July 2013 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we return from an unbelievable visit to Jewish Greece, Bulgaria, Skopje and Bitola, we gathered new friends and cemented age-old bonds. This year we celebrated a Bar Mitzvah in Ioannina! As always, we are happy to share our news.

![Celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of Max Abraham in Ioannina](image)

This newsletter, our 66th, will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. In addition, we will cover news from our new friends in Bulgaria, Skopje and Bitola. 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](http://www.kkjsm.org)).
We now reach close to 6000 households worldwide, with our community of ‘friends’ continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (papusoup@mindspring.com) so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher foods) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

Passings

We mourn the passing of Jesse Ganis, just short of his 93rd birthday. Our sincere condolences to his widow, Florence, and his children, Monte, Jaime and Rodney. A true Yanniote, Jesse was the son of Mathew Ganis and Sarah Jeuda and the grandson of Jesse Ganis and Dinah Colchamiro.

We mourn the passing of Marvin Cohen, a descendant of one of the founding families of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Marvin left us way too young, at the age of 71. He was the son of Samuel Cohen and Shirley Jaeger, and the grandson of Solomon Koen (Cohen) and Rebecca Battino. Our condolences to his widow, Sandra, and his children David and Shari Cohen Markbreiter.
We mourn the passing of Fina Cohen Lodico, a special lady whose spirit and joy of life lifted all of us. Our condolences to Fina’s children and grandchildren. Her passing has left a hole in our hearts.

Simchas

Our belated birthday wishes to Manny Asser who recently turned 98.

Manny with his nephew
Steven Mazza
The light of Kehila Kedosha Janina is still in the Attas family

Valerie Marflitt, Elisa Berger & Debbie Kelton

The “Corito” cousins come home

Serata descendant visits KKJ
Past Museum Events

Jonathan Boyarin’s book presentation

We were honored to have Jonathan Boyarin present his book, “Mornings at the Stanton Street Shul” on June 2nd.

News from Greek-Jewish New York

Report from Asher Matathias on Greek participation at the Israel Day Parade: 6/2/13 – "Just returned with Anna to our home, tired but exalting for another Israel Day Parade, celebrating the "Medicare" status, ever-vibrant, and uniquely contributing to improving our world, still incredibly historic! You see, for the first time, responsible, progressive voices in the Greek and Cypriot communities rose beyond the din to prevail and include a sizable contingent and presence on ...a warm Fifth Avenue! Hail the Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York, endorsing the resolution by Argonaut Paul Skotidas to parade (president Elias Tsekeridis was in the lead today); also the leadership of the Pan-Macedonian Association, headed by its president; most of all, the Cyprus Federation of America, with former president Panicos Papanicolau and Consul-General Koula Sophianou up front, which took the initiative, showing the way towards demonstrating solidarity, friendship, and cooperation with the Jewish State! This experience materially enhanced our ranks as Zionists --- adherents of the right for the Jewish People to have a nation! Long live this collaboration begun today in the asphalts of New York, yards from Central Park, and let us say Amen. This is the start of a new week, which includes the 123rd anniversary of the Park East Jewish Day School, celebrating several honorees at a Waldorf-Astoria dinner, including our darling daughter Joy Avitan, as Educator of the Year. My cup runneth over ..."
Our June 16-July 2 Tour to Jewish Greece this year included Bulgaria, Skopje and Bitola. We connected with Jewish communities in all these locations. The highlight of the tour was, of course, the Bar Mitzvah of Max Abraham in the synagogue in Ioannina. The participants in this tour were exceedingly special, well travelled with excellent senses of humor. They made us proud everywhere we went.

We started in Thessaloniki and, thanks Hella Kounio Matalon, our group was treated to a very personalized tour to Jewish Thessaloniki.

Our trip to Bulgaria was truly an adventure, and with the brilliance of Anthony Georgieff, author of “Jewish Bulgaria,” the group was treated to an amazing tour.

