



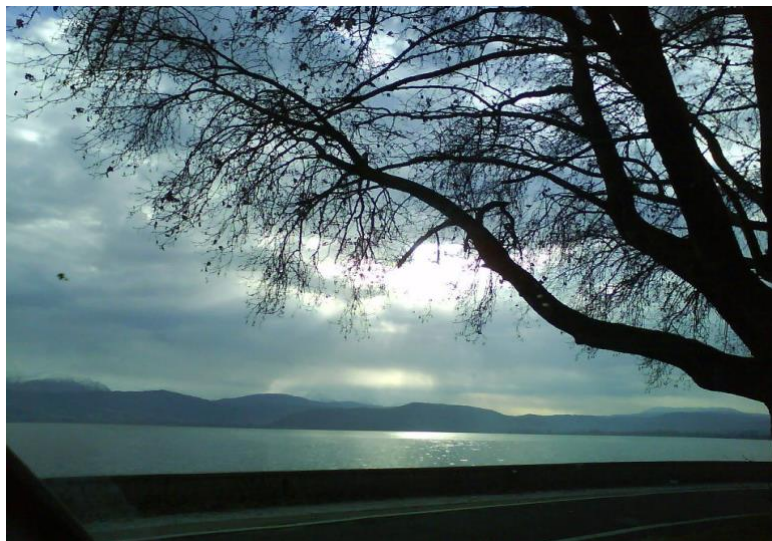
Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

December 2021 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we close out the secular year of 2021, we would like to thank our ever-growing number of followers and supporters. When we started our E-Newsletter in February of 2008 we reached a little over 2,000 households. Now, as we enter our 14th year, our readership has grown to over 10,000. Our first newsletter was 5 pages long. Now, the average number of pages is close to 40. May our community continue to grow and flourish in the new year ahead. We wish everyone a Happy Hanukkah and a Happy and Healthy New Year.



The sun rising over Lake Pamvotis in Ioannina.
May your suns continue to rise welcoming new days and new experiences.

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by the children and grandchildren of
Solomon Solomon and Eva Eliezer Solomon.

If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjism.org.

This newsletter, our 153rd will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjsm.org.

We now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of 'friends' continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at museum@kkjsm.org

We have returned to our regular schedule of weekly Shabbat services on Saturday mornings. Please email amarcus@kkjsm.org if you would like to attend. We will be following CDC guidelines, with masks and proof of vaccination required.

Our Museum will be open every Sunday from 11am-4pm. Reservations to museum@kkjsm.org are suggested; masks and proof of are vaccination required.

Simchas

We are overjoyed to be celebrating the 100th birthday of Bella Atun Cowen. Bella turned 100 on June 24th. Bella was born in 1921 in New York City. The family lived at 299 Broome St. Her father Leon Atun was born in Trikala Greece, and her mother Rachel Azouvi Atun was born in Larissa. Rachel's family moved to Kavala where her father Juda Moshe Azouvi was a rabbi. Juda's brother Abraham and his brother-in-law Zacharia Sasson were rabbis in Larissa.



Atun Family 1948



Bella with her parents on her wedding day October 30, 1943



Birthday June 24, 2021

Our heartfelt congratulations to Hy (Elias) Eliasof on his 100th birthday on December 9th. Hy comes from one of the founding families in our New York City community and is a cousin of Moisis Eliasaf (the President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina and Mayor of the City of Ioannina). Hy is the son of Louise (Lulu) Eliasof and Michael Eliasof (both of Blessed Memory). He is a decorated WWII veteran and a former Mayor of Closter, NJ.



Pasha Reunion 2011. Max Marshal (of Blessed Memory), Rose Eskononts and Hy Eliasof



Congratulations to Aaron and Laeeqa Levy on the birth of twin babies, a boy and a girl! The babies' names are Zakkai and Zimra.



Passings

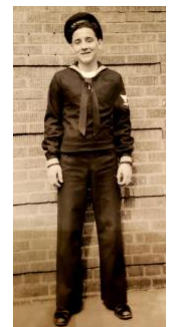
We mourn the loss of Saul (Solly) Solomon. Sol was 99 when he passed away on September 23 to join his parents Esther Vitulis and Samuel Solomon. Esther was the sister of Rachel Aboulafia, Mollie Matza, Louisa Coffina and Leon Vitulis. He was predeceased by his wife Francine Reinfeld. He was also predeceased by his brothers Milton and Israel and sister Rae Coffino. He is survived by his children, Michele Solomon Levy, Ira Solomon and his wife Michelle, Steven Solomon, Errol and seven grandchildren (Jana, Sara, Blake, Luke, Chloe, Justin and Lindsey) and four great-grandchildren (Brianna, Noah, Sky, and Shiloh . His son, Elliot predeceased him.

Jack Israel Kessman (February 9, 1934 - October 20, 2021) passed away peacefully at his residence in Anza, California on October 20, 2021 at the age of 87; he was born on February 9, 1934 in New York, New York to the late Joseph and Sarah (Michaels) Kessman. He served his country in the US Navy from 1951 to 1955. Jack worked for himself most of his life, owning a health club, auto repair and lastly a paralegal company. He enjoyed weight lifting, watching movies and reading. He is survived by his loving wife Joan Kessman; his children and their families, Nathan Kessman, Ronald Kessman, Steven Kessman and James Kessman; eleven grandchildren.

David Solomon, the son of Solomon Solomon and Eva Eliezer Solomon (both of Blessed Memory) passed away at the age of 95 on November 2, 2021 in Houston, Texas. David was born in Harlem and lived in New York for most of his life. After the birth of his first son, he and his wife Irene moved from the Bronx to Long Island where they raised their family. They lived there until moving to Boynton Beach, Florida in 1998, where they resided in the Valencia Lakes community. David continued living there after he lost his loving wife Irene in 2008, but relocated to Houston a few months before his passing, where he got to spend time with his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.



David was a veteran of the US Navy and served in WWII. He worked in aviation as a mechanic at American Airlines and later as a quality control engineer. He retired from the Long Island Lighting Company in 1987. He was an avid baseball fan and enjoyed playing poker several times a week with a local group in Boynton Beach.



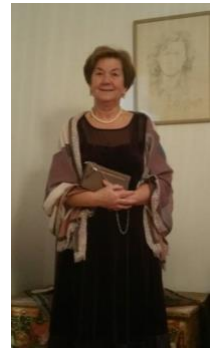
David had a large family with strong connections to the Greek Jewish Community. He is preceded in death by his father Solomon M. Solomon, his mother Eva, brothers Murray and Jerry, sister Molly Matza, and other beloved family members. He is survived by his sister Barbara (Kenneth) Schwarz, sister-in-law Audrey Solomon, his children Ira (Susan) Solomon, Susan (Dudley) Hempel, and Saul and (Anabella) Solomon, as well as 6 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. Donations in his honor can be made to the Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Rae (Asser) Blumberg, passed away peacefully on November 11, 2021 at the New Bedford Jewish Convalescent Home at the age of 98. She was the wife of the late Jerome "Jerry" Blumberg. Born in New York, Rae was the daughter of the late Elias and Esther (Epstein) Asser. For many years she and Jerry were the owners of Pierce Garment Company. They were longtime residents of New Bedford, and enjoyed spending the winter months in Boca Raton, FL.



Rae was an avid golfer and bridge player and loved spending time with her family. She was a member of Tifereth Israel Synagogue, Allendale Country Club, the New Bedford Jewish Convalescent Home and the Boca Lago Country Club. She is survived by her two daughters, Ellen Gitlin of New Bedford and Sharon Gold and her husband Jonathan of Swampscott, her sister Mae Lipp, eight grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren. She was mother of the late Larry Blumberg and sister of the late Manny Asser.

We mourn the passing of Xhangi Ilijazi, an amazing woman who dedicated her life to telling the stories of ethnic Albanians who risked their lives to save Jews during WWII. In doing so, she raised the relationship of Albanians and Jews to a new level. The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry's tour group that took part in the Greece-Balkan tour in 2018 were treated to a private tour of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, given by Xhangi and Leke Rezniqui. We learned of the Jewish presence in Kosovo and the work of ethnic Albanians in saving Jews. She was Chairperson of the Kosovo-Israel Friendship Association, "Dr. Haim Abravanel."



Xhangi died of brain cancer at the age of 68, leaving the world a poorer place. She will be mourned and remembered by her family, friends and all those she inspired by example. Xhangi was known as the woman who broke many taboos, giving inspiration to many other girls and women. She had played football for London's famous Chelsea club, thus becoming the first Albanian girl to play football (soccer). Among her many contributions was that of an inspiring English professor and, of course, promoting Albanian-Jewish relations, highlighting Albanian families who saved Jews during WWII.

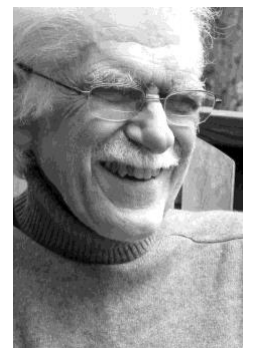
We mourn the passing of Dario (David) Sevi. Dario was born in Thessaloniki in 1927. He passed in November of 2021 in Israel at the age of 94. He was among the 97% of Jews who were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was a survivor. May his Memory be a Blessing.



It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Professor Dan Georgakas. Full obituary [here](#)

Dan Georgakas, Author, Activist and The National Herald Contributor Has Died, 83. Greek American Dan Georgakas, author, poet, historian, editor, professor, film scholar, activist, and longtime contributor to The National Herald passed away on November 23. He was 83.

