



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

March 2022 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

In March we celebrate the Holiday of Purim, the Holiday commemorating the saving of the Jewish community in the Persian Empire. This is a Holiday of Deliverance and is told in the Book of Esther (the Megillah). Jews throughout the world will celebrate our savior Esther and stamp their feet and make noise every time the name of Haman (the villain) is mentioned. Join us to celebrate Purim in the Romaniote tradition on March 16 at 6:15pm.



Megillot from the collection of Kehila Kedosha Janina

The E-Newsletter is sponsored by Art Mollengarden in memory of his mother Esther.
If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjism.org.

This newsletter, our 156th 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@kkjism.org if you would like to attend, and enjoy a traditional Greek kiddish lunch after services. Proof of vaccination and masks are required.

Our Museum will reopen for visitors on Sunday March 6th. Reservations are required and only fully vaccinated visitors will be allowed. Masks are also required. RSVP to Museum@kkjism.org

Simchas

Moshe Haelion, a survivor from Salonika who now lives in Israel, celebrated his 97th birthday on February 26.



Moshe was born in 1925 in Salonika, Greece. In April 1941, the Germans took over the city. His father died just six days later. In April 1943, Moshe was deported to Auschwitz, where his entire extended family was murdered. After 21 months in Auschwitz, Moshe spent four months in three other camps in Austria. On May 6, 1945, he was liberated from Ebensee, a deadly sub-camp of Mauthausen. After spending a year in Italy, Moshe emigrated to Palestine. By 1950, Moshe was an artillery officer, and he retired as a colonel in the army in 1971. He then worked for the Ministry of Defense for 20 years. He married Hana and has two children, six grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Moshe was the chairman of the Association of Survivors of Concentration Camps of Greek Origin Living in Israel for 15 years and is presently its Honorary President. He is also the current Honorary President of Salonika and Greece Jewry Heritage Center, a member of the board of directors of Yad Vashem, and the deputy chairman of Israel's Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors.

Moshe tells his story in both Ladino and Greek and was invited to Cyprus and Spain for International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Moshe received a prize from the Liber Press organization in Spain. In January 2020, Moshe was one of the Survivors who came with the ABMF delegation to Auschwitz Memorial to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the camp. Read more about Moshe's story [Here](#)

Passings

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Ilias Hadjis, a longtime congregant of Kehila Kedosha Janina, original member of our Board of Trustees, and a cherished docent of the museum. Ilias was born in 1937 and lived, as a young child, through the Occupation. His family was from Volos and Chalkis. He was the son of Mayer Hadjis and Emilia Cohen. He is survived by his wife, Cookie, his daughter, Emily, his grandson, Michael, his brother, Ephraim and sister, Nina.



The Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA) was saddened to hear of the passing of one of its own founding members and an inspirational leader, Professor Edmund (Mike) Keeley. Early tributes have justly underscored Professor Keeley's stature as a scholar, author, mentor, and translator of modern Greek literature. Indeed, many English-speakers were introduced to the riches of modern Greek poetry through his translations of Cavafy, Seferis, Ritsos in the 1960s and 1970s. Professor Keeley was also a founder and longtime cornerstone of the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University.



Rachel Velelli Glaser, of Owings Mills, MD, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her beloved family on Saturday, February 12, 2022, at the age of 73, after a short battle with cancer.



She is survived by her husband, Richard Glaser; children, Dr. Rivka Glaser (Dr. Joshua Weisberg), Eli Glaser (Pnina Laric), Miriam Glaser (Dr. Dan Isenberg), and Aviva Glaser (Jason Luly); sisters, Josephine (late Oscar) Becker and Regina (late Simon) Frances; brother, Victor (Connie) Velelli; grandchildren, Nadav, Shai, Eitan and Gilad Weisberg, Zev and Matan Glaser, Meira and Elana Isenberg; also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and others. She was predeceased by her parents, Emily and Emmanuel Velelli.

Rachel was a beloved and active member of the Baltimore Jewish community. She devoted her life to Jewish education, both formal and informal. She was the Education Director of Beth Israel Religious School for 26 years, and the Director of Habonim Dror Camp Moshava for 28 years. She was especially proud of her Greek Jewish heritage - she was born in Patras, Greece and moved to Baltimore with her family when she was 8 years old. Rachel and Rick were happily married for 50 years. Her greatest delights were gathering together with her children and grandchildren and hosting holiday meals with her large extended family.

At the age of 73, Maurice Magrizos passed away, leaving behind his wife Rosa and two children. He served for many years as president of the Jewish Community of Larissa and vice-president of the Central Jewish Council of Greece. His funeral took place on Thursday, February 3, at 2.15 p.m. at the Jewish Cemetery of Larissa.



Maurice Magrizos was born in 1949 in the city of Larissa to Greek Jewish parents. He was the eldest son of a family, who were engaged in the manufacture of furniture and ran a small commercial store in the center of the city. He lived his early childhood in the Jewish neighborhood and, as a teenager he helped his father in the family business while going to school.

At the age of 21 and having fulfilled his military obligations, he married his life partner, Rosa. Despite the adverse economic conditions of the time, together they decide to take risks by opening a furniture store. Relying on hard work and staying true to the belief of the individual responsibility of each person for the achievement of his goals, he manages to become known in his field.

However, the main chronological intersection in terms of his professional development will come a little later, at the age of 40. In 1988, therefore, it proceeds to the opening of the exhibition space "Flopplodimi", a multi-story privately owned building. With great collaborations in Greece and abroad, it continues to this day to be one of the largest furniture companies in the country. Today, of course, it has passed on to the next generation, now run by his daughter, Juliana, and his son, Nino.

Maurice Magrizos was, for many years, a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community of Larissa and was elected its president in 2002, a position he held until 2018. At the same time, he served as Vice-President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KISE) and as a member of the management committees of the dormant Communities of Chania, Kavala and Rhodes.

In a recent article in "Faces", he said: "Times are dangerous. Enmities, unfortunately, lurk where no one expects it. A typical example is the currents of anti-Semitism, racism, and extreme nationalism, which are taking place all over the world. A sign of lack of learning, an abundance of pessimism and dullness of consciences".

He was an optimist and a visionary of positive developments and believed that the world would continue to fight while maintaining its humanitarian values and realizing the necessity of brotherhood for the common good.

With great sadness that we relate the passing of Eftichia Nachmias Nachman, author of "Journey to the Past." Eftichia passed on February 16, 2022. She was buried on Thursday, February 17, at the 3rd Cemetery in Nikaia. She was 89 years old.



We, at Kehila Kedosha Janina had a very personal relationship with Eftichia. The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry published the English translation of her book and she, and her husband, Teli, came to New York for a presentation of the book in 2004. Eftichia wrote about the traditions and customs of the Jews of Ioannina and included a glossary of Yanniot dialect in her book. Her research was invaluable. While she will be mourned by her friends and family in Greece and Israel, she will also be mourned by the Yanniot community here in the United States.

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Art Mollengarden in memory of his mother Esther

Esther was born in 1923 into a traditional Romaniote family. Her father Asser Raphael was born in Preveza, and her mother, Lillie Mioni, born in Ioannina. She passed away on May 11, 2019. Esther was always proud of her Romaniote roots, a love she passed on to her son, Art. We thank Art for these lovely photos from Esther and Sydney's wedding in 1946.



Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Join us to celebrate Purim on Wednesday March 16 at 6:15pm
RSVP to Amarcus@kkjism.org

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
WISHES YOU A

HAPPY PURIM!

חג פורים שמח

Χαγκ Σαμέαχ

PURIM ALEGRE I DULCE

**JOIN US TO CELEBRATE PURIM!
WEDNESDAY MARCH 16 AT 6:15PM**

**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 אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁן וְיִקָּר

PLEASE RSVP TO AMARCUS@KKJISM.ORG



**Greek Jewish & Sephardic
Young Professionals Network**

Κοινότητα קהילה Komunita

GREEK JEWISH COOKING CLASS



**SUNDAY MARCH 6 AT 3PM
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC**

**JOIN US AS WE LEARN HOW TO COOK HOMEMADE SPANAKOPITA,
BAKLAVA, & GREEK SALAD. PROFESSIONAL CHEF EVAN ZAGHA
WILL LEAD US IN THIS INTERACTIVE DELICIOUS EVENT**

TRAINING IN NY UNDER CHEFS SUCH AS ISAO YAMADA, DAVID BOULEY, & MICHAEL WHITE, THE CIA GRADUATE CHEF EVAN BRINGS 18 YEARS OF REFINED TECHNIQUE TO THE KITCHEN. HE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT LOCAL SOURCING & MINDFUL EATING. HAVING TRAVELLED THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF GREAT GASTRONOMIC CULTURE, HE THOUGHTFULLY MARRIES COMPLEX FLAVORS WITH CULINARY EXCELLENCE.

LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE. PROOF OF VACCINATION REQUIRED

**OPEN TO YOUNG ADULTS IN THEIR 20'S AND 30'S
RSVP TO GREEKJEWISHYPN@GMAIL.COM**

Young Professionals Tour of Jewish Greece – Summer 2022

Learn More Here: <https://www.kkjsm.org/jewish-tours-of-greece>
Email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Young Professionals Tour of Greece Summer 2022



The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network
in partnership with The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

Tour of Jewish Greece July 10 – 20, 2022

Includes Thessaloniki, Veroia, Kastoria, Ioannina, Athens, & Rhodes

Rediscover your heritage and connect with other young Greek Jews on this
once-in-a-lifetime experience

For more information email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com

News from Jewish Greece

Athens

President of Israel Visits Greece

On Feb 24, 2022, the President of the State of Israel, Isaac Herzog, paid an official visit to Athens, at the invitation of the President of the Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou. The visit took place under the shadow of the Russian invasion of Ukraine which was a central point of reference in the discussions that Mr. Herzog had with all Greek officials.

In the morning, the President of Israel laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, then went to the Presidential Palace, where the official welcoming ceremony took place, followed by a private meeting with the President of the Republic.

During the discussion, the President of the Republic, referring to the bilateral relations between Greece and Israel, stressed, among other things, that "our two countries, especially in recent years, have a strategic relationship, mainly due to the friendship between the peoples, but also to their common vision for security and stability in the region". For his part, Isaac Herzog, after thanking the President for the warm welcome, noted that his visit comes to highlight the excellent relations that already exist between the two states, but also to focus on what more can be done to further develop this relationship for the good of the Eastern Mediterranean.



Immediately afterwards, extended talks between the two delegations took place and then Isaac Herzog went to the Maximos Mansion for a private meeting with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (relevant video [HERE](#)). During the meeting, views were exchanged on bilateral political, defence and economic relations, the course of the trilateral cooperation schemes and the general developments in the region, as well as on issues of particular interest, with Mr. Mitsotakis briefing the Israeli President and on the escalation of Turkish provocativeness in the Eastern Mediterranean and Greece's moves to address it.

This was followed by the official luncheon hosted at the Presidential Palace in honor of the President of Israel by the Greek President Mrs. Sakellaropoulou. The luncheon was attended by the Greek political leadership and on behalf of Greek Jewry, President and treasurer of KIS David Saltiel and Daniel Benardout and the President of the Jewish Community of Athens Albert Taraboulos.

Then, in a special ceremony held at the City Hall, the Mayor of Athens, Kostas Bakoyannis, awarded the Israeli President the highest distinction of the Greek capital, the "Gold Medal of Merit of the City of Athens".



"We are two nations with a long history, traveling through the centuries in constant dialogue, perpetual osmosis, coexistence and ultimately coexistence," said the mayor of Athens, welcoming Mr. Herzog to Athens and stressed, among other things, that the Municipality of Athens "proudly participates among others in targeted actions to combat anti-Semitism that concerns all of us. Just a few weeks ago we participated in the international campaign of the World Jewish Congress and illuminated the City Hall with a word #ΘΥΜΟΜΑΣΤΕ (#WEREMEMBER) clearly stating Never Again."

Focusing on Greek-Israeli relations, the mayor of Athens noted that "the inter-cultural exchanges of the capitals of the two countries are multiplying, building "bridges" of cooperation, understanding and friendship", and referred to the mural "Waves", which adorns the façade of a building located in the "heart" of Athens and bears, he said, "the colors of the flags of our countries".

For his part, the President of Israel expressed his joy and emotion for the Gold Medal of Merit of the City of Athens that was awarded to him, underlining that "Athens is the city that bears the most important values for the whole of humanity". Furthermore, he also talked about the strong ties between the two peoples and warmly thanked Mr. Bakoyannis for the excellent cooperation he maintains with the Jewish community of Athens which, as he said, is one of the oldest in the world and which managed "to overcome the Holocaust, to resist and to create a state of strength and success".

The Greek-Jewish community was also present at the ceremony with representatives from KIS, OPAIE, EME, and an expanded delegation of the Jewish Community of Athens. After the meeting, the President of the Parliament guided the President of Israel to the Parliament building, showing him the marble votive stele with the engraved names of the Greek Jewish MPs, victims of the Holocaust, located in the Peristyle of the Parliament...During his one-day visit to Athens, and despite the extremely heavy schedule, the President of Israel had a special meeting with representatives of Greek Jewry and an expanded delegation of ENE, in the presence of which he attached great importance, stressing that this is the future of Jewry.

