

“Behold! he was standing over the River... ‘In my dream, behold! I was standing upon the bank of the River.’” (41:1, 17)

In Pharaoh’s dream, he sees himself standing over the river. When he relates the dream to Yosef, he tells him that he was standing on the bank of the river. What is the significance of this discrepancy? The commentators suggest reasons for the change. *Horav Yaakov Neiman, z.l.*, takes a somewhat different approach. He gives the following analogy. In America, during the cold winter rivers and lakes freeze, due to the subzero temperatures. When these rivers freeze, they become rock solid. One can even drive over these frozen “highways.” Someone who comes from a warm climate and sees this “highway,” will not think twice about building a house on this hard ground. If he does so, we understand that as soon as the weather warms up and the thaw begins, he will have a house on the water.

The analogy is obvious. One who builds in this temporary world is similar to he who builds on the frozen river. When the day arrives that he leaves this world, everything that he has built will crumble and disintegrate. This world is temporary, so that whatever one invests in *Olam Hazeih*, if it has no spiritual value will dissipate with time.

The Torah alludes to this in our *parshah*. When Pharaoh slept, when his dreams became confused with reality, he thought that he was standing over the river. Everything is in his hands; he is in charge; he is the boss. As soon as his “wake-up” call comes to prepare him to leave this world, he realizes that what he had was nothing more than a figment of his imagination. He has nothing! He is not over the river; rather, he barely touches the shore.

When a man enters this world as a little infant, his hands are clenched as if to imply that he is prepared to grab hold of everything that he can. When he leaves this world, however, his hands are wide open, demonstrating that this world contains nothing. One leaves empty-handed. He only takes with him those deeds that have enduring spiritual value.