



# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

## Yosef's Dreams

וְהָיָה תִּסְבִּינָה אֶלְמֵתֵיכֶם וְתִשְׁתַּחֲוּיָי לְאֶלְמֵתִי (לז, ז)

**Your sheaves surrounded and bowed down to my sheave. (37:7)**

Yosef's first dream was all about sheaves of grain. His brother's sheaves bowed down to his sheave. But in his second dream he saw the moon and the stars bowing to Yosef himself. Why, in the first dream, did they bow to Yosef's sheave and not to Yosef himself?

These two dreams were about two different events. The first dream was about the first time Yosef's brothers came down to Egypt and met him there. The second dream was about their last trip to Egypt, when they came together with Yaakov their father.

When Yosef's brothers came initially, without

Yaakov, they did not know who Yosef was. They did not recognize him. So this meeting was symbolized in the dream by bowing down to his sheave. But when they came the final time, with Yaakov, they already knew who he was, so in the second dream, they bowed to Yosef himself.

That is one possible answer. Another is that they came the first time with the purpose of buying food. They did not need Yosef as himself; they just needed him as a means to obtain grain, so Yosef was represented in the dream as a sheave of grain. But when they came the final time, they showed honor

*This week's publication is dedicated  
to the zechus of all those who are searching for their zivug,  
and especially to משה בן חיה לאה.*

*May they find their zivug very soon!*

*And in the merit of their tefilos and their bitachon may they soon see yeshu'ah.*

to Yosef as himself. So in the second dream they bowed to Yosef himself.

Another difference between the two dreams is that in the first one, it says תִּסְבִּינָה אֶלְמֵיכֶם וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָּה לְאֶלְמִתִּי – “Your sheaves surrounded and bowed down to my sheave.” They all bowed down together. In the second dream it says only that they bowed down.

This is because the first dream was about Yosef’s brothers bowing to him when they came to buy food. They all came with that common purpose in mind, so they all bowed down together. But when they came down the last time, with Yaakov, each one bowed down alone, on his own, because they did not have a shared reason to prostrate themselves to Yosef at that point. ●

## Yaakov’s Truth

וַיִּמָּאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי אֵרָד אֶל בְּנֵי אָבִל שְׂאֵלָה (לז, לה)

**He refused to be consoled, and said, “Because I will go down to my son in mourning to the grave.” (37:35)**

**“In mourning to the grave” – This may be understood according to its simple meaning. Its *Midrashic* meaning is that “to the grave” signifies to *Gehinom*. Yaakov said: This sign was given to me by *Hashem*: if one of my sons does not die in my lifetime, I am guaranteed not to see *Gehinom*. (*Rashi*)**

*Avraham Avinu* was the foundation of it all, yet he was not called *bechir ha’avos*, the choicest of the *Avos*. Yaakov is called *bechir ha’avos*.<sup>1</sup> Yaakov was the pillar of *emes*, as it says:

תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לַיַּעֲקֹב – “Attribute truth to Yaakov.”<sup>2</sup>

Why did the trait of truth make Yaakov the choicest of the *Avos*?

*Yaakov Avinu*, too, received an unfavorable sign from Heaven regarding his spiritual fate. He was informed that his son had died, and the implication was that Yaakov would go to *Gehinom*. However, this did not draw a negative reaction from him. He carried on his *avodas Hashem* like before.

Yaakov thought that he had failed in his great mission to build the House of Yisrael, which cannot exist without the Twelve Tribes, just as the world cannot exist without the twelve constellations of the Zodiac. Yosef was gone. There would not be twelve

<sup>1</sup> Bereishis Rabbah 76:1.

<sup>2</sup> Michah 7:20.

### לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָת

מִוֶּה"ד מִשְׁחָה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרָגָה זצ"ל

וּמִוֶּה"ד בְּרוּךְ זָאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קִרְאוֹס זצ"ל

נִדְבַת נִדְיָהם ~ עֲשֵׂת זָקִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפָּאֶדֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

tribes. Yaakov thus assumed that he had lost his portion in *Olam Haba*. Yaakov considered himself responsible for the termination of the Jewish people and the end of the world.

Yaakov lived with this unbearable feeling for twenty-two years. He lived with the knowledge that he has no portion in the World to Come. He thus had no practical motivation to continue serving *Hashem*.

However, *Chazal* say that during this whole long period, his *avodas Hashem* did not change at all. This incredible behavior of Yaakov stemmed from the trait of *emes*. Although he had nothing to gain from serving *Hashem*, and, as far as he understood,

everything was over – the *Shevatim* are gone and *Olam Haba* is lost – this did not change anything for him. He remained the same *Yaakov Avinu*.

This is a man of truth. Being truthful means *eigene avodah*. It means having your own service of *Hashem* that comes from yourself, not from external circumstances. To resemble *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and not to bend and change when the external circumstances are different. There had not yet been a person in the world who stood up to such a situation like *Yaakov Avinu* did, and that is why he is rightly called *bechir ha'avos*, the choicest among the great forefathers of our nation. ●

## PARSHAH TOPIC

## The Opposing Outlooks of Yehudah and Yosef

וַיְחַלֵּם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגֵּד לְאֶחָיו וְגו' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל  
בָּנוּ (לז, ה-ז)

Our *parshah* describes the ongoing struggle between Yosef and Yehudah. It begins with Yosef's dreams and his negative reports to his father about his brothers' behavior. It continues with Yehudah and his brothers judging Yosef as a rebel against the kingdom and passing on him a death sentence. This results in a full-fledged struggle that climaxes in next week's *parshah*.

And it didn't end even then. This *machlokes* accompanies the whole history of the Jewish people. For instance, the split in early times between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom was actually a split between Yosef and Yehudah. They represent two aspects of Divine Providence and two paths in *avodas Hashem*. This expresses itself also in *Mashiach ben Yosef* and *Mashiach ben David*.

There is a rift between Yosef and Yehudah. When this rift is healed and they unite, the result is *Geulah*.

It is very important to understand the differing

approaches to *avodas Hashem* represented by Yosef and Yehudah. We should know what they were fighting about and what needs to be unified. And most important of all, what it has to do with us. Because unifying these two aspects brings perfection to the Jewish soul.

The Jewish people consists of two parts: simple Jews and special Jews. The former are called "Yosef," and are often termed "Efraim," who was Yosef's son. The latter are called "Yehudah."

Yosef was the one who supplied food to the world in general (*Bereishis* 42:6) and to the Jewish people in particular. Thus, all Jews are named after him, because their lives were sustained by him. The word "Jew" is derived from the name Yehudah.

The tribe of Yehudah produced the kings David and Shlomo, who were not simple Jews. They were special and unique individuals. Neither is *Mashiach ben David* a simple person.

The Jewish people's first king was Shaul. He was not from the House of David, he was not from the tribe of Yehudah; he represented the Kingdom of Yosef. Whereas David was the first king who came from Yehudah.

The *Gemara* says in *Yoma* 22b that Shaul committed one sin and thereby lost kingship, whereas David committed two sins yet did not lose kingship. Shaul was commanded to wipe out Amalek, but he kept Agag alive, and this sin resulted in kingship being taken away from him. David committed two sins, yet continued serving as king. This shows the basic difference between them.

The *avodah* of every Jew is to be a *tzaddik*. If he commits sins, he is not a *tzaddik*, and thus not living up to his name of "Jew." Yosef is called *Yosef Hatzaddik*, and this quality of *tzidkus* is all his power and beauty. He became what he was, he attained kingship, because he withstood all *nisyonos*, especially that of *Eishes Potifar*. If he had slipped even that one time, he would have lost his status and would not even have had his own stone on the *choshen* as the other tribes did. Yosef is great because he is a *tzaddik*. And so it is with every Jew.

