

Newsletter No 60
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2015

Australian Association for Jewish Studies

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A Message from the AAJS President

From 15-16 February 2015 The University of New South Wales and The Shalom Institute hosted the 27th annual conference of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies (AAJS) with the conference theme being “Neighbours: Relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout History”. As with the association’s past conferences, this conference was a resounding success attracting an array of both local and international scholars offering a feast of variations on the conference theme.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof Harvey Goldberg of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem whose paper: “From an Israeli Moshav to Archives and Manuscripts: Moving Back-and-Forth in Jewish Studies” explored Jewish life in North Africa, and, in particular, Tripoli and discussed the opportunities and dilemmas of moving back and forth

between past and present in the fields of ethnography and anthropology.

As in the past papers were arranged most effectively into thematic panels including such themes as: Memory of the Holocaust; Neighbours in Australia; Neighbours in Literature; Judaism, Christianity and Islam; Neighbours in Western Europe; Neighbours in Biblical Times; Neighbours in Central Europe; Jewish Society and Neighbours; and Neighbours in Culture and Philosophy.

As is evident from the thematic



panels, papers were rich and diverse traversing all subjects and across the globe and conference attendees were treated to not only a diverse range of papers, but a highly scholarly level - which has come to epitomise the annual conference, which continues to bring together a small, but rich, diverse and scholarly array of presenters and subjects. The conference was also a testament to the benefits of inter-university cooperation, in this instance with The University of New South Wales, where the Vice President (NSW) of the AAJS and conference convenor, Dr Jan Lanicek, is based as Lecturer (Jewish History) in the School of Humanities and Languages. Our sincere thanks for Dr Lanicek's organisation of the conference is most deserved, and we look forward to this continued relationship

which only continues to foster the growth of Jewish Studies in Australia. It goes without saying that a sincere vote of thanks must also be made to the 2015 Conference Committee for their untiring efforts and support.

We look forward to reporting to you again in 2016 when our conference will take place at Griffith University in Brisbane from 14-15 February with the conference theme: "Jews, Judaism and the Environment from Biblical Times to the Present."



May I also take this opportunity to wish all our Jewish members an uplifting and joyful Pesach and for our Christian members a meaningful Easter!

Dr. Michael Abrahams-Sprod

President of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies



**Call for Papers – Australian Association for Jewish Studies
The 28th AAJS Conference, 14-15 February 2016
Griffith University, Brisbane**

"Jews, Judaism and the Environment from Biblical Times to the Present"
AAJS 2016 Brisbane

From its very beginning, the people of Israel have been known as spiritual and literary.

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 development, one can note that, both practically and conceptually, the so-called Hebrew people maintained close reciprocal ecological relationships with the *environment*, resulting in fascinating and multifaceted cross-fertilizations and multiple causations. **The theme of AAJS Brisbane (14-15 February 2016), *Jews, Judaism and the Environment from Biblical Times to the Present*, aims to explore Jewish/Jews' interaction with the environment 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 geography and ecology, and by no means can they be satisfactorily explained as being the outcome of their spiritual origins alone in terms of Judaism's monotheistic beliefs. The religious connections to the Land of Israel, as seen in the Abrahamic covenant, together with the agricultural regulations in both the Torah and Talmud, need to also be investigated, both for the earlier periods of Jewish history and their importance in the contemporary era. *Jews, Judaism and the Environment* aims to explore the intriguing Jewish phenomenon from **various angles**, stressing the unique interaction with the environment that enabled its endless creativity, reinvention, and seemingly miraculous renaissance after undergoing major crises.

Jews, Judaism and the Environment is taking place on 14-15 February 2016 in Brisbane. The conference will be hosted by the Law School Socio-Legal Research Centre of Griffith University to be held at Griffith University South Bank Campus located in the South Bank Parklands in Brisbane city centre.

Papers on other topics will be considered but preference will be given to those bearing directly on the conference theme.

Please submit your paper proposal by Monday 3 August 2015 to Dr Deborah Cao via email d.cao@griffith.edu.au. The Subject of the message should be 'AAJS UNSW 2016 Proposal' (All applicants will be informed about the decision by Monday 31 August 2015).

Submissions must include the following:

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

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 for Jewish Studies.

Communication about the conference should be sent electronically to Dr Deborah Cao via email d.cao@griffith.edu.au.

