



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

November 2024 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we entered the New Year of 5785, for Jews our lives have been irrevocably changed. Many would question how we could possibly celebrate when so many of us both here in the United States and in Israel are so saddened by the events on October 7, 2023. Great Rabbis throughout the centuries have commented on this dilemma, as mentioned by Rabbi Gershon Harris (see October issue of our newsletter): "we must not allow our spirit to be broken, or our faith tested by not celebrating the High Holy Days and Simcha Torah in as much joy we can muster under the circumstances. We must demonstrate to ourselves and our enemies that the Jewish spirit and life cannot and will not be broken. Shana Tova, G'mar Hatima Tova, and Hag Sameah to one and all, and may we know peace and the end of our tribulations speedily.



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

This newsletter, our 187th will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjsm.org.

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

We are open for Shabbat 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 info@kkjsm.org

Passings

We were deeply saddened by the passing of Walter Pappas, husband of Pearl Colchamiro. A moving Memorial tribute took place at KKJ on October 27.



We mourn the passing and celebrate the blessed and long life of Sally Soulika Kamhi Elias from Kastoria. Sally Elias (nee Soulika Kamhi) passed away on October 26. She was 99 years old. Thankfully her passing was peaceful, in bed in her own home, after a lengthy struggle with Alzheimer's. Soulika was always sweet and kind and giving. And, tiny as she was, strong. And tough. A Holocaust survivor who spent two years of her teenage life in Auschwitz. Her funeral will be in Davie, Florida, where she will be reunited with her husband, Pinhas Eliaou, her daughter Bonita, and Bonita's youngest, Adam. She is survived by her sister Anna, two grandsons, Paul and Brian Goodstein, and son Isidore Elias.



We mourn each of the heroes who have fallen defending the State of Israel over the past year. We were saddened by the loss of one soldier who was connected to our friends at the Sephardic Educational Center (SEC): Rabbi Aviram Hariv. From Rabbi Daniel Bouskila: "It is with great sadness that I read the bitter news about my beloved colleague Rabbi Aviram Hariv, who fell in battle in Lebanon as a hero of Israel. I loved him very much, he was among the members of Beit Midrash Sh'arei Uziel (in the Sephardic Educational Center) that I loved the most. Smart, learned, friendly, socially conscious, loved humanity, a deep lover and defender of Israel, a great teacher and leader, beloved family man, a dear colleague. Despite the holiday, this is a day of great mourning. When I return to Israel, we will organize a memorial service and a Torah study evening in his memory at our Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. I am stricken with a deep sadness on his death. Rest in peace my dear colleague, I salute you, hero of Israel."



Visitors to Kehila Kedosha Janina & Past Events

October was a very busy month for our Kehila! We reconnected with hundreds of community members throughout the High Holiday season; celebrated Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atseret, and Simhat Torah in our beloved Romaniote traditions; and welcomed hundreds of new friends through museum tours from local schools and through the Open House New York program. When you are in the Lower East Side, contact us and come visit us!



Selihot Services



Decorating the KKJ Sukkah



Lulav & Etrog



Open House New York



Jessica Ruetter & Jordan Salama



Student groups from Stuyvesant High School



Open House New York



Baruch Feldman from the Venouziou family

Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network hosted a beautiful Rosh Hashana dinner with more than 50 young community members. They participated in KKJ evening services and then led a traditional Rosh Hashana seder with symbolic foods like pomegranates, dates, leeks, squash, apples and honey, black eyed peas, a fish head, and more, and they recited special prayers in Hebrew, English, Greek, and Ladino.

They also recently hosted a popular fall nature hike in New Jersey. They had a gorgeous day with amazing views and great energy, and even enjoyed delicious kosher Turkish food afterwards.



Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

"A Sephardi Turkish Patriot"

New Book Presentation by Author Anthony Gad Bigio – November 3 at 1pm

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjasm.org



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi

ARE HONORED TO WELCOME

ANTHONY GAD BIGIO

FOR A PRESENTATION OF HIS NEW BOOK

**A SEPHARDI
TURKISH PATRIOT**



SUNDAY NOVEMBER 3 AT 1PM

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC**

Join us for a presentation on the fascinating life of Gad Franco (1881–1954), a prominent Sephardic journalist, lawyer, and jurist, who worked relentlessly for the Jewish community's belonging to the national Turkish polity, and for the consolidation of the rule of law. This historical biography, written by his grandson, takes the reader from Izmir to Istanbul and beyond at the turn of the twentieth century.

The world of Sephardi Jewry, the convulsions and conflicts of the late Ottoman Empire, and the birth, ruthless consolidation, and promising reforms of the young Turkish Republic, provide the context to this intriguing life story.

Following the presentation, the author will join Natalia Indrimi, Executive Director of Centro Primo Levi, for an engaging panel discussion.

SIGNED BOOKS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJSM.ORG

We Want to Hear from You!
Please fill out the KKJ Community Survey

Access the survey here: <https://bit.ly/kkjsurvey>

WE NEED YOUR HELP

FILL OUT THE KKJ COMMUNITY SURVEY



We want to hear from you!

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on how we can grow our community & improve our activities to better serve you. Thank you!



**Take the survey at:
bit.ly/kkjsurvey**

News from Jewish Greece

The President of the Republic Katerina Sakellaropoulou, as part of her visit to Poland for the 19th Informal Meeting of the Heads of State of the Arraiolos Group (11.10.24), went to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.



After the tour and the laying of wreaths at the Wall of Death and the Memorial to the Victims, the President said: "Words are not enough to describe the horror of the Holocaust, the methodical extermination by the Nazi regime of millions of Jews, including thousands of Greeks, as well as many other fellow human beings. An unimaginable barbarity that has indelibly scarred not only European culture, but also the history of the entire humanity. At a time when peace, democracy and human rights are being tested on so many fronts, it is the duty of all of us to continue to fight so that such heinous crimes never be repeated."

German president in Greece 'filled with shame' by past Nazi crimes Full article [Here](#)

At the start of his visit to Greece on Tuesday, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed Germany's shame over crimes committed by Nazi occupiers in the country.



Steinmeier said the many smaller places where the Nazis committed atrocities should be included in the commemoration of German crimes during World War II. Only in this way can "the memory of the victims and the suffering be upheld," said Steinmeier.

The persecution of Jews by Germany's Nazi regime had taken place throughout Europe, he said. "It's not just about numbers when we remember, it's also about showing time and again that behind the numbers are faces, names, fates and relatives who share the suffering of their parents and grandparents right up to the second and third generation," said Steinmeier. After his arrival, the German president visited the site where a future Holocaust Museum is being built in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. He was accompanied by Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou.

The crimes perpetrated in Greece during World War II after fascist Italy and Nazi Germany occupied the country in 1941 are the focus of Steinmeier's three-day official visit. The German president is being accompanied by his wife, Elke Büdenbender. The museum is currently being built with German support near the transit camp where Jews were gathered before being deported to the concentration camps. "Anyone who stands and speaks here as German president is filled with shame," said Steinmeier.

Before the war, the Jewish community in Greece numbered around 80,000. The majority, around 50,000 of them, lived in Thessaloniki. Beginning in March 1943, most of them were deported to the Nazi Auschwitz extermination camp in German-occupied Poland and murdered.

Only around 12% of Greek Jews survived the Holocaust. The museum should not only be a memorial to the millions of victims, said David Saltiel, chairman of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki: "It should become a beacon, a shining symbol against racism and anti-Semitism, a constant reminder of the values of humanity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence."

Steinmeier said that remembrance and commemoration are important. However, in times when democracy is being challenged as much as it is today, "we must also see a museum like this as a mandate to stand up for democracy today," he said. On Thursday, Steinmeier also plans to visit the town of Kandanos on the island of Crete, which was almost completely destroyed by German troops in June 1941. Steinmeier is also to pay tribute to Greek efforts in taking in refugees during the trip. Around 46,000 people have reached the country by sea this year so far, more than in the whole of last year. He is scheduled to visit the Malakasa Reception Facility near Athens which provides for the registration and temporary accommodation of refugees.

Thessaloniki

From our friend Leon Saltiel: Very moving ceremony on October 29, at the construction site of the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki, in the presence of the Presidents of Greece and Germany, Katerina Sakellariopoulou and Bundespräsident Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who both reiterated the importance of memory and the fight against antisemitism and all discrimination.



Visit of the Presidents of Greece and Germany to the site of the Holocaust Museum under Construction in Thessaloniki

The President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, on 29.10.2024, visited together the premises of the Greek Holocaust Museum under construction in Thessaloniki, they spoke with two Holocaust survivors from I. K. Thessaloniki and symbolically planted two pomegranate trees.



Mr. Steinmeier presented the Museum with a scrapbook of photographs from Ioannina showing the transport of Romani Greek Jews, who lived there, to the Nazi concentration camps and, as he said, the first photograph shows a girl crying and from her face he understands nobody what was about to happen. The president of the Central Jewish Council of Greece and president of I.K. Thessaloniki, David Saltiel, who received it, stated that this album will be the first historical document to be placed in the new Museum.

Upon arriving at the venue, the two Presidents met with Holocaust survivors Rina Revach and Rosie Saltiel, 85 and 89 years old respectively, and had a human conversation with them. As Ms. Revach told APE-MPE, Mr. Steinmeier wanted to learn from her and Ms. Saltiel their history - where they were displaced, the conditions of their detention, etc., while he expressed his satisfaction with the fact that the Holocaust Museum of Greece is now on track for implementation.

An event followed and in his greeting Mr. Saltiel pointed out: "Today we are in a holy place! From here, 50,000 Greek Jews were loaded into cattle cars, of which 12,800 fought on the Albanian front for their homeland. We are in Thessaloniki, which was called Madre de Israel, that is, Mother of Israel, which before the war had a prominent position in the Sephardic Jewry of Europe with a multitude of institutions, priestly schools and synagogues.

Today we welcome the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs. Katerina Sakellariopoulou, after her recent visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps, as well as the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and honorary member of our Community, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, of whose commitment and continuous interest in the Museum were decisive. The bonds we strengthened, the relationships we cultivated, are not only a sign of friendship, cooperation and reconciliation, but also a shared responsibility towards History".

