



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

December 2008 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Our monthly e-newsletter has become a welcome addition in thousands of households around the world. 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). This e-newsletter has helped us connect to additional Greek Jews throughout the world. 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.

This month, we mourn the passing of Diane (Diamonda) Serota Mintz, the daughter of Sarah and Benjamin Serata (both of Blessed Memory) and the mother of Sidney and Melvyn. The Sephardic world mourns the passing of David Altabe (1929-2008), internationally recognized authority on Judeo Espanyol language and literature, and the author of numerous poetry books in Judeo-Espanyol.



We welcome the birth of a new member of our community. Samuel Matsa, the son of Morris and Liat, the grandson of Sam and Perry and the great-grandson of Morris Matsa of Blessed Memory, was born on October 13th. His great-grandfather was very active in the Kehila Kedosha Janina after coming to the USA from Greece in 1952.



On Friday, November 28th, Kehila Kedosha Janina was honored to host the wedding of Lana Soyfer and Stan Mitelman. The young couple had been charmed by our historic synagogue and chose the Kehila as the site of their nuptials.



Photo courtesy of Phillip Rosenbaum



Koula's Kitchen

Koula's Kitchen, Kehila Kedosha Janina's popular cooking class will take place in the communal room downstairs at KKJ (280 Broome Street) on Sunday, December 14th at 1:00. REGISTRATION IS A MUST! The charge is only \$5 for this very popular event. This class we will be demonstrating Hanukah recipes (loukoumades, rivani and tiganites). Koula Kofinas will be leading the class and, this year, her helpers will be Rachel Cohen and Audrey Mordos. Coffee will be served and the Hanukah treats will be available for all to taste.



2009 Tour To Jewish Greece

Our prices are in! Join us for our full tour (June 4-June18) or for the Colchamiro Reunion in Ioannina (June 11-15). This year, our full tour includes Rhodes, Salonika, Ioannina and Athens. Access our website (www.kkjsm.org) for full details.



Our new exhibit, "Our Gang," the story of Greek Jewish participation in the United States Armed Forces during WWII, opened on November 2nd. We have now put the photo components of the exhibit on our website (be patient, because of the large number of photos, it might take some time to download). It is not too late to be part of this historic exhibit. If you have a Greek-Jewish relative who served in the United States Armed Forces during WWII, send us a photo in uniform. This way, he (or she) will be honored as a permanent part of our website (the exhibit will initially appear under "Exhibits/present exhibits" and, then, in the late fall of 2009 will become part of our "Permanent Exhibits" link). Cherished photos continue to come in.



Milton Coffman (Coffina)



Morris (Mo Coffino) and his mother



Meyer Yomtov saying goodbye to family



Jack Jeuda



Ed Bakola and Family



Jack Askinazi

We are collecting formal photos in uniform and family photos taken before "Our Gang" left to serve. Just added to our collection (courtesy of Ben Gessula) are photos taken on Broome and Allen during a patriotic rally in July of 1942.



The Rhodes Project

INTERIM REPORT: JEWS OF RHODES PROJECT

Robert Rubin Mayo, M.D., M.A.

November 7, 2008

The purpose of the Jews of Rhodes Project is to try to identify the original 50 families who were Iberian, Italian, and Romaniote Jews that existed in Rhodes in 1522. This will be done by studying the paternal lines (using Y DNA testing) and the maternal lines (using mitochondrial DNA testing) of Jews whose families had lived on the Island of Rhodes.

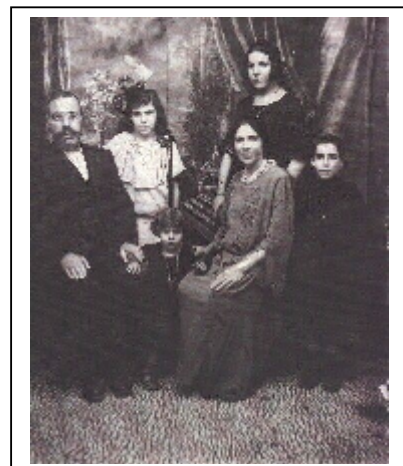
So far, the following Rhodeslis families have had members taking part in the study:

ALHADEFF, ALMELEH, ALTABET, AMATO, BENON, BENVENISTE, BERRO, CAPELLUTO, CODRON, COEN / COHEN, De MAYO, FRANCO, GALANTE, HAGIEZ, HALFON, HANAN, HASSON, HAZAN / JAZAN, ISRAEL, LEVI / LEVY, MAYO, MENASHE, MIZRAHI, NAHMIAS, NAVARRO, NOTRICA, PALOMBO, PIHA, PISANTE / PIZANTI, ROUSSO / RUSSO, ROZANES, SURMANI, TARANTO, TARICA, TOURIEL / TURIEL, TREVES.

