March 2020 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This month, we celebrate Purim, one of the most colorful and enjoyable Holidays of Judaism. In Greece, this was the Holiday where children received presents and everyone enjoyed dressing up in costumes. We, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, celebrate the Holiday in the traditional Romaniote way. Do join us. Our Spring Holiday schedule is included with this newsletter. To our Christian friends, as they prepare for Easter, we wish them a meaningful Lent.

This Megila was given to Kehila Kedosha Janina by Sarah Kuperschmidt Battino and her daughter, Silvana Patricia Battino. The Megila had been brought from Corfu to Argentina by Ralph Battino. It had been in the Battino family for hundreds of years. Of all the museums throughout the world that the family could have chosen to give this Megila, they chose Kehila Kedosha Janina. We are very grateful. The Megila will be displayed in a new case and will be on permanent exhibit in our Museum in the Spring of 2020.

This newsletter has been sponsored by Blanca Garazi Schooner in honor of Mario Egozi and Diego Binett.
This newsletter, our 132nd 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 have now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of ‘friends’ continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at museum@kkjsm.org

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

Passings

It is with deepest sadness that we report that Ruth Etta Pengas passed away on Thursday, February 20, 2020. Raised in Vineland, New Jersey by her parents Daniel and Lucy, Ruth moved to New York City for college and made it her home (she would readily explain to anyone why not living in NYC was a terrible mistake), becoming a belly dancer, NYU University Administrator, and Greenwich Village fixture.

Ruth is survived by Avram Pengas, her husband, Dena Pengas, her daughter, her brother John Berkowicz, Alex Feldman, her son-in-law, her grandsons Oz and Liev, and the incalculable friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances whose lives were brightened by Ruth’s smile, spirit, and, if lucky, her unsolicited but always indispensable life advice.

Kehila Kedosha Janina mourns the passing of Sheila Gessoula, widow of Ben Gessoula. Sheila was born in 1935 and passed in February. She is mourned by her family and our community.
Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

As always, February brought us a variety of visitors: school groups, new friends from near and far, and members of the Greek Jewish world, who always make us a stop on their visit to New York.

This month’s newsletter has been sponsored by Blanca Garazi Schooner in honor of Mario Egozi and Diego Binett. Blanca and Mario have a fascinating Jewish heritage and have recently joined the DNA project. Blanca’s family resided in Turkey but she believes the family has strong Romaniote background going back to North Macedonia and the city of Ohrid, having attended the Ahrida Synagogue in North Macedonia (Formerly part of Yugoslavia).

“The Jewish Virtual Library (link here) references Rabbi David Egozi, 17th century Istanbul, which also corroborates the stories my mom records in her memoir of the towns of Balat, (Istanbul) Turkey and Ahrida Synagogue (here spelled Ohrida). We have now learned that this synagogue was founded centuries before, by Jews who fled the area of Lake Ahrida from (what is present day) North Macedonia.”

Hopefully, Kehila Kedosha Janina can help Blanca answer some of her questions.
Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

On February 16th, Kehila Kedosha Janina was honored to host the esteemed scholar, Professor Alexander Kitroeff, and his presentation on Greeks and Jews in Egypt. This was by far the most successful event we have hosted, with more than 70 attendees and standing room only! Thank you Professor Kitroeff. We are now helping the Professor gather additional info on Greek Jews in Egypt. If your family history takes in this aspect of the Greek-Jewish diaspora, please get in touch with us at museum@kkjsm.org and we will put you in touch with Professor Kitroeff.

Boureka Cooking Class with the Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network

The Greek Jewish Young Professionals hosted another amazing event with a full house. More than 35 young members of our community got their hands dirty making their very own delicious spinach & cheese and potato bourekas. They also enjoyed a wine and fruit tasting for the holiday of Tu BiShevat. If you wish to become a member, you can email GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com or follow them on Facebook here. The Network is open to young adults in their 20s and 30s.
Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum wishes you a

Happy Purim!
행 폰임 쉬마다
Χαυκ Σαμέαχ
Purim Alegre I Dulce

Join us to celebrate Purim!
Monday March 9 at 6:00pm

Kehila Kedosha Janina
280 Broome Street NYC

Mincha, Arvith, and Megillah Reading
Followed by a Traditional Greek Jewish Dinner
Come dressed in your best costume!

“The Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness and honor”
ליהוהים חמדת ארצה שמחתה והשנה ויקר

Please RSVP to amarcus@kkjsm.org
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
IS HONORED TO WELCOME

DR. MURRAY SPIEGEL
TO PRESENT

HOW TO CREATE AN UNFORGETTABLE
PASSEOVER SEDER

SUNDAY MARCH 29TH AT 2:00PM
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC

Find out how to make your Seder extremely entertaining and educational!

Murray Spiegel has a passion for Judaism, Passover, and Language. He has a reputation for innovative Seders, which have been featured in the New York Times and filmed by PBS. He has spoken all over the United States. On March 29th he will be joining us at KKJ.

All attendees will receive a free printout of Romaniote and Sephardic Passover Recipes. In addition, Jennifer Abadi’s excellent cookbook “Too Good to Passover” will be available at a special Holiday Price. We will also have copies of Romaniote and Sephardic Haggadot for sale.

PLEASE RSVP TO MUSEUM@KKJSM.ORG OR 516-456-9336
JOIN MARCIA HADDAD-IKONOMOPOULOS ON MARCH 8 AT THE
CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION AT 12:30 PM
FOR A PRESENTATION ON

GREEK CHRISTIAN AND Cypriot Heroes:
Saving Jews During the Holocaust in Greece
And Risking Lives to Help Jews Incarcerated
In British Detention Camps in Cyprus

To date, Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance
Center in Israel, has recognized 355 Greek Orthodox
Christians as “Righteous Among the Nations.” In the
midst of one of the harshest Fascist occupations, these
heroes literally took food out of their children’s mouths
to feed and hide Greek Jews, jeopardizing their own lives
and those of their families. One Cypriot risked his life to
enable Jews to escape the British detention camps,
Enabling them to join the fight for Israeli Independence.
Learn their stories. Honor their memory.

SUNDAY MARCH 8TH AT 12:30PM
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION
302 W 91ST STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10024
Greek Independence Day Parade
SUNDAY MARCH 29th 2020, 1:30pm
CELEBRATING THE 199th ANNIVERSARY OF HELLENIC INDEPENDENCE
5th Avenue
New York City
64th to 78th Street
Organized by the Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York
Join Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Clémence Boulouque as they discuss Abrevaya Stein’s latest book, Family Papers: A Sephardic Journey Through the Twentieth Century (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

For centuries, the bustling port city of Salonica was home to the sprawling Levy family. As leading publishers and editors, they helped chronicle modernity as it was experienced by Sephardic Jews across the Ottoman Empire. The wars of the twentieth century, however, redrew the borders around them, in the process transforming the Levys from Ottomans to Greeks. Family members soon moved across boundaries and hemispheres, stretching the familial diaspora from Greece to Western Europe, Israel, Brazil, and India. In time, the Holocaust nearly eviscerated the clan, eradicating whole branches of the family tree.

