

# The GREAT VINE

ROSH HASHANAH - 5782 / 2021-2022



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY





GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
SYDNEY

Message from

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC  
Governor of New South Wales**

I am delighted to send warm greetings to The Great Synagogue and the entire Jewish community of New South Wales as it celebrates Rosh Hashana 5782. I have always felt a warm connection to The Great Synagogue and have enjoyed my many visits to your beautiful sanctuary.

The past year has been challenging for everyone as we continued to confront the difficulties thrown up by the pandemic. As we re-establish a safe degree of normalcy here in New South Wales, our thoughts turn to communities around the world.

Religious communities, including Jewish communities and their synagogues, have played an enormously important part in maintaining all the policies and practices that are so important to keeping us all safe. They have enhanced connection and community that are so essential for our wellbeing.

On behalf of the people of the State of New South Wales, I express my thanks for this leadership and commitment that has benefitted each of us.

As we enter a new Jewish year, I pray that we will all enjoy a successful and healthy twelve months to come and that God will grant every blessing to our State, to our nation and to people of faith around the world.

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC  
Governor of New South Wales**



## Acknowledgment of Country

*Our Synagogue stands on the traditional lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We acknowledge and give thanks to the Elders and Traditional Custodians who have cared for this land for thousands of years. May we walk with care on this land which has provided a home for our Jewish community. We offer respect to the descendants of the first peoples whose presence and cultures are vital to the nation we share.*



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
ביתנו הוא ביתך

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From The President



David Lewis speaking at the Live@The Great Concert.



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

DAVID LEWIS

# The most Unusual of Years

## What a year it has been – like no other in our 143-year history.

During the last 18 months we have, for the very first time in our history, been compelled to close The Great to services due to a pandemic the likes of which none of us have seen before. Significant changes to our lifestyle have been necessary and this has been painful for the congregation.

As I write this at the end of July, we have again been forced to close and we are unsure when we can resume services.

However, out of adversity comes strength and I am greatly heartened by the way we have all supported each other. We have pivoted to provide a wide variety of online lectures and gatherings during the toughest of times and our rabbis and staff have done an absolutely amazing job. As a community we have responded to each other with great kindness and support and that is clearly the true

measure of a community. Thank you to all of you for helping others.

### Thank You!

There are so many people to thank. Rabbi Elton and Hinda, who have been an inspiration with their tireless efforts. Rabbi Phil and Abra also have continued to innovate and build programs for The Great, and we are all excited that Rabbi Phil has chosen to remain another two years as our Assistant Rabbi and Chazzan. I have thoroughly enjoyed working closely with both rabbis over the past twelve months and look forward to many more.

Rabbi Richter has continued to provide us with his outstanding leining throughout the year and I would like to clearly acknowledge our deep appreciation.

Your Executive team of Max Freedman, our Senior Vice-President, Lauren Ryder, Vice-President and Simon Havas, Treasurer, have all

been amazing. In addition, Eli Green has acted as Assistant Treasurer and has provided Simon with incredible support. Whilst a role on the TGS Executive is demanding, I know that my friends will join me in acknowledging the great sense of achievement we have all experienced.

Our Board members have all fulfilled very significant roles as well, with Darryl Green managing several important projects, Fay Frischer spearheading communal outreach, Benjamin Hansen overseeing the long overdue update of our HR functions and Dan Abbott assisting with our Heritage Floor Space application.

Then there is our office staff without whom nothing would get done. Our General Manager Lynn Niselow has been outstanding together with Ilana Modell, Ezra Wexler and Justin Green, who also doubles as our Choirmaster, have all gone above and beyond their remit and have shown great love for our



David Lewis, speaking at the Law Service.



David Lewis with Daniel Krochmalik.



David Lewis and Justice Stephen Rothman AM.

community. I know that this is not just a job as you have all demonstrated that unmistakable dedication to excellence and we all thank you most sincerely. Our Accounts Manager, Judith Indyk has experienced a most difficult year as Covid has made her role far harder. Thank you too Judith for all you do for the Shule.

**Financial Security – Heritage Floor Space and The Foundation**

Last September I noted that the enhancement of the financial resources of The Great Synagogue would be one of my major considerations. Whilst progress has been slow, we have moved forward, and we confidently expect to achieve our objectives.

We have lodged a detailed and complex application to the City of Sydney Council relating to the Heritage Floor Space of The Great Synagogue and, whilst this is taking longer than we had hoped, we remain confident that we will achieve a strong result for The Great.

In July this year we finally achieved Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status for The Great Synagogue Foundation after almost four years of planning and preparation. Later this year, pandemic permitting, we will launch The Foundation, and recognise those

who will be the founding contributors.

The Foundation will be responsible for raising funds to sustain and grow The Great Synagogue over the next 143 years.

**Events**

Prior to the recent lockdown we enjoyed a number of high quality cultural and community events at The Great, none more so than the Live@The Great Concerts.

The Concert on Tuesday 2 June arranged by Vladimir Fanshil featuring Simon Tedeschi and Andrew Haveron was an incredible success with over 450 in attendance. The lighting of the Shule coupled with an inspirational musical performance made for a magical night and there was a very strong positive reaction from members and attendees.

We had another concert planned for 10 August with concert pianist Konstantin Shamray and the world-famous conductor and cellist Umberto Clerici. Unfortunately, we had to postpone this event until we are able to fill the sanctuary once more.

**Disabled Access**

For many years we have been unable to offer proper disabled access to all levels of the Shule. During the past

year we have worked on a number of proposals to rectify that position and whilst Covid has delayed us, we hope to make progress so that everyone can access not only the Women's Gallery but all the way down to the Israel Green Auditorium.

**Communal Growth**

Membership of the Shule continues to increase and this is the most pleasing report I can make. It is important to note that these new members are, on the whole, not those who have left other communities but rather families either returning to The Great or joining after having no previous long-term membership. As a community what we want to see is more people joining more Shules and that is the win/win position for all of us.

Finally, I look forward to serving our wonderful community and hope that I will have the opportunity to continue to improve the fantastic Shule that we all love so much.

Caroline and I want to wish you and your families a happy and healthy new year and a speedy return to our wonderful synagogue.

See you in Shule! 🌸



From The Rabbi



Rabbi Elton lighting the Chanukiah at Parliament House.



Taking part in the campaign to encourage vaccination.



Rabbi Elton and family.

# Day by Day



RABBI DR BENJAMIN ELTON

**One of the great contributions of Judaism is its ability to infuse every moment with holiness. Spirituality is not relegated to a specific place or time, instead it finds a home in every aspect of life and activity.**

Judaism testifies that every moment is infinitely valuable and full of potential. Eating, drinking, talking, walking, thinking and even playing can all become holy. That means that although the past and the future are important, nothing is as important as the present. Above all, the moment matters.

That is a lesson that I have learned more intensely over this past year, 5781. The previous year had a very different atmosphere. When Covid hit we moved quickly to support our community during lockdown, and although there were difficulties. Indeed tragedies, at the same time, it was exciting. By the end of 5780 the

situation was improving and as we moved through 5781 most normal arrangements returned. But this brought about new challenges, which in some ways were much harder than launching online activities or planning amended High Holiday services. How could we restore the old energy, enthusiasm and momentum? Covid forced a pause, and as Shules all over the world have learned, it was unrealistic to expect to bounce back like a piece of elastic, and that we were all going to pick up exactly where we left off. More would be required.

That is when I realised the overriding importance of the present. This past year has been about making the most of the moment, whatever that moment comprises. As soon as we could hold services, whatever the restrictions on numbers or the requirement to distance, we did so. In whatever format the Choir could sing, we returned them to Shabbat and Yom Tov. If there could not be a Kiddush to celebrate a simcha



Hinda and Rabbi becoming citizens.



Live@The Great June 1, Musicians and Rabbi Elton.



Rabbi Elton weekday morning.

in the Israel Green Auditorium because of its size, we enjoyed a boxed Kiddush in the Shule. The Law Service needed to take place with masks on, so that is what we did. If men had to stand away from the Sefer Torah for their Aliyah, that is what we arranged.

Some events could take place exactly as they might any other year. We were all delighted by the return of the Communal Second Seder, which sold out. There was a beautiful atmosphere and everyone enjoyed coming together, especially as last Pesach had been so lonely. The next morning we were honoured to welcome the Premier to the Synagogue and for the first time we used the Bimah in front of the Ark instead of the temporary Bimah set up between the pulpit and the centre block to aid social distancing. The Choir was back to full strength in its Gallery.

Seven weeks later Shavuot was the liveliest in my six years at the Shule. Every service had something special about it, whether it was the bat mitzvah on the first evening, the kids' parade and ice cream party on the first morning, the learning at the Kaplans' on the second evening or the brunch on the second morning. The children's event on Shavuot set us up well for the welcome return of Youth Shabbat, organised by Rabbi Kaplan, with children and teens taking as large a role as possible and including both girls and boys. It saw a wonderful turn out of our members,

their children and grandchildren.

Sometimes we had to make last minute changes. Due to a small outbreak in May a choral service with a congregation could not go ahead for Yom Yerushalayim, so instead it was recorded and put online. And of course at the end of June another lockdown arrived and we returned to virtual services and other offerings. By now we have learned to be quick on our feet, and even though a return to lockdown was frustrating and disappointing, we made sure we provided for the community.

It turned out that doing the best we could in each moment continued to be recognised, and once again this year we welcomed dozens of new members and celebrated the whole range of semachot, births and namings, bar and bat mitzvah, aufrufs and weddings. Some were shifted or amended, and the June lockdown meant that one had to be postponed, but we will make sure our families can celebrate as they would wish, consistent with the circumstances we face.

The successes of the past year, especially given the difficult conditions, are down to an outstanding team. The President, Executive and Board consistently give so much on a voluntary basis. Rabbi Phil Kaplan, our Associate Rabbi, masterminded not only Youth Shabbat but also our highly successful Conversion Program and Bar and Bat Mitzvah Program,

as well as excellently filling the role of Chazzan, and all the other duties of a Second Minister of a large and busy congregation. Abra has made a great contribution, through teaching, hosting and her warm presence. Rabbi Richter is the ever-outstanding Torah reader and Children's Service leader. Jana Vytrhlik continues to care for our Museum collection. The staff led by Lynn Niselow, our general manager are a highly efficient team enabling the Shule to run with great effectiveness.

I give my deepest personal thanks to Hinda, who enables me to do my job as effectively as I can and does so much herself. We have marked two important milestones this year. We welcomed our son Solomon Isaac (Salo) and were overwhelmed by the warmth and support of the congregation – thank you all! We also became Australian citizens and marked a further transition as full members of this wonderful nation, of which The Great Synagogue is a cherished and worthy flagship.

As we enter another year, we can hope and pray for the full restoration of normal life, and with it the wisdom and the strength to make the most of every moment that comes, and to keep ourselves, our family, our community and our Synagogue strong. We do not have the blessing of living in easy times, but if we apply ourselves day by day, the future will be very bright indeed! Shana tova umetuka! 🌟



RABBI PHIL

# Two Years in Sydney

**July 2021 marked two years since Abra and I arrived in Sydney and I began my work as Associate Rabbi at The Great Synagogue. This past year has had its ups and downs no doubt, but I can honestly say I believe we are in a much better place than we were this time last year, and the future looks incredibly bright.**

The finish line of the pandemic seems to be getting closer and closer. We have been very blessed here in Australia – things have felt normal for many months now and our day-to-day living and our health has been spared what many around the world have suffered.

On a personal note, this year has been filled with tremendous joy and discovery for my family. Roe was born in October 2020 which gave me the privilege of becoming a father – a lifelong dream of mine! I can say unequivocally that being a dad is the best thing I've ever done. Roe brings so much light to my and Abra's life.

Of course, with this immense joy also comes a bit of sadness. It hurts that our parents and siblings overseas can't get the nachas and delight that they deserve from seeing Roe in person and hugging and kissing him. I know many of our congregants have faced the same challenges and pain that comes with not seeing family. Please God, the pandemic will be fully behind us soon, travel will open and we will all get to see our loved ones abroad.

While this year in general has had its mix of joys and challenges, it has been overwhelmingly positive. For several months services returned to normal. We had the Choir at full strength each Shabbat and kiddush resumed being an important social, communal space each week that we all very much enjoy. We enjoyed a lovely choral service with Chazzan Menachem Feldman for the end of Pesach and for Yom Yerushalayim.

We all hope that we will soon return to normal service conditions. The Choir had so much fun making music videos at the start of the pandemic, and the community enjoyed them so much, that we decided to continue. And so this past year we made videos for "Ein Kitzva", "u'Mordechai Yatzah" and "Veafilu beHastara." There was also the release of the wonderful album the choir made with Chazzan Josh Weinberger, LeDor VaDor, and

the recording of the Yom Yerushalayim service featuring Chazzan Feldman and myself along with the Choir.

In February we began the second year of The Great Synagogue Bnai Mitzvah Program, and so far it has been a tremendous success. We learned so much from the first year of the program and have done our best to use that knowledge to make this year even better. This year, we have nine students in the program, up from last year's six. One Sunday a month we have a two-hour session for the students and their parents. In addition to some interactive learning, crafts or activities with either myself or Rabbi Elton, each session also features a guest speaker. The list this year is fantastic! Rabbi Groner from the KA teaching the kids about kashrut; UIA shlichah Jasmine Malul sharing her experience of Israel; Montefiore's Rabbi Rogut learning with the students about Chesed and Bikkur Cholim; and our very own Rabbi Richter, Steve Schach and Justin Green discussing Torah reading, the role of the Gabbai and Jewish music, respectively.

We've also had some marvellous programming geared towards kids of all ages, above and below Bnai mitzvah. We had a very well attended and successful kid's parade on Shavuot, and in June, we had our first ever Youth Shabbat, which will, God willing, become an annual tradition at The Great.

This year I have had many opportunities to perform one of my favourite rabbinic functions – teaching. In November of 2020 I began a Biblical Hebrew course, and I am so pleased



Rabbi Phil with Abra and Roe.





Rabbi Phil at the Law Service.

that there is a very committed cohort of students with whom I am still learning each Wednesday. I would love to offer more courses like this one in the future which provide comprehension skills and tools for greater access to broader Jewish learning. In February of 2021, I began teaching a conversion class at The Great Synagogue. The class is continuing strongly to this day and has twenty wonderful students whom I get much pleasure and nachas from teaching. More about the conversion class in a full article further along in The Great Vine!

It has been great to see some regular events become more frequent. Rabbi Elton and I have performed a number

of weddings this year, there seem to be more bnai mitzvah coming up and I am very frequently giving tours of the Synagogue to school groups.

Thank you to Rabbi Elton, Hinda and family, to Lynn and the entire office staff, and to The Great's board for making this past year a success. Thank you to the congregants who continue to show up and join in. And thank you to my wife Abra for all your support so

that I can do this work that I love. There is so much more to say – more than I can possibly fit in this brief article. The future looks bright and I can't wait for what's ahead for this extraordinary community and all the individuals who make it up. May 5782 be a year filled with good health and many brachot and smachot. Abra, Roe and I wish everyone a Shana Tova u'Metuka! 🌟



Rabbi Phil taking food to Pantry 4 the People.

