



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

January 2021 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Wishing all our friends a Happy and Healthy 2021. May we all get back to a new normal and move past the sadness that 2020 brought into our lives. In January, in the Hebrew calendar, we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish "New Year for Trees." On Tu B'Shevat Jews often eat fruits associated with the Holy Land, especially the ones mentioned in the Torah. Tu B'Shevat (which is a transliteration of 'the fifteenth of Shevat') is the Hebrew date specified as the new year for trees. The Torah forbids Jews to eat the fruit of new trees for three years after they are planted. The fourth year's fruit was to be tithed to the Temple.

"And when ye shall come into the land and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as forbidden; three years shall it be as forbidden unto you; it shall not be eaten. And in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy, for giving praise unto the LORD. But in the fifth year may ye eat of the fruit thereof..." Leviticus 19:23-25

Tu B'Shevat gradually gained religious significance, with a Kabbalistic fruit-eating ceremony (like the Passover seder) being introduced during the 1600s. Jews eat plenty of fruit on Tu B'Shevat, particularly the kinds associated with Israel. The Torah praises seven 'fruits' in particular: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. A short blessing is recited when eating any fruit. A special, longer blessing is recited for the fruits mentioned in the Torah. Some Jews plant trees on this day or collect money towards planting trees in Israel. This year the Holiday will begin on the evening of January 27th and end after sundown on the evening of January 28th.



This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Roslyn Vitoulis Honan in memory of Rabbi Bernard Honan and in honor of the children and grandchildren of Roslyn and Bernard: Sara and Charlie, Michael, Roxanne, Rachel and Benjamin and Lydia. Included in this E-Newsletter is an article about the family. We thank Roslyn for her generous donation.

This newsletter, our 142nd 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.kkjsm.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@kkjsm.org

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

If you would like to sponsor a KKJ E-Newsletter in Honor or in Memory of someone, please reach out to us at museum@kkjsm.org.

Urgent Appeal for Support for the Restoration of the Synagogue in Larissa

We recently learned that the Jewish Community of Larissa is in jeopardy of losing its synagogue due to serious damage. The cost of the project, which is estimated to be more than 500,000 Euros, is beyond the capacity of the small community in Larissa to fund on their own. The community has set up the means to donate through their bank account. Email museum@kkjsm.org to receive a copy of their bank transfer information.

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry has offered to help raise money for this important project. The Association is a not-for-profit in the USA and has extensive experience in similar projects, including the restoration of Kahal Shalom synagogue in Rhodes, the Etz Hayyim synagogue in Hania, and repair of both the synagogue and cemetery in Ioannina.

If you would like to donate by check you can send the check made out to the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry and mailed to Association of Friends of Greek Jewry, 1 Hanson Place, Huntington, NY 11743.

Every dollar collected will be sent to the Jewish Community of Larissa.



Simchas

This January we are happy to share our joy, our Simchas, with our readers.

We celebrate the birth of Moshe Chaim Werner, son of Andrea Esther and Samuel Werner. Moshe Chaim was born on December 6th. He is the grandson of Hilda Mitrani.



Andrea and Samuel Werner with Moshe Chaim

Happy Birthday to Mollie Cohen, former President of the Sisterhood of Janina, who turns 90 on January 12th.



Mollie Cohen and her family

Happy Birthday to Annette Binder who turns 93 on January 22nd.



Annette at her wedding in 1946

Join us as we celebrate the 97th birthday of Flory Jagoda.

When the young Flory fled the Nazi invasion of her home country, Bosnia, she took with her only the clothes on her back, her harmonica (ladino word for accordion) and her "suitcase full of songs" (which she says while pointing to her head). Known as "The Keeper of the Flame", Flory is the only living member of the Altarac Family singers who learned the Jewish music of Spain's once thriving Sephardic community from her Nona (grandmother), who learned them from her Nona...all the way back over 500 years to the time before the Jewish People's expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Flory spent many decades in the United States spreading the stories and songs that were passed onto her, performing concerts all over the country, taking on students and apprentices, and hosting large song-filled holiday gatherings at her house. Flory was awarded the prestigious National Heritage Fellowship in 2002, the highest honor our nation bestows upon traditional artists.



Andrew Marcus and Flory at our Greek Jewish Festival

Passings

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Allegra "Gita" Zacharia Korman, a survivor of the Holocaust, deported from Kastoria in March 1944. Allegra passed away on October 10th. Allegra was 93. May her memory be a Blessing.



This picture was taken in Kastoria in 1996. Allegra is on the left.



We mourn the passing of Isaak Revah on December 29th at the age of 86. Isaak was among those Jews with Spanish nationality who were sent to Bergen Belsen and, then to Morocco. So much of the miracle of his surviving was due to a Spanish diplomat who was honored at Yad Vashem. We feel that this story is so important, and for that reason we have included a separate article below on the story of the diplomat and his work in saving Jews in Athens and Salonika. Isaak Revah was born in Salonika in 1934.

We mourn the passing of Morris Salario at the age of 90 on December 5, 2020 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The youngest of five siblings, Morris was born on May 29, 1930 in Chicago, IL and raised on the city's West Side. He graduated from the Chicago Teachers College (now Chicago State University) and had a fulfilling career as an educator and city worker in the state's unemployment agency.

Morris is preceded in death by his four siblings. Born to Jewish immigrants from Greece and Turkey, Morris and his siblings came of age during the Great Depression. They embodied the work ethic, unyielding loyalty, and social responsibility of the Greatest Generation: Through their actions, they taught their children that they could do anything they set their minds to. The Salario siblings used their fierce determination, intelligence, and grit to the benefit of their communities, the lives of those around them, and future generations.

