

## For I have made his heart stubborn. (10:1)

*Kveidus ha'lev*, translated as “a hardening of the heart,” making it stubborn, is derived from the word, *kaveid*, heavy; a hardened heart is a heavy heart. Why is the heart the reference point, as opposed to any other organ? *Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, explains that a human being is comprised of 248 *eivarim*, organs, which coincide with 248 *mitzvos asei*, positive commandments. Each individual organ is designated for a specific *mitzvah*. Thus, if a specific organ is flawed or defective, the *mitzvah* with which it coincides will likely be compromised. In other words, organs matter because of their relationship with *mitzvos*. As an infant, Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not nurse from an Egyptian woman because his mouth, the organ of speech, would one day speak with the Almighty. Likewise, when Yosef demurred from entering an immoral relationship with Potifar's wife, all of the “involved” organs were rewarded/blessed.

*Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl*, explains that the *lev*, heart, is the *eivar ha'ratzon*, organ of will, the organ through which one decides if he will or will not act, go forward. Once the *eivar ha'ratzon* becomes deficient, it is no longer capable of acting willfully in a constructive manner. It is flawed, analogous to an eye that is unable to see. In other words, *kveidas ha'lev* is not simply a temporary condition whereby Hashem caused Pharaoh to refuse the Jews access to leaving Egypt. Pharaoh now had a damaged heart that was incapable of saying, “Yes.” His will was impaired and now disqualified, much like a physical impediment that precludes proper function.

The *Mashgiach* explains that the heart is the *mercaz*, center, of the body, through which all its organs function. This is much like an officer who dispatches a soldier to act on his behalf. While the soldier executes the action, the endeavor/end result, is attributed to the officer who sent him. Likewise, the heart maintains its control over the body. The eye sees what the heart wants it to see; the ear hears what the heart wants it to hear; the legs go where the heart wants them to go. Thus, a defect observed in one of the organs is attributed to the heart, the central dispatch for the body.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* suggests that this is why the rule of *devarim she'b'lev einan devarim*, “Words in the heart (which were not actually articulated) are not words.” This means that one's thoughts do not hold halachic value, because the person did not actually voice his feelings. Why does the rule focus on *devarim she'b'lev*, when it should really say, *devarim she'b'machshavah*, words of the mind? When one just thinks of doing, the action is not binding. According to that which *Rav Yeruchem* has explained, it is quite fitting, since the mind is also an agent of the heart. The *lev* retains control over all of the body's organs – the mind included.