Contents

Board Reports
04 PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE: Veronica Leydman
05 BUILDING PROGRAM: David Rosalky

Special Articles
06 THE INDOMITABLE SYNAGOGUE: Rabbi Robuck
14 BOOK CLUB: Karen Tatz
14 BOOK REVIEW: Shoshana Creagh
15 POEM - OF ALL THE PEOPLES: Nathan Alterman
18 LETTER FROM: Hillel Lehman and Almog Zoosman
19 LETTER FROM: Raz Sofer & Rotem Dvir
20 INTERVIEW: VERONICA & SARAH: Yvette Goode
22 PESACH COOKING IDEAS: Yvette Goode
23 AUSTRALIAN JEWISH WAR MEMORIAL: Peter Allen
24 THOMAS MAUTNER: Canberra Times
26 PROFILE - MARC ITZCHAKI: Robert Cussel
27 BEYOND DUTY EXHIBITION
29 MEMO - SPELLING OF ANTISEMITISM

Community and other Reports
07 PROGRESSIVE: Jesica Dowell
08 ORTHODOX CONGREGATION: Alan Shroot
09 ACT ZIONIST COUNCIL: Robert Cussel
10 AUST JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Adele Rosalky
11 NCJWA: Steering Committee
12 GRUMPS R US: Tom Frommer
13 WELCOME COMMITTEE: Jo Dixon
16 SHALOM EVERYONE!: Shir Ostroff & Shay Pinsker

Events
21 YOUNG ADULTS PURIM PARTY: Tamsin Sanderson
21 PURIM: Robert Cussel
30 YOUTH LED SHABBAT SERVICE: Naomi & Amy

Lifecycle Happenings
48 OBITUARY - JACQUELINE AUMANN: Peter Taft
32 MEMBERS LIFECYCLE EVENTS
Editor’s Note

KAREN TATZ
FOR THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Hello and welcome to this edition of HaMerkaz (#544).

Purim has been and we are sending this edition to you before Pesach.

The new editorial committee includes three past editors: Yvette Goode, Robert Cussel and me. Vicki Coleman does all the hard work, making our publication look professional, colourful and inviting.

We do our best to cover the events since the last edition and to provide some articles we think may interest you.

We welcome input from the community, whether it is a personal story or a contribution about one of our sub-communities, affiliated groups, education program or an individual. If you have any questions or suggestions or would like to make a contribution, please speak to one of us or email me via the office.

As usual, this edition is full of interesting items and photographs. We have a contribution from three lots of Shlichim – as well as hearing from Shir and Shay, we have messages from Israel fromm our past Shlichim, Roz and Rotem and Hillel and Amog.

There are a number of reports for you to read about the building, congregations, committees, affiliated groups and some events organised by our younger members. There are features on Thomas Mautner, Jackie Aumann (obituary), and Marc Itzchaki as well as some Pesach recipes and key dates.

Chag Pesach Sameach.
Karen

UPCOMING events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APRIL</th>
<th>MAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRI 19 - 1st Night Seder</td>
<td>WED 1 - Yom Hashoah commemoration service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT 20 - Pesach Day 1</td>
<td>&quot;Memorials and Memories&quot; with guest speaker Dr Brendan Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THUR 25 - Anzac Day Memorial Service</td>
<td>SUN 5 - First day of Cheder (Term 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRI 26 - Rabbi Robuck visit</td>
<td>WED 8 - Yom Hazikaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT 25 - Eli Zuckerman’s Bar Mitzvah</td>
<td>THUR 9 - Yom Ha’atzmaut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAT 18 - Youth-led Shabbat Service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THUR 23 - Lag B’omer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUN 9 - Shavuot Day 1. Our Limmud program</td>
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</tbody>
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FOR THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
Welcome to our first edition of Hamerkaz for 2019. Not only did we kick off the year with a bang, we haven’t stopped to take a breath! Here are just some of the highlights.

Our first communal celebration for 2019 was Ariella Gould’s bat-mitzvah in which she leined from the Torah as part of a women’s tefillah service held on Shabbat afternoon of Australia Day. I don’t think I’ve ever experienced a communal Havdalah ceremony with fireworks lighting up the sky at the same time. It was a fabulous sight.

Two weeks later, our younger members proved that their bar and bat mitzvah was not the end of attendance at shul when they led (almost) the entirety of the Shabbos morning service on their own; a first for the ACTJC! Misha Weisman was an expert Gabbai, keeping things running smoothly while calling up boys to the bimah and bestowing the blessings on them after the various readings. Amy Joshua and Naomi Leydman gave a very impressive dvar Torah where they talked about the meaning of community and contribution. It was such a successful event, another one will be held on 18 May.

And speaking of success, our fabulous Shilchim, Shay and Shir have achieved remarkable results with our young adult program, hosting a variety of social and educational events which have been extremely well received.

Rocky (Rachel) Neumann and Tamsin Sanderson ran a beautiful and inspiring Kabbalat Shabbat service in honour of International Women’s Day and NCJWA Shabbat. This was followed by another well-attended communal dinner. And the fun continued with our very grand Purim carnival and plans are now underway for Pesach, Yom Hashoah and Limmud Shavuot.

All of these events however could not happen without the dedicated volunteers who generously donate their time to make our community a vibrant hub of activity for all to enjoy. Unfortunately, sometimes it falls on a few to do a lot. I would therefore like you to consider apportioning a part of your time just as you would consider apportioning a part of your money for tzedakah. If you can contribute some time to help with our security roster, with our Kiddush roster, the War Memorial garden or with events planning in general, please contact a member of the Board or our Office staff by email at: actadmin@actjc.org.au.

I am so proud to be part of a small but remarkably active Jewish community where all members and friends come together to learn, pray, celebrate and eat under the one roof. The Board is working extremely hard to ensure that this continues from strength to strength and so you would have seen advertised on our website (as well as other national and international sites), our call for a JewishCare Community worker, a researcher to assist with a new digital display of service personnel for the Australian Jewish War Memorial and of course, a Rabbi and Educator for our Community. In particular, I would personally like to thank everyone who provided feedback on our Rabbi recruitment process. Your comments were very helpful and constructive in shaping the position description and selection criteria for our Community Rabbi. I look forward to keeping you informed as we move forward with the recruitment process for the above positions.

I would like to wish you all a kosher and joyous Pesach. I look forward to celebrating with you at our communal seder on 19 April.

With warm regards
Veronica
Stage 1 of the building program is now well behind us, bar a couple of maintenance issues. That work has provided us with:

- A secure boundary which mitigates many of the risks we could be exposed to. Even so, the risk is never eradicated and our security efforts, together with sensible levels of alertness, remain important routine activities for the Community.

- An excellent meeting facility, in the form of the Sir John Monash lecture room. This room, with its modern audio-visual capacity, has been used multiple times by the Australian Jewish Historical Society, the ACT Zionist Council and other groups. It holds about 70 people in this mode and is a valuable addition to our capacity.

- The Orthodox synagogue space (the alternative role of the lecture room) is flexible and effective allowing greater participation by women in the services and is comfortably expandable to accommodate about 150 congregants.

Now we are embarking on Stage 2. This stage involves the construction of the extension wing and associated works. This wing is the centre-piece of the whole development. It includes:

- a ceremonial foyer to the whole building;
- administrative offices;
- a rabbi’s office;
- storage for furniture;
- a serving kitchen;
- new toilets;
- three meeting/classrooms;
- the Progressive congregation’s prayer space incorporated in one of the meeting rooms;
- external verandah space and a succah.

Moving the administration and rabbi’s office to the new wing will free up the Earle Hoffman library which has been recently brought back into full operation.

The plans for the new wing are posted on the notice-board near the entrance to the building. They have been sent to building firms seeking tenders for the work. We will know the outcome of the tenders very soon.

As matters stand, we know we will have a shortfall in funds. The amount of the shortfall will depend on the tender price after work has been done to cut costs wherever we reasonably can. But we will have to raise more money through our own membership and by approaching again some of the donors in Melbourne and Sydney.

If all goes smoothly, we would hope to be building early in the new financial year and be well completed before the fiftieth anniversary of our building in 2021. The construction process requires that the ACTJC is able to maintain access, parking and operations in the existing building. However, it will certainly be disruptive for several months. Bulletins will be promulgated periodically to explain how the building is to be accessed and utilised.

There are also plans prepared for the installation of a lift and for revamping of the existing kitchen and bathrooms. But carrying out these elements will require extra funds.

