



# Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

## February 2023 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

In February, this year, we celebrate the Jewish New Year for Trees - Tu BiShvat. While the holiday is mentioned in the Talmud, Tu BiShvat is the Israeli Arbor Day, and it is often referred to by that name in international media. Ecological organizations in Israel and the diaspora have adopted the holiday to further environmental-awareness programs.



Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, his wife Paula, and the IDF Chief of Staff, arrive at the Tu Bishvat tree planting ceremony at Shaar Hagai, 1949

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This newsletter, our 167<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website [www.kkjsm.org](http://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](mailto:museum@kkjsm.org)

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

If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at [museum@kkjsm.org](mailto:museum@kkjsm.org).

## Simchas

We wish our President Marvin Marcus a very happy birthday. Marvin celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday with family and friends on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Marvin with his cousin Alan Balaran.



We share in the joy of our dear friends, Rabbi and Lindsey Bodner, on the birth of their daughter Rayna Fay Bodner, and the baby naming at Congregation Ramath Orah, surrounded by hundreds of family members and friends. Rayna is the 4<sup>th</sup> child of the Bodners and their first daughter.



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## Passings

We mourn the passing of Jennie Aelion in Salonika at the age of 72. Jennie was the niece of our docent, Stella Bacolas.

We mourn the passing of Laurie Anne Mougel, daughter of Morris and Sarah Negrin, and the granddaughter of Joseph Moses Negrin and Serena (Sarah) Ganis. Laurie was born in Teaneck, NJ on December 24, 1953. She passed away on Saturday, January 28, 2023. Her husband, Mark, predeceased her. She is survived by her sister Alice Siler (husband Duane) and nephews Jeffrey & David and her brother Jay Negrin (wife Linda), nieces Beth and Allie and a large extended family of Negrin cousins.



Thank you to everyone who has reached out to offer their condolences on the passing of my father, Tasso Manassis. Anyone who was fortunate to know my father knows that he was a true gentleman in every sense of the word. My father was born in Erikousa, Greece, and came to this country in 1950. not knowing a word of English. He went on to graduate NYU and become a respected businessman and leader in the Greek American community. For all of his success, both personal and professional, my father never forgot what it was to be a young boy thrust into the public school system, without understanding English and with no resources to help him. Of all of his incredible accomplishments, and there were plenty, working with the NYC board of education to have them recognize the needs of Greek speaking students, and provide support with an ESL program was perhaps one of his proudest accomplishment. He touched so many lives, and helped so many people along the way. Archon, pangregorean, businessman...of all the titles he earned, and wore so proudly, anyone who knew him knew that papou was the title that made him most proud and happiest. Thank you again friends. We will cherish every moment and memory.



## Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

**We are honored to host Dr. Anna Kohen for her NYC book launch on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 12pm**

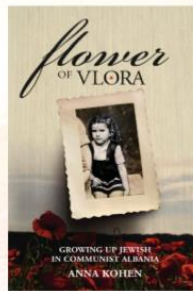
Dr. Kohen is close to our community, her family originally from Ioannina. Like many Jews from Ioannina, before the Second Balkan War, the Kohen family was living and working in Albania. Her book tells the heart-warming story of how her family survived the Holocaust with the help of Muslim Albanians. Special price for autographed copies of the book \$20 plus \$5 P&H.

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA IS HONORED TO WELCOME

**ANNA KOHEN**

TO PRESENT HER NEW BOOK

# FLOWER OF VLORA: GROWING UP JEWISH IN COMMUNIST ALBANIA



**SUNDAY MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> AT 12PM**

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA 280 BROOME STREET NYC**

Join us for this special event when Anna Kohen, a Romaniote Jew with roots from Ioannina, will tell the fascinating story of how her family was saved from the Nazis by Muslim Albanians. Her new book has been widely acclaimed in Israel, Greece, Albania, Kosovo, and the United States.

Dr. Anna Kohen was born in Vlora, Albania, and left in 1966 with seven of her family members and moved to Greece where she completed dental school. In 1991, with the help of several Jewish organizations, including the Sisterhood of Janina, she brought 37 of her Albanian relatives to the United States. That same year she was invited to Albania to celebrate the founding of the Albanian-Israeli society and was appointed Honorary Member. In 2004, the President of the Albanian Republic awarded her the medal for Special Civil Merits for valuable contributions in helping Albanians during the Kosovar humanitarian crisis. Dr. Kohen has served the Albanian community for over 30 years as President of the Albania American Women's Organization.

Autographed copies of Anna's book will be available for sale at a discounted price thanks to the generosity of the publisher.

**REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.**

**PLEASE RSVP TO MUSEUM@KKJSM.ORG OR 516-456-9336**



**Greek Jewish & Sephardic  
Young Professionals Network**

Κοινότητα קהילה Komunita

# *Frutikas*

## **Sephardic Tu BiShevat Wine & Fruit Tasting**

**Sunday February 5th at 7pm  
Lion's Milk  
104 Roebling St - Williamsburg**

**Join us to celebrate the Jewish New Year for  
Trees with a traditional Sephardic Seder featuring  
wine, cheese, fruit, and more**

**Enjoy drinks while meeting other  
young members of our community**

**Open to Jewish Young Professionals  
in their 20s and 30s**

**RSVP to [GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com](mailto:GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com)  
*Limited Space - Must Receive Confirmation to Attend***

## Visitors to Visit Kehila Kedosha Janina

January was an interesting month with visits by old friends and new friends.



The Falks from Chicago



Isaac Botner



New Israeli friends



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## News from our World in the United States

### New York City

Holocaust Remembrance Day of the Greek Jewry hosted by Consul General of Greece in New York Konstantinos Konstantinou on January 19, 2023. Watch the moving program on YouTube [here](#)



### Remembering Italian Jews on Holocaust Remembrance Day in NYC

On January 27, on the occasion of the Giorno della Memoria (International Holocaust Remembrance Day), the Consulate General of Italy hosted the traditional ceremony of the public reading of the names of the Jews deported from Italy and the territories under Italian control.

This initiative is part of a program of events promoted by the Consulate General, the Primo Levi Center, the Italian Cultural Institute, the Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò at NYU, the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, the Calandra Institute at CUNY, the Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi, the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA) and Magazzino Italian Art to commemorate the victims of the Shoah and preserve the memory of those tragic events.

The reading of the names is an open, outdoor event took place in front of the Italian Consulate (on Park Avenue, between 69th and 68th street). The public is invited to take part in the reading. Anyone interested can join the reading at any time during the ceremony.



## Holocaust Remembrance Event at the United Nations



### Theme "Home and Belonging"

Exploring how victims adjusted their ideas of "home" and "belonging" as they faced the violent, antisemitic onslaught during the Holocaust, and what "home" and "belonging" meant to survivors in the immediate post-war years will frame the outreach program. In 1933, the Nazi Party took control of the government of Germany and put its ideology into practice, identifying who could claim Germany as home and who belonged. The process of definition and exclusion went beyond legislation and propaganda campaigns of disinformation and hate speech, to state-sanctioned acts of terror that destroyed people's places of worship, livelihood and homes. The definition of who belonged and who did not, soon extended to all who fell within the expanding borders of the Nazi Reich and was reproduced by collaborator governments.

The Nazis and their racist collaborators rendered many millions homeless and stateless before and during the Second World War. We consider how those who sought refuge from 1933 negotiated the meaning of "home" and "belonging". We consider those who survived by hiding and the impact of this experience on their sense of "home". We will examine the ways in which survivors as displaced persons in displaced persons' camps, and the children born in these camps, navigated the post-War world - a world in which the meaning of "home" and "belonging" had been challenged radically by the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

Holocaust remembrance and education that includes opportunities to develop a deeper appreciation of the victims and survivors and their agency, can inform our response to the plight of contemporary victims. Placing the victims and survivors in the center of historical research, learning and remembrance illuminates the humanity of victims of atrocities today, and the impact of antisemitism fueled by disinformation and the distortion of history. Focusing on the humanity of the victims prompts us to remember our humanity, and our responsibility to combat hate speech, combat antisemitism and prejudice - to do all we can to prevent genocide.

# News from Jewish Greece

## Holocaust Remembrance Events Held across Greece We Remember



## Thessaloniki

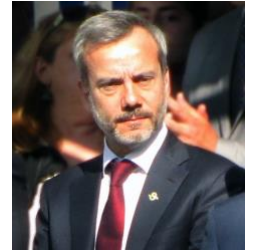
Once again, anti-Semitic vandalism occurred in Thessaloniki. Swastikas were painted on a mural commemorating the Holocaust.



### Proposal from Mayor of Thessaloniki

The Remembrance Day of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust is a day etched in the city body. A day when Thessaloniki is confronted with its history.

Thessaloniki remembers, the Greeks remember. We will not allow this atrocity to be forgotten.



That is why I will propose renaming a main street in Thessaloniki to Jewish Martyrs Avenue, embracing the proposal of the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva, Leon Saltiel.

This move, along with the construction of the Holocaust Museum, the new Eleftherias Square, and the Memory March that will end up with the sculpture of the Glid brothers, constitute a tribute to Thessaloniki in its history.

Turning moral debt into an opportunity for the city itself.

Opportunity to leap forward with the respect our past deserves.

### The new ERT series starring a Jewish family in Thessaloniki in 1917

The filming of the new ERT fiction series entitled "The bracelet of fire" continues at a feverish pace.

The new ERT series is based on the book of the same title by Beatrakis Saia-Magrizou, with the directing stamp of Giorgos Gikapappa and the sensitive eye of Nikos Apiranthitis and Sofia Sotiriou.



The first filming of the series takes place in the mansion of the family of the Jewish businessman Moses Cohen and through the rehearsals, we convey the unique atmosphere of the time.

Scenes of the series shot in Lavrio, as well as indoors and outdoors in various parts of Athens, capturing the atmosphere and style of the shocking story.

The new series brings to the small screen the heart-wrenching journey of a family that seeks refuge in a gypsy camp after the great fire of Thessaloniki in 1917. With an excellent cast of actors, including Nikos Psarras, Elisabeth Moutafi, Christos Loulis, Alexandra Aidini, Spyros Stamoulis, Michalis Tabakakis, Nefeli Kouri, Dimitris Arianoutsos, Alexandra Aidini and with the excellent music of Minos, fire", through eight episodes, brings to the small screen the shocking journey of a family and takes us on a journey to the beginning of the 20th century, in an era of repeated conflicts, strong loves and merciless... fires.

The history of the ERT series...



