

#### July 2021 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Tisha B'Av, the 9th day of the month of Av (July 18, 2021), is the darkest day on the Jewish calendar, on which we fast, deprive ourselves, and pray. It is the culmination of the Three Weeks, a period of time during which we mark the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The date, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Av, coincides with the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the defeat of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans in 133 CE, the Expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.



Lamentations for Tish B'Av from the Seattle Sephardic Community



The Western Wall in Jerusalem

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by the Elliot Colchamiro in memory of his wife, Gladys, of blessed memory.

Read more about Elliot and Gladys later in this newsletter.

If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at <a href="mailto:museum@kkjsm.org">museum@kkjsm.org</a>. We already have sponsorships for August and September; Jesse Levy (in August) in honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of his father, Morris Levy, the son of Rabbi Jessoula Levi, and (in September) the family of Rose Matza Goldstein, who recently passed just short of her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday (see obituary later in this newsletter).

This newsletter, our 148<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.

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 <a href="mailto:museum@kkjsm.org">museum@kkjsm.org</a>

We have resumed Shabbat morning services in person on a monthly basis for now. Please email <a href="mailto:amarcus@kkjsm.org">amarcus@kkjsm.org</a> if you would like to attend Shabbat services in person. We will share updates as we resume more frequent services.

And, as of June 6, our Museum will be open every Sunday from 11am-4pm (with closings on July 4 and July 18 for Tisha B'Av). Reservations to <a href="mailto:museum@kkjsm.org">museum@kkjsm.org</a> are suggested and masks are required.

#### Simchas

We had a number of special birthdays in June:

Stella Bacolas turned 80 and has not lost her passion for life and, especially, dancing.





Max Negrin turned 94 in June.





Esta Varon turned 96 in June.



Thank you Linda Matza Silverman for graciously sharing the family's joyous news of the births of grandchildren and family simchas.

"Steven and Mindy Matza welcomed a granddaughter to their beautiful family. On May 8, 2021, their daughter Megan and her husband Matthew Sones, happily added their little girl, Hayden Aubree to their family. She arrived just in time, to join her brother Jonah, for very special Mother's Day for Megan."

"A new bundle of joy has been added to the Silverman family. Noa Ivy was born on, June 7, 2021 to her delighted parents, Tessa and David Silverman. Noa's siblings, Max Abram and Leah Rose, are thrilled with her arrival. They are already great companions for their baby sister. Robert and I are tickled pink with our new little love. Our wish for our newest grandchild is for a kali zoi."

"On Saturday, June 12, 2021, Leanore Naphtali Zeigleheim was called to the Torah, for her Bat Mitzvah. Her parents Dorothy and Menahem Naphtali, of blessed memory, would have been very proud her accomplishment. Leanore has been studying diligently for almost two years to reach this milestone. Mazel tov, cousin!"

#### **Passings**

June was a difficult month as too many of our Romaniote community in the United States left us.

On June 1, Rose Matza Goldstein left us just short of her 103rd birthday. She made history when she was interviewed on TV after receiving her COVID-19 vaccination.

Rose was the daughter of Nahoom Matza and Simchouloucka (Sophie) Matza, both of Blessed Memory, both born in Ioannina, and the granddaughter of Moshe Matza and Chaido Matza. Ruth was born in 1918 close to where the Kehila Kedosha Janina would be built. Rose is survived by her three children, Anne (Stan Disgera), Richard Goldstein (Joan) and Alex Goldstein and her grandchildren (Laura, Serena, David and Robert). Rose will be mourned by her large extended Matza family and the Yanniote community in the USA.





David Colchamiro was only 78 when he left us in June. He was the son of Eliezer (Louis) Colchamiro and Ruth Gordon Colchamiro, the grandson of Asher and Steroula Colchamiro and the great-grandson of Jessoula and Rachel Colchamiro. David worked for many years for the railroad in New York and was a born researcher. I am so grateful for his research for Kehila Kedosha Janina's "Our Gang" exhibit. David will be mourned by his children, Ivan Panyavin and Ana Risco and his granddaughters, his sister, Sondra Alcantara, His brother, Eric, his nephew Jonathan Alcantara (Michaela) and Jonathan's two daughters, Alicia and Emilie.







Steroula and Asher Colchamiro

Sol Matsil left us on June 18 at the age of 92. Sol was the son of Rabbi Matsliach Yishak Matsil and Amelia Levy Matsil and the youngest of 10 children. He is survived by his sister, Selma Gilberg, his wife of 67 years, Irene Rosen Matsil, his son, Marc (Weld Royal) and Marc's children, Becket and Simone, his daughter Vickie Schreiber (Steven) and their son, Zachary. Sol was buried in New Montefiore on Sunday, June 20.

Sol loved his Greek-Jewish Romaniote background. He was so proud of his family and his community and was always available to help out with services. Sol was one of the few remaining Romaniote Jews and was an authority our distinctive liturgy. He was a community leader and served on the boards of KKJ, the United Brotherhood, and the Pashas.

Sol's passing will be grieved by his large extended family and his precious Romaniote world.

Kehila Kedosha Janina is welcoming donations in Sol's memory, either through our website www.kkjsm.org or by mail to Kehila Kedosha Janina 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002.









Bechoraki and Amelia Levy Matsil with Amelia's father and their three oldest children: Isaac, Regina and Matty





Esther Naphtali Gold left us at the age of 91. She was the daughter of Matathias (Mathias) Naphtali and Bella Myones, the granddaughter of Leon (Judah) Naphtali and Leah (Lula) Confino Naphtali, and the great-granddaughter of Matathia Naphtali and Anna Battino. Esther is survived by her daughters, Sheri (Mark Forman) and Barbara (Alan Goldberger), and her grandchildren (Jaymie, Jeffrey, Michael and Eric.



On June 22<sup>nd</sup> a great woman left us, Mildred (Millie) Froot. She passed at the age of 101. She was the daughter of Mollie Barouch and Abraham Negrin, and the granddaughter of Malka Levy and Haim Barouch.

