



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

July 2009 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we return from our annual visit to Greece, we bring you news from Rhodes, Salonika, Ioannina and Athens. While our trip was filled with lasting memories and many joyous occasions, unfortunately it was irrevocably marred by the sight of the anti-Semitic desecration of the Jewish cemetery of Ioannina. This issue is dedicated to the Jewish Community of Ioannina, and the memory of a time when Jews in the city could be interred in the sacred grounds of their cemetery without fear of senseless barbaric desecrations. A detailed report on the desecrations, including pictures, will be a major part of this e-newsletter. We call upon all our readers to pass this story on. Let the spotlight shine on Ioannina. Let the world know of ignominy of Ioannina. The pain might be ours, but the shame is theirs.

History of the Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina

The Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina is situated in what was once an eight-acre field bought by the community from the Ottoman Turkish Despot, Ali Pasha, in the early 19th century. The history of a burial site for the Jews of the city has been one fraught with ceaseless obstacles. The original cemetery was outside the walls of the fortified city (the Kastro), near the market place. Nothing remains of that cemetery but it is believed that tombstones, many going back to the 13th century, were transferred to subsequent cemeteries. In 1892 a later Jewish cemetery was desecrated by the Ottoman authorities and the main site of Jewish burial was transferred to the outskirts of the city, in an area called Kalkan. This later cemetery was leveled in 1922 to build homes for Greek refugees from Asia Minor. It was then that the tombstones were transferred to the field known as Gem, the site of the present Jewish cemetery.

The present cemetery originally encompassed over 25,000 square meters and, as was the custom, the older burials were towards the rear of the cemetery. Much of the area remained unused and, after the loss of over 90% of the Jewish Community of Ioannina in the Holocaust, the cemetery fell into disrepair. According to Greek law, burials cannot take place within the city limits and the City of Ioannina tried to expropriate the Jewish cemetery land which, although originally outside the city limits, with the growth of the city, now found itself within the city. In the 1990s, as a gesture of good will, the community ceded a plot of unused cemetery land, located on the far right of the cemetery, to the municipality to be used as a park. The cemetery has been subjected to acts of vandalism and, after years of legal battles, the Jewish community was finally issued a permit to raise the height of the protective wall around the cemetery. Funds were raised by Yanniotte Jews in the United States (\$15,000) for the erection of the wall and the work was completed in the spring of 2002. The Central Board of Jewish Communities (KIS) also contributed. The municipality had the responsibility of erecting the wall separating the cemetery from the land donated for the park but did not make it high enough to keep out vandals, the results being that the cemetery was vandalized in April of 2002; five tombstones severely damaged. The municipality has taken responsibility for this and was to repair the damage along with increasing the height of the protective wall. The wall is still insufficient to prevent vandals from entering.

According to the oral history of the community, and archival material attesting to the transporting of tombstones from former cemeteries, it is believed that tombstones dating back to the 13th century are buried under overgrowth in the far rear of the left side of the cemetery. If this is the case, the Jewish cemetery of Ioannina might hold some of the oldest Romaniote Jewish tombstones in Greece. Only with complete cleanup and expert assessment will we be able to determine what can be restored. To date, documentation has not been completed.

Anti-Semitic Vandalism of Jewish Cemetery of Ioannina



On June 2, 2009, it was discovered that the Jewish cemetery of Ioannina had, once again been desecrated. This was the third desecration in the past two years, the prior being in January of 2009. However, the June 2nd incident was the most vicious and the most obviously anti-Semitic. Three recent tombstones directly to the right of the Holocaust memorial inside the cemetery (that of John-Kalef Ezra's mother, Moses Eliasof's mother and Avraam Svolis) had been brutally smashed. Additional tombstones further within the cemetery had been specifically targeted. In addition, the Holocaust Memorial had been damaged and a turtle slaughtered, its blood deliberately splattered on the memorial.



