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The New Year is upon us, and as is customary, we look back at what has been happening in our world, what we have achieved, what could be improved on. As we take stock of ourselves we also pause and contemplate where the future is taking us, here in our community, in our centres of learning and, importantly, in the Land of Israel.

Our thoughts and prayers go to the Regev and Goldwasser families, whom we remembered at Pesach and whose hopes for the liberation of their sons were cruelly dashed not so long ago. Our thoughts and prayers go to the Shalit family that they should be reunited with their son in the not too distant future. And our thoughts go to those who are in the forefront of the struggle for justice for the Jewish cause and for recognition that the future of Israel is inextricably linked to the future of the Jewish people wherever in the world they may be.

L'SHANA TOVA TIKATEVU

Anna Rosenbaum

It gives me great pleasure as President of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies to send you warm greetings and best wishes for a happy Jewish New Year.

It is my wish that the New Year brings prosperity, quiet and true peace amongst all peoples and that you all have a year of good health and accomplishments.

Your participation and support of the AAJS is tremendously important and we look forward to your continued encouragement and contribution.

With the blessing of a happy and sweet New Year, I wish all our Jewish members and readers well over the Fast.



Shana tova and hatima tova.

Dvir Abramovich

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I take great pleasure in presenting this 2007-2008 report as President of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies.

This year has been a busy one for the AAJS on various fronts. In March Suzanne Rutland and I participated in a discussion about the newly formed Australian Independent Jewish Voices on ABC's *Australia All Over*. Later this year, the AAJS will be publishing an edited collection of essays titled '*Analysing Testimonies of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*'.

Of particular salience is the inclusion of the Australian Journal of Jewish studies in several full text databases such as EBSCO publishing. Such inclusion further broadens the reach of our publication and fits strongly within my goal of expanding the network of relationships the AAJS maintains with other institutions and associations. As a matter of fact, the number of enquiries from colleagues within Australia and abroad interested in joining the association and attending our gatherings has increased considerably.

The AAJS continues to thrive because of an enthusiastic and loyal group of executive members who take time from their demanding schedules to add value to our mission. Their collegiality, sense of shared enterprise and valuable input have propelled the AAJS forward.

Once again, the annual AAJS conference, this year entitled "*A people that dwells apart?*" *Exploring the boundaries of Jewishness*, serves as the focal point of the Association's activities. I am sure you will agree that the choice of topic is very timely and will be of interest to a wide cross section of the public.

I am enormously delighted that such an impressive cadre of local and international academics will be presenting at this multidisciplinary conference and will be sharing their insights and the fruits of their scholarship. I am certain that the papers delivered will enlighten us and stimulate a tremendous amount of debate, analysis and intellectual discourse. I am likewise convinced that this forum will give post graduate students exposure and feedback on their research.

In this connection, I would like to first and foremost record my thanks to the conference convenor, Dr. Michael Fagenblat. Michael has done a superb job in organizing the conference and has spent many months in ensuring that all matters are handled professionally. The variety and calibre of papers is a testament to his efforts. Michael was given administrative assistance by Gillian Brameld from the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation.

I must also add, gratefully, our debt of gratitude to the various co-sponsors whose support has made this conference possible

Special thanks are also in order to our dedicated Honorary Treasurer and Secretary, Sister Dr. Marianne Dacy who does an outstanding job in a very exacting role. This year, Marianne deservedly received the Sigmund Sternberg Award for her contribution to the interfaith movement in Australia and overseas.

Allow me also to express my thanks to Suzanne Faigan, who maintains the AAJS website and to Anna Rosenbaum who edits the AAJS newsletter. Both the website and the newsletter are instrumental in enabling the AAJS to keep its members informed about the wide spectrum of activities, news and events taking place within the Jewish Studies departments and centres in Australia.

Thanks are also due to Associate Professor Ziva Shavitsky, who is my co-editor of the Australian Journal of Jewish Studies. In addition to the annual conference, the peer-reviewed journal represents a key dimension of the AAJS. The 2007 edition will include a range of new contributors from around the world, underscoring the high academic standing and repute in which the journal is held. A pivotal part of the team is Lucy Davey who works tirelessly in typesetting and formatting the journal

You will want to join me in conveying our warmest congratulations to Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland for being awarded an OAM for services to Jewish education and to the promotion of interfaith relations. This is indeed a great accomplishment. I hope that Suzanne, who is a past President of this Association, will continue serving the community for many more years to come.

This year we farewell our Victorian Vice-President Associate Professor Danny Ben Moshe. Danny has served the Association with distinction over the last two years. I thank Danny for his contribution and look forward to his involvement in other capacities in the future.

