

# HaMerkaz

ACT Jewish Community Magazine

March 2017 | Adar 5777

## PURIM

ANOTHER  
SUCCESSFUL  
CARNIVAL ENJOYED  
BY EVERYONE

## REPORTS

UPDATES FROM THE  
BOARD, RABBI,  
AFFILIATED  
ORGANISATIONS AND  
GROUPS

## OPINIONS

ARTICLES FROM THE  
COMMUNITY



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- Adele Rosalky
- Merrilyn Sernack
- Simon Tatz
- Rabbi Meltzer (*ex officio*)

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*Cover: Raz and Rotem at Purim*

*Left: Community Youth participating in an education class run by our Shlichim, Rotem & Raz*

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## Editor's Note

KAREN TATZ

On behalf of the HaMerkaz Editorial Committee

Hello and welcome to the March / Purim / Pesach issue of *HaMerkaz*. *HaMerkaz* is our community magazine and the Editorial Advisory Committee continues to discuss the best format and content. We welcome thoughts and ideas from members, as well as contributions.

The committee consists of Adele Rosalky, Marilyn Sernack, Rob Cussel, Simon Tatz, the Rabbi (ex officio) and me, Karen Tatz. As noted in a recent *Grapevine*, we have decided to limit each issue to 40 pages, which means we have to limit individual articles / reports. Ideally, contributions will be a maximum of 800 – 1000 words.

Longer articles will either be returned for editing or we will edit them ourselves. If you want to discuss a particular piece, please contact me, and the Committee will give your submission consideration. Please be aware that some items are more appropriate for the weekly *Grapevine* than *HaMerkaz* and that anything in *HaMerkaz* should reflect that it is a quarterly journal.

If anyone or any group would like to include something in this edition, please contact me via the office at [admin@canberrajewishcommunity.org](mailto:admin@canberrajewishcommunity.org). If you are submitting photographs to accompany an article, please do not embed them in the article but provide

them separately in JPEG or TIFF formats.

I recently completed the Gen17 – Australian Jewish Community survey, a joint project between Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation and the JCA to help understand the current views and needs of Jewish Australians. I found the way I identified my Jewishness interesting and thought that it covered the range of members in our special community. If you would like to know more about it – see <http://www.monash.edu/gen17#page-section-11>. If you haven't received an email to participate and are interested, you can email [gen17@jca.org.au](mailto:gen17@jca.org.au).



Yael, David, Raz & Rotem enjoying our Purim Carnival

# What changes we have seen in *HaMerkaz!*

## ACTJC BOARD

The first edition was published on 27 August 1965 and consisted of two foolscap pages of manual typescript. Its aim was to "keep members informed" and to "circulate among our friends in other cities who are interested in news of the A.C.T. Jewish Community". It also recorded events and personal milestones of members.

Over the intervening years, there have been progressive changes to the content, size and style of the magazine. Its role has expanded to provide articles of general Jewish interest; editorial comment has waxed and waned; reports of Community activities have continued to form essential copy, but have expanded in information content.

There has also been a major change in quality. This has come about in part through dedicated editorship by a sequence of volunteer editors. But there has also been a large contribution from new technology - software, printing quality and the internet. These changes have resulted in recent editions of *HaMerkaz* becoming a glossy coloured magazine of high quality. The internet has enabled the magazine to glean material from world-wide sources. It has also made the magazine universally available as nearly everybody has internet access. In 2016, 85% of Australians used the internet, and the capital cities, and Canberra in particular, had the highest penetration.

While production and availability have become cheaper through technological change, printing and postage have moved in the other direction, and the costs are becoming prohibitive. The Board has considered how to maintain production and dissemination of a high-quality *HaMerkaz*. In engaging our excellent, highly skilled office managers, there was an emphasis placed on skills necessary to produce documents like *HaMerkaz*. But the Board has concluded that, like nearly all community groups, associations and clubs, its publicity material should be made available electronically and printed copies should be made available only to those who request them and who then pay the marginal cost of production.

Charging for printed colour copies will commence from the next edition. The rates per edition will be:

### MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

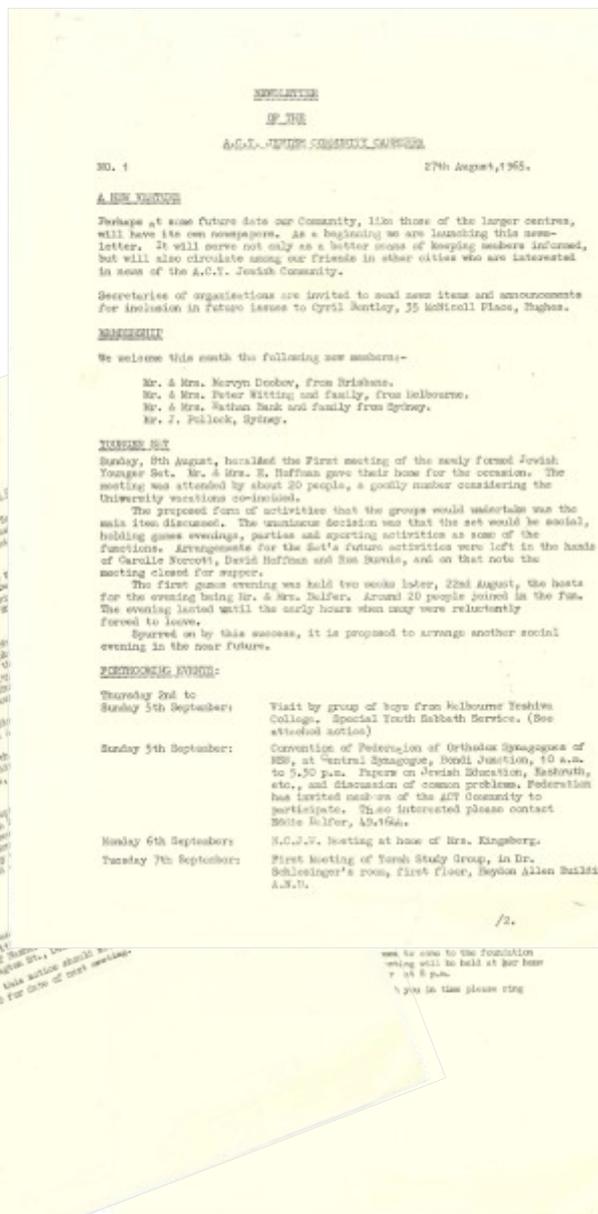
Pick up copy: \$4.00  
Posted copy: \$7.00

### PENSIONER MEMBERS

Pick up copy: \$2.50  
Posted copy: \$5.00

March 2017

Pages from the first  
Edition of *HaMerkaz*  
dated 27 August 1965





# President's Welcome

Yael Cass

**W**elcome to our first edition of HaMerkaz for 2017. This year is off to a flying start with our child and youth education program in full swing, our CaTZ youth group active and adult education classes available for all. Our Purim Carnival was on Sunday, 12 March, and our communal Seder night for the whole family will be on Monday, 10 April. Look out for your email invitation and notices in our weekly *Grapevine* so you can RSVP early.

## Australia's National Jewish Community Survey Gen17

All members of the ACT Jewish Community should have received an email inviting you to complete the Gen17 Survey. This is a joint project between the JCA and Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. The purpose of the survey is to collect information for better planning and resourcing Jewish communal activity. It is used by all Jewish communal organisations to better understand the views and needs of Jewish Australians, including:

- Your experience of Jewish (and non-Jewish) school education;
- The changing expression of Jewish identity;
- Your views on Jewish leadership, services provided by communal organisations and your priorities for communal activity;
- The challenges faced by Jewish youth and young parents; and
- Your future expectations.

The survey will illustrate the change in our community since Gen08. Please take the time to complete the survey. If you have not received an email about the survey –

then you should email [gen17@jca.org.au](mailto:gen17@jca.org.au) to receive a link to the survey

## JCA Support for the ACTJC

The JCA has provided very generous support for the ACTJC in 2016-17 with an allocation of \$220,000. This allocation is in recognition of the bold initiatives we have pursued over the last two years and the significant growth in our membership base, programs delivered and engagement with our community. The increased allocation is also directly attributable to the increased level of ACT donations to the JCA General Appeal – and the JCA has indicated an intention to maintain this level of funding as long as our community's contribution is also maintained. This is an important issue, and we will provide more information in advance of the next JCA General Appeal.

The new JCA CEO, Bruce Goldsmith, commenced work in January 2017 following Dan Grynberg's departure after three years in the position. Bruce was born in Christchurch, New Zealand and was a member of the tight-knit Canterbury Hebrew Congregation. He has been involved in the hi-tech and telecommunications sector for large parts of his career, including significant involvement more recently with the Israeli tech sector and raising growth capital for tech sector companies. We look forward to working closely with Bruce on our plans for continuing to build the ACTJC, and to him visiting our community at some point in the future.

## ACTJC Capital Appeal

The Board is continuing to finalise our Capital Appeal to redevelop the National Jewish Centre. Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone in our community who has made a contribution to this project for our future. It is not too late to make a contribution! We currently have pledges and payments with around \$3.8 million available – and we are continuing to talk with potential donors and philanthropic

organisations in Sydney and Melbourne. Receipts for donations made so far will be issued shortly. The Board is carefully costing all elements of our redevelopment project to determine the best staging of the tender and building project. Further information will be provided to the whole community at a communal meeting planned for May 2017.

In addition to our immediate capital development plans, a small group of community members – ably led by Robert Cussel – has done some related work on a broader site strategic plan. This plan is intended to be a living document which sets out our communal vision for the potential medium and longer-term use of our whole site. These activities must be consistent with the aims and objects of the Community, and compliant with the terms of our perpetual lease and with our status as a charitable organisation. It is not a definitive statement of future development, rather a set of suggestions of what we could look to in terms of future development of our community. A draft will shortly be sent to all community members for discussion and comment.

## Yom Ha'Shoah Memorial Service

Planning for our Yom Ha'Shoah service is now underway. This year we have the opportunity to work with the ECAJ and NSW Jewish Board of Deputies to hold a joint national Holocaust memorial service. More information will be available shortly for this important event.

Our Centre is alive with activity – and your help is vital to our work. If you can contribute some time to help with our security roster, with our Kiddush roster or with our ReachOut service please contact a member of the Board or our Office staff by email at: [actadmin@canberra jewishcommunity.org](mailto:actadmin@canberra jewishcommunity.org).



# Rabbi's Desk

RABBI ALON MELTZER

**I**t has been a whirlwind start to the year as normal, but now that we are in March!?! (I know, right), and the year is one third the way through, things are starting to smooth out and everything is running like a well-oiled machine.

This little reprieve between Purim and Pesach offers a nice moment to stop and contemplate the meaning of what community has to offer. The hustle and bustle of Purim, where we saw over 150 people join together for Asher Lee's Bar Mitzvah and our very successful CaTZ Purim Carnival, is over. Soon the frantic Pesach cleaning and cooking will begin (followed by more cleaning as we try to eliminate the horrid collection of matzo crumbs). What we do now, in this interim period, is catch our breath and look at what is around us.

The Shulchan Aruch, the codification of Jewish Law, in Orach Chayim, Chapter 429:1 gives the following law.

We learn the laws of Pesach for 30 days before Pesach. Rem"a: And it is customary to buy wheat to give to the poor for Pesach. And whoever is residing in the city for twelve months must give for this.

שואלין בהלכות  
פסח קודם לפסח  
שלשים יום. הגה:  
ומנהג לקנות  
הטים לחלקן  
לעניים לצורך פסח.  
וכל מי שצריך בעיר  
י"ב חדש צריך לתן  
לזה

What does it mean that thirty days before one must begin to learn the laws of Pesach, surely we know from year to year what we have to do; the process of the cleaning, the old family recipes, the

order of the Seder? What more can there be to learn?

I am always of the view that one should pick up the Hagaddah prior to Pesach and refresh ones' self with the story of our freedom, looking for new explanations for the adults, and new questions for the children. But I think the Shulchan Aruch is saying much more. The gloss, penned by Rabbi Moshe Isserlis, the Rema, adds to this law by stating that one needs to begin the communal purchase of wheat, and the gathering of charity, so that those who are without means can prepare for their Seders, knowing that they will have what they need.

This announcement, meant to be made following Purim, ties hand in hand with the opening words of our Hagaddah, 'Whoever is hungry come let him/her eat'. It is not enough to just do this on the night of the seder, when the words are empty, we have to go out for the thirty days prior to ensure that there is no one left without a place to enjoy the Seder.

When I look at this community that is what I see. I see a collective of people, from such a varied background, who come together to help one another. As the Talmud teaches us, 'kol yisrael areivim zeh l'zeh', All of Israel is responsible for one another. It is not a statement of fact, but rather a command. You need to form a community, a brotherhood/sisterhood, and you need to look out for one another.

In the beginning of March, I had the pleasure to sit alongside a group of our community, as we welcomed members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

They came to extend a message of consolation and comfort as we mark a rise in Anti-Semitism at home and abroad. Through our discussions, Imam Atae Rabbi Hadi, said that he came here not just to express his discomfort at what has been a rise of hate in general, but to also offer a hand of friendship. He said that if there was ever a time, God forbid, that we might need help, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community would be the first ones to answer our call.

For so long we have isolated ourselves, the mantra has always been to help those at home first, and this is important, but we must ensure that we also extend our helping hands outwards.

Pesach teaches us to have compassion, on those who are poor, or those who are enslaved, on those who find themselves outside of the community. It is a holiday about our story, and the building of our nation. But I think we must take it one step further – how are we going to extend that same helping hand that works for the betterment of our community, and our people, and ensure that those around us, in the wider community, are not left to suffer.

Perhaps as we enter this year's seder we can commit ourselves to saying 'kol anshei areivim zeh l'zeh', all of humanity is responsible for one another, or acting on our statement of 'ha lachmya anya', whoever, truly whoever, is hungry come let them eat.

From my family to yours, I wish you a chag kasher v'sameach, a kosher and uplifting Pesach.

# Orthodox Congregation

ALAN SHROOT

Over the summer we managed to continue services on Friday evenings and Shabbat mornings. With several members away, including the Rabbi, Sunday morning services were often missed. We had Minyanim for all Shabbat morning services but occasionally missed the magic number on Friday evenings. We had a number of visitors attend over the summer. One visitor, who gave the Drasha on Parshat Vaera/Rosh Chodesh, was Rabbi Noah Leavitt from New York, who is currently the scholar-in-residence at the Great Synagogue, Sydney.

