



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

March 2025 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This year Jews around the world will celebrate Purim on Thursday evening March 13th and Friday March 14th. Although Purim is a minor festival in the Jewish calendar, Romaniote Jews nevertheless had many ways to celebrate the defeat of Haman's plot to destroy the Jewish people, as we recount in the book of Esther. Special foods are eaten (see recipe in this newsletter) and participants dress up in costumes. In the world of Romaniote and Sephardic Jews, who for the most part lived alongside Muslims and did not have to compete with the Christian holiday of Christmas, this would be the holiday when Jewish children would receive presents. Join us at Kehila Kedosha Janina for our own celebration and the traditional Romaniote reading of the Megilat Esther on March 13th at 6pm, and visit our museum to view our collection of Megilot from across Greece.



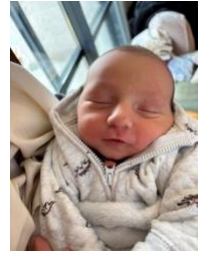
This newsletter, our 191st will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjsm.org.

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

We are open for Shabbat every Saturday morning starting at 9:30am. Please email amarcus@kkjsm.org if you would like to attend, and enjoy a traditional Greek kiddush lunch after services. Our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm. If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at info@kkjsm.org

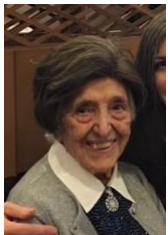
Simchas

We welcome the birth of Tov Ro'i, born on February 10 in Israel. He is the 34th grandchild of Rena and Gershon Harris (who writes our monthly article in this newsletter). Tov Ro'i's name comes from the Book of Samuel I, chapter 16, verse 12, and is how King David is described. The best literal translation would be "handsome", but the connotation is spiritual as well. It is certainly a unique name, but is already gaining popularity among the modern Orthodox in Israel. Proud parents: Gamliel Yehoshua and Rachel Harris, grandparents: Rena and Gershon Harris, and great-grandparents Rabbi Pinhas and Rivka Kahn who live in Jerusalem.



Passings

We join the entire Jewish world in mourning the killing of the Israeli hostages, especially Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir Bibas. Shiri was 32 years old, Ariel was 4 years old, and Kfir was just 9 months old when they were kidnapped. May they rest in peace, may Yarden Bibas be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, and may all the remaining hostages come home safely.



We mourn the passing of Esther Colchamiro on February 11. She was truly a remarkable woman, living to age 106. Esther was the daughter of Mollie (Mazaltov) Colchamiro and David (Cartona) Kaplan. Esther married her first cousin, Ralph Colchamiro, and had 3 children, Juliet, who died in infancy, Rochelle, and David, who died at the age of 16. Esther became a widow in 2009, when Ralph died after 62 years of marriage. Esther had grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even lived to see great-great grandchildren. Esther was a graduate of Tuft's Dental School. Below is an excerpt from an article in Tuft's Dental Magazine (March 1, 2023). Read the full article [here](#).

"In the late 1930s, most graduate and professional schools had little interest in educating women. An ambitious young woman from the Bronx sent off a raft of applications anyway. Tufts dental school offered her a chance. At 104, Esther Kaplan Colchamiro, can't readily recall the details. But in the fall of 1938 she found herself arriving in Boston to enroll at what was then known as Tufts Dental College, located in a red brick building at 416 Huntington Ave. She instantly stood out: a class photo shows a petite figure with a wide smile in an almost schoolgirlish white blouse and dark skirt, with dozens of male classmates towering above her. It would be about 30 years before women began attending dental school in significant numbers.



Esther & Ralph
Wedding in 1947

Nevertheless, she went on to graduate second in her class and establish herself as a giant in the field of public health dentistry. Over her 60-plus year career, she provided care for thousands of New York City's neediest children; kept watch over the city's dental Medicaid and other public health programs; and taught scores of dental students at New York University.

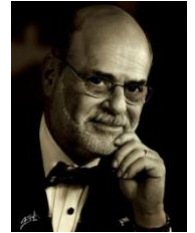
'She spent 60 years striving to make this a better world for all dental patients, but for children in particular,' said David Rosenstein, a fellow member of the American Public Health Association, who spoke at a ceremony honoring Colchamiro in 2002, when she received the John W. Knutson Distinguished Service Award, one of the highest honors in the field, and just one of a lengthy list of awards and recognitions Colchamiro collected throughout her career. 'Esther has been a beacon of light in our field since the day she entered it.'

At the beginning of Colchamiro's career, about 3% of dentists in the U.S. were women, and that proportion stayed fairly consistent until about 1970, according to the Journal of the American Dental Association. Today, nearly 35% of practicing dentists are women, and with women dental graduates outpacing men, they are expected to account for 50% by 2040. At Tufts, where Colchamiro once stood alone, women students have outnumbered their male classmates most years since 2008."

We are sad to report the passing of Judy Elias, mother of Ladino musician Danny Elias and widow of musician Joe Elias. She had been living with Alzheimer's disease for about 4 years and suffered a stroke in February. Even in her later years, she was full of vim and spice. A real people person, she was known as an extraordinary hostess. She was giving to her family and friends and enjoyed folk dancing, bridge, and art.



Richard A. Bernstein, 78, passed away peacefully on February 25, 2025, surrounded by his family: Loving wife of 55 years Amelia (Fishman), daughter Jennifer A. Rothkin, son-in-law Gregg A. Rothkin, son Bradley R. Bernstein, granddaughter Sidney A. Rothkin and grandson Blake A. Rothkin. Richard was born in Brooklyn, to Father Dr. Sidney Bernstein and Mother Ethel Helen Bernstein (Shankman).



A graduate of NYU, Richard held many roles in the business community over his career including: Chairman and CEO of P&E Capital; President of P&E Properties, Chairman R.A.B., Food Group, (including Manischewitz, Rokeach and other consumer brands); Chairman and CEO of Millbrook Distribution Services; Chairman and CEO of Western Publishing Group, Inc, Chairman and CEO of General Medical Corp and Harris Wholesale Drug Corp; and Chairman and CEO of Rabco Luxury Goods.

He sat as a trustee on many boards including: The Police Athletic Club of New York City, New York University, The Big Apple Circus, NYU's Hospital for Joint Diseases/Orthopedic Hospital, Stern School of Business, Chase (Chemical Bank) Middle Market Board and Children Affected by AIDS Foundation. Additionally, Richard was a Director of the IDF, Finance Chairman, New York State for Reagan/Bush '84, Chairman, New York Temporary State Commission on Regulation of Lobbying and a member of New York State Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review. Richard ran for Comptroller of the City of New York on the Republican ticket in 1981. An avid collector - he was a passionate, dedicated, loyal friend, father, grandfather and husband.

Samuel M. Matsa passed away at 91 after a long, productive and respected life. Sam was born in Athens, Greece in 1933 to Morris and Lucie Matsa. Sam was a hidden child during the Holocaust, living for two years with his parents and nanny Katarina in the attic of the home of a widow named Berta Stephanopoulou. This experience colored the rest of Sam's life and he was active in sharing his stories as a Holocaust survivor and acknowledging the Righteous whose help was critical in saving lives during the Holocaust.



Sam was an ardent pursuer of knowledge, excelling as a student, speaking 9 languages, and learned everything he could on any topic that interested him. He attended Athens College, a K-12 school, which still has a plaque in the lobby commemorating his record academic achievement as the highest ranking student ever in the school. Sam came to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar in 1952 to study electrical engineering at Purdue University and graduated with Very Highest Distinction. He attended MIT for all his graduate work and was recruited by IBM in Cambridge. Sam remained at IBM for 43 years in many varied positions and divisions. He founded the IBM Scientific Center in Manhattan, contributed to the development of computers in their early stages, and traveled the world for IBM. Together with Andy Van Dam, Sam formed the ACM Special Interest Committee on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques (SIC-GRAPH) in 1967. The organization celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023, with two days honoring Sam at Brown University.

Sam shared his love of learning with others working on scientific literacy and computer knowledge. In 1957 Sam was the General Chairman of ACMHO (the Association for Computing Machinery) at the New York Hilton. He was

a fellow of the NY Academy of Sciences and the chairman of the Academy's Section of Computer & Information Sciences. Sam developed an education program for IBM that would fund K-12 schools all over the country, programs that would encourage and enhance learning. He was instrumental in the development of the education movements Micro Society and the Coalition of Essential Schools and later joined their boards. Sam was a judge for many years for the National Science Foundation grants in Washington, D.C. He planned and conducted twice monthly scientific literacy graduate seminars at Columbia University along with Dr. Samuel Devons. He has been cited in many books and articles in recognition of his contributions to the greater education, scientific and computing worlds.

Sam's Jewish and Greek heritage were incredibly important to him. He belonged and served as chairman and president of the boards in multiple synagogues throughout his life including Temple Sinai in Forest Hills, Temple Beth Am in Yorktown, and his beloved Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue, a landmark Greek Synagogue in Manhattan and acted as the rabbi when the rabbi was traveling. Sam was just as passionate about learning more about Judaism as any other topic, starting right after Passover to prepare for next year's Seder. Sam and Perry were docents at the Hebrew Union College Museum. Sam was instrumental, along with Shohoma Weiner, in the founding of the Academy for Jewish Religion. He loved music of all kinds, from opera to jazz, including singing Greek, French, Hebrew and Ladino songs until the end of his life.

Sam was active in the Yorktown community. With his wife Perry they were instrumental in the starting and the success of the Yorktown Teen Center, where he served as Treasurer. Sam loved his family, his friends, all people, playing and teaching backgammon (Tavli in Greek), and double espressos with Sambuca at 10pm. He is survived by his loving wife Perry, children, grandchildren, family in Greece, colleagues and friends.

Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

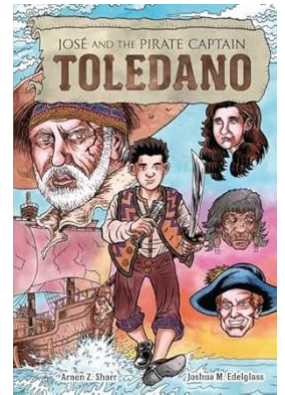
Torah & Taverna Night – February

Last month we hosted our second Torah & Taverna Night and it was an incredible evening! Our dear community member Josh Lipson discussed the history of psychedelics, his research on people's mystical experiences, and hints of psychedelics in the Jewish world. Our guest musicians Ta Pedia Tis Polis played riveting Greek music, we sampled Greek bites and drinks, and we all had a great time dancing together. Thank you to everyone who made the night so special, and we look forward to seeing you in March!



Jewish Comics & Sephardic Stories

We had a great afternoon on Sunday March 2nd with authors, artists, and Jewish educators Arnon Shorr and Joshua Edelglass who presented their wonderful graphic novel "Jose and the Pirate Captain Toledano." They shared beautiful original artwork that was used in the book and we also watched their acclaimed short film that has been featured in dozens of festivals. We also discussed the importance of sharing stories from our diverse Jewish communities and teaching the broader world about our history beyond common Ashkenazi experiences. We only have a few copies of the book left so email info@kkjism.org to order your copy today! \$10 plus \$5 shipping.



Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network Past Events

We hosted a beautiful Tu BiShevat Seder last month in honor of the New Year of the Trees that featured a wine tasting and a variety of delicious fruits, nuts, and sweets. This holiday reminds us that we are always connected to nature for sustenance, and we pray that this coming year will bring us health, nourishment, and peace through the land, especially in the Land of Israel. Celebrate your own Seder with a special guide [Here](#).



On February 23 we hosted a special class entitled "People of the Bean" led by Theo Canter about the Jewish history of coffee. We sampled fresh brewed coffee from special guest barista Aaron Dahan of [Caffe Aronne](#) and learned some amazing insights about the history of coffee and how it influenced the evolution of Jewish culture and general Middle Eastern and European society. Thank you to Theo Canter and Aaron Dahan for a stimulating afternoon!



Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Purim Celebration – March 13 at 6pm

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjasm.org

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
WISHES YOU A

HAPPY PURIM!

חג פורים שמח

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ

PURIM ALEGRE I DULSE

**JOIN US TO CELEBRATE PURIM!
THURSDAY MARCH 13 AT 6:00PM**

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC**

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

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

לִיהוּדִים הִיְתָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשֶׁן וְיִקָּר

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJSM.ORG

To Say I Was Here: Greek, Ladino, Turkish, & Arabic Speaking
Jewish Recording Musicians in New York circa 1916-66
March 30 at 1pm
RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

To Say I Was Here

Greek, Ladino, Turkish, & Arabic
Speaking Jewish Recording
Musicians in NY circa 1916-66

Sunday March 30 at 1pm
280 Broome St NYC

Join us for a special talk and listening session led by music researcher Ian Nagoski surveying the immigrant performers who recorded in Lower Manhattan during the first half of the 20th century. Explore the lives and music of immigrants from Aleppo, Baghdad, Ioannina, Istanbul, Izmir, and Thessaloniki who settled in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Learn how they worked with fellow immigrants and touring performers from Cairo, Athens, and beyond to collectively provide music for their communities. Experience this unique opportunity to hear and feel their music again.

Refreshments will be served

RSVP to
Amarcus@kkjism.org



Torah & Taverna Night – March 26 at 7:30pm

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

TORAH & TAVERNA NIGHTS

A Monthly Salon of Greek Jewish
Culture, Thought, and Music

Wednesday March 26 at 7:30pm

Join us for an engaging evening of Jewish insights,
savor delicious Greek food and drinks, and enjoy live
music with a rotating cast of guest musicians

Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome Street NYC

RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org



Greek Jewish & Sephardic
Young Professionals Network

Κοινότητα קהילה Komunita



American
Sephardi
Federation

HEBREW, ARABIC, & PERSIAN

Calligraphy

WORKSHOP

Led by Artist and Educator Ruben Shimonov

Learn about the history of Jewish calligraphy across the Islamic World and learn to make your very own calligraphy art!

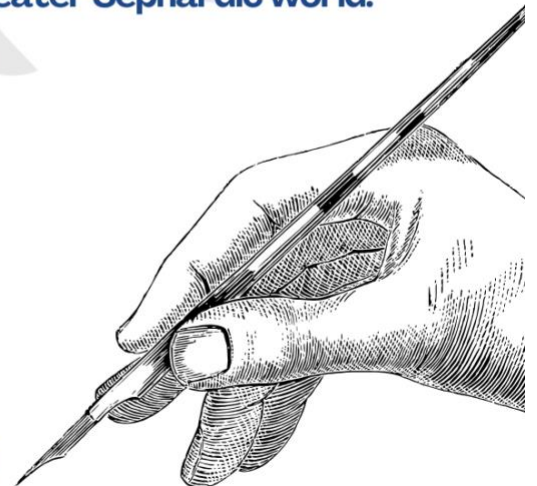
Bukharian Jewish calligrapher Ruben Shimonov serves as the National Director of Sephardi House and Education at the American Sephardi Federation. His creations incorporate Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian, and represent his multilingual and multicultural upbringing. As an artist, Ruben uses his designs to build interfaith and intercultural bridges, while also celebrating the diversity of the Greater Sephardic world.

Tuesday March 11 at 7 PM

**Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome St NYC**

**Open to Jewish young adults
in their 20s and 30s**

**\$18 per person
RSVP: info@GreekJewishYPN.org**



Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network
Tour of Jewish Italy – July 2025

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network is excited to announce their Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Italy! They will trace the roots of our communities and visit the beautiful cities of Florence, Rome, Naples, Livorno, Pisa, Pompeii, & Capri. The tour runs July 6-16, 2025. Spots are limited and the deadline to register & submit deposits is January 15. Open to Jewish young adults in their 20s and 30s. Make sure to sign up now for this once-in-a-lifetime experience while there are still spots left! View the full itinerary here: <https://bit.ly/YPIItaly2025> and email info@GreekJewishYPN.org to learn more & sign up.



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TOUR OF JEWISH ITALY

July 6-16, 2025

**INCLUDES FLORENCE, ROME, NAPLES, LIVORNO,
PISA, POMPEII, & CAPRI**

**REDISCOVER YOUR HERITAGE AND CONNECT WITH OTHER YOUNG
SEPHARDIC JEWS ON THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE**

View the full itinerary at bit.ly/YPIItaly2025

**To register and learn more email
info@GreekJewishYPN.org**



Greek Jewish Festival - Sunday May 11, 2025

Save the date Sunday May 11, 2025 for our tenth annual Greek Jewish Festival! We are currently recruiting volunteers who can help us during the festival. Please email amarcus@kkjism.org if you can help. Stay tuned for more festival updates soon, including the full performance schedule. Check the festival website for updates: www.GreekJewishFestival.com

GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL

Upcoming Events of Interest

Courage and Compassion: A Jewish Boyhood in German-Occupied Greece

Tuesday, March 11th, 2025, 7:00 pm, at 150 West 17th Street, New York City

The Hellenic-American Cultural Foundation welcomes historian and author Tony Molho in conversation with Professor Mark Mazower. The author of *Courage and Compassion: A Jewish Boyhood in German-Occupied Greece*, Molho will discuss his early childhood in Greece during the German occupation, how his parents risked everything to hide him, and the ordinary people who selflessly protected his family. He will also share how his Jewish and Greek identity, and the trauma of the Holocaust, has informed the course of his own life.

Tony Molho is the David Herlihy University Professor Emeritus at Brown University and Professor Emeritus of History and Civilization at the European University Institute. He has written numerous books, and the Greek edition of his book *Courage and Compassion* was awarded the Ouranis Prize of the Academy of Athens.

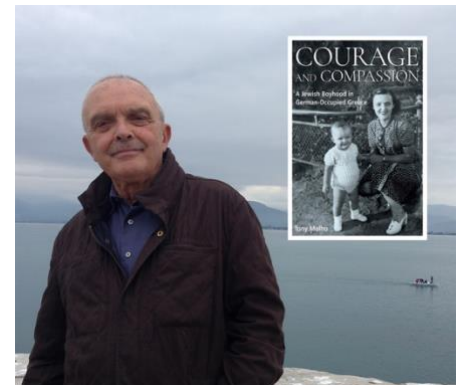
Mark Mazower, Ira D. Wallach Professor of History, comments on international affairs and reviews books for the *London Review of Books* and *The New York Review of Books*, amongst other publications. He co-created the film, *Techniques of the Body*, and his most recent book, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe*, won the Duff Cooper Prize. He is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Director of the Columbia Institute for Ideas and Imagination, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Fellow of the British Academy. There will be a reception following the event, where copies of Tony Molho's book will be available for purchase, cash only, and for him to sign.

Related program on Zoom:

Wiener Holocaust Library Zoom event

A Jewish Boyhood in Nazi Greece: Author Antony Molho in conversation with David Abulafia & Paris Chronakis
March 17 at 1:30 pm New York time

Registration (free) is at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hybrid-event-a-jewish-boyhood-in-nazi-greece-author-antony-molho-tickets-1226206359229?aff=oddttdcreator>



Message from the Sisterhood of Janina



Sisterhood of Janina, Inc.

Become a Member Today

and Help the Next Generation of Women lead Community Service

The Sisterhood of Janina is a living testimony to the success of the first experiment in America of an organization of Romaniote and Sephardic women, whose sole purpose was to practice benevolence and charity to fellow Jews in the USA, those living in Greece, and other foreign lands.

The group was established in 1932 under the supervision of the late Leon Colchamiro, who saw the need for this noble work as an adjunct to Kehila Kedosha Janina. A committee was formed and that was the start of our Sisterhood.

Now, in 2025, 93 years after our Sisterhood was created, it is time for a renewal and member drive to attract new members and younger generations to become involved and aware.

History and Accomplishments

In 1932, a group of enthusiastic workers solicited membership by making personal door-to-door visits each month, collecting the 25 cent membership dues. During these visits, a chat was enjoyed over the traditional serving of homemade fruit jelly compote and a cup of Turkish coffee, after which the “Sisterhood Lady” was once again on her way.

Though our prime concern is to help our needy, our records indicate that financial aid has also been extended to a multitude of charitable and philanthropic organizations. Such is the work of our Sisterhood.

In 1991 the Sisterhood learned of the plight of 37 Albanian Jews (originally from Janina, Greece) seeking to flee Albania during one of the very few times its borders were open to allow safe passage from the country. The Sisterhood accepted the responsibility and challenge of creating a safe haven for these people and through our members generosity, fundraising efforts, and help from other sources, they were brought to our shores and given refuge in Brooklyn. They are now a flourishing group and we share in their joys of becoming Americans, enjoying the freedom that our great country provides. We are proud of the role the Sisterhood played in this accomplishment.

In 2003 Sisterhood purchased a fully cardiac-equipped ambulance for Israel, through the auspices of the American Red Magen David for Israel. The ambulance was dedicated on Sunday June 22, 2003 in front of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Traffic was closed on Broome Street and the ambulance was on full display. A program of responsive readings with a theme of peace and liberty followed with Shehehianu, Refuah Shelema and Hashkavoth prayers were read for the people of Israel who had been injured or killed by terrorist attacks. The dedication on the ambulance read: "Donated with Love by the Sisterhood of Janina to our brave brethren in Israel. May we see Peace in Your Beloved Land and the World. Amen." No more truer words were said, and this hope echoes through to today.

And now in 2025, we work to grow as a Sisterhood, create fundraising events, and increasing our membership throughout the generations and across the miles.

In 1932 this was a door-to-door effort. In 2025 we have a multitude of ways to stay in touch, create new programs, and grow.

Please join us in keeping the Sisterhood of Janina alive and thriving.

Please mail in your 2025 dues of \$36 made out to SISTERHOOD OF JANINA:

**Laurie Serwetz
1400 Harbor Terrace, unit 1415
Island Park, NY 11558**

(Laurie is the daughter of the current Sisterhood President, Rose Eskononts, age 90!)

Please also remember that we continue to have Sisterhood cards available to be mailed out for *sympathy cards, get well cards, and congratulations/best wishes cards*.

- Please mail a donation of your choice to the address above along with:
 - Recipient name and address
 - Donors Name and address
 - and a short message

and Sisterhood will take care of the rest.

Our first fundraising project is a Sisterhood cookbook of Romaniote and Sephardic recipes.

- ❖ **Please email family recipes to: SisterhoodofJanina@gmail.com**
- ❖ Please include the recipe along with a short blurb and history/remembrance of the recipe/family member.

