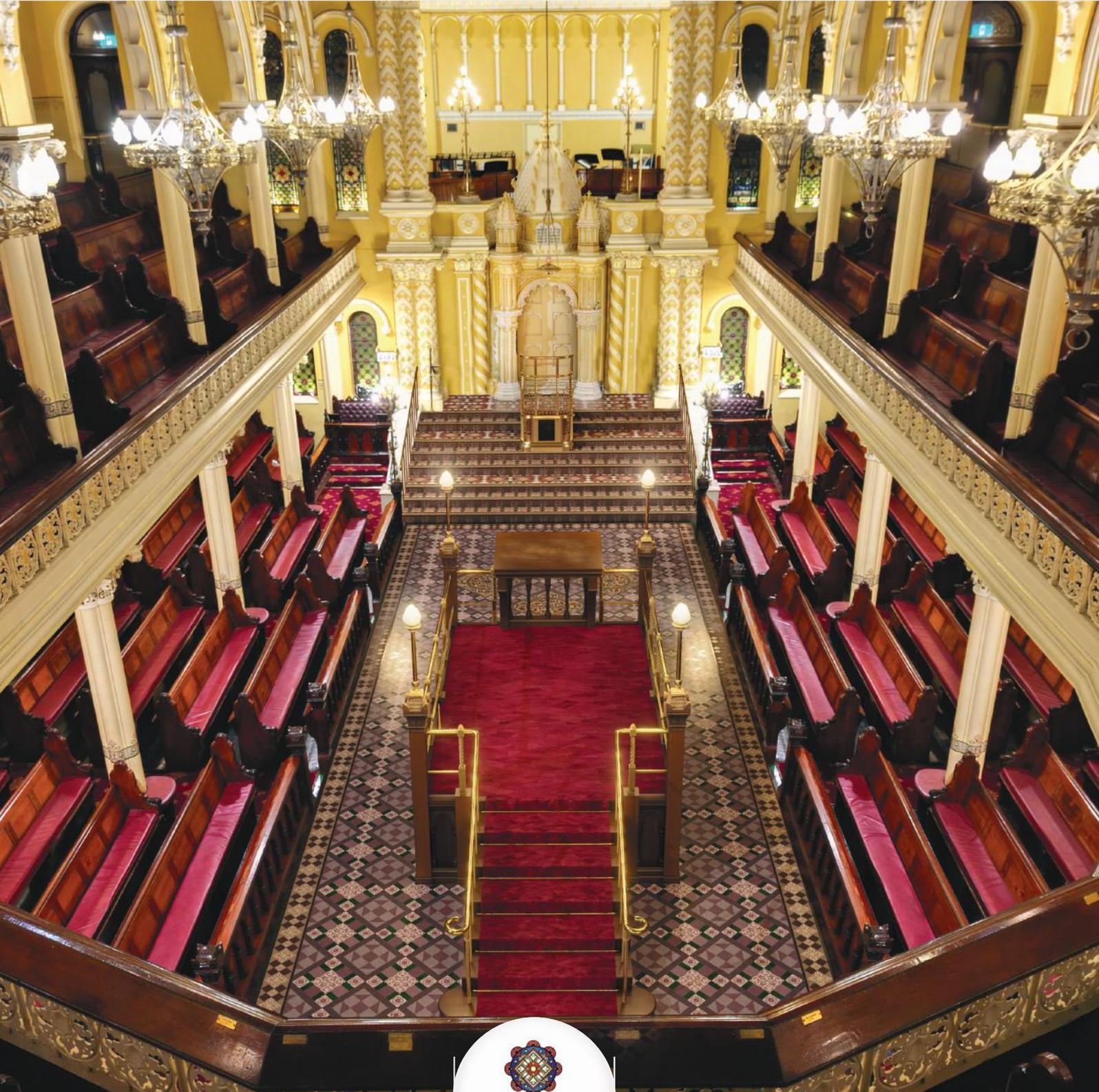


The GREAT VINE



YESTERDAY



Today



TOMORROW



Thank you!

The Great plays a special part in the lives of so many people, both within our community and beyond.

We thank all our donors for a fantastic 5784 and we look forward to new conversations about our community's future.

Wishing everyone a prosperous and healthy 5785!



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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 us a home for our Jewish community. We offer respect to the descendants of the first people whose presence and cultures are vital to the nation we share.



The Chief Rabbi's Rosh Hashanah Message 5785

During this most painful year, in addition to the trauma of the terrorist atrocities, the capture of hostages and the tragic war, we have been subjected to a constant barrage of falsehoods. Of these, none has been so insidious as the morally inverted claim of genocide, the modern-day blood libel.

On Yom Kippur, we will chant Kol Nidrei, a prayer steeped in history and emotion. Fascinatingly, historians differ on its precise origin. Many believe that it was composed as a remedy for Jews who had been forced to make oaths of conversion to Christianity. While Kol Nidre declares 'all vows' made to God null and void, it was used as a pretext by medieval antisemites to portray Jews as untrustworthy in business and other civil matters. Despite assurances that Kol Nidrei did not apply to vows between people, the lie persisted, causing deep-seated hatred.

According to an old adage, a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still lacing up its boots. Sadly, in the era of social media, this is truer than ever, particularly where Israel is concerned.

In just one such example, in July, a well-known medical journal published a letter on its website. The authors estimated that the total number of casualties in Gaza attributable to Israel might eventually reach 186,000, if one were to factor in the impact of secondary causes, such as lack of housing and poor healthcare infrastructure. No attempt was made to assign any responsibility to Hamas, nor to differentiate between the deaths of combatants and non-combatants, nor identify the 'Gaza Health Ministry,' on whose data its conjecture was based, as Hamas-run. Nevertheless, campaigners attributed this 'new data' to the journal itself, rather than to a letter it had received. Some claimed that the journal had 'released a study,' while others stated that the estimate was 'peer reviewed.' Before long, millions had read it and it was cited by activists, British Parliamentarians, and a UN Special Rapporteur.

Kol Nidrei is chanted during our deepest moments of personal and communal introspection. In our confession of the High Holy Days, we call out to Hashem in candour: "You know the hidden secrets of every living soul. You search the innermost chambers of the conscience and the heart. Nothing escapes You. Nothing is hidden from Your sight." This is a moment of the purest honesty.

The Torah instructs us, "Distance yourself from falsehood," because it is not enough to be truthful; we must create an environment intolerant of falsehood.

Indeed, despite the centuries of lies and hatred, Kol Nidrei has endured because we have always found solace in moments of perfect truth between ourselves and Hashem.

When we know in the deepest recesses of our souls where truth ends and falsehood begins, no lie can diminish us.

The truth will prevail. Am Yisrael Chai!

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE





Premier of New South Wales
Australia

Rosh Hashanah - The Great Synagogue

On the occasion of Rosh Hashanah, I wish your readers a Happy New Year and extend my warmest greetings to Jewish communities across NSW.

I recognise that the past year has been devastating and that this Rosh Hashanah is therefore a particularly poignant moment for the Jewish people of NSW and around the world. As your community comes together this Rosh Hashanah, I join you in prayer for a peaceful and sweet new year in 5785.

In NSW, I am proud that we are home to a thriving multicultural society, which includes vibrant Jewish communities. As Premier, I recognise the role these communities have played in shaping NSW into the strong and connected society it is today.

I also thank Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Elton and members of the Great Synagogue for their leadership in fostering solidarity and cooperation among people of different backgrounds and faith traditions.

May this time bring us all together to pray for peace around the world.

On behalf of the NSW Government, I wish you all the best for a prosperous new year.

Shana tova u'metuka!

Sincerely,

Chris Minns MP
Premier



Securing THE FUTURE



DAVID LEWIS – PRESIDENT

This year has been a challenging year for everyone in the Jewish community. Since October 7, 2023, we have been unfortunately forced to concentrate on the protection of not only The Great Synagogue community but also, given our prominent position in the centre of the city and our leading role with the NSW government, the wider Jewish community.

Of course, nothing compares to the far more difficult experiences of our friends and family in Israel.

Having said that, I emphasised just a few weeks ago in my weekly newsletter to the congregation that *“whilst we acknowledge the difficulties of our cousins in Israel and we share their grief, as a people we will not be silenced, and we will not hide. We pray for Israel, and we will continue with our traditions just as we have done for the past 5784 years.”*

Over the past year, The Great has witnessed increased engagement of our members together with a steady increase in new members, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, weddings and many other smachot. Long may that continue!

In fact, we have added over fifty new members in the past 12 months.

Our growth has resulted in a steady increase in the number and quality of our events, and I hope that you will all continue to enjoy our schedule. I invite all members to join our committees and assist us to expand our events.

Picture above: Addressing the Law Service

HERITAGE FLOOR SPACE (HFS)

Over the past three years, I have regularly reported on the progress we have made with our application for our award of Heritage Floor Space. Finally, in May of this year, the Council for the City of Sydney confirmed that award was successful.

It extends the restriction on our title so that no development on the site may increase our gross floor area or increase the height of the building. A similar restriction was placed on title under our 1989 sale of air rights.

This grant enables us to bring in very substantial funds to protect our building and to guarantee our financial security for decades.

Our Conservation Management Plan, a 219-page colossus, has been ratified by Council, and this includes an obvious requirement for continual maintenance of our buildings.

I hope some time prior to the 2025 AGM, I will be able to advise members that we have successfully sold our HFS.

We plan to place the bulk of the funds received into The Great Synagogue Foundation, thereby preserving the capital for the future maintenance of our wonderful Synagogue.

Under current legislation, The Great will be eligible to make another application for an award of HFS in 25 years' time. I hope I can assist with that application!

MOVING THE BIMAH AND OTHER MAJOR BUILDING WORKS

Following congregational agreement our Development Application (DA) to move the Bimah back to the 1878 position in the centre of the Shul was approved and in March this year a prototype was built and deployed.

By Rosh Hashanah we will restore several heritage items to the Bimah including the old posts, brass railings together with the original reading desk, all of which have been restored. The pulpit is being restored and will be reinstalled after Succot.

We ordered new floor tiles from the original 1870s UK supplier, and we were hoping to have them in place in time for the High Holy Days, however they are still in transit. During August we laid some of our surplus floor tiles to match the 1878 tiles as well as some temporary tiles. The sanctuary already looks stunning, and I am looking forward to the completion of this stage of the process, with the restoration of the Ark together with safety and security improvements in early 2025.

Our Senior Vice President, Max Freedman, who has now served on the Board since 2009, has been the driving force behind this onerous project. Our heritage status requires careful and cautious management and Max together with Rabbi Elton have delivered.

The air-conditioning of the sanctuary in conjunction with repairs to the roof of the Synagogue have advanced. Also, during September we will lodge a new DA to make changes to the lift that will enable it to extend to the IGA and finally provide stepless access to the Women's Gallery. These latter enhancements will deliver on our commitment to improve disability access throughout the building.





Drawing the Chanukah kids raffle

Adam Pisk, one of our new appointees to the Board, has taken on the management of our building programme and I cannot thank him enough for assuming this demanding portfolio.

THE GREAT TEAM

In my weekly newsletters I have regularly highlighted the significant contributions of so many of our volunteers and staff members. We are so fortunate to have Rabbi Elton and Hinda as our Senior Minister and Rebbetzin. I am constantly stopped in the street by members and non-members alike extolling their interactions with both of them.

Rabbi Feldman and Mushki have now been with us for two years and they have recently recommitted to The Great for the next five years. Rabbi Feldman is a world-class Chazan who consistently enhances our services. Mushki's warmth is enjoyed by all. We look forward to their continuing contribution.

Rabbi Richter has once again humbly delivered the most outstanding service to us each week reading Torah and running the children's service. Rabbi will be visiting family in Israel over Rosh Hashanah, and we will miss him.

Our Chair of Great Women, Sharon Schach, has announced her retirement from that position. Sharon has held this position for over six years and her contribution has

been immense. Thank you, Sharon, you have set a high standard and contributed so much.

Your Board has once again remained stable this past year and at the time of writing I expect that will continue into 5785. I again thank our Treasurer, Eli Green, Junior Vice-President, Lauren Ryder, Darryl Green, Fay Frischer, Benjamin Hansen, Toby Hammerman, Jack Pinczewski and new appointee Soraya Calavassy.

General Manager Lynn Niselow continues to lead our office and this year it has been a demanding task. Members may not be aware that Lynn together with Ilana Moddel and new recruit Bassia Dinnen, have dealt with and shielded most of us from verbal and written antisemitism to which they are subjected most days. I know you will all join me in thanking them and wish them a peaceful and happy New Year.

Choirmaster, Josh Weinstock has taken the choir to yet another level and has worked closely with Rabbi Feldman. Thank you, Josh, - we all look forward to October and beyond with you at the helm.

Jana Vytrhlik is our superb Curator, looking after our collection. We wish her mazal tov on the publication of her outstanding book *Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney*.

Finally, to our senior gabbai Steven Schach. Over the past two years Steve has trained both David Dunn and Richard Davey, both of whom have taken on the roles of assistant to Steve and Toby Hammerman. Steve, David and Richard ensure that the service runs efficiently and to the standards required by Rabbi Elton and the Board. Their contribution has been outstanding.

CONCLUSION

I am so honoured to have the continuing opportunity to serve the community and to participate in the continued success of our Synagogue and my service to the community.

Once again, Caroline and I wish you and your families a happy and healthy new year. 🌸

Shana Tova

David P. Lewis
President



David Lewis introduces 'Songs for Israel' Concert



With our Curator Jana Vytrhlik



David and Caroline Lewis at the Law Service

Celebrating the present WITH FAITH IN THE FUTURE

RABBI DR BENJAMIN ELTON

As I prepare for my tenth High Holiday season at The Great Synagogue, I am riding high on a wave of celebration and optimism. You might expect the opposite. Should we not be downbeat after the last few months? Last year's festivals concluded on Simchat Torah with the terrible attack of October 7, which has hung like a shadow over the months since. That atrocity and the war in Gaza that followed it have created extraordinary pressures for Israelis and for Jews around the world. Here in Sydney, protest and public discourse have sometimes crossed the line from what is acceptable to what is most certainly unacceptable and as a city centre shule we have had to deal with that. In which case, why do I feel more positive about the shule than ever before?

The rabbis say, "all is in the hands of Heaven, except for fear of Heaven". We cannot control what other people do,

whether overseas or in Australia, but we can control what we do. As a community, that is reflected in the internal life of the synagogue, which this year has been truly remarkable. The thought and work of the Board, ministers, staff and volunteers, combined with enthusiasm and support of our members, created an amazing year for the shule.

When I think back to some highlights, there are so many over the whole course of the year. The very morning, we were learning about October 7, we

were showing our vitality and faith in the Jewish future by hosting a Simchat Torah party for forty kids and their families who were having a fantastic time in the Israel Green Auditorium. That was followed by other very successful children's events for Chanukah, Purim and Shavuot, and a Friday night dinner for recent and forthcoming Bar and Bat Mitzvah kids and their families. The networks of social groups for different ages and genders continued to grow. Educational opportunities at the shule and in private homes expanded. My conversion program continued, and we celebrated with new graduates. We hosted important interfaith events, especially important in these challenging times. Some of the couples I have married in recent years came together for a Shabbat lunch reunion.

The Foundation, ably and energetically led by Garry Browne and his Board, made presentations to honour major donations that will secure the financial future of the synagogue. The Law Service witnessed an outstanding attendance. The passing of Rabbi Apple was marked with a



Preparing for Seder at Rabbi's home



Rabbi Elton conducting a Wedding



Rabbi Elton meets Prime Minister Anthony Albanese



Rabbi Elton and Hinda with Lizzie and Salo at David's Brit Milah

Rabbi Elton leading prayers at post 7 October rally

dignified, beautiful service with communal leaders and many present and former congregants. The Falk Lecture, launching our curator Jana Vytrhlik's new book Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney filled the Israel Green Auditorium.

The concert of Songs for Israel lifted our spirits and raised funds for victims of October 7 over Chanukah and featured outstanding performances. The Live at the Great concert series continued bringing many new faces into the shule, maintaining our position as a cultural landmark for the whole of Sydney. Regular communal lunches and Yom Tov meals brought our community even closer. The Women of Worth Day of Friendship was another huge success. Both Elton and Feldman families welcomed new additions. Hinda and I celebrated a brother for Lizzie and Salo, David Quentin (Shmuel David), called Davey, who was given a Brit Milah after Shacharit in the synagogue, with many members of the congregation present, as well as the Governor of New South Wales and other leaders of the wider community. Both Rabbi Feldman, Mushki, Hinda and I were delighted to celebrate those happy occasions with the congregation. I know we all felt the warmth and love of the congregation.

We have enjoyed a bumper year for new members joining the shule, and the number of semachot we have celebrated and hosted has increased once again. I want to acknowledge Hinda's invaluable contribution teaching the brides and bat mitzvah girls. I have been delighted to see a strong Board become even better equipped to lead our congregation with the addition of new members.

A project close to my heart – the restoration of the sanctuary with the return of the bimah to its central location and the revelation of the original stairs to the Ark – was approved and implemented, to the very highest historical, architectural and heritage standards, and will be a lasting benefit and service to the synagogue and its members. I want to thank Max Freedman and his committee, Peter Phillips, Julian Bickersteth and Zac Levi for their work, as well as all the sponsors of the project. The service is now back where it belongs, in the heart of our community, brought together each week physically in the Shabbat congregation.

That brings me to what I find the most encouraging aspect of the last year. The regular services of the shule are getting stronger and stronger. I give a lot of

I give a lot of credit to Rabbi Feldman our chazzan, Josh Winestock our choirmaster, and the choir, who have now reached a very high level of excellence

credit to Rabbi Feldman our chazzan, Josh Winestock our choirmaster, and the choir, who have now reached a very high level of excellence and our outstanding Torah reader and children's service leader Rabbi Richter. We now regularly attract thirty or more people on a Friday night, and one hundred on a Shabbat morning, even without a simcha, and even if it's cold and wet outside! Our Pesach, Shavuot and Succot services, night and day are very much stronger than they used to be.

Moreover, we have increased strength in all age groups with more children and their parents each week, young couples, as well as older members of the congregation. All are equally valued and important, and it is a very positive development that they are all represented. Although our total membership is lower than it was forty years ago, I believe we are now a more engaged congregation, and in the next year and the years to come I want to see even more growth both in membership and in participation.

I am very happy to offer my thanks to everyone who has made the successes of the last year possible and will create an even brighter 5785: Rabbi Feldman, Rabbi Richter and Joe Gluck; the team of efficient and pleasant gabbaim led by Steve Schach; Lynn Niselow, our General Manager and staff Ilana Moddel and Bassia Dinnen; David Lewis, Max Freedman, Lauren Ryder and the Board; Sharon Schach, now retiring as Chair of Great Women; Yvonne Kinney and Denise Sher of the Women's Auxiliary and all the ladies who prepare the weekly kiddush; our curator Jana Vytrhlik; Garry Browne and the Foundation Board; all volunteers; everyone who belongs to and attends our shule; and the people who make it possible for me to make my contribution, Hinda and our children. May this be for all of us, and for all Israel and the world, a year of happiness, health and peace. Hinda, Lizzie, Salo and Davey join with me in sending our Shana Tova wishes. I look forward to seeing you in shule as we begin 5785 together, in prayer and friendship. 🌸

Lifting OUR SOULS

RABBI CHAZAN MENACHEM FELDMAN

Despite the challenging year our people have faced, God has blessed The Great Synagogue with yet another year of tremendous growth both in quality and quantity. The extensive array of regular services, special events, *shiurim*, ceremonies, celebrations, concerts, tours and religious, social and educational programs catering to literally thousands of people across all ages and from all walks of life have continued to flourish and blossom, keeping us 'The Heart of Our Community'.

