



# Kehila Kedosha Janina

## Synagogue and Museum

### May 2021 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This month the Jewish Holiday of Shavuot will be celebrated. Unfortunately, often overlooked by many, in many ways it is one of the most important of the Jewish Holidays. As our former spiritual leader, Hy Genee of Blessed Memory, would often say, "How can we forget when G-d gave us the Torah?"

Among our Greek Orthodox friends, this year their Easter falls in May, a fairly unusual occurrence but one that will provide warmer weather and the fragrance of new flowers for the festivities.



Special Sephardic Bread for Shavuot  
Pan de Los Siete Sielos

Shavuot is the only major festival mentioned in the Torah that is not given a particular date on the Jewish calendar. Instead, the date of the festival is given in relation to Pessah. Instead of giving us an exact date, we are commanded to count a week of weeks, 49 days, in anticipation of the date the Torah was given.

At Pessah, G-d restores our freedom.

At Shavuot, G-d restores our responsibility.

On Shavuot, we read the Biblical book of Ruth. Ruth was a non-Jewish woman whose love for G-d and Torah led her to convert to Judaism. The Torah intimates that the souls of eventual converts were also present at Sinai, as it says: "I am making [the covenant] both with those here today before the Lord our G-d, and also with those not here today" (Deut. 29:13). King David is a descendant of Ruth.

On Shavuot, it is customary to decorate the synagogue with branches and/or flowers. This is because Mount Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day the Torah was given. The Bible also associates Shavuot with the harvest of barley and fruits and marks the bringing of the first fruits to the Holy Temple as an expression of thanksgiving (see Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Numbers 28:26).

Some General Sephardic Customs:

Sephardic food customs for Shavuot vary: there are those who eat meat (Moroccan). Sephardic Jews from Greece and Turkey eat dairy. See recipes for Shavuot later in this newsletter.

The book of Ruth is read in the synagogue, but not at morning services as is the tradition of Ashkenazim.

Because Shavuot is a commemoration of the offering of the "first fruits," it is customary to include fresh fruit in Shavuot menus. Many also include dishes with honey because learning Torah is equated with the sweetness of honey and Shavuot is the holiday of the Torah.

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This E-Newsletter is sponsored by the children of Louie Levy, both with his first wife, Shirlee Cabelis Paganetti – Rhonda, and his second wife, Judy – Andrea Levy Orlando, Susan Levy Reisman and Donna Levy. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org).

This newsletter, our 146<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website [www.kkjism.org](http://www.kkjism.org).

We now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of 'friends' continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org)

We have resumed Shabbat morning services in person on a monthly basis for now. Please email [amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:amarcus@kkjism.org) if you would like to attend Shabbat services in person. We will share updates as we resume more frequent services.

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### Simchas

Here he is, the newest member of our family, Ethan Ari Sullivan! Born April 8, 6 lbs. 8 oz. Mama and baby are doing fine. Eventually mom will get enough sleep and get her energy back. Noah, at 5 is a proud big brother who loves to check on the baby, make sure he is all right. Very sweet! Please send us more info so we can identify the parents and grandparents.



Congratulations to our dear friend from Kastoria, Anthony Papadamianos, on the recent birth of a granddaughter.

Congratulations to Holly Kaye on the birth of her first grandchild, Sam.



## Passings

April was a cruel month, as many of our beloved members from the Greek-Romaniote and Sephardic world passed away.

On the evening of April 27<sup>th</sup>, our beloved Hy Matza left us at the age of 97. We all have such fond memories of Hy. For us 97 years was too soon. Hy was born April 21, 1924. He was the oldest son of Ezra Matza and Mollie Samuel Matza, both born in Ioannina. He was predeceased by his wife (Sarah) and his youngest son, Eric. Hy is survived by this oldest son, Robert (Dorothy), their two sons, Jason and Scott, and his daughter-in-law, Robin and her daughter, Arielle. Hy was the grandson of Haim Matza and Steroula Matza who arrived in New York from Ioannina in 1914. In 1920, Haim, his wife and his three children (Max, Ezra and Rachel) were living on East 114<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem, a block that was filled with Jews from Ioannina. By 1940, Hy and his family were living on 64<sup>th</sup> Street in the Mapleton section of Brooklyn, again a Greek Jewish enclave. Later on, when Hy was at the Bristol in North Woodmere, I would often visit and Rose Eskononts and I would take Hy to eat at his favorite place, a nearby Greek Restaurant where he would have his standard avgolemono soup and spanakopita. We will miss you Hy. Unfortunately, we had no photos of Hy in our archives. Please send photos, both past and present. May his memory be a blessing.

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On March 27, 2021, Abraham Pitsirilos, the son of Moses Pitsirilos (of Blessed Memory) and Louisa Koen Pitsirilos, both Holocaust survivors from Ioannina. Abraham is survived by his wife, Lydia, and his three children, Stephanie, Alexander and Liza, and his two sisters, Elizabeth (Sevva) and Connie. Abraham is the grandson of Avraam and Sevva Pitsirilos, who perished in the Holocaust with the rest of his family. Only his parents survived. May his memory be a blessing.



It was with great sadness that the Romaniote community in New York learned of the passing of Karen (Kayle) Asser. Kayle was only 59 when she died on June 11, 2020. She was the daughter of Murray (Chubby) Asser and Irma Fischer, both of blessed memory. Kayle was the granddaughter of Solomon Asser and Joyia Apsty, both immigrants from Ioannina to the USA. She is survived by her son and a loving extended family.



The Greek-Jewish world, both in Greece and in Israel, and, of course, here in the United States, mourns the passing of Yitzhak (Jacco) Genis, who was born in Arta and passed away on April 5 in Israel.

It is with regret that we announce the passing of [Mathilda] Elda Hassid née Hagouel. She will always be remembered for her kindness and goodness.



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Finally, it was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Charlotte Battino, who joined us in Greece with her husband Rubin in 2012. From the lovely memorial in the Yellow Springs News.

Charlotte Battino: April 19, 1936 - December 28, 2020

Charlotte Battino passed away peacefully in the company of family on December 28, 2020, after more than 50 years in Yellow Springs. She was 84. She leaves behind a rich legacy of community involvement, including nearly four years on Village Council, where she guided the early greenbelt program. Upon her departure, News editor Don Wallis wrote, "Charlotte excelled at the job. She worked. She got hold of information, absorbed it, studied it, understood it, insisted that others pay attention to it, demanded that they work harder than they wanted to. She more than anyone else shaped an approach to village government that was — well, it was exhaustive, but it was also comprehensive, and that's rare, and it's good. Even when Ms. Battino voted in a way I didn't like, I knew she knew more about it than I did, and that she was, probably, right." Charlotte also served for many years on the YS League of Women Voters, and as board member and finance chair for the YS Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

She especially enjoyed local theater, performing in numerous shows at Center Stage. Favorite roles included Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance* (opposite Pirate King Bill Chappelle) and Eulalie Shinn in *The Music Man*. She also sang in the Yellow Springs Community Chorus and Berkshire Choral Festival, performing in the Berkshires, New Mexico, and Austria.

Charlotte was born in Gettysburg, PA, to Bill and Ellie Ridinger on April 19, 1936. She earned a BA in English at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina and was awarded a Phi Beta Kappa key. She continued to graduate studies at the University of Chicago on a Wilson fellowship, where she met her husband Rubin. The couple moved to Yellow Springs in 1966. Charlotte subsequently completed a master's degree at Wright State University in urban planning and worked for 15 years at United Way of Dayton, serving as director of agency development.

She was a generous contributor to many area charities and organizations, supporting the Little Art Theater; Dayton Foundation; Cincinnati Shakespeare Company; Tecumseh Land Trust; YS Arts Council; YS Community Foundation; and Home, Inc.

Hiking was another lifelong passion, with 25 years of trekking through the Great Smoky Mountains and numerous hikes in Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. Still, one of her family's fondest memories is of their annual Christmas Day walks in Yellow Springs with the Dixon family.

Survivors include her husband of 61 years, Rubin; sons David (Folsom, CA) and Benjamin (Wausau, WI) and their wives Hazuki and Gillian; brother Tom and wife Lea (New York, NY); and eight grandchildren: Ellie, Toma, Lily, Anabel, Miaki, Asa, Abel, and Ben Yisak.

They are grateful to friends and relatives for the sentiments they've shared, and to Hospice of Dayton for support during Charlotte's final weeks. Having time at home to talk, share memories, and say goodbye helped them find peace during a transition that came far too soon. One evening as they gathered around Charlotte's



bed, she proposed a toast. By that time, about the only thing she could eat was ice, so she suggested everyone crunch a cube and celebrate. "It's not about crying," she said. "It's about doing better and being together."

A deep, caring woman with extraordinarily high standards, Charlotte inspired all of us to do better. And in a sad, beautiful way, she brought us closer as well.



Bottom Row: Sadik, Anna, Terry Schieber, Abraham  
Top Row: Lillian, Manny Solomon, Rubin, Rita Samuels, Raphael,  
Minnie Kalkstein, Emanuel.

We thank Rubin for his generous donation in honor of his family: Parents - Sadik and Anna, Siblings - Lillian, Raphael, Emanuel, and Abraham, and his wife Charlotte.

The rest of these pictures are from our 2012 tour. Such beautiful memories and the heartbreak of knowing that three of the people from this tour have since passed away.



## News from Kehila Kedosha Janina

The Museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina continues to work on genealogical research, compiling family trees and of course, collecting additional photos for our vast photo archives. If you have family trees you would like to add to our collection or questions on your Greek Jewish families, contact us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org).

### Shabbat Services at Kehila Kedosha Janina in Person

As we monitor ongoing guidance from health officials, we will host Shabbat morning services on a monthly basis for now. We will continue to monitor the situation and keep our community updated as we plan to resume more frequent services or museum tours.

**Please join us for our next Shabbat Service in person on Saturday May 15, 2021 at 10am.**

People interested in attending services in person are strongly encouraged to RSVP in advance by emailing [Amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:Amarcus@kkjism.org).






## Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network recently hosted a picnic in Central Park to celebrate the holiday of Lag Ba'Omer. They welcomed more than 40 young community members with both Sephardic and Romaniote heritage, and enjoyed bourekas, koulouria/biscochos, fruit, and even a little Ouzo! To learn more about the Young Professionals Network and upcoming events for community members in their 20s and 30s, email [GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com](mailto:GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com)



### Greek Jewish History Lectures from the Jewish Community of Athens – May 9<sup>th</sup> at 12pm


RSVP here: <https://tinyurl.com/greek-jewish-history-lectures>



## Sunday, May 9th

### Dr. Johannes Niehoff – Panagiotidis

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**“Who are the Romaniotes?”**

**Prof. Dr. Jannis Niehoff-Panagiotidis** was born in an Istanbul Greek and Dutch-German family. He studied at the University of Tübingen and at the Scuola Normale in Pisa, focusing on Classics, Linguistics and Oriental Studies. His PhD "Koine und Diglossie" examined the development of Greek language from Hellenistic to Modern Greek. In 1998 he completed his Habilitation on the Greek and Old Spanish versions of Kalila wa-Dimna. In 2004 he became professor at the Central European University in Budapest and in 2006/2007 spent one year at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Since 2007 Professor Jannis Niehoff-Panagiotidis holds the Chair of Byzantine Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. Jewish History since the Late Antiquity is one of his main research interests.

**19.00**  
**Israel**  
**Time**

**12.00**  
**New**  
**York**  
**Time**

**18.00**  
**Germany**  
**/Austria**  
**Time**



## Lower East Side History Month



Lower East Side History Month is an annual celebration of the rich and diverse history of the Lower East Side. Each year in May, Lower East Side cultural and community groups, small businesses, and residents come together to create a variety of public events, exhibits, tours, and learning opportunities.

All events take place in the historical boundaries of the Lower East Side, which includes the East Village, Chinatown, Two Bridges and Loisaída. Conceived and launched in 2014 by Downtown Art and FABnyc in partnership with LES-based cultural and community groups, LES History Month aims to connect our present to our past, exploring how our history can inform and inspire our future. Learn more: <https://www.peoplesles.org/>

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## News from Jewish Greece

### Ioannina

Historical Research: We are looking for additional information on this event from May 14, 1880. "The Jewish community of Ioannina falls victim to grand theft as recorded by Chicago newspaper 'The Jewish advance'. Robbers were probably Turkish soldiers who robbed one of the 2 synagogues"

A newspaper clipping from Chicago, dated May 14, 1880, reporting on a robbery in Ioannina. The text reads: "The Jewish community at Janina owns two synagogues, the one inside the town, the other outside the gates. The latter has been plundered of its costly embroidered curtains, etc., vases, and silver lamps. Two hundred Turkish pounds have likewise been carried off by the robbers. It is suspected that the sacrilege was committed by soldiers, who have not received any pay from the government for some time past, and who seek to obtain money whenever they can."

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### Alexandroupolis

Elias Tzioras: Jewish Memories in the Neighborhoods of Alexandroupolis & the Holocaust

The fishing village of Dedeaganc (monk's tree in the Ottoman language) was a small settlement with a natural port in Thrace until the German-Jewish Baron Hirsch decided to create a railway hub connecting the most important cities of the Balkans at the end of 19th Century.

The trains arrived and transported European air to Alexandroupolis and the rest of Northern Greece, which still had the aroma of the East.

The Railway and the Port carved out the history of Alexandroupolis and created a new and cosmopolitan city with international banks, consulates and commercial followers of foreign countries. Among the populations who moved to the new city for work and a better future were those of Jewish origin, as shown in the censuses. In 1889 there were 35 Jews and in 1928, 181 Jews, as recorded by the historical researcher Mr. Thrasyvoulos Papastratis.



In the beginning of the tragic decade of the 1940s, the Jews of Alexandroupolis numbered about 150. Along with their fellow co-religionists of Thraki and



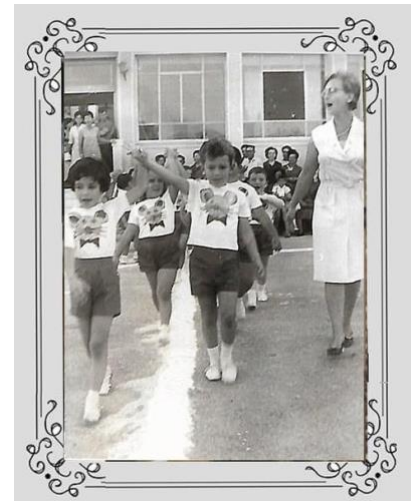
Eastern Macedonia, they were arrested on the evening of the third of March by the German-Bulgarian forces and deported to Nazi the concentration death camps.

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## Athens

### Memories and Personal Stories from the Life of Our Community "Fragments of Memories" by Bella Aaron

The Athens Jewish Community has started to collect "memories" before they fade. Along with the memories came some priceless photos.



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## Thessaloniki

The student who saved lives during the Occupation by forging documents by Stavros Tzimas

On such days, in the spring of 1943, the first train was preparing to load about three thousand Jews from Thessaloniki for Auschwitz.

It will leave on March 15 and another 18 "missions" will follow until the plan of transfer and extermination to the crematoria of Nazi Germany of the Jewish element of Thessaloniki is completed. At a distance of about two kilometers from the railway station, and specifically in a villa on Antheon Street (today's Vasilissis Olgas), a "life laboratory" was set up under the "nose" of the Gestapo to help the persecuted Jews.

In the building, known as "Villa Olga", which housed the Italian consulate, under the auspices of Consul Guelfo Zamponi, a machine for forging documents of Greek Jews through which they appeared as of Italian origin and thus able to flee to Athens. Auschwitz. A young law student, then 20-year-old Drita Giomo, with an Italian mother and a father from Zagorochoria, was a key link in the chain of humanity, starting from the basement of the consulate.

Under Zamponi's guidance, young Giomo forged documents, which were later taken out of the consulate by German-educated military follower Lucillo Merzi, thus saving many lives. The epilogue of this deeply humane and extremely dangerous initiative, which went around the world after the war, was written on Saturday, March 6, with the death due to old age of the daring student. Fate brought her to die on such days, when 78 years ago the first death trains departed for Auschwitz. If the daring game of the Italian diplomat was perceived by the Germans, then, without a doubt she would have been placed on one of those trains.



Drita Giomo lived "forgotten", without awards and honors, with her memories, in an apartment on V. Olgas Street in Thessaloniki, right next to the now dilapidated building of the Italian consulate, when I first met her in 2016 and she told me her story about "K".

"With the instructions of the consul, I forged the papers and he signed them. "He was a very good man, he had nothing to do with Mussolini's fascism, he helped many Jews," she said, beginning the story. What were these "papers"? The fake identities, with which they presented Greek Jews as having a distant Italian origin. And this was for its holder the passport to salvation, since by showing it he or she could get out of the ghetto, leave Thessaloniki and pass to the Italian occupation zone, mainly in Athens, thus escaping Auschwitz .

As soon as I handed him the papers, he said "welcome to the silent Miss Drita". We wrote the transit permits from Platy, Imathia, which was the last station of the German zone. From there, the Italian zone began. We showed that the owner had a mother, grandmother, Italian. With these papers, the military follower Lucillo Merzi picked them up in his car and took them to Platy, where he supervised their boarding the train and the passage in the Italian zone. We thus saved a few hundred, they were not few " .



Old Italian Consulate in Thessaloniki

Such a venture could hardly have escaped the Gestapo, and by the time the first disturbances began to reach the consulate, it was time for the twenty-year-old Giomo to flee.

One day, returning from work by tram, the Germans raided and singled out ten people, who were taken in retaliation for the murder of a Wehrmacht soldier. She felt that death was approaching.

"It simply came to our notice then. When I told my father, he took us and we left for Albania, through Koritsa. But then we were trapped, we could not return with the release. We went to be saved, but we found ourselves in another prison, from which we could not get out for forty-five years. We knew nothing about Auschwitz. We have not had any contact with Greece all this time. We sent letters that never arrived. "

Until 1988, a rift in communication with Thessaloniki for the Giomo family opened completely unexpectedly. "A merchant ship from Albania caught up in Thessaloniki and two of the sailors went for a walk in the city, where they turned on the road to a stranger to ask him something. He, in turn, asked them where he was from and when they answered him from Albania, he said: "Ah, I have some relatives there". It was a coincidence that one of our cousins gave them our address and when they returned, one of them who happened to know my brother told him the story. We then wrote a letter, gave it to the sailor and when the boat picked up again in Thessaloniki, he mailed it from the city. That's how our people learned that we live... " .

Upon returning to Thessaloniki in 1991, Drita Giomo found a city unrecognizable from the one she had left. The house was deserted, had become a hangout for drug addicts and because of this the authorities demolished it.

"Villa Olga" was also abandoned to the ravages of time, after the Italian consulate had been moved.

She settled a few meters from the then consulate, where she lived laden with memories and rather forgotten by the city and the official state, for the people of which she put her head on the chopping block.

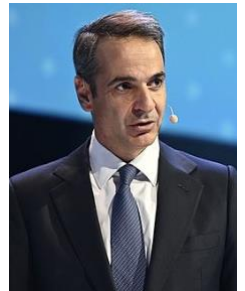
Her face shone when in the modest ceremony of her award from the Italian embassy - the only honor given to her for all that she offered - we informed her that the "Villa Olga" was sold and will be saved. "Well done to the one who took it, it is part of our history," she commented.

Drita Giomo will go down in history (and) through an hour-long documentary about the children of "Uberto Primo", a shocking story told by Antonio Cresenzi, an employee of the Italian Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, and refers to the children of the Italian school in Thessaloniki, whose Jewish students were exterminated in concentration camps in Germany. With time burdening her mercilessly, her daughter took her to Albania to look after her. Days ago, Antonio called me to inform me that "Drita Giomo is gone." She was ninety-eight. Even after her death, Thessaloniki owes her a price.

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### **Mitsotakis Response to Lauder**

Following World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder's message on the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Greek Revolution, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis sent to Mr. Lauder the following letter:



"Dear President Lauder,

I would like to thank you for your inspiring congratulatory message during the National Day of my country, which this year marks the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek Revolution.