The great fire of Thessaloniki in 1917 forces the family of Jewish businessman Mois Cohen (Nikos Psarras) to seek refuge in a gypsy camp. There, his wife, Benouta (Elisabet Moutafi), gives birth to Joseph (Christos Loulis and Dimitris Arianoutsos at a young age), a child literally born in the fire.

The story of fire, which sometimes creates and sometimes destroys, seems to follow Joseph throughout his life. His family experiences Campbell's arson, his father's bankruptcy and the escape of his older sister, Jacqueline (Nefeli Kouri), from the house to live with the Christian Konstantinos (Spyros Stamoulis).

The Second World War "burns" what Joseph had known until then, with the tragic classification of the family's transfer to the Auschwitz hell. And yet, through it all, there is one material that still endures. Where no fire can melt it, but instead makes it even stronger!

The heroes of the new ERT series

Nikos Psarras, Moses Cohen: the father of the family. Successful factory owner, father of three boys and two girls. Mois is tested on many levels by the events he experiences from 1917 and the fire of Thessaloniki up to World War II, culminating in his transfer to Auschwitz.

Elizabeth Mutafi, Benuta Cohen: the mother of the family, wife of Moses, who we know is pregnant with her 5th child, Joseph, while already having David,

Jacqueline, Elijah and Rachel. She is a woman who knows how to devote and love, sweet and at the same time dynamic. She supports her family in all circumstances and suffers when she loses track of her own.

Christos Loulis. Joseph, in 1962, in old age. He is the man who survived Auschwitz. Now a jeweler, married and the father of a daughter, Betty, he is the person through whom the "Bracelet of Fire" will return to the family. He himself, through a painful flashback to the past, is confronted in the present with a horrible discovery.

Alexandra Aidini. Ester, who has her husband and has a small child, one day at the table she meets the eldest son of the family, David. He wants to help her and the Cohen family takes her home.

Nefeli Kouri: Jacqueline Cohen is the eldest girl in the family, artistic nature and unconventional. She will fall in love with Constantine, who is a Christian and despite the obstacles they face, love wins. She does not hesitate to come into conflict with her home when she decides to change her religion in order to marry him.

Christina Mathioulakis: Rachel is the youngest daughter of the family, who supports her parents and siblings and is taken with them to Auschwitz with unforeseen consequences. He is a person who, unwittingly, will play a catalytic role in which he will influence the course of the family with everything that will take place.

Gal Robisa: David, the eldest son of Moses and Benuta, will leave for the land of Israel, but when their father loses his property, he returns to support his family and is taken with the others to Auschwitz.

Electra Baruta she plays Matilda, one of the family's servants. It is the "stone of scandal" of the family.

Nicoleta Haratzoglou she plays Marina, the second servant of the family. She is Benuta's confidante, who in the end gives her life to save her.

Panagiotis Xynos: Joseph Cohen in his childhood. The beloved son of his mother, he grows up with the tale he tells about the time and place he was born.

Spyros Stamoulis: Konstantinos Dimos is the Christian with whom Jacqueline falls in love and changes for the sake of religion. They marry, have children, while Konstantinos helps the family in difficult times with food and hides Jacqueline's mother, who does not enter Auschwitz.

Dimitris Arianoutsos: Joseph Cohen at a young age: He is the youngest child in the family, closely tied to his mother, the child of fire who will live the ultimate horror. He is the one who is taken to Auschwitz and one of the few who return alive.

Michalis Tabakakis. Ilias, the second son of the family, is the one who dreams of serving Greece as a soldier from a young age. He will graduate from the Evelpidon School and die on the Albanian Front.

"The bracelet of fire." A shocking story about those who have everything, but found the courage to stand up again. For those who walked through the flames and came out more alive than ever.

Screenplay: Nikos Apiranthitis, Sofia Sotiriou

Directed by: Giorgos Gikapepas

Original music: Minos Matsas



## Ionian Islands

**United States of the Ionian Islands: The History of British Rule in Greece** Full article [Here](#)

The formation of the United States of the Ionian Islands under British rule in Greece is a little known period of the country's history.

What is widely known about the history of Greece's splendid Ionian islands is that they never had to endure direct Ottoman rule during the dark years between the 15th and the 19th centuries, when the rest of Greece was under the often brutal Turkish occupation. However, what is lesser known is the fact that these islands have a rich and turbulent history due to the fact that Europe's most powerful nations were constantly struggling to gain control over them. This was mainly because of their geographical position right at the edge of the once-powerful Ottoman Empire. Among the powers who fought to gain control of these territories were, of course, the British. At a time when the British Empire literally ruled almost the entire world, it was normal for them to eye the beautiful islands of the Ionian Sea, which were so very strategically placed in the Mediterranean. However, others were also eyeing the exact same lands and making it difficult for the British to occupy them.



The short-lived Septinsular Republic and the beginning of British rule in Greece

The islands of Corfu, Paxoi, Lefkada, Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zante, and Kythira, along with smaller islets which surrounded them, were for many centuries part of the powerful Republic of Venice, which never allowed the Ottoman Turks to set foot on these lands. However, following the dissolution of the Republic of Venice in 1798, the French became the rulers of these idyllic islands.

Unfortunately, the Ionian Sea was now entering a long period of turbulence and dramatic political change. A united force of Russians and Ottomans was soon formed in order to oust the French and make the Ionian islands part of the broader Russian and Ottoman spheres of influence. The joint Russo-Turkish alliance succeeded, and the French were forced to leave the beautiful islands in less than two years.

In 1800, the Septinsular Republic was born.

Literally meaning the "Republic of the Seven Islands," this oligarchic republic was fully functional until 1807 and managed to survive on some of the islands up until 1815, when the British finally gained total control of the islands. The Septinsular Republic put the islands under nominal Russian and Ottoman sovereignty. The islanders hoped that they would gain complete independence; however, the Republic remained autonomous throughout its existence. After 1807, the French tried again to gain control, and they actually succeeded; however, they respected the institutions of the Republic and did not annex the islands to France. It was the British who intervened after 1807, and gradually began establishing rule on one island after the other.

The birth of the United States of the Ionian Islands

In 1809, the United Kingdom defeated the French fleet off the island of Zakynthos (Zante) and captured Cephalonia and Kythira, as well. The powerful British Royal Navy took Lefkada in 1810, and only the island of Corfu, or Kerkyra, remained occupied by the French until 1814. It was the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and 1815 which finally granted the United Kingdom full sovereignty over all of the Ionian islands. The exact legal term used at that time was "exclusive amical protection," but this was just a fancy legal term to describe complete British rule over these lands. "The United States of the Ionian Islands" was thus born, and along with allowing British rule, the islands had to grant the Austrian Empire commercial status equal to the UK, allowing Vienna to trade freely in this part of the Mediterranean Sea.

1815 – 1864

The United States of the Ionian Islands was then given a bicameral legislature, titled the "Parliament of the United States of the Ionian Islands," which was composed of a Legislative Assembly and a Senate, something very similar to what the US has today. The United States of the Ionian Islands was formed as a federation, with each one of the seven main islands constituting one member-state in the federation. The British decided to make Greek the official language of the States, something that surprisingly had not been the case in the past.

This was depicted not only in the coat of arms of the island federation, but also on its coinage. In order to maintain its sovereignty on the islands, the UK appointed a "Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands," who was traditionally chosen by the British monarch. The capital of the United States of the Ionian Islands was Corfu, where the chambers of the Assembly and the Senate were established.



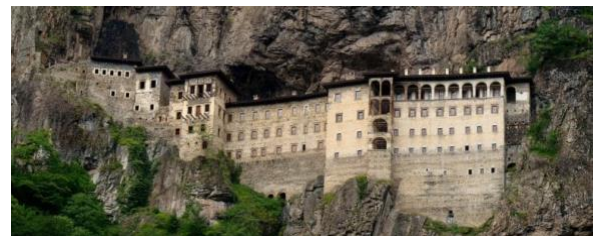
The union of the United States of the Ionian Islands with Greece As was only natural, the islanders gradually but steadily began to demand a political union with their motherland, the Kingdom of Greece. Skirmishes took place on most of the islands between the Greeks and the British throughout the decades of British rule in Greece, with the British Army often intervening to impose order. The final years of British rule were actually quite difficult for the islanders. The party of the Radicals demanded union with Greece. Many of its MPs, including Detoratos Typaldos, Frangiskos Domeneginis, and Telemachus Paizis among many others, signed the proposed parliamentary bill which called for the union of the United States of the Ionian Islands with Greece nearly fifteen years before it actually occurred. The United Kingdom, as was common throughout the history of the British Empire, responded with force and violence to the growing movement for independence and union with Greece.

Persecutions, arrests, imprisonments, and exile were their common practices to suppress the growing desire of the local people to join with their Greek motherland. Eventually, on March 29, 1864, after nearly a decade of turbulence, the United Kingdom decided to offer the Ionian Islands as a present to the newly-enthroned King George I of Greece, who was a dyed-in-the-wool Anglophile. Thus, on May 28, 1864, by proclamation of the Lord High Commissioner, the Ionian Islands were officially united with Greece, beginning the new, modern chapter in their long history.

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## **Pontic Greek Still Spoken by Thousands in Northern Turkey** Full article [Here](#)

Pontian Greeks may have been forced out of their homeland one hundred years ago, but their language, Pontic Greek, still lives on today, in communities near Turkey's Black Sea coast. From antiquity up until medieval times, the area of Trebizond, or Trabzon, on the Black Sea coast, lay at the heart of the Greek-speaking world.



The land of the legendary kingdom of the Amazons was colonized by the Greeks in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, and was immortalized in Greek mythology as the area from which Jason and his crew of fifty Argonauts began their journey across the Black Sea on his quest for the Golden Fleece. Studies conducted by historians and linguists suggest that thousands of Muslim Pontians in today's northeast Turkey speak a Greek dialect which is remarkably close to the extinct language of the earliest years of ancient Greece.

Most of these individuals live in a cluster of villages near the contemporary Turkish city of Trabzon. Linguists have found that their dialect, called "Romeyka," a variety of Pontic Greek, has structural similarities to ancient

Greek which are not observed in other forms of the language spoken today. Romeyka's vocabulary also has parallels with the ancient language.

Dr. Ioanna Sitaridou, Director of Studies in Linguistics at Cambridge University, who has traced the origins and evolution of Romeyka over the centuries, estimates that at least 5,000 people currently speak this particular dialect.

"With as few as 5,000 speakers left in the area, before long, Romeyka could be more of a heritage language than a living vernacular. With its demise would go an unparalleled opportunity to unlock how the Greek language has evolved," said Dr. Sitaridou in an interview with British daily *The Independent*. As devout Muslims, Romeyka speakers in the Trebizond/Trabzon area were exempt from the large-scale population exchange between Greece and Turkey following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Using religion as the defining criterion to re-settle Christians in Greece and Muslims in Turkey, the Treaty resulted in the uprooting and exchange of some two million people between the two countries. For Pontus, the result was an exodus of Greek-speaking Christians. However, this still left small, isolated enclaves of Greek-speaking Muslims within Turkey.