I want to pay tribute to my esteemed colleague Rabbi Elton and *kol hakavod* to the Board of Management and the office staff for all their efforts in the daily running of our shule. I applaud our talented choirmaster Josh Winestock and all the devoted members of the choir for enhancing the prayer experience all year round.

Our family was blessed with a new addition this year – our baby daughter Rosa (Reizel Geulah), a baby sister for Leah and Ari. The community celebrated at kiddush on the first day of Pesach.

It meant so much to us that we were able to celebrate this milestone with our friends at The Great. The amount of love and good wishes we received from them has humbled us greatly and has only strengthened the affection and attachment that we feel for this community.

... and has only strengthened the affection and attachment that we feel for this community.

Sadly, this has also been a year of great struggle for *Am Yisrael*. We all feel the pain and suffering of our brethren in the holy land, and tension from the rising global antisemitism is palpable.

As we prepare for this coming Yom Tou, when we'll once again come together as

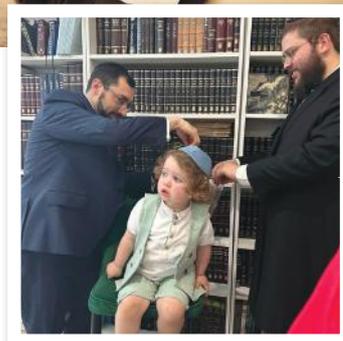
a community in prayer and song, let us keep our sacred homeland in our hearts and minds. Let us pray to Hashem for the immediate salvation of the hostages, for the complete healing of the wounded, for infinite strength, victory and safety of our soldiers, for comfort and healing to the grieving families, for genuine peace and unconditional brotherly love amongst ourselves and for an end to all war and suffering.

Mushki and I greatly look forward to seeing everyone in shule over Yom Tou in good health and spirits. We wish you a *ketiva vechatima tova, leshana touah umetuka*. May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year filled with Hashem's blessings for success, proper health, true joy, *nachas* from our children and loved ones, much prosperity and good fortune, peace and harmony for our community and indeed for the entire world.

May the end of 5784 bring an end to all suffering and sorrow. May the start of 5785 bring comfort, healing and redemption to our world, with the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days. Amen.

With love,

RABBI CHAZAN MENACHEM, REBBETZIN MUSHKI, LEAH, ARI AND ROSA FELDMAN





Hope and FAITH

LYNN NISELOW – GENERAL MANAGER

Lynn Niselow

5784 began with all our hopes, prayers, and dreams for the new year. On Simchat Torah, our lives changed forever. We will never be the same. The impact on our world, the families who have lost loved ones, those with family members still held hostage, and all of us as Am Yisrael has been profound.

Yet one thing remains constant – our hope and faith, The tragedy of October 7th has led many Jews to reconnect with their Jewish identity.

Our cherished Great Synagogue continues to thrive. Attendance at our services has increased, and we've expanded our events and engagement. Many of you have joined us for Shabbat dinners, communal lunches, shiurim, and Great Women events. Each of our festivals has been remarkable, with great turnout at services, kiddushim, lunches, dinners, and children's parties, all incredibly well-attended and received. We are privileged to have held many smachot this year and in the year ahead many more are being planned.

In our office, the remarkable *Ilana Modell* continues to show extraordinary dedication and commitment, going above and beyond her duties. I am deeply grateful to work with her every day.



Ilana Modell and family

We've also welcomed *Bassia Dinnen* as EA to the rabbi/administration officer. Bassia and her family have long been part of our community, and it feels like she's been a member of our TGS family forever.



Bassia Dinnen

We cannot forget our wonderful *Amy Ibarra*, who manages the cleaning and setup. She is our rock, always present and supportive.

Enormous thanks go to Rabbi Elton and Rabbi Feldman for their unwavering guidance and support. We appreciate the many hours they devote to our shule and community.

Working with Sharon Schach, outgoing chair of Great Women, has been a pleasure. Thank you for your dedication

and commitment. With Caroline Lewis OAM, incoming chair of Great Women, I look forward to the adventure and eagerly anticipate the exciting initiatives to come.

The generous contributions of time and effort by the special women of the Women's Auxiliary are deeply valued. We appreciate everything they do.

My heartfelt thanks go to the President and members of the Board for their support and guidance. I am grateful for their continued assistance, as they tirelessly work for our beautiful shule.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the team and all the volunteers at CSG who look after us.

It is in our nature to rise above tragedy; we live, laugh, and celebrate, as life continues.

Our lives changed forever on October 7th, but something greater has emerged. There is a soul connection among us that provides comfort, reminding us that we are not alone.

Thank you all for being a part of our community. It is what makes us whole.

I wish you and your loved ones a Shana Tova Umetuka, a year filled with peace, joy, and hope. 🌸



On a High Note

GREAT SYNAGOGUE CHOIR

JOSH WINESTOCK, CHOIRMASTER



2024 has been a year of consolidation and development for the choir of The Great. Having dug through our library of music and filtered out which pieces and arrangements we are retaining from previous years, the current choir has now had a year to become familiar with the High Holidays' suite of music (enormous as it is!) and now we're focusing on improving musical quality and adding a select few pieces beyond our previous lineup.

Notably we have commissioned a dozen or so arrangements from Raymond Goldstein, the musical arranger of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue. Goldstein is an eminent figure in current day Hebrew music and was a mentor to our cantor Rabbi Menachem Feldman. He has delivered revised and expanded arrangements for some of our heftier pieces, including our classic Blumenthal *Etz Chayim* Hi, with more interesting harmonies and multi-line textures.

For this year we are hoping to introduce a new *Avinu Malkenu* to our Yom Kippur services, similar to the popular version sung by Barbra Streisand. This is a gorgeous melody by Max Janowski that

many congregants will be familiar with, and our arrangement aims to give it a cinematic flair. We are also bringing in some simpler pieces; for instance, *Maran Divishmaya* is a favourite of mine from the Selichot service, a simple recitative piece with a compelling rising trajectory and a touch of wit.

Our rehearsals have been intensive and very rewarding, with a tangible sense of progress and camaraderie.

The choir is working with admirable dedication on all of this, with extra rehearsals scheduled through August and September. Our rehearsals have been intensive and very rewarding, with a tangible sense of progress and camaraderie. I'm quite proud of them all for their effort and improvement!



Rehearsing

As always, we welcome visits in the choir room from any male singers or aspiring singers in the congregation, regardless of skill level or background. Come chat to me in shule! 🌸



Recording



Choir and Chazzan

Weddings



ANIKA AND JOSHUA MOSES

Our wedding was a wonderful celebration of our special journey and our mixed cultures. It was a day filled with lots of love, happiness, dancing and even a horse. We were blessed to have shared the day with our loved ones and to have Rabbi Elton marry us under the chuppah.



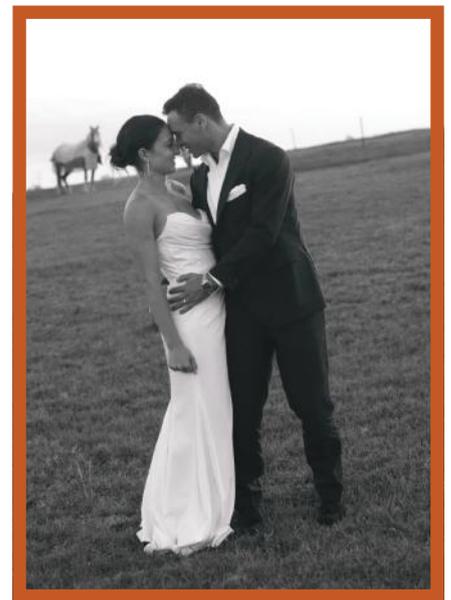
RIKKI STERN AND STEVE JOCUM

We feel passionately and with conviction that our wedding day was truly the best day of our lives and The Great Synagogue was one of the greatest factors that contributed to this.

The synagogue is steeped in rich history and beauty, needing minimal flowers or decor to have our guests marvel. Rikki's parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents were married there, and we feel incredibly grateful to be a part of the history of such a timeless and magnificent place.

Rabbi Elton and his wonderful wife Hinda made the day and all the days before it a truly special time. From inviting us to Shabbat lunch, taking us through wedding classes, run-throughs at the synagogue and spending time getting to know who we were so that rabbi's words on the day were thoughtful and meaningful, they are truly two of the kindest people we have ever met.

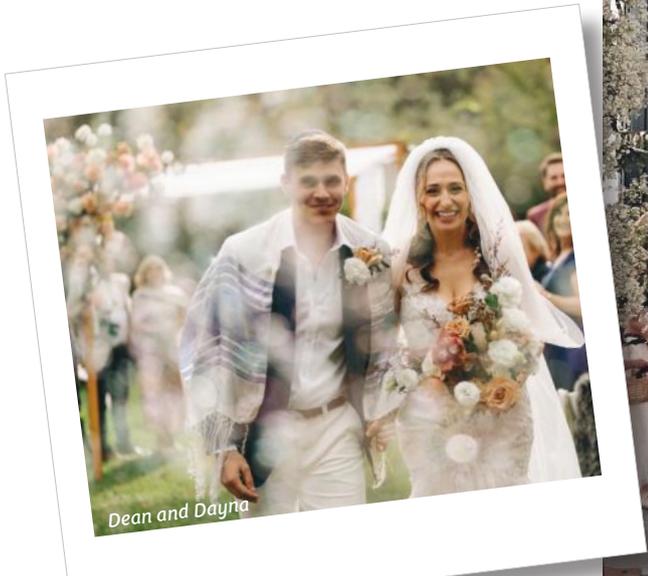
Throughout the process, the staff at the synagogue were helpful and friendly. We are so grateful and feel the decision to wed there could only be the right one.



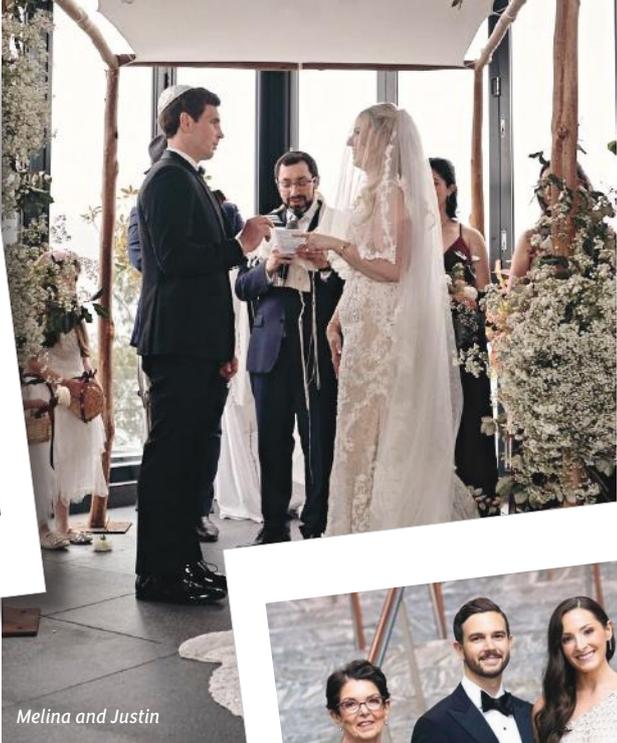
REBECCA AND MAX SYMONDS

Our wedding day was filled with so much joy and love. We felt incredibly blessed to be able to celebrate with our families and friends as we embarked on our next chapter as a married couple.

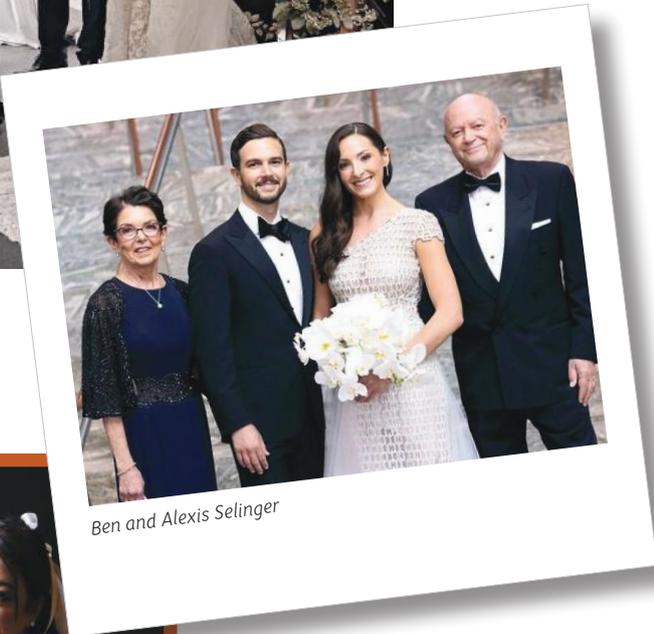
We cannot thank Rabbi Elton and Hinda enough for all their support in the lead up and on the day and we look forward to celebrating many more simchas together in the future.



Dean and Dayna



Melina and Justin



Ben and Alexis Selinger



Clementine and Daniel Fryer



Shoshana and David Newman



Alison and Jonathan

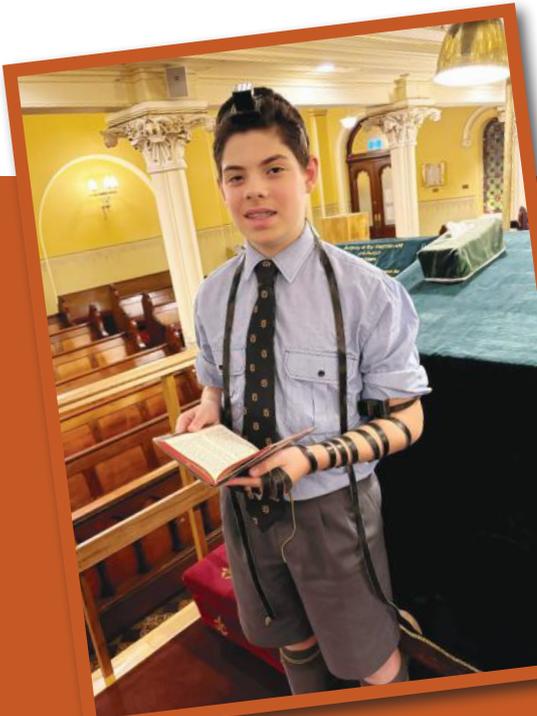


Simone Nathan and Paul Williams

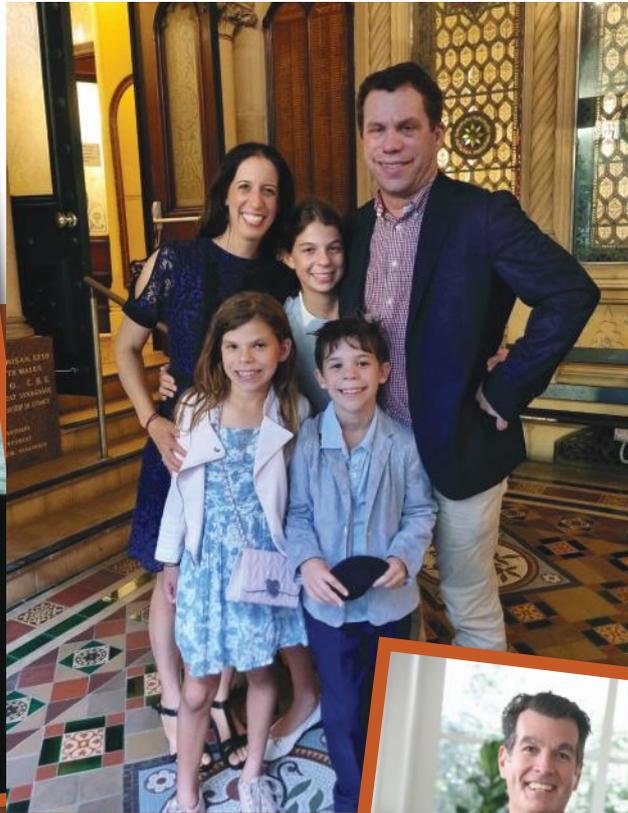


Richard Davey and Soraya Calavassy

Bar and Bat MITZVAHS



Zac Lusthaus



Hannah Samuel and family



Jordana Goodman and family



Milo Begg and family



Sadie Green

Marissa Hurst and family



Joshua Guthrie and Lillian Sher



Ezra Sher



Kobe Bloom and family

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THE GREAT VINE 2024

High Holidays with THE GREAT FAMILY

*"Shana Tova U'Metuka!" "Shana Tova Tikateivu!" "Gut Yontif!"
Stephen and Susie Kopp*

*Happy, healthy and Sweet
New Year to everyone,
from Women's Auxiliary.*

*Wishing our friends and family a
healthy, happy and prosperous
year ahead filled with more
pleasures and mitzvahs. Robyn,
Garry, Joshua, Ari, Sam and Remi*

*Sari Browne OAM wishes her
family, friends and the entire
congregation, a sweet, happy
and healthy 5785*

*Wishing everyone at The Great a
year of fulfilled hope and peace,
here and in Israel. Shana Tova from
Ros and Alex Fischl and family.*

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

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

*The Chair and Board of The Great Synagogue
Foundation wishes all of their members
Shana Tova, a Happy and Healthy 5785*

*Wishing our community a sweet,
joyous, and prosperous New Year!
Kim, Adam, Daniel and Ava Pisk*

*The Board of The Great Synagogue
wishes all of their members Shana
Tova, a Happy and Healthy 5785*

*To our 'Great family', wishing you a
safe Fast and a New Year spent in
good health and happy times. Chag
Sameach. David Lewis and Caroline
Lewis OAM, Juliet & Jade Lewis,
Charlotte, Rob & Maddie Weiss.*

*A sweet & healthy New
Year to everyone, Judith,
Genevieve, Lewis Sammy*

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

*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*

*The Chazzan & Choir wish
the entire community "Shana
Tova." Looking forward to
uplifting High Holiday services
and beyond!!*

*Wishing everybody a happy and
peaceful Yomtov. Brigitte Rola-Janicki.*

Wishing our "Great Family & Friends" plus our "Nation around the World" a peaceful & good New Year. Well over The Fast, Jake, Sue, Ben & Alexis Selinger. Bring Them Home.

From our family to yours, we wish you all a good and sweet new year! With love, Rabbi Menachem & Mushki, Leah, Ari & Rosa Feldman

Rabbi Elton, Hinda, Lizzie, Salo and Davey wish the whole congregation a sweet, happy and healthy 5785

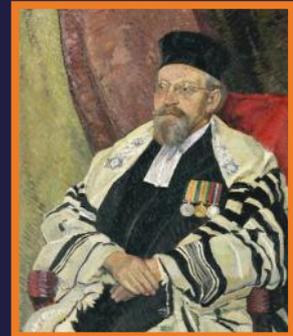
Simone and Darryl Green wish family and friends a happy and healthy new year and well over the fast.