Thank you, Sisterhood of Janina

Romaniote American Oral History Project

Contact Theo@kkjism.org to learn more and share your stories



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

ROMANIOTE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

A community-sourced archive for
preservation, research, and inspiration



What does it mean to be a Romaniote Jew
in the US in the 21st Century?

After more than 100 years in America,
Kehila Kedosha Janina is excited to launch
this new research project to document our
community today, exploring questions of
identity, culture, preservation, & adaptation.

We want to hear from you! Submit
testimonies, family stories, recipes,
photographs, traditions, songs, memories,
& more.



Contact Theo Canter at Theo@kkjism.org
to learn more and contribute your voice as we
write the next chapter of our community's story

Romaniote Bar & Bat Mitzvah Classes

Email Theo@kkjism.org to learn more



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

Romaniote Bar & Bat Mitzvah Tutoring

FREE

Learn How To...



Read Torah & Haftara

Read Torah & Haftara in Hebrew, chanted in the centuries-old Greek Romaniote rite



Give a Derasha

Prepare a speech analyzing the weekly Torah portion



Lead Tefillah

Recite the prayers for Shabbat with our beautiful ancient melodies

Classes taught by KKJ Community Engagement Fellow Theo Canter

Email Theo@kkjism.org to learn more and sign up

**Message from Theo Canter
KKJ Community Engagement Fellow**



Shalom uVeraha dear friends and community,

Spring is just around the corner! Last month we celebrated Tu BiShevat. I led a class about the mystical meanings of the fruits of the Mediterranean and the many shared symbols around these trees in Jewish and Greek mythology. With our Young Professionals Network, we held the traditional Sephardic Frutikas seder, when we tasted delicious produce and expressed our wishes for a bountiful and healthy new year. Indeed, this month has been fruitful in our Kehila with so many amazing events taking place.

In February we hosted a special class “The People of the Bean” about the Jewish history of coffee. I shared Rabbinic responsa as well as historical records detailing how medieval Rabbis first encountered coffee, and expressed both their hopes and fears of how this could impact Jewish life. At the same time, among the Muslim thinkers in the Ottoman Empire, we find very similar commentaries – a reminder of our centuries of coexistence. Coffee, as I explained, is also an example of how Halacha as a tool can be used, in its classical Sephardic sense, for people of faith to actively engage with the world in all its complexity.

On the topic of Mediterranean coffee and coffeehouses, we recently hosted our inaugural Torah & Taverna monthly evening program. In January renowned Israeli author Ruby Namdar explored the story of the four Rabbis who “entered the orchard” and analyzed the story’s mystical lessons. Building on that energy, in February we held our second Torah & Taverna night, where our dear friend Dr. Josh Lipson shared with us Jewish and medical insights from the study of psychedelics and spirituality. As the aromas of spices mixed with the sounds of bouzouki and voices in Greek, Hebrew, and Ladino, our Ada Finifter Communal Room transformed back into the legendary Sephardic coffee house ‘El Amaneser’ that once stood on this very same spot on Broome Street a century ago.

We are not only heirs to a rich legacy, but we are writing our own new chapter, in the present, guided by our ancestors and inspired by each other. In that vein, I have started interviewing our community members to record stories for the Romaniote American Oral History Project. We are aiming to finish recording stories over the next month, so **please email me at Theo@kkjasm.org if you have stories or memories to share!**

In just another two weeks we will celebrate the holiday of Purim with song, costumes, drinking, gift-giving, and revelry. What we are celebrating is not just the victory of the Jewish people in ancient Persia but the total reversal of fates — how the story flipped from the near destruction of our people to our redemption. In that sense, mixed with our joy let us take a solemn moment to do our part to also make this Purim a reversal — both inside ourselves and in society at large.

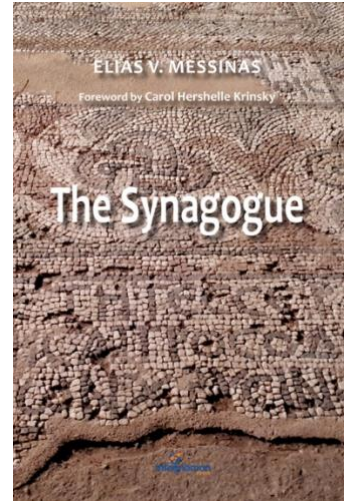
May we have ample cause for celebration soon! Hag Purim Sameah.

Theo

New Book on the Synagogues of Greece

"The Synagogue" by Elias Messinas

The new book in English "The Synagogue" by Elias Messinas, a Greek Romaniote Yale-educated architect, was just released. The book covers three decades of survey and study of synagogues in Greece. In the book, the architect's journey brings him to sites of former Jewish communities, in Didimoticho, Komotini, Xanthi, Halkida, Veroia and Aegina. There he discovers the ruins of demolished synagogues, and surveys abandoned synagogues in Xanthi and Komotini, just before they are demolished. In Aegina he follows the footsteps of American-Jewish archaeologist Belle Mazur, who studied the mosaic of the ancient synagogue in 1932. In Didimoticho, a neighbor takes him to an inaccessible Jewish cemetery. In each location, a new surprise awaits him. Interviews with local Jews and non-Jews reveal secrets of Jewish life, and the text is enriched with personal notes from the architect's travel sketchbooks. Historic narrative is based on extensive in-situ and archival research in Greece, Israel, and Europe, and the surveys on first-hand documentation, a rare account of the state of Greek Jewish monuments in the early 1990s.



"Architect and researcher Elias Messinas has done something unusual in this book. He offers human-interest stories about the synagogues of Greece, not the usual descriptive prose. He thereby appeals to readers who would not respond to academic accounts of the buildings and communities that experienced mass destruction and neglect in the past century. His stories present history as an aspect of people's experience, and architecture as a way to embody that experience. The heartfelt emotion of the author is evident throughout this text, and the result is a distinctive form of history writing." Prof. Carol Herselle Krinsky, Architectural historian, New York University, author of 'Synagogues of Europe'

Kehila Kedosha Janina is proud to offer this new book for \$20 plus \$5 shipping. Email info@kkjism.org to order your copy today.

News from Jewish Greece

Ioannina

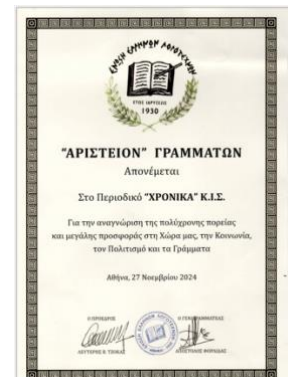
Ioannina Hospital Clinic Named in Memory of Moses Elisaf

The late Moses Elisaf left his indelible mark on the Internal Medicine Clinic of the University Hospital of Ioannina, which he founded. The Internal Medicine Clinic was the "second home" of the Professor of Internal Medicine until his election and assumption of his duties at the City Hall of Ioannina. His great love, Medicine, was never abandoned. Patients, students, and colleagues had and still have to remember Moses Elisaf's passion for contribution, his love for his fellow man, the patient. Last month, in a modest ceremony, the administration of the University Hospital of Ioannina honored the man, the scientist, Moses Elisaf. The Internal Medicine Clinic of the University Hospital, the Clinic he founded and served until his death now bears his name. The Director of the General Hospital, Mr. Spyros Derdemezis, paid tribute to the man who identified his life with the University Hospital. "...a small tribute to a man who founded and operated the Internal Medicine Clinic," said Mr. Derdemezis, unveiling the inscription with the name of the deceased who left an irreplaceable void. Present at the ceremony were his beloved wife, Patra Hatzigianni-Elisaf, the doctors and nurses who worked with him, moved that this small honor is being given to a great man. The Director of the Department of Internal Medicine, Professor Georgios Liamis, visibly moved, spoke about the great work accomplished by Moses Elisaf. "...he was a personality who radiated beyond the narrow boundaries of our city, with a valuable work, an imprint that will remain indelible in all of us. The continuation of his work is a challenge for us. Today, in many universities in the country, but also abroad, doctors who were trained in the Department of Internal Medicine, staff the largest institutions in the country and abroad. We are grateful that we met him on our path and we will always have in our thoughts the continuation of his multifaceted work", he emphasized. Source: printed edition PROINA NEA (Ioannina)



Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS) Honored for Their Publication "Chronika"

The Union of Greek Writers (UEL) awarded the "Excellence in Letters" to the KIS magazine "Chronika" as "recognition of the long-standing course and great contribution to our Country, Society, Culture and Letters", as characteristically stated in the papyrus. The UEL, founded in 1930, is the oldest literary association in our country, and in 2025 it will complete 95 years of active presence in the literary field. The Board of Directors of the UEL, at its meeting of 21.9.2024, unanimously decided - among other things - to "award the 'Excellence in Letters' to newspapers and magazines, associations and individuals, who are still resisting and constitute a 'mound' of culture in the difficult times we are going through". Chronika magazine is among those that received this special distinction. The Award of Excellence recognizes Chronika's contribution - in its 47 years of publication - to the documentation of the history and cultural heritage of Greek Jews as well as the preservation of the Memory of the Holocaust, and honors the contribution of Greek Jewry to Greek Letters.



Athens

Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 in Athens

On Monday, January 27, 2025, the events of the Jewish Community of Athens and the Attica Region took place for International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In the morning, a wreath was laid by H.E. the President of the Republic Katerina Sakellariopoulou, at the Holocaust Memorial in Athens, in memory of the Greek Jewish victims of the Holocaust, in the presence of the public and officials. Among those who attended the event were the Minister of Tourism, Ms. Olga Kefalogianni, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. G. Kotsiras, the Minister of Health, Mr. A. Georgiadis, the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. Economou, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice, Mr. G. Floridis and the Mayor of Athens, Mr. Haris Doukas. The presence and laying of a wreath by one of the few survivors still alive, Ms. Naki Bega, a survivor of the Holocaust, was moving.



The main event took place that same afternoon at the Old Depot of the Greek Socialist Workers' Party (OSY) in Athens and gathered a large crowd and personalities from the political, diplomatic, and cultural scenes. The event began with a moving reference to the historic day, as this year marks 80 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp by Soviet troops, an event that revealed to the world for the first time the horrors of the Holocaust.

The freight car, which was granted by the OSE to the I.K. Athens and was restored with funding from the German Foreign Ministry using the resources of the Hellenic-German Fund for the Future, was unveiled and presented for the first time. It is a freight car identical to those used to transport Jews from Greece and the occupied countries of Europe to their places of extermination. The lighting of the flame in memory of the victims of the Holocaust was moving, with the presence of two survivors of the concentration camps, Ms. Russell-Lola Angel and Ms. Nakis Bega, who lit the candle in memory of the lost victims.

During the event, greetings and speeches were delivered, led by the Deputy Governor of Attica, Mrs. Christina Kefalogianni, who emphasized the importance of education and preserving the memory of the Holocaust as a necessary condition for combating anti-Semitism and intolerance.

The President of the Central Jewish Council of Greece, Mr. David Saltiel, pointed out the value of memory and justice, emphasizing the constant need for unity and resistance against anti-Semitism.