Regarding the Museum under construction, he said that it will not just be a place of remembrance for the millions of victims. "It will be a beacon, a bright symbol against racism and anti-Semitism, a constant reminder of the value of humanity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It will appeal to all generations, both present and future, offering a living history lesson. The Museum will be a center for research and documentation, memory and education. It will be the body that will bring to light the stories of the Jews of Thessaloniki, but also of the communities of the rest of Greece in Didymoteicho, Xanthi, Serres, Drama, Alexandroupolis, Kavala, Veria, Kastoria, Ioannina, Arta, Corfu, Kefallonia, Zakynthos, Karditsa, Trikala, Larissa, Volos, Chalkida, Athens, Patras, Crete, Rhodes, Kos.

The location of the Museum is of the utmost symbolic and historical importance, making it unique as it is being erected on the same spot where the tragedy began. It is near the transfer ghetto where our co-religionists gathered before their deportation, Baron Hirsch's camp, and next to the same tracks."

The president of the Central Jewish Council of Greece thanked Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis for his undivided support and the donors. Namely, the Greek state, the German state and President Steinmeier, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and its president Andreas Drakopoulos, the Genesis Prize Foundation and Albert Burla of Thessaloniki. He also thanked the Municipality of Thessaloniki, the Region of Central Macedonia and TRAINOSE for their contribution to the construction of the Museum and the creation of a memorial park.

The architect, head of the Makridis Associates office, Petros Makridis, mentioned the progress of the works for the construction of the Museum, explaining - among other things - that within the first quarter of 2025 there will be the appointment of the main contractor, the main construction works are expected to start before April 2025 and the completion of the project is expected in the first quarter of 2027. Mr. Makridis also mentioned that the project is mainly due to the persistence of two people, the president of the Israelite Community of Thessaloniki and the Central Israelite Council of Greece and of the former mayor of the city, Yannis Boutaris.

The Holocaust Museum of Greece is a monument to the long multicultural life of the city, Mr. Makridis emphasized and added that this Museum recalls the uniqueness of the Jewish history of Thessaloniki but also belongs to all the past and present communities of the city. As he characteristically said, it will not only offer a retrospective of reconciliation with the past, but also a future recognition of a new collective history of tolerance.

During the event, the soprano Mariangela Hadjistamatiou sang Eli Eli in Spanish-Hebrew (Latin). In attendance were - among others - the Deputy Minister of the Interior (Macedonia and Thrace) Kostas Giulekas, the German Ambassador to Greece, Andreas Kindle, the Consul General of Germany in Thessaloniki, Monica Frank, the Charge d'Affaires of the Israeli Embassy in Athens Doron Lebovitz, the former coach of the National Football Team, Oto Rehaegel, the Secretary General of the New Democracy Parliamentary Group Stavros Kalafatis, the MPs Dimitris Kouvelas, Diamantis Golidakis, Theodoros Karaoglou, the SYRIZA-PS MP and party president candidate Sokratis Famellos, the mayors of Thessaloniki Stelios Angeloudis, Pylaia-Hortiati Ignatios Kaitezidis, the Metropolitans of Thessaloniki Philotheos, Neapolis-Stavroupolis Varnavas, representatives of the diplomatic corps of Thessaloniki, the Coordinator of the Prime Minister's Office in Macedonia Yiannis Papageorgiou, the president of the Municipal Council of Thessaloniki Spyros Vougias, the former mayor of Thessaloniki Konstantinos Zervas, representatives of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Genesis Prize Foundation.

Statement by German President Steinmayer

The President of Germany made important statements focusing on the debt for the memory of the Holocaust and the Holocaust Museum. According to a press release of the German News Agency (DPA), Mr. Steinmeier pointed out: "Only in this way will the memory of the victims and the suffering be preserved (...) The persecution of the Jews by the National Socialists happened all over Europe. When we remember them, we must keep in mind that they are not just numbers. We must show, again and again, that behind the numbers are faces, names, destinies and relatives, who up to the second or third generation share the pain of their parents and grandparents."

The press release also mentions Mr. Steinmeier's visit to the construction site of the future Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki. As noted, the Museum is being built with German support near the transit camp, where the Jews were gathered before being transported to the concentration camps. "Whoever stands here and speaks as Federal President is full of shame," Mr. Steinmeier said, while the report added that of the approximately 80,000 Jews living in Greece before the war, only 12% survived the Holocaust. Frank-Walter Steinmeier also stated, according to dpa, that memory and paying tribute are important. In times when democracy is so contested, as it is today, "we must see this Museum as a mandate to defend democracy today," he stressed.

October 7 Memorial Event Held in Thessaloniki

On October 7, 2024, a memorial service was held at the Yad Lezikaron Synagogue in memory of the Israeli citizens and soldiers who were lost in the terrorist attack by Hamas, exactly one year before, on 7 October 2023.

The ceremony co-organized by the Central Jewish Council of Greece, I.K. Thessaloniki and the Embassy of Israel in Greece, honored with their presence His Eminence Archimandrite Eusebius Nakopoulos as the representative of His Holiness Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Mr. Philotheos, the Inspector General of the Police of Northern Greece, Lieutenant General Christos Bouloumbasis, the Deputy Regional Governor for Culture and Sports, Christos Mittas as a representative of the Regional Governor of Central Macedonia Apostolos Dziztikosta, the Consul of the Embassy of Israel, Danny Sivan, the Member of Parliament of the Republic of Greece, Anna Efthymiou, the Consul General of the USA, Jerrier (Jerry) Ismail, the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Monika Frank, the Consul General of France and Director of the French Institute of Thessaloniki Jean-Luc Lavaud, the Honorary Consul of Spain in Thessaloniki, Samuel Nahmias, the coordinator of the Prime Minister's office, Yiannis Papageorgiou, the President of the Hellas-Israel Friendship Association, Mrs. Gianna Panagopoulou, members of the Community Council and the Community Assembly of I.K.Th. and a crowd of people.



The ceremony started with psalms from the choir of I.K.Th. while then the Most Wise Rabbi of I.K.Th. Izhak Dayan held a memorial service. Then, in an emotional atmosphere, the Rabbi of I.K.Th. Addressing the audience, Izhak Dayan recalled the constant challenges faced by the State of Israel, in its 76 years of life, from those - then and now - who seek its annihilation, but also the resilience of the Jewish people, which is founded, from generation to generation, in his belief in unity, solidarity and mutual understanding.

Immediately after, the Vice-President of the Community Council, Mr. Lazaros Sefikha, took the podium and noted: "A few days ago, Jews around the world celebrated Rosh Hashanah. I can't even imagine how those who lost their loved ones feel a year later. How the relatives and friends of the hostages feel, facing still empty chairs at the festive table, if there is one. The October 7 attack dragged Israel into a war that only those who planned and carried it out wanted. Tonight we mourn every unnecessary loss of life. For every death caused as a result of anti-Semitism and Hamas' clearly stated mission to destroy Israel and exterminate all Jews."

In another disgust of his speech, Mr. Sefiha underlined: "Unfortunately, the world sees selectively in Israel's war against terrorism. Most of those who engage in such acts have no knowledge of the history of the Middle East, the different peace proposals that have been repeatedly put forward and rejected by the Palestinians over the decades, or the longstanding positions of Hamas. ... Unfortunately the war is intensifying and expanding. Israel will defend its land and its citizens. It is a war of Democracy against totalitarianism. A war of our culture against fanatic obscurantism. That should be clear." Concluding his statement, he said: "May every effort for peace succeed soon and thus begin the gradual healing of the wounds caused to the families of the victims, the hostages and to the Israeli society, the unquenchable hatred against the Jews and Israel. For each of us one thing is certain, the people of Israel will live."

Finally, the Consul of the Embassy of Israel, Danny Sivan, spoke who, among other things, spoke about the pain of the relatives and friends of those who were murdered or kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

For the effects - in the space of this one year - of the abhorrent terrorist attack by Hamas - on the society of Israel, but also for how the Jewish people, despite the shock and mourning, showed and shows strength to win this battle against to all those who seek his destruction. He made special reference to the case of his own people who lived in kibbutzim who were attacked and were saved by luck while they were away in Jerusalem, as well as Eden Ben Rubi, one of the victims of the terrorists who was born in Thessaloniki, grew up in Israel and spent many summers of her youth at the camp organized by the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki. In closing, he wished those who are captives in the hands of terrorists to return to their homes soon and for peace to prevail. The ceremony ended with songs from the choir of I.K.Th. and the observance of a minute's silence.

Flower of Vlora – Presentation in Thessaloniki

On October 6 in the packed hall of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, The Jewish Museum of Thessalonika and Epikentro Publications organized the presentation of Dr. Anna Cohen's book titled: "The Flower of Vlora". The audience was welcomed by the Museum Committee Chairman, Mr. Isaac - Nino Saltiel. The Consul of Albania in Thessaloniki talked about the book, Mr. Erida Dobrushki, Assistant Professor of History of Jewish Communities of the Department of History and Archaeology Antoniou, the Assistant Professor of Children's Literature of the Pedagogical Department of Primary Education Goulis and the author of the book Dr. Anna Cohen, President of the Organization of Albanian American Women, Florida Chapter. The book is a personal account of her family's rescue from the Holocaust during World War II (thanks to the generosity of the Albanian people) as well as Anna's struggles as a child raised under the Communist dictatorship that her family endured after war. A special note to the event was given by the testimony of Mrs. Frinda Matalon, who shared with the audience the experiences of rescuing her own family in Albania. The discussion was coordinated by the Scientific Manager of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, Dr. Xenia Eleftheriou. The presentation ended melodiously when Eliona - Eleni Siniari, of Albanian origin, and sang in Ladino the song she sings in the theater play "Luna" in which she participates.



In September the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki hosted the Jerusalem Cantors Choir for a special concert in the Monastirli Synagogue. Watch a video of the concert on [YouTube Here](#).



