

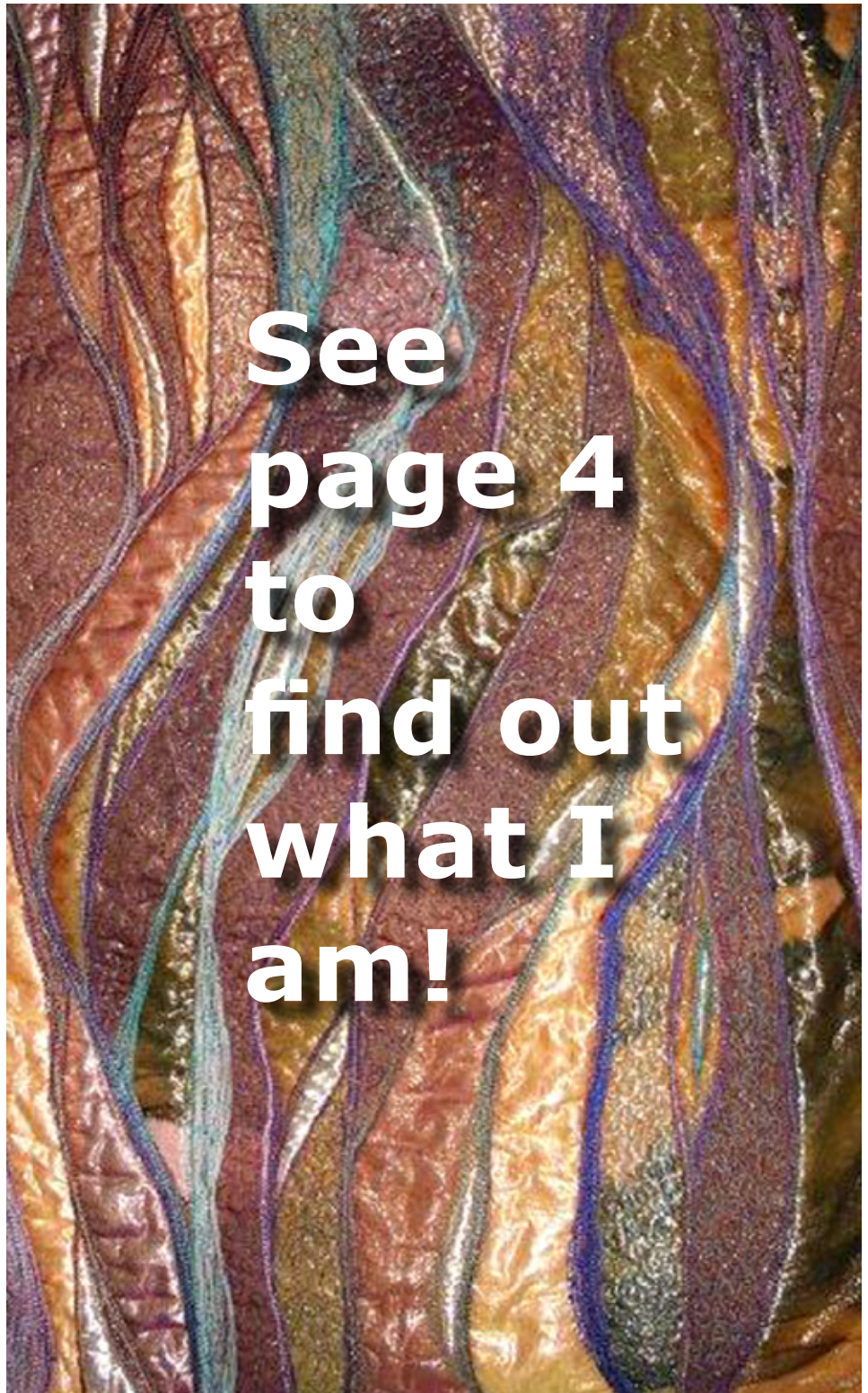


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**See
page 4
to
find out
what I
am!**



RABBI

Louis Sutker
ravenlws@shaw.ca

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Reva Hutkin
bubbareva@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Amanda Gafter-Ricks
amanda.gafter-ricks@gov.bc.ca