Wishing all our friends in the "Great" Community and beyond, Shana Tova, a happy and sweet New Year!!! David and Shoshana Newman and our families

*Wishing our dear children and grandchildren and all The Great family a healthy, happy and peaceful year.
Chag sameach
Mavis and Peter Elton*

RABBI LEIB AISACK FALK

The family of the Late Rabbi Falk of the Great Synagogue 1923-1956 is preparing a comprehensive book about him



Rabbi Falk was a treasured scholar, bibliophile, scribe, artist, silversmith, bookbinder, cabinetmaker and orator.

He was also an avid Zionist, friend of Jabotinsky, a founder of the Australian Jewish Historical Society and of the Jewish Folk Centre.

Should you have any stories or memories you would like to share, letters, ketubahs, kiddush cups or objects produced by him in any form or images depicting him please call the shule on 9267 2477 or email debsleigh@gmail.com

All contributions will be fully acknowledged.



Debbie Sleight
On behalf of the family

Great WOMEN

SHARON SCHACH



GREAT WOMEN
the heart of
our community



Great Women Coffee Club
@21 Double Bay



Great Women Coffee Club

Great Women has had an eventful year and we are eagerly awaiting an even busier 5785!

Firstly, I want to express our gratitude to the Women's Auxiliary under the chairmanship of Yvonne Kinney for their dedication and hard work in catering our Shabbat morning kiddushim. While we are in the synagogue praying, they are in the kitchen early in the morning, preparing delicious food for us to enjoy at the kiddush after the service. With the support of the Board, new and even more

We have organised some amazing events for women to connect spiritually and support each other.

delicious and innovative menus have been developed.

The Women's Auxiliary's annual tour of the Archibald was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Once again, the WA held a delicious and well-attended morning tea in the succah. The speaker was Dilys Denham, who gave a most

inspiring talk on Jewish women artists and the impact of their works on the direction of the Archibald prize.

The WA needs more volunteers! If you can help prepare the kiddushim on Shabbat morning (men and women) or assist with decorating the succah (men), please contact Yvonne Kinney or Denise Sher.

The women's coffee groups, started by our board member Fay Frischer, continue to thrive. We have two groups, each meeting monthly for coffee and chat about a variety of topics. Some of our meetings have delved into family histories, which have been absolutely fascinating. We held a combined evening on the eighth night of Chanukah at my home, where each woman brought her own chanukiah, and the room was ablaze with light! Another combined event was a lunch at the home of Sara Gresham, where we held a silent auction, with the funds raised going to charity.

Sadly, we recently lost our beloved and dedicated member, Sunny Gold z"l. At the coffee club meeting soon after her passing, we honoured her memory and were pleased to welcome her daughter, Deborah, who joined us for the morning to share memories of her mum. Any women interested in joining a coffee club should get in touch with Fay. It's important to note that these groups require a commitment to attend regularly, rather than just dropping in occasionally. There is now a similarly well-attended group for men in our congregation.

The tragic events of 7 October, the hostage situation and the ongoing war have affected us all deeply. We have organised some amazing events for women to connect spiritually and support each other.



Coffee Club with Deborah Klein



Women's learning and inspiration for Israel

Micaela Ezra and Rebbetzin Nechama Dina Moss led a moving session at the home of Rebbetzin Mushki Feldman called 'Together with Purpose: Unity, Faith, and Emunah'. Maxine Radus led a 'Movement and Meditation' session at the shule. Both events were inspiring and uplifting.

This will be my last Great Women report in the Great Vine. I have had the pleasure and honour of serving as Chair of Great Women for the past six years and it's now my turn to rest and make way for younger, enthusiastic energy to take over. I want to express my deepest gratitude to Rabbi Elton, President David Lewis, the Executive and Board, Lynn and the office staff, as well as the entire congregation, for their unwavering support and guidance throughout my time as Chair. Their wisdom, encouragement and commitment to the mission of Great Women have been invaluable, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of such a vibrant and caring community.

I'm absolutely thrilled to share that Caroline Lewis OAM has agreed to be the new Great Women Chair! With her drive and enthusiasm, Great Women is going to be even more wonderful in the years to come! Mazal tov, Caroline! 🌸



Women's Auxiliary AGM



Silent Auction Lunch



What a WOW OF A DAY!!



CAROLINE LEWIS OAM

friendships that just 'work': Illana Sussman and Myfi Schostakowski paired through 'Mum for Mum'; Susan Hertzberg and Debra Marks remaining friends since being Bat mitzvah at The Great; and Julie and her school friend Sophie Inwald. All brought the history of their friendships to life with humour and compassion.

Jackie Loeb comic, actor, singer and writer had us rolling with laughter with her hilarious comedy act and musical performance celebrating female friendships, accompanied by pianist Michelle Lowy-Goldman, who had us up singing and dancing in the aisles and all the way to lunch!

The food at lunch was delicious and abundant and provided another opportunity to talk and meet new friends before doing an Art Activity, with art therapist Amy Hersch, creating our very own 'Tree of Life'.

The pointy end of the day was a presentation from mediator Danielle Jaku-Greenfield on How to Navigate Uncomfortable Conversations in Friendships, learning tools and strategies when managing conflict and confrontation to keep friendships intact and us composed, which stirred up emotions and discussions.

Our final session, The Power of Friendship on Social Media, was held during afternoon tea. Angela Zinn moderated a panel discussion comprising Tracy Fischl from WIZO, Julie Klimt from ORAH & Susie Rosen from her 'Friday Night' Facebook page, who have all successfully created and maintained friendships with women using networking and social media in a positive way.

The day ended with a final group photo and with promises to meet up with new and old friends.



This year's 'Women of Worth' tied in with the annual International Day of Friendship, a day that promotes and recognises, amongst other things, friendships between individuals.

At The Great Synagogue we value exactly that - inclusion, diversity and supporting one another - and at this time in history, friendships have never mattered more. The day played a vital role in highlighting the significance of friendship in our lives and encouraged us to rekindle connections, providing an opportunity to nurture existing relationships, promote social interaction, resulting in new connections fostered across our community and generations.

The shule was buzzing all day with the sights and sounds of 130 women (and one man!). Women of all ages from all over Sydney gathered at The Great to enjoy a full day of activities, discussions and LOTS of laughter and chatter! Everyone seemed to love the day!

With a friendship bracelet attached to each wrist, a cuppa and a 'dance card' in hand, the noisy speed-friending session started a day full of new and old connections and reconnections.

There were 16 wonderful speakers and performers who delivered each of the six sessions with passion and spirit, the focus being on celebrating friendship and sharing ideas, stories and experiences. The range of topics were varied and extensive and the criterion for each session was: it had to be totally WOW. The Great Synagogue was showcased from the sanctuary to the auditorium and up to



Julie McCrossin, Sophie Inwald and Myfi Kernke

the sukkah, so attendees could appreciate the entire heritage building - and keep moving!

Starting with understanding The Significance & Styles of Friendship, child psychologist Belinda Blecher and sociologist Karina Veal defined the different types of friendships, how they change and adapt at milestone moments and how friendship supports good physical and mental well-being in women.

We were honoured to have Julie McCrossin AM facilitate a lively session 'The Two of Us - Unlikely Friends', celebrating the life-enhancing power of friendship through the experiences of three very different and unlikely





It was a joyous moment in time to see and hear the sweet sounds of a room full of talking and laughing women! In a year of solemnity, lost friendships and profound sadness, it was wonderful to bring this number of women together in friendship and in a most positive way. Great Women will continue to create engaging events to bring diverse groups together for good.

We could not have accomplished such a smoothly run day without the help and support of those in the office and the many volunteers on the organising Committee, in the kitchen, at the 'Crafternoon' pre-event, and on the day

in various roles. Those who generously supported the function lightened the load by contributing chocolates, wine and making donations. Our 'Pay it Forward' process enabled several of the women the opportunity to attend who might not have otherwise afforded it.

Amazingly, 60% of attendees were non-members from other communities and areas, happy to come on their own to make friends or bring friends along - and 60% had never been to WOW before, so we look forward to making next year even bigger! 🌸



Some of the amazing feedback we received:

"I met wonderful people and learned new things."

"It was so professionally organised but warm and friendly."

"The mix of speakers and activities kept the day flowing and interesting. The organisation was seamless."

"Yesterday was the best ever. The topic was fun, fun, fun. The speakers were all different with something new to add to the meld."

"WOW, WOW, WOW! Wonderful, Outstanding, Wonderful! Fantastic day."

"It was a fabulous experience from start to finish and every aspect of the event was meticulously planned and executed with precision."

"Mazeltov and thank you for the wonderful gift you provided. Wow, what a sensational WOW Program!"

"I felt light, like I'd had a rest day, and refilled my cup!"

"Exceeded my expectations in every way. I loved meeting so many new people."

"This was my 3rd WOW, and I loved it all!"

'12 Over 12' BAT MITZVAH PROGRAM DECEMBER 2023

CAROLINE LEWIS OAM



Vivienne Selwyn and Sara Gresham



Bat Mitzvah girl Alice Hubbers with daughter Caroline Lewis



Kinney family



Diane Alperstein and Jacki Gluck



12 Over 12 Bat Mitzvah Girls

Another Great Women and WOW initiative developed to help and empower women of all ages was the '12 Over 12' Bat Mitzvah program, which was devised for 12 women over the age of 12 to finally be Bat Mitzvah.

Many women grew up without the opportunity, or even right, to have a Bat Mitzvah so to have experienced one in their later years, at a time in their lives when they are far more reflective, spiritual and seeking knowledge and connection with their Judaism and their community, was such an enriching experience for them all. Each had a different perspective on what being Jewish meant to them and they engaged in lively discussions each week whilst learning, laughing and creating lovely new friendships.

Our wonderful shule member and Jewish educator, Jacki Gluck in designing the program, was able to bring to life women's learning and appreciation of their strengths and sense of historic importance, culminating in their long-awaited Bat Mitzvah. Over six weeks, the group covered topics such as learning about mitzvot and tzedakah, what having a Bat Mitzvah meant to them, the significance of

their birthdate and Hebrew name, and each spoke about a famous Jewish woman in history that resonated with them. They also did a special challah bake.

On Sunday 3rd December, these brave and determined women, most of whom had never spoken in public, stood on the bimah before their families and friends, numbering more than 100, to each deliver their d'var Torah, prepared over the preceding weeks. All but one of the women were over 70 and one special lady, Alice Hubbers, (my mum) had flown in from the UK only a few days earlier. She had been studying online each week with the group from 11.30pm-1.30am and had their wonderful support throughout the experience. She turned 99 in January, surely the oldest B'not Mitzvah in the southern hemisphere!

Diane Alperstein commented: "From the very first day, when the Bat Mitzvah group of women sat down at the welcoming table of Jacki's home and we began our Sunday morning classes, I strongly sensed this undertaking was going to be something very special."

Bat Mitzvah girl, Fay Frischer said of her experience: *"The camaraderie with each of the participants and educators has facilitated such overwhelming feelings of warmth and friendship, that I recommend the experience to all of those who missed out on the opportunity of a Bat Mitzvah."*

And Rachel Bickousky added: *"After years of not feeling I belong to a community; I have found my tribe."*

It was a journey of shared growth, perseverance, humour - and just a few (happy) tears! It may not have been the party, the pretty dress or the presents, but the gift they received created a life-long memory and so much nachas for their family and friends!

Mazaltov to **Agnes Kainer-Geyer, Alice Hubbers, Brigitte Janicki, Diane Alperstein, Fay Frischer, Jaquerli Serafim, Rachel Bickousky, Sara Gresham, Vivienne Selwyn and Yvonne Kinney.**

If you are considering having your Bat Mitzvah, please get in touch with The Great Synagogue on 9267 2477 to join the next cohort. 🌸

Women's Auxiliary ARCHIBALD TOUR JULY 2024

JUDITH JAFFÉ

Thank you to Yvonne Kinney, President of the Women's Auxiliary at The Great, for organising this year's Archibald tour at the Art Gallery of NSW. It's always a highlight of my year.

Sometimes there is great controversy about the winners - and losers - as not everyone on the tour agrees with all the judges' decisions - or the tour guide's.

The portrait that moved me on first sight this year and that remains etched in my memory, is that of Professor Marcia Langton, by artist Angus McDonald. Painted before 'The Voice' referendum to Parliament, it encapsulates the struggles, the injustices, the pain and the ongoing suffering and disappointment the sitter

presciently feels on behalf of the First Nation's peoples.

The 2024 prize went to a portrait of Tim Winton, acclaimed novelist, playwright and environmental activist, by Laura Jones. View it for yourself to decide the scope of political decision-making in this fine work. And make sure you take time to view the portrait of Robert Hannaford by his daughter Tsering Hannaford. It is

one of the few portraits in the Archibald painted in the classical manner fully from sittings, instead of mainly from photographs.

If you only have time to see one other painting, I recommend the Wynne prize winner for landscapes this year, 'Sunrise Side in Yolnu Matha' by Djakanu Yunupinu Nyalalagurmilili, from the perspective of The Seven Sisters. 🌸



Women's Auxiliary Archibald Tour

Join Us in Making a Difference!

Volunteers needed

Are you passionate about contributing to your community?

Here's your chance to make a meaningful impact!

The Great Synagogue **WOMEN'S AUXILIARY** is seeking dedicated volunteers to join the team.



Contact denisesher46@gmail.com



Strength IN COMMUNITY

ROSALIND FISCHL OAM



Ros and Alex Fischl

The recent events here in Australia, following the horror of 7th October 2023 in Israel, have brought to the fore the importance of community, more than any other conflict fought during my lifetime. We felt great pride in Israel's success in the Six Day War and the eventual victory in the Yom Kippur War, despite the devastation of the loss of Israeli lives in both conflicts.

However, decades of failed attempts to reach a civil and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbours have taken their toll and we as a community have become divided as to the best way forward. This dilemma has been compounded by the recent actions Israel has taken in response to the attacks and abductions on 7th October by Hamas terrorists and others from Gaza. Fractures have appeared within the Israeli populace, some

advocating a deal to free the hostages, others demanding the destruction of Hamas and other operatives to ensure that 7/10 never happens again.

It is easy for us in Australia to criticise the Israelis for their disparate opinions. We are lucky that we live in a democracy that welcomes people of all backgrounds and religious beliefs. However, recent events here have tested this presumption, and we must therefore stay united and determined to withstand the challenges ahead.

Our Jewish community with its strong rabbinic and lay leadership provides the structure we need to feel supported and protected against outside influences, and our warm synagogue community gives comfort to those of us who feel threatened and insecure. Our beautiful choral services provide a spiritual experience,

and our rabbis are always there for us at any time of need. Jewish life must go on regardless, marking the milestones as well as the festivals of rejoicing.

The recent TGS WOW event organised by Caroline Lewis and her enthusiastic committee, was a huge success, drawing in many from other congregations who declared it a wonderful experience that provided a balm during these tense times.

As the High Holidays approach, let us gather in our numbers at synagogue and in our homes to celebrate, to show the world around us that we are not afraid, that we have faith in our community and together we will continue to contribute to the broader community and be a force for the future. 🌸

Great Women 'WHAT WOMEN WANT' WORKSHOP

Great Women hosted a dynamic workshop to discover 'What Women Want'. A group of 14 women volunteered their time to come together to brainstorm ideas. This warm, collaborative afternoon, facilitated by Marketing Strategist, Tonia Price and Chair, Caroline Lewis, helped identify our goals, and generate event ideas that will continue to inspire women who are looking to connect with The Great. Three themes that emerged were **Learning & Sharing, Connecting & Engaging, and Collaborating across Communities.**



If you would like to get involved, be part of a committee or lead your own passion project, please contact Caroline Lewis at caroline@greatsynagogue.org.au

New MEMBERS

*Lisa Davey
Leslie Davey
Peter Solomon
Jenny Solomon
Vera Dunn
Vanessa Samuel
Daniel Bailey
Rikki Stern
Steven Jocum*

*Simon Alperstein
Justin Wendemuth
Melina Tsibushkina
Michelle Watson
James Watson
Hannah Watson
Saul Watson
Niveen Cardo*



Michelle and James Watson and their two young children Hannah and Saul have recently joined The Great Synagogue although James' family has a long history with the congregation, starting with his great-great-grandparents who in 1880 were the first of many of his relatives to be married at The Great Synagogue.

Michelle hails from New York, while James grew up near Canberra. They met in 2010 when James was working in New York and were married in Brooklyn in 2014. The following year, they relocated to Sydney, where Michelle works in the development of new TV shows and James runs his own credit advisory and broking business.

Michelle and James reconnected with The Great through their daughter's friendship with Rabbi Elton's daughter Lizzie. After coming to shule as visitors a couple of times, they decided to become members because of the warmth of the congregation and progressive Orthodoxy on offer.



We are **Shay Hamama and Oren Lavie** and we're thrilled to be part of The Great Synagogue community. Originally from Israel, we moved to Sydney ten years ago. Our journey also took us to Luxembourg for a while and then back to Sydney, where we currently live in Surry Hills.

Shay is the Chief Product and Technology Officer at Luxury Escapes while Oren recently completed his master's degree in film directing at AFTRS and is excited about what the future holds.

We both enjoy cooking and cherish our weekly Shabbat dinners, featuring freshly-baked challah and traditional dishes like kugel, klops and yapchik, as well as favourites from Shay's Jewish-Iraqi heritage, such as beetroot kubbah and pumpkin kubbah. We also have Israeli tahini, petitim and other delicious dishes on the table.

We love The Great Synagogue and the beautiful sense of belonging the community has provided us. We look forward to sharing traditions and creating new memories with this vibrant community.



After five wonderful years attending the North Shore Synagogue, where they developed a deep bond with the community and Rabbi Lewin, **Zachariah and Nava, son Daniel, and daughter Lavanah Cardo** decided to move to Milsons Point on the Lower North Shore. Zac writes about their move:

During this transition, I coincidentally met Rabbi Elton, who warmly invited me to visit The Great Synagogue for Shabbat. Though we were uncertain which synagogue to join, Rabbi Elton's genuine welcome made our decision clear. This was around December 2023, and since then, we've enjoyed integrating into this vibrant community and have made many new friends.

Despite growing up in a Sephardi household, since moving to Australia in 2010, I've mainly attended Ashkenazi synagogues due to their proximity to our home for Shabbat. One profound realization I've had is that regardless of one's tradition or upbringing, the essence of being Jewish remains constant. This sense of unity and shared values across different traditions is something I deeply cherish. Am Yisrael Chai. On behalf of the Cardo family, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to The Great Synagogue community for their warm welcome. We look forward to many more years of shared simcha, achdut and the blessings of the Torah with this wonderful community.