Indeed, interactions between Greeks and Jews have existed for many centuries, with the two peoples claiming - with admirable strength and determination - their own place in history despite difficulties that often seemed insurmountable.

However, in these modern times our relationships and contacts are perhaps stronger than ever before. This is evident in strong Greek-Israeli relations, in the support and participation of the US in the leading tripartite shape of our cooperation with Cyprus and Israel, as well as – if not mainly – in the unique bonds of friendship, admiration and respect that have been forged between Greeks and Jews over the years.

As the body representing Jewish Communities in more than 100 countries around the world, you have personal knowledge of this special relationship between Greeks and Jews, to which you also make a maximum contribution.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that my country has proudly assumed the Presidency of the IHRA for 2021. We see this great honor as a tribute to the great Greek Jewish community and its remarkable contribution to the modern Greek state as an important intrinsic part of our society.

Waiting to meet you in person as soon as the pandemic subsides, please accept, Mr. President, the assurance of my utmost appreciation.



## Israel

Israel honored Pfizer pharmaceutical company CEO Albert Bourla during Independence Day celebrations, thus thanking him for his support for the country in successfully implementing the pandemic vaccination program. At the main event in Jerusalem, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla, via a taped message broadcast on Israeli state television, said: "Together we demonstrate that with mass vaccinations we can fight the pandemic and save lives."

Bourla, a descendant of Greek Jewish Holocaust survivors, was invited to attend the events in person as a representative of the Jewish Diaspora but was unable to attend. Israel has vaccinated more than three-quarters of the adult population in more than three months. There is a significant reduction in infection rates which allows the country to restart its economy in the coming weeks.

"We have proven that there is a way back to normality and it is certainly something that the whole world can celebrate," Bourla said.



## Israel at 73

On April 15<sup>th</sup> Jews around the world celebrated Yom Haatzmaut - Israel Independence Day.

This 1956 photo shows a celebration of the 8th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel in the synagogue of Chalkida. Greek Metropolitan Gregory of Chalkida spoke next to Rabbi Eliahu Barzilai of Athens for this special celebration.

Thoughts for Yom Ha'Atsmaut  
by Rabbi Marc D. Angel



A tiny nation, often misunderstood and maligned, changed the course of history for the good. This tiny nation produced the Bible and its prophets; sages and mystics; poets and dreamers. This tiny nation, generation after generation, in many ways has been the conscience of humanity, the litmus test of human civilization.

This tiny nation lived in a tiny land in antiquity. Its King David established Jerusalem as its capitol city a thousand years before the dawn of Christianity and more than 1600 years before Mohammed. It was seldom allowed to live in peace: other nations threatened, attacked, made war. It saw its capitol city razed by vicious enemies, its Temples destroyed by Babylonians and Romans, its citizens ravaged and exiled.

This tiny nation, scattered throughout the world, faced persecutions and humiliations. Its men and women and children were confined to ghettos, deprived of elementary human rights, subjected to pogroms and pillage. Millions of them were murdered during the Holocaust.

Exiled from its land for nearly 2000 years, it always dreamed of returning to its ancestral soil and re-establishing its sovereignty. It prayed daily for the return. Many of its members made pilgrimages, and some remained living in the land throughout the generations, in conditions of poverty and oppression.

In spite of the persecutions it suffered and in spite of the callousness of so many nations of the world, this tiny nation-maintained faith in One God and in the mission He assigned it to bring the lofty teachings of Torah to humanity. In spite of all its sufferings, this tiny nation-maintained faith in humanity: it strove to make the world a better place for all human beings, with an eternal optimism that is truly a wonder.

This tiny nation, born 3500 years ago, wove its way through history and refused to be destroyed or silenced. This tiny nation, scattered throughout the lands of the world, found the will and the courage to return to its historic homeland after nearly 2000 years of exile. The return home has been difficult. It has had to fight wars, withstand terrorism, overcome economic boycotts, endure political isolation, and combat hateful propaganda.



Yet, this tiny and ancient nation, against all reasonable odds, has re-established its sovereignty in its historic homeland; it has created a vibrant, dynamic, idealistic society, dedicated to the ideals of freedom and democracy. With its memory spanning the millennia, it has created a modern, progressive state.

My wife Gilda and I first visited this historic land in the summer of 1968, a year after our marriage. When we glimpsed the shoreline from the airplane window, we both found ourselves with tears in our eyes. We were not born in this land; we had never been there before; and yet we were returning—we and all the generations of our families were returning through us. “When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were as in a dream (Psalm 126:1).”

This tiny people is Israel. This tiny land is Israel. This nation of dreamers and visionaries, builders and farmers, sages and scientists, warriors and peace makers—this nation is Israel. This tiny nation is a great nation. This tiny land is a holy land. “The tiny shall become a thousand, and the least a mighty nation (Isaiah 60:22).”

Israel is a bastion of hope in a world filled with despair. It is a wellspring of human dignity in a world filled with shameless hatred and strife.

To stand with Israel is to stand for the redemption of the people of Israel and humanity. To stand with Israel is to recognize the sheer wonder of the survival and contributions of the people of Israel. It is to affirm the preciousness of life over a culture of death; righteousness over hypocrisy; idealism over despair. This tiny nation in its tiny land is a testament to the greatness of the human spirit. It is a testimony to God’s providence.

It is a privilege, beyond words, to dream with Israel and share its destiny.

“For Zion’s sake I shall not be silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I shall not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation as a flaming torch (Isaiah 62:1).”

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## France

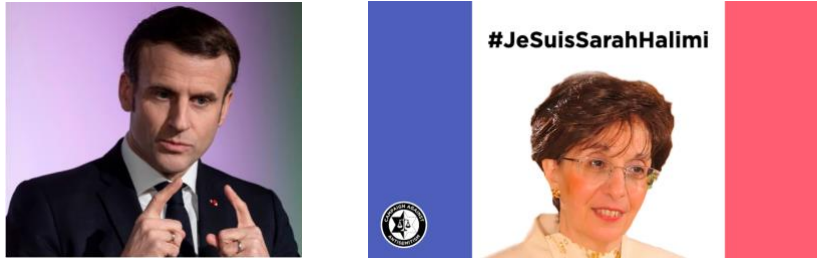
### The President of France Requests Amendments to the Legal System

French President Emmanuel Macron has called for a change in the country's legal system following an allegation by a man who killed his Jewish neighbor that he was unfit to stand trial because he was under the influence of drugs, which led to him being psychotic, according to the court.

"Those who use drugs and are led to "crazy acts" should not, in my opinion, be tried with extenuating circumstances, without criminal responsibility," President Macron said in an interview with Le Figaro newspaper. "I would like the Minister of Justice to present an amendment to the law as soon as possible."

The Supreme Court recently ruled that killer Kobili Traore should not stand trial for beating to death Sarah Halimi, whom he threw from the third floor of her apartment in 2017.

The French Police said the decision was a "judicial error."



Traore, who is Muslim, called Halimi a "demon" as he beat her for more than 30 minutes, a witness said. After throwing her out the window she shouted: "One lady fell out the window" and tried to escape, others were arrested. Traore was admitted to a psychiatric hospital and will likely be released if he is found to be no longer dangerous.

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## Turkey

Online Museum from Alef Youth to Commemorate Holocaust Victims

Alef Youth (one of the youth clubs of the Turkish Jewish community), in preparation for Yom HaShoah when we commemorate the Holocaust victims, created an online museum, in the context of their Karakare project that they have continued for many years to increase the awareness on the Holocaust.

"Karakare [meaning BlackSquare or BlackFrame] is a project developed and continued for many years led by the Alef Youth, to raise awareness on the Holocaust. Its mission is to create awareness about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, not to forget, and to teach how to make it unforgotten. Karakare, with this purpose, is organizing various events each year.

Karakare designs an object every year, to remember and not to forget the Holocaust and the people we lost during the Holocaust. In the context of this 'Social Awareness Project', the objects determined, designed, and developed by young people to raise awareness, are distributed to our community via the Şalom Newspaper. Also, we are trying to create awareness, with movie screenings and preparing videos.

This year Karakare, due to the conditions of our day, in line with the COVID-19 measures, prepared the 'Alef Online Museum' project. Alef Online Museum is an online museum designed virtually in the Alef building, and open to access anytime from anywhere.



In the Alef Online Museum that you can reach using the link <http://alefkarakare.com/>, you will come across a museum where there are many creations in different rooms of the Alef building. In the first room of the museum, there is an exhibition including the stories of the people who have helped the Jews in tough conditions during the Holocaust and were honored as 'Righteous Among the Nations'.



In the second room, the exhibition continues with the famous art pieces that had belonged to Jews before World War II but were confiscated by the Nazis. In the same room, you will also find artworks created by the Alef Youth.

In the third room themed 'Holocaust and Children', there are various photos, paintings and videos.

If we don't know our past, we cannot perceive our future. We cannot let the painful historical events like the Holocaust occur ever again. Therefore, we must be aware!"

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## Bosnia

### **A Bosnian War prosecutor from Boston is trying to help Sarajevo's Jews survive a brutal COVID-19 surge** By Bette Keva in JTA

It's been nearly a decade since Phillip Weiner last lived in Sarajevo, where he served as an international war crimes judge.

But Weiner has remained in touch with the Bosnian Jews he met there, and when he heard about their plight during the COVID-19 pandemic, he knew he had to do something.

Serving in the Hague court at the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal, Weiner prosecuted those responsible for the atrocities committed during the Bosnian War from 1992 through 1995. He lived off and on in Sarajevo, now the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for more than four years from 2006 to 2012, and attended Shabbat services at the Jewish Community Synagogue.

Weiner became acquainted with many prominent members of the city's Jewish community, some of whom are now falling victim to COVID-19 amid a surge in cases there. His contacts say the pandemic has claimed the lives of as much as 5% of Bosnia's tiny Jewish community.



People over 75 years old line up to receive a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at a sports hall in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, April 21, 2021.

