



# Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

## February 2022 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This issue is dedicated in memory of Leonard Colchamiro, beloved member of our Board of Trustees, who passed away on January 4, 2022. His brothers Elliot and Jesse are sponsoring this newsletter in his memory. We stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us. Just as Leon Colchamiro helped found our congregation 100 years ago, his grandson Leonard followed in his footsteps and served as the architect overseeing our synagogue's historic restoration. We proudly recognized Leonard's contributions on the plaque on our building's façade. May the Colchamiro family continue to play a vital role in our community for generations to come, and may Leonard Colchamiro's memory be for a blessing.



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If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org).

This newsletter, our 155<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website [www.kkjism.org](http://www.kkjism.org).

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

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email [amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:amarcus@kkjism.org) if you would like to attend. We will be following CDC guidelines; proof of vaccination and masks are required.

## Simchas

We celebrate the birth of Alan Max Moses, the son of Michael and Veera Moses. Baby Moses was named after his grandfather, Allan Moses and his great-grandfather, Max Moses. He is also the great-grandson of Stella Calef.

Rae Yamali turned 99 on December 4<sup>th</sup>! She is absolutely amazing.



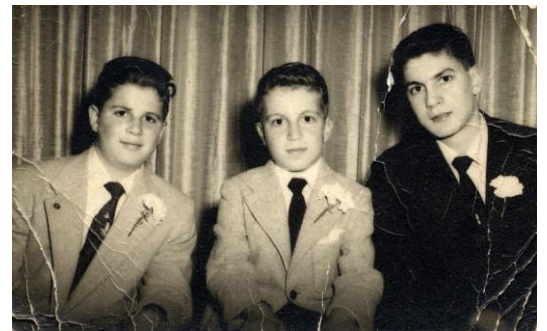
Molly Cohen, Past President of the Sisterhood of Janina turned 91 on January 12<sup>th</sup> and Annette Binder, Vice President of the Sisterhood of Janina, turned 94 on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. This picture of the Sisterhood from 1996 shows Mollie Cohen seated third from the left and Annette Binder standing third from the right.



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## Passings

We mourn the passing of Leonard Colchamiro on January 4<sup>th</sup> at the age of 83. Leonard was the oldest son of Morris and Sarah Mazza Colchamiro, the grandson of Leon (Judah) Colchamiro and Julia Mazza Colchamiro, and the great grandson of Jesoula ben Matathias Colchamiro and Rachel Galanos Colchamiro. He is survived by his wife, Claudia, his daughter Sarina, his brothers Elliot and Jesse, a large extended family, and a loving community.



We mourn the passing of Jeanette Cabillis, the widow of Vic Cabillis. Jeanette passed at the age of 88. She is survived by her children, Leonora, Jody and Marc, along with her grandchildren.

We were unable to include photos in the last newsletter and, thanks to her children, we can now include some lovely photos.



Karolos Papoulias, a former president of Greece has died at the age of 92, Greece's state news agency ANA reports.



Papoulias, a long-time socialist lawmaker and minister, was close to Andreas Papandreou, the founder of the Socialist PASOK party, and an opponent of Papandreou's successor, the moderate modernizer Costas Simitis.

This opposition prompted conservative Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, who succeeded Simitis in 2004, to propose Papoulias for the largely ceremonial position of president in early 2005.

Papoulias was re-elected to a second term in February 2010, a term marked by Greece's financial crisis. Papoulias had little power to shape policy, but he was also temperamentally averse to upstaging the successive governments he swore into office — conservative, socialist, a conservative-socialist coalition and, in the final month of his term, the leftist Syriza-led government.

His 10-year tenure was mostly free of controversy domestically. His foreign policy, however, saw him support the likes of Moammar Gadhafi and Slobodan Milošević, while maintaining friendly relations with the Kremlin. Karolos Papoulias was born on June 4, 1929, in a village near the city of Ioannina, in north-western Greece, the son of an army officer who retired as a Major-General. He owed his rather unusual name for a Greek to his godfather, a general and close friend of his father's, who was an admirer of the Austrian Marxist politician Karl Kautsky.

At a very young age, he was involved in the resistance against the German occupation of 1941-44. After the liberation, Papoulias finished secondary school and studied law at the University of Athens. He was also heavily involved in sports, taking part in several track and field events, and becoming Greece's youth champion in the pole vault, while also being a member of the Greek national volleyball team. Later in life, he served as President of Athens-based Ethnikos Athletic Club for 25 years. Papoulias finished his law studies with a graduate degree from the University of Milan and a doctorate in private international law from the University of Cologne.

In 1963, Papoulias settled in West Germany and in 1967, when a military junta seized power in Greece, he founded a resistance organization. It was during the 1967-74 period that he met and became close to Andreas Papandreou. Returning to Greece in 1974, Papoulias was a founder member of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement and was elected to the Greek Parliament from 1977 to 2004. He was a member of all Papandreou governments, primarily in foreign affairs roles.

Papoulias was well-known for his close relations with Arab leaders, including PLO head Yasser Arafat and Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi, and, in general, was cool to Western policies. As a lawmaker, he protested vigorously against NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and voiced support for Serbian nationalist leader and suspected war criminal Slobodan Milošević. One of his few official trips abroad was to attend the 2014 Winter Olympics at Sochi as a guest of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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### Corrections

We apologize for the misspelling of Seraphina, the granddaughter of Anita Altman. The baby's name is Lilah Seraphina.

Correction in the obituary of Miriam Levine. Miriam was the daughter of Morris and Becky (nee Coffino) Askinazi, Granddaughter of Zadick and Anna (nee Matza) Coffino (maternal grandparents) and Joseph and Esther Askinazi (paternal grandparents). She was predeceased by husband Ben Levine and son Dick Levine. She is survived by daughter ivy Sher, grandchildren Cosmo Sher, Ben Sher and Eden Sher and 2 great granddaughters, and son Mark Levine and grandson Jackson Kent.

## Visitors to Kehila Kedosha Janina

While we continue to hold Shabbat morning services, our museum was closed during the month of January due to the upsurge in the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Our museum is set to re-open on Sunday February 6. All visitors must show proof of vaccination and wear masks while inside. Email [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org) if you would like to visit us.

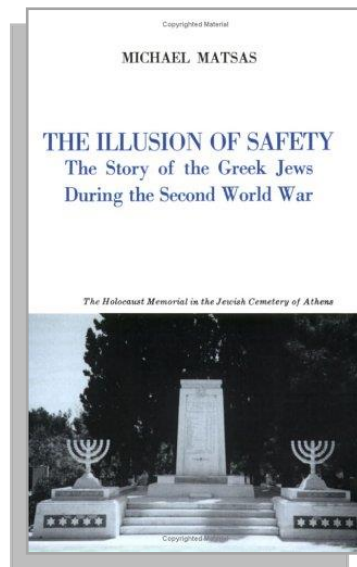
We also plan to resume Shabbat kiddush lunch after services on Saturday mornings. We would love to have you join us to help ensure we have a minyan and help us continue to practice our Romaniote traditions. Please email [Amarcus@kkjism.org](mailto:Amarcus@kkjism.org) if you can join us one Saturday morning. We will be happy to welcome you and promise you will enjoy the experience (and the food!). Stay well and stay in touch.

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## Upcoming Events

### Roundtable Discussion with Dr. Michael Matsas February 7 at 6pm (Online)

Join our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, when she interviews Dr. Michael Matsas regarding the republication of his monumental work "The Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During the Second World War."



Dr. Michael Matsas will discuss his book which explores the little-known history of the Holocaust in Greece. When he was 13 years old, he and his immediate family hid in the partisan-controlled free Greek mountains and survived. Tragically, 87% of the Greek Jewish community was destroyed. Marcia Ikonomopoulos, Museum Director of the Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue & Museum and world-expert in Greek Jewry, will interview Dr. Matsas as he recounts what happened in Greece during WWII. His research includes personal memoirs of survivors and Greek resistance fighters as well as official government wartime reports. *The Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During the Second World War* was published in a second edition in 2021.

Register [Here](#) for this Online Event

**Save the Date!**

**Greek Jewish Festival  
Sunday May 15, 2022 12pm-6pm**

# GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL

Kehila Kedosha Janina is proud to announce that we are planning our annual Greek Jewish Festival for Sunday May 15, 2022! Check our festival website for updates in the coming months: [www.GreekJewishFestival.com](http://www.GreekJewishFestival.com)

## **Call for Sponsors**

We are currently fundraising for the festival and welcome sponsors! Help support our festival and celebrate our amazing heritage. Sponsors can be individuals, families, or businesses, and sponsor names/logos are included on all festival marketing materials and our website. Contact [Amarcus@kksjm.org](mailto:Amarcus@kksjm.org) to learn more.

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## **Past Events**

### **Holocaust Remembrance Day Program**

For those who missed this event, the full program can be viewed on YouTube [Here](#)

**“THERE IS  
NEITHER  
GREEK  
NOR JEW”**

**The heroic duo who saved an  
entire island from the Holocaust**

January 25<sup>th</sup> | 11:00 | 6:00 PM  
2022 | AM EST | Athens

In honor of International Holocaust  
Remembrance Day, we invite you to  
a commemorative reception for  
**Loukas Karrer and Dimitrios Chrysostomos**  
who saved the entire Jewish community

**This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Elliot and Jesse Colchamiro  
in memory of their brother Leonard Colchamiro**

"We dedicate this edition of the KKJ E-Newsletter in memory of our dear brother Leonard who we lost on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2022. Our beloved brother has always been a champion for the Kehila. Thanks to Len our shared membership on the KKJ Board of Trustees has brought us even closer together. We will always miss him."



We thank Debra Colchamiro, Leonard's neice, for these beautiful photos from her private family archive.



Lenny and Morris Colchamiro



Lenny and Sarah Colchamiro



Lenny Bar Mitzvah



Elliot, Jesse and Lenny



Formal Family Photo



Claudia and Lenny wedding



Sarina, Lenny and Claudia



Lenny on his bike



## News from Jewish Greece

### Letter from KIS to the Prime Minister on the Return of Jewish Communal Archives from Moscow

With the following letter, KIS thanked and congratulated the Prime Minister, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, for the "significant achievement" of the return of the Jewish archives from Moscow, which - as the President and the General Minister of KIS characteristically mention in their letter - "brings a happy ending to a long-standing battle of Greek diplomacy". The full text of the letter (12.9.2021) for this historic decision is as follows:

Dear Prime Minister,

It was with great pleasure and satisfaction that we followed your announcement, at the joint press conference with Russian President Putin, on the return of the pre-war Archives of the Jewish Communities from Moscow. On behalf of our Council and the whole of Greek Jewry, we express to you our warm congratulations and thanks for this important achievement, which brings a happy ending to a long battle of Greek diplomacy. Your personal commitment and your key actions have been a key factor in achieving our common goal. In the anniversary year of 200 years since the beginning of Greece's independence struggle, history returns us home, at last! For Greek Jewry, these archives illuminate its historical course, sacred relics in which the light of life and the darkness of looting and the Holocaust are recorded. Their performance will mean justice and will transmit knowledge about a part of the Greek people that contributed to the development of their land but no longer exists, that of the 60,000 Greek Jews who were deported and exterminated in the Nazi death camps. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your undiminished practical interest in the construction of the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki, which in combination with the actions of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. P. Pikrammenos, we are sure that it will soon result in another great achievement, offering to the Archives the hearth that were deprived, to the Jewish community its roots and in history the lost links of its chain.

We wish you every good and always success in your work for the benefit of our country.

Yours faithfully,

President David Saltiel

Secretary Victor Eliezer

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### Message from the Jewish Museum of Greece on the Importance of Helping in the Creation of the Holocaust Education Center in Thessaloniki

*We all have a responsibility and a duty to contribute to the promotion of our history.*

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, recognizing the importance of the construction of the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki for Greek Jewry, for the Memory of the Greek Jews who were exterminated by the Nazis as well as for the dissemination of the universal human learning from the Holocaust, supports the effort of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and *urges the Communities and their members to actively contribute to the collection of exhibits.*

The Holocaust Museum, as a center of education and research, aspires on the one hand to highlight the rich cultural heritage of the Jewish Communities of Greece with objects and relics that survived after the deportation and extermination of the 67,000 Greek Jews and on the other hand to become a center of research, study of researchers as well as a place of learning and memory.