Georgakas was the Director of the Greek American Studies Project at the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College. He was editor of the Journal of Contemporary Hellenic Issues and his biweekly Viewpoint in TNH was one of the most read and beloved columns in the newspaper. His memoir, My Detroit: Growing Up Greek and American in Motor City, is a treasure trove of Greek American history. Georgakas' Detroit:



I Do Mind Dying, published in 1975, documents African American radical groups in Detroit during the 1960s and 1970s.

He was the author, editor, or co-author of a dozen titles and was a sought-after commentator on film and mass media, appearing on MTV, the History Channel, the Canadian Broadcasting System, Pacifica Radio, the Voice of America, and Greek National Television among other radio and television outlets. Georgakas had taught at New York University, Columbia University, the University of Oklahoma, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and Queens College. Many of his books have been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, and Greek.

Georgakas was born March 1, 1938, to Xenophon and Sophia Georgakas in Detroit. In his memoir, he brought the people and history to life so that we felt as though we knew his family members and the neighbors whose lives intersected for a time in the old neighborhood. Even if we grew up in Astoria or Chicago and not Detroit, the Greek culture, traditions, and heritage have molded our experience. We share with the same pride the Greek American success stories and the contributions of those who struggled so their children and grandchildren could have a better life, though there were many who slipped through the cracks as well. Change seems to be the only constant and though Georgakas' Detroit may no longer exist, the memory of it lives on in his book.

In 1966, Georgakas and painter Ben Morea helped found an anarchist group affiliated with New York City's Lower East Side. He long served on the editorial board of Cineaste magazine, the acclaimed film quarterly, and specialized in Latin American cinema.

Georgakas was also the subject of a documentary film titled Dan Georgakas: A Diaspora Rebel by filmmaker Kostas Vakkas. The film screened at the 17th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in 2015. In it, Georgakas tells his life story and his experiences growing up in Detroit. Georgakas told TNH at the time of the film screening that "my rebellious perspective is linked to growing up in a working-class district of Detroit and being born Greek and American. Life had greatly improved for all of us as a result of the leftist reforms begun in the 1930's. I wanted to accelerate that kind of change. As a child of immigrants, I was not programmed to consider all things American as normal and positive. This made it easier to go against convention. In a similar fashion, as an American, I was not programmed for traditional Greek culture either. Much of my subsequent writing and activism has been directed at melting the mind-forged manacles that prevent us from understanding a new economic order based on mutual aid would be far superior to our present competitive system."

Dan was a dear friend of Kehila Kedosha Janina and supported the publication of articles by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, in both "The Journal of Modern Hellenism" and "The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora." See www.kkjsm.org under "Articles and Historical Archives" and "The Holocaust in Greece" for copies of these articles.

Sherry Johanas Borrero asked us to remember her father Johanne (John) Johanas who would have been 101 on November 8th. He passed on December 23rd, 1973.



John with his cousin
Al Moss in 1938

Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

This November, Kehila Kedosha Janina welcomed members of our community and new friends. As always, it was a pleasure to open our doors and share our stories.



Jack and Michelle Akerman



Gabe Stern is the great grandson of Rabbi David Davidson. Gabe was able to hold a Torah that originated in Ioannina and stand on the Bema where Rabbi Davidson once conducted services.



Alan and George Lopera



Maria Mendoza, Stella Bacolas and Maggie Nikas

Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network hosted a great Hanukkah Party this week. They welcomed more than 40 young members of our community and celebrated the holiday with live Greek music from Avram Pengas, prasa keptedes, wine, sweets, and of course candle lighting. Participants hailed from Romaniote and Sephardic families including Cohen, Camhi, Cantos, Hagouel, Levi, Moisis, Mushabac, Toledo, and Yeshua. Email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com to sign up for future events and connect with this exciting group. Young adults in their 20s & 30s with Romaniote or Sephardic heritage are welcome to join.



Giving Tuesday Campaign – Donate Today

During this holiday season, we humbly ask for your support to help us continue our recovery efforts.

We at KKJ are passionate and dedicated to serving our Greek Jewish community through Shabbat and Holiday Services, Museum Exhibits and Tours, Community Programs and Events, Education and Research on Greek Jewry, and so much more. All of this work depends on your support. On this global day of giving, Giving Tuesday, please consider making a donation and aiding our efforts to preserve our Greek Jewish heritage. Our small but strong Kehila relies on you to help educate the next generation within our community and around the world. Your support can make all the difference!

Help make sure that the only Romaniote synagogue and museum in the Western Hemisphere remains a beacon for research, prayer, culture, and love of our Greek Jewish traditions in the United States. Donate today on our website www.kkjsm.org and click the Donate button on the top left of the page.



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

**Help Us Continue to Recover and
Grow Our Community**

Donate Today to help ensure we can continue to serve the
Romaniote and wider Greek Jewish Community in America

We Need Your Help. Please Donate Today

Upcoming Events

RSVP through Eventbrite [Here](#)

THE MANHATTAN JEWISH HISTORICAL INITIATIVE (MJHI)
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
AND THE LOWER EAST SIDE JEWISH CONSERVANCY
PRESENT

AN MJHI JEWISH HALL OF FAME EVENING WITH
DR. GEORGETTE F. BENNETT
IN CONVERSATION ABOUT HER NEW BOOK
“THOU SHALT NOT STAND IDLY BY”

WITH A VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE FAMOUS LOWER EAST SIDE
GREEK SYNAGOGUE KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA

THURSDAY DECEMBER 16 AT 7PM

ONLINE VIA ZOOM

MEETING ID: 889 5937 7245

PASSCODE: 216770



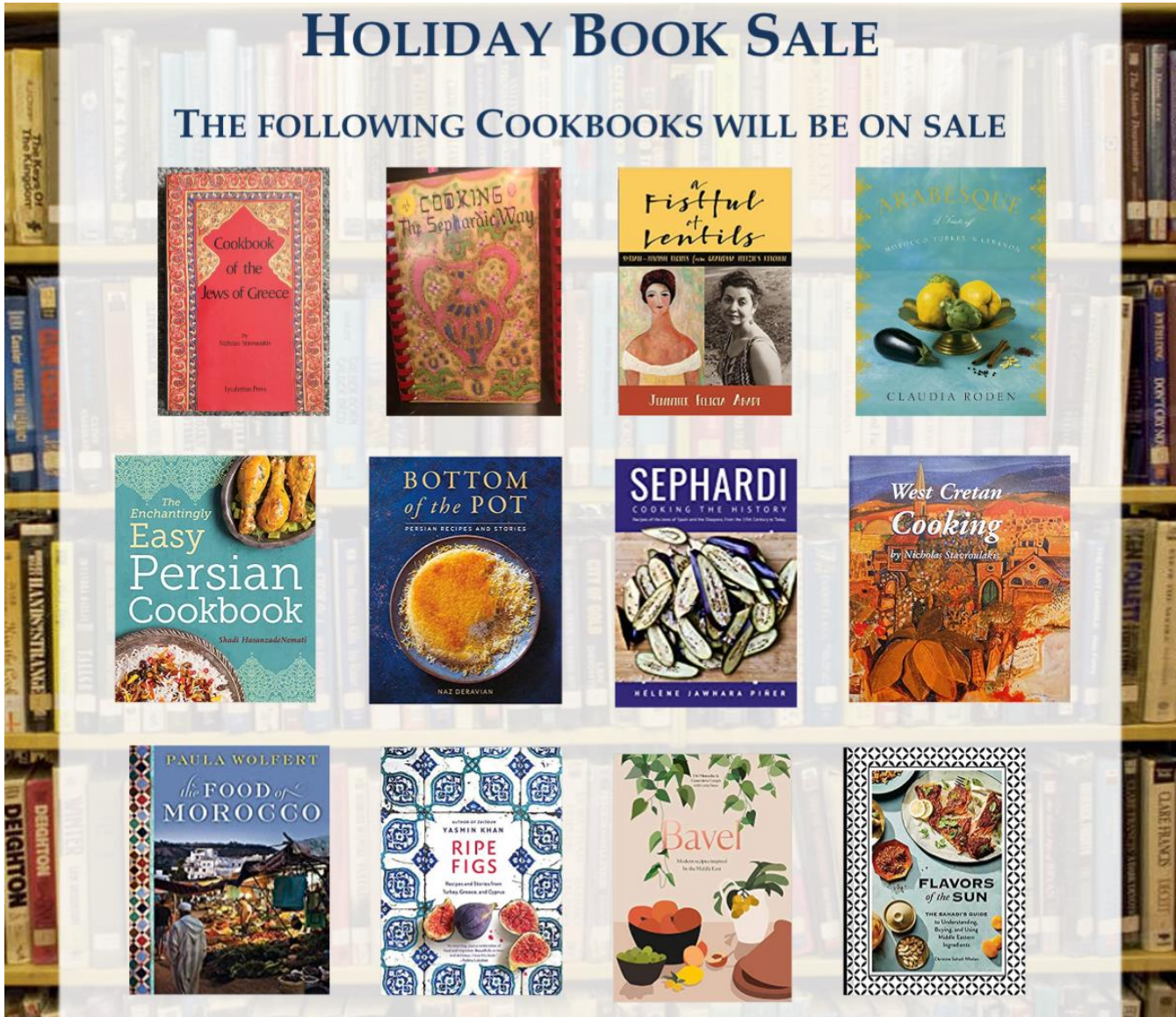
“Thou Shalt Not Stand Idly By” The inspiring story of how one woman forged a series of unprecedented partnerships across national, tribal, and religious boundaries to impact an overwhelming crisis against near impossible odds. Set against the backdrop of the Syrian civil war and the massive humanitarian crisis it produced, Georgette Bennett tells the largely untold story of how sworn enemies – Syrians and Israelis, Jews and Muslims – came to trust each other with their lives in order to alleviate terrible suffering. The dramatic tale of their unlikely collaboration illustrates what a few determined individuals can do in the face of inertia, inefficiency, and widespread indifference. It also shows how the novel concept of humanitarian diplomacy offers a beacon of hope for all the hate-based clashes occurring around the world today. Learn more at www.bennettny.com



Past Events

Holiday Book Sale

If you were not able to join us for our Holiday Book Sale last month you are in luck – you can still order books online by emailing us at museum@kkjasm.org. The following beautiful cookbooks, and others, are available with excellent recipes, and they make great holiday gifts!



