



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

October 2024 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we approach Rosh Hashana this week, we wish you and your loved ones a healthy, joyful, and prosperous New Year. May you be inscribed in the book of life and may 5785 be a year of peace for us, for our brothers and sisters in Israel, and for all good people around the world. As we read on Erev Rosh Hashana:

“Conclude this year with all its misfortunes...
Begin this year with all its blessings.”

תְּכַלֶּה שָׁנָה וְקַלְלוֹתֶיהָ
תַּחֲלֵל שָׁנָה וּבְרָכוֹתֶיהָ

October is a busy month full of holidays, and we invite you to join us for services on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth, Shemini Atzeret, and Simhat Torah. Your presence means so much to us and will help us continue our Romaniote traditions.

One of the meaningful traditions in our Greek-Jewish community is the remembering of our dearly departed on Yom Kippur. On Erev Yom Kippur, we follow the centuries-old Romaniote custom of our people by reciting Hashkavoth (Memorial Prayers) and the individual names of our dearly departed during the Kal Nidre Yom Kippur Eve service. If you wish to honor your family members or friends in this very special way, please email their names to Amarcus@kkjasm.org. It is customary to include a voluntary donation of your choosing. The names and donations may be submitted via our website using this [Link Here](#) or mailed to 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002.

Help us continue our cherished traditions and join us for High Holiday services.
View our full holiday schedule [Here](#), and please RSVP to Amarcus@kkjasm.org

תזכו לשנים רבות Tizku Leshanim Rabot
Χρόνια Πολλά, Anyos Munchos i Buenos
May You Merit Many Happy and Healthy Years

This newsletter, our 186th 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.kkjasm.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@kkjasm.org

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email amarcus@kkjasm.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@kkjasm.org

Simchas

In September, we celebrated the simchas of couples who will now join our community. May they bring joy to their families and to our community.

We celebrate the engagement of Rachel Golland to Dr. Jared Louis Pasetzky, the son of Renee Motola. Renee is a member of the Board of Trustees of Kehila Kedosha Janina, and serves on the Board of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America. Renee is also a Judge in the Town of Pound Ridge, NY.



We celebrate the marriage of Jason and Dara Myones. On September 17th Dara and Jason had their fairytale wedding celebrating their love with family and friends. We wish the new Mr. & Mrs. Myones a lifetime of joy and health. Jason is the son of Annete and Irving Myones.

Passings

We mourn the passing of Kaye Hasson Israel, daughter of Haco and Sarota, a beloved matriarch of the Rhodesli Jewish community in Los Angeles. From Robert Carlson: "The last of a generation. Hazan Mizrahi, when he sang Adio Kerida, Goodbye beloved Kaye, changed the words to reflect our feelings towards her -- "una mujer amada i estimada," a loved and esteemed lady. Kaye and her husband Jack were two mentors to me as a young kid. They were from the generation who spoke Ladino and lived our tradition as their own. They were proud contributing Americans who simultaneously kept their faith and customs. It was all the more special to spend time with Jack and Kaye because they both knew my great grandparents, Mordo (a close friend of Jack from the Seattle Turkino community) and Esther. Kaye knew my family matriarchs and patriarchs, Rahel and Marco Tarica from the Los Angeles community and transmitted to me memories of them, and their way of life that I could not have known without them. Kaye was a woman who embodied hakhnasat orhim - receiving of guests with abundance and hospitality. Her home was open, and her table was filled always with borekas, boyos, reshas, zeitunas, and kezo, decorated with elegance and precision. She embodied the phrase "bendichas manos," blessed hands, and her stature, her grace, and her sweetness will be remembered and missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her. She was a woman of valor. Kaye was one of the only people to perform the ritual of "lavar la kara," washing the face during Tashlikh, a kabbalistic ritual practiced by Rhodesli Jews. My mom and I spent the day with the Hasson-Israel family and were blessed to have Kaye wash our faces. My mom and grandma enjoyed hearing from Jack stories of their father and grandfather Mordo, from his days as a bachelor from Istanbul in Seattle, and Kaye, was eager to perform Tashlich on us. As Kaye put a dash of sugar in our mouths, with her arms around us, her bendichas manos washed our faces, and her warmth enveloped our souls, clearing our impurities with a small beraha in Ladino, and welcoming a new year of peace, health and tranquility. Kaye was about to turn 100 years old this year. Kaye was truly, "ateret Rosheinu", the crown of our small community.



"La cara lavada; todo el mal ki se vaiga.

Todo el bien ki te venga

Komi ken ti komio

As your face is cleansed, may all the evil go.

May all good come to you

and you should overpower all the evil that overtakes you."

Kaye, in her very essence, brought goodness, true light, to our world, and overpowered evil with her spirit of strength, faith, and kindness. Ke su alma repoze en Ganeden. BeGan Eden menuhata. Tiye nishmata serora biseror ahayyim. May her soul be bound up in the bond of life."

Exciting News from Kehila Kedosha Janina Introducing Our New Community Engagement Fellow Theo Canter

Kehila Kedosha Janina is excited to announce that Theo Canter will be joining us as our new Community Engagement Fellow! In this role, Theo will help lead public outreach, programming, religious services, educational classes, and general community development for our Kehila. Theo will be joining us for services on Shabbats, holidays, and other times, as well as lead new programs that will be held throughout the week. Theo is a dynamic young man whose knowledge, skills, and passion about his Romaniote heritage will help us grow and better engage our Greek Jewish community.



Theo Canter graduated from Oberlin College in 2023 with degrees in Comparative Literature, Cinema Studies, and Mediterranean Studies. He spent the past year as a Fulbright scholar in Athens teaching music, filmmaking, and creative writing, while reconnecting with his Romaniote heritage as a member of the Athens Jewish community. During this time he studied under the guidance of Rabbi Gabriel Negrin and hazzanim in Athens to become proficient in our Romaniote liturgy and traditions. Theo is a versatile musician, playing guitar, bouzouki, and accordion in a variety of genres including Rembetiko and Klezmer. Theo speaks English, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and French, and he has worked as a literary translator and multimedia journalist in Israel, Europe, and the US. Theo is passionate about Greek Jewish culture and traditions, and we are very excited to have him take on this new leadership role in our community.

Theo will be joining us for the upcoming High Holidays and we would love to have you join us then to meet him in person. We also encourage you to reach out to Theo directly and get to know him more by emailing him at Theo@kkjism.org

Message from Theo

Yiasou and Shalom Dear Friends,

For my whole life I have been a proud Romaniote. I was raised on stories from my Papou about his family's marble house in Athens with lemon trees in the yard, and the story that many of us share about the legend of our ancestors - the Jewish slaves who shipwrecked and arrived in Ioannina 2,000 years ago. Growing up in New York, I was always grateful for the KKJ community's presence as a living testament to our unique Greek Jewish heritage.

My past year in Greece was a time of exploring and deepening my connection to the land of my ancestors. I learned the Greek language and especially the Romaniote traditions and melodies for Torah and Tefilah. Although I was working as an English teacher, this year was also a time of learning, a chance to live a Greek Jewish life in all its facets: praying, socializing, singing, laughing.

As we enter the new year I am excited to continue my learning from this past year in Athens, and to bring it into living practice on our side of the sea. It has been a pleasure already getting to know our community members at services, our young professionals network, and cultural events. I look forward to getting to know you all in due time, to better connect with you as individuals and to create programs that appeal to the full array of our community's interests. I hope each and every one of you always feels welcome to express your thoughts to me, and I invite you to email me at Theo@kkjism.org.

I aim to organize a wide variety of social and educational programs which will enrich our knowledge of history, Torah, and society. Drawing on my musical background, I also seek to invigorate our services with the full musical beauty of Romaniote, Sephardic, and other Mediterranean melodies. I am looking forward with gratitude and excitement for the blessing of spending the upcoming year in our beautiful community with you all.

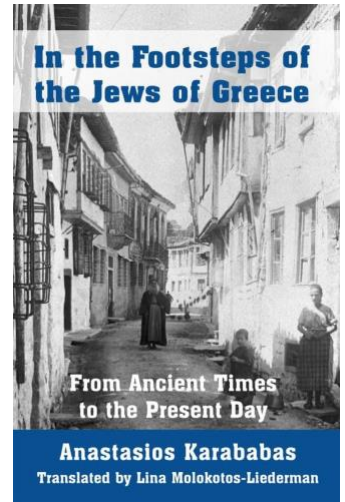
Visitors to Kehila Kedosha Janina

As always, we are happy to welcome new and old friends to visit us for services or tours of our museum. In September, in partnership with PJ Library, we welcomed a special group of Jewish children's books authors and illustrators from around the country for a retreat and Shabbat experience at our synagogue. We were especially excited to spend time with Sephardic authors and friends Sarah Aroeste, Ruth Behar, Arnon Shorr, and others. They also toured the Tenement Museum and learned about the rich Jewish history of the Lower East Side.



Past Events

On September 15 KKJ welcomed Anastasios Karababas for a wonderful presentation on highlights from his new book "In the Footsteps of the Jews of Greece." We were honored to be the first stop in his tour of universities and synagogues here in the US. We look forward to welcoming him back again in the future and to his continued research and scholarship educating the world about our community's story. Email info@kkjism.org if you're interested in ordering a copy of his excellent book. \$35 plus \$5 shipping.



Article from The National Herald on the presentation:

In the Footsteps of the Jews of Greece Book Presentation by Anastasios Karababas [link here](#)

NEW YORK – Author Anastasios Karababas presented his new book 'In the Footsteps of the Jews of Greece: From Ancient Times to the Present Day' in an informative and moving event at the historic Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum (KKJ) on New York's Lower East Side on September 15.

Karababas is a French-Greek historian, teacher and political analyst. He was a guide and lecturer at the Shoah Memorial in Paris from 2014 to 2020. In 2011, he began his research on the Jews of Greece, and his latest book is based on historical archives from Europe, Israel, and the U.S. His research mainly focuses on genocides of the 20th century, the preservation of memory, and its transmission to younger generations.



