

## Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

### MIND OVER MATTER

By Ozer Bergman

**“Pharaoh said to Yosef, ‘Since God has informed you about all this, there is no one as perceptive and wise as you’”** (Genesis 41:39).

We were in Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) and the Beit HaMikdash stood. So what was the “exile” of our Greek exile during the time of the Chanukah miracle?

The Greek exile, its attack on Jewishness, is best summarized by the words found in the *Al HaNissim*: “The evil Greek empire arose against Your nation, Yisrael, to make them forget Your Torah.” That seems like a mighty impressive goal: to make an entire nation of millions and millions people forget their national treasure, the revelation of which they had been celebrating annually for a thousand years. But that wasn’t the Greek goal. What they wanted to do was lower the Torah’s status, downgrade it to a human work, God forbid. Not only did they want to downgrade its origin from Divine to human, they wanted us to “forget” it, to no longer consider the Torah an option as a life-guide.

The holy *Zohar* (I, 194b) tells us that kings—Pharaoh, for example—don’t have the same dreams we commoners do. Kings’ dreams come from somewhere “higher up” than ours. So after being disappointed by the dream interpretations offered to him by his native sages (Genesis 41:8), Pharaoh understood that Yosef’s interpretation really did come from God (ibid., 41:16, 39). In addition, he understood that Yosef’s plan must be Godly, and for that reason had to be implemented.

(Let’s not fool ourselves. Pharaoh was not about to become a *ba’al teshuvah* [returnee to Judaism] because of Yosef’s Divine wisdom. On the contrary, like Potiphar before him, Pharaoh seems to have given Yosef carte blanche in running Egypt [ibid., 41:40–44, 55] and gone into retirement.)

Unlike Pharaoh, the Greeks faced no immediate emergency. They had no incentive to admit or submit to the superiority of Jewish wisdom. In fact, because theirs was the ascendant nation, they had every incentive to show the world that their wisdom was superior. This is one reason why they did not destroy the Beit HaMikdash outright. That would have indicated they were afraid of the Jews. Instead, by adding to—diluting—and making changes in the service of

the Beit HaMikdash, they wanted to impress upon the world, in particular the Jews, that Greek wisdom was superior, that they could teach the Jews a thing or two.

Sadly, many Jews thought the Greeks were correct. Fortunately for us, the Chashmanoim did not buy in. They fought back. When the war was won and the little jar of pure oil was found, our Sages, with *their* Divine wisdom and insight, understood that the light of the Menorah that burned for eight days was not a result of the war, but its cause. The little bit of *da’at* (God-consciousness) that the Chashmonaim stirred up in the Jewish people led to victory.

You’re human, right? You eat, drink and do other physical things that all humans do. You’re a normal person so you probably enjoy these functions, sometimes a little, sometimes more than a little. Do you think these activities are “desires” or “lusts”? Rebbe Nachman teaches:

Eating and drinking are bodily necessities. Likewise, one must beget children. This is human necessity, not desire. These are not extravagances, just needs that have to be accomplished in holiness and purity.

All of us continue to fight the Greeks, the idea that our native Jewish wisdom and intelligence is not totally superior, that it needs to be “enhanced.” We have succumbed to Grecian pleasures of body and mind. Our *da’at* has been damaged, weakened and diminished as a result. The likelihood of our resisting current and future temptation is also weakened—but not gone. Rebbe Nachman teaches:

The human mind can withstand any temptation because God “gives wisdom to the wise” (Daniel 2:21). Every person has the potential for wisdom, but he must develop it. The innate potential alone, without that which God later adds, is sufficient for one to withstand all temptations. Even after damaging his *da’at*, one still has some mind. This alone can overcome all desires. One grain of *da’at* can overcome the world and all its temptations.

Find that jar of pure oil within yourself. Light it and watch as God makes it shine beyond what you thought possible.

*a gutn Shabbos!  
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sichot HaRan*  
(Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom) #51

### SIDEPATH

The Evil One fights against us; he tries to destroy whatever holiness we’ve built up by getting us to do something that goes against God’s Will. Even so, when we are knocked down and all seems hopeless, we must never give up hope. We have to pick up a few good points and collect them together from amidst the sins. This is the way to return to God (*Kokhavye Or*, p. 78).

### PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**41:1 Two years later, Pharaoh was dreaming**

***Every Day That We Seek God Is Infinitely Valuable***

*Shenatayim yamim* (two years) literally means “two years of days.” When a person is searching for God, each day is as valuable as a year (LM II, 2:6).

**41:2 Seven cows, beautiful of appearance and of healthy flesh**

***The Tzaddik Teaches Us How To Pray***

The seven healthy cows in Pharaoh’s dream represent prayer, as in “Seven times a day I have praised You” (Psalms 119:164). The seven scrawny cows represent the thoughts that overcome a person during his prayers, causing him to think that his prayers are worthless. The person then strengthens himself and begins to pray another time, but again evil thoughts rise up and disturb his prayers. Pharaoh found the solution to his dream by relying on Joseph, the tzaddik. Joseph teaches us to grab hold of the good when it is present and store it up, so that we can face the hardships that come later (LH III, p. 20a-40).