There is no doubt that the culprits are known to both the police and the city. They are members of an openly neo-Nazi group that have publicly demonstrated in the city. The reaction of the police chief was to mock one of the members of the Jewish community as she wept at the destruction. When asked to denounce the vandalism, the local bishop stated that he did not want to get "political." The Mayor has remained conveniently low-profile. While articles appeared in the local newspapers of Ioannina and in two Athenian papers, that was it! Members of the Jewish community in Salonika were unaware of the vandalism when our group visited a few days afterwards.

Where is the outcry! Where is the outrage! The Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the issue in a public address while announcing the publication of a new book on the Holocaust in Greece (see new books in this issue) and KIS (the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece) has commented on this most recent act of anti-Semitism. Apparently, the municipality of Ioannina could care less. Have they increased security at the cemetery? No. Have they made an attempt to catch the perpetrators, even though everyone I spoke to in the city knows exactly who they are? No.

While we would love to see those responsible caught and punished to the full extent of the law, obviously this will not happen. More important, the cemetery must be protected so that this will never happen again, and the responsibility for doing this falls upon the City of Ioannina. As stated before, the pain is ours, the shame is theirs.

Pass this on to anyone and everyone you think may be able to help. In this day and age, such a disgrace cannot remain unaddressed.

Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

The scheduled July 12th Film Festival at Kehila Kedosha Janina must be cancelled due to a conflict. Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, was part of the committee chosen to work on the Salonika Archives (see article below) and will be in attendance at the seminar at YIVO, making it impossible to proceed with the film festival. This event will be rescheduled.

July 11th reception in honor of Joe Halio.

280 Broome Street-2:00 PM.

A small token of our thanks to Joe Halio and FASSAC (Foundaton for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture) for salvaging stained glass window pieces from Kehila Kedosha Janina of Mapleton, Brooklyn. Samples of the stained glass will be unveiled to become a permanent part of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Refreshments will be served. Open to the public.

Upcoming Events Outside of Kehila Kedosha Janina

UPCOMING SEMINAR

Sponsored by YIVO in partnership with the American Sephardi Federation

RUTH GAY SEMINAR IN JEWISH STUDIES

Uncommon Voices, Everyday Lives: Jewish Experiences in Salonika through the YIVO Archives

SUNDAY 12 JULY 2009

Meet the faculty at 3PM; Seminar at 3:30PM

Chair: Isaac Benmayor

Introductory Remarks: Steven Bowman

Presenter: Devin Naar

RSVP REQUIRED: 212-294-6143 / fmohrer@yivo.cjh.org

Devin Naar, a doctoral candidate in the department of History at Stanford University, was Project Historian of the Salonika Project at YIVO. Under the project, the Records of the Jewish Community of Salonika housed in the YIVO Archives were arranged, microfilmed, and digitized, and a finding aid was completed. The project received support from the Maurice Amado Foundation and from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Naar is writing his dissertation on the Jewish Community of Salonika during the 19th and 20th centuries. He was the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship to Greece where he organized a segment of the Salonika archives housed at the Jewish Museum of Salonika and curated the exhibition "With Their Own Words: Glimpses of Jewish Life in Thessaloniki before the Holocaust." He has delivered conference papers or lectured at numerous locations in New York and New Jersey, as well as St. Louis, Georgetown, New Haven, Jerusalem, Moscow, and Paris.

Isaac Benmayor holds a Ph.D. in Modern Greek Linguistics from Oxford University. Born and raised in Thessaloniki, Benmayor is a past president of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece, and has worked on a number of publications on the Holocaust in Greece, including *The Holocaust in Salonica: Eyewitness Accounts*.

Steven Bowman is Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati and has written extensively on Greek Jewry. His books include *Jews in Byzantium, 1204-1453*, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece*, *The Holocaust in Salonica: Eyewitness Accounts* and *The Agony of Greek Jewry during World War II* (in press). Bowman is Editor in Chief of the "The Sephardi and Greek Holocaust Library."