His pioneering book, first published in Greek in 2022, in French in 2023, and published in English in 2024, translated by Lina M. Liederman, presents a unique, detailed overview of the history of Greek Jews from antiquity to the present day, including the period of the Holocaust when nearly 90% of the community was annihilated. Beyond this historical landscape, the book also highlights the contributions of Greek Jews to the economic, cultural, intellectual and political life of the country, and reveals the golden times and the darkest days in the coexistence between Jews and Christians in Greece.

With a prologue by Yiannis Boutaris, the former mayor of Thessaloniki, the book, a valuable resource of information, includes testimonies from survivors, historic photos, detailed notes, and an extensive bibliography. For anyone interested in the history of Greece, it is a must read.

Andrew Marcus, KKJ board member and Director of Community Development, gave the welcoming remarks, sharing greetings and congratulations on Karababas' book from Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonopoulou who could not attend that day. Marcus noted that the community is "almost 100 years in this synagogue building, but over 100 years in America, and about 2,000 or so going back in Greece, as you'll hear, in the Romaniote community."

He then introduced KKJ's new Community Engagement Fellow, Theo Canter, who speaks English, Greek, Hebrew, French, and Arabic, and will be spearheading new initiatives, programs, and classes at KKJ to better engage the Greek Jewish community. Canter spent the past year in Greece as a Fulbright Fellow, teaching English and studying with the Jewish community in Athens of which Karababas is a member. Canter then introduced Karababas, noting his many accomplishments as a scholar and author.

Karababas thanked the community, pointing out that "it is a great honor to have the opportunity to stand in front of you and to present this rich history, the history of the Jews of Greece."

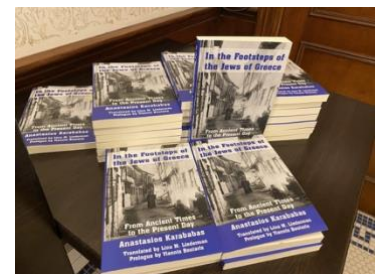
During the presentation, Karababas shared key points about the long history of the Jews of Greece, beginning with the earliest traces of the Jewish presence, recorded in inscriptions and in archaeological evidence from ancient times. Slides including historic photos and maps highlighted the multifaceted communities that thrived throughout Greece until the devastation of the Holocaust. Karababas noted that the first Jews settled in Greece in the sixth century BC, the Romaniotes, based mostly in Ioannina, are the oldest group while later on the Sephardim- Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, Askenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, and Italian Jews also settled in Greece. He mentioned famous Greek Jews, including Moses Allatini who led industrial development in Thessaloniki in the mid-19th century, the war hero Colonel Mordechai Frizis who lost his life in the Greco-Italian War in 1940, and rebetiko singer Roza Eskenazi.

Karababas also offered insights into the Holocaust in Greece, noting that there were 31 communities recognized by the Greek government and over 75,000 Jews in Greece, 56,000 of those living in Thessaloniki before the war, but the Nazis' Final Solution decimated the once-thriving communities. He noted the efforts of Archbishop Damaskinos, Bishop Chrysostomos, and Zakynthos Mayor Loukas Karrer, who are among the 364 Greeks listed by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations for helping Jews during the war.

Karababas pointed out that the history books in Greece when he was in school did not mention the Holocaust and only in recent years has the subject become a part of the school curriculum. He said that anti-Semitism in Greece is superficial today and based on ignorance, adding that as the education level increases, anti-Semitism tends to decrease.

Today, there are about 5,000 Jews in Greece and nine official Jewish communities with the largest in Athens, followed by Thessaloniki, and Larissa.

Following the presentation, Karababas answered questions from the audience and signed copies of his book which were available for purchase. Attendees also enjoyed refreshments at the event.



Join us for High Holiday Services

Please RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org
View our full holiday schedule [Here](#)

2024

5785

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
WISHES YOU A**

**HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND SWEET
NEW YEAR**

**תזכו לישנים רבות
Χρόνια Πολλά**

ANYOS MUNCHOS I BUENOS

**YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US FOR SERVICES
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA - 280 BROOME ST NYC
OUR SEATS ARE FREE AND OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN**

ROSH HASHANAH - OCTOBER 3, 4

YOM KIPPUR - OCTOBER 11, 12

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG

VIEW OUR FULL SCHEDULE AT WWW.KKJISM.ORG

Hashkavoth Memorial Prayers for Yom Kippur

Email memorial names to Amarcus@kkjism.org

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA HASHKAVOTH MEMORIAL PRAYERS

On Yom Kippur it is traditional to recite memorial prayers for the dearly departed. In many synagogues this ritual is observed by conducting a Yizkor service. At Kehila Kedosha Janina we follow the centuries-old Romaniote custom of our people by reciting Hashkavoth (memorial prayers) and the individual names of our dearly departed during the Kal Nidre Yom Kippur Eve service. If you wish to honor the memory of your family members or friends in this very special way, please email their names as soon as possible to Amarcus@kkjism.org. It is customary to include a voluntary donation of your choosing. The names and donation may also be submitted via PayPal on our website www.kkjism.org.

WISHING YOU GOOD HEALTH AND HAPPINESS
AS WE APPROACH THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

תזכו לישנים רבות

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NEW YORK, NY 10002
AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG

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



Greek Jewish & Sephardic
Young Professionals Network

Κοινότητα קהילה Komunita

Young Professionals

ROSH HASHANA SEDER & DINNER

Thursday October 3
Holiday Services at 7:00pm
Seder & Dinner at 8:00pm

**Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome Street New York, NY 10002**



Join us for a special Seder and Dinner on October 3 - the second night of Rosh Hashana! Celebrate the new year with a traditional array of symbolic foods, enjoy a delicious Sephardic dinner, meet other young community members, and learn more about our Sephardic and Romaniote customs.

Open to Jewish Young Adults in their 20s and 30s

**SPACE IS LIMITED
MUST RSVP TO GREEKJEWISHYPN@GMAIL.COM**

**EARLY BIRD PRICE \$50 UNTIL SEPT 26
\$72 PER PERSON AFTER**

News from Jewish Greece

Thessaloniki

Event in Madrid for the Sephardim of Thessaloniki

On September 10, 2024 the Cervantes Institute in Madrid organized a special event dedicated to the cultural heritage of the Sephardim of Thessaloniki. In the first part of the event, the President of KISE and IKTH, Mr. David Saltiel, placed in a treasury box (Caja de las Letras), which is located in the basement of the Institute's headquarters, a series of objects related to the Spanish-Jewish language and culture of the Sephardim of Thessaloniki.



The Cervantes Institute uses these boxes, giving great figures of the sciences, arts and letters the opportunity to place objects of their choice, creating thematic time capsules of Spanish culture. Mr. Saltiel placed inside box number 1447 - among those that house objects of the Spanish poet and writer Federico García Lorca, the Spanish novelist and member of the Royal Spanish Academy, Ana María Matute Ausejo and the Mexican writer José Emilio Pacheco - a CD with Spanish-Jewish songs of Thessaloniki and songs of Greek Jewry, the editions of the proceedings of the four international conferences on the Spanish-Jewish language organized by the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki (1997, 2001, 2004 and 2008), the book "Ethyion from the life of the Jewish community", a model of the building under construction of the Holocaust Museum of Greece, a copy of the post-war minutes of the Community Assembly of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki of May 8, 1945, written entirely in the Ladino language, a set of keys - a symbolic reference to the poem by Jorge Luis Borges "A key to Salonica" ('Una llave en Salonica') and a letter to the Sephardim of Salonica addressed to the members of every future generation - of Spain but also of the whole world - as well as to every person who cares to know.



Among others, the President of KISE and IKTH, Mr. David Saltiel noted:

"I know that in these boxes are kept texts of great personalities and objects with special symbolism. I would very much like to "deposit" a text from the many great Rabbis who were born and flourished in Sephardic Thessaloniki. But the havoc that wanted to destroy almost every trace of this identity - without fortunately succeeding - does not allow me to do so. But what I can testify is that it represents the spirit and identity of these people. Of those who were expelled from Spain but did not forget it. Of those who were mercilessly hunted because they were praying in a Synagogue. Those who survived the crematoria and the hardships and returned to Thessaloniki. Of those who never forgot the pain and had the strength to find the smile of life again through the eyes of their own children. Of the first post-war generation, - of those of us today who continue in their footsteps - with an old-fashioned perhaps, moral compass - like Don Quixote - in front of the different - more dangerous - windmills of our times.

A round table on Sephardic Culture followed, in which, in addition to Mr. David Saltiel, the following participated:

- Carmen Noguero, Secretary General of the Cervantes Institute.
- Esther Bendahan, author and Cultural Director of the Sefarad-Israel Center, and
- Jon Juaristi, philologist, former director of the National Library of Spain and the Cervantes Institute.
- Pilar Tena, Director of the Cervantes Institute of Athens.

The events were attended by the Honorary Consul of Spain in Thessaloniki and member of the Community Assembly, Mr. Samuel Nahmias, the Director of Diplomacy, Representative to the UN in Geneva and UNESCO and coordinator for the fight against Anti-Semitism for the World Jewish Congress, Mr. Leon Saltiel and the soprano Mrs. Mariandzela Hadjistamatiou.

David Saltiel: The Construction of the Holocaust Museum is going fast

Interview with Elisabeth Stavrianidou full article [Here](#)

One of the most important development projects implemented in Greece, the Holocaust Museum of Greece, is taking shape in a symbolic place for Thessaloniki, in the area of the Old Railway Station, from where the death trains left, with the Jews of Thessaloniki for Auschwitz. The landmark museum for the city, keeping alive the memories of the past, will at the same time be a pole of attraction for thousands of tourists annually, participating in the tourism development engine.



The first phase of construction of the Holocaust Museum has already begun, with preliminary work continuing and the first excavation works already completed. With a total area of approximately 9.000 sq.m., the Museum, which is implemented by the Israelite Community of Thessaloniki with donations from the Greek State, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Genesis Prize Foundation in honor of Dr. Albert Bourla CEO of Pfizer, but also from donations from individual people, it is expected to be ready at the end of 2026.

