



# Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

## January 2023 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Best wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2023. We have returned to some semblance of normalcy with in-person Saturday morning Shabbats and our museum open to the public on Sundays from 11am-4pm. We have had some very successful live events and hope to continue throughout the new year. January 27<sup>th</sup> is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorating the day that Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by the Red Army. Jews throughout the world will stop and remember. There will be special events at the United Nations, along with events of remembrance in Parliaments and synagogues throughout the world. Yom HaShoah is a day for Jews to remember. January 27<sup>th</sup> is a day for everyone to remember. The following photo was taken in Ioannina on the day of deportation, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Let us never forget.



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The E-Newsletter is sponsored by Helene and Steve Askinazi in memory of Steve's parents Joe and Shirley Askinazi. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at [museum@kkjasm.org](mailto:museum@kkjasm.org).

This newsletter, our 166<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website [www.kkjasm.org](http://www.kkjasm.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@kkjasm.org](mailto:museum@kkjasm.org)

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email [amarcus@kkjasm.org](mailto:amarcus@kkjasm.org) if you would like to attend, and enjoy a traditional Greek kiddush lunch after services. Our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm.

## Simchas

In this issue we celebrate two special birthdays, one wedding, and a special family reunion. On December 4<sup>th</sup>, Rae Yamali celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and, on January 22<sup>nd</sup> we will celebrate Annette Binder's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. December saw the marriage of Nehama Smith, the daughter of Elisheva and Rabbi David White in an amazing ceremony in Brooklyn and, finally, in December there was a Vitoulis Family reunion in Florida (the Vitoulis siblings are all in their 90s).

The following photos were taken at the celebration of Rae Yamali's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.



Annette Binder was born January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1928, the only child of Joseph Politis and Esther Josephs. Annette often recounts that her parents would take her everywhere, especially to the Bronx to visit relatives. By blood or through marriage, Annette is related to an unbelievable number of Yannote families and, fortunately for us, is a repository of memories.



Rochelle and Elisheva  
with Esther (age 103)



We celebrate the wedding of Nehama Smith (the daughter of Elisheva and Rabbi David Smith, the granddaughter of Rochelle Rosen and the great-granddaughter Ralph and Esther Colchamiro) to Yechiel Zerkind.

December saw the Vitoulis family reunion in Florida, where the three Vitoulis siblings, all over 90, gathered to celebrate. The children of Morris Samuel Vitoulis and Lydia Saporta Vitoulis (both of Blessed Memory) are Evelyn Vitoulis Kaplan (now 95 years old), Roslyn Vitoulis Honan (now 94 years old) and Samuel Irving Vitoulis (now 92 years old) are blessed with good Greek genes and loving families.



## Passings

It is with great sorrow that we note the passing of Elizabeth Mitilineos St. Vincent, the oldest daughter of Marcella Leontsini Mitilineos and Peter Mitilineos (of Blessed Memory). After courageously battling cancer, Elizabeth passed in Tennessee, where she was living with her family. She is survived by her mother, Marcella, her husband, Michael, her children and her recently born first grandchild, Lilian, born October 27<sup>th</sup>. She will be mourned by her extended family, including her aunt, Stella Leontsini. The Leontsini family were from Corfu and bit Stella and Marcella survived as hidden children in Athens during the Holocaust.

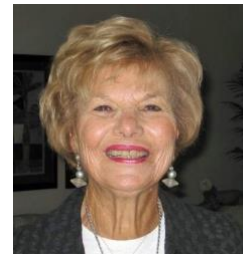


Elizabeth St Vincent



Rebecca, Elizabeth, Marcella & Peter Mitilineos

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Mae Asser Lipp on December 2, 2022 at the age of 92. She was predeceased by her husband, Stanley Lipp (z"l), her sister Rae (Asser) Blumberg (z"l) and her brother, Manny Asser (z"l). Mae was the last surviving child of Elias Asser and Esther Apsty (Epstein) Asser (both of blessed memory). She was the granddaughter of Menachem and Regina Asser. The Asser's were among the founding families of Kehila Kedosha Janina and married into other early Yanniote families (Nachman, Cohen, Menachem, Yomtov, Mazza and Apsty).



Mae Asser Lipp

Mae is survived by two children, Lori Chase and her husband Richard, Michael Lipp and his wife Wendy Garf-Lipp. She is also survived by three grandchildren, Ezra Lipp and his wife Carolann Kinzel, Carly Chase and her husband Peter Kunze and Danny Chase; two great grandchildren, Elan Lipp and Millie Kunze; and two nieces and one nephew.



Menachem Asser family in Ioannina 1910



Bechoropoulos Family Ioannina 1933

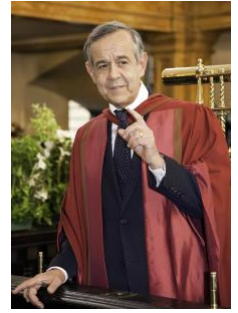
Our sincere condolences to the family of Anna Vechoropoulos (Bechoropoulos), also known as Anna Becker. Anna passed away in Aventura, Florida, on Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at the age 103. Anna was born March 26, 1918 in Greece to Jacob and Nina Levy. Her husband Victor passed away many years ago. Anna enjoyed working as a beautician in hotel salons, she was a people person, making friends with whomever she met. Anna is survived by her nephew Israel Peles and her nephew Joseph Salfatis. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

We mourn the passing of Barbara Klein Isaac, the widow of Hanen Isaac. Barbara passed on November 14, 2022 at the age of 91 in Ormond Beach, Florida. Barbara is survived by her children, Joseph, Paul and SueAnne Casaale, along with her brother-in-law Lawrence Isaac.





We thank Rabbi Marc Angel for this notice on the passing of Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy who was Rabbi for many years of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London. A distinguished Rabbi, he was a longtime friend and colleague of Rabbi Marc Angel, of New York's Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. Rabbi Angel reviewed a book by Rabbi Levy several years ago, and we re-post it in memory of Rabbi Abraham Levy. Barukh Dayan Ha-Emet. Read more [Here](#)



Memoirs of a Sephardic Rabbi: A Book Review by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

"A Rocky Road," by Rabbi Abraham Levy (with Simon Rocker), Halban Publishers, London, 2017.

Rabbi Abraham Levy has been associated with the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London for nearly six decades. Those of us who have known him over the years have been impressed with his energy, optimism, single-mindedness, devotion, British elegance...and more.

And now, he has written a volume of memoirs in which he offers candid reflections on his long service as a Sephardic rabbi. Rabbi Levy highlights his many achievements, especially in the area of Jewish education for children and adults. He writes warmly of those congregants who supported his work, who shared his ideals, and who were genuine friends to him and his family.

But he does not shy away from the less pleasant aspects of his rabbinic life. He openly discusses conflicts between himself and others of the synagogue religious and lay leadership. Indeed, the book seems to jump from one crisis to the next, some within the congregation itself and some involving other factions in the Jewish community.

He entitled his book "A Rocky Road," as an allusion to his upbringing in Gibraltar with its famous rock; and also to the fact that his years in the rabbinate were "rocky," with plenty of ups and downs. Throughout his long rabbinic tenure, he stayed focused on his mission to provide religious leadership to his people. His Sephardic upbringing and worldview served him well.

Growing up in the warm Sephardic Jewish community of Gibraltar, he learned to love his Judaism and its many mitzvot. "The Judaism we experienced was never a burden nor driven by anxiety or fear. It was part of our natural habitat." (p. 11) The happiness and naturalness of his childhood Judaism has imbued his religious life ever since.

He also learned that a religious leader must identify with his community and must strive to create a sense of family among the various members. In a sermon he delivered in 1977, Rabbi Levy "reflected that a rabbi can only be effective in his work if he is prepared to identify with congregants in their times both of joy and festivity and of sorrow and calamity. A rabbi could not be a detached spectator." (p. 42)

In a sermon he gave on Rosh Hashana in 1987, marking his 25th anniversary with his congregation, he stated that "while there had been quiet and productive years, a few had been tempestuous and unhappy. I compared the role of the rabbi to that of a shofar. The protracted single blast of tekiah was a wakeup call, urging people to think what more they should do to improve the religious lives of themselves and their children. It didn't always make the rabbi popular...The broken three-note sequence of shevarim, the sound of lament, represented the rabbi's sharing in the troubles of his congregants and holding their hand in times of need. The staccato burst of teruah—blown in biblical days as a rally to war—was a summons to action. For if I believe that something needs doing I will continue to blow the notes of teruah into everybody's ears until hopefully it gets done." (p. 62)

Rabbi Levy, like most (all?) rabbis, had to deal with various synagogue leaders who were less than ideal. "When it came to lay leaders, I always made a basic distinction: there were those who brought honor to the office and those who sought honor from the office...I prayed for honorary officers who were successful in their careers and happy at home because if they were frustrated or unfulfilled, they tended to make the rabbi's job more difficult." (p. 116) How difficult it is for a rabbi—and for the congregation as a whole—if synagogue leaders are rude, egotistical, control-freaks. Improper leaders, bent on seeking honor for themselves, end up causing vast damage to the spiritual and material health of the congregation.

Rabbi Levy's Sephardic ideology shines through his book of memoirs. He expressed pride in the fact that Sephardim "can present a religious interpretation of Judaism which does not have an ideological adjective such as Orthodox or Reform attached to it...We Sephardim, with a little give and take, have always managed to have only one Jewish community." (p. 143)

In looking back on his rabbinic career, he confessed: "I have tried not to deviate from the values I inherited from my parents and their family before them. We all remain sentimentally attached to the traditions we grew up with, but I continue to espouse the classical Sephardi outlook out of conviction that it remains important in a polarized Jewish world...I remain a defiant centrist." (p. 235) As the religious ground has shifted to the right, "I came to occupy a lonelier position in the middle of the road." (p. 233)

Rabbi Levy broods over the growing dissension within the Orthodox community, and within the larger Jewish community. Factionalism is rife. Extremism increases. Harold Levy, the former warden of Jews' College, once remarked: "We are becoming a dumb-bell religion." He meant, we are becoming thin in the middle and heavy on the extremes. (p. 111) Rabbi Levy takes genuine pride in the school he established and which has provided strong Jewish and general education to its students. Many families have become more religiously observant thanks to the influence of the school. Yet, some of the graduates have gone on to become more "right wing" Orthodox, and have turned away from the classic Sephardic religious moderation.

In reading Rabbi Levy's "A Rocky Road," we call to mind another road mentioned in a poem by Robert Frost, The Road not Taken. "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--/ I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference." Rabbi Abraham Levy, as a young man, could have chosen many roads to live a happy and fulfilling life. He chose the rabbinate, a road less traveled by—and that has made all the difference to him, his family, and his community.

The Gibraltar-born rabbi, who trained in London, was a champion of the classic Western Sephardi ethos with its belief in synthesis between traditional Judaism and the best of secular culture. Among those who sent condolences to the Sephardic community of London on the passing of Rabbi Levy was King Charles.



The late rabbi's cousin, deputy mayor of Jerusalem Fleur Hassan Nahoum, told the JC: "Rabbi Levy was my first cousin, my mentor, and to me he's always been a spiritual figure that worked very hard towards bridge building with all sorts of populations and stood for the Maimonides value of moderation between the spiritual world and the practical modern world.