March 2019
Yochanan ben Zakkai is not a name that often or easily rolls off the tongues of most Jews today. But make no mistake. This 1st century tanna (scholar), the disciple of Hillel and a leader of the Pharisees, the “master” of Rabbis Eliezer and Joshua, was among those most responsible for preserving Judaism in the wake of the Temple’s destruction in 70 CE.

Famously, it was Yochanan ben Zakkai who, according to legend, was smuggled out of the ruins of Jerusalem in a casket, feigning his death so that he might appeal to the Roman general Vespasian to spare the city of Yavneh as a home for Torah scholarship.

The legend of Yochanan is emblematic of the courage and vision of all those throughout Jewish history who, having been confronted by an existential crisis, responded by introducing regenerative measures that would restore Israel’s footing. It was Yochanan who determined that Rabbinic authority would be vested in the mastery of Torah and serve as a salve to stop the bleeding resulting from the loss of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael, the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Priestly service.

The story of Judaism since Yochanan’s time has been one of continuous crisis and regeneration, reflection, relocation and reinvention. The portability of Torah and the intellectual agility of its teachers have allowed the faith of our ancestors to become the faith of our children a hundred times over. And it has been the synagogue that has been indomitable throughout.

Modernity, however, presents numerous challenges to synagogues and those who care about them. Let’s look at how our relationship to our places of worship may have changed.

“The principal authority for contemporary Jews has become the sovereign self. Each person now performs the labour of fashioning his or her own self, pulling together elements from the various Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires available rather than stepping into an “inescapable framework of identity…given at birth. Decisions about ritual observance and involvement in Jewish institutions are made and made again, considered and reconsidered, year by year and even week by week.” 1

And what of the synagogue itself? What follows is a fascinating analogy that can help us to understand the lengths to which the synagogue of today must adapt to meet the needs of its members:

“Jewish institutions face a formidable task in this period of voluntarism and mobility. They must have a range of options available to every individual at every moment, so that when he or she is ready to seize hold of Jewishness or Judaism, the right option is there to be had. Jewish professionals more and more seem like the operators of a transit system. A bus must be ready and waiting at the bus stop at the exact moment that the prospective rider appears. The fleet must be sufficiently large to be there whenever wanted, and it must be sufficiently diverse to take account of the diverse tastes and needs of its potential clientele.” 2

What is being described is indicative of the challenges facing Progressive and Orthodox shules alike. “Synagogues need to be proactive, flexible, collaborative, holistic, balancing preservation and adaption, tradition and change so as to become self—renewing.” 3

As I reflect on the first six months spent serving the ACT Jewish community, I am delighted to have discovered openness to new ideas, an inclusive and welcoming spirit and a willingness to reflect and when warranted, to respond to the unique challenges and opportunities present in the ACT.

The Progressive congregation’s leadership team under the inspired direction of Jesica Dowell is working tirelessly to initiate new programs and vitalise existing offerings that meet the needs and interests of its members. The warmth and helpfulness of Veronica Leydman suggests that new and deeper relationships being created between and among those both upstairs and downstairs will continue to contribute to the community’s broad success, one that views worship, study, service and socialising as the stepping stones for a bright, shared future.

I look forward to joining with you along the journey.

2 Ibid.
Jewish Author and Educator Ron Wolfson describes Judaism as a collection of relationships and connections – “relationships between Jews, between Jews and others, between Jews and Judaism, between Jews and God.”

Three years ago I moved to Canberra with my husband. As a committed Jew, one of my first tasks was to find our local synagogue and Jewish community. To me, attending Synagogue was part of a spiritual and familial ritual – something my parents, brother and I did every Friday night and many Saturday mornings. It was a way to connect to our ancestry and heritage and continue to carry on the traditions of a long Jewish lineage. It was a physical structure in which we could congregate to pray and reflect. But it was also a place where transactions were made; where my mother paid our fees and purchased our High Holy day seats each year, where we politely greeted “those people that were at so and so’s house… what are their names again?” a place where my parents met with the Rabbi and negotiated Bat Mitzvah portions and logistics, a place of strict rules and silence – where I couldn’t connect with the other children other than a sneaky wave, ‘escaping’ or catching up after services on the way to our cars. What I only now realise is that amongst the busy-ness of family life, full time jobs, school, Bar/Bat-Mitzvah preparations, extracurricular activities and Sydney traffic, there was no time for our family to build actual relationships and connections with our community. This is of course no discredit to my incredible parents who went above and beyond to enrich our Jewish lives. It was just the reality of big city Jewish family life. So, in my venture to this exciting new city and with nervous anticipation, I set out to reconnect with Judaism, to reconnect with my local Jewish community and to find personal time to build meaningful relationships with the Jewish community I was now entering.

Well, I don’t know what I was so nervous about! The ACTJC Progressive Congregation is a congregation of true and honest connection - a group of individuals who support each other in services by taking turns lighting candles, pouring wine and leading prayer. A congregation that helps set out and pack away furniture each service, and who bring in home-baked Challot to share. A congregation that hug each other hello, who converse and listen,
Services continue on Friday evenings, Shabbat mornings, Yom Tovim and Rosh Chodesh.

We occasionally fail to have a Minyan on Friday evenings. On Shabbat morning, we often need to wait for the requisite number. I ask that men attending try to arrive by 10:00am. Usually we have over 30 attending on Shabbat morning and there is always a Kiddush following. This gives members the opportunity to solve the World's problems over a wine or whisky.

There is a roster for Torah reading and drashot on Shabbat mornings. Let me know if you would like to give a Dvar Torah, if you are able to lein Torah or would like to read a Haftarah.

Minyanim for Yartzeits can be arranged by request.

Megillat Esther was read on three occasions at Purim. Rabbi Shimon Eddi and Meir Yitzchaki shared the readings. My sincere thanks to them as well as all who have assisted in any way with conducting the services.

Pesach will be with us shortly. We are hoping to have a full complement of services. Please attend when you are able.

REPORT

Orthodox Congregation

ALAN SHROOT
CONVENOR ORTHODOX CONGREGATION

and who share stories. It is a congregation that truly cares – that call each other during times of struggle, sickness and celebration, that share personal memories on the Yarzheits of past members, that value the opinions and time volunteered by members, that invite each other to Shabbat dinners, play dates and coffees. The sense of honest connectedness was instant. I am immensely proud of my congregation.

2019 has brought us many opportunities to continue to connect, starting with a ‘Welcome’ Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Robuck in February. We connected socially for drinks and food prior to the service, welcoming and getting to know members from as far as Sydney and the Bega Valley. Together we compiled personalized travelling ‘Shabbat kits’ for members to use and add to over the years; complete with Shabbat ‘cheat sheets’, candles, Kiddush cups, spices and children’s Shabbat activities. We connected spiritually, sharing a beautiful, musical Shabbat service led by Rabbi Robuck with opportunity for individuals to volunteer with Brachot and the leading of personal tunes. We connected as a wider community, enjoying an absolutely delicious dinner catered by Jocelyn Robuck and friends.

We've connected with many of our young families and children with the launch of Rabbi Robuck’s children’s services – Shabbat songs, stories, craft and Kiddush for children up to 8 years and their parents. I must say I’ve noticed a few adults sneaking into these services – they are truly engaging!

We've connected spiritually and intellectually across the community with Rabbi Robuck’s Shabbat Study Table using ‘Life – the 13th Annual Study Compendium for Limmud UK’, a treasury of biblical and rabbinic texts, contemporary essays and classic stories on the stages of life. Each session has been thought-provoking and has elicited rich conversation. One of my favourite moments will forever be joining together as a community after the March Study Table, holding Havdallah under the Canberra starlight sky.

We continue to share Shabbat dinners – from pot-luck and restaurant dinners after services to Shabbat meals at each others homes. I am immensely proud of our Progressive congregation – who we’ve been, who we are and where we’re going. A congregation of true and meaningful connection.
REPORT

ACT Zionist Council

ROBERT CUSSEL
PRESIDENT, ACTZC

The ACT Zionist Council (ACTZC) is an unincorporated Association established in 2016 (with preparatory work in 2015) to promote links with Israel and support the work of the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) in Canberra. The establishment of the ACTZC greatly facilitated the implementation of the Shlichut program, which has made so much difference to Jewish community life, especially for the younger generations, in Canberra and holds much promise for the future. In September 2017, the Zionist Federation of Australia held its 90th Anniversary Plenary Conference in Canberra at the National Jewish Memorial Centre.

