

IN HONOR OR MEMORY

Since our last newsletter, donations were made in honor or memory of the following people:

David & Esther Abraham, Ezra & Mollie Askinazi, Joseph Askinazi, Sylvia Assael, Julia Asser, Manny Asser, Ralph Battino, Ester Benjamin, Yessoula Besso, Larry Blecker, Ben Bryton, Moise Calderon, Mollie Cohen Feldman, Deanna Cohen-Marcus, Colchamiro Family, Elias & Speranza Colchamiro, Leon Colchamiro, Morris & Esther Colchamiro, Eliot DeCastro, Simon Elias, Rebecca Eliasof Kailo, Jesse & Dorothy Elison (Colchamiro), Hy Genee, Dora Gessula, Gene Golumbek, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, Annete Joseph, Ezra Joseph, Max Joseph, Anna Raphael Koebler, Seth Kofinas, Leon Lafazan, Thelma Levy, Leab Mathbios, Sylvia Meller, Al Moses, William & Mollie Nachmias, Lucille & Abe Naphtali, Joseph Negrin, Mr. & Mrs. David Reis, Esther & Elisba Russo, Jean Saltsman Colchamiro, Rachel Sama, Molly & Sam Solomon, Esther Talbi, Rachel Levy-Weinberg, Esther Yobanan, Joseph Yobanan.

SPECIAL THANKS: We wish to also acknowledge a special donation by William Sabba in memory of his parents, Mollie and Morris, and an exceedingly generous donation by Rabbi Marc Angel of Shearith Israel in honor of our President, Marvin Marcus.

A special thank you to the Besca Family for their generous donation of a new parochet and bema cover in memory and honor of their beloved father.

PASSINGS

It is with sadness that we note the passing of these special Yanniotes and family members of Yanniotes: **Joseph Askinazi**, father of our webmaster, Maurice; **Eva Chizek** of the Isaac Family; **Chrysoula Kalef-Ezra**, the mother of the Vice President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, John; **Bobby Gabrilides** of Athens, husband of Karolina Gabrilides; **Dora Gessula**, mother of Annette Shaw and Leon Gessula; **Gene Golumbek**, husband of Holly Kaye; **Pearl Hametz** and **Henry Isaac**.

We apologize for errors in our last issue. **Eli Zagba**'s name was misspelled, and there was the unfortunate omission of **Larry Blecker**, husband of Alice.

RECIPE FOR WATERMELON RIND DESSERT

We had many, many responses for our request for watermelon rind recipes, printed in our last issue of *The Romaniote*. It is our pleasure to offer the family recipe of Jeff Mordos' mother, Mathilda Mordos of Blessed Memory, as given to us by his wife, Audrey. This recipe is from Preveza. Mollie Cohen (past President of The Sisterhood of Janina) is offering her traditional Yanniote recipe (too long to possibly reproduce here!) and for those who want an additional watermelon rind recipe, please contact Mollie directly at 631-544-5432.

Watermelon Rind Dessert (Karpouzi Glyko):

For Rind

- 1 watermelon
- 2 qt. glass jar
- 2 tablespoons of lime (comes in a 5lb. bag from the hardware store)
- 2 qt. water

For Syrup

- 2 cups water
- 3 cloves
- 2 drops red food coloring
- 3 cups sugar

Cut off all red watermelon from the rind. You will not be using any of the watermelon for the recipe. Carefully peel (or cut) off all of the green shell from the rind, leaving as much rind intact as possible. Cut rind into approximately 3.5" by 1.5" pieces. Rinse and drain all of the rind. Set aside.

Fill the 2 qt. jar halfway with water. Mix in two tablespoons of lime. Add the rind. Add more water to fill the jar to the top. If all of the rind doesn't fit into one jar, make a second jar with the same amount of lime and water. Soak overnight. Rinse each piece of rind very well the next day. Put in pot and boil until tender, but not too soft. Drain and set aside. Also, rinse and dry jar for later use.

To make syrup: Add 2 cups of water to 3 cups sugar. Cover and boil. Add 3 cloves and 2 drops of red food coloring to sugar water. Cool in pot. Remove cloves. Put rind in glass jars and fill jars with syrup. If there is not enough syrup, make more using proportions above. Set for at least 12 hours. Can now be served. Keep remainder in glass jars filled with syrup for future serving. Does not require refrigeration.