We can all contribute to this important work by sending documents such as objects, books, documents, letters, photographs, testimonies, etc., which will be included in the musicological study that will be completed in a short time in the context of the processes for the creation of the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki. The active contribution of all of us is necessary so that the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki is enriched with evidence of the history and annihilation of our own people, the Greek Jews.

You can declare your intention to provide material and send to the I.K. of Thessaloniki at [info@jct.gr](mailto:info@jct.gr) (tel. 2310 275 701), the photographs of the objects that you will donate until January 30, 2022, so that they can be included.

## Thessaloniki

### President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki meets with Outgoing Ambassador of Spain to Greece

On 1.7.2022, the President of KIS (the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece) and Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, David Saltiel, had a special meeting in Athens with the Ambassador of Spain to Greece, Enrique Viguera, on the occasion of the completion of the ambassador's term of office and his imminent departure from Greece. Mr. Saltiel thanked the Spanish ambassador for the constructive cooperation they had all these years, for his personal interest in Jewish issues and for his rich work and offered him as a memento, a model of the façade of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. On his part, the Spanish Ambassador thanked the President of KISE and stressed the importance of the ties his country has developed with Sephardic Jews, as well as the important contribution of Mr. Saltiel personally and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki to the strengthening of relations. Among the issues of common interest that were discussed, were the actions for the preservation of the Sephardic cultural heritage, the preservation of the Ladino language, the educational work of the Cervantes Institute, as well as the developments for the opening of the Institute's branch in Thessaloniki.



### Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer, Visits Thessaloniki

For the progress of the Holocaust Educational Center, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla was informed by the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr. Constantinos Zervas, the President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, Mr. David Saltiel, and the project manager of the project, Mr. Dimitris Samaras, at a working lunch they had on 30.12.2021, in Thessaloniki.



Mr. Bourla expressed his strong interest in the progress of the project and asked to be informed about the progress of studies and works. As he was informed, today the deadline for expressions of interest by museologists expired and in January the company that will design the museum exhibition will be selected, while an effort is being made to collect archives and exhibits from Moscow and Washington. According to the information provided by the mayor and the project manager, the money comes from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (EUR 10 million), the Federal Government of Germany (EUR 10 million) and the Greek State (EUR 8 million) and the Final Budget will be between EUR 30 million and EUR 35 million. when the studies are finalized. Mr. Dimitris Samaras informed about the timetable of the whole project, according to which the studies should be completed in 2023, in order for the museum to be operational in 2025. At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Zervas referred to his family's ties with the Jewish community, but also to his plans for Eleftherias Square, which was temporarily converted back into a parking lot.



On 1.3.2022, the President and CEO of Pfizer, Albert Bourla, toured the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, while spending the New Year's celebrations in his hometown. The Thessalonian Jewish scientist, accompanied by his son, had the opportunity to tour the wings of the Museum located on St. Minas Street and to talk with the President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and the Central Jewish Council of Greece, David Saltiel. In fact, he was photographed with executives and employees of the community who asked him to do so, while he wrote his impressions in the guest book. Mr. Bourla said he was moved by his tour of the Museum, which he said he visited for the first time.



## **Albert Bourla Awarded Genesis Prize** Full article [Here](#)

The Genesis Prize Foundation announced that the Genesis Award for 2022 is being awarded to Pfizer CEO Dr. Albert Bourla. Dr. Bourla received the bulk of the vote during a recent global online campaign involving 200,000 people from 71 countries. The selection of voters was unanimously validated by the nine judges of the Genesis Selection Committee.

The Commission congratulated Dr. Bourla for his determination and leadership skills, as well as for his intention to take big risks. The Commission pointed out that Dr. Bourla is proud of his Jewish identity and heritage and referred to his commitment to the values of Jewry and his support for the State of Israel.

The Commission pointed out that, unlike the managers of other companies, Albert Bourla refused billions of dollars of US federal funds to avoid government bureaucracy and accelerate the development and production of the coronavirus vaccine. As a result, the coronavirus vaccine was ready within months instead of years.

The one million dollars of the Genesis Prize, which was named the "Jewish Nobel Prize" by TIME magazine, honors prominent personalities of international Jewry for their professional achievements and contribution to humanity and Jewish values. Dr. Bourla is the ninth figure to be honored with the Genesis Award. Personalities who have received the Genesis Prize include director Steven Spielberg (2021), activist Natan Saranchki (2020) and actors Natalie Portman (2018) and Michael Douglas (2015).

Israel's President Isaac Herzog will award the Genesis Prize to Dr. Bourla in a ceremony scheduled to take place on June 29 in Jerusalem.

According to the tradition established by the first laureate Michael Bloomberg, all those who receive the Genesis Prize choose to waive the prize and make it available for charity. Dr. Bourla asked the Genesis Prize to allocate the sum of one million dollars to projects that contribute to the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust, with particular emphasis on the tragedy suffered by the Jewish community of Greece.

Dr. Bourla was born in Thessaloniki and grew up in a family that suffered from the suffering of the Holocaust, as his parents are among the survivors of the Holocaust.

"I am pleased to welcome Dr. Albert Bourla to the family of Genesis Award laureates," said the co-founder and president of The Genesis Prize, Stan Polovets. "Dr. Bourla embodies two of the most important Jewish values, which are the commitment to the sanctity of life and the contribution to the creation of a better world. And while the pandemic continues, millions of people are alive and healthy thanks to what Dr. Bourla and his team at Pfizer Have accomplished."

Dr. Bourla said: "I did not intend to live a public life and I could not imagine that one day I would have the honor of receiving this award and standing by these excellent fellow candidates. I accept this with humility and on behalf of all my colleagues at Pfizer, who have responded to the urgent call of history over the last two years and together we have achieved what has been achieved. I grew up in a Jewish family that believed that each of us is as strong as the ties to our community and that we are all called by God to make the world a better place. I hope to visit Jerusalem and receive in person the honorary distinction, which symbolizes the triumph of science and hope for our future."

Also, on his twitter on 19.1.2022 Dr. Bourla wrote: "Deeply grateful to have received the Genesis Award. I would like to thank the Genesis Foundation which will donate the prize to the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki – in memory of my parents, for the values of life and community they bequeathed to me and in memory of the Holocaust in Greece."

## **Freedom Square in Thessaloniki and Its Importance to the History of the City**

Mayor of Thessaloniki: Eleftherias Square will become a Park. Temporary Conversion of the Parking Area

The assurance that Eleftherias Square will become a park and that its transformation into an outdoor parking lot is a temporary measure, until the possibility of creating an underground parking space is explored, reiterated the mayor of Thessaloniki, Konstantinos Zervas, during tonight's meeting of the city council.

"It really strikes me that the truths about Liberty Square are hidden for political expediency. My personal will is to make it a park that will revive the green and urban environment and will honor the memory of the thousands of Jewish fellow citizens who perished during the Second World War", said Mr. Zervas from the podium of the city council.

He added that "no plan alters the character of this historical site." Whoever claims otherwise acts fraudulently and with expediency." He also added that in the next city council he will inform the House about the progress of the construction of the Holocaust Museum, while he spoke of "close cooperation with the Central Jewish Council on a variety of issues."

"History lessons, lessons in honor and respect for the memory of thousands of fellow citizens. I will not accept those who wish to ignore them, especially from those who serve petty political expediency, who try to create confusion," the mayor said, reiterating that pre-election he had announced the possibility of creating an underground parking lot in Eleftherias Square, with the aim of giving "breath" to the traffic.

"We temporarily converted Liberty Square into a parking lot to use the intervening time until the construction of the underground parking lot," he said.



## **The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece on the Importance of Freedom Square**

Eleftherias Square in Thessaloniki has been identified in memory of the Greek Jews as a square of human humiliation, as a square of inhumanity of man, as a square that symbolizes the beginning of the campaign of extermination of the Jewish population of the city. Where on the Black Saturday of July 11, 1942, the German conquerors pilloried 9,000 Jews of Thessaloniki and put into practice the plan of the "Final Solution" that caused the deportation and extermination of 45,000 Thessalonian Jews.

"Memory" is a continuous process of reminders and messages to every visitor, every passerby from Eleftherias Square, to see the place of martyrdom, to wonder why this happened and why civil society remained, in its vast majority, a mere spectator of this atrocity.

The Holocaust Monument of the city must dominate Eleftherias Square, and the Square reminds everyone that there suffered and martyred 9,000 Thessalonians just because they were born Jews. Because the city must confront its past, citizens must reflect, and young people must learn from the past so that the snake's egg does not hatch again. We are confident that the State, the Local Government and the social bodies will highlight and safeguard the historical memory of Eleftherias Square in Thessaloniki.

## **New Mini Series on Greek TV to Highlight the Great Fire of 1917 in Thessaloniki**

A new period mini-series that deals with the history of the Jews of Thessaloniki is one step away from getting the "green light" to EPT. The series is called the "Bracelet of Fire" and will be based on the novel of the same name by Beatrice Saia-Magrizou. According to information, the 7-episode mini-series has already passed through the competent committees and next week it is expected to be officially included in the program planned by ERT by decision of the Board. The series narrates the dramatic travelogue of a Jewish family in the 20th century, starting in 1917 and the big fires that broke out in the Jewish quarter of Thessaloniki, affecting the Benouta's family. Everything is burned except for a precious relic, which is a link between events and people with a common fate: the bracelet of fire.

## International Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemorations

January 27<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz in 1945. Around the world, this event is commemorated by events honoring the heroes who saved Jews and remembering those who were murdered.

### Athens

On January 13, 2022, the Minister of Justice, Mr. Costas Tsiaras, visited the Holocaust Memorial in Athens on his own initiative in view of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27<sup>th</sup>.



He was welcomed by the General Treasurer of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece, Daniel Benardut, the Director of the Jewish Community of Athens, Tally Mair and the member of the Jewish Community of Athens of Athens, Mr. Benjamin Batis. Mr. Tsiaras, paying tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, placed a stone in the Monument according to Jewish custom.

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On January 27<sup>th</sup> the President of the Greek Republic Katerina Sakellaropoulou attended a Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration at the Athens Holocaust Memorial along with other dignitaries and Jewish communal leaders. On Twitter President Sakellaropoulou stated: "Today, International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we commemorate the millions of victims of the Nazi horrors and renew our commitment to never again permit the darkness of anti-Semitism and racism. #NotOnMyWatch"



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On the evening of January 26, 2022, the illumination of the imposing façade of the City Hall of Athens began with the logo of the international campaign #WeRemember of the WJC. The illumination will be repeated on 27.1.2022, honoring the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the National Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust.

The Municipality of Athens participates for the first time in WE REMEMBER with this symbolic action of social awareness, for the implementation of which the Mayor of Athens, Mr. Kostas Bakoyannis, and the staff of his Office were immediately mobilized, despite the adversities due to the recent extreme weather conditions. The city of Athens "remembers" the darkness of the Holocaust of 6,000,000 Jews and "illuminates" the future with the values of democracy and humanism!



The Greek Parliament is also participating in WE REMEMBER this year, with a similar action to illuminate the Parliament, which will take place on the day of the anniversary, on the evening of January 27, 2022.

## We Remember – Around the World



Israel



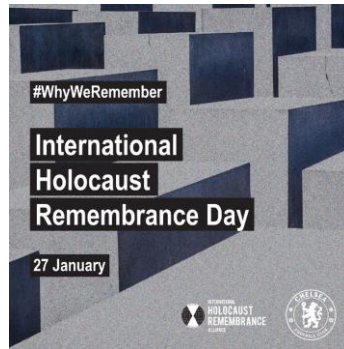
Cyprus



Germany



MLK Foundation



UK



US Holocaust Memorial Museum



Reading of the names of the Jews deported from Italy and the Italian territories Giorno della Memoria  
Natalia Indrimi (Centro Primo Levi)  
and Marvin Marcus (KKJ)



## Turkey

### Excavations Reveal Ancient Synagogue in Turkish town near Tourist Hotspot Full article [Here](#)

The remains of an ancient synagogue dating back as far as the 7th century have been discovered in a resort town on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. The synagogue was found recently in the town of Side, not far from the tourist hotspot of Antalya, in southern Turkey.

