



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

October 2021 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

In Greece and in Greek Diaspora communities around the world, October 28th, OXI Day, is celebrated as the date Greece stood up to Fascist aggression. It was celebrated around the world as the first open confrontation with Fascism. As Winston Churchill said, "From now on we won't claim that the Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks."



Colonel Mordechai Frizis: Greek Jewish Hero who died defending Greece on the Albanian Front during WWII

Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, will be taking part in an in-person presentation sponsored by The Eastern Mediterranean Business Culture Alliance (EMBCA) on October 28th. She will be covering the role of Greek Jews who fought on the Albanian Front, highlighting those from Ioannina who fell in battle. See full details in this newsletter.

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Arlene Schulman in memory of her grandparents, Anna Attas David and David H. David (Bechoropoulos) and the Attas sisters, Sophie, Stema, Esther, and Mollie, and in tribute to Mildred Negrin Froot who shared memories of her family from their days in the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjism.org.

This newsletter, our 151st will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjsm.org.

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

As of Shabbat on October 2nd, we will resume weekly Shabbat morning services starting at 9:30am Please email amarcus@kkjsm.org if you would like to attend. We will be following CDC guidelines and masks are required. Join us for a traditional Greek kiddush lunch after services.

Our Museum will be open every Sunday from 11-4. Reservations are suggested and mask wearing is required.

Passings

From Greece, we received the following sad news: We are sad to announce that the mother of our Community President Rita Kabeli passed away. She was the daughter of David and Rosa Misrachi, born and raised in Larissa, and raised her family in Trikala with her husband, Eliezer Kabelis. She leaves behind Lucy & Matt Levi and Elias & Rachel Kabelis, Aris & Noah's grandchildren, Sarah, Solon-Eliezer, Lior and Naomi and her great grandchildren Adam and Oren. Her funeral was held on Sunday, September 5 at Trikala Jewish Cemetery." May her memory be a blessing to her family and to those who knew and loved her.

It is with great sadness that we share that Rachel Angelou Mosios passed peacefully in her home on Sunday, September 5th at the age of 88. Rachel Angelou was born July 6, 1933 in Athens Greece. Rachel and her parents survived the war in hiding posing as Christians. She is the widow of Haim (Victor) Mosios. She is survived by her children, Ralph and Marlene and her grandchildren, Joshua, Hannah, Jacob, Rachel, Joseph and Natalie. May her memory be a blessing to her family and to those who knew and loved her.



Rachel and Haim (Victor) Mosios

We mourn the passing of Marcia Scott, the daughter of Molly and Jerome Blau, and the granddaughter of Israel and Pernoula Hametz, both of Blessed Memory. Marcia was 69 at the time of her death. She leaves behind her husband, Martin, her son, Jason, her brother, Irwin and her sisters, Pam and Karen. Marcia came from one of our founding families, her grandfather and uncles helping to serve spiritually in Kehila Kedosha Janina. The oldest of Rabbi Hametz's children, Sarina, arrived in the United States in 1920 and was married to Joseph Leon Joseph in 1924. Rabbi Israel did not arrive in the United States until 1928, four years after the immigration quotas of 1924 were put in place. It was a letter from Kehila Kedosha Janina that brought the family over, stating that "Rabbi" Israel Hametz's help was needed in the congregation. Marcia's mother, Molly (Eftichia) was the youngest of Rabbi Israel's 8 children and was only 1 years old on arrival. Initially, the family lived on the Lower East Side close to Kehila Kedosha Janina.



Hametz Family



Jason and Marcia Scott

Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

In September, we were honored by visitors from our extended community, always a joy. In September, we had members of the Negrin Family: Estelle Negrin Acerno, Rhonda Negrin and Andrea Michaels-Klein (Negrin). We also enjoyed the visits of new friends, Nino from Amsterdam and Asher and Joshua.



Anita, Rhonda and Estelle



Asher and Joshua



Nino from Amsterdam



Andrew Marcus and Stella Bacolas setting up our Sukkah at KKJ



Estelle pointing out the plaques of her uncle and aunt Oriel and Annetta Jacobs

Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

Thank you to everyone who joined the Sephardic Sweets in the Sukkah event on Saturday night. We enjoyed delicious Baklava, Turkish Delight, Fruits, Nuts, Wine, and Ouzo in the Sukkah! We had a great time listening to classic Sephardic, Middle Eastern, and Israeli music in the beautiful SoHo Sukkah in Manhattan. Special thank you to our friends at Congregation Magen David of Manhattan for partnering with us, and email us at GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com for information on our upcoming nature hike in October!



KKJ Reopening for Weekly Shabbat Services

We Need Your Help

Dear Friends,

If you are reading this letter, you are one of the many people who care about Kehila Kedosha Janina. We are proud to have such a large extended community, and we truly appreciate each and every person who has a family or personal connection to our Kehila.

The past 18 months have been a challenging time for all of us. Many have lost family members or friends, or suffered in isolation. For months we were unable to come together in our beloved Kehila and pray as a community. Slowly we adapted and began hosting services on a modified schedule, and we recently welcomed the new year with successful High Holiday services.

I am proud to share the news that Kehila Kedosha Janina will reopen for weekly Shabbat morning services starting October 2 - Shabbat Bereshit. We will continue to require masks and monitor all health guidance to ensure our community is safe. Like other synagogues, our Kehila is facing the challenge of bringing back community members on a weekly basis.

I am writing today to ask for your help. Kehila Kedosha Janina is the last Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, and we serve as a center for the Greek Jewish community in the US. For nearly 100 years, we have prayed together on Broome Street according to our ancient Romaniote traditions. However, these traditions cannot continue without you.

We urge you to join us for services whenever you can. Bring your children, grandchildren, family, or friends, and share our beautiful heritage with them. We are particularly asking for commitments from people who may be able to join us on a recurring basis. Maybe you can attend services every Shabbat, maybe you can join us every few weeks, or maybe you can join us once a month. One of the beautiful facets of our Romaniote and Sephardic heritage is our inclusivity. We are proud to welcome people of all Jewish backgrounds. Regardless of your level of observance, we always do our best to make you feel at home. Even if you have not attended services in years, we truly welcome you and would be honored to have you join us.

We all feel a special connection to our Kehila. It is the place where our families first prayed when they arrived in this country; it is the place where we celebrated so many simchas; it is our communal home. Help us keep our Kehila a spiritual home for current and future generations.

Please reach out to Andrew Marcus at 347-204-9461 or amarcus@kkjasm.org if you are thinking about attending services. We will be happy to hear from you and honored to have you join us in person. In addition, join us after services each week for our traditional Greek kiddush lunch. We promise you will enjoy the experience of our community as much as we will appreciate seeing you.

Wishing you a Happy and Healthy New Year,

Marvin Marcus
President

Upcoming Events

Annual Oxi Day Commemoration – October 28 at 6pm
Register [Here](#)

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA MUSEUM
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
EAST MEDITERRANEAN BUSINESS CULTURAL ALLIANCE
INVITES YOU TO THE

ANNUAL OXI DAY COMMEMORATION

THURSDAY OCTOBER 28 AT 6:00PM
3 WEST CLUB - 3 WEST 51ST ST NYC

KKJ is honored to participate in EMBCA's Annual Oxi Day Commemoration, with KKJ Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos participating alongside a number of distinguished historians, artists, and dignitaries.

Oxi Day (October 28, 1940) is a national Hellenic holiday and represents when the Hellenic Prime Minister Metaxas was awoken to respond to a series of demands from a representative of the WWII Axis Powers which would have allowed foreign troops free reign in Greece, a neutral nation at the time. His response to these demands, and the Hellenic public's "OXI/NO" led to historic battles by the Hellenes against the fascists which had international consequences for Europe and the free world. It was the first time in the European theater that a fascist Axis Power was defeated after they took over country after country. Hellenic heroism raised the hopes of occupied Europe, and caused the Nazi forces which were scheduled to attack the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) to divert their forces and invade Greece instead. This diversion led to a delay in the Nazi invasion of the U.S.S.R. and the Nazi's eventual defeat there in the Soviet winter. OXI Day was a turning point in WWII. Despite the ultimate Hellenic defeat, having fought long and hard, the bravery of the Hellenic people also had the effect of changing how Hellenic Americans were perceived in America. It transformed them from being thought of as the "Other" to being finally accepted as Americans. These and other aspects of OXI Day will be elaborated on in the presentations. Join us.

ATTENDANCE IS FREE - REGISTRATION REQUIRED
REGISTER AT WWW.TINYURL.COM/OXIDAY2021

LEARN MORE AT WWW.EMBCA.COM

National Sephardic Community Gala

An Evening of Sephardic Community, Unity, & Celebration – Honoring the Past, Ensuring the Future
Sunday December 5, 2021 at 6:30pm – 8th Night of Hanukkah
Full details and tickets available [here](#)

Guests of Honor



DR. ALBERT BOURLA
CHAIRMAN & CEO
PFIZER, INC.



ALBERT MAIMON
COMMUNITY LEADER &
SEPHARDIC EDUCATOR



SARAH AROESTE
LADINO ARTIST &
EDUCATOR

To Purchase Tickets & RSVP

GENERAL ADMISSION TICKET - \$250
YOUNG ADULT TICKET - UNDER 35 - \$180

ORDER TICKETS ONLINE AT
WWW.SEPHARDICBROTHERHOOD.COM/GALA

FOR QUESTIONS EMAIL
GALA@SEPHARDICBROTHERHOOD.COM
OR CALL 718-685-0080

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED

We Are Excited to Celebrate with You!

ESTAMOS TRESALIDOS DE SELEBRAR KON VOZOTROS!

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Arlene Schulman in memory of her grandparents, Anna Attas David and David H. David (Vecheropoulous) and the Attas sisters (Sophie, Stema, Esther, and Mollie). And in tribute to Mildred Negrin Froot who shared memories of her family from their days in the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx

Arlene's Yanniot roots go deep, her mother coming from the David (Bechoropoulos) and Attas Family. Arlene is the granddaughter of David H. David (Bechoropoulos) and Anna (Annetta) Attas, both of whom were born in Ioannina and settled in the Kingbridge neighborhood of the Bronx. So many in the family, unfortunately, perished in the Holocaust. Arlene is a talented writer and photographer.



Anna and David



Arlene

A Tribute to the Kingsbridge Neighborhood of the Bronx

The neighborhood is named for the King's Bridge, likely erected by enslaved Africans in 1693 and owned by Frederick Philipse, a local lord loyal to the British monarch. The bridge spanned a now-filled-in section of Spuyten Duyvil Creek, roughly parallel to today's 230th Street. The King's Bridge was part of Boston Post Road, connecting southern Westchester County (which later became the Bronx) with Marble Hill, once part of Manhattan Island and still part of the borough of Manhattan. The bridge is said to still be in place, having been buried when the creek bed was filled in. The creek's water flow was redirected to the new and deeper shipping canal, south of Marble Hill.