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

Founder*: Joseph I. Josephs Life President*: Hyman Genee Life Members*: Michael Aronesty • Morris L. Cohen • Morris David • Morris Eskononts • Joseph Kassarla • Sam Nahoam • Solomon Schinasi

Trustees: Marvin Marcus, President • Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, Museum Director • Chaim Kofinas, Treasurer • Solomon Kofinas, Financial Secretary • Elliot Colchamiro, Recording Secretary

Jeffery Mordos, First Vice President • Rose Eskononts, Second Vice President • Marc Winthrop, Second Vice President • Martin Genee, Vice President • Lois Ledner, Vice President

Jesse Colchamiro • Leonard Colchamiro • Isaac Dostis • Ilias Hadjis • Holly Kaye • Sol Matsil • Max Nachmias • Maurice Negrin

SIMCHAS

Now that our synagogue is refurbished, we have been honored to host a number of recent simchas, two baby namings and a Bar Mitzvah. What better way to truly celebrate your simcha than to have it in the only Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. If you have plans for a celebration, let us know! We would love to be part of it.

CHANGES IN FORMAT FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

Too often our newsletter recipients misplace the list of Upcoming Events. There will now be a separate sheet with each newsletter, and it will not only list the synagogue/museum events but also the Sisterhood, Brotherhood and Pasha events, which you can keep for easy reference. In addition, as part of every future newsletter, there will be contact information for our sister and brother organizations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Brotherhood

Chaim Kofinas

[for membership and burials]:

845-356-0844

Steven M. Matza

[dues for current members]:

732-792-072

Sisterhood

Rose Eskononts:

718-648-7374

Esther Benjamin:

914-636-2480

Pashas

Max Nachmias:

516-481-8616

516-263-3501

Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos:

516-221-2712

The Romaniote

Newsletter of Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

THE RENAISSANCE ON BROOME STREET

Ten years ago, the world was ready to write us off: even our own people were questioning whether we should close our doors and go the way of so many other synagogues on the Lower East Side. Our perseverance and commitment to the “little Greek synagogue on Broome Street” have been rewarded. Not only are we a part of the recent renaissance

on the Lower East Side, but we are in the forefront. Our recent rededication (May 20th) of the Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum saw Broome Street between Eldridge and Allen closed to traffic as the crowds gathered to celebrate our triumphs. Greek, Israeli and American flags flew from our façade. Speeches by our President, Marvin Marcus; our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos; our architect, Leonard Colchamiro; the Consul of Greece, Sophia Veves and Holly Kaye of the Lower East Side Conservancy preceded a religious rededication of our synagogue led by Rabbi Nissim Elcenave of the International Sephardic Leadership Council and Marty Genee, son of Hy Genee of Blessed Memory, with the official unveiling of our Landmark Plaque by Holly Kaye and Leonard Colchamiro.



Afternoon services reflected our continuity as Chaim Kofinas shared the honors with his son, Seth, and Andrew Marcus, son of our President.

On June 2nd, in honor of the anniversaries celebrated by our five organizations [Brotherhood: 100 years, Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue: 80 years, Sisterhood of Janina: 75 years, Pashas: 50 years and Museum: 10 years], our synagogue was again filled to capacity as the voices of the Yanniotes sang out in celebration. Sharing out in celebration. Sharing in the honor were Chaim Kofinas, Marvin Marcus and Morris Levy, great-grandson of one of our first Rabbis, Jessoula Levy.

Our physical structure has been restored to its 1927 “grandeur,” and we are ready to host your simchas and family reunions. Let our synagogue and museum continue to act as a living repository of the special culture, traditions and minhag of the Romaniote Jews of Greece. Join us for religious services. Continue to support us as you have in the past. This is your Kehila and Museum. Be a part of our renaissance!

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As we approach the High Holidays, I would like to note some of the wonderful events we have experienced this year at KKJ. In April we honored the life and times of former president and spiritual leader Hy Genee. In May we rededicated our synagogue, and in June we celebrated the 80th anniversary of the Kehila and the Bar Mitzvah of Seth Kofinas, the son of Chaim and Suzanne Kofinas and the grandson of Sol and Koula Kofinas. The synagogue was overflowing with love and emotion. Also in June we had a baby naming for Mia Chana, daughter of Jilit and Howard Stein and granddaughter of Anna Sabba Ullman and Jonathan Ullman. On September 8th, we will have the baby naming of Rebecca Ariella Solomon, the second daughter of Paul and Aliza and their second daughter to be named in KKJ.

