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SEFER BEREISHIS - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

IN HONOR OF MY DEAR FRIENDS: MOISHE & HINDY ATLAS

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Yaakov's Ladder

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SEFER BEREISHIS

THE **CHOPP HOLDINGS** EDITION

IN HONOR OF MY DEAR FRIENDS: MOISHE & HINDY ATLAS

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Year 4 | Issue 10

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פרשת ויצא

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Yaakov's Ladder

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Part I. To Heaven

The Famous Vision

When Yaakov Avinu left Be'er Sheva and started out on his way to Padan Aram, he knew that he couldn't make such a long trip in one day. As much as he wanted to escape the wrath of Eisav he would have to stop along the way to sleep on the side of the road. And it was on one of those nights, while he was sleeping by the wayside, that there came to him that famous dream, the vision of the ladder. He saw a **אֲרָצָה מְצֻבָה אֶרְצָה** – *A ladder that was positioned on the earth*, **וְרֵאשׁוֹ** **הַשָּׁמַיִמָּה** – *and the top reached up to the sky*.

Now, a prophecy like that deserves to be studied at length because it wasn't only for Yaakov himself – it was for us too. We have a great principle that *maaseh avos siman la'bonim*, that whatever

happened to our Avos is a portent for what is going to happen to us as well; and even though we usually understand this idea on a national level the truth is that Yaakov Avinu's biography, the Torah biography of Yaakov, is intended also as a guidebook for the life of every *individual* of Yisroel.

By means of studying the life of the Yaakov Avinu, the virtuous Jew learns how to contend with the various difficulties of life, the ups and downs of *Olam Haze*, and still flourish in his *avodas Hashem*. And in the end, like Yaakov, he proves successful; he establishes himself as an *eved Hashem* and he lives a happy life.

And therefore it wouldn't be a waste of our time if we would make an attempt to glean some of the lessons of this extraordinary vision. On the contrary; whatever time we spend on understanding the "ladder that reached up to the sky," will redound to our benefit; no question about it.

A Ladder to Hashem

The *seforim* tell us that among the lessons we're expected to learn, one of the most important of all is that this world is a ladder for climbing. A ladder you know is not for standing still and it's not for walking horizontally either. It signifies *aliyah*, going up. It means that there's "a ladder stationed on the earth," a ladder of *shleimus*, of perfection, that is waiting for all of us to climb which can bring every individual "up to the sky." *Olam Haze* is an opportunity to climb a ladder of escalating rungs, indicating degrees of escalating perfection, and we're expected to use our time in this world to climb higher and higher.

Now pay attention because the first thing we have to know is what it is that is waiting for us on top of that ladder. What is it that we are climbing towards? And the answer is one thing: Hakodosh Boruch Hu! **וְהִנֵּה ה'שָׁם נֹצֵב עָלָיו** – *Behold, Hashem is the One stationed on top of the ladder.* That's the purpose of the climb, to come as close to Hashem as possible; and nothing is more important than that. Dovid HaMelech said that: **וְאֲנִי קִרְבַּת אֱלֹקִים לִי טוֹב** – *As far as I am concerned, the highest good, the most important good that a person can accomplish, is to come close to Elokim.*

Gedolah deiah – How great is the accomplishment of being aware of Hashem (Sanhedrin 92a)! Man’s success in this world is measured by how much of an awareness of Hashem he achieves (Moreh Nevuchim 1:54), and “the top of the ladder goes up to heaven” means that the only way to achieve that success, the only way to reach Hakodosh Boruch Hu is by means of climbing. That’s what Yaakov’s ladder is – a ladder for ascending towards perfection in Awareness of Hashem.

Step by Step

Now a lot of people might think, why a ladder? Who needs a ladder? Let’s have wings and we’ll fly up! It means, “Once I decide I want to be close to Hashem, that I want to live successfully, so I’ll do it – I’ll fly up to Him. Ladders?! The only thing holding me back is that I didn’t get started yet but once I get moving I don’t need to take baby steps – I’ll fly straight to success.”

No; the vision that Yaakov saw that night is teaching us the great lesson that we don’t fly; we have to climb up step by step. There are thousands of rungs to climb; small steps that we’re expected to take every day and it’s impossible to put your foot on a higher rung unless you climb up the lower rungs first.

