



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

May 2011 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

May 1st was Yom HaShoah, the annual commemoration of the Holocaust, where Jews around the world stop and remember the victims. We, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, have so many to remember. Enclosed (in a following article) is a copy of the opening address made by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, and photos taken at the event.



Rebecca
Malta
DeCastro



Gracia
Samuel

Lost from Ioannina. May their names be inscribed for Eternity.

This newsletter, our 40th 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 5000 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.

On December 8, 2010, Hyman Levy, passed away at the age of 92 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was the son of Stella and Issac Levy and one of ten children. He is survived by one brother, Louis Levy of Florida. He lived his life proudly to be Greek, Jewish, and American. May his memory be a blessing. The Levy family lived at 94 Allen Street, 29 Ludlow Street and 255 Broome Street on the LES. He was Bar Mitzvahed at Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Hyman Menachem, son of Jesse and Mollie Menachem, passed away last month. Hyman's father, Jesoula Menachem, was a Gabbai at Kehila Kedosha, his name is on the founders' plaque in our entrance vestibule. Our condolences to his wife, Shirley and his sister Sara Samuels and their respective families. May his memory be a blessing.

Julia Nahmias, born in Salonika, and one of the few to escape the Baron Hirsch Ghetto, recently passed away in California, where she lived for many years. Initially after the end of WWII, Julia, her husband Lazar and their son Victor had gone to live in Israel and then later settled in California. Our condolences to friends and family of Julia Nahmias. May her memory be a blessing.

Our apologies for a misprint in our last e-newsletter. It was Lucille, not Louise, Meyer, daughter of Nissim Barouch, who passed away.

MUSEUM NEWS

Yom HaShoah Commemorations at Kehila Kedosha Janina on May 1, 2011

The Holocaust of Greek Jewry

Address by Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonopoulos

In September of 1940, there were 76,000 Jews living on the soil of what was then Greece and an additional 2,000 living on islands in the Dodecanese (Rhodes and Kos), which became part of Modern Greece after World War II. Only 10,000 would survive the Holocaust. Starting in March of 1943, Greek Jewry were systematically rounded up and deported to death camps. Those few

who were able to escape and find safe havens were often hunted down like animals and sent to join their families in the crematoria.

Auschwitz was, for most, their final resting place, as they were placed in the gas chambers from March of 1943 to August of 1944.

For Jews in the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation in Greece and Yugoslavia, the gas chambers of Treblinka would be their last sight as they met their untimely deaths.

Today, 68 years after the first cattle cars left Greek soil, we stop and remember those who were lost. It is said that a measure of a people is how they remember their dead. We have so many to remember. Hopefully, we have measured up to this task.

Let us never forget the martyred Jews of Ioannina and those of Arta, Preveza, Volos, Trikkala, Larissa, Athens, Chalkis, Patras, Salonika, Rhodes, Kos, Corfu, Kavala, Xanthi, Drama, Serres, Verroia, Kastoria, Alexandroupolis, Komotini, Didimoticho, Florina, and Crete.

Let us never forget our family members who perished in neighboring southern Yugoslavia in small cities like Monastir.

Let us never forget the camps on Greek soil where Greek Jews were detained by the Germans: Haidari and the Baron Hirsch ghetto.

Let us never forget the detention centers of Lom and Skopje where Jews from the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation were kept as they awaited their deportation to Treblinka.

Let us never forget the death camps where they perished: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, Mauthausen, Ebensee, Melk, Dachau, Ravensbruck, and Buchenwald.

Of the close to 78,000 Jews who resided in Greece before World War II, only 10,000 survived. Let us never forget the many that perished so unjustly and let us never forget the sacrifice and courage of those who saved the others. Most of all, let us honor the memory of those who were lost and applaud the survivors who so bravely went on with their lives; who "rose from the ashes" in a tribute to humanity and to Greek Jewry.

Photos taken at Yom HaShoah candle lighting ceremonies at Kehila Kedosha Janina



Andrew Marcus lights a candle for the Jews of Veroia

Consul General of Bulgaria Radoslav Totchev lights a candle in memory of Jews who died in the Bulgarian Zones Of Occupation





Watching "In the Shadow of the Acropolis"

Victor Mosios, deported from Ioannina, shows the numbers tattooed on his forearm.

Our Museum was filled with visitors this past April.



Hebrew Academy of Long Beach

Aikoi Mas (Our Own) comes home.



Julia Ganis & her son Isaac stand in front of family photo of Ganis family from Ioannina



Rachel Fink and her father, Dr. Kenneth Martin Fink from the Besso family stand in front of Plaque with Kenneth's grandfather, Morris Besso's name



Al Barouch



Barouch and Coffina families

**Shalom to one and all!
Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



This month's column is inspired by the history of the Romaniote Jews and some specific facts sent to me by native "Ioanianian", Emily Udler, of Elkana, Israel. Thank you, Emily! And in honor of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, I would like to dedicate this column in memory of the relatives and friends of KKJ members and bulletin recipients who were martyred in the Holocaust, and may their memoirs, testimonies and lives be an inspiration and source of pride and hope for all their descendants.

Were all Sephardim Always Sephardim?