I welcome on board our new incoming Victorian Vice-President Dr. Gideon Reuveni. Gideon is the Modern Jewish and European history lecturer at the Centre for Jewish History and Culture at The University of Melbourne. Gideon was a research fellow at University of Munich and at the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig. He served as the George L. Mosse Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and held the prestigious Yad Hanadiv, Beracha Foundation Fellowship. He is the author of *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (2006) and has edited two other books on Jews and sports.

Let me close by wishing all participants of the conference success in their academic endeavours and an enjoyable two days. I look forward to the lively discussions that will ensue and hope to see you all again next year.

I'm extremely proud of what the Australian Association for Jewish Studies has achieved, and am confident that the coming year will be a prosperous and enriching one for the association.

Dvir Abramovich
President

2008 Pratt Oration: Professor David Ruderman



The University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney were honoured in August of this year by the visit of David B. Ruderman, the Joseph Meyerhoff Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Pennsylvania and the Director of the University's Centre for Advanced Judaic Studies. Born in New York in 1944, Professor Ruderman was ordained rabbi in 1971 at the Hebrew Union College in New York and then devoted himself to his doctoral studies. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1975 at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he currently teaches. He is also the past president of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

An author on many books on Jewish history, culture and philosophy, Professor Ruderman stands at the forefront of advancing interaction between universities and Jewish communities, focusing on dialogues between cultures, gaining knowledge and striving for the achievement of tolerance between various communities and religious groups through education.

His efforts, however, are predominantly devoted to the study and promotion of Jewish intellectual life from the Middle Ages to the modern era by concentrating on achievements attained by Jewish scholars who stood at the cradle of the emerging intellectual enquiry in Renaissance Europe and during the Age of Enlightenment.

Professor Ruderman's lecture on *The People and the Book: The Invention of Printing and Transformation of Jewish Culture* presented at the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney in August was the Richard Pratt Oration for 2008. It was a showcase of distinction in teaching and excellence in research of Jewish topics to which he devoted his academic career.

Our thanks go to the Richard Pratt Foundation for supporting this outstanding scholar.

Visit of Professor Benny Morris: Renowned Israeli analyst

A Collaborative Endeavour

On Changing History – the Past and Future of the Arab-Israel conflict.

In late September Professor Benny Morris is briefly visiting Melbourne and Sydney where he will be giving lectures – at Monash University in Melbourne (14 September) and in Sydney a public lecture at the Central Synagogue (18 September) and one at the University of Sydney (19 September).

Professor Morris, born in 1948 in Kibbutz Ein HaHoresh of British Jewish migrants, received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. A former foreign correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, he became disillusioned with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and in the 1980s refused to perform his military duties in that region, an act that carried a jail sentence for him. He is, at present, professor of history at Ben-Gurion University in Be'er Sheva.



Professor Morris' work is highly controversial due to his unorthodox views on the Middle East conflict, beginning with the War of Independence in 1948 up to the present. The focus of his research is the history of the Palestinian refugee problem which differs in its interpretation to that of Israeli historians. However, the controversy his views generated does not mean that his views had been accepted by both Israeli and Jewish revisionists, nor Palestinian historians.

In his search for the roots of the Israel-Palestinian problem, Professor Morris' views had evolved after the eruption of the second intifada in 2000 and brought about a change of his position towards the issue, as well as a fresh review of both the historical and current situation in the Middle East. Throughout his career he has debated historical issues and has been at the centre of controversy about the reasons for the failure of the Oslo peace process.

George Weisz

In the Special Pesach issue of the Newsletter I have written about the exhibition on Nazi Medicine which was inaugurated at the Sydney Jewish Museum in autumn of this year and which was organized by Dr. George Weisz, a Sydney orthopaedic surgeon. Due its great success the exhibition, which was seen by thousands of visitors, was extended to 13 July. The exhibition will soon open in Melbourne and a smaller version of the exhibition had just opened in the foyer of the library of the University of New South Wales.

Dr Weisz has also been active in presenting lectures not only at the Sydney Jewish Museum but also in other venues in Sydney, in Melbourne and in country New South Wales. Apart from that he has been giving lectures to post-graduate students of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney last year and in September of this year as part of the lecture series *Holocaust: A Context of Health* at Mandelbaum House.

