

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

Tough Ethical Questions From Torah Portion Toldot

At our next Shabbat morning service via Zoom, on November 21st, we will once again be exploring the sixth reading of the Torah reading cycle, Torah portion *Toldot*, Genesis 25:19-28:9. This portion begins with Isaac taking Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel and sister of Laban, to be his wife when he is forty years of age (25:19-20). In the biblical account it would seem that immediately following their marriage, Rebecca becomes pregnant with twins (25:21-26), but we learn in verse 26 that in actuality twenty years have elapsed, since Scripture records that Isaac was sixty years old at the birth of the twins, Esau and Jacob. We learn that Esau grew to become a skillful hunter, “a man of the field,” and that Jacob became an “*ish tam*-perfect man(?), dwelling in tents.” While in those tents, Jacob must have developed some amazing cooking skills, because he was able to wrest the birthright away from Esau in exchange for a bowl of lentil soup (25:27-34). At that point, the Bible tells us “there was a famine in the land,” meaning, of course, the land promised to Abraham, the land that would eventually become Israel. Isaac was instructed by Adonai not to go

down to Egypt, the neighboring superpower of that time, so he stayed in Gerar, near the land of the Philistines. While there, Isaac deceived the Philistines into thinking that Rebecca was his sister because he was afraid they would kill him and take her if they knew she were his wife (26:1-16). In spite of his dishonesty, Isaac eventually makes peace with Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, because Abimelech could tell that Isaac was being blessed by Adonai (26:17-33). By this point in the story, the twins have reached the age of forty, and Esau takes two wives, Judith and Basemath, from among a local tribe, the Hittites. Apparently, these Hittite ladies “made life miserable for Isaac and Rebecca” (26:34-35). Nevertheless, Isaac plans a special blessing for his firstborn, Esau. Upon hearing of Isaac’s intentions, Rebecca and Jacob conspire together to formulate a plan for Jacob, through deception, to get the blessing for himself (27:1-29). Isaac and Esau were both enraged when they learned of Jacob’s deception and taking of the blessing. Esau was so angry, in fact, that he planned to kill Jacob after their father’s passing. Once again Rebecca steps in upon hearing of the plan. She arranges for Jacob to be sent to Haran, the land of her relatives, purportedly to find a wife, but more obviously to get him away from Esau (27:30-28:9).

I have always appreciated that the Hebrew Scriptures do not “whitewash” the lives and actions of our patriarchs and matriarchs. When wrongs or dishonesties are committed, the Hebrew Bible lays them out for all to see. Now, one might argue that Jacob’s taking of the birthright from Esau, the true firstborn, was just shrewd business practice. Jacob had labored all day producing a stew, while Esau had spent the day in the field, obviously pursuing game. Esau was famished after all that hunting, so he asked Jacob for some of the soup he had been making. Jacob demanded Esau’s birthright in exchange for the soup. Esau obviously thought he was about to perish from hunger and that the birthright would be of no use to him, so he willingly made the exchange. Now, the birthright in ancient near Eastern cultures was no small acquisition. It entitled the holder not only to the family leadership and decision-making, passed down from the father, but also to a double portion of any property inheritance (See Deut. 21:15-17).

It is somewhat harder to justify, I believe, the *outright deception* that was involved in Jacob’s taking of the blessing. Isaac had grown old and “his eyes were too dim to see.” He commissioned his son, Esau, to go on a hunting expedition and bring him back some of his favorite game, so that after he had eaten, he might pronounce a blessing on Esau. Upon overhearing the plan, Rebecca instructs Jacob to go quickly among the herd and take two young goats. Rebecca took the meat of the goats and prepared a “savory dish.” She put the skins from the goats over Jacob’s neck and hands so that he might appear hairy like his brother. She also had Jacob put on Esau’s clothing; thus, Jacob would both smell and feel like his brother Esau, to the aging Isaac. As Jacob approached his father with the delicious meal, he answered all questions cunningly, to continue the deception. So Isaac, thinking Jacob to be Esau, pronounced his blessing upon him: “Now may God give you the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers and

may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you" (Gen. 27:28-29). Then, just as soon as Jacob had left Isaac's presence, Esau returned from his hunt. He prepared his game and brought it to his father. It was only then that both realized the deception that Jacob had perpetrated. The biblical account tells us that Isaac "trembled with a very great trembling," obviously enraged. Esau was so angry he plotted to kill his brother after the passing of their father.

