

Newsletter No

65

December 2016

Australian Association for Jewish Studies

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2017 marks 30 years of the AAJS, the organisation being founded in 1987 with its first conference held in 1987, when tertiary Jewish Studies was very much in its infancy. It is exciting to see how the organisation has continued to grow and to maintain and build on its original mandate. The 2017 conference, being held at the Sydney Jewish Museum from Sunday 12-13 February at the Sydney Jewish Museum promises to be a highlight, with three keynote speakers, Hebrew University academic, Dr. Dan Porat, radio personality, Dr. Rachael Kohn and Sam Lipski, AM, veteran Jewish journalist and community personality. Its theme is *Narratives and Counter Narratives: Nation and Nationhood*. Together with a rich combination of both overseas, interstate and local presentations, the conference will be well

worth attending.

Some AAJS founders: L-R Professors Bill Rubinstein, Dr David Beirman, Professor Suzanne Rutland, Dr Paul Bartrop.



Our international keynote speaker, Dr. Dan Porat teaches at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has published *The Boy: A Holocaust Story* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2010), a book focused on the iconic photograph of a little boy raising his hands in the Warsaw ghetto. Currently he is writing a book 'State of Suspicion: Israel Tries Jews Who

Collaborated with^[1]_[SEP] Nazis' that focuses on forty criminal trials (1950-1972) in which the State of Israel prosecuted Holocaust survivors for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis.

In his keynote address, Dr. Porat will focus on his current project. He will explain his research to untangle the stories of three Nazi criminals, ranging in status from SS sergeant to low-ranking SS officer to SS general and two Jewish victims, a teenage girl and a young boy, who encounter these Nazis in Warsaw in the spring of 1943.



He will also review how his investigation into the lives of these participants in the years preceding World War I and following them to their deaths. One of the Nazis managed to stay at large for twenty-two years. One of the survivors lived long enough to lose a son in the Yom Kippur War.

The Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund has sponsored Dr. Porat's visit to Australia. He is the Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund Academic Exchange Fellow. We would like to express our appreciation for the support of the Fund for the conference, as well as to the Pratt Foundation, for their support of scholarships for early career researchers.

A registration form is attached and can also be downloaded from the website. The program will also be uploaded once it is finalized. We look forward to seeing you all there for this special conference.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Dr. Michael Abrahams-Sprod is stepping down as our president after having served with dedication as our president for eight years. Under his helm, the position of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies has been extended and consolidated, as he has outlined in his annual report, which will be included in the conference booklet.

During Michael's term we have seen the AAJS grow and prosper. We have extended its activities to the smaller

Jewish centres. We have held our first ever conference in our national capital Canberra and also in Brisbane. As well we had the second conference in Adelaide – the first was held in 1993. This was an outstanding conference so well organized by Professor Ghil'ad Zuckerman, who has kindly agreed to take over the helm of our Association from Michael. Ghil'ad has served as South Australian vice-president since that time.

Another approach consolidated under Michael's leadership is having a clear theme for each conference, which has proved a very successful approach for our conferences. With specific themes, we have been able to attract international scholars who have a specific interest in the theme of that conference. Combined with including membership fees within conference registration fees – a normative practice for other Jewish Studies associations – and Michael's careful management – the AAJS is now in a good financial position. Michael has also built an excellent team, both within New South Wales, and also with interstate representatives.



This year Michael was appointed as the Roth Lecturer in Israel, Jewish Civilisation and Holocaust Studies in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney. With his new responsibilities he has decided to hand on the baton. He has brought outstanding qualities to his role as president. He is meticulous in his

approach, extremely conscientious and dedicated to everything he undertakes, demonstrates careful attention to detail and thoroughness, and excellent time management skills. We have all been very fortunate to have had him at the helm for such a long time, and I am sure that he will still be part of the team in terms of advice and assistance.

We can look forward to an exciting future for the AAJS, with the firm foundations that Michael is leaving. The new elections will take place at the AAJS Conference, with Professor Ghil'ad Zuckerman nominating as president. Dr. Anna Hirsh of Melbourne has agreed to nominate as the Victorian Vice-President, adding to our strong team.

