

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



A New Year, A New Book of the Torah!

As we head into a new civil/Roman year, 2021, we also turn to a new book in the Torah reading cycle. Leaving Genesis (*Bereishit*) on Sabbath, January 9th, we will begin to read from

the book of Exodus (*Shemot*). Thus, we consider once again the exciting story of Moses and the liberation of the Israelite people from slavery in Egypt. We begin in Torah portion *Shemot*, Exodus 1:1-6:1, with the appearance of *Adonai* to Moses in the “burning bush” on Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:6). It is here that Moses receives his first commission to go to Pharaoh and to the children of Israel. The Almighty reiterates the commission to Moses and Aaron a second time, to go to Pharaoh requesting freedom for the Israelite slaves, in Torah portion *Va'eira*, Exodus 6:2-9:35. This is followed by a brief genealogical discussion, tracing the descendants of just three of the sons of Jacob(Israel): Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. It is obviously interjected to establish the pedigree of Moses and Aaron and to identify Aaron’s descendants who were to become priests, or *Cohanim* (Ex. 6:14-25).

After Moses and Aaron’s first commission in Torah portion *Shemot*, they do approach Pharaoh as commanded, saying, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go that they may celebrate a feast to me in the

wilderness” (Ex. 5:1). Not only do we learn that Pharaoh is unresponsive to their request, stating, “Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.” Pharaoh intensifies the burdens of the Israelite slaves by instructing their taskmasters to no longer provide the straw needed to make bricks while keeping the quota of bricks the same. This forced the Israelites to add the task of gathering straw to their labors. When these requirements proved difficult to fulfill, Pharaoh accuses the Israelites of being lazy and subjects their leaders to beatings. This situation causes Moses to question the Almighty’s plan, “Oh LORD, why hast Thou brought harm to this people? Why didst Thou ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he has done harm to this people, and thou hast not delivered thy people at all” (Ex. 5:1-23). Thus closes Torah portion *Shemot*.

Va’eira opens with a quizzical self-identification by the Almighty. “God spoke further to Moses and said to him, ‘I am Yod-heh-vav-heh; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as *El Shaddai* (usually translated Almighty God), but by my name, Yod-heh-vav-heh (usually rendered as *Adonai*), I did not make myself known to them’” (Ex. 6:2-3). I use the term quizzical because there are several instances earlier in the Torah where the text specifically states that Yod-heh-vav-heh*Adonai* did appear to the patriarchs and matriarchs. One vivid example is in Genesis 18 where we learn that *Adonai* appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. This particular appearance was to inform Abraham of the coming destruction that God had planned for Sodom and Gomorrah. If the Divine Name had in fact not been revealed at that time, it is puzzling that the Almighty would say of Abraham, “For I have chosen him in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of Yod-heh-vav-heh by doing righteousness and justice in order that Yod-heh-vav-heh may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Gen. 18:19). Now, there are two possibilities here. A conservative scholar might say that the text of Exodus 6:3 is literal, and that the Tetragrammaton, Yod-heh-vav-heh, was not known to the patriarchs and matriarchs, but was written back into the earlier accounts by the Torah author, presumed to be Moses, after the revelation of the Name. A second possibility is that the verse was not intended to be taken literally, but to subtly differentiate between different aspects of God’s interaction with the creation, and, perhaps, to criticize Moses for his questioning and lack of faith.

The tradition in Judaism is that the greatness of the creator is, in fact, very far beyond our ability to comprehend—absolute, infinite, and limitless. Thus, in many respects it is inappropriate to limit God through the use of the name. In this line of thinking, the names of God become descriptions of various aspects of God’s character and of God’s interactions with the cosmos. Rashi contends that the use of the name *El Shaddai* in this passage was to demonstrate the matriarchs’ and patriarchs’ complete trust in the Almighty. Promises were made to them about the multitude of their descendants and about their possession of the Holy Land, most of which they did not live to see fulfilled. Yet, they trusted God without questioning. On the other hand,

here was Moses directly questioning the Divine plan (See Rabbi Yehoshua Berman, “*Va’Eira* The Tightest Bond,” www.aish.com).