Volos

On Monday, October 7, 2024, a memorial service was held in the Holy Synagogue of Volos, in the presence of the members and friends of the Community, in memory of the Israeli citizens and soldiers who died in the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023. The memorial prayer was performed by the religious minister Makis Moisis, who also asked for a minute's silence to be observed in memory of the deceased victims. Markos I. Maisis, treasurer of the Board of Directors of I.K. Volos, read the messages of the President of Israel, Yitzhak Herzog and the Central Jewish Council of Greece, for this day. Afterwards, our Community member Lina G. Sabetai, read texts by her daughter and granddaughter describing the state of Judaism today and conveying messages of optimism and hope for the future. The ceremony ended by wishing that all the hostages would soon return to their homes and that PEACE would take place.



Athens

October 7 Memorial in Athens

In an emotional atmosphere, a memorial service was held on Monday 7.10.2024, at the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Athens, in memory of the Israeli citizens and soldiers who died in the terrorist attack by Hamas, exactly one year ago, on 7 October 2023.

The event was co-organized by KIS, the Jewish Community of Athens and the Embassy of Israel in Greece.

Ambassador of Israel to Greece [Noam Katz](#), said characteristically: "Today marks one year since the darkest day for the people of Israel. Hamas terrorists attacked by raping, kidnapping, inhumanely and brutally killing 1.200 people, while 101 people remain captives. We are here today for the memorial service, while the trauma still remains deep, an open wound that continues to bleed. But we cannot let sadness and despair overwhelm us, but instead we must turn our grief into strength. We will come out stronger, as always, the Jewish people have proven it in history. I hope and wish that all the captives will soon return to their homes and that peace will prevail."



President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, David Saltiel, pointed out: "And yet, a year has passed since the pogrom of October 7, 2023, and the world seems to have chosen to forget that day. But we don't, we count the days, 367. We share the pain of the relatives of the victims and the anguish of the relatives of the hostages. For them, every day that dawns is a new October 7th. It was a quiet autumn morning in Israel, a day of celebration turned into a day of mourning. It was the day of unparalleled and raging hatred of the Hamas terrorists. It was manifested with beheadings of children, executions of families, rapes, kidnappings, cold shootings of young people, who were singing and dancing. 1.200 people were massacred in the most inhuman ways and 250 were kidnapped and held hostage in the dark tunnels of Gaza. It is estimated that today 101 hostages may still be alive. It was the day terrorism struck the West and continues to do so. Today we remember and remind the world how Israel's war on terror began and wonder what state would let such an attack go unanswered. We are not indifferent to the devastating humanitarian crisis that the war has brought to Gaza. The people of Gaza are suffering and - to the extent that they do not support Hamas - they are suffering doubly: from the war, but also from the dictators to whom they are captive, from the terrorists who use the innocent as human shields, who hide weapons and ammunition in schools and playgrounds. Today we make one more appeal for the release of the hostages and one more prayer for the end of the war and the prevalence of peace. Here I would like to highlight the strong stance of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the government in favor of the just struggle of the people of Israel."

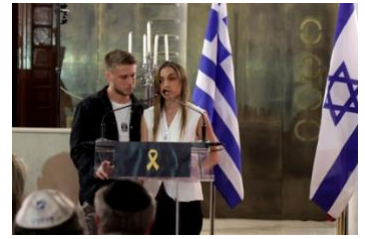


President of the Jewish Community of Athens, Albertos Taramboulous, during his speech he said among other things: "I wish we didn't have to be all here today. A year now, full of grief and anguish. 101 hostages have not yet returned home. They are unjustly detained and tortured by the terrorist organization Hamas. Over 1.200 victims, thousands injured, over 70.000 have left their homes. A year when we hear descriptions of rapes, beheadings, kidnappings of innocent citizens. We hurt and shudder at the thought, at the sight of unimaginable images, at the war sirens sounding in the year 2024. The battle is fierce and unequal. In this particular conflict, the struggle of the civilized world defending itself against terrorist organizations and regimes that challenge democracy, equality, freedom and the autonomy of a state is symbolized. The rise of terrorism does not start or stop in Israeli lands. It is a threat to human civilization and global cohesion. Today we remember the lost victims, we pray for the release of the hostages. In the dark times we are experiencing, however, we do not lose hope. The wounds are many, the gaps difficult to fill, but by agreeing on common bases, we can write a new chapter of peace and harmonious coexistence, definitively and irrevocably leaving behind us the blackest pages of history".

During the ceremony a [video was shown](#) edited by the embassy of Israel, which presented the pain and hope of the people of Israel, through difficulties and losses.

A special moment of the event was the description of the October 7, 2023 attack by two young Israelis, Ben and Zlil, who survived the terrorist attack at the 'Nova' music festival and shared their own story with the attendees. Living examples of courage and endurance, they captivated those present with their testimonies: "As bullets whizzed past our heads, we had to make a quick decision and run. Without knowing where to move, only with our instinct and following the rising sun. After 4,5 hours of walking and 24 kilometers, without water, without food and with a lack of sleep for many hours, we arrived safely at a point. Unfortunately, our friends didn't make it. In the days following the murderous attack, we were trying to come to terms with what we had been through and how we had managed to survive while others had not," said Ben.

There followed a memorial prayer by the Rabbi of Athens Gabriel Negrin, who prayed, among other things, for "true, just and lasting peace," and the event continued with two symbolic songs - "October Rain", by Eden Golan and "Gibor shel ima" - performed by [Solly Johanna accompanied by Danny Tzafoos](#) on the piano.



Closing the event, which was presented by the president of the Jewish Youth of Greece, Solomon Kampelis, the national anthems of Greece and Israel were played and a minute's silence was observed. Those present, during their exit to the courtyard of the Synagogue, lit candles for the victims, as a sign of collective memory and sadness.

The event was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and representative of the Prime Minister and the Greek Government Giorgos Gerapetritis, the Ministers of State Makis Voridis, Labor Niki Kerameus, Health Adonis Georgiadis, the Deputy Ministers of Development Zoi Rapti, Defense Yiannis Kefalogiannis, Labor Kostas Karagounis, Education Zetta Makris, Digital Governance Konstantinos Kyranakis, G.G. Giorgos Kalantzis of Religion, G.G. Defense Antonis Oikonomou, the special envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on anti-Semitism, Ambassador Chrysoula Aliferi, the Deputy Mayor of Athens Giorgos Giannaros, as well as many MPs, ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps and the media.

Rosh Hashana in Athens

The Jewish Community of Athens celebrated Rosh Hashana in the lobby of the War Museum, decorated with pomegranates and balloons with wishes for the Jewish New Year 5785. With their thoughts with the Israeli people who are being tested, a yellow balloon stood out and drew attention to the hostages and their families, for the difficult hours they are experiencing. We all pray for a better year, for a more auspicious future with hopeful news. Under the guidance of Rabbi Gabriel Negrin, who explained an introductory message, they all participated together in the traditional Seder with wishes and prayers. Among us was Cantor Mizrahi from Chicago, who gave us the opportunity to enjoy his wonderful voice. At his greeting, the President of our Community, Mr. Alvertos Taraboulous welcomed all of us, wished a sweet and creative year full of actions and experiences for young and old. The festive dinner, curated by Mr. and Mrs. Rachel Matsa, Milena Molho, Sam Pessach and Joseph Negrin under the supervision of our Rabbi Gabriel Negrin and Aviel Dahan. The beautiful evening was accompanied by melodies by Rosh Hashana and other songs by excellent musicians Solly Barkey, Mr. Theodore Lykouropoulos and Antigone Katsuri. We thank Mrs. Gina Grapsia for the artistic editing of the Seder and Mrs. Marietta Spanou for all the support before and during the event. We warmly thank Mr. Sammy Tournon for the pomegranates that, like every year, offered us for our Seder. We wish you a sweet year with health and peace!



Opening of the "Karya 1943" Exhibit in Athens

On Wednesday, October 16, 2024, the opening of the new periodical exhibition entitled "Karya 1943. Forced Labor and the Holocaust", which is presented simultaneously at the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Benaki Museum (Piraeus 138, Athens) and is dedicated to the subject of the forced labor of Greek Jews during the German occupation.

The evening started from the Jewish Museum of Greece with a small circle of official guests and with an emphasis on the descendants of the few survivors of Karya. The director of the Museum, Zanet Battinou, welcomed the attendees and gave a brief introduction about the history of the exhibition, the factors involved in the idea, the initial design and its final form.

The five partners, the Nazi Forced Labor Documentation Center of the Topography of Terror Foundation, the Memorial Foundation for the Murdered Jews of Europe and the University of Osnabruck from Germany, the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Benaki Museum from Greece, worked on this project, at the core of which is the amazing discovery and acquisition and above all the subsequent long and meticulous research of a photo album from the War years, bought by Andreas Assaël from Thessaloniki, while financed by the Foundation for Remembrance, the Responsibility and the Future and is under the patronage of the Greek Minister of Culture Lina Mendoni and the German Deputy Minister of Culture and Media Claudia Roth.

Afterwards, Mrs. Battinou emphasized the role of the EME to serve the task of memory and to present the events, the place of Karya and the life stories of the few survivors, whose testimonies shed light on the hard everyday life and the martyred deaths of the forced laborers, most of whom breathed their last in the ravine. Also, to spread the message of our own responsibility for the safety of our world today, engaging young minds through educational programs for schools and visiting groups.

He thanked the German partners, who entrusted EME with this remarkable program, the historian Dr. Jason Chandrino and the coordinator Alexios Detorakis, as well as the Greek partner, the Benaki Museum and its director Giorgos Magginis, who willingly partnered with EME and worked for the successful completion of the report.

Then, Ms. Stavroula - Willy Fotopoulou, Director of Contemporary Cultural Heritage of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, addressed a greeting, followed by Dr. Christine Glauning, Director of the Nazi Forced Labor Documentation Center of the Topography of Terror Foundation, who shared her experience with the attendees. Before the guests left the EME to move to the Benaki Museum for the second part of the inauguration, Mr. Andreas Assaël took the floor while the greetings were concluded with the president of the EME, Mr. Mikis Modiano.



