

**Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants Inc.
invites you to**

FROM SKINHEAD TO COVERED HEAD



**Meet and hear
the amazing
story of
PAWEŁ
BRAMSON**

Once an anti-Semitic skinhead who discovered his Jewish roots and who now, more than twelve years later, leads the life of an observant Hassidic Jew.

We will also screen "THE MOON IS JEWISH", a fascinating documentary about Paweł's life transition, which was shown last year on Polish television.

Sunday 9th June 2013

2.30pm, Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium.

Enter via Glen Eira Road entrance.

Afternoon tea will follow.

Members: \$20 Non-Members: \$25

Enquiries and bookings, please email:

lfiszman@bigpond.net.au

Booking Essential: www.trybooking.com/CWOO or www.trybooking.com/50402

FOCUS ON Jan Hartman

By Sophie Maj



Prof. Jan Hartman, Ph.D. was born 18th March, 1967 in Wroclaw, Poland.

His father was Stanislaw Hartman, a mathematician and a descendant of a much respected rabbi, Isaac Kramsztyk.

Jan Hartman's academic studies include philosophical studies at The Catholic University in Lublin, graduating in 1990, followed by doctoral studies in 1990–1994 at The Institute of Philosophy, Jagellonian University in Cracow, one of the most prestigious academic institutions in Poland.

Jan held several professorial positions at various Polish universities.

In 2003 he was elected as a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences Philosophical Committee and in the same year was chosen as President of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Nursing, Jagellonian University.

Jan is the author of several books and over 200 articles in many very well regarded newspapers and magazines.

In addition to his academic work he is a contributor to learned magazines and is one of the principal founders of the B'nai B'rith Poland.

In 2009 Jan was granted a "Grand Press" prize in the "Publicist" category.

Politically Jan is left of centre and was an (unsuccessful) candidate in Polish elections a few years ago.

Jan is fluent in English and speaks

German, French and Russian.

Jan's "Jewish Philosophy" in my opinion can be expressed in a few lines:

As a Polish Jew, I demand that it be remembered that the Holocaust of the Jews was also a Polish tragedy, as hundreds of thousands of its victims felt themselves to be, and were, Polish, just like me and my murdered ancestors. Ignoring this fact goes hand-in-hand with the bad opinion that many Jews have about Poland and Poles.

I am full of rancour against my compatriot Jews for the fact that they believed so easily that Poland is an especially anti-Semitic country and that so many of them spread such unfair opinions about Poles. I hope it will change in time. Maybe it is already changing.

Jan Hartman is currently Full Professor of Humane Sciences (since 2008), Head of the Department of Philosophy and Bioethics, Jagiellonian University Medical College (since 2003)

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Telephone: +61 (0)3 9523 9573

Facsimile: +61 (0)3 9528 2082

Website: www.polishjews.org.au

Email: lfiszman@bigpond.net.au

Mailing Address:

PO Box 56, Elsternwick, Vic., 3185

Six Poles named 'Righteous among the Nations' by Israel

<http://thenews.pl/>

05.12.2012



Prof. Bartoszewski (left) and Israeli Ambassador to Poland Zvi Rav-Ner at medal ceremony in Warsaw: photo - PAP/Radek Pietruszka

Israeli ambassador to Poland posthumously honoured six Poles who helped Jews during WW II Nazi-occupied Poland, Tuesday.

The awards have been given by the Yad Vashem institute in Jerusalem since 1963 to "righteous gentiles" who helped save the lives of Jews.

Over 6,000 Poles have been awarded the Righteous among the Nations honour out of a total of 24,000 medals.

The ceremony on Tuesday at the Prime Minister's Office in Warsaw was attended by Ambassador Zvi Rav-Ner and former Polish foreign minister and inmate of the German Nazi Auschwitz death camp, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski.

Poles posthumously awarded included Princess Woroniecka-Czartoryski, Stanislaw Olewnik, Helena and Leon Godlewski, Maria and Micha Golba and Leokadia and Antoni Jastrzab.

The award ceremony coincided with the 70th anniversary of Zegota, an underground organisation formed in Warsaw during WW II aimed at helping Jews.

Zegota was established on 4 December 1942 as part of the Polish resistance against Nazi occupation.

