



# Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

## March 2023 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Wishing all our Jewish friends a joyous celebration of Purim. Join us on March 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm as we celebrate a Greek Jewish Purim! The evening starts with Minha and Arvith services, followed by a Romaniote Megillah reading. Afterwards we'll enjoy a traditional Greek Jewish dinner. Dress up as your favorite costumes and celebrate this festive Jewish holiday with your family and friends! Please RSVP to [Amarcus@kkjasm.org](mailto:Amarcus@kkjasm.org)



Megillat Esther from Ioannina, on display in Kehila Kedosha Janina

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On February 17<sup>th</sup>, we received the news that Dr. Moisis Elisaf, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, and Mayor of the city of Ioannina, passed. We dedicate our humble newsletter to this exceptional man.

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This newsletter, our 168<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website [www.kkjasm.org](http://www.kkjasm.org)

We now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of 'friends' continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at [museum@kkjasm.org](mailto:museum@kkjasm.org)

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email [amarcus@kkjasm.org](mailto: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 [museum@kkjasm.org](mailto:museum@kkjasm.org).

## Passings

February was a very difficult month for us, as we lost important members of our community in New York and dear friends from Greece.

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Marcel Svolis, the son of Ebbie (Avram Svolis) and Eftichia Mioni Svolis, passed. He was born June 3, 1961 was only 61 years old. He leaves behind his brother Aris Svolis, his wife Tshila-Sharon Levi and his children Miranda Svolis and Joy-Joanna Svolis. He was a gentle man and will be mourned by his friends and family in Greece and in the United States. Marcel was the grandson of Jeudah Svolis, who died in Ioannina at the age of 66 and was spared the horrors of the Holocaust, and Refka bat Bechor Matathias who perished in Auschwitz in April of 1944, along with most of her family. The oldest son of the family was executed by the Germans before the deportation in January of 1944. Ebbie, Marcel's father, was able to escape the transport, along with three other men from Ioannina, as they walked out of the warehouse where they were being kept and joined the Resistance movement in the mountains outside of Larissa. Ebbie's older sister, Sophie came to the United States and married Matathias Matathias, becoming part of the Romaniote community on the Lower East Side. Marcel grew up in the small Yanniot community in Ioannina, the son of a Resistance fighter and a survivor of the Holocaust. He will be greatly missed by many.



Marcel



Svolis Family in Ioannina before 1921



Marcia, Aris Svolis, Penny Santiago (granddaughter of Sophie), Marcel, & Ralph Santiago

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Abraham Levy, a lifelong congregant of Kehila Kedosha Janina and lifelong resident of the Lower East Side, was laid to rest in Wellwood Cemetery, in a section of the United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina. He was 93 years old. Abe was a regular at our Shabbat services at Kehila Kedosha Janina. He was pre-deceased by his wife, Sandra. He is survived by his two daughters, Ann Sykes and Randi Rogers, his two sons-in-law, Matt Sykes and Robert Rogers and his two granddaughters Danielle (Ann and Matt's daughter), and Sara (Randi and Robert's daughter). Abe was a loving father and a gentle man. He was a veteran of the Korean War. He will be missed by many.



Abe & Sandra Levy



Abe Levy - Korean War



On February 17, Max Negrin was laid to rest in a section of the United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina in Beth David Cemetery in Elmont. From the obituary written by his family:

Max Negrin, one of the youngest surviving US veterans of World War II, passed away peacefully in hospice care on February 12, 2023. He was 95.

A Queens resident for 68 years (65 in Bell Park Manor Terrace in Queens Village), he and his wife Esther (Tica) moved to Springfield, VA, in 2019 to live in Assisted Living nearer to their remaining family.



Max - US Navy WWII

Born on Manhattan's Lower East Side to Greek immigrants on May 22, 1927, the day Charles Lindbergh landed in Paris, Max excelled in school so rapidly that he graduated from Seward Park High School at age 15; at just 16 ½, with World War II raging, Max forged his parent's signatures in an attempt to enroll in the US Navy. Thwarted in his first attempt, he soon tried to enlist again until finally at 17 he legally enlisted and enrolled in the Navy's Flight Training School. As a gunner on a PV4Y-2 Privateer, he was honorably discharged from the Navy in June 1946.



Max and Tica,  
December 1951

Max was an excellent baseball player and avid fan, often attending over 50 games a year in the Polo Grounds to watch his beloved New York Giants play. Devastated and feeling betrayed by their move to San Francisco in 1958, he instantly became a Mets fan when they began playing in 1962. He was immensely proud when he went to his first Mets game, in early 1962, at the same Polo Grounds the Giants left behind.

Known for an unmatched memory, up until his death Max could recite all 50 US states in alphabetical order; he could recall, by name, all of his crew mates in the Navy; he would speak the names, alphabetically, of each of his 17 classmates from the first grade; and he could still recite all 18 stanzas of Poe's The Raven...backwards. He often amused friends and colleagues when he spelled and pronounced words backwards, and spoke in sentences backwards. No crossword puzzle was a match for him, and he dried out many an ink pen completing them. Trained as a Civil Engineer, Max worked in construction and retired from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, having played an important role in the redesign and reconstruction of Newark International Airport.

Max held prominent Board positions in several local organizations, including The Pashas, a fraternal group of Greek Jews from the Lower East Side, and The United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina, a burial society serving the community through burial services and more.



Pasha Weekend in the Catskills

A loyal and devoted husband, father and grandfather, Max is survived by his wife of 71 years Esther (Benjamin), son Arthur, daughter-in-law Maurie, and grandsons Matthew and Michael. He was preceded in death by his oldest child, Vicki, in 2016. His memory is an abundance of blessings.

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Moisis Elisaf passed away. President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina and Mayor of the city of Ioannina, he was buried in the Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Tributes came in from around the world, justifiably so. He was, after all, not only the President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina but, also the Mayor of the city. Dignitaries from all over Greece attended the funeral service, including Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou, which was held in the synagogue of Ioannina. Moisis was the son of Shemos Eliasaf and Anna Lagari (both of Blessed Memory). He is survived by his wife, Cleopatra Hadsiani.



"It is with deep sadness that we bid farewell to the Mayor of Ioannina Moses Elisaf. His untimely death leaves the city poorer, the Yaniotas deprived of a municipal leader with rare character integrity, unbound, a war of intolerance and fanaticism, who built bridges between people and inspired with his ethics and vision. A Romaniote Jew, born and raised by the ancient Jewish community destroyed in the Holocaust, faithful to its tradition, drew from a painful past strength to defend democracy, freedom, and belonging. A doctor, a university professor, passionate about the public, has been busy in highlighting the cultural imprint of his small place that divided so many cultures. His gentle, unifying, bold and visionary personality will be missed by his fellow citizens and all of us who knew, talked, worked with and connected with him over a priceless friendship." - Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou

### **Mosis Elisaf, Greece's first Jewish mayor, dead at 68**

Ioannina Mayor Mosis Eliasaf, Greece's first elected Jewish mayor, died on Friday February 17<sup>th</sup> from cancer. He was 68 years old. A pathologist by training, Elisaf led a very busy life as a doctor and researcher, with hundreds of published articles and activities in several medical societies. His participation in city committees as of 2011 eventually led to his election as mayor of Ioannina, the western Greek city of Epirus, in June 2019 under a collective that combined center-left and conservative members. For several years, Elisaf served as member of the Central Board of Jewish Greece (KIS), while also President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina.

Professor Elisaf was born in Ioannina, a city with a historic Romaniote Jewish community, in 1954. His parents survived the Holocaust and escaped to the Middle East, but his grandparents and several family members perished in Auschwitz and Birkenau. His father ran a fabric store and his mother was a housewife.

After graduating from the University of Athens Medical School in 1979, he worked as a researcher in the University of Tel-Aviv on lipids and arteriosclerosis, his lifelong research focus. His longest affiliation was with the University of Ioannina Medical School and its University Hospital, where he taught pathology and served as head of the University Hospital's Second department of Internal Medicine. He was also head of the same hospital's Lipids, Atherosclerosis and Obesity Clinic.

**Moses Elisaf: Farewell to a Symbol** by Rafael Mosis – Full article in Greek [Here](#)

Moses Elisaf, a special figure for Ioannina, Greece and Greek Jewry



The chair of the Mayor of Ioannina has strong legs and has withstood very heavy names on it. First, Giyiabeis, the last of the Ottoman Empire and mayor for three more years in the Greek city of Ioannina, a strong proof of the harmonious coexistence of religions and the rare and smooth change of regime. Other big names in the past, Vasilios Pysinellas, Dimitrios Vlahleidis and more recently the intellectual doctor Filippos Filios and the methodical engineer Thomas Begas.

To get to Moses Elisaf, with "unique" being the adjective that characterizes his personality. He was the only Jew in Greece who managed to overcome the otherwise unsurpassed "you are not a Christian, not a Greek" and to convince the people of Ioannina to vote for their mayor the professor of their university, their good doctor, the prominent Yaniote personality.

It is said and written by persons in the know, that his contribution to the research of medical science is unique in importance and originality. President of the Spiritual Center before becoming mayor, he spearheaded its emergence as one of the leading ones in Greece. He was perhaps also unique as a mayor, who still had so much to offer to his city, if life had given him the opportunity. He is prolific and sharp with his pen, deep in his philosophical reflections, simple as a person, good as a friend.

He also remained until the end President of the local Jewish community, and Greek Jewry – the few that remained in the country – will forever remember the uniqueness of his contribution there.

