



CONGREGATION TIFERETH BETH DAVID JERUSALEM

Shabbat Bulletin

ז טבת התשפ"ב
שבת פרשת ויגש

Shabbat Parshat Va'yigash
December 10 - 11, 2021 / 5782

Please print this bulletin before Shabbat.

Chazan Sheini
Rev. Amiel Bender

Rabbi
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SHABBAT SHALOM • שבת שלום

TBDJ Welcomes Scholar-in-Residence Rabbi Ari Cutler of Yeshivat HaKotel in Yerushalayim

Rav Cutler's drasha and shiurim on this Shabbat are listed in bold in the schedule below.

Ta'anit Asara B'Tevet is on Tuesday, December 14 / fast begins at 6:02am, ends at 4:46pm

Shabbat Parshat Va'yigash

Haftara: Yechezkel 37:15 - 37:28

* denotes drasha or shiur by
Scholar-in-Residence Rav Ari Cutler

Friday, December 10

2:30pm Daf Yomi on Zoom
3:16pm Plag Hamincha
3:53pm Candle Lighting
3:55pm Mincha, Kabbalat Shabbat and
Maariv - Sanctuary & Social Hall
* **After Kabbalat Shabbat:**
Earners and Learners

Shabbat, December 11 / 7 Tevet

8:00am Shacharit - Upper Social Hall
8:40am * **Chumash Shiur:**
**The Philosophical Meaning of the
Unique Offerings of the Jews**
9:00am Shacharit - Main Sanctuary
9:36am Sof Zman Kriyat Sh'ma
10:00am Kef Club for Kids - Lower Level
* **Sermon by Rav Cutler before Kiddush:**
**Living in the Diaspora -
Am I An Idol Worshiper?**
3:16pm Plag Hamincha
3:50pm Mincha, Seudah Shleesheet and
Maariv - Sanctuary & Social Hall
* **Seudah Shleesheet:**
Preparing for the Tenth of Tevet
4:11pm Sh'kiah
5:01pm Havdala
5:05pm Daf Yomi - Upper Social Hall
5:50pm Musical Havdala on Facebook
with Rev. Amiel Bender
6:30pm Daf Yomi on Zoom

COMMUNITY NEWS

Mazal Tov to **Sari & Shlomo Drazin, Ruth Drazin** and **Rozanne Polansky** and their families on the upcoming wedding of their son and grandson Ari Drazin to Rebecca Appel of New York. Sharing in their simcha are Rebecca's parents Michelle & Yehuda Appel, her grandparents Miriam & Shlomo Appel and Fern & Willy Nathanson and many delighted siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins in both families.

Mazal Tov to **Esther & Morris Feinberg** and their families on the birth of a granddaughter on Wednesday, December 8 in Haifa, Israel. Proud parents are Tehila & Aryeh Isaacs. Sharing in their simcha are the baby's paternal grandparents Reshi & Yosef Isaacs, great grandparents Florence & Joseph Benhamou and Sylvia & Richard Feinberg, great great grandmother Marcelle Attias and many delighted aunts, uncles and cousins.

Mazal Tov to **Elizabeth & Meir Israel** and their families on the engagement of their son Jacob to Lauren Gross of New York City. Sharing in their simcha are Lauren's father Mechi Gross, her mother Jennifer Burian, her stepfather Saul Burian and many delighted aunts, uncles and cousins.

Condolences to **Kathryn & Ira Kroo** and their families on the loss of Kathryn's beloved father Leon Cabinet z"l who passed away on Monday, December 6 in Cleveland, Ohio. Funeral and burial took place in Cleveland on Friday, December 10. Private shiva in Cleveland.

Condolences to **Stephanie & Eli Tabak** and their families on the loss of Stephanie's beloved mother Rachel Bank Sitruk z"l who passed away on Tuesday, December 7. Funeral and burial took place on Wednesday, December 8. Private shiva continues until Tuesday, December 14 - for details, please write to stephpht@hotmail.com. The family will attend daily minyanim at TBDJ during shiva.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS

Seudah Shleesheet is sponsored by **Sari & Shlomo Drazin** and their family in memory of Sari's beloved father Joe Polansky z"l (Yisrael Yosef Meir ben Yaacov Shlomo - 11 Tevet).