The council supplied hidden Jews with funds, found them apartments and hiding places, and supplied them with false documents.

To find out more about the Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants please visit www.polishjews.org.au

From Skinhead to Covered Head

Courtesy of chabad.org



Paweł Bramson was raised in an observant Catholic family. As a teenager, he joined a skinhead gang. He was virulently anti-Jewish, anti-black and anti-Gypsy.

At age eighteen, Paweł married his Catholic high school girlfriend, a fellow skinhead, and they had two children. Four years later Paweł's wife decided to investigate some nagging questions that she had about her family's background. She eventually found her maternal grandparents listed on a register of Warsaw Jews, along with Paweł's maternal grandparents.

The news shook Paweł. The Jews that he had always reviled were actually his own people!

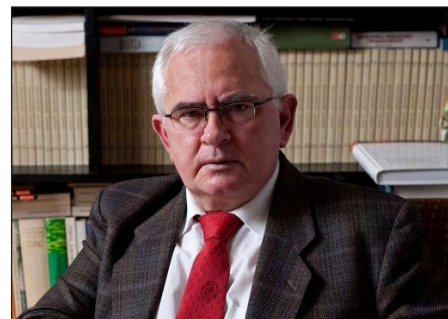
Paweł's wife decided to begin serving Shabbat meals and introduced other mitzvot into their home. Paweł confronted his parents and although they acknowledged the truth, they reacted with unease. They even pressured Paweł to urge his wife stop serving Shabbat meals, and to sweep her Judaism back under the rug. They had hidden their Judaism from their own children out of fear of anti-Semitism, and the religious life that Paweł's wife was beginning to explore represented what to them was profound danger.

It took Paweł a long time to accept the reality of his identity. He struggled with it, unsure of whether he wanted to embrace Judaism or not. But eventually he and his wife decided to live as Orthodox Jews. Paweł now goes by the name Pinchas and is studying to become a shochet, a ritual slaughterer.

Paweł has three brothers, one who is his twin. The twin still believed in many of the anti-Semitic myths that Paweł had rejected. And yet he has been influenced by Paweł's religious growth in some small ways.

Meet and hear Paweł's amazing story. Sunday 9 June 2013, 2.30pm, Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium

ASPJ condemns academic who claims Jews were responsible for the Holocaust.



Prof. Krzysztof Jasiewicz

The ASPJ has written a letter to His Excellency, Mr Paweł Milewski, Poland's Ambassador to Australia, raising concerns about Professor Krzysztof Jasiewicz's interview article, "Are the Jews Themselves Guilty?" in the special edition of the Polish magazine *Focus*, marking the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Professor Jasiewicz, who is a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a well known expert on Polish-Jewish relations, said Jews brought the Holocaust on themselves and that it was they, not Poles, who killed Jews under the Nazi occupation.

"The nonsense about Jews being killed mostly by Poles was created to hide the biggest Jewish secret. The scale of the German crime was only possible because the Jews themselves participated in the murder of their own people," Jasiewicz said.

He also blames Jews for damaging their relations with Poland by being over-critical and believing they are the chosen people.

"I am convinced that there is no point in a dialogue with the Jews, because it leads nowhere," said Jasiewicz.

The ASPJ letter expresses hope that Professor Jasiewicz's views are being strongly challenged by the Polish government, media and institutions of strong standing.

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre has called on the Academy to strip the Professor of his life membership and the Jewish Community of Warsaw has expressed not only indignation at his words but also deep concerns about the decision of the editor-in-chief to allow the article's publication.

Focus Chief Editor, Michael Wojcik, has explained that his decision to publish the article was "to show that anti-Semitism among scientists does not just belong to the past, but still exists today", and he has apologized for any unintended offence.

Polish novelist turns spotlight on nation's shame

By Krysia Kynst

Acclaimed Polish writer Zygmunt Miłoszewski has stirred controversy over his representation of Polish-Jewish relations in his latest crime novel, *A Grain of Truth*. The story revisits notorious blood libel myths and anti-Semitic paranoia.

Some have accused him of 'reproducing harmful anti-Polish stereotypes'. Others praise him for delving deeply into 'the way modern Poland deals with its historical memory of anti-Semitism during and immediately after World War II'.

