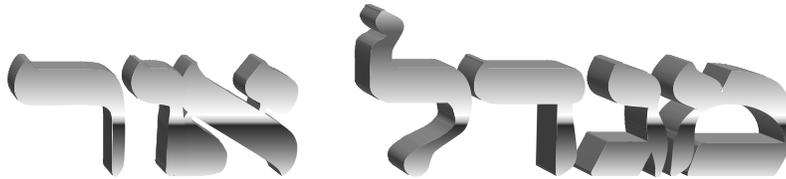


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Sponsored I'zchus Refuah Shelaima for Henya bas Tobah הניא בת טאבא  
May she have a speedy and complete recovery among all the sick people of Israel.

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

### Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:44 - הדלקת נרות
- 5:02 - שקיעה
- 9:05 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:41 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:30 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 5:04 - שקיעה
- 5:46 - צאת הכוכבים
- 6:16 - צאת 72

Monday 4:54:17 AM - מולד שבט -  
Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com and  
EzrasTorah.org

### Did You Know?

We all know that HaShem hardened Pharaoh's heart in order that he be able to withstand the severe trauma of the plagues and react without emotion, sticking to his position not to let the Jews leave Egypt. Some question how it was fair to take away the chance for repentance from Pharaoh. (There's no word for "fair" in Lashon Kodesh by the way. That's because HaShem judges and we can't understand it. The human concept of "fairness" simply doesn't apply in Judaism because we don't have all the information.)

The Ramban quotes the Midrash which explains that HaShem spoke to Pharaoh five times and he refused to listen. Thereupon, HaShem said, "You hardened your heart and turned your back on Me, I will add impurity to your impurity." This act has a very positive aspect to it. HaShem stole Pharaoh's resolve not to listen to HaShem and enabled him to withstand torturous circumstances because that is what he wanted.

By the same token, if one wishes to act in accordance with HaShem's wishes, how much more is he given the strength to withstand the challenges and tests that face him?

Chazal tell us that a person is led in the direction he wishes to go and that one who wishes to purify himself is assisted. We now see the great lengths to which that assurance will be carried, even to superhuman limits of endurance.

### Thought of the week:

**No man has ever been contained but in a prison of his own design.**

אתה תדבר את כל אשר מצוד ואהרן אחיך ידבר אל פרעה ושלח את בני ישראל מארצו. (ז:ב)

**"You shall speak all I have commanded you and Aharon, your brother, will speak to Pharaoh and he shall send the Children of Israel from his land."**

The Ibn Ezra here explains that Moshe repeated the words of HaShem to Aharon, who then relayed them to Pharaoh. According to him, Moshe did not speak directly to Pharaoh, but to Aharon. Rashi, however, as understood by the Sifsei Chachomim, disagrees.

Rashi says, "You shall speak one time, each message as you heard it from Me, and Aharon will translate it and convey it to Pharaoh." The Sifsei Chachomim explains: "You [Moshe] shall speak before Pharaoh each message, one time only, briefly. Aharon will then repeat those words two or three times until the message gets through to Pharaoh."

If Pharaoh was not going to listen to Moshe, why have Moshe speak the words of HaShem before him at all? It would make more sense if, like the Ibn Ezra says, Moshe only told them to Aharon, and it was he who related the messages of HaShem to Pharaoh.

Further, if Moshe was going to speak before Pharaoh, why only make a brief statement? Perhaps, if Moshe were to elaborate as Aharon did, Pharaoh would have listened to him directly? There must be more to it.

We know that Pharaoh was determined not to listen to HaShem. Though ultimately HaShem hardened his heart, the Ramban explains that it was only a continuation of what Pharaoh had begun on his own. We must ask: Pharaoh was not going to listen anyway, so what was the point of Moshe saying anything in front of him?

The answer is astounding. Even with Aharon's elaboration, Pharaoh only barely heard what he was being told. That was a result of his decision not to understand. Had he been willing to listen, however, even the brief statements of Moshe Rabbeinu in the name of HaShem would have been sufficient to get the messages across.

Quite often, HaShem sends us messages and signs which are clear and definitive. We don't get them, however, because our biases and desires cloud our vision. Sometimes, HaShem sends a more forceful message so we realize what He's telling us, while other times we remain unaware, missing the opportunity to act on this Divine Inspiration.

It may even come in the form of another person criticizing or chastising us, but if we don't wish to hear it, we will not. The lesson of this parsha is that we must not be like Pharaoh, who chose to be ignorant, but instead be open to learning of our own shortcomings, and ready to hear the messages of G-d.

*In 1945, a plan was hatched to ransom Jews from concentration camps. R' Aharon Kotler z"l, met with Henry Morgenthau, Jr., the Secretary of the Treasury under President Franklin Roosevelt. Through a translator, Irving Bunim, Morgenthau explained that the United States had a policy not to pay ransom. R' Aharon was enraged and directed Bunim to tell Mr. Morgenthau that "if he cannot help his Jewish brothers then he is worth nothing, and his position is worth nothing, because a single Jewish life is worth more than all the positions in Washington!"*

*Bunim conveyed the Rosh Yeshiva's words in a calm and diplomatic fashion. When he saw Morgenthau react calmly, R' Aharon was incensed. He turned to Bunim and cried, "Translate exactly what I said!"*

*Bunim did so and Morgenthau was shaken. He was moved by R' Aharon's intensity and fiery demeanor. He sat quietly for a long moment then told Bunim to translate. "Tell the Rabbi that I am a Jew," Morgenthau said with great dignity and emotion. "Tell him that I'm willing to give up my life - not just my position - for my people. I will help you." And he did.*