

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

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Temple Beth Shalom
P.O. Box 9142

Hickory, North Carolina 28603
www.hickoryjewishcenter.com



From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Dennis Jones

Thank You, Temple Beth Shalom!!!

Trees Deserve a New Year Too!!!

In my opinion, one of the primary reasons for the endurance of the Jewish faith/tradition, almost 4000 years, is our amazing cycle of annual holidays. Typically, as we emerge from winter and begin to see the first signs of spring, the notable occasion on the Hebrew calendar is Tu B'Shevat. This year the holiday falls on February 6th. Often called the "New Year for Trees," Tu B'Shevat is a transliteration of the Hebrew for the 15th of Shevat. You will recall that in Hebrew, letters represent numbers. The Hebrew letter *tet* stands for the number nine and the letter *vav* (which in this case makes the "u" sound) represents the number six; six plus nine, of course, equaling fifteen. Shevat is the eleventh month of the Hebrew calendar. The New Year for Trees is *not* a biblically commanded festival. Its first mention is found in the *Mishnah*, a collection of the sayings of Judaism's most prominent sages from just after the beginning of the Common Era. In *Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2a*, the rabbis are discussing when the new year should fall. They did, in fact, establish four new years. The first of Nissan was referred to as the new year for kings and festivals. The first of Elul was established for the tithe (giving of one tenth) of cattle. The first of Tishri was called

the new year for years of release, Jubilee years, and for the tithe of vegetables. The famous House of Hillel placed the new year for trees on the 15th of Shevat.

The need for a “New Year for Trees” was based on several passages from the Torah dealing with the treatment of trees, the most specific being Leviticus 19:23-25: “When you come into the land and you plant any tree for food, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it will be forbidden and not eaten. In the fourth year, all of its fruit shall be sanctified to praise the LORD. In the fifth year, you may eat its fruit.” The rabbis of the *Mishnah* probably placed the new year for trees on the 15th of Shevat because at that time of year the trees in the land of Israel, particularly those which bear fruit, begin to emerge from their winter dormancy and put forth their first buds. Since the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans in about 70 C.E., the ancient practices of tithing and the dedication of fruit, vegetables, and cattle for use by the priesthood in Jerusalem are no longer strictly adhered to in Judaism. Still, the importance of Tu B’Shevat has remained on many levels.

In modern times, the “New Year for Trees” has become a time to emphasize Jewish *responsibility toward the environment*. For an ancient document, the Torah contains a remarkable number of passages that deal with the appropriate treatment of plants, animals, and the land. The passage cited earlier from Leviticus 19 about the treatment of a newly planted fruit tree is one such example. The practice of not harvesting the fruit of a young tree for the first three years would allow the tree time to strengthen and establish its root system before being subjected to harvest. You will recall that even from the beginning of man and woman’s time on earth, they were instructed to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and master it, to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:27-28). The book of Genesis goes on to tell us that man and woman were placed in the Garden of Eden “to cultivate it and keep it” (2:15). The psalmist confirms, “The earth is the LORD’s and all it contains, the world, and all who dwell in it” (Psalm 24:1). In fact, the Almighty has made us partners in tending this incredible planet and bringing its possibilities to fruition.

The Torah instructed the children of Israel that even during times of war when extreme measures were necessary for the preservation of the nation, special care was to be taken not to destroy trees (Deuteronomy 20:19). According to Numbers 35:4, when cities were constructed in the Promised Land, “green belts” were to be maintained around the perimeters of the cities. Special rules were established for the harvesting of crops and the treatment of fields. For example, the land was to be planted and harvested for six years, but in the seventh year, the land was required to lie fallow, obviously in order to rejuvenate itself (Leviticus 25:3-4). This is actually referred to as giving the land a “sabbath rest”! There are even laws in the Torah that regulate such mundane things as the disposal of waste (Deuteronomy 23:12).

The ethical treatment of animals is also a prominent concern in the Torah. Leviticus 19:19 prohibits the crossbreeding of species. Several laws pertain to the preservation of species. One such example is Deuteronomy 22:6: “If along the road, you chance upon a bird’s nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs and the mother sitting over the fledglings or the eggs, do not take the mother together with her young. Let the mother go, and take only the young so that you may farewell and have a long life.” It is on this same theme that the famous passage, “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 14:21), the very passage from which the *Kashrut* laws of separating milk and meat

derive—the ethical treatment of a parent of a species and its young. Even in such a simple statement as, “You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing” (Deuteronomy 25:4), one can sense the Divine intent of not wanting to cause an animal undue stress or suffering. I have always been astounded that in *the* central communication of Jewish law, the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, the Almighty keeps the welfare of animals in mind. When the instructions for keeping the seventh day Sabbath are given, in verse 10 the Torah states, “the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, **nor your animals**.... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” So, it is clear that even our livestock, just as we ourselves, were to be given a time of rest and restoration one day in seven.