"Many Jews are dying. It's a horror show," Weiner said. "David Kamhi, a prominent concert violinist and diplomat, died. Jakob Finci, the president of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, is in serious condition."

More than 1,000 Bosnians marched through Sarajevo earlier this month to demand the resignation of the government over what they say is the country's poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Bosnia has reported 7,000 deaths from the disease and has among the highest fatality rates in Europe. What's more, the country has not embarked on a vaccination program of any significance. So from his home in the Boston area, Weiner is working backchannels to get doses of a vaccine to the Jewish community in Bosnia.

He has contacted the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the consul general of Israel to New England in Boston and the American Jewish Committee in Los Angeles. So far, he said, there has been no response. Those who are able to travel have taken the six-hour trek to Belgrade, Serbia, for vaccinations, according to Igor Kozemjakin, the 41-year-old cantor and acting rabbi of Sarajevo's Jewish Community Synagogue. But traveling to a neighboring country is not possible for many elderly, including Bosnia's 90 Holocaust survivors, said Kozemjakin, whose own mother died of COVID-19 in late March. His father, Boris, age 73, had a mild case and is not yet vaccinated.

The European Jewish Congress estimates there are about 500 Jews living in the country. Kozemjakin said he learned from Elma Softic-Kaunitz, secretary general of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that 5% of community members have died of COVID.

Kamhi, a community leader, was among the Holocaust survivors to succumb. He was 5 years old when a Muslim family helped his family flee Sarajevo in 1941.

"David Kamhi was a very important member of our community and in general society," Kozemjakin said. "I succeeded him as cantor. The Jewish community is 85% Sephardic and Kamhi kept the traditions. He was the last living speaker of Judaic Español – Ladino – the language of Sephardic Jews. It was his mother tongue." Kamhi was active during and after the 1992-95 war, was president of the Commission for Culture for the Jewish community in Sarajevo, and researched the culture and traditions of Bosnian Jews. His brother-in-law also died of the virus, and Kamhi's widow, Blanka, recovered after falling very ill, according to Kozemjakin. Another survivor who remains gravely ill is Finci, who was born in 1943 in an Italian concentration camp on the island of Rab (now in Croatia) and has long been an advocate for Bosnian Jews.

Finci, a former ambassador, once was the president of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2009, he and Dervo Sejdic contested a law that excluded Jews and other minorities from running for elected office. They won at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg — the Supreme Court of Europe — but Bosnia has still not implemented the judgment.

Finci was treated for COVID-19 in the military hospital in Sarajevo. In a phone interview with the Jewish Journal, the hospital's director, Dr. Ismet Gavrankapetanovic, decried the country's lack of vaccines to inoculate the population. Asked if he could expect the vaccine anytime soon, Gavrankapetanovic answered with exasperation.

"We expect, we expect, but until now we have nothing," he said. "How unjust everything is today. Four years in war. Four years without electricity. Four years without medical supplies. Now, no vaccine."

Bosnia's government is uniquely ill-prepared to handle a crisis calling for immediate decision-making, according to a [recent Politico Europe analysis](#). A multitiered administration created at the end of the war in 1995 guarantees representation for the Bosniak, Croat and Serb ethnic groups whose political leaders are locked in a perpetual fight — but also fuels deadlock at a time of crisis, when quick decisions are vital. COVID-19 is now killing more civilians every day in Sarajevo than died during the Bosnian War in the 1990s, Politico concluded. Weiner recounted his conversation with Blanka Kamhi. "It feels like we're back during the Bosnia War," she told him, according to Weiner. "The only difference is that bombs are not falling from the sky. Instead, people are sick and dying."

This leaves Weiner and others who care deeply about the country and its fragile Jewish community wondering who will help Bosnia. He said he would continue seeking vaccines for the community.

"The prime minister of Israel has indicated he would make sure that all Holocaust survivors throughout the world are vaccinated, and I would hope that Israel will now take action in Bosnia," Weiner said. "Germany has announced the donation of \$13.5 million to vaccinate Holocaust survivors worldwide. I hope they can implement that program very quickly."



Mourners at the funeral of David Kamhi, a prominent concert violinist, diplomat and one-time Jewish community leader. (Phillip Weiner)

## The Story Behind a Ladino communist Musical Passover parody

By Theo Canter in JTA

Eliezer Papo, a professor of Sephardi and Hebrew literature at Israel's Ben-Gurion University, has spent much of his career studying reinterpretations of the Haggadah — the seder liturgy text retelling the story of the Exodus — and how they reflect changing Jewish self-conceptions of religious and political identity. "The Haggadah is well-known and a very flexible story, with a clear good and evil," Papo says. "You just need to say in a humoristic way who is Moses, and then everyone knows who is Pharaoh."

The tradition of these sacred parodies begins in medieval Spain as a fusion of the Christian springtime carnival with the Islamic literary and musical patterns. Following the expulsion of Jews in 1492, Haggadah parodies became a vehicle for Jewish communities in the Sephardi diaspora to satirize contemporary problems they faced internally and externally. For example, a Haggadah parody written in Smyrna in 1919 following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire described how the Jews came to Turkey and prospered, but then a new sultan arose who abused the Jews and suddenly the promised land became the West. Another parody from New York in 1923 decries price fixing by Big Matzah before the holidays.

Having grown up in the Jewish community of Sarajevo, Papo now works with his students to preserve the rich tradition of Haggadah parodies in Ladino, the lingua franca of Sephardi Jews for centuries, which he speaks fluently. This year they produced *Agada de la Corona* as an artifact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Riffing on the traditional seder text, the *Corona Haggadah* refers to "Rabbi" Albert Bourla, the Greek-Sephardic CEO of Pfizer, and relates how "the great Salonikan Jew liberated us with a strong vaccine in our outstretched arm. Had it not been for that, our children and their children would still be wearing masks."

Papo's academic interest in Haggadah parodies began in his hometown with the Sarajevo community's unique Passover tradition of reciting the Partisan Haggadah, a little-known parody written by a communist Yugoslav partisan in 1944.

"This is the bread of affliction that the Jewish partisans ate in the Croatian forests of Kordun and Banija," the Partisan Haggadah begins. "This year we are here, but next year, inshallah, we will drink raki in Sarajevo."

First written and performed on Passover 1944 by a young Yugoslav partisan, Shalom "Shani" Altarac, the Partisan Haggadah is rooted in the bloody struggle by communist partisans against the Axis powers occupying Yugoslavia and their locally established puppet regimes.

Altarac was a talented musician and jokester from a Sarajevo family of prominent hazzans, or cantors. He was in charge of entertainment among the partisans, as well as being an active fighter himself (imagine Bob Hope's USO show performed by Che Guevara). He accompanied his musical reinterpretation on guitar around a campfire as the partisans camped in the remote forests of Croatia with guns still loaded. He set his original parody to the same tunes as the regular Haggadah.



"Rabbi Gamliel said, one who does not speak of these three things has not fulfilled his obligation of Passover: salt, fire, and machine guns!" one lyric goes.

Altarac was a member of the Rab Brigade, 24th division of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army Partisan Detachment. Its 250 Jewish members included many teenagers. They hadn't been home in three years, having previously fled Bosnia, been interned by the Italians in Croatia and escaped an Italian detention camp on the island of Rab. They crossed the mountains through territory controlled by the Chetniks (Serb monarchists who fought against both Nazis and communists, but who were not particularly anti-Jewish) and joined the armies of Marshal Josip Broz Tito, the communist revolutionary who would go on to serve as president of postwar Yugoslavia. Nearly 5,000 Jews (10% of the entire prewar Yugoslav Jewish population) joined the partisans, rising easily in the ranks due to a lack of institutional anti-Semitism.



The partisans not only defeated the Axis armies who vastly outnumbered them, but went on to create the government of their newly free country. The victorious Jewish fighters were absorbed into the national founding mythology as larger-than-life heroes.

In his forthcoming book, "Fighting, Laughing and Surviving: The Story of the Partisan Haggadah, a Passover Parody Composed during the Holocaust" (Wayne State University Press), Papo describes the importance of the document to the partisans and their community in both preserving their story as well as highlighting the Jewish contributions to Yugoslavian nationhood.

Starting in the postwar years and still continuing today, the Jews of Sarajevo held the seder as a community. A cultural flourish like the Partisan Haggadah tied the ceremony together, making explicit the parallels of ancient Israelite and modern Yugoslavian liberation.

"Passover was both an important holiday for all Jews, and it fit beautifully with communism — celebrating the insurrection of proletariat slaves against the capitalist Pharaonic exploiters," Papo explains. "You could be a proud Yugoslavian communist and a proud Jew and celebrate Pesach, no contradiction."

The Jews of Sarajevo had spoken and written in Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, since their arrival from Spain 400 years earlier. The illustrious Sarajevo Haggadah, an illuminated manuscript of the seder liturgy, and one of the oldest physical Haggadah texts still in existence, was most likely written in Spain in the 14th century and brought to the Balkans by the Sephardic Jews who fled the Inquisition for the comparatively tolerant Ottoman Empire.

For Passover, the traditional Haggadah was recited in Hebrew and then repeated in Ladino, the way American Jews recite it in English today. As secularization and assimilation have diminished the knowledge of Ladino in the community, the Haggadah is now also recited in Serbo-Croatian.

The Partisan Haggadah text incorporates all of these languages together. It begins by taking the Hebrew original and for each line offering an unrelated but humorous rhyme in Serbian:



Ma nishtana halaila (how different is this night)  
ništa to ne valja (this whole deal is worthless)  
hazeh mikol halelot (from all other nights)  
Hitler je veliki skot (Hitler is a dirty animal)

The Dayenu in this Haggadah recounts not the Jewish people's journey out of Egypt but the wanderings of the Jewish warriors through the hostile villages of the Croatian wilderness deeper into enemy lines.

We went to Topusko – dayenu.

To Ponikvar – dayenu

To Malicka – dayenu

To Petra Gora – dayenu.