Zachariah Cardo

Ann Milch

Clementine Freyer

Natalie Duffy

Jonothan Moddel

Alison Moddel

Fiona Stewart

Anna Boucher

Amanda Garlick

Nella Goldwin

Taimoor Yunus

Marieluise Leobling

Teresa Pirola

David Rosalky

Adele Rosalky

Rodney Diamond

Dayna Kohn

Dean de Jong

Tash Levy

Karen Freyer

Les Sher

Yanir Yakutiel

Gila Yakutiel

Reuben Yakutiel

Olive Begg

Milo Begg

José Ortiz

Oren Lavie

Shay Hamama

Jed Lusthaus

Leo Lusthaus

Zac Lusthaus

Ian White

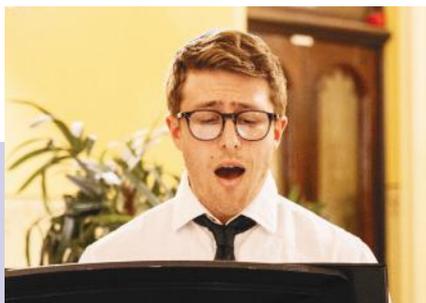
Hilary White

Anastasia Treharne

Adam Finkelstein



Les Davey writes: My wife **Lisa** and I are delighted to re-join the shule to support and celebrate the marriage of our son Richard, to his wonderful and talented wife Soraya last February. Our family has a long and deep relationship with The Great Synagogue, given several generations have enjoyed many beautiful simchas there.



I joined The Great Synagogue choir in 2020 after noticing a distinct lack of music in my life, writes **Simon Alperstein**. I was welcomed into the choir with open arms. It meant a lot to me that despite my lack of sight-reading ability and familiarity with the prayers (I attended the North Shore Synagogue growing up), I was patiently given time to improve. The camaraderie of the group is special, and I really like the way we all support each other. The pervasive Jewish humour is also a big plus. Most of all, I feel lucky to be singing in a shule that really appreciates

Lisa and I were married at the shule in 1985. My parents, Gary and Julia Davey and Lisa's parents, Tony and Fay Greenberg, were also married at the shule in the early 1950s. While my family had immigrated from Hungary after being displaced, both sets of Lisa's grandparents, Isadore and Celia Don and Reuben and Claire Greenberg were also married at the shule.

With the help of Rabbi Elton's detective work and support, Richard and Soraya were able to identify the day and month of Reuben and Claire's wedding and thoughtfully selected their wedding date to fall on the exact same day, one hundred years to the day. Mazal tov!

Along with our wonderful daughter Jessica and husband Jamie and their children, Madi and Mitch, as well as close family and friends, we celebrated a truly magical wedding, filled with amazing history for us, now four generations deep, and we now look forward to many more simchas, hopefully shortly!



*Lisa and Les Davey
Wedding Day*

music. A culture has been created where we are constantly pushed to improve our musical abilities. This is thanks to the continued efforts of Rabbi Elton, Rabbi Feldman and our choirmaster, Joshua Winestock.

I love singing because it forces me to be present. When everything is aligned in terms of voices, pitch and harmonies, it's a wonderful feeling. I have developed a great fondness for some of the beautiful prayers we sing and a new type of connection to Judaism through this. It certainly helps that our chazzan, Rabbi Feldman, is a rare talent. His passion and voice inspire us.

In 2023, I became a member of The Great

Synagogue. The shule has provided me with a lot of great experiences, friendships and a sense of community. It's also great to have my mum, Diane, attending services with me. While I am not someone who dives deep into our religious texts, I have grown increasingly interested in what it means to be Jewish today. Rabbi Elton has provided a way in for me that previously felt a bit opaque. I am very thankful for his thought-provoking sermons and sage advice. I am intrigued to see what I can continue to learn here and how I can grow as a person. Lastly, I would like to thank the congregants of The Great, as without you, we wouldn't feel compelled to sing. We always sing for you and with you.

Pastoral CARE



Fay Frischer

'Finding unity in community' was an apt quote from Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis in the 2017-18 issue of *The Great Vine*. Community is the core of The Great Synagogue and to this end Board Member Fay Frischer has sought to adopt this ethic and principle as the mantra of the Member Engagement Portfolio.

On the basis that everyone within The Great Synagogue community deserves to be remembered and acknowledged, each month Fay telephones the members celebrating a birthday whose details are noted in the synagogue's records.

Community development has further been developed and strengthened by regular contact throughout the year not only by these birthday calls but also through the telephoning of our members before Rosh Hashana and Pesach.

Some of our members are no longer able to attend services through ill-health or advanced age and at least telephone contact reinforces a feeling of commitment and relationship.

The Pastoral Care Committee supports our rabbi and provides him with relevant information about our older members as to health and family issues through these regular contacts very much like triaging as a first port of call.

We are only able to reach out to our members if the contact details are correct and our members inform the office of relevant changes to telephone numbers or email addresses, so please make sure you update the office if your contact details change. 🌟

SOCIAL GROUPS

MEN'S COFFEE GROUP

RODNEY MARKS

The Great Synagogue men's coffee group began in February 2024. We meet monthly at 10.00 am on a Monday, finishing at 11.30 or 12.00. Due to public holidays and Jewish holidays, we meet on a different Monday each month.

The group is an initiative of Board member Fay Frischer, to enhance the shule's community engagement. (It complements the two successful women's coffee groups.) So far, we have eight active members, but as the word gets out, we hope for more. The age range is from late 60s to mid-80s, but younger and older participants are welcome. Some people car-pool, which adds to the experience. Each month we have a different theme, to stimulate conversation. Topics include favourite Jewish jokes and Jewish youth groups of our time. We meet at a cafe in the Eastern suburbs.

There is no membership fee. Just pay for your own coffee. Or tea! For details, please contact Rodney Marks, rodney@comedian.com.au, 0412 207 655 🌟



COFFEE GROUP



BEVIES AND BANTER



To be a VOLUNTEER

LYNN NISELOW

“Volunteering helps change the world because it changes us”. Rabbi Lord Sacks



Shelley Kensell

These profound words resonate deeply with the ethos of the Jewish tradition, where the concept of *tikun olam*, or repairing the world, underscores the intrinsic value of giving back. Imperfect though our world may be, Judaism teaches us that we are not mere spectators but active participants, with a profound duty to contribute to its betterment and completeness.

At The Great Synagogue, we are immensely grateful to our dedicated volunteers.

Our President, Executive and Board members, along with the Chairs of our Committees and our cherished Women’s Auxiliary, all generously volunteer their time. The annual WOW, “Women of Worth” day is produced by a volunteer who is assisted by a team of volunteers and this Great Vine publication is also curated by a volunteer. Each individual fulfills a crucial role in ensuring the success of our organization. Their tireless dedication and unwavering commitment are indispensable; without their efforts, the

fulfillment of our mission and vision would be significantly challenged.

We express profound gratitude to each of them for their invaluable contributions, persistent efforts, and deep affection for our beautiful synagogue and its community.

At its core, the Hebrew word ‘*lehitnadev*’ encapsulates the essence of volunteering—a voluntary act, freely given out of willingness rather than obligation. Derived from the root ‘*nada*’, meaning to give generously, ‘*lehitnadev*’ is reflexive, implying that in giving to others, we undergo a transformation ourselves. It is through volunteering that we not only extend a helping hand to those in need but also discover a renewed sense of purpose and self-worth.

Volunteering is not just beneficial; it is essential for a thriving society founded on equality and compassion. Studies affirm that volunteering offers significant health benefits, alleviating stress, combating loneliness, and fostering a profound sense

of fulfillment. It provides a meaningful connection to others. It is often said that when one spends time giving to others the reward is not only for those for whom you help but rather the reward to oneself is immeasurable.

Each one of us has a passion and a skillset, and we welcome everyone in joining us to fulfill the goals of The Great. No matter if you have an hour or a day, each moment helps us. As we move forward, expanding and innovating with new initiatives and projects, your support will not only bring these endeavours to life but also ensure their success.

We invite you to join us as a volunteer for The Great Synagogue to continually engage with our members and the greater community. From assisting in our office, to ushering at an event, helping the Women’s Auxiliary at kiddushim and lunches, as well as joining one of our numerous committees, The Great offers volunteer opportunities that will both inspire and empower you. We look forward to you joining us. 🌸

John Lenn JP

Bar Mitzvah Tuition

- Mentoring is provided in consultation with your Rabbi
- Learning tailored to individual student needs
- I prepare personalised audio recordings

Call: 0411 516 017
lennjohn@gmail.com
lennjohn.wixsite.com/barmitzvah



School Tours REVITALISED

TOBY HAMMERMAN

It has always been important for the wider community to be educated on Judaism and Jewish people, but especially now

The new initiative for school groups is the offer of a combined tour for students to visit the Sydney Jewish Museum in the morning, have lunch in Hyde Park then tour the synagogue in the afternoon.

At the museum, the one-hour tour provides students with a hands-on experience of viewing close-up, religious objects and artefacts, encouraging an understanding of Jewish texts and beliefs, celebration of festivals and traditional practices including Shabbat. The workshop with an educator helps students develop a comprehensive understanding of Judaism as a living religious tradition.

During the visit to The Great Synagogue students learn about Jewish observance and religious practices and see for themselves the key features and religious symbols found in most synagogues. The one-hour tour includes a video presentation highlighting worshipping practices and a brief history of early Jewish settlement and Jewish contribution to Australian society. This is followed by an interactive Q&A session with our rabbi or a knowledgeable community member. 🌸

During Covid we had no choice but to curtail our very popular tours of The Great Synagogue. Under the guidance of Rabbi Elton and Toby Hammerman and administrative support from Office Manager, Lynn Niselow, we have recommenced pre-booked group tours of our beautiful sanctuary and introduced a new initiative for school students.

The pre-booked group tours are typically outings arranged by schools for students completing Studies of Religion. We have also welcomed community groups of senior citizens such as Rotary or Probus and have been booked by overseas tour organisers for cruise ship passengers. Our curator, Jana Vytrhlik, prepared a specific tour for The Embroidery Guild of NSW which included a display of exquisite Torah mantles, some of which are over one hundred years old.

Tours are conducted by Rabbi Elton and Rabbi Feldman with back up from Toby Hammerman and Michael Gold OAM. Recently retired Joe Gluck has also joined the group of volunteer guides.

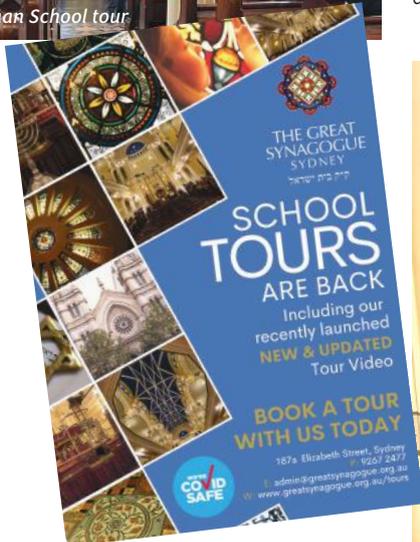
Feedback from these tours has been very positive. One participant wrote: *'these activities are so important. Thank you for doing this'*



Michael Gold OAM



Toby Hammerman School tour



RBE with Western Grammar School



Kids Corner



Spelling Bee





Spot the Difference

There are six differences between these two pictures, can you spot them?

Word Search

C J T N U R C C R H O O S J S
 H O I L W E R A A W T O R A H
 A L A P P L E S T N T F A U A
 L P S Q A H E O A P D R P U N
 L C O A T G O P R A G L N N A
 A A R M I Y E N O W D S E T T
 H S I H E G J I E D H Y W S O
 G H W D N G I D E Y T N Y H V
 A O H A C U R Y I A H A E E A
 W F M E E R A A R E S G A B Y
 E A T I T T M E N U T O R R G
 S R M E A L S S R A I G I E F
 T V R I P Y F E S M T U A L I
 Q K A F O R G I V E N E S S S
 I T Z I M M E S I G H W S O H



- FISH
- MEALS
- TORAH
- APPLES
- HONEY
- SHOFAR
- TZIMMES
- CHALLAH
- CANDLES
- PATIENCE
- NEW YEAR
- SYNAGOGUE
- SHANA TOVA
- FORGIVENESS
- POMEGRANATES

Word Scramble



See the letters around the Shofar in the orange box, can you rearrange them to fill in the blanks below...

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Tribute to:

RABBI DR. RAYMOND APPLE

This year The Great Synagogue and Australian Jewry lost one of the leading rabbinic figures of the last generation, our former Chief Minister, Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple. Rabbi Apple was buried in Jerusalem, where he had lived since his retirement. To mark his sheloshim, thirty days since his passing, a memorial service was held at the synagogue on 22 February 2024, with a large attendance and tributes from Rabbi David Rogut OAM, Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland OAM, Rosalind Fischl OAM and Ruth Apple reading words from Marian Apple. Mrs Apple summed it up when she wrote:

What did it feel like for over 30 years to be the rabbi and his wife of this large congregation? It was not just a job. It was our life, almost our family as we celebrated with those at a simchah and mourned with those in trouble. They were people we cared for and whom we are still in contact with by email or whom we see when they visit Israel.

As a fitting ending, I will quote the prophet Micah, who sums up Raymond's life well: "What does the Lord require of you: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." If that is Rabbi Apple's legacy, we can only be proud!

Here is an edited version of Rabbi Elton's remarks at the memorial service:

Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple loved tefillah, Jewish liturgy. He enjoyed writing prayers, preparing guides to the service and planning special occasions. He arranged the memorial service for his predecessor, Rabbi Dr Israel Porush in 1991, and over thirty years later I selected Psalms for the service in his memory. As I did so I reflected on how appropriate they were:

The teaching of the Lord is his delight, and he studies that teaching day and night.

He is like a tree...whose foliage never fades

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely, I have a delightful inheritance

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

Rabbi Apple was a constant student and teacher of Torah, from the bookshelves of Melbourne University Library religion section that he worked his way through as a student, to the pile of Jewish books that he read on the deck of the ship that carried him from Australia to his training at Jews' College in London in 1958, to the weekly instalments of Oz Torah that are still appearing on Facebook.

That passion did not fade in old age. Although he slowed down physically, he retained his intellectual vitality and continued to write on classic and contemporary issues to the end. I always knew that any email I sent him would receive a swift, precise, informative and helpful reply.

As he told his last Neilah service as rabbi of The Great Synagogue in 2004, he was grateful to God "for casting my lines in pleasant places". He was happy at The Great Synagogue, for its ethos and traditions and for the wider role it encouraged. He worked hard, very hard in fact, for his thirty-two years there, as he had done during his thirteen years in the



he was grateful to God "for casting my lines in pleasant places".

Bayswater and Hampstead Synagogues in London, and as he continued to do after retirement.

God saw his dedication to avodat hakodesh, his sacred work, and rewarded him with long life, with honour, and ultimately what was most important to him, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren following in the way of Torah and mitzvot.

Rabbi Apple was not destined for the rabbinate. His parents were synagogue-goers in Melbourne, but not shomer Shabbat. Under the influence of mentors especially Dr Samuel Billigheimer and his own inclinations, he adopted full halachic observance. As a university student in Arts and Law he started teaching others. He left for England in 1958, and it became clear over the next two years that he was set for a career in the pulpit.

The early Rabbi Apple, Rev Apple as he was in those days, was formed by a series of rabbinic models. Rabbi Jacob Danglow of St Kilda Synagogue remained an exemplar of a dignified minister who gave thoughtful sermons. In London, Chief



Rabbi Apple Memorial attendees

Rabbi Sacks wrote
*“Elaine and I knew that he was
 a very special human being.”*



Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple

Rabbi Brodie, Dr Isidore Epstein, Rabbi Kopul Kahana and others represented the different elements of the ideal rabbi, both more modern and more traditional, as teachers and as preachers. In his early positions he showed his energy and imagination. He started a range of initiatives for all ages at Bayswater between 1960 and 1965 and at Hampstead between 1965 and his appointment in Sydney in 1972.

It was during this period that Rabbi Jonathan Sacks came under his mentorship. Rabbi Apple officiated at Rabbi Sacks' wedding because, as Rabbi Sacks wrote “Elaine and I knew that he was a very special human being. More than anyone else he cared for Jewish students. He spoke our language. He was accessible, understanding, generous and wise. We loved him then. We love him now”.

That reveals a side to Rabbi Apple which is different from the more formal and reserved image often associated with him, but which was always revealed to those he mentored throughout his time in Sydney, the youngsters he took under his wing, the people who saw him in informal moments. He certainly felt that he had left The Great warmer, friendlier and less starchy than he'd found it. Rabbi Porush believed the same about himself too, and

both can be correct, if we compare what they inherited and what they bequeathed.

When Rabbi Apple arrived in Australia, all the major rabbis of the community shared his style of dress, of speech, of attitude. They followed the ideal of the cultured Western European rabbi. Some of the young rabbis present at the end of his career had rejected this model of Torah Im Derech Eretz, a combination of Jewish and wider culture and a religiously motivated engagement with the world. Rabbi Apple was aware of this and wryly

... guided both by halacha and an inclusive ethos, he greatly expanded the role of women within the synagogue ...

contrasted their disapproving attitude with their continued and continual requests for his help and advice, which he gave generously, and which often solved

their problems. He did share with the new generation a preference for the rabbi as scholar and teacher over the old Anglo-Jewish model of pastor and functionary.

In Sydney his courage showed itself. In his last Neilah sermon at Hampstead, he had been booed for calling for the end to their mixed choir. The choir at The Great Synagogue became all-male at his insistence a year after he arrived. At the same time, as someone who was guided both by halacha and an inclusive ethos, he greatly expanded the role of women within the synagogue, most notably the Shabbat morning individual bat mitzvah, women on the Executive and through his support of the Sydney Women's Tefillah Group. He made other major changes at The Great Synagogue; he introduced the Priestly Blessing and Israeli pronunciation into services.

Is there a paradox here? Was Rabbi Apple a traditionalist or a progressive? In a sense he was both. He was a Jewish religious leader



Ruth Apple

I have tried to build not edifices but attitudes, not buildings but bridges, not institutions but ethics.

at a time of transformative change. Sydney and Sydney Jewry changed more between his arrival and his retirement than in any other period of a similar length. When it came to substance, Rabbi Apple did not fear change. As well as his innovations within the synagogue, he pioneered and championed Aboriginal reconciliation, interfaith dialogue with Muslims as well as Christians and he publicly favoured a republic in the 1990s. That is because although his external forms remained traditional, and he loved and upheld the dignities, decorum and historic practices of The Great Synagogue, inside he possessed a marked progressive streak.

As someone raised in the 1940s, trained in the 1950s and who found his rabbinic style in the 1960s and 1970s, by the early twenty-first century, he was bound to reflect the world in which he was formed, even as he helped to create the new world that we have inherited. What insights into both worlds we have lost now he is gone!

Rabbi Apple Stone



Rabbi Apple kept himself amazingly busy. Within The Great Synagogue he was a totally involved rabbinic leader. In any document relating to the synagogue and its running, his handwriting is literally all over it. There were streams of booklets, and of course all the namings, marriages, funerals, and services week in and week out. His congregational efforts were not confined to the synagogue building, but included his home, in his family surroundings. He was steadfastly supported by loyal colleagues and responsible and hard-working Boards.

Outside the synagogue he was involved in a blizzard of organisations, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Australian Jewish Historical Society, the Sydney Beth Din, military and police chaplaincy, the universities, Mandelbaum House, the Board of Jewish Education, the state and national rabbinical associations, interfaith bodies, freemasons and more.

In what spare time he had, he wrote. His copious writings on history and Torah will be a lasting legacy.

