

HAVURAT YISRAEL WEEKLY NEWS

28 Tevet 5783

SHABBAT VAEIRA / MEVARCHIM / WELCOME RABBI WESCHLER

January 21, 2023

Shabbat Shalom!

4:41 pm Candle Lighting
 4:50 pm Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat

8:45 am Mishnayot Shiur
 9:00 am Shacharit
 9:38 am Latest Shema
 Parasha p. 318 Haftarah p. 1149
 11:00 am Drasha, Kids Program
 4:00 pm Gemara Shiur
 4:30 pm Mincha, Seudah Shlisheet
 5:40 pm Maariv, Havdalah

Kiddush is sponsored by Judy Kugelman commemorating the Yahrzeit of her father Shraga ben Seiv Halevi Z"L.

Seudah Shlisheet sponsorship available.

Upcoming Sponsorships

February 4 — Anonymous
 February 11 — Jack & Shulie Goldhaber
 February 18 — Rachel & Louis Ordentlich
 February 25 — Sarah & Barney Paikin
 March 4 — Ephraim Grossbein
 March 25 — Anonymous

Welcome Rabbi Weschler!

We are happy to welcome our new Intern Rabbi, Avi Weschler to Havurat. Rabbi Weschler, ordained by Yeshiva University, is also completing studies in counseling. He will be assisting the Rabbi in all his duties, teach courses and create programs of outreach and new members. We wish him much success in all his plans.

Molad Tevet - The new moon will occur over Jerusalem, the holy eternal indivisible internationally recognized capital of the Jewish people and the State of Israel on Shabbat at 11:56 (10 chalakim) pm. Rosh Hodesh will be observed on Monday.

SET ASIDE A TIME TO LEARN TORAH!

- **Sundays at 9:30 am**- Rabbi Algaze's Parsha class in Spanish
- **Mondays at 7 pm**- Journey in Jewish Literature
- **Tuesdays at 7 pm**- Parasha class
- **Wednesdays at 7 pm** - The Book of Samuel with guest teacher Avi Weschler



Trip to Israel! with Rabbi & Tamara Algaze

March 12-23, 2023

- ◇ An exciting visit to Eretz Israel
- ◇ Meals and admissions included
- ◇ Complete land package only \$2,600
- ◇ Airfare approx. \$1,200 now

Details on the flyer.
Contact the office to register.

All participants must deposit half of the land price by Monday. Without a minimum we may have to reschedule it for the summer or early Fall.

Start the New Year Right! Pay Your Dues!

Our shul has always distinguished itself by keeping membership dues low, so that everyone could be a full supporting member. That model only works if everyone becomes a member and pays their dues on time. Please be a part of your community. **If you're not yet a member, the time to join is NOW. If you are a member, the time to renew is now! Note: All members' privileges are for members in good standing. Don't let your membership lapse.**

SUNDAY Jan. 22 / 29 Tevet	MONDAY Jan. 23 / 1 Shevat ROSH HODESH	TUESDAY Jan. 24 / 2 Shevat	WEDNESDAY Jan. 25 / 3 Shevat	THURSDAY Jan. 26 / 4 Shevat	FRIDAY Jan. 27 / 5 Shevat
7:30 am Gemara Shiur 8:00 am Shacharit 8:45 am Breakfast 9:30 am Parasha Class in Spanish — Rabbi Algaze	6:30 am Gemara Shiur 6:45 am Shacharit 7:00 pm NO CLASS THIS WEEK Journey in Jewish Literature — Rabbi Algaze	6:30 am Gemara Shiur 7:00 am Shacharit 7:00 pm Parsha Class — Rabbi Algaze	6:30 am Gemara Shiur 7:00 am Shacharit 7:00 pm The Book of Samuel — Avi Weschler	6:30 am Gemara Shiur 7:00 am Shacharit	6:30 am Gemara Shiur 7:00 am Shacharit 4:49 pm Candle Lighting 5:00 pm Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat

HAVURAT YISRAEL

106-20 70TH AVE, FOREST HILLS, NEW YORK 11375 / TEL: 718-261-5500 / FAX: 718-261-7584
 DAVID ALGAZE, RABBI / JACK GOLDHABER, PRESIDENT
 WEB: WWW.HAVURAT.COM / EMAIL: HYOFFICE18@YAHOO.COM / ERUV: 718-544-6898

FREE CHOICE AND G-D'S DESIGN

by Rabbi David Algaze

"But I shall harden Pharaoh's heart and I shall multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh will not heed you and I shall put My hand upon Egypt" (Shemot 7:3-4)

One would think that it is unfair, if not altogether unethical, to punish someone for committing a crime involuntarily. Even more troubling is to bring disaster upon a nation for actions or decisions imposed on them from the outside. "Would the Judge of the whole world not do justice?" as Abraham asked. How could G-d punish Pharaoh for not heeding Moses when it was He who prevented his repenting?

The world that G-d created is a world where free choice is a universal law for all human beings. This is the meaning of Man having been created in the image of G-d. How then can one understand G-d's "hardening" of Pharaoh's heart? Some commentators have explained that G-d did not inhibit Pharaoh from repenting. Rather, He simply wanted him to repent sincerely and abide by His commandment willingly and not because of the pain he was feeling under the plagues. The strengthening of his heart was merely like a painkiller that permitted Pharaoh to make his own decision freely.

