

Newsletter No

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Australian Association of Jewish Studies

Contents

Editorial

Report on 2013 Conference in Sydney *Jewish Language, Jewish Culture: The Shaping of Jewish Civilization.*

Call for Papers for AAJS Conference in Adelaide—*Jews, Judaism and Hybridity*

Honour to Marianne Dacy

The Czechs and their Neighbours

Visit to Central America

Report on Conference at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

Membership

Editorial



Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod

Pesach Sameah!



ביצה
 בשר מבושיל
 מרור
 בשר עליו
 מצות
 חרוסת
 כרפס
 סדר הקערה
 כדעת
 מהר"י זצוק"ל

Report on the 25th AAJS Conference 2013 *Jewish Language, Jewish Culture: The Shaping of Jewish Civilization.*



1. Kim Cunio and Heather Lee.
Kim is playing the psalterium.
2. L-R. Professor Tony Lovell, Suzanne Rutland and Zehavit Gross



3. L-R. Shaun Sidky, ? Navra Aafreedi
4. L-R Neta Steigrad, Navra Jaat Aafreedi and Avril Alba

The 25th Annual Conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies was held in Sydney on 10-11 Feb 2013. The conference, which proved to be an outstanding success was co convened by Neta Steigrad and Prof Suzanne Rutland with help from Dr Anna Hueneke. Conference delegates debated and exchanged ideas on a range of topics that fell within the conference theme of *Jewish Language, Jewish Culture: The Shaping of Jewish Civilization*. As one participant said, “Everything was able to be discussed. There was no ‘no go’ zone.” The first day of the conference was held at the Sydney Jewish Museum concluding with the haunting strains of Heather Lee and Kim Cunio who demonstrated Sephardi and Mizrachi music. Over the course of a riveting few minutes, they played and sang melodious extracts from their settings from texts including the Dead Sea Scrolls. In ‘Apostrophe to Zion’ (a psalm not found in the Bible but in Qumran), they utilised several instruments from medieval and early music such as the oud and the triangular psaltery, a medieval Western instrument that is a close relation of the *asor* (harp) in the bible. The hurdy gurdy, a rare medieval instrument played by bowing a wheel, was also used to accompany a secular Ladino repertoire.

The second day was held at the University of Sydney and finished on a joyful note, with the paper on “Dancing moments” presented by Jan Poddebsky, which led to a lively

discussion and reflections on the contributions of the Yemenite community to the culture of Israel and throughout the Jewish world.

What then do these two themes, dance and music have to do with language? It is clear that language is fundamental to the many intellectual, ritual and cultural developments that comprise Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life. The centrality of language was amply demonstrated throughout the conference with topics ranging from the nuances of Yiddish translation in the construction of Elie Wiesel's Holocaust memoir, a topic explored by Sydney University student Sean Sidky, to Dr Ari Lobel's paper on the development of the Hebrew alphabet. Professor Ghila'ad Zuckermann made the point that in the revival of a language such as Hebrew, children shape the emerging language and teach it to adults. Myer Samra spoke on the Sephardi Jews of Baghdad and their Arabic dialect, Racheline Barda on French language and culture in Egypt, and Judy Campbell on a musical she is creating for Broadway on the exodus of Jews from Egypt in the 50s and 60s.. Not to be forgotten is Graham Pont's paper on Byron and Isaac Nathan, Raphael Dascalu's presentation on Medieval Judaeo-Arabic readings of the "Song of Songs" and Dvir Abramovich's paper on Dahlia Ravikovitch's "A Clockwork Doll".

The keynote address was given by Associate Professor Ian Young from Sydney University's Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies Department on "What do we really know about Ancient Hebrew." He spoke about the way that discoveries from outside the Bible (inscriptions and the Dead Sea Scrolls) have challenged older models of the nature and development of ancient Hebrew. Dr Marianne Dacy presented a paper on the new Jerusalem text in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other literature of the late Second Temple period. Several overseas visiting scholars spoke. Navras Jaat Aafreedi, Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Civilization at Gautam Buddha University, Uttar Pradesh, India discussed the Indian Muslim involvement with Hebrew, and Michael Cohen spoke on American Jewish language. Hebrew language education also featured prominently with Dr Zehavit Gross, (Bar Ilan University) and Professor Suzanne Rutland (University of Sydney) presenting the findings of a five-year research project centred on the teaching of modern Hebrew in day schools both in Australia and internationally. A selection of conference papers will be published in the 2013 edition of the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* edited by Dr Myer Samra and planning is already underway for the 2014 conference.

