

פרשת בא / Parashat Bo

Shabbat Shevat 6, 5769, January 31, 2009
32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
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5

G-d is faithful even with the unrighteous

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 10:1-13:16
הפטרה: Jeremiah 46:13-46:28
הברית: Luke 22:7-30; 1 Corinthians 11:20-34
החדשה

10 One of the most baffling and mysterious passages in the scriptures are those which appear on the surface to be confusing because of our perception of the written scriptures. In this week's parsha in *Shmot / Exodus 11:9* we find just such a situation. Here, HaShem reminds Moshe not to worry, Pharaoh will not hear you. Why won't Pharaoh hear Moshe? Pharaoh won't listen because HaShem hardened his heart? For a lot of people G-d hardening Pharaoh's heart sounds like G-d is interfering with Pharaoh's sense of free will. This is certainly a confusing passage and in fact we are told six times that G-d hardened pharaoh's heart (See *Shmot / Exodus 7:3,13, 9:12, 10:1, 20,27, 11:10, 14:4,8*), four times pharaoh hardened his own heart (See *Shmot / Exodus 8:15, 32*) and three times the text is ambiguous.

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שמות 11:8-9

8 אֲשֶׁר יַפְלֶה יְהוָה בֵּין מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיִּרְדּוּ כָל-
עַבְדֵיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִי-לִי לֵאמֹר צֵא אֶתְךָ וְכָל-
הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-בְּרַגְלֶיךָ וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן אֵצֵא מֵעַם-פְּרַעֲהַ
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה
9 בַּחֲרִי-אֶתִּי:
לֹא-יִשְׁמַע אֵלֶיכֶם פְּרַעֲהַ לְמַעַן רַבּוֹת מוֹפְתֵי בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם

v. 26 בִּזְנוּבֵי נֶקֶח קִמְצִי. לֹא. v. 1 ס"א וְאַחֲרֵי וּבֵן ח"ש, ת"ע וּת"ס. v. 6 סְבִיר פְּמוֹה
וּבֵן ח"ש. v. 6 סְבִיר וְכְמוֹה וּבֵן ח"ש. v. 7 ס"א תְּדַעוֹן. v. 8 צ רַבְתִּי. v. 9 כֵּן
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, בְּהַלְלֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חֲסֵר.

Shmot / Exodus 11:8-9

1:8 'All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out.' And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. 11:9 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.' (NASB)

Burning nose

Pharaoh will not listen to you

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In these various passages what is HaShem trying to tell us about the hardening process Pharaoh went through during the event of G-d's delivering Yisrael out of Egypt? Is the text suggesting that HaShem is modifying Pharaoh's behavior

30 against his will? Do the English translations confuse the reader to believe this is happening? That would pose an obvious problem (concerning free will) and is the central motivation behind our study this week in Parashat Bo. Hopefully we will resolve this issue by analyzing the various Hebrew texts that speak about Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

35 Examining the text

40 In the various locations *Shmot / Exodus 7:3,13,8:15, 32, 9:12, 10:1, 20,27, 11:10, 14:4,8* where it speaks of pharaoh's heart being hardened it is interesting to note that there is more than one Hebrew word used to describe Pharaoh's heart being "hardened." You may verify this by examining the Hebrew text yourself. In the Hebrew bible, sometimes the Hebrew word "קשה" is used, other times the word "הזק" is used, and other times it is "כבד." All three occurrences of these words are translated "harden" in the English text but are they really saying the same thing? Have a look at the following examples:

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Text location and word usage

1. *Shmot / Exodus 7:3* "I will "hardened" Pharaoh's heart → קשה (Hiphil, future)
2. *Shmot / Exodus 4:21* I will "harden" his heart → הזק (Piel, future)
- 50 3. *Shmot / Exodus 9:7* and the heart of Pharaoh was "hardened" → כבד (Qal, preterite)

55 In the first example, *Shmot / Exodus 7:3*, קשה is written in the Hiphil future and literally means "be hard, severe, fierce." In the second example, *Shmot / Exodus 4:21*, הזק is written in the Piel future and literally means "be or grow firm, strong, strengthen." In the third example, *Shmot / Exodus 9:7*, כבד is written in the Qal preterite (which expresses a past action or state) means "be heavy, weighty, burdensome." The Hebrew words used here are all verbs. Verbs are those words used to describe an action or state of being. In the Hebrew text the Hebrew words are written using three of the Hebrew verb stems which are used to indicate the properties of voice and aspect, (i) Qal stem, (ii) Piel stem, and (iii) Hiphil stem.