Suzanne D. Rutland, OAM

Professor Emerita

CHANGE OF EDITORSHIP

Thanks to Dr. Myer Samra, who is retiring as Editor of the Australian Journal of Jewish Studies (AJJS) after serving in this capacity for seven years. We are greatly appreciative of all his efforts.



The AAJS is a peer-reviewed Journal published annually by the Australian Association for Jewish Studies. The AJJS is devoted to the study of Jewish culture in all aspects and all periods, and all articles undergo rigorous peer review.

Dr. Vicky Schinkel has a diverse background. Initially a management and marketing specialist, she attained her first research Masters Degree in Economic Statistics (QUT), where she applied Chaos Theory to the forecasting of time-series data. Her second research Masters (UQ) applied the four levels of meanings represented by the traditional method of analysing the Torah known as PaRDeS - the film script Saturn Returns.

Vicky spent twelve years as a film critic on radio, before completing her PhD at the University of Melbourne. She used the PaRDeS method as the foundation of a new theory of film interpretation and criticism, arguing that the post-modern concept of 'The Author is Dead,' as inappropriate in a modern world, where we each find multiple meanings based on our personal experiences. She also noted that the Jewish concept of Midrash accurately represents the modern viewer's exposure to social, print and digital media.

Manuscripts and books for review should be sent to Dr. Vicky Schinkel (vickyschinkel@gmail.com) as an email attachment.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Prime Minister's Literary Award, Australian History

Congratulations to Emeritus Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM, from the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies, who with co-author Sam Lipski, was jointly awarded the Prize for Australian History for her work, *Let My People Go: The untold story of Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959-89*, co-authored by Sam Lipski AM. The book explores Australia's pivotal role in helping persecuted Soviet Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union, during the latter half of the 20th century.

"I am absolutely delighted, I had not expected to be shortlisted, let alone to win," said Emeritus Professor Rutland. "The campaign for Soviet Jewry was a major issue, which contributed to the collapse of the Soviet regime, so I am very glad that the book has received this recognition."

Professor Rutland and Sam Lipski share the prize with Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick of the Department of History for her book *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics*.

Congratulations to both for this remarkable achievement.

Promotion to Senior Lectureship

Congratulations to Dr. Avril Alba, who has been promoted to Senior Lecturer in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney. This is a great achievement for Avril, who was appointed as lecturer in 2012. Since her appointment, she has published her PhD thesis as a book with Palgrave, has received a major ARC Linkage grant and has played a key role in the development and running of the new MA on Museum and Heritage Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Social Studies.

Sister Dr. Marianne Dacy, AM

Marianne, who has played such a key role in the history of the Association, serving as both honorary secretary and treasurer of the AAJS for many years, retired two years ago and is now moving back to Melbourne. We would like to wish Marianne much happiness and fulfillment in her new abode and look forward to her still being involved with our association as Honorary Secretary.

Oral Narratives and the Politics of History Making, Jerusalem

The second international conference of the Oral History Division of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry was held at the Hebrew University Mount Scopus campus and the National Library 6-8 December. There was a rich array of papers dealing with many different aspects of oral history with presenters representing scholarship across the globe including Australia. Dr. Michael Abrahams-Sprod (University of Sydney) spoke on 'Completing the Picture: The Role and Impact of Oral History on Writing the History of the Jews of Magdeburg under Nazism' and Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland spoke on 'Challenging the Myth: Arthur Calwell and Postwar Survivor Migration to Australia'. Both were also invited to chair sessions.

The conference also marked Dr. Sharon Kangisser-Cohen's move from being the Director of the Oral History Division to being the Director of the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People at the National Library of Israel. A special session was held in honour of Sharon, with warm words said about her by Emeritus



Professor Dalia Ofer. Sharon grew up in Sydney, where she did her undergraduate studies, before making aliyah. She earned her PhD from the Hebrew University from the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, under Professor Ofer's supervision. She has taught Holocaust studies at the Hebrew University, The University of New South Wales, Australia and at NYU in New York. Her second book entitled *Testimony and Time: early and later Holocaust survivor testimony*, which Professor Ofer praised as an important piece of scholarship, was published by Yad Vashem in 2014.

