



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

May 2020 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This month, we celebrate Shavuot, a Jewish Holiday which, unfortunately is often overlooked. Shavuot is the Biblical Holiday celebrated on Sivan 6 (and 7 in the Diaspora) on the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai. This year it will be celebrated from May 28-30. The Torah is likened to “nourishing milk” which is one reason why we eat dairy on Shavuot. Shavuot means “weeks,” and it celebrates the completion of the seven-week Omer counting period between the second day of Passover and Shavuot. This year, around the world, Shavuot will be quite different in most households as we continue to fight the spread of the coronavirus. We are all in this together. We have suffered worse in our history. We will survive this. Just know that our thoughts and prayers are with you. Please note that both our synagogue and museum are closed until further notice. Understandably, this has caused severe financial hardship. If you see it in your heart to send in a contribution, we would be most grateful. You will find info on contributions throughout this newsletter.



This newsletter, our 134th 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

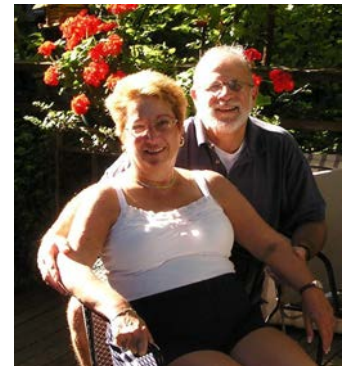
Hopefully, we will soon be open for services again. When we are, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up by emailing info@kkjsm.org so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher foods) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

Simchas

A special shoutout to Hy Matza who turned 96 on April 21st. Hy is the son of Ezra Matza and Mollie Samuel, both of Blessed memory and both born in Ioannina, the grandson of Haim and Steroula Matza, both of Ioannina, and the great grandson of Menachem and Anna Matza, both born in Ioannina. As with most Yanniototes, Hy is related to other Yanniotote families (Lagary, Samuels, Solomon, Menahem, Jeuda, Raphael, Naftali, Yohanan, Coffina, Zaffos, Coffina, Eliasof, Vitoulis, Genee) and many Sephardim (Confino, Yamali). We are sure that they are all wishing Hy Happy Birthday.

Passings

It is with great sadness the we report the passing of Gladys Beseler Colchamiro, age 78 on April 24th. Gladys had suffered for years with a liver condition that worsened over the past year. She was living in Delray Beach, Florida. Gladys is survived by her husband, Elliot Colchamiro, a member of the Board of Trustees of Kehila Kedosha Janina, and her children and grandchildren. She will be remembered for her strength during adversity and her gracious spirits. May her memory be for a blessing.



We mourn the passing of Anita Nachman Matsil, ex-wife of Marty Matsil, mother of Martin, Robert of Blessed Memory and Amy Matsil Honig. Anita was the daughter of Max Nachman and Rachel Dostis, and the granddaughter of Hyman and Anna Nachman. Anita was 88 years old and died of coronavirus related complications.

We mourn the passing of Rebecca Gabai (from the David family of Ioannina) at the age of 94 in Israel. Rebecca passed on April 20th a few hours before the commemoration of Yom HaShoah. Rebecca was 18 when she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, rounded up in Ioannina on March 25th, 1944. Rebecca survived the camps and returned to Ioannina. She married another Yanniot, Alberto Gabai, also a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Rebecca's number tattooed on her arm was 77056. Alberto and Rebecca made Aliyah to Israel where her daughter Roula and son-in-law Megir (Mario) Barouch lived.

Rebecca is pictured with her mother Flora (who was murdered in the camps) in the famous photo at right, taken during the deportation of the Jews of Ioannina. This photo was among 17 others that appear on the website of Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Below, Rebecca is pictured with her great-grandchildren in Israel.



We mourn the passing of Norman Kobren, living in Delray beach. Norman was the husband of Lily Koulias who passed in 1987. He is survived by his children, Jody, Ellen and Joel, and his grandchildren, Matthew, Lauren and Jack. Norn will be mourned by his extended family and the many who remember him as "the Sergeant in Arms" of the Pashas. Norman was 94.



We mourn the passing of Gabor Newmark (Gabriel ben Itzhak), father-law of our Board of Trustees member and Second Vice President, Marc Winthrop. Gaby was born in Hungary on 8/16/1931 and passed in New York on 4/6/2020. He was a survivor of the concentration camps. He was 88 years old and is survived by his wife, Anko, his daughter, Susan Winthrop, his son, George, daughter-in-law, Monique, and 4 grandchildren.



We mourn the passing of Dina (Matilda) Yamali COUNECA (Koeneka). Dina was the sister of our beloved docent, Stella Bacola. Dina was 85 when she passed. She is survived by her son, David, and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and extended family.



Yamali Family

We mourn the passing of Mollie Pinhas at the age of 101. Mollie was born into the Yomtov family, the daughter of Nissim Yomtov and Annie Abraham, the granddaughter of Raphael and Hanoula Nachmias. Mollie was the widow of Max Pinhas. Mollie is survived by her three children, Albert, William and Anne. She will be mourned by the extended Yanniote community.



Annie Abraham and Nissim Yomtov 1912



Leo and Susan Matza

We mourn the passing of Alan Matza, the son of Louie (Leo) and Susan Matza, the nephew of Mollie Matza Cohen (former President of the Sisterhood) and Jack Matza, and the grandson of Sacalina Yohanah.

During this time of pain and anxiety, with the spread of COVID19, we are so proud of Kim Matsil, a lovely lady who is certainly performing a Mitzvah.

Caterer to the Jewish community steps in to help elderly, frail during pandemic Kansas City Star

Caterer Kim Matsil works in her kitchen, preparing food that she would later deliver to people in the community who are elderly or otherwise homebound.

We are all trying to stay at home and do our social distancing, but many are looking forward to our approved trips to the grocery store. But what happens if it really isn't safe for you to leave your house, even to get food?

Local caterer Kim Matsil, of Kim's Kreations, is stepping in to help a handful of folks who may be elderly or immunocompromised — those who really shouldn't venture out of the house. It can be extra difficult for these folks to get food because many of them keep kosher.



"I have a lot of friends that are elderly; I've gotten to know a lot of those people through the Jewish Community Center and through my synagogue and stuff. I know that they're not supposed to go out," Matsil said. "I have a neighbor. She was in the hospital. I took over some food for her. She shouldn't be leaving the house — not that she can't —but she's been in a compromising position."

"I found myself with no jobs to do until mid-May and needed something to do to keep myself busy and sane," she said. "I needed something to do because I'm not used to having any spare time." When she realized there might be a need for her help, she called around to some of her friends to check on them.

"Some of them they have people that are helping in their houses, but everyone needs a break," Matsil said. "I purchased a lot of kosher chicken and salmon (for canceled events), and I'm trying to be creative with what I have, picking fresh ingredients here and there."

Matsil's friend, Marlene Katz, helped connect her with a few people who might need her services.

"She had all of this extra food, and when we're in the condition we're in, this did not surprise me that this is what she would do. She's a very giving and loving and caring person," Katz said.

As of last week, Matsil was delivering to 11 households. She started her deliveries March 14. Matsil calls to let them know she's coming, then leaves the parcel on the step so that no one has to have any direct contact.

"I'm trying to focus on people who might need a bit of a smile when they open their door and they see a bag of food," she said.

Right now, she isn't charging for the food, although friends have made some donations to help her be able to keep doing this for longer. For Passover, coming up April 8, she may have to charge just a little bit, because Passover ingredients are much more expensive.

"The stuff for Passover is kind of extraordinary; it's one of the most expensive holidays. If someone can't pay, I'll give them whatever they need," Matsil said.

Some of the recent food items she's made for people include noodle kugel, chocolate chip cookies and salmon croquettes.

"I just like making people smile. I like to make people happy, and when they have good food in front of them, it makes the world go round," she said.

Remembering Mike's Diner in Astoria

With the recent passing of Kostas Sergiadis, the owner of the iconic Mike's Diner in Astoria, we were reminded of the original owner, Alex Eliassof, who named the diner after his father, Michael Eliassof, members, of course, of the Greek-Jewish community in New York. Here is an old article printed at the time of Alex's death

By Nathan Duke

Alex Eliassof, one of the original founding members of Astoria's popular Mike's Diner on 31st Street, died earlier this year at age 89 (January 29, 2010) on his birthday (January 29th), his son said.

The longtime Queens resident grew up in Astoria but moved to Kew Gardens Hills in the late 1960s and lived there until his death Jan. 29, said Mark Eliassof, his son.

Mark's grandfather, Michael Eliassof, had originally opened the diner, at 22-37 31st St. in Astoria, in the late 1920s. Alex Eliassof had revamped the eatery upon returning to Queens after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Alex's brothers later joined the family business.

"He loved Astoria," said Mark Eliassof, who lives in Kew Gardens Hills. "It was so close to Manhattan and Tony Bennett would perform there. He was very politically involved and knew the neighborhood."

Alex Eliassof upgraded the diner in the 1940s and became a co-owner with his grandfather, the eatery's namesake. He lived in the community until 1967, when he moved to Kew Gardens Hills. In 1977, he sold the restaurant.

