
THE WEISS EDITION

וישב

Vayeishev



Dreaming to Toil

Filled with Emptiness

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A Picture Worth More
than a Thousand Words

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה



וישב

Vayeishev

 לז:ז | 37:7

וַהֲבֵנָה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲלֻמִּים אֲלֻמִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה

*And behold, we were binding
sheaves in the midst of the field.*

Dreaming to Toil

Both Yosef's and Pharaoh's dreams involved grain, but a significant difference between them reflects the fundamental disparity between what they each represent.

Yosef's dream began with a scene of toil: he and his brothers were working the fields, binding sheaves of grain. Pharaoh's dream, on the other hand, involved no labor: ears of grain grew from the ground spontaneously.

The contrast between their dreams highlights the difference between those who draw sustenance from *kedushah*, holiness, and those who are sustained by *kelipah*, unholy sources.

Deriving nourishment from unholy sources involves little or no effort. As Bnei Yisrael told Moshe, "We remember the

fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge,”¹ which, Rashi explains, means not that the Egyptians provided them with food at no cost, but that their lives in Egypt were free from mitzvah obligations.² They referred to their food as “free of charge,” because nourishment from Egypt, an allusion to all things unholy, comes easily, without effort or toil.

Conversely, when one’s life is nurtured exclusively by *kedushah*, everything is earned through hard work. This is, in fact, G-d’s means of granting us the greatest degree of delight, for ultimately, things that come without effort are not truly enjoyable. In the words of the Talmud Yerushalmi, “One who eats from the food of another is ashamed to look at his benefactor’s face.”³ The blessings we enjoy most are those we’ve earned, not those that are handed to us for free.

It is therefore only natural that the dreams of Yosef—representing the good and holy—began with toil and labor, while the dreams of Pharaoh—representing the unholy—were of growth that did not involve labor.

One who follows the demanding path of Yosef, however, can rest assured that his successes will follow the pattern of Yosef’s dreams: though his beginnings may be humble, he will ultimately reach great heights, like Yosef’s dreams, which progressed from the plant kingdom on earth to the celestial beings on high.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, pp. 807-808, 820

1. Bamidbar 11:5.

2. See Rashi ad loc.

3. Orlah 1:3.

 לז:כד | 37:24

וְהַבּוֹר רֶק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם

*Now the pit was empty;
there was no water in it.*

Filled with Emptiness

The Torah describes the pit in which Yosef was held captive, saying, “Now the pit was empty; there was no water in it.”

Rashi asks: “Do the words ‘now the pit was empty’ not imply that the pit contained no water? For what purpose did the Torah add that ‘there was no water in it’? The added phrase saying that ‘there was water in it’ teaches us,” replies Rashi, “that it was empty only of water, but it was in fact occupied by snakes and scorpions.”

Water is often used as a metaphor for Torah study.⁴ Accordingly, we can understand why the Torah alludes to the presence of snakes and scorpions in the pit by emphasizing that “there was no water in it,” instead of stating explicitly that the pit was inhabited by harmful creatures.

The arrival of snakes and scorpions—symbolic of the spiritual ills that can plague a person’s life—is not an “additional” risk faced by those who do not fill their lives with Torah study. Rather, the presence of these negative elements is *synonymous* with the absence of Torah study: they are its inevitable consequence. For the vacuum created when a person does not occupy his free time with Torah does not remain neutral.