Climbing a ladder means repetition – one step up and then another step and then another. And that means if we’re going to be successful in this world we have to start on a program of doing things, little acts that we wouldn’t have done otherwise, with the intention of making our way up the ladder. You’ll do the same thing over and over again but each time you’ve climbed a little higher; you’re not in the same place anymore – you’re not even the same person anymore.

Good Hypocrisy

Now at first beginners are reluctant to do such a thing, to constantly repeat certain acts, because they don’t feel like they are actually participating mentally with the acts they’re doing or with the words they’re saying – it’s just a program that they’re following

and therefore they don't consider themselves moving up the ladder at all.

Therefore it is important to know that *ad kan divrei yetzer harah* – such thoughts shouldn't give you any cause for discouragement. At first you *must* be a hypocrite. Of course, it's good hypocrisy – you're doing it to train yourself. "It's not sincere at all," you're thinking, "but I'll do it anyhow, I'll keep climbing, and subsequently the great ideals of genuine *emunah* will become a part of my personality."

Depth of Faith

Not like a man told me recently, "I have *emunah*; I believe and that's enough." The truth is he does have a certain level of *emunah*. He has *emunah sichlis*; he understands that our tradition is the only true one and I'm sure this man would even run into a fire for *kiddush Hashem*.

But that doesn't mean he has real *emunah*. *Emunah* means you believe in Hakodosh Boruch Hu at least the same way you believe that you have an Uncle Morris somewhere in the Bronx. You're *maamim b'emunah sheleimah* in your Uncle Morris. Your mother is telling you about him all the time and you even met him once at your *bar-mitzvah* – he gave you a present. You don't visit him, he doesn't visit you, but you *know* you have an uncle in the Bronx. That's *emunah*! Now, if you would believe in Hashem as much as you believe in that uncle, then you're pretty good! I want to compliment you!

But if your *emunah* in Hakodosh Boruch Hu is only *emunah sichlis*, if it's only intelligence – so at best it's very hazy; there's no actuality there, it's not real *emunah*. It's only in his mind; he accepts the idea but it's not part of his personality yet. Real *emunah* will only come if you start climbing the סֵלֶם הַמַּצֵּב אֶרְצָה – *the ladder that is positioned on the earth, וְרֵאשׁוֹ מִגֵּיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה* – *whose top reaches up to the sky*.

The First Program

And so we're going to spend a little time studying a few programs, a few ladders, that we all can begin climbing towards awareness of

Hashem. You can try one of them or if you're really sincere you can try all of them at once, but whatever it is, you have to keep in mind that it's only the small and steady repetitive steps that will lead you to the top. And so, we'll start climbing now together on the ladder of *emunah* towards Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Program number one: Every day, at least once, in the middle of the day stop wherever you are, stop and speak for one minute to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Did you ever do that?! For one full minute on the clock, talk to Him – it's a very precious achievement if a person can train himself to talk to Hakodosh Boruch Hu one minute every day.

“But,” you'll say, “I davened.” Oh no; that's nothing. I know you davened but that's only following in the beaten path that everyone else does. It's good, it's excellent, and you must daven too, but you're saying words by rote and we want more than that.

The Most Important Minute

Now, that first minute is as superficial as could be. You might even feel somewhat embarrassed. It doesn't feel genuine at all – you feel maybe a million miles, a million rungs on the ladder away from the actual feeling of conversing with a friend. But you must know by doing it one time now – even if you're doing it only because of our program – it's a million rungs minus one. You've climbed one rung and that's already a tremendous achievement.

Now, just hearing about it won't do you any good; you have to get busy fulfilling it. Imagine if you walk out of here tonight and on your way home when nobody is listening you stop for a moment and you address your words to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Whatever you say, it doesn't matter. You could say, “Hakodosh Boruch Hu, help me in my program so that I should succeed. I'd like to begin climbing the ladder towards being more aware of You and I need Your help. Help me remember once a day to speak to You for a full minute.” Talk to Him about that for a full minute. It's one minute of training yourself in gaining awareness of Hashem; it could be it's the most important minute of your day.