His lecture on Thursday, 11 September 2008, entitled *Medicine at the Edge of Death – Medical Research in Warsaw Ghetto*, dealt with the heroic struggle of Jewish doctors to save lives under horrendous conditions in the ghetto environment. Not only that, when studying the topic, Dr. Weisz's brought to the surface material documenting research secretly undertaken by Jewish medical practitioners in the ghetto. The results which, survived the war, are nothing short of astonishing.

The second lecture to be presented by Dr. Weisz, *Holocaust by Food Poisoning – The Case of Transnistria*, deals with another topic, this time relating to the crimes against humanity. Dr. Weisz will document the intentional intoxication of inmates of the Vapniarka concentration camp in Transnistria, an area in the Ukraine between the rivers Bug and Nistra. Half a million Jews, including 170,000 deported from Rumania, were systematically murdered by Rumanian military personnel under SS Einsatzgruppen guidance, not only by mass executions but also by the poisoning of their meagre bread rations with grass or chickling pea, an agent causing paralysis and death. The Vapniarka camp in occupied Transnistria brought to light what Dr. Weisz called "Holocaust by food intoxication".

The lecture which should be of interest to both students and the general public will take place on Thursday 18 September 2008 between 5 – 7 pm at Mandelbaum House.

Launch of Exhibition and Catalogue: *Nationality Stateless: Destination Australia*

Co-authored by Suzanne D. Rutland and Sarah Rood
Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne 3 August 2008

She is twenty-six. A dressmaker. A typewritten address, 'Azbergerlager', has been crossed out and 'Rothschild Hosp' scrawled over the top. Her nationality, stateless. Her destination, Australia. She is accompanied by her husband.

He is seventeen. A student. His address is also Rothschild Hospital, but unlike her, he is accompanied by no-one. His nationality, stateless. His destination, Australia.

So read two index cards completed by staff of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee at the Rothschild Hospital in Vienna, in late 1949. Originally intended to house a maximum of 750 people, the hospital became a crowded haven for 4,500 Jews who fled Eastern Europe after the war. It was one of many Displaced Persons (DP) camps across Europe. Refugees arrived ill, exhausted, and broken, often in desperate need of medical care and rest. Most significantly, they arrived stateless, without a home. (p.11)



The *Johan de Witt*, which arrived in Sydney in March 1947 with 600 Jewish survivors, the largest group to immigrate to Australia in the postwar years.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (known then as the Joint) – a major welfare organisation established in 1914 to provide relief and aid for Jews suffering the results of political upheaval and turmoil in various parts of the world – staffed the Rothschild Hospital. After the Holocaust, the Joint field workers assumed the responsibility of caring for the war refugees after the Holocaust. The activities of the Joint were not limited to the Rothschild Hospital. Joint staff members were

dispersed throughout war-torn Europe, working desperately to provide aid, rehabilitation, and assistance to over 700,000 Jews affected by the horrors of the Holocaust. More than 250,000 of them were residents of Joint-run DP camps.

One of the major roles of the Joint was to find permanent homes for the residents of the DP camps. It played a pivotal role in agitating for countries around the world to open their doors to Jewish war refugees. It was around this time that the Joint began to reconnect with welfare organisations in Australia – surely Australia could provide a haven for the Jewish stateless ?



Book cover of: *Nationality Stateless: Destination Australia*

Links between the Australian Jewish community and the Joint had been established in before the war 1938. In its usual way, rather than establishing a branch of the Joint in Australia, the Joint instead provided funding to existing Jewish welfare organisations to support their activities on the ground. Helping to build a sustainable, self-sufficient social welfare infrastructure was essential for the Joint. It hoped that by assisting existing welfare organisations in key times of need, effective, strong, and lasting social welfare networks would be established that would eventually become self-sustaining.

However, this policy of working quietly behind the scenes, meant that the role played by the Joint in building Australian Jewry in the post-war period was largely forgotten.

In 2005 Associate Professor Suzanne D. Rutland researched the files of both the Joint and the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) in both New York and Jerusalem to reveal this story. The exhibition in Melbourne, curated by Sarah Rood, a professional historian who runs a company called 'Way Back When', and the book co-authored by Rutland and Rood, are products of this research. In addition to the launch of the exhibition at the Jewish Museum of Australia, a major community function was held at the Melbourne Holocaust Centre in Elsternwick on Wednesday 7 August, attended by 200 survivors and their families. **Suzanne Rutland**

TWO EVENTS TO NOTE IN YOUR DIARY

BOOK LAUNCH

WHERE: SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM

WHEN: SUNDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 6 PM

The Memory of the Holocaust, edited by Dr. Tom Lawson and Dr. James Jordan, a collection of essays that deals with the development of Holocaust memory in Australia since 1945. This book brings together the work of younger and established scholars providing a variety of different disciplinary perspectives from history through to literary, cultural and museum studies. Contributors included Professor Konrad Kwiet, Associate Professor Suzanne D. Rutland OAM, Dr. Sharon Kangisser Cohen, Amelia Klein and Avril Alba.