Among the remains was a plaque with a menorah motif and an inscription in Hebrew and Greek stating that it was donated by a father in honor of a son who passed away at a young age. The plaque ends with the Hebrew word "Shalom."



The floor of the synagogue in Side, Turkey, features a plaque with Greek and Hebrew inscriptions

The town was home to Jews for centuries, but until this discovery, there was little evidence of Jewish life there beyond a few records from the late Byzantine period. Since 2014, Turkish authorities and the town's own citizens have worked together to try to preserve some of its history.

That year was "a turning point for Side in terms of research and conservation," said Feriştah Alanyali, an archeologist from Anadolu University who is leading the excavations, according to the Turkish Jewish news outlet Avlaremoz. "Many works have been done that could not be done until now."

Though today Side is a popular destination for Russian and European tourists, in ancient times it was an important Mediterranean port city, adopting Greek culture after its conquest by Alexander the Great in 333 B.C.E. It maintained a Greek identity until it was abandoned in the 12th century after the conquest of Anatolia by the Seljuk Turks. The city was ultimately repopulated at the end of the 19th century by Turkish Muslim immigrants from Crete and saw a building boom during the 20th century, thanks to the rise of tourism in the Antalya region.

It was that uncontrolled building that covered up much of the ruins of ancient Side, including the synagogue, which was found beneath an old house. Alanyali hopes that when more structures in Side are removed over the next 4 to 5 years that its ancient ruins, including the synagogue, will be intertwined with the town's infrastructure like they are in other ancient cities such as Rome.

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## Izmir (Smyrna)

### The Historic Etz Hayim Synagogue in Izmir is officially reopened after restoration, during the Izmir Sephardic Culture Festival Courtesy of Jewish Heritage Europe and Ruth Gruber

The historic, long-derelict Etz Hayim synagogue in Izmir has been officially reopened following a 2-year restoration carried out thanks to a substantial grant from the Izmir Development Agency (IZKA).

The ceremony took place November 29, at the opening of the third Izmir Sephardic Cultural Festival, which ran through Haukkah. Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Tunç Soyer, Konak district Mayor Abdul Batur, Jewish community president Avram Sevinti, a representative of the IZKA, and Festival Director Nesim Bencoya jointly cut a ribbon.



Believed to be the oldest synagogue in Izmir, the Etz Hayim may date back to the 14th or 15th century — though it was later rebuilt, with its current appearance from the mid-19th century. It is part of a complex of half a dozen historic synagogues at the core of Izmir’s Jewish quarter that the Izmir Project is working to preserve as part of a planned Jewish museum.



Restoration work begun in the summer of 2019 entailed full restoration of the walls, roof, wall paintings, and flooring.

“Six years ago this Synagogue was facing a collapse,” said Judith Kiriatty-Matalon, who established the Kiriatty Foundation to spearhead restoration of Jewish heritage Izmir. “Since then, rescue efforts have been made to save the building, which later paved the way for subsequent restoration and conservation work until the current state of the synagogue was achieved. It was wonderful to celebrate this important event, which is a dream to come true on Hanukkah.” Kiriatty-Matalon addressed the opening event via video from Israel. On site speakers included the two mayors and Jewish leaders.



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### **The Keeper of Izmir** Full article by Paul Benjamin Osterlund in Tablet Magazine [Here](#)

After 40 years in Israel, Nesim Bencoya returned to his once-cosmopolitan hometown in Turkey to save its hidden synagogues

From the expansive rooftop of a grubby, eight-floor parking garage in the center of İzmir, one is greeted with a spectacular panoramic view of Turkey’s third-largest city. To the north and west is the downtown area, and just beyond is the curving coastline of the Gulf of İzmir, tucked into a pocket of the Aegean Sea. Right across the street stands the heart of the city’s old Jewish quarter, concentrated around Havra Sokak (Synagogue Street).



Synagogue Street is a busy, dense, and cacophonous outer section of İzmir’s Kemeraltı Bazaar, a massive open-air market with centuries of history that still functions as an important space of commerce. The street is lined with vendors gutting, cleaning, and selling fresh fish, and butchers hawking various types of organ meats, racks of lamb, and whole chickens. The stench is pungent to say the least, and packs of stray dogs and cats are on the prowl after fallen morsels. Kemeraltı is bustling by day but mostly dark and eerily silent at night, though bars and restaurants have recently opened in certain parts of the market, providing light and energy to its maze of empty streets and shuttered shops.

I’m standing atop the roof on a sunny October day with 66-year-old Nesim Bencoya, a native of İzmir and a member of the city’s dwindling Sephardic Jewish community, which numbers about 900 to 1,000 today. From above, Bencoya points out the nine synagogues—some in good condition, others in advanced stages of decay—located in very close proximity to one another on both sides of Synagogue Street. In the foreground is an empty lot and a crumbling building that housed Politi Şaraphanesi, a kosher winery that closed in the 1940s.

"Imagine a roof," Bencoya says, waving his arm around the compact quarter that encompasses the synagogues. He doesn't mean a literal roof enclosing the area, much of which is in disarray, but envisions a restored, integrated heritage center linking the synagogues and adjacent backstreets. As general coordinator of Izmir's Jewish Heritage Project, Bencoya is the primary force behind this expansive project, which brought him back to his hometown in 2010 after nearly 40 years in Israel, having moved to Haifa for college and worked as the director of the city's Cinémathèque for 15 years.



Around that time, the chairwoman of Israel's Kiriaty Foundation, who owned a business in İzmir, came across the sad state of the Kemeraltı synagogue and launched the project, tapping Bencoya to helm it. It was in the planning stages for more than a decade, and restoration on two of the synagogues began earlier this year within the scope of the project. Funding has come from a number of sources, including a six-figure grant from the European Union delegation to Turkey.

Bencoya is slender and energetic, dressed casually in trousers, sneakers and a polo shirt with a mop of curly gray hair, a thick black mustache, and a salt-and-pepper beard. He looks younger than 66 and speaks with enthusiasm and conviction. He fields numerous phone calls as he sips coffee during our chat, mostly to do with the restoration project.

"I didn't grow up in a religious family. Until I was 15 years old I would go with my father on High Holidays to the synagogues, and I don't even remember which one we went to," Bencoya says. Though he has since immersed himself in the history of the synagogues, he didn't know much about them until returning from Israel in 2010. It wasn't just the project that brought Bencoya back to his hometown after so many years abroad: Coupled with feelings of nostalgia, he'd also started to receive offers to direct some of Turkey's most prestigious film festivals, and had fallen in love with a film professor based in the city.

"Being very active and committed to promote Jewish cultural heritage in the city, I feel that I am offering some pride to a people who for a long time has preferred to live unnoticed. To my satisfaction I see that Jewish people embrace that," Bencoya says. "Five out of the nine synagogues we have here were in a very bad state. Three of them you couldn't really enter because of the rubble, the roofs collapsed. Over time, it became a forest actually, from the Hevra and Forasteros [synagogues] we uprooted 20 trees from each one. We're going to have access to all nine places, which makes a beautiful tour."

But for Bencoya, the project goes far beyond restoration, and he has two distinct personal reasons for being involved in this demanding, grandiose project.

"I didn't know it at the beginning but now I know better. I see this project not as an architectural project within the framework of rebuilding or preserving the old, collapsed buildings. First, I want to tell a story that I find very interesting which is linked to the story of İzmir and of Turkey, and of the Ottoman Empire. So it's a universal thing and it excites me," he says.

"The second thing, which is also very important for me, I have been a Jew who has lived in a community of Jewish people who hid their identity. They went to pray in the synagogues, they knew they are Jews, they kept traditions but they changed names, for example," Bencoya goes on, mentioning that instead of Nesim, people would call him Nedim, a Turkish name.

"According to surveys, Turkey is very antisemitic in terms of people's attitudes, and those people usually did not meet any Jewish person in their lives. I think and I believe that this project is the biggest fight against antisemitism. If I don't expose myself as I am, there is nothing that I can make advocacy for, and then I get erased and then I die. OK, there are buildings and very nice architecture, but what is in it, what is its meaning?"

For centuries after their expulsion from Spain, the Sephardic Jews of Turkey spoke their mother tongue of Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, throughout the parts of the Ottoman Empire in which they settled. But though Bencoya and other younger generations of Turkish Jews can speak and understand Ladino, it fell out of favor throughout the 20th century due to the demands of the new republic's nationalism.

"We didn't speak Ladino. My generation didn't speak Ladino because we didn't want to feel different. There was pressure on Jews and other minorities to be Turkish, to behave Turkish, to speak Turkish," Bencoya says.

İzmir's Jewish population peaked at around 40,000 in the 19th century and was an important fixture of the city's commercial and cultural life. The city also had significant populations of Greeks and Armenians, which are nonexistent today.



As in Istanbul, which was also a more cosmopolitan city before the establishment of the Turkish republic, minorities in İzmir left or were forced out due to a series of ethno-nationalist policies, like the "Citizen, speak Turkish!" initiative, which scapegoated Jews in particular as many chose to speak Ladino and French in public. In addition to economic reasons, this eventually left only a small remaining Jewish population in Turkey, between 15,000 and 20,000 today, most of whom live in Istanbul. (One reputable source estimates a peak Jewish population of 300,000 during the late Ottoman period.) Persistent antisemitism has resulted in many young people leaving for Israel, and in recent years, Islamist groups have protested outside of Istanbul synagogues, holding the Turkish Jewish community responsible for episodes of escalating violence between Israelis and Palestinians. According to Bencoya, many of the country's Jews simply left for a better economic future, adding that the wealthiest members of the community have stayed.

Despite numbering no more than 1,000, İzmir's Jewish community is Turkey's second largest, a result of its historical role as a pivotal port city and trade center. Nevertheless, congregations are still active at three of the intact synagogues in Kemeraltı: Signora Geveret, Algazi, and Shalom, in addition to the Bet Israel Synagogue in the neighborhood of Karataş.

Sephardic Jewish culture and cuisine have left their mark on the city, and İzmir's signature snack is boyoz (etymologically linked to the bollos of Latin America) a flaky, savory, fist-size pastry served in carts all over the city that goes well alongside slices of boiled egg doused in black pepper. The late singer Dario Moreno, who was born in a neighboring province and grew up in İzmir as an orphan, remains among the city's most iconic artists.

The Portekiz Synagogue, built by Sephardic Jews from Portugal in the early 17th century, today functions as a museum. It has been fully restored, though the structure was almost entirely destroyed by a fire in 1976. Just across the main avenue lies the ancient Agora of Smyrna, built in the Roman period in the fourth century BCE and excavated in 1933 just 10 years after the establishment of the Turkish republic.

In the corner of the agora stands the restored home of the infamous Sabbatai Zevi, a rabbi who claimed to be the messiah and attracted the ire of both Jews and Ottoman Muslims alike. He nevertheless assembled a serious following, the center of which became the Portugal Synagogue. Associated with Jewish converts to Islam who historically maintained their faith in secret, the term "Sabbatai" is still found in the rhetoric of Islamist pundits in Turkey who employ it as an antisemitic trope when attacking their opponents.

The Forasteros Synagogue is one of those that has been newly emptied of tons of rubble due to roof collapse. I find a tiny scrap of paper printed in Ladino tucked in a divot of one of the old walls, which are designed intricately with mid-Ottoman era brick and stand proud amid the absence of any interior. I show it to Bencoya, who nestles it into a crevice in another wall next to a small piece of Hebrew text.



Immediately next door is the Signora Giveret Synagogue, built in the 16th century and still in good shape due thanks to its small but active congregation. The courtyard and garden are stunning, with looming palms, fruit trees, and large swathes of ivy. Nestled in the same area, the Etz Hayim Synagogue was on the verge of collapse, but was stabilized and restored in 2019 following a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund. Etz Hayim is thought to be the city's oldest synagogue, dating back to the Byzantine era.

Synagogue Street, or Synagogue Market, as Bencoya called it, retains certain traditions dating back to İzmir's cosmopolitan past. In those days, Jews would go out in their yarmulkes while market sellers would bellow out what goods they were hawking in Ladino, Greek, Armenian, and Turkish. Today only Turkish is heard, and the Jews of İzmir no longer live in Kemeraltı but mainly in the nearby district of Alsancak.