The meeting took place in a central hotel room. The Israeli President was welcomed by the President of KIS David Saltiel and the Ambassador of Israel to Greece Yossi Amrani. The President of KIS welcomed Mr. Herzog and informed him about the main issues and actions of Greek Jewry, referring to the role of the Greek-Jewish community as a link between Greece and Israel.



The meeting ended with the presentation of a commemorative gift by the President of KIS to the Israeli President "so that you can remember your acquaintance and your ties with the Greek-Jewish community", as Mr. Saltiel characteristically said. The gift - which depicts the façade of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki engraved on plexiglass, with silver details - gave the opportunity to Mr. Herzog to wish the short realization of the Holocaust Museum and the desire to come back to our country to visit it.

U.S. Special Envoy on Holocaust Issues Visits the Jewish Museum of Greece

On February 23, 2022, the U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Ellen Germain, visited the Jewish Museum of Greece as part of an official visit to Greece on the occasion of her participation in the international conference on "Holocaust, Genocides and Mass Atrocities: Remembering the past to protect the future" organized by the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education and the Metropolis of Messinia with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Athens and of the Fulbright Foundation of Greece and is part of the actions of the Greek Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). During her visit to the AWU, Ms. Germain was accompanied by the Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Athens, David Burger, as well as the Officer of the Political Department of the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Brian Breuhaus.



The distinguished visitors were welcomed by the President of the Board of Directors of EME, Samuel (Makis) Matsas and the Director of the AWU, Zanet Battino, who guided them both to the permanent and the temporary exhibition of the Museum, while there was a brief briefing on the research and educational work of the AWU and a discussion on the long-term participation of the Museum in the IHRA. At the end of the tour, a short press conference followed in a special area of the AWU, followed by a meeting of the official visitors with the President and Treasurer of the Central Jewish Council of Greece, David Saltiel and Daniel Benardout, as well as the Secretary General and the member of the Community Council of the Jewish Community of Athens, Delia Alchanati and Joanna Nahmia, during which the initiatives of public bodies for the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust were discussed, such as the recent participation of the City Hall of Athens and the Hellenic Parliament in the WJC's campaign #WeRemember for Holocaust Remembrance Day and other programs aimed at informing about where intolerance and anti-Semitism may lead.

Ioannina

Another Heroine Passed Away

John Kalev-Ezra, professor emeritus of the Medical Department of the University of Ioannina, wrote about Rebecca Gabai, a Romaniote Jew from Ioannina, who passed away on the eve of Yom HaShoah in 2020. A few hours before the start of Yom HaShoah on April 21, 2020, which is dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust, Rebecca Gabai, born into the David family, passed away. In part of one of the photographs, taken on March 25, 1944 in Mavili Square, Rebecca is noted, along with her mother, Flora. That day, almost 1/10 of the inhabitants of the city of Ioannina were caught and deported for racist reasons by German-speaking conquerors and their Greek collaborators.



Arriving at Auschwitz, along with 5,000 other compatriots of all ages (all of whom had the "misfortune" to be born Jewish), a group of German-speaking doctors divided them into two groups. The then eighteen-year-old Rebecca, but not the 45-year-old Flora, was among the 648 exiles of this mission to death, for whom the medical opinion was: a short-term postponement of their murder. The rest were immediately led to the gas chambers of the Birgenau sub-army. Rebecca became the prisoner 77056, a number that accompanied her to her left forearm throughout the rest of her life. She was among the few of the displaced persons in Central Europe who were alive in the summer of 1945.

Rebecca returned to Ioannina. She married Alberto Gabai, who was also born in Ioannina and survived Auschwitz. They had grown up together in Ioannina. Their homeland, however, did not stop hurting them. At

the time of "Greece of Greek Christians" they felt once again that many of their compatriots considered them foreigners. They immigrated to Israel, where their daughter Roula had already married Meyer Baruch, also from Ioannina.

All of them never forgot Ioannina. About 20 months ago Rebecca's granddaughters made a nice gift to their mother Roula for her birthday. They visited with her the place where their immediate and distant ancestors were born. Rebecca's health did not allow her to accompany them.



New Exhibit in Ioannina

"Averoff Street, Jewelry, Ioannina" with K. Sakellaropoulou and K. Tasoulas
 The temporary exhibition "Odos Averoff, Jewelry, Ioannina" is presented by the Society of Continental Studies, in the context of the events for the liberation of Ioannina from the Ottoman Empire. The opening of the exhibit will coincide with the Anniversary of the Liberation, February 12th.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the President of the Hellenic Parliament, Konstantinos Tasoulas, in the presence of the President of the Republic Katerina Sakellaropoulou, on Monday, February 21, at 11.40 am, at the Folklore Museum "Kostas Frontzos". Attendees will only come by personal invitation, due to the anti-covid19 measures. The exhibition will be open to the public until the end of the year. The exhibition presents jewelry of the 19th and 20th centuries, up to the interwar period, which was gathered in the 60s by Kostas Frontzos and are from the Folklore Museum "Kostas Frontzos".



In a note for the exhibition titled "Jewelry Averoff Street, Ioannina", Professor Katerini Liabi of the University of Ioannina, talks about the jewellery of the time: "Women's jewelry, silver and soft-smoked or bronze, often stone-shaped, serve the morphology of traditional costume design and are divided into the following categories: the head, the epistocia, the hands and the waist: tepeliki and heavy collars, earrings and kopitsas, the buttons, the pins, the kiousteki, the cross and the amulet, the metal belt, the buckle that closes the metal or fabric belt, the feminine or locks, which were intended to close the chest openings, the famous kemeria, the bracelets, the rings and the coin decorations. In the men's garment they were similar to the buttons, the chest and waist boxes, the rings, the crosses, amulets, encyclopedias and other accessories, such as snuff boxes and weapons with their amazing decoration.

The basic iconography of continental jewellery, apart from the complex geometric shapes, is inspired by flora and fauna. The hagiographical themes make their presence felt in the fylaktic objects (protective objects): St. George dracontocide, St. Demetrius javelining the fallen enemy, etc. Human figures, cherubim, crosses, eagles or two-headed eagles, "shields", buildings are also adopted and create a large vector of depictions.

Everywhere is detected the skill, the inspiration of the craftsman-artist, the variations of the basic motifs he attempts, but also the xenotropic elements, which he borrows, without taming his creative fervor in the work being prepared".

She adds information about the goldsmiths of Averoff Street: "The merchants frequented the bazaar, outside the Kastro, to the terzis and the goldsmiths, evlia Çelebi mentions, in 1670. In the early 19th century, Pouqueville comments that it was a mud-filled bazaar adjoining the Kastro. The "goldsmiths" were integrated into this bazaar, in huts during the 17th, 18th and partly in the 19th century. There or a little above the following opened their workshops and shops: Spyros Tzoumakas in 1856 and the Hatzis in 1864, when Ioannina had been destroyed by the fire of 1822. Testimonies about the "prehistory" of Averoff Street, Kamares Street with the shops of the famous old gold coins and the Mosque of Koublos are offered by

Fotopoulos in 1864. The nickname Kamares came from arches, relics of old mansions. Kamares, from the time of the destruction of Ioannina, the burning of Rasim Pasha (1869) for street-planning reasons. Consequently, the first shops of the silversmiths were hosted, after the burning, on the vertical street of Kamares: V. Kyprioti, before 1870, N. Kontos in 1880 of N. Ioannidis in 1890 and Evang. Nessee in 1905. After the liberation, in 1913, Kamares Street was renamed Georgiou Averoff Street. The name Kamares Street faded into oblivion of time and we are unaware of how powerfully it was associated with the jewelry in the consciousness of the then people of Ioannina, since there were no surpluses of silversmiths. The street Averoff, where gradually began to blow the coolness of silver with the traditional artefacts, but also the aura of gold with the styles of the train, flourished like the street Mesi of Constantinople, which gathered the silversmiths, ie the jewellery shops of the Byzantines. The people of Ioannina and the travelers, locals and foreigners, older and younger, carry loads of memory from the workshops and silversmithing shops of Averoff Street".

Exhibit at the Gani Foundation in Ioannina

Thirteen lithographs from the Foundation's collection will be exhibited, accompanied by texts by the philologist Konstantinos Vlachos, former president of the Society for Continental Studies and the Foundation for the Study of the Ionian and Adriatic Area.

The exhibition is part of the celebration of the 109th Anniversary of the Liberation of the city of Ioannina and will be open to the public from 12 to 2 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., excluding holidays

The president of the Joseph and Esther Gani Foundation, Napoleon Margaritis, states: "The great prosperity of the Balkan wars, including the liberation of Ioannina, was immortalized by popular lithography, that functioned as a reportage. A coloured lithograph, a folk iconography more impressive for the popular imagination than a photograph. Lithography as a technique of printing images has its beginnings around the middle of the 17th century. In order to make a lithogram, as experts write, the artist designs his work on a limestone slab and after a series of technical procedures prints it on a manual press. When the lithographs are colored, as in our case, each color is put on a separate stone slab.

In Greece, the first state lithograph was founded in 1835 (Royal Lithography by Otto, directed by the German Andreas Forster) and the first private lithograph of 1840 by the Prussian Karl Josef Kohlman. In this lithograph, the painter from Karpathos, Athanasios Iatridis (1799-1866), designer of the archaeological service, lithographed in 1859 the first nine lithographs, which depicted folk songs and are considered the first known genuine folk icons.

Almost all the lithographs (about 100) were lost because, in order to be bought by the general public, they were printed in multiple copies and on cheap paper of small value and there was no interest in protecting them (wall-posting in cafes, grocery stores, etc.). The series of lithographs presented by the Joseph and Esther Gani Foundation to our fellow citizens, intends to be "the lithographed chronicle" of the glorious Balkan wars of 1912-13 and the liberation of the city.

Today there are rare lithographs in the War Museum, mainly in the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece. The lithographs presented here are from the Foundation's collection. The tradition of benefactors, which has its roots in our country and goes back to the years of the Turkish occupation, continued with the work of Esther Gani of Ioannina, who founded the charitable Foundation, which is also a spiritual center of the city of arts and letters. The Foundation has an important library, collections of works of art, archives of our local culture and, without interruption, organizes exhibitions of painting, engraving, sculpture, photocopying with young artists from Ioannina.



Larissa

On Friday, January 28th, the children of the Primary School, went together with Amora Selli and their parents, to Anne Frank Square. There, with the presence of two members of our Community Council, the President Mr. Elias Kabelis and the Vice President Moses Manouach, a very beautiful text about Anne Frank was read and a wreath was placed on the memorial of Anne Frank, located on the square. Then all the children left a flower in memory of Anne Frank and each child separately made a promise. Some of the promises that were heard were: "Never Again!!! "We Will Never Forget !!! We're all different, yet we're all the SAME!!! The children once again moved us and proved to us that they are our hope for the future!!! As long as our children know our history and pass it on to their friends, history will not repeat itself!!!



Chalkis

Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Religious Dialogue in Greece - By Evan Bourtis

The Interorthodox Center of the Church of Greece has worked to bring Greek Jews and Orthodox Christians together to help combat antisemitism in Greece.

Last October, primary and secondary school teachers from across Attica and Chalkida gathered in a synagogue with white arches, crystal chandeliers, and parchment texts dating back to the 13th century. Jewish residents of Chalkida, on the island of Evia, welcomed the teachers into the synagogue and shared stories about the city's 2,500-year-old Jewish history. Chalkida – with a Jewish population of around 60 – has possibly the oldest continuous Jewish presence of any European city. The guests spoke with Jewish elders who, during the Nazi occupation of Greece, survived with help from the city's Christian residents, said Kallioipi Mavruga, a theologian for the Interorthodox Center of the Church of Greece.



The religious educational organization, chaired by Greece's archbishop, arranged the event for 24 teachers to understand different religious traditions and to cultivate coexistence through their classrooms. A European-wide fellowship for supporting interreligious understanding, the KAICIID Fellows Program, helped to fund the visit. During the one-day trip to Chalkida, participants visited the synagogue, a Byzantine-era Orthodox Church, and a mosque that had been used during Ottoman times. The Interorthodox Center, one of many organizations using inter-religious dialogue to foster coexistence in Greece, aims to create an entire society that rejects hate. On the trip, teachers spoke with the Metropolitan of Chalkida, His Eminence Chrysostomos, about how Orthodox Christian leaders protected the city's Jewish community when Nazi soldiers arrived in March 1944.



During the Holocaust, 59,000 Greek Jews were killed, including 22 residents of Chalkida itself. Fewer than 17% of Greece's Jews survived the occupation, during which Nazis captured entire Jewish communities and forced them on trains, by which they were transported to concentration camps. Unlike other cities in Greece, however, the vast majority of the Jews in Chalkida, 94%, survived the War. The Nazi invaders demanded that all Jews assemble at the Synagogue of Chalkida but when they opened the door there, they found only a rabbi. Many Jews escaped to more mountainous parts of the island with the help of its Orthodox Bishop of the time, Gregorios. Christian families in central Evia provided them shelter and the bishop hid the scrolls and

other precious materials belonging to the synagogue in a church. Respect between religions helped to save lives during the occupation, said Dr. Christos Nasios, a theologian at the Interorthodox Center who has taught religion for 23 years.

"We have to use these examples as educational materials in our schools in order to show that this is the Christian way of life," he said. Email Museum@kkjsm.org for the complete version of this article.

