



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

October 2025 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we begin the new year, we thank everyone who made our Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services so special. Next week we celebrate Sukkot, when we leave our homes and dwell in temporary shelters, reminding us of our ultimate reliance on Hashem for protection. We gather with family and friends to eat meals in the Sukkah, and experience the fall season and its greenery. We also wave the Lulav and Etrog - four plant species we bring together to symbolize the diversity of the Jewish people and our ultimate goal of unity. Join us to celebrate the holiday with our cherished Romaniote liturgy, and experience our unique Lower East Side Sukkah at KKJ. Finally, join us for Simhat Torah when we will celebrate the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah with a festive meal. View our full holiday schedule [Here](#) and please RSVP to Amarcus@kkjsm.org. Moadim LeSimha - Χρόνια Πολλά!



Andrew Marcus, Seth Kofinas, and Theo Canter
blowing the Shofars at Kehila Kedosha Janina during Selihot services

This newsletter, our 198th 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 thousands of 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 info@kkjsm.org

We are open for Shabbat services every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email amarcus@kkjsm.org if you would like to attend, and enjoy a traditional Greek kiddush lunch after services. Our Museum is open on Sundays and during the week by appointment. Email info@kkjsm.org to make an appointment. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at info@kkjsm.org

Passings

We mourn the passing of Sam Vitoulis (6/30/1930 - 9/13/2025) at the age of 95. Sam was the youngest child and the only son of Morris Samuel Vitoulis and Lydia Saporta (both of blessed memory). Sam is survived by his wife of 58 years, Rochelle "Shelley" Braver, three sons, Joseph (RoseAnn), Alex and Eric, and many nieces and nephews. Sam was very close with his two older sisters, Evelyn Vitoulis Kaplan and Roslyn (Bernard) Vitoulis Honan (both of blessed memory). They were fortunate to spend many happy times together.



Back: Morris and Lydia Vitoulis. Front: Sam in the middle with his two sisters on each side.



We mourn the passing of Alan Winton from the Ganis family. Alan W. Winton, 87, a resident of Yonkers, NY, sadly passed away on August 31, 2025, surrounded by his caring family. Alan was born in New York City on June 30, 1938, to the late Max and Sophie Winton. After graduating from City College, Alan went on to become a CPA and served in the Army Reserves. Growing up in the Bronx, and playing basketball, he was affectionately known to his friends as the Whiz or Wizzy. He was an enthusiastic NFL fan, and lifelong follower of the NY Jets. His greatest passion was playing poker. Alan played two to three times a week throughout his life, most recently with a group of friends in Queens, until just before his passing. He was even a participant in the World Series of Poker tournament. He was also an avid reader and enjoyed going to and watching movies. In addition to his beloved wife of 35 years Lucille, Alan is survived by his cherished children Robert (Tamara), Rose (Ronald) Quintero, his adoring grandchildren Leah, Daniel, Amanda, Andrew and Sarah and his loving sister Susan (Jerry) Schoendorf. Alan was the grandson of Avasai Ganis and his 1st wife, Serena, part of extensive family tree from one of our early families.

Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Thank you to everyone who joined our Torah & Taverna night in early September! We learned poignant insights from Rabbi Sjimon den Hollander on the Rosh Hashana poem Et Sha'are Ratson, which describes Abraham's binding of Isaac, and the tumultuous life of the poem's author Yehuda ibn Abbas. Afterwards we listened to sinuous melodies from the Eastern Mediterranean from the musical group Prinkipo. Throughout the night we enjoyed delicious Greek mezeds and great energy from a packed audience.



We hosted our annual Romaniote Selihot services on Sunday September 14 and sang our beautiful melodies.

Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Sukkot Services – October 7-8

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjsm.org

View our full holiday schedule [Here](#)

2025

5786

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
WISHES YOU A

HAPPY SUKKOTH

מועדים לשמחה

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ MOED ALEGRE

YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US FOR SUKKOTH HOLIDAY SERVICES ON

TUESDAY OCTOBER 7 AT 9:30AM

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8 AT 9:30AM

**EXPERIENCE THE ANCIENT ROMANIOTE TRADITIONS OF
THE JEWS OF GREECE AND ENJOY A TRADITIONAL
GREEK JEWISH KIDDUSH IN OUR COMMUNAL SUKKAH**

**"YOU SHALL DWELL IN BOOTHS SEVEN DAYS... IN ORDER THAT FUTURE
GENERATIONS MAY KNOW THAT I MADE THE ISRAELITE PEOPLE LIVE IN
BOOTHS WHEN I BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT"**

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA 280 BROOME STREET NYC

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJSM.ORG

VIEW OUR FULL HOLIDAY SCHEDULE AT WWW.KKJSM.ORG

Athens Meets Aleppo: Sukkot Community Celebration – October 9 at 7:30pm

Tickets here: bit.ly/AthensAleppo



THE
HABURA



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi



Greek Jewish & Sephardic
Young Professionals Network
Κοινότητα Κηילה Komunita



Athens Meets Aleppo

An Evening of Music & Mazza in the Sukkah

Thursday October 9 at 7pm
SoHo Sukkah (address upon RSVP)

Celebrate Sukkot with delicious food, exciting live
music and pizmonim, and inspiring Torah, all with a
mix of Greek and Syrian flavors

Early Bird price \$18 until October 5, \$36 after
Tickets: bit.ly/AthensAleppo

Simhat Torah Celebration – October 14 at 6pm

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjasm.org

2025

5786

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR A

**SIMHAT TORAH
CELEBRATION & DINNER**

מועדים לשמחה

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ MOED ALEGRE

TUESDAY OCTOBER 14 AT 6PM

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA

280 BROOME STREET NYC

EREV SIMHAT TORAH SERVICES BEGIN AT 6PM

INCLUDING MINHA, ARVITH, AND HAKAFOT

TRADITIONAL GREEK JEWISH DINNER FOLLOWING SERVICES

"THESE ARE THE APPOINTED FESTIVAL SEASONS OF THE L-RD...
YOU SHALL REJOICE ON YOUR FESTIVAL... AND YOU WILL BE COMPLETELY JOYOUS"

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJSM.ORG

VIEW OUR FULL HOLIDAY SCHEDULE AT WWW.KKJSM.ORG

DONATED BY
FRIENDS OF
KEHILA
JANINA
DEDICATED
PURIM 5744

My Romaniote Patrimony
Presentation and Book Signing by Author and Researcher Alexander Moissis
October 26 at 1pm. Please RSVP to Amarcus@kkjsm.org



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

My Romaniote Patrimony

**How precious family memorabilia
led to 15 years of research and 5 books
related to Greek Jewry and Ioannina**

**Sunday October 26 at 1pm
280 Broome St NYC**

Join us when author Alexander Moissis will present how texts in his grandfather Asher's archive and stereoscopic glass photographs that came from his grandmother Hiette's family led to 15 years of research and to several books related to the Jews of Greece and to the history of the city of Ioannina.