The construction of the Holocaust Museum was proposed in 2016 and the foundation stone was laid on January 30, 2018. The museum under construction will house, in addition to the permanent exhibition spaces, spaces for periodic exhibitions and archives, with special visitor education programs as a key element and in particular of the children. It was also going to house the archives, books and other objects that the German occupation authorities seized on July 11, 1942 from 30 synagogues and Jewish institutions of Thessaloniki, which they later transferred to Berlin. This material ended up in Moscow in 1945 after the occupation of Berlin by the Soviet army. In December 2021, the Russian government announced its decision to return it to Greece, to be deposited in the Holocaust Museum under construction following the intervention of Prime Minister Mr. Mitsotakis. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances that have arisen to date, the original files have not been returned. The Israelite Community holds copies which can be studied by researchers.

The President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, David Saltiel, in his interview in the special printed edition of GRTimes for the 88th TIF, "guides" us to this emblematic project, noting that it will highlight all the unknown aspects of history, of the Jewish community, but also of Thessaloniki, serving important educational purposes at the same time.

Mr. Saltiel, at what stage are the works for the construction of the Greek Holocaust Museum?

For the Holocaust Museum of Greece, which is implemented by the Israelite Community of Thessaloniki and financed by the Federal Republic of Germany, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Greek government, but also by donations such as Dr. Albert Bourla, the Construction Permit was issued at the end of December 2023 by the Directorate of Construction and Urban Development of the Municipality of Thessaloniki, thus paving the way for the implementation of the 1st of the major projects of Thessaloniki that will be completed keeping the memory alive. The contractor for the execution of the Preliminary Works of the project, which concern excavation and support works and the construction of the foundation piles, is the joint venture of the companies GEOREVNA - OFS and the duration of its implementation is seven months. The Contractor settled and completed the work of organizing the construction site (required permits, installation of construction site fencing, Project sign, construction site huts, connection to OKO networks, etc.) and continues with excavation work, and construction of piles to create a barrier.

Which works are currently in progress and which ones will follow?

Excavation work is in progress and, at the same time, construction work is being carried out on the sub-foundation of the future building. In the sub-foundation phase, reinforced concrete constructions will take place, with the excavation and filling of one hundred (100) shaft piles, 1,20 m in diameter. and 21m deep. each, as well as a perimeter partition wall, 0,60 m thick. 13,45 m deep supported by a 16,25 m long pre-tensioned anchor system. The preliminary work is completed with the complete excavation and removal of the

excavation products up to the level of the foundation floor (-8,60 m in relative elevation, taking into account that the absolute +0,00 = 5,20 m.)'

When is construction work expected to begin?

The Israelite Community of Thessaloniki, which is the owner of the project, together with the donors and the association of companies "Samaras & Synergates SA - Consulting Engineers" and Hill International in the role of Project Manager and Technical Consultant for the implementation of the project, worked intensively and coordinated in order to complete the tender process and the contracting of the Contractor on schedule, so that this first phase of construction can start immediately. Under the coordination of the government, in cooperation with the donors, IKTH, the Project Manager, the Municipality of Thessaloniki and in general with all the contributors, all the actions for the implementation of this emblematic project of our city are proceeding intensively. In parallel with the works on the construction site, the preparation of the Application Study and the drawing up of the Tender Documents are also progressing at an intensive pace, with the aim of the General Contractor of the construction of the project succeeding the Contractor of the Preliminary Works at the beginning of 2025, so that the construction of the building and of its surroundings to start in early 2025".

What will be the characteristics of the Holocaust Museum?

The Museum has a total area of approximately 9.000 sq.m, will consist of six above-ground and two underground floors and will be developed around a small urban grove. In addition to the permanent exhibition rooms, it will include periodical exhibition, archive, education and research rooms, as well as multi-purpose and leisure spaces and administrative offices, while the adjacent property will create outdoor parking. The preparation of the Architectural study is co-signed by the architectural offices of Efrat Kowalsky Architects from Israel, Heide von Beckerath from Germany and P. Makridis & Associates SA. from Thessaloniki which have been framed by renowned scholars. The Museum is designed as a prominent monument inspired by the octagonal monuments of Thessaloniki, which during the night will diffuse light from the inside out, transforming the building into a living canvas that imitates the lighting of lighthouses. The design is based on the principles of sustainability and sustainability and the common goal of all parties involved is the certification of the project by the internationally recognized sustainable development system LEED".

Why did you choose Thessaloniki for the construction of the Museum?

Thessaloniki was chosen for the construction of the Holocaust Museum instead of Athens, due to the extent to which the city suffered during WWII. Thessaloniki was originally under German occupation, unlike most of Greece, which was under Italian or Bulgarian occupation. Adolf Hitler planned to incorporate the city into the Third Reich in retaliation for its involvement in WWI. In 1942, German forces began implementing the Nuremberg Laws in the city and ordered male Jews to appear in Freedom Square where they were publicly tortured and humiliated before being forced into forced labor near the train station. In 1943, the city's 56.000 Jews were transported, via 19 Holocaust trains, to the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, where 43.000 – 49.000 of them were killed. The train route from Thessaloniki to the concentration camps was the longest in distance of all the trains of the Holocaust, while the Jews were obliged to buy a ticket! From the 15th to the beginning of the 20th century, Thessaloniki was the only city in Europe where Jews constituted the majority of the population. However, only 2.000 Jews returned after the war and fewer than 1.000 remain today. In total, 80.000 Greek Jews, i.e. 85% of the entire Jewish population, perished during the Holocaust.

Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki

Italian Ambassador visits Museum

On 9/8/2024 the Ambassador of Italy to Greece, Mr. Paolo Cuculi, accompanied by the Commercial Assistant of the Italian Embassy of Athens, Mr. Enrico Barbato, Honorary Consul of Italy, Mr. Georgia Sarantopoulou and the President of the Hellenic Chamber, Mr. Christos Sarantopoulos visited and toured the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. The guests were received by the Vice-President of the Community Council, Mr. Lazarus Sefiha, who on the occasion of the retrospective of the Jewish history of Thessaloniki, mentioned the modern functioning of the Community and the implementation of important initiatives such as the Holocaust Museum, programs to fight Antisemitism, and more.



New Museum Artifact: "The Jewish Chests"

The chest was delivered before the departure of the Thessaloniki Jews for Auschwitz from a Jewish family (unknown names) to the Koukounos family, perhaps along with other personal items, so that they could be protected and taken back by the Thessaloniki Jews family when he returned. After the Holocaust, F. Koukounos, a painter from Thessaloniki, took the "Jewish" chest with him to the house he bought in Harilau, which he sold years later to Mrs. T. Corby. Years later the chest was found forgotten on the balcony of the Corby family in Harilau. After related research and personal actions by Mr. Alberto Sebi, today the chest is in the pre-war Archive of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, where it will be preserved. In the near future it will be placed as an exhibition in some permanent or future exhibition of the Museum.



The Greeks in Thessaloniki said of the Jewish chests that they were "like camels". And indeed, the Jewish chests had something quite distinctive: tall, made of blond wood, with a curved lid, with plenty of embossed ornamentation on their exterior. Of course, it was impossible to sit on a Jewish chest. And this was something that -us Greeks - surprised us. We were also surprised by the Jewish decoration - the Star of David, the incomprehensible Jewish letters that "look" to the left, etc. Later, in the spring of the fateful 1943, I happened to see a lot of "Jewish" furniture, conceived for sale in squares or sidewalks. Then I had the "opportunity" to compare the Greek and Jewish tradition of chests again. At that time, the Jews knew that they would be taken by the Germans to take them to the mythical (and, of course, nonexistent) kingdom of Krakow. That's why all the families hurriedly sold their belongings Source: Ilias Petropoulos (Achilleas Fotakis Editorial-Introduction), For the Jews of Thessaloniki, Kapon publications.



"Dress of the Soul" Exhibition

Exact replica of a Sephardic woman's clothing, 19th century.

The exhibition that enchanted the audience of Athens, comes to Thessaloniki enriched with new works of unique costumes of Macedonia and Thrace, an initiative of the Papageorgiou Foundation. From September 06, 2024 to January 06, 2025, the enriched iconic exhibition entitled "Soul Garments", is presented under the auspices of the President of the Greek Republic Katerina Sakellaropoulou, located at the Thessaloniki Branch of MIET / Villa Kapantzi.



After the tour of the exhibition to Greece and abroad, and the unique appeal to the public in all destinations, and especially to the Acropolis Museum, where it took place in the context of the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 1821, the "Soul Garment" comes to Thessaloniki. This is a unique exhibition, where photographer Vangelis Kyris and the expressor of embroidery art Anatoly Georgiev present the

"Greek attire" in a special way and an artistic perspective, worn by contemporary people, and through the osmosis of photography with fabric and embroidery art.

In the exhibition, which will be on display for four months in the city of Thessaloniki, more than 70 costumes of the past "push" faces of the present, in a unique connection that highlights the richness, the imaginative variety, the mastery of details, and the construction skill of the garments. At the same time, through the penetrating gaze, posture and body movement, the costumes become the narrative of the history of the place, historical persons, the histories of societies and their daily lives.

Athens

Mazal Tov to Athens Jewish community members Elena, Ileana, Rosa, Sofia, Lilian, and Malkita on their Bat Mitzvahs in September! We wish them all the blessings and strength as they are called to gradually become self-sufficient by carving a beautiful path with crossroads of choices, with avenues of opportunities and experiences, with narrow challenges and trials, with obligations and freedoms.



Hellenic Diplomatic Academy Students visited the Jewish Museum & Beth Shalom Synagogue

In September students of the Hellenic Diplomatic Academy received a tour of the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Sephardic and Romaniote Synagogues in Athens, where the seat of the Jewish Community of Athens is located. They learned about the rich presence of the Jews of Greece since antiquity, the identity of Greek Jews and the scourge of anti-Semitism. They paid tribute to the Holocaust Memorial, a reminder of the horror that intolerance can cause but also a commitment that this crime will not be repeated. The students were accompanied by the Special Envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the fight against Anti-Semitism and the Defense of Holocaust Remembrance, Ambassador Mr. X. Aliferis. Warm thanks to the Director of the Jewish Museum, Mrs. Zanet Battinou, the Most Reverend Rabbi of Athens, Mr. Gabriel Negrin, Mr. Monis Halegua and Mrs. Rosa Roussou, Vice-President and Member respectively of the I.K. of Athens, for the invaluable information and warm hospitality.



