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# Temple Beth Shalom

## From the Bima: Our Rabbi's Message.

### I Will Make You a Light to the Nations...

My dear friend and mentor, Prof. Emmanuel Gitlin, Ph.D., frequently sends me articles of interest, dealing with research and developments in the field of religion. Only *partially* in jest, I refer to Prof. Gitlin as "a walking encyclopedia of biblical and historical knowledge." While Prof. Gitlin's knowledge of religious principles cuts across the spectrum of all religions, he is deeply committed, as am I, to establishing Temple Beth Shalom as a thriving Jewish community in the Hickory area. Like me, Prof. Gitlin strives to find ways to meet the spiritual needs not only of the congregation, but also of the greater community. Recently, Prof. Gitlin sent me an article from "The 2014 Dean's Report" of Duke Divinity School. In that report, Dean Richard B. Hayes, Ph.D., lays out the initiatives for the Divinity School for the coming year. In his essay, Dean Hayes draws inspiration from a stirring and powerful

passage found in Isaiah 49:5-6, "And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him... 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'" Now, we are truly blessed in the United States with educational institutions of the highest caliber, both secular and religious, but coming as it did in the weeks leading up to my preparation for Temple Beth Shalom's Community Passover Seder, Dean Hayes' article got me thinking about what might be the greatest Passover miracle of all: through faith in the Almighty God, a battered down and oppressed group of slaves was ultimately liberated and transformed into a chosen people, a blessed nation, and a light to all nations.

In the early chapters of *Bereishit*, Genesis, we read that the Creator's interactions with mankind got off to a rocky start. There was the killing of Abel by Cain, which apparently led to the spread of such violence in the earth that

a cleansing flood was necessary to purge the bloodshed and give mankind a new beginning on the earth. Even after the flood we find that the rebellious nature of man seems to persist as evidenced by the story of the Tower of Babel, which again required a Divine intervention in the form of a confusion of the languages and a scattering of the people. It was at that time the Eternal initiated what I call "The Family Plan" for the spreading of God's way and message to mankind. The plan began, of course, with the calling of the family of Abraham. We read in Genesis 12: "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your father's house, to a land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you, I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (vv. 1-3) For insight as to why the Almighty chose *Abraham* and his family, one might take note of Genesis 18 where in God's own words it is recorded, "For I have chosen [Abraham], in order *that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice*; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham

what God has spoken concerning him." (v. 19)

After a long sojourn in Egypt, estimated from various sources to have been between 250 and 430 years, originally necessitated, of course, by a famine in the land of Canaan, the descendants of Abraham had become enslaved by the ruling class of Egypt. Known at that point in history as the children of Israel, that is of Jacob the grandson of Abraham, the labor of the Israelites was exploited by the Egyptians for the building of their famed cities and temples. The hard bondage of the Israelites became so intense and unbearable that the Creator decided once again to intervene in the affairs of mankind. The deliverance from slavery in Egypt appears to have fulfilled a twofold purpose, keeping promises made to the matriarchs and patriarchs while at the same time establishing a platform for the next step in the family outreach plan. As Moses is commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, God declares in the *Shemot*, Exodus, "I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage; and *I have remembered my covenant*.... I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will

also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you *for my people*, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." (Ch. 6:vv. 5-7) Through a series of events that can only be described as miraculous, this oppressed group of slaves did manage to attain their freedom from what truly would have been the greatest superpower on earth at that time, the nation of Egypt. After their escape, as the people of Israel stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, about to receive instructions from the One who had provided their freedom, God affectionately instructs Moses to tell the people of Israel, "If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be *my own possession* among all of the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*." This amazing proclamation was immediately followed by the giving of the Ten Commandments.

The "light to the nations" passage found in Isaiah 49 and used in Dean Hayes' essay on Duke Divinity School picks up on this same theme. The verses containing the passage are among a group of similarly themed messages in Isaiah known as the "servant songs." And, while

scholars agree that they refer to the calling and commissioning of the prophet Isaiah himself, it cannot be denied that the “servant songs” have a deeper and transcendent meaning applicable to the nation of Israel as a whole. This can be seen in chapter 49, verse 3, where the Almighty states quite explicitly, “*You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will show my glory.*” This statement is paralleled by another servant passage in the book of Isaiah in which the entire nation of Israel, at that time, is clearly being addressed, “*You are my witnesses, declares the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen in order that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am. Before me there was no God formed and there will be none after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and there is no savior besides me.*” (Ch. 43:vv. 10-11)