From her obituary in the New York Times:

"Born in Manhattan to Abraham and Mollie (Barouch) Negrin. Devoted wife, mother, sister, grandmother, aunt, friend and neighbor, died peacefully at home amidst much love on June 22, 2021. Mildred's kindness, enthusiasm and optimism touched all who knew her. She is survived by her son Steven and daughter-in-law Mary Ann, grandson Daniel and brother Martin. Predeceased by her beloved husband Leonard."



Millie's memory was fantastic. She was the source of so much information about the early Yanniote community, especially in Harlem and the Bronx.

One of the attendees at Millie's funeral graciously shared her memories of Millie with us. Thank you Arlene Schulman (from the Attas family):

"Mildred Negrin Froot died this week. She was 101 years old. I met Mildred by chance at a Sisterhood of Janina luncheon over 10 years ago. We bumped chairs and got to talking. As we discovered, she lived in the same Bronx neighborhood as my grandmother. She remembered my mother and sister as children.

Mildred recalled my grandmother and her sisters very well, of how my grandparents loved to entertain in their small apartment in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx.

Mildred told me of my great-grandmother who arrived her from Greece with four small daughters. The fifth daughter, my Aunt Mollie, was born here. A son would be prized. After one miscarriage, my great-grandmother, distraught over the loss of her child, pulled out all of her hair. She screamed and screamed in the Greek dialect from Janina.

The hair never grew back. The Greek women from Janina cut their hair, Mildred recalled and had it sewn into a wig for my great-grandmother.

Mildred and I spoke every so often on the phone and I regret that we lost touch over the last few years. She never told her age, though. She always spoke proudly of her grandson, Daniel, and his adventures.

I had been hearing about Daniel since he was in high school. Daniel graduated from Wesleyan and is now 27. I finally met Daniel in person and told him how proud she was of him. He held back his tears and gave me a hug. In his eulogy, he spoke of his grandmother and their adventures and how she was his best friend. He told the story of his grandmother taking the sugar packets and putting them in her purse. When Daniel visited his grandmother during the last few weeks of his life, he said he was reminded of the importance of those sugar packets when he needed one for his coffee during a hospital visit. I told him afterwards: "My Greek grandmother took the sugar packets, the butter, AND the rolls." Two generations apart, we shared a good laugh. "That's what the tote bags are for!" I said.

Mildred's son praised her for her resilience and optimism. She turned 100 during the middle of the COVID outbreak and was disappointed that she could not have an in-person party. But she was on Zoom at a century old.

Mildred's husband was a dentist who died at 55 in the mid-1970s. Her son was in college. Devastated by his father's death, he wanted to quit school. Mildred refused to let him. He continued on to law school, eventually become an assistant district attorney. Mildred dusted herself off, moved to Manhattan from Brooklyn, and got her real estate license. Steven, her son, spoke of how she never quit. She let nothing get her down.

Mildred was always full of advice on the telephone and very direct. Halfway through a paragraph of conversation, she had already distilled the information. "Get another job." "Drop him." "You don't need that." 101 years old. Wow."

#### ΔIKOI MAS - Dikoi Mas - Los Muestros

While we welcome all visitors as family, we joyously celebrate when our own visit us. In June, we were honored with the presence of the Cohen family and the Yamali family.



Cohen family



Stella Yamali Bacolas with her nephews and nieces (grandchildren of Mike Yamali)



Hanania Family from Israel

#### **Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina**

It was so rewarding to see visitors, especially new friends who had waited patiently for us to reopen. Most of our June visitors were from New York. It was heartening to see young people, some of whom were looking forward to joining us for services in the future.



Ben & Zachary



David Himelman



David Rubin



Mishka



Joy London



Great group on June 6



Cohens and Rubins on June 13th

#### Shabbat Services at Kehila Kedosha Janina in Person

We continue to host Shabbat morning services on a monthly basis for now. We will share updates when we plan to resume more frequent services.

Please join us for our next Shabbat Service in person on Saturday July 17, 2021 at 10am.

People interested in attending services in person are strongly encouraged to RSVP in advance by emailing Amarcus@kkjsm.org.



#### Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum – New Exhibit

Our new exhibit on "Sephardic and Romaniote Religious and Social Organizations" is now open in our Ada Finifter Communal Room and Education Center. Rare archival photos from the private collection of Dr. Joe Halio are now on display. The exhibit will be available for viewing on Sundays when the museum is open. We will schedule an official exhibit opening reception in the coming months.







#### **Museum Genealogical Research**

The Museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina has been busy working on genealogical research, compiling family trees and of course, collecting additional photos for our vast photo archives. If you have family trees you would like to add to our collection or questions on your Greek Jewish families, contact us at museum@kkjsm.org. Our online Zoom presentations, coordinated by Ethan Marcus, the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, and Kehila Kedosha Janina, have been a great success and can now be seen on our YouTube page <a href="Here">Here</a>. You can also search our Museum Director's name (Marcia Ikonomopoulos) on YouTube to find other online programs we have hosted through Zoom.

#### **Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network**





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Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Sephardic Young Families Picnic in the Park! We had more than 30 adults and children join us to enjoy delicious kosher Turkish food, kids activities, and even some Raki!









#### **News from Jewish Greece**

#### Larissa

Thank you, Jewish Heritage Europe, for covering and promoting the restoration of Synagogue in Larissa Here

We wrote in December about the stalled campaign to restore the structurally threatened Etz Hayyim synagogue in Larissa, central Greece. The restoration started in October 2019, but was halted two months later because of lack of funds and then Coronavirus restrictions. By now, the historic synagogue has been closed for more than a year and a half, standing empty, with its furnishings dismantled and removed.



The small Jewish community in Larissa has now renewed its appeal for aid to help complete what it now says is an estimated €450,000 project. It has posted updated photos and other information on its web site — and a new video about the campaign, the synagogue, and the community.