The book will be launched by Professor Robert Aldrich, Head of the Department of History at the University of Sydney.

AAJS Annual Conference February 13-15, 2009 Shalom College Thinking Jewish. Jewish Thinking

The **twenty-first** AAJS Conference promises to be a stimulating exchange of scholarship and ideas, having attracted scholars from around Australia and all corners of the globe. Papers will cover many aspects of Jewish thinking and thinkers, including Moses Mendelsohn, Moses Maimonides, Kafka, Spinoza and the challenge of modernity. Topics covered will be wide-ranging, from the Biblical and Second Temple periods, to the languages and culture of the Diaspora, Israel, antisemitism and the Shoah.

Speakers will include Rabbi Raymond Apple, Professor Bill Rubinstein, A/Prof Ozlem Firtina, Prof Uri Zur and A/Prof Suzanne Rutland. The conference, to be held at Shalom College at the University of NSW, is certain to be both informative and to provoke lively discussion.



[Moses Mendelssohn \(Jüdisches Museum Berlin\)](#)
(From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository)

Registration : \$130 for 2 days \$80 for one day (includes lunch and morning and afternoon teas). \$25 for single sessions. Student rate to be offered.

Membership fees to be paid in conjunction with conference fees at registration.

Accommodation for overseas and interstate participants will be available at Shalom College.

Visit www.shalom.edu.au for details.

More details on how to register will be featured in the next newsletter.

PORTRAIT
ROSS HALPIN, POST-GRADUATE STUDENT OF HOLOCAUST STUDIES,
DEPARTMENT OF HEBREW, BIBLICAL AND JEWISH STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

This year I have completed a MA Research degree under the supervision of Professor Konrad Kwiet of The Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, University of Sydney. The title of the thesis is "A History of Concern: The ethical dilemma of using Nazi research data in contemporary medical and scientific research." The methodology involved a critical analysis of past and present literature by eminent Holocaust historians, ethicists and physicians and an oral history that involved the participation of 32 physicians and ethicists from Australia, Germany, Israel, South Africa, UK, USA and Canada.

The issue is complex and emotive and this is reflected in both the literature critique and oral history for there is a specific divide between those who would use the data and those who would not put the data to use. If one measured the response in terms of numbers, that is quantified the arguments for and against the majority would use the data. However my argument is the issue is not about numbers. It is about science and ethics. Robert Berger carried out a comprehensive analysis of the hypothermia experiments and reported the scientific method was flawed, the experiments were unethical and the actions of the doctors in carrying out the experiments were cruel and murderous. There has been no rebuttal of these findings. Even those scientists who have used the data, such as Pozos and Heywood, acknowledge that the experiments were unethical and the methodology was unscientific. Thus, my argument is that there is no ethical dilemma. The data should never have been or should be used or cited.

The participants in the oral study expressed a similar view as that from the literature critique: the majority stating the data should be used even though it was obtained by unethical means. The majority argued that despite the suffering of the victims, including the pain, torture and death of children, they would use the data if it would or may save a life. It was clear from the study that the Hippocratic Oath took precedence over a medical code of ethics such as the Nuremberg Code of Medical Ethics or the Act of Helsinki.

This leads us to the question of why a code of ethics? The actions of the past tell us there are two reasons. First, to protect the individual and second to protect the researcher from doing harm in the name of science.

Office Bearers

President: Dr Dvir Abramovich Secretary/ Treasurer Dr Marianne Dacy
Vice-presidents: Dr Gideon Reuveni (VIC);
Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod (NSW)
Journal Editors: A/Prof Ziva Shavitsky & Dr Dvir Abramovich

REMINDER

Have you paid your membership subscription for 2008 or even 2007? Now it is time to pay for 2008,if you have not paid, yet. More than ever, our Association depends on members' support. In 2009 we will raising the fees to reflect increasing costs, but for the rest of 2008, the fees are the same. Pay Pal is in the process of being set up. Please go to the website for an update.

2008	\$50 AU regular membership	2009	\$60AU
	\$60 AU institutional		\$80AU
	\$60 overseas		\$70AU
	\$15 AU full-time student/pensioner		\$25AU

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See us at: www.geocities.com/aajssite/ and
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Newsletter edited by Anna Rosenbaum and Marianne Dacy