The synagogue in Plovdiv with the Shamas, Mr. Behar, and Anthony
Our visit to Skopje and Bitola (Monastir) was a true revelation. The Holocaust Museum was well done and our tour guide Maya especially knowledgeable. Faton, who is a journalist was sensitive and informative as he guided us through Skopje, both the city and the suburbs. Our friend, Pavlos, met us in Bitola and, I am sure, will be of great help when we return again.
There is no doubt that the highlight of our tour was the Bar Mitzvah of Max Abraham. Max and his family came from the States to share his Bar Mitzvah with the Jewish community of Ioannina in the synagogue where his great grandparents worshipped.
Anytime we go anywhere, we don’t just make a donation. We always ask, is there anything we can do for you. So here is our shopping list as we return from this special tour.

1. Finding a Jewish community in the States to adopt the synagogue in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.
2. Supplying a mezuzah for the Museum created in the former Jewish home in Samotov.
3. Helping raise funds for a Jewish Museum in the basement in the synagogue in Sofia.
4. Raising awareness and funds for a cleanup and preservation of the Jewish cemetery in Bitola.
5. Continuing to help the Jewish community in Ioannina with the upkeep of the synagogue and cleanup of the cemetery.

One of our major new goals is to encourage additional Bar Mitzvahs and celebration of other simchas in Ioannina. These events inject new life into the community. Get in touch with us and we will help you.

News from Jewish Greece

Athens
We have the pleasure to announce that after the elections of 28th May 2013 the executive committee of our Bnei Berith Lodge is formed as follows:
President: Victor Batis
Vice President: Matathias Borbolis
Gen. Secretary: Rita Gabay
Deputy Gen. Secretary: Souzy Cohen
Treasurer: Matathias Levis
Member: Helias Borbolis
Member: Leon Mizan
Member: Alberto Ferera
Mentor: Leon Gabrielides.

News from Greece

Foreign minister tells American Jewish Committee forum 'Greece will never allow hate to grow'

"Greece will never allow hate to grow and spread," Foreign Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos told the American Jewish Committee Global Forum in Washington on Monday, at which he was a keynote speaker.
"Because of its economic problems, Greece is facing serious social challenges that have bred political forces that disgrace our democratic and humanistic traditions," Avramopoulos said.
"Let me state from this forum, in the most determined and compelling manner, that Greece will never allow hate to grow and spread. Hate will be confronted and stopped," he added.
"The social factors that have allowed this to happen, as in other European countries, must be successfully addressed. Ignorance, despair, anger, disillusionment with the political system are
some of them. I am certain that as the crisis passes, the haters will pass too," Avramopoulos said.
On a different note, Avramopoulos also said that Greece "will continue the application of the necessary measures, structural reforms and privatizations." He said that this early stage - "the beginning of a long process of regenerating the Greek economy" - also provides opportunity "for investors who first spot the new trend and invest in the renewed prospects of our economy. Investors, who will, above all, appreciate the unique comparative advantages of our country."

Jewish and Orthodox church leaders meet in Greece

Thessaloniki: 12 June 2013

Leading Orthodox Christian and Jewish interfaith officials, scholars and clerics discussed the crucial importance of protecting the environment and religious values and condemned growing incidents of anti-Semitism and religious prejudice around the world during a three day conference to help improve relations between these two ancient faith communities. Co-sponsored by the Liaison Office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Office of Interreligious and Intercultural Affairs, and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), a Jewish umbrella group, the meeting was the latest in an on-going effort to improve relations and dialogue between Orthodoxy and Judaism.

About 40 Christian Orthodox clergy, rabbis, and academics from around the world met with local government and religious leaders. Thessaloniki Mayor Yannis Boutaris, Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki and David Saltiel, president of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, were among those who met with members of the consultation. Participants also visited the Monastiriotes Synagogue, the Holocaust Monument and the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki.

