**Free Will**



Two mummies had evidence of severe arterial atherosclerosis with calcifications in virtually every arterial bed. Definite coronary atherosclerosis was present in 2 mummies, including a princess who lived between 1550 and 1580 BCE. This finding represents the earliest documentation of coronary atherosclerosis in a human.  – *The Horus Study*

**Devarim 30**

Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it. See, I set before you this day life and prosperity, death and adversity. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. … Choose life - so you and your offspring would live.

**Shemot 4 21**

וַיֹּאמֶר ה’ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּלֶכְתְּךָ לָשׁוּב מִצְרַיְמָה רְאֵה כָּל־הַמֹּפְתִים אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְיָדֶךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָם לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וַאֲנִי אֲחַזֵּק אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְלֹא יְשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָעָם׃

And the Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the marvels that I have put within your power. I, however, will stiffen his heart so that he will not let the people go.

**Shemot 7 3**

וַאֲנִי אַקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת־אֹתֹתַי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתַי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם׃

But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt.

**Shemot 9 10-12**

וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־פִּיחַ הַכִּבְשָׁן וַיַּעַמְדוּ לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וַיִּזְרֹק אֹתוֹ מֹשֶׁה הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וַיְהִי שְׁחִין אֲבַעְבֻּעֹת פֹּרֵחַ בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה. וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ הַחַרְטֻמִּים לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי הַשְּׁחִין כִּי־הָיָה הַשְּׁחִין בַּחֲרְטֻמִּם וּבְכָל־מִצְרָיִם. וַיְחַזֵּק ה’ אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה’ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

So they took soot of the kiln and appeared before Pharaoh; Moses threw it toward the sky, and it caused an inflammation breaking out in boils on man and beast. The magicians were unable to confront Moses because of the inflammation, for the inflammation afflicted the magicians as well as all the other Egyptians. But the Lord stiffened the heart of Pharaoh, and he would not heed them, just as the Lord had told Moses.

(Haksav VaHakabbalah)

**Rashi Shemot 7 3**

ואני אקשה. מֵאַחַר שֶׁהִרְשִׁיעַ וְהִתְרִיס כְּנֶגְדִּי, וְגָלוּי לְפָנַי שֶׁאֵין נַחַת רוּחַ בָּאֻמּוֹת לָתֵת לֵב שָׁלֵם לָשׁוּב, טוֹב שֶׁיִּתְקַשֶּׁה לִבּוֹ, לְמַעַן הַרְבּוֹת בּוֹ אוֹתוֹתַי, וְתַכִּירוּ אַתֶּם אֶת גְּבוּרָתִי. וְכֵן מִדָּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּבָּ"ה, מֵבִיא פֻּרְעָנוּת עַל הָאֻמּוֹת כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּשְׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִירְאוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱ' "הִכְרַתִּי גוֹיִם נָשַׁמּוּ פִּנּוֹתָם … אָמַרְתִּי אַךְ תִּירְאִי אוֹתִי תִּקְחִי מוּסָר" (צפניה ג'); וְאַעַפִּ"כֵ בְּחָמֵשׁ מַכּוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת לֹא נֶאֱמַר וַיְחַזֵּק ה' אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה, אֶלָּא וַיֶּחֱזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה (תנחומא):

Since he has wickedly resisted Me, and it is manifest to Me that the heathen nations find no spiritual satisfaction in setting their whole heart to return to Me penitently, it is better that his heart should be hardened in order that My signs may be multiplied against him so that ye may recognise My divine power. Such, indeed, is the method of the Holy One, blessed be He: He brings punishment upon the nations so that Israel may hear of it and fear Him, as it is said, (Zephaniah 3:6, 3:7) “I have cut off nations, their corners are desolate etc. … I said: Surely thou wilt fear Me, thou wilt receive correction” (cf. Yevamot 63a). Nevertheless, in the case of the first five plagues it is not stated, “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart” but “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened” (Midrash Tanchuma, Vaera 3).

