



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

July 2020 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

In July of 1944, the Jewish communities of Rhodes and Kos were rounded up for deportation to Auschwitz Birkenau. Last year, we attended the 75th anniversary of the deportations and this year, the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry was planning to bring one of their annual tours to Rhodes. COVID-19 prevented that. With the help of G-d we will be back in Greece in 2021. This newsletter is dedicated to the Jews of Rhodes and Kos.



The family of Stella Levi from Rhodes

This newsletter, our 136th 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 correction to our birth announcement: A special Mazal Tov to Rhoda and Lloyd Hirsch on the birth of their second grandson, Kiran Janveja Hirsch, born on April 25, 2020. The proud parents are Jonathan and Seema Hirsch. Kiran is welcomed by his older brother, Jayden, and large Greek-Jewish family. On his mother's side, Kiran is the grandson of Jack and Saroj Janveja. Kiran is the great-grandson of Jesse and Dorothy Elison (both of Blessed Memory), the great great-grandson of Elias and Nancy Colchamiro and the great great-grandson of Jessoula and Rachel (Galanos) Colchamiro, and Sam and Regina (Bacola) Matza.



Kiran



Elias Colchamiro



Elias Colchamiro family

We celebrate the birth of Wyatt Briskin Negrin, born May 26, the son the Noah and Sarah Su Negrin, the grandson of Joel and Linda Negrin, the great grandson of Samuel Negrin and Diana Ganis Negrin (both of Blessed Memory), the great great-grandson of Joseph Negrin and Serena Ganis Negrin (both of Blessed Memory) and the great great-great grandson of Moses Negrin and Leah (Lula) Cohen Negrin (both of Blessed Memory) and the great great-great-great-grandson of Eliyia Negrin and Hanoula Cohen Negrin (both of Blessed Memory). The Jews of Ioannina, the Jews of Greece and the Greek Jews in the United States celebrate. Na Sas Zisei.



Sienna, Nash and Wyatt



Noah, Sarah Su and Wyatt



Joseph Negrin Family

Mazal Tov to Emily Udler on the birth of her latest grandchild, Ediatar, brother to Aviv and Ofir, son of Daniel and Yael Udler, grandson of Emily Isaac Udler and Avi Udler (of Blessed Memory), great Grandson of Rosa Ester Bessos and Iakov Isaacs (bother survivors of the Holocaust and both of Blessed Memory).

Mazal Tov to Rose and Stephan Oberman on the birth of their son Samuel Asher Oberman on June 21st. Rose is the daughter of Maurice and Katherine Askinazi.



June was also the month of joyous simchas as Shirlee Cabillis Paganetti turned 90 on June 20th, Esta Varon turned 93 on June 21st, Millie Negrin Froot turned 100 on June 14th and Rose Matza Goldstein turned 102. Mazal Tov to these strong and beautiful women.

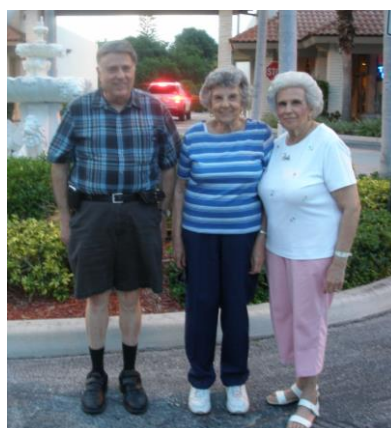
Shirlee Paganetti through the years, always beautiful.



On June 30th Sam Vitoulis celebrated his 90th birthday. Sam is joining his sisters, Evelyn and Roslyn who are also in their nineties.



Morris and Lydia Vitoulis with their children, Sam, Roslyn, and Evelyn



Sam, Roslyn and Evelyn, the children of Louisa Saporta and Morris Vitoulis



The Vitoulis Family

Happy 93rd birthday to Esta Varon, mother of Joseph and Cheryl. Esta is a member of the extended Colchamiro family.



Millie Froot from the Negrin and Barouch families celebrated her 100th birthday.



Happy 102nd birthday to Rose Matza Goldstein

Passings

We mourn the passing of Diana Gloskin, the daughter of Esther Levy Liascos and Gerson Liascos. Diana was born in New York, New York on April 15, 1931. She is the niece of Annetta and Oriel Jacob. She was married to Louis Gloskin and has two daughters with her ex-husband (Arnold Negrin, who predeceased her) Estelle Acerno (married to Robert) and Joann Cohen Sauter (married to John). She is survived by 3 grandchildren: Danielle Guertin (married to Matthew), Eric Acerno, and Daniel Cohen (Joann's son). She also had the blessing of two beautiful great grandchildren, Everett James and Isla Rose, children of her granddaughter, Danielle and husband Matthew Guertin. Diana grew up in Brooklyn and moved to the Bronx in 1960 to raise her family. She lived among a loving extended family. She worked as a secretary for the Bureau of child guidance, a division of the Board of Education until her retirement. She passed away peacefully on June 24, 2020.