The inauguration continued at the Benaki Museum, where the scientific director, Mr. Giorgis Magginis, welcomed the officials and the public with a speech. This was followed by the speeches of the Minister of Culture, Mr. Linas Mendonis, the Ambassador of Germany to Greece, Mr. Andreas Kindle, and Mr. Andreas Assaël, the researcher and author who brought to light the tragic story of the Karya massacre. The parallel release of Mr. Assael's book, entitled "[In the dungeons of death. A journey through the coercive Nazi projects of Christians and Jews in Greece with 350 anecdotal images](#)", (published by University Studio Press, Thessaloniki, September 2024). A symbolic presence at the opening event was Berta Karasso, granddaughter of Dzako Karasso, from Thessaloniki, who survived forced labor in Karia, who spoke about her grandfather's story. The exhibition will last until February 16, 2025 at the Jewish Museum of Greece and at the Benaki Museum / Piraeus 138.

Ioannina

Yom Kippur in Ioannina

Despite the ongoing war in Israel, more than 280 people from Israel, America, Canada, Mexico, France, Switzerland, Athens, Thessaloniki, Larissa and Volos arrived in Ioannina to celebrate with us the Judaism's biggest holiday. Among them, the former President of I.K. of Athens, Isaac Mordechai, the honorary members of our Community, Mr. Raphael Moussis and Avraam (Mimis) Cohen, the family of the -for a number of years- President of KIS, the late Moussis Konstantinis. The Mayor of Ioannina Thomas Begas, the Rector of the University Mrs. Anna Batistatou, the former Mayor of Ioannito, Dimitris Papageorgiou, representatives of the city authorities, University students, journalists of local newspapers, as well as several ordinary fellow citizens who have repeatedly expressed and continue to express practically their friendship and support to our Community.



At noon on the eve of the great celebration, in the presence of a large number of people, our religious minister, Mr. Chaim Ishakis, held a memorial service at the grave of the former Mayor of Ioannina and President of I.K. of Ioannina, Moses Elisaf, and then, Kandis also offered a memorial prayer in memory of the Yianniot-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, in front of the special memorial-cenotaph of the cemetery.

On the evening of the eve, during the Kal-Nidre liturgy, the memorial service for the repose of the souls of the Israeli soldiers and civilians who lost their lives in the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023 was held - amid great emotion. Among those present there was also a family of Israelis who were forced to leave their home on the border with Lebanon due to the constant shelling, as a result of which, their home was completely destroyed.

At the morning service, on the day of the great feast, all those who wanted to remember their deceased relatives and make donations for the maintenance of the Synagogue and the Cemetery of our Community were invited to Sefer. In the early afternoon, the service of Mincha began, followed by the service of Neyla, which was concluded in an atmosphere of intense rejoicing with the Priestly Blessing performed by 2 attending Kohaneim, and the sound of the Shofar.

Immediately after, we broke the fast all together in a hotel in our city where our Community hosted a celebratory dinner. After the end of the dinner, the President of the Community, Markos Battinos, spoke first, who after thanking all the guests for coming to Ioannina, wished them a happy birthday and expressed hope for the end of the war and the return of the hostages to their homes.

Afterwards, the general secretary of the Community, Mrs. Allegra Matsa, took the floor, who, after thanking Mr. Ishakis for his Romaniote service, wished all the visitors a happy birthday, thanking them for their presence in Ioannina .

Our Community had decided to honor after the end of the dinner Ms. Anna Bakola-Garti, born in Ioannina, a founding member of the Greek Jewish Heritage Center which is active in Israel and promotes the Romaniote heritage. Unfortunately, due to the state of emergency due to the ongoing war and the cancellation of many flights, Ms. Bakola was unable to attend the event. Ms. Allegra Matsa read her moving speech to the audience and expressed her hope that Ms. Bakola will be able to attend the next Yom-Kippur celebration next year so that our Community can honor her as she deserves.

We want to warmly thank all the visitors who honored us with their presence this year, realizing the vision of our late President and Mayor of our city, Moses Elisaf, for the celebration of Yom-Kippur in Yannena in a Synagogue full of people from all corners of the Earth. Their support gives life to our Community which is struggling in very difficult times to survive and preserve what is left of its great cultural heritage. We renew our appointment for next year and invite all co-religionists to come celebrate Yom-Kippur with us in Ioannina to live a truly unique experience!

Mazal Tov Anna Bakola Garty

We congratulate our friend Anna Bakola Garty in Israel who was recently honored by the Jewish Community of Ioannina for her diverse work and dedication to the heritage of Greece Jewry.



Chalkida

Celebration of Jewish Holidays by the Jewish Community of Chalkida

The Jewish Community of Chalkida celebrated the Yamim Noraim holidays with the participation of all its members, as well as visitors where they gave life to our small community.

The Ross Asana it started with the selikhot of the eve and ended the next day with the blowing of the shofar by the hazzan Mr. Haim Ishaki. In the afternoon we performed Taslich in the garden of the Synagogue. During his speech, the president Mr. Solon Maisis, in addition to the wishes, warmly thanked Mr. X. Ishakis and M. Levis for their many years of contribution to the Community.



The Yom Kippur It began with the Kal Nidre service, by Rabbi Mr. Handel calling the audience to prayer with reverence. The next day after the sound of the Shofar, we cut Tanith, in the courtyard of the Synagogue, with juices and sweets, offered by the Handel family. This was followed by dinner, offered by the Community, for our guests, who honored us and celebrated this Holy day with us.

A few days later we celebrated it Sukkot in the Sukkah, in the courtyard of the Synagogue, which was once again decorated with myrtle, reeds and fruit and was ready to welcome the members for the traditional dinner. On Thursday, October 24, a memorial service was held for the victims of the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023, with everyone wishing for the release and return of the hostages.

The curtain fell on the fall holidays with the Simcha Torah (Joy of the Law). The Arvit prayer was offered by Mr. Ishaki, followed by the customary processions of Sefarim with candles lit, singing the hymns of the holiday. We had the pleasure of celebrating with the participation of Israelis who live in Greece and who gave a different tone to the celebration.

Larissa

On Monday, October 7, 2024, the Larissa Community commemorated the tragic one-year anniversary of the barbaric terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel, with a moving event at our Club. The pain for the 1.200 innocent dead, for the 250 hostages, of which 101 are still being held in the bowels of Gaza, and for the soldiers who lose their lives in Israel's existential struggle, were expressed in the prayer and psalms recited by our Rabbi , Mr. Ilias Sabetai.



Afterwards, the Director of the Community, Alina Mousis, presented her experiences from her trip to Israel last February: a journey, in words and pictures, in the cities with the numb but strong people, in the voluntary actions for the relief and support of society, in the places of martyrdom and the places of memory of the atrocity, where the collective trauma still bleeds... The presentation ended with a video screening of a song by Naomi

Shemer, sung together by 2.000 Israelis, in the hope that peace and with it the security, tranquility, progress will flourish again in the land of Israel.

Closing the event, the President, Moses Manouah, emphasized that we must always remember the innocent victims of our people, but not allow terrorism to achieve its goal, by moving forward and continuing our community activity proud, strong and united.

Arta



The song "The Bridge of Arta" (Της Άρτας το Γιοφύρι) is a Greek folk ballad that tells the story of a human sacrifice made during the construction of the bridge. The song is based on the legend that the bridge would collapse every morning after the builders finished working on it during the day. To make the bridge secure, the master builder sacrificed his wife by burying her alive in the foundation. Her powerful soul became the bridge's guardian spirit.

The song has inspired many Greek proverbs and expressions related to delays. For example, the song includes the line, "All day they were building it, and in the night it would collapse". You can listen to a song called "So-Called Ballad of The 'Arta Bridge" by Greeks from Asia Minor [online Here](#).

Turkey



Antisemitic red paint was splattered on the door of the historic La Sinyora synagogue in Izmir in October. Nesim Ben Joya and the [Izmir Jewish Heritage Project](#) work tirelessly to restore and protect the historic Jewish sites in Izmir.

Kehila Kedosha Janina in the News

From Ioannina to Lower Manhattan: Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue

Full article by Daniel Cody in the Greek Reporter [Here](#)

On 280 Broome Street, a quiet subsection of the Lower East Side (LES) of Manhattan, a narrow but ornate Classical and Moorish Revival-style building sits across the street from a photocopy shop and an art gallery: the [Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue](#), the only [Romaniote](#) synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Embellished on the facade of the building (which is a restored, brick version of the original edifice), Stars of David adorn the windows, and the Ten Commandments – in Hebrew – rest high above the doorway, almost anointing visitors as they enter the premises.

The Romaniote congregation, originally from Ioannina, [Greece](#) (hence, 'Janina' an alternative version of the Greek place-name), formed in 1906, though the synagogue itself was not fully constructed until 1927. Today, the synagogue is surrounded by bustling Chinese and American businesses, signs in Mandarin and Spanish on neighboring buildings beckon a world that seems almost alien compared to Kehila Kedosha Janina's Romaniote roots, which some claim extend all the way back to the time of [Alexander the Great](#).

The Kehila Kedosha Synagogue Community Today

Kehila Kedosha Janina (KKJ) continues to be a central hub for the Greek-Jewish community, notably hosting the annual [Greek Jewish Festival](#), which goes viral each year for its celebration of Greek Judaism with food and fanfare. KKJ maintains a regular congregation of 20-25 people, and holds Shabbat services every Saturday. However, more people attend the services for the High Holidays, memorials, family reunions and other celebrations.

"This Jewish community is unique because not only are we Greek, but we're Romaniote," Andrew Marcus, a Greek Jewish American who sits on KKJ's board of trustees, told the Greek Reporter.

"This [community spoke Greek at home](#), unlike the Ashkenazi Jews who spoke Yiddish, or the Sephardic Jews who speak Ladino in Thessaloniki. This community was in Ioannina for centuries before the Sephardic-Spanish Jews arrived [in Greece]," continued Marcus. "Beyond a synagogue, we're also a cultural center."