The Minister of State, Mr. Akis Skertsos, the keynote speaker of the event, reiterated the Greek government's commitment to defending the memory of the Holocaust and to strictly confronting all forms of racism and hatred. As he characteristically stated, "the duty of culture is to build new knowledge on the already gained knowledge of our ancestors and to learn from tragedies so as not to repeat them in the future." He also mentioned that the old OSE carriage that will be placed at the Holocaust Memorial in Thessio, next to the train tracks, will be a fragment of memory, to remind us that in this world, which is getting smaller and at the same time expanding, each of us needs everyone else.

The Ambassador of the State of Israel to Greece, Mr. Noam Katz, thanked the I.K. of Athens for the organization and emphasized the importance of international cooperation in combating anti-Semitic phenomena.

The President of the Jewish Community of Athens, Mr. Albertos Taraboulos, concluded his speech by underlining the importance of memory for the younger generation and the continuous contribution to the promotion of historical truth.

Special mention was made to the people who contributed to the restoration of the memory of the Holocaust, and were honored with special distinctions for their work in preserving historical memory and combating

forgetting. The honorees were the ladies and gentlemen, Artemis Alkalai, an artist, who through her work captures the tragic consequences of the Holocaust, Rachel and Moses Kapon, for their publishing activities and their contribution to the rescue and recording of the history of Greek Jews, and Renee Revach, for her photographic work, which examines her personal connection to Auschwitz and the memory of her family.

The event concluded with the presentation of a theatrical performance entitled "Unknown Number", inspired by the play by Alberto Eskenazis, with scenes selected by Aris Emmanuel, performed by Alberto Fais and directed by the author.

The Jewish Community of Athens expresses its warm thanks to all participants and the organizations that supported the event. The memory of the victims of the Holocaust continues to remain alive in our hearts and we will continue to fight for a world without hatred and racism.

Tu BiShvat Celebration at the Athens Jewish Community Center

A celebration with great participation and a warm atmosphere! On February 12, 2025, we had the pleasure of celebrating Tu Bishvat at our Community Center, with the traditional Seder of the day. Members of our Community led the event, with more than 140 participants, which surpassed any previous one. At the Center, where we tasted fruit and said the corresponding prayers with the guidance of our Rabbi, it was embraced with great joy and interest by the attendees. Rabbi Gabriel Negrin gave us a explanation in detail to the beautiful meaning of the day, the traditions and Halachot. The dishes offered by our Community, all inspired by the tradition of the day and beautifully served, gave the celebration a special "flavor". Special thanks are due to Mr. Sammy Touron, who offered another year the fruits of the evening. The beautiful atmosphere was complemented by the live music of the Rast Hitzaz Rebetiko Band, which gave the attendees an unforgettable night. Many thanks and congratulations are due to the organizers of the event, our Rabbi, and the Religious Committee. We also thank the Community Center Committee for their assistance to the organizers, which was necessary and contributed substantially to the success of the effort. Tu Bishvat Sameach to all!



Israeli tourists attacked in Athens for speaking Hebrew, wearing Star of David

Man in 40s reportedly stabbed in the forehead; Foreign Ministry says one assailant fled while the other, 'Gazan known to have participated in pro-Palestinian protests,' detained

Two men attacked a group of Israeli tourists in Athens early Saturday after overhearing them speak Hebrew and noticing their Star of David necklaces, the Foreign Ministry said, with one man in his forties reportedly being stabbed in the forehead before police intervened.

None of the victims required hospitalization, according to the Foreign Ministry, which said one assailant fled and was still at large, while the other, a "Gazan known to have participated in pro-Palestinian demonstrations," was apprehended.

Local outlet News 24/7 identified both attackers as Palestinians. The outlet said the detained assailant is 32 years old and being charged with race-based violence, causing bodily harm and violating Greek law on bearing arms. The attackers reportedly targeted an Israeli couple who had just left a taberna on central Athens' popular Ermou road. Other Israelis were said to have dined in the restaurant as well.

Uzi Bukai, an Israeli eyewitness quoted by Israel Hayom, reported hearing an Arabic cry right before the attack. "It was at about 2 or 3 a.m., a man and a woman were attacked," said Bukai.

"We were with a couple of friends and there were other Israelis who exited the taberna," he said. "Suddenly we heard, 'Allah Akbar,' and [an assailant] started stabbing the Israelis."

"I ran to the Israelis, they said they'd been stabbed. I ran to the cops, they came and intervened," he added. "If police hadn't intervened... it would've been much worse."

Athens, a popular destination among Israelis due to its proximity and low prices, has seen several attacks on Israeli tourists since October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists stormed southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

The Israeli National Security Council's current guidelines for travel to Greece put the country's threat level at two, of a possible four, meaning Israelis and Jews are advised to take "increased precautionary measures" there. Last year, Greek police arrested seven people accused of planning to attack a synagogue and Israeli-owned hotel in central Athens. The year before, Greece detained two people thought to have been sent by Iran to attack a kosher restaurant in the city.

Greek Jewry Wins an Important Legal Battle

On Tuesday, 14.01.2025, the appeal filed by Avraam - Minos Moysis against Stefanos Chios and Georgios Gasiamis regarding the defamatory and insulting publication that had been posted on the website "MAKELEIO."

In particular, the Court heard the appeals filed by both the two defendants against the conviction in first instance and by the Public Prosecutor of the Athens Misdemeanor Court. Thus, in acceptance of the concurring opinion of the Public Prosecutor of the Athens Misdemeanor Court of the seat, the **three-member Athens Misdemeanor Court found both defendants guilty and sentenced them to 15 months in prison each, suspended for 3 years, for the offense of slander. (CC 363) and even with the aggravating circumstance of racist characteristics (CC 82A)**. The Court, in other words, ruled in this case that the defamatory defamation was committed against the victim, who was chosen by the defendants precisely because of the characteristics of his religion, and for this reason it increased the initial penalty imposed by the first-instance criminal court.

The attorneys for Minos Moses, the plaintiff supporting the accusation, were Ovadias Namias and Elias Konstantopoulos, and the prosecution witnesses were Victor Isaac Eliezer and Panos Psomas. This is an important and rare conviction with the aggravating circumstance of racist characteristics.

Volos

Holocaust Commemorations in Volos

In a climate of emotion and reflection, the events for the National Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust took place in Volos on Sunday, February 2.2.2025. The city honored the memory of the victims with two important events: the laying of wreaths at the Holocaust Memorial in Rigas Feraios Square and the main event at the Volos Municipal Theater "Vangelis Papathanasiou".



Announcement of the Volos Jewish Community on the Courageous Speech of Metropolitan Demetriados Ignatios



At the recent event for this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day, held at the Volos Municipal Theater, Metropolitan Ignatius - with bravery and courage - publicly expressed the Church's apology for the past stance towards long-standing phenomena of antisemitism.

We consider this move to be a pioneering and exceptional act of responsibility and spiritual maturity. For the first time, the word "apology" was heard from an ecclesiastical leader regarding the acceptance of responsibility and the condemnation of anti-Semitism, which demonstrates sincerity and the willingness to build a society that respects diversity and life.

Our Community feels proud and grateful for this initiative, which aims to further build a spirit of mutual understanding, while paving the way for a society free from discrimination and hatred. His Eminence's stance is a model of leadership and courage, and an example to all those who strive for justice and peaceful coexistence.

We honor and warmly thank His Eminence Metropolitan Ignatius for his bold stance, a stance that echoes that of his predecessors, the blessed Metropolitan Ioakim and the blessed Archbishop Christodoulos. It was and is a stance with a positive impact on the local community and beyond.

Volos Music School– Unveiling of a Memorial Stone for the 1,500,000 Children Killed

On Feb 3, 2025, at the Volos Municipal Theater "Vangelis Papathanasiou", the event of the Magnesia Secondary Education Directorate for the Holocaust took place. The event was assigned this year to the Volos Music School, where students and teachers honored the anniversary with a moving musical and artistic presentation, which was also attended by other school units.

Professors Zafiris Koukouselis, Kerasia Siara and Maria Foulidou were in charge of the music. The event featured selected literary excerpts about the Holocaust, chosen by Professor Pepo Salem. The presentation was undertaken by Professor Vasilis Kleitsas.



Through their emotional performances and artistic sensitivity, the one hundred students enchanted and moved the audience, conveying the timeless message of remembrance and peace.

The greeting sent by the Deputy Minister of Education, Religious Affairs & Sports, Ms. Zetta Makri, was read, while greetings were given by the Deputy Mayor of Education, Ms. Georgia Bondou-Tokali, the Quality Supervisor of Secondary Education of Magnesia, Ms. Haido Natsi, the President of the Jewish Community of

Volos, Mr. Marcel Solomon, the Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany Volos in Volos, Mr. Georgios Paparizos, the Vice President of the Parents and Guardians Association of the Volos Music School, Mr. Iordanis Papazoglou, the Director of the Volos Music School, Mr. Panagiotis Mandrakis, the Director of the Secondary Education Directorate of Magnesia, Mr. Socrates Savelidis, the representative of the Metropolitan of Demetrias, Mr. Ignatius Archimandrite Fr. Epiphanius Economou.

Mr. Savelidis, in a retraction of his speech, said characteristically: "... Marcel, Nikos as they called him, was hidden and he managed to be saved" and continued in a strident voice: "but the 1,500,000 children were not."

During the event, the President of the Jewish Community of Volos, Mr. Marcel Solomon, was honored by the Magnesia Secondary Education Directorate and the Volos Music School for his collaboration with the entire educational community of Magnesia for his timeless contribution to it. He said, among other things: "I am very moved that you are honoring me today. However, I believe that you should be the honorees for highlighting the Holocaust. I have heard excellent speeches at events about the Holocaust, but the best and most moving was the "speech" of the children with their music."

Later, a commemorative column dedicated to the memory of the 1,500,000 children who were killed in concentration camps during the Nazi atrocity was unveiled. The column was placed in the area of the University Library, marking a timeless point of memory and reflection. The Jewish Community of Volos thanked the Volos Music School, the Director Mr. Panagiotis Mandrakis, the teachers, the students who participated and especially the Director of the Magnesia Primary Education Directorate Mr. Socrates Savelidis for his timeless love and especially for his continuous efforts to highlight the importance of the Holocaust.

Jewish Youth Club of Greece Visits Volos

On February 23, 2025 the Jewish Youth Club of Greece (E.N.E.) visited the Community Center of the Jewish Community of Volos, as part of its scheduled seminar in Volos and Portaria.



The visit concerned all young people and had the following main objectives:

1. The creation of a group of volunteers who will actively support the actions of E.N.E.
2. The shaping of the character of E.N.E. through the participation of young people and
3. The establishment of active groups that will contribute to the organization and support of future actions in the Greek Jewish communities.

The Volos Youth Club welcomed the young people in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, offering coffee, tea, bagels, falafel and soft drinks.

Also present was Rabbi Gabriel Negrin from Athens, who conducted the Mincha service and later spoke about the importance of Shabbat, candles, bread (amotzi), as well as philosophical topics, offering valuable knowledge and inspiration to the participants. The young people participated in planned activities at the Community Center, where, among other things, they made candles in various colors and scents.

Subsequently, the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Volos Synagogue, Mr. Michalis Sabettai, presented the history of the Volos Community, the Synagogue and its broader presence in the region, analyzing important issues that concern it, and a dialogue followed.

