



## Va'eira

(and I appeared)

### Shemot [Exodus] 6:2-9:35

#### Moshe Receives a Prophecy

*Shemot [Exodus] 7:1-6*

**1 And YHWH said to Moshe, "See, I have made you as Elohim to Pharaoh; and Aharon your brother shall be your prophet.**

**2 You shall speak all that I command you; and Aharon your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.**

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

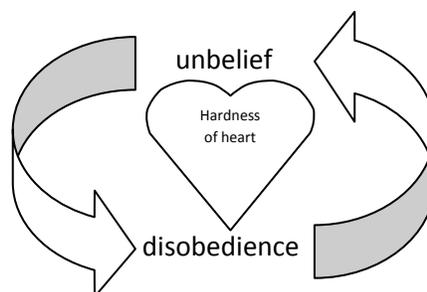
**4 But Pharaoh will not hearken to you, and I will lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.**

**5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am YHWH, when I stretch forth My hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them."**

**6 And Moshe and Aharon did so; as YHWH commanded them, so they did.**

Before Moshe actually went back into Egypt, YHWH told Moshe that Pharaoh would not listen to the command to let the nation of Israel go. He would do this by way of Pharaoh's heart being hardened. The process of the hardening of the heart is a very important concept for His people to understand so that we can guard against it properly.

The cycle of the hardening of the heart begins with disobedience to YHWH. As we will see below, there are many things that contribute to the hardening of one's heart. However, this cycle can be reduced to two main components: disobedience and unbelief. It can actually start with either one, but most commonly begins with unbelief.



When one refuses to believe YHWH, this can result in only one thing – disobedience. If left to take its natural course, then this will produce further unbelief. This, in turn, produces further disobedience. Thus, a cycle begins of hardening one’s heart. If this cycle is allowed to continue, the heart of that person will grow harder and harder, culminating in one’s destruction.

Let us now look closely at Pharaoh’s life to learn about this cycle.

## Disobedience = Hardening of the Heart

### *Shemot [Exodus] 7:13-14*

**13 And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not to them; as YHWH had spoken.**

**14 And YHWH said to Moshe, “Pharaoh's heart is stubborn, he refuses to let the people go.”**

When Moshe first went to Pharaoh, he demonstrated to Pharaoh that he was there by the commandment of YHWH by turning his staff into a tanniyim (dragon). However, Pharaoh did not believe that this was of YHWH because his sorcerers could also do the same thing; except that the dragon that Moshe created, ate the dragons that the Pharaoh’s sorcerers conjured up with their magic arts. But, it was enough so that Pharaoh refused to believe, and thus it resulted in him disobeying the commandment from YHWH to let His people go.

So far, there have been three different Hebrew words that are being translated into English as “harden” or some other form of this English word. Let us look at these words so that we can be familiar with them and know which word is being used in which verse.

Reference	Hebrew word	Hebrew root word	Meaning of the form used	Additional references
7:3	אֶקְשֶׁה (‘aq-sheh)	קָשָׂה (qa-shah)	to harden	
7:13	וַיַּחֲזֶק (vay-ye-che-zaq)	חָזַק (cha-zaq)	to be strong	7:22; 8:19; 9:12; 9:35; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17
7:14	כָּבֵד (ka-ved)	כָּבֵד (ka-ved)	heavy	8:15; 8:32; 9:7; 9:34

As we can see, the first word used to describe what was going to happen in Pharaoh’s heart is used only one time, which was in the prophecy concerning this given by YHWH to Moshe. The most common Hebrew word used to describe this, is the word “chazaq” which means “strong”; and in the way that it is used in 7:13, its form means “to be strong”. This the most common form used in the verses listed.

## **Unbelief = Hardening of the Heart**

***Shemot [Exodus] 7:22***

***22 And the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not to them; as YHWH had spoken.***

Pharaoh simply refused to believe that Moshe was speaking for YHWH because his sorcerers could do the same things as Moshe. Now this doesn't make any sense to me at all. It seems obvious that they were going to be in serious shortage of water to drink really quickly. Yet, here these sorcerers are turning what little water they had into blood. If they were such good sorcerers why didn't they turn the blood back into water? That would have made much more sense! It is probably because they couldn't do that!

