

Parsha Plug Parshat Vaaira

<p><b>Shemot 6:9, 12, 28-30; 7:1-5</b></p>	<p>שמות ו:ט, יב, כח-ל; ז:א-ה</p>
<p><b>9</b> Moses spoke to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of [their] shortness of breath and because of [their] hard labor.  <b>12</b> But Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, "Behold, the children of Israel did not listen to me. How then will Pharaoh listen to me, seeing that I am of closed lips?"  <b>28</b> Now it came to pass on the day that the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, <b>29</b> that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh everything that I speak to you." <b>30</b> But Moses said before the Lord, "Behold, I am of closed lips; so how will Pharaoh listen to me?"  <b>1</b> The Lord said to Moses, "See! I have made you a lord over Pharaoh, and Aaron, your brother, will be your speaker. <b>2</b> You shall speak all that I command you, and Aaron, your brother, shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel out of his land. <b>3</b> But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will increase My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. <b>4</b> But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay My hand upon the Egyptians, and I will take My legions, My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt with great judgments. <b>5</b> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch forth My hand over Egypt, and I will take the children of Israel out of their midst."</p>	<p>ט וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֶלְבָּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֵר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה:          יב וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה' לֵאמֹר הֲיִן בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמְעוּנִי פִרְעֹה וְאֲנִי עַרְל שְׁפָתַיִם: כח וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה--בְּאָרְץ מִצְרַיִם. {ס} כט וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר, אֲנִי ה'; דִּבֶּר, אֶל־פִּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי דֹבֵר אֵלֶיךָ. ל וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, לִפְנֵי ה': הֲיִן אֲנִי, עַרְל שְׁפָתַיִם, וְאֵיךְ, יִשְׁמַע אֵלַי פִּרְעֹה. א וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה, רְאֵה נִתְּתִיךָ אֱלֹהִים לִפְרֹעֹה; וְאֶהְרֶן אַחֶיךָ, יִהְיֶה נְבִיאֲךָ. ב אַתָּה תְּדַבֵּר, אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶךָ; וְאֶהְרֶן אַחֶיךָ יְדַבֵּר אֶל־פִּרְעֹה, וְשַׁלַּח אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרְצוֹ. ג וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה, אֶת־לֵב פִּרְעֹה; וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־אֲתַתִּי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתֵי, בְּאָרְץ מִצְרַיִם. ד וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵכֶם פִּרְעֹה, וְנִתְּתִי אֶת־יָדַי בְּמִצְרַיִם; וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־צְבָאתִי אֶת־עַמִּי בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵאֶרְץ מִצְרַיִם, בְּשִׁפְטִים, גְּדֹלִים. ה וַיִּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי ה', בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת־יָדַי עַל־מִצְרַיִם; וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִתּוֹכָם.</p>

<p><b>Rashi on Shemot 6:9, 12; 7:3</b></p>	<p>רש"י על שמות ו:יב</p>
<p><b>But they did not listen to Moses:</b> They did not accept consolation [They despaired completely of ever being redeemed].  <b>Closed lips:</b> Of “closed” lips. Every expression of עֲרָלָה I say denotes a closure: e.g., “their ear is clogged (עֲרָלָה)” (<a href="#">Jer. 6:10</a>), [meaning] clogged to prevent hearing; “of uncircumcised hearts” (<a href="#">Jer. 9:25</a>), [meaning] clogged to prevent understanding...  <b>But I will harden:</b> Since he [Pharaoh] behaved wickedly and defied Me, and I know full well that there is no delight among the nations to make a wholehearted attempt to repent, it is better for Me that his heart be hardened, so that [I can] increase My signs and My wonders in him, and you will recognize My mighty deeds, and so is the custom of the Holy One, blessed be He. He brings retribution on the nations so that Israel should hear and fear...Nevertheless, in the first five plagues, it does not say, “And the Lord strengthened Pharaoh’s heart,” but “Pharaoh’s heart remained steadfast.”</p>	<p>ולא שמעו אל משה: לא קבלו תנחומין. ערל שפתים: אטום שפתים. וכן כל לשון ערלה אני אומר שהוא אטום (ירמיה ו:י) ערלה אונם, אטומה משמוע, (ירמיה ט:כה) ערלי לב, אטומים מהבין... ואני אקשה: מאחר שהרשע והתריס כנגדי, וגלוי לפני שאין נחת רוה באומות עובדי עבודה זרה לתת לב שלם לשוב, טוב לי שיתקשה לבו למען הרבות בו אותותי ותכירו אתם את גבורותי. וכן מדתו של הקב"ה מביא פורענות על האומות עובדי עבודה זרה כדי שישמעו ישראל וייראו...ואף על פי כן בחמש מכות הראשונות לא נאמר ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה, אלא ויחזק לב פרעה:</p>

