Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Best wishes for a healthy, happy and productive secular New Year. May 2016 bring us peace in the world. In honor of the increasingly improved relationship between Greece and Israel, a new stamp has been issued in Israel commemorating the sisterhood between Haifa and Thessaloniki. While Tel Aviv is a sister city of Thessaloniki, many Saloniklis built the port of Haifa in the early 20th century.
This newsletter, our 83rd 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).

We now reach close to 8000 households worldwide, with our community of ‘friends’ continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (papusoup@mindspring.com) so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher foods) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

Passings

~ We mourn the passing of Dianne Levy from Boca Raton, a woman who loved her Yanniote heritage. Dianne was born in 1938, the daughter of Nat and Pauline Negrin and recently passed away after a short illness. Nat Negrin of Blessed Memory was the son of Louis (Elias) Negrin and Anna Ganis. We have such fond memories of Dianne visiting Greece with us in 1998, 2002 and 2013. Dianne is survived by her daughters and grandchildren. May her memory be a Blessing.

Dianne with her parents Pauline and Nat

Marriage of Pauline and Nat Negrin

~ We mourn the passing of Irene Isaacs, widow of Ike Isaacs. Irene passed away on Nov. 2, 2015. She is survived by her son Ed Isaacs, her daughter, Karen S. Bell, seven grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. We all will miss her wit, her intellect, and especially her love and devotion.

Irene Isaacs and her daughter Karen Bell
~ We mourn the passing of Joe Ezratty (son of Sarah Ezratty, Sisterhood’s past president) in December. Joe was the son of Louis and Sarah Ezratty, both of Blessed memory. He was 84 years old. Joe was the beloved father of Monte, Brian, and Raif, father-in-law of Jackie, Debbie, and Elena and grandfather of Jake, Joanna, Robbie, Sydney, Bradley, Samantha, Danielle and beloved husband of the late Pearl Ezratty and wonderful and loving partner of Paula Franklin for the last five years. Joe came from a large and loving family and was cherished by his brothers Albie and his late wife, Essie, Bernie, and Marty and his wife Rona.

~ We mourn the passing of Avram Mordos, born in Zakynthos on January 15, 1931, the son of Moses and Esterdina Mordos. Avram passed on December 17, 2015 just a month short of his 85th birthday and is survived by his wife Erriketa and children, Moses and Esterdina. Avram survived the Holocaust as a hidden child on the island of Zakynthos, among those Zakynthian Jews who were hidden by their neighbors with the help of the Metropolitan Bishop and the Mayor. After the earthquake of 1956, along with most of the remaining Jews of Zakynthos, his family settle in Athens. Avram was the cousin of our Board of Trustees First Vice President, Jeff Mordos. Avram never lost his love for his beloved island, Zakynthos. May his memory be for a blessing.

~ We mourn the passing of Mike Yamali, who will forever be ingrained in our memory as the spirited man who danced balancing a glass of ouzo on his head. Mike’s family was from Larissa. He was the son of Gilda and Moise Yamalli. Mike’s brother Albert and his wife, Ruth, passed away before him. He is survived by his sisters Stella Bakolas, Dina Couenca, his sister-in-law Rae Yamalli, his children and grandchildren. He was 85 years old when he passed, surrounded by his loving family.

Mike dancing with his sister, Stella Bacolas at a June concert of Ladino music
~ The Jeuda Yanina tradition continues with the ceremonial Brit milah pillow & the Aron legacy lives on with Max Lucas Aron, the first grandson of Madeline Judah Aron, and the first son of Shari & Craig Aron. Madeline graciously put the brit milah pillow cases on loan to the Museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina and it was returned to the family for the ceremony.

~We welcome the birth of Vidal Naar, first son of Devin and Andrea Naar. Devin is a Professor of Sephardic Studies at the University of Seattle and the proud son of Saloniklis. May the passion and love for the Greek-Sephardic world live on in Vidal.
~We celebrate the marriage of Tity Matsa and Trifon Repapis in Greece. Tity is the daughter of Ilias Matsas of the Matsa and Yohanan families, and is related to many of our Yanniote families in the United States.

~We celebrate the 96th birthday of Hy Myones, father of Steven, Jerry and Irving Myones and Rebecca Myones Negrin. Hy recently lost his wife Betty. The photo below was from Hy’s 95th birthday when his Betty was still by his side.