Until the later part of the 19th century Riverdale, Kingsbridge, and other areas now in the northwest Bronx were part of the Town of Yonkers. The areas that are inside the modern-day New York city line broke off to form the Town of Kingsbridge. In 1874, the City of New York annexed three towns that later became the western half of The Bronx, including the Town of Kingsbridge. As the trains to Manhattan were built in the 20th century, a stop in the northwest Bronx along the Hudson River called Riverdale-on-Hudson, now Riverdale, was created. This gave rise to the Riverdale neighborhood. The remainder of the old Town of Kingsbridge developed into the modern-day Kingsbridge neighborhood.

Historical documents reveal that the Black population of Kingsbridge was proportionally much higher in the distant past than it is today, due to the number of Africans enslaved by local landowners from the late 1600s to mid-1800s. In more recent history, it became a neighborhood of predominately Irish immigrants.

Kingsbridge was also home to an offshoot of the Romaniote Greek-speaking Jewish community, as the community (known as Shearith Israel of Janina) migrated from Harlem into the Bronx.



News from Jewish Greece Ioannina

Second Vandal Attack Against Tomb at the Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina

From the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS):

Antisemitism targets even the dead. For the second time in less than a month a tomb was found vandalized at the Jewish cemetery of Ioannina. The vandals chose the period of the High Holidays of the Jewish faith for the manifestation of their antisemitic hatred with the hideous act of removing the tombstone of a grave. Shame!

The State as well as the local authorities need to take all necessary measures for the safety of the Jewish Community and its sacred sites all over Greece, and particularly in Ioannina, where the Jewish cemetery has been the target of hatred attacks repeatedly in the past. Let the dead rest in peace!



Athens, September 10, 2021, Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece

A Rare Window into the Life of the Lost Jews of Ioannina

Nissim Levis was a member of an affluent Jewish family in Ioannina killed in the Holocaust. But by a miracle, his photographs spanning decades survived. Full article by Athos Dimoulas [here](#)

The war has just ended. Members of a family of Greek Jews who had escaped the worst of the Nazi occupation by hiding near Athens return to their home city of Ioannina, searching for traces of their old life. But they find a different reality. The majority of the city's Jewish population has vanished and of their grand, three-story home on Kountouriotou Street, built in the local architectural style of the early 19th century, only the stone outer shell remains. The rest is burnt and looted.

As they return devastated to their hotel, they see on a salesman's bench a Taxiphote Jules Richard slide viewer. Upon looking at the stereoscopic images in the viewer they realize that they were all taken by their relative, Nissim Levis, who in 1944 was among the Jews of Ioannina transferred to Auschwitz. He was not among those who were rescued by Soviet forces when they freed the camp on January 27, 1945, a date that became established as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



In total there were about 500 images in the form of glass photographic plates, which were passed down in the family until Alexander Moissis, the grandson of Nissim Levis' niece, decided to share this family heirloom with the world. And so, following a painstaking process, the glass plates that survived destruction almost by chance, were processed and categorized and assembled into an exceptional book published by Kapon Editions titled, *The Nissim Levis Panorama, 1898-1944: Stereoscopic photos and travels of a doctor from Ioannina*. In 2017, the Academy of Athens awarded Alexander Moissis a Prize in the Section of Letters and Fine Arts for the book.

The story begins in the last years of Ottoman rule in the western region of Epirus, after which we travel to Montpellier and Paris where Nissim Levis studied medicine. He later returned to Ioannina where he opened his own practice and we observe the city during the Balkan Wars, life and travels during the interwar period, up until the Second World War when, as the renowned historian Mark Mazower notes in the prologue, "the world

that Nissim Levis knew, and recorded and hence allowed us to glimpse, the world of the European bourgeoisie, vanishes.”

“Some of these photographs I remember from my kindergarten years,” Moissis told us. “They were stored in a cupboard in the study in my grandparents’ house. When my grandfather had a visitor and wanted to speak to them in private, he would ask my grandmother to take us to his office and show us the ‘kratidor’. This strange word was a code between them and it meant ‘keep the kids here’. Because every time they would send me to the study I would play with the glass photos, I thought ‘kratidor’ was the name of the viewer. To this day that is still how I refer to the big wooden box.”



Today Moissis lives and works in Silicon Valley. The book of Nissim’s Levis’ photographs is the result of him dedicating the countless hours needed to ensure the memory of his relatives would be something more than ‘a list of names on the holocaust memorial’, as he writes in the introduction.

“There were times, as I scoured the past, when I wondered how Nissim Levis would feel if he knew that I had published his collection, uncovering a part of his life and putting on public display. I want to believe that he would not object to it. It is better that the memory of these people be connected to their beautiful life, and not only to their brutal and inhuman deaths.”

“Every photograph hid its own story,” Moissis says. “And every act of recovering these stories from the depths of the past brought not only the technical satisfaction for having solved a problem, but was particularly moving for having discovered one more facet of the life of Nissim Levis, of my grandmother and other ancestors.” Here (in the top photograph above) we see the courtyard of the house in Ioannina in the summer of 1912. The gun-wielding girl who is the focus of the photograph is one of Nissim’s nieces, Hiette Levis, the author’s grandmother.

Travels in Europe

Nissim Levis left for France, to study medicine at the end of the 19th century. He experienced first-hand the famous World Fair of 1900 in Paris, was a guest in French dining rooms (in the photograph above we see Nissim and his friends enjoying a feast at the home of an affluent Parisian family), took walks around the Jardin du Luxembourg and the Bois de Boulogne. He got to know western Europe, passed by Marseilles and Naples, traveling as far as the Pyrenees and the Alps.

When he completed his studies in 1904, he returned to Ioannina, where he opened his medical practice and, as Moissis writes, became particularly popular for devoting one day of the week to treating the poor free of charge.

But he did not stop traveling and returned to Paris a number of times to see his brother, Maurice (in the photograph above, Nissim can be seen in the mirror), who lived there. From the headline of the newspaper “Le Matin” that Maurice is reading, the precise date the photograph was taken could be established: Sunday, February 21, 1909.

Frozen Time

“I began identifying locations, with the aid of Google’s search tools,” Moissis explains to us. “It became my hobby and every day, after work, I would analyze 2-3 photographs. After identifying certain locations, I began establishing who the people were and when the photograph was taken. From the age of my grandmother and some other individuals I started to piece together the timeline of the life of the photographer. That in turn assisted identifying locations in some other photographs. And so on.”

In the photograph we see the frozen lake of Pamvotida. It is February of 1929 and Moissis notes in the caption that the particular photograph was easy to date, as the lake rarely freezes over. The strange landscape makes it look like time itself has frozen. But, unfortunately, that did not happen. 18-year-old Nelly, one of Nissim Levis' nieces who we see standing front and center, was destined to die some years later in Auschwitz.



1929

The Train to Auschwitz

The last photograph in the book was not taken by Nissim Levis. Those pictured are Greek Jews in Ioannina getting on the truck that will take them to the train for Auschwitz. At the same time another vehicle was taking Nissim to the same destination. The chilling scene above took place near Mavili Square in Ioannina, not far from the Levis' home on March 25, 1944.



1944 Deportation

"When I was small and looking at the photographs, it never crossed my mind that the majority of the people picture later suffered terrible deaths," Moissis says. "Of course I knew about the Holocaust, the one or two times a year that I was taken to the synagogue, I looked with awe at the elderly people there, wondering how they had borne such loss. But I don't remember a conversation on that subject with my grandfather and grandmother about her family. It was only much later that I realized that the stories from her childhood that my grandmother would tell us when I was a small boy on her knee was for her the least painful way for her to remember her past."

We are proud to carry Alexander Moissis' latest book, "Davitsion Effendi." Because of the excellent price given to us by the author, we can now sell this for \$15 plus \$5 P&H within the Continental USA. Email Museum@kkjism.org to order your copy now.

Alexander Moissis
Davitsion Effendi
A Romaniote Jewish Pasha in Ioannina



Athens

Athens Jewish Community children's Sukkot celebration



Komotini

The medals and the title of the "Law of the Nations" of the Holocaust Museum of Yad Vashem in Israel were awarded, on 9.9.2021 at an event in Komotini, to Vasiliki and Dimitrios Kiakidis, by the Ambassador of Israel Yoshi Amrani, for the rescue of the Greek-Jewish Donna Rodrigue in the Second World War. The event was hosted by the Mayor of Komotini, Ioannis Garanis, and the Municipality of The Municipality of Tsanaklio Municipal Library and was organized in cooperation with the Embassy of Israel.



As stated in a statement by the Israeli Embassy in Greece, Vasiliki and Dimitrios were recognized as "Righteous" posthumously and the award was received by Dimitrios Kiakidis, grandson of the laureates. The event was also attended, among others, by the Regional Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Christos Metios, the Metropolitan of Maroneia and Komotini Panteleimon and local authorities.

The Central Jewish Council of Greece at the ceremony was represented by the Second Vice-President, Mr. Morris Magrizos, who in his speech referred to the multiple and multifaceted messages emitted from the story of the rescue of Donna Rodrigue, pointing out, among other things: "Listening to the stories of self-sacrifice of the Righteous of the Nations, we always feel chills of emotion and admiration for those people who acted at the risk of their own lives to help their fellow man. As a representative of the Central Jewish Council of Greece, which represents the Jews of our country, I am always shocked as I consider that when there are such bonds of brotherhood and mutual understanding, not only one family, but an entire society can be saved. Today, humanity is once again going through one of its most difficult periods, due to the spread of fanaticism, fundamentalism and terrorism, and the rise of anti-Semitic rhetoric. That's why it's important to learn and project stories of humanity and brotherhood, such as that of the rescue of Donna Rodrigue by the Kiakidis family. Because knowledge and education are the only weapons against the spread of hatred." In his statements, the Ambassador of Israel, Yoshi Amrani, thanked the Mayor of Komotini and the Municipality for hosting the event. He noted that Vasiliki and Dimitrios Kiakidis, like the other "Righteous of the Nations", shone as rays of light in the darkest period of the Holocaust, stressing that the Jewish people will owe them eternal gratitude.

The Ambassador also pointed out the lessons that can be learned from those who chose humanity above all else, even risking their lives to save their Jewish compatriots. "It is a living proof that humanity must never succumb to tyranny. They remind all of us that things could have been different. It is the right response to racism, fanaticism, the distortion of history and holocaust deniers."

The title of "Law of the Nations" is conferred by Yad Vashem, the Authority and Museum of Remembrance of Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes established in Jerusalem by the State of Israel in memory of the six million victims of the Holocaust. It is given to people who put their lives at risk to save Jews during World War II. The award of the prize requires extensive research by Yad Vashem and approval by the Supreme Court of Israel.