Conference Committee

- Professor Deborah Cao, Conference Co-Convenor
- Dr Antonio Gariano, Conference Co-Convenor
- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, AAJS President
- Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM
- Dr Esther Jilovsky
- Rabbi Aviva Kipen
- Dr Avril Alba
- Dr Jan Lanicek
- Nikki Marczak
- Dr Myer Samra
- Neta Steigrad
- Anna Rosenbaum
- Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann

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 must have paid the conference registration fee, which includes the AAJS membership for 2014, by Friday 18 December 2015. **Visit www.aajs.org.au for details.**

A PESACH RETROSPECTIVE OF THE 2015 SYDNEY CONFERENCE: NEIGHBOURS: RELATIONS BETWEEN JEWS AND NON-JEWS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

AVIVA KIPEN

A Pesach retrospective of the 2015 Sydney conference invites me to paraphrase the Seder questions to review my recent conference experience, the first for many years.

Why was the conference like all other conferences?

As with all well provisioned festive tables, the hospitality at UNSW Shalom College was warm and gracious, we were generously wined and dined, we enjoyed endlessly available coffee and tea, snacks and treats. The nourishment of the body was excellent but the highlight was the nourishment of, through and by the learning community of scholars.

Was it strictly Jewish fare (bread) as opposed to any other (bread or matzah, sorry for the labored allusion here)?

Fascinating linkages across the topics and Jewish connections emerged through many nuances of the definition of “Jewish” which for the purpose of the conference was magnificently broad. The plurality of the Jewish intellectual, social and communal experience made room for everything from the *ba'lei teshuvah* who bring rap music with them as they enter the Chasidic communities and generate new music there, to Spinoza's assertions about the demand to know Hebrew language in order to grapple with the intricacies of the philosophical conundrums contained within the canon as it was being studied in the context of



emerging European Enlightenment, from Hebrew Bible to Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Was there any bitterness that had to be tasted?

Just as each broken glass at the wedding ceremony reminds us of the coexistence of joy and sorrow, so did many papers treat painful, sensitive and delicate subjects, recalling the inevitable but still-tantalizing menu of *mar u'matok*, bitter and sweet. From the WWII Jewish experience in the Netherlands Antilles to the post-Shoah absence of Jews from Hungarian film, from the depiction of strangers in Israeli cinema to the lingering crypto-Jewish traits of Turkey's Donmeh community, from the contribution of Romanian Jewish artists who abandoned their overt Jewish identities to Israeli, Czech, Russian, New Zealand, Israeli, American, Polish and Italian scholars who enriched the broad Australian contributions, the treatment of some bitter subjects was elegantly handled. Not everything was to everyone's taste, but then again, some like their gefilte fish with sugar and some with salt, and some like their chicken soup with dill and others with chili and coriander.

Did we blend and dip into multiple strands of material?

The range of disciplines, from the arts to philosophy, anthropology to history, international détente to resource management as central of political solutions, literature to music, ethics to spirituality, the range of age groups of contributors, the strong number of women presenters, the mix of academic maturity and experience meant that we were constantly "double dipping" by hearing the papers on multiple listening frequencies. Unexpected connections were made between Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Australian and non-Australian experiences, which brought a sense of embrace despite the fact that some brave (and much younger) souls than I flew in on tight budgets and had to return to studies and teaching within short turnaround of arrival in Sydney. Thankfully the program book enables us to keep in touch by email.

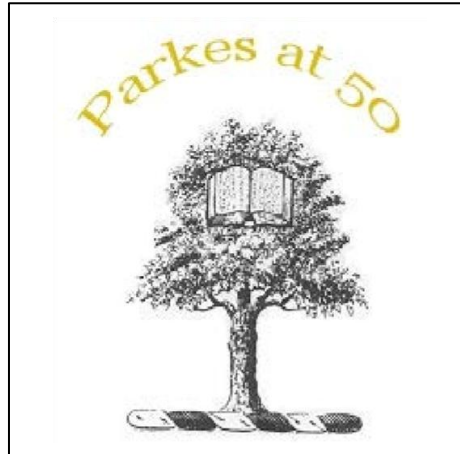
And did we lean; that is, were we uncompromising in our many disciplinary postures, free to express our academic views?