In a statement in April, leaders of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece described the challenges of the restoration and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

The restoration project started in October 2019 when the Jewish Community of Larisa received a small initial funding from the program "German–Greek Fund for the Future" in order to conduct a detailed soil technical and static assessment. Two months later and after the Synagogue had been completely despoiled and exposed to any danger, the project froze for almost one year, due to lack of funds and due to the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown.

During that pause, the Jewish Community of Larisa launched a large fund—raising campaign with a view to motivate both individuals and institutions in Greece and abroad to contribute, since it is certain that the restoration of this cultural and historic monument should be a concern of Judaism worldwide.

Up until today, the Jewish Community of Larisa, with the continuous help of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece as well as with the help and support of the other Greek Jewish Communities, has managed to raise the amount of 140,000 Euros but we strongly feel that this amount is not enough and every day that passes the Community of Larisa and the bond between its members weakens without the Synagogue.

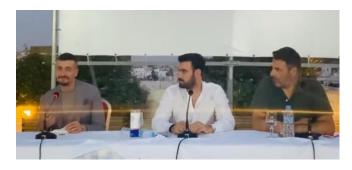
See the webpage of the Jewish community of Larissa and how to donate **Here** Donate with Eurobank Live Pay.

Do not forget to write in the "Notes" field: "For the Restoration of the Larissa Synagogue"

#### **Athens**

Mazal Tov to Rabbi Gabriel Negrin for the publication and presentation of his first book of poetry: "Μεταξύ Υψίστου Ιδεατού και Ανθρώπων" – "Between the Most High Ideas and People."





## Sarah Aroeste uses the power of Sephardic music to revitalize a lost Jewish community Full Article by Matt Hanson Here

At the turn of the 20th century, the city of Monastir, present-day Bitola in North Macedonia, was home to the country's largest Jewish community, 11,000 people. That's about half of the current Jewish population of Turkey, most of whom share the Ladino language and its music with Balkan Jewish communities like Monastir. But in March of 1943, Monastir's Jews suffered genocide when the Nazis deported 98% of their people to Treblinka. None returned.

In 2017, Sephardic singer Sarah Aroeste received unexpected invitations from non-Jews in North Macedonia to perform her original Ladino songs in Bitola, the birthplace of



her grandfather and her 104-year-old cousin Rachel Kornberg, who survived the Holocaust after Albanian Muslims rescued her.

This experience inspired her new album, "Monastir," releasing today. On the record, Aroeste sings with Kornberg and Helena Susha, an 18-year-old opera singer from North Macedonia. With her Israeli producer Shai Bachar, she also collaborated with over 30 other musicians from Israel, Spain, Germany, North Macedonia and the U.S.

The music revitalizes the lost Jewish presence in Monastir, an idea for which Aroeste found support both among the people of Bitola and the general population of North Macedonia. Non-Jewish Macedonians were ebullient and nostalgic at the chance to celebrate the multicultural, interfaith fabric of their shared heritage with one of the community's daughters.

"I was flabbergasted. They made all of the arrangements for me. That was the first hint that they really wanted me to come," Aroeste says. "I arrived and I was immediately met with bouquets of flowers. I was whisked away. Press was everywhere, cameras, newspapers. And this was the very first time I set foot in Bitola."

"Monastir" opens with the blowing of a shofar before Aroeste sings "Oy Qui Muevi Mezis" (Oh, What Nine Months), which is a "kantikas de parida," or birth song in Ladino. It is an appropriate sounding of hope for the revitalization of Monastir's Jewish community. On half of the album's 10 songs, Aroeste sang in Macedonian for the first time. She also studied how to pronounce the Monastir dialect of Ladino as part of the research for what became the largest production of her six albums to date, extending her range to perform new arrangements of traditional and original lyrics and compositions of Sephardic, Balkan and Flamenco fusions.

"When I returned to North Macedonia, it was to perform at a culture festival supported by the municipality of Bitola and the Israeli foreign ministry. It was a formal event. To prepare, a friend of mine suggested that I perform a Macedonian song," Aroeste remembers. "Edno Vreme Si Bev Ergen' [One Time I Was a Bachelor] struck me because it's about a Slavic man wandering in the Jewish neighborhoods of Bitola. To me it's humorous, but it also shows the interplay of cultures that existed prior to World War II."

Aroeste consulted a wide scope of scholarly sources. One major inspiration was the National Authority of Ladino in Israel and the fieldwork of Max A. Luria, who, in 1927, drew from a text dated to 1527 in Barcelona titled "Flor de enamorados." It was preserved orally in Monastir for centuries until its music, like the community, disappeared. But inspired by the words, Aroeste wrote original music and called Israeli flamenco singer Yehuda "Shuki" Shveiky to perform it with her.

The song, "Espinelo," is a metaphor for Sephardic Jewry's debt to Turkish hospitality when, during the Inquisition of 1492, the sultan welcomed them to settle in the Ottoman cities of Izmir, Istanbul and Thessaloniki. The chorus exaggerates the warmth of the Sublime Porte: "The ladies watch over him, / The most elegant ladies of Turkey." Shuki sings with the passion of a native Andalusian on the track, which tells a tale of Balkan Jewish superstition in which women who birthed twins were thought to have slept with two men. One ill-fated twin is thrown into the sea, only to be rescued by a fisherman and adopted by royalty. By historical interpretation, that empathic father king is Sultan Bayezid II embracing Spanish Jews after their exile east across the Mediterranean.

"In encased glass, I have my grandfather's fez that he wore. He would always say that he was a Turk from Greece born in Monastir who spoke Espanyol (Ladino). It was as confusing to me then as it is now," Aroeste says, laughing. "Interspersed on 'Espinelo,' we have Turkish qanun (a lap-style, plucked zither). We wanted to infuse [the song] with the Ottoman Turkish sound to show that change from gritty Spanish flamenco to salvation in Turkey."

The choice of flamenco for "Espinelo" is a nod to the innate fusions in Sephardic, Jewish and Balkan music. Their mixtures do not preclude their preservation; quite the opposite. The music of



A family walking the streets of Bitola

"Monastir" is rife with contemporary production details, from the didgeridoo that rumbles with shofar on the opening track to the children's chorus on "Estreja Mara," which immortalizes the living, present-day tradition of a Bitola kindergarten.