UPDATE FROM THE FELLOWSHIP OF BIBLICAL STUDIES (FBS), UNSW

Recently Dr Rachele Gilmour took over from A/Professor Ian Young of the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney, as the co-ordinator for FBS in NSW and Sydney as of the AGM in Melbourne last week. She expressed her thanks to Ian for all his work co-ordinating, planning and organising FBS over the last years from its very beginning in Sydney and NSW! A special vote of appreciation was also made to Ian at the AGM for the leadership and energy he has put into FBS. Ian will of course still be involved in FBS and part of the co-ordination team.

Dr Gilmour is senior lecturer in Biblical Studies at the Broken Bay Institute. She completed her doctorate in

the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies under Professor Ian Young's supervision and then continued with a post-doctoral fellowship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Edinburgh. Her main research interest is analysing biblical narrative from a literary perspective, and using these insights to learn more about the art of the biblical authors and editors, and their ancient conception of historiography. She has published two books on these topics, *Representing the Past: A Literary Analysis of Narrative Historiography in the Book of Samuel* (VTS 143, Brill, 2011) and *Juxtaposition and the Elisha Cycle* (LHBOTS 594, T&T Clark, 2014), alongside a number of articles. Her current focus is on collective on prophecy and memory in the Book of Jeremiah.

Dr Gilmour has invited members of FBS for feedback and suggestions they may have for the future direction of FBS in Sydney. In particular, she asks if members might have ideas for the format of our regular meetings, special meetings, social media or other networks. She would also love to hear if you would be interested in presenting a paper in 2017 or know of visiting scholars who might be suitable.

BBi - The Australian Institute of Theological Education

Caroline Chisholm Centre
423 Pennant Hills Road, Pennant Hills,
Australia
Postal Address: PO Box 662, Pennant
Hills NSW 1715
Ph: [+61 2 9847 0528](tel:+61298470528), Fax: [+61 2 9847 0031](tel:+61298470031)
Email: rgilmour@bbi.catholic.edu.au
Web: www.bbi.catholic.edu.au



MEMBER REPORTS

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

In November the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance met in Iasi, Romania. IHRA has 31 member nations, 11 observer nations and 7 international partner organisations. Each year one member nation hosts two meetings of the organization, in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. In 2015 Hungary, was the host nation, in 2016 Romania and in 2017 it will be Switzerland. The Romanian ambassador, Mihnea Constantinescu, has proved to be an outstanding chair, dedicating himself to the major challenges in terms of ensuring and implementing a clear definition of anti-Semitism, and dealing with the issues with Poland.

This was the third meeting Australia has participated in as an observer nation. Australia's Deputy Ambassador to Germany, Lauren Bain headed the delegation, which included four experts, Pauline Rockman OAM, Sue Hampel OAM, Prof. Suzanne Rutland OAM and Dr. Andre Oboler, headed the delegation. At the invitation of the chair, Stefan Andersson, Sue Hampel and Suzanne Rutland gave a presentation on Holocaust education in Australia to the Education Working Group.

The meeting took place in Iasi, the largest city in Eastern Romania and the former capital of the country of Moldavia from 1564 to 1859. Prior to the Holocaust the city of Iasi was 42% Jewish and had 127 synagogues. The Iasi Pogrom, which started on 29 June 1941, saw at least 13,266 Jews killed by Romanian authorities. Today the city has two synagogues and a Jewish population of around 200 people.

In addition to the formal meetings of the International Holocaust Memorial Alliance, delegates visited the site where Jews were detain for transport on the death trains and others were killed in the

courtyard of what was then the police station and a full day tour to Holocaust sites was also organized on the Sunday before the meeting.



Group at police Station with photos of the Jewish roundup on the walls and the Romanian guide providing an explanation. Professor Suzanne Rutland is in the foreground.

The topic causing greatest concern at the meeting was the situation in Poland where laws have been created criminalising those “who publicly and against the facts, accuse the Polish nation, or the Polish state, [of being] responsible or complicit in Nazi crimes committed by the III German Reich.” The laws carry a three-year prison term.