Morris is survived by his nieces and nephews: Alizah and Daniellah Salario, Robert Fischer, Jaqueline Wolf, Robert and David Benowitz, and preceded in death by his nephew Gerald Benowitz.



We mourn the passing of Aris Negrin at the age of 80. Aris was born in Argalasti on 11/11/1940 and passed on December 18, 2020. He was the son of Ilias and Revekka Negrin. He leaves behind his wife, Anna and his children Sami (Elianna) and Ilia (Vagia) and his grandchildren (Ari, Moisi, Marsel and Lizeta Negrin).

We mourn the passing of Dora Bakola (b. 1930 - d. 12/24/2020) widow of Salvator Bakola.

We mourn the passing of Martha Capon Drossman on December 24th at the age of 94. She was the daughter of Daniel and Sophie Sasbon-Capon, the widow of Stanley Drossman, the sister of Jack Capon, and the mother of Gloria Gribin, (Tony), Rhona Drossman and Howard Drossman (Julie) and the Grandmother of Adam (Nicole), Jeremy (Audrey), Sara Gribin, and Sierra and Schyler Drossman and a great grandmother.



News from Kehila Kedosha Janina

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 January 16, 2021 at 10am.

People interested in attending services in person are strongly encouraged to RSVP in advance by emailing Amarcus@kkjism.org.

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
INVITES YOU TO JOIN OUR

SHABBAT SERVICES
IN PERSON
IN THE ROMANIOTE TRADITION

SATURDAY JANUARY 16 AT 10AM

WE CONTINUE TO MONITOR ONGOING GUIDANCE FROM
HEALTH OFFICIALS TO KEEP OUR COMMUNITY SAFE. WE WILL
PROVIDE UPDATES AS WE PLAN TO RESUME MORE FREQUENT
SERVICES OR MUSEUM TOURS.

PLEASE EMAIL AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG TO RSVP

שבת שלום

The Museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina has been busy working 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@kkjasm.org

Our online Zoom presentations, coordinated by Ethan Marcus, the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, and Kehila Kedosha Janina, have been a great success. The latest series by our Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos on the Synagogues of Greece has been widely received. If you missed any of these presentations, you can access them online [here](#).

In addition, a number of synagogues have booked Marcia for a presentation on Romaniote Jews and a virtual tour of the synagogue (for a small fee). If your synagogue would be interested in this, contact Marcia directly at museum@kkjasm.org.

Events in the Greek Jewish World

We are Losing Our Survivors

6 Prominent Holocaust survivors have died in Europe over the past month Read full JTA article [here](#)

Renzo Gattegna

In addition to testifying before young people about the Holocaust, Gattegna, who died of COVID-19 complications on Nov. 10 at 81, also helped rebuild the Jewish community in Italy after the genocide. Gattegna had led the Union of Italian Jewish Communities for 10 years until 2016.

Although he was born in 1938, "I started living in 1944," he said in one interview. His early childhood was a time of fear, want and uncertainty as his family moved from one hiding place to the next in Rome's suburbs, where they managed to flee before fascist gangs showed up and ransacked their home.

Gattegna had two children.



Stella Cohen

One of only 160 people from her native Greek city of Ioannina who survived the Holocaust, Cohen died there on December 1 at the age of 96. She had escaped the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp and for years told high school students about her survival story in testimonies.

Cohen belonged to the ancient Romaniote Jewish community, which had survived for 2,000 years before nearly eradicated by the Nazis. Ioannina was a major center of Romaniote Jews, with about 1,800 living there before the Holocaust.

Cohen had two children.



Samuel Cohen, Stella Cohen and German President Joachim Gauck in Ioannina 2014

Hanukkah 2020 Around the World

Israel

Maccabi Tel Aviv lights Hanukkah candles in memory of North Macedonia's Jews

The international memorial campaign was done in coordination with the the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bitula Monstir Community Heritage Association and the Center for Jewish Impact.



Athens

Traditional lighting in Athens by Rabbi Gabriel Negrin in an untraditional year with COVID-19



Thessaloniki



Rome



Hanukkah in Rome with the Chief Rabbi of Rome Riccardo di Segni

United States

Virtual Hanukkah celebration with the Sephardic Brotherhood. Watch the event with live music, bimuelo cooking, and more [here](#).



We Are Always Proud of Romaniote and Sephardic Jews Who Achieve Greatness

This month we would like to highlight Ben Chewey who has had his first book published. Ben is from the Cohen and Meezan (Mizan) families of Ioannina and Arta.

For more info on Ben's book and on Ben, see [here](#).

Ben came to Greece with us a number of years ago with a group of Greek Jewish Young Professionals.



Ben with the group of Greek Jewish Young Professionals in Ioannina in 2017.

Upcoming Events in the Greek Jewish World

New York Ladino Day – January 10, 2021

Sign up [here](#)



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi

Proudly Present

New York Ladino Day 2021: Adelantre / Onward!

2:00 PM EST on Sunday, 10 January 2021



You'll hear Ruth Azaria, actor Hank Azaria's mother, speak about growing-up with Ladino; Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé on expressions we love; Ladino students on learning the language; renowned writer Myriam Moscona; the premiere of a contemporary short play; and celebrated singer Daphna Mor.

Ladino is a bridge to many cultures. It is a variety of Spanish that has absorbed words from Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, French, Greek, and Portuguese. The mother tongue of Jews in the Ottoman Empire for 500 years, Ladino became the home language of Sephardim worldwide. While the number of Ladino speakers has sharply declined, distinguished Ladino Day programs like ours celebrate and preserve a vibrant language and heritage. These programs are, as Aviya Kushner wrote in the *Forward* last January, "Why Ladino Will Rise Again."

