



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

March 2024 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

On March 23rd and 24th, we celebrate Purim, a time to rejoice and remember how bravery and hope won against all odds. How very appropriate for this year.



Purim at Jewish orphanage in Athens after WWII, circa 1946

This newsletter, our 180th 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 museum@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 museum@kkjsm.org.

Simchas

We are overjoyed to welcome into the world a Great, great-great-granddaughter of Mordechai ben Jessoula Levy (b. 1852), the Patriarch of the Jessoula Levy branch of this illustrious family, a Great great-granddaughter of Rabbi Jessoula Levy (b. circa 1869) and Esther Cantos Levy (b. 1881) (both born in Ioannina), a Great great-granddaughter of Menachem Cantos and Mazaltov Moses Cantos, both born in Ioannina, Great-granddaughter of Morris Levy and Yvette Rosenbaum (both of Blessed Memory), and Granddaughter of Olivia Koppell and Jesse Levy. Orezza Vienna Levy-Kubasek, was born January 21, 2024, and the proud parents, Gabriella Levy and Niklas Kubasek rejoice in this blessing, along with the entire community of Kehila Kedosha Janina, where Rabbi Levy served as the spiritual leader until his passing in 1946.



Passings

John Chapple Obituary - A Cherished Soul Has Sadly Passed Away

It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of the passing of John Chapple, a stalwart figure in the world of publishing, renowned for his dedication to showcasing the richness and diversity of Greece. Through his publishing venture, Lycabettus Press, John Chapple played a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge about Greece for over five decades. John Chapple's journey in the world of publishing began with the establishment of Lycabettus Press, a venture that would go on to shape the landscape of literature and information about Greece. Over the course of more than 50 years, Lycabettus Press became synonymous with high-quality publications that covered an extensive array of topics related to Greece.



Under John Chapple's leadership, Lycabettus Press produced an impressive range of literary works, including tourist guides, travel literature, cookbooks, and historical volumes. The breadth and depth of these publications reflected John's passion for capturing the multifaceted nature of Greece, inviting readers to explore its landscapes, culture, history, and culinary treasures. Lycabettus Press, under John Chapple's guidance, became a bridge connecting people around the world with the richness of Greek heritage. The books published by Lycabettus Press served as invaluable resources for travelers, scholars, and enthusiasts seeking to delve into the heart of Greece, its traditions, and its timeless allure.

John Chapple's legacy extends beyond the printed pages of the books he brought to life. His commitment to promoting Greece went hand in hand with fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the country's heritage. Through Lycabettus Press, he contributed to the global conversation about Greece, enriching readers with insights that went beyond the surface, capturing the essence of the nation. As news of John Chapple's passing reverberates through the literary and Greek communities, expressions of condolences pour in from those who recognize the significance of his contributions. Colleagues, authors, and readers alike share stories of how Lycabettus Press shaped their understanding of Greece, leaving an indelible mark on their journeys of discovery.

John Chapple's legacy lives on through the words and images he shared with the world. The books published by Lycabettus Press continue to inspire and inform, acting as enduring testaments to his passion for Greece. As we celebrate the life of a literary luminary, may we reflect on the immeasurable impact of John Chapple's efforts to illuminate the beauty and complexity of Greece. In bidding farewell to John Chapple, we acknowledge the loss of a visionary publisher whose dedication to Greece resonated with readers across the globe. May his memory be a source of inspiration, and may the works of Lycabettus Press continue to kindle a sense of wonder and appreciation for the timeless treasures of Greece.

Italy: RIP Elio Carmi, president of the Casale Monferrato Jewish Community. A cultural activist and noted designer, he developed the Jewish museum in the complex of the 16th century synagogue, and established the Museum of Lights, featuring contemporary Hanukkah menorahs.

Thank You Ruth Ellen Gruber and JHE

Elio Carmi, a cultural activist, nationally known creative designer, and president of the tiny Jewish community in the town of Casale Monferrato, in northwest Italy, died Monday (January 8), aged 71. He suffered from pleural mesothelioma, a rare lung cancer caused by exposure to asbestos.



Carmi, noted for his bald head and big, bushy beard, was instrumental in the development and promotion of the Jewish museum that forms part of the complex anchored by the city's ornate 16th century synagogue, which opened to the public in 1969 following the full-scale restoration of the synagogue. In 2006 he also was instrumental in founding the OyOyOy Jewish Culture Festival, held annually in Casale.



In the mid-1990s, he and several artist friends established the Museum of Lights, an expanding collection of contemporary Hanukkah Menorahs, or Hanukkiyot, produced by Jewish and non-Jewish artists. It is now located in the basement of the synagogue complex, which once housed a mikveh and matzo oven.

"The idea was born to show that Jews, though small in number, are determined; and to use interpretations of the Hanukkah menorah to demonstrate, symbolically, the continuity of the community," Carmi told JHE's Ruth Ellen Gruber in 2017.

Each one, he said, was a "homage to the story of Hanukkah" and its message of the triumph of light over darkness. By now there are more than 250 menorahs in the collection, though only 30 to 40 can be displayed at a time in the vaulted underground chambers. They represent a wide range of sometimes fanciful forms, and some were designed by famous artists.

Carmi's last public appearance, wheelchair bound, was presiding at the community's Hanukkah celebrations this past December. In an autobiographical book, published last fall, Carmi discussed his illness, and he also posted about it on his Facebook page. Hundreds of residents of Casale have died from asbestos-related disease due to pollution from a big factory, Eternit, that produced asbestos-reinforced cement and functioned from 1907-1986.

A series of trials over more than a decade ended up last summer with the sentencing of the former main shareholder in Eternit, a Swiss billionaire, to 12 years in prison for the aggravated manslaughter of nearly 400 victims of asbestos poisoning.

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Florence Motola, born Florence Negrin in 1933, the daughter of Renee Matsil and Louis Negrin, and the granddaughter of Rabbi Isaak Matsliach and Amelia Levy Matsil. Florence was predeceased by her husband Charles Motola. She is survived by her son, Jay Motola (Sue Mandel) and her daughter, Renee Motola, her grandchildren, Hilary, Allison and Craig Motola and Jared, Jordan, and Joely Pasetzky (the children of Renee Motola).



The photo at right shows Rabbi and Amelia Matsil with Amelia's father and three oldest Matsil children. Taken in Ioannina in 1915. Renee Matsil is the young girl standing next to her mother.

Visitors to Kehila Kedosha Janina

February might have been a short month but it was filled with visitors from all over the world. It seems that Kehila Kedosha Janina is now top on everyone's list when visiting New York!



AIKOI MAS / Los Muestrros / Our Own

It is always a special joy when "Our Own" come to visit. Paul Warhit (the son of Dinah Colchamiro Warhit) from the Elias Colchamiro branch of the Colchamiro family, came to discuss the possibility of an upcoming trip to Greece in November. This is what a family looks like when they know that they are going to Greece!

If you want help planning a trip to Jewish Greece, our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, has been arranging tours for over 27 years. Contact Marcia at museum@kkjms.org



Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network launched a new Greek Dance class series and it has been a beautiful success. More than 20 young community members have participated and started learning dances from across Greece, including the Sta tria and Tsamiko from Epirus; Sousta, Sigano, and Zervodexos from Crete; Trata from the Cyclades islands; and Tik Diplon and Omal from the Pontos region. Special thanks to our expert teacher Dimitri Carabas from Meraki Folk Dance New York. Email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com if you would like to sign up for the remaining classes. Check out some of the videos of the dances on Facebook [Here](#).



Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

New York's Sephardic Cafes – Lecture by Professor Devin Naar – March 10 at 2pm

Please RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi



Kehila Kedosha Janina
Synagogue and Museum

NEW YORK'S SEPHARDIC CAFES

COMMUNAL, MUSICAL, CULINARY, AND POLITICAL HUBS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY



SUNDAY MARCH 10 AT 2PM

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE & MUSEUM

280 BROOME STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002

RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJSM.ORG



Join Professor Devin E Naar, chair of the Sephardic Studies Program at the University of Washington, as he debuts new research about the dynamic and long-forgotten roles that cafes played in the life of Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews from the Ottoman Empire who arrived in New York City in the early twentieth century. As centers of communal gathering, familiar cuisine, musical performances in Ladino, Greek, Turkish, and Arabic, and organizing efforts that resulted in the creation of mutual aid organization, labor actions, and political activities, cafes served as pillars of Sephardic Jewish life on the Lower East Side and in Harlem.

Community Purim Celebration – March 23 at 7pm
RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
WISHES YOU A

HAPPY PURIM!

חג פורים שמח

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ

PURIM ALEGRE I DULSE

**JOIN US TO CELEBRATE PURIM!
SATURDAY MARCH 23 AT 7:00PM**

**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 הֵיְתָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁ וְיִקָּר

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG

Stranger in the Desert – Book Presentation by Jordan Salama – March 31 at 2pm

RSVP to Museum@kkjism.org

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE & MUSEUM
IS HONORED TO WELCOME

JORDAN SALAMA

FOR A SPECIAL PRESENTATION
ON HIS NEW BOOK

**STRANGER IN THE DESERT:
A FAMILY STORY**



SUNDAY MARCH 31 AT 2PM

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC**

Inspired by family lore, a young writer embarks on an epic quest through the Argentine Andes in search of a heritage spanning hemispheres and centuries, from the Jewish Levant to turn-of-the-century trade routes in South America.

Jordan Salama is a writer covering culture and the environment in the Americas. His essays and stories have appeared in National Geographic, New York Magazine, The New York Times and other publications. An American writer of Argentine, Syrian, and Iraqi Jewish descent, he is the author of "Every Day the River Changes," a Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2021 and the 2022 Princeton "Pre-Read." His latest book, "Stranger in the Desert: A Family Story," was just published in February 2024. Jordan graduated from Princeton University in 2019 and has been based, in recent years, between New York and Buenos Aires.