Marianne Dacy (NDS)

Call for Papers AAJs Conference Adelaide 2014 Jews, Judaism and Hybridity



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE



Call for Papers – Australian Association of Jewish Studies

The 26th AAJS Conference, 9-10 February 2014

The University of Adelaide, North Terrace, CBD, Adelaide, South Australia

Jews, Judaism and Hybridity

From its very beginning the people of Israel has been characterized as 'a people that dwells alone' and one that 'is not reckoned among the nations' (Numbers 23:9). Indeed, the ancient Israelite religion was different from all other religions in that it worshipped one

God, believing him to be the source of all creation and professing that he could not possess any physical manifestation.

However, looking at the history of Israel and at its spiritual development, one can see that, both practically and conceptually, the Jewish people maintained close reciprocal relationships with other groups and ideas, resulting in fascinating and multifaceted cross-fertilizations and multiple causations. **The theme of AAJS Adelaide (9-10 February 2014),**

***Judaism and Hybridity*, aims to explore Jewish cross-fertilization, synthesis and syncretism from any perspective.**

Extensive study of the Jewish faith, method of scriptural interpretation, Jewish identity, society, literature, art, philosophy and language throughout history, demonstrates that they were all heavily influenced by diverse cultures and religions, and by no means can they be satisfactorily explained as being the outcome of their Jewish or Hebrew classical origins alone. *Judaism and Hybridity* aims to explore the intriguing Jewish phenomenon from **various angles**, stressing the unique combination of sources that enabled its endless creativity and its seemingly miraculous renaissance after undergoing major crises.

While being 'hybrid' is typically perceived as an inferior quality, papers may debate whether or not it is a universal trait that ought to be acknowledged, embraced and celebrated.

As John Donne wisely wrote, 'no man is an island'. Every cultural phenomenon is necessarily related to multifaceted human experiences. Thousands of years ago, Judaism introduced monotheistic faith into human society, thus changing history for years to come. Papers could propose or reject the idea that whilst monotheism is important, it has also taken its toll, leading philosophers and scientists to believe mistakenly that there is one cause for each phenomenon rather than many. Papers could demonstrate or deny the hybridic nature of the Jewish experience and indeed of the monotheistic religion itself, and open up a novel perspective on society, religion and culture in general.

Submissions to present papers (Deadline: 1 September 2013)

Submissions to present papers must be made via email **by 1 September 2013** to Professor Ghila'ad Zuckermann, email: ghilad.zuckermann@adelaide.edu.au. The subject of the email message should be 'AAJS Adelaide 2014 Proposal'. (Acceptance of papers will be notified by email no later than 30 October 2013.) Submissions must include the following:

- ~ Author's full name,
- ~ Postal and email address,
- ~ Institutional affiliation,
- ~ Abstract of the paper to be presented (*no more than 250 words*)
- ~ Short biographical note (*no more than 50 words*).

Ghila'ad Zuckermann AAJS encourages students engaged in academic research to submit proposals based on their work to the conference committee. Authors should clearly indicate their student status on their submission.

Presenters are also invited to submit written articles for consideration for publication in the Australian Journal of Jewish Studies.

Communication about the conference should be sent electronically to Professor Ghila'ad

Zuckermann, email: ghilad.zuckermann@adelaide.edu.au

Conference Committee

- Professor Ghila'ad Zuckermann, Conference Convener (Chair of Linguistics and Endangered Languages at the University of Adelaide)
- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, AAJS President
- Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM
- Dr Gitit Holzman
- Dr Avril Alba
- Dr Myer Samra
- Dr Jan Lanicek
- Dr Miriam Munz
- Lee Kersten
- Neta Steigrad
- Anna Rosenbaum

As this Conference addresses a small community of scholars, it is imperative that we all support the Association. Thus, it is a requirement that all presenters at this conference will have paid by 10 January 2014 the conference registration fee, which includes the AAJS membership for 2014.

