



AAJS NEWSLETTER

September 2012

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PRESIDENT'S NEW YEAR GREETINGS



President's New Year greetings

THE L'SHANA TOVA TIKATEVU

As President of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies it gives me great pleasure to wish you a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous New Year and well over the Fast.

May we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for another productive year and may our prayers and hopes for peace for all peoples afflicted by war and conflict be fulfilled as we all work together for a better future for all peoples.

Your participation and support of the AAJS is enormously important and we look forward to your continued support and contributions. May I also take this opportunity to thank the executive and the faithful and dedicated team of volunteers who continue to drive our association's activities.

Wishing you a happy and a sweet year! *Shana tova and hatima tova!*

Michael Abrahams-Sprod

ANNA'S EDITORIAL

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This time of the year, just before the High Holidays are about to descend upon us, we are compelled to find time to reflect. Whether it concerns our own personal lives, our deeds or misdeeds, important issues concerning our health or the health of members of our families, love, fortunes, misfortunes or memories - this is the time for stock taking. Memories, in particular, are important, because they delve not only into our personal histories but, inevita-

bly, into our common Jewish destiny. We remember our martyrs, as we hope and pray, that neither our generation, nor future generations should ever become victims to plans leading to our destruction.

Given that these fears are not imaginary but real, it is also time to consider whether the surrounding world has ever intended to accept us as equals. The answer, in my opinion, is no. I





ANNA'S EDITORIAL



have a passion for art. Any quality book that deals with paintings will one fine day find its way onto the shelves of my cherished library. However, I cannot appreciate August Renoir, like other lovers of one of the world's greatest artists can, because I know that he was antisemitic. I cannot enjoy Edgar Degas' paintings of ballerinas and race horses because I know that he supported the vicious campaign against Alfred Dreyfus. I cannot admire the music, like other music lovers can, of Mikis Theodorakis, the outstanding Greek composer, because I am aware of his hatred of Jews. I feel deep pain realizing what Charles Dickens' sentiments towards Jews were when he portrayed Feigin and when the celebrated Grimm Brothers infused the minds of German children with aversion towards Jews. When reading the immortal poetry of Goethe, I know that I cannot let his works penetrate my heart because he too despised us. The same goes for that beacon of Enlightenment Voltaire, for Schopenhauer and other philosophers. When I think of Martin Luther, I am aware that it was him who supported the idea of exterminating Jews. I could go on. And the truth is that I dare not investigate what Chopin's sentiments towards us were because it would be too difficult for me to turn away from his music. Better not to know.

This is what separates us from the rest of the world. We always have to bear in mind that we cannot totally indulge our senses in the arts and be educated by the world's greatest thinkers without inhibition because we are aware of their antisemitism. There is an inbuilt barrier within us that does not permit us to get close to them, no matter how much we would like to and be at one with those who are free to partake of the gifts that these giants of our civilization bestowed upon mankind.



I recently became interested in Mannerism, its paintings, frescoes, sculpture and architecture. This awesome artistic movement swept through Italy in the footsteps of the Renaissance and then, after a relatively short time in the history of art, evolved into the Baroque. Yet, in northern Europe Mannerism endured for a longer period and left some wonderful traces. The architecture of northern cities are nothing less than rows of pearls sewn into the delicate fabric of European culture.

Poland is one of the countries that was bequeathed with the wonders of Mannerist art and architecture. Looking at the magnificent palaces gracing Polish towns, one feels enchanted and humbled by the human genius with which Poland was gifted. If you look at the pictures, you cannot but marvel. Just do not look at the names of the towns where these buildings stand: Chelmno, Lublin, Kielce, Warsaw and other locations in Poland, where Dante's hellish carnage set fire to European civilization, scattering ash over its debris. One more stab into the Jewish heart and one more separation from the rest of mankind. Yet, one more reason to walk with our heads erect in the knowledge that we shall never falter. This should be our pledge for the coming New Year.

Anna Rosenbaum



**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH STUDIES
25TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**



**JEWISH LANGUAGES
JEWISH CULTURES
~ THE SHAPING OF JEWISH CIVILIZATION ~**



**10TH - 11TH FEBRUARY, 2013
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Language permeates everything we do. It is the medium of scholarship, literature and song as well as shopping lists and instant messages. Language shapes culture at the same time as being shaped by it.

