

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

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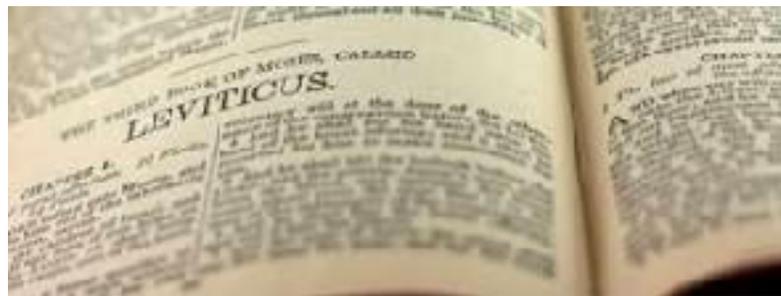
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Temple Beth Shalom
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From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Dennis Jones, Student Rabbi



Is the Torah “Inscribed” in the Human Soul?

The Book of Leviticus, *Vayikra* in Hebrew, definitely betrays the hand of a priestly writer. There are constant references to the Levites and Cohenim, most with minute detail in the laws and precepts for which they were responsible. Leviticus also goes into great detail on the specifics of animal sacrifice, a subject that is not very appealing to the discerning 21st century reader. But, embedded in the priestly laws and statutes is a theology of individual and corporate responsibility that has become a cornerstone of Western society. It is no secret that I see the grounding of Western law and ethics on principles enunciated in the Torah as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. We chant, as a part of every Shabbat Torah service, the second part of Isaiah 11:3: “For the Torah will go forth from Zion, and the Word of Adonai from Jerusalem.” But we stop just short of verse 4, which goes on, “And God will judge between the nations and will

render decisions for many peoples. And they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war anymore.”

A good example of Leviticus/*Vayikra's* emphasis on individual and corporate responsibility is Torah portion Bechukotai, which is read this year on Shabbat, May 12th. That portion begins, “*Im bechukotai telechu*—If you walk in my statutes” or alternately “by my decrees....” The passage goes on to enumerate the rewards that will accrue to the people of Israel for keeping God’s laws, but also providing a list of some of the direst consequences in the biblical text for breaking God’s commandments. The Hebrew root of that parshah’s name, Bechukotai, is *chuk* (*chet-quf*). Translated as “statute” or “decree,” the root literally means “engraved.” This undoubtedly hearkens back to the idea that God’s laws, the Ten Commandments, were engraved on stone tablets. Later sages have invoked the root meaning of the word to demonstrate that the Torah of Adonai is imprinted on an individual’s soul. As Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi put it, “There is a dimension of Torah that is *chuk*, engraved in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with God that is the very essence of the Jewish soul.” (“Parshat Bechukotai In-Depth.” www.chabad.org)

The rewards detailed in this Torah portion for the keeping of God’s statutes are many and lush. It should also be pointed out that they are given by the Almighty in the first person. God says, “If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments..., I will give you rains in their seasons..., the land will yield its produce..., the trees of the field will bear their fruit. Your threshing will last until your grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. I will also grant you peace in the land... I will also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword shall pass through your land... You will chase your enemies, and they will fall before you... I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm my covenant with you... I will make my dwelling among you... I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people.” (Lev. 26:3-12)

The punishments ascribed for disobedience to God’s laws are devastating to the point of being catastrophic. Again, they are stated by the Almighty in the first person, “But if you do not obey me and do not carry out all these commandments..., I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away.... You shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. You shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you.... Your land shall not yield its produce and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit. ... I will let loose among you the beasts of the field which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted.” (26:14-22) It gets far worse, but let this suffice for our discussion now.

The blessings and curses enumerated in this passage have sparked the ages-long debate over whether these rewards and consequences are to be taken naturally or supernaturally. The supernatural view would envision an omnipotent God sitting in the heavens dealing out divine judgments for obedience or rebellion. A more natural view would assert that a mindful Creator has built into the universe certain laws of cause and effect that cannot be abrogated. One cannot jump out of a second story window, for example, and expect not to smack into the ground. Actions have consequences. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks puts it, “You cannot over eat and take no exercise, and at the same time stay healthy. You cannot act selfishly and win the respect of other people. You cannot allow injustices to prevail and sustain a cohesive society. You cannot let rulers use power for their own ends without destroying the basis of a free and gracious social order.” (“Bechukotai—The Politics of Responsibility,” www.aish.com) There is nothing necessarily supernatural about these consequences, but as Rabbi Sacks points out they are absolutely moral.

