

## **"Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt." (41:33)**

After successfully interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Yosef offered his unsolicited advice. He counseled Pharaoh to appoint a unique individual who possessed an acute mind and an uncanny ability to organize the entire country during the seven years of plenty.

*Horav Eliyahu Lopian, z.l.*, questions the need to appoint someone who is unusually perceptive. This is an undertaking for an individual who is endowed with excellent organizational and administrative skills, not someone who is astute. He responds that it takes one who is especially gifted to "see" the years of hunger at the very moment that he and everyone else are enjoying the years of plenty. It is not sufficient for one to visualize the future; one must also be able to foresee the debilitating hunger that will challenge the people in the future.

*Horav Lopian* compares the years of plenty and the years of hunger to man's existence on this world and his ultimate home in *Olam Haba*, the World To Come. During our short tenure in this world, we are availed every opportunity for *mitzvah* observance, every chance for spiritual development. During our "years of plenty," we must gather our spiritual accomplishments and store them away for the future "years of hunger." In the future we will leave this world for a much better one, one in which spiritual achievement is no longer possible. What we bring to *Olam Haba* will sustain us. If we arrive with a vast inventory of *mitzvos* and good deeds, we will have a comfortable sojourn. Alas, if we reach our destination with a small amount of spiritual achievements, we will "starve" from hunger!

In sum, every one of us is encouraged to acquire the characteristics of "*ish navon v'chacham*." We should develop our ability to be discerning, wise and perceptive, so that when the period of "hunger" arrives, we will have provided for our ultimate destination.

*Horav Lopian* recounts a story which he uses as an analogy to help us reflect upon the importance of never losing sight of our life's mission. Two countries were constantly at war with each other. Obviously, the toll of this war wore heavily on both sides. One day the king of one of the warring countries announced that he would offer a substantial prize to anyone who could devise a viable solution to this long war. The prize consisted of five minutes of access to the king's private treasury. The winner would be able to keep anything he could gather in those few moments.

One day a man appeared who had arrived at a solution for ending the war. To the excitement and joy of both sides, the plan was acceptable. In due time, it proved to be practical. The king announced that the winner of the prize would have his special moments in the treasury on a designated day. As that auspicious time was drawing near, the king began to worry lest this resourceful prizewinner succeed in emptying a large portion of his coffers. Realizing that he could not retract his prize, the king turned to his trusted advisors for a strategy by which he could

circumvent the possible loss of a substantial portion of his fortune.

One of his advisors said, "I have an idea which would permit the prizewinner to enter the treasury at no risk to the king's fortune. It so happens that the man is obsessed with music. On the day that he is to claim his prize, we will pipe a symphony of beautiful music into the treasury which will be so compelling that it will subdue his desire to gather the king's treasures.

On the designated day, the "lucky man" donned his finest clothes and was accompanied by his entire family to the gates of the palace. Their conversation revolved around one subject -- his soon to be acquired wealth. Indeed, he and his wife were planning to buy a new home, to fill closets with clothes, to plan exciting trips, and to accumulate all the things which had previously been only a dream. Our hero awaited his moment of destiny with great anticipation. Suddenly, the doors to the treasury were flung open, and he was summoned to enter and collect his prize.

As he entered the room, he was immediately overwhelmed by the vast array of jewelry, precious stones, and gold that was assembled before his eyes. As he was about to begin collecting the treasures, he instantly became aware of the most beautiful music he had ever heard. The harmony of sound was a perfect blend of soothing, relaxing music and it gradually overpowered him. The beautiful and tasteful compositions distracted him from his intended goal. Every time he "freed himself" to pursue his goal, he fell prey to the sounds of the music. Finally, he cleared his mind and began the task of gathering treasures.

Suddenly he felt the hands of the king's servant on his shoulder, forcefully removing him from the treasury. "Please, I beg you, let me remain here for one more moment. I have not had the opportunity to gather my treasures. I became engrossed in the beautiful music. Please give me one more chance," cried out the desperate man. His heartrending pleas fell on deaf ears. His time was up!

This is the story of life. We are allotted a period of time in this world to gather treasures by performing *mitzvos* and good deeds. We, however, fall prey to the blandishments of the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, who entices us with his assortment of "music." For some it is a relaxing "medley" of laziness, while for others it is a "cacophony" of excitement and raucous sound. In the final analysis he who is *ofju iucb*, discerning and wise, sees the treasure beyond the music and puts his mind to work. This type of individual succeeds in gathering the King's treasure.