We held our AGM on 28 February and elected a committee to manage the affairs of the Council, comprising Jon Rosalky, Yvette Goode, George Rothman, Jane O'Neill, Frank Selch and myself. Shay Pinsker and Shir Ostroff are ex-officio. We encourage as many ACTJC members as possible to join the ACTZC. Contact Jon or myself for details.

We aim to:

- effectively support the Shlichut;
- communicate with and support the ZFA and attend meetings and conferences by telephone or in person and thus ensure we have a seat at the table;
- manage a small budget and ensure that funds are available for the Shlichim to plan and implement parts of their program;
- find new younger members and leaders for the committee to help communicate with our young adults;
- support the Shlichim in providing an effective program of information and engagement for the community;
- build the ACTZC membership base;
- support fund raising activities by the UIA and JNF;
- encourage and support future leaders for the ACTZC and ensure its success as a Council in Canberra.

The AGM was followed by guest speaker, Ron Gerstenfeld, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Israel Embassy who spoke on the topic "Between the Iranian Proxies: Challenges and Opportunities in the Middle East." Ron provided a fascinating and comprehensive insight into the issues. Thank you to our Shlichim, Shir Ostroff and Shay Pinsker, who coordinated the event and provided a delicious supper on the occasion.

Over 25 people attended another fascinating ACTZC evening on Thursday 28 March, focusing on the 2019 Israeli elections with expert guest speakers Shai Habet, former advisor to the Knesset and Michael Manheim, Tzofim Shaliach. Another round of amazing Israeli food, specially prepared by Shir and Shay, capped off the evening. Thanks Shay and Shir for your dedication and vision for the program.
On 6 February the AJHS(ACT) AGM was held at the National Jewish Memorial Centre. The following office bearers were re-elected unopposed:

**President:** Adele Rosalky  
**Vice-President:** Leonie Webb  
**Hon. Secretary:** Naomi Robertson  
**Hon. Treasurer:** Richard Webb  
**Committee:** Victor Isaacs, Margaret Beadman OAM, Judith Wimborne, Susanna Elkaim

At the meeting the President drew attention to the new benefit of membership: a log-in to members-only areas of www.ajhs.com.au which will include databases, personal papers, photos, military records, newspapers and ephemera dating back to the First Fleet in 1788. This is in addition to two hard copy Journals and four Newsletters annually.

The President thanked all members of her committee for their valuable support over the past year, and the Treasurer announced that membership fees would remain unchanged for the fourth consecutive year at $35 which applies to a single membership or a family.

Following the short meeting, members and friends of the AJHS(ACT) heard Angus Trumble, the recently retired Director of the National Portrait Gallery of Australia, deliver the annual Earle Hoffman Memorial Lecture in Australian History. He gave an illustrated talk entitled The Rothschild Bank, the Montefiores, and the Victorian Gold Rush, which outlined the discovery of documents and correspondence in the basement of the London Rothschilds Bank. The contents of these papers connected the two families to every aspect of the Gold Rush in colonial Victoria. He also noted and gave an analysis of the antisemitic nature of cartoons and illustrations at that time.

An enjoyable supper followed which had been prepared by committee members Leonie, Susanna and Judith.

The second AJHS event for 2019 was held on 27 March. Sabrina Elias, the AJHS senior archivist, shared her vast archival knowledge and professional experience with us in a talk entitled Records Continuity: Preserving Today's for Tomorrow's Community. Sabrina discussed the importance of retaining records in Jewish communities and described the various collections she has worked on. The topic, which could have been perceived as dry, was well-received, entertaining and enlightening.

The following day Sabrina led a workshop at which she offered valuable guidance, showing us hands-on how to organize and maintain our own ACTJC, AJHS(ACT) and NCJWA records. We are most grateful for her generous instruction and hope it will be ongoing in the future. Thank you to Leonie for catering lunch.
Steering Committee

We continue to run the Canberra section with a steering committee. The Committee has shrunk this year and members are; Barbara Butow, Anita Shroot, Judith Eisner, Deb Sims, Debra Hurwitz, Tracy Massil, and Karen Tatz. As a smaller group, we have decided to reduce the number of events for 2019 and to focus on the women in our community. We continue to hold committee meetings in our homes every few months (with a Jewish morning/afternoon tea or supper).

We welcome new Committee members. If you are interested, please send us an email care of the office.

National Representation

Anita Shroot remains responsible for liaison with the NCJWA National Board at national level.

Membership

We currently have 32 financial members. Our membership function will be held in June this year.

Projects

We contribute to the NCJWA's national projects, including the ILAN foundation, a daycare centre in Tel Aviv for young adults with profound disabilities; the Haifa Rape Crisis Centre; and assistance for female Ethiopian students at the University of Haifa. We also make donations to local charities.

ACT Jewish Community Inc

Our small Section continues to rely on the ACT Jewish Community for support. This is a mutually beneficial relationship as we often help out with community activities, including Kiddushes. Our functions are advertised through the community and we use the Centre for some of our functions.

EVENT CALENDAR

2 June
A women’s health event and membership drive to be held at the home of Tracy Massil between 2:00 and 4:00 pm. Invitations and the address will be sent closer to the date.

30 July
Our Annual General Meeting to be held at 10.30 am with the keynote speaker and venue to be confirmed.

22 September
We will have an afternoon tea at the home of Karen Tatz between 2:00 and 4:00 pm with invitations and the address to be sent closer to the date.

10 November
A garden party at the home of Judith Eisner at a time to be confirmed. Invitations and the address will be sent closer to the date.

We hope that the women in the community can join us at one or all of these events.

Feel free to bring a friend or relative.
Another successful quarterly report from ‘Grumps’!

Our Thursday afternoons continue to be well attended, approximately 15-20 gentlemen eager to discuss what is on their minds and, of course, have others perhaps take an opposing view just for the sake of a good lively discussion.

The table tennis equipment is set up in the auditorium for those fit enough to climb the stairs and play pairs until another takes his turn. It is very competitive though there is no record of wins or losses.

Coffee is served with snacks as the intense discussion continues until mid-afternoon.

There is very little structure to Grumps, sometimes we hear about some interesting recent travel, a new technical device, a medical breakthrough for the future or something political Jewish or non-Jewish – often politically incorrect.

As you can see, this is an enthusiastic group of men who enjoy the company and opportunity to come together on a regular basis.

We thank the office staff, Vicki and Alice, for their continued support always with a smile.

Pesach Greetings to the whole community.
We held a meeting on the 20th February in which we reviewed the year and made plans for the following year.

Review of year

Book club has met three times and is going strong. It averages about 7-9 participants. There is some discussion about increasing frequency of meetings (currently every two months).

The ceramic workshop run by Sarit Cohen had a small but enthusiastic attendance and she will run another workshop.

The Composers in Exile performance was a big hit. The Street Theatre gave us a good discount for a group of 10. Unfortunately, since it was a Friday night, it couldn’t be advertised through the community channels. I did mention to the Street Theatre that more people would have come if it hadn’t been a Friday night.

The visit to the Portrait Gallery was also greatly enjoyed – a group of 20 was taken on a tour of portraits with a Jewish connection – by a Jewish artist or of renowned Jewish person. We discussed making this an annual event as there are a lot of other portraits not currently on display, which we would be able to see.

Our Plans for the Coming Year

Visits to cultural institutions:
- War Memorial – May.
- Portrait Gallery – November (closed session).
- Tour of the ANU classics museum with Fiona.
- Dog walking group alternating between mornings and afternoons and also at different locations.
- Viewing of Gary Sturgess’s wonderful documentary on Barry Jones.
- A series of speakers.
- Sarit will run another ceramic decorating workshop in the middle of the year.
- Michael Platow will look for a time in second semester to run a short course on prejudice.
- Book club will continue to meet (Monday nights 7 – 9 pm at the Centre – dates and books for the each meeting to be advertised in Grapevine).

We would like to start a veggie patch if there is enough interest – please contact us if that appeals to you.

We all plan to keep our eyes open for films/theatre/exhibitions with a Jewish theme and to let the group know but if anybody else becomes aware of anything please let us know.

Welcoming new and prospective members

The membership committee – Tamsin, Robert and Jo – is keen to actively welcome and facilitate new and potential members’ involvement with the community by:
- finding buddies to invite new members for a meal and then bring them to functions for a while and introduce them to other members
- having an annual pot-luck dinner or picnic to welcome new members.

