

**NZCCJ - AOTEAROA**

**MASSAH**  
**מסע**  
**JOURNEY**

**Journal of the  
New Zealand Council of Christians  
and Jews**

**No. 26 Summer 2009**

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### Auckland CCJ

Jewish Co-President	Wendy Ross
Christian Co-President	Revd Dr Tony Stroobant
Secretary/Treasurer	Harry Hepple, 72/21 Graham Collins Drive, Mairangi Bay, Auckland
	Membership subscription: \$30, unwaged \$20. (For individual or couple)

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Treasurer	Col. Margaret Hay SA PO Box 1110, Wellington.
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### Editorial Committee

Auckland	Revd Chris Honoré (Editor)
	Ann Gluckman
	Terry Wall
	Two further appointments are currently in progress.

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# MASSAH

JOURNEY

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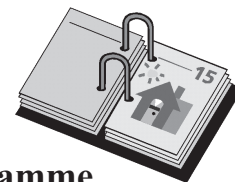
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## Editorial - *Lest we Forget*

This southern summer has not proven to be a particularly good one for Jewish - Catholic relationships with the protested rehabilitation by Pope Benedict of a bishop who does not believe in the Holocaust of Nazi Germany. How this belief could emerge again now amazes me. I have been to Yad Vashem, I have stood in the shadowy memorial space and heard the names read, an endless solemn litany of remembrance. I have seen the photographs and read the stories. In my home town in Northland New Zealand lives a niece of Corrie Ten Boom whose concentration camp experiences were related in books popular in the 1970s. I have seen the small tree in the memorial garden in Jerusalem, and plaque marking her name and recognising her as a righteous person. How can one gainsay the experience of such a time as that ignominious period of human history?

Sadly, racism and anti-semitism are ever present with us, and like the evil inclination, must be named, recognised and resisted in our midst. As good people we must not stand silently by. It is for this reason that the stories in this edition of Massah have been chosen that we might remember, tell the stories and pray with knowledge and compassion. The sign of Jonathan Sacks and Rowan Williams walking together and writing poignantly of their visit late 2008 to Auschwitz-Birkenau is a sign of the mutual respect and cooperation of our two faith traditions at their best. A sign of careful listening, reflection and, a prophetic sign of hope. Included is a poignant letter of self sacrificial love from a mother whose child lived because of the kindness of strangers. Paul Oestreicher, whose work and witness will be known to many because of his New Zealand connection writes honestly, truthfully and in a troublingly direct manner and invites us to move from reflection, to action. Paul Oestreicher remembers Kristallnacht, as he was there, seventy years ago.

## For Your Diary



### 2009 Auckland CCJ programme

• **Wednesday March 25**, 7.30 pm at Beth Shalom Synagogue, 180 Manukau Rd, Epsom.

#### *Becoming Clergy: Preparation for ordination and smicha.*

Rabbi Dean Shapiro and the Revd Chris Honoré discuss how one goes from congregant to clergy in just a few years. Also an opportunity for Auckland CCJ members to meet the (nearly) new Rabbi of Beth Shalom and the (also nearly new) editor of *Massah*.

• **Tuesday May 5**, 7.30 pm at St Paul's Methodist Church lounge, 12 St Vincent Avenue, Remuera.

#### *Recent reading: CCJ members talk about books.*

None of us has time to read everything. Learn about what others have been reading lately about Jewish-Christian relations. A repeat of a popular format.

• **Sunday July 12**, 2.30 pm in the Wesley Hall, St John's College, 202 St John's Rd, Meadowbank.

#### *Jewish and Christian perspectives on "forgiveness".*

Rev Darryl Milner and Wendy Ross speak about this sensitive subject from Christian and Jewish perspectives.

• **Sunday August 23**, 2.30 pm in the Wesley Hall, St John's College, 202 St John's Rd, Meadowbank.

#### *Care of the vulnerable: Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives.*

The annual, well-supported, Council of Christians and Jews/ Council of Christians and Muslims combined meeting.

• **Wednesday October 28**, 7.30 pm in the Wesley Hall, St John's College, 202 St John's Rd, Meadowbank. Wine, fruit juice, cheese, crackers, and book launch evening.

#### *Beyond contempt: Removing anti-Jewishness from Christian Worship by the Revd Dr Tony Stroobant*

Tony will talk about his research and how he hopes his study book might be used by the church. Do not miss the opportunity to purchase a signed first edition of a publication destined to become a Jewish-Christian relations classic!

# Thanks to Jean and welcome to Chris for Massah

In this issue of Massah we say thank you and farewell to Jean Holm as our previous editor, and welcome to Chris Honoré as our new editor.

Jean's background was as a lecturer at Homerton College, University of Cambridge (UK), teaching Judaism (among other things), and supervising Tripos papers on Judaism, and otherwise involved in inter-faith relations in various ways.

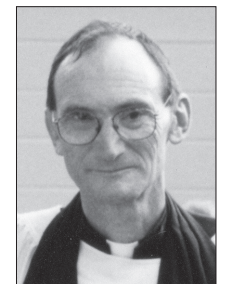
Upon her return to NZ in 1993, at Ann Gluckman's suggestion, Jean joined the Auckland CCJ Core Group (organising committee). Soon after, a national journal concerning Jewish-Christian relations was suggested. Jean had the editing and writing experience, and was willing, and so Massah (Journey) was born. The first issue came out in July 1996 and there have been 24 issues since. Over the years, Massah has covered most of the major issues in Jewish-Christian relations by many of the significant commentators, both international and local.

Jean says that she has enjoyed the responsibility of trying to produce a balanced publication over the years, and has tried to go beyond simply affirming the somewhat obvious "importance" of inter-faith relations these days. On the down side, there has been the regular anxiety and frustration as to whether promised copy will arrive on time, and when it does not what to fill the potentially blank pages with!

Thank you, Jean, for getting things going for the voice of the New Zealand CCJ, especially as we know we have just "left you to it", all too often. The publication of Massah has not only been interesting and stimulating over the years, it has been a steadfast reminder to everyone about the ever-increasing importance of inter-faith relations.



Welcome to Chris Honoré as the new editor of Massah. As Chris' family name might suggest, he is of Huguenot descent. His family arrived in NZ in the early 19th century as part of the many missionary enterprises of that time.