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From The General Manager

# A year in the time of change and adaptability



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY

LYNN NISELOW

**At the time of writing this message it's quite hard to believe that we are all in lockdown. This too shall pass as it always does and all will be well.**

When I look at the work we have done this year I am so proud of our extraordinary team, Ilana, Ezra, Judith and Justin. They have all worked so hard, their commitment and dedication is quite simply fantastic, their ability to adapt to the many changes that COVID has brought to our day to day work and our planning has been incredible. It is a pleasure to work with them every day.

I am delighted to report that in addition to celebrating all of the holidays, the Shule has hosted many events over the past year: we were honoured to host the Premier of NSW on Pesach, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies holds events with us every few months, and more recently there have been several sold-out concerts. These have been attended by the wider community. It is wonderful that we are able to show off our beautiful Shule. Schools bring several groups each week, it is lovely to see the faces of the children as they walk through the historic building and listen to the Rabbis talk about our Shule and our Jewish life.

The Pesach seder was generously sponsored by many of our members and sixty people attended. Shavuot was celebrated with good attendance and wonderful kiddushim, the children's ice



cream party was a great success, as was the Youth Shabbat. We look forward to many more Yamim Tovim, Shabbatot and simchas with these lovely little people, the future of The Great.

This time last year we were anxiously preparing for the High Holiday services with restricted numbers. We put together a wonderful program to ensure that you, our members, were still able to be engaged with Shule, and that you knew and felt how special you are to The Great. The High Holidays are important to us all, it is a deeply religious time, a time for reflection, for gratitude and forgiveness, and a time of beautiful traditions and nostalgic memories.

And once again we approach the High Holidays faced with an unknown. We do know however that the High Holidays will be special as they always are, in whichever form they take.

We will continue to strive to engage with you our members, to collaborate more within the community and to bring many people to our beautiful Shule.

By now you will all know that I originate from South Africa, there they talk about Ubuntu – the literal meaning

## **Ilana Modell**

*"I have been working at The Great for a long time now. It's been amazing to watch and be a part of the evolution of the Shule and on a personal level, to have built so many wonderful relationships with our members and my colleagues."*

## **Ezra Wexler**

*"It's my pleasure serving and aiding the continuing vitality of the Great Synagogue community, of which my wife's family has been a part for six generations."*

## **Judith Indyk**

*"I have had the pleasure of working at The Great for over 8 years in the accounts area. Hoping the next 8 will be just as happy. Wishing all our Members a happy, healthy and safe year ahead."*

## **Justin Green**

*"My role in the office team – responding to enquiries, assisting with services, finding records, organising tours, and helping with the building itself - shows me how treasured and significant the shule is to the community of The Great."*

is I am because we are. It speaks to the fact that we are all connected and that we each grow through the growth and progression of others, and that whatever lies ahead we will overcome together, this is what it means to be a community. I feel so grateful and fulfilled to be working in this special community in this beautiful Shule. I know for sure that as we continue to work together our future and that of our beautiful Great Synagogue is bright and promising and I am delighted to be here.

I wish you and your precious families Shana Tova Umetuka, a Healthy Happy and Sweet year with the richest of God's blessings. 🌸



# From the Choir Loft



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY

JUSTIN GREEN

**Over the past year the Choir phased out of the virtual state that COVID imposed, and returned to delighting the congregation and other audiences with their in-person performances.**

The 5781 High Holidays had to be led without a Choir, but Cantor Mordechai Levin from Melbourne was a fine solo Chazzan for Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Succot. His Kol Nidre service was particularly acclaimed. The Choir rallied to make some socially distanced videos with Rabbi Phil and Chazzan Levin, expertly produced by Ezra Wexler and Josh Winestock, that kept the memories alive for the congregation.

As the Choir returned to performing live and accompanying Rabbi Phil Kaplan's sweet and sincere chazzanut, we welcomed new chorister Simon Alperstein. He joined the existing line-up of Alex Walter, Adam Wasielek, David Politzer, Yossi Samuelli, Robert Green, Joshua Winestock, Jackson Ryder, Joseph Ginges and Michael Lewis.

How could we sing while distancing? After trying upstairs near the rose



*The Great Choir at the Law Service.*

window, which was too far from the bimah (sound takes time to travel), the middle block downstairs was annexed and the Choir had a glorious time participating directly in the service, sitting with other congregants rather than being tucked away (albeit visibly) in the Choir Loft.

As restrictions on singing indoors eased, four choristers could be spaced out in the loft, then gradually more were allowed, and finally the Choir was able to stand in regular formation. Each of these disruptions was faced with great flexibility and professionalism. Even after their return on high, the time spent being downstairs arguably integrated the choir more into the service and indeed the congregation.

The repertoire was expanded, with a setting of Psalm 30 for Chanukah, Etz Chaim by Verrinder, and Ben Saffir's arrangement of Adon Olam to And

*So It Goes* by Billy Joel. The moving *Ve'al Kulam* by Finkelstein, which also appears on the *Ledor Vador* CD, quickly became a favourite.

During the course of the year, the Choir performed at Shabbat services, the Law Service, the first day of Pesach with the Premier of New South Wales, at the service for Counting the Omer with Chazzan Menachem Feldman, the Shavuot Dinner at Dover Heights Shule, and the Yom Yerushalayim Service recorded (by Yossi!) with the support of the UIA. Each time, the Choir consistently inspired and impressed.

The Choir remains an evolving and unique part of the Great community. We are a small but close group and look forward to what will no doubt be another eventful, musically stimulating but hopefully less frightening year as the world slowly recovers from the COVID era. 🌸



RABBI RAYMOND APPLE, AO, RFD,  
EMERITUS RABBI



# *They don't laugh at us anymore*

**Australian Jewry was an irrelevant backwater of the Jewish world prior to 1939. It was small in numbers, far from everywhere, a mere outpost of Empire, and lax in Jewish commitment. The pulsating European centres of Judaism had hardly even heard of it.**

Yet there were always *davkaniks* who would not abandon their Jewishness. Some were storekeepers in odd places far from any synagogue, holding on to Jewish practice – even learning poultry *shehitah* to give their families kosher chickens for Shabbat. Some sent their sons to relatives in the big cities to prepare for Barmitzvah. Idealists struggled to maintain the old ways; dedicated ministers and teachers loved Judaism but had little success in enthusing the youth. All are part of the pre-1939 story.

There were mayors, parliamentarians, Masonic Masters, commercial and professional leaders,

pioneers who brought respect to the name of Jew. They included George Judah Cohen, John Goulston, Sir Daniel Levy and Sir Samuel Cohen. NSW parliament was once unable to sit on Yom Kippur when the Speaker and his deputy were Jewish. In NSW almost all the Jewish dignitaries were members of the Great Synagogue. The Great resisted the founding of new congregations, though at last had to give way.

Jewish practice was at a low ebb. Hardly anyone kept Shabbat strictly. A minority kept kosher. Less than a handful had ever heard of the *mikveh*. Almost everyone made compromises. It took decades for really orthodox congregations to emerge. In those years who could have imagined mainstream synagogues with Chabad rabbis - or Liberal and even Conservative congregations? Or ideological secularists?

There was a tug-of-war between old-timers and newcomers. Modern orthodox rabbis like Israel Porush

and Eliezer Berkovits came with more Zionism, more tradition, more learning. Jewish education was transformed. A steady sprinkling of young people went overseas to *yeshivot*. Orthodoxy became more orthodox. These days there are *shi'urim* everywhere. *Kashrut* is stronger; the *mikveh* has come to stay. There are Jewish writers and scholars. Jewish identity, Jewish law and Jewish theology are fiercely debated.

Most country communities have gone, but little pockets of Jewishness exist outside the big cities. They generally don't build synagogues but have social gatherings in local halls or homes. Some are mentored by the communal rabbis; some prefer to keep away from rabbis. Australian Jews do wonders for Israel and world Jewry. There are less Jewish mayors, but more Judaism. Australia is still the end of the world, but as Rav Soloveitchik said in another context, "They don't laugh at us any more". 🌸



# REACHING OUT & RAISING UP

WITH OUR PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE



*This past 12 months has certainly had its challenges. The contact with our members has been a vital part of the pastoral care for our community. We have implemented strategies to maintain communication and emotional support of all our members, from birthday calls and Chaggim well wishing from the Board to maintaining a strong connection with our senior members by our dedicated and wonderful Pastoral Care Committee volunteers.*

*We have had great responses to our work, however to keep such communication going to such a high standard requires our members to ensure that we have up to date telephone numbers, so please notify the office with any changes.*

FAY FRISCHER

## Shanah Tovah



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# The Great Bar and Bat Mitzvahs



Anthea Samuel.



Olive Begg.



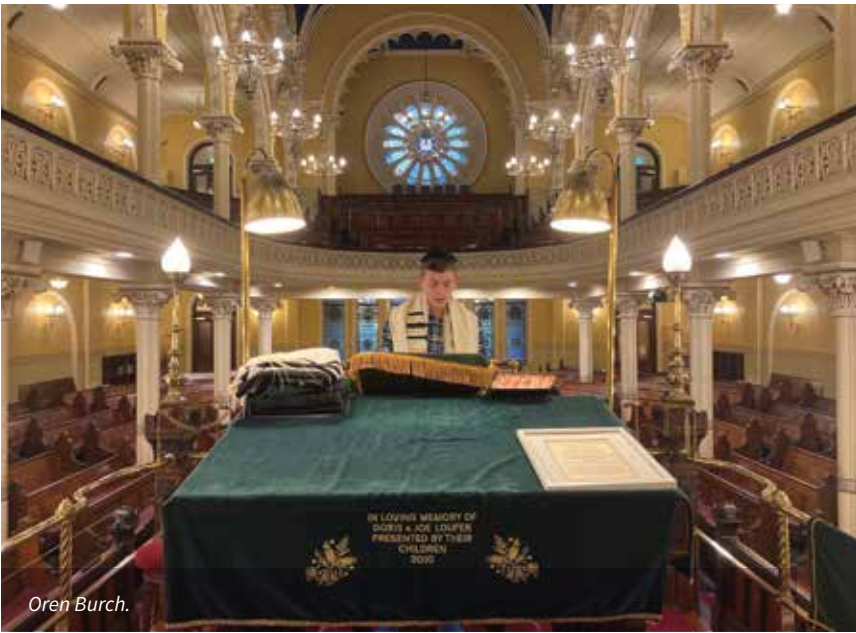
Araleh Richter.



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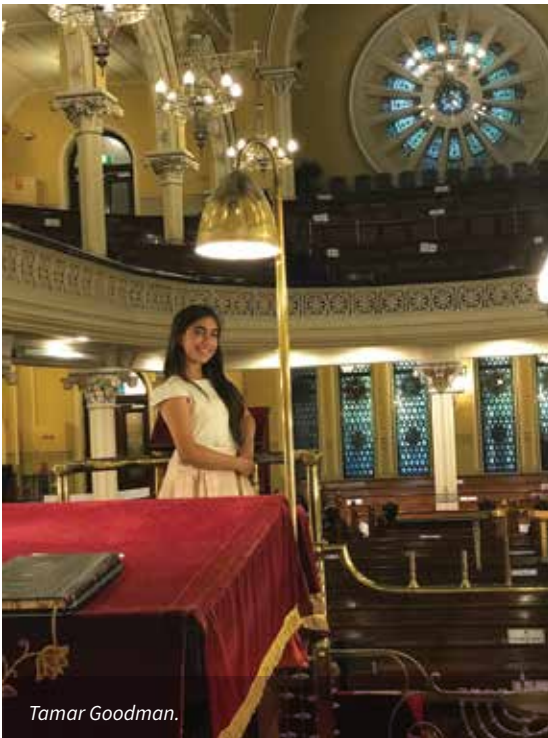
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Naming of Salo Elton.



# Three Britot and a Pidyon



Moshe Zev Richter.



Roee Kaplan.



In what must be the first time in the history of The Great Synagogue, all three of the Shule's Rabbis and their families welcomed baby boys over the past year.

First, Abra and Rabbi Phil Kaplan celebrated the birth of Roee Yaakov. He was given his Brit Milah at The Great after Shacharit with Rabbi Elton as Sandek and was named by Chazzan Ne'ach Koncepolski of

Coogee Synagogue. As a first born and a son, he then had to be redeemed in the Pidyon HaBen ceremony that took place at their home.

A little while later, Ziva and Rabbi Yakov Richter, our long-standing and excellent Torah reader were blessed with a fifth son, Moshe Zev. He was given his Brit at Tzemach Tzedek Synagogue. Rabbi Elton was honoured with naming the baby and Rabbi Phil

recited the special prayers after Birkat HaMazon at the festive meal.

Finally, Hinda and Rabbi Elton shared the good news of the birth of a younger brother for Lizzie. Solomon Isaac (Salo). He was named at The Great Synagogue by Rabbi Richter and Rabbi Phil was Sandek.

We look forward to many more semachot in the future, although this coincidence is unlikely to happen again.





*Shaharit and Adam Wasiel.*



*Jodine Wolman and Jonathan Abrams.*

# *Great Weddings*



*Arielle Zin and Josh Browne.*



*Sam Sheinberg and Melissa Levy.*



*Will Storey and Rikki Avenaim.*



*Jonathan Davis and Selena Lotto.*




**שנה טובה ומתוקה!!**  
 May your home light up with joy and sweetness.  
 Stephen & Susie Kopp.



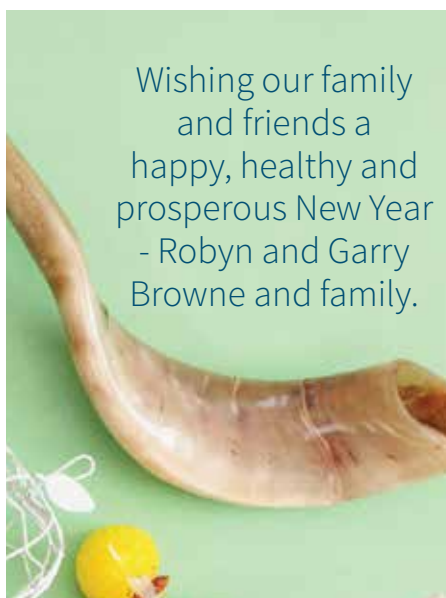
Wishing you a wonderful sweet and healthy new year. L'Shana Tova! Daniel & Mauri Abbott and family.



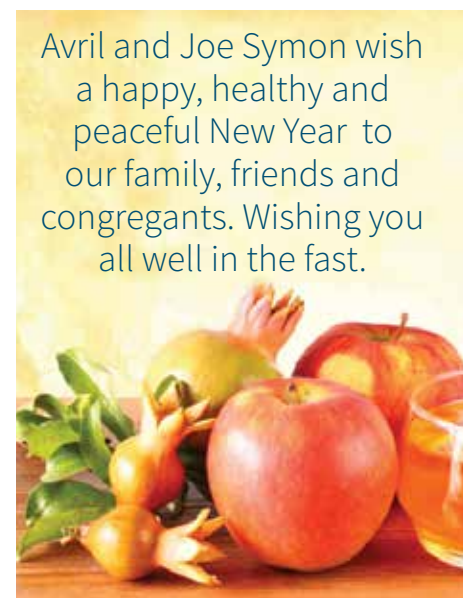
Wishing our wonderful Great Synagogue family, Shana Tova Umetuka, a Happy, Healthy and Sweet year.  
 Best wishes  
 Lynn Niselow.



