

HaMerkaz

ACT Jewish Community Magazine

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Editor's Note

KAREN TATZ
EDITOR

Hello everyone and welcome to the June /July issue of HaMerkaz. I am sorry that this issue is a little late in coming out. I was rather out of action for a little while with a broken toe – caused by too much gefilte fish (a jar fell off a high shelf onto my bare foot) and the arrival of my granddaughter, who joined us on 19 June, just before we headed off for a two-week holiday. My family were most amused that I still managed to eat the gefilte fish!

I would like to thank Vicki for all her work on this issue. We would not be able to produce HaMerkaz without Vicki's efforts and creativity. A lot of work goes into desktop publishing.

I would also like to remind you that we will now be charging for hard copies of HaMerkaz. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to order and pay for your printed copy.

Donation of Seder Plate to the ACTJC

A beautiful ceramic seder plate was donated to the community for Passover by our talented artist **Sarit Cohen**.

The plate displays the style that Sarit has used on many items she has created and exhibited over the past few years, with blue Hebrew lettering on white porcelain. The plate was used for the first time at this year's communal seder.

The community is most grateful to Sarit for this beautiful addition to our collection of art works.



Rabbi's Desk

RABBI ALON MELTZER

Since our last issue of HaMerkaz, things have been running flat out – having completed two round trips to Israel to represent the community at various conferences and gatherings, finalising the building process (hopefully by the next issue we will see some construction occurring), and continuing our array of programming.

It is an exciting time to be part of the ACTJC (I think that is a recurring theme in my messages, but, sincerely, we never seem to stop innovating and transforming).

This issue of HaMerkaz really ties together so much of what has occurred in our community – we have had simchas, Pesach, our Limmud Shavuot, our host of Yoms, including the very successful Yom Hashoah Ceremony with the NSW Board of Deputies and the ECAJ, and Yom Yerushalayim, where we launched our Jerusalem at 50 photo exhibit.

I know that sometimes sitting in Canberra, and being part of our community, we feel isolated from the bigger picture of Australian Jewry. In this issue's message, I would like to talk about some of the bigger picture issues that our national community is facing, and would like to use my voice as a member of the Executive of the Rabbinic Council of Australia and New Zealand (RCANZ) to do so.

There are three main issues that are facing our community at a national level.

The first still revolves around Child Sexual Abuse, specifically relating to the alleged abuses perpetrated by Malka Leifer, a former principal of the Adas School in Melbourne. Recently RCANZ and the ECAJ launched a fresh campaign to lobby the Australian Government to ensure that she is extradited from the State of Israel. With the memories and scars still very fresh from the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse, it is imperative that we as a national community stand with a strong and united voice demanding justice for all the victims of such horrendous tragedies.

The second issue is the inclusion of the LGBTQI community within the fabric of Australian Jewry. At the recent Limmud Programs and private communal functions, Rabbi Steven

Greenberg, an Orthodox Ordained Rabbi, who later opened up about being Gay, spoke on the issues of inclusion of all Jews within practice and worship. While some of his views are clearly controversial, the response to his talks by some members of the Jewish community were far too extreme for what is needed in 2017's discourse. As many of you know, it is my view that Orthodoxy in particular, and Judaism in general, needs to ensure that we shift the discourse from the sexualisation of this community, to a conversation around companionship, relationships, and the space for inclusion within the community.

Finally, the topic of Israel. Again at recent Limmud programs in Sydney and Melbourne, there were several very problematic outbursts from the audiences regarding certain speakers and topics on the topic of Israel. While at the Nahum Goldmann Fellowship in Israel at the beginning of June, I was fortunate to participate in a facilitation workshop run by Resetting the Table, an organisation whose primary objectives are to teach people how to talk about Israel in a non-confrontational manner, where both sides can listen, and truly understand the views of the other. What was most interesting was that in an almost unanimous fashion, all those with opposing extreme views concluded with realising that both participants were really engaging in similar conversations and had similar ideas, with different ways in which to get to the conclusion. When the heat and emotion was finally removed from the conversation, both sides could truly appreciate the nuance. I believe the Australian Jewish Community as a whole, but also the members of the ACTJC, need to think about how we talk about Israel, but perhaps more importantly we need to think about how we listen to our fellow tribe mates.

With that short update, I wish you a warm and healthy winter and I cannot wait to see you at the ACTJC.



President's Welcome

Yael Cass
President

Welcome to the second edition of HaMerkaz for 2017. Our communal events have been coming thick and fast this year.

I hope you and your family have joined us for several of the many significant educational, social, religious and cultural events held in our Centre over the last few months. This is your community – and we want you, your kids and friends to be involved and to feel at home.

Special General Meeting 18 June Outcomes

We held an informative and lively SGM on Sunday 18 June to ensure that all members of the community could be informed and contribute to key decisions relating to the future growth and development of our community.

We discussed the ACTJC Capital Appeal which was a priority project for the last year. Thank you to all community members who contributed to our Appeal. Your support has been integral to our success.

We commenced our Capital Appeal in February 2016 by running a series of community consultations in members' homes around Canberra. These meetings helped us gauge community priorities for the short to medium term and helped us build the case for expanding the National Jewish Memorial Centre. We engaged with the national Jewish peak bodies and a group of significant Appeal patrons from Melbourne and Sydney to mount the case for national support for our project. We held around 100 meetings with potential donors and presented a persuasive case supported by a prospectus, a digital fly-through of the building plans, audio visual material and pledge cards.

To date we have pledges and contributions of \$4.1 million towards our project. This should enable us to proceed with:

- Refurbishment of the existing classroom wing, the toilets, a lift and construction of the Orthodox sanctuary;
- Construction of the new wing including a ceremonial

foyer, offices, new classrooms/meeting rooms and the Progressive sanctuary; and

- A perimeter security fence which will provide pedestrian and vehicle barriers.

We expect that work on the first contract (the security fence and refurbishment of the existing wing) will commence shortly and should be completed by the end of the year. This will allow time to finalise the specifications and tender process for the second contract.

We are entering a significant phase of development for our community, both in terms of physical construction and communal growth. The SGM voted, nearly unanimously, in support of expenditure up to \$4m for the capital works with the Board to approve and monitor each milestone and to report to the Community on costs and progress on the construction program.

Update on Youth Education Program and shlichim project

As parents in our community will know, we revised our Youth Education Program in the 2016 calendar year. In August 2016, we engaged our professional and talented shlichim, Raz and Rotem, who have been integral to offering a comprehensive program for tots, primary school kids, teenagers and young adults. Raz and Rotem have extended their repertoire by offering Café Invrit classes for all community members and by supporting and mentoring a cohesive team of madrichim to run our CaTZ youth movement.

Raz and Rotem are remarkable young people who have inspired and stimulated our kids. Sadly, they will be returning to Israel in October 2017. The Board and a selection panel including Deb Sims and Sharon Polishuk have worked with the Jewish Agency and the ZFA to find a replacement pair of shlichim to take over where Raz and Rotem leave off. I am pleased to advise that we have offered the placement to young couple, Almog and Hillel, who are presently preparing to join us later in the year.

Process for next Rabbi Appointment

We are seeking your input into the process for selecting our next Rabbi for the ACTJC.

Rabbi Alon and Rebbetzin Lindsay have been with us for three years – and have entered the last year of their four-

year appointment. As R Alon mentioned at the SGM, they will now look for a new placement for their family.

The bold choice to engage a Rabbi for the ACTJC several years ago has well and truly paid off. We have seen an explosion in community programs and membership. R Alon has been a remarkable educator and spiritual leader for our entire community – dedicating his endless energy, commitment and drive to building our community into a dynamic Centre with national standing and recognition. I extend my thanks to R Alon and Linsay for opening their home to members of our community and stimulating us to be better Jews.

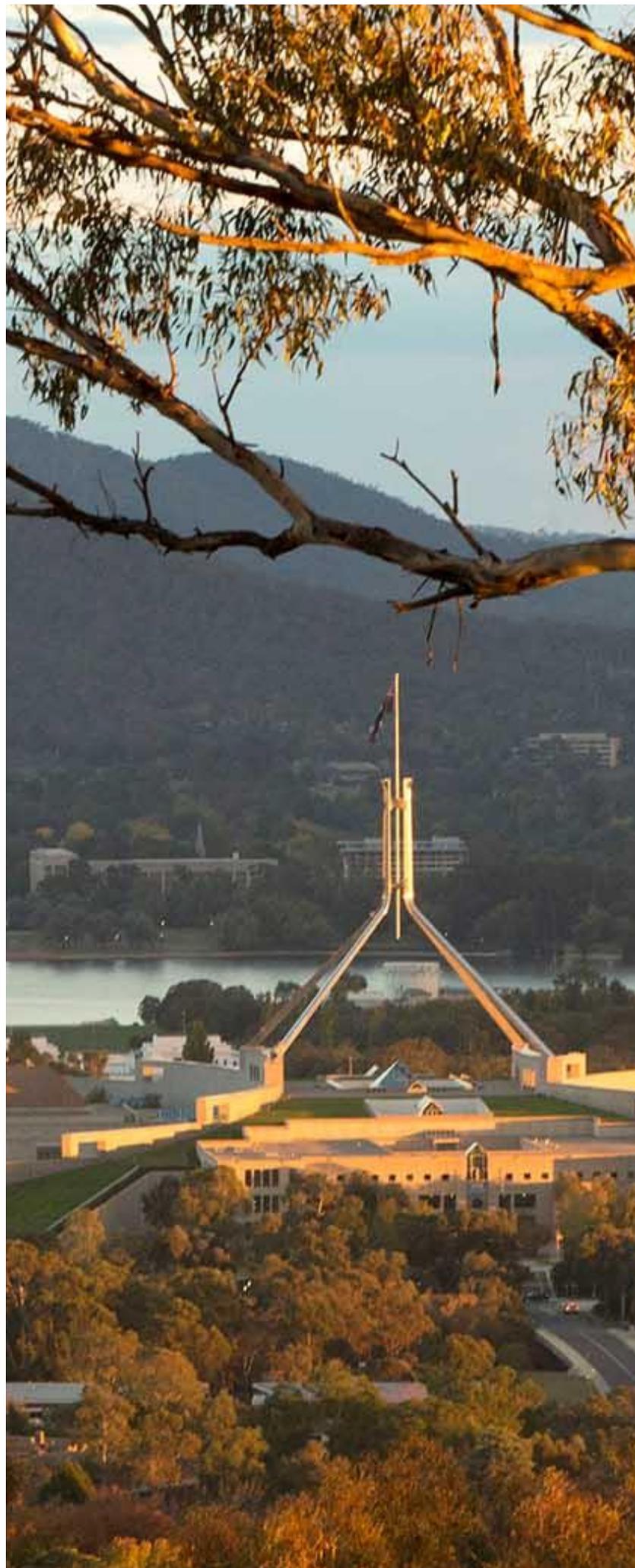
We are seeking your input to engagement of our next rabbi in three stages. First all members of the community were asked to provide comments to refine the position description for the job and to describe the qualities and key characteristics you would look for in a new appointment to inform our selection criteria.

Second, we are seeking community representation on the selection committee for this next appointment. In addition to a group of Board members, this will also include three communal representatives from the Progressive and Orthodox congregations and from the young adults group.

And third we will organise a community visit to enable all members of the community to meet the preferred candidate, ask questions and consider the proposed engagement before the Board makes a decision and commences the process of negotiation.

2017-18 Membership Renewal

The new financial year has begun and we will shortly be inviting you to renew your financial membership of our community. Your attendance at our communal events is always welcome and your financial membership helps it all happen.



ACT Jewish Community Yom Ha'Shoah Memorial Service

Yael Cass
President

The first joint NSW Jewish Board of Deputies/ACTJC Yom Ha'Shoah Memorial Service was held on Wednesday 26 April. It was a moving and engaging service which brought together the creative contribution of the NSW JBD with the unique character of the Canberra Jewish community. It was a beautiful service which moved all who attended. It followed a small local memorial service held on Sunday 23 April with survivors and community members to honour families and friends who perished during the Holocaust.