The Story of the Rescue

During the triple occupation of Greece (1941-1944), Vasiliki and Dimitrios Kiakidis, at the risk of their lives, rescued the Greek Jew from Komotini Donna Rodrigue. In Komotini, before the war, the doctor Dimitrios Kiakidis had a private clinic in which Donna Rodrigue worked as a nurse. Having gained their trust, Donna took care of the children of the Kiakidis family, Theophilos and Konstantinos. Before the Bulgarian army entered Komotini in April 1941, the Kiakidis family fled to the German-occupied zone, while Donna remained with her family in the city facing the consequences of unemployment and occupation.

At the urging of his colleagues, Doctor Kiakidis began the operation of a small private clinic in Katerini in the winter of 1941-1942. On a trip to Thessaloniki, In 1942, he came across Donna who was looking in vain for a

job. Kiakidis immediately offered Donna a job and allowed her to live with the family in Katerini. With the beginning of the persecution of the Jews in 1943, Kiakidis took out a false Christian identity card in Donna with the help of the local authorities. Then, thanks to his cooperation with the resistance organizations for the care of the wounded, Kiakidis safely sent Donna to a mountain village where he continued to work as a nurse until the end of the Occupation.

In March 1943, 864 Greek Jews of Komotini were arrested by the Bulgarian authorities, deported and exterminated by the Nazis in the camp of Treblinka, Poland. Among them were all of Donna's relatives. Thanks to the humanity and bravery of the Kiakidis family, she found a safe haven and was saved. After the war Donna married an Auschwitz survivor in Thessaloniki where she continued to live until her death (1996), maintaining friendly relations with the family of her savior Demetriou Kiakidis.



Former synagogue of Komotini from the archives of KKJ

It is worth noting that to date 362 Greek Righteous of the Nations have been honored. Among them, the late Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Damaskinos, the former Chief of the Greek Police during the Occupation, Angelos Evert, the former Mayor of Zakynthos, Loukas Karrer, the Beatitude Metropolitans of Zakynthos and Dimitriadou, Chrysostomos and Ioakim respectively, the heroine of the National Resistance, Lela Karagianni, as well as many other unsung heroes of the Second World War. Information from newspaper PROTO THEMA, 9.9.2021

Xanthi

The proposal for the creation of a Monument for the Jews of Xanthi in Eleftherias Square has been submitted to the City Council of Xanthi by PAKETHRA and will be discussed at the next meeting of the City Council. The proposal is, in fact, the fulfillment by the city of the due tribute to the memory of the hundreds of Jews of Xanthi who were almost completely exterminated during the Second World War by the Nazi atrocity, but their history remained in obscurity.

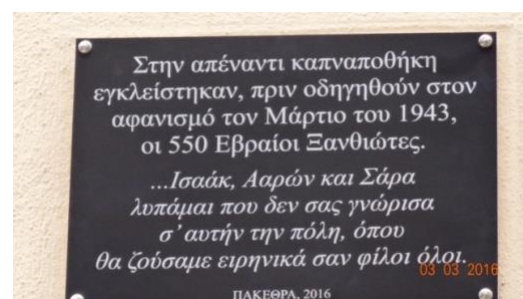
The monument will overlook the houses of the old Jews of Xanthi. According to the proposal, the monument will "see" towards the district of the 12 Apostles, as most of the Jews lived there, before their tragic end, while on Hadjistavrou Street there was the synagogue and the Youth building.

It is a fact that PAKETHRA and the historical research of the late Thomas Exarchos, had highlighted the drama of the Jewish community that had a strong presence in the multicultural society of Xanthi. The historical events of the gathering of more than 550 members of the community in the Tobacco Warehouse of Salamis Street and their mission by train to the concentration camp of Treblinka at dawn on March 4, 1943, remained until a few years ago, invisible in local history.

SOURCE: xanthi2.gr, 6.9.2021



Jewish cemetery of Xanthi



In March of 1943, before being led to their extermination, 550 Jews from Xanthi were enclosed in the adjacent tobacco warehouse Isaak, Aaron and Sarah, we are sorry that we did not know you in this city where we all lived together in peace.

Thessaloniki

Jewish Thessaloniki: A Story of Love Against All Odds Full article [here](#)

Leon Perahia and Lina Capon never met in pre-World War II Thessaloniki, and they might never have, had it not been for the war.

When German troops occupied Thessaloniki in April 1941, the systematic persecution of the city's Jews began almost immediately, eventually leading to their segregation into ghettos. In March 1943, the deportations began. Within a little over a year, a community that had been the cornerstone of Thessaloniki's multicultural society for centuries was almost completely wiped out.

Leon Perahia was sent to Auschwitz. The Capon family was, at first, more fortunate; that same spring, as the deportations were in progress, Lina Capon's sister, Alice, and her brother, Benjamin, were able to reach Athens, using false identities and various means of transportation. Lina and their parents, Hasdai and Vida, followed soon after.

The family first took refuge in an asylum by feigning insanity, as did some other Jews. They were betrayed, but when the police came, they were able to pay them off. Still, it no longer seemed safe, so they joined other family members already living in a villa that had been given to them by a business associate of Hasdai Capon. They lived there for nearly a year before being betrayed again.

Thirteen members of the extended family were deported, including Lina, her siblings and her parents. Their mother was killed on arrival at Birkenau, a fate that befell more than three-quarters of Thessaloniki's Jews. Not long before liberation, Hasdai and Benjamin were sent to other camps, while Lina and Alice remained in Birkenau.

In January 1945, with the war's end in sight, the Germans evacuated the death camps, hoping to kill as many Jews as possible by letting them die from exhaustion as they marched, before the Allies could reach them. When Birkenau was evacuated on January 18, Lina, feverish with typhoid, was in the infirmary. She fainted as they were being marched from the camp. A guard thought she was dead and kicked her aside. Alice was elsewhere and didn't know what had happened to her sister. Hours later, Lina regained consciousness to find herself in an utterly deserted Birkenau.

Three kilometers away at Auschwitz, Leon and some friends had managed to hide during the evacuation. They had been factory workers, so they knew the camp's layout and were also in fair physical condition. Armed with whatever they could find, they now took control of the camp where they were once prisoners, in case any Germans should return.

Two of the men, Jews from Holland, went to Birkenau in search of other survivors. They found Lina and told her there were other Thessaloniki Jews at Auschwitz. She gathered her strength, bundled herself in whatever she could find and set off with them through the snow, taking sips from a small bottle of Cardiazol – a heart medicine – to sustain her as she walked. When she arrived, she asked the prisoner-turned-guard, in German, if he knew where the Greeks were. He replied to her in Greek; the guard was Leon Perahia.

On January 27, the Russians liberated Auschwitz. They didn't have the means to repatriate anyone, so the survivors were transported to the city of Chernivtsi (present-day Ukraine), where Leon and Lina fell in love. Six months later, they were sent by train to Bulgaria. Other Jews greeted them at the station offering soup and cigarettes. "Stay with us," they urged them. "You won't find any survivors in Thessaloniki." But Lina and Leon could not be dissuaded; they still held out hope.



Perahia family home

At a quarantine station set up near the Greek border at Sidirokastro, a woman from the Red Cross recognized Lina. She gave her excellent news: her father, brother and sister had survived. Alice had reunited with Benjamin at Bergen-Belsen, and their father had been liberated at Gross-Rosen; they had been living at home together in Thessaloniki for months.

Lina's family had, for some time, been certain that Lina had died, after a woman from Thessaloniki had told them she had seen Lina being tossed aside as they were being marched from Birkenau. They had even said the Mourners' Kaddish for her. The miraculous news was sent to them at once: Lina was alive and would soon return to them.

By June 1945, the Capon family had returned to their old rented apartment. Most of the city's Jews were not as fortunate. Over 95 percent never made it back, and for nearly all of those who did return, there was no home to go back to: after the Jews were deported, the authorities redistributed most of their houses to refugees from Asia Minor and to those fleeing the violence in Thrace. With so many homes gone, communal housing was arranged in the buildings that were still at the disposal of the Jewish community. Leon, who had also lost his family home, was housed in a synagogue.

Back in Thessaloniki at last, Lina and Leon wished to marry at once. However, they met with a new obstacle. Lina's father withheld his permission; there was, after all, still their difference in social class (the Capons were from a privileged class; the Perahias were not). And as it turned out, her father's refusal wasn't the only obstacle. No sooner was World War II over than the Greek Civil War, which had been brewing before the end of the German occupation, broke out in earnest. Leon was sent off to fight in 1947 and 1948. Some Jews perished in the civil war, but Leon came home safe. It was only after his return that Lina's father was eventually persuaded to give his permission. In 1950, Lina and Leon were finally married.



Later in the 1950s, Leon and his brother, David, managed to reclaim their family home. They sold it, as David had decided to emigrate to the United States. Although Greece was the first country to pass a law allowing Jews to recover their properties, in practice, tracking down property deeds was difficult and costly. This led many other Jews to make fresh post-war starts elsewhere, some in the part of Palestine that would become the state of Israel in 1948, others in destinations closer to home, including Athens, feeling there was nothing left for them anymore in Thessaloniki, and yet others on distant continents.

Leon also thought of building a new life in Israel, but Lina wouldn't hear of it. Being reunited with her family was a miracle, and it would have been unbearable to be parted from them again. Hasdai Capon lived with his daughter and son-in-law for the rest of his life; he was there when the family welcomed his granddaughters, part of a new generation of Thessaloniki Jews, into the world.

This story was narrated to the author by Lina and Leon's daughter, Erika Perahia Zemour, who recently retired from the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki.

General News from Greece

Thessaloniki

The Thessaloniki International Fair Is Back – Full article by Constantine S. Sirigos [here](#)

Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis opened the 85th annual Thessaloniki International Fair on September 11 with the traditional speech that can be called Greece's 'State of the Nation' address.



This year's fair, which runs from September 11-19, has two official themes, and while the first was future-oriented: Greece - Moving Forward, the second: Greece: Past, Present, Future, reflected the event's transitional character during a continuing pandemic a year after it could not be held. The transitional feel was apparent during the two-and-a-half-hour press conference of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis the following afternoon on September 12.

Most of the 46 questions he answered with good-natured patience – except the questions about early elections, which he fended off with some annoyance – and often in impressive detail naturally reflected current concerns more than plans for the future, but Mitsotakis did spotlight the ongoing changes – especially major infrastructure works – that are in many ways transforming Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city.

He also answered tough questions about his recent higher education reforms by emphasizing the future benefits to students – Thessaloniki is very much a university town – and Greece as a whole from changes at universities supporters believe were a long time coming.

On a related front, after highlighting the talent of the country's young adults, especially in high tech fields, he expressed confidence that the painful brain drain is being reversed, sharing that officials from the Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer have told him that 25% of people applying for the jobs the company is generating in Greece are people who want to return from abroad.

The prime minister stressed that his government's economic development plans reflect his conviction that its human capital is Greece's greatest resource. While questions regarding the status and continuing fears about the COVID pandemic and concerns about the apparent resumption of Turkish provocations caused the tone to be less triumphalist than in the past – Mitsotakis downplayed the usual 'cheerleader' role of prime ministers at the Fair – the prime minister embraced opportunities to be enthusiastic.