Alexander Moissis grew up in Greece, close to his father's Romaniote Jewish and his mother's Orthodox Christian family. After graduating from high school in Athens, he studied at MIT where he earned four degrees in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and Management Science. He then moved to Silicon Valley, where he has contributed to the success of several now well-known business software companies. Following time in Paris, he lives in Portola Valley, California, where he works in English, reads in French, and multiplies in Greek. Alexander won an award by the Academy of Athens for his book "The Nissim Levis Panorama: 1898-1944 - Stereoscopic photos and travels of a doctor from Ioannina."

Signed copies of Moissis' latest book "The Lost World of Henriette de Serviana" will be available for purchase.

Refreshments will be served

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjsm.org

Rosh Chodesh Women's Circle – October 23 at 7:30pm

RSVP to WomensMoonCircle1@gmail.com



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM



Rosh Chodesh Women's Circle



Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan

Thursday October 23 at 7:30pm
280 Broome Street NYC

Join us to come together as a community to honor each other and inaugurate the New Moon. We will provide a space to set clear intentions for the month ahead, start new projects, and reflect on personal growth in the previous month as we start the new year. Led by Ariana Shushan, we will embrace the New Moon with dance, journaling, sharing, and blessing each other's intentions. Please bring your journals. All ages are welcome.

Ariana Shushan is a community builder and a native New Yorker. Her love for Judaism and community have consistently shaped her life. Ariana works as a speech-language pathologist with individuals and small groups to promote connection and communication, and she believes these are the most distinguishing abilities that make us uniquely human. Through this intimate Rosh Chodesh circle, Ariana hopes to create a space fertile for those same things and help participants create a balanced life that is rich in social and spiritual connections.



RSVP to WomensMoonCircle1@gmail.com



Torah & Taverna Night – October 30 at 7:30pm

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

TORAH & TAVERNA NIGHT

A Monthly Salon of Greek Jewish
Culture, Thought, and Music

Thursday October 30 at 7:30pm

Join us for an engaging evening of Jewish insights,
savor delicious Greek food and drinks, and enjoy live
music with a rotating cast of guest musicians

Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome Street NYC

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org

Message from Theo Canter
KKJ Community Engagement Fellow



Shalom uVeraha dear friends and community members,

The past month has been full with prayer, reflection, and contemplation, as we welcome the changing seasons and start the new year. This Rosh Hashana, we enjoyed a well-attended synagogue service with members new and old, reveling in the special melodies and liturgical poems handed down from across the Mediterranean for generations. We joined our neighbors from Jewish communities across Lower Manhattan to perform *Tashlich* on the East River, symbolically casting away our sins. With our young professionals, we celebrated a delicious Rosh Hashana dinner with the traditional Sephardic *simanim*, the foods whose names often have punny connections to our aspirations for the coming year. We ate items like a fish head, aspiring to be at the head of the year, and a pomegranate, aspiring to be full of mitzvot like the pomegranate's 613 seeds.

In all of these actions, the ways we give the holiday color and meaning, although they stimulate our five senses, it is important to remember these are not magical spells. Our prayers are earnest expressions of our heart — directed to Hashem, but also designed to guide us into living the lives of holiness which we seek. I spoke on Rosh Hashana to our congregation about how although this season lends itself to us aspiring high, I encourage each of you to think specifically, and pragmatically, about ways in which we can each grow and improve ourselves this year. Maybe it's committing to having Shabbat dinner as a family, to learning more Torah, to give tzedaka. I also encourage each of you to feel a genuine part of our community — to take advantage of our prayers, programs, social connections — and contribute whatever you have to offer, be that your attendance on Shabbat and holiday services, leading a class, and any contributions of your time, financial resources, and thought.

As I said on the holiday, what makes our community special is its people. We are a diverse span of ages and backgrounds, coming together for different purposes but with shared goal of building spiritual space, supporting each other, and maintaining our tradition for the ages. Our community is built by the simple people who show up, who make the time. And everyone has the power to be that small but necessary part. As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded of our humanity and fallibility. Yet while we aspire to be better, we can also choose to look back in gratitude at the past year, and to think of all the things we hope to continue in and grow in for the coming year. As individuals and as a community, it has been a year of great accomplishment and achievement, a path I hope we will follow in the years to come.

I wish each of you a reflective season of *teshuva*, and may our prayers be received with compassion and favor. Tizku Le Shananim Rabot.

Sincerely,
Theo

Upcoming Events of Interest
Save the Date – Sephardic Brotherhood Gala December 7, 2025

“Join the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America for the International Sephardic Community Gala celebrating our collective Sephardic identity, culture, and community. The evening will feature delicious kosher Sephardic food, live Sephardic and Mediterranean music, special Sephardic guests of honor, dancing, and a whole lot more. The evening will be hosted at the beautiful Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and includes complimentary access to one of the Museum's featured exhibits. The evening will also celebrate the 110th Anniversary of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood, and bring together participants from our communities throughout the United States and around the world.” Learn more online [Here](#).



THE
SEPHARDIC JEWISH
BROTHERHOOD OF AMERICA

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO OUR

*International Sephardic
Community Gala*

CELEBRATING 110 YEARS OF SERVICE TO
THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025
6:00 P.M.

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE:
A LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST
36 BATTERY PLACE, NEW YORK CITY

Guests of Honor


JOEL BENOLIEL
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER
COSTCO


MITCH JULIS
CO-FOUNDING PARTNER
CANYON CAPITAL


SARAH LEVIN
COMMUNITY LEADER &
ADVOCATE

News from Jewish Greece

Athens

Rosh Hashana Celebration in Athens

On Monday September 22, 2025, in a warm and festive atmosphere, the Jewish Community of Athens gathered 250 members and friends and welcomed the new year 5786! They listened to Rabbi Negrin's inspiring words about how the concept of guilt is absent from the scriptures because it breathes negative energy and instead emphasizes the importance of action in Judaism that essentially defines us, as he characteristically said "we are our deeds" and therefore choose to do good actions this year. They enjoyed a wonderful meal with all the symbolic foods for the new year. They wish everyone a sweet and productive year, full of health, peace and joy!



European Days of Jewish Culture in Athens (EDJC)

The EDJC began in early September 2025 with the theme "People of the Book." In Athens, the Jewish Museum of Greece inaugurated the event with family activities titled "A Page from Our Own Book" on September 28th, with English materials available for foreign visitors.

Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki's Armenian minority and Jewish past are bound by a shared history of genocide

Half of the Greek port city's residents were Jewish in 1919. Today, only a few are. Full article [Here](#)

Fronting the Mediterranean Sea in this bustling Greek port stands a haunting monument to the city's roughly 50,000 Jews who were rounded up by the Nazis in 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. Each year on Holocaust Remembrance Day, local dignitaries and Jewish leaders make speeches and lay wreaths at the monument in their memory.



One of those dignitaries is Akis Dagazian, Armenia's honorary consul in Thessaloniki (known in Turkish Ottoman times as Salonika). He says the ethnic Armenian presence in this ancient city dates back to the Byzantine era, while the Jewish presence goes back even further, to Roman times. And like the Jews, the Armenians have long dominated commerce and trade, and have excelled in professions such as law and medicine.

Sadly, the Armenians share something else with their Jewish brethren: the collective trauma of a genocide. The Armenian Genocide took place 110 years ago and is still often dismissed as a consequence of the First World War.