Chris taught in the 1970s, offered as a candidate in the Anglican Church and was ordained in 1980, and has served in a variety of parishes and roles since. Chris currently teaches Anglican Studies at St John's College and says his brief visit to Israel in 2000 has left a lasting impression. He also has an abiding interest in Hasidic storytelling. The Council of Christians and Jews welcomes Chris and the new perspectives he brings to Massah.

Wendy Ross, *Jewish Co-President, Auckland Council for Christians and Jews.*

Tony Stroobant, *Christian Co-President, Auckland Council for Christians and Jews.*

## Meetings of the International Council for Christians and Jews

May 26-28, 2009. Conference in Arad, Romania, to strengthen the ICCJ member organisations in Central and Eastern Europe and to explore the possible foundation of an ICCJ member organisation in Romania.

End of MAY 2009 (!) ICCJ seminar in Jerusalem on the interreligious dialogue in the context of the Middle East conflict.

July 5-July 8, 2009 ICCJ conference in Berlin, Germany. The project on re-assessment of Jewish-Christian dialogue and its future will be central during the 2009 annual conference.

July 9, 2009 ICCJ Annual membership meeting in Berlin, Germany.

*From the Website*

# Is it Possible to Teach the New Testament without being Anti-Semitic?

## Part 2

by Jean Holm

Part 1 of this article (in the Winter issue of *Massah*) claimed that anyone teaching the New Testament should have some understanding of both first century Judaism and the way in which the New Testament developed. Part 2 offers suggestions for teaching the young.

Teaching children and young people is much more difficult than teaching adults because adults can handle more easily the complexities of Judaism where these are not obvious from the biblical text. However, it is not only more difficult, it is also more important, because it is at a young age that the foundation of anti-semitism is laid.

It is not problematic helping children to realise that Jesus was a Jew. For example, if Old Testament stories are told to children they should be put in the context of stories Jesus heard as a boy. This helps establish the fact that what Christians call the Old Testament was – and is – the Bible of Judaism.

Children should learn about Jesus growing up in a Jewish family, going to the synagogue, celebrating Passover and other festivals, going with his family to Jerusalem for the Pilgrim festivals and visiting the Temple, though it is obvious that this requires a different approach from the conventional one of introducing children to Jesus mainly through New Testament stories.

It is important to realise that all scriptures – of every religion – were originally addressed to adults, and most require adult experience to understand them properly. In addition, all scriptures are interpreted writings, interpreted in the context of the culture, the experience and the faith of the specific religion. For example, the First Testament (the expression increasingly used by scholars for the ‘Old Testament’) is the scripture of both Judaism and Christianity, but it is interpreted quite differently within each religion.

An indirect approach to the biblical stories is through exploring the great biblical images: Shepherd, Bread, Water, Light, Fire, Wind, Pilgrim People. As this exploration involves meeting a variety of passages it helps to avoid our young people growing up thinking that the Bible is just a ‘book of stories for children’.

For the 10+ age group, a project on ‘What is a gospel?’ is an excellent introduction to the development of the New Testament and the reasons for the hostility towards the Jews in the gospels.

## Teaching about Easter

In contrast to the above reasonably straightforward approaches, the accounts of the Easter events provide the most difficult area in the New Testament – though not only for children.

I want to suggest that we should turn our usual approach on its head, with the reminder that there are four elements in religious festivals:

- (1) How the festival is celebrated today. This is our actual experience, with all the preparations, rituals, gatherings, traditions, which we are involved in.
- (2) The doctrine expressed by the festival: Incarnation (Christmas), Salvation (Easter), etc.
- (3) The experience represented by the doctrine. A doctrine is mere words unless it can be ‘cashed out’ in terms of life experiences. For example, Good Friday speaks to Christians of self-sacrifice and forgiveness, Easter Day speaks of reconciliation, wholeness, a new quality of life.
- (4) The story that is retold at the heart of the festival.

We have to ask which of the four elements of a festival are appropriate for different age groups. Here are some brief pointers . . .

**4-7 year olds:** The emphasis is on the children's experience.

(1) **Celebration today:** Easter eggs, hot cross buns, painting eggs, making Mothering Sunday cards to take home to their mothers.

(3) **Experience:** Joy, celebration, parties, Spring, chickens hatching, stories (good fiction) about newness.



(2) and (4) No direct teaching about doctrine or biblical accounts of Easter.

**7-9 year olds:** Emphasis still on children's experience.

(1) **Celebration today:** Customs, special food, painted eggs (the Orthodox Church), the Church – seasonal colours, Easter cards (most children will draw chickens, bunnies, Easter eggs, etc, those from practising Christian homes may choose to draw biblical scenes).

(3) **Experience:** Spring, new life, cycle of life and death, chickens hatching (new life through desperate struggle), good fiction – death and the dark side.

(2) and (4) No direct teaching about doctrine or biblical accounts of Easter, though incidental aspects of the biblical stories may be raised by the children in discussion.

**9-11 year olds:** The stage at which more systematic study becomes appropriate.

(1) **Celebration today:** Customs and their origins, spring festivals in religions, the symbolism of foods, Palm crosses, the Christian Year – Lent and Easter.

(3) **Experience:** Light and darkness, self-sacrifice, courage, good fiction and biographies which illustrate these characteristics (e.g. Helen Keller)



(4) **The story:** Symbols and incidents from the biblical stories seen in stained glass windows, the gospel accounts read during Holy Week in churches that use the Common Lectionary (recognising that there are four different accounts).

(2) No direct teaching about doctrine.



**11-13 year olds:** More 'grown-up' study.

(1) **Celebration today:** Learning about the contemporary Jewish celebration of Passover and Christian celebration of Easter, including reference back to original events.

(4) **The story:** A study of 'What is a gospel?' This provides young people with the tools to understand the approach of the gospel writers.

(2) No direct teaching about doctrine.

(3) Fiction and biographies may be useful but are not essential at this stage.

**13-15 year olds:**

(2) **Doctrine:** What Jesus means to Christians.

(4) **The story:** There will be references to the New Testament within projects such as "Is death the end?" and "The problem of suffering".

(4) Fiction and biographies are less necessary at this stage.



## 15+: This is what we have been leading up to!

- (2) **Doctrine:** The Christian doctrine of salvation - theories of the atonement.
- (3) **Experience:** The story of Martin Luther King could be appropriate here.
- (4) **The story:** The Oberammagau Passion Play (including its anti-Judaism – which should be able to be recognised by young people who have been through the above teaching).
- (4) There is less need at this stage to focus on celebration today.

