



February 2015 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This issue is dedicated to one of our youngest Board members, Maurice Negrin, and a special kiddush will be sponsored by The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry in his honor on February 28th. We will also commemorate the adara of his grandfather, Moise (Morris) Negrin who passed in 1989. As is our tradition, Maurice proudly carries his Grandfather's name.

This is part of our new chapter with our e-newsletters, highlighting a prominent family in our community. The Negrins have played a prominent role in the establishment of the Romaniote community in New York and all Negrins are invited to this special Shabbat on February 28th.

Maurice Negrin



If you are a Negrin or a family that married into the Negrin family, and would like to attend Feb. 28th, please RSVP at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net (we want to make sure we have enough food!). See articles and photos in this issue relating to the Negrins. If you would like to have your family honored, or memorialized, at a future Shabbat, contact us.

This newsletter, our 72nd 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.kkjsm.org).

We now reach over 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.

Passings

~This month we send our condolences to Phyllis Modiano on the recent passing of her brother-in-law, Irving Assael.

~We send our condolences to the family of Max Nachmias, brother of Esther Nachmias Calderon. Max was the son of Abraham and Mollie Nachmias. Abraham was one of five Nachmias brothers who came to the USA from Ioannina. He was a first cousin of Max Nachmias, son of Samuel Nachmias, who is a member of the Board of Directors of Kehila Kedosha Janina.

~It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Lou Koulias. Lou was just 60 years old and had been bravely battling cancer when he lost the battle on January 28th. Lou was from one of the founding families of Kehila Kedosha Janina. He was the son of Hy and Bobbi Koulias and the grandson of Lou Koulias. Our condolences to the family.



~One of our few Holocaust survivors, Oriel Jacobs passed away on January 29th, just short of his 100th birthday. Oriel was the son of Gerson and Mazalto Jacobs (Iakov) and was deported from Ioannina on March 25, 1944 to Auschwitz. In addition to his first wife, Rachil bat Eliasaf Liasko, age 24, he lost his daughter Touvoula, age 1. Oriel's parents and seven siblings also perished in the camps. Oriel married Anneta, who preceded him in death. He will be greatly missed.

Oriel and Anneta



Simcha

~On February 1st, we celebrate the 96th birthday of Esther Colchamiro. Esther is the widow of Ralph Colchamiro, and the daughter of David and Mollie Kaplan. She is a retired dentist and dental school professor. Esther's mother (Mollie) was the 9th child of Jessula and Rachel Colchamiro, while her husband, Ralph, was the 7th child of Leon Colchamiro (the 4th of Jessula and Rachel Colchamiro). Esther's father, David Kaplan (Cartona) was born in Smyrna.



Esther and Ralph Colchamiro on their wedding day

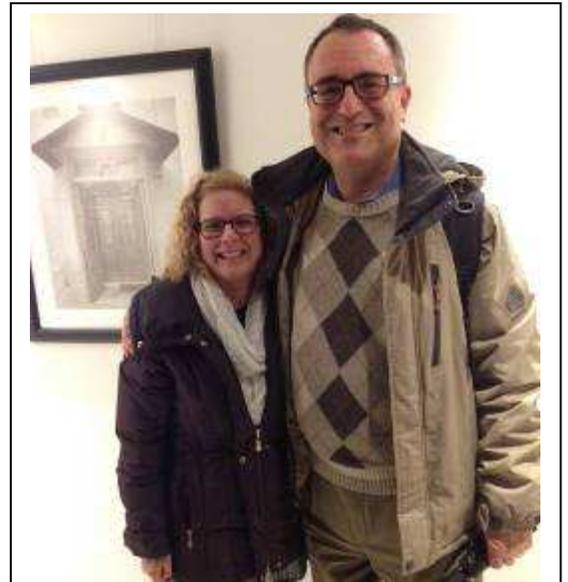
Aikoi Mas, Los Muestrros (our own) come home

~As always, it is a joy when "Our Own" come home. In January we welcomed members of the Levis and Varon Families. Theo's grandfather survived the Occupation of Greece and, in naming him, his parents chose the name Theo that his papou had taken in hiding. Simcha Varon is the son of Nelson Varon, the grandson of Becky Moses and Samuel Varon, the great-grandson of Abraham Moses and Esther Genee Moses and great-great grandson of Modechai and Malka Moses.

Theo
Levis



Simcha & Debra
Varon



Visitors continue to flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

~Not even the cold of a New York January keeps visitors away from Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Joseph Pariente



New friends, Rocco, Joan, Douglas and Ambyr

Past Museum Events

~On January 4th we welcomed back participants of our 2014 tour to Jewish Greece. It was a great event. There was dancing in the aisles, sharing of memories, viewing of a special DVD made for the group and plenty of Greek food to eat. So many of the group can't wait to go back again. This is so typical of our tours. We must be doing something right!



~Our January 11th presentation on Jewish Bulgaria and Serbia by Anthony Georgieff was very successful. There was not an empty seat to be had. We are hoping to tour with Anthony in 2016. Let us know if you are interested.



Upcoming Museum Events

There will not be any Museum events in February, but we are previewing two events in March 2015.