Photos from the Archives: JDC in Greece

Jewish life thrived in Greece until the Holocaust, when Nazis murdered a shocking 85% of Greece's 76,000 Jews. Following World War II, the JDC helped survivors restart their lives in Greece by financing training activities and loan institutions for those eager to be self-sufficient. JDC also funded orphanages and schools for Jewish children, provided medical care, aided sanatoria, and made contributions for the reestablishment of religious and cultural institutions in the country. Additionally, JDC-supported hachsharot or agricultural settlements helped Greek Jews waiting to emigrate prepare for their new lives in Mandatory Palestine.

In the 1950s, JDC continued to assist the community with cash relief, medical aid, and meals in school canteens. JDC also helped build Jewish youth community centers and undertook a housing project for

earthquake victims in Volos following devastating earthquakes in the mid-1950s. During the first half of 1957, Greece was the first landing point for thousands of Jews fleeing Egypt, who were cared for by JDC and the local Jewish community before immigrating to Israel. Learn more and view additional photos [Here](#)



Women try on shoes distributed by JDC. Athens, 1948.



Residents of a JDC-supported agricultural hachsharah, or training center, preparing for a new life. Athens, 1947



A free loan financed by JDC allowed this survivor to operate a kiosk in the Monastiraki subway station. JDC's loan program allowed Greek Jews to find their place in the Greek economy following WWII



Family of Jewish refugees who returned to Greece after the war. Athens, 1945.



Postwar, JDC helped build a Jewish school and Jewish youth community centers in the country. Athens, 1969



Children pose on the balcony of a JDC-supported orphanage of Jewish children whose families were killed during the Nazi occupation. Athens, 1945

Rhodes

Theater Performance in Australia on the History of the Jews of Rhodes Full article in Greek [Here](#)

On 9/15/2024, in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the displacement and extermination of the Jews of Rhodes and Kos, an event was organized in Sydney, Australia, during which a theatrical action was presented on the history of the Alhadeff family from Rhodes. The project "Torn Apart by War" is inspired by true events and concerns the Jewish family Alhadeff's desperate attempt to escape from Rhodes before the Holocaust. The event was held with the cooperation of the Consulate General of Greece in Sydney and the contribution of the Jewish Museum of Rhodes. The theatrical performance belongs to Mr. Vic Alhadeff, whose parents, when they left Rhodes, went to what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where the author grew up. During the event, the Consul General of Greece in Sydney, Yiannis Mallikourtis, spoke, who, among other things, pointed out: "The history of Rhodes is not just a Jewish story, it is also a Greek story, but not exactly that, it crosses borders, and finally becomes a story of universal importance."



Crete

Interview with Donna-Lillian Capon about her New Book on her Childhood in Athens and Crete

The writer Donna-Lillian Capon is the offspring of an old Greek-Jewish family, whose members left a mark on Crete. Her mother, Mafalda, was born and raised in Chania and her uncle, the successful businessman, Leon Albert associated his name, even if some tried to keep it in obscurity, with some of the most iconic works on the island, such as the Municipal Market of Chania, the Keritis river bridge, but also the section of the National Road that connects Chania with Rethymno.



Donna-Lillian Capon lived her whole life in Athens, but during the summers she spent a large part of her vacations in Crete, so she kept alive many of the memories of those beautiful times. She remembers, as she told us, mainly the love and interest she received from her relatives on the island who made her feel like she was the center of the world.

She also remembers the stories she was told, the Cretan delicacies she tasted and the gifts she received from relatives and family friends. A family with deep commercial roots in both Crete and Athens, hers with her great-grandfather being called the "Venizelos of commerce". The author as an adult studied French and English Literature and taught as a professor for many years while specializing in the translation of medical texts. She was also, for a number of years, a member of the administrative boards of the Jewish Community of Athens and the Central Jewish Council of Greece, from the position of general secretary. In 2018, Donna-Lillian Capon was honored with a special plaque by Greek Jewry, in recognition of her multifaceted work and the support she offered to the creation of the Holocaust Museum of Greece. In recent years, however, she has been writing books.

Her first book "Enigma - From Thomas Becket in Athens of the 21st century" was first published, where the author, having discovered an incredible, even for herself, path of her family presents us with her roots with several references to Crete.

Her second book "Nostalgia for an Athens I Loved 1947-1957" completes the mosaics of the historical journey not only of her large family but also of the Jewish community itself, putting us in the climate of life and the images that post-war Athens presented at the time , where he lived.

Through descriptions, oozing with tenderness and love, Donna Lillian Capon in her new book revives an Athens that cannot but awaken nostalgic feelings in those who lived in the Capital during the difficult post-war years. As Mrs. Capon tells us, this book emerged as an internal need as the previous years, with the brutalities of the Second World War, had marked them and she did not want the memories of her family to be lost. Her family decimated by Nazism (many of her close relatives were murdered in Auschwitz), and having the image of even more members of the Jewish community, essentially the last Jews of Crete, at the bottom of the sea after the wreck of the ship "TANAIS" , Lillian Capon experienced the period she describes in her book as the "Renaissance."

"We wanted to live, to overcome the difficulties, to overcome the lack of trust that existed at the time towards the Jews", she tells us and confides to us that all these experiences had made her then, although a small child, think and behave like an adult . Sometimes she even wondered with her childlike innocence: "Have we done something bad and they are hunting us?"



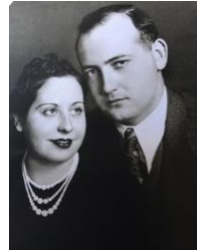
Unfortunately, she adds, there will always be a scapegoat and unfortunately there will always be anti-Semitism and in the case of the Jews it will bother some that they are a people who do not erase their past and do not assimilate, in whatever corner of the earth they find themselves.

Mrs. Capon dedicates her new book to her grandfather Isaac Benjamin Capon, a victim of the Nazi atrocity in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps, whom she did not get to embrace. As she describes it, the proud, imperious market lord was caught in a trap by the Germans and ended up, along with her grandmother, Donna, his daughter Sarina, his son-in-law Isaac Rousseau and his six-year-old grandson Emilio-Samuel, in the Auschwitz extermination camps- Birkenau, "from where it was released in the form of gray smoke through the chimneys of the crematoria that worked day and night to burn millions of victims."

Her grandfather, who was an active and successful businessman, had invested money, before the war, buying a property at 22 Armeni Braila Street, in Athens thus offering a safe haven for his family during the post-war years.

This second book by Lillian Capon revolves around this house and the life of the family when they first settled there. Beautiful family moments, childhood memories of the house, the neighborhood, its people, the school, the wider area of the Field of Ares, bring to life an Athens different from the Capital of today, more humane, even if it was wounded by the war, as and the souls of its people.

Lillian Capon's father, Benjamin, reports in the book, returned from the Front in 1940 wounded, with severe frostbite, and was forced to have his lower limbs amputated. "Luckily, his hands were spared from amputation, while both of his lower limbs were sacrificed from the metatarsals, in an operation carried out at the Petraki Monastery (it was then transformed into a hospital) by the legendary military surgeon Professor Aesop..." describes Ms.Capon. But he succeeded and he and Mafalda were able to continue their lives by giving birth to three children, Roberto, Lilian and later Moses.



Their new home, which had been bought by her grandfather Isaac Benjamin Capon, "It too was like a living organism, wounded by misguided human interventions and the merciless time that had allied itself with them. And yet, it radiated an irresistible charm that did not leave me indifferent..." the author notes in her book. In fact, as she later discovered, this house was built and lived in by the famous architect, archaeologist and academic, Anastasios Orlandos.

Through the pages of her book and centered on this house, the stories of various people who were either related to the specific building, or to the neighborhood and the circle of friends and acquaintances of the Capon family emerge.

Forgotten professions emerge in post-war Athens and characteristic figures of people, such as the itinerant ice cream seller and greengrocer, the fisherman, the photographer, the yogurt maker, etc. Also emblematic points of the Capital such as the Field of Areos, the church of Agios Charalambos with the icons designed by Fotis Kontoglou.



All these and even more take on color, aroma, and beauty and come to life in front of the reader who shares the author's nostalgia for that Athens, for her happy childhood life, because of the love she received and gave inside and outside the house on Armeni Street Braila 22. The way Lillian Capon writes and describes succeeds in a unique way in turning the reader into a partner in her experiences.

At the same time, the rich photographic material that completes the book, like pieces of a puzzle, reinforce the purpose of its writing, i.e. the transition to a period, which was marked by the war with its suffering, but everyone needed to live to the fullest and they are happy, as if their life was beginning then and on its white pages they wanted to have only happy moments flooded with love and tenderness.

Turkey

A Sephardic Rosh Hashanah from Turkey – Full article [Here](#)

Leyla and Erman Kaspi are Jews from Turkey who I recently met outside the elevator of our Chicago apartment complex. After the usual introductions, I asked Leyla whether she still cooks the dishes with which she grew up. “Of course,” she exclaimed.

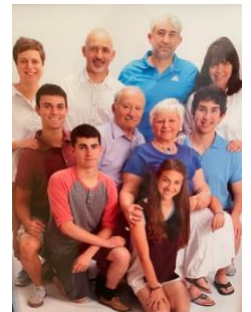


That was the start of a lovely relationship. Leyla and I talked for hours about her family’s holiday foods and traditions, including their Turkish Rosh Hashanah seders. Before I share what I learned from Leyla, a brief history of Sephardic Jews in Turkey:

Although the Jewish presence in Turkey dates back more than 2,400 years, the majority settled there following their expulsion from Spain and Portugal in 1492. Sultan Bayazid II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire at the time, welcomed the Sephardim, seeing them as a benefit to the empire’s economy. Sephardim had religious freedom and autonomy in their Turkish communities, something they lacked in their former countries. As the Sephardim became key players in commerce, their numbers grew, eventually surpassing the Ashkenazi Romaniotes who pre-dated them.