There may be hundreds of thousands of Pontic Greek speakers in Turkey.

In 1996, Turkish researcher Ömer Asan made headlines with his book the "Culture of Pontus" (Pontos Kültürü) in which he suggested that up to 300,000 people still speak Pontic Greek. Asan, originally from the region of Of, in Trabzon, an area with a strong Islamic tradition and a substantial Greek-speaking population, was charged with violating Turkey's "Anti-Terrorism Law" by "propagandizing separatism," before he was acquitted in 2003. In a 2000 interview with the Greek edition of the *International Herald Tribune*, the author maintained that "there are still people in Turkey today who speak and understand Pontian, which is the oldest surviving Greek dialect.

"The members of this community come from Trabzon and are scattered throughout Turkey, or have emigrated to other countries. Pontian is spoken in sixty villages in the Trabzon region, most of them in the Of area. At a conservative estimate, I would say this dialect is spoken by around 300,000 people," he concluded. Pontic Greek is an endangered Indo-European language spoken by about 778,000 people worldwide. However, only 200,000–300,000 individuals are considered active speakers of the tongue.

The language is mainly spoken in northern Greece, but is also used in Russia, Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan and by members of the Pontic diaspora around the world.

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## Mykonos

**The Island of Mykonos Throughout the Millennia** Full article [Here](#)

Mykonos is undoubtedly one of the most famous Greek islands. Known for its lively parties and beautiful beaches, the island also has an incredibly fascinating ancient history. Somewhat surprisingly, the party paradise was also an international hub in ancient times because of its close location to the island of Delos, which was the birthplace of the god Apollo and home to many temples and religious sites.

It was basically considered the spiritual center of the ancient Mediterranean, as it even had temples to Egyptian gods, so pilgrims from all across the region visited the island, particularly when large feasts and festivals to Apollo were held there throughout the year.



Delos is still considered one of the most important mythological, historical, and archaeological sites in all of Greece to this day. The entire island is uninhabited and is considered a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The island, referred to as “the sacred island of Delos,” is where, as Greek mythology tells it, Leto gave birth to Zeus’ twins, Artemis and Apollo.



Nearby island of Delos was the birthplace of Apollo.

The story goes that because of Hera’s jealousy of Zeus and Leto, she ordered all lands to shun Leto, making it difficult for her to find a place to give birth. However, Zeus asked Poseidon to find a secret, safe place for Leto to give birth. She ended up on the island of Delos, and, since the island is not connected to the land, she was able to safely give birth to her twins, Artemis and Apollo. From that moment onward, the small, rocky island was declared “the most sacred of all islands” by Callimachus in the third century BC in all of Ancient Greece and was devoted to Apollo. It was said to be “bathed in the unique light” of Zeus’ son.

Of course, visitors to Delos would stop in Mykonos, as well, as the island was only a mile away from the religious hub.

According to ancient historian Herodotus, the island was first inhabited by the Carians, a group of ancient people from Anatolia. Yet, by the eleventh century BC, Mykonos was mainly populated by Ionians from Athens. The stunning island was named after its first ruler in Greek mythology, Mykonos. He was said to be the son of the god Apollo, who was born nearby on Delos.

Mykonos also plays a role in one of the most famous stories in Greek mythology, as it was said to be the site of the Gigantomachy. The story recounts the battle between the Olympian gods, led by Zeus, against the giants. The Twelve Olympians killed countless giants in the battle, and myth has it that the large boulders found across Mykonos are actually the bodies of slain giants.

After the Hellenistic era, Mykonos fell under the control of a series of empires and states. First, the Romans took power on the island, but then it became part of the Byzantine Empire. This was until the Fourth Crusade in 1204, when Venetian lord Andrea Ghisi claimed the island. Just decades later, the Catalans claimed the island. They were then cast out by the Venetians yet again in 1390.

The island, along with nearby Tinos, remained under Venetian control for centuries until the Ottomans took power on the islands—Mykonos in 1537 and Tinos much later in 1718. During the Ottoman period, the island became a maritime center and accumulated wealth through trade. Immigrants from across the Ottoman empire made their way to the island with the hopes of making their fortune. This wealth and excess also attracted the attention of pirates in the Mediterranean, who frequently targeted the island’s residents and nearby sailors in raids.

Mykonos has been a tourist destination since the 1800s.

Along with much of Greece, the island was freed from the Ottomans in the early 19th century after the Greek War of Independence. Wartime hero Manto Mavrogenous was from Mykonos, and she is honored there and across Greece for her contributions to the war effort. Although Mykonos is currently a top vacation spot, tourism actually started on the island many years ago. Waves of eager travelers visited the island in the late nineteenth century after excavations by the French uncovered ancient treasures on the nearby island Delos.



From then on, tourism became one of the most dominant industries on the island. This archaeology-based tourism began to shift in the mid-20th century, when hip jet setters began to “island hop” across the Greek islands and rediscovered Mykonos.

In the 1960s and 70s, tourists from across Europe and the US flocked to the island to frolic on the nude beaches and admire the distinctive blue-and-white Cycladic architecture the island is famous for.

The island is now known as an LGBT-friendly, luxury tourist destination full of fine dining, designer boutiques, and popular clubs.

## **President of Greece Mentions War Reparations in Germany Visit** Full article [Here](#)

The President of Greece Katerina Sakellariopoulou raised the issue of war reparations during her visit to Germany on Thursday. At her meeting with her German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, she stressed “the utmost importance of the issue of war reparations and the occupation loan.” She added that a dialogue on the issue “will be to the benefit of both countries and the resolution of past disputes will help strengthen bilateral cooperation for the future.”



Germany owes Greece 278.7 billion euros in war reparations.

In April 2015, Greece evaluated the war reparations to be the equivalent of 278.7 billion euros (equivalent to 389 billion euros in 2023 or \$420 billion). While several German politicians and members of the Bundestag are calling on the federal government to compensate Greece financially for the effects of the Nazi occupation, the German government insists that the issue of reparations has been dealt with. In 1990, West Germany and East Germany signed the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (‘Two Plus Four Agreement’) with the former Allied countries of the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union.

This treaty was supposed to close all open questions regarding Germany and the aftermath of WWII and paved the way for German reunification. Germany considers this treaty as the final regulation which concludes the question of open reparations which had been made in previous treaties such as the London Debt Agreement.

Sakellariopoulou: “excellent relations” between Greece and Germany

The open issue of war reparations aside, Sakellariopoulou highlighted the excellent relations and the prospects for even closer cooperation between Greece and Germany. The Greek President referred to the two countries’ shared vision, which she said was based on the rule of law and repulsing all forms of revisionism. Sakellariopoulou said her visit to Germany was proof of the excellent level of relations between the two countries and said the meeting would promote a “common perception on a series of major issues concerning the challenges of our times.” Steinmeier emphasized the grave responsibility of politicians during the current difficult time and the prospects for the development of even closer and friendlier relations between the two countries. He expressed his satisfaction at Sakellariopoulou’s first visit to Germany, clarifying that this had been delayed due to the pandemic, while also expressing his certainty that “intensive deliberations” between the two presidents will significantly contribute to further enhancing the already close and friendly bilateral relations.

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## **Albania**

### **New museum to provide comprehensive look at Albanian Jewish life** Full article [Here](#)

The Jewish population of Vlore totaled approximately 2,600 in the 1500s, when the city was a trade hub. Today, the figure has dwindled to 50-100 Albanian-born Jews.

Vlore, the third-largest city in Albania, was the historic home of Albania’s biggest Jewish community. The city now plans to build a Jewish museum to commemorate this history.

The Albanian Jewish Museum project is a joint venture of the Albanian-American Development Foundation (AADF) and Albania’s Ministry of Culture, which are working together with the small local Jewish community.

After a long search for an architect, they narrowed the list to five companies and ultimately chose Tel Aviv-based Kimmel Eshkolot to design the museum. Kimmel Eshkolot is well-known for building the Mount Herzl Memorial on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives and the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel Aviv University. Company co-founder Eitan Kimmel told JNS, "We hope to break ground sometime next year and are very excited." The museum intends to provide a comprehensive look at Albanian Jewish life through the ages, as the Jewish presence in the Balkan nation has been documented since the 2nd century. From Greek Romaniotes to Spanish Sephardim fleeing persecution in the 15th century to Hungarian Ashkenazim who came much later, the combination of a mountainous region and proximity to Italy and Greece created a distinct Jewish culture.



By the outbreak of World War II, an estimated 1,800 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution arrived in Albania due to its liberal visa policies. Some were hoping to continue on to North and South America, British Mandatory Palestine or other places of refuge. A few of them ended up making Albania their permanent home. An estimated 2,000 Jews were saved thanks to the efforts of local Albanian Muslims, and the country was one of the few European nations whose Jewish population had increased by the end of World War II. Rabbi Yoel Kaplan, the local emissary for Chabad-Lubavitch, said, "Albanian Jews like to maintain their unique identity and customs after so many centuries. Albania was further isolated for 50 years under communism, and after the 1990s when communism ended, many Jews emigrated."

He continued, "Albanians have this concept called 'Besa'—it is an all-encompassing term for hospitality and protecting your neighbor or guest—that we invoke every time we get together here. It was also this Besa that saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust. We pushed for this museum to happen and I'm glad it's happening. The government has also been especially supportive towards the local Jewish community." Albanian Jews, he noted, have warm historical ties with the Jewish community in Corfu, a Greek island that was once a major center for Jewish life with many yeshivot. The Jewish population of Vlore totaled approximately 2,600 in the 1500s, when the city was a trade hub due to its coastline and proximity to Italy. Today, the figure has dwindled to 50-100 Albanian-born Jews, most of whom live in the country's capital and largest city, Tiranë. There are also around 200 foreign Jews in the Balkan nation.

The museum will be built as an addition on top of an existing building, as the architect is tasked with innovatively designing a modern "extension" of an old structure. "We will mix both the old and new," Kimmel said. "We have to double the size of the existing building to create this museum complex while respecting the existing monument." Many buildings in the Vlore area once belonged to Jewish families, dating back to the 16th century, when many Jews were involved in the city's vibrant trade culture. Near the museum, there are remains of an old synagogue that burned down in the 1920s.

