Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This newsletter is dedicated to Rebecca Hauser Yomtov, who will be celebrating her 95th birthday on December 12th. We also stop and remember the members of her family who perished in the Holocaust.

We wish our readers a joyous Holiday season. May the proximity of the Jewish Holiday of Hanukah and the Christian holiday of Christmas bring us closer together, to celebrate what we share in common: love of family and the preservation of our respective traditions.

Hanukah Menorahs from Spain and Italy from the 15th and 16th centuries.
PLEASE REMEMBER OUR NEW WEBSITE: www.kkjsm.org and our new emails: info@kkjsm.org and museum@kkjsm.org.

This newsletter, our 93rd 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).

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE NO LONGER USE OUR PO BOX-
ALL MAIL SHOULD GO TO 280 BROOME ST.
New York, NY 10002.

We now reach over 8000 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 museum@kkjsm.org

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (info@kkjsm.org) 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

We regret to inform you of the passing of Boenina (Betty) beloved wife of Alberto Ferera, the former President of the Athens’ Bnai Brit Lodge “Philon.” Betty was born in Thessaloniki in 1948, the daughter of Moissis and Esther Rousso. Her life was dedicated to her family and to Judaism. The funeral took place in the Athens Jewish cemetery on October 31st 2016.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Our sincere condolences to the Cohen and Kofinas families on the passing of Abe Cohen, the brother of Koula Kofinas. He is survived by his wife, Veronica and his sisters, Fani Cohen Frizis and Koula Cohen Kofinas. Avraam (Abe) was close to 90 years old and was born in Larissa. He and his family escaped deportation in hiding with the help of Greek Christians.

Three grandchildren of Hyman Mioni (born in Arta) and Estir Matza (born in Ioannina) died in the month of November.

Joe Myones passed away at the age of 96. He was the son of Nissim and Flora Mioni. He is survived by his sons, Neal and Barry and their families.
Leah (Leanore) Naphtali Seroka ((b. 8/21/35-d. 11/9/16), daughter of Bella Mioni and Mathew Naphtali was survived by her husband, Stanley and three sons, Mark, Wayne and Richard, her daughters-in-law and grandchildren.

Hy Myones died at the age of 97. He was the son of Simon Myones and Betty Ganis Myones. His wife, Betty passed away last year. Hy is survived by his children, Steven, Jerry, Irving and Rebecca Myones Negrin, and his many loving grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Jack Cohen at the age of 91. Both Jack and his wife of 68 years, Sylvia Isaac Cohen, passed on their love of their Greek Jewish world to their children. Jack is survived by his wife, Sylvia and his three daughters, Arlene, Michelle and Jackie, and their families.

Simchas

We are overjoyed to share in the celebration of Rebecca Hauser’s 95th birthday. Rebecca, born Rebecca Yomtov in 1912 in Ioannina, was deported with the Jewish community of Ioannina in March of 1944. Rebecca is the daughter of Mordo (Mordechai) Yomtov (a merchant who lived on Arsaki Street in Ioannina) and Boneka Matsa Yomtov, both of whom, along with the rest of her family, perished in the Holocaust. Rebecca was the only survivor in her immediate family and was brought to the United States by her uncles, Jacob and Nissim.
It is with great joy that we wish Irene Mathios Dresner and Byron Dresner a happy anniversary on their 60th anniversary.
This November, we celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of a member of the Lagary (Lagaris) family, Spencer Kufeld (see pictures in this e-newsletter). One of the emotional moments was when George Lagary saw family names on memorial plaques we received from the Sephardic Jewish Center of Canarsie, which were originally displayed in the Sephardic Jewish Center of Mapleton.

We were overjoyed to welcome Samantha Beja, daughter of Jeff Beja. Samantha is now a member of the Greek Jewish Young Professionals Network.
As always, visitors continued to flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

Our visitors come from near and far. Recently we entertained a group from Brooklyn and South Africa, along with two young men from London. No matter where they may go on the Lower East Side, we are the highlight of their visit.

Robert Freudenthal and Omer Portillo from London

------------------------------------------

Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

In November we had a first at Kehila Kedosha Janina, a Havdalah Bar Mitzvah. The Bar Mitzvah boy was Spencer Kufeld and the officiant was Len Neuhaus, a member of our Board of Trustees. Spencer’s Greek-Jewish heritage is through his father whose mother was from the Lagary (Lagaris) family. Thank you Beth and Alan Kufeld for choosing to celebrate your son’s Bar Mitzvah at Kehila Kedosha Janina.
Events of Interest in the New York Area

Our dear friends at the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy are celebrating their CHAI Anniversary! Do join them for their Gala, "A Taste of The Lower East Side" on December 18, 2016 at the Rooftop event Space of the Manny Cantor Center.