Kos

Prominent Greek-Jewish Israeli Architect Searching for a Bema for the Synagogue in Kos

Dear friends,

The Greek community is in search of a holy ark and bimah for a synagogue restoration in Greece. The background of the synagogue is as follows: On the island of Kos, near Rhodes, there is a synagogue that has been preserved since WWII in good condition, functioning as a municipal cultural center. The synagogue was built around 1934 after an older synagogue was destroyed in the earthquake of 23 April 1933. This year, the mayor and the Central Board of Jewish Communities have come to the understanding and agreement that the island needs a synagogue for the increasing number of visiting Israelis / Jews to the island. Having been involved in the survey, study and restoration of synagogues in Greece for several decades, I was asked to make the transformation of the interior of the building back into a synagogue. The budget available is quite limited. We have been searching in several directions, first to secure reused older furnishings from Israel, Italy, Turkey or Greece, but without success. We then looked for new furnishing in Israel. A company that has reasonably priced good quality products is producing them in Ukraine. With the situation at the moment, it is unlikely we can order them from there, at least for the foreseeable future. Having no other options, we are now extending our search to the US and Europe.

The Ark and Bimah

In the 1930s Kos was under Italian rule. So, we are looking in fact at an Italian tradition synagogue. Regarding the style of the furnishing there is a dilemma: we can go with more modern mid-20 century pieces, but we can also assume that the ark and bimah from the older synagogue that was destroyed were reused after they were salvaged from the earthquake. Therefore, we would be open to review both 'modern' and more traditional options. I think that the reuse of existing pieces will also add to the synagogue narrative and layer of historic importance. The dimensions of the furnishings are as follows (if piece in other dimensions are available, please inform us in case we can modify and fit in the given location). The plan is to build a solid base of old bricks and place the wooden furnishings on top, so that they are situated at least 2-3 steps above the floor. The dimensions of the ark and bimah are as follows (as discussed with the manufacturer in Israel and the space available). If available furnishings are of different dimensions, adaptations may be possible. So, please inform us even if available furnishings are of other dimensions.

Ark: 1.50m (4.92ft) width X 2.40m (7.87ft) height X 0.60m (1.96ft) depth

Bimah: There are two options:

Option 1 (with seating like traditionally is accepted in Greece): 2.40m (7.87ft) X 2.40m (7.87ft).

Option 2 (if we adopt the Italian tradition of the 1930s and use a reading pulpit: 0.90m (2.95ft) width X 0.70m (2.29ft) depth X 1.10m (3.6ft) height.

We are turning to you to help us get in touch with congregations or businesses or individuals that may know or own used synagogue furniture available for giving away or for sale. You are welcome to circulate this message in your congregation and friends. We thank you in advance for your help!

Best,

Elias Messinas, Architect, M.Arch. (Yale '92), Ph.D. (NTUA, '99)

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News from the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS)

Documentary on the Jews of Corfu at Thessaloniki Film Festival

The "golden" ticket for participation in the Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival, which is held every year in March in the co-capital and is one of the most important in the world, managed to secure the documentary by Yannis Gergevitsas, who has been living and working in Corfu for 14 years.



Through his documentary entitled "The Jews of Corfu", emphasis is placed on the role they played as an important part of the island, contributing to the formation of its history, as well as to the evolution of trade and economy. However, the sad events against them were added to the black page of the history of mankind.

Historical legacy

The documentary, which was musically "dressed" by the Corfiot composer Maria Boua, who was also responsible for the historical research along with Christiana Lacha, is expected to be, according to the same historical legacy, for future generations, so as not to lose this part of history through time.

The idea for the creation of the documentary, as Mr. Gergevitsas tells "E" came during the quarantine period. Confinement worked creatively and a seed of art began to gradually come to life. The first filming began in August 2020 with interviews and the documentary, after continuous research and collection of photographic documents was completed after 17 months, in January 2022.

Narrations

The documentary based on the narrations of three members of the Jewish community, Nina Vital, Zacharias Matathias and Linos Soussis describes the life of the Jewish community in Corfu, the tragic events that followed in the operation to exterminate the Corfiots - Jews, just three days before the end of the war, but also what happened to those who survived the Auschwitz Concentration Camp of Auschwitz Poland.

"The documentary also made us knowledgeable of things that we did not know about the history of the Jews of Corfu and has historical value for the generations to come", said Mr. Gergevitsas, stressing that the project had no funding and support and the expenses were undertaken by its creators.

However, the corfiot-signed documentary succeeded in joining the Greek program of the 24th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in the competition sections "Platform" and "From Screen to Screen" and will be screened online, as well as in the "Open Horizons" section with a face-to-face screening in Thessaloniki.

SOURCE: enimerosi.gr, 22.2.2022

New Film from the Jewish Museum of Greece – "My Diary"

The Jewish Museum of Greece presents with great pleasure its new production, with a historical and educational character, which was implemented with the support of the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the late Friend of the Museum, Petros Jean Marinos.

In 2020, as part of the International Day of Remembrance of Holocaust Victims, which is set for January 27th each year, the Museum presented for the first time the original theatrical event: "My Diary".

It is an event that evolves within the space of the AWU and on the individual levels and thematic showcases of the permanent exhibition, based on true testimonies and stories of children from the period of war and occupation, from the archives of the Museum. Through Joseph's diary, we learn about the fate of his family in occupied Thessaloniki, who decides to separate and hide.

Joseph "talks" to us about his thoughts, his fear and wonder about the loss of his loved ones, as well as about the feeling of good luck and gratitude that possesses him, when he realizes how lucky his family was, who managed to be saved. Through the narration we get insights into everyday life and the difficult situations experienced by the Jews during The Second World War, but also a perspective of continuity and life, drawing lessons from the past.

This year and under the auspices of the Greek Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), this theatrical event took on a new form, since through the artistic gaze of director David Gavriilidis, it evolved into a short film. Actors Alberto Fais and Gianna Papageorgiou shaped the script on an older idea and educational activity of the museum and embody the roles, offering us a different experience. An experience of a lifetime, a story of survival in incredible conditions, a lesson in strength and faith, which will be directly framed by lesson plans and special educational activities for school groups. For more information about the short film "My Diary", please contact the Jewish Museum of Greece.

Gift from KIS to the Jewish Community of Athens

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, under the chairmanship of Mr. David Saltiel, decided to donate to the Jewish Community of Athens the property of the playground for the purposes of the Lauder School of the Jewish Community of Athens, with the sole aim of the playground being used for the best possible education of kindergarten and primary school children. On Wednesday 23.2.2022, the President of KIS David Saltiel and the President of the Jewish Community of Athens Albert Taraboulos signed the relevant transfer agreement, the expenses and taxes of which were covered by a donation of a co-religionist. The meeting of the two Presidents took place in a very friendly atmosphere and the discussion focused mainly on current issues concerning Greek Jewry.

Kavala: Memorial Exhibition of 1,484 Jews who perished in Treblinka

Through an exhibition and educational artistic activity, the city of Kavala honors the memory of the 1,484 Jews who perished in the inferno of Treblinka and the memory of the last remaining Jewish Kavaliotis, the late Sabetai Tsimino, the only survivor of the once populous Jewish community of the city.



On the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, the MOHA Research Center and the Ministry of Education present at the museum - in the old town of Kavala, the exhibition "SHOAH - How was it humanly possible?" the Yad Vashem International Holocaust Remembrance Center, based in Jerusalem.

The opening of the exhibition "SHOAH" and the educational artistic action "Pitsipoi" by the artist Elli Chrysidou took place on 18.2.2022 in the presence of the General Secretary of Religious Affairs George Kalantzis, the Ambassador of Israel to Greece Yossi Amrani, the President of KIS David Saltiel and the son of the late Sabetai Tsimino, Aaron Tsimino, who always holds close ties with the birthplace of his family.

In an emotionally charged atmosphere and with the memories always remaining alive, MOHA's president Anna Missirian warmly welcomed the attendees, stressing the importance of the exhibition and underlining the great responsibility and the heavy legacy that older people have to convey to the younger generations the message that such a mass extermination of innocent people should never be repeated again. He also stressed that both through the exhibition and the educational activity hosted in the Museum, the aim is not to forget the thousands of children who were exterminated in the concentration camps.

During the event there was a live internet connection to Yad Vashem's headquarters in Jerusalem, where on behalf of the foundation, Ms. Micha presented the sad history of the extermination of the Jewish community of Kavala by the Bulgarian occupation troops operating in Eastern Macedonia as collaborators of the Germans.

The 4th of March 1943 was a sad day for the city of Kavala, since the 1484 Jews of Kavala along with the 16 Jews of Thassos and the five of Eleftheroupolis gathered initially in a tobacco warehouse and then were transported by trucks to Drama. From there by train to Bulgaria and after a few days stay they headed to the city of Lom, a Danube port, bound for Vienna and then by train to Treblinka. Ms. Micha pointed out that the 1,484 Jews of Kavala were immediately taken to the gas chambers and no one was rescued.

He made particular reference to the aims of the foundation, but also to the exhibition that aims to keep the memories alive, sending the message that these atrocities "concern people like us, were made by people like us, were suffered by people like us and protested against all this by some people like us".

The exhibition covers with historical documents a broad time frame, starting from the lives of Jews in Europe before the Holocaust and ending with the liberation of Nazi concentration and extermination camps across the continent and the remarkable return of survivors to life. The dashboards feature explanatory texts, enriched with personal stories of victims and original photographs. The exhibition will last until March, the month in which Bulgarian occupation forces gathered the Jews of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, transferring them to the Treblinka concentration camp.

About Yad Vashem

Founded in 1953 in Israel, Yad Vashem is the official center of remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust. It is dedicated to preserving the memory of the Jews who were murdered, to paying tribute to the Jews who fought against their Nazi persecutors, but also to those who selflessly helped the Jews in need, as well as to researching the phenomenon of the Holocaust in particular and genocide in general, with the aim of avoiding similar events in the future.

One of the most moving moments of the simple opening ceremony was the tour of Aaron Tsimino by Mrs. Missirian in the space of the artistic action "Pitsipoi", which is hosted on the second floor of the museum and where an illuminated deconstructed star of David dominates along with a teddy bear in the center, symbolizing the great void left behind by the children who perished so unjustly.

The artistic educational activity "Pitsipoi" by the artist Elli Chrysidou is dedicated to the unique surviving Jew Kavaliotis and his family, the beloved throughout the local community of the city Sabetai Tsimino.

The Tsimino family was a Jewish family of tobacco merchants of Kavala, whose five of the six children were transferred to the concentration camp of Treblinka. Sabetai Tsimino, the only son of the family who escaped persecution while working in forced labor, was the last Jew of Kavala.

The installation "Pitsipoi" creates images that even fleetingly make the viewer think of the emptiness, the absence, the separation, the trauma, the daydreaming, the return, the reunion, the rejuvenating power of the game and the creation of an imaginary world, where everything seems to have been lost.

The title of the work is borrowed from the name given by the Jews of France to the unknown destination for which the trains left the detention camps. They came up with a playful word to define the unknown. A word that reveals the need for hope, resistance, liberation, regaining dignity, new bonds and dreams for the future.

Also present at the event were - among others - the mayor of Kavala Thodoros Mouriadis, the Metropolitan of Alexandroupolis Mr. Anthimos and the former mayor of Thessaloniki Yiannis Boutaris. SOURCE: zougla.gr, 18.2.2022

Xanthi

Memories of the presence of the Jews in Xanthi came alive on Sunday 20.2.2022 with the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial in Xanthi. KIS with the cooperation of the Municipality and PAKETHRA organized an event for the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial, within the framework of the Greek Presidency of the IHRA, in memory of the 526 Jews of Xanthi who were exterminated in the Holocaust. At the base of the Monument, which was symbolically placed in Eleftherias Square in Xanthi, 526 pebbles have been placed, as many as the Jews of Xanthi who were exterminated by the Nazis, as well as parts of two railway rails that symbolize their route to the concentration camp in Treblinka.

After the unveiling of the Monument, the Minister of Education Niki Kerameus, the Metropolitan of Xanthi and Peritheorion Panteleimon, the representative of the Deputy Of the Mufti, Imam Empluk Ramadan and the Rabbi of Thessaloniki Aaron Israel, sent a strong message of peaceful coexistence of Christians, Muslims and Jews, with their joint photographing in front of the Monument, as Thrace is a model of this coexistence.



The unveiling ceremony was attended by the Deputy Ministers of Education Angelos Syrigos and Tourism Sofia Zacharaki, the General Secretary of Religious Affairs George Kalantzis, the MPs of Xanthi Baran Bourhan and Spyros Tsiligiris, the Director of the Civil Affairs Service of Xanthi of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Simeon Tegos, the Deputy Regional Governor of Xanthi Konstantinos Kourtidis, the Commander of the D' Army Corps based in Xanthi, Lieutenant General Angelos Houdeloudis, the Commander of the Police of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Paschalis Syritoudis, the Police Director of Xanthi Paschalis Gioris, the Commander of the Amth Fire Brigade, Archpriest Konstantinos Koukouras, the Rector and Vice-Rector of the Democritus University of Thrace Alexandros Polychronidis and Fotis Maris, the Mayors of Thessaloniki Konstantinos Zervas, Komotini Ioannis Garanis, Alexandroupolis Ioannis Zamboukis, Drama Christodoulos Mamsakos, Mykis Ritvan Deli Hussein, Topeirou Thomas Mihoglou, Paranestiou Anastasios Kayaoglou, Nestos Savvas Michaelides, Iasmou Oder Moumin, Doxatou Themistocles Zekeridis, the Deputy Metropolitan of Orthodox Armenian Greece Obanez Sagdejian, from KIS were also present the general secretary Victor Eliezer and the General Treasurer Daniel Benardout, representatives of Jewish communities and organizations, as well as many people.

