



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

September 2010 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

We take this opportunity to wish our friends a Happy New Year, Chronia Polla (Χρονια Πολλα), L'Shanah Tovah, Anos Muchos y Buenos. Do join us for services at Kehila Kedosha Janina. As always, our seats are free and our hearts are welcoming. Our holiday schedule can be found on the next page.

Traditional Yanniote
Shofar from the collection
of Kehila Kedosha Janina



Join us for High Holiday Services at Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street (between Allen and Eldridge Streets), New York NY 10002

2010
5771

2010
5771

The Officers and Congregation of Kehila Kedosha Janina cordially invite you to join us for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur Services.

Kehila Kedosha Janina, at the same location on the Lower East Side for the past 80 years, is the last remaining Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere conducting services in the Judeo/Greek, Sephardic (Minhag) tradition.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 5	SELICHOT SERVICES	7:00 A.M.
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8	EREV ROSH HASHANA	6:00 P.M.
THURSDAY, SEPT. 9	ROSH HASHANA (1ST DAY) ROSH HASHANA (MINCHA)	9:00 A.M. 6.15 P.M.
FRIDAY, SEPT. 10	ROSH HASHANA (2ND DAY) (TASHLICH)	9:00 A.M. 6:00 P.M.
SATURDAY, SEPT. 11	SHABBAT TESHUVA	9:00 A.M.
FRIDAY, SEPT. 17	EREV YOM KIPPUR (KAL NIDRE)	6:00 P.M.
SATURDAY, SEPT. 18	YOM KIPPUR MINCHA NE'ILA SERVICE FAST ENDS	8:00 A.M. 4:10 P.M. 6:05 P.M. 7:46 P.M.
THURSDAY, SEPT. 23	SUCCOTH (1ST DAY)	9:00 A.M.
FRIDAY, SEPT. 24	SUCCOTH (2ND DAY)	9:00 A.M.
SATURDAY, SEPT. 25	SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED	9:00 A.M.
THURSDAY, SEPT. 30	SHEMINI ATZERET (YISKOR) EREV SIMCHAT TORAH	9:00 AM. 6.00 P.M.
FRIDAY, OCT. 1	SIMCHAT TORAH	9:00 A.M.
SATURDAY, OCT. 2	SHABBAT BERESHITH	9:00 A.M.

Prayer Books and shawls are available at the synagogue.

For additional Information, Please Contact:

Marvin Marcus, President (212) 431-1619

We Look Forward to Having You Join Us for the High Holy Days.

*L'Shana Tovah
Marvin Marcus, President*

This newsletter, our 32nd, 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 4500 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 all are 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.

In light of the upcoming High Holidays and the blowing of the shofar, we would like to share with you some excellent internet sites relating to the shofar. We thank Sarina Meones for this information:

THE SHOFAR IN SECULAR MUSIC: <http://www.shofarguide.com/?cat=5>
TO HEAR SOUND OF THE SHOFAR: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jR20-0sy1Y&feature=related>

We celebrate two special births, that of Raphael Smith, great-grandson of Ralph Colchamiro of Blessed Memory and Esther Colchamiro, son of Elisheva and E. David Smith, and Ami Rahm Baratz, son of Raanan and Michael Baratz and grandson of Elyna (of the Mione & Pardo families) and Robert Weintraub. Na sas zisoun.

This month we lost 2 special people. Annetta Levy Jacob, wife of Oriel Jacob passed away at the age of 97. Both were deported from Ioannina and survived the camps. We also mourn the passing of Murray (Moe) Seraita.

Aunt Jean (Saltzman) turns 97 on Sept. 4th and she still drives a little red sports car.

Louisa Koen Pitsirilo turns 93 in September

We wish them both a happy birthday and many more years of joy and good health.

For those of you involved in Genealogical research on Yanniote Jews and/or might wish to visit the graves of their ancestors in Mt. Carmel in Queens New York, we have added to our website (under the link for the United Brotherhood) a complete listing (with disclaimers) of the Brotherhood burials at Mt. Carmel. Access www.kkjsm.org for more information.

On August 8, 2010, we were honored to host the Julis family reunion. Now scattered throughout the United States, many members of the Julis family were members of Kehila Kedosha Janina and the Brotherhood of Janina. Thank you Julis family for a memorable day.



As mentioned in our last e-newsletter, Kehila Kedosha Janina will be the recipient of a generous grant from New York Landmarks Conservancy Sacred Sites program. We would like to share with you exciting news on the establishment of an historic synagogue fund.

Landmarks Conservancy Announces New Historic Synagogue Fund

The New York Landmarks Conservancy's *Sacred Sites* program is one of the few in the country dedicated to the preservation of religious properties. Since its inception in 1986, the program has awarded more than 1,100 grants totaling over \$6.4 million to nearly 700 religious institutions throughout New York State.

The Conservancy is nearing completion of an unprecedented survey of New York City's extraordinary Jewish architectural heritage. Surveys have been completed in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. A Manhattan survey will be completed by the end of this year.

The goal is to identify the universe of synagogues, educate the public about this remarkable architectural collection and cultural contributions and to offer financial and technical assistance, where appropriate, for synagogue restoration.

So far, these surveys have resulted in listing ten synagogues and two former synagogues on the National Register of Historic Places. The surveys and nominations have laid the groundwork for the launch of the Conservancy's new Historic Synagogue Fund, which will provide matching grants of \$25,000 to \$50,000 for major synagogue restoration projects in New York City. A major gift of \$100,000 from the David Berg Foundation, as well as a substantial grant from the Roy J. Zuckerberg Foundation, facilitated the launch of the fund last December. The goal of the Fund is to disburse \$300,000 annually for synagogue restoration.

Kehila Kedosha Janina synagogue has worked with the Conservancy since 1998, receiving two matching grants and a low interest loan towards the restoration of the building exterior.

For further information please call Ann-Isabel Friedman at 212.995-5260, ext. 318 or by email at annfriedman@nylandmarks.org.



Museum News

We have received treasures for our exhibit on families and we love the fact that connections have been made. Thanks to Elaine Ioannou (of the Yohanan and Moss/Mussey) families, we have received photos of family life on the Lower East Side. So many of our families lived on Delancey Street. Thank you Elaine for sharing these photos with us.



Negrin, Yohanan and Mordos families



Elaine Moss and Becky Mordos

As always, the baby photos are always our favorites.



Esther Matza with Elaine Moss & Stuart Forman



Len Neuhaus' first birthday

We are looking to identify the children in the photo below.