We welcome hearing about simchas from our community. It is truly our joy to share your joys. If you lament not seeing your family photos in our e-newsletters, do share them with us. We can only publish them if we have them!
Δikoi Mas, Los Muestros (our own) come home

We love when our own visit Kehila Kedosha Janina. In November, we were honored by the visits of members from the Pallas, Matsil and Nahoum families. Rachel Bussom’s grandfather from the Pallas family was bar mitzvahed at Kehila Kedosha Janina and, of course, David Levitt, the grandson of Matty and Ruth Matsil has always know his connections to Kehila Kedosha Janina, but Elyse Nahoum had thought she was Sephardic until her husband met a Romaniote Jew at an event and, on hearing the surname, Nahoum, knew that Elisa Nahoum was from the Romaniote world. These are the reasons that it is so important that we are here, to reconnect with those from the next generation, whether they knew about us or not!
In December, Kehila Kedosha Janina continued to welcome visitors from around the world.

Visitors from the Czech Republic and Germany

Visitors enjoying our new Community Room/ Education center thanks to a bequest by Ada Finifter

Visitors of all ages love holding our ancient torahs

From LESJC walking tour

Jerry & Laurie Pessah, Henry & Naomi Perahia
Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

The Greek Jewish Young Professionals celebrated Hanukkah at Kehila Kedosha Janina with their first Hanukkah Party. They continue to welcome new people in their 20s and 30s into the Greek Jewish Young Professionals Network. If you are interested, e-mail GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com to sign up. As you can see from the photos below, the Hanukkah party was a great success. The Greek Jewish Young Professionals Network continues to welcome new people ages 20s-30s into the Network. You can email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com to sign up for the Network.
While Kehila Kedosha Janina is the only Romaniote Synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, we have built bridges with other synagogues with which we share much in common. The Sephardic Jewish Center in Forest Hills (SJCFH) was also founded by Jews from Greece, mostly Sephardim from Thessaloniki who, in the 1960s moved their congregation from the Bronx to Queens.

Members of our community, including our President, Marvin Marcus, attended a Hanukkah party at SJCFH and we are proud to share some photos.
Teaching the Holocaust is so important. Recently, in Athens, students from the University of Athens visited Beth Shalom Synagogue in Athens and Rabbi Negrin and Marios Soussis (President of the Second Generation of Survivors in Athens) spoke on the Holocaust, the importance of remembering and the rise of Anti-Semitism.
On January 27th, countries throughout Europe, including Greece, will stop and remember victims of the Holocaust. In Greece, this year, the theme will be the role of the Righteous who risked their lives to save Greek Jews.

Wall of the Righteous Among Nations from Greece in Yad Vashem

To date, there have been 25,685 Righteous Among Nations honored by Yad Vashem. Among them are 321 Greek Orthodox Christians. We, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, never forget these stories because, without them, many of our dear friends would not be with us. One of the stories is that of Dr. Kostas Nikalaou who saved members of Isaac Dostis’ family (the Cohen Family from Preveza).

The following is from Yad Vashem

Yitzhak (Isaak) Cohen had been a friend of Nikolaou Kostas since the age of 14. On Yom Kippur of 1943, the Germans began to concentrate the Jews in Athens in preparation for deportation to the concentration camps. Nikolaou came to his Jewish friend’s house to ask how he could help him and his family (seven people). He suggested that he hide his friend and his friend’s family in the country, and finally obtained forged non-Jewish identity papers for them. Kostas arranged for a boat to take the Cohen family from Greece to Turkey. Until a boat could be found, he hid the family in the mountains. Five or six other Jews also joined the on the journey to Turkey. The Cohen family set sail for Izmir. From there, they made their way to Aleppo and then to Palestine. One sister, along with the family’s elderly father, were hidden in Greece with non-Jewish identity documents which Dr. Kostas had obtained. In addition to the Cohen family, Kostas rescued ten other people.
There are times we are particularly proud to be Greek and this is one of the reasons why.

Association "Agkalia" awarded the Raoul Wallenberg Prize

For its achievements in providing frontline assistance to thousands of refugees

If you want to comment this news: lrwf.feedback@gmail.com

The Raoul Wallenberg Award was created by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation with the goal of distinguishing those people who by their excellent work and exceptional deeds. In virtue of the exemplary show of solidarity undertaken by these individuals, demonstrating integrity in their conduct, outstanding performance in their respective occupations, and for their firm and continuous support of non-governmental organizations, the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation has decided to create the award. The Award was presented for the first time in year 2000, thereby bestowing upon the 21st century a much-needed welcoming message of hope. The Raoul Wallenberg Foundation is chaired by Eduardo Eurnekian.
In turn, the Council of Europe established the Raoul Wallenberg Prize in 2012, at the initiative of the Swedish Government and the Hungarian Parliament.