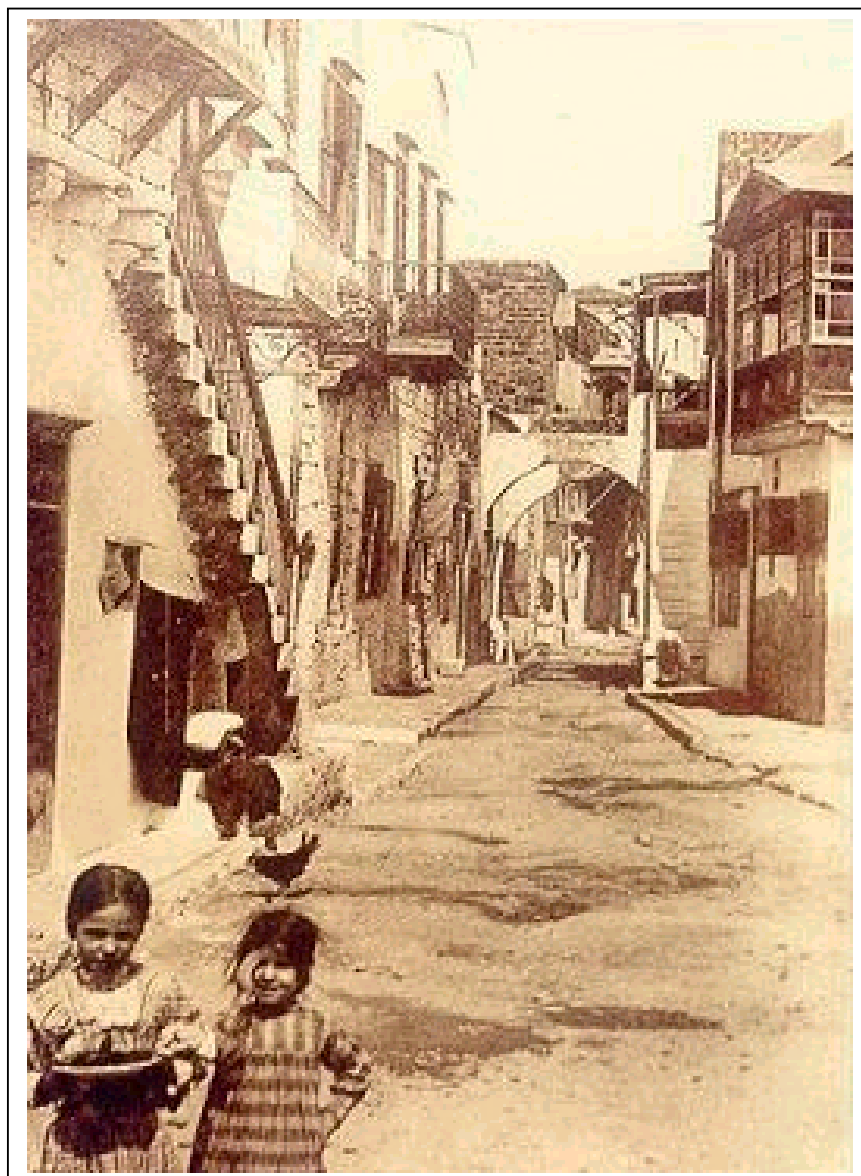
By means of this investigation, many people have discovered new cousins and have been able to trace their ancestors back many more generations. If you are not already a participant, you can become involved in this project by e-mailing Dr. Rubin Mayo at bob_rubin@hotmail.com.



Gravestone



Levi Family



Old Photo Jewish Quarter in Rhodes
Copyright: Jewish Museum of Rhodes



Museum News

Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum is pleased to bring to your attention an exhibition at one of New York City's lesser known museums, The Museum of Biblical Art, MOBIA, on 61st Street and Broadway. MOBIA recently hosted Vincent Giordano's "Before the Flame Goes Out," photographic exhibit about the Romaniote Jews of Greece and New York. In the process, MOBIA has become a good friend.

CHAGALL'S BIBLE: MYSTICAL STORYTELLING, is on display through January 18, 2009 at MOBIA. It features over 100 works, several of which have never been shown before in the United States.

Chagall's Bible: Mystical Storytelling

Marc Chagall holds a singular place in the canon of modern painters. Melding symbolic elements and iconographies from the traditions of Jewish Hasidism, eastern Orthodoxy and western Christianity, as well as incorporating motifs drawn from his Russian cultural roots and his fondness for France, Chagall created a dynamic and personally significant series of Bible-based images. Examining issues of historical context and evolving religious sensibilities, MOBIA's exhibition represents an important moment in the reappraisal and deepening understanding of the artist's intriguing and unique images of biblical heroes and prophets.



On display through January 18, 2009

Levi, 1962, Jerusalem Windows series.

This exhibition was made possible, in part, by:

Color lithograph, Private Collection.

New York Council for the Humanities



Case Systems, Midland, Michigan
American Bible Society
Ahmanson Charitable Community Trust

MOBIA

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GREECE-JEWISH NEWS

Something to remember the next time you eat Dannon yoghurt.

Isaac Carasso (1874- April 19, 1939) was a doctor and member of the prominent Sephardic Jewish Carasso family of Ottoman Selanik (modern Thessaloniki, Greece). He went on to found a yoghurt factory which became Groupe Danone. He was the nephew of Emanuel Karasu, the Ottoman politician.