PAST PRESIDENT

Neal Wasser
wassfamvic@telus.net

TREASURER

Morris Bleviss
Morris@Bleviss.com

SECRETARY

Joel Fagan
faganis@shaw.ca

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Dorothy Torontow
d2t2@shaw.ca

Hal Yacowar
hny@shaw.ca

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Sharon Shalinsky
gilleam@shaw.ca

NEWSLETTER

Julie Elizabeth
madrona623@gmail.com

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Amanda Gafter-Ricks
amanda.gafter-ricks@gov.bc.ca

Katrina Hanevelt
klgreenfh@gmail.com

RITUAL AFFAIRS

Julie Elizabeth
madrona623@gmail.com

WEBSITE

<http://www.kolotmayimreformtemple.com>

From Rabbi Louis



Mazal Tov You made it through the month of Elul.

In Elul you started to contemplate your life and to decide what you were doing that was not positive and to start to increase the things that would be positive, especially in relation to other people including your own family.

Then you hit Tishrei and things got more serious. "Who will live and who will die..." You apologized to anyone you might have done wrong and made amends and decided to do differently.

On Yom Kippur you confessed with all Jews the wrongs that some of us have done. You began to recognize that the Creator wanted you to do differently and decided to do so. The beautiful music that you heard affected you emotionally. You sacrificed your own fat on the altar. You thought about things in a different way.

If that wasn't enough you sat in your flimsy Succah or visited someone else's when it wasn't raining torrentially. You realized how fragile your substantial home might be in an earthquake and empathized with those who only have a succah to live in, or not even that, and decided to help them. You held together and waved the pine branch (lulav) and citron (etrog) and willows (aravot) and myrtle (hadassim) in all six directions with you in the centre, and you were blessed with rain.

After all this it was enough. The guests went home. You were alone with the ultimate Host and appreciated the peace and quiet. You celebrated by finishing the novel that tells the story of your People and also symbolizes your own unique story.

And then you started all over again from the beginning. Welcome to the Journey.

r. Louis

Family Trees, Branches, and Identity Noach, Genesis 6:9–11:32

D'var Torah By: David H. Aaron(*See page 8 bottom)

The Book of Genesis involves a patchwork of stories. These are held together by an overarching framework that I refer to as "the ideological overlay." How are we to understand this structure? Picture eggs in an eggcrate. When open, the box is flimsy, and the eggs all sit there as discrete and unconnected

Continued on page 9.

President's Message



Shalom Kolot Mayim family,

Can you smell the change of season in the air? The leaves are turning colours, the rains have arrived, and our new year has begun in earnest. We have celebrated the harvest/Sukkoth, and Simcha Torah – the end and the beginning of our year long study of the Torah. We have had our first Board meeting, and I look forward to a year of working together in harmony, and to tackling any issues that arise with understanding and heart.

I promised a list of jobs available to make our congregation vibrant and functioning at all levels. The following tasks are still available for our congregants to snap up and make their own:

Fundraising

Organize a telephone tree and/or take on a part of the list

Form or be part of a Care and Concern Committee

Volunteer to help with the Seder (co-ordinators already recruited)

Commit to helping with breakup/cleanup after Onegs

Organize three pot-luck dinners a year

Be a meeter and greeter at Shabbat Services and Temple Events

Organize a Purim Spiel and /or KM participation in a community Purim event

Join an existing committee

Send a CHAI greeting in someone's honour or to celebrate an event

Other involvement could be learning to lead services or just doing the Drash,

Sponsor and/or recruit people to offer an Oneg

Host a Kolot Mayim-at-Home event

Bring a friend or relative to services/events

Grow our membership

As you can see, our Temple requires your energy and commitment to these projects. Will this be the year you step up and keep your leaders from burning out trying to do everything? I want to encourage you to take a leadership position. The rewards are great and you will be so appreciated. Now that we have been inscribed in the Book of Life for another year, let us not waste this wonderful gift.

We have a beautiful newsletter produced by Julie Elizabeth, and Rennie Parish keeps us up to date on weekly events. If you need to announce anything there are formats available. I also want to draw your attention to our Bulletin Board. I will be posting things of interest to us as a community, and urge everyone to look at it. [Continued on page 5.](#)

Our New Parochet and the Parochet Fund

I have sat at Emanu-El many times and admired their parochet (Ark curtain), and I've also seen many very beautiful ones on various Jewish Websites. I thought I would like to gift the congregation with a new Parochet in honour of my Bat Mitzvah.