Moshe turned the whole river into blood. Pharaoh's sorcerers could only turn small containers into blood. But because they were seemingly able to do the same thing, Pharaoh refused to believe and thus it resulted in Pharaoh's disobedience to YHWH. This produced a hardening of his heart.

## **Who's Doing What**

***Shemot [Exodus] 8:15***

***15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not to them, as YHWH had spoken.***

In this second plague, as soon as the frogs were gone, Pharaoh went back on his word. He had no fear of YHWH Elohim and the only thing that he cared about was getting what he wanted out of all this, which was relief from the plagues. And he was willing to do almost anything to get it; anything except obey YHWH in this matter. After all, when a person has another person in his service, it is difficult to let them go and serve YHWH. Who would then serve Pharaoh?

YHWH was asking Pharaoh to not only let these people go so they could serve Him, but He was also asking Pharaoh to serve Him, which is exactly what Pharaoh would have done had he obeyed the command from YHWH. For to obey is to serve; and to serve is to obey.

When a person enslaves another person, then the master had better be treating those in his service with kindness and compassion according to Torah. If he does not, then he will have to answer directly to YHWH Himself. This is what happened in this case. Pharaoh was responsible for all the Hebrew people in his service. His taskmasters were mistreating the Hebrew people. They cried out to YHWH,

He heard and responded to their cry. YHWH’s response was to come to their aid and seek their freedom from bondage.

Now, in relation to this hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, we need to chart this so we can easily see who is doing what and when, in order to see what it is that YHWH would have us to learn from this.

Reference	What	When	Who
7:3	I will harden	Prophecy	YHWH
7:13	to be strong	Staff	Pharaoh
7:14	heavy	Statement of fact	Pharaoh
7:22	to be strong	1 <sup>st</sup> plague – blood	Pharaoh
8:15	to make heavy	2 <sup>nd</sup> plague – frogs	Pharaoh
8:19	to be strong	3 <sup>rd</sup> plague – lice	Pharaoh
8:32	to make heavy	4 <sup>th</sup> plague – swarms	Pharaoh
9:7	to be heavy	5 <sup>th</sup> plague – disease	Pharaoh
9:12	to make strong	6 <sup>th</sup> plague – boils	YHWH
9:34	to make heavy	7 <sup>th</sup> plague – hail	Pharaoh
9:35	to be strong	7 <sup>th</sup> plague – hail	Pharaoh
10:20	to make strong	8 <sup>th</sup> plague – locusts	YHWH
10:27	to make strong	9 <sup>th</sup> plague – darkness	YHWH
11:10	to make strong	10 <sup>th</sup> plague – death	YHWH
14:4	to make strong	The chase prophesied	YHWH
14:8	to make strong	The hardening for the chase	YHWH
14:17	to make strong	Final hardening	YHWH

YHWH first prophesies to Moshe, that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart, in Shemot 7:3. However, YHWH does not actually harden his heart for the first time until after the sixth plague is removed. From 7:13 through 9:7, it is Pharaoh hardening his own heart. Then YHWH hardens Pharaoh’s heart one time at the conclusion of the sixth plague, with Pharaoh hardening his own heart again at the conclusion of the seventh plague. The rest of the time, YHWH is doing the hardening until YHWH destroys Pharaoh and all his army in the sea. We will discuss this more, later in this teaching.

Notice in the chart above the usage of the word “chazaq” (strong) in relation to Pharaoh and YHWH. When pharaoh is doing this to his own heart, the form of the word “chazaq” used means “to be strong”. When it is YHWH doing it to Pharaoh’s heart, then the form of the word “chazaq” used means “to make strong”. This is a wonderful clue to help us know who is doing what, and when.