Now, don't be afraid of being silly. Otherwise, you'll have to resign from the program. They say about the Gra that when he was young he disregarded his environment. He lived in a very good environment but he disregarded them and he did what he thought was right and he became great because of that. And therefore don't care what the world will think about you – you make that one minute to talk to Hashem at least once a day no matter what. You're a pioneer now; you're leaving the beaten path and you're setting out to do something on your own.

Keep It To Yourself

I'll stress those words again, "on your own." It's very important that you don't tell anybody about it! Once you tell it to them, you have ruined the whole program. You know why? It says (Mishlei 23:9): **כִּי יִבּוֹז לְשׁוֹכֵל בְּאָזְנֵי כְּסִיל אֶל תִּדְבֹּר מִלִּיד** – *Do not speak into the ears of the fool, because he'll make your words into nothing.*

How is that? First of all he might say, "Who needs it?" and goodbye program. He erased everything – he took the winds right out of your sail. But even if he didn't say anything like that; he just looks at you with an empty face, that look is enough to ruin all your hopes. **כִּי יִבּוֹז לְשׁוֹכֵל מִלִּיד** – *He'll make your word to nothing.*

Don't tell anybody. Like it says (*ibid.* 5:17), **יְהִי לְךָ לְבַרְדָּה וְאֵין לְזָרִים**, **אַתָּה** – *it should be for you alone and strangers cannot share this with you.* Don't try to tell it to your rebbe – could be he never thought of this himself and he won't appreciate it. Don't tell your wife or your parents or your friends. *Chas v'sholom* to tell your friends because you should know that you're going to have a very great disappointment. Be a pioneer and do what you're supposed to do – start climbing the ladder all by yourself.

Starting and Stopping

Now suppose you decide to do it not once; you do it *twice*. Now you're two rungs closer in that million mile distance; you're a professional climber already. It's not so strange anymore; it's not so difficult either. So decide now that you'll undertake to do this every

day. The third day, another rung. Fourth day, another rung. And so on and so forth.

Do it every day for one month and then stop. Why stop? Because after a while you become tired of it and the words mean nothing. You just rattle them off. It becomes like *krias shema* in the morning. So the *sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh* says that when you want to embark on such a program, it's a good idea to stop once in a while and give yourself a rest – then you come back a little later and start all over again. You'll stop for a rest and then you'll start climbing again.

Now imagine you would keep at it all your life; every day you train yourself to have in your mind that you're talking to Hashem for a minute every day. If you'll do that – with the appropriate vacations from time to time to regain the *gevuras hanefesh* that you lost by habit – then great things are going to happen to you. You'll be amazed after a while that you actually start believing in Hashem. That's a big *chiddush*! You're not just a *ma'amin* who rattles off the words after davening, אָנִי מְאָמֵן בְּאֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה and finished, no, you become a head taller than everyone else!

If you'll follow this program, you'll become a *ma'amin*. Of course you're not yet like the *tzadikim* who thought constantly about Hashem, but we should never overlook the small steps up the ladder – that's how the *tzadikim* did it too. And it's guaranteed that in the course of time you'll change from the head to the feet. It will transform your personality entirely because it's not merely a minute a day; each day is another step up and it means you're climbing Yaakov's ladder every day.

Part II. All Heaven

A Second Program

Now we're going to study a second program. However when we say a second program it doesn't mean *l'apukei*, as a substitute, to exclude the first. It's an additional ladder that when added to the first transforms a person's life even more. Like I said before, if you're

capable and you really want to climb high so you can climb a few ladders at the same time.

And so, ladder number two is the program of recognizing in everything around us the hand of Hashem. We'll call this method, *Bereishis bara Elokim* – *In the beginning, Elokim made everything!* It means that there's nothing we see in the world that's not the *dvar Hashem*; from the stars above to the ants below, on all sides we have lessons to make us think of Hakodosh Boruch Hu; that's a big responsibility, a big opportunity, because it means that we have now a ladder that's always available for climbing; wherever you turn there are rungs to ascend.

