



Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

January 2022 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we welcome in the secular year 2022, let us wish for an end to the horrors of COVID and a return to a semblance of normalcy. While we have returned to hosting synagogue services every Shabbat, we have had to pause our kiddush lunches due to an upsurge. Because of the uncertainty and the spreading of this latest variant, our Museum will be closed until the first Sunday in February. We are monitoring the situation on a daily basis and are constantly working to protect the health and safety of our congregation, visitors, and staff.

On January 27th we stop and commemorate the International Holocaust Remembrance Day in memory of the loss of European Jewry. The 27th of January was chosen to commemorate the date that the Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by the Red Army in 1945. The day remembers the killing of 6 million Jews and 11 million others by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. It was designated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/7 on November 1, 2005.



Deportations of the Jewish Community of Ioannina by the Nazis on March 25, 1944

This E-Newsletter is sponsored by Anita Altman in honor of her grandchildren, Silas Jacob and Lilah Serafina, great grandchildren of Sarah and Jack Altman and great, great grandchildren of Anna and Zadick Coffino.

If you wish to sponsor a newsletter, contact us at museum@kkjism.org.

This newsletter, our 154th 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. We will be following CDC guidelines; proof of vaccination and masks are required. Please note our Museum will be temporarily closed until February 6th.

Simchas

Annette Binder will be celebrating her 94th birthday on January 22. Selma Matsil turned 95 on December 21.



Annette Binder



Selma Matsil Gilberg and family



We celebrate the engagement of Justin Kovarsky (the son of Shlomo Kovarsky and Cherryl Varon Kovarsky) and Brittany. Justin is the grandson of Esta Hazan and Morris Varon of Blessed Memory, the great-grandson of Sophie Dalven and Morris Hazan (both of Blessed Memory) and the great-great grandson of Steroula Colchamiro and Israel Dalven (both of Blessed Memory). Steroula was the 7th child of Jessoula and Rachel Colchamiro.

Congratulations on the birth of Eliza McCullough Levy on December 8, 2021, in Cambridge Massachusetts. Eliza's proud parents are Joshua Levy and Colleen McCullough, Grandparents – Daniel and April Levy, Great Grandparents – Morris J. and Yvette Levy, and Great-Great Grandparents – Esther Cantos and Rabbi Jessula Levy.

Passings

We mourn the passing of Minos (Avraham) Mizan, born in Larisa on April 6, 1938. He passed away in Israel on December, 2, 2021. He was 83 years old. He was the first cousin of Rabbi Zakinos Mizan. Minos lived in Greece, Argentina, South Africa and Israel. He was married to Raquel and they had 3 wonderful children: Gabriel (Gabi), Astro and Asaf (Asi), 4 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. Minos and his family lived in Larisa, Greece before the war. They were hidden from the Nazis by local rescuers in the mountains of Greece until the end of the war. Minos' brother, Samis Mizan was a member of the Greek Partisans. In 1943 and 1944, as many as 1,000 Greek Jews fought as partisans.



Family of Avraham Mizan before the war

We mourn the passing of Jack Israel Kessman from the Michaels family. Jack passed on October 20. He was predeceased by his parents, Joseph Kessman and Sarah Kessman (Michaels). He is survived by his wife Joan Kessman and his sons, Nathan Kessman, Ronald Kessman, Steven Kessman and James Kessman. He is also survived by eleven grandchildren. Jack was the grandson of Nathan Michaels and Molly Mordechai Michaels, both of whom were founding members of the Lower East Side Romaniote community.



Jack and his parents, 1935

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

We mourn the passing of Sabbetai (Bessos) Pitsirilos from the Jewish Community of Ioannina on December 18, 2021. Saby was only in his 50s.

We mourn the passing of Miriam Levine from the Askinazi Family. Miriam was living in California close to her daughter Ivy when she passed at the age of 85 on 12/29/2021. Miriam was the daughter of Joseph Samuel Asiniazzi and Rose Wasserman (both of blessed memory). She was the granddaughter of Morris (Willie) Askinazi and Rebecca (Betty) Coffino and the great granddaughter of Joseph and Esther Askinazi, both born in Ioannina. Miriam was pre-deceased by her husband, Benjamin and her son Zadick. She is survived by her children, Mark and Ivy and her children, Hans, Eden and Benjamin Sher and her recently born twin great-granddaughters.



Ivy Sher and Miriam Levine

Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

This December Kehila Kedosha Janina welcomed members of our community and new friends. As always, it was a pleasure to open our doors and share our stories. We were honored to welcome guests from Romaniote and Sephardic communities of Greece, Turkey, Seattle, and Florida. We loved meeting the Blitz and Teich couples from Long Island and the Smarts from Manchester, UK. The visit of University of Connecticut students with Professor Fred Roden was amazing. The students were taking a course on World Jewish Literature, although none of them were Jewish.



Rabbi Isak Alaluf from Turkey



Blitz and Teich couples



Smart couple



University of Connecticut students



Professor Fred Roden

Upcoming Events of Interest

New York Ladino Day - January 30, 2022 Online via Zoom

Learn More and Purchase Tickets [Here](#)



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi



The Sephardic
Foundation on Aging

Proudly Present

Salud i Vida: The 5th Annual New York Ladino Day!

2:00 PM EST on Sunday, 30 January 2022



Featuring scholar **Eliezer Papo**

Sephardic Nonagenarians: A Panel by **Bryan Kirschen**

Estreyikas d'Estambul Children's Choir

"Kantiga," a **Ladino** Short Story by **Jane Mushabac**

Trio Sefardi: the Musical Finale!

Ladino is a bridge to many cultures. It is a variety of Spanish that has absorbed words from Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, French, Greek, and Portuguese. The mother tongue of Jews in the Ottoman Empire for 500 years, Ladino became the home language of Sephardim worldwide. While the number of Ladino speakers has sharply declined, distinguished Ladino Day programs like ours celebrate and preserve a vibrant language and heritage. These programs are, as Aviya Kushner wrote in the *Forward*, "Why Ladino Will Rise Again."

Since 2013, International Ladino Day programs have been held around the world to honor the Ladino language, also known as Judeo-Spanish. January 30th marks New York's 5th Annual Ladino Day curated by Drs. Jane Mushabac and Bryan Kirschen for the American Sephardi Federation.

Past Events of Interest

Greek, Turkish, Israeli Diplomats Get Together to Mark Hanukkah

The Greek, Turkish and Israeli Ambassadors to the US got together on Sunday, December 5, 2021 in New York in an event to mark the end of Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights.

In an extremely rare show of unity between the three countries, often at odds with each other, the three diplomats lit Hanukkah candles together at the event, which was organized at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York by the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America.

Greek Ambassador in the United States Alexandra Papadopoulou joined Turkish Ambassador in Washington H. Murat Mercan and Israel's United Nations representative Gilad Erdan at the event, called the National Sephardic Community Gala. Thessaloniki-born physician Albert Bourla, the CEO of the Pfizer Corporation, also was in attendance.

"The strong ties between the Hellenic & Jewish communities are the best guarantee for religious freedom & interfaith dialogue," the Consulate General of Greece in New York tweeted.



Greek, Israeli, and Turkish Ambassadors



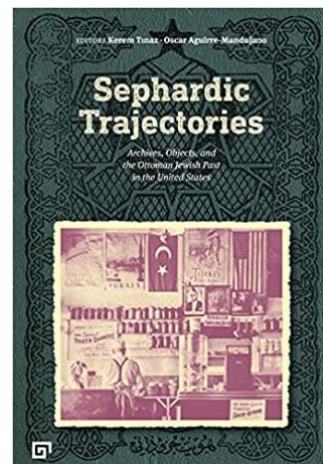
Albert Bourla and Cliff Russo

New Book Available from Kehila Kedosha Janina

Sephardic Trajectories: Archives, Objects, and the Ottoman Jewish Past in the United States

Sephardic Trajectories brings together scholars of Ottoman history and Jewish studies to discuss how family heirlooms, papers, and memorabilia help us conceptualize the complex process of migration from the Ottoman Empire to the United States. To consider the shared significance of family archives in both the United States and in Ottoman lands, the volume takes as starting point the formation of the Sephardic Studies Digital Collection at the University of Washington, a community-led archive and the world's first major digital repository of archival documents and recordings related to the Sephardic Jews of the Mediterranean world. Contributors reflect on the role of private collections and material objects in studying the Sephardi past, presenting case studies of Sephardic music and literature alongside discussions of the role of new media, digitization projects, investigative podcasts, and family memorabilia in preserving Ottoman Sephardic culture.