KKJ offers more than faith services: concerts, cooking classes, speeches, book presentations, lectures and more. The synagogue is for anyone, including Greek Jews, Romaniotes, Greek Orthodox and people who are simply interested in learning

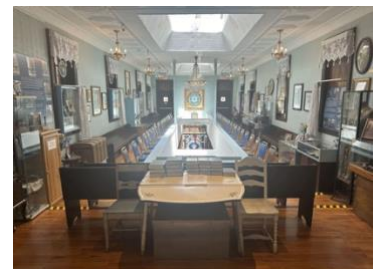


Andrew Marcus, a member of the board of trustees at KKJ

The History of the Romaniote Jews in the Lower East Side

The Romaniotes migrated to America following World War I for economic opportunity. Broome, Allen and Orchard Streets, which occupy a northern portion of LES, were home to many immigrant families who left the Ottoman Empire, including Romaniotes who mostly arrived from Greece, the Balkans, Cyprus and modern day Turkey. Hundreds of families who currently attend, or previously attended KKJ, came from Ioannina, but many arrived from Rhodes, Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Izmir, and the former Yugoslavia.

KKJ is what is known as a "tenement" synagogue, according to Marcus. The building was at one point a tenement building, then converted into a Greek coffee shop, and finally a synagogue in 1927. The Romaniote community pooled together money to construct the synagogue, which is much more narrow and space-conscious than other synagogues.



Following World War II, in which many second-or third-generation Romaniotes served the United States armed forces, Lower East Side communities at large migrated elsewhere in the New York Metropolitan Area.

“The first generation [of Romaniotes] lived in tenements, eight people in two-room apartments,” said Marcus, who is a native of the Lower East Side. “So, with the generation after WWII, they started to move into Brooklyn and The Bronx, eventually to Queens and Long Island and New Jersey.” For a period of time, KKJ had two satellite synagogues in Brooklyn and The Bronx.

Hyman Genee, an influential figure of Kehila Kedosha Janina who was at one point the synagogue’s president.
Credit: Daniel Cody / Greek Reporter

“For the most part, the Jews that came here from the former Ottoman Empire – Greece – had a relatively positive experience under Ottoman rule and then Greek Christian rule, so, they didn’t come here because of persecution, they came here for economic opportunity,” indicated Marcus.

[Jews from the Balkans and surrounding regions](#) often wanted to keep their idiosyncratic traditions alive, so they would establish smaller synagogues like KKJ. At one point, according to Marcus, there were over 400 synagogues in LES.

“Every block had its own synagogue,” he said. KKJ is the only non-Ashkenazi synagogue in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The Torah scrolls used at KKJ came from Greece. Their ornate decorations are unique to the Romaniote branch, with glistening silver and gold intricacies reminiscent of Ottoman and Byzantine art styles. The bimah, typically found in front of the Ark (or, Aron Hakodesh), is placed in the center of the synagogue for a more communal listening experience.

The Ark at KKJ. The Ark is usually located on the wall facing Jerusalem and is the most sacred area in the synagogue. One of the Torah scrolls at KKJ came from Greece. Their ornate decorations are unique to the Romaniote branch, with glistening silver and gold intricacies reminiscent of Ottoman, Byzantine and Middle Eastern Judaica.



KKJ also houses a museum on the Romaniote experience, which includes Judaica like the Alephs, a unique, hand-written birth certificate in Hebrew. The Aleph protects babies for the first 40 days after they are born, including immediate family members’ names, the names of angels, and other religious elements.

Clothing from the early-to-mid 20th century, including Greek-Jewish wedding dresses and textile work, is included in the museum. Many Romaniotes worked in the textile industry because Jewish law necessitates that all fabrics utilized with religiosity be pure, thus incentivizing the Romaniote skill in the fabric arts, as well as gold and silver filigree.

Beyond material Judaica, though, like any Greeks, the Romaniotes love their cuisine. While Kosher, it includes staples like bourekia, spanakopita, lamb and eggplant.

“Anything you can name!” said Marcus. “Except for pastitsio... because of the meat and dairy” (Jewish dietary law prohibits the preparation of meat and dairy in the same utensil or dish). Literature, history, and even cookbooks are available at Kehila Kedosha Janina – anything the [Greek diaspora](#) could hope for.

The Naar Family – From Salonica to the US by Professor Devin Naar

One hundred years ago today, on October 2, 1924, my Nono arrived in the United States along with his parents, Haham Benjamin and Rachel Naar, his grandmother, Hannah, and eight of his nine siblings (the youngest was born on the ship in the Atlantic!)

Can anyone guess which person in the photo is my Nono?

Due to the implementation of the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act, the family's departure from Salonica was delayed. They were supposed to be in the US in time for Rosh Ashana as my great grandfather, Rabbi Benjamin Naar, had been invited by Sephardic [Congregation Etz Ahaim](#), then in New Brunswick, New Jersey (and today in Highland Park), to lead services for the High Holidays.



Through a series of twists--including an exemption from the new immigration quotas for "ministers" of any religion, an emergency family unification bill passed by congress, and a few fudged birth dates to skirt the law--the family ultimately got on the SS Braga headed to the US (in Ladino, by the way, "bragas" means underpants, so they must have gotten a good laugh!).

Not only did my great grandmother Rachel give birth to her tenth child on board, but the family spent the Rosh Ashana holiday at sea!

Likely due to the new quotas, the SS Braga did not dock at Ellis Island, as most immigrants in that era did, but rather at another "island" to the north: Providence, Rhode Island!

Nono's oldest brother, Tio Salomon, remained in Salonica with his new bride, Esther, and soon their two children, Rachel and Benny (named after their paternal grandparents according to Sephardic custom). But when they began applying for visas to come to the US, they were denied every time over the course of more than a decade due to the strict immigration quotas that sought to keep out folks like us--Jews, and especially Jews from the Eastern Mediterranean context, from the broader orbit of the Muslim world. Ultimately, Tio Salomon and his family wound up being deported by the Nazi occupation forces to their deaths at Auschwitz Birkenau in 1943--along with almost all the Jews of Salonica, once home to the largest Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jewish community in the world.

In the context of feeling so much grief, despair, shame, and many other emotions these days, I will be reflecting on my family's century in the United States as we enter Rosh Ashana this evening. That century follows our forebears living about four hundred years in Salonica (mostly during the rule of the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of the final twelve years, once Greece took control of the city), and the generations before that in Portugal and Spain.

Check out this piece I wrote a few years ago about the details and broader historical context of my family's arrival in the US: <https://theworld.org/.../im-american-my-family-came-us...>

Happy Centennial to all the descendants of Rabbi Benjamin and Rachel Naar! Anyada buena i dulce!

Annual Summer Camp Envelops Sephardic Youth in Nature and Nurture By Alexander Benoliel
Despite its informal beginnings, Sephardic Adventure Camp has evolved into a sacred lifecycle event for a growing number of families. Full article [Here](#)

Surrounded by the serenity of an evergreen forest, the snug fragrance of our delicious *boreka* and *quashado* lunch still filling the air of the large room where all of us sit, about 150 summer campers join together to punctuate the moment with a spirited rendition of the Shabbat hymn, *Ki Eshmera Shabbat*. Some know the tune well, while others are learning it for the first time. A few of the young campers select the *pizmon* they'd like to sing next, and Haham nods approvingly.



This is Sephardic Adventure Camp (SAC), the only summer youth retreat in the U.S. designed expressly to preserve Sephardic tradition, instill values of our heritage and build leadership skills among the youth who come to the Pacific Northwest-based camp from all over the country — and even across the globe.

I can speak to SAC's mission through firsthand experience. My father, Michael, was a camper as a child and later served as a camp counselor. As young parents, he and my mother enrolled me in the camp for eight straight summers. Following my father's lead, I also graduated from camper to camp counselor and now, after spending several years studying at yeshivot in both Jerusalem and New York City, I am a member of SAC's professional staff, serving as head of education.

As I got married this past summer, I have begun to think about my wife and I starting a family one day and sending our own children to SAC, just as their grandparents did. To me, Sephardic Adventure Camp is one of the many lifecycle events of the Benoliel family.

The origins of Sephardic Adventure Camp date back about 70 years. It began modestly as an idea percolating in the mind — and heart — of Rabbi Solomon Maimon, who was the brother of my great-grandmother. At the time, Rabbi Maimon was the energetic young leader of Sephardic Bikur Holim, one of two Sephardic synagogues operating within six blocks of each other in Seattle.

Rabbi Maimon tapped a few of the young parents in the congregation and offered to take their children on a three-day weekend summer camping trip where they would observe Shabbat together in the woods, enjoy traditional Sephardic meals, sing songs in Hebrew and Ladino, and effectively celebrate the Turkish Sephardic heritage that the community held so dear.

The makeshift camp turned into an annual summer tradition, which grew into a longer camp that took place each year on Vashon Island, near Seattle. Congregation Ezra Bessaroth — the city's other Sephardic synagogue, which was founded by immigrants from the island of Rhodes — eventually started its own camp. In the late 1980s, the two camps merged and eventually branded as Sephardic Adventure Camp. As the number of campers grew, SAC formed as a legal entity, put a board in place and hired year-round employees.

Today, it is a three-week sleepaway camp that maintains the original mission of preserving Sephardic tradition through education, activities and camaraderie. Most of the campers hail from the Seattle area, but each year they are joined by kids (some Sephardic, some not) from Jewish communities in other states, such as California, Oregon, Arizona, Alaska, Texas, New York, Maryland, Massachusetts and Florida. Some arrive from other countries, including Canada, Israel and Spain.



The kids leave their families to join a bunk, where counselors just a little older than them are in charge. Campers are not allowed to have phones, allowing them to immerse themselves into the world of camp. The camp becomes a mini-society, with its own norms, traditions and roles, separate from the outside world. The community extends year to year, with many of the kids growing up to become counselors and staff members, just as I did.

Many families have been at camp through multiple generations. My papoo (grandfather) was too old to be a camper when Rabbi Maimon launched the camp, but for years he drove luggage up to the campsite each summer. My father attended camp for nine years. I started in B1, the youngest boys' bunk, back in 2010, and other than in 2020 (when COVID canceled plans for camp), I've attended every year since as either camper, counselor-in-training, counselor, or staff. My story is not unusual. In fact, many campers are second or third generation at SAC.