Thus Shaul was chosen to be king. He was clean from sin like a one-year-old child (*Pesikta Rabasi, Hosafah* 1:1). He was also the greatest *talmid chacham*. But the moment he committed a sin, *Hashem* ripped the kingship away from him.

This is a certain type of *avodas Hashem*. This is how every Jew should conduct himself. We must fulfill the *mitzvos*, guard our eyes, and our thoughts, and everything else. If we do this, it will be good for us. If we do *aveiros*, if we start looking where we shouldn't, we will lose it all. This is the message of the "Kingship of Yosef."

However, the kingship of Yehudah is not built on being a *tzaddik*. Yehudah is something else altogether. The Torah speaks nowhere about Yehudah's outstanding righteousness. On the contrary, he attained kingship because his past was *not* impeccable. *Chazal* say (*Yalkut Shimoni* 1:117) that a leader with a less-than-perfect past is preferable, because this will help save him from

becoming arrogant. This was David. He was chosen to be king in spite of, or because of, his marred record as a *tzaddik*.

Who was greater, David or Shaul?

Shaul was much greater. Nevertheless, when he sinned, he lost everything, whereas David sinned twice, and retained his greatness. He was the same *David Hamelech*. Also Shlomo committed several *aveiros* but remained *Shlomo Hamelech*. The dynasty of David will last forever, because if David's descendants sin, *Hashem* will punish them, but not cast them away.

*Hashem* relates to the Jewish people in two basic ways. The first is the trait of judgment. If a person is a *tzaddik*, he has everything, and if he is a *rasha*, he loses everything. This is the way of Yosef and the Northern Kingdom. *Midas Hamishpat*.

The second way in which *Hashem* relates to us does not depend on our *tzidkus* alone. There is *siyata d'Shmaya*, Divine love, as a father relates to his child. This is the way of Yehudah, David and Shlomo. This is the way of the Southern Kingdom. Although many of their kings were wicked, the dynasty of David lives on. *Hashem* relates to the House of David with the trait of mercy. He goes beyond the letter of the law with them, *lifnim mishuras hadin*.

There are two aspects also to the *avodas Hashem* of individual Jews. Some follow the path of *tzidkus* and some follow the path of *lifnim mishuras hadin*. The latter is the path of *Malchus Yehudah*. There are many instances in which they went beyond the letter of the law to sacrifice themselves for the sake of *Hashem*.

In the story of Yehudah and Tamar, Yehudah stood up before the greatest *tzaddikim* of his generation, who were then sitting in the *beis din* that judged Tamar – he stood up before *Yitzchak Avinu* and Levi and Yissachar – and admitted publicly to the very embarrassing incident in which he was involved. He didn't have to make his admission publicly. He could have saved face and found a more diplomatic way to handle the situation. He acted *lifnim mishuras hadin*. When he confessed that Tamar was pregnant

from him, and acknowledged that she was more righteous than he, a Heavenly voice came out and declared that *Mashiach* will descend from Yehudah.

This is a type of *avodah* that goes far beyond *tzidkus*, beyond merely doing what is right. It is an *avodah* that entails superhuman efforts. Such was the *avodah* of Yehudah and David from beginning to end. *Hashem* consequently dealt with them differently. Yehudah and David, despite their temporary shortcomings, served *Hashem* with a superhuman greatness, above *derech hateva*. This is why *Hashem* treated them with great mercy, beyond the letter of the law.

The dispute between Yosef and Yehudah was about these two paths in *avodas Hashem*. Yosef held that Jews need to focus on *tzidkus*, while Yehudah argued that the main strength of Jews is not *tzidkus* but the *siyata d'Shamaya* that comes as a reward for

their supernatural sacrifice and self-dedication.