Shopkeepers and hoteliers in the area are in favor of its restoration, lamenting the shabby surroundings and the fact that most of the market is pitch black at night, which spooks tourists. "Muslim neighbors feel that something important will happen in the neighborhood. They usually are empathetic to the project," Bencoya says.

Some involved with tourism in the area want to tidy up the street and liberate it from the smelly fish and organ meat vendors, but Bencoya believes it should remain as is. A stone's throw away is a small shop owned by Rafael Palombo, the city's last Jewish caviar salesman. It was closed during my visit, but Palombo's number was written in a note on the window for interested customers. Amid the chaos and overwhelming scents of Synagogue Street, one might spend considerable time there without ever realizing that there are nine synagogues in the immediate area. But there they are, standing as they have for centuries, hidden in plain view.

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### **Searching for a Jewish History in Turkey before 1492** Full article by Kenan Cruz Cilli [Here](#)

While many Sephardic Jews found homes in the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Iberia in 1492, Jewish presence in the region goes back much further. In late December, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted a delegation of rabbis at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, for the first annual summit of the Alliance of Rabbis in Islamic States.

'It can be said that the Jews arrived in Anatolia some time between the sixth century BCE and 133 BCE, when the Romans arrived' -Inci Turkoglu, historian and archaeologist



Most of the delegates arrived in Turkey from predominantly Muslim states, including Kazakhstan, Iran, Albania and the UAE. Lauded by some commentators as an important example of interfaith dialogue, the summit provided the rabbis with prayer facilities as well as kosher meals.

In a publicly broadcast statement at the conference, the Turkish leader spoke of the importance of Turkish-Israeli relations and the joint struggle to combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia around the world.

A noteworthy reference in Erdogan's speech was to the expulsion of Sephardic Jews from Spain in 1492, at the culmination of the Reconquista. "We are a nation that welcomed the Jews who escaped from the Inquisition in 1492," the president said. "The spirit that enabled the Ottomans to embrace the Jews is still alive today."

Erdogan's reference to the year 1492 comes as no surprise, as Jewish history in Turkey is often told with that year as a starting point. It was when the Catholic monarchs of Castile and Aragon proclaimed the Alhambra decree, which oversaw the expulsion of Jews from Spain.

Many of the Jews who were exiled made their way to the Ottoman Empire, settling in Turkish-ruled territories in the eastern Mediterranean. In major urban centers such as Istanbul, Smyrna and Salonica, these Sephardic Jews established significant communities, and greatly influenced local culture and society, while maintaining their own cultural traditions, such as the use of the Ladino language.

1492 is key to a historical discourse that frames the arrival of Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman realm as the beginning of a special era of coexistence and tolerance between Muslims and Jews in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. This discourse has been hugely influential in academic and popular perceptions of Jewish history in Turkey.

The major issue with the 1492 narrative is that the year does not, in fact, mark the beginning of Jewish history in Turkey, or the coexistence between Muslim Turks and Jews in Anatolia.

"Starting Jewish history in 1492 is a way to erase Jewish presence in these lands," says researcher Nesi Altaras, editor of *Avlaremaz*, an online media platform focused on combating anti-Semitism in Turkey. "It reduces Jews in what is now Turkey to Sephardim, destroying the memory of the Romaniote, Ashkenazi, Neo-Aramaic and Arabophone communities that predate Ottoman conquests."

Accordingly, the 1492 discourse serves to strengthen the guest-host binary, which sees Jews as guests in Turkey, and the Turkish Muslim majority as hosts. Altaras says that the narrative reinforces the idea that Jews must continuously demonstrate gratitude and loyalty to the Muslim majority for the ancestors' decision to allow refugees to settle.

"As perpetual guests, Jews cannot receive equality, so the best they can hope for is tolerance," he adds. "A citizen is not someone who is tolerated, a nuisance; a citizen has equal claim to all things in a country."

## **Romaniote Jews**

In the same week Erdogan spoke in Ankara, archaeologists in southern Turkey uncovered the remains of a seventh-century synagogue in the popular seaside resort of Side, in southern Turkey. The synagogue features an inscription in both Greek and Hebrew, as well as the engraving of a menorah on a plaque at its center.

Alongside other historic synagogues in cities such as Priene, Sardis and Andriake, the new discovery is a clear indicator that Jewish history in the land that is today Turkey predates 1492 by many centuries.

"It can be said that the Jews arrived in Anatolia some time between the sixth century BCE and 133 BCE, when the Romans arrived in Anatolia," says Inci Turkoglu, a historian and archaeologist at Pamukkale University. "Their first settlements were in Phrygia and Lydia, and Greek cities in western Anatolia - basically, the western half of what is Turkey today."

These early Anatolian Jews, known as Romaniote Jews, were Greek-speaking citizens of Rome and then the Byzantine Empire, Turkoglu explains.

The Romaniote Jews were later joined in Anatolia by Karaite and Ashkenazi communities, well before 1492.



The ruins of a third-century synagogue in Sardis, Turkey

According to Turkoglu: "Romaniotes got assimilated among the Sephardim, just like the Karaites... because the Sephardim arrived in big numbers and with a very strong cultural background. Only some surnames survive indicating Romaniote origins."

Despite the large-scale disappearance of Romaniote culture and civilization in Turkey, the discovery of Romaniote synagogues throughout the country helps to firmly establish Jewish history in Anatolia, and what is now Turkey, before the Sephardic arrival.

As it stands, the current 1492 narrative remains dominant among both the Turkish population generally and, according to Turkoglu, among Turkish Jews too. In 1992, for instance, the 500th anniversary of the Sephardic arrival was marked with exhibitions and the issue of a commemorative postage stamp.

Turkoglu says that an article she published in 2000, explaining that Jewish roots in Anatolia go back much further, was met unenthusiastically by the local Jewish community.

However, attitudes are changing. In November 2021, for the first time in its history, the Museum of Turkish Jews in Istanbul organized a temporary exhibition showcasing the ancient synagogues of Anatolia. The exhibition, Jewish Identity Engraved on Stones, will be followed by a book cataloguing the topic.

Such publications and exhibitions, alongside archaeological excavations, have played a significant role in uncovering Turkey's ancient Jewish history, and can help challenge the popularity of the 1492 myth, weakening the guest-host binary that has for so long characterized Jewish identity in Turkey.

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### **The Club Netflix Series about Sephardic Jews in Turkey**

The series "The Club," which has been airing on Netflix since November 2021, and recently added new episodes, surprises with its theme: it's about the Sephardic Jewish community that flourished in Pera, Istanbul, next to the Greek one, and was wiped out in September 1955.



Israeli filmmakers have offered many big hits on Netflix in recent years, mostly on issues related to the difficulties of Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews. Now, the new series The Club is about a completely different Jewish community, the Sephardic Jews (they came from the Iberian Peninsula, from where their ancestors were expelled, in the 15th century).

"The Club" focuses on a Sephardic family in Istanbul in the 1950s and for the first time opens a window of interpretation, until today forbidden by the official Turkish state and forgotten by the younger Turks. Turkish is the main language of the series, but there are also ladino - the historical language of Sephardic Jews, a mixture of medieval Spanish, Hebrew and Aramaic. However, Greek, Arabic and other languages coexist in the series in each episode.

The strength of the series is based on the description of Turkey's minority world. The names of the protagonists and actors prove it: there is Agop (Armenian), Giannis, Tasoula, Nikos (Greeks) and of course Matilda, David, Rachel, Mordo (Jewish Sephardic).

Most of the series takes place in the cobbled streets of Pera, the most cosmopolitan and glamorous district of Istanbul. In the '50s the district was home to a significant Jewish minority, where ladino, Greek and Turkish were heard. To add plausibility to the historical evidence, the producers of the series hired important ladino personalities of the Turkish Jewish community: the actor of the theater Izzet Bana, the actress Forti Barokas,

who was a little girl, in the 50s, and Karen Sharon, director of the last magazine in Ladino language of Istanbul, El Ameneser. All of them and other members of the Jewish community of Constantinople played small roles and appeared in The Club series.

Forti Barokas is now 73 years old and still lives in Istanbul. She is one of dozens of Sephardic Jews who helped create the TV series, both in the dialogue and in their presence as extras in scenes of religious celebrations of that time. In 2019, Baroca taught Ladino and Hebrew to Turkish actors in the series. But out of fear, she never taught her tongues to her children. "We killed our tongues and now we are trying to revive them," she said, stressing that she regretted not teaching them to her children. "But there is no going back."

Karen Gershon Sharon is the director of the Sephardic Centre in Istanbul and has tried for years to keep the culture and language of the community alive. "Istanbul has 20 million people, we are 10,000-15,000. A nothing. How many of them have ever seen a Jew? Sometimes, when they meet a Jew, they say, "but you don't look like a Jew at all." But what does a Jew look like? Does he have horns and a tail?" he told the Times. The story unfolds in 1950 and follows Matilda (played by Gökçe Bahadır), a Sephardic woman who has just been released from prison, Rachel's daughter and other people working at the le Club Istanbul nightclub. This six-episode series is not Zeynep Günay Tan's first experience with Jewish audiences. An earlier film of hers "The Bride of Istanbul" became a great success in Israel, where the Turkish series have been a huge success in recent years.

The series The Club also refers to another Turkish taboo: the 1955 City pogrom, which was mainly aimed at the Greeks, but wiped out Jews and Armenians, forcing many thousands of people to leave Constantinople. In September 1955, the Muslim mob attacked Greek houses and shops in Pera. With them, they also destroyed Jewish and Armenian property. In the following years, many of the remaining Jews fled to Israel. The few who remained after all this, learned to keep their heads lowered and tried to assimilate to survive, Barokas explains to the Times. The series thus becomes the reason why many modern Turks learn about this past of Constantinople, the discriminations and persecutions against Greeks, Armenians, Jews, etc., in the middle of the 20th century. Source: [iefimerida.gr](http://iefimerida.gr), 12.1.2022

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## Israel

The Minister of Defense of Israel Benny Gantz in a joint statement with the Greek Minister of Defense Nikolas Panagiotopoulos at the Headquarters of the Ministry of Defense in Israel said that:

"Israel's commitment to security cooperation with Greece is based on common interests and values. We will continue to deepen and expand them, in any scenario and under any development in the region. There is a great possibility of extending Israel's cooperation with its old and new friends in the fields of energy, innovation and security. We will continue to act in this spirit and strengthen the trilateral framework between Israel, Greece and Cyprus."



## Spain

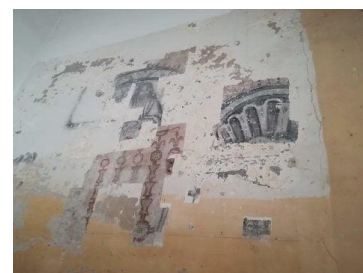
### **Spain: Former medieval synagogue in Híjar shortlisted for Europa Nostra's "7 Most Endangered" List** Courtesy of Ruth Gruber

Despite some urgent repair work and archaeology carried out in 2017-2020, the medieval former synagogue in Híjar, Spain has been placed among the 12 threatened heritage sites in Europe shortlisted for Europa Nostra's 7 Most Endangered program for 2022. The final list of 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe for 2022 will be announced in the spring of 2022.



The only medieval synagogue remaining in the region of Aragon, and one of only five in all of Spain, the synagogue was transformed into a church following the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, as were many other synagogues in the country. The church was dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot, and today, though still a church, the synagogue is known as St. Anthony's Synagogue. Rarely used, it is in deteriorating condition. "Further urgent works are needed to stabilize the building," Europa Nostra says on its web site. Striking evidence of its original use was discovered in 2017, including the foundations of the bimah and traces of wall paintings of Hebrew inscriptions and a menorah. "The building presents iconography of both Jewish and Christian religions and origin," Europa Nostra says on its website.

Of particular importance are the fragments of wall paintings which were recently revealed from under several layers of plaster, which contributed to the unique preservation of the paintings for over 500 years. Due to the poor quality of their surroundings, these medieval paintings are now completely unprotected and are in direct contact with the outside atmosphere. The importance of protecting these medieval paintings is now clear, especially since there are no specific measures in place for their protection.