At a Maimon family picnic in 1978, my father's cousins convinced him to come to camp for the first time. My noni and papoo signed him up, and the next morning, off to camp he went. As a child going to sleepaway camp for the first time, he recalls being nervous, but when he finally arrived, he was calmed by a familiar image. In the kitchen, his Uncle Ike, Auntie Rae, Uncle Jack, Auntie Louise, and many family friends were baking and cooking classic Sephardic food. Still today, community members who don't work for the camp visit nearly every day.

Even as the campsites, directors, and parts of the culture have changed, the institution, with its particular way of doing things, always feels the same. "

My mother, Rinah, is one who visits regularly. She was born in an Ashkenazi family in New Jersey, but when she married my father, she immediately began to learn about all kinds of our Turkish Sephardic customs. When they were newly married, my father's nona (my great-grandmother) came to stay at their apartment in Manhattan. My mother wasn't sure what to make for Shabbat lunch, so my great-grandmother said, "We'll make *borekas*, *huevos haminados*, a salad, and that's lunch!" When my mother admitted she had no idea how to make the borekas or the *huevos haminados*, Nona responded, "Oh, *mi alma* (a Ladino term of endearment meaning "my heart"), I'll teach you!" and the two of them spent the afternoon preparing a traditional *desayuno*. Now, years later, though she'll deny it, my mother is an expert in Sephardic baking and cooking. She and other mothers and grandmothers come up to camp each summer to teach the kids how to make our unique delicacies. Others will visit for a Shabbat, join as scholars-in-residence or come to run one of the various traditional activities. Children sometimes celebrate their bar or bat mitzvahs at camp, with their families and friends attending. By bringing the community into the bubble of camp, family traditions are passed down once again.

I always have seen SAC as my second home, and I'm not the only one. Even as the campsites, directors, and parts of the culture have changed, the institution, with its particular way of doing things, always feels the same. It feels like SAC. It feels like the Sephardic community in which I was raised.

SAC is unique in that it is a direct extension of the Seattle Sephardic community, which is quite unique in and of itself. Many of the traditions and practices of the camp come directly from the two synagogues that created it, reflecting the Ottoman heritage that — even with demographic changes among Seattle Sephardim over the years — continues to be the cultural spine of the city's community.

The majority of SAC campers, counselors, staff, and board are members of Seattle's Sephardic community. Our full-time Haham, Rabbi Aryeh Greenberg, is a former camper and a true expert in our customs and liturgy. His father, Rabbi William Greenberg, led Congregation Ezra Bessaroth for nearly a generation and, like Rabbi Maimon (who served Sephardic Bikur Holim as Rabbi Emeritus until his passing in 2019 at age 100), supported SAC for many years.

Many Jewish sleepaway camps represent a denomination or specific group of Jews, but few are so intertwined with a particular local community as SAC.

Being tied to a live community allows for a certain kind of authenticity. What we do at camp is a natural reflection of the practices and values of the community. When we sing *Ya Komimos* after the *Birkat Hamazon* blessing, it is not a statement; it's just what we do. That doesn't mean that we don't do things intentionally. It's just that even our intentional education reflects what our particular community values, making my job as head of education much simpler than it might be at other camps.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, being tied to a particular community with particular customs allows SAC to be a naturally welcoming place. We are an organic community, which means staff and campers with other customs aren't seen as a challenge, but rather an extension of who we are. Many members of the SAC community don't have Turkish or Rhodesli backgrounds. The approach taken with those who have different Sephardic or Mizrahi backgrounds is to continue to feature our Seattle traditions at the camp while learning about the others. Each year, one of our three *Shabbatot* features a Moroccan *Kabbalat Shabbat*, and we have events every summer that highlight different Sephardic customs and rites.

At SAC this past summer, Sara Avrahamy, our programming director, and Sarah Aroeste, a world-renowned Ladino singer and author, created an event for our camp titled "*La Boz*" (which is Ladino for "The Voice"). Each bunk learned and performed a Ladino song in a competition similar to the TV show of the same name. One bunk learned *Ken Supiense*, the Ladino version of the classic Pesach song *Ehad Mi Yode'a* (Who Knows One), while another learned *Kuando el Rey Nimrod*, which tells the story of Avraham Avinu. It was the kind of event that could only happen in the world of Sephardic Adventure Camp — centuries-old songs, learned anew. I find it telling that a significant portion of the membership and leadership at both Sephardic Bikur Holim and Ezra Bessaroth once were SAC campers, counselors and/or staff. In this way, SAC has supported the transmission of history and customs not just on an individual level, but on a communal level. The Seattle Sephardic community supports SAC, which in turn supports the resilience of the community itself.

Al Benoliel is the director of education at Sephardic Adventure Camp, where he creates a curriculum exploring Sephardic customs, history and language. He is a Semikha student and Maybaum Sephardic Fellow at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and is studying toward a Master's in Jewish History at Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. Born and raised in Seattle, he now lives in New York with his wife.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the Ocean Blue and he was NOT a Jew Full article [Here](#)

The genealogy of Christopher Columbus has been the subject of intensive popular interest for many years. A deeply controversial historical figure, Columbus is both remembered for heralding the dawn of the New World and for the terrible violence he inflicted on the Native peoples of the Caribbean. For over a century, there has been ongoing dispute over whether he was of Italian or Spanish extraction (ironic, considering neither country existed before 1492!). There is a certain degree of identity at the heart of this dispute: is it a question of Spanish national identity as the first global seafaring Empire or is it a question about the place of Italian-Americans in American society? Why then are we at JewishGen even addressing this?



The study of genealogy and history is at its roots about engaging with the past in order to document it. As happens every few years or so, especially since the 500th anniversary of 1492, there is a new claim of "evidence discovered" that proves Columbus was of neither Spanish nor Italian origin, but instead a converso who used the excuse of sailing to the West in search of India in order to escape the Alhambra Decree's ill effects. The fact that there were a couple of documented, known conversos who were a part of his crew and the fact that his surviving diaries had "Hebrew letters" in it had been taken as proof positive by believers that he was really a Jew. This year, the latest "announcement" was received like wildfire across the newswire: the crypt in Sevilla that claimed to have his bones was truly his as the fragmentary DNA profile was sufficiently matched to his known and documented descendants, and that he was "of Jewish origins". A genealogical breakthrough, right?

The only problem is this is absolutely false. Columbus, according to the documentary evidence, was likely of Genoese origin. His knowledge of "Hebrew letters" was neither uncommon nor unusual for someone of a higher class during the time, as there was a lot of theological study of the Jewish Torah but in a purely Christian context. The fact that there were conversos who were part of his crew just makes him a part of Iberian society at the time, which was made up of Jews, conversos, Muslims, moriscos, Africans, and Europeans of every nation.

But what about the DNA evidence?

The author, based on supposed genetic evidence extracted (specifically a partial Y-chromosomal haplogroup and his son's mitochondrial haplogroup), doesn't even state that it is conclusive evidence of his "Jewish" origin. The fragmentary DNA profiles extracted were highly damaged, contaminated, and that the usable results could show a Jewish origin just as much as it could any other origin. Furthermore, the fact that they specifically identified his son's mitochondrial haplogroup as being evidence for Columbus's supposed heritage is a complete misrepresentation of the tool. Mitochondrial DNA is passed down from mother-to-child. Unless Columbus was somehow both the father and the mother of his son, his son's mitochondrial haplogroup is a complete and total non-sequitur and to use it as evidence of his father's genealogy is both bad genealogical and historical practice.

In Y-chromosomal genetic studies, Jewish lineages often share common ancestry with other Mediterranean peoples in the past 5,000 years because of a simple reason: the Mediterranean was a metaphorical superhighway moving goods and people with regularity and relative safety for thousands of years. Of course, we'll wait on the formal publication of the results but even the way it was announced goes against all standard academic practice, as the announcement was made without the results having gone through peer review. Peer review is not necessarily the end all, be all as an arbiter of what is true and what is not, but it is a process by which all scientific/academic research is examined in order to determine its efficacy. Sure, there are plenty of times where discoveries might be announced without the work having gone through peer review but in many of those cases, the authors make some degree of data available. They did none of that. This announcement is not science, genealogy, nor history.

To sum it up, this is a perfect example of bad genealogical and historical practice. JewishGen strives to grow beyond the days of genealogy based on mythology such as "I heard that my family in Warsaw arrived there from Spain after 1492" or "I have my genealogy all the way back to King David". Our mission is to be a leader in making accessible global archives for our users to search for their family. We also strive to be the shining city on the hill providing a framework for Jewish genealogists to learn the skills for pursuing research, and how to be ethical researchers and to uphold a high standard of practice that JewishGen believes in. Just remember: In 1492, Columbus sailed the Ocean Blue and he was NOT a Jew.

Michael Waas, Associate Director, Sephardic Research Division, JewishGen, mwaas@JewishGen.org

Scientists cast doubt on claims Christopher Columbus was a Sephardic Jew from Spain

Specialists criticize the absence of scientific evidence in the RTVE documentary featuring forensic expert José Antonio Lorente, who has not published any analysis since the exhumation in 2003 of the alleged tomb of the explorer. Full article [Here](#)

The excitement surrounding the supposed origins of [Christopher Columbus](#) has generated astonishment in the scientific community. The documentary *Columbus DNA. His True Origin*, broadcast on Spain's National Holiday suggests that the explorer was not Genoese and Christian but [Spanish and Jewish](#). The absolute protagonist of the documentary, forensic scientist [José Antonio Lorente](#), has not yet published any scientific study to back his claims.



The documentary is presented in the style of a reality show in which Lorente systematically discounts other theories, including that Columbus was Castilian, Portuguese, Galician, Mallorcan or a Cagot. It culminates with a scene in which only one possibility remains, the one put forward by architect [Francesc Albardaner](#), author of the book *La catalanitat de Colom* (or, *The Catalan Origins of Columbus*).

Lorente meets Albardaner, who is seriously ill with acute myeloblastic leukemia, in a garden, soundtracked by moving violin music. "I'm afraid of dying without finishing a theory I've been working on for many years," says Albardaner.

Lorente, professor of Legal and Forensic Medicine at the University of Granada in Spain is reassuring.

– I should tell you that all the theories about Columbus being the son of so-and-so have all been discarded.

–What about mine?

–Regarding yours, I'm overjoyed to be able to tell you that it is the closest to the truth.

