



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

January 2009 e-mail newsletter

This issue is dedicated to the memory of the over 100 Negrin descendants who were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau in April of 1944 and the courageous Negrins who survived to carry on the family name.

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

We wish you a happy and healthy 2009. We appreciate your continued support and encouragement and welcome your contributions to our e-newsletter. Thanks to correspondences from around the world, our monthly e-newsletter now reflects, not only our news, but, also, news from Greek Jews worldwide. We welcome new additions to our e-mail list. If you have friends or relatives who would like to receive the e-newsletter, please have them contact us at (kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net). Send us your news. We welcome news stories having to do with the Greek-Jewish community, both here in the United States and internationally. We will try to print as many of them as possible.

We mourn the passing of Anne Mutter (daughter of Benjamin Negrin and Esther Jessula Negrin, both of Blessed Memory). (See story on Negrin research in this newsletter.) We also sadly note the passing Abe Calderon, Larry Salberg, husband of Rose Nachmias, Mollie Solomon Matza, and Esther Matza Samuels.

We welcome the birth of two new members of the Greek-Jewish community. Zanet Battinou (Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens) and Isadore Tiano, welcomed twin sons into the world on October 2, 2008. Samuel and Joseph were named after their grandfathers (both of Blessed memory), Samuel Tiano and Joseph (Pepo) Battino. Pepo was a former President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina. The twins have a proud older sister, Linda Sarah Tiano.

We congratulate Sarah Besso on her 90th birthday.

On Sunday, December 28th, the Brit Milah of Richard Micah Sherman took place at Kehila Kedosha Janina (KKJ). This mitzvah celebrated both the Romaniote Yanniote community that worships at KKJ and the former traditional Sephardic presence of the Lower East Side. Sarah, Richard Micah's mother, is the daughter of Gail Nisman, the significant other of Jesse Colchamiro, grandson of Leon Colchamiro, one of the founders of KKJ. Many of the Colchamiro clan were in attendance at the gathering of more than 100. The baby's father, Michael Sherman, descends from the Mevorah family from Kastoria. Michael's grandparents worshiped at KKJ after the Sephardic synagogue at 133 Eldridge ceased operations. The Mevorah family lived across the street from KKJ.



Sarah, Michael and Richard Micah Sherman

Koula's Kitchen

Our most recent Koula's Kitchen (December 14th) had a record turnout. In addition to hosting over 30 participants, and sharing in the delicious Hanukah delicacies prepared by our volunteers (Koula Kofinas, Audrey Mordos and Rachel Cohen), something very special took place. Both Koula and Rachel were born in Larissa and, as they began to talk, they realized that their families had been neighbors. In fact, Rachel's older brother was an usher at Koula and Sol's wedding in NYC. Both Cohen families (Koula's maiden name is Cohen) came to the USA in 1956, but Rachel was too young to remember Koula. Now, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, sharing loukamades, baklava and tiganites, reconnections were made. As Rachel related, "My brother explained who Koula was and now I know who her mom was -I called her kria eftixia and she was the only person in our neighborhood who had a radio. I remember she used to allow me to come over and sit in her kitchen and listen to a children's story hour called ' Kiria Eleni' when I was about 4 years old."



Emma Rosenthal (granddaughter of Renee Yomtov Rosenthal) learns how to make loukamades from Rachel Cohen.

Our Koula's Kitchen has received attention on another level. We were recently contacted by a member of the staff of The Museum of Jewish Heritage, who is writing a cookbook of recipes of survivors (both of the camps and occupation). She is looking for Greek Jewish entrees. Koula will be sharing her story and one of her recipes. If you survived the camps or survived in hiding, and have a recipe to share, get in touch with Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

We are progressing with our compilation of family trees. We are very fortunate to have acquired two large family trees, that of the descendants of Elia Negrin (born circa 1810) and the descendants of Nahoum Matza (born circa 1800). These family trees show many connections to other Yanniotte families. To date, we have done extensive work on the following Yanniotte families: Askinazi, Colchamiro, David, Eliezer, Hametz, Mathios/Matathias, Matza, Samuels and Yomtov. We are looking for additional family tree information on these families and other Yanniotte families. Please send us your family tree info!

In addition to documenting Yanniotte roots, we are working on early immigration patterns. David Colchamiro is compiling a table of years of arrival in the USA. If you have info to add to this, get in touch with us (kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net).

Don't forget to send us your family and wedding photos for future exhibits. As much as we love to see your current photos, we are interested in old photos taken here in the USA and back in Greece.

As a very positive side-effect of all this research, many Greek Jews are reconnecting with their roots, and with Kehila Kedosha Janina. Just recently (December 28th) we had a visit from members of the Negrin family. Joel and his sister Serena, the children of Sam Negrin and Diana Ganis Negrin (both of Blessed Memory) visited with other members of the family.



