

Only by the throne shall I outrank you. (41:40)

Was Pharaoh protecting his throne, or was he underscoring the elevated position that he was giving to Yosef? In his commentary to the Torah, the *Shach* (cited in *Kerem HaTzvi*) employs an anecdote to explain Pharaoh's demand that he maintain a higher status than Yosef. Without doubt, Pharaoh was not about to relinquish his monarchy to Yosef. Pharaoh added a caveat to his contingency concerning Yosef's appointment. A distinguished *gaon*, Torah giant, was as humble as he was erudite. He did everything possible to conceal his saintly character and scholarship. He was required to travel to a large Jewish community, and he was concerned that when people would become aware of his presence in their city, they would all come out en masse to pay homage to him and receive his blessing. He was not interested in the accolades, parades and singing. He wanted to get in and out discreetly. He came up with an idea which he felt would ameliorate his problem. He would trade positions with his coach driver.

Prior to arriving in the city, he changed positions; he became the driver, and the driver became the *Rebbe*. They changed clothes, so that when they arrived, the fanfare would be directed toward his driver, and people would leave the *gaon* alone. Everything went along as planned, as the driver became the center of attention while the *gaon* stood with the horse and coach. One unexpected problem arose: The people wanted to speak in learning with the scholarly *Rebbe* and to hear his pearls of wisdom. This presented a problem, since his driver's expertise was limited to horses and their care. *Talmud* and *Shulchan Aruch* were beyond him. The *Rebbe* came up with an idea. They went into the large communal *shul*, and the driver was placed at the head of the table. The *Rebbe* sat in the back with others who were present more for the performance than for the scholarly discussion that would ensue. The people began peppering the driver with questions from all over *Shas*, the *Talmud*. The driver listened and said, "I think I will let my driver answer the questions." The *Rebbe* proceeded to respond to each one's question and clarified all the issues which were presented. The community was bowled over. If this simple driver was capable of so much, they could only begin to imagine the level of erudition achieved by the *Rebbe*.

This is to what Pharaoh alluded when he said, "Only by the throne shall I outrank you." He knew that Yosef was far more accomplished than he was. In order not to appear subordinate to Yosef, he said to him, "My position will remain higher than yours, but I will send every issue to you." Pharaoh hoped that the people would conjecture that Pharaoh was far above their petty issues. Thus, he chose an assistant who could address their concerns, allowing for Pharaoh to be undisturbed by their "petty" concerns.