When in 1913 Ioannina was integrated into free Greece, the Jewish element was Greek-speaking with a purely Greek conscience and behavior. This fact led his leadership during the Nazi occupation to complacency. "We are not like the Sephardim of Thessaloniki displaced by the Nazis. We are Greeks and they will not bother us", they assured before

the inhuman uprooting of March 25, 1944. Almost 2,000 souls left, only 50 people, approximately, remain today. Among those rescued was the Elisaf family, who had managed to escape to Palestine.

The word "ashes" is the most appropriate to describe the situation that Elisaf found when he assumed the presidency of the Community. And from the ashes he slowly and methodically reborn her. He created a Community Council, assembled the ruins of a synagogue that had miraculously been saved, cleared the ownership of the cemetery that had become an overgrown vine. The size of the Community was of course small and did not allow the appointment of a permanent rabbi, so that the synagogue could function regularly. But Elisaf found a solution.

His reasoning was simple but genius: "There are few Romaniotes left in Ioannina, but there are still many in the world. Let's mobilize them!". He found the right visiting religious minister, located the Romaniotes around the world and invited them to come and celebrate the greatest Jewish holiday in the homeland.

From year to year, "Yom Kippur in Ioannina" became a destination for hundreds of Yaniotes from every corner of the world. The synagogue came alive for a day, the old Ioannina lived again for a while. Many Christian friends were celebrating next to them, among them prominent personalities from Epirus and the rest of Greece. The ceremony was closed by a joyful dinner in which every year the Community honored a Romaniote personality. It was organized by Makis Matsa and the signatory of the "coup" two years ago, and Elisaf himself became the recipient of the honor and a wonderful Menorah - the symbolic seven-light lamp - that Kostas Varotsos philanthropically crafted for his sake.

It is said by many that for the Jewish Community of Ioannina, Elisaf will break the rule of "no one is irreplaceable". I dare to disagree and offer him this final assurance: So strong are the foundations on which you have built your creation that even the great earthquake of your unwelcome loss will not destroy it.

The terms of reference you recorded for the future mission of the Community Council are clear. The invitation-order to the religious minister is irrevocable. Thus, "Yom Kippur in Ioannina" will be perpetuated so that Romaniotes around the world will continue to come to their homeland to honor your memory and remember you.

#### Open roads

"Good, will you vote for a Jewish mayor?" some people said to the citizens of Ioannina shortly before the municipal elections in 2019, in order to receive the answer: "Well, when you were sick you went to him to heal you, now you are afraid that he won't become mayor?". The sudden loss of Moses Elisaf, at an age when he had so much to offer to his country and to Greece, plunged his fellow citizens into mourning. Because in the person of the doctor, university student, sensitized citizen, Ioannina found the ideal representative to open a way for them both to the future and to the past. He was a man of integrity, giving, stoic, patriotic. As he himself said, it was not difficult to manage but to be elected. And the truth is that, during his tenure, the Ioannina embraced extroversion and made an effort to recover the different "tsefides" that formed a human mosaic. Elisaf will be remembered as a doctor who managed to heal the wounds of History.



Marvin Marcus, President of KKJ with Moisis



KKJ Board Members with Moisis



Moisis with Lois Genee Ledner and Marty Genee



Moisis with Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos and visitor



Moisis with relative Linda Krieger from USA

## Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

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

Dr. Kohen is close to our community, her family originally from Ioannina. Like many Jews from Ioannina, before the Second Balkan War, the Kohen family was living and working in Albania. Her book tells the heart-warming story of how her family survived the Holocaust with the help of Muslim Albanians. Special price for autographed copies of the book \$20 plus \$5 P&H. We will be honored to have dignitaries in attendance as well, including Ferit Hoxha, Ambassador of Albania to the UN, Blerim Reka, Ambassador and Head of Mission at the Consulate General of the Republic of Kosova in New York, Akri Cipa from the American Jewish Congress, and others.

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA IS HONORED TO WELCOME

**ANNA KOHEN**

TO PRESENT HER NEW BOOK

## **FLOWER OF VLORA: GROWING UP JEWISH IN COMMUNIST ALBANIA**



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

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA 280 BROOME STREET NYC**

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

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

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

**REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.**

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

**Purim Celebration – March 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm**

Join us at Kehila Kedosha Janina as we celebrate a Greek Jewish Purim! The evening starts on Monday March 6 at 6:00pm with Minha and Arvith services, followed by a Romaniote Megillah reading. Afterwards we'll enjoy a traditional Greek Jewish dinner. Dress up as your favorite costumes and celebrate this festive Jewish holiday with your family and friends! Please RSVP to [Amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:Amarcus@kkjism.org)

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM  
WISHES YOU A

**HAPPY PURIM!**

חג פורים שמח

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ

PURIM ALEGRE I DULSE

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE PURIM!  
MONDAY MARCH 6 AT 6:00PM

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA  
280 BROOME STREET NYC

MINHA, ARVITH, AND MEGILLAH READING  
FOLLOWED BY A TRADITIONAL GREEK JEWISH DINNER

“THE JEWS ENJOYED LIGHT AND GLADNESS, HAPPINESS AND HONOR”

לִיהוּדִים הַיְתֵה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁ וַיִּקָּר

PLEASE RSVP TO [AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG](mailto:AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG)

**Special Concert in Memory of the Jewish Community of Monastir - March 11<sup>th</sup> at 8pm**

Join us at Kehila Kedosha Janina on Saturday evening March 11<sup>th</sup> at 8pm when we welcome the Elias Ladino Ensemble for a special Holocaust memorial concert. The program will commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deportation of the Jews of Monastir (Bitola), and will include Sephardic music originally played by the Monastirli Jewish community. [Click Here](#) to RSVP for free tickets.

# Songs We Still Sing

March 11  
8:00 PM



Join the Elias Ladino Ensemble for an evening of Monastirli music to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Macedonian Jews

Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue  
280 Broome St  
NY, NY 10002



Free  
Admission



RSVP at [SongsWeStillSing.eventbrite.com](https://SongsWeStillSing.eventbrite.com)



The Sephardic Jewish  
Brotherhood of America  
*La Ermandad Sefaradi*



Kehila Kedosha Janina  
Synagogue and Museum



Permanent Mission of North Macedonia  
to the UN



2023  
5783

2023  
5783

***Kehila Kedosha Janina***  
**280 BROOME STREET**  
**NEW YORK, NY 10002**

*The Officers and Congregation of Kehila Kedosha Janina cordially invite you to join us for Purim, Pesach, Shavuoth, and Tisha B'Av Services.*

*Kehila Kedosha Janina, at the same location on the Lower East Side for the past 96 years, is the last remaining Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere conducting services in the Judeo-Greek Romaniote Minhag (tradition).*

**PURIM**

Monday	March 6	Purim	Mincha/Arvith	6:00 PM
			Megillah	7:15 PM

**PASSOVER**

Saturday	April 1	Shabbat Hagadol	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Thursday	April 6	Pesach 1 <sup>st</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Friday	April 7	Pesach 2 <sup>nd</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Saturday	April 8	Pesach 3 <sup>rd</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
		1 <sup>st</sup> Day Chol HaMoed		
Wednesday	April 12	Pesach 7 <sup>th</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Thursday	April 13	Pesach 8 <sup>th</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
		(Last Day)	Yizkor	

**SHAVUOTH**

Friday	May 26	Shavuoth 1 <sup>st</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Saturday	May 27	Shavuoth 2 <sup>nd</sup> Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM

**TISHA B'AV**

Wednesday	July 26	Tisha B'Av	Mincha/Arvith	7:00 PM
			Fast Starts	8:18 PM

*Prayer Books and shawls are available at the synagogue.*

*For additional information, please contact:*

*Marvin Marcus, President at [info@kkjism.org](mailto:info@kkjism.org)*

*Please RSVP for services to [Amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:Amarcus@kkjism.org)*

*We Look Forward to Having You Join Us for the Holidays.*

*Moadim Le'Simcha*

*Marvin Marcus, President*

## Visitors to Visit Kehila Kedosha Janina

We love welcoming old and new friends at Kehila Kedosha Janina.



Emily & Joseph Pariente  
with Elizabeth Cohen



Lenny and Stacey  
Rennard



Leslie Schatzer &  
Friend



Rafael Saul and  
wife from Izmir



Maayan Schoen



Renae and Jonathan

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## Past Events

### Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

Thank you to everyone who joined us last month to celebrate Tu BiShevat! We sampled some delicious wine, fruit & nuts, and enjoyed great company. Special thank you to the Saporta family for hosting us at Lion's Milk bar in Williamsburg. May this year bring blessings and abundance in produce for the land of Israel and all people around the world. Looking forward to seeing everyone again soon!



### Kehila Kedosha Janina was an Honored Guest at the 41<sup>st</sup> Convention of the Panepirotic Federation of America

Marvin Marcus, the President of KKJ represented us.



## News from Jewish Greece

Since 2013, youth from the Jewish community in Greece have taken part in Taglit Birthright, the program to bring young Jewish people to Israel to learn about the country and to reinforce Jewish ideals.



## Turkey

### Devastating Earthquake in Southern Turkey

On February 6, 2023, a powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake and a series of strong tremors and aftershocks devastated southeast Turkey (officially the Republic of Türkiye) and northwest Syria. The death toll has passed 47,000 and continues to rise. Two weeks later, on February 20, 2023, an additional 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit southern Turkey, causing additional deaths and injuries.

