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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the editorial of the December issue of Newsletter No. 39, I reflected upon the passing of the year and where we, as Jews, stood in the world at that point in time. Needless to say, my wishful thinking that things might perhaps improve in the future, remains under lock and key somewhere in the realm of shadow dreams. If nothing, the situation of the Jewish people has advanced further down the path of dread. No prizes for guessing why this is so. Israel's response to relentless aggression on the part of Hamas brought upon us the wrath of the world. Moreover, the antisemitism fest which will take place in Geneva next month threatens to be an even more virulent reproduction of Durban I. It would thus seem that our efforts to gain a rightful place amongst nations of the world, with dignity and respect that is due to us, will continue to be wrought with difficulties.

When all this is happening, it is no wonder that we strive to take pride in our resilience. The annual conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies, which took place last month in Sydney, was a showcase of what we have done and what we are determined to achieve. The conference, the theme of which was *Thinking Jewish – Jewish Thinking*, opened up a vast panorama of intellectual enquiry, of academic achievements, of educational activities, exploration of historical issues, of Holocaust issues in the light of new discoveries, as well as biblical, linguistic, feminist, literary and interfaith topics. It brought out the best of what we can offer to ourselves and to the world that surrounds us. It was not only a conference of Jewish thinking, it was a conference of thinking in depth about the purpose and circumstances of our presence in this world. We can hold our heads high – what we have we share and we can account for it. We are here with what we stand for.

Anna Rosenbaum

Australian Jewish thinking comes of Age. Association holds twenty- first conference

15-16 February 2009, at the Eric Caspary Centre, Shalom College.

In her opening address on whether there is a unique Jewish way of thinking



Rachael Kohn answered in the affirmative, citing the Jewish tradition's unique acceptance of legal (halachic) mystical and rational thinking, from very early in its formation. Beginning with a quote by the late eminent Rabbi Emanuel Rackmann, who held that uncertainty, doubt and humility was characteristic of Judaism, which abhors fanaticism, Dr. Kohn surveyed the history of Jewish thought showing how the acceptance of scientific discoveries was consistent with a belief in the Torah.

Papers were presented on a variety of topics on the theme: *Thinking Jewish-Jewish thinking*. Areas examined included new thinking about the Shoah, definitions of Jewish thinking, Jewish intellectuals and their originality and the uniqueness of Jewish thinking. Zionism and education also featured and language studies.



L-R Peta Jones-Pellach and Melanie Landau



Dr Mark Baker Peta and lunchtime speaker

**Dr Dvir Abramovich
at podium**

Professor William Rubinstein, now teaching at the University of Wales and a foundation member of the Association in 1987, gave a paper on "The Jewish mind: contrasts and Decline". Some papers tackled the subject from a literary point of view. Thus Dr Dvir Abramovich, the association's president and co- editor of the journal (with Prof Ziva Shavitsky) spoke on Generation X and the Holocaust: Atgar Keret's Shoah Stories, while Dr Ozlem Firtina from Gazi University in Turkey presented "Franz Kafka and Ilse Aichinger: A comparison regarding Jewish identity". Papers on biblical themes included Sydney University's Dr Yael Abrahami's "Names in the Bible as a clue to Jewish identity" while Simon Holloway spoke on "Conceptions of the Other in the Book of Nehemiah". Dr Mark Baker presented: "Compassion as a Halachich Category: The Case of Agunot in the Nineteenth Century". Professor Sol Encel and A/Prof Suzanne spoke on "My Son the Doctor, My Son the Lawyer", while Rabbi Raymond Apple explained what Maimonides left



out of his thirteen principles. **Professor Hans Lausch**, in the same session spoke on Moses Mendelssohn. Peta Jones-Pellach and Dr Julie Kalman (joint conference convenors) are to be congratulated for such a stimulating conference that allowed for a rich exchange of ideas on very wide ranging topics.



**Pro Pao Wang (Taiwan) & Discussion over lunch
Prof Bill Rubinstein**



**Dr Ozlem Firtina
(Ankara)**

If you should like to join the Association, take a look at the website at <http://www.geocities.com/aajssite>. The association publishes a journal each year and four bulletins are emailed to members and interested persons.

