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subject: Rav Frand - Tefillin: Na'aseh before Nishma / The Power of a Hint

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Parshas Bo

Tefillin: Na'aseh before Nishma / The Power of a Hint

Insincere Converts Will Put on Their Tefillin Backwards

In the last pasuk of Parshas Bo, the Torah, in speaking about the Mitzvah of Tefillin, states: "And it shall be a sign upon your arm, and for totafos between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt." [Shemos 13:16] The mitzvah of Tefillin is to have Tefillin both on one's arm and on one's head. The Mechilta, which is a collection of Tannaitic teachings relating to the laws taught in the chapters of the Book of Shemos, interprets this pasuk as teaching that as long as one's hand-Tefillin are on his arm, his head-Tefillin needs to be worn on his head. The practical import of this instruction is that the sequence for putting on and removing Tefillin is that first we put on the hand Tefillin and then we put on the head Tefillin; first we remove the head Tefillin and then we remove the hand Tefillin.

The sefer Bei Chiya raises an interesting question. The Talmud states, "We will not accept converts in Messianic times" [Avodah Zarah 3b]. The reason for that is that in Messianic times, everyone will want to jump on the bandwagon of the Jewish people. Everyone will want to become a part of the obviously "Chosen Nation." However, we do not need Johnny-come-lately type of additions to Klal Yisrael. The Gemara notes that for similar reasons, converts were not accepted during the monarchies of Dovid or Shlomo. This was the apex of Jewish history, and then too, everyone was anxious to join the premier nation, which was the envy of the world. The Gemara says that despite these restrictions, there are people who will say, "We want to join the club anyway." They are going to put on Tefillin on their heads and Tefillin on their arms and Tzitsis on their clothing—to appear as Jews. However, when these insincere converts see the pre-

Messianic War of Gog and Magog and the associated trauma and stress that will impact the Jewish community in that time, they will say "Forget it! We do not need this." They will abandon their Tefillin and Tzitsis and walk away from them.

It is interesting to note that the Talmud, in mentioning the practices of these "insincere converts," says that they put Tefillin on their heads and Tefillin on their arms. Now, as we mentioned before, that is the wrong sequence! Once they are already putting on Tefillin, they should do it right: It should first be Tefillin on their arm and then Tefillin on their head! The sefer Bei Chiya gives an interesting explanation:

Even though there is a halacha that the hand Tefillin must be worn at all times when the head Tefillin is worn, there is a great symbolism in this as well. It basically echoes the same concept as "Na'aseh v'Nishma" (the proclamation the Jews gave at Sinai: "We will do and we will understand.") Jewish theology is based on first doing and then asking questions and coming to an understanding of why I am doing. We are willing to do, even if in the interim we do not understand.

This differentiates between Klal Yisrael and the Nations of the World. The famous Medrash teaches that the Almighty took the Torah and went to offer it to the various nations of the world. Each one first inquired "What is written therein?" To one nation He said "You shall not murder." To another nation He said "You shall not commit adultery." A third nation was taught that theft is prohibited. Each nation rejected the Torah because they refused to commit to the prohibition the Almighty called to their attention.

Rav Weinberg always used to say that the problem with the nations' answer was not that they said "Well, I cannot accept a prohibition to murder", "I cannot accept a prohibition of adultery", "I cannot accept a prohibition of thievery." The nations were already disqualified as soon as they asked "What is written therein?" even before hearing a sample command and rejecting it. The very inquiry as to what is written there implies a refusal to commit. Someone who refuses to commit cannot accept Torah.

This is in sharp contrast to what Klal Yisrael said—Na'aseh v'Nishma! No questions asked! We sign a blank check and we allow Him to fill it in! We had such faith in the Master of the Universe that we were willing to do that. This is what Chazal mean when they say "Who revealed to My children this secret?"

This is why hand Tefillin precede head Tefillin (when being put on). Tefillin can be on the arm (implying action) without there being Tefillin on the head (implying understanding); but if the Tefillin are on the head (implying making an attempt to understand) without being on the hand (implying commitment for action), that does not work. Understanding (the brain) in Judaism must always come after action (the hand).

Now we understand perfectly the Talmudic reference to insincere converts who put Tefillin first on their heads and then on their arms. It was the same theology and philosophy of life as the nations who refused to accept the Torah: First explain it to me. I will decide afterwards whether to accept it or not. We see that they did not last. One who lacks the "Na'aseh v'Nishma" commitment is disqualified from being part of the Jewish nation.

Pharaoh! Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!

The Medrash in this week's parsha, on the pasuk "Go to Pharaoh..." [Shemos 10:1], states: "Rabbi Yehuda began by saying, 'Fortunate are the people who understand the call of the Teruah blast; Hashem, in the Light of Your Presence they walk.'" [Tehillim 89:16] This pasuk from Psalms is obviously associated with Tekiyas Shofar. It is recited on Rosh Hashanna after the completion of blowing the first set of Shofar blasts.

This is a beautiful pasuk, but what on earth does it have to do with "Go to Pharaoh..."? There are many fundamental mitzvos in Parshas Bo—Pesach, Chametz, Tefillin, Bechor. The mitzva of Shofar does not appear in this parsha! What on earth does "Ashrei ha'Am yodei Teruah" have to do with "Bo el Pharaoh?"

The Chidushei HaRim cites in this connection a very famous Rambam in the third chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah. The Rambam writes there: "Even though blowing shofar is a Divine Decree (with no apparent logic), it carries a tremendous message within it (remez yesh bo): Arise those who slumber from your sleep, wake up from your drowsiness and repent."

A remez is a 'hint' and sometimes a 'hint' can be even more powerful than a long speech. Sometimes even the wink of an eye or the nod of one's head—the slightest gesture—can deliver a far greater impact than a twenty-minute oration. "A hint suffices for the wise."

When the Rambam says that Tekiyas Shofar contains within it a hint (remez), he is saying that Klal Yisrael respond to the remez of Tekiyas Shofar. There are no words that come out of the shofar—it is merely a series of sounds that emerge. But that sound is enough to send a message that I need to wake up from my slumber. This sound can sometimes be more powerful than the most eloquent of drashas.

The first time we hear the shofar—perhaps even in Elul, but certainly on the first day of Rosh Hashanna—we start to tremble. It sends a message. There is no screaming, there is no yelling, there is no fire and brimstone, just that kol shofar—the hint within it. And Klal Yisrael responds.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that Rabbi Yehuda in the Medrash means as follows: Come and see the difference between the Jewish people and Pharaoh. Parshas Bo contains Plagues #8, #9, and #10. Pharaoh has already gone through seven plagues. He has been banged over the head time and time again. Wake up and smell the coffee, Pharaoh! Don't you see where this is headed? Why can't you figure it out? Why don't you respond? Are you blind? Are you deaf? Are you dumb? What is it that you do not get? They are going to take your entire country down the drain!

Such is sometimes the nature of people. They can be hit over the head, they can be yelled at, they can be slapped in the face, they can have cold water poured over their head. Everything! And still they do not wake up.

Rabbi Yehudah began and expounded: Fortunate is the nation who knows the Teruah. Klal Yisrael understand the Teruah. They hear one sound and already they intuitively understand the hint contained with it. That one sound already arouses them to repent. Such is the difference between Pharaoh and Klal Yisrael.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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8:00 PM - Rav Yaakov Neuburger - Parents: Preach, Teach, and Beseech without Overreach

8:45 PM - Rav Hershel Schachter - Is My House Muktzah? Halachos of Home Automation on Shabbos]

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Answering the Ben Rasha

I

"You must tell your son on that day saying 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I left Egypt'" (Shmos 13:8). Rashi adds, "Here [the Torah] hints at the answer to the wicked son by saying 'Hashem did for me', i.e. for me but not for you, for had you been there you would not have been worthy of being redeemed". Rashi thus highlights that this passuk is the response to the wicked son, whose question (12:26) "What is this service to you?", he cites earlier (13:5).

A different version is found in the Haggadah: "Because he has removed himself from the klal, he has denied the essential (kafar b'ikar), therefore you should blunt his teeth and tell him 'Because of this Hashem did for me when I left Egypt' i.e. for me and not for him; had he been there he would not have been redeemed."

The differences between these two versions are significant. Rashi's version mentions neither the wicked son removing himself from the klal nor blunting his teeth. In addition, Rashi's answer is in the second person - "For me but not for you" - while the Haggadah instructs us to speak in third person - "For me and not for him". Finally, Rashi concludes "you would not be worthy of being redeemed", implying that perhaps he would be redeemed even if unworthy. By contrast, the Haggadah concludes starkly and definitively, "he would not have been redeemed".

Perhaps the two versions refer to two different types of sons, even though the word rasha - wicked is found in both. The question, "What is this service to you?" is disrespectful to be sure, but still ambiguous. Rashi understands that a dialogue is still possible, and thus the father responds "for me and not for you." One who disrespects the Torah's laws is not worthy of being redeemed. However, if the son accepts his father's rebuke he may become worthy. In addition, since he is still part of Klal Yisrael he may possibly be redeemed even if he personally is unworthy.

