

## **Rabbi Freilich's Opening Address**

I read an article recently in the 11th April edition of the Sydney Morning Herald entitled "What is Religion's Role on Anzac Day?" I pondered this question myself and thought – if we see Anzac Day as a day in which we are celebrating a victory in battle then religion has no role in this day at all - as religion and war are oxymorons!

Although Anzac Day is commemorating events in the First World War, known as the Great War and some even refer to war as holy - I must comment from a spiritual point of view that war is neither great nor holy! Religion should be dedicated to encouraging all of human-kind to dwell together in peace and harmony, without conflict or bloodshed, no matter what differences we may have in how we worship or relate to G-d, or how we don't relate to G-d! Therefore what are we commemorating in this religious setting today? We are thanking and remembering those who gave their lives so that we can have a life! Yes, we are showing our gratitude to G-d for the wonderful lifestyle we are able to live here in Australia, but even more than this, we are expressing our thanks and we are giving profound honour to those, who by their bravery and heroism, showed their G-dliness in ensuring that the G-dly gifts of freedom, respect for each other no matter what our differences, sanctity of human life, and the importance of every human being created as we are in the image of G-d, prevailed against tyranny, the debasement of the value of life, bigotry and the enslavement of the human spirit. They fought so that the light of G-dliness would prevail over darkness. However unavoidable war and conflict has been, whatever the gains that have come from it, G-d could not be expected to like it.

May we pray that the whole of humanity will be blessed with peace and harmony, without the needless loss of life for any of G-ds children in this world that he has entrusted to us.