In our modern age, a call to be a light to the nations might seem controversial or intimidating to some, but I assert that to a very large extent the commission is already achieving success, and in a way that many people might not even realize. Keep in mind that the primary purpose for the original call of Abraham was the teaching of God’s laws first to Abraham’s family, but by extension to all mankind. Is it merely coincidence that *those laws have become incorporated in*

the religious precepts of what is already a majority of the world’s religious population? Jews, of course, have followed the laws in the Hebrew Bible for generations, but they are only a tiny proportion of the world’s current population, 0.2% according to a 2012 Pew Research analysis of 2010 population data. But, Christianity, whose roots are also in Judaism, deemed it appropriate to accept the Hebrew Bible into its own canon of scripture, thus bringing the laws and traditions of Abraham and his descendants to the world’s 2.2 billion Christians. That is approximately 31.5% of world population as of 2010. Add to that the Muslim faith, whose roots are in Christianity and Judaism, which has also ratified and brought forward many of the laws and traditions of the ancient Hebrews in its own holy writings, and one finds the laws of the Creator, originally enunciated in the Hebrew Bible, reaching another 1.6 billion people, or 23.2% of world population. (For a brief analysis of how the Ten Commandments have been incorporated in the Koran, see [http://submission.org/The\\_ten\\_commandments\\_in\\_the\\_Quran.html](http://submission.org/The_ten_commandments_in_the_Quran.html). For a more detailed analysis, see [http://www.answering-christianity.com/quran\\_ten\\_commandments.htm](http://www.answering-christianity.com/quran_ten_commandments.htm).) These three major Western religions alone, all tracing their

traditions back to the patriarch Abraham, accounted for a total of almost 55% of the world’s population in 2010, a majority already. (For population figures, see <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.) Based on my research, I would also posit a connection between the ancient Hebrew tradition and the teachings of Hinduism (15.0%) and Buddhism (7.1%) bringing the world influence of the “Abrahamic faith” up to 77% of 2010 world population, but that connection will definitely have to wait for a future article.

You see my point, that the One who willed this creation into existence, the One who chose Abraham and his descendants, and the One who miraculously brought the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and entrusted them with lofty precepts and a worldwide mission is now known and revered worldwide as a result of that mission, *just as the Hebrew Prophets foretold*. But, there is still much to be done. We as Jews have experienced the bondage of slavery in Egypt, so we must never fail to take up the cause of those who are still oppressed in our modern world. We experienced starvation then, so our compassion must remain with those who still do not have enough food. We were strangers in a strange land; let us continue to reach out to all

who are disenfranchised in any way. As we celebrate the *Divine gifts and miracles* provided to our ancestors at *this holy time of Passover*, will you commit to join me in carrying the mission forward to be in the words of our holy writings, “*a light to the nations*”?



## President's Corner

*Barbara Laufer, TBS President*

Thinking of Purim and the story of Esther led me to the many women of valor within our own congregation. To name just a few we are blessed to have: Lin Gentry who has developed Sisterhood into a force for temple programs; Tiffany Hull for many years of service on the board and her quiet contributions to Oneg after Oneg; Esther Greene and Madeleine Guy for their unfailing support and contributions for many years; Marsue Davidson who has brought a welcomed change to our bulletin; Kathy Jones for development of Sunday school lessons and materials; and Marion Dubow for contributions over and above

including getting the campaign to update our siddurs off the ground. Dedicated to all the special women of our congregation is the poem written by Eric S. Kingston a writer for Chabad:

A woman of valor makes the world change  
Her strength is the content that guides through the days  
Defined by her actions that bring light to all dreams  
Valor is something that's defined by her deeds.  
Her valor is golden, sparkled and gray  
She stands up to the challenge no matter the way  
It can't be held back or defined by her age  
For valor's not held by the young or old  
But by the deeds of the heart that give and unfold  
It's merit and honor that hold no disguise  
Like the creation of being in the blessed Holy One's eyes  
For valor is the color of the song of her soul  
As she changes, creates and turns light into gold  
Divine is Her Presence, be it Joyous or sad  
--A Woman of Valor--  
May offer little, but it will be all that she has.  
For only her heart will know the depths of her soul  
That nurtures and blossom and forever unfolds  
And hold in its essence new life and new gain  
Yes, a woman of valor makes the world change.

## TBS Sunday school Program

*Marsue Davidson, Sunday school Chair*

The Sunday school program is coming to an end and the children have really enjoyed the teachings and activities of this year's Sunday school program. They participated in the Seder Dinner and the parents were so happy because they were all so well behaved and participated in the 4 questions. They continue to collect Tzedakah money for a celebration at the end of the Sunday school year.

Our next session we will be discussing Yom Hatzma'ut which is Israel's Independence Day on April 19<sup>th</sup> and then Mother's Day and Judaism on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May.

We all love Rabbi Dennis continued enthusiasm and patience. He has connected with the children and continues to encourage the children to understand and implement the teachings they have learned over this Sunday school session.

## President's Reminder

Temple Beth Shalom's annual congregational meeting will be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:30am. This very important meeting will take place after Sunday school, so the parents can

## Temple Beth Shalom Event Calendar 2015

### April 2015 hosted by Sisterhood and Stephen and Marsue Davidson

17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm Evening  
Service  
18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am Morning  
Services  
19<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Sunday  
school studying Yom  
Hatzma'ut/Israel  
Independence Day

### May 2015 hosted by Larry and Barbara Laufer

3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30am Sunday school  
will be studying Mothers and  
Judaism  
15<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Friday night  
services  
16<sup>th</sup> at 10am Saturday morning  
services  
17<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Sunday school  
will studying Shavuot  
23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00pm Erev Shavuot  
services

### June 2015 hosted by Susan Rieder in celebration of Andrew's Bar Mitzvah

7<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Sunday school  
studying Kashrut  
19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm Friday night  
services  
20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am Andrew Igdal  
Bar Mitzvah  
22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday school  
Celebration

participate in the annual meeting. Alec will be available to watch the younger children play outside while all the adults meet in the sanctuary. Please join us for this annual event, vote for your new TBS board and the accomplishments we have made over this last year.