Acknowledgement

The ACTJC acknowledges the wonderful contribution of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD) Shoah Commemoration Committee for sharing their magnificent videos of Holocaust survivor testimonies and the slide show of historic images of both survivors and families lost to the Shoah. These images provided a poignant and powerful backdrop to our service.

Order of Service

Nearly 140 guests attended our memorial service. This included six ACT Jewish community survivors and family members of survivors and six children of our community who together lit the candles for the six million and read our communal statement of remembrance and acceptance by the next generation to honour the Shoah.

In addition to our guest speaker, Morris Gleitzman, who was engaged in collaboration with the NSW JBD, we were pleased to welcome representatives of the Israeli Embassy, members of the diplomatic community and local members of the Federal and ACT parliaments to the National Jewish Memorial Centre for this service.

Some talented members of our community performed reflective musical pieces and read poetry to reinforce the solemn and moving

nature of the service. This included Rebecca Carpenter, who performed a flute concerto, Sarah Greenbaum who sang Eli Eli, and poetry read by Daniel Coppel, Stefan Misrachi and Dion Esterman.

Our guest speaker, Morris Gleitzman, spoke in conversation with his friend and local ABC radio host Alex Sloan. Morris reflected on his family connection to the Holocaust and the Jewish community and on his motivation for writing a series of children's books about the impact of the Shoah on families and communities. His aim is to engage and educate the next generations of Australian children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, so they will have a visceral understanding of the horror of the Holocaust and can reflect on its lessons for Australian society.

Our memorial service closed with a recitation of El Malei Rachamim read by Rabbi Meltzer and the mourners' Kaddish by Vernon Kronenberg.

Members of our community found it to be an engaging, meaningful and uplifting service. It was a service which brought together older and younger generations around a common purpose to remember, reflect and learn.



Report on the Building Project

DAVID ROSALKY
CHAIR OF BUILDING COMMITTEE

Our building project has reached a critical point where construction is about to commence.

With the capital appeal having been completed, we have received donations or pledges which, combined with our own accumulated savings, amount to a little over \$4m. While this is somewhat less than we sought for the full ambitious program, it is sufficient to cover the core elements of the project that have been considered and approved by the Community over recent years.

The core elements of the project are:

1. Surrounding security fence approximately following the line of the existing rock barrier. The fence will provide both pedestrian and vehicle barriers,
2. Refurbishment of the existing classroom wing and construction of the Orthodox sanctuary,
3. Construction of the new wing including a ceremonial foyer, offices, services, classroom/meeting rooms and the Progressive sanctuary.

Savings on cost of project

Some redesign has been carried out to reduce the costs of the elements. This has been done in such a way as to preserve the basic design and functionality of the planned structures. The main areas where significant savings are being made is in the very high security levels built into the original designs, and by not proceeding with elaborate landscaping of the grounds. Several engineers, including with security experience, have confirmed that the earlier plans involved excessive protection and for a threat that has largely morphed into a different form.

In the new wing, we have decided not to proceed with a commercial kitchen and to replace it with a serving kitchen. A lift will be constructed, as sought by members for years, in order to make the existing kitchen workable for the whole building. The existing toilets will also be upgraded to include showers and a parents' facility, removing the need to accommodate those facilities in the new wing.

What's been happening recently?

Security fence

The plans for the security fence were sent to the market to request tenders. The initial very high costs (all well over \$1m) have been reduced through intensive analysis by our project manager and the preferred tenderer to about \$700,000. While the decision has been made in principle to proceed with the revised design, detailed design changes and drawings are being produced which will be presented to the NCA to gain development approval for the changes.

Until the new wing is constructed, a temporary fence will be in place along the western side which is where our members and visitors enter presently. That means that security control will be at a gate adjacent to the carpark.

Classroom/synagogue wing

Plans for the existing classroom/synagogue wing have been developed to costing and approval stage. The proposed works include:

- replacement of the windows along the full northern wall with wind-out double glazed windows and shades;
- replacement of the movable walls (folding doors);
- replacement of carpets;
- construction and fit-out of the new Orthodox sanctuary.

The cost of this project is currently estimated at about \$275,000 if carried out in a single contract with the security fence.

Careful programming of the work on the wing is required to minimise disruption as the wing is our critical operational area until the new wing is built.

We will soon close a contract with our preferred tenderer to carry out these two stages concurrently. At this point, the combined contract is costed at approximately \$1m plus contingencies.

New wing

This is the most costly and complex component, but the centre piece of the project. We are embarking on a process that will simplify the design and bring the cost down significantly. The main elements, as listed above, are the simpler construction and removal of a second commercial kitchen. The shape and functionality of the wing will be preserved and indeed enhanced – simpler construction gives us greater flexibility to adjust spaces internally as needs change over time, and the smaller servicing areas provide more functional floor space.

Design of a Progressive sanctuary will be developed and included in the design and costing.

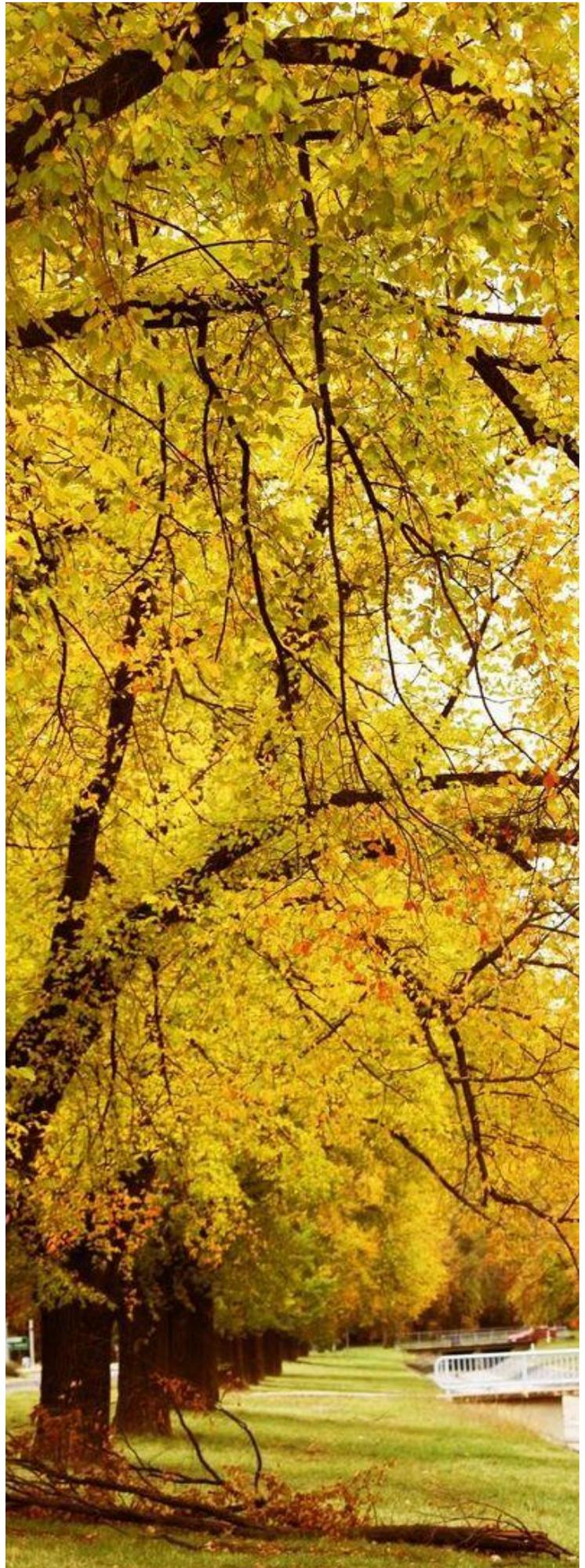
It will take some months to redesign the wing and to cost and value-manage it. We will then go to tender to arrive at a construction contract.

Coupled with the construction of the new wing will be the lift, some modernisation of the kitchen and upgrading of the existing toilets to include showers and parents' facility.

Timing

We can expect that work on the first contract (security fence and the existing classroom/ synagogue wing) will commence in coming weeks and be completed before the end of the year.

The second contract, construction of the new wing plus the lift and upgraded kitchen and toilets, is probably a year away.



Australian Jewish Historical Society ACT



ADELE ROSALKY
PRESIDENT, AJHS

At a well-attended AJHS ACT meeting on 17 May 2017 our former President Sylvia Deutsch OAM was honoured, in her absence, with a Certificate of Life Membership in recognition of her long and dedicated service to our branch of the AJHS.

Sylvia served continuously from the inception of this branch in 1984 until her departure to live in Sydney in 2015. She was the inaugural Secretary, then Vice-President for many years, and finally in 2008 served as President for the following seven years on the retirement of Earle who had preceded her in the President's role for 24 years. Earle valued Sylvia's advice and they had a very good relationship.

Over the years Sylvia wrote many reports about AJHS ACT's activities for Hamerkaz and was meticulously thorough and detailed in her research of all her published material. Today we have her articles as a record of the history of our branch of AJHS, and in fact, of the ACT Jewish Community.

On Tuesday 27 June, a presentation of the certificate was made to Sylvia at the home of Leonie and Richard Webb, with past and present members of the AJHS ACT committee in attendance. Thank you to Leonie for her generous hospitality.

At the same meeting EMERITA PROF. SUZANNE RUTLAND presented her research on Combatting Antisemitism in the School Playground: an Australian Case Study. She analysed the problem of antisemitic bullying in contemporary Australian state school by investigating the case of Jewish children in those schools.

Undertaken by Prof. Zehavit Gross of Bar-Ilan University, with Prof. Rutland, the study was interdisciplinary, drawing on historical data and educational methodology, employing a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews conducted in Sydney and Melbourne. Interviews included students (55), teachers (10), principals (4), parents (13) and Jewish communal leaders (10). The research reinforced the findings of Prof. Danny Ben-Moshe of his Canberra study

carried out for the local community.

Gross and Rutland argued that classical anti-Jewish stereotypes are perpetuated in the school playground, transmitted by children from one generation to the next. This finding provides an additional perspective to the general literature, which argues that racial prejudice and stereotypes are acquired primarily through home socialization, religious institutions and the media, and neglects the role of the school playground.



Sylvia Deutsch OAM with President Adele Rosalky

All those members and friends who braved the cold Canberra night air to hear DR MICHAEL ABRAHAMS-SPROD deliver a talk on Wednesday 19 July, entitled Jewish and Israeli Identities in Contemporary Israel, were rewarded to hear Michael's scholarship and analysis on his research topic.

The presentation charted the complex evolution of a uniquely Israeli identity. It explored potent symbols that have become objects of debate as to whether or not they are myth or fact or, indeed, a combination of both. Core elements of Israeli society such as the place and role of Judaism; dividing lines amongst Israeli Jews; the issue of religious observance in Israel's Jewish majority and the role of the IDF in shaping Israeli identity were discussed. Key lines of both division and

commonality were also explored, including religion and identity and the secular-religious divide. Further, relations between Israeli and diaspora Jews and issues and dilemmas of modern Israeli identity were raised. A final discussion included the unique absorption process of new immigrants into Israeli society and the future challenges both the state and its Jewish population face.

We look forward to welcoming Michael to Canberra again in the future.

Date for Your Diary

3 December 2017 at 5.30 pm – Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial to honour Judith Eisner's uncle, Sergeant Morris Solomon, who died in a flying accident in 1942, aged 23 years. We invite all members of the ACT Jewish Community to attend this ceremony.

Like a Phoenix Rising From the Ashes; World Jewry and the State of Israel

RABBI ALON MELTZER

Tonight I am fortunate enough to be heading to Israel to represent Australian Jewry at a conversation of Rabbis, Cardinals and Bishops, as a guest of the Pope and the Catholic Church. I will be there for Yom Hazikaron and Yom Haatzmaut, my first time in twelve years since I have been able to commemorate Israel's losses, and celebrate the miracle of the State of Israel, whilst within her borders.