The final assertion of the Passover's many expressions of freedom is embodied in the very posture of those who take their seats at the Seder table. The range of intellectual positions on display was heartening. The range of Jewish religious preferences was respectfully given time, space and recognition. Non-Jewish presenters enriched our group and the quality of our work. There was robust questioning and even more robust expectation that scholars would stand their ground on the excellence of their work. We could not have been accused of academic compromise or of avoiding contentious material.

On balance, given the two short days, this conference was not large, but "never mind the quality, feel the width" does *not* apply. As a networking opportunity for young scholars, the chance for all to test the progress of research and a chance to polish the skills of personal presentation (no substitute for academic excellence but by far the most memorable element if you have been asleep through the others), the conference worked for me. Oh and I don't even have video games loaded on my phone as a distraction, I stayed awake and listened to all the sessions I attended ...

At the end of the 2015 conference we can truly say NEXT YEAR IN BRISBANE!!!

Aviva Kipen



CFP: Jewish/non-Jewish Relations from Antiquity to the Present University of Southampton, 7-9 September 2015

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Parkes Library at the University of Southampton, the catalyst for the establishment of the unique Parkes Institute for the study of Jewish/non-Jewish relations. The Institute is based on the life work of the Reverend Dr James Parkes (1896-1981), one of the most remarkable figures within twentieth century Christianity. A tireless fighter against antisemitism in all forms, including from within Christianity, he helped rescue Jewish refugees during the 1930s and campaigned for the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust. During the Second World War he helped found the Council of Christians and Jews and worked throughout his career in promoting religious tolerance and mutual respect. As part of his international campaigning, he built up the Parkes Library and associated archive which transferred to the University of Southampton in 1964 and opened in 1965. It is now one of the largest Jewish documentation centres in Europe and the only one in the world devoted specifically to Jewish/non-Jewish relations.

This anniversary conference will examine the subject of Jewish/non-Jewish relations by looking at the history of research over the last 50 years, presenting the latest research in this area, and determining future directions in the field. We welcome proposals covering any subject related to Jewish/non-Jewish relations from antiquity to the present day, with proposals for papers (and panels) in the following areas especially welcome:

- The legacy of James Parkes
- Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim relations
- Jewish/non-Jewish relations in the Hellenistic and Roman periods
- Rabbinic literature and the representation of the 'other'
- Medieval and Early Modern Jewish/non-Jewish relations
- History of antisemitism
- Comparative migration and identity
- The Holocaust and Jewish/non-Jewish relations
- Jewish/non-Jewish relations in literature and philosophy
- Representation and constructions of the image of 'the Jew'
- Jews and non-Jews in the Visual and Performing Arts

- The role and representation of Jews in the heritage world, including museums, libraries and archives.

Keynote speakers

Todd Endelman, Professor Emeritus of Modern Jewish History, University of Michigan

Sander Gilman, Professor of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and Professor of Psychiatry at Emory University

Martin Goodman, Professor of Jewish Studies, Oxford University, and President of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

Tony Kushner, Marcus Sieff Professor of the History of Jewish/non Jewish Relations, University of Southampton and the Parkes Institute

Miri Rubin, Professor of Medieval and Early Modern History, Queen Mary University of London

Greg Walker, Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature, University of Edinburgh

Venue and Conference Information

7-9 September 2015, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, UK.

Submission of paper proposals

Please submit proposals by **1 April 2015** to Dr Helen Spurling (H.Spurling@southampton.ac.uk), including the following information:

- Author's full name
- Postal and email address
- Institutional affiliation
- Abstract of the paper to be presented (no more than 250 words)
- Biographical information (no more than 50 words)
- Panel proposals should not exceed one page in length

A limited number of bursaries will be available on a competitive basis for postgraduates and early career researchers. Please indicate if you would like to be considered for a bursary.

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/parkes/jubilee/index.page?>

For academic enquiries, please contact H.Spurling@southampton.ac.uk

For general enquiries, please contact: parkes@southampton.ac.uk

Let My People Go: The untold story of Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959–89

Sam Lipski and Suzanne D. Rutland

"... an inspiring and fascinating story"
—John Howard

LET MY PEOPLE GO



**The untold story of Australia
and the Soviet Jews 1959–89**



SAM LIPSKI AND SUZANNE D. RUTLAND

For 50 years, until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the Soviet Union ran a campaign of repression, imprisonment, political trials and terror against its three million Jews. After Stalin's death in 1953, many in the West thought that the persecution of Soviet Jews would come to an end, but by 1959 it had become clear that this was not the case, and a campaign on their behalf began across the free world.