Rav Cutler's Pre-Shacharit Chumash Shiur is sponsored by **Sari & Shlomo Drazin** and their family in honour of the upcoming wedding of their son Ari to Rebecca Appel of New York.

This Shabbat Bulletin is sponsored by Rachel & Nathan Rabinovitch, Debby & Mark Fenster and Emilie & Avi Alpert "with heartfelt thanks to the TBDJ community for supporting and loving our parents **Suzanne & Lionel Rabinovitch**. Special thanks to Judah Aspler for always being there for any request big or small. Thank you to Gerry Cartman and all the drivers for getting our dad to shul, and to Rabbi Freundlich for his check-in telephone calls before Shabbat each week. You are a very special community!

Today's Kiddush and Scholar-in-Residence Shabbaton featuring Rabbi Ari Cutler have been sponsored by the following generous donors:

**Aviva & Ami Drazin / Sari & Shlomo Drazin / Adrienne & Shlomo Drazin
Edie & Phil Friedman / Elizabeth & Meir Israel / Jordana & Morrie Levy
Chaya & Lorne Lieberman / Renee & Marty Lieberman
Lauren & Alvin Suissa / Marla & Peter Veres**

SCHEDULE FOR NEXT WEEK

Mincha: 3:55pm Sun & Mon & Wed & Thurs
3:40pm on Tuesday (Asara B'Tevet)

Shacharit

Sunday: 8:00am and 9:00am
Monday and Thursday: 6:50am and 8:00am
Wednesday and Friday: 7:00am and 8:00am
Tuesday (Asara B'Tevet): 6:30am and 8:00am

Candle Lighting is at 3:54pm
and **Mincha** is at 3:55pm
on Friday, December 17

For our full schedule, go to tbdj.org/calendar

About our Scholar-in-Residence Rabbi Ari Cutler

Rabbi Cutler teaches at Yeshivat HaKotel as a Ram. His daily Gemara shiur teaches students the necessary methodology and skills to be confident in building a sugya with in-depth analysis of Rishonim and Achronim. His vision to synthesize the development of his students' Torah identity with a commitment to the greater Jewish community drove him to begin the *Yeshivat Hakotel Bergman Family Leadership Program*. Rabbi Cutler's experience as a teacher for more than two decades at various institutions, such as Camp Moshava Enismore, Machon Maayan and Yeshivat HaKotel, guides the educational philosophy of the program. Under his leadership, the program has grown into a fully developed program that provides classic lectures, interactive group learning and opportunities for independent, hands-on experience. Rav Cutler received Semicha from Yeshiva University and has a Masters in Social Work from Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

An Unusual Conversation

It happens to all of us as parents of our young, and not so young, working professionals. On occasion we meet our children's employers. It's happened to us and, Baruch Hashem, our children's bosses have had good things to say about them. The conversation is generally comprised of small talk which features an introduction from our children followed by exchanged pleasantries and the compliment offered by the employer.

Small talk is by definition an informal type of discourse that is in essence polite conversation about unimportant things. At times it is a way to make acquaintances, share good will, while on other occasions small talk serves as a conversational opener. At our grandson's bris, Cheryl and I were introduced to our son's employer. We chatted for a few moments, accepting compliments about our son's work which added to the joy and the nachas of our wonderful morning. We kept the conversation short as we didn't want our son to feel uncomfortable about us talking to his boss.

A similar encounter happens in this week's Torah portion of Vayigash. Following the descent of our patriarch Yaakov Avinu and his family to Egypt and the emotional reunion between Yaakov and his son Yosef, Yosef takes his father to meet his "boss" Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. We are given an account of the summit meeting of the two monarchs - Yaakov, a spiritual leader, with Pharaoh, the powerful head of a vast kingdom. The meeting proceeds as follows: Yosef brings his father to Pharaoh. Yaakov blesses Pharaoh, after which they engage in a short formal conversation which is recorded in the Torah with the following verses:

Then Yosef brought Yaakov, his father, and presented him to Pharaoh and Yaakov blessed Pharaoh; Pharaoh asked Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"; And Jacob answered Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourn [on earth] are one hundred and thirty years. Few and hard have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained the life spans of my fathers during the days of their sojourns"; Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and left Pharaoh's presence." (Breisheit 47:7-10)

If there indeed was any small talk between the two leaders at that meeting it is not recorded in the Torah. The Torah however tells us that Yaakov blessed Pharaoh at the beginning of their seemingly short four-verse meeting and again before his taking leave of the Egyptian monarch. I read the verses on Shabbat morning in about thirty seconds, though I am sure that the meeting lasted a little longer than that.