~On March 1st we will welcome Professor Panos Stavrianides, who will present a very timely program on Ethnic Identity and Integration of Greek Jews in Contemporary Greece: A Sociological Study of their Attitudes and Behaviors as an Ethno-religious Minority in a Homogeneous Society. *"Greek Jews have lived in Greece for over 2000 years. Despite the uniqueness and importance of this group - few studies have been devoted to understand the perception on their ethnic identity, their integration/assimilation into the Greek society and their attitudes and experiences in regards to Anti-Semitism."*



Date: March 1, 2015

Time 2:00

Where: Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, NYC

Admission: Free-Open to General Public

Refreshments served

On March 29th Kehila Kedosha Janina is honored to welcome Dominick Porto who will do a presentation on the Jews of Calabria and the renaissance of Jewish life in the region.



Sign in former Jewish neighborhood in Calabria



Sign with Hebrew letters in Gerace in Reggio Calabria

Date: March 29, 2015

Time 2:00

Where: Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, NYC

Admission: Free-Open to General Public Refreshments served

News From Jewish Greece

Ioannina

In the beginning of January, the Jewish Community of Ioannina suffered a major blow. This time it was Mother Nature who caused the damage to the Jewish Cemetery of the city. A fierce storm swept through the city, uprooted trees in the cemetery, damaged the small house that was used for services in the cemetery, damaged the walkway through the cemetery and caused damage to a still unknown number of graves. Trees were down throughout the cemetery.

After speaking to Moses Eliasaf, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, we estimate the cost of repair as over \$50,000. Needless to say, the small Jewish community in Ioannina cannot possibly repair the cemetery on their own.

Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue will spearhead a drive to raise money for repairs (estimated at over \$50,000). This is not the first time we have done this. For those of you living in the United States, send your checks to Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue, 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002. The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry will absorb the costs of bank transfers so that every dollar raised will go directly to the Jewish Community of Ioannina. For those of you outside the United States who wish to make bank transfers directly to the Jewish Community of Ioannina, contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net and we will send you the bank information for the community in Ioannina.

We sincerely thank those who have already given. A Facebook and e-mail campaign has raised over \$10,000 but we still need so much more. Please encourage your family and friends who have not yet given to do so.



~January 27th is the International Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust.

We, here in New York, will stop and remember on February 2nd, at the Greek Press & Communications Office in Manhattan. We will report on this in our March e-newsletter.

Throughout Greece there were commemorations.

Salonika

"On the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorated worldwide on 27 January, the British Embassy co-organized with the Jewish Community in Thessaloniki a series of events in memory of the Jews of Thessaloniki victims and survivors of the Holocaust, on 24 January 2015. The events were under the auspices of the UK International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Chairmanship which the UK assumed in February 2014. Joined by the President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki David Saltiel, the British Ambassador John Kittmer laid a wreath on behalf of the members and observers of IHRA at a ceremony that took place at the Holocaust Memorial. Earlier on the day, representatives of the diplomatic corps in Greece received a tour at the Jewish Museum and historic sites in Thessaloniki, such as the 'Monastiriotes' Synagogue, the Baron Hirsch neighborhood near the Railroad Station, where the city's Jews were deported from to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps, and the University, the site of the old Jewish Cemetery."



Athens



On February 2, the Jewish Community of Athens will have a series of events, including the placement of a wreath at the Holocaust Memorial in the City. Minos Mousis, President of the Jewish Community of Athens will be present.

Volos

ΕΘΝΙΚΗ ΗΜΕΡΑ ΜΝΗΜΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΕΒΡΑΙΩΝ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΗΡΩΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΟΛΟΚΑΥΤΩΜΑΤΟΣ



1 ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ 2015 ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ - ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΕΣ ΕΝΟΤΗΤΕΣ ΜΑΓΝΗΣΙΑΣ -ΣΠΟΡΑΔΩΝ ΙΣΡΑΗΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΒΟΛΟΥ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ

The program in Volos will take place on February 1, 2015 where a wreath will be placed at the Holocaust Memorial of the city in Plateia Riga Feraiou. In attendance will be the President of the Jewish Community of Volos, Marsel Solomon and the both the Metropolitan Bishop and Mayor of Volos, along with the President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS) Moisis Konstantinos.

Larissa

The events in Larissa surrounding the International Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust took place on January 27th in the Square of the Jewish Martyrs where a wreath was laid at the Holocaust Memorial. After a moment of silence the National Hymn was sung. The events then

continued in the Municipal Academy of Music. Among the dignitaries who spoke was the Metropolitan Bishop of Larissa, Dimitriadis. The Philharmonic Orchestra from Corfu performed with soprano soloist, Louiza Kone.



Ioannina

Ioannina remembered the date with a series of events, including a concert and a photo display of historical photos from Ioannina from 1890-1930.



Events at Auschwitz on the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation

In January, on the 70th anniversary there was a gathering at Auschwitz that included dignitaries from around the world and, among them, 300 survivors from 19 different countries. Among the survivors were two from Greece, Fortouni Gani from Athens (born into the Politis family of Ioannina) and Naki Bega from Larissa. Among the international representatives were the following from Greece: President of KIS, Moisi Konstantinos, President of the Jewish Museum of Greece, Maki Matsa, the General Secretary of the Jewish Community of Athens, Iosef Mizan, the Vice President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, Lazaro Sephica and the Vice President of the Second Generation of descendants of Victims of the Holocaust, Graciela Bourla. Representing the Greek

governments were Ambassador to Poland from Greece, Tasia Ayhanasiou and Fotini Tomai-Konstantopoulou, Archivist from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



New Board of Directors of The Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece
KIS

As of January 12, 2015, there is a new Board of Directors at the leadership of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), as per the decision reached at the General Assembly of the Representatives of the Jewish Communities of Greece in June 2013.