To our 'Great family', wishing you a New Year in good health and happy times. Fast well. Chag Sameach. Caroline, David, Juliet Lewis, Charlotte & Robbie Weiss.



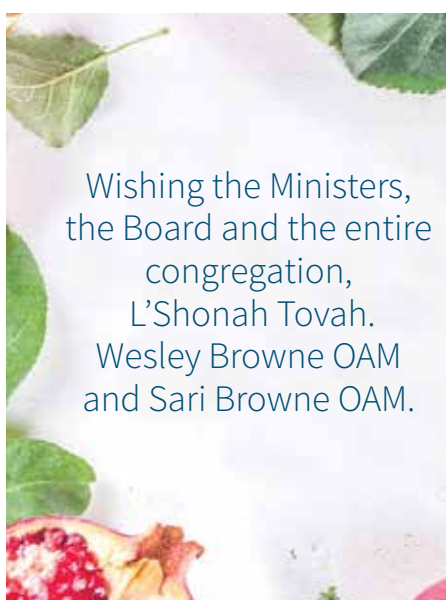
Wishing our family and friends a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year - Robyn and Garry Browne and family.



Avril and Joe Symon wish a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year to our family, friends and congregants. Wishing you all well in the fast.



Wishing all our family and friends Shana Tova and well over the Fast.  
 Steve and Sharon Schach.



Wishing the Ministers, the Board and the entire congregation, L'Shonah Tovah.  
 Wesley Browne OAM and Sari Browne OAM.



Barbara and Max Freedman and family wish all members of the Great community a happy and healthy New Year.  
 Shana Tova.



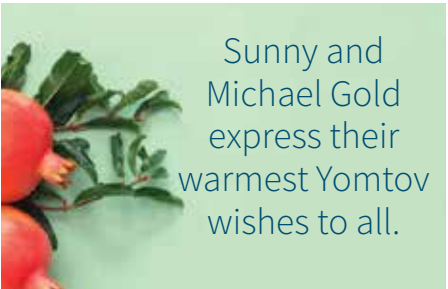
David Hartstein and Judith Cowan and family wish all their family and members of the congregation a happy and healthy New Year and well over the fast.



Shana Tova to all at TGS with best wishes for a safe, healthy and rewarding year filled with hope and renewal.  
Ros and Alex Fischl.



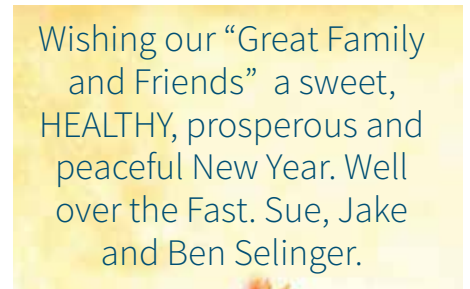
Wishing everyone in The Great community a very sweet, happy and healthy New Year! L'Shana Tova Um'tukah From Lauren, Jackson and Mikaela Ryder.



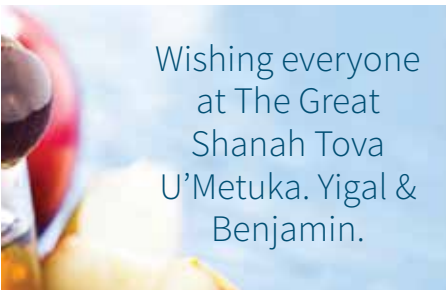
Sunny and Michael Gold express their warmest Yomtov wishes to all.



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
קִיָּק בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל



Wishing our "Great Family and Friends" a sweet, HEALTHY, prosperous and peaceful New Year. Well over the Fast. Sue, Jake and Ben Selinger.



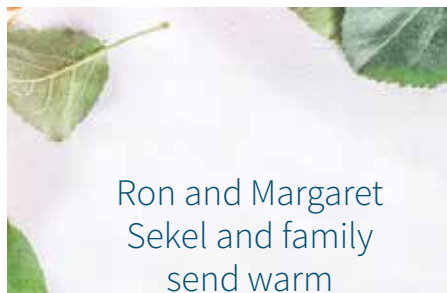
Wishing everyone at The Great Shanah Tova U'Metuka. Yigal & Benjamin.



Rabbi Elton, Hinda, Lizzie and Salo wish the whole congregation a sweet, happy and healthy 5782.



Wishing all Great Chagim! Love, Eli, Ezra, Jane and Riva.



Ron and Margaret Sekel and family send warm greetings for the coming year.



Wishing everybody a happy and peaceful Yomtov.  
Brigitte Zeitler-Janicki.



Simone and Darryl Green wish family and friends a happy and healthy new year and well over the fast.



Wishing all our friends in the "Great" community and beyond, Shana Tova, a happy and sweet New Year!!! David Newman and Family.



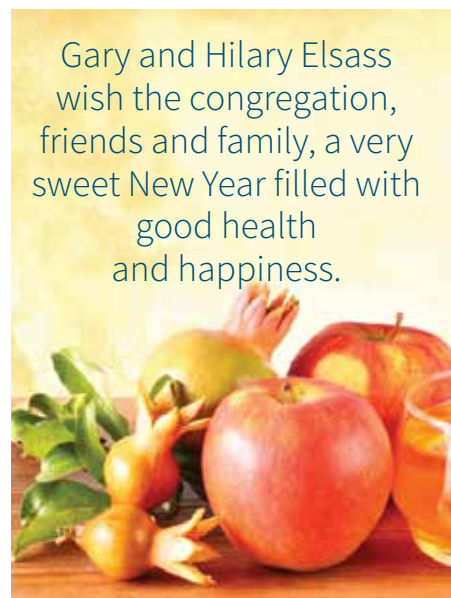
Shana Tova!  
Wishing the entire congregation a sweet, healthy New Year from our family. Rabbi Phil, Abra and Roe Kaplan.



Mavis and Peter Elton wish The Great Synagogue community a very happy and healthy 5782, and hope to be back in Sydney soon!



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
ק"ק בית ישראל



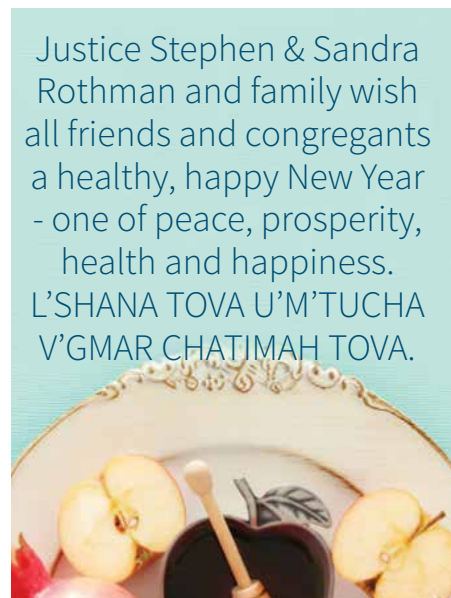
Gary and Hilary Elsass wish the congregation, friends and family, a very sweet New Year filled with good health and happiness.



The Great Synagogue Choir wishes you a happy and healthy 5782, to the tune of "Bashanah Haba'ah" in four-part harmony... Shanah Tovah!



The Havas Family would like to wish the congregation restful and peaceful High Holy Days.



Justice Stephen & Sandra Rothman and family wish all friends and congregants a healthy, happy New Year - one of peace, prosperity, health and happiness. L'SHANA TOVA U'M'TUCHA V'GMAR CHATIMAH TOVA.



# *A Foundation for our Future:* **The Great Synagogue** **Foundation**



LAUREN RYDER, VICE PRESIDENT

In 2017 our much-loved former Treasurer, the late Ken Gresham, had a vision to guarantee that The Great Synagogue remains as an icon of the Jewish community for generations to come. His vision was to create a Foundation, through which interest from donations would fund capital improvements, building maintenance and the ongoing running costs of The Great, and to make the Synagogue financially secure in perpetuity. He worked tirelessly over the following years to bring this vision to life, and we are now proud to announce that, following the announcement in the 2020 Budget, legislation has been enacted by the Federal Government to confirm the Deductible Gift Recipient status of The Great Synagogue Foundation.

When The Great was built in 1878, it was the only synagogue serving the Jewish community of Sydney. Nearly every Jewish family in Sydney has a connection to our congregation, whether through weddings, bar or bat mitzvahs, educational activities or religious events. To this day, it remains the heart and soul of the Sydney Jewish community.

The building is a magnificent piece of global Jewish history, and visitors



*Garry Browne AM,  
Head of Foundation Committee.*

regularly marvel at its beauty and classic design. As the oldest fully functioning synagogue on mainland Australia, the sandstone heritage building requires a high degree of maintenance to remain an icon of the Jewish community.

In order to continue to serve our congregation and the greater Sydney community, we need a strong financial core which will supply us with an income for years to come. The Great Synagogue Foundation will provide us with this asset and allow us to raise money through tax deductible donations for special projects.

It has taken a number of years to set up The Foundation, as we needed to ensure that all funds donated will be 100% tax deductible. Through the very hard work of Stephen Rothman, Simon Havas, David Lewis and others, the Federal Parliament passed the necessary legislation and it was given Assent by the Governor-General in July 2021.

In the coming months, we will

*“Today, we serve  
future generations.”*

Ken Gresham, former  
Great Synagogue Treasurer



*The late Ken Gresham.*

launch The Great Synagogue Foundation to the community. We would love for our members to become founding benefactors and be part of Great Synagogue history. With your donation, we can run capital improvement projects which will add to the inclusivity and warmth of our wonderful shule.

Look out for news of the launch of the Foundation and how you can make your tax-deductible donation to the future of our beloved Synagogue.



## **Foundation Members**

*Chair of The Great Synagogue Foundation*  
Garry Browne AM

### *Foundation Board Members*

Dr Sue Hertzberg  
Justice Stephen Rothman AM  
Simon Havas  
Max Freedman  
David Hartstein

# Safe and more inclusive: Improving our building



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
founded 1880

DAVID NEWMAN,  
CHAIR OF THE BUILDING COMMITTEE

In the last year, the Synagogue has embarked on major works, enabled by the receipt of grants from the NSW Government and the Commonwealth Government's Safer Communities initiative.

Earlier this year, thanks to a bequest from the family of our Past President Herman Eisenberg, a champion for the disability sector, we were able to dedicate the Disability Lift in his memory. The installation of the lift, completed the Castlereagh Street security entrance, planned by the Synagogue Board and approved by the City of Sydney in 2015. It enables disabled members and visitors to have access to most of the Shule above the ground floor.

It has been extremely difficult to bring the existing buildings up to the requirements of the Disability Act NSW. The President and Board of Management are now considering alternatives to extend disabled access to the War Memorial and Israel Green Auditorium. This initiative will enable all of our members and visitors to enjoy the kiddushim and many semachot held in the Auditorium

In 2018, the then President, Justice Stephen Rothman AM, conscious of the continuing needs to increase Shule security, applied to the Commonwealth Government for a funds grant under the Safer Communities initiative. He can now see the fruits of his vision with the installation of the glass sliding



Eisenberg Plaque.



Disability Lift installation complete.



Glass screen installation.

doors and fixed arch panels, in the Elizabeth Street portico. The glass has been specially designed to comply with the Building Code of Australia and approved by the City of Sydney and fire authorities.

We are awaiting approval under the Heritage Act of NSW, to allow restoration of the one hundred and thirty year old Elizabeth Street gates. To the untrained eye, they appear in good condition, however investigations

showed that the insides of the gates have deteriorated, They are in need of repair due to rust in the gates and internal deterioration of the wrought iron columns that support the gates. This will also present an opportunity to re-cast some missing decorative pieces. These works could take up to a year, necessitating installation of temporary gates and a fence in their place. When they return, they will be more splendid than ever. 🌿



# Kids Corner

Rosh Hashanah

## Fruit Code

Use the code to solve the riddle

- |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|
| E= | G= | T= |
| P= | R= | M= |
| O= | N= | A= |



I am a fruit, red from outside with many tiny pieces inside. It takes a long time to peel and eat me. Who am I?



I am a \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue:**

Rumour has it I contain 613 seeds



## Tongue Twister

שָׂרָה שָׂרָה שִׁיר שָׂמֵחַ,  
שִׁיר שָׂמֵחַ שָׂרָה שָׂרָה

Sarah shara shir sameach,  
shir sameach shara Sarah

Sarah sings a happy song,  
a happy song sings Sarah

## Shofar Blasts



Can you name each one of the Shofar blasts?

Can you guess what the mystery object is?

Mystery Object



## Buzzer Puzzler

Can you get Buzzer through the maze to his friends at the beehive?



*“Our kids loved learning about the reasons we celebrate Shavuot, and of course the foods they got to sample was a great highlight! Who can say no to ice cream?”*

Lucy & Jason Romain, parents of Abigail, 7 & Harriet, 4

*“I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to you all for a very successful Shavuot kids’ celebration.*

*There was a wonderful vibe of community spirit, enjoyment, connections, warmth and overall a sense of belonging between the children and grandparents who attended.*

*The activities were excellent, with children joining a parade through the synagogue, being blessed on the Bimah and thoroughly enjoying the educational activities provided before their ice cream feast.*

*Once again congratulations to all those involved in creating this special service.”*

Susan Modell



Great





Oscar, 7: "I liked everything about the Shavuot party. Especially the little ice creams and pretzels."

Jack, 3: "I had 4 ice creams and shared with everyone"

Eli Green



"Joshy had a great time at the Shavuot event. The ice cream party was a huge success. The kids marched around the Shule with their Israeli flags which was a wonderful sight. Was also very special to see all the kids being blessed on the bimah."

Ruth Jurke

# Kids



"It was such a lovely atmosphere in Shule when the children all paraded around the Shule waving their Israeli flags. Everyone was smiling. The warmth radiated in the beautifully decorated themed Ice Cream Party in the Sky Room. The array of ice creams were amazing together with chips, sweets and water! It was the best. The children had a ball as did the adults."

Diane and Paul Drexler

**KIDS PARADE**  
 FOLLOWED BY AN **ICE CREAM PARTY**  
 AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

Parade: 10am  
 in Shule followed by  
**Ice Cream Party**  
 in the Sky Room (Level 4)

**SHAVUOT**  
 MONDAY, 17 MAY 2021

**Great Women is an umbrella organisation of The Great Synagogue. It connects all the women's interest groups by promoting their events, facilitating collaboration, and providing support for their initiatives, as well as developing new initiatives.**

The Great Synagogue has always been in the vanguard of increasing the role of women in the Orthodox community, from women on the Board, as President, reading from the Torah in a women's service, carrying the Sefer Torah and reciting the prayer for the congregation at the end of the service. Great Women continues this tradition.

During the 2020 lockdown, Great Women swung into action, and brought a total of thirty-five online events to our members. The variety of programs were received to uniform acclaim, and were much appreciated by all of us who were housebound. These programs were recorded and are still available to view on the Great Women page of the shule website.

### Women's Auxiliary

For many weeks our Shabbat kiddushim and communal lunches came back, albeit with some changes. We could not resume self-serve buffets, so our Kiddush menus were been changed to accommodate serving of the food by the ladies of the Women's Auxiliary. The new food offerings are varied and delicious, and have been well received. We thank Lynn Niselow for her invaluable help in developing these new menus. We look forward to Kiddushim returning soon!