The evening service began by bringing together young and old, filling the Synagogue space with vibrancy and enthusiasm. It was an event that the Volos Youth Union welcomed with joy, looking to the future with optimism and recognizing that youth is our hope and continuity.

We Must Never Forget

March is always a difficult month for Greek Jewry, with many important anniversaries involving the deportation of Greek Jewry during the Holocaust.

"The first transport of Greek Jews left Salonika on March 15, 1943: the transport contained 2,800 Jews. They arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau on March 20. According to the Official Records of Auschwitz: ` 2,800 Jewish men, women and children from the ghetto in Salonika have arrived with an RSHA transport from Greece. Following the selection, 417 men, given Nos. 109371-109787, and 192 women, given Nos. 38721-38912, are admitted to the camp as prisoners. The other approximately 2,191 people are killed in the gas chambers."¹

There were three other transports from Salonika in to arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau in March of 1943; arriving on March 24th, 25th and 30th, in cattle cars containing a total of 7,202 Jews. Of these, 5,240 went directly to the gas chambers.²



The largest deportation to leave Greece were Jews from Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Athens, Larissa, Trikala, Volos, Chalkis, Patra and Kastoria. The date of March 25, 1944, Greek Independence Day, was specifically chosen to show the Greeks how meaningless was their day of independence.

Eftichia Nachmias Nachman, in her book, *Journey to the Past*, Eftichia interviewed survivors, giving us an emotional picture of the plight of Ioannina Jews.

Stella Abraham from Ioannina:

After nine-ten days (in a warehouse in Larissa), they gathered us all and loaded us onto trains. I can't tell you how many of us there were: one on top of the other. They kept pushing us. Then they threw a barrel in for us to use as a toilet. The Red Cross took care of us again, bringing us many things. But, in that train... one on top of the other. We were crying; we were trying to look out of the window but we couldn't see a thing. The only thing we knew was that the train was traveling on. After a while, we would stop; they would order the men to empty the barrels because they stank. Little children needed to go to the toilet, but we grown-ups were so ashamed, we could not.... This terrible situation lasted for nine whole days. Some old men died; they would stop the trains and remove the bodies. For so many days we weren't allowed to get off at all, not even to get some fresh air. We just stopped for a short time, they opened the doors, emptied the barrels, brought them in again and we went on, and on, and on....

The story of Greek Jewry in the Holocaust is often called the "orphan child" of Holocaust research. For the most part, the story of the Holocaust has been told by the Ashkenazim, and the fate of Sephardic Jews has often been overlooked. It is only recently that their story and, particularly, the story of Greek Jewry is being told. Many factors led to the tremendous Holocaust losses of Greek Jews. There is no denying that factors within Greece and variables specific to Greek Jewry added to these losses. There is no denying that if information was available to Greek Jews on the concentration camps, information that was known at the time of their deportation, many of these losses could have been prevented. There is no denying that the timing of their arrival, unfortunately timed to coincide with the completion of the gas chambers and the crematoria, also added to their losses. There is also no denial that the longer journey of Greek Jews to the camps, and the fact that life was harsher for them once they arrived, added to their losses and that these losses were statistically disproportionate to those of Jews from other European countries. By analyzing these other variables, we are able to get a clearer, more complete, picture of why 87% of Greek Jewry were lost during the Holocaust. These explanations will never ease the pain but, hopefully, they will enable us to better understand the "why."²



¹ From The Story Behind the Statistics. Variables Affecting the Tremendous Losses of Greek Jewry During the Holocaust. Published in The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, March 20, 2017, Ikonomopoulos, Marcia-Haddad

² Ibid

Cyprus

Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Mark 76th Anniversary of Cypriot Internment Camps' Closure

Full article [Here](#)

Snunith Shoham says she was only a few months old in February 1947 when British authorities permitted her family to leave one of around a dozen internment camps in Cyprus that held tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors and head for "the homeland." Cyprus was at the time under British colonial rule.



Shoham, a professor at the Israeli Bar-Ilan University who also chairs an organization representing Jewish people interned in Cyprus, flew to Nicosia to attend on Tuesday a ceremony marking the 76th anniversary of the internment camps' closure in February 1949.

The ceremony was held at a Cypriot National Guard base that formerly housed a British military hospital where Shoham was born. About 2,200 babies were born in Cypriot internment camps that held some 52,000 survivors, in the aftermath of World War II, over the entire span of their operation of about four years, according to official records.

Shoham says conditions in the camps were so awful – especially for youngsters – that the British granted special dispensation to several hundred families with newborns and small children to make the trek in search of a new life. The influx of people making the journey was so big that British authorities tried to halt it.

At the time, ordinary Cypriots, who worked in the camps and sympathized with the plight of the survivors, helped in whatever way they could, says Shoham. "The Cypriot workers did many small, yet significant services for the (camp) detainees," Shoham said addressing the ceremony attendees. "We will never forget the assistance of the local Cypriots."

Although the existence of the internment camps in Cyprus isn't widely known, the 1960 Hollywood historical drama "Exodus" starring Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint shed light on the issue. "On their path to their new homeland, Cyprus became a temporary haven for these survivors, offering them security and care in a world that had so often denied them both," Cypriot Defence Ministry official Anna Aristotelous said during the ceremony.

Israeli Ambassador Oren Anolik called the internment camps "a fundamental link between Israel and Cyprus" that "forged an enduring bond between our peoples."

One of those Cypriots who aided Jewish survivors was Capt. Paul Rossides who had volunteered as a harbor pilot at Famagusta port to guide refugee-laden ships where they were refueled and restocked. Capt. Rossides' daughter Irinoulas Loizou, 87, who also attended the ceremony, recalled the pots of coffee her mother prepared for her dad to keep him alert as he worked through the night piloting the ships in and out of the port.



"My father was a very courageous man who always offered his help to those in need regardless of the situation or potential risks to himself," she said.

Loizou said her father's work earned recognition from Israeli officials including a plaque he was presented with in July 1949 by Ephraim Gilan, the camp commander of the Jewish paramilitary organization the Haganah.

The plaque was inscribed with the words: "In recognition for outstanding services rendered to the internees of Karaolos and Xylotympou camps during the years 1946-1949."

Pfizer's CEO, Dr. Albert Bourla, in Conversation With Rabbi Angela Buchdahl

Watch the video of this recent event on Youtube [Here](#)

Born to Holocaust survivors and raised in the tightknit Sephardic community of Thessaloniki, Greece, Dr. Albert Bourla is wired to succeed in difficult circumstances.



After working at Pfizer for nearly three decades, Dr. Bourla was appointed the CEO of Pfizer in 2019. Only a year later, he faced the biggest challenge of his career: leading the development of a COVID-19 vaccine in record speed. Refusing public funding and instead investing \$2 billion at-risk, Dr. Bourla's leadership pushed the boundaries of science and became the basis for his Bronze Medal-winning book, "Moonshot: Inside Pfizer's Nine-Month Race to Make the Impossible Possible."

Driven to transform patients' lives and deliver joy, Dr. Bourla's innovative approach to medicine is grounded in purpose and courage. In 2022, Dr. Bourla was awarded the prestigious Genesis Prize, which recognizes Jewish individuals for professional achievement and contributions to humanity. An important voice in the global fight against antisemitism, he donated the \$1 million prize towards the construction of the Holocaust Museum of Greece.

Dr. Bourla has been an outspoken voice against antisemitism, using his platform to sound the alarm about rising hatred globally. And since the tragic events of October 7th, he has been a consistent advocate on behalf of the hostages, pressuring leaders across the world to do everything possible to fight for their release. Central Synagogue is proud to host this opportunity to hear from one of the most influential Jewish leaders of our time in conversation with Rabbi Angela Buchdahl.

The Bible's First Translation Was in Greek Full article [Here](#)

The Bible is the biggest-selling and most read book in human history; originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, the first translation of the Bible into another language, called the Septuagint, was in Greek.



The translation of the Old Testament into Koine Greek in the third century BC took place within a historical context that was important for the development of the "Tanakh," or Hebrew Bible, and the growth of Judaism and Christianity.

The Septuagint

Hebrew, the original language of the Jews, ceased to be a spoken language during the exile or post-exile period, and Aramaic became the lingua franca or common language of the Jewish people.

With the rise of Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire, Diaspora Jews became Hellenized; and for some Jews, especially those living in Ptolemaic Egypt, Greek had become their primary language. Therefore, it became necessary for the Hebraic laws to be translated into Greek.

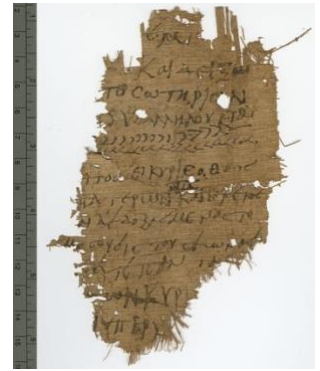
Demetrius of Phalerum, the chief librarian of the library of Alexandria, urged Egypt's Pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus to translate the Hebrew law into Greek to increase the library's collection of books.

The high priest chose six men from each of the twelve Hebrew tribes, for 72 in all; after a sermon regarding the law, the translators arrived in Alexandria. For the next seven days he posed philosophical questions to the translators. The work of the 72 was reportedly completed in 72 days. They mainly translated the Hebrew law, or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible today. The Jews of Alexandria, upon reading the law in Greek, asked for copies of the translation and cursed those who dared to change the translation. The king rewarded the translators handsomely and sent them home. This story is recounted in "The Letter of Aristeas to

Philocrates," a Hellenistic-era work from the 3rd century BC, known to be the oldest text that mentions the library of Alexandria.

The work bears this name because it was written by Aristeas, a courtier of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, to his brother Philocrates. In the missive he recounts the reasons for the Greek translation of the Hebrew laws. However, it should be pointed out that the letter is considered by many scholars as questionable.

The main intention of the translation was to impose the Greek Septuagint over any other version of the Hebrew Bible. In the translation, moreover, they portray Zeus as another name for the God of Israel. Twenty handwritten copies of the letter in Greek, written from the 11th to the 15th century, survive.



The 70 translators

Originally there were 72 translators, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, but it was shortened to 70, and therefore they gave the work the name "Septuagint," or "the book of the 70s." When the Jewish scholars were brought to Alexandria, the king asked them philosophical and profound questions for seven days. Ptolemy II Philadelphus was amazed at the wisdom of the 72 men. A miraculous event supposedly occurred, when, after 72 days, the translators drew up exact copies of the Septuagint separately.

The story that is known through the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates was repeated in later sources, including Philo of Alexandria, and Josephus in "Antiquities of the Jews." It is also found in the Tractate Megillah of the Babylonian Talmud, where it says:

"King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did."

The Importance of the Septuagint

After the translation of the Torah, the other books of the Old Testament were translated. The New Testament was originally written in Greek.

This Greek translation of the Bible is important because it added theological concepts that help to better understand the religious and political context in which the prophets lived. The Septuagint has helped scholars determine which manuscripts are most reliable, giving a faithful translation of the Old Testament. In addition, the Septuagint helps to better understand Jewish theology, by better understanding the worship practices of the Jewish people.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are names entered into the Bible through the Septuagint. Just as the division of the books into law, history, poetry, and prophets, as well as the subdivision of books like 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, etc., are due to the Septuagint.