Len Dixon celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday on his Bar Mitzvah anniversary (Shabbat Hanukka) and led the service on Friday evening and Musaf. He also read a portion of the Torah and, I understand, has applied for the vacant position of Chazzan/Baál Koreh! Merrilyn Sernack celebrated her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday with a luncheon. We also had a celebration for Sam Fein's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday when two grandchildren attended from the USA. His grandson, Rabbi Nathan Fein, gave the d'var Torah. Mazeltov to all.

On 11 February, Tu B'shvat, Itamar Oren, and on Purim, 12 March, Asher Lee, celebrated their Bar Mitzvahs. Mazel tov to the boys and their families. We hope to see you both attend services when you count towards the Minyan.

A meeting will be scheduled shortly to discuss participation, Yizkor and further engagement of women in the services.

Avremi

# Progressive Congregation

PETER WISE AND REBECCA LEHRER

The Progressive congregation continues to run services every Friday night, and on one Saturday morning each month. We welcomed a number of visitors over the holiday period, and enjoyed the extra ruach they brought to our services. On the seventh night of Chanukah, congregants brought along their chanukiot, and we took the opportunity to light the candles together. Before the Kabbalat Shabbat Service, Raffi Lehrer delivered a discussion on the stories behind the story of Chanukah.

We have had a few meetings of our (new) Ritual Committee and are successfully creating more coherence in the Service delivered by all our able Service Leaders. The Ritual Committee will also begin preparing weekly and monthly small informal education elements for Service Leaders. We intend to integrate these into the service to deepen the congregation's understanding and connection to the prayers and structure of the service.

The congregation voted on a more formal relationship with the Union of Progressive Judaism (UPJ), which will give us the access to resources and support, and the opportunity for our community

to strengthen ties and contribute to the wider Australian Jewish community.

We were pleased to welcome again our consulting Rabbi from the Progressive Moetzah, Rabbi Adi Cohen of Temple David Perth, on the weekend of February 24-26. It was a successful and enjoyable visit. Both Friday night and Saturday morning services were well attended and we enjoyed some illuminating Droshot. After the Friday night services we had a lovely community meal followed by a presentation from Rabbi Cohen titled "Can I be a good Jew if I don't believe in God? Can there be Judaism without God?". After introducing some concepts, everyone was invited to participate in the discussion. There was spirited discussion, a lively exchange of views and, it appeared, a great night had by all.

Rabbi Cohen also facilitated a Progressive Congregation meeting to discuss opportunities for growth, development and structure. It was generally agreed that a more formal Committee structure, with more clearly assigned roles, be adopted. Further work will be done on a document outlining a vision, goals and future direction for the Congregation. He also facilitated a meeting of the Ritual Committee which dealt with some questions that have arisen in the running of services, and possible solutions to them within the



bounds of halachah. His ongoing commitment to our Congregation, and his broad knowledge and skills in working with Congregations to bring about change and renewal, are deeply appreciated.

Rabbi Cohen was delighted to attend Shabbat lunch with the Meltzers during his visit, and commented that the food and company was as excellent as he remembered from his previous visits. We look forward to Rabbi Cohen's next visit, when he returns in November to officiate at Vida Rosauer's Bat Mitzvah.

There are a number of exciting events coming up this year, the first of which is Sophie Thorpe's Bat Mitzvah on 29 April. We hear fantastic reports about Vida's preparations for her Bat Mitzvah on November 11. We also have a special opportunity to call up Rebecca Carpenter for her first Aliyah in May, and are looking forward to acknowledging her process of engagement and study.

We are thrilled to have a wealth of reasons to celebrate with you all this year.

# Remembering and Consecrating - A Jewish Understanding of the Headstone and Unveiling Ceremony

RABBI ALON MELTZER

So Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob erected a monument on her grave; that is the tombstone of Rachel until this day.

The Torah tells us in Bereshit 35:19-20 that Jacob buried his beloved wife Rachel in Bethlehem and erected a tombstone. It is clear that, archeologically, tombstones and grave markers were very common in the ancient world, and since that point in our history, the tombstone, as well as the unveiling ceremony, has had extraordinary placement within our mourning rituals.

The late Rabbi Maurice Lamm, writes in his book *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, that there are three reasons why we have a tombstone:

1. To mark the place of burial so that Cohanim may avoid walking in the vicinity of the remains of a deceased.
2. To designate the grave properly so that relatives and friends may visit the grave. For this he adds, that only the name of the individual is needed.
3. To serve as a symbol of honour to the deceased buried beneath this. He elaborates by saying that a family should erect a respectable monument, but not something ostentatious or beyond their means.

We see here that the tombstone fulfils a dual need, to serve as a place for gathering, eulogising, and continuing the memory of a loved one, and to respect the dead. Remembering and consecrating.

Jewish mourning rites are steeped in ensuring that mourners are able to slowly move through the process of grief - from the intense, speechless moments of the immediate passing through to the solemnity of the funeral. From the stooped isolationism of the shiva, through to the re-emergence of the family in the shloshim perior, the

days following the shiva until the thirtieth day following the death. From the soul searching recitation of kaddish for the eleven months following a parent's death, through to the first yearzeit and the consecration, and beyond to each consequent yearzeit. Each moment is designed to act as another step that brings a mourner from the depths of their emotions back towards a place of regularity and complete comfort and peace.

The consecration is such an important stage within this grieving process - firstly it allows the immediate family to reminisce over the loved one - to choose a favourite verse or stanza to go onto a tombstone, to recall the way in which the deceased loved each of the children and grandchildren. Secondly, it allows for a communal gathering to mourn the loss, to realise that there is still a hole within the fabric of the community, and that despite the ease of the wider community to get back to normal, there is still something missing.

This is remembering. This is furthering the memory of those who have come before us.

The idea of respecting the dead is extremely important. On Purim, for example, we are told that we must bury a recently deceased before beginning the reading of the Megillah. Rabbi Lamm adds that if the deceased had explicitly stated that he or she did not want to have a Jewish burial or even a headstone we ignore that demand.

The earth of a grave is consecrated, and the headstone demarcates that consecrated ground and the holy airspace that hovers around each and every grave.

This idea of remembering and consecrating has been with us since

ותמת רחל ותקבר בדרך אפרתה הוא בית לחם  
ויצב יעקב מצבה על קברתה הוא מצבת קברת רחל  
עד היום

our very beginning. I remember standing in a cemetery in the north of Israel where many of the early Zionist pioneers were buried. Our guide shared with us a bit about their lives. They were fervently anti-religious, many of them rejecting their own upbringings, and ways of their parents and homes. They came to Israel on a mission to establish a Zionist State, not necessarily a Jewish State. It was a terrible life full of many hardships for the first pioneers, and unfortunately many died. Despite their anti-religious ideology, when they died, they were buried Jewish, their tombstones matched those of the Jewish communities in Europe, and even their bodies were laid to rest in the direction of Jerusalem as has been custom since the destruction of the Temple.

Even in death we are Jews.

**There are several graves that have yet to be consecrated within the Jewish cemeteries of the ACT Jewish Communities.**

I would like to aim for cross communal service of all consecration stones on May 14. This allows plenty of notice to organize the stone, and also to ensure that we will have a minyan for the service.

If you are in need of a headstone for your loved one please can you call Oskar Memorials on 02 6299 7711, or email [oskarmemorials@netspeed.com.au](mailto:oskarmemorials@netspeed.com.au), if you chose to email them, please do not hesitate to include me in the email so I can ensure that the Hebrew is ok.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with me.



# ACT Zionist Council

DION ESTERMAN

**T**his year is a big year for Israel, the Jewish Community and the ACT Zionist Council!

We started off with a historic visit to Australia by the Prime Minister of Israel, Bibi Netanyahu, the first time in history that a current Israeli PM has visited Australia! Unfortunately, not being a sitting week, he did not make it down to Canberra.

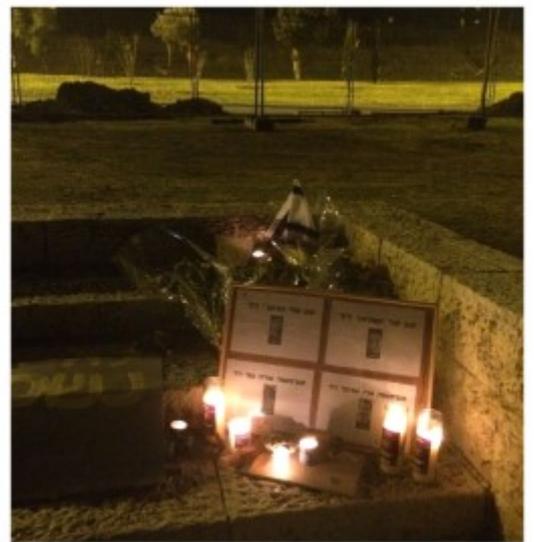
In just a couple of months we will be celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut as well as the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War and liberation of Jerusalem. Look out for the special events that will be held on those dates.

Speaking of Jerusalem, I was recently in Israel for a week. While there I attended the wedding of a friend from school which took place on the Haas Promenade, a beautiful walk which overlooks the old city and provided a stunning backdrop for the chuppa. Yet only fifty metres from where the chuppa was taking place, there was a memorial already set up for those who were murdered and injured in the terrorist attack which had occurred there just the night before when a Palestinian man drove his truck through a group of soldiers.

Being at that location at the wedding put me into an emotional tug of war. On the one hand, I felt enormous joy as my friend got married, while on the other, I experienced the pain once again of losing fellow Jews to another senseless act of hatred. It reminded me once more that, as a community and as a nation, we go through terrible lows but ,despite it all, we continue to live and rejoice with smachot, both in our homeland and wherever we are in the world.

I look forward to sharing many celebrations this year with the ACT Zionist Council and the community.

*Dion is President of the ACT Zionist Council*



*Clockwise from Top: Close-up view of Memorial tayelet; Memorial tayelet; Chuppa tayelet; Chuppa tayelet showing the surrounding landscape. Photos supplied by Dion*

# Ben Cowen z"l

RABBI JOHN LEVI

**A** very large crowd of mourners paid tribute to the life of Ben Cowen z"l at his funeral at Temple Beth Israel in early January 2017.

Ben was the youngest child of Sir Zelman (z"l) and Lady Cowen AM and is survived by his two brothers, Yosef Cowen of Jerusalem and Rabbi Dr Shimon Cowen, and his sister Kate, both of Melbourne. Ben leaves a wife, Lahra, and children, Mitch, Charley and Alexandra. Ben made Jewish history in Canberra when, in 1979, he was called to the Torah at the Canberra Jewish Centre to become the first vice regal barmitzvah boy in Australia – and possibly the world.

Ben attended Ormond College at Melbourne University and graduated in Arts and Law. He spent half a year at the Samuel Rothberg School at the Hebrew University Jerusalem where his father served on the Board of Governors. Ben worked as a merger and acquisitions expert in Melbourne. He served on the board of the King David School where his three children are students.

Ben Cowen was a loving and proud member of his family and of the Jewish People. He built a life of loyal friendships. He was a "people person". He was joyous, strong and fearless. He was fascinated by facts and by history. He was fascinated by flying and with military history and he met his death through a tragic accident.

His memory will bring blessing.

*Rabbi John Levi conducted the service at Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne. Ben Cowen was taught for his Bar Mitzvah by Mervyn Doobov, Life Member of the ACT Jewish Community and now resident in Jerusalem.*



Ben Cowen



Above: Mourners at the Temple Beth Israel Synagogue. Herald Sun

# Itamar's Bar Mitzvah Drasha

**S**habbat Shalom, welcome everyone and thank you for attending my Bar Mitzvah on this Tu' Beshvat day.

The Parashat Hashavua is Parashat Beshalach which is the beginning of the 40-year journey that the Children of Israel spent wandering in the desert from Egypt to the Promised land.

In the past, a Bar Mitzvah was when a boy would change to a man, meaning that the Bar Mitzvah would have to take initiative and there are higher expectations for work at school and at home. Very similarly, in this week's Parashah, the Children of Israel, are suddenly not slaves in Egypt, but they become free people. Like I was a bit of a slave to my parents before this Bar Mitzvah. Why is this relevant? When The Children of Israel have any difficulties they cry to Moses or God just like a child cries to his parents when they are in trouble. "Help me God I'm hungry!"

These days, when I turn 13 in many ways I am not considered a man or adult. Because if I was I could go drive a car, drink alcohol or vote. Even though I am not fully a man I am going to take this lesson on how the children of Israel had to become more independent. When a boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah he is not expected to call his parents every time he has a problem, just like once The Children of Israel become free they are not expected to call God with every small problem. God expects The Children of Israel to take initiative and act, instead of expecting God to perform a miracle. This is very similar to my situation of me standing here, a Bar Mitzvah boy. It is part of a child moving to adulthood, there is more expectation from him to solve his own problem, take initiative and to make his own decisions.

The similarities of moving from childhood to adulthood is similar to the Children of Israel's journey; when they were in Egypt they were slaves and they had no rights, now they are free. They have rights, but

with rights come responsibilities. It took the Children of Israel 40 years to become full "Adults" 40 years before they were ready to enter the promised land. Now that I have become Bar Mitzvah it is time for me to learn to fully become an adult, hopefully it won't take me 40 years.

When the Children of Israel leave Egypt, they need to take more initiative whenever they want God to make a miracle, this is shown when God wants the Egyptians and other surrounding nations to be scared of him or see him as a great God; so he decides to make Pharaoh and his men chase the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel see the Egyptians chasing and start to panic. According to Midrash Mekhilta the Children of Israel at that moment split into four groups; the group which wanted to try to cross the sea, one which wanted to return to Egypt, one wanted to battle the Egyptians and one wanted to shout at them. The Children of Israel get really confused.

So what do they do?

Ask Moses what to do.

Moses asks God what to do. God says "Why do you ask me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them keep on journeying!"

It says in Exodus chapter 14 verses 13 and 15:

Moses said to the people "Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of *HASHEM* that He will perform for you today; *HASHEM* said to Moses "Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth!"

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם, אַל-תִּירְאוּ-- הַתְּשׁוּעָה ה' אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, מַה-תִּצְעַק אֵלַי; דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִסְעוּ.

As shown in the example God expects the Children of Israel to take initiative and act, not just to let him perform a miracle. This is the same with Bar Mitzvah lads they must start to take initiative and not just wait for their parents to do all the work or always help/guide them.