The rasha discussed in the Haggadah has already removed himself from Klal Yisrael and has denied the ikar, Hashem Himself and His Torah. No dialogue is possible, and he would not have been redeemed. The father therefore only speaks to his other children so that they will not be influenced by their brother's heresy. The rasha is, therefore, referred to in third person, "for me and not for him" (Haggadah of the Gra, and Bais Halevi 13:8-10). "Emor lo" must be rendered "say about him" (See Rashi 14:3).

II

The Bais Halevi (ibid) questions the use of the word chuka (13:10) in the context of the korban Pesach which has an obvious reason (12:27), i.e. that Hashem saved us by passing over our homes when He killed the Egyptian firstborn. If the son is unaware of this reason, as implied by the response that Hashem took me out of Egypt, he is not wicked but ignorant and it is the father's fault.

The Bais Halevi answers that the son is aware of the mitzvos and the historical reason, but he feels that the mitzvos do not apply to him. This son argues that they applied when needed as a necessary antidote to idolatry (see Rashi 12:6, Ramban Vayikra 1:9), but today the civilized world is monotheistic and therefore the korban has no purpose and the mitzva no longer applies. He argues "What is the use of this service to you, in our modern era?-"

The Torah, following this question, states, "You shall say it is a korban Pesach to Hashem for He passed over the houses of B'nei Yisrael in Egypt when He killed the Egyptians and saved our houses" (Shemos 12:27.) This is not a response to the rasha, rather it's an affirmation of faith so that the words of the rasha should not affect us at all.

The Bais Halevi explains "Because of this Hashem did for me when I left Egypt" as follows: It is not because I left Egypt that I perform the mitzvah, rather it is because of the mitzva that I left Egypt. The Torah predates Creation, and its mitzvos were performed by our forefathers before we left Egypt (see Rashi Breishis 19:3, 27:9).

In this sense, even the korban Pesach is a chok. As it says (12:43), "This is the chok of the Pesach." It must be offered even if the perceived reason no longer applies. For this reason, as the Bais Halevi (12:43) explains, the Midrash Rabbah compares the korban Pesach to the Para Aduma, the paradigmatic chok. In both essays the Bais Halevi refers to reformers and deniers of Torah in his time (the late nineteenth century) as the pasuk continues to state that a ben-nei'char (one whose actions are foreign to Hashem, i.e. a denier, see Rashi and Pesachim 96a) may not eat the korban Pesach.

This yields an additional dimension to the rasha's question. Why is this service for you, all those who eat the korban, but not for me? Why am I excluded? The answer is that you took yourself out of the klal, denied Hashem, and therefore you would not have been redeemed. Therefore, you may not partake.

III

Unfortunately, denial of the truth of the Torah, the mitzvos, and even Hashem Himself, have increased exponentially since the time of the Bais Halevi. However, as the Bais Halevi himself notes, one who is not taught is not wicked but ignorant. Today, in most cases, it is the fault of the previous generation. Most Jews are not observant and, recently, even intermarried, having never been taught otherwise.

Even amongst more observant Jews, there are cases which parallel the Bais Halevi's description. In his words, "some claim that a particular mitzva has an outdated rationale, and conclude that it no longer is binding" (translation of R. Y.I. Herczeg, 1991, p. 57). We must reaffirm our faith in the immutability of Torah and mitzvos, and convey this idea, clearly and unapologetically, to the next generation.

The pervasive ignorance of today places nearly all of the questioners in Rashi's version, rather than the Haggadah's version. As such, dialogue is possible and, in fact, has created many ba'alei teshuvah in recent decades. The aforementioned passuk (12:27) concludes, "the people bowed their heads." Rashi comments that the Jews bowed upon the tidings of the redemption, coming into Eretz Yisrael, and the tidings of the sons that they would have. The Artscroll commentary (Stone edition p. 357) notes: "Commentators have noted that the Jews bowed in gratitude for the news that they would have children, even though the child just described to them is wicked. To parents, every child is a blessing and it is up to them to cope with his rebellion and turn him to the good."

The Chasan Sofer notes that the passuk (12:26) begins, "when your sons say to you", indicating that he can't be judged as a rasha since he turns only to his father. Even though he harbors a heretical spirit, he does not entice his siblings to abandon faith and observance. Therefore, there is a still hope that his father can return him to the proper path, and the people were correct in thanking Hashem for the tidings of this son.

Only the incorrigible son, the rasha of the Haggadah who threatens the spiritual wellbeing of his siblings, despite being taught properly, has removed himself from the klal and denied the essential. In that case dialogue is not possible, and the father must reaffirm his faith and protect his other children. In most cases, however, as Rashi teaches, dialogue is possible. Parents facing these challenges are encouraged to exercise patience and wisdom in the fundamental responsibility of passing faith and observance to the next generation.

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**The Story We Tell About Ourselves (Bo 5780)
Covenant & Conversation**

Finding Faith in the Parsha with Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Sometimes others know us better than we know ourselves. In the year 2000, a British Jewish research institute came up with a proposal that Jews in Britain be redefined as an ethnic group and not as a religious community. It was a non-Jewish journalist, Andrew Marr, who stated what should have been obvious. He said: "All this is shallow water, and the further in you wade, the shallower it gets."

It is what he wrote next that I found inspirational: "The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. They have had their Bible, one of the great imaginative works of the human spirit. They have been victim of the worst modernity can do, a mirror for Western madness. Above all they have had the story of their cultural and genetic survival from the Roman Empire to the 2000s, weaving and thriving amid uncomprehending, hostile European tribes." [1]

The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. I love that testimony. And indeed, from early on, storytelling has been central to the Jewish tradition. Every culture has its stories. (The late Elie Wiesel once said, "God created man because God loves stories"). Almost certainly, the tradition goes back to the days when our ancestors were hunter-gatherers telling stories around the campfire at night. We are the storytelling animal.

But what is truly remarkable is the way in which, in this week's parsha, on the brink of the Exodus, Moses three times tells the Israelites how they are to tell the story to their children in future generations.

When your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.' (Ex. 12:26-27)

On that day tell your child, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Ex. 13:8)

"In days to come, when your child asks you, 'What does this mean?' say, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.' (Ex. 13:14)

The Israelites had not yet left Egypt, and yet already Moses was telling them how to tell the story. That is the extraordinary fact. Why so? Why this obsession with storytelling?

The simplest answer is that we are the story we tell about ourselves. [2] There is an intrinsic, perhaps necessary, link between narrative and identity. In the words of the thinker who did more than most to place this idea at the centre of contemporary thought, Alasdair MacIntyre, "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal." [3] We come to know who we are by discovering of which story or stories we are a part.

Jerome Bruner has persuasively argued that narrative is central to the construction of meaning, and meaning is what makes the human condition human. [4] No computer needs to be persuaded of its purpose in life before it does what it is supposed to do. Genes need no motivational encouragement. No virus needs a coach. We do not have to enter their mindset to understand what they do and how they do it, because they do not have a mindset to enter. But humans do. We act in the present because of things we did or that happened to us in the past, and in order to realise a sought-for future. Even minimally to explain what we are doing is already to tell a story. Take three people eating salad in a restaurant, one because he needs to lose weight, the second because she's a principled vegetarian, the third because of religious dietary laws. These are three outwardly similar acts, but they belong to different stories and they have different meanings for the people involved. Why though storytelling and the Exodus?

One of the most powerful passages I have ever read on the nature of Jewish existence is contained in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Considerations on the Government of Poland (1772). This is an unlikely place to find insight on the Jewish condition, but it is there. Rousseau is talking about the greatest of political leaders. First of these, he says, was Moses who "formed and executed the astonishing enterprise of instituting as a national body a swarm of wretched fugitives who had no arts, no weapons, no talents, no virtues, no

courage, and who, since they had not an inch of territory of their own, were a troop of strangers upon the face of the earth.”

Moses, he says, “dared to make out of this wandering and servile troop a body politic, a free people, and while it wandered in the wilderness without so much as a stone on which to rest its head, gave it the lasting institution, proof against time, fortune and conquerors, which 5000 years have not been able to destroy or even to weaken.” This singular nation, he says, so often subjugated and scattered, “has nevertheless maintained itself down to our days, scattered among the other nations without ever merging with them.”[5] Moses’ genius, he says, lay in the nature of the laws that kept Jews as a people apart. But that is only half the story. The other half lies in this week’s parsha, in the institution of storytelling as a fundamental religious duty, recalling and re-enacting the events of the Exodus every year, and in particular, making children central to the story. Noting that in three of the four storytelling passages (three in our parsha, the fourth in Va’etchanan) children are referred to as asking questions, the Sages held that the narrative of Seder night should be told in response to a question asked by a child wherever possible. If we are the story we tell about ourselves, then as long as we never lose the story, we will never lose our identity.

This idea found expression some years ago in a fascinating encounter. Tibet has been governed by the Chinese since 1950. During the 1959 uprising, the Dalai Lama, his life in danger, fled to Dharamsala in India where he and many of his followers have lived ever since. Realising that their stay in exile might be prolonged, in 1992 he decided to ask Jews, whom he regarded as the world’s experts in maintaining identity in exile, for advice. What, he wanted to know, was the secret? The story of that week-long encounter has been told by Roger Kamenetz in his book, *The Jew in the Lotus*. [6] One of the things they told him was the importance of memory and storytelling in keeping a people’s culture and identity alive. They spoke about Pesach and the Seder service in particular. So in 1997 Rabbis and American dignitaries held a special Seder service in Washington DC with the Dalai Lama. He wrote this to the participants:

“In our dialogue with Rabbis and Jewish scholars, the Tibetan people have learned about the secrets of Jewish spiritual survival in exile: one secret is the Passover Seder. Through it for 2000 years, even in very difficult times, Jewish people remember their liberation from slavery to freedom and this has brought you hope in times of difficulty. We are grateful to our Jewish brothers and sisters for adding to their celebration of freedom the thought of freedom for the Tibetan people.”