Asked about criticism from SYRIZA, the official opposition party, that he has abandoned the middle class, Mitsotakis rattled off a list of actions that he said have helped Greek citizens both endure the pandemic and plan for a more prosperous future. He emphasized reductions in tax rates for individuals and businesses, reminding that reforms and initiatives – like eliminating bureaucratic red tape – that benefit small business owners help the Greek middle class.

Also on the reform front and perhaps signaling future initiatives, he noted the importance of incentives and policies in the health care area that urge public and private sectors medical practitioners and institutions to cooperate more with each other. Regarding COVID, he took advantage of the national audience to repeat that the vaccines are both safe and effective and urge citizens to be vaccinated, also noting booster doses for at risk populations are under discussion. Mitsotakis also emphasized the changes he has implemented that promise better planning and coordination in the future to combat wildfires, including more and better equipment.

TIF, the biggest exhibition event in Greece and a major commercial engine in the Balkans, is an annual event that is held at the Thessaloniki International Exhibition Centre. It is located in an area not far from the city's waterfront and dominated by the OTE tower that glows deep blue every night, complementing the daytime presence of the beloved 'Lefkos Pirgos – White Tower.' Observing all necessary hygiene protocols, TIF is the first major Exhibition to be organized in Europe in 2021. At the same time, 13 Regions of Greece will be present at the Fair."

Crete

Strong quake hits Greek island of Crete; 1 dead, 20 injured. By Elena Becatoros and Derek Gatopoulos

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A strong, prolonged earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of at least 5.8 struck the Greek island of Crete on Monday, killing one person and injuring 20, while damaging homes and churches and causing rock slides near the country's fourth-largest city.

The quake sent people fleeing into the streets in the city of Heraklion, and schools were evacuated. Repeated aftershocks — described by witnesses as feeling like small explosions — rattled the area, adding to damage in villages near the epicenter.



"The earthquake was strong and was long in duration," Heraklion mayor Vassilis Lambrinos told private Antenna television. The Athens Geodynamic Institute, which gave the 5.8 magnitude, said the quake struck at 9:17 a.m. (0617 GMT), with an epicenter 246 kilometers (153 miles) south southeast of the Greek capital, Athens. Hospital officials said 20 people had been treated for injuries, ten of them receiving first aid.

International and domestic flights to Heraklion airport weren't affected by the quake, while the region's hoteliers association said there was no serious damage to any hotels in the area, which includes many popular holiday resorts. Municipal construction vehicles helped clear a path for the emergency services, scooping up rubble and knocking down a badly damaged apartment block balcony.

"This is not an event that occurred without warning. We have seen activity in this region for several months. This was a strong earthquake, it was not under sea but under land and affecting populated areas," seismologist Gerasimos Papadopoulos said on Greece's state broadcaster ERT.

The European-Mediterranean Seismological Center and the U.S. Geological Survey put the preliminary magnitude of 6.0, with an epicenter seven kilometers (four miles) north of the village of Thrapsano. It is common for different seismological institutes to give varying magnitudes for an earthquake.

Greece's Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Ministry said one man had been killed. He was pulled from the rubble of a partially collapsed church in the village of Arkalochori, very close to the epicenter, authorities said. Local media said the victim was a 65-year-old builder who had been working inside the church when the roof collapsed on him.

Government spokesman Giannis Oikonomou said there were no reports of people missing or trapped under rubble. Seismologist Efthimios Lekkas, who heads Greece's Earthquake Planning and Protection Organization, said inspections of critical buildings such as schools and hospitals had already begun.

"We are urging people who live in damaged older buildings to remain outdoors. One aftershock can cause a collapse," Lekkas said from Crete. "We are talking about structures built before 1970. Structures built after 1985 are built to a higher standard that can withstand the effect of an earthquake."

Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Christos Stylianides, who traveled to Crete, said a state of emergency was being declared in the area. Local media said hundreds of homes had been damaged, including more than half the houses in Arkalochori. Civil protection officials said tents were being set up for residents whose homes had been damaged, and there would be capacity for up to 2,500 people.

The fire department said it was flying 30 members of its disaster response units with sniffer dogs and specialized rescue equipment to Crete, while all its disaster response units and the fire department services on Crete were placed on general alert. Numerous aftershocks struck the area, with the EMSC giving a preliminary magnitude of 4.6 for the two strongest. Greece lies in one of the most seismically active parts of the world, but strong quakes that cause extensive loss of life or widespread damage are rare. In 1999, an earthquake just outside Athens killed 143 people.

Cyprus

Cyprus Removes Textbook Praising Turkish Conqueror Ataturk – Full article [here](#)

NICOSIA -- Modern Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who helped lead the takeover of Greek lands that saw massacres in the Anatolia region of Smyrna in 1922, won't be glorified on Cyprus.

Schools on the Greek-Cypriot side of the island that's a member of the European Union were told to remove a textbook from the curriculum because of its praise for Ataturk, who was born in Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, which preserved his birthplace house as a museum.

The education ministry had earlier told secondary school teachers in an email to "tear out page 36 before handing it to the students," an instruction that was leaked on social media, Agence France-Presse reported.

But after withering criticism over a page referring to Ataturk as "Turkey's greatest hero," the ministry ordered the whole book, which is in English, yanked from the curriculum, the report said.

In a statement, the ministry defended the move that came during heightened tension on Cyprus over insistence by Turkey and Turkish-Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar that the United Nations and world recognize the northern third occupied since unlawful Turkish invasions in 1974.

"It is not possible to accept textbooks that promote or even praise his personality and 'leadership'," the ministry said. "Ataturk's name is directly connected with crimes against humanity such as the Armenian genocide, which is unequivocally condemned by our country and by the United States, France and many others," the statement added.

The ministry said modern day education that has seen revisionist movements trying to shape past events to today's cultures, is based on "respect for human rights and does not compromise with attempts to embellish such historical crimes," that Ataturk directly or indirectly had taken part in or overseen.

Cypriot Member of the European Parliament Niyazi Kizilyurek, the only Turkish-Cypriot EU lawmaker, denounced the decision that he said is of a type "which we only find in totalitarian regimes."

"We have recently seen the Turkish government intervene in the teaching of history in Turkish-Cypriot schools," he said. "Unfortunately, in both communities, the education sector is anachronistic, and with these interventions, it becomes even worse," added Kizilyurek.

Turkey's Hurriyet Daily News reported swift reaction from the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which doesn't recognize Cyprus and bars its ships and planes while fruitlessly trying to join the EU since 2005.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry said the decision "reveals the radical level of the distorted mentality" against Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots. "We strongly condemn this anachronistic, hostile and unacceptable attitude of the Greek Cypriot Administration," said the statement.

Turkey is still drilling unlawfully for oil and gas in Cypriot waters while the United Nations has refused to intervene and the last round of reunification talks collapsed in July, 2017 at the Swiss resort of Crans-Montana.

That was over Turkey's refusal to remove a 35,000-strong standing army on the occupied side and demand for the right to militarily intervene – invade – again when it wanted, saying the troops were there to protect Turkish-Cypriots.

But Turkey, along with Greece and the former Colonial ruler the United Kingdom, which still has military bases there, are official guarantors of security under the UN, which has peacekeeping forces there

Monastir (Bitola)

My Dear Monastir: A new album from Ladino singer Sarah Aroeste is a collaborative, loving homage to a once-vibrant Sephardic Jewish community in Macedonia

Full article by Matt Alexander Hanson [here](#)

One time I was a bachelor," begins a traditional Macedonian song ("Edno Vreme Si Bev Ergen"). The singer plays a Slavic man, jobless and wandering around Bitola, his hometown in the southwest of North Macedonia, which is still nostalgically called Monastir after its legacy as a diverse, cosmopolitan, and very Jewish city in the formerly Ottoman Balkans.

The mountainous town was a pearl of modernist enlightenment, where the Manaki brothers made the first film in the Balkans in 1903 and the Congress of Monastir standardized the Albanian alphabet in 1908. Its Spanish-speaking urban Jewish community, including upwards of 11,000 people at the turn of the 20th century, was among the most prominent in both the East and the West. For Yad Vashem, the survivor Stella Testa remembered Jewish life in Monastir before World War II. As she described it, in those days the observance of religious rituals was like a holy art.

But the 20th century would take its toll on the city's Jewish community, which slowly dwindled until World War II. On March 11, 1943, Monastir's remaining 3,351 Jews were deported to Treblinka, on orders approved by the Bulgarian government. North Macedonia is now home to 225 remaining Jews, all of whom live in the country's capital of Skopje.

In 1976, the all-male Macedonian nonet Ansambl Biljana released a version of "Edno Vreme Si Bev Ergen." Its booming harmonies are styled to a lilting Grecian melody, carried by fusions of Eastern Europe and Middle Eastern instrumentation and directed to the city's vanished, prewar Jewish community: "There I met a Jewish girl / With messy hair."

With the release of *Monastir*, the latest album by Ladino singer Sarah Aroeste, this past June, the song comes full circle. Aroeste first released five albums of Sephardic music in the Spanish of her ancestors, including a children's album of all-original Ladino songs and a "feminist Sephardic homage" named after Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi, a woman who saved Jews during the Spanish Inquisition. And now, in *Monastir*, she has consummated her love for the peculiarly pluralistic sociocultural mixture that emerged out of her grandfather's beloved city. In collaboration with producer Shai Bachar, who programmed her prior three albums, and over 30 musicians from around the world, she is leading a revitalization of the sounds of Balkan Jewry.

Aroeste's own grandfather left Monastir in 1912, before the Balkan powder keg imploded. Yet he never forgot his roots, which, to him, were in Greece. He thought of himself as a Turk. His dialect of Spanish only added to his multicultural identity, preserved by his increasingly American family in the heirloom of his crumbling red velvet fez, which they keep in a glass case.

In September of 2017, while touring in nearby Bulgaria, Aroeste visited Bitola for the first time. She had never felt so honored. People came from all directions. New acquaintances welcomed her as one of their own. Media kept circling. In North Macedonia, when a descendant of their lost Jewish communities returns, it is newsworthy.

As a singer of the endangered Ladino language, Aroeste was aware of the larger context of Jewish preservation efforts in Europe. Bitola is home to the oldest Jewish cemetery in the Balkans, with gravestones dating back to 1497. Her surname is engraved on many of the tombs. Just 15 minutes after entering the town, she visited her family's graves at the behest of her hosts, who were not Jewish. "These citizens were preserving the Jewish



cemetery. It is a completely volunteer-led mission of the town of Bitola to restore and keep this cemetery, which is a source of pride for the city," said Aroeste. "Now, there's a huge collaboration with Israel, digitizing the gravestones. It was so evident how personally non-Jewish citizens take the cemetery."



During her first few days in Bitola, whenever she was shown a home that had once been inhabited by Jews, its current owners would invite her in for tea and cake. On many occasions, they then told her stories of how close their grandparents were to their Jewish neighbors. Aroeste was in awe as she gazed at the Hebrew lettering on the archways of the old houses.