Please click this link for further details. www.wizadjournal.com/lesjc-brunch2016

Honoring Our Families

It is only appropriate that this month, December, we honor our founding father, Zacharia Yomtov, who set sail from Avlona (now in Albania) in December of 1898, arriving in New York Harbor on January 11, 1899. Zacharia was the first and, unlike other immigrants who listed on the ship manifest the name of the person they were going to, Zacharia listed “no one.” We do have an address that he went to (11 Madison Street) which was then a back tenement with little ventilation, no indoor plumbing and only a coal stove to heat the residence. Zacharia was a boarder but would marry into one of the most prominent Yanniote families, the Mosios family. When his marriage was arranged, his father-in-law, Menachem Mosios, and mother, Esther Yomtov, brought his bride to the United States. His bride, Mazalto Moses, was nine years his junior, not at all uncommon among arranged marriages of that period. When Lula Mosios, Mazalto’s mother, realized that there was no need to provide a dowry in the United States, she came over with other daughters who married into the Ganis, Barouch and Negin families.

We have a number of Yomtov family trees in our museum archives and are now working on making the connection to link all of them.
If you want your family honored or memorialized in our monthly newsletter, send in a donation (of your choosing) to Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum, 280 Broome Street, New York City, NY 10002.

Of course, we always welcome family photos!

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

News from Jewish Greece

Ioannina

A letter from a Yanniote: Emily Isaac Udler

Note: the photos printed here with this article are printed with the permission of Emily Udler and Joe Besca.

Ioannina – Yom Kippur 2016

Dear Family and Friends,

In August, I received an email from Prof. Moises Eliasaf, Professor of Internal Medicine at Ioannina’s hospital and Head of the Jewish community inviting all those born in Ioannina and their offspring to attend Yom Kippur services in Ioannina.

This invitation triggered all sorts of emotions and when I decided to go, I asked my eldest son, Arieh to go with me. I was thrilled when he accepted my invitation. We had not spent 4 contiguous days together in 30 years and to do so in Ioannina about which he had heard so much from my parents was not to be missed.

A bit of background:
Unlike most other cities in Greece where the Jews speak Ladino and are offspring of the Spanish exile in 1492, the Jewish community of Ioannina was established 300-400 years after the Roman expulsion following the destruction of the Second Temple (in 70 CE). Thus, the community is 1500 years old and the Jews know Greek and Hebrew but not Ladino and its descendants are called Romaniotim. With the Spanish expulsion a thousand years later many Spanish/Portuguese Jews arrived in Ioannina but were not warmly received and left, going on to establish cities, the biggest of which was Thessaloniki (Salonika).

Most of the Jews of Ioannina were religious and did not work on Shabbat. In the 1920’s new regulations were issued forcing them to refrain from work on Sundays in addition to Saturday, thereby diminishing their income. In addition, there were anti-Semitic rumblings and half of the 4,000 strong community immigrated to the U.S.A.
On the eve of WWII, there were roughly 2,000 Jews in Ioannina. Some were able to flee but most were rounded up at 3-4am on Shabbat, March 25, 1944. This was just between Purim and Pesach and in as many of the Jewish families had already baked matzot for the coming holiday; they took the matzot as part of their provisions. The entire community was ordered to Lake Pomviotis where they were trucked to the city of Larissa which had a rail line. From there it was a train ride straight north through Budapest and onto Auschwitz. Among the Jews, on this train were my mother Rosa Besso (b. 1918), her parents Annetta (b.1889) and Michael Besso (b. 1876) and Annetta’s sister Reveka, (b. 1887). My father’s parents, Mazel Tov*(b.1883) and Haim Isaak (b. 1872) and his sister, Anna (b.1913) and brother Avramaike (b.1910) were also on the train. Only my mother survived**. Annetta, Michael, Reveka, Mazel Tov and Haim went to the gas chambers and the crematorium, upon arrival at Auschwitz. Anna died the day before liberation and Avramaiki was in the Sonderkommando, all of whom were periodically killed so as not to bear witness to the horrors. Of the 2,000, a total of 168 Jews returned to Ioannina after the war – some from Auschwitz, some from Cyprus and Palestine and others from hiding in the mountains and the Peloponnese.

