

Newsletter No

56

September

2013

# Australian Association of Jewish Studies

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As President of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies it gives me great pleasure to wish you all a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous New Year and well over the Fast and may we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for another productive year.

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 ve hatima tova!**

**Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod**



***L'SHANA TOVA TIKATEVU***

We draw your attention to the upcoming AAJS Conference, in Adelaide, from 9 – 10 February 2014 convened by **Prof Ghila'ad Zuckermann**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZPjdNaLCho>

<Http://www.whyllanewsonline.com.au/story/1503840/reviving-barngarla-language/>



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 extended to 10 September)**

Submissions to present papers must be made via email by **10 September 2013** to Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann, email: [ghilad.zuckermann@adelaide.edu.au](mailto: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*).

\*A concert given by Bruce Springsteen will take place in Adelaide at the same time as our conference. Anybody interested should either get in touch with Professor Zuckermann for more information or directly with the organizers in Adelaide".

\*Good news regarding AAJS Adelaide 9-10 February 2014: with the support of the Pratt foundation, not only will we have a major keynote speaker but we will offer several travel scholarships for brilliant students (or unemployed scholars). This will include a waiving of the conference fees plus a sum to be determined. More details to follow.

Registration fees for 2014 are the same as for 2013 conference.

#### **Early Bird by January 9th**

- Two days \$220
- Two days - Student/Pensioner \$110
- One day \$150
- One day - Student/Pensioner \$75

- Two days \$240
- Two days - Student/Pensioner \$120
- One day \$160
- One day - Student/Pensioner \$85
- Individual session(s) \$30 each

#### **Prof Ghila'ad Zuckermann**

### **Record numbers at Limmud-Oz**

Limmud-Oz 2013 was the biggest ever, attracting 1200 participants including over 200 presenters. This included an astounding 17 international presenters and over 20 interstate speakers and performers.

Over 100 volunteers from across the community gave their time to make this an incredible cross-communal event.

This year there was an expanded children's program streamed into three age groups reflecting the record number of younger families engaging with the Limmud experience. The program included arts, Krav Maga, music, sports and dynamic informal learning sessions to keep the young Limmudniks entertained while their parents enjoyed the adult program.

The packed program of lectures, discussions and performances contained numerous highlights.

"The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive", organiser Michael Misrachi said. "The extraordinary thing about Limmud-Oz is the way it brings together people from across the

community – left and right, religious and secular, young and old – to engage in and talk about ideas and issues facing the Jewish community and world in a meaningful way”.

While Deborah Conway soothed in Sunday evening with some of her ballads from her recently released album, *Stories of Ghosts*, Prince of Kosher Gospel Joshua Nelson brought the crowds to their feet on Sunday night with their unique blend of Jewish liturgy and the sounds and vibes of American gospel and motown music. It was an uplifting, high energy performance that had the audience clapping, singing and dancing.

Amongst the interstate presenters was Ghil’ad Zuckermann who moderated a session on Jewish-Aboriginal cooperation with Lisa Jackson-Pulver, Michelle Jersky and linguist Jaky Troy.

### **Prof Ghila’ad Zuckermann**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZPjdNaLCho>

## **Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies**

### **International Holocaust Lecture Series 2013**

In conjunction with the Sydney Jewish Museum, the Shalom Institute (UNSW), Mandelbaum House and Monash University’s Australian Centre for Jewish Civilization, the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies is currently presenting a series of lectures and research seminars with leading scholars in the field of Holocaust, Genocide and Jewish Studies.

Visiting scholars include Professor Christopher Browning (University of North Carolina) whose pioneering study *Ordinary Men: Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* forms a seminal work in Holocaust studies and Professor Hasia Diner (New York University) author of *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust 1945-1962*, winner of the National Jewish Book Award in 2009.

The program was made possible in large part through generous sponsors for which the Department is grateful. *The Wilkenfeld Family Fellow in Holocaust Education 2013* Dr Alan Rosen (Jerusalem) whose investigations into survivor testimonies recorded in the Displaced Persons camps in the immediate aftermath of World War II have profoundly changed how scholars have viewed this under researched period. His recent publication *The Wonder of Their Voices* explores a collection of such testimonies undertaken by psychologist David Boder in 1946.