We grow with the efforts of many individuals who give their all to help continue the Romaniote culture and traditions. To them I extend a heartfelt thanks. We look forward to one day hosting a wedding at the Kehila.

I would like to wish L' Shana Tovah to the Board of Directors, Brotherhood, Sisterhood, Pashas, and all the friends and families of Kehila Kedosha Janina. I hope and pray that in the coming year our synagogue will continue to be a source of spiritual renewal for all those who seek it. Please join us this holiday season.

*Xronia Polla,
Anos Muchos Y Buenos,*

Marvin Marcus

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www.kkjsm.org or e-mail at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

*Deceased

MESSAGE FROM OUR MUSEUM DIRECTOR

With the reopening of the Museum, our mission has taken a slight detour. Initially, when the Museum was founded, the main thrust was to tell the story of Romaniote Jewry to a world that knew very little about us. While we, certainly, will still continue to do this, in addition the Museum wants to tell the story of our people both in Greece and, especially, when they came to the New World. Many more family artifacts are now on display and artifacts can be easily rotated to enable those in storage to make an appearance.

Since the reopening of the new Museum so many exciting things have happened. On April 29th, we hosted a gathering in celebration of Hy Genee, of Blessed Memory, with the opening of a new permanent exhibit about this exceptional man. A moving film tribute compiled by Vincent Giordano made us feel that Hy was actually with us for the event, especially when, at the end, he rolled his eyes, almost saying: “why the big deal.” Such was our Hy, always humble. He will be forever missed.

Going forward, we are planning to restore our communal room to include a kafenion room and a multimedia center, facilitating on-site genealogical and Holocaust research.

The Museum played host to two very moving family gatherings; the first on March 18th of the Colchamiro, and the second of the Asser Family on May 27th. These events serve many purposes, other than the obvious one of enabling the family to gather together and feast on Greek delicacies. They also serve as a means of having our people, many of whom have become disconnected over the years, reconnect with the synagogue and, most important, bring in the next generation, our future.

Over 150 descendants of Jessoula and Rachel Galanos Colchamiro, representing 8 of the 11 branches of the family, gathered for a day of celebration and remembrance. A special exhibit was created in the Museum in honor of the event. Though the exhibit was only on display through the end of June, our website will continue to tell the story of the Colchamiro. In telling the story of this remarkable family, the Museum told the narrative of so many other Yanniot families, both in Ioannina before they came to the United States and here in the New World as they struggled to survive and confronted a culture that tried to absorb them. The Museum exhibit had far-reaching consequences. One of the branches (that of Dinoula Colchamiro Bakola) was almost completely destroyed in the Holocaust.

One of the most moving messages I received was from Emily Bakola, born in Greece, a great-grandchild of Dinoula, who grew up thinking that the only family she had were the offspring of the few who had survived, only to now find out that she has hundreds of cousins. Then there was the recent visit of Mollie Cohen Weissbard, daughter of Hanoula and Isaac, now 97 years old, who came to see the story of her family. I shall never forget the image of this remarkable woman standing there and naming the people in the photos.

The Asser Family event was quite different but no less remarkable. It was a smaller reunion, marking the 92nd birthday of Manny (Menachem) Asser, possibly the first Bar Mitzvah in the synagogue. Thirty-two members of the Asser Family gathered to remember their heritage and their attachment to KKJ.

Additional family gatherings are planned: the Ganis Family for October 28th. The Askinazi/Eskononts/Eskenazi Family, Attas and Matza/Mazza Family, dates still to be determined. If you are interested in having your family gather in the Kehila and reconnect with their roots, get in touch with us. This is your museum!