Poland is concerned about the misrepresentation of history, particularly where death camps established in occupied Poland by the Nazis are at times incorrectly referred to as “Polish Death Camps” in the media. Experts at the meeting agreed this was a worrying misrepresentation of history, but felt the law was too widely drafted and would stifle legitimate research into Polish involvement in atrocities during the Holocaust. Princeton University Professor Jan Tomasz Gross is already under investigation for his work on Polish involvement in Holocaust. Poland stressed the complaints were not initiated by the Government and the Prosecutor is doing his job following up on the complaints he

received. The meeting offered the assistance of legal experts to Poland to look at ways the laws might be improved to limit the risk of them being abused and having a negative impact on Holocaust research and scholarship.

During the meeting the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance expressed a strong desire to see Australia’s involvement upgraded from observer status towards full membership as soon as possible. Sir Eric Pickles, head of the United Kingdom delegation, offered to liaise with Australia to provide any assistance needed with this process. An upgrade, first to Liaison Status then to full membership, requires a formal decision from the Australian Government, followed by a vote at the Plenary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The question of an upgrade to Liaison Status is currently being considered by the Australian Government.

Dr. Andre Oboler

Much of this article was first published by J-Wire:

<http://www.jwire.com.au/protecting-memory-holocaust/>

The Process of Using PaRDeS in the Analysis of Film Texts

In my last article I referred to my use of PaRDeS in the analysis of filmic texts, specifically with relation to the film *Taxi Driver*. In this article I present the process of applying PaRDeS – a system that traditionally applies four levels of meaning in the analysis of *Torah*, which can be applied to any film text. It is worth noting that this process applies to *all* texts: film, poetry, literature and historical documents. I remind readers of the four levels:

P’shat Plain/Simple/Literal

Remez Allegorical/Metaphorical

D’rash Commentary/Midrash/Significant Meaning

Sod Secret or Hidden Meanings/Personal Response/Mystical Meanings that offer insight into the structure of the Universe

The process is simple, and consists of the following steps:

Step 1: Prior to Watching the Film

- Note the viewing context of the film (for example in a cinema or at home)
- Note own prior knowledge of the film (for example information from reviews/word of mouth)
- Ask self: What pre-existing ideas do I have about this film?

Step 2: 'First Response'

- Watch film (taking notes is recommended)
- Once film is viewed, summarise story/plot as you remember it
- Ask self: What are filmmakers 'trying to communicate?'

Step 3: Research Phase

- How was the film produced? Where was it made? How does this impact upon the story?
- Who was responsible for what elements – for example the scriptwriter, director and actors?
- Do the contributions of various contributors reflect previous filmmaking activities? How?
- What was the critical and scholarly response to the film?

Step 4: Establishing Boundaries of Midrash: Commentary and Interpretation

- View the film again – but this time in the context of responding to questioning film meaning as a synthesis of the four levels of PaRDeS
- Seek support for alternative interpretations
- Develop an assessment of explicit and implicit meanings of the film

- Ask self: Are there interpretations of the film that have not been previously identified?
- What is the socio-cultural impact of the film?
- Does the film suggest ideological or philosophical meaning? How?

Step 5: Responding to Interpretative Questions

- Such questions are different for any specific film
- Essentially, you will be asking, 'How do I undergo the *process* of interpretation, and what influences me during this activity?'

Step 6: Responding to own Interpretation of Film

- Whilst casting a critical eye on your own interpretation, aim to identify your own potential biases, and how these might create a 'misinterpretation'
- Use your personal understanding of the film, develop a dialogic position from which you can respond to existing interpretations

Step 7: Making Choices about Meaning and Interpretation

- How valid are your personal responses to the film?
- Are any existing interpretations invalid or misguided? Why?
- What choices do interpreters/critics/scholars make about the meaning of the film, and how/are these choices justified?

PaRDeS interpretation of texts underpins the intuitive grasp that most of us have about interpretation and meaning, and allows us to identify what is personally significant when 'making meaning.' Using the process described above enables the creation of unique and original analyses of not only films, but also any kind of text, be

it poetry, literature, biography and so forth.