We mourn the passing of Haim Mois, born in Kavala. Haim was among those detained by the British at Atlit in Israel, in his attempt to settle in Israel.



Clara Honen Koch passed away late Sunday night (June 14, 2020). Clara was 93. She was born April 23, 1927, and was the youngest of the 6 sisters, but older than her brother Natie.

News from Kehila Kedosha Janina

Because our Museum and Synagogue are currently closed due to COVID-19, we have been holding a series of classes, lectures, and services online. In case you missed the 3-part course "Greek Jewry Throughout the Ages" led by our Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, you can watch them online [HERE](#). Follow us on Facebook to stay updated on future online programs.



The poster features logos for The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America (La Ermandad Sefaradi) and Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum. The title "GREEK JEWRY THROUGHOUT THE AGES" is prominently displayed in a dark red box, with the subtitle "ANTIQUITY, MIDDLE AGES, AND MODERNITY" below it. The instructor's name, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, and the schedule (Mondays June 8, 15, 22 at 8pm EDT) are listed. A circular portrait of the instructor is on the right. Contact information for Zoom and email is provided at the bottom.

The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi

Kehila Kedosha Janina
Synagogue and Museum

SEPHARDIC DIGITAL ACADEMY

GREEK JEWRY THROUGHOUT THE AGES

ANTIQUITY, MIDDLE AGES, AND MODERNITY

With Marcia Haddad
Ikonomopoulos
Mondays June 8, 15, 22
8pm EDT

Online Streaming Via Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/86338056778>

Questions? Email Us at info@sephardicbrotherhood.com

Watch recordings of these online classes [HERE](#)



Antiquity



Middle Ages



Modernity

Kabbalat Shabbat Services Online – July 3 at 6:30pm

[Click Here](#) to watch on Facebook

[Click Here](#) to watch on Zoom

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
INVITES YOU TO JOIN OUR

KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICES

IN THE ROMANIOTE TRADITION

FRIDAY JULY 3 AT 6:30PM EDT

LIVE-STREAMING VIA FACEBOOK AND ZOOM

[FACEBOOK.COM/KKJNYC](https://www.facebook.com/kkjnyc)

[HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/83216209235](https://zoom.us/j/83216209235)

WHILE WE MAY HAVE TO STAY APART TO HELP ONE ANOTHER,
WE CAN STILL WELCOME SHABBAT AS A COMMUNITY. JOIN US
FOR A DIGITAL ROMANIOTE KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE
TOGETHER. LIVESTREAM WILL END BEFORE SHABBAT BEGINS.

שבת שלום

News from the Lower East Side and the East Village

Aerial Photos Call into Question City's Decision to Fully Demolish 70 Mulberry Street

by Karlin Chan in Bowery Boogie article [here](#)

On the evening of January 23, as Chinatown residents prepared for the Lunar New Year, a devastating five-alarm fire decimated the former PS23 at 70 Mulberry Street. Nearly five months later, many in the neighborhood continue to question the city's choice to fully demolish the facility.



Especially after the emergence of aerial photos showing the charred interior.

True to form, elected officials held press events in the immediate aftermath of the blaze, including an onsite cameo by Mayor de Blasio, who “vowed” to restore. It took five weeks before the nonprofit tenants – Museum of Chinese in America, Chinatown Manpower Project, HT Chen & Dance, United East Athletics – could return and conduct salvage operations.

However, transparency about the fire or plans for the city-owned building were seemingly nonexistent until a Community Board 3 Land Use meeting last month. Department of Citywide Administrative Services deputy commissioner Quintin Haynes presented pictures of the burned building and said full demolition was well underway due to the severity of infrastructural damage to supporting wooden joists and beams.

All along, residents had been told that removal of the roof and top three floors was necessary to prevent imminent collapse. Not a removal of the whole structure.

The CB3 full board adopted a resolution last week calling for continued demolition of top floors down to the historic stonework. Yet recommended that an independent structural engineer assess the feasibility of saving the remainder of the historic facade. (One was hired the next day.)