Kehila Kedosha Janina is proud to sell this book. We have limited quantities selling for \$25 plus P&H. Email us at museum@kkjism.org to reserve a copy.



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Sarah Coffino



Jack Altman and Sarah Coffino Altman at World's Fair

News from Jewish Greece

Ioannina

Greek City Ioannina Aiming to Attract Visitors All Year Round

Full article [Here](#)

Ioannina Mayor Moisis Elisaf (center) with (from left) Eleni Basogianni (head of the municipality's tourism department), Kostas Bakogiannis (Mayor of Athens), Sofia Zacharaki (Deputy Tourism Minister), Dimitris Dimitriou (president of the Chamber of Ioannina) and Emiliios Neos (member of municipality's tourism department).



Efforts to attract visitors to the Greek destination of Ioannina all year round seem to be paying off, according to the city's mayor, Moisis Elisaf. Ioannina is the capital and largest city of the Region of Epirus, northwestern Greece. Speaking during a special event held last week to present the destination to travel agents in Athens, Mayor Elisaf introduced the strategy developed by the municipality for the tourism development of Ioannina and the wider region.

"We are trying to establish the city as a 365-day destination and this seems to be working," he said, informing the audience that Ioannina's hotels had high occupancy levels during the summer months despite the fact that it is not a hotspot for that season.

With regard to its accommodation offerings, Ioannina is a city with more than 1,000 hotel beds and several five- and four-star hotels, and boutique hotels.

The mayor highlighted that Ioannina is a city with an impressive history that is reflected through its monuments and museums; it has the necessary infrastructure to stand as a tourism destination; it is accessible due to its location in the center of the Ionian and Egnatia motorways; and it has an upgraded international airport.

Ioannina also hosts many sports activities, including European rowing competitions at Lake Pamvotida, the largest lake of Epirus.

Religious tourism

Mayor Elisaf highlighted that Ioannina offers other forms of tourism beyond the traditional, and specifically highlighted the destination's religious tourism offerings.

As the mayor pointed out, the monastic state of the island in the lake is the third after Mount Athos and Meteora.

"This is something that we must highlight even more in our strategy," he said. It was recently announced that the municipality and the Tourism Ministry were going ahead with a project to highlight Ioannina's religious tourism offerings.



Moreover, Mayor Elisaf underlined that the municipality is also focusing on further developing Ioannina as a destination ideal for hosting international conferences and events.

"Ioannina already is the third conference destination in our country," he said and referred to the city's ideal infrastructure.

He added that the municipality is looking to establish an agency to attract more conferences and establish the city of Ioannina as a host destination for international events.

A destination for Greeks and travelers from abroad

While Ioannina is a popular domestic tourism destination for the Greeks, the city also attracts its share of international visitors, according to Ioannina's deputy mayor responsible for tourism, Yiorgos Lolis.

"Ioannina is a city that attracts many tourists both from inside the country and from abroad," he said during the event, informing that before the pandemic, the destination's first market was Israel, while many visitors also came from the Balkans, especially from Albania.

This year, the majority of visitors were domestic travelers and tourists from France, Germany and Italy. Deputy minister: Ioannina has strong cultural features, gastronomy and history

On her part, Greek Deputy Tourism Minister Sofia Zacharaki said that Ioannina has all the elements to develop any thematic form of tourism, thanks to its strong cultural features as well as its gastronomy and history. Zacharaki highlighted that Ioannina's attempt to become a destination open for visitors all 365 days of the year is in line with the priorities of the Tourism Ministry.

"We can say that Ioannina is becoming a model city for this policy and we will see it unfold with the Recovery Fund as more than 320 million euros will be given for tourism, infrastructure and the sector's human resources," the deputy minister said.

Following the municipality's presentation, B2B meetings took place between travel agents of Athens and tourism professionals (travel agents, hoteliers and representatives of companies of alternative activities) of Ioannina.

Thessaloniki

Hoping for Return of Salonika Jewish Community Archives

The Greek Prime Minister and President of Russia Announced the Return of the Archives of the Jewish Communities of Greece

Kyriakos Mitsotakis raised the pending return to Greece of the Archives of the Jewish Communities to Vladimir Putin during the meeting in Sochi, with the President of Russia accepting our country's long-standing request. The agreement, which was announced according to the statements of the two leaders, initiates the repatriation of the Archives, which were stolen by the Nazi occupation forces during their retreat from Greece and then identified by the Soviet army in Berlin, after the occupation of the city. The return of the Archives, which are now housed in Moscow, to the facilities where the Russian Military Archives are kept, has been a constant pursuit of Greece for decades, the same sources stress.



The Archives of the Jewish Communities

The Nazis, upon their withdrawal from Greece, made sure to take the records of the Jewish Communities of the country. They were transferred to Berlin, where after the entry of the Soviets they were located and transferred to Moscow. Greece was already trying to repatriate the archives since 1997. (Note: Parts of the Archives wound up, in addition to Moscow, in YIVO at the Center for Jewish History in NYC, Israel and Salonika).

The study of about 100,000 documents, which are kept in 270 files, is expected to bring to light important facts about the lives of the Jews of Thessaloniki and the other Jewish communities of Greece, before the Holocaust. The material concerns public documents, correspondence with city agencies, cadastral documents, declarations of marriages, baptisms and deaths, and according to the estimates of Jewish agents they are a treasure troop of knowledge. The archive as a whole is unexploited, and its study is expected to provide valuable information about the daily life of the Jews.

Most documents are in Spanish-Jewish script with Hebrew characters, which makes them difficult to read. Apart from Moscow, where the bulk of the documents are located, another small part of the archive of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki is located in New York and Jerusalem.

Announcement of KIS on the Return of the Jewish Archives from Moscow

History returns home!

It is with immense emotion that the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece and the Greek Jews welcome the decision of Russian President Vladimir Putin for Russia to return the archives of the Greek Jewish Communities - and especially of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, from where the Nazis, on 11.7.1942, hijacked archives, books and religious objects from 30 synagogues of Thessaloniki, from libraries and from Community institutions. These records after the conquest of Berlin by the Soviet army in May 1945 were transferred to Moscow.

A long and difficult struggle of Greek Diplomacy and Greek Jewry seems to be coming to fruition thanks to the key actions of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. This is a historic achievement that concerns the history of our country. We express our gratitude to the Greek Prime Minister and all those who have worked and continue to work for the completion of the return of the pre-war Jewish archives to our country.

In the anniversary year of 200 years since the beginning of Greece's independence struggle, history returns us home, at last! For Greek Jewry, these archives illuminate its historical course, sacred relics in which the light of life and the darkness of looting and the Holocaust are recorded. Their performance will mean justice and will

transmit knowledge about a part of the Greek people that contributed to the development of their land but no longer exists, that of the 60,000 Greek Jews who were deported and exterminated in the Nazi death camps.

Statement by David Saltiel, President of KIS and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki

"Our archives are our roots. To this day, our archives are missing and we will be without roots if we do not have them," the president of KIS and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, David Saltiel, told ERT3. "These files are in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will now be given to us," he added. "In fact, these archives will be digitized and will be in the Holocaust Museum of Greece in Thessaloniki and concern all Greek Jewry", concluded Mr. Saltiel. "In Thessaloniki there were 30 synagogues and many of the objects stolen from them we have found and we have asked Poland and we are waiting for their return," the president of the I.K. of Thessaloniki pointed out.

"The return of the documents is like coming into contact with all those who perished, it is a story, not only of the Jews but also of the whole of Greece during this black period of occupation. What happened was a tragic crime and the return of the documents has moved the Jewish population because it is as if someone who was lost comes and returns home", adds Mr. Saltiel.

The Holocaust Museum of Greece, which will be erected in Thessaloniki, will be the ideal hearth for their reverent deposition, but also for their viewing by researchers, as access to the Archives will be ensured through modern methods of research and search.