"There will be two stone-clad pavilions at the entrance that almost merge into each other. Ninety-eight percent will be composed of local Albanian stone and 2% Jerusalem stone," Kimmel said. There will also be a trilingual plaque in Albanian, English and Hebrew that reads, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire"—a paraphrase of a passage from the Talmud.

"We will present a unique story of Albanians and Jews," AADF said in a statement provided to JNS. "While the Holocaust chapter is of the utmost importance and perhaps the most exceptional part of this history, the Albanian Jewish Museum will place this chapter within the entire history of Albanian Jews—understood as that of Jews in the historic territory of Albania as well as the Diaspora." AADF also cited the fact that there are three other museums in the vicinity as another reason for having chosen the site. Sokol Pirra, who was born in Vlore but now lives in Tiranë, said, "My ancestors thrived here for generations. But now, we struggle to keep Jewish life going, as many Jews have migrated to Israel or other places. This museum is a great addition to honor our long presence in Albania. Vlore has beautiful seaside scenery. And the Jewish museum will be a great addition to both the cityscape and the Albanian Jewish community."

## Turkey

### **Restoring Izmir's Sephardic heritage, one synagogue at a time** Full article [Here](#)

The Izmir Jewish Heritage Project is undertaking a monumental restoration and rehabilitation of five of the nine still-standing synagogues.

While the Jewish community in Izmir is now only a shadow of its once vibrant self, the Izmir Jewish Heritage Project is bent on changing that reality. At its head is Nesim Bencoya, representing the existing Izmir Jewish Community Foundation and the Izmir Jewish Community at large.



On a bright and beautiful fall morning, Bencoya met a small press group of Jewish Heritage writers and took us to the top level of a soon-to-be demolished parking garage for a city planning development. There we had an overview of the old port of Izmir and what was left of the jumbled Jewish Quarter, while he enthusiastically described his vision to us.

The Izmir Jewish Heritage Project is undertaking a monumental restoration and rehabilitation of five of the nine still-standing synagogues, returning the buildings to their former glory and joining them into one big museum compound. The fact that they are so close together makes it possible to link them, allowing each of the restored buildings to serve a different function as part of the overall museum.

The Etz Hayim, Talmud Tora and Senyora Synagogues will feature culture and art performances and exhibits, while Bet Hillel will serve as a memorial house for Rabbi Hayim Palacci. Algazi Shalom and Bikur Holim Synagogue will be open for religious services and celebrating weddings, bar mitzvahs, etc., and Portekiz Synagogue will function as a conference center.

We visited the five old synagogues in varying stages of restoration. Restoring them to their original state is a daunting undertaking. Working from old drawings, bits of surviving paint and archeological investigations, and with the help of architects and artists, one by one the buildings are slowly coming back to life. It helps that they all share common layout features, i.e. the Tevah (Bimah) placement, which is located in the center of the main prayer hall.

Another feature of the Izmir synagogues is that the Echal has three doors, the main one for the Torah scrolls in the center and a cupboard on either side that was most likely used as storage for books. The purpose of the design of three is lost to history but probably traces back to the synagogues of Spain, which they were trying to emulate.

Jews migrated to the Byzantium Empire and settled around Istanbul, Smyrna (present-day Izmir), Bursa and Sardis as early as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 555 BCE, but it was not until the Spanish expulsion of the Sephardim in 1492, that the area played host to multitudes of Jews fleeing conversion or death.

Impoverished by the confiscation of their properties and goods, imposed as a condition of escaping the Holy Inquisition, communities of destitute Sephardic Jews clustered together along the Smyrna coastline. Turkish tribes had long-ago established settlements on the rise of the hill known as "Kadifekale" so the newcomers settled at the bottom, closer to the Aegean Sea. With such a large influx, the massively crowded Jewish Quarter extended all the way to the sea. Other minority groups followed and after the Jewish quarter became the Armenian section, then the Greek and finally the European – mostly Italian – all in self-imposed segregated settlements.

Iberian Jews rebuilt their lives.



Slowly, the Iberian Jews rebuilt their lives and fortunes and began constructing synagogues reminiscent of the lifestyle they had left behind. For protection, they built their synagogues close together in a warren of alleyways navigable only by the greater community of Jews, which at its peak is estimated was about 30,000 Orthodox Sephardic Jews, clustered into the crowded area.

By the late 18th century, as the Jewish population prospered, they began moving out of the congested seaside communities to the greener, less crowded, mountainside city of Karatas and by 1860, the final synagogue, Bet Israel, was built in that upscale neighborhood. Karatas is a district split between two levels; there is the bottom level fronting the narrow coastline and a level facing the steep hills above. Bet Israel was built at the lower level, while many of the Jewish families lived on the upper level, necessitating a daunting climb.

Initially, a 155-step ladder was put in place to navigate from one level to another. In order to help the community, a wealthy philanthropist named Nesim Levi Bayraklioglu, built a state-of-the-art elevator in 1907, that would whisk women, children and the elderly up from the synagogue to their homes in the heights.

Nesim Levi was a humble, illiterate merchant who accumulated a great fortune in banking and trading and wanted to give back to the community that supported him on his rise. He also donated one of his mansions to be turned into the Karatas Jewish Hospital and arranged for the income generated from the small fee charged to ride the Elevator to help finance the Hospital's upkeep. Today, the elevator is a big tourist attraction, with restaurants and shops leading up the street toward the ride.

Bencoya's mission is to bring together the three major Abrahamic religions, Jews, Christians and Muslims, through understanding each other's customs and to help develop an appreciation of how similar we all are. His aim is to open a dialogue first in Izmir and then the world. The museum will be a bridge to connect the community with the general population and a way to fight antisemitism through education and commonality. The project has the financial backing of the European Union, Turkish Authorities and foreign funds, along with community support.



Although the majority of the Jewish population was Sephardic, Ashkenazi Jews began arriving in Izmir following the pogroms in Russia at the end of the 19th century. Nevertheless, of the surviving synagogues on Synagogues Street, all of them are of Sephardic heritage and they all held services in a combination of Hebrew and Ladino.

The museum will display a collection of some 2,000 holy books from the 16th and 17th centuries and a rare textile collection of parochet (Holy Ark curtains), Torah covers and binder covers, along with other artifacts conserved from the community.

When work is completed on the two remaining synagogues, Hevra and Forasteros, scheduled for July 2023, the compound will function as the Izmir Jewish Heritage Visit Center. Currently, it is open to locals and tourists alike for artistic activities related to Jewish Culture, including the Sephardi Cultural Festival, which was held over Hanukkah.

Bencoya put together a documentary which can be viewed [Here](#)

He has also established a fund with the help of the American Sephardi Federation. Here is the direct link for donations: <https://mailchi.mp/asf/izmir>

*Note: it was decided to edit this article and change the use of "shul" to "synagogue" since "shul" is a Yiddish term and inappropriate when talking about Sephardic or Romaniote houses of worship.*

## Istanbul

### Orthodox pilgrimage to the grave of Kabbalah rabbi buried in Istanbul picks up after COVID slump [Full article Here](#)

Dozens of Jews gathered on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus Strait. Above them, guarding the hilltop, stood a Turkish military base, and below sat the swanky Istanbul neighborhood of Ortaköy. Dominating the view was the 15th of July Martyrs Bridge, which connects Europe and Asia. On the Asian side of the Strait loomed the massive Çamlica Mosque.

None of those sites were of interest to the crowd, however. The hill also contains one of Istanbul's main Jewish cemeteries, and those gathered — who came from Turkey, the United States and Israel — were there to pay their respects on the *yahrzeit*, or death anniversary, of Rabbi Naphtali HaKohen Katz, an influential and prolific 17th-century rabbi who was devoted to Jewish mysticism.

Pilgrimages like this one, made by Orthodox groups of varying sizes to the grave sites of similarly revered Jewish figures across Europe, are far from uncommon and have spawned a cottage travel industry. Among the largest and most publicized is the annual pilgrimage to Uman, Ukraine, which brings tens of thousands to the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov each Rosh Hashanah (not on the anniversary of his death). Another involves the grave of Rabbi Elimelech Weisbaum, an early Hasidic leader, in Lizhensk, Poland, in the early spring.

Yitzhak Friedman, a Hasidic Jew from Lakewood, New Jersey, who is currently studying in Israel, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he and a few friends used the opportunity of Katz's *yahrzeit* to rationalize a short trip to Istanbul.

"It was cheap tickets, we heard a lot of great things, so I had a nice jump over for two days," he said.

Another group of Orthodox women from Israel said they had planned their trip similarly to coincide with the "*hilulah*" — using the Hebrew word for such a pilgrimage.

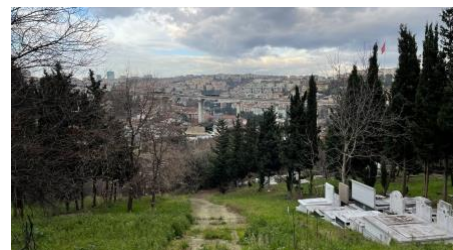
Though the pilgrimage to Uman has become a rowdy days-long affair, during which the influx of Orthodox Jews rent out most of the small city's available apartments and hotel rooms, other pilgrimages, such as the one to Katz's grave, have a more quiet and introspective atmosphere. The crowd on Tuesday took breaks from praying to eat at the cemetery's synagogue, passing around whiskey and snacks.

Friedman said that he has made several similar journeys in the past year alone, including to Dynow, Poland, to the grave of Reb Tzvi Elimelech, another early Hasidic leader. He also spent more than 30 hours traveling to war-torn Ukraine to spend Rosh Hashanah in Uman, a practice that was strongly discouraged by both Israeli and Ukrainian rabbinic leaders this year.

Friedman said he had heard that a visit to Katz's grave had helped people with various things, from finding "the right match" to having kids have kids to being cured from a sickness. He asked simply for "happiness" in his prayers.

He also attributed some of the effects of the grave to the fact that it is visited less than the one in Uman.

"It's known that a *tzaddik* that very few people come to, his powers are much bigger," Friedman said.



Another of the pilgrims, a Hasidic man from the Dorogor sect in Bnei Brak, Israel, explained that he was a distant descendent of Katz, and that, though he was coming for the first time, he came to accompany his father who had been making the trip for 50 years.

Katz was born in 1649, in what is today Ostrovo, Ukraine, and at the age of 14 he was captured and sold into slavery by Tatars, a Turkic muslim group in Crimea and other parts of Southern Ukraine. But he escaped years later and returned to Ostrovo to become the community's rabbi, later transferring to Posen in modern-day Poland, where he became a scholar of Kabbalistic literature.

But his struggles would not end with the Tatars. Later in life, Katz was called to Frankfurt, in today's Germany, to serve the community there. When a fire broke out in the city in 1711, he was accused of using kabbalistic charms to stop it from being extinguished by natural means and imprisoned by the local leadership.