In Family Papers, the prizewinning Sephardic historian Sarah Abrevaya Stein uses the family’s correspondence to tell the story of their journey across the arc of a century and the breadth of the globe. They wrote to share grief and to reveal secrets, to propose marriage and to plan for divorce, to maintain connection. They wrote because they were family. And years after they frayed, Stein discovers, what remains solid is the fragile tissue that once held them together: neither blood nor belief, but papers.

With meticulous research and care, Stein uses the Levys’ letters to tell not only their history, but the history of Sephardic Jews in the twentieth century.

Sarah Abrevaya Stein is the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Director of the Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, as well as Professor of History and the Maurice Amado Chair in Sephardic Studies at UCLA. She is the author or editor of nine books, including Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce, among many others. The recipient of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, three National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and two National Jewish Book Awards, Stein lives with her family in Santa Monica, CA.

Clémence Boulouque is an Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies in the Religion Department at Columbia University where she focuses on philosophy, psychoanalysis and interreligious encounters. A former radio host and book critique, she is also the author of a dozen novels and essays published by Gallimard in her native France.

TALK: FREE
Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Clémence Boulouque
DATE & TIME
Tuesday, March 24, 2020
6:30 PM
LOCATION: ALBERINE
972 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY
Past Events Outside of New York

Indianapolis

Mazal Tov to the Sephardic Community in Indianapolis Etz Chaim Sephardic Congregation on the dedication of a new Sefer Torah! The dedication coincided with the community’s Frutkas Tu Bishvat Seder and special celebration in honor of the completion of the Sephardic Sefer Torah. Etz Chaim is celebrating over 110 years of service to the Sephardic community, originally founded by members from Monastir and Salonika.

Washington DC Holocaust Commemoration with SHINDC (Sephardic Heritage International DC)

For a second year, Kehila Kedosha Janina and the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America joined with Sephardic Heritage International DC in the US Congress to remember Sephardic and Romaniote victims of the Holocaust.
Philadelphia – Italian Shabbat

Our President of Kehila Kedosha Janina, Marvin Marcus, joined Rabbi Albert Gabai of Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia, and Rabbi Amadeo Spagnoletto, former Chief Rabbi of Florence Italy, for Shabbat (February 21-22) in Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia.
Upcoming Events Outside New York

Portland

14th Annual
Sephardic Winter Film Series

Films shown TUESDAY EVENING, each month at 7PM
SHOWING AT: 6686 SW Capitol Hwy. Portland, 97219
ADMISSION & SEPHARDIC DESSERT ARE FREE!
For Information call Ron 503-750-0888

Sponsors: Jewish Federation of Portland, NCSY Organization, OJCF, Albert J. & Esther Menashe, Richard & Judi Matza, Oregon Kosher, Ron & Pam Sidis, Renee Ferrera, Jose Behar
Eve Stern & Les Gutfriend, Michael Menashe, Ruben & Elizabeth Menashe, Barry Menashe,
Gevurtz Menashe Attorneys and Albert A. Menashe & Shawn Menashe,

March 3, 2020. DOUBLE FEATURE INTERNATIONAL NIGHT
The Nazi Games – Berlin 1936. This Film chronicles the story of how the Nazis and the International Olympic Committee turned a relatively small, elitist, sports event into an epic global mass media spectacle. The grand themes replete with architectural grandiosity, budget overruns, corruption, bribery, collusion with unsavory characters – including dictators and autocrats – and the ill treatment of black and Jewish athletes. This is a study of deception.
English language, 61 minutes, 2016, Produced by Taglicht Media.

Holocaust Escape Tunnel. For centuries the Lithuanian city of Vilna was one of the most important Jewish centers in the world, earning the name “Jerusalem of the North”. The Nazis murdered 95% of its Jewish population. Now an international team of archaeologists is trying to rediscover this forgotten world, excavating the remains of its Great Synagogue and searching for one of its great secrets: a lost escape tunnel dug by Jewish prisoners inside a horrific Nazi execution site.
English language, 2016, 60 minutes, Produced by PBS, Speaker: Natan Meir, PSU

PLEASE NOTE THE NEW LOCATION FOR ALL SCREENINGS:
Congregation Ahavath Achim’s new sanctuary, located in Hillsdale neighborhood

6686 SW Capitol Hwy. Portland, OR 97219. Call Ron at 503-750-0888
News from Jewish Greece

The Greek community of the United States, both Jewish and Greek Orthodox Christian, welcomes the new Ambassador of Greece to the United States, the Honorable Alexandra Papadopoulou.

The first woman Greek ambassador to the United States, Alexandra Papadopoulou, arrived in Washington DC last week to present her credentials to President Donald Trump.

Papadopoulou left her position as head of Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ diplomatic bureau to assume the historic role in the US capital.

Athens

Romaniotes, the highly acclaimed film by Agnes Sklavou and Stelios Tataakis will be shown in Athens. (KIS) The Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece, the Jewish Community of Ioannina, COSMOTE TV and the Jewish Museum of Greece organized a showing of the film at the theater of Hellenic American College (Massalias 22, Athens, second floor). The film has previously been shown at a number of international film festivals, and the NYC Greek Film Festival and the Sephardic Film Festival in NYC, along with COSMOTE TV in Greece. Greetings will be given by David Saltiel, President of KIS, Moses Eliasaf, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, the Executive Director of COSMOTE, Dimitris Michalakis and the President of the Jewish Museum of Greece, Makis Matsas. Additional details in Greek here.
Greek Jewish leader David Saltiel awarded with Medal of Grand Commander of the Order of the Phoenix

The European Jewish Congress was represented by Raya Kalenova, Executive Vice-President and CEO at a ceremony honouring David Saltiel, President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS). Mr. Saltiel was presented with the medal of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Phoenix, by H.E. Mr. Prokopios V. Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic.

This prestigious medal is bestowed to personalities, Greek citizens or foreigners, who have helped raise Greece’s prestige internationally and have excelled in their field of practice or in public life. This is the first time that a Jewish leader has been bestowed with this honour.

President Pavlopoulos praised the achievements of Mr. Saltiel and his dynamic personality and presented him with the medal and presidential decree. Mr. Saltiel thanked President Pavlopoulos, not only for the great honour bestowed on him but also for the active support of the President on issues related to Greek Jewry.

“As a child of the post – War era I felt it was my duty to become a ‘bridge’ between old and new. I explored the roots of my religion without feeling confined by diversity. I proudly embraced the Greek, the Salonican, the Jew. My motto in life is that bridging the gaps can only bring to positive results. This spirit guides me in my personal life, my work, my activities for the benefit of the Jewish Community, for the strengthening of the relations between Greece and Israel, as well as between Diasporas,” said Mr. Saltiel.

EJC President Dr. Moshe Kantor congratulated Mr. Saltiel on receiving such a prestigious honour. “David Saltiel is not only a distinguished and well-respected Jewish leader but a true friend, and for the Hellenic Republic to honour him is to honour all of European Jewry.”

Also in attendance at the ceremony were Panagiotis Pikrammenos, Vice President of the Greek Government; Yossi Amrani, Israeli Ambassador to Greece; Dr. Efstathios Lianos Liantis, Head of the Greek Representation to IHRA; Yiannis Zervas, Mayor of Thessaloniki; Makis Matsas, President of the Jewish Museum of Greece; Victor Eliezer, Secretary General of KIS and members of the Saltiel family.