Everything was all complicated and f\*\*ed up

(zaguljenu i jebenu, rhyming with dayenu)

The partisan fighters were both idealistic secular communists and proud Jews — they valued and fought for both parts of their identity equally. As the Haggadah reads, "Beara de Israel bene horin, ad ki yoshienu haver Stalin" — "Next year as free Jews, once comrade Stalin delivers us!"

(This was shortly before Tito split with the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, and while Stalin was still the standard bearer of international Communism. Ironically, Stalin was uncomfortable with Tito having Jewish partisan brigades.)

Unlike their Soviet neighbors, Yugoslav communists encouraged each nationality (what Americans would call ethnicity) to express and celebrate their cultures. Distinct populations of Croats (Catholic), Serbs (Orthodox), Bosniaks (Muslim) and others lived scattered in one another's historic territory, sometimes even intermarrying. Despite ethnic rivalries, a shared secular nationhood united them. This multiethnic makeup made the Balkans an oasis of relative tolerance for the Jews. Until the war, Sarajevo had a substantial Jewish community of thousands who were never forced to live in a ghetto.



After the war, in the newly communist Yugoslavia, many Jews were members of the Communist Party. Religion was not banned, but party members — of any faith — were discouraged from attending services. Synagogue-based holidays like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were supplanted by “historical” and “ethnic” holidays, such as Purim and Hanukkah, that could be celebrated at home or as a community.

The Partisan Haggadah entered the Sarajevo community's canon several years after the war. Altarac continued to write and entertain for Jewish holidays, writing yearly comedic musical revues for Hanukkah and Purim. At a communal seder in the early 1950s, some of his former wartime comrades encouraged Altarac to revive his old classic.

In a field interview quoted in Papo's book, an elder recalls the performance:

“They said, ‘Shani, do you have your guitar? Why don't you do your old Partisan Haggadah?’ He was unsure, a little shy, said it was improper, but they were all begging him. He said, ‘I'll play just one stanza,’ took up his guitar, but of course once he started he did the entire thing. And by the end everyone was pissing on the floor, laughing their asses off.”

Until his death two decades later, Altarac's yearly performance was the highlight of the communal seder. As the partisan generation slowly disappears, the youth have now taken it up, reciting “we were partisans in Croatia” the same way the rest of us recite “we were slaves in Egypt.”

Altarac's work was a unique instance of a Holocaust survivor relating to his experiences with humor, for himself and his comrades. And it is the continuation of a longstanding Sephardi tradition of Haggadah parodies commemorating wars, although this is likely the only one to be written by a combatant and survivor during the war itself.

Papo has discovered dozens of similar texts from Europe, the Middle East and the Americas, with the earliest being from Curacao, the Dutch Caribbean colony, in 1778, and the most recent from the Israeli War of Independence in 1948.

According to Papo, “These stories have every social and political movement that a Jewish community ever identified with — socialist, capitalist, Zionist, anti-Zionist, Ottoman, American — all compared to the Passover story. This is exactly the purpose the Haggadah was written for originally — to shape and to construct a people's identity anew in every generation, as if they left Egypt.”

## Articles of Interest

### US Ambassador Pyatt's Remarks at Opening of the Museum on Philhellenism

Delivered by Ambassador Pyatt from the podium

Kalimera sas. Minister Vlassis, Minister Stefanis, my dear friend Governor Patoulis, colleagues, and friends, it is a great pleasure for me to join you here today for the special opening of the Society for Hellenism and Philhellenism's Museum on Philhellenism. I hope it's easier to say in Greek!

Our Embassy is very proud to support the museum's exhibition on "American Philhellenism" as part of our year-long campaign to commemorate the Greek bicentennial and the two hundred years of friendship between our great democracies.



We're very proud to welcome the museum to the Greek cultural scene, and we're excited by how this exhibit highlights the historic ties between Greece and the United States as part of its debut.

I really want to say a special thank you to our close partners at the Society for Hellenism and Philhellenism, Constantinos Velentzas and Fotis Papathanasiou. I especially want to recognize Constantinos, since he's really the heart of the museum, and the museum largely features his unique collection. I also want to acknowledge the Embassy's continuing partnership with the Greece 2021 Committee and the really important work that the Committee is doing to educate citizens about the importance and the symbolism of this bicentennial. I can remember very well the emotion surrounding the American bicentennial in 1976, and it was really inspiring for me to see so many of those same feelings last March 25<sup>th</sup> around the launch of the Greek bicentennial.

I had the special opportunity to preview the museum a few weeks ago, and I know it has a very important story to tell about the far-reaching impact of the Greek Revolution not just on the United States but throughout the world.

Ancient Athenian ideals are a source of inspiration and pride for everyone who enjoys the rights and freedoms of democracy. This was made very clear on Greek Independence Day when buildings around the United States and indeed around the world were turned blue and white, as leaders celebrated Greek independence. President Biden, a very close friend of Greece throughout his political career, and Secretary of State Blinken sent strong messages honoring the day and expressing their commitment to our shared future. As President Biden said in his address to the Greek people last month, "I'm incredibly proud to be the American president who will help launch the next 200 years of our close cooperation and friendship." Though European philhellenism is well known, I'm really delighted that the museum does such a good job of shedding light on a topic that does not get enough attention: the brave efforts of American women and men who 200 years ago stood shoulder to shoulder with Greeks to help Greece reclaim its birthright of democracy and independence.

The Greek and American revolutions are uniquely intertwined, inspired by the same democratic ideals and values. And American philhellenes had an important impact on the early development of U.S.-Greece relations, which I am proud to say today are at an all-time high.

We are delighted to include the "American Philhellenism" exhibition in the Embassy's celebration, "USA and Greece: Celebrating 200 Years of Friendship." In partnership with cultural and educational institutions around the country, cities, and individual citizens, we will seek to reaffirm and honor the unwavering bond between



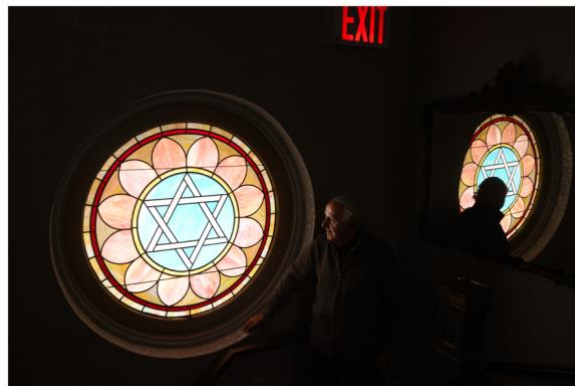
our democracies and strengthen the cooperation between our peoples that will be so important to the future of both our countries.

I also want to take a minute today to thank the Society for Hellenism and Philhellenism for honoring Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry with the inaugural Lord Byron Prize later this month. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Secretary Kerry since it's under his tenure that Mary and I first came to Greece. So I was delighted to learn that Special Envoy Kerry is in fact a direct descendant of the American philhellene Thomas Lindall Winthrop, who chaired the Philhellenic Committee of Boston, and of course, Secretary Kerry has continued Winthrop's legacy of supporting Greece throughout his career.

I want to underline that American society has been enriched from its earliest days by our relationship with Greece and the Greek people. And I'm extremely confident that even two hundred years from now, the United States will continue to stand by Greece as our trusted ally and partner. So as we celebrate Greece's bicentennial and look towards the future of our alliance, I'm proud to reaffirm the cry, Zito i Ellada. Zito i Ameriki. Efcharisto poli.

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On April 5<sup>th</sup>, a lovely portrait of our very own Sol Kofinas, taken by the photojournalist, B.A. Van Sise, went up in Jerusalem on the side of Safra square.



**This E-Newsletter is sponsored by the children of Louie Levy, both with his first wife, Shirlee Cabelis Paganetti – Rhonda, and his second wife, Judy – Andrea Levy Orlando, Susan Levy Reisman and Donna Levy**



Stella Cohen Levy



Louie & Judy

Louie grew up on the Lower East Side, born in 1921, one of 10 children. Louie was the son of Isaak Levy and Esther Cohen Levy. Louie passed in 2017, his wife Judith shortly afterwards. His first wife, Shirlee Paganetti, age 90 lives in Florida. The family were longtime residents of the Lower East Side. According to the 1920 census, Isaak and Stella (Esther) Levy were living at 94 Ludlow St. with their then three children. Isaak was listed as a laborer, working with paper boxes. In the 1925 State census the family was living at 94 Allen Street and had five children. According to the 1930 census the family now consisted of Isaac and Stella and seven children. In the 1940 census they are living at 255 Broome Street with ten in the household. Isaac is working as a stock clerk and Louie is a delivery boy. Louie registered for service in the US Armed forces for WWII in 1942 and served in the US Navy. Louie loved life, his special Greek Jewish world and, above all, his family. One of his daughters wrote the article below, based on an article written by Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos for The Greek American (September 28, 1998-"The Personal Odyssey of Louie Levy"). Actually made page 1!

**The Personal Pilgrimage of Louis Levy, in honor of his birthday 100 years ago**

(May 30 1921 – March 15, 2017)

by Andrea Levy Orlando

Louis Levy grew up, with his 8 brothers and sisters and a multitude of cousins, on Broome and Allen Street in the Lower East side of New York. Both of Louis's parents, Issac and Stella (Cohen) Levy, were born in Janina and his family had lived there for generations.

At the end of the war, specifically May 31, 1945 – June 3, 1945, Louis Levy who was a signalman on a Liberty ship (the Park Holland) in the US Navy visited Janina. He was 24 years old (in fact, he started this 5 day pilgrimage the day after his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday). His trip began from the port of Patras in southern Greece, and he traveled, with the help of some good people that he met on the road, 212 miles to Janina. The purpose of his pilgrimage was to fulfil a promise that he made to his mother, that if he ever reached the shores of Greece, he would travel to Janina to try to find her sister and other relatives whom they had not heard from in many years. They had no way of knowing whether they were dead or alive.

When Louie approached his commanding officer, requesting time off to travel north, his leave was refused. Practically begging, and explaining the importance of his trip, it was still denied. The Capt. explained that he did not know how long the ship would remain in the port at Patras; they were awaiting orders, and if Louie left the ship he would be considered AWOL. Sailors on the ship took up a collection, and handed Louie 4500 drachmas (about \$30), and 2 naval officers contributed another 5000 drachmas (\$34), so with less than \$60 Louie traveled north.