The centenarian voice of Kornberg introduces the upbeat song "Estreja Mara" by explaining the Ladino rhyme scheme of a Sephardic finger-game to Aroeste's infant daughter. Then, the chorus of children sings an anthem dedicated to a 21-year-old Jewish resistance fighter, Estreja Mara, who died in battle while standing up to the Bulgarian army in 1944.

Like Aroeste's earlier albums, "Monastir" focuses on the importance of youth in revitalizing culture. She presents glimpses of life when young Jewish women and Slavic men mingled. "Edno Vreme Si Bev Ergen" features Macedonian crooner Sefedin Barjamov, who accompanies Aroeste to adapt a tune most often heard via a 1978 recording by the all-male Biljana Ohrid Ensemble. The fact that Macedonian singers have never stopped reminiscing about Jewish neighborhoods in Bitola is a testament, in song, to the affection and even love that Macedonian people of all backgrounds have for the memory of their destroyed, local communities.

"Monastir" is more than a resonant echo. It is a strong response to genocide, harnessing the power of Sephardic music to revitalize Jewish culture and celebrate its often unsung endurance in the midst of linguistic endangerment. Aroeste plans to perform internationally with her illustrious cast of guest musicians. She is confident that her album will support historic initiatives like the restoration of Monastir's Jewish cemetery.

"So many revitalization efforts look back at traditional repertoire... Music from a hundred years ago can still be newly recorded. Ethnomusicologists are doing incredible work. However, people are not going to learn about Ladino and this culture unless we make it accessible and find ways to reach them," says Aroeste. "I firmly believe that to keep Ladino going, to expose it to more people, we need to be creating new material. There are a lot of ways we can do this. The music of Monastir had never been compiled in one source. There's still an uncovered treasure trove of material."

#### **Synagogue Restoration News from Jewish Heritage Europe**

#### Hungary

#### Rumbach St synagogue officially reopens this week after award-winning €10 million restoration

Events celebrating the official reopening of Budapest's historic, Moorish-style Rumbach St synagogue as a cultural and religious space after a fullscale restoration kicked off June 10 with a public Torah procession though the downtown Jewish quarter.

The Jewish umbrella organization Mazsihisz said the procession would start at 3:30 p.m. from the "Weeping Willow" Holocaust memorial next to the Dohány Street Synagogue, then move on to the Rumbach Synagogue via Károly körút and Madách Square.

The public was welcome to follow the procession, it said, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, only a limited number of invited guests were able to attend the ceremony inside the synagogue.

Mazsihisz said one of the invited guests is a nurse who caught COVID while working at a hospital, spent more than three months in intensive care, and still suffers serious complications. She will place one of the mezuzot to be installed in the synagogue as part of the ceremony,

The synagogue is reopening following a detailed renovation carried out in 2017-2019, which entailed the conversion of the synagogue and its entire building complex into a multi-purpose arts, culture, prayer, and education center. The 3.2 billion Forint (€10 million) costs were fully funded by the Hungarian state.





The interior work entailed a complete rebuilding and/or replacement of both structural and decorative elements in the richly ornate, octagonal sanctuary. These included the chandeliers, wall paintings and wood-paneled ceiling, and also a total rebuilding of the destroyed ark in its original place, using plaster, glass, and gold.

The restored complex includes a permanent exhibition that presents the experience of Hungarian Jews through the history of a Hungarian Jewish family.

The Hungarian National Committee of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) awarded its annual restoration prize to the restoration in April, on the occasion of World Monuments Day. The announcement of the award cited the exemplary character of the restoration, which also "enables the cultural use of its central space."

The synagogue complex, dating from 1872/73 is an early work by the noted Viennese architect Otto Wagner, It had long stood in a semi-derelict state following partial reconstruction in the late 1980s/early 1990s that was left unfinished for lack of funds. It was returned to Jewish ownership in 2006.

Several cultural events, including online concerts, will take place as part of the inaugural celebrations.



#### Slovakia

#### Magnificent synagogue in Trenčín to be restored as cultural center and Jewish community space

The magnificent domed synagogue in Trenčín, western Slovakia, will undergo major restoration as a cultural center and Jewish community space, with first steps financed by the EEA and the Slovak state.

Construction work will start in the autumn of this year, and should be completed in October 2022, the Trenčín Jewish community, which owns the building, said in a statement.

"We have been looking for ways to finance reconstruction for a long time," Jewish community chair Ol'ga Hodálová said. "We are very pleased that we are among the monuments supported by EEA Grants and the state budget."

The work will be carried out as a project called "Restoration, Reconstruction and Revitalization of the Synagogue in Trenčín." It received an EEA grant of €763,300 from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the program "Entrepreneurship in the field of culture, cultural heritage and cultural cooperation," co-financed with €134,700 from the state budget of the Slovak Republic. The statement said, however, that an additional €1 million will be needed to complete a full restoration, and the Jewish community and Trenčín municipality are seeking further financing.





The synagogue, listed as a national cultural monument, was built in 1913 to replace a wooden synagogue from the 18th century. Designed by Trenčín native Richard Scheibner and his collaborator Hugo Pál, it mixes Byzantine and Art Nouveau styles with a modern reinforced concrete dome construction and is an example of early modernist trends that aimed to reduce decoration while preserving monumental classical forms.

The main prayer hall was once richly decorated and still retains colorful stained glass windows, blue painting on the dome, and a historic chandelier in its center. The synagogue was severely damaged during World War II and further damaged under the postwar communist regime, which used it as a clothing warehouse. It was reconstructed in the 1970s and 1980s for use as an arts center, but in a way that destroyed much of the interior decoration.

The synagogue was restituted to the Union of Slovak Jewish Communities in 1993. It includes a Holocaust memorial and small prayer room at the back of the building. Ownership was transferred to the small local Jewish community in 2018.

