August 2013 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

We wish our friends a Happy and Healthy New Year surrounded by family and friends. May 5774 bring peace throughout the world. May we continue to grow and flourish. May our wealth be counted, not in material possessions but, rather, in the love of family, friends and community. L’Shanah Tovah, Xronia Polla, Anos Muchos y Buenos. Attached to this e-newsletter you will find our Holiday schedule. Do join us for services. Our seats are free and our hearts are open.
This newsletter, our 67th, will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. In addition, we will cover news from our new friends in Bulgaria, Skopje and Bitola. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website (www.kkjsm.org).

We now reach close to 6000 households worldwide, with our community of ‘friends’ continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (papusoup@mindspring.com) so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher foods) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

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Passings

It is with great sadness that we report the passings of the following:

Leo Mallah (born December 15, 1928 in Salonika) passed away on Tuesday, June 25, 2013 in Queens New York. Leo was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. Our condolences to his family.

Essie Ezratty, wife of Albert, daughter-in-law of Sarah Ezratty, past president of Sisterhood. Our sincere condolences to her family.

Albert Pinhas, son of the late Julia (past president of Sisterhood) and Irving Pinhas, (very generous supporter of the Sephardic Synagogue of Forest Hills and The Sephardic Home). Our sincere condolences to his family

It is with great sorrow that we report the passing of Vic (David) Cabillis. Vic was a personal friend, a supporter of our museum and a true Pasha in every sense of the word. Vic’s family came from Ioannina (Eliezer and Cabillis) but he lived his whole life in the Bronx, originally part of the early Yanniote presence in the borough. Vic is survived by his loving sister, Shirlee Paganetti, his children (Marc, Jody and Leonora) and his grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Vic served his country in the US Navy during WWII and his funerual included an honorary Navy guard.
Wellwood cemetery, Framingdale NY, July 23, 2013

Cabillis family (circa 1934): Vic is standing next to his mother Eva on the left

For a beautiful tribute to Vic, see: http://tykos-wassupthisweek.blogspot.com/2013/07/in-memoriam-vic-cabillis-december-9.html?showComment=1374504523842&m=1
It is with great joy that we wish our dear friend Ralph Battino a happy birthday. Ralph will be 94 on August 5th and is always the first to get up on the dance floor. Happy Birthday Pasha. Xronia Polla and ola Kala.

Battino family (circa 1924). Ralph is standing on the right.

Ralph served his country in WWII

With Maxie Nachmias at a Pasha reunion
We apologize for our appearance during our extensive restoration of our basement (communal room). We were privileged to receive a generous bequest from the estate of Ada Finifter of Blessed Memory. Ada’s grandfather (Leon Colchamiro) was one of the founders of Kehila Kodosha Janina. During our restoration we have been unable to have regular programming but, on completion (estimated sometime in October), we will rededicate our synagogue and have a full schedule of fascinating programs, making use of our new educational facilities and state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, all part of our new Ada Finifter Educational Center.

July 10, 2013
19th century wall uncovered
July 31, 2013

Our synagogue is open for services during the restoration and the museum is open every Sunday from 11-4.

Visitors continue to flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

The “Victorias” from the Confino apartment at the Tenement Museum come to Kehila Kedosha Janina for a discussion of Sephardic Jewish life on the Lower East Side and to learn about Victoria’s life in pre-1913 Kastoria.

Rick Levy and Family visit
Past Events on the Lower East Side

We are a community here on the Lower East Side and love to join in celebrations with others in our extended family. On Sunday, July 28th, we attended a celebration at the Stanton Street Synagogue, founded in 1913 from Brzezany in Galicia. For more information about Stanton, see their website at http://www.stantonstshul.com/

Mazalot are a Jewish Zodiac rendition.

Jonathan Boyarin presented

Stanton Street Shul at 180 Stanton Street

On July 31st, Mick Doyle of Acheson Doyle Partners Architects gave a behind-the-scenes tour of Saint Brigid’s Church, 123 Avenue B. This historic church was saved from the wrecking ball and restored to the great delight of its parishioners and the surrounding community. Mr. Doyle shared his experience as an integral part of this successful example of historic preservation, and was joined by representatives from the church and the restoration contractor.

