

There is Always Light  
Parshat Bo, Yael Keller

...when day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never ending shade?...

- Amanda Gorman, Poet Laureate

Shemot 10:21-23

(21) And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Stretch out thy hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, **even darkness which may be felt.**'  
(22) And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; (23) **they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place** for three days; but **all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**

(כא) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נִטֵּה יָדְךָ  
עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם. וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
וַיֵּםֶשׁ חֹשֶׁךְ: (כב) וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ  
עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ־אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: (כג) לֹא־רָאוּ אִישׁ  
אֶת־אָחִיו וְלֹא־קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחַת יָדוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת  
יָמִים וְלֹכְלֹל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אוֹר  
בְּמוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם:

**Rabbi Sacks, *Heart of Darkness* (pg 75)**

The plague of darkness was not a *mofet* but an *ot*, a sign. The obliteration of the sun signaled that there is a power greater than Ra. Yet what the plague represented was less the power of God over the sun, but the rejection by God of a civilization that turned one man, Pharaoh, into an absolute ruler, (son of the sun god) with the ability to enslave other human beings - and of a culture that could tolerate the murder of children because that is what Ra himself did.

The ninth plague was a divine act of communication that said: there is not only physical darkness but also moral darkness.

**Reb Hanoch of Alexander (19<sup>th</sup> Cen. Hassidic Rebbe; Parpera'ot La-Torah p 43)**

**"People could not see one another:"** That is to say, each individual only worried about themselves and only looked to save themselves and the members of their households – and, thus, “did not rise from under the darkness for three days.” Not a single one of them succeeded in rising above the degraded spiritual level that they were caught in.

The Egyptians were responsible for their own darkness because of their selfishness and self-centeredness. It was not the symptom of darkness—it was the cause. Their darkness was spiritual.

**Talmud, Brachot 9b (discussing when it is light enough to say kriyat shma)**

And Aherim say: When one can see a friend  
from a distance of four cubits and recognize him.

ואַחֲרֵים אוֹמְרִים: מִשִּׁירָאָה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ רְחוֹק אַרְבַּע  
אַמּוֹת, וַיִּכְרְנוּ.

**Reb Nachman (18th Century)**

The evil inclination is more interested in the depression following a sin than in the act of sinning itself, for nothing is as spiritually and even physically debilitating as depression.

The Exodus from Egypt, nationally and personally, entailed confronting the darkness and returning to the light. They held onto the light and hope of salvation.

Just as the plague of darkness immediately preceded the redemption from Egypt, so too, the darkest hour always comes right before the dawn. Knowing this secret and deciding never to give up are the greatest antidotes against the evil inclination's ultimate secret weapon of depression.

**Amanda Gorman**

...when day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never ending shade?...

We've learned that quiet isn't always peace and the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always justice. And yet the dawn is hours before we knew it, somehow we do it, somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished.

When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.

The new dawn blooms as we free it for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.