However, as many of you know, hiring an artist to design and produce a one-of-a-kind object is not an inexpensive undertaking. So I asked Morris to create the parochet Fund, to which I as well, would contribute.

In true "Julie fashion," my original idea has grown. I thought well, what about for the High Holidays? And what about a Challah cover? And what about cloths for the two tables, and a new curtain for the lectern? So the project has grown! I am pleased to announce that we (Dorothy Torontow is working with me on this project) have hired Judi MacLeod, a friend of Susan Halpert's, to design and make the various items.



Judi is a very accomplished fabric artist. I showed her our Ark and lectern, and I showed her what Emanu-El has; loaned her a book and suggested some Web Sites to look at. And she showed us her work. One piece graces our cover this month, and another is at left. I chose these particular pieces to show you as they are stylistically similar to what she will design for us.

We told her that *Kolot Mayim* means *voices of the waters*, and so we would like a water element in the curtain, and we told her we prefer modern to traditional, and let her fly with it.

Originally a nurse, Judi subsequently took 4 years of Fine

Art and Graphic Design. She is energized by vibrant colours and textures and is mostly influenced by nature and her travels. She shows her fibre art nationally and internationally, and her work can be found in collections across Canada, as well as in Germany, the UK, and the US.

Dorothy and I recently saw what she had done on the Parochet so far, and we are both thrilled. This first piece of the commission (the parochet) will be completed very soon, and we're very excited. Hope you will like it as much as we do!

President's Message, continued from page 3. Please keep your Misheiberich list up to date with Rennie. If someone has recovered it would be good to remove his/her name. Don't forget to let the recipient of our prayers know we are praying for his/her recovery.

I look forward to keeping in touch with everyone, personally, and through my monthly message. Remember that our Board meetings are open and we meet on a Thursday evening at 7:30 every other month.

Don't forget the Trop Workshops with Lynn Greenhough. It's only two hours of your time (one hour each on two subsequent Wednesdays), and we will base the learning on the Veyahafta. Lynn needs to know how many are coming, so please RSVP to her at 250-380-1863 or lgreenhough@shaw.ca. The two Wednesdays in question are October 9th and 16th from 7:30 to 8:30 each.

Reva

Chai חַי

Kolot Mayim has several funds to which you may earmark your donations. They are: Chai (General Fund), Religious School Fund, Social Action Fund, and Parochet (Ark Curtain) Fund. Undirected donations will go into the Chai.

The following donations have been received since the last Voice.

PAROCHET (ARK CURTAIN) FUND

In honour of Julie Elizabeth's Bat Mitzvah - Paula Blitstein, Dr. Ruth Simkin
In honour of Alec and Rennie's 10th Anniversary - Julie Elizabeth & Reva Hutkin

CHAI FUND

In honour of Alec & Rennie's 10th anniversary - Rabbi Louis Sutker
In honour of Joe Gougeon-Ryant's birthday - Neal Wasser
In honour of rabbi Louis's birthday - Morris & Janna Bleviss
In hopnour of Julie's Bat Mitzvah - Morris & Janna Bleviss
In honour of his sister, Bella's Yahrzeit - Morris Bleviss

Top 10 Destinations For Business Growth



Jewish People Around the World

Israel Takes #8 in the World's Top 10 Most Dynamic Economies

Australia takes first with Chile coming in second and China third. [Canada takes 5th! Woo-hoo!] US comes in eleventh place.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2013/09/21/the-worlds-top-ten-most-dynamic-economies/>



1,200-Year-Old Jewish Prayer Book Is Unveiled

Ninth-Century Parchment Artifact Offers Link to Ancient Jews

By Menachem Wecker

A 1,200-year-old parchment Jewish prayer book that is billed as the oldest in existence was introduced Sept. 27 by a prominent private collector of Biblical artifacts.

The complete 50-page book with original 13-by-10 centimeter binding features early Babylonian vowels, which are a precursor

to modern Hebrew vowels. Those, along with Carbon-14 dating, helped scholars arrive at the 9th-century date, which would make the prayer book several hundred years older than the oldest Torah scrolls, although later than the Dead Sea Scrolls.