**R Saadiah Gaon –** Hardened his heart to dull the pain so he would have free will

**Rambam Laws of Repentance 5-6**

Every man was endowed with a free will; if he desires to bend himself toward the good path and to be just it is within the power of his hand to reach out for it, and if he desires to bend himself to a bad path and to be wicked it is within the power of his hand to reach out for it. … Permit not your thought to dwell upon that which ridiculous fools of other peoples and a majority of asinine individuals among the children of Israel say, that the Holy One, blessed is He! decrees at the very embryonic state of every man whether he should be just or wicked. The matter is not so. Every man is capable of being as just as Moses our Master or as wicked as Jeroboam, wise or incony, merciful or human, miser or philanthropist, and so in all other tendencies. There is none to either force things upon him or to decree things against him; either to pull him one way or draw him another way, but he alone, of his own free will, with the consent of his mind, bends to any path he may desire to follow. … And, this matter is a great and component part, the very pillar of the Torah and its precepts, even as it is said: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 30.15), and it is, moreover, written: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and curse" (Ibid. 11.26). This is as if saying, the power is in your hand, and whatever human activity man may be inclined to carry on he has a free will to elect either good or evil. And, because of this very subject it is said: "Oh, who would grant that they had such a heart as this, to fear Me, and to keep all my commandments at all times" (Ibid. 5.26). This is as if saying, that the Creator forces not the sons of man, and makes no decrees against them that they should do good or evil, but that it all is in their own keeping. …

There are many verses in the Torah and in the texts of the prophets which appear to contradict this principle, and most people are stumbling thereby, and therefrom they suppose in their mind that the Holy One, blessed is He! predestines for man either to do evil or good, and that the heart of man is not his to bend it to his own will. … And, it is possible that a man should commit either one grievous iniquity or a multitude of sins so that the Judge of Truth will decree against him that, whereas this sinner committed those sins of his own free will and consciously, repentance should be witheld from him altogether, and grant him no leave to repent, so that he might die and perish in the iniquity he committed. Even this is what the Holy One, blessed is He! said through Isaiah: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their eyes heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, and understanding with their heart will return and be healed" (Is. 6.10). It is, moreover, said: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy". (II Chro. 36.16)—as if saying: "They sinned of their own free will and they have multiplied iniquities, until their guilt carried the punishment to withold repentance from them, which is the remedy". It is, therefore, written in the Torah; "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 14.4), because at the beginning he sinned of his own free will, and meted out evil to Israel who sojourned in his land, even as it is said: "Come, let us deal wisely with them" (Ibid. 1.10). Thereat justice demanded to withold repentance from him, so that due punishment might be visited upon him. Wherefor, the Holy One, blessed is He! hardened his heart. If it be so, then why did He delegate Moses to him, charging him to let Israel go forth and turn to repentance seeing that the Holy One, blessed is He! long since told him thou wilt not let them go forth, saying: "But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God" (Ibid. 9.30), and again saying: "But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee My power, and that My name be declared throughout all the earth"(Ibid. –16)? To demonstrate to the future generations whenever the Holy One, blessed is He! witholds repentance from a sinner he can not repent, but must die in the original evil which he perpetrated of his own free will.

**Ramban**

And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart – they said in the Midrash Rabbah (5:6) that [God] revealed to him that [God] would in the future harden [Pharaoh’s] heart so that judgment would be done on him for enslaving them with hard labor. And we read more there (13:4) because I made his heart heavy (Shemot 10:1) – from this verse, said Rabbi Yochanan, the minim say that he had no chance of doing teshuvah. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish answered: ‘let the mouths of the minim be closed, rather He laughs at mockers (Mishlei 3:34), he was warned once, and twice and three times and he did not repent, and He closes the door of teshuvah so to extract [retribution] from him what he sinned. So with the evil Pharaoh, God sent [warnings] to him five times and he did not listen to [God’s] words, God said to him: ‘you stiffened your neck and you made your own heart heavy, behold I am going to add impurity to your impurity.