Ghila'ad Zuckermann

Marianne- Congratulations!

This year's Australia Day's Honours List contained the name of a recipient whom we all know very well. It is our own Dr. Marianne Dacy, the secretary and treasurer of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies. It is a well -deserved honour. For the past twenty years Marianne gave everything of herself to our association, always helpful, always cheerful and always ready to fulfil her duties. It did not matter how busy she was, if there was something urgent to do, she was here to meet the deadline, suggesting better ways to make everything function perfectly.

Marianne has been not only the secretary and treasurer of the association for many years, but continues to be the founding senior archivist of the Archive of Australian Judaica in the University of Sydney Library.

Perhaps the most Marianne has provided was for Dialogue, in particular the Christians and Jews. Marianne promote a very important issue religious barriers and bias, values of various religious mutual prejudice, builds and introduces an innovative harmony . For this service she Sidney Sternberg Award for



significant service that the Council for Interfaith dialogue between worked tirelessly to in a world divided by where nurturing spiritual groups helps dismantle bridges, promotes respect concept of religious was honoured with the Jewish Christian relations

in 2007, by an award of the International Council of Christians and Jews, ICCJ, which was bestowed upon her at the Sydney ICCJ Conference in July 2007 at the Shalom College, which she convened with Henry Mendelson. In 2009 Marianne was at the Berlin ICCJ conference and received a certificate as having been one of the authors of the Berlin

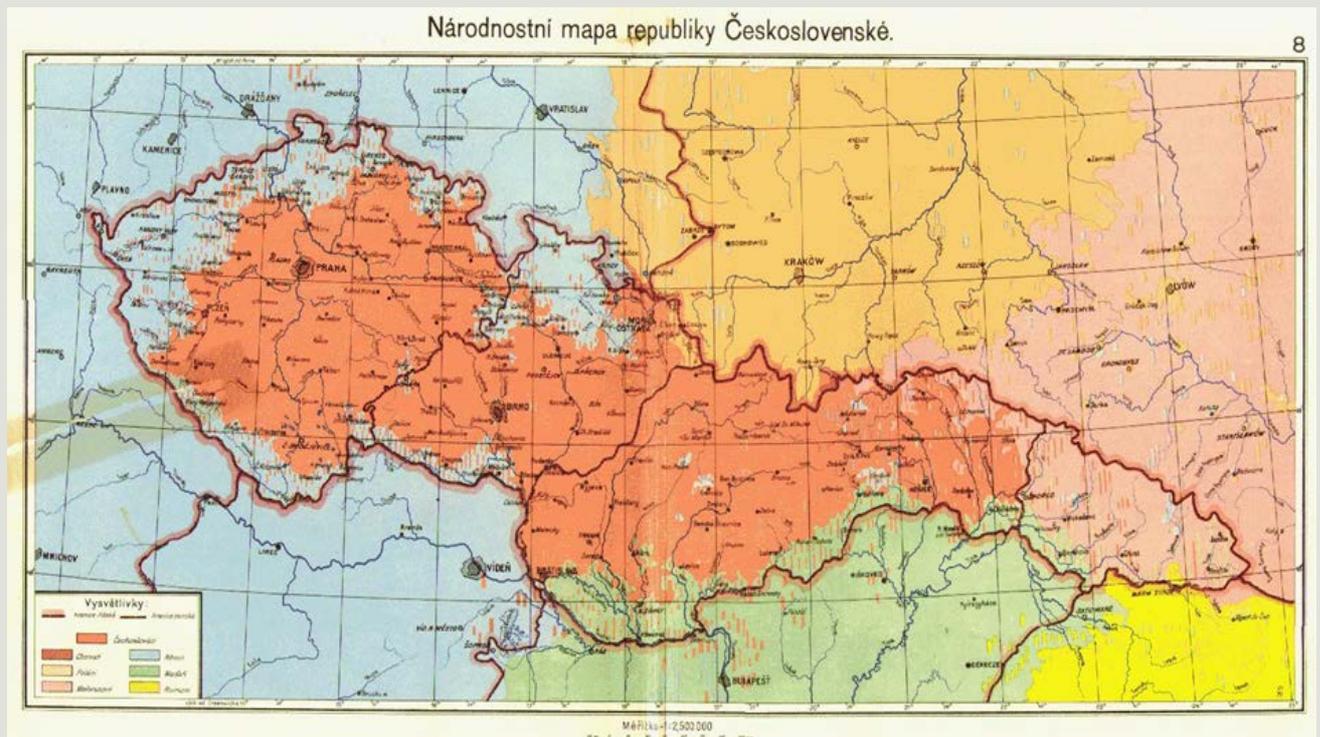
Document (Twelve Points of Berlin), a document updating Jewish Christian relations in the twenty first century and a renewal of the previous statement made at Seelseberg in 1947 (Ten Points of Seelseberg). Apart from that, Marianne continues to organize memorial services for victims of the Holocaust at St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Well done, Marianne.

