

# TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

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## From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Dennis Jones

### Chag Pesach Sameach!!

We are about to observe what many scholars believe to be history's oldest continuously celebrated religious holiday. I would posit that the holiday of Pesach/Passover commemorates the *second* greatest miracle in the history of humankind—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. As Moses is commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, God declares in the book of *Shemot/Exodus*, “I have heard the groaning of the children 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 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” (Ex. 19:5-6). This amazing proclamation was immediately followed by the giving of the Ten Commandments.

What an honor to be chosen as witnesses to the One True God, the Creator of the cosmos. And that, I would argue, is *the greatest* miracle of all time/space. For people of faith, the One God brought into existence a creation that abounds with indescribable complexity and amazing diversity. Indeed, the more complex systems or species become, the more diverse they become. My Rabbi, Morton Kaplan, would often use the creation story in Genesis 1 & 2 as a springboard to extol the beauty and necessity of diversity not only in nature but among humankind as well. The Jewish faith tradition may just be the most diverse of all the world’s religions. Just think of all the changes our religion has gone through in the 4000 years when from what began as a covenant with one nomadic family expanded into the diverse, worldwide system of laws, traditions, and beliefs that Judaism embodies today. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, taught that Judaism’s holy texts are “anthologies of arguments: arguments between God and humans, humans and God, humans and one another.” Rabbi Sacks maintained that diversity can be a source of strength, not a weakness. Where you find disagreement and argument you will also find *passion* (<https://rabbisacks.org/jewish-unity-published-in-jewish-action/>).

Perhaps one of the most famous “clashes” in our people’s history is the rivalry between the Schools of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai. Hillel has been called, “Judaism’s model human being.” This is because his life encapsulated so many of the values of Judaism in the time period in which he lived. Hillel was a scholar of the Mishnaic Period. He is known for having overcome a background of poverty and ascending to a life of devotion to serving humankind and studying Torah. Hillel is credited with originating the Jewish version of the Golden Rule. According to tradition, a non-Jew approached Hillel and asked him to define the essence of Judaism while standing on one foot. Hillel responded, “What is hateful unto you do not do unto your neighbor. The rest is commentary—now go and study” (*Shabbat* 31a). As a result of Hillel’s diligent studies, he developed a forceful intellect. Many scholars credit him with the introduction of the concept of *tikkun olam*, the performing acts of Torah for the ethical betterment of the world. Hillel developed this idea in the context of his concern that the rote implementation of Torah law was actually degrading his peers’ motivation and efforts to help the poor and the oppressed. Hillel is credited with a large number of the words of wisdom which are found in the tractate *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Elders). Hillel is remembered in history as being the perennial opponent of Shammai (Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1991, pp. 120-122).

The Talmud records numerous disputes between Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai, then later of disputes between Hillel’s disciples and those of Shammai. It is generally agreed that Hillel’s motivations in the implementation of Torah were less strict and according to the “letter of the law,” and more motivated by compassion for all human beings. Shammai, on the other hand, was known for the strictness of his Torah interpretation, and his disregard for the effect it would have on human beings. Rabbinical rulings of that time almost always went in favor of the school of Hillel. There is a very interesting story recorded in the Talmud: “A heavenly voice declared: the words of both schools [Hillel and Shammai] are the words of the living God, but the law follows the rulings of the school of Hillel because the Hillelites were gentle and modest, and study both their own opinions and the opinions of the other school, and humbly mentioned the words of the other school before their own” (*Eruvin* 13b). It is interesting to note that rulings went in favor of the school of Hillel on grounds of morality and compassion even when ritual matters of the Torah were being decided. This shift toward ethics over ritual not only reinforces the message of the prophets but may have also been the savior of Judaism after the Roman destruction.

In our own day here in America, we find our politicians and pundits lamenting the fact that our country seems more divided and polarized than it has been in recent history. I would ask whether we might turn this current diversity and disagreement into a strength today, just as Judaism has managed to do for its 4000-year history. Our nation was founded on the ideals of negotiation and compromise. I believe it is just our ability to compromise that has made our nation as free and prosperous as it has been. I truly believe that when ideas clash and are worked through, the evenest path forward can be struck.