### Building understanding

This whole topic is vast, and I have been able to offer only pointers towards a possible approach. What is important is that we need to construct a syllabus that provides coherence, and enables children and young people to gradually build up understanding without the misconceptions and prejudices that so often result from the early encounter with the Easter accounts in the New Testament and from adults' attempts to answer children's questions, eg., 'Why did God let Jesus die?' or, worse, 'Why did God send Jesus into the world to die?' – especially if the children have been told that God is a loving Father.

Building a house is a useful image for teaching children and young people. The builder lays foundations first, and they don't look at all like a house though they are a most important part of the building. He wouldn't try to put the windows in until the walls have been constructed to the right height, and he would not dream of trying to put the roof on at an early stage. But isn't this exactly what many Sunday School teachers have felt they ought to be doing with the Easter stories? Traditionally Christians have tried to teach too much too soon at the early stages and not offer older young people teaching at a more adult level.

The suggested approach demands more constraint than in the past from the teachers of the children of primary school age, and demands much more knowledge from teachers of teenagers. This should not surprise us. School teachers are familiar with the concept of developmental stages, and the need to shape teaching to suit each stage.

These principles apply to all our teaching in church or Sunday School, but the most serious consequences result from ignoring them in our teaching about Easter, leading to both misunderstanding of the Christian faith and negative attitudes to Judaism.

## Statement

We, the members of the Executive Board of the International Council of Christians and Jews, are deeply distressed and saddened by the current round of violence in the Middle East. We have always affirmed our commitment to the survival and security of the State of Israel. At the same time, we grieve for the loss of innocent lives on both sides.

Despite the political and ideological questions that may divide us, we re-affirm our common commitments to the sanctity of human life, the pursuit of peace as a religious imperative, and the importance of inter-religious and inter-group dialogue.

Of particular concern to us is the outbreak of anti-Semitic incidents, some violent, in different parts of the world, seemingly in response to the current difficult situation. There have also been incidents of discrimination against innocent Muslims living outside the region. We deplore this tendency to import the conflict into other regions.

We pray that the fighting will end as soon as possible and that Palestinians and Israelis will be able once again to sit together and resolve their conflict through negotiations based on mutual acceptance.

Dr Deborah Weissman  
*President*

# Book Review

by Terry Wall

***The Aryan Jesus*** – Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany. Susannah Heschel, Princeton University Press, 2008, pp 289

Abraham Joshua Heschel was the outstanding interpreter of Judaism to the English-speaking world after the Second World War. Drawing on his rich Hassidic heritage in Eastern Europe, he opened the eyes of the West to a lost world. His poetic theology, at once traditional and contemporary, was rooted in the biblical witness. His doctoral work on the prophets recovered the pathos of God and contributed to reflection on the suffering of God.

His daughter, Susannah Heschel, has established a reputation as a scholar in her own right. She has become a specialist in the field of the capitulation of the church in Germany during the Third Reich to National Socialist ideology. In this book *The Aryan Christ* she brings together a good deal of her research. She draws on secondary sources in English and German. She has also had access to archives of the German Church that have not been open until recently.

Susannah Heschel examines the movement in the Protestant Church from the 1920s which gave birth to what became known as the German Christians. This movement captured a significant part of the church and became deeply influential not only in seminaries and universities, but also in parishes. She sees this movement finding its support in the progressive and avant-garde theologies of the day and as an expression of generations of German liberal theology.

*The Aryan Jesus* surveys the influences that played a role in the development of this German theology. She traces impulses from mediaeval Christianity, through Luther to nineteenth century liberalism. Consistent in what she discovers is an hostility to the Jewishness of Christianity. German race theory was drawn upon to demonstrate that Jesus could not possibly have been Jewish, given the beauty of his person and the truth of his teaching.

At the centre of this work is an examination of the foundation and work of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life, 1939 to 1942. The Thuringian Church, where the Institute was based, was

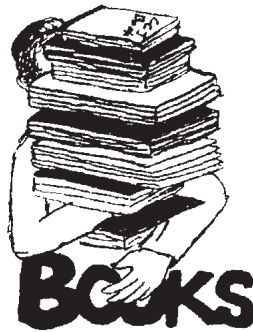
considered “among the most open in Germany in the 1920s and 30s to theological experimentation at both liberal and Nazi ends of the spectrum...” (p. 68) The intention of the Institute was to serve what was described as the dejudaization of Christianity. All Jewish influences came under scrutiny. It attracted a range of competent scholars who gave their energies to promoting a redefinition of Christianity imbued with Volkish ideology intended to align Christianity with National Socialism.

The theologians involved in the Institute attempted to depict a Jesus who was not only distinguished from Judaism, but was its implacable foe. Drawing on Renan’s *Life of Jesus* (1836) and other works, they demonstrated how Jesus was not Jewish. Galilee in the north, they claimed, was always opposed to Judea in the south. Without justification, they claimed that Galilee, after the Assyrian invasion, had an Aryan demographic with only a minority Jewish presence. Besides, the racial theories the Institute embraced, held that race was less a matter of blood than of spirit.

Heschel shows how the Institute, closely associated with the University of Jena, vigorously prosecuted its aims. Conferences were held and research embarked upon that created a climate in which racialised theology was deemed necessary in the service of a dejudaised German Church. New versions of the hymn book, the catechism and the New Testament, that erased Jewish influences, were produced and circulated widely.

The outstanding leader of the Institute was the New Testament scholar Walter Grundmann. Much of Heschel’s attention is focused on what he accomplished. One sentence defines his work for the Institute: “Jewish influence on all areas of German life, including on religious-church life, must be exposed and broken.” (p. 90) The scope of Grundmann’s teaching, curriculum design, writing, supervising and advocating the cause is astonishing. She exposes the way many leading German Christian scholars re-invented themselves post-war, Grundmann himself becoming a secret agent for the Stasi in the GDR.

Drawing on primary sources, Heschel demonstrates that the Institute existed to serve the new vision of the State. “As Hitler shaped a grand political narrative of a fight to the death between Aryans and Jews, the Institute gave the story religious significance.” (p. 158) Under the influence of racial theory the theological work of the Institute



was contaminated. The Institute produced an eschatology realized in the Third Reich, a soteriology that had the Aryan Jesus triumphant in combat with Judaism, and a Christology in which the Fuhrer was divinised.