The Jews from Spain and Portugal carried their unique culinary traditions with them to Turkey. And just like so many other groups of Jews, they adapted some of their dishes to reflect the cuisine and available ingredients in their new home. Vegetables and herbs such as eggplant, zucchini, dill, mint and sumac were plentiful in Turkey. Likewise, the foods of Turkey were influenced by Persian cuisine, which made Sephardic Turkish cuisine unique.

Leyla Kaspi was born in Istanbul. At home her family spoke mainly French and Turkish, and with her grandparents a little Ladino. She and her husband Erman, also from Turkey, remained there throughout the Holocaust, benefitting from Turkey’s neutrality during World War II. In 1942, the Wealth Tax legislation was imposed on non-Muslim citizens. This included Armenians, Greeks and Jews. When I asked Leyla whether she and Erman consider themselves Turkish Jews today, she emphatically said no, that they are Jews from Turkey.



Erman’s job took them to Athens, Greece in 1970, which was just the beginning of their version of the Wandering Jews. From Athens they moved to Rome, Italy, and seven years later to Windsor, England, where they lived for 35 years, splitting their time between England and Nice, France. They moved to Chicago 10 years ago to be closer to their two sons and families, which now include four grandchildren.

These facts were in my mind as I listened to Leyla describe her family’s Rosh Hashanah meal. She told me that while growing up in Istanbul, fruits and vegetables were part of every meal, purchased daily at the nearby market. However, in preparation for Rosh Hashanah, the purchases were far more specific. If fresh dates were available, they would take precedence over the dark ones. “Foods for Rosh Hashanah had to be light colored, and the fresh dates are golden,” Leyla explained.

Sesame seeds, pomegranates, apples, eggplants, peppers, zucchini, potatoes and whole blanched almonds were among the purchases. And, of course, a fresh whole fish such as red snapper, which the fish monger cleaned, detached the head and tail, and wrapped every part of the fish in one package.



To begin the holiday festivities, each of the Kaspi’s guests would kiss the other guests at the table. This lovely family custom precedes their Sephardic Rosh Hashanah Seder called Yehi Ratzon (“may it be thy will”), a tradition dating back 2,000 years to Talmudic times. Their seder begins with the lighting of the candles and the blessing

over the wine. Next is the hamotzi over the bread. Rather than sprinkling the bread with salt, each guest dips his or her bread in sugar, for a sweet year.

There are additional blessings called simanim, which are recited over many of the items that Leyla arranges on a tray, including her homemade apple jam with whole blanched almonds, a pomegranate, an apple and a bowl of sesame seeds. For example, the blessing over the pomegranate is: "May we be as full of good deeds as the pomegranate is of seeds"; over the apple: "May it be your will, G-d, to renew us for a year as good and sweet as honey"; and a blessing over the fish head of Leyla's pièce de résistance, a beautiful cooked and re-formed whole fish, adorned with sliced cucumbers to resemble fish scales: "May it be your will, G-d, that we should be heads and not tails; leaders, not followers." Suffice it to say, the Turkish Sephardic version of the fish course is a far cry from the Ashkenazi gefilte fish.

Other foods for this special seder include prasa de kefta (leek patties), fritada de kalavasa (frittata of zucchini) and a Turkish ratatouille called turlu made from eggplant, potatoes, peppers and okra. While Leyla might serve a chicken dish as part of the menu, the meal is primarily made up of all the small dishes mentioned above. For dessert there are apple tarts or tishpishti (walnut cake—although on Rosh Hashanah, her grandmother made it with blanched almonds, to keep the color light).

If I've piqued your interest in a few of these Sephardic dishes, as Leyla piqued mine, I am including four Sephardic recipes below. You will notice that few spices are used in these dishes. Rather the delicious flavors are the result of using the freshest in-season produce and fresh herbs.

From my family to yours, Shanah Tovah!

Margi Lenga Kahn is the mother of five and grandmother of eight. A cooking instructor at the Kitchen Conservatory, she is working on a project to preserve the stories and recipes of heritage cooks. She welcomes your comments and suggestions at margikahn@gmail.com.

View the Recipe for **Tispishti** below at the end of this Newsletter.

A Jewish, feminist, Ottoman gynecologist: A portrait of a physician from 19th-century Ottoman Istanbul

Full article by Büşra Demirkol [Here](#)

The [Ottoman Empire](#) — the state created by Turkish tribes in Anatolia that spanned between the years 1299-1922 — was home to many successful Jewish medical professionals over time, including figures such as [Hamons](#), [Hayatizâdes](#) and [de Castros](#). Yet, this essay is not about heroic Jewish physicians in the imperial court.

It is about a Jewish, feminist gynecologist who chose to live in the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, near the end of the imperial era in the late 19th century, and was, perhaps, too ahead of his time to be recognized as an important figure in historical accounts.

Why move from Europe to the Ottoman Empire?

Dr. Jean Miclesco was born to a Jewish family in 1861 in the capital of present-day Romania, Jassy. Determined to escape his parents' insistence that he pursue a religious education, he emigrated to Germany. There, he studied medicine at the University of Munich and specialized in gynecology and obstetrics. Following

19



Banner for **L'Aurore**, an Ottoman Jewish newspaper. January 29, 1915.

his graduation in 1887, he embarked on a second migration, ultimately settling in İstanbul — the capital of the Ottoman Empire — where he dedicated 45 years to the active practice of medicine.

Although we do not know for certain why Miclesco decided to make İstanbul his home, despite professional and multilingual abilities compatible with work in any European capital, it is possible to deduce an answer based on a [report on Romanian Jews](#) published in *The Reform Advocate* – a newspaper published in Chicago “in the interest of Reform Judaism” – in 1907.

In the article, Max Sylvius Handman, a Romanian Jew who immigrated to the United States and later became a sociology professor, writes that Romania’s “Jewish problem” was only a part of “many neglected, unsolved and hopelessly entangled social problems” in the region. In Romania:

Jews cannot own any rural property, a Jew can't teach any public school, a Jewish lawyer is not admitted to the bar, the Jew can occupy no governmental office of any kind and under any condition... Jewish physicians are not admitted to serve in non-Jewish hospitals, nor are Jews allowed to own or operate drug stores.

Considering the antisemitic, precarious conditions that Romanian Jews faced, Miclesco’s decision not to stay in Europe or return to his hometown in Romania may not be surprising.

Successful career in Istanbul; volunteer and literary work

As a physician, Dr. Miclesco had a thriving career within Jewish and Ottoman imperial institutions and attained high positions, such as chief surgeon of the military hospital in Istanbul. It is possible to glean his professional trajectory through Ottoman Jewish sources; on January 29, 1915, the newspaper *L’Aurore* announced that he had been selected as a board member of the Association of Jewish Physicians of İstanbul.

From [medical advertisements](#) in the same newspaper, we learn that Miclesco had seen patients free of charge in the Or-Ahaim Hospital, the most prominent Jewish community hospital in Ottoman İstanbul, which is still open today. Last but not least, Miclesco also worked in an independent clinic, where he accepted patients from all ethnic and religious identities and classes.



The Or Ahaim Jewish Hospital in Balat, İstanbul. Via the [History of İstanbul](#) website

In addition to his medical work in different institutions, Miclesco was also a prolific literary man. He wrote on various subjects, including philology and mythology, and even undertook a translation project of the poetry of medieval Sephardic intellectual [Judah Halevi](#).

Feminist writing

Among these multilingual and multifaceted literary works, his most interesting ones were focused on women and gender. Particularly in his unpublished memoir ([excerpted online here](#) in Turkish), “La Vie et La Mort,” Dr. Miclesco sheds light on the under-discussed topics of female sexuality, pregnancy, abortion, and prostitution through the stories he witnessed while working in different gynecology clinics in 19th- and early 20th-century İstanbul.

While heavily inspired by his professional life and medical observations in the Ottoman Empire, Miclesco didn’t only write about Ottoman women. He also provided strong critiques of patriarchy across other societies, especially in Europe. According to Miclesco, “One of the greatest errors committed by the human spirit is to give the Church the authority to deal with the sexual question, to think that sexual morality depends on religion.”

In contrast to the morality of Christian theologians, who “constantly fix their eyes on the heavens while forgetting what is on the ground,” he defended the naturalness and legitimacy of female sexual desire: “A woman is not only a moral and social being but also a sexual



Dr. Jean Miclesco,
1 Nisan 1917’de İstanbul’da.

being. To say that a woman must forever retain the purity of a virgin is like talking about fish that can live outside of water.”

Another aspect of women’s rights that Dr. Miclesco fervently defended was abortion:

It is no longer a question of enumerating the diseases that justify an abortion intervention, or of determining the moral qualities of abortion, but of emphasizing the fundamental fact that the woman has the right to accept or refuse any operation. She is always the owner of her own body.

He also criticized the criminalization of abortion in penal codes such as those of the French, German, Austrian, and Ottoman governments, arguing that while the tiny fetus was protected, the female citizen’s right to life was effectively denied by state oppression. Dr. Miclesco’s unwavering support for women’s right to abortion, especially in a [historical context](#) where it [carried severe penalties](#), was a bold feminist stance.

Beyond his memoir, the book in which Miclesco collected his feminist ideas on women’s bodies and sexuality, “*Ecce Mulier ou L’Éternelle Blessée*” (“Behold the Woman, or the Eternally Wounded”), was published in Paris in 1911, and brought him well-deserved international recognition.

It was reviewed and publicized in various Jewish, Ottoman, and French newspapers, such as *Le Messager de São Paulo*, *Le Jeune-Turc*, and [La Lanterne](#). However, the most validating recognition for his work came when it was recommended in the [feminist bibliography](#) in the French suffragettes’ weekly newspaper *La Française: Journal de Progress Feminine* in 1923.

A feminist doctor ahead of his time

Dr. Jean Miclesco’s life and work embody a unique blend of medical expertise and a feminist perspective. He viewed medicine not merely as a profession but as a lens through which to understand societal and moral constructs related to women and sexuality.

As Miclesco himself noted, “In the course of my work in the art of medicine, I have often witnessed horrors and agonies that have led me to study the question of sex with complete independence and enthusiasm. It is from this extensive study that I have come to recognize the daily errors, abuses, and crimes committed by society in the name of morality in general and sexual morality in particular.”