The Septuagint was the Bible of the early church, and the most cited text by the Apostles and authors of the New Testament. Mark 7: 6-7 says: 'Jesus replied, "Isaiah was right about you hypocrites when he said, 'These people claim they honor me, but in their thinking they are far from me. There's no point in their worship of me, for what they teach as doctrines are merely human rules', referring to the Septuagint.

And the Apostle Paul, the greatest writer of the New Testament, didn't write his letters in vulgate Greek, he wrote in language worthy of a learned man who knew Greek perfectly and already had the Septuagint in his mind. Before the New Testament was written, the Old Testament had already been translated into Greek. This facilitated the understanding and creation of the Bible as we know it today. Today, the Bible has been fully translated into 450 languages.

Metropolitan Museum to Return Ancient Bronze Griffin's Head to Greece Full article [Here](#)

The head of a griffin from 7th century B.C. is believed to have been taken from a museum in Olympia in the 1930s and later sold on the art market.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is returning to Greece the bronze head of a griffin, the mythological creature, after determining that the artifact from the 7th century B.C. was likely stolen from an archaeological museum in Olympia in the 1930s.

The museum said the head, which entered the collection as a gift from a former trustee in 1972, will be turned over to Greece's minister of culture at a ceremony Monday at the Met.

Though discussions about the provenance of the piece have been underway since 2018, the museum said the decision to return it was finalized only a few months ago. It will be the first piece from the Met's collection to be repatriated since the museum installed a new executive, Lucian Simmons, last year to lead an expanded provenance research unit.

The museum chose to devote more research efforts to determining the provenance of its expansive holdings after a series of seizures of looted artifacts and increased scrutiny over the protocols it had used to accept and purchase works and objects, particularly antiquities. As head of provenance research, a newly created role, Simmons, a former executive at Sotheby's, oversees a team of analysts that has been expanded from 6 to 11.

The ancient Greeks often decorated their bronze cauldrons, used to honor the gods, with the head of a griffin, whose visage is that of an eagle but whose body is that of a lion. On its website, the Met said that the cauldrons set on tripods or conical stands were often used as votive gifts dedicated in Greek sanctuaries from the 8th to the 6th centuries B.C.E.

The head had been displayed at the entrance to The Met's Greek and Roman galleries since 1999. It was originally discovered in a river bed in Olympia, in the Peloponnese region of Greece, in 1914 by the curator of the Archaeological Museum of Olympia, but it went missing roughly two decades later, the Met said in a statement. It said research by the Met and Greek authorities showed the antiquity had been stolen. The head came to the Met in a bequest from Walter C. Baker, a financier and art collector and Met trustee who had bought it in 1948 from a dealer in New York.

"The Met and the Greek Ministry agreed to the return of the Griffin after careful review of records and letters determining that it could not have legitimately left the Archaeological Museum of Olympia," the Met said in the statement. "This research revealed that the theft of the object occurred under the watch of the head of the Archaeological Museum of Olympia, for which he was referred for criminal prosecution over 80 years ago."

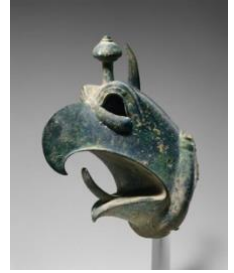
The work will be lent back to The Met for an exhibition next year, the Met said.

"The Met is honored to collaborate with the Hellenic Republic on the return of this extraordinary object," said Max Hollein, the museum's director and chief executive. "We are grateful for our long-standing partnership with the Greek government, and look forward to continued engagement and opportunities for cultural exchange."

Loan agreements have become a tool for museums looking to continue to display important items at a time when many countries are seeking the return of their cultural heritage. In 2022, the Met announced another arrangement with Greece to display one of the world's most significant privately assembled collections of Cycladic antiquities — mostly marble figures and vessels created thousands of years ago in the Cyclades, a group of islands off the coast of Greece in the Aegean Sea.

The works were collected by the businessman and philanthropist Leonard N. Stern. Stern gave his collection to Greece, and in an agreement with the Met and the Greek government, most of the objects are to remain on view at the museum for 25 years, with an acknowledgment that the collection belongs to the Greek state, and with select works periodically returning to Greece. The agreement foresees that the loan can be extended.

On Tuesday, Greek officials will take part in a panel discussion at the Met about the cooperation between the museum and Greece, titled "The Cyclades at the Met: a New Model of Collaboration." Greek officials are also scheduled on Tuesday to attend a ceremony at the Manhattan district attorney's office where the officials are to receive 11 artifacts. The artifacts, which were described as looted, had been seized by the office's Antiquities Trafficking Unit from private collectors.



The Scholars Who Deciphered the Ancient Greek Script Linear B [Full article Here](#)

If not for the incredible determination and talent of two scholars, Alice Kober and Michael Ventris, the ancient Greek script Linear B would likely remain a mystery today.

While many linguists and archaeologists contributed to the decipherment of the script, Ventris's and Kober's discoveries were some of the most important.

Linear B is considered the oldest known form of Greek, and the script predates the Greek alphabet by centuries. It is related to Linear A, an older script that remains undeciphered. Linear A was used to write the language of the Minoans, a Bronze-Age power that was centered on Crete while Linear B has now been linked to the Mycenaeans, who were present throughout the Peloponnese and Crete. When first discovered, however, Linear B was also thought to represent the language of the Minoans, not the Mycenaean. It was only through the work of scholars Kober and Ventris that this link could be established.



An example of Linear B script, the earliest known Greek writing. The script was deciphered with the work of many scholars but most prominently Michael Ventris and Alice Kober.

Linear B

Mycenaean Greek, the earliest known form of the language, was expressed using Linear B. The earliest writing with the script dates to around 1450 BC. As a script, Linear B contains eighty-seven syllabic signs, or symbols that represent sounds, and over a hundred ideographic signs, or symbols that represent objects, units of measurement, or commodities. These ideographic signs, also referred to as "signifying signs" do not correlate to a phonetic sound but to a word describing an object.

It seems that Linear B was used only in administrative contexts—not for literature or other endeavors. Fascinatingly, from the thousands of clay tablets upon which Linear B was inscribed, archaeologists have determined that not many different authors wrote the texts. In Pylos, a Mycenaean center in the western Peloponnese, there seems to have been only forty-five different authors while in Knossos, Crete, there were only sixty-six. Likely, there was a class of scribes that wrote all texts in each Mycenaean palace.

Astonishingly, with the fall of the Mycenaean during the Bronze Age Collapse, a period during which countless powerful Bronze-Age empires around the Mediterranean fell, the entire Linear B script was forgotten. During the period that followed the collapse, which is known as the Greek Dark Ages, there is no evidence of writing in the Greek world. Centuries later, unaware of the existence of Linear B, ancient Greeks developed their own script, the Greek alphabet, to write the same language. To date, Linear B is the only one of the Bronze Age Aegean scripts to be deciphered.

Michael Ventris, an English architect and self-taught linguist, cracked the code to the mysterious script, which haunted codebreakers, linguists, and archaeologists for decades.

Alice Kober's incredible contributions to deciphering Linear B

The contributions of Alice Kober, a Hungarian-American classicist from New York, made Ventris' astounding accomplishment possible. Kober, who was born in New York in 1906, was always an exceptional student. She attended Hunter College after receiving a scholarship in 1924 and began learning Latin and Ancient Greek there. After graduating from Hunter College, Kober received her master's degree and later PHD in Classics from Columbia University.

Throughout her studies, Kober taught at Hunter College and the associated Hunter College High School. Her love of teaching brought her to Brooklyn College, where she began as an associate professor of Classics and remained for the rest of her career. Beginning as a graduate student in the 1930s, Kober began studying Linear B, which was then undeciphered, on her own. The dedicated classicist maintained meticulous records on nearly two hundred thousand note cards that she had cut out by hand, and she filled over forty notebooks with her findings.

Kober developed a process in which she hand-punched holes onto each piece of data she recorded, and the hole corresponded to a way that the data could be sorted. This was extremely tiring work that proved essential in deciphering the script, as it made it possible to visualize connections and patterns in the script. The scholar was an expert in ancient and modern languages, including Hittite, Old Irish, Akkadian, Sumerian, Basque, Chinese, and Sanskrit among many

others. After her work on the script became known in 1946, Kober received a Guggenheim Fellowship to study Linear B full-time. Then, she met English archaeologist John Linton Myres, who helped her gain access to a trove of Linear B inscriptions copied down by Sir Arthur Evans, who excavated Knossos.

Kober's most significant contribution to the struggle to decipher Linear B was her discovery that the language it represented was inflected, or that words in the language changed form depending on their grammatical function. Although Kober made significant developments in decoding the script, her progress was cut short when she had to return to her teaching position. Much of her time was also taken up by proofreading and correcting Myres' book *Scripta Minoa*, for which she received no credit. Tragically, Kober died in 1950 at the age of just 43. A lifelong, heavy smoker, Kober likely died of cancer.

The race to decode a mysterious language - Susan Lupack
Michael Ventris uses Alice Kober's discoveries as inspiration

After her death, Michael Ventris, an architect and amateur linguist, built upon Kober's work, and eventually went on to decipher Linear B. Ventris, working on a hunch, was the first scholar to determine that the script was Mycenaean Greek. Born into a military family in 1922, he spent much of his youth studying languages and was fascinated with deciphering codes from a young age. The scholar's family moved to Switzerland when he was just a child, and it was there that his passion for learning languages began. The child learned French and German at an unbelievable pace and soon became fluent in Swiss German as well.

He was said to be able to learn a new language in a matter of weeks, an ability that allowed him to become fluent in numerous tongues. After eight years in Switzerland, Ventris and his family returned to England, and his parents divorced four years later in 1935. The teenager received a scholarship from the Stowe School, where he began studying Ancient Greek and Latin. Although extremely intelligent, Ventris did not receive good grades in school, as he spent all of his free time studying Linear B, allowing him little time to finish school work. He became interested in the script after hearing Sir Arthur Evans, the man who excavated Knossos, give a talk about Linear B in 1936, when Ventris was just fourteen years old. He developed a theory, one which turned out to be incorrect, that Linear B was linked to Etruscan, a mysterious but known language that was prevalent in ancient Italy until it was overcome by Latin.

At just eighteen years old, Ventris published an article titled "Introducing the Minoan Language" in the *American Journal of Archaeology* in which he explored the theory. His mother, who came from a high class and a Polish-Jewish family, supported Ventris' endeavors, and introduced him to her friends, who were scholars and artists. Her income was cut off, however, when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, a year after Ventris' father died. After his grandfather died as well, the scholar's mother struggled with clinical depression and died of an overdose of barbiturates soon after.

According to his friends, Ventris was so hurt by her death that he never spoke of her. Rather, he became extremely extroverted and excited about any matter he decided to pursue. In 1942, Ventris was conscripted into the Royal Air Force and became a navigator. Although never confirmed, many suspect that he also worked as a codebreaker. After the war, he was able to complete his studies as an architect and married his wife, Lois, who was also an architect.

Michael Ventris' monumental discovery

Ventris soon learned of Alice Kober's discovery that Linear B was likely an inflected language just like Greek. This sparked the imagination of the amateur linguist, who credited Kober as inspiration.

