



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

February 2009 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

January and February might be quiet months in other parts of the world...not in ours! News relevant to Greek Jewry continues to pour in. Keep it coming! We love it. We appreciate your continued support and encouragement and welcome your contributions to our e-newsletter. Thanks to correspondences from around the world, our monthly e-newsletter now reflects, not only our news, but, also, news from Greek Jews worldwide. We appreciate new additions to our e-mail list. If you have friends or relatives who would like to receive the e-newsletter, please have them contact us at (kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net). Send us your news. We welcome news stories having to do with the Greek-Jewish community, both here in the United States and internationally, and we will try to print as many of them as possible. For those of you who have missed previous e-newsletters, they are archived on our website (www.kkjsm.org).

February 21, 1913 marks the 96th anniversary of the incorporation of Ioannina into the Modern State of Greece and we, here, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, stop and remember.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Avraam (Abie) Svolis of Ioannina, a true palikari, who passed away in Ioannina on January 30th. He was one of the few Yaniototes to escape the March 25, 1944 deportation of the Jews of Ioannina. Abie (as he was fondly called) was all too aware of the brutality of the Germans. One of his brothers (Bochor) was executed by them even before the deportations took place. Rounded up with the rest of the Jews of Ioannina and taken in open trucks to Larissa, Abie was among a small group of young Yanniotote men to escape the imprisonment in a warehouse in Larissa. According to him, "we just walked out." Abie, carrying one end of a basket, along with a friend carrying the handle of the other end, handed over a piece of paper to the German guard and, with authority, kept walking. The German could not read the Greek writing on the paper and assumed it was a pass to exit the warehouse on business. Once outside, Abie would flee to the mountains and join the Greek Resistance. With the Liberation of Greece, he returned to Ioannina and would later marry Eftihia Mioni, one of the few who survived the camps. A true palikari (a brave young man), Abie never lost the twinkle in his eyes. His entire family would be murdered during the Holocaust. The only exception was his older sister Sophie, who, years earlier, had come to the United States and married a member of the Matathias family. When asked why he chose to stay in Greece, why he chose to stay in

Ioannina, Abie explained that this was his home, the city he loved. For us, here at Kehila Kedosha Janina, Abie Svolis was a special friend, one that will be deeply missed. With the loss of Abie, an important link to the past has been lost. We extend our sincere condolences to Eftihia Svolis, and her children, Ari, Marcel and Rebecca.

We mourn the passing of Ben Gessula, a special man who grew up on the Lower East Side and never lost his attachment for Kehila Kedosha Janina; and Molly Levy Post, who also grew up on Broome Street, the daughter of Stamoula and Mioxhas Levy.

We welcome the birth of Gabriel Mathieu, born in France on January 9th. His father, Fabrice traces his ancestry to the Matathias family of Ioannina and his relative, Irene Mathios Dresner, has sent a donation to Kehila Kedosha Janina in honor of Gabriel.

We congratulate Denise and Irwin Hametz on the engagement of their daughter Tova Hametz to Ari Abramowitz of Jerusalem. (See enclosed article on Hametz family).

Vandalism of the Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina

During the weekend of January 17-18, vandals climbed over the wall surrounding the Jewish cemetery in Ioannina and, probably looking for valuables that they thought were buried in the graves, severely damaged three tombstones.

Condemnation of Vandalism of the tombstones in the Ioannina Jewish cemetery.



Moise Eliasaf, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, had requested additional protection for all Jewish sites in Ioannina in light of the conflict in Gaza and possible anti-Semitic acts. The municipality of Ioannina did not heed his warning and Dr. Eliasaf has been quoted in several local newspapers condemning the municipality's inaction. We at Kehila Kedosha Janina have many who have family members buried in the cemetery and the news hit us very hard. Bank transfers covering the cost of repairs have been sent to the Jewish Community of Ioannina by Kehila Kedosha Janina, the Sisterhood of Janina and The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry. If you wish to add your name to those who have contributed, please send in your donation to Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, New York City. Please note that your donation is for the Ioannina Cemetery. If you live outside of the USA and wish to help in the repairs of the tombstones in the Ioannina cemetery, please contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

We thank Dr. Moses Eliasaf, President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina, and Alekos Raptis, a reporter with The Epirote Struggle, a local newspaper in Ioannina, for this story and constant updates.

January 27th, Holocaust Commemoration Day

New York City

On January 27th, the Greek Press Office hosted a commemoration in memory of Greek Jews who perished in the Holocaust and in honor of those who survived. Honorable Consul General of Greece Aghi Balta was in attendance and gave a short but moving speech. "Triumph of the Spirit," a movie about a Jewish boxer from Salonika who survived Auschwitz due to his tenacity as a boxer, was shown.