SIGNED BOOKS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

PLEASE RSVP TO MUSEUM@KKJISM.ORG

Naphtali Family Cookbook Demonstration – April 7 at 2pm

RSVP to Museum@kkjism.org

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE & MUSEUM
IS HONORED TO WELCOME**

LINDA MATZA SILVERMAN

**FOR A SPECIAL PRESENTATION
OF HER HIGHLY ACCLAIMED BOOK**

**THE NAPHTALI
FAMILY COOKBOOK**



SUNDAY APRIL 7 AT 2PM

**KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC**

Join Linda Matza Silverman as she introduces her highly acclaimed culinary guide, *The Naphtali Family Cookbook*, and shares her passion for cooking with a demonstration of preparing a traditional Greek pastry.

Linda grew up with the inspiration of Romaniote heritage from her four grandparents who emigrated from Ioannina. She is the granddaughter of Judah Naphtali & Leah Confino, Solomon (Shorty) Matza & Rosina Negrin, and the daughter of Morris S. Matza and Anne Naphtali.

Linda became the bearer of the flame, enamored with her legacy, and determined to share the flavor of Romaniote heritage with the next generations. What better way than through food!

**AUTOGRAPHED COOKBOOKS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.**

PLEASE RSVP TO MUSEUM@KKJISM.ORG

2024
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2024
5784

Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 BROOME STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10002

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

Kehila Kedosha Janina, at the same location on the Lower East Side for the past 97 years, is the last remaining Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere conducting services in the Judeo-Greek Romaniote Minhag (tradition).

PURIM

Saturday	March 23	Purim	Mincha/Arvith	7:00 PM
			Megillah	8:25 PM

PASSOVER

Saturday	April 20	Shabbat Hagadol	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Tuesday	April 23	Pesach 1 st Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Wednesday	April 24	Pesach 2 nd Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Saturday	April 27	Pesach 5 th Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
		Shabbat Chol HaMoed		
Monday	April 29	Pesach 7 th Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Tuesday	April 30	Pesach 8 th Day (Last Day)	Shacharit Yizkor	9:30 AM

SHAVUOTH

Wednesday	June 12	Shavuoth 1 st Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM
Thursday	June 13	Shavuoth 2 nd Day	Shacharit	9:30 AM

TISHA B'AV

Monday	August 12	Erev Tisha B'Av	Mincha/Arvith	7:00 PM
			Fast Starts	7:57 PM

Prayer Books and shawls are available at the synagogue.

For additional information, please contact:

Marvin Marcus, President at info@kkjism.org

Please RSVP for services to Amarcus@kkjism.org

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

Moadim Le'Simcha

Marvin Marcus, President

Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Greece & The Balkans – July 2024

We are thrilled to announce the special Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Greece and the Balkans this Summer 2024. We will trace the roots of our families and visit the beautiful cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Bitola (Monastir), Skopje, Thessaloniki, Veria, Ioannina, & Corfu, with optional extension to Rhodes. The tour will run from July 7-17, 2024. Spots are limited and the deadline to register and submit deposits is February 15. The tour is open to Jewish young adults in their 20s and 30s. Email Ethan@SephardicBrotherhood.com to learn more and sign up. View the full itinerary [Here](#).



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TOUR OF JEWISH GREECE & THE BALKANS

July 7-17, 2024

INCLUDES SOFIA, PLOVDIV, BITOLA (MONASTIR), SKOPJE,
THESSALONIKI, VERIA, IOANNINA, & CORFU
WITH OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO RHODES

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

View the full itinerary at bit.ly/YPBalkans2024

To register and learn more email
Ethan@SephardicBrotherhood.com



Kehila Kedosha Janina Infrastructure Fund - We Need Your Help

Our historic synagogue building is nearly 100 years old. Thankfully it remains a center for Romaniote religious services and education on Greek Jewry. However, our aging roof has passed its lifetime, and we need to replace the roof to ensure our building remains waterproof and physically secure well into the future. We humbly ask you, our community and friends, to donate to our Infrastructure Fund to help us ensure we can make the necessary repairs and preserve our cherished Kehila. As one of only a handful of historic synagogues that are still active on the Lower East Side, our building remains a beacon for visitors to learn more about our unique community & our special neighborhood. Donate today to invest in a strong future for KKJ. Thank you.

Donate [Here](#)



KKJ
INFRASTRUCTURE
FUND

HELP US MAINTAIN OUR LANDMARK
SYNAGOGUE BUILDING AS A CENTER
FOR GREEK JEWISH LIFE

**Donate today to help us
renovate our aging roof**

We Need Your Help

Athens

This year, as every year, the Jewish Community of Athens will join with the Municipality of Athens and the Greek State to remember Athenian Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. This year is the 80th anniversary of the deportation from Athens and the special events, including the laying of the wreaths, will take place on March 13, 2024.



Photo from a previous memorial

In a "full circle moment," Theo Canter, a 2023 Fulbright Fellow to Greece, is teaching English at the same high school in Athens from which his grandfather graduated. His Fulbright provides an opportunity to deepen his Greek cultural identity, strengthen his language skills, and amplify his musical talents. Theo is a graduate of Oberlin College, a 2023-2024 Fulbright Top Producing Institution of U.S. Students, which supported 16 Fulbrighters this academic year. He plays the guitar, accordion, and bouzouki and hopes to learn more rebetiko music in the genre's birthplace, exemplifying Oberlin's dedication to both academic and artistic exploration. Theo hails from the Levis family from Ioannina.



Theo playing the guitar, teaching, and performing in Greece.

Oberlin's dedication to both academic and artistic



Leadership from the Jewish Community of Athens visits the Jewish community of Sofia, Bulgaria. In a special winter atmosphere the Athens community President Mr. Albert Taraboulous, Rabbi Gabriel Negrin and the Program Manager, Iakovou Atun visited the Jewish community of Sofia in order to exchange views and best practices as well as to explore possible cooperation between the two

communities and joint participation in subsidized programs by foreign Jewish organizations. They both shared the practices they implement in their communities and spoke openly about the issues they face in the day-to-day operations of their communities.

Arta

This year, on the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Jewish Community of Arta, the Municipality of Arta will remember those who were murdered in the camps. The events will take place on the 22nd and 23rd of March. On the 23rd, at the Square of the Jewish Martyrs, at the Holocaust Memorial, wreaths will be placed.



Holocaust Memorial in Arta

In memory of the former Jewish Community of Arta on the 80th anniversary of the deportations, Kehila Kedosha Janina pays tribute by publishing photos from our archives of the Jewish Community in Arta.



Jewish community leaders



Jewish Community Pre-WWII



Mizan Family Alef 1935



Former synagogue

Preveza

On the 24th of March, on the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews from Preveza, there will be an unveiling of a Holocaust Memorial. In memory of the small Jewish Community of Preveza who were deported on March 25th, 1944, Kehila Kedosha Janina publishes photos from our archives in memory of this Community.



The Ackos family in Athens before deportations. Born in Preveza, Rosa and the children survived in hiding with a Christian woman. Menachem, the father was deported on March 25, 1944 from Athens.

Kastoria

On March 31st in Kastoria, there will be a special program in memory of the Jewish Community of Kastoria that was deported on March 25th, 1944. This is the 80th anniversary of the deportations.



Elias Family



Holocaust Memorial



ΔΗΜΟΣ ΚΑΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ
ΠΡΟΣΚΛΗΣΗ

Σας προσκαλούμε να τιμήσετε με την παρουσία σας την Ημέρα Μνήμης του Ολοκαυτώματος της Εβραϊκής Κοινότητας Καστοριάς, που διοργανώνει ο Δήμος Καστοριάς την Κυριακή 31 Μαρτίου 2024.

Ο Δήμαρχος Καστοριάς
Ιωάννης Κορνησιός

ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ
Κυριακή 31 Μαρτίου ώρα 11.30 π.μ.

- Συνάντηση στην Πλατεία Ομόνοιας
- Συμβολική Παράσταση Μνήμης προς το Μνημείο Επληρησμένης Δέησης-Ψαλμού του Δαβίδ από τη Χωροδία της Ισραηλικής Κοινότητας Καστοριάς
- Χαιρετισμοί Δημάρχου Καστοριάς, Προέδρου Κεντρικού Ισραηλικού Συμβουλίου εκπαιδευτών Ξένων Κρατών και Εβραϊκών Κοινοτήτων
- Κατάθεση στεφάνων
- Συνάντηση-πρωινή γευματιστή των Εβραϊκών Κοινοτήτων, με το ποσειδωτικό καράβι του Δήμου Καστοριάς «Ολοκαύτωμα»

Μέλη των επιτροπών οργάνων: Δ.Σ. Δήμου 31 Μαρτίου 2024 στην Αίθουσα Κοινοτήτων
1^η Ομάδα: Βασιλική Φάρος, Αρκαδία της Εβραϊκής Κοινότητας Καστοριάς (2021-2024), Αλίκη Γ. Βασιλάκη
2^η Ομάδα: Εβραϊκή Κοινότητα Καστοριάς, στο πλαίσιο της παλαιάς «Κοινότητας» (1942), Αλίκη Βασιλάκη, Αλίκη Βασιλάκη



Halkis (Chalkida)

On Tuesday 20.2.2024, a group of French Jewish tourists visited the Synagogue of the Jewish Community of Chalkida. They were welcomed by the president Mr. Solon Maisis and Mr. Mairis Maisis, who showed them around the site and spoke to them about the history of the community and its existence since the Hellenistic period.



Cyprus

Signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Churches of Greece and Cyprus, and the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE) on Holocaust Remembrance and Antisemitism.

A Memorandum of Cooperation for the preservation of Holocaust remembrance and the fight against antisemitism was signed on February 27, 2024, in Nicosia, at the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth of Cyprus.

The Memorandum was signed between the Ministries of Education of Greece and Cyprus, the Church of Greece, the Church of Cyprus, the Central Jewish Council of Greece, and the Jewish Museum of Greece and provides for the implementation of actions aimed at preserving the memory of the Holocaust and combating antisemitism and all forms of racism.