Yehudah held that Yosef is rebelling against the Kingdom of Yehudah. He argued as follows: according to your approach, that everything depends on *tzidkus*, albeit you are the *tzaddik* and foundation of the world, but can we rely on *tzidkus* alone to bring the end of *galus* and the coming of *Mashiach*? This needs to be built on *siyata d'Shamaya*. Your approach prevents the Kingdom of Yehudah from being ultimately established.

The *Torah* teaches us that as long as these two approaches – building on *tzidkus* versus building on *siyata d'Shmaya* and *mesirus nefesh* – are separated from one another, we can't move forward. Because we need both. We need *tzidkus* as well as *mesirus nefesh*. This is the only way to build the Jewish people. Combining these two approaches and living according to them brings the *Geulah Sheleimah*. ●

## SPECIAL TOPIC

Chanukah is about dedication. *Chanukas hamizbeach* – the dedication of the Altar in *Beis Hamikdash*. These are days of kindling the light of the *Menorah* before *Hashem*. We become partners with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* through this unique *mitzvah*. After this introduction we will now explore Chanukah's central theme.

Point number one: Chanukah is not one of the 613 *mitzvos*. It is a Rabbinically ordained *mitzvah*. We know that the *Torah* was created by *Hashem* two thousand years before the creation of the world. The *Torah* and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* are one. In the *Torah* we were commanded to put on *tefillin*, to pray, and so forth.

Nevertheless, *Hashem* has special affection for the *mitzvos* that we, His children, initiated. How are to understand this? It may be compared to a small child who gives a cookie to his father.

## More Cherished Than Torah

The words of the Sages are more cherished than the words of the *Torah*, as it says, כִּי טוֹבִים דְּדִידָךְ מֵיַיִן – “your love is more cherished than wine [of *Torah*]”<sup>1,2</sup>

We are not talking here about greatness or power. We are talking about affection and cherishing: חֲבִיבִין דְּבֵרֵי סוֹפְרִים, “The words of the Sages are more cherished.” A *mitzvah* that the Jewish people itself enacted is more cherished by *Hashem* than is anything else.

Why?

Because they, *Hashem's* beloved children, enacted it themselves.

Kindling the Chanukah lights is a Rabbinic *mitzvah*. There is exceedingly deep meaning to these lights. We learn in early *Torah* sources that there are

1 Shir Hashirim 1:2.

2 Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:2.

seven *sefiros* by which *Hashem* runs the world. They are *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferes*, *netzach*, *hod*, *yesod* and *malchus*. They are all called “light.” There is the light of *chesed*, the light of *gevurah*, the light of *tiferes*, and so forth.

There is a lot said about these lights. The great flow of plenty that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* bestows upon us is nothing but light. Physical and spiritual, supernal and infinite. Nevertheless, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* turns to the Jewish people, to His beloved child, and says, so to speak: Yankele, I want you, too, to make lights. Yankele responds: Me? How can I make light? And *Hashem* answers: Yes, you too can make light!

Chanukah is a light that we make.

### Chanukah: Kedushah Within the Mundane

There is a basic difference between *Shabbos* candles and Chanukah lights. On *Shabbos* we conclude blessings and prayers with *Mekadesh hashabbos*. We do not mention *Yisrael* as we do on *Yamim Tovim*, when we recite the words *Mekadesh Yisrael vehazemanim*. This is because *Shabbos* is illumination that comes from *Hashem* alone. By means of *Shabbos*, *Hashem* brings His *kedushah* into the world.

The Chanukah lights are different. It is a *mitzvah* to place them low, within ten *tefachim* from the ground.<sup>3</sup> This is because the Chanukah lights are **our** lights. With them we illuminate before *Hashem*. It is our opportunity to kindle a light that has the same power, so to speak, as that of *Shabbos* candles.