Mr. Moses Konstantinis will once again lead KIS, the umbrella organization of the Greek Jewry, after having served as Secretary General from 1991 to 1997 and as the Board's President from 1998 to 2010.

The new Board of Directors of KIS is the following:

President: Moses KONSTANTINIS

1st Vice President: Moissis (Morris) MAGRIZOS

2nd Vice President: Solomon PARENTE

Secretary General: Mordochai (Marcel) SOLOMON

General Treasurer: Solon (Makis) MAISSIS

Deputy Secretary General: Moissis ELISSAF

Deputy Treasurer: Isac MAIR

Members: Benjamin ALBALAS, Nachman (Manos) ALCHANATIS, Victor Isaac ELIEZER, Daniel BENADOUT, Zacharias SOUSSIS.

Deputy Members: Aaron AVDELAS, Isaac (Sakis) LEON, Ezdras BAKOLAS.

We at Kehila Kedosha Janina congratulate the new Board of Directors and wish them strength in their important endeavors as the legal body of Greek Jews in Greece.



Moses Konstantinis and Benjamin Albala

Results of Greek Elections

From World News

After the seismic victory of Greece's leftist Syriza party in national polling Sunday, the country's new prime minister, 40-year-old Alexis Tsipras, is leading all of Europe down an uncertain path. Syriza has vowed to renegotiate the crippling debts saddled on the Greek economy by European lenders — a move that some fear could threaten the unity of the eurozone. Tsipras and his allies, meanwhile, see their ascension as a historic opportunity, as WorldViews discussed here. But it's not just the future that's on Syriza's agenda. In what was virtually his first act as Prime Minister Monday, Tsipras journeyed to the memorial site at the Kaisariani rifle range, where in 1944 Nazi soldiers executed some 200 Greek activists in retaliation for the death of a German officer killed in a Greek ambush.

The visit was drenched in symbolism. The past half-decade of crippling austerity in Greece is the consequence of terms dictated by the "troika" — the European Commission, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Germany, Europe's largest economy, played a key role in delivering Greece's bailout and enforcing its strict conditions. Ill will toward Germany is high in Greece, where ordinary citizens blame their country's dire economic state in part on the high-handed policies of a distant European elite.



Syriza, in particular, has been outspoken about the need for Germany to atone for its past in Greece, or at least show a bit more leniency now as compensation. Tsipras has campaigned on the issue for more than a year, including in the build-up to Sunday's election. "We are going to demand debt reduction, and the money Germany owes us from World War II, including reparations," he said earlier this month.

A 2013 study carried out by the previous Greek government of defeated Prime Minister Antonis Samaras estimated that Germany owed Greece some \$200 billion for damages incurred during the Nazi occupation, the cost of rebuilding destroyed infrastructure as well as loans Nazi authorities forced Greece to pay between 1942 and 1944. The Samaras government, whose critics accused of being handmaidens to Brussels' harsh mandates, did little with the report. Another advocacy group claims that the sum owed to Greece could be as much as \$677 billion.

But Syriza may likely invoke this legacy in its bid to win greater debt forgiveness now. It has the sympathy, at least, of German leftists. "From a moral point of view, Germany ought to pay off these old compensations and the 'war loan' that they got during the Occupation," said Gabriele Zimmer, a leading member of Die Linke, a socialist German party that is allied with Syriza in the

European parliament.

As is often the case, though, the question of reparations is a fraught one. Not many countries have received reparations from Germany, which itself was ravaged by the war and then carved up by the victorious Allies.

According to the New York Times, some experts believe that as many as 300,000 Greeks starved to death during the Nazi occupation. Brutal reprisals like that carried out at the Kaisariani site were not uncommon, given the active nature of Greece's resistance movement.

Syriza's grandstanding on the issue can also be read as a savvy move to win over nationalist voters who would perhaps otherwise not favor the leftists. The far-right Golden Dawn party, which has neo-Nazi origins, polled far behind Syriza, but still came in third among the country's many jostling parties.

"It is our duty to pay homage and not forget that the European peoples live free and have defeated the specter of intolerance, the dark ideology of fascism," Tsipras said last April, ahead of European elections. "There were thousands of those who sacrificed their lives in our country." That battle against "fascism" may have been won once more Sunday, but Tsipras and Syriza have long a fight ahead of them to win the larger concessions they now demand.

AJC CONGRATULATES SYRIZA LEADER ON GREEK ELECTIONS VICTORY

Tuesday, 27 January 2015 13:58

January 26, 2015 -- New York -- AJC congratulated Alexis Tsipras, head of the Syriza political party, which convincingly won Greece's national elections yesterday. Tsipras will serve as prime minister in the next government, succeeding Prime Minister Antonis Samaras.

"Greece continues to face enormous economic and social challenges that will engage the incoming government from day one. We wish the new leaders success, hoping they will continue the country's principal orientation toward the European Union," said AJC Executive Director David Harris. "Moreover, in recent years, Greece has built strong, mutually beneficial ties with Israel, and fostered closer quadrilateral relations among the United States, Israel, Cyprus and itself, which we also trust will remain a pillar of Greece's international outlook." Over the past three decades, AJC has maintained robust relationships with Greek leaders, through regular visits to Athens, engagement with diplomats in the U.S. and Europe, and cooperative ties with Hellenic-American groups. AJC also has a long-standing association agreement with KIS, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece. Last year, an AJC delegation met for an hour in Athens with Tsipras, the new prime minister.