Then she came to the home of her grandfather's first cousin, Rachel Nahmias, which is famed, if tokenized, as the "Jewish house" for its visibility in Bitola's modestly sized pedestrian center. The Stars of David in the grillwork are preserved, as is Nahmias' memory. Though she no longer resides in the city, at 104 years old, she is a living testament to Monastir's Jewish history.

Returning to my grandfather's hometown, I witnessed the affection the locals feel for their country's Jewish past

By Sarah Aroeste

Nahmias survived the Holocaust after being smuggled to a family in Albania who hid her under a Muslim name. She returned home after the war. But only 2 percent of Jews from Bitola survived. The loss was unbearable. She resettled in Brookline, Massachusetts, where she has lived since the 1950s. One piece of memorabilia that Aroeste treasures is a letter, written in Ladino by Nahmias' first cousin (Aroeste's grandfather), whom she had not yet met. He was welcoming her to the United States and imploring her to learn English.

On the album, Nahmias recited a Sephardic children's finger game to Aroeste's infant daughter. Her delicate voice can be heard introducing "Estreja Mara," which is sung by a kindergarten class choir in Bitola. It is a homage to a children's song, dedicated to a girl, who, at 21, died a heroine with her fellow partisans fighting the Bulgarian army in 1944.

The night after her visit to Nahmias' house, television cameras caught Aroeste contemplating her cousin's life on the terrace of her historic home. She sang an all-Ladino set for a standing-only audience, accompanied by an interpreter who explained the lyrics as she projected her family photographs from Bitola. "They just ate it all up. Afterward, it was more flowers, stuffed animals for my kids. Hand-embroidered pictures of flowers," Aroeste recounted. "I remember thinking other people need to experience this explosion of love. I can't be the only one."

Monastir opens with a didgeridoo buzzing to the piercing blow of a shofar, accompanied by a nine-beat rhythm. The Ladino song "Oy Qui Muevi Mezis" ("Oh, What Nine Months") has been in the Balkan Sephardi repertoire since the Jewish expulsion from Spain in the 15th century. Its form is a "kantikas de parida," with lyrics readapted specially by Monastir locals. It is traditionally sung to celebrate newborns, an auspicious opening as Monastir Jewry enjoys a musical rebirth.

The album is full of intercultural collaborations. Aroeste wrote original music for the track "Espinelo," drawing from the fieldwork of Jewish ethnomusicologist Max A. Luria, who, in 1927, transcribed the song's "romanso" lyrics while in Monastir. Luria, a professor emeritus of modern languages at Brooklyn College, traced the song's oral tradition to a Ladino publication in 1562 of "Flor de enamoradas" in Barcelona. In turn, Aroeste transformed "Espinelo" with Israeli flamenco singer Yehuda "Shuki" Shveiky. The result is an Andalusian Jewish fusion, appropriate because its lyrics are a folktale about a twin thrown into the sea (Ottoman Jews believed twins were a bad omen), only to resurface at the Sublime Porte in the care of the sultan—an allegory for Sephardic migration to the Ottoman Empire.

Monastir also contains the first Hebrew translation of the popular Macedonian song "Jovano, Jovanke" by Sephardic scholar Eliezer Papo. The song is performed by Israeli singers Odelia Dahan Kehila, member of the Autoridad Nacional del Ladino, and Gilan Shahaf. It opens with an elderly man in Israel, Akiva Eskayo, remembering his mother from Monastir singing it as her last words.

As she talked with her growing circle of friends from Bitola, Aroeste learned to sing in Macedonian and the local Ladino vernacular. During these meetings, which occurred virtually under lockdown, she gleaned two of the Ladino songs on the album from a songbook, dated to 1985, that a friend of a friend in Bitola had collected.

Those songs, "En Frente de Mi Te Tengo" and "Jo la Keria," were arranged by Moritz Romano, the son of Rabbi Avraham ben Moshe Romano, the last rabbi of Monastir. On the album, "Jo la keria" is sung by Israeli Ladino artist Yehoram Gaon, who rose to fame during Israel's first decades of independence. "En Frente de Mi Te Tengo" was performed by 18-year-old opera singer Helena Susha, one of the 225 remaining Jews in the country's capital.

"It was an absolute pleasure singing in Ladino as my great grandmother used to speak it!" Susha emailed. "This song in particular has a special place in my heart because my mother used to play it for me as a child."

"Preserving the Jewish tradition is of great importance everywhere in the world but especially in places like Macedonia, where the Jewish community is very small," she continued. "But even though it is small, it is very active! I think that, with what Sarah is doing, a bright future awaits us!"

In 2018, Aroeste organized a Jewish Macedonian heritage tour and invited 20 Americans. She was assisted by local history enthusiast Zoran Gjorgiev, who was born in Bitola to an Orthodox Macedonian family and began working in the field of Jewish historical preservation about 10 years ago.

"I felt a great emptiness. We have been missing the Jewish community for 70-plus years in Bitola," Gjorgiev texted. "Since I was born here, I had one of the most emotional walks through Bitola's Jewish neighborhoods with Sarah. We visited sites where synagogues no longer exist. Around the city, I find items that were part of the Jewish cemetery and return them. I do this alone, without institutional support. I just want to contribute to my city."

He has since designed a smartphone app to help visitors find the same historical sites he visited with Aroeste. In July, Dan Oryan, ambassador of the State of Israel in R.N. Macedonia, presented Gjorgiev with a certificate of appreciation.

"These non-Jews in Bitola are absolute philo-Semites. They love Israel, and they love all things Hebrew and Jewish and Ladino and Sephardic," Aroeste said.

When Aroeste returned to North Macedonia in 2018, the municipality threw a culture festival with support from the Israeli foreign ministry and organized for her to perform more formally in the Bitola Museum. That was the first time she sang in Macedonian. She chose, "Edno Vreme Si Bev Ergen." The ideas that would sprout into her album began taking root.

"It just struck me, because it was about a Slavic man wandering the streets of Bitola in the Jewish neighborhoods and finding a lovely Jewish girl he wanted to convince to become Slavic. To me it's very humorous and shows the interplay of cultures that existed prior to World War II," Sarah said. "I don't know what happens, whether she intermarries and goes with him or not, but it is a fascinating window into these people who lived side by side." She invited Bitola clarinetist Vevki Amedov, who later recorded on two songs from Monastir, to join her. The audience loved it, clapping enthusiastically to the song's 7/8 rhythm.

"The entire room erupted with smiles. I was so joyful singing it with them. It was right after that concert when the Israel Foreign Ministry hosted a party at the rooftop of a famous hotel," said Sarah. "We were dancing, singing, people brought out their instruments, Macedonians, Israelis, Jews, Christians, Muslims. That's when I had my a-ha moment."

Aroeste next proposed the idea of recording to Amedov and Sefedin Bajramov, a local singer, after the impromptu rooftop shindig. She asked her new friends in Bitola more about the city's Jewish history and received floods of research material. For the next year, she designed a track list of Ladino, Macedonian, and Hebrew songs, drawing Israeli and Macedonian choruses to collaborate on the traditional tune "Od Bitola Pojdov" ("I Left Bitola").

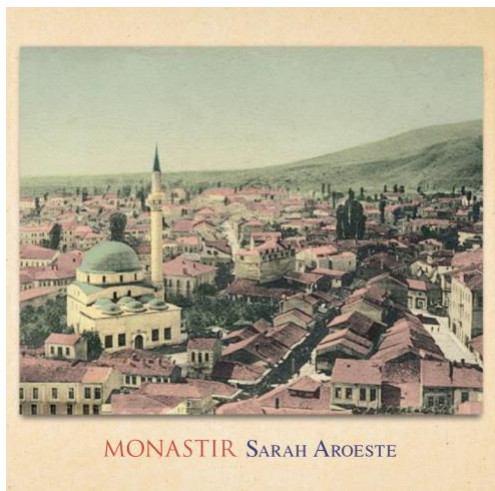
The refrain of "Od Bitola Pojdov" goes, "Bitola, my beloved Bitola / My dear Monastir," acknowledging the city's innate linguistic, cultural pluralism. Her producer, Bachar, programmed the piece with a powerful, electronic backbeat, refreshing the classic rhythms for 21st-century listeners.

"From the start, it was a very comfortable musical situation where I had the artistic liberty to take every song that was recorded and interpreted probably tens of thousands of times the same way. We took it and made it our own," Bachar said. "When we started this project in March of 2020, I really felt the effect of the pandemic. This was my only project that I decided to keep nourishing. It was a lifesaver artistically. I produced it with my sound signature while respecting the essence of those songs and texts, without trying to copy it. I used every piece of technology available from modern sounds. I did not try to re-create a mockup."

"I did my best to give ("Od Bitola Bojdov") a new life. It's a song about love that knows no boundaries," Bajramov told me over text. "Our best family friends were Jewish—Dr. Haim Abravanel and his family. I am so happy to revive those glorious, beautiful times. I did it for friendship. I did it for history and for my hometown. I did it because I believe Sarah did something called world heritage." The album ends with the song "Bitola, Moj Roden Kraj." The song is more contemporary, written by Macedonian composer Ajri Demirovski in the 1950s. "It is the only one that doesn't overtly mention Jewish life or the word Monastir, but it's a love song to Bitola," said Aroeste. "The lyrics say, 'Who doesn't cry when they leave this beloved city?' I wanted to end the album with that because that's how I feel."

"The name changed, and even though Jews still call the city Monastir, from WWI onwards many did start calling it Bitola, its official name. But for me, Bitola and Monastir are interchangeable. I wanted to end with a love song to the city." In July, Aroeste went back to Bitola to hand out the album to friends and to perform in the streets. She plans to premiere the album's music with the musicians she collaborated with in Bitola next March 11, to memorialize the 1943 deportation of the city's Jews. She is showing history that her community might have lost loved ones and moved on but that they are not lost, and they will always continue singing.

Note: Both Sarah Aroeste and Matt Hanson (the author of this article) are dear friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina.



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Spain

Opinion: The Inquisition decimated Sephardic Jewry. We still haven't internalized its lessons

By Ari Hoffman article [here](#)

On a recent warm night in Madrid, a young woman shared that she had travelled over 3,000 miles, leaving her husband and two young children in Montreal, to claim Spanish citizenship.

Over glasses of the local Alhambra brew, she told me that her grandparents spoke Ladino, and that whenever someone would mention Spain around her grandmother, the older woman would hiss under her breath. Five hundred years after the Inquisition, the wounds of the past still ached.

Under a [Spanish law](#) that expired this month, descendants of Jews expelled during the Inquisition were [eligible](#) to receive a Spanish passport. Getting approved, however, was another matter entirely. Recent reporting reveals that just 22% of applications were approved since the policy was instituted in 2015, and in recent months, Spain's Ministry of Justice instituted increasingly restrictive bureaucratic standards. On September 1, the program closed, ending Spain's reckoning with its vanished Jews of long ago.