The question may seem strange at first, but the fact is, not every community that became part and parcel of the more "generic" Sephardic world started out that way. Perhaps the most prominent example of this phenomenon is the very basis of KKJ itself: Romaniote Jews. Possibly the oldest European Diaspora community, originating with numerous exiles and Jewish slaves from the Land of Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE, who, on the way to Rome, were apparently either shipwrecked or intentionally docked on the shores of the Ionian Sea near the Albanian coast. Forming a very distinct Jewish community, the Romaniotes actually pre-dated what would become 'normative' Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewry, because such distinctions really developed much later as Jews became more scattered around the world. However, the destruction of the Second Temple by Rome did not end the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, though the center of learning and home of most of our famous Talmudic Sages like Rabbis Gamliel, Akiva, etc., shifted to the Galilee. The final 'end' to Jewish settlement and total Roman control would only come about in 135 or 136 CE, with the end of the Bar Cochba rebellion. As a result, communities like the Romaniotes in Greece and early settlers in areas that would later become "Ashkenaz", still took the bulk of their customs, ceremonies and halachic decisions from the Jerusalem Talmud. Therefore, there is no doubt that early Romaniote religious practice had more in common with later more formalized Ashkenazi rites than it had with its parallel exile communities that reached the territories of pre-expulsion Spain and Portugal and North Africa, who took their basis of Jewish ritual, practice and source of Rabbinic scholarship more from the Babylonian "Gaonim" [literally "the Geniuses", but referring to the religious leadership of the Babylonian Jewish community]. In fact, many Jewish historians see the Romaniote ritual as being the precursor to the formal Ashkenazi and Italian prayer rites, a fact that seems to be confirmed by many Rabbinic "responsa" – answers to halachic and other questions posed to Jewish Sages in every age.

By the 12th century, thanks to the travel diaries of the famous Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, we know that Romaniote Jewish communities existed in all major Greek cities, like Corfu, Thebes and Thessaloniki, with his recording some 2,000 souls – the largest community – in Thebes, including "eminent Talmudic scholars and men as famous as any of the present generation". It would seem, then, that until the 15th century, the indigenous Greek Jewish community was almost exclusively Romaniote. However, the fact that the number of Jews never seems to be greater than several thousand testifies to the fact that assimilation and acculturation into greater Greek society was paramount, though as we see from Benjamin of Tudela's lofty praise of Thebes' Rabbis and leaders – "No scholars like them are to be met within the whole Grecian empire, except for Constantinople" - the Romaniote Jews certainly maintained their Judaism and even had their own Judeo-Greco language, Yevanic. So it would seem that for

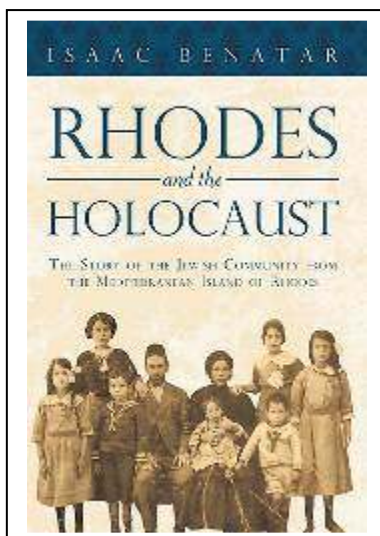
at least some 1,500 years, whatever Jewish community did exist in Greece was basically Romaniote.

This all changed in 1492 with the Spanish Expulsion. At that time under Ottoman Turkish rule, which offered refuge and shelter to the Jewish exiles, Greece and virtually the entire Mediterranean and Balkan basins became the home to wave after wave of Sephardic Jews from Spain, which rapidly overwhelmed the indigenous Romaniotes in terms of both sheer numbers and Jewish practice, custom and ceremony. The new exiles even brought their own language, Ladino (Judeo-Español), though the indigenous Romaniotes continued to maintain their own Yavnic. Interestingly, and paralleling the exact same pattern of encounter between the new Sephardic exiles and indigenous Jewish populations of Morocco and Syria, the newcomers at first formed their own separate communities, even sometimes questioning the Jewish credentials of the native population. However, due to the influx of so many Sephardim, and the leadership roles taken on by the Sephardic Rabbis and Sages, Romaniote Jews (as well as their indigenous Syrian and Moroccan peers), were by and large completely absorbed into the now-dominant Sephardic community, changing whatever unique customs they had to the Sephardic rite. This is not necessarily a tragedy in purely religious terms, since Romaniote Jews are far from the only community to be absorbed into a greater Jewish majority over the centuries and in many lands. But in the historical and ethnic context, it would be both interesting and important to be able to compare let's say, a Romaniote prayer book – if one still exists – with Ashkenazi/Sephardic versions, or ritual poems and songs and the like. This is often accomplished for ancient or even "lost" Jewish communities (and reconnection of Ethiopian Jewry in its time). Unfortunately, however, given the unprecedented destruction of Greek Jewry in the Holocaust (close to 90%), and the proportionally even greater decimation of the already tiny surviving remnant of the descendants of Romaniote Jewry, this would seem to be an impossible task. Yet who knows? If any of you out there know, remember or can still find out some of the unique Jewish religious customs, prayers and rituals of your indigenous Romaniote ancestors, they must be recorded, distributed and commemorated as a living, vibrant segment of Jewish life, and the unique heritage of KKJ.

Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

May 15: 2:00 pm

Book-signing and presentation by Isaac Benatar, author of *Rhodes and the Holocaust*. Recently presented his book at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.