Professor Michael Steinlauf’s lectures, that have already taken , Professor Browning and Vashem, Jerusalem) will also research seminars, which will Australian postgraduate students researching in the broad areas of Professor Browning is sponsored Civilisation and the Shalom



Michman is a Mandelbaum scholar. To view the full program of lectures and seminars please see: [http://sydney.edu.au/arts/hebrew\\_biblical\\_jewish\\_studies/](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/hebrew_biblical_jewish_studies/)

and Professor Alan Rosen’s place, were outstanding. In addition Professor Dan Michman (Yad preside over three intensive presentations from as well as established scholars Holocaust and Jewish Studies. by the Australian Centre for Jewish Institute and Professor Dan

## Dr Avril Alba and Professor Konrad Kwiet

### CONFERENCES

Professor Suzanne Rutland attended two international conferences in April. The first was at the University of Cape Town, where she presented a paper on ‘The Impact of Postcolonial Settings on Jewish Identity and Education: Singapore and Hong Kong – A Case Study’ with her Israeli colleague, Professor Zehavit Gross of Bar Ilan University. The theme of the conference was ‘Jews in Colonial and Post-Colonial Societies’. She also chaired a session at the conference. She then flew on to San Francisco to attend the annual conference of the Organisation of American Historians, 11-14 April. She participated in a panel entitled ‘Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History’ chaired by Ellen Eisenberg, Willamette University, presenting a paper on: ‘*Conflicting a New “Homeland”: Australia, America, and Soviet Jewish Emigration*’. The other two papers were: ‘*Uncovering “Little Rumania”: Foodways and Jewish Immigrants and Early Twentieth-Century New York City*’ by Lara Rabinovitch, New York University and *Confluence: American Youth Create Israeli Kibbutzim* by Ava Kahn, of California Studies Center.

### Reflections on ‘Children and War’

There was a strong Australian presence at the second ‘Children and War’ International Conference, held last week at the University of Salzburg in Austria. Sydney University Professor Suzanne Rutland, Melbourne University Professor Joy Damousi, UTS lecturer Dr Panayiotis Diamadis added uniquely Australian perspectives with their presentations.

The three-day event attracted 138 presentations from across the world, including many Shoah-related topics. Panels included Shoah survivors, forced labour, education in Imperial and NS Germany, Children in Hiding, as well as the Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic Genocides (1914-24), civil wars in Africa and Asia and many others.

‘Academic conferences provide opportunity for the presentation of scholarly research as well as being venues for networking amongst scholars with similar interests,’ Dr Diamadis stated. ‘Working in the field of *Shoah* and genocide, I believe it is very important we promote our research beyond strictly Jewish or genocide conferences. We need to be illustrating our work in diverse arenas.’

There was also a strong Israeli presence in Salzburg, covering topics related to the *Shoah* as well as to contemporary Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Professor Rutland’s paper, titled ‘A distant sanctuary: Australia and child Holocaust survivors’ related the story of Australian Jewish community initiatives in the late 1930s, including the Rescue the Children’s Fund, the Jewish Welfare Guardian Scheme and the *Gross Breesener* Scheme. She then traced the efforts by the Australian Jewish community to sponsor a number of child orphan survivors to Australia after the war, with the assistance of HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society) and the American Joint Distribution Committee. Her paper was based on research in archives in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, New York and Jerusalem.

Professor Damousi’s paper, titled ‘The Greek civil war and child migration to Australia’, focused on the reunification of children abducted from their extended families during the Hellenic Civil War (1946-49) with their parents in Australia.

In her own words, 'I argue that at this time when international laws were not mandatory in regulating child welfare, it often took localised efforts of non-government bodies in specific locations to agitate for the reunification of children with their parents.'

Individuals and organisations in Europe and Australia 'defied the division and hostilities promoted by the Cold War politics of the day' to promote 'a global community united by humanitarian efforts and transnational exchange.'

