



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

May 2022 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

In May we celebrate our seventh annual Greek Jewish Festival, as well as the 74th birthday of the establishment of the modern State of Israel. During this month we also count the Omer, the 49-day period between the second day of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot. In the words of Rabbi Angel, the Omer period is an appropriate time to remind ourselves of the importance of each day. May we cherish each and every moment we have together, and appreciate the upcoming celebratory events we will share as a community. Read Rabbi Gershon Harris' enlightening article on the State of Israel and Rabbi Marc Angel's inspiring insights on Counting the Omer in this E-Newsletter.



The E-Newsletter is sponsored by Lois Genee Ledner and Ed Ledner
on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary.
If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjism.org.

This newsletter, our 158th will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website www.kkjism.org.

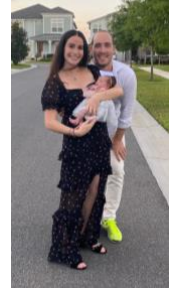
We now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of 'friends' continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at museum@kkjism.org

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.

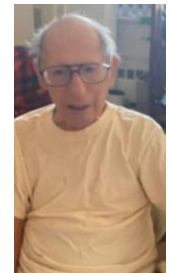
Our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm. Please RSVP to museum@kkjsm.org if you would like to visit. Proof of vaccination and masks are required.

Simchas

It is with great joy that we announce the birth of a baby girl to Elianna Mintz-Perez and Asher Perez. This precious baby girl, Rochelle Dina Maayan, is the granddaughter of Debra Hametz and Marshall Mintz, the great-granddaughter of Isaac and Pearl Hametz, the great-great granddaughter of Israel and Pernoula Hametz, and the great great-great granddaughter of Haim Hametz and Sarah Ovadia Hametz. The Hametz lineage from Ioannina continues here in the United States.



We celebrate the 100th birthday of Morris Calef. Morris is the son of Hyman Calef and Esther Jenny. His grandmother was Stamoula Jenny from Ioannina. He is the brother of the former Shirley Jenny Ungar and Irving Calef and Stella Calef Moses. Morris is married to Evelyn. Morris is retired from the US Postal Service.



Joyous news from Pearl Pappas. "With my niece's (Dr. Julia Visgauss) permission, I'd like to introduce you to the newest addition to our marvelous clan. Reece Thomas Visgauss born April 3, 2022. Youngest son to Mikelis and Julia Visgauss, grandson to Joan Colchamiro Langhamer (Roy), nephew to Jason Smart and the second great-grandson of Oscar Colchamiro (Muriel). He is another of the great-great-great grandchildren of Jessula and Rachael (Colchamiro) Matathias. Reece is pictured here with his brother Mikelis "Coley" Visgauss who goes by the name of Coley for Colchamiro-this clan being such a big part of all our lives, especially Oscar. Best wishes for a wonderful Passover!"



We wish Nathan and Judy Cohen Mazal Tov on the birth of their second grandson, Henry David.



Passings

We were greatly saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Denise Baker Hametz - Dina Bat Sara Hametz (11/28/1950-4/1/2022). Denise was a force of nature and it is so hard to believe that she left us so soon. She will be deeply missed by her loving family and our extended community. She is survived by her husband Irwin Hametz, and her children, Tova, Isaac, and Tzvi.



We mourn the passing of Ann Goldstein Bisgeier (from the Matza family) who was born in the Bronx on November 3, 1939 and passed away on March 25, 2022 in Las Vegas, where she lived for over 25 years. Her two brothers were Rick and Alex Goldstein. Ann was married almost 50 years to Stanley Bisgeier and had two daughters: Laura Murphy and Serena Bisgeier, and two grandsons Nicholas and Stephen Musco. Ann's energy and spirit left a mark on everyone who knew her. Her involvement with the family was her passion. She was always the first one to make plans for a future family gathering. She was a most generous hostess and a fabulous cook. You never had to guess how Ann felt about something; she was honest and very outspoken about how she saw the world. Her integrity was admirable. Her encouragement for those she loved was unlimited. We will miss her very much.

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Lois & Ed



Hy, Lois, Lil, and Marty Genee



Visitors Return to Visit Kehila Kedosha Janina

It is a joy to open our doors to visitors, both old friends and new friends. Once you walk through our doors, you are a welcomed friend. As always, there are those from our community, *Los Muestras*, Δικοί Μας (our own) who seek us out when they are in town. In April, we welcomed visitors from California, our own Arlene Schulman who is honoring us with a documentary on our community for her Master's Thesis at Columbia School of Journalism, and the honorable Michalis Firillas, the Consul General of Cyprus in New York.



Andrew Marcus &
Michalis Firillas



California visitors



Arlene Schulman

Past Events in the Greek Jewish World

Yom HaShoah at Kehila Kedosha Janina

There were a number of events commemorating the Holocaust on Yom HaShoah. At Kehila Kedosha Janina, on April 24th, we honored Hariklia Sayanou who saved the Akkos family, Romaniote Jews who were from Preveza, but were living in Athens at the time of the deportation of Athenian Jews. During the German occupation of the former Italian zone in Greece that began in September 1943, Hariklia Sayanou, a wealthy middle-aged widow, lived in Nea Smirni, Athens. She was originally from Janina, and had been educated at an academy in Constantinople. Her son had died as a soldier in Albania in January 1941 leaving a wife and two children. During the time under German occupation, Hariklia saved the lives of Rosa Akou and her five children. Only Rosa had false documents. Her husband, Menachem had been caught by the Germans and deported to Auschwitz in 1944, like many other Jews from Athens. Hariklia, was a friend of the sister of Mrs. Akou who was also a widow. A neighbor, Agape Mamaluka, who knew about them would say if asked, "I and Hariklia are the only ones living here. No one else", but actually she helped with the shopping for the Jews in hiding. They would leave the basement where they were put up only at night. Other neighbors were told that the Akous were relatives from Australia. The four girls and the boy with their mother remained under Hariklia's roof even after the German occupation - when there was indeed real danger to their lives and the life of their protector, in case of denunciation. The family name of the Akous sounded Greek so it did not have to be changed but the Jewish names of the children did – nine-year-old Esther became Stella, seven-year-old Havoula (Evelyn, later Ettinger) became Voula, five-year-old Miriam, became Mary, three-year-old Bertini kept her name and 13-year-old Semantov (Sam) became Touli. In 1951, the Akous left for America but several years later Sam went to visit Hariklia Sayanou in Athens to thank her again for the rescue of her family.