For those of you who missed the Kristallnacht Commemoration on November 14th honoring Archbishop Damaskinos (of Blessed Memory), you can watch a video of the event on YouTube [Here](#). Present during the commemoration was our very own Sol Kofinas, who was interviewed about his personal story of survival.



Archbishop
Damaskinos



Sol Kofinas

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by the Solomon Family

This newsletter is sponsored by the children and grandchildren of Solomon Solomon and Eva Eliezer Solomon, both born in Janina and of blessed memory, and also in memory of their children, Murray and Edith Solomon, Aaron and Mollie Matza, David and Irene Solomon and Jerry Solomon."

Solomon Solomon and Eva Eliezer Solomon, were both born in Janina and were married in New York City. They and started life together in Harlem, before moving to the West Bronx. They had five children, Murray, Mollie, David, Jerry and Barbara. Solomon was a partner in the produce business, but passed away in 1953, at a young age. Eva lived until 1979 and took great pride in seeing her children marry and have families of their own.



Jerry Solomon



Solomon and Eva Solomon, circa 1929, with their first 3 children, Murray, Mollie & David



Barbara Solomon

**Correction on sponsorship of November E-newsletter:
The grandparents of Jack and Dean are Richard and Sheri Binder. Our apologies.**

News from Jewish Greece

Municipalities of Ioannina and Thessaloniki Participate in the Commemoration of the "The Night of Broken Glass" (Kristallnacht) Full article in Greek [Here](#)

This year marks the 83rd anniversary of the "Night of Broken Glass", the series of pogroms against the Jewish population unleashed on November 9, 1938 by the Nazis in Germany and its annexed territories. On the occasion of this anniversary, the International March of the Living organized for the second consecutive year the #LetThereBeLight campaign, which spreads a universal message against racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

The campaign included a central online event with testimonies from survivors, celebrities and music as well as an open streaming platform on which thousands of people from all over the world posted their private messages. On the evening of November 9, 2021, these messages were projected on the walls of the old city of Jerusalem, creating a devout and imposing atmosphere. At the same time, houses of prayer, synagogues and public buildings around the world were illuminated and projected on their walls, in a spectacular way, their own promise that the light would prevail.

Greece gave a dynamic presence in this year's campaign with dozens of messages posted on the platform. Characteristic is the message of Gen. Secretary of the KISE Mr. Victor Is. Eliezer who stresses: "Anti-Semitism

should not be tolerated. Let the light of knowledge educate future generations. Let the light of human rights lead our society. Our determination to never forget the tragic consequences of the Holocaust will be the light that will prevail over obscurity brought about by racism and fanaticism" and the President of EMOTL Mr. Benjamin Alballa who states: "The Night of Broken Glasses" was the beginning of the great destruction of Greek Jewry. States, governments and the whole world must understand that always early symptoms point to dangerous disease. The "Night of Broken Glass" was the early and severe symptoms of the Nazi crazy ideology that led to the death of Europe's 6 million Jews."

The Municipalities of Thessaloniki and Ioannina illuminated the Town Halls of their cities and projected to them a bright message of hope and unity against obscurantism. The Jewish Communities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina and Volos participated in the campaign by illuminating the Synagogues and their Offices.



Ioannina



Thessaloniki



In Volos, the Synagogue was illuminated

In Thessaloniki, on the evening of November 9, 2021, from 19:00 to 24:00, the Town Hall was illuminated and a video dedicated to the "Night of Crystals" was projected on the façade of the building, as well as the messages of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr. Konstantinos Zervas, and the President of KIS and the I.K. of Thessaloniki, Mr. David Saltiel.

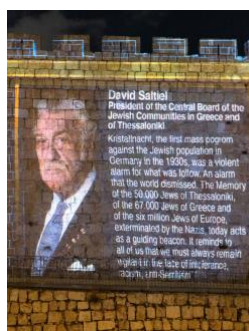
The message of the Mayor of Thessaloniki stated: "The Municipality of Thessaloniki participates in the global initiative #LetThereBeLight of the organization International March of the Living, honoring the Memory of all the victims of the Nazis and in particular the 50,000 innocent Jews of Thessaloniki, 20% of the population of our city in 1943, who were deported and killed in the Nazi Camps during the Holocaust. We don't forget. On the occasion of the 83rd anniversary of the Night of Broken Glass, we affirm our unshakable faith in the fight against anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred."



In Athens Etz Hayyim Synagogue was illuminated

The message of the President of KIS and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki said: "The sad anniversary of the Night of Broken Glass reminds us that we must always remain vigilant in the face of intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, while combating oblivion and the deliberate distortion of the Holocaust."

In Ioannina, the Town Hall was illuminated and the message of hope and unity was projected in the building, which stressed: "Ioannina "illuminates" the way against hatred and fanaticism." In addition, on the Walls of Jerusalem, messages:



Kristallnacht Commemoration in Geneva

Statement by Leon Saltiel

On July 3, 1936, a suicide interrupts the meeting of the League of Nations in Geneva. Czechoslovakian journalist Stefan Lux intrudes into the plenary chamber, shouts loudly "gentlemen, this is the final shot", and turning the revolver on his heart, he commits suicide. By doing so, he wanted, as he explained in a letter to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, to draw the attention of the international community to the situation of the Jews in Germany and the danger of the rise of the Nazis.



Stefan Lux and all those who tried to sound the alarm about the growing Nazi threat in the 30s were dedicated last night's commemoration event (9.11.2021), at the Hekhal Hanes synagogue in Geneva, for the 83rd anniversary of the "Night of Crystals" (Kristallnacht"), the series of pogroms against the Jewish population unleashed by the Nazis in Germany and its annexed territories, as explained to the Athenian/Macedonian News Agency by the representative of the World Jewish Congress to the United Nations, Dr Leon Saltiel.

"We focus on this person, Stefan Loux, because it is a history of both Geneva and the UN (then League of Nations), but also on others who tried to awaken the leaders of the international community to the Nazi threat," says Leon Saltiel, underlining that "this lesson of prevention and prediction is important not to forget, especially with the rise of anti-Semitism in recent years."

The event, organized by the Jewish Community of Geneva, the Friends of Yad Vashem in Switzerland and the World Jewish Congress, was placed under the auspices of the Permanent Representation of Greece to the United Nations and the Consulate General of Greece, within the framework of the Greek Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The event took place in parallel with the Thessaloniki Summit of the IHRA, which due to the health situation is taking place online.

The co-organizers also included the Permanent Representations of Germany, Israel and Switzerland to the United Nations, the Consulate General of Brazil and the 'Casa Stefan Zweig' organization.

Strong message about the need to fight anti-Semitism

Speaking at the event, Greece's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Panagiotis Stournaras, assured that "Greece, like the entire international community, will never forget the pogrom unleashed by the Nazis against the German Jews on the night of November 9, 1938, referring to an "organized act of extreme barbarism".

"Kristallnacht's trauma is not the only wound that common Jewish memory carries. Over the centuries, the persecutions suffered by Jewish communities around the world are countless", underlined the Greek ambassador, pointing out that all these events, which have marked our history, identity and culture, should never be forgotten and above all, they are the millions of victims who come from these genocidal practices, that should never be erased from our collective memory.

In this context, Mr. Stournaras made particular reference to the contribution of education and education to the preservation of collective memory, assuring that during the Greek Presidency of the IHRA, Greece aims to educate not only the young generation but also the entire society about what the Holocaust means, so that it will never be repeated.

"Moreover, Greece, with a strong sense of responsibility, undertakes to promote the work of the International Alliance for the Memory of the Holocaust, so that the latter will remain alive through the centuries," the Greek ambassador said, describing as the "compass" of the whole effort the verse of the Talmud that, "whoever saves a life, saves the whole world"."

The event was attended by several ambassadors and diplomats from about 20 countries, as well as the Consul General of Greece in Geneva, Alexandros Gennimatas, who also played an important role in the organization of the event, as Mr. Saltiel points out, as well as other members of the Greek diplomatic mission to the United Nations.

SOURCE: ATHINAIKO - MACEDONIAN NEWS AGENCY, 10.11.2021

Ioannina

Moses Eliasaf, Mayor of Ioannina, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina and retired Head of Internal Medicine at the University of Ioannina was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Department of Medicine of the School of Health Sciences of the University of Athens.



Thraki (Thrace)

Alexandroupolis – Komotini – Xanthi: Memory of Jewish Life Full article [Here](#)

On the weekend of November 1 and 2 of 2021, the members of the board of directors of KIS, Gen. Secretary Victor Isaac Eliezer and Gen. Treasurer Daniel Benardout conducted a tour in Thrace in order to meet the representatives of the local authorities and discuss ways of including the Jewish heritage in Alexandroupolis, Komotini and Xanthi.

Alexandroupolis

The first meeting was with the Mayor of Alexandroupolis Mr. Ioannis Zamboukis and Gen. Secretary of the Municipality, Mr. Ioannis Bogdis, at the Town Hall, where the development of the Jewish cemetery of the city and the promotion of the history of the Jewish community were discussed. Afterwards, the two executives of KIS visited, along with the Mayor and gen. Secretary the Jewish cemetery, where in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan of Alexandroupolis Mr. Anthimos walked among the tombs dating from the beginning of 20The Municipality of Alexandroupolis has already cleaned the site, fenced it temporarily with barbed wire and takes care of the discovery and cleaning of the tombstones. It was agreed to erect a fixed fence, to place a commemorative plaque with historical reference to the Jewish cemetery, as well as to illuminate it for its emergence as a place of remembrance for the Jews who lived in Alexandroupolis.



