



March 2013 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Best Wishes to all our friends whether they are celebrating Pessach or Easter. March, unfortunately, will also be the 70th anniversary of the first deportations from Thessalonika and the deportations from the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation in Greece and former Yugoslavia. We stop and remember.



Rabbi Azouvi from Kavala being led onto barge at port of Lom in Bulgaria, taking him across the Danube to his death at Treblinka

Beginning of the persecutions in Salonika as men between the ages of 18-45 are rounded up for forced labor at Freedom Square in the center of the city.



March also marks the 69th anniversary of the roundup of the Jews of Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Chalkis, Kastoria, Larissa, Volos, Trikala, Athens and Patras. We stop and remember.



Mevorach Family in Kastoria (most perished)

Rachel, Mazalto & Stella Ischaki (hid with mother in a convent outside of Athens)--their father, age 39, perished.



Koen family in Ioannina-most perished



Gabrielides family in Athens-father and Grandmother perished



Batis and Levy family wedding in Ioannina in 1936-most perished

This newsletter, our 62nd, will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website (www.kkjsm.org).

We now reach over 5000 households worldwide, with our community of 'friends' continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

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

Passings

We are sad to announcing the passing of the following special members of our community:

Rhoda Calef passed away in January, one day before her 90th birthday. She was the daughter of Anna and Benjamin Solomon, wife of Louis Calef and mother of Barry and Andrea.

Rebecca Matza, on Jan 18, 2013. Rebecca was the 8th daughter of Naoum Matza and Sarina Negrin. She was born in 1916 in Ioannina and left Greece to Egypt in 1934 when she got married with her cousin, Elie Gani. Most of Rebecca's family was murdered in Auschwitz. Rebecca, her husband and three of her children left Egypt to France in 1956. A fourth child, Renee, was born in France. Rebecca passed at the age of 96.



Matza family in 1920s

Ann Matza Uffer, widow of Jack Uffer, daughter of Jack Matza and Sarah Joseph-Matza, granddaughter of Chanoula Malta and David Matza of Ioannina.

Victor Modiano, brother of Raymond Modiano.

Esther Mordecai, widow of Elia Mordecai, born into the Politis family of Ioannina, passed in February. Esther was a survivor of Auschwitz, deported from Ioannina, she lost most of her family in the Holocaust and married her husband, another survivor, after the war. She is survived by her daughters, Evelyn and Anny.

**Esther Mordecai is
pictured third from left
holding her new-born
daughter in Ioannina**



Simchas

It is with great joy that we spread the news of the marriage of Matthew Coffina, son of Mary and Neil Coffina on January 18th.

Aikoi Mas, Los Muestros (Our Own) Come Home

It is always emotional when one of our own visit the synagogue. In February, we were so pleased with the many descendants from our Greek-Jewish world who went out of their way to visit their "spiritual home," Kehila Kedosha Janina.



**The Noble family: Oliver, Francesca and Charles
Francesca is a descendant of the Ganis family**



Eli and Bezalel Nachman visit from Israel



Alizah Salario from the Cohen family of Chalkis



Brett Oberman from the Levy Family

Visitors continue to flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina



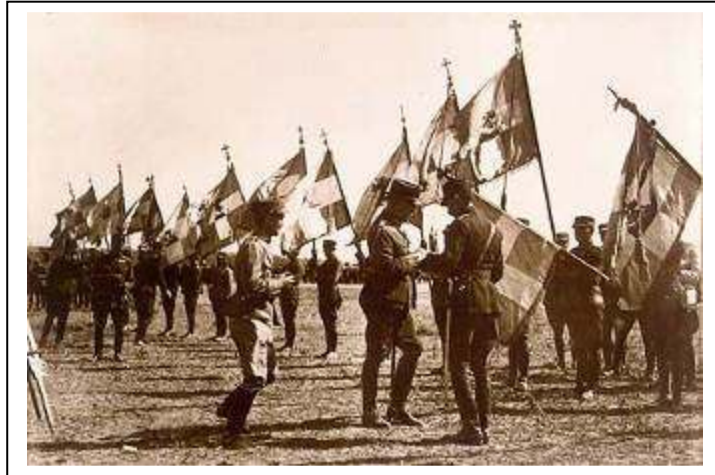
The Tali family from Santiago Chile

Upcoming Museum Events

Sunday, March 3rd at Kehila Kedosha Janina at 2:00

Join us in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Ioannina becoming part of Modern Greece

On February 21st, Ioannina, after being part of the Ottoman Turkish Empire for 483 years, became part of Modern Greece, as the Ottoman Pasha of Ioannina surrendered the historical city to the Greek Army.