And here is the answer to the question that everyone asks: If God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, what then was his transgression [since he had no choice]? There are two answers, which both hold true: First, Pharaoh, in his wickedness, had unjustifiably treated the Jews terribly, so he was punished with the withdrawal of the path of repentance, and there are many verses regarding this in the Torah and the Writings, and he was punished by his original deeds. Secondly, only the second half of the [ten] plagues were brought upon Egypt due to Pharaoh’s transgressions, as the Torah states, And Pharaoh’s heart was strengthened, (Shemot 7:13, 26; 8:15), and Pharaoh hardened his heart (ibid. 8:28, 9:7). He did not want to send the Jews out of Egypt for the glory of God; rather, when the plagues increased and he was becoming too worn out to withstand them, his heart softened and he decided to send them out because of the severity of the plagues themselves, but not in order to do the will of his Creator. Therefore, God strengthened his spirit and gave courage to his heart so that His Name would be declared [throughout the world], as we read: Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Adønαi. (Ez. 38:23).

And that that is written before the plagues (Shemot / Ex. 3:19) and I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go, this is the reason for and I will stiffen Pharaoh’s heart and multiply My wonders that is to say that I will stiffen his heart so as to increase my wonders in the land of Egypt, because in the last five plagues, and also in the drowning at the sea it is written and Adønαi strenghthened (14:8) because the heart of the king is in the hand of Adønαi He turns it how He wants.

**Siforno**

ואני אקשה, seeing that G’d is interested in the sinner’s repentance rather than his death (as we know from Ezekiel 33,11 חי אני, נאום ה', אם אחפוץ במות הרשע כי אם בשובו מדרכו וחיה, “by My life, I do not want the death of the wicked but that he return from his wicked path and live”), G’d told Moses that He would bring on numerous plagues, all in order to increase the chances that Pharaoh would finally see the light and become a genuine penitent. He hoped that by demonstrating His greatness and His power this would eventually cause the Egyptians to recognise all this. At the same time, G’d also spelled out a similar thought in 9,16 but aimed at the Israelites, when He said: “that the only reason He had not yet killed Pharaoh was so that in the course of more plagues you, the Jewish people, would come to recognise both G’d’s greatness and His patience.“ He also wanted the Jewish people to learn how to both love and revere Him when they witnessed and thought about the meaning of all these plagues. There can be no question that without G’d stiffening Pharaoh’s attitude from time to time, he would have collapsed much sooner and would have sent the Israelites on their desired journey. However, this would not have been the result of his repentance and humbling himself before the Lord, involving genuine regret about his previous errors, but the result of his impotence to withstand the pressure applied to him. He would have acted out of terror of what the next plague would do to him and to his country. If we needed confirmation of this, all we have to do is look at what his servants said to him when Moses threatened with the plague of locust. They said to him: “how long will you be obstinate, do you not see that Egypt will go down the drain?!” There was not a single word of regret of past errors, no word of recognition that G’d could have killed them all long before this and that He must therefore be very patient, and kind, but mere terror forced them to utter these words. (10,7) Keeping all this in mind, it is foolish to ask how G’d could punish Pharaoh after he Himself had interfered with his decision-making process by “stiffening his heart,” ואני אקשה את לב פרעה, I will stiffen the heart of Pharaoh, etc.” not in order to punish him but in order to finally trigger repentance in his heart. The operative clause is “in order that I can demonstrate all these miracles of Mine in his midst” (10,1), the purpose being to bring about his humbling himself in repentance and genuine contrition. If that wish of G’d would indeed materialise, the Jewish people also would tell of G’d’s greatness, (למען ספר את שמי, having observed at first hand how the mightiest secular power on earth turned into G’d fearing human beings.) They would tell their children and children’s children the lesson they had learned that G’d’s apparent cruelty is actually an act of loving kindness as it results in His creatures coming to love and to revere Him. [Noach, who had survived the destruction of mankind by a deliberate act of G’d’s kindness to him and his family, had not been able to relate to his children what G’d hoped that the Israelites would be able to relate to their children. Ed.] The basic lesson in ethics we derive from all this is that when suffering an affliction we must first and foremost examine our past actions to find out where we went wrong, and try to find out what these afflictions are intended to trigger in our memory so that we can improve our conduct both vis-à-vis G’d and our fellow man.

