

**NZCCJ - AOTEAROA**

**MASSAH**  
**מסע**  
**JOURNEY**

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

**No. 25 Winter 2008**

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# MASSAH

JOURNEY

Journal of the  
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## Editorial

We have two main themes in this issue of *Massah*.

The first focuses on the relationship between the New Testament and anti-Judaism.

As John Pawlikowski points out, there has been an increasing number of Christian biblical scholars involved in what he describes as 'a much broader reinterpretation of the early years of the Jewish-Christian relationship', reversing the traditional view that Paul was responsible for the sharp contrast between Judaism and the emerging Christian church.

This is encouraging, but it is regrettable that the debate takes place almost entirely within academic circles, having little influence on the 'person in the pew'.

The second theme focuses on the commemoration of the Holocaust, and encouragement here comes from the increasing awareness of the need to keep alive the memory of the tragedy.

Yom Hashoah, as Rabbi Golinkin explains, has been a part of Jewish experience since the fifties, but in recent years, with the introduction of Holocaust Remembrance Day, officially sponsored by governments, vast numbers of people from outside the Jewish community – from any religion or none - now share in the remembering and in the determination: 'Never again'.

Although the NZ government has not adopted the UN Holocaust Remembrance Day, it is good to hear how many school parties have visited the Wellington Holocaust Research and Education Centre in the short time it has been open.

## For Your Diary



### AUCKLAND

**Sunday 24 August 2.30pm** in Wesley Hall, St John's College. This is the joint meeting of the Auckland CCJ and the Auckland Council of Christians and Muslims.

#### **Holy Places: The Role of Pilgrimage.**

Speakers: **Muhammad Umar Chand** (Publisher, and Lecturer – in Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Brunei); **Lesley Max** (Director of Great Potentials, and member of Auckland Hebrew Congregation); **Sister Patricia Leamy** (Member of Missionary Sisters of Mary).

We regret that it has not proved possible to arrange the usual public meeting for October/November. The next meeting will therefore probably be in April 2009.

### WELLINGTON

Annual Symposium to be arranged, probably for August.

## Useful to Know

The New Zealand Jewish Chronicle included in its March 2008 edition a review of four books dealing with Jewish situations or characters.

They were published by a UK-based publishing house, the Toby Press, which has a significant list of Jewish and Israeli authors. They can be contacted by email at [office@tobypress.com](mailto:office@tobypress.com) and their catalogue can be found on [www.tobypress.com/](http://www.tobypress.com/)

## Contributors



**Rabbi Raymond Apple** was until 2005 Senior Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney. He has been a leading spokesperson for Judaism in Australia and he was one of the founders of the Australian Council of Christians and Jews. He now lives in Israel.

**Rabbi David Golinkin** is President and Professor of Jewish Law at the Conservative Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He was born in America, but moved to Israel in 1972. He has a PhD in Talmud, and is the author or editor of 32 books.

**Jean Holm** was formerly lecturer in Religious Studies at Homerton College, Cambridge (UK). She was for four years Christian co-president of the Auckland CCJ, and is currently editor of *Massah*.

**John Pawlikowski**, OSM, PhD is Professor and Director, Catholic-Jewish Studies Program Catholic Theological Union Chicago, and Visiting Professor-Spring Term at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. He is President of the ICCJ.

**Jim Van Praag** was born in Antwerp, Belgium. He escaped from Europe in 1940, and came to New Zealand in 1947. He joined Beth El Orthodox Congregation and then Temple Sinai, Wellington's Jewish Progressive Congregation, of which he became President, and is now Life Member. He was a key person in the establishment of the Wellington CCJ.

## Going Abroad this Year?

**Jewish Museum of Australia – Walks 2008: Walk the Talk Through Historic Jewish Melbourne.**

**Sundays.** The last four of the nine walks are:

**July 27, 2.00pm – St Kilda**

**September 14, 10.15am – Victoria Market**

**October 5, 10.15am - Mansions of East Melbourne**

**November 9, 10.15am – China Town**

Bookings essential. Enquiries: Jewish Museum of Australia, Gandel Centre of Judaica, 26 Alma Rd, St Kilda, VIC 3182.

Ph: 03 9534 0083

Email: [info@jewishmuseum.com.au](mailto:info@jewishmuseum.com.au)

[www.jewishmuseum.com.au](http://www.jewishmuseum.com.au)

**Monash University: Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation Thursdays 7.30pm.**

Remaining sessions: **July 17, 24, 31**, at the Monash Centre of Jewish Civilisation. A series of workshops and lectures on the development of early antisemitism and the conflict between Christianity and Judaism, presented by **Professor Amy-Jill Levine** and her husband **Professor Jay Geller**.

Further details from the Council of Christians and Jews, 179 Cotham Rd, Kew, Victoria 3101, Australia. Email: [ccjvic@corplink.com.au](mailto:ccjvic@corplink.com.au)

**Council for Jewish-Christians Relations (Cambridge, UK)**

**September 7-9**, at Peterhouse, Cambridge. A conference celebrating CJCR's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 'Memory in a Memoryless Age: Jewish-Christian Relations'.

**November 4**, 7.00pm. (location to be confirmed. A lecture-recital by **Hannah Rosenfelder**: 'The Forgotten Art of Yiddish Opera'.

Further details from CJCR, Wesley House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge CB5 8BJ, UK.

Email: [ech40@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ech40@cam.ac.uk). Website: [www.woolfinstitute.cam.ac.uk](http://www.woolfinstitute.cam.ac.uk)



## **Paul – Founder of Christianity or Faithful Jew?\***

*by John T. Pawlikowski*

The coming celebration of a Jubilee Year in honour of the ministry and writings of the Apostle Paul offers the Christian churches an opportunity to re-examine their perspectives on his role in Christian history. For centuries a master narrative rooted in the book of Acts has tended to dominate Christian understanding of Paul's outlook on Judaism and its Torah in terms of Christian belief.

This master narrative begins with Stephen's decisive break with Judaism in Acts 7. So-called Jewish Christians then begin to disappear from this master narrative until chapter eleven when they are totally removed from the story following Peter's revelatory vision through which he is convinced to abandon his previous adherence to continued Jewish observance.

From that point onwards the master narrative focuses exclusively on gentiles as the new people of God and moves the geographic centre of Christianity to Rome in place of Jerusalem. Thus in the account of Christian origins that has tended to dominate in the Church's vision, Judaism is superseded and even annulled with Paul being viewed as the primary messenger for this teaching.