The actions deriving from the Memorandum concern the realization of seminars, the creation of a common digital cooperation platform for teachers in Cyprus and Greece and the undertaking of educational initiatives, such as the holding of an annual student competition on the Holocaust, the organization of visits by school units and the implementation of relevant actions by students. The Memorandum also provides for the establishment of a joint working committee in which the six parties involved will be represented and which will identify and further specify the fields of cooperation between them.

The Memorandum was signed by the Minister of Education of Cyprus Athena Michaelidou, the Archbishop of Cyprus George, on behalf of the Ministry of Education of Greece, the Secretary General for Religious Affairs George Kalantzis, on behalf of the Church of Greece, the Metropolitan of Maroneia and Komotini Panteleimon, on behalf of the Central Jewish Council of Greece, the Secretary General of the Board Victor Is. Eliezer and on behalf of the Jewish Museum of Greece its President Mikis Modiano.

The Cypriot Minister of Education Mrs. Michaelides said in her speech that the "Memorandum of Cooperation, which we are signing today, will strengthen and reaffirm the determination and will of all of us, not only to preserve the memory of the Holocaust, but also to combat all modern forms of antisemitism, racism and intolerance."

She indicated that this is one of the objectives of the Cooperation Programme in the field of Education between the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports of the Hellenic Republic, which she signed last December with her counterpart, Kyriakos Pierrakakis. Michaelidou also said that through interreligious dialogue and the preservation of collective memory of the Holocaust "we can protect society and create a better world than today." It also welcomed the strengthening of ties between the parties and the further taking of actions aimed at preserving the memory of the Holocaust and combating antisemitism, achieved through the signing of the Memorandum. He stated that the Republic of Cyprus participates as an observer in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance IHRA, in order to contribute to the strengthening of efforts to promote and encourage actions for the study and preservation of this memory.

The Cypriot Minister of Education added that the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth has established in recent years an annual competition in secondary education for Holocaust remembrance, while, in collaboration with the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, travelling exhibitions related to the Holocaust are hosted in schools in Cyprus.

He also said that a new exhibition, entitled "Stars without Heaven – Children in the Holocaust", will be included in the existing ones, at the initiative of the competent History Curricula Group.

In addition, he said that a group of teachers from Cyprus visits the Yad Vashem Center in Israel every two years for training on Holocaust teaching, while, at the same time, the Ministry cooperates with other Holocaust teaching centers such as the Musee de la Shoah.

"An additional action of particular interest, which causes great emotion to students and teachers, is the hosting of Holocaust survivors in school premises," said Ms. Michaelidou, noting that in recent years, during the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust, the Ministry has promoted the message "We Remember" as a minimum tribute to the victims of the Holocaust.

Archbishop George of Cyprus welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, noting that the spiritual fathers of the Jewish nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "are also our spiritual fathers". He added that the psalms and other books of the Old Testament "are also our spiritual indulgences."

Judaism and Christianity, the Archbishop of Cyprus characteristically said, are called to cooperate for the benefit of the universe and in this context the joint declaration of the late Archbishop Chrysostom II with the Chief Rabbi of Israel was circulated on December 6, 2011, which characteristically says "above all we affirm the teaching of our respective religions in relation to the holiness of life and the dignity of the human person, given that everyone has created in the image of G-d. We therefore condemn all acts that desecrate this sanctity, especially violence and terrorism against innocents."

The Archbishop of Cyprus noted that the Memorandum of Cooperation will help preserve the memory of the Holocaust but also combat all forms of anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance, principles which, unfortunately, as he pointed out, "to this day are violated in Cyprus by the Turkish invader, who since 1974 has been violating our basic human rights and religious freedoms."

The Secretary General for Religious Affairs Mr. G. Kalantzis spoke of "an historic day", noting that it is the first time that a Memorandum has been signed with such an object and with the specific participants. Greece, he continued, lost 86% of Greek Jews in the Holocaust, pointing out that this is one of the highest percentages recorded in Europe.

Speaking about the Holocaust, Mr. Kalantzis stressed that "we have the responsibility not only not to forget it, but with the knowledge to be able to teach the new generation what it is that they should avoid."

The Metropolitan of Maroneia and Komotini, on behalf of the Church of Greece, said, speaking on the issue of antisemitism, that the Church of Greece has worked for years in this direction and referred to actions and programs that have been taken in order to condemn all that has been done against these people.

The General Secretary of KISE, Mr. V. Eliezer, stated that antisemitism is a historical phenomenon which is the most painful consequence of a set of lies about a portion of people who believed and continue to believe in monotheism. "Since ancient times, Jews have been accused on the basis of falsehood," Mr. Eliezer said, noting that "even today, 80 years later, Jews are in the crosshairs, but Jews today are not alone." He said that the aim is for all forms of intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism to be combated in schools, by schools, noting that the program of visits to Auschwitz carried out by the Greek Ministry of Education is commendable.

The President of the JMG, Mr. M. Modiano, underlined the importance of education regarding antisemitism and praised the initiative of the Greek Ministry of Education for the student competition that allows students, once selected, to go on an educational trip to Auschwitz and do various seminars on the Holocaust.

Series of Videos for the 75th Anniversary of the Closing of the Jewish Camps in Cyprus

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the closure of the camps in Cyprus where Jewish Holocaust survivors who tried to immigrate to then British Mandate Palestine were held, the Embassy of Israel in Cyprus edited a series of short video interviews with testimonies of Cypriots from the time. The material is published and shown for the first time. See the videos [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) .

Welcome speech by Minister of Defense Vasilis Palmas at the Commemoration Event for the 75th Anniversary since the closing of the Detention Camps for Jewish Holocaust survivors in Cyprus

It is with the deepest respect, that I welcome you today to the Monument of Cyprus - Israel Friendship, dedicated to the children of Holocaust survivors born in Cyprus in the period 1946 – 1949.



This Memorial site stands as a symbol and unshakable testament of the enduring friendship between Cyprus and the State of Israel. During the period of World War II and the following years, Cyprus hosted a large number of Holocaust survivors. This year marks the 75th anniversary since the closure of British camps in Cyprus, where a significant number of Jewish Holocaust survivors were relocated and held. Having escaped the concentration death camps, their only wish was to rebuild their lives peacefully with their families, contributing thus to the development of their homeland. Thousands of them, on their way to their new homeland found temporary shelter in Cyprus. Cyprus became the safe harbor for the Holocaust survivors, providing the security that had been sorely lacking in their lives. Moved by feelings of humanity and compassion, Cypriots provided support, comfort, and solidarity to more than 50,000 Jewish people in the British detention camps in Karaolos at Ammochostos, Xylotymbou, and Dekelia. During this time, and until the closure of the last camp in February 1949, 2200 Jewish children were born in Cyprus, creating an everlasting, unbreakable bond between our two countries. Some of them are among us today and honour us with their presence here. They are an embodiment of human resilience and hope in the face of abject difficulties a triumph of the human spirit.



Ladies and gentlemen,

Almost eight decades after the closure of the Nazi death camps, it is still impossible to fully comprehend the abysmal depths of inhumanity of the decision for the implementation of the horrific systematic mass extermination of Jews - the most abominable crime ever experienced by humanity.

Their creation and operation in occupied Poland and elsewhere, of extermination camps, demonstrates a well-planned and thoroughly "industrialized" strategy for the complete annihilation of European Jews, of Roma and Sinti, of Slavs, of people with disabilities, of homosexuals and others who were deemed to be subhuman, 'untemenschen' by the Nazi regime. Millions of people were exterminated in European death camps, on the grounds of their religious belief, their ethnic origin, their 'otherness'

The story of more than fifty thousand Jews who managed to escape from Europe and ended up in Cyprus is a tragic reality of modern history that we have to highlight for younger and future generations. Our presence here today serves as a gate for remembrance and reflection, a reminder of our obligation to respect, defend and protect human dignity. It is an incentive for studying and understanding history, not only to honour the

victims of the Holocaust and its survivors, but also to understand the imperative of preserving historical memory. This camp, where the first cry of the 2200 Jewish children born in Cyprus was heard, is an integral part of Jewish and Cypriot history. It is a reminder of the long journey and herculean effort made by thousands of Jews until the establishment of the State of Israel. As we respectfully approach one of the darkest pages of history, we pay tribute to the spirit of human resilience that resisted inhumanity conditions, oppression, physical and mental abuse and abasement, and the incomprehensible mass exterminations that took place in the death camps. Revisiting the past, this darkest period of human history, we are called upon to reflect and contemplate the persecution and humiliation suffered by millions of people.

Today, here at the Cyprus - Israel Friendship Monument, a profound sense of sorrow weighs upon us. A sorrow that arises from the voices of the six million Jews who perished and from the trauma suffered by the survivors.

The message of the event is that every human life has equal value and must be protected. We have the duty to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust will be preserved to act as a guide for the future. Drawing strength from history, we must firmly stand up against violence, antisemitism and all forms of racism, social inequality, intolerance, and discrimination. We have to work towards a world where peace, reconciliation, collaboration, and respect for human dignity prevail. Once again, thank you all for attending this solemn event and for your kind attention.

Israel

We pray every day for the return of the Israeli hostages from Gaza. Thank you Leon Saltiel for sharing this moving photo of families of hostages who testified in Geneva with the World Jewish Congress.



Italy

Siena

Jewish Heritage Europe: The 18th century synagogue in Siena, which suffered damage in an earthquake one year ago, has been placed among the 11 threatened heritage sites in Europe that have been shortlisted for Europa Nostra's 7 Most Endangered program for 2024.

Located just off Siena's expansive central Campo, the synagogue was inaugurated in 1786 as an extension of an earlier one, following the project of Giuseppe del Rosso. Since the earthquake, the sanctuary has been closed both for prayers and to visitors, though the synagogue building, which houses a small Jewish museum, remains open.