There is such poignancy between Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron v'Haatzmaut. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik perhaps sums it up best in his monumental chapter Six Knocks, in his book *Kol Dodi Dofek, Listen – My beloved knocks*.

Eight years ago, in the midst of a night of the terrors of Majdanek, Treblinka and Buchenwald; in a night of gas chambers and crematoria; in a night of total divine self-concealment; in a night ruled by the devil of doubt and destruction who sought to sweep the Lover from her own tent into the Catholic church; in a night of continuous searching for the beloved – on that very night the beloved appeared. The Almighty who was hiding in His splendid sanctum, suddenly appeared and began to beckon at the tent of the lover, who tossed and turned on her bed set by convulsions and agonies of hell. Because of the beating and knocking at the door of the mournful Lover, the State of Israel was born.

Rav Soloveitchik goes on to discuss six periods of time where we see the Almighty knock on the door of his beloved, the people of Israel, in fulfilment of 2000 years of hopes, aspiration, and prophecy.

The question is what do we do once the door has been opened, when the prophecy fulfilled, when the State of Israel came into creation? What do we do when the phoenix finally rose from the ashes and the Jewish people finally had the opportunity to return back to our spiritual and ancestral homeland?

These are questions that are worth pondering on the eve of the 69th year anniversary of the State of Israel's establishment. Worthwhile because if we were to go back seven decades, to 1947, prior to the announcement of the Partition Plan on November 29, what were people feeling, how were they living, were they dreaming? Worthwhile, because even though we sit thousands of kilometers away from the land of Israel, and we come from a variety of political and religious ideological positions, we are as the Babylonian Talmud states, intrinsically connected to one another, *kol yisrael areivim zeh la zeh*. Worthwhile, because we all, each of us through our birth right, have the potential to one day be citizens of the State of Israel, it is a safe haven, a retreat, when we are faced with persecution.

There are perhaps three things that I might posit on here today; the first being the nature of our support towards the State of Israel, the second regarding our ability to live in our spiritual homeland, and the third, the appropriateness of critique towards the political arena of the State of Israel.

I: Supporting the State

In 1965, Rabbi Dr Norman Lamm, the previous Chancellor and President of Yeshiva University, and perhaps one of the greatest darshanim, extrapolators of Torah ideas and ideals, instructed his congregation at the Jewish Center in New York around the ideas of action, toil and commitment.

He stated;

Without labor and struggle, without exertion of the intellect and long hours of patient plodding, one can neither master the intricacies of any profession, nor can achieve great and satisfying success in any business. It is true about children – if we over-protect them, if we train them to accept easy triumphs, the shortcuts to success, then they will grow up without backbones, nurtured on the infantile conception that a wishbone is enough. Such people can never fly, they can only flutter. Their vision never soars, their dreams remain myopic, their conceptions petty . . . To be a Jew means never to look only for the easy way. It means never to sacrifice conviction for convenience, although convenience in and of itself is no sin. It means always to search for the road of the greatest meaning and duty. Rabbi Israel Salanter, the great founder of the Musar movement, put it this way: "I have never asked myself if I can do something, only if I ought to. And if I ought to, then I always knew that I would be able to." This is the language of the Jew.

Dina Blank, in her 2015 Essay, *Yom Haatzmaut: Heeding the Call*, commented on Lamm's words;

What Rabbi Lamm terms the "language of the Jew" is the

message of Yom Haatzmaut. Herzl's "If you will it, it is no dream" was piggy-backing on centuries of Jewish wisdom and deep-rooted tradition and at a time of national crisis, when it counted most, the youth stood up to wave the proverbial flag.

We must encourage our community, and people, to recognize the centrality and importance of effort, of toil, of labor. We must be exposed to stories of youthful heroism and teach them that each one of them has a unique mission to fulfill and that the urgent needs of the Jewish people outweigh transient goals. We must raise children with backbones, and give them ample opportunities to exercise those muscles so that when the time comes, they too will heed the call, im lo achshav eimatai — if not now, when? and speak "this language of the Jew"

Supporting the State of Israel can be divided into numerous forms of actions. We have members in our own community, like Margaret Beadman, who took the call during the Six Day War to offer her services while in Jerusalem, we have many from within our Israeli community who have given their years of service both in the IDF as soldiers during their national service, but also as diplomatic staff here in Australia. We have many members who support the State financially, through appeals of the JNF and the UIA. We have members, most notably Mervyn and the late Syue Doobov, who gave their time to our local community, and then made the major decision to make Aliyah. But most importantly, and I sincerely believe this, the greatest way we can support Israel, is to teach our children to have pride in Israel. Not blind faith, not automatic support, but pride. Pride in the fact that we have a homeland, pride in the fact that we have a robust democracy albeit with faults, pride in the fact that we have a multicultural society.

II: Living the State

Soloveitchik, in his follow up essay to his Six Knocks mentioned earlier, argued for a widespread Yishuv haAretz, the settling of the land. Speaking to his specific audience, the modern orthodox Jewry of the USA, he argued that we have a religious obligation to settle the land of Israel and to help fulfil the prophecy of returning from the four corners of the world.

He stated that logic dictates, that when the Jewish community was given the opportunity to return to its Land – which had withheld its treasures from foreigners and stored them for us – Orthodox Jews should

have hastened to perform so great a mitzvah, to plunge with joy and enthusiasm into the very midst of this holy work; building and settling of the land.

Following on, he issues a scathing attack on those that had not done so.

However, to our regret, we have not reacted that way.

Within the Progressive / Reform Movements there has been an evolutionary shift between surrounding the topic of both Zionism as a whole, and yishuv haaretz, moving to and settling Israel.

Notably, the The Philadelphia Conference of Nov. 3-6, 1869, adopted the following among its principles: "The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state

under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God in the confession of the unity of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures, and their call to moral sanctification." Similarly, at the Pittsburgh Conference of Nov. 16-18 1885 this was reaffirmed, in the following words: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community; and we therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning a Jewish state."

By 1937 the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a Rabbinic Roof Body of reform Jewry, had reversed its stand on Jewish peoplehood, and declared in its "Columbus Platform" that "Judaism is the soul of which Israel [the people] is the body." The document further states: "We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its [Palestine's] up-building as a Jewish homeland by endeavouring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a centre of Jewish culture and spiritual life."

The CCAR returned again to the question of Zionism in 1976, asserting in its "Centenary Perspective": "We are bound to...the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties.... We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security and defining its Jewish character."

The idea of living in the State becomes a central focal point for both Reform and Modern Orthodox Jewry, and through the past three decades, both denominations have aided and facilitated countless families and people to make Aliyah.

I have not used this pulpit to advocate for members of our community uproot themselves enmasse and make Aliyah, I don't necessarily view that as a attribute of my Job Description, however, on a personal note, I must state that since I have assumed the mantle of leadership as a communal Rabbi, where the responsibility of souls is weighted on my shoulders, never more than now, have I felt the personal call to join the Jewish people in our spiritual homeland. It won't be happening any time soon, but I would be proud, and religiously and spiritually fulfilled if that were to happen one day in the future.

III: Critiquing the State

I know there are many who will say that one cannot critique the political arena of the State of Israel, while others will say



we must use each and every opportunity to do so. I think we need to be nuanced and realise the complexities of the issues at hand, and what it means for all of klal yisrael when we engage in such activity.

We are commanded by Isaiah to be an ohr l'goyim. Rabbi Michael Zedek, Rabbi Emeritus of the reform community Emanuel Congregation in Chicago states as follows;

Our purpose isn't just to exist. Rather it is to inform, inspire and uplift others, perhaps someday the whole world, to a vision of what is required of all humanity. Whether expressed in the urgency to become "a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy People," or, equally, as a "Light to the Nations," we are commanded to bridge some of the distance between the world as it is and the world as it should be.

I believe this idea is pertinent to understanding how we should see our role in using our voice regarding the State of Israel.

I believe that in the public sphere we should be supportive and proud of our state. However, I believe that we have a duty, because we are meant to be a light unto the nations, to raise our voice in objection to things that do not fit our faith, our history, or humanity.

We must stand for unity amongst our people and equal representation of our people in the State of Israel. We must stand for universal human rights afforded to all. We must stand for transparency of government and governance.

I believe that we must demand the same ethical standings to the state of Israel, because we are intrinsically part of the people of Israel, as we would to the Government of Australia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is much to think about surrounding our relationship with the State of Israel, we have a lot to feel proud of and in, and I believe that we are living in fortunate times that we have a place to call home. Our community spans the political and religious ideological spectrum, yet we are all part in parcel of the same people, and therefore I believe that we must also all realise the connections that we have with Israel, both State and Country.

With this I move to Sophie.

I want to congratulate you on the words you have just

shared with us in your drasha, and for your entire Bat Mitzvah. Sophie spoke about the way in which the Torah defines and unites the Jewish people. This idea is so pertinent to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, where the Torah is the focal point of your commitment to becoming an Adult.

In describing your family your father, Malcolm, said that you are a family that prides itself on love, loyalty and mutual respect. While your mum shared that your family is loving, spirited and loyal.

You Sophie told me that to have a Bat Mitzvah means that you have the ability to choose how you want to engage with the Jewish people, but that it means that you are part of an extended family.

Your family, both in your father's household and your mother's, is one that prides itself on loyalty, and you define your Bat Mitzvah around the notion of family.

Sometimes family is tough, but when things get really tough in our lives, it is the family around us, which includes your community, that will be there to support you.

Your mother said that she would like her to remember that nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm. She has the ability to shoot for the stars and nothing is impossible if you put your heart and soul into it.

This to me sounds very much like Rabbi Lamm's initial comments, and I want to echo her sentiments.

You Sophie, as you enter into our people as an adult, when you become a responsible member of the greater klal yisrael, the greater Jewish people, you must take action. You must be loyal, you must be spirited, you must be engaged. That is your job. That is the language of the Jewish people. That is the language of our community, and that is the language of your families.

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 viunnēkkā ...)
May the LORD lift up His face unto you and give you peace .



Sophie's Bat Mitzvah Drosha

SOPHIE THORP



When I began writing this drosha I thought that the Rabbi's drosha might be too long, so in case it is, I will make sure to get us all to the food soon, I can also assure you that my speech will be interesting and worth staying awake for.

At the beginning of learning my Parasha I was fascinated by the various laws contained in this week's Torah portion. I began to look into the idea of purity, which is a focal point in this week's reading. The more I studied, the more I began to also have an interest in the overall Torah, both the text, but also the story of our Progressive Torah.

The Torah

When we were rolling the Sefer Torah to find my portion a few months ago, I started asking all these questions about the Torah. How is it made? Who writes it? What happens if they make a mistake?

As we all know, the Torah is an important part of Judaism.

It holds the basis of all the laws of the Jewish religion and details our history. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, writes the following about the Torah; "Torah is not a book of history, even though it includes history. It is not a book of science, even it represents the first time people saw the universe as the product of a single creative will. It is, first and last, a book about how to live. Everything it contains - not only commandments but also narratives, including the narrative of creation itself - is there solely for the sake of ethical and spiritual instruction."

One of the marvellous things about the Torah is that the tradition has kept up with the times.

Maimonides, the 12th century philosopher tells us the importance of writing a Torah scroll, he writes in his Sefer ha Mitzvot, Positive Commandments, Mitzvah 18

It is highly commendable and preferable that he write it himself, as our Sages said, "If he himself writes it, it is as if he personally received it at Mount Sinai."

כותב ספר תורה
לעצמו ואם כתבו
בידו מעלה עליו
הכתוב כאילו קבלה
מהר סיני.

kotev sefer
Torah l'atzmo,
v'im katvo
b'yad m'alah
alav ha-kotev
k'ilu kabbalah
m'har Sinai.

The Torah is always written in Hebrew in a specific style and font. There is a difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardi styles. Scribes, also known as Sofers, are specifically trained people who have a large variety of knowledge on the Jewish laws. Overall the sofrers have a very important job and must study very hard to be able to accomplish a Torah.