However, amateur aerial footage of the site doesn't appear to comport with the DCAS assessment. For instance, steel girders and support beams are clearly visible; and major damage can be seen on the Bayard Street side, from the third floor upward. But most of the roof was intact and you could even see a worker standing on it.

Coincidentally, it appears demolition crews have accelerated the pace of work. Is the city pulling a fast one on the community? A reputable source had disclosed that DCAS allegedly pressured some of the nonprofits to endorse a joint letter calling for full demolition lest it be years longer before occupancy. Is there more here than meets the eye?

Note: 70 Mulberry Street was built in 1900 and is a 5 story, 7-unit iconic building in Chinatown.



Economy Candy Hits the Sidewalk with 'Mystery Bags' for Summerlong To-Go Shop

Three months into the pandemic, Economy Candy remains a sweet spot on Rivington Street. Third generation co-owners Skye Greenfield Cohen and Mitchell Cohen are still operating as a two-person skeleton crew, walking two miles each way every day, to fulfill online orders for anyone in need of a sugar fix. As previously reported, Economy Candy rearranged their business model back in March when the pandemic hit by offering CandyCare Packs for purchase. They've now sold over 5,000 of these care packages, which has sparked additional, intriguing options for those with an adventurous sweet tooth.



Starting this weekend, and every weekend from 12 to 6pm throughout the summer, the Lower East Side icon is opening a curbside mini version of the candy shop, dubbed "Economy Candy To Go," which will not only offer limited candies for immediate purchase, but also have a line of to-go "mystery bags" for \$10, including "Mystery Sweet," "Mystery Sour," and "Mystery Chocolate Bags." This is part of an expansion of their curbside pickup, allowing both same day pick up and adding more pick up slots per day.

News from Jewish Greece

Jewish Museum of Greece Digital Exhibit: Jewish Neighborhoods of Greece

This second virtual exhibition took place in the framework of the European Program Judaica Europe, where Greece's Jewish community participated as a partner.

Through the photos presented in this exhibition, the Jewish Museum of Greece is trying to present some aspects of life in the Jewish neighborhoods in Greece, mainly before the war. The visitor is invited to participate in familiar, eternal stories, and catch a living image, though necessity partial, of a way of life rich in traditions and human relations, of the world that the war has ruined forever.

View the online exhibit [HERE](#)



Veroia

A number of photos were released on Facebook of the "house of the rabbi of Veroia." We would like to verify that this large house was actually the house of the rabbi (who would have been Sabbetai Azaria in 1944). Please contact us at museum@kkjism.org if you have information to share.



Morocco

The Jewish Quarter of Marrakech full article [here](#)

A mellah (Hebrew: מלאה, the Arabic meaning "salt spring" or "salt marsh" which was the area of the first Jewish settlement in Fez) is a walled Jewish quarter of a city in Morocco, analogous to the European ghetto. Jewish population were confined to mellahs in Morocco beginning from the 15th century and especially since the early 19th century. It first was seen as a privilege and a protection against the Arabs' attacks in the region, but with the growing of the population, it then became a poor and miserable place. With the colonisation and the arrival of the Europeans at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Mellah opened and gave new economical and social possibilities to the Moroccan Jews.

In cities, a mellah was surrounded by a wall with a fortified gateway. Usually, the Jewish quarter was situated near the royal palace or the residence of the governor, in order to protect its inhabitants from recurring riots since its inhabitants played a vital role in the local economy. In contrast, rural mellahs were separate villages inhabited solely by the Jews.



Surnames of the Jews of Damascus

Research into the Origins and Migrations of the Jewish People
Avotaynu Online article [here](#)

A Consolidated Index of Jewish Surnames in 20th Century Damascus

Like many other Jewish communities in the Levant, the Jewish community of Damascus dwindled from a thriving community with 12,000 members in 1943 until only a handful remained by 2010. Its members largely left for Mandatory Palestine and later to the State of Israel, the USA or Latin America, where they established thriving new communities founded on a rich heritage.

In this article, I aim to foster genealogical research into the Jewish families of Damascus by offering a preliminary compilation of surnames of those who lived there. In this endeavor, I have built upon the work of others:

Eliezer and Yosef Yoel Rivlin

Eliezer and Yosef Yoel Rivlin lived in Damascus during World War I and in 1926 published a book about the history of the Jews in Damascus during the 16th century[1]. In their last chapter, the Rivlins included a list of the surnames of Jewish families that lived in the city in previous centuries, as was provided to them by the city's Rabbis. They noted that some of those families continued to reside there in the 20th century. Unfortunately, the list is only partial.

