DARKNESS Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – JANUARY 15, 2016

1. We read in Torah, “And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days: They could not see one another, neither did they rise anyone from his place..." (Exodus 10:22-23)
2. Why is darkness so bad? If the plagues increase in severity – how is darkness #9, second only to the death of the first born?
3. Rav Yitzchak Meir of Gur observed, commenting on this question that the greatest darkness exists when we can't see each other - when we can't appreciate the other's pain.
    a. If we never see the need in the first place, we won't move, we won't lift a hand to help, not even a finger – we practice blind indifference.
4. Maya’s choosing to have her Bat Mitzvah in Israel and the observations she shared with us tonight about the stark contrasts and contradictions in Israel today shine a light on the darkness that is unavoidable being Jews in the diaspora.
    a. Why go to Israel for a Bat Mitzvah or for a Birthright Trip or to volunteer?

Because we just can see it as it really is from here. We are in darkness.

b. Israel is without a doubt a work in progress
c. Israel is a young country struggling with is identity and its values. But you can't see all of that from CNN or CBC.
d. Like so many things you have to go to source, you have to lift the veil, you have to shine a light to really see and understand what is going on.
e. Why do we say don't judge another person till you've stood in his shoes? Its not because of how your feet will feel, its what your eyes will see from that perspective.

5. Its not only true as Maya discovered at age 13 about Israel – but its true in all of the dark corners of our lives, the places where we struggle to see.
6. We are plagued by darkness
7. As parents so often we judge without really seeing or understanding – appreciating the challenges of being a child in a world run by grownups.
    a. How can we bring the light of empathy?

8. As employers and employees we so seldom see or appreciate the whole picture. Do we truly understand the pressures we place on those we work with? How they too are struggling to live in this city that is getting increasingly more expensive and less affordable. The stress that rising food costs and the pressure of housing costs put on employer and employee? Or do we turn a blind eye and deaf ear – worried only with our experience, how we will do?
9. And in our relationships, even with those we are closest with – we are sometimes intentionally blind. We close our eyes because we don't want to see – because to see might mean to acknowledge our part in contributing to their pain or feeling of isolation. Is their no more profound feeling of being alone in the dark than to be alone in a relationship with another person?
10. MLK who's birthday is celebrated this weekend in the US preached, ""Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.""

11. Maya's journey to understanding Israel and our journey to understanding each other begins with the same first step. You have go there, you have to shine the light and see, with your eyes but also your heart.