What is amazing is that the Torah is still written by scribes, still being transferred onto parchment, and are still dressed and respected properly.

Rafi Lehrer shared with me a very interesting story about our Progressive Sefer Torah I want to share with you.

Each Torah has a different story, the person who wrote it, the person who purchased it, where it lived. These make up part of the bigger picture of how encompassing the Torah is to the Jewish people.

In World War II, during the Holocaust, Torah scrolls were being destroyed and burnt, people were not allowed to read or hide the Torah. The only way to save a Torah was to escape the warzone and smuggle the Torah with you.

An unknown holocaust survivor escaped and travelled to Australia with our Progressive Torah, while smuggling the Torah out of Europe he had it wrapped around his body. When you look at our Torah you can see the evidence of it being carried around his body. Some panels have repaired semi-circles cut out where it was under his arms. There are sweat marks, and some crumples.

Once in Australia, the survivor made a business and kept

the Torah hidden as a good luck charm.

When he retired he put the Torah for sale after realizing he wouldn't need it, a couple named Ernie and Nina Horton, who would eventually help found our community, bought the Torah.

The Etz Chaim (the wooden poles it is rolled on) had to be replaced and the Torah had to be checked and correct and fix any damage.

Considering what that Torah had been through it was well preserved, has been repaired and is totally kosher.

The wooden poles that replaced the original Etz Chaim were made with Australian wood, which years later broke down due to the weight of the Torah. They were remade with stronger wood.

This Holocaust survivor was willing to risk his life for the Torah. Nina and Ernie Horton were willing to give from their money to buy the Torah, and they were willing to give it to the ACT Jewish Community. It shows you how important the Torah is for us.

The Laws

When I was studying my Parsha I was reading about ritual purity laws (rules around the Mikvah). There are different rules for men and women, and there are different rules and time periods for women after they have a male child or a female child.

According to my Parsha, if a woman gives birth to a baby boy she is rendered spiritually impure for 33 days and twice the amount of days for a baby girl. During this time the woman cannot enter a holy place.

I learned that the reason for the time difference between having a boy and a girl was because of the future. The baby girl will one day grow up and will have moments in her life where she will become spiritually impure, thus her mother contracts an elongated impurity as a form of spiritual mourning.

The Parasha says that when a man and woman are impure they go to a holy bath (mikvah) and purify themselves. The Mikvah is still around today but however not as widely used compared to biblical times.

When I started to understand my parsha I began to ask a lot of questions about women in Judaism. Not only in what I read, but also because there is a difference in what women do in our community. I did my research in person not online and went to the rabbi, Sarah Wiseman and Bec Lehrer and talked about the differences and similarities in the progressive and orthodox women in Judaism.

These intricacies in law and the differences around how we engage with them across the denominations within our community, show me the relationship we all have with the Torah. While we have differences of opinions in how to understand certain laws or passages, or we have different levels of practice, the Torah as a whole is what binds us together and envelops us, just as it enveloped the holocaust survivor who saved it.

My Journey

As a young girl I grew up with going to Friday night services, the standing up and sitting down all the time. I didn't really think about it all very much. After my sister, Adele, had her bat-mitzvah a few years ago (and unfortunately for me set a ridiculously high standard when she did very well) the realisation grew that mine was drawing nearer.

When I first started training for my bat mitzvah I thought it would be exciting. I knew how much Adele complained about the work and all the learning involved and I always thought that she was over-exaggerating and I would be fine..... I was wrong.

It has ended up being an extremely challenging thing for me, sometimes because of things happening in my life and often because of my motivation towards it.

In the past few months, while preparing I have started high-school and have moved house a number of times. I live between two houses with two different attitudes to Judaism and my Jewish identity, I attend a school which teaches me about another religion. I have had to clarify for myself what are the things I think are important in my life surrounding Judaism.

During my bat mitzvah journey I have learned other things about myself and who I am.

As you can all see me reading out this speech I know that I have already completed a Jewish milestone in my life, I feel very proud.

It has never been easy getting up in front of people for me and having completed this service has helped me to resist the temptation to give up and never face your fears.

At the start of my journey I didn't want to do my Bat Mitzvah. One night I wrote the following. "Sometimes I think that the only reason that I can't do my bat mitzvah is because of stage fright. I always thought I would give up because of that one reason. But that isn't the only reason, there are so many other factors. But there is one factor that makes me know I can do it, it's the factor I trust the most. I. am. Determined. I will do this bat mitzvah, and I will make it amazing, and I might have a panic attack but that's ok".

I would spend many hours studying, and some nights I would do my normal school homework while listening to recordings of all those sentences and blessings. That is how I am standing here in front of all of you today. And how I was able to learn for the Torah reading, from the Torah reading, and about the Torah. That is my story, it is our Torah's story, and our people's story. My journey was one that was full of learning and understanding, our Torah's story is one where we can realise the sacrifices made for the Torah, but also the love that we have for it, and our people's story where we have a full history of engagement with this central text, and how it has bound all of us together. Thank you for joining me at my Bat Mitzvah, I am proud to have told you these stories, and I hope you can also be proud of them too.

EULOGY:

Norma Alice Solomon

19 March 1946 to 11 July 2017

TAMARA PHELPS AND PAUL SOLOMON

Norma Alice Solomon (nee Wolfers) born 19th March 1946, Sydney - Passed 11th July 2017
Parents - Gustav Paul Wolfers (Dec) and Grete Wolfers (Dec)
Siblings - Edward and Howard Wolfers
Husband - Elias Hai Said Solomon, (Dec 7/7/2007)
Children - Paul and Tamara
Daughter-in-law Nicole Solomon
Son-in-law Matthew Phelps
Grandchildren - Joel and Rebecca Solomon (Paul's Children) Thomas, Mia Zoe Phelps (Tamara's children)

Married Elias in 1966 - moved to Melbourne to support dad in the Public Service. Later, they moved to Canberra where it became their home for 25 years. In 1997 Mum and Dad moved back to Sydney and made St Ives their home and then later moved to Forestville after Eli passed away to be closer to her children.

Mum and Dad were foundation member of the Canberra Liberal Jewish community. Many of their closest friendships were formed during this period. So many of these friends are more like family, as mum and dad had no family support in Canberra.

Mum had a very close circle of friends. They were called the 21 Club. Meeting regularly at coffee shops in Canberra and later Sydney, spending hours gossiping. All these ladies originally met up through the Jewish Community when their children were young, and they were a strong support network for each other.

Mum and Dad had successful businesses while in Canberra. Setting up an educational wooden toys and puzzle business and later the first of the \$2 shops in Canberra called Rockbottom Discounts. Mum spent many years doing markets to help support the business. They had a very strong work ethic.

After moving to Sydney, mum worked as an accounts clerk and enjoyed working in these busy environments.

Mum had a keen interest in finance and the Stockmarket. She learnt from her late father the methodical ways to doing accounting. She loved spreadsheets and filing. She was extremely organised and lists for everything.

One of the joys in her life was travel - seeing the world. We were fortunate enough to travel every year (once or twice) overseas during our childhood. Her one regret was never making it to Italy.

Mum loved culture. She introduced us to the world of Art Galleries, Operettas, Musicals, Ballet and History. She loved going to Art Auctions and in particular enjoyed purchasing modern Australia Art Works, including her favourite artist John Coburn.

Having grown up without an extended family - who all perished in the Holocaust. Mum was into Genealogy and learning about information on how her family perished in the Holocaust. She volunteered her time at the Sydney Jewish Museum and other Jewish Groups, including the Temple.

She may not have been a 'religious' person, however, mum had a very strong Jewish ideology and Jewish traditions and customs.

Mum was an independent woman. She liked to be self-sufficient and did not like to rely on others. Family was important to mum, having grown up without any Uncles/Aunties and Grandparents..

When mum became a grandmother, she cherished this as she never had grandparents of her own. She said she had to learn what to do, and she invested a lot of time to ensure her grandchildren were well loved. Taking care of her grandchildren after school on weekends and even taking them on overseas holidays. Mum's mantra was, to do things with Warm Hands 'while you are capable'. Only 3 years ago we all went to America and this was the best memory we all have of our time together.

Although mum wasn't an athlete herself, she loved watching and supporting her kids play sport. Whether it be Tamara and Paul in their Swimming and Water Polo, Her Son-in-law Mathew playing Cricket for NSW and her grandchildren's sporting success.

Mum often spoke of her attendance of the 1956 Olympic Games as a highlight of her childhood. Later she took the whole family to watch the Sydney 2000 Olympics Games.

Mum loved swimming and found therapy in the water, especially when she was diagnosed with Scheloderma. This was her life-line and kept her joints from getting stiff. Mum lived with this debilitating disease for over 30 years.

Mum always encouraged us to follow our dreams. She supported us to get University Degrees. She was always sad that she didn't have the opportunity to go to University. Although she got into teaching at University, she missed out on getting a full-scholarship to enable her to follow her dream of being a teacher, this always played on her mind.

Mum enjoyed playing with technology. She loved playing with her iPad, computer, enjoyed watching TV. Foxtel, and loved her Fitbit, even last week she had it on in hospital, sadly with 0 steps. She was very computer savvy for her generation.

If you ever wanted advice, Norma was always happy to help, she never gossiped, her strength was her ability to listen and empathise.

Unique Holiness: Jerusalem through a Talmudic Lens

RABBI ALON MELTZER

We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel. We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again. To our Arab neighbours we extend, also at this hour - and with added emphasis at this hour - our hand in peace. And to our Christian and Muslim fellow citizens, we solemnly promise full religious freedom and rights. We did not come to Jerusalem for the sake of other peoples' holy places, and not to interfere with the adherents of other faiths, but in order to safeguard its entirety, and to live there together with others, in unity".

June 7 1967, Moshe Dayan

These powerful words which join the pantheon of Jewish literature around the topic of Jerusalem mark the historic period we now find ourselves in. 50 years of access to Jerusalem, a united capital under which we have sovereignty, autonomy and responsibility. 50 years of dreams realized.

Jerusalem occupies much of our texts and literature, as well as our ritual engagement, in light of that, this morning I would like to share with you the place of Jerusalem within our faith and for our people through a Talmudic lens consisting of three passages.

Each one gives over to the reader an internal beauty of Jerusalem that is something that has become the foundation of an eternal love of Jerusalem by the Jewish people.

The first passage is from Tractate Shabbat 30b

One who was standing in Eretz Yisrael, should focus his heart toward Jerusalem, as it is stated: "And they shall pray to the Lord by way of the city that You have chosen" (1 Kings 8:44)

היה עומד בארץ ישראל
יכוין את לבו כנגד
ירושלים שנאמר (מלכים
א ח, מד) והתפללו אל
ה' דרך העיר אשר
בחרת

Despite the fact that we had been exiled from both the city of Jerusalem, as well as the land of Israel, the focal point of our prayers has been towards both the land as a whole, but also the resting place of God's Shechina, His spiritual presence.

This passage, which is part of a longer passage as to how to direct one's prayer, concludes by stating the following derasha: "Like the Tower of David built up beautifully (le-talpiot)' - [The Temple Mount is] the hill (tel) towards which all mouths (piyot) are directed."

Rabbi Shubert Spero makes note of two schools of thought behind this Talmudic piece, and the continuing Rabbinic rulings to turn our attention, both physically and spiritually, towards Jerusalem.

In the popular mind, particularly in the lands of the Diaspora, the rationale of this practice always seemed quite self-evident. Some understood it in national terms, with the emphasis on Jerusalem. Turning towards Jerusalem and the land of Israel, from the "four corners of the earth" kept the Jew mindful of where he came from and where he longed to return. In a very realistic way, this compelled the Jew at all times and in all places to be mindful, in actual geographical terms, of the direction in which the city of Jerusalem was to be found. Should he decide tomorrow to return to Jerusalem, he will already know in which direction to set out.