Join us as our Museum presents a special exhibit on "Ioannina-1913," accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos

Exhibit and presentation are open free of charge to the general public.

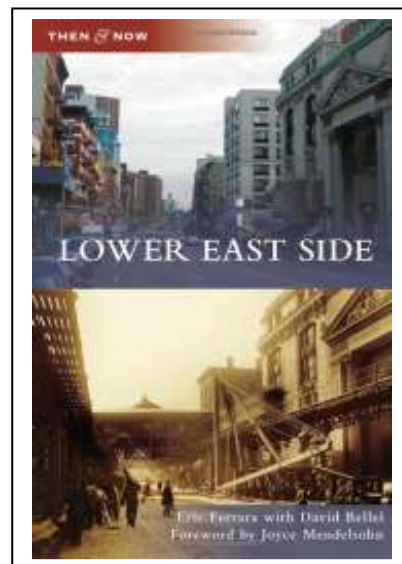
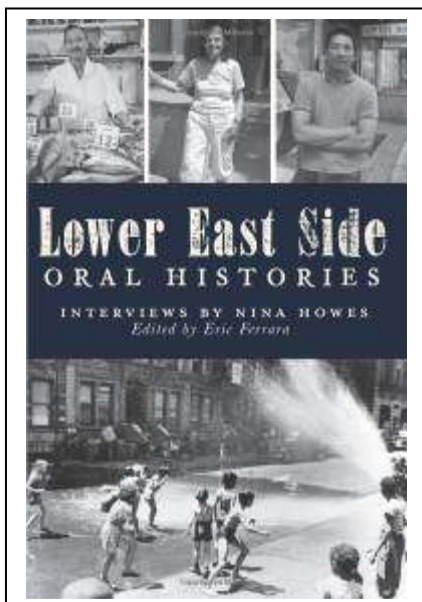
Greek desserts to follow.

For questions, call 516-456-9336.

Join us on March 17th at 2:00 for a very special program.

Kehila Kedosha Janina is honored to highlight the work of Eric Ferrara and the Lower East Side History Project

Two books will be available for sale:



The Lower East Side Oral Histories is a compilation of 25 diverse interviews by Nina Howes and edited by Lower East Side History Project's Eric Ferrara.

The Lower East Side, Then and Now has just been released and is filled with photos of the Lower East Side.

Meet authors as well as interviewees whose life stories and personal photos were documented for the project.

Free. Open to the general public. Refreshments served.

Both March events will take place in our upstairs Museum at 280 Broome Street on the Lower East Side (between Allen and Eldridge Streets).

IN HONOR OF THESE TWO SPECIAL EVENTS THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL BOOK SALE IN OUR MUSEUM THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF MARCH. THIS IS A TIME TO PURCHASE SOON TO BE DISCONTINUED BOOKS. IN HONOR OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF IOANNINA, ALL BOOKS ON IOANNINA WILL BE ON SALE THROUGHOUT THE MONTH (again, only in our Museum).

Upcoming Events on Lower East Side

133 ELDRIDGE STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002
T: 212.966.3411 F: 212.966.3491 EMAIL: ART@WOODWARDGALLERY.NET
WWW.WOODWARDGALLERY.NET
TUESDAY-SATURDAY: 11-6PM; SUNDAY: 12-5PM



Our society places great emphasis on detail, but the rare individual pauses long enough to appreciate this specialty. If detail refers to the parts which make up the whole, this exhibition relies on the small elements considered for each unique work of art. The group of Artists are: *Michael Alan, Susan Breen, Thomas Buildmore, Deborah Claxton, Cassius Fouler, Kosbe, Kiriyo Kuchina, Moody, Margaret Morrison, Kenji Nakayama, Jaggu Prasad, and Cristina Vergano.*

A disciplined control is declared in the colorful individual feathers painted by Cristina Vergano, the contemporary Japanese weaving by Kiriyo Kuchina, hyper-realism by Jaggu Prasad (utilizing a rare, traditional Indian technique), implied imagery from Susan Breen, hand-cut paper collages by Deborah Claxton, or Moody's recontextualized use of iconic imagery.