Isaac Benatar (LL.B) is a law graduate of the University of London. He was born in Zimbabwe in 1943 and was elected Youth Mayor of the city of Salisbury during 1965-66. Became public prosecutor in Rhodesia from 1970 to 1980. He emigrated to the United States in 1980.

Rhodes and the Holocaust is the story of "La Juderia," the Jewish community that once lived and flourished on Rhodes Island, the largest of the twelve Dodecanese islands in the Mediterranean Sea near the coast of Turkey. While the focus of the accounts of the Holocaust has for the most part been on the

Jewish populations of Eastern and Middle Europe, little seems to be known of the events that affected those communities in Greece and the surrounding Aegean Islands during that time. The population of this group was almost annihilated, reduced from a thriving community of over 80,000, to less than a 1,000 survivors, who were left to tell their stories. Among the victims of Rhodes Island were the grandmother and aunt of the author, who were killed by falling bombs, and his grandfather, who was taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp. This history tells of the deceit and inhuman treatment the entire Jewish community of Rhodes experienced during their deportation and eventual "liberation" by the Russian Army.

Free event: Open to the general public. Refreshments served.
Autographed books for sale (\$11)

If you cannot attend the event and wish an autographed copy, send \$15 (includes shipping and handling) to Kehila Kedosha Janina, One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743. E-mail us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net to reserve an autographed copy.

News From Greece

Corfu

Anti-Semitic Attack in Synagogue of Corfu during Pessach

Synagogue targeted by arsonists on the Greek island of Corfu

ATHENS (EJP)---The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS) and the Jews in Greece strongly condemned the attack against the synagogue on the Ionian island of Corfu by unknown extremists.

Vandals broke late last night into the synagogue, piled a number of prayer books on the floor in front of the Holy Ark and set a fire.

Police and fire department of Corfu intervened in time and prevented the fire from spreading into the wooden interior and destroying the historic Scuola Greca synagogue which was built during the 17th century in the Venetian architectural style.

The synagogue, which is the only synagogue remaining on the island of Corfu out of three that existed before World War II, was closed at the time and nobody was injured.

In a statement, the Board said: "It is obvious that the vandals wished to give their action a highly symbolic message by choosing this specific date for their shameful attack: the day of the Jewish festivity of Passover, the day when Jews around the world celebrate the liberty of their ancestors from the Egyptian rule, the day that represents freedom."



Burnt siddurim inside synagogue of Corfu

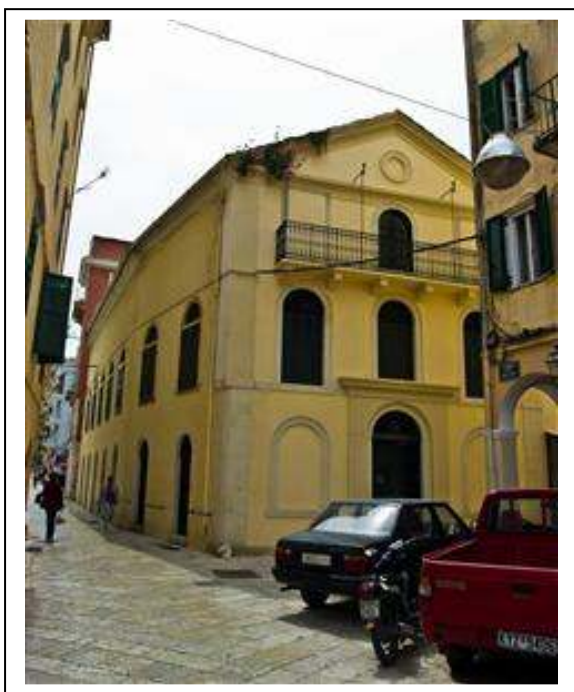
"On the day of Passover anti-Semitism brutally manifested itself in Corfu, expressing hatred and fanaticism, in the same way that the Nazis chose to start the implementation of the "Final Solution" of the "Jewish problem" by burning books and synagogues", it said.

"In contemporary Greece, society cannot allow or tolerate anti-Semitism, given that such attacks undermine our civilization, our dignity, our human nature, our democracy."

The island of Corfu has the sad privilege to be one of the cities with the higher rates of extermination of Jewish population during the Holocaust.

The city is also where Jews have a long historic presence and made a significant contribution to the island's development, culture and heritage.

***It is also the native city of world known writer and philosopher Albert Cohen.
The Board called on the Greek authorities to take the necessary measures to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice.***



Corfu synagogue



**Alef from Corfu
Photo archives of KKJ**

***"Those who burned the Jewish books today will be the future criminals who will turn against the principals of democracy, and against the values of our civilized society. The citizens and the society of Corfu have the moral obligation to protect their city's history and heritage".
No arrests have been made so far.***

***A video showing the damages in the synagogue can be found on You Tube:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9ujaOMkA9A&feature=player_embedded***

Jewish community cemeteries and monuments in various parts of the country are sporadically targeted by vandals.

A similar attack on a synagogue on the island of Crete in 2010 destroyed hundreds of rare books. Greece's pre-war Jewish community was decimated by Nazi deportations and now numbers around 6,000 people.