This conference will examine the interplay between Jewish languages – including the different strata of Hebrew - from Biblical to Modern, Jewish hybrid languages, and their social and cultural milieux.

We encourage scholars to bring their most original thinking and to put forward new interpretations of the theme. Hence the following list is by no means exhaustive though papers of interest may touch upon one or more of the following areas:

- ❖ Jewish scholarship from Biblical times onwards
- ❖ Religious, educational, social, or political contexts
- ❖ Development of identity
- ❖ Preservation of culture
- ❖ Artistic expression
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Relationship to the languages of the "other"
- ❖ Impact on non-Jewish culture and philosophy
- ❖ Symbolism and psychological significance

Of interest would also be papers on the growth and development of Hebrew and Jewish languages, e.g.:

- ❖ The study and teaching of Jewish languages
- ❖ Development of Hebrew in modern Israel
- ❖ The development of language(s) in response to social and political conditions.

SUBMISSIONS TO PRESENT PAPERS

Submissions to present papers must be made by 10th September 2012. Acceptance of papers will be notified by email no later than October 2012.

Submissions must include

- author's name,
- postal and email address,
- institutional affiliation,
- abstract of the paper to be presented and
- short biographical note.

**Please note- Deadline for
submission extended to
October 12, 2012**

The abstract must be 200-300 words and the biographical note no more than 50 words.

The AAJS encourages students who are 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*.

Submissions should be sent electronically to

Dr Anna Hueneke: ahue6278@uni.sydney.edu.au

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM, Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod,
Dr Myer Samra, Dr Miriam Munz, Dr Anna Hueneke (Co-Convenor),
Neta Steigrad (Co-Convenor), Anna Rosenbaum



Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney

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 be financial members of the AAJS, and have paid their conference registration by 10th January 2013.



BRYAN CONYER
EFFECTING
PLURALISM:
 Three case studies of Jewish Community Schools in Australia and the Western United States



EFFECTING PLURALISM:
 Three case studies of Jewish Community Schools in Australia and the Western United States

Bryan Conyer

Pluralism has become one of those ubiquitous terms that both infuriates and inspires. Jewish demographic surveys repeatedly include the word pluralism to describe both the current and future anticipated trends of Jewish identification, moving further from homogeneity, towards greater diversity. For example, Gen08 remarks that a “key issue to be faced is the extent of pluralism and diversity to be accommodated within the Jewish community (A. Markus, 2011, p. 95). This sentiment is shared in demographic surveys across the Jewish world, usually referencing a weakening denominational influence, an increasing wariness of institutional membership, including synagogues, a greater willingness to engage with multiple Jewish organisations that reflect diverse Jewish perspectives and an growing influence of individualism.

While quality Jewish education is often lauded as a prerequisite for a viable Jewish future, Jewish educational institutions are still learning to adapt to the emergence of this new pluralism within the Jewish community. One response has been the emergence of the Community Jewish School internationally a school that no longer affiliates with a single Jewish denomination, but explicitly acknowledges and nurtures diversity within the Jewish community. This diversity often includes the equal validation of multiple Jewish denominations, a wide spectrum of relationships to Israel and the embrace of cultural and other secular expressions of Judaism. Significantly, many of these schools include the word pluralism within their mission and/ or values’ statements.

However, the word pluralism is seldom carefully defined and often means different things to different stakeholders within and between schools.

My project focused upon three Jewish High Schools, in the USA and Australia, which include pluralism as a primary value. The project’s goal was to understand how different stakeholders understood pluralism in the context of their school, including policy makers, parents, teachers and students understand pluralism, and how their understanding influenced their perception of Jewish educational practices within their school. While multiple understandings predictably co-existed within each school, my interest remained upon the interaction of these diverse understandings and how they influenced Jewish policy and practice. For example while all schools insisted upon a local Orthodox standard of kashrut for school events, some accept vegetarian catering off campus. One school requires its male students to wear a kippah during the school day while another makes it mandatory only during Jewish Studies classes and prayers. I was interested in uncovering the rationale and understanding of having such divergent practices, all underpinned by a commitment to pluralism.

