

# TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

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*Temple Beth Shalom*  
P.O. Box 9142

*Hickory, North Carolina 28603*  
[www.hickoryjewishcenter.com](http://www.hickoryjewishcenter.com)



## From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Dennis Jones

### Some Reflections on "The Messiah"

Before I retire in July, I will get to my promised book review of the Palestinian perspective on the situation in Israel today: *The Words of My Father*, by Yousef Bashir. But time to write keeps slipping away from me!! While you wait for that article, I have decided to recycle some of my more controversial bulletin submissions from over the last nine years. The subject of "the messiah" is a very complex topic. So, let's go for it. Let me begin the discussion with a favorite Passover story that I have heard told by many progressive rabbis over the years. There was a child present at a Passover Seder who inquired of the rabbi about the symbolism of the cup for Elijah. The rabbi explained to the child that according to our tradition, Elijah was to be the forerunner of the messiah, and when the messiah comes that will be a time of peace and prosperity—sickness and hunger will be eliminated, and all the nations will live in friendship and fellowship with one another. Upon hearing this, the child asked simply, "**Why would we need to wait for the messiah to do that?!**"

The Western religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have, in my opinion, become preoccupied with the doctrine of "the messiah." My own views on this topic have evolved greatly over the years and **are still evolving**. I have no hard and fast eschatological system that I adhere to, only the fundamental belief that there is a Supreme Creative Mind that willed this creation into existence and, probably for reasons known only to that Creator, also willed human beings into existence to be **partners in the completion of that ongoing Creative**

**Process.** In my own experience, to know that Creative Force is to have a sense of gratitude, respect, praise, and desire to respond to that Force. I think the appropriate response is to be a full partner in the **completion of creation through acts of lovingkindness to all creatures, social justice, and gestures of peace.** I do believe that the Hebrew Prophets have given us a glimpse of the perfected state that our world and eventually our entire cosmos can achieve. Based on my understanding of what the Creative Force has revealed about One's self, at least in the Hebrew Bible, the sacred writings I am most familiar with, the Creative/Redemptive Process is being carried out through a series of **covenants made with humankind.**

Again, in my opinion, the idea of a messiah has been blown far out of biblical proportion by many. The entire idea of messiah comes from the Hebrew word, מָשִׁיחַ—mashiach, which means simply, “anointed one.” The word itself comes from the Hebrew verb, מָשַׁח—mashach, which means, “to smear with oil.” The first messiahs in the Hebrew Bible were Aaron and his sons. We read in Exodus 29:7, “Then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his [Aaron's] head and anoint him.” And speaking of Aaron's sons, in Exodus 28:41, “...and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.” If we are going to interpret the term messiahs as referring to anointed ones, as I believe would be biblically appropriate, then even in biblical times we have examples of hundreds of messiahs, since the practice of anointing was used for priests, later for kings, and also for prophets. See for example 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:16, where Elijah was instructed, “Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint a king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as **prophet in your place.**” Even the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are called messiahs in the Hebrew Bible. Psalm 105:13-15 states, “When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, God permitted no one to do them wrong; yes, God rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, ‘Do not touch my **anointed ones** and to do my prophets no harm.’”

If we were going to look for a figure to assist humankind in ushering in the golden age which is often referred to as the “messianic age,” I would hone in on two passages in the Torah that scholars believe are more ancient than some of the later passages often applied to a messiah. The first passage is found in Exodus 23:20-23, “Behold, I am going to send a messenger/angel (Hebrew: מַלְאָךְ) to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him. But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For my messenger/angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.” Now most scholars and interpreters take this passage as a reference to Joshua, but the writer of Deuteronomy picks up on it and gives it a more expansive meaning in 18:15-19 of that book, “Adonai your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from among your countrymen, you shall listen to him. ... I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [Moses], and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to my words which he shall speak in my name, I, myself will require it of him.” These passages make me wonder whether, rather than looking for **a messiah**, we should instead be looking for **the return of prophecy to humankind.** The sages of the Talmudic period talked about the removal of prophecy and its eventual return. A full discussion of that is beyond the scope of my answer here, but rather **a messiah**, an anointed

prophet, group of prophets, or better yet **all humankind communicating with the Divine Mind** would be a much better deal. This might be what the prophet Joel envisioned when he said, “And it will come about after this that I [God] will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out my spirit in those days.” (2:28-29)

Now, **the idea of an anointed king came much later in the Hebrew Bible**. And one should remember that Adonai was not pleased with the people’s request. When the people asked the prophet Samuel to appoint a king over them so that they could be “like the nations,” Adonai told Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected me from being king over them**” (I Samuel 8:7). That passage continues with a vivid description of the oppressive rule of kings, concluding with the chilling warning, “Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, **but Adonai will not answer you in that day**” (I Samuel 8:11-18). So, while there are references to a descendant of David in many prophetic passages, 10 to be exact, it is difficult for me to believe that the True Sovereign of Israel who felt rejected by the people at the appointment of an earthly king, would then turn around and make a descendant of an earthly king a **central figure in the redemptive plan for the entire cosmos**.