Before the ceremony, the officials visited the Jewish cemetery of Xanthi, where a memorial service was held by Rabbi of Thessaloniki Aaron Israel and then the Mayor of Xanthi Emmanuel Tsepelis welcomed and welcomed the official guests at the Town Hall. Then all together they walked to Eleftherias Square where the event took place, which began with a memorial service by Rabbi of Thessaloniki Aaron Israel.



This was followed by the greeting of the Mayor of Xanthi, Emmanuel Tsepelis, who stressed, among other things, that "Today Xanthi pays the due honor to the memory of the 526 Jews who had the inhuman fate of all their omodoxes in Europe. We are here to transmit from Xanthi, from this culturally diverse and wonderful aspect of the Greek territory, the message of humanity, solidarity, justice and peace". In his address, the Regional Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Christos Metios, described the unveiling of the Monument as an "Act of Remembrance" and underlined that "Today's day should also have the character of the memory of the harmonious coexistence of Jews, Christians, Muslims and the promotion of the wealth that this multiculturalism means for our country today. In a changing world, respect and tolerance are the big demands. We must do everything possible to ensure that such crimes are not repeated." This was followed by the greeting of the Ambassador of Israel, Yoshi Amrani, who referred to the small community of Jews in Xanthi – who coexisted with Christians and Muslims – who contributed to society, while wishing both the monument of Xanthi and the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki to be a reminder that people do not forget. "We cannot bring back the lost lives. They were lost forever", he stressed, among other things, explaining that this transfer of the tragic events to the younger generations can lead to a "better civilization" in humanity. The President of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance George Polydorakis in his address expressed his emotion for his presence at the event, stressing among other things that "Memory is our elementary obligation. The

absolute responsibility and duty of all those who choose and are called partakers of humanitarian and democratic values, is to honor the victims and the survivors, to reflect on their inheritance and to act accordingly

The President of KIS David Saltiel in his address stressed that "With this modest Monument, the memory of the Jews of Xanthia becomes a beacon unquenchable to remind us that whatever happened then, can happen again in any society, no matter how sophisticated it may be, in any city, no matter how modern it may be, at any time in history." "It is our duty to understand all aspects of history and at the same time to overemphasize acts of humanity and that these are the ones that teach us that every human being can make a difference," he noted. Regarding the Holocaust Memorial, he said that "it will become a point of reference and pilgrimage, as well as a springboard for the creation of memory initiatives and educational activities, a living tool for interaction with history".

In her address, the Minister of Education Niki Kerameus pointed out, among other things, that "As a government and in particular as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, we underline the importance of education for the Holocaust, we promote the teaching of the atrocity of Nazism from very early on to our children. We conduct training seminars for teachers on the teaching of the Holocaust. We work with relevant bodies. We undertake awareness-raising actions. Using knowledge as our weapon, we ensure historical memory and the thorough study and teaching of events, through the cultivation of values such as mutual respect, acceptance of diversity, ideals of democracy and active citizenship from an early age. We ensure that there will never again be any crack left open that will allow the resurgence of fascism, anti-Semitism, intolerance."



Then a message was read by the Mayor of Ioannina, Moses Elisaf, who did not attend due to the celebrations for the liberation of Ioannina. This was followed by the projection of the video messages of the Vice-President of the European Commission for the promotion of the European way of life, Margaritis Schinas, who stated that "Thrace is a place that is also a symbol of coexistence, coexistence, tolerance and solidarity, it is a place that reflects the European way of life, a model of society that fits us all", by the journalist Moses Litsis, which referred to his family who lived in Xanthi until the mid-1920s and then moved to Athens, from where in March 1943, many of its members were arrested and transferred to Auschwitz where they tragically died of the Braunstone family, which lived pre-war in Xanthi and was arrested - along with all the other families of the city's Jews - was taken to the Camp of Treblinka, where a total of 50 members, from Xanthi and Alexandroupolis, tragically died.

The screening ended with the video "The Jewish memory in Xanthi", which is a nostalgic reminiscence of the old Xanthi and the active Jewish community, which was curated by the Jewish Museum of Greece. Information on the history of the Jews of Xanthi was presented by Vassilis Ritzaleos, member of the EDIP of the Department of Language, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries of the Democritus University of Thrace.

Mr. Ritzaleos stressed in his speech: "On the "longest night" in the history of the Jews of Xanthi, on March 3-4, 1943, the director of the tobacco trading company CommercialGeouda Perachia found refuge in a friendly Christian house in neighboring Kavala and later fled to the German occupation zone. He was the only one who survived that night in the "gathering of the Jews", as he remained in the collective memory. After the war he returned to Xanthi and dedicated his life and writings to preserving the memory of the victims of the Holocaust until the end of his life in 1970". "Who were the Jews of the city? They were descendants of sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain and found refuge in the Ottoman Empire after 1492. A central element of their culture was the Spanish-Jewish language, "Spanish" or ladino. The first Jewish families settled in Xanthi probably around 1875. In the early 20th century, when the city evolved into an important tobacco-trading center, 234 Jews were enumerated in the city by the Ottoman authorities (2/3 are tobacco workers and reside temporarily for as long as the cycle of work in the tobacco warehouses lasts). They come from Thessaloniki, Adrianople, Komotini and cities of present-day Bulgaria. These are mainly poor industrialists from the working classes of the Ottoman centers, but also craftsmen, textile merchants, silversmiths, employees and managers of tobacco trading companies. Email Museum@kkjism.org for the complete version of this article.

Zagori

With a few days delay, which however does not affect the general planning, the Ministry of Culture and Sports submitted the candidacy of the cultural landscape of Zagori to the UNESCO World Heritage Center, which is the first candidacy of our country in this category.

As stated in a relevant announcement, the drafting of the candidacy file of the cultural landscape was the result of systematic cooperation between the services of the Ministry of Culture and the Region of Epirus, based on the operational instructions of the UNESCO Convention (Paris, 1972) for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. In the whole process of preparing the file, scientists of many different specialties, archaeologists, historians, foresters, biologists, environmentalists, architects, economists, and ethnologists worked together.



"Zagori, a region of unique beauty and special value in the importance of our country, is the first Greek candidacy to be submitted to UNESCO for inclusion in the list of cultural landscapes. The preparation of the dossier was long and complex. It demanded close cooperation with the Region of Epirus, with which we always have a very good cooperation, as well as with a large number of scientists of different specialties. The participation of the local community in the composition of the dossier was particularly important, as a candidacy in the field of cultural landscape is very different from the candidacy of a monument. It requires the involvement of society, of the citizens of the region. We expect positive results from the evaluation of the candidacy, as the accession of Zagori adds value to the region", the Minister of Culture and Sports, Lina Mendoni said in a statement, thanking the regional governor Alexandros Kachrimanis, as well as the regional executives and the Ministry of Culture for the enormous effort they made in order to meet the particular demands of the candidacy file.

The nomination file includes all the necessary chapters that highlight the outstanding universal value of the cultural landscape of Zagori, extensive references to the biodiversity, fauna and flora of the place, the unique natural environment with the rivers, the Vikos gorge, the special geological formations. It also includes chapters that refer to the historical retrospection of the area, with emphasis on the 17th and 18th centuries, the rich architectural heritage that harmonizes with the natural environment, the monuments of all times and contains the necessary information for the responsible protection bodies. The dossier also includes the wealth of intangible cultural heritage such as music, festivals and traditions. Part of the dossier is the management plan, with the aim of protecting all these elements and highlighting them.

The evaluation follows, based on the prescribed procedure, by the Advisory Bodies of the International Organization, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), while the decision on whether or not to include Zagori will be taken by the World Heritage Committee, which is scheduled to meet in Kazan, Russia in June 2022.

David Saltiel: The Historical Truth Against Hate

January 27, Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust
By Kyriakos Athanasiadis

A discussion with David Saltiel, President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, on the Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Holocaust Heroes (commemorated every year on January 27), on the archives of the Jewish Community during the Holocaust, the reconstruction of Freedom Square and anti-Semitism.

KA: Mr. President, we are almost 80 years away from the first train that left the city station for Auschwitz-Birkenau. It's been a long time. But most of these years the Thessalonians in particular, Jews and Christians, spent in a great, heavy silence - something that has only really changed in the last ten or fifteen years. What was it that kept their mouths shut? The fear, guilt? The shame, that there were people who benefited from all this?

DS: Eight decades is really a long time. But despite its passage, we cannot forget that what the persecuted Jews experienced during the Holocaust were inhuman experiences that created physical and mental traumas that afflicted those who survived for a lifetime. These people experienced, more than anyone else, in their own skin literally, the physical and mental catastrophe caused by the brutal treatment by their fellow human beings, the uprooting from their homeland and of course the indelible marks left by forced labor, violence, medical experiments, hunger, loss of relatives and friends and much more.

A first reason for the silence was certainly the fact that the majority would not believe what the survivors - especially those in the camps - would say. There are recorded cases of survivors who were treated as mentally challenged as what they described was considered unthinkable and literally unbelievable. But that was not the only reason. But we must keep in mind that we are talking about many different cases. People who survived the camps. People who, being small children or even infants, wandered in the mountains and spent an odyssey with members of their families, knowing the hunger and hardship in the very first years of their lives. It is no wonder, then, that a significant number of Holocaust survivors — not just Greeks — suffered from guilt for surviving, when everything — the people but also what he knew as everyday — was lost. Every personal story is different and we cannot know what drove each survivor to remain silent. If I were trying to identify some commonalities, I would say it makes sense that they do not want to talk so as not to experience the pain again.

We must also consider the conditions of those times immediately after the Liberation. Who was their immediate surroundings? Other Jews who were persecuted and either hid so as not to be deported to the camps or survived the camps because of a miracle. In both cases we are talking about people who — having lost dozens, if not hundreds, of relatives and friends — knew this reality and had no reason to discuss this painful subject.

On the other hand, was the wider social environment open to hearing about the camps and what the Jews experienced? Those who returned, if they returned and did not relocate elsewhere — which was not uncommon — returned to places where the people who collaborated with the Nazis were. Here in Thessaloniki the fortunes — shops, houses, household items, furniture, clothes, books, and so many of the city's 50,000 Jews — what happened? The Nazis created the YDIP. An asset management service. Obviously this management was done. All of these assets could not have disappeared.

Do you know how many times when I visited antique shops I found items that apparently came from families lost in the Holocaust? Too many. Even today we continue to collect tombstones of the Old Jewish Cemetery or their fragments from every corner of the city... And since I mentioned it. What does the example of the Old Jewish Cemetery tell us? Then there was no shame, no moral barrier. Tombstones and bricks were good materials and the place of origin did not matter to those who were going to use them, on streets, houses and even in sacred places. And this begins in 1942 but continues after the end of the war... The issue of property

is something that is of great concern to researchers today. I can tell you that the Organization for the Care and Rehabilitation of Israeli Israelis,

But to return to the subject. At the end of 2020, Auschwitz's survivor from Ioannina, Esther Cohen, passed away. There were many tributes in her life, during the last decades of which she, like other Greek Jewish survivors, had shared their experiences so that no other generation would experience a Holocaust. Among what he had narrated was the treatment he had when he returned to Ioannina. She and her sister from their family of seven had survived. So when she went to her house, at 1 Gennadiou Street, as it is narrated: "I did get in. A stranger appeared on the first step and said, "Where are you going?" "To my house," I replied. He tells me, "Do not go ahead, I will tell you something." I say, "Here." "Do you know if your mom had an oven in the kitchen?" I happily replied, "Sure, we baked the bread, I do not know my house?" "Well, since the Germans did not burn you, I will burn you if you dare to enter," he told me. So how do you narrate these experiences in such circumstances?...

Also another reason seems to have been the need to look ahead, not to go back to what happened. To invest in life, in everyday life - perhaps as a way of dealing with trauma. Now, as far as children are concerned, I think they probably did it to protect them.

You know, if there is a tragic event today, there is usually an organized reaction. For those who are at the center of this event, help is offered by specialized scientists, especially when it comes to losing lives. But to those who experienced the Holocaust — first consider the difference in intensity and extent of any tragedy of our day — what help was given? None. From any point of view. So I think that, quite naturally, they did not know how to manage these experiences, the mental traumas, the guilt. So how could they talk to their relatives, friends, neighbors, or children? Some did, but with little reference and without much detail. While those who came forward sharing their experiences did so decades later, when their lives were flowing,

KA: Strengthening the Memory is an extremely important issue for the Community and for Greek Judaism in general. What are the steps that have been taken in this direction?

DS: We are trying to talk about these events today, because knowledge and understanding are the antidote to intolerance and racism. This effort is based on extroversion, otherwise it can not work. In Thessaloniki and other places where there are still Jewish Communities, they develop excellent cooperation with public bodies, with the state, with educational and cultural institutions, and many times this crosses the borders of the country, in Greece and abroad.

This turn was not easy. It's a struggle that really started in the 1990s and has intensified over the last two decades. It took many small steps.