Since 2013, International Ladino Day programs have been held around the world to honor the Ladino language, also known as Judeo-Spanish. January 10th marks New York's 4th Annual Ladino Day created by Drs. Jane Mushabac and Bryan Kirschen for the American Sephardi Federation.

Heritage and Memory: A Focus on Jewish Greece
January 27 - February 6

Sign up for free lectures at UCLA [here](#)
Register for film screenings at the LA Greek Film Festival [here](#)

HERITAGE AND MEMORY: A FOCUS ON JEWISH GREECE

A 10-DAY VIRTUAL EVENT IN HONOR OF
GREECE'S PRESIDENCY OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE
JANUARY 27-FEBRUARY 6 | ALL EVENTS FREE OF CHARGE

FILMS (FOR SCREENING DETAILS, PLEASE CONSULT: [HTTP://LAGFF.ORG/](http://LAGFF.ORG/))

THE QUEEN OF REBETIKO: MY SWEET CANARY
CLOUDY SUNDAY
MAGIC MEN
TREZOROS: THE LOST JEWS OF KASTORIA
ROMANIOTES: THE GREEK JEWS OF IOANNINA
LIFE WILL SMILE
ELEFTHEROMANIA
THE GREAT FIRE OF SALONICA: BIRTH OF A CITY
HEROES OF SALONICA
ISLAND OF ROSES: THE JEWS OF RHODES IN LOS ANGELES
KISSES TO THE CHILDREN
MY PEOPLE: THE JEWS OF GREECE (EXTENDED SPECIAL PREVIEW)

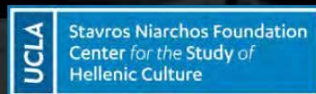


ZOOM LECTURES (TO RSVP, SEE <https://hellenic.ucla.edu/events/>)

- JANUARY 27 10 AM PT **CONVERSATION WITH THE MAYOR**
THE HONORABLE MOSES ELISAF, MAYOR OF IOANNINA
(CO-SPONSORED BY THE PANEPIROTIC FEDERATION OF AMERICA)
INTRODUCED BY HER EXCELLENCY ALEXANDRA PAPADOPOULOU, AMBASSADOR OF GREECE TO THE USA
- JANUARY 29 10 AM PT **MARCIA HADDAD IKONOMOPOULOS, MUSEUM DIRECTOR OF KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA, NY**
"MEET ME ON THE CORNER OF BROOME AND ALLEN: A VISIT TO KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA"
(CO-SPONSORED BY THE PANEPIROTIC FEDERATION OF AMERICA)
- FEBRUARY 1 10 AM PT **LEON SALTIEL, UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA, THESSALONIKI**
"DEHUMANIZING THE DEAD:
THE DESTRUCTION OF THESSALONIKI'S JEWISH CEMETERY DURING WORLD WAR II"
- FEBRUARY 3 10 AM PT **RENA MOLCHO, HISTORIAN & INTERNATIONAL AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR**
"PROBLEMS OF INCORPORATING THE HOLOCAUST INTO THE GREEK COLLECTIVE MEMORY"

BOOK DISCUSSION WITH AUTHOR RIKA BENVENISTE
(IN GREEK; TO PARTICIPATE, CONTACT SZENIOS@HUMNET.UCLA.EDU)

JANUARY 30 10 AM PT *Λούνα (Luna)*



This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Roslyn Vitoulis Honan and her family in honor of the late Rabbi Bernard Honan

This newsletter is sponsored by Bernard's wife, Roslyn Vitoulis Honan and is from the children of Roslyn and Bernard: Sara and Charlie, and their grandchildren: Michael, Roxanne, Rachel and Benjamin, and Lydia.

Bernard's connection to Kehila Kedosha Janina and the Romaniote community in New York was very strong. His parents were Menachem "Max" Honan and Sarah Cantos Honan (a former President of the Sisterhood). Sarah Cantos Honan's father was Morris Cantos, a founder of the KKJ. Morris Cantos' sister, Esther, was the wife of Rabbi Jessula Levy. Rabbi Jessula Levy officiated at Bernard Honan's Bar Mitzvah. We are very appreciative of the generous donation from Roslyn Vitoulis Honan sponsoring this E-newsletter.



Benjamin Honan in Kastoria 1938



Bernard Honan's Bar Mitzvah invitation



Sarah Cantos as young girl in Ioannina 1907



Menachem (Max) Honan and Sarah Cantos Honan



Roslyn Vitoulis and Bernard Honan wedding 1955

Venice: Modern Greece's First Diaspora

Read the full article by Alexander Billinis [here](#)

Diaspora is a Greek word, connoting a dispersion of seed or people. It is quite appropriate, as Greeks from time immemorial have left their shores. Greeks in America or Australia are part of a long (and continuing) chain of migration out of the Greek homelands.

The entire Mediterranean and the Black Sea basin hosted Greeks from ancient times, but what happened in Venice in the years immediately prior to and after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 in many ways set the stage for all subsequent Greek migrations. The Greeks who arrived in Venice included all classes, from the daughter of the last Byzantine Prime Minister, the Duchess Notarina, to merchants, artisans, soldiers, laborers, and sailors. Unlike the post-Byzantine Greeks who migrated to Salento and Calabria in Southern Italy (where a dying dialect of Greek remains spoken to this day in a dozen or so villages), bolstering the Greek element that had been there since Classical times, the Greeks of Venice founded a new community from scratch.