The Women's Auxiliary is always in need of volunteers to help with preparing and setting up for Kiddushim. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Ros Brennan or Denise Sher via the Shule office. We are very grateful to our current team of volunteers and could always do with a few more helping hands!

### Women of Worth: WOW!

WOW was the brainchild of Caroline Lewis, and the inaugural weekend in 2018 was a roaring success. A



SHARON SCHACH,  
CHAIR OF GREAT WOMEN

subsequent WOW dinner/theatre evening was thoroughly enjoyed by the thirty women who attended. This was followed by yet another hugely successful WOW weekend in 2019.

We had many hours of discussion regarding whether to hold the 2020 WOW weekend online, however ultimately it was decided that the nature of the WOW experience — women celebrating women together in our beautiful Shule space — did not lend itself to an online event.

Sadly the WOW event due to be held on the 1st August, celebrating International Friendship Day, needed to be postponed due to Covid re-surfacing. We are putting that entire plan on ice ready to launch it as soon as we are able to meet in person in close proximity with each other.

### Kaddish Classes

Ever since his arrival at The Great Synagogue, Rabbi Elton has been a supporter of women's participation in services to the extent that is halachically permissible. Women can and do say Kaddish, so it was with much anticipation that our first series of Kaddish classes for women, taught by Rabbi Elton, was launched in November 2019. Because of the personal and often moving nature of the classes, registration was limited to ten participants, and the first series of four weekly classes, held in a private home, was instantly filled. It was an extraordinary success. The second series, held at the Shule, was also fully



# Great

subscribed and equally successful. We have since had two more series with a waiting list for a fifth. We are so grateful to Rabbi Elton for his compassionate and insightful teaching.

### Rosh Chodesh Group

Rosh Chodesh groups began in the 1970s in Jerusalem, where groups of women began gathering monthly to explore and create new rituals based on the celebration of the new moon, Rosh Chodesh. The practice has spread worldwide, with Rosh Chodesh groups taking many forms. We were delighted when Abra Kaplan agreed to coordinate and run a Great Women Rosh Chodesh group. Our first women's Rosh Chodesh Experience was held in Rabbi Phil and Abra's home for Rosh Chodesh Adar. It was attended by twenty women in a warm and spiritual environment. We all looked forward to our next experience with Abra,



Rosh Chodesh event.

# Women



however it had to be canceled because of COVID-19. Therefore, during 2020, Abra ran successful online Zoom Rosh Chodesh conversations.

In May, a group of Great Women joined the women of North Shore Synagogue for their fabulous Rosh Chodesh Sivan evening.

Plans are now underway for a Rosh Chodesh Elul event in Abra's home, and we thank Abra for all the time and effort she has spent in creating these inspiring events for women.

Thanks as always to Rabbi Elton and Rabbi Phil, President David Lewis and the Board, and our incredible, hardworking office staff — Lynn Niselow, Ilana Moddel, Ezra Wexler, and Justin Green. You have all made our programs possible. 🌸

# New members 2020-21

*Every year we are delighted to welcome dozens of new members of the congregation. Each one has a story and a unique journey that led them to The Great. Here we share a few.*

## Anthony Cohen

Anthony immigrated from South Africa in 1987 and attended Moriah College, growing up in a family home that strongly valued Yiddishkeit. His mother Rose worked for The Jewish House, and those of you with kids at The Emmanuel School may know her as the long-serving receptionist there, until her retirement just a couple of years ago.



He has spent his professional life working in senior marketing roles in the airline, tourism, and telecommunications industries - having led some of Australia's most iconic marketing and sponsorship campaigns including the Olympics, Rugby World Cup, and bringing Oprah Winfrey to Australia. At the beginning of COVID he established 'Project Displaced', a career-support charity which is entirely volunteer-run and aims to help anyone in Australia who has lost their job due to the enduring economic impacts of the pandemic. Project Displaced works closely with Jewish Care and a host of other non-denominational organisations to help job seekers return to employment, and regain their confidence.

Anthony found his way to The Great when he began a journey to re-discover his spiritual roots, looking to again be a part of the community. "I was visiting a few shules at that time, exploring which felt right to me. I remember walking in to that first Shabbat shacharit service as a stranger, and within minutes Rabbi Elton and David Newman had both approached me and welcomed me so warmly - I knew in that moment that I wanted to be a part of The Great family", says Anthony. His seat in shule is next to Raymond Whitten AM, whose family are long-standing members. Anthony's sister Lee-Anne is married to Raymond's youngest son, Andrew. 🌟



## Lee and Gary Abrams

Lee and Gary were married in The Great Synagogue and over the years celebrated all their children's bat mitzvahs and bar mitzvahs as well as their daughter's wedding at The Great Synagogue. They attended Shule on important occasions and the wedding of their son Jonathan to Jodine Wolman this past year was an opportunity to rejoin the Synagogue formally. The Great Synagogue has seen many happy occasions for the Abrams family over the past few years, and we are all looking forward to lots more in the future. 🌟

## Monique, Daniel, Rafael and Violet Krochmalik

We have both travelled various paths that have led us to becoming members of The Great. My sister, Marianna, married Tim Green there in 1992 when I was only six, and I attended several services with her and her husband's family over the years. Her husband's family, the Greens, are a founding family of the Great.

My husband, Daniel, has also attended the annual Law Service

at The Great over the years and we have attended many holiday services and events there together, including the marriage of my cousin Anna Meyerowitz - which happened to be the first marriage that Rabbi Elton conducted in Australia. Our children have been at daycare together over the years and our whole family is so fond of Hinda and Rabbi Elton, and the warm, inclusive and progressive outlook that they have for Orthodoxy and the Sydney Jewish community.



Our kids have loved attending The Great, and we look forward to celebrating many important milestones there as a family. 🌟



### Zac Levi

I am a 3D artist specialising in 3D architectural visualisation and animation. I was re-introduced to The Great Synagogue earlier in the year by a friend and felt very welcomed by the congregation and the Rabbis. Ever since then, I have been attending weekly. My family has been a part of The Great Synagogue community since its consecration in 1878, with my 3rd great grandfather, Rev Aaron Alexander Levi as second minister and reader.

I have been working on a project with the honorary curator of the AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum, Jana Vytrhlik, on reconstructing the interior of Sydney's first purpose-built synagogue, York Street Synagogue. The Great Synagogue has been very open and inclusive and it is such an honour to be part of a community such as this. 🌟

### Rachel Bickovsky

I think of myself as a woman of heart and mind, each equally important.

I have always been proud to be Jewish. In so many ways it has made me who I am, while at the same time I have lived with the feeling that I am other and I do not belong. I have felt that in some ways I have been the quintessential wandering Jew - if not in reality, at least in my being: looking for the place where I will be accepted and fit in.

I have sought to find who I am and my place in the world largely through my work where I have forever been focused on doing good. First I was a nurse where I tried to ease suffering. Then I became a lawyer where I tried to right injustice. And I wonder where the need to be helpful, to do good in the world comes from. Has it been hardwired into me because I am

a Jew, that I understand suffering because the suffering of my ancestors is etched on my consciousness, that I understand justice because I have been distilled by injustice. Or is it my version of trying to enact the concept of "tikkun olam".



When not saving the world I like to read, bushwalk, knit and generally engage in creative pursuits.

There are many things I continue to question in life but as I approach the first anniversary of joining the shule it is no longer where I just belong. I have found that place where I fit in. I have found a house of welcome, warmth and wisdom. 🌟

### Our new members this year:

Raphaela Levy Mesman  
 Zachary Tirrell  
 Albert Gammer  
 Rachel Bickovsky  
 Solomon Goldman  
 June Goldman  
 Geoffrey Nash  
 Michael Nash  
 William Ramberg  
 Joseph (Yossi) Samuell  
 Simon Tsapepas  
 Laurence Rodny  
 Michelle Meyer  
 Monique Krochmalik  
 Daniel Krochmalik  
 Daniel Abulafia  
 Joshua Abulafia  
 Noah Abulafia  
 Jerry Greenfield  
 Dr Harry Johnson  
 Nicholas Volpe  
 Fani Tsapepas  
 Anthony Cohen  
 Kellie Smith  
 Reuben Glasser  
 Ariel Lumbroso  
 Tanya Elizabeth Ma  
 Stephanie Watson  
 George Deutsch  
 Cynthia Deutsch  
 Lawrence Nathan  
 Jenna Nathan  
 Michelle McEwing  
 Gary Abrams  
 Lee Abrams  
 Isabella Edinger-Reeve  
 Sam Freydin  
 Shirley Brockwell  
 Adam Kaufmann  
 Jane Wolfers  
 Arielle Zinn  
 Ray Cohen  
 Micah Burch  
 Zac Levi  
 Peter Mohay  
 Jonathan Abrams  
 Jodine Wolman  
 Ellie Curran  
 Anna Hueneke  
 Linda Reitzin

# Bar & Bat Mitzvah Program



Bar and Bat Mitzvah Course 2021 first session.

**We began the second year of The Great Synagogue B'nai Mitzvah Program in February 2021. The program runs for two hours on a Sunday morning each month, comprising eleven sessions from February to December.**



RABBI PHIL KAPLAN

The program is open to boys and girls who will be having their bar or bat mitzvah the year of the program or the following year. The students come to each session with one or two parents and the sessions include learning for the whole family.

After last year's inaugural program, our goal for this second iteration was to grow both in size of the cohort and in quality of the content, and we have met these goals. The class size has grown from six students in the first year to nine students this year. We learned so much from the first year's success and challenges, and the learning and activities this year have been phenomenal.

During each session, we try to always include three components: Jewish learning, an engaging activity or craft, and hearing from a guest speaker. We've made our own Shabbat candlesticks and bookmarks with Hebrew calligraphy and we've gone on a scavenger hunt of the synagogue.

We've also heard from some incredible guest speakers! Rabbi Groner from the KA taught the kids about kashrut; UIA Shlichah Jasmine Malul shared her experience of Israel; Montefiore's Rabbi Rogut learned with the students about Chesed and Bikkur Cholim; and our very own Rabbi Richter, Steve Schach and Justin Green discussed Torah



reading, the role of the Gabbai and Jewish Music, respectively.

We'll end the year strong as well. November's session will feature a challah bake with Sharon Schach, and finally, the last session in December will be our closing with myself and Rabbi Elton, where we invite all the students and families to my home for graduation, certificates and an "Ask the Rabbi" session where they can ask us anything they'd like.

Having a successful bar and bat mitzvah program brings so much to the content and culture offered at the synagogue, and I am so happy that our second year is a success. Let us know if you have kids, grandkids, friends or family who might be a good fit for our third cohort in 2022! 🌟



HH cards received by Monte staff from Bnai Mitzvah class.



Graduation of the 2020 class.



Class activity.



Bnai Mitzvah program April 2021 with Rabbi Richter.

# Education at The Great



Melton Graduation.

**The past year has been a busy one for education, with both Rabbis running a series of classes on a whole range of different topics, catering for the beginners, the advanced students and everyone in between.**

Rabbi Phil launched his Biblical Hebrew class. Rabbi Elton completed his two-year Melton Program, taught a series on Talmud and gave a short shiur over breakfast after Shacharit on Thursday mornings. You can read about the Bar and Bat Mitzvah and Conversion Programs which Rabbi Phil developed in the magazine.

Much of the teaching was still partially or entirely over Zoom, and the Rabbis also taught in videos which were posted online. Rabbi Phil taught Mishna and Rabbi Elton concluded his series on Jewish books and began a new one on fifty Jewish personalities covering one thousand years.

When the July Lockdown began, our educational offerings were expanded

online, with a busy two weeks of programming to keep our members and friends engaged and connected.

The Shule's own Rabbis as well as visiting speakers addressed our popular 'Lunch and Learn' series, and here was also DIY education, especially through The Great Synagogue Book Club.

For the wider community, our tours are an important source of education about Judaism. We are receiving lots of bookings from schools and other organisations and clubs. They enjoy watching the new video, taking part in a question-and-answer session with a Rabbi and then they visit the Museum and gift shop. 🌸



Melton Graduation.





Rabbi Elton giving a school tour.



First Breakfast Club.



Book Club.



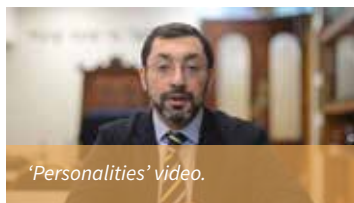
Rabbi Phil's Hebrew Class.



Filming with Rabbi Elton and Ezra.



Rabbi Kaplan teaching at 'Lunch and Learn.'



'Personalities' video.

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

ONLINE SESSIONS FROM THE GREAT

# 1-9 JULY 2021

<b>PRE &amp; POST SHABBAT</b> on Facebook Live	Kabbalat Shabbat & Dvar Torah with Rabbi Elton	Each Friday 30 mins before candlelighting	
	Havdallah with Rabbi Phil, Abra and Roe	Each Saturday 30 mins after Shabbat ends	
<b>THURS</b> 1 July	The Misunderstood Rabbi Sacks - with Rabbi Elton	1 PM ZOOM	
<b>FRI</b> 2 July	Rashi on the Parsha with Rabbi Elton	12 PM Facebook Live	
<b>TUES</b> 6 July	Coffee with the Rabbis	10 AM ZOOM	
<b>WED</b> 7 July	Mishnah Shabbat with Rabbi Phil	10 AM Facebook Live	
	Good Mental Health Practices with Renee Mill	1 PM ZOOM	
<b>FRI</b> 9 July	Home Rituals of Shabbat with Rabbi Phil	10 AM ZOOM	
	Rashi on the Parsha with Rabbi Elton	12 PM Facebook Live	

ALL LEARNING WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE ON OUR YOUTUBE AND WEBSITE AFTERWARDS

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

# Talmud Class

STUDYING THE TENTH CHAPTER OF TRACTATE SANHEDRIN

Taught by Rabbi Elton

**Tuesdays 6-7 pm**

2, 9, 16, 23 FEBRUARY  
2, 9 MARCH

in the Israel Green Auditorium and via Zoom

Pre-register at [admin@greatsynagogue.org.au](mailto:admin@greatsynagogue.org.au)



Conversion Class 2021.

# Conversion Class

**In February 2020, The Great launched its inaugural conversion class! The conversion class is a year-long, once a week class that aims to teach the Beth Din of Sydney curriculum to people working towards Orthodox conversion in Sydney. While the conversion process usually takes closer to two years, the class is meant to cover the expanse of knowledge that is the basis for conversion, with the expectation that candidates will do further learning during the time of the course and beyond.**

I teach the course each Wednesday evening, and I am so pleased to say we have around twenty participants! In addition to the class, the students also have occasional meetings with their sponsoring rabbi, who is either myself or Rabbi Elton.

It has been such a pleasure so far for me to teach this class. The students are engaged and curious and passionate about Judaism. There are always excellent questions and conversations each week. A few of the participants stay after class each week to have a Hebrew study session, led by one of the students who happens to be doing her graduate studies in Modern Hebrew and Jewish History!

I've also taken great joy in watching how this class has helped to create their own little community, and by getting involved at The Great beyond just the class, they have helped to enhance our community. It is wonderful to see the cohort coming to services and events at The Great, meals and events at my

home, making connections and bonds with Great members and integrating into our community.