## Not Listening = More Hardness

***Shemot [Exodus] 8:18-19***

***18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not; and there were lice upon man, and upon beast.***

***19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of Elohim." And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not to them; as YHWH had spoken.***

Even though Pharaoh's own sorcerers became convinced that it was YHWH Who was behind these plagues and told Pharaoh as much, Pharaoh would not listen to their counsel. The thing about not listening to counsel that directs one to listen to Elohim, is that it will not result in a good ending for the one so foolish enough not to listen to His words, regardless of where they are coming from.

Pharaoh's problem was that he had already made up his mind as to what he wanted to do. No amount of signs or counsel or anything else was going to change his mind. He simply hardened his heart against it. To do this will only bring more hardness.

### **Deceit = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 8:28-32***

***28 And Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to YHWH your Elohim in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away; entreat for me."***

***29 And Moshe said, "Behold, I go out from you, and I will entreat YHWH that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow; only let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to YHWH."***

***30 And Moshe went out from Pharaoh, and entreated YHWH.***

***31 And YHWH did according to the word of Moshe; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.***

***32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.***

Pharaoh wanted the swarms of bugs removed. He would promise anything to have them removed. He promised to let the Hebrew people go. However, it seems rather evident that Pharaoh never intended to let them go. His promise meant nothing. He promised in order to deceive.

Now here is the thing: Pharaoh could deceive Moshe. Pharaoh could deceive the people. But, Pharaoh could not deceive YHWH! Make no mistake about it, there is a day of reckoning coming and for some, it comes in this life, as it did for Pharaoh. Whether a person believes this or not will not change the reality of this eternal truth!

When a person intends to deceive others, what comes is hardness of that one's own heart. This is part of the cycle one enters when YHWH is not believed and obeyed.

## **Selfishness = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 9:4-7***

***4 “And YHWH shall make a distinction between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt; and there shall nothing die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.”***

***5 And YHWH appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow YHWH shall do this thing in the land.”***

***6 And YHWH did that thing on the morrow; and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel not one died.***

***7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.***

As soon as Pharaoh learned about the disease of all the livestock of Egypt he sent messengers out to check on the livestock of the Hebrews. He learned that not one of their livestock was sick as a result of this plague. I find it interesting that Pharaoh sent out messengers to check this out. Why? Since it seems rather obvious that he had already made up his mind about not letting the Hebrew people go, why bother checking this out? If the messengers came back with the news that their cattle had disease as well, that would have been sufficient cause to say that he was not going to let the people go. However, if they came back with the news that their cattle had no disease, which is exactly what he expected to hear, for he was informed of this before the fact, then that would reinforce the idea that it would be a good idea to let them go. So what gives?

What Pharaoh was really interested in was his own wellbeing. He wanted to know if there were any cattle left in Egypt that were not diseased. He wanted to know if he had a source to get cattle to replenish his livestock. He certainly was not going to let the Hebrew people go with all their healthy cattle and leave him with all these diseased cattle! He was going to keep the Hebrew people in Egypt because he (Egypt) needed them!

And when a person acts to disobey the commandments of YHWH for one's own selfish gain, the result will always be that his heart will be hardened. Selfishness brings more hardness of heart.

## **Dishonesty = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 9:11-12***

***11 And the magicians could not stand before Moshe because of the boils; for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.***

***12 And YHWH hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not to them, as YHWH had spoken to Moshe.***

When the plague of boils came, it was apparently the first plague that the sorcerers were afflicted with. They did not show themselves before Moshe. The only honest thing that the sorcerers did was to tell

Pharaoh that the third plague, the swarms of flies, were from Elohim. Other than that, everything that they did was meant to deceive. It was meant to deceive Pharaoh and all who would believe their lying signs and wonders.

The problem with deception is that it is SO deceiving, especially for those who would wield it. Pharaoh knew what was going on in his kingdom. However, he would not be honest with himself or with others. He knew what he wanted and he was willing to lie to get it.

Please note that this is the first time that YHWH Himself actually hardens Pharaoh's heart. You see, this is the truth of the matter: if we want something badly enough, YHWH will give it to us, even if it brings our own destruction. One way or another, YHWH will be glorified in our lives. We can glorify Him with our loving obedience; or, we can glorify Him with our own destruction.