Greek Government Reactions to the arson attack against the Synagogue of Corfu

Following the vandal attack against the Synagogue of Corfu on the first day of Passover, the Government's spokesman Mr. Petalotis condemned the attack. In a statement made on April 19, 2011, Mr. Petalotis, inter alia, stressed out that "the breaking into the Synagogue and the destruction of prayer books are immoral and hideous acts. The Greek Government strongly condemns them", and added that "this incident will not overshadow the long-standing tradition of friendship and respect between the two people".

On the same spirit, statements of condemnation were issued by the Minister of Education Mrs. Diamantopoulou, the City Council of Corfu, the regional Prefect of the Ionian Islands, and the MPs of all of Corfu's political parties.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece

We personally spoke to Zino Vellelis, President of the Jewish Community of Corfu, immediately after the attack. Fortunately (in contrast to what was reported irresponsibly in the Jerusalem Post) there was no damage to the Torah scrolls and, unfortunately, no one has yet been arrested.

There were services held three days after the vandalism (Friday night Shabbat services with visiting Israelis).

Mr. Vellelis is hoping that their insurance will cover most of the damage and the community is planning to install metal doors to prevent a future incidence.

We assured the community that, if additional funds are needed, we would help raise them.

Ioannina

Light and shadows in the synagogues of Greece

A photography exhibition entitled "Sacred and Symbols: The Synagogues of Greece" of Samuel and John Negrin Panagakos organized by L. 'Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities since 14 March.

The exhibition opened March 14 in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.

This photographic exhibition entitled "The Synagogues of Greece: Light and Shadows", was originally presented by the Jewish Museum of Greece in 2005. The exhibition consists of black and white photographs by two photographers who traveled throughout Greece and captured with their lenses the atmosphere of the synagogue. Both are graduates of the School of Graphic Arts and Art Studies, TEI Athens.



"Two young photographers, friends and colleagues, shared with us their thoughts to 'capture' in black and white the images and details from the synagogues of Greece. These synagogues are still operating or, in other cases, were accessible," notes the Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece Zanet Battinou.

Photos taken at opening of exhibit



Samuel & Stella Cohen in audience



Moses Eliasof & Haim Ischakis

CALL FOR MATERIAL FOR NEXT EXHIBIT

Hunt down those old photos!

We thank Estelle Benozilio Hendrickson for these photos of her family in Salonika. If anyone recognizes anyone in the photos, please get back to us.



Houly Family



Please send us the addresses where your Sephardic and Romaniote families lived (in the Bronx, Harlem, Brooklyn and the Lower East Side). If your family moved out of New York, let us know when and where to. We are compiling a data base and cross-referencing this with census and immigration records. It will give us a clearer picture of the demographic of the Greek Jewish world. We are planning "old neighborhood" reunions and this information will enable us to reunite neighbors who may not have seen each other for decades.

We received this lovely piece from Estelle Benozilio Hendrickson which, not only gave us addresses but, also, a lovely taste of Sephardic life in NYC.

In your newsletter you requested info of where the Sephardics lived in the NY area etc.

In the Bronx a lot of us lived just off the Concourse between Morris Avenue to Jerome Avenue stretching from 169th Street to 170th Street. William Howard Taft High School, D. Witt Clinton HS, Bx H/S of Science, PS 64, and other schools in the area are where we attended.

Most of the shopping was done on 170th Street where there were many kosher butchers, fish markets, Gaitiano (sp?) market. He sold cheese, olives, laquida, sadeles in salt and all the things we like to eat. Across the street was Beraha Bakery known for his pasteles, cookies, marochinos, wedding cakes and tajicos (almond candies shaped like fruits) Above the Luxor movie house was the Philo Club where the men went to drink coffee, play cards and smoke. On 169th Street was the Sephardic temple which later moved to Queens.

We lived on Townsend Avenue and 170th St. The building was full of Sephardic families from Salonika. Fridays were special, coming home from school you could smell the comidas cooking, as I would walk up stairs to our apartment I knew what everyone was cooking, most were fijones and rice on Friday, roasted chicken for Saturday. When we reached home, my Mom would fill the heel of a French bread with the caldo and beans to hold us until dinner. By 4PM everyone was finished, the women would bathe, get dressed and ready to light the candles and wait for the family to arrive for dinner. After dinner most got together with friends to play cards, sing songs, told stories about the old country and jokes. In the summer most of us went downstairs after dinner and everyone sat by the door in the street and talked or walked to the park "para echar leshon".

In the summer we all packed up and went to the Rockaways and of course, we all rented apartments in the same area. There we met with others from New Lots, Bklyn and the Lower East Side.

Estelle

Articles of Interest on Greek Jewry

<http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20110430/EDIT03/105010350>

For years the question has haunted Bella Ouziel: Why did she survive when so many perished? It is especially relevant today, on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The Holocaust was the murder of some 6 million Jews and others deemed to be politically, socially or racially inferior by the Nazis, who came to power in Germany in 1933 under Adolf Hitler. By 1945 the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution."

Among the victims: Ouziel's entire Greek family, including her father, Abram, her mother, Riketa, her older sister, Sylvia, her younger sister, Esther, and her younger brother, Levy.

She is 85 now, a charming woman, all of 4-feet-11, with warm eyes. "For my age, I think I'm doing pretty good," she says. She sits in the dining room of her Evendale home, close to the kitchen where a pot of chicken soup simmers for her children, who will visit later this day. She didn't want them to be afraid when they were growing up, so she was reluctant to talk about the Holocaust. Her grandchildren, though, learned some of its history in school, and would ask questions. A granddaughter wondered about the numbers tattooed on her left forearm. "I used to say, 'It's my telephone number, and I don't want to forget it,' " Ouziel says. She has never forgotten what happened more than 60 years ago.