— Marcia Haddad Ikonomidou

MESSAGE FROM THE SISTERHOOD OF JANINA

I am so proud of our Officers and Members, who, in keeping with our mission of philanthropy, overwhelmingly voted to donate \$5,000 to the historic Kehila in Janina, Greece...and, to top it off, I got to deliver it in person this summer, when another full-of-history event took place...the Bar Mitzvah of Seth Michael Kofinas, son of Suzanne and Chaim, and grandson of Koula and Sol, whose father prayed at this one-of-a-kind building. In this Diamond Jubilee year of the Sisterhood, culminating in a gala five-way anniversary historic event this past June, we

look forward to many more years of service and benevolence to our coreligionists and hopefully augment our ranks to include second- and third-generation members. So, please get your daughters, daughters-in-law, nieces, etc. to join us to continue to perpetuate what our founders envisioned 75 years ago. Contact our Membership Chair, Esther Benjamin, at 914-636-2480, or myself, Rose Eskononts, President, at 718-648-7374. We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to our “family.”

— Rose Eskononts

YOUTH GROUP

As part of our continuing endeavor to pass our traditions and culture on to the next generation, the Board of Kehila Kedosha Janina is now in the process of establishing a KKJ youth organization to bring in our young people. Activities will be planned for different age groups (5–12, 13–18, 19–30 and 31–40). Let us know of your interest and suggestions.

SPECIAL THANKS TO MAJOR BENEFACTORS

We wish to thank the late Frances Siegelbaum for the exceptionally generous bequest that enabled the completion of our recent interior restoration. This sizeable donation is unprecedented in the history of our Kehila and for that we owe her a tremendous amount of gratitude.

In addition, we received a generous donation from the Genee Family, in honor of Hy Genee of Blessed Memory, that will be applied towards the next stage of our interior restoration.

A very special thanks to Amy Attas Shapiro and her husband, Steven, who have generously donated the cost of the restoration of our chandelier so that they can keep it “in the family” for four generations. As Amy so beautifully phrased it, the Attas Family has continued to be “responsible for the light at Kehila Kedosha Janina.”

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF GREEK JEWRY

On March 18th, the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry was honored to bestow one of its highest awards, our “Living Treasure Award,” to Leonard Colchamiro for his dedication and commitment to preserving Greek Jewry. Leonard, a world-renowned architect, and descendant of Leon Colchamiro, one of our founding fathers, was instrumental in enabling the restoration of Kehila Kedosha Janina and worked pro bono, refusing any personal compensation for his tireless work.

This past summer, from July 18th to August 2nd, the Association brought over our annual tour to Jewish Greece. Our participants experienced the beauty of Greece and visited the Jewish communities of Ioannina, Salonika and Athens. We were invited by Eleni and Nicholas Gage to visit their family home in Lia, celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of Seth Kofinas in the synagogue of Ioannina, visited the Jewish museums in both Salonika and Athens and cruised the Aegean. This tour was

sold out almost immediately. Don't miss out on our Summer 2008 Tour, details to be released in January. Get on our mailing list.

We have “our man in Ioannina,” Isaac Dostis, Vice President of the Association, now living in Ioannina nine months out of the year. If you want Isaac to research birth records in the municipal archives and get copies of birth records for you, contact us.

MEET THE BOARD: JEFF MORDOS

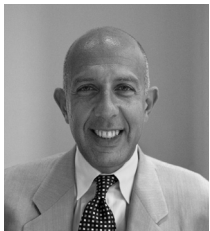
Long overdue, it is our honor to tell the story of someone very special, Jeff Mordos, our First Vice President, a member of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of Kehila Kedosha Janina since their inception. Jeff is also a Board Member of the United Brotherhood Good Hope Society of Janina. In addition, he is on the Board of YAI, the National Institute for People With Disabilities and a former Board Member of the Sephardic Nursing Home.

Jeff grew up on the Lower East Side and had his Bar Mitzvah at Kehila Kedosha Janina in 1970. Jeff's late mother (Mathilda Cohen Mordos) was born in Preveza and his late father (Elias Mordos) in Zakynthos. Both survived the Holocaust but Mathilda lost most of her family in the concentration camps. Jeff's father was among those fortunate Jews of Zakynthos who survived

due to the moral courage of Christian islanders [see “The Saving of the Jews of Zakynthos” below].