This master narrative from Acts has also impacted Catholic liturgical life as it dominates in the readings during the Easter season.

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\* A lecture given at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, March 2008.

This classical perspective on Paul and Judaism was significantly reinforced in the mid-nineteenth century in the writings of F.C. Baur. In his classical work *Paul The Apostle* (1845) Baur argued for the existence of only two factions in the early church. One was the Jewish Christians whose leader was Peter and the other the Gentile Christians who looked to Paul for spiritual leadership. The Jewish Christians, in Baur's perspective, stood mired in a narrow legalism that blinded them to the universalistic elements in Jesus' teachings championed by Paul.

Recent biblical scholarship, with much effort, has work to break out of the limitations imposed by the master narrative based solely upon Acts as revived by Baur and his disciples. This effort is part of a much broader reinterpretation of the early years of the Christian-Jewish relationship.

### **New scholarship**

A growing consensus within the new scholarship insists that there is no evidence that Jesus intended to establish a totally new religious institution apart from Judaism in his own lifetime, and that we cannot really speak of a definitive break between Judaism and Christianity until at least the mid-second century and even later in sectors of Eastern Christianity.

Scholars involved in this new research paint a far more complex and nuanced picture of the first century Jewish-Christian relationship than argued by Baur. In reality many different groups existed within the then very wide tent of Judaism who combined continued Jewish practices within an acceptance of the way proclaimed by Jesus. Even so-called 'Christ worship,' some of these scholars maintain, did not automatically sever the bond with Judaism for those engaged in such worship. Regrettably neither systematic theology nor liturgical studies has given much attention to the profound reorientation on the Christian-Jewish issue emerging in important sectors of contemporary biblical scholarship.

A striking comment on the new approach to Paul and Judaism in recent biblical studies came from the late Raymond Brown in a popular lecture shortly before his death. Brown said that he had now become convinced that if Paul had fathered a son he would have had him circumcised. This new thinking on Paul's outlook on Judaism in terms of Christian faith began with the recently deceased

Harvard biblical scholar and subsequently Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm, Krister Stendahl. In a seminal article in the *Harvard Theological Review* in 1963 entitled 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', Stendahl argued that the classical understanding of Paul as anti-Torah, an interpretation which played a central role in Christian theological self definition in Protestantism especially, bears little resemblance to what Paul actually believed about the continued practice of Jewish ritual by Christians. His work has been picked up by an impressive list of scholars who include, among others, E.P. Sanders, Peter Tomson, James D.G. Dunn, John Gager, Daniel Harrington, Jerry L. Sumney and Lloyd Gaston. They have been joined of late by several Jewish scholars, most notably Alan Segal.

## The new picture

What is beginning to emerge in important sectors of Pauline scholarship is a picture of a Paul still very much a Jew, still quite appreciative of Jewish Torah with seemingly no objection to its continued practice by Jewish Christians so long as their basic orientation is founded in Christ and his teachings, and still struggling towards the end of his ministry to balance his understanding of the newness implied in the Christ Event with the continuity of the Jewish covenant, something quite apparent in the famous chapters 9-11 of Romans, cited by Vatican II in chapter four of *Nostra Aetate*, where we find the conciliar declaration on the new understanding of the church's relationship with the Jewish people. It is also possible, though far less certain, that some of the Pauline writings, particularly his Christological hymns, may have roots in Paul's personal contact with the Jewish mysticism of the time, though Paul would have added his distinctive interpretations. A few of the biblical scholars involved in this new Pauline research even go so far as to maintain that Paul regarded Torah observance so highly that he feared that if Gentiles tried to practise it they would only corrupt its authentic spirit. Such a view admittedly pushes the envelope of scholarly evidence a bit far, but it is presently under discussion in some scholarly circles.

One of the scholars at the centre of the new picture of Paul is John G. Gager. He is a founder of the important Oxford-Princeton universities

continuing study group on the 'parting of the ways'. In a recent essay Gager has summarised the new vision of Paul that in his judgment must replace the dominance of the master narrative from Acts that has dominated Christian theology and worship for so very long. And certainly this Jubilee celebration of Paul would be an excellent opportunity to present this new view to people in the pews as well as for serious discussion among theologians and liturgists about its implication for Christian self-understanding and worship in the churches.

Gager's summary includes the following elements:

- (1) He strongly emphasises the plurality of practice among followers of Jesus who continued to observe Torah. They were far from uniform in their continued observance of the Torah.
- (2) Jewish Christians in fact did not disappear from the scene after Peter's so-called revelatory vision, as the author of Acts would have us believe. They remain a significant force in the Christian churches for many centuries, especially in the regions of Syria and beyond where they were far from a tiny minority and were not considered heretical in their outlook or practice.
- (3) Early Christianity, unlike what is presented in Acts, did not simplistically reorient its geographic focus uni-directionally towards Rome. Rather it moved multi-directionally into every area of the Mediterranean region and beyond. In places such as Syria, Jewish Christianity seemed in fact to occupy the dominant position in the church.
- (4) Together with other scholars such as Brown, Gager repudiates any notion that Paul rejected Judaism and those we term Jewish Christians. Rather he chose to devote his energies to the outreach to Gentile believers who, for whatever reason, he felt did not have the obligation to pick up Torah observance in their faith expression. The author of Acts, according to Gager, enlisted Paul in his own effort to downgrade Jewish Christianity.

Gager thus implies, though he does not say it explicitly, that the author of Acts, rather than Paul is in fact the founder of the anti-Jewish form of Christianity that has been so powerful (and negative) a force throughout Christian history which has so often witnessed the manifestation of sinful anti-Judaism and even outright anti-Semitic hatred in various Christian communities.

Paul in fact advocates a 'two door' policy in terms of salvation with distinctive paths for Jews and Gentiles.

(5) Largely due to the image of Paul created by the author of Acts, Paul became known as the arch-enemy of Jewish Christians, as the person who totally undermined their legitimacy as an authentic expression of Christianity. This image also infected Jewish circles where he also has traditionally been regarded even by scholars favourably disposed towards Jesus and his teachings as the founder of a Christian church anti-Jewish at its core. The Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt once spoke of the chasm she felt between the teachings of Jesus in the gospels and the Christ of the Pauline texts.