Jews Appearing Before Muslim Courts 1583-1909

During 2015, I wrote an article for AVOTAYNU entitled "When Did Damascus Jews Start To Use Surnames?". The source of my data was a collection of documents in the Muslim religious courts of Damascus between the years 1583-1909. My article did not try to index surnames, but rather to figure out when surnames came into use in Damascus. Because the court documents mentioned only names of Jews who appeared before them, they reflect only a fraction of Damascus surnames and only ran through 1909.[2][3]

Amon Atzmon

The first serious attempt to construct a comprehensive list of Syrian Jewish surnames was undertaken by Amnon Atzmon, who in 2014 compiled a list of surnames of Israelis born in Syria (Damascus, Aleppo, and Qamishi). The list was posted in Hebrew on the website of the "Organization of Damascene Jews (from Syria) Living in Israel". Atzmon assembled 1,864 surnames from a variety of lists existing in Israel with Hebrew spellings apparently provided by family members. Many surnames appear multiple times with different Hebrew spellings, suggesting that the original Arabic spellings had been ignored or forgotten. Many of the families on the list carried Hebraized surnames adopted after their arrival in Israel.[4]

I was asked at a certain stage by Yossi Yavin (Yabu) whose late father hailed from Damascus to explore the Atzmon list and to offer a legal Hebrew spelling based on known rules governing transliteration from Arabic to Hebrew. Using these rules, I managed to identify and reconstruct many contemporary Jewish Syrian surnames. I found the Damascus Jewish surnames were not only of Arabic origin but Sephardic, Hebrew, and Ashkenazic origin as well.

Because many of the names had been transcribed into Hebrew based on how they sounded, some of the names on the Atzmon list required reconstruction from the Hebrew. For example, the Arabic letter Q is not pronounced in many cases, thus Qattash/ch is pronounced Attash/ch and Qubrusi is pronounced Ubrusi or Ibrisi.

Rafi Asher

At this stage, Rafi Asher from Tel Aviv (whose parents hail from Damascus and who is familiar with many surnames of Jews from Damascus), offered to examine my transcription of the Atzmon surname list and to identify those specifically from Damascus.

Asher and I verified our list and added several new surnames by corresponding with members of two Hebrew Facebook groups "Habait Hadamaskai" (The Damsacene House) [5] and "Lemoreshet Yehudei Damesek Suria u Levanon" (The Heritage of The Jews of Damascus, Syria and Lebanon) [6].

Based on this inquiry, Asher compiled a Hebrew-language table of Damascene surnames as well as a Latin transliteration. The PDF can be viewed on the "Habait Hadamaskai" website in the files section.[7] The table displays a legend explaining how some letters and vowels were actually pronounced in Damascus. This is a remarkable contribution to the genealogy of Damascene Jewish families and will certainly serve future researchers from different disciplines.

A Consolidated Index of Jewish Surnames in 20th Century Damascus

As the table compiled by Rafi Asher is not easily accessible to readers who are not familiar with Hebrew and Arabic, I am providing below a re-compiled version of his list using the Latin alphabet. In the process, I added further surnames.

Since a considerable number of the surnames on the list are of Arabic (and fraction from Turkish) origin, we referred to their original Arabic spellings to offer a more uniform index that was not dependent upon inconsistencies in pronunciation. In the process, discovered mainly through Latin spellings on contemporary (non-Jewish) Syrian Facebook groups, that notwithstanding a common spelling, there is indeed more than one way to pronounce a given surname.

The updated surnames index set out below presently includes some 300 surnames and hopefully will grow as we receive feedback from the community. The Latin transliteration is not according to academic rules but tries to reflect as much as possible the way it is written. Hopefully, everyone will be able to locate the surname he or she seeks. Surnames from Arabic origin are marked by the letter A.

For a complete list of names see [here](#)

News for Everyone

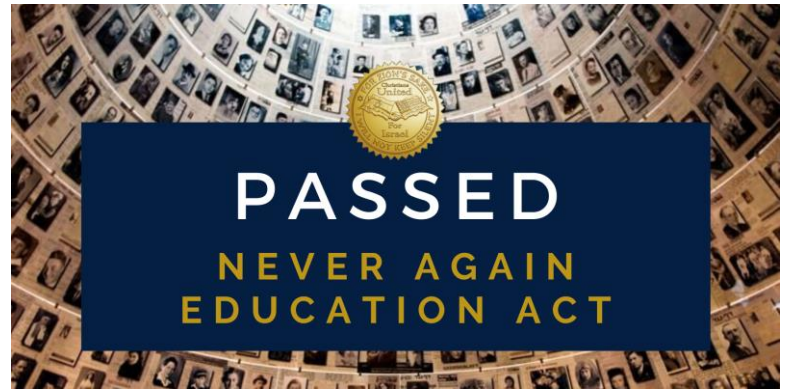
Never Again Education Act Signed into Law – World Jewish Congress