St. Brigid's was built in 1848 and served a diverse working-class immigrant population until 2001, when it was closed due to structural problems. In 2006 demolition began, but an anonymous $20 million gift in 2008 led to the restoration we see today.
Upcoming Events on the Lower East Side

Jazz Age Klezmer with the Dave Levitt Trio
Wednesday, August 7 at 7 pm
Eldridge Street Synagogue
12 Eldridge Street, NYC, NY 10002

Wear jazz-age attire and receive $5 off the ticket price!

The *Dave Levitt Trio* will fill the landmark Eldridge Street Synagogue with the Jazz Age sounds of klezmer’s American roots at a special summer concert. Enjoy classics from the 1920s and 1930s, including *freilachs*, joyful music played at Jewish celebrations, and Yiddish theater songs. With Mike Cohen on clarinet, Christina Chowder on accordion and Dave Levitt on trombone.

Beer and wine will be sold.

* + RSVP now - $20 adults; $15 seniors & students
Please Save the Date: Saturday, September 7th, 2013; 6 - 8 pm
Robert Indiana: A to Z
at the Woodward Gallery September 7 - October 26, 2013
>click for more info

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**News from Jewish Greece**

Interesting documents concerning the Jews of Thessaloniki, mainly during the period of the Occupation, from the archives of one of the municipal collections.

http://palaiabiblia.blogspot.ch/

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**Vandalism of Jewish Cemetery in Kos**

We are saddened to report the vandalism of the Jewish cemetery on the island of Kos. A number of the few remaining tombstones were severely damaged.

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**Interesting article from Yakov Schiby**

- **Yakov Schiby** The Jewish Heritage in Greece
  Το 1492 οι Εβραίοι από την Ισπανία και όλη την Ιβηρική χερσόνησο διώχτηκαν, και άρχισαν να καταυθάνουν κατά κύματα στην οθωμανική επικράτεια. Εγκαταστάθηκαν, κυρίως, σε μεγάλες και
εμπορικές πόλεις: Θεσσαλονίκη, Κωνσταντινούπολη, Ανδριανούπολη, αργότερα Σµύρνη κτλ. Όµως η συνάντησή τους με τις εβραϊκές ρωµανιώτικες κοινότητες δεν ήταν εύκολη. Φαίνεται πως και οι σεφαραντί Εβραίοι δεν ήταν εύκολη κοινότητα και αν πιστέψουμε τις πηγές θεωρούσαν τους εαυτούς τους ανώτερους πολιτισμικά από τους "γηγενείς" Εβραίους. Οι ρωµανιώτες ραβίνιοι της Κωνσταντινούπολης Καψάλη, Μιζράχι, έκαναν το παν για να διευκολύνουν τους νέους μετανάστες. Φαίνεται όµως πως οι αντιπαραθέσεις μεταξύ τους ήταν πολλές. Οι Σεφαραντί έκαναν κάθε προσπάθεια να επιβάλουν την δική τους κουλτούρα πάνω στους παλιούς εβραίους κατοίκους της αυτοκρατορίας.

Δεν ξέρω αν η Πεντάτευχος που τυπώθηκε στην Κωνσταντινούπολη έχει καµµιά σχέση µε την διαδικασία συµφιλίωσης. Πάντως το 1547 εκδόθηκε, αυτό που σήµερα ονοµάζουµε η Πολυγλώττα της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Πρόκειται για µια πολυτελέστατη πεντάτευχο τυπωµένη σε τρεις γλώσσες, στην µέση την εβραϊκή από την δεξιά πλευρά µετάφραση σε δηµοτική ελληνική και από την αριστερή πλευρά µετάφραση στα ισπανοεβραϊκά (σπανιολίτ, λαντίνο). Όλα µε εβραϊκούς χαρακτήρες. Τα υπόλοιπα είναι ερµηνείς διαφορών ερµηνευτών. Τελικά, παρά τις προσπάθειες συµφιλίωσης κατάφεραν οι ισπανοεβραϊοί να επικρατήσουν στις µεγάλες πόλεις.

In 1492 the Jews from Spain and the Iberian peninsula were driven out, and began to arrive in droves in Ottoman territories. They settled mainly in large and commercial cities: Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Izmir, Andrianoupolis, etc. The encounter with the Romaniote Jewish communities was not easy. It seems that the Sefardic Jewish community was not easy to get along with and, if you believe the contemporary sources, considered themselves culturally superior from the "native" Jews. The Romaniote rabbis of Mizrachi, Constantinople and Kapsali, did everything to make it easier for new Sephardic immigrants, but it seems that the controversies between them were many. The Sefardim made every attempt to impose their own culture on the Jewish population of the old empire.