Jeff's family immigrated to the USA in 1951, first settling in Coney Island and then at 61 Delancey Street. He was born at Beth Israel in 1957 and named after his maternal grandfather, Jessoula Cohen. Jeff attended PS 42, PS 110, JHS 56 and Brooklyn Tech before receiving his BS from SUNY at Stony Brook and his MBA from Cal State Sacramento. Jeff's early education was supplemented by attending Talmud Torah on Rivington Street and Greek School at St. Barbara's Greek Orthodox Church on Forsyth Street.

Jeff married Audrey in 1988 and is the proud father of Elise (16) and Todd (14). Since 1984, he has worked for BBDO, a New York advertising agency, and is



presently its COO for North America. Also an avid runner, Jeff has completed 45 marathons in 33 states, including the last 11 consecutive New York City Marathons.

Those of you who are holding this newsletter in your hands should be aware that it is through the generosity of Jeff Mordos that we are able to publish *The Romaniote*. BBDO does the typesetting and Jeff does some of the editing. And most of the printed material at KKJ (stationery, business cards, brochures, etc.) is supplied through donations Jeff has secured for us. Thank you, Jeff Mordos. We are truly lucky to be blessed with your generosity, commitment and passion.

THE SAVING OF THE JEWS OF ZAKYNTHOS

Zakynthos, one of the seven islands in the Ionian Sea, had a varied history but the most enduring influence was the long period of Venetian occupation (over 400 years). It was during this time that the Jews living on the island, like all Jews living on Venetian soil, were placed in a ghetto. The Jewish population on the island was always small and Romaniote (Greek-speaking) throughout its history. The few Sephardim (Spanish-speaking Jews) who settled on the island after the Expulsion from Spain in 1492 were absorbed into the indigenous Romaniote community.

Yad Vashem honored the Metropolitan Bishop of Zakynthos, Chrysostomos, and Mayor Lucas Carrer, crediting them with saving the 275 Jews of Zakynthos. This is the story: In the Spring of 1944, the Mayor of the island, Lucas Carrer, was called to the German High Command Office (Herr Litt) and ordered at gunpoint to produce the list of Jews of the island the following day. Distraught, not knowing how to proceed, he went to see Chrysostomos. The Bishop told him to destroy the list immediately and that he would take care of this himself. The following day, Chrysostomos reported to Litt's office, accompanied by Carrer. When asked to produce the list of the

Jews, Chrysostomos handed over a piece of paper with two names on it: his and that of Mayor Carrer. He then said the words that earned both him and Carrer “Righteous Among Nations”: “Here are your Jews. If you take the Jews of Zakynthos, you must take us, and we will share their fate.” Litt, though supposedly moved at the sacrifice these two men were prepared to make, said that he could not do anything, that “he had his orders.” The Bishop then asked a favor of Litt. He wanted to be given the opportunity to plead directly with Hitler, having met him while studying in Munich. Litt allowed him to send a wireless message, and a reply was received four days later: the Jews of Zakynthos will remain the personal responsibility of the Mayor and the Bishop of the island. A boat was never sent to pick up the Jews of Zakynthos. The Gestapo never showed up on the island. No other explanation is given for this unusual situation in Greece.

When the Jews returned from hiding (they had all fled to the mountains and survived with the help of local Christians) they crowded around the Bishop, wanting to hear the story of how they were saved. They wanted to thank the Bishop and the Christians of the island, and offered to help

physically and financially with the building of an earthquake-proof church for the Patron Saint of the island, Agios Dionysus. The church was completed. The Jews helped to build it and contributed the stained-glass windows and the church bells.

The feared earthquake came in 1953, leveling the city of Zakynthos, including the synagogue and the Jewish quarter. One of the few buildings to survive was the church the Jews helped build. The first ship to arrive with help for the devastated islanders was from Israel with the message: the Jews of Zakynthos will never forget their Bishop and their Mayor. Both Chrysostomos and Mayor Carrer are honored at Yad Vashem and, in 1998, monuments in memory of their courageous help in saving the Jews of the island were paid for by the Central Board of Jewish Communities and Zakynthos Jews in the Diaspora and placed in the central square of the city.

There is no Jewish community on the island, most having relocated to Athens or Israel after the earthquake. However, a well-kept cemetery tended to by one of Jeff Mordos' relatives, and the only remaining Romaniote synagogue in Israel is the Zakynthos Synagogue in Tel Aviv.