I am thankful to the conversion students for allowing me to teach them and for being such wonderful students, and I am grateful to the synagogue board and to Rabbi Elton for supporting me in leading this inaugural class!

## Luca

*The conversion class taught by Rabbi Kaplan is a great initiative organised by TGS and I feel deep gratitude to be able to be part of it. The path of a convert can be lonely and hard at times but having a very caring, warm and knowledgeable guide and a group of fellow travellers to make the journey with is helping make the experience more meaningful and less disorienting. I am also very grateful to have had and to be having many supportive interactions with the*



RABBI PHIL KAPLAN

*larger TGS community: Judaism needs to be studied but, even more essentially, lived within a community, and what a great community TGS is! My journey within Judaism started over ten years ago, sparked by a search for spirituality and triggered by the rare occurrence of Birkat haChamah, the blessing of the sun, with its roots in Jewish astronomy. Initially I mainly gravitated around the Reform world, in New Zealand and Italy, then around the Conservative one, in New York. There I got to know and got*





closer to Modern Orthodoxy. In a total random twist of events, I even briefly met Rabbi Kaplan in a minyan in Manhattan in June 2019, just a few days before his departure for Sydney. At the time, I did not know I would be moving to Australia, so when I ended up in Sydney in early 2020, TGS presented itself as the natural choice for a community where I could continue my journey towards Jewish Orthodoxy. 🌸

### Tayler and Dave



My partner Dave and I have been part of The Great Synagogue's conversion class since February 2021. In addition to our weekly Wednesday classes, we've been attending Friday night Shabbat services and had the pleasure of celebrating Pesach with Rabbi Kaplan and his wife Abra. My interest in Judaism started when my mother and I moved to St Ives in 2006. Many of our neighbours were Jewish, and through various interactions, I fell in love with being part of a community that extended beyond my immediate family. While I have only just begun my conversion journey, The Great already feels like a second family. Everyone has been exceptionally warm and welcoming, and I feel very lucky to be part of the Shule. We chose to join The Great because we feel both spiritually and ideologically aligned with Rabbi Elton – and are thrilled to have him as our supervising Rabbi. Dave's family also has a strong connection with the Shule; his parents and brother had their weddings at The Great. We love our Wednesday classes with Rabbi Kaplan. Each week feels like a steep, but rewarding, learning

curve and we look forward to putting theory into practise as we take on more observance. We are proud to be part of this special congregation, and we look forward to meeting more members over the coming years! 🌸

### Lisa and Bella



**Lisa:** I commenced classes with Rabbi Phil at the beginning of this year, after several years of studying Hebrew, Arabic and Jewish studies at the University of Sydney. I have spent a significant amount of time in the Middle East throughout my life, working and studying and have always loved language learning. The conversion process for me is the crystallisation of my studies, my Jewish family history and my love of Jewish culture and Hebrew. Undertaking the process with my daughter has made the learning and lifestyle changes a lot easier, and having an extra level of support is fantastic. 🌸

**Bella:** I have been lucky enough to be exposed to Jewish culture and Hebrew throughout my life due to my mum's experience. I really valued the focus on family, learning and tradition, and loved the continuation of a culture across thousands of years. Over the years, I considered a more formal conversion process to fill in gaps in my knowledge, but also to integrate more fully with a Jewish community in Sydney. My current partner is Jewish and through the years of our relationship, the importance of building a Jewish home with a strong commitment to learning has become stronger. I have been studying for my conversion with Rabbi Phil since the

beginning of this year, and I feel very lucky to be immersed in Jewish tradition of learning. My partner and I have really enjoyed taking on new mitzvot together, and building a stronger Jewish knowledge as a couple. Having my mum also go through the same process (and teaching me Hebrew!) has been really useful, especially as the conversion process can be a lot to take in at any given time. It's been great to have support and a sounding board. 🌸

### Tanya and Ariel



Ariel grew up in Israel and relocated to Sydney back in 2013 for work. Although being raised in a traditional Jewish home, little did he know that moving down under would bring him even closer to his roots.

Tanya moved to the eastern suburbs at the age of 18 where she was first introduced to the Jewish culture and values. She lived in Vienna and became best friends with members of the Jewish community, an experience that provided her greater insight and appreciation of the Jewish way of life and history.

We both met through a mutual friend and have been sharing our love of travel and fine food ever since but most importantly found a true sense of community through The Great Synagogue which has given us not only endless support throughout this journey but also allowed us to build strong friendships with different members and immediately made us feel we were part of this great family. 🌸

# The Great and JConnect Collaborate on Wedding Preparation



MICHELLE LEWIS



Falling in love is one of the most wonderful experiences. The excitement of planning their lives together should be the start of a lifetime of simchas for engaged couples. While falling in love might seem like the ultimate dream, staying in love and building the strong foundations for a marriage takes preparation, lots of wisdom from a variety of learned sources, and commitment to the process.

JConnect is Australia's premier Jewish matchmaking service for people who are looking for a serious relationship. The organisation understands that their highly personalised service is the first step in building a vibrant, strong community. Supporting couples to build a solid foundation for their marriage is essential. With this in mind, JConnect has committed to offering no-cost marriage preparation courses and is continually updating their marriage education programs.

Engaged couples often spend months planning their special day. To make sure that the wedding day is the beginning of a happy, healthy marriage, JConnect have invited specialists in their fields to

collaborate on the JConnect online marriage preparation course.

The Rabbinical wisdom of Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton and Rabbi Phil Kaplan with meaningful insights and joyful contributions from Hinda Young and Abra Kaplan make up the four beautiful videos leading you through and explaining the significance of the traditions of a Jewish wedding: the Bedekin, Chuppah, Ketubah and the Seudah / Simchat Chatan v'Kallah.


JConnect was delighted to have The Great Synagogue's Treasurer, Simon Havas share his insights on setting up finances as a couple. This has been a true collaboration with TGS and we are very grateful for the contribution everyone at TGS has made to this project.

There are six central modules in the course: creating deep love and partnership, your Jewish wedding, intimacy and communication, navigating life as a couple, family planning and safety in your marriage. Topics covered are designed for a couple to explore sharing their lives and all that entails from finding the best way to communicate with each other and understanding the role family-

of-origin plays in their relationship, through to managing finances and feeling safe in their marriage.

With easy-to-navigate modules and a course workbook, it is an accessible guide to a successful Jewish marriage. The course is currently an online course so couples can invest a few hours and complete the free online marriage preparation course in the privacy of their own home. In the future we will be adding more modules and plan to introduce an in-person group session to facilitate meaningful discussions and enhance the learning experience.

Since launching in 2006 Jconnect has celebrated sixty-four weddings and the birth of eighty-seven JConnect babies. We are committed to Jewish continuity through helping to create strong, happy, healthy Jewish families. JConnect is a not-for-profit community organisation primarily driven by a team of dedicated volunteers. Visit us at [www.JConnect.org.au](http://www.JConnect.org.au)

If you or anyone you know is interested in the online marriage preparation course please register at <https://courses.JConnect.org.au/> 



# Archibald Documentary



Rachel Griffith with the 1961 Rabbi Porush portrait for the Archibald documentary.

Photos courtesy Mint Pictures

The Synagogue contains a wonderful collection of portraits, including several that were entered or finalists for the Archibald Portrait Prize. One even won: the portrait of Rabbi Porush painted by William Pidgeon in 1961. The ABC produced a three part documentary with Rachel Griffiths to celebrate one hundred years of the Archibald, and she came to the Shule to see Rabbi Porush's portrait. Rachel has Jewish ancestry and she adored The Great and was fascinated by our history and Rabbi Porush's life story. 🌟



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# Festivals



Chanukah at The Great.



Second Seder.



Second Seder.

## The Great Synagogue marked Festivals this year with a mixture of tradition and innovation.

We arranged High Holiday services so that everyone who wanted to attend a particular service was able to do so, through asking for preferences and then inviting people to specific services. They were reduced in length to allow for cleaning between services and of course there were masks and social distancing in place.

By Chanukah we were able to be more open and the Choir was able to sing. The traditional lighting of the Falk Menorah took place on the Friday evening of Shabbat Chanukah. On Purim we were delighted that Arele Richter, son of our Baal Korei Rabbi Yakov Richter, who had just celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, read Megillah for us in the evening and morning.

Pesach saw the revival of the communal Seder for the second night.

Tickets sold out and there were many generous sponsors which meant that the event did not incur any cost for the Shule while making sure prices were still reasonable. And of course we made sure that anyone who wanted to attend was able to do so without concern for the ticket price. On the first morning of Pesach we were honoured to welcome the Premier of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian MP, who addressed a large congregation after the service. On the seventh night of Pesach the Choir with Rabbi Chazzan Menachem Feldman led a choral service for the Counting of the Omer. They repeated some of this service, with parts of Hallel led by Rabbi Phil, for Yom Yerushalayim.

Shavuot was a tremendous success. As always the Synagogue was decorated with greenery. On the first



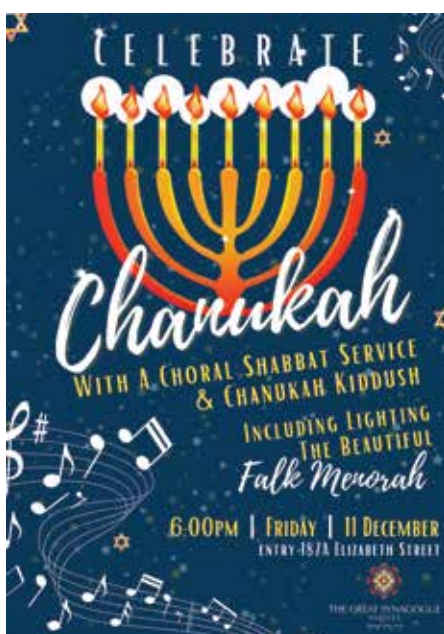
night we celebrated a bat mitzvah (and the Samuel family generously added to the floral decorations). On the first morning over thirty young kids paraded with flags to the Bimah to hear the Ten Commandments before enjoying an ice cream party. Abra and Rabbi Phil hosted supper and learning



Choir for Sefirat HaOmer.

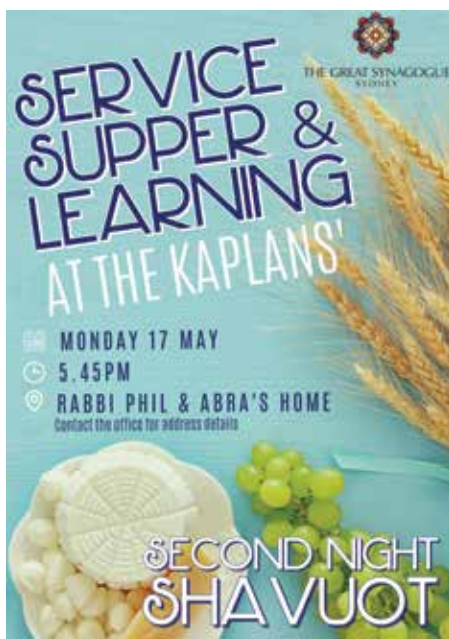


Shavuot.



at their home on the second night, and on the second morning an early service was followed by a delicious dairy brunch.

Although a special Shabbat rather than a festival, we cannot leave out Youth Shabbat in June, a revived and popular tradition, which brought one hundred and twenty adults, thirty kids and a full Communal Lunch to follow. As many honours as possible were given to kids and teens, or parents and grandparents bringing their grandchildren to the bimah with them. We are looking forward to this becoming a regular event, twice a year, on Chanukah and in June. 🌟





# NSW Jewish Board of Deputies events at The Great



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
תלמוד תורה



LYNDA BEN-MENASHE



At the Jewish Board of Deputies we love working with The Great Synagogue, because you provide us with a magnificent, historic and authentically Jewish CBD venue in which to host our guests from every sector of New South Wales' society. Rabbi Elton as well as all the other rabbinic and administrative staff are tremendous partners, in every sense. The Great Synagogue is the Abraham's Tent of our community, welcoming 'strangers' so beautifully that no one feels a stranger to us after the experience. Here's a typical guest comment after one of our events:

*"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to The Great Synagogue and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies for taking a big leap in reaching out to the LGBTI community despite the challenges of dogma and religious belief. It was also a very warm gesture to open the synagogue to non-Jewish members and letting them understand the wonderful experience of a Shabbat evening celebration. This gesture has planted a great step for many hopes*

*and aspirations for younger LGBTI members, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, in having the confidence of being accepted and being loved by the community around them."*







# Why Law?



Law Service address by Chief Justice Tom Bathurst.

It's quarter past five on a Wednesday. I'm sitting downstairs on the couch, suit and tie clad, frantically typing away at my laptop to finish an update to a client. I have many memories of that couch, traditionally as a temporary post-kiddush stopover before leaving synagogue, but this was the first time checking emails inside The Great. Surprisingly, it doesn't feel wrong, as for the past thirty minutes dozens of legal professionals had been walking by, resulting in an equal number of acknowledging head nods and gentle smiles, as they progress past for robing.

Soon I'm ushered onto my feet to join the forming procession of judges, ministers and lawyers. I, a wig-less, bright-eyed second-year solicitor barely qualified to practice, preemptively stand aside to allow my more learned colleagues to lead the way. I contemplate if I'm supposed to be there, but no one directs me otherwise, so I suspend my concern and head upstairs, telling myself that permission would be ideal (but forgiveness would have to do)!

After rounding the shul, I slip away to sit with a friend, who proclaims his disbelief at my magisterial entrance.



David Lewis, Judge Leonard Levy SC and Rabbi Elton.

As the President recognises the long list of esteemed guests with their numerous post-nominal letters and titles, I feel honoured to be part of that professional association. But when the Chief Justice recognises the contributions of my ethno-cultural and religious community to law reform and justice, it dawns on me the personal significance of not just being a Jew or



Rabbi Kaplan carrying the torah.



CAMERON GRAF



Cameron Graf with proud mum Lianne.

a lawyer, but a Jewish lawyer (however prosaic) and the importance of each of those roles in forming my self-identity.

If asked why I chose law, my response will usually reference my Jewish mother's expectations (who, might I add, does not need her law degree to win an argument), and seldom does my answer provide more than 'it felt right'. Sitting there in shul, I couldn't help but reflect on how my pre-Barmi classes, involvement in the community and closeness with my Jewish family undoubtedly helped me get to where I am today. I didn't derive a passion for law from watching television, nor develop a sense of good and bad (or the vast in-between) in isolation from those around me. I have always been part of a people who value and emphasise honesty, integrity and justice, and who made it imperative to apply these principles to my everyday life, irrespective of my professional qualification.

And for that, I am forever grateful. 🌟



# Live@ The Great



**“In every cloud there is a silver lining” proclaims the famous song and indeed in these COVID-affected times as a community we have benefited from some musical sunshine peeking through those dark clouds.**



TOBY HAMMERMAN

Photos courtesy Irena & Jan Photography

It all started with two amazingly talented musicians, husband and wife duo, Vladimir Fanshil, conductor and compere extraordinaire and Elanor Lyons, superb opera singer, being stranded in Australia with all overseas engagements cancelled. Their entrepreneurial skills led them to establish a series of intimate concerts in special venues throughout Sydney, attracting many similarly stranded local and international artists.

