

Why Bet Haskala is a great example of respecting one another.

Whenever a new year is coming up
we as Rabbis try to write a Drasch as
profound, sublime and solemnly as possible.

In doing so, we're inspired by the great writings of our ancestors and predecessors.

We sit down for days
And we're coming up with new ideas over and over
We keep doing so because we believe there's either too little or too much said
already.

We ask ourselves:

What would this congregation like to hear?

What would the elder Generations like to hear and how about the younger ones?

What would the people that are here for the very first time like to hear?

How about the people that attend services regularly?

What would the board of this community like to hear?

All of these thoughts are quite important...

Is it - at this point and time - worth talking about the last year,

Summarising the last year:

a year of suffering, of sorrow, of grief, sickness and war

Or should we save that for Yom Kippur?

Let's talk about something else

Lets talk about respecting one another

The River

As soon as the first drops of water come up from the soil we won't know what is
going to happen

As soon as there is a sufficient amount of water drops they start moving,
they start to move slowly and carefully but with an ever-growing trust they get faster
and faster

The newly formed river is growing and you can almost hear it
Our sun is heating it, shadows are protecting it and rain is enlarging it's path
It's riverbed is also growing larger and larger
The rivers waters learn not only to go around the rocks on its way,
But to also flow over them.

On it's further journey the river sometimes opens up into another branch
But finally they all find their way back to our river
The river is passing Forstes and fertile land, which live off of this river
As do the animals along side the river. Some even live in it or travel alongside it
The river is passing small towns and cities
Some humans look at it with fear
Some humans even exploit this rivers seemingly endless wealth
But our river doesn't mind that
As soon as it reaches the biggest city, our river is channeled, its being regulated
It's friends, so far moving alongside the river, disappear

Channels and Damms are starting to regulate its further way
The river - so far being very happy with sharing its wealth with others - is suffering
The River is weakening
It's natural path is slowed down by regulations and what not
It's water is polluted by unknown waste
Our river has to keep on carry this waste
It's emerald blue color is changing, it's turning more and more grey
You almost can't hear it anymore
The humans who used to honour this river are now in charge.

The Man

Whenever a child is born it is welcomed by high expectations and hopes.
Big plans, excitement and protective hands are there from the very beginning
The child is growing strong, it is turning into a man
The child faces more and more influences from the outside world
And at some point every child needs to leave its protective home and known
environment — to get out and see something new.

The knowledge he received at home will be enriched by the many new experiences
he will make upon leaving
He might take a sip of water from the river and he might also cool down on a hot day
by taking a bath
He learns to respect the river
On his journey he encounters people
Some of them will become part of his life for quite a long time
Whilst others might be a short encounter
Some will help him, some will teach him, some will hinder him and some will want
to sabotage him.

Every one of the experiences will be part of his life.

As soon as this man decides he's ready to settle, he will have to learn the rules of his
new hometown
He will learn to respect those rules
As a visitor, you can very much do a lot of things, but as soon as you're settling
somewhere the local traditions will also be part of your life
From the moment of settling somewhere one is starting to become attached in this
place,
Which means that one can't just get up and leave
One is becoming part of a community

The man and the river lived alongside, together,
equals equally respecting one another.
Until recently.

Something has changed.

The river starts to burst wide open, its dams break and its waves drive high
It is flooding the soil close by
It is flooding all the land with all the trash that has been dumped in it
In doing so it destroys houses, streets and is hurting Humans too.

The Man -

He was part of a local community and he knew his place within this community
He was getting used to the local traditions
He had built himself a life

He was once again wandering around
He has to start from the very beginning,
he ends up in the very same situation he was in once ago - when he decided to settle
for the first time.

What he called his home was now gone

He has to find himself a new home

The river - that's the people we live with.

Every single encounter is important for us and our society

It is changing our future.

Trough every one of these encounters we're getting back exactly what have shown
before - and vice versa.

Aggression causes aggression.

Rejection causes rejection.

The Pain and Suffering, that others have encountered through time comes together
and creates a river - a river that is bound to break out

If this river floods a neighbourhood, we have to help instantly

The ideas of safety have varied quite a bit over time

But it most importantly relies on the mature nature and resilience of every single
person and the community as a whole.

I'm quite happy to say that ever single member of this community -

Everyone here at Bet Haskala

Has these qualities

A high degree of tolerance

Lots of love and compassion for their fellow men and woman

Respect for one another

That is something I am very very happy say.

We have suffered a lot,

And I don't see an end for this suffering in this historically very important era we live
in

But I place my trust

In our hometown

In our synagogue

And believe it is not going to be washed away by another flood

Because we all know of the value of every person around us

In supporting one another there is absolutely no reason for the river to actually leave its bed.

Water is the source of life

In its purity it will keep us alive and feed us

I am thankful for the exemplary behaviour and solidarity I experienced in the community during the last year.

I thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be the rabbi of this community.

Shana Tova !