The restoration will aimed to restore the synagogue to its original condition. "We found out that under the white paint from the times of socialism, there is an original beautiful Art Nouveau painting, which is unique in Slovakia," Hodálová said. "Restoration probes have confirmed to us that we can renew it, for which we will use part of the obtained grant. It's amazing news." In addition to uncovering the original paintings and restoring the painting on the dome, the restoration is to entail repair of the broken copper roof, reconstruction of the roof gutters on the western façade of the building, renovation of the entrance doors and spaces., and replacement of some windows.



The restored synagogue will house a cultural center hosting exhibits and events managed in cooperation with the Bratislava-based Jewish Cultural Institute, an official partner in the project. There will also be a permanent exhibition on local Jewish culture, as well as spaces for use by the Jewish community for prayer and communal activities. "The restoration of the Trenčín synagogue is one of the largest projects of the Slovak Jewish community," said Maroš Borský, director of the Jewish Cultural Institute. "Our task will be to build a modern cultural center that will present Jewish culture and which will be a place for dialogue between the majority and the minority."

#### **Turkey**

#### Turkey: German grant for rescue work on Izmir's long-ruined Forasteros synagogue Article Here

Cleanup and first-stage rescue work at the long-ruined Forasteros (Orahim or Kedosha) synagogue in Izmir will soon begin, funded by a €67,000 grant from the German Foreign Ministry.

Izmir Jewish Heritage said work on the building — today a roofless shell — will begin "in the coming weeks." It said the work will entail "complete cleaning, excavating to the original floor and building of a temporary roof to reduce deterioration caused by climate and other conditions." The synagogue is believed to have been originally built in the 17th



century, but was reconstructed in the early 18th century after being destroyed by an earthquake in 1688.

It is one of nine synagogues in central Izmir that form a unique complex. Work has been going on for several years now to revitalize these synagogues and develop the complex as a Jewish museum and educational and visitors' center.

A report provided to JHE by Izmir Jewish Heritage detailed the dire condition of the building. Due to the lack of roof cover, it said, serious destruction and deterioration occurred in the main bearing walls of the building, especially due to external factors (rain, weather conditions, etc.). The direct exposure of the area to external influences has also created a serious vegetation problem. The fact that it has been used for different purposes over time and unqualified additions and interventions made during this use have unfortunately damaged the structure. Contrary to the original function of the building, meaningless wall coverings and partitions caused an increase in the deterioration of the building.

### Turkey's Synagogues and the Politics of Conservation Online Presentation on Thursday July 8 at 1:30pm ET Register Here



#### **Italy**

Italy: An agreement last year enables "Mantova Hub" urban renewal work to proceed under Halachic supervision at the site of Mantova's old Jewish cemetery, but work is stalled because of hold-ups in allocating new funds

Following an agreement reached last summer, the Italian government allocated €6.5 million for work to be carried out – under Halachic supervision – at the site of a centuries′-old Jewish cemetery in Mantova so that a major urban regeneration project, "Mantova Hub," can be completed. As of June, however, work at the cemetery remained suspended due to bureaucratic holdups in allocating the funds.

David Palterer, a consultant for the Mantova Hub project on behalf of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI), told JHE he expected work to begin once the municipality formally transfers the funds to the architectural firm chosen to carry out the work at the cemetery site.

The €18 million "Mantova Hub" project is to revitalize a longneglected complex of buildings for educational, cultural and social use. Progress on the project ran into problems because part of the complex includes the site of the cemetery.

Known as San Niccolò, the cemetery was founded in the mid-15th century and closed in 1786. It had already been sold to local authorities by the Jewish community nearly 170 years ago and had long been partially built over by some of the buildings slated for renewal as part of the Hub.



Haredi rabbis and others from outside Italy had attempted to block any work at the cemetery site, saying the cemetery had been sold under duress. Archival evidence shows that noted rabbis were buried there.

An agreement was reached in July 2020, however, between the city and Italian Jewish authorities, with input from representatives of the Haredi Jewish cemetery protection organization Asra Kadisha, whereby work on the Hub will go forward at the cemetery site, in accordance with Halacha. Asra Kadisha had earlier been one of the groups calling for the work to be halted.

The agreement resulted in the new grant, which was made official at the beginning of this year.

"From a very complex problem a new opportunity has arisen, and now with these funds also this part of the project [at the Jewish cemetery] may restart again", Mantova's mayor told the Italian Jewish news site Moked.it at the time.

The agreement was based on a set of guidelines and case studies drawn up by Palterer and Ph.D. fellow Luca Cardani, both from the Faculty of Architecture of the Mantova campus of Milano Polytechnic.

Under the agreement, Palterer told JHE, the area of the former cemetery cannot be excavated, and a Rabbi should always be present whenever any type of work is to be

performed on the site.

The history of the cemetery site is complex. The Jewish community was forced to sell the site to the authorities in 1852 when Mantova was under Austrian rule; ownership was later transferred to the Italian state. The city of Mantova currently owns the site.



Over the centuries, all the cemetery's matzevot were either destroyed or removed, and both the Austrian and Italian authorities constructed on much of the site.

During WWII, the Nazis used the area, on the outskirts of the city, as a concentration camp for Italian soldiers, and after the war it served as a refugee and DP camp. The area returned under Italian military supervision, during which five barracks were constructed on part of the cemetery site. These barracks cannot be demolished, as they are listed as a national monument.

From the 2000s, the complex on and around the cemetery site, which includes a former brick factory, became increasingly derelict. The Mantova Hub redevelopment is being carried out with an €18 million grant received by the city in 2016 under a state-funded program for the regeneration of suburbs.

In 2018, during cleaning work at the cemetery site — paid for by the municipality and carried out under Rabbinical supervision — workers discovered the foundations of the original cemetery walls and of the ceremonial hall, which corresponded to those indicated on Austrian maps.

Over the years around 20 matzevot and fragments from the destroyed cemetery have been found, both in the "New" Jewish cemetery, still in used by the local Jewish community, and elsewhere.

Some had been used for construction purposes.