On that Friday morning, Louie took a barge from the ship across the channel to the docks .... He met a group of British soldiers who offered him a ride. They traveled up the treacherous and bumpy mountain roads, shared tea and sandwiches with him....and dropped him off in another small town, that was still 110 miles from Janina. Another British truck picked him up and took him a short distance (Louie describes his journey as going in a zigzag pattern.) They were stopped on the road by a group of men with flashlights and guns, asking lots of questions in Greek "Who are you?" "What are you doing here" "Where did you come from?" After realizing these men were Greek guerilla fighters who lived in the mountains, Louie explained, speaking Greek, that he was an American soldier on leave traveling to Janina to see if any of his family members had survived the war. The guerilla fighters were amazed to see a young man in an American Navy uniform speak Greek so fluently, and they were so empathic to his reasons for travel, that they offered to chaperon his travel into the town of Janina to ensure his safety.

Louie arrived in Janina in the middle of the night (3:25a.m. on June 1, 1945.) He wrote:

"I found myself standing alone here in the streets, deserted because of the early hour of the morning. The town was asleep. I stood here on the main street and looked around me. I was excited and marveled at my being in the very town where my dear mother and father were born."

By morning he was the talk of the town.

Later that day, as he headed to a small café, he overheard and of course understood, what the townspeople were saying. "Who is this American?"

"This sailor speaks Greek"

"What is he doing here?"

And before you knew it, Louie said, he felt like the Pied Piper...with more than 100 people following him down the main street. One of the townspeople led Louie to a restaurant, offering him free food and drink, refusing to take payment, and reassuring him that the proprietor of the restaurant was a source for the particular information he was seeking.

At the restaurant, Louie was introduced to Eli Shenazi, a man who knew Louie's parents before the war; and had known his father as a young boy. (Mr. Shenazi was taken prisoner, held in a German prison camp, and released by the allies just 3 weeks prior to Louie's arrival.)

Louie wrote,

"He guessed and understood the purpose of my visit and regretfully told me that my mother's sister and her family were killed along with my other relations when they were taken prisoner by the Germans. All were killed but one young cousin of mine. He was 22 years old and escaped along with 41 other young men who took to the mountains to fight guerilla warfare."

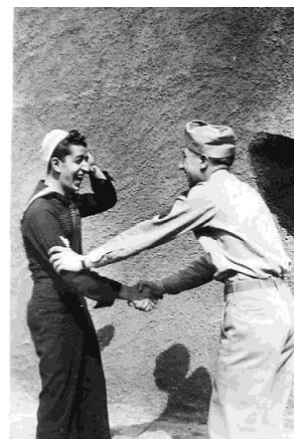
(These 41 men, and 5 or 6 young women, were the only survivors of the 2000 Greek Jews left in that city.)

"I met 32 of these men...they related everything that happened during the siege."

Louis's last night in Janina was spent with some survivors of the Jewish community of Janina, who told him that he was their one hope of direct communication with their relatives in the states. They explained how grateful they would be if, when he got back to America, he would look for their relatives and tell them they were still alive. Fulfilling the promise he made, Louis brought back that list of the survivors which he gave to the then president of Kehila Kadosha Janina Synagogue on Broome Street.



Louie Levy and Samuel Cohen Ioannina June 1945



Louie Levy & Benny Cohen



Louie said that he remembered the anxiety and horror expressed by this small Romaniote community in NY as they learned of the almost complete decimation of their families in Janina. 91% of the 1, 850 Jews in Janina listed in 1944, were deported and killed.

This pilgrimage earned Louis recognition at the historic synagogue on Broome Street in New York, the restored synagogue in Ioannina, and the Jewish Museum in Athens.

This was the first pilgrimage made by a member of our immediate family.

For 53 years Dad carried this story in his heart. It wasn't until 1998, when his daughter Rhonda traveled to Janina with a group of Christian and Jews to establish closer ties with Janina, and shared her moving experiences with their family, that spurred Louie to reveal his own story of his Odyssey to Janina.

The following year, Rhonda and her son Maxx who was 13 at the time, returned to Janina where Maxx made his Bar Mitzvah, at the synagogue in Ioannina. Maxx was the first Bar Mitzvah at this synagogue since the Holocaust.

A side note...Louie made it back to his ship just 3 hours before they were to leave the port. He was sent to the brig, and told he would be court marshalled. The Capt. explained to Louie that if he had not returned, the Capt. would have lost his commission to command the ship. Louie remained in the brig for 3 days. (He borrowed a typewriter to write the details of this story before he forgot it!) He was only permitted to come out to send and receive messages from other ships (he was the signalman.) The other soldiers begged the officer to drop the charges and let Louie out of the Brig. They said that Louie's endearing sense of humor, his great story telling abilities, and his ability to organize a crap game greatly affected the moral of the ship. This was granted...and as they say, "The rest is history!"



Louie and Shirlee



Judy and Louie



Judy



Louis Jackson Bender



Nash Kleiner

And the legacy lives on with the birth of two grandsons

**Gershon Harris**  
**Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



Shavuot will be celebrated this year Sunday night and Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> in Israel, and continue through the 18<sup>th</sup> in the Diaspora. While the Torah only mentions the fact that Shavuot is the “Hag HaBikurim” – the celebration of the first fruits and the pilgrimage to the Temple in to thank G-d, it is also when Israel received the Torah from G-d at the Revelation on Mount Sinai.

This aspect of Shavuot gave rise to a special custom among all Jewish communities since ancient times, which is to stay up the entire night of Shavuot (or the first night in the Diaspora), to study Torah. This would seem logical as a celebration of the Revelation and Covenant at Sinai, but the Midrash paints a different picture.

Such a seminal and major event like the giving of the Torah obviously required not less major physical and spiritual preparation, which is indeed described in detail in the Torah, including 3-days of abstaining from marital relations, making sure all were spiritually pure and ready, and maintaining a physical safe distance from the foot of the mountain due to the grand and awesome natural phenomena the people would experience when G-d would speak directly to them. One can only imagine how exciting, frightening the entire nation of Israel felt, which should have been expressed in a super level of alertness and anticipation to hear G-d’s word.

However, the Midrash in the Song of Songs presents a rather embarrassing and fascinating narrative: Apparently, the night before the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people fell asleep! On the following morning, when it was time to receive the Torah, everyone was still asleep, and the gathering place was empty. The Midrash then relates that Moses had to wake the people, which caused G-d to later lament, “Why have I come, and no one is here to receive me?”

So to rectify this terrible act, we stay up late, and even the entire night, of Shavuot to “correct” our forefathers terrible, if unintentional, transgression, prove that our love and enthusiasm for the Torah and our covenant with G-d are indeed sincere and everlasting.

Nonetheless, that actual custom of staying up late did develop in stages over the centuries. Not mentioned in the Talmud, the earliest source of the custom is from the Zohar, which mentions that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai—the author of the Zohar, together with the “the early pious ones”, would stay up learning Torah on Shavuot night. Interestingly, the Zohar mentions nothing about our “sleeping in”, but rather states that this was a custom instituted as preparation for Israel’s making a covenant with G-d through the Torah. It was actually much later in history, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that a prominent Halachic authority, the Magen Avraham, suggested that the all-night study was to rectify our original error of sleeping at the first Shavuot. And this has become the most widely accepted explanation for the custom’s origin.

As to what is studied, there is really no prescribed formula, and Jewish communities worldwide conduct Shavuot night learning sessions in many different forms and venues. These included both classic ‘book’ learning from the entire range of Jewish law and lore, as well as intermittent lectures and talks to keep people from dosing off. Many choose to study the “*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*”, a compendium that includes segments and passages from the entire range of classic Jewish literature: Tanach, Mishna, Talmud and Kabbalistic texts, so that everyone can get a true taste of the entirety of Torah, both written and oral.

However, as strong and universal as this custom is, it is certainly not a commandment or requirement, and anyone finding it too difficult to stay up all night may try and remain awake till late, and if even that is difficult,

then he or she has done nothing wrong. In fact, the majority of Halachic authorities rule that if by forcing oneself to stay up late, and certainly overnight, a person will sleep through the morning prayers and Torah reading, the latter takes precedence, and such an individual should not stay up at all. Whatever you choose, Hag Sameah!

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**Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé**  
**Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America**



Parashah of the Week - Emor  
Wholesome Leadership  
Why is the high priest called "Kohen Gadol"?

The book of Vayikra, Leviticus in the Torah is largely dedicated to the services that were to be done at the Tabernacle throughout the travels of the Jewish people through the desert and beyond after their settlement in the land of Israel.

The Torah describes in detail the required practices. And in our portion of the week, it tells us about the priests and the conditions for them to serve in the holy sanctuary. It is important to note that the priest or Kohen in Hebrew, is not only tasked with the services at the Tabernacle, but also with educating the public to observe the laws and statutes of the Torah, therefore it is understood that the priestly family was to have a distinct status within the Jewish people.

The Torah tells us that the Kohanim or priests were to be organized with different tasks, according to the services that they were to perform, with one of the Kohanim, the Kohen Gadol or High Priest, to serve as the head above the rest of the priests.

Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov (1) asks, but why was he called the Kohen Gadol? And he gives us a rather thorough and insightful response. He states that the Kohen Gadol must be greater than the rest of the Kohanim on five things which are strength, beauty, wealth, wisdom and years.

Rabbi Shem Tov writes that it is well known that many things are required for a man to govern well. "Many utensils are needed for a man to rule and lead properly." He states that first he needs to be strong and healthy, since a weak ruler will not be able to confront the lurking enemies. Still, even if he has many subjects at his disposal, such a ruler will not be able to break with ease the yokes of the people. A true leader must be strong in order to stand and defend those who need him and look to his protection.

Rabbi Shem Tov states that the second condition is that a leader must have beauty, he must be handsome. He explains that the masses at all times tend to look up to their leader, therefore no blemishes should stand out. Rather, he must have good looks in order for his statements and guidance to be better received. He adds that just as his beauty is essential, his speech must also be proper. A proper leader must know how to properly communicate with the masses. To speak to them with sensitivity and in their language.