But there is a difference between them. *Shabbos* candles, although they fill us with *kedushah*, do not train us how to live our lives in this world. The Chanukah lights, which are kindled low, close to the ground, shed their light inside *galus* itself. The days of Chanukah are not *Yamim Tovim*. They are not called *mo'ed* or *mikra'ei kodesh*. They are regular,

mundane weekdays. Even if we hold a festive meal on Chanukah it is not a *se'udas mitzvah* unless we speak words of Torah in it.<sup>4</sup>

The Chanukah lights teach us how to illuminate the mundane weekdays with *Hashem's* light.

A person's main *nisayon* in life, the main place where his greatness shows, is his daily *avodas Hashem*. A person's behavior on special times of *kedushah*, such as *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, does not express his true spiritual greatness, because on these days, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* uplifts a person to a higher level akin to *Yemos Hamashiach*.

Our main test in life is how we function when we are involved in this-worldly matters. When we are earning our living, for instance. And Chanukah teaches us how to handle these things.

A person who is brought by necessity to perform lowly labor could be totally pious like someone who never stops learning Torah.<sup>5</sup>

There is another point that must be emphasized. A person's life divides up into two types of times: times of spiritual ascent and greatness, such as *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, and

routine weekday times. We tend to think that the difference between them is that on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* we occupy ourselves with *kedushah*, whereas on regular weekdays we occupy ourselves with mundane matters.

But this is not the true difference between them. A person's thoughts when he is doing what he is doing determine whether he is performing an act of *kedushah* or a mundane act. Even when we are involved with mundane matters it can be considered like involvement with sacred matters. Just as Torah learning and searching out a fine *esrog* are considered involvement with *kedushah*, so it can be with plowing a field, if it is done with a holy intent. Such a *kavanah* can turn it into a holy act.



<sup>3</sup> *Shabbos* 21b.

<sup>4</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 670:2.

<sup>5</sup> *Mesilas Yesharim* ch. 26.

But it takes effort to inject *kedushah* into mundane matters. It says about Rus:

Naomi saw that Rus is making an effort to go with her, so she stopped telling her [to stay behind].<sup>6</sup>

The *Vilna Gaon* explains that even though Naomi was an older woman, and Rus was a young woman, Naomi did not find it hard to walk back to *Eretz Yisrael*. But for Rus, the walk took a lot of effort. It was hard for her. When Naomi saw this, she realized that Rus was walking for the sake of a sacred matter. Thus she stopped trying to convince her to go back. When a person is going to do a *mitzvah* it is not natural walking. It takes an effort.

This is one of the points that comes up in arguments with the non-religious. One thing is for sure: a path of someone who is not Torah-observant is an easy one. All he has to do is go with the flow. He is swimming downstream. The fact that he finds it easy is no proof that it is right. He is simply doing what comes naturally.

Walking the path of Torah requires effort. It calls for *mesirus nefesh*. When we see people practicing self-sacrifice it shows that truth is within them.

## What You Do is What You Think

It is important for us to know that a certain act is neither necessarily holy nor mundane. The person performing the act determines its nature. I was fortunate enough to hear several discourses from R. Yitzchak Hutner about this subject, and this is what he said.

There are *mitzvah* objects, such as *tefillin*. Let's say a man puts on *tefillin*. The *tefillin* themselves determine that he is performing a *mitzvah* act. But there are acts which fall into a middle category. They are neither obligatory *mitzvah* acts, such as putting on *tefillin*, nor are they forbidden acts. They call into the category of *reshus*, i.e., that which is permitted but not commanded. Such acts do not necessarily have *kedushah* but are also not necessarily bereft of *kedushah*. The person performing the act determines

its nature. Let's say a person eats bread on a regular weekday. The bread itself does not determine if eating it is a holy or a mundane act. Only the eater determines the nature of his eating by means of his intention, his *kavanah*, that he puts into the act.

The truth is that there is no neutral act in the world. Nothing we do is truly "*pareve*." Every deed we do is either a *mitzvah* or an *aveirah*. Someone who thinks that there is such a thing as neutral acts is missing a basic concept in *Yiddishkeit*.