Others thought of it in theological terms, with emphasis on the Temple. This is the unique spot on earth where God caused His Divine Presence to appear regularly and where He was worshipped by the people Israel for some 1,000 years. It is fitting and proper that in prayer to God, one turns towards the site of His Holy Temple. One is, therefore, inclined to think that this practice is to be classified as one of the many observances decreed by the sages after the destruction of the Second Temple by which to "remember" the Holy Temple and its various rituals.

There are two further ideas that I would like to offer. Firstly, that the Jewish people, despite our being scattered across the world, have always been of one heart and one soul in the moments of prayer is an incredible feat. All of us with our bodies and souls facing towards the land of Israel and reminiscing and anticipating the city of Jerusalem, is an incredible feat. The spiritual beauty of Jerusalem which has been continually revered, despite its spewing forth of its inhabitants, is perhaps the very glue that held the Jewish people together. On our two most observed rituals, the Seder, and Yom Kippur prayer, Jerusalem becomes the collective call - *l'shanah habah b'yerushalayim*. Secondly, the continued focus on the rebuilding of Jerusalem, not just the Temple, but indeed the entire city through the blessings *boneh yerushalayim* recited in the Birkat Hamazon and Amidah, unite Jewry in the face of adversary. In our reverence, and love for Jerusalem, we have been able to reestablish her beauty and have directed so much more than just our minds and souls, but indeed our toil and labour into ensuring that this vibrant city has come of age.

The second passage is from Tractate Shabbat 59b

Ten *kav* of beauty descended to the world; Jerusalem took nine and all the rest of the world in its entirety took one.

עשרה קבים יופי ירדו לעולם
תשעה נטלה ירושלים ואחד
כל העולם כולו

The Talmud comes to teach us that Jerusalem is ten times as beautiful as the rest of the world's beauty combined.

The commentators explain that this is because Jerusalem is the seat of two monarchs: HaShem, the King of Kings, and the Davidic Dynasty.

Despite Jerusalem being the most beautiful city in the world, it lay desolate and its street were crumbling. No more was the sounds of brides and grooms heard, no more were the streets marked with the music of children playing, words of Torah puncturing the fabric of the city, no more were the voices of unified prayer heard. Yet still it was the single greatest focal point for the Jewish people.

This is because the beauty refers not to the city's physical appearance, but rather to the spiritual state of the city. Jerusalem is the most beautiful city in the world because it is the world's capital of spirituality – it is there that we have directed our prayers and learning for two thousand years. And it is there, where for the past 50 years we have been able to establish ourselves institutions devoted to the promulgation of Torah study with its multitude of Yeshivas and Beis Midrashim.

As the verse says in Isaiah 2:3

For from Zion does the Torah come out, and the word of HaShem from Yerushalayim."

When we consider the approach of this Talmudic piece we realise that this obviously not solely talking about the physical beauty of Jerusalem, though each time I visit I still get tingles and shivers at the sheer grandeur and beauty of our holiest place. Each cobblestone which has been walked over for hundreds of years, each wall that has been touched by fingers from past generations in the midst of a spiritual pilgrimage, these are elements of beauty that move me. But it is the spiritual beauty, the essence of the city, the kedusha, the holiness that creates its true beauty in the eyes of the Talmud. It is a sociological statement, we are constantly instructed to remember Jerusalem, and as such we have placed a level spiritual beauty onto it like nothing else.

Finally, the Tractate Shabbat 59b states the following;

We learned in the mishna: And neither may a woman go out on Shabbat to the public domain with a city of gold. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: With a city of gold? Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Jerusalem of Gold, a gold tiara engraved with a depiction of the city of Jerusalem,

ולא בעיר של זהב:
מאי בעיר של זהב
רבה בר בר חנה א"ר
יוחנן ירושלים
דהבא

and the expulsion from Jerusalem.

What is interesting is that the phrase city of Gold, or Jerusalem of Gold, becomes an appropriate and oft used phrase describing the city of Jerusalem herself.

Naomi Shemer's *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* comes to mind as to how far this idea Jerusalem of Gold has reached the depth of the Jewish psyche.

Yerushalayim shel zahav
Veshel nechoshet veshel or
Halo lechol shirayich Ani kinor.
Oh, Jerusalem of gold,
and of light and of bronze,
I am the lute for all your songs.

The Talmud records that Jerusalem of Gold" is the name of a beautiful piece of jewelry, given by noted Talmudic scholar Rabbi Akiva to his wife Rachel, daughter of Kalba Savua, upon the rabbi's return from years of studying Torah. Legend has it that Rachel married the rabbi to the great chagrin of her father, a wealthy Jewish man named Kalba Savua. Kalba Savua left his daughter penniless, and she and her new husband lived in shameful poverty, sleeping on a bed of straw. In the mornings, when Rabbi Akiva arose, he would pull straw out of his devoted wife's hair, and promise that one day they would fare better and he would be able to afford the priceless gem. And Rabbi Akiva's promise came true. Late in life, he began to immerse himself in his studies, and after many years, he returned with 24 thousand pupils in tow. Only then did Kalba Savua accept him as a revered son-in-law, and he was able to buy Rachel the beautiful Jerusalem of Gold jewels.

From archaeological findings the assumption is that it was a crown made of gold and stones, common amongst the aristocracy of ancient Israel.

Jerusalem of Gold has become an icon in the Jewish World; an icon representing beauty, love, Torah studies, and especially Jerusalem's role as a center for both the Jewish world and Jews as individuals

These three excerpts are just three of over 500 descriptions of Jerusalem in the Talmud yet they show us, as diaspora Jews the true essence and beauty of Jerusalem. It is a city where we turn our bodies and hearts towards in prayer, longing and hoping that we will be able to return. It is a city where we are able to feel the very spiritual essence of God's presence, along with the myriad of generations who have come before us, or who have longed towards her. And it is the city that has been etched into the psyche and hearts of our people, emblazoned in gold.

As Psalm 118 states:

Zeh hayom asah Adonai, nagilah v'nismecha vo

This is the day that God has made, let us celebrate and rejoice in it

Friends, this truly is the day of celebration, as we realise and actualize on a daily basis the hopes and dreams of all those who came before us!

The Rabbis explain the style of jewelry that was customary for women to wear following the destruction of the Temple

Philippe Sands: International Justice and the Search for Lost Family

ROBERT CUSSEL

Philippe Sands is an English barrister who has worked on many high profile international law cases. A few years ago he was invited to the Ukrainian city of Lviv to give a talk. He knew Lviv as the city where his grandfather was born. He soon discovered it was also the city where the two men who did most to create the modern system of international justice had studied. This set Philippe on a path to uncover the secrets of his own family. Along the way he met the sons of two Nazi war criminals who had sent his relatives to their deaths.

East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, by Philippe Sands, is published by Hachette, is the fascinating story of the journey of discovery.

The 90 minute documentary film, "What Our Fathers Did: A Nazi Legacy" is available on Netflix and illuminates much of the story.

Richard Fidler on ABC Radio has interviewed Philippe Sands and you can listen here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/conversations/philippe-sands/7802860>

Louise Adler has written an excellent book review.

"This is a story of four equally important characters in Lviv, a Ukrainian town exemplifying the tumultuous political events of the 20th century. At the beginning of the century it was the Polish town of Lwow; the Nazis occupied Poland in 1941, renaming it Lemberg and, when the Russians took over in 1944, it became Lvov. A thriving



Philippe Sands

cultural centre during the inter-war years, the town was home to 100,000 Jews; by the end of World War II, fewer than 1000 had survived.

In 2010 Philippe Sands was invited to Lviv to give a lecture on the concept of international law. It was his grandfather's birthplace and home to the two most influential figures in the development of international law – Hersch Lauterpacht and Rafael Lemkin. For five years it was also home to Hans Frank, "The Butcher of Warsaw" and the Nazi party's lawyer. Hitler personally appointed Frank Governor-General of occupied Poland, a role he enjoyed from 1939 to 1945.

Within his territory were the concentration camps of Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek and Sobibor.

The author admits to relishing "the muck of evidence". Out of that "muck" he has produced a brilliant narrative, elegantly weaving together stories of public and private importance, with a cast of characters that include the deeply flawed, the despicable, the self-interested, the altruistic, those devoid of compassion and others filled with empathy.

Sand quotes a psychoanalyst on the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren: "what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others." It is an equally useful insight for those preoccupied by the past and the task of remembering."

To read Louise Adler's review in full, see the following link:

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/east-west-street-review-philippe-sands-on-genocide-the-law-and-the-nazis-20160818-gqvprw.html>

The New Australian Haggadah

ROBERT CUSSEL

Members may be interested to know that we now use The New Australian Haggadah for our communal seders. This beautifully illustrated Haggadah is unique in that it is designed to be relevant in today's Jewish Australian world, pluralistic and inclusive for all Jews, with the range of contributions and commentaries coming from many different Jewish Australians, including Dr Howard Goldenberg, Ittay Flescher, Dr Avril Alba, Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio and Rabbi Ralph Genende.

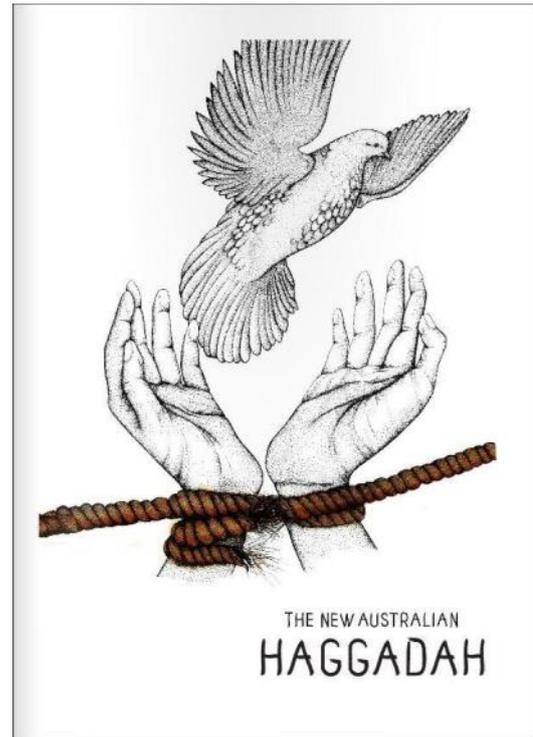
The Haggadot have been very generously donated to the ACT Jewish Community by Gina Cass-Gottlieb and family in loving memory of Cecil Cass, Avraham Ben Pinchus.

The New Australian Haggadah is a project of "Stand Up: Jewish Commitment to a Better World" and its central core mission of social justice.

"Two years in the making, we are incredibly proud of the finished product and hope that you will love it as much as we do. Commentaries written by Aussie Jewish writers, doctors, teachers, students, rabbis, lawyers, artists and activists punctuate the text to stimulate questions, thought and discussion. There are also inspiring scatterings of extracts from thinkers across the ages to give extra insight." From the following website:

<http://www.standup.org.au/education/haggadah/>

These Haggadot are especially symbolic of the essential unity of purpose that forms such an important part of the ethos of the ACT Jewish Community.



A Rabbi, a Cardinal and a Bishop walk into a...

RABBI ALON MELTZER

A conversation. The title and the first two words were not the beginning and punch line of a joke, but a beautiful reality of our times. A Rabbi (actually some 250 of them and their spouses), 7 Cardinals, 17 Bishops, a number of priests, and devout catholic itinerants joined together at the Domus Galialae, the spiritual home of the Neocatechumenal Way in the north of Israel.

Overlooking the Knerret, or the Sea of Galilee, the picturesque location provided the backdrop to a truly extraordinary event within the sometimes-tumultuous history between our two people and faiths.

For me, as a Rabbi of a very engaged and active Jewish community in Canberra, to experience such a happening, was an unbelievable privilege. For much of my life I have always looked at interfaith dialogue, especially between Catholics and Jews as a no-brainer. I went to public school growing up in New Zealand, many of my closest friends were Christians of varied persuasions, and as such the very idea of formal dialogue seemed strained and unnecessary.