What did Rabbi Apple achieve? He found The Great Synagogue large and strong, and he left it large and strong. He guided many individuals, from a member who needed help to heads of government and state. He made a huge contribution to very many organisations, but ultimately his contribution was less formal. He said in that Neilah sermon in 2004:

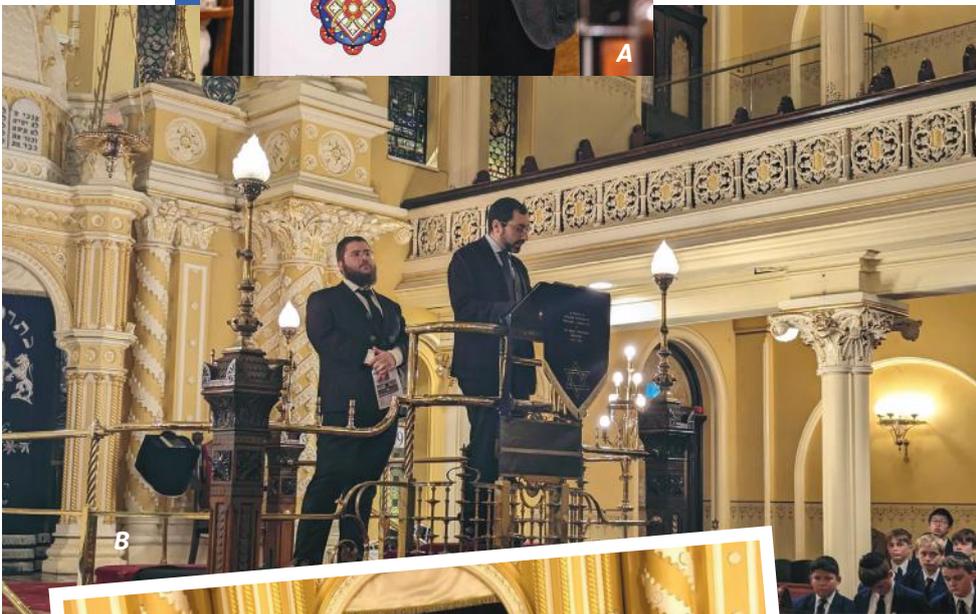
If Australians and Australian Jews are a little saner and more tolerant because I happened to be here, then I am content.

We can answer that his efforts were successful, and he made his impact through ceaseless restatement of the ideas he believed in most: truth, tolerance, respect, integrity, dignity, and faith. He should be content and Australian Jewry should be grateful. 🌸



Suzanne Rutland OAM

Interfaith



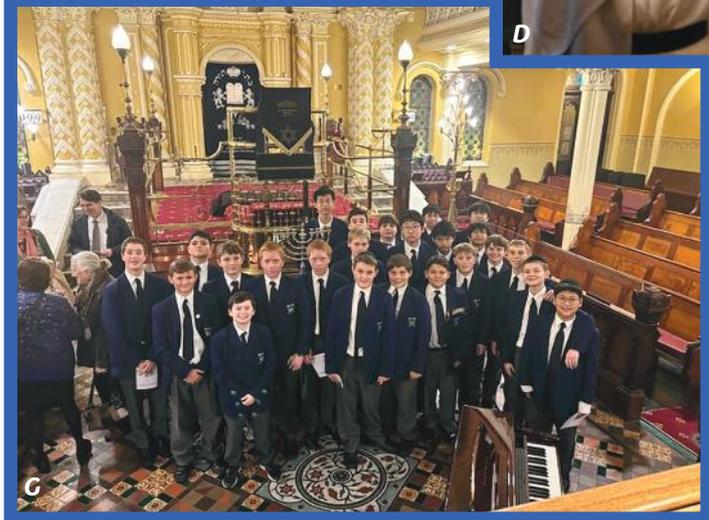
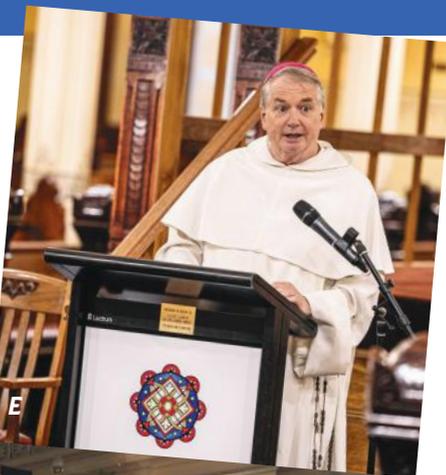
This has been a difficult year for interfaith dialogue, but if anything, the work has been even more important because of that.

Every year the Council of Christians and Jews holds its Shoah commemoration at The Great Synagogue and this year there was a special focus on the failure to ensure 'Never Again' was a promise fulfilled.

The Council also hosted a memorial lecture for Rabbi Apple given by Archbishop Anthony Fisher, which was a great honour for our synagogue, for Rabbi Apple's memory and a fitting tribute to his years of service and leadership on the Council. It was an outstanding and very personal address.

Rabbi Elton hosted Jewish leaders in their annual meeting with Catholic bishops in which there was a friendly but frank dialogue, and relationships were placed on a stronger and better basis for the future.

A. CCJ Apple Memorial Service. **B.** CCJ Shoah Memorial Rabbis Elton and Feldman. **C.** CCJ meeting of Catholic Bishops and Jewish leaders. **D.** Archbishop Anthony Fisher and David Lewis. **E.** Archbishop Anthony Fisher. **F.** CCJ Shoah Memorial. **G.** CCJ Shoah Memorial Knox College.



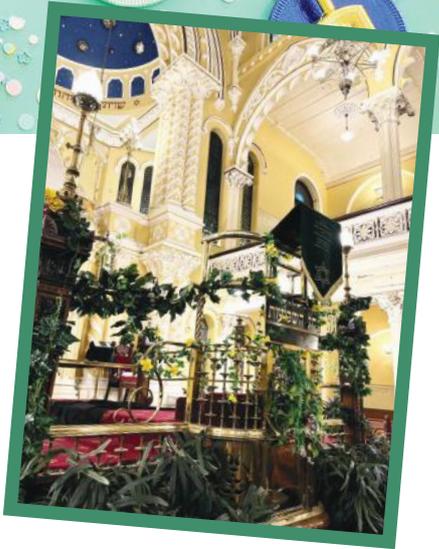


Festivals



The cycle of Jewish festivals creates special times. In the past year, both adults and children enjoyed events to celebrate these happy moments.

On **Simchat Torah** and **Purim**, the Israel Green Auditorium was filled with dozens of children as they enjoyed a jumping castle, sporting events and of course lots of treats. As a **Shavuot** innovation, a kids' Ten Commandments reading and Yom Tou meal with a magician filled the succah with children and laughter.



An outstanding highlight is always the Friday night of **Chanukah** with donuts, latkes, other refreshments, kids' entertainment, a raffle, Chanukiah lighting and a choral service. There is always a large crowd having a great time.

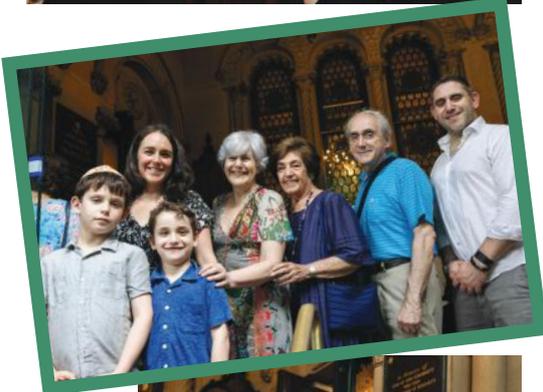


Adults were not forgotten, with choral services one evening of every Yom Tou with outstanding singing from the chazzan and choir, a dinner in the succah, the second night seder being as well attended as ever, a sellout Shavuot dinner followed by Rabbi Elton's annual Shavuot Lecture.

The Ark, Torah scrolls and bimah were all decorated appropriately for each Yom Tou, with greenery for Shavuot. This **Pesach** the Freedman and Hammerman families presented a new Torah mantle in memory of their parents, which will sit in the Ark every year between Pesach and Shavuot.



Aside from special events, it has been so good to see such a strong attendance for festival services, both evening and morning, which should only increase further in the future. 🌸

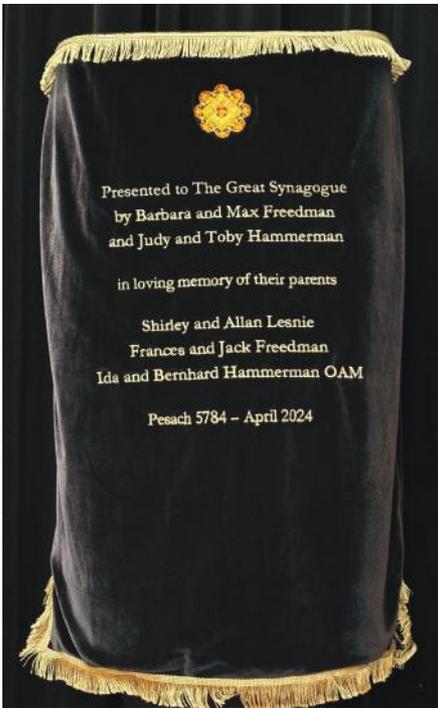


Chanukah

Purim



Pesach



Festivals - Kids



KIDS & FAMILY PIZZA & ICE CREAM PARTY

Second Night *Shavuot* Wed 12 June

SHAVUOT EXTRAVAGANZA & YOM TOV DINNER

MEMBER 2 Adults, 2 Children \$100 \$36 \$18	NON MEMBER 2 Adults, 2 Children \$110 \$40 \$20
---	---

Children's reading of the Ten Commandments followed by Maariv

4.30pm Mincha
4.45pm
5.30pm Party, Entertainer & Yom Tov Dinner

children under 2yrs FREE

BOOKINGS - greatsynagogue.org.au/shavuot24

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

SIMCHAT TORAH KIDS EXTRAVAGANZA

SUNDAY 8 OCT 10AM - 12PM

WITH DANCING & SPECIAL KIDS CALL-UP TO THE TORAH

JOIN THE CELEBRATION FOR

GAMES
HOT DOGS
SHOW BAGS
LIVE SHOW
PRIZES FOR ALL
JUMPING CASTLE

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE SYDNEY

The Great Synagogue invites you to our

FAMILY WORLD OF PURIM PARTY

Sunday 24 MARCH

9.30am Shacharit followed by Megillah

10.30am - 12.30pm PURIM Party

Be dressed as your favourite sports star or in your favourite team colours



Law Service



Over 350 members of the Legal Profession attended the Law Service in February 2024, and the speeches and addresses by the President of the synagogue, David Lewis, the Rabbi and the Chief Justice were all very well received, as was the fine reception afterwards!

This annual event is an important point of connection between the Jewish community and wider civil society. This was also reflected when Rabbi Elton was invited to represent the Jewish community at the celebrations of the Bicentenary of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. 🌟





President David Lewis,
Chief Justice of NSW, The Hon. Andrew Bell
& Rabbi Benjamin Elton



Songs for ISRAEL



UIA Concert

In the terrible wake of October 7, when many of us felt the need to show our support and send much-needed assistance to Israel and its people, Stephen Green initiated and supported a concert called Songs for Israel, which gave us strength in hard times and sent funds to Israeli civilians who had suffered in the attacks.

The ground floor of the synagogue was packed with members, guests and communal leaders, as we listened to our own chazzan, Rabbi Menachem Feldman and The Great Synagogue choir, R Motti Feldman, acclaimed musician Ilan Kidron, child star Zelig Nussbaum and the brilliant Chutney Unplugged.

It was a fantastic evening, that was a force for good in hard times, and both moving and uplifting. 🌟



Jewish Board of Deputies President David Ossip lighting Menorah



Sponsors, the Green family



UIA Concert



President David Lewis and Jasmine Malal UIA



UIA Concert



UIA Concert

The Great Synagogue AT NAJEX

The Great Synagogue has been closely associated with the ADF and with NAJEX since the early twentieth century and this relationship continues to thrive today. At the 2023 Armistice Day commemoration, Rabbi Elton and President David Lewis, former President Michael Gold OAM, Foundation Chair Garry Browne AM and former Board member Sari Browne OAM, together with congregants including David and Zac Levi, were present and laid roses in memory of those who served and fell for Australia and our freedoms. 🌹



Garry Browne AM and Sari Browne OAM NAJEX

President David Lewis NAJEX



Rabbi Elton NAJEX introduction



Rabbi Elton and Michael Gold OAM NAJEX



Zac and David Levi NAJEX

Live at YOURS

VLADIMIR FANSHIL



Shamray

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, it's always a good time to reflect - and what a year it has been!

The tragedy of 7th October then the ensuing war and antisemitism has certainly affected each and every one of us. We received a huge amount of hate mail about our concerts at The Great and at the Toorak shule in Melbourne but remained resolved and resilient to continue as that's what we as Jews have always done well - rise up in adversity and not allow others to stop us from living! We deeply thank Rabbi Elton, David and Lynn as they were clearly resolved that we must keep on hosting concerts for the wider public and that's exactly what we did! In a way, it was our tikun olam to bring music and hope in a time of such darkness to our community and share it with the broader public. Huge thanks to you all, our faithful audience, for supporting our concerts. You are at the heart of what we do!

After four wonderful, unexpected years in Australia, our family returned in December to Vienna to continue our music careers but with every desire to keep our Sydney connections and Live at Yours alive! Vladimir is the Associate conductor of the Polish National Radio Orchestra in Katowice (just a train ride from Vienna albeit passing Auschwitz). Eleanor's career is thriving and she's performing with many major European orchestras including Vienna Symphonic, Monte-Carlo Philharmonic and Orchestra Nacional de España. Floria and Bella are already speaking German and we're slowly finding our local Jewish community here. Please reach out if you're visiting Vienna or passing by as we love connecting with members of The Great Synagogue family!

Meanwhile the Live at Yours concerts have been hugely challenging due to the antisemitic climate, so they've been smaller yet no less spectacular. The wonderful St Andrew's Choir made their synagogue debut for the season opening and the bimah being removed created a new challenge of two bimahs, one being in the centre. As a result, we created Australia's first 'concerts in the round' with the spectacular Hungarian violin virtuoso József Lendvay. In May, Konstantin Shamray delivered a charming and powerful French programme in the round with the piano lid off, in September we have Ensemble Liaison and finally in December Simon Tedeschi will present a jazz programme. We can't wait to bring you more spectacular concerts in 2025 because music is the superglue of humanity and brings out our deepest emotions.

We wish all The Great Synagogue family a shalom bayit and spiritually uplifting High Holy days. Am Yisroel Chai.

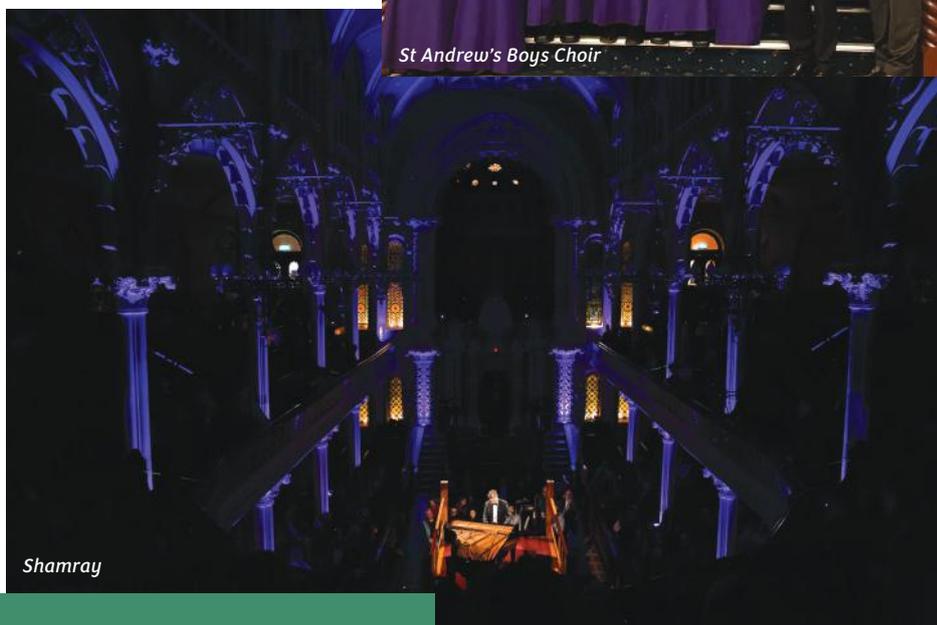
With love
from the Fanshil Family. 🌸



Rabbi and President with a St Andrew's chorister, descended from Thomas Rowe



St Andrew's Boys Choir



Shamray

The Great Synagogue presents a

BLACK & WHITE PURIM

Saturday Evening
23 March

8.15pm
Maariv followed by Megillah, Havdallah & Refreshments
Elizabeth Street entry



Community Shabbat Dinner at The Great Synagogue

Friday Night
9 February

6.00pm
Kabbalat Shabbat Service followed by Dinner

\$36 per person
\$18 per child (aged 2-12)

Bookings essential by Monday 5 February at greatsynagogue.org.au/shabbatdinners



THE COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

AN ADDRESS IN MEMORY OF
RABBI DR RAYMOND APPLE AO, RFD
1935-2024

THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2024 | 6PM
The Great Synagogue, Sydney
Entry Via 187A Elizabeth Street

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS WALKING TOGETHER: WHERE ARE WE IN 2024?
BY THE MOST REVEREND ANTHONY FISHER OF CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY

Registration is essential. Please register by clicking here: CCJNSW.Address.2024 Or by sending an e-mail to: Emmanuel.Nathan@ccjnsw.edu.au



9AV 5784

DREYFUS DREI

EREV TISHA B'AV PROGRAM

MONDAY NIGHT
AUG 12

AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE
ENTRY: ELIZABETH ST

FREE ADMISSION, ALL WELCOME



Community Shabbat Dinner at The Great Synagogue

Friday Night
8 March

6.00pm
Kabbalat Shabbat Service followed by Dinner

\$36 per person
\$18 per child (aged 2-12)

Bookings essential by Monday 4 March at greatsynagogue.org.au/shabbatdinners



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE FOUNDATION INVITES YOU TO A SPECIAL

KIDDUSH

JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR SYNAGOGUE THROUGH THE FOUNDATION

JOIN US IN THE ISRAEL GREEN AUDITORIUM AFTER SHABBAT SERVICE ON
23 MARCH 2024



Ladies Night Out Brought to you by

7.00pm
15 Feb 24

Movement & Meditation

with Maxine Radus

Bookings essential by Monday 12 February at greatsynagogue.org.au/community/greatwomen

\$30 pp

Join us for this special evening of inspiration, relaxation, movement & community! Refreshments included for you via Castlereagh Street



Mental Health & Jewish Life

with
RABBI YONI ROSENSWEIG

Thursday
25 JULY 8pm

RSVP for location details admin@greatsynagogue.org.au

Brought to you by THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE FOUNDATION MIZRACHI



GUEST SPEAKER

SHABBAT MORNING BEFORE KIDDUSH

13 JULY 24

DR YOSSI ELRAN
of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel

HELPING TRAUMATISED CHILDREN WITH MATHS PUZZLES



JOIN US ON SHABBAT VE-AHAVTEM

A CELEBRATION OF CONVERTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

HOSTED BY
SORAYA CALAVASSY

AN ENGAGING PANEL CONVERSATION

HIGHLIGHTING RECENT CONVERTS & CURRENT STUDENTS AND THE IR STORIES

FEATURING

LIAM O'CALLAGHAN KELLIE SMITH SAM MILCH

SHABBAT, 8 JUNE 2024
BEFORE KIDDUSH



WE ARE TAKING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR A NEW SOCIAL GROUP FOR WOMEN IN THEIR 20'S-40'S

BEVERAGES & BANTER AFTER WORK

For more info & to register your interest soraya@neon.black



EREV Shavuot 5784

CHORAL SERVICE & DAIRY DINNER

FEATURING
RABBI ELTON'S ANNUAL SHAVUOT LECTURE

"What Price Peace? Ransoming hostages, releasing prisoners and ceding land in Jewish Law"

Tuesday **11 JUNE**

5.30pm Choral Evening Service
6.30pm Dairy Dinner & Lecture

Dinner Member \$36 Non Member \$40

Book at greatsynagogue.org.au/shavuot24



SHABBAT 2nd of MARCH

JOIN US FOR KIDDUSH IN THE ISRAEL GREEN AUDITORIUM

WITH GUEST SPEAKERS FROM
MOISHE HOUSE

AN ORGANISATION EMPOWERING JEWISH YOUNG ADULTS ALL OVER THE WORLD TO ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE.