"We are dedicated friends of Greece," said Harris, who also expressed admiration for outgoing Prime Minister Samaras, with whom AJC met frequently in Athens, Brussels, and New York during his three years as prime minister. "He led Greece through enormously challenging times. Though many of those challenges remain, his determined efforts to reverse the economic travails facing Greece and work closely with the international community, his courage to confront and combat the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, and his vision to strengthen security in the eastern Mediterranean, including ties with Israel, will all be hallmarks of his incumbency."

Following Syriza's electoral victory, Samaras, head of the New Democracy Party, said, "For the good of this country, I hope the next government will maintain what has been achieved." Golden Dawn, despite a crackdown on its leadership during the past year, won enough votes to be the third largest party in the parliament.

"It's dismaying that Golden Dawn, a neo-Nazi party that threatens the democratic fabric of Greece, a country brutally occupied by the Nazi regime in World War II, and menaces principally immigrants and Jews in Greece, continues to garner significant support," said Harris. "We look to the Syriza-led government to continue the measures implemented during the past years, and assure all minority communities, who are an integral part of Greece, that they will continue to be fully protected and respected, and that there will be no place for anti-Semitism in mainstream Greek society."

Source: AJC, January 26, 2015

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BOARD OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN GREECE on the result of the Greek Elections

Monday, 26 January 2015 13:40

The General National elections held in Greece on January 25, 2015, resulted in the victory of the SYRIZA party of the Left, and positioned the neo-nazi party of Golden Dawn in the third place, after having gained the 6.3% of the vote. In the aftermath of the elections, the President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece Mr. Moses Konstantinis, from Krakow, where he arrived today as part of the Greek National Delegation, which will attend tomorrow the ceremony in Auschwitz marking the International Holocaust Remembrance, made the following statement: "We congratulate SYRIZA, the winning party of yesterday's elections, and convey our best wishes. The Greek Jewish Community, the oldest in Europe and an integral part of the Greek society, has always supported the national struggles and has contributed to the progress of the country and will continue to do so by supporting the next government, in confidence that stability will be consolidated and development will continue so that the country fully overcomes the crisis.

On the other hand, I point out that the Greek Jewry is shocked by the fact that yesterday's elections indicated the pro-Nazi party as the third political power in Greece, the country that gave birth to Democracy and put the roots of the Western civilization.

Although the party of the seekers of Nazism has clearly demonstrated its position and intentions, it continues to misguide part of the Greek people by exploiting poverty and suffering.

Once again the Greek Jewry sends a warning signal. The revival of extreme ideologies in Europe and in Greece incubates serious dangers. If the world has forgotten or even worse if it has not learned from the Holocaust and the devastation that Nazism has brought to Greece and to the whole of Europe, then tomorrow's ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, has no meaning, and it only reminds us that many more initiatives should be undertaken at national and European level".

Greek Official Refutes Charge That Jews Don't Pay Taxes

Wednesday, 14 January 2015 12:58

ATHENS, Greece (JTA) — A Greek government official has been forced to clarify that Greek Jews do pay taxes and have the same obligations as every citizen.

"Greek citizens of Jewish faith pay their tax normally like all Greeks and do not enjoy any exemption or extra burden because of their religion," said Giorgos Kalantzis, the Education Ministry's general secretary for religion.

Last month, right-wing politician Panos Kammenos said in a television interview that Jews don't pay taxes.

Kalantzis said he felt compelled to speak out publicly as the accusations by Kammenos had become a part of "the public debate and, mainly, on the dark side of the Internet." Kalantzis said widespread reports that Jews paid fewer taxes were "conspiracy theories, lies and slander," the Kathimerini newspaper reported. The issue of tax avoidance is a heated topic in Greece, where widespread tax evasion has been blamed as a leading cause of Greece's economic troubles. In response to Kammenos' charge, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece had issued a statement saying it "categorically refutes" the comments.

Greece Responds to Terrorist Attacks in Paris

Following the terrorist attacks by jihadists in Paris at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015 and at the Koshier hyper market on January 9, 2015, the Prime Minister of Greece, Mr. Antonis Samaras, joined the forty-four world leaders who took part in the largest demonstration in the history of France, which was held in Paris on Sunday January 11, 2015.



Samaras in Paris



Demonstration in support in Thessaloniki

Similar demonstrations took place in many towns across the world, such as the rally organized by the Municipality of Thessaloniki at the White Tower, which gathered large crowds of people.

Letters of solidarity were sent to the President of CRIF expressing the Greek Jewry's outrage and support by the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), the Jewish Community of Athens and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki.

The immediate past president of KIS Mr. Benjamin Albalas attended the funeral of the four Jews who were killed in the Kosher hyper market in Paris held in Jerusalem on January 13, 2015.

ARTICLE IN THE GREEK NATIONAL HERALD ABOUT THE ROMANIOTE COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK

We thank Dean Sirigos of the Greek National Herald for his recent excellent article on the Romaniote community of New York. Note: the supplemental photos are from the photo archives of Kehila Kedosha Janina and do not appear in the original article.

NEW YORK – As Greek and Jewish-Americans, friends and colleagues for a century, discover how much they have in common in the wake of the deepening of relations between Greece, Israel, and Cyprus, both groups are fascinated to learn about the Romaniote Jews of Ioannina.

The keeper of that historic treasure in New York is Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, Scholar in Residence of the historic Kehila Kedosha Janina synagogue at 280 Broome Street that was built in 1927 in Lower Manhattan and director of its museum.

