

HASHKAMA WEEKLY

פרשת בא

ה' שבט תשפ"ו

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חכמה ב-א תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Consider the following "Torah" thought, generated by Gemini: Did the AI get it right? Do you find it to be accurate? Or did the technology miss the boat?

In Parshas Bo, we encounter Makkas Choshech (the Plague of Darkness), a phenomenon that feels suspiciously familiar to any Rabbi trying to get volunteers for the shul cleanup committee. The Torah describes a darkness so thick it could be touched, paralyzing the Mitzrim (Egyptians) where they stood. Rashi (Shemos 10:23) brings a frightening detail: "No man saw his brother." This was not just a lack of photons; it was a spiritual blindness. The Chiddushei HaRim (the first Rebbe of Ger) explains that the ultimate definition of Galus (exile) is when a person can no longer see the distress of their fellow Jew. It is a state of total self-absorption. We all know this feeling—it is the convenient paralysis that strikes when we see a meshulach (collector) heading our way, and suddenly we become very interested in the texture of our Siddur. The darkness of Egypt was the darkness of a society where everyone is an island, frozen in their own ego. This brings us to the second topic: the antidote found in the Korban Pesach (Paschal Lamb). Unlike other offerings which could be brought individually, the Torah mandates, "Seh l'bais avos, seh l'bayis"—a lamb for a father's house, a lamb for a household (Shemos 12:3). The Korban Pesach must be eaten in a Chabura (group). You cannot eat it alone. Hashem was orchestrating a direct repair for the plague of darkness. If the disease of Mitzrayim was "no man saw his brother," the cure was a Mitzvah that forced everyone to sit around a table, look each other in the eye, and share a meal. We could not leave Egypt as isolated individuals; we had to leave as a Klal (nation). Freedom is not just about walking out of chains; it is about walking into a relationship with your neighbor—even the one who hums too loudly during Pesukei D'zimra. **Practical Takeaway:** We often think that spiritual growth requires solitude and quiet meditation. However, Parshas Bo teaches us that true Geulah comes from connection. This week, try to cure a little bit of the "darkness" in our own community. If you see someone standing alone at Kiddush, or someone who looks like they are carrying a heavy burden, do not let the "Egyptian paralysis" keep you frozen. Walk over, say "Good Shabbos," and really see them. And if they start talking about politics, well, that is just the price we pay for the light.

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Shabbus Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
4:44 pm	הדלקה
--- pm	מנחה - קבלת שבת
5:02 pm	שקיעה
5:48/6:01 am	עלות השחר (16.1/72)
7:13:50 am	נץ החמה
7:15 am	שחרית
Hot kiddush & Shiur after davening	
9:05/9:41 am	סי"ז קריאת שמע
10:06/10:30 am	סי"ז תפילה
12:08:14 pm	חצות היום
12:38:14 pm	מנחה גדולה (30)
3:00:28 pm	מנחה קטנה (גר"א)
4:01:52 pm	פלג המנחה (גר"א)
--- pm	מנחה
5:03 pm	שקיעה
5:47/5:53 pm	צה"כ ר' משה (8.5/50)
5:55 pm	מעריב (52)
6:03/6:15 pm	צה"כ (60/72)



Next Week's Zmanim

Chestnut Ridge, NY

1:30 pm	מנחה
4:56 pm	הדלקה
5:11 pm	שקיעה
7:15 am	שחרית
5:12 pm	שקיעה
6:04 pm	מעריב (52)

This Week's Riddle

Riddle: What two-letter word appears 27 times in this parsha and has four different meanings in the Torah?

Answer: The word "ki" appears 27 times in the parsha. Throughout the Torah, it is translated in four different ways: if, perhaps, rather and because (Rashi, Berachis 18:15).



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משל ונמשל ב-א תאמין?

By Reb Gemini

Mashal: There was once a yungerman (young man) from the town of Chelm—a place renowned for its scholars, though perhaps not for their logic—who decided that the noise of the shtetl was destroying his kavana (concentration). He went to the local travel agent, a man known for his dry wit, and demanded, "I need a place of absolute silence. No hock (chatter), no questions about who I'm voting for, and definitely no one asking if I want to buy a raffle ticket." The agent nodded slowly and booked him a stay in a remote, windowless cabin in the deep forest. "It is pitch black and soundproof," the agent promised. "You will be alone with your thoughts." The yungerman arrived, sat on the floor in the absolute darkness, and waited for enlightenment. Ten minutes passed. Then twenty. Instead of deep spiritual insights, he found himself wondering if he had left the stove on. An hour later, he was paralyzed with anxiety, convinced the silence was actually a lion holding its breath. He fled back to Chelm the next morning, screaming, "I wanted peace, not to be locked in a closet with my own neuroses!" It turns out, complete darkness isn't peaceful if you don't bring your own candle; it's just terrifyingly empty.

Nimshal: This comedic tragedy brings us to a profound, if terrifying, reality in this week's Parsha, Parshas Bo. We read of the ninth plague, Makkas Choshech (The Plague of Darkness). The Torah describes it not merely as an absence of light, but as a tangible substance. The Midrash Rabbah (Shemos 14:3) tells us the darkness was as thick as a dinar coin; it was a paralysis of existence. The Mitzrim (Egyptians) could not stand, sit, or move. They were frozen in a void of their own making. Yet, the posuk (verse) states, "Ul'chol Bnei Yisrael haya ohr b'moshvosem"—but for all the Children of Israel, there was light in their dwellings (Exodus 10:23). The Beis HaLevi (Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk) offers a piercing insight: The Jews did not simply have better lamps. Rather, the nature of the darkness was spiritual disconnection. The Egyptians, who worshiped the Nile and the physical world, had no internal source of vitality. When the external lights were cut, their very existence ceased. The Bnei Yisrael, however, possessed the light of Emunah (faith) and Hashem's promise. Their light was not dependent on the atmosphere; it generated from within. They walked through the same physical space as the Egyptians, but while one saw a dungeon, the other saw the path to Geulah (Redemption).

Practical Takeaway: We live in a world that often feels like it is shrouded in hester panim (the hiddenness of God's face). We face personal challenges—parnassah (livelihood) struggles, health scares, or the general confusion of this long Golus (exile)—that can feel like a suffocating darkness. It is easy to feel frozen like the Egyptians, waiting for the external circumstances to change so we can finally "see." The lesson of Bo is that we cannot wait for the world to light up for us. We must recognize that as Yidden, we are not powered by the grid of nature or luck. We have a generator inside us called the Neshama (soul). As the Sfas Emes teaches, the purpose of the darkness is often just to force us to ignite our own internal light. So, the next time you feel surrounded by gloom, do not panic. Do not be like the man from Chelm who feared the dark. Look inside, tap into your Emunah, and illuminate your own surroundings. And if that doesn't work, well, maybe you really did leave the stove on—so please, go check.

GOOD SHABBUS!