**41:21 They came inside them, but there was no way of knowing that they had come inside them**

***Evil Makes Us Forget All The Good We Ever Had***

The forces of evil swallow up a person's awareness of all the good he ever knew (LM I, 54:6).

**41:39 There is no one as perceptive and wise as you**

### *It Takes One To Know One*

Once someone asked Reb Moshe Breslover (a leading student of Reb Noson), about the *tzaddik emet* (true tzaddik) that Rebbe Nachman always speaks about in his lessons. "Who can Rebbe Nachman be referring to?" the man wondered.

Reb Moshe told the man that even Pharaoh was wiser than he. Pharaoh understood that because Joseph spoke of a wise man to oversee the production of food in Egypt, then he was wise enough to be that person. If Rebbe Nachman always spoke of the true tzaddik, then he must have that special quality to make him a true tzaddik (*Oral tradition*).

**41:40 Only by the throne will I outrank you**

### *Each Person Must Know His Own Limits*

I will be called the king (Rashi).

The tzaddik always strives to attain great spiritual heights. However, he must constantly remember that God is *always* greater than he and that there are spiritual regions that are still beyond him. Thus, "I (God) will be called the King"—a person must strive for greatness, but always remember that there is a limit to how far he can go (LH II, p. 310).

**41:51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh "because God caused me to forget all my hardship and all my father's house"**

### *Immoral Desires Cause Us To Forget Our Ultimate Goal*

The Hebrew word *NaShani* (נָשַׁנִּי, caused me to forget) shares the same root as the word *NaShim* (נָשִׁים, women). The word *ZaKhaR* (זָכַר, remembered) shares the same root as the word *ZaKhaR* (זָכָר, male). The more a man pursues immoral desires vis-a-vis women, the more he will forget his real purpose in this world—to remember the Ultimate Goal (LH VII, p. 128a).

**43:11 Take from the famous products of the Land**

### *With Melody, We Can Awaken Compassion*

*Zimrat ha'Aretz* (famous products of the Land) can also be translated as "melody of the Land." Every place has its own melody. Furthermore, every level of vegetation—each blade of grass—has its own melody which extends its blessing throughout the world.

Music, which is made by sifting and selecting sounds, represents separating the good from the bad. Thinking that Joseph was an Egyptian ruler, Jacob sent him a melody from the Holy Land befitting his status, and constructed it in such a way as to elicit his compassion (LM II, 63).

**43:14 May El Shadai grant you compassion before the man**

### *We Pray For Compassion As We Understand It*

Sometimes God makes a person suffer to induce him to repent. In such a case, God is actually being compassionate. But Jacob prayed, "May God grant you compassion." That is to say, may God's compassion be the kind that we naturally understand to be compassionate (LM II, 62).

## KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

7 — "And these are the laws" (Exodus 21:1)  
*(continued)*

11. Sexual immorality stems primarily from the eyes, and the mitzvah to wear *tzitzit* functions as a rectification for and protection against this type of sin. Through the performance of this mitzvah, a person is saved from evil advice, and he merits to receive true advice from the true tzaddikim. Therefore, it is necessary to scrupulously observe the mitzvah of *tzitzit*; and at the time that one wraps himself in the holy *tzitzit* and makes the blessing over them, he should yearn and intend to merit to guard his sexual purity and to receive good, true advice—thereby meriting faith, the Land of Israel, and bringing the Redemption. He should also yearn and intend to attain prayer, to be able to perform miracles and wonders in the world, and to gain his livelihood through [the performance of] this holy mitzvah—since livelihood depends primarily on sexual

purity. In this way, he will also merit to understand clearly whatever he studies, and all the fields of wisdom will be revealed before him as a neatly set table.

12. Prayer is closely bound up with faith; it improves the memory and saves a person from forgetfulness, since forgetfulness is caused by a blemish in one's faith.

13. Before a person draws close to the tzaddik, he may be described by the verse, "Fatten the heart of this people; make their ears heavy and smear over their eyes" (Isaiah 6:10). In other words, his heart is sealed shut, his ears are stopped up and his eyes are blinded from seeing the truth and from awakening himself to repentance. But when a person binds himself to the tzaddikim and receives advice from them, then his heart, his eyes and his ears are opened, as in, "He will see with his eyes, hear with his ears and his heart will understand [alluding to the three parts of the intellect], and he will repent and be healed" (ibid.). In other words, he sees, hears and understands the truth and he thereby merits repentance.

14. When a person blemishes his sexual purity, he has no livelihood.

15. It is beneficial for a sick person to look at the *tzitzit*.



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