

Parent-Child Learning

Motzoai Shabbat, Parashat VaEira, 5773

1. In the Tora we find the idea of HaShem Hardening Pharaoh's heart mentioned many times.

שמות פרק ז

(ג) ואני אקשה את לב פרעה והרביתי את אתותי ואת מופתי בארץ מצרים:

*And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.*

שמות פרק י

(א) ויאמר יקוק אל משה בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו ואת לב עבדיו למען שתי אתני אלה בקרבו:  
*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;*

שמות פרק י

(כ) ויחזק יקוק את לב פרעה ולא שלח את בני ישראל: פ

*But the LORD Hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.*

שמות פרק י

(כז) ויחזק יקוק את לב פרעה ולא אבה לשלחם:

*But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.*

What does "HaShem Hardening Pharaoh's heart" mean?

When someone's heart is "hard", what will that person be like?

When we say someone is "soft-hearted", what do we mean?

If Pharaoh's heart would have been "soft", how would he have acted differently than when his heart was "hard"?

Do you think that HaShem would prefer that a person's heart is "soft" or "hard"? Why?

2. If HaShem Hardened Pharaoh's heart, can Pharaoh be blamed for not letting the Jews go out of Egypt? Isn't this unfair? Explain.

Even if Pharaoh is a cruel ruler, if he didn't choose to keep the Jews in Egypt, but he was Forced to by HaShem, why should he and the Egyptians have to suffer from all the plagues?

For an answer compare the following verses:

1) Shemot 7:22 And the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was <u>hardened</u> , and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken.	1) Shemot 9:12 And <u>the LORD Hardened the heart of Pharaoh</u> , and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had Spoken unto Moses.
2) Shemot 8:11 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, <u>he hardened his heart</u> , and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had Spoken.	2) Shemot 10:1 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh; <u>for I have Hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants</u> , that I might Show these My Signs in the midst of them;
3) Shemot 8:15 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: 'This is the Finger of God'; <u>and Pharaoh's heart was hardened</u> , and he hearkened not unto	3) Shemot 10:20 But <u>the LORD Hardened Pharaoh's heart</u> , and he did not let the children of Israel go.

them; as the LORD had Spoken.	
4) Shemot 8:28 And Pharaoh hardened his <u>heart this time also</u> , and he did not let the people go.	4) Shemot 10:27 But <u>the LORD Hardened Pharaoh's heart</u> , and he would not let them go.
5) Shemot 9:7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. <u>But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn</u> , and he did not let the people go.	
6) Shemot 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and <u>hardened his heart</u> , he and his servants.	

According to these verses, how many chances did Pharaoh get **before** HaShem Began to Force him not to let the Jews go free?

Why didn't Pharaoh get unlimited second chances to do teshuva?

Do people other than Pharaoh get as many second chances as they want? Why or why not?

3. The Tora tells us reasons behind HaShem's Hardening Pharaoh's heart:

שמות ז

(ה) וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְדֹד בְּנֻטִי אֶת יְדֵי עַל מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם:

*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I Stretch forth My Hand upon Egypt, and Bring out the children of Israel from among them.'*

שמות י

(ב) וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶךָ וּבֶן בְּנֶךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלֵתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת אֶתְנִי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַתִּי בָם וַיִּדְעֵתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְדֹד:

*And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what I have Wrought upon Egypt, and My Signs which I have Done among them; that ye may know that I Am the LORD.'*

According to these two verses, why is HaShem Interested in Doing these miracles?

Why couldn't He Do the same miracles, or accomplish the same thing, without Hardening Pharaoh's heart?

What lessons that apply even today might HaShem Be Trying to Teach by Doing these miracles?

4. The next time you do something wrong at home or in school and an adult or one of your friends asks you, "Why did you do that?", would you be able to say, "HaShem Hardened my heart, just like He Did to Pharaoh, and it's not my fault!" Why or why not?

5. When might HaShem Harden someone's heart? Does He Do it only to special people like Pharaoh? Why or why not?

6. When reading or hearing about current events, do you think that HaShem might still be Hardening some people's hearts? Can you think of any examples?