As said, there are 10 references in the Prophets to a descendant of David being involved in the ultimate golden age. There are another 4 references, three in Ezekiel and one in Hosea, that state that **David himself** will reign over a restored kingdom of Israel and Judah. But there are dozens of passages in the Prophets that speak of a **return of Adonai’s own Presence to the earth**. The clearest passage is in the book of Zechariah. We chant it every service as part of the *Aleinu* prayer. The prophecy is spoken in the context of many nations gathering for battle against Jerusalem. It states, “Then Adonai will go forth against those nations, as [God] fights in the day of battle. And in that day [God’s] feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the East.... Thus, Adonai my God will come, and all the holy ones with you.... And Adonai shall be King over all the earth; in that day it shall be—Adonai will be one and [God’s] name one” (14:3-9). There are countless more verses, though, in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Hosea which speak of the **presence/appearance of Adonai with no references to any human agent**.

Also pertinent to the discussion of “end time” events are the **servant passages** from the book of Isaiah. Scholars and interpreters believe that these refer predominantly to the **whole nation of Israel**. And that idea is definitely conveyed by the prophet himself. For example, in chapter 41, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendent of Abraham my friend, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts, and said to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you’” (41:8-9). But a few chapters later, there is a twist and wording that could be interpreted to point to an **individual rather than to the nation**. “And now says Adonai, who formed me from the womb to be God’s servant, to bring Jacob back to God, in order that Israel might be gathered to God (for I am honored in the sight of Adonai, and my God is my strength). God says, ‘It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth’” (49:5-6). It must be pointed out here that **absolutely none of the servant passages in the book of Isaiah contain a reference to either a messiah or to a descendant of David**.

So, on this very complex subject of “the messiah,” my views have evolved and are still evolving just as the views of Judaism itself have evolved over the years and are still evolving. As the Torah says, “The secret things belong to Adonai our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, **that we may observe all the words of this Torah**” (Deut. 29:29). Of one thing I am very certain, I want to be a part of **Adonai’s Creative Plan**; I want to be a part of the **perfection of this cosmos—tikkun olam**. Our tradition tells us, “Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai taught: ‘If you have a sapling in your hand, and someone says to you the Messiah has come, stay and finish planting, and then go to greet the Messiah’” (*Avot d’Rabbi Natan* 31b). I will plant that sapling, drive an electric car, feed the hungry, visit the sick, free the oppressed, fight for social justice, and **do whatever I can to bring perfection/wholeness to Adonai’s creation**. If a messiah or messiahs, at some point, figure into that effort, so be it. And if not, so be it. **It does not really change what I practice and preach.**

## The President’s Message

Susan G Goldstein, President

External and Internal!

### External:

Reminding you that the Carolina Region Small Congregations Cohort (the “Carolina Cohort”) has planned our first series. You may recall that this group is composed of small congregations in North and South Carolina. Most, like us, have less than 100 members. Some are affiliated with the Conservative or Reform movements, and some, like us, are unaffiliated. The Carolina Cohort offers us a way to share information and bring programs to our members that we would not otherwise be able to assess.

**The series will consist of two Zoom programs:**

**Wednesday, May 10, 7:00 pm**

**Wednesday, May 24, 7:00 pm**

**The flyer is attached. Please note that you must register to receive the Zoom link.**

### Internal:

If you have pictures from your “together, but apart” *seder*, please share. We’d all love to see you enjoying each other’s company. Susan Huitt and I missed out on the shared closing because we’d just begun our entrees as they were starting! No worries. We did it on our own.

All our members should have received the membership survey as we decide how to proceed in light of our rabbi’s retirement. PLEASE complete the survey and return it at your very earliest convenience.

And, mark your calendars for our Annual Membership Meeting May 21<sup>st</sup>, 10 am at the temple. Members who are unable to attend can vote by email ballot. Look for it in your email before the meeting.

*Shalom,*

Susan

**ALL MEMBERS OF TEMPLE BETH SHALOM**

The TBS board needs your input as we actively seek a replacement for Rabbi Dennis when he retires in July.

PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR A  
SURVEY THAT IS COMING YOUR WAY  
AND COMPLETE IT AS SOON AS YOU CAN



**TBS Sisterhood**

Sheri Stock, Sisterhood President

I can't believe it's almost summer! Sisterhood will be having our next two monthly Friday night potluck dinners on Friday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, and Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. Both will start at 6 pm. I hope to see you all there! Bring a vegetarian, parve, or dairy dish to share.

Jodi has also invited the whole synagogue to her house for a pool party Sunday, June 11<sup>th</sup> from 3 to 7 pm! Please let me know if you plan to attend.

And on July 16<sup>th</sup> we reserved tickets for a Crawdad's baseball game, at 2 pm at Crawdad Stadium. Contact me if you want to attend.

The sisterhood is also planning a Summer Cleaning Day. Our synagogue needs a good deep cleaning, and many hands make light work. It will be held on Sunday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Come ready to roll up your sleeves and help get our synagogue shining like a new penny before Rosh Hashanah rolls back around. I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Sheri





## TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Principal

Our Sunday School students learned about the Jewish traditions of kosher eating this month. They loved sorting the “clean” and the “unclean” bugs and animals from a huge bag of plastic critters as well as some animal crackers at snack time! In our last session, we learned about the holiday of Shavuot. Our next meeting will be Sunday, May 7th at 10 am.

As always, if you are interested in learning more about TBS Sunday School, please contact Kathy Jones, Principal, at [krsjones2002@yahoo.com](mailto:krsjones2002@yahoo.com)

## Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund



The Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund (HSSF) was established by a long-time Temple member and past President, Burt Sederholm (may his memory be a blessing), to honor his late wife Harriet, who died shortly after her retirement from 25 years with the Catawba County Department of Social Services. The scholarship committee is a sub-committee of the Temple Beth Shalom Board. The committee manages funds invested for the purpose of rewarding one-time scholarships with the

earnings from the invested funds. These awards honor the memory of Harriet Sederholm and her efforts to improve the lives of so many impoverished adults and children in Catawba County.

The HSSF scholarship is available to students. Candidates will submit an essay to any one of the committee members. The essay will explain who the candidate is, what they are doing currently, their plans for the future, how the scholarship funds will be used, and, if applicable, what the connection may be to Jewish life.

The committee will make decisions based on the following preferences but not absolutes:

- ♦ Is the applicant a temple member or related to a temple member?
- ♦ Is the applicant Jewish?
- ♦ Will the funds be used for educational needs?
- ♦ Will the funds make a difference regarding the applicant's ability to benefit from the activity?
- ♦ Is the activity something deemed to be of value by the committee?

Interested students should submit their essays by April 30th. The scholarship season runs from May 1-April 30. All applicants will be notified in writing if their application has been approved or declined by May 15<sup>th</sup>. Awards should be mailed to recipients by May 31st.

The essay should be emailed to any of the committee members: Lin Gentry, Karen Ferguson, or Sandy Guttler. Naturally, the committee encourages everyone to make a tax-deductible donation to the Scholarship Fund at any time.



## Temple Board

Our next meeting is on Wednesday, May 3rd at 6:30 pm, on Zoom. Board meetings are open to all temple members. Contact Susan Goldstein if you wish to join a scheduled monthly meeting. Board members are:

### Officers:

Susan Goldstein, President  
 Barbara Laufer, Past President  
 Mary Lee Tosky, Acting Vice President  
 Susan Rieder, Treasurer  
 Lin Gentry, Secretary

### Members at Large:

Liz Correll  
 Karen Ferguson  
 Sheri Stock  
 Susan Tiger Huitt  
 Derek Cooperberg  
 Jodi Lavin-Tompkins



**The TBS board thanks  
 you for your donations**

**TBS monthly donations to local  
 Charities:**

**May – The American Cancer Society**

**Do you have a favorite charity you would  
 like us to donate to? Let us know.**



Please consider pairing with a board member(s) to host a Shabbat or Holiday at Temple Beth Shalom. When members contribute to the life of our synagogue in this way, we all feel a part of our Jewish community and an active participant in assuring its well-being. Here's the link to sign up: [TBS Hosting Sign-ups - Google Sheets](#)

1. View the [spreadsheet](#) to see what dates are free
2. Submit your choice using the [Google Form](#).
3. MaryLee will type in any form *submissions*, but **any board member can enter host names** on the spreadsheet for themselves or other members *by request*. Several of you have successfully done so!

**Hello Fellow Congregants.** Would you like to perform mitzvahs for members of TBS who need help? We are looking for volunteers for the new Caring Committee and we need you! Wondering what you'll be doing? We will periodically deliver or order food for members who are temporarily ill, or chronically ill and live alone. We will send cards for special life events our members are celebrating. Please send me an email if you are interested to [jodi.m.lavintompkins@gmail.com](mailto:jodi.m.lavintompkins@gmail.com).