And the families in the following photos:



Some of the great family photos we have recently received



Matza family



Sarah and Joseph Negrin Family

Kehila Kedosha Janina collaborates with project in Great Britain to tell the story of the Greek Holocaust

Do check out the following site to learn more about this important project:
<http://education.hmd.org.uk>

Cultural Events

New York City

Unfortunately, we missed the announcement of this event in time to include it in our monthly e-newsletter. Please send in your announcements before the 1st of the month that the event is scheduled to take place. We do wish to congratulate Robin Hessman (of the Colchamiro family) on the showing of her film. Below is the information on the showing (August 13-19). We certainly hope that the film will be shown again.

**Subject: Re: My Perestroika- at the IFC Center, Aug 13-19
323 Sixth Avenue and West Third Street, tel. (212) 924-7771**

Red Square Productions is pleased to announce that MY PERESTROIKA will be screening at the IFC Center, August 13-19, 2010.

MY PERESTROIKA premiered in the US Documentary competition at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2010. It was selected for New Directors/New Films at MoMA and Lincoln Center, and received the Filmmaker Award at the Full Frame Film Festival and a Special Jury Award at the Silverdocs Film Festival.

The debut feature by filmmaker Robin Hessman is an intimate and lovingly crafted epic about the extraordinary lives of five Moscow schoolmates who were brought up behind the Iron Curtain, witnessed the joy and confusion of Glasnost, and reached adulthood right as the world changed around them.

The film is screening at IFC Center as part of the IDA's DocuWeeks Theatrical Showcase.

Washington DC

For those of you lucky enough to live in the Washington DC area, mark your calendars for the first TV showing of Ed Askinazi's film "Last Greeks on Broome Street." *****



Sunday, September 12th, 2pm.

WETA, Channel 26 in Washington, DC.

This will be the film's broadcast premiere and will reach DC, VA and Maryland.

New Judaic studies group formed in New York City

The 'Jewish History Salon' aims to bring together like-minded individuals that share a passion for exploring the world of Jewish history

Contact: Shelomo Alfassa shelomo(at)[alfassa.com](mailto:shelomo@alfassa.com)

NEW YORK, NY (August 4, 2010) 'The Jewish History Salon,' a new discussion group that will meet on a monthly basis in New York City, aims to draw together intellectually oriented persons that seek the scholarly advancement of Judaic studies. The group will come together to focus on any and all aspects of Jewish history, which may include the ancient, medieval and/or modern periods; discussions on secular as well as religious topics are also welcome, this may include discussions on Biblical criticism, exploring traditional perspectives on Judaism, books, language, rabbinics, Jewish law, etc.

The Salon will be a place where one can discuss and share their own current research or projects, exchange ideas with like-minded people, receive and give constructive criticism, read samples of their own works and hear the works and ideas of other participants.

Shelomo Alfassa, founder of 'The Jewish History Salon' said, "The Salon will be open to anyone with a true interest in exploring Jewish history and furthering the cause of Jewish studies, both lay persons and professionals are encouraged to participate."

The initial meeting will be held on **Sunday, August 8, 2010 at 2pm at Barnes and Noble (East 17th and Broadway at Union Square) on the 3rd floor. Participants are welcome to bring their intellectually curious minds or even a sample of an essay/book, etc. that they are working on or reading. Membership is informal and there is no charge. 'The Jewish History Salon' will be a great place to socialize, network and to make new like-minded friends and colleagues.**

Previous Events

Our compliments to Elias Messinas on ECOWEEK

Press Release 7/8/10

ECOWEEK 2010: from Aegina island to the Middle East & from Ecology to Peace

NGO ECOWEEK was born on the island of Aegina, Greece, in 2005. Its activity included local events at the Folklore Museum and the historic medieval tower of Markellos; visits to passive solar houses by award-winning architect Alexandros Tombazis and renowned architect Kostas Tsipiras. In 2007 ECOWEEK invited **Al Gore** (photo) to present his slide show at the Athens Concert Hall with Megaron Plus, in 2008 ECOWEEK started activity in Cyprus with the Municipality of Larnaka and MKC City College and in 2009 ECOWEEK co-organized the conference “Green Civil Engineering” with SCE College of Engineering and the partial support of the Ministry of Environment of Israel. Last year, ECOWEEK brought to Athens the guru of modern Architecture **Shigeru Ban** and this year ECOWEEK hosted a lecture and workshop with legendary **Rural Studio** and **WHITE Architects**.

This week something different took place. ECOWEEK successfully completed its first large scale conference in the Middle East titled “Green Architecture : Community : Sustainability”. A unique initiative that combined ecology with peace, cooperation and ‘green’ buildings for non-profit community organizations.

Palestinian architect **Omar Yousef**, who lectured and led a workshop at ECOWEEK, put it very poetically. He compared ECOWEEK 2010 to a healthy forest: ‘ECOWEEK is like a healthy forest,’ he said. It contains the ingredients of a forest, such as biodiversity, mutual support and cooperation. Indeed, the participating young architects and students were Greek, Israeli, Palestinian, Italian, French and British, forming a group very rich in texture, ideas, backgrounds, and beliefs. Nevertheless, for one week this group worked harmonically and creatively together producing exceptional designs, under the guidance of leading architects from around the world. ECOWEEK 2010 speakers were award-winning architects **Bjarke Ingels (BIG)** (photo), **Michael Sorkin (Sorkin Studio)** (photo), and **Thomas Rau (Rau Architects)**. The 4-day long ECOWEEK workshops were led by leading architects such as architect and urban planner from New York **Michael Sorkin (Sorkin studio)**, the Greek award-winning landscape architect **Thomas Doxiadis (doxiadis+)**, and the leading Palestinian architect **Omar Yousef**. The workshops produced ecological buildings for the Shorouq Palestinian Women Society in Al-Izaryia, a community center for the Ethiopian community in Kiryat Gat, a building to house IPCRI and other peace organizations in Jerusalem, urban interventions for the environmental awareness of the local communities within the 2nd Bat Yam Biennale, the first ecological pedestrian street in the old city of Beersheva, and other assignments.

The ECOWEEK team also met with the planners of the first modern and highly sophisticated Palestinian city **Rawabi** currently under construction, in the outskirts of Ramallah.

Of course, it is not the first time that an NGO brings together Israelis and Palestinians,' says ECOWEEK founder and Chairman architect Elias Messinas. 'What was unique about ECOWEEK in the Middle East, was the combination of ingredients, some of which have been implemented in the past, but never in that combination, and in such extend and scope. The binding element of the conference was cooperation: between young and established architects, designers and landscape architects, and graduate students; between Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis and Greeks. Israelis that designed community buildings for Palestinians and Palestinians for Israelis. Education was another very important ingredient, together with the implementation of the principles of 'green' buildings, and community projects for real communities some of which will be built. This rich texture of cooperation was not only in the content, but it also run through the organization of the conference. ECOWEEK 2010 in the Middle East was the result of cooperation between a number of exceptional and leading organizations, groups and people.