Tens of thousands are injured and hundreds of thousands displaced across a region already beset by turmoil from the nearly 12-year conflict in Syria and the ongoing refugee crisis. After working desperately for nearly two weeks to locate additional survivors, search and rescue teams from around the world are largely shifting to recovery efforts. Reports indicate that there are over 87,000 injuries and at least 47,000 buildings have been destroyed or damaged.

The city of Antakya (Ancient Antioch) was levelled. Among those lost were two members of the Jewish Community of Antakya.

Rescue relief came in from Israel, the United States, and Greece. The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America has been raising funds to aid the Jewish community in Turkey.

Donations can be made online via [this link](#).



The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood Foundation  
*La Ermandad Sefaradi*

**TURKISH  
EARTHQUAKE  
RELIEF FUND**

Help us support those most affected by the the devastating Earthquake in Southern Turkey and northern Syria. Help directly assist the Jewish Community of Antakya and general recovery efforts throughout Turkey.

**Donate Now**

## Antakya's Remaining Jews Flown to Jewish Nursing Home in Istanbul [Full JTA article here](#)

The remaining few Jews of Antakya have been transferred to Istanbul, where they are staying in a Jewish nursing home thanks to a collaboration between the Turkish Jewish community there, a Kazakh-Israeli billionaire and Israel's fundraising organization Keren Hayesod.



While there have been a variety of ways for survivors to leave Turkey in the wake of last week's earthquake that killed over 40,000 — including through the Turkish budget airline Pegasus, which is offering evacuation flights free of charge from several cities — Antakya's Jews were helped by Alexander Machkevitch, a Jewish businessman from Kazakhstan who is one of the richest men in Israel with a net worth of over \$2.4 billion.

"Even in the most difficult days following the disaster, members of Turkey's Jewish community discovered a unity which has characterized the Jewish people throughout the generations," Alexander Machkevitch said in a statement issued by Keren Hayesod. "I am honored to take part in this joint effort with Keren Hayesod to help our fellow Jews from Antakya, and hopefully give them an opportunity to rise from the ruins to rebuild their families and restore community life. Our hearts are with the Turkish people during this difficult time, with hope for a full recovery for the wounded and rebuilding of the area."

Despite their small numbers, Antakya's Jewish community was known amongst Turkish Jews for being fiercely traditional, only consuming kosher meat. In the nursing home, they are being provided with kosher food.

Antakya was one of the areas hardest hit by the earthquake that ravaged Turkey and Syria last week. Among the dead accounted for so far were the president of the city's Jewish community, Saul Cenudioglu, and his wife Fortuna.

Jews have been present in the city, known in antiquity as Antioch, for nearly 2,500 years, since its founding under the Seleucid Empire. Though several hundred Jews lived in the city at the time of Cenudioglu's birth in the 1940s, by last year their number had dwindled to only 14, the youngest of whom was over 60. Many of them worked in shops in the city's famed Long Bazaar market.



Saul Cenudioglu, and his wife Fortuna

The Turkish Jewish Community's president, Ishak Ibrahimzade, wrote on Twitter last week that the earthquake had brought "The end of a 2,500-year-old love story."

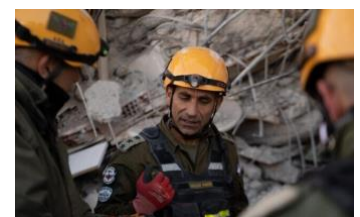
The Cenudioglus were buried in Istanbul's Kilyos Jewish cemetery earlier this week, but the rest of the city's small Jewish community — only about 8 families — were flown to Istanbul. Many across eastern Turkey are living in tents outside of destroyed or structurally compromised homes, while temperatures approach or drop below freezing.

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## Israel Sends Rescuers to Turkey

### IDF teams rescue 17 civilians in quake-hit south Turkey, set up field hospital

Overnight, Home Front Command search and rescue experts pull 26-year-old woman, 65-year-old man out of collapsed buildings in Kahramanmaraş.



Israeli military search and rescue teams working since a devastating earthquake struck southeastern Turkey earlier this week have so far pulled out 17 Turkish civilians from the rubble, the Israel Defense Forces said Thursday evening.



The IDF Home Front Command delegation began work on Tuesday, a day after the 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the region and killed thousands of people. Meanwhile, a second IDF delegation that landed in the country on Wednesday established a field hospital on the outskirts of the city of Kahramanmaraş overnight. It was expected to receive its first patients on Thursday night.

The IDF said 15 Air Force cargo planes ferried hundreds of tons of equipment and some 230 participants — including search and rescue experts, military medics and Health Ministry doctors, nurses and paramedics — to Turkey to set up the hospital.

The first IDF delegation of 150 search and rescue experts continued to work to rescue civilians trapped under the rubble, saving a 26-year-old woman and a 65-year-old man in the predawn hours of Thursday in the quake-stricken city, also known as Marash.

The chief of the Home Front Command, Maj. Gen. Rafi Milo, also paid a visit to the teams on Thursday, and was briefed on the ongoing operations. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday afternoon, the head of the aid delegation, Col. (Res.) Golan Vach, said the Israeli teams had seen successes.

"I think that the state [of Israel] and the Home Front Command know how to carry out such tasks in a short time. The speed with which we reached the scene is what brought us to these results and I hope we will achieve more results soon," he said. Vach said such IDF aid delegations usually last between nine and 14 days, and in this case, were ready to stay that long. The military has dubbed the aid operation "Olive Branches."

The IDF Home Front Command is regularly dispatched around the world to assist in natural disasters, including earthquakes, wildfires, flooding, and building collapses. Several delegations of Israeli medics from emergency organizations have also headed to Turkey to assist local authorities in treating victims of the earthquake. The Foreign Ministry was weighing an additional flight to Turkey containing humanitarian items and medicine.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that Israel also plans to send aid to Syria, including tents, medication, and blankets. But Syrian sources vigorously denied requesting aid from Israel, and IDF spokesman Ran Kochav told reporters that the military was not involved in potential aid to Syria.

### **Greece Sends Aid to Turkey**

Athens, Feb 9 (Reuters) - Greece sent thousands of tents, beds and blankets on Thursday to help the hundreds of thousands of people left homeless by deadly earthquakes in Turkey, in an act of solidarity with a neighbor that is a NATO ally but also a historic foe.



Greece plans to provide a total of 80 tons of assistance such as blankets, beds, tents and medical supplies, its civil protection ministry said. Commercial flights carrying boxes with part of the aid landed at the Turkish airport of Adana early on Thursday, with the operation expected to conclude by Friday.

### **Greece, Albania, Kosovo send rescue teams to earthquake-shaken Turkey**

Full article by Alice Taylor and Sarantis Michalopoulos [here](#)



## Remembering 1939 Earthquake in Turkey, and Jewish Fundraising to Aid Brethren

Thanks to Dr. Devin Naar and Dr. Joe Halio for this story and translation.

In response to the unfortunate earthquake disaster in Turkey, The Sephardic Foundation on Aging (Sephardic Home) and the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America have again taken steps to provide earthquake relief aid to our friends in Turkey. The following is an article that appeared in *La Vara* in December 1939 when a similar disaster struck. Through the efforts of the newspaper *La Vara*, the Sephardic community in New York raised thousands of dollars in aid for Turkey, and we will again. The transliterated article from 1939 still applies and expresses our sentiments.

*La Vara*, on Turkish Earthquake Relief in 1939:

Original in Ladino:

La Katastrofa Turka  
El Dover de Nuestros Sephardim

No ay alma ke no se degoye y korason ke no se adoloriye a meldar la katastrofa ke viene de arivar a la Turkia, nuestra patria de nasimiento. Miles de matados, mas miles de feridos, los ke restaron bivos estan arastrando por las montanyas al aire y al frio espantandose a tornar a sus kazas.

Las novedades dados por los korespondientes aze yorar a meldar los padres kavakando la foya para interar sus ijos y ijas aziendo el intero de sus genitores.

Nunka a avido una semejante kalamidad en la tiera Turka. A siertas vezes meldavamos de semejantes tremoras de tiera, aktos dela natura, ke no se pueden kontrolar, ma eran limitados y akontesian a raros intervalos, ma la katastrofa aktuala es komo el fuego de Sidom y Gemora, arastando vedre y seko, deshando en desdecha miles de almas inosentes.

El governo de los Osmanlis a sido para el puevlo Judio, dezde la Inkizion de Espanya el solo governo ke mos protejo. Mos ayudo, mos resivio en sus tieras sin demandar nada de nozotros.

Sultan Beyazid y los reyes ke vinieron despues de el asta la Turkia Republikana de oy mostraron bienkerensia enverso nozotros, kuando eramos persekutidos en otras tieras eran los Turkos ke mos resivian, eran siempre eyos ke se burlavan a la sivilyasion ke maltratava el Judio ke les dio su Dio.

Si a siertas vezes avia algunos reyes tolerantes en Evropa ke deshavan al Judio bivir en pas, otros venian y destruijan todo. Israel estava siempre kon el baston del egzilo, biviendo siempre kon el espanto de loke un nuevo podestador puede ser. Pero, no fue ansi en Turkia. No importa kien era el nuevo Sultan el era tolerante, su relijion le ensenya la tolerensia, esta tolerensia oriental es la enbedia del mundo Kristiano.

Los Sultanes Turkos no demandaron nada de nozotros. Eyos dezeavan protejarnos y ansi por los 450 anyos ke los Judios bivimos en Turkia restemos en pas y lavorando en pas.

Agora viene la ora para nozotros Judios de todas las kolores de venir al ayudo de nuestros ermanos Mohamedanos. Agora es la ora para todos nozotros de mostrar nuestra gratitud a este puevlo ke todo el tiempo no supo ke avlar bien por nozotros.