The Children of Israel always call on the help of God when they are in trouble, they always expect him to perform the miracle and them to just sit back and relax. This happens either when the Children of Israel are thirsty or hungry. The Children of Israel walk three days without water until they reached Marah, where they find water but it is too bitter to drink. Once again they start to complain, "I'm thirsty, the water here tastes horrible...". God told Moses to throw a stick into the water. When he did so the water became pure and the Children of Israel drank. The Children of Israel kept on walking. Soon enough they started to complain again, "we're hungry, there is nothing to eat...". Moses passed the message onto God. God made bagels fall from the sky. After walking for a while, the Children of Israel run out of water again and they complain to Moses. So Moses hit a rock with his staff and water comes forth.

As it states in Exodus chapter 15 verses 23 and 24:

They came to Marah, but they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter; that is why they called it Marah. The people complained to Moses.

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִרְתָּה--וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֶּת מִיָּם; מִמַּרָה, כִּי מְרִים הֵם; עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ, מִרָה. וַיִּלְנוּ הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה.

And later in Exodus chapter 16 verses two:



Hiking in the Judean desert in Israel.

The entire assembly of the Children of Israel complained to Moses and Aaron in the Wilderness. **וילינו (וילונו) קל- עדת בני-ישראל, על משה ועל-אהרן- במדבר.**

In both these examples, the word that occurs the most is **וילינו** meaning 'complain'. This is because The Children of Israel keep on complaining to God and Moses. When the Children of Israel were slaves they were told exactly what to do by the Egyptians and they didn't need to think for themselves. Once they were freed, they do not know what to do and how to look after themselves.

As a child moves from childhood to adulthood, they need to rely more and more on themselves; now they cannot just rely on their parents, they need to start figuring things out for themselves. They need to be more responsible, however, they have more freedom to select things for themselves and they can engage as a Jewish adult. The process of moving from childhood to manhood is symbolised by celebrating the Bar Mitzvah.

Today is Tu' Beshvat, the holiday which is

related to fruits, abundance and planting of trees.

The Children of Israel walked forty years through the desert expecting to find the promised land full of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey. Midrash Tanhuma states *"the God of Israel said to them; Although you find it full of all good, do not sit down and not plant anything. But plant carefully, as it is written."* Meaning, we must work for things to happen, not just rely on God. With Tu' Beshvat celebrated today we must, like the Children of Israel, plant trees so that the promised land would be bountiful just as promised. Like in Tu' Beshvat, one needs to work really hard and be active and fight for it so that your dream and hard work will come true.

I love pole vaulting, it is a sport which requires much practice and training. To become a good pole vaulter, I have to practice a lot, just like the Children of Israel had to work the promised land to make bountiful.

As shown in Deuteronomy chapter 8 verses 7 to 9:

For the LORD your God **כי ה' אלהיך,** brings you into a good **מביאך אל-ארץ** land, a land of brooks **טובה: ארץ, נחלי** of water, a land of **מים- ארץ חטה** wheat and barley, and **ושערה, וגפן** vines and fig-trees and **ותאנה ורמון;** pomegranates; a land **ארץ-זית שמן,** of olive-trees and **ודבש--לא-** honey; you shall not **תחסר כל, בה;** lack anything in it;

In this Drasha I have tried to relate how The Parashat Hashavua, which happened a long time ago in the desert, is relevant to a Bar Mitzvah boy here in Australia. I hope that you will take home today the fact that we are not all slaves and we should be grateful of that fact. Because of that we have duties and responsibilities, one of those is that we should plant more trees. This is the meaning of a Bar Mitzvah, a time in which we learn and accept our responsibilities and duties.

Thank You and Shabbat Shalom.

# Water, Water, Everywhere,

RABBI ALON MELZTER

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The 1834 poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

The Jewish people are finally free, they walk out of the land of Egypt at the end of last week's Parasha and they are free. Had Dr Martin Luther King Jr stood with them he would have called out "Free at last, free at last, thank God we are free at last!"

After journeying for some small amount of time, they become stuck at the edge of the Sea of Reeds, water surrounds them from one flank and, from the other, the encroaching army of Egypt, with a crazed and delusional Pharaoh at the helm, there is nowhere to go.

Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

Shemot 14:11-12:

And they said to Moses, "Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt?"

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה  
הַמִּבְלִי אֵי-יִקְבְּרִים  
בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת  
בְּמִדְבָּר מֵהַזֶּאת עָשִׂיתָ  
לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ  
מִמִּצְרָיִם:

Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us be, and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness?'"

הֲלֹא-זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר  
דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם  
לֵאמֹר תְּהִל מִמֶּנּוּ  
וְנַעֲבֹדָה אֶת-מִצְרַיִם כִּי  
טוֹב לָנוּ עֲבֹד  
אֶת-מִצְרַיִם מִמָּוְתוֹ  
בְּמִדְבָּר:

The Jewish people start screaming, they start fighting, they start cursing Moshe – the supposed deliverer – but where was he taking them, were there not enough graves in Egypt? Surely we could have died there?

Our Bar Mitzvah, Itamar, shared the Mechilta

The Children of Israel at that moment split into four groups; one group wanted to try to cross the sea, one wanted to return to Egypt, one wanted to battle the Egyptians and one wanted to shout at them.

Here the Jewish people do what they do best, they factionalized and they turned against each other.

Itamar didn't share with you the rest of the Mechilta, the responses by Moshe.

To those who said, "Let us cast ourselves into the sea," he said: "Fear not; stand by and see the salvation of G\_d." To those who said, "Let us return to Egypt," he said: "As you have seen Egypt this day, you shall not see them again anymore, forever." To those who said, "Let us wage war against them," he said: "G\_d shall fight for you." And to those who said, "Let us cry out to G\_d," he said: "And you shall be silent."

Moshe has a response, G\_d will wage war for us.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, who I don't quote often, but whose exegesis I am fond of, remarks:

These "four factions" represent four possible reactions to a situation in which one's divinely ordained mission in life is challenged by the prevalent reality.

One possible reaction is: "Let us cast ourselves into the sea." Let us submerge ourselves within the living waters of Torah; let us plunge into the "sea of the Talmud," the sea of piety, the sea of religious life. Let us create our own insular communities, protecting us and ours from the G\_dless world out there.

At the other extreme is the reaction, "Let us return to Egypt." Let us accept "reality," recognizing that it is the Pharaohs who wield the power in the real world. We'll do whatever we can under the circumstances to do what G\_d expects from us, but it is futile to imagine that we can resist, much

less change, the way things are.

A third reaction is to "wage war against them"—to assume a confrontational stance against the hostile reality, battling the "unG\_dly" world despite all odds.

A fourth reaction is to say: It's wrong to abandon the world, it's wrong to succumb to it and it's wrong to fight it. The answer lies in dealing with it on a wholly spiritual level. A single prayer can achieve more than the most secure fortress, the most flattering diplomat or the most powerful army.

G\_d rejected all four approaches. While each of them has their time and place (it's important to create inviolable sancta of holiness in a mundane world; it's also necessary to appreciate the nature of the prevalent reality and deal with it on its own terms; it's also necessary to wage an all-out war against evil; and it's always important to recognize that one cannot do it on one's own and to appeal to G\_d for help) none of them is the vision to guide our lives and define our relationship with the world we inhabit.

I would like to posit another idea; these four collections of Jews show us how we engage with our Jewish world and Moshe's answer tells us how we should engage with the Jewish world.

The group which wanted to try to cross the sea, these are the Jews who want to move forward, who want to grow our people, who want to engage more people, but who also want to do it by themselves, without the help of organisations and institutions, without the help of history and hindsight, without the help of our texts and our faith.

There is the group who wanted to return to Egypt. These are the Jews who are hiding away, they don't want anyone to know they are Jewish, don't want anyone to see who they are, and in turn they don't want to engage. They want to return back to Egypt, where Judaism didn't exist, where they were assimilated and were very happy being just one of the multitudes.

The group who wanted to battle the Egyptians, these are those who will wage war at any cost. These are the Jews who want to take the gamble, they want to risk it all. Maybe they will be successful,



# Nor Any Drop to Drink



growing the frontier, pushing the boundaries, changing the Jewish path. Perhaps they will create unity, perhaps they will succeed, but there is also the chance they will fail, leaving the Jewish people worse off.

Finally, there is the group that wanted to shout at them. These are the Jews that are all talk, and no action. They are willing to stand on the soapbox, ready to declare their piety, or their politics, or their bonafides of grandmothers gefilte fish or kugel, but they aren't willing to actually engage in yiddishkeit.

But Moses says, no God will wage war. That you cannot do anything without bringing God into the equation. You, the Jewish people need to wait till you get to Sinai, wait until you get the Torah, the moral code for the operation of the world, and then you can start moving forward. All of these four forget the fundamental idea of Judaism, that we are God's people, and he is our God, and because of that we must find a common ground in which to unify ourselves under.

When we can add Godliness into the equation, when we bring divinity into the picture, suddenly we have the ability to create – we have the ability to realise the return to Egypt is futile, that crossing the sea, entering the depths is impossible without a helping hand, that waging war has drastic consequences, and that our words without actions are irrelevant.

Here we stand at a Bar Mitzvah, and we are fortunate to recall this idea of ensuring that we bring godliness into our lives, because that is who we are as a people.

Itamar, today you spoke of working, of persevering, of putting actions on the table for the betterment of our national growth with the Israeli tradition of planting trees on Tu'B'shvat, as well as personal growth with your pole vaulting.

Your sermon, one of the most eloquent and well put together sermons I have seen a Bar Mitzvah put together, is an incredible testament to who you are. Your parent's Osnat and Yarden, shared with me that you are talented, smart and

insightful, words that describe intellect and this Drasha confirmed that. But they also shared with me that you are creative, athletic and well-liked by your peers.

You told me how you like to act, and how your preparations for today, while sometimes hard to remember to practice, gave you an entrée into learning about our history and our faith.

You shared with me an idea around being part of the Jewish people, that you have a community to engage with. Most others, you said, just have their sports friends, or school friends, but they do not intermingle across the aspects of their lives, but with community you see them across all of your life, and know that they are there for you.

Your parents shared with me that they would like to see you keep spreading your wings to fearlessly pursue your passions, knowing that your family will always be there for you as you continue to mature. They did add that you are growing too fast, but they won't hold it against you.

Itamar, today you have to begin to make a decision. You can choose to be like one of the four factions of the Jewish people, you can choose to be one of those Jews that hide away, or you can choose to be one that wants to take the gamble, perhaps failing or succeeding. You can choose to be someone who talks but doesn't act on their Judaism, or you can choose to want to grow in your Judaism but try do it all on your own.

Or Itamar, you can do what Moshe argues for, you can say that God is going to wage war, and you are going to connect yourself to Godliness. That you are going to commit to continuing this exploration of learning and engaging, through our programs and our role models, and you are going to engage yourself in the community, as a proud and active member.

This does not mean you throw everything else away, it doesn't mean that you stop pole vaulting, and acting, and sports etc, it means that you take all of those, along with your keen intellect,

you take your Israeli heritage and your community, and you commit to growing yourself, engaging yourself, and, in turn, you will ensure that we, your community, grows as well.

I share this as a message to you, but it is not a message solely for you. Each of us has to ask these questions, and each of us has to ensure that we continue to commit to engaging in a manner that sees a unified community growing and enhancing itself through its membership.

I will now ask Itamar to please join me at the pulpit for the traditional priestly blessing.

May the LORD bless you and guard you.

("Yebhārēkh-khā Hashem veyishmerēkhā ...)

May the LORD make His face shed light upon you and be gracious unto you –

("Yā ēr Hashem pānāw ēlekhā vīDunnēkkā ...)

May the LORD lift up His face unto you and give you peace –

("Yissā Hashem pānāw ēlekhā vīyāsēm lekhā shālōm.")



# Alternative Facts: Letter Writing to *The Canberra Times*

ROBERT CUSSEL

**T**he term “alternative facts” has recently entered the lexicon, especially in relation to controversial political matters that are in dispute. Closer to home, there are very good reasons why it is important to focus on a band of inveterate letter writers to *The Canberra Times*, who often seek to demonise Israel. *HaMerkaz* (December edition) published a timely and excellent opinion piece from Simon Tatz, which sought to address some of these issues and was submitted to *The Canberra Times* but not published.

One writer recently referred to the “34 US naval servicemen deliberately murdered by Israel in a premeditated attack on the USS Liberty in 1967” in a letter to the editor of the *Canberra Times* on the 30 December 2016.<sup>1</sup>

The more often this sort of statement is made about an event that happened 50 years ago, the more it tends to go unchallenged. This unfortunate incident occurred on the fourth day of the Six Day War, off the coast of Sinai, when the USS Liberty was mistakenly attacked by Israeli jets and torpedo boats. Six US Government investigations have concluded that there is no evidence to support the conspiracy theory that Israel deliberately attacked the ship. There is substantial documented evidence to assert that

this incident was a tragic mistake that occurred in the fog of war. The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (CAMERA) in America has summarised much detailed information on this event and the extensive, subsequent and ongoing attempts to demonise Israel.<sup>2</sup> Esteemed historians, Martin Gilbert and Chaim Herzog, both attest to the fact that this incident was not a premeditated or deliberate attack.<sup>3</sup>

Truth and alternative truths are nothing new in this world. Nazi propaganda relied on the repetition of a lie until it was taken as the truth. Joseph Goebbels is reported to have written:

*If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.*<sup>4</sup>

It can be argued that the level of political discourse has always been deeply problematic. Mainstream conventional media has had an historical role in challenging such big lies in western democracies. However, now the new social media has become a fertile breeding ground for the propagating of fake news, where

ideas can spread like a virus. In this medium, it is much more difficult to challenge obvious falsehoods, because consumers of this information are only exposed to the news that they find comforting or which confirm their world views. Verifiable facts or invented lies; they can be turned on their heads in a deliberate and conscious attempt to influence and control populations and people.

Rabbi Jonathon Sacks has an answer for us all in his wonderful *drosha*, “The Necessity of Asking Questions”, where he writes: “Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself”.<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Sacks holds that Judaism is based on the asking of questions and that “we believe that intelligence is God’s greatest gift to humanity.” He quotes Nobel Prize winner, Isadore Rabi, who, when asked what motivated him to become a celebrated scientist, recalled how his mother would ask him after school, not what did you learn today, but “Izzy, did you ask a good question today”.

