

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

News | Activities | Events

Inside this Issue

From the Bimah: Our
Rabbi's Message

The President's Message

TBS Sunday School
Announcements and
Schedule

Sisterhood Corner and
Brotherhood

Life Cycle Events

Temple Beth Shalom
Event Calendar

Harriet Sederholm
Scholarship Foundation

Special Events and
Announcements

Temple Board of Directors

Temple Member
Business Directory

Temple Beth Shalom
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www.hickoryjewishcenter.com



From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Dennis Jones

Some Reflections on God, Humankind, and Religion

Happy summer!! I hope this month's TBS newsletter finds all of you well. My good friend, Larry Laufer, would tell you that most of my bulletin articles are recycled writings from the many papers written during the course of my rabbinical studies. Well, he is right! But, I have more reflections that have not been shared yet. I am currently reading an eye-opening book by Rabbi Nahum Ward-Lev, *The Liberating Path of the Hebrew Prophets Then and Now* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2019). I plan to do a full review for the bulletin once I have completed the book. Rabbi Ward-Lev's views of God as Creator, God's interactions with the creation, and humankind's responsibility in the process of creation are riveting. His words sent me back to some of my earlier writings on similar topics. Now, I share these thoughts with you, not in any didactic way. You know I always stress that Judaism requires **no** credal allegiance. I do hope my words will provide food for thought as we all grow together in our discussion of these important concepts.

If I had to summarize my own belief system in 25 words or less, give or take, I would assert that the entire cosmos as we know it came into existence as the result of the Big Bang. Behind that radical transformation of energy into matter is a Creative Mind. Some would call that Mind God, but I would maintain, in keeping with the philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, that to reduce that Being to any verbal description whatsoever would be

to do that Being injustice and minimize that One's greatness. The Creative Mind to me is beyond all categorization and all description. The cosmos reflects the One's greatness and that One reflects the cosmos's greatness. The cosmos and that One are so interconnected as to seem one in human imagination. But that is perhaps because human imagination and understanding fall short of the ability to comprehend either the One or the cosmos.

Now, it is my opinion that the Creative Mind would have revealed One's self to the creation. That revelation is of course contained in the spiritual writings of the many families/nations of the earth. I was persuaded in my younger years that there must be one group of people who has preserved that understanding the most accurately, and **I determined that group to be the Jewish people**. That said, if, as I believe, human beings are created in the image of the Divine Mind, then it follows that human beings have an inherent relationship with that One, just as human children have an inherent relationship with their parents. Concomitant with that inherent relationship also comes whatever access to eternity the Creative Force, that One's Self, has. Neither the relationship with the Creative Mind nor the eternity that springs from that is dependent on any behavior or belief system that the Creator might have. So, how is devotion to the Creative Force expressed? It is most honestly expressed by **service to the creation**, caring for the earth and **all** of its creatures. Perhaps most importantly, by caring for our fellow human beings. Love and service to God are demonstrated by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, freeing the oppressed, extending basic human rights to any who are denied them. In so doing **the pinnacle of creation, human beings, partner with the Creative Force in bringing the cosmos to a level of perfection that is glimpsed in the messages of the Hebrew Prophets**. And, is not that completion/perfection of creation—*tikkun olam* is possibly what the Creative Mind had envisioned for the creation all along? I believe, in fact, it was. So then, **what is the purpose of religion?** The most accurate description of religion in general and more particularly of the Jewish religion that I am aware of comes from the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel. For humankind, according to Heschel the conundrum is, how do humans acquire the knowledge of a force that is beyond knowledge? How do they convey this knowledge to others if, in fact, the Divine is, by definition, beyond words or understanding? Heschel wrestles with this issue. He states, "There is hardly a symbol which, when used, would not impair or even undo the grasp or remembrance of the incomparable. Opinions confuse and stand in the way of intuitions; surveys, definitions take the name of God in vain" (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, 1951, p. 97). It is, in fact, in this discussion that Heschel begins making references to the Hebrew Bible. He at the same time begins smashing some myths about God. For example, he contends, "The notion of God as a perfect being is not of biblical extraction. It is not the product of prophetic religion but of Greek philosophy.... In the Decalogue, God does not speak of being ... perfect but of ... having made free men out of slaves" (*Man is not Alone*, p. 101). Heschel points out that the central proclamation of the Jewish faith, the Shema is not, "Hear, O Israel, God is perfect!," but rather, "Hear, O Israel, God is one" (p. 102). **Heschel sees this unity as central to the relationship not only between humans and God, but between fellow human beings as well.** "The idea of unity is not

only one upon which the ultimate justification of philosophical, ethical, and religious universalism depends, but also one which is still beyond the grasp of most people” (p. 111).