Albardaner then explains his theory: "Columbus was a Sephardic Jew, following Jewish traditions and customs. He had Jewish teachers who taught him the Jewish religion, but apparently in the public sphere, he was a Christian. According to my theory, he was born into a family of silk weavers in [the Spanish city of] Valencia, where there was a long tradition of silk weaving within the Jewish community."

But geneticist Antonio Alonso, former chief of the National Institute of Toxicology and Forensic Sciences, is not convinced: "Unfortunately, from the scientific point of view, no assessment can be made after watching the documentary, since it does not provide any data on what has been analyzed. My conclusion is that the documentary *Columbus DNA* does not show the DNA of Columbus at any given moment and scientists do not know what analysis has been undertaken."

The background to the documentary involves a high school teacher from the Sevillian town of Estepa, Marcial Castro, who approached Lorente's laboratory [in 2001](#) to suggest that they analyze the DNA of the supposed

remains of Christopher Columbus in the Cathedral of Seville where he had lain since 1899. Lorente's team obtained permits and in 2003 exhumed the presumed tomb of the explorer and also the tomb of [his son Hernando](#) which lay alongside it. The remains found in both graves were solemnly draped with the Spanish flag in front of dozens of journalists. Also rescued were the supposed remains of Diego Columbus, Christopher's brother, found in a tin can filled with water in an [earthenware factory](#) set up in a former Carthusian monastery in Seville.

Forensic anthropologist [Miguel Botella](#), also from the University of Granada, remembers that day in 2003 when he waited for the box containing the [supposed bones of Christopher Columbus](#) to be opened. "Everyone expected to be greeted by an intact Columbus, but there were only 150 grams of bone fragments," he says with a smile. The largest would have been about four centimeters in length.



Botella analyzed the jumble of bones for six days with laser scanners. But the only thing he could be sure of was that all the remains belonged to the same person: a man between 50 and 70 years old — closer to 60 — and that there was a mark indicating that he had been eaten away. "I guess this was when they moved him from Valladolid to Seville," he explains, referring to one of the [numerous journeys](#) of the supposed remains of Christopher Columbus, which traveled from Valladolid, where he died in 1506, to Seville three years later, to the Caribbean city of Santo Domingo in 1544, to Havana in Cuba in 1795 and back to Seville in 1899. By the time the bones were exhumed in 2003, it was not possible to extract DNA from the bones, Botella explains, adding that he stopped collaborating with the team responsible for the investigation after his initial involvement, not wishing to participate further.

Lorente then said that he was going to analyze the DNA of the three alleged members of the Columbus family with the help of prestigious geneticists, such as Ángel Carracedo from the University of Santiago de Compostela; and [Mark Stoneking](#), from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, in Leipzig, Germany, one of the world's most prestigious centers for the analysis of ancient DNA.

Carracedo recalls that the DNA that reached him was tremendously degraded, and he too distanced himself from the project. Moreover, he refuses to comment on Lorente's new results until there is a serious scientific study published in a specialized journal. The response of the Max Planck Institute geneticist to questions from EL PAÍS were similar: "I am sorry, my group stopped working on this in 2005 and I have not heard anything about the most recent results," said Stoneking.

Lorente attempts to justify his decision not to publish anything on his work for more than 20 years. "The study on Christopher Columbus and his family has always been considered a unit, as something joint and inseparable by our university and our team, and until the research is completed, nothing will be published," he told EL PAÍS. In his opinion, *Columbus DNA*, directed by journalist [Regis Francisco López](#), "is not a scientific documentary, but a film" based on his studies. The scientific results, he says, will be presented at a press conference probably at the end of November. Until then, Lorente says he will not issue any statements.

Despite the extreme degradation of the DNA, the forensic scientist already said back in 2006 that there was "no doubt" that the bones in Seville Cathedral belonged to the explorer who discovered the New World. Lorente did not provide any proof, but his assertion made headlines around the world. The U.S. network [NBC News](#) declared: "DNA verifies Columbus' remains in Spain."

Lorente explained in 2007 that the key lay in mitochondrial DNA, a small fragment that comes down the maternal line. "In the studies to identify Christopher Columbus to date, we have tried to answer two main questions: one, where his bones are, and two, where he was from," said Lorente in the [journal Medicina Balear](#). "The first question already has a definitive answer, because, after comparing the mitochondrial DNA of Columbus' bones in Seville Cathedral with the DNA of the bones of his brother Diego, it has been observed that both are identical — typical of people with the same mother."

Lorente later acknowledged, in a [2010 publication](#), that the mitochondrial DNA fragments obtained were “very small” — too small in fact to draw conclusions from. Now the documentary *Columbus DNA* states that the supposed remains of Christopher and Diego are not like those of two brothers, but of two second cousins.

According to geneticist Antonio Alonso, “It is not the done thing for data that the scientific community has not yet endorsed to be presented to society, as it puts the data itself at risk as well as the proposed theory.” Alonso is also surprised by the absence of experts from the U.S. and Australia in the film whose contribution Lorente describes as essential. “Here there is too much protagonism from only one scientist. Neither the Granada team nor the collaborating ancient DNA laboratories in California and Adelaide, which are said to be of great importance in the success of the analyses, appear in the film,” he points out.

Recently retired, Alonso is one of Spain’s leading experts in forensic genetics. He worked on the identification of the victims of Madrid’s 11-M terror attacks; on the investigation of dozens of reports of alleged baby thefts; on the recognition of Spanish Civil War victims and even on the attempts to find the remains of the writer Miguel de Cervantes. He claims that the documentary *Columbus DNA* does not speak to him as a scientist. “We do not know which DNA regions were analyzed, nor the technology used in the analysis, nor the results obtained, which makes it impossible to make a correct assessment of the findings,” he says.

In the documentary, Lorente tells Francesc Albardaner, “We have very partial DNA of Christopher Columbus, but it is enough, and we have DNA of Hernando Columbus, who is confirmed to be his son [...] What is very important in your theory is that both in the Y chromosome [inherited from the father] and in the mitochondrial DNA [inherited from the mother] of Hernando there are traits compatible with a Jewish origin.”

Alonso explains that there are clusters of genetic variants called haplotypes or haplogroups that tend to be inherited together and may be characteristic of certain family lineages, but he adds that they often coincide with those of other groups in historically Jewish or non-Jewish populations. “In any case, having a genealogy, a haplogroup or a haplotype of Jewish or Sephardic ancestry does not call into question Columbus’ birthplace in Genoa as stated by historical sources, nor does it tell us anything about the religious beliefs professed by the generations of relatives close to Columbus,” he says.

[Rodrigo Barquera](#) is a Mexican expert in archeogenetics at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. Barquera has conducted DNA studies of human remains prior to the arrival of Europeans in America, such as those of children sacrificed by the Maya at Chichén-Itzá in Mexico. The researcher is very critical of the fact the data have been presented via a documentary, and without the backing of a serious scientific article reviewed by independent experts, especially given the enormous interest in the figure of Christopher Columbus and his origins.

“Normally, the article is sent to a scientific journal,” he says. “The journal assigns an editor and at least three independent reviewers who rate the paper and decide if it is scientifically valid. If it is, it is published, and then the rest of the scientific community can say whether they agree or not. Putting it on a screen, removed from this process and with all the media focus on it, makes it difficult for the scientific community to say anything about it.”

Unaware of this fresh controversy, the Spanish Biographical Dictionary of the Royal Academy of History continues to offer the official version. In the entry dedicated to Christopher Columbus, the historian Juan Pérez de Tudela y Bueso, who died in 2004, objected to the “emotional rather than reasoned patriotism” that was required “to complete the Spanish glory of the discovery, making its protagonist a Spaniard.” In his opinion, “the first requirement to Spanishize the explorer is to disqualify the sources closest to his life as pure fake.” According to Pérez de Tudela y Bueso, who was a professor of Modern History at the Complutense University of Madrid, “There were many scholars who tried to find Columbus’ birthplace in the Iberian Peninsula. [...] We should also note the efforts of [Salvador de Madariaga](#) [a diplomat and author of the biography *Christopher Columbus* in 1939] to place Columbus in the bosom of a family of Jewish converts. But these efforts are undermined by an indisputable argument — the testimonies of that period, including that of the explorer

himself in the founding document of the estate in favor of his son Diego, are unanimous in establishing Genoa as the Columbus family seat. Genoese researchers have also reliably proven that Columbus was the son of Doménico Columbus and Susana Fontanarosso, both from Ligurian families dedicated to textile manufacturing.”

[Antonio Salas](#) heads the Population Genetics in Biomedicine team at Santiago de Compostela’s Health Investigation Institute. “The documentary promised to focus on DNA analysis, as suggested by its title *Columbus DNA: His True Origins*,” he says. “However, the genetic information it offers is very limited. Only at the end is it mentioned that the only thing that was recovered from the presumed remains of Christopher Columbus was a partial profile of the Y chromosome. The problem is that the Y chromosome represents only a tiny fraction of our DNA and our ancestry.”

“The documentary rushes to a conclusion that Christopher Columbus was a Sephardic Jew originally from the Spanish Levant. This hypothesis is, to say the least, surprising: there is no Y chromosome that can be uniquely defined as Sephardic-Jewish,” argues Salas. “Even if all of an individual’s DNA were recovered, it would still be impossible to reach definitive conclusions about his or her exact geographic origin.

The renowned geneticist [Mark Jobling](#) put it like this: “The best answer to the question ‘Where did my ancestors live?’ would be ‘Everywhere.’”

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Words of Comfort from Israel – Excerpt by Miriam Peretz. National Library of Israel link [Here](#)

“In a person’s lifetime, there are moments when you cling to a fragment of hope that offers you life. I experienced such a moment 14 years ago, during the shiva [seven-day mourning period] for my son, Major Eliraz Peretz, who fell in battle in the Gaza Strip.

My daughter-in-law, Shlomit, asked me if, at the end of the shiva, I would come to their home in the community of Eli. I was speechless.

It seemed like a simple request, one that any mother would be happy to fulfill – to visit her son’s and daughter-in-law’s home and rejoice with her grandchildren. But for me, it was unbearable. How could I set foot in my son’s home when he was no longer there?