For example, on the one hand on the occasion of locating the bones of the hero Colonel Mordecai Frizis and burying them in the Jewish cemetery of Thessaloniki, and on the other hand with the unveiling of the monument in the same place dedicated to the thousands of Greek Jews who fought in On the side of their Christian brothers, defending the sanctuaries and saints of Greece, we talked about the participation of the Jews in the Greek-Italian War of 1940-41. It was thus demolished through historical facts, which were little known to the general public, another myth, a negative stereotype that degraded the Jews' offer to the Homeland and their bravery.

Also, after efforts of about eight years, we managed to vote unanimously in the Greek Parliament, in 2004, the institution of January 27 as the Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust. Such a day was a matter of course for many countries in Europe. It took effort to convince us that accepting the past, dealing honestly with even the darkest aspects of it, is not harmful - quite the opposite.



We also actively supported Greece in achieving its membership as a member of The International Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, the forerunner of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. An international organization with an important project, of which today we are talking about Greece is the presiding country.

We also insisted, for a number of years, on the erection of a monument on the site of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Our efforts were successful in 2013. This is part of the effort to heal a wound, since few of the thousands of students knew that they were stepping on a sacred place. Where thousands of Jews from Thessaloniki were buried.

In the same year, the citizens of Thessaloniki walked side by side from Eleftherias Square to the Old Railway Station. It was the first silent march of Memory. This institution, which stopped only temporarily due to the pandemic, is an initiative of the Municipality of Thessaloniki, the city's Universities, and the Community, which openly shows, with the participation of all Thessalonians, of all ages, how the Holocaust, the events that led us to this but also what it so painfully bequeathed to us, concerns us all.

We continued on this path, and in 2014, thanks to the ongoing dialogue with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, we saw the reopening of the only Chair of Jewish Studies in Greece, which contributes significantly to the promotion and research of Community history, and the fight against stereotypes and anti-Semitism. through teaching but also collaborations and programs implemented with universities and institutions abroad. At the same time, the library of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, with the help of the Community, and thanks to the critical contribution of the Federal Republic of Germany, has access to the complete database of the Shoah Foundation with testimonies of Greek Holocaust survivors. So the voice of the survivors — even those who are no longer with us — remains strong.

In the field of education, for some years now, programs of the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki have been implemented, which are addressed to the members of the educational community for the teaching of the Holocaust and local history. While similar initiatives in the form of conferences or seminars are organized not only in Athens and Thessaloniki but also in other cities of Greece, reviving local history, as we must not forget that before the Holocaust there were 28 active communities in our country.

As for the places where Jewish Communities, Synagogues and Museums operate today, we encourage and see an ever-increasing number of visitors, most importantly the increasing presence of organized school visits. There are of course the annual visits of students to Auschwitz, which are supported by the Greek State. This is another relatively recent development that we have reached because the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki in 2009 proposed to fund such an initiative with its own resources for the benefit of secondary school students. It was this proposal that sparked the Holocaust-focused training competitions and educational trips to Auschwitz. An experience that, perhaps more than anything else,

It is clearly very positive that the study of the history of the Holocaust is a key part of teaching in schools. But enhancing memory is not something that can only be achieved through in-class teaching. I think we have to make sure that the consequences of Nazism are obvious and present today. The actions implemented in recent years by the Central Israeli Council of Greece and the local Israeli communities, with the erection of monuments in places where there are no longer active Jewish communities - because of the Nazis and their allies - with the organization of events of honor for the Righteous of the Nations, that is, those who did not act and thus few of the persecuted did not end up in crematoria, have this very meaning. The symbolic lighting of the White Tower last year on the Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, the display of messages at the City Hall on the anniversary of the Night of Crystals this year, and of course the Memorial Park to be created in the central element of Freedom Square Reconstruction of the Holocaust Memorial, are acts that are part of this very reasoning. These are many other things, big and small, that we take care of every day.

As you can understand, strengthening the Memory is something very important for our Community for Greek Judaism in general. We can not build the future if we do not know the past, history. And all of the above, which happened over the years, was not just done in a context of restoration and promotion of what existed in Thessaloniki or elsewhere. They are part of a conscious effort to highlight what has been lost throughout Greece. And in this way we want it to be understood that what was lost was part of our Homeland.

KA: Do you want to tell me about the archives stolen by the Nazis of the Israeli Communities in the country? It's another story that goes slowly, very slowly. Maybe only recently some steps were taken to finally return to Greece from Russia where they are kept all this time. Are you optimistic?

DS: Following the invasion of Thessaloniki on April 9, 1941, the Nazi Occupation Authorities, in the context of the implementation of the plan aimed at the complete annihilation of every trace of the long-standing Jewish presence in the city, confiscated our Community archives and transferred them to Berlin. These priceless files were located and transported by the army of the former Soviet Union at the end of the War from Berlin to Moscow, where they are still part of the State Military Archive of Russia. As a result, the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki, after the extermination of 96% of its members in the Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau camps, now has little evidence of its pre-war existence and operation.

We have been trying to return the files since 1992. This is a huge moral issue, a matter of respecting the memory of the Greek Jewish victims of the Holocaust, which had been raised many times in the past by both our Community and Greek diplomacy, either in international meetings or on other occasions. It is therefore understandable that we are talking about a long and difficult struggle that seems to be succeeding thanks to the key actions of the Prime Minister Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis. The public statement of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, I consider to be a commitment to the realization of this effort. I can say, yes, I'm optimistic. In fact, if we consider that the project for the construction of the Greek Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki is evolving at the same time,

This is an achievement of historical importance that concerns the history of our country. And we must express our gratitude to the Greek Prime Minister and all those who worked and continue to work to complete the return of the pre-war Jewish archives to our country.

KA: Let's go to the Museum of the Holocaust. The city wants it and needs it. When do you hope the work will start and when can we hope that it will start working? Why wouldn't it be a simple exhibit museum, right?

DS: The Holocaust Museum of Greece is really something that both our city and our country want. It is one of the most important projects that will be implemented in the coming years, for Thessaloniki and Northern Greece. This is an ambitious initiative of the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki that was embraced by the Greek Government, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, and individual bodies such as GAIAOSE SA and OSE.



The problems that delayed the project had to do mainly with problems that were identified - after studies - in the area of GAIAOSE SA in which the construction of the building was originally planned. Fortunately, after the identification of the problems through close and continuous cooperation with the Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Panagiotis Pikrammenos, Government officials, such as the Deputy Minister of Spatial Planning and Urban Environment Mr. Nikolaos Tagaras and the Mayor of Thessaloniki Mr. Konstantinos Zerith change of plot, with another area in the same area - and so we proceed normally.

The creation of the Holocaust Museum is a complex undertaking. Consider that all this started as a proposal from the Community and proceeded, in its early stages, thanks to our perseverance and actions. In such a project it is expected that there will be problems and delays. But if there is a vision, a goal, with work and

perseverance, the problems are addressed. It takes determination, faith, and specific choices. With such an approach any obstacles are progressively overcome. So today, after what I have described to you and other issues that have arisen and been addressed, we are in discussions for the selection of the specialized office that will undertake the preparation of the museological study.

And precisely because we are at this stage I can say with certainty that the goal is not to build a space of exhibits and evidence for the Holocaust. Of course these will exist and in fact we have addressed an open invitation to those citizens who have such items and wish to make them available to the Holocaust Museum to contact the Community so that they can be taken into account when preparing the museological study.

I told you earlier, on the subject of the repatriation of the pre-war archives of our Community from Moscow, about how they will help the effort of the researchers. This is another aspect of the multifaceted work of the Greek Holocaust Museum. This will combat the deliberate distortion, falsification and relativization of the Holocaust. The Museum of the Holocaust of Greece will display - on the contrary - History in its true dimensions. It will highlight the daily lives of the people who went missing. The Nazis tried to zero people out, to turn them into numbers by taking away their human condition. The Museum through elements from personal stories will give face and human dimension to the victims, to the numbers.

So we are moving forward with sure and steady steps. Regarding the start time of the works, within the next months we expect the issuance of a Presidential Decree for the location of the Museum, while by the end of the year the necessary studies that will lead to the issuance of the building permit will be completed.

KA: There was a lot of talk, and not unjustly, about the fate of Freedom Square and its renovation. How did we end up receiving funding from the Community? Was there a resource problem? And finally, what do you think will happen? Will we finally see it as what we dream of, with the undergrounding of the parking lot and the emergence of historical memory on the surface?

D.S.: At this time there is a great discussion and it is now clear that the citizens of Thessaloniki demand the execution of the decision of the Municipality of Thessaloniki for the creation, in the area of Eleftherias Square, of a Memorial Park, in which the Holocaust Memorial will have a central place. . Something that has already been delayed. Our Community, after discussions with the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr. Zervas, is waiting for the completion of the procedures that will launch the start of the execution of the renovation project. So, once the formal approval of the Municipality of Thessaloniki is given, the Community is willing to assist in any way it can, even with an effort to secure financial resources, for the faster and more complete execution of the project.

KA: Anti-Semitism has not been eliminated, Mr. President. We very often witness the vandalism of sacred monuments, as well as other intolerant acts by extremists. Is it limited to these marginal areas? Or does he find his most "loud" expression there, while he exists elsewhere?

D.S.: The Holocaust was based on a well-thought-out and organized plan, which aimed at the mass, complete disappearance of the Jews from the face of the earth. Everyone had to be exterminated! Without any discrimination. It was the culmination of anti-Semitism in Germany during the Holocaust. World War II is over. Six million Jews were killed in ways that reason could not comprehend. Is anti-Semitism over? Unfortunately, no. Anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance unfortunately continue to exist and increase. This is a harsh reality. Research in previous years on anti-Semitism levels shows high rates for our country, while showing that ignorance of the Holocaust and local Jewish history is significant. So we can not be impressed by the fact that incidents of vandalism of Holocaust monuments, Jewish cemeteries, etc. are not uncommon. The positive thing is that the State and even groups of ordinary citizens react and take a clear position against these acts that offend not only the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, their survivors or descendants but also our society as a whole.

Of course, the problem does not only concern Greece. It is something that we find in other countries as well. In fact, some countries have experienced bloody incidents. So you understand that we are dealing with

phenomena that cover a wide range. We may be dealing with offensive cartoons, books, posts on social media and the internet in general, slogans on cemetery walls or Holocaust memorials, up to the destruction of the monument years ago at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - the Old Hebrew.

All of the above contain elements of anti-Semitism. This happens when ignorance is combined with the existence of stereotypes that are born and perpetuated through a hate speech. We must also not forget that ignorance creates fear. So both stereotypes and fear can easily be used, as part of political approaches from across the political spectrum, to magnify the spark of Anti-Semitism. Jews easily become the ones to be blamed for the problems of society. We have experienced this in recent years when the Jews, in some cases, presented themselves as scapegoats of the health and economic crisis. In the face of all this, we can only contrast the historical truth, our constant effort for the diffusion of knowledge,

KA: In contrast to the glorious past, the Community now has a numerically small but culturally large contribution to the modern life of the city. At the same time, as we see with the renovation of the Modiano Market, new investments are constantly being made in Thessaloniki, and I am sure that this will not stop here - everything else. Do you want to give us some information about the Community and what it does?

DS: Indeed, numerically today the Community can not be compared with the pre-war image of 50,000 Jews, or if you will with the 80,000 Jews who lived in Thessaloniki at the beginning of the 20th century. However, the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki is today an active and integral part of the local community, having managed to restore most of its functions. Considering the scale of the Holocaust, as well as the Nazi method of destroying not only the people but also those created by the Jews of Thessaloniki — especially if we consider that the Jewish presence in this city dates back to since its inception — we are talking about a miracle. A miracle that happened thanks to those who survived. To those who managed to find the strength to return to their birthplace, to settle there again, and to build their own lives and the Community from its ashes. Today, we, the first post-war generation — and of course our children and grandchildren — continue to build on what they have taught.

Our Community therefore maintains the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, which today is the largest private museum in the city. Three synagogues, the "Joseph Nissim" school with a primary school, a kindergarten and a kindergarten, educational summer seminars for the youth, as well as a nursing home. At the same time, it organizes many cultural activities, conferences and other events either independently or in collaboration with other local and regional bodies (Municipality of Thessaloniki, Region of Central Macedonia, Aristotle University, University of Macedonia, etc.) and cultural organizations (French Institute, Institute, Institute Thessaloniki, Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki State Orchestra, etc.). The Israeli Community of Thessaloniki also implements programs such as the "Digital repository of historical memory and culture of the Israeli Communities of Greece:" JOSEPH ". This program aims at the unified, integrated digital management of the cultural stock of all the Greek Israeli Communities. Through this we contribute to the preservation, promotion and promotion of the Historical Memory, of the long tradition of the Greek Jews, which presents a special scientific and at the same time educational value. Another important program, which is part of the rich research work of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, is implemented by a team of experts who research the Jewish musical tradition, gathering material for the creation of a "music archive" and the publication of a special music album. highlighting and promoting the Historical Memory, the long tradition of the Greek Jews, which presents a special scientific and at the same time educational value. Another important program, which is part of the rich research work of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, is implemented by a team of experts who research the Jewish musical tradition, gathering material for the creation of a "music archive" and the publication of a special music album. highlighting and promoting the Historical Memory, the long tradition of the Greek Jews, which presents a special scientific and at the same time educational value. Another important program, which is part of the rich research work of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, is implemented by a team of experts who research the Jewish musical tradition, gathering material for the creation of a "music archive" and the publication of a special music album.

We therefore consider it our duty, together with all the other issues of daily life concerning the members of the Community — which we certainly deal with and deal with — to keep the fight against Anti-Semitism and the strengthening of the Holocaust Memorial at the top of the agenda, through important initiatives like everything I mentioned above.