"He was a very nice, hardworking guy," said Konstantinos Pavlakos, who bought Mike's Diner 20 years ago and is currently one of several owners, of Alex Eliassof.

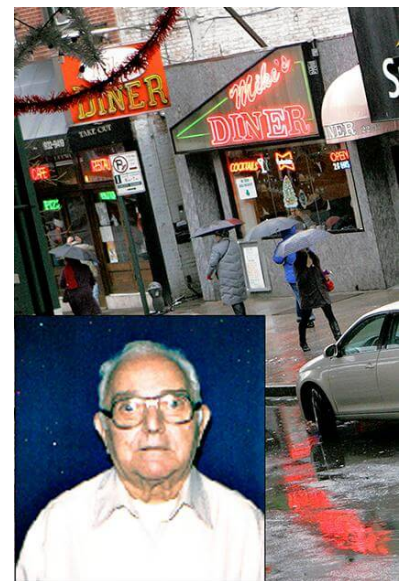
City Councilman Peter Vallone Jr. (D-Astoria) said Mike's Diner has long been a hangout for neighborhood residents as well as a popular site for elected officials. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ate at the diner while visiting the community during the 10-day western Queens blackout in 2006.

"I remember when I was little, my dad used to take me and my brothers there," Vallone said. "The fact that it's still there with new restaurants opening every week in the community is a testament to its staying power." Peter Vallone Sr., father of the councilman and the former Council speaker, said he has been eating at the diner for 72 years.

"I've brought future presidents, governors and mayors to have breakfast and lunch there," he said.

A memorial service was held Jan. 31 at Sinai Chapels in Fresh Meadows. Alex Eliassof was buried in Beth David Cemetery in Elmont, L.I.

He is survived by his wife, Nina Eliassof, as well as his son, Mark Eliassof; grandson, Adam Eliassof; and granddaughter, Tara Eliassof.



In these difficult times, Kehila Kedosha Janina is working hard to reach out to those confined to their homes. We are a Kehila (a community) and we look forward to the day when we can gather together once again.

HEAL US LORD AND WE SHALL BE HEALED; SAVE US AND WE SHALL BE SAVED, FOR YOU ARE OUR PRAISE.
SEND PERFECT HEALING AND RESTORATION FROM ALL OUR PAINS, SICKNESS AND INFIRMITIES, FOR YOU ARE THE MERCIFUL, FAITHFUL GOD OF HEALING. BLESSED ARE YOU, LORD, WHO HEALS THE SICK OF YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL.

רְפָאנוּ יְהוָה וְגַרְפָּא, הוֹשִׁיעֵנו וְגוֹשְׁעָה, כִּי תִהְלָתְנוּ אִתָּה,
וְהַעֲלֵה אֲרוּכָה וּמְרַפָּא לְכָל-תַּחֲלוּאֵינוּ וּלְכָל-מַכְאוּבֵינוּ
וּלְכָל-מַכּוֹתֵינוּ. כִּי אֵל רּוֹפֵא רַחֲמָן וְגֹאֲמָן אַתָּה:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Ἀνάρρωσον ἡμᾶς, Κύριε, καὶ θέλομεν ἀναρρώσει, σῶσον ἡμᾶς καὶ θέλομεν σωθῆ, διότι Σὺ εἶ ὁ πρὸς ὃν ἀποτεινομεν τοὺς αἴνους ἡμῶν χάρισον ἡμῖν τὴν ὑγείαν καὶ τὴν ἴασιν εἰς πάσας τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν, εἰς πάσας τὰς ὀδύνας ἡμῶν διότι Θεὸς ἰώμενος, ἐλεήμων καὶ πιστὸς Σὺ εἶ. Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, Κύριε, ὁ θεραπεύων τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ σου Ἰσραὴλ.



Three times every weekday we read this prayer.
In these difficult times we ask God to fulfill this prayer and answer the call of all of those in need.

Past Events
Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day – Virtual Commemoration

Although we could not gather together in person for our annual Yom HaShoah commemoration, community members from around the world sent us photos of candles they lit in memory of all those we lost. May their memories be for a blessing.



Zino & Mae
Gabrielides



The Ledner
Family



Elliott
Colchamiro



Jesse
Colchamiro



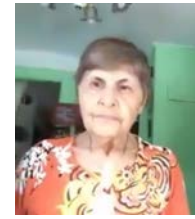
Almo Family in memory of
the Jews of Salonika



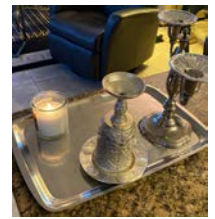
Dr. Joe Halio



Elana Hasson in memory of
the Jews of Rhodes



Koula Kofinas in memory of
the Jews of Larissa



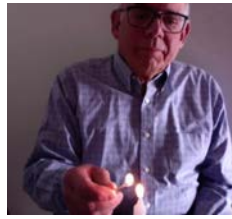
Rosita Nahum



Sam Namias in
memory of the Jews
of Athens



Adam Kofinas in
memory of the Jews of
Ioannina



Marvin Marcus in
memory of the Jews
of Veria



Sarah Aroeste in
memory of the Jews
of Monastir



Marcia Haddad
Ikonomopoulos in
memory of her family



Igor Kožemjakin in
memory of the Jews of
Sarajevo



Rabbi Daniel Bouskila



Russo Family in memory of
the Jews of Kastoria



Renan Koen



Rodopi Sisamis
and Family



Natee Bay

**IN MEMORY OF THE SIX MILLION AND
 IN SPECIAL MEMORY OF THE
 67,000 GREEK JEWS WE LOST**



Lawrence
Russo

Due to the New York State shut down because of COVID19 and the fact that all religious institutions and museums must be closed, there are no upcoming events or religious services at KKJ at this time. We will let you know as soon as this changes. Do check our website www.kkjsm.org and our Facebook page along with news from our community partners for upcoming digital programs. SHINDC and the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America are offering Zoom programs (music, services, rabbinical dialogues, etc.)

Sephardic Digital Academy Free Online Classes



From the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America:

We're excited to announce the launch of our Sephardic Digital Academy, a new national partnership to connect and educate our Sephardic community institutions, synagogues, Rabbis, educators, and members across the United States.

We are partnering with more than a dozen affiliated synagogues and institutions to bring you new weekly classes and series on Sephardic Torah, Halakha, traditions and customs, Ladino language instruction, Sephardic cooking, and so much more. All classes are FREE and open to all, with participation via zoom and live-streamed on our [Facebook Page](#) and posted on our Youtube Channel. As we continue to connect and develop new programs, we will be updating you on weekly additions to our class schedule, including finalizing an online calendar for easy access. We hope that this new program will help you feel a little more connected to our Sephardic Community, identity, history, and heritage.

If you're interested in learning more about the Sephardic Digital Academy, including opportunities for sponsorship or becoming a contributing educator, please reach out to info@sephardicbrotherhood.com.

[Click Here for the full class schedule](#)

Israel Celebrates 72nd Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jewish State



News from Jewish Greece

Message from KIS

The Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece sends the warmest wishes of Greek Jewry for Israel's 72nd birthday with the belief that the miracle will continue as long as there is the remarkable human resources that motivates it and carries it. Happy birthday Israel!

"In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles!" This quote by David Ben Gurion has been proven right many times in the history of Israel.

The "miracle" of Israel, which we often refer to on Yom Haatzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, has semantically evolved from biblical to modern times, based on the interaction amongst solidarity, faith and strong beliefs, great leaders, resilience and hard work, wise choices and prudent strategy planning, as well as persistent focus on the target for the common good.

With a society formed by Holocaust survivors and the people who settled there coming from the East and the West, some because they believed in the need to establish an independent state for the Jewish people, others because they were persecuted in their countries of birth. With a society that endured and continues enduring the pain for the loss of thousands of its children who sacrificed themselves for the existence and the safety of the citizens of the State of Israel. This is the reason why the mourning is closely tied to the joy of independence.

Statement of KIS to the Jews of Greece on COVID 19

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Mankind experiences one of its most difficult periods after World War II, with thousands of dead, victims of the covid-19 coronavirus, and with millions of people confined at home in order to conform with precautionary measures imposed by the scientific community.

"Pikuach Nefesh", the "control, the saving of life" is prioritized by Judaism as the highest value prevailing over all other commandments. This is why the Chief Rabbi of Israel issued an interpretive announcement stating that the protection and precaution guidelines of the Health Ministry must be implemented in full by all people because they serve the very meaning of the phrase "Pikouach Nefesh."

We at the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), since day one that the virus struck our country, on the 27th of February 2020, we decided to close the Synagogues in Veria, Hania and Rhodes and issued a relevant circular advising all Greek Jewish Communities to close the Synagogues and the Cultural Centers. KIS, as well as the Jewish Communities revoked all social and cultural activities scheduled for March and April.

At the same time, with the support of KIS administration, we are in close contact with the Jewish Communities and the international Jewish Organizations in order to face this aggressive virus and the harsh consequences that might threaten the well-being of the vulnerable groups of our Community.