January 29th: Deputy Representative, Ambassador Dimitri Alexandrakis, along with Ino Benmayor, born in Salonika, the son of a Holocaust survivor, and Leon Mallah, a survivor from Salonika, all now living in New York, spoke at the United Nations in a special program in memory of Greek Jewry. The whole presentation lasted 2 1/2 hours and can be seen on a UN webcast. The link to the UN webcast is as follows:

www.un.org/webcast; go to Archives for 29 January 2009, for DPI/NGO Briefing on The Sephardic Jews in Greece: The Untold Story

Plaque at railroad station in Salonika dedicated to the memory of Saloniklis Jews who were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Salonika

The memory of the Greek Jews of Thessaloniki who perished in Nazi concentration camps was commemorated on January 25th, at an event at the Holocaust Museum, organized by the prefecture of Thessaloniki and the local Jewish community.

Greetings were delivered by the following dignitaries: Macedonia-Thrace minister Stavros Kalafatis, Israeli ambassador to Greece, Ali Yahya, German ambassador to Greece, Wolfgang Schultheiss -- who read out a message from minister of state for Europe, Gunther Gloser -- Thessaloniki Prefect Panayotis Psomiadis, the chairman of the Central Jewish Council of Greece Moses Constantines, and president of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki David Saltiel.

Holocaust Memorial in Plateia Elefterias in Salonika.



The keynote address was presented by main opposition PASOK MP Evangelos Venizelos, who said that "we all bow to the memory of the Holocaust victims and hear their silent cry," stressing that Greek society reacted strongly against the violence in Gaza.

Also present at the memorial event were Archbishop Demetrios of America, the consuls of the US, Spain, France and Romania, representatives of consulates, several MPs and representatives of local governments.

The Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA) did not send a representative, explaining in an announcement that it honors the memory of Greek Jews but that the attendance of the Israeli ambassador rendered its own participation impossible, and consequently SYRIZA will honor the memory of the victims separately at the Holocaust Monument.

We thank Leon Saltiel for sharing this information.

Museum News

Koula's Kitchen

Mark you calendars. Koula's Kitchen will be back for Pessah delicacies. March 1st (from 1-3) Koula and her helpers will be instructing on traditional Greek Jewry Pessah foods. Register early. Space is limited. The fee is only \$5.

Search for Information

As part of our research on weddings (for an upcoming exhibit due to open November 2009), we are gathering information on wedding venues. If you have information on where your family wedding took place, please send to us, along with photos and any memorabilia you may have. Send the information to: kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

Please continue to send us your family tree data. We are creating a genealogical data base and your information is important.

The Hametz Family

Of the early families that worshipped at Kehila Kedosha Janina on Broome Street, the Hametz family stands out. According to family legend, the family name, a *paratsouklia* (a nickname) was given to a member of the family when he was found with *hametz* in his pocket during Pessah. As with all *paratsouklia*, it is always interesting to speculate what the original family name was. The first member of Israel Hametz's family to come to the United States was his oldest daughter Sarina, who arrived in 1920 and married Joseph Leon Joseph in 1924 (for additional information on the Hametz family, see our website (www.kkjsm.org under exhibits/past).



Israel Hametz family

It would be 8 years before the rest of the family arrived in New York. In 1928, a letter was sent by Kehila Kedosha Janina to the American Consulate in Athens, asking that the Israel Hametz family of Ioannina be permitted to leave Greece and come to the United States even though the immigration quotas for that year had already been filled. The congregation of Kehila Kedosha Janina stated that the rabbinical services of Israel Hametz were needed. Through these efforts, the Hametz family became a vital part of the Yanniote community on the Lower East Side. Israel Hametz acted as rabbi and, years later, his son Ovadia continued to also serve the community as a spiritual leader, helping to conduct the services, along with Hy Genee. Rabbi Hametz instilled in his children the basic principles of Judaism and, most important, the importance of service, and the importance of making the world a better place by your presence. These principles have been passed down in the Hametz family from generation to generation. An example of this is young Isaac Hametz, now living in Israel, who is working to make his small part of the world a better place. We rarely send out pleas for money. This newsletter is an exception. For more details on Isaac's project and how you can help, see the letter and flier in the attachments.

Events of Interest

New York City

► February 5-12th: 13th New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival

Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th Street, NYC.

Call 212-294-8350 for additional information. www.americansephardifederation.org

Box office: www.smartix.com

► Sunday, February 11th, at 1:00, a film entitled "Toledo" will be shown. The Director, Jack Matatiahu, traces his roots back to Ioannina.

► Wednesday, February 18th, 7:00 pm

The YuvL Ron Ensemble presents *The Lost Soul of Spain: Music and Dance of the Sephardic Jews*

Museum of Jewish Heritage

For information contact: www.mjhnyc.org or 646-437-4202

► Thursday, February 19, 2009 at 6:30PM

SEPHARDIC JEWS IN AMERICA: A DIASPORIC HISTORY

with Aviva Ben-Ur

Co-Sponsored by The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy

Sephardic Jews from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans immigrated to the U.S. in large numbers toward the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Most of these Eastern Sephardim settled in New York, establishing the most important Judeo-Spanish community outside the former Ottoman Empire, and forged alliances with the Hispanic and non-Jewish immigrant communities with whom they shared cultural and linguistic ties. Drawing on primary source documents such as the Ladino press and oral histories, Prof. Aviva Ben-Ur, a Judaic and Near Eastern scholar at the Univ. of Massachusetts, offers their history in the United States from 1654 to the present, focusing on the age of mass immigration.