Gager also adds a point relative to the revelatory experience which, according to Acts 11, led to a basic change of heart on the part of Peter regarding the continuation of Jewish practices by followers of Jesus. He questions the actual historicity of this account, believing it was a story developed by the author of Acts to buttress his own anti-Judaic perspective.

### **Paul a faithful Jew?**

To bring this brief survey of the new perspectives on Paul to a close, we need to return to the original question, Was he the founder of Christianity or merely a faithful Jew? In some ways the answer is he was both. There is little doubt any more that Paul took a very positive attitude towards Judaism and its Torah. He personally probably continued to adhere to many of its provisions and likely would have been aghast at the 'denuded' form of Christianity separated from its Jewish soul that eventually emerged in many quarters of the Church. In that he remained a 'faithful Jew'. But he did believe that the coming of Christ had resulted in a fundamental reorientation of faith into a belief system rooted in the experience of Christ. For Paul the experience of the resurrected Christ was personally transforming. Paul certainly wanted Jews to recognise Jesus as the Messiah of Israel as well of the nations, but for Paul this did not mean any repudiation of the Torah. In fact, from the Pauline perspective, a contradiction between Jesus the Messiah and the Torah would in fact be rather ridiculous as he sometimes appears to draw a parallel and even identify the law with the gospel of God's acts in Jesus Christ.

Paul's battle with the so-called 'Jewish Christians' which Baur erroneously built into a fundamental confrontation was in fact a much more limited dispute restricted to those Jewish Christians who refused to accept Paul's view of a fundamental reorientation for believers in Christ.

For Paul the Jewish Torah genuinely mattered; but Christ mattered more. And this was why he felt he could extend covenantal membership to Gentiles without requiring of them a commitment to Jewish ritual practices, as highly as Paul regarded such practices. For Paul Israel will ultimately be saved through God's eschatological Messiah. Romans 9-11 clearly shows that Paul expected all Israel to attain salvation. He appeared to regard the present 'disobedience' of the Jewish people as in fact an integral part of the divine plan for human salvation. There was even a way in which the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the expected Messiah of Israel could be seen as a 'Christological sacrifice', paralleling Jesus' separation from God the Father on Calvary. In this sense Paul can be termed the founder of Christianity. But in a far different way than the classical portrayal of him in this regard as one who expunged Judaism and its practices from Christian faith, who favoured Christ over Torah in an absolute sense.

### **Exhibition of Holy Books**

An impressive exhibition of the sacred writings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, at the British Library in London, gave visitors a wonderful opportunity to explore the art of the three religions as expressed through their holy books.

The exhibition was called 'Sacred: discover what we share', and at the entrance a display case held copies of the Christian Bible, the Jewish Torah and the Muslim Qur'an.

Other rare texts included the Codex Sinaiticus, from the fourth century – the earliest complete copy of the New Testament, the Golden Haggadah – a lavish manuscript of the Passover ritual, the Ma'il Qur'an, from the eighth century, and therefore one of the earliest surviving Qur'ans in the world.



## **Is it Possible to Teach the New Testament without Being Anti-semitic?\***

### **Part 1**

*by Jean Holm*

The question mark in the title is important. There are no easy answers.

Christians are heirs to 2,000 years of negative attitudes to Jews and Judaism based on the writings of the New Testament.

There have been periods in history when the Church actively encouraged brutal persecution of the Jews, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the great reformer, Martin Luther, was vitriolic in his preaching against Judaism.

In our own times anti-Judaism in the Christian Church is not far from the surface, and it is not difficult to trace at least one significant reason: Bible stories told to children, especially stories about the Easter events. A five year old commented, 'Poor Jesus got nails in his feet. The Jews did it.'

Years ago, at a CCJ meeting in Nottingham (England) a member of the audience said that as a child he had been taunted by other children: 'You killed Jesus.' The question was asked, How many others at the meeting had had that experience, and almost all the Jews raised their hands.

A Jewish friend of mine said that when he was growing up in Glasgow he was excused from Religious Education, but he had to sit at the back of the class listening to his religion being vilified.

We'll come back to the question of teaching children, but first I want to suggest that no one should be teaching the New Testament, whether

children or adults, without some understanding of Judaism in the New Testament period. In the past 50-60 years scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have revealed to us a picture of Judaism considerably different from the picture we get from the New Testament. To start with, it is much more complex than we used to think.

### **A diverse society**

The first century was a time of great ferment, with numerous groups making up the population of Palestine, as well as some differences between the Jews of Palestine and those from countries around the Mediterranean who were more open to Hellenistic – Greek – influence.

Of the groups in Palestine, we are familiar with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were not a religious sect, but the wealthy aristocratic families from whom were drawn the Temple priests. They lived in and around Jerusalem. They were conservative in religion, accepting the authority of the first five books of the Bible – the Torah – but not the authority of the Oral Torah, as the Pharisees did. So they did not believe in resurrection, which is not mentioned in the Written Torah.

Zealots were members of a movement who believed that God wanted them to oppose by force the Roman occupation of their land. Their heroes were Elijah and Judas Maccabaeus who stood up against tyrants. Zealots were mainly devout Jews but the movement also attracted a number of less religious men of violence.

Essenes are not mentioned in the New Testament, but we know about them from the writings of a contemporary Jewish historian (Josephus), a Jewish philosopher (Philo) and a Roman naturalist (Pliny). The Essenes were a sect who lived a strictly disciplined life, in cities and towns, but largely cut off from ordinary society – the Exclusive Brethren of the first century!

The Qumran Community – who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls – are thought to be an Essene-type community who had completely withdrawn from ordinary society and lived a monastic life near the Dead Sea. Unlike the rest of Judaism both before and since, they practised celibacy. They were led by priests but rejected the priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple. They studied the Torah, interpreted by priests. They regarded themselves as 'Sons of Light' and everyone else, Jews as well as gentiles, as 'Sons of Darkness'. They believed in the imminent approach of the Messianic age, though

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\* From an address given to a meeting of the Auckland CCJ, April 2008.

they looked for the coming of two messiahs, with the priestly Messiah taking precedence over the royal Messiah.

Another group consisted of those who believed that a Jewish teacher from Galilee – Jesus of Nazareth – was the longed-for Messiah.

The term *am ha'aretz* (lit. people of the land) referred to the mass of the Jewish people who sat more lightly to the law of the religion and were not associated with any of the groups within Judaism.