Mr. Saltiel has been previously awarded with the distinction of Cavaliere (2008) and Officer of the Order of the Star (2019) by Italy, with the Legion d’ Honneur (2011) by France, with the Cross of Merit (2017) by the Federal Republic of Germany, and with the Cross of the Order of Isabel la Católica (2018) by Spain.
Ioannina

**Historic City of Ioannina Celebrates Anniversary of Ottoman Liberation**

Full article by Tasos Kokkinidis in the Greek Reporter [here](#)

February 21 marks the day in 1913 when the historic city of Ioannina, the capital of Epirus in north-western Greece, was liberated from the Ottoman troops.

The city, which endured centuries of Ottoman rule until 1913, celebrates the union with Greece every year with a parade accompanied with plenty of traditional food, music, and dancing. Its liberation followed the battle of Bizani, where a fortress guarded the approaches to Ioannina. This decisive Balkan War battle was fought between the Greek Army and the last Ottoman army ever to enter Macedonia or Epirus.

The Army of Epirus had been rendered mainly defensive at the outbreak of the First Balkan war, since the majority of the Greek military units were sent to reinforce the Macedonian Front.

Following the annexation of Thessaloniki, the Ottoman Empire sought a truce with the Balkan Allies. The Greek government conceded to participate in peace deliberations but clarified that since Epirus had not yet been liberated, Greece would still be at war with the Ottoman Empire until the final peace treaty.

On October 19th, 1912, the Army of Epirus, under the leadership of Major Sapountzakis, abandoned its defensive role and attacked the Turkish Army. Although the Greek forces were outnumbered, Preveza was conquered and an Ottoman attack at Pente Pigadia was repulsed.

Still, there remained enormous difficulties still to overcome in the campaign to liberate Ioannina. The Ottoman Army’s numerical superiority and the fact that it had moved to the forts of Bizani, which historians describe as “strongly fortified,” combined with the extreme cold and the lack of supplies, prevented the Greek Army from initiating an offensive.

Victories in Macedonia allowed the main bulk of the Army of Thessaly to move south and reinforce the Army of Epirus. Crown Prince Constantine then assumed the command of the Army and demanded a peaceful surrender of the city. Essat Pasha did not accept the Crown Prince’s offer and prepared for attack. With careful strategic maneuvering — and astounding heroism — the Greek Army conquered Bizani and forced Essat Pasha to surrender the city of Ioannina on February 21, 1913.
Paramythia

Paramythia is a small town not far from Ioannina. During the early 20th century many Ioanniote families opened stores there. Jean Papadopoulos, from Brussels, has done extensive research on the small Jewish community in Paramythia. He has written extensively on the pre-WWII community and the families that lived there (that of Ezra Bakola, the husband of Dina Colchamiro, Eliyia Koen and his son, Joseph).

An example of the close relationship of Jews and Christians in the town is cited in this quote: “Theodoros Koskinas, an old junk dealer, who knew the story very well, still lives in Paramythia. He worked for Eliyia Koen as a child, helping with the work. Theodoros still keeps safe the scale and folk previous owned by Eliyia, as if they were precious amulets, hoping that one day a member of the family will come to claim them and give him the opportunity to tell them what a good person Eliyia was. He also safeguarded Ezra Bakolas’ brazier because he loved the role he played every Shabbat in lighting candles in Jewish homes.”

The Jews of Paramythia would be taken to Ioannina to be deported with their extended families in March of 1944.

Jean Papadopoulos is planning to create a museum about the history of Paramythia which will include the story of the Jewish community there. If your families lived in Paramythia, send us your photos so we can pass them on to Jean.
Kastoria

This summer the Museum Director of Kehila Kedosha Janina will be visiting Kastoria to access the space intended for a Jewish Museum. We know that there are many Kastorialis in the Diaspora, some of whom have shared family photos. Please share them with us at museum@kkjsm.org.

Cyprus

Athens to Reintroduce Ferry Connection Between Greece and Cyprus

The Greek authorities have recently given the green light for the reintroduction of a ferry connection between mainland Greece and Cyprus, a line that has stopped operating since 2000.

The decision to speed up all necessary measures was taken following a meeting between the Cypriot Deputy Minister of Shipping Natassa Pelidou and Greece’s Shipping Minister Giannis Plakiotakis.

Greece has reiterated its will to facilitate the reintroduction of the line, by offering a dedicated slot on Piraeus’ port, for the companies that will undertake the task.

The Greek authorities are also studying the possibility of adding an intermediate stop between mainland Greece and Cyprus.
Forty-five years on, ‘lost’ masterpieces see light in divided Cyprus Full article in EKathimerini here

It took more than 45 years, but 219 paintings thought lost or stolen – artwork that includes some of the most significant works produced by Greek Cypriot artists – have gone on display.

One work by artist George P. Georghiou has been hailed as one of Cyprus’ “most iconic paintings.” The oil-on-plywood painting encapsulates the Greek Cypriots’ armed uprising against British colonial rule during the latter half of the 1950s that culminated in the Mediterranean island’s independence.

“This is some of the most prized art in Cyprus and Greece,” said Yiannis Toumazis, a senior Greek Cypriot official on a committee trying to foster trust through culture between the divided island’s Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Officials say the paintings are of incalculable artistic value but some could carry price tags well into six figures. A sample of the paintings were unveiled at an exhibit Monday at a disused hotel straddling the UN-controlled buffer zone that cuts across the capital of Nicosia.

Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci, leader of the breakaway Turkish Cypriots, were on hand to launch the exhibit.

The works had languished in the basement of a cultural center in the breakaway Turkish Cypriot northern third of ethnically divided Cyprus. They were put in storage there after being rounded up from private collections and public galleries after a 1974 Turkish invasion. But an agreement last year aimed at boosting trust between Cyprus’ Greek and Turkish speaking communities saw the paintings reemerge.

“To see the paintings returned was one of the most sentimental moments of my life,” said Androula Vassiliou, the committee’s Greek Cypriot co-chair. In return, Turkish Cypriots received rare archival footage from state broadcaster CyBC of Turkish Cypriot cultural and sporting events dating from 1955 to the early 1960s. The footage is a visual window to a past that had until recently lingered only in memory, said Turkish Cypriot committee co-chair Kani Kanol.

Whether it’s Cypriot folk dances performed by Turkish Cypriots or Turkish Cypriot tennis legend Ilter Sami in action, the footage comprises a historical record that was previously inaccessible. Akinci, the Turkish Cypriot leader, hailed the exhibit as a “manifestation of the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots’ respect for each other’s artistic and cultural values.”

“The common language of art, which is universal, serves as a unifying force,” he said. The exhibit was a bright spot amid prolonged uncertainty over whether moribund reunification talks for the island would be relaunched soon.