In many respects then, the plagues with which Adonai punished Pharaoh and the Egyptians can be taken as signs not just for Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, but also for the Israelite people and their leaders, and by extension, the entire world. The plagues bear a progression that is seemingly part of a larger didactic purpose. Surely, the Almighty, given God’s limitless power over creation, could have flattened Egypt with a single blow and allowed the children of Israel to go free. Yet, the Almighty chose to work in stages, with careful attention to the response of Pharaoh and the Egyptians to each phase of the plan. Taken as a whole, the plagues can be seen as countering four definite misconceptions which were held by the Egyptians. It might also be argued that since Moses was raised as an Egyptian and since the Israelite people had lived among the Egyptians for so many centuries they too might have been subject to these same misconceptions. 1. They denied the Creator, believing that the world was infinite and had no beginning or end. 2. They denied the Creator’s interest in or care for God’s creation. 3. They denied the Creator’s ability to intervene in the laws which were part of the creation. 4. They denied prophecy, the Creator’s ability to communicate with human beings through ongoing revelation. The plagues were orchestrated by the Almighty incrementally to counter these misconceptions and to show that: 1. God did create the universe and all that we perceive. 2. God does, in fact, care about human beings and their actions. 3. God does have the ability to intervene in the laws of nature. 4. God does communicate with humankind—Moses being the first in a line of prophets that was intended to continue throughout time (See Deut. 18:18-22). It has been pointed out that the ten plagues correspond with the ten “utterances of creation.” In the creation account of Genesis chapters 1 and 2, God says, “Let there be...” exactly ten times. This would reinforce the idea that the plagues were Adonai’s proof of control over the very natural realm that God had willed into existence (See Rabbi Avi Geller, “Pharaoh’s Stubbornness Earns the Egyptians a Serious Beating,” www.aish.com).

Further proof of the targeted nature and the didactic purpose of the plagues is that they seem to stem almost naturally from the first plague, the turning of the Nile River into blood. This is clearly a direct affront to the ruler of Egypt, the Pharaoh, who had claimed ownership over the Nile River and was even considered by himself and the Egyptian people to be a god or the son of a god. The Haftorah portion associated with Torah portion *Va’eira*, Ezekiel 28:25-29:21, makes this clear. Pharaoh is referred to as “the great monster that lies in the midst of the rivers.” In Ezekiel, Pharaoh exerts his own deity by saying, “the Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.” In this context it becomes clearer why the Almighty would have chosen to exact punishments on the Egyptians appropriate to their level of evil and idolatry. Now, in general, Judaism would reject the idea that our faith is based on the need for miracles. Rather, as Martin Buber has pointed out, our traditions are rooted in an ongoing historical interaction between God the Creator, and the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. That historical interaction is verifiable fact.

Time and time again events have intervened to deliver our people from the hands of oppressors. It is in our faith to attribute those serendipitous events to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah (See Rabbi Yehuda Appel, "Miracles and Magic," www.aish.com).

So we see in the book of Exodus the Almighty's reassertion of power over the creation, as God opposes the greatest superpower on earth at that time, Egypt, and begins to form a family clan of slaves into a new nation. Perhaps one of the more controversial elements of that plan is God's statement in Exodus 7:3, "But *I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt,*" and the implications that such a statement has for the concept of free will. Many sages have wrestled with that topic, and the ideas are as interesting as they are diverse. But, I will save that discussion for another message. Happy civil new year, everyone!!!!

President's Message

Susan Goldstein, President

As we enter 2021, I'm sure there are pieces of 2020 that we'll all be glad to leave behind. However, much as I want to see the back of Covid 19, there are some really good things that, but for it, I would not have discovered. These are the things for which I'm grateful in 2020:

- I don't need a gym membership! There are wonderful, free workout offerings on youtube. No need to go out in the heat -- or the cold. Just suit up and work out at home.
While I haven't seen my family in LA, Chicago, or Naples since March, I get to see my daughter-in-law several times a week as we take live Zoom yoga classes together. Once a week I take a live Zoom body sculpt class with my stepdaughter and her husband. Fitness with the family!
- I didn't get to go to the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) for the annual Week of Study in June, but JTS went virtual and I've been able to take at least one online class every week since April -- and now have signed up for classes through May 2021!
- I've often wished I could spend a month in Jerusalem studying at the Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI). In April, SHI went virtual, and I've taken at least one online class ever since, and am anxiously awaiting the opportunity to sign up for the next series.
- Much as I love our TBS services, we have only two a month. My "home" synagogue, Anshe Emet in Chicago, went virtual almost immediately, and I've been able to daven on a regular basis.

- Limmud semi-annual day of Jewish Learning; the Jewish Federations of North America virtual trips to Israel and Tblisi, Georgia; and American Jewish University, various sessions, all offered online classes, and I've loved getting to know them!