Though the Venetians were less dogmatic about religious matters than other Italian or West European states, the Greeks nonetheless did face discrimination because of their Orthodox faith, and initially, the Venetians required them to worship in the Uniate fashion, forced to acknowledge the Pope. The Greeks in Venice successfully lobbied to be under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, testimony to the power of the Greek merchant community and, significantly, to the large numbers of Greeks under arms in the service of Venice, known by the Italianized Greek word *stradioti*. This was unique and then set the standard by which all Greek communities established themselves, both before and after the emergence of the Greek state in the 1830s.

Nearly 100 years after the community's founding, the Church of San Giorgio dei Greci rose from the canals of Venice in 1573, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture nonetheless a lovely fusion of the Byzantine and the contemporary surroundings. San Giorgio recalls, in some ways, some of the Orthodox churches in areas of Greece dominated by Venice, such as in Crete or Corfu. When we visited, on a thickly humid August day in 2011, the high courtyard walls surrounding the church in lovingly washed white marble provided a heavenly respite from the tyranny of heat and the crush of camera-toting tourists. Inside was the iconography of some of the finest Venetian artists, as well as Greek masters such as the Cretan iconographer Damaskinos.

The Church's bell tower, visible from the Grand Canal, served as a beacon to guide us to the church. Like nearly all bell towers in Venice, San Giorgio's is a leaning tower, as the waterlogged Venetian earth struggles to support the weight of such edifices, many of which have fallen over the years. Next to the church, there is the Istituto Ellenico, the Hellenic Institute, where priceless information on Hellenism in Italy and the West regularly receives visits from Greek scholars and their colleagues from around the world.

What moved me most about the visit, apart from the architecture, was a plaque on the whitewashed wall of the community center, commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the community's founding, in 1498. The community kept the Greek faith and letters alive throughout this period. The Greeks' entrepreneurial and



mercantile mettle, another Diaspora characteristic, emerged from this period. Schools supported by the community included a vocational institute for girls.

The community is tiny today, with generations of Greeks assimilating into Venetian society, or, as the fortunes of Venice waned, many moved to other locations, notably Trieste in the late 1700s, as the Austrian Mediterranean port actively attracted immigrants with commercial and maritime skill. Like all Greek Diaspora communities, the Venetian Greeks assisted with blood and treasure the emergence of an independent Greece, and some Venetian Greeks returned to the new country. Nonetheless, a small community remains, bolstered in part by Greek scholars studying at the Institute. The Greek state retains a consulate in Venice, recognizing its historic importance, and the Greek Orthodox Exarchate of Italy is headquartered here.

Go into any Greek church in the Diaspora and, in a very real sense, the congregants are descendants of those of San Giorgio dei Greci. This community set the stage refused to sever its links with the Patriarchate and remained steadfast in its Orthodoxy and Hellenism. The church served as the community's reference point, where christenings, marriages, and funerals were held, friends met, gossip exchanged, and where a newcomer from the "old country" might find some spiritual (and perhaps secular) guidance. So often we in the Diaspora think that our history is all "back in Greece," but when you are in the exquisite shadow of San Giorgio, you discover that you are part of that history.

Venice's beauty and singularity speaks for itself and far greater pens have extolled it. Everyone should visit. When going to Venice, any Greek ought to walk a few bridges from San Marco Square, from the crowds, the ten-euro espressos, and the production line tours, to a slower, more intimate encounter with San Giorgio dei Greci — and their history.

Kastellorizo/Megísti: Another Place to Put on Your "Must Visit" List Once We Can Travel Again

Article printed in Greek News from December 28, 2020

The name Kastellorizo inspires visions of an island fortress.

Indeed, its distinctive, time-worn defences on the northeast coast gave rise to its current appellation – a Greek corruption of the medieval Italian name Castello Rosso ("Red Castle").

From the 12th century, Castello Rosso became a familiar place for early travelers, traders and adventurers. Before the arrival of Venetian and other Italian merchants, Kastellorizo was also known as Megiste (or Megisti) in ancient Greek – as we know both from historical sources and an inscription carved into the rock below the castle that was discovered by Charles Cockerell during his 1812 visit.

The ancient name refers to Megisti, the largest island of the surrounding archipelago of 30 smaller islets and reefs.

Located about 130km east of Rhodes and about 2km from Anatolia, Megisti offered ships protection in several natural bays: a double harbor on its northeast side – today the main (Kavos) and smaller (Mandraki) ports – separated by Cape Kavos; and a third, western inlet, Limenari, useful when the winds shift. Inland, the mountainous terrain features three prominent peaks, Vigla (273m), Paliokastro (244m) and Mounta (230m), which likely were well-known landmarks for approaching sailors. Lying outside the Aegean, Kastellorizo represents the easternmost and smallest of the central Dodecanese Islands.



Its proximity to the Lycian coastline, flanked by critical maritime centers including Patara, Antiphellos (Ἀντίφελλος, Turkish: Kaş), Aperlae and Myra, made the island an excellent offshore base, a launching-off point for the mainland and an East-West gatekeeper.

On 28 December 1915, during WWI, while the Kingdom of Greece was still neutral, the French navy led by cruiser Jeanne d'Arc occupied the island at the behest of the inhabitants who feared Turkish reprisals. French troops occupied Kastellorizo, off the southwest coast of Turkey, on 20 December 1916 to use it as an advance base against the Turks. Not pleased at the presence of the French, the Turks secretly deployed an artillery battery of four 155-millimetre (6.1 in) and twelve 77-millimetre (3.0 in) guns within range of the island. The French commander requested a seaplane carrier to conduct reconnaissance in the area and Ben-my-Chree was sent in response.