Statement by Israeli Ambassador on the Return of Jewish Archives from Russia to Greece: "Victory of Spirit and Humanity"

The return of the Jewish archives from Moscow to Greece, the commitment and determination of Prime Minister Mitsotakis and his government to build a Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki represent the victory of spirit and humanity over the barbarity and atrocities of that terrible period in our lives and history, stressed in a statement the Ambassador of Israel to Greece, Ambassador Yossi Amrani.

"President Putin's decision will contribute to the education of future generations, in Greece and beyond, about the rich Jewish life in Greece, the enormous contribution of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and the destruction brought about by the Holocaust. The return of the archives, the commitment and determination of Prime Minister Mitsotakis and his government to build a Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki represent the victory of spirit and humanity over the barbarity and atrocities of that terrible period in our lives and history," the Israeli ambassador said in detail in his statement.

Alexandroupolis

Secretary General of KIS Participates in TV Show to combat Anti-Semitism

Secretary of KIS Victor Eliezer recently participated in the show "Sempos", of the television station "Thrace NET" and talked with Marina Kondyli and Demosthenes Doukas, making extensive reference to the unknown aspects of the history of the Jews who lived in Alexandroupolis and the wider region of Thrace.



Victor Eliezer during presentation



Komotini Holocaust Memorial

The discussion also focused on the issue of anti-Semitism and its contemporary forms that poison society. The Secretary of KIS stressed that society must act decisively in order to keep anti-Semitic attitudes on the sidelines. He also referred to the work of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), and the initiatives for the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust, with special reference to the actions taken by cities in Thrace - such as Alexandroupolis, Xanthi and Komotini - for the revival of the Jewish heritage in the region through the promotion and preservation of Jewish monuments and cemeteries.



In memory of the Jews of Komotini who were exterminated in 1943 during the Holocaust by the German-Bulgarian forces

Maisis and Frizis in Chalkis

The President of the Jewish Community of Chalkida Deposited a Wreath at the Statue of Mordechai Frizis

On December 5, 2021, the President of the Jewish Community of Chalkida, Mr. Makis Maisis, honored the hero Mordechai Frizis, who fell in battle, on December 5, 1940 in Premeti, by laying a wreath at the equestrian statue in the city.



The death of Mordechai Frizis was covered extensively by the press of the time and characteristically cited the article of December 24, 1940, of the newspaper "Evrivos" that wrote:

"Awe to the Synagogue." Tomorrow Sunday 24-12-1940 at 11 a.m. by decision of the Council of the Jewish Community, a prayer is chanted in the Synagogue for the success of the glorious Greek members of the armed forces that fought in battles defending Greece.

Yad Vashem Honors WJC's Leon Saltiel for Book on Wartime Greece

Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, has honored Dr. Leon Saltiel of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) for his work chronicling the last days of the once-vibrant Jewish community in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Dr. Saltiel, the WJC representative in Geneva to the United Nations and UNESCO and the coordinator on countering antisemitism, on December 16 was awarded Yad Vashem's prestigious 2021 International Book Prize for Holocaust Research, for his work, titled *The Holocaust in Thessaloniki – Reactions to the Anti-Jewish Persecution, 1942–1943*, published in 2020 by Routledge History.

The book narrates the Nazi persecution of Thessaloniki's Jewish community – more than 90 percent of 50,000 people were deported – and maps the reactions of the authorities, the Church, and civil society as these events unfolded. Dr. Saltiel's research continues to resonate, both in Greece and across Europe.

At the Yad Vashem ceremony, he said that Greece has recently seen "a reversal of public attitudes vis-à-vis its Jewish community, and the legacy of the Holocaust."

"Although antisemitism regrettably remains a problem in public perceptions, the Jewish history slowly comes to the fore, where the government, local authorities, the media, and educational institutions openly speak about the past, and even recognize some of these injustices," Dr. Saltiel added. "I am hopeful that this willingness to study and commemorate this dark past will continue for decades to come."

Hanukkah Celebrated Around Our World



Ioannina



Kehila Kedosha Janina



Albert Maimon visiting
KKJ



Athens

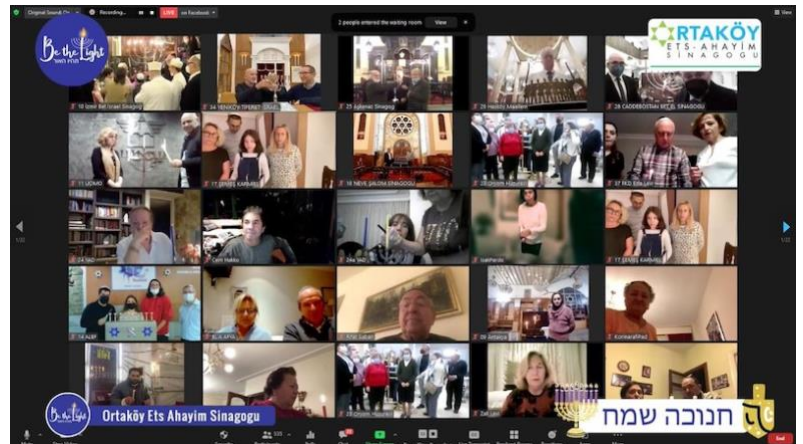
Hanukkah in Turkey

Light of Hanukkah Spread All Around Turkey

Hanukkah, the festival of lights, was celebrated with the hanukiyas (menorahs) lit all around Turkey on the first night of the Hanukkah. Just like last year, Ortaköy Etz Ahayim Synagogue in Istanbul, connected live to 10 synagogues in Anatolia and 34 different locations in Istanbul, and let thousands of people experience the joy of Hanukkah, while revealing the vibrant and rich life of the Jewish community in Turkey.

On the evening of Sunday, November 28th, the first night of Hanukkah, with Rabbi of Ortaköy Synagogue Rabbi Nafi Haleva's architecture and hosted by Ortaköy Etz Ahayim Synagogue, a Hanukkah celebration was organized via Zoom. As 1,300 people joined Zoom simultaneously, over 1,000 people also had the chance to watch the ceremony broadcasted live via Facebook.

Rabbi Nafi Haleva and our Şalom Newspaper writer Selin Kandiyoti, who were presenting the ceremony, established live connections with 10 synagogues in Anatolia and 15 synagogues and 18 Jewish organizations. During the first half of the program video screenings along with the interesting facts about the synagogues spread throughout Anatolia were presented.



The first live connection was established from in front of the Gelibolu Synagogue of which only the walls have been left, joined by the Deputy Mayor of Gelibolu Mustafa Çoban, President of the Çanakkale Jewish Community Sami Kumru, Jewish citizens and people of Gelibolu. Serdar Azak, a citizen of Gelibolu, burst into tears while reading the letter that came from his Jewish friend, with whom they had been neighbors as children. Following the wishes of restoration for the Gelibolu Synagogue, live connections with other synagogues continued. Connections were established with the synagogues of Kırklareli, Gaziantep, Adana, Bursa, Edirne, Ankara, Çanakkale, Antakya, and Izmir respectively.

The speeches of Rifat Haleva, who lives in Kırklareli, and Albert Mizrakli the 90-year-old son of Gaston Mizrahi, the founder of the synagogue in Adana, made all the participants emotional. In Edirne, Rifat Mitrani connected

live from the Edirne Synagogue, where he and his children had gotten married at. Recep Gürkan the Mayor of Edirne also expressed his feelings and congratulated the Hanukkah Festival of the Jewish people. Şaul Cenuodioğlu the President of the Antakya Jewish Community talking about the attractions and beauties of their city, requested that everyone should visit Antakya.



The Izmir Jewish Community welcomed Chief Rabbi Isak Haleva in their synagogues for Hanukkah this year. Rabbi Nafi Haleva said, "We are conveying our prayers to all of you who are taking care of our synagogues and the Jewish heritage all around Anatolia with everything you've got. We are thankful to our state for making it possible for us to embrace this beauty."



After the wishes and hopes of transferring the Jewish heritage in Anatolia to future generations have been expressed, the first live connection in Istanbul was made with Ulus Jewish Schools. Izzet Bana and the Estreyikas d'Estambol Choir, consisting of Minix Kindergarten children, with their song 'Ocho Kandelikas [meaning 'eight candles' in Ladino]' and dances they performed live, delighted the audience.