"He built a good majority of the Sephardi institutions in the UK, he built the rabbinical program, he built a school, he built a mikveh. These things didn't exist for the Sephardi world until he decided to do it.

"He was also an integral part of the Montefiore Foundation to advance educational projects. Again, everything he did was in the spirit of bridge building, middle of the road moderation, making Judaism attractive and accessible to everyone, embracing and including everyone in that vision.

"He was a very proud Sephardi, a very proud Jew, very proud of his heritage, of our heritage and a very approachable, kind, empathetic figure.

**This E-Newsletter is sponsored Helene and Steve Askinazi  
in memory of Steve's parents Joe and Shirley Askinazi.**

Joe was the son of Ezra (Israel) Askinazi and Molly Cohen Askinazi, both born in Ioannina.



Shirley and Joe Askinazi

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### Visitors to Visit Kehila Kedosha Janina

December was a busy month with visits by old friends and new friends, large groups and small groups, and a special visit by descendants of two of our founding families (the David and Menachem families). As part of a large lunch group (our first lunch tour in a long time) we were overjoyed to meet Eddie David and his sister, Roxanne Davis.



Eddie David



From the KKJ photo archives, Eddie's grandparents, Eddie and Anne David



We were honored with a visit by Professor Ronnie Perelis from Yeshiva University and a group of his students.



Our new friend, Tasos Karapanagiotidis, visited the US from Thessaloniki and enjoyed meeting members of our community.



## Past Events of Interest

### Hanukkah Celebrated Around Our World

#### Athens

The Greek Minister of Education and the leadership of the Jewish Community in Athens exchanged Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year wishes as part of a heartfelt and festive dinner extended at a central hotel in Athens. Education Minister Niki Kerameos sent warm wishes to the leadership of Greek Jewry for the celebration of Hanukkah, underlining the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Religion to transmute knowledge, preserve memory through educational programs, fight intolerance and anti-Semitism. Read more from KIS [Here](#) (in Greek).



#### Thessaloniki

On December 22 an event for lighting the 5th candle of Hanukkah took place at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. The guests were welcomed by the Museum's President, Mr. Isaac (Nino) Saltiel and then the Rabbi of the IKTH sang the prayer. The candles of Hanukkah, in honor, were lit by the President of the IKTH and KISE, Mr. David Saltiel, Mayor of Thessaloniki Mr. Constantinos Zervas, Deputy Commander of the 3rd Army Corps Mr. Costakoglu, Mayor of Panorama Mr. Ignatios Kaitetzidis, the Vice-Regional Governor of the Metropolitan Unit of Thessaloniki Mrs. Voula Patoulidou, the Director of At the Office of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Maria Antoniou, the MPs Mr. Giannis Amanatidis, Mrs. Anna Efthimiou, Mr. Theodoros Karaoglou, Mr. Konstantinos Gioulekas and Dimitrios Kouvelas and the Vice President of the Holocaust Museum, Mr. Giannis Boutaris. The event was honored by the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Consul General of Cyprus, the Honorary Consul of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Director of the International Relations Service of the Suburban Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a crowd of people. The Mayor of Thessaloniki Mr. Zervas, the Vice-Regional Governor of the Metropolitan Unity of Thessaloniki Ms. Patoulidou, the MP Mr. Amanatidis and the President of the IKTH Mr. Saltiel. The evening ended sweetly, with the traditional souvganiots and with the wish of the light of Hanukkah to fill our hearts all. And next year too!!



#### Chalcis



#### Istanbul



## Izmir



## Sarajevo



Archbishop Elpidophoros of America offered Hanukkah wishes:

"To our Jewish sisters and brothers, we offer our best wishes on the joyous occasion of Hanukkah. May the miracle of the oil and the radiance of the Menorah inspire everyone to be filled with hope instead of despair, faith in place of doubt, and love to vanquish all darkness."



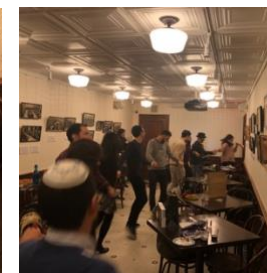
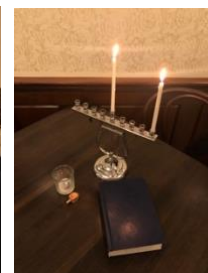
Leon Saltiel and the World Jewish Congress celebrate Hanukkah in Geneva

The American Jewish Committee brought together diplomats to celebrate Hanukkah at Central Synagogue in NYC.



## Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

Thank you to everyone who attended our Hanukkah Party! It was an incredible evening with great drinks, delicious keftikas and latkes, amazing company, incredible music, and tons of dancing! We definitely started the holiday off right! Special thank you to Michael Mintz and Shahin Naim for helping to sponsor the celebration. Let's carry forward the amazing energy we shared throughout the holiday and into the new year.





## News from Jewish Greece

### **The Synagogues of Greece: Architectural Drawings and Photographs at Kehila Kedosha Janina**

By Elias V. Messinas, PhD, MSc, March, BDes

The origins of the Jewish heritage of Greece date from antiquity. The oldest-known Greek synagogue, dating from the first century BCE, was unearthed in Delos, although its Jewish origins have been disputed. Magnificent synagogue mosaic floors dating from the fourth century CE, belonging to Romaniote communities, were unearthed in Aegina and recently in Chios. Also, the Metroon, in the Agora of Athens, has been suggested to belong to a synagogue from the fifth century CE.



Upon the outbreak of WWII there were 27 Jewish communities and a small concentration of Jewish congregations in several more cities, numbering over 70,000 Jews – primarily, Romaniotes and Sepharadim - in Greece. More than 100 synagogues stood throughout Greece. In Thessaloniki alone, stood 59 synagogues and private prayer halls. Their origins traced in antiquity, Medieval Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe, the Ottoman Balkans, and North Africa.

In WWII the Nazis and the Bulgarians in Thrace and parts of Macedonia, annihilated 87% of the Jews of Greece, and vandalized and demolished their synagogues. Some were abandoned, or converted into homes, warehouses, and stables. Jewish institutions were also destroyed, including cemeteries. In Thessaloniki, for example, the ancient cemetery, was turned into construction materials for sites throughout the city, and the site into the extension of Aristotle University. In Preveza and Arta, for example, new construction erased it forever.

Upon Liberation we know of 38 synagogues surviving in 25 cities in Greece. In many cases, lacking a Jewish community, these synagogues were sold and then torn down during the modern reconstruction of cities. Very few were saved, like on the island of Kos, thanks to the intervention of the local authorities.

Today, 15 synagogues stand in 12 cities throughout Greece. The former Jewish community center in Kavala that served as a prayer hall, was demolished circa 2020. The synagogues of Thessaloniki and recently of Trikala and Kos, were restored by the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and the Central Board of Jewish Communities respectively. These restorations were undertaken by architect Dr. Elias Messinas, an expert in the field, who has been documenting and studying the architecture and history of the synagogues of Greece for the past three decades.

The survey and study of the synagogues of Greece, a project initiated and undertaken by Dr. Elias Messinas was initiated in 1993. Upon graduating from the Yale School of Architecture and after practicing in architectural offices in New York, he “decided to undertake a meaningful project” as a young Jewish architect looking for a meaningful start in his career, and to fulfil the need to document what survived the Holocaust. Further, making this material available for exhibitions and further study. The survey project was initiated with the survey and study of the synagogue in Chalkis, the city where Messinas’ Romaniote grandmother Eftihia Negrin (nee Forni) was born and raised, before moving to Ioannina with her husband Elias Negrin. The survey of the synagogue in Chalkis was made possible thanks to a seed contribution by the late Minos Mordochai, board member of the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens, and reimbursement of costs by the World Monuments Fund, thanks to Dr. Samuel Gruber, Director of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments. The survey project, which encompasses all cities with standing synagogues, also includes visits to cities without synagogues and Jewish communities, where locals – non-Jews - keep the narrative alive until today.

**This year, Kehila Kedosha Jannina Museum joined numerous prestigious institutions in the US, Greece and Israel in acquiring the Elias Messinas Digital Archive of the Synagogues of Greece.**

The digital archive, already enriching and serving archives, libraries and institutions, such as Stanford University, Hebrew University, the Jewish Museum of Greece, and others, includes more than 1500 images and

200 architectural drawings of the synagogues of Greece, some of which have since been demolished. The digital archive, considered “very valuable” by these institutions, enriches collections and enables comparative study, research, exhibition and publication.

Architect Elias V. Messinas is a practicing architect, graduate of the Yale School of Architecture, Bezalel Academy, with a doctorate from the National Technical University of Athens, and a post-doc from the Technion. He initiated the survey and study of the synagogue of Greece in 1993, preserving in detail architectural records of synagogues since demolished. Since 2016 he has been the chief architect and coordinator of restoration projects of synagogues throughout Greece. He has lectured, and exhibited his work in the United States, Israel and Europe and is the author of several books and numerous articles. Founder and editor of Kol haKEHILA The newsletter and website for the Jewish Monuments of Greece and of ECOWEEK with activity in 17 countries. He is the urban planner of the Ginot Hair Jerusalem community council, and Design Faculty member at Holon Institute of Technology. Website: <https://ecoama.com>.

Further reading new publications on the synagogues of Greece:

*The Synagogues of Greece: A Study of Synagogues in Macedonia and Thrace: With Architectural Drawings of all Synagogues of Greece* second edition with foreword by Samuel D. Gruber. ISBN: 979-8-8069-0288-8 paperback. Available online **and at Kehila Kedosha Janina**.

*The Synagogue of Veroia - Η Συναγωγή της Βέροιας* second edition with foreword by Samuel D. Gruber. ISBN: 979-884-6836-06-8. Paperback Greek-English. Available online **and at Kehila Kedosha Janina**.

*The Synagogue* (‘Η Συναγωγή’, Infognomon Editions, 2022) the new novel by the author, bringing to the front, the human stories behind the research, based on many years of research on published and unpublished archival documents, and on interviews. ISBN: 978-618-5590-21-5. Published in Greek. Available through the publisher Infognomon Editions.

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### **Street mural project honors unknown ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ in their homelands**

With first installations completed in Greece and Portugal, an international initiative celebrates Holocaust rescuers and educates on antisemitism. Full article [Here](#)

In the year ahead, buildings around the world will be festooned with elaborate murals that celebrate “Righteous Among the Nations” who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

In the initiative launched by the group Artists 4 Israel, the first two murals were installed earlier this year on buildings in Portugal and Greece. Fundraising pending, the group’s vision is to celebrate hundreds of additional heroic “upstanders” with murals around the world.

“The purpose of the project is to force people to interact with the Holocaust, to learn and to find pride in fighting against antisemitism,” said Artists 4 Israel’s CEO Craig Dershowitz. “The beautiful murals are a psychological trigger,” he said. In addition to people who see the murals in person, millions are reached through social media platforms curated by famous street artists enlisted for the initiative, said Dershowitz.