Marianne has resigned from her position as treasurer and from membership work but will remain secretary till the AGM in Adelaide. Needless to say, she will be sorely missed.

We congratulate Marianne for the honour bestowed upon her this year and wish her every success for the future.

Anna Rosenbaum

The Czechs and their Neighbours



Victoria University of Wellington, 2 July 2013

The First Czechoslovak Republic, while heralded as a triumph of Wilsonian peacemaking after its founding, proved no more immune from nationalist tensions than its predecessor, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The state's official census recognized sizeable Russian, Polish, German, Hungarian and Jewish populations; the majority "Czechoslovak" ethnicity additionally masked the particularist loyalties of Slovaks, Silesians, and arguably Moravians, Chodové, Roma, and so forth.

This workshop, which takes place immediately before the AAEH "Faultlines" conference in Wellington, considers the relationship between Czechs and their neighbours. Papers in the provisional schedule examine the Czech relationship to Germans, Lusatian-Sorbs, Rusyns, and Jews; we welcome papers that either supplement or duplicate this list. The *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, a journal with a presence on J-stor, has already expressed interest in publishing selected papers in 2014.

Send an abstract of c. 400 words by 1 May to Alexander Maxwell at
Alexander.maxwell@vuw.ac.nz

Visit to Central America

On January 2nd, I flew to Los Angeles and then took the small COPA plane to Panama City, and another to San Jose. In the plane from Panama City to San Jose, I noticed a woman wearing a yarmulka, who was obviously Jewish, and there were some Jews in hassidic dress. There is a sizeable Jewish community in Panama City, more so than in Costa Rica.

Being met at the airport, and taking the precaution of changing a few dollars, we drove to Moravia, to the convent attached to the large College owned by the Sisters of Sion. On the way, a man came up to the car window when we stopped and Adriana gave him some coins. Another wanted to sell us some fruit. Where we drove, houses were brightly coloured with protective railings.

On the first morning I was thrilled to see red Australian Bottlebrush in the garden being visited by active rufous humming birds, and a number of other brightly coloured birds. Quite large squirrels, that were half grey and red flitted around in the trees surrounding the school and Centre and there were brightly coloured butterflies visiting the flowers, and a some orchids. humming birds in Costa Rica and Central America. Everything the weather was mildly warm. . In pleasant, but it would be much



The purpose of my trip to with our international group of Christian co ordinating team in of Sion.

Central America was to meet five who are the Jewish our Congregation of the Sisters

Our meetings are once a year in a different country. Our team felt it was important for us to meet in the global south, and in Latin America. It is known that the largest Christian populations are in the Southern Hemisphere, but the Jewish populations are largely concentrated in the north in Israel and the USA. We believed that by meeting in Moravia, Costa Rica, we would gain new perspectives in our work in Jewish-Christian, interfaith and interreligious relations .

Costa Rica is a very Catholic country with statues of Mary everywhere and very ornate decorations in the Churches. The Christmas cribs were more elaborate than those I have seen in Rome. The idea of the Christmas crèche was first introduced by St Francis of Assisi in the twelfth century and has caught on in the public imagination. Yet, despite the veneration of religiosity, Costa Ricans, I have been told, in general are not very religious, and there is an undercurrent of antisemitism, despite the fact there are few Jews.

One morning was spent on an extensive analysis of the situations of the Jewish communities in Costa Rica and Brazil. In Costa Rica, it is not so easy to meet with Jewish communities, and we did not actually meet any Jews during our stay. We were surprised to learn that the Brazilian Jewish community now numbers 250,000.