As a Jewish, feminist gynecologist in late 19th- and early 20th-century Ottoman Istanbul, Dr. Jean Miclesco’s dedication to women’s health and his forward-thinking views on sexuality and gender issues positioned him as a unique figure who was ahead of his time in both Jewish and Ottoman histories. By advocating for women’s rights and demonstrating solidarity with female patients of all religious and class backgrounds, Miclesco made a mark on the medical field and on feminist thought.

His story serves as a testament to the diverse and impactful roles that Jewish physicians played in the Ottoman society, and his independent spirit continues to inspire research in both women’s and gender studies. I am deeply grateful to Professor Irvin Cemil Schick, whose scholarly generosity and work made it possible for me to become acquainted with Dr. Miclesco’s legacy.



Büsra Demirkol is a Ph.D. candidate in the Interdisciplinary Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Washington. She received her B.A. in sociology at Galatasaray University and her M.A. in Turkish Studies and History at Sabancı University. Her master’s thesis focused on modernization in the legal field during the late Ottoman era and its impact on women on the margins. Based on penal codes, codification discussions, and court records, she traces how marginal women have been redefined and constructed within the boundaries of the public sphere in Ottoman legal culture and have been subjected to [state intervention](#) according to a modern understanding of crime and punishment. Before graduate school, she also worked as a social worker with African, Afghan, and Syrian refugees in Istanbul and researched the official and unofficial schooling of Syrian children. Her research interests include 19th-century Ottoman social history, sociological theory, history of medicine, and women, sex, and gender. She is a 2023-2024 Robinovitch Family Fellow in Jewish Studies.

Ladino News

Saving a Language from Extinction – Binghamton University [Link](#)
Harpur faculty revive Ladino, traditionally spoken by Sephardic Jews

Spanish and Hebrew are two languages you probably wouldn't link in terms of sound, appearance or cultural history. So, it may surprise you that a language exists that sounds like Spanish and has historically used varieties of the Hebrew alphabet.

At its peak, Ladino — the language of Sephardic Jews — was spoken by about 250,000 people. After teetering on the brink of extinction, Ladino is not only still alive, but it's attracting an increasing number of people who want to learn and speak it. This revival is partly because of the collaboration of two Harpur College faculty members. In 2020, Bryan Kirschen '07, MA '08, and Dina Danon created the Ladino Collaboratory — also known as the Ladino Lab — with the help of a grant from Binghamton University's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. This three-year initiative was intended to train students to read and speak Ladino, and introduce them to others who speak the language.

When Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they dispersed throughout the eastern Mediterranean region to lands that were part of the Ottoman Empire, establishing communities in cities in what are now modern-day Greece and Turkey.

"Because the Ottomans were historically not interested in homogeneity, the empire had many ethnicities and many languages," says Danon, associate professor of Judaic studies and history. "People preserved their cultural particulars in the lands of the Ottomans. Jews could speak the language they brought with them. Over centuries, Ladino evolved. As it came into contact with Turkish, French and Italian, there were regional variations of the language, and it managed to survive for hundreds of years in exile."

"Sephardim were often multilingual, and Ladino was a vibrant living language at the center of their linguistic production," adds Kirschen, chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, and associate professor of Spanish and linguistics. "While genocide and assimilation have escalated the degree of endangerment of Ladino, the language is still used in a variety of domains. Within academia, we have a platform to share the voices of minoritized groups. In particular, younger generations are showing interest in a language that has been pushed aside for generations."

The COVID-19 pandemic might seem like an odd historical reference point for a language that has endured for centuries. Ironically, the lockdowns provided an opportunity for Ladino to spread its reach. Kirschen and Danon initially created the concept for the Ladino Lab before the pandemic, with programming to be delivered in person. After the pandemic hit, they introduced an apprenticeship program that paired participants with partners across America with whom they would converse over Zoom.

"Ladino has received a considerable uptick of attention and interest since 1992, which was the 500-year commemoration of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain," Kirschen says. "In more recent years, the pandemic created many new opportunities to offer additional resources online. Before that, much of the activity in Ladino was limited to communities with Sephardic populations." The three-year duration of the grant has concluded and the Ladino Lab is on pause. In the meantime, Kirschen is incorporating Ladino into upper-level Spanish courses and Danon introduces students to Ladino in Sephardic history classes. They are planning the next phase of the lab to meet the needs of a growing number of students who want to learn the language and history of the Sephardim.



Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History Dina Danon

"Ladino was a language I heard around the house and something I came to study as an adult," Danon reflects. "I was familiar with Ladino as a child, so part of it is a personal quest for preservation. The Holocaust almost completely erased Ladino off the map. We at Binghamton can continue it. Ladino is still alive, and we can engage people in all sectors of the campus. It's meaningful to me both on a scholarly and personal level."



Bryan Kirschen, Chair of the Department of Romance Languages & Literatures, and associate professor of Spanish and linguistics

"For many, Ladino is more than just a language; it's a movement," Kirschen says. "Several of our students have continued conversations by phone or Zoom with their Ladino-speaking partners, which is very meaningful. While some members of our lab were Sephardic, most were not. Part of our goal is to educate students of different backgrounds on diverse historical, cultural and linguistic ways of being Jewish and speaking varieties of Spanish."

Haberes Buenos! Hebrew University initiates first Ladino intensive language program

Inaugural summer session attracted a diverse group of students, who took a deep dive into the living tradition of Judeo-Spanish and encountered native speakers

The world's first Ladino ulpan was launched this summer. For two-and-a-half weeks, 28 students were immersed in the Judeo-Spanish language of the Sephardic Jews at the inaugural session of the International Ladino Summer School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The seed was planted five years ago when Dr. Ilil Baum, then a postdoctoral researcher in Jewish studies at the University of Michigan, began noticing a recurring question her students would ask: "Where can we study Ladino?"



"That was a good question!" Baum recalled, but she didn't then have an answer, as the study of Ladino has traditionally been under-represented in Western academia. "There are Yiddish summer programs, there is Hebrew ulpan, why wasn't there a program like that for Ladino? I carried this thought with me for many years," she said, speaking to The Times of Israel by phone.

This August's program, according to Baum, is the first of its kind to offer academic credit for a Ladino intensive summer course. Attended by students at different points in their academic careers, the program offered beginning and advanced tracks, each combining morning language classes with afternoon modules on archive use, research tools and studies in Sephardic culture.

The course was led by Baum, now a lecturer at both the Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan University, and Prof. David Bunis, head of the Ladino program at the Hebrew University. "It's a serious program. Many of our students were graduate students at the MA and PhD level. We also had some BA students and two at the postdoc level," Baum said. Much of the thrust, she said, "was about research tools, and working with Ladino materials on documents from the 17th and 18th centuries," but it was also "very important to send them to document living Ladino speakers today in Israel." She said the students encountered 25 native speakers and documented their interviews

"What was really exciting about this program was that people came who were enthusiastic for Ladino and Sephardic studies. They were crazy about Ladino as much as I am," Baum said. "Many of them have Sephardic heritage, but others just felt infatuated with the language. Not all of them were Jewish... So we had very interesting profiles of students and it was very exciting."



What is Ladino?

Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish diasporic language, originated in the Golden Age of Medieval Spain and, after the late 15th-century expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula, became widely spoken across the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans after Jewish exiles from Spain were allowed to settle there.

Spain is known as Sepharad in Hebrew, and the Sephardic Jews of today are the descendants of these exiles, who brought with them to the east, and elsewhere, their Jewish Spanish culture, food and language.

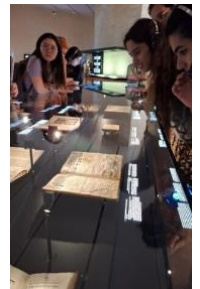
The Sephardic Jews largely thrived under the Ottoman regime and developed into an important and recognized minority population in the empire. In some cities, especially Salonika (now Thessaloniki in Greece), Istanbul and Izmir, Ladino-speaking Jews developed sizeable communities and played important roles in economics, politics and culture. In Salonika especially, Sephardic Jews were the majority from the 19th century until WW II, and the port, where many worked, was famously closed on the Sabbath.

In the 20th century, a combination of historical factors contributed to a sharp decline in the language: the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War 1, which drastically altered Jewish society in areas formerly controlled by the empire; the Holocaust, which decimated Ladino-speaking communities in Nazi-controlled Europe, including in Salonika; and Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel, which led to a focus on modern Hebrew over diaspora languages.

The language itself is classified as a Romance language, being based on old Spanish, and until the early 20th century was written in Hebrew characters. Ladino vocabulary contains elements from Hebrew, Turkish and several Balkan languages, a testament to the language's wandering path through time and history. A lesser-known dialect called Hatekia, which evolved outside the Ottoman sphere among Sephardic exiles in Morocco, has a heavy Arabic influence.

Communities of mostly elderly native speakers still exist in Turkey, Israel, France and elsewhere, but unlike Yiddish, the most well-known and widespread Jewish diasporic language, Ladino doesn't benefit from a society that continues to use it and pass it along to new generations, as Yiddish does in many parts of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish world.

Also unlike Yiddish, Ladino hasn't traditionally benefited from the same level of support from US and European academic institutions, cultural organizations and private initiatives, although some universities, especially in Israel, offer Ladino language and Sephardic culture courses.



A family affair

Paz Ben-Nissan, 28, was finishing a dual BA in International Relations and Middle-Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University when he saw "by complete accident" a notice about the summer session, he told The Times of Israel. Ben-Nissan, an Israeli of partial Bulgarian-Sephardic descent, convinced a cousin who was also a Hebrew University student to take the course as well, which was "really nice. We are related on that side, so it was another way for us to get in touch with that part of our family," he said.

Taking the course was "a really amazing experience" because "all of a sudden a lot of things clicked" about his family background, Ben-Nissan said, and he was able to invite his grandmother and her sister to the class to participate in the program as native speakers. Now, "I do want to continue to study, it's very important. It's not just any old language," he said. "It's dying out. Most people who speak Ladino are not very young... there is a sense of responsibility for that language, it's part of my family's history."