The most recent of Ikonomopoulos' stream of presentations focused on the life of the Romaniotes – Jews who unlike the Sephardim, have lived in Greece for more than 2000 years and have a Greek identity – on the Lower East Side in the early 20th century.

Her presentation was enriched by images of ship manifests and historic photos depicting everything from arrivals at Ellis Island to family and business life.

She presented an overview of Greek immigration, which began in large numbers in 1890 and received pushes from the Balkan wars and WW I, and said she looks forward to learning more about the Greek Christians of the nearby parish of St. Barbara.

One major difference between the two groups is that in the first wave, Greek Christians came as single men. "Greek Jews came over as families...but what distinguished Greek-speaking Jews from Jews of other backgrounds is their Greekness," she said. In photos of joint gatherings, except for the rabbi and clergy like Archbishop Athenagoras, the guests were indistinguishable.



Ikonomopoulos illustrated the community's story by focusing on a few families, especially the Colchamiro-Kalchimiras clan.

On July 22, 1905, 31 year-old Leon Colchamiro and his wife, Julia, set foot on the shores of America. On the ship manifest, his name appeared as Leon Kalchimiras and he is listed as Greek. She warned researchers that as valuable as the information on ship manifests can be, "many are treasures troves of lies – or misinterpretations." Leon was listed as not having an occupation and with Piraeus as his last residence – wrong on both counts.

His journey began in Ioannina must have been especially difficult for Julia as she was forced to leave behind her two young sons. Ultimately the family had eight children.



"It was her duty to follow her husband and Leon had dreams and ambitions that could not be fulfilled in Ioannina, where antiquated Greek inheritance laws that divided children's shares impoverished families.

Leon's younger brother Elias was the first Colchamiro to arrive. He loved playing the bouzouki and was often found in the Greek nightclubs on Manhattan's West Side, "the Café Amans as they were known."

Like their fellow Greeks, the Romaniotes took to American entrepreneurship right away. The Jews from Ioannina found a niche in the garment industry making women garments – and as early as 1911 the Colchamiro brothers are listed in a directory as operating a number of businesses.

Greek Christians will find the whole story familiar. Leon brought most of his extended family to New York and helped established the synagogue at 280 Broome Street and the Sisterhood of Ioannina, the philanthropic organization that continues to help the community.

Like all first generation Greek-Americans, they made a great effort to preserve the language. "When St. Barbara's opened in 1927 – interestingly enough in a converted synagogue – it would be the natural place to send their children," Ikonomopoulos said.

"What is interesting is that Polish, Italian, and Yiddish speaking Jewish immigrants did not send their children to learn those languages, but Greek immigrants, both Jewish and Christian, sent their children to learn Greek," she added. The Greek Jews were never comfortable attending the Spanish language synagogues nearby, just

as Greek Orthodox Christians did not worship at non-Greek churches.

Ikonomopoulos showed photos of 14 people living in a 2-bedroom apartment and said, "While their apartments were small their aspirations were not. And they had to appear important. There was a popular shoe shine stand on the corner of Allen and Broome and the women also looked their best when they went out.



"Every occasion became a celebration. A picnic in the park was not complete without the lilting strains of bouzouki music. At night they attended night clubs attended by Greeks – Christians and Jews – Turks and Armenians. Music was the diplomacy that brought them together."

Like the Greek Christians, Greek Jews "worked hard, but this is why they came to the United States, to make a better life for themselves and their families. Their shops lined Allen Street and their hard toil paid off as their children and grandchildren lived the American dream and became professionals."

She concluded with a touching story about attending a Colchamiro family reunion. Ikonomopoulos looked out at the 156 attendees, a mix of doctors, lawyers, professors, architects, with tears in her eyes and she said to them "how proud your ancestors would have been!"

The synagogue – its website is www.kkjsm.org – has been beautifully restored and the architect was also named Leon Colchamiro. That is no coincidence. Like Greek Christians, he was named after his grandfather, its founder.

News from Greek–Jewish Israel

We are honored that this year, at Yad Vashem, for the 70th anniversary commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz" on the 27th of January 2015, Fortouni Attas (Politis) Gani will be participating. Fortouni was born in Ioannina on May 26th, 1926. Fortouni was deported from Ioannina on March 25, 1944, along with the Jewish Community of Ioannina. This year, at age 88,

Fortouni will light a candle at the commemoration.



Fortouni and Chrysoula photographed by Artemis Alcalay

**Chrysoula, Fortouni, Moses and Anna pre WWII
The two youngest perished in the Holocaust**

Shalom to one and all!

**Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



Believe it or not, February 4th is a new year – for trees, that is, because it is "Tu B'Shvat" (the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shvat). I am sure that older members of KKJ remember those blue tin Jewish National Fund 'tzedaka' boxes found in almost in every Jewish home to collect money for planting trees in Israel, especially in the early days of the State. This was obviously a very tangible and Zionistic way for world Jewry to contribute to Israel's development and sustenance, but I would venture that most Jews are unaware of how important trees are in Jewish tradition and lore, and all the way from Biblical times.

First of all, according to Jewish homiletic tradition [Midrash], when God created the first man he took him and showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him, 'See my works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything that I created, I created for you. Be careful not to spoil or destroy my world--for if you do, there will be nobody after you to repair it.' The emphasis is on the trees and not the Garden of Eden as a whole, because trees represent God's precious natural world.