Marianne Dacy

ONLINE LAUNCH OF UNPRECEDENTED RESOURCE

Jewish Women's Archive Gives Free, Global Access to Encyclopedia of Jewish Women

The Jewish Women's Archive (JWA) announces the launch of the first comprehensive online source of Jewish women. On March 1, 2009, ***Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*** -- which includes over 1,700 biographies, 300 thematic essays, and 1,400 photographs and illustrations -- went live on JWA's website, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>.

"Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia represents a huge advance for the fields of history and women's studies," said Gail Reimer, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Jewish Women's Archive. The *Encyclopedia*, first published in 2006 by Alice and Moshe Shalvi of Shalvi Publishing Ltd., and edited by Paula Hyman of Yale University and Dalia Ofer of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was previously available only on CD-ROM. Reimer notes, "In its CD-ROM form, the *Encyclopedia* was expensive and not widely accessible, so we are delighted to make this important resource available online and usable at no cost. We've taken history out of the locked vaults of physical repositories and put it into the hands of Internet users all over the world."

Reviewers hailed the CD-ROM version for its easy navigation and for the wealth of information it contains. The online edition has an improved user interface, which provides thematic and visual links and extensive cross-references, along with many new Web 2.0 features, including the ability for users to discuss and update current biographies and to submit new ones.

The *Encyclopedia* contains content from over 1,000 independent scholars on a wide range of Jewish women through the centuries--from Gertrude Berg to Gertrude Stein; Hannah Greenbaum

Solomon to Hannah Arendt; the Biblical Ruth to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Suzanne Rutland wrote the entry on Australian Jewish women. The *Encyclopedia* is an invaluable resource for students, educators, researchers, and the general public.

Gloria Steinem praised the *Encyclopedia* as "user-friendly and thoughtfully compiled, as much a joy for the casual browser as for those who come with a purpose. Whether you are a scholar in search of the past, a journalist in need of facts in the present, or a young Jewish girl looking for role models for dreams of the future, the encyclopedia is a treasure-trove."

The mission of the Jewish Women's Archive (JWA) is to uncover, chronicle, and transmit to a broad public the rich history of North American Jewish women. A national non-profit organization founded in 1995 and headquartered in Brookline, Massachusetts, JWA disseminates educational materials, conducts original research, hosts public programs, and maintains an innovative website. Through web exhibits, online collection projects, and oral histories, JWA shares the stories, struggles, and achievements of North American Jewish women spanning many generations. In 2007, JWA produced the film [Making Trouble](#), a prize-winning documentary about three generations of Jewish women in comedy, from Molly Picon to Gilda Radner.

A/Prof Suzanne Rutland

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT MONASH UNIVERSITY

- To honour the memory of Roslyn Smorgon AM, who passed away in January 2008, Monash University has established

THE ROSLYN SMORGON PROGRAM IN JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

This program aims to bring the best of academic research and training to a reflective engagement with the community. Students will be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and experience including but not limited to professional staff and lay leadership of communal organizations and synagogues, fundraisers, museum volunteers and people involved in all facets of Jewish community work.

Students will gain a deepened understanding of Jewish life and experience in Australia and the challenges and opportunities that face the community. Learning will be enhanced through an examination of

the Australian Jewish community in the context of other ethnic communities in Australia and other diasporic Jewish communities.

This new graduate program is coordinated by Melanie Landau, lecturer and community educator at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, she has diverse interests including facilitating personal and group processes as well as creating community. She teaches in Jewish Law and Judaism and Gender and is currently completing her Ph.D. which addresses an analysis of the acquisition inherent in traditional Jewish marriage.

