

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Vayeshev 4 - Chanukah

The Pit:

The pit that Yosef's brothers threw him into is described by the Torah as "empty, it did not have water." (*Bereishis 37:24*) The Talmud notes the unnecessary addition of "it did not have water," and makes the following deduction: "there was no water in the pit, but there were snakes and scorpions." (*Shabbos 22a*)

Torah is compared to water, and so this teaching is alluding to a spiritual assessment. If there is no water, if a person lacks Torah study, then there are "snakes and scorpions," the person is occupied with harmful forces that oppose holiness. There is no middle ground.

The Question:

But why does the Talmud make such a drastic statement? Why does lacking Torah study immediately lead to harmful opposition to Torah? To understand this, we need to look at the comparison between Torah and water more closely.

The Explanation:

The Torah is compared to water for, "just as water descends from a high place to a low place, so, too, Torah is not secured within a person unless they are humble." (*Taanis 7a*) That is, water alludes to the humility that is prerequisite for Torah study. Why is humility essential to Torah study? Because Torah is the limitless essence of G-d's mind, and for a limited human intelligence to become connected to the essence of G-d, it needs to relinquish its ego. Otherwise, the parameters of the person's intellect and ego interpose between the finite and the infinite.

If a person does not have this quality of "water," of letting go of the ego, then he is actively opposing the essence of Torah, because his ego does not allow G-d into the act of Torah study. Thus, G-d says about the arrogant, "He and I cannot dwell together."

This is why if a person does not have "water," the humility that is the foundation of Torah study, they have "snakes and scorpions," harmful elements that oppose the presence of G-d.

Connection to Chanukah:

This is related to the theme of Chanukah, which often coincides with this parshah: The Greeks wanted to make the Jewish people "forget Your Torah," meaning, the

essence of G-d within the Torah. The miracle of the oil alludes to the untarnished essence of the Torah which the Jewish people were able to safeguard despite the pressures of Greek hellenism.
