

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

Chochmah, wisdom, is clearly a prerequisite for growth and leadership. It is also vital to functioning as a *ben Torah*, one who is committed to achieving a close relationship with Hashem. *Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl*, was wont to say that Hashem will not take a person to task if he is not a *tzaddik*, righteous man, but He expects him to be a *chacham*, wise man. This means that Hashem waits for a person to use his own G-d-given brain to determine that it is in his best interest to choose to live the Torah way of life. His own thought process should impel him to decide to perform *mitzvos*. *Chochmah*, wisdom, and *seichel*, common sense, are critical for a Jew. The rest will come in time.

The *Alter, zl, m'Kelm*, explains that the divergence between a *tzaddik* and a *rasha*, wicked person, is not in the idea that one has faith and the other does not. The difference lies in the *tzaddik's* ability to conjure up the image of the reward he will receive in *Olam Habba*, the World-to-Come, while the *rasha* does not see past his desires and the pleasures of this materialistic world.

Yosef HaTzaddik manifested extraordinary wisdom. His ability to see what lay in store for Egypt in the future guided his decisions for the country. Furthermore, as *Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl*, explains, *Yosef's* wisdom extended even further. The Torah records that while *Yosef* bought off all the privately-owned land in exchange for food, he refused to touch the land belonging to the Egyptian priests. He taught Pharaoh and the Egyptian populace an important lesson: A group of religious devotees must remain, who, regardless of circumstances, must be left alone. They must be permitted to continue their spiritual endeavors. Why did he do this? Was *Yosef* really concerned with the spiritual needs of the Egyptian priests? No. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that *Yosef* was acutely aware that one day Pharaoh's "appreciation" of the Jewish community would wane, to the point that he would issue a decree that they be enslaved. They would be persecuted for over two hundred years. What would happen to the Torah during this period? Who would study? He knew that a group of Jews must sanctify their lives with full-time, uninterrupted Torah study, such that their lives are a symphony of total devotion to Hashem and His Torah. In order to inculcate the Egyptian mindset with this notion, he refused to purchase the land belonging to the priests. This way, Pharaoh would one day permit *Shevet Levi* to continue their ceaseless devotion to the Torah. *Yosef's* wisdom allowed them to perceive what others could not. Thus, Torah study never ceased in *Klal Yisrael*, paving the way for the liberation of the Jews from Egypt.

Indeed, *Horav Shlomo Lorincz, zl*, related that *Rav Yaakov* visited *Eretz Yisrael* during the time when the issue concerning drafting *yeshivah* students into the army was hotly debated. *Rav Yaakov* commented, "Even the Egyptians understood that a segment of the populace must be freed from communal endeavor, so that they would be able to devote themselves solely to spiritual endeavors. The lawmakers should be made aware of this, so that perhaps they would understand that *yeshivah* students should be permitted to study Torah unremittingly.