ECOWEEK 2010 in the Middle East took place under the auspices of the European Institute for Law, Science and Technology. It was made possible thanks to the cooperation of ECOWEEK with the Municipality of Beersheva, the 2nd Bat Yam Biennale, the Royal Embassy of Denmark in Tel Aviv, the Ministry of Culture of Denmark, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Danish Arts Agency, the Dutch Green Building Council, the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem, the US Embassy and US Consulate, the Bruno Zevi Foundation, the Porter School of Environmental Studies at Tel Aviv University, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Architecture for Humanity Tel Aviv Chapter, IPCRI, Palestine Peace Society, Brigham Young University Center in Jerusalem, the David Azrieli School of Architecture at Tel Aviv University, the Interior Design Depart at Holon Institute of Technology, the Technion Faculty of Architecture, Shenkar School of Design, College of Management, architectural firm SAYA, the Shorouq Palestine Women Society. ECOWEEK had the participation of students from the Palestinian Polytechnic of Hebron, and Bir Zeit University. ECOWEEK acknowledges the cooperation of the Consul General of Greece Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou and the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem. Communication partners of ECOWEEK were CSRWire, DETAIL, ECOLOGIK and EuroCharity.

Organizer and coordinator of ECOWEEK 2010 in the Middle East is the founder and Chairman of ECOWEEK **Elias Messinas** an architect and environmental consultant.

> To find more details on ECOWEEK in the Middle East: www.ecoweek.org.il.

> Short presentation of the ECOWEEK 2010 Workshops:

http://ecoweek.netfirms.com/ecoweek.co.il/files/2010/files/workshop_materials/pdf/ecoweek_2010_workshops_EN.pdf

We are considering including Albania in our next tour to Jewish Greece (scheduled for late May early June 2011-dates still to be determined) and thought you would enjoy information on recent archeological work in southern Albania. Many Yanniot Jews were born in Albania or worked there when it was part of the Ottoman Turkish Empire.

"Ancient stones, buried memories

Butrint in Albania is one of the least known and least spoilt archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. Here, ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine remains are piled in layers of stratified history, underpinned by a Trojan legend. Hamish McRae fell under its spell

***The sight of high Phaeacia
soon we lost,
And skimm'd along Epirus'
rocky coast.
Then to Chaonia's port our***

*course we bend,
And, landed, to Buthrotus'
heights ascend.
Here wondrous things were
loudly blaz'd fame:
How Helenus reviv'd the
Trojan name*

Virgil, Aeneid, Book III

In the dark days after the sacking of Troy, Helenus, the seer-son of King Priam, was brought as a prisoner by the son of Achilles to the Adriatic coastal region of Greece that lay between the Ambracian Gulf and Illyria. Today, that area is better known as Albania. And at its southernmost tip, on the coast immediately opposite the Greek island of Corfu, is the site of Butrint, the city where, according to tradition, Helenus eventually ruled with his wife and former sister-in-law, Andromache.

It is an exotic legend, and the fact that the site is only a couple of hours by ferry and taxi from Corfu must make it one of the most exotic day-trips that holiday-makers can take anywhere in Europe. Better still, stay a night or two and explore a fascinating, rough, puzzling, charming country that was until recently, in effect, closed to foreigners.

A day gives you a glimpse of Saranda, the little port where the Corfu ferries dock, and a few hours at Butrint set in a new national park 15 miles to the south. With a couple of days to spare you could take in a concert in the Greek theatre which after some 2,500 years is still in use and really absorb the atmosphere of Saranda before it becomes too developed.

Saranda may appear dusty and rough when you get off the ferry, but it is fast becoming one of Albania's most fashionable resorts. You step off the boat, and get into one of the elderly Mercedes taxis, and bounce along the rutted roads past unfinished apartment blocks. Then suddenly just as you start to wonder what you've got yourself into, you are in a glitzy bar overlooking the sea, with Corfu shimmering in the distance and feeling that life does not come much better.

For Albania is still to some extent awaking from a Communist enchantment, in the form of a half-century slumber. On the one hand, capitalist consumerism is evident and the roads are populated by nearly new Mercedes and BMWs (Albania is the home of Europe's stolen car fleet). On the other, there are memories of the Hoxha Communist dictatorship: little pillbox fortifications dot the landscape.

Geographically, the country is varied. Go over the mountains, pass the flocks of wandering sheep, and you have left the warm Mediterranean for the wonderful medieval city of Gjirokaster, a couple of hours' drive away.

You are conscious always of moving backwards and forwards through landscapes and time. One minute we were bumping along a mountain track with people cutting hay with scythes and riding bullock carts. Half an hour later we were sipping a gin and tonic at a swish restaurant overlooking the Med. (The Albanians are good on the gin front by the way – no messing about with optics, they just slosh it in.)

That evening we went to a folk festival in the Greek theatre, where a hundred or so musicians demonstrated different kinds of traditional music. I now know that Albanian bagpipes, unlike the Scottish variety, have only one drone.

Later still we were back in Saranda, sitting next to the minister of culture, who had come down for the festival, having dinner on long tables in the village square, as the Albanian version of line-dancers wound their way among us. (Much, much later, it was the Africa Club disco, and more G&Ts, on the waterside under a starlit sky.)

And it is not just the contrasts but also the rate of change. You see a country moving with astonishing speed from one way of life to another. Wait a few years and the scythes and bullock carts will be gone, and Albania will be pretty much like the other countries that fringe the Med.

And Butrint? As John Julius Norwich, the scholar of Byzantine history, wrote: "Of all the great classical sites of the Mediterranean, Butrint is the least known, the least frequented and the least spoilt." Here you will catch a feeling for the way in which Europe's culture and history has been created, layer on layer, over 3,000 years.

Its story is also unfolding before your eyes, for the archaeologists have been hard at work. The main team is an Anglo-Albanian one, part funded by the London-based Butrint Foundation. The Greek theatre is understandably the most stunning of the buildings and the one in current use.

But the particular excitement this year is the next stage of excavation of a vast, early Byzantine complex called the Triconch Palace. During our visit, they were trying to figure out why work was apparently abandoned before a big rebuilding program was finished at the beginning of the sixth century AD. Perhaps by now they may even have discovered the answer.

The site is so big (about 100 acres) and there are so many layers of history that it is hard in one visit to figure out what was built when. In the Aeneid, Virgil has Aeneas describe it as looking like a miniature Troy:

***I saw before me Troy in miniature,
A slender copy of our massive tower***

The Roman poet himself would have been aware of Butrint, as the region was the scene of the civil war between Mark Antony and Octavian, later the emperor Augustus and, of course, Virgil's patron. The Crusaders came here, the Despots ruled here as did the Venetians and the Ottomans. The Butrint Foundation publishes an excellent guide that you can buy at the kiosk.

