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**Bible & Kabbalah: The Hardening of Pharoah's Heart**

**By Rabbi Michael Ozair**

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Bible & Kabbalah:  
THE HARDENING OF PHAROAH'S HEART

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There is continuous creation,  
out of the new ideas discovered in the Torah.

Zohar, Genesis, Introduction, 52

**OUR PURPOSE FOR THE STUDY**

Students of Kabbalah understand the Torah (Hebrew Bible) as a mystical book wherein the Kabbalistic system is embodied in allegories and symbols. Thus, the Torah and the Kabbalah are dependent on and complete each other. . The illumination emanating from the study ignites the soul, setting it on fire with the awareness of a deeper and Higher Reality. Its study and insights are themselves mystical experiences.

**Why Study Them in "Blocks"?**

The need for exploring these archetypal accounts in weekly blocks can be understood in the idea that what Spirit has to teach us, must be taught in segments. Spirit does not confront us with its totality, for it would be far too vast, too immense on our psyche to integrate all lessons of spiritual growth at once, therefore it is broken down into parts, or what we call the weekly parsha or Torah portions.

**Creating a Collective Portal of Light**

For thousands of years now, we have studied these sacred texts. It is taught by the Kabbalists that when we collectively learn the parsha of that specific week with its spiritual teachings, we tap into a

portal of Heavenly Light. The more people engaged in this study, the stronger the portal becomes. The portal creates an opening for the Earth and her inhabitants to be flooded with Shefa, Divine Light, which is very much needed today to penetrate the veil of mass consciousness on our planet.

Those who have done their spiritual work will be more able to quickly assimilate the Light into their beings and use it to propel themselves forward in their earthly endeavors.

#### INTRODUCTION – BIBLICAL TEXT:

"Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart" (Exodus 10:1)

In this week's Torah portion, we read that G-d hardens Pharaoh's heart. In Hebrew thought, the heart is the core of a person, the seat of emotions, intellect and will. Regarding the above Biblical verse several questions must be raised: If G-d was controlling Pharaoh's heart, then Pharaoh had no choice to do what he did and was therefore not really making his own decisions. Why then blame Pharaoh for anything? Additionally, where is the Free Will in all this?

The following commentaries based on Judaism's Hasidic tradition shed some very interesting insight into the entire Biblical account, and of course, into ourselves.

It will comprise of three sections, with each section introducing a Spiritual Law:

- First Law – Light is Impartial
- Second Law – Law of Accountability
- Third Law – Law of Correction

#### FIRST LAW: LIGHT IS IMPARTIAL

The following is a beginning point, taught as a fundamental principle by Reb Nachman of Breslov:

"From the mouth of the Most High comes neither good nor bad. What emanates is a simple Light. However, according to the level of the vessel that receives the Light, so is Light inside formed and perceived."

In other words, Reb Nachman is saying the following:

Light, as revealed in our world, is not selective, nor does it discriminate. It is present in It's entirety at all times and in all places. This Light follows the direction we put our attention and energy. Since this Light is all-inclusive and all-pervading, we have a responsibility with where we focus our attention.

Since Light does not discriminate as to where It is led, then why could It not be the very energy behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? It is Pharaoh who

is choosing to harden his heart, Light is just the energy he is using towards his own decisions. As it says in the Talmud, "The door shall be opened for one who comes knocking to defile himself" (Masechet Yoma: 38b)

This is where free choice comes in. According to the Torah, we are even given "assistance" even to make the wrong choices. Again, this is because the Light does not discriminate. It gives of Itself to all.

With this in mind, the following Hasidic commentary comes as a very interesting point to WHY Pharaoh needed G-d's Light to harden his own heart:

"Pharaoh needed to be strengthened by G-d in order to keep his composure and make his own choices. Moses and Aaron, were after all, great tzaddikim (holy sages), full of signs and wonders. It would have been impossible not to surrender to them had not Pharaoh's heart been made stronger by G-d."  
(Source: Rabbi Eliezer Ish Horowitz in Noam Megadim).

This idea of G-d being the fuel behind even one's misdirected, foolish and evil intentions may be shocking, but it is not something new. Our tradition recognizes that conscious thought is the starting point of every new creation, and since our world is a Free Will Zone, we have a responsibility of where we direct and focus our thoughts/energy.

In other words, Torah teaches us personal accountability that must be taken with great sensitivity and awareness, as we come to realize what a tremendous power we have at our conscious disposal. Learning from Pharaoh's misuse of Spiritual Law, we need to do the opposite, as we shall soon see.

#### WHAT WENT WRONG?

Since Light is impartial, does this justify Pharaoh's position? Absolutely not.

The Zohar (3:47b) states, "The greatest revelation of G-dliness is the Light that emerges from Darkness." Thus we see that not only is there value to darkness – but when we attempt to draw Light out from it, it becomes the GREATEST display of G-dliness.

Reb Tzadok HaCohen adds the following insight regarding darkness:

"The (Hebrew) word for darkness – choshech can be read in two different ways,(depending on whether we read the interchangeable middle letter as a shin or a sin) A dot on the right side will give us the word choshech–darkness. A dot on the left will yield the word chosech–to withhold. What then is darkness but the withholding of Light?"

If darkness is the withholding of Light, our job in the world then becomes to reveal it.