Some commentators make an effort to relieve Rebecca at least partly of blame for this deceptive plan by pointing to a prophecy she received just prior to the birth of the twins. While the twins were in her womb, they "struggled together," apparently causing her some discomfort. When she inquired of God about this situation, the Torah tells us "Adonai said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples shall be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger'" (Gen. 25:23). According to some sources, when she realized that the blessing of her husband, Isaac, was about to go to the firstborn Esau in contravention of the prophecy, Rebecca obviously felt compelled to step in (See, e.g., "The Tragedy of Good Intentions," Rabbi Lord Sacks, <http://www.aish.com>).

Other commentators do not try to mitigate the level of deception involved in the story, but use the situation to emphasize another point. That is that such difficult circumstances often arise when parents play favorites. You will notice that early in our Torah portion, we are informed that "Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebecca loved Jacob" (25:28). Such a blatant statement of parental bias and disagreement must convey some meaning in the context of our story. With such division and favoritism existing how could the family not have struggles among siblings? (e.g., *Parenting101*, Noah Chertkoff, www.reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/toldot.)

Another possible observation we might glean from this story is the importance of spousal communication. When Rebecca learned of Isaac's plan to bless Esau, knowing full well this went against a message from the Almighty that Jacob would be the son to come to a position of preeminence in the family, why did she not just approach Isaac and discuss the matter with him? A simple exchange of information and coming to parental consensus may have avoided the need for the deception that followed. Isaac may well have planned a blessing for both sons, just intending to deliver Esau's first, but we will never know (See "Toldot 5771," Rav Michael Susman, <http://harova.org/>).

Finally, many commentators point out that while acquiring the blessing which came by deception for Jacob and Rebecca, it was not without great cost and consequence. Jacob incurred the ire of his father and brother. He needed to flee from both and ended up living, basically in exile, in the region of Syria for over twenty years. Rebecca, for her part, had to endure that long separation from her favorite son. Upon Jacob's return from Syria, his beloved wife, Rachel, died in childbirth with their second child. Ultimately, near the end of his life, when the Pharaoh of Egypt

met Jacob and inquired about his age, Jacob told Pharaoh, “The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning” (Gen. 47:8-9).

Because the Torah is *so honest and straightforward* about the lives and actions of our patriarchs and matriarchs and the consequences that followed, we who are living almost *four thousand years* after their time can still discuss, debate, and derive meaning from these ancient texts. The Constitution of the United States is often referred to as a “living document” because it is debated and interpreted based on changing times and events after just over two hundred years of history. Can you imagine that after four thousand years a document could have anywhere near the relevance of the Torah? That document which has, of course, become the *cornerstone* of the world’s three major Western religions, Judaism; Christianity; and Islam.

President’s Message

Susan Goldstein, President

I just completed an online learning series with the Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI). The title of the series was "Judaism, Citizenship & Democracy."

In this nine-day series, every day at noon an SHI fellow shared different views of "The Citizen in a Democracy." The timing, of course, was deliberate. If you're interested in hearing any of these brief (under 30 minutes) talks or any of the other sessions, go to youtube and type in “Shalom Hartman Institute." I'd like to share some of my favorite outtakes. So here goes:

Donniel Hartman: We should celebrate our diversity. (After all, SHI is a pluralistic think tank.) While I don't want to be you, I appreciate you. These and those are the words of the Living God. This is how Jews debate. Pluralism means that each of us has the right to be different.

Marusa Segiv: Our actions have consequences for all of us. Each of us is responsible for one another. So -- wear a mask!

