

# CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

## With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

### VaEra—Exodus 6:29-7:13

LEV TOV—A Good Heart

...Key KOSHI...

**RAMBAN: IF the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, what then was his sin?  
HOW do we guard against hard-heartedness & acquire a good-heart ?**



### P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

29] And the Eternal One said to Moses, “I am the Eternal; speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I will tell you,” 30] Moses appealed to the Eternal, saying, “See, I get tongue-tied; how then should Pharaoh heed me!” 7:1] The Eternal replied to Moses, “See, I place you in the role of God to Pharaoh, with your brother Aaron as your prophet. 2] You shall repeat all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from his land. 3] But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt. 4] When Pharaoh does not heed you, I will lay My hand upon Egypt and deliver My ranks, My people the Israelites, from the land of Egypt with extraordinary chastisements. 5] And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Eternal, when I stretch out My hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst.” 6] This Moses and Aaron did; as the Eternal commanded them, so they did. 7] Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they made their demand on Pharaoh. 8] The Eternal One said to Moses and Aaron, 9] “When Pharaoh speaks to you and says, ‘Produce your marvel,’ you shall say to Aaron, “Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh.’ It shall turn into a serpent.” 10] So Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh and did just as the Eternal had commanded: Aaron cast down his rod in the presence of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and it turned into a serpent. 11] Then Pharaoh, for his part, summoned the sages and the sorcerers; and the Egyptian magician priests in turn, did the same with their spells: 12] each cast down his rod, and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed their rods. 13] Yet Pharaoh’s heart stiffened and he did not heed them, as the Eternal had said.

29 וַיֹּדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר אֲנִי יְהוָה דַּבֵּר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי דֹבֵר אֵלָיךְ : 30 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה הֵן אֲנִי עֶרְל שְׂפָתַיִם וְאִיךָ שְׁמַע אֵלַי פְּרָעָה : 7:1 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רְאֵה נִתְתִּיף אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעָה וְאַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ יְהִיָּה נְבִיאֲךָ : 2 אַתָּה תְדַבֵּר אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶךָ וְאַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ יְדַבֵּר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְשַׁלַּח אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם : 3 וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־אֲתֹנֹתַי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתֵי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם : 4 וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֵכֶם פְּרָעָה וְנִתְתִּי אֶת־יָדַי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־צְבָאָתִי אֶת־עַמִּי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשַׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים : 5 וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם : 6 וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתָם כֵּן עָשׂוּ : 7 וּמֹשֶׁה בְּרֹשְׁמַנִּים שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּרֹשְׁלֵשׁ וּשְׁמַנִּים שָׁנָה בְּדַבְּרָם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה : 8 [רביעי] 8 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר : 9 כִּי יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵכֶם פְּרָעָה לֵאמֹר תָּנוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת וְאַמְרַתְּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח אֶת־מַטְּךָ וְהִשְׁלַח לִפְנֵי־פַרְעֹה יְהִי לְתַנּוּן : 10 וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַח אַהֲרֹן אֶת־מִטָּהוּ לִפְנֵי פְרָעָה וְלִפְנֵי עַבְדָּיו וַיְהִי לְתַנּוּן : 11 וַיִּקְרָא גַם־פַּרְעֹה לַחֲכָמִים וְלַמְכַשְׁפִּים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם־הֵם חֲרֻטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלַהֲטִיהֶם כֵּן : 12 וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ אִישׁ מִטָּהוּ וַיְהִיו לְתַנּוּנִים וַיִּבְלַע מִטָּה־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־מִטָּתָם : 13 וַיַּחֲזֹק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֶלְהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה :

## REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. —R' Avi Fertig



v.1-3 *See, I place you in the role of God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall repeat all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh...But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt*

**RASHI**... The term “*Elohim*” here means judge and ruler, that is, to reign over him through the plagues. The term “*navi*” should be understood as “*your interpreter*.”...You will speak My word from your mouth and your brother Aaron will speak so Pharaoh’s ears can understand. But “*I will harden his heart...*” because Pharaoh has spoken disdainfully of me. It is clear that gentiles take no satisfaction in wholehearted repentance...Such is God’s method: He punishes the nations so that Israel will fear and heed Him.