## The Pharisees

I have left the Pharisees till last because they are the most important group for our purposes. They attract most of the criticism in the New Testament, but actually they were the most devout Jewish sect.

There were only about 6,000 Pharisees at the time of Jesus, but their significance was out of all proportion to their numbers. In contrast to the Sadducees, whose influence was mainly in the Temple at Jerusalem, the Pharisees' influence was mainly in the synagogues. There would be synagogues in every town and village in Palestine, and in every centre in the Diaspora where there were at least ten adult male Jews.

Pharisaism was a lay movement. Its members based their religion on both the Written Law – the Torah – and the Oral Law, which had developed as a means of applying the Written Law (which dated from centuries earlier) to changing conditions. Most of the Scribes were Pharisees. They are sometimes referred to as Lawyers in English translations of the Bible. They copied the Law, interpreted it and taught it, mainly in the synagogues.

It was the Pharisees' form of religion that enabled them to continue when Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed in 70CE.

The Pharisees emphasised righteousness – being right with God – by doing God's will, which had been revealed in the Torah.

The translation of Torah by the English word 'Law' is misleading. We think of law in the context of a legal system, ie, a set of laws imposed by an authority, with punishments for infringements of the laws. Torah in Judaism is guidance for living. As a commentary on the biblical Book of Numbers said: 'Observing the Torah was the Jews' response to the God who had chosen them, who had made a covenant with them, and who dwells with them.'

## Individual responsibility

There is no central authority in Judaism. Each person decides which aspects of Torah he or she will observe, eg, in relation to Kashrut (the food laws), Shabbat (Sabbath) observance, observing festivals and fasts – individual responsibility. The *Mishnah*, the codification of the Oral Law, compiled about 200CE, is a discussion rather than a legal document. Two examples: In relation to the boundaries of the Sabbath, we read, 'The School of Shammai say: Ink, dyestuff, or vetches may not be soaked [on a Friday] unless there is time for them to be [wholly] soaked the same day. And the School of Hillel permit it.' (Shabbat. 1:5). In relation to the beginning of Passover, we read, 'If the 14<sup>th</sup> falls on a Sabbath all *hametz* must be removed before the Sabbath. So R. Meir. But the Sages say... R. Eliezer b. R. Zadok says...'

Some examples which illustrate that Judaism's attitude to the Law is not legalistic: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul', also familiar to Christians (Psalm 19:7).

A quote from the Talmud: 'Charity is equal to all the other precepts [of the Law] put together' (B.B.9a).

A quote from *Pirke Avot*, (Ethics of the Fathers), a collection of sayings: 'Simon the Just was one of the last survivors of the Great Synagogue. He used to say, Upon three things the world is based: upon the Torah, upon the Temple service, and upon the practice of charity' (I:2).

And from the Talmud: 'Whoever practises charity and justice is as though he filled the whole world with loving-kindness' (Suk.49b).

A number of the clashes between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Gospels refer to the Sabbath. We read that when the Pharisees complained that Jesus was desecrating the Sabbath, he rebuked them by saying, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'. It's likely that Jesus was reminding the Pharisees of their own teaching. For example, two quotes from Jewish writings: 'The Sabbath is God's greatest gift to man', and 'The Sabbath was given over to man and not man to the Sabbath' (Mek. Kc Tisa 5)

In the Gospels the Jews, and in particular the Pharisees, are criticised for being insincere, hypocritical, especially in prayer. However, their own literature includes discussion of the importance of intention, eg, 'The Holy One, blessed be he, requires the heart', and 'Do not

make your prayers routine' (*Pirke Avot* II:18), and 'He who makes his voice loud in prayer is one of those of little faith'.

I'm not suggesting that all Pharisees lived up to the highest ideals of their religion. Leo Baeck, a great Jewish teacher and writer, said in his book *The Pharisees and Other Essays*: 'Wherever an ideal of saintliness is erected, there the sanctimonious are always to be found . . . the "painted ones" as the Talmud calls them.'

The Pharisees were well aware of such dangers. They designed their own classification:

'There are seven types of Pharisee:

The shoulder Pharisee, who parades his virtue,

The wait-a-little Pharisee, who temporises,

The bruised Pharisee, who bangs into a wall in his anxiety to avoid looking at a woman,

The pestle Pharisee, with his head bowed down in mock humility,

The reckoning Pharisee, calculating his virtues,

The God-fearing Pharisee,

The God-loving Pharisee.

Only the last two are commended.'

It is ironic that the Pharisees are the villains in the New Testament when their teaching was closer to that of Jesus than that of any other group.

The early Church was a Jewish Church. Jesus was a Jew, as were his disciples and most of those who followed him. The first Christians worshipped the same God as the Jews, had the same Bible, attended the synagogue on the Sabbath as well as meeting in house groups on Sunday, etc.

Of course the early Church did not remain so completely Jewish, especially after Paul travelled as a missionary to centres around the Mediterranean and gentiles joined the Church. This caused division as some Jewish Christians claimed that gentiles could not become Christians without first becoming Jews. Acts describes a Council held in Jerusalem to settle the question.

## **Development of the New Testament**

Those who teach the New Testament need to know about first century Judaism, but it also helps if they recognise the significance of the way in which the New Testament developed.

The earliest New Testament writings are Paul's letters, dating from about the fifties. They were never intended to be treated as scripture – they were written to deal with current issues in the churches around the Mediterranean that Paul had visited or was going to visit. He doesn't describe anything of Jesus' life and ministry, apart from establishing Jesus' Jewishness: Galatians 4:4 'Born of a woman, born under the law'. And there is no mention of the Jews betraying Jesus or of being responsible for his death. Jesus' death to Paul was part of the divine plan.

The four gospels do deal with Jesus' life and ministry, his death and resurrection. The earliest gospel, Mark, was written in the 60s or 70s, with Matthew and Luke about 20 years later, followed by John. So, for the first 30-40 years of the Church's existence, stories about Jesus circulated orally. This material was in the form of separate small units – pericopes – which were later used by the gospel writers to construct their accounts.

The gospels demonstrate the growing tension through the first century between the movement that developed into Christianity and its Jewish parent. For example, when Matthew uses pericopes from Mark about the Jews, he intensifies Jewish guilt.