Judios del todo el Balkan empesando dela Romania asta la Grecha deven una devda de gratitud a los Osmanlis. Es nuestro sakro santo dover de avrir nuestras manos y ayudarlos.

Nuestras sosietas, todas nuestras sosietas deven agora aunarsen, en esta trajedia y venir en ayuda de estos desfortunados.

La Croche Corelada Americana dio 10 mil dolares, los gobiernos de Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria y Grecha dieron sus ayudo. El governo Grego mando una estafa de medikos y nursas para akudir a estas viktimas y es nuestro dover de azer lo mizmo.

El proverbio de Ben Sira es bien dicho agora. "Manda su pan sobre las fases dela agua ke a la fin delos dias lo toparas."



Mostremos a nuestros ermanos ke la tolerensia mostrada por eyos puede ser pagado agora. Mostredmos a todo el mundo ke el Judio paga bien kon bien.

Egziste en nuestra sivdad mas de una sosieta ke sus miembros son nasidos de Turkia, sociedades de Chanakale, Edirne, Angora, Izmirna, y mizmo las sociedades ke aktualmente son de Grecha deven ajuntarsen y desidir en ayudo imidiato para las viktimas de Turkia.

Es en estas oras ke devemos akodrarnos, y si en estas oras mos akeyamos..... Diosave si no metemos en perikolo la vida de nuestros ermanos ke ayinda biven en Turkia.

En estas oras trajikas para nuestros konermanos mostremos generozamente y devoamiento. Vengamos a sus yudo como lo izimos en el fuego de Izmirna.

Demos loke podemos al governo Turko en senyo de rekompensa por toda la buendad y tolerensia ke mos an mostrado asta oy.

Estamos seguros ke las sociedades tomaran la inisiativa y kooperar en kualonke manera posivle por el sukseso de esta enterpriza de Hesed.



### **English Translation:**

Catastrophe in Turkey

The Duty of our Sephardic Community

There's no heart that isn't broken and no soul that isn't stricken upon reading about the catastrophe bearing down on Turkey, our ancestral home. Thousands dead, thousands more wounded, those who survive dragging themselves away into the mountains exposed to the environment, the cold, and afraid to return to their homes. The news sent by our correspondents, stories of parents digging graves to bury their children and children burying their parents, makes you cry.

Never has there been such a calamity in Turkey. At times we have read about tremors, uncontrollable acts of nature, but it has been rare. But this catastrophe is like the fire of Sodom and Gemora, dragging down everyone, leaving thousands of souls destitute.

Since the Inquisition in Spain, the Ottoman government has been for the Jewish people, the only government that has protected us. They received us into their lands, supported us, and demanded nothing of us. Sultan Beyazid and the rulers that came afterward including the Turkish Republic of our times always shared benevolence with us. When we were persecuted in other lands it was the Turks who received us, and who mocked the civilizations that mistreated the Jews who gave them their God.

Yes there were times when rulers in Europe let the Jews live in peace, but others came and destroyed everything. Israel, always limping with the cane of exile, always living in fear of what a new ruler might do. But not in Turkey. It didn't matter who the next Sultan was because he was always tolerant, his religion having taught tolerance. That tolerance, the envy of the Christian world.

The Turkish Sultans never asked anything of us. All they wanted was to protect us and for 450 years we Jews still live and work in Turkey in peace. Now is the time for Jews of all colors to come to the aid of our Mohammedan brothers. Now is the time for all of us to show our gratitude to this nation that has done none other than speak well of us.

Jews of all the Balkans, from Romania to Greece owe a debt of gratitude to the Ottomans. It is our sacrosanct duty to open our hands and help them. Our societies, all of our societies should now unite in this time of tragedy and come to the aid of the unfortunate.

The American Red Cross gave ten thousand dollars. The governments of Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece have given aid. The government of Greece has sent a staff of doctors and nurses to rescue victims and it is our duty to do the same.

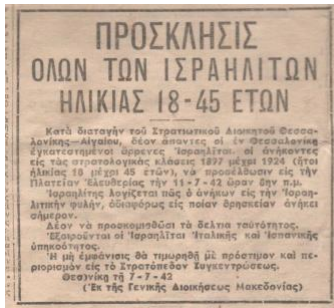
The proverb of Ben Sira is well said now: Cast your bread over the waters and at the end of days you will find it.

Let's show our brothers that the tolerance they have shown us can be repaid now. We'll show the world that the Jew repays goodness with goodness. In our city there are several societies whose members were born in Turkey. Societies of Chanakale, Edirne, Ankara, Izmir, and the societies of Greeks actually should unite and offer immediate aid to the victims of Turkey. In these times we must remember, and in these times we remain quiet...God knows the danger that lies ahead for our brothers living in Turkey.

In this tragic hour for our brothers lets show our generosity and our devotion. Let's come to their aid as we did for the fire in Izmir. Let's give what we can to the government of Turkey to try to repay all the goodness and tolerance they have shown us up to today. We are sure that our societies will take the initiative and cooperate in every way possible to assure the success of this deed of Hesed. Hesed (Hebrew) Lovingkindness, benevolence.

### In Memory of the Jews Deported from Greece in March 1943 and 1944

March has become a month of remembrance for the deportation of Jews from Greece. 1943: Salonika, Veroia, Hania, Kavala, Drama, Didimotiko, and Xanthi, and the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation in the former Yugoslavia. 1944: Jewish communities on the mainland including Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Patras, Volos, Larissa, Kastoria, and Chalkis. May their memory be eternal.





## 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bulgarian deportation of Jews from Kavala

List of Jewish men taken from Kavala for forced labor in Bulgaria and then, sent to their deaths at Treblinka. Any claim that the Bulgarian government had that they protected these men from deportation is a lie. Any claim that the Bulgarian government gives that they are not responsible for the deaths of Jews in the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation is an example of hypocrisy and cruelty. In memory of the members of the Rousso family: Menachem, Elia, Natan, Haim and Isaak. They watched their families pass by in the cattle cars on the way to their deaths in Treblinka, only to be placed in cattle cars themselves to join them shortly afterwards. May their memory be eternal. We will never forget.

- Isaak ben Joseph Adato, age 24
- Joseph ben Nissim Afar, age 23
- Mordechai ben Leon Albes, age 20
- Avraam ben Isaak Algava, age 28
- Samuel ben Joseph Alhanati, age 40
- Shalom ben Yeuda Amis, age 32
- Isaak ben Yeuda Atias, age 39
- Joseph ben Eliezer Yeuda Atias, age 35
- Leon ben Nissim Avraam, age 43
- Iakov ben Hananel Azouz, age 29
- Menachem ben Mois Azouz, age 39
- Iakov ben Mois Azouz, age 29
- Yeuda ben Mois Azouz, age unknown
- Avraam ben Mendech Barahaim, age 39
- Avraam ben Haim Barahaim, age 31
- Avraam ben Ephraim Bega, age 24
- Joseph ben Solomon Benaltabe, age 47
- Joseph (Pepo) ben Gabriel Benmayor, age 39
- Isaak ben Ezra Bueno, age 20
- Yeuda ben Isaak Fermon, age 29
- Nissim ben Marcel Fermon, age 31
- Nissim ben Isaak Fermon, age 27
- Avraam ben Mois Filous, age 51
- Haim ben Mois Filous, age 24
- Mordechai ben Matathia Filous, age 35
- Iakov ben Yohanan Filous, age 39
- Haim ben Daniel Florentin, age 32
- Haim ben Joseph Ganis, age 43
- Isaak ben Solomon Gracia, age 47
- Solomon ben Samuel Haim, age 44
- Elia ben Isaak Haim, age 20
- Raphael ben Ovadia Haim, age 39
- Leon ben Mois Hakim, age 33
- David ben Semah Hasson, age 29
- Joseph ben Samuel Hasson, age 46
- Joseph ben Sabetai Hasson, age 44
- Aaron ben Natan Hasson, age 39
- Israel ben Mois Kabelli, age 21
- Alberto (Avraam) ben Iakov Kabelli, age 23
- Joseph ben Eliezer Kabelli, age 21
- Mois ben Avraam Kabelli, age 43
- Bension ben Nissim Kandioti, age 30
- Chemaya ben Yedua Kandioti, age 46
- Iakov ben Isaak Kastro, age 38
- Leon ben Menachem Koen, age 43
- Eliaou ben Joseph Koen, age 20
- Solomon ben Vitali Koen, age 31
- Joseph (Pepo) ben Isaak Koen, age 29
- Ovadia ben Avraam Koen, age 32
- Iakov ben Mordechai Koen, age 24
- Solomon ben Avraam Koen, age 27
- David ben Avraam Koen, age 18
- Barouch ben Aaron Levi, age 35
- Samuel ben Menachem Matarasso, age 40
- Samuel ben Bahar Mosé, age 31
- Haim ben Meir Nissim, age 29
- Haim ben Raoul Nissim, age 34
- Avraam ben Matathia Pardo, 39
- Mois ben Matathia Pardo, age 27
- Yeuda ben Iakov Passi, age 48
- Mois ben Avraam Perez, age 39
- Elia ben Samuel Rousso, age 38
- Natan ben Bochor Rousso, age 38
- Menachem ben Samuel Rousso, age 50
- Isaak ben Samuel Rousso, age 38
- Haim ben Mordechai Rousso, age 42
- Simantov ben Avraam Saltiel, age 39
- Raphael ben Elia Sedaka, age 27
- David ben Elia Sedaka, age 45
- Joseph ben Mois Sides, age 31
- Ovadia ben Manuel Simcha, age 31
- Aaron ben Samuel Simcha, age 25
- Solomon ben Yeouda Strougo, age 42
- Daniel ben David Stroumsa, age 23
- Iakov ben Joseph Stroumsa, age 31
- Daniel ben Lazar Stroumsa, age 31
- Samuel ben Haim Stroumsa, age 42
- Shalom ben Ezra Taraboulous, age 41
- Elie ben Yeuda Tchimino, age 39
- Bension ben Hasdai Yohai, age 29
- Marco ben Bohor Yohai, age 32
- Avraam ben Levi Yohai, age 20