Ibn Ezra on Shemot 7:3	אבן עזרא על שמות ז:ג
<p><b>I will harden:</b> There are those who ask, 'If God hardened his heart, what was Pharaoh's sin, what was his transgression?' The answer is that God gave wisdom to man and planted in his heart intelligence to receive a higher strength, to add to His goodness, or to lessen the evil. This is what is intended in Parshat Ki Tissa in the verse, 'O, that they had a heart like this always' (Deut 5:25). This is the reason for 'I will harden his heart', in order to increase My wonders. Rebbe Yeshuah said the reason for 'I will harden his heart' was to suffer the plagues, but this is not right.</p>	<p><b>ואני אקשה:</b> יש לשאול, אם ד' הקשה את לבו מה פשעו מה חטאתו. והתשובה, כי השם נתן חכמה לאדם ונטע בלבו שכל לקבל כח עליון, להוסיף על טובתו, או לחסר מרעתו, וזה אפרש בפ' כי תשא, ובפסוק מי יתן והיה לבבם זה (דבר' ה, כה). והנה טעם אקשה את לבו למען רבות מופתי. ור' ישועה אמר, כי טעם אקשה את לבו לסבול את המכות, ולא דבר נכונה.</p>

Ramban on Shemot 7:3	רמב"ן על שמות ז:ג
<p><b>And I will harden Pharaoh's heart:</b> The rabbis said in the midrash, 'God revealed to Moses that He was destined to harden Pharaoh's heart in order to bring judgement upon him for he caused them to work in cruel bondage'. It is also stated there, 'For I have hardened his heart'. Rebbe Yochanan said, 'This provides a pretext for the heretics to say that God did not allow Pharaoh to repent!' Rebbe Shimon ben Lakish said, 'The mouths of the heretics will be closed. Only 'if it concerns the scorners, will He scorn them''. When He warns one on three occasions and he does not turn from his ways, He closes the door of repentance on him in order to punish him for his sin. Such was the case with wicked Pharaoh. After the Holy One Blessed be He sent him five times [the request to let His people go] and he paid no attention to His words, the Holy One blessed be He said to him, 'You have stiffened your neck and hardened your heart. I will double your defilement'.</p>	<p><b>ואני אקשה את לב פרעה:</b> אמרו במדרש רבה (שמו"ר ה ו) גילה לו שהוא עתיד לחזק את לבו בעבור לעשות בו הדין, תחת שהעבדים בעבודה קשה. ועוד שם (יג ד) כי אני הכבדתי את לבו (להלן י א), אמר רבי יוחנן מכאן פתחון פה למינין לומר לא היתה ממנו שיעשה תשובה. אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש יסתם פיהם של מינין, אלא אם ללצים הוא יליץ (משלי ג לד), מתרה בו פעם ראשונה ושניה ושלישית ואינו חוזר בו והוא נועל בו דלת מן התשובה כדי לפרוע ממנו מה שחטא. כך פרעה הרשע, כיון ששגר הקדוש ברוך הוא אצלו חמש פעמים ולא השגיח על דבריו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אתה הקשית את ערפך והכבדת את לבך, הריני מוסיף לך טומאה על טומאתך:</p>

Aviva Zornberg <i>The Patriarchs of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus</i> , pp.104-108
<p>Pharaoh- 'And God hardened Pharaoh's heart':...In Pharaoh's case, not-listening becomes a fatal reflex, closing him to vulnerability and to growth...The process by which he moves from hardening his own heart to God's hardening his heart (in general terms, this happens after the first five plagues) is essentially a mysterious one. A stamina of endurance possesses Pharaoh: to the bystander, there is an unnatural compulsive quality about this refusal that is, perhaps, as Shadal and Cassuto suggest, the idiomatic meaning of the formula: 'God hardened his heart': where God is described as the cause of human emotional responses, the effect is to suggest and <i>unaccountable</i> human reaction...We notice that with the progress of the plagues the phrase, 'Pharaoh did not listen to them' disappears from the Torah. It is absent in the fourth plague, reappears in the sixth, and does not recur... Then, a kind of spiritual</p>

*rigor mortis* sets in...To hear is to open oneself up to vulnerability, chance, contingency. The Egyptian solution to the *causa sui* dilemma, the 'narcissistic inflation' that attempts to overcome the conflict of ambivalence, turns out to be pathological. But it is not, it seems, confined to Egyptians. The Israelites also do not listen...