"This is the recent official Turkish narrative. At least they admit something happened in 1915," Dagazian said over breakfast at the waterfront Café Mazu, a few blocks from the Holocaust memorial. "According to Ottoman statistics, before the Balkan wars, more than 2 million Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire. Now there are only 50,000. I want someone to tell me what happened to the rest of them."

By most accounts, the Ottoman Turks are believed to have killed about 1.5 million Christian Armenians during World War I. Romania was among the first countries to welcome Armenian refugees after the genocide, but for economic and strategic reasons, Romania has yet to officially recognize that genocide.

Israel only just recognized the genocide, in comments made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month following the collapse of relations with Turkey. (It comes at a time when the world is debating whether Israel is committing a genocide of its own, in Gaza, a charge that Netanyahu rejects.) President Joe Biden was the first U.S. leader to acknowledge the genocide, in a 2021 move that divided Jewish groups. The first nation that did was Uruguay, in 1965. Greece followed in 1996 and went a step further.

"In 2014, the Greek government criminalized denial of the Armenian genocide under the same law that criminalizes denial of the Holocaust," Dagazian said. That's not surprising, given that Armenians have been living among Greeks for centuries, and that Armenians are also mentioned in ancient Greek literature, with ties between the two ethnicities dating back to antiquity.

Dagazian, 50, belongs to the oldest Armenian family in Greece. His forefathers arrived some 300 years ago, settling in Komotini, about 240 kilometers east of Thessaloniki. They were part of the first wave of Armenians — merchants and craftsmen who thrived in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, as well as the island of Crete.



The second wave consisted of Armenians fleeing first the genocide, and then the collapse of the Greek front in 1922 in what came to be known as the Asia Minor catastrophe. That brought another 80,000 to 100,000 Armenians to Greece. Yet from the mid-1920s to around 1948, most of these later arrivals returned to Armenia — by then a Soviet republic — while a significant number also emigrated to Europe and the Americas.

The community rebounded in 1991 after the breakup of the USSR, when 40,000 Armenians — the third wave of immigrants — relocated to Greece, most of them settling in Athens.

Yet unlike any other major city in Europe where Armenians wound up en masse, Thessaloniki was the only one with a Jewish majority.

In an 1882-84 census conducted by the Ottoman government, Jews accounted for about 48,000, or 56%, of the city's 85,000 inhabitants. And in the first census conducted by the Greek government in 1913 — two years before the Armenian genocide — Jews were less than half of the total, yet they remained the largest single group, with 61,439 Jews out of a total population of 157,889. In fact, Thessaloniki had more Jews than either Greek Orthodox Christians or Muslims, and far more than the handful of Armenians who were then living in the city.



By 1919, according to the newspaper L'independent, Jews accounted for 90,000 of the city's 170,000 residents, or about 53%. None of other 31 Greek towns where Jews lived at that time had more than 2,500 or 3,000 members.

Today, as a consequence of the Holocaust, barely 1,000 Jews live here. Last year, Thessaloniki-born Albert Bourla, CEO of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and winner of the 2022 Genesis Prize, broke ground on the

Holocaust Museum of Greece. The 9,000-square-foot museum, to open in 2026, will occupy eight floors in an octagonal structure at the site of Thessaloniki's Old Railway Station, where the first Nazi train carrying Jews to Auschwitz departed on March 15, 1943.

Dagazian, who like many other Greek Armenians is in the jewelry business, can read and write Armenian, though he is not fluent in the language of his ancestors.

What keeps the community together is religion. Armenian cultural life revolves around the Armenian Apostolic Church, an Orthodox denomination that dates from the year 301 C.E., when Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion.

For 120 years, the focal point of community life here has been the Armenian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary. It's located on Dialekti Street less than a mile from the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, which according to its director, Xenia Eleftheriou, attracted some 30,000 visitors in 2023, triple the 10,000 who came in 2021 at the height of the COVID pandemic.

Inaugurated in 1903, the church — designed by the renowned Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli — is a single-aisle basilica with a vaulted roof, and a three-story bell tower topped by a square pyramid. The church survived the great fire of 1917, which decimated most of the city, including its historic Jewish quarter.

Agkop Kasparian is president of the Armenian Community of Thessaloniki. He said about 5,000 Armenians live in Thessaloniki, of which 1,000 are from the older established group; the rest came after 1991. Among other things, the community supports an Armenian school that offers language and history classes to some 100 students each Saturday.

"Our interest is to preserve our traditions, language and identity, and to support the Armenian state, and to stand strong in the difficult international environment," he said. "We do this through cultural activities, dance groups, musical events and fundraising."

Ties to their ancestral homeland are paramount among the Armenians here.

Although he no longer has family in Armenia, Kasparian has been there several times. His first visit was in 1991 — shortly after Armenia's independence — to accompany a plane carrying 40 tons of aid for families displaced by a catastrophic earthquake three years earlier. He went again in 1993 with Foreign Ministry officials to help acquire the building that now houses the Greek Embassy in Yerevan.

In total, about 50,000 Armenians live in Greece today, according to Dagazian — but he said their cultural distinctiveness was eroding.

"Being a Christian in another Christian country, it's much easier to assimilate after four or five generations. In the case of Jews, having a different religion is what keeps your community isolated from the others," he said. "This actually presents a threat, in that right now, the rate of mixed marriages between Greeks and Armenians is 95%, which means that in a few generations, our kids will be hellenized."

Despite his deep respect for Judaism and admiration for the modern State of Israel, Dagazian is disappointed with the behavior of some haredi Orthodox Jews who have humiliated priests and even spit on them in the Old City of Jerusalem.

"The attitudes of these Jews do not correspond to the values of the Talmud or the Jewish religion," he said. "They are targeting mostly us simply because we are the only Christians living there. The presence of all the other Christian denominations in the Holy Land consists mostly of just clergy are just priests, but in our case, ethnic Armenians form a solid ethnic majority that has been living there for 1,700 years continuously and uninterruptedly."

Dagazian noted that in some ways, it was the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks against the Armenians that made the Holocaust possible. He cited a 1939 speech by Adolf Hitler, who justified his plan to exterminate the Jews with the comment: "Who, after all, remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?"

This, he said, is why global recognition of what really happened to his ancestors is so important.

"We feel so close to the Jewish community because we have experienced similar tragedies, and we face similar challenges as well," he said. "This threat of assimilation is something we both face—not only now, but through the ages, especially the Jews, because they have been 2,000 years away from their motherland, but also the Armenians. Since Byzantine times we have been relocating to other territories. That's why I believe we are the only ones who can really understand what it means to be a Jew — but more importantly, remain a Jew — in the Diaspora."

Chalkida

Rosh Hashanah was celebrated in the Jewish Community of Chalkida with the participation of all its members and visitors, who brought life to their small community. The celebration began with the Selichot on the eve of the holiday and concluded the next day with the blowing of the Shofar by Mr. Haim Ishakis. In the afternoon they performed Tashlikh in the synagogue garden.

During his speech, the community President Mr. Solon Maisis, in addition to his wishes, warmly thanked Haim Ishakis and Mr. Levi for their many years of contribution to the community. They shared wishes of Shana Tova with health, happiness and peace.