As Heschel moves from human apprehension of the Divine, to human’s acts on that apprehension in the form of religion, this concept of Divine and universal unity is central to Heschel’s understanding of the cosmos’ future. He contends, “In our own age we have been forced into the realization that, in terms of human relations, **there will either be one world or no world**” (p. 112). Without question, Heschel argues that the primary purpose of religion should be to bring about what he calls the “restitution” of the unity of God and the world. Heschel points out that according to the Hebrew prophets God is not so concerned with the overarching themes of humankind, as God is concerned with the day to day details of human interaction. Time and time again the prophets do not discuss details of sacrifice or religious service, but they repeatedly emphasize feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and freeing the oppressed. In the short, bringing justice into every aspect of human interaction. Being a rabbi of course, **Heschel sees modern Judaism as an ideal expression of humankind’s efforts to fulfill the Divine Will.** Individuals of the Jewish faith will, as I was, be energized and reinforced by the profound wisdom of our tradition as they read the second half of *Man is not Alone*. And to Heschel, our restoration of justice and love to our communities, and to our world, becomes even more profoundly important as time marches on. “Horrified by the discovery of man’s power to bring about the annihilation of organic life on this planet, we are today beginning to comprehend that the sense for the sacred is as vital to us as the light of the sun....” (p.146).

Definitions of religion have varied throughout the centuries. But to Heschel, “To define religion primarily as a quest for personal satisfaction or salvation is to make it a refined kind of magic” (p. 233). Heschel maintains that “...**religion for religion’s sake is idolatry**” (p. 236). And if our religion is to be for God’s sake then according to Heschel the goal becomes as simple as the words of the prophet: “...**to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God**” (Micah 6:8). Heschel casts the Hebrew Bible not so much as the history of the Jewish people, but “...as the story of God’s quest of the righteous [person]” (p. 245). Heschel absolutely believes that the quest of humankind for God is reciprocated by the Divine quest for humankind. Why else, Heschel asks, would God have created humankind in the first place? **Heschel maintains that humans advance God’s creative intent when they partner with God to bring the divine will into the every day.** “The quest for right living, the question of what is to be done right now, right here, is the authentic core of Jewish religion” (p. 269). *Ken ye’hi ratzon*—May this be God’s will!

President's Message

Susan Goldstein, President

Dear TBS Family and Friends,

As you know, we held our Annual Meeting on Sunday, May 23rd. Unfortunately, we did not have a quorum, therefore we were unable to conduct any business. Voting Members in good standing soon will receive more information about that. In the meantime, I'm sharing my President's Report with the whole *mishpacha*. Here goes:

We have had an interesting year! Most important, I believe, is that we were able to pivot relatively quickly thanks to the Board, the rabbi, and the Re-opening Committee. Prior to the High Holy Days, we purchased equipment that enabled us to hold virtual High Holy Day services. We weren't able to use our "new" *mahzorim*, *Mishkan Hanefesh*, but provided every member a copy of the "old" "New Union Prayer Book for the Days of Awe." Rabbi Dennis, Aaron Tosky, Ritual Chair, and I met to map out the services which turned out to be very inclusive. Since the HiHo's, we've zoomed every service. Even though we're back with limited in-person attendance (and hope to open it up with fewer limitations soon), we plan to continue to offer virtual services for the foreseeable future for those who are ill or just not ready to meet in a group setting.

Many thanks to:

- Our Re-opening Committee for bringing their knowledge and talents to make the recommendation to purchase the equipment necessary to broadcast; to make sure we took minimal risks; and set limits for reopening.
- Our Board of Trustees for understanding the value of being able to broadcast, and the need to move quickly to purchase the equipment that cost a little under \$8,500.
- Our Tech Team - Kathy and Rabbi Dennis Jones, Mary Lee and Dr. Aaron Tosky, and Dr. James Norwood. If not for their willingness to learn all the moving parts, we would not have been able to broadcast. If anyone is interested in joining the Tech Team, please let any of them (or me) know. We'd love to have some more volunteers.

We weren't ALL about tech stuff! Thanks to Barb Laufer, we have new handrails. They look great and will be quite useful when we're back in full swing! We also installed a sensor system provided by our insurance company, Church Mutual. Now, if the system senses a water leak or anything strange, I'll get an alert on my iphone. We also ordered replacement pads and a battery for our AED.

Upcoming projects include enhanced landscaping, having our HVAC system checked out, and having the roof inspected. We welcome your input if there's an issue you'd like us to investigate.

I look forward to seeing you at services on Friday evening, June 4th.

L'Shalom,

Susan

TBS Sisterhood

Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President

June is a month with a few holidays and special occasions. One of them is ‘Pride Month’, commemorating the Stonewall Riots in June 1969. These were a series of demonstrations by members of the gay community in NYC in response to a raid at the Stonewall Inn, among other raids routinely made on gay bars. Keshet (Hebrew for rainbow) is a national organization that works for the full equality and inclusion of LGBTQ Jews and their families in Jewish life. It began 20 years ago and according to their website, keshetonline.org, they work to strengthen Jewish communities, provide resources for everyone, and fight for justice nationwide.

Another occasion to be marked is Juneteenth, a day to celebrate the emancipation of those who were enslaved in the United States. It commemorates the day the Union General Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas and proclaimed freedom for the enslaved people in June 1865, even though Lincoln’s emancipation proclamation was made two and a half years earlier. Texas was the most remote of the slave states and enforcement of the Proclamation was slow and inconsistent as the Union troops made their way west.

