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All Ladders Lead Upward

“Hashem plants us in just the right spot.”

Someone needs to get onto the roof of a house, 20 feet off the ground. Whether he places his ladder in the front or back or one of the sides of the house, he will be able to climb those 20 feet and step onto the roof. Wherever the ladder is placed, it leads to the top.

But let's imagine that instead of reaching the roof, a person wants to reach the heights of spiritual accomplishment. He is a 20-year-old *yeshivah bachur* and he wants to be a *tzaddik*. He'd really *love* to be a *tzaddik*. But he doesn't seem to be in a place in life that can get him there.

Sadly, Hashem seems to have placed his ladder in the wrong place. He's from an ordinary family — no Roshei Yeshivos in his family tree. He's in a lesser-known yeshivah in a small town. He's not particularly smart, either. Sometimes he looks around the *beis midrash* at all the *chavrusas* arguing their points, and wonders, “Do they all really understand what they're talking about? What am I missing?” He is beginning to believe that there is no path upward for him.

But this boy's despair ignores one Big Truth: Hashem has placed him exactly where he needs to be to reach his own potential for greatness. Rav Elimelech Biderman tells of the Slonimer Rebbe, who wrote the following letter to a student who was upset that he had to be in America for Rosh Hashanah, rather than with the Rebbe:

Hashem sets up a ladder for every Jew to climb. Yosef was in the decadent land of Egypt and Hashem set up a ladder for him there. Yosef climbed that ladder and that's how he became Yosef HaTzaddik... The ladder extends from wherever you are all the way up to the Heavens. Where you are is the place from which you will be able to reach the highest levels. Therefore, accept it with love and joy.

Wherever Hashem places our ladder, we can always reach the roof. Sometimes, the climb might be difficult or dangerous. Sometimes it will be exciting. We'll look down and see how far we've come, and then look up and see the amazing heights that lie ahead. It is our *emunah* — our belief that where we are and what we experience are all Hashem's plan to bring us to the top of the ladder — that keeps us going.

MAKE IT REAL:

What do you consider to be your limitations in growing as a Jew? Imagine writing an inspiring story about someone in the same situation. How would he use his challenge as a step up the ladder?