Our thoughts are with all our coreligionists that are part of vulnerable social groups. Let's give our assistance, let's offer some moments of company either over the phone or in the social media, to our grandparents, to our parents, to our fellow-citizens that live alone, and let's hope that at the end of this adventure we will all come back together, reunited, healthy and strong.

We "stay at home" so that we stay well. Be always well.
Athens, March 17, 2020

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece
The President David Saltiel
The Secretary General Victor Eliezer

A Fascinating Story of the Fame of a Member of the Yanniote Community

"His Royal Family: Relatives Have Big Stake in Yugoslavia War" Oct. 1991 full article [here](#)

It's a tough act to follow - being the successful owner of a multimillion-dollar business who retires to philanthropy.

"But suppose you went on to have some royal relatives who are trying to save their strife-torn nation from self-destruction? Ask Victor Bates of Greensboro. The former business executive recently returned from a visit in London with his niece, Katherine, and his nephew by marriage, Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia. "We had cocktails at the hotel," said Bates, 86, former owner of Bates Nitewear. "I said, 'Alex, I'm going to give you a little advice. Don't trust the communists.'"

Prince Alexander, 45, was preparing to go to Yugoslavia - the homeland he had never before visited - as part of his efforts to reestablish the monarchy and unify the warring Serbs and Croats.

A Serb born in exile, Prince Alexander flew to Belgrade on his private jet during the weekend and was greeted by cheering, would-be subjects numbering in the tens of thousands. Bates hasn't heard from him since.

Yugoslavia is in the midst of a civil war that started when the state of Croatia decided to secede from the nation. Prince Alexander says his ascent to the throne would lead the divided country toward a Western-style democracy.

Bates stayed overnight in London with his niece and nephew Sept. 27 on his way to Greece, where Bates' sister had suffered a heart attack. She is recovering now and Bates has returned to Greensboro.



Victor and Emma Bates

Bates emigrated from Greece to New York in 1920 as an aspiring medical student. He took a job in the garment industry to finance his education, then changed career plans and started an apparel firm that he later moved to Greensboro.

Bates retired at 81 after he and his son, Louis, sold Bates Nitewear and its four plants. Victor Bates and his wife, Emma, have made several sizable contributions to the nursing program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



Prince Alexander and Princess Katherine of Yugoslavia

Princess Katherine is the daughter of Bates' brother, Robert, who lives in Greece. She grew up in Athens, Greece, but went to business school in Denver and Dallas. She married a U.S. State Department official and moved to Virginia.

This is the second marriage for her and the crown prince. They met in Washington in 1984 and were married a year later in London's Serbian Orthodox Church.

Prince Alexander is the son of the late King Peter, exiled in London during World War II and prevented from returning to his country by the communist takeover after the war.

The prince was born in a hotel room that Britain temporarily named part of Yugoslavia so he could retain his royal title. He went to school in Indiana, served in the British army and, later, made his living as a shipping, insurance and advertising consultant in London.

Bates said his niece has taken a wise first step toward the Yugoslav throne. She's learned the language."

Note: Victor's wife Emma was born into the Mazza family of Ioannina. Emma was a sister of Sarah Mazza Colchamiro, the mother of our Colchamiro brothers, members of the Board of Trustees of Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Victor had, like a number of Yannioties from New York, moved to Greensboro North Carolina, where there were numerous textile mills, producing textiles that helped those in the family who were manufacturing garments in New York City.

North Macedonia

Saving of North Macedonia Jews

“What made an anti-Semitic Spanish diplomat rescue 150 Macedonian Jews? His wife”

Note: This is an extremely long article. We will only publish an abbreviated version. You can get the full article by Bernard Dichek in the Times of Israel [here](#).

New evidence shows that Julio Palencia was likely influenced by his Greek spouse, Zoe Dragoumis, to issue last-minute passports, pull 150 off trains – and adopt two Jewish children

ATHENS, Greece — Archivist Eleftheria Daleziou looked puzzled when I asked her in March 2019 if the Gennadius historical library in Athens had any documents connected to Zoe Dragoumis.

The Dragoumis family is one of the most famous families in Greece. Stefanos Dragoumis was a Greek prime minister at the beginning of the last century, Ion Dragoumis was a legendary revolutionary, and other family members were prominent political and military leaders. As we walked through the mammoth study hall, Daleziou pointed out several historians leafing through documents written by members of this influential family. But no one, it seemed, had ever inquired about Zoe, one of Stefanos’s daughters, who died in 1964.

Together with fellow filmmaker Shiri Davidovitch, I was trying to unravel the mysterious rescue of 28 Macedonian Jewish families during the Holocaust.

It was 77 years ago last month that Bulgarian soldiers burst into the homes of the Jews living in Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia and transferred them to the filthy warehouses of the Monopol tobacco factory in Skopje. During the next few weeks about 7,000 Jews were forced onto trains destined for the Treblinka extermination camp. Just before the last train departed, 28 families were suddenly freed.



Over the years various explanations for their release have been offered. But not until archivist Daleziou unveiled a carton with the unopened diary of Zoe, along with her letters, did the full story emerge.

That story goes back to 1913 when Zoe fell in love with Julio Palencia, a mild-mannered Spanish diplomat. Unlike her five sisters, Zoe resisted her parents’ attempts to marry her to an Athenian aristocrat. Zoe stood her ground and insisted that she would only marry out of love. Finally, at 31, a late age for a woman to be single in that era, she found the man she was looking for.

Following their wedding Zoe and Julio embarked for Costa Rica where Julio was appointed to be Spain’s ambassador. During the next three decades the couple would lead a gilded life in other exotic diplomatic postings that included Shanghai, South Africa and Morocco.

But something was missing. As Zoe wrote in a letter to her mother in French, the language of the Greek upper class: "For my marriage to Julio I feel the purest bliss, I ask of God two things only: that our happiness continues and that he finally sends us the child we so desire!"

Still childless in 1936, Zoe and Julio were stationed in Istanbul when the Spanish Civil War broke out. The war deeply divided Spain and would result in the deaths of more than 500,000 people. From the onset of the fighting, Julio sided with the Nationalists led by General Francisco Franco. This led him to clash with Turkey's Jewish community, which opposed Franco.



Addressing Spain's foreign minister, Julio wrote a blistering letter tinged with anti-Semitism: "We must take action against this confused crowd with their bent backs, trembling hands and crooked eyes... because the Spain of Franco is always right..."

The action with which Julio threatened Turkish Jews was the taking back of Spanish passports they had obtained in the 1920s. During that period, Spain, in order to maintain an economic foothold in the crumbling Ottoman Empire, gave Jews of Sephardic descent the opportunity to obtain Spanish nationality. About 5,000 Jews, including Sephardim in Turkey and Yugoslavian Macedonia, took up the Spanish offer.

The Spanish Civil War ended in 1939 without Spanish nationality being revoked from the Jews, and one year later Julio was assigned to Bulgaria, where his attitude would inexplicably change.

Bulgaria did not officially become an ally of Nazi Germany until April 1941, but the government's persecution of Jews was well underway before that. Jews were forced to wear yellow stars, expelled from universities and their bank accounts seized.

As Zoe walked across Sofia to the Greek Embassy to send her family parcels of knitting, she would cross a street renamed Adolph Hitler Boulevard and see signs on parks and restaurants proclaiming: "No Jews Allowed." Moved by the suffering of the Jews, she wrote that the sight of them left her "broken by emotions and sad to death."

Zoe's movements across Sofia were carefully documented, because unbeknownst to her, she was being followed by Bulgarian secret service agents. Bulgarian prime minister Bogdan Filov, aware that members of the Dragoumis family had led Greece in its wars with Bulgaria, was convinced that she was a Greek spy. Zoe may not have been involved in acts of espionage, but her diary does make clear what her feelings were towards Bulgaria, which was allowing the Germans to cross through Bulgaria to invade Greece. "I wish Bulgaria were destroyed," she wrote, "and I was destroyed along with it."

Her despair increased as she heard radio reports about the Germans hoisting a swastika flag over the Acropolis: "Everything darkens as it all ends for me. I'll never see Greece as it was... My dear ones, will I ever see you again in your homes? What will you do, my God? Could this mean the end of my Greece?"

She also pointed out that there was "great persecution of the Jews... who are taken by truck and sent to three parts of Bulgaria where they will be sent to concentration camps in Poland. Many are committing suicide." It stands to reason that her sympathy towards the Jews, driven by observing both Jews and Greeks suffering, would later influence Julio's actions.

The first indication of Julio's change of heart towards the Jews could be seen when he asked the Franco government to intervene on behalf of the Jews with Spanish nationality.

"I dare to suggest respectfully to Your Excellency that Spain, a center of civilization and culture, where Maimonides, Averroes, and Ezra of Tudela were born... not allow Jews just for being Jews, to be considered as herds destined for the slaughterhouse."

Despite Julio's repeated telegrams and letters, Franco did not reply.