## **Distorting the Holocaust to Boost the International Arms Trade**

If whitewashing Bulgaria's history during the Second World War helps an Israeli arms company get a contract, who could possibly object? Full article in The Nation [here](#)

One of the most grotesque distortions of Holocaust history is when those involved in the international arms trade use it to legitimize war and mass violence. Perhaps the most egregious example was the visit of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to Yad Vashem in September 2018. In 2016, Duterte declared his intention to conduct a mass murder campaign against alleged drug dealers and addicts in his country by comparing himself favorably to Hitler. By 2018, the Philippine state had murdered more than 10,000 people. Duterte was visiting Israel to buy weapons. Like all heads of states on formal visits to Israel, Duterte had to pass through Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. The absurdity of a Hitler-admiring mass murderer at Yad Vashem, during an arms shopping trip in Israel, was thus on full view for anyone to see.

The newest example of exploiting the Holocaust to benefit the Israeli arms trade is a book published last year with the financial support of Elbit Systems, the largest arms company in Israel. Decorated with the Elbit Systems logo and published in English and Bulgarian, *The Bulgarian Army and the Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews, 1941–1944* is by Dr. Dimitar Nedialkov, a professor at the Bulgarian Military Academy and a retired lieutenant colonel in Bulgaria's air force. The book adds a new element to the Bulgarian state's narrative of the rescue of Jews during World War II. This narrative emerged immediately after World War II, with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian King Boris III, and a number of politicians as the main heroes. Nedialkov now argues that it was actually the army that played the central role in this rescue plan—by forcing Jews into labor battalions, as an excuse for the state not to deport them to Nazi death camps.

Recent research on the war and the Holocaust in Bulgaria has fundamentally challenged the state's rescue narrative: It shows that the Bulgarian state during World War II very much aimed for the forced removal of Jews from Bulgaria; that Bulgarian state authorities enthusiastically and brutally planned and carried out the arrest, plunder, and mass deportations of around 12,000 Jews from Bulgarian-occupied western Thrace and eastern Macedonia to Nazi death camps in March 1943 where the vast majority of them were murdered; and that the practice of forcing Jewish men to join labor battalions in the army actually began before the Nazi "final solution" and was part of a plan to leave Jews economically ruined, socially marginalized, and with no future in the country. It was therefore hardly surprising that around 40,000 of the 48,000 Jews who survived in Bulgaria during the war had left the country by the early 1950s—mostly to British Mandate Palestine (which became Israel after May 1948). In short, both the Bulgarian state narrative of rescue of Jews during World War II and Nedialkov's book are forms of Holocaust distortion.

Recent research has also shown that the Bulgarian state persecuted and deported Jews as part of a broader design to create an ethno-national "Greater Bulgaria" that also targeted Greeks, Muslims, and Roma for exclusion and mass violence. The Bulgarian state treatment of ethnic and religious minorities was, in fact, violent to such an extent that in 1944 Raphael Lemkin—who coined the term "genocide" and was a major force behind the UN Genocide Convention—described in his extremely influential book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* the Bulgarian state's assault against Greeks as "a real genocide policy" (p. 188). Bulgaria's state narrative of rescue of Jews during World War II is therefore Holocaust distortion within a broader historical distortion. Nedialkov's new book adds fresh insult to that injury: The book presents no evidence for the argument that the Bulgarian army aimed to rescue Jews, and it completely erases the involvement of the Bulgarian army in atrocities such as the massacre of around 5,000 Greeks in and around the town of Drama in Bulgarian-occupied western Thrace in September 1941.

In a recent article in *Haaretz* Dr. Moshe Mossek, former chief archivist of Israel, and Dr. Shlomo Shealtiel, a scholar of Bulgarian Jews, exposed the book's distortion in relation to Jews and wondered how "a respected Israeli company like Elbit Systems came to fund the book's publication." Jacky Vidal, chairperson of the Bulgarian Jewry Heritage House in Jaffa, Israel said "It is unperceivable and hurting that [...] Elbit Systems helped publish a book that promotes this hallucinatory narrative." The company, in response, published a brief

statement only in Hebrew in the print edition of *Haaretz* that merely offered an apology “if someone was offended.”

Why indeed did Elbit Systems support this work of Holocaust distortion? And why did the company barely respond when exposed? As during World War II, Bulgaria today is one of the most Romaphobic and Islamophobic countries in Europe, a state where Deputy Prime Minister Krasimir Karakachanov in 2019 could talk openly about “a complete program for the solution of the Gypsy problem” and where “Bulgarian authorities are beating, robbing, stripping, and using police dogs to attack Afghan and other asylum seekers and migrants, then pushing them back to Turkey without any formal interview or asylum procedure,” according to a recent Human Rights Watch report.

This is where Elbit Systems enters the story. In the past 20 years, the company has built a considerable market for its surveillance devices and weapons for use on and around border walls and fences, and more broadly against refugees. Elbit has, for instance, installed armed semiautonomous robots on the separation wall in Israel/Palestine, which an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice has found to be illegal. It has also, to take another example, built dozens of surveillance towers in Arizona, along the US-Mexico border, which constitute severe violations of the rights of the Tohono O’odham Nation in the area and enhance US state violence at the border.

The Bulgarian government had scrapped a deal for military helicopters with Elbit Systems back in 2007. Now, it seems that Elbit Systems aims to reclaim its place in the Bulgarian arms market and may have supported Nedialkov’s revisionist and nationalistic book to gain a foothold in Bulgarian military procurement, with the increasingly militarized border fence with Turkey as a possible incentive.

Mossek and Shealtiel wrote that Elbit Systems is a “respected” company, but it is clear that it is respected primarily in the eyes of authorities engaged in state violence—state authorities, such as in Bulgaria, that are also engaged in using the Holocaust as a tool to distort and blur state violence, now also with the support and funding of Elbit Systems.

It is a horrible irony that Holocaust distortion is used today by an Israeli arms company to support its work with a violent state. It calls attention to a deep crisis in the project of global Holocaust memory and education, and it highlights the acute failure to realize the vow “Never Again.” But it also opens a window for us to identify and understand important historical and contemporary links between Holocaust distortion, racism, and xenophobia—and these may help us in the struggle against the mass violence that Elbit Systems enables and supports.

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## Bosnia

**Bosnia’s Jewish Community is Putting Together an Archive for an Eventual Museum** Full article [here](#)

As their numbers dwindle, Bosnia’s Jewish community is creating an archive of Balkan Jewish history, including documents, photographs, artifacts and genealogies to preserve the Bosnian Jewish story. The Jewish Community of Bosnia Herzegovina group acquired a 7,500 square foot space in downtown Sarajevo in the fall, with the hopes of turning the eventual archive into a museum.

Eli Tauber, 72, who has written several books on Bosnian Jewish culture and history, is leading the project.



“Our idea is to write the history of the Jewish people in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Tauber told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “But this is not so easy, we are talking about 500 years of history and not just history but people, families and the destinies of all those people across 500 years.”

Today, at most 900 Jews live in Bosnia and Herzegovina, around 500 in the capital Sarajevo. But before the Holocaust, Sarajevo was about 20% Jewish and known lovingly as “little Jerusalem” for its variety of synagogues, mosques and churches — both Catholic and Orthodox — all in close proximity.



Sephardic Jews first arrived in the region during the time of the Ottoman Empire, after fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. Ashkenazi Jews followed suit when the area fell under Austro-Hungarian rule in the 1870s.

The Holocaust, which in western Yugoslavia was implemented by Ustaše — a brutal Nazi puppet regime — decimated Bosnia’s Jewish community. Less than 40 years later, the Bosnian War, another genocidal conflict which broke out during the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, caused many of those who remained to emigrate to Israel and beyond.

Tauber has been criss-crossing the Balkans for the project, working with state archives and meeting with descendants of Bosnian Jews in cities from Belgrade to Vienna to Budapest.

“I just returned from Belgrade a few months ago with 7,000 scans,” he told JTA on a recent call.

He said he hopes the archive — which is still at least two years away from completion — will help reconnect all those who left to the country they or their ancestors had come from.

“What is important is that at the end we will establish some computer program with family trees, for all those people who have their roots in Bosnia, and find all that they did,” Tauber said.

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## Cyprus

**Turbulent Past of Cyprus Comes to Life in Stunning Photographs** Full article [here](#)

Internationally, Cyprus is known for its beautiful sandy beaches, vibrant culture, and tasty Mediterranean cuisine. Fewer people are aware of the island’s darker past and the events that led to Cyprus’s division and the occupation of the north.

Since the Turkish invasion in 1974, Cyprus has remained divided by the United Nations Buffer Zone, which cuts across the island’s width. As a result of the invasion, a myriad of places in Cyprus lie abandoned, effectively frozen in time since 1974.