"We wanted to report to you about an important milestone in the fight against antisemitic hate; a monumental achievement your loyalty helped to bring about: H.R. 943, The Never Again Education Act, has been signed into law after passing the U.S. House of Representatives with bipartisan support and passing the Senate by unanimous consent. This critical legislation will provide federal funding to expand Holocaust education in the United States.

The World Jewish Congress – with your dedicated support – has long advocated for the significance of increased Holocaust education in American schools and for the passage of this bill.

We are grateful for your continued partnership which resulted in this critical victory in our ongoing fight against growing intolerance and hatred.

The Never Again Education Act helps to ensure that awareness of the lessons of the Holocaust remains ingrained in the collective American consciousness. This legislation is a tremendous step forward toward prioritizing and standardizing Holocaust education, and we hope that it serves as a model to world leaders around the globe.



The World Jewish Congress is working with many European and other countries to ensure that Holocaust education becomes a permanent part of school curriculums. WJC President Ambassador Ronald S. Lauder has initiated the Auschwitz Legacy Project to make available to schools around the world an educational package in different languages that will enable teachers to devote a session each year on January 27, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, to teach their students what happened in the largest of the Nazi death camps and about the importance of standing up against antisemitism. In order to make Holocaust education a central element of the study of modern history in the 21st century, the World Jewish Congress joined with UNESCO to create the multi-lingual Holocaust education online platform, aboutholocaust.org, geared at providing students, young adults, and others with essential information about the history of the Holocaust and its legacy.”

National Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam Becomes a Reality

Gemeente Amsterdam contributes five million to National Holocaust Museum:

The municipality of Amsterdam has decided to contribute five million euros to the realization of the National Holocaust Museum at the Plantation Middenlaan in Amsterdam. With the contribution of the municipality of Amsterdam, the Jewish Cultural Quartier has taken a decisive step in the fundraising for the National Holocaust Museum.

The National Holocaust Museum (NHM) will be the first place in the Netherlands from 2022 to show the entire history of the Jews persecution in the Netherlands. A history of exclusion, persecution and murder, and sometimes of rescue, survival and solidarity.

The NHM is located in two historical buildings at the Plantation Middenlaan in Amsterdam: the Hollandsche Schouwburg and the former Reformed Kweekschool. The Hollandsche Schouwburg was used by the German occupier during World War II as a deportation site for Dutch Jews. Tens of thousands of women, men and children had to wait until they were deported to concentration and destruction camps. Through the Reformed Kweekschool, hundreds of children were smuggled to relatively safer places using the resistance.



Emile Schrijver, general director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter, let us know to be pleased with the contribution: "We see it as a token of great confidence that the Municipality of Amsterdam has decided to support us so generously. By far most of the murdered Dutch Jews came from Amsterdam and many Jews from outside Amsterdam were eventually sent to the destruction camps through the capital. For the Jewish Cultural

Quartier, this support underlines our belief shared with the capital that a National Holocaust Museum is an essential addition to the national museum and memorial offer."

Touria Meliani, alderman Art and Culture of the municipality of Amsterdam: "For the municipality of Amsterdam, this contribution is an important step towards a full-fledged National Holocaust Museum, with a prominent place in the Jewish Cultural Quartier. A place for education, for information, for reminder about a radical period of the city of Amsterdam that should not be forgotten."



Decisive step

With the contribution of the municipality of Amsterdam, the National Holocaust Museum has taken a decisive step in the fundraising campaign. The resources acquired will be used to build both buildings, the permanent exhibition, producing educational programmes, the development of programming and exploitation for several years.

Seeking Help

We have been trying to help a young man from Great Britain whose grandfather immigrated to Manchester in 1910 with his mother. His grandfather's name was Simon Bakola (son of Haim and Rebecca). It is believed that Haim died in 1914 and did not come with Rebecca and Simon to England. Please send us info on any Haim Bakolas that you have in your family by emailing museum@kkjism.org.