The use of our Shule for high quality cultural events has been a welcome policy in recent years and so three of those concerts have been held utilising the glorious acoustics and inspiring architecture of The Great Synagogue.

The first concert in March 2021, featured the monumental Bach D

minor Partita performed by soulful violinist Ben Adler. The compere Vladimir personally guided us through the music to reveal its inner secrets and gave us an insight into the intricacies of the work. We then experienced the joyous Mendelssohn Third String Quartet as Ben was joined by his energetic Quartet.

The second concert in April 2021 took us on a journey through the colourful streets of Buenos Aires from the early 1920s with Piazzolla to modern day Sydney through the music of Jewish composer Kats-Chernin as well as impressionistic treasures by Ravel and Debussy. The concert featured the Nexus Quartet which as an ensemble have premiered countless new Australian works, focusing on



Caroline and David Lewis with sponsor Montefiore President David Freeman & Lisa Spira.

promoting the musical diversity of the saxophone. In a special collaboration with radiant harpist Emily Granger they swept us off our feet with sensuous tone and breathtaking virtuosity.

The next concert in June 2021 attracted 460 people and presented acclaimed pianist Simon Tedeschi performing a duo program with violinist Andrew Haveron, well known to many of us as the concertmaster for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

They played works for violin and piano famously performed by the legendary Fritz Kreisler and Sergei Rachmaninov. Together with the moving and dramatic sonatas by Beethoven and Schubert, we had the extra treat of hearing Israel Lazarus Mombach's *Hallel for Shavuot* first published in 1880. How fitting was the Synagogue setting for this piece which was introduced by Rabbi Elton as a "world premiere of a traditional prayer reworked for piano and violin

by Andrew Howes".

We can all be very proud of the way our Shule was presented to the general public at these concerts. There were many compliments for the sublime acoustics and the changing-coloured lighting of the columns and starred ceiling that set the mood for each piece. Well done to all those involved, and we look forward, Covid willing, to the next series of concerts. 🌟



## GLAZED BRISKET WITH ONIONS

Monday Morning Cooking Club



### Ingredients

2kg (4½lbs) well marbled veal or beef brisket, with some fat left on  
7 brown onions, sliced  
500ml (2 cups) veal or beef stock (broth)

### Spice Rub

1 heaped tablespoon dry mustard powder  
1 heaped tablespoon garlic granules  
1 heaped tablespoon dried parsley flakes  
2 teaspoons sea salt

### Glaze

¼ cup brown sugar  
¼ cup tomato ketchup  
¼ cup dijon mustard

### Method

Preheat the oven to 160 °C/325 °F. You will need a large roasting pan. Put the onion into the roasting dish and pour the stock over the onions. To make the spice rub, in a bowl mix the mustard powder, garlic, parsley and salt together and rub over both sides of the brisket.

Place the brisket on top of the onions. Cover the dish with foil, place in the oven and roast for 2 hours. Uncover and continue to roast for a further hour or until fork tender, basting from time to time. Meanwhile for the glaze, in a bowl, mix together the sugar, tomato sauce and mustard.

After the 3 hours of cooking, spread the glaze on top of the brisket and roast for an additional 30 minutes.

To serve, pile the onions on top of the brisket and slice the meat thickly, across the grain to serve.

Serves 10.

Photo courtesy Alan Benson

# A Taste of the High Holidays

LYNN NISELOW

With the High Holidays almost upon us we focus on the religious significance, we reflect on the past year, and on our wishes and prayers for the forthcoming year. We also look forward to sitting around the YomTov table and sharing traditional and symbolic food.

Everyone has their own family recipes. Like chicken soup and kreplach, it is customary for some people to have the head of a fish, this is so we should be 'the head and not the tail'. Apples and honey, for a sweet year, and the round challah for

the eternal cycle of life.

We all start off so enthusiastically planning our menus for Rosh Hashanah and by the time we get to Succot and Simchat Torah we have recipe and cooking fatigue.

We've gotten in touch with some of our friends and have some fabulous recipes to share.

The Monday Morning Cooking Club have shared a delicious glazed brisket recipe with us, the very talented Ilana Moddel has shared one of her beautiful vegetable

platters with tips on how to create those gorgeous platters so lively, simple and healthy. You could quite easily have some of the vegetables cut up and prebagged, in your fridge ready to go. Ros Fischl has shared her secret family chocolate celebration cake recipe with us. We so look forward to serving this cake now it's not a secret any more.

We're all somehow always left with apples and honey, so there's also a fabulous quick and easy dish. 🍯



## CELEBRATION CAKE

with fresh summer cherries Ros Fischl

### Ingredients

- 2 x 200g blocks of good quality dark chocolate (parve if required)
- 12 eggs separated
- 2 green apples, cored, skinned and grated
- 250g caster sugar
- 180g ground hazelnuts
- 300 ml of parve whip or fresh cream
- Extra whipped cream for filling
- Berries or cherries for filling and decoration

### Method

Preheat oven to 180 °C

Prepare 2 x 28cm springform pans, grease the tins and line bases with baking paper, tossed with medium matzo crumbs or rice crumbs or breadcrumbs.

You will need a double boiler to melt the chocolate, or you could use a glass bowl over a saucepan half filled with boiling water.

Melt 200g of chocolate in a saucepan over boiling water, stirring until melted and smooth.

Beat together the egg yolks and caster sugar in Mixmaster on high speed until light and creamy, several minutes. Add the grated apples and melted chocolate, mixing slowly to combine.

In a separate bowl whip the egg whites until peaks form and they start to firm. Add one spoon of caster sugar and continue until whites are at soft peak stage.

With a spatula fold the ground hazelnuts

and the whipped egg whites alternately into the chocolate mixture, keeping it light and fluffy.

Pour half of the mixture into each of the prepared springform pans and bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until the top springs back to the touch. Cool in the pans. Run a flat knife around the edge of the tin to loosen the cakes from the sides.

### For the glaze

Melt the other 200g of chocolate in the saucepan over the simmering water. Add 200 ml of parve whip or fresh cream, stirring constantly, until it begins to simmer. Remove from stove and stir again. Allow to cool or refrigerate until workable as a glaze.

### Assembling the cake

Place one slab of cake on a platter, add extra parve whipped cream or whipped fresh cream to cover. Add sliced strawberries or fresh pitted and sliced cherries.

Place second slab carefully on top of the filled slab, base side up. Cover sides and top with thickened chocolate glaze, working with a flat knife or palette knife dipped in warm water to help spread evenly.

Decorate with remaining berries or cherries, depending on what is seasonal. This cake freezes well before assembly and can be prepared ahead, then just assembled as needed.



*This cake was demonstrated to me by my late mother-in-law Heda (Myska) Fischl when I was first married to Alex and knew nothing about cooking. In fact my mother Flora had apologised to Alex when we got engaged that she had not succeeded in teaching me anything mildly domesticated in my twenty two years.*

*I made up for lost time and experimented with various cake recipes, altering them for our particular taste. It can be made gluten free as it is flourless. The favourite chocolate celebration cake was a tradition for our family birthdays and Yom Tov, and I have used variations of the recipe over the years. It is made as a double layer with filling of parve whip or fresh cream and fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, fresh or sour cherries. (Single layers are also popular if time poor).*

*A glazing of chocolate cream (parve or fresh) over the whole cake is finished with fresh fruits as a decoration on top and sides (if desired). Halved strawberries make a lovely side effect with more on top around the edges, allowing for a centre piece of candles or birthday wishes.*



### LEFT OVER APPLES & HONEY

Peel and core 4 apples and slice lengthwise. Drizzle 3 tablespoons of honey over the apples. Sprinkle over the cinnamon and if you wish for a little extra indulgence, dot a tablespoon (broken up) of butter or dairy free margarine all over the apples. Bake at 200 for 30-40 minutes uncovered or until tender.

### VEGETABLE PLATTER

A rainbow of vegetables and nuts. Prepare all your ingredients according to their needs...wash, peel, steam or precook.

#### Helpful Tips:

When cutting your individual ingredients, think about texture and contrast.

Start by placing one ingredient element on the platter and then plate and build your platter by colour from there. Sprinkle with edible flowers and bean shoots to add a dash of drama and an extra colour boost.



# Honoured Members

This year three of our members were honoured in the Order of Australia for their work for the community. Here we celebrate their achievements.

## Geoffrey Basser OAM

*Awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia*



Geoff was awarded the OAM for services to the Port Stephens community. He has been a volunteer since the age of eighteen when he joined Apex, the young men's service club and he became President of the Lithgow branch. He joined Rotary in 1969 and is still a member.

In the early 2000s he began working to establish a free mental health service for young people. He was a founding member of the Kur-ring-gai Youth Mental Wellbeing and Development Service (KYDS), a free counselling service for 12 to 18 year olds living, working or attending school in Northern Sydney.

In 2013, Geoff became a founding member of Caring for our Port Stephens Youth (COPSY) and helped launch a free youth counselling service, Jupiter. He is involved with the Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association, Nelson Bay and Salamander Bay Rotary clubs and Nelson Bay NOW. His award of the OAM recognises sixty-eight years of service to the community. 🌟

## Lea Portrate OAM

*Awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia*



Lea is one of our most regular attendees and longest standing members, since the days she came to Shule with her parents Bella and Israel Green, and has been a stalwart of the Women's Auxilliary.

After retiring as a preschool teacher, Lea volunteered with Jewish Care, Jannawi, Scarba House for Children, and Montefiore. She volunteered for years in the Boutique at Hunters Hill.

She was offered an honour some years ago but refused. However, she decided to accept this time around. She has enjoyed her volunteering but with typical modesty, and is a little embarrassed by the attention the award has brought. 🌟

## Robyn Richmond AM

*Appointed a Member of the Order of Australia*



Emeritus Professor Robyn Richmond is a highly distinguished academic in the area of public health, working at the University of New South Wales, as a journal editor, and has served on many boards and committees. She has worked to reduce tobacco use and risky alcohol consumption. For thirty years, she has trained more than eleven thousand practitioners and other health professionals, in Australia and around the world.

She has worked in humanitarian health programs in sub-Saharan Africa including in Kenya and Uganda to improve health among vulnerable and high risk populations. She has published over one hundred and ninety peer-reviewed publications, as well as fifty-eight books, chapters and booklets. She teaches at UNSW at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, supervises research among medical students, Masters of Public Health and PhD students, and has developed training programs for health professionals. 🌟



EDDIE JAKU

# *The Happiest Man on Earth*

Pan McMillan Australia. Reviewed by Rebecca Weisser

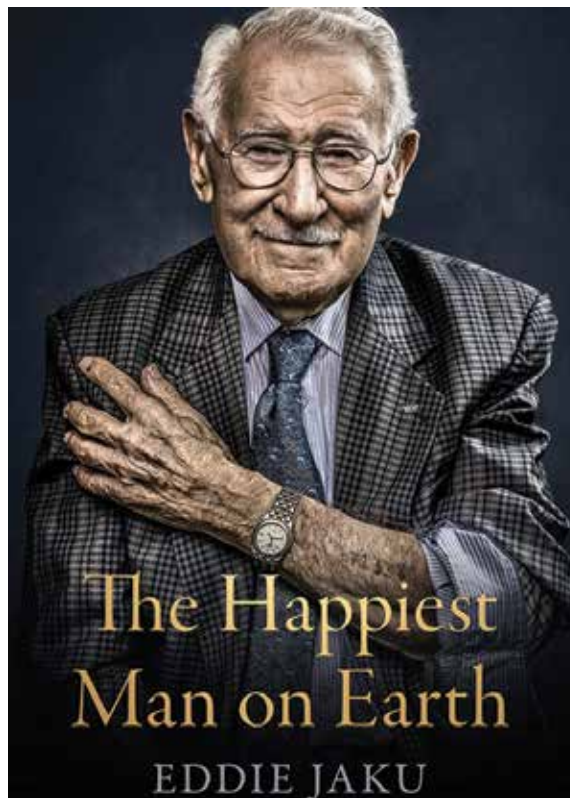
**“My Dear New Friend, I have lived for a century, and I know what it is to stare evil in the face”. So begins Eddie Jaku’s poignant account of his descent into the hell on earth the Nazis created and the extraordinary truths he learned in the death camps that have made him The Happiest Man on Earth.**

For Jewish people, whether or not they are survivors or the children of survivors, it can be deeply painful even to think about the Holocaust, yet this is a book that you cannot put down and despite the horrors it recounts, it lifts your spirits.

From the first page, the reader is swept up in a paradox; a kind-hearted, hardworking, talented Jewish boy, living in beautiful Leipzig, ancestral home to geniuses such as Bach, Mendelssohn, and Leibniz, who is intensely proud of German civilisation, only to see it descend into barbarism.

On Kristallnacht, through a twist of fate, he returns to his family home, is brutally assaulted and taken to Buchenwald. He manages to escape to Brussels, rediscovers his family and they flee to France, only to be recaptured and sent to Auschwitz.

When he loses his beloved parents on the first day and is separated from his sister, he wonders what the point of surviving is but on the brink of despair he finds his best friend. Together, these orphaned young men give each other the strength to go on.



This seems to be Eddie’s lot; he keeps finding himself in the worst place at the worst possible time but through courage, tenacity, and intelligence he finds a way to survive. Yet he never loses sight of the need to help others warning that “if you lose your morals, you lose yourself”.

The horror of the Holocaust does not end with liberation, but he rediscovers

his best friend again, and his sister, and falls in love. Yet it is not until he becomes a father that love transforms his life, and he fulfils a promise he made to God in Auschwitz that if he ever survived, he would choose to be happy and find a reason to smile every day. Now a great-grandfather, Eddie exudes warmth and wisdom.

This is a beautifully written book because Eddie has told his story thousands of times at the Sydney Jewish Museum to open the eyes and the hearts of his listeners. It wasn’t easy he says but he sees it as his duty to share his experiences to try to make the world a better place. That is why, in each chapter, there is a simple yet profound moral truth.

The Holocaust has a searing lesson for humanity — ordinary people are capable of extraordinary evil and all it takes is for good people to do nothing to stop them. Atrocities are committed every day around the world. Eddie’s message is that we owe it to the victims of the Shoah to do everything in our power to stop the suffering of today’s victims. 🕯️

# In Memoriam

**We look back at the lives of three of our members who passed away this year, who each made a great impact on the lives of the community and Synagogue.**

## Mimi (Emilia) Josef

Written by Professor and dear friend of Mimi's, Clive Kessler.

Mimi (Emilia) Josef died in her sleep overnight on Shabbat, 13 February 2020. She was born in September 1920 in small town in rural western Romania, where her father was a county official. There she went to *cheder* and high school and married while still a teenager. She lived in Transylvania and survived there during World War II until the major roundup of Jews over Shavuot in May 1944, when she was immediately taken with her parents and parents-in-law (to whom she was also very close) direct to Auschwitz. Her husband Alexander had already been mobilised into a local labour brigade to do forced work.

She was separated from her relatives on arrival at Auschwitz, where she had an unforgettable encounter with Dr. Josef Mengele. She passed from Auschwitz through over a dozen other camps and, as the war was ending, she survived a death march westward from Auschwitz. Her group was eventually liberated on the road by advancing Soviet troops. She returned to her pre-war home



town and was reunited there with her husband, and a son Robi was born.

