

Good Shabbos Everyone. On the way to Haran, Yakov the patriarch stopped to rest for the night on Mount Moriah, the future site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

As he slept, Yakov dreamt that he saw a ladder. The famous dream of the ladder contains some of the most inspirational lessons of the entire Torah. The verse tells us that Yakov "dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..."(Bereshis 28:12)

The Rabbis teach us that the ladder symbolizes the position of a Jew in this world. Although we stand on the ground like the base of the ladder, we strive to reach up to the heavens, like the top of the ladder in the dream. As the verse states, "A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..." It is important to review the fact that a Jew is made up of body and soul.

As the verse tells us "And Hashem G-d formed the man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being."(Bereshis 2:7) Hashem implanted the holy soul into the earthy body. The body craves earthy pleasures such as eating, sleeping, etc. While the soul, craves spiritual pleasures such as Torah study, prayer and other mitzvahs.

This idea is hinted to in the dream of Yakov. As the verse tells us "A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..." The challenge of a Jew is therefore to elevate his earthy being to become more like Hashem in heaven. The ladder must stay on the ground in order to climb on it, yet the purpose of the ladder is to climb higher. So too, although we although we must take care of our earthy needs such as eating, and sleeping, etc., our primary goal is to reach the heavens.

Jews in Karlsruhe, Germany, were given the rights to live as equals and in relatively peaceful conditions from the late 17th century. The Jewish community thus flourished in this city, located on the Rhine River and a short distance from France. Shmuel Straus, a banker in this city, enjoyed a happy life, free to spend his extra time raising his children, doing good deeds and studying Torah from his vast library of Jewish books.

Shmuel earned just enough to support his family without any worries. He was known to be G-d-fearing and thus did all of his business dealings honestly. Shmuel's first business venture was to run a small bank, given to him by his father-in-law following his marriage. With a permit from the government, Shmuel would mainly exchange currencies and invest money for people. He owned a special coat with two large pockets, one where he would place account receivables and one for currency exchange. One Friday morning, before going to the bris of his friend's son, he put on the special coat he would wear on Shabbos, holidays and special occasions, and transferred the wads of cash he'd ordinarily keep in his other coat. Following the celebration, he continued on his way to work as usual, changing money and accepting payments. At midday, he stopped his work to assist in the preparations at home for the holy Shabbos.

After his wife lit the Shabbos candles, he put on his Shabbos coat, and bid farewell to his wife and small children and then headed to the synagogue for the Friday night prayers. He suddenly realized that his pockets were still filled with wads of money from that day's dealings. Shabbos was a special day for Shmuel, and he'd spend it in prayer, learning and precious time with his family. For the Shabbos meal, they would always have many guests. That Shabbos was no different. As he walked the quiet route back from the synagogue, he'd take the time to gather the words of Torah he would say at the Shabbos table. His guests would soon arrive with their families at his home. .

Shmuel sat on the bench on the side of the road as he gathered his thoughts, when he suddenly realized that his pockets were still filled with wads of money from that day's dealings. Shmuel learned from an early age that it is forbidden to transfer anything from the private domain (his home) to the public domain (the city streets), or vice versa, or to even pick up something and carry it in the street.

Thus, Shmuel remained rooted in his place was sweating from the thought of having to carry the money. He could not bear the idea of using money that he brought home on Shabbos.

Sitting in the deserted street, he suddenly thought about the joy he'd have knowing that he did the right thing, and quickly unbuttoned his coat, dropping the wallets on the ground. A blanket of relief swept over him. He knew that he would have to repay many debts, and that his future was in doubt. However, his trust in G-d empowered him to make a decision that he knew was right. That Shabbos was extra joyous for him. He felt that he passed the great test G-d placed in his way, and had prevailed triumphantly. His extra joy was a mystery to his family and the many guests who had been to his table before. As the sun faded and the stars came out, Shmuel said the special prayer recited over wine at the conclusion of Shabbos. His wife held the special candle and the family passed around the special fragrance to soothe the soul upon the departure of the beautiful Shabbos. His extra joy was a mystery to his family and the many guests who had been to his table before. After saying the after-blessing on the wine, Shmuel relayed to his family what had transpired on Friday night, thus revealing the reason for the joyous Shabbos. He also told them that it may be the beginning of a more difficult life. And youHis wife accepted the will of Hashem and assured the family that everything will turn out for the best. The same night, Shmuel decided to check the route he'd used, hoping to find the wallets he'd dropped. He did! And as Shmuel opened the door to his home, the family breathed a sigh of relief, for the wallets were intact with the full sum of money inside them. A few days later, the Minister of Finances of the Baden region heard about the trustworthy Straus bank, and entrusted Shmuel with a huge sum of money. The investment in the bank spread and many well-to-do people invested their money with Shmuel. Today, Shmuel's legacy lives on in Jerusalem, where the Straus Courtyard, a place of Torah learning, stands in his name. His children sold Straus & Company in 1938 when they fled from Germany and relocated to California. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**