Mental Health Shabbat
D'var Torah Ideas - Parshat Va'era

At the start of the Parsha, Va'era, G-d reassures Moses, rearticulating His intention to free the people from Slavery. It wouldn't happen right away and there would be obstacles, but liberation would come. G-d needed Moses to have faith in his plan and to convey it to the Children of Israel. G-d wanted them to know he heard their suffering, that he has been watching them, that their pain matters to Him, and that he would intervene to do something about it. Hence, the upcoming plagues. G-d, in that instance is expressing His empathy to the Jewish people.

With the enslavement of the Jewish people for over two centuries, came persecution and physical abuse. When Moses appears to them to let them know their woes would end and they would be redeemed, they couldn't hear his words. They were under great stress and therefore were hopeless.

Stress of the body and mind can lead to a breakdown of the human spirit. Physical and emotional effects ensue and are not pleasant. Stress can lead to angry or hostile feelings, increased nervousness, anxiety, and even depression. Ultimately, the Exodus from Egypt gave the Jewish people their hope back. So on this Mental Health Shabbat, perhaps we can hold onto hope when we experience our own dark days. Reach out and be empathic to those struggling, offer help, offer hope. Stresses in life are inevitable, but it is comforting to have hope. It can take us from darkness into the light.

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