Class # 13 - **Parshat Bo – Are you still afraid of the dark?**

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel *z”l*

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<https://www.nbc.com/new-amsterdam/video/frome-questions-why-martin-loves-him-new-amsterdam-episode-highlight/4099744>

**New Amsterdam** [NBC 2020] Dr. Frome (Tyler Labine) breaks down to Martin (Mike Doyle) about his insecurities and doubts about why Martin would ever want to be with someone like him.

1. What extreme acts of chesed did Dr. Frome do? What act of chesed triggered the crisis in his life?
2. Why does Dr. Frome have such difficulty in becoming aware of his deep insecurity about his feeling of worthlessness?
3. What role does commitment to extreme chesed have in Dr Frome’s inability to become aware of his problem?

Locusts: The Eighth Plague

10:12 God said to Moses, 'Extend your hand over Egypt [to bring] the locusts, and they will emerge on Egypt. They will eat all the foliage in the land that was spared by the hail.'

10:13 Moses raised his hand over Egypt, and all that day and night, God made an east wind blow over the land. When morning came, the east wind was carrying the locusts. 10:14 The locusts invaded Egypt, settling on all Egyptian territory. It was a very severe [plague]. Never before had there been such a locust plague, and never again [would the like be seen].

10:15 The [locusts] covered the entire surface of the land, making the ground black. They ate all the plants on the ground and all the fruit on the trees, whatever had been spared by the hail. Nothing green remained on the trees and plants throughout all Egypt.

10:16 Pharaoh hastily summoned Moses and Aaron. 'I have committed a crime,' he said, 'both to God your Lord and to you. 10:17 Now forgive my offense just this one more time. Pray to God your Lord! Just take this death away from me!' 10:18 [Moses] left Pharaoh's presence and prayed to God.

10:19 God turned the wind around, [transforming it into] a very strong west wind. It carried away the locusts, and plunged them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust remained within all Egypt's borders. 10:20 But once again, God made Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not let the Israelites leave.

Darkness: The Ninth Plague

10:21 God said to Moses, 'Reach out toward the sky with your hand, and there will be darkness in Egypt. The darkness will be palpable.' 10:22 Moses lifted his hand toward the sky, and there was an opaque darkness in all Egypt, lasting for three days. 10:23 People could not see each other, and no one left his place for three days. The Israelites, however, had light in the areas where they lived. 10:24 Pharaoh summoned Moses. 'Go!' he said. 'Worship God! Even your children can go with you. Just leave your sheep and cattle behind.' 10:25 'Will you then provide us with sacrifices and burnt offerings so that we will be able to offer them to God our Lord?' replied Moses. 10:26 'Our livestock must also go along with us. Not a single hoof can be left behind. We must take them to serve God our Lord, since we do not know what we will need to worship God until we get there.' 10:27 God made Pharaoh obstinate, and he was no longer willing to let [the Israelites] leave. 10:28 'Leave my presence!' said Pharaoh to [Moses]. 'Don't dare see my face again! The day you appear before me, you will die!' 10:29 'As you say,' replied Moses. 'I will not see your face again.'

Parshat Bo consists of the last three in a series of ever-increasing plagues: Locust, Darkness and the Plague of the first born.

1. Is Locust [Arbe] a highly destructive plague?
2. Is the last plague of Makat bechorot - the killing of the first born of Egypt as well the first born animals and other gods – obviously the most intense?
3. Why would darkness be the ninth plague? What was so difficult or challenging about sitting quietly in the dark? How could this plague top the destruction of Egypt’s entire food supply?!?

The Tur explains:

* וימש חשך, "the darkness will be tangible." This expression describing touching something, as when Yaakov expressed his concern to his mother Rivkah that his father, being blind, would subject him to the "touch-test." ([Genesis 27,12](https://mg.alhatorah.org/#!Bereshit/27.12)) The darkness was so opaque that the people could feel it with their hands. The reason was that this "darkness" was not merely the absence of light of the sun, but it was caused by the descent of "thick" air into the lower atmosphere covering Egypt. This layer of "thick" air extinguished any candles or other artificial means of lighting the Egyptians would use at night to see by.

To appreciate this plague- let me give you a related example:

You want to go camping. You drive up and then hike alone and no one is around for miles in a national park where there is no cell service, no electricity, absolutely no distractions from the outside world AND you realize that you left any reading material behind. It is just you and your thoughts. Then the night falls and there is no moon. It is pitch black. A new set of thoughts start to descend on you – scary thoughts of terror by being attacked by animals, or by other dangers seen in horror films or spooky thoughts of demons or spirits attacking - like in a scene in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban - when he sees the Dementor on the Train trying to suck out his soul

* With this image – we can understand how makkat choshesh was so profoundly terrifying to the idolatrous and conflicted Egyptians.

1. What three factors determine how difficult the experience of the plague of Makkat Choshech would be? Explain each factor?
2. Who would the plague of *Makkat Choshech* have little effect on? Why?