4. See Bava Kamma 17a.

When “there is no water in it,” the void automatically fills with “snakes and scorpions”—ideas that are incompatible with a holy lifestyle.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, pp. 324–325

 לח:יג | 38:13

וַיֵּגֵד לְתָמָר לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה חֲמִידָה עֹלָה תִמְנָתָהּ לְגֹז צֹאנִי

It was told to Tamar, saying, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

What Does Not Go Up

Rashi tells us that the city of Timnah was built on the slope of a mountain. We thus find that whereas Yehudah is said to have gone *up* to Timnah,⁵ Shimshon went *down* to Timnah.⁶ As Rashi explains, "You go up to Timnah when coming from one direction, but you go down to it when coming from the other."⁷

Rashi's words describe not only the topography of the region, but also a fundamental truth regarding the nature of Divine worship, which can be compared to ascending a mountain.⁸

While we read of people who *ascended* or *descended* to Timnah, the Torah never mentions anyone being *stationed* in this mountainside city or simply *going* there. For on a slope, you are either ascending or descending; if you do not climb upward, you will inevitably slide in the opposite direction.

The same is true with regard to our devotion to G-d and His service. We must constantly work toward greater heights in our spiritual climb, if only to maintain the degree of devo-

5. Bereishis 38:13.

6. Shoftim 14:1.

7. Bereishis 38:13.

8. Tehillim 24:3.

tion to G-d that we have already attained. For on a mountain, if you are not going up, you are almost certainly going down.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, pp. 127-128

 לט:יב | 39:12

וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה

*But he left his garment in her hand,
and fled and went outside.*

A Picture Worth More than a Thousand Words

When Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Yosef, “the image of his father’s face appeared to him in the window,” and stopped him from sinning, just moments before he would have succumbed to her advances.⁹

The Talmud’s words imply that simply remembering the ethical standards with which he was raised would not have sufficed to stop Yosef from sinning; it was specifically the appearance of Yaakov’s face that gave him the courage not to resist the immoral act. What did the appearance of Yaakov’s face convey that so significantly influenced Yosef’s decision?

Elsewhere, the Talmud tells us that “our forefather Yaakov’s beautiful countenance was akin to that of Adam, the first man.”¹⁰ The Kabbalists attribute this physical resemblance to the spiritual bond that Adam and Yaakov shared. What was the spiritual bond? Through their spiritual endeavors, the forefathers, Yaakov in particular, undid the damage

9. Sotah 36b.

10. Bava Metzia 84a.

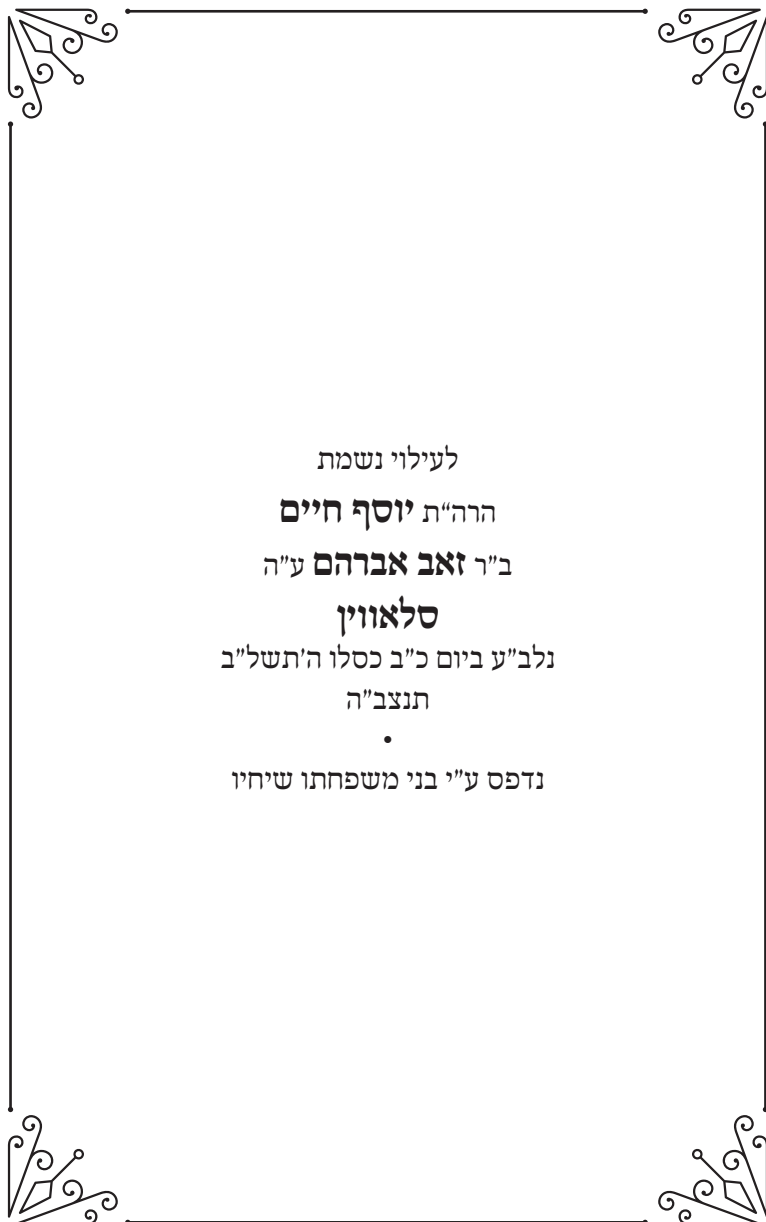
brought upon the world by Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.¹¹