Dr Diamadis' paper was titled 'Save the Children: The origins of international humanitarian relief efforts', an examination of the forces that drove the formation of the world's first international humanitarian relief agencies, the techniques they pioneered during, and subsequent to, the Genocides, as well as the impact of these efforts on 'modern' humanitarian relief work.

'With initiatives such as 'Golden Rule Sunday' and 'Bundle Day' and the support of Hollywood child star Jackie Coogan, the Save The Children Fund and the Near East Relief were highly successful in securing desperately needed emergency supplies for the survivors of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian Genocides.'

The international multidisciplinary conference was organised by the University of Salzburg and the University of Wolverhampton, in association with the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

### Conferences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Professor Rutland attended two international conferences held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The first was the pre-Congress of Jewish Studies with the theme 'The Issue in the Hebrew Language: Theory and Practice'. This conference dealt with theoretical language issues together with practical aspects of teaching Hebrew as a second language and was held on 24-25 July 2013. Professor Rutland chaired a session entitled 'The Influences of Foreign Languages on Hebrew'. The papers dealt with Yiddish, Persian and Russian.

The second was the Sixteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies from 28 July – 1 August 2013. Described as the 'Olympics of Jewish Studies', this conference is held once every four years in Jerusalem. It covers every aspect of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies and attracts close to one thousand participants with ten parallel sessions for each time slot running over five days, with the leading international scholars participating. Professor Rutland presented a paper with her Israeli co-researcher, Professor Zehavit Gross on 'Intergenerational Challenges in Jewish Education'. This is part of a wider study of Jewish Education in Australia, funded by the Pratt Foundation.

### Prof Suzanne Rutland

During June and July Dr Avril Alba gave papers at the three European conferences. The first *The Aftermath of Genocide: Victims and Perpetrators, Representations and Interpretations* was held in Siena, Italy and convened by the International Assoc of Genocide Scholars. Her paper, entitled 'Marching to the Same Drum? Reflections of Survivors, Students and Educators on March of the Living (MOTL) Australia' explored the pedagogic value of these increasingly popular educational trips to sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau. The second two conferences were held in the UK. The first, *Challenging Memories: Silence and Empathy in*

*Heritage Interpretation* was held in Devon and the second *The Future of Holocaust Studies*, in Southampton. Dr Alba's papers 'The Counter Memorial Void: Silence as Secular Theodicy' and 'Here there is no why'—so why do we come here? Is a pedagogy of atrocity possible?' focused on Holocaust representation and education topics. In addition, Dr Alba was awarded an Irmgard Coninx Foundation (WZB Berlin) Fellowship to participate in the 17th Berlin Roundtables on Transnationality 'Travel and Museums: Rethinking the Modern Experience'. The Roundtable was held at the WZB from June 26-29 and included both academic and experiential workshops as well as site visit to new and innovative museum and memorial projects currently under construction in Berlin.

**Dr Avril Alba**

## Is Secularism A Good Thing? Can it co-exist with Religion?

Can it ever be right to ban the wearing of head-scarves and other 'conspicuously religious' clothing – including crucifix and kippah? Is it really wrong to teach Religious Education in schools? What kind of 'secularism' really 'protects' all citizens, and what just shuts out religious people and their convictions from the public sphere? What can we do about the dangerous situation of Jews in Hungary at present?



**Abrahamic  
Forum Participants**

These were some of the difficult questions faced by participants in the International Council of Christians and Jews' conference, in Aix-en-Provence, from Sunday 30 June to 3 July. Another theme, running through the conference, was remembering Jules Isaac, whose work is not so well known outside of France. Isaac was the Jewish French historian and pioneer of Jewish-Christian dialogue who was involved in setting up *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* and was an influence on *Nostra Aetate*., having met with both Pius XII and Pope John XXIII. He memorably coined the phrase 'teachings of contempt' about Christian theologies (both formal and informal) of Judaism and the Jewish people. Isaac died in Aix-en-Provence 50 years ago, just before Vatican II. His life was one fraught with suffering, with the loss of his wife and family in the Holocaust (one son survived). He showed extraordinary courage in confronting the troubling issues raised by the Holocaust about the age old Christian teachings of contempt concerning Judaism and the terrible consequences.