One of the things that has a lot of influence on the nature of a person's actions is routine. when a person eats a slice of bread because he is hungry, he should consider that his act of eating might not be a *mitzvah* act, because after all he is living in a world of mundanity. Let's speak about the effects of routine.

## Mesirus Nefesh for Spirituality

The following point might sound a little strange. It seems that nowadays it is more important than ever to examine ourselves in this area. Ours is a generation in which the Torah world is flourishing, and so many people live within the framework of Torah learning, *davening* and *mitzvah* observance. It is quite possible to just go with the flow of Torah society and do all this as a matter of course, without stopping to think about it.

When I was a young man I remember that R. Aharon Kotler felt the need to speak out against going to college and university. Nowadays, there are many communities where the common practice is for men to go from *yeshivah* learning to *kollel* learning. Everyone is learning Torah, and a person growing up in such an environment is likely to think that he, too, will of course learn Torah. Why should he want to go to university? Why should he take his son out of *yeshivah* and send him to college?

This brings us to the special *avodah* of Chanukah. We have *Shabbos*, *Pesach*, *Shavu'os* and *Sukkos*, which lift us up to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. But it is possible that all this happens out of habit, out of routine, as a matter of course.

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<sup>6</sup> Rus 1:18.

Chanukah comes to correct this. It has a special element of affection, of *chavivus*, of a loving connection and relationship to *Hashem*. Chanukah is *d'rabbanan*. About the *mitzvos* of Chanukah it

was said, חביבין דברי סופרים, "The words of the Sages are more cherished." *Hashem* asks us to kindle the Chanukah lights and illuminate before Him on our own. ●

## STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS ZT"l

### The Eternal Menorah

A *bachur* from *chutz la'Aretz* who was learning in *Yeshivas Tiferes Avos* in Bnei Brak once approached Rav Shimshon to ask where he should light his *Menorah* on Chanukah. Rav Shimshon indicated an exact spot and suggested that the *bachur* purchase a glass box for his *Menorah* so the flames, lit outside, wouldn't be snuffed out by the wind.

The *bachur* hesitated and replied that he wasn't sure it was worthwhile since he would only be spending one year in *Eretz Yisrael* and would be returning home that summer. "There, everyone lights inside, so I won't have use for an outdoor *Menorah*."

Rav Shimshon was shocked, unable to fathom the *bachur's* doubts. "We're not talking about a *Menorah* for this year alone! This is an **eternal Menorah**! Your *mitzvah* of *hadlakas ner Chanukah* this year will escort you for eternity! Don't you think it's worth investing in eternal gain?"

### Bring Them Home

*Chesed* was part and parcel of the Pincus household, a permanent fixture no different from the walls and floors. One Chanukah evening, when the Pincuses were still a young couple, a pauper with

a sack of troubles weighing heavily on his heart knocked on the door and asked for *tzedakah*.

"*Reb Yid*," Rav Shimshon turned to him with a smile, "have you *bentched Chanukah licht* yet?"

When the man replied negatively, Rav Shimshon immediately ushered him into the house, reminding him that even a pauper is obliged to light Chanukah candles. However, to ensure that the man could at least be called a "houseguest" who is *Halachically* permitted to light candles in the home of his host, Rav Shimshon rolled out the red carpet, set the table with a generous spread of food and drink, and offered him a room and bed for the night.

For the next few weeks, the homeless man, whose name Rav Shimshon did not even know for the first few days, dwelled happily in the Pincus home, enjoying kind and generous treatment from his hosts. Random guests from all walks of life drifted in and out of the Pincus house during the early years of their marriage, all benefiting immensely from the Rav and Rebbetzin's matchless care, warmth, and generosity. As the years progressed, and the children grew older, it became unfeasible to host such an assortment of people in the house, yet the door was always open to accommodate the those who came for help, advice, support, and hot meals. ●