Another metaphorical lesson that we can take away from the “New Year for Trees” is a deeper appreciation for the source of the amazing laws and precepts that have preserved us as a people, the Holy Torah. It is likened in our tradition to a “**tree of life**.” The laws of the Torah truly have, as promised (Joshua 1:8), kept those who observe them happy, healthy, successful, and prosperous. Referring to the Torah as a “tree of life” connects back to the original “tree of life” in the Garden of Eden, from which, according to the creation story, if man and woman had eaten, they would have lived forever (Genesis 3:22). One of the most beautiful and soulful chants from the Sabbath morning liturgy is the one we do after reading the Torah, as we return it to the ark, “*Eitz chayim hi...*” Based on a paraphrase of the passage from the Hebrew Bible found in Proverbs 3:17-18, we are instructed: “Behold, a good doctrine has been given you, My Torah; do not forsake it. It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.” We have truly inherited an awe-inspiring and lofty tradition, teaching us to love God, our Creator, and to have compassion not only for our fellow humans, but for the earth and all its creatures, plant and animal.

In the weeks following our holiday of Tu B’Shevat, as we anticipate the rebirth of nature in spring, please join me in thanking Adonai for the awesome creation that has been entrusted into our care, as well as for the remarkable laws, the Holy Torah, which instruct us as to how that care should be implemented. *Ken yehi ratzon!* — May this be God’s will!

The President’s Message

Susan G Goldstein, President

Whatever you feel about current politics in Israel -- or the United States -- how do you feel about praying for peace, and for our countries’ leaders and advisors? I’ve always considered these prayers to be aspirational. Irrespective of how I feel about current leadership in either country at a given time, I want them to succeed. Praying for them to have wisdom is not the same as praying that all their machinations succeed.

I was reminded that not everyone shares my views (What?!) when reading an editorial in Friday’s *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). The article featured remarks by my friend and teacher, Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove, Senior Rabbi of New York’s Park Avenue Synagogue (also the one who introduced me to the writings of Rabbi Lord

Jonathan Sacks, z"l). He is quoted as saying regarding the Prayer for the State of Israel, "We may be better patriots by praying now because any objections we have to the current government reflect our love of country and our Zionism" (For reference, the Prayer for the State of Israel is on page 377 in the *Mishkan T'fillah*). I believe the same can be said for praying the Prayer for Our Country (page 376 in *Mishkan T'fillah*).

Allan Ripp, in the WSJ's weekly "Houses of Prayer" article, notes that prayers for the government have been around for some time, having been formally introduced in Seville, Spain, in the 14th century so that officials "have the counsel necessary to make wise, compassionate decisions." As we know from Rabbi Sacks, Jews in England have recited a prayer for the royal family for decades. German Jews in the early 20th century blessed Kaiser Wilhelm II, praying that "truth and justice would blossom under his scepter." Although removed by many German prayer books after the Holocaust, in the 1930s German synagogues added new wording to pledge allegiance to the fatherland.

Rabbi Cosgrove notes that some people are withholding their blessings because they see the words as a kind of "Rorschach test for political loyalty." He offers another perspective: "Praying for wise sound governance need only reflect an aspiration, one's 'hoped-for experience,' not necessarily one's contentment with who's running the show." In saying the prayer, he notes, one "hits the key themes of justice, equity and 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.'" What, he asks, could be a more commendable message for our leaders?

Rabbi Rachel Isaacs, a Conservative rabbi in Maine, adds: "When I pray for my government to thrive, I'm not favoring one agenda over another, but that our leaders make decisions aligned with values of Torah. The alternative -- praying only when we agree with the ruling party -- risks severing our thread of common decency with the rest of the country."

I've always loved reciting these prayers because I love both the US and Israel and want them to know peace and good -- while not agreeing with the paths their leaders take at any given time. I can't think of a more appropriate place to pray for them than in *kehilla kedosha* -- the sacred community that we share.

Shalom,

Susan



TBS Sisterhood

Sheri Stock, Sisterhood President

Hello TBS!

Sisterhood has a variety of meaningful (and enjoyable) activities scheduled.

February 12th at 1 pm we will meet at the synagogue to discuss Pesach plans.

February 26th at 1 pm we will meet at the temple to make Hamantaschen to deliver to our members who are homebound or unable to bake their own.

March 10th at 6 pm we will have our Shabbat potluck dinner together at the temple and have a game of trivia!

If anyone would like to learn how to bake challah, let me know and we can meet at the synagogue to bake. You will leave with about 6-8 loaves and we will have a terrific time together!