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YIVO Institute for Jewish Research | 15 West 16th Street
New York | NY | 10011
www.yivo.org

THE VILLAGE OF CEDARHURST PRESENTS

THE ANNUAL

GREEK NIGHT CONCERT

UNDER THE GAZEBO AT CEDARHURST PARK

With vocalist Lazaros Paraskevas and his Band of Golden Greeks
Pre-show by the Pontian Komninoi Youth Dancers of New York

TUESDAY, August 4, 2009
7:00 PM- 9:30 PM

Andrew J. Parise
Mayor of Cedarhurst

Prof. Asher J. Matathias
Chair, Greek Concert

SPONSORS

Nassau County Executive Thomas R. Suozzi
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NY State Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg (20=2 0A.D.)
Federation of Hellenic Societies of New York
(Offering the tasty pastries and cool beverages of *Lefkos Pyrgos*)
Association of Prefecture Magnisias "*Argonauts*"
Vocalist Lazaros Paraskevas and the Band of *Golden Greeks*
Pontian Komninoi Youth Dancers of New York
Takis Auto Repairs, Rosedale, NY (Valtesiniko)
Dimitris Deligiannis, *Delta Printing*, L.I.C.
Weekly Bilingual *GreekNews*
Takis Auto Repair, Rosedale, NY
L.I. Lodge #1353, B'nai B'rith, P.O. 51, Woodmere, NY

Thanks to Joe Varon for this information.

New Film on Thessaloniki

Return to Europe

"After the war, this group of people did not feel like speaking very much. You know, the ones who had numbers," says Heinz Kounio and points to his own upper arm. Mr. Kounio was one of 40,000 Jews from Thessaloniki who were deported to concentration camps in 1943. Only 2000 of them survived the Holocaust and returned to the northern Greek city. And it is only recently that people here have started to really acknowledge that for centuries the city was a centre of Jewish life.

'Return to Europe' uncovers this Jewish heritage, portraying Thessaloniki as a city that lost its identity in the 20th century. The people here lived through the traumatic population exchange in 1923, when hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Turks were forced to leave their homes. Who was allowed to live where depended on their religious affiliations. The film analyses the impact this has had on Greek identity to this day. In Greece, the Church quite naturally gets involved in politics. Loyalty to the Orthodox Church goes so far that during the Bosnian War most Greek politicians even supported Slobodan Milosević und Radovan Karadsić. The film points out how Greece was the only Balkan country to translate the idea of an ethnic homogenous nation state into reality after World War I, and one cannot help but think about the recent wars in the Balkans, where the lance of nationalism was taken up once more, resulting in the disaster of ethnic cleansing.

In 'Return to Europe,' journalist Takis Michas explains that many Greeks compared the war in Bosnia to their own history in the 20th century: interpreting it as a necessary attempt to establish a nation state. Today, Greece itself is a multi-ethnic state once again, particularly since large numbers of Albanian refugees reached its shores in overcrowded boats in the 1990s. Return to Europe points out that Greece has not only mastered the integration of these new citizens, but that relations with its former archenemy Turkey have also been progressing nicely since the late 1990s.

Despite its Western orientation during the second half of the 20th century, under the surface Greece is still trying to address its role under the Ottoman Empire and the changes brought about by its demise, just as the other Balkan nations are doing. Following the population exchange of 1923, the expulsion of Turks from Greece and the expulsion of Greeks from Turkey, five hundred years of Ottoman culture in Thessaloniki were destroyed, and the majority of the mosques were demolished. Today's filmmakers have attempted to address the tension between Greece and Turkey in movies like "A Touch of Spice". In its film about Greece, 'Return to Europe' shows how the Greeks are slowly building up self-confidence – partly a result of the country's economic success