Remember – let us know if you have anything you’d like to get happening and we’ll see how we can help.
We have now met five times and we are looking forward to a full year of reading and sharing. The books we have read to date are Geraldine Brooks, “The People of the Book”; D.A. Mishani, “The Missing File” (an Israeli thriller); Jonathan Safran Foer, “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close”; Daniel Silver, “Kill Artist” (the first book in a long series featuring an Israeli intelligence officer); and Ben Elton, “Two Brothers”. Our next book is Alexandra Joel, “Rosetta” on 6 May.

We have a core group of 8 – 10 people and have been enjoying good discussion even when there are different views about the book (or maybe when there are different views – not much to talk about if we all agree). We will continue to meet on Monday evenings at the Centre. Dates and books will be in Grapevine. We welcome anyone for a single meeting or as a regular. The only rule is that you have to have read the book.

Book Review

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

SHOSHANA CREAGH

It has been such a pleasure for Phil and I to participate in our new ACTJC Book Club and to be able to share our common love of books. It is extra special when we get to know Jewish authors together that we might otherwise never discover with ‘kindred spirits’ in our community we might not have otherwise have got to know. Special thanks to Karen Tatz for the energy and expertise she brings to our meetings. I couldn’t write a review without mentioning that……

Now where do you start in reviewing the outstanding book “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” by Jonathan Safran Foer…… I think with the author himself because that sits at the centre of the story…..

Jonathan Safran Foer is the author of Everything Is Illuminated (2002), Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (2005), Eating Animals (2009) and Here I Am (2016). He has also edited a new modern edition of the sacred Jewish Haggadah and Foer composed the libretto for an opera titled Seven Attempted Escapes From Silence, which premiered at the Berlin State Opera on September 14, 2005.

Everything Is Illuminated was named Book of the Year by the Los Angeles Times and the winner of numerous awards, including the Guardian First Book Prize, the National Jewish Book Award, and the New York Public Library Young Lions Prize. Foer was one of Rolling Stone's “People of the Year” and Esquire's “Best and Brightest.” Foreign rights to his newest novel have already been sold in ten countries. Both “Everything Is Illuminated” and “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” were optioned for films in conjunction with Warner Brothers and Paramount Pictures. Foer was born in Washington, D.C. as the son of Albert Foer, a lawyer and president of the American Antitrust Institute, and Esther Safran Foer, a child of Holocaust survivors born in Poland. Foer lives in Brooklyn, New York. He teaches creative writing at New York University.

You would not be mistaken to assume just as the life of this amazing Jewish personality is full of vibrancy, talent, and diversity with an undercurrent of never forgotten generational trauma that his books would be likewise:

Oskar Schell is the nine-year-old protagonist of Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close but one would be mistaken to assume it is children’s literature. “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close” describes the grieving process of a family that’s lost a loved one in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Most especially, this is Oskar’s story, a precocious 9-year-old with highly advanced scientific curiosity but a child’s limited ability to process grief and loss. Oskar is a self-confessed social misfit who exhibits repetitive behaviours that have led some readers to think he’s on the autism spectrum, however, it is stated that he was tested for Asperger’s syndrome but nothing “definitive” was determined. Though most of the novel focuses on Oskar's quest for a lock he thinks will reveal hidden details about his beloved father, the book also digs into various characters’ memories of 9/11, as well as the Dresden bombing during World War II, which shaped the lives of Oskar’s grandparents. There are also passages from an interview with a man who watched his daughter die after the bombing of Hiroshima. These accounts of violence are intense and emotional. Discussion in our group highlighted the changing views of this generation about war stories that were once idealised.

Because of Foer’s frequent use of modernist literary devices (such as parallel narratives that only come together late in the book), some view him as a polarizing figure in modern literature. Certainly that trend was apparent in our Book Club group: Reflecting the general view of literary critics, our group was polarised around 50-50 about whether the novel was a masterpiece or a somewhat frustrating conglomeration……. We viewed the movie together after reading the book and all agreed it added so much value. There was not the disappointment or watering down you often have viewing a movie adaptation. In contrast to the book which had a mixed response from our group, there was enthusiastic endorsement for the movie – both for the screenplay adapted from the book and the acting. We all agreed the child actor who played Oscar was outstanding and we all loved Tom Hanks as Dad, and admired Sandra Bullock’s portrayal of Mum. We enjoyed reflecting on the themes of autism (or was it just difference?) portrayed throughout the movie. It was a bit of a tear jerker right through but also an uplifting story of community at its best with an ending that affirms life and family in the midst of loss and especially in the face of unexplained terror events.
When under the gallows our children cried
We did not hear the world’s wrath.
For of all the peoples you selected us
For us you loved and sanctified.

For you selected us of all the peoples
Those of France, Japan and Norway.
And when our children march to the gallows
Smart Jewish kids, they all know
That their blood does not count and say
Mom, turn your eyes the other way.

The iron devoured day and night
And the holy Christian Father in the city of Rome
Did not come out with the icons of Christ
To stand one day in a pogrom.

To stand one day, one single day
Where for years like a lamb
A small
Unknown
Jewish kid
Stands alone.

Great is the worry about sculptures and paintings
Lest those art treasures are destroyed in a raid
But the heads of infants, art treasures they are,
Are smashed to the walls, and crushed on the roads.
Their eyes are begging: Mom don’t look and don’t see
Us lined lying in long rows on the ground.

We are famous old soldiers
Only short in size, aren’t we?
They say with their eyes a few more words
"We know, God of our forefathers
That you selected us of all the kids in the world
That you loved and pampered us more than all others.

That of all the kids in the world us you selected
To be killed at the feet of your throne,
And our blood in small vases you collected
Because no one else would, only you alone.

And you smelled it like flowers
And you wiped it with your scarf
And for it you will charge both the killers
And the silence keepers..
We had worked hard to create a detailed strategic plan for 2019, and we started implementing it as soon as we returned from a trip to New Zealand (which was excellent!). We started the year in January with the "Tu B'Shvat Seder" event at our home. The event gathered about 35 participants. Guided by a Tu B'Shvat ‘Haggadah’, together we blessed fruit from various types of trees, drank different types of wine, and ate dried fruits of many different colours.

A week after this, we began all our programs for 2019: Cheder on Sundays and Tuesdays, CaTZ, Tweens, Teens and Cafe Ivrit.

We’d like to share with you a few of the topics we’ve covered with the kids and youth in programs this last term. In the Cheder, we’ve learnt about the Jewish calendar, about respect for each other, the map of Israel, Tzedaka, the 4 mitzvot of Purim, Purim traditions, and more.

With the Teens and Tweens, we’ve learnt about the many colours of Israeli society, about Tel Aviv versus Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel, about the various waves of immigration to Israel, Israeli cuisine, Purim, and more.

This year, CaTZ, the Canberra Youth Movement has a team of excellent Mads (leaders) who have generously volunteered their free time to enrich the children of the community with informal programs related to Judaism, Israel and general values.

Towards the middle of February, we hosted a Shabbat dinner for more than 28 Canberra young adults! During the meal, the young adults listened to two lectures, presented by members of the group: one on the weekly Torah portion, and the other on Israel. The volunteer lecturers did a wonderful job, and the lectures generated some animated discussion, over a very good meal (if we do say so ourselves!).

In February, at our invitation, the Deputy Ambassador of Israel, Mr Ron Gerstenfeld, delivered a fascinating lecture on "The Middle East: Opportunities and Threats." After the lecture, attendees enjoyed Israeli desserts – malabi and rugelach – home-made by Shir. In March there will be a very topical lecture on the Israeli elections, with two Israeli speakers travelling to Canberra to speak, and we have more surprises coming later this year for the ACTZC members.

To celebrate International Women’s Day, Tammy and Rocky from the Young Adults group initiated a women’s Kabbalat Shabbat service. Around 40 women attended, and the service was expertly led by Rocky with her amazing voice.

Purim began on Wednesday night with a Young Adults Purim party at our house. About 25 young Jewish and Israeli people from all over Canberra attended. It was a perfect way to welcome Purim. Then, on Thursday night, we celebrated Purim with the whole community, with a Purim Shpiel,
Megillah reading and a festive meal of kosher pies especially ordered from Sydney. About 150 people attended and had a lovely time.

The following Friday – Saturday, we hosted the Betar youth movement from Sydney. Betar Madrichim created a shabbat full of excellent programs, important content and so much fun for the CaTZ kids. We also ate meals together, held services and had a sleepover in the Centre. Thank you very much to the Betar and CaTZ madrichim who initiated this amazing event.