“The earthquake in February 2023 caused structural damage to the vault of the Synagogue of Siena, including the walls and the roof, which remain structurally unstable,” Europa Nostra states in the announcement.



Measures were promptly taken to limit access to the prayer hall. Its entrance is still roped off with a cord so that visitors and tourists can see the room without actually accessing. Religious services were moved to a small area in the women’s gallery on the second floor. All this poses a threat to tourism, on which the city of Siena greatly relies.

The community has proposed specific solutions for the restoration of the building, which is planned to unfold in two phases. The initial phase focuses on consolidating the vault and arches, while the subsequent phase entails replacing the roof. Within the prayer hall, restoration work will focus on the interior decorations of the vault, addressing detachments or cracks using plaster, stucco, and pictorial film. With approvals secured from local and national supervisory bodies, the project is set to start pending the acquisition of necessary funding.

Beyond structural improvements, the primary objective of the restoration is to re-establish the Synagogue of Siena as the community’s central place of worship. Inclusion in the 7 Most Endangered Program would grant visibility in order to find funding and resources needed to carry out its restoration.

In September, the Jewish community of Florence, of which the small community in Siena is a branch, launched a fund-raising campaign seeking a total of €368,000 for the restoration. The community secured funding for the first phase, thanks to grants from the David Berg Foundation (through the World Monuments Fund), the Società Israelitica della Misericordia di Siena, and the Fondazione Beni Culturali Ebraici in Italia. It has also received funding from the Leon Levy Foundation.

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

The synagogue was nominated for the list by an individual member of Europa Nostra from France with the Jewish Community of Florence and the World Monuments Fund Spain.

Europa Nostra lobbies for monuments and heritage preservation, targets endangered sites and grants annual awards for restoration projects. It is a network of 250 member organizations across Europe, including heritage associations and foundations, plus 150 associated organizations (governmental bodies, local authorities, and corporations) and also 1500 individual members.

Venice

Open letter urges Venice Biennale art show to exclude Israel. Italy’s culture minister pushes back
Milan (AP) — Thousands of artists, curators and critics have signed an open letter calling on the Venice Biennale to exclude the Israeli national pavilion from this year’s contemporary art fair due to the war in Gaza, but Italy’s culture minister firmly backed Israel’s participation.

The online letter was signed by more than 17,000 people through Wednesday, which included current and past Biennale participants as well as winners of the Turner Prize, an annual prize presented to a British visual artist.



Italian Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano expressed solidarity with Israel in a statement Tuesday, saying it “not only has the right to express its art but has the duty to bear witness to its people precisely in a moment during which it was struck hard by merciless terrorists.”



The Israeli culture minister, Miki Zohar, affirmed Israel’s participation and thanked Sangiuliano for “his strong, professional support. Art is a bridge between cultures and between people – and we will continue to firmly set out against attempts to boycott Israel in international forums,” Zohar said in a statement.

The Biennale ruled out excluding Israel or Iran, the object of a second petition, saying that any country recognized by the Italian government may request to participate.

The letter, by an ad-hoc group called “Art Not Genocide Alliance,” noted that the Biennale had discouraged South Africa’s participation due to the apartheid state from 1950-1968 and put a ban in place after the U.S. resolution suspending “exchanges with the racist regime” until apartheid ended. It also noted the Biennale’s support for Ukraine since the 2022 Russian invasion. Russian artists withdrew their participation in 2022, and the Biennale said Russia did not request to participate in this year’s edition.

“The Biennale has been silent about Israel’s atrocities against Palestinians,” the letter said. “We are appalled by this double standard.”

‘Teli na cusi tin glossa grika?’ - How a Greek language lives on in southern Italy Full article [Here](#)

With its sugar cube houses, labyrinthine streets and hyper-Baroque churches, Corigliano d’Otranto seems at first like any other village in Italy’s southern Salento region. But as you wander around and explore, an entirely different world begins to reveal itself.

“Teli na cusi tin glossa grika?” asks a sign on the main square. “Cai `na percorso amesa tus monumentu pleon orriu so chorio paleo pu Coriana?” If you’re an Italian speaker, you might be feeling a little lost. But if you’re a Greek speaker, then these words will evoke an odd sense of familiarity. That’s because this is Griko – a language closely related to Greek and spoken in a small microregion of Salento known as Grecia Salentina.



My guide to this world-within-a-world is Dr Manuela Pellegrino, a native of the region and author of “Greek Language, Italian Landscape: Griko and the Re-storying of a Linguistic Minority.” She was born and raised in Zollino, one of seven villages in Salento where Griko can still be heard. At 47, she is one of its youngest fluent speakers.

“For me Griko was always there growing up,” she says. “My grandmother would speak it to my parents at home, though my parents preferred to speak to me in Salentino, the local Italian dialect.” Curious about Grandma’s language, she began whimsically recording the words, phrases, and grammar in her notebooks. Her spoken Griko remained rudimentary, though the language engendered a profound sense of meaning in her. After graduating in foreign languages from the University of Salento, she embarked on a PhD in anthropology, investigating the past and present of Griko, ultimately deciding to return to her home village and make a concerted effort to master the language.

“I would literally follow all the elderly Griko speakers around as they went about their daily activities – gardening, cooking, meeting with friends. I would insist they speak to me only in Griko,” she recalls. And what was their response? “A polite curiosity. They found it difficult to speak casually with someone so young and made fun of my mistakes. Perhaps this was a kind of revenge for when we would make fun of their mistakes in Italian.”

The origins of the Grikos are something of a mystery, even to themselves. Romantics herald them as the last remnants of the once vast Greek-speaking colonies of Magna Graecia, but linguists who have studied Griko

grammar say it has more in common with modern than with ancient Greek. Perhaps the Greek language was reintroduced (or reinforced) by the arrival of Greek refugees in southern Italy during the Ottoman incursions into Europe? Again, no one is quite sure. The Grikos have no great origin story. They've just always been here. Since their "rediscovery" in the early 1990s, they have been the targets of intense mythmaking and ideological self-interest. Pellegrino is weary of these internecine debates over identity. She stresses that – apart from their language – speakers of Griko do not consider themselves culturally different from other Salentines and regard themselves as a linguistic minority rather than an ethnic or national one.

In 1994, the Greek state – alarmed that there appeared to be a Greek minority abroad which they hadn't known about – began dispatching Greek teachers to the villages. These Modern Greek language classes were mostly attended by pensioners with nothing to do and curious about the links between the two languages. Having had less impact than the Greek state had perhaps hoped, the program was quietly discontinued during the financial crisis and only recently reactivated.

"Locals still debate whether learning Modern Greek can help preserve Griko," says Pellegrino. "But in the 90s, contact between our community and Greece intensified, which significantly influenced Griko language and culture."

Since then, the Griko language has undergone – if not quite a revival – then a reinvention. What was once stigmatized as a peasant vernacular at odds with Italian nation-building has been recast as something lofty, romantic, and cool. Much to the bemusement of its elderly mother-tongue speakers, Griko has become something of a brand.

Partially, this has to do with the reinvention of Salento itself, previously a poor and forsaken corner of Italy, now increasingly popular with both Italian and foreign visitors. The uptick in the region's economic prospects coincided with a revival in folk and cultural traditions, such as the pizzica and tarantella dances, which had been largely abandoned. Griko became a part of this revival.

In 1999, the Italian state officially recognized Griko as one of Italy's historical minority languages and in 2001 the Union of the Municipalities of Grecia Salentina was formed. It includes the seven villages where Griko is still spoken – Calimera, Castrignano de' Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Martano, Martignano, Sternatia and Zollino – in addition to four villages – Carpignano Salentino, Cutrofiano, Melpignano and Soletto – where Griko has not been spoken for one or two centuries. Being part of the Grecia Salentina union grants its members the right to claim a lofty inheritance and a distinctive brand, but there are economic incentives too: access to lucrative European funds which are available for ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minorities.

Suddenly the language has appeared in the names of restaurants, bars, B&Bs, cultural associations, municipal projects, and advertisements. It has recently been used in brand names for local products (such as beer) and even in the names of political parties in local elections. "I'm often asked to translate signs into Griko," says Pellegrino. "But this isn't always easy, as Griko is essentially a pastoral language and lacks the vocabulary of modernity, so we are forced to borrow words from Salentino, Italian and – more recently – modern Greek." Some locals have even started adorning their shops with signs written in the Greek alphabet, which the majority of the community cannot read. "These are just two examples of how modern Greek has seeped into Griko," says Pellegrino.

The language is sporadically demonstrated in schools and Pellegrino helps run an annual Griko summer camp called I Ddomada Grika (The Griko Week). In 2022, the Greek president visited the region, her presence granting these back-of-beyond villages a rare moment in the spotlight.

In tandem with this has been a renewed interest in Griko as a language of artistic expression. Numerous bands and poets have emerged within the language's cultural landscape and Grecia Salentina has become the center of the revived *Notte della Taranta*, of which Griko music plays an integral part. The final night's concert, held in the village of Melpignano, has now become a mega-event, attended by up to 200,000 people and broadcast live on Rai 1. It typically ends with a rousing rendition of "Calinitta" (Goodnight), which has become something of a Griko anthem.

"If we judge the life of a language based on its day-to-day utility, then Griko has been dead for a long time," says Pellegrino. "What's interesting is how the language has been reappropriated. Nowadays, when people speak Griko

they do so because they 'want to' and not because they 'need to.' So as the language declines in traditional use, it is reborn as a kind of metalanguage, in which the use of Griko becomes a performative comment on the meaning of Griko itself."

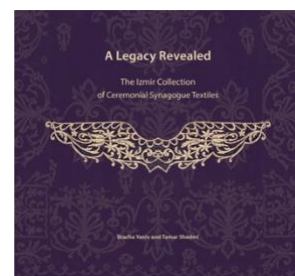
Such is the paradox of a language that is always dying but never actually dead. As the contemporary Griko writer Paolo Di Mitri puts it: "O Grikomma pesane? Refrisko n'achi. Ce mi pu grafome grika, imesta pesammeni? Esi ka mas meletate pesanato?" (Has Griko died? May it rest in peace. Are we who write Griko then dead? Are you then, reading it, dead?)