Naama Zohar

Moishe House Global Director of Advancement Naama Zohar will speak together with a Moishe House community builder about the Jewish community they are building for young adults in Sydney.



ISRAEL SHABBAT AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

THIS WEEK WE WILL MARK YOM HA'ATZMAUT & **76 YEARS OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

Join us for SPECIAL PRAYERS FOR ISRAEL & THE IDF with Guest Speaker
YOSSI ESHER
CEO of Zionist Council of NSW & Managing Director of IsraAID

11 MAY 2024



Growing IN LEARNING



The Great Synagogue is a hub for high quality and accessible Jewish education: classes in the homes of rabbis and congregants; learning before Shacharit on Shabbat or after Shacharit on a Thursday; for men, women and mixed groups; for potential converts; one-on-one or in larger settings; and with our own ministers or guest rabbis. There is a huge variety and something to suit everyone. We will continue to expand these opportunities next year and look forward to more people taking part. 🌸



From top and left to right:

Conversion class in the Elton Sukkah

Women's Learning with Mushki Feldman

Rabbi Elton class

Secrets of the Sedras with Rabbi Feldman

Thursday Breakfast and Shiur



Spotlight on RABBI YAKOV RICHTER

I was born in Kiryat Malachi, Israel, and moved to Winnipeg, Canada, at the age of five. Growing up in a small religious community, I learned early on the importance of standing proud in my faith. At the age of thirteen, I moved to a Yeshiva high school two thousand km away from home, due to the lack of a local religious high school. After high school, I continued my religious studies in Manchester, UK, for two years, then back to Montreal, Canada. From there, I was sent on a program to help the community in Sydney in 2004. It was then that I began my teaching career, starting with Yeshiva College. Rabbi Menachem Feldman, The Great Synagogue chazan, was one of my students.

During my time in Sydney, The Great Synagogue was looking for a Torah reader, and I was interviewed by Rabbi Apple, who wanted to hear me read. I then began reading the Torah regularly. Later, I started running a mini children's service, which included, at the time, Rabbi Lawrence's children, Rafi and Shira, on the second floor in the room behind the choir loft.

These early experiences laid the foundation for my long-term involvement with the shule.

There was a short pause in my work at The Great Synagogue after getting married to Ziva in Israel in 2006 and living there for a year. I eventually returned to teach in Sydney and restarted my work at The Great. Initially I was only leining

but began conducting children's services after the departure of Rabbi Garber.

I've been privileged to serve as the leiner (Torah reader) for almost twenty years and have been conducting children's services for nearly ten years. During my time with the shule, I have worked with three Chief Ministers: Rabbi Apple, Rabbi Lawrence and currently Rabbi Elton.

Outside of my involvement with the shule, I am a full-time teacher at Kesser Torah College. I teach Year 6 Jewish Studies and have a leadership role in developing the Jewish Studies curriculum and mentoring future educators. Recently, I've been training to coach teachers, also giving Bar Mitzvah lessons during the week and conducting adult classes (chaburots) both in groups and one-on-one. My role as an educator complements my work at the shule, allowing me to bring valuable insights to my contributions.

My wife, Ziva, and I are blessed with five sons: Araleh, Mendel, Gershon, Hershy, and Moshe. Ziva, who is also an educator, and our children have become well-known in the shule community. The four eldest children have spent many shabbatot at The Great Synagogue, making the trek with me from Bondi since they were young. I cherish the memories of walking with them to shule, and currently, Hershy joins me on Shabbat, while Moshe, at age 3, is eagerly awaiting his turn. The older ones have even filled in for me, reading the Torah at times.

I enjoy my role in the synagogue and look forward to carrying on my work with the community as it continues to grow. 🌸



Spotlight on NEW BOARD MEMBERS



SORAYA CALAVASSY

My path to joining The Great Synagogue started when I was at the beginning of my journey to convert to Judaism. From the moment I walked into The Great one Friday night in late 2021, I instantly felt a connection and knew it was the place for me.

The Great Synagogue also has family significance for Richard. His parents were married at The Great, as were both sets of grandparents and his maternal great-grandparents. Rabbi Elton has been the ultimate guide throughout the challenging conversion process and has managed to handle my incessant questions that still arise today. My conversion was finalised in January 2024, and it was incredibly special to celebrate the culmination of this process with our wedding at The Great Synagogue.

Joining the Board of The Great Synagogue is an honour and privilege. To have the opportunity to serve a community that has been so welcoming and supportive is incredibly special. As the co-founder of a PR and Communications agency, my expertise is in storytelling and words. I hope to be able to use my skills and experience to further bring to life and amplify all the wonderful things that are happening at The Great Synagogue. 🌸



ADAM PISK

I have a deep and enduring connection with The Great Synagogue, starting from my bar mitzvah, then to my HSC/TER History major on The Great Synagogue, during which I spent considerable time with Rabbi Apple and then to my wedding. My family's history with The Great is long and storied, starting in 1878 and continuing to the present day.

As a new Board member, my primary focus is to contribute in any way I can to the betterment of our shule. In my first Board meeting, I was entrusted with two major assignments: the first is to ensure that our sanctuary is properly air-conditioned. This involves not only fixing the existing system but also repairing the dilapidated roof. I am pleased to report that this project is fully funded, and we have a project plan in place; the second is to enhance accessibility for disabled and elderly congregants, particularly by extending lift access to the women's level and the Israel Green Auditorium. This project is also making good progress. Additionally, I am helping with website updates and the introduction of AI technology.

I look forward to contributing to the vibrant future of The Great Synagogue. 🌸

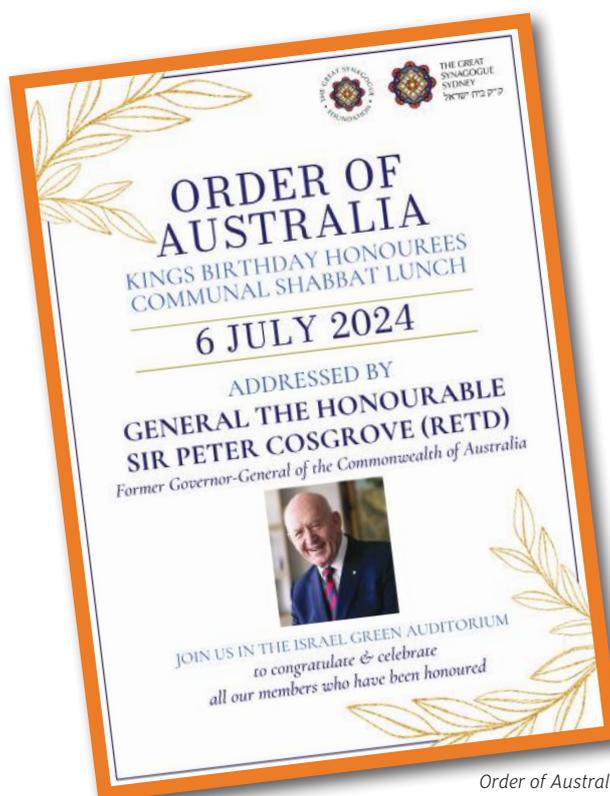
Order of Australia: OUR 2024 HONOURS



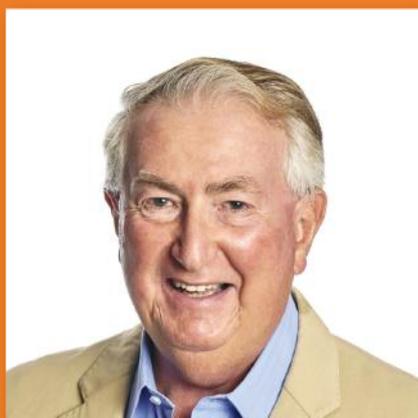
RON FERSTER AM

Ron was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the community. Since 2016 he has been deeply involved with the Black Dog Institute Foundation, including as its Chairman and Director. The Foundation works to create better mental health for everyone through research, education and services.

Ron was also deeply involved with the JNF, Masada College and the Montefiore Homes. For five years he was Treasurer of the JCA. In business he is Chairman of Sanwa Holdings Pty Ltd and the Halifax Vogel Group. Ron was always committed to going beyond simply giving financial support for causes and organisations. He became involved and made a significant and sustained contribution over twenty-five years, which this award honours. 🌸



Order of Australia Lunch flyer



GARY INBERG OAM

Gary was recognised with the Order of Australia Medal for contributions to the community and to business. His most extensive contribution has been to the Montefiore Homes. He was firstly Treasurer and then Vice-President for twenty years as well as fulfilling a range of other roles. Outside of the Jewish community he has been President and Director of the Sydney Grammar School Foundation.

Gary enjoyed an exciting career in business including as Vice-President of Sydney Casino and preparing and managing huge deals and projects. In the public sector he was Director, Commercial and Property, Roads and Maritime Services and Head of Property for Sydney Water. Gary had been recognised with the New South Wales Premier's Public Sector Award for Leadership, and the OAM reflects even more years of service. 🌸

In Memoriam



MICHAEL MODDEL

Susan Moddel

Michael's lifelong involvement with The Great began with his family's connections to Rabbi Porush. As a child, he regularly attended shabbat services with his father and grandfather and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in 1963, remaining active in his teenage years as leader of The Great Synagogue Youth (GSY), organising dances and summer camps.

Michael married Susan at The Great in June 1976. Their sons Daniel and Tim were pupils at the synagogue's Sunday school, culminating in Daniel's Bar Mitzvah in 1993. It was at this stage of life that the family found it sensible to join Coogee Synagogue, a short walk from home, but eventually in 2017 Michael was drawn back to The Great. He thoroughly enjoyed being a shule guide and he was also very proud of Ilana, his daughter-in-law's work in the synagogue administration team.

Michael was a very decent and good-hearted person, who also gave much time and energy to other communal organisations. He would be delighted to see that his beautiful family continues its connection to The Great Synagogue.



THEO WHITMONT

Rabbi Shua Solomon

Theo was born in Sydney in 1967 to parents Norton and Stevie Whitmont. He began his community work as a leader of GSY and was also involved in the Community Security Group CSG for almost 15 years. In his mid-twenties he began working in the family business together with his father and this partnership lasted for the rest of his life. It was also in his mid-twenties that Theo met Kayley. They were married in December 1994 and had four beautiful children together – Hannah, Jacob, Talia and Leila.

He was President of the Caravan Camping Industry Association and the Manufactured Housing Industry Association, as well as a director of the Big Four parks, helping to pass legislation in parliament and lead and guide others in the industry.

Theo was someone who helped the community, wanting to contribute in any way that he could, with a positive attitude and always with a huge smile.



REV SHMUEL KINNEY

Samuel Kinney, Shmuel to many of us, born to Yvonne and Paul in 1984, was an *Eved Hashem*, a servant of God. He was a man of deep faith who loved Judaism and Jewish observance and lived a life of Torah and mitzvot. He played the violin and clarinet, loved swimming and cricket and was a wonderful help in the kitchen.

When he was a child, his family discovered their Jewish heritage. Sam went to Paramatta Shule cheder and then, with the encouragement of Rabbi Yossi Wernick, to the Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. He returned to Sydney in 2010, by which time his family had joined The Great Synagogue.

Sadly, he was unable to complete his rabbinical studies, having developed a brain tumour. He showed immense courage undergoing surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, but the cancer returned very aggressively in 2023, requiring his admission to hospital and finally to the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. Rabbi Gutnick and members of the Sydney Beth Din made a special visit to bestow on him the title of Reverend Chaver, which will be attached to his name permanently.



IAN LACEY AM

Ian was born in London in 1936 and arrived in Australia in his early teens, began studies at the University of Sydney at the age of 16 and graduated in Arts/Law. He met his future wife Josie at a picnic on a boat and in 1961, they were married at The Great Synagogue. Ian was a wonderful family man who loved being with his grandchildren.

Ian made many contributions to the community: President of Strathfield Synagogue; member of the Jewish Board of Deputies and its Executive and wrote content for their education website; authored three major Board of Deputies publications and a textbook on the Arab-Israel conflict; prepared submissions on anti-vilification law for ethnic community councils; contributed an array of authoritative articles to academic journals; and convened the Legal Committee of the NSW Race Relations Consultation.

Ian worked tirelessly alongside Josie in the area of multicultural relations, being foundation members of Religions for Peace Australia, NSW Branch. As Honorary secretary of the Zionist Federation of Australia, he negotiated with the Israeli Interior Ministry and Australian immigration department for the procedures to protect citizenship of Australians in Israel. In 2006 he was awarded an AM for service to the community, particularly as a contributor to law reform in the area of human rights.



SUNNY GOLD

Sunny was born on 24 February 1943 to Minna Sapier from Kobrin, Poland and Elias Altshuler from Harbin, China. She was named Sonia but preferred to be called Sunny due to her bright and sunny disposition as a baby. She was a wonderful wife to Michael, a devoted mother and fine role model to her daughter Deborah, and a proud Jew.

Her many achievements included: taking on leadership roles in NSW Council of Jewish Women at local, state and international levels; receiving a NCJWA Woman of the Year Award for her dedication and contribution over some five decades; becoming secretary and one of the presidents of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society; being a member of Mensa; gaining a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of New England. She was also a skilful physiotherapist for over forty-four years. Yet through it all, her life was unfortunately marred with health issues and with the final challenge proving too great, she decided to allow nature to take its course and faced the end with the same dignity and thoughtfulness that has characterised her life.



JUDGE RON SOLOMON

Ron was born on 18 August 1941 to Genya and Udi Solomon. His father's paternal family came to Australia in the 1820s as convicts and his mother fled Odessa pogroms in the 1890s. He was born above the family pub, the Royal Sovereign Hotel, in Darlinghurst and went to the local school. He had three younger brothers, Richard, Paul and Bruce, with whom he had a good relationship throughout their lives.

Ron met Judy when they were seventeen, they married at twenty-one, had three children and were together for sixty-six years. Ron studied law and worked as an articled clerk for Abe Lander and Co, a labour lawyer. He became the leading lawyer in industrial law and was involved in many political campaigns for the union movement. At the age of just forty-one, he was appointed as a judge, only the second solicitor to receive such an appointment. He served for thirty-six years, the longest serving judge in Australia. He also had a successful business in pubs.

He ran the court when the Chief Judge was away, taking new judges under his wing and greeting visiting judges from overseas. He had a reputation as very fair. Both sides of the case wanted Ron to preside. He deliberately took up the indigenous circuit and avoided sentencing to jail unless it was unavoidable.

Ron was the oldest of the cousins and became the patriarch of the family. He never compromised his principles even as he became successful and a distinguished member of the establishment. Ron embodied love, justice, compassion and generosity for his family, his friends and his profession.

The Haunting Nothingness OF JEWISH SPAIN

SUSAN BURES AM

In her profound book *People Love Dead Jews – Reports from a Haunted Present*, the American novelist Dara Horn refers to a “tourist industry concept popular in places largely devoid of Jews called Jewish Heritage Sites. It’s a much better name than ‘property seized from dead or expelled Jews’,” she writes. Spain is positively littered with “Jewish Heritage Sites”, most of them labelled with small plaques as “Sepharad”.



Rylands Haggadah

Many of the Spanish cities have well-promoted Jewish quarters. Cordoba has its Juderia, for instance, the word emblazoned on the walls of the old Jewish quarter. Toledo has a plaque set into the ground reading in English “The Jewish Quarter”. Segovia had two Jewish quarters with five synagogues and there is a well-illustrated brochure on Jewish Segovia available in English at the tourist centre. Unfortunately, there’s nothing actually left to see.

There are only two synagogues remaining from pre-exilic Jewish Spain. One is the small synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of Cordoba, another is the imposing Transito synagogue in Toledo. Guides in Spain have to graduate from university courses to become licensed so evidently Jewish Spain is on the curriculum. And in the south, they often tell you about the Golden Age of Jewish life in Spain under Muslim rule. But as one scholar has said, it was not a golden age: “it was just an age when Jews



Maimonides



Juderia Street sign

were persecuted less”. The relative peace was shattered in 1066 when 5000 Jews in Granada were murdered by Muslims. It was the first pogrom on European soil.

Jews throughout the Muslim lands had dhimmi status and there are examples of how they were singled out: special clothes including various sorts of “badges”; rules about only riding side-saddle and only donkeys; houses were not permitted to be built higher than those of their Muslim neighbours. New synagogues were not permitted to be built. Certainly in many places at different times, Jews in Muslim Spain were doctors, linguists and administrators, Hasdai ibn Shaprut in Cordoba in the mid-10th century was personal physician to the Caliph and even mediated on his behalf between the warring Christian kings of Leon and Navarre. In the Berber-ruled kingdom of Granada, Samuel ibn Nagrela was its vizier.

But most of the Jews lived a precarious existence throughout.

In the Christian north, and throughout Spain after the *Reconquista*, the inflammatory nature of Christian preaching like that of the priest, Ferrand Martinez, whipped up the people of Castile to attack the Jews which resulted in the massacres and forced conversions of 1391.

The story of the Conversos is extraordinary. These were Jews who converted to Christianity either forcibly (mostly) or out of a need or desire to



Casa Mazal



Cordoba Shule

get on in life (quite a number) or out of conviction (very few). Their numbers were apparently in the hundreds of thousands. The Conversos became known as New Christians to distinguish them from “Old” Christians whose prejudice against them saw the eventual introduction in 1449 of the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) statutes, so setting a high bar for what it meant to be a “true” Christian – you had to be of Christian descent, not just engage in Christian observance.

The Conversos of Spain and particularly of Portugal, however, understood their links one to another and regarded themselves as members of The Nation – whether they were Jews in secret or went faithfully to Mass – and this identity persisted across the geography of the Renaissance world and throughout the centuries. It was members of The Nation who fled to Amsterdam and eventually created the magnificent Portuguese synagogue, teaching themselves how to be Jews once again after generations as Christians.