“With the ‘Righteous’ mural project, we have the opportunity to educate via positivity, by celebrating the heroes of a nation and giving citizens the chance to emulate their actions,” said Dershowitz. Until this new “Righteous” project, in its more than decade of operation Artists 4 Israel has concentrated on bringing hundreds of artists to Israel, where they have painted bomb shelters in the south and created tattoo art on the bodies of wounded veterans and terrorism survivors.

“It is always important to look past the art and at what message the art is communicating,” said Dershowitz.



### 'Putting it in their faces'

When German forces landed on the Greek island of Zakynthos in 1941, the local mayor was ordered to supply a list of the Jewish population for deportation. Mayor Loukas Karrer, in coordination with church leader Archbishop Dimitrios Chrysostomos, instead devised a scheme to rescue nearly all of the island's 275 Jews.

While Chrysostomos went to negotiate with the Germans, Karrer burned the list of Jews living on Zakynthos and wrote his and the archbishop's names on a piece of paper. Karrer then joined the meeting with the Germans and handed the paper to the archbishop, who in turn passed it to the Nazi administrator.

"Here are your Jews. If you choose to deport the Jews of Zakynthos, you must also take me, and I will share their fate," said Chrysostomos, who was under gunpoint for much of the encounter. After the confrontation, the mayor and the archbishop immediately warned the island's Jews. Most of them went into hiding in villages and were able to survive the Holocaust with assistance from neighbors. To celebrate the rescue of the Jews of Zakynthos, Artists 4 Israel commissioned artist Kleomenis Kostopoulos to honor the rescuer duo on the side of a building in Patras, Greece.



Righteous' mural in Patras, Greece



"Murals are one of the most important forms of contemporary expression and communication in public spaces," said Kostopoulos of the project, completed in March. "Today, more than ever, we must revisit our history in Greece by bringing it to the streets and putting it in their faces," said the artist. Called "Memory for Blessing," the Patras mural blends portraits of Mayor Karrer and Archbishop Chrysostomos alongside images of the island's Jews. In Greece, at least 80% of the Jewish community — some 70,000 people — were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau and other killing sites. The wartime story of Zakynthos contrasts starkly with — for example — the Greek island of Rhodes, where only 151 Jews survived the Holocaust from a community of 2,000.

### 'I saw myself saving lives'

Also earlier this year, Artists 4 Israel worked with artist Mr. Dheo to commemorate diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes with a mural near Porto, Portugal. "A New Memory Across the Portuguese Skyline" depicts Sousa Mendes, Portugal's consul-general in France during the war. In that role, he defied his government's orders by issuing Portuguese visas for up to 30,000 Nazi refugees, including 10,000 Jews. "I remember as soon as I spoke with my father about this project, straightaway he mentioned Sousa Mendes as a hero and he told me that everybody here — it's going to be unanimous — everybody will like the project, will like the wall, especially the older generations," said Mr. Dheo. "They know what he did."



Mural honoring Aristides de Sousa Mendes near Porto, Portugal

After rumors of Sousa Mendes's actions made their way to Lisbon, he was dismissed by the Portuguese government and left destitute with a large family to support. "If thousands of Jews are suffering because of one Christian [Hitler], surely one Christian may suffer for so many Jews," said Sousa Mendes after his dismissal. In 1966, Sousa Mendes was the first diplomat recognized as "Righteous" by Yad Vashem. But not until 1988 — 34 years after his death — was he granted total rehabilitation by the Portuguese government.

Dershowitz said Artists 4 Israel has two murals lined up for United States locations in 2023, pending funding. The first will commemorate Master Sargent Roddie Edmonds of Knoxville, Tennessee, who refused a Nazi order at gunpoint to identify his unit's Jewish soldiers in a German POW camp. "We are all Jews here," Edmonds told the Nazi commandant, after which he threatened to have the Germans prosecuted for war crimes. By rallying his soldiers against German orders, Edmonds is credited with saving up to 300 American-Jewish soldiers in the POW camp.

The second mural planned for the US will honor Irene Gut Opdyke, a Polish rescuer who hid Jewish families and later relocated to southern California. When 12 Jews she was hiding were discovered by a German officer, Opdyke agreed to become his mistress in exchange for not turning them in.

"You must understand that I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, someone who defies the SS and the Nazis, all at once," wrote Opdyke in her memoir. "One's first steps are always small: I had begun by hiding food under a fence." Years after moving to California with her American husband, Opdyke wrote about her positive interactions with Jews as a child and how her daydreams became reality after Germany's occupation of Poland.

"In my fantasies, I was always caught up in heroic struggles, and I saw myself saving lives, sacrificing myself for others. I had far loftier ambitions than mere romance," wrote Opdyke. "Before Artists 4 Israel started the Righteous Among the Nations Global Mural Project, I was familiar with only a few of the more famous ones," said Dershowitz. "But as this program continues, I am learning of hundreds of heroes each braver than the next."

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### **New Righteous Recognized in Greece:** Honorable Event for the Rescue of the Hazan Family in Litochoro

The families of Captain Vasilis and Fotini Siskopoulou, Nikolaou and Pelagia Giata, and Captain Georgiou and Anastasia Pitsiava from Litochoro were honored by the grandchildren of Emmanuel and Emma Hazan, Aliko Koen-Moses, Fikos Saltiel and David Hazan for saving their grandparents and parents, Etis, Russell and Moses during the German occupation.

The event took place in the packed conference room of the Dion-Olympus City Council on Sunday, December 18, 2022. The event was opened by Mrs. Aliko Koen-Moses, who did a brief look back at the events that highlighted her family's history. As soon as war was declared in October 1940, Captain George Siskopoulos, who lived with his family close to the family of Emmanuel Chazan in Thessaloniki, suggested that he take them to Litochoro with his boat (Agios Spyridons) that carried coal. The Captain was a Litochorite and because he too had children the same age as the Hazan family he thought there would be greater security during the war. Thus, the Jewish family of five were moved to Litochoro, where they remained throughout the occupation, hiding in the homes of the other families honored at the event.



In his greeting, the Mayor of Dion-Olympus Mr. Vangelis Geroliolios underlined that the event is characterized by the humane values of humanity, solidarity, and assistance to fellow man. The rescue of the Jewish family at that time from the Litochori families, the Mayor said, proves the ecumenicalism that should characterize our thinking today, showing emphatically that we all have a responsibility not to allow We will repeat such events again. The professor and former high school principal Nikos Davanos, who introduced the family of Emmanuel and Emma Hazan with their three children, spoke. During his experiential narrative, he traveled the audience in the 1940s, when, at a very young age himself, he lived up close the effort of the entire local community to protect the Jewish family and preserve Christ texture of its own identity.



The grandson of Captain Vasilis Siskopoulos spoke about the importance of such events, and the impact this initiative had on Vasilis Siskopoulos' descendants, to whom he served as a unanimous to obtain better knowledge of the IT boundary of his own family, but also to the residents of Litochoros as a whole who they got to know unknown aspects of the history of their place.



David Hazan expressed his own thanks to the family of Captain Vasilis Siskopoulos and the residents of Litochoros, conveying the greeting and thanks of Moses' father, who could not attend the event. Alice Cohen-Moses explained that this day for the honorary event at Litochoro coincides with the start of the Hanukkah celebration. "A moment that allows us to parallel the heroic actions of those who saved Jewish lives during the Nazi occupation with the courage and determination of the Maccabees. Just as the Maccabees stood against their oppressors to ensure freedom to practice their religion, so did those honored today stood against the Nazis and risked everything to protect justice raw of their Jewish fellow humans not in the exercise of their religion but in something more sacred, in preserving their lives," Aliko Cohen-Moses emphasized in her speech.

The honorary event ended with the awarding of a thank-you souvenir by the three grandchildren of the Hazan family to the representatives of the three Litochori families and to Mayor Vangelis Geroliolioli, on behalf of the residents of Litochoros, where with a central feature a boat, like the one that saved their grandparents and their parents during the German occupation. The honorable event took place in cooperation with the Litochoros Naval Museum and the support of the Municipality of Dio-Olympus.

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## Athens

### Mayors From Across the World Gather in Greece to Combat Anti-Semitism

In December municipal leaders from more than 50 cities and 23 countries convened in Athens, Greece, for the second-annual Mayors Summit Against Antisemitism, chaired by the City of Athens and Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis, and co-organized by the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) and Center for Jewish Impact (CJI), in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), Jewish Community of Athens, and Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS).



At the conclusion of the summit, participating mayors signed a **joint declaration** underscoring their commitment to "fighting antisemitism in all its manifestations with a cities-oriented approach" in realms including education, law enforcement, and interfaith relations, among others, and expressing support for use of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism as a "guide and educational tool."



"This event is not just an act of reflection, but also a generator of transformative action," Mayor Bakoyannis said. "Tolerance, empathy, and respect, begin at home—in our communities, our towns, and our cities, at the grassroots. Summits such as this provide a valuable opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences in building more tolerant and resilient societies. "The summit's opening dinner featured keynote remarks by H.E. President of the Hellenic Republic of Greece Katerina Sakellaropoulou, who said, "At a time when antisemitism is growing worldwide, it is our moral duty to turn memory daily into action, to cultivate historical knowledge, to reflect on the causes that gave birth to Nazism, racism, antisemitism, and all kinds of racial, religious, and social prejudices. New York City Mayor Eric Adams—who received the CAM Civic Leadership Award—called out social media companies for the role their platforms play in fomenting hatred, particularly among the young, saying, "We need to not only build a better globe for our children, but build better children for our globe. Right now, our children have been hijacked by those who put profit over public safety and their mental stability. We have to reclaim our children."



The summit also included a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at the Holocaust Memorial of Greece, as well as a visit to the Jewish Community of Athens' historic Beit Shalom synagogue, where series of panel discussions on

antisemitism-related issues were held. At the summit's closing dinner, CAM CEO Sacha Roytman Dratwa unveiled a new six-point plan for municipal leaders to take impactful action to fight religious bigotry and secure and nurture Jewish life in their cities.

The plan calls on mayors and city authorities to:

1. Appoint a coordinator responsible for liaising with the city's Jewish community and organizing the municipal-level response to incidents of antisemitism.
2. Adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism—the most authoritative, comprehensive, and widely-accepted tool used to delineate contemporary manifestations of antisemitism across the ideological spectrum.
3. Allocate municipal resources for initiatives fostering interfaith tolerance, understanding, and harmony.
4. Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for antisemitism, with municipal officials uniformly speaking out to condemn each and every local act of Jew-hatred.
5. Devise an educational plan to train municipal staff and law enforcement personnel how to detect and react to all forms of modern-day antisemitism.
6. Celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month and European Day of Jewish Culture with annual municipal programming in highlighting the rich and storied history of the Jewish people in the U.S. and Europe and the positive contributions of Jews to American and European culture and society.

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## Thessaloniki

### **The Renewed Modiano Market is Open – The Historic 1900 Building Marks the Jewish Presence**

On December 5, on a rainy morning, the Modiano Market reopened. The weather did not dampen the spirits of those present. After four years, the dream has become a reality. The architecture was preserved, but the market interior was fully refurbished. The Modiano Market was ready to reaffirm its role as the main home of the retail center, along with catering and leisure activities, as had traditionally been done over a century ago.