In early 1943 the Bulgarian government stepped up its harassment of the Jews. Bulgarian police arrested two leading members of the Sofia Jewish community, Leon and Raphael Arie, owners of a cosmetics and soap factory, on false charges of price gouging.



Then, under the guiding hand of SS Captain Theodor Dannecker, a special envoy of Adolf Eichmann, the government made plans to deport all of the Jews from both Bulgaria and the territories of Yugoslavian Macedonia and Thrace (northern Greece), which Hitler had turned over to Bulgaria as part the German-Bulgarian alliance.

Implementation of the plan began on March 11, 1943, when Bulgarian soldiers rounded up about 7,000 Jews in Macedonia and 5,000 Jews in Thrace. They incarcerated the Macedonian Jews in a tobacco factory warehouse adjacent to a Skopje train station.

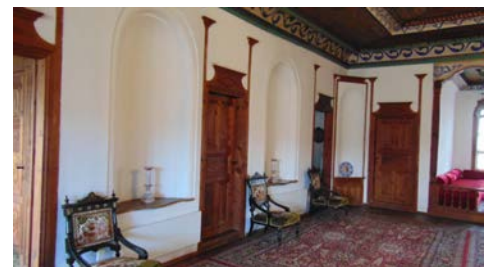
The Jews with Spanish passports insisted that they be freed because they had the nationality of a country that was neutral in the war. But the Bulgarian authorities denied their request, pointing out that the passports were "worthless" as they were issued in Yugoslavia.

When Julio heard about the Bulgarian refusal, he sent a vehicle to bring two representatives of the Spanish passport holders to the Spanish embassy in Sofia. There he exchanged the group's old Yugoslavian Spanish passports with new ones that were stamped "Issued in Bulgaria." The Bulgarians reluctantly acknowledged these passports and released the 28 families comprising about 150 Jews, as wives and children were registered on men's passports.

Significantly, Julio waited until after the last of the trains departed from Skopje before informing Madrid about what he had done. Diplomatic protocol would have required him to request permission from the Spanish government before taking action of this kind.

The satisfaction that Julio and Zoe may have felt at having rescued the Jewish families with Spanish passports was short-lived.

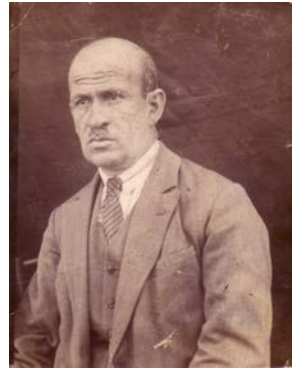
Bulgarian prime minister Bogdan Filov soon boasted to Julio that he planned to deport the entire community of 50,000 Jews living in Bulgaria. To break the spirit of the Jews, Filov proceeded with a show trial for Leon and Raphael Arie, reminiscent of the Dreyfus affair. The Arie men were summarily convicted and publicly hanged in Sofia's city square.



Zoe and Julio paid a consolation visit to the mourning Arie family. In a recent telephone conversation, the nephew of Leon Arie told me about the dramatic moment when Zoe and Julio arrived to pay their respects.

"We sat there in mourning and suddenly a black limousine arrived, something seldom seen in those days," recalled Rene Arav. "Out came Julio and Zoe, elegantly dressed, to offer their condolences."

Zoe and Julio's sympathy for the Arie family did not end with that visit. As it now appeared that the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews was imminent, Zoe and Julio decided to do what they could to save the two adult children of Leon Arie. They went to the Bulgarian Civil Administration and officially adopted Renato and Claudia Arie.



Abraham Arie

As the Arie children now appeared on Julio's passport, they no longer could be deported. The Bulgarian response was quick to come. Enraged, Filov declared Julio persona non grata and banished him from Bulgaria. Consequently, Julio and Zoe were forced to return hastily to Spain.

The Spanish government was equally displeased. Julio was demoted and never offered an ambassadorship again. He died in 1952 as an outcast. Zoe, disenchanted with the country that her husband had loyally served for 40 years, arranged for him to be buried away from Spain, in the Dragoumis family plot in Athens. The story of the rescue of the Macedonian Jews lay untold for several decades. On their way back to Spain, Zoe and Julio had stopped off in Romania where they left Claudia and Renato to live with an uncle. Claudia was killed soon after in an American bombing attack and Renato eventually moved to Argentina where she died childless, without publicly passing on the story.

Rescue revealed

Historians assumed that the entire Macedonian Jewish community was annihilated at Treblinka. Even in 2011 when the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia was inaugurated in Skopje, there was no reference to the rescue. It was a chance discovery made by a Macedonian architecture historian that set the stage for the story to be revealed.

While researching the history of the former Jewish quarter of Skopje, Jasminka Namiceva came across 28 Bank of Bulgaria envelopes stashed away in the city archives. The envelopes had Jewish names on them and contained jewelry and coins. Jasminka would learn that just before the Macedonian Jews boarded the trains, Bulgarian soldiers took their last remaining possessions from them and told them that they would be given to the Bank of Bulgaria for safekeeping. The envelopes belonging to the Jews with Spanish passports apparently were set aside and never retrieved.

Eventually we tracked down the descendants of about a dozen families in Israel and other countries. We were disappointed to learn that even among the descendants of the survivors scant information about the rescue was passed down. Many presumed that it was Franco who had saved the lives of their parents or grandparents.

The true details only surfaced after we contacted Spanish historian Jose Antonio Lisbona, who unearthed archival evidence proving it was Julio Palencia who issued the lifesaving passports for the 28 Macedonian families in defiance of Franco.

Access the full article [here](#).

Articles of Interest to Everyone

The Mountain Jews: An Ancient Community between the Caucasus and the Caspian article [here](#)

That Jews live in Dagestan, in southern Russia, at all can seem unlikely. Historically speaking, however, Derbent is exactly the kind of place Jews would be found: a city which has been a crossroads for five millennia. It was well after midnight on a hot summer's evening in July 2013 when Ovadia Isakov, rabbi to the Jews of Derbent, in Russia's restless southern republic of Dagestan, arrived back at his apartment. It was not unusual. Tending to the ancient city's 2,000 Jews often kept him on duty until the small hours.

Outside his house on Pushkin Street, in the heart of Derbent's Old Town, Isakov left the car and walked to his front door. From out of the darkness, shots rang out. One tore through his ribcage. Neighbors rushed the critically injured rabbi to hospital, from which an Israeli medical team flew him to Israel.

The gunman fled. Though the Russian police later announced that they had killed a known terrorist suspected of the attack, no one was ever brought to trial. In Dagestan's years-long Islamist insurgency, a spillover of the Chechen wars, few militants ever were.

For the remnants of the Jewish community that once dominated Derbent, the assassination attempt seemed like the final straw. "There is no future for Jews here," Angela Rubinova, head of the local branch of Atzmaut, a Jewish organization, told The Times of Israel. "I'm staying because someone needs to turn out the lights." That Jews live in Dagestan at all can seem unlikely. In Moscow and St Petersburg, the autonomous republic's name is almost a byword for the distant barbarism of Russia's wild southern fringe: overwhelmingly Muslim, culturally alien and congenitally violent.

Historically speaking, however, Derbent is exactly the kind of place Jews would be found. Squatting in a three-kilometre-wide gap between the Caucasus mountains and the Caspian Sea, the city has been a crossroads for five millennia. Sitting astride both Europe's Silk Road with China and one of the only north-to-south passes through the Caucasus, it has been both commercial hub and military outpost. For the Persian shahs, the fortress they built at Derbent—which means "barred gate" in Farsi—was the end of the known world, Iran's eternal insurance policy against northern invaders.



It was, some historians say, the shahs who brought the Persian-speaking Mountain Jews from Iran to the Caucasus, perhaps as early as the fifth century BC. Over the centuries, the Mountain Jews settled in a vast crescent spanning modern-day Azerbaijan, Dagestan, and the Russian North Caucasus. Derbent, growing rich on the trade routes, grew into one of the many improbably cosmopolitan dots that pepper Eurasia. Jewish and Armenian merchants dominated a dizzyingly international town that by the 20th century, according to Svetlana Anokhina, a local journalist, boasted Georgian, Polish and even Chinese residents, on top of 36,000 Jews.

The Caucasian Mountain Jews suffered as much as anyone from the revolution, civil war, totalitarianism, and an eventual, precipitous collapse that Soviet power offered. "The Bolsheviks wouldn't let us live as Jews, religiously," says Robert Ilishaev, rabbi and chairman of the Derbent Jewish community. "My family were forced to leave Dagestan on foot, walked for months to Istanbul, and took a ferry to Israel."



Amid the economic collapse and ethnically inspired bloodshed that consumed the Caucasus after the Soviet collapse in 1991, Mountain Jewish communities in Chechnya, Ossetia and Dagestan shriveled, died and emigrated. Only two final redoubts survived: in the village of Qirmizi Qasebe in Azerbaijan, and in Derbent. Strung out along Tagi-Zade street, about halfway between the hilltop Sassanid fortress and the Caspian shore, stands the Kele-Numaz Synagogue. Restored and reopened with much fanfare in 2010, the center of Derbent Jewish life is immediately recognisable: it is the only half-modern building on a street otherwise made up of decaying 19th-century merchants' mansions. Containing a Jewish kindergarten, a museum, a medley of administrative offices and Russia's southernmost mikvah (a bath for ritual immersion), the synagogue complex is a microcosm of a community that once dominated Derbent.