Andrew Avraam, a Greek Cypriot photographer based in the United Kingdom, has captured many of these forgotten spaces behind the lens of his camera. Greek Reporter spoke exclusively to Avraam about his fascinating portfolio.

About the photographer: Andrew Avraam is a 25-year-old photographer, originally from the village of Aradippou on the outskirts of Larnaca in Cyprus. His photography can be found on his Instagram and Facebook accounts.

He travels frequently between the United Kingdom and Cyprus. He currently resides in Nottingham, where he studied Tourism Management at Nottingham Trent University.

Avraam's project to photograph abandoned places in Cyprus began with a chance encounter in the Old Town of Larnaca. He was just 15 years old when he stumbled across an abandoned building that caught his attention.

"I go by this one building and the window was open and I walked past and from the corner of my eye I see all this stuff and I did a double take and had a look inside and it was just full of antiques, so I'm thinking oh my God, this is crazy that they left all this here," Avraam told Greek Reporter.

"Then, I took a picture and I left and that was it. Then I kept thinking about this place and I just had to go back, I don't know what it was, I was just drawn to it, I was just really curious about it. I just wondered who used to live here, why was it abandoned, why is all this stuff here? I don't know, I was just so interested in it."

Avraam then returned to the vacant building to take more photos which he uploaded on Facebook. It was the unlikely beginning of a project to photograph abandoned places across Cyprus which the photographer has been compiling for over a decade now.

Inspiration: Avraam's fascination with abandoned places in Cyprus compelled him to delve further into the world of photography.

"I started doing research online about abandoned places. I got really inspired by a photographer called Rebecca Bathory and actually ended up becoming friends with her for some time," Avraam told Greek Reporter. "She was voted one of the best photographers in the world, she's got several books, she's traveled all over the world taking pictures of abandoned places, Chernobyl, Fukushima, places like that."

Avraam still views himself as an amateur photographer and is always keen to learn more about his craft.

"I've been doing this as a hobby for ten years, whenever I can and I wouldn't consider myself a professional or anything. I'm still learning," he said.

Finding abandoned places in Cyprus: As one might imagine, finding all these abandoned places across Cyprus is quite a lengthy process in itself. Over the years, Avraam estimates that he has been to at least over 1,000 deserted places on the island. "Over the years I managed to amass a huge list of abandoned places I had seen in person," the photographer said to Greek Reporter. "I'll find people, they've taken pictures of different places and message them for locations. I'll spend ages on Google Earth doing lots of research. Even on Facebook and Instagram, photography websites, just any leads, anything I think is worth photographing."

"Also, a lot of the places I've photographed have been on spontaneous trips so it's a mixture. Some spontaneous trips and places I go to and other places where I know exactly where they are and what I can expect from them."

Highlights: Over the ten years Andrew Avraam has been taking pictures of abandoned spaces in Cyprus, he has had the opportunity to capture some truly remarkable and often profoundly moving images behind the lens.

2017 was a particularly notable year. The photographer was able to secure a visit with the United Nations to the derelict airport in Nicosia. That same year, he was also able to arrange another trip to photograph a vintage vehicle graveyard of over 500 vehicles, which had been left to slowly gather rust since the invasion in 1974.

In 2020, the Turkish Cypriot authorities illegally reopened parts of Varosha to the public. Avraam took photographs of the ghost town there, which has not been inhabited since the invasion in 1974. Whilst there, he had the chance to talk to Greek Cypriot refugees who were driven from their homes.

"When I was there it was so emotional," Avraam said, "I met a few refugees there who used to live in the city. One of them showed me her house and there was a photo of her mum there that she really wanted to get and I saw her begging the Turkish police to let her inside and retrieve the picture of her mum."

In Varosha and other abandoned places in Cyprus, Avraam found poignant reminders of what used to be, including children's homework, family photographs, clothes, locked safes, jewelry, and even the remnants of uneaten meals.

In 2021, Avraam managed to arrange another trip with the United Nations to a restricted area, this time to the Old Town of Nicosia to parts that have been cordoned off by the Buffer Zone for nearly five decades. This trip took four years to



arrange. When Greek Reporter asked Avraam to discuss the importance and impact of his work, he reflected on how his photographs have captured points in time that have remained frozen since the troubles of the 1960s and the subsequent invasion in 1974. "I'm happy that I'm capturing these places because I'm capturing what they look like today, the forgotten places behind closed doors and walls that people haven't seen for many years. It kind of gives people closure, it's a mixture of emotions," the photographer said. "I'm also happy to be able to do this because no one else is doing this and I forever have an archive of what these places look like. And also, there's a lot of places I've photographed which no longer exist and the only record of them is my photos."

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## **Cyprus' New President** Full article [here](#)

Nikos Christodoulides was elected president of the Republic of Cyprus on Sunday, without the support of either of the country's two main parties. He does have significant power by virtue of Cyprus' presidential system, but the peculiarity of having neither the center-right Democratic Rally nor the leftist Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) on his side presents an unprecedented challenge in the country's process of governance.



The 49-year-old former diplomat, who served as a government spokesman before taking over as foreign minister, will need to muster all of his diplomatic skills to achieve consensus and compromises in promoting policy and passing legislation.

In terms of foreign policy, and despite the questions raised by some officials, particularly in the European Union, the new president's orientation is clearly Euro-Atlantic.

At the same time, he cannot overlook the particular situation of his country and the fact that the Cyprus issue is an international problem that is being handled by the United Nations and about which crucial decisions are made by all five members of the Security Council.

That said, Christodoulides has a very strong card in his close ties to the Hellenic diaspora and particularly to the Hellenic-American community, which he is sure to use to his advantage.

He will obviously be judged by the choices he makes and the policies he ultimately adopts.

His personality has been instrumental in the harmonious cooperation with the Greek governments of Antonis Samaras, Alexis Tsipras and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and this is expected to continue regardless of the result of the upcoming elections in Greece.

His choice to run as an independent may have caused some friction and tension, but it was vindicated at the ballot box.

Beyond the differences between the candidates – which featured intensely at times in the runup to Cyprus' polls – and the tensions inside the Democratic Rally, from which Christodoulides hails, the multitude of statements about unity that came after he was confirmed winner are encouraging.

After all, his rival in the second round, fellow career diplomat Andreas Mavroyiannis, an extremely polite person who not only did very well himself – better than the polls were predicting – but also showed dignity and political cultivation.

Given the increased need for consensus in the management of the Cyprus issue, everyone needs to put their personal rivalries aside and support the eighth president of the Republic of Cyprus in his efforts.

Christodoulides' victory signals the next generation's rise to power. It is not just the new president who is young, but he has also vowed a young government.

With the wound of the Cyprus issue still open, the baton, therefore, passes onto the next generation of Cypriots, and one can only hope they will succeed where the others have failed.

## Divided Cyprus' New President Scopes out Peace Talks Reset [Full article here](#)

The new president of Cyprus met informally with the leader of the breakaway Turkish Cypriots on Thursday to test the waters on reviving stalemated talks to end the island's ethnic division, which has been a source of instability in the east Mediterranean for decades.



The two-hour meeting, hosted by the head of the UN peacekeeping mission on the island, was the first for President-elect Nikos Christodoulides following his election victory earlier this month. The fact that it took place even before Christodoulides – a former foreign minister – formally assumes office on March 1 aimed to underscore a campaign pledge to keep a peace deal as an overriding priority.

But the meeting itself is no harbinger of a breakthrough anytime soon, because seemingly insurmountable obstacles still stand in the way of a peace deal. Chief among those obstacles is an about-face by Turkey and the minority Turkish Cypriots regarding the agreed-upon shape of a deal after the most recent failed push for peace at a Swiss resort in the summer of 2017.

The island's division came about in 1974 when Turkey invaded in the wake of a coup aimed at union with Greece. Only Turkey recognizes a Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence in the island's northern third and it maintains more than 35,000 troops there. Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but only the Greek Cypriot south enjoys full membership benefits.

There had been a long-held understanding that any deal would reunify Cyprus as a federation composed of a Turkish-speaking zone in the north and a Greek speaking zone in the south. But Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots are now seeking a two-state deal that recognizes separate Turkish Cypriot sovereignty, something that Greek Cypriots reject out of hand and which has also been rejected by the European Union, the United Nations, the US and other countries.

Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar has said that he's open to dialogue, but warned there's "no flexibility or retreat" from the two-state proposal as well as a permanent Turkish troop presence on the island and military intervention rights for Ankara – all non-starters for the Greek Cypriot side.

"You can never impose on us a settlement saying that 'this is what the EU says,' burying your head in the sand," Tatar said. "Our red line is our sovereignty."

Emerging from Thursday's meeting, Tatar repeated there can be no formal return to the negotiating table without the recognition of Turkish Cypriot sovereignty. He also raised the possibility of the two sides working together on dealing with potential earthquakes on the island. Christodoulides said that could be done through established "technical committees" formed to foster cooperation on a wide range of fields, such as restoration of cultural monuments on either side.

Christodoulides told The Associated Press prior to the meeting that he's "fully aware" of the obstacles, "but that doesn't mean that we mustn't do everything possible to break the current deadlock."

The president-elect said key to any peace deal would be the EU's active involvement in U.N.-led talks through the appointment by EU leaders of a "strong political personality."

He said Turkey could be made more amenable to a deal if things that it has long sought from the EU – including upgrading its customs union with the bloc, visa-free travel for its citizens and unfreezing its EU membership bid – can be put on the negotiating table.

Christodoulides said after the meeting that he "didn't hear anything that he wasn't expecting" from Tatar, but that he had proposed to the Turkish Cypriot leader to meet again socially with their wives.