Micah Goodman: When we disagree with someone, ask why they think they're right. Replace judgment with curiosity. Engage in RADICAL LISTENING!

Elana Stein Hain: We're all interdependent. We can't rely on enforcement for moral education. We all need to look for ways to take responsibility.

Yehuda Kurtzer: Obligations are the means by which we acquire rights. We are obligated to shape society to earn our rights.

So, all these ideas come back to the notion that America's focus is on our rights, and Judaism's focus is on obligations. Think back about 60 years ago when John Kennedy asked, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Have you heard any politician ask that lately?

We have the right to vote -- and the responsibility to educate ourselves as to the issues on the table. We have a right to have an opinion -- and the responsibility to listen to, and respect, opposing views. We have the right to bear arms -- and the responsibility to use them only as needed. We have the right to disagree -- and the responsibility to do so peacefully and respectfully. We are required to remember that we all are created *B'tzelem Elohim* -- in God's image. Each of us has a voice that should be heard and respected -- and each of us has the responsibility to hear the voice of "the other."

Whatever happens in the coming days, let's remember that we're family. We can respect each other for our differences and work, as citizens of a great nation that has become, in many ways, a second homeland to the Jewish people, to find common ground and peace in uncertain times.

And a great big *yasher koach* to Larry Laufer for rallying our security folks to help move a great big tree from our parking lot!

Susan



TBS Sisterhood

Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President

The sisterhood is anxious to finally do some socializing—virtually of course. We'll do a trivia game; a 'sort-of' book discussion, a virtual 5K as a fundraiser for Hadassah; a Hanukkah BINGO game; and a virtual Hanukkah Fair with the gift shop from Temple Beth El! All of these activities are open to everyone, they're not just for sisterhood.

I emailed Dee at the Temple Beth El gift shop and she has a great idea. For one week (November 15th to 20th), everyone can shop in their online store and she'll give us a code to get 10% off the whole purchase. It doesn't have to be just Hanukkah stuff. Then on the Sunday that it ends, November

22nd, she'll bring everyone's stuff up to us in Hickory and we can pick it up at the temple. All we have to do is tell everybody to order!

I'll let Kathy tell you the details about the Hanukkah BINGO—it'll be on zoom, she'll have prizes, and she'll explain about how the cards will work.

The Hadassah Virtual 5K is raising money to fight heart disease, and is scheduled between November 26th and 29th. You can walk, run, anytime, inside, outside. It's \$36 to register, and we can do it as a sisterhood team or individually. Visit hadassah.org/supersouth.

I say a 'sort of' book discussion—maybe we can have a zoom call and go around the room and tell each other what we've recently read, what we thought about it, etc. We can figure out a date.

Who likes trivia? Ilie Nastase was a champion in which sport? What does the T stand for in Capt. James T. Kirk? Which ear did Van Gogh cut off? What color is our sun?

Lin

TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Principal

Our Sunday School students have been back to work this past month. They made their own Israeli flags to wave during our virtual Simchat Torah service on October 11th and then began in depth

Hebrew learning again at our last meeting on October 25th. They all did amazingly well during the review session and the new Torah Portion on the story of Noah! The Bet Class studied the letter Nun and colored pictures of the flood while the B'nai Mitzvah class practiced reading the Hebrew verses of Genesis 9:8-17. We welcomed back our former student, Sawyer Owens. She will be a great addition to the school!

The next class will meet virtually on Zoom on November 8th at 10am. The meeting invitation will be sent out closer to that time. As always, if you have questions about Sunday School, or would like to enroll your child, please call Kathy Jones at 828-632-9261 or send an email to her 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 **Wednesday, November 11th, 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
- Karen Ferguson
- Lin Gentry
- Amy Hedrick
- Jodi Lavin-Tompkins
- Mary Lee Tosky
- Linda Greenfield
- Kathy Jones
- Susan Huitt

Yahrzeit Donations



Susan Goldstein in memory of Richard Goldstein

*In remembrance of David Tosky-
Sandy and Linda Guttler
Maria and Andrew Rieder
Susan Rieder and Richard Carlton and family
Marion and Ron DuBow
TBS Board*

*In remembrance of John Hull -
The Rieder family
TBS Board*

TBS Gives through Donations

Our donation for November was sent to
The Family Care Center

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**



When we do 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. There is a sign up sheet and ‘what to do’ list posted in the kitchen that make it easy. And please remember that all

members present will be glad to help out. Volunteers are greatly appreciated.