- **Research Seminar in Jewish Studies**

The Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University is presenting an exciting Research Seminar in Jewish Studies in the first semester of 2009. The courses will be presented by Fania Oz-Salzberger, Leah Garrett, Dalia Ofer, Melanie Landau, Omer Bartov and Gideon Reuveni, distinguished academics in the field in the study of Jewish humanities. They touch upon the cornerstone of Jewish civilisation and education:

Social Justice and the Right of the People: The Seventeenth Century Reads the Hebrew Bible (F. Oz-Salzberger)

Rewriting the Canon: Jewish American Literature (L. Garrett)

The Contribution of Gender Analysis to Holocaust Research (D. Ofer)

Rabbinic Presumptions about Men's Sexual Intentions (M. Landau).

Testimonies as Historical Documents: A View from Below of the Holocaust (Omer Bartov).

Jews and Consumerism (G. Reuveni).

These seminars offer a challenge to students whose aim is to deepen their understanding of the intricacy of Jewish scholarship.

Please note Sushi lunch will be served.

- **Postgraduate Workshops on how to get publications.**

Newly appointed professor at the Monash University Centre of Jewish Civilisation, Professor Leah Garrett, is running two workshops on how to get essays published in American and European academic journals. The seminars will discuss:



Prof Leah Garrett

What type of essays are appropriate for academic journals
How to write an academic CV to submit to journals
How to write a cover letter for a journal submission
How to find the appropriate journal
The hazards to watch out for in submissions.

Dr Garrett will evaluate journal submissions for the top literary studies journal, *Comparative Literature*, as well as manuscript submissions for Yale University Press.

Leah Garrett is the Loti Smorgon Research Chair of Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture at Monash University. She has published extensively in the field of Jewish literature, including two books on Yiddish literature. Her current work focuses on Jewish appropriations of Richard Wagner's operas. She recently relocated to Melbourne, with her family, from the United States.

• **Ari Ofengenden: Newly appointed Post-doctoral Fellow**

In Semester II at Monash University, Dr Ofengenden is offering a new course entitled 'Israel: Vision and Reality', which examines the history, politics and society of modern Israel from the early days of the Zionist movement to the beginning of the 21st century. Main topics include the varieties of Zionist ideology and practice, pre-independence Jewish society, the history of Jewish-Arab conflicts, constitutional and legal history of the State of Israel, and the growth of modern Israeli society. The course will look at issues of identity, cultural coherence and variety, social divisions along national, ethnic, political and religious lines, Israel's international standing, and the common denominators of Israeli polity and society.



Dr Ari Ofengenden

Ari Ofengenden has a Ph.D in Hebrew literature from Haifa University, has lectured in Tuebingen University in the department for Protestant studies, and has worked as a research fellow at the Center of Ethics in the Sciences in Tuebingen University. He will be teaching at Monash University as a lecturer in Israel studies at the Jewish civilization department from 2009.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

The Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney presents an outstanding series of seminars within the context of 'Holocaust Research: Trends and Problems'. Coordinated by Professor Konrad Kwiet, the subjects to be presented will include

The Current Stage of Holocaust Research

Holocaust Research in Israel I

Australia and Holocaust Memory

Israelis and Holocaust Memory

Holocaust Research in Israel II – Ghetto – Motherhood – Bulgaria

The Australian War Crimes Debate

Guilt and Accountability in Post-War Court in Czortkow and Bucacz, East Galicia as seen in West German Legal Discourse

Genocide in World History

Research on Perpetrators

Empire, Colony and Genocide

The seminars will be conducted by Associate Professor Suzanne D. Rutland, Head of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, University of Sydney, Professor Konrad Kwiet, Roth Professor of Holocaust Studies, Dr. Dirk Moses, Senior Lecturer, History Department, University of Sydney, Professor Omer Bartov, Brown University, USA and Professor Dalia Offer, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

The Seminars are regarded as Master Classes. They will be publicised to attract a wider audience, in particular BA Honours students and postgraduates from other universities.