Cultures are shaped by the range of stories to which they give rise. Some of these have a special role in shaping the self-understanding of those who tell them. We call them master-narratives. They are about large, ongoing groups of people: the tribe, the nation, the civilisation. They hold the group together horizontally across space and vertically across time, giving it a shared identity handed on across the generations.

None has been more powerful than the Exodus story, whose frame and context is set out in our parsha. It gave Jews the most tenacious identity ever held by a nation. In the eras of oppression, it gave hope of freedom. At times of exile, it promised return. It told two hundred generations of Jewish children who they were and of what story they were a part. It became the world’s master-narrative of liberty, adopted by an astonishing variety of groups, from Puritans in the 17th century to African-Americans in the 19th and to Tibetan Buddhists today.

I believe that I am a character in our people’s story, with my own chapter to write, and so are we all. To be a Jew is to see yourself as part of that story, to make it live in our time, and to do your best to hand it on to those who will come after us.

Shabbat Shalom

[1] Andrew Marr, *The Observer*, Sunday 14 May, 2000. [2] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London, Duckworth, 1981; Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths And The Making Of The Self*, New York, Guilford Press, 1997. [3] MacIntyre, op.

cit., 201. [4] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Harvard University Press, 1986. [5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, Cambridge University press, 2010, 180. [6] Roger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, HarperOne, 2007.

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Why do you think the Jews have the reputation of being a people who tell stories?

Why is it particularly important in Jewish tradition to tell stories to children?

What is it about the Exodus story that makes it so critical that the Jewish people remember and retell it?

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subject: **Hamaayan - A Soft Heart**

Parshas Bo

A Soft Heart

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Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz on the 50th yearzeit (8 Shevat) of Martin’s great-grandmother, Helen Kemeny, nee Kohn, of Vienna and Washington Heights (Zissel bat Dovid a”h)

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (28:14), “Ashrei adam / Praiseworthy is the man who always fears, but he who is stubborn of heart will fall into misfortune.” Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z”l (14th century; Spain) writes: King Shlomo is instructing in this verse that a person should have a “soft heart”—i.e., the opposite of stubbornness. One should always fear that his deeds and actions are not up to the standard they should be, and he should introspect regarding where his deeds will lead him.

Rabbeinu Bachya continues: The verse starts with the word “Ashrei,” which is plural. This word never appears in Tanach in the singular form, he writes. The reason is that a person does not deserve to be praised if he has only one good trait, but rather when he combines many good Middot. Thus we read (Tehilim 1:1-1), “Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and did not stand in the path of the sinful, and did not sit in the session of the scorners, but his desire is in the Torah of Hashem . . .” We see that the verse lists many good traits of a person who is called “praiseworthy.” Our verse, too, encompasses several traits in that a person who “always fears” will weigh the advantages and disadvantages of all of his actions, he will refrain from bad actions, and he will do many good things.

Why does the verse refer to such a person as “Adam” rather than “Ish”? Rabbeinu Bachya explains that “Adam” comes from “Adamah” / earth, and refers to a person’s baser, less spiritual nature. Praiseworthy is the man who conquers the Adam aspect of his nature.

The opposite of the praiseworthy person described here is a stubborn person. A stubborn person does not examine his deeds. As described in our Parashah and the preceding ones, Pharaoh was stubborn. His punishment, writes Rabbeinu Bachya, was that, even when he wanted to repent, Hashem did not permit him to, but instead forced him to remain stubborn.

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn [literally: ‘heavy’] so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst.’” (10:1)

The Torah uses three different words to describe Pharaoh’s heart as he stubbornly refused to send Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt: “Kasheh” / hard, “Kaved” / heavy, and “Chazak” / strong. Why are three different words used?

R' Naftali Herz Wesel z"l (Germany; 1725-1805) explains that there were three different reasons why Pharaoh's resolve needed strengthening: (1) to enable him to disregard the wondrous signs that Moshe performed when he first came to Pharaoh—signs that should have convinced Pharaoh immediately, even before the pain inflicted by the Plagues, that Moshe was sent by the All-Powerful G-d; (2) so Pharaoh would not capitulate as a result of the painful Plagues inflicted on Egypt—pain so great that Pharaoh should have been swayed even if the Plagues had not been wondrous miracles; and (3) so that, after everything that had happened, Pharaoh would not lose his resolve when he heard Moshe warn of even more Plagues to come.

Each of the three words used to describe Pharaoh's stubbornness corresponds to one of these. When Moshe was first sent to Pharaoh, Hashem gave Moshe a preview of what lay ahead (7:3): "I will harden Pharaoh's heart and I shall multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt." "Hardening" Pharaoh's heart would enable him to withstand the pain of the Plagues that would afflict Egypt.

When Pharaoh refused to acknowledge the wondrous signs that Moshe performed (for example, turning a stick into a snake, and back again), Hashem told Moshe (7:14), "Pharaoh's heart is 'heavy,' he refuses to send the people." A heart is heavy when it is full of excuses and rationalizations, anything to avoid admitting the obvious.

Finally, we read (7:13, 7:22, 8:15), "Pharaoh's heart was strong . . ." This refers to the strength needed to ignore Moshe's warnings about Plagues to come.

R' Wesel applies these explanations to some of the verses: During the first Plague, Pharaoh's heart was "strong" (7:22). His resolve did not weaken at all, so he did not even ask Moshe to pray that the blood turn back to water. In contrast, during the second Plague, Pharaoh did ask Moshe to pray. Pharaoh's resolve had weakened, so the Torah does not describe his heart as "strong." But, when that Plague, too, was over, Pharaoh rationalized it away; therefore, we read (8:11), "Pharaoh saw that there had been a relief, and kept making his heart stubborn ('heavy')." (Ruach Chen 19)

"This Chodesh / month shall be for you the beginning of the months . . ." (12:2)

R' Moshe Shapiro z"l (1935-2017; Rosh Yeshiva in several Israeli yeshivot; best known for his lectures on Jewish Thought) observes: The similarity between the Hebrew words "Chodesh" / "month" and "Chadash" / "new" is a reflection of the Torah's view of time. Time is not primarily something that passes, but rather an opportunity to build a future, to progress toward a goal. Not coincidentally, the letters of the word "Zman" / "time" form the root of the word "Hazmanah," whose meanings include "to invite," "to prepare," and "to set aside for a specific purpose." The Torah teaches this lesson in connection with the Exodus because the Exodus was not meant to be an end in itself but rather a preparation for a higher purpose, as Hashem told Moshe at the beginning of his mission (Shmot 3:12), "When you take the people out of Egypt, you (plural) will serve Elokim on this mountain," i.e., receive the Torah. (Shiurei Rabbeinu: Parashat Ha'chodesh p.412)

"You shall eliminate leaven from your homes . . ." (12:15)

Rabbi Yehuda, one of the Sages of the Mishnah, maintains that Chametz must be destroyed by fire and not by any other means. He derives this from the law of "Notar" / leftovers of sacrificial offerings, which also must be destroyed by fire.

R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (Chassidic Rebbe, known as the "Bnei Yissaschar"; died 1841) is quoted as saying that whenever the Talmud derives one law from another law, there must be some intrinsic connection between them. What is the connection between Chametz and Notar?

R' Yaakov Yechizkiyah Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1941) explains: Why would someone leave leftovers from a sacrificial offering rather than eat it all within the allotted time? Often, it would be because he lacked Bitachon / trust in G-d and was afraid he would not have food for

tomorrow. Chametz alludes to a similar lack of Bitachon. What's the difference between Chametz and matzah? Matzah does not expand; the way it's made is the way it remains. Chametz doesn't share this trait. Chametz rises as if it's afraid there won't be enough for tomorrow. Thus, Chametz also alludes to a lack of Bitachon. (Va'yagged Yaakov)

"When your son will ask you in the future, 'What is this?'" (13:14)
R' Moshe Feinstein z"l (1895-1986) writes: The question of the "simple son" ("What is this") appears in the Torah before the question of the "wise son," because before a person can ask the reasons for the mitzvot, he must know them thoroughly. This will give provide him with a solid foundation for his faith. (Darash Moshe)

Shabbat: A Remembrance of the Exodus
R' Yechezkel Landau z"l (1713-1793; the Noda B'Yehuda) asks: Why may a man recite Kiddush for his wife? A man who prayed Ma'ariv has already said "Vy'chulu" and the blessing "Mekadaish ha'Shabbat"; thus, he has fulfilled his Torah obligation to recite Kiddush. All that remains is a Rabbinic obligation to recite Kiddush over a cup of wine. His wife, on the other hand, most likely has not recited Ma'ariv; thus, her obligation of Kiddush is a Torah obligation! As a general rule, one whose obligation is of a relatively lesser Rabbinic nature cannot exempt a person whose obligation is of a higher Torah nature. Why then may a husband recite Kiddush for his wife? (Dagul M'revavah ch.271)

R' Akiva Eiger z"l answers that this is an example of the rule that one who is theoretically obligated to perform a Mitzvah can exempt another person, even if the former is not obligated at the moment. (Sh.U't. R' Akiva Eiger No. 7)

Some answer that there is no set text for the Torah obligation of Kiddush. Thus, when the husband comes home from Shul and his wife says "Shabbat Shalom" (or a similar greeting), she fulfills her Torah obligation to sanctify Shabbat verbally, i.e., to recite Kiddush. Now, both husband and wife have "only" a Rabbinic obligation to recite Kiddush over a cup of wine. Since their obligations are equal, the husband may exempt the wife through his recitation.