KA: Although the pandemic has played its inhibitory role, the tourist-pilgrimage connection of recent years with Israel is on the rise. Are you optimistic that the future can only be better for the Community, for the Judaism of Greece, and therefore for the country itself?

Indeed, the pandemic changed our daily lives dramatically. Transportation and travel, tourism as a whole, were significantly negatively affected. But I am personally optimistic. Gradually we will be able to come back - to a certain extent this has already been done. I am sure that the tourist traffic will recover in the future, especially for the city of Thessaloniki. Let us not forget that we are talking about Jerusalem in the Balkans. The city where thousands of Thessalonian Jews lived and today their descendants live and excel in Israel, France, the USA and other countries around the world. These people maintain and strengthen ties with the birthplace of their ancestors. For example, members of the Dassault family have re-visited the city and made significant donations. Marina Nissim and Gabrielle Nissim,

A similar case, of course, is that of Albert Bourla - a child of our Community - who, as you may know, was recently awarded the Genesis Prize. Mr. Bourla, from the first moment his candidacy for the award was announced, had stated that he intended to donate the cash prize to support initiatives that will help preserve the memory of Greek Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Also, the Holocaust Museum of Greece and the metropolitan park that will be created in the surrounding area are expected to function as factors for the increase of the tourist traffic of the city, for the commercial development as well as for the general progress and development of Thessaloniki. So when we develop such contacts, when we take care of the development and implementation of important programs that highlight the multifaceted contribution of the Jews of Greece, taking care not to forget the wounds of the past, when our country continues to cultivate the mutually beneficial strategic cooperation with Israel at all levels — then, yes, with all that, based on extroversion and building partnerships that can bring us multiplier benefits in the near and distant future,

KA: Thank you very much, it was a great honor for me.

Memories of Agrinion by Dr. Michael Matsas

The Jewish Community of Agrinion By Michael Matsas

Translated by Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos Chronika: issue 168: July/August 2000

On the New Year, the families of Eliezer, Yiossoula, Reví, Elia Mizan Savva Mizan, Leon Matsas and Isaak Matsas families would gather in Nisim Mionis' home to read the book of prayers since Nisim Mioni knew Hebrew. The only one who did not take part in the religious service was Nisim's brother, Yonas, the teacher and member of the Communist Party who was one of the five leaders of EAM (left-wing resistance movement) in the area of Agrinion. The Eliezer family, who were also members of EAM, had a dog who was much beloved by the andartes [resistance fighters]. His name was Hitler.

We were in touch with my father's family but, unfortunately, I was the only one in my family who did not get to see my relatives again.

In 1942, my mother decided to visit her sisters in Ioannina, along with her parents and her brother who were in Albania. Since we no longer had a servant, my mother gave me some instructions on cooking and housekeeping before she left. She took my sister Ninetta with her.

During this period, most people traveled by bus, which used to have frequent breakdowns, or with the Italian convoys, which my parents preferred. The Italians would permit people to travel with them on their trucks and lorries, feeling that the andartes would not attack them with civilians on board. My mother stayed about two days in Ioannina and in Albania. My father, also, went to visit his relatives for a few days in Ioannina. Many people were traveling during this period, searching for food or work. The Italians had requisitioned all the hotels, and people who were traveling would rent beds in private homes. Many Jews, who knew my parents, would prefer to stay at our house, not so much because they did not have to pay anything, but because they feared that someone would steal their money, their good or their possessions if they rented elsewhere.

Every evening, we would have visitors. One evening there were 12 people sleeping on the floor. My parents wanted to host all those who could keep them in touch with what was happening in Ioannina and Athens. In 1942, the heads of the Jewish families were ordered to present themselves to the Italian police and be registered. The Italian sergeant, who was responsible for this, always believed that as long as the Italians were in Agrinion, nothing would happen to the Jews. This indicative hint should have made all of us nervous, but none of us were. Everyone obeyed and, shortly, this episode was forgotten with no one suspecting the hidden meaning behind his words.

In the beginning of 1943, Agrinion had the distinction of providing the greatest number of andartes [in proportion to the population] of any other city. The spirit of resistance was very much alive in our area. There were many instances where my mother would prepare baskets filled with sweets, which our friends, especially Maria Dimadi, would bring to the hospital where the andartes were being treated.

One day, we were taken by horseback after purchasing a sack of wheat from a villager. The individual who took us gave us this message: "Inside the sack of wheat there is a gun and bullets which you are to give to Chrysto Bokoro." I quickly transferred this valuable cargo to a lorry filled with many different items. On the way to Bokoros' house, we passed by many enemy soldiers, and I was curious as to my 'mission.' I did not realize how what I was doing was very dangerous, up to the moment where I transferred the gun to Chrystos' sister, Kiki, and saw the expression of fear on her face.

The Bokoros family was our best friends in Agrinion. They were related to one of my father's bank colleagues in Preveza. They had given me a small plot of land on their farm outside of Agrinion and I planted potatoes there. The problem was that potatoes require a great deal of watering and all I had to water them was a bucket from the well. In addition, the field was located a number of kilometers outside of Agrinion in the

village of Zapanti. My potatoes were the smallest in the world. I did not appreciate it then; it was only afterwards that I realized that every time I would go to water my potatoes, I was leaving Occupied Agrinion and going to a free area controlled by the andartes. I did not have to show my identification papers. I did not even have one. Neither the Italians nor the Germans had a roadblock in the area where the andartes were. In April of 1943, we learned about the deportation of the Jews of Thessaloniki and understood that the same would happen to us. My father went to the director of the bank to get his annual leave which was necessary for him to leave the city. The director informed my father that the Jews of Thessaloniki were 'different.' (Rumors had it that the Papagianni family to which the director belonged was one of the Jewish families that converted to Christianity in 1821.)

In May of 1943, the Polizos family, neighbors of ours and members of the Resistance, had visitors. I remember them. They were a well-dressed couple with a beautiful young daughter. Rumors had it that they were wealthy Jews from Thessaloniki who had arrived in Agrinion, escaping the anti-Jewish measures inflicted on their fellow Jews by the Germans in the German Zone of Occupation. They had fled to Agrinion and avoided any contact with the community. After a few days, they left the city. Not even then did we think that, perhaps, we too should flee the city. Wasn't it said that we were 'different' as far as the Germans were concerned?



Matsas family in
Agrinion

The Italians capitulated in 1943. German soldiers entered Agrinion and took over the Italian fortifications. The andartes tried to confiscate arms from the Italians and the Germans did everything possible to prevent this.

One day, while standing on the balcony in the rear of the house, I saw a German with a gun in hand chasing after a youth who was carrying a sack and shooting at him. The young boy ran into our courtyard, crossing over to the apartment on the first floor and jumping from the window that was directly under our balcony. The German also entered the courtyard, climbed the outside concrete stairs and entered our house. Our door was always kept open. He ran through to the balcony, and right in front of me, aimed his pistol at the fleeing youth below and pressed the trigger. Nothing happened. The gun did not fire. The andarte escaped unharmed and the German stared right at me, looking straight into my eyes. I thought that he was trying to see if I was happy that his gun had not fired, and I was terrified. The German left without saying a word, looking at his weapon in disgust.

Email Museum@kkjism.org for the complete version of this article.

Note: I recently had the honor of interviewing Dr. Michael Matsas for the National Arts Club, the topic the new edition of his excellent book, "The Illusion of Safety." This brought to mind his article in Cronika which I translated from Greek in 2000. Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos.

Turkey Izmir (Smyrna)

In this Turkish city, historic synagogues are seeing new life Full article in JTA by David Klein [Here](#)

Once a jewel of the Diaspora, 150 years ago the Jewish community of Izmir on Turkey's Aegean coast numbered over 30,000. It was the hometown of notable figures, from the Ladino singer Dario Moreno to the renowned Rabbi Haim Pallachi to the infamous false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi.

Today, the city's Jewish community has dwindled to barely 1,000 members. But Izmir's residents and visitors will soon be able to get a taste of what the city was like when it was home to the third largest Jewish community in the Ottoman empire.

Thanks to the Izmir Jewish heritage project, nine historic synagogues in Izmir's old town, known as Kemeralti, have been restored and will soon be open to the public as museums, starting in June. The neighborhood, which sits not far from a promenade on the gulf of Izmir, is one of the largest open markets in the world, attracting tourists from all over Europe and beyond. "You can find anything you want there, you can taste any food, smell any scent," Nesim Bencoya, director of the heritage project, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Today, its skyline is dominated by the minarets of its many mosques and the spires of churches belonging to the Greek Orthodox community, whose members were once also a defining feature of Izmir's diversity. When the project opens, Bencoya hopes that the synagogues will join them as a major aspect of Kemeralti's character. "Even if there will not be one single Jew in Izmir, people will be able to say, look, there was a Jewish civilization here," he said.

Six of the nine synagogues stand next to each other, practically wall to wall, surrounding a courtyard, while the other three are dispersed throughout the neighborhood. In addition to the synagogues, also undergoing restoration is the former office of the city's chief rabbi. Just a few minutes walk away in the neighborhood is the childhood home of Shabbetai Tzvi and a building that once housed a kosher winery.



Shalom Synagogue

Once complete, the synagogues will serve as a living museum to Izmir's Jewish history, with exhibits on local customs as well as on the history of the individual synagogues and their congregants — such as the Algazi synagogue, which is named after the musical family of its rabbi, or the Portekiz synagogue, which was founded in the 16th century by North African Jews of Portuguese descent.

Izmir isn't the only city in Turkey that is seeing its ancient synagogues restored. In recent years Edirne, a city by the border with Bulgaria, and Kilis, a city in eastern Turkey near Syria, have both had their long abandoned synagogues restored thanks to government funding. No Jews live in either city today, and some skeptics have pointed to the campaigns as a way for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a strongman with a history of controversial statements about Israel, to evade accusations of antisemitism. But others say it is stemming from a genuine appreciation for the country's now dwindling Jewish community.

Bencoya said that his project, which is mostly funded by the European Union, was inspired by restoration of other historic Jewish neighborhoods, such as that done in Prague, whose Jewish quarter is now a major attraction for visitors to the central European city. Small towns in Spain are also looking to renovate (and in some cases unearth) ancient synagogues.

"We took as our example the Prague Jewish museum," Bencoya said. "In 2017, they had 716,000 visitors. If that happens to us, we're going to be rich."

If successful, the project, he hopes, will help allay the expenses of the dwindling community so that they can afford to maintain their heritage.

"It will help the community, they will have income to take care of these places, and for whatever else they need," Bencoya said. "Izmir tourism will profit from it too, the hotels, the restaurants, taxis, whatever cultural tourists can bring to the city." Like Prague, there's a lot to maintain as the community goes back a long way.

An ancient community

Jews have lived in Izmir, once known in Greek as Smyrna, since antiquity. Since the city was also a center of early Christianity, Jews are mentioned in church documents dating back to the second century AD. The oldest of the restored synagogues, Etz Hayim, is attested to in records as far back as the 1600s, but local tradition holds that it has been around since the era of the Byzantine Empire. Like elsewhere in Turkey, the city saw several waves of Jewish life, from the Greek speaking Romaniote Jews of the Byzantine era to the Sephardic community brought over by the Ottomans following their expulsion from Spain in 1492.

The relative tolerance afforded by the Ottoman empire allowed the community to flourish, and by the turn of the 20th century, Ladino-speaking Jews made up 10% of the city, the second largest non-Turkish group after Greeks, who made up about half the city. "We're not newcomers here, we are very old citizens of this land," Bencoya stressed.

Bencoya, who is 66, was born and raised in Izmir. Like many other Turkish Jews over the past century, at age 19 he emigrated to Israel, expecting to leave behind Turkey for good. He lived in Israel for 39 years, before returning to the city of his youth in 2010.

"You know, when you start getting to 40 or 45 years old, you start thinking about your origins," he said. In Israel, he had been director of the Haifa cinematheque. After hearing from other Izmir Jews that the community was interested in conserving the city's Jewish sites, he was tapped to lead the project.

Bencoya has his own intentions of fighting antisemitism, through the act of boldly displaying the religious and secular aspects of his culture. He and everyone else involved in the project expect it to attract far more non-Jewish than Jewish visitors, and to provide a space for cultural dialogue between Jews and non-Jews in a country where antisemitic rhetoric is often normalized. "How will I fight anti-semitism — not with arms of course, but by showing myself with pride," said Bencoya. "Jews here have tended to hide themselves and we have proverbs that say, 'don't get involved in politics,' 'it is better if people don't notice us.' — I want people to notice us. I want to be taken into account, I want to participate in the decision making process. That's what this project is about." "People come and see, and it will bring into the city money, all of Izmir will profit, Jews and non-Jews," He added. He hopes it will help shore up the pride of the Jewish community as well. "The more successful it is, the stronger it will make our community. And maybe people won't just leave and go to Israel, but that we'll be here for another 100 years, at least another 100 years!"



Bikor Holim Synagogue



Sinyora Synagogue



Talmud Torah Hevra

Victims of the Struma Disaster Commemorated on 80th Anniversary

768 people who had lost their lives on the Struma ship on February 24, 1942, were commemorated on February 24th, on the 80th anniversary of the disaster, with a ceremony organized on the coast of Sarayburnu, Istanbul. The General Coordinator of the Turkish Jewish Community, Deniz Saporta, who gave a speech during the Struma Commemoration Ceremony, talked about the situation the people boarding the ship were in and why they had to endure it even though they had known the Struma was not a safe way to leave Romania.