We do, however, need to acquire or reacquire the ability to disagree without demonizing or “otherizing” our opponents. In his article, “Jewish Diversity & Unity,” Rabbi Sacks proposed three what I would call ‘rules for fair argument or disagreement.’ First, do not see an opposing point of view as being an attack on you personally. In other words, try to keep disagreements or differences within the realm of opposing ideas or principles, *not* as moral judgments. I know, sometimes that is hard to do. Second, try to defend your own ideas without attacking others on a personal level. Most human beings are sensitive to criticism and tend to take things personally. Can we each state our own case in such a way as to avoid that human tendency? Remember, the *Mishnah* says, “The one who passes judgment on his/her fellow is judged first” (*Bava Kama* 93a:3). Third, it is crucial to consider that Adonai loves, cares for, and sustains all of Adonai’s creatures despite our many differences, disagreements, weaknesses, and failings. It has never been acceptable in Judaism to expect Adonai’s love and forgiveness for ourselves without extending that same love and forgiveness to our fellow humans (Rabbi Sacks, *ibid*).

You know I talk often about how the Prophet Isaiah, in line with most of the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible, gives us some breathtakingly positive glimpses of humankind’s future. A particularly powerful and oft-quoted prediction is Isa. 2:4: “...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; **nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.**” As I think of the incredible strides humankind has made in the areas of science, technology, medicine, and human rights in just the past 100 years, I am optimistic enough to hope that the vision of the Hebrew Prophets *is* possible. I tell my students frequently that the American constitutional experiment, in particular, has yielded amazingly beneficial results. Never before have so many individuals been afforded equal rights under the law or broad access to food, shelter, medical care, and wealth. I believe that our country’s movement in such a positive direction is principal *because* it was founded and has continued to operate on the deeply embedded Judeo-Christian values of honesty, hard work, and acts of generosity and kindness.

I close with one of my favorite quotes from the *Gates of Repentance* High Holiday prayer book:

**When will redemption come?**

**When we master the violence that fills our world.**

**When we look upon others as we would have them look upon us.**

**When we grant to every person the rights we claim for ourselves**

(p. 103).

*Ken yehi ratzon*—May this be God’s will!!

## The President's Message

Susan G Goldstein, President

I'm excited to share with 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 access.

Members of the Carolina Cohort determined that our first initiatives should be (a) a series on antisemitism, and (b) an initiative that would engage the children in those congregations whose parents are members. Our first collaboration will be an Antisemitism series. I am part of the subcommittee working on Antisemitism along with Mark Epstein (Gastonia) and Steve Silver (Aiken). We are working under the guidance of Noah Levine with the Jewish Community Legacy Program ("JCLP"). We have met (via Zoom, of course!) several times and have met with two professionals who have agreed to help frame the issue and be the presenting speakers. They are Eric Ross, Associate Director for Jewish Community Outreach on Antisemitism for the Southern Division of the Anti-Defamation League ("ADL"); and Natanya Miller, Director of Education Initiatives, Charleston Jewish Federation.

The series will consist of two Zoom programs

- Wednesday, May 10, 7:00 pm
- Wednesday, May 24, 7:00 pm

We will send the flyer for this series along with the registration links later this month. We believe that you will find the programs interesting, informative, and very relevant.

The subcommittee working on the Children's Initiative consists of Rochelle Reich (Asheville); Rabbi Dov Goldberg (Fayetteville); and Irving and Elga Joffe (New Bern). We submitted TBS's answers to the survey that group sent to congregations collecting data on the ages of the children (or whether congregations have no children). The subcommittee will put into a place a process whereby the children can share their thoughts and desires for collaborative programming (virtual and in person). They will also convene a meeting of the religious school directors and spiritual leaders to craft a process for engaging the children in meaningful programs and activities. Stay tuned!