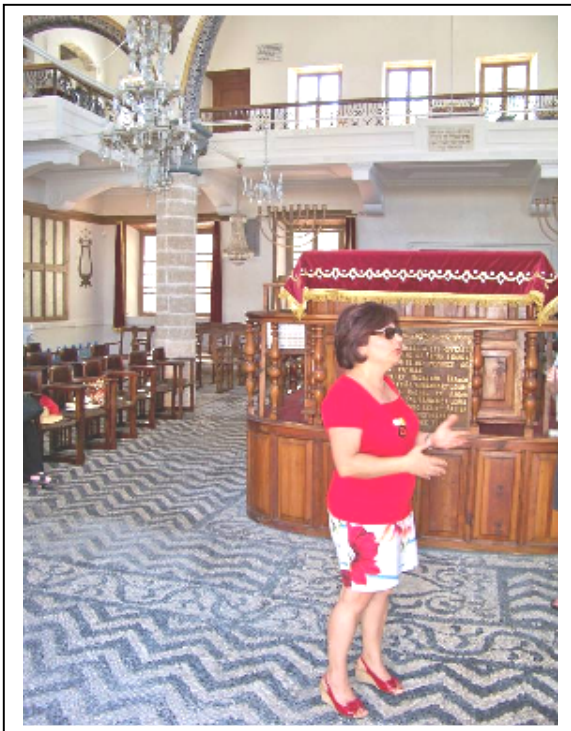
– but that this confidence is still missing in the country’s dealings with its neighbor Macedonia, whose very name many Greeks are apparently still afraid of. Fortunately, Return to Europe also encounters people like Yiannis Boutaris who make fun of this nationalism and point out that, first of all, Alexander the Great died three thousand years ago and, secondly, he was an internationalist. (Adelheid Wolf)”

Please note that the above film has not been seen nor reviewed by us, not do the opinions expressed in this review necessarily reflect those of Kehila Kedosha Janina. We thank Leon Saltiel for passing on the information on the release of this film.

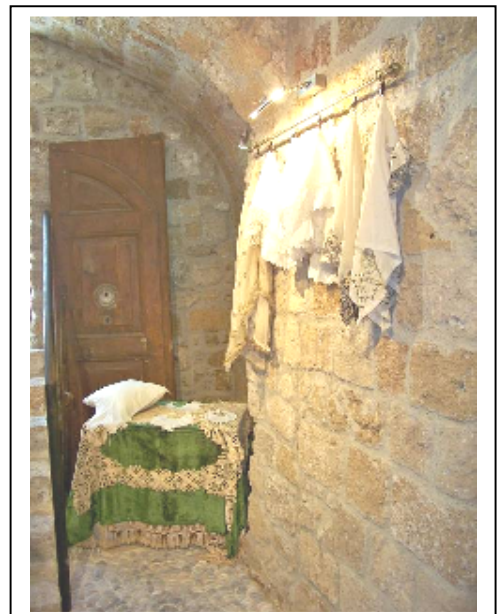
News From Jewish Greece

Returning from Greece on June 18th from a two week trip, we would like to share with you our impressions of our visit to Jewish Rhodes, Salonika, Ioannina and Athens.

In Rhodes we visited the recently opened Jewish Museum of Rhodes housed in Kahal Shalom Synagogue. Our Museum Director , Marcia Haddad Ikonopoulous, has very close ties to Kahal Shalom, having been instrumental in nominating the synagogue to the World Monument Fund and its acceptance as one of the “100 Most Endangered Sites in the World” in 1999. To see the restored synagogue and to be personally greeted by Carmen Cohen (Director of the Community) was especially gratifying. We offer our compliments to the community on the recently dedicated Museum, beautifully done with the help of Aron Hasson and Stella Levi. The Community is now working on plaques with the individual names of all those from Rhodes who perished in the Holocaust. The names will be on display in the courtyard of the synagogue. Stella Levi, one of the few Holocaust survivors from Rhodes, has been instrumental in the creation and formation of this project, something she has worked on for over 10 years. We were also gladdened to hear that the number of Jews in Rhodes has actually increased in the past year (from 32 to 40) due to the fact that Jews from elsewhere in Europe have recently chosen to make this beautiful island their home.



Carmen Cohen inside Kahal Shalom



Interior of Jewish Museum of Rhode

In Salonika, we viewed both synagogues, especially delighted to be able to see the Monastirion Synagogue, which was usually closed to the public. We also visited the cemetery, where members of our group were able to find possible family tombstones (from the Mallah, Sides, Pardo and Errera families). The highlight of our visit to Salonika was our visit to The Museum of Jewish Presence of Thessaloniki and a personal tour by Heinz Kounio, one of the few Holocaust survivors from Salonika. Heinz spent hours with our group as he personally answered their questions. We are so grateful for this special opportunity and thank Heinz for his generosity of spirit.

