

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's parsha Vayeitze we read about how, on the way to Charan, Yakov Avinu stopped to rest for the night. As he slept, Yakov dreamt that he saw a ladder. The famous dream of the ladder contains some of the most inspirational spiritual 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..." (Bereishis 28:12)

The Sages 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..." The following story told in the first person illustrates the amazing climb of a few Jews in this world.

The following amazing true Shabbos story told in the first person, will inspire all of us to keep Shabbos properly.

I remember many years ago when I first began to keep Shabbos. At the time I was new to Jewish observance. I had been hitchhiking around the country, and living on the streets for a few years, searching deeply for answers and ways in which I could become closer to G-d. I was fortunate enough to come into contact with the Chabad House in Berkeley, CA, where I met Rabbi Yehuda Ferris. Such a special Jew, so loving and non-judgmental, he turned me on to Shabbos.

After some months of living there it was time to move on, and I took on the commitment of keeping Shabbos. I made it very clear to G-d that even though I was hitchhiking, and even if I should be on the side of the road once Shabbos came in, I would simply stay there with my pack till after Shabbos. So I began my journey.

I arrived in Boulder, Colorado, on a Friday afternoon. Not to worry though, I would go to the local Chabad House. I found the address and directions, and proceeded to walk the few miles necessary. I figured I still had a good three to four hours and that I was ok for time. When I finally arrived at the address I did not find a Chabad house, but a huge office building. At this point I was a little worried. I went inside and saw that the Chabad office was on the third floor. Of course it was already closed for Shabbos.

Now what to do? I should mention my appearance: I had long dreadlocks (matted hair) with a Tibetan bell attached, a scraggly beard, tattered, painted pants and a very exotic shirt from India, which had Sanskrit written all over it. I definitely was not your average looking Jew, or even human.

I noticed that there was a financial firm of some sort next door to the office, with a glass door through which I could see an elderly lady sitting at a desk and looking at me. I asked if she might let me use the phone. I was getting a little nervous because it was almost Shabbos. She asked me in quite a surprised and curious tone, "Are you one of those religious Jews?"

She had seen me knocking on the Chabad door, but was confused by my appearance. I told that I was Jewish and trying to be religious. "Oh, that's wonderful," she exclaimed. "I'm a born-again X-tian and I think you Jews are the greatest!"

She invited me in and I called the Chabad House in Denver. They told me that there was nothing they could do as Shabbos was so soon and they knew no one who could help me in Boulder. I proceeded to call all the synagogues in the phone book. This was many years ago when there were almost no observant Jews there. (Now, B"H, that is not the case.)

The synagogues simply laughed at me. My problem was not that I needed a place to stay, but rather a place to leave my backpack, because you cannot carry outside on Shabbos. I had lived on the streets for a few years and knew how to take care of myself. My main concern was to not break Shabbos. I traveled with candles and grape juice for this very purpose.

Finally I spoke to one person who told me that I could leave my pack if the janitor was there. The lady had been listening and offered to drive me to the Synagogue. I was greatly relieved, because there was only an hour to Shabbos. We went in her new Cadillac to the Synagogue, only to find it locked, and no one there.

At this point I decided to forget it, throw my pack in the bushes and retrieve it after Shabbos. The woman would not hear of it, and offered to allow me to celebrate Shabbos at her home. I was amazed by her kindness, and saw no reason not to take up her wonderful offer. I told her yes but we had to hurry. Not a moment too soon we arrived at her house, which I might add was quite nice and in one of the ritzier areas of town.

Her husband came out and she introduced me as a religious Jew who had come to celebrate the Sabbath. He was overjoyed, and invited me in with nothing but graciousness. I immediately lit candles and then davened (prayed).

Afterwards they put some food together for me - I was a vegetarian then which made things easier. After I had eaten they tried to explain to me about their Messiah and so on and so forth. They spent about five minutes talking about it. I said that he sounds like a great guy but that I was just starting to get into my Jewishness.

"Absolutely you should learn about being Jewish and what it means. That is the most important thing." After this they informed me that the following morning they were going to visit their daughter, who lives in North Carolina, for a week, and were leaving at 6:30am. I asked them to let me put my backpack in their backyard, and I'd retrieve it on Saturday night.

"No, No," they exclaimed. "We wouldn't hear of it. We want you to stay, here are the keys, stay as long as you like. The house is yours. It is our honor to be able to serve a Jew and help him in any way." How clear I was that this was a miracle.

Here I was, coming into a town I had never been to before, on Erev Shabbos. I didn't know anyone. I looked like a complete freak, and this wealthy, elderly, non-Jewish couple asked me into their home. Not only did they take me in, but they basically gave it to me! And they really didn't try to convert me, but encouraged me to learn more about being Jewish, and the importance of keeping Shabbos.

What more could I ask of Hashem? He showed me what He is willing to do to help me keep Shabbos, if I am willing to make the commitment too. We have to know that Hashem is not far away from us. He is very close and involved in every aspect of our lives. If we will simply let Him in, and be a part of our life, He will do things for us which are far beyond our imagination. May we all be blessed to constantly see the miracles that are manifest in our lives at every moment. Amen!"

If you experience the beauty of Shabbos every week then you know "what it is all about." If you have yet to experience Shabbos, then your imagination will have to suffice. Everyone knows that reality is much better than the imagination. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**