As you become familiar with the site, you start to feel irritated by the Roman builders who "improved" the theatre by adding a new brick back wall which spoils the lines of the Greek stonework. Large parts of the site are still to be excavated, and you feel the tantalizing possibility that you are standing on some hidden architectural gem or a vital piece of an archaeological jigsaw. Perhaps some artifact will be unearthed confirming the legend and proving that it really was the Trojans who came here to create a new kingdom. The earliest pottery fragments found so far date back to 800BC.

If you are lucky you might get to meet the head of the park, Auron Tare. Refreshingly, the local office of the Butrint National Park sees its job as helping to make sure that visitors are looked after by local people who are committed to the development of the region. They will organize local guides, trekking and so on.

This is not regular tourist territory so there will be an element of adventure. As far as I could judge, the place is extremely safe, particularly for anyone connected with the dig. Think of yourself as a guest, not a tourist, and you will be treated with courtesy."

News from Greece

Strong earthquake strikes Greece

An earthquake struck western Greece today, but no injuries or damage were reported. The US Geological Survey said the 5.7 magnitude quake struck earlier at a depth of 20.5 miles. The Athens Geodynamic Institute measured the quake at 5.4 and said it was centered off the southwestern coast of the Ionian island of Zakynthos, 330 kilometres away from Athens. Police and witnesses said there were no reports of injuries or damage. "We felt the earthquake but there are no immediate reports of any damage," said a police official in Zakynthos. Greece is regularly hit by earthquakes.
August 22, 2010

Netanyahu visits Greece

Thursday, August 19, 2010

[Netanyahu did not go to Turkey, " with Greece defects remedied decades "](#)



Photo by: Amos Ben Gershom
Netanyahu has no plans to visit Turkey
By GIL HOFFMAN
08/19/2010 01:49

First visit to Greece by a PM 'corrected 62-year-old abnormality'

The tension between Israel and Turkey resulted in the "sharpening of mutual interests" between Israel and Greece, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu told reporters accompanying him on his way back from his two-day visit to Greece that ended on Tuesday.

Netanyahu and his Greek counterpart, George Papandreou, at a press conference on Monday, took pains to distance the visit to Greece from Israel's problems with Turkey. But Netanyahu spoke openly on the way back home about the troubles with Turkey inspiring the development of Israel's relationship with Greece, which has feuded with Turkey for decades.

Asked whether he had plans to visit Turkey, Netanyahu revealed to a reporter from the Yisrael Hayom newspaper that he had never been there.

"I am the only Israeli who has never been to Turkey in his life, and I don't think I will be going there soon," he said.

Netanyahu's visit to Athens came amid a souring of Israeli- Turkish relations following the navy's May 31 commando raid on a Gaza Strip-bound protest flotilla that left nine Turkish activists dead. The operation, conducted in international waters, led Turkey to recall its ambassador from Israel and scale back military cooperation.

Israeli and Greek teams will soon begin working on implementing the agreements Netanyahu reached with Papandreou, including joint military exercises, military purchases, upgrading ammunition, coordinating intelligence, and high-level strategic sessions. To that end, Greek Defense Minister Evangelos Venizelos will visit soon.

Greek and Israeli officials stressed that the agreements would not be implemented at the expense of either country's relationship with Turkey.

Netanyahu, at the culmination of the visit, expressed satisfaction about improving Israel's ties with Greece.

"We are opening a new chapter," he told Israel Radio. "What is unnatural is that for 62 years we didn't do what we did now with George Papandreou coming to Jerusalem and me reciprocating by coming to Athens.

We are fixing abnormalities that there were for decades, in which two countries that can and want to cooperate on security, tourism and diplomatic issues did not, and now we are."

Bloomberg contributed to this report.

One of First Visits Netanyahu makes in Greece is to the Jewish Museum of Greece

Monday 16 August 2010

**OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE JMG OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL
MR. B. NETANYAHU**

On Monday 16th August 2010, at 15:30, the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, with his wife Sarah, visited the Jewish Museum of Greece. They were guided through the exhibition areas and were briefed on the main programs and projects of the JMG. Afterwards,

they had a brief meeting at the Museum library with representatives of Greek Jewery. The officers responsible for the Prime Minister's security had requested that local representation be kept to a minimum for security reasons. Therefore, the JMG was represented by the President, Mr. M. Matsas, and the President of the Friends, Mr. G. Nathan. Also present were Mr. D. Saltiel, President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the J.C. of Thessaloniki, Mr. B. Albalas, President of the J.C. of Athens, Mr. S. Maissis, President of the J. C. of Chalkis, Mr. M. Magrizos, President of the J. C. of Larissa, and Mr. D. Tarabulus, President of O.P.A.I.E. It is important to mention that the JMG was the first stop of this first official visit by an Israeli Prime Minister to our country, to which he came directly after his arrival to Athens. Mr. Netanyahu impressed the Museum officials and staff with the depth of his knowledge and his keen interest. He requested to receive digital copies of certain artifacts he viewed in the exhibition areas. The Prime Minister of Israel and his wife expressed themselves very positively on their visit to the JMG.



AJC Leadership Delegation Concludes Greece Visit

August 26, 2010 – Athens -- An AJC delegation has concluded a two-day diplomatic mission to Greece.

The eight-member group met with top Greek officials, including Prime Minister and Foreign Minister George Papandreou, Defense Minister Evangelos Venizelos, State Minister to the Prime Minister Charalambos Paboukis, and Leader of the Opposition MP Antonis Samaras. The group also met with Israeli Ambassador to Greece Ali Yahya, U.S. Embassy officials and the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), which is one of AJC's 31 international partners.

Earlier this summer, Prime Minister Papandreou traveled to Israel and Prime Minister Netanyahu recently reciprocated with a visit to Athens.

"There is a welcome new era in Greek-Israeli relations," said AJC Executive Director David Harris. "What we are witnessing today is historic. A growing partnership between Greece and Israel, two democratic countries with ancient and noble histories, has always made sense in its own right, as it serves the national interests of both countries," said Harris. "We are delighted to finally witness this partnership come to fruition under the leadership of two forward-looking political leaders."