**Plaque inside Jewish Cemetery
Of Thessaloniki
(not a tombstone).**



In Ioannina, we found possible former family homes with the help of Isaac Dostis, and were privileged to share Kabala Shabbat with the Jewish Community of Ioannina. Samuel Cohen led the services. After services, the Community joined us for poolside buffet dinner at the Du Lac Hotel. We, of course, visited the cemetery, not only to document the aforementioned desecration but, also to photograph tombstones for future translation and documentation. We were very fortunate to have Sydney Levy, Jonathan Alcantara and Joanna Schecter as members of our group, three young people with the knowledge, passion and stamina to attempt this project. Their photos and documentation (when complete) will become part of the Kehila Kedosha Janina website (www.kkjsm.org).



**Mrs. Matathias & Nina Mordo
discover relations.**



Carol Mathios Halpern & Mrs. Matathia



**Sydney Levy, Barry Lisak, David Mussey
& Jerry Pardo in front of the Aron in
Ioannina.**

In Athens, we visited the Jewish Museum of Greece and were honored with a personal tour by the Museum Director, Zanet Battinou. This was a fitting finish to what was, without doubt, one of the best tours we have ever ran to Jewish Greece. So much of the success of this tour had to do with the special people who participated. *Thank you all.*

News From Greece

Greece to unveil Acropolis museum (Museum is now open)

The long-awaited Acropolis Museum in Athens is to be unveiled later.

The modern glass and concrete building, at the foot of the ancient Acropolis, houses sculpture from the golden age of Athenian democracy.

The £110m (\$182m; 130m euros) structure also offers panoramic views of the stone citadel where they came from.

Culture minister Antonis Samaras said he hoped it would be the "catalyst" for the return of the Parthenon sculptures from the British Museum.

Some of the sculptures, also known as the Elgin Marbles, originally decorated the Parthenon temple and have been in London since they were sold to them in 1817.

"After several adventures, obstructions and criticism, the new Acropolis Museum is ready "

Antonis Samaras

The British Museum has long argued that Greece has no proper place to put them - an argument the Greek government now hopes the Acropolis Museum addresses.

Mr. Samaras said: "After several adventures, obstructions and criticism, the new Acropolis Museum is ready: a symbol of modern Greece that pays homage to its ancestors, the duty of a nation to its cultural heritage."

The building, set out over three levels, holds about 350 artifacts and sculptures that were previously held in a small museum on top of the Acropolis.

Antique ceramics and sculptures are displayed on the first floor while the Caryatids - columns sculpted as females holding up the roof of a porch on the southern side of the Erechtheum temple - dominate the top of a glass ramp leading up the second floor.

Sculptures from the Temple of Athena and the Propylaea entrance to the Acropolis will be displayed on the second floor, while the third features a reconstruction of the Parthenon Marbles.

"The structure is Greece's answer to the British argument that there is nowhere in their country to house the Elgin marbles."

Razia Iqbal, BBC arts correspondent

The reconstruction is based on several elements that remain in Athens as well as copies of the marbles still housed in the British Museum. The London institution holds 75 metres of the original 160 metres of the frieze that ran round the inner core of the building.

It has repeatedly rejected calls for their return saying they are displayed in an international cultural contest. "I think they belong to all of us - we are all global citizens these days," spokeswoman Hannah Boulton said.

The copies of those held in the British Museum are differentiated by their white colour - because they are plaster casts, contrasting with the weathered marble of the originals. Museum director Prof. Dimitris Pandermalis said the opening of the museum provides an opportunity to correct "an act of barbarism" in the sculptures' removal.

"Tragic fate has forced them apart but their creators meant them to be together," he said. Bernard Tschumi, the building's US-based architect, said: "It is a beautiful space that shows the frieze itself as a narrative - even with the plaster copies of what is in the British Museum - in the context of the Parthenon itself."

Story from BBC

News report thanks to Mordy Eskononts.