A good place to begin is within ourselves.

"Every time you find yourself at conflict with a part of yourself that is self sabotaging –the Pharaoh part – remember that the force of might that is behind this destructive part is really an unconscious and misdirected power, a "hardening" of G–d. When you unravel the hardened heart, you will discover that the intention is pure and the power is G–dly, and thus, transformable." – Rabbi Avraham of Trisk (Magen Avraham)

What happens to those, such as Pharaoh, who do not seek to "unravel the hardened heart"?

When one does not take a personal accountability of their resistances to change, it is inevitable that plagues break out. It took 10 plagues until Pharaoh, the archetype of resistance, was able to surrender to the inevitable change that awaited him.

This introduces us to our Second Law – the Law of Accountability.

## SECOND LAW – LAW OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to understand the Metaphysics behind the Law of Accountability we need to further understand what our role is in dealing with Light and Darkness.

According to Judaism's mystical tradition, when we encounter darkness, we have an option by which we are held accountable: to either push it away or to transform it. The difference is the following:

"When light PUSHES AWAY the darkness, eventually another darkness shall come. When the darkness itself is TRANSFORMED into light, it is a Light that no darkness can ever again oppose. It is a higher grade of Light" (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt"l – the late Lubavitcher Rebbe).

The Pharaoh of the Torah text not only neglects to transform his darkness into light, or even push it away, but resists it, and thus becomes further hardened by it, as a result.

Again, this Pharaoh part of ourselves is in truth a Divine part of ourselves but one that remains blocked and unevolved.

The greater the resistance to the Moshe (Moses) liberating force within, the more we witness on ourselves strange behaviors, violent demonstrations of wrath, and crazy outbreaks of irrationality – in other words – plagues.

## PHAROAH'S FATE – THE LAW OF CORRECTION

The universe shows us that our daily encounters in the world will persuade us to embrace our inner contradictions, challenge us to make compromises while offering us the reward of wholeness if we surrender to Reality.

Like Pharaoh, when we resist what we perceive as an opposition or threat to our reality, we inevitably

attract and must face conflict.

Like Pharaoh, when we are unable to take appropriate actions, we inevitably become the victims of Life's correction.

Like Pharaoh, whatever we refuse to embrace about ourselves will ultimately deprive us of our peace.

G-d indeed hardens Pharaoh's heart and indeed punishes him.  
But G-d is not the one to blame for it. Pharaoh is.

The text implies that during the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. It was not until the end of the plagues that the text changes to "G-d hardening Pharaoh's heart".

This is because although we are given free choice in this universe, it is only up to a point.

In Kabbalah we have what is called, "The Law of the Vessel" or "Law of Correction" which means, the universe (Vessel) has within it a self correcting mechanism. When anything reaches an extreme, the Universe corrects it by brining it back into balance. When a body gets too cold, it shivers. When it gets too hot, it sweats. Likewise, according to the Law of the Vessel, if someone decides to do harm of their own volition, they are given free reign to do just that (which is the nature of free choice), but there'll come a point where their

ability to freely make their own wrongful moral and spiritual choices will be taken away from them, and both that person and their acts of evil will be undone. Therefore, as our Sages have taught, our Universe is comprised of a delicate balance, perfect in its own way, of both Mercy and Justice – Chesed and Gevurah.

In the meantime, let us continue moving forward with honesty, humility and a willingness to be advocates for G-d's Light. Tomorrow still holds many seas to cross, a wilderness to wander, and a Promised Land that awaits both you and I.

Blessings,  
Rabbi Michael Ozair  
<http://www.KabbalahCoach.com>

Rabbi Michael Ozair is a spiritual life coach, counselor, teacher and consultant. He can be reached at [coach@kabbalahcoach.com](mailto:coach@kabbalahcoach.com) or by visiting his site at [KabbalahCoach.com](http://www.KabbalahCoach.com)

**Where to Start**

**By Joyce C. Lock**

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When God's thoughts were written in the Bible, they didn't have the same meaning as how we interpret words. Didn't He tell us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts," Is. 55:8?

Almost every word of significance, within the Bible, has its own definition given somewhere in the Bible. God hides things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them to babes, Lu. 10:21.

God is His own commentator. He doesn't need anything, including interpreters.

Study to show yourself approved, compare scripture with scripture, rightly DIVIDING the word of truth. (If you don't, it isn't truth.) It can only be spiritually discerned. He told us all these things and more. Wasn't anyone listening!?!

When you seek ME with your whole heart, you'll find ME. When you seek MY definition of the words, you'll find MY heart and intent. Your knowledge will pass away. My words are forever. And, My Truth will set you free.

When we're ready to do away with doctrines of men (gods of this world) and start over as a little child (letting God be our teacher), the Bible takes on new life ... life more abundantly. His Spirit will guide us to the truths we need in the moments of our day and the Spirit can't lie ... God promised, I Jn. 2:27.

God isn't dead. He'll walk with you and talk with you, and be the best counselor you ever had. Trade your thoughts for God's, your ways for His. We can live victoriously, when we put our faith in Him.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
Proverbs 3:5

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In addition to being a published author and poet, Joyce C. Lock created the religion column, "Christianity Made Simple" for Peru Daily Tribune, continues to write inspirational articles for area newspapers, and shares further in online and e-mail ministries.



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