In addition, this project considered the specific milieu in which each school is located, and how that milieu’s experience of pluralism, specifically multiculturalism, influenced its internal paradigms. For example, stakeholders in one school emphasised ethnic pluralism, focusing upon the country of





origin of its student body, while another focused primarily upon Jewish denominations and virtually ignored ethnic diversity. One school's pluralism incorporated non-Jewish perspectives, while another limited itself to perspectives exclusively within the Jewish community.

The project ultimately proposes various models and constructs of pluralism to help better understand and analyse differences within and between Jewish Community Schools. It

also identifies a pattern that stakeholders pass through in their own relationship to pluralism. This pattern offers a framework through which to ascertain the stage of pluralistic development of the school itself. While pluralism is ubiquitous, its positive potential and possible pitfalls can only be purposefully negotiated if it is thoughtfully considered and negotiated. It is hoped that this project supports this process.

Bryan Conyer

Congratulations to Bryan who has been awarded his Ph.D. in Jewish Education from the Faculty of Education at Sydney University. It was co-supervised by Professor Anthony Welch and Suzanne Rutland. He will graduate later this year.

LEON PERLMAN :

AWARD OF UNIVERSITY MEDAL IN JEWISH CIVILISATION

LEON PERLMAN : AWARD OF UNIVERSITY MEDAL IN JEWISH CIVILISATION



Leon Perlman, currently a doctoral candidate under the supervision of Professor Suzanne Rutland and Professor Konrad Kwiet, was recently awarded the University Medal on the completion of his BA (Hons) degree. Leon, who also holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Melbourne, returned to University after a twenty-year career in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a short period in the Tax Office. His previous career afforded him the opportunity to work overseas, in such places as Warsaw, London, New York and Washington D. C.

Leon's primary research focus is the cultural history of Galician Jewry in the period between 1867 and 1939. His secondary interests include film history, the Holocaust in Eastern

Galicia, the Polish-Jewish Press, and Polish-Jewish relations after 1945. He was recently both translator and contributor to the publication Michał Maksymilian Borwicz, *The University of Criminals* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Wysoki Zamek, 2012). Apart from the translation of this Holocaust text that had been published once and only in 1946, he also contributed a chapter to the collection of essays that accompanied the translation on the long history of the Jewish community of Lwów.

Leon completed the research for his honours thesis principally at the Harvard archives, Boston and the YIVO archives in New York. His thesis examined Jewish women's exclusion from the master narrative of Zionism in East European history. Through the optic of the Polish language Jewish





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press, the study focused on acculturated Jewish women in Lwów. Leon demonstrated that despite accelerated modernisation (that saw Jewish women in Lwów largely ahead of their counterparts in Central Poland), Zionist orientation and participation in political and philanthropic activities, Galician Jewish women still failed to fully penetrate the male domain centred in Warsaw. This failure was emphasised in Leon's thesis by a re-examination of the 'Miss Judea' competition of 1929, which was instituted in Warsaw to market the 'New Zionist Woman'. This beauty competition was strongly opposed in Galicia, where a New Zionist Woman had arguably been in existence since 1914. The ideological clash highlighted the depth and degree of Galician particularity, and Leon's thesis dealt in detail with the underlying reasons for the differences between Galicia and Central Poland. These included different and specific historical developments, the post-imperial legacy of Hapsburg rule, the attractiveness of Europeanism with its Universalist messages, including those related to emerging notions of womanhood and feminism. Leon demonstrated that this clash between the male dominated Zionist enterprise in Warsaw and Galician Zionist womanhood arose out of gender stereotyping, the complex of Jewish identities in Poland and emerging early feminism. Further, it exposed fundamental fault lines in the Polish Zionist enterprise, wherein Polish Zionist leaders had misread female Jewish identity and avoided confronting gender stereotypes, or mobilising a constituency first identified by Herzl as early as 1901.