Upcoming Events New York City

Our dear friend, Stella Levi, a survivor from Rhodes, is featured in the upcoming documentary on the Jews of Rhodes directed by Ruggero Gabbai and produced by the Shoah Museum in Rome.

Stella was also the narrating voice in Rebecca Samonà's film "L'Isola dell Rose." Stella has dedicated so much of her life in preserving the memories and documents of the Jewish Community of Rhodes.

The film will premiere at the Museum of Jewish Heritage on March 13th. Contact the Museum of Jewish Heritage for information.

<http://www.mjhnyc.org>

March 13 at 7 pm

THE LONGEST JOURNEY

The Last Days of the Jews of Rhodes

The Museum of Jewish Heritage

Edmond J. Safra Plaza | 36 Battery Place

Tickets: 626-437-4202



In 1938, the Italian Racial Laws stripped the Jews of Rhodes of their civil rights and livelihood. Amidst the indifference and compliance of the Italian authorities, three high school professors, known for their antifascist leanings, held unofficial classes for the Jewish boys and girls. In the fall of 1943, in spite of a much greater military force, after a brief resistance the Italian governor surrendered to the Germans. Many of the soldiers were deported to German labor camps.

With the Germans in military control of the island, the Italian civilian authorities took the oath to Mussolini and remained in their positions. They continued to protect Italian interests as well as the Italians who had not fled.

The Jewish community, by and large impoverished and unaware of what was happening to the Jews in Europe and even in Greece, witnessed the events following the armistice in complete isolation. Even though they were all Italian citizens, they were left out of the communication network that might have helped them make informed decisions.

On July 19, 1944, 1,800 of them, including elderly and children, all of them Italian citizens, were summoned to the air force headquarter and reported promptly to the authorities. Four days later, they were loaded on boats and transported to Athens. They arrived in Auschwitz on August 16. Only 42 Turkish citizens were spared thanks to the intervention of the Turkish consul.

Today little remains of the culture and history of the Jews of Rhodes and this film is a precious contribution in tracing a continuity from that lost world to ours. For additional information visit www.primolevicenter.org



Presents



THE UNTOLD STORY
of the
Sephardic Communities
and the
Holocaust

**Wednesday, March 13
At 7:30 PM**



**Congregation
Edmond J. Safra**
11 East 63rd Street
New York, NY

Historic Documentary

FOR INFORMATION:

Project Witness P: 718.WITNESS (948-6377)
E: info@projectwitness.org W: projectwitness.org

Presenters:

Rabbi Elie Abadie, M.D.
Rabbi, Congregation Edmond J. Safra


Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein
Director, Project Witness

Prof. Steven Bowman
Prof., University of Cincinnati

Prof. Asher J. Matathias
Prof., St. Johns University

Light Refreshments

*These events are made possible through
the generous support of the*

 **Claims Conference** **ועידת התביעות**
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

On March 13th at the Bulgarian Consulate in New York

Consul General Radoslav Tochev, a dear friend of Kehila Kedosha Janina, has invited us to a special showing of a film on the "saving" of the Jews of Bulgaria, at which time he has assured us that mention will be made of the Jews who were not saved but, rather, were deported to their deaths at Treblinka.



Romaniote Jews Now Presented at The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia

We thank Daniel Weinberg, grandson of Rabbi Jessula Levy, who donated the Megilah Esther of grandparents (Rabbi Jessula Levy and Esther Cantos Levy). The Megilah Esther is encased in a beautiful silver hand carved case. Daniel's mother, Rachel, was the youngest daughter of Rabbi Levi of Blessed Memory.

For too long this new museum in Philadelphia had no mention of the Greek-speaking Jews in the USA. Now, thanks to Daniel, they know who we are!