We all need to be sceptical and not to believe everything that we hear or read. Seek the truth, or at least a deeper knowledge, in all endeavours and look carefully at the motives behind those who seek to influence us. However, we also need to be reliant on the professional ethics of the journalists of the fourth Estate to report news in a balanced and even-handed manner, to

investigate and hold governments accountable for their actions and to uncover crime and corruption. In the long run marketing fake news would be a very poor choice for a media company seeking to build a respected and viable business model? There is an issue of trust here, which is essential for any news organisation that is seeking repeat business.

Critical thinking is really a form of deep conversation and, ideally, is a character trait of a person who seeks to base judgements on a process of putting knowledge first.<sup>6</sup> In this chaotic and confusing world of claim and counterclaim, we cannot rely on others to do our thinking for us. We are all responsible for challenging hubris, clearly unsupported judgements and faulty thinking, including those who perpetuate falsehoods and write unsubstantiated letters to *The Canberra Times*.

We must ask ourselves what is the motive behind someone who seeks to deliberately mislead and peddle fake news or alternative facts? Is the underlying motive all about power?

There is too much at stake for our Western democracies to sit idly by and watch the corruption and destruction of our mainstream political consensus and a widely accepted moral code that has taken millennia to develop. And the place to start is inside ourselves. If we continually question and challenge our own shortcomings, prejudices and faulty assumptions, which is part of our Jewish learning, we have a decent hope of contributing to a constructive and positive conversation.



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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/ct-letters/development-comes-at-a-cost-20161230-gtjwfx.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sixdaywar.org/uss-liberty.asp>

<sup>3</sup> Martin Gilbert, Israel, A History, Harper Perennial, 2008. Chaim Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars, Arms and Armour Press, 1982

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/joseph-goebbels-on-the-quot-big-lie-quot>

<sup>5</sup> <http://rabbisacks.org/necessity-asking-questions-bo-5777/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://theconversation.com/lets-stop-trying-to-teach-students-critical-thinking-30321>

# Bene Israel: From Israel to India to Australia

REBECCA JOSEPH AND JOSEPH SOLOMON JOSEPH

To many, it is a matter of surprise to learn that there have been Jewish people settled in India for many centuries. They arrived in India during different periods and flourished in different parts of India.

The largest community of Jews in India are the Bene Israel meaning 'Children of Israel'. Covered in sand and soaked in salty water the Bene Israel came to India after the destruction of the second Temple. They were shipwrecked, lost all their belongings, including the holy books, and were washed ashore at Nowgaon on the Konkan coast, south of Mumbai. The survivors, seven men and seven women, buried their dead in the village of Nowgaon, which later became a Bene Israel cemetery.

The Bene Israel took to oil pressing and agriculture, including coconut plantations. They had brought with them the art of pressing oil from olives. They worked for six days of the week and kept their establishment closed on Saturdays. Hence the neighbours called them "Shanwar Teli" meaning Saturday Oilpressers. The descendants of the original settlers adopted the customs, dress, language, and cuisine of the local people, including not eating beef out of respect for their Hindu neighbours.

We did not cremate our dead, or partake in using idols during worship. We evolved quite uniquely, without many of the holidays, rituals, and Rabbinic rulings introduced meanwhile in the European, Middle Eastern, and Babylonian Jewish communities. We remembered the Shema, observed Shabbat, celebrated Pesach, circumcised male children on the 8th day, followed marriage, and burial rites, and kept kosher.

By the 20th century, the majority of my community lived in Mumbai and developed communities in cities such as Pune, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, and Karachi (in present day Pakistan). As a general rule, the prejudice and persecution that affected other Diaspora Jews did not affect us in India. However, in 1947, during the India-Pakistan

partition, my in laws (Avigail and Solomon) were forced to leave Karachi with whatever they could carry on their person, while their home and assets were taken over by their Muslim neighbours. They came to Mumbai (then Bombay) as refugees and had to start afresh.

Some of my memories growing up in Mumbai include a traditional upbringing. We maintained a kosher home, observed Shabbat, high holy days, and most other festivals, rituals and customs. Every Shabbat was special as my grandma and mum together cooked a special kosher goat meat curry, coconut rice and salad. 'Sweet puris' which is sweet dough rolled into small pancakes and deep fried were also made and my three sisters and I were often asked to help roll the dough. Mum lit the Shabbat oil lamps, Dad said the blessings over bread, wine, haetz, and hadama and we all sang the Yigdal Elohim in the unique Bene Israel tune which we sing every Shabbat dinner in our home in Melbourne.

When the time came for Rosh Hashana, the old family tailor was summoned and new clothes were stitched for us all. The day before Rosh Hashana, a huge pot of sweet thick coconut milk, sugar and flour mixture was put on a coal fire and stirred for hours with a long handled oar-like wooden spoon to make the halva which was later distributed to family, friends and neighbours.

The High Holy Days synagogue morning services started pre-dawn and my father would leave very early giving mum and us four sisters a fixed time to get there by. If we arrived any later and dared to meet his eye in the men's section, we would catch a look of absolute disgust and shame on his face. The Tashlich short service later on Rosh Hashana day was well attended too as it was an opportunity for eligible young men and women to be noticed and set up, an opportunity a father with four daughters was not likely to pass up.



*Bene Israel marriages usually include a Henna or Mehendi ceremony a few days before the wedding day*

Yom Kippur meant wearing white to the synagogue, fasting, asking for forgiveness, then breaking fast and feasting, among other things on homemade, freshly squeezed, chilled, very tasty blackcurrant juice.

Shemini Azret and Simchat Torah was a fun time for all as the celebrations and the seven rounds of dancing with the Torah went on to way past midnight. Various street food stalls were set up on the grounds of the synagogue and that was the one day that my father never said "no, not today" to any request for food or money from us.

Growing up, my sisters and I were surrounded by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and others, and quite often we were the only Jewish students at any given time in school and university. While introducing me to their family, my non-Jewish friends often added "and she is Jewish" to the introduction as it was considered a rarity to meet a Jewish person. Our parents repeatedly impressed on us that, although we should respect all other religions, we should never forget that we are Jewish, and have always been Jewish. When still quite young, my father had, in no uncertain terms told us he expected us to marry Jewish and would cut off all ties with us if we married otherwise. I thank God that he got his wish. As long as the boy was Jewish, my parents didn't care if we married Sephardi, American, tailor, politician, doctor, or cricketer. In a city of more than 18 million non-Jews and less than 1,000 or so eligible Jewish men, this might have seemed an impossible task. Without online dating, Tinder and Facebook we looked to our Synagogue as the centre of worship, study and meeting eligible bachelors.

I formally met my now husband, Joseph, while still studying for my degree in

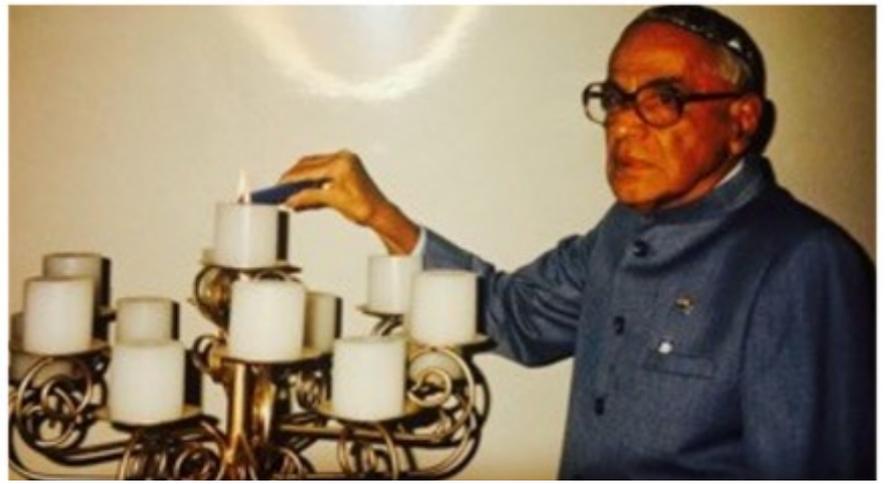
Commerce. He had spotted me in the ladies section one day with head uncovered, the sign that I was unmarried. I sometimes wonder whether I fell in love with his profession before I actually fell in love with him. He was an Engineer in the merchant navy and after getting married he was permitted to take his family along. This meant that I very easily started to fulfil my dreams and my love of travelling to places far and wide. After our daughter was a year old, we took her along as well. My life as a woman of leisure on the high seas came to an end after our son Akiv was born and my husband gave up sailing to take up a shore job. Australia was the one continent we had never touched during our seafaring days and yet, for unknown and inexplicable reasons, my husband Joseph always wanted to migrate "down under". And that's exactly what we did.

In Australia, we regularly get asked about our Jewish heritage by other Jewish people. A lot of the times from genuine interest and an awareness of the Bene Israel and at other times from a place of total ignorance and scepticism.

It was at a shul brunch not long ago that I was asked, "How do you get to be Jewish?" by one of the other guests. I instinctively felt my host, seated between us, cringe with embarrassment. We have sometimes been told we "don't look Jewish" which is insulting and mildly comical considering the geographic origins of Judaism. The honey brown colour of our skin sings louder than our attendance at shul, the tallit on my husband's shoulders, or the Magen David around my neck. This experience is not uncommon for Bene Israel and coloured Jewish folk the world over. Judaism is not a look. Most Jewish communities, especially in Israel, will know that Jewish people are diverse and come in all shapes, colours, and backgrounds.

Several years ago, the *Australian Jewish News* interviewed Joseph and I for a small article titled, "Curry Not Gefilte Fish". The journalist had a photo taken at my daughter's Bat Mitzvah party. Not being a subscriber to the *Jewish News* myself, and not knowing then how widely distributed it was among Jewish Australians, I was surprised when I received a phone call from my friend jokingly saying that my family were now famous. On hearing about the title, the first thing I said was ..... "What is Gefilte Fish?"

From the outside, no matter the constancy of our Jewish heritage, the canvas of golden brown in our skin causes some Australians to automatically perceive us as non-Jewish. . . . Still, we and my children (and hopefully grandkids) trek through life with Jewish souls and Jewish spirits, fleshed out by the unique challenges and wonders of a combined Indian, Jewish and Australian tradition.



*My dad, Isaac lighting the first candle at my daughter's Bat Mitzvah while on his first trip to Melbourne*



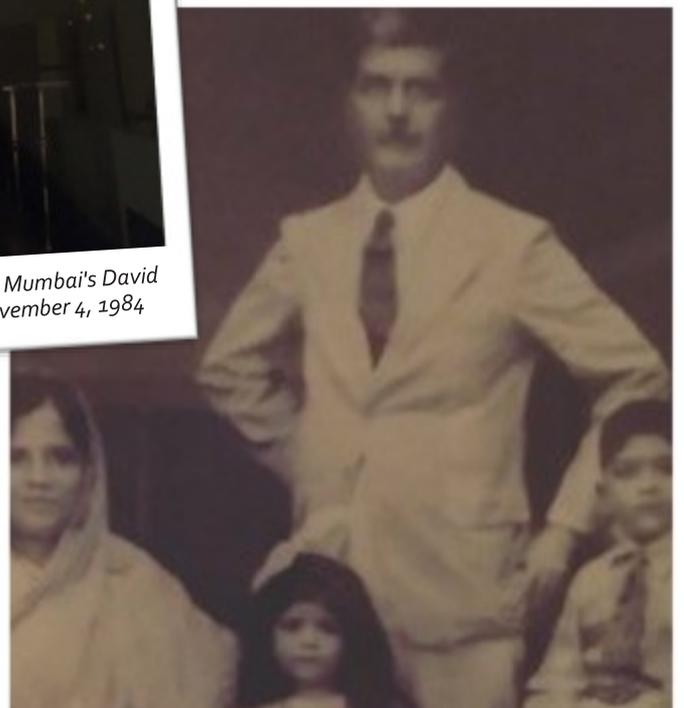
*Joseph's parents Avigail and Solomon on their wedding day on 11 September 1955*



*January 2016 - Bimah and the Aron Kodesh in one of Mumbai's many synagogues*



*Joseph and I were married in Mumbai's David Sassoon Synagogue on November 4, 1984*



*1930s Mumbai - My mum, Jerusha, her parents - Joseph and Miryam, with her older brother Joshua*

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN AUSTRALIA

SHIFRA JOSEPH

The Ask Me Anything sessions are about a team of diverse, brave, and honest volunteer presenters sharing their personal stories and inviting audiences to ask anything. We encourage curious high school students and community members to ask uncensored, unabashed, and anonymous questions about race, culture, resilience, mental health, and other issues.

Our aim is to provide community members and students the ability to drive their own learning and have the appropriate freedoms to be able to ask anything, consider personal responses, and gain a better understanding of Australian diversity, stereotypes, racism, and other issues that are important to our community. Our presenters include a previously homeless police officer, a Muslim-American, a male feminist and atheist, an Indian-Jewish Australian, a bisexual trans woman, and an Indigenous Australian father of three.

The Ask Me Anything team knows free and open conversations can be the beginning of meaningful dialogue, increased understanding, and positive action to make our communities more informed, and more inclusive of all Australians. However, we also know that freedom of speech is not absolute, and consider that sections 18C and 18D of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)* maintain a balance between freedom of speech and freedom from racial vilification. Indeed our Ask Me Anything sessions address racial, ethnic, religious, and gender stereotypes, promote dialogue, and encourage mutual respect by openly discussing the words, labels, and issues that may subjectively be considered offensive.

This submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. Inquiry into Freedom of Speech<sup>1</sup> in Australia, responds to the following elements of the Terms of References:

*Whether the operation of Part IIA of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) imposes unreasonable restrictions upon freedom of speech, and in particular whether, and if so how, ss. 18C and 18D should be reformed.*

Freedom of speech has never been absolute. There are laws moderating what we can and cannot say. Laws guarding against misrepresentation, official secrecy, contempt of court and parliament, slander, libel, copyright, and misleading and deceptive conduct. These various laws recognise the need to legislate where words can cause economic damage, unfairly harm a person's reputation, or compromise community safety and national security. There seems to be little or no concern about whether such laws impose unreasonable restrictions upon freedom of speech.

We understand that sections 18C and 18D were introduced partly in response to recommendations of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence, and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. These inquiries and other

research has found that racial hatred and vilification can cause psychological harm to their targets, reinforce other forms of discrimination (e.g. on the basis of religion, sex, gender and/or sexual orientation), and have an inevitable link to racially motivated physical violence (including to property).

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)* aims to provide a benchmark for racial tolerance, and guards against racial vilification of a serious nature. In its present form, sections 18C and 18D do not unreasonably restrict freedom of expression due to the following:

There is no violation of Part IIA unless the offence is found to have "profound and serious effects, not to be likened to mere slights". An act is not unlawful simply because someone happened to get their feelings hurt. The court makes its assessment using an objective test, regardless of the individual complainant's feelings and sensitivities.