## TBS Community Mitzvah Projects

This past month the Community Relations and Social Action Committee partnered with the Alexander Christian Crisis Center and the Alexander Central High School Social Worker to pay a high electric bill for a family of five with three children before their power was disconnected. We were able to also donate funds to help a single mother of four after their home was destroyed by fire. We need to keep these families in our prayers! It is always a blessing for TBS to be able to help those in need in our local community!

Please remember us when you have funds, bedding, or household goods that you would like to donate. If you have any questions about our mitzvah projects or suggestions on where else we can have a positive impact, please contact Kathy Jones, Chairperson, at [krsjones2002@yahoo.com](mailto:krsjones2002@yahoo.com).



## TBS Member Business Directory

*Let us know if you would like to list your business here in the Bulletin. It is a free benefit of TBS membership*

Dr. Laura Faruque  
A Woman's View  
915 Tate Blvd SE  
Suite 170  
Hickory, NC 28602  
828-345-0800

Dr. Mark Faruque  
Bethlehem Family Practice  
174 Bolick Lane Suite 202  
Taylorsville, NC 28681  
828-495-8226

Jack and Hannah Levy  
Druzy Dreams Crystals  
<http://www.etsy.com/shop/druzydreamscrytals>

Dr. David Peltzer  
Newton Family Physicians  
767 West First Street  
Newton, NC 28658  
828 465-3928  
[www.newtonfamilyphysicians.com](http://www.newtonfamilyphysicians.com)

## Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle May Events



### Birthdays

Grayson Cohn 5/2  
Ashley C Cohn 5/2  
Eileen Cangemi 5/6  
David Engelmann 5/7  
Linda Guttler 5/8  
Lori Coen Fata 5/13  
Ross Guttler 5/18  
Ariel Cohn 5/19  
Amanda Garrick 5/24  
Kevin Huitt 5/26  
Solomon Zerden 5/26  
Patrick Rowan 5/27  
Mark Sobotkin 5/30

### Anniversaries

Aaron and Mary Lee Tosky 5/4  
Ron and Sue Cohn 5/6  
Bud and Connie Tosky 5/24

### Yahrzeits

Ruth Laufer 5/15  
Richard Fox 5/15  
Sam Griffin 5/17

## Local and Regional Events



## 21st Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Symposium, 2023

### ***The Holocaust and Lessons For Today***

"The Holocaust is not just Jewish history; it is humanity's history, and we must understand it if we are to prevent it from happening again."

*Save the Date! **July 8-13th***

*Registration Forms and Scholarship Applications Open February 15, 2023.*

This year's symposium will be guided by the theme "The Holocaust and Lessons For Today."

**Registration: Visit this site to**

**register: <https://aonstate.irisregistration.com/Form/23SYMPOSIUM>**



**SHALOM  
HARMON  
INSTITUTE**

Follow this link for information about  
upcoming online events at  
SHI: <https://www.hartman.org.il/programs/>



**Temple Beth Shalom has an active membership in the Catawba Valley Interfaith Council, where Rabbi Dennis served as president for 5 years and now serves as secretary. You can find out more about this organization and its activities at: <https://www.facebook.com/CVICNC/>.**

## Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School

For event updates, email: [info@hickoryjewishcenter.com](mailto:info@hickoryjewishcenter.com)

DATE	EVENT	BULLETIN DEADLINE
May	6/7 <b>Saturday Morning Service</b> 10:00 AM/ <b>Sunday School</b> 10:00 AM	April 23
	19 <b>Friday Night Service</b> 7:00 PM	
	21 <b>TBS Annual Membership Meeting</b> 10:00 AM (Sunday)	
	25 <b>Erev Shavuot Service</b> 7:00 PM (Thursday)	
	28 <b>Sunday School</b> 10:00 AM	
June	3/4 <b>Saturday Morning Service</b> 10:00 AM/ <b>Sunday School Final Session/Party</b>	May 21
	23 <b>Friday Night Service</b> 7:00 PM	
July	8 <b>Saturday Morning Service</b> 10:00 AM	N/A
	21 <b>Friday Night Service</b> 7:00 PM	
	26 <b>Sunday School</b> 10:00 AM	

## Jewish Holidays in May



**Lag BaOmer**—this year, **Tuesday, May 9, 2023**, is the 33rd day of counting the **Omer**. The holiday is a temporary break from the semi-mourning period, the counting of the **Omer**.



**Shavuot 2023** celebrated from **sunset on May 25, 2023, until nightfall on May 27, 2023**) coincides with the date that G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people.

Want to contribute to the TBS Bulletin? Send entries to Karen Ferguson at [karen.sederholm@gmail.com](mailto:karen.sederholm@gmail.com). All entries are reviewed by the TBS Board before publication.