**Medrash Raba Shemot 13 3**

Another explanation: For I have hardened his heart - Rabbi Yochanan said: Does this not provide heretics with an opportunity to open their mouths to say that he had no means of repenting, as it say "For I have hardened his heart". Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said to him: Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped up. Rather, (Mishlei 3:34) If it concerns the scorners, he scorns them. When the Holy One Blessed be He warns a man once, twice, thrice and he doesn't repent, and G-d will close his heart against repentance so that He should not exact vengeance from him for his sins. So to with the wicked Pharaoh, since Hashem sent five times to him and he took no notice, G-d then said: "You have stiffened your neck and hardened your heart; well, I will add impurity to your impurity". Hence, "For I have hardened his heart".

**R Bechaye Shemot 10 3**

**והנה** כובד המכות על פרעה לכובד לבו כי מה שאמר אני הכבדתי את לבו פירשו מוסיף כובד על כבדו, לפי שאמר למעלה ויוסף לחטא ויכבד לבו הוא ועבדיו. וכבר ידעת כי אחאב מלך ישראל שהיה רשע עובד ע"ז ונכנע ועלתה לו הכנעתו הוא שכתוב ([מלכים א כ״א:כ״ט](/I_Kings.21.29)) הראית כי נכנע אחאב מלפני יען כי נכנע מפני לא אביא הרעה בימיו בימי בנו אביא הרעה על ביתו

(Malbim – during the warnings)

**Ibn Ezra Devarim 5 26**

*May they always be of such mind, to revere Me and follow all My commandments, that it may go well with them and with their children forever!*

**Who would grant!** Scripture does not say, “who would grant me ”, but rather, “who would grant them ” (the word them is displaced in the sentence, and appears after that they had such a will ). Know that the Divine decree underlies all actions and all phenomena, in the sense that the nature and potentiality of everything in the universe, including living creatures, is determined by the action of the constellations on the four elements. A creature’s behavior at every moment is governed by its nature and its potential. However, as the author of the Sefer Yeṣira has explained, a certain amount of deviation can exist. Individuals derive their nature from the species, and they can change their nature within the boundaries of their species’s potential. This is the meaning of “God hardened the heart of Pharaoh” [Exodus 9: 12], although elsewhere Scripture asserts, “he hardened his heart; he and his officials” [Exodus 9: 34]. Both statements are true. Accordingly the prophets have said, “I know, God , that the way of a man is not in himself” [Jeremiah 10: 23] and “Why have you made us stray, God , from Your ways?” [Isaiah 63: 17]. Nevertheless, Moshe said, “choose life” [30: 19]. God does not prevent anyone from achieving good. Indeed, He wishes to bestow good; and Scripture says so anthropomorphically by using the expression, **Who would grant.**

**Akeiydas Yitzchak**

**-** Hashem allowed outdoor “reasons” to give Pharaoh an out.

Rav Dessler (vol 2 pg 238)

Sfas Emes (Shemos 10 3)

*So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go that they may worship Me.*

Other locations:

**Yeshaya 6 –**

*And He said, “Go, say to that people: ‘Hear, indeed, but do not understand; See, indeed, but do not grasp.’ Dull that people’s mind, Stop its ears, And seal its eyes— Lest, seeing with its eyes And hearing with its ears, It also grasp with its mind, And repent and save itself.”*

Rambam – This was a punishment, Rashi – Yetzer Harah speaking, Mhari Bei Rav – reverse psychology, Malbim – tell them to listen but not to think about it, so eventually they might, Radak (Yohonasan) This is what the people were telling themselves, cynical

**End** by summarizing and with the middah kineged midah piece