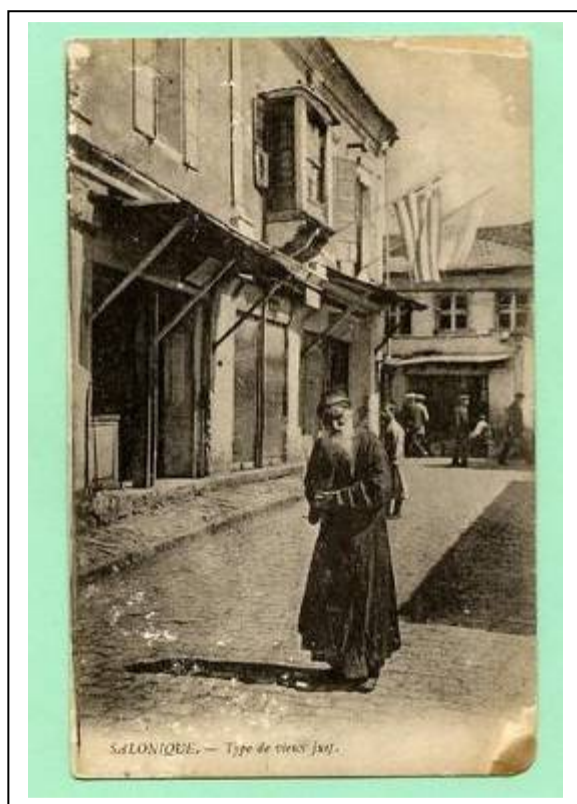
Topics on the agenda for the AJC meetings included the fast-approaching threat of a nuclear Iran, the growing campaign to delegitimize the state of Israel, pressing concerns in the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans, and domestic priorities of the Greek Jewish community.

The AJC visit, one of many during the past two decades, also demonstrated the global advocacy organization's abiding solidarity with Greek Jewry.

"The community today is small in number today because of the devastation wrought by the Holocaust, but its members are the proud and dedicated heirs of a 2300-year-old community," said Harris. "Our meetings here confirmed that the Greek government stands with the community against the scourge of anti-Semitism and in its desire to preserve its rich heritage."

Information

"The Catastrophe of Salonikan Jewry and the Looting of their Property"



<http://www.youtube.com/user/YadVashem#p/u/3/cclBxZH1HZ4>

Thanks to Leon Saltiel

Check out youtube for some interesting information on the role Greece has played in the culinary traditions of the world. We thank our dear friend Leon Saltiel for these 'insights.'

[Click here: YouTube - Greeks invented PIZZA ? Yes !](#)



Δήμος Χαλκιδέων - Ισραηλ. Κοιν. Χαλκίδας
"Friends of Colonel Frizis"
1827 Connelly, Troy, MICH 48098 USA
"Φίλοι του Συν/χη Φριζή"
Π. Μελά 30, 15343, Αγ. Παρασκευή Αττικής

Mr. Stefanos Becharas



Συν/ρχης Μαρδ. Φριζή



Πρόσκληση



Ο Δήμαρχος Χαλκιδέων
κ. Αθανάσιος Ζεμπίνης
Ο Πρόεδρος της Επιτροπής "Φίλοι του Συνταγματάρχη Φριζή"
κ. Στέφανος Μπιτσάρας &
Ο Πρόεδρος της Ισραηλιτικής Κοινότητας Χαλκίδας
κ. Σόλων Μάισης

Έχουν την ευχαρίστηση να σας προσκαλέσουν στην τελετή αποκαλυπτηρίων
του έφιππου ανδριάντα του Ήρωα του 1940
Συνταγματάρχη

Μαρδοχάιου Ι. Φριζή

την Κυριακή, 26 Σεπτεμβρίου 2010 και ώρα 12.00 στην Πλατεία Πυροσβεστικής
του Δήμου Χαλκίδας.

Η Α.Ε. Ο Πρόεδρος της Δημοκρατίας
Κύριος Κάρολος Παπούλιας
Θα τελέσει τα αποκαλυπτήρια.

Looking for our help

I'm 29 years old, born in former Yugoslavia, belong to the Sepharadic Ladino tradition. I have received my degree in Law, speak 7 languages, and right now I'm living in Jerusalem, studying in a Rabbinical program at the famous rabbinical college Bet Midrash Sepharadi in the Old city of Jerusalem lead by Rabbi Sam Kassin.

I'm also a Chazzan (Sepharadic tradition).

As you understand me, I'm looking for some community in the States, that need a Chazzan and rabbi for the High Holidays, and I will happy to help them , and to support them.

So if you know some communities that need help, I'm ready to talk and to discuss it.

Please stay in touch

My phone number is : 00972542258019

Thank you very much in advance,

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Avi M. Kozma

Comments on Past E-newsletters

Marcia,

"With the Newsletter, the memories keep coming back. The photo of Gary Camhi and Jackie Nehama are incredible. Indeed the Camhis and Nehamas lived in a two family home on the same street where I was brought up. In Brooklyn, on 59th street between 19th and 20th avenue. Jackie was a track star at New Utrecht, and I remember well, the baseball catches on 59th street with Gary and someone, whose name eludes me. Say hello to Gary for me."

Marv Negrin

"Sad to read about Fanny Florentin, a true heroine of the war whom I had the pleasure of interviewing for my book on Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece. She and Leon, a resistance fighter, ran a small and successful luggage emporium in Seattle after the war. May her memory be for a blessing as it no doubt remains among the many andartes whom she nursed through those harrowing years."

Professor Steven Bowman
Judaic Studies Department
4508 French Hall West
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0169

From Gershon Harris in Israel in response to the article on Devin Naar in August 2010 e-newsletter:

"1. Regarding Devin Naar's quest and research into his Sephardic Jewish heritage and history:

Keep up the good work! "Western" Sephardic culture, i.e. Spanish-Portugese, Balkans, Mediterranean, Central Europe and certain areas of North Africa, is a dying breed. Unfortunate but true. Not only is the history virtually ignored, if known at all, the horrors of the Holocaust decimated these communities proportionally much higher than Eastern and other parts of Europe in terms of sheer numbers and thoroughness. Recent years have seen a welcome, if sad, "awakening" by survivors, especially from Greece and surrounding territories and lands, to tell their stories, as horrible as they are, because soon there will be no one left to do so. I recently visited Yad Vashem (hadn't been there since it was totally renovated), and saw many welcome and effective additions to the main museum, including more items and information (films included) of the North African and Greek/Balkan Jewish tragedy, which was sorely lacking previously. Still, there is room for much more, so I might suggest that Mr. Naar visit Israel and spend some intensive time gathering even more invaluable info about Sephardic/Greek Jewish history. There is still a relatively large Ladino speaking population in Haifa, mostly former Salonikans including many of the famous former stevedores. There has also been somewhat of a "religious" revival in publishing prayer books using the "Western" Sephardic rite as opposed to the dominant "Iraqi" or "Halabi" custom in almost everything. New additions of literature, especially prayer books originally published in Livorno (Leghorn), Italy, as well as Torah literature research institutes (Machon Yerushalayim) publishing famous and important Sephardic Torah literature and responsa, including from Salonika. Just a suggestion!

