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לחיות את הפרשה LIVING THE PARSHA

וְאַנְּיִ אַקְרַבָּ אֶת לְבֵ פְּרָעָה (שמות ז, ג)

"I shall harden Pharaoh's heart" (Shemos 7:3)

רק העקשן יצלייח

אמרו רבותינו, פרעה אוטיות - הערכ, בבחינת עם קשה עורף. אולם אצל פרעה קשיות זו לא נעצרה בעורף, אלא אף לבבו נעשה קשה, כמו"ש 'וְאַנְּיִ אַקְרַבָּ אֶת לְבֵ פְּרָעָה'. עקשות דקדושה ענינה להתעקש לעשות את רצון קונו. עקשות דקלקלול זו עקשות לעשות את רצון עצמו.

למעשה

לאדם על כל אחד ואחד להכיר את הכח בחזק שבנפשו, ולהתעקש להוציאו מהכח לפועל, בשום שכל והדרגה, אולם בהתעקשות מוחלטת של יהי מוה, ולא יעמוד בפניו שום מניעה ועכוב. אולם עקשות חזקה זו ראיי רק בכח החזק בנפשו, ולא בכל שאר כוחות נפשו. כי כאשר האדם משתמש בכח העקשות בכל עניינו נעשה אצלו טبع שני להיות עיקש, וכבר אמרו חז"ל לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה.

THE STUBBORN SUCCEED

Chazal tell us that פרעה is comprised of the same letters that spell הערכ, the nape, as in the *pasuk* עַמְּ קָשָׁה עַרְךָ, "a hard-necked nation" (Shemos 34:9). For Pharaoh, the hardness didn't end in the nape. His heart also became hard, as it states, "I shall harden Pharaoh's heart" (Shemos 7:3).

Holy stubbornness is when one is determined to perform the will of his Creator. The corrupt form of stubbornness is to persevere to do his own will.

IN PRACTICE

It is everyone's obligation to recognize the strongest attribute of his *nefesh*, and to stubbornly bring it forth from potential into existence. This is while wisely going gradually, step by step, yet with a determined decision that no matter what will be, nothing will prevent him. However, he should only use his stubbornness for the most outstanding attribute of his *nefesh*. He shouldn't use it for the other strengths of his soul. Because when a person uses the strength of stubbornness for all his matters, it becomes his second nature, and *Chazal* have told us, "A person must always be soft like a reed" (Ta'anis 20b)."

[EXPANDED BASED ON EDITORS UNDERSTANDING]

POSITIVE & NEGATIVE SIDES OF STUBBORNNESS

Stubbornness (עקשנות) is a positive trait when a person uses it to perform Hashem's service. Tzaddikim accomplished great things because they were stubborn in persisting with their plans to do something special for Hashem, and nothing could stand in their way.

The place of the body that represents this trait is the back of the neck, the nape, as in the *pasuk* הערכ, "a hard-necked nation" (Shemos 34:9). The nape is a hard, stiff, unyielding part of the body, symbolizing firmness and steadfast resolve in serving Hashem. Below the neck is the heart. The hardness of the nape mustn't extend to the heart because then he will be become uncaring towards his fellow man and haughty towards Hashem. When this occurs, he only cares about himself and his own wishes, with total disregard to the truth and Hashem's will.

Chazal tell us that the letters that spell פרעה are the same letters that spell הערכ, the nape. Pharaoh had this attribute of stubbornness, but this hardness didn't end in the nape. His heart also became hard, as it states, "I shall harden Pharaoh's heart" (Shemos 7:3). This is the reason he denied Hashem and was callous to the needs of the Jewish nation.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Within every person is a special, unique personality, and if he develops it allowing this attribute to shine, he will accomplish great things in Hashem's service and for the benefit of *Klal Yisrael*. But there will be a great struggle because the *yetzer hara* places many obstacles in his way to prevent him from attaining his greatness. This is the reason *akshanus*, holy stubbornness, is so important. One must stubbornly and determinedly reveal his greatness, and he shouldn't allow any test or trial to prevent him from this most important mission.

Success won't happen in a day. The battle will be great and long, but with determination, holy *akshanus*, and patience he will reach his spiritual perfection.

One must be cautious to be stubborn specifically to develop the most unique attribute of his *nefesh*. If he will use stubbornness for the development of his other traits, being stubborn will become his second nature, and *Chazal* say, "A person must always be soft like a reed" (Ta'anis 20b). His heart must remain soft, humble, flexible and caring.