In the coming months we have some great events that should not be missed: the Israeli elections lecture, the Pesach Seder, the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration and more!

Thank you all for your support and willingness to take part in our programs. We are happy to hear from you for any questions and suggestions.

With love,
Shay and Shir
Shalom dear community,

We’re writing to you from the train that connects Tel Aviv to Be’er Sheva, as we have moved to the south of Israel (Be’er Sheva), but Tel Aviv is still the centre of many things in our lives.

The period where we still compare everything we experience or have, including everyone we meet – to the life we had in Australia has not passed yet.

The time of our Shlichut in Canberra with you has really influenced us and of course has a warm place in our heart.

We find ourselves thinking about the children and the adults of your community very often, from little things like kitchen-tips, to bigger memories and shared moments.

We thought it would be nice to write to you, after a few months have passed since you’ve been a home to us. It is important for all of us to keep the “maintenance” of this link that has started – going.

So, we have settled in Be’er Sheva, which is a big university city in the south of Israel. There’s no rain here (it’s very dry!), though every-now-and-then there’s a rockets-rain coming from Gaza to visit us, without saying Shalom.

Hillel studies computer science and linguistics and is very busy with it all as a first-year student. Almog works in Tel Aviv in an Israeli start-up that does strategic counselling to NGOs from around the globe, mainly from the US.

The commuting is a bit challenging and tiring, but thankfully, the Shlichut has built a strong basis for us that we rely on many times.

Israel is wonderful, the food is super yummy, family is not a day far away and there’s Chutzpah all over! (which is fun only if you laugh…) Yet, the “routine” is very different and the use of time is so noticeable unlike Australia. It’s much busier in the way that Israelis spend much more time at work. There are two possible explanations for that: Either we are workaholics, or we are super inefficient. There’s more respect to family-time in Canberra, based on the year we experienced there with you.

Eurovision 2019 is coming up, and it will be held in May in Tel Aviv, which is just a great opportunity to come visit.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Until the next update, love from Israel,

Hillel and Almog
Shalom Canberra family!

It’s hard to believe that 15 months have gone by since we last waved goodbye at the airport. Memories of beautiful frosty sunsets (with ear-deafening cockatoos) and long warm summers (plus occasional catastrophic hailstorms) all seem like just a moment ago. We were “DELIGHTED” (as the dear Yael Cass would say) to get a chance to send a word of regards from Israel and give you a quick update on how we’ve been.

First, I’m happy to report that we’re both doing great, and in pursuit of our dreams and goals back home. After returning, we moved to a Moshav in the Negev region called Sede Tzevi. Rotem is currently studying for her Masters degree in Social Work at Ben Gurion University while working as a social worker with at-risk youth near Ashkelon. Raz is working for an Israeli-American startup, developing the world’s smartest personal assistant.

Life is great here, really. Kind of like the Canberra peaceful way of life surrounded by nature. It’s calm, quiet, and full of kind and welcoming people. We even extended our family and adopted a stray dog — Lola. But in Israel, there are always other factors to take in mind. As Hamas launches rockets from Gaza into the Negev region we’ve experienced a fiery routine here. Rocket sirens in the middle of the night as well as dozens of fires a day, courtesy of the latest “freedom fighting” trend: explosive-kites leading to acres of burnt fields and homes.

Looking at the world media (including Australia’s own) it seems like Israeli Jews, including civilians, are perceived as fair targets of Palestinian aggression based on an oppressed/oppressor dichotomy. I don’t see this changing anytime soon, and I’ve learned from experience that a mindset on seeing the world in black and white is hard to change. It makes atrocities easier to explain. It makes the taking of human lives easier to process. I see the appeal. But remember us, and that reality tends to be more complicated, affecting real people and real lives on both sides, just like ours.

Over the past year we were also fortunate to get a few visitors from the community who traveled to Israel, some for quick visits, and some on longer programs. We’d honestly love to see you all on your next visit to the holy land (but don’t be surprised if we make you stay for Shabbos dinner). If you haven’t already visited before, trust us – there’s something here for every one of you.

We love you, miss you all, and wish you all the best!

Yours,
Raz and Rotem
Yvette: Veronica and Sarah, congratulations on a brilliant youth led service. I think everyone in shul was truly impressed with the depth of talent of our young people.

I know that arranging such an event takes a great deal of time and energy, so I’d like to ask you a few questions about how you went about it.

First of all, when did the idea of a youth led service even enter your forward planning for our community?

Veronica: It was actually Sarah Weisman’s idea! I had shared with Sarah some tefilla (prayer) recordings that Rabbi Meltzer had made for my boys when teaching them how to lead a Kabbalat Shabbat service and Sarah thought this was a wonderful resource and asked me what I thought about having an all-youth led Shabbat morning service. Loved this idea and I knew this was an excellent way of keeping our younger members (including my kids!) engaged with the Community.

Y: How did you go about the planning? Did you do it on your own or did you have help?

Sarah: Veronica and I thought about the Shabbat morning service and came up with a list of all the roles involved in leading it. We consulted with Rabbi Eddi to work out which roles had to be done by boys past bar mitzvah and which roles could be done by girls or by boys under 13. We then reached out to the families of teens and tweens with the idea for the Youth Shabbat and the list of potential roles.

In terms of a date, we wanted to schedule the Youth Shabbat in February after kids came back from holidays. We chose the Shabbat when the Torah reading was Terumah. This was very appropriate because Terumah means contribution, and the idea of the Youth Shabbat was for kids to contribute back to their community.

Y: What kind of support did you have from the parents, Cheder teachers and other community members?

Veronica: All the parents we contacted thought this was a wonderful idea but unfortunately some kids already had commitments for that Shabbos morning. David Rosalky and Alan Shroot kindly provided recordings of the Torah portions for the respective boys to learn with which were invaluable.

Y: Were there any specific issues that needed to be addressed in the planning stage? How long did the whole planning process take?

Sarah: After we put together the list of roles, we spent about three weeks sending emails around families, working out which kids would take on which roles. Then the kids had about a month to learn their roles. Some kids were learning to lead difficult parts of the service, or were researching and writing an in-depth Dvar Torah, so they put in many hours of work. Their parents were very proud of them.

Y: I was very happy to see the young women involved wherever possible. Was it difficult to encourage them to participate?

Veronica: Most of the girls were very happy to carry the Torah throughout the service or recite the Prayer for the Queen and Leaders of Our Nation. It took a little bit of convincing for the girls to give the Dvar Torah however, but they did such an impressive job without any assistance whatsoever!

Y: The Kiddush after the service was lavish...a stand up lunch in effect. Was this also part of the planning?

Veronica: I promised my kids if they all took part in the service they could choose the menu for kiddush! So, the smoked salmon, egg dip and chocolate brownies were really a bribe. Plus, we had a tonne of leftovers from the Shabbos communal dinner the night before. There was a lot of food but you can’t have a Jewish celebration without a feast!

Y: Will we be honoured with a similar service later in the year?

Sarah: Yes! We are having a second Youth Shabbat on 18 May. The Torah reading for this Shabbat is Emor, and it is the bar mitzvah anniversary of three of our teens. We are hoping to see another fantastic job by the kids and great turnout by the Community.

Y: Is there anything else you would like to add? Or any further comments?

Veronica: I just want to thank all the children for their outstanding dedication and hard work in preparing for the Shabbat morning service. This is particularly so given they studied during the summer holidays when I’m sure all they wanted to do was relax and have fun. Thank you as well to their parents.
Young Adults Purim Party

TAMSIN SANDERSON

The Young Adults celebrated Purim in style on Wednesday 20 March, with a party hosted by our Shlichim, Shir and Shai, at their house. Shir and Shay welcomed about 25 young adults from the ACT Jewish community and also young Israelis living in Canberra. The apartment was decorated in Casino style, with poker chips and playing cards, in a reference to the meaning of Purim ("lots") since, in the Purim story, Haman casts lots to choose a date on which to execute his evil plan. Shir and Shay had made delicious punch and all sorts of snacks, and we ate Hamantashen too, of course! We all enjoyed hanging out and getting to know each other – even in Canberra, not every young adult knows all the others! – and dancing to Israeli music. It was a really fun event, and as ever, we are very grateful to Shir and Shay for initiating and hosting it.