Simon Bakola (Bacola) during WWII



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 וְנִנְשָׁעָה, כִּי תִהְלַתְנוּ אִתָּה,
וְהַעֲלֵה אֲרוּכָה וּמְרַפָּא לְכָל-תַּחֲלוּאֵינוּ וּלְכָל-מַכְאוּבֵינוּ
וּלְכָל-מַכּוֹתֵינוּ. כִּי אֵל רּוֹפֵא רַחֲמָן וְנֶאֱמָן אִתָּה:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Ἀναρρώσον 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 Ἰσραήλ.



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.

Due to the New York State precautions in place because of COVID-19, there are no upcoming events or services at KKJ. We will let you know as soon as this changes. Do check our website and our Facebook page for updates as well as digital programs online.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



Between the 9th and 30th of July, we enter into a special period of semi-mourning, often nicknamed "the three weeks, to commemorate the series of events that led to the destruction of the First and Second Temples. We open with 12-hour fast of the 17th of Tammuz, which commemorates, among other tragedies, the final siege of Jerusalem by our enemies, and with the full 25-hour fast of the 9th of Av- "Tisha B'Av", which commemorates the actual destruction of both Temples in their time. Tisha B'Av also commemorates other major tragedies Jews have suffered over the century, and besides fasting from all food and drink, demands other prohibitions against "pleasurable" activities, like not bathing or massaging with special oils for pleasure, not wearing leather shoes and avoiding marital relations.

We also change the very structure of synagogue conduct prayer on Tisha B'Av. For example, in most synagogues, the Book of Lamentations and dirges are recited while everyone sits on the floor or on low stools, like sitting 'shiva'; Lights are dimmed, the curtain on the Ark is usually pushed aside, and the prayer leader does not use the pulpit. During morning services, men do not don tallit or tefilin, and more dirges are recited for sometimes half the day. By the afternoon service, the mourning begins to subside, tallit and tefilin are worn, and people resume sitting in their usual synagogue seats. However, the entire day is one of mourning, sadness and grief for the loss of our Holy Temples and so many Jewish martyrs over the centuries. The day is considered so sad, that according to Jewish law, we are not supposed to even greet one another with the usual pleasantries, and Torah study, with certain exceptions, is forbidden, because our Sages considered this a "happy" and fulfilling activity!

Yet with all this sadness, conspicuously absent from the day's prayers as well as the pre-fast afternoon service is "Tahanun", the penitential prayers recited every weekday morning and afternoon, except for Sabbaths, holidays and 'happy' occasions, as well as the eve of such days. Given the nature of Tisha B'Av, it would seem to be most appropriate to say Tahanun, which by its very nature describes our sorrow and guilt at having committed sins and pouring out our hearts to G-d in asking forgiveness. Why, then, do we specifically omit Tahanun specifically on what could be considered the saddest day of all in the Jewish calendar?

The source cited in Jewish literature for this custom is a verse in the Book of Lamentations, which refers to the ninth of Av as being a "mo'ed", which literally means an "appointed time", but is virtually always used in Jewish literature to refer to holidays or special joyful times. If for whatever reason Tisha B'Av is considered a mo'ed, then we do not recite Tahanun.

But how can such a sad day be even considered a mo'ed?

Jewish tradition provides the answer. In Tractate Rosh Hashana of the Babylonian Talmud, page 18B, we are taught that in the future, Tisha B'Av will become a joyous mo'ed – holiday, because it will be the day of Israel's final redemption and onset of the long-awaited Messianic era., meaning a holiday – mo'ed', as Jeremiah describes. This idea is reinforced by the Jewish tradition that the Messiah was or will be born on Tisha B'Av itself. Thus, despite with all its tragic implications and nature and important commemoration of historic events, the future will see our saddest day of destruction and mourning becoming the day of Israel's final redemption and the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. This amazing aspect of Tisha B'Av is put into practice with a very widespread custom among all Jewish communities, but especially among Sephardim, whereby Jews thoroughly clean the house on Tisha B'Av afternoon in anticipation of the Messiah's coming! This idea of Tisha B'Av's transformation from a day of mourning to one of celebration and joy illustrates a cardinal principle in Judaism that we often forget. No matter what occurred past or present, Judaism never

loses hope and even on the saddest day of the Jewish year, we still make sure to institute certain customs to practically demonstrate such hope. By doing so, we show our firm belief and understanding that G-d's final redemption of Israel is not just a lofty ideal, but a true and very real expectation that will literally transform a day of mourning and tragedy to a day of unbridled joy and happiness. And may we merit this final redemption and welcome the Messiah already this year!

Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé
Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America



Parashah of the Week – Korah (Divisive Leaders)

The Torah tells us that Korah became the head of a number of unsatisfied leader types, numbering two hundred and fifty. Lead by Korah, they gathered about Moshe and Aharon and complained. They accused Moshe of taking advantage of his position and of abusing his power. They spoke harshly against Moshe and even had the audacity to praise the land of Egypt where they had been slaves. The next day unafraid, Korah and his people gathered in front of the Tent of the Testimony as requested by Moshe. It was at that point that G-d's anger was kindled against Korah. The land cracked open and swallowed Korah and his people. It was indeed a terrible and very tragic episode.

Yet, we wonder, is it wrong to challenge our leaders? Why were Korah and his people punished so harshly for questioning Moshe's leadership? Our Sages state, "Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven is destined to endure; one that is not for the sake of Heaven is not destined to endure. Which is a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven? The disputes between Hillel and Shamai. Which is a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korah and all his company." (Pirke Avot 5:17)

Hillel and Shamai are amongst the greatest scholars in Jewish history. The Talmud records a number of their disputes, yet it states that as the day ended and they ended their debates, they would be able to embrace each other as old friends. (1) Rabbenu David, (2) the grandson of HaRambam explains the difference in between Hillel, Shamai and Korah. He writes that Hillel and Shamai endure, because they never debated to win an argument, but rather they debated in order to attain the truth. Korah, on the other hand, intended to defeat Moshe by all means, justice was never in his mind. (3) To this, Rabbi Shimon bar Semah Duran (4) adds that when one is looking for the truth and for justice, one is able to see the other side of the argument and concede and agree when necessary. (5)

Rabbi Avraham ben Mordekhai Azulai (6) offers further insights into this Mishna. He states that it is important to challenge leadership and to present different views for a better understanding of the issues. The give and take of the debate will in turn create healthier and more robust thinking, freedom of speech is indeed fundamental, Judaism had promoted this important concept from time immemorial. This is what it means when the Mishna stated that if "the dispute is for the sake of heaven it will endure". Yet, he also writes that one must be aware when "Mahlokot", disputes, emanate from hate and dislike. Anger and hate are emotions that are not necessarily connected to logic and unfortunately are often used by demigods to divide the people. On the other hand, love and peace bring societies together, Hillel and Shamai are a true example of that.

Indeed, Korah has come to symbolize leadership that seeks to divide the people by pointing out or inventing faults on others. We must be aware that these types propagate hate, strife, and instability. Hillel and Shamai on the other hand, symbolize leadership that is mature and seeks to do the best for its constituency. Respect

and love are part of their traits, they don't need to criticize the other. They build their nation with care, love, and harmony. As students of Hillel, we must always choose and demand leadership that is mature and caring... then peace and harmony will follow.

Shabbat Shalom

(1) TB, Yabamot 14b.

(2) Rabbi David Hanagid was the son of Rabbi Avraham son of the Rambam. After his father's passing in 1237, he replaced him as leader of Egyptian Jewry until his death with the exception of 5 years when his position was contested. Some of the books whose authorship is attributed to Rabbi David HaNagid are 'Derashot Rabbi David', and a commentary on 'Pirke Avot'. Rabbi David HaNagid passed away in Egypt in 1300 and was brought to burial in Tiberias in the vicinity of his grandfather the Rambam and his great grandfather Rabbi Maimon.

(3) Rabbenu David Hanagid, Pirke Avot Im Midrash David, Chapter 5:24.

(4) Rabbi Shimon ben Semah Duran, also (1361-1444) (Hebrew: שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן צִמְחַ דּוֹרָאן), known as Rashbatz (רשב"ץ) or Tashbatz was a Rabbinical authority, student of philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and especially of medicine, which he practised for a number of years at Palma (de Majorca). A major 15th century posek, his published decisions in matters of halakha have been widely quoted in halakhic literature for hundreds of years. Shimon ben Semah was born in the Hebrew month of Adar, 1361. Various accounts put his birthplace as either Barcelona, or the island of Majorca. He was a near relation but not a grandson of Levi ben Gershon. He was a student of Ephraim Vidal, and of Yona de Maestre, rabbi in Zaragoza or in Calatayud, whose daughter Bongoda he married. After the persecution of 1391 (in the Balearic Isles) and Majorca he fled Spain with his father and sister for Algiers, where, in addition to practicing medicine, he continued his studies during the earlier part of his stay. In 1394 he and the Algerian rabbi Yishak ben Sheshet (known as Rivash) drafted statutes for the Jewish community of Algiers. After Rivash's retirement, Duran became rabbi of Algiers in 1407. Unlike his predecessor, he refused on principle to accept any confirmation of his appointment by the regent. As Duran had lost all his property during the massacre at Palma, he was forced against his will to accept a salary from the community, not having other means of subsistence. He held this office until his death. Duran's Magen Avot was a polemic against Christians and Muslims, of which the fourth chapter of the second part was published separately as Keshet u-Magen (The Arrow and the Shield). (Source Wikipedia)

(5) Rabbi Shimon ben Semah Duran, Magen Avot Chapter 5:16.