Serena Negrin Michelson and Joel Negrin

As mentioned in the December e-newsletter, our new exhibit, "Our Gang," the story of Greek Jewish participation in the United States Armed Forces during WWII, opened on November 2nd. We receive additional photos and we will be updating the exhibit on our website each month as these photos capturing cherished memories continue to come in. The internet exhibit appears on our website (www.kkjsm.org) under "Exhibits/present exhibits." Some of our recent acquisitions included photos from the Sabba/Zagha family, Hy Matza and the family of Samuel Solomon. Unfortunately, the size of this newsletter does not allow us to show them all, but they can be accessed on our website.



**Bea Sabba & Eli Zagha
Central Park: 1942: Engagement**

Negrins Worldwide

After expressing interest on Negrin Family genealogy, we received responses from Negrins all over the world (Australia, Israel, France, Greece, Canada, France and, of course, the United States and South America).

The origin of the surname 'Negrin' is from the Spanish root for 'black' and shows a transformation that points to possibilities that Negrins in Greece spent some time on Italian soil. The word in Spanish for 'black' would be spelled with an 'e' and not an 'i' and yet the earliest entries in the Ioannina Municipal archives spell the name as "Nigrin," showing an Italian influence. The surname is quite prominent in Ioannina but is not necessarily indigenous to that community. Negrins are found in the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century in communities in Italy, North Africa, Lebanon and Eretz Israel, along with other Jewish communities in Greece.

Not all Negrins are related to each other, not even those who hail from Ioannina (although present research on Yanniot Jews show that somehow, either by blood or marriage, most Yanniot were related to each other).

Some of the occupations of Negrins in Ioannina before World War II were: selling of dry fruits and nuts (Jessoula Negrin), proprietor of a variety stores (Ouriel Negrin, Samuel Negrin), wholesale (Samuel Negrin), seller of leather skins (Haim Negrin), seller of chickens (Solomon Negrin). Pre WWII, Negrins in Ioannina lived both inside and outside the Kastro. The famous poet, Joseph Eliyia had a Negrin connection. His mother was Hanoula Negrin, the second child of Moses Negrin and Leah Cohen. According to our Holocaust records (can be accessed on our website), 84 individuals from Ioannina bearing the surname of Negrin perished in the Holocaust. This, of course, does not include those Negrin women who married and would be listed under the surnames of their husbands.

Coming to the New York City area in the early part of the 20th century, Negrins would compromise an important part of the Yanniot community in the New World. While the early arrivals would live on the Lower East Side, by the 1920's there was movement of the community into both the Bronx and Brooklyn. In 1925 (according to the membership list of the United Brotherhood of Janina, the burial society), there were still a substantial number of Negrin families on the Lower East Side. Abraham Menachem Negrin lived at 81 Orchard Street, David Michael Negrin at 102 Orchard, Isaac Negrin at 108 Eldridge, Julius Negrin at 271 Broome, Menachem and Nathan Negrin at 173 Eldridge, Oriel Negrin at 91 Eldridge, and Samuel Negrin at 100 Allen.

Of course, like most Yanniot families in the New York area, the Negrins would marry other Yanniot and it is very unusual not to find a Negrin somewhere in the family trees of other families from Ioannina.

Please continue to send us information on your families (not only Negrins!) and if you want information from our archival records (Brotherhood, Ioannina Municipal and Holocaust) please contact us.

Request for Information to Assist Scholarship on Greek-Jewish Involvement in the Spanish Civil War.

We received the following request from Dan Georgakas: "Scholarship on the Greek Jews in America has been progressing at a good rate. A question that has been raised in that context is if any Greek Jews from America fought in the Spanish Civil War, often thought of as the precursor of World War II, due to the intervention of Hitler and Mussolini. A significant number of Jews from America fought for the republic in the International Brigades. There were from 100-200 Greek Christians from American who fought. Many of these individuals were in the Communist Party-USA or allied groups.

The specific query at hand is, were there any Greek Jews from America who fought in the International Brigades or other units? If you have any information on this matter, please contact me at the number below. Unless you ask for confidentiality, the data will be shared with those who have shown scholarly interest in the topic. These include scholars in England and Greece as well as the US. I am currently Director of the Greek American Research Project at Queens College--CUNY.

Dan Georgakas at smyrnapress@hotmail.com"

GREECE-JEWISH NEWS

Greek Exhibit at Auschwitz Stirs Controversy

We've been informed by Paul Hagouel of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki that an exhibit on Greek Jewry is planned at Auschwitz. Concerns were raised as to how the story of Greek Jewry will be told. To date we have learned the following:

On 15 January 2008, at 1:00 pm, in the city of Oświęcim (Auschwitz) in Poland, the Director of the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ms. Photini Tomai - Constantopoulou, Expert Minister A', and Mr. Piotr M.A. Cywipski, Director of the Museum of the Holocaust in Auschwitz, signed an agreement for the organization of a permanent Greek Exhibition in Block No18 on the ground level of the Museum. The process of preparing the Exhibition will go through various stages and it is foreseen that the works will be finalized by the autumn of year 2009, when the opening ceremony is scheduled to take place.