There is a wide margin of tolerance for potentially offensive or humiliating political satire or artistic works with a race related focus. This includes satire or comedy that perpetuates damaging negative stereotypes about Australia's first peoples, or any other group based on perceived race or ethnic origins.

Controversial, or potentially offensive, beliefs or opinions about race, religion, or ethnic origins, even if expressed in writing on social media, do not infringe Part IIA of the Act.

Australians have freedom to express their views and opinions, engage in debate about race issues, and tell racist jokes. At the same time, our community should actively work to protect all Australians from gross negative stereotyping, and repetitive and serious cases of verbal or written abuse due to perceived race or ethnicity. Legislation is one way to protect Australians from racial vilification but it does not eliminate racist attitudes and misunderstandings.

Australian law cannot by itself hope to eliminate racist attitudes or behaviours. Legislation, dialogue, and education are all tools to combat racism, dispel stereotypes, and encourage social harmony and mutual understanding between diverse Australians. Indeed the former Attorney General emphasised this point, saying that:

Racism is often a by-product of ignorance, and education is an essential part of any response...Racism should be responded to by education and by confronting the expression of racist ideas. But legislation is not



mutually exclusive of these responses. It is not a choice between legislation or education...There is no doubt that the Racial Discrimination Act has been a powerful influence on the rejection of racist attitudes over the past two decades. It has forced many people to confront racist views and have them debunked. It can be compared to the contribution of the Sex Discrimination Act over the past 10 years to improving the way women are treated in our society.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, Part IIA of the Act in its current form achieves a reasonable balance between freedom from racist hate speech, and freedom of speech. We recommend that Part IIA of the Act be left in its present form. Its operation does not unfairly or unreasonably restrict freedom of speech any more than other legislation that moderates what we can and cannot say.

Shifra Joseph's submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights - an inquiry into freedom of speech in Australia.

<sup>1</sup> In this submission, 'freedom of speech' includes, but is not limited to, freedom of public discussion, freedom of conscience, academic freedom, artistic freedom, freedom of religious worship and freedom of the press.

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, Tuesday 15 November 1994, pp 3336-3337, (The Hon Michael Lavarch MP, Attorney General): <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansardr/1994-11-15/toc.pdf/H%201994-11-15.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%221990s%201994%22>

# A Golden Wedding Anniversary for Raffi & Vicki Lehrer

BECCA LEHRER



On 12 December 2016 Raffi and Vicki Lehrer, my parents, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. On 12 December 2016, Raffi also turned 75 years young. The decision to get married on his birthday was extremely good planning for many reasons. Raffi has never forgotten his wedding anniversary and he has a double celebration every year. He also set the groundwork for his most longstanding "Dad Joke" (even before he had any idea he wanted to be a Dad) in that he is able to announce loudly and proudly "Well, I bought myself the best Birthday Present ever. Never regretted it for a day!". This year, as an anniversary gift, Mum presented him with the framed receipt for the marriage licence (A whole SIX DOLLARS). Evidence that, in exercising his normal frugality, he gained incredible value for money.

The wedding took place in front of a Magistrate at the ACT Registry Office, witnessed by just a few friends and family. On hearing two days earlier about this low-key affair, two of their friends flew into action. They commandeered a nearby restaurant kitchen and put on a fantastic spread/reception. Within a short period of time, while looking for her new husband, Vicki found him in his wedding suit underneath a car changing the oil (or some such thing). As many of you would recognise, this set the scene for the next 50 years: If you are looking for Raffi, you will usually find him helping someone, performing some sort of task that explains his signature torn and dirty workwear. (I will never forget the delight on Nina Horton's face when Dad once showed up to a community event in a white dinner jacket and tie: "Raffi! See! I knew you could do it! You don't have to look so scruffy all the time!". The rest of the night she would occasionally walk up, pat his lapel and smile up at him.)

After the December 1966 wedding came the period Raffi describes as "The Golden Years". Seven years, child free. "I had your mother all to myself. We would go to work, come home and change, go out and have a great time. No responsibility, all fun!"

For such a free spirit, he certainly took to the responsibilities of parenthood. The three of us children, Jacob, Me and Joey were all born in the 70s. Despite intermittent involvement with the Jewish Community in Canberra prior to this, the longer term relationship that Raffi and Vicki formed with this Community became more fully realised as they started raising their family. Raffi began volunteering as a Cheder teacher, was responsible for many years for the upkeep of the building, helped found the Progressive Congregation and took on many positions and roles over the years. Vicki volunteered at Kiddushim and many other events. Faced with children returning from Cheder and asking when we were going to light the Shabbat Candles, have Challah or observe other festivals, Vicki took herself along to adult education classes to round out her Jewish Education. She learned the Aleph Bet along with her kids and rose to the occasion to create a Jewish household for these children who were slowly starting to identify themselves as Jewish. Both Raffi and Vicki led by example: If you expect this community to be there for you, to educate you, to provide a congregation for your Bar/BatMitzvah, to celebrate with you, and support you when you need them – then it is up to you to contribute to your Community.

Raffi became a wedding Celebrant a number of years ago. This was a slightly strange choice for a man who, while he has the utmost respect for the institution of *marriage*, had never been particularly quiet on the questions of *weddings*. "It is ridiculous to spend that much money on a party at the beginning of a marriage. You should put it into the deposit for a house. Have the party after you have been Married for 50 years. That's when it is time to celebrate...when you know you've made it!"

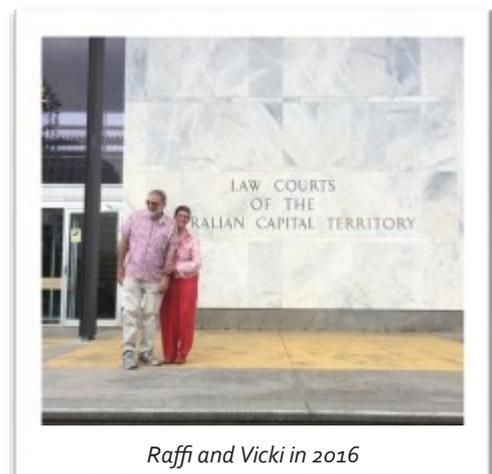
There is a reason people talk about 50 years of marriage as an achievement. Because it is. This brings us to the real reason this marriage has made 50 years: Margaret Victoria Glasgow Lehrer, aka Mum. One of my Dad's friends calls him every year on his birthday, gives him a "Mazal Tov!" and then asks to speak to Vicki. "Mazal Tov on your anniversary and commiserations on your husband! I don't know how you do it! None of us do! I couldn't be married to him!" Vicki is certainly a loving, accepting, tolerant

woman. With enough of a sense of humour to manage 50 years with Raffi, and enough strength of character to continue to give him a good run for his money.

At 50 years of marriage Raffi and Vicki have three children, two valued daughters-in-law, two granddaughters and two grandsons. They both now sit at the top of their own family trees. Most days you can easily see the culture that they chose for their home and family continuing down through the generations. Family is, among other things: discussion (sometimes Loud), commitment, endurance, laughter (sometimes Loud), service, and love.



Raffi and Vicki in 1966



Raffi and Vicki in 2016



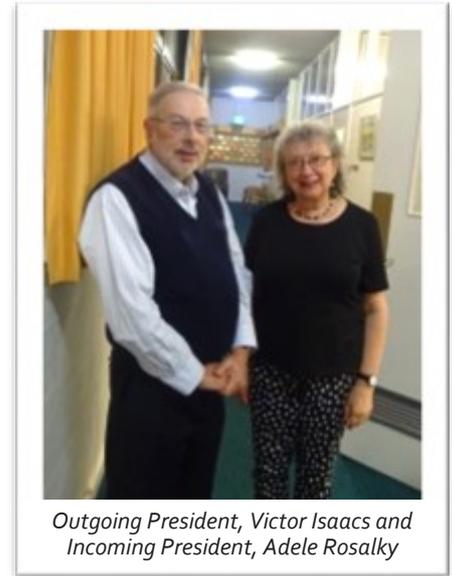
# Australian Jewish Historical Society ACT Branch

The Annual General Meeting was held on 15 March 2017 and the following Committee was elected:

**President:** Adele Rosalky  
**Vice President:** Leonie Webb  
**Treasurer:** Richard Webb  
**Secretary:** Naomi Robertson  
**Committee Members:** Immediate Past President, Victor Isaacs, Margaret Beadman, OAM; Judith Wimbourne  
**Co-opted Member:** Suzanne Elkaim  
**Honorary Auditor:** Ann Thorpe.

**Membership:** The AGM agreed that Membership Fees would remain at \$35.00 for families for the 2017 calendar year. Please contact Richard Webb regarding new and renewal of memberships.

After the AGM, Adele Rosalky delivered the annual **Earle Hoffman Memorial Lecture in Australian Jewish History**. Adele gave an illustrated talk on the topic of A Jewish Cultural Landscape in the Goulburn Area, which presented Goulburn's prominence in Australian Jewish history. The 1861 census showed that Goulburn was the third largest Jewish community in Australia after Sydney and Melbourne at that time. The opening up of transport routes to the Southern Tablelands, followed by the discovery of gold in south east NSW brought Jews as store- and inn-keepers. Jewish religious services originally were held in a storeroom of the Argyle Stores, but later worship took place in a summerhouse, in the shape of a ship's stern, situated on the Lansdowne Park property. The summerhouse acquired the name of 'the Jewish Synagogue'. The Jewish cemetery in Long St has undergone conservation since 1987 and was thought to contain 22 graves, mostly in the period 1845-79. The most recent were two in 1943. Recent changes in aims and methods of preservation and maintenance of heritage objects and sites were discussed, as was the current poor state of the 'Synagogue', and the on-going research on burials at the cemetery.



*Outgoing President, Victor Isaacs and Incoming President, Adele Rosalky*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Wednesday, 17 May, 7.45pm** – Dr Suzanne Rutland, *Combating Antisemitism in the School Playground: an Australian Case Study*.

**Wednesday, 19 July, 7.45pm** – Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, *Jewish and Israeli Identities in Contemporary Israel*.

**Sunday, 19 November, 2.00 – 4.00pm** – this afternoon event will be the first of a new series called 'Tell Your Story'.

**Leonie Webb** will tell the story of her Aunt, Elizabeth Friedman, who survived Birkenau and Auschwitz to make a new life in Australia and lived to the wonderful age of 94 years. She wrote about her experiences in the chapter of a book titled 'Secretaries of Death : Accounts by Former Prisoners who worked in the Gestapo of Auschwitz'.

**Merrilyn Sernack** will tell the story of her father, Sidney Sernack, a major fashion retailer, who brought the Mary Quant label to Australia and introduced the all-weather ladies' coat to the Sydney retail sector. He also brought the A-line dress, the bikini, patchwork denim, bouclé and polar fleece to the country.

As part of the afternoon activities, the following documents will be on display and will be of interest to many Community members to read, make comments and perhaps to add more important information:

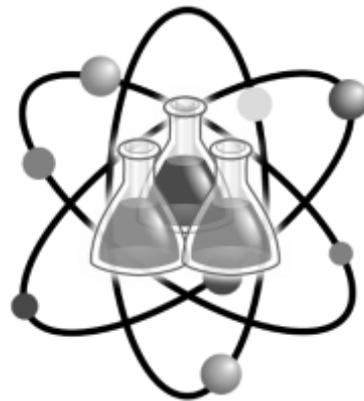
Obituaries and Consecrations;  
Historical Sites of Jewish Interest in Canberra; and  
Catalogue of Provenance of Donations to the ACT Jewish Community.

If you have documentation or photos which you would be prepared to donate to these collections, please bring them along or contact Adele Rosalky.

Afternoon tea will be served as part of the afternoon's activities.

**ADELE ROSALKY**  
President

# Great Jewish Women Scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



DAVID ROSALKY

Jews have featured prominently in scientific discovery in all fields since before the turn of the 20th century. Many received Nobel prizes.

What is not well known is that there were very prominent women amongst the Jewish scientists, some of whom were responsible for the great revelations of the scientific explosion in the 20th century. Some did so very much on their own and others with (male) colleagues.

None of these women received Nobel prizes while their male colleagues, or in some cases, competitors did. I will note three prominent cases.

## LISE MEITNER NUCLEAR FISSION

Meitner discovered the process of nuclear fission, the underlying process of nuclear energy, together with a colleague, Otto Hahn, in 1939. Their work was joint, not dominated by one partner; Hahn approached the experimentation as a chemist while Meitner was a physicist. But Hahn was awarded a Nobel prize for the discovery and Meitner was not. Hahn was a pre-eminent and brilliant chemist who clearly deserved the Nobel prize – some say he should have received at least two for his range of discoveries – but the award was for the discovery of fission, and in that endeavour, Meitner was a full partner, worthy of sharing the prize.

As a belated recognition of the unjust outcome, a trans-uranic element, number 109, was officially named after her in 1997: Meitnerium, thirty years after her death. The only other element named after a woman is Curium in honour of Marie Curie.

As an interesting side matter: Hahn actively helped Meitner to escape Nazi Europe, including gifting heirlooms to her to be used as bribes at the borders. Towards the end of the war, Hahn himself was interned by the British over (unfounded) concerns that he was assisting the Nazi pursuit of nuclear weapons.



## ROSALIND FRANKLIN STRUCTURE OF DNA

Franklin was a member of one of the two teams competing in London to discover the structure of DNA. There were various theories as to the shape of the molecule that could undergo union between the DNA of two individuals during the conception process. Even the great chemist Linus Pauling made incorrect predictions of the form of the molecule based on theoretical considerations.

Franklin was an expert in organic crystallography and had produced empirical evidence of the helical and duplicated shape of the DNA molecule. At this time, 1953, there were two teams working on the problem, one at the Cavendish Laboratories, where Francis Crick and James Watson worked, and one at Kings College Cambridge, where Franklin was working. Franklin wrote and submitted papers before Crick and Watson, even if just days before. But she was cautious to check that her workings were accurate whereas, Crick and Watson, realising that the race was desperate and having been exposed to Franklin's early results, published without such care. But they were right with their conclusions and got their paper accepted before Franklin, even though her papers showed that she reached the conclusion first.

Crick and Watson won the Nobel prize while Franklin slipped into obscurity.