Following the hunch that Linear B could be a form of Ancient Greek rather than a separate language, Ventris set out to find patterns in the inscriptions available to him. He soon realized that certain symbols appear only in the texts found on Crete and nowhere else, and the same applied to those from the Peloponnese.

From this, the scholar guessed that these unique symbols likely represented place names, which was correct. Using this discovery, Ventris was soon able to work out each element of the script piece by piece. This discovery confirmed the theory that Crete became part of the Mycenaean civilization in the Late Bronze Age. Ventris' discovery was monumental and allowed scholars a deeper picture of Mycenaean civilization.

Tragically, however, Ventris died of a car accident at the age of thirty-four in 1956, just a few weeks before the publication of his book *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, which was written with English classicist John Chadwick. The scholar died instantly after colliding with a parked truck late at night while driving home. It was determined to be an accident.

Turkey

New Records Added to the JewishGen Turkey Database

The Sephardic Research Division is pleased to add its latest entry to the JewishGen Turkey Database: 1247 AH Izmir Census (1831-1832). There are more than 1,000 records in this collection, and it can be searched here: <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/turkey/>.

More Details:

The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839) was a time of foundational changes as the Sultan sought to modernize his empire. The Auspicious Incident of 1826 where the Sultan disbanded the Janissary Corps kicked off a series of foundational reforms that would become the Tanzimat ("Reorganization"). After disbanding the Janissary Corps, the Sultan wanted a new formalized way to monitor the population in line with Europe for drafting soldiers and taxing the draft-exempt population (ahl al-kitab, dhimmi, the People of the Book, Jews and Christians). This census was intended to act as a register that would be periodically added to as males were born, moved away, or died and both act for military and tax purposes. These censuses were exclusively males as daughters and wives were not recorded until much later in the Hamidian period (1876-1909).

The first real census of the Ottoman Empire was completed in 1247 AH (11 June 1831-20 May 1832 CE). It mainly covered the heartland of the Empire and the format of them was not standardized beyond recording tax status, given name, father's name (for the head of household or non-sons in the household), and age. Some of the census takers recorded occupations and other comments. Often times, additions as well as indications of whether the individual had died or moved away can also be found in different hands along with the date of registration.

In the Ottoman Empire, officially, there were no surnames even though much of the Jewish community and many of Christian communities of the Empire had stable surnames. The lack of surnames on most documents until much later in the 19th century is a consequence of this general rule, though, it was not always followed. While researching in the Ottoman Archives in 2022, Associate Director of the Sephardic Research Division Michael Waas discovered that for Izmir, there are three separate copies of this first census register. Two of them survive in full and appear to be copies of one another to some degree. There are over 3000 men and boys recorded in this first census. There are no surnames in it, though, it is possible to deduce the surnames based on other information. The third register, remarkably, the Ottoman official recorded the surnames. All of the names are recorded in Ottoman Turkish.

This register is fragmented and appears to be about one-third of the original register. More than 230 unique surnames were able to be extracted. Special thanks to Dr. Abraham Marcus for his advisement and assistance with translating Ottoman Turkish for this project and to Dr. Dov Cohen for his expertise on the genealogy and history of the Izmir Jewish community and collaborating on research.

For more information about the Sephardic Research Division, or to get involved, please contact Sarina Roffee (sroffee@JewishGen.org) or Michael Waas (mwaas@JewishGen.org).

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

Photo: The Beth Israel Synagogue in Izmir, Turkey (1986).
Courtesy of the ANU Museum of the Jewish People, Israel



Syria

After decades in exile, Syria's Jews visit Damascus Full article [Here](#)



For the first time in three decades, Rabbi Joseph Hamra and his son Henry read from a Torah scroll in a synagogue in the heart of Syria's capital Damascus, carefully passing their thumbs over the handwritten text as if still in awe they were back home.

The father and son fled Syria in the 1990s, after then-Syrian president Hafez al-Assad lifted a travel ban on the country's historic Jewish community, which had faced decades of restrictions including owning property or holding jobs.

Virtually all of the few thousand Jews in Syria promptly left, leaving less than 10 in the Syrian capital. Joseph and Henry - just a child at the time - settled in New York.

"Weren't we in a prison? So we wanted to see what was on the outside," said Joseph, now 77, on his reasons for leaving at the time. "Everyone else who left with us is dead."

But when Assad's son and successor as president Bashar al-Assad was toppled in December, the Hamra family began planning a once-unimaginable visit to Damascus with the help of the Syrian Emergency Task Force, a U.S.-based advocacy group.

They met with Syria's deputy foreign minister at the ministry, now managed by caretaker authorities installed by the Islamist rebels who ousted Assad after more than 50 years of family rule that saw itself as a bastion of secular Arab nationalism.

The new authorities have said all of Syria's communities will play a role in their country's future. But incidents of religious intolerance and reports of conservative Islamists proselytizing in public have kept more secular-minded Syrians and members of minority communities on edge.

Henry Hamra, now aged 48, said Syria's foreign ministry had now pledged to protect Jewish heritage. "We need the government's help, we need the government's security and it's going to happen," he said.

Walking through the narrow passages of the Old City, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, Henry and Joseph ran into their onetime neighbours - Palestinian Syrians - and later marveled at hand-painted Hebrew lettering at several synagogues.



"I want to see my kids come back and see this beautiful synagogue. It's a work of art," said Henry.

But some things were missing, he said, including a golden-lettered Torah from one of the synagogues that was now stored in a library in Israel, to where thousands of Syrian Jews fled throughout the 20th century.

While the synagogues and Jewish school in the Old City remained relatively well-preserved, Syria's largest synagogue in Jobar, an eastern suburb of Damascus, was reduced to rubble during the nearly 14-year civil war that erupted after Assad's violent suppression of protests against him.



Jobar was home to a large Jewish community for hundreds of years until the 1800s and the synagogue, built in honour of the biblical prophet Elijah, was looted before it was destroyed.

Israel

Sephardic Heritage Tour at the National Library of Israel Learn more and get tickets [Here](#)
The Jews of Spain: From the Rambam and the Zohar to Ladino Poetry

Sunday March 9th 15:00 - 16:30 The National Library of Israel, Kaplan 1, Jerusalem

A unique tour that traces the heritage of the Jews of Spain from the Rambam and the Zohar to Ladino poetry, told via the National Library collections. How did this community succeed in preserving its culture for hundreds of years in a changing world? How did encounters with Christianity and Islam affect the Jews of Spain? We will traverse eras and encounter historical personages by learning about the creativity and achievements of this vibrant Jewish world.



*The tour includes a short introduction which features an explanation on the National Library building's architecture, as well as the underground robotic stacks. The tour places an emphasis on Sephardic Jewish treasures, and includes a special display of items.

The Sephardic Heritage Tour is made possible thanks to the generous donation of the Samis Foundation, located in Seattle, Washington, USA, and dedicated to the memory of Samuel Israel.

Finding a Sephardic Jewish Community Changed My World

I now know that I'm not alone. By Rachel Pakan Full article [Here](#)

Sephardic Jews are loud, spirited and filled with Jewish joy. Ironically, we also tend to keep to ourselves.

In America, at least, Sephardic communities often live in tight-knit enclaves: Syrian Jews in Brooklyn and Deal, New Jersey; Persian Jews in Great Neck and Beverly Hills; Bukharian Jews in Queens. I proudly belong to the last group.



Like many in my community, my Jewish upbringing was purely Bukharian. We ate bakhsh on Shabbat, danced in the traditional joma during celebrations and held annual yushuvos — memorial dinners — for my late grandfathers. While I was exposed to Ashkenazi traditions in high school, I never quite had meaningful interactions with Sephardim outside of my community — that is, until I became a Sephardi House Fellow at the American Sephardi Federation (ASF).

I applied for the fellowship between high school and college, after a Jewish content creator suggested it to me over Instagram. At the time, I longed to find a Jewish community that I could connect with, unable to relate to some of my community's deep-set traditionalism or the alternatives offered by more progressive Ashkenazi circles. Luckily, all of my hopes were realized, and then some.

Throughout the year-long fellowship, I met virtually with about thirty Sephardi college students from across the country, discussing Sephardic cultural and liturgical history and hearing from the most prominent leaders in the Sephardic world. With each meeting, it became increasingly clear to me that, contrary to the [Ashkenormative lens](#) through which Jewish history is often presented, Sephardic Jews weren't side characters in the Jewish narrative — we were integral to it.

But if I had to distill the fellowship down to a single, defining experience, it wouldn't be any of our countless, enlightening Zoom discussions. It would be the Shabbaton — an in-person weekend spending Shabbat together — that we shared in New York City.

Our first “icebreaker” game at the Shabbaton: *If the room were a map, with the left side being the Westernmost point of the U.S. and the right side being the Easternmost point of Asia, stand where you were born.* Lots of us crowded around “New York” and “New Jersey,” with most others speckled across the “United States.”

Move to where your parents were born. We were more spread out now. Some people moved to Israel or Iran; I and a few others moved far eastward towards Uzbekistan.

Now, move to where your grandparents were born. We dispersed all over the map: Syria, Yemen, Turkey, Mexico, Greece, Morocco, Iraq and more. I felt honored to be in the presence of such astonishing Jewish diversity.

It soon became time for Shabbat. As we sang “Shalom Aleichem” before Friday-night kiddush, each of our arms slowly wrapped across an adjacent shoulder, until we were all linked together, swaying to the verses in a giant group hug. In that moment, we were no longer strangers; we melded into a unit, bound by reverence for our traditions and a deep sense of shared identity.

The singing didn’t stop there. Guided by our fellowship directors, throughout the Shabbaton, we learned songs in Hebrew and [Ladino](#) (*Avraham Avinu, padre kerido, padre bendicho, lus de Israel!*) and made them our own, clapping and thrumming on the tables to their rhythm as if we had known them all our lives.

But most beautifully, we broke out into song and dance on our own, without any prompting from our leaders. Our energy was electric; our connection was palpable. Given the tumultuous state of the Jewish world at that time, it was the therapy and healing we all needed.

Throughout the Shabbaton, I learned so much about the Greater Sephardic world, whether visiting a Greek Romaniote synagogue for morning services, stopping by a Syrian synagogue for havdalah or exchanging family histories with my new friends at the fellowship.

Despite all of the novelty, every aspect of the weekend carried a distinct warmth and familiarity, echoing the specific form of connection to Judaism that I had inherited and molded on my own over the years. I realized that despite feeling alienated in high school for my traditional, immigrant Jewish background, I was far from alone — there was a whole community of youth who understood me. Until then, I just hadn’t known where to look.

When we parted ways, I knew it wouldn’t be the last time I’d see my new friends. Our connection was instantaneous, too precious to lose. Over a year later, and over six months since the fellowship ended, I remain friends with so many. As the youngest person in my cohort, which ranged in age from 18 to 24, I still have so much to learn from them.

After that weekend, I felt deeply compelled to bring that indescribable sense of community to my own campus. As a fellow last year and now as an advisor to this year’s ASF fellow from my campus, I’ve worked to organize accessible events celebrating Sephardic heritage. Slowly, we are helping weave the vibrant magic of Sephardic culture into the fabric of our broader Jewish community — ensuring it reaches far beyond our fellowship.