Alex Sakalis is a writer and journalist whose work has appeared on the BBC and in The Economist and The Guardian, among others. He lives in Bologna, Italy.

Turkey

Turkey: A new book, "A Legacy Revealed. The Izmir Collection of Ceremonial Synagogue Textiles," explores hundreds of pieces found in the historic synagogues of Izmir, which have been undergoing restoration for a decade

The character of a synagogue does not just come from its architecture, but from the interior decoration and fittings that complete it. Among the most striking of these fittings are the often richly embroidered ritual textiles used in the Ark and elsewhere.



Lavishly illustrated with color photographs, the book was written by the scholars Bracha Yaniv and Tamar Shadmi and published by the Mordechai Kiriati Foundation in Tel Aviv in English, Hebrew, and Turkish — each version is available for free download by clicking the link. The 137-page publication is the outcome of a six-year project by the Kiriati Foundation on the rescue, preservation, and restoration of more than 300 ritual Jewish textile items discovered in the synagogues in Izmir.

The textile project was part of a broader project for the preservation of Jewish heritage in Izmir initiated by the Kiriati Foundation, and which includes the restoration and preservation of nine historic synagogues in Izmir's old city.

The book explores synagogue textiles including Torah covers, mantles, and binders, Parokhet (ark curtains), and covers for the Tevah, or reading desk. They are made of silk, linen, cotton, or wool, and are often elaborately decorated with gold or silver thread and colorful embroidered floral designs. They often have dedicatory inscriptions embroidered on them.

"A dominant common feature of these artifacts is their decorative character—a feature that is also highly prominent the ceremonial textiles of other Sephardi and oriental communities," it states. "This was apparently influenced by the surrounding Muslim culture, which shunned figural images in religious settings and focused instead on non-figural ornamentation. This approach is contrary to the Ashkenazi design of the same objects, mainly parokhot, on which various figural images were commonly depicted."

he books describes the physical aspects of the objects and their design, as well as providing history and tradition. It also provides the translations of the dedicatory inscriptions and describes the restoration process.

"Deeply treasured personal belongings were the source of many of the ceremonial objects donated to the Izmir synagogues," it states. "Bedspreads, pillowcases, bundle kerchiefs, and other covers were transformed into parokhot, Torah mantles, tevah covers, and small covers for the Torah scroll. Bedspreads were especially suitable for use as a parokhet because of their square form. This necessitated adding hanging loops and a dedicatory inscription."

Serbia

Jewish Heritage Europe: Serbian government recognizes the former synagogue in Apatin as a cultural monument. It has a ceiling painting of the 10 commandments with Hebrew letters mysteriously written backwards.

The Serbian government has designated the former synagogue in Apatin a cultural monument, raising hopes that the long-vacant building, in the country's Vojvodina region, may undergo much-needed restoration work.

Built in 1885 for the Neolog community and located in northwest Serbia near the borders with Hungary and Croatia, the synagogue is a small, simple building, known for the striking — and somewhat mysterious — painting on its ceiling: a depiction of the Ten Commandments, with the Hebrew lettering painted backwards, as if viewed in a mirror. The tablets are revealed beneath a radiant sunburst in sky filled with dramatic banks of clouds.



"The synagogue complex in Apatin represents the last preserved trace of the Jewish community of that place, which was a significant driving force and catalyst in the development and modernization of life in the economic and cultural sense," the Serbian government said on its web site announcing the decision.

Only about 60 Jews lived in Apatin before World War II, and the community was annihilated in the Holocaust. In the 1950s, the synagogue was sold to a Baptist church which used it for worship for around 20 years — a small cross was set up on the peak of the building's roof.

Ivan Ceresnjes, an expert on the Jewish heritage of the former Yugoslavia, called the painting "unique" and told JHE's Ruth Ellen Gruber in 2004 that nothing was known about either the architect of the synagogue or the artist who painted the ceiling — or why the Hebrew was written backwards. But, he said, the artist probably was local and not Jewish.

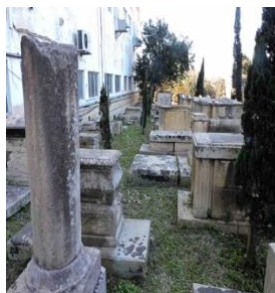
"The decision of the Government of Serbia to declare the Apatin Synagogue a cultural monument is extremely important, since the conditions are now finally being met to enter into the process of structural rehabilitation and internal protection of this complex," an article in the news site Dnevnik stated.

Malta

Jewish Heritage Europe: The Tayar Foundation Aims to Safeguard Malta's Three Jewish Cemeteries and Promote Jewish Culture and Memory on the Mediterranean Island State

Malta boasts a rich Jewish history, tracing its roots back to Phoenician times. Currently, it is estimated that only around 100-300 Jews reside in the Mediterranean island state, including Jews who moved there from Israel and elsewhere in Europe. The significance of its larger historical Jewish population is underscored by the presence of three remaining Jewish cemeteries. The oldest among them dates back to 1784, though several menorahs found carved on tombs in the St. Paul's Catacombs in Rabat testify to the existence of a Jewish community on the Maltese archipelago in ancient Roman times. The Valletta-based Tayar Foundation has embarked on projects to renovate and maintain these sites as well as promote Jewish culture and memory.

In this Spotlight, JHE contributor Michele Migliori focuses on the Foundation and its work regarding Malta's Jewish heritage — specifically its Jewish cemeteries.



The Tayar Foundation for Jewish Heritage in Malta was established in 2019 by a group of Jewish and non-Jewish activists aimed at preserving, restoring, and maintaining Jewish heritage sites on the Maltese islands as well as promoting Jewish culture and memory.

It honors George Tayar, a former President of the Malta Jewish Community who died in 1994 aged 87, his first wife Gita, who died in 1992, and his second wife Shelley, a journalist and Gita's sister, who died in 2019. George, a prominent businessman and philanthropist, was a descendant of Rabbi Josef Tayar, who in 1846 became the first Rabbi to hold this post in Malta, coming from Tripoli, Libya.

The Foundation was created by a group of the Tayars' friends in the Jewish community and in the academic and cultural sectors of Malta, all keen on promoting their interest in Maltese Jewish life, history, and culture. It was launched at a memorial for Shelley Tayar soon after her death. It is independent from, but actively collaborates with the Jewish Community.

The Foundation is chaired by Julius Nehorai, a retired businessman with a background in real estate, who moved to Malta in 2003. He is also a vice-president for Malta in the Commonwealth Jewish Council, which links Jewish communities in the British Commonwealth. Other founding members include Dr. Sarah Azzopardi-Ljubibratic, who holds a Ph.D. in the History of Religions from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and Reuben Ohayon, president of the Jewish community of Malta. Dr. Dennis Mizzi, a senior lecturer in Hebrew and Ancient Judaism at the University of Malta, is the Foundation's Projects Director.

The Foundation's main goal is to restore Malta's three Jewish cemeteries: Kalkara and Ta' Braxia (picture above), which are no longer in use, and Marsa, still used by the Jewish community and soon to be expanded. It aims "to increase awareness of this unique aspect of Malta's history" and eventually organize "open-days [...] to invite locals and tourists to discover these windows onto Maltese history and learn the stories they still have to tell."

Nehorai told JHE that the Foundation plans to carry out work in all three cemeteries this year, focusing on clean-up, landscaping, and restoration of matzevot. It is hoping to raise \$100,000 through a crowd-funding campaign on the WhyDonate platform. (a crowdfunder in 2021 successfully raised more than \$10,000.)

The cemetery in Kalkara, established in 1784, is Malta's oldest surviving Jewish burial ground, aside from the catacombs. It lies on the third of four promontories opposite Valletta on the southeast side of the Grand Harbor area. From 1530 to 1798, the Knights of St. John ruled the islands and brought back large numbers of Jewish prisoners captured in battles against the Ottomans. The Jews of Venice, Livorno, and elsewhere raised funds to ransom these Jewish prisoners, many of whom were kept in slavery, through the Societies for Redeeming Captives (Chevrot Pidyon Shevuyim).

The cemetery is entered through a narrow wooden door and steep, narrow steps. A plaque at its entrance states that the Kalkara cemetery was established by the Society financed by Jews in Livorno. No Jewish slaves are believed to have buried in the cemetery, however, and in 1798, Napoleon conquered Malta and outlawed slavery. The small, walled enclosure includes 12 identified graves from the early 19th century, plus four unidentifiable ones, and other fragments. Nehorai told JHE that it is in serious disrepair, surrounded on three sides by houses with limited access to the general public.

"The Foundation has access to it, but its restoration work is delayed pending the establishment of who has legal ownership of the site," he said. "We have not been able to identify who owns this cemetery. If land has not been claimed for a certain period of time, it reverts to the government, and it is probable that is what has happened here, but the Government has not formally adopted it." This needs to be clarified before restoration efforts can begin, he said.

The Jewish cemetery at Ta' Braxia, located two km from downtown Valletta, was founded around 1830 and in use until 1880, when it reached full capacity. Sir Moses Montefiore, while visiting Malta, was instrumental in

obtaining the small strip of land for it. Malta's main British multi-faith cemetery at Ta' Braxia was established next to it in 1855, and the Jewish cemetery is now a separate section of that complex. The Friends of Ta' Braxia Association has helped the Jewish community maintain the cemetery since 2001. This association was formed by a couple, Jenny, and Andy Welsh, who came to Malta from the UK many years ago and had an interest in maintaining cemeteries.

"They took care of Ta' Braxia, and when they became aware of the Jewish section of the cemetery, which was concealed behind a wall, they kindly took care of that as well," Nehorai told JHE. "The Tayar Foundation is contributing towards the cost of maintaining the cemetery and donating towards Friends of Ta' Braxia from time to time for this purpose."