Ben-my-Chree arrived on 11 January 1917 and anchored in the harbour which faced the Turkish mainland. The Turkish guns opened fire about two hours later, hitting the carrier with their third shot. Subsequent shells disabled her steering and started a fire in her hangar that spread across her upper deck. The French fought back, bravely assisted by Kastellorizo's citizens, but the surprise Turkish bombardment successfully sank the ship and destroyed about 1,000 homes. The Ben-my-Chree remained half-submerged in Kastellorizo's port until 1920 when it was refloated and towed to Piraeus.

In the Treaty of Sèvres, the island was assigned to Italy, and the Italian navy assumed it from the French on March 1 1921, but the treaty was never ratified. The Treaty of Lausanne confirmed the Italian claim on Kastellorizo, and the island – under the Italian name "Castelrosso" – was then integrated with the possession of the Isole Italiane dell'Egeo.

Because of the Italian occupation, the island was not affected directly by the Population exchange between Greece and Turkey of 1923. Still, the forced emigration of the large Greek population living on the nearby Anatolian coast hit the island's economy heavily. Kastellorizo was assigned to Greece with the Paris Peace Treaties, 1947. In May 1945 it was still under British administration, but on September 15, 1947 it effectively came under Greek administration. The island formally joined the Greek State on March 7 1948 together with the other Dodecanese islands.

According to the 2011 census, the population then stood at 492, all living in Megísti. The municipality also includes the islands of Ro and Strongyli, both without permanent inhabitants.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



On November 1st, 2005, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 60/7, designating January 27th as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, based on the date in 1945 when Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest of the hundreds of concentration and death camps that operated in Nazi-occupied Europe, was liberated by the Red Army.

One of the central themes on every International Holocaust Memorial Day is the honoring and commemorating "righteous gentiles": non-Jews who helped Jews survive the Nazi onslaught at the risk, and even sacrifice, of their own lives. Acting out of basic human morality and decency and often religious conviction, these heroes and

heroines protected and literally saved the lives of Jewish friends, neighbors and even complete strangers because, as many would respond why they acted as they did, it was simply the right thing to do.

It is fascinating to discover that at the outset of the Exodus story, which we read this month in our weekly Torah portions, there is evidence that "righteous gentiles" played a crucial role in saving the Jewish nation in-formation in ancient Egypt. As part of Pharaoh's plan to solve his own "Jewish problem", he ordered "the Hebrew midwives" to kill all Israelite male newborns at birth. The Torah names two midwives, "Puah" and "Shifra", but our classic commentators assume that there must have been hundreds of midwives serving the Israelite population, so they see Puah and Shifra as the two "chief" midwives, representing the entire group. But to Pharaoh's chagrin, the midwives defy his royal order and act to sustain the life of every Israelite child out of a "fear of G-d", risking their lives in the process. This is certainly one of the greatest stories of moral courage in history, and our classic commentators rightly see this heroism as such.

However, there is a basic disagreement among our classic commentators as to whether the midwives were Israelites, i.e. Jews or gentiles! Most commentators insist that the midwives were Israelites, both because of reading the Hebrew term "Hameyaldot Ha'Ivriot" as simply "The Hebrew midwives", as well as offering proof that "Puah" and "Shifra" were actually Moses' sister and mother, Yocheved and Miriam.

However, other commentators suggest that Puah and Shifra and the other midwives were Egyptian, and not "Jews" at all! Their opinion is based on reading "Hameyaldot Ha'Ivriot" as "The midwives of the Hebrews", which they understand as being a much more general term referring to Egyptian midwives assigned to the Israelite population.

It is therefore not farfetched, according to this interpretation, that the brave midwives were the "righteous gentiles" of their day, who rejected Pharaoh's immorality and chose to identify with the Israelites' suffering, even at the risk to their own lives! Some of these same commentators suggest that these heroic women subsequently became "righteous converts" and joined the Israelite nation, but many maintain that they did not convert, and refused to collaborate and contribute to Pharaoh's ungodly, inhumane and evil persecution of Israel out of a basic morality toward one's fellow man.

The lessons we can learn from this argument between commentators are profound.

In terms of the more prevalent opinion that the midwives were Israelites/Jews, they join the myriads of Jews in every age who endangered and sacrificed their own lives for their people, since Judaism, fully demonstrating the most basic Jewish premise that "all of Israel are responsible for one another". However, if the midwives were not Israelites/Jews, they may be the first, or at least among the first, "righteous gentiles" the world ever knew!

The Ramban – Moshe Ben Nahman- of Spain, in his commentary on the Book of Genesis and the lives and lessons of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, determines that "everything that happened to our Forefathers – is a sign for their descendants". Given the possibility that the midwives in Egypt were "righteous gentiles", perhaps their heroic actions are also "a sign" for future generations. Furthermore, like "righteous gentiles" during the Holocaust, the midwives were unfortunately the exception and not the rule. However, this in no way derogates from the significance and impact of their actions. Quite the contrary: it clearly demonstrates how heroic and moral actions of the few can have a decisive and major impact against evil, as well as giving us confidence that no matter the extent or scale of immorality, persecution and hate in any age, morality, decency and G-d's way will ultimately triumph.

Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé
Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America



Parashah of the Week - Vayigash
The Love of a Brother

Yosef had tricked his brothers by placing his cup in Binyamin's sack and now accusing him of having robbed it. The brothers realized that they were in a very difficult situation. Was this a trick? Did Binyamin really steal the cup? Was destiny playing a trick on them after what they had done to Yosef their brother many years before? Indeed, they had promised their father that they would return Binyamin safe and sound, but now, was there a way to save Binyamin? And if not, could they return to their father without him? What would happen to Yaakov, their father, if Binyamin did not return? One can only imagine the thoughts that were running through their minds during these tense moments.

Rabbi Hayim David Sheloush (1) in his commentary to the Torah reminds us that speech and the ability to use it is indeed a gift that human beings possess. He states, "Speech is the utensil that the mind uses to express itself, and that it's the proper use of our words that will make the difference when it is required. Rabbi Sheloush explains that Yehuda made the proper speech and at the right time, as stated in the book of Moshe, "A word in its proper time." (2)

What are some of the elements for a speech to be made at the right time? Rabbi Sheloush writes that Yehuda fully understood his father and his concerns, his feelings and his pain. At the same time, Yehuda also understood his own standing and his limits in front of the vizier of Egypt, and indeed, he also understood what it would be like to have to face his father if he returned to him without Binyamin. Yehuda expressed these many facts in a few words when he said about Binyamin and his father, "their souls are bound together." (3)

In order to illustrate Yehuda's words even better, Rabbi Sheloush tells us the following analogy. He states that there was once a man who had migrated into a new land. By some unfortunate circumstances, the king decided that the man was deserving of capital punishment and the man was placed in jail until the royal decree was performed. Once the man realized his terrible situation, he asked to be brought in front of the king to make a last request. "What is your request?" Asked the king. The man asked to be allowed to go back to his hometown for a short while and to be allowed to put his house and matters in order before his death. The king asked, "What is the guarantee that you will return?" The man replied that he had a close friend who would be willing to sit in jail until his return. The king was amused and accepted his request thinking that no one would be so foolish to sit in jail and wait for his return. Yet, the next day, the man's friend appeared at the court and said to be willing to sit in jail until his friend's return. The king continued to be amused by them, and about what the friends were ready to do for each other and therefore allowed the man to travel back to his hometown and for his friend to take his place in jail until his return. A month went by, and surely enough the man came back and asked the king to release his friend and for him to receive his punishment. The king was shocked at the two friends and said, "you men have done a very foolish act." He turned to the friend and asked, "Did you really expect your friend to return? Why would you take this kind of a risk?" And then, turning to the first man he asked, "And you, why did you return, you could have lived as a free man?"

"Your majesty," the man said, "our friendship is a true friendship, we love each other like brothers. If one is hurt the other is in pain. If one is punished and dies, the other one will die from the pain. We knew that we would gain a bit of time during my travels, but we also knew that upon my return I would die and he would eventually die too. I had to return in order to die with a clear conscience, I could not go on knowing that my friend was put to death because of me."

When the king heard these words, he meditated for a moment and said, "this means that if I put you to death I'll be killing your friend, an innocent man. Therefore I have decided to forgive you, absolve you of your guilt, and save the life of your friend. Rabbi Sheloush comments that this indeed was the claim that Yehuda was making in front of Yosef. If Binyamin did not return, his father would surely die from the pain. Still, Yehuda went even further and said, "I will take the place of the lad and be a slave in his place..." (4)

We may wonder what would have been Yosef's reaction if Yehuda would not have said the proper words. But Yehuda had measured words and they made an impact and an impression in the heart of Yosef and the brothers were finally brought back together.

Shabbat Shalom

(1) Rabbi David Haim Chelouche (Shelush) (1920-2016) the former Chief Rabbi of the city of Netanya. He was born in the Old City of Jerusalem. His father was Rabbi Yosef Chelouche who was the leader of the Mugrabi community in Jerusalem. He was amongst a great generation of Rabbis, like Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Rabbi Barukh ben Haim, Rabbi Sion Levy, Rabbi Haim David Ha-Levy, Rabbi Sion Aba Shaul and others who studied at Yeshivat Porat Yosef under the tutelage of Rabbi Ezra Attie.

(2) Mishle 15:23

(3) Bereshit 44:30



Lions and Laggards: Thoughts on Parashat Vayhi by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

This week's Torah portion includes Jacob's last words to his sons. He described his fourth son, Judah, as a lion, and stated that the scepter of kingship would never depart from Judah (and his descendants). All the brothers (and their tribes) would turn to Judah for leadership. What did Judah do to deserve this singular role? The answer may be suggested in the story of Joseph's threat to keep Benjamin in Egypt as his servant. The brothers, believing that Joseph was a ruler of Egypt, were in a terrible quandary. They knew that their father Jacob would be devastated by the loss of Benjamin. They knew that they had to find a way to confront Joseph and make him change his mind.

Reuben was first born. He had a strong, impetuous personality. Why didn't he come forward? Apparently his bravura abandoned him at this moment of crisis.

Simeon and Levi were prone to violent action. They wiped out the men of Shechem. Why didn't they challenge Joseph? Apparently, their courage melted when facing a regal opponent.

Issachar, according to rabbinic tradition, was the family's great Torah scholar. He devoted his days to study and spiritual contemplation. Why didn't this man of God stand up to Joseph? Apparently, his holiness and scholarship did not lead to making him fit for courageous action.

Zebulun, according to rabbinic tradition, was an expert businessman. With all his financial acumen, why didn't he try to make a deal of some sort with Joseph? Apparently, his business skills failed him at this desperate moment.

Indeed, all of the brothers failed to muster the courage and quick-wittedness to stand up to Joseph and fight for their brother Benjamin, for their father Jacob, and for the honor of their family. All except Judah.