That's what this world is for. **וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה** – *Why did Hashem make this world?* **שִׁירְאוּ מִלְפָּנָיו** – *so that we should become aware of Him* (Koheles 5:17). It means so that we should have opportunities to climb the ladder to Him. It's not that we're in a world and *derech agav*, by the way, we can see Hashem. Oh no; *that's the purpose of it all!* We're expected to use the world around us, everything we see, to climb the rungs of Awareness of Hashem.

Studies of Avrohom

The stars are a rung for you to climb. The tree is another rung. The blue sky is for climbing and the gray sky too. The grass, the rain, the snow, the clouds, the leaves; they were all created for climbing.

That's what Avrohom Avinu did. Avrohom looked at the world around him and he recognized the *Borei* because of that. He was a very precocious child – it says *ben gimel shanim hikir Avrohom es Boro*; when Avrohom was three years old, he already recognized his Creator. There are cases like that in history, where a child of seven went to Harvard. Avrohom, of course, was much better than that because Harvard is a place of *avodah zarah*, a place of foolishness, of *meshugas*. The main courses in Harvard are women, booze and narcotics; other things too.

Avrohom didn't go to Harvard. He didn't have to go to school because the whole *briyah* was a school for him; he went to the university of *Olam Hazeh*, of seeing Hashem in nature, and he saw

better than any professors will ever see. He studied the world around him and he saw wisdom and plan and purpose everywhere; by means of the complicated contrivances on all sides already at the age of three he had surmised that there was a Designer.

And Avrohom never stopped surmising! He could have said, “I believe; I’m finished.” Oh no, that’s not *emunah*, Avrohom kept growing. That’s why the Rambam says, *ben arbaim shana hikir Avrohom es boro* – it was at the age of forty that Avrohom recognized his Creator. So it seems to be a contradiction; was it three or forty? And the Rambam is quoting a *medrash* so we understand that both are true.

He Kept Looking

The answer is this: Avrohom at the age of three discovered the secret but that was only the beginning; he understood that he had just discovered a ladder and that he was standing all the way on the bottom. Now you start climbing. And so, from the age of three he continued by day and by night to look. When he passed a peach he stopped to look at the beautiful fruit because he understood that he still had a long way to climb. He looked at the blush on each cheek, a little bit red on it. It’s so beautiful. Why the red? “Oh,” said Avrohom, “it’s the hand of Hashem. He wants me to notice Him; He cooked this fruit on the tree in order that I should have the opportunity to become more aware of Him.”

And when he reached the pit he looked at that too. Why is it that the peach pit is so hard? Even an animal can’t eat it! He can’t break it open! With a monkey wrench, you can’t break it! Why is that? Someone designed it after all; what was His purpose in making it this way? The answer is, the Creator wants to protect the seed inside. The seed inside tastes good, almost like an almond, and the Creator wants to protect the future of the tree so He gives it a covering so hard that even with a saw you can’t open it up. Nothing in the whole tree is as hard as the case of the seed.

But put the peach pit in the ground and it opens up by itself, deposits the seed in the earth, and a tree grows out of it! Miracle of miracles! That little seed has in it at least one million bits of

information! And each one is essential; each one works in a certain sequence one after the other and from that little seed a tree with bark and wood and roots and leaves and flowers and fruits is produced. Fruits with color and flavor from a seed?! How could such a thing happen? And the fruits have more seeds in them!

The Ladder Reaches Higher

Avrohom didn't let such a thing just pass. He stopped next to the tree and thought about what he was witnessing. And he did it again and again – he looked at the tree again the following day, and again the day after that, because he understood that he was climbing a ladder and that every rung was a step closer to perfection. You'll say, "I should stop to look at a tree every day?!" Yes! Every day! Avrohom Avinu wasn't looking for thrills – he was looking for Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

That's how Avrohom lived and when he reached forty, *ben arbaim l'binah*, he understood even more that there was a Hashem in the world. By the time he was forty years old he must have been very much advanced in his studies and yet he never stopped climbing. For more than a hundred more years, day and by night, day and night, he continued looking at everything around him and climbing the ladder of *Bereishis bara Elokim*.

Keep Asking Questions

Now it takes time for a person to get into his head that all of nature is testifying to Hashem. Why is it that the apple turns red when it's sweet and it's a pleasure to eat it, but when it's sour and hard it's still green? Because green hides among the leaves so that you shouldn't see it. All unripe fruit are green to hide among the leaves, and then when they're ripe they change color so that you'll notice them. Some become red. Oranges become golden. Bananas become yellow. Grapes become purple. All types of colors in the trees!