In Australia, political leaders and the Jewish community contributed significantly to this international protest movement. Australia was the first country to raise the issue of the abuse of human rights and the mistreatment of Jews in the Soviet Union at the United Nations in 1962. The Australian resolution stated that if the Soviet Union was unable to permit Jews to practice their religion freely, then they should be permitted to leave the Soviet Union. Both Bob Hawke, as ACTU leader and later prime minister, and Malcolm Fraser were deeply involved in this campaign, which eventually triumphed over Moscow's tyranny and led to the modern Exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel and other countries.

Lipski and Rutland make this largely unknown Australian story come alive with a combination of passion, personal experience and ground-breaking research, which is based

both on previously closed materials in the National Archive of Australia and the private archive of Mr Isi Joseph Leibler, who played a crucial role in the campaign.

Natan Sharansky, a former Soviet Jewish dissident, who suffered imprisonment and solitary confinement from 1977 until his release in 1986, and today is Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel has written about the book: “The struggle for the freedom of Soviet Jewry was one of the most powerful displays of strength and solidarity by the world Jewish community ... even those intimately familiar with the struggle will be surprised to discover in *Let My People Go* how the Australian Jewish community and its leaders were among the campaign's initiators, and how they saw it through to its successful conclusion. This is a unique testament to how a small group can play a big role in history.”

This book is the product of the combined efforts of a veteran journalist, Sam Lipski, who was also a player in the story, and Professor Suzanne Rutland, well-known historian of Australian Jewry.

Sam Lipski is an award-winning journalist who has written for *The Australian*, *The Bulletin*, the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Washington Post*, and was the *Australian Jewish News*' Editor-in-Chief 1987-98. He is also a former TV news producer and commentator for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Nine Network.

Suzanne D. Rutland is Professor of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney and Co-ordinator of the Jewish Civilisation, Thought and Culture program. She was awarded an Australian Prime Ministers Centre (APMC) Fellowship, 2008-09, for this project. She has published widely on Australian Jewish history.

An edited version of the first chapter appeared in the Weekend Australian 18 March 2015:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/why-bob-hawke-brought-palestine-issue-to-refusenik-rally/story-e6frg6z6-1227281792278>

Why Bob Hawke brought Palestine issue to refusenik rally

For more information, go to www.hybridpublishers.com.au

SUBMISSIONS TO AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF JEWISH STUDIES

The *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* is an academic publication, produced annually by the AAJS. The Journal is devoted to the study of Jewish culture in all its aspects and all periods. The Journal regularly publishes the Keynote Address from the AAJS's Annual Conference, along with a selection of other conference papers, and interesting articles submitted by authors from across the world. It also publishes book reviews of a similarly wide range of topics. Contributions which come within the scope of the Journal are always welcome. Please note that all articles published in the Journal undergo peer review, to ensure their academic quality.

Please send contributions for the Journal to myer.samra@uni.sydney.edu.au

Regards and best wishes for the Passover,

Dr Myer Samra Editor *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2014

MEMBERSHIP FEES for the Australian Association for Jewish Studies (ABN 16535824946) are current from 1 January 2014–31 December 2014 (includes the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* published annually and the AAJS Newsletter)

<http://www.aajs.org.au>

Fees for 2014

Benefactor: \$250.00

Regular: \$60.00 (Aus)

Pensioner/Full-time Student: \$25.00 (Aus)

Institutional: \$70.00 (Aus)

Overseas: \$80.00 (Aus)

All correspondence to:

AAJS

C/- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod

Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies

School of Languages and Cultures, A18

The University of Sydney NSW 2006

michael.abrahams-sprod@sydney.edu.au

Payment Options:

1. Pay directly into our account: BSB: 082-372; Account No: 507 802 547; SWIFT Code: NATAAU33025
2. Via the AAJS webpage <http://www.aajs.org.au> or
3. By cheque. Post to Membership Secretary, AAJS, C/- Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod (as above)

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Newsletter edited by Anna Rosenbaum.