Upon his release, he fled to Prague — where he quarreled with another Kabbalah teacher devoted to Shabbetai Zevi, a false messiah — and later Wroclaw.

After a life filled with struggle in Europe, Katz tried to emigrate to the holy land but only made it as far as Constantinople, where he died in 1718, and was buried by the local Jewish community in the Ortaköy Cemetery.

Ever since, the grave has been a site of pilgrimage, explained Rabbi Mendy Chitrik, an Istanbul rabbi affiliated with the Hasidic Chabad-Lubavitch movement — and another distant descendent of Katz's — who helped in the restoration of the grave in 2005.

"Throughout the ages some great rabbis have allegedly made the pilgrimage," Chitrik said, including the Baal Shem Tov — the founder of the Hasidic Judaism — Rabbi Nachman of Breslov and others.

"I have accompanied great rabbis who came anonymously to pray at his grave," Chitrik added. "Some fly in for a day on private jets and leave."

While some people come throughout the year, the most popular time to come is Katz's *yahrzeit*, the 24th of Tevet on the Hebrew calendar. In past years, as many as 300 people came for the occasion, said Albert Elvaşvili, the president of the Ortaköy Jewish community which manages the cemetery.

However, he noted that attendance often rises and falls with the changes in Israeli-Turkish relations, much like general Israeli tourism to Turkey, which reached an all-time high this year.

The biggest slump came during the COVID-19 pandemic, with only a handful of pilgrims coming the last two years. Now it seems that the tradition is once more back in force, with several buses of pilgrims from different countries and sects coming throughout the day.

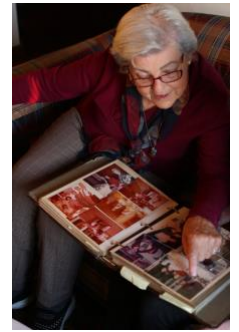
"As relations with Israel and the Jewish people are coming to a better place, I believe there will be many more people coming in, and as Turkey becomes much more attractive for the Jewish and religious traveler, there will be many more opportunities for people to come," Chitrik said. "Not just to the *kever* [grave] of Naphtali Katz on the 24th of Tevet, but to Rabbi Chaim Palachi in Izmir, on the 19th of Shevat, next month, and Rabbi Yehudah Rozanes, on the 26th of Nisan, and many other rabbis who are buried here in the important cemeteries of Turkey."

## Remarkable Story about Perpetuating Ladino

### Saving a Language from Extinction Full article [Here](#)

With increasingly few Ladino speakers left, researchers work with survivors to revive this Judeo language.

Ninety-year-old Berkeley alumna Rebecca Contopoulou (born Rebecca Israel) speaks Greek, Italian, French, English, Spanish, and another language that sounds a lot like Spanish but is actually Ladino, a Sephardic language that traces its origins to Medieval Spain.



According to Julia Peck, a PhD student in Berkeley's Linguistics Department who is studying Ladino, the two languages—Spanish and Ladino—were so intertwined that many Sephardic communities saw them as indistinguishable. Over the centuries, though, differences were accentuated as Ladino-speaking Jews came in contact with other cultures and the language absorbed influences from Greek, Arabic, French, and Turkish—centuries of Jewish diasporic history encoded in language.

For thousands of years, the Jewish community has contained a wealth of different languages and cultures. Besides the commonly thought of Hebrew and Yiddish, there's also Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Malayalam, Judeo-Persian, and [many more](#). But they all share a shrinking number of speakers, in part because many, like Contopoulou '52 MA '57, were scattered by war and emigration, or killed. This is a profound loss, according to Peck, not only for individuals, but also for cultural history. "A language in many senses can be equivalent to a culture," she notes. "And when one disappears, you're looking at a massive loss of cultural information, of relationships between people that were carried out in that language before."

For this reason, Peck has dedicated her career to preserving Ladino. After working with the Amazigh speakers in Morocco and Zaza speakers in New York, Peck wanted to work with an endangered language in her own community. She had seen the effects of the loss of language in her own family: Her father was never able to converse with his own Yiddish-speaking grandfather. She chose Ladino because she recognized that more focus and resources were being put into Yiddish, especially in the United States.

"As a kid, I only learned 'Ocho Kandelikas,' the very famous Ladino Hanukkah song, and knew basically nothing else about the language and felt like that was unfair," Peck explained. "But also, I could see where my skills could line up to join in language revitalization efforts that already exist in the Ladino-speaking community."

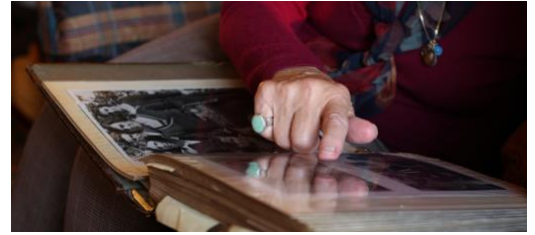
In many ways, Contopoulou's story is the story of Ladino. Born on Rhodes, then in the Italian Empire, Contopoulou moved at age four to Athens where she survived the Holocaust in hiding before moving to the United States. Besides a couple of years in Greece in the late '60s and early '70s, she has spent the past 76 years in the Bay Area.

Asked by her son if she considered herself an American, Contopoulou hesitated. "So to a degree, I am American, but I also am Greek, and I am Jewish. Jewish takes care of everything," she said.



Andrew Contopoulos ('82) mentioned that he and his siblings were not raised Jewish; they never attended synagogue, they didn't celebrate Jewish holidays, and their mother never openly practiced Judaism around them. And yet, there were signs of it everywhere in their home: there was a menorah in the entryway; Contopoulou's family offered me bourekas, a Sephardic Jewish pastry; her sister's ketubah, or Jewish marriage certificate, hung on a wall; and she told me that the Star of David necklace she wore had probably been around her neck every day since she was married.

Within Contopoulou's family, as with many families of minority language speakers, Ladino was lost within just a couple of generations. This is a phenomenon Peck explained as the "classic three-generation model of language shift or language loss."



"It is extremely rare for a community to voluntarily lose their language," Peck said. "Language loss often means that a community is facing severe discrimination, which forces them to switch or shift languages to survive."

Contopoulou's parents spoke Ladino to each other and in their community in Rhodes, but her parents spoke to her in Greek, Italian, and French. Those were the languages that allowed Contopoulou to assimilate to the communities they moved to. Once in the United States, Contopoulou married a Greek Orthodox man and spoke only English and Greek to her own children.

Contopoulou's family story shows, in one lifetime, the trajectory of Ladino speakers over thousands of years—a story hidden in the makeup of the language. Sephardic Jews have kept their connection to Spain for more than 500 years through their language. But over time, that language took on borrowed words and phrases which are now interspersed throughout the language. Take, for example, the word in Ladino for Sunday, *alhad*, which is from Arabic's *al-ahad*. *Orosoj oroza*, meaning "happy," is from the French *heureux/heureuse*. *Buchukes*, or "twins," originates from Turkish's *buçuk*, meaning "half." The Hebrew *mazal tov*, meaning "good luck," or "congratulations," is *mazal bueno* in Ladino.

Peck shared a quote from the late Klara Perahya, a Ladino language activist and writer from Istanbul and creator of a Turkish-Judeo-Spanish dictionary, which she said illuminates this idea of linguistic borrowings:

Judeo-Spanish:

"Muestros avuelos, de siempre siempre, tuvieron la manya de ispanizar las palavras ke tomavan. Kuando tomavan una palavra turka, o la desformavan, o la ispanizavan. Par egzempl, de *kullanmak*, izyeron *kullanear*. Este modo aziyan una palavra, no solo espanyola, una palavra djudiya."

Peck's translation to

English:

"Our ancestors always had the habit of hispanicizing the words they took. When they took a Turkish word, they either modified it or hispanicized it. For example, from *kullanmak* ('to use') they made *kullanear*. That way, they were making not only a Spanish word, but also a Jewish one."

Through her research, Peck aims to show how, because of these borrowings, Ladino is far from dead. "It's been sentenced to death for quite a long time and it hasn't died," Peck said. The borrowings that continue to be added to the language show it is still alive. She added that the metaphor of language death is itself problematic. Linguists prefer to say that the language is "sleeping", she explained, "because we know languages can come back."

Part of Peck's Ph.D. work will focus on revitalizing and preserving Ladino. Previously, while getting her master's at Oxford, Peck worked with the [Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Cultural Research Center](#) in Istanbul to support the revitalization efforts already started by the Ladino-speaking community there. These efforts include a Ladino newspaper (the only one in the world), theater, music, online language courses, and an archive of interviews with native speakers called the Ladino Database Project.

The coordinator of the center, Karen Gerson Şarhon, told Peck that the pandemic caused a linguistic renaissance. More young people are interested in learning Ladino than ever, despite the fact that the youngest native Turkish Ladino speakers were born in 1945. Peck said this has created a turning point where the Jewish community gets to decide to support and preserve this diversity in the Jewish community.

Now, at Berkeley, Peck plans to work with the research center to develop teaching resources, including children's books and home language-learning kits, to help people make the language visible in their homes. Peck chose Berkeley for her Ph.D. partly because of the program's emphasis on language revitalization efforts, as well as its focus on the need to give back to the communities that linguists are working in.

"We have examples of professors and students working on dictionaries and websites and things that are more accessible to nonspecialists but who might have a special interest in a particular language," said Isaac Bleaman, an assistant professor in the linguistics department and Peck's advisor.

While at Berkeley, Peck hopes to, in collaboration with the research center, make sure its Ladino Database Project is preserved in the [California Language Archive](#), a physical and digital archive begun in 1953 as a way to preserve Indigenous languages, which has since grown into one of the largest such repositories in the world. The archive, full of handwritten notes, tapes, and other forms of recordings, is tucked away into two unassuming rooms on Berkeley's campus, yet is home to around 500 named language varieties. The archive has also started the process of digitizing all of the physical recordings and notes it holds.

"It would be amazing for any Ladino speaker, any Sephardic person, any Jew, anyone in the world to be able to access these recordings of speakers and use them to learn Ladino," Peck said.

One winter evening, I joined Contopoulou and her family at their house in the Berkeley Hills to listen to a [recording of Contopoulou's mother speaking and singing in Ladino](#). The cassette was recorded in the '80s. It was the first time that Contopoulou had heard her mother speaking Ladino since 2008, when she passed away at the age of 102.

At first, Contopoulou did not recognize the voice on the tape. "That's the language," she said, "but I don't know if that is my mother."