Leon's doctoral research aims to reconstruct the Jewish community of

Lwów during the inter-war years, 1918-1939. Using the paradigms of politics, education, religion and cultural expression, it will compare and contrast Lwów with its far better known counterpart cities in Central Poland like Warsaw and Łódź. Leon will argue that while Warsaw and Łódź were experiencing an accelerated modernisation between 1918 and 1939, this process had largely taken place in Lwów (but was still underway) in the years between 1880 and 1914. This meant that during the inter-war years the development of the Jewish community in Lwów was significantly more advanced than in Central Poland. These advances were evident in a cultural-linguistic system that differed markedly from elsewhere, an embracement of modernist art, film and literature, interdependences with Vienna and Berlin, and distinctive developments in politics, religion and education. Leon's dissertation will explore these advances and differences. It will also seek to reconstruct the lives, and provide biographical sketches, of forgotten individuals who made an indelible contribution to Polish Jewry's culture.

Leon's research will take him to Washington D.C. and New York in October and to Israel again (where he studied briefly during his undergraduate years for his BA in Modern Hebrew) in the New Year. Leon's dissertation is entitled *Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv: Writing the history of a forgotten Jewish Community*. His research will correct a long-standing imbalance in our understanding of the totality and complexity of pre-war Polish Jewry, and serve as a reminder that Lwów was the third largest Jewish community in Poland before the Holocaust.

Our congratulations also to Leon!



THE THREE SEPTEMBER 11S

RACHAEL KOHN



RACHAEL KOHN

THE THREE SEPTEMBER 11s



Today is September 11. Almost three thousand victims of a senseless act of Islamic extremism are being remembered today, and will be for many years to come. With one coordinated act causing the deaths of innocent civilians and 55 military personnel, the name of religion and of one religion in particular was degraded.

That is what extremists do – they want to destroy what has been built up, and they do *not* know the meaning of compromise, dialogue, or tolerance. Many Muslims were quick to condemn the act and dreaded what they knew would be a long shadow cast over them for years to come.

It is now 11 years since September 11, and despite the horror of that day, the imperative to mend relations has progressed, and in some circles exceeded previous understanding. This would have been unthinkable or impossible had there not been a long and well-developed acceptance of different religious, ethnic and racial groups, in the West, stemming from our multiple societies' constitutional freedoms.

Just a month ago Imam Mohamed Magid the President of the Islamic Society of North America wrote in the Huffington Post:

The beautiful thing about America is that in the midst of our struggles, we have found great support and friendship from other religious communities, who believe strongly that an attack on one religion is an attack on all religions. When someone vandalized my own Islamic center in Virginia a few years ago, I was comforted and heartened by the immediate outpouring of support from the nearby Trinity Presbyterian Church. And when my community members in Reston, Va.,

*needed a space to pray closer to home, the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation opened its doors to us. At a national level, 28 religious organizations showed their solidarity, including financially, by joining an interfaith campaign entitled, *Shoulder-to-Shoulder: Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values.**¹

The legal guarantees of freedom and religious tolerance that are a cornerstone of American public life, and which Australia has emulated in its own constitution, does much to entrench this attitude of mutual support but laws and constitutions do not themselves generate the will to reach out in friendship and dialogue with a feared entity. There has to be a collective public will that models the desired relationship. Ironically, that first happened in America, over a century ago, when the first major interfaith dialogue was held on September 11.

When the World Columbian Exposition of 1893 (also called the Chicago World's Fair) was being planned, a number of congresses were also organized to take advantage of the large numbers of overseas visitors from the furthest reaches of the world who were coming to share their cultural achievements and scientific expertise. Among these congresses was the World's Parliament of Religions.

The World's Parliament of Religions began on September 11th, and it was so successful it stretched for 18 days, closing on the 27th. At the now beautiful Art Institute of Chicago, then named the Congress Auxiliary Building, Americans saw Sikhs and Buddhists, Yogis and Gurus, Sufi Dirvishes and African chiefs for the very first time. Even the Baha'I Faith had





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its first mention in America at the Parliament.

The young and handsome Swami Vivekananda, of the Ramakrishna Mission, addressed the crowd on that day with the expression, "Sisters and Brothers of America." On hearing those words alone 7,000 people rose to give him a standing ovation, which lasted for two minutes.

Swami Vivekananda chose two quotes from his holy book, the Bhagavad Gita to express the spirit of universality:

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take, through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee!"

"Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths that in the end lead to Me."