Purim Party at the ACT Jewish Centre

ROBERT CUSSEL

An amazing Purim Party, carnival and dinner was not hindered by a little rain on Thursday, March 21 at the Jewish Centre. The event included lots of kids’ activities, face-painting and games. Over 140 people attended, the costumes were gorgeous and a wonderful new Purim Shpiel “Esther Potter and the Wizard’s Megillah” premiered, written specially for the occasion by Sarah Weisman. Esther declares at the end: “Well, tear up your decree against the Jews. And then let’s have a big party and call it Purim.” The annual Shpiel is a feature of Purim at the Centre and the children have so much fun rehearsing and performing.

We very much appreciate the efforts of Shir and Shay, who put so much dedication and love into the planning and preparation for another terrific ACTJC event. We also don’t forget all the others who contributed to making this event such a success. Thank you to Rabbi Shimon Eddi and Marc Meir Yitzchaki for the Megillah readings.

This is just one of a host of events held recently in our vibrant Community.
Year after year we all rely on our favourite Pesach recipes. I think with a little imagination we can not only refresh these but add something new. Our families will love that we have made the effort to bring something new to this season.

Please take some time before Pesach to browse the internet. A simple search such as “Recipes for Pesach” will yield many possibilities, however, all ingredients should be Kosher for Pesach.

There are various customs regarding the eating of Kitniyot, meaning legumes in Hebrew, but during Pesach takes on a much broader meaning to include rice, corn, sunflower and sesame seeds, soybeans, peas and lentils as well as all legumes. You need to be guided by both family and community traditions to make up your own mind on this topic.

**Using Matzah as a sweet**

Melt chocolate and spread over sheets of Matzah. You may prefer to break these sheets into smaller pieces first. This creates the perfect blank canvas for adding toppings. Different kinds of nuts and dried fruits can be sprinkled over this base according to family tastes. For the really sweet, crunchy taste, make some toffee (just boiled sugar and water) and then crush and sprinkle over the Matzah.

**A Matzah House**

We all know about a gingerbread house but you can do the same with Matzah, using chocolate as the “glue” to hold it all together. Silvered or flaked almonds make a great roof. I found this idea on Martha Stewart’s Website.

**Multicultural Charoset**

A quick search online will provide you with many different ideas for Charoset, which can differ markedly from region to region. Do your research and then ask guests to bring a small amount of a different recipe for all to try. Guide them by suggesting what kind, e.g., typical Sephardi, Ashkenazi, etc.

The basis is usually fresh fruit, such as apple and/or pear, plus wine, nuts and dried fruits, but can include spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg. Desiccated coconut can also add texture and can replace the nuts for those with nut allergies. The size of the individual ingredients varies, from small to large chunks. Some recipes blend all ingredients making a thick paste.

**Vegetables**

Where would we be without the humble potato? It is the basis of the much loved latkes but these can be enhanced with the addition of other root vegetables according to family tastes. Carrots, parsnips, beetroot, onions, sweet potatoes, turnips, garlic, etc. are all useful, as is ginger. Just grate them as you would the potatoes and add to the mixture before frying.

Similarly, instead of just baking potatoes, whether they are left whole or cut into dice, the addition of some root vegetables can add colour, flavour and texture. Squeeze juices such as orange juice over the veggies and sprinkle with a little sugar for a very different taste.

If making a vegetarian kugel, add different types of vegetables and flavours. Layers of Matzah in this dish provide a mock lasagne.

With salads, be adventurous with the addition of different vegetables for a variety of tastes and colours. Kale is nutritious, red cabbage has a wonderful colour and radishes have a spicy flavour as well as crunch. When next at the markets or your favourite green grocer, take a few more moments to examine the range we can now enjoy and buy a very small amount to try. Also try to cut the salad vegetables into different sizes, from the smaller dice of a typical Israeli salad, to the larger torn leaf type of Aussie salads.

**Soups**

Many families expect chicken soup with kneidlach (Matzah balls) but other soups are just as acceptable, such as borsht, pumpkin soup, potato and leek soup, etc. Your favourite soup can probably be adapted for Pesach.
Australian Jewish War Memorial update

PETER ALLEN

Following our War Memorial dedication, Peter Allen, a former National Coordinator of the Centenary of Anzac Jewish Program, has provided the following details:

**In the Boer War,**

Rose Shappere was likely awarded the MID by Sir George White for services at Ladysmith (this is apparently gazetted), but there is evidence that she was gazetted for, but was refused award of RRC (likely because she spoke out about conditions at Intombi Camp Hospital, Ladysmith). See: https://www.bwm.org.au/soldiers/Rose_Shappere.php

And see comments beneath: http://greatwarmuses.blogspot.com/2012/07/miss-shappere-and-royal-red-cross.html

**In WWII,** approx. 5280 Jews enlisted

138 DoS

73 earned military honours: 47 higher Decorations, of which some 34 were for ‘gallantry’ and 13 exemplary service, with 26 MID

Rachel Reuben was a Nurse in WWI.

See: http://ww1nurses.gravesecrets.net/re-rh.html. She was buried in the “Church of England Division of the Manly Cemetery”… her father was probably Jewish, but mother was not Jewish and she enlisted CoE (so we should not claim her).

Medal awarded to Sister Leah Rosenthal

Sister Leah Rosenthal was awarded ARRC (Associate Royal Red Cross).


In WWI, approx. 1800 Jews enlisted in AIF, RAN and other Empire forces – approx. 10%

194 DoS

94 earned military honours or were MID

Note that Issy Smith was awarded VC serving with the British Army and his status as ‘Australian’ wrt his service in WWI is arguable – notwithstanding we would very much like to include him in the AJHS ‘Empire’ listing!

Sister Leah Rosenthal was awarded ARRC (Associate Royal Red Cross).
How Thomas Mautner escaped the Holocaust by the kindness of others

ELLiot Williams (With edits by Thomas Mautner)

As a child Thomas Mautner witnessed two Gestapo officers come to the front door of his family home in Bergen, Norway and drag his foster father away for being part of the resistance against Nazi forces.

A few short years later he had the nerve-racking experience of being smuggled across the border into Sweden to escape the Nazis.

Born to a Jewish family in Czechoslovakia, Dr Mautner was one of the lucky ones, able to get away and spared the horrors of the concentration camps that took the lives of his mother and father.

Decades later, two academics from Norway, Ewa Mork head of documentation at the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities and journalist and author Dr Arnhild Skre, recently visited Dr Mautner at his Canberra home to help document Norway’s assistance in saving Jewish children from the holocaust.

Surrounding him in his Griffith home Dr Mautner has thousands of books, documents and artefacts from his experiences during World War II and from a more than 50-year career as a philosophy academic at the Australian National University.

"There is a goldmine in his shelves," Ms Mork said. "Documenting his life, which is extremely interesting and documenting the efforts of those in Norway."

During the war foster families were asked to destroy all trace of their adoption of the Jewish children for fear of the Nazis being able to locate them. Being in the resistance, Dr Mautner’s foster parents did not, which is why he is such a valuable resource for the centre today.

The Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities and two Jewish museums were set up in Norway as a form of compensation to the Jewish people after what they endured during the war.

Ms Mork said one of their principal concerns is to educate younger generations about this dark period of history.

"[Young people] can’t just get a dramatic story that lasted three years, they need to know why it happened and what happened afterwards," she said.

Dr Skre added: "So children can identify and think about what it would be like to be at war, to be alienated because you are as you are."

Visiting Dr Mautner took on a personal significance for Dr Skre whose great uncle and aunt were Dr Mautner’s foster parents.

Born in Prague in 1935, Dr Mautner’s parents foresaw the incoming danger of the Nazi invasion and managed to get he and his elder sister visas to Norway.

They were part of a group of 37 Jewish children who escaped to Norway and were taken in by foster families. About 20 of these children perished after being sent back to Czechoslovakia and Austria after the Nazis had occupied Norway.

Dr Mautner’s father sent a carefully worded letter to the Skre’s to avoid the ire of the censors who were intercepting all mail and conveyed the message that should Thomas and Ilse be sent back to Czechoslovakia they would certainly be killed.

Five years after the children had made it to Bergen it was time to move again to remain out of the Nazis’ clutches. Among a group of about 20 adults and children, Thomas and Ilse were packed into the back of a truck under a tarpaulin.

“Our truck was stopped by the border guards and the Germans on the Norwegian side,” Dr Mautner recalled.

“For reasons that I don’t know to this day, I don’t know if they were bribed, or lazy, or benevolent, but they never checked the truck properly.”