Today, he said, the Ta' Braxia Jewish cemetery requires a restoration plan and periodic maintenance to make it more accessible. As we posted on JHE in 2016, the Braxia and Addolorata Army Association cleaned up the cemetery that year, but, Nehorai said, it does not appear to have worked on the site since then. The Jewish Cemetery in Marsa, also just outside Valletta, is the only Jewish cemetery still in use. Located next to the Turkish military cemetery, which is noted for its ornate entry walls, the Marsa Jewish cemetery was established in December 1879, as the Ta' Braxia Jewish cemetery reached full capacity. It is the only cemetery directly owned by Malta's Jewish Community and was designed by the English architect Webster Paulson. The grand neoclassical façade of its entrance, a Grade I listed building, "is crumbling and urgently needs restoration," the Foundation said.

The cemetery includes about 80-100 graves, six of which belong to WWI and WWII soldiers who died defending the island. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains these graves. Although it is in the best condition of Malta's three cemeteries, the Marsa cemetery also needs extensive renovation.

Nehorai told JHE that the Rotary Club Malta is donating €10,000 for the restoration of certain graves, to which the Tayar Foundation will also contribute. In 2022, the Government of Malta and the Jewish Community of Malta signed a Memorandum of Understanding, in which the government pledged to contribute towards the renovation of the cemetery in two phases. Phase One is to restore the entrance to the cemetery and provide a wheelchair ramp. Phase two involves extending the burial ground by incorporating the adjoining vacant lot, providing a further 80 burial plots, and constructing a boundary wall and entrance to link it to the current cemetery grounds, which incorporate a Tahara house.

The local news media Malta Today said the Jewish Community's plans for the expansion would also include extensive landscaping, including the removal of some trees "the introduction of 32 Cypress trees, 40 Myrtle trees, 32 palm trees, and five olive trees. Additionally, four existing almond trees will be transplanted." In addition to the cemetery work, the Tayar Foundation organizes cultural and educational events. These have included a Holocaust exhibition at the University in 2023, and an Anne Frank exhibition 2022, which was displayed at University campuses and was available online.

For more information about the Foundation's activities or volunteering, or to obtain lists of people buried in the cemeteries, visit their website www.jewishheritagemalta.org or email: info@jewishheritagemalta.org

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



This year, Purim will be celebrated on Sunday, March 24th, and "Shushan Purim" (in Jerusalem) on Monday, March 25th. On the Shabbat just before Purim, commonly referred to as "**Shabbat Zachor**", besides the regular Torah portion, a second Torah is taken out for a special reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 25, verses 17-19, which begins "**Remember what Amalek did to you...**", referred to as "**Parshat Zachor**". This short additional segment refers to the first attempt to eliminate the nation of Israel described in the book of Exodus, perpetrated by the evil Amalek immediately after the Exodus from Egypt, when we were still a multitude of confused, weak and shell-shocked former slaves. Israel was victorious, but due to the unique nature of Amalek's hatred of the new nation of Israel, which was not motivated by any allegedly strategic, economic, cultural, political, or military threat by the Israelites against anyone, including the warrior nation of Amalek, in Parshat Zachor, we are commanded to not only remember and never forget what Amalek tried to do to us, but also to physically eliminate the nation of Amalek, and "erase" his name for eternity. commandment that applies to no other Biblical or later enemy of Israel.

This special commandment applies to no other enemy of Israel. What, then, is so unique and different about Amalek's aggression against Israel that warrants such "special mention" and "treatment"? The answer is that, unlike other nations, Amalek attacked Israel simply because they were Israel, or in more contemporary terminology: Jews. Amalek was under no strategic or other threat from Israel, and nor did he have any claims of Israel encroaching on or conquering any territory. Amalek was not even from the local area he attacked and made a special effort to encounter and declare war on Israel. Therefore, Amalek's hate is unique in its pathological, inborn, irrational, and irreversible nature, as opposed to other enemies of Israel who, whether justified or not, had specific territorial and other contentions, claims, fears, and designs against Israel. This was also true of Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek. Like his ancestor Haman's hate, and subsequent nefarious scheme to commit genocide against the Jewish people, was not due to any Jewish economic, strategic, or other rational challenge to the Persian kingdom. His venomous hate of the Jews originated in his confrontation with a single Jew, Mordechai, who refused to bow to him as King Ahasuerus highest official. In his irrational and pathological hatred, Haman immediately extrapolated Mordechai's conduct onto Mordechai's entire nation, leading to his convincing King Ahasuerus to do no less than allow him to annihilate the entire Jewish people.

The original commandment in Parshat Zachor to physically annihilate any and every member of the Amalekite nation was still in force during the times of Kings David and Saul but disallowed after the Babylonian conquest of the region and the Land of Israel, due to massive population transfers, migrations and intermingling of nations, including Amalek, that made it impossible to definitively identify any native Amalekites. However, Amalekite-like Jew-hatred more than survived any bloodline descendant of the original Amalek and Haman, and in fact infiltrated and spread among all too many nations and leaders with clearly no historical or familial connection to Amalek. As such, the definition of "Amalek" or an "Amalekite" became conceptual, as explained by Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, and his grandson, Rabbi Josef B. Soloveitchik, of blessed memory. This means that indeed, it is no longer possible to attribute even the most infamous and cruel Jew haters and perpetrators of mass persecution and murder of Jews as direct biological descendants of Amalek, not to mention being able to physically kill anyone suspected of being from the seed of Amalek. But by their unbridled hate and murderous actions against the Jewish people actions, such individuals and nations conceptually and morally enter into the Amalek 'family' and must be fought and even destroyed.

This is certainly the case with Hamas, which is a contemporary version of Amalek. By its own charter, declaration and horrific atrocities, Hamas has shown its enthusiastic adoption and devotion to Amalekite Jew hatred of the worst kind imaginable. That is why Israel must continue to do all in its power to physically destroy Hamas and remove it from the world seen.

But more shocking and perhaps even devastating to Jews around the world, is how willing even the most so-called enlightened nations are to buy into so much of the Hamas and Amalekite rhetoric against Israel and Jews the world over.

On this front as well, we must not only remember what Amalek did to us thousands of years ago, but remain constantly aware of what is being said and done about Israel and the Jewish people by too many who have figuratively, conceptually, and philosophically joined the Amalekite nation. To those types of pathological anti-Semites, we must show no understanding and give no sanction, and continue to fight against all institutional and individual anti-Semitism, publicly and aggressively. But to be truly effective in this endeavor, we must constantly strengthen our own Jewish identity and faith, so that we never lose sight of the righteousness of our mission, which is not only our right to live and practice Judaism wherever we are proudly and unapologetically, but also our G-d given right to dwell in peace and prosperity in our homeland. We must also continue to spread Torah and Jewish values to further reduce the influence and power of even more contemporary "Amalekite" forces. "**Remember what Amalek did to you....and Happy Purim to one and all!**



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Angel for Shabbat, Parashat Vayakhel
JewishIdeas.org

During the early 1960s, Dr. Robert Coles spent time in the American south studying the moral life of children. This was a time when schools were being racially integrated and when racial hatred came to a head. Black children who attended public schools were cursed, spat upon, and threatened with violence. And yet, in spite of the hatred spewed out against them, they persisted in attending school. White children who befriended black children were ostracized by their white classmates...and often by their own parents. But they persisted in their friendships with black students.

Dr. Coles wanted to know what gave these children the moral strength to stand up to their detractors. After all, many other children did not demonstrate the moral character to resist the status quo.

In his interviews with black students, he found that many of them drew moral strength from their churches. The ministers preached about righteousness, about the importance of standing up against evil, about G-d's love of those who were strong in their faith and commitment to justice. A black student who attended a high school in Atlanta told Dr. Coles about how important the church was. "I'm not as small after church as I am before church." ("The Moral Life of Children, p. 153).

I first read Dr. Coles' book about 30 years ago, and that black student's statement made a lasting impression on me. In fact, it encapsulated my own feelings about the role of a religious leader and of a religious institution. I transposed the statement into a Jewish context: one who attends synagogue services should feel as though he/she has grown in the process, that he/she is stronger, better, more inspired, more courageous.

"I'm not as small after synagogue as I am before synagogue." The rabbi should be a source of spiritual strength and inspiration. The prayers should offer comfort, confidence, and a profound sense of G-d's love.

Here is a question of the highest importance: when you leave synagogue services, do you feel that you've come closer to G-d, that you've become spiritually more alive, more courageous? Can you honestly say: "I'm not as small after synagogue as I was before synagogue?" Did your rabbi engage your mind, heart and soul...or did he tell jokes, tell you how sinful you are, lament anti-Semitism, offer his views on the latest news stories? Did those who led the synagogue services bring you closer to G-d and to your own soul...or did they seek to show off their voices, or rush through the services by rote, or chant the prayers without seeming to understand that they were in the presence of G-d? For some (many?) congregants, the best part of Shabbat morning services is the Kiddush where they can socialize, eat and drink.

This week's Torah portion includes the description of how the Israelites built the sanctuary in the wilderness. The Torah states that G-d called upon those who were "wise of heart" to do the work. This refers to a special kind of wisdom, not merely a high I.Q. G-d appointed those who had an aesthetic sense, who were receptive and imaginative, whose hearts were in tune with the history and destiny of their people. It refers to spiritual wisdom...the humility and profundity of feeling G-d's presence.

The Talmud (Berakhot 55a) states that G-d only gives wisdom to one who has wisdom. Shouldn't G-d be giving wisdom to those who lack it, rather than to those who already have it? We may understand this Talmudic passage in light of this week's Torah reading.

G-d gave wisdom--and gives wisdom--to those who are receptive to receiving wisdom in this special way. Those who lack "wise hearts" are simply not receptive to this wisdom.

This quality of having a "wise heart" is vital to the wellbeing of every society, and certainly of every sacred endeavor. It is a repudiation of egotism and an affirmation of loyalty to the greater glory of G-d. It is a sensitivity to the historical context of the people. It is a rejection of the quick-fix attitude that cares more for self-gratification than for the greater good of society. The sanctuary was to be a place in which people could sense G-d's love and G-d's concern. It was a place for each person to develop a wise heart.