Publicly, the authorities are cagey about precisely how many Jews remain. Privately, most put the figure today at a little less than a thousand. "This whole part of town used to be Jewish," says Vafik Gasanov, a Shi'ite Azeri security guard I meet on the street outside. "Further down, towards the sea, it was Christians. Armenians and Russians. In the upper city, beneath the fortress, Azeris. We always just got along. Derbent has always been like that—tolerant, educated."



Jewish Quarter Past

'That Jews live in Dagestan at all can seem unlikely. In Moscow and St Petersburg, the autonomous republic's name is almost a byword for the distant barbarism of Russia's wild southern fringe'

Dagestan is, for outsiders, dizzyingly diverse. Over 30 ethnicities with their own, largely unrelated, languages inhabit a region no larger than Scotland. It is a cultural jigsaw so complicated that it resembles a series of puzzles, each with little to do with the next. Even the Avars, Dagestan's single biggest nationality at around a third of the population, who traditionally dominate politics in the capital of Makhachkala are almost unheard of in Derbent, barely an hour's drive south.

Dagestan's extraordinary variegation has often been seen as self-fulfilling: nationalism isn't practical when no one nation is anything other than a small minority. Dagestan was simply too multicultural for ethnic cleansing or national sorting. Many credit this diversity for the Jews' survival.



Jewish Quarter Present

"If there weren't so many different nationalities here, we Jews would have left long ago," says Viktor Mikhailov, editor of Vatan, Derbent's Jewish newspaper. "Everything in Dagestan depends on a very precise balance. That meant we never came under attack from our neighbors, as happened elsewhere." He says that in the 2000s, during the worst of the Islamist insurgency, Derbent's balkanization helped protect local Jews from the fate of other, vanished Dagestani Jewish communities. "The southern Dagestan, Derbent mentality is very, very different from the rest of the republic. In Makhachkala, in the north, everyone is Sunni. Here, it's always been a mix of Sunni, Shi'a, Christians and Jews. That has made Derbent more pluralistic and meant that terrorism was always less of a problem."

Nevertheless, Dagestan's distinctive brand of ethnic coexistence has demanded sacrifices from the Mountain Jews. One of the most painful has been their specifically Jewish identity. When the Soviets took control of Dagestan in the Civil War, they began to grapple with the new republic's dazzling ethnic kaleidoscope, creating 14 official nationalities into which all Dagestanis were expected to fit. Rather than being recognized as Jews, Mountain Jews were officially categorized as Tats, members of another Dagestani people with distant Persian origins.

“The word ‘Tat’”, Ilishaev, the community leader, says flatly, “is a communist invention. It was always about eroding our religion and heritage as Jews.” Even so, others suggest this bureaucratic compromise has brought the Derbent community certain advantages. “In Soviet Dagestan, there were very strict ethnic quotas for employment, access to education, housing,” says Mikhailov. “Being one of the 14 official nationalities got you all kinds of advantages that outsiders didn’t get. Of course, we’re not actually Tats, but we certainly benefitted from pretending to be Tats.”

Today, however, many of the old certainties that nurtured and protected the city’s Jewish community are gone. Derbent’s unique cultural mix has started to crumble. Amid the post-Soviet chaos, the city’s Christians, Soviet Russian administrators and technicians, and ancient Armenian merchant clans almost all left, as well as most of the Jews. The collapse of Soviet-era controls on internal migration have seen huge influxes into Derbent from Dagestan’s hinterland, swelling the city’s population from 80,000 in 1989 to 120,000 today. The new arrivals, mostly Tabasaran and Lezgin Sunnis, known derisively as uncivilized, uncouth gutsy, or highlanders by some Derbent old-timers, have decisively shifted the city’s demographic balance.

For the Mountain Jews, the problem is not security—with the long-running Dagestani insurgency now largely defeated, Jews are now perhaps safer than at any time since 1991. Rather, it is a sense that the multi-confessional city that nurtured and protected their community is no more. With thriving Mountain Jewish communities in Moscow and Acre, emigration looms ever larger for those who remain.

Yet stubbornness flickers. “My entire family have already gone to Israel”, says Ilishaev, “but I’m not leaving, I’ve no business in Israel. Derbent is my home, and my community’s home and I’m staying here.”

Barbados

How Jewish Immigrants Spurred the Barbadian Rum Trade Full article by Jared Ranahan [here](#)

The island nation of Barbados is renowned for more than just Rihanna — the country is also home to a thriving rum industry that dates back to the 17th century. While many are familiar with Bajan rums — Mount Gay and Malibu being some of the most popular — few are aware of the early geopolitical developments that caused Barbados to become one of the Caribbean’s most prominent producers of the spirit.

The industry’s origins lie not with the English colonists who claimed the island under their crown, but instead with a mass migration of Jewish refugees. Fleeing persecution from the Portuguese Inquisition, these newcomers arrived with a valuable skill set that would soon spur rum production to heights previously unseen.

The Great Journey from Iberia to Brazil to Barbados

Before detailing the Bajan rum boom, it’s necessary to highlight the driving force that brought these refugees to Barbados in the first place: the Alhambra Decree. This royal mandate, backed by Spain’s Ferdinand II and Isabella I in 1492, sought to eliminate any and all Jewish influence from the Iberian Peninsula. While many Jews chose to undergo conversion to Catholicism, a large portion fled across the sea to seek out a more tolerant place to call home. For many Sephardim, the northeast shores of South America became a haven to live and worship freely.

Life for Jewish immigrants in South America was largely uneventful for the next few decades, until the geopolitical tides came to a sudden shift in the early 1600s. The Netherlands, a major seafaring power bent on spreading its influence, captured the Brazilian state of Pernambuco from Portugal in 1630. Dutch influence spread across the region until the kingdom owned a sizable chunk of South America, now referred to as Dutch

Brazil. Dutch Count Johan Maurits espoused religious tolerance throughout the region, allowing Jews to worship freely. Finally, it seemed that this frequently persecuted group had found a safe place to settle.

Enter Portugal: The kingdom's navy returned to Brazil with a vengeance, intent on reclaiming the land it had once relinquished to the Dutch Empire. In 1652, the Portuguese began an onslaught against the city of Recife, leading to one of the largest mass migrations of Jewish immigrants from South America.

"Though Jews were in Barbados from 1628, the first large wave came after the Sephardic community of Recife, Brazil, was forced to leave ... after the Portuguese reconquered the area and reintroduced the Inquisition," says Karl Watson, a retired senior lecturer in the department of history at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus in Bridgetown, Barbados. "By 1654, a mikvah and synagogue were built in Bridgetown." Once again forced from the lands that they called home, the Sephardim began a new life on the shores of Barbados.



Barbados's Sugar Industry Takes Off

Up until the 1640s, life in Barbados was largely a bleak affair. Tobacco and cotton were the island's principal crops, though neither grew in abundance compared to other nearby regions. The colony held little relevance in the eyes of the European powers right up until the first wave of Jewish migrants arrived from Recife. Armed with the knowledge of sugar cane rearing, a skill picked up from generations of living in Brazil, the crop exploded onto the global scene.

"Together with the Dutch, the Sephardic Jews transferred the center of the New World sugar industry from northern Brazil to the Caribbean islands," writes Richard B. Sheridan in his book, "Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775." "They brought knowledge of cane culture and processing, together with cane cuttings, seasoned slaves, mills, utensils, Holland and English wares, and African slaves. More than the Dutch, they were masters of sugar technology and taught the English the art of sugar making." This sudden abundance of sugar cane led to an abundance of molasses — a byproduct that's a key ingredient in the production of most rums.

Within 20 years of the mass migration from Recife, by the early 1660s, Barbados had become fabulously wealthy, spurring a greater quantity of trade than all other English colonies put together. Though the Sephardim kick-started this rampant economic growth, they had little to show for it. "From the outset, Barbados's Jewish inhabitants settled in the colony's towns, choosing to concentrate on commerce rather than on plantation agriculture," writes Eli Faber in his book, "Jews, Slaves, and The Slave Trade: Setting The Record Straight." "While some of Barbados's Jews did own land outside the towns, concentration in the latter, hence in commerce, meant that the Jewish population was destined to own few of the island's slaves." While the Jewish community traded goods, rum being one of them, it was largely unable to reap the financial benefits of the sugar industry.



Barbados in the Modern Era

All good things must come to an end, and that included Barbados's incredibly lucrative sugar trade. As surrounding islands and shores across the Caribbean began to cultivate their own cane, Barbados slowly fell to the wayside, unable to match the supply of its neighbors. Thankfully, the country had developed a deep affinity for rum over the centuries, spurring a consistent demand for the spirit even without a major surplus of molasses.