One of the many things I love about progressive Judaism is that it gives to every individual the freedom to choose whether a supernatural, natural, some combination, or even neither of the two views of positive and negative consequences resonates best with his or her own conscience and convictions. Regardless of the view one chooses, it cannot be denied that this concept of justice, *tzedek*—“doing the right thing,” has been *chuk*—engraved on the Jewish conscience from ancient times. The Torah’s view of individual and corporate responsibility as it relates to social justice is deeply ingrained. The rich cannot buy special favors, nor should the poor be deferred to because of their poverty. Every soul is an indispensable part of the social fabric and should be treated as such. The needs of one are seen as the needs of all. This Jewish sense of individual and corporate responsibility, purpose, and destiny is very succinctly stated in the words of the British Catholic historian, Paul Bede Johnson:

No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny. At a very early stage in their collective existence they believed they had detected a divine scheme for the human race of which their own society was to be a pilot. They worked out their role in immense detail. They clung to it with heroic persistence in the face of savage suffering. Many of them believe it still. Others transmuted into Promethean endeavors to raise our condition by purely human means. The Jewish vision became the prototype for many similar grand designs for humanity, both divine and man-made. The Jews, therefore, stand right at the center of the perennial attempt to give human life the dignity of a purpose. (*A History of the Jews*, p. 2, Harper Perennial, 1988)

In affirming Mr. Johnson’s historical analysis, I attempted to find words to inspire my readers to take the precepts of the holy Torah to a new level, applying them daily in their own lives in ways that are meaningful to them. But, I am hard-pressed to find words more moving than those already written by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his comment on Johnson’s observation:

The people who change the world are those who believe that life has a purpose, a direction, a destiny. They know where they want to go and what they want to achieve. In the case of Judaism that purpose is clear: to show what it is to create a small clearing in the desert of humanity where freedom and order coexist, where justice prevails, the weak are cared for and those in need are given help, where we have the humility to attribute our successes to God and our failures to ourselves, where we cherish life as the gift of God and do all we can to make it holy. In other words: precisely the opposite of the violence and brutality that is today being perpetrated by some religious extremists in the name of God. (“Bechukotai—A Sense of Direction,” www.aish.com)

All I can add is...*Ken yehi ratzon*—May this be God’s will!

The President’s Message

Marsue Davidson, President

We hope to see you all at this year’s annual meeting on Sunday, May 20th, at 10am. Refreshments will be served. We have a full agenda of speakers lined up to share important information about our TBS board elections, proposed by-law changes, financial status reports, cemetery report, Rabbi’s report, security and safety measures, as well as Sunday School and adult learning plans. It is necessary for us to have a quorum



for the board membership vote and by-law changes. Please send your proxy vote via email to MarsueDav@aol.com, or any board member, if you are unable to attend. By May 10th 2018 all TBS members eligible to vote will be sent a reminder email and ballot.

Several landscaping projects at Temple Beth Shalom have been completed. A marble memorial for our beloved benefactors, Howard Zerden and David Cohen, has been placed in our prayer garden. The beautiful memorial is an everlasting token of our appreciation to two families that have given so generously. Thank you all for your commitment to our Jewish community. When you arrive please take notice of how the new stairs, signage, retaining wall, landscaping and rockscapes have beautified our surroundings, as well as provided much needed safety improvements. Thanks to Barbara and Larry Laufer for your dedication and hard work in overseeing this project for Temple Beth Shalom.

Please reach out to any board member if you have any suggestions for improvements. Your input is important to the board at TBS. The temple is blessed with a congregation that freely expresses their wishes for continued improvement and giving and this is greatly appreciated by your board of trustees.

Thank you to Rabbi Dennis for all your support and spiritual teachings. Your explanation and insight of the Torah readings month after month, has brought the children and adults closer together. Time spent with family and friends reflect the Jewish values of family and community. Thank you all for your continued support of Temple Beth Shalom.

TBS Sunday School Program

Kathy Jones, Sunday School Program Coordinator

Sunday School students had a great time at the TBS annual Passover Seder on March 31st. They loved having the guests help them sing the four questions!