Metropolitan Anthimos, who had the initiative to create in the courtyard of the Metropolis the Holocaust Memorial of the city in memory of the Jews of Alexandroupolis who were deported and exterminated in the Nazi death camps, together with the Mayor Mr. Ioannis Zamboukis and the representatives of KIS, also agreed to the placement of special plaques on the pedestrian street, outside the building where the Synagogue was housed until the late 1950s, with its imprint and its history. It should be noted that of the 140 Jews of Alexandroupolis, only 4 survived the Holocaust.



Komotini

Messrs. Eliezer and Benardout, after visiting the wonderful Holocaust monument of the city, met with the Mayor Mr. Ioannis Garanis and the philologist and advisor of the Mayor Mrs. Meneslidou and toured the foundations of the Synagogue in the wider area of the Byzantine fortress, where the Archaeological service is currently

carrying out redevelopment works. It was agreed that there would be a mapping of the Synagogue and a record of the history of the Jewish Community of the city, in the context of highlighting the history of the wider area of the excavations. They then visited the city's Concert Hall, where Jewish tombstones were discovered, which were rescued after the destruction of the Jewish cemetery located in the area. The Mayor, Mr. Garanis, clarified that this area belongs to the region of Thrace and Eastern Macedonia and will support any effort to save, clean and highlight the monuments that have great historical value for the culture of the city. Of the 819 Jews of Komotini, only 28 survived the Holocaust. The tour ended with a visit to the City's Municipal Library, a building of exceptional aesthetics that aspires to cover cultural events.



Komotini

Xanthi

The Mayor of Xanthi, Mr. Manolis Tsepelis, welcomed the representatives of KIS at the Town Hall, in the presence of Gen. Secretary Mrs. Sofias Psomas and the representative of PAKETHRA Mr. Vassilis Aivaliotis, who presented the proposal for the construction of the City's Holocaust Memorial in Eleftherias Square. After a relevant communication with the President of the IHRA Ambassador, Mr. Christodoulos Lazaris, it was decided that the unveiling event of the Holocaust Memorial of Xanthi would be included in the program of events of the Greek Presidency of the IHRA, early next year. Afterwards, the Mayor Mr. Tsepelis and Mr. Aivaliotis accompanied the representatives of KIS to the Jewish cemetery of the city. Messrs. Eliezer and Benardout thanked the Municipality of Xanthi and PAKETHRA for maintaining and maintaining the site of the Jewish cemetery in excellent condition, pointing out that it is an integral part of the cultural heritage of the city in which 550 Jews lived, of which only 6 survived the Holocaust.



Xanthi

Jewish Cemetery in Alexandroupolis

The General Secretary Mr. Victor Eliezer and the Treasurer of the Central Jewish Council of Greece Mr. Daniel Benardout were welcomed on Monday 1.11.2021, in his office by the Mayor of Alexandroupolis, Yiannis Zamboukis.

The main topic of the meeting was the promotion and preservation of the site of the Jewish cemeteries in Alexandroupolis. It is an area on the east side of the city with at least 47 tombs, which were discovered very recently after the cleaning and landscaping works that were carried out.



Immediately after the meeting followed an on-site visit to the cemeteries in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Anthimos. Then the members of the Presidium of KIS had a special meeting with the Metropolitan of Alexandroupolis, Mr. Anthimos, who is active in the fight against anti-Semitism and took care of the construction of the Holocaust Monument of the city, which was inaugurated in 2019 in the courtyard of the Metropolitan Church of Ag. Nikolaos.

The members of the KIS, along with the Mayor and the Metropolitan of Alexandroupolis visited the Holocaust Memorial of Alexandroupolis.

The common goal is to protect the Jewish cemeteries of our city, which are part of our local history, and to organize an event in order to highlight the history of the Jews of Alexandroupolis.

Article from aftodioikisi.gr website, 2.11.2021

Greece and the European Union

In the context of his visit to Greece, the Vice-President of the European Commission for the Promotion of the European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, on 3.11.21, had a meeting with the Board of Directors of KIS, at the Offices of the Organization. Mr. Schinas was accompanied by the head of the EU Delegation to Greece, Niovi Rigkou, and his assistant on policy issues, Elias Iordanidis. Mr. Schinas, starting his introductory remarks, stressed the clear commitment of the European institutions, the Commission and himself personally to the fight against anti-Semitism.

For their part, KIS's President David Saltiel, Vice President Manos Alchanatis, Gen. Secretary Victor Eliezer and Gen. Treasurer Daniel Benardut, briefed the Vice President of the EU on cutting-edge issues concerning Greek Jewry. The discussion focused mainly on anti-Semitism, and on the security of the sacred sites of Jewish interest in Europe in general but also in Greece in particular, as well as on the programs launched by the EU - especially after the recent announcement of the objectives of the first **EU strategy to combat anti-Semitism and safeguard Jewish life**. It was pointed out that synagogues and Jewish cemeteries are often the targets of anti-Semitic violence and Mr. Schinas assured the Central Jewish Council that both he and the European Commission are determined to protect Jewish life in Europe.



Particular reference was made to the work of the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki, the importance of which was underlined by the Vice-President of the EU, in the context of the preservation of memory and educational programs, stressing his personal interest and that of the European institutions that will actively support its completion.

Earlier that morning, Mr. Schinas and his entourage had visited the Jewish Museum of Greece, where they were welcomed by the President, Makis Matsas, the Vice President, Mikis Modiano, Gen. Secretary Benjamin Albalas, Treasurer Guy Natan and Gen. Treasurer of KIS Daniel Benardut. The Museum's collection was guided by the Director of the Museum, Zanet Battinou. This was followed by a brief briefing on the educational programs of the Museum, and the history of the Holocaust and the work of the Museum.

Comment on Fighting Anti-Semitism in Greece

On 23.10.2021, the following article by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Panagiotis Pikrammenos, was published in the newspaper "TA NEA" entitled "Hate Speech and Anti-Semitism – War in the Digital Age"

The word Holocaust, a purely ancient Greek word, has been used since Old Testament times. Centuries later, after World War II, it was used to express the unprecedented destruction of the Jewish element in Europe with the Nazi genocide against the Jews. On 12 and 13 October in Malmo, Sweden, during the International Forum for the Remembrance of the Holocaust and the Fight against Anti-Semitism, the word Holocaust was heard and written hundreds of times to signal and reinforce the gravity of the message against hate speech and anti-Semitism in modern times. All the participants agreed that these phenomena not only do not belong to the past but constitute a constant threat that recently appears to be growing – mainly in the digital "society" of the Internet. Greece actively participated in the International Forum as the Presiding Country of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2020- 2021. The entries were of a high standard. Among others, the Royal Couple of Sweden, the Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Lofven, the President of the European Council



Charles Michel, heads of state, etc., were also present Ursula von der Leyen, Antonio Guterres, Justin Trudeau and Emmanuel Macron online.

As the supervisor of the Greek Presidency of IHRAP, I first referred to the strategy of the Greek Government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis that includes supporting the historical memory of the Holocaust through education, especially now that the last survivors are abandoning us and leaving us without their shocking personal narratives. This historical context highlights the need to find the appropriate means to convey intact the testimonies and narratives of the Holocaust, so that they can be integrated into the consciousness of future generations as an antidote to all kinds of racism and hate speech.

In the context of strengthening the strategy against anti-Semitism during the period 2021 - 2030, I noted the need to strengthen and implement the basic measures of the European Commission in each member country. Let me remind you that the European strategy already defines measures that focus on:

Preventing and combating all forms of anti-Semitism by creating a Europe-wide network of reliable sources of flags for illegal content and strengthening Jewish organizations to eradicate hate speech on the Internet; The protection and preservation of Jewish life in the EU through the use and allocation of resources and mechanisms for the protection of public places and places of worship; and in education, research and in the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust. Today, one in twenty Europeans has never heard of the Holocaust. To keep the memory alive, the Commission will support the creation of a network of sites where the Holocaust took place, including sites that are not more widely known, for example locations used as hiding places or as execution sites.

These measures are complemented by the EU's international efforts to tackle anti-Semitism at global level. I underlined, however, that the European Commission's strategy should be supported in parallel, both by the European Parliament and by the European Council, so that the national strategies of the Member States can be coordinated and evaluated at regular intervals. This assessment should be made as member states have already committed themselves to preventing and combating all forms of anti-Semitism through new national strategies and/or action plans to prevent racism, xenophobia, radicalization and violent extremism.

Especially in the digital age with the countless platforms and sources of information supervision. the control and intervention of institutions in cases of racism for religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation must be continuous and timely, in line with the constantly changing developments in the use and applications of the Internet. I have focused more specifically on the fact that new generations of citizens are looking for information, quickly and almost exclusively on the thousands of Internet information platforms, a fact exploited by shrewd propagandists of extreme politicians and instigators of violent manifestations. This was welcomed by all participants the active presence of top executives of companies that manage important platforms of the internet (Facebook, YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.).

Finally, I mentioned in my speech the great importance of the renewal of memory and the concurrence of messages with modern times and new generations through evolving and vibrant Holocaust Remembrance Museums located in more and more countries of the world. Greece proceeds with steady steps in the establishment and operation of such an emblematic Museum in Thessaloniki that will "communicate" and "converse" with corresponding Institutions, Museums and Institutions abroad in a mutual feeding and updating of the messages we want to send so that the basic Principle of NEVER AGAIN will always be and for all those who will follow clear, easy to understand, non-negotiable but mostly, inalienable.