2009 MANDELBAUM HOUSE PROGRAM

Mandelbaum House at the University of Sydney is offering a series of fascinating lectures. In March 2009, Dalia Ofer, the Max and Rita Haber Professor of Holocaust Studies at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Mandelbaum Scholar presented a series of lectures, which examined the role of women in recent Jewish history and in present times. She covered a series of challenging topics, including Women and Family during the Holocaust and in its Aftermath (22 March); Women in Zionism, the Yishuv (Palestine) and Israel (March 29); and Women Immigrants in Israel: Agents of change or Keepers of Tradition (5 April)

Later in the year Mandelbaum will host two other scholars: Dr. Alan Unterman in August and September and Professor Graham Auld in October.

New Books by Members:

- Ghil'ad ZUCKERMANN:

Israelit Safa Yafa (Israeli, a Beautiful language: Hebrew as Myth), Am Oved, 2008.

Fascinating and multifaceted, Israeli (Zuckermann 1999, a.k.a. 'Modern Hebrew'), the language which emerged in Eretz Israel at the end of the nineteenth century, possesses distinctive socio-historical characteristics such as the lack of a continuous chain of native speakers from spoken Hebrew to Israeli, the non-Semitic mother tongues spoken by the revivalists, and the European impact on literary Hebrew. Consequently, it presents the linguist with a unique laboratory in which to examine a wider set of theoretical problems concerning language genesis, social issues like language and politics, and practical matters, e.g. whether it is possible to revive a no-longer spoken language. The multisourced nature of Israeli and the role of the Congruence Principle and the Founder Principle in its genesis have implications for historical linguistics, language planning and the study of language, culture and identity.

A promotional poster for Limmud-Oz 2009. The top half features the event title 'Limmud-Oz' in a stylized red and blue font, with 'celebrating Jewish Life' below it. A small green tree icon with 'AUSTRALIAN MADE' written below it is positioned between the words 'celebrating' and 'Jewish'. The event dates and location, 'June 6-8 2009 Queen's Birthday Weekend, University of NSW', are listed in bold black text. Below this, the text 'Seeking educators, performers, experts and enthusiasts in any Jewish field.' is written in red. Further down, it says 'Register now to present at Limmud-Oz 2009. Be part of our celebration of Jewish life. Anyone can be a teacher – register now at www.limmudoz.com.au'. The bottom section of the poster, on a dark red background, provides contact information: 'p 9931 9660', 'e limmud@shalom.edu.au', and 'www.limmudoz.com.au'. To the right of this contact info is the 'encounters @ shalom' logo, which includes a stylized book icon and the words 'engage explore connect'.

Book Award

- *What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice*, edited by Roberta Goodman, Paul Flexner and Linda Bloomberg, received a 2008 National Jewish Book Award in the USA for the category of education and Jewish identity.

Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland contributed the chapter to on Australian Jewish schooling.

BENEFACTOR MEMBER CATEGORY

The Australian Association of Jewish Studies has always operated on a shoe string basis, but this lack of funding really limits what we are able to achieve as an association. Following the pleas by our president, Dr Dvir Abramovich, we have decided to add a new membership category for Benefactor members, with a contribution of \$250, rather than the usual \$60 membership.

Please consider becoming a benefactor member of the association. It will help to put us on a much better financial footing.

22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

PLANS ARE UNDERWAY TO HOLD OUR NEXT CONFERENCE AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, CANBERRA. THE DATES OF THE CONFERENCE WILL BY **14-15 FEBRUARY 2010**. WE WILL SHORTLY BE DISTRIBUTING THE CALL FOR PAPERS. PLEASE WATCH THIS SPACE.

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH STUDIES
MEMBERSHIP Fees for 2009**

MEMBERSHIP FEES for the Australian Association for Jewish Studies (ABN 16535824946) are current from 1 January 2009–31 December 2009 (include the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually (towards end of current year), AAJS Newsletter, book discounts, and discounted registration fee for the AAJS annual February conference)

Fees for 2009

- Benefactor : \$250
- Regular: \$60 (Aus)
- Pensioner/ Full-time Student: \$25 (Aus)
- Institutional: \$70 (Aus)
- Overseas: \$80 (Aus)

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Post your cheque to the above address.

Access: <http://www.geocities.com/ajssite/AAJSMembership.htm> for Pay Pal.