

In פרשת בא, we read about the מכות, and specifically, the ninth מכה of חשך. As we discussed briefly last week, the הלוי בית explains that פִּרְעָה means that Hashem strengthened פרעה's heart, allowing him to say no despite the overwhelming terror of each מכה.

Now, let's focus on מכה number nine, חשך. The פסוק says (10:21): וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה נִטָּה קֶדֶף עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם: פִּרְעָה got a חשך, but for חשך he did not. Hashem said to משה, "Let there be חשך" (10:22): וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים - לֹא רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו וְלֹא קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחַת יָדָיו שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: (10:23): The Egyptians were frozen in place for three days. However, but - וְלִכְלֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹרֶךְ בְּמוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם, not only that, we know from the מדרש that they were able to travel through all the houses of מצרים to take a look at all their goodies so when it came time to borrow all of the כלים, the מצריים said, "We don't have anything", and בני ישראל were able to respond, "Actually, you do, it's in the closet, third drawer on the left." They knew exactly where it was because they were able to look around the מצריים's houses during חשך. So this was a חשך that only affected the מצריים, but not בני ישראל.

The Gerrer Rebbe, the חידושי הרי"ם, offers a profound insight into the phrase אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו. He teaches the חשוף הגרוע ביותר הוא - What is the greatest חשך that we have experiencing in our lives in our מוסר? לא ראו איש את אחיו - כְּאִשׁוֹר אִישׁ אִינוֹ רוֹצֶה לִרְאוֹת אֶת אָחִיו בְּצַעְרוֹ וְלִהְיוֹשִׁיט לוֹ עֲזָרָה? עולם הזה is a statement. What's the greatest חשך? חשך אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו - לא ראו איש את אחיו? if you make it as if you don't see your friend when he's having difficulty, he's having his own צר, and as a result you don't extend him a helping hand, that is the greatest חשך. And what's going to happen to someone who acts this way, and ignores his friend's plight, and doesn't pay any attention to his friend's difficulty? What will be the result? הַתּוֹצָאָה הִיא, שְׂכַאֲשֶׁר אָדָם מִתְעַלֵּם מִדְּחֵקוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵירוֹ? When a person ignores and totally is uninterested in his friend's difficulty; מִידָּה כִּנְגַד - אין הוא עצמו יכול למוש מִמְקוֹמוֹ, he himself, will not be able to help himself. He'll have his own צָרוֹת, and he'll be stricken with exactly the same issue. He will have a problem, and nobody will help him, וְלֹא קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחַת יָדָיו.

It's a tremendous מוסר lesson for us. When we see anybody having a difficulty, we should extend him a hand, and help him in whatever way he can. And it's a very beautiful thought.

The day that I'm recording this is the שלושים for my תיירה ברידער, and that's exactly who he was, a man who always ran to help people at all times. Have a good Shabbos!

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