



## A Tribute to Australian Jewry Part two



As we continue to honour Israel in her 60th birthday year, The Friends of Israel join her worldwide throng of supporters in wishing the Jewish nation and Jewish friends in Australia and beyond, a Happy Hanukkah as well!

In this edition, we advance our theme of paying tribute to Australian Jewry. We gladly acknowledge the significant gifts and sacrificial contributions the Australian Jewish communities have made as citizens and compatriots of this "Great South Land".

Although Jews have always been a minority of the population – less than one per cent – they have nonetheless played a significant role in the upbuilding of Australia. Their contribution to our national heritage has greatly enhanced the building of Australia in the arts, sciences, industry and commerce, the armed forces, religion and on the land. Marianne Dacy from the University of Sydney has correctly stated: "Jews participate in every facet of civic, economic and social life" and "many of Australia's prominent doctors, lawyers, musicians and mathematicians are Jewish".<sup>(1)</sup>

Jewish citizens of Australia have proven to be key leaders relative to our nation's economy. Many founded businesses and financial institutions that paved the way to developing a strong economy.<sup>(2)</sup> That economy remains relatively strong despite the financial crisis presently sweeping the globe.

It was (and is) not only in the area of finance that Australian Jewish citizens have taken such a prominent part. They, like their counterpart forebears had done in England<sup>(3)</sup>, have greatly impacted the political arena as well. They had a foundational role in helping to establish and sustain stable Federal and State governments.<sup>(4)</sup> It is appropriate therefore that we give honourable mention to our Australian Jewish friends for their significant contribution in making the diverse peoples of this vast continent into a strong democracy.

**We do well to observe the biblical reason why this is so. God told Moses in an unconditional covenant promise: "... in you (the Jewish people, and ultimately the "Seed" – the Messiah Redeemer –) shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; Gal.3:16).**

Two stellar examples from our Australian political annals clearly illustrate the point. These two Jewish gentlemen and their legacies make us

all proud – whether we are physical descendants of Abraham or not. The former Governors General, Sir Isaac Isaacs<sup>(5)</sup> and his later biographer, Sir Zelman Cowan<sup>(6)</sup> shine like beacons in our political and social history. They are rightly included in that honourable group of citizens who faithfully led and served to "Advance Australia Fair".<sup>(7)</sup>



### **Sir Isaac Isaacs**

Isaac Alfred Isaacs (1855-1948) was our nation's first Jewish Governor General.

Isaacs was the eldest of six children who were born to the tailor Alfred Isaacs and his wife Rebecca (nee Abrahams). His mother had a powerful mind, wide-ranging intellectual interests and the capacity to understand and discuss complex matters. She was an ambitious and dominating woman who exercised strong influence over her son Isaac even during his married life.

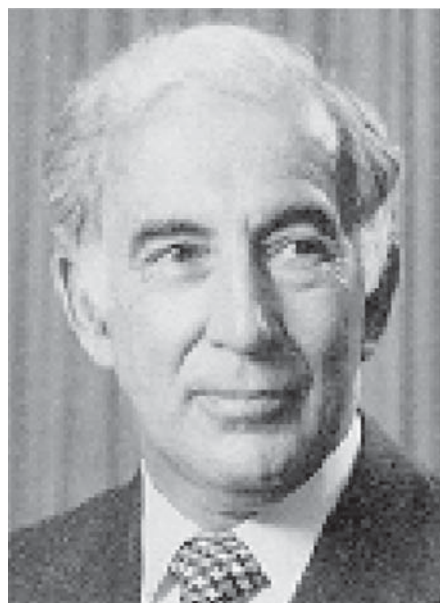
After a short teaching career, Isaacs secured an appointment as a clerk in the Crown Law Department in Melbourne. There he gained extensive experience in practical legal matters, and soon began studying law at the University of Melbourne in 1876. He graduated in Law with First Class Honours in 1880.

In 1888, Isaacs married 18 year old Deborah (Daisy) Jacobs. The Isaacs were blessed with two daughters - one born in 1890, the other in 1892.

Throughout his life, Isaac Isaacs was a student of languages. He learned Russian, French, German, Italian and Greek as well as a smattering of Chinese. He read widely in the realms of religion, science and literature and wrote on biblical and religious subjects. Although he didn't observe religious practices, he was acutely aware of his Jewish identity and heritage.

Isaacs was elected to parliament in 1892. He served as the Attorney General of the Liberal party for five years (1894 to 1899). In 1901, he became Acting Premier of Victoria. He was appointed to the High Court of Australia in 1906 and became

a member of the Privy Council in November 1921. He was appointed as Governor General and took the oaths of office on 22nd January 1931. He was both the first Jew and the first native-born Australian to be appointed as Governor General. He died in his sleep on 11th February 1948. The Federal seat of Isaacs preserves his memory and his considerable contribution to Australia's political, social and community life.