The separation into Christianity and what became Rabbinic Judaism was not only slow, it was piecemeal. A fascinating example comes from the end of the first century. Until then the Hebrew Bible (which was also the Christian Bible) consisted of two major sections: the Law and the Prophets. There were other writings that were revered, but they didn't have canonical authority. At Jabneh, the home of the Palestinian Rabbinic Academy, a meeting of Jewish scholars fixed the boundaries of the third section – the Writings. In spite of growing hostility towards Judaism, Christians accepted the Jewish decision, and the Christian Old Testament contains the same books as the Jewish Bible.

Many Christians tend to take for granted that one just needs to put a Bible into a person's hand, but I hope I have illustrated that the New Testament has to be read in the context of first century Judaism. Apart from systematic teaching there are many opportunities for incidental teaching, eg, reminders that Jesus was a Jew, and that therefore the statement 'the Jews opposed Jesus is distinctly odd; Jesus was opposed by some fellow-Jews and supported by others.

## Jewish-Christian Relations in Israel

Christians need to be more aware when they are reading the New Testament. There are numerous occasions when those who supported Jesus are referred to as 'the people' or 'the crowd', and those who opposed him as Jews or Pharisees or scribes. For example, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem accompanied by a 'great crowd'. They are obviously Jews. Not only are they on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, but they shouted what could only be spoken by Jews waiting for the Messiah: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David that is coming'.

We tend not to notice the occasions when the Pharisees or their scribes are shown in a good light. For example, 'The Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him' (Luke 13:3).

An interesting example is a story that is in both Mark and Luke about a scribe who asked Jesus a question. The questions are slightly different (in Mark 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' In Luke: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?') but the answer in both accounts is 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength and you must love your neighbour as yourself'. In Mark's account, Jesus gives the answer, and the scribe comments: 'Well said, teacher', but in Luke's account, Jesus asks the scribe, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' and the scribe gives the answer, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-6 – Love the Lord your God . . .and Leviticus 19:18 – Love your neighbour as yourself. Ironically, in the liturgy of the main Christian denominations the two commandments are ascribed to Jesus without any mention that they come from the Jewish scriptures.



(Part 2: Suggestions for an approach to the New Testament for children and young people will be included in the Summer 2009 issue.)

The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) explains on its website ([www.icci.org.il](http://www.icci.org.il)) its vision and its activities.

Religiously-motivated violence has been a significant deterrent to the progress of the Middle East peace process, and yet little to no attention has been paid to the Israeli and Palestinian religious communities, and few attempts have been made to utilise religion as a tool for peace and reconciliation.

The mission of the ICCI is, therefore, to harness the teachings and values of the three Abrahamic faiths and transform religion's role from a force of division and extremism into a source of reconciliation, coexistence, and understanding. To accomplish this, ICCI works with youth, women, and religious leaders to promote Jewish-Arab coexistence and peace-building projects.

Founded in January 1991, it comprises, museums, universities, and other inter-religious organisations. It also serves as the Israel chapter of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and is a member of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ).

The programmes combine dialogue, study, and action projects which demonstrate to the wider community the tangible benefits to be gained from working together towards common goals.

Participants are carefully recruited based on their potential to impact their respective religious communities.

The vision is real change led by grass-roots faith communities.

Under their leaders' guidance, the members of the different faith communities will work together to address issues of common concern, such as poverty relief, the empowerment of women, and environmental protection.

In the long term, as non-violence and mutual cooperation among local Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities becomes a model for society as a whole, we envisage a transforming of the public discourse which will empower peace-builders in the region to effect lasting change.



## **The Wellington Council of Christians and Jews Turns 20**

*by Jim van Praag.*

Late in 1987 the Wellington Regional Jewish Council decided to promote the formation of a Council of Christians and Jews. Shirley Payes and myself were asked to bring this about and a seminar was organised in March 1988 for the purpose of acquainting non-Jews with the Jewish religion. The Revd Owen Robinson, a retired Presbyterian Minister, and my neighbour, assisted with a list of Christians to be invited and the seminar proved most successful. All those attending supported the idea of establishing a Wellington Council of Christians and Jews.

The Wellington Council of Churches authorised the Revd Owen Robinson and the Revd Ed Boyd, a Methodist Minister, to approach a small number of Christian leaders to form part of the council. Great care was taken – and still is – to ensure that those selected were in good standing with their respective churches and synagogues.

The initial Council of Christians and Jews in Wellington consisted of myself as chairman (Temple Sinai), the Revd Owen Robinson as secretary/treasurer, and, as members, Rabbi Moshe Berlove (Beth-El Synagogue), the Revd Ed Boyd, Shirley Payes (Beth-El Synagogue), the Revd Father Anthony O’Sullivan (Catholic), the Revd Peter Stuart (Anglican) and Kurt Schwarz (Temple Sinai). The Revd Dr James Veitch and Janet Salek (Beth-El) joined shortly after the Council’s formation. Rabbi Berlove made a tremendous contribution to discussions, adding

greatly to the Council’s success.

The Revd Owen Robinson and myself wrote the constitution, which, to the best of my knowledge, is still standing.

The main aims of the Council are to foster understanding, friendship and trust between Christians and Jews; to help both Christians and Jews to understand their common heritage and appreciate one another’s distinctive beliefs and practices, and to discuss and, when appropriate, to speak out on issues of mutual concern.

Over the years Council members have grown to trust and respect one another, so that even controversial concerns can be freely and comfortably discussed.

The Council meets monthly and sponsors Bible Studies (e.g. Book of Jonah, Book of Daniel, Ruth, Job, Psalms (e.g. revised Anglican Prayer Book) and seminars (on ecology and social issues, for instance). Associate membership is available for those wishing to support the Council and be informed of its activities. The Council is affiliated – as is the Auckland Council – to the International Council of Christians and Jews.

In 1991, at the time of the Gulf War – with Israel threatened by chemical war, its people in gas masks and sealed rooms, its cities under random bombardment from Iraqi Scud missiles – the members of the Council of Christians and Jews expressed their solidarity with the Wellington Jewish Community, deeply worried and distressed about Israel and Jewish survival, by taking a prominent part in a special service at the Beth-El Synagogue organised by Rabbi Chaim Dovrat.

In November 1992 the members of the council assembled at short notice, following an appeal from Rabbi Larry Brown, to lift their voice in protest and dismay following unsettling television reports about a pub game offensive to Jewish sensitivities with respect to the Holocaust.