Our contemporary synagogues need to draw on the lessons of the ancient Mishkan. We, too, need to have wise hearts. We, too, need to increase our sensitivity to the holy and to the transcendent.

The rabbi, hazzan and congregation come together to elevate each other, to help all of us strengthen our character, and to gain spiritual and moral uplift from communal prayer and study.

After services, ask yourself: "Am I better after synagogue than I was before synagogue? Am I greater, if only a bit, after services and sermon than I was before services and sermon?"

If the answer is yes, you are truly fortunate.

If the answer is no, either find another synagogue or actively seek to effect positive change in the synagogue you attend. If we are not made greater by synagogue, we become smaller.

"...and every wise hearted person in whose heart the L-rd had put wisdom..."

Food for Thought

From Stigma to Staple: The Eggplant is a symbol of Sephardic resilience, identity, and survival

Full article in Tablet Magazine by Orge Castellano [Here](#)

On a recent jaunt to the heart of Spain's Segovia, it wasn't the grandeur of the Roman aqueduct or the history-soaked walls of the synagogue-turned-Corpus Christi Church that buzzed me. No, it was the anticipation of a meal at El Fogón Sefardí (The Sephardic Cookpot), a quaint bistro tucked away in the Jewish quarter. Esteemed as one of the rare spots in Spain to dish out genuine Sephardic medieval delights, it promised a culinary time machine back to the era of Spanish Jewry. For eons, my taste buds had fancied the treats on their menu. But, to my chagrin, a swath of Sephardic dishes were struck off. Mariano, the ever-accommodating maître d', lamented as I yearned for the *berenjenas caramelizadas con miel* (caramelized eggplant with honey), "Sorry, we took it off the menu; those dishes rarely get any takers." Quick on his feet, he chipped in with an alternative: "But might I tempt you with a succulent suckling pig paired with caramelized apples?" A twist, indeed.



The reluctance toward dishes like the sweet-and-sour eggplants cooked in olive oil and honey and spiced with cinnamon speaks to Spain's complex culinary history. Specifically, it hints at the controversial status of the eggplant in the country's past. Despite its abundant presence in various regional cuisines, the humble eggplant, now a celebrated culinary staple, once suffered intense scrutiny and stigmatization in medieval Spain due to its Semitic origins.

"In the Middle Ages, eggplants were considered poisonous," said Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, Spanish and food studies professor at the University of Washington. "Being a vegetable associated with evil, anyone who ate it who didn't die was also evil."

Tracing the history of eggplant in the Iberian Peninsula leads us back to the eighth century when the Moors introduced it. *Solanum melongena* is one of the few edible solanaceous plants that do not originate in America. Originating from India, the eggplant was widespread in ancient Asia and the Middle East, even mentioned in the significant Chinese agricultural treatise *Qimin Yaoshu* (fifth century CE). However, the old crop didn't leave significant footprints in Greek or Roman literature, despite these civilizations being familiar with other poisonous nightshades, such as henbane, belladonna, stramonium, and, above all, mandrake, whose fruits are similar to small eggplants.

The esteemed 10th-century *Kitāb al-tabīj*, *The Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook* written by Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq, offers a window into the culinary and religious traditions of medieval Muslims and Jews. Of 543 recipes, 62 showcase the eggplant in various preparations, including one recipe called Eggplant, Jewish Style. The book is in the National Library of France and listed as *Arabe 7009, Recettes de cuisine*. Other medieval European references include mentions from Abū 'l-Khayr in the 10th-century *Calendar of Cordoba* and the 11th-century *Agronomic Treatises*, known as the *Kitāb al-filāḥa* in Arabic. Thirteenth-century Sevillian botanist Ibn al-'Awwām detailed the cultivation of eggplant in al-Andalus, identifying four varieties—white, reddish-purple, black, or brown—and even likened its appearance to "an egg in the skin of a hedgehog." Known as Abu Zacaria of Seville, Ibn al-'Awwam highlights eggplant's cultivation in the ancient Roman city of Aquileia (near modern-day Trieste, Italy) despite little evidence of Roman authors discussing the vegetable.

As the centuries progressed, the acceptance of vegetables in Europe wasn't universally positive, as it had been during the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain. Historical cookbooks such as the *Novellino* and the *Tacuinum Sanitatis* from the 13th and 14th centuries helped spread prejudice against the eggplant by describing it as *pomo sdegnoso* (disdainful apple). By the 16th century, it was prohibited as a food in England and neglected in Germany, though still cultivated ornamentally. In the Italian Renaissance, humanist Ermolaus Barbarus dubbed the eggplant *malum insanum* (mad apple), a term that shaped the vegetable's current name

in Italian, *melanzana*, far from what the Arabs called it: *al-badinjan*, which produced both the French *aubergine* and the Spanish *berenjena*. The ill-natured names reflected the disdain eggplant faced at the time, an attitude evident in Antonio Frugoli's 1631 treatise where the gastronome suggested "delicate fruits to serve at any table of princes and great lords" while the rest of vegetables like eggplants were only "fit for peasants or Jews." This derogatory perspective against Jews persisted into the 17th century, with agronomist Vincenzo Tanara reiterating the vegetable's association with lower societal classes. This negative reputation wasn't limited to cultural discourse. Many in the medical field, influenced by the theory of humors, believed eggplants to cause various ailments.

"It was believed that its consumption caused phlegm, one of the four elements of humorism, which is why it was frowned upon by the Christian authorities and monarchs of the time," said Gómez-Bravo, "because it was believed that humors determined the character of a person or people. In this case, this entrenched medical discourse of the time stereotyped the Jewish body and culinary customs as inferior and impure."

Avicenna, a respected 10th-century physician, blamed the vegetable for illnesses ranging from leprosy to epilepsy. "Whoever eats eggplant engenders melancholy and weakness in the liver and spleen," he wrote. As Diego de Covarrubias, a Roman Catholic prelate, stated, eggplants were believed to have adverse effects on one's disposition and health. Even Sephardic Jewish philosopher Maimonides, in his famous *The Regimen of Health*, disregarded eggplant along with garlic, onion, leek, radish, and cabbage: "These vegetables are terrible for whoever wishes to follow a healthy diet alone."

Its near absence from cookbooks under Christian dominion hints at a larger ambition to eradicate the culinary traditions associated with the Jews and Moors. Fortunately, this endeavor was unsuccessful, as several manuscripts documented these communities' rich and diverse culinary traditions. Notably, medieval and early modern Castilian and Catalan cookbooks, such as the *Libro de guisados* by Ruperto de Nola (1520), spotlight the eggplant as a dominant ingredient. For example, in dishes like *cazuela mojí*, eggplant slices are fried and combined with roasted bread, spices, and cheese, followed by a mix of beaten eggs, pepper, saffron, and clove.

The popularity of eggplants among the Sephardim transcended beyond the sculleries' confines, as evidenced in literature, music, poetry, and popular culture. For instance, in Francisco Delicado's *Portrait of Lozana* (1528), the protagonist, Aldonza, boasts of her cooking talents while revealing her Jewish provenance: "Do I know how to make *boronia*? Wonderfully! And eggplant *cazuela*? To perfection!" Converso ancestry was often denoted by what they ate; food usually gave people's tradition away, ultimately leading to their persecution and killings solely for professing to observe Judaic dietary habits.

As reflected in David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson's book *A Drizzle of Honey: The Life and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*: "Late fifteenth-century conversos were evidently so fond of eggplant that the satirical literature of the day is filled with pointed references to this predilection." Typical is the burlesque poem by Rodrigo Cota about a converso wedding at which the guests were served this vegetable. The tribunal of the Inquisition of Toledo even accused several families of Judaizing for the preparation of these dishes after they were denounced by neighbors, friends, and even servants. "What's remarkable is how closely some of these recipes are to what we find in the Inquisition testimonies," said writer, chef, and cooking instructor Susan Barocas. Baltasar de Alcazar, another converso writer, celebrates bravely with irony in a poem about the virtues of eggplants, where he slips in ham so people won't suspect his Jewishness; unfortunately, his passion for the known Jewish vegetable gives him away.

<i>Tres cosas me tienen preso</i>	My heart is a prisoner
<i>De amores el corazón:</i>	In love with three things:
<i>La bella Inés, el jamón</i>	Beautiful Inés, ham
<i>Y berengenas con queso.</i>	and cheese with eggplants.

Berengeneros (eggplant eaters) was even a pejorative term used to insult someone suspected of having Jewish heritage or showing their Jewishness publicly. The so-called old Christians considered the vegetable

undignified food eaten by crypto-Jews. In cities like Toledo, considered the heartland of medieval Iberian Semitic culture, the term was used with contempt by the inhabitants of the nearby towns of León or Valladolid to refer to those who were thought not to be of pure blood—that is, to have Jewish or Moorish roots. Oral tradition played a crucial role in the collective memory of Sephardic Jews in Spain and the diaspora. The preference for certain foods toward specific edibles also made its way onto the collective bodies of folk narrative ballad poems called *Romanceros* and *Cancioneros*. These orally transmitted works were a powerful tool used by Jewish women to teach their daughters the *komidikas* (recipes) of their families, the traditions of the holidays, and Hebraic rituals.

“The communal and musical aspect of these gatherings played a crucial role in passing these recipes from women to women as they cooked and sang together,” said Barocas.

The collection of ballads that constitute the corpus of texts where eggplants are found consists of almost 2,000 versions. The verses that come to us from the Sephardic people of the Ottoman Empire and North Africa have reached great popularity since the 18th century. The burlesque lyrics turned into rhymes and songs, helping the memorization of the recipes, which Sephardim carried and maintained orally throughout the lands that sheltered them after the Spanish expulsion—mostly the Ottoman Empire and countries in northern Africa such as Morocco and Algeria.