“Art and cultural activities can tangibly contribute to efforts of achieving peace and reconciliation,” said Anastasiades. [AP]

KKJ Museum Director will be visiting Cyprus and Israel in June to conduct research on British detention camps used to detain Jews from 1946-1949. If your family spent time in Wither Cyprus or Atlit, please contact us at museum@kkjsm.org
**Egypt**

**Leading US Jewish Group Praises Egyptian President’s Decision to Restore Cairo Cemetery** full article [here](#)

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) on Friday gave a warm endorsement of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s decision earlier this week to clean and protect the historic Jewish Bassatine Cemetery in Cairo and to make available the country’s Jewish Communal Registers.

A statement from AJC noted that the global advocacy organization had “long called for these and other measures to preserve the heritage of the Egyptian Jewish community, which once numbered more than 80,000 and today is estimated to be fewer than 20.”

“Egypt’s commitment to preserve Jewish sites and records is vitally important,” said Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC Director of International Jewish Affairs, who has visited Cairo regularly to meet with government officials.

Bassatine Cemetery, which dates to the ninth century, contains thousands of Jewish graves. Neglected for years, most of the inscribed headstones have been looted and squatter’s apartments cover much of the original site. Broken walls leave it unprotected, and garbage is strewn throughout the cemetery. The cemetery is the only remaining Jewish gravesite that remains in Cairo and is Egypt’s largest.

Following Sisi’s announcement, bulldozers and other equipment were dispatched to the cemetery to begin the clean-up process.

The Communal Registers contain important personal data, including births, deaths and marriages, of the Jewish Communities of Cairo and Alexandria.

“For many Egyptian Jews these are the only formal records which might otherwise be inscribed in civil records,” Baker said. “And there are cases where they are very important in proving a person’s Jewish identity, for burial or for marriage.”

If your family lived in Egypt, please contact us at [Museum@kkjsm.org](mailto:Museum@kkjsm.org)

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**Lisbon, Portugal**

**Lisbon’s hidden Jewish cemetery** full article [here](#)

It was almost by accident that I came across the old Sephardic Jewish Cemetery of Lisbon’s Estrela neighborhood. When I told a friend that I would be visiting the city’s British Cemetery, he told me that he had heard that somewhere nearby was also a Jewish one. While walking, the following morning, through the tree-shaded grounds of the British Cemetery, I was fortunate in meeting Andrew Swinnerton, its administrator. He explained that the Jewish Cemetery directly adjoins the British Cemetery and pointed me towards a path leading to a high wall that separates the two burial grounds.
In 1497, King Manoel I of Portugal issued an edict demanding that Jews either convert to Christianity or leave the country. In the following years and decades, tens of thousands of Jews fled Portugal, including many of the so-called the “New Christians”, or “conversos,” whose lives were made intolerable, being subject to pogroms and the iron hand of the Holy Inquisition.

As a consequence of these expulsions, Sephardic Portuguese (and Spanish) Jewish communities were established across North Africa, southern Europe and further afield. Most of these exiles found new homes under the protection of the sultans and caliphs of the Ottoman Empire and of Morocco. Others fled north to Amsterdam, London, Hamburg and other trading centers, or across the Atlantic to Curaçao, New Amsterdam (Manhattan), Suriname, Pernambuco and elsewhere in the “New World.”

Some three hundred year after leaving Portugal, Jewish merchants started trickling back to their ancestral homeland. Although there were still strict restrictions placed on Jews in the country, as foreigners the new arrivals could count on at least some protection. Thanks to the special relationship that existed between Britain and Portugal, Sephardim from London and especially Gibraltar (which was a British territory since 1713) became something of a significant presence in Lisbon. But well into the 19th century, Lisbon’s Jewish community was in a delicate position.

Catholicism was the sole religion permitted to Portuguese citizens and as such the Jews had no legal existence and the community was regarded as being a foreign colony.

Soon after the return of Jews to Lisbon, it became clear that a burial ground would be needed. As many members of this new community were British, a corner of the Protestant British Cemetery (or the “English Burial Ground”, as it was called when created in 1721) was sectioned off for their use. The Estrela Jewish cemetery’s first grave was that of José Amzalaga, who died on 26 February 1804. For some sixty years this was Lisbon’s only Jewish cemetery, the final resting place of British, Moroccan and other Sephardim, and increasingly their Portuguese-born co-religionists. The last burial took place in 1865 by which time no more space remained. A new Jewish cemetery was established in 1868, one that remains in use to this day.

Access to the Jewish Cemetery is restricted, its large metal doors almost always locked and at street level it is impossible to see over its high walls. Approaching from the British Cemetery, however, I was able to open a flimsy cardboard door leading to the grounds of a vacant neighboring building, the former British Hospital. This, along with the Anglican parsonage, the Royal British Club and the Estrela Hall (the longtime home of Lisbon Players, an English-language theatre company), was once part of Lisbon’s so-called “British Quarter”. After well over three hundred years of British Crown ownership, the British government sold these buildings in 2018 to a real estate developer. Whereas the British Cemetery and St George’s Anglican Church were not included in the sale, the Jewish Cemetery was – though fortunately this portion of the property will remain protected, under the care of Comunidade Israelita de Lisboa.

From the small rear courtyard of the former hospital, I was able climb a few steps onto a fire escape, lean over a high wall and peer into the compact grounds of this normally hidden cemetery. The one hundred and fifty or so tombstones, with inscriptions all seemingly in Hebrew, are laid horizontally, in traditional Sephardic fashion. Soon only the occupants of the planned luxury condominiums will have this privileged view. I hope that they appreciate it.
Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo

Portugal: Jewish interpretive center to open in town where “Rembrandt’s doctor” Ephraim Bueno was born

The town of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, in northern Portugal near the border with Spain, expects to open in April a long-planned Jewish interpretive center, to highlight local Jewish history but also in hopes of drawing tourists.

Dr. Ephraim Bueno — whom Rembrandt depicted in two portraits — was born there in 1599. The LUSA news agency said the facility will occupy “a two-story building that was owned by the municipality and which has been refurbished and adapted to new functions, with funds from European funds, [and] the municipality invested around €150,000.”

The municipality wants to convey the “message of the importance that the Jews had in their journey and passage through Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo and to take advantage of all the potential in terms of Jewish tourism, so that it also starts to flow and operating” in the town, mayor Paulo Langrouva told LUSA. He said: “The [Interpretative Jewish] Center is ready. The physical work is finished. At this moment, we are also finalizing the entire work of contents, that is, the immaterial component of the contents, and the inauguration is planned, in principle, in the course of the April.”

According to the Rede de Judarias Portugal web site, there were references to a Jewish presence in the town starting at the beginning of the 13th century. There was a Jewish quarter, and the site of the medieval synagogue is known:

The Old Synagogue, located on the corner of Rua da Sinagoga (Synagogue Street) and Rua do Páteo do Castelo (Páteo do Castelo Street) has been transformed into the cistern that can be seen today although maintaining its base construction. The web site also says that a parokhet is displayed in the Vermiosa Church.

The Jewish Interpretive Center has been in the works for several years. Langrouva described plans for it in an article in 2015. He told LUSA that the facility will have four exhibition rooms and also a small synagogue. Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 found refuge in Figueira and nearby villages before that region, too, fell victim to the Inquisition, forcing Jews to leave or convert to Catholicism: those who stayed often continued to practice Judaism clandestinely as “Conversos”.