"This is the oldest Jewish prayer book known to exist in the world," said Steven Green, the president of the retail chain Hobby Lobby, announcing the identification at the Religion Newswriters Association conference here. Green's eponymous collection, which contains more than 40,000 artifacts, is slated to have a permanent home when the Museum of the Bible opens in Washington, D.C.

Green Scholars believe that after research "that this artifact may very well be the earliest connection today's practicing Jews have to the roots of their rabbinic liturgy," added Green, who said that ancient Jewish practice was to bury or ritually discard holy texts that had fallen into disrepair. "It's why we see so few Jewish texts dating even before the 15th century," Green said.

Full research on the book will be published next year or in early 2015 with the Netherlands-based Brill, edited by Emanuel Tov, a bible professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Jerry Pattengale, executive director of the Green Scholars Initiative, according to Green.

In response to questions after the presentation, Green and Pattengale declined to comment on how much the book cost, or which private collection it came from. Pattengale said the book contains six segments, but didn't say if there were any inscriptions identifying the book's patrons or early owners. The collectors also declined to say whether the book was unearthed in the Holy Land or elsewhere.

The prayer book features services for Sabbath and the 100 blessings that some Jews say every day, according to Pattengale. "This is probably the earliest account of the 100 Benedictions," he said. "I wish you could have been in the room when they started realizing what was happening. Just sometimes things are in collections for centuries—not decades—and they simply did not understand how early it was." "This does appear to be a Shabbat-dedicated prayer book," he added, "but the 100 blessings would have been a daily read."

One question the scholars working on the book might be looking at is whether the dating suggests the book is the prayer book of Amram Gaon, who died around the year 875 and was said to have codified the first Jewish prayer book.

Read more: <http://forward.com/articles/184640/-year-old-jewish-prayer-book-is-unveiled/#ixzz2gJSCeHnG>

U .R .J . BIENNIAL
SAVE THE DATE
December 11-15, 2013 - San Diego, CA

Biennial is where Reform Jews gather to learn, pray, share ideas, dance and sing, hear from inspiring guest speakers, reunite with old friends, make new connections, and make decisions about the policies of the Reform Movement. The Biennial and the Women of Reform Judaism Assembly will take place at the San Diego Convention Center

Discounted Biennial Room Blocks will be Available at: Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina and Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego Early Bird Registration will open early Summer 2013. This Biennial will also celebrate the Women of Reform Judaism's Centennial Anniversary. Sign up for Biennial Updates at <http://urj.org/biennial13/>.

Torah Trop Workshops
Wednesdays September 9th & 16th
from 7:30 - 8:30

at the home of Lynn Greenhough
2895 Austin Avenue

Lynn Greenhough will be conducting 2 sequential workshops to teach the basics of Torah trop. Trop, *ta'amim* or cantillation, is often understood to be the musical notation by which the Torah is chanted. In actual fact, trop provides many insights into the text itself – the pronunciation of a word, the phrasing of a verse, the stress of a syllable. It is a fascinating and wonderful aspect of our liturgical history. Trop systems exist for all of our liturgies, including readings from the Prophets in the Haftarat, and for readings from Kohelet, and Aycha, as well as a special trop reserved only for Yontif and the Song of the Sea. There are also many variations depending on geographical location and of course, your teacher. In this workshop we will be learning the trop of regular Shabbat Torah reading (Hungarian).

We will be using the V'ahafta as a template for learning trop. We will be looking at all of those 'squiggles' on the page that will help us understand the punctuation, the phrasing, and the musical accompaniment to the words. By doing so we will hopefully come to a fuller appreciation of our magnificent literary and musical heritage.

In the first workshop, we will learn some of the history and some of the mechanics of identifying the trop signs. During our second, we will be applying the trop to the V'ahafta.

Please email to reserve: lgreenough@shaw.ca. She will need to know in advance in order to prepare learning materials. Minimum 5 people needed.