Israel

14th-century Machzor book at Israel's National Library reveals lost Yom Kippur prayers

Newly digitized prayer book from Crimea's Kaffa rite preserves liturgical poems unknown elsewhere, giving a glimpse of traditions lost when prayers were largely standardized. Full article [Here](#)

A newly-acquired 14th-century *machzor* (prayer book for the Jewish holidays) includes previously unknown liturgical poems for the festival of Yom Kippur, the National Library of Israel announced on Thursday.

The discovery marks a rare occurrence, according to Dr. Chaim Neria, curator of NLI's Haim and Hanna Solomon Judaica Collection, that gives a glimpse into a time before the prayers were largely standardized by the invention of the printing press.



The manuscript reflects the Kaffa rite ("*nusach Kaffa*"), a liturgical tradition that emerged in the Black Sea port city of Kaffa on the Crimean Peninsula. In that era, the region was a vibrant crossroads of Jewish life, home to diverse communities including Krimchaks ("Crimeans"), Karaites, Khazarians, Genoese, Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews.

The Kaffa rite shows notable affinities with the Judeo-Greek Romaniote tradition, practiced by Romaniote Jews who lived across much of the Greek mainland and islands.

"We were already familiar with the Kaffa rite, but this machzor seems to have been written down prior to when the tradition was codified," Neria told The Times of Israel over the phone.

"What truly surprised us is that the machzor contains several *piyyutim* [liturgical poems] completely unknown from any other source, along with others previously attested only in documents recovered from the Cairo Genizah," he added, referring to a treasure trove of Jewish communal documents stored in an ancient synagogue in the Egyptian capital over centuries.

According to tradition, on Yom Kippur, which in 2025 falls on October 1-2 — Jews fast from sunset to sunset, devoting the day to prayer and atonement. *Piyyutim* form a central element of the prayers recited throughout the holy day.

The machzor was recently acquired from private collector Avigdor Klagsbald. Though not currently on public display, it has been fully digitized and is [accessible online](#).

"We look forward to having specialized scholars examine it and shed more light on the piyyutim," Neria said.

Neria noted that the machzor dates back to a time before the invention of the printing press, which quickly standardized traditions from different communities, leaving less popular parts of the liturgy out.

"We have something very unique as these piyyutim survived only on this machzor," Neria said.

On its final leaf, the machzor also includes a previously unknown version of a blessing for mourners.

"Blessed are You... Who understands every creature... Resuscitator of the dead. May You soon have mercy on Your people and comfort the heart of mourners... Comforter of Zion and the heart of mourners. And may everyone who does kindness to another be recompensed... Who pays goodly reward to doers of kindness. May You withhold Your anger... Who stops pestilence, sword, destruction and plague from us...", reads the blessing according to the translation shared by the NLI in a statement.

Neria said he felt the words could be especially relevant for today's troubled times.

"It could be a way to ask God to end the war," he noted.

The scholar noted that documenting and preserving such traditions is a core mission of the NLI.

"We see ourselves as custodians of the Jewish people's heritage, especially traditions no longer practiced today," Neria said. "They remain part of our collective story, and it's vital to safeguard them and give them a voice. Perhaps in the future, a community will rediscover one of these forgotten piyyutim and bring it back to life."

Two-thirds of a 15th-century Portuguese High Holiday prayer book were lost to history. Until now.

The Lisbon Mahzor has been reunited with its remaining third at the National Library of Israel. Article [Here](#)

A rare 15th-century Portuguese Jewish manuscript, long incomplete after it was split into three parts, is whole again after the National Library of Israel reunited its final missing pieces.

The Lisbon Mahzor, which contains Sephardic prayers for the High Holidays, Three Festivals and more, was produced by the Lisbon school of Portuguese Jewry in the final years before the region's Jews were forced to either convert or be expelled in 1496.



"It appears that even in their most difficult moments the Portuguese Jewish community did not give up its books – they took these cultural treasures along to their next destination," Chaim Neria, the curator of the National Library of Israel's Haim and Hanna Solomon Judaica Collection, said in a statement.

The small-format manuscript on parchment features artistic decorations throughout, including lace and geometric and floral motifs typical of Portuguese manuscript illumination.

At an unknown point in time, the mahzor was split into three parts, with the first, containing Sabbath prayers, being delivered to the National Library of Israel in 1957.

The final two parts had been lost to history until they recently came up for auction and were withdrawn and purchased on behalf of the library due to their historical significance.

"That this treasure has 'come home' just at the time of Rosh Hashanah is especially meaningful, as the Jewish New Year is one of the most important liturgical moments in the Jewish calendar, a time of prayer, reflection, and renewal," Neria said.

The three parts of the Lisbon Mahzor will now be digitized by the National Library of Israel for study and research, according to Neria.

While the auction price of the final parts of the Lisbon Mahzor were not public, in 2021, the 700-year-old Luzzatto Mahzor was sold at auction to an American Judaica collector for \$8.3 million.

Medical Breakthrough in Israel

Doctors at Ichilov Medical Center have performed a medical first in Israel, removing a rare skull base tumor through the eye socket without opening the skull. The minimally invasive brain surgery took place on July 21 and is being hailed as a breakthrough.

The complex procedure brought together specialists in neurosurgery, oculoplastics, and ENT. Thanks to their teamwork, the young patient made a full recovery with minimal impact on vision or appearance, marking a milestone in Israeli medicine.



Netanyahu recognizes Armenian, Greek and Assyrian genocides, sparking Turkish backlash

Full article [Here](#)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has, for the first time, publicly recognized the genocide carried out by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians in the early 20th century.



Speaking during an interview in August with American podcaster Patrick Bet-David, Netanyahu was asked why Israel had yet to recognize these atrocities.

Bet-David remarked: "If there were one country I would expect to be on the list of those that have recognized the genocide of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, it would be Israel. Why has Israel not recognized the genocide committed by the Turks against these communities?"

Netanyahu responded that Israel's parliament, the Knesset, had already passed a resolution acknowledging the genocide, adding: "In fact, I think we've done it, because I believe the Knesset has approved such a resolution."

When the host pressed further, noting that such recognition had never come directly from Israel's head of government, Netanyahu declared: "Yes, I just did. There you go."

His comments come as Israel faces mounting scrutiny over the toll of its military campaign in Gaza, amid allegations of genocide and legal proceedings expected to reach a critical stage between 2027 and 2028.

Turkey swiftly condemned the remarks. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Netanyahu of using historical tragedies "for political purposes."

"Currently on trial for his role in the genocide committed against the Palestinian people, Netanyahu is seeking to cover up the crimes perpetrated by himself and his government. We condemn and reject these remarks which are contrary to the historical and legal facts," the Ministry statement read.

Omer Celik, spokesperson for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AKP party, also attacked Netanyahu in a post on X, writing: "Netanyahu, the head of the genocide network, with his remarks about the events of 1915, has added yet another lie to his political falsehoods."

Turkey

Turkey bans Jewish singer Enrico Macias's concert citing fears of anti-Israel protests Article [Here](#)

The Istanbul governor's office late on Wednesday said that Macias's performance scheduled for Friday evening in the city has been banned "after intense calls for protests against the concert."