The 2016 Prize went to Agkalia, a Greek association acting on the island of Lesbos, for its outstanding achievements in providing frontline assistance to thousands of refugees irrespective of their origin and religion.

As the Greek island of Lesbos has become a European gateway for refugees, Agkalia has been providing temporary shelter, food, water and medical aid to people in need, assisting some 17,000 refugees and migrants since May 2015. Agkalia’s activities furthermore promote tolerance through awareness-raising, fighting against racism and discrimination of any kind.

"As a small and flexible local organization based on volunteers, Agkalia sets a leading example of effective action by European civil society on a burning global issue”, stated Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, announcing the jury’s decision. “Agkalia’s activities reflect the fundamental values of the Council of Europe and contribute to its combat for human rights in Europe and beyond,” he added.

The award ceremony of the prize, which amounts to 10,000 euros, will take place on 13 January 2016 at the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg.

We are so proud of our friend, Judy Moonelis. In England, see her exhibit at the University of Westminster. In New York, see her work at the Museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina.
Our 2015 Greek Jewish Festival was such a great success that plans for the 2016 Festival is already taking place. On the next page you can find our information on the May 22, 2016 Festival. Save the date. Come celebrate with us on Broome Street. This year the Festival will be even better! Last year over 2500 people attended. This year, we are hoping for over 3000.

SAVE THE DATE!
GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL
SUNDAY MAY 22, 2016
12PM – 6PM
BROOME ST BETWEEN ALLEN ST & ELDRIDGE ST
LOWER EAST SIDE

IF YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS WOULD LIKE TO BE A SPONSOR, PLEASE CONTACT ANDREW MARCUS AT AMARCUSNYC@GMAIL.COM
WE WOULD BE INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT!
Save the date in Los Angelos

Sephardic Meet-Up
Join us in L.A. for the fun!
5.15.2016

Join us for an Incredible Celebration of our Sephardic Heritage!
Speakers • Catered Mediterranean Luncheon • Full Day of Fun & Learning!

Cost: $55 per person
Location: The Olympic Collection Banquet & Conference Center, 11301 W. Olympic WLA CA 90064
Date: Saturday, May 15, 2016 • Time: 9 am - 5 pm

We need your paid reservation by 12/31/15 to secure our site location.
(please contact Mark for any payment arrangements)

Payment Options:
Paypal.com: Login, select "money" select "Friends or Family," add mangel@pacbell.net, the amount,
write registrant(s) name in notation box. and send.
Or, by regular mailed check: payable to Mark Angel
Mail to: Mark Angel, 5309 Asterwood Drive, Dublin, CA 94568

Questions? Contact Mark Angel • email: mangel@pacbell.net • ph: 925.829.9288

Note: After 1/1/2016, price goes up to $59.
Money will be refunded if we don't meet our quota by 1/1/16.

More details soon: discounted hotel, add-on options for Sat. 5/14 dinner & Mon. 5/16 breakfast

Full Agenda Coming Soon!

Sponsored in part by CA Multicultural Arts Institute (CMAI) a 501-C3 non-profit, Tax ID No. 94-2310929
On the first Shabbat in January, 2016 we read the first section of the book of Exodus, which introduces the saga of Israel’s sojourn, slavery and redemption from Egypt, commemorated by the holiday of Pesah – Passover. And though G-d’s primary purpose was to choose the Jewish people to receive the Torah and follow its commands, from the outset it was also clear that we were to be a "light unto the nations" and always work and strive to make the world a better place for everyone. And there is no question that in this arena, we have succeeded beyond all expectations. Jews of every type have always been at the forefront – and often even the founders- of movements and actions for social justice, scientific advancement, human rights and so much more. "Tikkun Olam" – repairing the world - has become the theme of multitudes of Jewish and non-Jewish activists the world over.

Yet instead of gratitude and recognition, we seem to be "rewarded" for our efforts with anti-Semitism, which encompasses the entire gamut of anti-Jewish (and anti-Israel) sentiments, statements and even actions that not only never seem to disappear, but rather often increase in intensity. And yet we continue in our ceaseless efforts – and successes – in "Tikkun Olam", no matter what the consequences. Can this phenomenon even be explained?