Rabbi Hirsch notes that as Pharaoh spoke to Yaakov he recognized that Yaakov was no ordinary person and that the commentaries suggest that Yaakov's presence prompted Pharaoh's question about his longevity. Pharaoh saw an unnaturally old man standing before him. The Baal Haturim explains that when Yosef placed his father before Pharaoh he physically supported him as Yaakov was old and frail. The Rashbam and Ramban comment that Yaakov looked extremely old, and his appearance struck Pharaoh so much that he was aroused to ask how old Yaakov actually was in order to learn about the wonder of Yaakov's longevity.

Yaakov's response is a surprising and lengthy answer, explaining that he endured a very difficult life, but he had not lived as long as his fathers. This dialogue is difficult to understand. It's strange that of all the things that Pharaoh could have asked Yaakov, he chose to ask him his age. Equally puzzling is Yaakov's lengthy and seemingly pessimistic answer about the pain that he had suffered. Interestingly, the Torah does not record a response from Pharaoh. Pharaoh may have found it hard to empathize and respond to the seemingly unexpected words of pain and anguish of Yaakov's.

The Ramban questions Yaakov's reply to Pharaoh: *I do not know the reason of the venerable one, our forefather, for saying all this, for how was it in keeping with propriety to complain to the king? And furthermore, what is the explanation for him saying "they - my days - have not reached the lifespans of my forefathers" for perhaps he would yet reach - their life span - or maybe even live longer than them.* The Ramban answers: *It seems to me that old age has been thrust upon our forefather Yaakov in the extreme so that he appeared very old. Pharaoh was astonished over Yaakov's old age because most people of his era did not enjoy such longevity for by then their lifespans had already become shorter. And he therefore asked Yaakov with wonder "How many are the days of the years of your life? For I have never seen anyone as old as you in my entire kingdom!" Yaakov then answered that his days so far have been a hundred and thirty years, but he told Pharaoh that he should not be surprised about his years of life for actually they were few relative to the years of his forefathers who lived even longer. However, because his days had been bad through toil and sorrow, old age had been thrust upon him and he therefore appeared very old.* Yaakov was telling Pharaoh that he was one-hundred and thirty years old and, while Pharaoh may find that to be remarkably old, it is not so because his forefathers lived much longer. The Ramban and Rashbam state that Yaakov answered Pharaoh that although he was very old, he looked even older due to the many difficulties that he underwent in his life.

It still remains difficult to understand why Yaakov offered such a seemingly pessimistic answer. Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman suggests that Yaakov did not want to arouse the jealousy of Pharaoh as to his longevity, so he emphasized the difficulties of his life.

Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen writes that regardless of the reason for Yaakov's answer, the Sages are critical of Yaakov. He notes that Yaakov was severely punished for this dialogue and he cites the following Midrash from the Daat Zekeinim:

At the time that Yaakov said, "few and bad have been the days of my life." The Holy One said to him, "I saved you from Esav and Lavan, I returned Dina to you, and also Yosef, and you complain about - the days of your - your life that they were few and bad?! By your life, the number of words from 'and [Pharaoh] said, until the 'days of their sojourns' so too will be reduced from your years, that you will not live to the age of your father, Yitzchak'. Because Yitzchak lived for one-hundred eighty years, and Yaakov only lived for one-hundred and forty-seven years.

This Midrash criticizes Yaakov for characterizing his years as few and bad. As a punishment, Yaakov lost one year for every word in that dialogue, amounting to thirty-three words, and he only lived to one-hundred and forty-seven years instead of the one-hundred eighty years of his father's life.

There are two very important points that can be derived from this Midrash. The first is an incisive observation from Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz. He points out that Yaakov himself only used twenty-five words in his answer while the other eight words comprised of the Torah's description of Pharaoh's initial question to Yaakov about his age. It's understandable that Yaakov was penalized for his own negative assessment of his life, but why should he be punished for Pharaoh's question?