On October 10, 2004, Yad Vashem recognized Hariklia Sayanou as Righteous Among the Nations. In 2018, members of the Akkos family met with Hariklia's granddaughter in Athens.



Yom HaShoah at Kehila Kedosha Janina



On April 27th, our Museum Director was honored to present a moving program on the Holocaust of Romainote and Sephardic Jews of Greece at Shearith Israel (The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue) The event was jointly sponsored by the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America and Kehila Kedosha Janina.



Shared Memories of the Holocaust from Israel, Greece, and the US

From Sabi Hanan and Anna Garty in Israel
In Memory of the Jews of Greece sent to the camps in 1943 & 1944

Thank you Anna Garty (born in Ioannina and now living in Israel)
for an explanation of the events:

"There was a gathering hosted by the Salonica and Greece Jewry Heritage Center on Tuesday evening. The guests were representatives of the 'Shem ve Ner' Organization, Representatives of the Ministries of Education and Culture, The Greek Ambassador, and the families and friends of 4 Holocaust survivors who have passed away but their personal story and the story of the Greek Jewish Communities keeps being passed on by their children and grandchildren. Shem Ve Ner produced a beautiful film in which four actors are impersonating the four survivors, and are telling their memories from their life before the Nazi occupation, during their deportation to Auschwitz, and their life thereafter. At the end of each story, the actor and the son or daughter of each survivor lit a memory candle (prepared by Shem va Ner in memory of those who perished in their family. It was beautifully done, and is meant to be shown on their Internet site, and for school students.



Before leaving each guest was given a box of candles in memory of our Ioannina Martyrs. The list of the Ioannina community provided by you (note: Kehila Kedosha Janina provided the List from our Memorial Book "In Memory of the Jewish Community of Ioannina") which was translated into Hebrew, and the film that was screened was about four survivors from Salonica, were the two major activities of Shem ve Ner connected with Greek Communities and I was really moved and pleased that Sephardim and Romaniotes were both honored in one event. I was asked to escort the Ambassador and translate to him in Greek what was going on, because everything was carried out in Hebrew."



In Memory of Chaim Assis (Isi) from Arta, by his Granddaughter Ortal Assis

My grandfather was a quiet and humble man, and didn't like to talk about what he went through during the Holocaust. He had beautiful blue eyes, eyes that told life stories from the sad to the emotional and happy. So, I started the search and got to forums and sites related to Greece. I wrote to a number of people living in Greece and also in the USA who are connected to the Jewish community.

Chaim Assis (Isi) was born in Arta Greece in 1925 he was named after his grandfather Rabbi Chaim Isi who was the chief Rabbi of Arta. He is mentioned in an article I found, which states that he was among the important people of Arta who met the King of Greece in 1881 when Arta was added to the kingdom.... The family life was simple, his father worked as a merchant who passed between the different towns and his mother was a housewife. Both his parents died before the war. When the Nazis entered Greece my grandfather and his three brothers (Joseph, Elijah, and Emmanuel) escaped to the nearby town where a family of Christians hid them. Shabtai's brother was a partisan and was killed near the end of the war.

His sister Asimo was married to Joseph Shatai and they had two children Rosa and Sabi. They failed to escape in time and were sent to Auschwitz, where Assimo and her children were murdered. Joseph has survived. In 1946, my grandfather went to Israel on the ship Habiva Raik, that the British captured and sent all the refugees to the detention center in Atlit. After the liberation he moved to the Kibbutz near Beit Shean and from there he moved to Tantura, and then to Moshav Dor to work the land and establish a new settlement. That's where he met my grandmother. They were the first couple to get married in a moshav. Thank you Theocharis Vadivoulis for your help in finding the family home in Arta. My grandfather and his brother sold the house in 1951.

A few words about Arta, Greece. The Jews who settled in Arta are the oldest community in the area. Romaniotes is a nickname given to a Jewish community that is not Ashkenazi and is not Spanish that lived in the Balkans and Asia Minor. According to Romaniote tradition, the origin of the community comes from Jews who left Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple and settled in Asia Minor and the Balkans.



In Memory of Rochelle Benveniste from Rhodes by her Grandson Arthur Benveniste

My grandmother was a collateral victim of the Holocaust. She lived on the Island of Rhodes. The Island had been occupied by the Italians. During World War II, The Italians were guilty of many atrocities, BUT, they did NOT kill Jews. In 1943 the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini was deposed from power. The leader of the Italian forces on Rhodes then declared for the Allies. The Nazis then invaded the island. The Nazi ships were in the harbor of Rhodes which was located very close to La Juderia, the Jewish Quarter. British planes were sent to bomb the German ships. Three of the British bombs fell short and hit La Juderia. One hit my family home and killed my grandmother and her sister. Shortly after this, the Nazis herded the Jews and shipped them off to death camps. 1600 of them perished there. If the British bombs had hit their intended target, my grandmother would have been among those who were shipped to the Nazi camps.