Langrouva said exhibits will focus on Jewish personalities who were born in the area or had an impact there. Key among them was Ephraim Bueno, a physician and biblical scholar born in Castelo Rodrigo in 1599 (he was given the Spanish name Martin Alvarez). Part of a Jewish medical dynasty, he studied in Bordeaux and settled in Amsterdam, where he flourished as a doctor.

Bueno’s grave in Ouderkerk Portuguese Jewish Cemetery

Rembrandt's painting Dr. Ephraim Bueno, 1647
Albania

In February, Leon Saltiel addressed the Conference on Combatting Antisemitism in the OSCE Region which took place in Tirana. The main emphasis was the role of civil society.

Vidin, Bulgaria

Bulgaria: could there finally be movement on the stalled Vidin synagogue restoration? Article here

At the end of January, Tsvetan Tsenkov, the mayor of Vidin, Bulgaria, said in an interview that the municipality is “clearing the last things” before moving forward in the long-stalled restoration of the city’s ruined synagogue and its transformation into a multi-functional cultural center as part of regional tourism development.

According to earlier reports, it had been hoped that renovation work on the neo-Gothic synagogue, built in 1894, would have begun in 2019 with completion by the end of 2021. Tsenkov — who took office in November 2019 after defeating incumbent mayor Ognyan Tsenkov — said in his interview that he first wanted “coordination with the Public Procurement Agency” to avoid any further problems with the estimated €5 million project.

A couple of days before the publication of the interview, JHE contributor Michele Migliori visited the synagogue and documented the state of the building, showing its current condition. He found the synagogue area bordered by an iron fence, which, in several parts, was completely destroyed, making it easy to access the synagogue itself.

There were no signs, information boards, or any other signage to tell the history or the nature of the building, nor were there sign boards that explained the planned restoration project. The only indication, written in Bulgarian, present on the synagogue is the one that warns not to enter into the synagogue due to danger of collapse. Inside, the building is filled with graffiti, and vegetation grown on the ground floor. The interior is full of trash, broken glass, and feces.

In the area where the Ark used to stand, and scattered around the synagogue, there is graffiti showing Menorahs and stars of David. The women’s gallery is accessible through concrete-made stairs, that together with the partial pavement on the ground floor, are apparently the product of renovation works that took place
in the 1980s. Some original decorations, such as iron Stars of David on the windows and painted decorations on the arks between the internal columns are also present.

Plans have long been in the works to restore the synagogue; it was announced in 2012 that it would be transformed into a cultural center dedicated to the Vidin-born Jewish artist Jules Pascin, to include a museum, library, meeting hall, and spaces for prayer and for the commemoration of the Holocaust. The mayor reiterated this goal in his interview, stressing that the project was also part of plans to enhance tourism infrastructure and attractions in the town, which is perched above the Danube River and is a stop for Danube River cruises.

He said: “For Vidin and for me as mayor it is very important for people to know that the restoration of the temple and its transformation into Jules Pascin Cultural Center is not of national but international significance! Many tourists who come off the ships arrive to see specifically the Synagogue even in its present form. It is unique in that its architecture mimics the dome of the Baba Vida Fortress.”

We have written several times about plans for the synagogue. The first renovation works, sponsored by the government started in 1983 but were abandoned in 1989, after the collapse of the communist regime. Workers had already removed the building’s roof, leaving the building unprotected and open to the elements.

In 2004, the synagogue was added to the World Monuments Fund Watch list — a list of historic sites around the world that are under particular threat. During an official ceremony in November 2017, the Bulgarian Jewish community formally transferred the ownership of the synagogue to the municipality, hoping that the restoration and conversion works could finally start. Architectural plans for the conversion were revealed at a public meeting in December 2018.

We wrote in March 2019 that according to local media reports in late February 2019, the Vidin city government had received funding for the project through the Operational Program Regions in Growth 2014-2020 (OPRG), which includes financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national co-financing. Bulgaria’s Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works is the Managing Authority for the Program.

Vidin’s Mayor (Ognyan Tsenkov) at that time said the city had received the support under the OPRG’s section focusing on the development of regional tourism related to cultural heritage of international significance.

He told the news site actualno.com that the project is worth 9,775,300 Bulgarian lev (around €5 million) of which 8,275,300 lev (€4.2 million) is a grant from the OPRG. He said the city arranged the rest of the funding via a 1.5 million lev loan, which will be repaid through revenues generated by the restored synagogue as a tourist site.
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Holocaust Museum of Buenos Aires re-opens after $4.5M renovation. Full article here
City museum dedicated to the Shoah opens its doors to the public, showcasing interactive testimonies with survivors.

Lea Zajac de Novera reclines comfortably into a grey armchair, her legs extended and crossed. Her elbows graze the seat’s armrests, and she flashes a faint, tender smile. On her left forearm, slightly faded, the numbers 3-3-5-0-2 are etched onto the 93-year-old’s skin. They were tattooed onto her when she was a teenager, in Auschwitz. Her gaze is heavy and focused, and her eyes meet mine — despite the fact that, technically, she’s not even there.

Humanity meets technology
The Holocaust Museum of Buenos Aires (Museo del Holocausto de Buenos Aires), located in Recoleta at Montevideo Street 919, will re-open to the public on Monday after a two-year refurbishment. Costing US$4.5 million, its redevelopment has delivered a host of groundbreaking exhibits, most notably “Dimensions in Testimony,” a curated, interactive experience—already showing at select museums around the world—where visitors can virtually engage with survivors of the Shoah. The first-ever “testimony” of this kind produced in Spanish is the testimony of Lea Zajac de Novera, which will soon be educating hundreds of thousands of visitors to the museum in the capital. Projected onto a high-definition screen, Lea is adorned in a bright pink blouse, colourfully contrasted against the otherwise dark display. Through a pixelated monitor, smart technology, and Lea’s compassionate humanity, visitors can engage with her directly — face to digital face.

“Where are you from?” I ask her. A microphone, situated on top of a lectern across from Lea, translates the sound waves into data points that trigger Lea’s pre-recorded responses. “I was born in Poland. December of 1926,” she responds. The survivor’s entire story — as told by Lea herself — is there waiting for visitors, like an unopened history book.

On the very day Lea was set to begin secondary school, Germany invaded Poland. The Nazis quickly instituted restrictive laws that radically changed her day-to-day life. Shortly thereafter, Lea and her family were confined into the ghetto of Pruzany, near Bialystok, where hunger and disease were rampant. After two years of living in squalor, Lea and her family were stocked into trains and shipped to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Immediately upon arrival, her entire family was sent to the gas chambers. Lea, however, able-bodied and suitable for labor, was spared. She spent roughly two years there working, hiding, and suffering. In January of 1945, as the Soviet Army advanced, the Nazis evacuated the camp and sent Lea on a death march, where many of her fellow prisoners, who had until that point survived the horror, either froze or starved to death.

Over the course of the Holocaust, 80 of the Polish teen’s relatives were murdered. But Lea — through grit, perseverance, and luck — survived the ghettos, Auschwitz, and the death marches. She fled to Argentina in 1947, where she would eventually marry, have two children, and five grandchildren.
Israel

In February, Moses Eliasaf, President of the Jewish Community and Mayor of Ioannina visited Israel and was interviewed by Yvette Nahmia-Messinas, a Greek-Jewish Israeli with roots from Ioannina.