The survivors came back to find strangers living in their homes and wearing their clothes. They were shocked to realize that so many of their loved ones were gone forever. The survivors clung, one another, to start a new life and this led to many arranged marriages. But where to live? The outer synagogue (to exo to synagoy) had been destroyed by the Nazis who used it as horse stables. Since the property on which the synagogue had been built belonged to the Jewish community, after the war they were able to utilize the plot to build a complex of apartments for the survivors. Fortunately, the inner synagogue situated near the lake and inside the Castro (the Ottoman walls called the Ioannina Castle), built in 1829 was intact. My parents – Rosa Besso and Yacov Isaak were married in 1947 and I was born in 1949. In 1951 we sailed for New York since Irving Isaacs, my father’s older brother who had emigrated in the 1920s was able to arrange visas for the United States.

Fast forward to 2016
Arieh and I arrived in Ioannina the day before Yom Kippur eve. It was quite a moving experience for me to be back, even though since leaving at the age of 2, I had been back 3 times. Seeing the city through Arieh’s eyes was fascinating. I was surprised at how much he had learned from my parents. Arieh noticed things that I did not, such as Hebrew etched above some doorposts, how similar I looked to the Jewish ladies in Ioannina and secondly was able to understand Greek conversations to a good degree. The city environs were reminiscent of the 1970’s, yet there were also lovely new pedestrian malls as well. There was an old
fashioned cafénio (you just can’t call it a coffee shop) with the most divine Kaddafi and baklava and since all the patrons appeared to be in their eighties or nineties we brought the average age down drastically. Walking down the main street, we both wondered how all the gold and silver jewelry shops remained in business since no one seemed to enter any of the many stores. And yet, despite the fact that it was all very pleasant and this was the year 2016, the Holocaust hovered over us. One could not look at the lake and not think that this is where they gathered our families.

**Yom Kippur**

We arrived early at the Inner synagogue (within the Castro – Ottoman walls) for the Kol Nidre service and were happy to see the synagogue all lit up and to meet the cantor who came from Athens for the Yom Kippur services. I had no idea how many people would come as there are only 35 Jews left in Ioannina and many are in the nineties. I couldn’t have been more surprised to see a large group of well-dressed middle aged people flowing into the synagogue and hugging one another. There were over 150 people, about 100 women and 50 men, most of whom came from Athens including some 12 Israelis. This was very heartwarming since on my previous visits there was barely a minyan to be found in the darkened synagogue. But although the cantor, who was from Athens, was excellent – I was disappointed that he did not chant the prayers as did my father, a native of Ioannina.

The closing service, the Ne’ila stirred us. The cantor blew the shofar so beautifully that it brought many people to tears.

And so despite the near destruction of this ancient Jewish community, my son and I were able to pray in the same synagogue that my father, grandfathers and great-grandfathers prayed in.

**The Jewish People Live**

* I was named after my paternal grandmother Mazal Tov (in Hebrew), Eftichiya (in Greek) and when we got to New York, my Uncle Irving said Eftichiya won’t work in NY – so for no good reason I became Emily.

** My mother’s testimony is available upon request.

---

**Zakynthos**

On October 31st the city of Zakynthos became a sister city with Qiryat Bialik in Israel. Among the dignitaries present at the ceremony was Irit Ben-Abba, the Israeli Ambassador to Greece. This is the second instance of a Greek city becoming a sister city to one in Israel. The first was Thessaloniki with Tel Aviv.
Thessaloniki

At the port in Thessaloniki, there are now gold-colored stones with names of Jews who were deported to the concentration camps in 1943. This is part of a European plane to remember the victims and the stones have been placed in major cities in Europe where deportations took place.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

ISRAEL ON FIRE, GREECE IN SOLIDARITY. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF KIS

"Haifa is burning and the mountains around Jerusalem are on fire too. Hundreds of people are injured and thousands are evacuating their homes."
The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the all Greek Jewry express their full support to the residents of Israel who were injured or were hit by the fires. We wish for the immediate restoration of the damages.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece congratulates the Greek Government on the immediate positive response to the request of the Israeli Prime Minister to Greece for assistance in order to put out the devastating fires widespread in Israel.

We wish all the Greek pilots, the firefighters and the technicians of the Greek delegation good luck to their mission. We highly appreciate the courage and solidarity they demonstrate in dealing with this disaster and wish them to thrive always in strength and health.

This tragic situation proves that the cooperation between Greece and Israel is not only based on common interests but also on strong bonds of friendship between the two peoples.”