In her *Autobiography*, eminent German feminist theologian Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel claims that she was targeted by Susannah Heschel and falsely accused of anti-Judaism in her writings.

However, *The Aryan Jesus* is conspicuous for its calm and measured approach. It is an exposure of the weakness of the German Church in the face of philosophies that subverted its theological identity. Theological complicity led to political complicity in the Holocaust.

There is a warning to the church in our day to work at retaining a distinctive identity and a capacity for prophetic critique in the face of cultural projects.

## Berlin's night of broken crystal

Paul Oestreicher - 23 October 2008

Berliners went wild on 9 November, 19 years ago. The impossible had happened. The Wall had come down. I wasn't there. But I was there on that same day in 1938, 70 years ago. Germans went wild on that day too. They let loose an orgy of destruction. The synagogues were set ablaze. Jewish shops were smashed up and pillaged. Jewish men were rounded up, beaten up, some to death, many sent to concentration camps.

What eventually followed was unthinkable. The streets that night were strewn with broken glass. The Germans called it Kristallnacht, the night of broken crystal, to symbolise the 'ill-gotten Jewish riches' Germans would now take from them. Never mind the many Jewish poor. Never mind that Jews like my grandparents were Germans as deeply patriotic as any of their neighbours.

My Christian father, born to Jewish parents, was in 1938 forbidden, as all Jews were, to continue working as a doctor. From a small provincial town we fled to Berlin with one aim, common now to thousands of Jews, to find asylum anywhere beyond the reach of Hitler. An only child, 6 years old, I was given refuge by kindly non-Jewish friends. Life in their basement flat bore no horrors for me. I simply wondered why I was not allowed to go to school.

My parents had gone underground. My non-Jewish mother had resisted the pressure to divorce her husband and so to get out of a marriage defined by the Nazis as *Rassenschande*, racial disgrace. My father, hoping not to be picked up on the street, as many were, trudged from consulate to consulate. A visa was priceless. The state had

confiscated our bank account. We could not bribe our way to safety. Once one had that visa, Nazi Germany said good riddance. If Kristallnacht had a definable purpose beyond a pure explosion of hate it was to make the Jews go away. But, except for the few who had somehow rescued great wealth, the world did not want them.



*A vandalised shop - Berlin 17 November 1938*

The day of the great pogrom started like any other. A rare treat, my mother came to take me for a walk, for as a non-Jew she was not directly threatened. Berlin was bathed in autumn sunshine. We walked to the Tauentzienstrasse, Berlin's Regent Street. For me, the big city was full of wonder – until terror struck. Trucks stopped at exact intervals. Black jackbooted men wielding wooden clubs scattered up and down the street and began to smash the windows of the Jewish-owned department stores.

My mother pulled me away. We fled. I was back in good hands. My parents left Berlin before the day was out and were hidden by a sympathetic member of the Nazi Party. In times of crisis, people are not always what they seem to be.

The search for asylum now became more desperate. It took us another three months. Many others were not so lucky. The nations met at Evian on the Lake of Geneva to discuss the plight of Germany's Jews but made no bold decisions. No effective concerted policy emerged.

At least the Australian delegate was frank: 'We have no race problem and we don't want to import one'. He and many others around the world bought into Hitler's fanciful race doctrine. Anti-Semitism was not just a German aberration. Why should we import a problem the Germans are so keen to get rid of? By early 1939 Britain felt 'it had done its bit' and so did America.

Our choice narrowed down to Venezuela and New Zealand. The New Zealand Government's attitude was like that of its large neighbour. Jewish applicants were told explicitly: 'We do not think you will integrate into our society. If you insist on applying, expect a refusal'. My father did insist. The barriers were high. Either you had a job to come to, in a time of high unemployment, or you had to produce two wealthy guarantors and bring with you, at today's values, £2000 per head.

We were able to take that hurdle, thanks to a French friend of a distant relative who lent us the money, money most refugees could not possibly raise. At a total of one thousand German, Austrian and Czech Jews, New Zealand drew the line. For my grandmother it was too late. She did not survive.

Britain, thanks to a few influential lobbyists, at the last moment agreed to take a substantial number of Jewish children. Most of them were never to see their parents again. Their ultimate contribution to British life was great, now that their stories are being told.

I tell my story on this anniversary not just for its historic and personal interest, but because it brings into sharp focus the far less than humane attitude of Britain, the European Community and many other countries to the asylum seekers of today.

True, there are now international conventions that did not exist in 1939, but they are seldom obeyed in spirit or in letter. The German sentiment 'send them away', has given way in many places to 'send them back', sometimes to more persecution and even death. Lessons from history are seldom learned.

The ninth of November 1938 is deeply etched into German history. Berlin's Holocaust Memorial and others in many German towns stand as mute reminders.

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*This item (edited) has been re-published in Massah with Canon Oestreicher's permission. Canon Paul is a former chair of Amnesty International. paulo@reconcile.org.uk*



## Chief Rabbi at Lambeth Conference

In July last year the Archbishop of Canterbury hosted the Lambeth Conference at which Sir Jonathan Sacks was invited to be a keynote speaker. As he noted, it was probably the first time that a rabbi had addressed the bishops of the Anglican communion. In his prefatory remarks he said he considered the Archbishops of York and Canterbury as "beloved colleagues". This was no empty rhetoric. He spoke simply and movingly about reconciliation and friendship between Christians and Jews as signs of hope for a future for religion in an increasingly secular world. He invited his audience to consider the two things which the world holds highest, economics, signified by the bank of England and politics, signified by Westminster Parliament buildings. The rabbi then went on to consider what it is that religions have to offer society. He talked about the gifts which empower others and in their sharing do not impoverish the giver; love, knowledge, wisdom, mercy. These may be considered covenantal goods. He spoke of covenant in terms of relationship. Offering an example from the scientific study of that difficult Anglican, Charles Darwin, he offered a paradoxical insight that it is not always the fittest which survive, but the altruistic.

"And we, Jews and Christians, who have worked so hard and so effectively at reconciliation, must show the world another way: honouring humanity as God's image, protecting the environment as God's work, respecting diversity as God's will, and keeping the covenant as God's word.