**An Interview with Moises Elisaf: The First Jewish Mayor of Ioannina, Greece**
by Yvette Nahmia-Messinas | Posted on February 6, 2020

“It is a fact that Greek-Israeli relations have become close over the last years. The avenue of full diplomatic relations between Greece and Israel was established in 1990 thanks to then Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis. Today, thirty years later, with Mitsotakis’ son, Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the helm of the Greek government, the ties between the two countries in energy, defense, tourism, culture, business and academia are growing vigorously. This vibrant cooperation between the two peoples and their countries is felt strongly in Israel. Two weeks ago, at a Rebetiko music evening at the Greek Community Center in Jerusalem by Greek musicians Lily Violetta Soussi and Moisis Aser we had the privilege of a surprise visit by the Greek Minister of Tourism Mr. Harry Theocharis.

A couple of days later, the Greek President H. E. Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos joined the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem. David Saltiel, who serves both as the President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki as well as of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Greece was also present at the Holocaust Forum.

On the cultural front, we had Greek singer Pandelis Thalassinos to perform this week in Tel Aviv with the Takim orchestra, brought to us by Bracha Cohen, Greek music productions.

On the tourism front, the Mayor of the Epirotic Greek city of Ioannina Mr. Moisis Elisaf will take part at the International Mediterranean Tourism Market in Tel Aviv. On the occasion of Elisaf’s visit to Israel, the Salonika and Greece Jewry Heritage Center will be holding an event in honor of the Jewish community of Ioannina. My old friend, Ioannina-born, Anna Garty arranged for my interviewing of Moisis Elisaf the first Jewish Mayor of Greece past the Holocaust. Elisaf leads the city of Ioannina in northern Greece, my father’s birthplace, which lost at the time of the Holocaust 1850 out of approximately 2,000 members.

Yvette Nahmia-Messinas: *Mayor Elisaf, you were born and raised in Ioannina, Greece, past the Holocaust into a community that lost 92% of its Jewish population. How was your childhood in Ioannina?*

Moisis Elisaf: *I was born in Ioannina on 17 July 1954. I am a native son of this city. Both my parents were born in Ioannina and my father was a merchant. I attended primary and secondary school in Ioannina. My genuine desire to become a medical doctor led me to Athens in 1973 and I graduated from the School of Medicine, University of Athens in 1979.*

Yvette: *What brings you to Israel?*

Moisis Elisaf: *I am visiting Israel with my colleagues for a touristic exhibition held in Tel Aviv [International Mediterranean Tourism Market, Tel Aviv Convention Center, Tel Aviv-Yafo Israel]. We try to make Ioannina a privileged destination for Israelis but also to expand the cultural, educational and economic relations between Greek and Israeli cities. I have arranged some appointments with tourism executives and professionals for discussing innovative ideas for the better tourism development of Ioannina.*
Yvette: How extrovert and welcoming is Ioannina to Israelis?

Moisis Elisaf: Our main goal is to make Ioannina a European, modern and extroverted city. Ioannina of today is a big cultural and administrative center, a lively modern city, vibrant and full of life. Our priority is to promote the image of our city which hosts many visitors throughout the year.

Yvette: Many Israelis nowadays consider buying a flat in Ioannina. Would you consider it a good investment?

Moisis Elisaf: I think so, since Ioannina is a beautiful historical city, is in the crossroads of the two trans-continental roads, the Egnatia and the Ionia Highway. The geo-strategic position of Ioannina city enhances its predominant perspective in the wider region of the Balkans. Furthermore, it is an administrative center linked daily by plane with other large cities of the country. So it is a good investment, the prices are varied.

Yvette: Are there any business/cultural or social ventures that connect between Yianniotes (Ioannina-born) and Israelis?

Moisis Elisaf: Ioannina has always been multicultural and multi-religious with a strong Jewish history and traditions. The small but vibrant Jewish Community and the presence of many Yianniotes in Israel is our connecting link.

Yvette: What Ioannina qualities/attributes would you like to offer Israel?

Moisis Elisaf: Located in the Northwestern part of Greece, a centuries old town by a beautiful lake, in a ring of high mountains by the sunny beaches of the Ionian Sea; Ioannina, was built on the famous Egnatia Odos, the road that connects Europe with Asia. With its rich history—a melting pot of traditions and cultures—Ioannina’s multicultural characteristics are still visible in everything from its architecture and traditions, to lifestyle and cuisine. No matter whether you are looking for an adventurous trip or want to enjoy the beauty of nature, Ioannina has something for everyone.

Yvette: What do you take back from Israel to Ioannina?

Moisis Elisaf: The hospitality of Israeli people, the meetings with relatives and close friends, the strong achievements of Israeli people and the possibility of a further, future collaboration on cultural, educational, economic and tourism issues.

Yvette: Thank you for your time Mr. Elisaf. And especially thank you for being a bridge between the two cultures and making the ties between Greece and Israel even stronger.
And they should make for me a Sanctuary and I will dwell amongst them. (Shemot 25:2)

Communities need a home base, a place where family, friends, or a group of people share their common interests. A place that gives identity to its members. The Jewish people long ago developed the concept of Synagogues or places of gathering. Synagogues are places where we come together to pray, to have religious instruction, to share our experiences. It is the place where we find and develop our Jewish identity.

But, when did the concept of the synagogue begin? Where did it come from?

Researchers and historians tell us that the beginnings of the synagogue is shrouded in mystery. No one is quite sure how it began. What is clear is that by the time the Jews returned to the rebuilding of the Second Temple, in the 6th Century B.C.E., the Synagogue was already regarded as a permanent institution.

The Jewish Encyclopedia states (1), "After the return from the Captivity, when the religious life was reorganized, especially under Ezra and his successors, congregational worship, consisting in prayer and the reading of sections from the Torah, developed side by side with the revival of the cult of the Temple at Jerusalem, and thus led to the building of synagogues." Our Sages explain that Ezra with his great vision, introduced a number of decrees in order to strengthen the observance of the Torah amongst the returnees. Communal prayer (2) and public study (3) was amongst them. The Encyclopedia states further, "The place of meeting is called "Bet ha-Keneset," since an assembly of the people for worship was termed a "keneset". The synagogue is also called in Aramaic, "kanishta", and, in Greek, συναγωγή (Sinagoga). Some scholars believe that the name Keneset, implies simply a place where the community in exile gathers.

Rabbi Hayim David Ha-Levi, former Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, (4) states (5) that the original concept of the Synagogue was developed by Jews outside of the Land of Israel. The people saw in the Synagogue the substitution of the Temple in Jerusalem and that is the reason why they were called, in the words of our Rabbis, the "Small Sanctuary". Rabbi Ha-Levi states that these "Small Sanctuaries" became essential to the Jewish nation anytime and everywhere during their time in the exile. The Synagogue became the source of spirituality that maintained the Jewish nation in touch and together through the ages.