In contrast, R' Yosef Babad z"l (Poland; died 1875) answers that even the husband has not fulfilled his Kiddush obligation through prayer because an essential aspect of Kiddush is missing from the Ma'ariv Shemoneh Esrei, namely, words that recall Yetziat Mitzrayim / the Exodus. Thus, the husband's and wife's obligations are equal, i.e., they both are on a Torah level, so the husband may recite Kiddush for his wife. (Minchat Chinuch, mitzvah 31)

Why is recalling the Exodus part of Kiddush? One answer is that the miracles associated with the Exodus (the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the Yam Suf) attest to Hashem's being the Creator, just as Shabbat does, because it is intuitively obvious that no one but the Creator of the universe could have wreaked havoc with the laws of nature the way that G-d did in Egypt. Knowing this strengthens our belief in Creation, and thus makes Shabbat more meaningful. (Zemiroth Shirin Ve'rachshin p.137, citing Rambam z"l)

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Insights Parshas Bo :: Shevat 5780
Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University
Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig
This week's Insights are dedicated in memory of Chaim Ben Avroham Shimon, Captain Hyman P. Galbut. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"
War: What is it Good for?

And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have amused Myself with Egypt... (10:2)

In Parshas Eikev, when Bnei Yisroel are on the threshold of entering Eretz Yisroel, Moshe Rabbeinu attempts to calm their fears: "Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than I, how will I be able to drive them out? Do not fear them! Remember what Hashem your God did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt...'" (Devarim 7:17-18). Moshe is reminding Bnei Yisroel of the incredible miracles that Hashem performed to utterly decimate the Egyptians and free them from slavery so that upon entering Eretz Yisroel they would not be apprehensive, but rather confident of victory.

However, Moshe's strategy to calm Bnei Yisroel is difficult to understand: Moshe is speaking to Bnei Yisroel after years of wandering in the desert - the story of the Exodus and all of the incredible miracles that Hashem performed happened almost forty years prior. In fact, almost every man who had experienced the Exodus was already dead, condemned to die in the desert. Those men who were children when Bnei Yisroel left Egypt would only have vague recollections of what happened four decades earlier. Moreover, just three months prior Bnei Yisroel had incredible victories against both Sichon and Og - whom the Torah labels the "arms of the world" (Devarim 33:26) (i.e. pillars holding up the world - see Rashi ad loc). Instead of recalling events that had taken place 40 years ago, why wouldn't Moshe just refer to these incredible victories over Sichon and Og that were so fresh in their minds?

When the spies wanted to convince Bnei Yisroel that entering Eretz Yisroel was not going to be a cakewalk, they warned, "The Amalekites live in the land of the Negev" (Bamidbar 13:29), meaning that, assuming they would enter Eretz Yisroel from the south, the first people they would come across would be Amalek. Rashi (ad loc) points out that since they had already been attacked by the Amalekites, knowing that they would meet them again would surely drive fear into their hearts.

But this too is difficult to understand. While it's true that Bnei Yisroel had been victims of a sneaky and brutal attack by Amalek, under the leadership of Yehoshua and Moshe, Bnei Yisroel utterly destroyed them. What kind of strategy was this of the spies to try to instill fear and dread by threatening them with an opponent they had already soundly defeated?

The answer is that in war even when you win, you lose. Even victors suffer heavy damage. Before the Six Day War 50,000 graves were dug in Tel Aviv because that was the anticipated losses and they wanted to be prepared. The United States soundly defeated the Japanese in WWII, yet there were many disastrous battles like Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima. The strategy of the spies was to instill the anxiety of entering a war knowing that even when you win many people die and never come back home. This is why Moshe didn't bring up Sichon and Og; even though they won, it was a hard fought war.

The possuk in our parsha lays out exactly what the battle with Egyptians were to Hashem. Rashi (10:2) explains that Hashem amused himself with the Egyptians, it was like a game and He made a sport of it. This is similar to watching a cat toy with a mouse; there is never the possibility that the cat is going to lose or get hurt. It's only a matter of how long the cat wishes to amuse himself. This is what Moshe is trying to impress on Bnei Yisroel - if you're worthy Hashem will take you into Eretz Yisroel with no stress of losing battles or suffering casualties. Just as Hashem took them out of Egypt and the battle was merely an amusement, He is more than capable of bringing you into Eretz Yisroel in the same manner.

Out of Control

Moshe said, "With our youngsters and with our elders we will go, with our sons and daughters, with our flock and with our cattle shall we go..." He (Pharaoh) responded - "Not so! Let the men go now and serve Hashem for that is your request" (10:9-11).

This week's parsha opens with Moshe threatening to once again visit upon the Egyptians a horrific plague (locusts). At the urging of his advisors, Pharaoh initially relents to let Bnei Yisroel go and serve Hashem. Pharaoh recalls Moshe and Aharon to the palace and asks them, "Go and worship

Hashem your God, who exactly is going?" (10:8). Once Pharaoh hears that Moshe intends that everyone as well as all the cattle will be going on this spiritual pilgrimage, Pharaoh responds, "Not so! Let the men go now and serve Hashem for that is your request." When Moshe holds fast to his request Pharaoh angrily chases them out of the palace.

This same scene repeats after the plague of darkness. Pharaoh summons Moshe and informs him that he will permit all the people to go and serve Hashem; only the cattle is to remain behind. Moshe responds by telling Pharaoh that not only will all of the cattle be going as well, but that Pharaoh himself will provide animals as offerings to Hashem. Needless to say, this comment does not sit well with Pharaoh and he responds by once again throwing him out of the palace along with the threat that if he ever comes back he will be put to death.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 182:2) gives the following parable: A lion and a variety of animals, including a fox, were on a ship. The ship comes to a toll where a donkey was the dock master in charge of collecting the tolls from all the vessels. The donkey demands that the lion's ship pay the toll as well. The fox protests, "What impudence! Do you not see that the king of all the animals is among us! How dare you ask us to pay the toll?" The donkey retorts, "I am only collecting the toll to bring it to the king's treasury!" At this point, the lion asks that the ship be brought closer to the dock. He thereupon leaps from the ship and kills the donkey. The Midrash concludes that Pharaoh is the donkey, and this is what he gets for demanding a tribute from Hashem.

This Midrash is difficult to understand. The Gemara (Sukkah 30a) relates that a king once came to a toll and proceeded to pay the toll. His servants asked him, why are you paying the toll when the proceeds from tolls belong to you anyway? The king responded that if someone sees him not paying the toll then others might learn from him that it is acceptable not to pay it. Therefore, he wanted to pay it. In essence, it seems necessary that the king pay the toll. Why then did the lion kill the donkey for his impertinence?

Most disputes are about control. This is particularly true in family relationships and disharmony in marriage. The circumstances that created the problem are rarely the essence of the issue. The real point of contention is invariably control.

The Gemara is saying that, of course, the king can decide if he wants to pay the toll. If he has a valid reason to pay the tax he is entitled to do so because he can do whatever he wants. However, the Midrash faults the donkey for trying to control the interaction with the king of the animals. He is trying to exert his own control by saying that he has to collect the tax in order to give it back to the king. The fact that he has the impudence to demand the tax from the king means that he doesn't really submit to the fact that the king is the one to decide whether or not he wants to pay the tax. For that, he deserves to be put to death.

The same is true for Pharaoh. Even though he somewhat acknowledges that he has to submit to the will of Hashem, he constantly tries to limit Hashem's will by placing conditions on how Bnei Yisroel are to serve Him. Of course, trying to exert his own influence means that he isn't really submitting to the will of Hashem. Just as the donkey who tries to exert control by forcing the king to remit his own taxes pays for his impudence with his life, so too Pharaoh brought destruction upon himself and his country.

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha, we find the final three makkos: locusts, darkness, and the deaths of the firstborns. Did you ever wonder why the ten makkos were split into two different parshios? In other words, what was special about the last three that they were separated from the other seven? Chazal were bothered by this as well. Here are some of their thoughts:

- Tosfos Hashalem (Bo, 10:1) suggests something quite fascinating, albeit slightly controversial. Moshe Rabbeinu had thought that there would actually be only seven makkos (similar to seven days of the week, seven heavens, seven planets, etc.). This approach is very interesting as it shows Moshe's mindset as well as the effectiveness of the first seven makkos.

Tosfos explains that this is why Moshe had to be enjoined again to approach Pharaoh - Moshe had thought the makkos were over.

• Abarbanel, on the beginning of the parsha, explains two very interesting reasons why they were divided like this: 2a) Parshas Bo begins the plagues for which Pharaoh began to seriously fear and initiated negotiations with Moshe before the plague even started. 2b) These last three makkos took place in the dark. The locusts "darkened the land of Egypt" with their sheer mass. "Choshech" clearly brought darkness, and the firstborn death occurred at exactly midnight.

