

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

In *Parashas Shemos* (1:8), the Torah writes, *Vayakam melech chadash al Mitzrayim*, “A new king arose over Egypt.” *Chazal* debate the meaning of “a new king.” Was he actually a new king? Or was he the same Pharaoh that had coroneted Yosef as a viceroy over Egypt? He suffered from “memory loss,” quickly forgetting the benefits he had accrued as a result of Yosef’s wise counsel. *Horav David Povarsky, zl*, asks that if he was indeed the same Pharaoh who was so impressed with Yosef, why was it that the miracles and wonders of Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* did not impress him? The “first” Pharaoh not only acquiesced to Yosef’s advice, he practically gave him free rein over the country. Now this “same” Pharaoh listened to Moshe and Aharon – and ignored them. How do we reconcile these conflicting reactions? How are the circumstances different?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the circumstances are as different as night is from day. When Yosef stood before Pharaoh, interpreting his dreams and advising him about how to move forward, Pharaoh had nothing to lose. His position would not change. He would now have a viceroy who would run the country for him. He would permit a holy, spiritual man – who happened to be extremely wise and a brilliant organizer – to manage his country. On the contrary, Yosef was making Pharaoh look good.

When Pharaoh met with Moshe and Aharon, the scenario had changed. The two Jewish representatives wanted Pharaoh to free the Jews. Pharaoh was not benefitting from their visit. He was about to lose millions of slaves. This would affect him personally, striking him where it hurt him the most – his wallet. Now, the decision to be impressed by the miracles would be mitigated by Pharaoh’s vested interests. It becomes increasingly difficult to see with clarity when one is personally affected. The same Pharaoh who was inspired by Yosef’s extraordinary demonstration of Hashem’s power was not moved by Moshe. The reason was simple: Now Pharaoh had something to lose.