In these ways and many more, the Wellington Council of Christian and Jews demonstrated its value as a forum for Christian-Jewish discussion, as a source of solidarity for Wellington Jews, and as a means of deepening harmony among Jewish and Christian communities.

I relinquished the Chair after some years when I found my theological knowledge lacking the depth to contribute significantly to the deliberations.



## Yom Hashoah

By David Golinkin

Yom Hashoah is marked on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan – a week after the seventh day of Passover, and a week before Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day for Israel's fallen soldiers). It marks the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

The date was selected by the Knesset in 1951. Although the date was established by the Israeli government, it has become a day commemorated by Jewish communities and individuals worldwide.

In the early 1950s, education about the Holocaust (Shoah, meaning catastrophe in Hebrew) emphasised the suffering inflicted on millions of European Jews by the Nazis. Surveys conducted in the late 1950s indicated that young Israelis did not sympathise with the victims of the Holocaust, since they believed that European Jews were 'led like sheep for slaughter'. The Israeli educational curriculum began to shift the emphasis to documenting how Jews resisted their tormentors through 'passive resistance' – retaining their human dignity in the most unbearable conditions – and by 'active resistance', fighting the Nazis in the ghettos and joining underground partisans who fought the Third Reich in its occupied countries.

Many Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox rabbis have never endorsed this memorial day, nor have they formally rejected it. There is no change in the daily religious services in some Orthodox synagogues on Yom Hashoah.

Rituals associated with Yom Hashoah are still being created and vary widely among synagogues.

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\* From an article in *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. XXXVII, no 4, 1984, reproduced online in 'Jewish Virtual Library' and reprinted with permission.

There have been numerous attempts to compose a special liturgy (text and music) for Yom Hashoah. In 1988 the Reform movement published *Six Days of Destruction*. This book, co-authored by Elie Wiesel and Rabbi Albert Friedlander, was meant to be viewed as a 'sixth scroll', a modern addition to the five scrolls that are read on specific holidays.

While Yom Hashoah rituals are still in flux, there is no question that this day holds great meaning for Jews worldwide. The over-whelming theme that runs through all observances is the importance of remembering – recalling the victims of this catastrophe, and ensuring that such a tragedy never happens again. The Shoah posed an enormous challenge to Judaism and raised many questions. Can one be a believing Jew after the Holocaust? Where was God? How can one have faith in humanity? Facing this recent event in history, does it really matter if one practises Judaism? Jewish theologians and laity have struggled with these questions for decades. The very fact that Jews still identify Jewishly, practise their religion – and have embraced the observance of Yom Hashoah answers some of the questions raised by the Holocaust.



David Zwartz at Makara. *NZ Jewish Chronicle Photo.*

## Remembering the Holocaust

On January 27 this year about forty people held a brief ceremony at the Holocaust Memorial at Makara cemetery in Wellington. It was organised by the Wellington Holocaust Research and Education Centre. The speaker was the chair of the Wellington Regional Jewish Council, David Zwartz, who said, 'This is not just a day for Jews to remember, but for all humanity'.

January 27 is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. It has been observed in the UK as Holocaust Memorial Day since 2001, and in 2005 the United Nations passed a resolution calling on all countries to recognise this day each year. The resolution included these words: 'Remembering the Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of one-third of the Jewish people, along with countless members of other minorities, will forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice.'

Many countries now observe Holocaust Remembrance Day, with a variety of educational and other activities.

The UK has a highly organised set of activities, including naming a different theme each year. For 2008 it has been 'Imagine – Remember, Reflect, React'. This year over 470 events took place, organised by schools, faith groups, local councils, racial equality and community groups. These events included Civic services, Poetry and art competitions, Interfaith services, Amateur dramatic productions, School assemblies (led by students who had visited Auschwitz), Photography exhibitions, Film showings, Discussions on identity and attacks on identity, Tree-planting ceremonies, Candle lighting, Wreath-laying services, Poster displays.

Such a varied set of events would not be possible without a great deal of help, but the UK Holocaust Memorial Day Trust produces resources for activities, in areas such as artwork, film, music, readings, book group activities, survivor stories, local activities guidelines, and useful online links.

### **Resources for Book Group Activities.**

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has produced discussion points for reading book groups who wish to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. They are based on the following books, listed according to their appropriateness for different age groups.

#### **Primary students**

Jeanne Wilson and Tony Ross: *Susan Laughs*

Shulamith Levey Oppenheim: *The Lily Cupboard*

Mary Hoffman and Kann Littlewood: *The Colour of Home*

Michael Murporgo: *The Mozart Question*

#### **Secondary students**

John Boyne: *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

Eric Heuvel, Ruud Van Der Rol and Lies

Schippers: *The Search*

Benjamin Zephaniah: *Refugee Boy*

Julie Mertus, Jasmina Tesanovic, Habiba

Metikos and Rada Bonc: *The Suitcase: Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*

D. Dina Friedman: *Escaping into the Night*

Anne Frank: *Diary of a Young Girl*

Pam Jenoff: *Kommandant's Girl*

#### **Adults**

Wladyslaw Szpilman: *The Pianist*

Thomas Kineally: *Schindler's Ark*

John Boyne: *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

Irene Nemirovsky: *Suite Francaise*

Anne Frank: *Diary of a Young Girl*

David Baddiel: *The Secret Purposes*

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## **Learning Curve Auschwitz Day Trip For Students\***

Two sixth-formers from every school in England are to visit Auschwitz to learn about the Holocaust, under a government-funded initiative to help ensure the lessons of the Nazi genocide live on with a new generation.

The British Schools Minister said he wants the teenagers who take part to educate their classmates and communities in turn by giving them their own accounts of the death camp in Poland where more than one million Jews, Roma, Sinti, gay, disabled and black people were put to death.

The British government will fund the greater majority of the cost of each student's trip. While their schools must find 100 pounds stg (A\$247), the Education Department will find the remaining 200 pounds per trip over the next three years.

Teenagers selected for the visit will meet an Auschwitz survivor, be shown around the camp's barracks and crematoriums and see registration documents of inmates, piles of hair, shoes, clothes and other items seized by the Nazis.

They will also hear first-hand accounts of life and death in the camp and end the visit at a memorial service.

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\* From an account in *Scene*, the newsletter of the Australian Council of Christians and Jews, March 2008.



## Intra-faith Dialogue\*

by Raymond Apple

What Samuel Huntington called the clash of civilisations happens *between* civilisations happens also *within* civilisations. The rifts are not only external, between one religion and another. They are internal too. We all seem to have many extremes and little middle ground.