• Ba'al HaTurim (9:33) says that after the plague of hail the Jewish nation no longer suffered from the burdens of Egyptian oppression. Therefore, a clear distinction should be made between the first seven plagues and the last three; the ones where the Jews were free.

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bo (Exodus 10:1 – 13:16)

By **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – “When your children will say to you, ‘What is this service to you?’ You shall say, ‘It is the Passover service to God’”

Why does the author of the Haggada call the questioner in this sequence “the wicked child”? The reason that the Haggada itself emphasizes lies in the questioner’s exclusion of himself from the family ritual when he asks, “What is this service to you?” The Haggada explains: “Saying ‘you,’ he excludes himself, and by doing so he denies a basic principle of our faith.” For a Jew, it is considered “wicked” to exclude oneself from the Jewish ritual-familial experiences.

Also, in this instance, the child doesn’t ask his parents anything; instead, he tells them: “...when your children shall say to you” (Ex. 12:26). An honest question reveals a willingness to learn, but the wicked child is not interested in answers – only in making statements.

How might we respond to such a child? The Bible itself gives one response: “It is the Passover service to God. He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt [when he slew the Egyptian firstborn] and He saved our homes” (Ex. 12:27); the author of the Haggada gives another: “You shall cause his teeth to be on edge, and say to him, ‘It is because of that which God did for me when I went out of Egypt’” (Ex.13:8).

Why the difference, and what is the message of each? The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1817-1893) teaches that the wicked child’s statement reflects his belief that so many years after the original events there is no reason to retain such an old-fashioned and outmoded service. The biblical answer is that it is specific a Passover sacrifice to God, who saved our homes, and our families.

There are two central pillars in Judaism: family ties and Divine directions. Family has been an important Jewish value from the beginning of our history, when Abraham is told that he is distinguished and loved by God “so that he command his children and his family after him that they do righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). And when Pharaoh’s servants agree to allow Moses to leave Egypt – but only with the males – Moses and Aaron respond, “We shall go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters” (Ex. 10:9). It’s a family affair.

Hence, the Bible tells this wicked child that the Passover sacrifice is a reminder of a Divine miracle that preserved the Jewish family. The Seder is precisely the kind of family ritual that is crucial for familial continuity.

The author of the Haggada cites a different verse: “When the Lord brings you to the land which He swore to your fathers to give to you... You shall

tell your child on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this [ritual] that God did [miracles] for me when I went out of Egypt’” (Ex. 13:5-8).

The key words here are “did for me.” Passover teaches the two most important messages of Judaism: the inalienable right of every individual to be free and the injunction that we love the stranger because we were (unloved) strangers in Egypt. The continuity of the generations and the familial celebrations of crucial historical events demand that each Jew have the ability to transform past history into one’s own existential and personal memory. The initial biblical answer emphasizes the importance of familial experiences for familial continuity; the author of the Haggada adds that without incorporating past into present there can be neither meaningful present nor anticipated future.

I am my past. Despite the fact that the wicked child has denied his roots, we dare not tear him out of the family. He may think that he wants to remove himself from historical continuity, but it’s the task of his family to remind him that this celebration is an indelible part of his existential identity, that he is celebrating his own personal liberation.

The Haggada instructs us to set the teeth of the wicked child on edge. The phrase in Hebrew is “hakkeh et shinav.” It doesn’t say “hakeh”, which means to strike, to slap him in the teeth, but rather “hakkeh,” from the language of the prophet Ezekiel, “The fathers eat the sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. (Ezek. 18:2). The prophet is expressing the fundamental unfairness in the fact that the parents have sinned but their children are the ones who must suffer the pain of exile. Indeed, children do suffer for the sins of their parents – always. Anyone who comes from a difficult or dysfunctional home will bear the burden.

But just as the child has responsibility to his past, the parent has responsibility to the future. Are we certain that the wicked child’s teeth are not set on edge because of the sour grapes that we, the parents, have eaten because we have not properly demonstrated the requisite love and passion for the beauty and the glory of our traditions? Have we been there to hear his questions when he was still ready to ask them and to listen to answers? Have we been the appropriate models for him to desire continuity within our family? The author of the Haggada subtly but forthrightly reminds both parents and children of their obligations to each other, to past and to future. Shabbat Shalom!

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Bo: Memories of the Soul

Rav Kook Torah

“Moses told the people: Remember (zachor) this day that you have left Egypt, the place of slavery.” (Exod. 13:3)

The word zachor is not in the imperative tense - z'chor! remember! Rather, it is in the infinitive absolute form. This grammatical form indicates that the Torah is not just commanding us to remember the anniversary of the Exodus from Egypt.

Zachor implies a state of being. It describes us as a people who always remember this historic date.

Ben-Gurion and the Mayflower

In 1936, the Peel Commission questioned David Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, concerning Jewish rights to the Land of Israel. Ben-Gurion gave the following reply:

Three hundred years ago, a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. In it were Englishmen unhappy with English society and government, who sought an uninhabited coast to settle and establish a new world. They landed in America and were among the first pioneers and builders of that land.

This was a great event in the history of England and America. But I would like to know: Is there a single Englishman who knows the exact date and hour of the Mayflower's launch? How much do American children - or grownups - know about this historic trip? Do they know how many people were in the boat? Their names? What they wore? What they ate? Their path of travel? What happened to them on the way? Where they landed?

More than 3,300 years before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Any Jewish child, whether in America or Russia, Yemen or Germany, knows that his forefathers left Egypt at dawn on the 15th of Nisan. What did they wear? Their belts were tied and their staffs were in their hands. They ate matzot, and arrived at the Red Sea after seven days.

He knows the path of their journey through the desert and the events of those forty years in the desert. They ate manna and slay birds and drank from Miriam's well. They arrived in Jordan facing Jericho. The child can even quote the family names from the Torah.

Ben-Gurion concluded his address:

Jews worldwide still eat matzah for seven days from the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus, concluding with the fervent wish, "Next Year in Jerusalem." This is the nature of the Jews. I

Ingrained in Their Collective Soul

Rav Kook explained that the people were not commanded to remember the 15th of Nisan. That was unnecessary! Rather, Moses was informing them that this date would be forever etched in their collective consciousness. On this day, the Jewish people were forever changed. On this day their souls gained eternal freedom.

"This date will be ingrained in the soul of the Jewish people. That is the secret that Moses revealed to the people. They will succeed in understanding the inner nature of their souls. They will know that this day must be remembered. Therefore, the word zachor is in the infinitive absolute form."

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Bo

פרשת בא תש"פ

כי אני הכבדתי את לבי

For I have made his heart stubborn. (10:1)

Kveidus ha'lev, translated as "a hardening of the heart," making it stubborn, is derived from the word, *kaveid*, heavy; a hardened heart is a heavy heart. Why is the heart the reference point, as opposed to any other organ? *Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, explains that a human being is comprised of 248 *eivarim*, organs, which coincide with 248 *mitzvos asei*, positive commandments. Each individual organ is designated for a specific *mitzvah*. Thus, if a specific organ is flawed or defective, the *mitzvah* with which it coincides will likely be compromised. In other words, organs matter because of their relationship with *mitzvos*. As an infant, Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not nurse from an Egyptian woman because his mouth, the organ of speech, would one day speak with the Almighty. Likewise, when Yosef demurred from entering an immoral relationship with Potifar's wife, all of the "involved" organs were rewarded/blessed.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains that the *lev*, heart, is the *eivar ha'ratzon*, organ of will, the organ through which one decides if he will or will not act, go forward. Once the *eivar ha'ratzon* becomes deficient, it is no longer capable of acting willfully in a constructive manner. It is flawed, analogous to an eye that is unable to see. In other words, *kveidas ha'lev* is not simply a temporary condition whereby Hashem caused Pharaoh to refuse the Jews access to leaving Egypt. Pharaoh now had a damaged heart that was incapable of saying, "Yes." His will was impaired and now disqualified, much like a physical impediment that precludes proper function.

The *Mashgiach* explains that the heart is the *mercaz*, center, of the body, through which all its organs function. This is much like an officer who dispatches a soldier to act on his behalf. While the soldier executes the action, the endeavor/end result, is attributed to the officer who sent him. Likewise, the heart maintains its control over the body. The eye sees what the heart wants it to see; the ear hears what the heart wants it to hear; the legs go where the heart wants them to go. Thus, a defect observed in one of the organs is attributed to the heart, the central dispatch for the body.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* suggests that this is why the rule of *devarim she'b'lev einan devarim*, "Words in the heart (which were not actually articulated) are not words." This means that one's thoughts do not hold halachic value, because the person did not actually voice his feelings. Why does the rule focus on *devarim she'b'lev*, when it should really say, *devarim she'b'machshavah*, words of the mind? When one just thinks of doing, the action is not binding. According to that which *Rav Yeruchem* has explained, it is quite fitting, since the mind is also an agent of the heart. The *lev* retains control over all of the body's organs – the mind included.