Workshop by donation to Kolot Mayim's Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

**Discover the Past Presents:
Pioneers, Shopkeepers, Frontier Merchants,
Legislators, and Curio Dealers:
A Walking Tour of Jewish Victoria:**

Peel back the layers of time to discover how a very small population of Jewish pioneers was so instrumental in shaping early Victoria. Their contributions include, first Jewish Mayor, first Jewish Judge, first Jewish Member of the Legislature as well as building what is now the oldest synagogue in continuous use in North America. Walk in the footsteps of the early Jewish pioneers and of those in subsequent waves of Jewish immigration to get a better idea of the Jewish Community in Victoria, then and now.

The Walking Tour of Jewish Victoria is a gentle 1½ walk through the main streets of downtown. Beginning at the synagogue and ending near Yates and Government which was THE hub in gold rush days. This tour is part of John Adam's new Discovery Walks and lead by Gary Cohen.

**Walking Tours of Jewish Victoria
Fall Schedule**

**October 13, 2013
November 3, 2013**

**Starts at 10:30 am
Rain or shine**

Meet outside of Congregation Emanu-El
1461 Blanshard Street (Corner of Blanshard and Pandora)

Adults \$15 (cash)
Students or Seniors (over 65) \$13 (cash)

For more information, obtain group discounts or to arrange for an alternate tour day contact: John Adams: www.discoverthepast.com

**The Victoria and
Vancouver Island
Jewish Burial
Society**

The Jewish Burial Society of Victoria and Vancouver Island is a service organization founded to assist all Jews with end of life requirements. We administer four totally separate and distinct sections in the Hatley Memorial Gardens and provide space for all persuasions of Jewish life from orthodox to secular, complete with cremation if specified.

The Society works with the Victoria Chevrah Kadisha in preparation of the body for burial, and works with the family in all ways to ensure that the concern and embrace of the entire community for the bereaved.

While we are a non profit Society, regrettably, end of life does not respect one's pocketbook, and costs are dear. There is a small membership charge that must be paid to become a member of our Society, and arrangements for this, and for burial requirements may be made at any time. We recommend dealing with one's self and saving the pain and expense of the survivors at a very stressful time.

For additional information on a highly confidential basis, call Joel Fagan (250 477-2006), Jack Shalinsky (250 477-1012), or Michael Goldberg (250 598-9094).

Tzedakah: A way of life.

Kolot Mayim Supports Food Bank

Hundreds of people rely on the various food banks in town. Torah tells us to leave the four corners of our fields for those in need; today, this could be translated to mean the 4 corners of our shopping carts!

I urge everyone to bring a little something to Shul on Fridays for our Tzedakah Box. We support two food banks: Jewish Family Services and the James Bay Community Project Food Bank. There are often sales at the various stores, so surely, one could find a can or package for under a dollar. Check for case lot sales; you could bring one can from the case each week. If everyone brought one can each week, it would go a long way to helping those in need. Thank you for your support.

The New Year is Coming! Are you looking for a Jewish calendar for your home or as a gift?

To help celebrate our 150th anniversary, we have a 16-month wall calendar, beginning September 2013 complete with Jewish dates, beautiful photographs and accompanying text.



When in Victoria, come by and visit us.

"OUR LEGACY"

Exhibit of historic and contemporary memorabilia, textiles and Judaica will be open until September 22.

\$20

SHRINK-WRAPPED
AND READY
FOR MAILING

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Telephone 250-382-0615. To order: info@congregationemanu-el.ca

Family Trees, continued from page 2. entities. When closed, such that the eggs are touching the top and bottom surfaces of those spaces specially designed to hold them, the structure becomes rigid, and you relate to the sum of the parts—the crate and the eggs—as a solid whole. In this analogy, the eggs are the discrete stories that make up the Book of Genesis, and the crate constitutes the structural framework that holds the individual stories together. As noted, when closed, an eggcrate feels pretty solid, and the same is true of the Book of Genesis—looked at as a whole, its narratives flow "solidly" from one part to the next. However, when we peel back the ideological overlay—analogous to opening the egg crate—we become conscious of the distinctive stories, which do not share either a thematic or even a chronological unity. That is, just like you can have an eggcrate with eggs that didn't start out together, so it is that the stories in Genesis did not start out clustered together as they currently are. Rather, the sense of unity was created by the book's editor.