## **Sin = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 9:34-35***

***34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.***

***35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Israel go, as YHWH had spoken by Moshe.***

While it was a sin each time that Pharaoh hardened his heart against YHWH, we are specifically told that this time he sinned again by hardening his heart. It is interesting to note that this record occurs on the last occasion of Pharaoh hardening his own heart. Each of the subsequent occurrences of hardening of Pharaoh's heart is done by YHWH.

It would seem that YHWH gave one more genuine chance to Pharaoh to repent and let His people go. Pharaoh did not take it. Pharaoh continued on the same path that he had initially set out to follow, a path of wanting things his way and only his way, a path that ultimately can only lead to destruction.

## **Lying = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 10:16-20***

***16 Then Pharaoh called for Moshe and Aharon in haste; and he said, "I have sinned against YHWH your Elohim, and against you.***

***17 Now therefore forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and entreat YHWH your Elohim, that he may take away from me this death only."***

***18 And he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated YHWH.***

***19 And YHWH turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the border of Egypt.***

***20 But YHWH hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.***

It is truly a terrible thing to confess one's sin, but have no intention to stop doing that which was confessed! Such was the case with Pharaoh. He knew he had sinned! He knew that he needed to stop sinning. He also knew that he was not going to stop sinning. His confession was a lie. His confession was for the purpose of deceiving and getting his own way!

A person that has reached this level of hardness, in which he clearly sees his sin, yet will not give that sin up, apparently is hardened beyond redemption at that point. How very sad!

Regardless of what type of sin a person involves himself in, it will always bring hardness of heart to a person.

## **Conditional Obedience = More Hardness**

***Shemot [Exodus]10:24-27***

***24 And Pharaoh called to Moshe, and said, "Go ye, serve YHWH; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed; let your little ones also go with you."***

***25 And Moshe said, "You must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice to YHWH our Elohim.***

***26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve YHWH our Elohim; and we know not with what we must serve YHWH, until we get there."***

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

After the locusts devastated the food crop of the Egyptians, the only thing they had left to eat was their cattle. But their cattle were now all diseased, at least those that were still alive. So, telling the Hebrew people that they could go and serve YHWH, but just leave their cattle behind was once again self-motivated.

It is never a good idea to attempt to serve and worship YHWH with only a partial heart or partial obedience. To attempt to serve YHWH in a partial manner is to worship something of one's own design and one's own making. YHWH expects and will accept nothing less than complete obedience from our hearts of love. Otherwise, He will bring events to pass in our lives to reveal these self-serving attitudes to point them out to us and then ask us to give them up. Or, like Pharaoh, we can be destroyed along with those impurities in our lives.

We can either allow YHWH to purify us, or else He will remove us along with our impurities. But one way or another, those impurities will be removed from the midst of His people. Of that we can be sure!

## **Not Listening to a Prophet = More Hardness**

*Shemot [Exodus] 11:9-10*

**9 And YHWH said to Moshe, "Pharaoh will not hearken to you; that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."**

**10 And Moshe and Aharon did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and YHWH hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.**

Pharaoh refused to listen to Moshe. This resulted in Pharaoh's heart being hardened. Moshe was YHWH's prophet. It is not a good thing to have YHWH send one a prophet with a message and he reject the message and continue to live in disobedience to YHWH. Not smart!

YHWH has given us plenty of information in His Torah to know how to tell a true prophet. Secondly, YHWH has made available to each one of us His Spirit, which is the surest way of telling who is a true prophet and who is not.

But here is the thing: YHWH also sends false prophets into the midst of His people to test them. Just because a person does signs and wonders, does not make him someone to whom we should listen and follow. Devarim [Deuteronomy] 16 is quite clear about this point. The ultimate clue as to whether we should listen to a man or stone him, is whether he is leading us to follow YHWH or to follow himself? After all, did not the sorcerers of Pharaoh also have signs? To be sure they did! Were these "prophets" worthy to be followed? Not hardly!

It is a serious matter that is before us! We are under obligation to listen to and obey His prophets. If we do not, then our hearts will grow hard. This is something that none of us can afford. However, we cannot afford to listen to or follow a prophet who would lead us astray from YHWH. This also will harden our hearts. It is only by His spirit that we can know His true path!