Further, human beings are compared to trees: The Bible says, "Because a man is a tree of the field"(Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verse 19), since the tree is at the pinnacle of the plant world that transforms the earth from a barren and lifeless mass into an environment capable of supporting other forms of life such as animals and humans. Therefore, man's very life comes from the tree. One of Judaism's greatest (and Sephardic) medieval philosophers, Bahya Ibn Pakuda, even transforms this idea into a legal directive: "The commentators explain that the life of man and his food is [from] a tree of the field...and it is not the way of a wise and understanding nation to needlessly destroy something so worthy, and therefore you should not cut down a tree of the field, rather you should protect it from destruction and damage, and take benefit from it."

Furthermore, the Torah mandates special consideration for trees even during war! While obviously human life takes precedence, there is a basic prohibition – which extends to private gardens even today – to uproot or destroy trees in general, and fruit trees in particular. And how many cultures or religions have a special blessing to thank God for the very fact that we have trees? Indeed, the special "*Birkat Ha'Ilanot*" – the Blessing on the Trees – is said every year during the month of Nissan, which signifies the onset of spring. Entire congregations often gather around an area that contains at least two different types of fruit trees, smell the fragrant newly blossomed flowers and say aloud, and with fervor: "*Blessed art Thou, Lord, Our God, King of the Universe, who has left nothing lacking in His world, and created within it good creations and good trees for the benefit of mankind.*"

And though fruit trees were given a higher status, all trees are considered part and parcel of fulfilling the commandment of settling the Land of Israel. The author of the Shulchan Aruch, Yosef Karo, even rules that if two buyers are interested in purchasing a parcel of land, where one wants to plant crops and the other wants to build houses and plant trees, the land should be sold to the latter, because, "that which is more permanent on the land better fulfills [the commandment of] settling the land. Houses are more permanent than crops, and trees are more permanent and rooted in the land than houses." Therefore wanton or unnecessary destruction of trees of any kind, excepting special circumstances, is basically forbidden in Judaism.

In short, it is not enough to show gratitude to God for creating the natural world which sustains and supports us, but rather appreciation, sensitivity and gratitude must be shown to nature itself, and specifically to trees! Something to think about the next time you sit in the shade or enjoy a piece of fruit! Happy New Year to one and all!!

News of Interest To All

Articles of Interest

The following article has been prepared by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos.

THE NEGRIN FAMILY

The surname Negrin, so common among Yanniote Jews, is also found in other communities in Greece. There is no doubt that the name originated in Spain (Nigrin for "black" or dark skinned, not an uncommon feature among Sephardic Jews in the Iberian Peninsula). The name then made its way into Italy, where it became Nigrin and, then into Greece where it took its final form as Negrin. The first entree of the name in the Ioannina Municipal Archives was in 1842 (the birth of Moshe ben Elias Negrin). The name appears 77 times in the male birth records of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, and of those, 47 are with the "Italian" spelling (Nigrin) probably due to

how the scribe heard the name pronounced. This makes Negrin the 4th most popular surname in Ioannina after Matsa (159 times), Koen (157 times), and Levy (133 times).

One of the earliest of the founding fathers of the Yanniot community in New York was a Negrin, Joseph Avraam Negrin, a 28 year old merchant who came with his 21 year old wife, Touvoula. They arrived on July 30, 1903 on the Graf Waldersee, leaving from Boulogne in France and going to their friend, Zacharia R. Yomtov at 115 E. Broadway, New York.

We have extensive Negrin trees from a number of families, most of which tie into another large Yanniot family like the Matsas, Mioni, Mosios, Colchamiro, Ganis, David, and Eliyia (the family of the famous poet) just to name a few.



Sam Negrin age 4-1918



Sarah and Joseph Negrin Family

The Negrin branch of Iosef Eliyia's family



Negrins made us proud fighting in the US Armed Forces during WWII.



Max Negrin



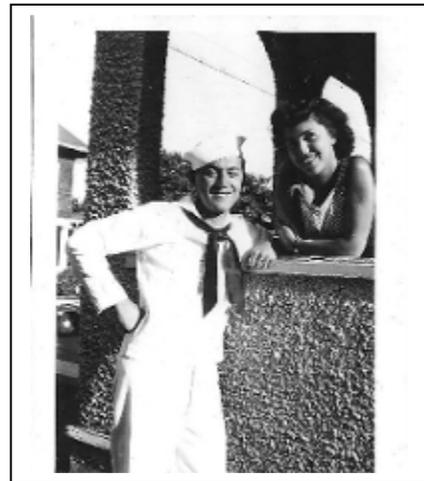
Herman Negrin



Morris Negrin



Murray Negrin



Sam Negrin and Diana Ganis Negrin

Maurice Negrin's immediate family in Volos survived the Holocaust. Many Negrins in Ioannina were not so lucky. Of the 1851 victims from Ioannina who perished in the Holocaust, 101 of them were Negrins. May their Memory Be Eternal.