The stories the editor decided to include address a great array of concerns, but two main thematic elements lend the entire work narrative and ideological unity. The first element consists of those periodic genealogies we read; the second is what we will refer to as "the covenant." We will meet the second element in next week's Torah portion (Parashat Lech L'cha). Here, toward the end of Parashat Noach , we have a very important genealogy, one that traces the regeneration of humanity after the devastating Flood of Noah's era—a regeneration through Noah's sons that leads to the ancestry we identify with ancient Israel.(1)

The Genesis genealogies define both the lineage of the world's nations as well as Israel's place in that world. Identity in antiquity was frequently developed around two notions, blood relations and land. When it came to familial or tribal units, establishing what was meant by "we" frequently involved defining some "other" group. In effect, people declared what they were by articulating what they were not. "We" form a group; they are not part of our group.

This approach to self-differentiation is not without certain inner paradoxes. The Bible seeks to show that all human beings derive first from Adam and Eve, and then from Noah's sons and daughters

Continued on page 10.

Those we remember ...



OBSERVED DATE	CIVIL DATE YEAR OF DEATH	HEBREW DATE YEAR OF DEATH	NAME	RELATIONSHIP	MOURNER
October 1, 2013	October, 1980	Unknown	Joseph Sugarman	Uncle of	Sandy Fagan
October 1, 2013	October, 2005	Unknown	Sylvia Markel	Great Aunt of	David Levinson
October 2, 2013	October 2, 1967	27 Elul 5728	Jessie Jardine	Mother of	June Kadonoff
October 2, 2013	October 2, 1992	5 Tishrei 5753	William Wagman	Father of	Ellen Wagman
October 3, 2013	October 3, 1990	14 Tishrei 5751	Monica Fisi-Fischer	Daughter of	Judith Fischer
October 5, 2013	October 5, 2005	2 Tishrei 5766	Sonya Leshner	Sister In Law of	Arline Leshner
October 5, 2013	October 5, 1993	20 Tishrei 5754	Mark Hedrick	Uncle of	Jessica Simpson of
October 6, 2013	October 10, 2010	2 Cheshvan 5771	Sarah Bleviss	Mother of	Morris Bleviss
October 7, 2013	October 7, 2008	8 Tishrei 5769	David Masson	Friend of	The Congregation
October 7, 2013	October 7, 2008	8 Tishrei 5769	Evelyn Young	Mother of	Gail Young
October 9, 2013	October 9, 2008	9 Tishrei 5769	Harry Torontow	Father of	David Torontow
October 10, 2013	October 10, 1999	30 Tishrei 5760	Debbie Wagman	Sister of	Ellen Wagman
October 11, 2013	October 11, 2007	11 Heshvan 5768	Richard Lawson	Father of	Pamela Lawson
October 12, 2013	October 12, 1976	18 Tishrei 5737	Simon Marks	Father of	Gerry Marks
October 12, 2013	October 12, 1959	10-Tishrei-5720	Frank Sher	GrandFather of	Don Sher
October 13, 2013	October 13, 1998	23 Tishrei 5759	Martin Schulstad	Father of	Jacqueline Seigel
October 14, 2013	October 14, 1969	2 Heshvan 5730	Benjamin Bookman	Father of	Lawrence Bookman
October 16, 2013	October 16, 1987	23 Tishrei 5748	Caitlin Martha	Granddaughter of	Arline Leshner
October 16, 2013	October 16, 1997	17 Tishrei 5758	Harold Miller	Uncle of	Don Sher
October 17, 2013	October 17, 2006	25 Tishrei 5767	Eliza Chassin	Mother of	Yehudi Freedman
October 17, 2013	October 17, 1993	2 Cheshvan 5754	Kenneth Conlin	Father of	Sharon Gillelan-
October 17, 2013	October 17, 2007	5 Cheshvan 5768	Jean Downey Dey	Friend of	Rennie Parrish
October 18, 2013	November 11, 1981	14 Cheshvan	Jules Szabo	GrandFather of	Caroline Hergt &
October 25, 2013	October 25 1958	11 Cheshvan	Sarah Gottdank	Mother of	David Torontow
October 27, 2013	November 10th	23 Cheshvan	Shemuel Ben Abraham	Father of	Samuel Perez
October 27, 2013	October 27 2003	1 Cheshvan 5764	Moishe Hutkin	Father of	Reva Hutkin
October 29, 2013	October 29, 2005	26 Tishrei 5766	John Langston	Great Uncle of	Jessi Goss
October 30, 2013	October 30, 2009	12 Cheshvan	Phylis Harbison	Mother of	Glenn Harbison

Family Trees, continued from page 9. -in-law. In other words, we are all, in some sense, related . Consequently, differentiation among peoples proves to be a tricky business. The paradox, then, lies in the notion that the writers were moved to valorize some groups and villainize others, despite the fact that heroes and villains may only have had a few degrees of bloodline separation between them.