As a Jewish college student, I feel fortunate to have access to countless resources designed to support my involvement in a Jewish community. But this fellowship, and everything that came from it, was more than finding a community. It was coming home.

Rachel Pakan is an undergraduate student on the pre-medical track, with additional interests in English literature and journalism. She seeks to integrate these interests as she progresses in her education and career, all while continuing to explore Jewish culture and history.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The Shabbat before Purim is called "Shabbat Zachor" [*Remember*]. In addition to the regular Torah portion, a second Torah is taken out of the Ark to read a small section from the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 25, verses 17-19, "*Parshat Zachor*", which begins "*Remember what Amalek did to you....*" The reference is to the battle Amalek initiated against Israel just after the Exodus from Egypt, when we were still a multitude of confused, weak and shell-shocked slaves, just recently released from bondage. Israel was victorious, but as a result of Amalek's unjustified and evil act, we are commanded to both remember and never forget this incident for all time, as well as literally and figuratively "erase" the very name and memory of Amalek. It is therefore considered mandatory to listen very intently to the reading of the Parshat Zachor in order to fulfill this Biblical commandment to eradicate Amalek's name and memory.

Since Purim is the story of our victory over Haman, who was a direct descendant of Amalek, and his nefarious plot to physically annihilate the Jews of the Persian empire, on Shabbat Zachor, a unique and beautiful 'piyyut' [ritual poem] is recited in Sephardic, Yemenite, Italian and Romaniote communities called "**מִי כַמוֹךָ**" [**"Mi Kamocho": Who is like You?**, composed by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141) of Spain, one of Judaism's greatest and most prolific Hebrew poets, and author of the "*Kuzari*".

The piyyut poetically delves into the story of Megillat Esther through the use of Midrashic and Talmudic literature, Biblical verses and commentary. The piyyut consists of 82 stanzas. Each stanza is divided into four segments, with the first three segments rhyming with each other, and the fourth containing an allusion to God, using a Biblical verse that ends with the word "to Him." The first 22 stanzas begin with a Hebrew alphabetical acrostic, and the next 29 stanzas begin with a Hebrew acrostic that means "**I am Yehuda Halevi the 'insignificant' son of Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi**." The next 22 stanzas begin again with a Hebrew alphabetical acrostic, and the next 8 stanzas begin with a Hebrew acrostic meaning "**I am Yehuda**". The final stanza stands on its own and is not included in the acrostic framework. In the final verses, Yehuda Halevi gives thanks for the miracles Israel experienced, particularly the splitting of the Red Sea, in order to link the end of the piyyut and the idea of redemption from Haman's evil to the second blessing after the Shabbat morning Shema, just before recitation of the Amidah prayer, which ends "*Go'al Yisrael*" – the redeemer of Israel - where Yehuda Halevi originally intended it be recited.

However, over the centuries, the placement of the piyyut in the Shabbat morning prayers was Halachically controversial. Despite Yehuda Halevi's intention that the piyyut be placed in the Shema blessings, many early Halachic authorities strenuously objected, as they considered insertion of any 'outside' piyyutim or other types of supplementary prayers into the Shema blessings as being prohibited because it "interrupted" the classic prayer structure. Despite such objections, this practice was not uncommon in both Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities, but over time more and more early and later Halachic authorities forbade it. And once this position was accepted by Rabbi Yosef Karo in the authoritative Shulhan Aruch in the 16th century, many Sephardi communities moved the recitation of "Mi Kamocho" from the Shema blessings to the "Nishmat Kol Hai" prayer. And though not as Halachically controversial as inserting the piyyut into the Shema blessings, this custom also met opposition by many authorities who insisted that insertion of piyyutim anywhere in the Rabbinical mandated prayer structure constituted an "interruption", and was therefore forbidden. So once again, most Sephardi communities moved the recitation to after repetition of the Amidah and before the Torah reading, which was acceptable to all, and this is the most widely practiced custom today. Nonetheless, the

Romaniote and Italian communities left the piyyut in its original location in the Shema blessings, and certain Spanish-Portuguese/Balkan and Moroccan communities continued to recite it in the "Nishmat Kol Hai" prayer.

Regardless of one's custom, the importance and significance of reciting "Mi Kamocho" today cannot be overstated. Though the physical nation of Amalek no longer exists, the world is still full of many "Amalekites", in spirit if not in body, as many Halachic authorities have ruled that anyone determined to annihilate Israel and the Jewish people, is considered a spiritual descendant of Amalek. This includes not only Haman, but every individual or group, past or present, that strive to annihilate Israel and the Jewish people for no other reason than our very existence. We may no longer be able to physically eradicate Amalek, but are still commanded to spiritually and emotionally remember and never forget what our monstrous enemies, past and present, and their undying attempts to destroy the State of Israel and the Jewish people. As the verse in Deuteronomy 25:19 says:

"וְהָיָה בְּהַנִּיחַ יְדֹד אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְךָ מִכָּל אִיבֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב בְּאַרְץ אֲשֶׁר יְדֹד אֱלֹקֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ תִּמְחָה
" :את זְכוֹר עַמְלֶק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח "

"Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess, that you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget."

With God's help, may we merit fulfillment of this commandment and the final redemption speedily in our days. Happy Purim to one and all!



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Genuine Love: Thoughts for Parashat Tetsaveh
JewishIdeas.org

Commentators have noted the unusual fact that the name of Moses does not appear in Parashat Tetsaveh. This is in sharp contrast with his brother Aaron whose name recurs frequently in this Torah portion. Since this Parasha focuses on the garments to be made for and worn by Aaron as he assumes his role as High Priest, it is reasonable to suggest that the Torah wished to highlight Aaron and draw attention away from Moses.

Some have suggested that Moses himself wished to keep his name out of this section in order to pay full homage to his brother. In his humility and genuine love for his brother, Moses chose to cede the stage entirely to Aaron. This example of brotherly love harks back to an earlier story in the book of Shemot.

When the Almighty first called on Moses to go to Egypt to lead the Israelites, Moses demurred. He was a humble shepherd who did not feel worthy of the enormous responsibility of leadership. Moreover, Moses may have thought that his older brother Aaron had a better claim to lead the people than he did. Aaron, after all, lived among the Israelites and knew their situation first hand. Moses had been living for many years in Midian. How would Aaron react when he learned that God chose Moses rather than him? God reassures Moses that Aaron would see Moses "and rejoice in his heart." Aaron was such a fine human being that he fully rejoiced in Moses's success. He was not envious, not insulted, not feeling bad for being passed over.

Just as Aaron's love for Moses was selfless, so Moses's love for Aaron was also selfless. Each of them willingly and full heartedly rejoiced in the success and honor of the other. They didn't let their egos get in the way.

Genuine love is a special gift. It requires the ability to identify fully with the beloved. The Hebrew word for love, ahavah, derives from the root meaning "to give." A loving person is a giving person. Imperfect "love" is when one is really interested in one's own pleasure and advantage, when one is more interested in taking than in giving.

In order to love selflessly, one must have inner confidence. One with a weak sense of self has trouble loving because his/her ego intrudes. Interest in bolstering one's own ego detracts from the ability of sharing love fully with another.

It is very difficult to give a full and generous compliment. People want to protect their own egos. When they compliment others, they feel a threat to their own frail sense of self. The compliment and [inner thoughts] go like this: you've done well [but I can do better]; you've achieved something great [but not as great as what I have achieved]; you are loveable [but not as loveable as I am]; you are beautiful, smart, successful [but you have many shortcomings too.]

People with weak egos constantly seek validation and recognition. They want their pictures and names in the newspapers. They make outrageous statements, or dress outrageously, or do outrageous things so that they will be noticed. They don't want to share the limelight because they fear that they will be eclipsed by others.

Moses and Aaron set examples of selfless love. They genuinely rejoiced in each other's success. Their egos and self-interest did not factor into their mutual respect and commitment.

In demonstrating their respect and love for each other, they thereby demonstrated their own greatness of spirit. They set a model worthy of emulation.

Thank you for your help!

In our last newsletter Rhonda Saldias asked for information to help track down her long lost relatives from the Tarabolous family. Thanks to our extended Greek Jewish network, Rhonda was able to find her cousin!

"I have great news. Because you added a note in the KKJSM Newsletter my cousin and her long lost relatives have found each other!!

Annette Fromm read the request and sent me some suggestions. And it worked. Jack Tarabolous is a physician and I was able to contact him. Then he and my Israeli cousin corresponded and discovered they are related. His family was the long lost family my cousin was looking for!

Thank you for your help!"

Rhonda (Matza Amira) Saldias

Pyota – Purim Pudding

This Sephardic Purim pudding known as pyota, is inspired by a recipe found in the cookbook of the Tifereth Israel Sisterhood in Los Angeles, CA. Learn more [Here](#)

Not to be confused with the hallucinogenic cactus, this sweet Purim dessert was made by Greeks, and if you haven't heard of it, you're not alone. We found this treasure in the cookbook of the Spanish synagogue "Tifereth Israel" in Los Angeles, California, where most of the old members of the congregation are of Greek origin. It is a semolina porridge that is mixed with eggs and sugar and baked, resulting in a soft and indulgent pudding.



Somehow, this delicacy did not emigrate to Israel, but the Greeks are not the only ones who serve pudding as a dessert for the Purim meal: Joyce Goldstein, author of the book *Cucina Ebraica: Flavors of the Italian Jewish Kitchen*, tells about an almond pudding seasoned with orange blossom water prepared by Italian Jews; Jewish food researcher Gil Marks tells about "rice kugel", a kind of baked rice pudding made by Romanians; and Jennifer Felicia Abadi, the author of the book *A Fistful of Lentils* tells about a cornstarch-based pudding made by Syrians – all of which are eaten on Purim.

The original recipe, from Sisterhood contributor Betty Albala from Kastoria, Greece, makes use of Cream of Wheat (farina) but it was also popularly made with semolina. We added the strawberries which lends a pleasant acidity to pudding.

Ingredients for Pyota - Purim Pudding - 4-6 individual portions

- a little butter to grease the dishes
- 1½ cup milk (you can replace the regular milk with non-dairy milk to make it pareve)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 cup milk (you can replace the regular milk with non-dairy milk to make it pareve)
- 1/4 cup semolina
- 1 egg beaten
- 1/2 cup (100 grams) Sugar
- strawberries or other fruit of your choice

Instructions

1. Bring the cup and a half of milk (or milk alternative), the teaspoon of vanilla extract, and the teaspoon of almond extract to a boil. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 355F (180C) on turbo/fan/convection.
2. In the meantime, mix the semolina together with the 1/2 cup of milk (or milk alternative) in a bowl until uniform.
3. When the milk reaches the boiling point, add ladlefuls of the hot milk into the milk/semolina mixture, while stirring constantly, to bring to the same temperature. Return the entire mixture to the pot mixing constantly to avoid burning the bottom.
4. In a bowl big enough to contain the entire milk mixture, beat the egg with the 1/2 cup (100 grams) of sugar until smooth.
5. Pour the thickened milk mixture over the eggs and mix well.
6. Arrange the strawberries in the bottom of 5 oven-safe ramekins or bowls and pour the pudding mixture over them.
7. Bake for about 20 minutes until it still jiggles in the center but is stationary and stable at the edge.

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

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

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

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



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