Source: TA NEA, 23.10.2021

Interview with Israeli Ambassador to Greece Yossi Amrani on the Prospects of Greek-Israeli Relations Full article [Here](#) and [Here](#)

The Ambassador of Israel to Greece, Yossi Amrani, describes the prospects of Greek-Israeli relations as "very good", paying tribute to the Greek government for its efforts to deepen the ties between the two countries and praising the importance of cooperation in the context of broader initiatives, with the participation of other countries.



In an interview with the Athens/Macedonian Agency, on the sidelines of the Thessaloniki Summit 2021, organized over the past two days by the Federation of Industries of Greece (SBE) and the Delphi Economic Forum, under the auspices of the President of the Republic Katerina Sakellariopoulou, the Israeli Ambassador also characterizes the contribution of Greece to regional cooperation and to balance, security and prosperity in the wider region as enormous. While also referring to the energy sector, underlining that "energy diversity is in the interest of national security" and pointing out in this direction the importance of various initiatives, such as the EMGF (East Mediterranean Gas Forum), which allows Europe to strengthen relations with the Mediterranean countries, Egypt and Israel, and gives Greece "an important lever for the diversification of its economy in order to play a greater role in the European energy market and become a point of entry into Europe for Mediterranean energy".

Regarding the opening of the works of the Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki, he notes that "there is good will" from the parties involved, considering that "it is only a matter of months before we see work done". Asked if he is worried about the phenomena of anti-Semitism, he replied that what worries him most is the lack of education, noting that "70+ years after the Holocaust, the memory of peoples is very "short" and ignorance is so great".

"Greece is a friendly country"

"I am very optimistic about our relationship, and I would certainly give credit to the Greek government for its efforts to intensify, strengthen, deepen the relations between the two countries", says Mr. Amrani, pointing out that he sees significant progress in all aspects of the bilateral relationship and more broadly, at the level - for example - of trilateral cooperation. "Greece is a friendly country, a neighboring country", he stresses, pointing out that "we see with the same look many issues and although in the past the focus of the relationship was defense and joint military exercises, we now see an intensification of exchanges between the two countries".

In support of what he said, he notes that in the last 3.5 months, the foreign ministers of Israel and Greece have met twice in Israel, once in Brussels, once in Washington, in addition to exchanging phone calls and messages, which, as he points out, is an important indication of the intimacy of the relationship. "The very fact that we can pick up the phone and discuss issues that concern one country or another and we are trying to help each other, this is a certain climax (of relations) and I would give credit to Prime Minister Mitsotakis, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs N. Dendias, to the Minister of Defense N. Panagiotopoulos - and you forgive me for not going through the entire list of government ministers", says Mr. Amrani.

It notes "openness and goodwill" in various aspects of bilateral relations and brings examples from bilateral cooperation even in cases of emergency response and crisis management. "The moment a fire started in Israel, Minister G. Gerapetritis called me and offered support, we also offered support to Greece for your needs. One of the goals of the new Minister of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection (Ch. Stylianides) is to upgrade relations and cooperate, regionally, with Israel on climate change. The Greek government - and I am a great advocate of its policies on these issues - sees the region as a whole and is trying to develop a strategy that will be good for Greece and for other countries", he underlines.

Greece's contribution to regional cooperation is enormous

The Ambassador of Israel to Greece also refers to the delivery of joint military exercises of Israel with Greece and other countries, bringing as an example Andravida or the recent joint participation in the exercise "NEMESIS 2021" in Cyprus and underlines the role of our country in promoting peace, prosperity and security in the wider region.

"We were there (in the exercise in Cyprus), you were there, the Egyptians were there. Just imagine that, through this Greek alliance that you are promoting, countries feel comfortable cooperating with each other. And I do not need to mention the countries by name. I therefore see a huge contribution of Greece and its good contacts with Israel and with the Arab countries, in order to bring more balance, security and prosperity to the region", he stresses.

He characterizes as a "win-win" the very close relationship of our country with the Arab world, underlining that "this is good for Greece, it is good for the Arab world and it is good for Israel" and adds: "I believe that through cooperation with Greece we can achieve a level of regional cooperation, as with the EMGF (East Mediterranean Gas Forum). The EMGF is a regional gas forum, very popular from countries that are not necessarily Mediterranean, which are "knocking on the door" and wishing to be accepted into the EMGF. This is a direct investment in a country's strategic importance."

In the interest of national security energy independence and diversity

On the energy sector in particular, the Israeli ambassador underlines that "energy independence for any country or energy diversity is in the interest of national security." "The regional cooperation on gas and energy, the EMGF, allows Europe to diversify its resources," he says and explains: "It allows Europe to strengthen relations with the Mediterranean countries, Egypt and Israel, and gives Greece an important lever for diversification of its economy in order to play a greater role in the European energy market and become a point of entry into Europe for Mediterranean energy."

Strategic "game changer" for Israel the "Abraham Accords"

The Israeli ambassador also makes particular reference to "The Abraham Accords", "a strategic 'game changer' for Israel," he says, painting the bigger picture of how they "opened the door" for closer cooperation. "The 'Abraham Accords' opened the door to a close relationship we have with some of the Gulf countries. It is a huge potential for Israel, it is a huge potential for the (Arabian) Gulf, it is a huge potential for the region. We see the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain moving forward and intensifying its relationship with Israel in all fields. We must not ignore the economic interests of a country such as the UAE in Israel. The exchange of visits in recent months is very impressive and so would the number of bilateral agreements that have been signed", says Mr. Amrani, who points out the UAE's interest in one of Israel's major ports, the port of Haifa, the close cooperation of the Arab country with Greece, but also the role that the UAE can play strategically and economically in Israel, in Greece and in a direct contribution to a more stable region.

"There is good will to start the work of the Holocaust Museum"

Asked if he is optimistic about the start of work on the construction of the Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki in the near future, the Israeli ambassador said that "there is goodwill" from the parties involved, considering that "it is a matter of months to see work done".

"Being Jewish means never losing hope, and being Israeli means believing in miracles. So I would not abandon hope and believe in miracles. I think there is good will", Mr. Amrani said and added: "I will start by saying that there is a need for a Holocaust Memorial, a Holocaust Museum in Greece, and nowhere else but in Thessaloniki. Because this has been the center of Jewish life for hundreds of years, and the tragedy of the Holocaust is horrible everywhere, but also here. There is goodwill on the part of the mayor (Thessaloniki) and the president of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and KESE Mr. Saltiel. There is goodwill on the part of the government. The Prime Minister himself, as far as I know, is personally involved, he is personally interested. Deputy Prime Minister Pikramenos is leading the whole effort. I think we are making progress on planning, on town and country planning, on permits, and I think it is a matter of months before we see work done. Am I optimistic? I think I'm a realist because I know how important it is to everyone. We have to overcome some difficulties. I am not saying that all the difficulties have been solved. There are a few. But the direction is very clear and we are moving in the right direction. But goodwill is required from all partners. I have to say that the government fully supports this."

"I'm worried about anti-Semitism, but more about the lack of education." Asked if he is worried about the phenomena of anti-Semitism in Greece, since he points out that "everyone should be worried about anti-Semitism,

not because it poses a direct threat at a particular moment, but because it proves ignorance, proves fanaticism, proves a lack of education", he underlines the need for education.

"Am I worried about anti-Semitism? Yes, but I am more concerned about the lack of education", he says, pointing out that "the Museum, which will one day be built in Thessaloniki, would help educate and teach people about what happened".

The Human Dignity Award presented to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in New York on Monday, November 2, 2021

Through this award, the AJC recognizes the Ecumenical Patriarch's concern for humanity and the environment, his extraordinary commitment to interreligious coexistence and the promotion of Orthodox-Jewish relations. In his speech, the Ecumenical Patriarch thanked the leadership of the AJC, stating that the awarding of the prize is an expression of love, not only towards Him, but also towards what the Ecumenical Patriarchate stands for: dialogue, reconciliation and the fight against religious extremism, hatred and anti-Semitism. Focusing on the title of the award, "Human Dignity," he distinguished that it recalls the biblical teaching about the creation of man "in the image and likeness" of God, to point out that "our dignity as human beings depends on the sanctity of the image of God within us."



Continuing his thoughts, he asked himself meaningfully: "If human dignity comes from understanding the image of God within each of us, how much more should we embrace and care for our fellow man?" We should be deeply inspired by the sense of the sanctuary that encompasses all creation." "The key," he continued, "to ensuring human dignity as the foundation of human existence is freedom. It is our prayer to the almighty God that all human beings enjoy the greatest degree of freedom, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, and that they use this freedom to "serve one another with love."

Concluding, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew congratulated the leadership of the AJC for promoting interreligious cooperation and understanding, especially between Jewish and Orthodox Christian traditions, while he stressed the need for everyone to cooperate in the fight against anti-Semitism, hatred and all kinds of discrimination. "The role of education and the family is indeed very important," he noted, "but religious communities also have a key role to play in eradicating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism."

Bulgaria

World Jewish Congress Condemns Antisemitic Attacks on President of Bulgarian Jewish Community [Link Here](#)

Reacting to antisemitic attacks in the Bulgarian media on Dr. Alexander Oscar, President of the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria – Shalom, the World Jewish Congress declared:

The World Jewish Congress condemns in the strongest possible terms a spate of recent antisemitic attacks in the Bulgarian media on the head of the Bulgarian Jewish community that falsely accuse him of criminal wrongdoing.

Dr. Alexander Oscar, the president of the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria – Shalom, is a widely respected physician and the recipient of numerous awards who has spearheaded welfare programs that benefit all



members of Bulgarian society. Through his many civil society engagements, he has consistently fought against all forms of hate speech and discrimination and worked to protect democracy.