2. I am possession of a 1947 edition of the Sephardic prayer book by David De Sola Pool, which is used by Shearith Israel in NY and, not coincidentally, the Etz Ahaim Sephardic Congregation in Highland Park, NJ. I was privileged to be part of that community during my years as a student at Rutgers U, between 1973-1977. Coincidentally or not, added to this prayerbook is a special English transliterated Kaddish and Ladino "Bendicho su nombre" (Brich sh'mei) insert which was published in memory of Rabbi Benjamin H. Naar - who I think would be Devin Naar's great-grandfather. Even in the 1970's, the original Salonikan born congregants (synagogue originally in New Brunswick, right near two other Ashkenazic ones: Ahavas Achim and Paolei Tzedek) were elderly, but younger Rabbis since then have seemed to keep the congregation alive and kicking, though I'm not sure how Ladino - oriented it is at this point. In any case, I wish Professor Naar much success, and if he hasn't done so already, again suggest that he do some more extensive research in Israel, which has also not stood out in academic or even anecdotal recording and research of Western Sephardic culture.

All the best, and thanks for the monthly bulletin!"

***Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit
Israel***

Thank you Gershon

Inquiries

Dave Corito is looking for additional information on his grandmother Chaido (Ida) Matza's family Chaido was born in Ioannina in 1872 and came to the USA in 1912 with her husband Moshon Corito.

Elaine Moss Ioannou is wondering if anyone out there remembers "Pispringou."

Rhonda Amira Saldias is looking for our help in two areas:

1. finding the woman in this photo:



2. I am looking to find the connection between the Pitsrillo family and Solomon families. Contact Rhonda at matzanews@gmail.com

Comments relating to recently published book on Greek Jewry

<http://www.haaretz.com/culture/books/no-other-jews-like-them-1.307650#send-friend-popup>

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"No other Jews like them

A new volume on the destruction of Greece's Jews in the Shoah is a fitting reminder of how little attention the 'official version' of history pays not only to that subject, but also to the miraculous culture that characterized the Jews of Salonika

By Leah Aini

Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau by Photini Tomai. The Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Papazisis Publications, 191 pages

The year is 2000, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, and the place is Israel Radio's Reshet Aleph. Announcer: Today we have as our guest in the studio a senior researcher from Yad Vashem, who will describe for us how the institution is organizing itself for the new millennium in everything connected to the Holocaust and Holocaust denial.

Researcher: We have begun a new research project, called "Rebirth." Our students are looking at cities, towns and communities in Europe, in order to learn about the vital Jewish life that thrived in these places before the coming of the Germans, and to bring back to life - to the extent that such a thing is possible - the community rabbi, the fishmonger in the market, the gvir, the tailor.

Announcer: Very nice. So you are going from one community to another: Vilna, Lodz, Sosnowiec, Salonika –

Researcher: Yes, yes. Well - Salonika, no.

Announcer: Why not Salonika?

Researcher: Um, no. No. They, there, they are conducting their own research.

That radio show, which is forever engraved upon my heart, and which I have rendered here somewhat freely, really did take place, and a recording of it can be found in the Israel Radio archive. You can check for yourself. It would also be worthwhile to check how it is that, out of 115,000 volumes about the Holocaust housed in the Yad Vashem library, only 34 are indexed under the heading "Greece," and under "Salonika," a mere 17, the most recent of which is from 1999. In contrast, about the Polish city of Lodz alone, to take just one example, there are 106 titles, 28 of them published during the past decade.

The situation on the educational front is also dismal: "Salonika is the second-largest port city in Greece, and the most important city in the north of the country. There were those who referred to it as the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans'" (emphasis mine), writes Efrat Belberg in a six-page appendix, "Jews of the Balkans," attached to a syllabus published by Yad Vashem this year. The topic is offered only as an elective to high school students studying the Holocaust, and teachers are asked to choose one Balkan country from the three dealt with by the appendix. One might say: It's just a matter of numbers. There were more Jews in Poland, for example, and unfortunately more of them were killed. Yet, what normal state is expected to decide on the basis of numbers when it budgets time and resources for research on its murdered people and their history? Apparently, it is the responsibility of the Jews of Greece, 90 percent of whom were murdered, and whose principal city, Salonika, was Europe's largest Sephardic Jewish center until the Holocaust (and which between the 16th and 18th centuries was, without exaggeration, the largest Jewish center in Europe altogether), to research themselves. That's what is done today by a handful of Greek Jews in Israel and abroad who have taken the task upon themselves. In light of all this, the book "Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau," by Photini Tomai, director of the historical and diplomatic archives of the Greek foreign ministry - a volume that includes eyewitness testimony, documentation, photographs and other research, at least some of which was new to me - is a significant event, even if it has its shortcomings. And as the book has been published in a nation where anti-Semitism is on the rise, it's important to establish the narrative of the Holocaust of the Jews of Greece, and in doing so to investigate the unique aspects of their specialness and otherness, especially as this specialness and otherness find almost no expression in Holocaust research and education in Israel.



Jewish cemetery in Salonika before its destruction



Modiano Villa

Prior to the Nazi occupation, 77,000 Jews lived in Greece, organized within 25 different communities. The largest of them, the same "Jerusalem of the Balkans," was Salonika, with its 56,000 Jews, most of them descendants of those expelled from Spain in 1492. Salonika, which knew occupation, epidemics, fires and famines, had been a veritable empire of rare cosmopolitan experience, with a lively culture of tolerance, and it had served as a Ladino-speaking Jewish center for 450 years. Even after the Greeks liberated the city from Ottoman rule, in 1912, the Jews continued to be active in the country's social, political and military circles, according to the

book, which mentions people like the senator Avraham Ben-Aroya, and military officers such as Col. Mordechai Frizis, a hero of the Albanian war.

The book also describes a flourishing Jewish intelligentsia; newspapers published in Ladino, French and Greek; Jewish theater, poets and writers; movements both socialist and Zionist; publishers and impressive libraries; a wide network of Jewish schools and community-run social-service organizations; a magnificent rabbinate; physicians and bankers.

But the book neglects what it was that made Greece's Jewish community unique, which turns out to have great significance when it comes to their situation and the way they coped during the Holocaust. Greece's Jews were the living realization of the vision of David Ben-Gurion and the Zionist movement: They were the "New Jew." The sea off of Salonika was home to Jewish fishermen, its ports employed Jewish stevedores - and when they rested on the Sabbath, the port was closed. The workshops of Salonika, many of which were Jewish-owned, employed Jewish craftsmen, and the city's streets were traversed by muscular Jewish porters, Jewish horse-drawn carriages, all organized in cooperative agreements that were fully honored in hard times. And with fraternal relations with their Christian brethren too, as the book characterizes them, they had a mentality that was Mediterranean. They celebrated life with good food, with song, dance and music, with entertainment, love and sports.