Comments on our last newsletter

From Leah Matsil:

"Just reading your newsletter about your visit from the Gani family - I have the Ellis Island ship manifest for my grandmother, Anna Samuels, who left Piraeus, Greece on the SS Acropolis on June 14, 1922 with an Eftihoula Gani, age 20, daughter of Moise Gani. There was a group of 5 single women from Ioannina that trip - I know my grandma told me she traveled with close family friend (although there is another Samuel listed on the manifest, who may have been a cousin). Since they are listed one after the other and both said they spoke French (everyone else is listed as speaking Hebrew) I'm guessing they were friends or became friends on the trip and were waiting in line together. It also says that Eftihoula was going to her uncle David Davidson's house - per your newsletter a major KKJ masher! Lots of funny connections and coincidences with all of this research, right?"

My grandmother is listed as age 17, but I always remember her telling me she was younger when she came here, so I wonder if she had "false" papers to make her appear

older since she was traveling without an immediate relative and going to her brother's house - her skill is listed as "housekeeper". She certainly was a good one - the lady could cook! - but I think she had a very tough time at her brother's crowded place and became a bit like a servant until she found another family to live with (Koulias).

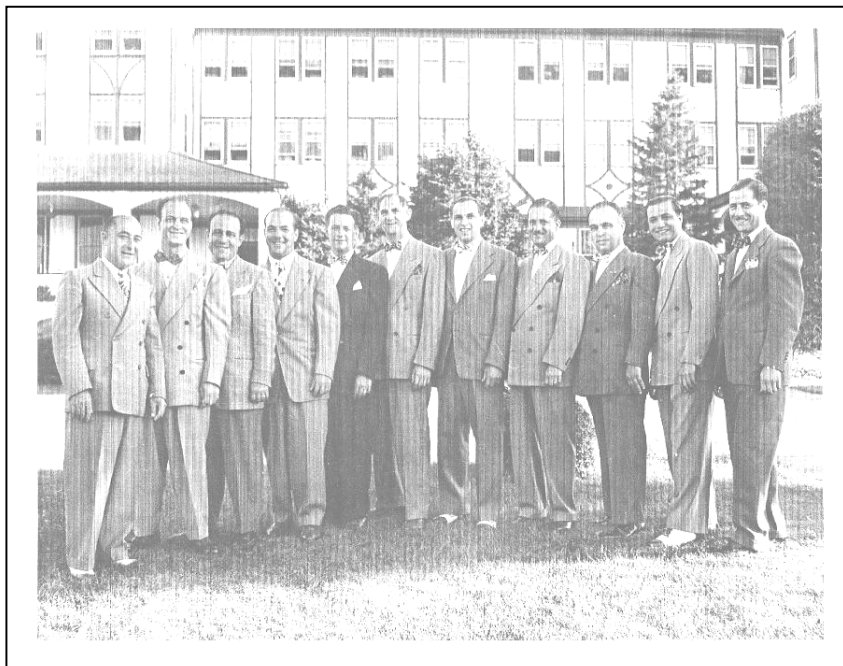
I have to get you that photo I promised for you wedding exhibit."

Thank you for sharing this with us Leah. As a reminder to our readers, do share your thoughts, recollections and, of course, your pictures. The "Weddings" exhibit (due to open on November 8th) will be taking form this summer. Do not forget to get us your photos.

Recent acquisitions to our photo archives

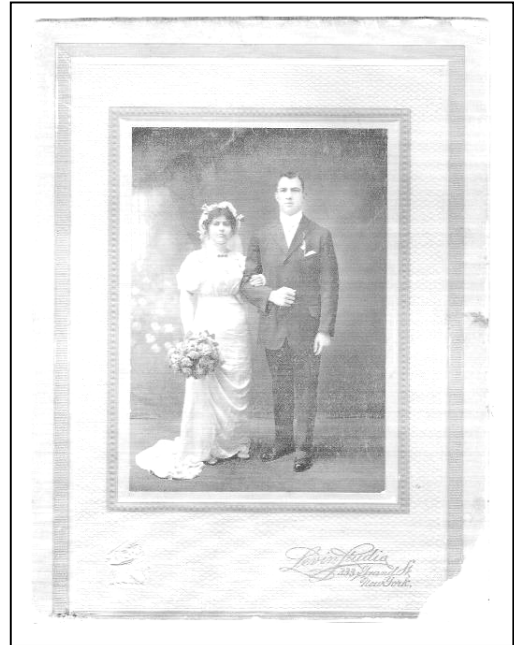
We thank Deanna Cohen Marcus and Sarah Honan Crocker for sharing these precious photos with us.