Franklin's family were prominent and active Jews helping refugees to leave Europe, including the *kindertransport*. Her great-uncle was Viscount Samuel, the first practising Jew in Westminster and a Cabinet minister. He was an active Zionist and was the first High Commissioner of mandatory Palestine.



## VERA RUBIN DARK MATTER

Rubin was an astronomer who, in 1974, detected that the speed of galactic rotation was incompatible with the visible quantity of matter in the galaxies. She correctly surmised that there was a considerable quantity of matter not able to be seen, comprising about one quarter of all matter – so-called dark matter.

Her conclusions were treated with scepticism for some time but are now generally accepted, but no Nobel prize has been awarded. Interestingly, an extension of the concept which invokes dark energy, has attracted a Nobel prize for the team that developed the theory. One of the recipients is the present Vice-Chancellor of the ANU, Brian Schmidt. Many scientists believe that the concept of dark matter was path-breaking and should have attracted a Nobel prize.

Vera Rubin died in December 2016.



*This article was submitted by David Rosalky who has always had a love of science and science history. He graduated with a PhD in Nuclear Physics in 1971, aged 25.*

# The Young Professionals of Canberra

STEFAN MISRACHI

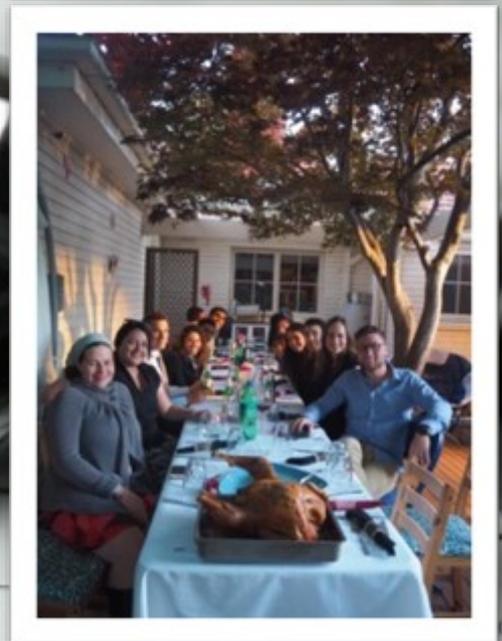
Here ends 2016 and begins 2017... what a year it's been! A year filled with social events, Shabbat dinners and lunches, celebrating festivals, playing tennis, brewing beer, discussing topical issues in contemporary society and Torah, and most of all, forging friendships that will last a lifetime.

The young adult / young professional community in Canberra has never been stronger and more vibrant. Led by Rabbi Alon Meltzer, we have been fortunate enough to have a visiting scholar-in-residence from the United States, shlichim from far-flung Melbourne and Sydney, and the arrival of brilliant shlichim from Israel, Raz and Rotem. With every event having 20 to 30 engaged young professionals, the Canberra young adult community is truly flourishing.

Events from last year included a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner (kosher turkey included), learning how to brew beer, discussing topical issues (such as immigration and same-sex marriage) and the Jewish perspective, many Shabbat lunches and dinners, karaoke Purim party, baking challah, Simchat Torah BBQ, tennis competition at the Rabbi's, watching a hit Israeli television series followed by a discussion, and many more.

It is only March, but 2017 has already built upon the success of 2016. We have had our first ever Young Professionals weekend get-away. Spending two days along the beautiful coastline of South Durras, 12 young professionals had a fantastic time swimming in the ocean, walking along the beach, playing board games, having Shabbat meals, and enjoying each other's company.

While not having the numbers as Sydney or Melbourne, our young adult events yield a more precious gift: they are gatherings of true friends - places where we can laugh, discuss issues, and be ourselves. I have seen many Jewish communities around the world, but none have been as warm and nourishing as Canberra's. It is truly a place we call home.



## Refuah Sheleima

**We wish all those who are unwell a speedy recover. Please contact Rabbi Meltzer or Arava if you or someone you know is unwell.**



## Caring for you in Canberra

*We are here to help you and your loved ones. Please contact us to discuss how we can help you.*

Arava Klein  
(02) 6295 1052  
arava.klein@canberra jewishcommunity.org

Local Jewish Care Support  
6295 2298

The Jewish Care Service  
(Sydney) 1300 133 660

Jewish  Care

# Lentils and Rice:

## A One Pot Wonder

FIONA SWEET FORMIATTI

**L**entils and rice in one dish feature in a number of recipes in the Middle East. Here is my version. Although the description is long, it's actually quite easy to cook. You can do a parev/vegan version, or a milchig one (with a dash of ghee, and served with yoghurt). It's worth taking the time to cook the sauce properly. You can even make it the day beforehand. I keep to tradition and cook the lentils and rice in the same pot. You can combine cooking this with other activities: doing a load of washing, chatting over a glass of wine ...

### Basic ingredients

1 cup short-grain rice  
1 cup dried green lentils  
1-1.5 tablespoon/s olive oil  
salt

### Sauce

2 onions, halved and very finely sliced  
2-3 cloves garlic, smashed  
2-3 tablespoons olive oil  
400g passata/tomato purée

### Optional

Black pepper  
Smoked paprika  
Cumin powder  
Cayenne pepper/harissa

### Method

1. Heat 2-3 tablespoons olive oil in saucepan (low heat). Add sliced onion. Stir. Sauté for 10 minutes, then add garlic. Place lid on saucepan. Keep heat is low so that neither garlic nor onions start to brown. Check every 10 minutes or so, and stir.
2. Wash rice well. Place in sieve to drip dry.
3. Place 6-8 cups water and 1 teaspoon salt in a large pan with a heavy bottom. (You'll need a lid.) Add well-washed lentils. Bring to boil, reduce heat to medium. Cook until lentils are just soft, not mushy (40 minutes or so).
4. Meanwhile keep checking onions. After lentils have cooked for 30 minutes, add tomato passata/purée into onion mixture, and salt and black pepper to taste. Optional: 1-2 tablespoons of tomato paste (no need to add salt), either smoked paprika (1 teaspoon or to taste), cumin (half a teaspoon), and cayenne/harissa paste to taste. We like spicy food so I add harissa. Bring to boil, turn to low-medium. Cover. As before check occasionally, and stir.
5. Drain lentils. Put aside in bowl. Keep cooking liquid.
6. Rinse and dry pan. Add 1-1.5 tablespoon/s olive oil to pan. Warm over low heat. Add rice and stir gently. (For a milchig meal, you can use a mixture of olive oil and ghee. Keep stirring. When rice changes colour (2-3 minutes), add 2 cups of water (or 2 cups of lentil cooking liquid and water, if needed). Bring to boil. Reduce heat to very low. Cover pan. Cook for 20 minutes, without removing lid. Turn heat off, let stand for 5 minutes.
7. Turn heat on to lowish Add cooked lentils to rice. Then add sauce (which should have thickened and reduced). You may find you don't need to use all the sauce. You don't want the mixture too soggy. (It makes a great base for a vegetable tagine or soup.) Gently, with a large fork, fluff up lentils, rice, and sauce, until well mixed. Place paper towel (or clean old tea towel) over top, then put lid on. Turn to low. Leave for 15-20 minutes. Turn heat off. Leave for 10 minutes before removing lid.

### Notes

Great as comfort food by itself. Hot, room temperature, or cold.  
For a more substantial meal, you can serve it with any of the following: bread, fried or boiled eggs, yoghurt, pickled cucumbers, and a green salad. You can garnish it with chopped herbs and lemon wedges.  
It is also great with fish, and marinated mushroom kebabs.  
If you want to make a larger quantity, just double basic ingredients. You may find that 3 onions and the same amount of passata/tomato purée are fine for the sauce.  
You can even leave out the sauce completely, if you are serving the dish as a 'base' with other dishes!





# National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (Canberra Section)

KAREN TATZ

The National Council of Jewish Women of Australia was founded in Sydney in 1923 by Doctor Fanny Reading MBE, and became a national organisation in 1929. With seven sections around Australia, NCJWA maintains its position as the only Australian Jewish women's organisation with a platform working for the general community, the Jewish community and its various projects in Israel.

In 1925, NCJWA was affiliated to the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW), representing over one million Jewish women worldwide. ICJW has representatives speaking on behalf of women's issues at the UN in Paris, Geneva, Vienna and New York.

In 1929 NCJWA was affiliated to the National Council of Women (NCWA). We advocate with NCWA on women's issues and interests both locally and nationally.

NCJWA has around 2000 women members who come together to explore common interests, serve their communities, and engage with local, national and international sections.

The focus is on service and philanthropy in both Australia and Israel. As an affiliate of the ICJW, NCJWA connects with women in fifty countries around the world, which gives us a voice in the highest levels of world government and at human rights agencies worldwide. It is a place for diverse views and consensual action, a place for discussion and debate, a place for exploration and commitment.

In Australia, sections are active in Canberra, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth. Our national and Israel projects bring change to our communities and women in Israel. On the national level, we aim is to make the world a better place. In Canberra, we provide an opportunity for women from our community to get together in our homes and at the ACTJC. Some of our events are for women only and others are open to everyone. We welcome guests and new members.

We have just held our annual garden party / membership drive and were delighted to welcome four new members. We will be holding a number of events this year and hope that many of you will join us.



*Dr Fanny Reading MBE*



# TU B'SHEVAT – New Year for Trees

ADELE ROSALKY

With Tu b'Shevat falling on 11 February 2017 (15 Shevat), this article continues the series on the provenance of art works on display at the National Jewish Memorial Centre. It focuses on two works featuring trees, both of which were donated to the ACT Jewish Community by Ruth and Clive Landau.

Tu b'Shevat, or the 'New Year for Trees', always occurs on the 15th of Shevat and marks the season in Israel when the earliest-blooming trees emerge from winter and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle. The day is marked by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. On this day we remember that 'man is a tree of the field' (*Deuteronomy 20:19*) through cultivating strong roots—faith and commitment to G-d, and we produce many fruits—Torah and Mitzvot.

The first donated work is *Tree in Jerusalem*, a woodcut by **Jacob Pins** created in 1947. Jacob Pins was born in Hoxter, Germany, and emigrated to Palestine in 1936 to study art. He first lived on a kibbutz, but moved to Jerusalem where he studied woodcut and linocut under woodcut master and painter Jacob Steinhardt. Pins lived in poverty as he continued his studies at the new Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, but eventually achieved success and became a professor at the Bezalel Academy. Pins' artwork was heavily influenced by German

Expressionism and traditional Japanese wood block printing. He was one of Israel's foremost art collectors and, after his death in Jerusalem in December 2005, his extensive collection of Japanese woodprints, paintings and sculptures was left to the Israel Museum. His own artwork was exhibited as the Forum Jacob Pins Museum in Hoxter, and a feature-length documentary about Pins is in the collection of MOMA, New York.

*Tree in Jerusalem* was donated to the ACT Jewish Community by Ruth & Clive Landau in 1983.



The second work is *Jerusalem* by **Degana Lopez**, which was painted on silk in the late 1970s, and illustrates Cyprus trees which feature prominently in the Jerusalem landscape. Degana Lopez trained as a primary school teacher specialising in art and craft, but later completed studies at the



Bezalel Art Academy in 1969. She was the wife of Aharon Lopez who was the First Secretary at the Israeli Embassy in Canberra during the second half of the 1970s. While in Canberra, Mrs Lopez held two exhibitions of her works on silk. The couple returned to Jerusalem in the late 1970s. Aharon Lopez was a career diplomat in Israel's Foreign Service and served as Ambassador of Israel in Cyprus. His last posting before retirement was as Israel's Ambassador to the Vatican from 1997-2000.

*Jerusalem* was donated to the ACT Jewish Community by Ruth & Clive Landau in 2008.

**Clive Landau** was a defence scientist. He died in 2013. **Ruth Landau** was a pharmacist before her retirement, and is still an active member of the ACT Jewish Community.

March 2017

# Shlichim's News

ROTEM DVIR AND RAZ SOFER

Dear friends, it seems that wherever you turn or look in Canberra these days, you'll find Jews celebrating their beliefs, history and heritage. From toddlers enjoying playtime and Jewish tunes and kids learning the secrets of the Hebrew language, to adolescents forming social bonds with others their age and connecting to Jewish values and Zionism. From university students and young adults making their first steps towards establishing Jewish families and futures, to adults enjoying a social meeting and a chance to debate Israel and Judaism in our classes.

The past months introduced us to a deeply thoughtful, inquisitive and ambitious Jewish community in Canberra. We heard directly from them about their lives, their views on spirituality, their ambitions, their fears, their feelings toward friends and family, how they form their Jewish identities and much more. During that period we tried the best we could to construct a meaningful Jewish education program tailored for specific age groups as well as families with a true and personal connection to Israel. We wish to take a moment and fill you in on the results so far and future plans.

The educational program we provide starts from toddler age with Shabbat gathering of parents and kids. Together, we sing songs, play games, hold a Kiddush ceremony and enjoy mutual playtime. The program for kids focuses on teaching Hebrew and basic Jewish studies - reading and writing in Hebrew, stories of the Torah, the Jewish calendar, Jewish holidays, the state of Israel and much more.

For teenagers we run a Zionist youth movement to infuse informal education with fun, to foster critically thinking individuals who can engage with the world with a mature, considered and balanced approach. In addition, weekly meetings are held in our apartment for teens aged 12-17 and provide deeper learning and debates on Jewish values, rituals and texts.

Young adults (Ages 18-35) events are held on a weekly basis and allow Jewish friendships and connections to form over Shabbat dinners, fun activities, weekend getaways and much more. The adult Jews of Canberra are enjoying spoken Hebrew classes, social gatherings and Rotem's baking abilities in weekly "Cafe' Ivrit" classes.

This has been an exciting year so far, and we are very eager to see what the future holds. As always, we would love to have your feedback, thoughts and suggestions.



*Children from the Cheder program*



*Children from Teens program*



*Young Adults at one of their social gatherings*



*Café Ivrit adult class*

# Asher's Bar Mitzvah Drasha

ASHER LEE

## Chag Purim Sameach

The Book of Esther is one of only a few Jewish stories with a woman as the main character. Because of this I thought that in my Dvar Torah I would like to talk about the two women (especially Vashti) in the Purim story, and whether they were feminists in their own way. Also I thought it would be good to look at whether the lessons about women and feminism from the Purim story, are relevant today.

Now I know I'm not a woman but I have two sisters and a mother (in fact Dad and I are just a little outnumbered) and I do believe in equality for all people, so I feel this is still an important angle for me to take when looking at the Book of Esther.

Queen Vashti is the first woman in the story. In fact, King Achashverosh makes an example of Vashti exactly because she stood up to him. Vashti refused to obey his command for her to attend the men's banquet.