Meeting of the Representative of the World Jewish Congress at the United Nations with the Commissioner of the Presidency of Cyprus

The Commissioner of the Presidency of Cyprus Mr. Fotis Fotiou had on 11.4.2022 a meeting in his Office with the Representative of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) at the United Nations in Geneva Mr. Leon Saltiel in the presence of the Director of the Center for Greek Diaspora Studies of the University of London Mr. Achilleas Chatzikyriakou. During the meeting, ways were discussed to promote various initiatives in the framework of the tripartite cooperation between Cyprus-Greece-Israel on issues of the Diaspora. It was particularly agreed to promote and carry out activities, such as the organization in Cyprus of a World Conference on interreligious dialogue. At the same time, actions were promoted that promote the fight against anti-Semitism and terrorism, which could be carried out in European countries with the participation of Hellenes Abroad.



Upcoming Events
Greek Jewish Festival – Sunday May 15

We are excited to announce the program for our seventh annual Greek Jewish Festival! Join us on Sunday May 15 from 12pm-6pm to celebrate our Romaniote & Sephardic heritage. Experience a feast for the senses including authentic kosher Greek foods and homemade Greek pastries, traditional Greek dancing and live Greek and Sephardic music, an outdoor marketplace full of vendors, arts and educational activities for kids, and much more!

See the full performance scheudle and learn more at www.GreekJewishFestival.com

Volunteers needed! If you can help volunteer on May 15 we would love to have your assistance!
 Please email Amarcus@kkjasm.org to sign up now.



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
 SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

PRESENTS THE
SEVENTH ANNUAL

ב"ה



**FREE
ADMISSION**

GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL

SUNDAY MAY 15, 2022
12PM-6PM

280 BROOME ST BETWEEN ALLEN ST & ELDRIDGE ST
 LOWER EAST SIDE NYC

DELICIOUS FOOD

LIVE MUSIC

KIDS ACTIVITIES

SYNAGOGUE TOURS

DANCING

VENDORS & GIFTS

- FESTIVAL SPONSORS -

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DANCE

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 LOWER
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HISTORY MONTH

 Greek Jewish & Sephardic
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Jews of Greece: 25 Centuries of Continuous Presence by Prof. Mimis Cohen
Online Presentation on May 3, 2022 at 12:00 PM Central Time
Register [Here](#)

Jews of Greece: 25 centuries of continuous presence

Dr. Mimis Cohen
University of Illinois at Chicago

TUESDAY, MAY 3RD, 12:00 PM CT



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Center for Hellenic Studies



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News from Jewish Greece

Larissa

The project to restore the Larissa synagogue is still in process. With works carried out from January to July 2021, we managed to complete the reinforcement of the foundations and the surrounding walls of the Synagogue. We did so using the funds raised from private donations from individuals from Greece and other countries and sponsorships of the Greek Jewish communities. The building is now safe from the possibility of collapse, however there is still much to be done to put it back into use. Our community continues its efforts with the fundraising campaign, by addressing to any possible sponsor, and especially to institutions and organizations. Any help that can be provided to us will be a real benefit.

With warm regards,

For the Board of Jewish Community of Larissa

Ilias Kampelis – President, Beatrice Magrizou – Gen.Secretary

Contact museum@kkjism.org to see how you can donate from the United States.

Past photo of the synagogue to see what we may lose if it is not restored.



Preveza

The Cultural Association "Preveza" in a letter to the K.I.S. (Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece) had proposed "a photographic depiction of the synagogue building and its history, on the façade of OTE, restoring, even in this way, an important historical mosaic of the city's history." The proposal found a very positive response from the Board of Directors of the K.I.S. and the cooperation with the central administration of OTE resulted in this aesthetic and historical result that adorns the OTE building of our city. The Cultural Association "Preveza" in its announcement states: "We would like to publicly express our gratitude to the Board of Directors of K.I.S. and OTE for the implementation of the proposal so that a historical past can take a place in the present of Preveza. The role of our compatriot and OTE executive of our region, Vassilis Koutroumbas, in the final result, proves that selfless collaborations and shared love for the country can offer a lot. We have repeatedly proposed similar narratives to the respective Municipal Authorities to be placed in other historical, religious, and social nodes of the city, but without positive results."



Kavala

"The Holocaust of the Jews of Kavala" is the title of the 45-minute documentary, produced by the TV channel ENA channel and the Municipality of Kavala, in which -through interviews, memories and archival material- the story of the Holocaust is summarized.

Historian Kyriakos Lykourinos and local history researcher Costas Papakosmas, Israeli Ambassador to Greece Yossi Amrani, KIS Committee President David Saltiel and K. Kavala Symeon Lake, as well as Jews from Kavala such as Fikos Mevorach, Alexandros Simcha and Aaron Tsimino. The documentary was directed by Konstantinos Patsoulidis and the director of the production, the artistic director and the screenplay are by Nikol Spyropoulou.



Moses Eliasaf, Mayor of Ioannina and President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina given a special award at a Holocaust Comemoration service in Kavala

On the morning, of March 3rd, on the anniversary of the roundup of the Jewish Community of Kavala, in the former Jewish neighborhood, the Municipality of Kavala conducted a memorial service. Then, a Memorial March took place from the former Jewish school (Greek High School building) to the Jewish monument on Red Cross Street, where the tobacco stores were located, in which, on March 3, 1943, the Bulgarians gathered the of the Jews of Kavala, before they lead them to Drama and from there to the Treblinka death camp in Poland. The events ended with an award presented to the Mayor of Ioannina, Moses Elisaf, the first Jew to be elected mayor in a Greek Municipality.



Trikala

The first visits of organized visitors from all over the world were received by the Jewish Synagogue in Trikala. Always based on the protocols in force for the pandemic, the renovated Jewish Synagogue of Trikala is expected to receive many people, after the completion of the works that highlighted its elegant stone building.