**RAMBAN**... RASHI’s comment is completely wrong...In MIDRASH RABBAH, Rabbi Yochanan said: “*For I have hardened his heart...*” This provides an opening for the heretics to say God did not allow Pharaoh a chance to repent...But we learn that when the Holy One warns on three occasions and a person does not turn from his ways, God closes the doors of repentance...Such was the case with wicked Pharaoh, after the Holy One sent him the request five times “*Let my people go!*”...The same Rabbis of the Midrash wonder: “If God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, what was his sin?” There are two explanations. One is that Pharaoh, in his wickedness, had perpetrated such great evils against Israel that justice required the path of repentance be withheld from him...He was judged according to his own wickedness, committed as an act of free will. The second explanation is that Pharaoh’s heart only softened as the plagues beat down upon him and he became too weary to suffer them. It was not to do the Will of the Creator. He relented only due to the onslaught, thus “*He hardened his heart that the Egyptians might know I am Adonai.*” [Ex 7:4-5]

**IBN EZRA**... Many wonder how Pharaoh can be considered to have sinned if God hardened his heart. Some great minds reply that what God did was “*strengthen*” his heart to bear his troubles. My answer is that God gives man wisdom and plants within his heart the intelligence to receive a higher power that enables him to increase his pleasure, or lessen his pain. I will explain this further in my comment to 33:23.

**S’FORNO**...The Almighty sent the plagues to stir the Egyptians to repentance...and there is no doubt that, had not Pharaoh’s heart been hardened, the latter would have let the Israelites go. Yet his action would then not have been motivated by sincere repentance, but merely because he could no longer bear the suffering...Had Pharaoh wished to turn to God and submit to God’s, nothing stood in his way

**R’ MOSHE GREENBERG**... Although “*hardening of the heart*” seems deterministic, events flow naturally from the ambitions and conflicts a human being, Pharaoh, who is seized with the delusion of self-sufficiency. While events unfold under the Providence of God, their unfolding is always according to the motives of human beings...Pharaoh conducted himself in conformity with his own motives and his own Godless view...Pharaoh had only to be himself to do God’s Will.

v.10-14 *So Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded...Yet Pharaoh's heart stiffened and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. And the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go.”*

**R.ALTER**...It should be noted that three different verbs are used in the story for the action on or in Pharaoh’s heart: *Hi-K’shah*—to harden; *Chizek*—to toughen/to strengthen, and *Kaved*—to be heavy, which in English unfortunately suggests sorrow when linked with the heart...The force of all three is to be stubborn, unfeeling, arrogantly inflexible, and there doesn’t seem to be much differentiation among the terms...

**HERTZ**... The phrase often translated as *hardening of heart* occurs nineteen times: ten times it is said that Pharaoh hardened his heart; nine times the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is ascribed to God...Each repetition of Pharaoh’s persistent obstinacy made it less likely that he would listen to God. For such is the law of conscience: every time the voice within is disregarded, it becomes duller, feebler—and the heart grows harder.

**BOGOMILSKY**... “*kaved lev Paroh...*” In Hebrew, *kaved* also means liver. The longer meat is cooked, the softer it becomes. Yet the more liver is broiled, the tougher it becomes. Usually, when a stubborn person is beaten, his heart softens and he begins to yield. Torah is telling us that Pharaoh’s heart was like liver, it toughened w/each plague.

## D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

Alan MORINIS...

What does it mean to have a LEV TOV, a good heart?

A good heart sees the good in others...A Good heart opens up to the heart of another....With a concern for a Good Heart, we are reminded to pay attention to the inner experience that lies behind every action. Many teachers have underlined the asage that “God desires the heart.” [TALMUD, Sanhedrin, 106b]...As the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Mussar teacher Rabbi Eliezer Papo writes: “All of Judaism and the service of God depend upon a good heart.”