I don't know if the Pentateuch printed in Istanbul has any relation to the reconciliation process, however, in 1547 what we now call the Polyglotta (many languages) of Constantinople was published. This is a luxurious Pentateuch printed in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). All of the languages are written with Hebrew characters. Eventually, despite attempts at reconciliation, Judeo-Spanish dominated in the larger cities.
Reunion of Mizan family in Larissa. Mimis Mizan worked for 1½ years gathering names of relatives to invite to the reunion. Samuel and Zinis Mizan had seven children who scattered to the four corners of the world. Some of the descendants became victims of the Holocaust but over 100 managed to gather in Larissa for the reunion. They came from Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Israel, England, the United States and Johannesburg in South Africa.

Many said that they would return to Greece λυσόρισμα στ, now that they realize the importance of their Greek roots and how they are part of a large family.

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Joint Distribution Committee to Help Greek Jews

From the CEO: JDC Stands with Greece's Jewish Community

Of all the countries plagued by Europe’s economic crisis, Greece has stood out in the headlines. After five years of economic contraction, the country continues to buckle under bailout-imposed austerity measures, plunging living standards, and soaring unemployment rates. Add to that political extremism and social unrest and one understands why this ancient nation has been exposed to the global spotlight. Under those circumstances, I travelled to Athens three weeks ago and found the city’s 3,000-member Jewish community—like all of Greece—struggling, but determined to forge ahead. As many of you well know, JDC, with Jewish Federations of North America support, has been leading a global consortium of Jewish organizations, communities, and philanthropists who’ve extended help to this financially strapped community over the past two years.

And while my visit was in many ways a statement of solidarity, bolstered by a JDC Board mission that took place just a few days before, I believe our presence in Athens was even more poignant because it provided insight into the juxtaposition between the crippling challenges besetting Greece and a Jewish community proudly weathering that storm.

Knowing the extent of the difficulties they’ve endured, I was truly inspired by the expressions of areivut—of mutual responsibility—and love of community that I found in my meetings with Athens Jewish Community President Dr. Benny Albalas, President-Elect Minos Moissis, and other Jewish leaders.

This special group included three engineers (all Technion graduates, interestingly enough), a veterinarian, a family business owner, and a real estate developer. They shared with me the extent of the crisis’ impact and its personal repercussions, with one confiding that his net disposable income has dropped 65 percent in the last two years.
They noted how community members have gone from being donors to beneficiaries in the blink of an eye. And how some community members’ grown children are leaving because of a young adult unemployment rate of 57 percent.

As I learned from them and in my subsequent meeting with US Ambassador Daniel B. Smith, wages, pensions, and salaries are down 40 percent; some 30-35 percent of Athens’ stores have closed; and plummeting rents have cut deeply into the community’s primary income source, even as taxes on that income have gone from zero to 23 percent.

To address the needs born out of such a crisis, we’ve done a lot of work together over two years. We’ve ensured a robust program of rent subsidies, food provision, and critically needed school scholarships for the most vulnerable families, many of whom lost businesses, jobs, and property. And to keep Greek Jewish youth involved with their peers throughout Europe, we held our annual Gesher Regional Young Leaders' Institute in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, once referred to as the "Mother of Israel" because of its long Jewish history and unique culture.

For the Athens Jewish community – which operates two synagogues, a day school for some 150 children, a welfare program, a home for the elderly, a JCC, a Holocaust memorial, and more – our response means more than any of us can imagine.

*Board member Etta Zimmerman captured that sentiment in her reflections on the visit: “In all of my years of travelling with the JDC, I never saw a more wounded community ... nor one more grateful for whatever help we have given. The community is proud and wants to return to self-sufficiency sooner rather than later.”*

Indeed, it was only with great reluctance that this community looked outward for assistance. And yet, as I toured the school strengthened by our scholarship assistance, the spirit of that help and the community’s gusto for Jewish life was uplifting. And our Board members were moved, too, impressed by the passionate volunteers, committed teachers, and smiling, enthusiastic students they met.

There were 142 kids enrolled in the day school this year, 75 percent of the community’s pre-K through 8th grade population—the highest enrollment rate in Europe today! And that in a country where almost 90 percent of the Jews perished during the Holocaust and where today, the right-wing Golden Dawn party engages in verbal attacks against Jews while increasing its political strength.