The ICCJ conference was preceded by two meetings of the ICCJ Abrahamic Forum and the Young Leadership Council. Full reports are posted on [www.iccj.org](http://www.iccj.org). I presented a workshop at the ICCJ Abrahamic Forum on “Teachings of Contempt’ in the New Testament and Christian Theology.’ and shared this workshop with Dr Mustafa Baig, from Exeter University who spoke on the Qur’anic negative teachings on Judaism and Christianity.

Keynote conference speakers included Rev Dr Gilles Bourquin from Switzerland, provocatively asking: ‘Can modernity survive without religion?’ His answer was unequivocal: ‘No’ All need to belong to something, and all need symbols. This was followed by a roundtable discussion on blasphemy, also featuring Dr Mustafa Baig, who outlined Muslim views in Qur’an and the legal traditions. Dr Raymond Cohen from Israel and Dr Peter Pettit from the USA each gave a presentation on how Israel and Zionism are seen in their respective contexts. This last discussion was as part of International Council of Christians and Jews’ ongoing project on ‘Promise, Land, Hope’. Outside the meeting hall, where talks were in both French and English, and the seminar rooms where workshops were held, participants were given a tour of Aix-en-Provence followed by a reception by the mayor in the manicured gardens of the city. One could not but be reminded of the post impressionist artist Cezanne, who had captured the golden shades of the Provence countryside and had lived here. In addition, on our first day, we visited the ‘Camp des Milles’. This newly renovated site, which functioned as a tile factory, until 2006, is now a museum and educational centre. This is because it also served as the deportation camp in Vichy France. Those who run this museum want all French people to face up to the fact that the French authorities volunteered to send its inmates to Auschwitz. The site, the only deportation camp still standing in France, is just one more example to illustrate ‘the banality of evil’, a phrase coined by Hanna Arendt. The first people interned there were artists, intellectuals and writers who were refugees from Nazi Germany. Some left paintings on the walls, such as depictions of banquets and images to raise their spirits.

**Dr Marianne Dacy**

## BOOK REVIEW

The book of Jan Láníček, the Postdoctoral Fellow in Jewish History at the University of New South Wales, titled *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938-48* was launched on 18 July 2013 at the University of New South Wales. Láníček provided an in depth study of a topic that is of interest to those who are immersed in the study of the fate of the Jewish populations in Central Europe during the Second World War and the period that followed it.



The history of Czech interwar period was of scholars due to the fact was the only democratic Eastern Europe. It was

the position of Jews in Czechoslovak society was unique in as much that they were considered equal to the Gentile population, enjoying the freedom and respect that the parliamentary democracy and the liberal society of their homeland extended to them. The situation of the Jews in Czechoslovakia was the envy of the Jews of surrounding countries who were subject to racial and religious persecution. For this reason many Jews from Germany, Austria, Poland and Romania sought asylum in Czechoslovakia throughout the 1930s.

and Slovak Jews in the particular interest to that Czechoslovakia country in Central and always accepted that

Láníček's book, however, provides an insight into what befell Czechoslovak Jews during the Second World War and the short period that followed after the liberation of their homeland. It does not deal with their fate during the Holocaust but with policies towards the Jews by the Czechoslovak government in exile in London and following the renewal of Czechoslovakia's sovereignty after the war came to an end. Láníček's findings are surprising because he brought to light the indifference and negative attitudes of Czechoslovakia's elitist representatives who, despite their commitment to defeat Nazi Germany, turned their backs on loyal Jewish supporters in a show of scarcely concealed antisemitism.

Congratulations to Jan on a very successful study. Well recommended.

Published by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

**Reviewed by Anna Rosenbaum**

## Membership

Fees are current from 1 January 2013–31 December 2013, and include the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually (early in the next calendar year), AAJS Newsletter (online) book discounts, and discounted registration fee for the AAJS annual February conference). It is the practice that those who present at our AAJS conferences pay their membership subscription at the 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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Formatted by Marianne Dacy*



**Shana tova ve tiktevu!**