Carasso was born in Selanik (Salonika) in 1874. In 1912, with the unrest of the Balkan Wars and the approach of Greek troops, he moved his family to Barcelona, Spain, where he changed his name to Isaac Carasso.

After setting up his medical facility, he noticed that he had many young patients with digestive and intestinal problems. Inspired by the work of Ilya Ilyich Mechnikov, who had popularized sour milk as a health food, and recalling that such health conditions were treated with yogurt in the Balkans, he imported cultures from Bulgaria[1] or used "pure cultures that had been isolated in Paris" at Mechnikov's laboratory at the Institut Pasteur.[2] Since yogurt was not well-known then in Western Europe, he initially sold it as a medicine, through pharmacies.

He founded the company which would become Groupe Danone in 1919 when he opened a small yogurt business named "Danone", a variation on the Catalan nickname of his son, Daniel. Carasso perfected the first industrial process for making yogurt.

His son Daniel Carasso took over the family business in Spain and established Danone in France and the United States (Dannon).

Isaac Carasso died in France in 1939.



As reported in issue #10 of Kehila Kedosha Janina's e-newsletter, the blatant anti-Semitic rhetoric in the Greek newspaper "Avriani" in response to Obama's victory in the US elections drew criticism from around the world. We are pleased to note that among those most outspoken voices were those of the Greek-Orthodox Archdiocese of New York:

November 11, 2008

NEW YORK – The Office of Interfaith Relations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America released a statement in response to a recent headline in the Press which read "The anticipated victory of Obama in the U.S. elections signals the end of Jewish domination. Everything changes in the USA and we hope that it will be more democratic and humane."

The statement reads: "For decades, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has been a leader in inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. This ministry of the Archdiocese is part of the wider witness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate around the world which works for reconciliation and mutual understanding among all peoples. We are opposed to the language of bigotry, hatred and anti-Semitism in any form by any media. Furthermore, an association of this kind of language with an election in the United States that clearly witnesses to how far prejudice has been abolished is deplorable and rejectable."



Sephardic News

Spain: Excavation for Construction on Site of Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Toledo by Samuel D. Gruber

Toledo



Bridge of Alcántara,

“ISJM) Dominique Tomasov Blinder and David Stoleru of the Center of Studies ZAKHOR in Barcelona report that excavation for new construction is taking place on the site recognized as the medieval Jewish cemetery of Toledo, Spain. There is already a school on the site, built in the 80s that destroyed a great part of the cemetery. The new excavation is for expansion of the school. ISJM has obtained photos of the excavation the reveal the complete exposure of skeletons.

Recently, representatives of Atra Kadishah (Israel) traveled to Madrid together with a delegation of American Rabbis. A series of meetings have taken place with government officials from the United States, and the Department of Religious Affairs of the Spanish Ministry of Justice, and other officials. Despite international pressure, Spanish law makes the Spanish Federation of Jewish Communities the sole interlocutor with the Spanish government on Jewish affairs in Spain. An agreement was prepared by the Federation that described how to proceed in case where a cemetery is found in a construction site and was expected to be signed. According to sources in Spain, the agreement would have allowed for the bones removed by archaeologists to be taken by the Federation under rabbinic supervision for reburial elsewhere (similar to what was agreed in the case at Tarrega). Due to a combination of factors, the agreement has not yet been confirmed.

Blinder and Stoleru visited the site to meet with the archaeologist in charge and with the Director of Landmarks of the region of Castille-La Mancha, to explain the significance of cemeteries in Judaism and that Jewish graves 'no matter when they are from' are by Jewish law considered inviolate except in extreme circumstances. ZACHOR's intention is to find a solution for the site with respect for its meaning and to avoid irreversible damage.

According to Blinder, 'Toledo is the city where the three cultures flourished in the Middle Ages reaching at times exemplary levels of "Convivencia', where the famous School of Translators produced great pieces which contributed to the intellectual development of the world, a city where even very important Rabbis from Catalonia and from Germany chose to live. Today, besides two synagogues (of the 10 that existed at the time), which can be visited today as Museums, the ancient cemetery is the only other landmark which remains of the Jewish community which once lived there. This community certainly deserves respect for their tradition and beliefs.'

'This cemetery definitely transcends the city of Toledo, as the descendants of Jews from Toledo now live in the five corners of the earth. Urban growth in the last century has destroyed most of its extension. Now there is a small portion, with about 85 tombs that is vulnerable to construction and will disappear forever if nothing is done to prevent it.'

It should be noted that Toledo is among the most visited cities in Spain for its Jewish heritage. It is home to two medieval synagogues that can be visited, as well as the Museo Sefardi, located at the Samuel Ha-Levi Synagogue. The Museum contains many old gravestones, some of which presumably came from the old cemetery site. Meanwhile, several government-assisted efforts are underway to encourage increased international tourism to Jewish sites throughout Spain.”

Jewish Heritage E-Report (November 13, 2008)

World News about Jewish Art, Architecture & Historic Sites from the International Survey of Jewish Monuments (ISJM)

**Edited by Samuel D. Gruber / Contact and send news items to
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We wish our friends around the world a Happy and Healthy Hanukah.



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