



CONGREGATION TIFERETH BETH DAVID JERUSALEM

# Shabbat Bulletin

שבת פרשת וארא  
ג שבט ה'תשפ"א

Shabbat Parshat Va'eira  
January 15-16, 2021 / 5781

Please print this bulletin before Shabbat.

Rabbi  
Yechezkel Freundlich

Chazzan Sheini  
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## SHABBAT SHALOM • שבת שלום

### Shabbat Parshat Va'eira

Haftara: Yechezkel 28:25 - 29:21

*The TBDJ building is currently closed. When davening at home, it is preferable to do so at the same time as the rest of the community.*

Friday, January 15

3:00pm Daf Yomi on Zoom  
3:41pm Plag Hamincha  
4:19pm Candle Lighting  
4:38pm Sh'kiah

Shabbat, January 16 / 3 Shvat 5781

9:48am Sof Zman K'riyat Shma  
3:42pm Plag Hamincha  
4:39pm Sh'kiah  
5:27pm Havdala  
6:00pm Musical Havdala and  
Kumzitz on Facebook  
with Rev. Bender  
6:30pm Daf Yomi on Zoom

### COMMUNITY NEWS

Mazal Tov to **Ben Levitt** who celebrated his 95th birthday on January 10!  
Biz 120!!!

### SPONSORSHIPS AND THANK YOUS

Rabbi Freundlich's Gemara Shiur on Wednesday, January 13 was sponsored by Morty Stern and his family in memory of beloved father, grandfather and great grandfather Lou Stern z"l (Elazer Gedalia ben Yechiel - Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat).

### DAILY SCHEDULE: JANUARY 17 - 22

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Mincha on Zoom: 4:20pm Shkiah: 4:40pm	Mincha on Zoom: 4:20pm Shkiah: 4:42pm	Mincha on Zoom: 4:20pm Shkiah: 4:43pm
WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Parsha Shiur 12:15pm Mincha on Zoom: 4:20pm Shkiah: 4:44pm	Mincha on Zoom: 4:20pm Shkiah: 4:46pm Chumash Shiur 8:00pm	Candle Lighting 4:28pm Sh'kiah 4:47pm

### D'VAR TORAH FROM RABBI FREUNDLICH

#### If Water Had Feelings

The first two plagues, blood and frogs, are brought about when Aharon strikes the Nile river with his staff. Rashi notes that it was specifically Aharon and not Moshe who strikes the water, as it would have been inappropriate for Moshe to have done so. The Nile, after all, protected baby Moshe when he was placed in a basket in the Nile's reeds just three months after his birth. Some 80 years later, as a display of hakarat hatov (gratitude), Moshe instead has Aharon begin the plague.

This is quite an interesting act of gratitude. It's not like Moshe protected the water from being hit at all. No. He simply had Aharon do it instead of doing it himself. And does the water really know that Moshe refrained himself from hitting it? Would it even care if Moshe did? Water doesn't have feelings, you know. And what did the Nile really do anyways? It is the nature of water to allow wicker baskets to float on them. It did not go out of its way to do something special or extraordinary.

The Sages utilized this episode to remind us of several important aspects of the trait of hakarat hatov. Firstly, there is no statue of limitations to express appreciation for something done for our benefit. It is always a good time to be appreciative, and it is never too late. Secondly, hakarat hatov is not built on a prerequisite that someone or something went out of their way for us or did something extraordinary. It's an internal feeling that arouses within us to recognize and be thankful that we have benefited from someone else's actions. It's not about calculating how much effort someone else exerted for us; it's all about appreciating what we have gained. And lastly, there is no action too small to be appreciative about. Yes, baskets float on water. It's natural. Happens all the time. That doesn't mean it isn't something to be grateful for. The sun shines, our heating system works, and food deliveries arrive at our door. There is much to be appreciative for. And of course, to appreciate what is most important of all, our health.

Rifki and I wish you a wonderful Shabbat Shalom!

## Plague and Pandemic - Then and Now

As the pandemic continues to affect our lives, I have formulated for myself ideas that are inspired by the content of the weekly Torah portions we are reading - ideas which I find correspond and relate to the way we are living our lives today. While we are privileged to have commentaries and interpretations from brilliant sages of the past as well as the present, I find that sometimes our own explorations of Torah are just as significant, and they help us reflect and put things into perspective on a very personal level.