The Megillah says in Chapter 1 Verse 12:

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command conveyed by the servants. The king was greatly incensed, and his fury burned within him.

וּתְמַאֵן הַמֶּלֶכָה  
וְשִׁתִּי לְבוֹא בְּדַבָּר  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּידֵי  
הַסֵּרִיסִים וַיִּקְצֹף  
הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ  
בַּעֲרָה בּוֹ:

Vatemaen hamalka  
Vashti lavoh bi-  
davar hamelech  
asher beyad  
hasarisim va-yiktzof  
hamelech meod  
vachamato ba-arah  
voh

Why Vashti did this I don't know.

There have been many commentators who have discussed this, and many have not seen Vashti in a very good light. For example, we see in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah, page 12b;

The verse states: "But the queen Vashti refused to come" (Esther 1:12). The Gemara asks: Since she was immodest, as the Master said above: The two of them had sinful intentions, what is the reason that she did not come? Rabbi Yosei bar Hanina said: This teaches that she broke out in leprosy, and therefore she was embarrassed to expose herself publicly.

Another reason given was that she was driven by her ego. In the Babylonian Talmud, we learn that Vashti was born into a royal family. Achashverosh wasn't – his family took over the thrown. Maybe Vashti was brave enough to refuse the King's order because she was born royal and felt she was superior.

For whatever reason Vashti decided not to do what he asked, it probably included the fact that she didn't want to.

But I believe it is a feminist story because of the reaction of the King and his advisors.

They used her disobedience as an example to husbands and wives everywhere, to make sure women understand that they need to be kept in their place – the place of second class citizens with very little power or say over their lives.

The Megillah states in Chapter 1, verse 17:

For the queen's behavior will make all wives despise their husbands, as they reflect that King Ahasuerus himself ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.

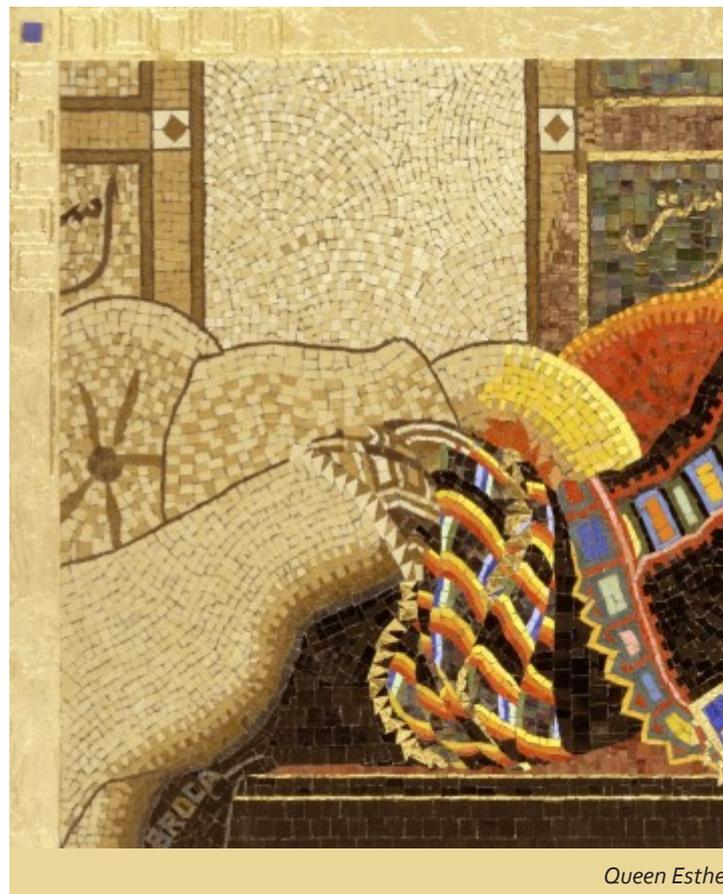
כִּי-יֵצֵא דְבַר-הַמֶּלֶכָה  
עַל-כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים  
לְהַבְזֹת בְּעֵלֵיהֶן  
בְּעֵינֵיהֶן בְּאֶמְרוֹם  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ  
אֲמַר לְהָבִיא  
אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָה  
לִפְנֵיו וְלֹא-בָאָה:

Ki-yeitze davar  
hamalka al kol  
hanashim  
l'havzot ba-  
aleihen  
b'eiheim  
b'amram  
hamelech  
Achashverosh  
amar le-havi et  
Vashti hamalka  
lefanav veloh  
ba-ah

Achashverosh made an example of Vashti by banishing her for disobeying him. So the King sent letters to all his 127 provinces to reinforce the fact that men are the rulers in their own home "all the wives will show respect to their husbands great and small alike"

I think the King and his advisers felt a little bit scared – they didn't really believe they were all powerful but they felt like it was important that other people believed that they were. The story doesn't end well for Vashti but that doesn't mean she was not brave.

A lot of rabbis have made Vashti out to be an evil character in the story. Some go as far as to say she was as evil as Haman, but I see it very differently. Although Vashti was a descendant of King Nebacuneza of Babylon (the king that destroyed the First Temple), in the actual book of Esther I cannot see anything evil Vashti does.



Queen Esthe

In Judaism there is a concept of Pardes, which is an acronym for Peshat, Remez, Drash, and Sod. Four concepts of explaining biblical verses. Peshat means the direct literal meaning, Remez is the symbolic meaning, Drash is a comparative reading, and Sod is the mystical meaning. While commentaries are important to understanding and explaining, I believe that we can gain great understanding by just looking at the story.

I believe that Vashti is a perfect example of feminism in ancient times. Some say that she was the first feminist, for example, as Harriet Beecher Stowe, a famous antislavery writer, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, wrote in 1878, Vashti's decision was a "first stand for woman's rights" and that "we shall stand amazed that there was a woman found at the head of the Persian empire that dared to disobey the command even of a drunken monarch."

Vashti may not have thought that she was a feminist. In fact, as I said before, she probably just disobeyed the king just because she did not want to do what he asked. But she was being a feminist either way from the way she reacted to how she was treated and it is amazing to think about how long ago this was and how these concepts are still relevant today.

Now that begs the questions, what was Esther fighting for? Was she a feminist too?

For most of the story, Esther was compliant, unquestioning and humble, she obeyed the orders of Mordechai and of the King. But Esther is the hero of the story and she saves her people. Admittedly Mordechai urged her to approach the king, but Esther solved the problem in her own time and in her own way, not as Mordechai had asked. She may or may not have been a feminist but we know she was brave.

Today women are discriminated against in many countries of the world, and in many ways. There is a wage gap between men and women in our own country. In some countries women are not full citizens and are not allowed to vote and girls are denied a proper education.

The Book of Esther is about two strong women. I come from a family of very strong women and I am proud of that. My grandmother Judy Lee is here today. She is clever, entertaining and interested in many things. She never misses a chance to teach me about science, art and more. She is always learning more about her interests. I would like to mention two other

strong women in my family who sadly are no longer with us. Only a couple of weeks ago my great grandmother – Fay Bernstein (or Nana Bernstein as we called her), passed away at the age of nearly 101. She migrated from Russia to China to Australia, raised 10 children, lost her husband at the age of 41 and still remained cheerful, sociable and positive her whole life. She was very strong.

My grandmother Anita Rosenberg (Nana to me) passed away 5 years ago. She was also a very strong woman. At the age of 31 she had a massive stroke which paralysed half her body and affected her speech. Instead of letting this ruin her life she worked nonstop to recover and created the stroke recovery association which started the first stroke groups in every state in Australia and created stroke awareness week to teach people about warning signs.

I am happy to also live in a Jewish community that also values the contribution of strong women.

As a Bar Mitzvah I had the privilege of learning my Torah Reading and the blessings for the Megillah. Normally, getting called up, or leading a service, is in the realm of the man. But did you know, that if I was having a Bat Mitzvah, I could have learned the Megillah and read it for all of you? A woman, because she is obligated just like a man is, in hearing the megillah, is able to lead the community megillah reading so that all can fulfil their obligation. Our community had the first woman President probably of any community in the world, Ruth Goren, in the late 1980's. Bat Mitzvah girls have the opportunity to have women tefillah groups, women say some of the Shabbat morning prayers, Kiddush on Friday night, and women give sermons. An Orthodox Woman Rabbi spent time here last year as our Scholar in Residence.

I believe it is important that women of our community are able to take meaningful leadership positions. I look forward to one day seeing my sisters Julia and Annie also being able to actively participate in the same ways that I have done.

In my own life I will make an effort to make everyone equal and encourage my friends and family to do the same and I hope you will too.

I would like to wish everyone Purim Sameach, have a fantastic Purim and thank you for learning with me, and joining me today.



Queen Esther's Banquet, by Lilian Broca . Website: <https://quakemoais.wordpress.com/tag/queen-esther/>

# PURIM:

## The Responsibility of Power

RABBI ALON MELZTER

The first Jewish President of the United States has been inaugurated, and the first Jewish holiday that follows is Purim. So he calls up his mother to invite her to the White House for Purim. Their conversation goes something like this:

"Mom, with Purim being the first holiday after my inauguration, I want you to celebrate it with us at the White House."

"Oh, I don't know. I'll have to get to the airport and..."

"Mom! I'm the president of the United States! I'll send a limo for you to take you right to the airport!"

"OK, but when I get to the airport, I'll have to stand on the line to buy a ticket and check my baggage. Oy, it will be so difficult for me."

"Mom, don't worry about standing on lines or any of that. I'm the most powerful person in the world. I'm the president. I'll send Air Force One for you!!"

"Well, OK. But when I get to Washington, I'll have to find a cab and..."

"Momma, please! I'll have a helicopter waiting for you. It will bring right to the White House lawn!!!"

"Well ... but where will I stay? Can I get a hotel room...?"

"Momma, we have this whole big White House!!!! There will be plenty of room!!!! Please join us for Purim?"

"Ok, I'll be there."

Two seconds later, she calls her friend:

"Hello, Sadie? Guess what? I'm

spending Purim at my son's house!"

"Oh, the doctor?"

"No, the other one."

Purim, is the festival of fun. It is the festival of levity, and celebration, where we eat and drink, where we dress up, where we party, it is about having fun. If I told you now that it is also the most serious day of the calendar what would you say? Rabbi, you must be joking, surely Asher's speech was the serious one, your one can lighten up a bit, no? Take a break it's Purim?

Friends, Purim is the most serious day of our beautiful year. Well I should be more honest, Purim is the most serious day of the year. It is a day of focus.

Because of this element to Purim, we have to enhance ourselves, we have the responsibility to focus ourselves in a way very similar to Yom Kippur, and to realize all the elements contained within this amazing Chag.

A key area of focus is the story of the Megillah. Asher gave an incredible drasha about feminism within the Megillah. I would like to look at another element of the Megillah, the Responsibility of Power.

Within the Megillah we see five characters that assume a role of power. Achashverosh, Vashti, Haman, Esther and Mordechai, ascending in that order.

According to the Sages, Achashverosh was a usurper king. He was not born nor fit to rule.

The Babylonian Talmud states in Tractate Megillah, 12b:

Rava Said, Vashti sent word to the king. You the son of my father's stableman, who could drink wine against a thousand men, and did not get drunk. While you Achashverosh have become senseless from his wine.

Yet as the megillah opens, we learn of his rule over 127 provinces from Ethiopia through to India and, while perhaps illegitimate, he assumes a role of power.

Achashverosh though is blinded by greed. He is a party animal who refuses to accept the realities in front of him. He does not realize that Haman, over the course of more than a decade climbs up the totem of power, until he is able to completely undermine the rule of law, and threatens to split the kingdom into two.

Vashti, also has an element of power. While Asher has argued his views, quite convincingly I might add, the Sages view Vashti in an almost universal negative light. Also in the same Talmudic piece, the Rabbis advise us that Vashti was a tormentor of Jewish women, making them remove their clothes, and work throughout the Shabbat. She is punished in the same way, forced to remove her clothes, which she refuses, and then is banished from the kingdom.

Vashti is all powerful. She is the daughter of true royalty, the wife of the usurper, yet she is controlling and manipulative. She uses her power for all the wrong reasons. Where other

אמר רבא שלחה  
ליה בר אהורייריה  
דאבא אבא לקבל  
אלפא חמרא שתי  
ולא רוי והוא  
גברא אשתטי  
בחמריה



kings of Persia had begun to restore harmony and balance within the empire, especially towards the Jewish people with the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the allowing of members of the exile to return back to our homeland, Vashti and her Husband cling onto old ways of power – humiliation, barbarism, and cruelty.

Haman, may his name be blotted out, is the evil schemer of the story. We read of the Amalekite nation in Asher's Bar Mitzvah Leining.

Amalek was the first nation to attack Israel, and played a central role in all the attacks launched against Israel. What was the origin of this anti-Semitism? Our Sages give a surprising answer in the Talmudic Tractate of Shabbat 89a.

"Why is it called Mount Sinai?" Rav Kahana was asked by one of the Sages. "On this mountain," came the reply "sinah [hatred] descended upon the nations of the world".

Amalek was the first to attack Israel and therefore that nation is destined to be destroyed. Haman, the instigator of the genocidal plot against the Jewish people in a manner of sinah, was indeed destroyed, while his partner in hatred - Achashverosh - was permitted to continue his reign and grant power and pride to a nation returning to Sinai.

Esther, as we know, makes her way into power by wooing first the servants of the king and then the king himself.

We learn in Megillah, 4:13 & 14:

And Mordecai ordered to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine to yourself that you will escape in the king's house from among all the Jews

וַיֹּאמֶר מֵרְדֵּכָי לְהַשִּׁיב  
אֶל אֶסְתֵּר אֵל תִּדְמִי  
בְּנִפְשָׁךְ לְהִמְלֹט בַּיִת  
הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל הַיְּהוּדִים

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and rescue will arise for the Jews from elsewhere, and you and your father's household will perish; and who knows whether at a time like this you will attain the kingdom?"

כִּי אִם הִחַרְשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי  
בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רוּחַ  
וְהִצֵּלָה יַעֲמוּד לַיהוּדִים  
מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאַתָּה  
וּבֵית אָבִיךָ תִּאבְדוּ וּמִי  
יֹדֵעַ אִם לָעֵת קִזְזַת  
הִגַּעְתְּ לְמַלְכוּת

From this point on, Esther seems to become proactive, however for a woman of such power, it seems inconceivable that she is unwilling to act in her own stead, until the blunt reality hits her.