After more trouble in Romania the family were allowed to emigrate to Israel in 1960. They lived in Beersheva, where she and they lived by hard work. They came to Sydney 1962, where again she and they lived by hard work: she by shirt-making, and taking in laundry and lodgers, while her husband made a living by heavy-lifting in house-furniture removals. Later they managed a petrol-selling service station.

The high point of Mimi's recent life was when she went as a 'living witness' historian and grandmother-figure on the March of the Living to Auschwitz, Poland and to Israel, including Yad Vashem. She became and remained close to a number of the young people

on that pilgrimage.

In her later years Mimi became a regular at The Great Synagogue, where her Shabbat morning arrival was always a notable moment. She was stylish, immaculately presented, and cultivated in her ways. In her attitude she was always positive. She did not look back. Not until late in her life, when she would say, 'I think repeatedly about

what I have seen and what I have been through. I know that people have faced such things, but I can now hardly believe that I myself went through all that. That that was my own life.'

Mimi was a woman of limited financial means but great financial generosity. She supported and worked for many local Jewish causes and institutions including Wizo and Ezra, the JNF and the Sydney Jewish Museum. She was much admired, respected and loved by The Great Synagogue's rabbinical and ministerial families of her time, especially the Apples, the Garbers and the Hiltons, and by all her circle of fellow congregant synagogue friends. 🌸





## Eleonore Solomon

Eleonore Solomon: talented artist, devoted wife, wonderful mother, doting chookie nana, pocket rocket, delightful, warm, a great cook, fun-loving, dedicated to family, glamorous, hard-working, shule-going, President of The Great Synagogue Women's Auxiliary, caring and compassionate, feisty and a free spirit.

Eleonore was born on 6 April 1933 in Sydney to Bella and Israel Green, two outstanding leaders of the community. She was educated first at Kambala and then at Dover Heights, where she was delighted to find a wonderful art department. Eleonore had met David Solomon when they were children horse riding in the Southern Highlands. They were married by Rabbi Porush in October 1952 when Eleonore was nineteen. Four children arrived, Joanne, Jonathan, Peter and Melinda.

Shule was immensely important to Eleonore, it was her second home. At first, Eleonore joined the Junior



Women's Auxiliary and then the Women's Auxiliary proper and became its President. She worked very hard on Kiddushim, decorating the Succah and the Shule for Shavuot and all the other events and activities.

David's and her move to Bowral enabled Eleonore to explore her first love, art. She was taught lino cutting by Joyce Allen and became a fine watercolourist. She was given a retrospective after twenty years' work, a rare honour. She later taught and mentored other artists.

After David died, Eleonore moved

back to Sydney. She attended shule every week once more. She continued her art in Sydney and before she became frail she travelled with her children within the State and overseas. She spread her wings and an independent side of her emerged.

Towards the end of her life, her sister Lea who was always wonderful remained so, calling twice a day, coming every Friday for lunch, reminiscing about the distant memories that Eleonore was more able to retain. Her carers did a wonderful job and enabled her to stay in her own home. She remained happy and accepting.

Eleonore Solomon was the lucky recipient of a privileged life, and she worked hard and created privileged lives for her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She was a woman of contrasts, combining the free and bohemian with the dependable and conventional. She created and she received so much love. 🌸

## Joy Balkind



Joy Balkind was the daughter of Zorach and Esther Balkind. He had been a man of considerable business acumen, the proprietor of a company importing fine European glassware and china, as well deep musical sensibilities.

A leading chorister at The Great Synagogue, he also arranged some of its signature choral settings. Esther was a woman of fine character and good deeds. Joy's life embodied both parental influences.

In 2006 Joy donated a small Sefer

Torah to The Great Synagogue for weekday use, on the condition that she should not be identified until after her death. When she passed away a new mantle was commissioned making her contribution of the Sefer in memory of her parents.



A graduate in science of the University of Sydney, Joy knew just about everybody in "professional Sydney", and many in London too, from those immediate post-war student years. She cared for her ageing parents and, after their death, she became active in Sydney life: in its musical circles and in Jewish community affairs, notably through the Board of Deputies and WIZO. She was a notable and generous supporter of Jewish Studies in the universities of the Sydney area and was committed to helping those in need, for example through WIZO's Ahuzat Yeladim in Haifa.

She was a woman of worth, cultured character, intellectual and moral stature, and good deeds. 🌸



First time in full rear view Photo courtesy of Chau Chak Wing Museum Collection, the University of Sydney .

# *Curator's Corner* *shares three secrets of the* **Synagogue**

**The Great Synagogue is still filled with secrets. These are sometimes revealed by luck, and at other times by closer scrutiny. During a visit to the new museum at the University of Sydney, a remark was made about an image that had so far escaped our attention.**



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
founded 1878

JANA VYTRHLIK, HONORARY CURATOR,  
ROSENBLUM JEWISH MUSEUM

It is no secret that most of the architecture of The Great Synagogue has been obscured by the growing city's skyline for just about a century. One would have to be born before 1910 and climb to the top of the nearby Town Hall to glimpse the synagogue's roof and have a clear view of its towers. Fortunately, Nicholas John Caire, one of the early Sydney photographers, had the very idea soon after the synagogue

consecration in 1878. Today, only his camera can still reveal the most hidden secrets of the rear of The Great Synagogue. Captured from the west, the original three-floor frontage to the Castlereagh Street appears, ending well below the synagogue's gable roof line. Housing initially the beadle's residence and school rooms, it features sets of familiar arched windows. Dominating the Elizabeth Street façade are the synagogue's two towers which only very few people today could see from the back. This image brings more than a new insight into the architect



Jana Vytrhlik and Ilana Cohen with the synagogue textile collection in January 2021.

### Rare synagogue embroidery from Sydney

Finally, a set of rarely seen manicured nails was revealed after a close inspection of one of the historical Torah mantles. The motif of two blessing hands on Jewish ceremonial objects or grave stones is not uncommon. It has been part of the Ashkenazi ornamentation and symbolises the Priestly *Kohanim* benediction of the congregation during the synagogue service. The hands are often embroidered in a stylised outline with fingers characteristically outstretched and thumbs touching. However, what is rarely seen in the Anglo-Jewish tradition, is the level of fine nail detail accomplished in raised gold needlework, as on the example from our museum collection. The work is thought to have been commissioned to Sophia Steffanoni, a skilled young craft and business woman of reputed Jewish lineage in Sydney, in the 1900s. ✨

Thomas Rowe’s original design: when zoomed-in it also reveals information on the nearby Fletcher Bros, the iron foundry which cast The Great Synagogue’s green iron gates in 1878... but that is a secret to reveal for another time.

### Museum collection during the pandemic

One of the least known aspects of the behind-the-scenes museum work of any collection is the ongoing care and conservation that the precious objects require. It is The Great’s many vestments which rotate from festival to festival, that call for a vigilant eagle-eye. A number of the richly embroidered ornaments and letterings on Torah mantles and parochot, the Holy Ark curtains, show signs of wear and tear. Since late last year, over a hundred pieces of textiles have



Detail of embroidered Torah mantle, c. 1900 from the AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum Collection .

been inspected and repaired with a helping hand of another collection volunteer Ilana Cohen.



# *Walking Inside York Street* **Synagogue**



York Street Synagogue in Sydney, in use from 1844 to 1877. Architect James Hume (c. 1800-1868), photo c. 1870.



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY  
1844-1877

JANA VYTRHLIK AND ZAC LEVI

**It is well known that the architect Thomas Rowe built The Great Synagogue in Sydney in 1878. What has only recently transpired is that as early as 1863, Rowe presented plans for the refurbishment of the York Street Synagogue's interior.**

The plans' discovery in the archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society unexpectedly brought together a curator and a computer artist. Each had long wished to glimpse inside Australia's oldest



*Virtual reconstruction of the York Street Synagogue's interior, 2021. View eastward from the ladies' gallery, with the bimah thought to be centred close to the ark. Contemporary records positioned the ark to the eastern wall as was the tradition in English synagogues.*



*Entering the York Street Synagogue through the southern entrance. Virtual reconstruction, 2021.*

synagogue, and here they write about their findings.

We are well familiar with the Egyptian style façade of the synagogue thanks to a handful of images and newspaper reports but no designs nor plans have been known to show how the sanctuary looked. Moreover, there were no other models in the colony to follow and the architect James Hume, who had already built several churches in Sydney, may well have never been inside a synagogue before.

In April 1844 the Sydney Morning Herald brought the news of the synagogue's opening ceremony, which alluded to the inner fittings:

"The interior is very handsomely fitted up: along the sides are three rows of open backed pews; at the east [sic] end is the ark, and in the centre the reading desk and choir, where the principal portion of the service is performed. It is lighted by two large gas chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, and by four lamps placed on ornamental pyramids alongside the ark".

For many years, this account was the extent of our knowledge about the inside design of Australia's oldest synagogue, until recently... when Zac started researching his family history and came across a Sydney relative, Aaron Alexander Levi.

In the early days of the

congregation, Aaron Alexander Levi was a reader and later a minister at the York Street Synagogue. This information pointed Zac to the well-known photograph of the synagogue, but with no other pictorial examples of the interior available, Zac went to the archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Sydney where he made an astonishing discovery. After requesting 'pictorial material of the York Street Synagogue', the archivist Sabrina Elias came up with the newly catalogued architectural technical drawings detailing the renovations planned for the York Street Synagogue by Thomas Rowe.

The plans depicted the front, sides, and back exterior façades as well as drawings of the interior which showed two levels, the ground floor for the men and the upstairs gallery for women. There was an area allocated at the western end of the gallery for the choir. The gallery was horseshoe-shaped extending around the north, south and west end of the Synagogue with the balcony having intricately carved wood held up by twelve painted cast-iron fluted ionic columns.

With the main layout of the York Street Synagogue's interior recreated, the final assignment was to find a creative answer for the interior fittings, the bimah and the ladies' gallery. Zac began to work with Jana

and applied her previous research into the York Street congregation. The design inspiration for the virtual recreation of the Synagogue's interior came from a rather surprising source: the Star of David motif on the furniture in the Martin Luther Church in Sydney (1883). Finally, on the eastern wall of the Synagogue sat the beautifully carved large cedar ark which is currently exhibited in the AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum as one of the highlights of The Great Synagogue collection. Zac 3D-scanned the ark in a process called photogrammetry and was able to include it in the virtual reconstruction of the interior.

In the end, using the latest imaging technology and Zac's skills, Jana's research, and drawings unearthed in the archives, the transformation into virtual reality now allows us to walk through the inner space, in a way which - until recently - we could only imagine. 🌟

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*Jana Vytrhlik is an art historian and has served as the honorary curator for the AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum at The Great Synagogue since 2016.*

*Zac Levi is a 3D specialist and architectural animator, and has recently crafted virtual reality recreations for The Great Synagogue.*



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY

CAROLINE LEWIS

**Whenever I think of giving up, I always think of Alice. This year, my mum, Alice, turned ninety-six years old. She has spent the past year in virtual isolation. Mum usually celebrates her birthday with me in Sydney. Instead, she has been alone most days in the short, dark, damp and cold days of London’s winter – and for her arthritic joints, it’s no party.**

Mum was born in Vienna in 1925, an only child. After Kristallnacht in November 1938, she was secreted, with little notice, onto a train bound for Dover, aged thirteen, unsure if she would ever see her parents again.

Mum’s father had already been taken into custody and was sent to Buchenwald labour camp. My brave grandmother, alone, negotiated his removal on the promise of funds; payment of two first-class tickets anywhere – expiry: ninety days. She sought entry to Shanghai, and she and my grandfather sailed there spending the next seven years surviving the ghetto bombings, setting up and running Hungaria, a restaurant selling her mother’s recipe of Hungarian Goulash Soup, amongst other Eastern European dishes.

At fourteen, Mum lived in a group home in Scotland for teens; at sixteen she moved to London, in with a family who cared for her, but who expected rent, cleaning, babysitting in exchange for board and lodging. Finding her own bedsit in Kilburn at eighteen, she cared for herself, working on the buses, in a metal factory and as a dressmaker’s



Young Alice.

## *The resilience of Alice*

# “This too shall soon pass”

assistant. With insufficient money to heat her bedsit, she would take her dinner (a sandwich and a flask of soup) to the cinema and sit through two runs of the same film, enveloped in the cinema’s warmth, curled up in the red velvet seats.

She once told me when she was at her absolute lowest ebb, the only thing that kept her going was hope. Hope that she would see her parents

again and that ‘this too shall soon pass’.

So, what could I possibly do from twenty thousand kilometres away to keep up Alice’s hope in the year that was? First and foremost, we had to fix that hair of hers! Some boxed colour delivered from Boots Chemist and she was able to dye it on her own. I added a set of curlers and a lightweight hairdryer, a Mandala



Alice making Hungarian goulash on Zoom.



Alice at 96.



Alice and parents.



Linzertorte baking class.

colouring in book, pens, paints, activity books and a magnifying glass to see it all with.

I enlisted her to run a couple of cooking demos. A wonderful and memorable Zoom session making Hungarian goulash soup that her mum had cooked in the Shanghai ghetto, and the same one her grandmother had served up at the family's Hungarian travellers' inn. Friends from London and Sydney baked Viennese Linzertorte together online which made Mum so happy to be of use and my friends absolutely loved her recipes and the stories behind them. I also interviewed Alice doing her exercise regime, showing us how she keeps her body moving, demonstrating safe, seated exercises which I posted on social media.

Her iPad has been her absolute lifeline to the outside world, accessing links for theatre, opera and art gallery tours to enjoy online.

What she does miss is having physical contact, just being face-to-face with people and in society – and she's missing her weekly bridge games but has returned to after more than a year.

My mum has taught me so much about resilience and how we can survive these terrible times with just the hope that 'this too shall soon pass.' 🌻



Zoom catchups with grand-daughters Juliet, Charlotte, Sophie, Michelle and great-grandchildren Zadie and Joel.



# Discovering my Jewish Convict Ancestry

JACLYN LEIBA GLUCK

*Dedicated in memory of my mother  
Joyce Falk (Simcha Bat Zadok 1921-2020)*



*My mother Joyce Falk aged 4 with her father Zade Lazarus aged 30, grandmother Marian Lazarus aged 50 and great grandmother, Rebecca Rosenfeld aged 83.*

**In 2007, I was walking past Gold’s Jewish Bookstore in Bondi when I noticed an impressive book in the shopfront window *These are the names –Jewish Lives in Australia 1788-1850* by John S. Levi. The book chronicles the stories of the fifteen hundred Jews who were either transported to Australia as convicts or arrived as free settlers during this period.**

My family are seven generation Australian-born Jews. My great-great-grandmother, Rebecca Rosenfeld (Rivka Bat Yaacov Ha Levi) was the first generation in our family born in Brighton, Hobart in 1842, married in Melbourne in 1872 and lived in Sydney from 1881 until her death in 1927 at the age of 84 years.