Megillah of Esther Cantos, ca. 1897

The Book of Esther is read aloud from a *megillah* (scroll) during the holiday of Purim which begins on the evening of February 23 this year. Esther Cantos received this scroll as a wedding gift from Jessoula Levy when they were married in Ioannina, Greece.

Cantos and Levy were members of the Romaniote community in Greece who traced their ancestors to a group of Jews who left ancient Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple. In 1912, this couple immigrated to New York City with their six children after Rabbi Levy was invited to minister to the spiritual needs of Greek-speaking Jews on the Lower East Side. He became one of the first leaders of New York's congregation Kehila Kadosha Janina, which was first organized in 1906 and which survives today as the only Romaniote congregation in the Western hemisphere.

National Museum of American Jewish History, 2012.42.1
Gift of Daniel Weinberg in memory of Jessoula and Esther Levy



News From Jewish Greece

Ioannina

The family of Miki Matsa made a gift of a modern sculpture by the renowned artist Costas Varotsos to the city of Ioannina. The gift was made in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Ioannina becoming part of Modern Greece. The sculpture is entitled "Cypress" and was placed in a square now bearing the name of Minos Matsas, named so by President of the Republic Karolos Papoulias. The naming of the square was a unanimous decision of the City Council in honor of the project but also as an offer to the small Jewish community that was almost completely destroyed by the Nazis during WWII. Present at the unveiling were members of prefecture, the president of the Municipal Council, Dimitris Giotitsas, and President of the Cultural Center, Moses Eliasof (also President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina). The Mayor of Ioannina spoke during the event, describing Minos Matsa (born in Preveza in 1903) in as a man who humbly made significant contributions to music.



Upcoming International Events of special interest

Bulgaria

**PROGRAM OF THE MAJOR EVENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE JEWS IN BULGARIA
"SHALOM" FOR MARKING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESCUE OF THE BULGARIAN JEWS
AND COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

From March 8, 2013-March 13th there will be a series of events. Below are the highlights.

March 10, 2013

Event: Inauguration of a memorial sign of gratitude and in commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust, including 11 343 Jews from Eastern Thrace, Vardar Macedonia and the town of Piro

Start: 15:00 p.m.

Location: The existing memorial plate next to the building of the National Assembly

March 13, 2013

Event: Commemorative ceremony in front of the memorial of the deported Jews in the town of Lom. A religious service in memory of the 11 343 Jews from Eastern Thrace, Vardar Macedonia and the town of Piro, deported to the Nazi death camps.

Official session of the Town Council and meeting with the citizens of the town of Lom

**Start: 11:30 a.m. Location: the town of Lom
Trieste Italy**

**COMUNITA' EBRAICA DI TRIESTE
via San Francesco 19 - 34122 Trieste
Mercoledì 27 febbraio 201
ore 17.30
Sinagoga di Trieste
via San Francesco, 19**

**I RAGAZZI INCONTRANO LE TESTIMONI DELLA SHOAH
Dialogo/intervista con Diamantina Salonichio e Lucia Del Cielo**

**Con Mauro Tabor, vicepresidente della Comunità ebraica di Trieste
Daniela Gross, giornalista**

Due testimoni d'eccezione, Diamantina Vivante Salonichio e Lucia Eliezer Del Cielo, entrambe sopravvissute al lager, raccontano la loro esperienza agli studenti che partecipano al progetto Treno della Memoria.

Nel loro racconto si ripercorrono le tappe drammatiche della persecuzione nazifascista - dalla discriminazione delle leggi razziali alla deportazione, dalla vita nel campo al rientro a casa - come furono allora vissute da due giovanissime triestine che nella Shoah videro sparire familiari e amici.

In un ideale dialogo fra le generazioni, l'incontro vuole trasmettere agli studenti il significato di una Memoria lontana dai rituali istituzionali e dai luoghi comuni così da mettere in luce i meccanismi alla base dei razzismi e dell'intolleranza che oggi vanno rimontando con violenza in tutt'Europa.

L'incontro è organizzato dalla Comunità ebraica di Trieste in collaborazione con l'Area educazione del Comune di Trieste e con il Treno della Memoria.