The story of Yosef and his family leading to our ancestors' ultimate slavery in Egypt has been a central theme in our weekly Torah reading for the past month. This theme continues next week with the exodus of our forefathers from the house of slavery in מצרים, in Egypt. The word מצרים has several definitions. One definition is boundaries. Our sojourn in Egypt was about the boundaries and the limitations of exile. When they first arrived in Egypt, our forefathers chose to live in the land of Goshen, separated from Egyptian culture and far from the dangers of assimilation. Yaakov and his sons were a strong presence in Egypt and though in exile, continued to serve Hashem on the highest level. Following the passing of Levi, the last of the twelve sons of Yaakov, the gradual boundaries of slavery and the descent into spiritual impurity and assimilation into a foreign culture affected our ancestors' ability to serve Hashem to their greatest capacity, thereby limiting the quality of their lives as Jews. Another idea is that within the word מצרים we find the word צר which means "narrow." For our ancestors, life in Egypt was "narrow" - with forceful limitations on freedom of religion and the restrictions of slavery narrowing their ability to live freely. It is interesting to note that Egypt was also a physical place of narrowness because of the narrow stretch of livable territory along both sides of the Nile River.

Over the past ten months, humanity across the globe has been forced into a narrow world of boundaries - with government regulations and forceful behavioral restrictions aimed at protecting ourselves and those around us. We have learned to live within our new and troublesome boundaries imposed by COVID-19 which affect and redefine the way we live our lives: synagogue lockdowns, limited numbers participating in shul minyanim, new shopping disciplines, masking and social distancing, prohibiting social contact such as traditional handshakes and loving hugs, and not being able to share even a live smile in person. The list goes on. We are presently in a different kind of "narrow" exile, exiled from the comforts in the ways we were used to living our lives.

A month ago we read the Torah portion of Mikeitz, and in that parasha we find a descriptive verse about the ongoing famine in Canaan that our patriarch Yaakov and his family were experiencing prior to their flight to Egypt: והרעב כבד בארץ. The verse teaches us that the famine was forceful in the land. The letter "י" - the connecting letter at the beginning of the verse - implies that there was no respite from the forcefulness and continuity of the famine. Similarly, we are these days experiencing a long and dangerous second wave of this coronavirus epidemic which seems to be neverending and "forceful". It is forceful and it is imposing a famine upon us - a famine not of food and sustenance, rather of the ways we are used to conducting our daily lives under normal circumstances.

In this week's Torah parasha of Va'eira, we are introduced to the first seven of the ten plagues cast by Hashem in Egypt at the time. I can imagine that due to our current dire circumstances, many of us can relate to the Biblical story of these plagues. In today's pandemic-ridden world, the word "plague" conjures up a very real experience of the idea. Both then and now, the plagues spread throughout the land in severe, alarming and conclusive measures.

In contemporary dictionaries, a plague is defined as an epidemic disease causing a high rate of mortality. In one particular dictionary, the word pandemic has the following entries: 1. An outbreak or product of sudden rapid spread, growth, or development. 2. Occurring over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affecting a significant proportion of the population. These definitions can connect our current experience of COVID-19 with the all-encompassing severity of the plagues in Egypt. Indeed, experiencing the world-wide spread of the coronavirus with its battering punishment, social regulations and business restrictions can certainly help us understand the powerful hand of Hashem on Egypt where there was no respite for the Egyptians anywhere in their kingdom. Hashem's far-reaching plagues teach us the expanse of Hashem's dominion in our world. Where today's pandemic is concerned, there are no geographical borders. The contagion travels harshly beyond the geographically defined countries in our world. We have sadly learned to live with this formidable predicament.

The solution which would have saved Pharaoh's people is found in these words from the Tractate of Sota 49b:

ואנו אין לנו להשען אלא על אבינו שבשמים

There is no one to rely on except our Father in heaven, who is sovereign in our world beyond its borders. The hand of Hashem controls our existence wherever we live on Earth. This is the message from Hashem transmitted to Pharaoh by Moshe Rabeinu. We see Hashem's words at different intervals throughout the portion reminding Pharaoh that Hashem's sovereignty is absolute. Following the ArtScroll's English translation of Hashem's sovereignty in these verses, we see a progression: Recognizing Hashem's sovereignty on a personal level, then Hashem's sovereignty throughout the land, then Hashem's sovereignty throughout the world: "...There is none like Hashem our G-d..." (following the plague of frogs), "...So that you will know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land..." (following the plague of wild beasts), "...In order to show you my power and so that my name may be declared throughout the world..." (following the plague of boils).