As with sugar production, the Jewish population began to dwindle as well. Today, Barbados is home to a small community of Jews, many of whom attend Nidhe Israel Synagogue, one of the oldest Jewish temples in the Western Hemisphere. Though they are small in number, there's no denying the pivotal role that their ancestors played in the history of Barbados, as well as the rum industry as a whole. From the shores of the Caribbean to the isles of the Philippines, rum has established itself as one of the most favored spirits in the world — and we owe its success, in part, to a small sect of religious refugees fleeing persecution to begin life anew in a foreign land.

Food from the Jewish Community of Izmir (Smyrne) Turkey

Generations On, These Recipes from Izmir's Community Simmer in Israel full article [here](#)

On Fridays in Levana Lowenstein's home, there's always a pot of avikas, a simple stew of beef, white kidney beans, onion, and tomato paste, simmering away on the stove. Often, her grandchildren come over after school for a bowl of it. They are the latest generation of many in Levana's family to eat this Friday stew. It's not only Levana's family that serves this stew for a pre-Shabbat lunch. It's a custom, she says, among families with roots in Izmir, a city along Turkey's Aegean coast.

Levana's father Nissim Daniel worked in construction in Izmir's port and as a dried fruit dealer. But, in 1949, before Levana was born, her parents and sister Esther, who is known as Etti, moved to Israel. When they arrived in Israel, a driver was supposed to take them to what is now Herzliya, 20 minutes north of Tel Aviv. Having heard of an enclave of Jews from their community, Levana's mother Ana asked the driver to take the family there instead. They arrived in Yehud, a small city near the airport that was and still is a Turkish community.

Here, Turkish recipes and traditions were preserved. "If we have 200 families in Yehud, all of them on Friday...eat the soup with beans, meat, and rice. This is our tradition," Levana explains. In other ways, the community assimilated. In 1951, when Levana was born, she was given the Ladino name Luna, but the family changed it to Levana as David Ben Gurion encouraged immigrants to the early state to adopt Hebrew names.

Growing up in Yehud, Levana and Etti's family lived around a patio with three other families. The women of each family would gather here to cook and gossip as they passed the time making recipes like bourekas, boyos, a savory pastry filled with spinach and cheese or potatoes that's served for Shabbat breakfast.

The foods of this community are unique and shared across households. The women from the patio also made tomatoes reinados, or "royal tomatoes" in Ladino, a recipe for tomatoes stuffed with ground meat. Another staple is sofrito, which in this community is a catch all term for a dish made with one meat and one vegetable like chicken and cauliflower or lamb with fried potatoes.



Anna and Nissim Daniel
in Izmir 1941

Levana saw all of this cooking but says: "I never came to the kitchen to help my mom." Still, she absorbed the images of her mother and Grandmother Anna cooking. When she married and had children of her own, she started to cook and developed an intense passion for the kitchen. While she never learned the Izmir recipes from the family matriarchs, she realized she could close her eyes and picture them in the kitchen, remembering how they prepared dishes. "I remember everything," she says.

She's held on to that and passed it down. "My mother came from Izmir and she cooked like her mother cooked...like I cook," Levana adds. She has made only small adjustments in the tradition, like saving the boyos style of bourekas for special occasions and holidays. During the rest of the year, she uses two riffs on a simpler dough to make cookies called biscocho and borekitas, small hand pies filled with eggplant or potato and cheese. She serves the borekitas for Shabbat breakfast alongside long cooked brown eggs, yogurt, and rice pudding. One of her granddaughters, Noa, who is 11-years-old, has learned to make the recipe as well, ensuring the dish is passed down to the next generation.

Neither Levana's grandmother nor mother is still alive, but both have a presence in her kitchen. There's a large photo of Levana's grandmother in her kitchen. As if the picture were a person, Levana says: "I ask her questions once in a while."

Avikas (White Bean and Beef Stew)

Makes: 4 to 6 servings

Total Time: 2 hours

Ingredients

3 teaspoons kosher salt, divided

1 tablespoon olive oil

1-pound chuck beef, chopped into 2 inch squares

1 yellow onion, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon tomato paste

½ cup white kidney beans, soaked overnight and drained

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper



Preparation

1. Place a large pot over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil.

2. Season the meat with 1 teaspoon of salt. Once the oil is hot, place the pieces of meat into the pot and sear on all sides until deep golden brown, about 3 minutes on each side.

3. Transfer the meat to a plate.

4. Add the chopped onions into the pot and sauté, scraping the meat drippings on the bottom of the pot to incorporate. Sauté the onions until golden, about 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook for about 2 minutes until caramelized. Add the meat back into the pot. Add the beans, pepper and the remaining 2 teaspoons of salt into the pot. Cover with water and stir.

5. Bring the mixture to a boil and reduce to a gentle simmer. Add a lid slightly ajar and continue cooking the stew for about 1 hour and 30 minutes until the mixture cooks down into a stew like consistency and the beans and meat are tender.

6. Serve hot with white rice.

Tomatoes Reinados (Tomatoes Stuffed with Beef)

Makes: 6 to 8 servings

Total Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Ingredients

10 tomatoes

1-pound ground beef

22



1 loaf white bread
1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 egg, beaten well
½ cup flour
½ cup canola oil
1 cup water

Preparation

1. Cut about ¼ inch off the top of the tomatoes crosswise. Scoop out the seeds and meat from the tomatoes.
2. Soak a loaf of bread in water for about 10 minutes and drain.
3. In a mixing bowl, place the ground beef, bread, salt, and pepper. Mix until combined well. Stuff each tomato with about 1 tablespoon of the beef mixture, using your palms to flatten out the top of the filled tomatoes.
4. Add ½ cup oil into a saucepan and set it over medium high heat. Add the beaten egg into a small bowl. Add the flour into another small bowl and set aside.
5. Starting with one stuffed tomato, dip the top of the tomato into the flour, shake any excess flour off, and then dip the top of the tomato into the egg wash and place on a plate. Repeat with the remaining tomatoes.
6. Once the oil is hot, place the tomatoes into the pot with the top of the tomato down into the oil. Fry the tomatoes until their tops are golden brown. Transfer the fried tomatoes into another skillet. Place them into the pan with the fried side up. Add 1 cup of water into the pan or enough to cover ¾ of the tomatoes. Place the pan over medium high heat and bring the water to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Cover the pan and cook the tomatoes over a gently simmer until the meat is cooked, the tomatoes are tender and about ¼ of the water remains, about 45 minutes.
7. Serve hot.

A Sephardic Shavout Tradition Continues

From Spain to Salonika, a disappearing Shavuot tradition revisited

A Greek-Sephardic custom until the Nazis decimated the community, will the 'bread of the seven heavens' soon be the crumbs of history? By Ronit Treatman

PHILADELPHIA — Nicknamed “The Queen of Israel,” Salonika was one of the greatest Jewish cities that ever existed. A melting pot of Jewish communities, the trade hub was a haven for Jews following the 1492 Expulsions from Spain and Portugal. In this cosmopolitan Jewish community, the once-again prospering Spanish and Portuguese Jews could maintain their Sephardic traditions and customs.

One of these customs was the baking of rich dairy yeast breads each Shavuot, the most well-known of which is “el pan de siete cielos,” or, “the bread of the seven heavens.”

For 780 years “el pan de siete cielos,” was the signature dish of the Shavuot holiday, and the Jews of Salonika continued to bake this bread all the way up until World War II, when the community was almost entirely exterminated by the Nazis. Today, only a handful of survivors can recall eating the bread at their holiday tables and the tradition has all but perished.

The festive bread’s genesis dates back to an early eighth-century period known as “la convivencia,” or, “the coexistence.” La convivencia was a golden age for Spanish Jewry — a time when Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived peacefully together, making the Iberian Peninsula a hub of innovation and cultural exchange. And so it is unsurprisingly that during this period, Sephardic Jews — inspired by the ornately-sculpted Easter breads of their Christian neighbors — began baking the bread of the seven heavens.

Pan de Siete Cielos

Adapted from "Cookbook of the Jews of Greece" by Nicholas Starvroulakis

Ingredients

7-8 cups flour

2 cups sugar

2 oz. fresh yeast

5 eggs

1/3 cup warm water

5 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted

1 tsp. anise extract or Arak

1/2 cup milk

Directions:

Dissolve 1/2 teaspoon of sugar in the warm water.

Mix in the yeast and allow to rest for 15 minutes.

Add the flour and mix well.

Cover the bowl with a clean towel and allow the dough to rise for 30 minutes.

Beat the eggs with the sugar and anise extract.

Pour them into the dough.

Add the butter and milk.

Knead the dough.

Cover the bowl with a towel and allow the dough to rise until it doubles in size.

To sculpt the bread:

1. Begin with a ball of dough in the center. Some people like to braid it like a round challah. This is Mount Sinai.

2. Roll out 7 ropes of dough. These are the 7 heavens. Wrap them around Mount Sinai.

3. Make a Torah shape out of dough. Place it on top of the 7 heavens.

4. Shape Miriam's well. Attach it to the ring of "clouds."

5. Mold a snake and adhere it to the "clouds."

6. Build Jacob's ladder. Make it connect Mount Sinai to the seventh "cloud."

To bake:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit (200 degrees Celsius).