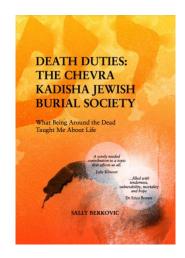
The first matzevah was discovered already in the 1920s, in a stone warehouse, by Emanuele Colorni's father. This matzevah, of the noted Amsterdam-born Rabbi Moses Zacuto (1625-1697), is now stored in the city's Diocesan museum, together with the tombstone of Rabbi Yedidiah Norsa (1560-1616).

# Death Duties: New online publication by Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe CEO Sally Berkovic offers insights on the Chevra Kadisha that provide a living context to the Jewish cemeteries we write so much about

We write a lot about Jewish cemeteries on JHE — but mainly about the physical aspects: matzevot; memorials; epitaphs; Ceremonial Halls/Tahara houses. We tend to focus on art, architecture, and history — though also, at times, about some of the people interred.

Woodcut of a Jewish funeral by Vitebsk-born Shlomo Yudovin (1892-1954) Aside from Holocaust victims, soldiers who fell in battle, and other exceptions, the vast majority of the millions interred in the Jewish cemeteries over the centuries underwent (and undergo) funerals carried out under the ritual care of the Chevra Kadisha, or burial society.

But what is the process of burying a person in Jewish tradition? What happens in the Tahara house — or happened in those that survive, often abandoned, today? What are the rituals connected with Jewish death and mourning?



There are, of course, books and web sites that discuss this. With this post, we want to draw attention to a new publication on the subject by Sally Berkovic, the CEO of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe.

Sally is a member of a Chevra Kadisha, and her 36-page essay "takes readers inside" a sometimes mysterious world — but also reflects, in a personal way, about the meanings of the rituals and their place in the entirety of Jewish life.





Rhodes

Ioannina

It's called Death Duties: The Chevra Kadisha Jewish Burial Society, What Being around the Dead Taught Me about Life. Click the link to read it online or download it — for free — as a PDF. Jewish cemeteries are often known as a House of Life, and the insights provide a living context to the stones.



Today, many Ceremonial Halls/Tahara Houses in abandoned Jewish cemeteries around Europe in places where there is no Jewish community stand empty, or in ruins. But a number have been restored and can be visited, and several now host museums or permanent exhibitions, or are used as cultural spaces. In Gliwice, Poland, for example, where the huge, red-brick, neo-Gothic building opened in 2016 as the Upper Silesian Jews House of Remembrance.

#### This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Elliot Colchamiro, in loving memory of his wife Gladys

In Elliot's own words, "Linda and I married in 1964. After our two children were grown and after 39 years of marriage, sadly after a long illness in 2003 Linda died. Gladys and I first met in 1953 in Jr. High School and hung out together with several other High School (James Madison) friends until 1961 or so. We all spent a lot of time together, gathering often at Gladys' house on E 13 Street just off the "Highway".

"By 1962 or so we had all gone our separate ways. My career as a civil engineer combined engineering practice with academics. I ultimately became professor and chairman of the department of construction and civil engineering technology at New York City College of Technology (of CUNY) right here in Brooklyn. In 2008 I completed 40 years of service at the college, officially retiring in 2005 but serving as an adjunct professor until 2008. Gladys, living in Arizona learned that Linda had passed away. She sent me a condolence card. I answered. Many Emails, calls and visits from Arizona to Staten Island and back followed. In November 2004 Gladys and I were married. Sadly, my beloved Gladys died on April 24, 2020.



Together we have 4 children and a total of 9 grandchildren. For several years we had a house on Staten Island, one in Scottsdale Arizona and one in Delray Beach Florida. We have since sold the houses in Staten Island and Scottsdale and now are living in Delray Beach. We had a very active social life here in Huntington Pointe, our condo in Delray Beach. Besides performing in the yearly condo show we both served as office volunteers in the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Volunteer Program, the largest sheriff's volunteer program in the country. I also volunteer at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center in Dania Beach where I am a docent, conducting museum tours and transcribing Holocaust survivor's oral testimonies to text for future scholarly study and for access by museum visitors.

#### Gershon Harris Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The ultimate day of national mourning for the Jewish people, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av – "Tisha B'av" - falls this year on Saturday night-Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. The fast of Tisha B'av was instituted in commemoration of the two Temples in Jerusalem, in 586 BCE and 70 CE respectively. We observe Tisha B'av by fasting, mourning like we do for a close relative who has died, sitting on the floor in synagogues with often reduced lighting or even candlelight, and reciting the Book of Lamentations and an entire series of special dirges and penitential prayers for a full 25 hours.

Yet many over the years have questioned the need for continued observance of such a tragic and mournful day. One major reason for the question is based on the miraculous rebirth of the Jewish commonwealth, meaning the State of Israel and its amazing achievements, including the miraculous military victory in 1967 when for the first time in close to 2,000 years, Jewish sovereignty was returned to all of Jerusalem and the Biblical Land of Israel. How can one mourn and fast while seeing Israel grow and prosper? No less pertinent is a point raised by the late Rabbi Joseph Dov Halevy Soloveitchik: According to Jewish law, if a person hears about the death of a close relative after 30 days, he or she does not sit shiva for a full seven days, but only for one-hour as a symbolic gesture! So how can we mourn so intensely historical events, as tragic as they may be, that occurred between 2,000-2,500 years ago? They are at best a very tenuous distant, and perhaps even long-gone, memory.

In 1968, Rabbi Soloveitchik related to this question and offered three main reasons why, in fact, Tisha B'av was perhaps even more relevant after the Six Day War victory and its resultant euphoria among large segments of both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry.

First, Rabbi Soloveitchik said that our observance of "full" mourning, so to speak, on Tisha B'Av, is that in the Jewish consciousness, the far-distant tragedy of the destruction of each of the Temples remains a contemporary experience, as do all our holidays and celebrations. At the Pesah Seder, we read that "in every generation, each person must feel/demonstrate as if he/she has just left Egypt"; we see the Exodus as a contemporary event. We do not just recall historical memories and stories: we relive our liberation: we recline, drink four cups of wine, say Hallel, just as if everything just happened.

Likewise on Shavuot and Sukkot: we do not simply recite prayers and sing songs. On Shavuot, we decorate synagogues, read the Ten Commandments in special awe as our forefathers did at Mt. Sinai; On Sukkot we build and "live" in temporary huts to reexperience how our forefathers lived in the desert wilderness for 40 years. And so with Tisha B'av: we act as if the Temples were being destroyed here and now, not two thousand plus years ago. In fact, the Jerusalem Talmud even states that "every generation the Temple is not rebuilt is like the generation when it was destroyed". Thus, we are not really mourning for something that occurred long, long ago, but for something that happened just now.

Another dramatic point is the question as to what the Jewish people did during the period of the Second Temple? Was Tisha B'av observed at all, since there was now a new, rebuilt Temple, and the routine of Temple worship was fully restored? After analyzing all relevant sources, Rabbi Soloveitchik concluded that while there was indeed no commemoration of Tisha B'av in the Second Temple by mourning or not performing ritual sacrifices, it was observed in terms of prayer, focusing mainly on trying to prevent a similar occurrence

in the future! The shadow of the destruction just 70 years before hovered over the people, and they were terrified that history would repeat itself and once again they would lose the Temple, which, as we know did occur some 600 years later. Therefore, what could be more relevant than observing full mourning on Tisha B'av even after 1967? We must pray and be very diligent in protecting and cherishing Israel's miraculous existence. We cannot let unjustified and unfounded hatred among Jews to undue our accomplishments and risk Israel's continued existence for a "third time", so to speak!

Finally, Rabbi Soloveitchik reminds us that Tisha B'av commemorates much more than the destruction of the two Temples. It is also devoted to our historic recollection of too-many calamities and tragedies: The Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, expulsions from other countries, pogroms in Eastern Europe and of course, the Holocaust. The observance of Tisha B'av is no less a commemoration of these and so many other events that are not just reminders of the past, but also of the present, as we see the scourge of antisemitism and international questioning, and even condemnation of Israel's very existence. We must remain vigilant and ensure that we remain conscious of our identities as Jews and strong in both the physical and spiritual sense, in order to meet the continued challenges and even threats to the security of not only Israel, but of every Jew anywhere in the world.

#### Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé Sephardic Je<u>wish Brotherhoo</u>d of America



Parashah of the Week - Balak Changing Curses into Blessings

In this week's Perasha, Bilam the soothsayer, attempted to curse the Jewish people. The Torah tells us that Bilam's words were changed into blessings. While reviewing his statements, one wonders and asks, can the words of someone who despised and scorned the Jewish nation be used in our prayers? How awkward is it to repeat the words of a soothsayer at our synagogues?

Our Perasha begins by telling us what transpired within the land of Moab as the Jewish people were approaching, on their way to the Promised Land. Balak, who was the Moabite king at the time, became afraid of the Jews, who, headed by Moshe, had won a number of battles against the nations that dwelled in the surrounding areas. Balak therefore summoned Bilam, a soothsayer, to attempt to weaken the Jews with his curses and then eventually, be able to overcome them in battle.

The Torah relates to us that at first Bilam rejected the invite and the rewards that Balak had offered. But as the offer appeared to become more appetizing, Balak decided to yield to Bilam's wishes and traveled promptly to Moab to meet with him. The Perasha then tells us that Bilam attempted to curse the Jewish nation a number of times, but each and every time he could only utter blessings to the Jewish people. God would not allow Bilam to curse us. Time and again, Balak became increasingly frustrated at Bilam and eventually gave up on his scheme to curse the people of Israel and sent Bilam back to his land.

One would think that this episode would be remembered by our Rabbis only with disdain, yet interestingly enough, some of Bilam's statements made a profound impression amongst our Sages. Indeed, one statement in particular made it into our weddings and our daily rituals and liturgy. It states, "Ma tovu ohalekha Ya'akov, mishkenotekha Yisrael." How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel. (1). Our Rabbis seem to be rather comfortable using these words to praise the Jewish people. Some of our Sages understood that the

words that Bilam attempted to say were actually changed into blessings. The Talmud states, R. Yohanan says: From Bilam's blessings, we can infer the intended curse: when he said, Mah Tovu Ohalekha... How good are your tents... he intended to say that we should not have Houses of Worship (Bate Kenasiot) neither Houses of Study (Bate Midrashot); (2)

This verse appears to imply that our homes and our dwellings are good and harmonious places. Which seems to be the reason why this verse is often recited during weddings. It is said as a praise and also with the hope that the new couple will build a home that will be praised by the onlookers. Yet, the Talmudic passage seems to give it a further understanding, it means that our institutions, our courts and houses of prayer are also places of justice and peace. Indeed, we further find some other words of Bilam having been introduced into our prayers during the High Holidays, the Talmud states, "Lo ibit aven be-Ya'akov..., None hath beheld iniquity in Jacob... (3), this verse was instituted by Anshe Keneset ha-Gedola, the Sages of the Great Assembly at the beginning of our second communion wealth, as part of the prayers for Rosh Ha-Shana. (4)

On regards to the ritual, Rabbi Shem Tob Gaguine (5) writes in his Keter Shem Tob, "The verse, "Ma tovu ohalekha...", is found in the prayer books of the communities of Israel, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and Amsterdam... in other words, the actual words that were stated by Bilam, the soothsayer were adopted in many congregations to be said at the time that we are about enter into our synagogues or houses of study. Interestingly enough he adds, "but it does not appear in the prayer book used by the Sephardic community of London." Rabbi Gaguine comments that the omission might be due to the fact that the verse was said by Bilam the soothsayer since he originally intended it as a curse to the Jewish people. (6)

One may ask, why are the words of Bilam used so positively and even in some of our rituals? The Midrash states, "The Nation of Israel receives its sustenance from the blessing of Bil'am the soothsayer." (7) Our Sages understood that as Bilam looked on and saw the tents and dwellings of the Jews, their harmonious and peaceful ways, he could only praise them and could not curse them. He could only bless the people as he understood and saw their righteous ways. Therefore, when we enter our holy places, we make this statement, How good are your tents Jacob... This is indeed a beautiful practice found in many of our communities. Our intent is to praise our synagogues or study houses and the people that gather to pray or to study in them. Our hope is that peace and harmony rule in our houses.

Shabbat Shalom



Angel for Shabbat Parashat Pinehas by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

A while ago, I needed some dental work. As I was sitting in the dentist's waiting room, I noticed a rack of brochures dealing with various dental procedures. Having a little time on my hands, I decided to look more closely at these brochures.

One of them was ominously entitled: Root Canal. On the cover was a picture of an attractive, smiling woman with perfectly straight, white teeth. Hmm! I have never met anyone who broke out into a wide smile upon learning she/he needed root canal work. Another brochure featured: Gum Disease. The cover of that brochure included four happily smiling people, all with perfect white teeth. Hmm again! I have never come across anyone who smiled upon learning she/he had gum disease and would need lots of unpleasant and expensive

dental care. And so it was with all the other brochures, each describing dental procedures, and each featuring a smiling face on the cover.

I suppose the creators of these brochures wanted to give a "positive spin" to dental work, and to make patients feel cheerful and relaxed by seeing happy people on the brochure covers. I'm not sure of the success of this strategy on others but it did not relieve my own anxieties in the least.

I know that the brochure makers would not want to show pictures of patients groaning in agony. But perhaps they could have chosen some other illustrations for their brochure covers. To show pictures of smiling people is surely misleading if not just plain false.

We realize that the people in the pictures are paid models. They aren't really having root canal work or dreading their own gum disease. They are not portraying reality, but are participating in the creation of a positive image for p.r. purposes. But instead of convincing us to be happy, these smiling models strike us as being participants in a con job. They are not genuine. They cannot be trusted. Anyone who smiles brightly while contemplating root canal work is not someone who can be relied upon for good judgment. This brings us to this week's Torah portion.

Moses knows he will not be leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. He pleads with the Almighty to appoint his successor, a leader "who will go out before them and come before them, who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Bemidbar 27:17). Rashi explains that Moses is asking for a leader who will take responsibility, who will be in the front lines of battle and not sit back at home while others do the fighting. Seforno adds that the leader should not only be involved in war, but should also be personally and actively engaged in the day to day management of the people. Other commentators note that Moses is calling for a shepherd, a person who tends the flock with great care and who is held responsible for any losses.

Moses is seeking a leader who will be genuine, reliable and trustworthy. He asks for a leader who takes personal responsibility for each member of the community. He wants a real leader, not a false image of a leader. He wants a leader with an honest countenance, not one with a fake smile. He wants someone who actually believes in his mission, not someone who pretends to be a leader and goes through the charades of leadership for p.r. purposes.

Many contemporary social critics have lamented the shortage of honest, sincere, authentic leaders. Politicians are widely perceived as being self-serving egotists. Leaders in religious life, academia, the business world etc. have all fallen in esteem in the eyes of the public; they are often viewed as petty, power hungry or manipulative. Instead of being shepherds who genuinely care about their flocks, the worst among them tend to care more about their own honors and emoluments.

Happily, though, there are genuine, fine leaders in the world. We are blessed with examples of authentically sincere, hard-working and selfless individuals who put the community's interests above their own, who are genuine shepherds rather than con artists.

God informed Moses that He would appoint Joshua as his successor. Joshua is described as a man "in whom the spirit resides." Joshua had demonstrated the qualities of courage, the ability to stand up against the crowd, loyalty to Moses and to the entire public. He was endowed with "the spirit" i.e. integrity, authenticity, selflessness. Joshua could be trusted; he was genuine.

We often come across people who are as untrustworthy and unconvincing as the smiling faces on the cover of the root canal brochure. Less often do we meet people of the caliber of Joshua.

But it is the Joshuas of the world who we admire, respect and trust. It is they—and only they—who are worthy to be our friends and our leaders.

#### **Looking for Our Help**

"The Art of Repair," a film about the ancient synagogue in Hania, Crete seeks Funding Support to continue Post Production. Learn more here: http://artofrepairfilm.com

Etz Hayyim, an ancient synagogue in Hania, Crete, was utterly destroyed, along with the Jewish population, (by the Nazis) during World War II. Today Etz Hayyim has been restored to an active, multi-faith temple bringing Jewish religion, culture, ethics and history to the local community and 30,000 people who visit each year. In today's fractured world, the film The Art of Repair celebrates the outsized contributions of this inclusive Jewish community to the larger world.

Please contact Ken Ross, Co-Producer: cyclonepictures@gmail.com

#### **Calling all Nikokiris**

Kehila Kedosha Janina is researching the Nikokiris surname, hoping to compile a Nikokiris family tree or trees. If you have any Nikokiri in your family. Please get back to us at <a href="mailto:museum@kkjsm.org">museum@kkjsm.org</a>.

#### **Photos of the Month**



Corfu 1900



This photo launched the "Our Gang" exhibit. Here, in 1942, Carol Laurie (from the David family) is saluting her uncle, Arthur Rubinstein.

Arthur did not return. His plane was shot down over the Pacific, his body never recovered. Due to the work of a dear friend of ours (Aimee Gagnon Fogg), we received a photo of a plaque in Midway with Arthur's name.

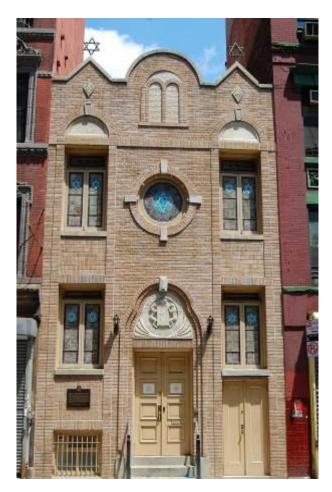
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ROZELLE WILLARD E PVT 14 BOMB SQ 19 BOMB GP (H) NEW YORK
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#### So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

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

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

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We look forward to reopening. Normally, we are open for services every Saturday morning at 9:30am and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm and by appointment during the week.



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