As we get closer to Pesach, I will offer a class on how to make matzah. Note: homemade matzah is difficult to make Kosher for Passover, but it is a terrific thing to learn. Kids enjoy it and it's delicious in matzah Brie!

Sheri



TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Principal

Sunday School has continued to thrive at TBS with 16 current youth members and 6 adult members. We even had some visitors this month when Pam and David Jones brought their two grandchildren! It is always wonderful to see several generations of our students still learning together!

This past Sunday the students learned about Tu B'Shevat, planted parsley, and made birthday cakes for the trees! (Which we then ate for the trees!) Hopefully, the parsley will grow and make it onto the Pesach seder plates in April!

As always, if you are interested in learning more about TBS Sunday School, please contact Kathy Jones, Principal, at 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, what their plans are 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 15th. 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 February 15th, at 6:30 pm at the temple and 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**



What are you doing for Passover Seder this year?

Your Board of Trustees, along with Sisterhood leadership, has given considerable thought as to whether we should proceed with plans to hold a congregational 2nd night Pesach seder this year with Covid-19 variations continuing to appear. Given the lack of certainty, we made the decision not to have a community seder at TBS. However, we encourage members who are able, to host other members for smaller, in-home seders. Sisterhood, always the gracious seder planners, will determine exactly how the process will work. We believe these in-home seders will be a nice alternative to a community seder -- while we continue to hope we can come together again next year. Please contact Sherri Stock at 828-999-0942 if you are interested in hosting a Seder, or volunteering in another capacity. Stay tuned for more details from Sisterhood!

TBS monthly donation to a local charity went to the Women's Resource Center for the month of January.

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

This month we delivered the winter clothing, back packs, and hygiene supplies that TBS has been collecting, to the Salvation Army Shelter. Thank you to all who donated. If you missed it, we will be keeping the donation box in the TBS foyer for another month. Please bring any winter items to services and leave them in the box. We will get them to the homeless who are in need!

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

TBS MESSAGE BOARD

To Jane Mandle – prayers for a speedy recovery from your TBS family

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

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/druzydreamscrystals>

Dr. David Peltzer
Newton Family Physicians
767 West First Street
Newton, NC 28658
828 465-3928
www.newtonfamilyphysicians.com

Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle February Events



Birthdays

- Barbara Laufer 2/1
- Linda Greenfield 2/1
- Julia Cooperberg 2/3
- David Cooperberg 2/3
- Tristan Haddock 2/7
- Perri Huitt 2/8
- Jodi Lavin-Tompkins 2/10
- Greg Rosenfeld 2/11
- Larry Laufer 2/11
- Grayson Weatherly 2/20
- Julie Owens 2/21
- Nicholas Faruque 2/23
- Maddy Gross 2/24
- Sam Gross 2/28

Anniversaries

Yahrzeits

- Helmi Berndt 2/18
- David Guy 2/21
- Sol Taub 2/22
- Trudy Lowenberg 2/27

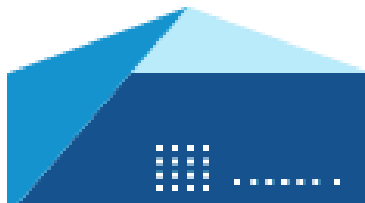
Local and Regional Events



“Antisemitism and Its Manifestations” with Rachel Lang

Wednesday, February 15, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Many ASU events are open to the public (in-person and virtually). For more information, go to: <https://holocaust.appstate.edu/events>, or contact the Center at 828.262.2311 or holocaust@appstate.edu.



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 Jan-July 2023

For event updates, email: info@hickoryjewishcenter.com

DATE	EVENT	BULLETIN DEADLINE
February	11 Saturday Morning Service 10:00 AM	January 22
	12 Sunday School 10:00 AM	
	24 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
March	6 Erev Purim Service/Megillah Reading 7:00 PM (Monday)	February 19
	11/12 Saturday Morning Service 10:00 AM/Sunday School 10:00AM	
	24 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
	26 Sunday School 10:00 AM	
April	6 Passover Community Seder 6:00 PM (Thursday)	March 19
	15/16 Saturday Morning Service 10:00AM/SundaySchoo10:00 AM	
	28 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
	30 Sunday School 10:00 AM	
May	6/7 Saturday Morning Service 10:00 AM/ Sunday School 10:00 AM	April 23
	19 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
	21 TBS Annual Membership Meeting 10:00 AM (Sunday)	
	25 Erev Shavuot Service 7:00 PM (Thursday)	
	28 Sunday School 10:00 AM	
June	3/4 Saturday Morning Service 10:00 AM/ Sunday School Final Session/Party	May 21
	23 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
July	8 Saturday Morning Service 10:00 AM	N/A
	21 Friday Night Service 7:00 PM	
	26 Sunday School 10:00 AM	



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