A Grain of Truth is the second in a trilogy featuring an urbane maverick detective, exiled to provincial locations, whose investigations peel back layers of secrets and shame. This time he is in the picturesque town of Sandomierz, known for its church frescos depicting Jews murdering Christian children for their blood. Two grizzly murders reignite the town's fear of blood libel. In pursuit of the



truth, Miłoszewski's detective encounters anti-Jewish rants and must deal with his own discomforts.

As a trained journalist, Miłoszewski is no stranger to controversy and uses his crime fiction to embed sharp criticisms of Polish society. He told *The Times of Israel* he relishes the opportunity to shatter national myths and revive history's ghosts through fiction.

"In my view, the job of artists and writers is to show a nation its own ugly face, not to crawl up its backside".

"I have always thought that if you want to be the scion of your nation, you can only be proud of its moments of glory when you own up to its inglorious moments of vile behavior."

The book has been nominated for Poland's top literary award.

References: [Times of Israel](#), [NPR Bookshop](#)

News From Poland

Polish Catholic Church Celebrates 16th Judaism Day

“I am Joseph, your brother ...” (Genesis 45:4) was the theme for this year’s Judaism Day celebrations within the Polish Catholic Church. The key event was held in Opole on January 17th and was attended by leaders of the Catholic Church in Poland and of the Polish Jewish community, including Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland.

Judaism Day is intended to help Catholics discover the Jewish roots of Christianity and to spread the teachings of the late Pope John Paul II when he stated that Judaism is an integral part of Christianity and that “our attitude towards it is different than to any other religion”.

Co-ordinator of this year’s Judaism Day, Fr. Prof. Siegfried Glaeser said, “Our central theme will help us to understand our bonds of brotherhood, family ties and what we have in common culturally and religiously. We want to bring Judaism and Jewish culture closer to Christians and to the general public, regardless of religious beliefs or social standing”.

In a special study, conducted by the Episcopate for this year’s Day of Judaism, it was noted that on the day Christians need to recognise what they have in common with Jews – a belief in one G-d, the Bible as the word of G-d, fidelity to religious tradition, the



Ten Commandments as the foundation of moral rights and the call to daily prayer.

Judaism Day was established in 1997 by the Catholic Church’s Polish Episcopate with the aim of developing Christian-Jewish dialogue, plus prayer and reflection on relations between the two religions.

Warsaw’s Jewish Museum Opens to The Public



While the official opening of Warsaw’s Museum of the History of Polish Jews is not scheduled until early 2014, the building itself is now open to the public following a ceremony during which the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, affixed a specially designed *mezuzah* to the Museum’s main entrance.

The *mezuzah* was created by architect Andrzej Buland and his son, who won a competition for its design conducted by the Museum.

While the Museum’s exhibitions will not go on show until after the official opening, its cultural and educational programs went into operation on April 19th. These include concerts, lectures, films, guided walks plus workshops for children and adults. Many events will be linked to the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

If you’re visiting Warsaw in the near future, you can check out the Museum’s calendar of activities (in English) by going to <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en/cms/program>

Poland Ratifies “European Day of The Righteous”

The Polish government has ratified a decision by the European Parliament declaring March 6th, each year, as the European Day of the Righteous.

The day is intended to honour not only the Holocaust’s Righteous Among the Nations, but all those who, through their own moral responsibility, have resisted crimes against humanity and totalitarianism.

Former Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, will head Poland’s Committee of Ceremonies charged with organising events to commemorate the Day each year. The Committee also comprises prominent Polish artists and scholars.



The concept of a European Day of the Righteous is the brainchild of the Gariwo Worldwide Righteous Gardens, an Italian organization, which calls for the creation of Righteous Gardens all over the world similar to the one at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. One of the Polish Committee’s main aims will be to establish such a Garden within Poland.

MEMBERSHIP

Even though the name of our Society is indicative of our general identity, our membership policy is intended to be as inclusive as possible.

Naturally, we encourage all Jews whose roots lie in Poland to become a Member and join in our activities.

However, even if you are not Jewish but are interested in Polish-Jewish relations, history and/or dialogue, we also encourage you to join us and invite you to apply for Associate Membership.

Even though Membership is open to Jews aged sixteen years and over, we also encourage young members under the age of sixteen who are interested in their heritage and history, to become an Associate Member.