Turkish authorities have banned a concert of Enrico Macias, a French singer of Algerian-Jewish origin, after calls for protest over his pro-Israeli stance.

The 86-year-old is one of French Jewry's best-known personalities. The crooner has performed in Israel numerous times, including arriving during the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War; in the latter, he joined the forces that crossed the Suez Canal.



The Istanbul governor's office late on Wednesday said that Macias's performance scheduled for Friday evening in the city has been banned "after intense calls for protests against the concert."

Such protests would place protesters "in an unjust position legally and cause grievances," the office said in a statement. Any protests around the concert venue in Istanbul's Sisli district on Friday were also banned by the governor.

Macias's achievements

Over the past 60 years, Macias has sold millions of records and performed all over the world, including a historic concert in Moscow's Red Square attended by an audience of 120,000 people.

His music incorporates all the cultural influences in his life, from French chanson-style ballads to works seasoned with Arabic and Jewish flavors.

"These are the kinds of music I live with, and they represent my roots," Macias told The Jerusalem Post in 2006. "I am very connected to my Jewish roots."

Italy

A Livornese “Port Jew” and the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire

Full article [Here](#) by Matthias Lehmann

“The Europeans think that there are no people more ignorant and unrefined than the Levantines. And there was one of them who told me that the Levantines are enemies of knowledge, and that they have no zeal for virtues, but that they are only after pomp and wealth and business.”

Thus does David Attias admonish the readers of his work *La Guerta de Oro* (The Garden of Gold), published in 1778, arguably the first secular book to be printed in Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, the vernacular language of the Sephardi Jews in the eastern Mediterranean. Attias was born in Sarajevo, in Ottoman Bosnia, but he spent most of his life in Livorno, the Tuscan port city, where he arrived in 1769. He wrote his work, the content of which ranges from a seven-page introduction to the Italian language to a short treatise on physiognomy, “to please a friend of his in the East,” explicitly intending the book for a Jewish reading audience in the land of his birth, the Ottoman Empire.



Judeo-Spanish literature had only begun to flourish in the 1730s; it was by definition popular religious literature until the mid-nineteenth century. Its “classical age” in the eighteenth century was marked by works such as the *Me-am Loez*—an encyclopedic commentary on the Bible begun by Jacob Huli of Istanbul in 1730—and numerous translations and adaptations that presented the essentials of rabbinic learning in a popularized Ladino version. Only in the mid-nineteenth century did secular genres—the novel and the theater—emerge and Ladino newspapers were established, all serving to open the Judeo-Spanish public sphere to secular ideas and promoting the project of Westernization. Writing in the late 1770s, Attias refers precisely to the absence of secular Ladino literature at the time, blaming it more than anything else for the perceived “ignorance” and “backwardness” of Ottoman Jewry.

Amsterdam

Netherlands: Dutch King Willem-Alexander takes part in celebrations of the 350th anniversary of Amsterdam’s Portuguese Synagogue Article [Here](#)

Dutch King Willem-Alexander took part in a ceremony celebrating the 350th birthday of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, known as the Esnoga or Snoge. After the service, the King met with rabbis and members of the Jewish community. He also spoke with young people about the community’s future.



The ceremony held on Sunday September 7 was one of several events marking the synagogue’s anniversary. There was a candlelight concert September 4, and from September 8 to 12 a Summer School is being held in the synagogue. Jewish history scholars are giving lectures about, among other things, the Amsterdam rabbi Da Fonseca who initiated the construction of the synagogue.

The synagogue was inaugurated in 1675 with a week full of baroque splendor to show how important the “Jews of the Portuguese nation” were for the Dutch Republic. It is still in use for worship today and can also be visited as a historic monument as part of the Jewish Cultural Quarter.

Importantly, its original interior has remained unchanged. The sanctuary has no heating and no electricity, and the only artificial light comes from hundreds of candles in brass candlesticks and hanging chandeliers. A major restoration of the interior lasting around six years, was initiated in 2017. The work primarily entailed a painstaking restoration of the wooden, brass, and gilt-leather ornamentation and fittings, including its benches and stately wooden Ark. Restoration of the entry porch was also carried out. During the restoration of the, two superb 18th century linen wall hangings decorated with images of birds and flowers were discovered. They are now kept in the synagogue’s hidden treasure chamber.



Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The holiday of Sukkot is celebrated from the 15th to the 21st of the month of Tishrei, corresponding this year from Monday night, October 6th until Monday night, October 13th. Sukkot is 'officially' a seven-day holiday, followed immediately by **Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah**, which occurs on the eighth day counting from the beginning of "Sukkot." In Israel, Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated on the same day, while In the Diaspora, "Shmini Atzeret" and "Simchat Torah" are celebrated on two consecutive days, "Shmini Atzeret" being on the eighth day as above, and "Simchat Torah" on the following, or ninth day.

And though immediately following Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret is its own separate and full festival. For example, the holiday prayers no longer mention Sukkot, we no longer carry the 'four species' [etrog, lulav, hadas and aravot], and in Israel, we do not eat in the Sukkah anymore. In the Diaspora, there is a difference of opinion as to whether one eats in the Sukkah on Shmini Atzeret, but in any case, our Sages ruled that even those that do, do not say the special blessing of 'dwelling' in the Sukkah. And like every Shabbat and holiday, candles are lit, and the special '*shehehiyanu*' blessing is recited in the Kiddush on Shmini Atzeret.

The Biblical source for Shmini Atzeret comes from the Book of Numbers, chapter 29, verses 35-39: "*On the **eighth day** you shall have a **solemn assembly**; you shall perform no laborious work; You shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice, a fire offering, for a sweet savor to the Lord, one bull, one ram, seven yearling lambs without blemish; The meal offering and libations for the bull, the ram, and the lambs according to their number, according to the ordinance; And one goat for a sin offering; in addition to the regular burnt offering, its meal offering, and its libations; These you shall offer to the Lord in your festivals, in addition to your vows and freewill offerings, your burnt offerings, grain offerings, and for libations and peace offerings.*"

But why was Shmini Atzeret established as a special and separate holiday from Sukkot altogether? The fact that it begins immediately at the end of Sukkot implies an intrinsic connection, so why not establish Sukkot as an eight-day holiday, at the outset with the last day being a full festival, similar to the Seventh Day of Pesah? What did God insist that, on the one hand, Shmini Atzeret be literally 'attached' to Sukkot, while on the other hand, establish as a separate and full holiday?

The great Biblical commentator Rashi offers a beautiful explanation: in the Temple, over the course of the seven days of Sukkot, God orders us to be his emissary and offer a total of seventy bull sacrifices in the Temple to symbolize His concern for the 'seventy nations', meaning the entire world, and His desire to forgive them for their wrongdoings. But after Israel completes this assignment on behalf of the world-at-large, God wants us to join Him in a private, intimate and exclusive 'family' repast, symbolized by the offering of a single bull and ram offering to demonstrate the oneness of God and the nation of Israel. God therefore asks that we delay our departure from Him for one more day, so that He may convene and converse only with His one and only chosen people. This is Shmini Atzeret.