TBS Message Board

The TBS board sends heartfelt condolences to Tiffany Hull and the Tosky family after the passing of John Hull and David Tosky

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

TBS Community Mitzvah Projects

Many of our neighbors in Hickory and the surrounding area are still experiencing an unprecedented need for food and/or hygiene and cleaning supplies because of illness or high unemployment rates associated with the COVID 19 crisis. We encourage TBS members who can help out without risking their own safety, to continue to donate where these essential 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. If you know of other local organizations or individuals in need of support during this trying time, please contact the CRSAC Chairperson, Kathy Jones, at 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

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



Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle November Events

Birthdays

Rachel Faruque 11/4
Rachel Engelmann 11/7
Jon Levinson 11/8
Susan Huit 11/9
Alec Davidson 11/10
Mary Lee Tosky 11/13
Jenna Gold 11/15
Laura Levinson 11/15
Sarah Levinson 11/16
Aline Cooperberg 11/27
Sue Cole 11/28

Anniversaries

Liz and Jim Correll 11/22

Yahrzeit

Samuel Lippe 11/7
Doris Davidson 11/8
Clara Gitlin 11/9
Werner Cohn 11/9
Bert Yelin 11/9
Murray Asch 11/10

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/>.



**SHALOM
 HARMON
 INSTITUTE**

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

Local and Regional Events



The Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies proudly invites the public to an online lecture by **Prof. Atina Grossmann**, Professor of History in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Cooper Union in New York City. Her evening lecture is entitled “Remapping Survival: Jewish Refugees and Lost Memories of Displacement, Trauma, and Rescue in the Soviet Union, Iran, and India” and will start on **Monday, November 9, at 7:00 pm** (on Zoom). The event also marks the 82nd anniversary of Kristallnacht, the nationwide pogroms in Hitler Germany that began on November 9, 1938, and marked the prewar turning point in the Nazi regime's persecution of the country's Jewish population.

From **11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. on** the following day, **Tues., Nov. 10**, Prof. Grossmann's broader work will be featured in the Center's **final F'20 Lunch Research Colloquium** (also on ZOOM). Like all colloquia, it is based on two pre-circulated publications by our guest that all participants will read before the start of the session. Like (almost) all Center events, these online programs are free of charge and open to the public.

To attend the **11/9 ZOOM lecture**, please **register here**.

To participate in the 11/10 colloquium and receive copies of the colloquium texts, please **register here**. For more information about the events, please contact the Center at 828.262.2311 or holocaust@appstate.edu.

Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School 2020-21

Date	Event	Bulletin Deadline	
November	6	Virtual Friday Night Service 7PM	October 31
	8	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	21	Virtual Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	22	Virtual Sunday School 10AM	
	26	Thanksgiving Community Service at http://corinthtoday.org/live 10AM	
December	11	Friday Night Service (Second Night of Hanukah) 7PM	November 25 (Wed.)
	13	Sunday School Hanukah Party 10AM	
	26	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	27	Sunday School 10AM	
January	8	Friday Night Service 7PM	December 26
	10	Sunday School 10AM	
	23	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	24	Sunday School 10AM	
February	5	Friday Night Service 7PM	January 30
	7	Sunday School 10AM	
	20	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	21	Sunday School 10AM	
	26	Friday Night Service/Purim Megillah Reading 7PM	
March	5	Friday Night Service 7PM	February 27
	7	Sunday School 10AM	
	20	Saturday Morning Service 10AM	
	21	Sunday School 10AM	
	28	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.