## **Hardness Brings a Serious Lack of Perception**

*Shemot [Exodus] 14:3-9*

**3 And Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."**

**4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he shall follow after them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am YHWH. And they did so.**

**5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"**

**6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him;  
7 and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them.  
8 And YHWH hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel;  
for the children of Israel went out with a high hand.  
9 And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses (and) chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen,  
and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal-zephon.**

Once again YHWH tells Moshe that He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart. This time He will do so to make Pharaoh chase after them into the wilderness. YHWH will take away Pharaoh's perspective to make him think that he can go and bring back the Hebrew people. YHWH will make Pharaoh think that he can win against YHWH Elohim. Seriously now, who would dare think such a thing?

Yet men and women today do this very thing and for the very same reason. Like Pharaoh, their hearts have become so hardened that they cannot think of anyone or anything except themselves. The result is that these people rush headlong into destruction the same as Pharaoh did so very long ago.

## **Hardness Brings the Fruit of Selfishness**

***Shemot [Exodus] 14:16-17***

**16 "And you lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.  
17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them; and I will get Me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."**

Moshe has arrived at the sea and the hardness of Pharaoh's heart is now complete. Moshe leads the Hebrew people across the sea on dry ground and when YHWH sees that it is time, He allows Pharaoh to pursue.

Now imagine with me for just a moment exactly what is happening here. The pillar of cloud has moved from before the Hebrew people and has come to stand between them and Pharaoh and his whole army. Pharaoh, at the head of his army, cannot proceed to retake the Hebrew people into captivity because of this pillar of cloud. He wants to move forward. He tries to move forward. But he is blocked by this pillar of cloud. As the Hebrew people retreat across the sea bed on dry ground, Pharaoh watches, helpless to do anything to stop them.

Now he must have known Who it was that was blocking his attempt to recapture the Hebrews. He must have known that this Elohim of the Hebrew people was an Elohim like none he had ever witnessed before. But herein lies the very difficulty that Pharaoh faced. Up until that day, at that very moment, he knew that all the gods that he and his people served were gods of their own making. He knew that his sorcerers were just cheap tricksters. He knew (or he thought he knew) that all these gods he had known

in the past were all fakes. He was wrongly assuming that the Elohim of the Hebrews was as fake as the gods of the Egyptians. But he was wrong. He was about to be dead wrong.

Then the pillar of cloud was gone. Suddenly and without warning it was gone. He could not believe his good fortune. He ordered his army to pursue them. They went down into the midst of the sea on the dry ground. What a very hard heart! It not only cost Pharaoh his life, but it cost the life of thousands of other men that day as well, as they followed their leader into the midst of that sea.

## **Broken or Shattered**

***Shemot [Exodus] 14:28***

***28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pharaoh that went in after them into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them.***

Unlike what Hollywood would have us believe, every man in Pharaoh's army, including Pharaoh himself, died that day in the sea.

***Matithyah [Matthew] 21:44***

***"And he that falls on this stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to dust.***

Yeshua, in quoting Yeshayah [Isaiah] 8:14, tells us that we have the option of either being broken to pieces or ground into dust. What Yeshua is teaching His disciples, is that if we come to Him and fall upon Him, He will break us into pieces so that we can be healed and used to build His Kingdom. If we do not fall upon Him, then the only other option is for Him to fall on us. The result of this will be to be ground into dust, nothing left.

This is what happened to Pharaoh. He refused to submit his life to YHWH and to fall upon Him. He would not be broken as his heart was too hard. So YHWH fell upon him and ground him to dust; YHWH took his life. That was the only option left.

This is the truth, we may choose to fall upon Him and ask for His mercy, which He freely gives to all genuine seekers. Or, He will fall upon us in judgment; this is the default choice. This is what will happen if one refuses to make the right choice.

ABBA YHWH, please break up the hardness of our hearts and make them pliable in Your hands and make us into the image of Your Son, Yeshua; in His name we pray. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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