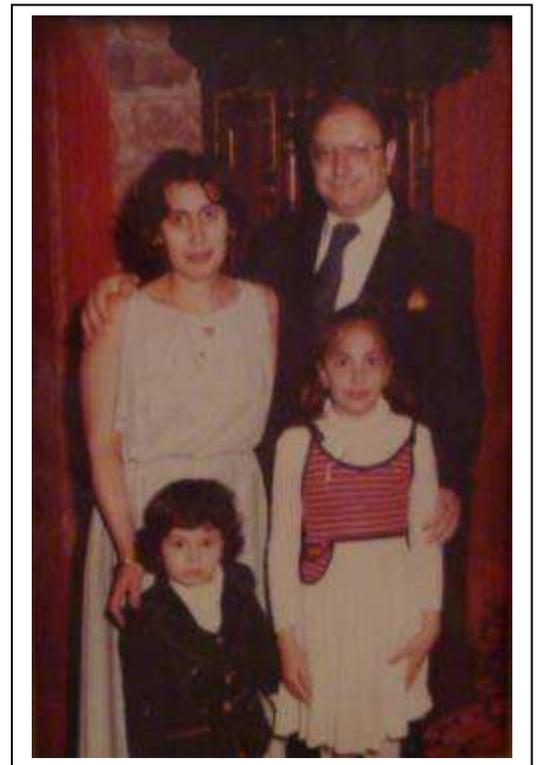
From the photo archives of Kehila Kedosha Janina taken by the Germans in Ioannina on the day of the deportation, March 25, 1944.



Maurice Negrin's family came to Kehila Kedosha Janina from Volos after the earthquake there in 1955 but both sides of his family were Yanniototes, showing the Romaniote thread throughout many of the Jewish Communities in Epirus, Thessaly and Attica.



Maurice Negrin's Family in Greece



Fani, Savas, Maurice & Esther Negrin

All the Negrins are particularly proud of the new Chief Rabbi of Greece, Gabriel Negrin, who officially took over the position on January 1st.

Rabbi Gabriel Negrin



Maurice is the grandson of Moise (Morris) Negrin and Esther (Steroula) Mosios. On February 28th, in addition to honoring Maurice, we will also be remembering Moise Negrin of Blessed Memory.

As always, we continually look for additional information. If you are from any branch of the Negrin family and you wish to add info to the family trees or other information such as the date of arrival, where your family lived in New York or other pertinent information relating to the Negrin family, please send it to us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

Join us on February 28 at Kehila Kedosha Janina for the Shabbat service honoring Maurice Negrin and his grandfather Moise Negrin of Blessed Memory. Our services start at 9:15. We are located at 280 Broome Street (between Allen and Eldridge). Please RSVP if you are coming so we have sufficient food.

Request for help

We are happy to say that we were able to help Rabbi Gershon in his quest for Yossi Mazza's family in New York. Now, we would like to help Barbara from Vienna, Austria. This is the message we received:

Hello,

I am Barbara from Vienna, Austria and I have a rather unusual question. Maybe you can help me.

I am looking for the family of a Greek doctor, David Rouso from either Florina or Kastoria in Greece. This is very close to Ioannina. He was murdered in the Holocaust.

The only thing I have is the Testimonial of his wife (or first wife as written) that was filled out in New York and the death record of April 1945.

The reason why I am trying to find the family is that they might not know the circumstances of David's death. In 1986 the testimonial reads no date or place of death.

I have now been forwarded a story and document of David's last days and exact day of death.

You know, its just a pin in a haystack, but here are the informations I have:

David Rouso, born 1913

lived in Kastoria (during the war in Florina)

his (first) wife reads as Sarah Pardo, signed with Sarah Cohen in 1986

Does any of these names sound familiar to you ?

Is there another Greek congregation in or around NY ?

Is there a magazine or newspaper that (former) Greek jewish families would read that I could contact ?

Thank you very much and my best regards

Barbara Timmermann

Jewish Vienna Walking Tours

Barbara@viennawalks.com

We have another unusual request:

I am Rudin (Rudy) Mucaj, I am 19 years old and I am from Albania, but I live in USA. I am writing to you because recently I have checked on internet for my family predecessors. My grandmother has always told me that she was born in Ioannina and she left when she was 9 years old because of the Greek Civil War. She has also told me that her mother came from Cabilis (Kabilis) family, and has told me a lot of stories about her mother's side of family. I made some researches on internet and I found that Kabilis is a Jewish family. But I do not know if there was only one family named Kabilis, or if there were more than one and all they had in common was only the family name and nothing more. My grandmother used to tell me that even today their house exists in Ioannina, and it is a museum. Again I do not know if this is true or not. When I checked on internet I found a page named "Geni. A My heritage Company", I saw some people that their last name was Kabilis and most of them were born in Ioannina, but died in US, Greece, and elsewhere. There was also one person that was born in Vlora, Albania, and it said that you had made the last updates on their profiles. So I was thinking if you could help me to find something more about my predecessors that come from Ioannina. Maybe a family tree, or other facts. I would be more than thankful to you, if you helped me.

***Yours Sincerely
Rudin Mucaj***

Note: in communicating with Rudin, he told me that his great grandmother's name was Sabrie/Sabrieh. I believe that it might have been Sarina or Sarah.

Share your pictures with us

A recent connection to our community is from the Cantos and Mione families. We thank you Stella Bennardello for your picture of your grandmother, Stella Mione Cantos who lived with her husband, Ike Cantos on Broome Street.