### **KIS Condemns Vandalism of the Jewish Monument in the University of Thessaloniki**

The Monument dedicated to the Jewish cemetery situated in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was once more target of hideous vandalism. A swastika was sprayed on the grave that symbolizes the sacredness of the Jewish cemetery—one of the oldest in Europe—which was destroyed in 1942 by the Nazis and their collaborators, as well as the annihilation of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, the largest in Greece, during the Holocaust. The marble dedication of the Monument was also desecrated with a fascist symbol. With the stain of the horrific Nazi swastika and a fascist-inspired graffiti we bid farewell to 2022, a



year during which no incidents of vandalism of Jewish sites were registered in Greece. We condemn the unholy act of the vandals, followers of intolerance and antisemitism that express their hatred and fanaticism through the profanation of the memory of the Salonican Jews. No tolerance to antisemitism! We call on the Law enforcement authorities to be mobilized in order to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to Justice.

Athens, December 29, 2022

Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS)



## New Museum Exhibit in Thessaloniki

December welcomed the opening of an important exhibition at the Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki on the common destinies of the Christians and Jews of the city, with many historical artifacts and interesting narratives. The Archeological Museum Of Thessaloniki presents the exhibition "In the Same City: Christians and Jews in Thessaloniki" from December 3, 2022 to April 15, 2023.



The Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy, the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the George Konstantinidis Archive are co-organizing a series of exhibitions entitled "In the same city: Christians and Jews in Thessaloniki". This series of exhibitions aims to highlight the atmosphere of Thessaloniki in the late 19th and early 20th century through unpublished historical documents.



The third exhibition focuses on trade and entrepreneurship in Thessaloniki. It deals with the city's economy, which during the period in question was based on international trade, local and regional small-scale trade, and local consumption. Thessaloniki supplied the other urban centres and the Macedonian countryside and was also the export gateway for agricultural products and the mineral wealth of the Macedonian inland. Numerous historical documents, such as contracts, bank accounts, business advertisements in the press, and other lesser-known documents, such as mining agreements, show the great influence that the Christian and Jewish communities had on the city's economy.



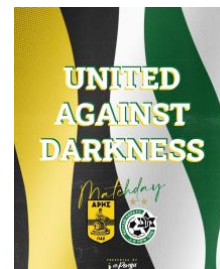
As in the previous two exhibitions, photographs, documents, and objects from the archive of C. Konstantinidis' family and the collections of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki offer the visitor a rich anthology of material that brings to life the people who made Thessaloniki a centre of trade and an export gateway to the Macedonian inland.

## Soccer for Diplomacy

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece congratulates the football clubs of Aris, Thessaloniki, and Maccabi Haifa on the dynamic message against intolerance and antisemitism sent from the "Vikelidis" stadium during the friendly match of December 4, 2022. The Greek Jewry welcomes the decision of both teams to donate all the proceeds of the match for the erection of the Holocaust Museum of Greece, in Thessaloniki. This is a meaningful action, an initiative in the memory of the 50,000 Jews of Thessaloniki murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators in the German death camps.

The two teams demonstrated their strong commitment to fostering solidarity and mutual respect in the stadiums, in sports and in society at large. Their example shows the way in the struggle against fanaticism, antisemitism, and violence.

Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS)



## Newly Established Thessaloniki-Izmir Ferry Route Suspended Full article [Here](#)

Levante Ferries Group has announced that its ferry route between Thessaloniki in northern Greece and the city of Izmir (Smyrna) on Turkey's western coast will be temporarily suspended until the Summer of 2023. The Smyrna di Levante's maiden voyage was on October 10th of this year. The company hopes that the link will become popular with tourists, owing to the immense cultural and historical attractions offered by both cities.

The Thessaloniki-Izmir ferry link is the first of its kind. The journey between the two coastal cities lasts for approximately 14 hours. Services to Izmir occur every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Voyages to Thessaloniki take place on the alternating days of Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday. Passengers can obtain a ticket for €81. A 10 percent discount is available for return tickets. It can accommodate 948 passengers, 300 cars, and 55 trucks. Levant Ferries Group has said that "the precise date for resuming the service in the summer of 2023 will be specified in a later announcement."

### A ferry route of diplomatic value

In recent years, Greece and Turkey have been experiencing a period of heightened tensions, particularly in the geographically important Aegean Sea. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the new maritime link will play a small role in helping to foster more positive bilateral relations.

It took over two decades of negotiations to make the Aegean route a reality amid a deteriorating diplomatic situation. Former Thessaloniki mayor, Yiannis Boutaris, was a firm believer in the project and championed the economic and cultural benefits it could bring the two cities.



Levant Ferries Group has likewise promoted the Thessaloniki-Izmir link's diplomatic qualities. The firm said that it had "created a bridge of communication between Greece and Turkey, which are now coming closer on a trade, social and cultural level".

### Two desirable destinations now joined together

Both Thessaloniki and Izmir boast illustrious histories and have a lot to offer visitors in terms of culture, cuisine, and tourist attractions.

Thessaloniki is Greece's second-largest city. King Cassander of Macedon founded the city in around 315 BC, naming it after his wife Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great. Today, it is known for its gastronomy and as an important business center in Greece. The picturesque White Tower and Byzantine-era Rotunda are well-known historical attractions.

The city may also hold special significance for Turkish visitors arriving by ferry. Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish state, was born in Thessaloniki in 1881. The house where he was born has now become a museum and attracts thousands of Turkish tourists annually.

Izmir is the third most populous city in Turkey. Notable attractions include the marble Clock Tower, the remains of a Roman-era agora (market), and the Kemeraltı bazaar established by the Ottomans. Like Thessaloniki, Izmir is well regarded for its culinary contributions. Its past is closely linked with the Greek presence in Asia Minor as Izmir is a Turkish rendering of the Greek name Smyrna, which was one of the oldest ancient Greek cities in Asia Minor. It was founded by the Aeolian Greeks in the 11th century BC and maintained a strong Greek presence until the Great Fire of 1922.

## Ioannina

New Exhibition: "Art and the Holocaust. From the past to the present"

The Historical Archive of Epirus hosted the Exhibition "Art and the Holocaust. From the past to the present" in December featuring contributions and relevant archival material about the Jewish Community of Ioannina and Romaniote Jews, which numbered about 2,000 members until March 1944. Read more [Here](#) (in Greek).

On display are the prints of 16 works by persecuted Jewish artists, donated to the Department of Visual Arts and Art Sciences of the University of Ioannina by the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem and hosted in its art collections. They are painted in any way possible, depicting aspects and moments of the Holocaust by recording the conditions of confinement, forced labor and crimes committed during the Second World War (1939-1945) in ghettos, camps, places of resistance and refuge. Sometimes artists depict a different world, the one they hoped awaited them after the end of the war.



Contributors to the realization of the exhibition are the students of the School of Fine Arts, who, within the framework of the museum-pedagogical activities, submit their concerns, comment visually with videos, paintings, photographs and installations on these works.

Curator of the exhibition: Esther Solomon, Assistant Professor of Museology, Nora Lefa, Associate Professor of Video Art, Vangelis Gokas, Associate Professor of Painting, University of Ioannina.

Participating students: Ioli Hartzavalou, Vasso Sfairopoulou, Maria Chatziantoniou, Theodora Parigoritsa, Anastasia Skatzi, Nena Kalpi, Dimitra Athanasiou, Adamantia Koulopoulou, Laura Tsiati, Eleni Karakatsani, Chrysovalantou Grigoriadou, Konstantinos Koinos, Victor Karamanlis, Katerina Iliopoulou, Anastasia Kyriakou, Chrystalla Antouna, Michalis Kritharis, Giorgos Ananiadis.

Visiting hours of the exhibition: Saturday 11.00-14.00

Ground floor area IAMI, Soufari Serai Building, Kastro of Ioannina

D. Philosophou & Glykidon , 452 21 IOANNINA

Phone: 26510 34469, e-mail: mail@gak.ioa.sch.gr

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## Arta

Savvas Aaron was originally from Arta. Arta was a thriving Jewish community. Following the integration of the city into the Greek state in 1881, Arta became a border city and lost the possibility of transactions with Epirus inland. Many Artinians, Jews and Christians, sought a better fortune in other cities. Many descended to the neighboring Patras forming the city's youngest Jewish community.

The Gargalianoi at that time was an important commercial and transit center, thanks to the raisin. Savvas Aaron chose to settle in Gargalianoi, expecting professional success. The 1907 Census mentions a Jewish resident of the Municipality of Platamodos, Trifilia Prefecture - where Gargalianoi is located. Of course it was Savvas Aaron.



I couldn't find the later course of Savvas Aaron, but he was named after his great nephew. Savvas - Sambetai Aaron in 1944 was taken to Auschwitz - Birkenau. He was arrested in Athens, where he had sought better luck. "Those who had come to Athens and were caught in the Synagogue and in their homes, met in Haidari with the others that were caught in Arta, and traveled to Auschwitz. A few lived together for a short time and then died. "It was not a sweet memory but more of a nightmare for the few survivors of the camp from the family of Aarons, including my father, Savvas Aaron," recounts my good friend Bella Aaron. Read more [Here](#)



## Crete

**Crete Celebrates Union with Greece On December 1<sup>st</sup>** Full article from Greek Reporter [Here](#)

On December 1, 1913, the island of Crete was officially integrated into the Greek state, after Sultan Mehmet V had finally relinquished all sovereignty over the island exactly one month earlier.

Crete's liberation from Ottoman rule was the result of a violent struggle that lasted close to a century and cost a great deal of blood to gain, as Cretans joined Greece's War of Independence on June 14, 1821, according to most historians.

However, on Sunday, December 1, 1913, the official announcement of the island's union with Greece took place in a festive atmosphere in sunny Chania, in the presence of King Constantine and Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos.

The day Crete was unified with Greece

That day, the white and blue, alongside Byzantine flags, was hoisted across the city and the whole island. Incredibly, this marked the first time that a Greek king had landed on the island since Byzantine Emperor Nikiforos Fokas, who reigned from 963-969, and who had kicked the Arabs out of Crete.

According to the Athenian newspaper Estia's correspondent from Chania, the events culminated at 11:50 in the morning, when Revolutionary War veterans Anagnostis Mantakas, 94, and Hatzimichalis Giannaris, 88, raised the Greek flag at the Firkas fortress, to the reports of 101 cannons fired off by Greek warships in celebration.

Crete had fallen into the hands of the Ottomans on October 4, 1669, when their army entered Chandakas (present-day Heraklion), putting an end to 465 years of Venetian rule, which had lasted from 1204-1669.

Despite the fact that many fled the island, Cretans never really knuckled under to their new rulers. Two uprisings in the following decades, the "Movement of 1692" and the "Revolt of Daskalogiannis" in 1770, failed; but they nevertheless they showed the Ottomans that Cretans did not accept their rule over them.

In 1821, Cretans joined mainland Greece in the national uprising; but their efforts did not succeed, due to the large number of Ottomans and Ottoman Cretans on the island and the dearth of armaments.

Still, uprisings against the conquerors continued with undiminished intensity. In 1833 it was the "Movement of Mournia"; in 1841 the "Revolt of Hairetis and Vasilogiorgis"; in 1858 the "Movement of Mavrogenis"; and in the 1866-1869 the "Great Cretan Revolution" took place.