Despite the fact that both Dr. Oscar and the hospital that employs him have unambiguously repudiated the false and pernicious accusations made against Dr. Oscar, these accusations, which also involve conspiracy theories involving the entire Jewish community, have been perpetuated by certain media outlets in Bulgaria and then via the internet by ordinary citizens as well as nationalist groups.

The World Jewish Congress is appalled by the recklessness of these media outlets in allowing themselves to be used to spread blatantly antisemitic falsehoods that target not just Dr. Oscar but the Bulgarian Jewish community as a whole. The World Jewish Congress calls on Bulgarian authorities to protect all members of the local Jewish community from such antisemitic manifestations. The WJC is also informing the European Commission Coordinator for Combating Antisemitism about these incidents and asking for additional protection from E.U. institutions for Jewish communities that find themselves increasingly under threat.

The Rescuers

The film "The Rescuers" by producer J. Mandel and award-winning director Michael King presents the unknown stories of 13 diplomats who with unparalleled courage spared tens of thousands of Jews during WWII

Inspired by the archive of testimonies and wanting to enrich the data, the production company Michael King with the collaboration of the USC/SHOAH Foundation decided to continue the research and create the program "The Rescuers – last chance to record their history," in order to record all the new evidence gathered about the hero diplomats who rescued Jews during the Occupation.



Zamboni



Relative of Romero Radiogales



Selahattin Ulkumen

In Greece there are the shining examples of the diplomats Guelfo Zamboni and Sebastian de Romero Radiogales in Thessaloniki, and of Selahattin Ulkumen in Rhodes. Those who know that their family was rescued by a diplomat during the Occupation or have evidence of the reported diplomats, can help with the investigation. If you have information to enrich the program and record the important information of that period, send your information to the project manager Keegan Luhter in the email keeganluther@rescuersdoc.com Learn more about the project [Here](#)

Paris

Mireille Knoll's Murderer Sentenced to Life

A Paris court sentenced Yasin Mihoub to life in prison for the murder of 85-year-old Mireille Knoll. The court found that the crime was also racially motivated, in addition to the robbery, as Knoll was Jewish and the perpetrators were certain that they were going to locate hidden money in her apartment, in a working-class apartment building. Mihoub's co-defendant, Alex Karibakus, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for raping the 85-year-old, who was suffering from Parkinson's disease at an advanced stage. The bench



said in its decision that the crime was committed in times of heightened anti-Semitism around the world. Knoll received 11 stab wounds while the assailants tried to erase their tracks by burning her body.

Ladino: A Nearly Extinct Language Experiences a Zoom Boom Full Article [Here](#)

By Hannah S. Pressman November 2021

Four years ago, during a period of intense work on a family memoir, I had a mysterious dream:

I enter a bustling cafeteria where people are conversing loudly in a language I don't understand. Judging by their apparel, it appears to be the 1920s or 1930s. I head upstairs to the quieter level and sit at a table for two. Soon an older woman with dark hair braided around her head sits down at my table. She looks like my maternal great-grandmother, Estrella. The woman starts to speak to me, and I realize that the language coming out of her mouth is Ladino. Though I don't understand what she's saying, I nod and listen. The noise of the other customers fades away. I don't want to leave until I can understand her words.



Estrella, author's great-grandmother

Whenever I am learning a language on a deep level, it permeates my dreams. I have studied enough languages in my life that I now recognize this as a sign. It first happened in college when I studied abroad at the University of Haifa. After a few weeks of ulpan and speaking Hebrew with Israeli friends, I began to dream in Hebrew—whole conversations happening in a foreign language that I could somehow understand.

The same thing occurred when I studied Yiddish while earning my Ph.D. in modern Hebrew literature. In 2003, I took the *enhabers* (beginners) level at YIVO. Before long, I was singing Yiddish folksongs during the day and speaking *mamaloshen* in my dreams at night.

But I needed to master a different Jewish language to connect with my great-grandmother and truly understand the cultural bedrock of my Sephardi ancestry. And so, this past year, I began formal study of my third Jewish language, Ladino, also known as Judeo-Spanish and Djudezmo.

Based on medieval Castilian, Ladino is central to the heritage of Sephardi Jews. In the centuries after the Jews' expulsion in 1492 and the Spanish Inquisition, Ladino traveled with Sephardim as they settled in the lands of the Ottoman Empire and points beyond (including in Bulgaria, the focus of the travel story on page 38). My mother's maternal grandparents, born in Turkey and the island of Rhodes in the late 19th century, spoke Ladino as their native language while participating in the multilingual societies around them. When my great-grandmother emigrated from Rhodes to Zimbabwe in the 1920s, she learned English, too, but continued speaking Ladino within the Sephardi community in Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare.



Hannah Pressman

In some ways, my experience learning Ladino—first in an intensive course I took in January of this year and then in two classes over the summer—was similar to other language courses I've taken: There were verb charts and worksheets, group work and listening exercises. We explored everyday topics like the weather, professions and food shopping.

In one important way, though, my Ladino experience has been vastly different because I have studied entirely online, viewing my teacher and fellow students through a screen (*ekran*). I took part in the widely reported phenomenon dubbed the "Ladino Zoom Boom," part of the profusion of online learning during pandemic-induced stay-at-home orders. Fueled by eager students with extra time on their hands (*manos*), this global virtual movement has involved hundreds of students of varying backgrounds, ages and religions. Our goal? To learn enough of *muestro spanyol*—"our Spanish," one of Ladino's traditional nicknames—to actually call it our own.

My platform of choice was the Ladino Linguist website run by Bryan Kirschen, a Binghamton University professor of romance languages and linguistics. Classmates logged on from a farm in England, apartments in

Istanbul and Tel Aviv, homes in Japan, Germany and California. With Kirschen's encouragement, we chatted about movies and conducted impromptu debates in Ladino. Additionally, each week we explored Sephardi folk culture through *refranes* (sayings), *konsejikas* (little stories) and *kantikas* (songs).

Soon, many classmates became friends—grateful not only for the chance to study such a historically important language, but also for the space to gather as a group during a time of profound social isolation. Virtual Ladino classes have been “a gamechanger,” said Ryuki, a Japanese Ph.D. student in comparative literature who has chosen to focus on Jewish writing and who had tried unsuccessfully to study Ladino on his own. Buoyed by the joy of learning with others this summer, he woke up at 3 a.m. to attend *moabet* (conversation) class. Ryuki, who asked that his full name not be used, is one of about half a dozen Japanese academics who are studying Ladino.

Kirschen, who began his efforts to revive Ladino as a University of California, Los Angeles, graduate student, calls this virtual community “Ladino 2.0.” He views the social connections as an exciting aspect of the online-learning era. “It’s creating opportunities that would have never existed before. We’re connecting people around the world who are creating their own friendships and relationships outside of class.... It’s going to continue to be important in the years to come.” Indeed. In the bigger calculus of Ladino’s continued existence, speakers will need each other as much as the language needs us.

If typical linguistic scales are any indication, Ladino is at a critical inflection point. Estimates vary, but the Jewish Language Project surmises that there are around 100,000 Ladino speakers, with the largest concentrations in Israel, Turkey and the United States. Based on the dwindling number of native speakers, Ladino is classified as “highly endangered,” “moribund” or “nearly extinct.” Frequently in nonacademic circles and in the media, Ladino is labeled “a dying language.”

“Can we expand beyond that?” asked Ignacio Montoya, a linguist at the University of Nevada, Reno, who ended up in one of my Zoom courses over the summer. Raised Catholic in southern New Mexico, Montoya converted to Judaism over a decade ago after years of feeling drawn to Judaism’s history, culture and rituals. Today, he specializes in endangered languages and revitalization, and is currently working with tribal communities that speak Paiute, an indigenous language of the Great Basin region of the United States. Montoya suggests—and others in his field prefer—the terms “sleeping” or “dormant” over “extinct” to describe a language without native speakers. “The idea is that there can be an awakening,” he told me.

For an example of linguistic reawakening, we need only look to the success of modern Hebrew, an astonishing feat of language revival. Indeed, immersive ulpan was the model I had in mind when I enrolled in Ladino classes this summer. From my home office overlooking a sliver of Lake Washington in Seattle, I haltingly spoke, joked and listened in *muestro spanyol* multiple days per week. As I did so, I imagined myself back in the places where my Sephardi relatives would have spoken Ladino: chatting over a pot of *fasulia* (stewed green beans) in someone’s kitchen in Harare; whispered in the women’s balcony at the Kahal Shalom synagogue on Rhodes; shopping at the confectionary owned by Ottoman Jewish immigrants in Seattle’s Central District. As my comprehension skills improved week to week, it began to feel reasonable to think I might one day be able to read Ladino texts and incorporate more of this evocative language into my writing projects.

Learning words like *karpuz* (watermelon), *bavajadas* (nonsense) and *fitijo* (naughty child), I found ways to incorporate Ladino into my everyday life. Imagine my surprise, then, upon discovering that Ladino was entering my children’s lives, too. One spring day, when schools were operating remotely, I overheard my third grader participating in a discussion about heritage languages spoken at home. (His school includes speakers of Mongolian, Korean, Amharic, Arabic, Spanish and more.) My son chose to record a Ladino expression for his class: “*Bivas, kreskas, enfloreskas!*” This expression, like *gesundheit* or *labriut*, is typically said when someone sneezes. It translates as “Live, grow, thrive!” and can be followed by a second phrase, “*komo un peshiko en aguas freskas, amen!*,” which means “like a little fish in fresh water, amen!” I had started saying *bivas* around

the house when I learned it in January, and by May it had become a piece of Sephardi heritage that my son could teach his class.

Another of my favorite Ladino phrases is "*Kon bien amaneskas*," which, like *bivas*, is formed using the subjunctive mood. This goodnight expression can be translated as "may you dawn well" or "may you arise well." How lovely to part with someone at nighttime by wishing them a pleasant morning.