"Too long we have dwelt in the valley of tears.

"Let us walk together towards the mountain of the Lord, side-by-side, hand in hand, bound by a covenant of fate that turns strangers into friends. In an age of fear, let us be agents of hope. Together let us be a blessing to the world".

*Hear the address on your computer: <http://www.chief Rabbi.org/speeches/lambethconference28july08.html>*

# November 13, 2008 - TIMESONLINE

Ruth Gledhill



## Archbishop and Chief Rabbi at Auschwitz

The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks have made a joint pilgrimage to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland. About 180 school students and teachers are accompanying them, as well as seven other faith leaders from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths.

The Archbishop and Chief Rabbi have both written moving 'messages' to mark the pilgrimage, organised by the *Holocaust Education Trust*, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary and has taken 2,000 school children on similar visits in the 12 months it has been organising them. The two messages are reproduced in full below. 'Evil for evil's sake,' says Sir Jonathan. 'A pilgrimage not to a holy place but to a place of utter profanity,' says the Archbishop. Incredibly, the attitudes that led to the Shoah are still alive in our world today.

Only on Tuesday, the President of Iran, a country which some believe is just 18 months or fewer off nuclear capability, forecast that Israel itself is to be 'wiped out.'

### **The Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks**

For years I could not bring myself to visit Auschwitz. There was an evil about it that, even at a distance, chilled my soul.

It was not just the sheer scale of the extermination: some one-and-a-half million innocent victims, ninety per cent of them Jews, but

also Poles, Gypsies, and Russian prisoners of war, gassed, burned and turned to ash.

It was also the madness of it all, the lengths the Germans and their helpers went to search out every single Jew, to make sure not one would remain alive. At the height of the destruction, German troop trains were diverted from the Russian front to transport Jews to Auschwitz. The Nazis were prepared to put their own war effort at risk in order to kill Jews. This was, as one writer has put it, evil for evil's sake.

Yet this did not happen far away, in some distant time and in another kind of civilization. It happened in the heart of enlightened Europe in a country that prided itself on its art, its culture, its philosophy and ethics. More than half of the participants at the 1942 Wannsee Conference that decided on the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' – total extermination of all Jews – held the title 'Doctor'. String quartets played in Auschwitz-Birkenau as the factories of death consumed the victims.

However painful it is, we must learn what happened, that it may never happen again to anyone, whatever their colour, culture or creed. That is what the victims wanted of us: that we should never forget where hatred, left unchecked, can lead. We cannot bring the dead back to life, but we can bring their memory back to life. We cannot change the past, but by remembering the past, we can change the future.

Hate has not vanished from our world, nor have war, violence and terror. That is why we must still remember, so that we, when the time comes, are willing to fight for tolerance, respect and human decency, honouring the image of God that lives in every human being however unlike us he or she is. Only thus can we rescue hope from the gates of hell.

### **The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams**

The name has become so much a shorthand for the worst atrocities of our age that we can almost forget that it is a real place where real and particular people perished. As has often been said, the six million deaths of the Shoah mean one person's death repeated six million times: the statistics have

to be returned to the realm of the specific, to names and faces.

The journey to Auschwitz that we are undertaking is part of the continuing effort not to lose sight of the specific. These things actually happened in a particular place to people with names and relationships and stories. Our faiths speak of God through telling the stories of specific people in actual places; it is in these particulars that we learn of God. But this means that we learn the horror of evil and godlessness also by hearing and telling particular stories. We are travelling to Auschwitz to hear and to learn this. And we are travelling so as to hear and to learn what we can say to each other of compassion and hope in the face of an evil that seems almost to defy human language.

Auschwitz, as many have said, reduces us to silence. But to say this and no more is to shy away from the challenge it poses. It is not enough to say that this evil is past understanding or imagining: this is something that human beings did, and so we have to seek to understand and imagine. If we do not, how shall we be able to read the signs of the times, the indications that evil is gathering force once again and societies are slipping towards the same collective corruption and moral sickness that made the Shoah possible?

Distorted religion, fear of the stranger, the reduction of humans to functions and numbers, the obsession with technological solutions that take no account of human particularity – Auschwitz is more than the sum of these parts, but it would not have happened without them. They are still at work in our world. If we are truly committed to hearing and learning, we have no choice but to seek to grow in our ability to identify where these are present today and to go on telling the story of how they swelled the flood of inhumanity that overwhelmed a ‘civilized’ nation and continent.

This is a pilgrimage not to a holy place but to a place of utter profanity – a place where the name of God was profaned because the image of God in human beings was abused and disfigured. For many the name of God has become something that cannot be uttered or taken seriously because of what was done here.

Yet our hope is that in making this journey together we also travel towards the God who binds us together in protest and grief at this profanation – and the God who even here was

discerned in acts of solidarity and love, in voices raised in prayer even from the depth of suffering and in faces still marked by human warmth and care for fellow-sufferers. And if there were people who spoke and lived for God here, this too is something we and our world need to hear and to learn.

### **Ruth Gledhill Reflects**

Last week I went to Auschwitz with the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, Archbishop of Canterbury and leaders from seven other faiths as guests of the Holocaust Education Trust. It was my second visit, and prompted this reflection.

Among the most moving of all were two of the documents published in the trust’s programme for the day. The first is a letter from a mother to a daughter. The mother is about to be sent to a death camp, where she knows she will die. She has no choice, if her daughter Mirele is to live, to give her up to a grocer who might be able to save her. Mirele did survive, and the letter was found sewn inside her clothing. The second document is her reflection on this, as an adult.

### ***Mama writes . . .***

Dear Mirele,

I can’t believe I have one night to stuff a lifetime of love into this letter.

Tomorrow morning – if 4.00 am can be called morning, I am giving you up.

I am taking you, Mirele, to the back entrance of dear, brave Hermann’s grocery and the child rescuers will be waiting there for you and the thirty-two other children under the age of three.

They’ll inject you with a sedative so you won’t cry and then they’ll slip off in the predawn with you – my life, my love, out of this barbaric country to safety.

We pushed it off, Mirele. We didn’t want to believe we would have to give up our child, probably never to see her again. But this is the last child rescue. After this there will be none left to rescue, because tomorrow, our informers tell us, is the last big round up.

