



Not in Heaven

There is a verse in the book of Deuteronomy that tells us Torah 'is not in the heavens ...' (Deuteronomy 30:12).

I love this verse because it expresses with such clarity that which is unique and special about the Torah. The Torah is not in the heavens; it is not a series of hagiographic portrayals of saintly figures. Our ancestors are deeply compromised individuals.

Abraham almost sacrifices his son Isaac. Sarah sends Hagar and Ishmael out of the camp to die in the wilderness. King David sends his most trusted and beloved commander, Uriah the Hittite, to certain death in order conceal his adulterous acquisition of Bathsheba, his wife.

Jacob, the main character in our last three parshiot, is arguably the most complex of them all. Two weeks ago we learned that Jacob stole his brother's birthright. Last week we found him fleeing Beer-sheba, his home, out of fear of Esau's wrath. On his way to his uncle Laban's family, he finds a place to pass the night. Setting a stone in place for a pillow, alone and afraid he makes a place to sleep. He dreams of angels ascending and descending a stairway to heaven.

This dream of Jacob's is one of the most powerful stories in the Torah and a pivotal moment in the Jacob epic. The power of this dream and our focus on it tends, however, to obscure the fact that just a few verses earlier we read how Jacob destroyed his brother's life by stealing his birthright. How are we to understand this?

Our Rabbis idealised our biblical ancestors. When dealing with their shortcomings they engaged in the theology of apologetics. They held the view that it was not possible to judge their actions the way we would a regular person, since they were agents of a Divine plan. A classic example of this is the way the Rabbis dealt with Jacob and Esau's very difficult relationship. Esau was a hunter and was certainly no Harvard graduate; however, he did not deserve to have his inheritance stolen from him by such trickery.

Initially he swore revenge on Jacob but did he act on this? This week we learn that HE is the one who forgave Jacob. He embraced him, kissed him and offered him gifts. He was the proactive partner in an altruistic act of reconciliation. Jacob, despite all of Esau's generosity, remained

continued over...

*Thank you to the Salamon family for sponsoring the Masorti kiddush.
Thank you to the Gilbert family for sponsoring the Progressive kiddush.*

MAZAL TOV

Jacob Salamon on his **Bar Mitzvah**
(New Sanctuary)

Benjamin Gilbert on his **Bar Mitzvah**
(Heritage Sanctuary)

Michelle & Timothy Rout on the **naming** of their **daughter, Zoe**
(Heritage Sanctuary)

Mikah Lowenstein on her **Bat Mitzvah**
(New Sanctuary)
(minchah)

CANDLE LIGHTING

Friday 7:42pm

Saturday 8:18pm

TORAH (page 198)
Genesis 32:4 - 36:43

HAFTARAH (page 221)
Obadiah 1:1 - 1:21

SHABBAT SERVICES

Erev Shabbat

- 6:15pm Masorti service
(Newweg)
- 6:15pm *Shabbat Live*
(New Sanctuary)

Shabbat Morning

- 9:00am -
Masorti service
(New Sanctuary)
- *Shabbat In The Circle* from 10:00am
(Newweg)
- 10:00am -
Progressive service
(Heritage Sanctuary)

suspicious, refusing his hospitality.

Nevertheless, the Rabbis cast Esau as the arch-villain and enemy of the Jewish people, linking some of the worst antisemites to his seed.

Who is Jacob? Is he a compassionate, wise person or is he a selfish narcissist? We should be concerned about him—for, after all, he is the father of the Jewish people.

Jacob, our forefather: He deceived his brother and stole his birthright; he dreamt of ladders to and from heaven; in this week's parasha he struggles with a Divine Being and, on surviving, is given the new name 'Israel'. Interestingly enough, even after this transformative moment, the Torah oscillates between naming him Israel and reverting to his original name Jacob. This suggests that even after his Divine encounter, his transformation is not really complete.

Who, then, is Jacob? We are troubled by him and at the same time drawn to him. We are drawn to Jacob/Israel in all his complexity because he reminds us of ourselves.

The contradictions and complexities of Jacob/Israel are our own. We have moments of weakness, we pursue our own interests and step over people to gain what we want. Complicated family and social dynamics can lead to hardening of our hearts. We can, however, overcome that which inhibits us and achieve true greatness, like Jacob did.

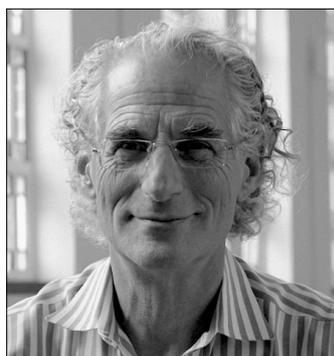
Torah is not 'in the heavens'. It is a compelling, searingly honest description of the human condition. That is its greatest gift to us. May we continue to study it, wrestle with it and through this process gain self-awareness and clarity. After all, we are the people Israel! The ones who, like Jacob, struggle with the complexities of life and who are transformed by the insights gained from that struggle.