Dr Vicky Schinkel

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies 2017 Volume

The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies, an international, peer-reviewed Journal invites submissions for its 2017 edition. The Journal is devoted to the study of Jewish culture in all its aspects and all its periods. For details of contents of previous Journals please refer to the website of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies: <http://www.aajs.org.au> Please forward manuscripts to the editor by electronic mail at vickyschinkel@gmail.com

Style of Manuscript

Title: Centred, spaced above text
 Author: Centred, spaced above text
 Headings: Aligned to left margin
 Spacing: Please use single spacing
 Margins: 4cm

A more extensive style guide, including examples is available, and will be sent to contributors. Please provide an abstract and a short biography of author/s.

Prevention of Mass Violence and Promotion of Tolerance: Lessons from History

International Multidisciplinary Conference

Department of History, Presidency University, Kolkata, India

27-28 February 2017

The Kolkata conference committee is inviting submissions of papers and posters from different academic disciplines to help us draw lessons from history as to how mass violence can be prevented and

tolerance can be promoted. History testifies to the fact that mass violence is as old as human existence. Almost every episode of mass violence has been followed by efforts aimed at preventing its reoccurrence, yet we have miserably failed in achieving that. This is an invitation to explore why we failed and how lessons from history could help us succeed in this endeavor of ours. We are particularly interested in the subthemes mentioned below but open to anything whatsoever relevant to the broad theme of the conference.

Subthemes

1. Absence of Genocide/Holocaust Studies in countries worst affected by mass violence
2. Role of Genocide/Holocaust Studies in the Prevention of Mass Violence
3. The Contested Field of the History of Genocide
4. The Demand for Apology and its Refusal
5. Resistance to Holocaust Studies
6. Hurdles and Obstacles in raising Holocaust Awareness in Asia, North Africa and Eastern Europe
7. Genocide/Mass Violence as depicted in Cinema and Literature and its reception
8. Debate on the Prohibition of Hate Speech v/s Freedom of Speech
9. Comparison between societies with Holocaust education and those without it
10. Political Response to Genocide/Holocaust Studies
11. Failure to recognize the warning signs
12. Judicial Response to Mass Violence: Failure and Success
13. State's Response to Mass Violence: Failure and Success
14. The Clash between Academia and State on the issue of Mass Violence
15. The Distortion of History for instigating Mass Violence
16. Selective Amnesia in Historical Studies of Genocide/Mass Violence
17. Sanitization of History

18. Coming to terms with the History of Genocide/Mass Violence

19. History of Interfaith and Cross-cultural understanding as deterrents for Mass Violence

20. Non-State Actors as Perpetrators and Preventers of Mass Violence

21. The Scholarly Debate on Nomenclature

22. The Centrality of the Holocaust

23. The Uniqueness and/or the Universality of the Holocaust

24. Holocaust as a point of reference

25. Absence of Holocaust Studies in South Asia

26. Conflicting Historical Narratives

27. History of Denial

28. Gender in Mass Violence/Genocide

Registration Fee:

Foreign Participants: US \$100/-

Indian Participants: Rs. 2000/-

In lieu of the registration fee the participants will get lunch during the two days of the Conference and a conference kit. Participants are expected to make their own arrangements for flights and accommodation.

Some of the confirmed participants of the



RENEWAL OF AAJS MEMBERSHIP

If you are unable to attend the February conference, please do not forget to renew your membership. The publication of our annual journal is dependent on members' subscriptions.

Benefactor: \$250.00

Regular: \$60.00 (Aus)

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

Institutional: \$70.00 (Aus)

Overseas: \$80.00 (Aus)

conference are the following: Mehnaz M Afridi,

Michael Barenbaum, Vian Dakhil, Charles Ehrlich, Reuven Firestone, Edward Mortimer, Dina

Porat, David Rosen, Suzanne Rutland, Robert Satloff, and Sarva Daman Singh.

Key Dates:

Deadline for the Submission of Abstract as a Word file (300 words)/Poster (PDF) with a biographical profile (100 words): **15 December, 2016**

Date of the Notification of Acceptance: 22 December, 2016

Deadline for the submission of complete paper (10,000 - 12,000 words): 15 February, 2017

It is planned to publish a collection of selected papers presented at the conference.

Email for Paper/Poster Submission:

Navras.His@PresiUniv.ac.in

Contact:

Dr Navras Jaat Aafreedi

Assistant Professor

Department of History

Presidency University

Kolkata, India





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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Edited by Anna Rosenbaum

Hannukah sameah!