We have problems as to the legitimacy of members of other groups within our own faith communities. Which is the real Christian – the Catholic Christian, the Protestant Christian, or someone different from either? Which is the real Jew – the Orthodox Jew (and of which shade of orthodoxy?), the Progressive Jew (and how progressive?), the secular Jew (even though the believer thinks secular Judaism an oxymoron)? Which is the real Muslim – the Sunni, the Shiite or some alternative expression of Islam?

Even more important, which of the range of internal attitudes found in each group should and can become the norm in a modernist world – the one that embraces modernity, the one that rejects it, the one that attempts a synthesis? Every religion has its fault fractures, its modernists and archaists: the one group seeking an accommodation with the contemporary world, the other preferring to recreate the past. This is not identical with the division between what in Judaism tends to be called orthodoxy and reform, since not every orthodoxy is uncomfortable with modernity and not every reform endorses every modernist whim.

The intra-faith debate sometimes becomes quite fierce. Despite the differences that divide one internal group from another, they probably all

share sufficient allegiance to an overall norm that they might well find that their conversations will allow some giving way and a reasonable *modus vivendi*.

We need an ethic of difference. I propose a five-point ethic:

**Identity** We may not always agree, but we are part of each other and we honour a heritage which has a range of interpretations.

**Honesty** We respect each other's point of view and accept that we all have a conscience and commitment to our heritage.

**Study** We will sit together to study our heritage and discover its nuances and how it handled differences in the past.

**Courtesy** We will keep the conversation, discourse or debate on a civilised, courteous level and never indulge in name-calling or mutual denigration.

**Credibility** We will agree where we can, but disagree if the credibility of our heritage requires it, in which case we will agree on how to acknowledge and articulate the range of views we espouse.

The internal rifts may not entirely disappear. Indeed having a range of views is a sign of life and vitality. But the occasional ferocity will have been softened and healed by the application of love and respect.

In the long run the God we affirm, each in our own distinctive way, as the ground and guarantor of ultimate truth, will reveal the answers.

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\* Taken from Rabbi Apple's keynote address at the Sydney ICCJ conference in July 2007.



# Book Review

by Terry Wall

## To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility

By Jonathan Sacks

(London, Continuum, 2005, pp 273)

Since 1991 Jonathan Sacks has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. Among his previous books, *The Dignity of Difference* addressed the issue of how to avoid the clash of civilisations. In that book he asked, 'Can we make space for one another?' Jonathan Sacks has earned a reputation as one whose words must be taken seriously. He is an erudite and practical spokesman for Judaism.

His latest book, *To Heal a Fractured World*, is a reaction to the bad press that religion is receiving in the world. At the outset he states that 'this work is my personal protest against suicide-bombers'. (p.9) He seeks to outline the positive contribution that Judaism can make to the healing of the brokenness of the world.

Sacks rejects the view that the world is the way it is because of the divine will. He makes a strong case for claiming that Judaism promotes the asking of questions about the way the world is. Indeed he insists that Judaism 'was born in an act of defiance against the great empires of the ancient world'. (p.18) On this insight Sacks builds a vision of Judaism being a religion that requires critique of social structures, especially those that oppress.

Central to this approach is the biblical witness. Sacks sees the scriptures as the revelation that God insists on sharing responsibility with the human community. Law plays an essential role in this, and so do the prophets who were first to have the ideal of shalom. Developing his ethic of human responsibility before God, Sacks engages with the biblical narrative in illuminating studies of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, the tower of Babel and Abraham. Each demonstrates in different ways a growing awareness of personal and corporate responsibility.

Theology and ethics can never be separated. There are fascinating discussions contrasting Plato's God and the God of the Bible. Sacks

proposes as an overarching theme in the Hebrew Bible 'the story of the transfer of initiative from heaven to earth, from God to humankind, from caring father to wayward but slowly maturing child'. (p. 155) There is no escape from the ethics of responsibility.

Placed alongside the biblical dimension is the witness of people to healing our contemporary fractured world. Sacks believes that we need text-people as much as we need textbooks. He draws on a wide experience of encounters with people who in their own areas work in creative and healing ways in education, business and health care.

It is these stories that bring the book to life and demonstrate how ancient insights are being lived out in ways that provide hope and transformation.

The book is deeply in touch with the Jewish tradition of social ethics and is an excellent introduction to its riches. Particularly interesting for the present reviewer was the outline of the significance of Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria. Sacks focuses on three ideas of Luria: *tzimtzum*, God's contraction or hiding to leave space for the world, *shevirat ha-kelim*, breaking the vessels, which refers to God's light

being dispersed throughout creation, and *tikkun* which refers to healing a fragmented world. The relevance of these ideas is developed strongly.

Throughout the work there is a strong emphasis on the freedom God gives to creation. This entails God taking a risk on the outcome of creation. 'God suffers every time human beings wrong each other, yet is prepared to suffer rather than take back from mankind the gift of freedom...' (p. 199) God's gift of freedom has a radical edge in that it provides us with freedom to do evil.

Sacks has interesting discussions about the limits of law, and the difference between sage and saint. (p. 245) I wondered whether Christian faith would share Sacks' view that 'it is we, only we, who can defeat the evil in the human heart'. (p. 201) This work demonstrates how Judaism as a religion can contribute strongly to healing our fractured world. It shows the inextricable relationship between spirituality and justice. Finally we are reminded that Judaism is not only about what is thought, but also what is done, not only about being, but also about acting. I commend this book with enthusiasm.



# Women Take the Initiative

Twenty-one women gathered near Wellington earlier this year for an interfaith gathering. They came from five different faiths – Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith.

The day began with a welcome from MP Winnie Laban and Rabbi Johanna Hershenson, followed by women telling some of their family histories and their paths through their religion.

Christians talked about baptism and what it meant to the baby and the family. They talked about water as purification, cleansing and life.

Buddhists 'built' a shrine to the Buddha, explaining each step, and telling the story of their religion and beliefs.

Jews spoke of the Talmud and the Mishnah, and how the discussions date back thousands of years. They showed a tallit (prayer shawl), yarmulka (skullcap) and t'fillin (phylacteries).

Baha'is spoke of the oneness of God and religion and of their personal prayers through the day, and the balance between love, justice and understanding.