Jewish tradition tells us that when one wants to understand "current events", the best place to look is the weekly Torah portion. And in fact, the first Torah portion of Exodus illustrates in an almost uncanny fashion, how contemporary these ancient scriptures remain. After a quick introduction of the names of the Israelites that came to Egypt with Jacob, and the end of the era of Joseph, who by all accounts literally saved the Egyptian empire from starvation and dispersal, verse 8 says, "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph". The most famous and comprehensive classic Jewish Bible commentator, Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, 11th century) offers explanations as to the meaning of a new king who did not know Joseph, since Joseph and all he did for Egypt were part of history, so how could even a new king not know him? Rashi first offers the more obvious and literal interpretation that a new king arose who did not personally know Joseph. However, Rashi is bothered by the fact that nowhere does it say in the Biblical narrative that Pharaoh died and a new king replaced him. Therefore, Rashi offers a less literal interpretation, suggesting that this was same Pharaoh under which Joseph served, though his attitudes and perception of Joseph had changed, i.e. he acted as if he did not know Joseph and all he did. And while chronologically this interpretation would seem a bit far-fetched, given the age Pharaoh would have been, the continuation of the text certainly not only gives added credence, but also could have been written hundreds and thousands of years later regarding the Jewish experience in so many lands:

"And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when any war is initiated against us, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were fearful because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard slavery, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of work in the field; in all their slavery, wherein they made them serve with rigor. And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives.... and he said: 'When ye serve as a
midwife to the Hebrew women, ye shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live......But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive.....and Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive" (Exodus 1, verses 9-22).

Even a cursive reading of this text shows how contemporary this Biblical narrative is even today. It’s all there: irrational envy and fear of Jewish success; the idea of the "fifth column", Jewish betrayal and treason, and of course a distorted vision of how large and powerful Jews can become, not to mention extreme changes in the same ruler’s attitudes and treatment of his/her Jewish citizens.

And yet we continue in our quest for morality, ethics and a better world, which often seems as irrational as the Jew-hatred our actions seem to generate. But perhaps that is the answer: "Tikkun Olam" is not based on a rational expectation of reward for efforts, but is, rather, part and parcel of our being, our essence and DNA as members of the Jewish people. Persecution, annihilation irrational Jew-hatred may slow us down, but we will not be deterred from our Divinely decreed mission and purpose of trying to make this world a better place to live. Am Yisrael Hai! The People of Israel live!

Sephardic News of Interest from Around the World

Restoration of El Transito Synagogue in Toledo

Spain: Sephardic museum/Transito synagogue restored, reopened
September 6, 2015

Month long restoration and cleaning work in August has been completed at the 14th century El Transito synagogue in Toledo, which houses the Sephardi Museum. The Museum reopened Friday in time for weekend events connected with the European Day of Jewish Culture.

According to Spanish News Today web site,
Experts are now confident that the building is closer to its original condition and confirm that it is better illuminated than prior to the work just completed. This follows the removal of approximately 5,000 nails which previously supported the silk wall decorations, which were taken down late last year.

The work was carried out by the Institute of Cultural Heritage of Spain. In a news release, the Museum detailed the process of taking down the hangings and cleaning, treating and plastering the walls and installing new lighting.

The Transito synagogue was declared a national monument in 1877. A record number of about 375,000 people visited in museum in 2014.
Plans to Restore Jewish Cemetery in Bitola (Monastir) and Create Memorial Park

Work is under way at the historic Jewish cemetery in Bitola, Macedonia, to create a memorial park there commemorating the large local Jewish community murdered in the Holocaust. The site will be called the Memorial Park for the Jews from Monastir (another historic name for Bitola).

At a ceremony this week, dignitaries including the Israeli ambassador, the Macedonian minister of culture and Bitola’s mayor planted trees to symbolically launch the landscaping for the project, which was organized the Israeli Embassy, the city of Bitola and ARHAM (Architecture and Ambiance Association for sustainable urban development.)

“With this park all of us will contribute to the protection of the historical heritage of the Jewish community that existed in this area for more than five centuries,” Culture Minister Elizabeta Kancheska Milevska said, according to local media reports. “The Memorial Park will serve as a permanent remembrance of Macedonian Jews, a monument to their role in building coexistence alongside their fellow Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and others.” She added that a memorandum of cooperation between the Holocaust Fund of Jews in Macedonia, the town of Stip and the Ministry of Culture foresees the restoration of the Jewish cemetery in Stip.