As the president of the Jewish Community of Trikala, Mr. Jacob Venouziou, points out to the Athens-Macedonian News Agency, the proposals from travel agencies for visits to the Synagogue are many, and are expected to increase when the pandemic subsides. At the same time, the educational community of the city of Trikala has so far embraced the new Synagogue, as there have been mass visits of students and teachers, where information is given to the local Jewish community. According to him, the Synagogue is of Romaniote style and for this reason it is called "Cal Yavanim", i.e. the Greek Jews.

It is one of the few, rare and valuable examples of Romaniote-style architecture and layout. The construction of the building, according to data from the Jewish Community of Trikala, began around 1925 and was completed in 1930. The only peculiarity of the Synagogue of Trikala is that it has two pulpits (Teva), one in the center - facing the Ehal - and one elevated on the west wall. At this time, adds Mr. Venouziou, we are preparing the showroom, which will include rare and unique objects of the Jewish tradition, which are kept for many decades since some of them have recorded dates of more than one hundred years.

The Synagogue is one of the most beautiful buildings of the city of Trikala and is listed in international tourist catalogues and albums of world Jewish monuments as a synagogue of unique beauty and a monument of glorious historical and cultural Greek-Jewish tradition.

After careful and considered interventions, and funding from donations and the German Consulate in Thessaloniki, the Jewish Synagogue changed its appearance internally and externally, new spaces were added.



According to Mr. Venouziou, the president of KISE and president of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki (David Saltiel), who also holds the position of vice-president of the world Jewish Council, it is very important.

All the Jewish Communities and Jews in Greece and abroad, he adds, also contributed financially to this work. Apart from the Synagogue, the visitor can also visit the Holocaust Memorial for the 139 dead of the concentration camps, an initiative of the municipality of Trikala. At the beginning of the old Jewish quarter of Trikala, on the pedestrian street of Plutonos, a tear from a train, refers to the memory and the long journey of Jews from Trikala and other Greek Jews



and non-Jews, with the "trains of death", in concentration camps. Extremely moving was the atmosphere at the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial, which took place in November 2018, where the events were a point of reference, both from Greece and from foreign countries: they were organized by the Italian Embassy and the Municipality of Trikala, the Greek Delegation to the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), the Central Jewish Council of Greece and the Jewish Museum of Greece, with the cooperation and support of the Jewish Communities of Thessaloniki and Trikala, the Italian School of Athens and the Research Center - Tsitsanis Museum, thus attended by ambassadors and their representatives from 14 countries.

Thessaloniki

Albert Nar was a prominent writer and historian of Thessaloniki, a child born to parents who came back alive from the hell of Auschwitz, the man who recorded the culture, music, customs, and traditions of the Jews of the city, the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and who marked the culture of the city with his work.



This was the reason why the Municipality of Thessaloniki, in 2018, gave its name to a street in the city. After the recent court decision, which annulled the naming of Alberto Nar on this street, we are sure that the Municipality of Thessaloniki will take all the necessary actions so that the name "Albertos Nar", of this Saloniki writer, adorns its street again to remind the people of Salonika of the cultural heritage of the Jews of the city.

Presentation of New Book by Elias Messinas in Thessaloniki

The long-term research of the architect and urban planner Elias Messina on the Synagogues in Greece with the stories of the people is combined with his new book "The Synagogue" which was presented on April 12, 2022 at the Monastirli Synagogue in Thessaloniki.

The texts are based on many years of research on the buildings themselves, on published items and archives (documents, texts, photographs) in Greece, Israel and elsewhere, some of which are also accessible on the internet. They are also based on interviews and facts from the time of the investigation to the present day. In contact with people and places, in scenes reminiscent of a movie, with a synagogue or the ruins of a synagogue in the background.



The Bracelet of Fire, written by Betty (Beatriki) Magrizou, chosedn to be made into a major series for Greek TV

Christos Loulis, doing selective work on television, gave his hands with the production of the new series "The Bracelet of Fire", which will be screened on state television next season. With a strong script and a select cast of actors, state television remains dynamically in the field of fiction, raising the bar higher and higher and claiming high viewership numbers, just as it happened with the "Love illegal" era series that became a big trend on social media. The last addition to the already strong cast of the series is Christos Loulis who according to the report of the iefimerida.gr closed just yesterday (19/4) to keep one of the main roles in the script. In addition, state television once again chooses a powerful book, based on true events, to become a series. The tv script is by Nikos Apiranthitis and directed by Giorgos Gikapeppas. The leading roles will be undertaken by Nena Karamichos, Nikos Psarras, Christos Loulis, Elisavet Moutafi, Thanos Tokakis, Vasiliki Troufakou, Michalis Tabakakis. "The Bracelet of Fire" is the book written by Beatrice Saia-Magrizou and the TV series is based. The book talks about the dramatic journey of a Jewish family to the bleak moments of the twentieth century. The chronicle of a society that crashes and emerges from its ruins. The tumultuous story of little Joseph, as recorded by a nightly tale: Thessaloniki, 1917. The flames live in the Jewish quarter. Benuta and her children are at home. A Gypsy, Aggelis, rescues them at the last minute. He takes them to his camp, far from havoc. Much of the city is being destroyed. A precious jewel is preserved. An heirloom that connects people and events. Jews and Gypsies. Two peoples with different worldviews but with destiny in common. War, Nazi atrocity, Auschwitz. The hard pages of the Holocaust. The odyssey of a bracelet.



Menti, Giorgos

Hymns from Auschwitz – Holocaust Memorial Concert held at Carnegie Hall – World Premiere of Memorial piece composed by survivor Michel Assael

16 years after his death, one of Michel Assael's decades-old symphonies came to life for the first time at Manhattan's iconic Carnegie Hall. Watch the video [Here](#)



Turkey

The Digital Effort to save Ankara's Jewish History: With the traditional Jewish quarter at risk of dilapidation, researchers are trying to preserve the community's history online. Full article [Here](#)

The history of the modern Jewish community in Ankara dates back to at least the 15th century, when Jews fleeing persecution in the Iberian Peninsula joined an existing community of Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews in the central Anatolian town.