60 The Qal is the basic verbal stem in the Hebrew language. The term Qal "קל" means "simple" with reference to the fact that the root is unaugmented, nothing has been added to it. Qal verbs are active in voice and exhibit the simple or unnuanced type of action. The Piel "פעל" stem is used to express intensive type of action with an active voice. In this stem, the action of the Qal stem will take on some type of intensive nuance in the Piel stem. Finally the Hiphil "הפעיל" stem is used to express causative action with an active voice.

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Discussion

Taking into consideration the various Hebrew words used along with the verbal stem there is definitely more here than meets the eye in the Hebrew text in

75 comparison to the English text. Our next question is “are the verses really saying the same thing when it mentioned hardening Pharaoh’s heart?” Let’s look again at the English translations of the relevant text.

Shmot / Exodus 7:3

80 7:3 ‘But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. (NASB)

Shmot / Exodus 4:21

85 4:21 The Lord said to Moses, ‘When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. (NASB)

Shmot / Exodus 9:7

90 9:7 Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. (NASB)

Taking into consideration the English translation of these Hebrew words, in *Shmot / Exodus 7:3*, G-d will harden Pharaoh’s heart so that He will multiply the signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. In *Shmot / Exodus 4:21*, G-d will strengthen Pharaoh’s heart so that he will not let the people go. And in *Shmot / Exodus 9:7*, Pharaoh’s heart became heavy and burdensome. By the way these verses use the Hebrew verbs it can be understood the process of hardening Pharaoh’s heart G-d is preserving Pharaoh’s sense of free will. When G-d was hardening Pharaoh’s heart he was giving him over to his stubborn heart to following his own evil devices. This is illustrated very well here in *Shmot / Exodus 9:34-10:1*:

שמות 9:34-10:1

34 אֶרְצָה: וַיֵּרָא פַרְעֹה כִּי־חָדַל הַמָּטֶר וְהַבָּרָד וְהַקֶּלֶת
35 וַיִּסֶּף לַחֲטֹא וַיִּכְבֵּד לִבּוֹ הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו: וַיַּחֲזֶק לֵב פַּרְעֹה
וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה בְּיַד־
מֹשֶׁה:
105 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי־אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי
אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְאֶת־לֵב עַבְדָּיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְּתִי אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

Shmot / Exodus 9:34-10:1
9:34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. 9:35 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses. 10:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, (NASB)

In the Hebrew text here in *Shmot / Exodus 9:34* it says Pharaoh hardened his heart and in *Shmot / Exodus 10:1* it says G-d made Pharaoh’s heart to be heavy or stronger. In this sense G-d is helping Pharaoh to be stronger in heart and Pharaoh uses this strength to sin, by committing more evil deeds and not allowing the

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people to leave. Studying the text in Hebrew it becomes apparent the Lord actually is preserving Pharaoh's free will so that Pharaoh is able to make his own choices.

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Conclusion

Studying the Hebrew language helps us to not only unravel seemingly baffling and mysterious passages but also helps us to think more like a Hebrew did in ancient times. In this week's parsha we get a glimpse of the Lord working through both the righteous and the wicked for his purposes and I believe He works in the same way today. As we learned in previous parsha studies the Hebrew mindset is not conceptualized but rather action oriented and concrete rather than abstract. We see how the Lord worked in Pharaoh's life to preserve his rights and freedom of choice. G-d continues to do the same today. If you are a child of the Most High G-d, He is working in your life. G-d is also definitely strengthening your heart through difficult and tough situations. The question is how do you use the Lord's strengthening? How will you use this strengthening? I believe G-d strengthens our hearts daily, especially for those who trust in Him and His sovereign will. So, how does this apply to us today? You may be reading this parsha today and not know whether you are going to get to heaven. Whether you believe in Yeshua HaMoshiach or not know for certain G-d is working in your life. He is strengthening you for this very moment in time. Will you use this strength to go and sin again as Pharaoh did (*Shmot / Exodus 9:34*) or to begin to serve the Lord? If you want to serve the Lord say this prayer with me right now.

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Heavenly Father,

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I praise and glorify your Holy Name and thank you for working in my life today. You are perfect Lord and you have shown us this in your Holy Scriptures. I want today Lord to change my life over to one that honors, glorifies and serves you. I want to begin by asking you to forgive me of my sins. Please have mercy on me and forgive me. Today I place my faith in Yeshua your Messiah. I believe His blood was shed for the forgiveness of my sins. Help me lord to continue loving and living for you.

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In Yeshua's name I pray, Amen.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever