



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

February 2024 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

There are no Jewish Holidays this month, but 2024 is a leap year, as is the Jewish Year 5784. In February, in the US, we celebrate President's Day (combining the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln - February 12th and George Washington - February 22nd). In the US, February is Black History Month. As this newsletter is being written, Jewish hostages have been held in Gaza for more than 120 days. The world is praying for their release. We want something to truly celebrate.



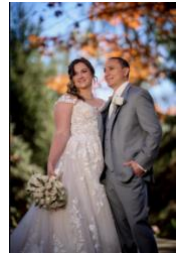
This newsletter, our 179th will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjsm.org.

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

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email amarcus@kkjsm.org if you would like to attend, and enjoy a traditional Greek kiddush lunch after services. Our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjsm.org.

Simchas

We are thrilled to announce the marriage of Russell Hochman and Tara Drobecker. Russell is the son of Tehru Eskononts Hochman (of Blessed Memory) and Richard Hochman and stepson of Ellen Hochman. Russell is also the grandson of Beatrice and Samuel Eskononts (both of Blessed Memory) and the great-grandson of Mordechai Eskononts and Esther Cohen (both of Blessed Memory). The joyous announcement is made with love and excitement by Aunt Sherri Busch.



We celebrate the arrival of baby Lily Nicole Nearnberg, born January 6th, the daughter of Marissa Blau Panfel and Bryan Nearnberg, granddaughter of Pamela Blau and Michael Panfel, great-granddaughter of Molly Hametz Blau (born in Ioannina) and Jerome Blau, great-great granddaughter of Israel and Pernoula Hametz (both born in Ioannina).

Passings

We mourn the passing of Leon Kabelis, born 1930 in Ioannina-passing January 3, 2024 in Israel. Leon was the son of Shemos Kabelis and Anna Cohen. Anna passed away at the age of 35. Shemo remarried Rebecca Levy and had two children with her. Shemo, Rebecca, and the young children all were murdered in Auschwitz. At the age of 14, before the deportations from Ioannina, Leon left to go to Eretz Israel. He did not make it there until after the Holocaust, having been detained by the British, like so many others trying to make aliya. Leon was on the Haviva Reik, a ship named after an heroic Jewish woman who was Haganah, sent to Slovakia to help Jews escape. She was executed in November of 1944.

Because of Leon's courage, the Kabilis name continued to live. One of the most moving moments at the recent Yom Kippur gathering in Ioannina, was Leon Kabelis, 93 years old, in a wheel chair, surrounded by his children and grandchildren. עם ישראל חי Am Yisrael Chai.



Kehila Kedosha Janina Infrastructure Fund - We Need Your Help

Our historic synagogue building is nearly 100 years old. Thankfully it remains a center for Romaniote religious services and education on Greek Jewry. However, our aging roof has passed its lifetime, and we need to replace the roof to ensure our building remains waterproof and physically secure well into the future. We humbly ask you, our community and friends, to donate to our Infrastructure Fund to help us ensure we can make the necessary repairs and preserve our cherished Kehila. As one of only a handful of historic synagogues that are still active on the Lower East Side, our building remains a beacon for visitors to learn more about our unique community & our special neighborhood. Donate today to invest in a strong future for KKJ. Thank you.

Donate [Here](#)



KKJ
INFRASTRUCTURE
FUND

HELP US MAINTAIN OUR LANDMARK
SYNAGOGUE BUILDING AS A CENTER
FOR GREEK JEWISH LIFE

**Donate today to help us
renovate our aging roof**

We Need Your Help

Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

On January 7th we were honored to host Hakham Dr. Isaac Sassoon and Rabbi Steve Golden, along with other special guests, for the launch of a new siddur - Siddur 'Alats Libbi. Hakham Sassoon led an uplifting lecture on Jewish prayer and the intentionality of our liturgical texts. You can watch the full presentation online [Here](#).



Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

The Greek Jewish and Sephardic Young Professionals held a beautiful gathering for Tu BiShvat (the Jewish New Year for Trees and First Fruits) in Kehila Kedosha Janina on January 25th. They led a traditional Seder, which included a variety of Israeli wines, fruits, and sweets. Kudos to Andrew Marcus for all his work in passing on the traditions and customs of our community.



Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network – Upcoming Events

We are excited to launch a new Greek Dance series in partnership with Meraki! Join us to learn traditional Greek dances and connect with other young community members over this fun interactive series. The five-class session costs only \$100 and will be held every other Tuesday starting on February 6th at 7pm. Email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com to learn more.



Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

MERAKI GREEK FOLK DANCE CLASS

5-Class Session
Every other Tuesday at 7pm
Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 5, Mar 19, Apr 2

Kehila Kedosha Janina **\$100 for full 5-class session**
280 Broome St NYC **Open to Young Adults in**
their 20s and 30s

Email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com to register

Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Greece & The Balkans – July 2024

We are thrilled to announce the special Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Greece and the Balkans this Summer 2024. We will trace the roots of our families and visit the beautiful cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Bitola (Monastir), Skopje, Thessaloniki, Veria, Ioannina, & Corfu, with optional extension to Rhodes. The tour will run from July 7-17, 2024. Spots are limited and the deadline to register and submit deposits is February 15. The tour is open to Jewish young adults in their 20s and 30s. Email Ethan@SephardicBrotherhood.com to learn more and sign up. View the full itinerary [Here](#).



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TOUR OF JEWISH GREECE & THE BALKANS

July 7-17, 2024

INCLUDES SOFIA, PLOVDIV, BITOLA (MONASTIR), SKOPJE,
THESSALONIKI, VERIA, IOANNINA, & CORFU
WITH OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO RHODES

REDISCOVER YOUR HERITAGE AND CONNECT WITH OTHER YOUNG
SEPHARDIC JEWS ON THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

View the full itinerary at bit.ly/YPBalkans2024

To register and learn more email
Ethan@SephardicBrotherhood.com



News from Jewish Greece

Athens

Meeting of the Leadership of Greek Jewry with the New Mayor of Athens

On January 8, 2024, KISE President David Saltiel, Vice-President Manos Alchanatis, Gen. Secretary Victor Eliezer and the President of the I.C. of Athens, Albertos Tarampoulous, held a ceremonial meeting with the new Mayor of Athens, Haris Doukas, at the Athens City Hall. In a cordial atmosphere, the actions for the 27th of January - Holocaust Remembrance Day and the participation of the Municipality in the events were discussed. Mr. Doukas declared his personal awareness on issues of memory preservation, and representatives of Greek Jewry invited him to pay a visit to Auschwitz. At the end of the meeting, the President of KISE offered to the Mayor of Athens the publication of KISE "The Holocaust of Greek Jews – Monuments and Memories".



Day of Commemoration of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes

A message from the Minister of Education, Religions and Sports Kyriakos Pierrakakis for January 27, International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust and Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, was sent to schools, in order to be read to students on January 27th.

Minute of Silence Observed in Parliament for Holocaust Remembrance Day

On January 26th, the Plenary Session of the Parliament observed a minute's silence in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day 2024. The 3rd vice-president of the Parliament, Thanasis Bouras, at the special event that took place, emphasized: "Today we honor the memory of six million Jews and many more victims of the unprecedented cruelty and horror of the Nazi regime. But we also honor all those who managed to survive, living witnesses of the extermination camps during the second world war".



"We Remember" at the Greek Parliament

The Hellenic Parliament and the Municipality of Athens commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day 2024 by participating again this year in the WE REMEMBER Memorial campaign. The facades of the Parliament and the Athens City Hall were illuminated with the characteristic logo of the campaign and a symbolic depiction of the Star of David between barbed wire. As every year, the model was created by the graphic designer of the Jewish Museum of Greece Haya Cohen. This year's message for the preservation of Memory was strengthened by the dynamic presence, in front of the enlightened Parliament, in the Constitution, of representatives of the leadership of the KISE, the I.K. of Athens, the 2nd Generation, the ambassador of Israel, representatives of Jewish organizations and friends. Everyone, holding signs with WE REMEMBER, united their voice, and declared their commitment to NEVER AGAIN.

The President of the Greek Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, January 29, 2024, laid a wreath at the Holocaust Memorial in Thissio, Athens.



Thessaloniki

On January 14, 2024, the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, as part of the solidarity campaign organized by the European Jewish Congress (EJC) on the occasion of the 100 day anniversary since the attack by Hamas terrorists and the abduction of 251 innocent people, illuminated the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, as a sign of support for the families of the hostages and the citizens of Israel.



On January 25, 2024, the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and the Greek Orthodox Church held a series of events that in Thessaloniki for Holocaust Remembrance Day 2024, in which Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and former Mayor Giannis Boutaris attended as honorary members.

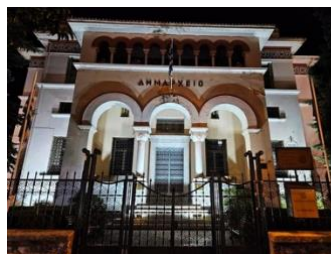


Ioannina

The Jewish Community of Ioannina, participating in the international campaign "Bring Them Home Now" for the immediate release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in the bowels of Gaza, illuminated the Ioannina Synagogue on 15.1.2024, marking in this way the 100 days of captivity of the hostages.



As part of the global events for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, the Municipality of Ioannina displayed the logo of the international information campaign for the preservation of Holocaust Remembrance #WeRemember in the outdoor area of the D. Hatzis Cultural Multiplex. At the same time, the Town Hall was illuminated. The aim is to keep historical memory alive by paying self-evident tribute to the millions of victims of the Holocaust and stressing the need for constant vigilance and vigilance in defense of human rights and democratic values.



Kavala

The Municipality of Kavala, in the framework of the global events for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust (January 27th), projected on the façade of the City Hall building the logo of the international information campaign for the preservation of the Holocaust Remembrance, with the slogan "We Remember". The campaign is promoted by the European Parliament, UNESCO, and the Conference of Presidents of the Parliaments of the European Union. Similar actions took place today in various regions of Greece and abroad.



Larissa

The Municipality of Larissa participates in the #WeRemember campaign by lighting the city's Municipal Conservatory. The action took place alongside the events of the Region of Thessaly & the Jewish Community of Larissa for the National Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Heroes & Martyrs of the Holocaust.



Members of the Jewish Community of Larissa gathered on Monday, January 15, 2024, at the Cultural Center, to join their voices and prayers with those of Jews around the world, for the return of Israeli hostages to their homes. The President of the GCM, Mr. Moses Manouach, referred in a few words to the tragedy of the 137 hostages, who, since the day of their abduction by Hamas terrorists, on October 7, 2023, are still detained in Gaza, as well as to the plight of their families, who for 100 days do not know if their loved ones are alive, whether they are injured or sick and what are the conditions of their detention. In solidarity with these people and the citizens of Israel, who collectively experience the trauma of 100 days of captivity of infants, children, women, men, and elderly, we support the call for the release of all hostages, the president concluded and called on the members of the Community to be photographed, holding the posters with the slogan: **"We won't stop until everyone comes back."**



Volos

Marking the 100 days of captivity of Israeli hostages in Gaza, on 14.1.2024, the Jewish Community of Volos, in solidarity with the families of the hostages, but also with the citizens of Israel, who collectively experience the trauma of 100 days of captivity of infants, children, women, men and elderly, illuminated the Synagogue by supporting the international appeal "Bring them home now" for the release of all hostages.



Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemorations Across Greece



Chalkida



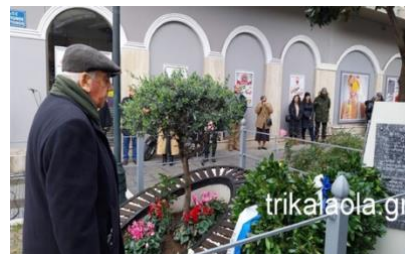
Veroia



Corfu



Hania



Trikala

Israel

The world has not deserted us. Around the world, the massacre of October 7th is condemned and countries show that their heart is with Israel.



On Tu BiShvat, trees were planted in Ashkelon for the victims of the Hamas terrorist attack. The characteristic message of the action is based on the lyrics of the Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos: "They tried to bury us... but they didn't know that we are seeds - and when they plant us, we will become stronger than ever."

Italy

Italy's leader denounces antisemitism

Rome (AP) — Italy's president on Friday denounced rising antisemitism and delivered a powerful speech in support of the Jewish people as he commemorated a Holocaust Remembrance Day overshadowed by Israel's military campaign in Gaza and a rise in anti-Israel acts here. In a ceremony at the Quirinale Palace attended by the premier and leaders of Italy's Jewish community, President Sergio Mattarella called the Holocaust "the most abominable of crimes" and recalled the complicity of Italians under Fascism in the deportation of Jews. Also Friday, Rome's police chief ordered pro-Palestinian activists to postpone a rally in the capital that had been scheduled for Saturday, the actual day of Holocaust Remembrance. Israel's Jewish community has complained that such protests have become occasions for the memory of the Holocaust to be co-opted by anti-Israel forces and used against Jews.



Bring Them Home – Norway and Spain

Last month Oslo and Barcelona marked 100 days since the terror attack by Hamas on the people of Israel. Despite the heavy snow in Oslo, hundreds called for the immediate release of the 136 Israeli hostages that are still being held in Gaza. All of their families are anxiously waiting for them to come home. We haven't forgotten them.



France

'I'm afraid every day for my children': As antisemitism soars, French Jews flee to Israel [Link Here](#)

With over 1,500 antisemitic incidents between Oct. 7 and mid-November – three times the reported number in the entire 2022 – more French Jews seek to escape the climate of fear

Paris — Freddo Pachter says that in his 17 years coordinating the immigration of French speakers to Israel, he has never seen such high demand — and that includes after events such as the Hyper Cacher supermarket terror attack, the jihadist murders by Mohammed Merah, and the 2006 Second Lebanon War.



The number of requests from French Jews has continued to rise since October 7, reflecting the climate of fear, says Pachter, who started working for the Aliyah and Integration Ministry in 2007 and now directs the Lekh-Lekha program for the organization Israel is Forever, which provides advice and assistance for French-speaking immigrants to Israel.

“Some people tell me that they are afraid of being in France because they are Jewish, and they took down their mezuzahs,” Pachter says, referring to the parchment scrolls affixed to the doorposts of many Jewish homes. “It’s unbearable to live like that, to hide any sign of Judaism when no one is ashamed to say that they are Christian or Muslim.”

On October 7, thousands of Hamas-led terrorists stormed the border with Israel under the cover of heavy rocket fire, brutally murdering 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 240 more to the Gaza Strip, where 132 are still being held — not all of them alive. In the wake of the massacre, Israel launched an ongoing military campaign aimed at retrieving the hostages and ousting Hamas from power in the Strip.

The onslaught also set off a violent wave of anti-Israel activity around the globe, with Jews spanning the Diaspora reporting an alarming rise in antisemitic hate crimes often accompanied by anti-Israel messages.

In December, several events were organized in France aimed at providing information and advice for those who wish to relocate to Israel. Gatherings in Paris, Marseille, and Lyon each drew hundreds of attendees, some of whom had to travel to get there.

Beyond the increase in demand, Pachter also observed a change in the profile of the people he met during these meetings. “Usually we see people who are experiencing professional or social difficulty, who have been fired or want to change fields. But this time we had engineers, doctors, and lawyers,” says Freddo, who believes this can be attributed to the increase in antisemitic hate crimes in France. “These are no longer people who leave France for financial problems — their lives in France would be more comfortable.”

Pachter’s observation is more than just a hunch — the Aliyah and Integration Ministry has recorded a 430 percent increase in the number of applications from France since the October 7 onslaught. A number of French Jews confirmed to The Times of Israel that they no longer feel safe in France and feel compelled to hide their kippah or other outward signs of Judaism for fear of being targeted.

“I can no longer see myself living in France with everything that is happening. I am afraid every day for my children, it is no longer a life,” says one mother who lives in Paris and requested to remain anonymous for her own safety. “October 7 changed everything. I would never have imagined thinking of leaving France for Israel. It may seem paradoxical given the situation in Israel, but at least there we will not have to hide,” says another anonymous French Jewish woman who is seriously considering leaving France in the coming months. The Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF) is also listening to such concerns from the French Jewish community, as it has in the past when events locally or in Israel precipitated an increase in antisemitic activity.

“The figures for [immigration to Israel] and the opening of files have always been a barometer of the level of concern of Jews in French society regarding antisemitism,” said CRIF president Yonathan Arfi.

Even if he believes that measures are being put in place to fight this climate of fear, Arfi believes it is now a much deeper problem in French society.

“Political authorities are very aware of the current reality but this is not enough, it’s now more social... We will only really fight antisemitism if it’s socially condemned in all walks of life in French society, which is not always the case today,” he says. More than 1,500 antisemitic incidents have been recorded in France between October 7 and mid-November, according to the latest statistics from the French Interior Ministry. “These are mainly tags and insults, but there are also assaults and injuries,” says French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin. This is more than three times higher than the 436 antisemitic incidents recorded over the entire 2022 in France. “These acts are not new, but are much more intense,” says sociologist Michel Wieviorka.

The Hamas massacre is partly responsible, but global views on Jews have also changed, believes the sociologist. “The Holocaust is no longer what it was [in the minds of the French people]. When the French [came to terms with the extent of the genocide] in the ‘70s and ‘80s... there was a lot of goodwill for the Jewish world at that time, but we are no longer there. Memory has given way to history. The younger generation no longer knows witnesses or survivors, and all this makes antisemitism easier in its expression,” says Wieviorka, who has conducted extensive research on the topic.

Turkey

Turkey needs accountability for Jewish persecution - Opinion

By Lyn Julius in The Jerusalem Post full article [Here](#)

Until recent tensions came to light, Jews in modern Turkey have not attracted much attention when compared to their treatment in Arab states.

“We are happy to get rid of non-Muslim citizens,” the Turkish consul in Rome told Anthony Gad Bigio, an architect and urban planner now living in Washington DC after he had applied to relinquish his Turkish nationality. Not much had changed, Bigio reflected, since Gad Franco, his grandfather, had been reduced to penury by the Turkish state.

The decline and fall of Franco, traced by Bigio in his new book, *A Sephardi Turkish Patriot*, epitomized the plight of Turkish Jews – and indeed all non-Muslim minorities, marginalized and persecuted by Turkish ethno-nationalism. Franco’s tragedy was particularly poignant, as he had begun his career with high hopes that independent Turkey, the successor state to the Ottoman empire, would be a beacon of equality, tolerance, and respect for civil and minority rights. Franco’s story is skillfully woven into a general history of the Jews of Turkey in Bigio’s book.

Empires rise and fall.

At its zenith, the Ottoman Empire stretched from the gates of Vienna to North Africa and the border with Persia. It had thriving, cosmopolitan trading ports, such as Tunis, Alexandria, Beirut, Salonika, and Izmir. Izmir boasted a Greek majority, thousands of “Levantine” and foreign residents, Armenians, and Jews. But in the 19th century, the Western powers backed minority rights, and chunks of the empire broke away as Bulgars, Romanians, Serbs, Albanians, and Greeks proclaimed their independence.

At the start of the 20th century, the crumbling Ottoman Empire was beset by wars. Armenian and Greek territorial designs brought forth massacres. The Turks committed genocide against more than a million



Gad Franco in Istanbul, 1922: His tragedy was particularly poignant, as he had begun his career with high hopes that independent Turkey, successor state to the Ottoman empire, would be a beacon of equality, tolerance, and respect, says the writer. (photo credit: Collection of Anthony Gad Bigio)

Armenians and forcibly displaced thousands more. Greeks and Turks swapped places in what has euphemistically been called "ethnic simplification."

The modern state of Turkey emerged much truncated from the war but undertook to safeguard minority rights in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The Jewish Journalist

A self-made journalist, lawyer, and jurist, Franco, who was born in 1881, was an influential member of the French-speaking elite, with excellent connections to politicians and intellectuals. A disciple of the assimilationist Alliance Israélite schools network, he opposed Zionism. As a representative of the community, he fought for Jews to integrate into newly independent Turkey, under its reformist, Western-orientated leader, Kemal Ataturk. While many Jews emigrated, Franco actually returned from France in 1920 to help reconstruct the new Turkey.

Although Franco became a successful and wealthy lawyer, he worried that Kemalist Turkey was becoming increasingly authoritarian and ethno-nationalist. The Ottomanist ideal of a secular, pluralistic state with equal rights for all was receding, as Ataturk struggled for control against a Kurdish insurgency. Instead, Bigio writes, the Turkish Republic sought Soviet-style eradication of religion and the abolition of community institutions.

Then came a drive against any minority that did not speak Turkish.

There had been a Jewish presence in Turkey for 2,000 years, but the bulk of the community were Ladino-speakers who had fled the Spanish Inquisition. They had been in Turkey for 500 years – and could hardly be called foreign. Nevertheless, the state embarked on a Turkification campaign centered on language. "Compatriot, speak Turkish!" was the official slogan in the 1930s. With the Greeks and Armenians fading out of the picture, the Jews, although historically close to Muslims, became the scapegoat of choice. They were accused of being speculators and black marketeers.

In May 1941, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish men, including Franco's brother Marcel, were conscripted into labor battalions. But the coup de grace came in 1942 when the state imposed a swingeing wealth tax (varlik vergesi) on all non-Muslim minorities, in order to replenish its depleted coffers. This amounted to legalized dispossession of the non-Muslim merchant class. Together with 5,000 others who could not pay, Franco was sent to do back-breaking work in forced labor camps. His health declined as he shoveled snow. Stung by the Turkish Republic's betrayal of its loyal citizens, he urged his son to emigrate to Palestine.

Four years before he died, Franco wrote an article, "Mea Culpa," in 1950, to apologize for having believed that the Jews had a future in Turkey. The only bulwark against racial and religious discrimination was Zionism. Some 40 percent of the Turkish-Jewish community ended up fleeing to Israel.

Under the Radar

Until recent tensions under the Islamic fundamentalist Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to light, Jews in modern Turkey have not attracted much attention when compared to their treatment in Arab states.



But while Arab states criminalized Zionism in 1948, Turkey had already declared Zionism illegal in 1934. While Arab states like Iraq banned Jews from public service in the 1940s, Turkey had already imposed a ban in the 1930s. Whereas Egypt and other Arab League countries introduced an Arabization company law that decreed that 75% of company staff must be Muslim in 1947, Turkey had insisted that non-Muslims be fired from companies as early as 1923. Those despoiled of their property by the Varlik Vergisi were never compensated.

Jews in Arab countries suffered riots in the 1940s, but these were foreshadowed by the Thrace riots of 1934 when the Turkish state forcibly evicted 10,000 Jews. And during the relatively benign postwar years, the 1955

riots erupted against the Greek minority: 30 died while the police stood by. Thousands more Jews were prompted to leave.

As with Arab nationalism, xenophobic Turkish nationalism exacted a fearsome price from its minorities. Why has Turkey never been held accountable for its persecution and dispossession of Jews?

There are several reasons for this.

In spite of popular pro-Nazi feeling, Turkey was neutral during WWII and some of its diplomats even saved Jews. In 1949, Turkey established diplomatic relations with Israel and placed itself firmly in the postwar US sphere of influence. As Bigio puts it, American Jewish organizations did not want to trouble the new diplomatic relationship on behalf of the Varlik Vergisi victims.

In this excellent, eye-opening, and very readable work, Anthony Gad Bigio has cast a spotlight on a little-known tragedy. Gad's story is one of betrayal by the Turkish Republic, but it is ultimately a vindication of Zionism.

The writer is co-founder of Harif, the UK Association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, and the author of Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight (Valentine Mitchell).

Croatia

Restoration of former synagogue in Koprivnica will be completed thanks to new €2 million grant.

(JHE) —Jewish Heritage Europe- Renovation of the former synagogue in Koprivnica, Croatia, will be completed thanks to a new €2 million grant from the EU, via Croatia's National Recovery and Resilience Plan. Mayor Mišel Jakšić signed the contract for it on December 21.



As we posted in 2022, gradual renovation has been going on for around 15 years on the synagogue, which was built in the mid-1870s to a neo-Moorish design by architects Julius Deutsch and Slavko Lowy. During World War II it was used as a prison and later as a warehouse and industrial site. In 1996 a plaque was put up to honor Holocaust victims.

In 2019 rehabilitation of the ground floor took place, including removal of the old brick floor, waterproofing, and installing new wooden flooring; and further structural work was carried out this past year thanks to a grant in 2022.

The synagogue was officially inaugurated in November 2019 as the Krešimir Švarc Cultural Center, and events are already held there.

"I can say that these €2 million are the final step and move so that [the building] gets its ultimate form and shines in its ultimate beauty and brilliance," Mayor Jakšić told local media drive.info.

He said the deadline for completion of the work was two years after the signing of the contract.

"However [...] we hope and wish to do most of the work next year, although we no longer dare to bet on such things considering that we all see the state of the construction operative market with labor force and material procurement, and that many times some absolutely unexpected circumstances can happen."

United Kingdom

UK: New conservation area approved around London's historic Bevis Marks synagogue

The City of London's Planning Committee has voted unanimously to set up a Conservation Area around historic Bevis Marks Synagogue, a Grade I listed shul built in 1701 that is Britain's oldest synagogue in continuous use. The move would protect the synagogue from hazards from tall buildings and other urban development at the central London location.



Such a zone, the Jewish Chronicle wrote, "will not prevent commercial developments in the neighborhood, but applicants will, in future, have to surmount significant hurdles."

The Committee had carried out a public consultation on the plans between September 21 and November 6 and reported that there had been "welcome, unprecedented levels of engagement for a City conservation area proposal" and "overwhelming support for the designation of the Creechurch area as a conservation area."

Several options for the area's boundaries were proposed.

Of the 976 responses, the overwhelming majority — around 84.5 percent — of those who made a choice chose the borders (Option 3) proposed by representatives of Bevis Marks, an expanded area that better protected the synagogue.



The vote to establish the conservation area took place December 12. If approved in the new year by the Court of Common Council, the zone would be London's 28th conservation area.

"The Conservation Area will help ensure that heritage factors are given the weight they deserve when future planning decisions are taken," Melody Salem Chair, Bevis Marks Synagogue Heritage Foundation, said in an email statement. "We look forward to continuing to work constructively with the City's planning officers as they prepare the crucial Management Plan, which will outline how the conservation area will be protected. This too will include a public consultation."

The My London web site quoted Bevis Marks Rabbi Shalom Morris as saying, "We are very pleased the City have decided to proceed with the Conservation Area, and with the boundary we support. This is a very special and historic part of the City, not least for the Jewish community, and it is under constant threat from insensitive development proposals. The Conservation Area will help ensure that heritage factors are given the weight they deserve when future planning decisions are taken."

Two years ago, the Planning Committee rejected plans to build a 48-storey office tower near the synagogue,

My London quoted Shравan Joshi, chairman of the planning and transportation committee, as saying: "After an unprecedented and welcome level of public engagement, the committee has voted unanimously to approve proposals for the Creechurch Conservation Area, giving due consideration to the results of the consultation. I would like to thank all those stakeholders who contributed, including our friends at the Bevis Marks Synagogue."

Rhodes and Food

Celebrating Becky: 100 Candles and a Tomato Cuajado By Sharon Gomperts and Rachel Emquies Sheff

A couple of Sundays ago, my family and I were blessed to celebrate the centennial birthday of my mother-in-law, Becky. Of course, turning 100 deserves a huge celebration. But over the last six months, she has slowed down. Neil was a bit worried that it might be too much, but our children, Max, Rebekah, Sam and his wife Estrella insisted that we must have a party.



Neil's maternal grandfather, Nissim Pascal Elie was from a Bulgarian family and had studied agriculture in Palestine before emigrating to America. His grandmother, Victoria Benatar came to Seattle from the Sephardic community of Rhodes, a picturesque island on the Aegean Sea. They met and married in Seattle in 1920. Becky, their only child, was born four years later in San Francisco.

They raised Becky in the close-knit Rhodesli community of Los Angeles. Becky met and married Neil's father Sam Sheff in 1959. Sam built a beautiful home in the Brentwood Hills. Miraculously the family survived the notorious Bel-Air fire of 1961. However, tragedy struck in 1962, when Sam suffered a heart attack. Becky was left a young widow with eight-month-old baby Neil. In order to support herself and her young son, Becky returned to her old job with the Army Corps of Engineers in the Los Angeles Federal Building.

Neil's grandmother Victoria was an expert baker, making the exquisite flaky pastries of the Sephardic *dezayuno* (Shabbat breakfast). But Becky worked such long hours, she never had the time to learn these old Sephardic recipes. It was only when she retired that she made up for lost time. Becky mastered the art of making boyos, burekas, biscochos and roskas with great flair.

Over the years, Becky taught me how to make these pastries and I was determined that I would serve them all at her 100th birthday. I really wanted it to be special, so I started preparing this brunch way ahead of time. The Sunday before, Neil and I spent the afternoon baking a huge quantity of boyos. Boyos are made from a yeast dough that is thinly rolled out and filled with a mixture of spinach, feta and Parmesan cheese, then coiled into a snail shape and baked. We froze them right away. A few days later, after work, I sat in my kitchen and baked about 200 cheese burekas from the traditional crumbly pastry dough (not the much easier packaged puff pastry that most people associate with burekas). The following day, I made biscochos, the subtly sweet, cinnamon dusted, twisted "bangle" cookies so beloved by Rhodeslis.



The night before the party, I made a spinach *cuajado* and a tomato cuajado. A cuajado (pronounced qua'shado) is sort of a creamy, veggie-filled crustless quiche.

Becky always loved the tomato one and would make it for us on special occasions. I had tried the recipe once before and it was a big fail. But I had to make it for her. I consulted a few Rhodesli recipe books. Then I reached out to our dear friend and adopted auntie, SEC board member Sarita Fields and she kindly sent me her recipe. Of course, I was rushing and almost ruined the dish. Instead of straining the tomatoes, I threw all of them into the pot. When I realized my mistake, I decided to simmer them for an hour. The sauce became concentrated, with an intense color and incredible flavor. It turned out to be a magical accident.

Our daughter Rebekah, Becky's namesake, made her delicious banana pudding. She also ordered the most beautiful, extra special birthday cake, decorated with flowers and an old black and white photo of Becky. Sadly, at Becky's age, many of her dearest friends have passed away, so the party was intimate. Family and a few friends who have known her for many years. The guest list included Esther and Clement Cohen, dear friends who have worked with us on many Sephardic Educational Center events and film festivals. A few years ago, I was amazed to discover that when Becky was a young girl, she used to baby sit Clement. Another

couple were Ron and Sharon Hasson and it turns out that Becky was the flower girl at the wedding of Ron's parents!

Becky has always been young at heart, with a quick mind and a great sense of fun. She loved to travel, to dance and to enjoy life. She was still driving in her early 90's. When my kids were younger, she loved taking them out and spending time with them. When my boys were teens she used to arm wrestle with them and she would always win.

Once Becky was in her 80's, she started telling my kids, "Come give me a kiss! You don't know how much longer I've got." Being a superstitious Moroccan, I would always yell back: "You're going to make it to 120! We're going to have a big 100th for you!"

Neil always tells me that G-d has blessed his mom with a long, healthy life because she always took such amazing care of her mother and father.

Sunday dawned a bright sunny day and everyone enjoyed the sparkling sunshine in our backyard. The buffet was sumptuous and the tables were bedecked in floral linens and fresh, pretty pink flowers. *We hadn't seen her smile or heard her sing in a very long time, so it filled our hearts to see her enjoying her party.*

Becky knew it was her day. She looked glamorous in a crème cashmere sweater with a matching throw on her knees to keep her warm. Her hair and nails were done and her makeup was impeccable. She looked beautiful and she was so happy. We hadn't seen her smile or heard her sing in a very long time, so it filled our hearts to see her enjoying her party. It was very sentimental for me to see my wishes for Becky come true!

—Rachel

Tomato Cuajado

4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided
5 medium tomatoes, diced
3 14oz cans diced tomatoes, strained
1 tsp sugar
9 large eggs
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
4 thick slices of challah (cut into bite size pieces)
1 8oz container feta cheese
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup grated Romano cheese (optional)
1 cup chopped Italian parsley
1 egg, whisked for egg wash
Preheat oven to 425°F.

In a saucepan, warm 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add the fresh tomatoes and simmer on low heat for 15 minutes.

Add the canned tomatoes and sugar and simmer for another 15 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the challah, Parmesan, Romano and Feta cheeses, tomatoes and parsley.

Gently combine all the ingredients.

Grease an ovenproof dish with remaining olive oil and heat the dish in the oven for 10 minutes. Pour the egg and tomato mixture into the warm dish.

Spread the egg wash on top of the mixture.

Place cuajado on the middle rack of the oven. Bake 30-40 minutes, until cuajado is golden brown on top and firm in the center.

Notes: Becky's trick of warming dish in the oven guarantees a crunchy crust.

Cuajado leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a week.

Reheat cuajado in oven warmed 350°F. Freezes well in a well-sealed container.

Rachel Sheff and Sharon Gomperts have been friends since high school. They love cooking and sharing recipes. They have collaborated on Sephardic Educational Center projects and community cooking classes. Follow them on Instagram @sephardicspicegirls and on Facebook at Sephardic Spice SEC Food.

How Zoom Helped Preserve a Sephardi Baking Tradition - Shared by Lisa and Vivienne Capelouto [Here](#)

Lisa Capelouto remembers the women in her community gathering when she was little to make phyllo dough at her grandmother's home in what was Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. "They would stand around the table and pull and pull until they got this pastry thin enough. And then each one would take their own portion home," she says.

A generation earlier, her mother Vivienne remembers: "Every Friday, I think every Sephardi woman made some sort of savory pastry." They were served on Shabbat mornings for desayuno, the Spanish and Ladino word for breakfast. Depending on the week and baker's preference, there might be flakey snail-shaped pastries called [boyos filled with spinach and feta](#), savory [eggplant pastelikos](#), or yeast rolls with orange blossom water known as [roskas](#) served alongside [long cooked eggs or haminados](#), feta, and olives.

For generations, these recipes weren't written down and measuring cups weren't the standard units, instead, many women in their community used Turkish coffee cups. Their hands knew the ways of Sephardic cooking from Rhodes, a Greek Island near the coast of Turkey, and Spain before that. (Lisa notes that there were also some Jews on Rhodes from Venice, which is where her last name is from. Her mother's maiden name is Leon, from the León province in northern Spain.)

During the Spanish expulsion, like many Sephardi Jews, their family fled to what was then the Ottoman Empire. On Rhodes, they built a strong Jewish community where customs and traditions from Spain, as well as Ladino, were preserved for several centuries. But, starting at the end of the 19th century, men from the community began to migrate to Africa in search of economic opportunities, settling in the Congo and Rhodesia. Vivienne's uncle — her father's eldest brother — was among them. He arrived in 1902 and brought several of his siblings in the following years. "The whole community, slowly, slowly from Rhodes, began to move. And eventually they were all scattered, running small businesses often in mining towns," she explains. Tragically, the Jews who remained in Rhodes were deported to Auschwitz during the war where many perished. One of Vivienne's grandmothers was on the last boat to leave Rhodes for Africa in 1942.

Vivienne was born the next year and when she was a child, there was a strong, well established Sephardi presence in Salisbury, the capital, which is now Harare. "We grew up in a very warm community. It was almost like they recreated the community in Rhodes in Rhodesia. It was very special," she says.

Life cycle events like weddings and bar mitzvahs were celebrated with everyone and women would gather before them to make fresh [marzipan](#), baklava, and other sweets together. In the early days, they baked at someone's home, but when the community built a synagogue with a kitchen, the cooking festivities migrated there. "And the older woman taught the younger ones," Vivienne explains.

More than half a century later, those intricate culinary traditions and recipes are starting to fade. "It's really getting lost," Lisa explains. "There's no Stella of our generation," she says referring to cookbook author [Stella Hanan Cohen](#), who documented many of these recipes in her beautiful book "[Stella's Sephardic Table: Jewish Family Recipes from the Mediterranean Island of Rhodes](#)."

But during the pandemic, Vivienne helped reverse that tide with cooking lessons. A handful of cousins from New York to Belgium, South Africa, and Israel gathered on Zoom with her to learn to make a few of the community's signature foods. "People from literally all over the world [joined] — we all did it together," Lisa says. Vivienne sent out shopping lists for ingredients and told everyone what to prepare in advance. And with the help of Lisa's father who held up the phone at times, they made pastelikos, borekitas, boyos, and other dishes together. Not everyone's pastries came out as beautifully as the ones Vivienne makes, concedes Lisa. "I mean, she's really the queen." But it was a start.

A year later, one of Vivienne's nieces asked for a refresher and the two of them met over Facetime. "I felt a gratitude that I could pass it on — and that there was this technology that enabled us to do it," she says.

Read the full article from the Jewish Food Society with additional family recipes including Eggplant Pastelikos, Spinach and Feta Boyos, and Orange Blossom Roskas [Here](#).



Vivienne Capelouto with her parents, her sister, three first cousins, and two aunts.



Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



Calendar year 2024 is a leap year, meaning February will have 29 days. The current Jewish year 5784 is also a leap year, but instead of adding a single day, an entire month is added. And as it happens this year, the "leap" month of February 2024, corresponds with the Hebrew "leap" month of the "Adar I", the "first" month of Adar, 5784.

The reason for a leap year in both calendars is primarily the same, which is to keep the calendar in sync with the seasons. Since the Earth takes approximately 365.2422 days to complete one orbit around the Sun, the solar year is slightly longer than 365 days, so without leap years, the calendar year would gradually fall out of alignment with the seasons. In the Jewish calendar, aligning the seasons is even more critical, because it is based on the lunar year, which is approximately 354 days long, or some 11 days shorter than the solar year. Since the Torah mandates that all our Biblical holidays be celebrated in their specific seasons, meaning the High Holidays and Sukkot in the fall, Pesach in the spring and Shavuot in the summer, the Jewish calendar must be adjusted to the solar cycle every few years. Otherwise, left to its own devices, the Jewish lunar cycle left unadjusted with the year's solar seasons, would have these holidays occurring in different seasons almost every year. The perfect example of this is the Islamic calendar, which is strictly lunar, resulting in the holy month of 'Ramadan' moving steadily backwards, eventually circling throughout the solar calendar and all four seasons. This cannot be allowed in the Jewish calendar.

The solution instituted by our Sages was to add an extra Hebrew month, a "leap month" when the lunar cycle pushes back the month of Nissan and toward winter. This addition was ultimately made seven times every 19 years, meaning every 2-3 years.

After much discussion in the Talmud, it was decided that the most appropriate month to be the "leap month" would be an additional Adar since Adar is the last month of the Hebrew year and marks the end of the winter season. In Temple times, there was not yet a fixed Hebrew calendar, and determination of whether there was a need for a leap year was made by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court, based on seasonal and agricultural considerations. They determined that the best time to declare a leap year and extra month of Adar would be as close as possible to the end of the regular Adar. Thus, if the Sages saw toward the end of Adar that the rainy/winter season seemed to be longer than anticipated, they would announce the addition of additional month of Adar. However, since Adar comes before Nissan and the onset of spring, the Sages had to prevent confusion amongst the people and ensure that Pesah would be celebrated in its proper time. Therefore, two Adars were proclaimed, Adar I and Adar II, with Purim and any other special day or occasion occurring in Adar being pushed to Adar II, both to mark the end of winter and onset of spring as well as maintain the 30-day interval between Purim and Pesah, which is how the people knew Pesah was on its way. Otherwise, in the absence of a fixed calendar, people might celebrate Purim during the first Adar during a leap year, count 30 days, and end up celebrating Pesah a full month before its proper time. So the 'extra' month of Adar is Adar I, with Adar II corresponding to the 'true' Adar in terms of the seasons and celebration of Pesah.

This entire system of setting leap years by the Sanhedrin ended by the 4th century CE, after the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersion of Jews throughout the world. This situation created a critical and even existential need for Judaism to fix a perpetual and uniform calendar, which, according to Jewish tradition quoted by Hai Gaon, was done by the Sage Hillel the Second and a special group of Sages in 358/359 CE. This daunting and unprecedented task obviously called for complicated and meticulous astronomical, scientific, and even philosophic knowledge and calculations. This historical and unprecedented accomplishment in itself is quite amazing when one considers the fact that there were obviously no technological means at our Sages' disposal,

and even the telescope had not been invented. The Sages literally looked up and studied the sky, measured the length of the lunar month, and calculated when there was a need to adjust to the solar calendar and declare a leap year by adding a second month of Adar. But more amazing is the result of our Sages' genius: According to modern measurements taken from satellites orbiting the earth, the lunar month is exactly 29.53058 days long. Hillel the Second and our Sages of antiquity calculated the lunar month to be 29.53059 solar days, which is virtually identical. Such was the genius and accuracy of our Sages in determining the perpetual Jewish calendar, which is still the one we use today.



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Angel for Shabbat, Parashat Yitro
JewishIdeas.org

Albert Einstein commented on the nature of Jewish ideals: "The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice, and the desire for personal independence--these are the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my stars that I belong to it." (The World as I See It, p. 103).

Einstein believed that Jewish civilization was magnificent and unique in cultivating education, justice and personal autonomy. It provides the moral and intellectual framework for individuals to achieve personal fulfillment and to be constructive members of society.

We Jews, like Einstein, should "thank our stars" that we belong to the Jewish tradition.

Many of the foundational values of Judaism are found in this week's Torah portion. We read of G-d's revelation of the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, commandments that serve as the basis of a moral society. We read the description of the people of Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation--a people that must be devoted to righteousness and holiness. We also learn the importance of taking personal responsibility.

The Torah portion begins with the words "Vayishma Yitro"--and Yitro heard. News had reached him about the miraculous salvation of the Israelites at the Red Sea and about their battle with Amalek. A Hassidic master asked: why did the Torah specify that Yitro heard about these things? Everyone, not just Yitro, had heard about the exploits of the Israelites. The Rebbe answered: others heard, but Yitro listened. Yitro was special because he drew conclusions from the news he received. He realized that he should meet with Moses and the Israelites, that he should stand in solidarity with them, that he should find ways of helping them.

We are barraged by news, by demands, by problems, by requests: many people hear these things, but then tune them out. Special people listen. They try to understand what is at stake and what role they can play. And they act accordingly. Those who hear are those who stand back, who are "the silent majority". Those who listen are the ones who enter the fray and change the world for the better.

The parasha includes the Ten Commandments. Significantly, the Ten Commandments are in the singular--not plural--form. G-d speaks to each individual. The Midrash comments that G-d's voice reached each person according to his/her ability to comprehend. G-d wanted every person to listen to His words and take them personally; he did not want them simply to hear Him.

Listening is a quality that demands that we pay close attention to what is being said, that we be attuned to the

feelings and needs of others, that we come to feel a genuine empathy with them. By listening, we then can decide on appropriate words and actions that may be helpful.

Yitro's ability to listen, not just to hear, distinguished him from so many others of his generation. So, too, each of us can learn to be better listeners, more sympathetic helpers, and more constructive participants in building better families, communities and society as a whole.



Rabbi Daniel Bouskila
Sephardic Educational Center - Israel

Sephardic Torah from the Holy Land | My Heart is in the East

Welcome to my renewed column, "Sephardic Torah from the Holy Land."

It's been over three months since I've written something for the Jewish Journal. My last column was written in another era, in what seems like a galaxy far, far away – a week before October 7, 2023. I wrote that column as Peni and I prepared to board a plane to Israel, to celebrate Sukkot and then spend a few weeks with our son Ilan and his wife Kayla. They got married in Israel in February 2023, are both IDF veterans, live in Herzliya, and had just returned home to Israel from a honeymoon trip in Thailand a few days before Sukkot. Ilan was scheduled to start his second year of law school at Reichman University, and Kayla her Mechina year at Bar Ilan. Peni and I planned to stay in Israel for about a month, including for meetings and events in Jerusalem with my organization, the Sephardic Educational Center.

Three months later, Ilan is now an Israeli war veteran, having served in a frontline infantry unit in Gaza, fighting in the ground war from its very first days. Kayla served in her search and rescue unit, doing patrols and guard duty on the northern border. While this brave couple served Israel in wartime, Peni and I spent all of our time worrying, not sleeping a wink, and volunteering everywhere we could, delivering supplies to IDF bases, helping evacuated families, and supporting families of hostages during our frequent visits to "Hostage Square" (a place I call "The Kotel of Tel Aviv"). We were even privileged to meet and spend time with Meirav Tal, who spent 53 days in horrific captivity as a hostage in Gaza.

As long as our kids were serving in this war, Peni and I refused to come back to LA. A one-month trip became 6 weeks, 8 weeks, possibly one year...until we came to a decision that was a long time in the making for us: this trip to Israel will be permanent, as we have now made Aliya and proudly call Israel our home – no longer just metaphorically, but actually.

In the iconic words of the Sephardic poet Rabbi Judah Halevi – "Our hearts are in the East" – and now – so is our home. Welcome to my renewed column, "Sephardic Torah from the Holy Land."

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila is the international director of the Sephardic Educational Center.



Rabbi Bouskila's son comes home from Gaza to a big hug

Essay Contest

Learn more here: <https://www.sephardicbrotherhood.com/essaycompetition>

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Entry & Guidelines

Share an original, previously unpublished work of prose (fictional or memoiristic) that gives voice to the experiences of the Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jewish communities (whether from family lore, lived experience, community heritage, life stories, etc.).

Work submitted must not exceed the maximum of 2,000 words and must be written in English prose. Genre may be memoir, (auto)biography or fiction.

***Submissions may include expressions or terms drawn from Ladino or other relevant languages.**

Need for Our Help

Marty Genee, Vice President of the Board of Trustees of Kehila Kedosha Janina, and a member of the Board of the United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina, came to us with a heartfelt request: to publicize the need of a Brotherhood member, Maury Siegel. Maury is in dire need of a kidney. His story is here: www.nkr.org/vyp642 Please spread the word.

Our documentary filmmaker, Arlene Schulman, has found herself laid off from her job. Arlene is multi-talented. If you know of any jobs, contact us at museum@kkjasm.org and we will pass on Arlene's contact.

Our museum director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, is an experienced genealogist. If you are from our community and need help finding your roots, contact Marcia at museum@kkjasm.org. For a donation to the museum, Marcia can help you access archival info from Ioannina and info on your family here in the USA.

News from Our Community

We are blessed to have a President at Kehila Kedosha Janina who is everywhere. Just this month alone he was at the UN for the Holocaust Commemoration and at the cutting ceremony of the Vasilopita in Astoria. There are those who say, "Where's Waldo?" We at Kehila Kedosha Janina say "Where's Marvin!"



Picture of the Month



Ioannina - 1920's

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. **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.



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February 2024
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