**קשה לב**

**אבנר רמו**



**והסרתי לב האבן מבשרם, ונתתי להם לב בשר**

In the Book of Exodus we read: **ואני אקשה את-לב פרעה** - “**And I will harden Pharaoh's heart**” (Ex 7:3).

In the Book of Ezekiel we read: **כי כל-בית ישראל, חזקי-מצח וקשי-לב המה** - “**For all the house of Israel are of a strong forehead and are hardened at heart**” (Eze 3:7).

In the Book of Proverbs we read: **אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד; ומקשה לבו יפול ברעה** - “**Happy is the man that always fears; and he that hardens his heart shall fall into strife**” (Pro 28:14; see also: Ps 95:8).

Yet in the Book of Samuel we find:

**ושם האיש נבל, ושם אשתו אבגיל; והאשה טובת-שכל ויפת תאר, והאיש קשה ורע מעללים והוא כלבו (כלבי).**

“**And the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail; and the woman was of good understanding, and of a beautiful form; but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was** [of the house of] **Caleb**” (1 Sam25:3).

The Greek translator wrote here: “and the man was dog-like”, yet the comparison between these verses suggests that **והאיש קשה ורע מעללים והוא כלבו** is a letter-insertion and word-disorder of: **והאיש הוא קשה לב ורע מעללים** - “and the man is hardened at heart and evil in his doings.”

We read in the Book of Exodus:

**ואמרת אל-פרעה: כה אמר יהוה, בני בכרי ישראל.**

**ואמר אליך, שלח את-בני ויעבדני, ותמאן לשלחו-הנה אנכי הרג את-בנך בכרך.**

“**And you shall say to Pharaoh: thus, said *YHWH*: Israel is My son, My first-born.**

**And I say to thee: Let My son go that he may serve Me; and you refuse to let him go. Behold, I will slay your son, thy first-born**” (Ex 4:22-23).

Yet we also find in this book:

**והיה כי-ישאלך בנך מחר-לאמר מה-זאת: ואמרת אליו-בחזק יד הוציאנו יהוה ממצרים, מבית עבדים.**

**ויהי כי-הקשה** [] **פרעה** [] **לשלחנו, ויהרג יהוה כל-בכור בארץ מצרים,**

“**And it shall be when your son askes you in time to come, saying: What is this? And you shall say to him: By strength of hand *YHWH* brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage;**

**And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go that *YHWH* slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt**” (Ex 13:14-15).

The Greek translator wrote here: “But when Pharao hardened against sending us away”’ but the comparison between these verses suggests that **כי-הקשה פרעה לשלחנו** is a word deletion error of: **כי-הקשה לב פרעה וימאן לשלחנו** – “because the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he refused to send us away.”

Similarly, we find in the Book of Isaiah:

**מדעתי, כי קשה** [] **אתה; וגיד ברזל ערפך ומצחך נחושה** - “**Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass**” (Is 48:4; see also: Jud 2:19).

The Greek translator wrote here “unyielding”, and it seems that the understanding of the Greek and English translators suggest that they believed that here the word **קשה** (*qasheh*) is a letter-substitution and order-type error of **עקש** (*i’qesh*) which means “stubborn” in modern Hebrew. Alternatively, the comparison between these verses suggest that here again the word **לב** - “heart” is missing and therefore instead of **כי קשה אתה** we should read: **כי קשה לב אתה**- “because you are hard at heart.” It is also possible that the biblical “hard at heart” meant also “stubborn.”

Similarly, we find in the Book of Samuel:

**ויאמר דוד אל-יהונתן, מי יגיד לי; או מה-יענך אביך קשה.**

“**Then said David to Jonathan: Who shall tell me** [if perchance]; (or what) **your father answers you roughly?**” (1 Sam 20:10).

The English translation indicates that the translator believed that the syntax of this verse is corrupt. However, it would be much more comprehensible if instead of **קשה** we will read here:

**קשה הלב** - “(who is) hard at heart”

We read in the Book of Proverbs: **תועבת יהוה, עקשי-לב** - “**They that are perverse in heart are an abomination to *YHWH***” (Pro 11:20; see also: Ps 101:4).

It is not known how the English translator determined that **עקשי-לב** means: “**perverse in heart**.” The Greek translator wrote here: “crooked heart”, but the comparison between these verses suggests that **עקשי-לב** is a letter-insertion error of **קשי-לב** - “(those that are) hard at heart.”

In the Book of Proverbs we read: **עקש-לב, לא ימצא-טוב** - “He that has a froward heart finds no good” (Pro 17:20).

The Greek translator wrote hear: “hard hearted” which suggests again that he believed that:

**עקש-לב** is a letter-substitution and order-type error of **קשה לב** - “hard at heart.”

In the Book of Ezekiel we read: **הנה נתתי את-פניך חזקים לעמת פניהם** - “**Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces**” (Eze 3:8).

Yet one chapter earlier we find: **והבנים קשי פנים וחזקי-לב** - “**and the children have harden-faced and strong at heart**” (Eze 2:4).

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that this expression is a word-order error of **והבנים חזקי פנים וקשי-לב** - “and the children have strong faced and a hardened heart.”

While it was proposed here that the biblical **קשה-לב** means “hard at heart” and is also likely to mean: “stubborn” there are several words from the root **עקש** (a’qsh) that mean “crooked” as in:

**ואת כל-הישרה יעקשו** - “**and pervert all equity**” (Mic 3:9), or:

**אשר ארחתיהם עקשים; ונלוזים במעגלותם** - “**Who are crooked in their ways, and perverse in their paths**” (Pro 2:15; see also: Deu 32:5; 2 Sam 22:27; Is 42:16; 59:8; Ps 18:27; Pro 4:24; 6:12; 8:8; 10:9; 19:1).