Deniz Saporta expressing that commemoration ceremonies like these are even more important during times of war, as the present, added, "We would like to state our wish in public, as the Turkish Jewish Community, for a memorial to be built so that this disaster is never forgotten, at Sarayburnu and surroundings that are rather significant in the context of the Struma Disaster, and we would like to emphasize that we are ready to perform all the necessary endeavors with our state as well as the local administration.

Following Deniz Saporta, the Deputy Governor of Istanbul Dr. Hasan Hüseyin Can gave a speech. In his speech, he expressed the importance of remembering, understanding, not forgetting, and making sure this horrific incident does not happen again. He also added that unfortunately there were still immigrants running away from wars and oppression in their own countries, even 80 years after this disaster.



Spain

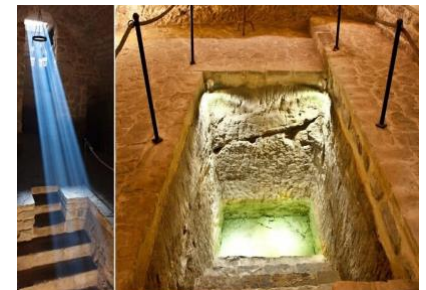
Spanish towns unearth ancient synagogues to bring back Jewish history — and tourists Expelled in 1492, the once-prosperous Sephardic Jews left a striking medieval architectural legacy. Now, landowners are digging it up, along with a possible gold mine of tourism. Full article [Here](#)

Beneath a sprawling 14th-century building with moss-furrowed terrace walls and interiors painted in garish strokes of purple and yellow lie what could be the remains of Spain's second-largest synagogue from the medieval era. The 7,500-square-foot estate, currently being explored by researchers and archaeologists, is nestled in a narrow alley in Utrera, a small city in the Seville province in southwest Spain. It sits covered with the geraniums popular in the city's historic Jewish quarter. The property has had a lengthy and multifaceted history as a hospital in the 17th century; a Catholic chapel; an orphanage; and most recently, in the 20th century, as a school, a restaurant and a cocktail bar.

But the city council bought the now-abandoned property in 2018 and launched an archaeological excavation project last February, with the hope of uncovering a synagogue that was pushed underground over the centuries. The goal is not only to preserve and foster Jewish history and culture — something the country's government has prioritized in recent years in order to rectify its dark Inquisition history.

As COVID-19 continues to hurt tourism worldwide, Spain is looking to remain one of the most visited countries on the planet. And ancient synagogues can be tourist draws, especially for smaller towns that lack them.

Uncovering the synagogue "would put our town on the world map, alongside cities such as Seville," said José María Villalobos, Utrera's mayor and the project's lead supporter. "This would be a powerful appeal for Utrera as a major touristic destination."



Utrera is far from alone in mining its Jewish past. Starting well before the pandemic, governmental and private interests at the regional and municipal levels have been attempting to unearth, restore and display Jewish heritage sites from the Middle Ages.

“In terms of cultural heritage, Spain has undergone an enormous transformation since the end of the 1980s, with an upsurge in archaeological interventions associated with the booming construction industry,” said Jorge A. Eiroa, professor of medieval history at the University of Murcia. He explained that synagogues often appear when grounds are excavated during construction.

Over several centuries, Sephardic Jewish communities in Spain left a striking medieval architectural legacy. Their former synagogues are jewels of artistic and cultural heritage that illustrate the splendor and prosperity of Spain’s medieval Jewish communities. But after 1492 — the year Jews were expelled from Spain through the Inquisition — most were abandoned, and many were built over or subsumed into other buildings. Some of the few prominent ones left intact today were repurposed into Roman Catholic churches, such as El Tránsito and Santa Maria la Blanca in Toledo, the Córdoba synagogue and Corpus Christi in Segovia. (Some of those, ironically, have recently turned back into Jewish-themed entities, as museums and cultural centers that educate about Spanish Jewish history.)

Many synagogues across Europe have been transformed over the centuries. In 2018, a British organization called the Foundation for Jewish Heritage launched an interactive map that identifies and categorizes them, showing how their functions have changed — some are now shops, restaurants, sports facilities and even funeral parlors. Many Jewish sites of worship scattered throughout the Spanish peninsula, however, are hidden underground with no documented evidence of their existence. “When a synagogue is converted into a church, any Jewish vestiges are promptly removed,” said Eiroa, explaining the difficulties of tracking down the old synagogues. “If we are lucky, the Torah ark is transformed into a small altar, as in the case of Córdoba,” and thus preserved. Miguel Ángel de Dios, one of the archaeologists working on the Utrera project, is confident that he will discover an underground synagogue. His team is looking for religious Jewish “traits” — including clues that show if the site was divided into men’s and women’s sections.

“We still have no idea if the synagogue is there or not and what state it is in. But, if we find it, we believe a mikveh, or ritual bath, should be located outside the prayer room, as well as some sort of building for the women’s gallery,” de Dios told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “It may not have been preserved, but we can certainly seek for traces of some kind of distinction between men and women.”

About 170 miles northeast, in the ancient city of Úbeda, stands another formerly unknown synagogue with a medieval mikveh, or ritual bath, which gives it a nickname: the Synagogue of Water. Buried under the bedrock of the city’s surrounding houses, the synagogue lay undisturbed until it was accidentally unearthed in 2007. Its discovery astonished the property’s owners, who were developing apartments for tourists and a parking lot.



Úbeda

Primary owner Fernando Crespo quickly understood the site’s cultural significance — and its tourism potential — and halted the construction projects. After three years of excavations and restorations, the synagogue opened its doors to the public as a museum in 2010. “It was a great surprise to all of us, to find this magical place — a striking discovery, a journey through history,” said Andrea Pezzini, head of the company Artificis, a tourism company that now manages the synagogue.

The Synagogue of Water is divided into seven interconnected chambers, including the well-preserved mikveh. The pool, situated on the lowest floor, was carved into natural rock and is illuminated by picturesque beams of natural sunlight, giving it a mystical quality. For centuries, natural water from a well has flowed through it, renewing itself every day. Scholars believe that there is only one other record of a similar natural mikveh in Spain, in the small Catalan town of Besalú.

Portugal

On the cold afternoon of Jan. 7, 1486, in the main square of a town called Teruel in eastern Spain, the Court of the Holy Inquisition sentenced to death the converso Juan Sánchez de Exarch for his Judaizing activities. Among the heretical practices mentioned in the Inquisition records were his adherence to Judaism, his repudiation of Jesus in favor of Moses, and his Hebraic foodways—such as the preparation of a Sabbath pot by the name of adafina.

Each week, on Friday from noon onward, the Jews of Spain would simmer this hearty and nourishing stew for 14 to 18 hours. Its components varied depending on the household's affluence; some versions contained lamb, others veal, most of them both, a few even fish. When meat became unaffordable or unattainable, a vegetarian variant would be devised. Chunks of onions, smashed garlic, chickpeas, carrots, turnips, and hard-boiled eggs textured the dish. Spices like cumin, thyme, black pepper, cloves, and saffron furnished it with body and aroma. One last *de rigueur* ingredient would give this Sephardic delight a distinctive tang: cilantro. Some recipes used the herb's aromatic leaves, sprinkled on top. Juan Sánchez de Exarch's recipe called for a teaspoon of the plant's seeds, ground.

Sometimes known as coriander or Chinese parsley, cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum* L.)—today a staple of Southeast Asian and South American cuisine—was ubiquitous to medieval Spanish Jewish cooking, a culinary custom shared by Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula.

The plant, native to southern Europe, has been cultivated throughout Asia and northern Africa for millennia. The earliest coriander seeds that have been unearthed were found in the Nahal Hemar cave in Israel near the Dead Sea, dating back to circa 6000 BCE. The plant was known to the ancient Israelites as *gad* in the Bible and *kusbar* in the Mishnah. In the Torah, it is mentioned twice, both times being compared to manna. In Exodus 16:31: "The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like wafers in honey." And in Numbers 11:7-8: "The manna was like coriander seed, and in color, it was like bdellium [gum resin]. The people would go about and gather it, grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream."

Besides utilizing cilantro for its nutritional and flavoring value in the kitchen, ancient Egyptians widely used the plant for its medical aphrodisiac properties. They used it so frequently that it is listed in the extensive Ebers Papyrus from 1550 BCE. Tutankhamun's tomb was filled with cilantro seeds when it was uncovered. In the Middle Ages, Jews and Moors employed the pungent herb for its stimulant, cooling, and digestive properties. It served to prevent and eliminate flatulence, conceal purgatives' taste, and was used as a tea for urinary complaints.



Recipe at end of article

The medical evidence of the herb's widespread use is etched in 13th-century cookbooks written in Arabic. From the illustrious era, two books survived, *Reliefs of the Tables*, *About the Delicacies of the Food and the Different Dishes* written by Murcian scholar Ibn Razin al Tugibi, and *Kitāb al-tabij*-The Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook. The latter illustrates the closeness of the cultural and religious life enjoyed by Muslims and Jews. The manuscript—currently available in the National Library of France and listed as *Arabe 7009, Recettes de cuisine*—has 543 recipes, of which 112 contain coriander.

The book is heavily influenced by the medical knowledge of the era based on the classical antiquity wisdom of Galen, Hippocrates, and Dioscorides when the Catholic Church in Europe discouraged these principles—which would later help shape Maimonides' scientific health regimen and guidelines. It even has a dedicated section linking ingredients with its health benefits, noting: "Coriander enters into all dishes and is the specialty of *tafâyâ* [lamb's stew in cilantro juice] and *mahshi* [sautéed eggplants with spices], because it goes well with foods in the stomach, and does not pass through rapidly before it has been digested."

"Most of the physicians in the Middle Ages were either Jews or Muslim. For them, food was medicine and nourishment," said H  l  ne Jawhara Pi  ner, author of *Sephardi: Cooking the History. Recipes of the Jews of Spain and the Diaspora, from the 13th Century Onwards*. "One could not go without the other. It was essential for both groups to maintain the connection between health, nutrition, and cooking."

Apart from Juan S  nchez de Exarch's execution, from the 15th century onward, a significant number of converted Jews would be publicly burned at the stake solely for professing to observe Judaic dietary habits. In many cases, sharing recipes, dining with old Christians, storing particular items such as eggplants, chickpeas, or saffron, and even frying with olive oil—rather than cheaper lard—was enough to justify prosecution before the inquisitorial courts. Nonetheless, many "New Christians" were unconcerned by the risks despite the hazardous consequences their choice entailed. For them, keeping their Jewish heritage and Jewishness alive meant engaging in simple but meaningful modest deeds of cookery dissent.

As reflected in David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson's book *A Drizzle of Honey: The Life and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*: "For the converso family struggling both to maintain its traditions and to evade the Inquisition, the preparation of each Sabbath stew or plate of matzo for Passover was at once an act of defiance against the pressures of assimilation and the risks of disclosure and an affirmation of pride in the preservation of family and religious heritage."

A great number of the recipes for which these disguised Jews were accused of being Judaizers—usually by their neighbors, friends, and servants—included cilantro. Gitlitz and Davidson chronicled the recipes of many of these "guilty-of-heresy" Sephardic individuals who refused to be ethnically and religiously cleansed. Isabel Gonz  lez's eggplant and onion stew used one teaspoon of dried cilantro leaves; Mayor Gonzalez's fish and carrot casserole added three tablespoons chopped fresh; and Isabel Garc  a's chickpeas and honey with cilantro had 3/4 cup of the herb.

The identifying power of food also emerges in the Middle Ages in Spanish literature. Cilantro is variously mentioned in many poetic instances among the nutrition and culinary customs closely associated with the Sephardim. For example, in Francisco Delicado's early-16th-century dramatic novel *Portrait of Lozana: The Lusty Andalusian Woman*, the protagonist, Aldonza, meets some converso women shortly after her arrival in Rome. Reluctant to reveal much about themselves because they don't know her, the women decide to put Aldonza's Jewishness to the test by asking her for the recipe for sweet fritters (*hormigos*) or couscous (*alcuzcuzu*). The task was to determine whether Lozana used olive oil and coriander to prepare the dishes—ingredients that would give away her Jewish identity. When Lozana begins giving them directions, the first question she asks is, "And do you have coriander? If it's good, I'd put a bit of nice flour and a lot of oil in it, and I'd make you a basinful that you'll never forget, even when you're dead."

The predilection or distaste of Spanish Jews toward specific edibles also made its way onto the collective bodies of folk narrative ballad poems called *Romanceros* and *Cancioneros* (poetic chants). Cilantro is also present in many of these orally transmitted works, which frequently utilized culinary metaphors to either signal religious affiliation or emphasize social status among old Christians, Jews, and new Christians: Food denotes privilege and power.

Cilantro would lose its pride of place within the Sephardic sculleries throughout the generations that followed. The robust, pungent herb was eventually replaced by parsley in the diaspora. With no inquisitorial persecution to haunt them, those Spanish Jews who found refuge in North Africa and under the Ottoman Empire used many local alternatives as a substitute, a prerogative of the wandering Jew: adapting to keep on preserving the legacy.