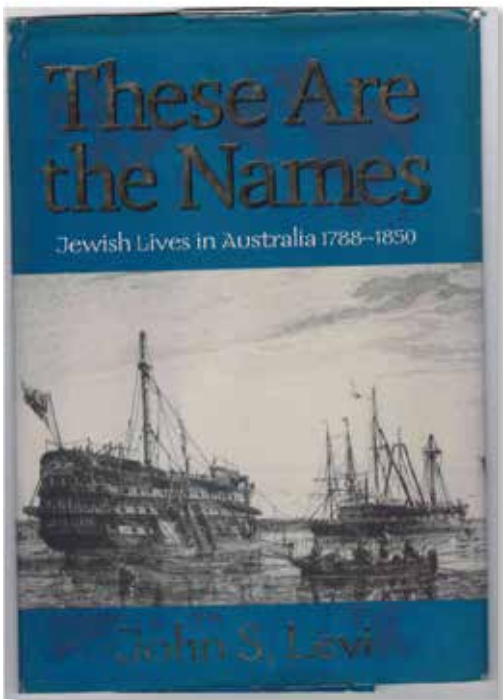
I have a family photo of the first four Australian born generations taken in 1925. They are all laid to rest with their spouses at Rookwood Jewish Cemetery in Sydney.

But why did our family come to Australia? Maybe this book could tell me more...I lifted the huge and

heavy eight-hundred-and-seventy-three-page biographical dictionary from the window. I opened it looking for the name of Rebecca Rosenfeld. I couldn’t find it. I was disappointed.

My mother had tried to research our Australian Jewish family history and had obtained a copy of Rebecca





and Moss Rosenfeld's marriage certificate. They were married in Bourke St West Synagogue, Victoria on the 18th September 1872. Rebecca's parents were John and Louisa Davis. My mother had found a few men named John Davis but she had no more information to identify the one belonging to our family, so she was not able to do any further research.

Standing in the bookstore, still holding the heavy book, I decided to look up the name John Davis. Four men called John Davis were listed, but I was soon able to identify our John Davis, as the book listed the names and dates of birth of all his children. My eyes lit up when I saw the name Rebecca Davis (1843). I was even more surprised to learn our Matriarch Rebecca was the ninth of twelve children!

John Davis (Yaacov ben Benyamin Ha Levi) was married (aged twenty two) on 26 March 1826 at London's Great Synagogue to his niece the fourteen year-old Louisa (Leah Bat Yehudah). They arrived in Van Diemen's Land (later called Tasmania) in 1839 as free settlers with six of their children. Louisa's father, Judah Solomon gave his son-

in-law, John Davis, the lease of the Castle Inn in Pontville in Tasmania, an important stopping point between Hobart and Launceston. Then it was a thriving town of over two thousand people. The Inn was the social hub of the town. The Davis Family had six more children and remained there for the next twenty years. John also ran the coach service to Hobart until his untimely death in 1860. Louisa died in Melbourne in 1885.

The Solomon Family owned the property in Pointville until 1896. It still exists today as a venue for public entertainment and is now called Epsom House.

I was intrigued to learn more about Judah Solomon. There was only one listed in the book and it was a very long entry. I began to read: Judah Solomon (Yehudah ben Yitzchak) was born in Sheerness in Kent in 1778. He was described as having a ruddy complexion, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, 173 cm tall. He was part of the Jewish community in Sheerness and was the son of Isaac and Rebecca and the brother of Joseph, Henry, Samuel and Isaac.

Judah aged twenty-seven, married in Sheerness in England in January 1805, to a widow Esther Abrahams

(nee Levy/Russell) who had a daughter, Hannah. The brothers Judah and Joseph had a business that supplied goods for naval ships for their long voyages. They were convicted of organising a team of thieves to repossess unpaid goods stored in warehouses in the Sheerness port. They were given the mandatory death sentence, which was later commuted to transportation for life to Australia. Esther was pregnant with their seventh child and refused a divorce.

Judah Solomon aged forty-two years of age and his brother Joseph were the only Jews transported. They and the other one-hundred-and-sixty convicts on the Prince Regent were sent to Van Diemen's Land, landing on 1 March 1820.

In the Jewish bookshop in Bondi, at forty-nine years of age, I discovered my Jewish convict ancestry and there began my journey to learn about my great-great-great-great-grandfather Judah Solomon and his contribution on Jewish life in Australia. (1820-2021). 🌸

*To be continued ...*



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE  
SYDNEY

DENNIS BLUTH



Figure 1.

# *Wish you were in* **Elizabeth Street**

## POSTCARDS OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

**Before social media, the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the rest, there was the humble postcard.**

Postcards evolved from the penny post letter first introduced in the United Kingdom in 1840. Austria was the first country to publish a postcard in 1869 in connection with the Franco-German War. There were no pictures on the first cards, only space for writing. The first Australian postcard was issued by New South Wales in 1875.

Buildings and nature started to feature on postcards in the 1890s. In Australia, the first picture postcard

was issued in 1894 by Tasmania for its International Exhibition. The Golden Age for postcards was between 1895 and 1914.

The Great Synagogue, like many synagogues around the world was featured on postcards. The earliest postcard reproduced here is postmarked 8 August 1907 (Figures 1 and 2) showing the interior of the synagogue. However, the picture on the card predates the moving in 1906 of the Bimah from the centre to the front to enable more seating to be installed on the ground floor. The card was obviously first produced some years earlier.

The second postcard is postmarked 20 January 1908 (Figures 3 and 4) and is of Elizabeth Street and Hyde Park, with a tram near the Synagogue. Again the scene appears to be earlier than 1908. It is noted in the right hand corner of the picture the inscription "Sydney Streets, 56. Kerry (Copyright) Sydney." Kerry was one of Sydney's major photographic studios at the time.

The third postcard, postmarked 27 January 1908 (Figures 5 and 6), is a fine photograph of the Synagogue standing tall in Elizabeth Street. The other two cards are not postally used so it is hard to date. The bold black

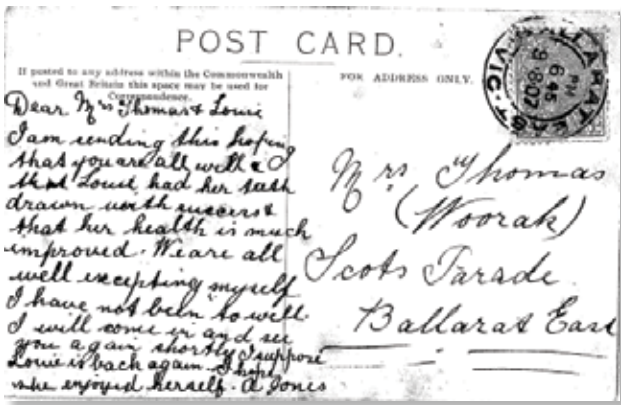


Figure 2.



Figure 5.



Figure 7.

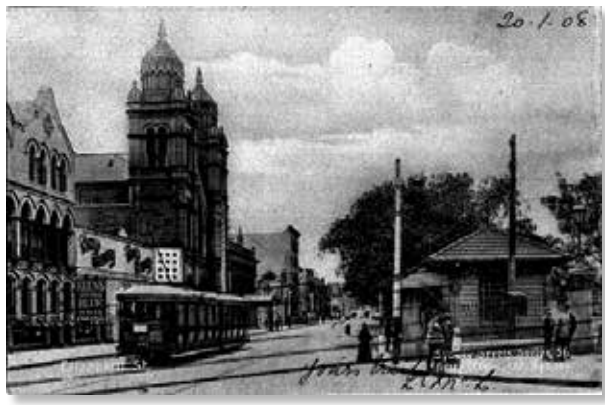


Figure 3.



Figure 6.



Figure 4.



Figure 8.

and white card showing Elizabeth Street and The Great Synagogue in white letters at the bottom of the card (Figure 7), is probably from 1950s judging by the cars and the style of clothes worn by the people standing in the street. It is marked as a Kodak photo. The last card (Figure 8) is again a street scene from the early twentieth century.

Postcards were a primary way of keeping in touch with family and friends showing a snapshot of the surroundings while traveling. Often there was no message, for example in the postcard to Miss Marion Thorn in

Pennsylvania dated 20 January 1908 (Figure 3). The sender's signature is on the front of the card.

Interestingly, the postcard of the interior of the Synagogue dated 8 August 1907 (Figures 1 and 2) was sent to a Mrs Thomas in Ballarat and postmarked in Ballarat, meaning it was not sent from Sydney. It is quite a chatty message from A Jones. The

postcard of 27 January 1908 (Figures 5 and 6) also has a very warm message from L Bellamy to Miss M Callaty in Hobart. There is reference to wanting a photo and mention that 'it is very hot at the present. I do wish for the winter'.

Interestingly, neither the sender nor recipient of these cards appears to have been Jewish! 🌸



# Sidney and Nita Sernack

Merrilyn Sernack looks back at the lives of her parents and long-time Great Synagogue members, Sid and Nita Sernack.



MERRILYN SERNACK

Nita Davis, daughter of Mr and Mrs EA Davis was introduced to Captain Sidney Sernack, son of Mr and Mrs Jack Sernack by her older sister Joan. The attraction was instant and the couple became engaged shortly thereafter. Sidney was serving in the 2/110th Australian General Transport Company transporting defence material between Alice Springs and Darwin and Nita had been called up to work in the Kodak factory darkroom.

Their marriage took place at The Great Synagogue on 15 November 1944. The bride wore a gown of Honiton lace brought back from Brussels by her mother while Joan (by then Mrs RM Hamilton) was Matron of Honour. Rabbi LA Falk and Rev A Kezelman officiated.

The couple rented a flat at Elizabeth Bay and, on being demobilised in December 1947, Sidney worked as a song plugger and book promoter before starting his own business manufacturing ladies clothing using the cut, make and trim shops dotted around the inner Eastern Suburbs. Sidney had considerable artistic ability and, with his own patterns and cloths, styled the clothing using resources at hand: fashion journals and trade magazines and Australian-made textiles. As the Sydney rag trade operated on a ninety-day credit cycle, it was possible to cut, style and trim outfits and sell them in time to pay the bills.



The Sernack manufacturing business grew quickly during the late 1940s and early 1950s as Australian women became more fashion-conscious and the import of exotic textiles and trims improved. Sidney's drive and energy saw the business grow exponentially during the 1960s as Australia absorbed the social and political movements in Europe, England and America, with their notable focus on youth and feminism.

As fashions changed, Sidney developed a suite of Sernack labels: *Rain'n Shine* for ladies' outer wear and shorter jackets for the change of seasons; *London Look* for the younger consumer interested in major trendsetters such as Biba and Mary Quant; and *Mr Strange* for the busy working girl. The Sernack labels remained outstanding successes throughout the 1980s and in 1984

the *Tussi* label – built on youthful glamour and pitched to the after-five market – won the Australian Fashion Industry Association (FIA) Award.

During this time Sidney opened retail outlets under the *Quibbs* banner at Bondi Junction, Centrepont, AMP, Rozelle and Wynyard but, with the removal of tariff walls, the Australian fashion industry went into an immediate decline. Sidney sold his retail outlets and retired.

Nita worked with Sidney throughout his career and the couple had five children.

On retirement, Sidney and Nita spent their time travelling and enjoying their eight grandchildren. Sidney also actively advocated for the surviving members of his Army unit. The couple moved to the Montefiore Home in Randwick when it opened and Sidney remained a devoted and loving husband to Nita until her death on 10 October 2010 aged 87. Sidney dictated his autobiography *Crossroads*, published by the family in 2015, before his death on 13 August 2016 aged 97. 🌸

Further information:

*Sernack, Nita & Strauss, Lucinda & Australian National Maritime Museum (1991). Operation war bride: [interview with] Nita Sernack.*

*Obituary: Sidney Sernack, retailer who introduced bikini and Mary Quant label to Australia*

October 3, 2016 at <https://www.smh.com.au/national/sidney-sernack-retailer-who-introduced-bikini-and-mary-quant-label-to-australia-20160914-grfwty.html>  
<http://traceyscq.com>



# The Reluctant Immigrant

## The year was 1845, The Old Bailey, London, England.

Caroline Birch: "Me and my husband Jesse left our house and locked the door, your Honour. We returned at 3.30pm and found the sheets and pillows were gone from our bed, also a clock. We was missing, a cap, a shift, some calico and me husband Jesse's own personal box was open and empty".

Officer John Carpenter: "Your Honour, on 19th of June I attended the residence at 1 Union Court, Kent Road where I located all the items stated previously by Mrs Birch plus 33 skeleton keys. With one of these keys I was able to open the door of the Birch's home-- and your Honour, I have little doubt these keys would open 500 other doors, probably including your Honour's".

Patrick Sullivan: "Your Honour, I live on the first floor of 1 Union Court and let the room above to the prisoner. I do not know what work he does, but he told me he had a licence to sell jewellery, though I have never seen him with a box or a bag. The keys spoken about were found under the coal-cupboard".

Officer John Carpenter: "Your Honour, there are five similar cases against the prisoner".

The Judge: "I find the accused guilty of the crime charged and sentence you, Aaron Steenbhom to be deported for no less than 15 years".

For the next two years my great-grandfather Aaron was housed in a succession of hulks, then to the new Milbank prison for a year, then deported to Australia. At the completion of this term Aaron's record reads somewhat



puzzlingly, 'attempted strangulation, otherwise good.' He was then just twenty-seven.

After five weeks sailing to Hobart then another five up the east coast of Australia, Aaron found himself in the hell-hole of Norfolk Island where he was promptly placed in leg-irons the following year. It seems Aaron spent most of this time being disciplined for several listed offences including 'neglect, lying, disobedience, obscene language, idleness' and lastly, for 'throwing a stone at a fellow prisoner' for which he received twenty-five lashes. In July 1852 he was sent south to Port Arthur Prison where it seems his previous rebellious nature continued undaunted.

Assuming the authorities grew tired of him our Aaron was granted a ticket-of-leave with a conditional pardon in October 1856. For the next three years his time was spent in and out of gaol or various half-way houses preparing him

for life as a free man. He worked as a hawker selling items from his cart to farmers and residents west of Sydney for two years until moving into a boarding house in Darlinghurst where among others resided Rebecca Symonds and her daughter Rachel, who had migrated to Sydney from London in 1850.

Aaron must have possessed some elusive, redeeming qualities and charm for in July 1859 at the age of thirty-four, he joined the Synagogue in York Street Sydney and equally as surprising, just five months later, married Rachel Symonds.

Under the strict guidance of Rachel, Aaron would somehow manage to live until 1903 aged seventy-eight and father seven children all of whom gained various trades. His descendants have been married in The Great for three subsequent generations and are still members one-hundred-and-six-two-years later. 🌟



# Board members of The Great Synagogue 2020-2021



David Lewis,  
*President*



Max Freedman,  
*Senior Vice President*



Lauren Ryder,  
*Vice President*



Simon Havas,  
*Treasurer*



Daniel Abbot,  
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Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton *Chief Minister and Senior Rabbi*  
Rabbi Phil Kaplan *Minister and Associate Rabbi*

## Honorary Ministers

Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple AO RFD *Rabbi Emeritus*  
Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM *Rabbinic Fellow*

## Religious Officials and Educators

Rabbi Yakov Richter *Torah Reader and Children's Service*  
Hinda Young *Tot Shabbat*

## Choir

Justin Green *Choirmaster*

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Jana Vytrhlik *Guest Curator, AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum*

## Useful contacts

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Denise Sher – Kiddushim 0408 411 510

## The Great Vine

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