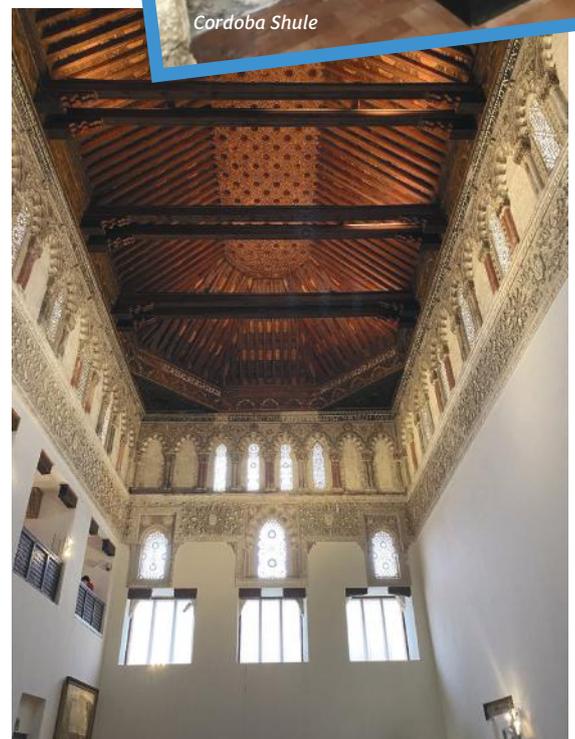
Remarkably, there is a community in Majorca of descendants of Conversos forcibly converted in the early 15th century known as Chuetas (Xuetas) who regarded themselves and were regarded by others as different right into the 21st century. In Belmonte in Portugal,

to this day, they practise a suite of customs with their roots in Judaism and many have now formally converted to mainstream Judaism. In south-western United States there are increasing numbers of individuals claiming descent from Converso ancestors who had fled to the New World to escape the Inquisition.

Yet despite the echoes, despite the streets called “Calle de Samuel Levi” or the squares called “Plaza de Juda Levi” or the statue of Maimonides in Cordoba or the Jewish quarters pointed out in every town, there is a resounding absence.

Spain – where Jewish life and scholarship flourished for 1500 years, where up to 400,000 Jews were farmers, bankers, poets, jurists, administrators, doctors, Talmudic scholars – is today *Judenrein*, Jew free.

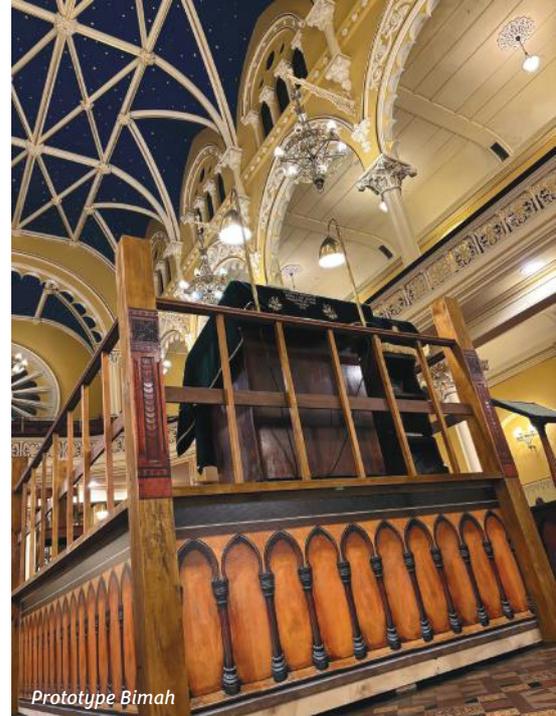
That Latin phrase of Christian origin kept forcing itself into my mind at each former Jewish place: “*Sic transit gloria mundi*” (Thus the glory of the world passes away).



Transito Shule roof

Maintaining the TRADITIONS OF THE GREAT

STEVE SCHACH, SENIOR GABBAI



Prototype Bimah



Steve Schach at Law Service

“TEVYE: Traditions, traditions. Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as, as ... as a fiddler on the roof”
Fiddler on the Roof, Act 1, Scene 2.

Traditions play a vital role in Judaism, especially in the synagogue. Once we adopt a traditional practice (*minhag*), it stays adopted—unless that *minhag* becomes infeasible.

When I joined The Great in December 2011, I noticed a *minhag* that seemed unique to our congregation. In the other synagogues in which I’ve worshipped—and I’ve lived on four continents—the procedure for taking a Torah scroll from the Ark to the reading desk was as follows: open the Ark; take out the scroll; immediately close the Ark; form a procession to escort the scroll around the synagogue to the reading desk.

But at The Great, the Ark stayed open for the Torah procession. Furthermore, the Ark opener and Ark closer joined the procession around the synagogue. When the procession finally reached the reading desk on the bimah, directly in front of the Ark, the Ark closer closed the Ark.

I volunteered to be the *gabbai* in October 2016. At all times, I’ve scrupulously adhered to every *minhag* specific to The Great. That includes the procedure I’ve just described, which I believe has been in place since 1907, the year in which the *bimah* was moved from the centre of the synagogue to the front.

In 2023, the congregation decided to move the *bimah* back to its original position in the middle of the synagogue. The central block of seats was removed in February 2024 and a prototype *bimah* installed. Rabbi Elton and the team of *gabbai'im* (Rich Davey, Dave Dunn, Toby Hammerman, and I) immediately realised that the *minhag* for taking out the Torah scroll had to be adapted.

Clearly, the Torah procession couldn’t go right around the synagogue anymore because then it would terminate back at the Ark, not at the reading desk, which was now in the middle of the sanctuary. Instead, the procession would have to end only halfway around the sanctuary, at the prototype bimah. But that meant that the Ark closer would find himself marooned in the centre of the sanctuary, and he’d have to walk back to the Ark to close it!

When the prototype *bimah* was installed in the centre of the synagogue, in an ideal world we would have resumed the *minhag* of that early period pre-1907. However, no one alive today could possibly have witnessed what was done one hundred and seventeen years ago, and we were unable to find a written description of the procedure in place at that time.

The only sensible alternative was to create a new *minhag*. But instead of following the almost universal practice of closing the Ark as soon as possible, we decided to pay homage to the previous *minhag* by closing the Ark as late as possible, that is, just as the Torah procession starts, which now coincides with the custom of many British synagogues, and might in fact reflect what was done at The Great before 1907.

In other words, we have adapted the *minhag* because it had become unworkable, but we’ve done so in a way that adheres as closely as possible to the previous *minhag*. We’ve also had to modify the *minhag* for returning the scroll to the Ark, again ensuring maximal continuity with the previous procedure, and we’ve made a few necessary minor modifications at other points of the service.

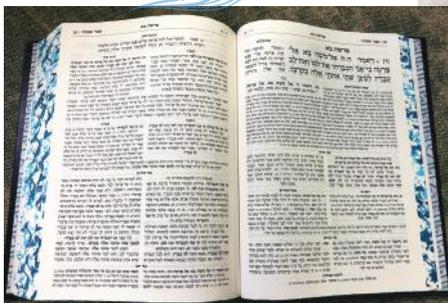
In short, the *gabbai'im* have worked with Rabbi Elton to make only essential changes to our *minhagim*. And at all times we’ve strived to achieve continuity of tradition, which is so important to our congregation. 🌸

Bo Boys ANNUAL SHABBAT

ARNOLD SHROOT



'Bo Boy' Arnold Shroot



Parsha Bo

On 25 January 1958, in Netherlee and Clarkson Shul, Glasgow Scotland, I recited my Bar Mitzvah Haftarah, which was 'Bo'.

My lessons were three times a week, taught by Rev Fenigstein, starting with the trop (notes) and of course the words. It was relentless learning, which is why I can remember it to this day and can recite large parts of it by heart!

Over the years I was sometimes given the opportunity to do the Haftarah again, but that depended on what was happening on that particular Shabbos.

Sixty-two years later, having emigrated to Sydney, I was introduced to the 'Bo Boys' at The Great Synagogue. I was really

impressed with this wonderful idea created by Leon Ratner and championed by David Lewis and also delighted to have had the honour of singing Haftarah 'Bo' again.

The 'Bo Boys' Shabbat is such a special occasion involving 'Bo Boys' from Sydney, Melbourne, Israel and UK, all celebrating their Bar Mitzvah anniversaries, and this is reflected by the young, the mature and the very mature (like myself!) who attend on that Shabbos to mark the occasion.

David Lewis, The Great's President, has done a fabulous job, sending reminder emails, organising the kiddush and donations, all to make sure that the 'Bo Boys' Shabbat is the special day that it is.

There is a different Haftarah every week and many members are called up to mark their own particular Bar Mitzvah anniversary. How special it would be, if this idea could be rolled out each week, once again showing how great is The Great! 🌟

REMEMBERING 15TH DECEMBER 1963 AT THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

Do you recognise yourself in the photo?

If so, get ready to celebrate your incredible life journey of over 60 years at a Bat Mitzvah reunion to be held in our shule.

This special event called "Memories," coordinated by Karen Pisk (nee Milston), promises to be a joyous reunion filled with heartfelt connections, laughter and nostalgia. Let's gather together to cherish the bonds that have stood the test of time, share stories of triumph and resilience and create new memories that will last a lifetime. Get ready to rekindle old friendships, embrace new beginnings and celebrate the enduring spirit of sisterhood and strength.



This reunion is not just an event; it's a celebration of our shared history and the bright future that lies ahead. Join us for an unforgettable lunch of love, laughter and togetherness as we honour the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the exciting adventures that await us!

Please contact Karen at Kpisk@hotmail.com for details.

Restoring THE SANCTUARY

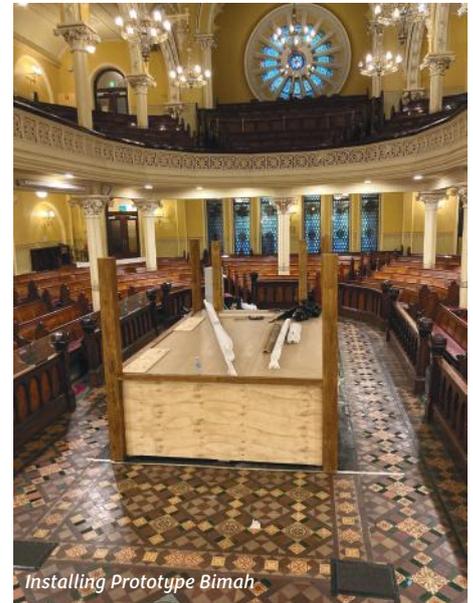
After months of research, designing, planning, engagement with members and applications to the City of Sydney, work commenced in early 2024 to restore the sanctuary to its original arrangement. This meant in practice the removal of the bimah attached to the Ark, the restoration of the steps beneath it, and the return of the bimah to its original position in the centre of the synagogue where it had stood from the opening in 1878 until the installation of the centre block of seats in 1907.

The first stage was the clearing of the centre block of seats to reveal the state of the floor underneath, a combination of tiles laid down in 1907 and plain black floorboards. When it was clear the floor was still sound, a prototype bimah, with basic wooden cladding, was set up. The railings had to be adjusted when children starting to swing through them on a Shabbat morning, but apart from that, the length and height of the bimah seemed to work in the space. By clever planning of the core of the bimah, a series of metal boxes remained the same and was simply clad with materials reflecting the final design. Spotlights from the columns in the ladies' gallery were also added to give good lighting at the reading desk without the need for additional lamps.

After DA clearance had been received from Council, the 1907 bimah attached to the Ark was removed, revealing amongst other things a call-up card for a Cohen from the 1930s. It was then discovered that beneath a layer of concrete steps added in the late 1980s, the original flight of steps luckily still existed and just needed to be uncovered and retiled. The pulpit and all the other brassworks were removed for minor reworking and some temporary wooden flooring and handrails added to make the stairs usable.

Then it was just a case of preparing the floor in the middle of the sanctuary for retiling and fitting out the bimah with wood, brass and lighting according to the final design. During this period, services and concerts continued, with a grand piano making an appearance on the new bimah.

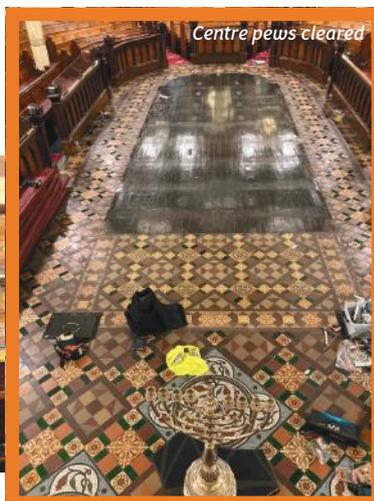
Although some temporary tiles will still be in place for the High Holidays, the section of the restoration project dealing with the bimah, pulpit, Ark stairs and floor will be completed. In early 2025, attention will turn to the Ark itself, which will have its side towers restored and is being given a new set of fire and security doors.



Installing Prototype Bimah

We must thank all the sponsors of the project, who will be acknowledged at a service of dedication next year. Architects Peter Phillips AO, the late Phil Abram and Anna Bowen-James produced a sensitive and beautiful design. Julian Bickesteth AO and his team from International Conservation Services, experts in every respect, were a delight to work with. Max Freedman and his bimah committee worked very hard at all stages of the project and Garry Browne AM and the Foundation Board enabled the funds to be collected and released effectively. 🌸

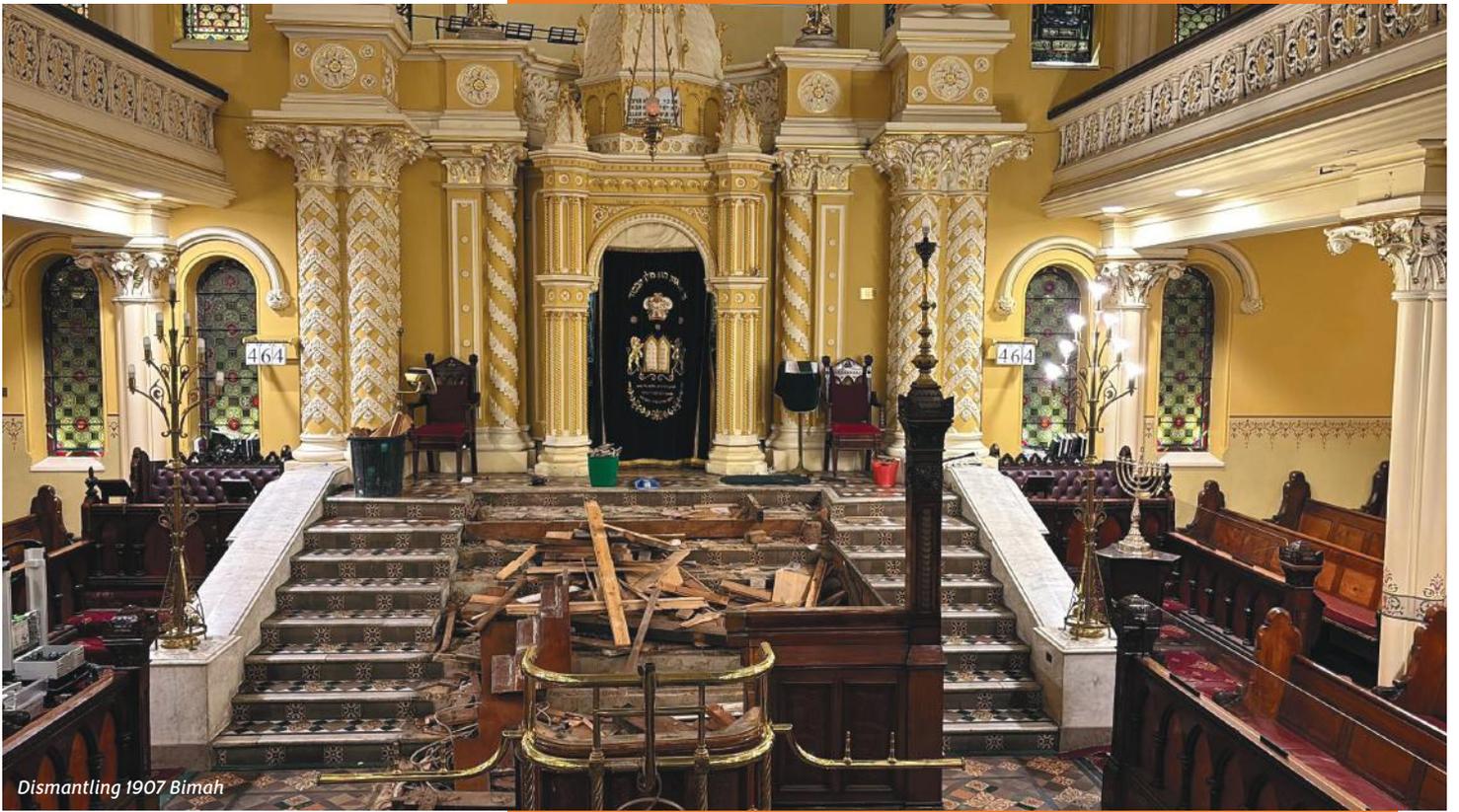
Relic found under Bimah



Centre pews cleared

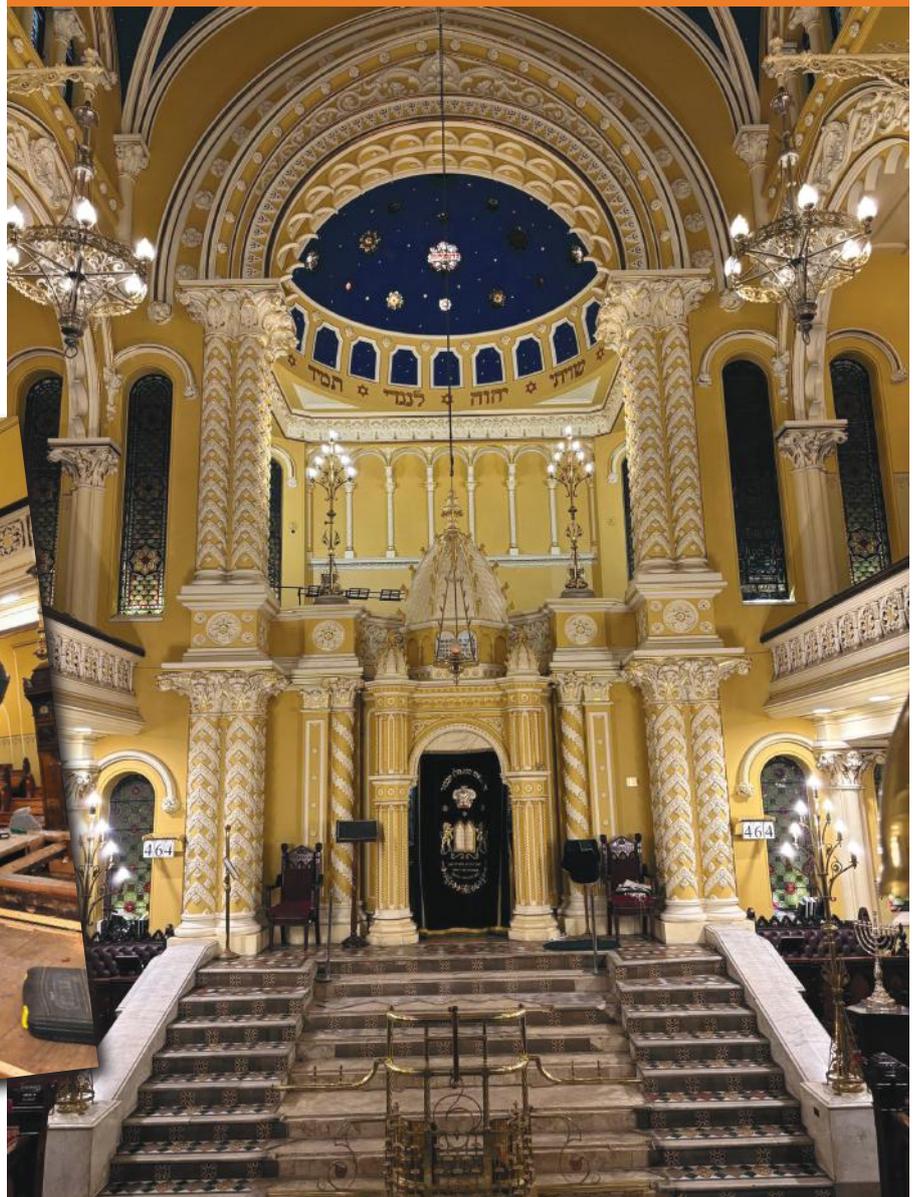
Removing reading desk



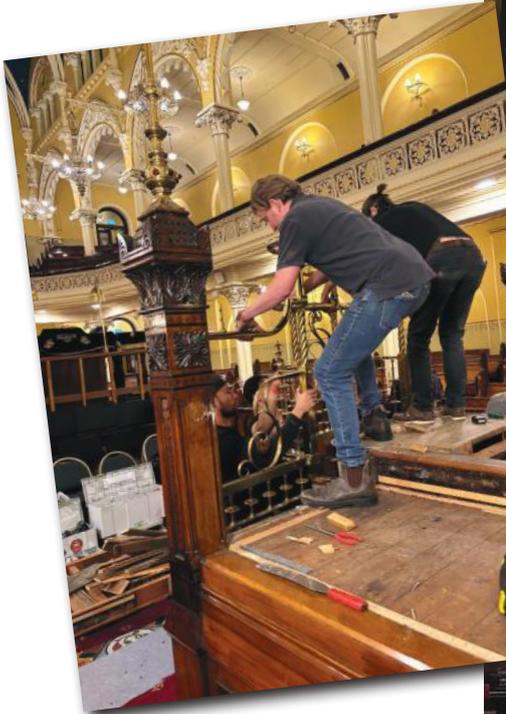


Dismantling 1907 Bimah

These High Holidays will be very special, as we all experience the beauty of the sanctuary as our founders and Thomas Rowe intended. It will be a memorable experience.