The Advisory Panel of the Program added:

The outstanding wall paintings must undergo thorough study and be given immediate protection. The Region of Aragon and the municipality of Híjar have taken the first crucial steps to stabilize and protect the building. The local community is aware of the significance of this site and supports the possibility of re-opening it as a heritage, cultural and educational center.



The Foundation for Jewish Heritage (FJH) said that the inclusion on the shortlist represented a significant step in this process. The Municipality of Híjar is working with the Foundation on plans to develop the site into a visitor destination "that will convey the culture and traditions of the lost Sephardi Jewish communities of the region, while fostering inter-cultural understanding and dialogue."

The 7 Most Endangered Programme is an awareness-raising program run by Europa Nostra in partnership with the European Investment Bank Institute. It also has the support of the Creative Europe program of the European Union. Launched in 2013, it forms part of a civil society campaign to save Europe's endangered heritage. It provides a grant of €10,000 per listed site.

Nominations for the 7 Most Endangered Programme 2022 were submitted by member organizations, associate organizations or individual members of Europa Nostra as well as by members of the European Heritage Alliance. The Híjar synagogue was nominated by the Future for Religious Heritage network. Europa Nostra lobbies for monuments and heritage preservation, targets endangered sites and grants annual awards for restoration projects. It is a network of 250 member organizations across Europe, including heritage associations and foundations, plus 150 associated organizations (governmental bodies, local authorities and corporations) and also 1500 individual members.

## France – Restoration of French Synagogue

France: Fundraising for a third and final phase to restore the synagogue in Bayonne. Jewish Heritage Europe thanks to Ruth Gruber

A fundraising campaign is underway to complete financing for a third and final phase of a restoration of the early 19th century synagogue in Bayonne, in the extreme southwest of France. According to officials, the planned third phase of work will mainly focus on renovating the facades, woodwork, and stained glass as well as repainting the building and its annexes. The estimated €600,000 cost is mainly financed by the city, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs (DRAC), and the local Jewish community, but donations are also sought (as much as €60-80,000) to kick off work.



As part of the campaign, a classical concert was held in the synagogue just before Hanukkah, with all the proceeds donated toward the restoration. (It's not clear where and how others can donate.) The first two phases of the restoration, begun in 2015, dealt with damage caused by termites, repaired the entire electrical system, and interior paintings. Listed as a historic monument, the simple but imposing neoclassical synagogue, designed by an architect named Capdeville, was built in stone in 1836-37 for a community descended from "Marrano" refugees from the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal. It is set back from the street in a courtyard. Its interior features massive women's galleries and an ark from an 18th century synagogue.

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## Great Britain

**British Jews have harsh words for the BBC following its coverage of an antisemitic incident in London** Full article by Cnaan Liphshiz [Here](#)

The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the main body representing the interests of Jews in the UK, has accused the BBC of falsely alleging that victims of a recent antisemitic incident in London had provoked their attackers with an anti-Muslim slur.

The Board's president, Marie van der Zyl, published an op-ed Thursday in the Jewish Chronicle of London saying the BBC had made a "colossal error" in its coverage of the Nov. 29 incident. The public broadcaster had previously reported that several young men caught on video harassing a Chabad-affiliated bus of Jews publicly celebrating Hanukkah were reacting to an anti-Muslim slur from one of the Jews on the bus; the Board's own analysis of video from the scene determined that none of the Jews on the bus had said anything Islamophobic.



"The supposed slur, which the BBC insists is there, is nothing but fiction," van der Zyl wrote in the Jewish Chronicle. "This raises serious questions about deep-seated biases within the BBC towards Israelis, and towards Jews in general."

The Board has criticized the BBC occasionally in the past over its coverage of Israel, but van der Zyl's op-ed marked its harshest critique yet of the broadcaster. It followed a Dec. 14 protest outside the BBC headquarters organized by an antisemitism watchdog group, at which attendees held signs reading, "BBC News: Stop Blaming Jews!"

In the original video, several men can be seen pounding on the windows of the bus with their hands and shoes while shouting "Free Palestine," spitting on the bus and flipping their middle fingers at the passengers as the bus drives away. At least one of the men performs what appears to be a Nazi salute.

The BBC's claims about an anti-Muslim slur are false, van der Zyl wrote, and are probably based on a mistranslation of a sentence uttered in Hebrew meaning "call someone, it's urgent," according to the Board's report.

"That misreporting is a colossal error on the part of the BBC. It has added insult to injury in accusing victims of antisemitism of being guilty of bigotry themselves," van der Zyl wrote.

"But what takes this from an egregious failure to something far more sinister is the BBC's behavior when confronted with its mistake. Instead of admitting it was wrong, it has doubled and tripled down on insisting that a Hebrew cry for help must be an anti-Muslim slur, despite the concerted outcry from our community," she added.

A spokesperson for the BBC told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency via email: "There was a brief reference to a slur, captured in a video recording, that appeared to come from the bus. We consulted a number of Hebrew speakers in determining that the slur was spoken in English. The brief reference to this was included so the fullest account of the incident was reported."

The BBC spokesperson did not provide any further details on the nature of the alleged anti-Muslim slur.

The BBC's Director General, Tim Davie, is scheduled to meet with representatives from the Board next month to discuss its coverage of the incident.

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### Additional Articles of Interest

**New Research Tracks Ancient Artifacts Looted by the Nazis** Full NYT article by Milton Esterow [Here](#)

When the Nazis invaded Greece in 1941, Julius Ringel, a major general in the German army, took an active role in initiating illegal excavations on the island of Crete, where Minoan culture had flourished more than 3,000 years earlier. The land was rich with artifacts from the island's cultural heritage and Ringel, often aided by his troops, carted off all sorts of ceramics, vases, parts of statuary, some for his own gain and some to be sent back to German museums as the spoils of war.

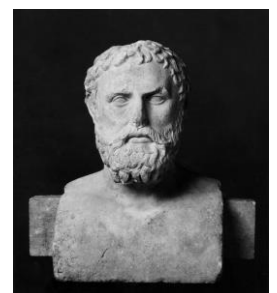
"Army officers such as Ringel were not only excavating and looting antiquities for personal wealth but they were also responsible for the destruction of antiquities, in Crete, Macedonia, Tiryns, Assini and Samos," said Vassilios Petrakos, a scholar who is curator of antiquities and general secretary of the Archaeological Society of Athens.

Though the cinematic exploits of Indiana Jones in the 1980s provided a popular, fictional view of a Nazi lust for antiquities, the art world has, understandably, focused considerably more attention on the seizure of art from Jews. But the topic of the Nazi role in antiquities looting is increasingly drawing attention, in part through the work of scholars who are peeling back the mysteries of what happened to the objects that were excavated or seized eight decades ago.

Last fall, for example, "The Past in Shackles," a five-volume study on the looting of antiquities in Greece during World War II, written by Petrakos, was published. "Research has intensified greatly in many countries, including the United States, Germany, Italy, France, Poland and Greece," said Irene Bald Romano, a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona and curator of Mediterranean Archaeology of the Arizona State Museum.

Symposia and lectures on antiquities looting by the Nazis have been held in several cities in the past few years, including one by the College Art Association, which presented a panel on the topic at its annual conference last February.

"The studies that have been made up to now really sort of scratch the surface of the topic," Romano said in a telephone interview. Romano is co-editor of the forthcoming "The Fate of Antiquities in the Nazi Era," a special online issue of RIHA, the journal of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art, which will be



An example of what was taken

produced in association with the Getty Research Institute and the Central Institute for Art History in Munich. The issue is scheduled to be published later this year.

"Antiquities have not received the kind of in-depth research they deserve on the fate of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Etruscan, Near Eastern and Egyptian antiquities stolen by the Nazis," said Claire Lyons, curator of antiquities at the Getty Museum. "We need to be focusing more effort on World War II."

The passage of time has made it difficult for scholars today to quantify the scope of the looting of antiquities that occurred during World War II, whether it be from Greece, Italy or the Middle East, primarily Egypt.

"A complete account of what was stolen does not exist and is no longer possible," said Petrakos, referring to the situation in Greece. "The looting was carried out by the Germans and Italian military men who robbed museums and findings from the excavations. We do not even know the quantity of items that were found in those excavations."

Tracking items is complicated by the fact that the looting took place during a time when the antiquities market was flourishing, especially in Germany, Switzerland and France, particularly occupied Paris.

These days, experts say, Germany has been quite responsive to claims for repatriation of looted antiquities, although it is not clear whether some may still reside in its museums because determining the full history of ancient artifacts can be so difficult.

"The Germans have been very open about their collections, created databases to make their collections' information and archives accessible, conducted provenance research in public museums, and restituted many works of art," Romano said. "The situation is not perfect, but Germany has a high standard for museums with respect to provenance issues, especially during the Nazi period."

While minor excavations took place under German supervision across Greece, there were major digs in the Thessaly region of northern Greece, Petrakos said. The Thessaly excavations, he said, were organized by Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi theorist, who headed the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, which plundered art, archives and libraries throughout Europe.

Heinrich Himmler, the head of the Gestapo and the SS, also started excavations in Greece under the auspices of his Ahnenerbe (Ancestral Heritage) organization, with a purpose of proving that Germans were part of an Aryan race and the heirs of ancient Greek culture.

In Italy, some antiquities were exported to Germany under the direct authority of Mussolini. In Greece, in anticipation of the Nazi invasion in April 1941, museums began hiding objects six months before. Some works were placed in caves, crypts or buried in gardens so as to protect them from bombings as well as looting. Some statues were placed horizontally in trenches, which were filled with sand and sealed with cement. Gold pieces and museum catalogs, which were viewed as valuable inventories of what the institutions had held, were sent to the vaults of the Bank of Greece.

"The hiding of antiquities was successful only for the big museums, those in Athens, Olympia, Delphi, Thessaloniki and Chalkis," Petrakos said. "The smaller museums, except that of Nafplion, were not protected properly and many antiquities were robbed."

Eleni Pipelia, an archaeologist in the Greek Ministry of Culture, said one sculptor she knew told her that during the war she had created fake antiquities and sold them to the occupying Germans, in an effort to sate their need to bring home antiquities and to raise money for the resistance.



Attempts at concealing artifacts



Concealing artifacts to prevent looting



Another hero of Greek antiquities preservation was Nikolaos Platon, the director of the Heraklion Archaeological Museum on Crete, who, at some personal risk, was known to bicker with the Germans to prevent their plundering.

Platon, who died in 1992, kept an inventory of the items Ringel had taken from the Heraklion Museum. Four years ago, based in part on Platon's research and reporting, the University of Graz in Austria returned 26 antiquities to the museum that had been taken by Ringel, according to Georgia Flouda, the museum's curator of Prehistoric and Minoan Antiquities.

One institution, the Pfahlbau Museum in Unteruhldingen has returned more than 13,000 artifacts that were taken from Thessaly — pottery fragments, small clay figures, stone tools, animal bones, excavation documents and photos, that are now in the storerooms of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, according to Kostas Nikolentzos, head of the museum's department of Prehistoric Egyptian, Cypriot and Near Eastern Antiquities. "The restitution began in 1951 and was completed in 2014," he said. The items have not been publicly exhibited, he said, in part because so many were in poor condition at the time of their excavation.

Dr. Maria Lagogianni-Georgakarakos, director emerita of the museum, said the length of the repatriation process had been influenced by the splitting of Germany at the end of the war. "Documents and antiquities were divided at various locations in East and West Germany," she said. "The director of the Pfahlbau Museum explained that it took two decades for research into the origins of the antiquities to be completed."

The focus on Nazi antiquity looting comes as museums across the world face increased pressure to review items originally acquired by colonizers and occupying forces in eras that long predate World War II.

"Greece has been robbed since the Persian Wars," Petrakos said.

Elizabeth Marlowe, an associate professor of ancient and medieval art at Colgate University and an expert on antiquities looting and repatriation, said: "The British Museum, as well as many national European museums, are full of objects that were seized under a variety of circumstances from colonial territories and other European spheres of influence around the globe."

As antiquities looted by the Nazis have been repatriated or returned to their original owners, many have been sold or donated to major museums around the world.

The Getty has two antiquities — a bronze statuette of a woman and a carnelian gem, that were restituted after they had been sold to a dealer who acquired works for Hitler, according to Lyons, the museum's curator of antiquities. The works are now on exhibit at the Getty Villa.