Like Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot carries a central theme of universalism. Just as we are commanded by God to be His 'defense attorney' for the world on Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgement for the entire world, on Sukkot we are similarly commanded to offer sacrifices on behalf of the entire world, and not only for our own wellbeing.

Coming, then, on the heels of Sukkot and this universal message and task, Shmini Atzeret may be seen as a kind of reward from for our concern for the entire world, despite the hate and rejection we suffer, as well as an expression of God's appreciation and gratitude for our role in ensuring that God's world, in all its faults, will continue to exist and prosper. Therefore, to properly express and demonstrate His appreciation, God saw fit to institute a special holiday called Shmini Atzeret, to be celebrated exclusively by, and for, His nation of Israel. It is especially on Shmini Atzeret that we can truly understand and appreciate what King David says in the Book of Psalms: "*Happy is the nation for whom this is so; happy is the nation whose God is the Lord*" (Psalm 144, verse 15). Hag Sameah to one and all!



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
A Parable: Thoughts for Parashat Haazinu
JewishIdeas.org

There was once a king who had two advisers. The advisers had a luxurious life as long as they bowed to the whims of the king. The king's whims were many. He often made unreasonable demands. He was harsh in his criticisms. He expected the advisers to be at his service constantly. He humiliated them by always reminding them that he was their superior, that he could order them around at will. As long as they complied, he rewarded them generously.

One day, one of the advisers resigned from his position. He left the palace and soon drifted into poverty. The days of opulence were over for him.

The other adviser continued to serve the king, and now had to work twice as hard since the other adviser had left. But the benefits were many. He lived in wealth and honor. People bowed to him. He was the envy of many who wished they, too, could have such ready access to the king.

After several years had passed, the king's adviser decided to visit his former colleague who had left the king's service. He found his colleague living in a simple hut, eating thin soup.

The king's adviser sneered at his former colleague: "Look how you've sunk into poverty. If you had remained an adviser to the king, you would have been rich and honored. You wouldn't have to live in a hut and eat thin soup."

The former adviser replied: "If you had left the service of the king, you, too, could have lived in freedom and self-respect. You, too, could have been free of the tyranny of the king. You could have broken the yoke of this earthly king in order to serve the King of kings."

To the public, the king's rich adviser seemed to be the epitome of success. He lived in the palace. He basked in luxury. He had power over others.

The poor former adviser, though, knew better. He knew that in spite of the outer trappings of success, the king's adviser was nothing but a glorified slave. He attained worldly "success" at the cost of selling his soul. The poor former adviser did not have the outer trappings of success; he had something far more valuable: he had self-respect and inner freedom. He was not answerable to the earthly king: he was answerable only to the King of kings.

In our busy and competitive world, we sometimes find ourselves in the position of the king's advisers. Some choose to be slaves to the blandishments of "success," willing to forego their personal freedom and self-respect in order to attain luxuries, or fame, or influence. They run in the rat race, not realizing that the cost of "winning" is losing one's own dignity in the process. The more the world thinks they are "winning," the more they are actually "losing."

Others choose to remain free and above the fray. This sometimes entails losses of money, prestige, and influence. But they have won something far more important. They have been able to stay focused on the really important values of life, and have realized that worldly "success" does not necessarily ensure genuine happiness, feelings of self-worth or ultimate meaning in life.

"Teshuva" means repentance. In this season of "Teshuva" it is appropriate to review our philosophy of life and our deeds—and repair what needs to be repaired.

"Teshuva" also means "answer." We are obliged to recognize that an answer is expected from us! When we understand that we are answerable to the King of kings—and not to the whims of worldly kings—we have taken a giant step forward in self-realization.

"Whoso is wise, let him understand these things; whoso is prudent, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just do walk in them; but transgressors do stumble therein" (Hosea 14:10).



Rabbi Hayyim Angel

The Binding of Isaac: Extremely Religious without Religious Extremism

JewishIdeas.org

It appears that the Akedah - the Binding of Isaac, perhaps more than any other narrative in the Torah, teaches how one can and should be extremely religious, but also teaches how to avoid religious extremism. In this essay, we will consider the ideas of several modern thinkers who explore the religious and moral implications of this narrative. Why Did Abraham Not Protest? Although the very idea of child sacrifice is abhorrent to us, it made more sense in Abraham's historical context. Many of Israel's neighbors practiced child sacrifice. It stands to reason that when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, Abraham concluded that perhaps God required this of him. Of course, God stopped Abraham and went on to outlaw such practices as a capital offense in the Torah (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2–5). We find child sacrifice abhorrent precisely because the Torah and the prophets broke rank with the pagan world and transformed human values for the better. [2] In its original context, then, the Akedah highlights Abraham's exemplary faithfulness. He followed God's command even when the very basis of the divine promise for progeny through Isaac was threatened.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was deeply troubled by the morality of the Akedah. He maintained that nobody is certain that he or she is receiving prophecy, whereas everyone knows with certainty that murder is immoral and against God's will. Therefore, Abraham failed God's test by acquiescing to sacrifice Isaac. He should have refused or at least protested. However, the biblical narrative runs flatly against Kant's reading. After the angel stops Abraham from slaughtering Isaac, the angel proclaims to Abraham, "For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me" (Genesis 22:12). God thereby praises Abraham's exceptional faith and commitment.

Adopting a reading consistent with the thrust of the biblical narrative, Rambam (Spain, Egypt 1138–1204) draws the opposite conclusion from that of Kant. The fact that Abraham obeyed God demonstrates his absolute certainty that he had received true prophecy. Otherwise, he never would have proceeded: (Abraham) hastened to slaughter, as he had been commanded, his son, his only son, whom he loved.... For if a dream of prophecy had been obscure for the prophets, or if they had doubts or incertitude concerning what they apprehended in a vision of prophecy, they would not have hastened to do that which is repugnant to nature, and [Abraham's] soul would not have consented to accomplish an act of so great an importance if there had been a doubt about it (Guide of the Perplexed III:24). Although Rambam correctly assesses the biblical narrative, there still is room for a different moral question. After God informs Abraham about the impending destruction of Sodom, Abraham pleads courageously on behalf of the wicked city, appealing to God's need to act justly (Genesis 18:23–33). How could Abraham stand idly by and not challenge God when God commanded him to sacrifice his beloved son?

By considering the Abraham narratives as a whole, we may resolve this dilemma. Abraham's actions in Genesis chapters 12–25 may be divided into three general categories: (1) responses to direct commands from God; (2) responses to promises or other information from God; and (3) responses to situations during which God does not communicate directly with Abraham. Whenever God commands an action, Abraham obeys without as much as a word of protest or questioning. When Abraham receives promises or other information from God, Abraham praises God when gratitude is in order, and he questions or challenges God when he deems it appropriate. Therefore, Abraham's silence when following God's commandment to sacrifice Isaac is to be expected. And so are Abraham's concerns about God's promises of progeny or information about the destruction of Sodom. The Torah thereby teaches that it is appropriate to question God, while simultaneously demanding faithfulness to God's commandments as an essential aspect of the mutual covenant between God and Israel.