ולמען תספר באזני בןך ובן בןך את אשר התעללתי במצרים

So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt. (10:2)

Relating the events preceding and surrounding the Exodus is more than a lesson in Jewish history. As the seminal event in world history, it demonstrates Hashem's mastery over nature to all. Thus, it has become a lesson in Jewish theology and dogma. Hashem is the Creator of the world and the G-d of history. As He wrought the miracles in Egypt thousands of years ago, He continues to control and guide the events of the world (history) to suit *Klal Yisrael*. Nations have come and gone. We are still here and will continue to maintain our presence as long as it is His will. While the Torah emphasizes "son and son's son," it refers to all people. When we relate the events of the Exodus, our own faith is increased. The Exodus was the beginning, and it taught that all "beginnings" are generated by Hashem. Thus, our belief in Hashem is intensified and our trust in Him becomes stronger, leading to a state of calm in the comforting knowledge of what will be.

The holy *Piaseczna Rebbe, Horav Kolonymus Kalman Shapira, zl*, quotes the well-known *pesukim* in *Parshas Ki Sisa* (*Shemos* 33:18-22) in which Moshe *Rabbeinu* requests of Hashem, "*Hareini na es Kevodecha*, 'Show me now Your glory.'" Moshe requested a deeper and greater sense of perception, so that he could comprehend the full extent of G-dliness, so that he could grasp how Hashem conveys the flow of His holy influence to every part of the universe. Hashem's reply was: "*V'ra'eesa es Achorai u'Panai lo yeirau*; 'You will see my back, but My face may not be seen.'" In other words, the fullness of Hashem's essence is beyond anyone's grasp. As the commentators explain, Hashem told Moshe that hindsight/introspection is the only way to comprehend Hashem's actions to any extent.

Hashem did agree to show Moshe "something." He said, "Behold! There is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock; I shall shield you with My hand until I have passed. Then I will remove My hand and you will see my back." Simply, this means that a human can no more survive a direct confrontation with the Divine than a person's vision remains unharmed if he stares directly at the sun. Hashem would place Moshe in the cleft of a rock or a cave in order to shield him from the brilliance that was beyond his ability to bear. He could only experience a "dulled" degree of revelation, because this is all (even) he could tolerate.

The *Rebbe* asks a profound question: Did Hashem want to show Moshe His glory, or did He not? If He wanted to reveal His glory to him, He should have done so. If He did not, why go through the cave/cleft experience? He could have said, "No, I am not showing you anything because it is too much."

The *Rebbe* explains that Hashem was essentially hinting to Moshe that he should inform *Klal Yisrael* that they must engrave on the wall of their hearts the belief that, even when life will be so bleak and the Divine concealment (*Hester Panim*) will be so intense that many might be driven to lose hope, to give up, they should remember the cleft that Moshe had seen. We must remember that we will always have "something." It will never be completely dark. If we look hard enough, with complete faith and trust, we will see a shimmer of light, a glimmer of hope. It is never completely dark. Something will always emanate and illuminate, giving us hope to go on.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates a vignette that he heard from the *Slonimer Rebbe* (the *Yesod Ha'Avodah*), which demonstrates that an illuminating perspective always exists. Unless we look for it, however, it will escape us. It is this hidden light that is the glimmer within the concealment. A couple came to the *Rebbe* and presented a tragic predicament which weighed heavily on their daughter, whose husband had met with an untimely death. Since the couple did not yet have children, their young, widowed daughter was destined to *yibum*, levirate marriage. The problem was that her brother-in-law (who was obligated either to do *yibum* or to perform *chalitzah*) was only four years old. Thus, the earliest he could do *chalitzah* (removal, alternative to *yibum*, which basically revokes the obligation to marry the brother-in-law) would be in nine years, upon his *bar mitzvah*. Meanwhile, their daughter must wait and could not remarry. This, they felt, was too much for her to endure.

The *Rebbe* listened and, with a stroke of brilliance, explained to them that actually she was "fortunate." "Imagine, if you will, that a Heavenly decree was proclaimed concerning your daughter, precluding her from entering into marriage before she reached the age of thirty. Every young man that she would meet would somehow

not be right, or she would not impress any young man. During these years of waiting, her sisters would become frustrated, as the rumors suggesting that ‘something is amiss in the family’ would become stronger each year that she was not married. The entire family would suffer, because no one would ‘think’ that she was not getting married simply because she had not yet met Mr. Right.” People have the “habit” of assuming the worst when, in fact, a simple explanation clarifies whatever ambiguities might exist.

This is what the *Piasczner Rebbe* meant when he taught that even within the greatest *hastarah*, concealment, a light exists. We just have to look harder to uncover it. *Rav Zilberstein* relates the story of *Horav Mordechai, zl*, the *Tzaddik* of Cracow. A couple was blessed with a son after a number of years of a childless marriage. They raised this son with great *mesiras nefesh*, devotion and self-sacrifice. The father was a devout Torah scholar who would study *Talmud* nightly next to *Mordechai’s* (boy’s name) crib, so that the *niggun*, tune, of his learning would inspire the young child.

This incident took place during the Cantonist period (1827) when Czar Nicholas called for the forced conscription of Jewish boys between the ages of 12-25 (many as young as 6 years old). Canton referred to military camps, where these boys were assigned to live in preparatory institutions until they were ready to serve in the army for 25 years, during which time their commitment to Judaism was all but forgotten. To be kidnapped by the government (which was usually the case) meant assured spiritual extinction. When their son was a lad of 7 years old, the government took *Mordechai*. The couple’s grief was unspeakable. Nonetheless, as faithful Jews, they did not lose hope, believing that by some miracle their precious son would be returned to them. This changed when, after a year, they had no word. It was as if their son had vanished from the face of the earth. They maintained their prayer vigil, never waning in beseeching Hashem that He rescind His decree and allow their son to return home. The father went so far as to pray to Hashem that He take his (the father’s) life in exchange for his son’s life. (While this practice is highly unusual, it is cited in the preface to the *Shivus Yaakov*, in which the venerable author related that when he took ill as a young *yeshivah* student, his father went to the *bais hamedrash*, opened the *Aron HaKodesh*, and pleaded with Hashem to take his life instead of his son’s life. Hashem listened.)

Forty years passed, the father was now an old man, having aged prematurely due to his son’s captivity. Four decades of grief and anxiety will do that. The father now had his own problems, having been framed by the government (a very common practice, especially against Jews, during that dark period in history). Apparently, the government felt that the father’s subversive activities (studying and teaching Torah) warranted a visit to their dungeon, where he would not remain very long, since he was immediately found guilty and sentenced to die. On the day designated for his execution, a guard entered the cell and asked if he had a final request. The father was in the midst of learning a passage in the *Talmud*. He was engaged in a difficult topic and he remembered that the *Rashba* has a lucid explanation of the *Talmud* which would clarify the issues that were troubling him. So he asked the guard, “Could you go to a synagogue and bring back a *Rashba*?” The guard agreed, and, within a few hours, he was back with the volume that the father was seeking. The father picked up the volume lovingly and could not wait to return to his learning, with the same tune that he had always chanted when learning, the tune that he would hum as he sat and learned next to *Mordechai’s* bed.

Suddenly, a loud cry emanated from the guard’s mouth, “*Tatte! Tatte!*” The guard recognized the tune to which he had listened forty years ago. The father took a quick look at the guard’s right earlobe and saw the dark mole with which his son was born, and he knew that his forty years of waiting were over. Their reunion was short-lived, as the father was taken to be executed. The son, however, left the Czar’s army and returned to his roots. He studied diligently night and day, achieving extraordinary heights in Torah erudition. He became the saintly *Horav Mordechai HaTzaddik m’ Cracow*.

Even within the *hastarah she’b’soch ha’hastarah*, concealment within the concealment (in the darkest of periods), Hashem is certainly present. *Gam mei achorei hadevarim hakashim*, “Even behind the difficult things that you are going through, I am standing.”

שבעת ימים מצות האכלו ... ושמרתם את המצות

For a seven-day period, shall you eat matzos ... You shall safeguard the matzos. (12:15,17)

The association of our departure from Egypt and the prohibition against eating *chametz*, leaven, for seven/eight days, requires some explanation. Furthermore, the fact that a *mitzvah d’Oraisa*, Biblical commandment, obligates us to eat *matzah* (on the first night) begs elucidation in its relationship to the Exodus. The fact that we were compelled to rush out of Egypt, which precluded our ability to make leavened bread, is the obvious and accepted reason for eating *matzah* (for its commemorative value). Is there a deeper reason for negating leaven and replacing it with *matzah*?

Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl, explains that when one mixes flour with water, the flavor of the finished product is that of *matzah*. The leaven flavor is not derived from the actual flour/water mixture, but from the delay. Another “ingredient” is added to the equation: the dimension of time, which produces a flavor from another factor, not from the mixture itself. Thus, the law prohibits leaven, because it is a product that is incongruous to Pesach, a festival which decries delay, the time when *chametz* is prohibited for seven days. The underlying concept that delay of any sort undermines a *mitzvah* is a Rabbinic theme that applies to all *mitzvos*. In *Rashi’s* commentary to *Shemos* 12:17, *U’shemartem es ha’matzos*, “You shall guard the *matzos*,” he writes, “Guard the *mitzvos* [same spelling as *matzos*]. A *mitzvah* that comes into your hand, *al tachmitzenah*; ‘do not allow it to become leaven.’” Its performance must be devoid of any delay.

