



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

פרשת וארא

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְכוּ'. לָכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֹלֵת מִצְרַיִם וְכוּ'. וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. בֹּא דַבֵּר אֶל פְּרַעֲהַ מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, וּשְׁלַח אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶצוֹ. וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָיו ה' לֵאמֹר, הֲנִן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי, וְאִיךָ יִשְׁמְעֵנִי פְּרַעֲהַ. (שמות ו, ב-יב)

And Hashem spoke to Moshe ... therefore say to the Children of Yisroel: "I am Hashem, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt" ... So, Moshe spoke accordingly to the Children of Yisroel; but they did not listen to Moshe, because of shortness of wind and hard work. Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, "Come speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he send the Children of Yisroel from his land." Moshe spoke before Hashem, saying, "Behold, the Children of Yisroel have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me?" (Shemos 6:2-12)

The Torah relates that Hashem instructed Moshe to inform the Yidden about the miraculous salvation they would witness. However, due to their suffering, the people did not accept his message. Hashem then commanded Moshe to speak to Pharaoh about freeing Klal Yisroel. Moshe was hesitant, arguing that if the Yidden had not been receptive to his message of freedom, then certainly Pharaoh would also reject his commands.

Rashi notes that this is one of the ten times in the Torah where a *kal v'chomer* (a fortiori) argument is used. Moshe was essentially saying to Hashem, "If Klal Yisroel, for whom my message is beneficial, won't listen to me, then certainly Pharaoh, for whom the message is detrimental, won't listen either."

The Meforshim ask that the argument presented in this case is flawed, as the Torah explained earlier the reason for the Yidden not listening to Moshe. The *possuk* just previously noted that the cause for the Yidden's lack of interest was due to difficult working conditions and shortness of breath. These obstacles were most definitely not applicable to Pharaoh, so why should he have difficulty in heeding Moshe's command? Several approaches have been proposed to resolve this issue, with many Meforshim suggesting that Moshe was not aware of the reason behind Klal Yisroel's refusal to listen to his message.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* suggests that although Moshe understood the reason behind Klal Yisroel's lack of receptiveness, he also recognized that Pharaoh, being a wicked person, would have the same difficulty in paying attention to Hashem's message. Just as the Yidden were physically enslaved and unable to appreciate Hashem's message, wicked people are enslaved to their evil desires and are therefore not receptive to Hashem's message.

This concept can be seen in the *possuk* (Yeshayah 57:20-21) which describes the wicked: וְהָרְשָׁעִים כִּימֵי יַם הַיָּם לֹא יִשְׁכָּטוּ, וְיִגְרְשׁוּ מִיָּם רֶפֶשׁ וְטִיט. אין שלום אמר אלקי לרשעים *But the wicked will be like the driven sea that cannot rest, and whose waters disgorge mire and mud. 'There is no peace,' said my G-d, 'for the wicked.'* Rashi describes the raging waves of the sea, and with that, we can understand the comparison to the *reshaim*. When watching the eruption of crashing waves at the shore, they appear to be trying to escape. They attempt to leave the confines of the sand and sea and escape to dry land, but are unsuccessful and come crashing down against their will. Even though every

wave observes the failure of the wave prior, the next one repeats the same motion with an identical outcome.

The behaviour of the *reshaim* is similar to that of the restless waves of the sea. They are never at peace, never successful in their pursuits. They fill their minds with visions of the benefits of sin and imagine that breaking free from boundaries will bring them boundless pleasure. However, like the raging waves trying to escape their destiny, all his efforts are futile and end up crashing down. The *rasha* beholds his friend's earlier attempts to commit wrongdoings and how they do not meet success, but repeats the same doomed cycle. *Reshaim* are influenced by their tumultuous visions of sin and become bound to their desires, unable to be calmed. Unable to be receptive to logic, they become slaves controlled by a master foreign to their better instincts.

Moshe appreciated this and was therefore apprehensive of Pharaoh responding sympathetically. Moshe was arguing, that if the Yidden, enslaved by Pharaoh, couldn't listen to reason, then certainly Pharaoh, enslaved by his evil desires, would be unable to resist keeping the Yidden in his land.

Chazal teach us that true freedom can only be attained through the study and practice of Torah. This is taught in the Mishnah (*Pirkei Avos* 6:2): תּוֹרָה בְּתִלְמוּד יִשְׁעוּסֵק אֶלָּא מִי חוֹרִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, *Only one who is involved in Torah is truly free*. The Torah provides the means to break free from the chains of desire and exercise free choice. Without Torah, people are enslaved to their negative impulses and unable to make the right decisions. However, with Torah, one can overcome the overwhelming temptations of the *yetser horah* and act according to their spiritual wishes. By learning and keeping the Torah, a person is no longer manipulated by false images of gratification from sin but instead can appreciate the true satisfaction that comes from authentically serving Hashem.

May we all be *zoche* to be among those who learn Torah, liberated from the raging desires of the *yetser horah*, and experience true freedom, happiness, and contentment in life!

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