TBS "House" Projects

- We recently had a water leak around our water heater. All County Plumbing has installed a new valve, and we will schedule a recommended maintenance visit for the water heater in the next few weeks.

- Aaron Tosky met with representatives of the Hickory Fire Department to check our fire alarms. All's well!

I look forward to seeing many of you at our “together, but apart” *sedarim* on Thursday evening. I've pulled out my *Haggadah* collection and have begun the annual pondering of some of the contents. This year the phrase “Next Year in Jerusalem” has provided the impetus for questioning. I just read an article from *Moment Magazine* wherein the author, George E. Johnson, suggests that when we use the phrase as we end the seder, we are really asking to find wholeness in our brokenness. I read somewhere else that, especially this year, we might want to say “Next Year in Jerusalem -- at peace.” What's your interpretation? That might be a question for discussion at our seder tables.

*Chag Pesach Sameach,*

Susan



## TBS Sisterhood

Sheri Stock, Sisterhood President

Hello TBS!

Pesach is almost here! If you want to enjoy the second night Seder with a host family, please let me know no later than Tuesday 4/4/2023.

Sisterhood will be having our monthly Friday night potluck on Friday, May 12th. I hope to see you all then! Bring a vegetarian, parve, or dairy dish to share.

Sisterhood is also planning a Summer Cleaning Day. Our

synagogue is in need of a good deep cleaning and many hands make light work. It will be held on Sunday, July 23rd. Come ready to roll up your sleeves and help me 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

Sunday School was busy this month with stories and teachings about Passover. The students made kiddush cups for the Seder and even made their very own matzo! (Thank you, Sheri Stock, for your baking expertise!) We hope all of the students will be singing the Four Questions at their home Seders and on the Community Zoom Seder as well as they practiced it!

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, April 12, 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

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

**Members at Large:**

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



**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 monthly donations to local Charities:

February - United Arts Council  
 March - Sipes Orchard Home  
 April – Sharing Hope Farm  
 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!



## TBS Community Mitzvah Projects

TBS continues to collect household supplies to give to families in need. Please keep us in mind for items you want to get rid of:

Towels/Washcloths

Dishes/Glasses/Cups

Pots/Pans

All Sizes of Sheets/Comforters

Curtains

Silverware

Dish Racks/Drain Pans

Trash Cans

Cooking Utensils

Small Kitchen Appliances

Rugs

Bathroom Shower Curtains

Cleaning Supplies

Hygiene Supplies

If you have any donations you would like to make, questions about our mitzvah projects, or suggestions on where else we can have a positive impact, please contact Kathy Jones, Chairperson of the TBS Community Relations and Social Action Committee, at [krsjones202@yahoo.com](mailto:krsjones202@yahoo.com)

### TBS MESSAGE BOARD

*Happy Passover!*

This space is reserved for members to send kind notes and acknowledgments to one another. If you wish to have your message printed here, please send it to Karen Ferguson, [karen.sederholm@gmail.com](mailto:karen.sederholm@gmail.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  
Suite170  
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/druzydreamscrystals>

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 April Events



### Birthdays

Aidan Weatherly 4/2  
Derek Cooperberg 4/3  
Ronald Cohn 4/6  
Amy Hedrick 4/7  
Ryan Laufer 4/10  
Dennis Jones 4/12  
Pam Jones 4/14  
Stephanie Zerden 4/17  
Jim Correll 4/18  
Ben Peltzer 4/22

### Anniversaries

Jon and Laura Levinson 4/15  
David and Pam Jones 4/25

### Yahrzeits

David Cohen 4/3  
Sue Brisbane 4/5  
Larry Freiman 4/12  
Ruth Leifer 4/19  
Fania Suess 4/25  
Rose Miller 4/26

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
April	6 <b>Passover Community Virtual Seder</b> 6:00 PM (Thursday)	March 19
	15/16 <b>Saturday Morning Service</b> 10:00AM/ <b>Sunday School</b> 10:00 AM	
	28 <b>Friday Night Service</b> 7:00 PM	
	30 <b>Sunday School</b> 10:00 AM	
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



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.