## Looking for Something to Do...

Each semester, The Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies at Appalachian State University sponsors a film series that explores how cinema treats the topics they teach. The center's director, Dr. Simon Sibelman, will introduce each film. They're free and open to the public, and are held at 2:00pm at the Greenbriar Theater on ASU's campus. This semester, the topic is being Jewish and gay. The next film will be April 12, called "Yossi", about an officer in the Israeli army dealing with the death of his partner, who was also an army officer. The final film this semester will be April 26 called "A Secret", centered around the love affair between two men--a Palestinian student and an Israeli lawyer. For more information, the Center's website is [www.holocaust.appstate.edu](http://www.holocaust.appstate.edu)



### TBS Sisterhood

*Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President*

The TBS sisterhood hosted another very successful community Seder on April 4. We'd like to thank everyone who attended and hope they all enjoyed

themselves. Of course, it didn't happen by accident there are some very important people we need to acknowledge. First of all, a huge thank you to Barb Laufer for organizing us all. Also, her brisket and matzah ball soup were fantastic! Thank you to Larry for making the matzah balls very nice. New this year was tsimmes made by Marion, which was a great addition. Thank you's to Marion-honey cakes, Tiffany, Lin, and Susan matzah kugels, Laura fruit, and Jan Robbins for everything else and coordinating in the kitchen. Kathy Jones made very pretty matzah bags for the tables and treat bags for the kids. The following people came to set up the temple before the big day Barbara, Larry, Kathy, Tiffany, Lin, Laura, and Elaine as instrumental as well. Lots of people helped clean up after dinner, which is always much appreciated. We hope to see everyone who came at next year's Seder, and we hope more people from Temple Beth Shalom are able to join us next year also.

Sisterhood's next meeting will be Thursday April 23, at 6:30pm at Thai Lotus, behind McDonald's on Hwy 127. We hope you can join us.

## Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund Announcement

The Sederholm Scholarship was established by a long-standing Temple member, Bert Sederholm to honor his wife, Harriet, who died shortly after her retirement from work in Hickory. Mr. Sederholm provided the initial funding that has been added to over the years. The scholarship is available to students. Temple members are looked upon favorably but one does not need to be a temple member or Jewish to apply. The scholarship fund is fully invested and the dividends are used to provide scholarship awards.

Interested students should submit an essay explaining their interests and desire for scholarship support by June 15, 2015. The essay can be sent to any of the committee members:

- Lin Gentry
- Julie Owens
- Sanford Guttler

Naturally, the committee encourages anyone to make a tax-deductible donation to the Scholarship Fund at any time and a check can be sent to Temple Beth Shalom and earmarked for the Sederholm Fund.

## Temple Board

Our next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 8th. All board meetings are open to all temple members. Please join us and find out the new and exciting direction for TBS.

## TBS Member Business Directory

**Dr. Ron Dubow**  
Internist, Geriatric Specialist  
(elderly care), Pediatrician

2651 Morganton Blvd SW  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
828-757-8950

**Dr. Laura Faruque of  
Womens View PA**

915 Tate Blvd SE  
Suite170  
Hickory, NC 28602  
828-345-0800

**Dr. Mark Faruque of  
Bethlehem Family Practice**

174 Bolick Lane Suite 202  
Taylorsville NC 28681  
828-495-8226

**Marsue Davidson, RN DCS  
Unifour Nursing**

805 W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
Newton, NC 28681  
828-464-0244  
[www.unifournursing.net](http://www.unifournursing.net)

**Robyn Diamond, Certified Health and  
Wellness Coach, Specializing in  
Digestive  
Health and Stress Management**

843-991-6338  
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**Professor Gitlin Hebrew Lessons**

109 6<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
Hickory, NC 28601  
828-328-9443

## Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle Events

### Birthdays

Aidan Weatherly 4/2  
Wayne Cole 4/4  
Ron Cohn 4/6  
Ryan Laufer 4/10  
Dennis Jones 4/12  
Whitney Cohn 4/14  
Pam Jones 4/14  
Ruth Leifer 4/19  
Jim Correll 4/18  
Braeden Richards 4/21  
Ben Peltzer 4/22  
Stuart Shubin 4/23

### Anniversaries

Jon/Laura Levinson 4/15  
David/Pam Jones 4/25  
David Cohen 4/3

### Yahrzeits

Sue Brisbane 4/5  
Fania Suess 4/25  
Rose Miller 4/26

**Alice Guy of  
The Hickory Wine Shoppe**

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**Michelle Oxenberg Jordon  
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