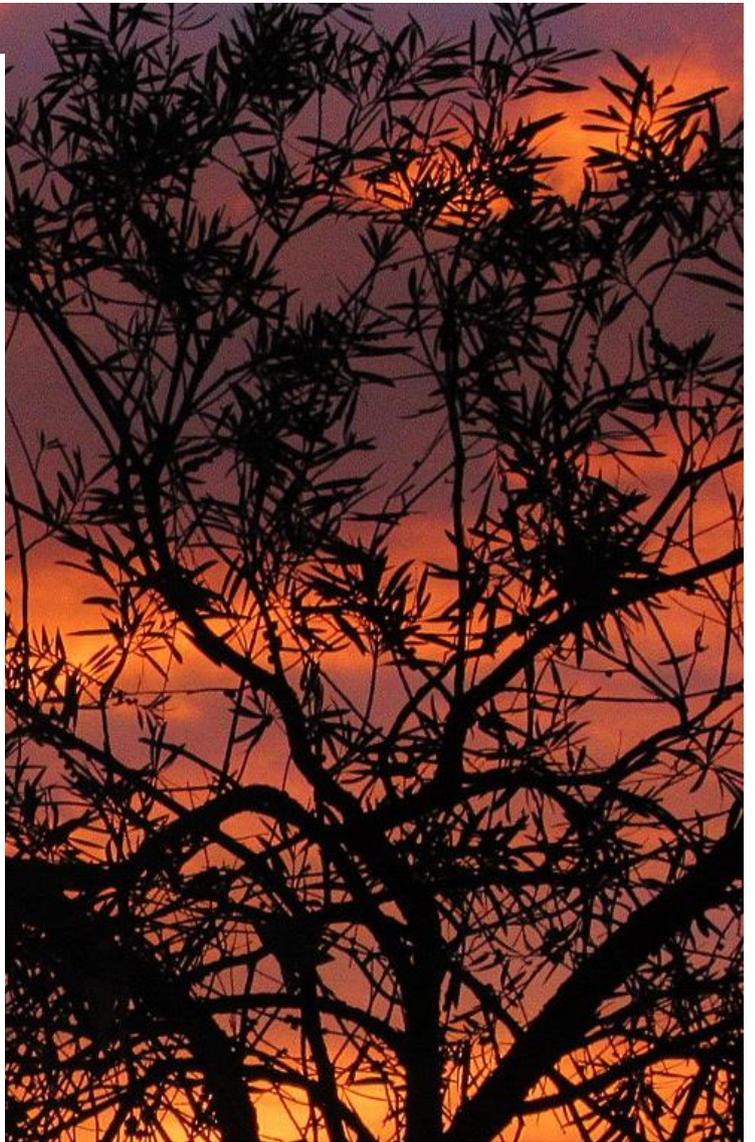
However, having established myself in a more formal setting of the Jewish world, I have come to realise that our history which has for so long shirked any responsibility of camaraderie, is in a place of newly chartered territory. As such, dialogue between faiths, and especially between our faiths is more important than ever before.

The focus of the conversation, the second of its time,

was clearly around the place of faith within the modern world. While the responses from Catholic practitioners and clergy differed from the varied Jewish experience, it was clear that there is a need to look modernity, with all its positives and negatives, squarely in the eye and reaffirm the place of faith.

Lectures and talks from various Cardinals, Rabbis and Scholars, afforded all the participants to engage in fruitful and oftentimes heated conversations and debates both during meals and in formal break-out sessions. The stirring sounds of Kiko Argüello's resounding symphony caused very spiritual reactions to all the participants, and to see the devotion of both musicians and vocalists was inspiring.

For me, this was not just a call to engage in dialogue, but to set into motion ways in which the Catholic and Jewish communities, with our pool of resources, especially in Australia, can come together in a partnership, as two brothers in faith, to act for the betterment of our wider society. This was a call for us to better work together, to inspire and galvanise our communities, and to extend the firm yet comforting handshake of faith to the entire world.



Drosha - Saturday 13 May, 2017

REBECCA CARPENTER

The Lord spoke to Moshe, saying, “Command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually”.

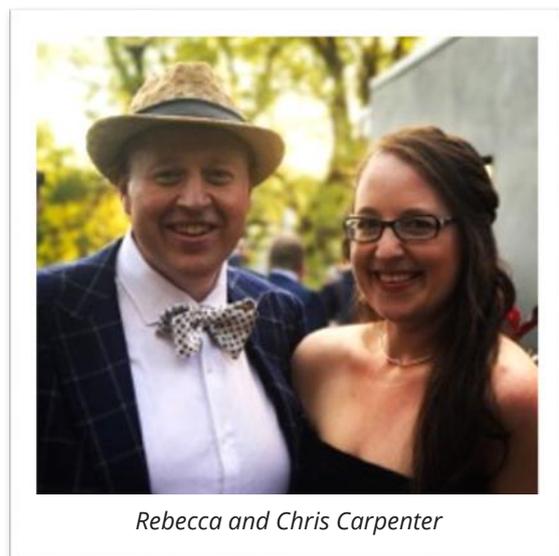
Firstly, thank you so much to everyone who has travelled to be here today. To my wonderful husband, Chris, I want to thank you especially. Chris isn't Jewish, yet – as in all aspects of our life together – he works actively with me to ensure our girls have a Jewish home and a Jewish upbringing. And I am eternally grateful to him for that. I'd also like to thank the entire ACT Jewish Community. When I started regularly attending services, about 18 months ago, everybody went out of their way to ensure I felt welcome and happily answered my many (many) beginner questions.

The Torah portion of Emor begins with the special laws pertaining to the kohanim, the Kohen gadol and the temple service. It sets out a number of laws for the priests, including contact with a dead body, not marrying a divorcee or a woman of a promiscuous past. The portion also stipulates that a newborn calf, lamb or kid must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible for an offering. The second part of Emor then lists the festival of the Jewish Calendar.

In the final part of this week's portion, God commands the Israelites to bring clear olive oil for lighting the sanctuary menorah and the ingredients and placement of the displayed loaves of sanctuary bread are also explained.

It was the lighting of the menorah that really connected me – and it's become a symbol for my journey to this place today. Here is a command originally intended for the Tabernacle, throughout the priestly generations, which has transcended that limited place and been observed as an ornament in the synagogue—throughout the generations. Like a fine watch that keeps time eternally, the ner tamid has kept burning eternally, keeping a light kindled for all who wish to hear the eternal word of God.

The ner tamid (or the eternal light) – is a physical symbol of the eternal and constant presence of God. In most synagogues today, the ner tamid is powered by



Rebecca and Chris Carpenter

electricity, not oil, but its purpose remains the same. It burns night and day, every day of the year.

It was thinking about the burning of the eternal light that really inspired my drosha today. It got me thinking about what happens to a light that burns day and night. In the brightest part of the day, it can be very difficult to see the eternal light for all of the light that surrounds it, but it still burns. At night, when it is dark and quiet and peaceful, you can see the eternal light from a long way away – a beacon. This imagery has come to represent how I see myself. I have always been incredibly proud of my Jewish heritage, but for a long time I identified as more culturally than religiously Jewish. For me, that was the period of my life when the brightness of everything else in my life rendered my Jewishness lighter by comparison. Then, while on maternity leave having had Victoria, I started working on capturing my grandfather's incredible story. For the first time in my life, I had a vivid, beautiful, terrifying glimpse into the life three of my grandparents, and so, so many others, had during the holocaust.

I'd like to share some of this story with you today. This chapter of my grandfather's story begins late in 1944. Ervin was just out of high school and had been called up for service into the “Hungarian Jewish Working Army”. His division was housed in a derelict school building on the outskirts of Budapest and their duties consisted of clearing the rubble caused by Allied air raids. On the 27th of November everything changed.

The previous night, the barracks had been surrounded by the Hungarian Arrow Cross and their German SS associates. All regular Hungarian military officers had disappeared. In a mass march of roughly 2,000 people, Ervin and his fellow army conscripts were herded to a nearby railway and forced into cattle wagons. There were at least 50 people in each wagon – no food, no water and no sanitation.

After a gruelling 24 hour journey, the doors were opened and the prisoners were marched to a village near the Austrian border, where they were housed – closely

guarded – in stables and set to work digging trenches. Cleverly, my grandfather was able to befriend one of the German soldiers who were supervising the prisoners as they worked. The German soldier warned Ervin that, once the task was completed, the prisoners would be transported to an Austrian concentration camp.

The following night Ervin slipped out of the stables and walked a number of kilometres through a forest until he reached the border town Shopron. His aim was to reach Budapest, collect his sweetheart, my grandmother, and to flee Europe. Once had arrived, he was able to find refuge in the cellar of the Red Cross Building. Three sleepless nights later, the Arrow Cross broke in, arrested and transported him to their Headquarters in Buda and then to the infamous Army Court Building where Ervin and a number of others were charged with desertion and condemned to death by firing squad.

Ervin was asked to sign an acknowledgement of his sentence but, prompted by one of the other prisoners who claimed he had Swedish citizenship, Ervin refused to sign and said "I am not a Hungarian citizen and therefore cannot be charged or punished". He was asked for evidence of his alleged Swedish citizenship and replied that the Arrow Cross had taken all the relevant papers. On that basis, Ervin's captors agreed to contact the Swedish Embassy to validate his story. A number of hours later, back in his cell, Erwin was approached by a tall, imposing man in overcoat and hat. He came close and whispered, "We are going to save you!". It was Raoul Wallenberg. Much later, Ervin discovered that the other men he had shared the Army Court cell with had all been executed.

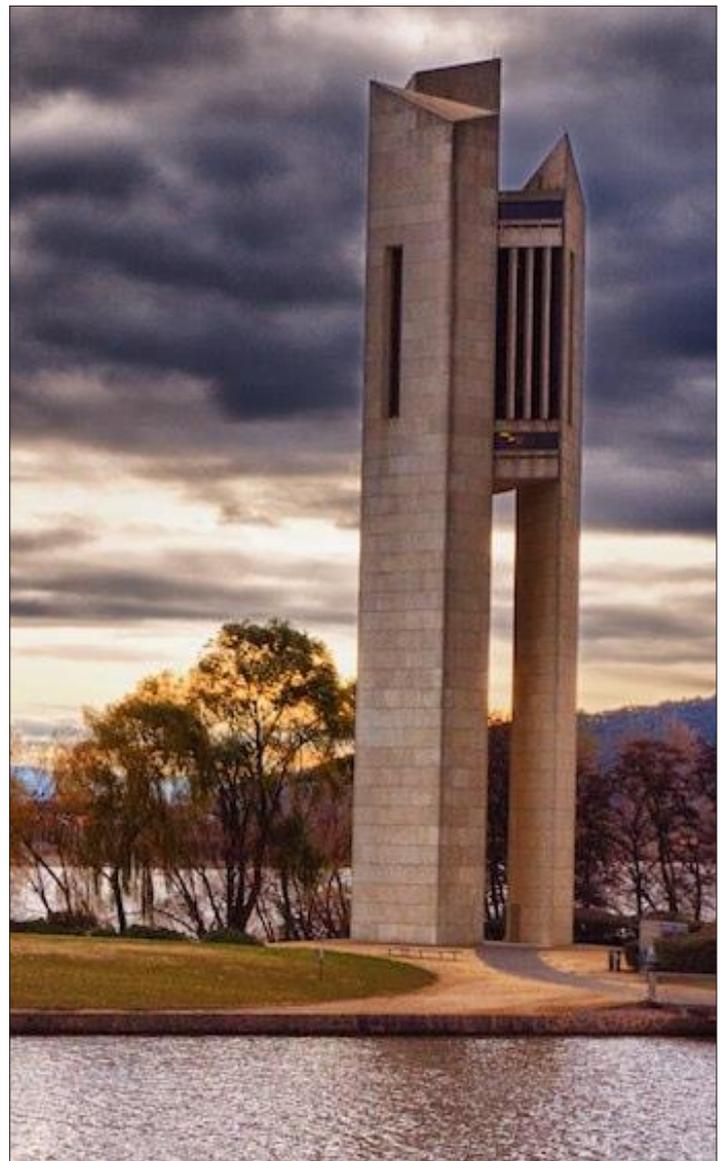
Raoul Wallenberg's determination to help as many Jewish families as possible to escape the horror of the holocaust is the reason we are here today. Now, we were so much luckier than most, otherwise I (and my parents, brothers, sister and children wouldn't be here today) – but it still got me thinking.....I had two small children, who I proudly called Jewish, yet I had no true understanding of what that meant. I was worried about coming to Schul, because I wasn't familiar with the service, or the people, or the purpose. I was waiting for someone to explain it to me. And then I realised, this was something I had to take responsibility for.