Both occasions mark the beginning of the end of oppressing forces on marginalized communities and are filled with joyful parades, family reunions, and lots of good food. They remind me of many Jewish holidays!

TBS Sisterhood is going to host another Temple Trivia Night on zoom, on Sat June 19th at 7pm. This is a different date than previously announced, so please make the change on your calendars! Create your team, bring pen and paper and your own beverages. I’ll try to find a wide variety of questions! Good luck!



TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Principal

TBS Sunday School has concluded its classes for the 2020/21 school year. The Sunday School will celebrate with a cookout/party on June 6th, 11am to 2pm at the home of Rabbi Dennis and Kathy Jones. Classes will resume in the fall. The schedule for the new year will be available soon. Anyone wishing to know more about

TBS Sunday School should contact Sunday School Principal, Kathy Jones, at krsjones2002@yahoo.com.

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 **DATE TBD**. 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
- Karen Ferguson
- Lin Gentry
- Amy Hedrick
- Mary Lee Tosky
- Linda Greenfield
- Kathy Jones
- Susan Huitt
- Jodi Lavin-Tompkins

Donations



- General donations from:
- The Freiman family
 - The Jacobson family

To the Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund from
Brent and Ashley Kolb

**TBS Gives through
Donations**

**Our donation for the month of
June was sent to The Hickory Soup
Kitchen**

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



Please consider these funds for your next donation:

Building and Grounds
Security
Sunday School
Community Relations and Social Action

When we all get back to temple in person 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.



TBS Message Board



Yom huledet sameach! - to all of our members who were born in June and July!

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

We encourage all TBS members to help out wherever they can, by donating their time and/or funds. The TBS Community Relations and Social Action Committee (CRSAC) collects hygiene and cleaning supplies, gently used bedding, towels and washcloths, small kitchen appliances, sets of dishes, glasses, and silverware, as well as cooking utensils, pots, and pans, and even furniture on an ongoing basis. These items are distributed to area families in need of them, particularly those who are being rehoused after a period of homelessness. This month we helped a family of 5 being rehoused. We were able to supply them with a dinette set, pots and pans, a queen size bed, bedding, and various other kitchen and bathroom items. They were most appreciative.

If you have any items or monetary funds 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 .



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/>.

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 Events

June Birthdays

Bradley Haddock 6/3
Susan Jarvis Goldstein 6/10
Connie Tosky 6/14
Heidi Jones 6/14
Esther Greene 6/16
Ron DuBow 6/20
Sandy Guttler 6/22
Ashley Brooke Cohn 6/30
Rhett Tompkins 6/30

Anniversaries June

Dennis and Kathy Jones 6/9
Rich and Debbie Engelmann 6/10
Lin and Frank Gentry 6/14

June Yahrzeit

Harry Leifer 6/1
Roy Bowen 6/5
Mazzie Hull 6/11
Harris Sederholm 6/15
Stephen Schonberg 6/24

July Birthdays

Emily Tosky 7/3
Lin Gentry 7/7
Karen Ferguson 7/9
Daniel Jones 7/16
Tiffany Hull 7/17
David Peltzer 7/18
Eric Igdal 7/19
Seth Cohn 7/19
Mitch Weatherly 7/19
Alison Weatherly 7/20
Arleen Gold 7/20
Alexis Cangemi 7/23
Debra Engelmann 7/24
Benjamin Levinson 7/29

Anniversaries July

Karen and Clyde
Ferguson 7/9

July Yahrzeit

Sylvia Kaufman 7/6
Carole Bowers 7/16
Leo John Maciejewski 7/19
Bernice Fedder 7/20
Marvin Yelton 7/20

Local and Regional Events

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



The Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies remains dedicated to supporting the campus and public population. We are actively practicing social distancing, which means we remain open for business but we are limiting the number of visitors on campus. If you need to contact the Center, phone (828) 262-2311 or email hillms@appstate.edu.

The **19th International ASU Summer Symposium on Children in the Holocaust To Be Held Virtually for the first time in its nineteen year history, from July 18-23, 2021.**

Participating teacher-participants will learn and analyze how the Nazi regime sought to indoctrinate Gentile children and turn them into supporters of their regime. They will also examine how persecuted Jewish children tried to cope with persecution and, eventually, outright genocidal onslaughts. The presentations and assigned materials will shed new light on children's complex challenges and struggles under Nazi rule and occupation, in the ghettos and even camps, as well as many's resilience and despair.

For more information on this symposium and access to the online registration forms, see [here](#). For responses to any questions, please contact the Center at holocaust@appstate.edu or 828.262.2311.



**SHALOM
HARMON
INSTITUTE**

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



This day of mourning and spiritual renewal falls on July 18th in 2021.

Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School 2020-21

For event updates, email: info@hickoryjewishcenter.com

Date	Event	Bulletin Deadline
June 4	Friday Night Service In person and Virtual 7PM	
6	Sunday School Final Session, celebration 10AM	May 28 (Fri.)
19	Saturday Morning In person and Virtual 10AM	
July 16	Friday Night Service In person and Virtual 7PM*	N/A
24	Saturday Morning Service In person and Virtual 10AM	

* Please note- July Friday Night service has been changed to July 16

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.