A potential deal could expedite the development of sizable natural gas deposits off Cyprus' southern shores amid Europe's energy crunch and remove a major thorn in the rocky relationship between NATO allies Greece and Turkey.

"The EU has all the tools that could create a beneficial state of affairs in which all sides will have nothing but to gain from a Cyprus settlement," Christodoulides said. [AP]

## Italy

### **Greek Language Day Celebrated in Naples, Italy** Full article [here](#)

The Italian city of Naples commemorated International Greek Language Day with events to highlight the timeless contribution of Greek to world history.

After a two-year lull due to the pandemic, philhellenes, academics and members of the Greek Italian community at Maschio Angioino, a medieval castle located in front of Piazza Municipio and the city hall in central Naples to celebrate the occasion. The Ambassador of Greece in Italy Ms. Eleni Souranis sent a pre-recorded video message whereas the Secretary General of Hellenism Abroad and Public Diplomacy Mr. Yiannis Chrysoulakis was present.



Professor George Babiniotis gave a lecture with the theme “My passion, my language” at the Marie Blanche Library. Babiniotis is a Greek linguist and philologist best known as the author of the Dictionary of Modern Greek, which was published in 1998.

Korinthios is the man who proposed the celebration of Greek Language Day in 2014.

The proposal was also supported by most municipalities in Greece, on the initiative of the president of the Central Union of Greek Municipalities (KEDE), Giorgos Patoulis.

When he spoke to Greek Reporter recently, Korinthios expressed his certainty that the Greek language is not under threat by the internet or the existence of multiple social media platforms.

Rather, he stated that “The Greek language is threatened by the indifference of those who must protect it: the schools, universities, homes, media, and our public services.

“The Greek language is ancient and yet alive... it is a valuable legacy and the cornerstone of the identity both of Hellenism and of European education.”

The International Greek Language Day was established in 2017 after a joint ministerial decision of the Greek Government, with the unanimous approval of the Greek Parliament.

During the events in Naples, three short films on the Greek language made by the Department of Graphic Design and Visual Communication of the University of Western Attica were shown to the audience.

Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Graphic Design and Visual Communication Apostolos Papapostolou presented the films that were based on essays submitted by children of the Greek Diaspora.

They were transformed into audio-visual animation narratives by the research team of Associate Professor Spyros Siakas of the University of Western Attica.



## Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

### A Beacon of Hope: The Abrahamic Family House Full article by Rabbi Isaac Choua [here](#)

Amid the darkness of surging antisemitism and an uptick in Jews across much of Europe hiding their identity, a beacon of hope is emerging in the Arab world.

This week marks the inauguration in the United Arab Emirates of the Abrahamic Family House, a center for mutual understanding and open dialogue that seeks to foster peaceful coexistence for generations to come. This visionary project is a testament to the UAE's commitment to bringing people and cultures together for a brighter future.



In November 2021, I was honored to join a World Jewish Congress mission to the United Arab Emirates, organized by the country's embassy in Washington. Forty young Jewish leaders from 20 countries had the opportunity to engage in open dialogue with their Emirati peers and explore the potential for future collaboration, both in the UAE and around the globe. While there, I was struck by the genuine warmth and hospitality of the Emirati people, which left a lasting impression.

The Abraham Accords made the delegation possible, initiating a new era of relations between Jews and Muslims in the Gulf region. At first, many people questioned the UAE's motivation in signing the accords. But after speaking with Emiratis, I realized that it was simple: a fundamental belief in the tolerance of others and willingness to set aside differences. This belief is rooted in the Bedouin cultural and Emirati way of life and is embodied in the words of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan 'ālāv haShālom (Heb. peace be upon him), who unified the Emirates using the principle:

"We are a nation whose friendship is based on honesty, whose cooperation is based on pride, whose help is extended without vanity or arrogance, and whose support of justice and equality is unconditional."

The Abrahamic Family House is a fitting symbol and embodiment of the government's commitment to this vision. The complex will house a mosque, church, and synagogue, each of equal size, and will provide a space for people from all walks of life to exchange knowledge and practice their faith. The Jewish community in the UAE is already growing, with Hebrew spoken openly on the streets, kosher food readily available, and young Jewish children playing without fear outside the synagogue. The government is also planning to build a community center and day school, further evidence of their commitment to creating a thriving Jewish community in the UAE.

It's not just the government's commitment to Sheikh Zayed's vision that gives me hope. Speaking with the local population and government officials about Jewish identity and the similarities between our cultures brought tears to my eyes. You can feel the renewed hope of long-lost relatives getting to know each other again. There is a genuine desire to rebuild connections with the Jewish people, their language, and history.

My family originally comes from Lebanon. As with many Lebanese Jews, there is an innate love for the land and its history; our attachment to Lebanon has existed for thousands of years. Our biblical poets celebrated these sites. In fact, King Solomon used the majestic cedars of Lebanon to build the Jewish Temple, preferring it to what was nearby. While Lebanon was once considered the "Paris of the Middle East," with its rich history of international commerce, religious tolerance, and camaraderie, that era has now passed. But the hope and wonder that once flourished in Lebanon can now be found in the UAE.

The signing of the Abraham Accords has made the UAE the new beacon of hope in the Middle East. While the Accords brought peace to the Israeli people, they also marked the beginning of a new era of relations between Muslims and Jews.

I still have hope for peace in the entire region, and the UAE has brought that hope closer to reality. I look forward to the day when all Jews can visit Lebanon and when I can prostrate myself to Jerusalem without fear.

The Abrahamic Family House in the United Arab Emirates is more than just a building. It's a symbol of hope, a symbol of mutual understanding, and open dialogue, bringing people together. It symbolizes the UAE's commitment to a brighter future for all.

*Rabbi Isaac Choua is the Global Interfaith Lead for the World Jewish Congress Jewish Diplomatic Corps and liaison for Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa.*

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



Purim will be celebrated on March 7<sup>th</sup> in most of the Jewish world, and on March 8<sup>th</sup> ("Shushan Purim"), in Jerusalem and any cities that were walled from the time of Joshua. And of course, the central feature of Purim is Megillat Esther, the last book to be canonized into our Tanach. All Jews from Bat or Bar Mitzvah age and up are commanded to hear the Megillah twice on Purim -evening and morning- and listen to the story of how the Jews living in the Persian empire of Ahasuerus were saved from the evil Haman's nefarious and genocidal plot to annihilate them. Megillah readings are always joyous, often noisy, and even sometimes unruly, as we stamp out the evil name of Haman and celebrate how his genocidal plot against the Jews was turned on its head, and the day that was supposed to be one of death and destruction of the Jewish people was transformed into one of happiness and joy.

However, Megillat Esther presents some very difficult anomalies when compared to all other books of the Tanach, and in fact led certain Sages to question the legitimacy of adding this book to the Hebrew canon. Among these anomalies, the most concerning was the fact that G-d's name does not appear at all, in total contrast with every other book in the Tanach. Nor is there any mention of anyone turning to G-d in prayer to cancel Haman's decree. For example, In Chapter 4, verse 14, when Esther shows hesitation in approaching Ahasuerus about Haman's evil decree, Mordechai tells her: "If you stay silent in this crisis, help and deliverance will come to the Jews from somewhere else". Such help and deliverance are the obvious role of G-d, and not some and not some ambiguous and mysterious undefined source. Furthermore, when Esther is ready to act, she makes no mention of praying to G-d, but rather gathers the people and orders them to fast for 3-days for her sake. This is not only unusual for a holy Jewish text; it would seem to disqualify accepting such a work in the Divine framework of Holy Scripture.

Another very unusual and ostensibly problematic element is that no mention or reference is made to the idea of Divine reward and punishment, which is one of Judaism's basic tenets in our relationship with G-d. Both written and oral Jewish law and philosophy constantly emphasize how much our fate as a nation is directly affected by our behavior both toward G-d and our fellow man. And the Torah and Prophets are filled with examples, direct and indirect, where our sins or omissions brought upon us severe Divine punishment, as well as the opposite when we act in accordance with our eternal covenant with G-d. Yet the Megillah contains nothing in this sphere, and we receive no indication if there is any theological reason for the annihilation decree or any other spiritual reference that might help us understand Haman's motives. Everything seems to occur by chance, as the result of a lottery, reading like a good suspense novel rather than a holy book worthy of canonization.

And while some Sages did indeed question entering Megillat Esther in the Hebrew canon due to an ostensible absence of G-d and anything sacred, the vast majority felt that the Megillah was the ultimate proof of G-d's presence, albeit in the background, so to speak. There were no coincidences at all, but rather the hand of G-d at every step, with Mordechai and Esther being His emissaries to defeat Haman and save the Jews. In fact, they saw Megillat Esther as being indispensable, because it demonstrates G-d's presence even in situations and locations that seem to be totally detached and distant from anything sacred. What seems to be so mundane, coincidental, and random in the Megillah is just the opposite: It is really G-d's hand "pulling the strings" at all times, even if we do not always perceive or feel His presence. There is even a custom when a ritual scribe writes a Megillah, to begin every column of the text with the word "Hamelech" – "The king", which textually is referring to King Ahasuerus, but symbolically referring to G-d and his concealed presence at all times. That is the real message of Megillat Esther that still resonates today. Happy Purim!



**Rabbi Marc D. Angel**  
**A Purim Miracle: Thoughts for Purim**  
[JewishIdeas.org](http://JewishIdeas.org)

Esther the Jewess marries King Ahashverosh. Her Uncle Mordecai tells her not to reveal that she is Jewish. The Jews throughout the 127 provinces of the Empire know Esther is Jewish. But not one of them gives away the secret. Ahashverosh, Haman and the entire royal court are kept in the dark about the Queen's true identity.