Athens, November 25, 2016

Unresolved issues
There were two meetings in Greece on the 28th and 29th of November between the David Saltiel, the President of KIS (Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece) and representatives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss two issues of importance to Greek Jewry. The first issue was the return of archival material belonging to the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki that is still residing in Moscow. The material was originally stolen by the Germans in 1942 and taken to Germany. When the Allies entered Germany in 1945 the material was found. The bulk of it still resides in Moscow. For two decades, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece has been trying to get this material returned. The issue still remains unresolved. The second issue is the establishment of a memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau (at Block 18) that would memorialize Greek-Jewish involvement at Auschwitz.

Events Commemorating the Creation of British Internment Camps in Cyprus and the visit of Israeli Jews who were born in the camps

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Nechema Friedman says her parents often recalled how the months they spent in a detention camp in Cyprus after World War II nurtured their desire to plant roots in Palestine.
The 69-year-old returned to the east Mediterranean island on Wednesday along with dozens of fellow Israelis also born in Cyprus to mark the 70th anniversary of the camps where 52,000 Holocaust survivors were interned by the British.

Cyprus' Defense Minister Christoforos Fokaides unveiled a memorial at a Cypriot Army camp that formerly housed a British military hospital where 800 Jewish infants were born after the war. Some 2,200 children in all were born to Jewish couples in the camps.
"People still brought children into this world, their hopes revived here on this ground," Friedman said at the memorial created in the semi-circle shape of the corrugated iron hut that housed detainees.

Friedman's parents, Moshe and Gita Weissler, were among the Holocaust survivors fleeing Europe on 39 crammed, rickety boats who were interned in a dozen camps on Cyprus while trying to reach Palestine. At the time, Britain controlled the territory that would become Israel. British warships intercepted the boats and kept the passengers behind barbed wire and guard towers between 1946 and 1949, events depicted in the 1958 novel "Exodus" and the 1960 movie of the same name.

But along with separation, the camps also fostered communities where schools, libraries, theater and music flourished, fanning the hope of return, Friedman said. "We prepared ourselves, we knew that one day we would be out of the camps," she said.

By virtue of a decree issued by Britain's King George VI to celebrate his birthday, the Jewish detainees slowly were allowed to leave the camps and head to Palestine. Friedman was 7 months old when her family they reached Haifa on November 29, 1947. That was the day the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine, paving the way for the founding of the state of Israel. "Now we have this monument to show how it was then, it's become something that we could come back to," Friedman said.
Turkey and Israel Resume Diplomatic Relations

November 16, 2016

Twenty-four hours after Israel declared Eitan Na'eh as ambassador to Turkey, President Erdogan announced Kemal Okem as first ambassador since the signing of the reconciliation agreement.

Erdogan declared his new appointment shortly before taking off for a state visit to Pakistan and Uzbekistan. "We are appointing as ambassador to Israel Kemal Okem, our prime minister's foreign affairs adviser," Erdogan told a news conference in Ankara before leaving for Pakistan.

Na'eh has specialized in Turkish affairs during his career and served in Ankara in 1991 as second and then first secretary for political affairs. Currently he serves as deputy ambassador to Britain and has also served as ambassador to Azerbaijan and as a policy advisor in the Prime Minister's Office.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel

One of the fascinating principles in Jewish law and lore is one developed by one of Jewry's greatest luminaries, the "Ramban" – Rav Moshe ben Nahman – also known as "Nahmanides" (1194-1270 C.E.) who lived in Girona, Catalonia in Spain. Starting with our forefathers' stories in the Book of Genesis, the Ramban developed the idea of "the deeds of the fathers are a sign for their children". The basic idea is that everything that happened to— or was caused by— our forefathers, and whether good or bad, not only made an indelible impression on succeeding generations, but was even repeated by later generations. The Ramban's purpose was to show how our history and what befell the Jews was not coincidental, but rather often the result of our own actions or omissions. Though ultimate redemption and the coming of the Messiah are dependent on G-d's will, our own actions have decisive influence in how long this process will take, and how G-d decides to reward or punish us. Therefore, we must learn lessons from the
past, so that we can speed up the redemptive process. Otherwise, we are destined to repeat the same good or bad actions and further delay the final redemption.

The "post-Hanukkah" actions of the Hasmonaeans (the Maccabees), are a prime example of this idea according to the Ramban. In the Ramban's view, the ultimate downfall of the independence and religious freedom the Maccabees had won for Judaism and Israel, which we commemorate on Hanukkah, was due to our own sins and omissions.