Note: let us know if you need a translation

Venice

Exciting news from Venice. Professor Shaul Bassani, President of the Venice Center for International Jewish Studies reached out to us.

"The Venice Center for International Jewish Studies is cooperating with other Italian and international institutions to commemorate the quincentennial of the Ghetto of Venice (1516-2016). As a twin Italian foundation and American charity, we have been promoting cultural events and programs in Venice and in the U.S. to recognize the shaping power of the Ghetto for Jewish life and its historical connections to other cultures.

We have recently started a new project, aimed at producing an exhibition, a documentary, and a website focused on the lives and achievements of a Jewish Venetian family of Romaniote roots, the Gesua/Salvadori family. This initiative will be based on the passionate research work of Edoardo Salvadori, who has produced three magnificent documentary volumes on the subject. We hope that the exhibit and the documentary may become powerful instruments to make this exemplary story better known to a larger audience.

Our further ambition would also be to extend the project outside Italian boundaries, through an English-language publication and version of the exhibit and documentary. They would both

testify to the importance and contribution of Romaniote Jews to the mosaic of the Ghetto of Venice as well as to the dedication to genealogical research that inspired Mr. Salvadori's work. We are looking for international partners to help us make possible this further and crucial step, and we would be delighted if you could suggest ways in which any form of collaboration with your kehilla or any individual member could be envisioned.

We are confident that the story of the Gesua/Salvadori is a saga worth knowing and telling in multiple ways, and the 500th anniversary of the Ghetto is a unique opportunity to showcase. Mr Salvadori has graciously put his work and its outcomes at the disposal of this project, that will be realized in cooperation with the Jewish museum and Jewish library of Venice.

Needless to say, we are honored and excited to be part of this project. Right now, the first step would be to have an English translation of the work. We are looking for a translator and funding for a translation. If you have any ideas, get in touch with us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

The long-over-do book on Greek-speaking Jews in New York is now officially a work in progress! Who better to write the book than our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos. We are looking for additional information on immigration, especially early immigrants from Ioannina. Do let us know what you have before 1906. And, of course, keep sending those priceless pictures. This time, though, we ask that you include a short letter giving us permission to use them in the book. Thanks in advance.



Public Park Lower East Side 1905

Shalom to one and all!

**Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



A Blessing for Spring

There is no doubt that if asked about the first thing that comes to mind about the Jewish month of Nissan, the vast majority of Jews the world over would reply "Pesah", with all its historical significance, not to mention the Seder, the special foods and so much more. Yet in the Bible, Nissan is called "the month of spring", and is intrinsically connected with the onset of spring and nature. Thus, probably one of Judaism's most beautiful, yet least observed and probably least known commandments, is "birkat ilanot", the blessing on trees, which according to most Jewish authorities, must be recited during the month of Nissan.

The source for the commandment is the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate "Blessings": "A person who goes out during the days of Nissan and sees trees in bloom, says: "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who left nothing lacking in His universe, and created in it good creatures and good trees, to give pleasure to mankind with them." The Talmud concludes that the blessing should be said specifically on fruit-bearing trees at the time when they just begin to flower, which, in terms of the Land of Israel- which forms the basis for the cycle of the Jewish calendar and seasons- is the month of Nissan. In short, this blessing and its recitation was commanded by our Sages in order to ensure that the Jewish people praise God for the miracles of nature at the most appropriate moment with the onset of the spring season. The Bible itself refers to Nissan as the "month of spring", and by Divine law, Pesah must be celebrated in the spring, symbolizing, among other things, the "spring" of the fledgling new Jewish nation after the harsh and brutal "winter" we suffered as slaves in Egypt.

Unfortunately, the overwhelmingly urban lifestyle of Jews for thousands of years in the Diaspora, whether by choice or coercion, led to an unfortunate loss of the natural significance of Nissan and Pesah. Along with the renewal of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and the creation of the State of Israel, came a new awareness of the ancient connections between Judaism and nature. Therefore, in Israel, it is quite common to see entire congregations and communities going out to orchards and fields of blossoming fruit trees to recite the blessing together, thanking God for bringing on the spring and its universal symbolism of revival and renewal of not only nature, but of mankind itself. Indeed, despite the basic connection with Israel and as an additional indication of its importance, the blessing on the trees can be said anywhere, as long as it is recited during the local spring season.