Judah's life before this crisis had not been one of uniform courage or brilliance. The Torah makes careful note of his various failings. Yet, Judah's personality undergoes a gradual development. He is able to admit error. He is able to stand up against his brothers in their plan to murder Joseph. And at the critical moment, when Benjamin's life is at stake, only Judah comes forward to challenge Joseph and to risk his own life in the process.

Judah argues with eloquence. He is poised and articulate. He tells Joseph that he will stay in Egypt as a servant instead of Benjamin, but that Benjamin must be returned to his father. Judah is so persuasive and so sensitive to the feelings of his father, that Joseph can no longer hold back tears. Joseph cries. He tells his brothers who he really is. The brothers reconcile. All because of Judah's courage. Judah is a lion. He has the presence of mind and the strength of character that all the other brothers lacked. In that one moment, Judah proved himself worthy of kingship.

All of us face crises in life. All of us confront problems. Many, like Judah's brothers, find themselves unable to take responsibility, to make necessary sacrifices, to act with courage. Many, like Judah's brothers, have various talents--and yet they allow themselves to be silenced in the face of challenge. We need to learn from Judah's example. We need to understand that leadership requires clarity of thought, unshakeable commitment to what's right, and a lion's courage to act. If kingship was assigned to Judah, the Torah calls on all of us to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." We must be lions, not laggards.

The Saving of Isaak Revah

From Yad Vashem's archive on the Righteous Among Nations

Before World War II there were many Spanish Jews living abroad. After the war broke out the Spanish government did not hold itself responsible towards those Jews residing in countries under German or Fascist control, despite their having Spanish citizenship. Spanish diplomats, therefore, were not expected by their superiors to provide any help or protection to their country's Jewish citizens. Their return to Spain was radically restricted, and they were left without any protection from the murderous plans of Nazi Germany. Spanish foreign policy in the case of the Spanish Jews living in Greece was no different. In March 1943, the deportations of Jews from Salonika to Auschwitz began, and within five months over 48,000 Jews were deported. The thriving Jewish community, which existed since Hellenistic times, was almost completely decimated. For pragmatic reasons, the Germans agreed to exempt Jews holding Italian and Spanish citizenship from deportation, on condition that they return to their countries. Italian Jews were thus spared and could return to Italy; but the Spanish Jews were faced with the reluctance of the Spanish government to permit them to be repatriated. Salomon Ezraty, of the Spanish diplomatic delegation in Salonika, reported to his superiors about Italy's protection of its Jewish citizens, and asked that the Spanish authorities do the same. On April 8, 1942, the request was formally rejected by the Department of Economy of the Spanish Foreign Ministry.

This was the situation which Sebastián de Romero Radigales, the newly-appointed head of the Spanish diplomatic delegation in Athens, found on his arrival. In a letter from April 15, 1943, written shortly after his arrival, Radigales thanked the Foreign Minister Jordana for his nomination and stated that he was busy with arranging the repatriation of 510 Jews from Salonika who had Spanish citizenship. Despite the strong opposition from the Spanish Foreign Office as well as that of the German Ambassador to Greece Altenburg, Radigales was determined to save these Jews. Following Radigales' cables asking Madrid to facilitate the repatriation of the fleeing Jews, the Spanish Foreign

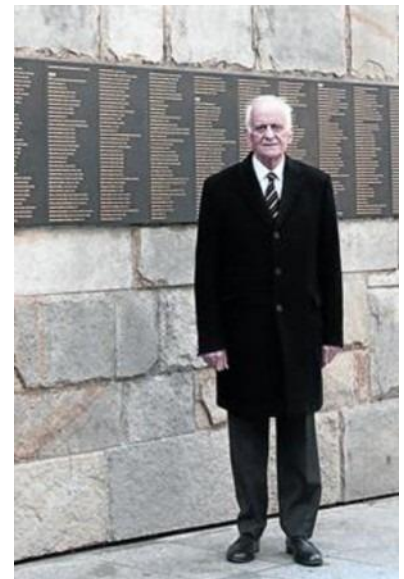


Sebastián de Romero Radigales

Minister Jordana instructed the Spanish ambassador in Rome to forward to Radigales a cable of March 18, 1943, with updated regulations, drastically restricting the number of Spanish citizens eligible for repatriation.

This did not deter Radigales and in the beginning of June 1943 he proposed that the Spanish Jews would return to Spain by sea. Jordana ordered the Spanish ambassador in Berlin, who was officially Radigales' superior, to instruct the diplomat in Athens "to maintain a passive approach, avoid any personal initiative and to refrain from issuing collective passports." Still determined, Radigales devised a plan to evacuate the Spanish Jews of Salonika by using a Swedish ship that would sail under the Red Cross flag. He went on to issue the necessary travel documents and make the preparations for the repatriation. He made a report on his progress to Ambassador Vidal in Berlin, who passed the reports on to Madrid. In a cable from July 1, 1943 Jordana wrote: "it is crucial to curb the pro-activeness of the General Consul in Athens and to block his initiative." The same orders were repeated in the cables that followed. Radigales not only acted on behalf of Jews with Spanish citizenship, but also tried to extend his protection to others. In a cable from June 9, 1943 he broached the subject of widows and divorcées of Jewish Spanish citizens, who had lost their citizenship when their union with a Spanish-citizen spouse had ended. In one particular case, Radigales tried to provide protection for a Greek Jew and his crippled son who were housed by Ezaraty in Salonika and were about to be deported. These attempts were in complete defiance to the instructions he had received from his ministry and must have aggravated his superiors. As the Spanish authorities continued to delay in their decision regarding the repatriation, the German authorities informed the Spanish ambassador in Berlin that until such a decision would be made they were considering transferring the Spanish Jews of Salonika to a camp in Germany, thereby giving the Spanish government some more time. The Germans nevertheless stressed that should there be no progress, they would transport the Jews to Poland. In his report to Jordana, Ambassador Vidal added: "I cannot conceal the tragic implications of such a transfer to Poland."

