

“You shall be in charge of my palace, and by your command shall all my people be sustained.” (41:40)

Let us attempt to view the Pharaohs of the Torah – the Pharaoh that reigned during Yosef’s tenure and the Pharaoh who was the monarch who enslaved the Jews – regardless of whether or not they were one and the same. Yosef’s “Pharaoh” seems to be magnanimous and trusting. He takes a slave out of prison and transforms him overnight into the viceroy of Egypt. This does seem a bit incredible. On the other hand, Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s “Pharaoh” was unmoved by the multitude of miracles that Hashem wrought against his People. He refused to listen to Hashem, while his counterpart – or ancestor – was prepared to listen to a “lowly” Hebrew prisoner. Wherein lies the difference between the two?

The *Baalei Mussar* explain that nothing was really demanded of Yosef’s Pharaoh. He was permitted to retain his monarchy. Indeed, by acceding to Yosef, he became wealthy and powerful beyond his wildest dreams! Yosef did everything for him, and he received the credit for having the foresight to appoint such a brilliant viceroy. Yosef did all the work – Pharaoh reaped the profits. Why should he not want to accept Yosef’s advice? He had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The Pharaoh who challenged Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not have it as good. It was demanded of him that he release his Jewish slaves, the ones who were building his country. What would he do without anyone to oppress? Moshe made demands on him. This was something he could not tolerate. He, therefore, was not able to “see” the miracles and wonders that were slowly destroying his country. He did not perceive the workings of Hashem, because to see would mean to listen and to give in. He was not prepared to give. It is easy to listen when it costs nothing.

When the *Alter, z.l., m’Kelm* was raising funds for the innovative *yeshivah* he was building, he once visited with a wealthy man for quite some time. He explained the significance of a *mussar yeshivah*, an institution where the development of one’s ethical character was paramount. The prospective donor listened intently. Their discussions truly seemed to appear to bear much “fruit.” When he turned to the intended benefactor to talk “*tachlis*,” purpose, the wealthy man suddenly transformed into another person completely. Talk – yes, he would love to talk and discuss the benefits of a *yeshivah* focusing on *mussar*. Give – that is something altogether different. It does not cost much to talk. It is the giving from which people shy away.