Our sages designated the completion of three Aliyot in our portion (Revi'i, Chamishi and Shishi) with the above words of the three levels of Hashem's sovereignty - as if to tell us that beyond everything, the last word in this world is Hashem's. It all comes down to the foundation of our belief which defines our existence as servants of the King of kings. Hashem is sovereign, and by Hashem this world functions. Accordingly, with our hope that the appropriate vaccine will end the perils of this devastating virus, we have immersed ourselves in prayer to Hashem and even fasting ordained by some rabbis for redemption and relief from this terrible mageifa.

The provincial government's latest lock-down regulations currently prevent us from leaving our homes between 8:00pm and 5:00am in the morning. There is a verse in Parashat Bo - next week's Torah portion - which speaks of the divine restrictive curfew placed upon our ancestors with the onset of Hashem's final plague of the firstborn.

"...and as for you, you shall not leave the entrance of the house until morning" -

ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר

Rashi teaches that once the force of destruction has been given permission to injure it does not distinguish between the righteous and the evil, prompting Hashem to keep Bnei Yisrael in the safety of their homes that night. We can attest to the fact that the coronavirus makes no distinctions in those it afflicts. Staying inside during our current lock-down connects us in a real way to this biblical verse and its description of the life-saving curfew imposed on our ancestors in Egypt.

Shabbat Shalom,

*Rev. Amiel*



## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

For more programs, shiurim and classes... please visit <http://programming.tbdj.org>



**\*Led by Rifki Freundlich, For Women\***

Monday, January 18 at 11:00am // Location: Zoom Social Hall



**\*Modern Jewish History: The First Aliyah Wave\***

Monday, January 18 at 7:45pm // Location: Zoom Social Hall



**\*Online Tour of Girona, Spain\***

Tuesday, January 19 at 1:00pm // registration required - see email



**\*Elyakim Rubinstein - Israel's Supreme Court and the Virtues and Challenges of Israeli Society\***

Tuesday, January 19 at 8:00pm // See website for details.



**Kef Club is celebrating  
the birthday of the trees!  
Join us for a Tu B'Shevat celebration**



**SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 3:00PM**

**Register by Thursday, January 21**

**[tbdj.org/tubishvat](http://tbdj.org/tubishvat)**

and a package will be dropped off at your house with all the supplies needed to make our annual gummy worms dessert, and plant your own Grass Head!

**Join us on Zoom here:**

**<http://tbdj.org/zoom-socialhall>**

**and get your hands dirty!**



# HOT

IT WARMS YOU UP

# CHOCOLATE

LEARN THE TRICKS OF THE  
TRADE

# BOMBS

**JOIN  
TBDJ  
AND  
JOY  
WILSON  
FROM  
JOY OF  
CAKES**



FEBRUARY 3RD IN THE TBDJ ZOOM  
SOCIAL HALL @ 8:00PM

Register at: <http://tbdj.org/chocolate5781>

Register by Jan. 27th, 2021

Cost: 35\$ includes everything you need to make your  
delicious chocolate bombs!







# Achieving Self-Care in a COVID Era & Beyond: What's in your tool box?

TBDJ is proud to invite you to our kickoff virtual event, featuring

**Rifki Freundlich**

Yoetzet Halacha,  
Rebbetzin of TBDJ



&



**Beth Taubes**

Certified Health, Wellness,  
Fitness, Tai Chi and  
Yoga Coach

## SUN / JAN 31 / 8PM

\*Register by January 17 to receive a special gift before the event!

***Register Today***

<http://tbdj.org/selfcare5781>

### Meet Beth Taubes

Beth was a health care professional with a specialty in oncology for over 30 years. After developing an interest in the science and art of helping her patients prevent disease through healthy living, she opened her own health and wellness practice in New Jersey. At Wellness Motivations LLC, she motivates clients to engage in improved self-care through personal fitness training, yoga practice, stress reduction techniques and more. She has published numerous articles in her field and has spoken at medical conferences, women's and parent groups and medical schools.