### **Sir Zelman Cowan**

Zelman Cowen was born in Melbourne in 1919 and was educated at the University of Melbourne. He served in the Royal Australian Navy during World War II. From 1947 to 1950 he was a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, in England and was also a consultant on legal matters to the British Military Government in Germany.

In 1951, Zelman Cowen returned to Australia and became Dean of the Law Faculty at the University of Melbourne. He held this post until his appointment as Vice Chancellor of the University of New England in Armidale, New South Wales, in 1966. From that time, he was frequently a Visiting Professor at American universities. He also advised the British Colonial Office on

constitutional matters and gave legal advice to the governments of Ghana and Hong Kong. Among his many other works, he published a biography of Sir Isaac Isaacs.

In 1970, Zelman Cowan was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland in Brisbane. By this time his intellectual skills, prestige and personal prowess were universally acknowledged throughout academia. In particular, he was regarded as one of the leading constitutional lawyers in the English-speaking world. His diplomatic skills became clearly evident during his tenure at the University of Queensland. Cowan handled the violent protests against the Vietnam War with consummate interpersonal skills and consultative arbitration with all parties involved.

When Sir John Kerr resigned his post as Governor General in 1977, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (whose grandfather was Jewish)<sup>(6)</sup> offered Cowen the post. Zelman Cowen





was a perfect choice because of his distinguished Australian and international reputation and flawless professional qualifications. The fact that he was Jewish gave his appointment a multicultural aspect in keeping with contemporary Australian sentiment. He served for five years as Governor General and restored the dignity and respect of the office after the tumultuous “Kerr years”.

## **Jewish Believers in Australia**

We would be remiss in not paying tribute to the small but significant group of Australian Jews who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah.<sup>(9)</sup> We personally know Jewish believers throughout Australia. It is our personal joy to visit with them in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth as well as the provincial centres. Helpful literature is provided to assist these believers in their spiritual growth as we pray with them and seek to encourage them each time we visit in their area.



Among these Jewish believers are Holocaust survivors who have come to faith in Jesus their Messiah. Often their families disowned and even held funerals for them because of their belief in Jesus. Truly, these sons of Abraham are a “remnant according to the election of grace”, as the apostle Paul puts it in Romans 11:5.

## **Jacob Josephson**

Jacob Josephson (1778-1845) became a Messianic believer around 1808 through the ministry of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among Jews. Jacob was brought to the Lord by another Jewish believer, Joseph Samuel Frey (formerly Levi). Within months, Jacob was working amongst the underprivileged Jews in London’s East End, but only three Jewish people made the decision to put faith in Jesus the Messiah.

As a result of insufficient finances, Jacob and his wife Emma fell on hard times. In 1817, they paid their rent with a forged pound note. When the authorities investigated their lodgings, they found twenty more false notes plus a suspicious collection of glass, lace, ribbons and silver – including the communion plate from the Stanstead Park parish church. Jacob’s downfall was noted with glee by those who opposed his ministry among Jewish people. Jacob was tried and sentenced to transportation to the Australian colony for fourteen years. It is noteworthy that he was freed within a year. It is believed by some that Jacob gave evidence of a changed life while in prison. Others consider it was because of Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s humanitarian tendencies to show leniency to prisoners. Whatever the actual reason may have been, the fact remains that Jacob was freed to join Sydney’s bustling young community.

After his release, Jacob opened a jewellery shop at 3 Pitt Street in Sydney.

For some years he fared extremely well, but following a robbery at his store in 1824, his fortunes took a downturn and he was incarcerated for failing to pay his debts. After his release, he opened an inn at Emu Ford where he prospered. While operating the inn, Jacob once again took his faith seriously. When two English Quakers sought lodgings, Josephson informed the missionaries that as preachers of the Gospel, they could stay “free of all charges”.<sup>(10)</sup>

Jacob gave generously to the building of a memorial to Governor Macquarie, Scots Church, Bible Society of New South Wales, the Benevolent Society, the Public Free Grammar School and even the Roman Catholic chapel. Significantly, as one of the trustees of the new Wesley chapel, in 1821 Josephson earnestly requested financial aid from the government “that the common cause of our Lord Jesus Christ may increasingly prosper.”<sup>(11)</sup>

Shortly before he died in 1845, Jacob gave the generous sum of ten pounds five shillings to the York Street synagogue’s building fund. This benevolence may be reflected in Rabbi Raymond Apple’s recent affirmation that “Christians contributed to erecting the York Street Synagogue”.<sup>(12)</sup>

Although Jacob Josephson did not always exhibit a consistent testimony or victory over temptation, nevertheless his overall life-story showed that he was a believer in Jesus the Messiah and did much in the way of giving and witnessing to expand the cause of the gospel.