The problem with this explanation is that later in the narrative, G-d makes His intention even more transparent. Before the last series of plagues, G-d orders Moshe to go to Pharaoh and prefaces His statement saying *"For I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst."* (ib.10:1) Here there can be no other explanation of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart other than that it was G-d's intention that Pharaoh not repent and not heed His words in order that G-d could display His power over Egypt. Pharaoh is then only a puppet in His hands and thus he would appear not responsible for his actions. How could a just G-d do this? Where is the human free choice that G-d planted in the universe?

Maimonides (Hilchot Teshuva 6:3) explains that if a person commits many sins repeatedly, "the Judge of Truth provides that repentance be foreclosed for him and that he be not permitted the right to repent from his wickedness, so that he will die and be lost because of the sin he committed." Although repentance is open to everyone there are exceptions when the sinner has committed acts so egregious that it would be unfair to let such a person escape the punishment he deserves. It would be wholly unfair that a Hitler should avoid his deserved punishment by repenting in one moment. Justice provides in such cases that certain people be prevented from repenting so that they get their proper retribution. Yet, this explanation too has the difficulty of understanding why did G-d ask Moshe to request from Pharaoh the release of Israel if it was already preordained that Pharaoh would not obey?

In reality, the principle of free choice is an axiom in the universe and cannot be suspended. In the case of Pharaoh the Midrash accepts that he ultimately repented of his own free will and he recognized G-d's greatness. We have to assume that G-d did not coerce Pharaoh at all and that He let him act with his freedom of choice. The hardening of his heart may be explained in the following manner. Just as there are physical laws of the universe, so there are psychological and spiritual rules. One of these immutable laws is that when a person commits a sin over and over again, the sin deposits in the doer a spiritual force that makes it easier to do the same act again. This creates a disposition that enables a person to replicate his actions leading to the development of his nature and character. When G-d said that "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" the reference was to that universal law of psychological development. In the world that G-d created, Pharaoh's own actions would lead him to develop a nature that will become obdurate and recalcitrant and not respond to any pressure to change. Indeed, during the first five

plagues G-d did not interfere with Pharaoh at all. In every one of the first five plagues, the Torah accurately describes Pharaoh's actions as his own. After the plague of blood it says, "And the heart of Pharaoh's was strong" (ib. 7:22) without any reference to G-d. The same applied to the following four plagues, including the fifth plague after which it says, "The heart of Pharaoh became stubborn" (ib. 9:7) Only from the sixth plague on we hear that G-d strengthened Pharaoh's heart. That proves that the psychological law of character development was applied and that is the basic meaning of "G-d strengthened the heart of Pharaoh." It simply describes a natural occurrence that after a person chooses a course of action, his temperament will be affected accordingly. Otherwise, how can we understand G-d's question to Pharaoh, "Until when you shall refuse to humble yourself before Me?" Clearly, G-d had given Pharaoh the full function of his freedom.

The question is why does G-d announce that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and even more poignantly, why does He proclaim that there is a purpose, namely to imprint in the mind of the people and the whole world that G-d has power over nature and that He is the sovereign of the world? That implies there is a grand Design, preordained and fore planned and that seems to conflict with the concept of free choice.

The answer is that human free choice and G-d's design need not be in conflict. This may be the lesson of these verses: Man may act freely and without any coercion and yet G-d can weave his acts into a pattern that will be in accordance with His original Design and Plan. In a manner beyond our comprehension, G-d has the capacity of integrating our human choices into His design and make our human actions fit into His Plan. This is what G-d means as He says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart at the beginning. G-d knows that Pharaoh's actions and response to events will be integrated into the pattern that G-d had planned. Although Pharaoh will act freely, nonetheless all his acts will ultimately fit perfectly into G-d's original Plan. This is one of the mysteries of G-d's conduct of the world. In modern mathematics, we find a similar phenomenon in the case of fractals where random functions of small parts may nonetheless not affect the exactitude of the whole. G-d has the power of making our actions fit into His grand Design without robbing us of our precious gift of free choice.

The lesson to learn here is that our acts are never coerced by any exterior force and that all our acts, small or large, are part of a Grand Design that affects the entire universe. For this reason we have to view all our acts as having a cosmic influence and not to belittle any of our actions. Every act we make is important. No action by us is irrelevant. This is G-d's greatest gift to us.

REACHING THE RABBI

The Rabbi is always accessible but sometimes the volume of calls or the time when calls are received make it difficult to answer immediately.

A better way would be to first text or WhatsApp message the Rabbi. He will respond as soon as possible. You can also reach the Rabbi in the office,

Please only make calls to his cell phone for urgent matters.



Refuah Shlema Alte Ester Riva bat Devorah Shifra (Eileen Alter), Batya bat Rachel (Betty Feit), Malka bat Buca (Yeni Hassin), Zeev Zelig ben Sarah Tish (Tom Hamori), Zalman Modechai Yitzchak Halevy ben Alta Chana (Stuart Greenberg), Chava Naomi bat Doba Chana, Elca bat Rahel (Michelle Polonetsky's mother), Yaakov ben Leah, Yaakov David ben Bayla, Tzvi Ben Sara, Chavah Bat Rivka (Eileen Alter's cousin), Moshe Elimelech haLevi ben Bashe