Florida

Gallery 14, Vero Beach, Florida To Present Ralph Lauren Fashion Illustrator/Designer Audrey Schilt (Audrey Schilt is a descendant of the illustrious Colchamiro family of Ioannina, the granddaughter of Elias Colchamiro (the 10th of 11 children of Jessoula Colchamiro and Rachel Galanos.)

As part of their FABULOUS FEBRUARY celebration, GALLERY 14 is showcasing the work of New York fashion illustrator/designer/artist Audrey Schilt. Schilt, whose work includes the Halston rendering of Jackie Kennedy Onassis' famous pillbox hat, served as Ralph Lauren's conceptual artist for twenty two years. Working side by side with Lauren as he built his fashion empire, Schilt helped him to interpret and illustrate his creative ideas and eventually became his Creative Director of Collection, VP. Highlights from her tenure with Lauren include

collaboration on the now-famous pink silk gown Gwyneth Paltrow wore to the 1998 Academy Awards. She has sketched dresses for Princess Diana, Oprah, Julia Roberts and many other celebrities. This unique show will include a large number of framed working drawings that are one-of-a-kind collectibles enabling one to own a piece of Ralph Lauren's empire. To aid in understanding the process, a series of illustrative posters will give viewers a glimpse into Ralph Lauren's world. From conceptual-design meetings, to fabrics and fittings, the grit and glamour of the industry will be presented to the public through this remarkable exhibit and sale. The show will run from February 2nd – 28. All are welcome to attend a special reception on Thursday February 5th from 3:00pm to 8:00pm. Included in this 'guest' show, as well, will be work by noted sculptor Cathy Ferrell.

Representing the work of 14 local artists with monthly rotating exhibits, Gallery 14 is open from 10-5 Monday through Saturday. Located at 1191 14th Avenue, the Gallery is dedicated to the revitalization of historic, downtown Vero Beach and hosts special events, classes, guest artists and artist Salons. For directions or further information, please call 772 562-5525 or visit: www.gallery14verobeach.com.

Note:

Important information

Claims Conference

In these difficult economic times, the Claims Conference is increasing its total allocations in 2009 of vital social services for elderly Jewish victims of Nazism. For programs in 2009, a total of approximately \$168 million will be allocated for social welfare programs. In 2008, the Claims Conference allocated a total of approximately \$150 million to assist Nazi victims.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) represents world Jewry in negotiating compensation and restitution for victims of Nazi persecution and their heirs. The Claims Conference administers compensation funds, recovers unclaimed Jewish property, and allocates funds to institutions that provide social welfare services to Holocaust survivors and preserve the memory and lessons of the Shoah.

For more information: www.claimscon.org

Greek Insurance

Thanks to Mel Schinasi, we pass along the following info: New York Life Insurance Company is looking for descendants of persons insured under life insurance policies issued to Greeks then living in the Ottoman Empire prior to 1915. The website to see all the original policy holders whose descendants they are looking for who can make a claim is: www.greekinsuranceclaims.com. Or you may call, 888-922-2973.

Ladino Books

An excellent website for information on availability of books in Ladino or Judeo-Espanyol: www.ladinobooks.com

Greeks in American Films

The Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of Queens College (CUNY) and the Modern Greek program at the University of Michigan have undertaken a joint project that focuses on the image of Greek Americans in American films. The final list will be posted electronically on a number of websites. That posting will offer a full description of the film's ethnic component and full credits. An example of what this will look like is offered as an appendix to the list of films. In most of the films noted, Greek Americans are important or significant minor characters rather than the central focus of the film.

We are asking your assistance in the final phase of identifying all films that should be included. At this point, we are only dealing with feature length fiction films. We may tackle documentaries at a later date. Please note that we are not dealing with films about Greece, but only Greek Americans (defined as persons of Hellenic heritage living in the United States).

Are there any films that you think should be added to this list?

Are you aware of any errors in our dating?

We look forward to your insights. Feel free to circulate our preliminary list to any knowledgeable person you think might be interested. (if you wish this list and additional information, contact us at kehila_kedoshajanina@netzero.net)

**Dan Georgakas (Queens College)
Vassili Lambropoulos (U of M)**

Access to Devin Naar's Paper

For those of you who attended the Lecture of Devin Naar at Kehila Kedosha Janina and, more important, for those who were unable, you can access Devin's paper at the following website:
http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/american_jewish_history/v093/93.4.naar.html

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