"In the diaspora, food was further enhanced and enlivened. Empanadas evolved to bourekas. We absorbed, adapted, and inherited many flavors and ingredients and extended our extensive repertoire from medieval Spain. Adaptation is part of our resilience, and it enriched our Iberian Sephardic cuisine tremendously," said

Stella Hanan Cohen, author of the award-winning book *Stella's Sephardic Table: Jewish family recipes from the Mediterranean island of Rhodes*.

Despite frequently sparking heated debate and unwelcome affection, cilantro has made a shy return in many Jewish kitchens due to its sharp taste, versatility, and distinctive flavor. "I use cilantro a lot because, as someone who is a historian, it is a way of reclaiming our Sephardic past and is reminiscent of our ancestors," said Piñer. "So, to eat is much more than just getting nourishment; it's recalling history."

Recipe for Portuguese Jewish Arroz

Arroz con garbanzos is one of those recipes that appears simple but packs a punch in terms of flavor and substance. This dish may be redolent of the many variations of Mediterranean Sephardic pilaf to the food enthusiast. Yet, the chickpeas give it a hearty balance and add an extra layer of texture. My family has been making this recipe for ages, passed down from generation to generation of women. Arroz con garbanzos has a distinct fragrant bitterness and a trademark yellow color given by the turmeric; bay leaves and currants add a sweet touch. When I was a child, I remember my mother serving it with poached or fried eggs and lots of cilantro sprigs sprinkled on top.

Ingredients

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups long-grain rice
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric
1 cup cooked and drained chickpeas
3 fresh bay leaves
2 tablespoons currants
2 cups vegetable stock
kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cilantro leaves or sprigs finely chopped or crushed
Yield: Serves 4

Preparation

Step 1

Wash the rice under cold water until it's no longer cloudy, then drain. In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil, add the cumin, and toast the seeds for two minutes. Next, add rice and turmeric and stir well for over two minutes until the grains are well coated in oil.

Step 2

Meanwhile, place the vegetable stock over medium heat, avoiding letting the stock boil. Add the chickpeas, currants, and bay leaves and stir for one minute.

Step 3

Pour in the hot vegetable stock and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer over moderate heat for about 17-20 minutes or until the rice is soft. If the rice dries too soon, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and adjust the salt and pepper. Garnish with the cilantro on top. Serve hot.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



While Purim is the 'main event' in the month of Adar – or Adar II in a Jewish leap year like the present one (5782), the month of Adar was significant to Jewish life centuries before the Purim story.

In fact, a very special and annual event commanded by G-d in the Torah, occurred on Rosh Hodesh Adar while the Israelites were still in the desert. On that day, the Israelites were commanded by G-d to donate 'mahatzit hashekel' – half a shekel of silver, as described in Exodus, chapter 30, verses 11-16: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: When you take the census of the Israelites as you count, every man will give a ransom for his soul to the Lord, so that no plague strikes them when you count them. Everyone counted in the census will give half a shekel, according to the Sanctuary weight, which is twenty gerahs; This half shekel shall be an offering to the Lord. Every male twenty and over included in the census must give the Lord's offering. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel. It is an offering to the Lord to redeem your lives. And you shall take the redemption money from the Israelites and assign it for the service of the Tent of Meeting; that it may be a memorial to the people of Israel before the Lord, to redeem your lives." And though connected specifically to the Mishcon – the temporary Tabernacle in the Sinai wilderness – it still has significance and halachic ramifications today.

As the Torah says, the giving and counting of the half-shekel was to be as a census of the people, as opposed to directly and physically counting heads. The Torah explicitly states the reason for using this method to count the people: 'so that no plague strikes them'. G-d apparently does not want mankind to count one another like objects, and if, and when, this is done, as we know from the Second Book of Samuel, chapter 24, the consequences are dire and deadly. The text describes how King David, despite being warned by his officers and officials not to conduct a census of his military by counting heads, insisted on doing so anyway, which resulted in a plague that struck thousands of his soldiers. G-d's message is clear: Human beings cannot treat each other like inanimate objects, even in something as mundane as counting heads. And in fact, to this day, Jews are usually careful about not counting people directly, but rather in roundabout ways, like when checking to see if a minyan [prayer quorum] is present. It is considered wrong to point to people and count "1, 2, 3..." etc., but rather to use Hebrew phrases containing ten words to "count" those present. At least in Jewish ideas, human dignity cannot be taken lightly.

Another important feature of the commandment to give a half-shekel is that only silver was set apart as being restricted and fixed in the amount that could be donated, whether one was rich or poor. How are we to understand these aspects of the commandment? The answer is provided by the Torah when describing the exact amount of the half-shekels collected and for what the silver was used in the Mishcon (Exodus chapter 38, verses 27-28): Casting the sockets that held the columns forming the Mishcon walls, and the hooks and bands of these columns and a silver lining on top. Thus, the very foundations of the Mishcon, top and bottom, was contributed equally from every Israelite equally, rich or poor. G-d obviously wanted to make it very clear that to be G-d's dwelling place on Earth, every Israelite must have an equal portion in the construction of the Mishcon. No privileged rich or pitiable poor. There were ample opportunities in the construction of the Mishcon for generous donations of other materials based on one's wealth and spirit of giving, but not the 'foundations': they must reflect the equality of holiness and brotherhood among all of Israel, no matter what their social or economic status.

Likewise, in the Holy Temples, the same half-shekel donation went to the purchase of the animals used in public sacrifices, like the “Musaf” (additional) sacrifices on Sabbaths, holidays, and new months on behalf of the entire people.

In fact, mandatory collection of the half-shekel was actually a common practice in Diaspora communities that existed in Second Temple times, like Egypt, Greece, Italy and elsewhere, with all contributing their share to the maintenance of the Temple, a practice that continued until the Jews’ Great Revolt against Rome and the Temple’s destruction.

Yet even the destruction of the Second Temple and the vast dispersion of Jews throughout the world did not totally end the practice of donating a half-shekel, at least in a symbolic manner. Given the ethical values described based on the half-shekel offering, including the idea of equality and dignity of all Jews in the eyes of G-d, as well as the spirit of giving charity to support Jewish communities, institutions and individuals, it has become common practice to contribute the modern-day equivalent value of the Biblical weight of half a shekel of silver to the poor, Jewish educational and community institutions and of course to one’s own synagogue and congregation for community needs. So, this very special commandment is still being practiced, at least in spirit, and may we see the renewal of the original commandment in a rebuilt third Temple speedily in our days!



Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Praise and Praiseworthiness: Thoughts for Parashat Pekudei

Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals – JewishIdeas.org

“And Moses saw the entire work [of the Mishkan], and behold, they [the Israelites] had accomplished it; as God had commanded them, so had they done; and Moses blessed them.” (Shemot 39:43)

The great 18th century economist and thinker, Adam Smith, distinguished between praise and praiseworthiness. In his book, “The Theory of Moral Sentiments,” (III.I.32) he noted that “the love of praise is the desire of obtaining the favorable sentiments of our brethren. The love of praiseworthiness is the desire of rendering ourselves the proper objects of those sentiments.”

One should act in a praiseworthy manner and this should result in receiving praise from others. An example of this is found in this week’s Torah portion. The Israelites completed the building of the Mishkan just as God had commanded—i.e. they performed in a praiseworthy fashion. Moses then offered them a blessing—i.e. he praised their work.

Adam Smith observes, however, that praise and praiseworthiness do not always go together. There are people who seek and receive praise even though they have not acted in a praiseworthy fashion. Charlatans, fakers, and egotists may behave in unseemly ways, and yet they receive praise from hangers-on or from a misguided, misinformed public. Such people, though, must know that they are not deserving of the praise. If they would be honest with themselves, they would recognize their own hypocrisy. Yet, since they are egotists after all, they rarely will give themselves an honest evaluation. They want praise, even if they are not praiseworthy. Such people are to be pitied, not praised.

Adam Smith also notes that there are those who behave in a praiseworthy manner, but who receive no adequate praise for their good work. While this may well be frustrating to these individuals, they have the satisfaction of knowing that they performed admirably and correctly, even if they did not receive proper acknowledgment for their deeds. Indeed, one should behave in a praiseworthy manner without expecting or demanding anyone's compliments or blessings. Still, isn't it nice to actually be thanked and appreciated!?

Moses well understood the importance of being praiseworthy...and of giving praise to those who have conducted themselves well. In blessing the Israelites, he acknowledged their good work and their sacrifices. He let them know that their efforts were appreciated. In so doing, he validated their efforts; he praised their praiseworthiness; he gave them the satisfaction of being recognized and thanked for their work.

What blessing did Moses actually utter to the Israelites? The Torah does not record his words. The Midrash, though, offers a suggestion: "He said to them: May it be the will of God that the Shekhinah may rest upon the work of your hands, and may the bliss of God, our God, be upon us." (Tanhuma, Pekudei, 11)

Moses prayed that the Israelites would merit to experience God's presence in their work, and that the Divine presence would be a source of bliss and inner satisfaction.

If people act in a praiseworthy fashion, they should—ideally—feel the presence of God in their work. They should realize that their thoughts, words and deeds are inspired by a Higher truth, by a Higher source of ideas and ideals. They behave in a praiseworthy fashion not for the sake of personal glory, and not in the hope of attaining fame and fortune. They behave admirably because they feel the presence of God in all that they do. While it may be nice to receive praise in return for praiseworthiness, one seeks to be praiseworthy by feeling God's presence in one's life and in one's work. That feeling of spiritual bliss is the ultimate human fulfillment.

May the Shekhinah rest upon the work of our hands...that is a blessing for which all good people aspire.



The Great Privilege of Being a Jew by Douglas Altabef

Douglas Altabef is the Chairman of the Board of Im Tirtzu, Israel's largest grassroots Zionist organization, and a Director of the Israel Independence Fund. This article is reprinted from the Jewish Press, February 25, 2022.

Let's face it: the raging debate about Jews having white privilege is a bit absurd. Jews are basically a historical Rohrschach depiction of a People. In other words, we take the form, we are regarded through the eyes of those who perceive us. For most of the past two millenia, Jews were certainly not regarded as being like other people. In Europe, we were first the Christ-rejectors/killers, who per Augustine, were being kept around in order to bear witness to our own degradation and supersession by the Church.

Not too much privilege there.

Come the Enlightenment, and we became the great chameleons of civilization. We could be morphed from usurious capitalists to stateless communists in the blink of an eye. We were vermin, who were still managing somehow, thanks to the Rothschilds, to control the world.

Pretty exhausting, if you ask me. Jews were a subhuman race, who threatened the purity of the Aryans. But we also threatened the peasantry of Poland and Russia. And after the Enlightenment, we were a threat by virtue of the fact that many Jews sought to convert to Christianity in order to gain access to the higher reaches of their society.

In Muslim countries, we were tolerated as dhimmis, second class citizens. We couldn't wear the same clothes as others, nor walk on the same sidewalk if it meant inconveniencing a passing Muslim. So where is the privilege from? It comes from the now dirty word called "achievement."

Jews who fled pogroms, death sentence conscriptions in the Tsar's or the Sultan's armies, who typically came to America with nothing, worked hard and saw their children and grandchildren rise. Jews sacrificed, educated their children, embraced America and the American dream and vision, and they succeeded.

Somehow, that has a sinister ring to it. Somehow, to a great many people today, that cannot explain what Jews are about. There must be some secret sauce, some hidden card that has made it all possible. Could that be our latent privilege?

Or is privilege what happens when you work hard and succeed? Besides achieving material success, and social acceptance, can you achieve privilege? Well, allow me to let you all in on a little secret. I, a proud Jew, am wildly privileged. Not because I might or might not be white, but because through no work of my own, by happy Providence, I was born into a Jewish family of two wonderful Jewish parents and was raised to be the next link of the Jewish chain.

I was shown that, despite the mind-boggling persecution, disdain, vulnerability, powerlessness, instability and uncertainty of what it meant for thousands of years to be a Jew, I was somehow, nevertheless, a card carrying, bona fide Jew. Meaning, that against any and all odds of historical endurance, I was allowed to come into the world as a Jew. I was privileged to stand on the shoulders of generations of ancestors who had decided, against all good common sense, to stay as Jews.

I had ancestors who were expelled from Spain rather than take the easy way out of kissing a cross and letting it all go. I had ancestors who toiled in poverty and constant uncertainty in Galicia, and in the Ottoman Empire, yet who believed that they had been endowed with something worth keeping.

So yes, I am enormously privileged. Because I have had the privilege to validate the struggles and sacrifices of those who enabled me to do all of that. And to top it all off, I packed up my privileged self and, together with my privileged wife and one of our privileged children, moved to Israel, which has to be the most privileged place on earth.

We moved to a place that for almost 2000 years was a dream, an idea, a memory, a yearning. But not really a place. But through the will power, fueled by the suffering of all those generations who were - let's be candid here - hated, despised and loathed by most everyone around them - of Jews who refused to give up the fraught privilege of being Jews, the place that was a dreamy memory, became a gritty reality.

And the gritty reality survived against the same kind of odds that Jews have been facing for close to forever. So, this place, Israel, succeeded, and of course by doing so, it must be guilty of unspeakable crimes against - you fill in the blank - because that is what it means to be a Jew.

You do things that shouldn't be able to be done. You endure things that shouldn't be put up with. That is part of the existential job description of what it means to be a Jew. And I cannot imagine a greater privilege than the opportunity to be part of it all.

Seeking Our Help

We are trying to identify the "mystery man" in this picture. We think that he is from Kastoria.
Email museum@kkjasm.org if you have any information to share.



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.

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



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