Located in the Ankara district of Altindag, the Jewish quarter was the heart of this community. It drew new arrivals throughout the Ottoman period and featured schools, a synagogue, and a beit midrash (Torah study hall). Today, derelict mansions and an impressive, albeit discrete, synagogue remain standing as a testament to this important aspect of the Turkish capital's history. As the neighborhood becomes increasingly run-down, preserving the history of the Jewish community in Ankara has taken on a heightened importance. To that end, a recently launched digital platform seeks to make sure that the Jewish quarter's stories are not forgotten.

The initiative, called the Jewish Quarter Ankara Digital Platform (JQA), thoroughly compiles the history of Ankara's Jewish community, as well as the



city's historic Jewish neighborhood, drawing on academic publications, news articles, cadastral records, personal memoirs, and interviews with former Jewish residents of Ankara.

This rich trove of material can be accessed on the platform, which consists of three separate parts, each focused on highlighting different aspects of the Jewish quarter's past and present. "In the section on the 'Ankara Jewish Community' it is possible to get information about the deep rooted history of the Jews of Ankara," says Aysin Zoe Gunes, the designer and coordinator of the project.

"The 'Archive of The Silence', on the other hand, contains digital exhibitions... while the 'Ankara Jewish Quarter' includes a 3D digital tour of the neighborhood," she continues.

"It offers the experience of exploring the Jewish Quarter today with the knowledge of the past." Organizers hope the project will expose the little-known history of the Jewish community in Ankara to the wider Turkish public and to others around the world.



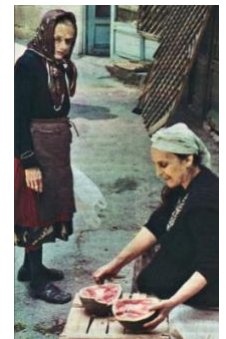
The Jewish quarter in the republican era

Ankara underwent tremendous changes following its newfound status as the capital of the Turkish republic in 1923. The city experienced unprecedented growth, leading to the construction of many new, well-planned neighborhoods throughout the city. Modernizing reforms during the early republican period also led to the erasure of much of Ankara's historical identity as a multicultural and multi-religious city.

"I think that Ankara's portrayal as an early republican city and its recognition in this way is an injustice done to Ankara," says Yavuz Iscen, a researcher and consultant to the Ankara Jewish Quarter project. "In the first years of its establishment, the republican administration tended to ignore the city's past or to interpret it in its own way, in line with the discourse that 'we created a modern city from a steppe town'," he goes on.

In this context, beginning in the 1930s, many of the Jewish residents of the old Jewish quarter began to move to the newer neighborhoods of Ankara. This migratory shift within the city was the starting point of the Jewish quarter's slow yet steady decline.

The Jews who remained in the old quarter in this period were mostly the impoverished members of the community who could not afford to move to the newer neighborhoods of modern Ankara. Policies such as the 1942 wealth tax levied discriminatorily and disproportionately on non-Muslims, also led to the decline of Jewish life in Ankara as many Jewish properties were expropriated by the Turkish state.



The final blow to Jewish life in the quarter was dealt in 1948, with the foundation of the state of Israel.

Prospects of a better life in the burgeoning Jewish state prompted almost all of the neighborhood's impoverished Jews to migrate. One elderly Jewish woman named Sara stood defiant, choosing to remain in the neighborhood of her birth up until the 1980s.

For decades, she was the sole Jewish resident of the old Jewish quarter. Sara, who later passed away at an old people's home in Istanbul, remained in the Jewish quarter until her old age made that impossible. Her unique story is one of many that the Jewish Quarter Ankara Digital Platform brings to light.

An uncertain future

In more recent times, the Jewish quarter of Ankara has faced continued degradation, giving the Jewish Quarter Ankara project a sense of increased relevance. Many of the surviving historic structures in the neighborhood are in dire conditions today, with complicated disputes in terms of ownership adding to a complex set of bureaucratic obstacles that impede their conservation.

"The neighborhood has a great importance in terms of social, cultural and architectural history, and these unique features are often lost due to fires or desolateness," says Aysin Zoe Gunes.

"It is obvious that the buildings in the neighborhood will fall into ruin and become destroyed if a detailed and healthy conservation plan is not implemented," she adds.

One major force that frequently spearheads conservation projects in Turkey is the country's massive tourism industry, which attracts tens of millions of visitors every year.

However, tourism and the changes that come with it can pose a different threat to neighborhoods such as Ankara's Jewish quarter. Often described as a double-edged sword, tourism can ensure the investment of money and the implementation of preservation plans, whilst simultaneously resulting in gentrification and the accelerated loss of local atmosphere.

"To be frank, I don't think tourism, whose main purpose is to make a profit, will take the conservation of the neighborhood seriously," says Yavuz Iscen.

"The deplorable physical and cultural situation of places that opened to tourism with the promise of protection, both in Turkey and in Ankara, pushes me to think in this way."

Nonetheless, Iscen points to various actions that can be taken in the near future to protect the neighborhood and preserve its status as an important site of memory in Ankara. "One of the neighborhood mansions can be reevaluated as a museum, the synagogue can be saved from its hidden appearance, and efforts can be made to ensure cultural continuity," he suggests. As the Jewish community of Ankara numbers around 35 members today, one thing that is certain is that any future preservation project in the Jewish quarter will have to be carried out in collaboration with members of the wider, non-Jewish public.

In this sense, the Jewish Quarter Ankara Digital Platform project is exemplary, in that many of the team's members, consultants, and researchers come from non-Jewish backgrounds.