The Pinnacle of Religious Faith

Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994) suggests that Abraham and Job confronted the same religious test. Do they serve God because God provides all of their needs, or do they serve God under all conditions? Both were God-fearing individuals before their respective trials, but they demonstrated their unwavering commitment to God through their trials.

Professor Moshe Halbertal (Hebrew University) derives a different lesson of commitment from the Akedah. God wishes to be loved by us, but this is almost impossible since we are utterly dependent on God for all of our needs. We generally express love through absolute giving. When sacrificing to God, however, we always can hold out hope that God will give us more. Cain and Abel could offer produce or sheep to God, but they likely were at least partially motivated to appeal to God for better crops and flocks next year. What can we possibly offer God that demonstrates our true love? The Akedah is God's giving Abraham the opportunity to offer a gift outside of the realm of exchange. Nothing can replace Isaac, since his value to Abraham is absolute. As soon as Abraham demonstrates willingness to offer his own son to God, he has proven his total love and commitment. As the angel tells Abraham, "For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me" (Genesis 22:12). Halbertal explains that Abraham's offering a ram in place of Isaac becomes the paradigm for later Israelite sacrifice. Inherent in all sacrifice in the Torah is the idea that we love God to the point where we are prepared to sacrifice ourselves or our children to God. The animal serves as a substitute. The Akedah thereby represents the supreme act of giving to God. The ideas explored by Professors Leibowitz and Halbertal lie at the heart of being extremely religious. Abraham is a model of pure, dedicated service and love of God. Such religious commitment is ideal, but it also comes with the lurking danger of religious extremism. We turn now to this critical issue.

Extremely Religious without Religious Extremism

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) composed a classic work on the Akedah, entitled *Fear and Trembling*. He argued that if one believes in religion because it appears reasonable, that is a secular distortion. True religion, maintains Kierkegaard, means being able to suspend reason and moral conscience when God demands it. Kierkegaard calls Abraham a knight of faith for his willingness to obey God and sacrifice his son. Although Kierkegaard's philosophy did not lead others to violence in the name of religion, it certainly is vulnerable to that horrific outcome. In his philosophy, serving God must trump all moral or rational concerns.

A fatal problem arises when the representatives of any religion claim that God demands violence or other forms of immorality. In a powerful article written in the wake of the terror attack on New York City on September 11, 2001, Professor David Shatz (Yeshiva University) addresses this urgent question. He observes that in general, the answer for any form of extremism is to create a system with competing ideals for balance. For example, one may place law against liberty, self-respect against respect for others, and discipline against love. In religion, however, there is a fundamental problem: placing any value against religion—especially if that competing value can trump religion—defeats religious

commitment. Professor Shatz suggests a solution. There is a way to have passion for God tempered by morality and rationality without requiring any religious compromise. One must embrace morality and rationality as part of religion. Religion itself must balance and integrate competing values and see them all as part of the religion. This debate harks back to Rabbi Saadyah Gaon (Babylonia, 882–942), who insisted that God chooses moral things to command. In contrast, the medieval Islamic philosophical school of Ash'ariyya maintained that whatever God commands is by definition good. Kierkegaard's reading of the Akedah fails Professor Shatz's solution to religious extremism and is therefore vulnerable to the dangers of immorality in the name of God. In truth, Kierkegaard's reading of the Akedah fails the narrative itself: God repudiates child sacrifice at the end of the story. Whereas Kierkegaard focuses on Abraham's willingness to suspend morality to serve God, the narrative teaches that God rejects immorality as part of the Torah's religion.

The expression of religious commitment in the Torah is the fear of God, which by definition includes the highest form of morality. There must never be any disconnect between religious commitment and moral behavior, and Israel's prophets constantly remind the people of this critical message. Thus, the Torah incorporates morality and rationality as essential components of its religious system. It also is important to stress that people who act violently in the name of religion generally are not crazy. Rather, they are following their religious system as they understand it and as their clerics teach it. Such manifestations of religion themselves are evil and immoral.

Post-modernism thinks it can relativize all religion and thereby protect against the violence generated by religious extremism. In reality, however, post-modernism achieves the opposite effect, as its adherents no longer have the resolve to refer to evil as evil and to battle against it. Instead, they try to rationalize evil away. This position very meaningfully empowers the religious extremists. Professor Shatz acknowledges that lamentably, there are negative extremist elements among some Jews who identify themselves as religious, as well. However, their attempts to justify their immorality with Torah sources in fact do violence to our sacred texts.^[15] Such Jews are not extremely religious, as they pervert the Torah and desecrate God's Name. Similarly, every religion must build morality and rationality into their systems so that they can pursue a relationship with God while avoiding the catastrophic consequences of religious extremism. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has observed, "the cure of bad religion is good religion, not no religion."

Conclusion

The Akedah teaches several vital religious lessons. Ideal religion is all about serving God and is not self-serving. Because we expect God to be moral, the Torah's protest tradition also emerges with Abraham's holding God accountable. We may and should ask questions. Simultaneously, we must obey God's laws in our mutual covenantal relationship. We aspire to be extremely religious, and Abraham serves as a paragon of the ideal connection to God, an active relationship, and faithfulness. The Akedah also teaches the key to avoid what is rightly condemned as religious extremism, using religion as a vehicle for murder, persecution, discrimination, racism, and other expressions of immorality. Morality and rationality must be built into every religious system, or else its adherents risk lapsing into immorality in the name of their religion.

One of the best means of promoting our vision is to understand and teach the underlying messages of the Akedah. We pray that all faith communities will join in affirming morality and rationality as being within their respective faiths. It is imperative for us to serve as emissaries of a different vision to what the world too often experiences in the name of religion, to model the ideal fear of Heaven that the Torah demands, and ultimately to sanctify God's Name.

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www.Jewishideas.org

Historic Preservation

At times you will see articles in our newsletter about the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative (LESPI) and we realized that many of you may not know what this organization is and what it does. Our Museum Director, Marcia Ikonomopoulos, was on the Board of Directors for many years, and is now on the Board of Trustees. LESPI often joins us at our Greek Jewish Festival as a community partner. Certainly, we, at KKJ know how important the preservation of traditions and customs is, along with the essence of the quickly changing neighborhood where our synagogue and museum are housed.

Therefore, for those unaware of LESPI and what it does, here is some background: Lower East Side Preservation Initiative: we're local residents and preservationists who want to preserve what's left of the historic architecture and streetscapes of Manhattan's historic Lower East Side. This area, which is one of the city's – and country's – most diverse and historically rich communities, includes such neighborhoods as the East Village, Lower East Side below Houston St., Chinatown, Little Italy, and the Bowery, extending from East 14th Street south to Fulton and Franklin Streets, and Broadway east to the East River. We're a grassroots not-for-profit organization, formed in 2007.

LESPI's first order of business has been to address preservation of the East Village, where we were instrumental in the creation of two new York City historic districts. We're now rallying to preserve additional historic areas of the East Village as well as the Lower East Side below Houston Street.

Why does this need to happen?