Among the letters and excerpts from memoirs filled with vitality I received in the wake of the publication of my last novel, "Rose of Lebanon," were those from the daughter of Yaakov Cohen. A Salonika Jew who immigrated to Israel before the Holocaust, Cohen wrote about a Jewish boxer by the name of David, who went by the nickname "Machista" and would make his rounds in the city with a large Magen David suspended around his neck. Such prizefighters later contributed another drop of life to Jewish and Christian prisoners who were ordered to watch them compete with Ukrainian bullies for the entertainment of the SS, and - heaven forbid - defeated them!

No, there were no other Jews like this in the Diaspora: Salonika's Jews were not weak, not assimilated, they were not forced to choose between religion and education. They were nursed on the harmony that was in the blood of the city, and blended body and soul. "A Jewish city unlike any other in the world, not even in Eretz Israel," wrote David Ben-Gurion in one of his letters, about the year he spent studying in Salonika. Wrote, and then forgot.

Forgotten facts

And yet, even in "Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau," some of the facts have been forgotten. There is no mention, for example, of the nationalism cultivated under the second term of prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos, between 1928 and 1933; of the development of a fascist movement, following the arrival of thousands of refugees from Turkey in 1923, whose members persecuted and abused Jews; of the anti-Semitic riots at Camp Campbell, in 1931; or of the Jews' expulsion from their positions and the emigration of some 25,000 of them, during the same period. The book also contains a black hole with regard to the participation of Jews in the Greek resistance organizations. In other words: The heroism of Col. Frizis was not a one-time phenomenon. His successors - even if not part of the national ethos of Greece - were educated young Jewish men and women who, left homeless after the arrival of the Germans, ascended into the hills to join the resistance against the invaders. Their contribution was decisive: "Captain" Sarika, 17, led her own women's corps against German targets, and her courage was widely known. And there were others who comported themselves with similar bravery. But their activism also found expression in instructing locals, including women, along with providing translation, supply, medical, agricultural and publishing services for underground anti-German tracts, as well as maintaining external links with the British and the Americans.

At their peak of activity, the Jews in Greek resistance organizations, together with those from other Balkan states, numbered about 1,000, according to Prof. Steven B. Bowman, of the University of Cincinnati, who spoke at a 2002 conference on the Jews of Greece at the University of Haifa. [Editor's note: Bowman is author, most recently, of "The Agony of Greek Jews, 1940-1945" (Stanford, 2009).]

And something else is missing from the current volume: "Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau" devotes only a few lines to the subject of the German occupation of Greece, and to Greece's division among Italy, Germany and Bulgaria. Tomai gives nearly equal weight to Athens under the Italians, where leaders and intellectuals refused to hand over the city's Jews, as opposed to Salonika, where most of the city's Jews were rounded up and, with the exception of a few instances of rescue on the part of Greeks, were handed over to the Germans, with almost total silence on the part of the Greek establishment.

Instead, the book "begins" with the transports, skipping over the long days of occupation, in which members of the Jewish community council were arrested, and over the suffering of Jews, whose property was confiscated and who were forced into the Baron Hirsch Ghetto. Forgotten too is the looting of the libraries of Salonika's synagogues (turned by the Germans into a library for the study of Judaism), or the story of the Black Sabbath of July 1942, when 9,000 of the city's Jews between the ages of 18 and 45 were humiliated for an entire day in Freedom Square, as well as many, many other events.

Moreover, according to the picture portrayed by Dr. Irith Dublon-Knebel of Tel Aviv University, whose research is presented in a book called "German Foreign Office Documents on the Holocaust in Greece (1937-1944)," the occupiers too reacted to the Jews of Greece differently than they did to Jews of other national origins. So, for example, though the Germans entered Salonika in April 1941, the restrictions on the city's Jews went into effect only at the end of January 1943.

"The Germans felt an alien nature to their encounter with the Sephardic Jews," writes Dublon-Knebel. Indeed, and the Germans' postponement of measures against the Jews of Salonika actually motivated the Greek anti-Semite Laskris Papanau to write a complaint to the German consul: "In all the countries of Europe and the Balkans, steps have been taken long ago ... to make ... the Jews harmless. Only in Greece, and especially in Salonika, have the Jews been left unharmed."

Twenty transports

On March 15, 1943, the first transport of Greek Jews left for Auschwitz; 19 others were to follow. The journey of 2,800 people crammed into cattle cars without food, with one bucket of water and one for waste, and with one stop, took seven days. For these Jews, the extermination process really began on the train. Only 10,000 of Greece's 77,000 Jews survived the Holocaust.

"In the concentration camp ... the Ashkenazim didn't believe that we were Jews ... because we were strong, suntanned from the sun of Saloniki ... 'Tfu, the Grecos, those Greeks,' the Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews said about us, and we were scared, thinking it was German they spoke ... We didn't understand a single word the SS shouted, and just for that we were beaten" (my father, Yizhak Aini, from the novel "Rose of Lebanon," and from life).

Only 524 men and women were taken from the first transport from Salonika to the Auschwitz work camps and to the devilish project of medical experiments. All the rest were sent directly to the gas chambers. Because of this, there is very little information about them in German documentation. However, even if the situation was similar in the other transports, Greek Jews could be found in all the forced-labor venues of Auschwitz-Birkenau from the period before the crematoria: as forced laborers in construction of the Buna camp, in the Sonderkommando, in the

camp orchestra. But their inborn pride and sense of freedom, their steadfast loyalty to their languages - Ladino and Greek - and camaraderie, patriotism and social cohesion, along with their singing, self-irony and cunning initiative, with which they were able to buy yet one more moment before descending into hell, quickly served to grant them a different pattern of survival. While talking among the prisoners was forbidden, the Germans actually encouraged them to sing. "We changed the words of songs whose tunes the Germans liked, and included messages and words of encouragement instead," recounts Haguel Leon of Salonika in Tomai's book. On occasion, passing messages through song proved fateful. The Germans had located the crematoria far from the camp area, and housed the Sonderkommando (Jewish prisoners forced to work in the death camp facilities, gas chambers and crematoria) in rooms above the ovens, in order to maintain secrecy. However, a Greek Jew with a strong voice sang one day from oven number 6: "Greek girls who can hear me, tra la la ... in these chimneys here that you see above, a death factory of the worst kind is operating ... thousands of Jews ... falling into flames ... and I know that I too will be burned ... Greek girls, please ... if you come out of here alive ... tell the world." Beri Nachmias, who worked in the Canada camp and heard the song, says she will remember it until the day she dies.



Auschwitz-Birkenau



Sketch of Sonderkommando

The brotherhood that existed among the Greek Jews was also well known. Only a few prisoners had positions that allowed them to save lives. But Aharon Rosa, a pharmacist from Salonika who was the only Jew working in the SS infirmary at Auschwitz, used to smuggle out medicine and other supplies to his friends, risking his life to do so. He was nicknamed "father of the Greeks." But the most powerful testimony to the exceptionalism of the Jews of Greece may be found in the book "If This Is a Man" by Primo Levi, who was in the Buna camp for a year. Buna, located near Auschwitz, was the I.G. Farben factory, and served as a forced labor camp for thousands of Jewish and Christian prisoners.