Why are these colors there? From where did the colors come? The seed wasn't colorful. Can you manufacture color? Try to take some water and dirt and mix it around – are you capable of making

color the way Hashem's seeds do it? Impossible! It's a remarkable miracle!

And so you learn to look at an apple and say to yourself, "Look how the apple shows us Hashem's purposefulness, His design! That apple is a masterpiece! Nobody can make a packaged apple like that in a beautiful colored skin. Inside there's luscious food. As long as the skin is intact, the apple doesn't rot. And inside when you finish eating, there's seeds and each seed has in it millions of plans that show the apple how to produce another apple tree. It's miracles of miracles."

Now this sight is duplicated around you in millions and millions of cases. Wherever you walk you can see the hand of Hashem. And as a person teaches himself to think, "Why is that? Don't I see here the *chochmas Hashem* in nature?" he begins to see plan and purpose wherever he goes. He constantly thinks about Hashem because he can see Him everywhere. He has plenty of rungs to climb and he continues to think about these ideas. He doesn't say "I already heard about the peach pit; I know all about it." He looks again and again and as the years go by it becomes so clear to him that he sees the design of Hakodosh Boruch Hu everywhere.

The Miracle of Children

Even when he sees a child on the street he understands that it's an opportunity for climbing the ladder. Here's a woman walking in the street and little boy is holding on to the side of a carriage. A little boy. He's three years old. Where was he three years ago? Three years ago, he was in the Atlantic Ocean. He was mostly water. He's water. 80% is water. 20% is air and a little bit of soil. Mostly air and a little bit of soil. Now, how did that combination of water and a little bit of air and soil come together to create a human body? A boy is perfect – a little boy. He has ears and eyes and a mouth. He has teeth. He has legs. He has muscles. He jumps up and down. His heart is beating. He has kidneys. He has everything. How did that complicated mechanism come just from air and water?

The answer is, it's a *neis*! Two years ago he was nothing at all. His mother was eating potatoes and drinking water and from that came a little boy.

So you're looking at a little boy and you see the hand of Hashem in the world. You have to train your eyes to do that, by the way. And if you think about that when you see a little boy today, and then again when you see a little girl tomorrow, and the day after too, so little by little, you'll learn how to recognize Hashem in this world – whenever you see a child, you'll be seeing the hand of Hashem.

A World of Opportunity

And therefore, our eyes are for the purpose, among other things, of seeing Hakodosh Boruch Hu in nature on all sides of us. I just chose some examples at random but the world around us is full of the wisdom of Hashem without any end – there's no bottom to it! The scientists are discovering new things every day – it's remarkable how profound is the wisdom in even the smallest thing in the world; every natural object is so profoundly deep and it's for one purpose only: *וְהֵאֱלָקִים עָשָׂה שְׂרָאוֹ מִלְּפָנָיו* – *He made it all so that we should have opportunities to become more and more aware of Him.*

He made this world in order we should look at the world and say, “Who made this?” There isn't a single object in the world, if you're willing to think a little bit, that doesn't demonstrate complicated plan and purpose. Everything in the world testifies to the Creator and it's all made for the purpose of helping us climb that ladder higher and higher to gain the perfection for which we were created.

Part III. For Heaven

An Oft-Ignored Halacha

Number three on our list; our third ladder is what we learn in the *mishna*: *וְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יִהְיוּ לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם* – *Whatever you do, you should do for the service of Shomayim (Avos 2:2).* It's a *halacha* in the *Shulchan*

Aruch too (Orach Chaim 231). It should be enough that it's a *mishna* but to us it's more potent when it's in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Now, even though it's a *halacha*, the truth is that it's not being done today. *Kol maasecha* means *all* of your actions should be done for the sake of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. *All!* That's something way up on top of the ladder!

But once we remember the lesson we're learning tonight, that the bottom of the ladder is *mutzav artzah*, that it's set right here on the ground, so you understand that every one of us can embark on this climb. And even though we might be very far from the top, nevertheless, once we start, we know that we are already climbing.