Take, for example, the situation that confronted Moses when it was he and not his elder Brother, Aaron, who was chosen to lead the people Israel. Moses worried that Aaron would be hurt because he'd been passed over for leadership, but God reassured him saying: “Behold, Aaron is going out to meet you and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart.” [Exod 4:14] Aaron yearned for the joy and success of others because he had, and had actually cultivated a Lev Tov...And just as much, the goodhearted person feels another's sorrow...

The VILNA GA'ON points out that rain causes whatever is in the earth to grow, whether food or flowers or noxious weeds. Similarly, our study and spiritual practice serve to “water” whatever is seeded in our hearts...We need to be concerned about the quality of our heart, because everything we do in our lives will be an outgrowth of what it is that we have planted there.

When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai asked his students to define the best path a person ought to follow in life, he approved the answer of “LEV TOV—a good heart. We need to cultivate a good heart in order to merit the transformation that we call “acquiring Torah.”

[With Heart in Mind, pgs 125-129]

## YALKUT SHIMONI...

Once upon a time, a lion, the king of beasts, and a fox set out on a voyage by ship. A jackass came and tried to collect a fare for the voyage. Said the jackass: “Pay me the fare.” Replied the fox to the jackass: “What are you, crazy? Don't you know that the king of beasts is with us, and you are worried about collecting a fare!” The jackass replied, “I take what I please from the king, for I have access to his treasuries.” Now the lion became furious and roared, “Bring me hold of this ship!” Whereupon he went and tore the jackass apart, and gave the carcass to the fox with these instructions: “Arrange the limbs of this fool.” So the fox cut the jackass up into pieces and when he came to the heart, he ate it. The lion returned and asked: “Where is this fool's heart?” Replied the fox, “My Lord King, the animal had no heart, for if he had a heart, he surely would never have tried to collect a fare from the king!”

So too with Pharaoh, for if he had a heart, he surely wouldn't have said to the King of Kings, “Pay me the fare!”

## **SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...***

*Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your I*

### **Rabbi LARRY KUSHNER...**

I used to be puzzled by why there were 10 plagues? If God can split the sea, then surely God can free the Children of Israel with a snap of the divine gingers. Furthermore, why would God harden Pharaoh's heart and thereby deprive him of any moral culpability for his obduracy? The answer, I am convinced, has more to do with the Jews than with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Remember that while the Jews complained about their slavery, they also were distrustful of Moses and fearful of rising up. Indeed, before the first plague, their hearts were frozen hard by the bitterness of being slaves...

Each successive plague seems to have an incremental effect on Pharaoh and on the Children of Israel. One heart they harden, the other hearts they lighten with hope. For the Jews, the effect will be that even contemplating serving God frees your heart. For Pharaoh, the inescapable conclusion will be that enslaving others, serving yourself, and calling yourself a god gradually seals you off from life until your heart turns to stone that sinks in the sea.

The rate at which Pharaoh's heart becomes sclerotic is precisely the rate at which Israel's heart begins to lighten. Pharaoh does not lose his freedom; he merely lives out the consequences of his own arrogance and ambition... This is the lesson: You refuse to know anything sacred beyond yourself, you call yourself a god—go ahead, but it will turn your heart into a brick. And this is the other lesson: If you are willing to consider that your present slavery is of your own choosing, and that there is a Holy One beyond yourself who wants only that you be free to serve in the wilderness...then even your heavy heart can soar like a bird on eagle's wings.

[God Was In This Place & I, I Did Not Know, Jewish Lights, 1991, pages 144-145]

### **...PRACTICE...**

TAKE 3 days and rate yourself at the day's end on the spectrum:  
10=LEV TOV[Goodhearted].....1=LEV KAVED[Hardhearted]  
HOW can you alter your life-responses so as to open/lighten your heart