

PARSHAT BO
EXODUS 10:1-13:16
HAFTARAH JEREMIAH 46:13-28
4 SH'VAT 5786/22 JANUARY 2026



Between Awe and Fear
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FROM FEAR TO AWE

1. יָרָא - v., to fear; to be in awe of
2. Awe is a way of being in rapport with the mystery of all reality. The awe that we sense or ought to sense when standing in the presence of a human being...Fear is the anticipation and expectation of evil or pain, as contrasted with hope which is the anticipation of good. Awe, on the other hand, is the sense of wonder and humility inspired by the sublime or felt in the presence of mystery. Fear is a surrender of the succors which reason offers; awe is the acquisition of insights which the world holds in store for us. (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*)
3. "...that I might set My *otot* in his midst." (Exodus 10:1)

אָנָה - v., to sign, mark, describe with a mark

אוֹת - n., sign, symbol

אוֹתוֹת - letters

4. All these deeds that were done in Egypt took place because God had already placed in Egypt hidden treasures that Israel still had to take out. “My signs” (*otot*) refers to the letters (*otiyot*) through which heaven and earth had been created. The children of Israel, who were ready to receive the Torah, first had to bring forth words and letters that already existed in the world...First they had to clarify the light of Torah that already existed within the natural order. This is “the way of the world” that preceded Torah; it is something impressed within nature itself. (Sefat Emet, Parshat Bo)

5. It is said that before entering the sea
a river trembles with fear.

She looks back at the path she has traveled,
from the peaks of the mountains,
the long winding road crossing forests and villages.

And in front of her,
she sees an ocean so vast,
that to enter
there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.

But there is no other way.
The river cannot go back.

Nobody can go back.
To go back is impossible in existence.

The river needs to take the risk
of entering the ocean
because only then will fear disappear,
because that's where the river will know
it's not about disappearing into the ocean,
but of becoming the ocean.

(“Fear,” Khalil Gibran)