

HEAVY HEART

by Rabbi Dovid Green

"And G-d said to Moshe 'come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart heavy..." This means that G-d Himself gave Pharaoh the strength to stand up against His coercion to free the Children of Israel.

G-d made clear to Moshe that He is behind the difficulties which the Children of Israel were experiencing. Had we been in Egypt, we might have just seen a very stubborn Pharaoh and felt the oppression of his domination over us. We may have wondered when and if this all would end. However, the truth of the matter is that G-d Himself was really at the helm, navigating.

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (19th cent.) writes in "Sfas Emes" that from this parsha one can derive much encouragement in facing the hardships we encounter in trying to do the right thing. G-d, Who has only our good in mind, is the One Who is maintaining the hardships we may find ourselves in. Nevertheless, just as in Egypt, our difficulties are purposeful.

One might conclude from the existence of opposition to good that G-d is weak. Rabbi Alter points out that it is really just the opposite. The patience and control that G-d shows by giving mankind strength to go against His will is a more profound manifestation of strength than that of obliterating evil.

A great rabbi once sent his son out to collect money for an urgent cause. Very soon after he left, he returned. "Why did you return so soon? Were you able to collect everything so quickly?" "No father, I was not. The reason I returned is as follows. When I began collecting, I found that people were almost throwing their money at me. I saw that I was meeting with no resistance, and I concluded that this could not have been a truly holy cause. Had it really been, there is no question that it would have been harder."

We can't get excited when we see that the Pharaoh's of the world can confidently state "Who is G-d that I should listen to him? I don't know G-d..." Such does not preclude G-d's existence, and it doesn't mean we are abandoned in the hands of evil. Rather, G-d is acting behind the scenes for our ultimate good. In the end, just as our forefathers did in Egypt, we will stand proudly, point toward G-d and say this is (and has always been) my G-d, and I will glorify Him.

Good Shabbos!

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