Thus, seeing Yaakov's face reminded Yosef of his father's famous lookalike, Adam, an individual whose sin brought devastation upon the world. At the same time, he was reminded of Yaakov's efforts to bring healing (from the damage caused by Adam's sin) to the entire world. This caused Yosef to recognize that his decision whether or not to resist the advances of his master's wife would not be inconsequential or temporary. Like Yaakov and Adam, his actions would affect the entire world for all time!

To be sure, Yosef could have relied upon all sorts of rationalizations to justify sinning just this once, in order to avoid the inevitable life sentence for denying the wishes of his master's wife. But upon seeing his father's face, Yosef was reminded that the decisions of every individual at every moment have the ability to bring harm to the entire world, as did Adam's, or to repair the universe, as did Yaakov's. When he realized that his "personal" decision would affect the entire world for all eternity, Yosef raised himself above his rationalizations and fled.

—*Toras Menachem*, vol. 29, pp. 262–265

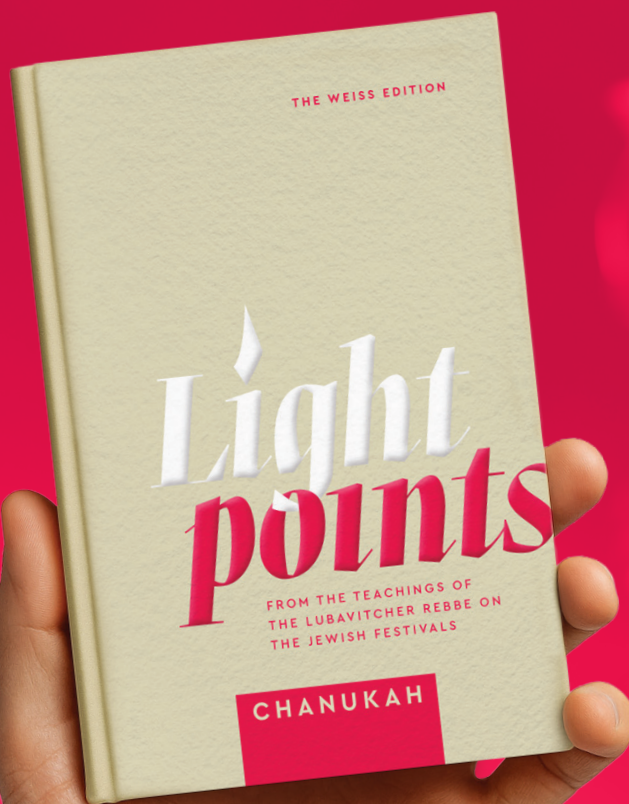
11. See Keser Shem Tov, sec. 311; Zohar 3:111b.



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ב"ר זאב אברהם ע"ה
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