There are problems in Jewish Christian dialogue, sometimes as result of colonial history or the Shoah, where Jews do not want to meet Christians. In Brazil, the Jews arrived and settled first in the north, but have now migrated to the more prosperous south. On the whole they are a wealthy community. However, despite some setbacks, relationships are developing among groups. In Rio a young adult group has begun and includes Christians, Jews and Muslims. This has given the older members of the Jewish-Christian dialogue hope

for the future. All of us commented that attitudes towards Israel and Palestine have made Christian -Jewish relations in some contexts.

When the meeting was over, I took a ten hour bus ride to Nicaragua, and stayed with our poor barrio where they have a mango tree in the back yard and even a horse, but I never saw a single cat though I heard one, at night making a terrible racket with the same time. Everyone else slept through the noise!



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The people in the barrios are very poor. The Sister of Sion help run a micro- finance programme for the women to give them some way of earning a little money as often their husband are out of work or are drunk most of the time. Meals are distributed every day to about one hundred people and are prepared by one woman and there is a cancer clinic. A priest comes in for Mass on Sunday. There is no church in the barrio, and the streets are unpaved. Young men are just discovering the joys of riding a motor bike. We called on some of the people where grandparents, and their children's families share the same house.



The area is extremely beautiful with volcanoes and parks all around. We visited that of Masaya in a spacious nature area, with much glorious vegetation. The volcano erupted in May, spitting out a few rocks, and we saw the smoke issuing from the crater. Back in Costa Rica, I visited the National museum, and used the buses to get around spite my bad Spanish. On January 20th, we had a huge celebration with people coming from everywhere, the novices put on a short play to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the sisters in Costa Rica, and there was lunch for everyone after the High Mass. It was a very stimulating and interesting two and a half weeks.



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Marianne Dacy (NDS)

The End of 1942: A Turning Point in WWII and in the Comprehension of the "Final Solution"?

Report from an academic conference held at the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

In December 2012, Yad Vashem convened a four days long international conference that focused on the history of the Holocaust in late 1942 and commemorated the major turning points in the history of the Second World War and in the comprehension of the Final Solution in the free world. On 17 December 1942, the governments of the United Nations (Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and the governments-in-exile) published a declaration in which they officially declared their knowledge concerning the German policies

of the Final Solution and condemned the 'policies of cold-blooded extermination' of the Jews. The content of the Declaration was relayed all over the world with the help of extensive media coverage and reached also people in Nazi occupied Europe. Concurrently, in the late autumn of 1942 and early 1943, the armies of Allied countries achieved first significant military victories against the German armies in the Soviet Union (near Stalingrad), as well as in North Africa (Operation Torch, the landing of the American troops in Morocco and Algiers).

The Yad Vashem conference offered a comprehensive coverage of the topics under consideration, analysing first of all key factors that led to the adoption of the aforementioned Declaration of the United Nations. Further, academic researchers, representing fifteen countries from all over the world, debated whether the public acknowledgements concerning the Nazi crimes could be considered as the final turning point in the comprehension of the campaign against the Holocaust, on the impact of the war on the Allies concerning the responses in the free world, as well as under the Nazis to the publication of the news concerning the massacres of the European Jews. Keynote lectures were delivered by three eminent scholars: Professor Antony James Beevor, Professor Yehuda Bauer and Professor Gerhard Weinberg. The Conference was co-sponsored by the Ben Zvi Institute, the Documentation Center of North African Jewry during World War II, and thus a considerable part of the programme centred on the history of the Sephardic communities, still relatively under-researched subject of the historiography. Australia and Sydney were represented at the conference by three scholars: Professor Konrad Kwiet (University of Sydney Museum), Professor Suzanne Rutland (University of Láníček (the University of New South Wales)). Dr Paul O'Shea (Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Rosebank College) was not able to attend the conference, but he delivered his lecture via Skype. Yad Vashem biennial conferences provide an important platform for researchers to share the newest research on the subjects pertaining to the history of the Holocaust. It is hence important that also members of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies partook in these fruitful events and could continue with networking activities with Holocaust scholars from all over the world.



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Jan Láníček

THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH STUDIES

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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 The University of Sydney, NSW, 2006
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Thank you!