It is worth pausing for a moment to think about what Spanish Jews of the past have to teach American Jews about the present. They were the victims of racial panic, of weaponized identity politics. They too lived in a world rocked by political instability, balancing great achievement with rising prejudice.

It would be a stretch to say that this ghostly history took me to Spain. But my time in the country offered some crucial clues for another civilization that is feeling a little distant from its Golden Age these days: American Jews. We too live at a moment of wrenching change, when Jews have to navigate new political and cultural regimes that seem less hospitable than those that preceded them.

The tide of expulsion washed Spanish Jews to the four corners of the globe. Understanding what led to their fate might help us alter our own. At the Prado, Madrid's extraordinary art museum, I stopped dead in my tracks in front of a Francisco Rizi [painting](#) depicting an auto-da-fé, the burning of a Jew in Plaza Mayor, the main square in Madrid. The wall note helpfully informs the viewer that "Rizi's canvas is the finest and most detailed depiction of one of these events." I'd had a café con leche and a croissant at that very spot that morning and flirted with a waitress about the warm weather.

What happened to Spanish Jewry was an utter catastrophe, snuffing out a civilization in its prime. Among the most dramatic relics of Jewish suffering in the world are the ghost towns in Spain, ravaged by Muslim and Christian persecution. They are pale shadows of the once-glorious seat of Sephardic Jewry. Cordoba and Seville, Granada and Toledo — these were places in which Maimonides studied Torah, Yehuda Halevi composed the most beautiful Hebrew poetry since the Bible, Kabbalists dreamed of angels and songwriters like Solomon ibn Gabirol and Samuel ha-Nagid swooned over beautiful Biblical landscapes and women alike.

Half a millennium ago, one of the greatest diasporas was decimated by those Catholics who decided that Jews were an affront to the One True Church, and that expulsion was their answer to the perennial Jewish Question. Jews who converted to Christianity rather than leave faced an exile of the spirit and soul, a journey that still often terminated horrendously at the stake.

This expulsion seeded the great flowerings of the Jewish worlds of Safed, and parts of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the anxious hinterlands of the collective Jewish mind, where the next calamity is just over the horizon. Their memory lives on not only in other lands, but in the Spanish genome: studies have revealed that [20% of Spaniards have Jewish ancestry](#). Over a beer in Seville, I [read](#) about a Spanish Catholic who had the practice of muttering words on entering a Church: it turns out they were Hebrew, half remembered articulations of Jewish faith made in the shadow of the cross and the gaudiest gold.

Those who left suffered the pain of homelessness, the indignity of the road. But the fate of those who stayed and converted was sometimes worse: the relentless hunt of the Inquisition, searching for the smallest hint of heresy among the *Marranos*, a candle set or a Saturday shirt grounds for the rack or the stake.

The Spanish experience kept intruding into my present. I couldn't bring myself to sign up for one of the excursions designed to highlight pogroms and expulsions, synagogues that once stood and bones that were moved long after they

could move. But I did find my way to the *Juderías*, the old narrow Jewish districts now filled with buzzy cafes and galleries.

The synagogues that remain are museums either closed on Mondays or facelifted into churches. In Cordoba, the statue of Maimonides and the plaza named after Yehuda HaLevi feel like totems to an extinct and vanished tribe. While about 45,000 Jews [live in Spain today](#) — mostly post-war immigrants from Morocco and Latin America — one of the few mezuzahs I saw during my trip was affixed to the doorpost of a trendy speakeasy in Malaga called 'The Pharmacy.'

That Spain's extension of citizenship to Jewish descendants is being [effectively revoked](#) casts doubt on just how much reckoning is being done with crimes of crown and church. As I traveled from city to city hopping on trains and buses, I read Joshua Cohen's new novel, "The Netanyahus." In both the book and in life, Bentzion Netanyahu, father of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was a scholar of the Spanish Inquisition. His right-wing Zionism found in analyzing this landmark disaster of the Diaspora fertile soil for a Jewish State, one informed by pride and strength, and committed to ingathering as an antidote to dispersion: the effort to blend in is doomed, so why even try?

For a long time, these grim lessons didn't seem like they applied to the American experience. We learned in school about the historical precariousness of Jewish existence, how golden ages seemed to collapse with a ferocity in direct proportion to how brightly they glittered. Caught in a vice between the Catholic Church and a new and more fundamentalist Muslim regime, the Jewish glories of Andalusia were long living on borrowed time, just as those of Aleppo and Vienna would eventually run out of rope.

Why is America any different? Organized not around religion or race but a set of ideas, democracies seem less likely to turn on their own citizens than mercurial monarchies or totalitarian states. We live freed from choosing between religion and citizenship. Jews are not despised, but widely admired. Lately, this vision seems to be fraying. [Violence in synagogues](#) has torn at the essential freedom of our ability to worship freely and securely. [Mobs on the street](#) attack Israel in the name of Jews, and Jews in the name of Israel. Increasingly, [anti-Zionist politics have gained a foothold](#) in the American political system, and it inevitably is shading into the ugliest kind of antisemitic rhetoric.

A new ideology, Critical Social Justice, sees Jews as white and privileged, their success an impediment to a better society rather than a testament to its health. It is now common to hear that Jews are white, that they benefit from white supremacy, and that they must lend their hands and resources to dismantling the frameworks that have given rise to this state of affairs. This ideology is fatally shortsighted — and the Spanish example offers the most tragic proof. "Are the Jews white?" uneasily echoes "are they Christian?": the old formulas of race and blood and belief stubbornly clinging to the contemporary scene. Like their German heirs centuries later, the Inquisitors were theoreticians of blood. They called it "limpieza de sangre," purity of blood, to track what indelibly traveled through capillaries as opposed to what could be cleansed through conversion.

But the lessons that medieval Spanish Jews would tell their contemporary American cousins is not necessarily a uniformly bleak one; to succumb to a story of inevitability is to absolve churchmen of their prejudice and Ferdinand and Isabella of their heartlessness. People and countries make choices, and they do so freely.

But we should know that good fortune and success are not things to take for granted. Jewish history has always been an uphill climb, and any perceived summit is just as close to the slope down as the path up. Even amongst the splendor of Spain at its zenith, its Jews always dreamed of Zion. In other words, they never stopped wanting to go home. American Jews can learn from their seamless merger of Hebrew and Arabic, deep Torah learning and secular excellence, a cultural synthesis where love of Sepharad and the Land of Israel danced in harmony.

There are more somber lessons as well. Even the most successful Diaspora cannot afford to avoid the mobilization of political forces against Jews. Cultural success is no guarantee of physical or communal security. Just as the Jews of Spain had to navigate threats from both their Christian and Muslim rulers, American Jews are required to fend off antisemitism from the far right and progressive left. To fail in this vigilance would be to risk a recurrence of the past.

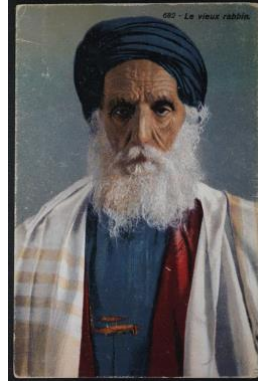
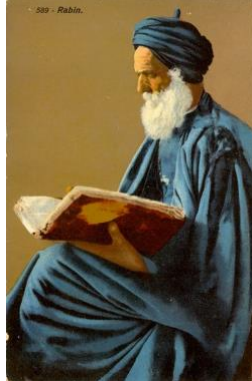
My last day in Spain, I visited the ancient caves in Nerja, a small resort town on the southern coast. I wandered into a vast network of underground tunnels studded with stalactites and elusively priceless prehistoric cave paintings. Our ancestors lived in these exceedingly strange catacombs 30,000 years ago, burying their dead, hunting animals and worshipping unknowable gods. There was something comforting about the footsteps of these ancients, who knew nothing of the religious hatreds and prejudices that are our troubled inheritance. No doubt they had their own expulsions and inquisitions but from this distance, all that remains are shapes on a wall, shadows overhead, and an echo rebounding through cavernous emptiness.

Tunisia

The Jewish Model from Tunisia Full article by Nati Gabbay [here](#)

A rabbi, a moneychanger and a goldsmith meet in a German photography studio in the early 20th century. No, this is not the opening line of a joke. It is the beginning of a mystery, since all three characters are in fact the same person

It all started in 1903 when a German photographer named Rudolf Franz Lehnert arrived in Tunisia. Besides being a gifted photographer, Lehnert was also a bit of an adventurer. After crossing the entire continent of Europe on foot, he arrived in Tunisia, where he chanced to meet another European photographer named Ernest Heinrich Landrock. The two became enamored with Tunisia and the charm of North Africa and decided to set up a photography studio together called Lehnert & Landrock.



Lehnert crisscrossed the deserts, capturing with his camera the landscapes, sights and people, especially the women, of North Africa. The printed photographs in various techniques made their way from North Africa to places around the world. And the world, it seems, fell under the exotic charm of Tunisia. Later, because of World War II, the two moved to Egypt and documented it as well, before eventually returning to their beloved Tunisia.

This article focuses on a number of these postcards which have ended up in the collections of the National Library of Israel.

While documenting the sights of Tunisia, Lehnert also encountered local Jews, whose different dress and unusual customs must have fascinated him and his clientele. He immortalized Tunisian Jewry with his camera, particularly the community's customs and its women. However, a closer look reveals that one endearing Jew starred in many of the photos, becoming a sort of "in-house model" for the studio.

In a postcard from 1904 featuring the title "Rabbi," we see the man photographed for the first time in the guise of a rabbi carefully studying the page of a book (possibly a Talmud). So who is the mysterious Jewish model in all these photographs, whom the two European photographers obviously found so appealing?

After this article was originally published in Hebrew, one of our Facebook followers, Victor Cohen, told us that this mysterious man is none other than Rabbi Yehuda Zeitoun from the city of Monastir in Tunisia. Cohen, a great-grandson of Rabbi Zeitoun, says that among his many occupations, the rabbi was also a goldsmith, merchant, mohel and a reciter of liturgical poetry. If so, it turns out, the various photographs simply document the rabbi's varied pursuits. Cohen notes that Rabbi Zeitoun's son, Rabbi Hai ben Yehuda Zeitoun, was the chief rabbi of the city of Sfax and was even awarded a medal for his work from the ruler of Tunisia.

In any case, the face of this accomplished multi-talented person became a representation of the figure of the North African Jew across large parts of the world.

London

Plea from the British Sephardic Community: Britain's oldest synagogue in continuous use under threat of closure from high-rise developers

The S&P Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom is asking for help from our communities throughout the United States. Their flagship synagogue in the heart of London, Bevis Marks, is facing an "existential threat" if proposals to build two nearby high-rise office blocks in the City of London are given the go ahead.