Bella Ouziel - her maiden name was Benozio - grew up in Thessaloniki, Greece, a city with a large, thriving Jewish community. Her mother was a homemaker, and her father, a dentist. She was the second of four children. Like other girls, she went to work after completing grade school. At 13, she was making ladies' hats.



A year later, in 1939, World War II began in Europe when Germany invaded Poland. In April 1941, the Germans attacked Greece. By the end of the month the country was under German and Italian occupation.

Persecution of Thessaloniki's Jews began in the summer of 1942, when Ouziel turned 17. Jews were ordered to wear the "Yellow Star" and were placed on curfew.

"We knew we were in trouble," she says. But they had no idea of what was to come.

Jews were told they would be taken to Poland to work. About that time, a member of the Greek resistance movement came to her family's home and offered to take Bella and Sylvia with him.

"My father said no. We thought we were going to be all together, all the time."

Soon, Jews in Thessaloniki were forced to leave their homes and move into an enclosed ghetto near the city's rail lines. As Ouziel's family departed with a few suitcases, they watched townspeople enter their house and carry away their belongings.

German deportation of the city's Jews began in 1943. Every three days, about 2,000 people were herded onto trains for the 950-mile ride to Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. They did not know their destination was a death camp.

They arrived at Birkenau, the largest of the camps that made up the Auschwitz complex. Four large crematorium buildings were built there between March and June 1943. The grounds were patrolled by the German SS.

"Right away they separated us," Ouziel says. "No goodbyes, no nothing."

Ouziel and her older sister Sylvia were moved to a line for people who had been judged fit to work. Almost all children, and women with children - including Ouziel's mother and sister Esther, who was 5 - went to another line. So, too, did Ouziel's father and brother, a young teen. They were immediately sent to the gas chambers.

When Polish prisoners explained to Ouziel and her sister what was happening, they looked toward the crematoriums.

"We couldn't believe it. These people are crazy. We couldn't believe something like that would happen.

"You see all that smoke and you could smell the flesh that was burning day and night." Ouziel and her sister were stripped of their clothes and given uniforms. Their heads were shaved and they were tattooed with identification numbers. She was prisoner No. 40018. Her sister was No. 40017. They were assigned to the same lice-infested barracks.

Ouziel was put to work outdoors, lugging heavy bricks. Sylvia soon grew weak and could not work.

"One day I came back from work. I had a piece of bread to give her," Ouziel says. "The whole block, everybody was gone. They said they sent everybody to the crematorium."

She pauses, rubs her red, watery eyes, and takes a deep breath.

Ouziel's next job was sorting materials in a shoe factory at Birkenau. She sometimes risked her life to run to a nearby canteen, where she might find food scraps in the garbage. Most days, her breakfast consisted of watered-down coffee. Lunch was soup, also mostly water. For dinner, she might get a piece of bread and perhaps a slice of salami.

"We used to say, 'Where's God? How come he doesn't see what we're going through?' We used to get mad, which was the wrong thing."

From Birkenau, she was sent to Auschwitz, where she worked in a factory making German military uniforms. In mid-January 1945, as the Soviet Army pushed toward Auschwitz, the Nazis retreated. Ouziel was among tens of thousands of prisoners evacuated from the camp and deported to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp about 650 miles away, in Germany. Prisoners were transported by train in unheated freight cars. But they were also forced to walk for days on a death march.

"I remember one girl. A German had a dog. He threw - not meat, a bone - and the girl left the march to pick up the bone. And right away, the German shot her, right there, in front of us." They had nothing to protect them against cold and snow but their uniforms and wooden shoes. "I don't know why we didn't die," she says. She kept "hoping, praying. I don't know why, but I always thought we're going to be free."

Others had no hope.

"My girlfriend, we were marching together. She said, 'Bella, I'm going to give up. I'm going to let them shoot me.' "

The young woman's name was Stella. She and Ouziel had been schoolmates in Thessaloniki. "I said, 'No, you're not going to give up.' We were like sisters. I said, 'I don't have anybody. I lost everybody. I don't want to lose you, too.'

"She made up her mind she would keep going. Finally, we made it."

But the thousands of new arrivals overwhelmed Bergen-Belsen, which had insufficient food, water and shelter.

"People started dying because of no food, no nothing. The dead bodies piled up, piled up, piled up," she says.

British soldiers liberated the camp on April 15, 1945. They found thousands of unburied corpses, and about 60,000 prisoners, most of them seriously ill.

Ouziel says she and her fellow prisoners looked like skeletons. But that day, she says, she went "from dead to alive."

She and several girlfriends eventually made their way back to Greece, to Ouziel's hometown, hoping to find relatives.

"There was nobody left," she says.

Between 60,000 and 70,000 Greek Jews died during the Holocaust. Thessaloniki lost 94 percent of its Jews, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

She found work there and married Sam Ouziel, a man from her hometown whom she met at Bergen-Belsen after the camp's liberation. His first wife and their child were Holocaust victims. To escape anti-Semitism, they left Greece in 1951 with their young son and daughter and came to the United States.

"We knew it had freedom of religion," she says. Another son was born here.

"We worked hard," Ouziel says, "and we were able to accomplish what we wanted."