The other institutions participating in the ceremony from Istanbul were Alef, Talmud Torah, Maccabiah Committee in Istanbul, Shemesh Karmiel Dance Group, Göztepe Culture Association, Or-Yom, Yad, HEGKOM (Chief Rabbinate Education Commission), Mişne Torah Students Aid Association, Association for Protecting the Poor, Golden Age, Genç Emekliler (Young Retirees), Şalom Newspaper, Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews, and Or-Ahayim Hospital.

The Istanbul synagogues connected live were Neve Shalom, Burgazada, Heybeliada, Kemberburgaz, Şişli, Yüksek Kaldırım Ashkenazi Synagogue of Istanbul, Balat Ahrida, Büyükkada, Caddebostan, Hasköy Maalem, Italian, Haydarpaşa, Kuzguncuk, Sirkeci, and Yeniköy synagogues. Erdem Gül, the Mayor of Princes' Islands, joining the live broadcast, congratulated the Hanukkah Festival of Jewish citizens.

Following the broadcast of the surprise from the Ulus Jewish Schools, Ishak Ibrahimzadeh, the co-President of the Turkish Jewish Community joined the live broadcast from the Balikli Greek Hospital. President Ibrahimzadeh expressed his gratitude for the volunteers working with all their might to keep the Jewish community alive and emphasized that every moment lived was in fact a miracle.

Chief Rabbi Isak Haleva joining the broadcast once again from the Izmir Synagogue congratulated the Hanukkah festival of everyone stating, "I wish this beautiful image experienced from the Black Sea to the Aegean, from Marmara to the Mediterranean with its warm and beautiful waves, shall spread to all the world". Then Rabbi Nafi Haleva thanking all the participants said, "To unite is the beginning, maintaining unity is progress, working together is a success. We thank all our synagogues, associations, and institutions."



During the prayer and the lighting of the Hanukkah candles, the images of the audience were projected on the screen. At the end of the program, while lighting their Hanukiyahs at the same time altogether, the participants also found the chance to convey their holiday wishes to each other.

This organization has once again displayed how vibrant the Jewish community in Turkey is. The message of continuing this online event in the future, which has been realized for the second time since the beginning of the pandemic, even if the circumstances do not require it was also given.

Before the live broadcast of the ceremony had started, a compilation from the 2019 show of the dance group Shemesh Karmiel was presented. To watch the program which lasted approximately two hours, you may visit the link [Here](#)

Erdogan emphasizes Turkey-Israel ties in meeting with Jewish clergy Full article [Here](#)

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan late Wednesday drew attention to the thawing ties between Turkey and Israel during a meeting with representatives from the Jewish diaspora.

Erdoğan received members of the Jewish community in Turkey and the Alliance of Rabbis in the Islamic States (ARIS) at the Presidential Complex in the capital, Ankara. The Chief Rabbi of Turkey, Isak Haleva, the Chief Rabbi of Russia, Berel Lazar, and other leading rabbinic authorities were among the participants.

Highlighting the importance of boosting the environment of peace and stability in the Middle East, Erdoğan said: "Turkey's greatest desire is a Middle East where societies from different religions, languages and ethnicities live together in peace."

Turkey's warnings to the Israeli government are to ensure that matters are approached via the perspective of long-term peace and stability in the Middle East, he added.

Meanwhile, touching on Turkish-Israeli ties, Erdoğan said that despite the differences of opinion on Palestine, "relations with Israel in the fields of economy, trade and tourism are progressing in their own way."



"Israel's sincere and constructive attitude in the context of peace efforts will undoubtedly contribute to the normalization process. Turkey-Israel relations are vital for the stability and security of our region," he added.

"The steps to be taken on the Palestinian issue, especially in Jerusalem, will contribute to the security and stability of not only the Palestinians but also Israel. In this regard, I attach great importance to our renewed dialogue with both Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett."

Turkey sees anti-Semitism as a crime against humanity, as much a crime as Islamophobia, the president also said. "Just as we see Islamophobia as a crime against humanity, we also see anti-Semitism as a crime against humanity," said Erdoğan.

Reminding that Turkey was the co-host of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 and co-presenter of the 2007 decision on the undeniability of the Holocaust, Erdoğan said: "I do not accept any approach that marginalizes people because of their faith or ethnic origin."

Additionally, "Turkish lands have also been a haven of peace for Jews who have been persecuted in different parts of the world throughout history," he said, adding Turkey embraced the Jews who fled the Inquisition in 1492. Praising the contributions of Jewish citizens to the development, strengthening and achievement of the country's goals for centuries, he said: "We did not allow inhuman ideas such as racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance to other religions to find ground in these lands."

Also, "we need to be in solidarity in the fight against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, especially in Western countries," he added. In a tweet, Turkey's Jewish community also thanked the president for his efforts to improve ties with the faithful.

"We thank our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for accepting us and encouraging the Chachamim (an honorific title given to one well versed in Jewish law) of the Islamic states for a mutual future," the community said in a tweet on its official account. The representatives also gifted Erdoğan a Hanukkah menorah. In late November, Erdoğan highlighted the importance of the fight against discrimination as he extended greetings to Turkey's Jewish community in a statement issued to mark Hanukkah.

"We are taking all steps to ensure that we fulfill our historical responsibility to stand up against all types of discrimination, at a time when intolerance against different beliefs and identities are increasing across the world," Erdoğan said.

Noting that Turkey has been home to many different cultures for thousands of years, Erdoğan said his administration sees it as a responsibility to stand up against discrimination based on religion, ethnicity and race, and to ensure that all citizens live freely and securely.

Members of the Jewish community in Turkey are mostly descendants of Sephardic Jews that took shelter in the Ottoman Empire after fleeing Spain centuries ago. Their numbers, mainly concentrated in Istanbul nowadays, dwindled due to a pogrom decades ago and migration to Israel. In 2015, the community publicly celebrated Hanukkah for the first time in decades in a ceremony held in Istanbul, where two synagogues were the target of terrorist attacks in 2003.

United Kingdom

Novo Cemetery: East London's Secret Jewish Burial Ground

Behind the busy Mile End Road, hidden within the Queen Mary University of London Campus you can find the extraordinary sight of Novo Cemetery. Distinctive with its mass of flat gravestones, representing equality of all people in death, Novo cemetery gained Grade II listed status in 2014.



History of the Novo Cemetery

The East End has a long history of immigration and has throughout history been home to those fleeing persecution in their home countries. Jewish arrivals reached a peak in the 19th century, but many were living in London after Jews were admitted back into the city in the 1650s.

Built for Sephardi Jews in 1733, what's left of this cemetery dates from the 1855 extension and it's one of only two exclusively Sephardic cemeteries in England. The story goes back further though, with London's first Sephardi Jewish cemetery thought to have been built near this site in 1657. The Velho & Alderney Road Cemetery is a little trickier to find, but there's a great post about it here. In nearby information panels, Rocque's 1746 Survey of London shows the old and new cemeteries in Mile End Road, backed by fields and orchards.

When Velho & Alderney Road cemeteries were full, a new – Novo Beth Chaim – cemetery was proposed and built. Notable burials included Benjamin Disraeli, (Grandfather to the Prime Minister of the same name) and Daniel Mendonza, famous prizefighter of the 1830s. By 1895 the Novo Cemetery was almost full, and they formally closed for burials in 1905 for adults and 1918 for children. At that time most of the Sephardi community had moved out of the area and though the space was cared for, it suffered damage from bombing in WWII.



An exceptional last burial was allowed in 1974, when John Gervase Lang, who worked at the nearby Beth Holim home for the elderly died at the age of 93. He was allowed to be buried next to his father.

The area visible today is a small percentage of the 'newer' (1855) graves. The 'older' section (1733) was carefully cleared with around 7,000 graves moved to Brentwood in Essex. It's customary at Jewish burial sites to wash your hands after a visit, leaving them to dry naturally so as not to 'wipe away' memories of the deceased. Novo Cemetery is free to visit every day, you just have to walk into through the Queen Mary campus, but there's clear signage to find it. The address is Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS.

Israel

The Manuscripts of St. Catherine's Monastery: Now on the National Library of Israel Website

One of the world's greatest collections of manuscripts is now available to view in the online catalog of the National Library of Israel

A meeting in the desert.