"Armenians, Greeks and Jews are the indigenous public of Ankara who have been settled here since pre-Ottoman times," says Iscen. "All these experiences form a part of the cultural richness of the city. Being aware of and owning this richness does not diminish us, on the contrary, it contributes a lot. "I consider the Ankara Jewish Quarter Digital Platform Project an important step in seeing and feeling this cultural richness."

View the [Digital Archive Here](#)



Izmir

Spectral Smyrna in Izmir by Alexander Billinis Full article [Here](#)

It is always our delight to publish work by our dear friend, Alexander Billinis

There is something about travel to our lost homelands that creates spectral yearnings in me. I have had the great fortune to visit and to experience nearly every country bordering Greece, or other places where the Byzantine legacy remains in culture or edifice. Nowhere were the ghosts more numerous than in my visit to Smyrna, ten years ago.

Ironically, this is probably because Byzantine and Hellenic legacy is officially expunged from the record in Izmir, whereas in Constantinople there is still a tiny Greek community and the Patriarchate of Constantinople maintains a slipping grip on the spiritual legacy of Byzantium.



It could be, too, that what “The City” represents simply transcends the grave for Byzantine descendants. Whatever it was, even Constantinople did not stir up the same whirl of spectral emotions in me as did Smyrna.

There were no family ghosts in Smyrna for me. My lineal family is all from the Western side of the Aegean, unlike so many of my fellow Greek tourists on this particular trip. We arrived after a brief flight from Athens, and proceeded into the city of Izmir, whose upper town, crescent shaped harbor, and seaside highway immediately brought Salonika to mind.

It was not just topography talking—many of today’s Izmiris were Salonikans, and today’s Salonikans were Smyrnans, the human legacy of the exchange. On the highway to Izmir, we rounded a bend where a huge rock carving bore the likeness of another Salonikan, Kemal Attaturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. Declaratively, Izmir greeted us cloaked in Turkish flags, as we arrived on Republic Day. Never had I seen so many flags, not even in post-9/11 America were so many flying, and at sizes ranging from toddler holding with paper jobs, to six story buildings totally draped. Shakespeare’s phrase about “protest[ing] too much” came to mind.

As for clear signs of the Greek legacy in Izmir itself, a Greek seeking many ready reminders of Greek Smyrna will be frankly disappointed. The Greek Quarter was consumed by fire and ploughed under for parkland. Some structures do remain, including a couple of formerly Greek high schools in a high neoclassical style now appropriated by Turkish universities, and some stately homes with gabled second stories known in the Balkans as Turkish houses and in Turkey as Rum (Greek)-style houses.

In today’s Izmir the greatest enemy to remaining Greek architecture is not the erasing efforts of Turkish nationalism, but a far greater enemy and one well known to Athenians, “progress.” Builders arrive with cash and promises of apartments, and mansions of a bygone era come down.

Then there are the Smyrnans of today, the Turkish Izmiris. Absent the veiled women, relatively few in number in this city, one easily sees the faces of Athens, Salonika, Sofia, Skopje, or Belgrade. Or Iraklion.

At a café in Smyrna’s upper town, where Turkish couples sipped beer in fashion and form no different from their Balkan neighbors, a fellow, hearing us speak Greek, opened a conversation. He spoke an unsteady Greek filled with Cretan idioms, astonishingly similar to the Cretan dialect I heard from Old Timers from the Greek community in my Salt Lake City, Utah hometown. Switching to his more fluent English, he informed me that his grandparents were Cretan Muslims, that there were hundreds of thousands of Cretan descendants in Turkey, and that “Greeks and Turks are brethren.”

Walking along Izmir’s waterfront, full of swanky apartments every bit the kin and peer of Waterfront Salonika or Glyfada, I expected to feel ghosts, for before arriving I had reread several accounts of the last days of Greek Smyrna, and horrors endured by hundreds of thousands of Asia Minor Greeks and Armenians, caught between fire and sword on the land, and the sick indifference of Allied ships in the harbor.



A quick stroll down the strand was enough.

The blackness of the sea, and the lights of the city easily remind of the countless thousands who met a watery grave. As I was with my new Turkish friends at that particular moment, whose kindness and hospitality easily compares to the best of the Greeks, the ghosts beat a diplomatic retreat.

The nearby ruins of Classical Ephesus conjure images of Greek civilization, and the very font of Christianity, clearly antecedents confirming Asia Minor’s Greek Christian past and the Turks as latecomers and awkward inheritors of its present and future. Here, again, were ghosts of the past, but of an earlier era, lacking the nearness and intimacy of those more closely associated with our era.

It was, rather, the villages near Smyrna, less impacted by modernity, more readily and visually connected to our Greek present, where the ghosts came out in force. There was the village of Urla (Vourla) now nearly a suburb of Izmir, with global chic from the city annexing the charms of a once Greek fishing village. Greece's Nobel Laureate poet, George Seferis, was born in Urla, and the Turks celebrate this native son with a street and restaurant adorned with Greek and Turkish flags. I thought of his oft quoted lines, "Everywhere I go, Greece wounds me." I certainly felt the pain here.



Breaking away from the tour, as I often do, I walked the quiet streets of the town, not much changed since the Greeks left these same houses in haste. Then I walked to the small port, in every way the same as a thousand such seaside towns in Greece, and a Turkish sailor sat in the late autumn sun, burned the same crimson as his counterparts in my home island, Hydra, cleaning his nets with the help of a big toe for leverage. I could not help but feel a timeless kinship with the man, a timeless Aegean figure.

North of Smyrna, the town of Foca beckoned. Known until recently as Phocaea, its citizens founded the city of Marseilles in France almost three thousand years ago. The Greek presence here ended abruptly in 1922. One of my fellow tourists recalled that his grandfather owned several factories here, sighing the sigh of fate and futility I have so often witnessed on both sides of the Aegean or anywhere in the Balkans, when recalling such things.

