

“And he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward.” (28:12)

It is interesting to note that the vision of a ladder whose legs are on the ground, while the top reaches the heavens, occurred only to Yaakov and not to the preceding Patriarchs, Avraham and Yitzchak. *Horav Shlomo Margolis, Shlita*, attributes this phenomenon to the different lives that they lived. Avraham initiated *Tefillas Shacharis*, the morning prayer. He understood that life has its challenges, its trials and travail. The sun shone for him. He succeeded in life, overcoming whatever challenges may have stood in his way. He was accepted by those around him. Indeed, he was recognized as G-d's emissary, His prince. He was admired and revered. His prayer, the prayer recited when the sun shines, reflects his life's endeavor.

Yitzchak's prayer was *Tefillas Minchah*, the afternoon prayer, recited as the sun's rays begin to wane. He experienced his share of life's problems. The sun did not shine as brightly for him as it did for his father. Yet, he persevered, serving Hashem no matter the circumstances of his life. His *tefillah*, recited as the sun begins to set, reflects his life.

Yaakov *Avinu's tefillah* was *Tefillas Arvis*, the evening prayer. His life was one of darkness. It started in the womb with his twin brother, Eisav. He suffered from the corrupt Lavan; from the misfortune of his daughter, Dinah; from the troubles of Yosef, which included the imprisonment of Shimon and near loss of Binyamin. Yaakov did not live a carefree life. The one time he asked for respite, a change from his daily troubles, Yosef's anguish came upon him. Yaakov's prayer, recited at a time of darkness, reflects the notion that one can and should trust and pray to Hashem, regardless of the overwhelming darkness that envelops him. Yaakov taught us that the “odds” mean nothing to a Jew. He can overcome anything.

The ladder also represents this idea. Even when one is on the “earth,” on the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder, having sunk to the nadir of depravity, he can still rise up and reach the zenith of spiritual purity. He can either climb the ladder, or stand there and watch as others accomplish what he reneged from doing. Yaakov succeeded, despite the darkness of life's challenges. He was shown that man can overcome anything: be it physical or spiritual darkness. He has to trust in Hashem and be willing to climb the ladder.