I came to my first few Friday night services. I had done a small amount of reading about Progressive Judaism and had connected with it. So I came upstairs. The more I attended services, the more I felt like I found somewhere I really belonged. The light within me, my Jewishness, my spirituality, began to burn a little brighter. Then I met a wonderful Rabbi from Perth, Rabbi Adi Cohen, who talks passionately and eloquently about what it means to be Jewish on a Wednesday. (In other words, how do you live Jewishly all the time – and not just on Shabbat. How do we each ensure that our internal light continues to burn even through the brightness of the other facets of our lives). He recommended a list of books for me to read. As those of you who know me well know, I can become a little obsessive once I get focussed on something, so I tore through the reading at speed. The more I read about Progressive Judaism, especially books by Rabbis Dosick, Tobias and Keren-Black, and the more thinking I did, the more I connected with the religious side of my Jewishness. For me, it's that Progressive Judaism strives

to rediscover, emphasise and celebrate the underlying principles that have been at the heart of our ancient faith since its inception more than three thousand years ago.

Rabbi Joe Rooks Rapport summarises it much more eloquently than I can. He writes "having a relationship with God is a feathery thing. One never really knows what God is thinking, when God is present, how we can truly bear witness to God's will in the world. And yet, through prayer we are reminded of all that is Holy in our world and in ourselves, and through this we form a bridge of connection. We become partners with God in the perfection of this world. It is then that we can truly make God holy. By repairing the brokenness in ourselves, by repairing the brokenness of our world, we repair the brokenness that has resided within God since the first moment of creation and in this way we can indeed make the Holy One, whole once again."

And so I stand before you today- proud of the fact that my internal light is burning strong and bright, despite the brightness of the many other facets of my life. I am also very proud of my declaration of my commitment to live by the pillars of Progressive Judaism and as an engaged and enthusiastic member of the community.



OPINION:

The Canberra Times and Anti-Semitism

ROBERT CUSSEL

A letter was recently published in the Canberra Times on 20 May 2017 titled, "We are the US's willing lapdog" (the "Letter"). The Letter included the following passage:

"... the Jewish PR machine swings into gear in promoting the Holocaust again as they have for 72 years..."

Some members of the ACT Jewish Community were appalled that a respected journal such as the Canberra Times would publish any letter that includes within it derogatory generalisations about any ethnic community, in this case the Jewish community.

This part of the Letter falls squarely within the working definition of anti-Semitism, which is accepted by most democratic countries, namely the definition endorsed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in June 2016:

https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf.

The definition was formally adopted by the UK government in December 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/12/antisemitism-definition-government-combat-hate-crime-jews-israel>

Australia is an Observer State of the IHRA.

The IHRA working definition includes:

"Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits."

The reference to a "Jewish PR machine" is language taken directly from the writings of neo-Nazis and anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists and plays on the classic racist stereotype of excessive Jewish power, manipulation and

bad faith.

The following posts on neo-Nazi sites, the *Daily Stormer* and *Stormfront*, illustrate the points:

"The Jewish PR machine is making Holocaust worship the new religion in the West..." - <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1029388/>

"This would be unbelievable but for the Jewish PR machine." - <https://bbs.dailystormer.com/t/scientists-to-finally-test-einsteins-theory-of-relativity/67787/64>

The theme of the Jewish community "promoting the Holocaust" for some nefarious or hidden purpose, precisely the assertion contained in the Letter, is particularly prevalent in contemporary neo-Nazi and far-right discourse.

The juxtaposition of the Holocaust with the Holodomor (commonly known as "Stalin's man-made famine"), is also a favourite device of the antisemitic far-right who attribute the crimes of Stalin and the Soviet Communist regime collectively to "the Jews".

The idea of conflating of Jews with Bolsheviks is derived from Nazi ideology. The idea featured heavily in the writings and speeches of Hitler and senior Nazi officials. See for example:

"Jewish World Bolshevism is an absolutely foreign body in the community of cultured European nations." (Hitler speech delivered on 12 April 1922)

"We shall take care that never again in Germany, the heart of Europe, will the Jewish-Bolshevistic revolution of subhumans be able to be kindled either from within or through emissaries from without." - (from The SS as an Anti-Bolshevist Fighting Organization, published in 1936, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler)

"For more than two decades the Jewish Bolshevik regime in Moscow had tried to set fire not merely to Germany but to all of Europe...The Jewish Bolshevik rulers in Moscow..." (Hitler speech to Reichstag in 1941)

Contemporary neo-Nazi literature is replete with claims that the Ukrainian famine in the 1930s, caused by Stalin

requisitioning the grains and crops of Ukrainian "kulaks" (wealthier peasants) to a level that led to the starvation of millions (including Jewish-Ukrainians) was the design of Jews or "Jewish-Bolsheviks".

See for example:

<https://www.dailystormer.com/holocaust-vs-holodomor-jews-tell-ukrainian-goyim-their-lives-have-no-value/>

<https://holodomorinfo.com/>

<http://www.rense.com/general85/holodo.htm>

The direct comparison of the Holocaust to the Holodomor, accompanied by the assertion that the latter was "far worse" than the former, and that there is some hidden or devious purpose for the "promotion" of the Holocaust and the supposed suppression of the Holodomor are among the more extreme claims routinely made by neo-Nazis, Holocaust-deniers and anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists.

The Letter includes other wild claims and misrepresentations. One example is the vacuous assertion that "a lot of commentators" now see the United States as "the world's No.1 terrorist".

Another is the claim that "Zionist paramilitaries ... made 700,000 Palestinians into refugees". No mention is made of the declaration of war and commencement of hostilities by Palestinian leaders and the Arab States against the UN's resolution in support of partition on 29 November 1947. Nor is there any mention of the full-scale invasion of the country by Arab military forces on 15 May 1948. We will let Arab leaders speak for themselves:

Emile Ghoury, Secretary-General of the Arab Higher Committee, stated in the Beirut Telegraph, on 6 September 1948, that:

"the fact that there are refugees is a direct consequence of the act of the Arab states in opposing partition and the Jewish State."

Even more strongly, the current Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas wrote in March 1976, in the P.L.O. journal in Beirut, Falastin al-Thawra:

"The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny, but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland.... For 17 years, the Arab radio stations broadcast their intention of returning the refugees to their homes. They did not throw the Jews into the sea, nor did they return the refugees to their homes."

The Letter ends with the statement that "It's called Palestine, not Israel." The State of Israel has existed since 1948, and it has been a member State of the United Nations since 1949. The existence of Israel is an objective fact and not a matter of personal interpretation or preference. The author's zeal to see Israel's name, if not its existence, totally expunged is a further indication of his malicious, racist animus.

The Letter's comments about Israel are therefore not merely "criticism" of Israel, still less "*criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country*".

Perhaps one can accept that fact that the freedom to engage in robust and wide-ranging debate, which is essential to democracy and human progress, necessarily means that some debate will be conducted at a very low level that includes errors of fact, distortions of the truth and inflammatory and provocative language. Most of the Letter's assertions have been thoroughly refuted in letters, written by community members, subsequently published by the Canberra Times.

What we cannot accept is that in publishing the Letter, the Canberra Times has given a platform, if not a megaphone, to overt racism, presenting it as a normal and acceptable part of political discourse, and have thereby coarsened the tenor of public debate.

BOOK REVIEW:

Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany

SIMON TATZ

The rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany has been analysed, documented and researched for almost a century now, and until recently one assumed there was little if any new evidence to be uncovered.

Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany, by Norman Ohler, has become an international sensation when it was published last year. Ohler's ground-breaking and cleverly written research centres on two aspects of the Third Reich: the use of methamphetamine by the German military, and the role of Adolf Hitler's personal physician, Dr Theodor Morell.

German pharmaceutical companies such as Merck, IG Farben and Bayer were world leaders prior to WWII, and Germans were huge consumers of what are now illicit drugs, including cocaine and heroin. Three German pharma companies (Merck, Boehringer and Knoll) controlled 80 per cent of the world cocaine market in the 1920. But it was the Tremmler factory that Blitzed focus on. Tremmler began producing Pervitin, a methamphetamine pill, in 1937. It soon became a staple of German civilians, then the military. They even manufactured a 'meth' brand of chocolates to make 'housework more fun.' Each chocolate was equivalent to a modern day 'hit' of crystal meth.

Dr Otto Ranke, who became a meth addict himself, oversaw the widespread supply of Pervitin to the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe. According to Ohler, it was the use of methamphetamine that allowed German tanks to sweep through France as troops stayed awake for two to three days and required little, if any food. The Blitzkrieg was supported by the enormous consumption of these Pervitin meth pills. In the Battle of Britain, Germany's airpower inferiority was countered by providing their pilots with tablets that kept them awake for days on end. German pilots flew endless mission until they 'burnt out' and suffered the effects well known about excessive methamphetamine use.

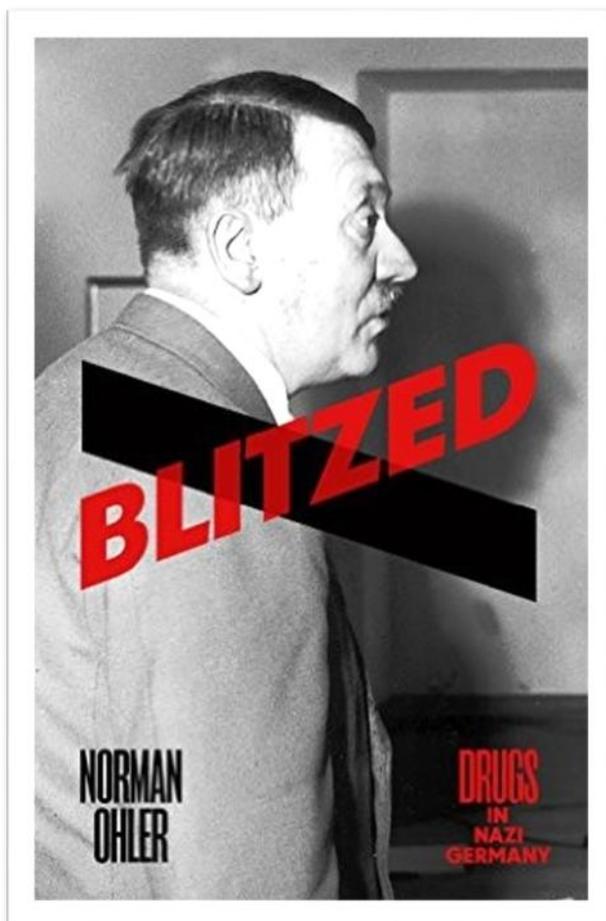
Pervitin doses to the military ran to over one million per month in 1941, with civilian use put at 1.5 million units per year. Dr Ranke, Director of the Research Institute of Defence Physiology, ordered 35 million Pervitin tablets for the Western Front campaign, while the German Labour Front placed orders for 260 million, then 390 million, Pervitin tablets.

Nazi doctors knew the dangers of meth use and addiction, however they ignored the warnings because it enabled the Nazi war machine, at least initially, to sweep through Europe.