In Daily Life

Now, when a man actually begins looking into his day he sees that only a very small part is devoted to the service of Hashem. If you're learning Torah all day long, *nu*, so maybe you feel that you're OK. Even the *kollel* man has to remember to learn *l'sheim shomayim* but at least he's in the *beis medrash* so he's reminded hopefully. But suppose you're a person who has to make a living; you work from nine to five maybe. So you *daven* in the morning, you make a few *brochos* too, and then you're off to work – from nine to five where's the *avodas Hashem*? Of course, at lunch time you'll wash your hands, you make *hamotzee*, you'll say *birchas hamazon*, but most of the time what are you doing?

You want to start climbing the ladder of *kol maasecha yihiyu l'sheim shomayim*? So while you're on the way to work, you're on the train going to your place of business, take a few seconds and say, "I'm going to work now *l'sheim shamayim*."

Why is it *l'shem shamayim*? Because Hakodosh Boruch Hu wishes that you should do business. **שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד** – "Six days you should work," Hashem says. He wants you to make money to take care of your family. When you got married, you made a *kinyan* on the *kesubah*. Every *chosson* takes a handkerchief and he obligates himself, *Ana eflach* – *I'm going to work*, *va'afarneis v'ozin* – *and I'll*

support my wife. So you're traveling on the train and you're thinking, "I have to keep my promise. That's number one."

"Secondly, I can't live in a barrel and that means I have to pay rent and other bills. Also, I have to pay *schar limud* for my children; I'm not going to send my children to public school *chas v'shalom*. I'm going to work now so that I can pay *schar limud* and do my part in building up the *Beis Yisroel*."

Climbing Higher

If you think that thought – better yet, be a 'fool' and say it with your mouth – as surprising it may seem, you should know that it's called *avodas Hashem*. You've already started climbing the ladder.

You want to climb another rung? In the middle of the day you say, "The next customer that walks in, I'm going to deal with him *l'shem shamayim*. I'm going to buy or sell – whatever it is you're doing – but I'll do it because this is what Hashem wants from me." You'll go through all the same motions – you'll buy and sell merchandise, you'll make a profit hopefully – but you're doing it *l'shem shamayim*. Now, at first it may seem insincere when you see a customer coming and you say, "My dealings with him are for the service of Hashem," nevertheless, persist; don't give up, because you're climbing now.

A Mother's Life

Now, let's say you're not a businessman; you're a mother. Ooh wah, is that an opportunity – it's a tragedy that more Jewish mothers don't make use of it. Here's a loyal wife, a loyal mother serving supper to her husband. "Certainly," you'll say, "What else should I do? He's my husband. Any loyal wife would do this."

But if you're loyal to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, you'll get into the habit of adding the thought that you're doing it for Him. Once a day think, "I'm serving my family supper now but actually I'm serving Hashem by means of that. I'm fulfilling His will when I feed my family. I'm having babies, I'm raising my children to serve You, Hashem. I'm cleaning the house, I'm bathing the children, I'm making supper for

the family, all to serve You, Hashem.” This is the service that Hashem wants from you, and you’re doing it! So you may as well think it too.

Eating L'shem Shomayim

Eating is another opportunity. Most of you eat every day, no? And therefore, since eating is something we all have to do anyhow, it’s a wonderful opportunity. So why don’t you try eating *l'shem shomayim*? You’re sitting down at the table to eat and you’re saying, “I’m eating in order to have strength to serve Hashem.” The truth is that it’s a well-known ideal among Jews. Whether it’s fulfilled or not is a different question but it’s an ideal we should think about.

And if we’re thinking about it, we might as well fulfill it too. “Ooh,” you think, “that’s a difficult thing.” But the truth is it’s only difficult if you don’t start climbing. Try it by supper: “I’m eating now in order that I should be able to sit and learn tonight. I need *koach* to learn and this chicken is going to be my fuel! You have to put gasoline into the automobile it should travel, so I’m putting some more fuel into my wagon I should be able to serve Hashem.”

Your wife will say, "Chaim! What are you saying?"

"No, nothing. I'm just talking to myself."