Rest assured, it is their extraordinary fortitude and headstrong love for their Jewish identity that together enable this community to overcome what seems an endless string of bad news for their country.

Once again – as we did 15 years ago in Argentina, and as we are doing today in Bulgaria and the Baltics – JDC has come to the aid of a Jewish community in distress.

But it’s not the historic interventions we should applaud, or the life-saving care we’ve made possible.

**It is the Greek Jewish community’s continued celebration of Jewish life and their stalwart determination to recover that we should all take tremendous pride in. And for that, we should thank them.**

Source: Alan H. Gill, *JDC Field Blog*, 03.07.2013
Commemoration of the Holocaust in Rhodes

The Jews of Rhodes were rounded up on July 23, 1944 and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This year, as always, the Jewish community of Rhodes stops and remembers.

News from Greece

For a second day, on July 28th, fire services on the islands of Rhodes, Crete and Serifos were battling large fires during the height of the summer tourist season.

In Rhodes, the fire was burning out of control and moving northward with wind changes, heading in the direction of the village of Vati, as well as Apolakkia, while there were also fires at the villages Profilia, Istrio and Laerma, which are under control.

According to the preliminary estimation of the forest inspection, the fire service and the Region of Southern Aegean, more than 30,000 acres of forest land have been incinerated since the outbreak of the fire but crews said they hoped to have it under control by the end of July 28. The General Secretary for Civil Protection has declared a state of emergency in Municipal Units of South Rhodes and Lindos, following the recommendation of the Regional Governor of Southern Aegean, as the fire threatened inhabited areas.

In Crete, while the fire in the wider area of Pombia in Messara, Municipality of Faistos, was under partial control in the morning, later in the day it flared up again with wind changes. The assistance of two helicopters was required in order to prevent the fire from expanding. The fire burned greenhouses and crops and threatened houses, as it reached their yards. The bells in the village of Andiskari rang, in order to evacuate the residents, while the settlement of Pigaidakia was also threatened.

The situation in Serifos was said to be better although the fire continued, although images showed how serious it was at one point when it seemed to threaten more destruction. Residents and swimmers in the region of Mega Livadi evacuated by boat because the fire had blocked off the main road in the area.

The settlements of Koutalas and Mega Livadi were also evacuated, while according to information, the fire burned a house and an old administrative office. The fire on Serifos began on July 25 and proved difficult to contain.
Greek Grafitti

For those who visit Greece and complain about the graffiti, this may put a whole new perspective on the subject. It appears that, along with democracy, the Greeks may also have invented graffiti!

22 Jul 2013
A rich Greek graffiti collection dating back to the second and fourth century AD has been found in the İzmir (Greek Smyrna) agora during excavation work in the area.

The graffiti shows daily life in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Experts have described the find as the richest Greek graffiti collection in the world.

Besides writing and paintings there are also dozens of carvings on the wall. The writings on the wall mention the names of different cities, showing the citizens communicated with neighboring countries or travelled extensively and showed tolerance to other cultures.

There are many different figures in the graffiti, from trade ships to gladiators. There are also confessions. One mystery person writes 'I love someone who does not love me', while others thank the gods for their good fortune - 'The gods healed my eyes, this is why I dedicate an oil lamp to the gods.'

There are also early signs of the influence of Christianity, with an inscription that says 'The one who ensouls', symbolizing Jesus Christ.

There are also riddles that have not yet been solved on the walls. Professor Cumhur Tanriver said Smyrna is one of the most extensive areas for Greek graffiti and talks are underway to properly preserve the sites.
"There are some pieces of graffiti under the plaster as well that we cannot prepare yet. We are having talks with Swiss experts to uncover them without damaging the ones on the top layer."

Shalom to one and all!

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel

The Hebrew month of Elul will begin on August 6th this year, ushering us into a 40-day long spiritually charged period of individual and collective introspection, repentance toward God and our fellow man, penitence and prayer. And while this special season culminates in the awe inspiring and somewhat frightening "Days of Awe", more commonly known as the "High Holy Days" of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it begins on Rosh Hodesh Elul with the recitation of "Selihot"—special penitential prayers – among all Sephardic communities.