It was January, and in the middle of a freezing cold, dark winter’s night and after the truck crossed into Sweden the group were faced with a long walk.

“I remember complaining bitterly about getting cold feet in the snow,” he said.

After three weeks in an internment camp the siblings were fostered by a Swedish couple and began their lives in Gothenburg.

After beginning a law degree Dr Mautner abandoned it to pursue his passion for philosophy which ultimately brought him to Canberra in 1965 and he knew he’d found his permanent home.

“The advantage of Sweden was two things, the language and the libraries have things you don’t easily get here,” Dr Mautner said.

“But in every other respect I thought Australia was a better country and the decisive feature is that people here are much more friendly, just nicer.”

After living through perhaps the most atrocious act in human history Dr Mautner looks around at the world today with some deep concerns.

“It’s true that mass murder on this industrial scale that is of course not quite happening now,” he said.

“But in every other respect, all this other nastiness, refusal of visas for example, I see very, very close similarities to World
War II Europe] and it strongly reinforces one’s pessimism about the human condition.

"And then there are occasional bright spots. Three or four years ago, we heard about this flood of immigrants from Syria and the Middle East.

"Germany and the Swedes opened their borders and there was a considerable push in Sweden, promoted by all the news media, that we should welcome these refugees.

"I found these expressions of generosity that came out then absolutely remarkable and certainly in contrast to what happened in the 1930s and 40s."

The door to Dr Mautner’s living room, where he enters daily to glance upon one of his many books, bears the front page of Sweden’s Metro newspaper.

Emblazoned across the issue is the striking blue and yellow of the Swedish flag with “Välkomna till Sverige” or Welcome to Sweden printed on it. It serves as a constant reminder of the country that opened its arms to Dr Mautner when he needed it most.
Marc was born in Belgium in 1967 and, when he was 5, the family moved to Jerusalem once his father concluded his medical studies in Switzerland. Members of his family were strong Zionists and one grandfather had fought in the Irgun. Perhaps one of the most powerful influences in Marc’s life was his education at an Orthodox Yeshiva High School outside Jerusalem. Through the study of Talmud, the importance of questioning and curiosity was instilled in the young Marc, which has stood him in good stead during his 5 years as an officer and paratrooper in the IDF and throughout his 22 years service in the Israeli Foreign Service as a diplomat and now as a law student once again. The drive to ask questions and to seek a deeper meaning is a key part of Marc’s identity as a Jew and as a human being.

At the age of 13, the family moved to South Africa so that his father could pursue his medical career. This was during the height of the Apartheid regime and the experience is seared on Mark’s memory. He says: “I have witnessed Apartheid first hand and those who accuse Israel of practising Apartheid have clearly not witnessed what it really looked like.”

Another very powerful influence and motivator in his life is the fact that he is a third generation Holocaust survivor. His grandmother, who only told her story just before she died, miraculously survived in Poland through her own abilities, intelligence and cunning, risking her own life to help other Jews survive and thus resist tyranny. His grandfather had escaped to Russia to later fight against the Nazis in the Russian army. When Marc became an IDF officer, the family was filled with pride that their son and grandson could now defend Jewish life, after their bitter experience with racial hatred and genocide.

His experience as a soldier was challenging and shaped his subsequent need to search for peaceful solutions in the Middle East and find alternatives to war. This is the reason why he decided to become a diplomat, specialising in arms control and disarmament.

Marc studied Middle East Affairs and Jewish History at the Hebrew University and entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at a time of optimism after Oslo. He is fluent in Hebrew, English, French with a professional background in Arabic. His first posting was to Ethiopia, where he provided crucial and timely assistance to an Ethiopian and Muslim government Minister critically injured in an assassination attempt. Marc arranged for his own father, an orthopaedic surgeon, to personally treat the victim in Israel. The lawmaker survived, later on becoming Ethiopia’s Ambassador to the UN. This personal relationship had proved useful more then once while Marc served as a diplomat with the UN and played a critical role in promoting Israeli-Ethiopian relationships.

In 2007 Marc, as Head of the Israeli Delegation to the UN Disarmament Conference in Geneva, met Angela, a young Australian diplomat and the rest is history. They married in 2013 and have shared postings in a variety of interesting locations including when Angela was Australia’s deputy Ambassador to Timor Leste. They have a beautiful and delightful 6 year old daughter, Ella. Marc also has four older children in Israel from his previous marriage, who are in constant touch with him.

In 2011, Marc was posted to Canberra as Deputy Chief of Mission for Israel. Marc describes his diplomatic career as formative with unparalleled experiences that have made him who he is today. While being grateful to have the opportunity to serve Israel for 22 years, he resigned in 2015 to pursue a career as a consultant in a range of areas, including identity security and lobbying. He has advised in the areas of prevention of identity theft, legal and administrative frameworks in Australia and New Zealand, defence industry and high tech work.

Marc is now pursuing legal studies at the ANU and aiming to work as a Migration Agent and will specialise in areas of Migration Law, Private International Law, Civil Litigation and Administrative and Constitutional Law.

Marc sees the ACTJC as an anchor point and centre for Jewish life in Canberra, where everyone is accepted and welcomed. It doesn’t matter what brand of Judaism a member practises or believes in, but what is essential is that...
we must find ways of reaching common ground and speaking with one shared voice as Jews so that we are never marginalised in Australian society.

On the perennial question of why Israeli expatriates choose not to join the ACTJC, Marc ventures that adapting to life in Canberra as a migrant is hard and that we need to understand how difficult it is to leave one’s homeland, family and friends behind. In a way, an expat never really leaves Israel and part of you is always still there. To assist in building connections with the expat community, we do need to engage in a dialogue and try to understand why expats are reluctant to get involved. A first step for both sides, expats and members, is to realise that we are not on opposing sides and that we should all be proud of our rich tradition and heritage as Jews. Indeed many expats travel regularly between Israel and Australia and often have business and professional links that foster a closer connection between the two countries.

Marc’s study of law has very much reminded him of his high school days studying Talmud in that Yeshiva. The same methodology is relevant, the need for critical thinking and the absolute importance of asking questions. Indeed, the asking of questions is central to Jewish life and learning and helps to build a better society and culture. The idea of being curious is essential to Jewish education. He says: “If I question my questioning, I am thinking and therefore I am fully aware and responsible.”

Marc Itzchaki is indeed a unique, special and true friend and member of the ACT Jewish Community in so many different ways and a role model to us all of how important it is to honour and respect our Jewish learning and heritage. Marc is quick to add that the core message of his learning and experience is the centrality of his humanity and the need to champion this, regardless of race, religion, creed or nationality.

BEYOND DUTY - SAVING JEWISH LIVES AND SHOWING THE WAY

PHOTO: Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (L) at the opening of the “Beyond Duty” exhibition in Paris with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (R). (Haim Zach/GPO)

A French exhibit on Beyond Duty-Saving Jewish Lives and Showing the Way Diplomats Who Defied Their Countries’ Edicts and Saved Collectively 200,000 Jews has opened.

Ahead of International Holocaust Memorial Day, January 27, 2019, Israel opened an exhibit in France, “Beyond Duty - Saving Jewish Lives and Showing the Way”. It tells the stories of 36 foreign diplomats in 20 countries who defied their own countries’ orders not to do anything to help the Jews get out of Europe and from under the Nazis. The exhibit tells how they risked their lives and their families to rescue collectively 200,000 Jews. These diplomats were all recognized as Righteous Among the Nations for their actions. The exhibit is being displayed in Israeli diplomatic missions around the world.

To read more see: https://tinyurl.com/yct5wpus


There is also a video on YouTube about the exhibit. Parts are in Hebrew, without subtitles, most is in English https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjvtXSZ3__g
My former spouse and mother to Elissa Taft and Kelsey Taft passed away on 24 January after a short illness. She was an Associate member of the ACT Jewish Community during the course of our marriage from 1999 to 2014.

Jackie was born in October 1973, during the Yom Kippur war. Her father, Ron Aumann, resembled the Nobel Prize winning Israeli economist, Robert Aumann, to whom there is no known family connection. Growing up in the suburbs of Brisbane, Jackie had little contact with Jews, but was a huge fan of the musicians of Tin Pan Alley, notably George Gershwin. (Our first trip to Sydney together was to see Gershwin’s ‘Crazy for You’). Jackie was a student at Brisbane State High School, the school also attended by Mervyn Doobov, and graduated with degrees in arts and law from the University in Queensland.