Sefat Emet on Shemot 6:12	שפת אמת שמות וארא שנה תרנט
<p><sup>1</sup>Indeed the children of Israel have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen, since I am a man of uncircumcised lips?: We have already explained that it is because Israel refused to listen that he has these uncircumcised lips. The prophet prophesies by the power of those who listen...This is what delayed the giving of the Ten Commandments. Speech was in exile as long as those who were to receive torah had not yet readied themselves to hear the word of God...Hearing requires being empty of everything. 'Hear O daughter, and see, give ear, forget your people and your father's house (Ps. 45:11). This is the essence of exile today as well: our inability to empty ourselves, to forget this world's vanities so that we empty the heart to hear God's word without any distracting thought. This is the meaning of the verse, 'Do not turn after your hearts' (Num 15:39). And it was because 'no man would cast away the abominations of his eyes' that they walked about amid 'the idols of Egypt'. Had they been ready to hear God's word, they would have been redeemed immediately. Now torah has already been given to Israel by, 'a great voice that did not cease' (Deut 5:19). It has never stopped. Each day we say, 'Hear O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One' (Deut 6:4). This is the voice saying 'I am Hashem your God'. It has never stopped. But we have to prepare ourselves to truly hear the Shema without any distracting thought. This is why we mention the Exodus (Shirat HaYam) before the Shema. By being redeemed from Egypt we are emptied of all distraction and become ready to hear God's word...</p>	<p>בפסוק הן בני לא שמעו כו' ואני ערל שפתים. פרשנו כבר כי ע"י שבנ"י לא שמעו לכן הוא ערל שפתים. כי הנביא מתנבא בכח שמיעת בני"י...וזה ה' עיכוב עשרת הדיברות. וה' הדיבור בגלות כל זמן שלא הוכנו המקבלים לשמוע דבר ה'...כי השמיעה צריך להיות פנוי מכל דבר כמ"ש שמעי בת כו' והטי אזנך ושכחי עמך ובית אביך. וזה עיקר הגלות גם עתה מה שא"י להתפנות ולשכוח הבלי עולם להיות הלב פנוי לשמוע דבר ה' בלי מחשבה זרה כמ"ש ול"ת אחרי לבבכם כו'. וז"ש איש שקוצי עיניו לא השליכו. ולכן בגלולי מצרים הלכו. כי אם היו מוכנים לשמוע דבר ה' היו נגאלים מיד. והנה עתה שכבר ניתנה התורה לבנ"י. וכל קול גדול ולא יסף. לא פסק. ואומרים בכל יום שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו כו'. והוא המאמר אנכי ה' א. אשר לא פסק. אבל צריכין להכין עצמו לשמוע פרשת ק"ש בלי מחשבה זרה. ולכן מקדימין יצ"מ לק"ש. שע"י גאולת מצרים יכולין להיפנות ממ"ז להיות מוכן לשמוע דבר ה'...</p>

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Rabbi Arthur Green

<sup>2</sup> Plague	Attribute of God	Physical Location	God's Power over	Warning to Pharaoh
1. Blood (דם)	Of the first nine plagues, the first set of three demonstrated <i>the existence of God</i> – in response to Pharaoh's denial of God (Shemot 7:17, Malbim)	The first set of plagues came <i>from below</i> , from the water and the earth, and being a lesser form of plague, they were performed by Aharon (Shemot 7:17, 7:28, 8:12; Tosafos on the Haggadah)	Water	Warning
2. Frogs (צפרדע)			Aquatic creatures	Warning
3. Lice (כנָם)			Dust of the earth	No warning. (The three plagues about which Pharaoh was not warned caused pain and inconvenience, but no threat to life – Ramban/Nachmanides 8:15).
4. Wild Animals (עֲרֵב)	The second set demonstrated <i>God's Providence and control of all the world's details</i> – in response to Pharaoh's claim that even if God exists He has no authority over the world (Shemot 8:18, Malbim).	The second set of plagues came <i>from above the ground and from the air</i> , and being a higher form of plague they were performed by Moshe (Shemot 8:17, 9:3, 9:9; Tosafos on the Haggadah)	Land animals	Warning
5. Epidemic (דבר)			Life of land animals	Warning
6. Boils (שחין)			Humans	No warning
7. Hail (ברד)	The third set demonstrated that <i>God's power is absolute and unparalleled</i> – in response to Pharaoh's claim that even if God has powers, other gods have equal powers (Shemot 9:14, Malbim).	The last four came <i>from the sky</i> , being the highest form of plague, they were performed by God Himself (Shemot 9:18, 10:4, 10:21, 12:12; Tosafos on the Haggadah)	Nature	Warning
8. Locusts (ארבה)			Flying creatures	Warning
9. Darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ)			Day and night	No warning
10. Death of the firstborn (מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת)	The tenth plague signifies God's direct control over life and death (Chaye Olam Vol. I, 15).		Life and death	Warning

<sup>2</sup> Chart by Aaron Kagan of Sh'or Yoshuv