This month we will be discussing the festival of *Shavuot and encourage everyone to come with their families for the Shavuot Service on Saturday, May 19th.

Ben Levinson has been busy with extra Hebrew tutoring for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah on June 2nd, and all of the students are helping to plan an end of the year celebration for June 3rd.

Just as a reminder, Sunday School is open to all members with children of preschool age and older and will be starting a new year of classes this coming fall. Contact Kathy Jones (828-632-9261) if you are interested in enrolling a student.

No Sunday School classes will be held on May 20th- the day of TBS Annual Meeting.

*The word Shavuot means weeks, and the festival of Shavuot marks the completion of the seven-week counting period between Passover and Shavuot. The yearzeit of King David is traditionally observed on Shavuot.



TBS Sisterhood

Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President

The Sisterhood thanks everyone for donating their time, talents, and presence to make the TBS annual community seder a huge success. You can find details in the Temple Board section of this newsletter.

Here are some pictures from April’s Movie Night. We saw “Keeping the Faith” and it was really cute.



We’ve had 3 Movie Nights this year, utilizing the big screen that was installed last summer. They’ve been very successful and well-attended. Sisterhood has plans for more in the future—we look forward to seeing you then!

We had an interesting meeting in April, discussing questions from visitors to our recent services. It was great to share experiences and viewpoints. We also talked about potential upcoming activities. Watch for information on fun places to go and things to do this summer with your friends at TBS.

We’d like to offer a warm “Mazel Tov!” to Amy Hedrick on her conversion during last month’s service. (pictures below are of Amy and Rabbi Kaplan, from Charlotte, conducting the conversion ceremony).



Our next meeting will be Wednesday, May 16 at 6:30pm at Bob Evans restaurant. The first person to email me how they would fill in the blank in the following sentence: ‘That _____, she’s a real balebusta!’, will win a prize at our May meeting.

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 is scheduled for Wednesday, May 9th at 7pm. Board meetings are open to all temple members. Please join us and become a part of our TBS family.

TBS Board members are:

Student Rabbi:

Dennis Jones

Officers:

Marsue Davidson, President
 Barbara Laufer, Vice-President
 Susan Rieder, Treasurer
 Tiffany Hull, Secretary

Members at Large:

Liz Correll
 Marion DuBow
 Debra Engelmann
 Lin Gentry
 Sandy Guttler
 Pam Jones
 Linda Greenfield
 Mary Lee Tosky
 Karen Ferguson



We are so proud of our very own Elaine Zerden for being honored by Hickory NAACP in April.

Our Seder was a huge success, thanks to congregation support and the hard work of sisterhood. Because of donations from members Deanne Griffin and Elaine Zerden, we were able to provide meals to four guests. The creative and clever Jones women, Kathy and Jaimi, provided the "plagues" centerpieces and activities for the kids. Donated food included charoses made by sisterhood president Lin Gentry; matzah balls and soup by the Laufers; gefilte fish from Henry Greenfield; tzimmes from Marion DuBow; kugels from Tiffany Hull, Susan Rieder and Mary Lee Tosky, and fruit salad made by Millie Kaufman, Sara Steinmetz and Brenda Callahan. Special thanks to April and Glenn Eckard and their food service students for keeping things flowing.

"... you shall keep My sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations..." Exodus 31:13

Help needed! We all love the sweet desserts and coming together at our Onegs after the Friday night service, don't we? Volunteers are needed to host next year. Consider doing this mitzvah with a friend, in honor, or in memory of someone. It's easy and fun, and there's usually an experienced member there to help out. Thank you!





Looking for a way to give tzedakah?

Jaimi Jones, daughter of Dennis and Kathy Jones, and School Social Worker for Alexander County Schools, is trying to collect hygiene/cleaning supplies for families of Hiddenite Elementary School students. It is the poorest school in the district and has a high rate of families living in poverty. She has had calls from parents seeking help to be able to send

their children to school with clean bodies and clean clothing. If anyone is willing to help her with this mitzvah by donating some of these supplies, please bring them to the next service at the Temple. **A box will be in the TBS foyer for the collection.**

They are in need of the following items for Kindergarten through 5th graders:

Shampoo Conditioner Children's and Adult Toothpaste and Toothbrushes Body Wash
 Bar Soap Boy's and Girl's Deodorants Shaving Cream Safety Razors Ultra Thin Kotex
 Toilet Paper Laundry Detergent Dish Soap Lysol Wipes

TBS Message Board

Happy Birthday to Clyde Ferguson, my husband and best friend. - KB

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 Marion DuBow at 2752 Brittany Dr., Lenoir, NC 28645. A greeting card will be sent acknowledging your donation and your message will appear here in the next issue of the TBS Bulletin.