Another student with a family connection is Simone Salmon, a PhD student in ethnomusicology at UCLA who is currently a visiting researcher at Istanbul Technical University. Salmon's Sephardic family immigrated in the early 20th century from Turkey to southern California, where she grew up. Her great-

grandfather was a Turkish-Sephardic oud player and Ladino singer, and his wife would collect Ladino song lyrics from Sephardic women across the US, Mexico and Canada.

"She tried to make the most comprehensive lyrics that she could. She published quite a few notebooks" that were passed around among Jewish communities, said Salmon, whose academic focus herself is on the Ladino song tradition.

This diverse body of lyrics and melodies is a very prominent cultural manifestation of Sephardic culture. It includes ancient Romanzas dating back to Medieval times, folk and holiday songs, wedding songs, lullabies and more. Much of it was traditionally sung and passed down by women.

Salmon said she took the course to improve her translation skills and because she "especially wanted to better understand" the jokes and side commentaries she regularly hears as part of her research among a group of elderly Sephardic Jews in Istanbul.

It was wonderful being around "other people so passionate about Ladino, which is very rare" in normal academic settings, she said, and "it really lifted me up" to be in Israel, she added, after a challenging year as a Jewish academic in the US.

Further afield

Some students came without familial backgrounds, like Rima "Reyze" Turner, a University of Wisconsin PhD. student and Yiddishist living in Wrocław, Poland. She came to the program, she said, in part because "the folks in my world" of Yiddish scholars and students are "really interested" in the language.

After studying Ladino for a year, "I had already given a presentation, in Yiddish, about some of the similarities between Yiddish and Ladino," Turner said. After the summer program, she "now feels confident" about working with Ladino texts and translations on her own and plans to begin a monthly "Ladino Zoom reading circle" oriented towards Yiddish speakers.

Turner plans to continue to study Ladino and incorporate it into her academic work, but said, as a Yiddish teacher, that "it's really tough to teach" Ladino because in general, "there is just not very much prepared materials, pedagogy, curriculum... it's not that organized."

Other students came from further afield, like Shiyu Hong from Shanghai, who "attended this program out of interest as a linguist of Jewish languages, and [from] an interest in Sephardic culture," she said. Hong, a PhD. student in the Department of Hebrew Language at the Hebrew University, came to the field "just accidentally" after she took a Hebrew class as an undergraduate student in China.

"I found Hebrew interesting and continued," she said. The summer course was the first time she had studied "a specific Jewish language like Yiddish or Judeo-Arabic," although she has studied Aramaic, the ancient cousin of Hebrew used in the Talmud.

Hong plans to "integrate the Ladino knowledge I've acquired into further research on modern Hebrew," she said, as "people in the Sephardic old Yishuv in Palestine spoke Ladino during the revival of modern Hebrew, so there are Ladino loan words that came into use."

The program attracted two students from Turkey, and a history student who came from Greece to improve his ability to read Ladino newspapers published in Thessaloniki during the 1920s and 30s, part of the diversity of students that gave organizer Baum "a deep sense of hope." "In this crazy year, we came to celebrate together, study together and invest our energy in expanding our intellectual horizons and to connect, in the middle of war," she said.

These Teens Are Keeping Sephardic Culture Alive [Full article Here](#)

Last year, as Judah Roberts was putting up posters for a Ladino festival at Katz Hillel Day School in Boca Raton, Fla., he wished he could involve his peers in preserving the disappearing language. The 16-year-old, who traces his family ancestry to the Balkans, grew up hearing his mother sing songs in the traditional Sephardi language. His family attends Maor David, a Sephardi synagogue in Boca Raton, and his grandmother makes the Sephardi specialty Pescado con Huevo y Limon (fish with eggs and lemon) for most Jewish holidays.



After posting on Facebook that he wanted more young people to learn Ladino, he connected with Ethan Marcus, the managing director of the [Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America](#), who had been thinking about ways to engage younger generations. Their mutual enthusiasm led to the launch of [Bivas](#), the Brotherhood's fledgling youth organization whose name means "live" in Ladino. Roberts serves as national president of the organization, which is coed and open to anyone who identifies as Jewish, with or without Sephardi roots.

"Ladino is on the brink of extinction. It is unsettling to see a culture and history dying out like that, especially among the young generation," Roberts said. "I was inspired to do something about it."

Drawing on youth leaders like Roberts to recruit fellow students, Bivas now has clubs in two Boca Raton day schools as well as ones in Teaneck, N.J., Los Angeles and Seattle, with others set to launch in Philadelphia and Atlanta this year. Clubs host weekly extracurricular activities that feature movie screenings (e.g., *Song of the Sephardi*, a documentary film), holiday celebrations, boreka bakes or Ladino lessons.



In one example, Roberts organized his club's biscochos bake, distributing the traditional ring-shaped pastries at the South Florida 10th Annual International Ladino Day Festival. He has also helped organize Bivas shabbatons in New York and Orlando.

Bivas's quick growth bolsters the mission Marcus envisioned when he resolved to cultivate a younger generation, reversing generations of Sephardi assimilation into the Ashkenazi mainstream in the United States.

"If we don't do something now, we're going to lose it," Marcus said of a community with deep roots in America but few schools or youth institutions of its own. He described efforts to revitalize Sephardi pride as "staying in one's tradition and being steeped in one's identity, while fully engaging with the modern world. We want to make sure that's something we offer to our next generation."



Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



Celebrating the High Holy Days as we enter the new Hebrew year of 5785 will be difficult for many. Besides the raw and still fresh memories of the horrible and unprecedented rampage committed by Amalekite Hamas on Shmini Atzeret-Simhat Torah last year on October 7th, Israel is still at war, and the hostages are still suffering – if surviving at all. Should this affect how we observe the High Holy Days this year, especially Simhat Torah?

On the simple, halachic level, the answer is clear: We cannot 'cancel' the holidays, and will assemble in synagogues on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, erect Sukkot and celebrate Simhat Torah. However, on an emotional level, the dilemma is difficult. On the one hand, we are commanded in the Torah to rejoice on Sukkot with Simhat Torah being the ultimate festival of singing, dancing and expression of unbridled joy. On the other hand, given the present circumstances, can we in good conscious dance and sing with Torah scrolls in the midst of war as Israel fights for its very existence? This question was also asked in 1973 on the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, which began on October 6th, exactly 50 years ago almost to the day when Hamas invaded on October 7th. How, then, can we even think of being joyful while at war?

The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate "Bava Batra", page 60B, in speaking about the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple shows us a path: *Our Sages taught: When the Second Temple was destroyed, ascetics increased in Israel to refrain from eating meat and drinking wine. Rabbi Yehoshua joined their discussion: "My sons, why don't you eat meat and drink wine?" They said to him: "Shall we eat meat from which sacrifices were offered on the altar, and now it has ceased? Shall we drink wine that was poured as a libation on the altar, and now it has ceased?" He said to them: "If so, we should not eat bread, as the meal offerings have ceased!" They replied: "It is possible to eat fruits." He said: "We should not eat fruits, as the first fruits have ceased!" They replied: "It is possible to eat other fruits." He said: "We should not drink water, as the water libation has ceased!" They were silent. He said to them: My sons, come and I will tell you: It is impossible not to mourn at all, as the decree has already been issued. But to mourn excessively is also impossible, as we do not impose a decree on the community unless the majority can endure it... Therefore, [to show collective mourning] the Sages said: A person plasters his house with lime, but leaves a small part un-plastered... A person prepares all the needs for a meal, but leaves out a small part...A woman makes all of her jewelry, but leaves out a small part...And anyone who mourns for Jerusalem will merit and see its joy, as it is said (Isaiah 66:10): "Rejoice with Jerusalem..."*

Rabbi Yehoshua's message is clear: We must somehow combine measured mourning with continuing our normal lives. To this day, for example, at the conclusion of the joyous wedding ceremony under the Huppa, the groom smashes a glass to remind us of the destruction of Jerusalem. Rabbi Yehoshua insists that, as traumatic the destruction was, we must nonetheless put things in perspective and not allow ourselves to fall into a deep, dark and virtually permanent melancholy.

And as tragic as the last year's horrible events may be, and the continued existential war Israel's continues to fight, in historical perspective, the Jewish people have suffered worst catastrophes as we all well know. More significant is the fact that despite the innumerable attempts to persecute, massacre and even annihilate the Jewish people, we have never allowed them to break the Jewish spirit. This has also been the ultimate goal of our enemies throughout history, since even they were, and are, aware, that the Jewish people cannot be fully annihilated without destroying our spiritual life as well as our physical existence. The prime example is the

holiday of Hanukkah, which in its essence was a battle for our spiritual survival even more than a physical uprising against Syrian-Greek tyranny. And throughout the ages, we have seen how, under the worst conditions of exile, expulsion and unfathomable massacres and annihilation, Jews heroically continued to practice Judaism and celebrate Jewish life and festivals whether openly or secretly, even at the sacrifice of their lives. This is no less true of the Holocaust, as we know from the vast numbers of testimonies and stories of spiritual resistance, whether by smuggling in ritual objects or holding secret prayer sessions under the very nose of the Nazi monsters. Even in the worst of times, when giving in to forced conversions or even worse, Jews have refused to give up and give in to spiritual destruction.

Therefore, though many religious leaders have suggested that this year, like Rabbi Yehoshua prescribes, we combine mourning the events of last October with the joy of our celebrations. To do so, some have suggested that the tone of this year's celebration of Simhat Torah be more subdued in terms of public dancing with Torah scrolls, or that special memorable prayers, like *Yizkor* in Ashkenazi congregations and *Hashkaboth* among Sephardim, be added for the martyred victims of the October 7th events, and other suggestions in this light. However, we must not allow our spirit to be broken, or our faith tested by not celebrate the High Holy Days and Simhat 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 in our days!



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Shofar So Good--Thoughts for Rosh Hashana
JewishIdeas.org

The Shofar plays a central role in the Rosh Hashana liturgy and invariably is one of the highlights of the synagogue service. Its primordial sounds are meant to awaken us from spiritual slumber; and to evoke thoughts and emotions relating to the Akeida story, the Revelation at Sinai, and the Messianic Redemption.