As I think about my journey into Ladino, and the journeys of my fellow travelers, the verb *amaneser*, "to dawn" or "to rise," is an apt symbol.

"There's something that awakens in me when I hear Ladino," said Robin, who preferred not to share her last name. The resident of Cape Town, South Africa, has studied with Kirschen the past two summers. Her Ladino classes have inspired her to investigate the legends passed down from her Sephardi relatives, Berbers from Morocco who lived for a time in Portugal.

Likewise, the language has deeply impacted Montoya, the linguist in Nevada. When he studied for his conversion, Judaism was taught through an essentially Ashkenazi lens. "When I discovered Ladino," he said, "it drew me in." Montoya appreciates the language as a portal into more diverse perspectives on Jewish culture.

Recognizing the shift wrought by the latest flowering of virtual students, some commentators are starting to use the words "revival" and "renaissance" to refer to Ladino. Is it too soon to tell if this language will survive and possibly even thrive at the dawn of a new, technologically aided era? Can the growing community of online learners sustain this centuries-old source of Sephardi pride? Asked about Ladino's future, Kirschen is both pragmatic and optimistic.

"Ladino will be endangered, but it can still live on," he told me. "There is so much potential." As intense and rewarding as my Ladino studies have been, I haven't repeated the pleasure of dreaming in *muestro spanyol*. I will continue to work hard while holding onto one hope above all—that the next time I see my Sephardi great-grandmother in a dream, we will be able to speak her language, our Spanish, together.

Hannah S. Pressman is currently at work on *Galante's Daughter*, a memoir connecting her Sephardi family history to explorations of American Jewish identity. She lives in Seattle with her husband and three child

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The fast day "Asarah B'Tevet"—the 10th of Tevet—falls on December 14th, and commemorates the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 425 BCE, which led to the destruction of the First Temple and our exile to Babylonia. And though King Cyrus the Great of Persia allowed the Jews to return to the Land of Israel and rebuild the Temple some 70 years later, the fast day was never eliminated by our sages. Quite the contrary, they saw it as such an important fast day that it is observed even when it falls on a Friday, which is quite unique, since all other fast days are arranged by the Jewish calendar to never fall on a Friday and interfere with Shabbat preparations. What, then, is so significant about the 10th of Tevet?

First, our Sages saw the 10th of Tevet as the beginning of the chain of events that culminated in the destruction of both Temples and their respective subsequent exiles, from which we have never fully recovered from, because even when the Second Temple was finally built, it never returned to the full glory of the First Temple built by King Solomon.

Furthermore, the 10th of Tevet commemorates two other events that occurred close to that date, and which our Sages saw as being tragic for the Jewish nation.

The first tragedy in this context was the desire and even insistence of Egyptian-Greek emperor Ptolemy in 246 BCE to have the Torah translated into Greek, which was the dominant and even official lingua franca for the entire Empire, including the Land of Israel. For that purpose, he gathered 72 Torah sages, sequestered them in 72 separate rooms, and commanded each one to produce a translation. On the 8th of Tevet, the 72 scholars miraculously produced 72 identical translations, including the same 13 places where each translator deliberately diverged from the literal translation of the Hebrew to prevent the proper interpretation from being lost in translation. Though thankful for this miraculous success, the sages dreaded this project, because they saw it as being very negative and even tragic for the Jewish people. The problem wasn't the actual translation, since even Moses himself had translated the Torah into 70 languages. However, Moses' task was a divine endeavor, aimed at all Jews, to enable them to understand and keep the Torah, while this project was a very human one to enrich Ptolemy's vast library, essentially transforming the holy Torah into just another book of human wisdom. And this work, known as the "Septuagint", eventually did become the basis for the "Old Testament" segment of the Christian Bible, which indeed included many corruptions and mistranslations of the original Torah text. Another fear of the sages that was realized in all its tragedy, was how this Greek translation further aided the advance of the agenda of the Hellenist Jews in the Land of Israel to bring Greek culture into Jewish life, and reform Judaism in the image of Greek values and lifestyle. It was clear therefore clear to the sages legitimizing the Greek language by using it to translate the Hebrew Bible had wide ramifications for Jewish society, and undermined the efforts of the sages in combating the allure of Greece in the Land of Israel.

The second tragedy was the death of Ezra the Scribe on the 9th of Tevet of the year 313 BCE, exactly 1000 years after the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. He had led the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile, supervised the construction of the Second Temple, and helped put a stop to the wave of intermarriage that afflicted the returning exiles from Babylonia. As head of the Great Assembly, he canonized the 24 books of the Tanach, and legislated a series of laws and practices, including formalized prayer and public Torah readings on weekdays, Shabbat and holidays. In many ways, then, he was instrumental in helping guarantee the continuation of Judaism among the Jewish people to this very day. In commemoration of these two specific events, the 8th and 9th of Tevet were originally established as separate fast days. However, our sages consolidated them into the fast of the 10th of Tevet so that the month would not be full of sadness and mourning. Finally, the 10th of Tevet was declared in 1951 by the Knesset to be the "Yom Hakadish Haklali" -the General Day for Saying Kaddish - for victims of the Holocaust, especially those whose day of martyrdom is unknown.

And though we continue to observe the fast of the 10th of Tevet for all the reasons cited above, we fervently pray that we soon merit the fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Zacharia, chapter 8, verses 18-19: "Thus says the Lord: The fast of the fourth month (17th of Tamuz), the fast of the fifth month (Tisha B'av), the fast of the seventh month (Gedalya), and the fast of the tenth month (10th of Tevet), shall become for the House of Judah days of joy and gladness – happy festival, on condition that you must love and follow emet v'shalom – truth and peace."



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals
Light and Shadows: Thoughts for Hanukkah

The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) records a famous debate between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel as to how to light the Hanukkah lights. Bet Shammai rules that we should light 8 lights the first night, and then subtract one light each ensuing night. After all, the original miracle of the oil in the Temple would have entailed the oil diminishing a bit each day.

Bet Hillel rules that we should light one light the first night, and then increase the number of lights night after night. (This is the accepted practice.) A reason is suggested: in matters of holiness, we increase rather than decrease. The miracle of Hanukkah is more beautifully observed with the increasing of lights; it would be anti-climactic to diminish the lights with each passing night.

Increasing lights is an appealing concept, both aesthetically and spiritually. But the increase of light might also be extended to refer to the increase in knowledge. The more we study, the more we are enlightened. When we cast light on a problem, we clarify the issues. We avoid falling into error. The more light we enjoy, the less we succumb to shadows and illusions.

Aesop wisely noted: Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow. It is all too easy to make mistaken judgments by chasing shadows rather than realities.

Professor Daniel Kahneman, the Israeli Nobel Prize winner in Economics, has coined the phrase "illusion of validity." He points out that we tend to think that our own opinions and intuitions are correct. We tend to overlook hard data that contradict our worldview and to dismiss arguments that don't coincide with our own conception of things. We operate under the illusion that our ideas, insights, intuitions are valid; we don't let facts or opposing views get in our way.

The illusion of validity leads to innumerable errors, to wrong judgments, to unnecessary confrontations. If we could be more open and honest, self-reflective, willing to entertain new ideas and to correct erroneous assumptions—we would find ourselves in a better, happier and more humane world.

In her powerful book, "The March of Folly," Barbara Tuchman studied the destructive behavior of leaders from antiquity to the Vietnam War. She notes: "A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period is the pursuit by government of policies contrary to their own interests." She points out: "Government remains the paramount area of folly because it is there that men seek power over others—only to lose it over themselves."

But why should people with political power succumb to policies that are wrong-headed and dangerous? Tuchman suggests that the lust for power is one ingredient in this folly. Another ingredient is an unwillingness to admit that one has made a misjudgment. Leaders keep pursuing bad policies and bad wars because they do not want to admit to the public that they've been wrong. So more people are hurt, and more generations are lost—all because the leaders won't brook dissent, won't consider other and better options, won't yield any of their power, won't admit that they might be wrong. These leaders are able to march into folly because the public at large allows them to get away with it. Until a vocal and fearless opposition arises, the "leaders"

trample on the heads of the public. They are more concerned with their own power politics, than for the needs and wellbeing of their constituents.

The march of folly is not restricted to political power. It is evident in all types of organizational life. The leader or leaders make a decision; the decision is flawed; it causes dissension; it is based on the wrong factors. Yet, when confronted with their mistake, they will not back down. They have invested their own egos in their decision and will not admit that they were wrong. Damage—sometimes irreparable damage—ensues, causing the organization or institution to diminish or to become unfaithful to its original mission. The leader/s march deeper and deeper into folly; they refuse to see the light.

Bet Hillel taught the importance of increasing light. Shedding more light leads to clearer thinking. It enables people to see errors, to cast off shadows and cling to truth.

It takes great wisdom and courage to avoid having the illusion of validity. It takes great wisdom and courage to evaluate and re-evaluate decisions, to shed honest light on the situation, to be flexible enough to change direction when the light of reason so demands.

The lights of Hanukkah remind us of the importance of increasing the light of holiness and knowledge. As we learn to increase light, we learn to seek reality and truth---and to avoid grasping at shadows and illusions.

Important Article by Our Dear Friend Dr. Michael Matsas

The Battle of Karalaka: How 242 German soldiers and officers were killed while they attempted to capture five unarmed Greek Jewish families

During the Holocaust, as a rule, the Germans and their collaborators were able to arrest or kill Jews, without suffering any losses. Karalaka, an obscure unknown location in Europe, is the ONLY place where 12 times as many Germans were killed, as the number of the Jews they wanted to capture.