But a few minutes later, listening to her mother sing "Morenica," meaning "little brown-haired woman," Contopoulou held the recording close to her ear and leaned back on the couch, tears forming in her eyes. "That's my mother," she said as she began to sing along, the words coming to her immediately as if no time had passed.

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## **Oldest Living Pearl Harbor Survivor is a Sephardic Jew** Full article [Here](#)

'Here I am': Redondo Beach WWII veteran is oldest living Pearl Harbor survivor.

Joseph Eskenazi, the oldest living survivor of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, was told by his doctor that a heart condition would prevent him from flying on an airplane to attend a ceremony this week at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

That didn't deter the Army veteran from Redondo Beach, even as he approaches his 105th birthday.

Eskenazi made it to the museum, where he and eight other veterans were honored and shared stories about their service, thanks to a cross-country train ride with Amtrak, funded by the Soaring Valor Program through the Gary Sinise Foundation.

"The train ride rocked a little bit and threw me around," Eskenazi said with a laugh from his hotel room in New Orleans on Friday.



About 81 years ago, Eskenazi was nearly thrown out of his bed at 8 a.m. while he was stationed at Schofield Barracks, about 17 miles from Pearl Harbor.

Pfc. Eskenazi was 22 years old. As he ran outside, he watched a low-flying Japanese airplane drop a bomb about 150 feet away. It did not detonate, but another Japanese plane strafed the barracks and killed his friend as the friend ran from a mess hall.

A commanding officer arrived on a motorcycle and asked for volunteers. He needed someone to drive a bulldozer and clear bombed-out railroad tracks so soldiers could move heavy equipment and repair the airfield.

"My hand went up right away," Eskenazi said. But while he was in the vehicle, one last plane strafed him and machine gun fire erupted around him. He was not hit. "This was an act of God, because I came so close to getting wiped out," he said. Over 2,300 soldiers were killed in the attack, which eventually forced the United States into the second World War.

Over the years, Eskenazi has not shared much about that day. Eskenazi's daughter, Belinda Eskenazi Mastrangelo, 68, remembers growing up with a father who kept mum about the war.

When Eskenazi and his wife, Vickie, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in Hawaii with his family in 1997, Mastrangelo said her father did not want to visit the war memorial at Pearl Harbor.

"Even after all that time, he didn't want to talk about it," said Mastrangelo, who accompanied her father on his trip to the National World War II Museum.

It's not unusual for veterans to keep quiet about their time in the war, but there's something about being in the museum that allows them to open up, said actor Gary Sinise, whose organization brings WWII veterans to the museum built in their honor. The Gary Sinise Foundation has helped raise millions for organizations and causes dedicated to serving U.S. military men and women and their families.

"So many times when walking through the museum, the veterans will start to talk and their family members will tell us that they had never heard some of the stories that came out during the trip," Sinise said. "We are fortunate right now that we still have veterans of World War II living among us."

Sinise was first introduced to the museum by actor Tom Hanks, who starred in the WWII movie "Saving Private Ryan." Sinise later arranged for his uncle Jack Sinise to be interviewed by a historian at the museum and share his own experience as a navigator aboard a B-17 Flying Fortress.

"I thought that every single family of a World War II veteran should have something like this," Sinise said. Eskenazi was born in New York and his Sephardic Jewish family moved to Puebla, Mexico, when he was 7. He enlisted in the U.S. Army several months before Pearl Harbor was attacked. He didn't know what he wanted to do with his life, but knew that he wanted to travel.

"I wanted to live a life of adventure," said Eskenazi, who will celebrate his 105th birthday on Jan. 30. While at the museum, he and the other veterans were honored in a ceremony and had their oral histories added to the museum's archives, which includes 12,000 personal accounts from the war, according to museum spokesperson Keith Darcey.

During the ceremony, Eskenazi was joined by his family, including his great-grandson, who is about to turn 5, and his 1-year-old great-granddaughter. He expects to make the trek back home by train. "It was wonderful being there," Eskenazi said. "Everybody would congratulate me and they would say, 'Thank you for your service.' I never expected all of this, but here I am."

## Sahadi's

Sahadi Importing Company, with its bins of nuts, shelves full of spices and display cases stocked with sweets, has been a Brooklyn Heights staple since the 1940s — and it's now been added to the New York State Historic Business Preservation registry, solidifying its place in local lore.

"Thrilled to welcome Sahadi's, 'A Brooklyn Tradition' into the New York State [Historic Business Preservation Registry](#)," said Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon on Twitter when she delivered the business's new certificate. "For decades, they have brought the best flavors from across the world to Brooklyn. Legendary among foodies in the know + locals, Brooklyn is blessed and honored!"

Simon nominated the business to the registry, which serves as a way to recognize the history, work, and traditions of historic businesses — for a nomination to be approved, a business must have contributed to the identity of its nabe and show commitment to carrying on its old traditions. It was officially added earlier this year, and Simon stopped by the shop earlier this month to deliver the certificate personally.

Sahadi's Atlantic Avenue location certainly meets those criteria. The store's first location opened in Manhattan's Little Syria in 1895. Fifty-three years later in 1948, as the local Arabic community started to disperse and the construction of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel disrupted local businesses, then-owner Wade Sahadi decided to move his shop to Brooklyn Heights.

"Some of the other businesses started to make their home here, on Atlantic Avenue," said Ron Sahadi, Wade's grandson and the business's managing director. "I think it became known as a little bit of a Middle Eastern enclave over the years. Over the years, a very big part of the population is that same Middle Eastern community."



In the 1950s and 60s, Atlantic Avenue was known as "the Syrian shopping center of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and New Jersey — filled with Middle Eastern bakeries, marketplaces, and more. Even Middle Eastern Christian churches — Our Lady of Lebanon and St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral — moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn to serve the growing community there.

Sahadi's has remained a favorite of locals and visitors alike even as the demographics of the neighborhood shifted. Many of its customers are second-generation, Ron said — their parents used to shop there, too.

Wade's son, Charlie — Ron's father — later took over the store, with the help of his wife, Audrey, and brothers Bob and Richie.

"I graduated high school in '89, I graduated college in '93, I always knew this was what I wanted to do, so I've been doing this a long time," Ron said.

His sister, Christine Whelan, and her husband, Pat, are in the business too — as are their two adult children, Michael and Caitin.

"We're down to the fourth generation ... in this day and age, it's unusual to have a family business last for generations," Ron said.



The shelves at Sahadi's are stocked with their own brand of spices, nuts roasted in-house, fresh-made treats like baklava and halva, and even homemade prepared foods. Some items are newer — they've expanded their selection of baked goods since opening a second location in Industry City in 2019 — but some, like the nuts and the hummus, have been around for decades.

The fresh hummus is Ron's top recommendation for visitors, he said. It's been made the same way since they opened the prepared food section in the 80s, and it gets "very good reviews from everybody."

Their bulk dried fruits and nuts are also a fan — and family — favorite.

"We roast some of these nuts in our warehouse here in Brooklyn, in Sunset Park," Ron said. "We have some of the best almonds, in my opinion, you can find in the world — we buy great quality almonds from California, we roast them here."

Before they were nominated, the family weren't even aware of the Historical Business Preservation Registry — Christine was contacted by someone from Jo Anne Simon's office asking if they'd be interested in a nomination, and the rest is (literally) history.

"We were beyond flattered," Christine said. "A lot of the elected officials shop by us, they come in. At our core, we're still a neighborhood store. It's so flattering that [Simon] thought of us in those terms, and that she thought to include us in the register."

Christine and Ron's parents, Audrey and Charlie, and their uncle are all retired and in their 70s — but still stop in occasionally to pick up the necessities. She and her daughter, Caitlin, work together in the new Sunset Park location — while her son works with his uncle Ron on Atlantic Avenue.

It felt "amazing" when both of her kids decided they wanted to join the family biz, she said, especially because she pushed them to explore other options first, to make sure it was really what they wanted to do.

"We all work, including them, very long hours, and it has to be a labor of love," she said. "We're happy to have them with us, and hopefully as we cut back on our hours, they'll run with it and take it in the direction they want to go in."

After over 100 years in business in New York City and almost 75 years on Atlantic Avenue, the family feels a deep affection and connection for the neighborhood and their customers — and they know how rare it is to feel the love and support they do.

"We're all here for each other, and Brooklyn is our home," Ron said. "And we feel blessed to still be here, going into the fourth generation. It means so much to our family to have that support after all these years when there's so many places you can go nowadays ... we feel blessed that we're able to, still, after all these years, be a part of your home."

## Upcoming Concert of Interest

My name is Jared Michaud and I am a classical singer (baritone) based in London, and I've learned about your synagogue through a contact at the Zimmerli museum in New Brunswick, NJ.

My duo partner (pianist Christina Koti) and I have recently been awarded the Federation of the Art Song Fellowship Competition in NYC, which includes performing a series of concerts in and around NYC (including at the Zimmerli museum). We are preparing for our big concert in NYC in February, and I wanted to email you specifically to invite you and your members to join us.

My pianist is Greek and our concert actually focuses on Greece's influence in classical music. Our program spans 'traditional' classical music that is inspired by Greek antiquity and mythology to 20th century art song written by Greeks themselves. It even includes Russian songs by the Russian Jewish composer Arthur Lourié. It's a really unique and exciting program with a lot of music that is very rarely performed. It will be a special opportunity to highlight and explore the age old duality of East and West.

If at all possible, do you think you could share the concert details with your members? We'd love to invite you all along! We were recently featured in The National Herald (link [Here](#)) and tickets/more information can be found at the links below. Thank you in advance for your help!

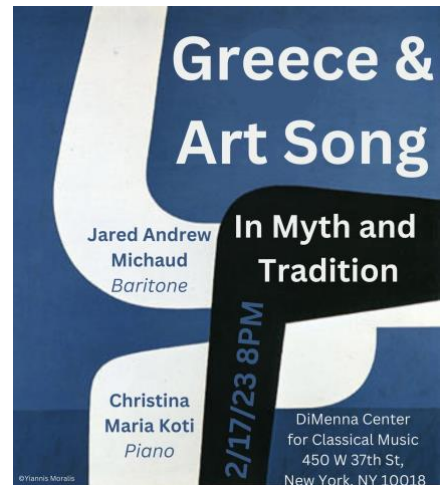
Tickets: <http://greekartsong.eventbrite.com> Facebook event: <https://fb.me/e/2sNsNXnrX>

Award-Winning Voice/Piano Duo Jared Michaud and Christina Koti to Perform in NYC by The National Herald

NEW YORK – The award-winning, London-based voice/piano duo of Jared Andrew Michaud and Christina Maria Koti perform a recital of art songs influenced by Greek traditions and culture, titled *Greece & Art Song: In Myth and Tradition*, on Friday, February 17, 8 PM, at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, 450 West 37th Street in Manhattan. Franco-American baritone Michaud and Greek pianist Koti who is originally from the island of Rhodes, have been working closely for nearly three years now after meeting at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance in London, where they both received their master's degrees and studied with Neil Baker, Deniz Gelenbe-Arman, Helen Yorke, and Eugene Asti. The duo has received international recognition for their interpretation of art song, winning first prize at the 2022 Federation of Art Song Fellowship Competition in New York City, the 4th International SGSM Singing Competition in Slovenia, and the 2022 Elisabeth Schumann Lieder Duo Competition in London. The gifted musicians spoke with The National Herald about their music and the upcoming recital which explores the nuanced relationship between Greek music and classical music, and the age-old duality of East and West with an impressive program of songs in Greek, French, German, Russian, and English by composers such as Schubert, Ravel, Berkeley, Constantinides, and Hadjidakis.