If your mother is around, don’t say it. Wait till she goes out from the place where you’re sitting and say it then – nobody has to hear you. If you’re in *yeshiva*, put your hand over your mouth and say the words, “I’m eating lunch *l'sheim shomayim*.” Nobody should hear you say it but say it anyhow.

Do it Right

Every time you sit down to eat bread, “I’m eating this piece of bread *l'sheim shomayim*.” Doesn’t that feel queer? Sometimes you’re going to have to be queer if you’re going to do things with your life. Even if you just do it once you’ll be able to boast when you’re an old man, “I remember many years ago when I heard about this subject and once when I sat down to breakfast, before I made the *bracha*, I said, ‘I’m going to eat *l'sheim shomayim* now.’”

Of course if it's something that's not going to help you; let's say you bought a box of kosher chocolates and you lie down on the bed with a newspaper and you want gorge yourself for an hour with the chocolates and you say, "I'm doing this *l'sheim shomayim*" – well, I don't know if *Shomayim* would agree to that. It's the opposite of becoming strong to serve Him. If you're stuffing yourself with all the garbage it's not helping you become stronger and healthier. But as much as possible, you can make your eating a ladder to climb towards Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Service of Sleep

Now, let's say you forgot all about our program. You forgot all about Yaakov's vision and your career of climbing the ladder and now it's the end of the day. A waste! No, no; all hope is not lost. Because when you go to sleep you can do that *l'sheim shomayim* too. Imagine that tonight you're going to sleep. You're tired. You lie down in the bed, your head is on the pillow – "Ah, it's a pleasure," and you relax and you're carried away in slumberland. Isn't that a pity? You lost a golden opportunity!

Would it have cost you any money to say beforehand, "Hashem I'm going to sleep in order to have *koach*, the power to serve you tomorrow"? That's a goldmine! Every night before you go to sleep say – nobody should hear of course – "I'm going to sleep *l'shem shomayim* in order to have *koach* to serve Hashem."

You need to gain new strength for the next day to serve Hashem. You have to do good deeds. You have to do many obligations and it needs a strong body and it needs energy. Maybe you'll be able to serve him if you stayed up all night too but it would be a second rate kind of service; your mind wouldn't be in it. So you go to sleep and you get up in the morning refreshed and full of energy and you'll serve Hashem better.

"I'm going to sleep in order to have *koach* to serve Hashem." At first, it's absolutely insincere – you want to sleep, that's all – but those words are going to revolutionize your character in the course of time. Say it and say it and say it and don't weaken. And there'll come a day when you'll lie down in bed and you'll be an *oived Hashem*

by sleeping. Imagine! To serve Hashem by falling asleep! And it costs no money! There'll be a reward every night forever and ever as long as you live! Yes! It's a tremendous achievement! In some ways, you're greater than a *rosh yeshiva*! What does it help for a person to say *shiurim* and *pilpulim* but he doesn't have any *kavanah l'shem Shamayim*?

Do it Anyway

Now, I have to warn you again that everyone who starts this is going to be beset by worries that it's insincere, it's deceitful. I'm saying *l'sheim shamayim* but actually I like to eat. I like sleeping. I'm going to work because I like money. And so why am I telling myself stories? What's the use?

Don't be discouraged. You have to know that every person who is ambitious to make something of himself must be a little bit of a hypocrite. If you are too honest with yourself you're going to remain frustrated, and so you must say what you don't feel. No question! Even though you don't feel at all any kind of feeling of doing it for Hashem. Nevertheless, say the words! It could be some years pass by before it settles into your mind and changes your personality, but you're getting reward for every step you take. Hakodosh Boruch Hu will pay you for every rung you climb.

He's Waiting

Now, before we end our talk we have to remind ourselves about the other side of the picture, about the top of the ladder. We spent time talking tonight about our career of climbing up the ladder to Hashem, different methods of achieving perfection in Awareness of Hashem but we always have to remember that **וַהֲרִיב ה' עָלָיו** – *And behold Hashem is standing on top of the ladder*. The word *nitzav* means that He's waiting there – He's looking down and demanding that you keep climbing.

We might think it's just a voluntary thing; “You want to go higher? Very good, excellent; *ashrecha*. But what does it have to do with me? It's not for everybody – I'm busy with life; I'll pass.”