The Orthodox Christian delegation was led by Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, and the Jewish delegation by IJCIC Chairman Lawrence Schiffman. A major theme of the meeting was to commemorate the solidarity Jewish and Christian Orthodox citizens of Thessaloniki displayed at the time of the Shoah in World War II, and to discover what processes are necessary to sustain that level of solidarity in today’s increasingly contentious world.

Noting that Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has declared 2013 the Year of Global Solidarity, Metropolitan Emmanuel said: “It is well documented that Greeks living in Thessaloniki at the time of the Shoah stood with their Jewish neighbors and friends. Today, more than ever, we must stand together to battle the evils of anti-Semitism, religious prejudice and all forms of discrimination.”

Schiffman said: "These meetings are extremely important for both the Jewish people and Orthodox Christianity because we share a long history and common roots. We are committed to building mutual respect and better understanding between our two faiths.”

Betty Ehrenberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress - North America and IJCIC vice-chair, presented the joint communique, which was approved, and stated that: “Given recent tragic events around the world – environmental, political and social – the need for interreligious consultations such as this one are all the more relevant as we work together to respect our world and respect one another.”


This year, the Jewish national day of mourning and the only other 25-hour fast on the Jewish calendar besides Yom Kippur – the 9th of Av – falls on July 16th. Besides the main focus on the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, other major tragedies and calamities also occurred to the Jewish people on or around that date, with one of the most seminal for all of world Jewry being the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

The actual edict of expulsion was issued on March 31st, 1492, but only made public on April 29th, most likely due to last minute efforts of Don Isaac Abravanel and Avraham Señor – two of the most prominent leaders of the Jewish community with access to Ferdinand and Isabella – to have it rescinded, though ultimately to no avail. The final date for all Jews to leave Spain was July 31st, 1492, which corresponded that year with the Hebrew date of the 8th of Av. Of course, the story really begins one hundred years earlier, in 1391, when Church instigation led to anti-Jewish riots all over Spain, leading to the forced mass conversions of many to Christianity. This in turn led to the phenomenon of the "conversos", Jews who continued to secretly practice Judaism or certain rituals, while outwardly living as Christians. Given Spain's desire to be a "pure" Christian – read Catholic – country, the Inquisition was established to discover, try, and in most cases execute by "auto de fé" (burned at the stake) insincere converts for their "Judaizing". And though Jews who remained true to their faith were not formal targets of the Inquisition, the Spanish Crown, and again highly instigated by the clergy, decided that Spain could never be a pure and Catholic country as long as Jews lived there.

The repercussions were traumatic in every sphere, with major impact on Jewish communities throughout the world. Besides the more obvious horrors of physical expulsion and all its accompanying death and destruction, the Spanish exiles reached almost every country, and especially in the areas physically closer to the Spanish peninsula. Many fled to Portugal, though their relief was short lived, since Portugal followed Spain's lead in expelling its Jews in 1496. Many reached North Africa, where they rapidly established their own communities, mostly within major cities, and in many cases virtually taking over the religious leadership from the indigenous Jewish natives. Others reached Middle Eastern countries, especially Syria and Egypt, and of course the Land of Israel, with the largest concentration settling in Tzfat and Jerusalem, leading to a Ladino/Judeo-Spanish speaking community that still exists today. Due to the Turkish Sultan's willingness to accept Jewish exiles to the Turkish empire, which at the time included most of the Balkan states, including Greece, probably the largest contingent settled in the Mediterranean basin, creating what would one could call "The Western Sephardic" tradition and major Judeo-Spanish speaking communities in cities like Thessaloniki and Rhodes, as well as cities like Ioannina (Janina) and other places which were the home of ancient enclaves of the Romaniote Greek Jewish population and ancestors of the KKJ community. The sheer numbers of Spanish exiles and their spiritual leaders led to a virtually take-over of Jewish community life in many of these places, though the Romaniote communities retained much of their cultural and lingual autonomy until the Holocaust. And in a larger perspective, the expulsion from Spain...
marked the end to a physically and spiritually glorious Jewish history and legacy that never really recovered.