Brush the bread with an egg wash (whip one egg yolk with 1 tbsp. of water).

Bake the bread at 400 degrees for 10 minutes.

Lower the temperature to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (175 degrees Celsius).

Bake for approximately 20 minutes, or until the bread is golden-brown in color.



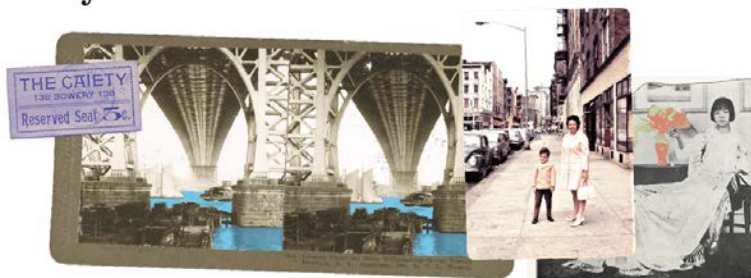
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Травень—це місяць історії дільниці
«Ловер Іст Сайд» 五月是下東城歷史月

May is Lower East Side History Month

Mayo es el mes de Loisaída **2020**



Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



This year, the 28th of Iyar, "Yom Yerushalayim" – Jerusalem Day – the day when, with God's miraculous help, Israel Defense Forces completely liberated all of new and ancient Jerusalem and all of Judaism's most sacred sites, will fall on Thursday night and Friday, the 21st and 22nd of May.

In the May 2013 KKJ bulletin, I wrote about the greater significance of the date of the 28th of Iyar in its being the date of the death of Shmuel the Prophet, whose grave in Jerusalem was a major annual pilgrimage site for Jews until some point in the Middle Ages, when Jews were no longer allowed to access. Thus, with the liberation of Jerusalem on the very date of Shmuel's death, this ancient Jewish custom could be renewed in a free and sovereign Jewish-governed Jerusalem.

Yet the 28th of Iyar has even further, and perhaps even greater, significance in Jewish history.

An ancient Hebrew work, "Seder Olam Rabbah", written in the 2nd century, CE, is a chronology of biblical events from the Creation to Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia. On the description of the beginning of Israel's journey in the desert following the exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Reed Sea (Exodus 15:22-Exodus 18:13), Seder Olam Rabbah relates that the [Hebrew] year the Jews left Egypt, Rosh Hodesh Iyar (or in Biblical terms, 'the first day of the second month'), was on a Sunday. When the Israelites arrived at a place called Alush, God gave them their first fully collective Shabbat, which was on the 22nd of Iyar (Ibid, 17:30). The next day (Sunday, the 23rd of Iyar), the Israelites left Alush and arrived at Refidim, where they were given the well of water, fought Amalek and stayed the following Shabbat, which would have been the 29th of Iyar. It is important to note that Amalek's main motive for attacking Israel was his total contempt for God and anything sacred. He therefore saw Israel as the proxy for God and His sanctity, so by destroying Israel, he would be destroying God himself and any sanctity brought to the world.

In the subsequent description of the battle with Amalek, the Bible informs us that as the Israelites fought the enemy, Moshe tried to keep his hands raised to inspire the Israelites to trust in God, but when he would lower them for even a moment's rest, the Amalekites would gain an advantage. Therefore, as described in Exodus 17:12, Aharon and Hur each supported Moshe's hands, so that they were kept up until sundown, leading to the Israelites' victory before nightfall. The classic commentator Rashi, using Midrashic sources, says that Moshe kept his hands up not just to inspire the fighters, but, since it was Friday, the 28th of Iyar, also to delay the onset of Shabbat. Our Sages explained that this miracle was necessary because Amalek well understood that once Shabbat would begin, the Israelites might cease to fight, leading to an easy conquest. However, God granted Moshe this miracle and the day was extended until the Israelites could defeat Amalek before sundown on the 28th of Iyar.

This Midrashic chronology of events lends further credence to the idea that the 28th of Iyar is not merely a random date on the calendar, but a day with a unique character and even holiness of its own. And considering Amalek's unchallenged "title" as the embodiment of evil and arch enemy of both the Jewish people and anything sacred, his defeat on the same date that in the future would see the miraculous liberation of Judaism's holiest of cities after close to 2,000 years, the 28th of Iyar seems to be much more than a coincidence. In fact, the 28th of Iyar was apparently destined to be a date that would herald great physical and spiritual victories of the Jewish people in the future. May we merit the final redemption, and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, speedily in our days, Amen! Happy Jerusalem Day!

Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé
Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America



Parashah of the Week - Ahare Mot/Kedoshim

A Distinct People
By Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé

In this Parashah, G-d commands Moshe to instruct the Jewish people to be "Kedoshim", to be holy. But one wonders what does holy really mean? How does one become holy?

In western culture, to be holy usually will have a religious connotation. To be holy often means, to be sacred, divine or sanctified. It often carries the meaning of one who is a saint. The understanding of a saint is of someone who has a higher soul or divinity of sorts, higher than everybody else. Such an individual is infallible, he is entitled to public veneration and is able to intercede for others spiritually. It is without a doubt, that Judaism rejects such notions outright, the verse states, "For there is no righteous man on earth, that does good, and does not transgress". (Kohelet 7:20) Man is not infallible, people can always improve and become better or one can choose to do the opposite. But even more, if one could never make a mistake, it would also imply no freedom of choice, all our actions would be predestined.

Amongst our commentators there are various approaches to the meaning of "Kadosh". Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher (1) states (2) that man can develop and become as righteous as an angel or as evil as a beast. He explains that there are two roads that one must choose from. The first is by distancing yourself from all sorts of desires and reaching a higher standard. The second is giving in to any inclination and bringing ourselves down to a lower status. According to Rabbenu Bahya a man is measured by how he relates to his impulses. If he does not allow his desires to rule over him, he can become as an angel, but if he allows his desires to overcome him, then he brings himself to the status of an animal, he has no control and is driven only by instinct. Rabbenu Bahya's understanding is based on the worldview that humans can rise above all creatures. He argues that since man is essentially made up from the heavens and the earth, body and soul, man is constantly pulled in both directions and he is therefore challenged at all times to choose between his intellect and his desires. He writes that the purpose of the commandments is to help the individual to overcome these inclinations. Man is to subdue his desires and to strengthen his intellect. He therefore concludes that the man that is able to keep away from his impulses is called holy.

Rabbi Shimshon Rephael Hirsch (3) on the other hand, suggests a different understanding. He states (4) that the Torah refers to an individual as holy when he strives to develop true human values. Rabbi Hirsch understands that even materialistic desires can be used for holiness. He explains that the Torah does not intend to suppress any of the human characteristics. Rather, the Torah's intent is that human beings use their qualities and characteristics and develop them with the proper values. He states that those human values are expressed in commandments of the Torah and one becomes holy by fulfilling them when body and soul are working together towards the same goal. One can be called holy when every action is sanctified with a higher purpose. When one prays or works, when one studies or even when one eats, when doing business or with family and friends there is a higher purpose.

Some scholars understand the word 'Kadosh' to mean, "to be distinct". To be distinct implies to stand out, to be visible. Rabbi David Hayim Chelouche, (5) Former Chief Rabbi of Netanya, Israel, writes (6) that in order for one to be holy or distinct, one must not only develop a deep love for his Creator, but one must also learn to care for all humanity since they have all been created in the image of G-d. He states that we must also go out and teach humanity true values, righteousness and kindness amongst others. He says that if we sanctify our lives by doing acts that make us distinct this in turn will inspire others to do the same.

Shabbat Shalom

(1) Rabbi Bahya ben Asher, Spain 1255-1340.

(2) Rabbi Bahya ben Asher, Commentary to the Torah, Vayikra 19:2.

(3) Rabbi Shimshon Rephael Hirsch (June 20, 1808 - December 31, 1888) was a German Rabbi best known as the intellectual founder of the Torah I'm Derekh Eres school of contemporary Orthodox Judasim. Occasionally termed neo-Orthodoxy, his philosophy, together with that of Azriel Hildesheimer, has had a considerable influence on the development of Orthodox Judaism. Hirsch was rabbi in Oldenburg, Emden, and was subsequently appointed chief rabbi of Moravia. From 1851 until his death led the secessionist Orthodox community in Frankfurt am Main. He wrote a number of influential books, and for a number of years published the monthly journal Jeschurun, in which he outlined his philosophy of Judaism. He was a vocal opponent of Reform Judaism and similarly opposed early forms of Conservative Judaism. Hirsch was born in Hamburg, Germany. His father, though a merchant, devoted much of his time to Torah studies; his grandfather, Mendel Frankfurter, was the founder of the Talmud Torah in Hamburg and unsalaried assistant rabbi of the neighboring congregation of Altona. Hirsch was a pupil of Rabbi Yishak Bernays, and the Biblical and Talmudical education which he received, combined with his teacher's influence, led him to determine not to become a merchant, as his parents had desired, but to choose the rabbinical vocation. In furtherance of this plan he studied Talmud from 1828 to 1829 in Mannheim under Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger. He then entered the University of Bonn, where he studied at the same time as his future antagonist, Abraham Geiger. During the final years of his life, Hirsch put his efforts in the founding of the "Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des Orthodoxen Judentums", an association of independent Jewish communities. During the 30 years after his death this organization would be used as a model for the formation of the international orthodox Agudat Israel movement. From reports of his family members, it seems likely that Hirsch contracted malaria while in Emden, which continued to plague him during the rest of life with febrile episodes. Hirsch died in 1888 in Frankfurt am Main and is buried there. Hirsch's son Mendel Hirsch (German) (1833-1900) was a scholar and writer; his granddaughter Rahel Hirsch (1870-1953) became the first female professor of medicine in Prussia.