1907 Bimah removed



Removing Pulpit

2024 Falk Lecture AND BOOK LAUNCH



The Falk Family



Museum Exhibition

In July, The Great Synagogue hosted the 2024 Annual Falk Lecture and launch of Jana Vytrhlik's book *Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney*. Generously sponsored by the families of Rabbi Falk and the author, the occasion highlighted the importance of Jewish artefacts in the community's tradition and memory.

Amongst The Great Synagogue's past scholars, Rabbi Leib Aisack Falk (1889–1957), who served in Sydney between 1923 and 1957, occupies a special place. He was well known to the congregation as a talented designer and silversmith, erudite bibliophile and translator, military chaplain and spiritual leader, but his understanding of the significance of Jewish symbolism in preserving the Jewish faith and tradition was somewhat overlooked. This is timely to remember in a year when the community marks two historic milestones: the consecration of the York Street Synagogue in 1844; and the emergence of the architect Thomas Rowe's bold design vision for a new synagogue, The Great Synagogue, in 1874.

Jana Vytrhlik's research and publication drew inspiration from similar concepts, showing that important visual heritage of Jewish Sydney can be found not only in The Great Synagogue or the community archives and museum alone, but also in major Australian public galleries, museums and libraries. Over one hundred items are illustrated in *Treasures* including ceremonial silver ornaments and embroidered textiles, illuminated folia, and a group of outstanding Jewish portraits from the State Library of New South Wales, Powerhouse Museum, National

Gallery of Australia, and the rare books collection at the University of Sydney. Some unique photographs and documents were discovered in the archives of the City of Sydney.

Jana Vytrhlik's *Treasures'* journey through the collections of old Judaica objects, Jewish art and synagogue architecture follows in the tradition of The Great Synagogue's scholarly publications, that include authors such as Rabbis Israel Porush and Raymond Apple. Most recently, the research and historical scholarship of Rabbi Dr Elton enhanced the knowledge of the Anglo-Jewish roots of Australian synagogue architecture.

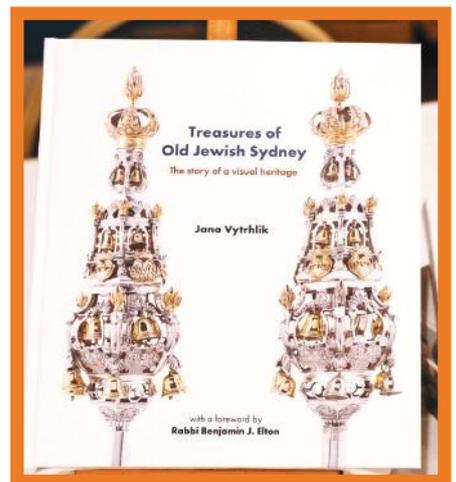
In Jana's words, "the book marks a milestone on a long journey from Prague of the 1970s, where Jews became the people erased from history, to finding the dynamic Jewish life on the other side of the world.

"There could be no better moment than launching the Treasures book in The Great, supported by the community."

The 2024 Falk Lecture and Book Launch event was attended not only by many members of The Great but also by numerous congregants from other Sydney synagogues and the community at large. It has proven that while we face the trauma of the present, solace and encouragement can be found in our renewed interest in the community's



Jana Vytrhlik



Treasures of Old Jewish Sydney Book

history. More than ever before, it is the role of our curators, historians and rabbis to draw on history and its importance within the current framework of Australian society. 🌸

Curating the A.M. ROSENBLUM JEWISH MUSEUM

JANA VYTRHLIK



Fig. 1 Some of The Great Synagogue Museum items dated to the 1940s and 1950s transferred to the Sydney Jewish Museum.



Fig. 2 Name of the silversmith David Aron of Königsberg in Prussia engraved on side panel.



Fig. 3 Sculptural silver testimonial with seated Moses holding stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. Donated by Falk Family in 2006. Portrait of Rabbi Leib Aisack Falk by Valerie Lazarus, c 1940, in the background.

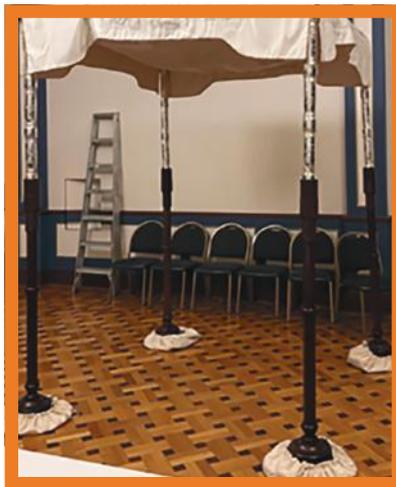


Fig. 4 Silver-plated brass chuppah poles were made by a local silversmith and used for a wedding in 1869.

While in 2024 the main curatorial focus was on reviewing the A.M. Rosenblum Jewish Museum collection, there were plenty of other interests, as **Vytrhlik** reports.

I worked closely with Toby Hammerman, The Great's Board member with oversight of the museum, on strategic directions to guide the museum over the next five years. To start with, the collection's relevance and preservation were reviewed and some twenty items were selected for transfer to the Sydney Jewish Museum. They date to the Holocaust era and include a series of concentration camp records, wartime identification documents and unique original photographs depicting the deportation of Jews by the Nazis in Poland.

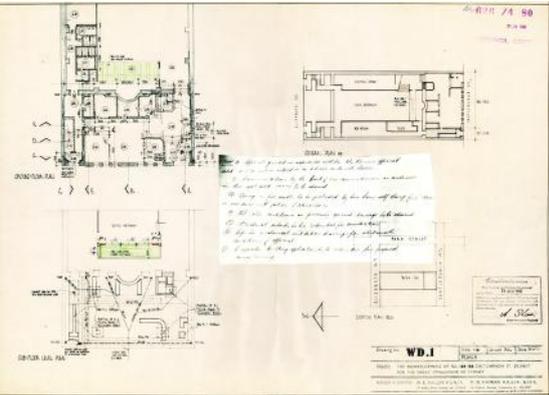
It is widely known that the large glass cabinet featuring the silver centrepiece with a seated Moses attracts attention every time a visitor enters the foyer. The piece is dated by its original donation in 1890 to Königsberg Rabbi Isaac Bamberger but until now, not much has been known about the silversmith. His name is engraved on a side panel as D ARON Königsberg i/Pr, and the German general artists' encyclopedia (Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon, 1992) identifies him as David Aron (1823-1896), a Jewish silversmith active in Königsberg in Prussia (today Kaliningrad in Russia). Known to be a Freemason, Aron settled in east Prussia in 1847. The synagogue centrepiece was crafted from ebonised wood and silver

and possibly designed by Hesse, with whom the silversmith collaborated on other pieces.

Other important items of synagogue silverware are the four historical chuppah poles. Handcrafted and decorated by a local silversmith, they were donated to the York Street Synagogue by John Isaac who celebrated the wedding of his two daughters Phoebe and Miriam in 1869, officiated by Rev A.B. Davis.

One hundred and fifty-five years later, to celebrate another happy occasion, permission was given to raise the chuppah on these silver poles for the wedding of David Newman and Shoshana Samuel in May this year. 🌸

Looking back on THE WORKS OF 1981

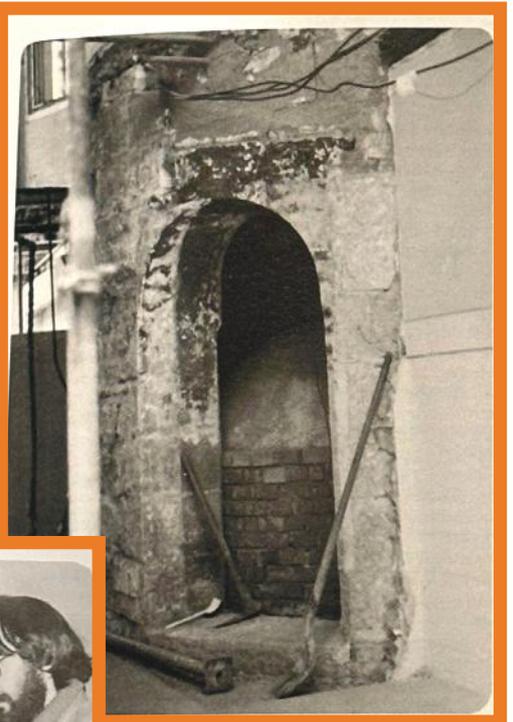


1981 plans

We are busy with works in the synagogue at the moment and will be for a while to come with air conditioning, disability access and perhaps painting, lighting and the roof to follow.

David Newman handed us a newspaper cartoon from 1981 reflecting on works that were taking place then to create the Education Centre, the part of the building between the sanctuary and Castlereagh Street, pretty much as we know it today.

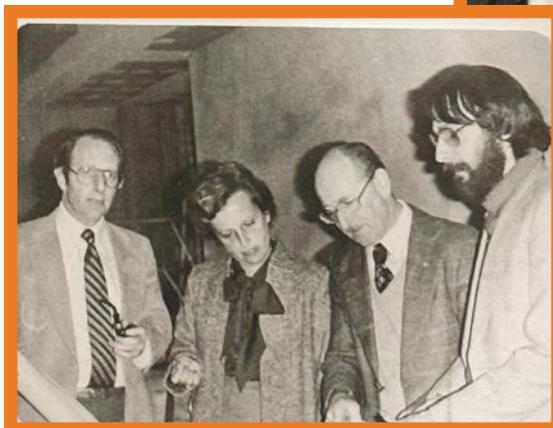
We share that cartoon and some pictures from those days, over forty years ago, with you here. 🌸



Revealing lost features



Affixing a mezuzah



Inspecting plans



"If we excavate further we could get access to the Eastern Suburbs Railway...
2 — The Australian Jewish Times, Thurs., March 12, 1981

Cartoon 1981



Classrooms under construction

Our Foundation GROWS

GARRY BROWNE AM



Goldstein family mantle presentation

The Great Synagogue Foundation has just passed its 3-year milestone of operation and continues to attract significant donations and support. These are essential to: advance the work of the Foundation; provide sustained funding for the synagogue now and in perpetuity; and to ensure The Great remains strong, secure and able to look after its members in the best way possible.

Donations are always recognised by the synagogue in an appropriate and lasting way. This year a presentation of a Torah mantle was made by the Foundation to the synagogue in honour of the contribution of Dorothy and Michael Goldstein and family. Presentations of gold-embroidered-and-trimmed velvet lectern covers were made in honour of Barbara and Max Freedman and family, Barbara and Ray Whitten AM and family and Alex and Ros Fischl OAM and family. Siddurim were presented to recognise the contribution of Diana and David Hartstein and family and Sue and Jake Selinger and family, who dedicated their siddurim in memory of their son David.

This year the Foundation has started to co-host major events in the synagogue, such as the seder on the second night of Pesach and the dinner in the shule succah. Members can see already how the Foundation is making a practical and positive contribution.

If you would like to make a donation or have a creative way to help the Foundation achieve its goals using the tax deductible facility through its DGR status, either Garry Browne, Chair of the Foundation, President David Lewis, Vice President Max Freedman or Rabbi Elton would be delighted to have a conversation with you to discuss your contribution and how it can best be recognised. 🌸



Fischl Family Presentation



Whitten Family Presentation



Freedman Family Presentation



Your Board AND WHAT THEY DO

Your Board is comprised of volunteers all working hard for the welfare of the congregation. Here is an outline of our Board members and their roles:

The Executive meets every two weeks in addition to monthly Board meetings, to discuss and plan policy for the Shule and manage the day-to-day operation of all aspects of the Synagogue in conjunction with Rabbi and the office.



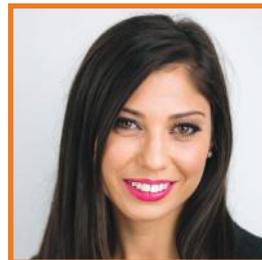
DAVID LEWIS

has now served as our President for four years. He has been working to bring in a substantial Heritage Floor Space grant from the City of Sydney and the safety and security of the Synagogue. His favourite job, however, is making presentations to boys and girls celebrating their benei mitzvah and couples getting married through the Shule.



MAX FREEDMAN

is our Senior Vice President and has served continuously on the Board since 2009, having also held the position of Treasurer. Max serves on the Investment Committee, The Great Synagogue Foundation and recently, together with Rabbi, has been the driving force behind the move of the Bimah back to the centre of the Shule.



LAUREN RYDER

is our Vice President, having joined the Board in March 2016 and has held this position since September 2020. Lauren has worked on all aspects of the Shule including marketing, presentations, website, Great Women and the Women's Auxiliary.



ELI GREEN

Eli Green is our Treasurer and joined the Board in May 2017. Eli acted as assistant Treasurer between 2019 and 2021 and then assumed the vital role of Treasurer from September 2022. Eli has overseen significant change in our operations, and he has been instrumental in the modernisation of our procedures.

THE BOARD

Over the last four years, each Board member of The Great has accepted a portfolio for which they are responsible. This means that they report to the Board each month on that area of responsibility.



Darryl Green prepares the minutes of all meetings and, till his recent retirement, has been responsible for liaison with the Council of the City of Sydney.



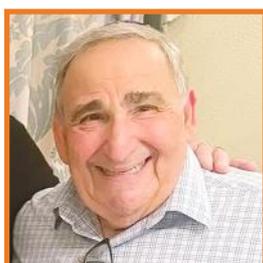
Benjamin Hansen is our resident HR expert, and he has assisted with all our internal employment policies and recruitment.



Jack Pinczewski is our government and political advisor.



Soraya Calavassy with her PR expertise, has been instrumental in revising our communications practices both internally and externally.



Toby Hammerman is one of our Jewish Board of Deputies representatives and has carriage of our historic collections and museum display plans.



Fay Frischer operates our community outreach and membership engagement, calling older members on a regular basis to wish them happy birthday and to check on their needs as well as running the Coffee Clubs.



Adam Pisk, our newest Board member, has assumed responsibility for several of our major capital works, including plans for air-conditioning, improved disability access, roof maintenance as well as the shule website revamp.

Officials OF THE GREAT

MINISTERS

Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton	Chief Minister and Senior Rabbi
Rabbi Menachem Feldman	Cantor and Assistant Rabbi
Rabbi Yakov Richter	Torah Reader and Children's Service
Joseph Gluck	Honorary Second Reader
Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM	Rabbinic Fellow

CHOIRMASTER

Joshua Winestock

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

David Lewis	President
Max Freedman	Senior Vice President
Lauren Ryder	Vice President
Eli Green	Treasurer
Soraya Calavassy	Observer
Fay Frischer	Board Member
Darryl Green	Board Member
Toby Hammerman	Board Member
Benjamin Hansen	Board Member
Jack Pinczewski	Board Member
Adam Pisk	Board Member
Norton Whitmont OAM	Life Member (leave of absence)

GOVERNORS

Rosalind Fischl OAM
Jake Selinger

OFFICE STAFF

Lynn Niselow	General Manager
Ilana Moddel	Administrator
Bassia Dinnen	EA to the Rabbi

AM ROSENBLUM JEWISH MUSEUM

Jana Vytrhlik Curator

GABBAI TEAM

Steve Schach	Senior Gabbai
Toby Hammerman	Gabbai
Richard Davey	Gabbai
David Dunn	Gabbai

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Sharon Schach Chair, Great Women
Yvonne Kinney President, Women's Auxiliary

USEFUL CONTACTS

Synagogue office 9267 2477
Denise Sher - Kiddushim 0408 411 510

THE GREAT VINE PRODUCTION

Caroline Lewis OAM Editor/Art Director
Linda Reitzin Proofreader
Cyrilla Almeida Designer
Zac Levi Front Cover Image



Shofar Les Sher

Come ye, gentle flock
O hear
The ancient call of the ram's horn
Fear

Sonorous
Its beauty dear
Righteousness upon the ear

See each child in wonder
Stare
Hear its call to heartfelt prayer

Be ye loving
Be ye fair
Feel His comfort
God is near



Rabbi Apple's Shofar

OUR ESSENCE



The Great Synagogue exists to create a beautiful community for all its members and their families.

The first congregation in Australia, The Great Synagogue Sydney is home to a vibrant and engaged community over eight hundred strong.



It is essential to our mission that we exist for and are open to all Jewish people, and inclusivity is at the heart of what we do.

Our vision is to continue to create and build a strong, inclusive and engaged community that is deeply connected to the traditions and values of Judaism, and that will meet the test of time.

INCLUSIVITY

Everyone should feel welcomed, know that they matter and know they are cared for without judgement.

DIVERSITY

We appreciate our diversity and value our differences which bring joy and strength.

TRADITION

We are committed to tradition and our history, we embrace a Judaism that can be lived and enjoyed. We recognise that everyone is at a different stage in their Jewish journey.

CULTURE

We embrace our rich culture and embody our values through our actions.

COMMUNITY

We are connected as one community, through our services, our values and relationships with each other.