As Levi testified: "Next to us is a group of Greeks, those admirable and terrible Jews of Salonika ... Those Greeks who have conquered in the kitchens and the yards, and whom even the Germans respect and the Poles fear. They are in their third year of camp, and no one knows better than them what the camp means And they continue to sing and beat their feet in time and grow drunk on songs" (from the translation by Stuart Woolf, Abacus Press, 1991).

Not for nothing was Buna the camp most identified with Greek Jews. It was built by 200 of them from Salonika who arrived at Auschwitz in the eighth transport, and within a year of its construction it housed about 3,000 Greek Jews. "The camp was the size of Salonika," relates Baruch Sabi, who worked in the camp with his brother Sam for seven months, in "Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau." But the work of Yaacov Handali, who dug tunnels in the frozen ground of Buna, was harder, and the food supplied at that camp the worst in all Auschwitz. Soon even the burly stevedores of Salonika were rotting in the oppressive labor of Buna. "They barely survived

a month," said Handali, who was saved by his gaunt build, but who lost his brothers, Yehuda and Shmuel.

Primo Levi himself wrote that had he not been transferred from the job of dismantling steel beams to that of laboratory chemist, where he was protected from the cold, he would not have survived Buna. Again he testifies: "The professional merchants stand in the market, each one in his normal corner; first among them come the Greeks, as immobile and silent as sphinxes, squatting on the ground behind their bowls of thick soup, the fruits of their labour, of their cooperation and of their national solidarity. The Greeks have been reduced to very few by now, but they have made a contribution of the first importance to the physiognomy of the camp and to the international slang in circulation ... These few survivors from the Jewish colony of Salonika, with their two languages, Spanish and Greek, and their numerous activities, are the repositories of a concrete, mundane, conscious wisdom, in which the traditions of all the Mediterranean civilizations blend together. That this wisdom was transformed in the camp into the systematic and scientific practice of theft and seizure of positions and the monopoly of the bargaining Market, should not let one forget that their aversion to gratuitous brutality, their amazing consciousness of the survival of at least a potential human dignity, made of the Greeks the most coherent national nucleus in Lager, and in this respect, the most civilized."

Mass sterilization

"Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau" devotes important chapters to blocks 10 and 11 in Auschwitz, in which the most horrifying acts ever enacted by people upon their fellow human beings took place. Many of the women tortured in block 10 were young Jews from Greece. The purpose of the experiments was supposedly to research diseases such as typhoid and cancer or conduct trials of new drugs produced by Bayer. In effect, however, what was perpetrated there en masse was sterilization. The devil for 200 Greek Jewish women was Dr. Karl Klauberg, who removed their ovaries in terrifying ways, without anesthesia or antiseptics. Let us remember the names of some of his victims: Rivka Ari, Dora Cohen, Buena Bitran, Rachel Mordoch, Bella Malach

"They pulled my womb down and performed experiments. Afterwards I could never have children," says Elvira Kolado. Another type of experiment was intended for human embalming. "They chose ... Greek Jewish young women with long noses ... Afterwards, I saw several types of masks fitted to the face, a month later the young women were put on a train and never returned. People said they had been mummified," remembers Germaine Mano, who was tortured in block 10.

The chapter in "Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau" on the Sonderkommando revolt seems to highlight more than anything else the differences in treatment of the Greek Jews, as opposed to those from the rest of Europe. According to the Greek Foreign Ministry, it would appear that the revolt organized by the Sonderkommando on October 7, 1944, was planned and executed completely by Greeks, waving improvised Greek flags, and accompanied by the strains of the Greek national anthem. Moreover, according to Tomai, the revolt - which included the blowing up of Crematorium No. 4 and sending to a fiery death the Kapo commander and an SS soldier - was led by Yosef Baruch, an officer in the Greek army.

The sparks of the revolt were ignited when Baruch, who worked in the Sonderkommando - which was the worst of all labors forced onto the Jews by the Germans and whose survivors were perhaps the most tragic among all Holocaust survivors - discovered his own parents in the gas chamber. Together with other Greeks, Russian prisoners and the chief Kapo, Jakob Kaminski, and with the help of four women from the weapons factory who smuggled them dynamite, and notwithstanding a series of plans that went wrong, the revolt (which ended in failure, or as Marcel Nagari put it, "For a few seconds we were free") began with Baruch's battle cry. Four

hundred and fifty rebels, out of them 300 Jews from Greece, were murdered on that day by SS fire; among them was Yosef Baruch.

In contrast, the book "We Wept without Tears: Testimonies of Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz," by Gideon Greif (Yale University Press, 2005), presents a more detailed and complex picture of the revolt, and a very different one. Even so, its description of the revolt also paints it with certain national colors while erasing others. Under the heading: "The Sonderkommando in Auschwitz-Birkenau: Portrait and Self-Image," Greif writes: "The story is told in various versions, especially in regard to the heroism of the participants and the symbolism of the act. However, the testimonies of former prisoners allow us to reconstruct the uprising in its general contours." Later on he points out: "Among those killed were almost all the leaders of the uprising," before proceeding to list six men with Ashkenazi names. No Yosef Baruch.

But one Peppo-Yosef Baruch is mentioned by Greif, who acknowledges in the book that he began his research on the topic following his acquaintance with two Greeks, Shaul Chazan and Josef Sakar. In answer to the question, "What do you know about the Sonderkommando revolt?" Greif quotes the answer of Chazan, who was from Salonika: "With us was a Greek Jewish officer whom I'd known back in Greece, Peppo-Josef Baruch. He was in contact with two Russian prisoners of war who were being held in the camp. One of them was also an officer. Peppo and the Russian officer contacted the underground in Auschwitz-I. Very slowly they organized and brought explosives to Birkenau. They made all preparations for an attack and an escape. At some time they told us about the plans for the uprising.."

The historic distortion continues today even at the data resource center of Yad Vashem, where one can read how "Greek survivors of Auschwitz credited themselves [my emphasis] with the explosion of Crematorium 3: Nearly all the participants in the attack were killed singing the Greek national anthem." Well, the truth comes into balance only in the words of Prof. Bowman: "It is also fitting to mention here the participation of the Jews of Greece in the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, and their contribution to the Sonderkommando revolt in October 1944. This was a suicide battle, but one that gave hope to the prisoners ... in the rest of the camps in the Auschwitz complex."

And it is my hope, filled with pain for all the victims and survivors - no matter what their origin - that the ultimate lesson of the Holocaust would be: Love your neighbor (and brother) as yourself."

Leah Aini is a writer.

Thank you Leah

Note: photos accompanying the above article are from the archives of Kehila Kedosha Janina

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