Bevis Marks – known as the "cathedral synagogue" of UK Jewry – is a heritage building of international significance which recently celebrated 320 years of regular services. Initially for those who lived in the City of London, it is now a centre of worship for people from all over the world. It was built in 1701 and has survived the Blitz in World War Two and two IRA bomb attacks in the 1990s. Today it is the home of UK's Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community and is the only non-Christian house of worship in the City of London. Now the future of the historic synagogue is up in the air. Developers are proposing to build two high-rise offices directly next door – a 21-story building in Creechurch Lane and a 48- floor tower in Bury Street. A decision is expected on October 5. The cumulative impact, with other buildings built or agreed, will mean sunlight (apart from one hour during the day) will be completely blocked out, making daily services almost impossible. Historic England, a British Government agency, has strongly criticized the City of London planning department about the local authority's policies and proposals for future land use in the area.

In a letter, it said: "We believe that fundamental shortcomings in the draft Plan risk encouraging development that will seriously harm the significance of the City's historic environment, including some of the country's most important heritage assets (Bevis Marks). In its current form we consider that the draft Plan should not be considered sound."

The S&P Sephardi Community is asking for your help directly by writing to City of London expressing your concern and support for this historic Sephardic house of worship, and sharing your concern on social media with the hashtag #SaveBevisMarks. Even if you do not live in London, you can still write to the City of London.

Learn more how you can help here: <https://www.savebevismarks.org/how-you-can-help/>

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The history of the KKJ community and synagogue in New York is certainly well known and documented. And the history of Romaniote/Greek Jewry in Greece and surrounding lands from its glorious origins to its tragic end in the Holocaust is also well documented. Perhaps much less known is the history and presence of Romaniote and specifically Ioannina Jews in the Land of Israel.

Sir Moses Montefiore is famous for his unprecedented philanthropic work and international efforts in defending Jews till his death in 1885 at the age of 100. Among his most significant and far-reaching philanthropic projects on behalf of the Land and People of Israel, he provided the financing to create five new neighborhoods for Jews outside the Old City walls. This was a revolutionary and very risky move at the time, but Montefiore's foresight contributed to Jerusalem's transference from a small, closed, poor and colloquial village to a larger, more thriving and Jewish populated city and its development into the major metropolis it is today. These new Jewish neighborhoods were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and were all named in his honor: Ohel Moshe (1883), Mazkeret Moshe (1883), Yemin Moshe (1892), Zichron Moshe (1906), and Kiryat Moshe (1923).

Of this list, 'Ohel Moshe' was built specifically for Sephardic residents of the Old City looking to leave its confines, and corresponded to 'Mazkeret Moshe', which was designated for the same purpose for the Ashkenazi community. Today, Ohel Moshe is part of the Nahlaot neighborhood, located near the center of the city and adjacent to the famous 'Mahane Yehuda' market.

But besides Sephardic Jews, Greek Jews from Ioannina also immigrated to Israel and settled in Ohel Moshe in 1925, building a private home which became the 'Beit Avraham and Ohel Sarah (Ioannina) Synagogue, which served the small but vibrant Greek-Romaniote community in Western Jerusalem for many years. Though the synagogue is still active, there is no longer any significant Greek Jewish presence in the neighborhood, and it is now Sephardic in ritual and custom. However, the name of the synagogue remains unchanged, and tour guides and Jerusalem tourism websites all note and emphasize its origins.

But Ioannina Jews lived and worked in Jerusalem even long before the construction of "Ohel Moshe". In 1975, a Rabbi Yakov Goldman, who worked for many years with the Joint Distribution Committee in Israel, visited and explored the Old City of Jerusalem and penned an article about his experience in the magazine "Shema Yisrael", published by a large Yeshiva in Jerusalem called "Ohr Somayach". The article is entitled "Jerusalem Quartered" and can be read in full at: <https://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1014>. The author's main point is to present his physical findings of Jewish presence in all four quarters of the Old City – Jewish, Moslem Christian and Armenian –which only ended after various anti-Jewish riots, actions, and persecution mainly in the 20th century.

In the section on the Christian Quarter he describes "Christian Street", which was once essentially a street of Jewish stores, already described in 1875 by a German visitor to the Holy Land named Gott. The latter described Jerusalem, street by street, and when he reached "Christian Street", he wrote that 'unfortunately', all the shops on this street are owned by Jews, and it could just as well be called the Jews' Street. Rabbi Goldman then relates that he still remembered a particular building on the street, number 80 as he recalls, which by 1975 was a tattoo parlor, but in the past was a synagogue, because he remembered that some 40 years previously (around 1935), while on his way to a Kollel on Shabbat (further proof of a Jewish presence in

the quarter), a man standing at the corner of Christian Street asked him if he would be the tenth person for a minyan in that synagogue. As Rabbi Goldman relates, "it was a synagogue of Yanina Jews – Yanina is a community in the north of Greece and its Jews had two synagogues in Jerusalem, one in the Ohel Moshe Quarter and this one in the Old City. Many Greek Jews had their shops on Christian Street and, nearby, the market called Aftimos was all Jewish. There also exists a copy of a deed of transfer dated 1826 of one Jew transferring his property in the Christian Quarter to another Jew. So you have an idea as to how 'Christian' the Christian Quarter was." Thus, as late as 1935, Jews from Ioannina and their families constituted a significant portion of the Jewish population of the Old City. And while we don't exactly know when these Greek Jews arrived, it is certainly possible that the property transfer transaction described by Rabbi Goldman was between two Jews originally from Ioannina. In any case, Jews from Ioannina played an important role in settling the Land of Israel and Jerusalem already in the 19th century. This fact of Jewish history may be little told or even researched, but is no less important than the more famous history of the corresponding "First Aliyah" from Eastern Europe and Yemen that occurred at the same time.



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Parashat Bereishith

"And the Lord God fashioned Adam from the dust of the earth" (Bereishith 2:7).

Rashi quotes two opinions, drawn from Midrashic teachings, as to the nature of this dust that was used to create Adam i.e. humanity. One opinion suggests that God gathered dust from the four corners of the earth in order to fashion Adam. The other opinion has it that God took the dust from one spot, the site of the future holy Temple in Jerusalem.

What is this rabbinic debate all about? Surely, the rabbis had no evidence as to what dust God actually used to create Adam. Neither side argued that it had an ancient tradition to bolster its viewpoint. These rabbinic opinions are not dealing with establishing a historic fact but are concerned with something fundamental about the essence and nature of humanity.

God created Adam from dust drawn from the four corners of the earth. Rashi notes that this was done so that no matter where a human being would die, the earth would receive his/her remains. In other words, a human being is "at home" everywhere on earth.

The broader lesson is that a person belongs to the entire world. Nothing human is alien to him/her. A human being—because he/she is composed from dust taken from throughout the earth—is part and parcel of all humanity, of all that transpires on earth. Thus, a person needs to have a grand vision of his/her place in this world. A human being should feel a sense of relationship with all other human beings—where ever they live. A human's mind should transcend the concerns of his/her own immediate place and should aspire to grasp universal human wisdom and experience.

God created Adam from the dust from one spot, the site of the future holy Temple in Jerusalem. A human being is rooted in one place, in the holiest place in the world. A person must be rooted in his/her tradition, must be focused on his/her particularity. Knowing that his/her life originates in the sacred dust of Jerusalem, a person can deepen his/her connection with God and with his/her direct and personal relationship with God. So which opinion is true?

The answer is: both are true. This is not a rabbinic debate of opposing views, but an expression of complementary ideas about the nature of humanity.

A person must be both universal and unique. He/she must recognize an innate kinship with all humanity in the four corners of the earth, and also recognize his/her particular rootedness in a family/tradition/society. A person who is only "universal" will ultimately be deracinated from his/her own uniqueness. A person who is only "particular" will ultimately be disconnected from humanity as a whole, and will become increasingly narrow in outlook. In either case, one's full humanity will be compromised and diminished. Humans were created from dust and will return to dust. This is a humbling fact. But during the interim when we live on earth, we should strive to lead lives of wisdom, sensitivity and fulfillment. We should fully develop our uniqueness while at the same time fostering our universality.

We were, after all, created from dust from the four corners of the earth and from the dust of the holy Temple in Jerusalem. This is our blessing...and our challenge.



**My Moroccan Succoth
By Rabbi Daniel Bouskila**

Rabbi Daniel Bouskila is the International Director of the Sephardic Educational Center and the Rabbi of the Westwood Village Synagogue. He is currently working on translating the legal and philosophical writings of Sephardic Chief Rabbi Benzion Meir Hai Uziel. This article originally appeared in the Jewish Journal of Los Angeles.

My father, of blessed memory, was born and raised in the Mellah of Marrakesh. All of the Moroccan traditions I practice on Sukkot are customs I learned and inherited from him.

Those special Moroccan traditions – which I grew up with and practice to this day – adorn Sukkot with an aesthetic beauty and mystical spirituality all its own. In my Moroccan tradition, the Lulav is far more than the plain spine of a palm branch. Upon bringing it home from the store, the first thing we do is decorate the Lulav with golden threads or ribbons. This is based on a unique tradition dating back to the Mishnah, where it says "The People of Jerusalem bound their Lulavs with strands of gold" (Mishnah [Sukkah 3:8](#)). How did this Jerusalem tradition arrive in Morocco? The simple answer would be that someone from Jerusalem brought it there. I think otherwise. If you've ever been to a Moroccan Shabbat dinner and seen how we adorn our tables with a colorful array of foods, it makes sense that we'd be attracted to a tradition that decorates our Lulav! As a child, I loved watching my father decorate my Lulav, but that Moroccan custom now belongs to my Ashkenazi wife Peni, who does it with love and her unique creative flair.

Fresh from decorating the Lulav, we enter the Sukkah, often with the spool of golden ribbons still in our hands. Bamboo sticks – not palm fronds – sit above our heads. My father taught me that in his family, the Sukkah was treated as more than a temporary dwelling place or dining room. It was a sacred space modeled after the Mishkan (Tabernacle), Judaism's original portable sanctuary. In that spirit, the décor of our Moroccan Sukkah – a colorful assortment of fabrics and materials – was inspired by the Torah's commandment to hang in the Mishkan "a curtain made of blue, purple and crimson cloths" ([Exodus 26:31](#)). It probably helped that my

grandfather sold fabrics for a living! The colorful fabrics are fastened to the Sukkah's walls with decorative hooks, and the golden ribbons left over from decorating the Lulav help line the fabric adorned walls. Moroccan lanterns made of bronze or copper hang as the Sukkah's light fixtures. Upon entering my Moroccan Sukkah, I always feel the striking blend of colors and lights exuding a warmth that is at once physical and spiritual. A special custom practiced by my father's family was hanging a small "Elijah's Chair" in the Sukkah. My father's grandfather was Rabbi Yosef Pinto, a Kabbalist descended from a long line of mystics originally from Spain. Rabbi Pinto taught my father that the reason we hang Elijah's Chair in the Sukkah is because Elijah the Prophet is the primary teacher of Kabbalah for saintly Moroccan Kabbalists, and on Sukkot, we hope that the spirit of Elijah's sacred teachings permeates our Sukkah. Perhaps my great-grandfather learned this from Elijah himself? Elijah's Chair was decorated with colorful Moroccan pillows, and it was customary to place various special Sukkot-related books on those pillows.