When asked if they always wanted to pursue a career in music, Michaud told TNH: "Not necessarily. I've been performing in one way or another since I was very young, singing and dancing and acting. I loved to sing from a young age and then was the cantor in my church for many years, but for most of my life I really wanted to be an actor. I only really got into classical singing when I went to university, where they offered free lessons, and I've been hooked since. I used to try to balance my academic passions with my performance ones, but now I know that— especially with projects like these— there are ways for both these interests to coexist."

Franco-American baritone Jared Andrew Michaud and Greek pianist Christina Maria Koti, who is originally from Rhodes, will perform in New York on February 17. (Photo: Courtesy of Jared Michaud and Christina Koti)



In response to the same question, Koti said: "Not really. I started taking piano lessons at the age of five but for many years I wanted to pursue a career in dance and particularly classical ballet. My mother is a musician but despite the influences at home it was only when I entered the Music High School of Rhodes that I realized music, and particularly piano, was the thing I wanted to focus on."

When asked what it was like winning the Federation of the Art Song (FAS) Fellowship Competition, they told TNH that it was "very surreal and surprising! We are quite young, and though we've won other competitions in Europe, this one had no age limit and some incredibly talented competitors— we were truly just grateful to have made it to the final round of the competition. But winning was even more amazing, especially since it comes with a whole bunch of concerts like this one in NYC and a lot of support from talented mentors."

Of how long the upcoming concert took to put together, they told TNH that "as a duo, we've always been interested in blurring the lines between canonical repertoire and less commonly performed music, and this fellowship and this concert gives us a nice big platform to do so. Last summer, we received funding from Help Musicians (a UK charity) to train and perform in Greece at the Horto Festival with collaborative pianist/coach Christos Marinos. Since then, we've been working on some of the songs featured in our concert program."

The duo added that Koti has always wanted to perform Greek art song and represent her culture, but Michaud has always been a bit hesitant because of how difficult the language is. But after their experiences in Greece and now this great concert opportunity, Michaud has become really excited about learning Greek and Koti has been a really great teacher as well.

"But ultimately, a lot of this music is fresh and just a few months old," they told TNH, noting that "more than just practicing the music, we've had to do a lot of digging for some of this music, as some of it is not easily accessible to the public or even published."

Koti also received help from musicologist Myrto Economides at the Lilian Voudouri Music Library of Greece to access some of the scores that they will be performing. When asked how they chose the pieces to include in the program, they told TNH: "We really wanted to include music that would appeal to everyone— to both classical music aficionados and everyday Greek/Greek-American people. Our aim is not just to present a concert of canonical Western European music inspired by Greece (the myths, the poets, and even the exotic East) nor is it to just perform the works of only Greek composers. Rather, we're hoping to bring everyone to the concert hall by blurring the lines between these two categories of music and show the influence Greece has had in the art song world, whether through Western fascination or their own composers."

"We chose some canonical pieces that might be familiar to audience members and have paired them with songs by Greek composers with similar themes in order to share multiple perspectives to ultimately the same message," they continued. "In the end, we hope that audience members leave not only with a more complex view of Greece and this duality of East and West but also with a new appreciation of some truly stunning Greek art songs that are rarely performed."

Of what's next for the duo, Koti said that "we're performing a different program in May in Princeton and New Brunswick, NJ, so we are preparing for that as well as a variety of other recitals in London. We are constantly preparing for and competitions in competitions around the world, so we will continue to travel the world and get ourselves out there. Jared is performing with Grange Park Opera this summer in the UK, and together we will likely do another duo course this summer to work with a talented mentor and practice some music. Next year, we are looking at relocating to Paris to pursue Artist Diplomas and to work with renowned collaborative pianist/coach Susan Manoff."

Fri, February 17, 2023, 8:00 PM – 9:30 PM EST  
The DiMenna Center for Classical Music 450 West 37th Street New York, NY 10018  
More information and tickets are available on Eventbrite: <https://bit.ly/3ZwwDs6>.

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



Most of February corresponds to the Hebrew month of "*Shvat*", which is most famous for *Tu B'Shvat*, the "New Year for Trees", but otherwise has no other Biblical or Rabbinic festival or fast day of any note. Yet a closer look will reveal that the month of *Shvat* is quite rich in Jewish lore, symbolism and meaning, from ancient to modern times.

On the Hebrew calendar, *Shvat* is the eleventh month counting from the first month, Nisan, as stated in the Book of Jeremiah: '*On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shvat...*'

It is interesting to note that the very name '*Shvat*', like all the other Hebrew months, originates in ancient Akkadian, and not Hebrew. This is because that during the Babylonian exile, the Jews began using the Babylonian/Akkadian names for the Hebrew months, and the names stuck when the exiles returned to the Land of Israel. One reason for this is that in certain cases, including the name '*Shvat*', the Babylonian name was often based on specific natural characteristics of the particular month, with '*Shvat*' in Akkadian meaning 'lashing', referring to the heavy rains of the season in Israel as winter draws to a close.

Likewise, the astrological sign for *Shvat* is Aquarius, the water-bearer, further testifying to the month's rainy character. In fact, *Tu B'Shvat* – the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Shvat* – was set by our Sages as the 'new year' for trees because of the fact that this date marks the approximate end of major rainfall in Israel.

But *Shvat* is also quite significant in historical terms. Tradition has it that the 8<sup>th</sup> Biblical plague of locusts G-d brought upon on Egypt, occurred in *Shvat*. Also, as the Torah relates in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 1, verse 3: "*And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month [Shvat], on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the Children of Israel exactly as the Lord had commanded him in their regard.*" This was Moses' farewell address to the people and his review of the entire Torah in the 40<sup>th</sup> and final year of wandering in the desert, which ended with his demise on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar, the 12<sup>th</sup> and final month of the Hebrew calendar.

In modern times, the new State of Israel's first "Constituent Assembly" was convened in Jerusalem on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1949, which was *Tu B'Shvat* that year. And two days following the opening sitting, the Constituent Assembly declared that Israel's new legislative house of representatives would be called the "*Knesset*", taken from the name of the "Men of the Great Assembly" - "*Anshei Haknesset Hagedolah*" - the supreme authority of the sages of Israel that convened in Jerusalem after the return of the Jewish people from exile in Babylonia during the 5th century BCE. The number of members in the Knesset was also determined at 120 members, based on the same number of members of the "Great Assembly." Given the fact that the historic convening of the new State's legislature on Tu B'Shvat, most representatives coming from outside Jerusalem stopped on their way for a tree-planting ceremony, and the ritual of planting trees in Jerusalem and its surroundings has become an integral part of the Knesset's birthday celebrations on Tu B'Shvat. So *Shvat* may not be as eventful as many other Hebrew months, but it is certainly no less significant in Judaism and Jewish history. May everyone enjoy a happy *Tu B'Shvat* and may we be blessed with bountiful rainfall!



**Rabbi Marc D. Angel**

## **Freedom to Complain: Thoughts on Parashat Beshallah**

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and saw the destruction of their Egyptian enemy, they were elated. The Torah tells us that they revered the Lord and had faith in Him and in Moses His servant. They sang a magnificent song praising God for granting them a miraculous redemption.

After having described this stunning spiritual high, we would expect the Torah to then relate wonderful things about the newly liberated Israelites. Yet the passages immediately following the Song of Moses are filled with one grievance after another: the Israelites complain that the water is bitter, that they want meat, that they would rather have died in Egypt than be in the wilderness. When they complained that there was no water to drink, Moses was driven to despair. He called out to God: "What shall I do for this people; they are almost ready to stone me!"

What happened to their faith in the Lord and in Moses His servant? How could the people have fallen so low in such a short time? Why were they constantly complaining? I think we should understand these passages as an important POSITIVE stage in the development of the children of Israel. When they were slaves in Egypt, they could not complain! And if they did complain, they had no expectation that Pharaoh would listen to them. In servitude, the Israelites had to eat and drink whatever was given to them, like it or not. If they were unhappy with the menu, that was too bad for them. There was no recourse to governmental authorities for an improvement in the situation. On the contrary, Pharaoh was an arbitrary despot who had total power over them--he could order the murder of their children, he could force them to make bricks even without his providing the necessary ingredients for brick-making. He was ruthless and unapproachable.

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, something important happened. For the first time, they felt they could complain! They felt that they had rights. They felt that their leader was obligated to respond to them and satisfy their needs. Slaves could not do this! Moses learned that leadership over free people was not dictatorship; he was answerable to the public.

If the Torah describes the constant complaining of the Israelites and the bitter frustrations of Moses, it is describing a new phase in the history of Israel--the first stages of freedom. Instead of viewing these passages as demonstrating Israel's lack of faith, we ought to see in these passages the emerging sense of self-respect and independence of the former slaves.

A vibrant and free society is characterized by rights and responsibilities, by complaints and compliance, by responsive leadership. Upon attaining freedom, the Israelites complained and demanded that their leader deliver on his campaign promises. The former slaves learned quickly to appreciate their freedom, to demand their rights, to assert their grievances, and to expect their leader to respond effectively.

As people develop a more sophisticated understanding of freedom, they move beyond complaining and demanding. They start to realize that they themselves must assume responsibility to make things better. They come to see that "leaders" and "constituents" have mutual responsibilities, and that each person needs to do his/her share. True freedom must entail a sense of empowerment, prodding each person to exert him/herself to resolve the problems of self, family, community, and society as a whole.

If things aren't right...complain! And if you can do something to improve the situation...stop complaining and do something!

## Recipe of the Month

Albondigas: A Classic of Andalusian Cuisine  
Jewish Journal  
Sharon Gomperts and Rachel Emquies Sheff

This Albondigas recipe is truly easy to throw together. Adding potato starch to the ground beef makes them really moist, light and flavorful.