As we reported earlier, the mayor of Bitola and Israeli ambassador to Macedonia Dan Orian signed a declaration in August to protect and preserve the cemetery, one of the largest and oldest in the Balkans.

“With this agreement, the Jewish cemetery in Bitola will be protected from the effects of time, will be preserved, and will be elevated into a significant cultural and historic monument,” local media quoted Mayor Vladimir Taleski as saying at the time. “A memorial street will be lined with trees, one for each of the Jewish families that once lived in Bitola.”

Bitola was a major center of Jewish life in the Balkans with a large, though in general impoverished, population. Out of about 3,350 Jews who lived there on the eve of World War II, only about 100 survived.

Founded in 1497, the cemetery, located on a steep hillside, was abandoned and left to ruin after World War II. About 1,000 tombstones — horizontal as in the Sephardic tradition — remain in place, but most are heavily eroded and illegible. The cemetery is enclosed by a wall, with a big gate with an arched entrance flanked by two arched windows. A civic campaign to restore it got under way in 1997, to coincide with the 500th anniversary of its foundation, and before the current project got under way, various groups from time to time cleared vegetation and cleaned the stones.

Access Jewish Heritage Europe on Facebook or www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu on the internet for additional stories.
Request for Our Help

Penny Santiago from the Matathia family approached us for help:

"I was wondering if you could help me figure out a dice game my family played on the holidays called fockla (phonetic spelling) all I remember is that you played with 5 dice and 5’s didn’t count in the score. Does anyone have any knowledge of this game? If so, contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

We love when readers share their memories and photos with us.

"I was just browsing through my past emails, when I came upon your October newsletter, and thought I’d read it again... I always enjoy them.
In any case, on page two (under "SIMCHAS") there’s a picture of a bride with a brief family background, in which her (Britney Mazza's) family names are given as background. I was familiar with some of the family... Ben and Millie Mazza were our friends. Ben was in the army with my brother, Jack, in WW2... Tica’s uncle Jess Asser was a relative to the Mazzas, and you also make mention of Britney’s great grandparents, Solomon Asser and Joyia Aptsy. Actually, that last name should have read Apsty, which is how the Yanniotes said "Epstein”. I don't know how an Epstein ever became a Yanniote family name, but it was, and there were a few of them in the family. I also don’t know who was the first of the Epsteins (Apstys) who entered the Asser family, and it’s too late to find out now, but it’s always mystified me, how there was a family of Epsteins (Apstys) who were as Yianniote as anyone...
... and perhaps I should have dug up more information when I was younger, and could...
Stay well and Tica sends love
Max Negrin”

We love hearing from our community and we love hearing about how much our e-newsletters mean to them. Annette Binder (from the Josephs and Politis families shared her memories with us. The blurb on the Hametz family brought to mind the closeness between her Josephs’ grandparents and the Hametz family. Annette was born in January of 1928, three months before the Hametz family arrived in the United States. The oldest daughter of Israel Hametz was Sarah Josephs Hametz. Sarah had come to the United States before the rest of the family and had married Joseph Leon Josephs. Joseph was a brother of Esther Josephs Politis, Annette’s mother. The Hametz family came to stay with Annette’s family in Williamsburg before they found a place to live on the Lower East Side. Annette fondly remembers how Ovadia Hametz would conduct the Pessach Service for either the first or the second night of Pessach every year in the household of Annette’s grandmother and her Aunt Sarah and Uncle Joe Josephs who lived across the street from Annette. Annette’s family lived at 194 Rodney Street in Williamsburg and the Josephs lived at 197 Rodney.

Annette is always a source of special memories. It appeared that her maternal grandmother was not the best of cooks and would burn everything. In fact, her grandmother would tell Annette’s mother that burnt food made you smart just to get her mother to eat it!

If our newsletter evokes memories, please share them with us. We love them!
We were fortunate to acquire precious photos that we wish to share with you. These are from the Cohen family (Jane and Steven Cohen). The wedding of Abraham Cohen.

Recommended sites on the internet.


http://nyti.ms/1VduTw5
New York Times article on religious buildings in New York City

When we were in Egypt! Exhibition shows Jewish life after the pharaohs

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.
When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11-4 and, by appointment during the week.