We arrived at a port every inch Greek, settling in a fine restaurant eating barbounia at a price and freshness hard to come by. Out at sea we could just make out a hazy silhouette of Lesbos, and over the Karaburun peninsula opposite Chios would have been visible, all linked together in a web of commerce and culture, until the tragic events of the 1920s.

Well sated and on unsteady legs from too much raki and nostalgia, we then took to the back streets of Foca, where the ghosts readily walked the narrow alleys, whose houses had not changed since the 1920s and door lintels often had faded inscriptions in Greek. The exchange might have happened yesterday, from the town's aura, and so it was just a blink in the eye, relative to the millennia-long history of Hellenism here.

Though Greek Christianity was officially expunged from Asia Minor, its aural presence remained, and physical traces abounded, hidden in plain sight. The DNA and features of the people told a similar story, as did the frequent facility with the Greek language due to pre-exchange ties which still held. This part of Turkey is a must see, not only for what is seen, but more importantly what is not seen, but rather felt.

Alexander Billinis is an instructor at Clemson University, in South Carolina, USA. He is a licensed attorney, with a former career in law, real estate management, and international banking. He has lived and worked in Greece, the UK, and Serbia, as well as shorter work or study assignments in Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, and Chile. A citizen of both the United States and Greece, he is married and the father of two teenage children.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



The State of Israel will be celebrating its 74th birthday on Thursday, May 5th. Yet despite becoming a world power, an economic powerhouse and the physical and spiritual homeland of the entire Jewish people, Israel still has too many enemies from without and even within the Jewish world that continue to question Israel's legitimacy as Jewish state, not to mention calling for its physical destruction. While the vast majority of the enlightened world continues to support Israel politically, morally, economically, and materially, such support can never be taken for granted, and constant vigilance and countering of the BDS and other political and antisemitic movements and organizations is vital. To help in this fight, it would be prudent to first remind ourselves of the miracle of Israel, whose creation and prosperity constitute one of the greatest miracles in the annals of history.

The late Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik published a famous essay in 1956 called "*Kol Dodi Dofek*" – 'the voice of my beloved is knocking'. The title is taken from the Biblical "Song of Songs", chapter 5, verse 2, which is a metaphor for the God-Israel relationship. The 'Beloved' – God, comes knocking at the door of His 'lover' – Israel, pleading to enter her room. But for various reasons, the lover hesitates, and when she finally does open the door, her Beloved is no longer there.

Rabbi Soloveitchik compared this segment of the "Song of Songs" to God's figuratively 'knocking' six times on the door of world Jewry to see whether the Jewish people would open the door and seize the opportunity to join God in this miraculous quest or hesitate and procrastinate in opening the door until it was too late, and God had left and could not be found.

The first 'knock' was heard in the political arena, by the very fact that the UN voted in favor of creating a Jewish entity at all, and was even more miraculous when one considers that virtual archenemies, the USSR, and the USA, both supported Israel's establishment. This could only have been the work of God's hand, and if the world-at-large had given its approval for the creation of a Jewish state, how could we not take up the challenge and ensure the new entity's growth and prosperity?

The second 'knock' was heard on the battlefield. Only a miracle can explain how the very small and ill-equipped Israel Defense Forces at the time managed to defeat five mighty Arab armies (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon), who refused to accept the Partition Plan and vowed to destroy the new Jewish state at birth. Yet Israel miraculously prevailed, and even expanded its territory to include parts of Jerusalem, the Galilee and more.

The third 'knock' resonated on the door of theology, since, due to our rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, classic Christian dogma insisted and taught that God removed from the Jewish people any right it had to the Land of Israel and annulled His "Old Testament" with Judaism, replacing it with a "New Testament" with Christianity. Part and parcel of this "Replacement Theology" and our "punishment" for rejecting Christianity was the divine doctrine that the Jews must remain downtrodden and persecuted forever, and never regain spiritual or physical sovereignty in the Holy Land. The founding of the State of Israel and our miraculous victory on the battlefield proved this theological doctrine as being unequivocally false at its core.

The fourth 'knock' was heard among the myriads of confused Jews, and especially Jewish youth, whose lives had been totally upturned by the horrors of the Holocaust, with so many losing faith and actively seeking to

flee from Judaism and assimilate. The miraculous creation of the new sovereign State of Israel shocked many into the realization that there now existed a living, breathing entity where every Jew could find a home and live as a Jew. The new state was no lofty theory or dream but a physical reality, and rapidly became vital in stemming the tide of Jewish assimilation and in infusing new hope, pride and confidence in Jewish identity and Jewish life and faith.

The fifth 'knock' was perhaps the most important, because for the first time in the annals of life in exile, God showed our enemies that Jewish blood is not cheap! No longer would Jews be defenseless and fodder for pogroms and annihilation with impunity, but rather defend themselves proudly, confidently, and effectively. Finally, the sixth 'knock' was heard in the successful mass absorption of tens of thousands of new immigrants over the span of a little more than a decade. Whether as refugees or immigrants by choice, Jews from all over the world either came on their own or were brought in by the government. The problems were many and difficult, but the new state miraculously managed to absorb Jews from every corner of the world and bring to fruition a true 'ingathering of the exiles' as described by our Prophets.

Rabbi Soloveitchik's message is clear. The founding and unprecedented success of the new State of Israel in 1956 was to be seen as a gift from God that demanded the help and support of the entire Jewish world to ensure that the miracle would continue. To ignore these 'knocks' would be not only tragic for the new state, but for the entire Jewish world.

74 years later, we can only marvel at Israel's achievements and prosperity, and can safely say that the Jewish people did answer the door when God came 'knocking', and we can all take pride in being part of this miracle. "*Hag Atzma'ut Sameah*" – Happy Israel Independence Day!



Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Making our Days Count: Thoughts on Counting the Omer

Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals – JewishIdeas.org

We had a neighbor--an elderly widow--who was vibrant, intelligent and active. As she grew older, she became increasingly forgetful. Her condition gradually worsened, to the point where she needed full time help at home.

One day, several of her grandchildren came to visit her. They brought tape recorders and note pads. They wanted to know more about her life story. They asked her questions, but she gave vague or confused replies. First she told them she grew up in the Bronx; and later said she grew up in Brooklyn. She couldn't remember names, or dates, or places. She could not remember the facts that the grandchildren were trying to learn. They were frustrated; their tape recorders and note pads were useless, since the grandmother's memory had deteriorated so badly.

They had come too late. The grandmother had lived well into her nineties, but the grandchildren had never seemed to have found time to ask her their questions or to listen carefully to her stories. Now, when she was about to die, they realized that they had better interview her before it was too late. But, in fact, it was too late. Her memory was impaired. All of her stories and adventures were locked into her mind, and were forever inaccessible to them. They were unable to retrieve information that would have been meaningful to their own lives, that would have given them greater understanding of the grandmother's life and experiences. They must have asked themselves: why did we wait so long before asking her our questions?

When people suffer the loss of a loved one, they often ask: why didn't I spend more time, why wasn't I more attentive, why didn't I listen more and listen better? When people suffer a breakdown in their relationships, they often ask: why didn't I give more time and effort to the relationship? Why did I take things for granted, why did I assume that everything would just go on forever?

In relationships, small things are often the big things: kindness, attentiveness, giving extra time and energy, expressing love and respect and appreciation, not taking others for granted. To maintain good relationships, one needs to feel a sense of urgency; the relationship needs to be renewed every day. If we let time slip by, we may lose everything.

When I was a young boy, I heard a rabbi explain the importance of the mitzvah of counting the Omer--the 49 day period between the second day of Passover and Shavuoth. He said: "We count the days so that we will learn to make our days count!" By focusing on each day, by actually counting it out, we come to sense the importance of each day. We then learn, hopefully, that each day counts--each day is important and cannot be taken for granted. None of us knows how the future will unfold; we only know what we can do here and now in the present.

The Omer period is an appropriate time to remind ourselves of the importance of each day. We can make each day count by devoting proper time to our loved ones, to our friends and neighbors, to those activities that strengthen ourselves and our society. Don't wait for tomorrow or next week or next year. Life must be lived and renewed each day. Count your days to make your days count.

Recipe of the Month

Whenever you tell someone you are going to Izmir, the first thing that comes to mind is definitely "boyoz." This iconic pastry associated with Izmir is actually a symbol of the province's diverse cultural history. It was brought five centuries ago by Sephardic Jews from lands far from İzmir, which was previously called Smyrna and the par excellence port city of the Ottoman Empire.

The story begins with the arrival of Sephardic Jews, who were expelled from Spain in 1492, to the Ottoman Empire. Offered refuge by Sultan Bayezid II, many found their way to Izmir and settled there, adding to the rich cultural mix of the city, which by the 17th century was home not only to Turks, but also Armenians, Greeks, and Levantine Europeans.

The name boyoz is derived from "bolos," meaning "buns" or "scones" in Spanish, as the two Ls are pronounced as Y's. It is a simple, small, round pastry made from thin layers of dough. The original recipe is based on flour and sesame oil, and a few other ingredients; it does not contain yeast, and therefore may be eaten during Passover, the commemoration day of Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt. As there are many types of pastries introduced by Jewish immigrants, boyoz is a unique melting pot in which locals put their spin.

Rumor has it, Boyozcu Avram Usta is the first person to make boyoz in Izmir. Upon his death, they were sold under the name "Avram Usta's boyoz." Well into the 19th century, Izmir's Jewish population was centered around Havra Sokađi (Synagogue Street) in Kemeraltı, the city's historic market district, and Jewish families started to make boyoz at home.

Later, wealthier families moved to the Karataş and Göztepe districts of Izmir and bakeries started to produce the pastry. Until recently, all of the bakers in Izmir who made boyoz were run by Jewish bakers. Today, many pastries in Izmir are sold under the name "boyoz" but are not made according to the traditional recipe: instead of sesame oil, most bakeries now use sunflower oil. People are unaware that the traditional sesame oil-based version has almost completely disappeared.

The pastry has since received a geographical indication with the name of "Izmir boyozu." Warm trays and street vendors in Izmir are full of boyoz. It may be troublesome eating it because of its crispy layers, still, it is worth it in the end. Generally, locals prefer to eat it with a side of hard-boiled eggs. Here is the recipe for boyoz that can add zest to your Sunday breakfast.

Ingredients

4 glasses of flour
1/5 glasses of warm water
1 full teaspoon of salt
1 full teaspoon of fruit molasses
To spread in-between:

6 full tablespoons of sesame oil/butter

The ingredients are mixed and kneaded well by hand to form a dough, which is then left to rest for about two hours. The dough can undergo further kneading and can be set aside for several more hours. Once the dough is well-formed and smooth, cut it into little balls and then soak the balls in a pan filled with sesame oil for an hour.

Remove the balls from the oil and roll them out into paper-thin rounds about the size of a small saucer. You can fold them into a bun shape and bake them plain or form them around the filling of your choice, spinach or cheese are great options. Then place the buns on a baking sheet and transfer them to the oven. Bake them at a high temperature until they are golden brown.



Picture of the Month



In memory of Rabbi Azouvi from Kavala, being led by the Bulgarians onto the barge that will take him across the Danube – final desitation Treblinka.

We will never forget the complicity of the Bulgarians in the murder of Jews in the Bulgarian zones of occupation during WWII. May their memory be a blessing.

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

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

Some of our major donations have been generous bequests, which have enabled us to complete major work in our synagogue/museum. Do remember us in your will. Your legacy will be present in our legacy. **We need donations more than ever now. You can do this 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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