Oh no; it's very wrong to think that. *Behold Hashem is standing on top of the ladder waiting for you!* We're learning now that it's not a voluntary thing and there will be a very great judgment on a person for failure to utilize this world to make something out of himself.

Depth of Responsibility

You didn't know that? You're in good company. The *gemara* in *Mesichta Pesachim* (54b) says that "there are seven things that are concealed from people's sight." Seven things that most people don't see; they don't know about and one of the things on that list is what concerns us now; it's *omek hadin* – How deep is the judgment of each person; how great is the responsibility of coming into this world.

Most people don't actually realize that. Almost nobody knows how great is the *omek hadin*; how deep, how profound, is the responsibility of each person in this world. **מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה רָבָה** – *Your judgments, Hashem, are like the great deep.* People don't know that there's a very great judgment for them.

It's Never Enough

Even though you are a *frum* person, even though you're living *al pi Torah*, even though you're devoted to doing *mitzvos*, to learning Torah, you have a family, you're serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu with kindness to your fellow Jews, doing all kinds of deeds of virtue and righteousness, nevertheless you should know there's an *omek hadin*, a very great judgment.

And that's because being *frum*, being Orthodox is not enough. There's a ladder waiting for you to climb and a ladder means it *can* be climbed. The ladder that Yaakov saw that reaches up to *shomayim* is demanding of us that we do the very best of which we are capable. Every little bit, every step is good, but you have to know that it's not good enough. You should never settle with a mediocre performance just because outside there are so many people who barely perform any *mitzvos*.

Are you going to compliment yourself and pat yourself on the back, because you are an ordinary *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*?! That's

no way to measure your potentialities. Everyone should be looking above him, on the ladder, at people better than him, and not below him. We should always strive and always demand of ourselves what we possess within us.

It's *מְגִיעַ הַשְּׁמַיִמָה* – *the ladder goes all the way up to heaven!* There are a lot of steps to climb and Hashem is *nitzav alav*, He's standing over you and He's demanding that the ladder should be utilized. But once you start climbing you're on your way! You're on your way to the *רֵאשׁוֹ מְגִיעַ הַשְּׁמַיִמָה* – the top of the ladder goes up to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and that's what was expected of the original Yaakov and all of those who follow in Yaakov's footsteps.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Don't Forget About the Ladders

One of the common problems with a program like this is that it's so easy to go through the day and forget about it entirely. And when it comes to climbing ladders, it's the daily repetition that's so important.

I will write these three programs on a piece of paper and take it out a few times during the day to review the ladders available to me and make sure that I fulfill the minimum every day: 1) I will talk to Hashem for one minute every day. 2) I will Stop and See Hashem in the world around me at least once every day. 3) At least once a day I will eat, work, do housework, or go to sleep *l'sheim shomayim*.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

- 411 - In Order to Know Hashem | 455 - First Rung of Ladder of Perfection
939 - Jacob, Our Model | E-6 - A Youth's Ladder to Greatness
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How does one encourage a husband or a child without becoming just an ordinary nag?

A:

And the answer is that חֲכָמוֹת נָשִׁים בְּנִתָּה בֵּיתָה – *It is the wisdom of a woman that builds up her house.* Now, that's not an easy answer because you have to learn how to do it. You have to plan what you want to say. Sometimes you feel that you must say something on the spur of the moment. Don't! Wait until you can say it with cunning. And many times you'll accomplish what you wouldn't have accomplished otherwise.

Sometimes you might want your husband to go out and learn in the *beis medrash* at night and he's sitting with his feet up at the table reading a newspaper. That's how he's wasting his evenings. So you have to wait for an opportunity and you let pass a remark, "What a nice neighbor Mr. Cohen next door. I see he's such a fine man; every night he goes out to learn in the *beis medrash*." That's all; don't say any more than that. Just let those words sink in a little bit.

I'll give you another suggestion as well. Sometimes when your husband does do one good thing, go out of your way to praise him. And that way you'll give him incentive to do it again.

Whatever it is, you'll have to find tactful ways because the frontal attack usually doesn't succeed and it only causes irritation.

TAPE # 239

_____ This week's Q&A sponsor: _____

Anonymous