Then there is the problem of ever-shifting attitudes toward discrete ethnic groups. One generation's villains may prove to be another's heroes. Some genealogies report matters in relatively neutral terms, while others involve characterizations that reflect deeply held prejudices. It would be a serious mistake to think that the perspectives on the various nations in the Book of Genesis were universally held by all ancient Israelites at any given moment in history. To illustrate this point, we'll consider a brief passage in Parashat Vayeira , which provides a scathing parody of the origins of the Moabites and Ammonites. Toward the end of Genesis 19 (vv. 31-38), Lot's daughters seduce their father to become pregnant. The story unfolds as follows:

"Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father." So they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born daughter went in and lay with her father, but he did not realize that she had either lain there or gotten up. . . . [The next] night also they made their father drink wine, and the younger one went and lay with [Lot]; but he did not realize that she had either lain there or gotten up. Thus both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. The first-born daughter bore a son and named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. And the younger also bore a son, and she called him Ben-ammi; he is the

Continued on page 11

[Family Trees, continued from page 10.](#) father of the Ammonites of today.(2) (Genesis 19:32–33, 19:35–38)

What could be more insulting than to have your origins attributed to an act of drunken intercourse between a father and a daughter, schemed by the daughters no less? Obviously, the author of this passage did not think well of the Moabites or the Ammonites (not to mention Lot himself). But this pejorative depiction of Moab was not shared by all. The genealogy at the end of the Book of Ruth conveys a rather different attitude:

So Boaz [the Israelite] married Ruth [the Moabite]; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. The Eternal let her conceive, and she bore a son. And the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Eternal, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel!". . . And the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, "A son is born to Naomi!" They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David. (Ruth 4:13–14, 4:17)

Hardly a more astounding contrast could be imagined. In the Genesis story, the Moabites emerge from the most debased of sexual pairings. In the Book of Ruth, a Moabite woman conceives because of God's intercession, and her progeny include Israel's redeemer, King David. That Ruth is not born a Jew hardly hampers her ability to bear Israel's future political and military savior.

We could point to a number of other biblical passages that parallel this odd contrast in attitudes toward a single nation. But let me here summarize what has been said thus far. First: identity contingent on distinguishing the "we" from "the other" is rooted in genealogies, ostensibly because "blood" can be construed as an objective marker of identity. And second: any particular attitude regarding a specific nation found in one part of the Bible should not be taken as having been universally accepted in any given period or even over time.

Both of these facts tend to leave "we/they" identity politics rather contentious. This has not hindered an ongoing engagement with this approach; indeed, many Jews even today still find these ideas to be powerful elements in their own sense of self. In his book *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, Shaye J. D. Cohen [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999] delineates how because of constantly changing historical circumstances Jews were constantly revisiting the question Who is a Jew? Perhaps the best-known adaptation in identity politics remains the shift from patrilineal to matrilineal descent (apparently) during the Roman era. But while this is the best known, it is hardly the most profound adaptation. More consequential would be the identity politics created by authors throughout our history who saw the content of one's Judaism as more important than any particular inherited trait. This approach to identity emerges from the Torah itself.

At some very fundamental level, biblical writers beyond the Book of Genesis recognized that blood lineage could never adequately establish the grounds for distinctiveness or allegiance. Some understood that distinctions between peoples who were originally next of kin (such as Ishmael and Isaac, or Jacob and Esau), were at best, artificial. They recognized that the most significant elements of Jewish living—the cultural content and religious practices that constitute its distinctiveness—contribute to a form of self-definition that is superior to vague claims that we are simply other than someone else.