He added some hopeful comments that can only make our collective chest heave and our mouths to utter a sigh, because such wise words were not to be fulfilled in the coming decades, which would see Europe and Asia plunged into two world wars:

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings be-

tween persons wending their way to the same goal."²

Such words rang true then and they ring true now, but in parts of the Middle East today, there are volatile conflicts between sectarian groups that have seen hundreds indeed thousands killed. And communities with ancient pedigree are now easy targets for radicalized groups, and they fear for their future. One such are the Christians in Syria who found protection from President Assad, due to his own Alawite (non-Muslim) religion. The other are the Coptic Christians in Egypt who are among the earliest Christian communities in the world.

According to tradition the disciple Mark went to Egypt and founded a community there. Copt means Egyptian – they were synonymous – so after the 7th Century Arab conquest Copt referred exclusively to Christians. Today Copts are about 10% of the population but face discrimination at every turn.

The last couple of years in Egypt have seen mobs sweeping through Coptic towns, while police were nowhere to be seen. They have burned down churches, and targeted Copts in violent reprisals over anything from a bad job at the Laundromat to the conversion of a Muslim to Christianity. The toppling of the Mubarak regime did not gladden the hearts of the Copts who feared the dominance of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. Their fears proved right.

On this day, September 11, the Copts celebrate their New Year. It is a time of eating fresh red dates, the taste auguring a sweet year ahead while giving thanks to the one just passed. But the bright red colour of the fresh dates is a reminder of the blood of the martyrs, who were massacred in antiquity by [Diocletian](#) the Roman Emperor, whose reign was marked by tortures and mass executions of Christians,





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especially in Egypt. Hence, the Coptic year beginning in 284, is identified by the abbreviation A.M. (for *Anno Martyrum* or "Year of the Martyrs").

Once again, September 11 points us in another direction – one that reminds us that even in the promise of a new year, the memory of inter-religious violence haunts human history. The Copts are today one of the many Christian communities in the Middle East and Asia who remain in very precarious circumstances. But I wonder how much these communities can hope for assistance and understanding by Western societies that have become so removed from their own religious heritage.

Few ordinary Australians realize that the earliest Christian communities in the Middle East have been living there continuously some from as early as the first century. Among the Middle Eastern churches one finds the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Chaldean and Assyrian Christian.

As Copts prepare their New Year celebrations, the Coptic Quarter in Cairo, which teemed with hundreds of families, is now home to fewer than 50 families. With the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi candidates, occupying more than 70 per cent of the seats in the parliament, Egyptian Christians are doomed to become even more disadvantaged than they

are now. With Shariah law on the books and only one Copt with a government portfolio, in the 'semi' ministry of scientific research, the Copts are lining up to leave their ancestral home.

There is a footnote to this September 11 when another new year, in a few days time, Rosh Hashanah, will be no longer be celebrated in Egypt. Indeed there will be no Jewish services for the foreseeable future in Egypt, as four days ago it was announced that the last synagogue in Egypt, Eliyahu Hanavi, in Alexandria, will be closed down. When Rabbi Avraham Dayan was making preparations for the High Holidays he was told that the Egyptian authorities could not guarantee the safety and security of those wanting to attend the synagogue.³ It is not so much that they cannot guarantee the safety but they lack the will to do so.

On this September 11 and for all those in the future, let us cast our minds back to the young man whose wise words transformed the hearts of all who heard him at the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893, when he called for friendship to defeat forever the seduction of hate mongering, for as Swami Vivekenanda said: "Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth." It is time to free ourselves from their bondage.

Rachael Kohn. From An address to the Council of Christians and Jews, NSW. September 11, 2012

Footnotes

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/imam-mohamed-magid/future-of-religious-minorities-in-the-muslim-world_b_1793023.html

² <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/full-text-swami-vivekanandas-chicago-speech/220148-53.html>

³ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4276623,00.html>





MEMBERSHIP

Fees are current from 1 January 2012–31 December 2012, and include the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually (early in the next year), AAJS Newsletter (online) book discounts, and discounted registration fee for the AAJS annual February conference)

Benefactor : \$250

Regular: \$60 (Aus)

Pensioner/ Full-time Student: \$25 (Aus)

Institutional: \$70 (Aus)

Overseas: \$80 (Aus)

All correspondence to: Archive of Australian Judaica,, C/- Rare Books, Fisher Library, University of Sydney NSW 2006

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THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH STUDIES

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Thank you!