(4) Rabbi Shimshon Rephael Hirsch, Commentary to the Torah, Vayikra 19:2.

(5) Rabbi David Hayim Chelouche, Jerusalem, 1920-.

(6) Rabbi David Hayim Chelouche, Or Hadash, Commentary to the Torah, Vayikra 19:2.



Angel for Shabbat: Aharei Mot-Kedoshim by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

This week's Torah reading instructs: do not turn to idols (Vayikra 19:4). Rabbi Yitzhak Shemuel Reggio, a 19th century Italian Torah commentator, notes that this commandment refers not only to physical idols but also to false ideas and beliefs. We need to hold correct notions, and not subscribe to foolish ideas and superstitions. True religion demands a commitment to truth. It requires us to study, to think, to use our rational faculties to the utmost. To follow after superstition is a form of idolatry.

The Torah reading also instructs: you shall love your neighbor as yourself (19:18). Rabbi Reggio comments that it is not possible to love another person as much as we love ourselves; what, then, does this Torah passage mean? He translates the verse as follows: you shall love your neighbor who is like you i.e. you must remember that all human beings are created in the image of God, all have the right to respect and dignity, all

share a common humanity. If you recognize that the "other" is actually "like yourself", you will be able to love/empathize/respect him or her.

These two comments by Rabbi Reggio are at the root of a proper understanding of Torah Judaism. On the one hand, Judaism demands an unflinching desire to discover and uphold truth. It eschews the superstitious view that sees religion as a set of magic formulae intended to control God; or as a means of warding off evil supernatural spirits. God must be served through Truth, which is God's own trademark. Following superstitious beliefs or practices--even if they seem to be "religious"--is actually a form of idolatry. Rambam, in his famous code of Jewish Law, Mishneh Torah (Laws of Mezuzah, 5:4), offers an example of misguided religiosity. He condemns the practice of some individuals who write names of angels or saintly men inside their mezuzot, and who think that the mezuzot on their doorposts are magic objects designed to keep away evil spirits. Rambam states that such people have no share in the world to come! "Those fools not only fail to fulfill the commandment, but they treat an important precept...as if it were an amulet to benefit themselves, since they foolishly suppose that the mezuzah is something advantageous for the vain pleasures of this world." In fact, the mezuzah teaches the unity of God, and our obligation to love and revere Him.

Torah Judaism demands not only a keen commitment to truth, but also a keen sense of responsibility to human beings. Rabbi Reggio's universalistic understanding of the "golden rule" teaches that all human beings--whatever their race, religion or nationality--are entitled to be treated "like ourselves". They, too, were created by God. They, too, have the human qualities with which we are endowed. If we can see "them" as being just like "us", we are more likely to develop a sense of kinship and responsibility to all of humanity.

The Torah commands clear thinking and righteous behavior. It prods us to live according to the ideals expressed in the opening passage of Kedoshim: you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.

Seeking Help

Hello my name is Abby Baharlias. My grandfather by the name of Memos Baharlias is a holocaust survivor from Athens Greece. He was hidden and survived the war along with his older brother. His parents perished and I am wondering if you know of any living survivors from Greece who may have known his parents and might have some information regarding their journey during the war (Their names were Elias Baharlias and Rachel Baharlias). Please contact us at museum@kkjsm.org if you have any info for Memos.



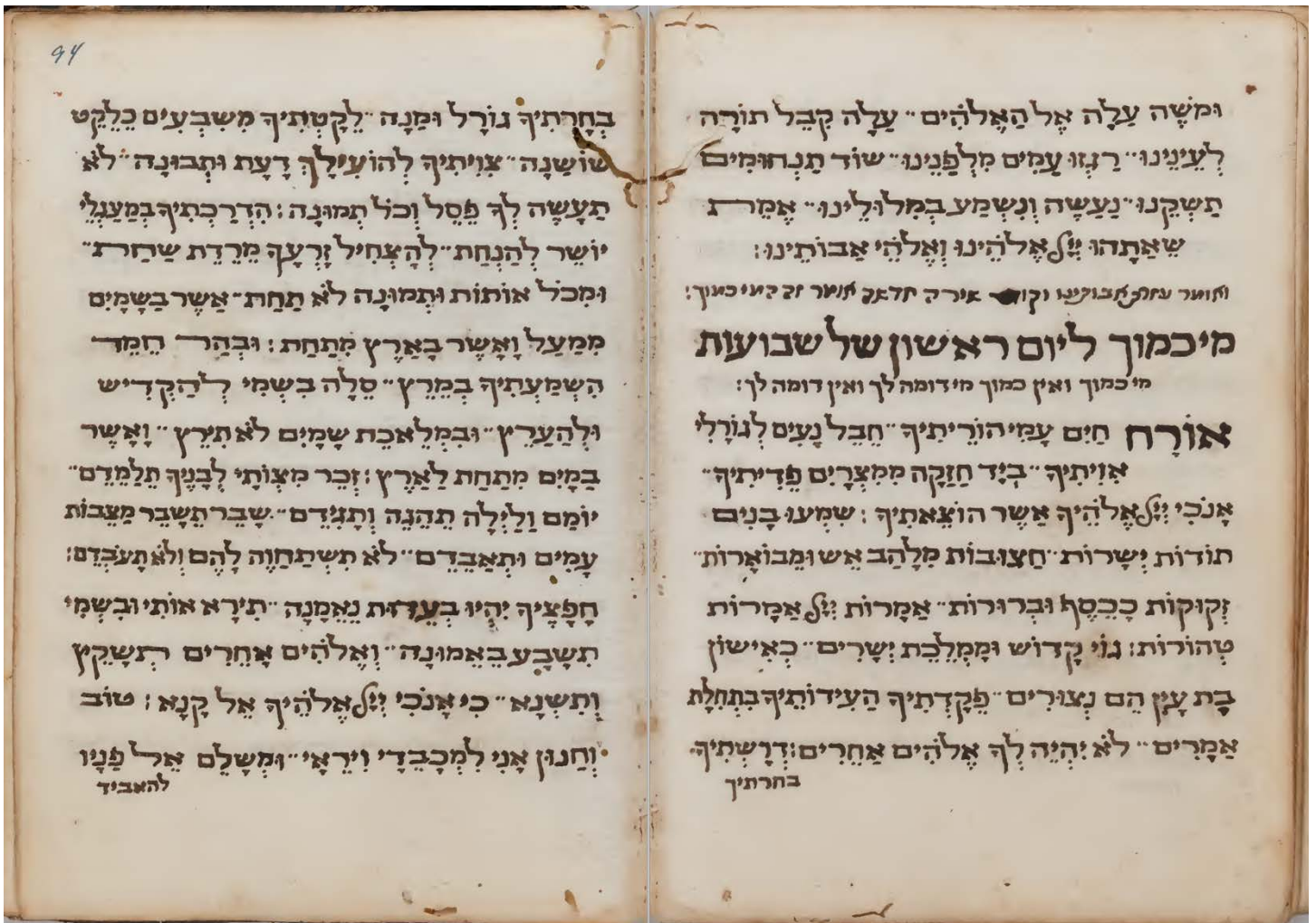
Baharlias family before the War

In March's e-newsletter we published a photo of the Jewish community of Kastoria. Thanks to a member of the Cohen family from Kastoria, we are able to identify members of that family in the photo.



"I'll try to explain who is who the best I can. The woman in the white hat on the left side of the picture is my mother Rachel Cohen Berman. 1st row of adults on the left side of picture is my great grandfather (Papoo my grandfather's father) 4 adults in on left side of picture is my grandmother Rebecca Colchamiro Cohen and next to her(the young boy) is my uncle Jack Cohen (my mother's younger brother). Next to Jack is my grandfather Hyman Cohen who was an import export merchant in Kastoria. He was a dress manufacturer in New York. My 2 aunts are also on the left side of the picture with all the children. 4th young girl in is my aunt Allegra Cohen Hason and next to her the little girl is my aunt Anna Cohen Gold. Of course all of these extraordinary loved ones are gone but not forgotten. There were 2 other children Dr. Jules Cohen (cardiologist) and Abraham Cohen (dress manufacturer in New York with my grandfather and Uncle Jack)."

Picture of the Month



Mi Kamokha Prayer for the Holiday of Shavuot, written in Corfu in 1729

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 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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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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