TBS Member Business Directory

Dr. Ron DuBow
Internist, Geriatric Specialist
(elderly care) Pediatrician
2651 Morganton Blvd SW
Lenoir, NC 28645
828-757-8950

**Dr. Laura Faruque of
A Womans View**
915 Tate Blvd SE
Suite170
Hickory, NC 28602
828-345-0800

**Dr. Mark Faruque of
Bethlehem Family Practice**
174 Bolick Lane Suite 202
Taylorsville NC 28681
828-495-8226

Marsue Davidson, RN DCS
Epic Health Services
805 W 25th Street
Newton. NC 28269
828-464-0244
www.marsue.davidson@epichealthservice.com



Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle May Events

Birthdays

Grayson Cohn 5/2	Ariel Cohn 5/19
Rick Crater 5/4	Terri Berndt 5/20
Eileen Cangemi 5/6	Damian Blankenship 5/21
Linda Guttler 5/8	Clyde Ferguson 5/9
Amanda Garrick 5/24	Kevin Huitt 5/26
Gabriella Cantore 5/10	Al Garrick 5/27
Michael Sullivan 5/15	Mark Sobotkin 5/30
Ross Guttler 5/18	

Anniversaries

Aaron and Mary Lee Tosky 5/4
Ron and Sue Cohn 5/6
Bud and Connie Tosky 5/24

Yahrzeits

Ruth Laufer 5/15
Richard Fox 5/15
Sam Griffin 5/17

Member Business Directory

Alice Guy
The Hickory Wine Shoppe
238 Union Square NW
Hickory, NC 28601
828-334-4441
Info@HickoryWine.com

Karen Ferguson, MAIT
Certified Professional in Learning
and Performance
KB Learning Designs
kblearningdesigns.com
karen.sederholm@gmail.com

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

Michelle Oxenberg Jordon
Managing Director of Design
3166 Main Ave. S.E.
Hickory, North Carolina 28602
828.322.3480 Ext. 271
michelle@robertabbey.com

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

Local and Regional Events



Pete Sobotkin is team captain for the Catawba County Fraternal Order of Police team for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life All Night walk, Friday and Saturday, June 1st & 2nd, at the Catawba County Fairgrounds, raising money for a cure for cancer and to support cancer patients. If you would like to donate to this very important charity, it will be greatly appreciated. All donations are 100% tax deductible. Cash or checks made out to the "American Cancer Society" can be given to Pete at temple services or mailed to:

Pete Sobotkin, [1004 N Center St, Hickory, NC 28601](mailto:psobotkin@fop100.org)

B'NAI B'RITH INSTITUTE OF JUDAISM* RETREAT AUGUST 13 - 16

Wildacres Retreat, Little Switzerland, NC

Now in its 71st year, the B'nai B'rith Institute of Judaism provides an opportunity for the individual to confront, explore, and clarify questions about Judaism in an individual, national, and global context. Our faculty provides four lectures daily, and there is entertainment each evening. Additional activities include patio discussions with the faculty, religious services, athletic pursuits such as hiking and tennis, enjoying the breathtaking beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, or just relaxing.



Online Brochure: www.bnai-brith.wixsite.com/wildacres

email: bcarr@ipass.net

phone: 919.781.4207

Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School

Date	Event/Time	Bulletin Deadline
May	4-6 Services/Friday 7:30 PM/Saturday 10:00 AM/Sunday School 10:00 AM	April 21
	19 Erev Shavuot Service 7:30 PM (Saturday)	
	20 Sunday School 10:00 AM/ Annual Meeting 10:00AM	
June	1-3 Services/Friday 7:30 PM/Saturday 10:00 AM/ *Ben Levinson Bar Mitzvah	May 19
	Sunday School End of Year Party 10:00 AM	

*The congregation is invited to join the Levinson family for a Bar Mitzvah luncheon following services. (no gifts)

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.