But she could never completely escape heartache. Her husband died more than 30 years ago, at age 59. She lost one of her three children, a son, to a heart attack at age 36.

Their deaths compounded her losses from the Holocaust. Which leads back to the question: Why did she survive when so many died?

Perhaps it was a combination of courage, determination and luck. Ouziel will never know. But she knows this: Something so horrific should bring lasting lessons to the world.

"I'm hoping there won't be prejudice for anybody, whether it's Jew or Christian," she says. The aroma of chicken soup wafts into the dining room, a reminder that her children will arrive soon. It's Friday. Jewish tradition calls for a candle lighting to usher in the Sabbath, and Bella Ouziel, who endured the darkest days of the Holocaust, will bring light to her little corner of the world.

We thank Leon Saltiel for sending us this article.

Articles of Interest from around the world

Jewish cemetery desecrated in Turkey during Passover holiday

ISTANBUL (EJP)---A Jewish cemetery in Istanbul, Turkey, was desecrated Tuesday, by vandals who smashed several tombstones to pieces.

According to a Turkish news report, eight tombstones of the Beyoglu cemetery were damaged. The desecration took place during the Jewish holiday of Passover.

According to the report, local police are investigating the incident through tapes from several security cameras installed in the cemetery area.

Some 20,000 Jews live in Turkey.

According to the "Ones from Turkey," a group founded by Jewish migrants from Turkey to Israel, 101 people moved permanently from Turkey to Israel in 2010, part of a slow but continuing shift that has seen eight more people relocate in the first two months of 2011.

Last week a 19th century synagogue on the Greek island of Corfu was attacked by arsonists. The vandals set fire to the synagogue's collection of religious books and papers, severely damaging many of them.





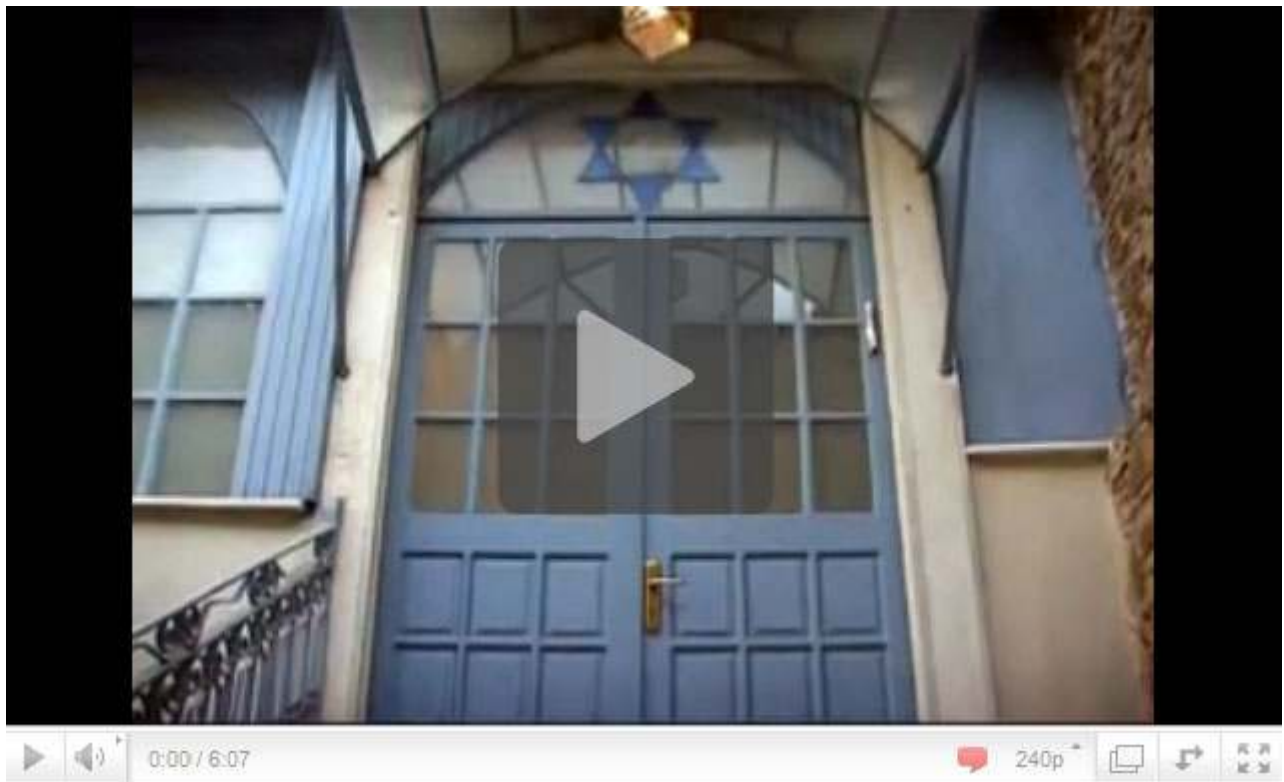
THE IZMIR PROJECT

The Hidden Secrets of the Ancient Synagogues of Izmir



The Izmir Project, an international initiative led by the Kiriaty Foundation to save Izmir's unique synagogues, and create a living cultural monument to the rich Jewish heritage of the city.

Please open the door and you will reveal the secret.



Watch on YouTube

Izmir in Turkey is home to the only complex in the world of adjacent ancient synagogues constructed in a unique Sephardic architectural style dating from the 16th century.