Tomorrow they come for men, women and children. And I have been convinced by these words, spoken by our trusted informer, Hermann, the brave gentile doctor, “Any child they take

away either dies immediately or dies on the way to the death camp". The word death three times in one sentence!

We were the last ones to be convinced to be giving up our child. He said finally, with the deepest sadness in every exhausted wrinkle in his face, "I cannot force you. But if you keep her with you, she will be dead in a month. They have no use for babies, she cannot work for them. If you want to give her to us, bring her to the back entrance of my grocery at 4.00 am. No belongings, whatever food you have. Goodbye".

Mirele, do you see why I have to give you up? He said no belongings, but I will beg, I will plead that this letter be allowed to go, sewn into your undershirt. And then, I will pray to G-d that the letter stays with you until you are old enough to read it. You must know that we love you. You must know why you are alone, without parents. Not because they didn't love you...but because they did!

It's eerie to think that by the time you read this I will probably be dead. That's what Hermann says is going on. People either die immediately or on the way or after a week or two of forced labour and no food. But I won't have lived in vain, Mirele, if I know that I brought you into the world and you will live and survive and grow big and strong and you will be happy. You can be happy, Mirele, because we loved you.

What makes the differences in the lives of adults, it seems, is if they had secure childhoods. Secure with lots of love and acceptance and needs fulfilled and predictable routine and the like. You've had that up to this minute. You'll have it up till 4.00 am. But then you won't. Who knows who will end up taking care of you? Some family who will take you in for the money Hermann will pay them? They will surely be kinder to their own than to you.

Here is where pain mixes with rage! I rage at the animals who are making it possible for you to cry and I won't be there to comfort you. But you will have this letter, and this letter will make you feel secure, if G-d answers my prayers. You have us, Mirele, even though you don't see us, we're with you. We're watching you and praying for you. Every time you have troubles we are pounding on the door to G-d's very throne room, insisting on an audience and demanding mercy

for our Mirele down on earth, alone, without her parents. And G-d will listen to us. We won't leave Him alone until he agrees that you deserve health, love and happiness.

Mirele, you'll wonder what your first two years were like. You'll wish you could remember. Let me remember for you right now, tenderly, on this piece of paper. You like hot cereal in the morning, with lots of milk and sugar. Except that there is no milk and sugar now, none in the whole city. But I make you cereal anyway and you eat it with big smiles between every bite. Then you come ready for your nap, so I rock you, after putting the rocker where the sunlight will fall on it. I rock you until you fall asleep and then I put you in my bed. You sleep well there, you like my smell.

What will you smell tomorrow night? Surely nobody will rock you tomorrow, not even in the shade. Oh G-d? I cannot do it! I will do it. For you, Mirele, so you will have at least a hope for life. Mirele, do me a favour, after you've grown, after this dirty nightmarish war is over... I know there will be those who underplay the tragedies going on here every day. They will say, "A war is a war. It was just a war". Mirele, tell them about this agony! Tell them how you felt secure in my arms rocking you to sleep in the sunlight.

Tell them how your father ran, one night, a year ago, to get you medicine, past sentries, while breaking the curfew. He risked his life to ease your pain, Mirele. And now the three of us are being torn apart. "Just a war"...?! Tell them, Mirele, that all wars in the world don't add up to the agony in my heart right now as I write this.

G-d it's 2.00 am already. Only two more hours with my love, my baby, my life, my Mirele. I'm going to hold you now, Mirele, for two hours. Your father and I are going to wake you, feed you and tell you over and over how much we love you. You're barely two years old, but maybe, if G-d is good, maybe, you'll remember it and maybe you'll keep this letter until you're old enough to read it.

There will be bad times for you, Mirele, I know. But just think about me holding you, rocking you to sleep in the sunlight. Keep that sunlight in your heart always. I love you. Your father loves you. May G-d help us all.

*Mama*

Dear Readers,

Miracles happen – my mother’s letter stayed with me, sewn into my undershirt and I am getting old myself and have decided to share it with you.

After almost fifty years of keeping it private, why did I translate it from the Yiddish and decide to share it with you now?

A few reasons... Firstly, one doesn’t hear much about the Holocaust anymore very much these days. There are even those who claim it was made up, not true, a brilliant Jewish ploy for sympathy. My mother asked me to remind you that it wasn’t “just a war”. It was a monstrosity.

Secondly, my mother’s faith in G-d, even at that dreadful hour, never ceases to amaze me. Even though she was almost certain that she would soon die, as indeed she did, she believes firmly in G-d to whom she can turn both before and after her earthly life ends. This strengthens my faith and perhaps it will strengthen yours.

And lastly – I know I’m from a different generation. Nowadays I’m told, all mothers work. But sometimes I look out my window and see little children, just two years old. That’s how old I was when my mother was forced to give me up to strangers. And I look out my window and see these two year olds cry because they want to stay with their mothers, but their mothers are putting them on the bus because they want to be free of them – and sometimes it doesn’t seem right.

You mothers who are lucky enough to have babies – raise them too. Don’t throw them out before they’re ready. Don’t leave them before they’re ready. Go now. Rock them in the sunlight. For my mother. Miriam bas (daughter of) Leiba.

(In my mother’s letter, she didn’t leave her name, but I always think of her as Leiba – “Love”. I’m lucky. Many of the children rescued with me don’t even know their own names.)

*Posted by Ruth Gledhill  
on November 17, 2008 at  
07:55 PM in anti-Semitism -  
Permalink*



## On My Bookshelf

### **The Lord is my Shepherd: The Healing Wisdom of the twenty-third psalm.**

Harold S. Kushner.

We will all face unexpected challenges, and the metaphor of walking through the valley of the shadow of death applies not only to the pathway of grief, but also to the resources of faith in the God who is the true shepherd.

Rabbi Kushner’s meditations invite us to consider our own lives and our connection with God in life in sorrow and in gladness.

### **Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Meditations on Psalms:**

Edwin Robertson (translator),

Meditations on violence and silence in the face of injustice.

One might not always agree with the tack these meditations take, but they are arresting in their simplicity and invite us to consider that which ails the world, and we, ourselves...

God,

Give us grace to accept with  
serenity the things that cannot  
be changed;

Courage to change the things  
which should be changed;

And the wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.