Thirdly, a leader must also be wealthy and honorable. He writes that this is a known fact, that wealth speaks to all. People will follow and support a wealthy ruler, but on the other hand, they will not quickly pay attention to the statements and the wisdom of the poor man.

He writes further, that the fourth condition is that the Kohen Gadol must be wise, full of knowledge and wisdom. He must behave, act and dress with wisdom. It is expected that a man of the statue dresses and behaves in a manner that stands out from the rest of the public. He must be able to teach, to guide and to

give advice to anyone that requires it. The fifth and last condition is that he must be an older man. Rabbi Shem Tov states that a young man will often behave with the inexperience of youth. On the other hand, years of experience will add to his knowledge, maturity and wisdom.

Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov concludes and states that if these facts are true for any leader, how much more so for the Kohen Gadol. (2)

Indeed, our sages remind us about the attributes that our leaders must have. It is imperative and it becomes the obligation of the people to demand to promote good, wise and righteous leaders.

Shabbat Shalom

(1) IBN SHEM TOV, SHEM TOV BEN JOSEPH BEN SHEM TOV (15th century), Spanish rabbi, philosopher, and preacher. Shem Tov was the namesake of his grandfather, and the son of Joseph ben Shem Tov \*Ibn Shem Tov. He became a vigorous defender of Aristotelian and Maimonidean philosophy. He wrote several Hebrew works on philosophic subjects, including one on the distinction between matter and form, one on teleology, and commentaries on \*Averroes' intermediate commentaries on Aristotle's Physics and De Anima. Only two of his works have been printed, *Derashot ha-Torah* ("Homilies on the Torah"; Salonika, 1525) and a commentary on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, which is printed in most Hebrew editions of the Guide. As a preacher, Shem Tov, following Maimonides, taught that only the man of intellect is in the image of God. In an age when many influential Jews chose baptism, he praised Moses who forfeited his status with Pharaoh and jeopardized his life by slaying the Egyptian taskmaster. It is for his commentary on the Guide that Shem Tov is generally known. Shem Tov extols the Guide: "He who knows this book and observes it meticulously is beloved above and pleasant below, and he is assured that he is a member of the world to come." His devotion to Maimonides included a religious acceptance of Aristotelian science.

(2) Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov, Commentary to the Torah, Emor.



**Good People, Good Jews: Thoughts for Parashat Emor  
by Rabbi Marc D. Angel**

In the midst of relating laws concerning the various festivals, the Torah portion includes a verse concerning gifts to be given to the poor. "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field, neither shall you gather the gleaning of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God" (*Vayikra 23:22*). This is a reminder that whatever we "own" is actually on loan to us from God; and God instructs us to share this "loan" with the poor and downtrodden. Careful observance of the rules and regulations is important; but this does not in itself make us into religious people. Religiosity entails a philosophic awareness of the presence of God in our lives, and a commitment to live righteous, compassionate and moral lives.

The Talmud (*Yevamot 47a*) instructs on what is to be said to a non-Jew who wishes to convert to Judaism. We are to tell the prospective proselyte that Jews are subject to oppression. If he/she is still interested, we are to inform him/her of "some of the light mitzvot and some of the heavy mitzvot." The Talmud then specifies that we are to inform the candidate of the agricultural gifts that must be given to the poor and the tithe for the poor. Only afterward are we to tell the person the punishments for violating such mitzvot as eating forbidden food and violating the Sabbath laws. The Talmud—as the Torah itself—places high importance on the laws relating to providing for the poor. Anyone interested in living a fully Jewish life—including those who wish to convert to Judaism—must recognize the centrality of righteousness and compassion in the Torah way



of life. We are not only to observe the ritual commandments; we are to become fine, moral, caring human beings living in the presence of God.

In popular parlance, Orthodox Jews often use the term "shomer Shabbat" or "shomer Shabbos" to designate an observant Jew. Stores advertise in their windows and on the labeling of their products that they are "shomer Shabbos." That is the code phrase for indicating that one is "frum," religiously proper, and worthy of our trust and respect.

Although I fully agree that Shabbat observance is a key ingredient in our religious way of life, I think it distorts our religion to refer to "religious" Jews as "shomer Shabbat/shomer Shabbos." One can be a scrupulously careful Sabbath observer, but also be a thief, miser, boor, and abuser. Shabbat is a component of religious life, but isn't the only component. To single it out as the sole identifying factor of Jewish religiosity is to misrepresent the nature of Judaism. The Torah and Talmud provide many ritual laws that are intended to bring us closer to and more aware of God. The ritual laws are not ends in themselves but serve as the means to shaping us into spiritual, decent human beings. We must strive not merely to be shomer Shabbat, but to be honest, fine, compassionate human beings. We must strive not merely to fulfill the technical laws of the festivals, but to remember to provide for the poor, the stranger, the widow and orphan.

When Rabbi Hayyim Angel was still a rabbinical student, he wrote a short statement responding to the question: Who are religious Jews? That statement well reflects ideal Orthodox Judaism: "Religious Jews are those whose hearts smile when their mouths do. Religious Jews feel pain in another's misery, joy in another's happiness. They know that perfection is impossible, yet they strive for it. They are trees rooted in the earth with their branches extending towards the heavens. Religious Jews are cisterns who do not lose a drop; they are springs of water which steadily increase. They observe the commandments with an adult's intelligence and a child's enthusiasm. They act in a manner that is a credit to themselves and which earns them the respect of both Jew and non-Jew. They are prepared to sacrifice for God, their people, their laws, and their homeland. Religious Jews are a unified mass of sand, yet individual stars who shine on the world."

Instead of referring to observant Jews as "shomer Shabbat/shomer Shabbos," we ought to use the term "shomer Torah," understanding that Torah includes a religious worldview, a set of ritual laws, a distinctively moral, righteous, and compassionate way of life. Anyone who isn't a good person, by definition isn't a religious Jew.

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## Some Light Thoughts

### Recipes for Shavuot

#### Moroccan Chicken Tangine with Honey and Apricots

6 lbs chicken pieces  
1 large yellow onion  
1/2 olive oil  
1/2 teaspoon turmeric  
salt  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
2 cinnamon sticks  
1 lb dried apricots  
8 tablespoons honey  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1/2 cup peeled almonds  
1 tablespoon sesame seed oil



Put olive oil in a large pot or tangine. Fry the chopped onions until soft, then add the chicken, salt, pepper, turmeric and cinnamon sticks. Add enough water to cover the chicken, about two cups. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the chicken is done, adding water if necessary. Remove the chicken pieces.

Add the apricots and simmer for about fifteen minutes. Add the ground cinnamon and the honey, stir and cook until the sauce has a honey-like consistency.  
(Add more honey if necessary.)

When the sauce is almost ready, saute the almonds in oil. Drain most of the oil from the pan, and toast the sesame seeds. Return the chicken to the pot and reheat. Place the chicken on a serving tray, pour the sauce on top of it and top with the almonds and the sesame seeds. Serve with Couscous .

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## Kaltsonia

(Rae David)

Spinach Filling

About 3/4-tsp salt to 1 package frozen chopped spinach (drain water)

1 handful and 1/2 of grated cheese

some oil (2 drops)

dill

some matzo meal (handful)

Mix all ingredients

Fill dough

About 1 tsslsp and 1/2 to each Kaltsonia circle

Press flat - fold in 1/2 and take excess dough off

Press in the edges

Dot with butter and bake at 350 (or 400)

(Double recipe for Pitta (spinach pie)

Double recipe for 15 Kaltsonia's

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Cheese filling

Mix together the following:

1/2-lb farmer cheese

1/4-lb cream cheese

3 eggs

3/4 tsp salt

Add a little flour (1 or 2 tblsp) so mixture will not be too loose

Fill and bake as spinach Kaltsonia

(Double for 15 Kaltsonia's)

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Pumpkin filling

To one 1-lb can of pumpkin, add (to suit taste)

2-3 tblsp honey

1 tblsp or 2 sugar

cinnamon

2 tblsp matzo meal

Caution - don't make too loose a mixture!

to make 30 K's, use 1 recipe of pumpkin, 1 of cheese and 1 of spinach



## Riz b'Haleb

### (Syrian Rice Pudding with Honey and Rose Water)

From our dear friend Jennifer Abadi

Yield: Serves 5 to 7 (Makes about seven 1/2-cup servings)

#### Ingredients:

##### *For Rice Pudding:*

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons long-grain white rice

2 cups cold water

3 cups whole milk

1/2 cup mild tasting honey (such as clover)

1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 teaspoons rose water

##### *For Serving:*

Ground cinnamon, cardamom, or nutmeg

Ground pistachios

1. Place the rice and water in medium-size saucepan or pot and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, and simmer over medium-low heat, uncovered, until most of the water has evaporated and the rice is soft (the water should be level with the rice), about 15 minutes.

2. Add the milk, mix well, and cook over low heat, uncovered, until the mixture starts to thicken, 50 minutes to 1 hour.

3. Mix in the honey, vanilla, and rose water, and stir well over low heat for 5 minutes.

4. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature sprinkled with ground cinnamon, ground cardamom or ground nutmeg (you may also refrigerate and serve chilled; it will keep up to 2 days).



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### Looking for Our Help

If you can help with any of these requests, email us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org)



**Thanks to Jesse Levy, we now have a full identification of everyone in this photo**

Top row from left to right: Morris (Mussie) Cantos, Manny Cantos, Molly Levy Cantos, Sol Cantos  
Bottom row from left to right: Jesse Cantos, David (Davie) Cantos

From Israel:

I am looking for a family from Yanina that came to the town from Monastir in the end of the 19 century or the start of 20's century. The name is Yosef and maybe Sara and their child Miriam (probable surname Levi).

Can you help me and refer me to possible sources of information?

Efrat Shimoni

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From the University of California, Berkley:

Hello Ms. Ikonomopoulos,

Hope you are doing well! This is Noah Usman from the Wikitongues Jewish Languages Project. Thank you very much for putting information about our language revitalization project in your e-newsletter. I have included a short piece about our project below.