The young scholar waited somewhat anxiously, for his counterpart to arrive. A negotiation was to be expected, and he was not entirely optimistic regarding his chances of success. In the meantime, at least, he was free to examine his fairly impressive surroundings.

It was the late 1960s, and Malachi Beit-Arié was head of the Jewish National and University Library's Manuscripts Department. He had been sent to the Sinai Peninsula to negotiate with the local Greek Orthodox Archbishop. The Jewish National and University Library (today's National Library of Israel) was seeking approval to microfilm the vast collection of manuscripts preserved at St. Catherine's Monastery, where Malachi now waited in the midst of the Sinai Desert. The monastery's texts had survived for many centuries in this isolated location, but Beit-Arié's aforementioned pessimism was rooted in the more recent history of the region.



After all, the Sinai Peninsula had just fallen under Israeli military occupation a year or so earlier during the Six-Day War. The monks of St. Catherine's had grown accustomed to living under Egyptian rule and regarded the IDF soldiers who now roamed the surrounding desert peaks and valleys with suspicion. There was no guarantee they would agree to the Israeli library's request.

Beit-Arié wandered through the monastery's ancient grounds for some two days before Archbishop Porphyrios III of the Church of Mount Sinai and Raithu finally arrived from Cairo. Malachi was quickly summoned, and the two set out in the priest's automobile for a nearby desert oasis. It turned out that Beit-Arié needn't have been so concerned. The negotiations were held in good spirit, during that same drive. The Archbishop, Malachie soon learned, had studied Hebrew, and was surprisingly sympathetic to the idea of cooperation with Israeli academics, quickly agreeing to the library's proposal.

The two then boarded a flight to Tel Aviv's Sde Dov airport, where Beit-Arié soon found himself loaded onto the Archbishop's private limousine. During the drive to Jerusalem, the priest conveyed his price for the exchange: a full set of the Talmud in English. This was quickly procured, and the contract was duly signed.

St. Catherine's Monastery contains the world's oldest continually functioning library, hidden behind immense walls which tower over all who approach its secluded location.

The monks of St. Catherine's take their vows seriously. Life in such an isolated place is not for those lacking in faith, of one kind or another. The monastery was built in the southern Sinai Peninsula, surrounded by dramatic mountainous desert landscapes. It sits at the foot of what is considered by Christian tradition to be Mt. Horeb, the place where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. The monastery even holds and nurtures what some believe to be the actual Burning Bush.

The Byzantine Emperor Justinian the Great built St. Catherine's, completing construction in the year 565 AD. Over a millennium and a half, the monastery's library has accumulated one of the world's most famous collections of early codices and manuscripts. It consists of some 3,400 manuscripts, among them a wide variety of Christian religious texts. These include early bibles, religious poetry and church music, writings by the various Church Fathers and different works of monastic literature. Also included are Greek classics, correspondence, writings on grammar, arithmetic exercises, rhetorical works, historiographical texts and other forms of secular literature.

While the vast majority of manuscripts were written in Greek (the monastery is part of the Greek Orthodox Church), there are also texts in Arabic, Syriac, Georgian and even languages that are no longer in use, such as Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Caucasian Albanian. The monastery's oldest manuscripts date to the third century AD. All these works have been preserved thanks in large part to the aforementioned isolation, the impressive fortifications (Justinian's walls are 36 feet / 11 meters high) as well as the dry desert climate.

Lately, however, there has been reason for concern. Though history has left St. Catherine's largely untouched, the past few years have seen new unrest come to the Sinai Peninsula, with ISIS terrorists fighting an insurgency against the Egyptian military in the region's northern areas. In 2017, an ISIS attack on a checkpoint near the monastery left one policeman dead and three others injured.

This is one of the reasons behind a recent push to document and digitize the historic treasures of St. Catherine's Monastery, guaranteeing the survival of the priceless information and cultural heritage contained within. The National Library of Israel is part of this multinational effort.

In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, a territory it would control for well over a decade. Shortly after the war, Dr. Batya Bayer, at the time the director of the Music Department at the National Library of Israel, took note of the manuscript collection at St. Catherine's. Bayer was interested in the study of early musical instruments and realized that the monastery's manuscripts contained valuable information in this respect. She soon formulated an official proposal to microfilm approximately half of the texts preserved at St. Catherine's. "The team should be as small as possible," she wrote in her proposal, "preferably one microfilm machine and one photographer, to be augmented whenever conditions permit."

By this point, around half of the monastery collection had already been microfilmed by a team from the Library of Congress in 1950. Following Beit-Arié's successful negotiation, an Israeli team set out in 1968 to complete the earlier project and microfilm the rest of the monastery's collection— meaning manuscripts which were written from the 12th century onwards.

Israel Weiser, a former employee of the National Library of Israel who worked on the project and who has since passed away, recalled that the team worked for four hours a day, five days a week (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) for around three months, only to be replaced by another team. Beit-Arié noted that this process continued for some two years. According to Weiser, the many hours of free time were spent in relative boredom in the isolated desert outpost ("They were eating rocks!" said Weiser). The project was a difficult one and those taking part had to make do without a regular supply of electricity. IDF generators were brought in to facilitate the work, and these were later left to the monastery's monks.

Over the past two years, the microfilm material collected by the National Library of Israel team in the late 1960s has been scanned and uploaded to the Library's catalog, where the general public can now freely view some 1,700 manuscripts in digital form. This was necessary because the microfilm material itself had begun to disintegrate, representing a real threat to the survival of the information contained within. There is also a separate project underway, being led by the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL) in collaboration with the UCLA library, to produce new high quality color photographs of St. Catherine's manuscripts. These initiatives will ensure that future generations will be able to access these cultural treasures that were once the reserved privilege of those who trekked across the barren desert sands.

Conversos

Leger Fernandez charts uniquely New Mexican path in Jewish community relations
While she's largely stayed out of the spotlight on Israel issues, the New Mexico congresswoman has been a leader in advocating for descendants of conversos



In early December, a small group gathered around a Zoom screen in a living room in Northwest Washington to hear from a perhaps unusual set of speakers — two officials from Givat Haviva, a nonprofit run by Israel's Kibbutz Federation, and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM), a first-term New Mexico congresswoman who has not been particularly outspoken on Israel issues during her time in office.

The event earlier this month, organized by Heart of a Nation, a pro-Israel group launched earlier this year by former longtime AIPAC official Jonathan Kessler to bring together progressive Americans, Israelis and Palestinians, appears to be one of Leger Fernandez's first forays into the national pro-Israel space.

The congresswoman's remarks focused primarily on her personal background and New Mexico's history of mixed indigenous, Spanish and Sephardi backgrounds and cultures.

Kinney Zalesne, a general manager of corporate strategy at Microsoft and member of Heart of a Nation's advisory committee, has been friends with Leger Fernandez since they served together as White House fellows in the mid '90s, and organized her appearance at the recent event. Zalesne told Jewish Insider that "it occurred to us that Teresa, in her role as chair of the House Subcommittee [for] Indigenous Peoples, could be such an interesting addition to this conversation."

Introducing the event, Kessler said that Leger Fernandez was "excited" about listening in on the conversation with the Givat Haviva speakers despite a busy vote schedule. "She said, 'I'm going to find a way to Zoom in... so that when I visit the region for the first time, I won't be interacting with strangers — I'll be interacting with friends,'" Kessler recalled.

Leger Fernandez did not respond to a request for comment.

Back home, the Jewish community in Leger Fernandez's Santa Fe-area district rallied behind her in last year's Democratic primary amid concerns about her more high-profile opponent, former CIA officer Valerie Plame. Plame faced scrutiny for sharing an article entitled "America's Jews Are Driving America's Wars," from a white nationalist website that promoted antisemitic views, defending that article as "very provocative, but thoughtful" and accepting campaign donations from an accused Holocaust denier. Local Jewish leaders said their relationship with the new congresswoman has remained solid in the year since she took office.

Ron Duncan Hart, the former president of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico, told JI that Leger Fernandez "identifies with the Jewish community" and "has close contacts within the Jewish community." He added that she has "expressed her support for Israel very clearly."