-- Reinhold Niebuhr

# The Latest Catholic-Jewish Crisis: Turning a Minus into a Plus

by Rabbi David Rosen

## The Papal Audience

The papal audience on Thursday, February 12, with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was the first ever for that organization. Under normal circumstances, it would have been just another photo opportunity for a Jewish group with the pope. However, the events of the previous two weeks concerning the Society of Saint Pius X (founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who broke with the Catholic Church in opposition to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council) and, in particular, one of its four bishops, Richard Williamson a public Holocaust denier gave this meeting special significance and attracted media attention. Accordingly, I travelled to Rome to represent AJC at this event.

The pope's address to us was a powerful repudiation of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial as sins that will not be tolerated by the Church; and emphasized the importance of nurturing the memory of the Shoah as a message and warning for future generations. In addition, Benedict reaffirmed his deep commitment to Catholic-Jewish relations and also announced his forthcoming visit to Israel.

It was clear that he was extremely eager to have the opportunity to reiterate these points publicly before a Jewish audience and to repair the damage and misrepresentation caused by this latest crisis in Catholic-Jewish relations. This audience was, in fact, an important symbolic confirmation of the remarkable clarification that the Vatican had issued a week beforehand.

The Vatican had explained that, contrary to popular misrepresentation, it had not embraced and welcomed back into the Church the members of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) including Williamson. All it had done was to lift the excommunication ban that Pope John Paul II had imposed when the society started performing its own ordination of bishops without papal authorization. Lifting this excommunication ban opened the way for the society and its leadership to return to the Church. However, they would have to first commit themselves to abiding by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, against

which they had originally rebelled. These include an affirmation of the eternal Divine Covenant with the Jewish people and the condemnation of anti-Semitism. Accordingly, the statement not only condemned Williamson's odious opinions, calling upon him to recant and categorically distance himself publicly from them, but also indicated that if he did not do so, there was no way he could be welcomed back into the Catholic Church. Yet arguably the most surprising sentence in the statement was the admission that Pope Benedict XVI had not known of Williamson's views when the excommunication ban was lifted (suggesting that had he known, he might not have proceeded as he did.)

No less astounding was the admission by the man responsible for these contacts on behalf of the Vatican, Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, who later in the day acknowledged that he also did not know about Williamson. A few days earlier the man in the Vatican responsible for relations with the Jewish people, Cardinal Walter Kasper, had complained that he had been taken completely by surprise by the Vatican's action regarding the SSPX, and he did not disguise his displeasure over this occurrence and its consequences. Such open criticism of the Vatican from within and, by implication, of its leadership is, if not unparalleled, very rare.

What has been revealed most dramatically by this episode is something that Vatican observers have been noting consistently during this papacy in contrast to the previous one namely, an amazing lack of preparation (if not disregard) for public perceptions and a profound lack of collegial consultation. The result is that time and again the Vatican has had to spend its energies on damage control and polishing up a tarnished image, when it could have prevented the distress to others and harm to itself in the first place.

## Interpreting the Clarification

While the Vatican's clarification has sought to put the record straight, there are still those who fear that this episode reflects some kind of backtracking by the Catholic Church when it comes to good relations with the Jewish people. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Of course, there are many Jews who do not believe that the Catholic “leopard” ever changed its spots at all as far as its attitude toward the Jewish people is concerned. Such Jews are those who have not been able to lift themselves out of the traumas of our past and/or those who are ignorant (sometimes willfully) of the changes of the present. However, the majority of Jews are aware of the remarkable historic changes that took place within the Catholic Church since Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council; and most of those who were not, were significantly educated by the positive gestures and impact of Pope John Paul II’s visit to Israel in the year 2000.

But those who are informed are fully aware that then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, was the most trusted theological right hand of John Paul II. Accordingly, there was no chance that he would want to turn the tide back on the stunning advances in Catholic-Jewish reconciliation and understanding that took place during John Paul II’s papacy. Indeed, at an unprecedented Jerusalem conference of Christian and Jewish leadership from around the world at the beginning of 1994, which took place on the heels of the historic accord between Israel and the Holy See establishing full relations between the two, Ratzinger, a keynote speaker, publicly expressed his great joy over the new full relationship between Israel and the Vatican. Moreover, since becoming pope, he has reiterated time and again his commitment to continuing the path of his predecessor concerning Catholic-Jewish relations and actually received the leadership of the Jewish representative body to the Vatican (the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations) even before receiving non-Catholic Christian representatives.

Accordingly, those aware of all this could not accept the interpretation of the lifting of the excommunication of the SSPX and Williamson as being an intentional snub toward the Jewish people that Benedict was willing to pay for the sake of Christian unity.

However, it is undoubtedly true that the matter of repairing the schism and uniting the Church is one of great preoccupation for the pope. In light (or rather in the shadow) of the above-mentioned lack of transparency in this pontificate, we have seen how damage can be done due to lack of advance consultation and consideration of the consequences of certain steps and statements. This was the case with the papal permission given for the wider use of the Latin liturgy (which actually had already been permitted in limited cases by

John Paul II), which includes an Easter prayer for the conversion of the Jews. When Benedict realized that this permission for the wider use of the Latin liturgy had a negative bearing on Catholic-Jewish relations, he sought to repair the damage by improving the offensive text. However the improvement was still a disappointment for the Jewish community and for many Catholics. This pattern of taking decisions too quickly without the necessary prior investigation, consultation, and preparation could have led the Vatican to move ahead with the rehabilitation of the SSPX without realizing all the implications and consequences. Richard Williamson’s crude publicity-seeking Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic rhetoric actually performed a great service in slowing down the SSPX’s move back into the Catholic fold and may, in fact, have stopped it altogether.

As mentioned, Williamson now has to publicly recant and the SSPX has to categorically accept the teachings of Vatican II before any reinstatement can proceed.

Moreover, this episode elicited remarkably widespread expressions of concern and alarm, not only from Jewish quarters, but from major national Catholic bishops’ conferences as well as from individual Catholic religious leaders and political figures (including some fifty Catholic U.S. congressmen and German Chancellor Angela Merkel) who called on the Vatican to clarify matters. All these developments leading to the Vatican’s eventual response and culminating in Pope Benedict’s eloquent words at the February 12 papal audience have heightened the importance of Catholic-Jewish relations on the Church’s contemporary agenda. In fact, we may say that this has been a classic example of turning a minus into a plus.