This was not, however, an insight held by the authors of Genesis. The Book of Genesis does nothing to foster the content of Jewish identity beyond clan association. The writers of other biblical passages (in the Torah and elsewhere) would take it as their task to remedy what they saw as Genesis's limited utility in the formation of Jewish identity. While they sustained aspects of "we/they" politics in their own writings, they ultimately transcended them with the laws, customs, ethics, and ideological positions that dominate their literary legacy.

The challenge of the Book of Genesis for liberal Jews starts in that otherwise innocent-sounding genealogy of chapter 10. For there we have set in motion a cultural paradigm for self-differentiation that cannot, in my opinion, be sustained by those of us seeking a vibrant Judaism through cultural creativity and ongoing spiritual renewal. It is in our power to assert that no one is a Jew by historical fiat, but that all Jews are Jews-by-choice. This is the conviction held by the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the closing section of the Book of Joshua. The covenant scenes in these books require that each individual affirm his or her allegiance; no individual is simply part of the covenant unless they have actively affirmed their commitment. In Exodus 24:7 we read: "Then he [Moses] took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, 'All that the Eternal has spoken we will faithfully do!'" Another covenant scene appears in the Book of Joshua (24:22): "Joshua said to the people, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have by your own act chosen to serve the Eternal.' The people replied, 'We are [free] witnesses.'" Such sentiments

[Continued on page 12.](#)

October 2013				Tishri-Cheshvan 5774		
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 October 27 Tishri	2 28	Rosh Chodesh 3 29	7:30 pm K.Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Louis	4 30 Noach 5 1 Cheshvan 4:00 Torah Study
6 2	7 3	8 4	9 5 7:30-8:30 Trobe Workshop @ Greenhough	10 6	7:30 pm Service led by Gerry Marks	11 7 Lech-Lecha 12 8
13 9	14 10	15 11	16 12 7:30-8:30 Trobe Workshop @ Greenhough	17 13	7:30 pm K.Shabbat Service led by Joe Gougeon-Ryant	18 14 Vayera 19 15
20 16	21 17	22 18	23 19	24 20	7:30 pm K.Shabbat Service led by Joel Fagan	25 21 Chayei Sara 26 22
27 23	28 24	29 25	30 26	31 27	Rabbi Louis will be with us when the squares are white.	

Family Trees, continued from page 11. dominate the entire narrative of Deuteronomy, where being a Jew is about making a choice to choose life! These authors saw a covenant entered voluntarily as more powerful than any notion of birth-into-a-covenant. In fact, these passages undermine the notion of Jew-by-birth.

Too often, when the politics of identity are rehearsed in the modern world among Diaspora and Israeli Jews alike, this profound insight of Torah is subordinated for the sake of reactionary, shallow notions of clan. It is time for us to consider the meanings of our identity through freewill affirmations of commitment, rather than acquiesce to customary medieval, halachic notions of who is a Jew that violate the more profound insights of Torah.

Some might hold that birth into a Jewish family makes this choice easier to come by than for others. But given well-documented assimilationist trends, no one should assume that "ease" constitutes a significant factor in the creation and sustaining of a Jewish identity and life. Only identities that involve active choice lead to meaningful engagements with Jewish living. If we only had the Book of Genesis, birth might constitute a sufficient criterion for establishing who is a Jew; but as it is, Torah transcends the mere sum of its parts. Meaning is created, not born. And so it is with each and every Jew. That I am taking direct aim at all theories of identity by descent—maternal or paternal—should be blatant enough. Reform Judaism should rethink its own politics of identity and, in the process, reaffirm its commitment to the more profound insights of Torah.

While the ideology of genealogically-based identity may prove to be increasingly irrelevant to Reform Jews over time, this does not detract at all from the Book of Genesis as a whole. The discrete stories in this book address many core concerns of the human condition beyond that of identity, including faith, justice, destiny, appeasement, dislocation, abandonment, and vulnerability. And these are the concerns with which we will be occupied over the coming weeks.

(1) Genealogies in Genesis occur in the following chapters: all of 5; 6:9–10; all of 10; 11:10–32; 25:1–18; all of 36.

(2) This is my translation. Most published translations use softer idioms that neutralize the crassness of the event. For instance, JPS renders verse 36 as "the two daughters of Lot came to be with child by their father," but "with child" is to my ears quite a bit softer than the literal meaning, "pregnant by."