In fact, one of Sephardic Jewry's most influential sages, the "Ben Ish Hai"- Rabbi Yosef Haim of Baghdad – commented on the wording of the blessing, asking why our Sages included "good creatures" in the blessing, which was specifically mandated for trees? Basing himself on a well-known Biblical phrase "...man is the tree of the field", the Ben Ish Hai says the following: "Similar to the tree, which was once dry and withered and has now come into full bloom, even the hopeless person can be rejuvenated. Watching the transformation of nature can provide us with the courage and inspiration to lift us out of our despair, and remind us that God has given us the tools to revitalize ourselves."

So if you can, go out to a field or orchard of fruit trees, or even your own backyard, and say the blessing – you'll be glad you did! Happy Pesah and a wonderful spring!

Websites of interest:

If you wish to follow updates on the Bialystocker Home for the Aged and Landmarking:

<http://www.thelodownny.com/leslog/2013/02/big-turnout-for-bilaystoker-hearing-before-landmarks-commission.html>

Blog on Vic Cabillis and his granddaughter Ariana's theatrical group

<http://tykos-wassupthisweek.blogspot.com/2013/02/mind-art-entertainment-in-bronx.html>

Fistful of Lentils.COM



From the Kitchen of Jennifer Abadi:

Special Announcement:

[Too GOOD To PASSOVER blog is up and running!](#)

Hello everyone!

Just wanted to pass along the exciting news that my first blog is now up and running! Based upon the research that I have done (and continue to do) for my next cookbook on **Sephardic Passover cooking**, my blog will explore recipes, traditions, and personal memories from the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Jewish communities. The cookbook is still in the works (having two small children to take care of full time has caused a bit of delay!) however, through this blog and your interaction I hope to finish my cookbook and make it even better than ever!



Thank you all for being so supportive over the years, and I look forward to your comments on my blog. Please check it out:

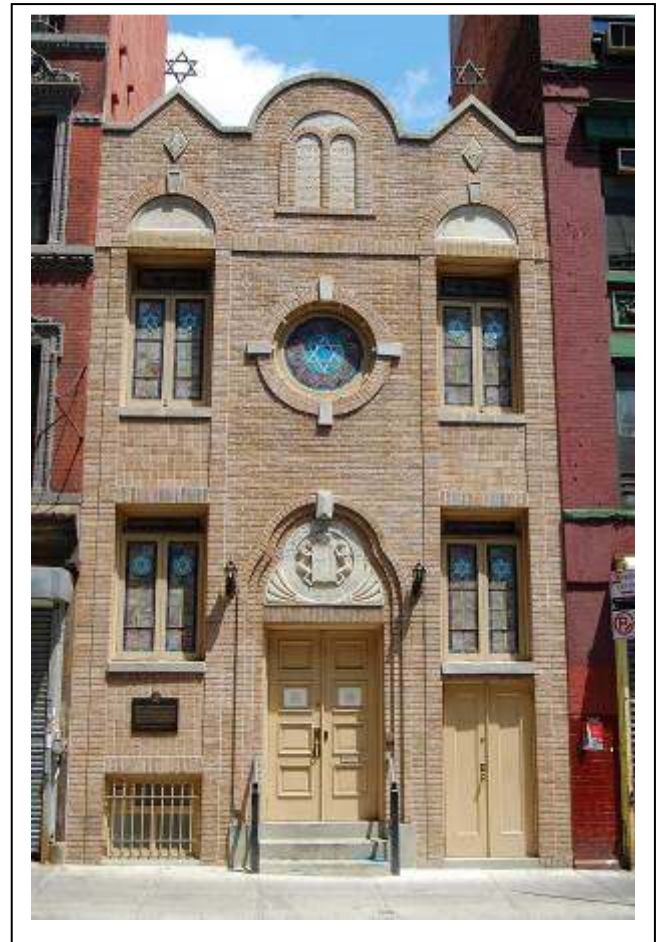
[Too GOOD To PASSOVER](#)

FDF2013 Awards Ceremony Greek Orthodox Folk Dance and Choral Festival

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.



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