It needs to happen because the Lower East Side's historic streetscapes and buildings serve as markers that tell us of an architectural and cultural history that has been central in the development of the city as well as the country, a history that includes generations of immigrants, artists, writers, political activists, and others who helped define who we were and are as a people. Every day now more of the area's historic tenement, institutional, and community buildings are being destroyed in waves of development that seem out of control. This destruction destroys an important tie we have to those who came before us. Learn more here: <https://lespi-nyc.org/>



Photo from NYC archives in the 1930s



Photo from NYC archives in the 1930s

We are blessed with talented, impassioned young people in our community, some who have been born into the Romaniote world and, others, like Gabe Zuckerberg, who has helped keep the Jewish Community of Ioannina on the map. We first met Gabe when he came to our Greek Jewish Festival. Subsequently, he was among a group of students from Dartmouth who traveled to Ioannina to help clean the Jewish Cemetery. He then returned with his parents as Gabe returned to learn more about our community. He was awarded the Jonathan B. Rintels Prize for the best honors thesis in the Arts and Humanities for the class of 2020. Gabe's thesis, "Mikrá Yiánnena: Romaniote Chanting for Shabbat Evening in Greece and New York City," was nominated by the Music Department and subsequently recommended for the Rintels Prize by the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Arts and Humanities. Gabe is presently in Ioannina, as he continues to bring the Romaniote liturgy to life.



Fiorello La Guardia: A Legacy of Leadership, Resilience, and Jewish Identity

On September 20, 1947, the world lost Fiorello La Guardia, New York City's transformative mayor and a man whose life embodied resilience, intellect, and cultural pride. Born on December 11, 1882, in New York City, he was the son of Achille Luigi Carlo La Guardia, an Italian American bandleader, and Irene Luzzatto-Coen, a Sephardic Jewish woman from Trieste, Italy. Raised in a multicultural environment, La Guardia mastered multiple languages, including Italian, German, Yiddish, and Croatian, skills that would serve him throughout his diverse political career.



Despite his Italian father's Catholic background, La Guardia's Jewish heritage profoundly shaped his identity. His mother descended from the distinguished Luzzatto family, linking him to a tradition of Jewish scholarship and intellectual achievement. Yet his dual heritage also subjected him to prejudice and discrimination throughout his life.

During World War II, La Guardia's sister, Gemma La Guardia Gluck, was arrested by the Nazis in Budapest. Recognizing her connection to the prominent mayor, Adolf Eichmann had her interned as a political hostage. Gemma was first sent to Mauthausen concentration camp and later transferred to Ravensbrück. Separated from her husband, who died in Mauthausen, and her daughter and grandson, who were also imprisoned, she miraculously survived and was reunited with her family in New York in 1947, just months before Fiorello's death.

Throughout his political career, La Guardia faced anti-Semitic slurs and obstacles due to his Jewish roots. He never exploited his heritage for political gain, focusing instead on principle and public service. As Mayor from 1934 to 1945, he championed progressive reforms, establishing public housing, expanding the city's airport, and combating corruption. His enduring legacy is reflected in landmarks like LaGuardia Airport and LaGuardia Community College. Fiorello La Guardia's life stands as a testament to courage, integrity, and the enduring influence of heritage. His story reminds us that resilience and dedication to justice can triumph even in the face of prejudice and adversity.

Romaniote Recipe for Sukkoth from Rae David (her Nona's recipe)

Uprikia (stuffed grape leaves)

Beat one egg
Add 1/4 cup rice
Add 1 pkg farmer cheese (8-oz)
Add some dill and parsley
Add 1 tablespoon lemon juice
Add 1 teaspoon salt
Mix ingredients together
Wash vine leaves, stuff them.
Put some oil in pot. Put Uprikia in.
Add 3/4 glass water and bring to a boil. Adjust heat so that it's not boiling hard.
When water evaporates and rice is done, remove.
Serve at room temperature with sour cream (if desired)



Sephardic Recipe for Sukkoth from Rachel Cohen (her Nona's recipe from Kastoria)

Potato and Feta Bourekas

Ingredients
1 package of #4 Phyllo
2 medium Idaho potatoes
1 medium onion
1 pk farmer cheese
1 pk feta cheese
2 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 cup any kind butter
1/4 cup oil - simmer the butter and oil...this is for brushing the phyllo



Boil the potatoes and onion to soften (cut them up) add 1 tbs butter to potatoes - mash all together
Let it cool - then mix all the above ingredients together (except for the oil and butter)
Each phyllo gets brushed lightly with the butter/oil mixture - fold in half -brush again -fold one more time ...
put 1 tbs of the potato/feta mixture at the bottom of your long strip of folded phyllo - fold upwards as though you are folding a flag...
When you have your triangle - brush it with the oil/butter mixture
Brush the baking pan with the same oil/butter
Bake at 350 degrees until brown

Recipe from Rachel Cohen - a/k/a Rachelle - Kastoria, Greece

So many people have asked when our Kehila Kedosha Janina Cookbook will be published. Sara Honan Crocker and Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos are working to make this happen. Email Museum@kkjism.org to learn more.

Books in Progress

"Meet Me On the Corner of Broome and Allen," by Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos is nearing completion. Marcia expects the book to be completed by the end of 2025, at which point it will be sent to an academic press.

Marcia is also working on a book about the Jews of Corfu, a small, fascinating Jewish community with a painful past. She is also working on publishing "Your Guide to Jewish Greece." Then, of course, there is the Kehila Kedosha Janina cookbook that Sara Honan Crocker and Marcia are hoping to get published.

To learn more, contact Marcia at Museum@kkjsm.org

Tour of Jewish Greece

Our Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos was unable to do her annual tour to Greece in 2025 since she was still recovering from back surgery. Thankfully she is in the process of healing and is exploring a tour in 2026. The 2026 tour would occur in May 2026 during the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. What a joy it will be to spend time with Rabbi Gabriel Negrin in Athens. The tour will include Athens, Salonika, Ioannina, Meteora, Mykonos and Rhodes. As of now, the dates are arriving in Salonika on the May 14, spending 3 days in Salonika, going with our private bus to Ioannina for 3 days (May 17-19) stopping for one day in Meteora (May 20th), spending Shavuot in Athens with Rabbi Negrin (May 21-23), spending 3 days in Mykonos (May 24-26) and 3 days in Rhodes (May 27-29). If you are interested, email Marcia at museum@kkjsm.org



Looking for Our Help

"My family is from Kavala. The family name was Youda. They lived on Amytna street and were merchants as well as tobacco workers. My grandmother Sol left for Barcelona with her first husband in the late 1930's, and eventually survived the war with her children in Marseille, France. But unfortunately, we were only ever able to find information on Sol's older brother, Benjamin, who we believe died at a factory by way of Natzweiler-Struthof camp near the end of the war. The rest of the family has been lost to us. The family names and history were mostly lost after the war as well, because my grandmother didn't want to talk about it."

If you have any information about this family, please contact us at museum@kkjsm.org

Photo of the Month



Can you guess who this is?
Email Museum@kkjsm.org

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. 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. **You can do this online on our website: www.kkjsm.org click 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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Website: www.kkjsm.org
Email: info@kkjsm.org**

Your donations enable us to continue our work. You can send donations via mail directly to 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002, or you can donate via our website www.kkjsm.org.