Of the 34 synagogues built in Izmir, just 13 remain, some in poor condition or ruins, with collapsed ceilings and walls, their contents disintegrating.

Without intervention there is real danger that some of these buildings will cave in completely, leading to the subsequent loss of this extraordinary architectural heritage, forever.

Responses to our last newsletter

We found a number of individuals who had relatives in Paramythia including Cal Attas and members of the Bakola family.

I want you to know that my mother was from Paramithia; her father was Elia Cohen and her mother was Sarena, brother and sister: Joseph and Mollie. They had a cheese business or dairy store. They all went in the Holocaust. I wish I could tell you more. Calvin Attas.

Haim Ischakis was of great help regarding the Sicilian Purim celebrated in Ioannina.

Answering Eitan Fiorino's question about the celebration of Purim Katan or Purimopulo as it was called only in Ioannina, I can tell you that this special holiday was celebrated in Romaniote and Sicilian communities in Greece only in leap years (with two months of Adar), one month before Purim and two months before Pessach. Unfortunately, after the Shoah it is not celebrated anymore... About the special Megila of Purim Katan, there is not even one left in Ioannina, Trikkala, Larissa, Volos or Corfu. I asked Zanet Battinou if they have a copy at the Jewish Museum of Greece and her answer was negative... So unless there is such a Megila in Salonica (which I really doubt it), we don't have any of them left in Greece... There is a guy I know in Chalkida, Issachar Cohen, aged around 80's, who claims he has one from his grandfather who was the chazzan of the community at the time but I never saw it so I can't tell for sure if does exist or not...

Note: we have a copy on display in our Museum on Broome Street.

Responses to our website

We print this letter in its entirety because it moved us and encourages us to keep telling our story.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I came across your website while researching the horrible atrocities committed by the Axis forces - mainly German troops - in occupied Greece during the second world war. A recent documentary about the collaborationist governments of Greece during the second world war and their direct or indirect implication in the suffering of the Greek people (regardless of race and religion) sparked my interest in finding out more about the human consequences of the occupation, the suffering, the cruelty but also the heroic tales of people who did what they could to protect those unable to protect themselves.

Before I continue I should perhaps introduce myself. My full name is Dionisios Nikopoulos and although I was born in Stockholm, Sweden and currently live in Manchester, UK - my parents originate from a small village called Mousiotitsa located roughly 33km south of Ioannina, close to the springs of the river Louros. My father from an early age lived and worked near the Kastro, what today constitutes the old town of Ioannina, before moving to Sweden and then marrying my mother. I myself have visited the city many times in recent years and spent many summers in my parents village where many of my relatives still live.

Sadly, the people of my village are also all too familiar with the suffering endured by many

Greeks at this time. On a summer's day in July 1943, German troops came to village with a purpose. Their purpose was to kill and destroy all in their path. As with other villages and small towns in rural Greece, ours suffered the same fate. In retaliation for the killed German officers, Greek women, children and men from the village were brutally murdered. 152 members of our community were executed, most were women and children. Many of these were my relatives, and we too commemorate them every year and their names have been carved in stone and listed on the Internet for all future generations to remember.

I have always prided myself in knowing many things about the land of my parents, its history, bad and good. I was all too familiar with the atrocities committed, not just against the people of my village, but against the ancient Jewish community who for centuries had peacefully been living in Greece. Looking at those sad pictures on your website brought back the memories of my late grandmother who use to tell me the stories of when the Germans came to her house, grabbed her 13 year old brother and marched him up the mountain to be brutally executed.

For all those years that I have been visiting Ioannina, I was told of the Jewish community that lived there and partly still does. It saddens me greatly that this community is now a thing of the past. But I was surprised and happy to see that it still survives in remote parts of the world. I must also admit that the Greek authorities should do more to remember the Jewish community of Ioannina who was lost, and with them the great cultural, religious diversity and strength that once was commonplace in the city. But I do not think this is a result of a conscious decision by Greek authorities - alas Greece has always been somewhat incapable to organize itself sufficiently to accomplish such tasks. But I digress. I do wish the heritage of the Jewish community in Ioannina was more prominent, as I feel this is a very important part of the city. And it would remind future generations of its past. What better way to prepare future generations then teaching them about humanity's past mistakes so as not to repeat them again? Sadly though we still seem to repeat the same mistakes, even today. But I have great hope for humanity.

You are perhaps wondering why I took this time to write this email. To be honest, I'm not sure myself. I guess I felt that sometimes the hard work people put in to teach others about the past, and to commemorate those needlessly killed sometimes goes unnoticed. After all, who wants to know what happened to a small village in rural Greece 60 odd years ago? Or to a small Jewish community in a small Greek city? It is easy to get lost in those great numbers of millions and millions of dead brought about by world war two. But by remembering the small numbers, we get a sense of the great tragedy that was World War II. By learning about the destruction of communities, we can see beyond those huge numbers and realize that these were people with dreams, hopes, aspirations and futures. So, I guess in a way what I'd like to show with this email is that your work in compiling the history of your community and your efforts to tell people about the horrible fate they suffered, has not gone unnoticed - and will at least be known by me.