Some of the more moving dirges recited on the 9\textsuperscript{th} of Av actually refer to the riots of 1391, the Inquisition and the expulsion. For example, one of the most famous ones, called "Judah and Israel, know that it is very bitter for me," was written specifically about the loss of these glorious communities. Manuscripts of this dirge include the lines: "My joy and happiness are gone when I remember Seville, because it is lost; the crown of all communities of Aragon and also Catalonia is gone, and the enemy has overtaken and plundered them...."

Requests for our help

"I apologize in advance for writing somewhat without introduction, but I have been following your work related to the Greek Jews and I also follow up on your newsletter. I have studied 1940s Greece from a more cultural perspective and have recently published on the subject of theater on the Greek prison islands (theater is what usually keeps me preoccupied). Currently, I am looking for an original manuscript (preferably an unpublished memoir by a woman) that deserves to be translated and issued in English. My model would be Tasoula Vervenioti's Diplo Vivlio, but I envision a publication in English with close attention to the Greek original (I read Greek). May I ask, if in your in-depth research on oral and written sources from the Greek 1940s and from Greek Holocaust survivors, you have come across a memoir that should really be published and placed in a more scholarly context? I would be most grateful if you could point me to something or someone who wrote or holds on to such a memoir.

Thank you so much in advance. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
Gonda Van Steen”

Vincent L. has asked our help in researching his wife’s Besso family roots. This is what he knows so far:

Michel Besso was born in Ioaninna in 1833. He married Rachel Besso. She might have been a cousin. Her maiden name is unknown. Rachel was born in 1844 in Arta. Michel died Istanbul in 1910 and Rachel in 1915.

Michel and Rachel had many children, at least 7: Sabin, Joseph, Maurice, Esther, Fortunée and there may have been a Victoria. All were born in Constantinople.

Sabin Besso, born in 1882, arrived in Belgium in 1909 and married Alice Seligmann. My wife is their great-grand daughter. Sabin arrived in Belgium with a passport from Corfu. I don't know whether after being born in Constantinople he went back to Corfu.

The other immigrated to France.
All of them survived to the Shoah, except Sabin and Alice who were deported from Belgium. We are still in very close contact to the descendants of Joseph. Also, I found some of the descendants of Esther and Fortunée (Bazonanna family and Camhi family), living respectively in Switzerland and in Columbia.

Sabin and Alice had three children: Roger, Michel and Colette.
The entire family was deported to Auschwitz. Only Roger, my wife's grandfather, survived. Roger never talked about his family after the war.
I decided 5 months ago to conduct all these research to discover our family's roots.

Before the war, there were other Besso families in Paris and Bruxelles who were originated from Ioannina and Constantinople. However, I'm still not able to make the link with my family.

If you had any information that could help me relating Michel Besso (1833-1910) and his wife Rachel (1844-1915) to other Besso from Ioannina and Arta, I would welcome it!

Please find enclosed a picture of Michel Besso.

We are continually looking for photos from the Lower East Side from the Greek Jewish world (both Romaniote and Sephardic). We would love family photos, street scenes, store fronts of shops owned by Greek Jews. Send them to us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

On the light side:

“Our Rabbinate has demanded, from this day on (I am not making this up) 'dairy bourekas must be baked as a triangle and parve bourekas must be square-shaped.” Thank goodness for our pious rabbis who work tirelessly on the vital issues that affect society. (Quote from Andrew M. Sacks)

Crazy rabbis and cheese bourekas | Jerusalem Post - Blogs
blogs.jpost.com

Thanks to Joe Varon

Corrections for June 2013 e-newsletter
From Jerry Pardo: THANK YOU FOR AUNT DINAH. IT’S MIONE. THE PIC WITH UNCLE LOUIE WAS WITH DINAH, NOT SARA AND WITH COUSIN IRVING.

So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11-4 and, by appointment during the week.