Victoria Reed, the curator for provenance at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, said that she had found that the museum has three classical sculptures that were returned to a collector after having been confiscated by the Nazis and then restituted — a portrait bust of a statesman or philosopher and a young satyr, both now in storage, and a relief sculpture, which is on exhibit.

"Unlike old master paintings, many antiquities are extremely difficult to research," she said. "They are not attributable to a particular artist and criteria, including a descriptive title, dimensions and conditions can change dramatically over a short period, with losses or additions."

But Reed said the research is becoming easier. "Many books and catalogs are increasingly accessible through online digitizing services. The University of Heidelberg, the Getty Research Institute and the Berlin State Museums have collaborated to make available the contents of thousands of auction catalogs from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Photo archives and digitized records of Nazi and Allied organizations are available online."

Flouda, the curator of the Heraklion Museum who researched German excavations on Crete, said she is concerned that those tracking what happened to looted antiquities still do not have full access to research undertaken by some German and Austrian scholars.

"We don't have all the evidence and we are not always in a position to know what documents are hidden in Germany and Austria," she said. "But quite often new documents come to the fore, and we cannot exclude the possibility that there were more excavations that we are not aware of."

## These Greek Recipes Are Loved by Five Generations of Women

Full article by Miriam Glaser [Here](#)

Before German and Italian forces invaded Greece in the early 1940s, Miriam Glaser's grandparents Emily and Emmanuel Velelli lived in the port town of Patras on the western coast of Greece. Part of a small Jewish community in the city with just 265 members, according to the Jewish Museum of Greece, their families descended from Romaniote Jews, who have called Greece home for more than 2,000 years.

During the war, "When bombs fell over the city of Patras, one hit the street in front of the house, forcing the family to move away to safety," Emily's daughter Rachel wrote in a tribute to her mother on her 100th birthday. "I think that our mother surprised herself in her ability to adapt and in her resilience." The family fled to the nearby mountain village of Michaleika where Elias and Kathryn Michalos, ardent anti-Nazis and Greek patriots, took them in, sheltering them in a small house built for workers at their winery. Holding the Michalos family responsible for aiding British agents, German forces burned down their house, but left the small structure where the Velellis were hiding alone. For the remainder of the war, the two families lived together under one roof, Miriam explains.



After the war, her grandparents returned to Patras where Jewish community's numbers had dwindled dramatically. Emmanuel returned to his business selling fabric, but worried about money. The father of three daughters, "He would have to give a dowry for each daughter, and he didn't have the means," Miriam explains. Imagining a better life in America, the family moved in 1956 to Baltimore with the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS).

By chance, the Michalos family had moved there a few years earlier. Not knowing how to reach them, Emmanuel left word for them at a local Greek grocer and ultimately the two families reunited. "They stayed friends their entire life," Miriam adds.

In Baltimore, Emily celebrated the family's Greek heritage around the table. "She loved to tell us how to make certain dishes and she always made Greek food at her house," Miriam explains. There were cheese pies called tiropita, leek patties, a dense and sweet raisin bread for Rosh Hashanah, and meatballs wrapped in spinach for Passover. Spanakopita, a spinach and cheese pie, was always part of family gatherings no matter if it was Thanksgiving or a birthday party.

Another of her signatures were koulouria, or Greek butter cookies, that she had with her coffee every morning. Today, Miriam's mother Rachel makes the recipe and Miriam's young daughters love to help shape the cookies. At Emily's 100th birthday party, the family sent guests home with small bags of them with the recipe attached, making sure it won't disappear.

Spanakopita is often made into small triangular-shaped pastries. This recipe, which is made as one large pie and served in slices, is fitting for a home kitchen. Miriam's mother Rachel makes it often. "I think it's one of the ways she is closer to her mother, by making these foods. She's taken on the role of the matriarch of the family," Miriam explains.

## Spanakopita

Makes: 1 pie Total Time: 2 hours

### Ingredients

#### For the Filling:

2 - 2 ½ pounds (3 - 4 bunches) fresh spinach de-stemmed and roughly chopped or 2-3 packages frozen chopped spinach

1 yellow onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon chopped fresh dill

½ cup cottage cheese (2% fat)

3 teaspoons grated parmesan cheese

1 ¼ cups (6 ounces) crumbled feta cheese

½ cup olive oil, divided

2 eggs

2 tablespoons breadcrumbs

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

#### For the dough:

2 cups of all-purpose flour

½ cup olive oil

⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

½ - ¾ cup water

#### For the egg wash:

1 egg

½ teaspoon water



### Preparation

1. Grease an 8 x 8-inch baking pan. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. If using fresh spinach, heat a pan over medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Once hot, add the spinach and saute for about 5 minutes until the spinach has wilted and softened. Transfer the spinach to a sieve and once it's cooled, squeeze the liquid out. If using frozen spinach, defrost the spinach at room temperature and then squeeze out all the excess liquid.
3. Make the filling: Place the spinach, onion, dill, cottage cheese, parmesan cheese, feta cheese, remaining oil, eggs, breadcrumbs, 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper into a large mixing bowl. Mix all the ingredients together until combined well. Set aside.
4. Make the dough: Place the flour and salt into a large bowl and mix. Mix the oil and water in a separate bowl. Gradually add the oil and water mixture into the dough, mixing with a wooden spoon and once a dough comes together transfer it onto a clean surface. Knead the dough until it is smooth and elastic (when you make an indent with your finger the dough should jump back up), about 10 minutes or so. Alternatively, you can mix the dough in a stand mixer with a dough hook attachment. Once the dough is made, divide it into two pieces, rolling each piece into a ball. Set aside on the counter at room temperature for 10-15 minutes, covered with plastic wrap.
5. Make the egg wash: whisk the egg and the water in a small bowl until combined well.
6. Assemble the spanakopita: Roll and stretch out one piece of dough into a square large enough to fit the bottom and up the sides of the baking pan, about 10x10 inches. Place all of the spinach filling on top of the dough and flatten it out into an even layer with a spatula. Roll and stretch out the second piece of dough into an 8x8 inch square that can cover the top of the pie. Carefully place the rolled-out dough on top of the filling in the baking pan. Pinch the sides of the top and bottom pieces of dough to seal the pie, feel free to make a crimped pattern here. Using a sharp knife, make 2-4 slits in the top layer of dough to allow steam to escape during cooking. Brush the top and edges of the pie with egg wash.
7. Transfer the pie into the oven and bake until the crust is golden brown, about 45 minutes.
8. Remove the pie from the oven, cool for about 15 minutes and serve warm.

## Koulouria

Makes: About 40 cookies

Total Time: 2 hours

### Ingredients

- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 ¼ cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon brandy or apple juice
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon water

### Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place the baking powder and flour in a medium bowl. Mix well. Set aside. Place the brandy and baking soda in a small bowl and mix it well. Set aside. Separate the yolks and whites of 3 eggs. Use a fork to whisk the egg whites and set them aside. Set aside.
3. Add the butter and sugar into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on low speed for 1 minute and then increase the speed to medium. Cream the mixture until it is pale and fluffy, about 1 more minute.
4. Add the whole egg and the 3 yolks, orange juice and brandy and baking soda mixture. Mix until combined well. Start on low speed, and slowly increase speed to medium. The mixture looks curdled and comes together after about 2 minutes of mixing at medium speed. Stop the mixer and add the flour in 3 equal batches, mixing at a low speed between each addition. Mix until a firm dough is formed (add more flour if needed). You should be able to tear off a small ball of dough and roll it into a log, then twist it while holding its shape. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.
5. Whisk 1 teaspoon of water into the reserved egg whites.
6. Once the dough has rested, divide the dough into two balls. Starting with one half of the dough, dip your fingers in a little flour and pinch off about 1 teaspoon of the dough. Roll the ball into a 7 inch rope on a lightly floured surface. Fold the rope in half and twist the two strands together to form the cookie. Place the cookie onto a parchment lined baking sheet. Continue with the remaining dough placing a 1 inch space between the cookies on the sheet. Use as many baking sheets as needed.
7. Use the second half of dough to make cookies that are in the shape of an "S". Take a ½ inch ball of dough and roll it into a 4 inch log. Use your finger to shape it into an "S" shape. Place the cookie onto a parchment lined baking sheet. Continue with the remaining dough placing a 1 inch space between the cookies on the sheet.
8. Lightly brush each cookie with the reserved whisked egg whites. Transfer into the oven and bake until lightly golden brown, about 15-20 minutes, rotating the baking sheet halfway to ensure even baking.
9. Cool the cookies on the baking sheet and serve at room temperature.

Cook's Note: Store the cooled cookies in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks at room temperature.



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



The current Hebrew year of 5782 is a leap year, which is somewhat similar but also quite different than the concept in the Gregorian (civil) calendar.

In the solar leap year, one day is added (February 29<sup>th</sup>) every 4 years to make up for the "loss" of a quarter of a day per year, based on the approximately 365.25 days it takes for Earth to orbit the sun. If this adjustment would not be made, there would eventually be repercussions for correlation of seasons of the year with their typical months, making it harder and more confusing in planning one's year in terms of weather, agriculture, etc.

However, such an adjustment is more critical for the Hebrew year, which is based on the lunar, and not solar, cycle, with the days of the year and Biblical holidays being set according to the appearance of the 'new moon', which occurs every 29-30 days, meaning a lunar year of some 351 days, 11 days shorter than the solar year. But since the Torah demands that our festivals must also fall in specific solar seasons, meaning Pesah in the spring, Shavuot in Summer, and the other three High Holy Days in the fall, it is imperative that the lunar calendar be adjusted every 2-3 years to correlate with the four seasons, since within two or three years, the shortfall would be between 22-33 days, with major repercussions for our festivals, which would end up falling every year in different seasons. This is exactly what happens in the Muslim lunar calendar, which is not adjusted to the solar year, so the major month-long festival of Ramadan occurs throughout the year, no matter what the season.

Yet setting the Hebrew calendar was not a simple task, and in Temple times, the new month was declared only after witnesses who saw the 'new moon' testified as such before the Sanhedrin in the Temple. In those days, a leap year was declared by adding a full 13<sup>th</sup> month, based on our Sages observing mother nature, animals, and crops. If they understood that the spring equinox did not arrive by a certain time, they knew that Pesah had to be "postponed" so it would fall in the spring. However, once this system of setting the new month became untenable it was urgent that a permanent calendar based on the solar and lunar years and astronomical considerations be composed. Tradition has it that Hillel the Second, the head of the Sanhedrin between 320-385 CE, put together the permanent Hebrew calendar, which is basically still the one we use today. The calendar is based on a 19-year cycle, with additional month of Adar being added to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> years. And though the solar dates of Pesah can certainly vary, one will find that it never occurs any earlier than the end of March and usually no later than the end of April. The permanent calendar ensures that continued correlation between the seasons and the lunar cycled will be maintained for all time, and automatically adjusts the annual 11-day shortfall of the lunar vs. the solar calendar

As to the decision to add an additional Adar, as opposed to Nisan or an earlier winter month, our Sages understood that people were used to Purim always coming one month before Pesah and were concerned that declaring any other month as the 'leap month', would lead to confusion and people eating Hametz when it should be Pesah. For this and other reasons enumerated in the Talmud, it was decided to add an 'extra' Adar before the pre-Nissan/Pesah Adar.

This may all seem rather technical, but the truth is, the setting of our Hebrew calendar was not only an ingenious accomplishment of our Sages. One could argue that it is the most important accomplishment of Judaism, since without a concept of time, uniformity and order, Jewish life could not survive. This fact was also well understood by our enemies. The Talmud relates that, in their various efforts of many conquerors and occupiers of the Land of Israel to destroy Jews and Judaism, they would almost always concentrate on forbidding the three most significant and critical pillars of Jewish life: Brit- Mila, Shabbat, and "Month", with the latter being interpreted by the vast majority of Talmudic Sages as meaning the determination of the new month, i.e., the Jewish calendar, without which Jewish life could not survive.



**Rabbi Marc D. Angel**

**Real and Fake Religion: Thoughts for Parashat Terumah**

Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals – [JewishIdeas.org](http://JewishIdeas.org)

A story is told of a man who stopped attending his usual synagogue and was now frequenting another minyan. One day he happened to meet the rabbi of his previous synagogue, and the rabbi asked him where he was praying these days. The man answered: "I am praying at a small minyan led by Rabbi Cohen."

