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1. Program for Year 2000

After a good deal of work the executive has finalised the program for this year. It is quite a challenge to come up with a different series of events each year and not lose the momentum we have built up over the five years that the Council has been in existence.

At its last meeting, on 16 March, the following series of events was drawn up. Of course the Dead Sea Scrolls seminars have already been held (see the report in this newsletter), and there is still some fine tuning to be done, but it is suggested that members enter the following dates into their diaries:

- ◆ **Seminars on The Dead Sea Scrolls** with Revd Dr Bill Loader, Professor of New Testament at Murdoch University and New Testament Lecturer of the Perth Theological Hall of the Uniting Church in Australia. The seminars were held from 29 March to 12 April at the Worship Centre, Murdoch University. 29 March - The origin of the scrolls; 05 April - The vision of the scrolls and their original community; 12 April - The significance of the scrolls for Jews and Christians.
- ◆ **Film Preview Evening - 7.30 pm, 27 July. PLEASE NOTE THE REVISED DATE!** A members and guests preview of *The Last Days*, Steven Spielberg's Oscar winning film tracing the compelling experiences of five Hungarian Holocaust survivors who fell victim to Hitler's brutal war against the Jews during the final days of World War II. **Upstairs in the Jewish Centre, 61 Woodrow Ave, Yokine. Limited places. RSVP BY 7 July to Graham Nielsen by Mail to 5 Ryland Road, Kelmscott 6111; Phone 9390 7447; Fax 9442 1690 or E-mail nielseng@iinet.net.au**
- ◆ **Workshops on The Two Bibles - 21 September.** The first of three segments will explain something about the two Bibles used by Christians and Jews. The second segment will explore how they are used in public worship, while the third segment will be on the topic, "What the Bible means to me."
- ◆ **Annual General Meeting - Sunday 19th November, on a theme of Food & Festivals.** Once more it will be held at the Redemptorist Monastery Retreat Centre, cnr. Camellia & Vincent Streets in North Perth.

2. Successful Seminars on the Dead Sea Scrolls

The three seminars held on 29 March, 5 April and 12 April and ably led by Professor Bill Loader from Murdoch University attracted an average audience of around 40 people. Bill took the participants on a fascinating journey through a community that existed in Palestine some two millennia ago and readily responded to a series of questions at each seminar.

In the first seminar he spoke of the origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls and introduced the audience to some translations of the documents. Professor Loader explained that some 800 documents have been identified. He said that practically all of the Hebrew scriptures are represented as well as others that had not been seen before.

The second seminar allowed the audience to have a longer look at some of the major documents. Among them were *The Damascus Document*, a Peshet (commentary) on the Book of Habbakuk, the *Testament of Levi*, and portions of the *Community Rule*.

Finally Bill took the participants on a guided tour of the Qumran ruins with the aid of a selection of slide transparencies. He then summed up by saying that the scrolls have created an awareness of the considerable diversity of Jewish communities around the period of 2 BCE to 1 CE. Taken together, according to Professor Loader, all these writings have helped to show that over the centuries a series of caricatures, or a kind of ideological anti-semitism, has been created by Christians. The Dead Sea Scrolls have helped to break down these old caricatures.

If you want to find out more about Bill Loader's work or if you missed the seminar series, here is his web site address: <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/home.html>

3. Overseas News

Pope's visit to Israel "extremely successful"

March 27, 2000 – According to YEDIOT AHARONOT, Vatican City Prime Minister Angelo Sudano said, "the pope's visit to the Holy Land was extremely successful and will be recorded in history books. We discovered that the leaders of the State of Israel are very open for dialogue and cooperation, and a new era has opened in the relationship between the two countries." Because of its recent emphasis on Jewish-Christian dialogue, the Government has decided to establish a forum headed by Cabinet Secretary Yitzhak Herzog to consolidate the two religions' various partnerships in Israel.

In Oberammergau the Jews are still the bad guys

May 9, 2000 – JCR. The passion play of Oberammergau, Bavaria, will again be performed this year beginning May 21. It will run for 4 1/2 months and will probably see half a million attendants. The performance takes about 6 hours and is the largest passion play in the world. It originated in 1630 when the people of the small town offered it to God during the European plague and promised to repeat the performance every ten years. About 2000 townspeople participate in the play and only those who were born in Oberammergau or have lived there for at least 20 years are allowed to act. Hitler once praised the play as "a precious tool" against the Jews. No wonder, because Jews were not only blamed for the death of Jesus, but also portrayed in special garments and with horns – as if Jesus and his disciples were not Jews as well. Since the mid 1980's the play has been revised a few times and a major overhaul has just taken place against the opposition of some town people. However, since the play follows the gospel texts from Palm Sunday to Easter, it is still very anti-Jewish. It does not take into consideration that the gospels are not historical records but rather represent theological positions which a nascent church took more than half a century after the death and resurrection of Jesus, when it started to separate from the Jewish community. Rabbi James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee, who among others was a consultant to the people revising the play, said: "In a passion play, some have to be the good guys and some the bad guys. And the bad guys are always the Jews."

4. Geshet Journal Web Site

Have you visited the Geshet homepage yet? Geshet (Bridge) is the official journal of the Council of Christians and Jews (Vic.) Inc.. The page contains links to a wide selection of articles that have previously appeared in the journal. You will find their site well worth visiting.

Geshet is to be found at: <http://www.jcrelations.com/australia/geshet/index.htm>

5. Newsletter Submissions, Feedback, and Subscriptions

The CCJWA Newsletter is produced by the executive committee and is distributed quarterly by 'snail mail', e-mail and fax. It is principally distributed to CCJWA members but copies are also made available to congregations of the five faith communities directly supporting our work.

We welcome submissions, feedback and subscription requests. Please contact:

The Editor
CCJWA Newsletter
5 Ryland Road
KELMSCOTT WA 6111
E-mail: nielseng@iinet.net.au
Fax: +61 8 9442 1690 (Please mark "Attention: Graham Nielsen")