(6) Rabbi Abraham ben Mordekhai Azulai, Cabalistic author and commentator; born in Fez about 1570. The expulsion of the Moors from Spain brought a great number of the exiles to Morocco, and these newcomers caused a civil war from which the country in general and the Jews in particular suffered greatly. Abraham Azulai, in consequence of this condition of affairs, left his home for Palestine and settled in Hebron where he died in Nov. 6, 1643. (Jewish Encyclopedia)



Angel for Shabbat, Parashat Korah by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

This week's Torah portion begins with the words "Vayikah Korah," and Korah took. But the verse never tells us what Korah took!

Our classic commentators offered their explanations. Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra opines that Korah "took men" with him in fomenting rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Rashi explains that Korah "took himself to one side" in order to dissent from the current Israelite leadership. Ramban explains that Korah "took counsel with his heart" to rise in rebellion.

Perhaps, though, the Torah is teaching us something else. By not stating what Korah took, the Torah is in effect saying: Korah took nothing! Korah gave the appearance of taking bold action, but in fact he offered nothing but bluster. He had nothing positive to suggest. Korah is good at complaining, he is an effective demagogue: but he had no actual agenda. The Torah lists his grievances but does not list any of his plans for

improving the lot of the Israelites. Korah and the other rebels never disclose how their leadership would be better than that of Moses and Aaron.

The Pirkei Avot (5:21) distinguishes between the types of disputes conducted by Hillel and Shammai and the dispute generated by Korah and his cohorts against Moses and Aaron. The debates of Hillel and Shammai were "in the name of Heaven." The dispute of Korah was "not in the name of Heaven." The usual understanding of this passage is that Hillel and Shammai were not arguing for their own personal glory but in order to clarify the halakha. Even when they disagreed on particular rulings, they both accepted the halakhic system and worked within it. On the other hand, Korah and the other rebels were not motivated by an honest search for truth, but by the desire to gain personal power. Their rebellion was not for the sake of Heaven but for their own selfish goals.

We might refine this explanation by considering two words: criticism and contempt. Hillel and Shammai were critical of each other's views on certain matters. They marshaled arguments to bolster their own views and to refute the views of the other. Criticism aims at undermining the arguments of the opponent, not at discrediting the opponent's character. People who are critical of each other's viewpoints can still sit together and offer their cases and refutations. Even if neither side is convinced to change his/her mind, the debate can be civil and respectful.

Contempt is something different. A contemptuous opponent is not interested in engaging in serious discussion or debate, but rather in assassinating his opponent's character. He does not offer arguments to bolster his views or to refute his opponent's arguments. Rather, he attacks his opponent's character. He wants to demonstrate that he is superior, and his opponent is inferior. He speaks and acts with contempt. This was the approach of Korah's cohorts Datan and Aviram toward Moses. They sought to discredit Moses in the eyes of the people, to malign his character and his leadership. They were not interested in a disinterested dialogue with Moses on the best way to lead the Israelites; Datan and Aviram even refused to appear before Moses when he summoned them. They were contemptuous.

When people—individually, communally, nationally—have disagreements, they can engage in serious discussion and dialogue even if the parties are critical of each other's positions. Each can offer arguments and refutations. Both sides—even if holding vastly different positions—can still find a common ground and can see themselves as working toward one goal. But when people—individually, communally, nationally—are contemptuous of the other side, then the basis for discussion, debate and reconciliation is undermined. The contemptuous party or parties are not at all interested in dialogue or debate; they are interested in destroying the other party. They see themselves as being superior; they are above discussion or criticism; their opponents are discredited and dehumanized.

And this may be the inner meaning of "Vayikah Korah," and Korah took...nothing. Korah and his cohorts did not come to criticize Moses and Aaron but to contemptuously displace them. When people offer contempt instead of criticism, they essentially offer nothing of value. They bring nothing to the table except hatred and self-righteousness. Contemptuous people are dangerous and destructive...but ultimately end up by being swallowed up by the forces of truth.

Picture of the Month



Louie Levy in Ioannina in 1945

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

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280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002

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