And the unrest went on, with the "Revolution of 1878"; the "Revolution of 1889"; and the "Revolution of 1897-1898", when Crete finally gained its autonomy with the blessing of the Great Powers, after the shocking atrocities committed by the Ottomans in Heraklion on August 25, 1898.

Crete had resisted Ottoman rule for years

On November 2, 1898, the last Ottoman soldier finally left Cretan territory.

It was that year when Crete came under the protection of both the Great Powers and only the high sovereignty of the Sultan.

A separate Cretan state was established from 1898 to 1913, with Greece's King George as Commissioner and a government consisting of five Christians and one Muslim — since in 1900 about 25 percent of the island's inhabitants were Muslim.



The dominant political figure of that period was a young lawyer by the name of Eleftherios Venizelos, who soon came into conflict with King George. The “Revolt in Therissos” on March 10, 1905, organized by Venizelos, forced the Greek king to resign from power and hand over the high commission to Greek politician Alexandros Zaimis.

The main demand of the insurgents was the immediate union of Crete with Greece.

Greece’s victory in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) that many attribute to the insightful policies of Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, accelerated these political developments.

On May 30, 1913, the Sultan signed away all his rights to Crete with the Treaty of London (Article 4), while with a special treaty he resigned his sovereignty on the island, on November 1, 1913.

Finally, Crete was free and its union with Greece had become a reality at last.

In 1923, with the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, the last Muslims left Crete, most of whom settled on the shores of Asia Minor.

From then on, Crete became an integral part of Greece, despite a rumor saying that in 2013 — 100 years from the 1913 treaty — a secret article stipulated that the island could secede from Greece and become independent.

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## France

France honored David Saltiel, President of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece, with the title of Defense of the Legion of Honor.



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## Turkey

**Sephardic festive spirit bears echoes of the past in Türkiye’s Izmir** Full article [Here](#)

The event, featuring one of the oldest communities in Türkiye’s multicultural society, sheds light on a broad scope of Sephardic Jewish heritage with exhibitions, synagogue tours and concerts in Izmir.

The International Izmir Sephardic Culture Festival opens with Sephardic songs and an exhibition showcasing the centuries-old history of the Sephardic Jewish community in the Aegean province.

Held annually since 2018, the festival includes synagogues tours and film screenings complemented by a slew of cultural activities — including Sephardic music concerts and meals based on traditional cuisine — in the historical Kemeralti district between December 18 to 27. The festival's director, Nesim Bencoya, tells TRT World that, “The festival aims to promote Sephardic Jewish culture and provide intercultural communication between individuals from different cultures.”



The street with a long-term memory

The events have been hosted in synagogues located on Havra Street — namely Portuguese, Etz Hayim, Signora Giveret and Hevra — that date back some 400 years and welcome visitors to travel in time.

Havra Street's proximity to the Izmir port and its location in the center of the old Jewish Quarter gives this street both a Jewish and a multicultural character thanks to the intermingling of Jews and non-Jews, says Bencoya.

The festival brings together Sephardic culture experts and participants from Spain, Romania, Germany and the US, offering visitors a unique backdrop to experience a stimulating blend of literature, music and cuisine. Through these encounters, culture enthusiasts can witness the trail of Sephardic Jews' footprints, historically and sociologically.

"Encountering an unfamiliar culture causes attendees to have a highly emotional experience," says Bencoya.

Erol Amado, deputy chairman of the Izmir Jewish Community Foundation, explains to TRT World that, "This event highlights the cultural element of Sephardic Jews rather than [the] religious one. The candle-lighting ceremony, which will be held for Hanukkah, aims to bring together representatives of as many cultural groups as possible in Izmir and convey the message of coexistence and multiculturalism to Izmir, Türkiye and the world."

A warm welcome

The story of Sephardic Jews is marked with pain and sadness as this distinct community came into existence on then-Ottoman soil following a tragic edict called the Alhambra Decree.

After Catholic Monarchs of Spain Ferdinand and Isabella issued a decree in 1492 forcing the Jews residing in their kingdom to convert to Christianity or to leave the country, thousands had no choice but to escape the inquisition and their homes in the Iberian Peninsula — and at the invitation of Sultan Bayezid II, many found safe refuge in the Ottoman lands of Istanbul, Izmir, Edirne and the Balkans.



As a migrating society, Sephardic people couldn't carry any tangible items across the Mediterranean, so it was rather their intangible valuables — such as their language, professional knowledge, religion and cuisine — that they brought with them.

Deep-rooted heritage far beyond boyoz and musician Dario Moreno

Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish language, is a living example of how an ancestral community can sustain its centuries-old tongue, build its identity and revive its memory based on that. According to Ethnologue, a database of languages, only 8,000 residents of Türkiye speak this endangered language.

An amalgamation of different languages including Spanish and Arabic, Ladino reveals a lot about the Ottoman policy of pluralism and contains many Turkish loanwords such as "kuti," deriving from "kutu" (box), and "furca," originating from "firca" (brush). The borrowing of terms was a mutual process as Turkish contains words deriving from Ladino, such as "boyoz," which comes from bollos (pastry associated with Izmir).

However, this language teetering on the verge of extinction resonates in listeners' ears thanks to Sephardic music of Türkiye, a distinctive tradition which exists in different forms. Janet and Jak Esim, Los Pasharos Sefaradis and Izzet Bana are some of the active Ladino folk musicians who are keeping the old language and stories alive and introducing them to future generations.



Sephardic Jewish musicians not only brought their heritage with them from Spain to the Ottoman Empire, but also contributed significantly to Turkish classical music. Festival Director Bencoya considers Ishak Algazi, Hoca Santo, Avram Aryas and Hayim Alazraki as “some of the most well-known musicians in classical Turkish music.”

#### Centuries-old flavors

The festival also treats participants to a taste of traditional Sephardic Jewish cuisine, offering up a delectable selection of dishes, from fritadas and fongos to mogados, mustachudos and ojaldres. Attendees can revel in this gustatory journey — one that Bencoya claims offers a sensory experience as well as knowledge.



#### Solid ties

While the festival is just one event showcasing the history and culture of Türkiye’s Jews, the country has a long tradition of being home to a vibrant Jewish community.

Although numbers differ, the current population size of the community is estimated to be around 16,000, with almost 90 percent of the Jews in Türkiye being Sephardic and the rest, mostly Ashkenazi. The vast majority of the population is located in Istanbul, while around 1,200 dwell in Izmir, and a small number live in the provinces of Ankara, Bursa and Antakya.

Turkish Jews, as citizens of Türkiye with equal rights to non-Jews, contribute to the development of the country in many fields, from science and culture to finance, and perform their religion freely.

Istanbul-based Mendy Chitrik, tells TRT World that, “The Jewish community, organised under the Chief Rabbi of Türkiye, has synagogues, schools, cemeteries and can perform circumcisions and students can receive proper religious and history classes.”

“Both Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews in Türkiye have complete freedom to celebrate their religion; they have never been under any pressure or involvement from the government,” he concludes.

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### **Did Turkey Deliver Humanitarian Aid to Greece During WWII?** Full Article from Greek Reporter [Here](#)

In a little-known episode of World War II, the SS Kurtuluş delivered humanitarian aid from Turkey to Greece.

Turkey’s position during the war was ambiguous, and Ankara remained neutral until the war’s final year. Turkey had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany only a matter of months before the Kurtuluş left port to deliver humanitarian assistance to Axis-occupied Greece. Most of the funding for humanitarian aid was organized by the Greek Orthodox community in the United States. Assistance could be funneled through Turkey and past an Allied blockade because of its neutral status.

#### Axis occupation of Greece

Despite successfully repelling the Italian invasion in 1940, Greece was unable to resist the combined forces of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy the following year. By April 1941, Greece had been occupied by Axis forces. Under Axis occupation, the Greek population suffered tremendously in what would become known as the Great Famine. Mass starvation was caused due to widescale plunder by Axis forces and an Allied blockade, which was intended to prevent supplies from reaching the Axis. The blockade also stopped any humanitarian aid from reaching the beleaguered Greek population. According to Nazi Empire author and Ohio University Professor Shelley Baranowski, between 1941 and 1942, an estimated three hundred thousand Greeks starved to death during the Axis occupation.



### Organizing humanitarian aid

Turkey's humanitarian aid for Greece was facilitated by a combination of community funding, diplomatic wrangling, and strategic compromise. To alleviate the suffering of Greeks under occupation, the Greek diaspora in the United States began fundraising in order to send humanitarian assistance. Funding was primarily organized by the National Greek War Relief Association, an organization founded by the Greek Orthodox Church in October 1940. The Hellenic Union of Constantinopolitans also played an important role. Delivering humanitarian aid to Greece was another problem entirely. The Allies were reluctant to send aid if it would mean lifting their blockade against the Axis in Greece. However, by sending humanitarian aid via Turkey, Great Britain's Royal Navy could maintain the blockade whilst allowing some supplies to reach the Greek civilian population.

### Delivering humanitarian aid

Turkish President İsmet İnönü and the Turkish Parliament agreed to the humanitarian assistance plan despite remaining neutral at the time. On October 6, 1941, the SS Kurtuluş left Istanbul for Piraeus, where it would deliver food and humanitarian aid. On the Turkish end, the food was mostly collected by the Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent) and in Greece, the Red Cross was largely responsible for distributing the food. According to Kevin Featherstone, a professor at the London School of Economics, together with other academics, it was primarily the American Greek War Relief Association and the Hellenic Union of Constantinopolitans who funded the venture, whereas Turkish sailors on the Kurtuluş were responsible for seaborne delivery. Records from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) indicate that it was difficult to deliver humanitarian supplies. 45,000 tons of food were successfully delivered to Greece between October 1941 and August 1942. However, during the harsh winter of 1941-1942, only 7,500 tons of food arrived securely.

The Kurtuluş was itself sunk after being blown off course during a storm on the night of February 20, 1942. It was the fifth voyage the ship had taken during its humanitarian aid mission. All thirty-four crew members reached dry land and survived. Smaller vessels continued to send humanitarian aid from Turkey to Greece. Ships such as the SS Dumlupınar, SS Tunç, SS Konya, SS Güneysu, and SS Aksu continued to deliver supplies, albeit in smaller numbers.



### Turkey's alignment

Throughout most of the war, Turkey remained neutral. Turkey's humanitarian aid to Greece was largely a symbolic gesture. İnönü's strategy was to maintain Turkey's non-alignment. This occasionally required making overtures to both the Allies and the Axis. According to Professor of International Relations Bülent Gökay, "This policy was designed to safeguard Turkey's territorial integrity by having close relations with Germany and the Soviet Union, while, at the same time, keeping either powers at arms' length and away from Turkish lands." Just a few months before the SS Kurtuluş first set sail, on June 18, 1941, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Şükrü Saracoğlu and the German ambassador to Turkey, Franz von Papen, successfully negotiated the German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship.