The freshman congresswoman's most prominent engagement with Jewish community issues has been in a niche deeply connected to New Mexico's history, as a vocal advocate for restored Spanish citizenship for descendants of Jews and conversos expelled from Spain during the Inquisition. Leger Fernandez's ancestors include Jews who fled Spain, and one relative was burned at the stake in Mexico City due to his religion.

Descendants of Sephardi Jews — both Jewish and non-Jewish — are a significant population within her district as well, and Leger Fernandez frequently emphasizes New Mexico's unique history of cultural "integration," noting in her Heart of a Nation speech, "in our cathedral we have the Star of David because the Jewish community helped construct the cathedral."

Spain's government announced in 2015 that it would grant citizenship to people of Sephardic Jewish descent, but rejections for citizenship applications have skyrocketed since a new socialist government took office in 2019, leading applicants and advocates to believe that the new government is attempting to backtrack on the citizenship policy. Leger Fernandez described the apparent backtrack as "antisemitic" at a recent Hanukkah event in her district.

In October, Leger Fernandez organized a letter to the president of Spain raising concerns about the rejections, joined by Sens. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Reps. Andy Levin (D-MI), Mike Levin (D-CA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Ritchie Torres (D-NY) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL). She has also raised the issue with the White House and the State Department and spoke at a rally in October outside the Spanish consulate in New York.

"When Spain offered the right of return, it meant a lot to my community. My friends, my community, they all applied," she said in her speech. "The broken promise of the noble gesture of reparation hurts more than if Spain had never made the offer of return in the first place. It's time for Spain to live up its promise to the many Sephardi Jews who have held onto the love of country and of people for centuries, despite unimaginable hardship."

According to Sarah Koplik, who leads the Sephardic Heritage Program at the Jewish Federations of New Mexico, which certifies the Sephardic heritage of applicants from around, around 40% of Leger Fernandez's district has crypto-Jewish heritage.

"Everybody is connected to somebody who used to be Jewish 400 years ago, 500 years ago," Koplik said. "Leger Fernandez was concerned that this program, which had such promise, was looking like it was falling apart." Activists who have worked with Leger Fernandez on this issue say she's personally passionate about it, and that it has become an important political issue in her district.

"Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez showed [an] incredible amount of leadership and interest in the issue," Koplik said. "She really cares about this issue. She really cares about the converso experience throughout the world... Why it's a political issue for her is because of her community and because of her constituents — so many of them have this heritage... This is a central issue because it crosses so many different communities and so many different parts of her constituency."

Jason Guberman, executive director of the New York-based American Sephardi Foundation, said her advocacy has been "very heartfelt."

Jesse Rojo, a leader within the Philos Project, a Christian Hispanic group that organized the New York City rally, said Leger Fernandez "felt... committed to this cause" both "personally" and on behalf of her constituents. "She decided to lead on this issue because she realized how damaging this could be, even for Spain's relationship with the U.S.," he added

Rabbi Nachum Ward-Lev, a former Santa Fe-area rabbi who taught Leger Fernandez in a course on the prophetic tradition prior to her congressional run, told JI he had conversations with her about Sephardi repatriation even before she took office.

"She was talking to me about learning and being very interested in the converso community in northern Mexico and Spanish citizenship," Ward-Lev said. "Just from being part of the community, she knew people and had friends or contacts — close friends — that brought her into awareness about the issue."

Guberman said Leger Fernandez's involvement has helped raise attention about the issue, noting that the second most popular newspaper in Spain ran an editorial about the government's seeming about-face after she spoke out. "Definitely having a congresswoman who's advocating for this has gotten their attention," Guberman said.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



As we approach International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27th, we remember the close to 87% of Greek Jewry annihilated by the Nazis, including the most ancient and unique Romaniote community. However, more than any other Jewish community, along with the unfathomable loss of human life in the Holocaust, much of the unique Romaniote tradition was also virtually wiped out, as volumes of literature, prayerbooks, ritual poetry and unique Romaniote customs were lost forever. The saving remnant of Romaniote Jewry, represented by mostly the communities in Ioannina and New York continues to make every effort to keep Romaniote rites and rituals alive, and G-d willing, will succeed as much as is humanly possible. However, perhaps no less interesting, and significant, is that the fact that the struggle to maintain Romaniote traditions goes back as far as the 15th century.

Until the expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492, the indigenous Greek Jewish population was the Romaniote community, dating back from the Byzantine Roman Empire, hence the name "Romaniote", but there is evidence that Jews were already in Greece during the time of Alexander the Great. Neither Ashkenazim nor Sephardim, and in fact to a large extent preceding both, Romaniote Jews were Greek-speaking and completely acculturated in Greek society, yet maintained their Jewish faith and even produced significant Jewish philosophical, Midrashic and Halachic literature over the centuries.

However, with the mass influx of Spanish and Portuguese Jews to Greece at the invitation of the leaders of the Ottoman Empire after the Spanish and Portuguese expulsions in 1492 and 1496, the indigenous Romaniote community was faced with significant and daunting changes. While welcoming and helping their exiled and traumatized Jewish brethren, including raising funds for the exiles at the time by the recognized Jewish leader in the Ottoman Empire, Rabbi Moses Capsali of Constantinople, tensions began early on as more and more Sephardic refugees arrived, whose customs and interpretations of Jewish law and lore were very different from Romaniote tradition. Furthermore, Romaniote rabbinical leaders were very concerned about what they perceived as lackadaisical religious observance among the exiles, with community leaders like Rabbi David Hachohen lamenting that some "never frequent the synagogue, preferring to immerse themselves in secular studies, and thereby forsaking eternal life", or Rabbi Elia Mizrahi, who criticized what he perceived as the religious and moral laxity of the newcomers, who used [Halachic] "legal subterfuge" to "allow themselves to keep their places of business open on the Sabbath and Festivals".

But the sheer numbers of Sephardic immigrants, including their own religious leadership and lifestyle, began to take its toll on the much smaller Romaniote community. Romaniote leaders understood the urgency of acting to preserve their traditions. One example of these efforts was the publication of the first Romaniote prayerbook in 1510, by Romaniote Rabbi Elia ben Binyamin Halevy, called "*Sefer Tefilot Hashana*" – "Order of Prayers for the Entire Year". This was followed by the publication in Venice in 1522-23, and Constantinople in 1574 in, of the Romaniote "*Mahzor Roumania*" for the Jewish festivals. Unique to this work were many prayers written in Greek and Judeo-Greek to make them more accessible to Greek Jews, whose command of Hebrew had waned. Likewise, "*Mahzor Roumania*" contained Judeo-Greek translations of the Biblical Books of Jonah, Ruth, and Lamentations, which were read in synagogue on Yom Kippur, Shavuot and the Fast of the Ninth of Av respectively.

The Romaniote rite was also unique in its frequent references to Jewish mysticism, which was not common in Sephardic prayerbooks at the time. And the *Mahzor* also contained numerous '*piyutim*' [ritual poems], totally unique to the Romaniote rite, and which to a large extent have been lost.

Yet despite hundreds of years of the challenge of preserving the Romaniote tradition, the efforts were obviously successful, evidenced by the very existence of autonomous Romaniote communities until World War II, especially in Ioannina and other Greek cities, and KJ in NY. No matter how small the community, Romaniote Jewry clearly managed to thrive for centuries and against all odds/ And though only a small remnant remains, we can only stand in awe as efforts continue on both sides of the Atlantic to keep the Romaniote tradition alive. May G-d help us succeed in these efforts, and the Romaniote tradition be revived, celebrated, and perpetuated by future generations.



Rabbi Marc D. Angel
Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals
Perashah of the Week – Shemot

What is Your Name?

When I was a student at Yeshiva College many years ago, I saw a passage scribbled onto a subway wall at the IRT 181st Street station. That passage had a big impact on me then, and continues to be important to me so many years later. The passage was a quotation from Alan Watts: "For when man no longer confuses himself with the definition of himself that others have given him, he is at once universal and unique."

It is so easy to confuse ourselves with definitions of ourselves given to us by others. People may stereotype us, may impose their standards on us, may treat us as "things" rather than as autonomous human beings. They may judge us based on our religion or race, on our political views; they may see us as "the other" without ever bothering to see who we really are. When we are constantly being dehumanized or stereotyped by others, it is all too possible for us to internalize the external definitions of ourselves imposed on us by friends and foes alike.