Thank you and best regards,  
Noah Usman

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*Wikitongues Jewish Languages Project*

Wikitongues is a nonprofit working to protect and safeguard linguistic and cultural diversity.

This year, we have initiated the Jewish Languages Documentation and Revitalization Project, in which we are working to safeguard all Jewish diaspora languages by recording oral histories and publishing an online dictionary in each language. The linguistic diversity of the worldwide Jewish community is vital to the preservation of our history, culture, and narrative.

We are actively seeking speakers of any and all Jewish languages to work with us to record oral histories and/or document vocabulary in their native languages. If you are interested, please email us at [hello@wikitongues.org](mailto:hello@wikitongues.org) for more information.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

You can also learn more about our project at this link: <https://wikitongues.org/projects/jewish-languages/>.

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From our New York Area Community

Jackie Cohen Helfand is looking for help in identifying people in these photos.





From Italy

Dear Mrs. Ikonomopoulos,

I was referred to your synagogue and museum in New York by Marvin Nachman, possibly a far cousin of mine that I only recently found over the Internet, and I was surprised to learn about your unique community. The concentration of people, objects and historical information on the Greek Jews and their, mostly lost, communities is astounding. When I next visit New York (who knows when) I'll make sure to come by.

I then listened to your three talks on Greek synagogues and communities on the Facebook page and was admired by your knowledge and perspective. As a few of my ancestors, my grandmother's parents, came to Italy from Corfu, I recently researched their origins, life and the reasons why they moved. So I am at the peak of my interest for that past, and with all likelihood both great-grandparents belonged to Romaniote families.

I could find quite a bit of information on the wife's family, one of the many people carrying the Belleli surname as you said, but the husband's origin is less clear. Their surname was Raffael (Rafail), and from some clerical records in Corfu it is clear that Salvator Raffael, the husband, had gone from Ioannina to Corfu, possibly around 1860, along with an older brother Eliasar. Their father was called Rafail Raffael, and I don't know if he died in Corfu or still in Ioannina. Their mother's name was possibly Dora, and she later came to Italy in 1891 along with Salvator.

My question to you: is it possible to trace some evidence of the Raffael (Rafail) surname in Jewish Ioannina or possibly of any descendants? Would that be a Romaniote family?

Thanking you for your understanding, best wishes for your community and work.  
Guido Rietti

### **Ivrea Italy**

Because Guido Rietti is from the Jewish Community of Ivrea, and because I knew so little about it, I research the small community in Piedmont and am sharing the fascinating info I found with our readers. Thank you Guido! – Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as in the rest of Piedmont, the ghetto was established in via Palma (today via Quattro Martiri), close to the castle walls. Since the census of 1761 we know that there were 7 families, 57 people in all, among them the Jona and the Olivetti. From 1799 to 1814 the Jewish community was under the leadership of The Chief Rabbi Eliseo Graziado Pontremoli of Casale Monferrato. In 1801 a gang of robbers attacked the ghetto; the population defended it thanks to the ruse of a simulated counterattack by the thunderous chirping of horses, an event that for years continued to be celebrated within the walls of the ghetto.



With the emancipation of 1848 the community reached its maximum expansion (151 people), contributing to the industrial development of the city with the industry founded by Camillo Olivetti. As evidence of the vigor of the nineteenth-century community are the new synagogue erected in Via Quattro Martiri in 1870 and the abandonment of the old cemetery in Porta Aosta with the opening of a new cemetery in Via Mulini. The community, however, suffered a sharp demographic decline during the twentieth century, while maintaining a presence in the city. Recent restoration work since 1985 has helped preserve the synagogue building.

### Synagogue built in 1875

The earliest documented presence of a Jewish community in Ivrea dates back to the 1540s, a time of violent riots against local Jews, with attempts to plunder stocks of pawned objects. Later a more stable presence is documented, with the arrival in 1547 of four merchant brothers who obtained a ten year trading permit. During this period the community lived in the Borghetto suburb near Ponte Vecchio.

Permits were regularly renewed and required the payment of huge sums into the city's coffers. During the 17th century many Jews fled from the surrounding rural areas to Ivrea due to violence and acts of intolerance. The community grew in size and was moved to a central area near via Arduino. The ghetto was founded by the House of Savoy in 1725, in a building of modern-day via Quattro Martiri, where the community's headquarters are still located today. A census of 1761 recorded 57 inhabitants.

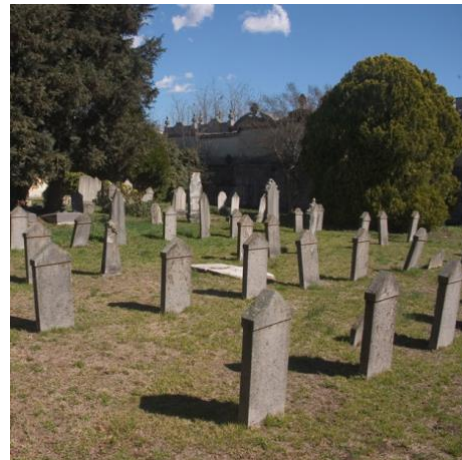
In 1801 the ghetto was devastated and plundered by a band of farmers from the surrounding countryside. Further atrocities were averted thanks to measures taken by municipal authorities and this narrow escape was celebrated by local Jews for many years.

Equal rights were obtained in 1848; the community continued to grow for many years, also in virtue of the city's industrial development; when the city was affected by an industrial crisis, the community dwindled and today consists of only a few members.

Present cemetery dates from 1863



Synagogue

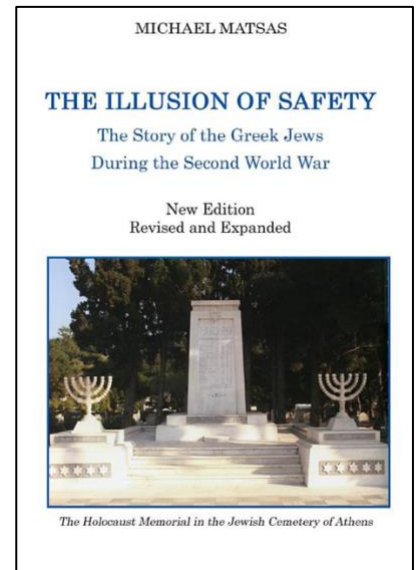


## New Book for Sale from Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum

Kehila Kedosha Janina is honored to sell the recent edition of Dr. Michael Matsas' classic book "The Illusion of Safety." This exceptional book was initially published by Pella in 1997. The new edition not only includes all of the original but also additional stories acquired after the initial publication.

"The Illusion of Safety" is the most extensive coverage of the Holocaust of Greek Jewry, not only the "where" and "how many" but, most importantly, the "whys." Dr. Matsas survived the Occupation of Greece by escaping with his family to the mountains outside of Agrinion. The rest of his family, with few exceptions, were murdered in the Holocaust.

Due to our close relationship with the author and his family, we are offering this book for \$20, including postage and handling (within the USA) for the first 20 orders. After these are sold out, the cost will be \$25 including P&H. Please contact us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org) to pre-pay for a copy at the introductory price.



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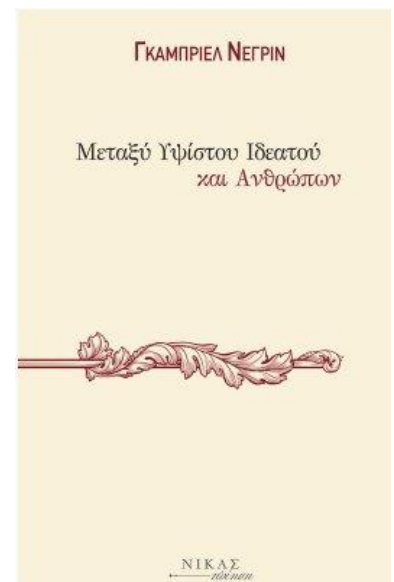
## New Book in Greek

Rabbi Gabriel Negrin of Athens has just published his latest book, "Between the Highest Idea and the People."

Publisher: Nikas / Hellenic Education S.A.

From the book's foreword:

Intense drama, complex rhythmology, from the municipal and word tradition of the Mediterranean countries. Folklore of emotions, so I would characterize this unprecedented poetic collection of a spiritual man who teaches even when he is silent, in the gaps of words, between the lines, in the deliberate pauses marked with typographical "spaces" referring us perhaps to the space of euphoria that has not yet been invented. Socratic teaching, sometimes a reminder and sometimes confessional, but never self-reference, especially when it looks like it is. Socially oriented poetry in arid materialistic times. Excerpts from sacred scriptures, references to scholarly manifestations of Arritus, which encloses and includes every human soul in the world of Mankind. Oriented to this world and to present time, Gabriel Negrin's poetry is sufficiently artistic, but without reproducing old standards and stepping on the wasted of previous generations. The poetry creates style, teaches with a Socratic irony, and draws her name from the depths of the long and long-suffering Greek Jewish soul. You can hear Rabbi Negrin reciting one of his poems: "Mirror" [here](#).





## Photos of the Month



Mezuzot from the Matza Family collection



Seaside wall in Thessaloniki demolished in 1867

How heartwarming to see Aziz Nekoukar, the great grandson of Zadick and Anna Coffino, stop by Kehila Kedosha Janina to celebrate his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. The message from his mom, Annette Nekoukar says everything. "I want to thank you for all your efforts to preserve our Romaniote history. This picture is a testament to your efforts. The ties to our heritage will live on for many generations. This is how he chose to celebrate his 40th birthday. Thought you might enjoy seeing it. Thank you Annette Nekoukar.





**So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.**

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) made out to *Kehila Kedosha Janina*, to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

Some of our major donations have been generous bequests, which have enabled us to complete major work in our synagogue/museum. Do remember us in your will. Your legacy will be present in our legacy. **We need donations more than ever now. You can do this on line on our website: [www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org) accessing the donation link in the upper left hand corner.**

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We look forward to reopening. Normally, we are open for services every Saturday morning at 9:30am and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm and by appointment during the week.



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Website: [www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org)  
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