The laws relating to the ritual propriety of a shofar can be understood to convey moral lessons. A shofar must be fashioned from one horn; a shofar that is patched together using different pieces of ram's horn is not kosher for use. The moral: we need to be "whole" human beings, true to ourselves, strong with personal integrity. If we are merely a patchwork of other people's ideas and values, we are not fulfilling our responsibility as autonomous human beings.

The shofar is not to be plated with gold in such a way as to alter its authentic sound. The moral: we are not to allow material prosperity to falsify our authentic voices. Nor are we to be impressed by wealthy individuals whose "voices" have been altered by their riches e.g. who arrogate to themselves rights and privileges simply because of their wealth. A person's human worth is not to be determined by how much or how little "gold" he/she has.

If the sound of the shofar is the result of an echo i.e. the person blew the shofar in a cave or through a microphone, then this does not satisfy the religious requirement of hearing the shofar. The moral: we need to concentrate on the real thing, not on echoes or artificial magnifications. The shofar serves its role not by how loud a noise it can make, but by how natural and authentic a sound it emits.

The shofar is supposed to be bent over into a curve. The moral: we are to be contrite when we come before the Lord, bowing in humility and with honest recognition of our weaknesses.

Thus, the shofar is imbued with important symbolic messages to help us be better human beings and more devoted Jews. May we all be sensitive to the messages of the shofar. May we all be blessed with a meaningful holiday season. May the Almighty bless us and our loved ones with a year of good health and happiness, peace for America, Israel, and the world.

This Year's High Holiday kids' books are a celebration of Jewish diversity Full JTA article [Here](#)
Books beckon families with stories that show Jewish customs around the world and across the centuries.

The enduring traditions of the High Holiday season take shape across time and place in the latest crop of children's books about Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. This year's books transport readers back to biblical times; whiz them to the old-world streets of Istanbul; remember the etrog trade in 18th-century New York City; and celebrate harvest festivals from very different culture. All of them beckon families with stories that display the rich diversity in Jewish culture. Here's your roundup of new children's High Holidays books for 2024.



"A Turkish Rosh Hashanah"

Etan Basseri; illustrated by Zeynep Özatalay, Kalanot Books; ages 5-9

In this heartwarming story, Rafael, a young Jewish boy in Istanbul, wishes his grandmother Nona, and his cousins Alegra and Leon, "anyada buena," the Judeo-Spanish greeting for a happy new year shared by Sephardic Jews at Rosh Hashanah. Kids follow the cousins at the bustling outdoor market, where they help Nona shop for the ceremonial foods they will enjoy that evening at their traditional Sephardic meal. The cousins' excitement is briefly dampened when an older kid bullies them while they shop. But Alegra courageously uses her voice to stand up to him, leading the way for Rafael and Leon to speak out, as well. A playful pack of friendly cats gets in on the action, keeping it light. When the family gathers for the holiday, Nona praises the kids for their team work. The book concludes with an author's note about Sepharic customs and a handy glossary.

"Max and the Not-So-Perfect Apology"

Carl Harris Shuman; illustrated by Rory Walker and Michael Garton, Apples & Honey Press; ages 6-8

In this cartoon-style page-turner, readers meet Max, a young inventor who saves time in the morning by washing only one side of his face. When Max and his best friend Emma join forces for their Torah-class project about the biblical story of Jacob and his brother Esau, Max is determined to win first prize. But when their teacher arranges different teams, jealousy and feelings of being left out threaten their friendship. It's a perfect set-up for a fun-filled adventure when Max powers up his time-travel machine, this time without his co-pilot Jin Emma. He lands in Ancient Israel, where plenty of jokes between Max and Jacob, his son Joseph and Esau will have kids chuckling. There are meaningful lessons to be shared about forgiveness that reflect the themes of Yom Kippur.

"An Etrog from Across the Sea"

Deborah Bodin Cohen and Kerry Olitzky; illustrated by Stacey Dressen McQueen, Kar-Ben; ages 4-10

Award-winning authors Deborah Bodin Cohen and Kerry Olitzky team up in a charming Sukkot tale lavishly illustrated by Stacey Dressen. Set in the early 18th century, a Sephardic Jewish family travels by stagecoach from their country home to New York City to their grandfather Luis' large house. Leah, her brother Aaron and their mother eagerly await Papa's return from his travels from Corsica in time for Rosh Hashanah. In a postcard, Papa has promised to bring home a perfect etrog — the fragrant citrus fruit used during Sukkot. But when Papa doesn't arrive, they fear something is wrong. Grandpapa Luis comforts Rachel with a beautiful silver etrog cup. But will her papa return for Sukkot, bringing the promised etrog? To everyone's relief, Papa returns home just in time, and the etrog finds its home in Leah's silver cup. In an author's note, families learn that the story is based on the life of Luis Moises Gomez (1660-1740), a prosperous merchant and trader from Britain who settled in New York.

"Mixed-Up Mooncakes"

Christina Matula and Erica Lyons; illustrated by Tracy Subisak, Quill-Tree Books; ages 4-8

A Jewish mother who lives in Hong Kong is one of the co-authors of a story featuring a young girl whose family celebrates two harvest holidays: Sukkot and the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. Ruby shops separately

with her Chinese Nainai and her Jewish Zayde for supplies for the holidays, but she craves some way to combine them. Like other recent books such as "Two New Years" and "The Very Best Sukkah," the book illuminates connections between different traditions for readers who appreciate learning about the world and want to see contemporary models of Jewish family represented in children's literature.

"Sammy Spider's First Book of Jewish Holidays"

Sylvia A. Rouss; illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn, Kar-Ben; ages 1-4

Possibly the most famous character in Jewish children's literature, Sammy Spider is back in board-book form in an introductory text about the Jewish holiday cycle. Starting with the fall holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah, the book continues through Shavuot in spring, showing the friendly young arachnid who enjoys spinning his web in the home of a Jewish family.

"One More Story, Tata!"

Julie Salamon; illustrated by Jill Weber, Minerva Books; ages 4-8

In their newest collaboration, Julie Salamon and Jill Weber hit the mark with a charming, beautifully illustrated intergenerational story about a young girl named Ruby, her grandparents, and great grandmother Tata. Every weekend, when Ruby visits, Tata enchants her with stories imagined from her dreams. On Friday nights, they gather around the Shabbat table and light candles, share challah and enjoy a festive meal.

"Ping-Pong Shabbat: The True Story of Champion Estee Ackerman"

Ann Diament Koffsky; illustrated by Abigail Rajunov, Little Bee Books; ages 4-8

Kids will cheer as they follow a rising young ping-pong star named Estee who aces all her competitions. Every Shabbat, Estee takes a break from the fast-paced game to go to synagogue and later, to enjoy the company of her family and friends. But when Estee qualifies for the National championship that will be held on a Saturday, she faces a hard choice. In the back pages of this action-packed, cartoon-style book, readers discover the real-life story of [Estee Ackerman, who gave up the chance to compete in the national table tennis championship when she was just 11-years-old, because it was held on a Saturday](#). The following year, Estee won the gold medal at the nationals, gratified by the knowledge that she had honored her values and her religion.

Recipe: Tispishti (Walnut Cake)

(Recipe adapted from "Sephardic Flavors," by Joyce Goldstein)

Because this recipe has no flour or dairy, it can be served on Passover. Feel free to substitute blanched ground almonds (almond meal) for the walnuts. The almond meal does not need to be toasted.

Ingredients

Syrup:

- 2 c. granulated sugar
- 1 c. water
- 2 tbsp. fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. orange-flower water (optional)

Cake:

- Olive oil or butter for oiling pan
- 10 large eggs, separated
- 2/3 c. granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tbsp. fresh squeezed orange juice
- 1tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves
- Grated zest of 1 medium orange
- Grated zest of 1 medium lemon
- 2 c. finely ground toasted walnuts
- 1 c. stirred Greek yogurt or whipped cream for garnishing (optional)
- Thinly sliced oranges, for serving (optional)
- Fresh mint leaves, for garnishing (optional)



Directions

To make syrup, combine sugar, water, and lemon juice in a small saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 8-10 minutes until mixture becomes syrupy. Remove from heat to cool. Once cooled, stir in optional orange-flower, if using. Reserve.

Oil or butter a 10x14x3-inch baking pan. Line the bottom with parchment paper and lightly butter or oil; set aside. Arrange rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 350 degrees.

To make the cake, beat the egg yolks in bowl of a stand mixer until pale yellow. With mixer on, gradually add sugar and beat until thick and pale.

Dissolve baking soda in orange juice and add to egg yolk mixture along with vanilla, cinnamon, and cloves. Beat until combined. Remove bowl from stand and fold in grated zest and all the ground nuts (be sure you have a full 2 c.); set aside.

In another bowl with clean beaters, beat egg whites to stiff peaks. Stir a third of the beaten egg whites into nut mixture above. Carefully fold in remaining egg whites, being careful to not deflate them.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake cake for 22-25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Keeping the Faith – Romaniote Film Project

Arlene Schulman of the Attas and David families is working towards completing her film, *Keeping the Faith: Meet the Romaniotes!* which examines the history, resilience, and survival of the Romaniotes.



Her Uncle Abie and his mother, Calomira, were two of the original founders of Kehila Kedosha Janina, donating \$100 towards the building of the synagogue in 1927. They were invested in keeping traditions alive for centuries to come.

Arlene is keeping traditions alive by producing and directing a film about her family, Romaniote and Greek Jews, and our synagogue. Films are expensive to produce and involve editing, music and video rights, color correction, photo rights, and graphic design.

Please help Arlene complete her film. Your gift of \$100, which matches Uncle Abie's, ensures that *Keeping the Faith: Meet the Romaniotes!* is completed with the production values that it deserves.

Here's how you can preserve Romaniote history. Our history. Thank you for considering a gift that tells our story. <https://gofund.me/5b87d611>

Photo of the Month

Sasson Family in Greece

Thanks to Sion Misrahi



So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

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

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

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



**Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 186
October 2024
Kehila Kedosha Janina
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