Among the most popular *kantikas* (poetic chants) that speak of eggplants and the way to cook them are those collected on the island of Rhodes, like *Siete Modos de Guisar las Berenjena* and *Los Gizado de las Merenjenas*. The latter contains 36 ways to stew the vegetable. Over time, the myriad eggplant dishes of the Sephardic Jews have influenced and enriched the Mediterranean, Maghreb, and Middle Eastern cuisines. Today, popular dishes like Greek moussaka, Italian vegetable frittatas, Catalan *escalivada*, pickled eggplants from Almagro, traditional cold purees from Greece, and Andalusian fried eggplants all bear the indelible mark of this culinary heritage.

The enduring legacy of the eggplant in Sephardic culture is a testament to more than just culinary tastes; it’s a poignant chronicle of identity, survival, and evolution. As modern palates worldwide savor its rich flavors and textures, they are simultaneously tapping into a rich tapestry of history. From the ancient streets of Toledo to contemporary kitchens around the globe, the eggplant is not just a dish’s main ingredient but a bridge connecting generations, reminding us of the profound ways in which food transcends borders and time, weaving together stories of celebration, endurance, and deep-rooted heritage. Today, as chefs and home cooks alike revel in the versatility of the eggplant, it stands as a vivid emblem of its storied past, symbolizing the journey of the Jewish community, our unwavering resilience, and an unyielding commitment to preserving our identity, no matter the challenges faced.

“It’s all about continuity. Whatever the circumstances we have faced—the Inquisition, the expulsion from Spain, the Holocaust, and the wars—we’ve always persevered, adapting and growing with every new experience,” said Barocas. “We created new lives there to the places we went, and these places, these cultures that embraced us contributed and added to our culture, cuisine, music, language, even to our prayers. We used it, and we survived. And we’re gonna keep doing it.”

The Recipe

Sephardic Eggplant Stew (Estofado de Berenjenas Sefaradí)

Delving deep into my family’s Hebraic culinary lineage, I rediscovered this cherished recipe, a testament to the rich gastronomic traditions that have flowed through generations of Sephardic Jews spanning regions from Turkey and Greece to Morocco. This eggplant stew captures the essence of Sephardic flavors as it combines the velvety texture of sautéed eggplants with aromatic spices like garlic, coriander, cumin, and a touch of cinnamon. What makes this recipe particularly delightful is its adaptability. While it stands robustly on its own, it also pairs harmoniously with a range of Jewish recipes. Imagine serving it alongside delicacies like spiced lamb koftas, tangy tabbouleh, or even a spicy matbucha salad. My family typically complements it with freshly



baked homemade bread, fluffy rice, or the distinctively textured corn arepas. The final touch of feta or beyaz peynir cheese, slightly melted or diced into the stew, elevates the flavors, and adds a comforting creaminess, making this stew a heartwarming meal, no matter the occasion.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium eggplants, around 1lb.
- 1 ½ cups feta cheese or beyaz peynir cheese, diced or crumbled
- 1 medium-sized onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ cup + 3 tablespoons virgin olive oil
- 1 bunch parsley, finely chopped to garnish
- Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Step 1 - Cut the eggplants into small cubes. In a medium frying pan, add the 1/2 cup of olive oil; when it is heated, add the eggplant, and fry the cubes until medium-browned. Set them aside and let them cool to room temperature.
- Step 2 - In a large frying pan over medium-high heat, add three tablespoons of olive oil, cumin, onion, cinnamon, and garlic. Sauté for 5-6 minutes or until the onions turn translucent. Next, introduce the eggplants and continue cooking until they are soft and half-browned.
- Step 3 - Turn off the heat and incorporate the feta or beyaz peynir cheese cubes. Stir gently, letting the warmth of the stew melt the cheese slightly. Sprinkle the parsley on top as a vibrant garnish.
- Step 4 - Season to taste with salt and pepper, keeping in mind that feta or beyaz peynir cheese tends to be salty; therefore, it is important not to add too much salt.

Biscochos Recipe

- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 6-7 cups cake flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons vanilla essence
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- Topping
- 1/4 cup fine sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a stand mixer, combine all the ingredients until the dough comes together and forms a ball.

Place dough on the counter and gently knead for about a minute, until dough is smooth and comes together. Roll all the dough into walnut-sized balls. Roll into a thin strand, then double the strand and twist into a rope. Close into a ring, then dip into cinnamon sugar.

Place cookies on parchment lined baking sheets and bake for about 20 minutes, until firm and golden brown. Remove cookies from the oven and allow to cool.

Lower oven temperature to 200°F.

Biscochar (crisp) the cookies by placing bracelets on a baking sheet and leave in the oven for one hour.

Transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool.

Store in an airtight container.



My Sephardic Jewish Practice Doesn't Need a Label Full article by Rachel Pakan [Here](#)

I am neither Reform nor Conservative nor Orthodox, stuck in a limbo that has always seemed normal to me yet felt entirely impossible to convey to others.

For years, I was just Jewish. I absorbed this simple fact before I was old enough to formulate any other identity, internalizing it from countless Sundays spent in Hebrew school and Shabbat lectures from my parents.

As I got a bit older, I learned that my Jewishness was a little more complicated than that: There were Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, with different ethnic backgrounds and traditions, and I was the latter — Bukharian Jewish, specifically. I also learned that there were various religious denominations of Judaism — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, et cetera — but I never consciously gave thought to my own denomination because my family's Jewish practices did not seem explicitly affiliated with any group.

My perspective began to change in high school, when I studied among Jews who were vastly secular or Reform. I remember explaining my lifestyle to them, that I couldn't go to Friday night parties or order the shrimp tempura at their favorite sushi spot, that my parents held certain traditional expectations that I was expected to abide by. When they asked me which denomination I belonged to, I said that I was Conservative.

It made sense to me; my family was highly traditional but didn't necessarily abide by all the laws of Shabbat and kashrut, a sort of middle-ground approach somewhere between Orthodox and Reform. But I only seemed to confuse them, most of all when they learned that my synagogue did not accept female rabbis and that I did not have a bat mitzvah which involved reading from the Torah.

So I decided to switch up my narrative. I began telling friends that I was Modern Orthodox, which I supposed would resolve my family's traditionalism with some of the leniency with which I observed Jewish laws. It seemed to prompt fewer follow-up questions than my previous claim, so I stuck with it.

But in my first month of college, I grew close with a community of students that strongly identified as Modern Orthodox; they kept Shabbat and kashrut, had attended Jewish day schools growing up and most of them had spent gap years in yeshiva or seminary after high school. I struggled to see how I, a product of the public school system and not nearly as strict in my observance as they were, could fit into their religious mold. I eventually concluded that I didn't — I was not Modern Orthodox — and they agreed. "So you're Conservative then, or Reform," they half-asked, half-told me, but I indignantly denied it.

It seemed that I was out of options: I was neither Reform nor Conservative nor Orthodox, stuck in a limbo that had always seemed normal to me yet felt entirely impossible to convey to others. Unable to resolve the conflict in my own head, I dug further into the origins of denominations until I found the explanation that I could never quite articulate before: Unlike Ashkenazi Jews, Sephardic Jews never developed the concept of denominations in their practices of Judaism. I didn't have to reduce myself to a label; my Bukharian heritage alleviated me of that burden.

A quick Wikipedia read told me that the inception of denominations in Ashkenazic Judaism was largely a reactionary process — the Reform movement formed in order to integrate Judaism with Enlightenment values, and Orthodox Judaism formed in opposition to it. Later, Conservative Judaism was founded by Reform Jews who felt that the movement was deviating from tradition too quickly.

Sephardic Judaism is different: While some of us are not as observant as Orthodox Jews, we generally believe that the Orthodox interpretation of halakha, Jewish law, does not need to be modified in modern times, and we respect this interpretation in our synagogues and at major Jewish gatherings.

Of course, we are not a monolith. Some of us practice little to no Judaism in our daily lives, while others observe the laws to their fullest extent. But many of us, including myself, fall somewhere in the middle.

My religious background resembles that of most of my Sephardic friends: The kitchen in my family home is kosher to the highest level of stringency, but I frequent non-kosher restaurants when I'm out of the house; Shabbat meals with my family are non-negotiable and feature overwhelming amounts of delicious food, but I've never abstained from using electronics during those 25 hours; I attend synagogue services in modest skirts that fall beneath my knees, but I change into my Levi's and v-neck tees as soon as I get back.

To those who were raised with a strictly denominational approach to Judaism, my practices may seem puzzling — neither here nor there, a coalescence of contradictions offering no indication as to where my true beliefs lie.

But to me, it makes perfect sense. I accept the presence of blurriness and ambiguity in all aspects of my life, including religion, because it allows the different facets of who I am to coexist and build on one another in a constant cycle of self-evolution. I don't preach that the way I observe is "right," but it is the most right for me at this moment, regardless of what others might think of it.

After years of spinning false and simplistic narratives while trying to sum up my Jewish observance in a single word, I have finally gotten comfortable with giving the longer, more complicated but considerably more authentic answer. I truly hope that people are willing to hear it.

Need for Our Help

Marty Genee, Vice President of the Board of Trustees of Kehila Kedosha Janina, and a member of the Board of the United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina, came to us with a heartfelt request: to publicize the need of a Brotherhood member, Maury Siegel. Maury is in dire need of a kidney. His story is here: www.nkr.org/vyp642 Please spread the word.

Some of you may know the work of Arlene Schulman (of the Attas and David families) who is producing and directing a documentary about the Romaniotes. She's a seasoned journalist and communications professional who was recently laid off. If you're hiring or know someone who is for a full-time communications position, Arlene would love to hear from you. She can be contacted directly at arlenetheauthor@gmail.com . Thank you!

Our museum director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, is an experienced genealogist. If you are from our community and need help finding your roots, contact Marcia at museum@kkjism.org. For a donation to the museum, Marcia can help you access archival info from Ioannina and info on your family here in the USA.

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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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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