The recitation of such penitential prayers before the High Holy Days goes back hundreds of years. The Sephardic custom of beginning for a full month before Rosh Hashanah is based on the Biblical narrative of Moses going up to Mount Sinai to receive the second set of the "Ten Commandments". According to Jewish tradition, after the debacle of the Golden Calf and Moses' breaking the original tablets of stone out of anger and rage at this brazen and open form of idol worship, he was called back by God on the first day of the 12th month (Elul) for another 40 days, descending the mountain with the new tablets on the 10th day of the first month (Tishrei), or Yom Kippur, when God finally forgave the Israelites for the sin of the Golden Calf.

And while there are often differences in local custom even amongst Sephardic communities, the experience of saying "Selihot" was universal. Based on Jewish and mystical traditions of the nighttime being especially suited for asking for forgiveness and spiritual introspection, almost every community saw people being awakened by a knock on their door during the wee-hours of the morning by the synagogue "beadle" as he called out "selihot; selihot". Coming together at 2 or 3 in the morning, the chanting and singing of ancient and beautifully poetic penitential prayers would begin. Given the early hour and lengthy service, it was also very common to serve hot tea or coffee, which both helped keep people awake and contributed to the special atmosphere of these special prayers, which mainly focused on asking God to forgive our sins, despite the fact that we are unworthy of such mercy and kindness.

Of course, this custom continued wherever Jews lived, and most of us can only imagine what KKJ must have been like during "selihot" in its more glorious days when the entire neighborhood teemed with Jews. In fact, the congregation would have stood out in this regard, because the more numerous Ashkenazi synagogues only began selihot much later in the month. And what an inspiration it must have been as the hazzan and congregants recited these special prayers together, in the serenity and quiet of the night in a spirit of true camaraderie and community.

And so it is today: Sephardic communities all over the world continue this tradition, though changing neighborhoods, lifestyles, and Jewish migration have taken their toll, often making it virtually impossible to have daily selihot services altogether, never mind before dawn! In fact, most congregations have ceased waking people up in the middle of the night to say selihot, and prefer to choose more convenient times, like just before morning prayers. But no matter when
Requests for our help

Dear Marcia,

Attached is a photograph of my wife’s great great grandfather, Raffaele Vita (Haim) Battino taken with his wife, children and grandchildren.

We don’t know when this picture was taken but we believe that it was some great family occasion. The only date we have is for the death of his wife, Benedetta Ferro who died on October 24, 1906.

The girl at the bottom left of the picture is my wife’s grandmother, Rose, who married her uncle (mother’s brother), Raffaele Dente, top row 4th from left.

We know that the Battinos came from Ioanina but don’t know when. The only other document that we have is a copy of the 1858 naturalization certificate of Mordocai Batino, written in Greek and English, when he became a citizen of the "United States of the Ionian Islands". He is described as a silk manufacturer of Arta.

The name Battino appears quite regularly in your newsletter - the latest being the passing of Marvin Cohen, a great grandson of Rebecca Battino. I would be really grateful if any of your readers have any information about our Battino family which may help us to trace our family history further.

Len Brown
While in Greece this past June and July, we had as part of our group Leon Weintraub. Leon’s mother of Blessed memory was a Colchamiro. His grandfather was Leon Colchamiro of Blessed Memory. Leon Weintraub is the brother of Ada Finifter of Blessed Memory. It is due to the generous bequest of Ada that we are able to do what we are now doing in KKJ’s downstairs communal room. When we visited the Jewish Museum in Athens, Leon “met” his cousin (Salvator Bakola of Blessed Memory) for the first time. The only one of Leon Colchamiro’s siblings to remain in Greece was his sister Dinoula who died before the Holocaust. She had married Ezra Bakola. Her grandson, Salvator Bakola is honored in the Jewish Museum’s excellent exhibit on Greek Jews in the Resistance. The resemblance between Leon Weintraub and Salvator was uncanny. In Ada’s honor we publish these photos.

Salvator Bakola

Leon Weintraub standing alongside the names of his Bakola relatives who perished in the Holocaust.

Website to enjoy

Renée Molho - A Bookstore in Six Chapters | centropa.org
www.centropa.org
Renée Molho - A Bookstore in Six Chapters
We are continually looking for photos from the Lower East Side from the Greek Jewish world (both Romaniote and Sephardic). We would love family photos, street scenes, store fronts of shops owned by Greek Jews. Send them to us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

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) 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.

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11-4 and, by appointment during the week.