The Torah portion relates that Pharaoh feared the growing numbers of Israelites in Egypt, and he decided to enslave them and to have their male children murdered. Rabbi Hayyim Angel has pointed out that the Torah conspicuously avoids mentioning the names of any Israelites or Egyptians--except for Shifra and Puah-- from the time Joseph died until the birth of Moses. (Pharaoh is a title, not a personal name.) People--both Egyptians and Israelites--had become nameless "things"--oppressors and oppressed, masters and slaves. When humans are reduced to "things", then both the oppressor and oppressed are dehumanized; they internalize false ideas about who they are and about their true worth as human beings.

To be universal and unique--to be who we really are--we need to develop a strong inner life that enables us to resist becoming victims of dehumanization. Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, who had been a Jewish prisoner in a German concentration camp, wrote that the prisoners feared not only for their physical lives; they feared that they would come to see themselves as the Nazis saw them--as animals. "The main problem is to remain alive and unchanged...the more absolute the tyranny, the more debilitated the subject." A Midrash (Tanhuma, Vayakhel) teaches that each person has three names: the name given by parents, the name given by fellow human beings, and the name which one acquires for him/herself.

The name given by parents represents their hopes for the child. The name may link the child to an ancestor; or may be something untraditional. This name reflects the parent's values and traditions. Each of us is shaped by the name our parents gave us. This is good and valuable for us, but should not be allowed to undermine our own individual freedom and choices. Parents should give us roots; but also wings. The name given to us by fellow human beings represents our reputation in our community and world. The name might tend to idealize us or to demonize us; it might be true to who we are, or it might be a total misreading of who we are by people who do not know us or understand us.

If we live our lives by the definitions given to us by others, we live a life of shadows and illusions. These first two names are given to us by others. The third name, though, is what we acquire for ourselves. This name draws on what we have learned from parents and fellow human beings; but its ultimate source is our own individual minds and souls. Inside of each of us is our own "name", our own real being. This is who we really are when we rise above externally imposed definitions of ourselves. Throughout our lifetimes, we learn--we grow--we strive. We are each a work of art in progress.

We derive strength and inspiration from many sources. We are accosted and dehumanized by unpleasant and hateful people. If we are to develop the full potential of our lives, we need to focus on the name we acquire for ourselves--our true selves. We need to foster the inner strength and wisdom to be universal and unique. We need to answer the question: what is your name?

This Weekly Parasha is a feature of the weekly Angel for Shabbat column of www.jewishideas.org

Christmas lights - Brought to you by a Jew from the Muslim world! (No joke!)

By Devin Naar

Born in 1901 in the Dardanelles, then part of the Ottoman Empire, Albert Sadacca came to the United States as a boy with his family around 1910; they settled on the Lower East Side (Delancey Street) and then in Harlem (114th Street). Like many other Sephardic Jews from the Ottoman Empire in New York, the Sadaccas got involved in the ice cream business (one of my grandfather's own cousins had the first ice cream truck in New Brunswick, NJ!), and then from there, into the novelty business.

A bunch of other Ottoman Jews found employment in electric battery and flashlight factories in New York, one of the few industries that would hire recently arrived "Oriental" Jewish immigrants from the Ottoman Empire. But that does not mean work conditions were good. In fact, the first major strike in the electric battery industry in NYC was organized by Ottoman Jews in 1916.

In the wake of this strike, young Albert Sadacca combined two elements from the world of Ottoman Jewish business and labor in New York: in 1917, after reading about a terrible fire caused by candles in a Christmas celebration, Albert decided a safer way to light up a Christmas tree would be to sell ornamental lights operated by electric batteries strung together on strings. He then introduced different colored electric lights and the idea took off. He soon established NOMA Lites, which remained the biggest manufacturer of Christmas lights through the 1960s.

The Star-Phoenix
Albert Sadacca: man who lit up Christmas
By DONALD A. JOHNSON
The first had a somewhat...
The only break in his high...
In fact, the lights have...
Sadacca is still president...

Already in the 1920s, as revealed in New York court documents, several of the major manufacturers of Christmas lights were Ottoman Jews - not only Sadacca, but also Penso and Barocas--typical Sephardic surnames.

But something else also happened in the 1920s that helps explain why Albert Sadacca's Jewish and Ottoman origins have been completely erased from the record. Look him up online, and you will find no trace of them. This syndicated piece from Newsweek, 1970, refers to him as an immigrant from Madrid and other sources refer to him as a "Spanish immigrant." What happened?

Sadacca became the target of a scandal in the 1920s involving one of his female employees, with whom he had an affair. Unfortunately, there was nothing unusual about that except for how it was portrayed in the media. The press jumped on Sadacca's identity as a "Turk" and employed all of the worst orientalist tropes, claiming that Sadacca was running a "harem" from his hotel room, fitted with "lavish Turkish furnishings." One article opened: "No passionate oriental kisses will feature [in] the sequel to the Turkish romance of Albert V. Sadacca, rich electrical supply dealer..."

In his defense, Sadacca, like many other Ottoman Jews in the US seeking the escape being pigeonholed by orientalist imagery as "Terrible Turks," argued that he was not at all "Turkish," but rather "Spanish." He could make this move based on his identity as a Sephardic Jew, his distant Iberian family origins, and the fact that he spoke "Spanish" (Judeo-Spanish, aka Ladino) as his native tongue. He invented Madrid as his birthplace and eventually the scandal abated, so much so that decades later, in the Newsweek piece in 1970, it was not even mentioned.

As you enjoy the Christmas lights in your home or around town, recall the Jewish man born in the Muslim world who made them possible. Also consider the orientalism, racism, and xenophobia that Sephardic Jews confronted in the US, and which compelled Albert Sadacca to hide or fudge his true identity for essentially his entire professional life in order to "make it" in America.

Accomplishments of Our Romaniote and Sephardic Community

Meet Josiah Benator, a WWII veteran who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, which began December 16, 1944. Benator was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1922 to a Sephardic Jewish family from the Greek island of Rhodes. He joined the BSA in 1934 and worked his way up to the rank of Eagle Scout. After receiving his engineering degree in 1943, Benator was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he served as First Lieutenant in the 20th Armored Infantry Battalion, 10th Armored Division. He has received numerous awards and honors for his service, including the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal. When Benator returned to Atlanta after the war, he became the Scoutmaster for Or VeShalom Synagogue Troop 73. Over the past 70 years, 53 of his scouts have become Eagle Scouts, something only 4% of Boy Scouts achieve! He has mentored several generations and helped shaped the lives of countless individuals. Thank you, Mr. Benator, for your service and dedication.



Sadis Matalon, Ph.D., Dr.Sc. (Hon.), FAPS, Distinguished Professor and Alice McNeal Endowed Chair in the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine, is the senior faculty winner of the 2021 Dean's Excellence Award in Research.

Matalon was born in Athens, Greece, and came to the United States in 1966 as an undergraduate Fulbright Scholar, earning his degree in physics from Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He earned both his master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota; his research exploring novel treatments for lung disease has been continuously funded by the NIH since 1978. In 1987, he received an American Lung Association Career Investigator Award, which he used to study the role of an artificial version of a substance in the lungs—pulmonary surfactant—in repairing severe lung injury. Matalon also received a MERIT from the National Institute of Health for his studies to understand the mechanisms by which viruses damage the lungs.