Muslims laid out two prayer mats and placed a copy of the Qur'an and prayer beads on a wooden book stand. They also talked of the oneness of God.

It was unanimously agreed that the group should meet again. Suggestions for themes included sharing food, discussion of life cycles, culture and dress and religious diversity.

*From an account in the New Zealand Jewish Chronicle, March 2008.*

## The Faith Club

'This book is the most honest and forthright interfaith dialogue I've seen.' - the conclusion by Marilyn McCaw, reviewing (for 'Jewish and Christian Scene' (Nov.-Dec. 2007) *The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew - Three Women Search for Understanding*.

In an effort to respond to their children's post-9/11 questions about world religion and faith, Ranya Idris, Suzanne Olive and Priscilla Warner began meeting for regular discussions. This led them to explore their own faith more deeply.

Their questions: What is it I believe and why? How much of my faith is really just cultural or habit? What stereotypes or prejudices do I carry? What stereotypes are applied to me and how do I feel about them? Does acknowledging or even participating in the rituals of another faith run counter to my stated beliefs? Can we all peacefully exist on this earth? What WAS God thinking in putting us here?

The authors wrestle with the issues of anti-Semitism, prejudice against Muslims, and pre-conceptions of Christians at a time when fundamentalists dominate the public face of Christianity.

The reviewer comments that this book is destined to spawn interfaith discussion groups in living rooms, churches, temples, mosques and other settings.



## New Interfaith Blog

The following notice which has been sent out introduces a new venture.

**New Blog:** <http://3faiths.org/> - Jews, Muslims and Christians working together

Dave Moskovitz (Jewish), Fr John D'Alton (Christian) and Mark Pedersen (Muslim) have started a new blog dedicated to telling the stories about positive interactions between the three Abrahamic faiths. Our aim is to provide a call to action as well as a critique of our own faiths, with a focus on breaking down stereotypes and making new paradigms of interaction, particularly drawing upon traditions of non-violence within each faith.

Do let us know if you have any news, stories, or other info you'd like to share.

Shalom / Peace / Salaam - Dave, John and Mark - The 3faiths.org team [dave@thinktank.co.nz](mailto:dave@thinktank.co.nz)

## News and Notes

### AUCKLAND

Auckland CCJ has had two public meetings since the Winter issue of *Massah*:

**Tuesday April 1**, at 7.30pm, at Beth Shalom Synagogue, 180 Manakau Rd, Epsom, **Jean Holm** spoke on **Is it possible to teach the New Testament without being anti-Semitic? Part 1**. (See pp. 7-10. Part 2, on teaching the young, will be in the Summer 2009 issue.)

**Sunday May 7**, at 7.30pm, at St John's College, 202 St Johns Road, Meadowbank, **The Revd Dr Tony Stroobant** spoke on **Jewish-Christian relations in the movies – a personal view**. This was a moving experience as the audience were reminded of older films, such as 'Chariots of Fire', through to modern ones, chosen from Dr Stroobant's extensive collection.

### Auckland Core Group meetings

*2008 dates for members*

#### Monday 21 July

9 Tirohanga Ave, Remuera  
(520 6439)

#### Monday 6 October

6/61A Birkdale Rd, Birkdale, North Shore.

#### Monday 10 November

87B Island Bay Rd, Birkenhead.  
(483 2450)

### WELLINGTON

Wellington CCJ has had one meeting since the Winter issue of *Massah*.

**Wednesday 14 May**, at Temple Sinai, **Prof. Bernard (Dov) Spolsky** spoke on **The Languages of Jerusalem: Then and Now**. He took the audience through Jerusalem's history as evidenced by its dominant languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Judezmo, Yiddish, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, English . . .

(The audio from the talk is available at <http://www.ccj.nz/wellington/media/20080516-bernard-spolsky-languages-of-jerusalem.mp3> or <http://snipurl.com/29iyn>).

Prof. Spolsky was born in Wellington but left in the 1950s in the course of an illustrious career which led to his becoming one of the world's leading Applied Linguists. He made aliyah in the early 1980s when he was appointed Professor of English at Bar Ilan University. He was in Wellington to receive an honorary degree from Victoria University.

## New Co-President

We welcome Rabbi Johanna Hershenson as the Jewish Co-President of the Wellington Council of Christians and Jews.

She has been Temple Sinai's Rabbi for the last two years. In that time she has become much loved and highly respected by her congregation and other community leaders in Wellington.

She is very involved in interfaith work, having presented at interfaith forums, and having been invited as an observer to the Asia Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue at Waitangi.

## New Rabbi

Beth Shalom Synagogue gained a new Rabbi this July, after an interregnum of nearly two years. Rabbi Dean Shapiro has just arrived from Los Angeles, though he was here for the High Holy Days in 2007. We look forward to getting to know him.

## Parliament of Religions

There will be a conference of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne December 3-9 2009. The original conference was held in Chicago in 1893, and marked a milestone in relations among the world's faiths. The centenary was celebrated in 1993 with three conferences, held in the USA, India and Asia. Since then conferences have been held every five years.

The theme for the 2009 conference is 'Make a World of Difference: hearing each other, healing the earth'. Four hundred and fifty activities are being planned, including social and tours programmes.

Conferences of the Parliament attract large numbers of people; the Dalai Lama has already confirmed that he will be attending next year.

Information from:

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 70 East Lane St., Suite 205, Chicago IL 60601, USA.

[program@parliamentofreligions.org](mailto:program@parliamentofreligions.org)  
[www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org)

# Times and Seasons

Important holy days for this calendar year

## Judaism

5768

Purim	March 21
Pesach	April 20-27
Yom HaShoah	May 2
Yom Ha'atzmaut	May 8
Shavuot	June 9-10
Tisha B'av	August 10

5768

Rosh Hashanah	September 30 - October 1
Yom Kippur	October 9
Sukkot	October 14-21 (Reform Judaism)
	October 14-22 (Orthodox Judaism)
Simchat Torah	October 21 (Reform Judaism)
	October 22 (Orthodox Judaism)
Chanukah	December 21-28

## Christianity

2008

Ash Wednesday	February 6
Palm Sunday	March 16
Good Friday	March 21
Easter Day	March 23
Ascension Day	May 1
Day of Pentecost	May 11
Trinity Sunday	June 3
All Saints	November 1
All Souls	November 2
Advent Sunday	November 30
Christmas Day	December 25