We build Synagogues in order to create communities. Our Sages teach us in the Tosefta (6) that whenever there are ten Jews (above the age of Bar-Misvah), that dwell in the same city, they must press one another to build a Bet-Keneset. They must also purchase a Sefer Torah, a book of the Prophets (Neviim) and a book of the Scriptures (Ketuvim). It is understood that according to our Sages, ten men comprise a community and therefore they are obligated to have a proper place where to worship together. Amongst the later Sages a great debate ensued on this issue (7). Is there an obligation to build a House of Worship? Is it a commandment stated by the Torah or is it stated only by the Rabbis? Regardless of how the law was established, it is truly a wonder how essential the concept of the Synagogue became to Jewish life and how Jews always strived to build functional and beautiful Synagogues.
The Synagogue has a strong and positive effect on us. Our mind set changes when we enter our synagogues. Part of that conception is shaped by following the guidelines that our Rabbis have prescribed. Rabbi Hayim David Ha-Levi states amongst other laws, that one must not be lightheaded while in synagogue. A head covering must be worn at all times promoting modesty. One must be careful not to speak in vain or just to joke around. We must be especially careful to keep quiet during prayers and throughout the readings of the Torah. This gives honor and value to everyone else’s prayer. It also allows others to pray comfortably and with better concentration. No eating or drinking is to take place, nor should one sleep there. Our materialistic needs are deferred while we are in Synagogue. Items, like staffs or umbrellas, should be kept outside. One should also clean his shoes properly before entering. We should be at our best whenever we are there. When entering for personal needs, to speak to someone or to retrieve something, one should read a short Psalm or meditate about the Torah and treat the area properly. A Synagogue should be kept clean at all times. We must strive to keep our Synagogues beautiful, pleasant, and warm. Our Sages have instructed that one should run to Synagogue, even on Shabbat. In another words, it should always be a place that's attractive to its members or anyone who visits. We should add, that this is especially true about our young. We must teach our children to attend Synagogue regularly, its importance and how to behave properly.

Traditionally, when we enter the Synagogue we acknowledge even without realizing, that we are entering a place that makes us feel special. Each one of us should feel like an important member of this distinct group of people. Some have stated that the Bet Ha-Mikdash in Jerusalem functioned as the embassy of G-d on earth. The same can be said about the Synagogue, even while on a smaller scale. The Synagogue is the institution that has kept the Jewish people together, and will continue to do so. It gives us identity, a sense of belonging as well as bringing us inner peace. Indeed, it is from the Synagogue that we call out together to G-d and G-d listens to our prayers.

Shabbat Shalom

(1) Jewish Encyclopedia, Synagogue.
(2) Mishneh Torah, Ahavah, Tefilah 1:4.
(3) Mishneh Torah, Ahavah, Tefilah 12:1.
(4) Rabbi Haim David Halevy (1924-1998) was one of the great rabbinic luminaries of his era. A prolific author and teacher, he was a gifted halakhic scholar, a devotee of kabbala, and a creative thinker who applied Torah wisdom to the dilemmas of modern times. From 1972 until his death, he served as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Influenced by the profound and compassionate teachings of his mentor Rabbi Benzion Uziel, Rabbi Halevy represented the best in the Sephardic tradition of the Judeo-Spanish Sephardim. His monumental knowledge and keen insight were widely recognized. He won many prizes for his intellectual achievements, and in 1997 was awarded the Israel Prize by the State of Israel in appreciation of his significant contributions to Torah scholarship.
(5) Rabbi Hayim David He-Levi, Mekor Hayim, Chapter 18.
(6) Tosefta, Baba Mesia’ 11:12.
(7) Sede Hemed, Kelalim, 2:43,44.
A prevalent custom in Ashkenazic synagogues is for the congregation to stand when the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah. This is a symbolic re-enactment of the Revelation at Mount Sinai, when the Israelites stood below the mountain. Among Sephardim, the widespread custom is to remain seated during the reading of the Torah, including during the recitation of the Ten Commandments. This custom is based on the notion that all the Torah—from beginning to end—is holy. To stand only for the Ten Commandments might imply that only the Ten Commandments were given by God. (The Sephardic sages did not require standing for all Torah readings, since this would be a terrible imposition on the public.)

During the 18th century, a question was asked of Rabbi Eliyahu Israel, a scholar born in Rhodes who was serving as rabbi in Alexandria. The responsum is included in Rabbi Israel’s book Kol Eliyahu, no. 5. The question was: may a person be stringent with himself and stand for the Ten Commandments in a congregation where the custom was to remain seated? Rabbi Israel responded: “It is obvious that one is not permitted to do so because it appears presumptuous [mehzei ke-yuhara]….Moreover someone who does so [stands] in the presence of Talmidei Hakhamim greater than he, is deserving of excommunication [nidui].” If a self-righteous person stands while others are seated, this gives the impression that only he is truly scrupulous about honoring the Torah, while the rest of the congregation are less pious.

What was in the minds of the individuals who stood for the Ten Commandments in a synagogue where the custom was to remain seated? They probably thought they were demonstrating honor to the Torah. Yet, Rabbi Israel penetrates to the inner motivations of these people: they viewed themselves as holier than the rest of the congregants. In the inner recesses of their souls, they took pride in their show of piety in contrast to the behavior of others. But this sense of pride and pretentiousness is repugnant. One should not defy the proper and well-established custom of a congregation but should rather follow the prevailing custom. To call attention to one’s supposed piety is an act of impiety. It is rude and disrespectful, as well as presumptuously self-righteous.

There is a thin line between genuine and counterfeit religiosity. One may show external gestures of piety and yet be religiously inauthentic. Rabbi Eliezer Papo, in his classic ethical text, Pele Yoetz, points out that one should strive to serve God humbly. If one wishes to adopt a practice that the law does not require, one should do so privately. One should not follow religious stringencies in public if the rabbis and members of the community do not observe these stringencies. God knows our inner thoughts, our real intentions. Our goal must be to achieve the highest level of purity in our service to God, to direct our deeds for the sake of Heaven. We need to be absolutely honest with ourselves, constantly cutting through our own rationalizations. Our judgment is easily clouded by self-delusion and feelings of self-contentment. We should be most concerned with real piety, not with external gestures of piety.
NYU Provost’s Love Affair With Greece Started at a Taverna on Crete: Meet Dr. Katherine Fleming

Full article here

Long before Tom Hanks was proclaimed an Honorary Citizen of Greece last December, American historian and academic Katherine Elizabeth Fleming was awarded the same honor for her contributions to Greek culture. Dr. Fleming, the Provost of New York University, has had a distinguished career specializing in the modern history of Greece in the context of the broader Mediterranean region.

“I was extremely proud to become an Honorary Greek Citizen in 2016, but I also feel that the honor comes with a responsibility to actually do some things for Greece and behave in a way that recognizes the fact that now I have Greek nationality,” she tells Greek Reporter.

“I take pride in the fact that I can remind people that perhaps to be Greek can be a more broadly-defined matter that some people think of it as being,” she adds.

As a historian, she notes the sweeping national debates which took place in Greece over the course of the nineteenth century on who really counts as Greek over the course of the nineteenth century and noted that they still persist today.

“Do you have to be Orthodox Christian to be Greek? Do you have to speak Greek? Do you have to have certain political views in order to count as Greek?” Dr. Fleming wonders.