The rabbi was stunned. "Why would you want to pray there with that rabbi. I am a much better orator, I am more famous, I have a much larger following."

The man replied: "Yes, but in my new synagogue the rabbi has taught me to read minds."

The rabbi was surprised. "Alright, then, read my mind."

The man said: "You are thinking of the verse in Psalms, 'I have set the Lord before me at all times.'"

"You are wrong," said the rabbi, "I was not thinking about that verse at all."

The man replied: "Yes, I knew that, and that's why I've moved to the other synagogue. The rabbi there is always thinking of this verse."

Indeed, an authentically religious person is always thinking of this verse, either directly or in the back of his mind. Such an individual lives in the presence of God, conducts himself with modesty and propriety. The Rabbi Cohen of the story was genuine; he was a spiritual person seeking to live a godly life.

The other rabbi in the story was "successful." He had a large congregation and external signs of prestige. But he lacked the essential ingredient of being authentically religious: he did not have the Lord before him at all times. He was busy trying to make himself popular, get his name into the newspapers, rub elbows with celebrities. Even when he prayed, his mind was not on God, but on how he could advance himself in the world.

This week's parashah begins with God's commandment to Moshe: "speak unto the children of Israel that they take for Me an offering—veyikhu li terumah. Rashi comments that the word li implies li lishmi—that the offering must be given with pure intentions for the sake of God. One might think that donating to the construction of the Mishkan sanctuary was in itself a sign of piety. Rashi's comment reminds us: it is possible to show external piety while lacking true piety. It is possible to appear to be religious, but not conduct oneself with a religious heart and mind.

A kabbalistic teaching has it that we come closer to God through the power of giving--giving love, charity, kindness. A truly religious person is characterized by an overwhelming desire to share with others, to act selflessly with purity of heart. This is the essence of real religion.

On the other hand, we become more distant from God through the power of taking--trying to amass as much as possible for ourselves--more material goods, more honor, more egotistical satisfaction. We cannot exist without the power of taking, since we must fulfill our basic material needs. But when we exert this power excessively, we drift further and further from God. This is a sign of fake religion.

We all know individuals who are characterized by the power of giving. These are loving people who can be trusted, who are generous, compassionate and loyal. When we meet such individuals, we can sense the image of God in them. They genuinely want to help, to share, to be of service, to contribute. They are humble, and ask for nothing in return for their kindness.

We all also know individuals who are selfish and self-serving. They may act friendly and smile broadly, but we sense that their friendship is as counterfeit as their smile. They may pretend to be loyal and giving--but they are simply interested in advancing themselves. They try to take credit for work performed by others. They are seldom there when work has to be done, but are always there for photo-ops. They ingratiate themselves with those in power, and calculate how they can take the most for themselves while giving the least of themselves. They pass themselves off as generous and kind, but they are only putting on an act. Their real goal is to take, not to give. Such people may fool some of the people some of the time, and even most of the people most of the time: but they never fool God.

In His command to the Israelites to contribute to the Mishkan, God specifies that He only wants contributions from those with generous hearts. He doesn't want contributions from those who are stingy; or who give in order to advance their own reputations and honor; or who give reluctantly or grudgingly. The Israelites were to build a sanctuary to the Lord--but it had to be constructed with "the power of giving", with selflessness and generosity of spirit. The house of God must be built with the finest, most idealistic human qualities.

The aspiration of a truly religious person must be to develop the power of giving; to be genuine, honest and kind. If we are to make our contributions to God's sanctuary--and to society--we must do so with purity of heart, selflessness and humility. We must aspire to real religion.



**Perashah of the Week – Yitro**  
**A Curious Commandment – By Rabbi Hayyim Kassarla**

We thank Rabbi Hayyim Kassarla of the Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills for contributing for this past week's Torah Portion.

In the Perasha of Yitro, we shall be reading perhaps the most famous and popular document in the universe: The Ten Commandments, or Ten Statements. It is the recognized cornerstone of the world's great religions. I would like to discuss one of the most curious of the Ten Commandments, Commandment number three: "You shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold that person guiltless who takes his name in vain." I've always been bedeviled by this commandment because it implies that Almighty God will not forgive us for taking his name in vain, yet He will forgive us for all the other Commandments, the nine other Commandments in the decalogue!

How strange that this commandment is the only one that the Lord will not offer us Teshuvah - forgiveness. I read somewhere a possible answer I'd like to share. The word "tissah" can also mean "to carry," so the commandment can be read the following way, "Do not carry the name of the Lord our God in vain, as the Lord will not forgive you for carrying his name in vain." It seems to me this commandment is telling us to be aware that we are carrying God's name with us, whatever we do, every day of our lives.

There are examples, too many to mention here, where individuals of the Jewish faith have brought God's name down in esteem because of their actions, which became public. But this Commandment doesn't only refer to famous people with Jewish-sounding names. It includes each and every one of us, how we relate to our fellow human beings, how we act in public when people know that we are of the Jewish faith. Simply put, in this commandment the Lord is telling us "If you do something of a dubious nature, do it in your name, not mine." If you wear a head covering, or if people know that you are Jewish, be careful in what you say, to treat property carefully, to respect the environment carefully, and carry God's name in a positive nature, rather than the opposite so people might say, "How fortunate is that person who carries God's name with him!" The opposite is scary indeed. How sad might it be for someone who desecrates the Lord's name for it to be said, "How unfortunate is that person who carries God's name and does not bring Glory to the Lord's name!"

This idea can be extended to a great concept with which our rabbis guided us in applying Jewish law. The concept is "Kevod Habriyot" (Honor and Respect to God's Creations). Respecting God's creation brings glory to His name, otherwise, we violate the third commandment of the ten. I shall not give examples of when the rabbi's applied Kevod Habriyot but suffice it to say that it is a guiding principle, especially in the responsa of Sephardic Rabbis throughout the ages. When faced with a dilemma, these rabbis often ruled in favor of applying Jewish law in a humanistic and favorable way to be strict with this principle of honoring God's creations. Perhaps, at another time, I will be able to give examples that will show how this principle is a working one, in the responsa of our great Sephardic rabbis who were challenged to apply Jewish law in our everyday life. I look forward to that opportunity.

As you read The Ten Commandments this Shabbat, let us remember how important all the Commandments are, and be assured the Lord's Mercy extends to all of the Commandments with one exception - the third one. Yet, with an understanding of how we can bring glory to God's name, this commandment, too, can be a Guiding Light in our lives, to bring glory to God's Name.

Wishing everyone all good things and good health as we face the challenges in our daily life on this planet.



## France

### **The Wicked Son: Will Eric Zemmour's Creepy Misuses of his Jewishness help make him France's Next President?** Full article by David Haziz in Tablet Magazine [Here](#)

In the fall of 2020, Eric Zemmour gave a strange history lesson to French voters. Comparing the situation of contemporary French Muslims with that of the Jews of the Emancipation era, he argued that the former should assimilate into French society the way the latter had done. Zemmour went on to assert that the Jews had fortunately abandoned the Talmud, which he called a political book, and returned to the Bible.



On hearing him speak, I felt like one of the stunned spectators of "Springtime for Hitler." My jaw dropped. Samuel and Kings, less political than a Talmudic sugya on how to build an eruv? And who actually jettisoned the Talmud? Even the radical reformists did not, unless approaching the text critically amounts to getting rid of it—in which case they did the same with the Bible. Zemmour went on to mention as one of the founders of the "Aufklärung" (sic) "the musician Felix Mendelssohn." Zemmour's cursory reading of Wikipedia, combined with the power of his unconscious, had made him confuse the 19th-century Felix (who was baptized) with the actual founder of the Haskalah, his grandfather Moses.

While the Bible is not in any way an apolitical "book," as Zemmour intimated, it can well be argued that, at least in the midst of Christendom, the Talmud did more to encapsulate the specificity of the Jewish mind, by laying out a specifically Jewish way of approaching the Bible. Even the wealth of Jewish opposition to the Talmud (that of the medieval Sephardic and Italian poets, of Provençal and Castilian mystics, of rationalistic interpreters of Scripture, and later of the Sabbataians) was often expressed in the very terms laid down by rabbinic discourse. By attacking this corpus, Zemmour symbolically lashed out at the possibility of a separate Jewish identity: a specifically Jewish way of being human, or, for that matter, French.

Zemmour's widely known stance on the Vichy regime—which he falsely claims acted to protect rather than persecute Jews—can be explained, I propose, by this systematic rejection. Zemmour's contempt for "Polish" Jews, for those foreigners or ex-foreigners whom the French authorities so unfairly betrayed, falls within the scope of his penchant for a sanitized, almost Protestant Jewishness—one with no territory, no language, yet also no strangeness, no exotic ritual, no ethical or prophetic message.

Some have argued that Zemmour's rehabilitation of Marshal Pétain might also be typical of a certain Algerian Jewish ethos. Algerian Jews had been proud French citizens since 1870, beginning a long process of estrangement from their North African and sometimes Jewish roots—although many continued speaking Arabic until the independence of the country in 1962, while also keeping the religious traditions of their forefathers. Yet Zemmour's take on Vichy is even more paradoxical when read against the backdrop of this peculiar history. Vichy was even harsher to Jews in Algeria than in metropolitan France, going as far as depriving them en masse of their French citizenship. Although no deportation occurred—probably thanks to the Allied invasion of November 1942—their marginalization there was particularly cruel, and many, like the philosopher Jacques Derrida, were to remember all their lives having been expelled from school. In Zemmour's strangely postmodern narrative, this never happened either.

Zemmour's relationship with his Algerian Jewish background may well account for his seemingly uprooted condition. Zemmour is a *déraciné*, to use a word popularized by the right-wing belle époque author Maurice Barrès, a likely influence on his thought. Modernity, for Barrès, has displaced us. There is some truth to this judgment, and Zemmour is actually its living proof. While Algerian Jews no longer belonged to Africa or the Arab world, and their Jewish knowledge was often scarce, they never really made it in French society. Marginalized in 1940 after decades of humiliation—including pogroms—the vast majority still chose France in 1962, only to have their accent, their complexion, and their strange manners thrown back in their face. There is something deeply ironic about a discourse so focused on roots and authenticity from one who is himself *déraciné*. A perverted son of sorts, Zemmour admires what he imagines as the virile strength of those who oppressed his people, going as far as to call his political movement *Reconquête*, an allusion to the Spanish Reconquista that culminated in the Alhambra Decree of 1492, expelling Jews from Iberia. "Napoleon is my grandfather, and Joan of Arc my grandmother," Zemmour once tweeted. In other words, he is an orphan.

In the world of Paris journalists, Zemmour once passed as "religious." Judaism being an utter mystery to these people, it is enough for a (Sephardic) Jew to eat couscous on Friday night with his family, or to refrain from consuming pork, to be

seen as “religious,” especially if, like Zemmour, he attended Jewish day school during his childhood. Asked about his practice, the polemicist and now presidential candidate recently reassured his right-wing audience. No, I am not religious, he said soothingly—but what he likes about religion, especially Jewish religion, is that it contributes to maintaining family order and tradition. Zemmour needs tradition, since for him tradition equals authority.

Interestingly enough, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the far-left leader, was asked if Zemmour was antisemitic. He replied that this would be absurd, given that Zemmour is Jewish. But Mélenchon went further, arguing that Zemmour’s racism was itself particularly Jewish, since Judaism is all about protecting oneself from external influences. Mélenchon’s answer was insane, but it did somehow echo Zemmour’s own vision of Judaism, except that, to Zemmour, France is more important than his Jewish identity, and thus more worthy of being “protected.”

Zemmour’s ideology is the right-wing version of identity politics, in which identity is a gated and locked house, not a window onto the world. For many of his supporters, Zemmour provides a response to “la France moche,” the ugly “peripheral” France that is in need of roots and transcendence. They see him as immensely educated, and traditional education does matter in their eyes. France is decadent, they believe, but Zemmour’s taste for things past will save her.