Historically speaking, the Hasmonaeans began going down a very slippery slope to corruption and autocracy, almost immediately after their miraculous ejection of the Seleucid Greeks from Jerusalem and the rededication of the Temple. Among other actions, the most significant, and according to the Ramban, the most detrimental in terms of blatant violation of Jewish law, was the usurping of both absolute religious authority – the priestly cult, and the monarchy – the political leadership. The Torah clearly delineates what could be called the first "division of power" and "checks and balances" that ultimately became the basis of the U.S. Constitution and the American nation: By G-d's divine decree, the kingship/presidency/highest political leader in Judaism must only come from the Biblical tribe of Yehuda (Judah), meaning the Davidic dynasty. Likewise, the highest religious/spiritual authority must be Cohanim –priests – who must be direct descendants of Aaron, the first Cohen, who was the brother of Moses. These two authorities must rule together, with no interchanging or exchanging of roles, and absolutely no facility for either party to usurp the power of the other. And this "balance of power" was a religious directive, meaning its breach would incur divine punishment.

And in fact, though other factors were involved, the ultimate total downfall of the Hasmonaeans and the takeover of the Land of Israel by Rome was divine punishment by G-d because of this terrible transgression. As the Ramban comments on Genesis 49:10: "This was also the reason for the punishment of the Hasmonaeans, who reigned during the Second Temple. They were Tzaddikim of the Most High, without whom the learning of Torah and the observance of Commandments would have been forgotten in Israel, and despite this, they suffered such great punishment. The four sons of the old Hasmonaean Matityahu: Yehudah the Maccabee, Elazar, Yonathan and Shimon, righteous men who ruled one after another, in spite of all their prowess and success, fall by the sword of their enemies. And ultimately the punishment reached the stage as declared in the Gemara (Bava Batra 3b), “He who says, ‘I come from the house of the Hasmonaeans,’ is a slave,” as they were all destroyed on account of this sin. All the children of the righteous Matityahu the Hasmonae were deposed for this only: they ruled even though they were not of the seed of Yehudah and of the house of David, and thus they completely removed “the scepter” and “the lawgiver” from Yehudah. And their punishment was measure for measure, as the Holy One, blessed be He, caused their slaves (King Herod) to rule over them, and it is they who destroyed them” (Ramban, Chavel Translation, Shilo, 1971).

As a rule, all of our classic commentators and Sages subscribe to the idea of the tremendous significance and influence of our past deeds on present and future events and situations. And while some may feel that it seems unfair to blame ourselves for almost all the tragedies that we have suffered, it was the Spanish philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist George Santayana who said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it!"

In searching for the names of the young women in a photo of the Levy sisters, there was an error. We erroneously identified the sisters as Aretha and Efthimia Levy. It should have correctly read “Annetta” and Efthimia Levy. Raphael Moissis corrected us as, in the process, his son, Alexander, sent us a lovely photo from the family’s collection.
In our request for information on the bag in the heirlooms from the Naphtali/Lagary family, we thank Annette Fromm for the following information.

“The little black and white knit bag shown in the recent newsletter is part of Sarakatsan or Sarakatsani traditional dress. The Sarakatsan were nomadic shepherders in the Balkans from across northern Greece as far as Bulgaria. Items such as these have been found in Greek flea markets for a long time - I bought mine in Monastiraki in 1970. Similar knitting is found in the footless leggings worn by the Sarakatsan (http://www.miriammilgram.com/archives/kkchknit.htm).”
As you can see from our monthly e-newsletter, family photos mean so much to us. Please share your photos.

This month we are highlighting two family photos. The first is part of our collection from the Colchamiro family. The photo came from David Colchamiro and is the photo of his family, Asher and Steroula Colchamiro and their children, Rae, John, Sally and Louis. The photo was taken in Ioannina in 1912.

The second photo is from the collection of David Corito and is of the Matza branch of his family. We have been able to identify Morris and Ida Matza in back row (3rd and 4th from the right. We are looking for help in identifying others in the photo.
So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) made out to *Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum*, 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.

PLEASE REMEMBER: WE DISCONTINUED OUR POST OFFICE BOX
ALL MAIL SHOULD GO DIRECTLY TO
280 BROOME STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002

Kehila Kedosha Janina e-newsletter: Number 93: December 2016
Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002
Email: museum@kkjsm.org
Website: www.kkjsm.org