But, she continues, as “people like Giannis Antetokounmpo have shown us, maybe there are all sorts of ways to be Greek and maybe Greece will be a stronger nation by including people who love Greece and consider themselves Greek even if they do not align with some traditional views of what it is to be Greek.”

Dr. Fleming reveals that her love affair with Greece began when she was a teenager. She went on holidays to Crete and ended up in Loutro, a small town in the southwestern corner of the island.

“I fell in love with the beauty of the place and I was offered a job as a waitress in a local restaurant called Helios, owned by the Androulakakis family. A wonderful restaurant that still exists today.

“I spent a year there and learned some elementary Greek. I maintained the connection with that family and the town all my life. The experience of learning Greek made me very curious about Greek history and culture and that shaped my choice for my studies when I did my Ph.D,” the university provost adds.

Dr. Fleming was named Provost of NYU in April of 2016 after joining the faculty there in 1998. As NYU’s Deputy Provost since 2013 and Vice Chancellor for Europe since 2007, she works closely with deans, directors, and the university’s different schools on academic planning. She also provides oversight of the Provost’s Global Research Initiatives program, which she created in 2011.

A historian, she is the Alexander S. Onassis Professor of Hellenic Culture and Civilization in the Faculty of Arts and Science, and served for many years as the Associate Director and then Director of the Remarque Institute. Beyond NYU, Dr. Fleming has served as an associate member of the History Department of the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, and served as the president of the Board of the University of Piraeus in Greece.
A specialist on modern Greece, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean, she is most recently the author of "Greece: A Jewish History," which won several prizes, among them the National Jewish Book Award and the Runciman Award.

She holds a doctorate in history from the University of California, Berkeley, earning her M.A. from the University of Chicago and her B.A. from Barnard/Columbia in Comparative Religion. She holds honorary doctorates from the University of Macedonia (PAMAK) and Ionian University, and was recently named "Chevalier" in the French Legion of Honor.

Dr. Fleming is very much engaged in Greek affairs, currently working with Greek journalist Sophia Papaioannou on a major oral history project called istorima.org, which is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

A total of 1,500 unemployed youth from all regions of Greece between 18 and 35 years of age will be invited to participate in the project, in which they are offered training in the techniques of interviewing and the taking of oral histories.

"The exciting thing about this project is that it is really designed to give back and help contemporary Greeks, and Greek youth in particular, by providing them with meaningful part-time employment as they gather history for us in their villages, towns and regions around the country," Dr. Fleming says.

She was also instrumental in giving the green light for a groundbreaking new course which began on January 30 at NYU exploring the historical origins of Greek Rebetiko and American Blues — and focusing on how the two musical genres intertwine in so many different ways. Composer and performer Pericles Kanaris provides instruction for the course in which Fleming herself will give a guest lecture this week.

Dr. Fleming tells Greek Reporter that New York University would be "absolutely interested in participating in joint projects with Greek universities."

She reveals that she recently spoke to Greek Minister of Education Niki Kerameos about ways to collaborate.

"We need to figure out how to make it possible for Greek students and researchers to visit New York and for our students and researchers to visit Greece," she says, adding that she is particularly interested in research collaboration.

"NYU has a study center in Athens and I think there are all sorts of ways we can leverage that for partnerships between NYU as a whole and universities in Greece," Dr. Fleming concludes.
Readers Seeking Help

If you have any info on any of these inquiries, please email us at museum@kkjsm.org

From France:

Greetings,

We are currently seeking information regarding our ancestors by the name of Baruch from Ioannina. My great grandfather was known by the name of Marc Barouh when he took up French nationality in 1928. The story goes that he was born in Ioannina in 1867, and that the family subsequently moved to Volos.

My attempts to find a trace in Ioannina were unsuccessful, I was told by a person from the local synagogue that there were no archives, which I found surprising. In Volos there is a register in which a Marc Barouh, son of Menahem, appears as being born there in 1869, which is confusing. This great-grandfather had four sisters (among whom Rosina and Anna, who survived, the other two were deported) and two brothers (Moses and Elia). Rosina married a member of the Saporta family, their son Isaac moved to the USA (www.findagrave.com › memorial › isaac-elias-saporta

Would you kindly advise me as to how to proceed to learn more about this family? Looking forward to your reply. Best regards Brigitte Herant-Dunais

____________________________________________

Are there any surviving photos of Ioannina in the 1920-1930’s, specifically the area around 5 Zappa street. That is where our family came from. If so, can you send them to me electronically.

Bernie Negrin

____________________________________________

From Sy Rotter: Filmmaker (It Was Nothing, It was Everything)

We are looking for the following people who either appeared in the film or helped in the making of the film so that Sy can send them a copy of the film.

1- CHANIA: Stratis Xiouchakis, probably deceased, but no doubt his descendants are living in the same city today. You may know of someone in Chania who could contact the Xiouchakis family to ask for a mail address through which the family would receive a copy of the film and be invited to participate in a Public Showing in Crete.

2- ARGOS: Maria Kotsovou, probably alive, who will be happy to receive a telephone call to request her mail address for a copy and an invitation to a film showing in Athens.

3- Vasilis Persidis, whose family you have already contacted so presumably you have their mail address for a film copy and Event invitation.

4- ZAKINTHOS: Elkana Tsezanas, Jewish survivor, probably alive but not likely living on the Island, who would cooperate request for a mailing address and participation in a Public Showing;

5- ATHENS: Bishop Meliton, probably alive and living in Athens within the Church domain where he should be reachable by phone. His praise of the activities of Archbishop Damaskinos should be well remembered by him, and I believe he would be happy to receive a film copy and invitation to participate in a Public Showing.
6- ATHENS: Angelos Evert, former Chief of Police, no doubt long dead, but probably with family living in Athens who would welcome your news about the film copy and Public Showing.

7- VOLOS: Dimitri Tsilidis, who spoke of the efforts of Metropolitan Bishop to assist Rabbi Moshe Pessah, most likely alive and perhaps living in Volos. He would remember the filming activity and would be pleased to receive a film copy and invitation to a future Public Showing;

8 - AMYGDALIA: Nikolaos Artzomanides, no doubt deceased, but probably with family members who may or may not know of his story, but who would probably be pleased to receive the film copy and perhaps a public event.

9- LARISSA: Leon Magrizos, Jewish survivor, probably alive and maybe living in the Lariissa area, who gave us the title for the film, should be pleased to receive a call and to cooperate.

10 - STOMIO: Stavros Diamontes, probably deceased, maybe family can be reached in Stomio who would be pleased to receive our message.

11 - THESSALONIKI: Stratos Paraskevaides presumably deceased but who may be survived by family who may be known to the Jewish Community in the city.

12 - THESSALONIKI: Marika Paraskevaides, Jewish survivor, may still be alive and known to Jewish community members who could help you to locate and speak with about the film copy and Public Showing to be organized.

13 - THESSALONIKI, Dimitri Sanas, referred to by Marika as the person who made her eventual survival possible, whose contact information may be provided by Marika.

We have been asked to distribute this by SHINDC
So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

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

Some of our major donations have been generous bequests, which have enabled us to complete major work in our synagogue/museum. Do remember us in your will. Your legacy will be present in our legacy.

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday morning at 9:30am and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm and by appointment during the week.