The more fascinating part of Blitzed is the role of Hitler's personal physician, the mysterious Dr Morell. Despite being interrogated by the Americans after the war, his scrawled personal notes on Hitler haven't been fully examined. Morell concocted a substance called 'Vitaminin', which was derived from rosehip powder, dried lemon, yeast extract, refined sugar and skimmed

milk. He marketed this to Hitler and the SS. Hitler, a vegetarian whose diet was mainly salads and vegetables, apparently gained little benefit from the vitamin tablets (and later intravenous injections) but he certainly relied on the Eukodal (Oxycodon) as well as methamphetamine and cocaine his physician prescribed. Hitler was obsessed with his own health and ensuring he had the stamina to lead the war, and Blitzed describes the descent into increasing drug addiction.

In August 1941 Hitler first became seriously ill, and Dr Morell's vitamin concoctions failed to improve his health. Here is the point where steroids are first used, followed by dolantin, an opioid similar to morphine. Dr Morrell is described as a proponent of polypragmasia - the use of multiple therapeutic modalities to



manage a single condition.

Blitzed provides a wealth of fascinating medical research material, much of which lay hidden in archives and not assessed until recently, on the way hard drugs affected decision making by Hitler and the SS. One example is Dunkirk, where Goring's morphine addiction is attributed to his delay in pursuing the British, thus allowing the famous Dunkirk evacuation.

The evils of Nazi Doctors has been well documented before, however this research has been on their victims

and the inhumane experiments carried out in concentration camps and elsewhere. Blitzed – which reads more like a thriller - reveals the role of the personal physician and military doctors in disseminating methamphetamine, steroids, cocaine and morphine to both the architects of the Final Solution and the Third Reich, and the troops who carried out their orders.

OBITUARY:

Dr Aharon Brandstetter z"l 1926 - 2017

EMERITUS PROFESSOR SYDNEY HAMBERGER

I first met Aharon in 1965, soon after returning to England from sabbatical in USA. We lived in Abingdon, near Oxford, which was the domestic base for three large government scientific research institutions. Aron's wife, Judith, called to introduce her family to us, and we soon became friends. Aharon, who had completed his PhD at Tel Aviv University, had a research appointment at the Science Research Council's Rutherford Laboratory working with the High Energy particle accelerator.

He was born in Frankfurt and at least some of his family somehow managed to avoid the Shoah by hiding mainly in unoccupied France and rural Italy, eventually reaching Palestine legally after the war. As he rarely spoke about his background I have no details of his early life in Israel, but I believe he was later an intelligence officer in the IDF.

The family soon became part of the small Oxford Jewish community, his eldest son, Yuval, having his Bar Mitzvah there. We always shared Seder night, which in their home would finish around midnight

delighting our youngsters.

When his fixed term appointment ended in 1970 he returned with his family to Israel. We next met at his home in Ramat Aviv in 1976 while my wife and I were visiting our daughter during her Ulpan. He was talking about a possible working visit to USA but I am unsure if it did eventuate. We met again briefly in Israel while en route to Australia late in 1977 to take up my ANU appointment.

By this time his academic interest had changed to renewable energy technology, particularly on energy storage. He contacted me about some of his ideas and I was able to put him in touch with the relevant group at ANU who invited him to join them. His scientific work at ANU was largely concerned with evaluating various phase-change materials, e.g. calcium chloride, for heat storage applications. He and his family moved to Canberra in 1980, buying a house in Torrens, where they remained until their eventual return to Israel in 1993. During their time here they were active members of the ACT community, their youngest son Sharon being a regular Torah reader. Our family relationship (including the Seder tradition) was of course renewed during their time here.

During his last visit to Canberra with Judith in October 2013 he was clearly not his usual sharp-minded self, and we were not surprised to learn that he was in care and fading. It had been a long friendship.

OPINION:

We are One Community: the Importance of Belonging

ROBERT CUSSEL

Both my parents were refugees from Nazi Europe. My German-born father secured a rare visa in 1938 to Australia as an 18 year old, but he never saw his parents again, who perished in the Holocaust. My maternal grandparents somehow engineered an escape from Nazi ruled Austria and made their way to Australia. Many Australian Jews have similar stories.

For so many children of Holocaust survivors or refugees, the horror stories of the darkness of the Holocaust in Europe were traumatic. My parents, like so many others, were determined that their children should grow up as loyal Australians and fully assimilated to their adopted country. German was shunned as a language in our home and gratitude to our new home and people was openly expressed.

If there is one lesson I have taken away from these formative experiences, it is the need for the Jewish people to be proud of our heritage and united and strong in resisting anti-Semitism and oppression and to take every step to ensure that all Jews can practise our religion and celebrate our rich learning and culture.

Jewish Australians have done much to integrate our deep learning into Australian life and many of us have made significant and important contributions to this country and way of life. Here in Canberra we are a small community, but we still face the significant challenge of ensuring that the Jewish aspects of our Australian life are preserved, communicated and fostered.

By necessity but also fortuitously, we have had the unique opportunity of uniting as one inclusive community. Our unity of purpose is an organizational strength and provides important protections for our Jewish way of life. One of my most enduring memories is of one of our founders, the



late Earle Hoffman z"l, thundering from the Bemah: "We are one community." To divide the community according to our religious preferences or practices was never seen as a viable or even desirable option, as it would have significantly weakened our collective voice in the wider Canberra community.

In pursuing this noble aim, we face challenges that are unique in the wider Jewish world and there are few role models that we can follow. We do have an established record of success in incorporating inclusive and pluralistic practices, but there is still much work to do in this regard. We have one Board of Management and a clearly articulated set of policies that aim to unite all our members under the one umbrella of Jewish identity. We include two congregations, which are deliberately not defined in the Constitution. There is significant advantage in allowing and encouraging the two congregations or minyanim to develop as collegial and cooperative bodies, as non-legal entities, to run their own religious services. For all other programs, activities and events, we join together and pool our collective energies and knowledge.

Our Board of Management is not a board of deputies, such as the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies or Jewish Community Council of Victoria, which are top level or roof bodies that seek to represent a range of separate, legally constituted organisations. We do have a number of "affiliated" groups that operate under the collective umbrella of the ACT Jewish Community (ACTJC), including the National Council of Jewish Women (ACT), the Australian Jewish Historical Society and the ACT Zionist Council, although their connection to the whole is not formally or legally defined and they are not formally represented on the ACTJC Board. Essentially, our collective Jewish life in Canberra is a set of agreements and common understandings that depend on the goodwill and intelligence of our collective membership. Indeed the word "wisdom" comes to mind as an essential prerequisite for ensuring communal harmony and consensus.

Our Board is elected directly by the fully paid up members of the ACT Jewish Community (ACTJC). Thus membership of the ACTJC is a prized opportunity and responsibility and not one to be treated lightly. I have had the privilege of serving on the Board in a variety of capacities for seven years now and have never ceased to be amazed at the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of my fellow Board members in seeking to preserve and build our collective Jewish endeavour. The Board also appoints a range of committees to help in organising life around the Jewish Centre, including events, education and youth, Jewish Care,

art and heritage, security, building, fundraising, systems, National Jewish War Memorial, editorial (Hamerkaz and Grapevine) and Yom Hashoah.

Our membership and formal links to such groups as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and the Jewish Communal Appeal (JCA) are essential parts of our ACTJC role and function to protect and defend Jewish Australians from anti-Semitism and vilification and represent us to the wider community and nation.

Volunteers have always carried a central and critical role in the building of our community. There are many opportunities for ACTJC members to get involved in the organisation of the community as volunteers, perhaps on one of the committees or even considering standing for the Board. Serving as a volunteer is an excellent way of learning more about our unique ACTJC and contributing in whatever way suits our range of commitments.

Social opportunities are also a very important part of what we do. Friendships are essential in all aspects of life. It is our collective friendships that provide the cement that keeps our community together. Social gatherings and celebrations form a vital part of our community life and are essentially whole of community events.

On another tack, the ACTJC is sitting on an extremely valuable and extensive block of land, over 17,000 square metres. We have just seen the adjacent block on the corner of Canberra Avenue and State Circle sell for over \$20 million. The founders of the ACTJC conceived that this

land holding is held in trust for both the local and Australian Jewish communities, both now and in the future. The ACTJC is both a not for profit and charitable organization, established under the ACT Associations Incorporations Act. We have a duty to protect the interests of future Jewish Australians. We don't want our land holding to be targeted by ambitious business groups seeking to make a short term profit on the alienation of our land or our organization taken over by any narrowly focused special interest group or faction that wants to impose their will on the community. Thus a broadly based membership of the ACTJC is actually essential to ensure that any plans for the future are thoroughly reviewed under the governance arrangements established under the Constitution. We need a well-informed and visionary membership body that will carefully consider any future plans to ensure that our land holding is used for the benefit of Jewish Canberrans and Australians. At the Special General Meeting on June 18, the Board encouraged all members to provide feedback on the Site Strategic Plan that is still in the development stage. The plan, already circulated to all financial members, details a range of development options for the future. Contact me if you wish to provide feedback.

We have a unique, pluralistic and inclusive community. It's up to all of us to ensure that the long established ethos of our ACTJC is protected and enhanced. Your individual membership is crucial in this process.

ACT Zionist Council

DION ESTERMAN
PRESIDENT, ACTZC

In the last couple of months, we have celebrated the 69th anniversary of the modern State of Israel, and the 50th anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem. We can look back in pride at the many wonderful achievements that have been accomplished since its independence.

To celebrate here in the capital, the ACTZC held a celebratory service on the eve of Yom Ha'atzmaut. We began by marking the division between Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, remembering all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so we can continue living in our homeland as well as all of the people who were murdered in terrorist attacks. This was followed by an Israeli sing-a-long which was peppered with spontaneous dancing by those in attendance!

We live in a world where Israel is so accessible, a world

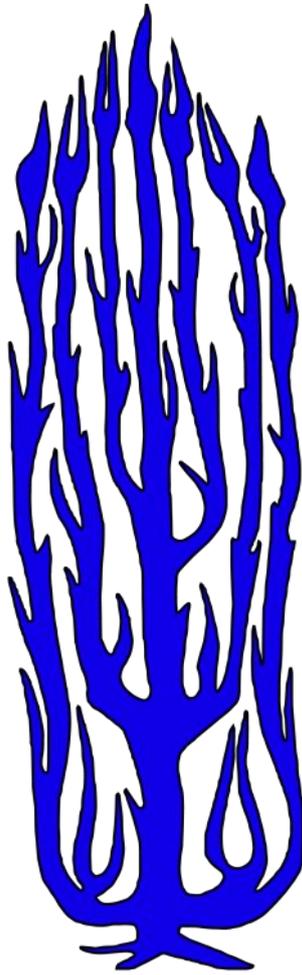
that was totally unimaginable to those only a couple of generations ago. Australia has one of the largest rates of Aliyah per capita, a fact of which we are immensely proud, especially as we are running towards a special place, seeking to fulfil a dream; not running away in fear, looking for a place of shelter.

We are lucky that in today's world we see Israel as a technological wonder, a start-up nation, an inspiration. So much so that the Australian government started a landing pad in Tel Aviv to bring Australian entrepreneurs to Israel so they could embrace the passion, knowledge and innovative abilities that characterize Israel's start up ecosystem and help their ideas become a reality.

To be a Jew in today's world is to feel a sense of connection to our Jewish state. Whether we live in Israel or not, we share that same destiny of both loss and achievement that defines our country. We are not just one nation with one heart in a spiritual sense, but in the practical sense where our fates are defined not by geography but by a common sense of purpose and faith.

On behalf of the ACT Zionist Council, I wish Israel a heartfelt Mazel Tov on the 69th anniversary of her independence and look forward to celebrating her achievements in peace and prosperity for many more years to come!





The Burning Bush sculpture , which adorns the façade of the National Jewish Memorial Centre building, has been part of the Canberra visual landscape for over forty years. Its cultural and historic significance has been perpetuated by the Canberra Jewish Community through extensive use of the Burning Bush graphic.

For more information on the sculpture, please visit the home page of our website or [click here](#).

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