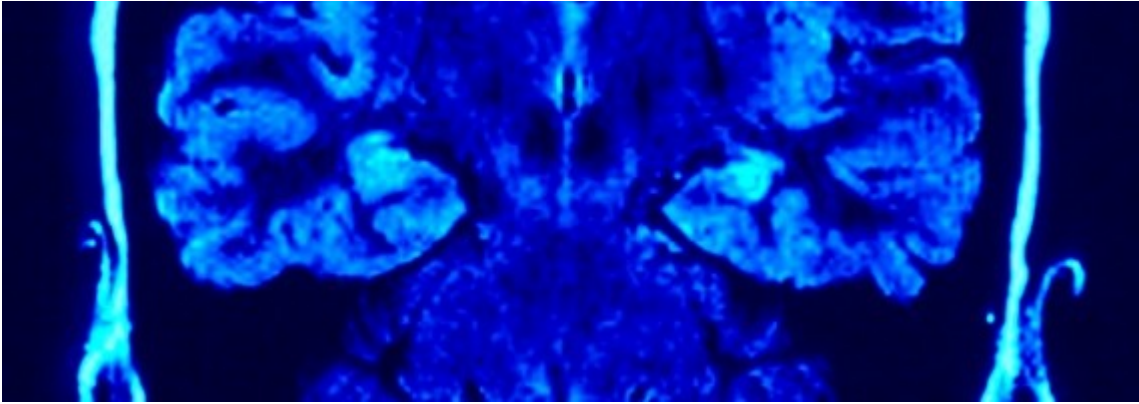


Distractions at the Door

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Our minds are very powerful. Using our minds, we can relive moments long past, analyze the things that surround us, and dream about the future. At the same time, our tests and challenges are primarily psychological. That's because our ability to choose between right and wrong is most influenced by what we're thinking – or often, by what we're not thinking.

When we try to live our lives in a spiritual way, focusing on Torah and Godliness, we experience some very difficult mental challenges as our evil inclination creates illusions in order to sidetrack us. Especially when we try to pray with true concentration, those seductive illusions lure us into a fantasy world. Our thoughts hop from one scene to another until, before we know it, we find ourselves in a place very far removed from God.

Pharaoh represents the power of illusion. His name, *PaRoH*, literally means “uncover.” Pharaoh is the doorkeeper who uncovers entrances to all the desires and lusts that distract us when we try to serve God. We have to do whatever we can to keep away from those distractions and keep those doors locked. Even if we see that we already have one foot in, we can still stop ourselves and run back out. But what if we have fallen into the darkness and can't find our way out?

Truth is the light of God Himself. By attaching ourselves to the truth, even when surrounded by gloom, we can draw down light that will enlighten our eyes to find the doorways out. Especially when we pray, we can attain truth by saying at least a few words of sincere prayer. But what if we are confused and we aren't sure what is true anymore?

The verse states: "Judah approached (Joseph) and said, 'Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears...for you are like Pharaoh'" (Genesis 44:18).

YeHUDah (Judah) represents the *YeHUDim* (Jews); Joseph (who is called Joseph the Tzaddik) represents the tzaddik. Conceptually, we are approaching the tzaddik and imploring him to rescue us from our situation. We tell him that he is like Pharaoh – meaning that the same way Pharaoh distracted us and led us through the doors of doom, the tzaddik is a doorkeeper who knows how to lead us back out. He is able to do this by revealing the truth to us, enabling us to once again see the Heavenly light and follow it back to our safety and well-being.