On August 13, 1943, a group of 367 Jews with Spanish citizenship arrived in Bergen-Belsen. Radigales continued relentlessly in his attempts to protect these Jews until finally the Spanish government changed its position and permitted the transfer of this group to Spanish Morocco. Their travel documents bore Radigales' signature. Isaac Revah, who was a child at the time, remembered how his group was allowed to leave the camp in February 1944. "Being released from a Nazi camp is an incredible event. It all happened thanks to an outstandingly courageous and humane man," he wrote to Yad Vashem. Revah did not forget his rescuer's actions and applied to Yad Vashem to have Radigales honored and recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. Following the German occupation of Athens in September 1943, the Jews of Athens were now also in danger of deportation. Rachel-Lola Hassid Frances told Yad Vashem that when the Germans came to arrest her family on March 25, 1944, her father managed to phone Radigales. Radigales prompted him to flee with his family and sent his wife over with an embassy car. But Rachel's father refused to go, and the family was deported to Bergen-Belsen along with another group of Spanish citizens. The family did survive, and in 2010 Rachel submitted her testimony about Radigales' actions to Yad Vashem as well. Radigales did everything in his power to help the Jews who went into hiding. He also intervened with the German authorities to have Jews released from the Haidari detention camp; supported those who went into hiding; kept the belongings of arrested Jews to ensure that they were returned to their owners or their rightful heirs after the war – actions that were all far beyond his duty as a diplomat, and often against his government's policy. On 26 February 2014 Yad Vashem recognized Sebastián de Romero Radigales as Righteous Among the Nations.



Isaac Revah

Some Light Thoughts

A special recipe to use on Tu B'Shevat: Stuffed Figs with Goat Cheese

Ingredients

12 large purple or black figs
3 ounces soft goat cheese
¼ cup chopped walnuts
¼ teaspoon sea salt
¼ cup honey

Tools:

Coffee/spice grinder or food processor
Plastic bag or pastry bag

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Start with one fig. Slice the stem tip off of the fig to create a flat surface. Stick a sharp paring knife into the center of the flat surface until it is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way inside the fig. Twirl the knife clockwise and counter-clockwise to hollow out the center of the fig, pulling out the fig flesh and seeds that stick to the knife. The top of the fig should look like the top of an olive. Repeat for the remaining figs.

Cover a small cookie sheet with foil. Place goat cheese into a small plastic bag (or, if you have a pastry bag, you can use that). Warm the goat cheese by massaging it in your hands for about a minute. If it's a cold day you may need to warm your hands under hot water before doing this. You want to make sure the cheese is soft and squeezable. Push the cheese to a bottom corner of the bag. Cut the very tip of that corner off the bag with a pair of scissors. Squeeze the cheese through the hole in the corner. Pipe about a teaspoon of cheese into the center of each fig. Place the stuffed figs onto the lined sheet, evenly spaced.

Take the chopped walnuts and pulse them in a spice/coffee grinder or food processor until they become a coarse powder, or "meal." Don't over-process or you'll wind up with walnut butter! Spread the walnut meal into the base of a small skillet. Toast the meal over medium heat for 3-5 minutes, stirring constantly, until the powder becomes fragrant and lightly browned. It will burn if you're not careful, so keep an eye on this until it's done.

Immediately pour the toasted walnut powder into a small bowl and mix in ¼ teaspoon sea salt, stir until well blended. Set aside. Warm up the honey in a small saucepan over medium heat until it becomes soft and fluid. This should only take about a minute. Pour the honey into a small cup with spout or bottle. Drizzle the honey over the top of the stuffed figs. Sprinkle the salted walnut meal evenly across the top of the figs. Some of the meal will stick to the honey, some will fall onto the tray. Just make sure that all exposed areas of honey are evenly coated with walnut meal.

Place the tray on the middle rack of the oven. Cook for 10-12 minutes until the figs and cheese are heated through. Don't over-bake them; the fig flesh is delicate and will fall apart if you let it bake too long.

Serve figs warm as an appetizer to a dairy meal. They will be bursting with juice, so make sure you have napkins on hand!



Looking for Our Help

I wonder if perhaps you know about a Holocaust survivor Ovadia Yani, or Gani that was with the group of my father Moshe in Santa Maria di Bagni but he didn't arrive to Israel and I wonder if he returned to Thessaloniki or immigrated to another country? If you have any information, please email us at museum@kkjism.org.

Wanted: Synagogue Photos from New York City. If you have any photos of the exterior or interior of Romaniote and Sephardic synagogues in New York City, please email amarcus@kkjism.org. We are conducting research on synagogues founded by Jews from Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans, and any photos you may have from Bar Mitzvahs or weddings in these synagogues would be greatly appreciated. Neighborhoods include the Lower East Side, East Harlem, the Bronx, New Lots, Mapleton, or other locations. Thank you!

Photos of the Month

From the Photo Archives of Pepo Battino of Blessed Memory (former President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina). Thanks to the work of Perikles Ritas. Jewish public school 1957/1958. Nissim Venouziou teacher.



The Opening of the Tram in Thessaloniki 1926



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 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.



Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 142

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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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