If you haven't already, I hope that you'll take the time to think about the good things that happened to you in the unique beginning of this decade. The challenges will continue well into 2021, and we'll eventually figure out just what our new "normal" is. Part of that new "normal" will be our continuing to grow together in strength as a *kehilla*/community, and that continuity is another circumstance for which we can all be grateful this year (although I'm pretty sure we would have done that very well without COVID-19).

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *z'l*, once defined faith as the courage to face the unknown. So I wish that faith for each of us in 2021, as well as the ability to find times of joy as uncertainty and turmoil continue to bombard us.

Stay safe, wash your hands, wear your masks, and accept the virtual hugs I'm sending to you!

Susan

TBS Sisterhood

Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President

Sisterhood hopes everyone had a meaningful and light-filled Hanukkah. We definitely need some light during these dark days of winter and covid. I've heard from doctors on tv that while the vaccine gives us a light at the end of the tunnel, it's still a really really long tunnel. We still need to be vigilant with our mask wearing, hand washing, and physical distancing from others. We also need to try to take care of ourselves in other ways-get plenty of sleep, drink lots of water, and connect with others. We can make phone calls, text, email, face time.....many ways to reach out to friends and family. Try to do other activities you enjoy. Connect with your 'faith-based organization'.

I'm thinking one way to connect with your 'faith-based organization' is to join sisterhood in a trivia party on zoom. Saturday Jan 2 at 7pm. Everyone is invited. Come up with a team name, a mascot, and a drink or two. I'll ask questions and you write down your answers, and at the end I'll tell you the correct answers and we'll add up the points. Another opportunity is to join in on a book discussion on



Sunday Jan 31 at 2pm. We can talk about what we've read, whether recently or long ago, and give recommendations to each other. There might be other activities coming along the pike soon. If we can't meet in person for a while, let's try to do fun things virtually.



TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Principal



December was an eventful month for students and families! Loaves of challah, candy, cookies, and crafts were delivered to all our students. In addition, about 60 TBS members received challah and candy thanks to our Sunday School mother, Sheri Stock, and her daughter Haven's incredible work! Those ladies are awesome! The students and many TBS adult members also participated in our first ever, (and hopefully the last ever to be needed) virtual Chanukah Bingo Game on

December 13th! Everyone had a great time and prizes were won by all!

On our last virtual zoom meeting of 2020 on December 27th, we were back hard at work learning Hebrew, and we were fortunate to have three new visitors, Carah, Connor, and Karver. We are excited that their family has chosen to begin attending our TBS virtual activities until we can finally meet in person! Welcome Elkins!

Our next Sunday School class via Zoom will be January 10th at 10 AM. Anyone wishing to know more about TBS Sunday School should contact Sunday School Principal, Kathy Jones, at krsjones2002@yahoo.com or call (828) 632-9261.

Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund



The Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund was established by a long-standing Temple member, Burt Sederholm, to honor his wife Harriet, who died shortly after her retirement after 25 years with the Catawba County Department of Social Services. Mr. Sederholm's efforts provided the initial funding from generous family members and friends and it 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 nor Jewish to apply. The scholarship fund dividends are used to provide scholarship awards. Candidates may 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.

Interested students should submit their essay 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 board meeting will be **Wednesday, January 13th, at 6:30pm via Zoom**. Board meetings are open to all temple members. Contact Susan Goldstein if you wish to join the meeting.

TBS Board members are:



Officers:

Susan Goldstein, President
Barbara Laufer, Past President
Susan Rieder, Treasurer
Tiffany Hull, Secretary

Members at Large:

Liz Correll	Mary Lee Tosky
Karen Ferguson	Linda Greenfield
Lin Gentry	Kathy Jones
Amy Hedrick	Susan Huitt
Jodi Lavin-Tompkins	

Donations



Please consider these funds for your next donation:

Building and Grounds
Security
Sunday School
Community Relations

TBS Gives through Donations

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

TBS Message Board

Happy Anniversary to Pete and Ginny Sobotkin from Karen and Clyde Ferguson

If you wish to post a message to acknowledge a special event or achievement, condolence, or send a get well message, give or send your message and a \$5 donation to Temple Beth Shalom Message Board, PO Box 9142, Hickory, NC 28603. A greeting card will be sent acknowledging your donation and your message will appear here in the next issue of the TBS Bulletin.

TBS Community Mitzvah Projects

Needs in our community are continuing to increase as the pandemic affects employment, homelessness, and hunger. We encourage TBS members who can help out without risking their own safety, to continue to donate where essential food and supplies are needed, like the Hickory Soup Kitchen; the Second Harvest Food Bank; The Lenoir Soup Kitchen; The Salvation Army of Taylorsville, Hickory, or Lenoir; and the Kwanzaa Family Inn in Lenoir.