In our ongoing research on early arrivals from the Jewish community of Ioannina to New York, we found an interesting arrival in 1902 into the port of Boston. Always assuming that all the Yanniototes came into the port of New York, we now realize that we were wrong! If any of your Yanniotote families came into Boston or another port of entry, please share this information with us by contacting us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

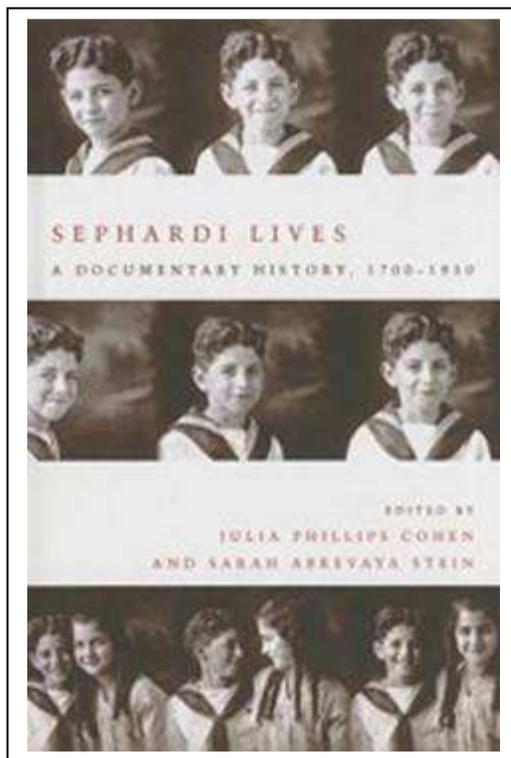
New Book For Sale

We are excited to offer this just released book for sale: **Sephardi Lives**

Sephardi Lives presents the reader with an outstanding collection of primary source documents portraying a broad spectrum of experience in the lives of the Judeo-Spanish population expelled from the Iberian Peninsula during the late 14th and 15th Centuries. In contrast to other documentary histories this compilation focuses not only on the political, the famous, and the infamous, but also on the everyday affairs of the people. It highlights elements as diverse as children's lessons, diary entries, a woman's grievances in the face of eviction, and the laments of Jewish conscripts in the Ottoman army. It recounts criticism of women singing on the Sabbath, expressions of hope for the redemption, memories of Holocaust survivors, and pleas for the study of Ladino in Mexico....

Rich and heterogeneous, this wonderful compilation is an outstanding endeavor to preserve a history and culture that might otherwise be lost. With notes and extensive index, Cohen and Stein's collection of documents are essential to the study of the Sephardim, and to the understanding of culture and its synthesis.

We are able to offer this book for \$25 plus \$5 for P&H within the continental USA. Send your check made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina to Kehila Kedosha Janina at 1 Hanson Place, Huntington, NY 11743.



Websites of interest

<http://www.boweryboogie.com/2015/01/kehila-kedosha-janina-planning-greek-jewish-festival-s-pringtime/>

A heads up on our Greek-Jewish street festival on May 31st

<http://www.haaretz.com/mobile/.premium-1.637252?v=CA2C3A1AA3FA0B848B91F0735C2B6423>

A delightful article about Sami Modiano, Holocaust survivor from Rhodes, celebrating his wedding anniversary in Rome where he now lives

<http://m.theglobeandmail.com/life/travel/destinations/from-balkan-backwater-to-must-see-destination-youll-never-guess-where/article22486662/?service=mobile>

An article about travel to Albania

<http://www.worldjewishdaily.com/valls-speech.php>

Prime Minister of France gives a moving speech after the terrorists attacks in France

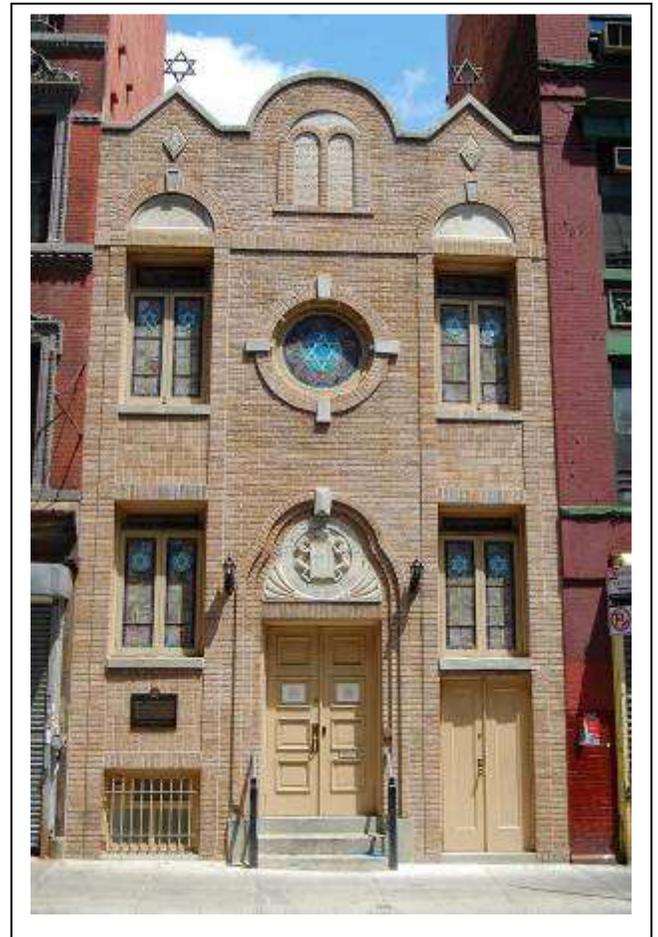
<http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Bulgarian-president-keeping-palace-lights-on-to-protest-anti-Semitism-389206>

Finally, an accurate assessment of Bulgaria's role in the Holocaust.

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.



**Kehila Kedosha Janina e-newsletter: number 72: February 2015
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E-mail: kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net
Web Site: www.kkjsm.org**