The non-aggression pact between the two countries was to last for ten years. However, on February 23, 1945, Turkey declared war on Nazi Germany. By this stage of the war, it was obvious that the Axis would lose. Turkish forces never participated in any fighting. Ankara's alignment was satirized by the Turkish cartoonist, Ramiz Gökçe, who illustrated Turkey as "The Comrade of Germany; The Sweetheart of America; The Ally of Britain; The Neighbour of Russia; The Protector of Peace; The Friend of the World."

### The naval blockade is lifted

In February 1942, the Allies lifted the naval blockade and other nations were also able to deliver humanitarian aid to Greece. The ICRC was thus able to deliver 15,000 tons of Canadian wheat to Greece every month. The Swedish government provided transportation and the Canadian authorities supplied the food. The number rose to 17,000 tons of food which was brought to Greece each month between September 1942 and March 1944 by the Swedish and Canadians.

According to a 2012 study, "The nutritional situation returned to acceptable levels towards the end of 1942." However, the situation on the Dodecanese islands remained desperate as they remained under German occupation until the final year of the war. According to the ICRC, the Red Cross was able to hire small boats in Izmir, which it used to deliver assistance to the Dodecanese. The British government and Greek settlers abroad supplied food, clothing, and medicine, and with the agreement of Turkey and the belligerents involved, were able to transport about 2,700 tons of this aid out to the Dodecanese.



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## Unique Byzantine Inscription Found off Black Sea Coast

A unique Byzantine inscription from the fourteenth century was recently discovered on Giresun Island in the Black Sea; inscribed on a terra cotta tablet, it is considered to be one of a kind because it is written regional alphabet of the Empire of Trebizond.

Giresun Island lies 1.2 kilometers (0.7 miles) from the Turkish province of Giresun (the ancient Greek Kerasous) on the southeastern coast of the Black Sea. Excavations have been ongoing on this beautiful and historic island under the supervision of Giresun University associate professor Gazanfer Iltar since 2009.

His team recently discovered the terra cotta plaque with the unique inscription this year; they unveiled the incredible find last week. Iltar told reporters that the inscription is of great importance, helping to shed light on the long history of the island and the entire Giresun region, once the site of many Greek colonies.



Byzantine inscription uses unique alphabet from the Empire of Trebizond  
Telling the press that the plaque was found on the floor of the tower on the island, Iltar stated that was created during the reign of Alexios III Megas Komnenos, the emperor of Trebizond.

"The inscription states that the structures and walls on the island were commissioned by the venerable Maria, the wife of Pinkernes Kyriakos, the son of Giresun Governor Roustam," Iltar noted, adding "The name of Roustam in the inscription also gives us clues about the strategic marriages between the Turkmen beys in the region and the Komnenos dynasty." The plaque, which measures 30 by 50 centimeters (11 inches by 19 inches) has an inscription that was written with a quill.



The Daily Sabah reports that the plaque with the Byzantine inscription had been translated by an unnamed academic from Russia. Iltar stated that "The inscription provides us with several pieces of information and perspectives. For example, the title of 'pinkernes' means the cup bearer of the emperor of Trebizond.

"It is actually a high court position in terms of diplomacy, and a pinkernes should be considered one of the closest people to the emperor. Therefore, it is understood that the governor of Giresun at the time was very close to the emperor of Trebizond."

Regardless of this imperial connection, the find is especially important since it is written in a unique script. Noting that "it is a unique work written in a regional alphabet of the Empire of Trebizond," the archaeologist added that archaeological excavations will continue on the island during the 2022 season as well.



Black Sea was once dotted with Greek colonies

Figurines representing the goddess Demeter and her daughter, Persephone, were unearthed just last year at a construction site in the Black Sea resort town of Anapa, in Russia. The terracotta statuettes, along with a relief, were discovered in early November by archaeologists from the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In antiquity, the region surrounding Anapa, known as Sinda, served as an important seaport. Pontic Greeks established a settlement called Gorgippia there in the sixth century BC, and it developed into a major power in the Black Sea throughout the years of antiquity.

A number of kilns used for the production of pottery and ceramics, mainly dating from the 4th to the 2nd century BC, were also discovered on the outskirts of the ancient city. It is near the remains of one of the kilns that archaeologists discovered the bulk of the priceless figurines of the Greek goddesses.

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## Italy

### Libyan Jews whose graves were bulldozed under Gaddafi are remembered in Rome Full article [Here](#)

Many in the Libyan-Jewish diaspora know that even if they return to Libya someday, they would never again be able to visit the graves of their parents, grandparents or other loved ones who lived in the country while it was home to more than 30,000 Jews.

A new initiative in one of Rome's Jewish cemeteries aims to provide some closure, according to a report by the British Jewish News.

Almost all of Libya's Jewish cemeteries — save one built on the grounds of an Italian-run concentration camp — were bulldozed during the reign of Muammar Gaddafi, the eccentric strongman who ruled the North African state from 1969 until his execution in 2011.

Civil war raged in Libya until 2020, and there is almost nothing to show of any Jewish gravestones, as the cemetery grounds have long been replaced with parks, apartment buildings and other construction.

Last week, according to the Jewish News, 16 marble plaques were unveiled in the Jewish section of Rome's Prima Porta Cemetery, bearing 1,800 names of Libyan Jews known to have been buried in Libya. Before it gained independence after World War II, Libya had been an Italian colony, and many Libyan Jews fled to Italy to escape the antisemitic pogroms and other persecution that broke out in the North African state after the establishment of the state of Israel, and again after the 1967 Six-Day War.

"It brings closure," Penina Meghnagi Solomon, 73-year old Libyan Jew who now lives in Santa Monica, Italy, told the British outlet. "When your loved ones have no grave, it helps enormously if there's a place with their name, where you can come and find peace."

The plaques were funded by Judy Saphra, a British-Jewish philanthropist who was born in Libya and found refuge in Italy when she was forced to flee as a child. "This memorial to my father is to a man I never knew — I was born after his death at the hands of Libyan Arabs merely because he was Jewish," she told the Jewish News. "I never saw his tomb because my grieving mother wanted to spare me the pain of such a great loss. Only years later, while attending the funeral of her own father, did she take me by the hand to see my father's tomb. That's why I wanted to commemorate and sponsor this memorial: in the name of my father, and for the Jewish community of Libya in Rome."



## The Pope Returns Vatican's Parthenon Marbles to Greece Full article [Here](#)

Pope Francis has decided to send back to Greece the three fragments of Parthenon Marbles that the Vatican Museums have held for centuries, the Vatican announced Friday. The Vatican termed the gesture a "donation" from the pope to His Beatitude Ieronymos II, the Orthodox Christian archbishop of Athens and all Greece, "as a concrete sign of his sincere desire to follow in the ecumenical path of truth."



In a statement shortly afterward the Acropolis Museum in Athens said that the artifacts will be displayed on its premises. The Vatican thus becomes the latest Western state to return its fragments of the Parthenon Marbles, leaving the British Museum among the holdouts. But the Vatican statement suggested the Holy See wanted to make clear that it was not a bilateral decision to return the marbles from the Vatican state to Greece, but rather a religiously inspired donation. The statement may have been worded in order not to create a precedent that could affect other priceless holdings in the Vatican Museums, Associated Press reports.

### Vatican returns three Parthenon marbles to Greece

The three fragments of Pentelic marble are remnants of a 160-meter-long (520-foot) frieze that ran around the outer walls of the Parthenon Temple on the Acropolis, dedicated to Athena, goddess of wisdom. The fragments came into the possession of the Vatican in the 19th century. The head of a horse comes from the west front of the building, on which Athena and Poseidon were shown competing for dominion over Attica; the fragment here has been identified as the fourth horse pulling Athena's chariot. The relief with the head of a boy has been identified as one of the figures from the frieze that went round the cella of the temple: he is carrying a tray of votive cakes which were offered during the Panathenaic procession in honor of Athena. The bearded male head, however, has been attributed to one of the metopes from the southern side of the building where there was a battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs.

Much was lost in a 17th-century bombardment, and about half the remaining works were removed in the early 19th century by a British diplomat, Lord Elgin. The UK recently pledged not to dismantle the British Museum collection, following a report that the institution's chairman had held secret talks with Greece's prime minister over the return of the sculptures, also known as the Elgin Marbles. British officials claim that such a move would spark a wave of demands for the return of other artifacts held in Britain. Appearing recently before the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan stated her opposition to their return to Athens. "Where does that end?" asked Donelan, as she highlighted how the law currently "does not allow" historical objects to leave the UK apart from in certain circumstances. It had emerged that George Osborne, the former chancellor who is now chairman of the British Museum, has been holding talks with Greece's prime minister over the possible return of the Parthenon Marbles.

## News from Our World in the United States

### New York City

**How the Lower East Side has changed since the 1988 rom-com 'Crossing Delancey'** Full article by Lana Schwartz [Here](#)

The classic and very Jewish 1988 film "Crossing Delancey" is one of those movies that feels both extremely of its time and also completely timeless. Director Joan Micklin Silver's film has all the classic rom-com trappings: A woman who's torn between two men (and to that end, two worlds); complaints about how hard it is to meet a man in New York City (as true in 1988 as it is in 2022), and a "mother" figure who knows better (here, a Jewish grandmother known as Bubbe, and in this case, she actually *does* know better). You could pluck all these specifics and drop them into a present-day film — and, if told with the heart and care of "Crossing Delancey," still have a pretty good movie.



Yet there's one thing about the "Crossing Delancey" that fully anchors it in the past, and that is its late-1980s Lower East Side setting. While our heroine, Izzy (Amy Irving), lives and works on the Upper West Side, she pays frequent visits to her Bubbe (Yiddish theater actress Reizl Bozyk), her grandmother, downtown. From the moment that Izzy steps off the train at Delancey Street, she's transported to another world: a bustling Jewish enclave with market-goers shopping for produce, friends and neighbors in the streets kibbitzing and a Hasidic child sitting outside the subway, enjoying a treat from a local bakery.

This dichotomy between the "Old World" of the Lower East Side and the "New World" uptown is the central conflict of the film: Izzy's inability to reconcile her Jewish roots with her desire to live a secular, intelligentsia lifestyle, as represented by her two love interests (Sam the Pickle Man and Anton, the self-important author).

However, rewatching the film in the present day, I can't help but wonder: Would Izzy run from the shtetl if she knew that in a few years, it wouldn't exist anymore? That due to rising rents and a shift in population, many Jewish businesses would meet their end — or, somewhat ironically, be part of the flight to Brooklyn that began in the early-to-mid 2000s? In some ways, 1988 itself was the beginning and the end: It marked the opening of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, an effort to preserve the neighborhood's immigrant past, and it was the very same year that Mayor Koch created a new redevelopment proposal for the Seward Park Extension, a canary in the coal mine for the sea change of development the city would see over the next 30 years.

Re-watching the film in 2022, it struck me how the Lower East Side's bustling Jewish enclave — the same place where my grandparents were born and raised — has since been lost to time, gentrification and re-zoning plans. These days, the neighborhood paints a different picture entirely: giant buildings hog entire city blocks, with construction promising even more sky-high buildings. There's no specific character to the neighborhood, no story to tell, few places more integral to the city's fabric than the Delancey-Essex McDonald's.