Rabbi Shmuelevitz explains that Yaakov looked so old because of his attitude towards his sufferings. Had he not felt so negative about his life, then he would never have appeared so old, and he would never have aroused Pharaoh to immediately ask his age. Thus, in the same way that he lost twenty-five years for his attitude towards his pain, he lost eight more years because that same attitude caused him to look in such a way that caused Pharaoh to even ask the question. This teaches us that a person's internal attitude reflects on his outward appearance, and if such an appearance transmits a negative message, then a person is held responsible for that.

A second important point can be gleaned from a careful reading of Hashem's criticism of Yaakov. Hashem did not say that Yaakov did not endure any difficulties, rather He focused on the four great difficulties that Yaakov faced in his life - Esav's threat to Yaakov, Yaakov's challenging time with Lavan, the episode of Dina's abduction, and the disappearance of Yosef. Hashem noted that, ultimately, He saved Yaakov from the threats of Esav and Lavan, and returned Dina and Yosef home. It seems that the emphasis of the criticism of Yaakov was that he focused on the pain of those events when instead he should have stressed the fact that Hashem saved him each time, despite the fact that he endured untold suffering while waiting for the conclusion of those frightening episodes.

Rabbi Gefen derives a powerful lesson from Yaakov's answer to Pharaoh. When we are delivered from an ordeal, how do we relate to the past events? Do we focus on the pain and suffering, or on the final, positive result? Hashem's stern rebuke of Yaakov teaches us that each of us has an obligation to focus on the positive ending and not dwell on the pain. Moreover, Rabbi Shmuelevitz's additional observation makes an even more demanding requirement - that even if a person underwent great suffering, he still has a responsibility to radiate a happy expression.

There is no debate that Yaakov's difficult challenges affected his life and it is far beyond me to evaluate his response to Pharaoh. It certainly was an unusual dialogue. When we meet people for the first time, do we ask their age? I imagine that Pharaoh did not expect the answer that Yaakov gave to his question. He probably thought that Yaakov would answer something in the form of *I'm one-hundred and thirty years old young man... I've seen a lot in my life...*

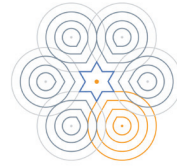
Were Yaakov's words the right words for the occasion? There is much to learn from Yaakov's verbal encounter with Pharaoh. One lesson may be related to the etiquette of conducting an appropriate conversation - especially with someone we have never met before. Another lesson may be that we need to focus more on the blessings in our lives because, in truth, Yaakov's cup was really more full rather than empty in the grand scheme of things. Another idea is that Yaakov's discontent probably should not have been expressed to Pharaoh, and that there must have been a more appropriate person to whom Yaakov could have complained. As we explore all the possible lessons from this parsha, it becomes clear that all of us should learn to be careful about who we choose as a confidant for sharing our complex feelings and discontent about life. There is a time and a place for everything. We may also learn that there is positive and negative value to each and every one of our words, which must be measured carefully as they leave our lips. In the end, the most important lesson here is that we need to recognize and remember that the founders of our nation were people just like us - with complex emotions and feelings and challenges and frailties.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rev. Amiel



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NEW Learning Opportunities

TBDJ is proud to launch two new programs in partnership with Kollel Torah MiTzion!



Friday Night Shiur

A program for our (early) winter Friday nights at shul. On alternating weeks, Rabbi Freundlich and Rav Gateno will deliver a short 10-15 minute shiur after davening for those wishing to stay.

Sunday Morning Kollel - כולל יום ראשון

Led by Rabbi Freundlich and Rav Gateno. A systematic and concise learning method from the Talmudic source through modern day Halachic application.

8:00 AM 1st SHACHARIT MINYAN
Followed by a 20-minute shiur on Hilchot Shabbat.

9:00 AM 2nd SHACHARIT MINYAN
Followed by some nosh and coffee, chavruta learning from 9:45-10:15, and a short 20-minute shiur tying everything together. You can come with your own chavruta, or we'll set you up. The KTM bachurim will also be leading small learning groups.

Location: Congregation TBDJ, 6519 Baily Road

RETURN AND INSPIRATION
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