## Happy Hanukkah!

This 22nd December, we will remember God's miraculous provision during one of the darkest times in the history of the Jewish people and be assured that He continues to have a plan and a purpose for them, just as he had when Judas Maccabeus and his loyal followers were victorious over Antiochus Epiphanes and the faithless, Hellenizing Jews. God did a miracle and multiplied the holy oil for the nation's menorah after the Temple was rededicated in B.C. 165.

Just as Jewish families around the world, including here in Australia, will place a Hanukkah menorah (hanukkiyah) in a window so it can share its light with others, we are called to spread the light of Christ. Luke stated it well when he wrote, "For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (Lk. 2:32). Just as the Jewish people will exchange gifts with their loved ones in memory of that first Hanukkah, we delight to share the Good News of the greatest gift ever given, with Jew and Gentile alike.

It is our prayer that both Jews and Gentiles will acknowledge the gift of Jesus the Messiah in this day of grace.

We wish everyone a 'Happy Christmas' and a special 'Happy Hanukkah' greeting to our Jewish friends.

## Deane and Margaret Woods



## Endnotes

- (1) Cited from *Brief History of Australian Jewry*, 17th September 2007, p 2 <http://judaica.library.usyd.edu.au/histories/History>.
- (2) Consider the Montefiore dynasty in the early years of colonisation, or in more recent decades, business entrepreneurs such as alleged billionaire Frank Lowy (Westfield shopping malls, Australian Football Federation), Joseph Gutnik (mining), Solomon Lew (retail), alleged billionaire Richard Pratt (manufacturing) and Graham Samuels (manufacturing).
- (3) For example, one has only to recall those Jews who assisted and loyally served Queen Victoria – Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) and statesman Marcus Samuel (1853-1927) who founded the Shell Oil Company in 1892. See Louise Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-97.
- (4) See *The Australian Shofar*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, pp. 1-4. For a complete list of Australian Jewish politicians, refer to Hilary Rubinstein's roster of Jewish parliamentarians in Australia from 1849 to the present and Levy's and Mendes' compendium in *Jews and Australian Politics*, pp 245-253. Geoffrey Brahm Levy and Philip Mendes, Editors, *Jews and Australian Politics*, Sussex Academic Press, 2004. Rubenstein's impressive list totals 90.
- (5) The bio-data details that follow have been based on public domain website material. See [http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_Isaac\\_Alfred\\_Isaacs](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Isaac_Alfred_Isaacs). This source material is hereby acknowledged.
- (6) The bio-data details that follow have been based on public domain website material. See [http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_Zelman\\_Cowan](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Zelman_Cowan). Material cited from this source in this present article is hereby acknowledged.
- (7) *Advance Australia Fair* is the title of the Australian national anthem. It was originally composed by Peter Dodds McCormick (1834?-1916) under the pen-name 'Amicus' (Latin: "friend"), in the late 19th century, and first performed by Andrew Fairfax at a Highland Society function in Sydney on 30th November 1878. The song quickly gained popularity as a patriotic song and an amended version was sung by a choir of 10,000 at the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901. It replaced the former "Royal" national anthem (*God Save The Queen*) after a national plebiscite and was adopted as the national anthem by the Bob Hawke Labor government on 19th April 1984.
- (8) Malcolm Fraser, Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Party between 1975 and 1983, was born in Toorak, Victoria in 1930. He had a Jewish maternal grandfather, of whose ethnicity Fraser claims never to have been mindful. See *Australian Biography*, Part 10, 14th April, 1994. Fraser's mother was Una Woolf, an Anglican (and later a Presbyterian) by choice. Her father, Louis Arnold Woolf, was Jewish. On the Jewish law of matrilineal descent, neither Una Woolf nor her son were Jews. Fraser, on a broadly ethnic (rather than a religious) basis could be included in our list to whom tribute may be paid. As former Liberal Senator Peter Baume – himself a Jew – observes: "(Fraser) was and is, of course, whatever his formal religious affiliations, very sympathetic to Israel and Jewish causes. It also should not go unremarked that he appointed Sir Zelman Cowan as Governor General (1978-82), the second Jew to hold this high office." Cited in Levy and Mendes, *Jews and Australian Politics*, p. 88.
- (9) Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 1993, p.100 cites these as 0.5 % of our population at that time. These believers either attended local churches, Christian fellowships or assemblies – as we at The Friends Of Israel espouse as part of our philosophy of ministry – or in separate messianic congregations.
- (10) James Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies*, London, 1843, p. 337.
- (11) Refer to Levi & Burgman, *op. cit.*, p 189, footnote 14.
- (12) Rabbi Raymond Apple, *The Jewish Way: Jews and Judaism in Australia*, pp. 15-16.

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