Yours sincerely

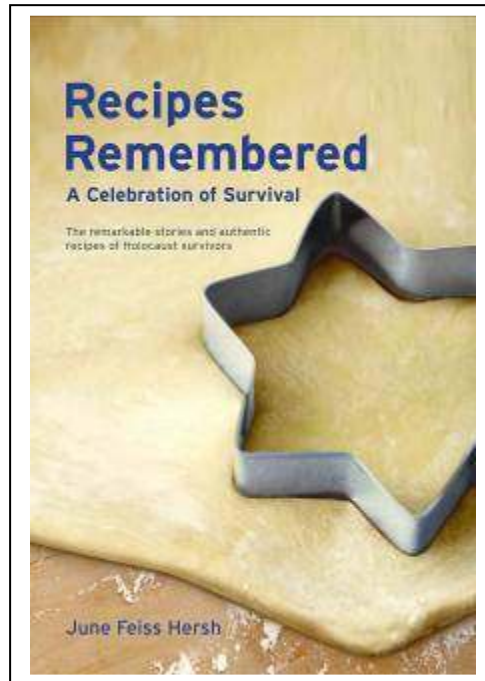
Dion Nikopoulos

New Books for Sale

Recipes Remembered: A Celebration of Survival

Recipes Remembered: A Celebration of Survival is both a timeless cookbook filled with incredible stories as well as a factual storybook filled with delicious recipes. It is a joyful journey for the

soul, which takes the reader from one of the most tragic and harrowing times in history to the possibilities of faith, luck and perseverance. The stories and recipes in the book were gleaned from personal interviews with Holocaust survivors and their families. The unique and singular histories of a remarkable community still recall both the best and worst they have experienced and unfold on every page. Each recipe will leave you hungry for more while the story it is paired with will fill you with a sense of hope and optimism and a renewed appreciation for what came before and what lies ahead.



You will meet the daughter who walked across the frozen Danube to reunite with her mother; the family from Rhodes who owe their lives to a Turkish diplomat, the newlyweds who met crossing the Alps by foot; and the valiant men and women who fought with the partisans. You will laugh, cry and marvel, and be forever touched and changed.

The more than 170 recipes will give you an appetite to take a culinary journey that is as diverse as the survivors themselves. The recollections run the gamut of foods from their childhood to those dishes they prepared here in America. You'll savor specialties of the Ashkenazi kitchen such as traditional gefilte fish and home baked challah, as well as hallmarks of the Sephardic kitchen with its robust lentil soup and sweet honey glazed doughnuts. All have been carefully tested and professionally written so you can expertly replicate these dishes while bringing your own personality and flavor to the table.

WE ARE PROUD TO SAY THAT OUR OWN KOULA KOFINAS IS IN THIS BOOK, ALONG WITH OUR DEAR FRIEND, STELLA LEVI.

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA IS OFFERING THIS BOOK (for a limited time) for \$30 plus \$5 postage and handling within the continental USA.

Contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net to order (or join us for our June 12th Koula's Kitchen for an autographed copy).

WEBSITES AND INTERNET ITEMS OF INTEREST

The entire video of the Eichmann trial was recently put online. The clip below refers to Greece. It contains the testimony of Yitzhak Nehama of Thessaloniki. One of the most memorable moments is minute 22:50, where he identifies himself in one of the photos from Liberty Square of July 1942.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2B7CEMhvuo>

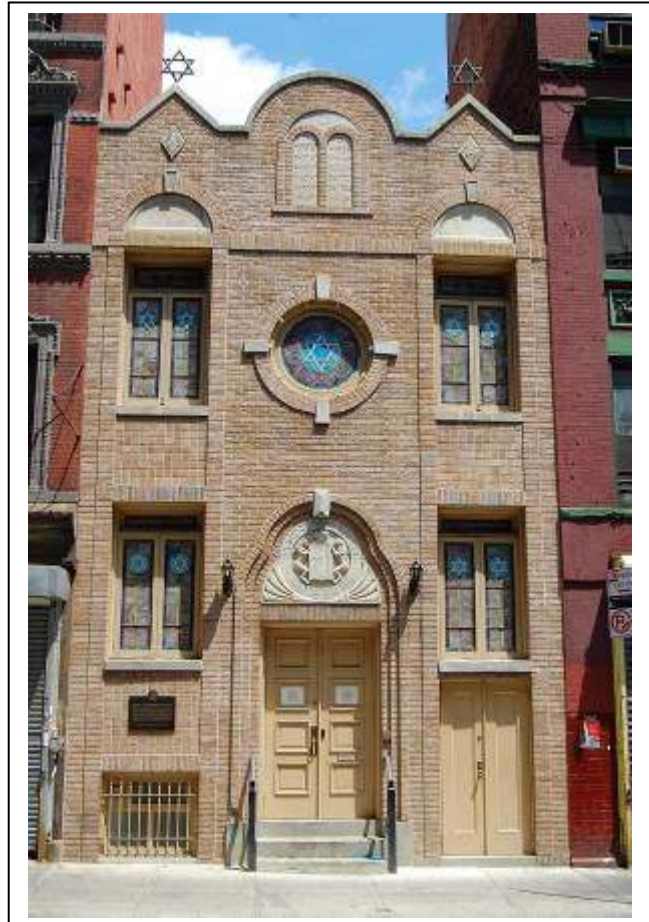
Do access Louisa Kone (wife of Zino Vellelis) on youtube:



LOUISA KONE

by [69Mrshaq](#) 1 year ago

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 40: May 2011
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