Our own TBS Community Relations and Social Action Committee (CRSAC) is actively collecting hygiene and cleaning supplies, gently used bedding, towels and washcloths, small kitchen appliances, sets of dishes and silverware, as well as cooking utensils and pans, and even furniture. These items will be distributed to area families in need of them, particularly those who are being rehoused after a period of homelessness. If you have any of these items to donate, or if you know of a person or organization needing any kind of help, please contact CRSAC Chairperson, Kathy Jones, at krsjones2002@yahoo.com or call (828) 632-9261.

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

Ghiora Mehler
The Southern Chickpea
Falafel Truck
thesouthernchickpea.com
828-999-0496



Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle January Events

Birthdays

David Jones 1/1	Alice Guy 1/12
Marsue Davidson 1/1	Jaimi Jones 1/20
Werner Locke Cohn 1/4	Deane Griffin 1/21
Stephen Davidson 1/5	Rachel Igdal 1/25
Liz Correll 1/7	Madeleine Guy 1/25

Anniversaries

Mark and Laura Faruque 1/6
Pete and Ginny Sobotkin 1/31
Ashley and Grayson Cohn 1/26

Yahrzeit

Mazal Dayan 1/1
Dora Dopkeen 1/7
Moses Gitlin 1/10
Clara Setser 1/14
Gwen Datnoff 1/17
Harold Setser 1/20
Charles Laufer 1/23
Joe Guttler 1/27
Ida Lippe 1/29

Member Business Directory

Scott and Julie Owens
Taste Full Beans Coffeehouse
29 2nd St NW
Hickory, NC 28601
828-325-0108
www.tastefullbeans.com

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

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

Local and Regional Events



Renowned Social Psychologist, Professor James Waller, on “Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Murder” -- In Commemoration of the Liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army

This presentation will start on Tuesday, January 26, at 7:00 pm EST. Based on an evolutionary perspective, Prof. Waller offers an equally intriguing and disturbing psychological view of how (almost) anyone can participate in genocidal crimes. The event also marks and commemorates the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camps by a division of the Red Army's First Ukrainian Front in January of 1945.

Like (almost) all CJHPS events, this online program is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, please contact the Center at 828.262.2311 or holocaust@appstate.edu. The Zoom registration will open in early January.



**SHALOM
HARMON**

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



When we get back to temple again, please consider pairing with a board member(s) to host a weekend 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.

Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School 2020-21

Date		Event	Bulletin Deadline
January	2	Trivia Night, via Zoom 7PM	December 23
	8	Virtual Friday Night Service 7PM	
	10	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	23	Virtual Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	24	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	31	Sisterhood Book Club 2PM	
February	5	Virtual Friday Night Service 7PM	January 30
	7	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	20	Virtual Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	21	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	26	Virtual Friday Night Service/Purim Megillah Reading 7PM	
March	5	Virtual Friday Night Service 7PM	February 27
	7	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	20	Virtual Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	21	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	28	Virtual Passover Community Seder(Sunday) 6PM	
April	9	Friday Night Service 7PM	March 26 (Fri.)
	11	Sunday School 10AM	
	24	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	25	Sunday School 10AM	
May	7	Friday Night Service 7PM	April 24
	9	Sunday School 10AM	
	16	Erev Shavuot Service (Sunday) 7PM	
	22	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	23	TBS Annual Membership Meeting (Sunday) 10AM	
June	4	Friday Night Service 7PM	May 28 (Fri.)
	6	Sunday School Final Session 10AM	
	19	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
July	9	Friday Night Service 7PM	N/A
	24	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	

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.

Thanks to all who completed the online TBS Index Update form. If you were unable to complete the form online, please print and complete this page and submit it by email or snail mail.

TBS Index updates

To report updates to our list of Birthdates

Please include name and date (month and day) to be added. Is this a member, or what is this person's relationship to a member? Member name must be included.

To report updates to our list of Anniversaries

Please include names and date (month and day) to be added. Is one or both a member of TBS, or what is this couple's relationship to a member? Member name must be included.

To report updates to our list of Yahrzeits

Please include name and date (month and day) to be added. Was this a member, or what was this person's relationship to a member? Member name must be included.

If you can scan and email your list please send it to: karen.sederholm@gmail.com
Or print and send by snail mail to: Karen Ferguson, 311 N Bridge St, Elkin, NC 28621