Undoubtedly, there are significant struggles taking place within the Catholic Church today, which are reflected in different interpretations of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. However, what is so sweetly ironic from an historical Jewish perspective is that one of the few issues on which conservatives and liberals in the Church are in agreement is the importance of good relations with the Jewish people and an unequivocal rejection of anti-Semitism.

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*Rabbi David Rosen is AJC’s director of the Department of Interreligious Affairs and the Robert and Harriett Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding and also chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC).*

# Purim - 9 March 2009

Purim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination.

The story of Purim is told in the Biblical Book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem, and he loved her more than his other women and made her queen. But the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, because Mordecai told her not to reveal her nationality.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech that is all too familiar to Jews, Haman told the king, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it does not profit the king to suffer them" (Esther 3,8). The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went into the king. He welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the bible that does not contain a name of God. In fact, it includes virtually no reference to God. Mordecai makes a vague reference to the idea that the Jews will be saved by someone else, if not by Esther, but that is the closest the book comes to mentioning God. Thus, one important message that can be gained from the story is that God often works in ways that are not apparent, in ways that appear to be chance, coincidence, or ordinary good luck.

Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar,

which is usually in March. The 14th of Adar is the day that the Jews rested after they had passed the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews. In leap years, when there are two months of Adar, Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar, so it is always one month before Passover. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city) they rested on that day.

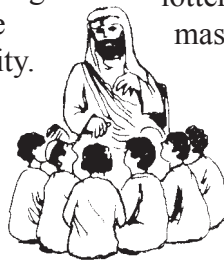
The word "Purim" means lots and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, which commemorates Esther's three days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with the king.

The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther. The book of Esther is commonly known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillahs (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of The Megillah. It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet, and rattle gragers (noise makers) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service; the purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman" (unfortunately, the rowdiness may interfere with hearing the reading, requiring people to read the whole thing over; this foolish custom should be abandoned!).

We are also commanded to eat, drink, and be merry. According to the Talmud, a person is required to drink until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai", though opinions differ as to exactly how drunk that is. The recommended solution is to drink just a little more than usual, and take a nap to stay out of trouble; it is wise to do this at home, not in public.

In addition, we are commanded to send out gifts of food (some erroneously think food or drink, but only food counts), and to make gifts to charity. The sending of gifts of food is referred to as "mishloach manot" (literally, sending out portions). Among Ashkenazic Jews, a common treat at this time of year is "hamantaschen" (literally, Haman's pockets). These triangular



*Teaching Spot*

fruit-filled cookies are supposed to represent Haman's three-cornered hat.

It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies, and to hold beauty contests, despite that these have no connection whatever with the commandments of Purim. Some think that the usual Torah prohibitions against cross-dressing (men dressing up as women and women dressing up as men) are lifted during this holiday, but they certainly are not. In the US, Purim is sometimes referred to as the Jewish *Mardi Gras* (a classical idolatrous orgy in the spirit of idolatry), which reflects poorly on the Jews there.

The kinds of work prohibited on Shabbat and holidays are not prohibited on Purim; but it is recommended against working for one's living on Purim, unless that is really necessary.

### Recipe for Hamentaschen

- 2/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup sugar • 1 egg
- 1/4 cup orange juice, the smooth kind, not the pulpy.
- 1 cup white flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour (DO NOT substitute white flour! The whole wheat flour is necessary to achieve the right texture!)
- Various preserves, fruit butters, and/or pie fillings.

Blend butter and sugar thoroughly. Add the egg and blend thoroughly. Add OJ and blend thoroughly. Add flour, 1/2 cup at a time, alternating white and wheat, blending thoroughly between each. Refrigerate batter overnight or at least a few hours. Roll as thin as you can without getting holes in the batter (roll it between two sheets of wax paper lightly dusted with flour for best results). Cut out 3 or 4 inch circles. Put a tablespoon of filling in the middle of each circle. Fold up the sides to make a triangle, overlapping the sides as much as possible so only a little filling shows through the middle. Bake at 375 degrees for about 10-15 minutes, until golden brown but before the filling boils over!

Traditional fillings are poppy seed and prune; but apricot, apple butter, pineapple preserves, and cherry pie filling all work quite well.

**List of Dates:** Purim occurs on the following days on the civil calendar:

- 10 March 2009(5769) • 28 February 2010 (5770)
- 20 March 2011 (5771) • 8 March 2012 (5772)

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*From Jewfaq: We speak and write only Hebrew and English. Mechon Mamre, 12 Hayyim Vital St., Jerusalem, ISRAEL 95470. Email: mtr@mechon-mamre.org.*

## A Film Worth Noting



### The Boy in Striped Pyjamas

The Boy in Striped Pyjamas is showing in cinemas in Auckland right now.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas is a fictional story that offers a unique perspective on how prejudice, hatred and violence affect innocent people, particularly children, during wartime. Through the lens of an eight-year-old boy largely shielded from the reality of World War II, we witness a forbidden friendship that forms between Bruno, the son of Nazi commandant, and Shmuel, a Jewish boy held captive in a concentration camp.

Though the two are separated physically by a barbed wire fence, their lives become inescapably intertwined. The imagined story of Bruno and Shmuel sheds light on the brutality, senselessness and devastating consequences of war from an unusual point of view.

Together, their tragic journey helps recall the millions of innocent victims of the Holocaust.

This is a film well worth seeing. It would make the basis of a very good theological reflection.



# Times and Seasons

Important holy days for this calendar year

## Judaism

5769

Purim	March 10
Pesach	April 9-16
Yom HaShoah	April 21
Yom HaZikaron	April 28
Yom Ha'Atzmaut	April 29
Shavuot	May 29-30
Tisha B'Av	July 30

5770

Rosh HaShanah	September 19-20
Yom Kippur	September 28
Sukkot	October 3-9 (Reform Judaism)
	October 2-9 (Orthodox Judaism)
Simchat Torah	October 11 (Reform Judaism)
	October 10 (Orthodox Judaism)
Chanukah	December 12-19

## Christianity

2009

Ash Wednesday	February 25
Palm Sunday	April 5
Good Friday	April 10
Easter Day	April 12
Ascension Day	May 21
Day of Pentecost	May 31
Trinity Sunday	June 7
All Saints	November 1
All Souls	November 2
Advent Sunday	November 29
Christmas Day	December 25

**MASSAH**  
**מסע**  
**JOURNEY**