Finally, Mordechai assumes the role of power, taking over the role of Haman in the final chapters of the megillah. Mordechai was one of the members of the Sanhedrin, the great court that would sit in Jerusalem. He was a leader of the Jewish people, what he said they did, as we learn from the Megillah when he donned sackcloth and ashes and all the Jews of Shushan followed him.

I found an interesting statement from a Christian bible website; What really troubles me about Mordecai is that his Jewishness does not seem to be sufficient reason to return to his homeland, but it is sufficient reason for him to show disrespect for the Persian authorities.

In Josephus' book, The Antiquities of the Jews, it states in Volume 11, Chapter 6:

"And Mordecai became a great and illustrious person with the King, and assisted him in the government of the people. He also lived with the Queen. So that the affairs of the Jews were, by their means, better than they could ever have hoped for."

Why does Mordechai not use his new found power to relocate the remaining Jews of the Babylonian Exile back to Israel and continue in the rebuilding of the Temple. Why does he sit and remain in the Palace of Achashverosh.

When looking at the power of these five characters we can see their human frailties, their flaws, all of their imperfections. Each of them wields considerable power, but instead of using it to benefit society they use it to further their own actions, or are so completely naïve to even realize their potential.

It is with this that I bring together the idea of focusing, with the idea of power.

The great Ben Parker, Spiderman's uncle, says that with great power comes great responsibility.

But in order to use that power, one needs to focus. Purim is about focusing, and I believe that we must use this immensely special quality of the day to realize our own powers, our own responsibilities, and our own mission and purpose in life.

I must be the only Rabbi in the world that has the privilege of giving a sermon on Purim morning, it is unheard of. But in doing so, I have the opportunity to hopefully enlighten you all about who we are and what we are meant to do.

Asher has done an incredible job, and it has been an amazing thing to watch the entire Lee family join with Asher on this beautiful journey.

Asher, you are now a Bar Mitzvah, and as you so eloquently put it, you have had the opportunity to assume the mantle of leadership. You are in a role of power, standing in the

footsteps of all those who have transitioned from childhood to adulthood in our nation.

Asher, your mother Naomi describes you as intelligent, comic, single minded; while your father, Jonathan, says you are good-in-a-crisis, independent thinker, engaging. You yourself said that you were peculiar, smart and funny.

This notion of intelligence and independent thinking shines through. Each conversation we have had over the past several years, each interaction, and especially the process of crafting and perfecting your Drasha, each of them have been an intellectual exercise where you have displayed the maturity and strength.

Your hobbies resonate power, you have mastery of machines, of programming computers and building them, you have the power of strength as a Yellow Belt of Kung Fu, and you have the power of musical talent.

Ultimately, as the story of Esther has shown us, it does not matter whether one has talent or power, whether learned or innate, it is how we use it.

You spoke so beautifully of how you would like to see your sisters engage with their own personal journeys in Judaism, but it is you, today, here in this shul, whom I believe we need to ensure we empower and engage to add benefit to our community.

Asher, your mother shared a message with me, be yourself and be proud of who you are, never stop learning and being interested in understanding things, respect others and respect their views, keep talking to your family because we love you and we are on your side, and most importantly be good to your mother. While your father said do what you enjoy and try your best at everything; we are always keen to hear your thoughts, be kind to your sisters and remember, it's OK if we don't always agree.

You have the choice today, and over the next coming months, to establish yourself a place within our community that is meaningful, that understands your power and, of course your responsibility towards yourself, your siblings and your community. You, Asher, have the chance to step up to the plate, I hope you are able to maturely engage with our faith, history,

culture, in a way that questions, critiques but ultimately draws you near. You said to me that being Jewish means, that, although you are not the most religious person in the world, you enjoy learning about our heritage and loved learning the concepts around the rituals that we do. You also said that being part of the community, is somewhere to belong, it is much like Judaism, in that wherever you go you have a place to call home.

Asher, your mum shared the

It is truly incredible the empowerment your parents give you, I hope that you learn the lessons of the Megillah that I have just shared and that you are able to use your new found powers responsibly.

Please join me as I give you the traditional Priestly Blessing.

May the LORD bless you and guard you –

("Yebhārēkh-khā Hashem veyishmerēkhā ...)

May the LORD make His face shed light upon you and be gracious unto you –

("Yā ēr Hashem pānāw ēlekhā vihunnēkkā ...)

May the LORD lift up His face unto you and give you peace –

("Yissā Hashem pānāw ēlekhā viyāsēm lekhā shālōm.")

# Kingdom of Twilight:

## A novel by Steven Uhly

SIMON TATZ

**The proliferation of books on the Holocaust and World War Two is seemingly endless. One questions what more can be written that adds value and understanding.**

Steven Uhly's epic novel has been described as one of the most powerful and important novels to emerge from modern Germany, and it certainly presents real life events in a manner that warrants the investment in reading this lengthy and at times challenging novel.

Uhly is an unlikely author of story that traverses the Polish experience, the fate of rural Germans, the complex life of female Jewish prisoners, displacement camps, the exodus to Palestine, post-Holocaust life and the birth of Israel. Uhly, who isn't Jewish, was born in Cologne in 1964, the son of a German mother and the Bengali father she met in London, where she was an au pair with a Jewish family.

The time Uhly's mother spent with her Jewish hosts was a revelation, a time Uhly has described as being "painful yet tremendous questioning and readjustment of her sense of identity, historical perspective and sympathetic truths."

In an interview, Uhly said he grew up with the feeling of being ashamed of being German. This wasn't just because of what Germany did in perpetrating the Holocaust, but because Germans were not taught to understand either the events of the Holocaust or their origins. As a mixed-race

child in Germany, he experienced discrimination and racial hatred; events that made him question the notions of belonging, identity and identification.

Uhly said: "After World War II the fate of refugees was still terrible. Jews sought a safe haven in Germany of all places, living for years as displaced persons wearing SS uniforms because there were no other clothes. That was a reality I could not escape, as was the resistance towards a

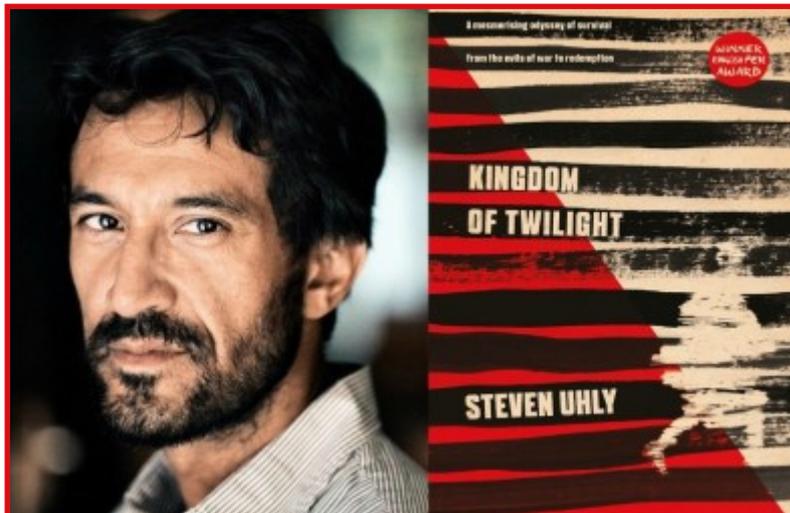
camp 'slave' Anna; the Kramer family, rural Germans settled in occupied Poland; and their various descendents is told in 186 separate but linked vignettes. This can be confusing as linear time and place are forsaken, and the narrative, such that it is, jumps from the Soviet sweep across Europe to Siberia to Israel in the 1950s to displaced camps in 1946. Fictional characters are also interspersed with real people and events. Abba Kovnar and other partisan

leaders appear and the story of the *President Warfield* (Exodus) is portrayed through both fictional and real life people.

*Kingdom of Twilight* reads in part like a gripping thriller, but it is more than that. The sad tale of what happened to ordinary Germans caught between the Nazi regime and the invading Soviets is told with compassion. The life of Jews after the war, forced into camps inside

Germany, is especially difficult to read without a renewed sense of anger and resentment toward the British Government. The chapters set between the end of the war and Israel's declaration of Independence is genuinely moving and heartfelt. Uhly doesn't hide where his sympathies lie.

Winner of the English Pen Award, *Kingdom of Twilight* has barely received the literary attention a book of such weight, emotional insight, and substance deserves.



mass exodus of Jews from Europe to Palestine, especially by the British. In the 1970s the Holocaust was as much silenced in Israel as it was in Germany – shame, the shame of survival, of having been a victim, being the respective cause."

Identity and identification are themes that tie *Kingdom of Twilight* into some form of coherence. The story begins with a young Polish Jewess, Margarita Ejenstain, assassinating an SS officer in occupied Poland. Her life and that of a brutal SS commander Joseph Ranzner, his Jewish

# JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ACT FAITH COMMUNITIES

*READ BY*

MR DEAN SAHU KHAN, VENERABLE TENPA BEJANKE,  
DEACON JOHN LIM AND MRS DEEPALI JAIN

**A**s leaders and representatives of the faith communities of the ACT, we welcome the adoption of "A Commonwealth for Peace" as the theme for this year's Commonwealth Day Multi-Faith Celebration.

Peace is a central concern of all our religious traditions. It is a fundamental spiritual and moral duty of every person and religious community to strive for peace - inner peace, peace in our families, peace with our neighbours, peace in and amongst all countries, and peace in the world.

Peace requires spiritual and moral qualities that every religion seeks to foster. Through the ages, the religions of the world have inspired their followers to develop love and compassion for others, to give of themselves for the greater good, and to strive for the material and spiritual betterment of all. The "golden rule", which calls us to treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, is a common moral thread running through all the world's religious traditions. Today religions continue to inspire and sustain countless men and women in every country to work for peace in the world. Attaining peace goes far beyond cessation of hostilities and peace agreements, important though these are. We will never achieve lasting peace without justice. The root causes of conflict must be addressed:

racism, the huge gulf between rich and poor, nationalism untempered by a wider concern for humankind, inequality between men and women, and lack of education, to name a few.

No serious attempt to achieve peace can ignore religion. The spiritual instincts of people undergird positive action for the common good and ought never be diminished or marginalised. We acknowledge that religious misunderstanding, prejudice, hatred and extremism have fuelled violence and conflict, a fact that must pain the heart of every true follower of the religious life. At the same time, materialistic ideologies have failed to satisfy the deepest yearnings of the human spirit, leaving a legacy of

resentment and conflict.

If it is to live up to its true purpose, the rich diversity of religious traditions must actively contribute to addressing the challenges that humanity faces today. The task before us is great, but we must never allow its scale to paralyse our will to act.

The pursuit of peace in and between nations has been a principal priority of the modern Commonwealth. Bringing together 52 countries, collectively representing one-third of all humanity, the Commonwealth of Nations has tremendous potential to build understanding and peace in the world.

The Commonwealth values, which include the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, individual liberty, egalitarianism, free trade, multilateralism and world peace, emerged in independence movements and the struggles for self-government.

Among its 2.4 billion citizens, the Commonwealth counts members of virtually every faith and religious tradition on Earth. We encourage the Commonwealth to look to people of faith and religious communities as partners in its vision to help create and sustain a union that is mutually respectful, resilient, peaceful and prosperous, and that cherishes equality, diversity and shared values.

We recognise there is much which is true and good in all our faith traditions. As faith leaders and representatives of the ACT, we resolve to work to increase inter-religious understanding and peace in our community, based on the unshakable belief that we are all part of one human family.

And we commit to finding and seizing more opportunities to work together towards a more peaceful world. May our interfaith solidarity and cooperation be a source of hope for all.

SUBMITTED BY BILL ARNOLD



Proudly  
representing  
Judaism in the  
nation's capital

## ACT Jewish Community 2016 Capital Campaign



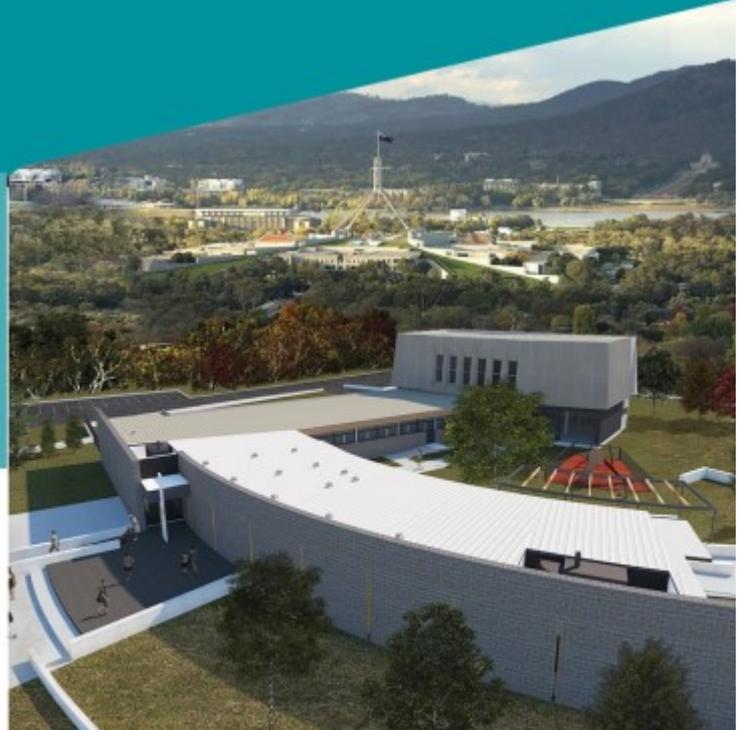
Building a centre for all of  
us to call home.  
Let's build it together!

Campaign Target \$6.3m

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The ACT Jewish  
Community is a  
member of the JCA  
family of organisations



# ACT JEWISH COMMUNITY LIFE CYCLES

DECEMBER 2016 - MARCH 2017

## BIRTHS

Greg and Anne Mark's  
granddaughter, Hannah

Michael and Susanna  
Elkaim's granddaughter,  
Hannah

## BAR MITZVAH

Itamar Oren

Asher Lee

## BAT MITZVAH

Sophie Thorpe

Shani Creagh

Elana McNee

Vida Rosauer

Yarden Livne

## DEATHS

Hannah Elijah, mother of  
Solomon and Jacob Elijah

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Len Dixon (95 years)

Sam Fein (93 years)

Merrilyn Sernack (70 years)

Engagement of Karen  
Mansberg and Simon  
Sawday

50th Wedding Anniversary  
of Raffi and Vicki Lehrer





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