Oh, how I loved Ramadan when I was a little girl! In Casablanca I attended a Catholic girls school. I had a beautiful blonde teacher and the nuns who ran the school were actually warm and kind. The school was just down the street from our home, so every day at lunchtime, I would come home and my family would eat a hot meal prepared by my mother. We would bask in the sun on our balcony and then my mother would walk me back to school. Those were glorious days, when my mother would hold my little hand as I skipped alongside her.

During Ramadan however, the girls brought their lunch to school and we would all eat together. This was the early '70s, so we would have those retro pale green glass bottles of ice cold Coca Cola. The nuns would walk around opening bottles for the little girls. After lunch, my classmates and I were sent to play in the schoolyard. The change in routine was so exciting!

But for my mother this caused suffering and worry. My mother was serious about food and her mission in life was to feed us and feed as well. How could she do that when she couldn't give me a hot lunch?

In Casablanca, the Jewish community was predominantly French Moroccan, but there were also Spanish Moroccans that came from cities that had once been Spanish colonies like Tangier and Tetouan and Larache, where my family had lived for five centuries since the Expulsion from Spain. Besides the obvious difference of speaking Spanish, the Spanish Moroccans also had a different cuisine. One of the delicacies was Albondigas, the Spanish version of meatballs. The name comes from the Arabic word al-bunduq, which derives from the Greek word for hazelnut, suggesting that the meatballs are of the same shape and size as hazelnuts. They can be traced back to the Islamic influence of the Arab invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711. Despite the expulsion of the Moors and the Jews in 1492, this Arab-influenced dish remains a star of Andalusian cuisine until today.

My mother was expert in the art of making Albondigas. She stewed these delicious meatballs with peas or with potatoes or with a spicy tomato sauce. Sometimes she made them round and other times she made flat little patties. Other times she would form a broiled liver and meat mixture into small little torpedo shapes and stewed them in a spicy cumin and preserved lemon tomato sauce. And other times she stuffed the torpedo shaped meatballs with pieces of hard boiled egg and simmered them with onions and peas.

My mother knew that albondigas con patatitas (little pieces of potato) were my favorite. The meatballs and potatoes were simmered in a rich saffron sauce and they were just so flavorful.

So what did my mother do to relieve her worry that I wasn't having my usual hot lunch during Ramadan?

She would make me the most delicious Albondiga sandwich on crisp fresh baguette. She would slather the bread with Savora mustard. (And if you haven't heard of Savora mustard, it's a unique condiment made of mustard seeds, cinnamon, Cayenne pepper, nutmeg, curcuma, cloves, celery, garlic, tarragon, vinegar and a touch of honey. The recipe dates back to 1899 and the French love it. Savora is a great accompaniment to meat, fish and vegetables.) Then she would nestle the meatballs in the sandwich and wrap it tightly in paper. I can still feel the love she put into my lunch.

—Rachel

Rachel and I are huge fans of one skillet meals. This Albondigas recipe is truly easy to throw together. Adding potato starch to the ground beef makes them really moist, light and flavorful. And it only requires a little patience to allow the meatballs to simmer in the fabulous saffron-infused broth. Have fun with this recipe and add your own twist with vegetables you love. I would serve it with fluffy grains of basmati rice or perhaps a baguette, like Rachel's mom did.

—Sharon

#### Saffron Meatballs

1 pound ground beef  
1 small yellow onion, grated and drained of liquid  
2 garlic cloves, grated  
4 tablespoons potato starch  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon cumin  
1 teaspoon coriander  
2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper

Place all the ingredients in a large bowl, then mix to combine well.  
Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.  
Form mixture into small meatballs, then set aside.

#### Stew

1 pinch of saffron threads  
1 cup hot water  
1 chicken consommé cube  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil  
5 small golden potatoes, peeled and diced  
Salt & pepper  
1 cup cilantro, for garnish  
1 teaspoon cumin, optional

Soak saffron in water, let sit for 10 minutes, add consommé to saffron water and stir until dissolved. Set aside.  
In a large skillet, warm olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and sauté for 10 minutes until caramelized.  
Add the garlic to the skillet and sauté for 2 minutes.

Add the meatballs and sauté for 5 minutes.

Turn the meatballs to brown evenly, then add the potatoes.

Pour saffron water over the potatoes and meatballs, then add the salt and pepper. If more broth is desired, add more water.

Give the pot a good shake so the meatballs and potatoes don't stick to the bottom, (using a spoon will break the potatoes), cover and simmer until the potatoes are fork tender.

Sprinkle chopped cilantro and cumin on top.

Sharon Gomperts and Rachel Emquies Sheff have been friends since high school. The Sephardic Spice Girls project has grown from their collaboration on events for the Sephardic Educational Center in Jerusalem. Follow them on Instagram @sephardicspicegirls and on Facebook at Sephardic Spice SEC Food. Website [sephardicspicegirls.com/full-recipes](http://sephardicspicegirls.com/full-recipes)

## Looking for Our Help

My maternal grandmother's side of the family (Behar) was possibly from Thessaloniki (Salonica) with some definitely from Didymoteicho (Dimotica). My maternal grandfather (Venezia) was from Constantinople.

My older daughter was in Greece right before the pandemic, and met Hella and her husband as they toured Jewish sites. From everything I hear, Hella is a *wonderful* person.

I did not know that Hella's father's memoir was in English. Where can one buy it?

Something I need to do in the next couple of years is try to get to Thessaloniki and Didymoteicho.

**We had family still there during the war and I am trying ---although it may be impossible---to figure out how to track down their names and fates.**

Very warm regards -  
Dave Finkelstein

Dear friends at KKJSM, Shalom!

My name is Gianpaolo Perletti, 60, Italian, University professor...

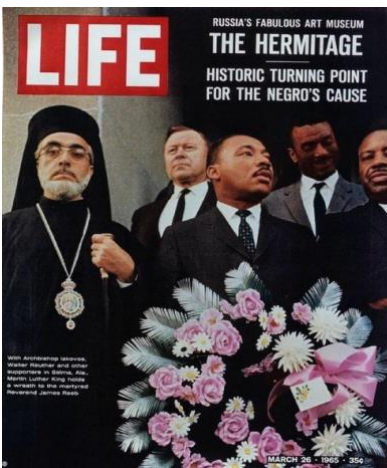
My friend Dr. Barry Myones, who is acquainted with your beautiful Community, suggested me to contact you!

I recently discovered to have Jewish Sephardic ancestry through my late beloved mother Giulia Musa Z"l (daughter of Jacob Musa). Through Barry and through Mrs. Carmen Cohen, President of the Jewish Community of Rhodos, Greece, I learned that Musa (Μούσα, Μούσα) Romaniote families presently live in Greece, especially in Larisa.

I am writing you to ask whether in your Community you have (or had in the past) any person or family with that Surname. Any information you may provide will have an immense value for me...

Thank you very much! My best greetings, Gianpaolo

## Pictures of Interest



Martin Luther King Jr. marching with His Eminence, Archbishop Athenagoras, on the cover of LIFE



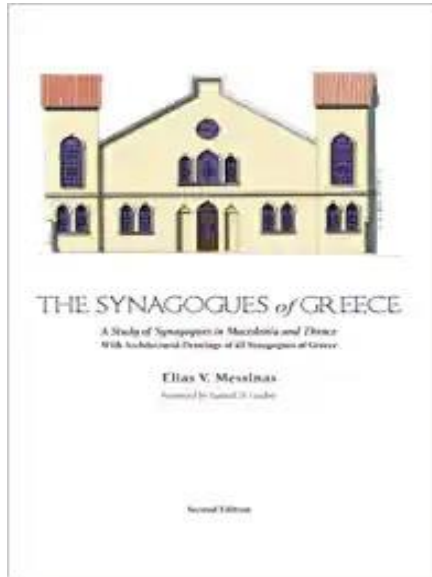
1901 Salonika



Newspaper article on stolen Torah from KKJ



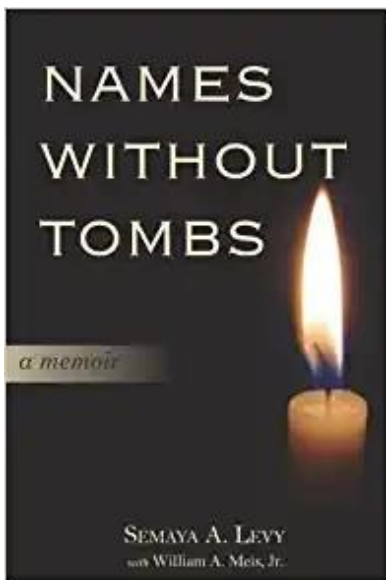
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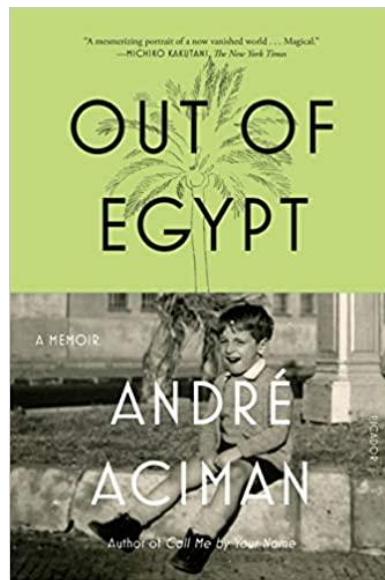
\$30 plus P&H of \$5



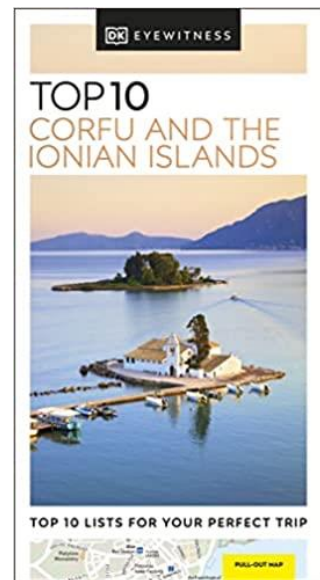
\$25 plus P&H of \$5



\$25 plus P&H of \$5



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\$15 plus P&H of \$5

**Books are in limited quantity. Email [Museum@kkjasm.org](mailto:Museum@kkjasm.org) to order**

**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](http://www.kkjsm.org) accessing the donation link in the upper left hand corner.**

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



**Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 167**

**February 2023**

**Kehila Kedosha Janina**

**280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002**

**Website: [www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org)**

**Email: [museum@kkjsm.org](mailto:museum@kkjsm.org)**

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