Of course, if you've lived in the city long enough, you know there's no getting comfortable. New Yorkers have to, in essence, harden their hearts. We must accept that the local business you love that's here today very well could be gone tomorrow — even if that business is a Duane Reade. The Lower East Side of today is not the neighborhood of 1988, or 1968 or 1928.

But amongst all of the present-day residential developments, upscale clothing stores and fast food chains, old-school Jewish businesses like The Pickle Guys, Kossar's Bagels and Bialys and Yonah Schimmel's Knish Bakery are still thriving. (And I'd like to think that if you look hard enough, you'll find some meddling but well-meaning bubbes and yentas, too.)

While we might not be able to fully experience the Lower East Side as the cast and crew of "Crossing Delancey," here are four places from "Crossing Delancey" that you can still visit, and four that are sadly gone forever.

#### What Remains Today

Bubbe's Apartment - 154 Broome Street



The interior shots of Bubbe's apartment, where Izzy fulfills all of her granddaughter duties, like singing with her grandmother in Yiddish and plucking her chin hairs, were filmed at 154 Broome Street. The 181-unit building sits at the mouth of the Williamsburg Bridge — which is why Bubbe has that spectacular view — and is part of the New York City Housing Authority's Seward Park Housing Extension. So while you still can visit the exterior of Bubbe's apartment building today, don't linger too long — it might weird out the current tenants.

#### Essex Market - 108 Essex Street

This one is a little complicated. The original Essex Market, where Bubbe shows off her Korean-language skills, still stands today. (If you get off at the subway at Delancey Street, you can't really miss it.) But that iteration of the market closed its doors in 2019 — in order to relocate to a building across the street so big and so glassy it would make Michael Bloomberg blush. In addition to apartments, office space and a movie theater (it's a truly mixed-use building for our modern times!), Essex Market does boast local, independent vendors, such as Essex Olive & Spice, Porto Rico Importing Co. and Puebla Mexicana food. Per the New York Times, only one of the market's vendors decided to forgo the move, opting instead for retirement. But you might want to pay a visit to the original Essex Market while you still can — even if only to give it one last look. Following the move, Essex Market initially housed some avant-garde art installations, but it has since seemingly closed its doors for good. According to Gothamist, it's to be razed to create — what else? — more condos.

#### Seward Park Handball Court - Essex Street between Grand and Hester Streets

From the moment Sam and Izzy meet, he makes no effort to hide his ardor. In fact, I'd say he uses every weapon in his arsenal to demonstrate his interest — even going so far as to try to impress her with his handball skills when she unexpectedly drops by the court. (You might also clock his CUNY sweatshirt, as I most certainly did.) The handball court is still there, should you decide you want to play a pickup game, but sadly the court's colorful mural depicted in the film has since been painted over.

#### What's Been Replaced

##### Steinberg's Dairy - 21 Essex Street

When Izzy emerges from that train at Delancey Street, director Silver takes great care to immerse us in this world. The camera stays on Izzy as she walks from the subway to Bubbe's apartment, passing a host of local businesses along the way. Among them is Steinberg's Dairy, which once lived at 21 Essex Street. Steinberg's Dairy, which also had an Upper West Side location, offered staples like herring, egg salad and vegetarian chopped liver for less than a dollar back in 1941. Today, if you're in the area, you can grab a drink at the punk rock bar Clockwork, which opened in 2013.

##### Zelig Blumenthal - 13 Essex Street

Izzy also takes us by Zelig's Blumenthal (also known as Z & A Kol Torah), where three older women sit outside, enjoying the sights and sounds around them. Once a popular Judaica store, it unexpectedly closed its Lower East Side doors in 2010 after 60 years in business. At the time, then-owner Mordechai Blumenthal made the decision to relocate the store to Flatbush due to a dwindling Orthodox population and foot traffic in the area, and a landlord who made clear he "wanted him gone." It's unclear if the Flatbush location remains open today, but a vintage clothing store called Country Of has taken up its original spot.

##### Posner's Pickles (AKA Guss' Pickles) - 35 Essex Street

Posner's Pickles, as run by Sam the Pickle Man in the film, was never exactly a real place to begin with. Filming took place at the world-famous Guss' Pickles, which first opened on Hester Street in 1920, before relocating to Essex Street, where there were once over 80 pickle vendors for locals to choose from. After a stint on Orchard Street, Guss' Pickles followed in the footsteps of so many others by then, leaving Manhattan to open up shop in Brooklyn's Dekalb Market in 2017. While Guss' Pickles is today based out of the Bronx, their delicious pickles are available to order no matter where you are in the country, via Goldbelly. Today, 35 Essex Street is home to Delancey Wine — appropriately named, but doesn't offer possibilities for a slogan like "a joke and a pickle for only a nickel," as Posner's Pickles did in the film.

##### Schapiro's Kosher Wines - 124 Rivington Street

For 100 years, Schapiro's Kosher Wines proudly served the Jewish community as the only kosher winery in New York City. It's where Bubbe chides Izzy for her lack of interest in Sam, and while today the pair couldn't have this conversation outside Schapiro's, they could grab brunch at the restaurant Essex. Home to New York City's "longest-running Brunch Party," Essex salutes its Lower East Side roots with dishes like potato pancakes and Israeli couscous.

## St. Nicholas (the Church) Has Come to Town Full article [Here](#)

The Greek Orthodox house of worship was destroyed on Sept. 11. After 21 years and \$85 million, its glowing new home has opened.

Olga Pavlakos grew up going to St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Lower Manhattan. She was baptized there. Her parents were married there. She has memories of her father, who worked in restaurants, volunteering there on Sundays, and of celebrating Epiphany every January, when parishioners would walk to the Hudson River, toss a gold cross into the frigid water and watch divers plunge in to retrieve it.

"St. Nicholas has been part of my family my whole life," Ms. Pavlakos, a lawyer, said.

Her connection to St. Nicholas can be traced to her grandparents, who left Greece in the early 1900s and settled in Lower Manhattan, then a bustling immigrant community. Residents there scraped together money and bought a tavern on Cedar Street that they converted to a place of worship, eventually adding a bell at the top.

These original parishioners, who had arrived by boat, named their church after the patron saint of seafarers — a saint who fed the hungry and clothed the needy and inspired the character of Santa Claus.

As the decades passed, and the modest buildings of the immigrant enclave gave way to the World Trade Center and other steel and glass towers of the financial district, many of the parishioners moved to other boroughs and beyond. But St. Nicholas managed to stay put. That is, until Sept. 11. The tiny church was obliterated during the terrorist attacks.

Twenty-one long and difficult years later, St. Nicholas has reopened. But it is no longer a humble church, exclusively for its parishioners. Its mission is larger, as is its splendor.

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church & National Shrine, as it's now called, has become a destination for all. It offers a bereavement center that will serve as a place for meditation and prayer for people of any faith. The structure itself cost \$85 million and features white marble imported from the same quarry that provided stone for the Parthenon. Its interior is decorated with icons hand-painted by a monk in Greece. The building sits proudly on an elevated plaza called Liberty Park, which overlooks the pools of the 9/11 Memorial. Its translucent dome glows at night.

More high-profile than the original saloon with a bell, the new church is a prominent expression of Orthodox Christianity in the city, and it is a source of great pride for the Greek American community.

For the few remaining longtime parishioners of St. Nicholas, there is relief that their beloved church has finally reopened. But now, their intimate community hub is a global destination, and some wonder about the future of their once tight-knit parish.

St. Nicholas has been recast as a national shrine memorializing the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives 21 years ago. It is expected to attract a steady stream of tourists; an app offering an audio tour narrated by George Stephanopoulos is in the works. Continue reading the full article from the NY Times [Here](#)



## Greece at the United Nations

### New Permanent Representative of Greece Presents Credentials

The new Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, Evangelos C. Sekeris, presented his credentials to UN Secretary-General António Guterres today

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Sekeris was his country's Deputy Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels from March 2019 to December 2022. He was Director of the A5 Directorate for the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Caucasus, Black Sea and Central Asia at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens from September 2018 to February 2019, having previously served as Consul-General in Istanbul, Turkey, from April 2015 to August 2018.



He was Deputy Director and Acting Director of the Diplomatic Cabinet of the Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2011 to 2015, Political Counsellor at Greece's Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels from 2007 to 2011, Deputy Director of the Diplomatic Cabinet of the Deputy Minister for European Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Athens from 2005 to 2007 and Consul in Izmir, Turkey, from 2002 to 2005. He obtained a bachelor's degree from the National University of Athens' School of Political Sciences and International Relations in 1995. Born in Marburg, Germany in 1967, he is married and has three children.

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## Los Angeles

### Sephardic Synagogue in Los Angeles Vandalized

Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel was vandalized on November 26.

Stop Antisemitism tweeted on December 6 that "security footage captured a man throwing a large rock through an entrance window, shattering it. The man then continued to bang on the glass, shockingly recording himself the entire time."



The synagogue's president, Raymond Yashouafar, issued a statement saying that the synagogue has reported the matter to the police as well as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Jewish Federation.

"This is a reminder that anti-Semitism is real and is literally happening at our footsteps," Yashouafar said. "It is deeply disturbing that we are still experiencing such hate crimes in 2022. We will not stand silent, and we will not allow anyone or anything to bring us down. Our temple has stood strong for the past 102 years, and we assure you that we will continue to thrive for many years to come."

"We are aware of and horrified by the vandalism perpetrated at the Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel on November 26," ADL Los Angeles Regional Director Jeffrey I. Abrams said in a statement to the Journal. "ADL Los Angeles has been in contact with the synagogue and provided our safety and security resources. Additionally, we have been in direct contact with the Los Angeles Police Department, and we appreciate that they are looking into the possibility of this being a hate crime. As always, we stand against antisemitism and any criminal acts directed at synagogues, be they Ashkenazi, Sephardic or any other houses of worship."

American Jewish Committee Los Angeles Regional Director Richard S. Hirschhaut similarly said in a statement to the Journal, "Any act of antisemitic vandalism is one incident too many. The reported vandalism of Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel, in broad daylight on the Shabbat of Thanksgiving weekend, was a brazen act of hate. With antisemitic rhetoric flooding social media at unprecedented levels, it is difficult not to wonder whether this crime was fueled by such unrelenting streams of hate. That the alleged perpetrator recorded himself in the act suggests as much; hopefully, it will speed his arrest and prosecution."



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



Besides the fast day of the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, another very significant date for the Jewish people is January 27<sup>th</sup>, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, designated as such by a UN General Assembly resolution from November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, based on the day in 1945 when the Red Army entered and liberated the largest Nazi concentration and death camp, Auschwitz. But there is a third significant date in January for the Jewish people and Israel, though much less known and virtually unmarked.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1961, a public debate was held in Montreal, Canada, at the McGill University Hillel House, between famed British historian, Arnold Toynbee, and the Israeli Ambassador to Canada, Yaacov Herzog. Herzog, 39, was the son of the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Halevy Herzog, and younger brother of Haim Herzog, who would become President of Israel in 1983. Toynbee, 71, was a prominent historian and author of a well-respected 12 volume work entitled "*A Study of History*". The impetus for the debate was Toynbee's opposition to Israel, which he openly expressed at a lecture delivered to McGill students just a few days earlier. Among other things, he had called Israel "demonic" and compared Israel's treatment of Arabs in 1948 to Nazi treatment of Jews. He also labeled the Jews as a "fossilized" civilization and more a relic of an ancient culture than a true living civilization. Though Toynbee's views were well known, and dated back as far as 1934, Herzog felt that Toynbee's public remarks could not be left unanswered and invited him to an open debate, which lasted an hour and twenty-minutes and was radio broadcasted live in Canada, and later that evening in Israel.