The Greek contingent on the committee include Moses Konstantinis (President of KIS, The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece), Heinz Kounio, survivor of Auschwitz whose book contained documentation of the Holocaust in Greece (obtained from archival sources at Auschwitz), Manolis Glezos (member of the Resistance during the Occupation), Makis Matsas (President of Jewish Museum of Greece) and Zanet Battinou (Director of Jewish Museum of Greece) and Photini Tomai-Constantopoulou from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Concerns have been expressed that the Jewish Communities of Greece were not informed nor approached to participate.



**Rita Levy was 7 years old
when she was deported from Corfu and murdered at Auschwitz**

Mr. Hagouel expressed his concerns as follows: "My concern is that the exhibit will not depict the FULL story of the fate of Greek deportees to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This should include the presentation of the process of deportation, the speed with which this was accomplished, the behavior (or lack of it) of non-Jewish bystanders, the attitude that local and national Greek officials displayed towards the deportees and the deportation, how the few survivors were greeted after the war in their hometown by the population at large and the state, plus it should be stated that Greece passed a special law (1959) to liberate a convicted German War Criminal, one of the main perpetrators of the Annihilation of Thessaloniki Jewry. Greece, on the basis of that law, REFUSES to prosecute any German war criminals for crimes against Jewish GREEKS."

Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum shares the concerns of Paul Hagouel and has expressed this to the Museum at Auschwitz. Our Museum and Synagogue, acting as a living memorial to the memory of Greek Jews who perished in the Holocaust, has a responsibility to that memory. We do not take that responsibility lightly.

YAD VASHEM HALL OF NAMES
NOW INCLUDES KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA'S MEMORIAL BOOK

When Yad Vashem first released its much anticipated Hall of Names on its website (www.yadvashem.org) we were upset that there were errors in Greek Jewish names and information. While we realized that due to the process used to acquire this information, there would be errors in the information from communities other than Ioannina, we were quite upset that the Ioannina information was still filled with errors, especially after we had submitted our research for our Memorial Book (In Memory of the Jewish Community of Ioannina). This has now been remedied and our Memorial Book has now become part of the Yad Vashem website. Now, correct information for Ioannina can now be accessed via the www.YadVashem.org and our website at www.kkjism.org.



GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF GREECE

**For the past year, an interesting group has been meeting in Thessaloniki on a regular basis inviting scholars to present papers on all aspects of Greek-Jewish history. An example of some of the topics can be accessed on their website:
<http://histjews.blogspot.com/>**

The meeting on Friday, December 19, 2008 at 7pm was at the DEOPS seminar room, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki (3rd floor). The guest speaker was historian Yaakov Schiby who spoke on:

From the whirlwind of the war to the whirlwind of the liberation. Migration of Jewish children and youngsters from Greece to Palestine (1945-1946)

SEPHARDIC NEWS

MADRID (Reuters) – From the 15th century on, Spain's Jews were mostly expelled or forced to convert, but today a study has found that some 20 percent of Spanish men tested have Sephardic Jewish ancestry, and 11 percent can be traced to North Africa.

"These values are surprisingly high," the researchers wrote in their report, published in the American Journal of Human Genetics.

"They checked the Y chromosome, a stretch of DNA carried only by men and passed down with little change from father to son. Mutations in this gene can be used to trace ancestry, and some have been clearly linked to Sephardic Jewish and northern African populations.

"The genetic composition of the current population is the legacy of our diverse cultural and religious past," one of the report's authors, Francesc Calafell, from the evolutionary biology faculty at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, said on Friday.

"Along with researchers from Britain's University of Leicester and Wellcome Trust, the scientists analyzed DNA samples from 1,140 men in Spain, Portugal and the Balearic Islands and compared them to Moroccans, Algerians, and Sephardic Jews in Istanbul and Israel.

"The work shows that religious conversions and subsequent marriages between people of different lines had a significant impact on modern populations both in the Balearic Islands and in Portugal," Elena Bosch of the University of Leicester said in a statement.

"One of the most surprising findings is the percentage of Spanish genes whose origin can be traced to Sephardic Jews, although Spain had a relatively small Jewish population compared to its Moorish population.

"Some of these genes may pre-date the Sephardic Jewish culture, the researchers said, noting that the Phoenicians also share some of the genetic characteristics.

"The Moors invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711 and remained until defeated in battle by the so-called Catholic Monarchs in 1492. Moorish influence is still very noticeable in Spain's language, architecture, music and other aspects of its culture.

"Jews lived in Spain before the Moors arrived and although small in number played a significant cultural and economic role.

"Hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from Spain in various repressive moves, started by the Catholic Monarchs. The study suggests many Jews converted rather than face repression.

"Some Sephardic communities to this day speak Ladino, which is similar to medieval Spanish and can be understood by present-day Spaniards."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20081205/sc_nm/us_spain_genetics

This article was sent to us by Marci Abschutz.

**Kehila Kedosha Janina e-newsletter: number 12: January 2009
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