Zemmour is no Donald Trump. There is no French Trump, for that matter, because French conservatives tend to style themselves as having a refined and sophisticated connection to the beauty of the French landscape, the glory of French history, and the elegance of French grammar. No French conservative would proudly butcher his language the way Trump does his. After decades of living in the shadow of liberal and Marxist hegemony, in fact, such conservatives now occupy the most fashionable corner of the intellectual scene, and Zemmour has done all he can to pass, first and foremost, as an intellectual. That he is really a product of mass media, that his diction is poor, and his culture fake (in these ways, perhaps, he is much like Trump) does not prevent some genuinely conservative French citizens from reading a classical grandeur into his candidacy. I can sympathize with this kind of nostalgia—a very European phenomenon that has little in common with the conservative American variety, as even European Liberals and Socialists tend to feel it in their old-word kishkes. But Zemmour’s France is nonetheless a kitschy vignette, devoid of any actual grandeur. In reality, he is not a believer in much besides power.

Louis XIV’s France was great because that king fancied himself, even when sinning, as a messianic messenger of God. So too were, in their own way, the Third Republic and the Resistance. Zemmour contradicts himself by asserting, on the one hand, that France has always been great, and on the other, that loving her must include love for her flaws and crimes. Thus Zemmour is actually unable to see his beloved country as something other than the sum of the facts that make up her history. A true patriot would see that Pétain signifies something true about France in the same way that King Ahab signifies something of Ancient Israel. Do Jews not commemorate the sins of their ancestors while (ideally) attempting to transcend them through piety, study, and the quest for justice? In the case of France, the attempt must be made to use her élan, her musketeer spirit to overcome her cowardice and pettiness—an impossible feat unless virtues and vices alike are considered honestly.

Zemmour’s world, by contrast, is as flat as that of the atheistic far left he castigates. Man, as Zemmour sees him, is only power and self-interest; even beauty serves the sole purpose of political glory. (Zemmour celebrated his 50th birthday, it should be noted, at the Château de Malmaison.) In many respects, he and his Jewish aides resemble the Jewish Bolsheviks of old (or the woke Jews of today). They too believed in power. They too submerged their Jewish identity on behalf of something larger—the proletariat, the people, justice, Russia. In the same way as Zemmour’s Jewish advisers reportedly like to joke around about their Jewishness at every opportunity, one can picture Bolsheviks from Odessa teasing their Volhynian comrades. Theirs was a mechanistic world, with no meaning other than conquest and brutality. Zemmour is less brutal, but his anthropology is akin to theirs. And so is his Jewishness.

Zemmour suggested in September 2020 that Alfred Dreyfus was in fact guilty. This is not only offensive to the memory of that innocent man, which, in a way, does not matter. More importantly, the presidential candidate and national media sensation approaches the Dreyfus affair like a parvenu of the mind.

For “l’Affaire,” as Charles Péguy said, was a mystical moment. Péguy was, paradoxically enough, both a socialist and a conservative. Dreyfus had put him on the path of Jesus. Péguy’s name, it should be recalled, appears at the war memorial, rue de la Victoire, in the courtyard of the Great Synagogue of Paris, among those of the French Jews killed during the First World War. “I wish that my husband’s name, CHARLES PEGUY, be joined with those of the Jews who, like him, gave their life for France,” wrote the writer’s widow. As a teenager, I would attend the Yamim Noraim services there, and this Catholic name fraternally accompanying thousands of Jewish ones always moved me to tears. Péguy saw

himself as kin to that prophetic nation, the Jewish people, both as a Catholic and as a French patriot. An entire French Jewish mystique is mixed up in the name of Dreyfus.

Zemmour sometimes refers to Péguy, clearly without understanding what he is saying. In any case, he may have believed that an infantile prank like slandering Dreyfus might successfully lure some half-educated, Ann Coulter-like pundits. But this attitude of his is at least proof that he does not know what it is to be a French Jew, and can't speak on that community with anything resembling authority.

In spite of all his pathetic efforts, Zemmour is no "Israélite français"—the term that prewar French Jews preferred for themselves. When referring to the ethical duties of Judaism and their defilement in the person of Zemmour, Bernard-Henri Lévy acted like one of those 19th- and 20th-century French Jews, for whom justice was the key principle of the faith. Zemmour absurdly called his foe's attitude "communautarisme le plus infect," or the most revolting communitarianism, as if invoking Deuteronomy and the Prophets on behalf of humanity is less universalistic than defending Pétain or closing French borders to Afghan women. For all their patriotism, the belle époque Israélites fought for Dreyfus and his memory—not despite but because of their patriotism. As French Jews, they would pray on Shabbat (as their descendants and spiritual successors still do) for God to protect "France, cradle of human rights" and to inspire her to "fight for right and justice in every place." By doing so, they were acting as the actual heirs of the Bible and as grateful sons of France at the same time.

The specific type of self-hatred that Zemmour expresses is not a purely ideological trait. He craves the acceptance of the well-heeled. Arthur Szyk's "wicked son," in his famous rendition of the Haggadah, is not any modern-day, BDS, keffiyah-wearing, self-hating Jew. He is something even more pathetic, a ludicrous stag-hunting Londoner who believes that, because his son finally made it to Oxford, they will reek less of schmaltz in the refined nostrils of their Mayfair neighbors. Zemmour is the original kind of self-hating Jew, the parvenu who wishes he had a wedding in Notre-Dame de Paris or St Paul's Cathedral.

To betray Judaism—the original religion of justice—on behalf of a modern conception of "justice" that involves harming your own people is certainly despicable. To forsake Judaism's hoary rituals in favor of sappy New Age ceremony is certainly a sad thing to do. But what about the conservative who immolates his dead on the altar of assimilation? Zemmour's stance is emblematic of our era, one of immature, "self-begotten" brats who deconstruct without ever knowing how to build. To be Jewish and disown the Talmud, and one's own dead, as well as the values of the Prophets, while at the same time celebrating Christmas, as Zemmour proudly does? No thank you.

The Zemmourian right justly laments our modern hatred for "essentialism" and common sense. Things and beings do have an essence. Facts do matter. But those who praise Nazi collaborators and Resistance fighters in equal measure renounce common sense—and desecrate the simple good heartedness of the thousands of peasants, workers, and nuns, who risked their lives to hide Jews. The postmodernist bullshit and disregard for facts and elementary values that Zemmour (rightly) criticizes as a conservative, he also endorses.

For his speech announcing his presidential candidacy, Zemmour posed under a cheap replica of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa—another postmodern flourish. Polish nationalists were thrilled. What struck me was that, over two centuries ago, this venerated icon held a special sway over another Jew—one who, like Zemmour, advocated Jewish territorialism and assimilation, albeit with a redeeming quality that would be utterly foreign to the French provocateur. This was a Jew who was also fascinated by weapons, uniforms, and political vainglory, one who "will always be remembered," as Gershom Scholem put it, "as one of the most frightening phenomena in the whole of Jewish history." Jacob Frank was detained in Częstochowa from 1760 to 1772, after the Polish authorities discovered that his conversion to Catholicism was not sincere. There he was enthralled by the same Black Madonna icon, which he came to interpret in kabbalistic terms. In his opinion, the Shekhinah, the female aspect of God, was partially embodied in it. He believed that his own daughter would take this process of incarnation to its final stage.

To be sure, Frank's kabbalistic feminism escapes Zemmour, who is certainly unaware of the icon's Frankist history. Yet by choosing it for the very moment when he thought he was symbolically renouncing his Jewish belonging, he unintentionally reconnected with it in a paradoxical, atrocious, and fascinating way.

## Sephardic Jew Involved in TV

We thank David Bellel for the following two articles.

The Sephardic/Dobie Gillis Connection? Dobie Gillis was directed by Rod Amateau. Rodney Amateau (December 20, 1923 – June 29, 2003) was an American film and television screenwriter, director, and producer. Starting out as a radio writer, Rodney Amateau began his career as a dialogue coach and filmed screen tests for Fox Studios while working as a stunt double before directing 2nd Unit's, where he began his film career. He soon turned to directing TV series, which he did for many years before returning to film directing in the 1970s. During his marriage to Sandra Burns, he was son-in-law of George Burns and Gracie Allen. The Blake Edwards film *Sunset* (1988), starring James Garner as Wyatt Earp and Bruce Willis as Tom Mix, was based on Amateau's unpublished book. Among the programs that he directed were *The Dennis Day Show*, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, *Mister Ed*, *Gilligan's Island*, *The Bob Cummings Show* and *The New Phil Silvers Show*. He produced *My Mother the Car* and *Supertrain* and wrote the story for the 1988 film *Sunset*. Amateau also directed a few episodes of *The Dukes of Hazzard* and appeared in a handful of episodes as an actor as well. In 1987, he directed, produced, and co-wrote *The Garbage Pail Kids Movie*, which is considered to be one of the worst films ever made. From 1945 to 1949, he was married to actress Coleen Gray, who sued him for child support in 1955. From 1959 to 1962, he was married to Sandra Burns, daughter of George Burns and Gracie Allen." He was the son of Albert Amateau who was a very famous guy in the Sephardic community. He was born into the Sephardic world in NYC, the son of Albert Jean Amateau and Rebecca Bekita Amateau, he was 79 when he passed in 2003 in Los Angeles.



### Albert Amateau

Albert Jean Amateau was born on April 20, 1889, in Milas, Turkey; one in a family of six Sephardic brothers and sisters. He grew up in rural Ottoman Turkey, the son of a French-Turkish lawyer. Albert's father had been born in Turkey, during the period when Albert's grandfather served as the French consul in Izmir, Turkey. In 1908 Amateau began studies at the University of Istanbul Law School, graduating in June 1910. While at the university Albert taught night classes for illiterate adults. His status as a teacher exempted him from military service. But as a result of the "Young Turks" revolution of 1908, the Turkish government changed the law in 1910 and he was expected to serve in the military. Since he did not wish to serve because he believed he would be killed, he decided to leave the country. Not having any money and afraid to contact his father, he had to persuade the captain of a French steamer to take him as far as Naples. He worked in Naples for three months as a dishwasher to make enough money to travel to the US. He finally arrived in NY in Aug 1910.



For the first few years in New York, Amateau worked at a succession of odd jobs, including teaching English and operation of automobiles to new immigrants. In 1913 he began working for the Society of the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf as a social worker assisting deaf Jews to acquire jobs. He had previously (1910-1911) worked in a similar capacity for the Industrial Removal Office.

In 1916 Amateau volunteered for the United States Army and served in World War I until 1918. While he was in Europe, he was wounded. After he returned from the Army, Amateau was ordained in 1920 at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he became the first rabbi of a congregation of the deaf. He continued working for the Society for the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf until 1925 when he quit to found an import-export business. For the next 10 years he worked as a lawyer for Travelers Insurance Company in New York. In 1938 he was named Area Director for the Federal Wages and Hours Administration.

In 1940 he moved to Los Angeles and in 1941 started the Albert J. Amateau Foreign Language Service, a service providing translators for lip sync dubbing for the motion picture industry. The business continued in

operation until at least 1989. Amateau had a strong love for his homeland of Turkey. He was given an award by the Assembly of Turkish-American Associations, for his constant defense of Turkey while living in the United States. He wrote numerous letters in response to anti-Turkish references brought to his attention. He also worked hard to try to disprove accusations by Armenians against the Turkish during the days of the Ottoman Empire. In 1992, he helped found the American Society of Jewish Friends of Turkey and was named as its president. In 1937, Amateau assisted with negotiations between Jews and Arabs of Palestine. Amateau was instrumental in organizing Sephardic immigrants, organizing the First Sephardic Democratic Club in New York. He was a member and often leader of several other organizations: Brotherhood of Rhodes (New York), Sephardic Brotherhood (New York), National Organization of Jewish Social Workers, Masons and Rotary International. On July 5, 1914, Amateau married his childhood sweetheart from Izmir, Turkey, Rebecca (Bekita) Nahum; she died in February 1976. In 1923 Albert and Bekita had a son, Rodney. On November 17, 1976, Albert married Edith nee Martin. Amateau died at his home in Santa Rosa, California on February 6, 1996, at 106 years old.

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### **Appeal and Thanks**

We are overjoyed that our appeal for funds to commission a new memorial board has been answered. The Sisterhood of Janina is sponsoring the new board. Thank you Rose Eskononts and the Sisterhood of Janina.

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