Shabbat Shalom,

Cantor George Mordecai

CHANUKAH KABBALAH INSPIRATIONAL EMAILS

From Rabbi Dr. Orna Triguboff during
the eight days of Chanukah
December 22-30
to join please email orna@emanuel.org.au



*Rabbi Jeffrey B. Kamins OAM
Arno & Hella Seefeldt Rabbinic Chair*



Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio



Rabbi Rafi Kaiserblueth



*Rev. Sam Zwarenstein
Director of Communal Engagement*



Cantor George Mordecai



Rabbi Dr Orna Triguboff

WHAT'S ON

Havdallah by the Sea - This Saturday 14 December from 7:00pm

Join Rabbi Dr Orna Triguboff and Cantor George Mordecai for a musical Havdallah under the stars, at Bronte Beach Park, amongst the pine trees close to Bronte Rd.

Conversations about Israel - Monday 10:00am-11:30am

This Monday, Rabbi Kamins will offer a reflection on the complex events that occurred in Israel over the last 12 months. **Please note:** this is the last *Conversations about Israel* session for the year and will resume on Monday 3 February 2020.

Morning Minyan - Mondays and Thursdays at 6:45am (*Neuweg*)

Come along each week for an intimate prayer service, a beautiful way to begin the day with intention and reflection. Please note: the last Morning Minyan for this year will be on Thursday 19 December and will resume on Monday 27 January 2020.

The Lost Princess - Thursday December 19 at 7.15pm

Cantor George Mordecai continues the review of *The Lost Princess*, a deeply insightful story from Rabbi Nahman, incorporating music and meditation.

Film presented with Plus61J:

Turn Left at the End of the World

18 December from 7:00pm

A group of families emigrates from India to Israel in the late sixties, seeking a better life in what they believe to be the first outpost of the West in Asia.

Book now: emanuel.org.au/event/turn-left



By popular demand!

Shabbat Live by the Sea

**20th December from 6:15pm
South end of Bondi Park**

Join us for the final *Shabbat Live* of the year as we bring in Shabbat under the stars.

Chanukah at the Beach

**Sunday 29th December from
4:00pm to 7:00pm**

Meet at Parsley Bay Beach.

Fun for all the family!

Bring a picnic dinner. We'll supply the sufganiyot!

IN MEMORY

There are mourners in our community to whom we extend our sincerest sympathies on the death of their loved ones.

Shiva: Gizela (Genia) Gottlieb

Shloshim: Cheyne Kuntsler, Alex Lips, Professor Colin Tatz, Nechama Miller,
Lorraine Lambert, Surica (Rica) Lichtenstein, Myrl Bear, Leslie Marcus

This week we observe the Yahrzeits of (observed by):

* Memorial Light

* **Madge Abbott** (Coral Lawrence)
Yaakov Ben Chaim (Hilary Katzeff)
Annette Camden-Smith
(Stephen Camden-Smith)
Irene Culshaw (Stephen Koder)
June Debruin (Vivienne Nabarro)
Hessel Elstein (Caren Bettman)
Isaac Errera (Lili Errera)
Roger Feitelberg (Kim Levinsohn)
Itzak Flakowicz (Iska Coutts)
Louis Franklin Freed (Edgar Freed)
Rosalie Goldstuck (Jennifer Smith)
Dorothy Gottlieb (Thomas Gottlieb)
Samuel Kahn (Jeremy Kahn)
Ziporah Kaplan (Reeva Schindler)
Ruth Kedzier (Dana Kedzier)
Hymie Kolt (Gregory Kolt)
Szymon Krygier (Doris Cope-Krygier)
Anne Landa (Sophie Landa, John Sharpe)
Eva Linton (George Linton)
* **Michael Lyons** (Michelle Lyons-Zwarenstein)
Desmond Macklin (Brett Macklin)
Alfred Maehrischel (Suzy Wolanski)
Barbel Markowitz (Rony Bogнар,
Lea Friedlander)
* **Rose Marks** (Wesley Browne)
Bernhard Morgenstern (Toni Kleiner)
* **George Myers**
Andor Oblath (Edith Simon)
Abraham Rodgim (Rosalind Ihaka)
Chaim Rosenstrauss (Susanne Martin)
Lorraine Rubner (Steve Rubner)

Harry Segal (John Segal)
Dveira Shneidman (Yakov Shneidman)
Bernice Singer (Michelle Favero)
Danny Slade (Marty Cowen, Alan Slade)
Rachel (Chelly) Slade (Marty Cowen,
Alan Slade)
Miriam Weiss (Sylvia Stricker)
Sadie Wilson (Barbara Holmes)
Andrew Winter (Robert Winter)
Alfred Witkowski (Barbara Simon)
* **Rebecca Zeichik**

Shoah Remembrance: Gabriel Druckman was born in Kutu, Poland in 1913 and lived there until he was murdered in 1943 in Bukovina, Romania during the Holocaust.