All this thanks to the partisans of ELAS and the sacrifice of three Jewish men. There were 650 Greek Jews who became partisans. There could have been many thousands more! Who would have accepted to go alive to Auschwitz in 1943 and 1944, if he or she knew what was taking place there? Yet, thanks to German deceitful promises and incompetent Jewish leaders, the Greek Jews went like lambs going to their slaughter. The only magnificent exception, almost totally unknown to this day, was the Battle of Karalaka near Mount Olympus.



On May 6, 1944, heroic partisans of ELAS, including Greek Jews like Lieutenant Marco Alberto Carasso, my cousin Joseph Matsas and others, fought bravely inflicting heavy and unprecedented losses to the cruel barbarians and liberated the captives. This is the only time the Germans had to regret their anti-Semitism. A marble monument stands on the site to honor the 14 Greeks who fell on that day!

Excerpts from Dr. Matsas book "The Illusion of Safety" relating to the battle at Karalaka: May 6, 1944. At sunrise the night sentinels return to our little barn to enjoy the warmth of a good fire. Slowly we get up and talk about the unusually cold weather for this time of year. On May I snow fell and can still be seen in places, where the sun did not yet melt it. We are at an elevation of 600 meters, and we represent an advanced post of our ELAS battalion on Mt. Olympus, which is stationed a few minutes march higher up.

I opened the door and the clean air rushed in to dispel the humidity that comes out of the wet overcoats and boots of the guards. Outside, I take a look and see only heavy fog, where I usually see the Larissa plateau. Behind me, on the contrary, Mt. Olympus, white with snow, is bathed in sunlight. The path that leads to the

fields of Larissa is carved on the side of a cliff, on top of which we located our post. In the bottom of the canyon, some two kilometers from us, there is an opening with some barns which shelter Jewish families from Larissa. They escaped the fury of the Germans and live there hoping for a better tomorrow. We often go down there and they are very happy to see and talk with us. They feel that they are not alone in this corner of Olympus and have a sense of security, thanks to our nearby presence. Their women often wash our clothes and the young men organized a system of scouts which, night and day, bring us information that arrives with couriers from Larissa.

Every day the first thing I see is their camp and, today, fog covers the entire area; for some unknown reason I feel uneasy. I went to the spring nearby and the guard there commented about the bad weather down below. The cold water refreshed me and made me lose all bad thoughts and laziness. As I passed again next to the guard, a funny noise was heard. "Machinegun fire? Don't you think?" the guard says as he searches with his eyes the canyon below. For a second the fog is reduced and the guard looks with his binoculars and points out something. The fog retreated like the curtain of a stage in which a drama is about to unfold. The Jewish barns form the background of this first act.

In the square, at the opening of the canyon, I can see a great number of people with helmets and military uniforms moving right and left. They are Germans a whole battalion of them. I shiver with the thought that my poor coreligionists, after all they suffered, fell again into the hands of the German beasts. But all hope is not lost. I lower the binoculars which the guard gave me and I turned around to see him. Instead I see all my comrades, ready with weapons in their hands. "Get your gun and kit fast," my captain tells me, "and give this note to the battalion commander." At the same time he took the binoculars from my hands.

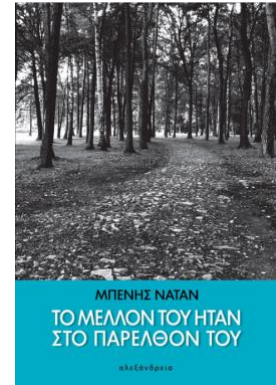
After running for ten minutes I am in front of my major, to whom I gave the note and explained what I saw. He looks deeply into my eyes and, as if speaking to himself, says, "We have to save them." I returned immediately to my guard post, where I see the men forming a circle around a sweating and heart-pounding tired civilian. I recognize him right away as one of the young Jewish men of the valley.

He describes how the Germans arrived at their encampment a little before sunrise, led by a civilian informer. They arrested the Jews in the barns and, after looting their belongings, were about to burn their shelter. A young man tried to inform us but the Germans fired and wounded him. This was the gunfire we heard earlier. Finally this man managed to escape and came to tell us what happened. Agony is depicted on his face as he finishes his story while at the same time, feeling relief, he realizes from what he sees that there is hope for the people he left behind.

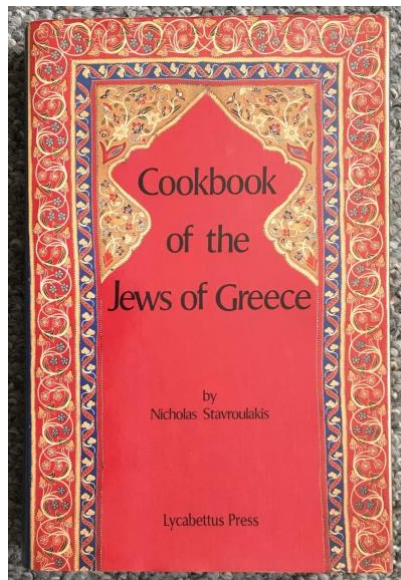
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New Publication in Greek

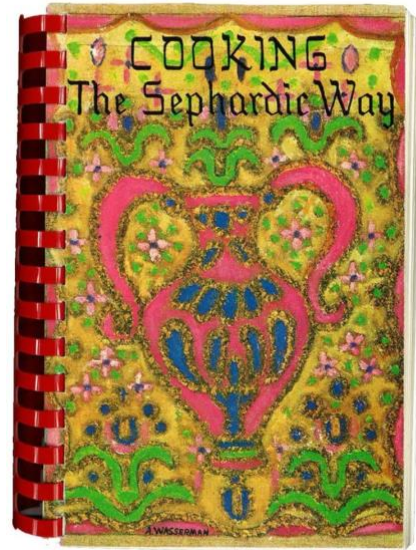
"His Future Was In His Past" by Benis Natan. Preface: Christos Lazos, Alexandria Publications – fictional chronicle November 2021. The etymology of the name Moses (Moses) means "He who was saved from the water," referring to the rescue of Moses when he was a baby in the waters of the Nile. Similarly, the hero of the book was saved not from the water but from Auschwitz. But does it matter where one is saved from? The book tells the story of Moses, a Greek Jew from Thessaloniki, who returned from the concentration camps and found the strength to rebuild his life from scratch. "He lives today only in my own mind. When I go to Thessaloniki, I visit his grave, I leave a small stone and try to find out who he was, what he did and why. I see them in front of me, Moses, Louisa, Ovadia, Rebecca, Rachael, Renee."



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The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry is planning two wonderful Tours for 2022

Email associationfriendsgreekjewry@gmail.com or museum@kkjism.org for full itineraries and prices.



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

**Tour of Jewish Greece
May 24 – June 7, 2022**

Includes Thessaloniki, Veroia, Kastoria, Metsovo, Ioannina, Meteora, Trikala, Larissa, Volos, Athens and a day cruise in the Saronic Gulf

Reconnect with your heritage and experience the beautiful sights and Jewish communities of Greece

To register and learn more information email Museum@kkjism.org

International Flights not included

Arrive in Athens on September 23rd with a connecting Flight to Rhodes. Four nights at the Hotel Ibiscus on the Beach. Friday night service at Kahal Shalom Synagogue. Tour of Jewish Rhodes. Rosh HaShanah in Rhodes. Three nights in Mykonos at Hotel San Marco. Tour of Mykonos, both town and beaches. Three nights in Santorini at Volcano View. Swimming at Black Sand Beach of Kamari. Farewell sunset at Oia. Three nights in Ioannina for Yom Kippur with the Jewish Community of Ioannina and Yanniote Jews from around the world.

Special Tour to Jewish Greece (13 full days not including travel days to and from Greece) includes all hotels, all transfers, all taxes, all breakfasts, 7 dinners and 2 lunches, domestic flight from Athens to Rhodes, domestic flight from Rhodes to Mykonos, ferry from Mykonos to Santorini, flight from Santorini to Athens and then on to Ioannina, flight from Ioannina to Athens. Transfers to and from hotels. Kosher/kosher style meals available on request (there might be an extra charge).

Flight from Athens to Thessaloniki (Salonika) Two nights at Electra Palace. Welcome dinner at Yialos. Full day tour of Jewish Salonika. Visit to Veroia. Overnight in Kastoria at Limineon. Visit to Metsova (traditional mountain village). Three nights in Ioannina (Hotel Dulac). Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat. Visit to island on the Lake. Tour of Jewish Ioannina. Visit to Zagoria and mountain villages. Two nights in Kalambaka with visit to the monasteries of Meteora. Visit to Trikala and Larissa. Visits to Jewish neighbors in both cities. Two nights at Volos Palace. Tour of Jewish Volos. Swim at local beach. Four nights at Athens Plaza. Friday night services with Rabbi Negrin in Athens. Friday night Shabbat dinner and Saturday Shabbat lunch. Walking tour of Jewish Athens. Day cruise to the islands of the Saronic Gulf (Aegina, Poros and Hydra). Farewell dinner included. Special Tour to Jewish Greece (14 full days not including travel days to and from Greece) includes all hotels, all transfers, all taxes, all breakfasts, 7 dinners and 3 lunches, domestic flight from Athens to Salonika, private bus throughout the tour. Kosher/kosher style meals available on request (there might be an extra charge).



**Tour of Jewish Greece
Fall 2022**

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

**Tour of Jewish Greece
September 23 – October 6, 2022**

Includes Rhodes, Mykonos, Santorini, and Ioannina

Reconnect with your heritage and experience Rosh Hashanah in Rhodes and Yom Kippur in Ioannina

To register and learn more information email:
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So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) made out to *Kehila Kedosha Janina*, to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

Some of our major donations have been generous bequests, which have enabled us to complete major work in our synagogue/museum. Do remember us in your will. Your legacy will be present in our legacy. **We need donations more than ever now. You can do this on line on our website: www.kkjsm.org accessing the donation link in the upper left hand corner.**

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street.



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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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