As for Toynbee's opposition to Israeli and equivalence of Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the course of the War of Independence in 1948 with the Nazis' treatment of Jews, Herzog was able to get Toynbee to concede that the comparison was invalid, even using quotes and segments of Toynbee's own works to show how no moral comparison could be made in any way between Israeli and Nazi soldiers.

As to the question of whether the Jewish people was a "fossilized", outmoded remnant of a bygone era or a living and breathing entity, Toynbee argued that Jews were best understood to be natives of their host country rather than an independent civilization, and their Jewish identity was just a relic of a dead civilization. This was based on his theory of history, whereby all civilizations pass through multiple stages: genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state, and disintegration, and the Jewish people would be no exception.

Herzog offered several counterarguments to this idea, culminating with the most obvious: the founding of the State of Israel. Using Toynbee's own theory, how could a "fossilized" civilization come to life? Ergo, the fact that Israel had apparently "de-fossilized" was clear evidence that Jewish civilization had never died. Even if one accepted Toynbee's theory, it was more than obvious that with the founding of the State of Israel, Judaism and the Jewish people proved to be the exception to that theory. As a result, Toynbee grudgingly conceded that Judaism and the Jewish people were no longer a fossil civilization, and though continuing to insist that due to persecution and isolation, Jews had not played an influential role in much of modern history, he also admitted that "the Jews in present times have... become part of the general stream of life and have played this enormous part in it."

There was no question that Herzog bested Toynbee, and besides the overwhelmingly positive response from almost every corner, the event also proved an inspiration for many Jewish students who attended, many of whom had felt humiliated by Toynbee's original lecture. Herzog's 'victory' instilled self-respect and pride as Jews and gave a tremendous boost to Israel's legitimacy, as well as being a severe blow to Israel's denigrators just 13 years after its founding.

Unfortunately, Yaacov Herzog died young in 1972 at age 50, and Toynbee's ideas faded both in academia and the media, and so has this debate from public memory. Yet its relevance and outcome are no less significant today than in 1961, since Israel still faces incessant attempts to condemn and delegitimize its very existence. It is therefore important that the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of this 'great debate' be acknowledged and studied. It is available on 'YouTube' for anyone interested. In any case, we can still draw inspiration and confidence from its results by understanding and internalizing that we will always be G-d's chosen people and eternal nation, never to be "fossilized" nor discarded into the dustbin of history, which has indeed been the fate of all those who have tried to destroy us. "*Am Yisrael Ha!*"



**Rabbi Marc D. Angel**

## **Reaching for Greatness: Thoughts for Parashat Vayhi**

This week's Torah reading brings us to the end of the book of Bereshith. During the past months, we have read the magnificent account of the creation of the universe; we learned about Noah and his times. We then were introduced to the lives of individuals who revolutionized human civilization: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, Joseph and his siblings.

These remarkable people laid the foundations not only for the people of Israel but for much of human civilization. The Torah describes these heroes of faith with their strengths and weaknesses, their victories and failures. They are not presented as having super-human talents or genius; rather, they appear to be very fallible human beings striving to fulfill their human potentialities. They are shepherds and seekers of God; they are parents and moral guides; they are courageous and wise...but not always.

These pillars of civilization were, to a great extent, loners. As Abraham himself said, he was a "stranger and a resident" among the people. A stranger—he was not at home within the pagan society in which he lived. A resident—he was a constructive and helpful member of the community. Our spiritual fathers and mothers, while being cooperative and sociable, were not at home in general society. They had different dreams and aspirations. They heard God's voice. They were striving for something beyond their own time and place. They were not afraid to stand alone, to be different, to defy the popular norms.

Human greatness often entails loneliness and alienation. It is nurtured by successes and failures, by trials and errors. It is fostered in an environment of quiet thoughtfulness. The greatest people often are the most humble and self-effacing.

Dr. Fred Hoyle, a famous English astronomer of the 20th century, made an astute observation. "It seems to be characteristic of all great work, in every field, that it arises spontaneously and unpretentiously, and that its creators wear a cloak of imprecision...The man who voyages strange seas must of necessity be a little unsure of himself. It is the man with the flashy air of knowing everything, who is always on the ball, always with it, that we should beware of. ("Of Men and Galaxies," Prometheus Books, NY, 2005, p. 28)

Dr. Hoyle expresses concern for the over-specialization characteristic of modern society. To be a "success," one must increasingly be seen as an "expert," a member of the in-crowd, a popular team-player. "More and more, the professions will cross over into the entertainment field. Those of us who are not employed directly in industry will come to realize that what we are really in is 'show biz.'" (p. 52)

What is increasingly valued in our world is entertainment, putting on a show for others, image-making.

Because of this cultural and spiritual degradation, the environment to produce real greatness is diminished. "It is a mistake to imagine that potentially great men are rare. It is the conditions that permit the promise of greatness to be fulfilled that are rare." (p. 25)

As we read the stories of our Biblical ancestors, we are given a unique opportunity to delve into their world. We can re-focus on spiritual striving, and free ourselves of the glitz and show biz that pervade our lives. We can seek to develop our own personal greatness, even as we are fully conscious of our many weaknesses and failings. Most of all, we can shake off the artificiality and superficiality that attempt to choke our spirits; we can reclaim our own souls, our own essential selves.

Our Biblical ancestors were not flashy know-it-alls with a glib word for everyone. They were not show-people or seekers of popularity. They were able to stand alone, to strive for God and Godliness, to attain human greatness. These are qualities that can transform lives and change the world.

## **Rabbi Marc D. Angel Shares His Thoughts on Rabbi David de Sola Pool**

Rabbi Marc D. Angel shares some thoughts on the life and spiritual legacy of one of America's foremost rabbinic figures of the 20th century.

Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool was the pre-eminent Sephardic rabbi in America during the mid-twentieth century. Born in England in 1885, he died on December 1, 1970, the first week of Kislev 5731, after having served Congregation Shearith Israel in New York for a period spanning 63 years.



Dr. Pool was the quintessential Sephardic rabbi of the Western Sephardic tradition. He was eloquent and dignified, and yet friendly and approachable. He was a fine scholar and author, and was also an admirable and respected communal leader. During his impressive career, he was an ardent spokesman for Zionism; a devoted spiritual guide to American Sephardim; a foremost voice in interfaith dialogue; a historian of American Jewry; editor and translator of the Sephardic and Ashkenazic prayer books.

When I began my service to Shearith Israel in September 1969, I was still a 24 year old rabbinical student. That first Rosh Hashana, I sat next to Dr. Pool on the synagogue's Tebah, reader's desk, where the congregation's clergy are seated. Dr. Pool was 83 years old, frail, and in declining health. After services on the first night of Rosh Hashana, Dr. Pool placed his hand on my head and gave me his blessing, wishing me a happy and meaningful ministry.

That was a special and sacred moment for me. When I shook Dr. Pool's hand, I was shaking the hand of a great spiritual leader who had begun his service to Shearith Israel in 1907; he had taken over from Dr. Mendes who had begun service to Shearith Israel in 1877. I was one handshake away from 1877! And just a few more handshakes separated me from Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas who had begun serving Shearith Israel in 1768. I felt the weight of centuries, the incredible continuity of a magnificent tradition.

I remember Dr. Pool's aura of dignity and serenity, even in his elderly years when he was increasingly frail. He was a genuinely pious and humble man who served his community with selfless devotion. Dr. Pool had maintained Shearith Israel's traditions during his many years of service to the congregation. He not only followed in the footsteps of his venerable predecessors, but set the standard for his successors. Dr. Pool taught by example. He instructed his immediate successor, Dr. Louis C. Gerstein, who passed on the traditions to me. I learned that the Rabbis of Shearith Israel, as well as the Hazanim, conducted the synagogue prayer services and read the Torah with precision. The synagogue's pulpit was reserved only for the synagogue's rabbis. (On rare occasions, guest Orthodox rabbis were invited to preach from the pulpit.) Sermons were to be instructive and inspirational; frivolity was never allowed from the pulpit, nor was the pulpit to be used to advance a political candidate or to criticize anyone by name. The rabbi was to set an example to the congregation of proper devotion in prayer—no engaging in idle chatter or silly gestures, no reading books other than the prayer book during worship. The rabbi was to be at services punctually, not missing unless prevented by illness or a serious scheduling conflict, or unless away from town. The rabbi was to set the tone for orderliness and decorum, for neatness and respectfulness.

The rabbi was to set an example for social justice, communal activism, righteous behavior. The rabbi was to be a scholar, teacher, and pastor. The rabbi was to speak with his congregants, not at them. Dr. Pool insisted that each Jew take responsibility for his and her religious lives. In September 1922, Dr. Pool wrote to his congregation: "We do not, we cannot, all think alike, and there is no one of us that dares dogmatize for others in the realm of religion. If you expect your Rabbi vicariously to think through the problem of living for you, you will weaken and paralyze your own spiritual nature, just as surely as you will destroy your Judaism if you leave it to your Rabbi to live a Jewish life for you."

In a sermon delivered at his grandson's Bar Mitzvah in May 1962, Dr. Pool spoke of the need for the generations of Jews to live their Judaism actively. "We must not allow ourselves to become decrepit veterans dreaming of past victories in the struggle for holiness. We have to be something more than feeble survivors of once glorious days...Our life as Jews must be the result of something more than inertia based on the physical fact that we were born into the Jewish people....Within every one of us who is worthy of bearing the Jewish name there must be a conscious sense of a divine call to serve our fellow men for today and tomorrow.... Weaklings among us may fall away as they have done in every generation. But the true spiritual descendants of Abraham, of Moses, and of all our heroic sages and saints keep the Jewish light kindled, and hand it down from generation to generation."

In 1966, he and his wife Tamar published a book, "Is There an Answer?" They made the following observation: "It is we ourselves who can and who must make life worth living. In the face of the harshest realities, we must cling to life and



exalt it by giving to its positive values a commanding place in our consciousness. ...To look constantly on the seamy side of life is false to the totality of existence. We must gratefully remember life's goodness and blessings. We must discern what is transient in experience and what is abiding in our consciousness" (p. 23).

Dr. Pool died in December 1970, a bit over a year after I began my service to Shearith Israel. Yet, I seemed to feel his guiding hand throughout my rabbinic career. I read all his publications; I went through his sermons; I edited a collection of his sermons, addresses and writings. Throughout my many years of rabbinic service, Dr. Pool has surely been an important influence. Even now, as rabbi emeritus of Shearith Israel, I still seem to feel Dr. Pool's hand on my head and I still seem to hear his words of blessing and encouragement. They mean as much to me now as when I first heard them at age twenty four. Perhaps even more.

**The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry – 2023 Tour of Jewish Greece**  
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The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

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**Kehila Kedosha Janina**

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