This exhortation applies to all *mitzvos*, such as Torah-study, *Tefillin*, etc.,. They must be executed without delay, since delay provides an added flavor that is foreign to the mixture, a false flavor that is not of the mixture itself. When we add delay to the *mitzvah*, that *mitzvah* becomes leaven.

Let us extrapolate from the above. One who delays indicates that he belongs to time. It has a hold on him, it controls him. One who acts in a timely fashion indicates that he is in control of time. The first *mitzvah* given to the Jewish people in Egypt was *Ha’chodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodoshim*, “This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you” (*Shemos* 12:2). Why was this *mitzvah* given at the time of the liberation? *Horav Avraham Pam, zl*, explains that the difference between a slave and a free human being does not lie in how hard or how long each works. Free people often work long and hard hours at the most difficult and arduous tasks. The difference is in who controls time. A slave works as long as the master wishes that he/she work. A free person works as long as he/she chooses to work. Control over time is the essential difference between freedom and slavery. The ability to determine the calendar, to calculate when the Festivals are to occur, is based upon the power to decide when the New Moon occurs. The Jewish People were given authority, domination over time. This first command was their prelude to freedom, indicating to them the path for valuing and sanctifying time.

והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מה העבודה הזאת לכם

It shall be when your children say to you, “What is this service to you?” (12:26) כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ד’ אלקינו אתכם If your child asks you tomorrow, saying, “What are the testimonies and the decrees and the ordinances that Hashem, our G-d, commands you?” (Devarim 6:20)

The first question which was cited in our *parsha* is that of the *rasha*, wicked son. The second question which is to be found in *Sefer Devarim* is that of the *chacham*, wise son. On the surface, they appear to be asking the same question. The difference lay in the subtle changes in their relative vernacular. The wicked son does not ask; he states. His question, if anything, is rhetorical, since he has all the answers. He refuses to acknowledge that the service is Divinely mandated, and, since *mitzvos* are “man-made,” they are not binding on him. Conversely, the wise son asks, mentions G-d, and includes himself in the congregation. Interestingly, the Torah, in recording the wicked son’s question, uses *lashon rabim*, plural, *b’nechem*, “your sons/children,” while when referring to the wise son (and also the single son and the son who knows not what to ask) writes *bincha*, “your son,” in the singular. Why is this?

Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl, applies the well-known adage, “An epidemic spreads, while health is not contagious.” This means that when one person becomes ill, the chances are that his germs will quickly spread to others and cause an epidemic. Health, on the other hand, does not spread. A similar idea applies with regard to spirituality. One sinner carries with him spiritual germs which can and will infect the innocent and unsuspecting. The wise, righteous man usually remains alone, since no one is lining up to receive his inspiration.

Hashem responded to this divergence (*rasha/chacham*) with two words. Hashem introduces the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, with *Anochi (Hashem Elokecha)*; “I (Hashem, your G-d) Who took you out of Egypt.” When Hashem created the world, however, the place which would be inhabited by humans, which would require relationships, the Torah writes, *Bereishis*, “In the beginning.” With regard to spirituality, it is *Anochi* with an *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with a numerical equivalent of one. The Torah addresses the realm of physicality and materialism with *Bereishis*, whose first letter is *bais*, two. By their very nature, friendships and relationships are implemented only via a group setting. A loner in a community remains alone. In order for the physical world created by Hashem to succeed, a sense of community, of interaction, organizations and groups must exist. If the community in which one makes his home is on a collision course with the spiritual dimension he seeks for himself and his family, then it is best that he remove himself from this community.

The Torah instructs us to carry out the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach* in a *chaburah*, group, setting. It provides, however, one stipulation: it must be *shcheino ha'karov eilav b' nichsas nefashos*, which is translated as, "his neighbor who is near to his house shall take according to the number of people" (*Shemos* 12:4). Based upon the above distinction, *Rav Kornitzer* renders the *pasuk* with a homiletic twist, focusing in on the Torah's use of the words *nefashos*, souls, as opposed to *anashim* people/men/*shecheinim*/neighbors. One must seek to share his *Korban Pesach*, to include in his group individuals who are like-minded in the area of *nefashos*, who are in spiritual agreement with him and his way of life. It is important to reach out as long as the reciprocal influence is not negative to one's personal spiritual journey.

Thus, when we see that it is *b'neicham*, a cadre of children (in the plural), a movement has taken root. When the questions are coming from a movement, he may suspect that its leanings are not positive. These children are not here to build and strengthen Torah. They are here to do the opposite, and, as such, must be stopped. As long as they refuse to listen, because they have all the answers, we have no discussion with them. They do not come to learn. They come with contempt, to ridicule and destroy. Such an attitude does not become or beget a "good neighbor."

Va'ani Tefillah

Baruch Atah Hashem shomea tefillah. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayer.

On a basic level, we thank Hashem for His kindness in listening to our prayers. Furthermore, He is pleased to hear from us: "Hashem is *misaveh*, strongly desires, the prayer of the righteous (*Yevamos* 64a)." *Horav Avigdor Miller, zl*, explains the reason for this strong desire. (This term is employed for human expression. Hashem needs nothing.) The Almighty wants to see the perfection of the *tzaddik*, righteous person. In fact, He wants everyone's perfection. Prayer is, indeed, a means of achieving great perfection of the mind and character. As a motivation to reward those who are close to Him, the Almighty will, at times, exert pressure on them (such as rendering the *Imahos*, Matriarchs, childless, so that they are forced to supplicate Hashem and plead for children). When they pour out their hearts and souls in prayer, they are concomitantly elevating their minds and souls. This would not occur if they had taken the "easy" road. As *Rav Miller* notes, "The grapes that yield the finest wine are pressed to extract every drop; and it this greatness which is derived from prayer that Hashem strongly desires from them." Thus, we close the prayer with gratitude, thanking Hashem for listening.

Sponsored in loving memory of Vivian Stone ליה לאה בת שמעון ז"ל
By her children, Birdie and Lenny Frank and Family
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<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/1542?lang=bi>

Bo- I'm Gonna Harden Your Heart

Rabbi Aaron Kagan

Vision, Growth, & Development at RAK Consulting

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שמות ז"א:

ויאמר ה' אל משה בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו ואת לב עבדיו למען שתי אתמי אלה בקרב (א)

Exodus 10:1

(1) And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs in the midst of them;

רש"י על שמות ז"א:

ויאמר ה' אל משה בא אל פרעה - והתרה בו" (א)

Rashi on Exodus 10:1:1 (1) And warn him

רמב"ן על שמות ז"א:

כי אני הכבדתי את לבו - הודיע הקב"ה למשה שהוא הכבד את לבם עתה אחרי שפחדו ממנו בברד והתוודו על עוונם. ואמר לו הטעם כי עשיתי כן, למען שאשית בקרבם אלה האותות אשר אני הפיץ ועוד כדי שתספר. לא שאעניש אותם יותר מפני הכבוד הזה, לעשות בהם שידעו מצרים את גבורתי אתה וכל ישראל לדורות הבאים כוח מעשי, ותדעו כי אני ה', וכל אשר אחפוץ אעשה בשמים ובארץ:

Ramban on Exodus 10:1:1 ...The reason I did this is to place My signs which I wish to perform - in their midst, so they can recognize my might; **Not to punish them more for their stubbornness.** Additionally for Israel to retell of My power....

The Issues

1. When was Moshe told
2. Why & for what purpose
3. How can he be punished
4. Lessons for us

שמות ז"א:

ויאמר ה' אל משה בקלכתך לשוב מצרפתה ראה כל המפתים אשר שמת בך נפשיתם לפני פרעה ואני (כא) אצחק את לבו ולא ילשח את העם.

Exodus 4:21

(21) And the LORD said unto Moses: 'When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand; but I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go.

רמב"ן על שמות ז"א:

אבל פירושו כי כאשר לקח את מטה האלהים בידו ממדיו לשום לדרך פעמיו והזירו האלהים ואמר ... (א) לו בלכתך בדרך שים לבך וראה שכל המופתים אשר שמת בידך תעשה לפני פרעה, לא תשכה דבר שלא תעשה לפני, ואני אחזק את לבו, ואל תתייחס אתה מלעשותם בעבור כן.

Ramban on Exodus 4:21:1 ...

אבן עזרא על שמות ז"א:

ויאמר. זה אמר לו במדיו והנה הודיעו כי השם יחזק את לבו ולא ישלחם בעבור כל המופתים שיראם עם (י) המופת האחרון:

Ibn Ezra on Exodus 4:21:1 This was told to him in Midian...

שמות ז"א:

ואני אקשה את לב פרעה והרפיתי את אתמי ואת מופתי מצרים (ג)

Exodus 7:3 (3) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

אבן עזרא על שמות ז"א:

ואני אקשה. יש לשאול אם השם הקשה את לבו מה' פשעו ומה חטאתו. והתשוב' כי השם נתן הכמה (י) לאדם ונטע בלבו שכל לקבל כח עליון להוסיף על טובתו. או לחסר מרעתו. וזה אפרש בפרשת כי תשא. ורבי ישועה אמר כי טעם. והנה טעם אקשה את לבו למען רבות מופתי. ובפסוק מן יתן והיה לבבם זה אקשה את לבו לסבול את המכות. ולא דבר נכונה

Ibn Ezra on Exodus 7:3:1 One can ask, if Hashem hardened his heart what was his sin? The answer is that Hashem gave wisdom to man, and placed insight into his heart to be able to draw additional power to increase good, or to detract from his evil, as I will explain later.But the reason for the hardening of his heart is to increase My miracles. Rabbi Yeshua states the reason was to allow him to suffer the plagues, and he speaks incorrectly.

