

Hasidism on Qohelet 10: 3— Even if the foolish choose a path to follow, it is quickly abandoned as another suddenly appears more alluring: The fool, in every act and gesture, manifests a lack of common sense and good judgment (Ibn Ezra). Even if the foolish one does not tarry long in one place, still that foolishness is obvious to all (Metzudat David). The extent that foolishness can control the masses and blind them to the reality of truth is a real concern. What coping mechanisms are there to navigate this thicket. Reb Nahman of Bratzlav suggests a strategy through the parable of the “Tainted Grain”:

The king's star gazer saw that the grain harvested that year was tainted. Anyone who would eat from it would become insane.

“What can we do?” said the king. *“It is not possible to destroy the crop for we do not have enough grain stored to feed the entire population.”*

“Perhaps,” said the star gazer, *“we should set aside enough grain for ourselves. At least that way we could maintain our sanity.”*

The king replied, *“If we do that, we’ll be considered crazy. If everyone behaves one way and we behave differently, we’ll be considered the not normal ones.”*

“Rather,” said the king, *“I suggest that we too eat from the crop, like everyone else. However, to remind ourselves that we are not normal, we will make a mark on our foreheads. Even if we are insane, whenever we look at each other, we will remember that we are sane!”*

Keep in mind that the fool thinks them self as wise and brand as fools anyone who fails to conform to their foolish ways (Akeidat Yitzchak). Do not misunderstand what Reb Nahman is suggesting here. Given the insanity of the world run by foolishness that surrounds us daily, the strategy is to find a way to remind ourselves that we are normal. This requires a sign and a friend.