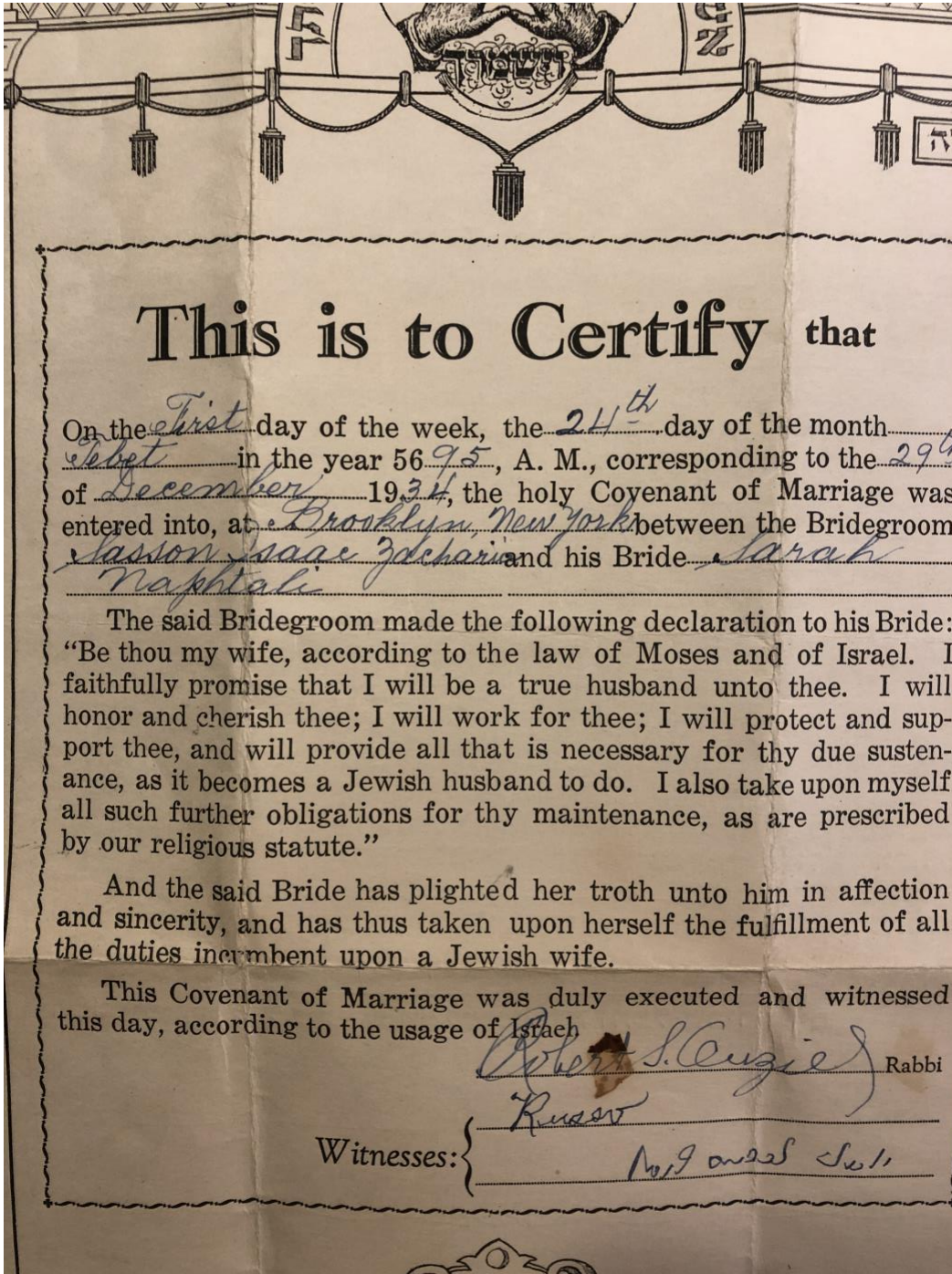


Throughout his 34 years at UAB, Matalon has tirelessly showcased his dedication to his research and the department. He serves as the vice chair and director of the Division of Molecular and Translational Biomedicine and is also the founding director of the UAB Pulmonary Injury and Repair Center in the School of Medicine. Previously, he was the associate editor of *News in Physiological Sciences* (1997–2003) and associate editor and deputy editor of the *American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology* (2003–2011). He has been a member of the American Physiological Society since 1975 and has served on the editorial board of *AJP-Lung* since 1994. His success as a distinguished researcher culminated in him being named editor-in-chief of *AJP-Lung* (2012–2018) and editor-in-chief of *Physiological Reviews* (2018–2023). He has published more than 280 articles in peer-reviewed journals and received two honorary Doctor of Science degrees from the University of Thessaly and the University of Athens, Greece.

"This award celebrates a story of a distinguished life of science and a remarkable contribution that spans five decades," said Dan E. Berkowitz, MB BCH, chair of the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine. "This award also celebrates a career of collaboration, devotion, and dedication to students and mentees. It is this intellectual curiosity, grit, mentorship, and lifelong learning and hard work that define Dr. Matalon. There is no one that I believe is more deserving of this award than he."

Looking for Our Help

Linda Matza Silverman (from the Naftali and Matza families) found this ketuba among her late mother's possessions and would like to return it to its rightful owner. It is the ketuba of Sarah Naftali and Sason Zacharia. We know that they had four sons (Irwin, Eli, Alvin and Richard) and lived in the Five Towns. If you have contact info for any of these men, contact us at museum@kkjism.org



Recipe: Bimuelos

Sephardic Pumpkin Donuts Recipe (Bimuelos de Kalavasa)

By Susan Barocas

It's just not Hanukkah in a Sephardic home without bimuelos, which are sweet, donut-like fritters. Like Hanukkah itself, there are many different spelling variations of the name including bumuelos, birmuelos, burmuelos and, in Latin America, buñuelos. During Passover, the flour in bimuelos is replaced with matzah meal making them a dessert that rises to the unleavened occasion.

Because Hanukkah this year is again a version of Thanksgivukkah with the two holidays only four days apart, it seems right to make bumuelos de kalavasa — pumpkin in Ladino. In fact, pumpkin has long been a favorite ingredient in Sephardic cooking.

These one-bowl, easy-to-make bimuelos de kalavasa double in size without any yeast. I've added the Syrian flavors of allspice and coriander along with the cinnamon of sweeter Turkish and Greek versions. When you drop the batter in the oil, don't worry about the shape. They are meant to be a free-form and individualistic. Bimuelos are best served warm, drizzled with warm honey, maple syrup or silan (date syrup), or dusted with a healthy coating of confectioner's sugar.

Notes: This recipe calls for canned pumpkin, not pumpkin pie filling. The fried bimuelos can be kept warm in a 200-degree oven for up to 30 minutes on top of the wire cooling racks on the baking sheets.

Ingredients

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp sugar
2 tsp baking powder
2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp coriander
1/4 tsp allspice
Couple pinches of salt
2 eggs, beaten
1 1/4 cup pumpkin puree
3 cups good vegetable oil with high smoke point for frying (avocado, sunflower, safflower, peanut)
Warm honey, maple syrup, date syrup and/or powdered sugar for serving

Directions

Prepare one or two large baking sheets by covering them with brown paper (cut up from a shopping bag) or paper towel. Place cooling racks over the paper-covered pans and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients. Add the pumpkin and beaten eggs, mixing well with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until smooth.

In an 11- or 12-inch skillet, heat oil over medium heat for about 6-7 minutes. The oil should be about 1/2 inch deep and is ready at 325 degrees or when a couple drops of water jump when they hit the oil.

Use two tablespoons, one to scoop even amounts of batter and one to gently help drop it into the hot oil. Add the bimuelos in a single layer, about 6 or 7 at a time, not crowding the pan as they double in size as they.

Leave undisturbed for 90 seconds to 2 minutes per side, depending on the size of the bimuelos, flipping only once using a tongs or a pair of chopsticks. Each patty should be deeply golden brown all over, crispy on the outside and soft, but cooked through, on the inside. Drain well on the prepared baking sheets.

Best when served immediately, drizzled with warm honey, maple syrup or date syrup (*silan*) or sprinkled with powdered sugar. Alternatively, the choice of syrups can be passed for people to dip and drizzle themselves.

Kehila Kedosha Janina – Appeal for Donors

Kehila Kedosha Janina is in need of a new Memorial Board for our memorial plaques. Most of our boards have been sponsored by a family and we would love this tradition to continue. The cost of the Board, including installation and a special family inscription along the bottom, is \$11,000. If you are interested in having a Memorial Board commissioned in honor of your family, please contact us at museum@kkjasm.org



Photo of the Month

On November 29, 2021, the grandchildren and other descendants of Rosina and Elias Saporta, gathered in Florida for a reunion. What was amazing about this reunion was that there were 3 children born to Lydia (Saporta) and Morris Vitoulis, and they are all over the age of 91 years old and doing well. Some of their children and other cousins came for the reunion. We did an oral interview of their memories, the next day. A good time was had by all.



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

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

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

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



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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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Website: www.kkjsm.org

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