פירוש על שמות ז"א:

ואני אקשה. הנה בהיות האל חפץ בתשובת רשעים ולא במיתתם, כאמרו חז"ל אני נאם ה', אם אחפוץ (א) וזה להשיב את, במות הרשע, כי אם בשום הרשע מדרכו ודיה, אמר שירבה את אונותיו ואת מופתיו בהודיע להם גדלו וחסדו באותות ובמופתים, כאמרו בעבור זאת העמדתך, בעבור, המצרים בתשובה כאמרו למען שיתי אונותי אלה בקרבך, הראותך את כחי ועם זה היתה הכונה שישאל יראו ויראו ולמען תספר, ואין ספק שלולא הכבדת הלב היה פרעה משלח את ישראל בלי ספק, לא על צד תשובה שיתנחם מהיות מורד, אף על פי שהכיר גדלו וטובו, אלא על צד היותו בלתי יכול, והכנעה לאל יתברך לסבול עוד את צרת המכות, כמו שהגידו עבדיו באמרים הטרם תדע כי אבדה מצרים וזאת לא היתה תשובה כלל. אבל אם היה פרעה חפץ להכנע לאל יתברך, ולשוב אליו בתשובה שלמה, לא היה לו מזה שום והנה אמר האל יתברך ואני אקשה את לב פרעה, שיתאמץ לסבול המכות ולא ישלח מיראת. מונע למען שיתי אונותי אלה בקרבך, שמהם יכירו גדלי וטובי וישובו המצרים באיזו תשובה, המכות את ישראל אמיתית. ולמען תספר אתה ישראל הרואה בצרתם, באוני בך להודיע שכל אלה יפעל אל עם גבר להשיבו אליו, וזה כשיפשו במופתים שבאו עליהם איזה פורענות

Sforno on Exodus 7:3:1 ...

משנה תורה הלכות תשובה ז"א:

ואפשר שיחטא אדם חטא גדול או חטאים רבים עד שיתן הדין לפני דיין האמת שיהא הפרעון מזה (ג) החוטא על חטאים אלו שעשה ברצונו ומדעתו שמונעין ממנו התשובה ואין מניחין לו רשות לשוב מרשעו כדי שימות ויאבד בחטאו שיעשה, הוא שהקב"ה אמר ליישעיהו השמן לב העם הזה וגו' וכן הוא אמר ויהי מלעבים במלאכי האלהים ובוזים דבריו ומתעבים בנביאיו עד עלות חמת ה' בעמו עד לאין מרפא כלומר חטאו ברצונם והרבו לפשוע עד שנתחייבו למנוע מהן התשובה שהיא המרפא לפיכך כתוב בתורה ואני אחזק את לב פרעה לפי שחטא מעצמו תחלה והרע לישראל הגרים בארצו שנאמר הבה נתחכמה לו נתן הדין למנוע התשובה ממנו עד שנפרע ממנו לפיכך חזק הקדוש ברוך הוא את לבו ולמה היה שולח לו ביד משה ואומר שלח ועשה תשובה וכבר אמר לו הקב"ה אין אתה משלח שנאמר ואתה ועבדיך ידעתי וגו' ואולם בעבור זאת העמדתך כדי להודיע לבאי העולם שבזמן שמונע הקדוש ברוך הוא התשובה לחוטא אינו יכול לשוב אלא ימות ברשעו שעשה בתחילה ברצונו וכן סיוחן לפי עונות שהיו לו נתחייב למנוע מן התשובה שנאמר כי הקשה ה' אלהיך את רוחו ואמץ את לבו וכן הכנענים לפי תועבותיהן מנע מהן התשובה עד שעשו מלחמה עם ישראל שנאמר כי מאת ה' היתה לחזק את לבם לקראת המלחמה עם ישראל למען החרימם וכן ישראל בימי אליהו לפי שהרבו לפשוע מנע מאותן המרבים לפשוע תשובה שנאמר ואתה הסבות את לבם אחרנית כלומר מנעת מהן התשובה: נמצאת אומר שלא גזר האל על פרעה להרע לישראל ולא על סיוחן לחטאו בארצו ולא על הכנענים להתעב ולא על ישראל לעבוד עכו"ם אלא כולן חטאו מעצמן וכולן נתחייבו למנוע מהן התשובה

Mishneh Torah, Repentance 6:3 ...

רש"י על שמות ז"א:

ואני אקשה - מאחר שהרשיעו והתריסו כנגדי וגלוי לפני שאין נחת רוח באומות עו"א לתת לב שלם (י) לשוב טוב לי שיתקשה לבו למען הרבות בו אונותי ותכירו את גבורתי וכן מדתו של הקב"ה מביא פורענות על האומות עו"א כדי שישמעו ישראל ויראו שני (צפניה ג) הכרתי גוים שנמו פנותם וגו' אמרתי אך תירא אותי תקחי מוסר ואף על פי כן בחמש מכות הראשונות לא נאמר ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה אלא ויחזק לב פרעה (ועיני ברא"ם שגורס כאן דבור המתחיל בלכתך לשוב עד אשר שמת בידך וכדלעיל בפ' שמות בפ' בלכתך לשוב ע"ש)

Rashi on Exodus 7:3:1 ...

Synopsis

1. The different opinions on why & for what purpose his heart was hardened

1. To be able to perform all the miracles and bring a revelation of Hashem's presence to
 1. The Jews & the world[11]
 2. the Egyptians[2]
2. inspire Repentance in the
 1. Egyptians [3]
 2. Jews[4],
 1. Remove the *tumah* of Egypt and reveal the 10 [5]statements of creation [6]
3. Strengthen pharaoh's ability to withstand the difficulty of the makos, and thereby still have free will, as wasn't doing *Teshuva*[7](or it would be an insincere and incomplete repentance)
4. To cause the Jews to recognize Hashem might and be inspired and fearful of Him[8]
5. To be able to perform all the *makos*, and thereby PUNISH the Egyptians for their action against the Jews[9]. Additionally, *Teshuva* is a *Chesed* of Hashem and only given to those who believe in him [uniquely -the Jewish Nation], not to heretics and idolaters[10]
6. Since he had been given enough chances, Hashem takes away the chance to repent, as happens to the wicked when appropriate. This then guarantees that they will be punished for their prior sins. Additionally, the inability to do *Teshuva* causes greater sin[11] and "*tumah*"[12]
7. To give Pharaoh ability to withstand the words of a Tzadik[13]
8. His heart wasn't hardened directly by Hashem. It was result of experiencing the *makos*, the effect of which was that he became inured to the suffering. [14]

1. How can Pharaoh be punished if he has no free will

1. He still had free will –see1 c, g, & h, above-[15]
2. Was only punished for prior sins[16]
3. Was punished for his refusal to submit in the first 5 *makos*, as his heart wasn't hardened by Hashem in those[17]
4. The *makos* weren't given as a punishment but a lesson in faith /revelation of Hashem-see1)a) above, also –see-¹⁴below
5. He had it coming to him as a measure for measure –for his obstinacy in not recognizing Hashem-see-1)f) above
6. Since his actions were against the Jews, they are classified as "*bain adam Lichaveiro*" and he is being punished for his actions against the Jews. As such, *Teshuva* to Hashem won't help.[18]

2. What are the lessons

1. To teach us that just as we find strength within us for a difficult situation, so to one can overcome an impossible situation in spiritual struggles as well.[19]
2. The consequence of doing nothing and ignoring events [20]
3. The downward spiral of sin[21]

[1] Malbim, Ramban, Rashbam, and implied in the verses [2] Shemos 7:5, Abarbanel-3rd answer [3] Seforno [4] Ha'amek Davar, side point of Seforno, Various baalei mussar [5] The 10 Makos are a reverse parallel of the 10 ma'amaros of creation, (they also parallel the 10 commandments- see Alshich) [6] Shem Mi'Shmuel -other Chasidic seforim [7] Malbim, Seforno, Ohr Hachaim, also Rashi –according to some commentaries on Rashi, see Sifsei Chachomim 7:3, and Sifsei Chachomim & Mizrachi 10:1 [8] Rashi 7:3 [9] Abarbanel-1st answer [10] Abarbanel- 2nd answer [11] It's unclear if they get punished for the subsequent sin, or if the greater sins and *tumah* caused by the inability to do teshuva is its own punishment [12] Rambam, laws of teshuva, 6:3 [13] Noam Elimelech shemos 4:21 [14] Abarbanel-3rd answer [15] According to the Seforno (7:4) the only punishment was the last *makah* and the *yam suf*; all the others were to inspire them to repent. the Malbim (4:22-23) views all of the makos as punishment since he had free will as a result of the hardened heart [16] Ramban 7:3 in one answer, and possibly Rambam [17] Ramban ibid in 2nd answer [18] Abarbanel-1st answer [19] Nesivos Shalom, Bais Avrohom of Slonim see Meorei Chassidus Shemos 10:1 [20] Reb Yerucham Shemos 7:23 [21] Reb Yerucham Shemos pgs 35-38 (maamarim)