Jackie arrived in Canberra in 1996 to work at the Department of Defence, and met me several months later when we were both members of the Brindabella Flute Choir. The Choir played one year in the late 1990s at the Jewish Food Fair, including versions of Hava Nagila and the Hatikvah.

In March 1999, Jackie and I celebrated our engagement with a karaoke night party in the hall at the Jewish Community Centre. Highlights included a version of ‘I am Woman’ sung by a (male) future minister in the Gillard/Rudd Government. We married later in 1999 by the Brisbane River, under a chuppah supplied by a Jewish civil celebrant.

Jackie’s working life in Canberra was mostly with the family law area at the Attorney-General’s Department.

Jackie developed lifelong friendships with several members of Canberra’s Jewish Community, notably Dr Ron Mendelsohn, who had founded Canberra’s Jewish Community in the 1950s. Jackie enjoyed Ron’s many stories from his life as a public servant advising senior Australian politicians such as Sir Robert Menzies.

She was also good friends with Rafi and Vicki Lehrer, Kevin White and Gracie McNamara. Jackie and Gracie travelled together through Europe in 2011. The Lehrers, Kevin and Gracie also provided great support to the family during Jackie’s final months.

A memorial service in Jackie’s honour was conducted by Rafi in the chapel at Gold Creek on 1 February 2019, attended by around a dozen members of the ACT Jewish Community.

Peter Taft
With this memo, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) would like to address the spelling of the term antisemitism, often rendered as ‘anti-Semitism’ and Microsoft’s auto-correct feature. IHRA’s concern is that the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called ‘Semitism’, which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews.

The philological term ‘Semitic’ referred to a family of languages originating in the Middle East whose descendant languages today are spoken by millions of people mostly across Western Asia and North Africa. Following this semantic logic, the conjunction of the prefix ‘anti’ with ‘Semitism’ indicates antisemitism as referring to all people who speak Semitic languages or to all those classified as ‘Semites’. The term has, however, since its inception referred to prejudice against Jews alone.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the derived construct ‘Semit’ provided a category to classify humans based on racialist pseudo-science. At the same time the neologism ‘antisemitism’, coined by German journalist Wilhelm Marr in 1879 to designate anti-Jewish campaigns, was spread through use by anti-Jewish political movements and the general public. The modern term gained popularity in Germany and Europe incorporating traditional Christian anti-Judaism, political, social and economic anti-Jewish manifestations that arose during the Enlightenment in Europe, and a pseudo-scientific racial theory that culminated in Nazi ideology in the twentieth century. Although the historically new word only came into common usage in the nineteenth century, the term antisemitism is today used to describe and analyze past and present forms of opposition or hatred towards Jews. In German, French, Spanish and many other languages, the term was never hyphenated.

The unhyphenated spelling is favored by many scholars and institutions in order to dispel the idea that there is an entity ‘Semitism’ which ‘anti-Semitism’ opposes. Antisemitism should be read as a unified term so that the meaning of the generic term for modern Jew-hatred is clear. At a time of increased violence and rhetoric aimed towards Jews, it is urgent that there is clarity and no room for confusion or obfuscation when dealing with antisemitism.

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Given that most communication today is electronic, and that Microsoft is a giant in that field, the Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial is concerned that Microsoft’s default spelling in English is ‘anti-Semitism’. Thus the Committee strongly recommends changing the default spelling of antisemitism so that it does not autocorrect to the hyphenated version of the word.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an intergovernmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders’ support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research both nationally and internationally. IHRA’s Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial was created to address the upsurge in antisemitism and Holocaust denial and trivialization. With this memo, IHRA expresses its concern over possible confusion of a clear understanding of the word ‘antisemitism’.
Naomi:
Imagine the world for a minute where people didn’t contribute. Think about where our world would be... We wouldn’t have all the organisations helping the poor, hungry and homeless. Nor would a community such as ours exist.

This week’s parashah, Terumah, meaning contribution, is about God instructing the Israelites on building a tabernacle – a sanctuary for God’s presence. The parashah contains precise instructions, inclusive of the materials needed and the architectural structure of the building. Within the construction of this tabernacle the Israelites’ contribution is highly demonstrated.

In Exodus 25: 1-2, it says: “The Lord spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering, from every person whose heart motivates him to generosity, you shall take my offering. From every man whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take my offering.”

In this quote, G-d makes it clear that contribution shouldn’t be a burden or act that comes from pressure. It should be an act of generosity that comes from the heart, and not an act of self-satisfaction.

It is said that the location of the temple has a story of generosity connected to it. The story that most of you have heard before is where two brothers worked in a field they had inherited. The two brothers made sure to split the field evenly, however each night both the brothers secretly added crop to the other’s pile; convinced that the other needed it more than themselves. And of course, their own pile remained the same. Until one night they met, and the brothers dropped their sacks and hugged each other; and this meeting place was chosen for the location of the temple. The message that can be taken from this story is that an act of generosity is created from selflessness and how we can give to not only G-d, but our family and friends. This also created a stronger bond between the brothers, signifying stronger unity.

Unity is another factor that was enhanced in building the tabernacle, in the idea that it created a sense of belonging; as a common project. This drew a closer connection between the people and G-d, and his dwelling place.

Amy:
As Naomi said, the Mishkan or Temple brought Israel together as one, it brought them closer to each other. But when I was studying the Parshah, what struck me most was the fact that Hashem had asked the people to build him a Mishkan.

But if we think about it, why would Hashem need the Mishkan to live in? He’s bigger than anything we could imagine how can we contain him in a tabernacle? Even King Solomon made this point in Melachim-Alef 8:27

Ki ha’um’nam yesh evhim al-ha’aretz hineh hashamayim u’shamayim lo yekholu’cha af ki-habayit hazeh asher banit.

“But will G-d really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this house I have built!”

There’s a certain pride in us when we make something for ourselves, even if we’re following instructions and the pieces are there in front of us. We’re able to brag and say, ‘I made that’ and we value our creation more because the effort we put into something does not just change the object, it changes us. The greater the labour, the greater the love for what we have made.

My brothers and I used to demand food when we were little. We always wanted something different, something more. We were not understanding or appreciative. The food was always served for us. But when Jono and I started to prepare meals, we began to appreciate the time, effort and love that goes into preparing a meal. Through that we learned to be grateful. It was
a lesson well learnt.

After the Israelites had left Egypt and were free, they were always complaining and always grumbling. With the exception of the Song at the Red Sea, they had never acknowledged or appreciated Hashem’s work. Hashem walked with them by fire at night and cloud by day and fed them manna by opening the heavens. Still they didn’t care. The Mishkan was the first thing that the Israelites had made themselves and it was the turning point for them. Instead of Hashem doing what the Israelites wanted, they were doing something for Him. Hashem had given Israel a chance to become the creator and to make something they would value.

And in the act of building the Mishkan, the Israelites were finally giving back to Hashem. This brought the closeness and acknowledgement of Hashem’s presence because the act of giving leads to the understanding that what we give is part of what we are given. And because the Israelites had donated something from themselves, they valued the tabernacle and that brought the people much closer to Hashem.

On the completion of the Mishkan the Israelites must have finally felt self-accomplishment. As everyone had mutual responsibility, contributing materials, energy, time and effort, everyone felt a personal achievement, knowing that only because of their help and contribution could the Mishkan be made.

The word for contribution in Hebrew, Terumah, is an unusual word, because it doesn’t literally mean ‘to give’, but it actually means ‘to lift up’. And through this parsha we can see that when we give, it is not just our contribution but we who are lifted up. Like Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said, ‘We survive by what we are given, but we achieve dignity only by what we give.’

Looking back on our community’s achievements, we can see how it has made a home for so many people. If you were to ask us teens why are we here today? It is because of our community’s Terumah in us. All the contributions that have been made to this community through your time, effort, energy and money is the reason why we as a community still stand today. All of us B’nei and B’not Mitzvah who have helped run the service have made our first step in contributing toward the Shule and community.

I would like to end our speech with a quote by Ethel Percy Andrus:

_The human contribution is the essential ingredient,
It is only the giving of oneself to others that we truly live._

Shabbat Shalom
Life Cycle Events

1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2019

B’nei Mitzvah

ARIELLA GOULD
26 JANUARY 2019 | 20 SHEVAT 5779

Deaths

JACQUELINE AUMANN
24 JANUARY 2019 | 18 SHEVAT 5779

Eulogies read at the funerals of our late members and friends are published on our website at https://www.actjc.org.au/yizkor.html.