One of these special books is "Hamad Elohim" (God's Desire), a Sephardic liturgical book devoted entirely to Sukkot. "Hamad Elohim" was the "official Sukkot book" for my father's family, and it remains that for my family today. The book is divided into seven sets of Kabbalistic texts read each night, corresponding to the "Seven Ushpizin" – the seven "special guests" (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David) we invite to our Sukkah. My family welcomes each "special guest" by reading and chanting "Hamad Elohim's" mystical texts in honor of that night's guest. Rabbi Bouskila's personal copy of "Hamad Elohim" with his father's inscription.

I have fond memories of sitting with my father and reading from his "Hamad Elohim" every night of Sukkot. The pages radiated a unique aura of spirituality, and my father's sweet chanting animated every sentence on the page. Reading "Hamad Elohim" with my father transported me back to the Sukkot of his upbringing in Marrakech, but it also helped bring the beautiful Moroccan customs from this book into my own Jewish life here in America.

One of those special customs is the "Tikkun Leil Hoshana Rabah," the all-night Torah study and celebration on the last night of Sukkot. Inspired by the Talmudic description of Hoshana Rabah as an all-night celebration in the Temple in Jerusalem, the Kabbalists turned this last night of Sukkot into a beautiful all night event in the Sukkah. My father's family hosted the "Tikkun Leil Hoshana Rabah" in their Sukkah for his community in Marrakesh. His description of the evening included a dazzling array of sweet pastries, fresh and dried fruits, and lots of Moroccan Mint Tea with Nana. Of course, there was the presence and Torah teachings of his grandfather, Rabbi Yosef Pinto.

While my upbringing in America and the Sukkah in my own family life lacked the presence of my saintly great-grandfather, we continue to study Torah and eat delicious Moroccan pastries in the Sukkah on Hoshana Rabah. My father's favorite Sukkot song was "Sukkah Ve-Lulav," a Kabbalistic poem composed in Meknes, Morocco by Rabbi Moshe Adahan in the 18th century. With its rhythmic stanzas and joyous tunes, "Sukkah Ve-Lulav" expresses our ultimate state of happiness in observing this beautiful holiday. "Let Israel rejoice in the shade of God's Sukkah," we sing, and "Happy are the pure of heart who set their intentions on the secret essence of the Lulav and its accompanying species."

In January 1993, one week after Peni and I got married, my father gave us a special gift – his "Hamad Elohim" Sukkot book from Morocco. In the personal inscription, written in a beautiful Hebrew, my father wrote to us: "This copy of Hamad Elohim belonged to my beloved father Shalom Bouskila of blessed memory. I've held onto this book for forty years, and I now hope that you will hold onto it for many more years, using it every year on Sukkot. May the Seven Ushpizin always protect you."

Our kids grew up with my father's "Hamad Elohim" in our Sukkah, along with all of his family's beautiful Moroccan Sukkot traditions. I'm proud that we've kept these beautiful traditions alive, and look forward to the day when we will inscribe something in our "Hamad Elohim" and pass it on to our kids. In the spirit of Sukkot, that brings me tremendous joy.

Looking for Our Help

Our dear friend, Devin Naar is revising a piece that he wrote last year and is looking for information on Romaniote involvement in the "kimono" manufacturing industry. We know that many of our early Romaniote immigrants had factories on Lower Broadway and elsewhere on the Lower East Side that produced "kimonos." Devin is now looking for information on any of our women who participated in a garment strike on the Lower East Side in 1913.

Moroccan Sukkoth Recipes

Roasted Brussels Sprouts With Pomegranate Molasses

- 2 lbs Brussels sprouts, cleaned and cut in half
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- Sea salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
- 1/3 cup fresh pomegranate seeds
- 2 tbsp pomegranate molasses (see notes)



Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. In a large mixing bowl, toss the Brussels sprouts with the 1/4 cup of olive oil.

Spread the sprouts evenly across a baking sheet. You can line the tray with parchment for easier cleanup, if desired (the pictures here show aluminum foil, but I no longer use that to line my trays). Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. I use around 3/4 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper in the beginning, then add more to taste later, if needed.

Roast for 15 minutes, until some of the outer leaves start to blacken around the edges. Bite through one to test for tenderness and doneness. I like them quite tender.

In a large mixing bowl, toss the roasted Brussels sprouts with the toasted walnuts. Season with additional salt and pepper, if desired. Place on a serving dish and drizzle with the pomegranate molasses, then sprinkle with pomegranate seeds. Serve.

New Books Available from Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum

The Food of Morocco By Paula Wolfert
\$35 plus \$7 P&H within Continental USA. Hardcover

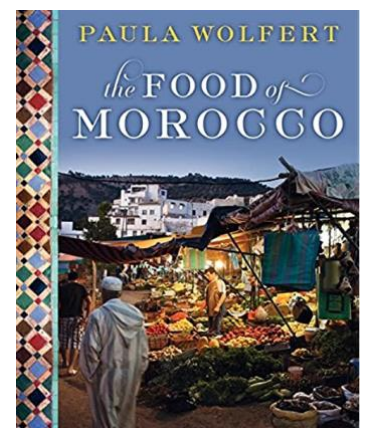
"A cookbook by Paula Wolfert is cause for celebration. Ms. Wolfert may be America's most knowledgeable food person and her books are full of insight, passion and brilliance."

—Anthony Dias Blue, CBS Radio, NY

"I think she's one of the finest and most influential food writers in this country...one of the leading lights in contemporary gastronomy."

—Craig Claiborne

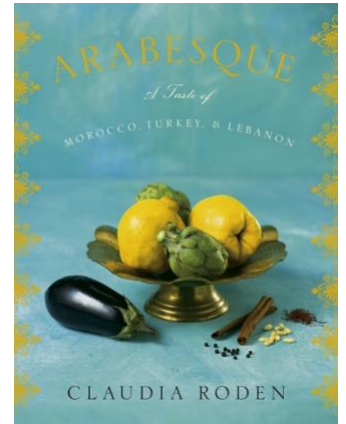
Paula Wolfert, the undisputed queen of Mediterranean cooking, provides food lovers with the definitive guide to The Food of Morocco. Lavishly photographed and



packed with tantalizing recipes to please the modern palate, *The Food of Morocco* provides helpful preparation techniques for chefs, home cooks, and any serious student of the culinary arts and culture. This is the perfect companion to Wolfert's classic, *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco*—a 2008 inductee into the James Beard Cookbook Hall of Fame—and fans of Claudia Roden, Elizabeth David, Martha Rose Schulman, and Poopa Dweck will be delighted by this extraordinary culinary journey across this colorful and exhilarating land.

Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon: A Cookbook By Claudia Roden
\$35 plus \$7 P&H within Continental USA. Hardcover

In the 1960s Claudia Roden introduced Americans to a new world of tastes in her classic *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*. Now, in her enchanting new book, *Arabesque*, she revisits the three countries with the most exciting cuisines today—Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon. Interweaving history, stories, and her own observations, she gives us 150 of the most delectable recipes: some of them new discoveries, some reworkings of classic dishes—all of them made even more accessible and delicious for today's home cook.



From Morocco, the most exquisite and refined cuisine of North Africa: couscous dishes; multilayered pies; delicately flavored tagines; ways of marrying meat, poultry, or fish with fruit to create extraordinary combinations of spicy, savory, and sweet.

From Turkey, a highly sophisticated cuisine that dates back to the Ottoman Empire yet reflects many new influences today: a delicious array of kebabs, fillo pies, eggplant dishes in many guises, bulgur and chickpea salads, stuffed grape leaves and peppers, and sweet puddings.

From Lebanon, a cuisine of great diversity: a wide variety of mezze (those tempting appetizers that can make a meal all on their own); dishes featuring sun-drenched Middle Eastern vegetables and dried legumes; and national specialties such as kibbeh, meatballs with pine nuts, and lamb shanks with yogurt.

Claudia Roden knows this part of the world so intimately that we delight in being in such good hands as she translates the subtle play of flavors and simple cooking techniques to our own home kitchens.

Moroccan: Cookbook Fit for a Sheik By Martha Stone
\$20 plus \$7 P&H within Continental USA.

Morocco is a land of mystery and intrigue. It's also a country that appreciates eating ... well, like a sheik. Meals are a family affair and meant to be savored. The country's cuisine is influenced by a number of other cultures for a wide variety of dishes. Spices provide one of the most important elements of Moroccan cuisine by creating layers of textures, flavors, and colors. Adding fruit such as raisins, dates, and dried apricots to main meals sweeten dishes in a very natural way without sugar.



Let your family dine like a sultan with the recipes in this Moroccan Cookbook Fit for A Sheik. They'll love the magic.

We love to highlight the achievements of our community.

Marc Varsano is a member of our congregation at Kehila Kedosha Janina. His father of Blessed Memory, Jack, was a student of our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, when she taught at the Grace Avenue Senior Center in Great Neck. Therefore it is only appropriate that we highlight Marc's chocolate shop, Varsano's Chocolates in the West Village.

We love the story behind the shop and we are sure that you will love the handmade chocolates.

"Well before the 1996 opening of Varsano's Chocolate, my affinity for chocolate was being formed. It was my Salonica-born Grandmother, Palomba, who introduced me to what would become my chosen profession. Her warmth, sweet smile and easy laugh would always greet me... along with marzipan and chocolate that she would take out of her coat pocket to give to me. All the Varsano's loved chocolate. It was a joy to see the favorites (marzipan, halvah, dark chocolate orange peel and almond bark) being enjoyed at all of our family gatherings. So, after graduating college, it was my family tree, my Grandmother Palomba, who made it easy for me to see, that chocolate was the job for me.

So, in 1996 I opened Varsano's Chocolate in New York's Greenwich Village. Still going strong after all of these years. Varsano's makes homemade, hand dipped chocolate right in the store. Fresh and delicious, some of the most popular items are:

Salted Caramels (in milk or dark chocolate)

Almond Bark (with salt, or with no salt), in milk or dark chocolate

Almond Butter Crunch (Toffee)

Dark Chocolate Orange Peel

Apricots (in milk or dark chocolate)

Dark Chocolate Covered Marzipan

Those are to name just a few. We make so many different types.

To celebrate holidays with or to give to a loved one or to cheer up someone sick.

Or to give to your Grandson, to give him the idea to become a Chocolate Man.

Thank you Nona.

Marc Varsano"



Varsano's Chocolate

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Shipping nationwide



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 accessing the donation link in the upper left hand corner.**

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



**Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 151
October 2021
Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002
Website: www.kkjsm.org
Email: museum@kkjsm.org**

Your donations enable us to continue our work. You can send donations via mail directly to 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002, or you can donate via our website www.kkjsm.org