Can anyone identify the Broome & Allen Street boys in the photo that Deanna Cohen Marcus sent us?





Sarah Honan Crocker grandparents
Serena Patera & Ben Sereta



Thanks to Shelomo Alfassa of ASF for passing on this interesting find in the archives.

"June 28, 1918: M. Simos, Minister of Defense in a conference with Dr. Nissim Levy and representatives of the Zionists of Yanina, state that Premier Venizelos and other members of his cabinet would do their utmost to help in the development of a Zionist program. AJYB 21, 5680."

New Books

We returned from Greece with 5 copies (in Greek) of *Memories of the Occupation II - Italians and Germans in Ioannina and the Destruction of the Jewish Community* (Μνήμες Κατοχής-Ιταλοί και Γερμανοί στα Γιάννενα και η καταστροφή της Εβραϊκής κοινότητας). If you wish to purchase the book, please let us know due to the limited number of copies in our possession. The book sells for \$25 plus \$4 P&H (for information on international sales contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net) . Please make checks out to Kehila Kedosha Janina and mail to One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743.

New Books in Greek

Youth in the Maelstrom of the Occupation of Greece (Νεόν στη Δίνη της Κατοχικής Ελλάδας) published by The Central Board of Jewish Communities. A collection of photos and stories of children who survived the Occupation of Greece or the concentration camps. If and when this important book is available in the United States, we will let you know.

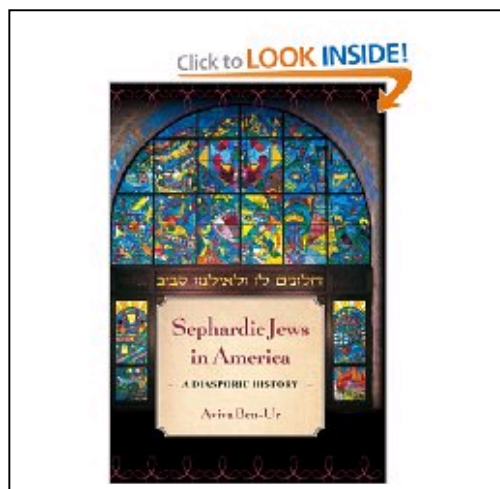
Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau (Ελληνες στο Αουσβιτς-Μπίρκεναου) by Foteini Tomai, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The story of Greek Jews and Christians at

Auschwitz-Birkenau based on interviews and research in the Auschwitz Archives. Unlike other books published on Greek Jewry by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this book is only published in Greek and, to date, is not available outside of Greece.

New Book for Resale at Kehila Kedosha Janina

***Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* by Aviva Ben-Ur. Published by NYU Press.**

A significant number of Sephardic Jews, tracing their remote origins to Spain and Portugal, immigrated to the United States from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans from 1880 through the 1920s, joined by a smaller number of Mizrahi Jews arriving from Arab lands. Most Sephardim settled in New York, establishing the leading Judeo-Spanish community outside the Ottoman Empire. With their distinct languages, cultures, and rituals, Sephardim and Arab-speaking Mizrahim were not readily recognized as Jews by their Ashkenazic coreligionists. At the same time, they forged alliances outside Jewish circles with Hispanics and Arabs, with whom they shared significant cultural and linguistic ties.



The failure among Ashkenazic Jews to recognize Sephardim and Mizrahim as fellow Jews continues today. More often than not, these Jewish communities are simply absent from portrayals of American Jewry. Drawing on primary sources such as the Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) press, archival documents, and oral histories, *Sephardic Jews in America* offers the first book-length academic treatment of their history in the United States, from 1654 to the present, focusing on the age of mass immigration. Hardcover.

\$25 plus \$4 P&H (within continental USA). Checks should be made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina and mailed to One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743.

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Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002
kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net www.kkjsm.org**