How could I look at the books on his shelves that he would never again read, the bench on the porch where he would no longer sit, the bed he would never sleep in again?

So, I remained silent. And suddenly, I heard a voice in the background.

It was the voice of my eldest grandson, Eliraz’s son, a new light – six-year-old Uriel, speaking to his younger sisters: “How fun! If Savta [Grandma] comes, she’ll bring us meatballs!”

Every home and every family has its own familiar and defining symbols, and for the Peretzes, my pot of meatballs is among our family’s claims to fame.

But how could I make the meatballs that Eliraz loved so much?

I was so skilled in preparing them, yet when you bury a son, it can feel like all your abilities fade and die with him, and I felt incapable of preparing the foods my son loved...

But still, I asked my neighbors to buy meat and spices and leave them in a hidden corner in the refrigerator where I wouldn’t have to see them.

That was on Thursday. Early Friday morning, a taxi arrived to take me to Eliraz’s home, but the meatballs had not yet been made.

At that very moment, I realized I couldn’t go to Eliraz’s home without the meatballs. I lifted my eyes to the heavens and cried out: “You took Eliraz! And you took away my ability to make meatballs. Please give me just enough strength ‘this one time’ to make them again for my grandchildren!”

I placed the meat on the table and spent an hour circling around it, unable to touch it.

And then, I decided to imagine a different reality.

And here is my son Eliraz, sitting at the table and I’m talking to him, and as we speak, I shape the first meatball. “Do you remember, my beloved son, the first time you ate a meatball? You were only a year old. You didn’t really eat it, just licked the sauce with curiosity and delight.

You were two years old, and you smeared the meatball all over your face and head.

You were 32. Back from Lebanon, and I served you 20 meatballs, which you gobbled up in minutes.

Now, my dear Eliraz, I ask for your forgiveness...

Forgive me for continuing to make your favorite food, which you'll never taste again.
You won't see bridges being built; you won't see flowers bloom.

You won't see your children enjoying meatballs.

But I, when I heard the cry of the boy, the voice of your son, asking for meatballs, asking to hold on to life – I chose to continue living.”

When I arrived at Eliraz's house, my grandchildren ran to greet me.

They didn't say, "How fun that you're here, Savta." They had just one question: "Savta! Did you bring the meatballs?!"

In life, hope takes on many forms; it is different and unique for each and every person.

Sometimes, hope is a ladder out of a pit; sometimes, it's a flicker of light; and sometimes, hope emerges from a cry, from the voice of a small child who reminds us of the power there is in life.

Hope gives people the strength to believe they can contend with any crisis, or any fall, or with great darkness. Hope is not simply saying, "All will be okay" – it is a call to action. A call to imagine the reality we want to live in, believe in that reality, and work to realize it.

I am a link in the chain of a people who, throughout history, lost almost every material thing imaginable.

But there is one thing we have never lost:
The hope that tomorrow a new day will dawn.”

**

The text above was written by Miriam Peretz. It is part of the National Library of Israel's special "[Words of Comfort](#)" project. Miriam Peretz is an Israeli educator. Two of her sons, Uriel and Eliraz, both IDF officers, were killed in action while serving their country. Peretz was awarded the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement in 2018 for her work to strengthen Jewish-Israeli spirit.



Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



Throughout November, we will read all the Torah portions dealing with the lives of and Avraham and Sarah and the very origins of Judaism, as well as the beginning of the saga of Avraham's son, Yitzhak.

One of the most seminal events in the lives of both Avraham and Yitzhak was digging of wells by Avraham in the Negev desert, and Yitzhak's re-digging of these wells a generation later. In the Torah portion of "Vayera", read on Shabbat, November 16th, the Torah relates how, after digging his well, Avraham reprimanded Avimelech, the king of the Philistines for his people stealing the well, though Avraham and Avimelech subsequently made a pact, and the issue of the stolen well is settled. In the Torah portion of Toledot, read on Shabbat, November 30th, the Torah informs us, however, that after Avraham's death, the Philistines sealed the wells Avraham had dug, and how his son Yitzhak tried to dig them anew (Genesis 26:15,18). The Torah records that each time Yitzhak re-dug a well, the Philistines immediately sealed it, and he only succeeded on his third attempt, after distancing himself from Philistine territory. It is important to understand that these wells provided water to the Philistines as well, making their conduct totally irrational and even self-destructive, because why would anyone seal a well of precious water in the arid region of the Negev and deny its own population access to such an invaluable resource?

The Torah commentator "Hizkuni" (Rabbi Hezekiya Ben Manoah-France 13th century) offers an intriguing interpretation: By sealing the wells, the Philistines sought to block Yitzhak from acquiring any permanent acquisition or property in the Land of Canaan/Israel, despite the pact with his father Avraham. But still, why would the Philistines resort to this particular tactic, which further depleted their own already low water supply, thereby harming themselves? The only other explanation would seem to be rooted in envy and resentment the Philistines expressed against both Avraham and Yitzhak's economic success and wealth, despite the harm caused to their own people by sealing the wells.

That, in fact, is exactly how another classic commentator, the "Radak" (Rabbi David Kimhi, Spain 12th-13th centuries) understood the Philistine's actions. As the "Radak" writes: "They therefore sealed them [the wells], for they said: 'They shall be neither his nor ours'." The Radak is saying that though obviously in the Philistine's best interest to leave the water accessible, albeit in Yitzhak's possession, to increase the region's water supply and better provide for their own population and needs, envy, resentment and underlying hate took over all rationality. The interests and welfare of their own people be damned as long as Yitzhak, son of Avraham, is prevented from attaining more economic prosperity and wealth.

Like so many other Biblical events, the Philistines' actions were a clear sign for the future, since this envy of the Jewish people's achievements and visceral hate continue to accompany us, even though the perpetrators become the main victims of their own actions. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, it demolished all private homes and removed all movable property. However, many facilities, including synagogues and most agricultural and tourism infrastructures were left largely intact, in the hope that the Palestinians would utilize them to create a thriving economy and peaceful coexistence. Instead, every vestige of anything left by Israel was joyfully and enthusiastically burned and totally destroyed, despite the implications for of such action for the creation of a new, prosperous and peaceful Gaza and its residents. Likewise, the fate of the countless billions of dollars donated by so many nations over the years to rebuild Gaza and provide critical humanitarian aid. The proper and designated use of these funds would have created a virtual economic paradise in Gaza, but instead, every penny has been expropriated by Hamas for its sole and evil purpose: to destroy Israel and

the Jewish people, no matter how much Gazans continue to suffer. Likewise for Hezbollah's fanatical and singular purpose to eliminate Israel and the Jewish people, no matter what the cost to Lebanon.

Israel and the entire Jewish world now face some of the most difficult times in history, and we continue to fight for our very existence against an axis of evil unprecedented since the Holocaust. And though we cannot know how long it will take to eliminate such evil, we must remember that we are no longer a defenceless and exiled people. We fervently pray that, with God's help, just like in the days of Avraham, Yitzhak and the Philistines, Israel will prevail and be victorious over these Amalekite enemies, enjoy peace and prosperity and the coming of the final redemption speedily in our days, Amen.



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Remembering the Anonymous: Thoughts for Parashat Noah
JewishIdeas.org

Dr. Roger Mesznik, a longtime friend and member of our Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, recently gave me two books in which he traced his family's genealogy—with both Sephardic and Ashkenazic roots. In the Prologue to his book on the Mesznik family, he notes that "in some cases we know more about their deaths than about their lives. History has conspired to leave more records about how and when they died than about who they were, what they dreamed of, and what they were about to become, or aspired to be."

This profound observation is true of so many human beings who have lived and died, and who left only faint—if any—traces of who they actually were. Indeed, over the past thousands of years, billions of people have died and have sunk into eternal anonymity.

And yet, all of these anonymous ancestors played their roles on the stage of human history. They had families and friends; they worked, played, dreamt, struggled, rejoiced, mourned, hoped. Although we have little trace of who they were, they impacted in some way on the progression of human history.

This week's Torah portion relates the story of Noah, the great flood, the survival of Noah's family, the beginning of a new chapter of humanity. The Torah tells us that Noah took his wife, sons and daughters-in-law onto the ark with him. But it doesn't give us the names of Mrs. Noah, Mrs. Shem, Mrs. Ham or Mrs. Yafeth. These women are left in anonymity. Yet, according to Biblical tradition, these women were the matriarchs of all later humanity, including us! Why don't we know anything about them, even their names?

Tradition attempts to fill in historical vacuums so that the Midrash in Bereishith Rabba refers to Noah's wife as Naamah. In the Dead Sea Scrolls her name is given as Emzara. Other sources have provided her with other names. These sources were uncomfortable leaving Mrs. Noah without a name of her own. Giving a name, even if fictitious, is an attempt to ascribe an identity to an otherwise anonymous individual.

Let us try to imagine something about the life of Noah's wife. Her husband was righteous; he defied the immoral society in which his family lived. He must have been a social outcast, being viewed as a self-righteous trouble maker. He spent years building the ark and must have been subjected to scorn and abuse by the public. Noah obviously had moral strength but he must have been pained and isolated. It was his wife who

stood by him and with him, who gave him the courage and confidence to persist. Without her support, Noah may well have failed in his mission. Mrs. Noah was a heroic person who shared the trials of her husband.

By omitting reference to Mrs. Noah's name, perhaps the Torah is thereby imparting a vital lesson. Some of the most important people in history—and in our own times—are people who may be entirely unknown to us. Their behind the scenes sacrifices, courage and faith have helped shape and strengthen the moral fabric of society. Thank you Mrs. Noah!

A Trip Back in Time on the Lower East Side

In October our streets on the Lower East Side were transformed back into the 1950's. The storefronts on Orchard Street, Broome Street, and Eldridge Street were the backdrop for Josh Safdie's new film "Marty Supreme," which stars Timothée Chalamet as American table tennis champion Marty Reisman. The eclectic cast includes Gwyneth Paltrow, Tyler the Creator, Abel Ferrara and Penn Jillette. KKJ President Marvin Marcus fit right in in front of the newsstand.



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.

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