This, commented Rabbi Haim David Halevy (late Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv), was an amazing phenomenon, a veritable miracle. Not one Jew in the entire empire betrayed the secret. The Jewish people were united, discreet, and disciplined to an extraordinary degree.

Let us imagine how this story would play out if it occurred today.

Jewish reporters would fiercely try to outscop each other to report about a Jewish Queen.

Wikileaks would put an image of Esther's birth certificate on the internet, with the indication that she was born Jewish.

The Hareidim would demonstrate worldwide at the travesty of a Jewish woman marrying a non-Jewish king, a wicked one at that.

The Chief Rabbinate of Israel would issue a statement that Esther's Jewishness was in question, and that she would need a "giyyur le-humra" (a conversion to be on the safe side) if she wanted to be considered Jewish for purposes of aliyah.

The Zionists would point to Esther and say: you see, the Jews of the diaspora are assimilating; they all should make aliyah before they totally disappear.

The zealous Litvaks would say: Esther is merely a Persian Jewess and doesn't have our fine Ashkenazic pedigree. We wouldn't want our sons to marry such a woman.

Chabad would send another shaliah to Shushan, to re-enforce the staff already there at the Chabad House. Cholent (Persian style) would be dished out each Shabbat morning along with prayers for the Queen's prompt release from bondage in the palace.

The Sephardi Federations around the globe would glow with quiet satisfaction that one of their own made the big time.

The peaceniks would say: this whole crisis could have been avoided if Mordecai simply bowed to Haman and would not have been so stubborn. If Jews simply gave everything away, we wouldn't have to worry about anti-Semitism.

The kabbalists would manufacture a new batch of red strings for bracelets, and sell them at a suitable price to those who wanted to provide mystical salvation to Esther and the Jewish people.

The secularists would blame the fanaticism of the religious community; the religious would blame the secularists for their innumerable sins which surely brought on God's wrath.

Jewish newspapers would be filled with spicy attacks and accusations, op ed pieces and letters to the editor. Everyone would have an opinion, invariably wrong. All the commotion within the Jewish community would catch the attention of the non-Jewish media.

It would not take too long for Queen Esther's hidden identity to be revealed. Esther would have then been ejected from the throne; Haman would have had full sway; the Jews would have had no powerful person to intercede on their behalf. The Purim story would have ended in disaster. The joyous holiday of Purim would never have come to be.

The Jews of the ancient Persian Empire demonstrated remarkable intelligence and restraint. They understood what was at stake and they rose to the occasion with admirable self-control. They surely had differing opinions and ideologies among themselves; but when faced with national crisis, they knew enough to set their differences aside, to refrain from destructive gossip and back biting.

While we modern Jews cannot hope to achieve the unity and self-control of the ancient Persian Jewish community, we can strive to act and speak with discretion, courtesy, and respect for the views of others. We can avoid vitriolic attacks on those with whom we disagree. We can focus on the really big issues which confront the Jewish people, and think how each of us can be constructive members of our community. We can know when to speak and when to remain silent. We can know when action is necessary and helpful, and when action is counter-productive and misguided.

Rabbi Halevy thought it was miraculous that the Jews of ancient Persia acted so wisely and so discreetly. Perhaps it is too much to expect such miraculous behavior from us. But perhaps—with intelligence, compassion, discretion and respectfulness—we can be part of a new Purim miracle for our generation.

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**The Flavor of Jewish Seattle** – Full article from Tablet Magazine [here](#)

Exploring Sephardic life—and food—on a trip Across the JEW.S.A.

When the crew of Unorthodox—which, according to God and iTunes is the universe's leading Jewish podcast—decided to go out on a journey Across the JEW.S.A., one of our guiding principles was this: Don't be Ashkenormative.

The word, in case you're not familiar, describes a state of mind in which one assumes that Ashkenazi Jewish life and culture is basically the norm for all American Jewish life and culture—which, hallelujah, isn't the case. We wanted to shine a light—or a microphone—on our Sephardic brothers and sisters. And so, naturally, we packed our bags and flew to Seattle, where Sephardic Jews had settled in the early 1900s and which is now home to the third-largest Sephardic Jewish community in the country, accounting for 5,000 out of the Emerald City's 70,000 Jews.

The first Sephardic Jews came to Seattle in 1902, when Jacob Policar and Solomon Calvo arrived from the Turkish island of Marmara, then part of the Ottoman Empire. They soon met Nissim Alhadeff, who arrived from the Greek island of Rhodes, also then under Ottoman control. Today, many of Seattle's Sephardic Jews trace their roots to either Turkey or Rhodes, with the two main Orthodox synagogues, Sephardic Bikur Holim and Ezra Bessaroth, reflecting this dual heritage.

There's a reason why Seattle appealed to Jews used to living by the water: Puget Sound may not boast similar climate to the that of the Mediterranean, but trade, fishing, and the other practices that come with life on the shoreline were as common in the Pacific Northwest as they were in the Middle East. By the 1920s, Seattle's Sephardic population grew to support dozens of shops in and around Pike Place. While many of those shops

have shut down or moved elsewhere, you can still find Sephardi-owned stores like Three Girls Bakery, Pure Food Fish Market, and Sweetie's Candy dotted around Pike Place.

After doing our part to accept as many samples as possible from the Pike Place food stalls, we spent the evening in Seward Park, which is home to the bulk of Seattle's Sephardi Jews, joining Las Frutikas, a Tu B'Shevat Seder. Plenty of Jews all over the world hold a Seder for the New Year of the Trees, but it's especially common and important in many Sephardic communities. This was a sold-out event—the first in-person event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic—and the first time the city's two Sephardic shuls had combined their Frutikas Seders in decades.

The event was introduced by Jeffrey Solam, the president of Ezra Bessaroth (lovingly referred to as "Ezzie Bezzie" by some of its members), and by Miri Azose Tilson, new board president of Sephardic Bikur Holim, and the first female president in the synagogue's history. Then, all of a sudden, there were dozens of kids on stage, reading blessings over the Tu B'Shevat meal in English, Hebrew, and Ladino, in front of hundreds of people packed around tables full of dates, pomegranates, and biscochos.

We met a cross section of the Sephardic community that night: the 90-year-old former leader of Ezzie Bezzie's Ladies Auxiliary baking group, kids speaking Ladino in public for their first time, grandparents seated next to their grandkids, a rabbi emeritus next to his old synagogue president, a teacher, a picture-book writer working to make Sephardi stories mainstream, and so many others. The community is impossibly vibrant, and inextricably interwoven.

You'll hear some of what they had to say in this installment of *Across the JEW.S.A.* They were frank about the questions facing their community—questions faced, in some way or another, by Jewish communities all over the country. When should divisions—between synagogues, between Ashkenazi and Sephardic, between Jew and gentile—be ignored, and when should they be maintained? How do you encourage a younger generation to learn how to make traditional foods that, while delicious, are really quite hard to do right, and easier to buy from a store? How can you preserve a language, Ladino, that so few people speak at home anymore, especially when learning Hebrew seems equally, if not more, important?

Of course, there's a lot you won't hear. Thirty-six hours may be too little time to uncover every corner of a community, but it's certainly way too much time for a podcast episode. For one thing, Lea Almo Lipman served us some amazing Sephardic food, for which we and our stomachs are incredibly indebted. More broadly, there's a whole other story to be told on the preservation of Ladino—and another on the preservation of Ladino just through hip-hop. There's a story about the Sephardic studies program at the University of Washington, one of very few such programs in the world. Some of that particular story has been told in *Tablet*; some has yet to be told. It's a complicated story, one with "Safeway genizahs" of centuries-old family documents only recently translated by an expert professor, but also one in which many of the people we spoke to have felt it necessary to distance themselves from that professor and that program. Getting into all that will take another 36 hours in Seattle, if not longer.

Perhaps most importantly of all, though, you will hear us eat some very good smoked salmon, and learn a Ladino phrase with roughly the same meaning as "oy vey." Lord knows we can never have enough phrases like that at our disposal.

## New Kosher Dairy Spot in Lower Manhattan: Sweet Dreams Café

Sweet Dreams Cafe is the newest dairy cafe on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a welcome addition to a former kosher oasis but currently an area home to only a few vegan, kosher restaurants. The new cafe will offer salads, paninis, and pizzas in addition to a wide selection of traditional Italian desserts.

Menu items at Sweet Dreams Cafe include a Panzanella salad, eggplant caponata, and lasagna. As for desserts, diners can enjoy a variety of biscotti flavors, cheesecake, and cannolis.

Sweet Dreams Cafe is located in the Blue Moon Hotel at 100 Orchard St, New York, NY. It is kosher-certified by Rabbi Fishelis.

Sweet Dreams Cafe is open Sunday-Thursday 11am-7pm.



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## Sisterhood of Janina

A gentle reminder of all that the Sisterhood of Janina does: sending help to Ioannina, supporting Kehila Kedosha Janina annually (this year supplying a new memorial board to the tune of \$10,000, and helping to sponsor the Greek Jewish Festival).

It is so important to keep the Sisterhood alive so we can continue to benefit from their philanthropic works.

For membership, contact Laurie Serwetz at [rob9rach7@aol.com](mailto:rob9rach7@aol.com)

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## Mexican Jewish Film Festival

Learn more [here](#)



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

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

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

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



**Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 168**

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**Kehila Kedosha Janina**

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