



# Kehila Kedosha Janina

## Synagogue and Museum

### December 2017 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Our heartfelt wishes for a healthy and happy Hanukkah and, for those who celebrate Christmas, a joyous Holiday filled with the gifts of love. To all, our wishes for a 2018 where peace will pervade the world, unity will prevail, and we will emphasize what we share in common, rather than what divides us.

Hanukkah Menorah  
from Corfu on an  
Israeli Shekel



This newsletter, our 105<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.kkjsm.org).

We now reach over 8,500 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 [museum@kkjsm.org](mailto: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](mailto:info@kkjsm.org) so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher food) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

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## Simchas

We are overjoyed at all the beautiful simchas in November. We celebrated two bar mitzvahs and 3 births. Our community is strong and vibrant!

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, Jackson Winthrop put on Tefillin and was called to the Torah at KKJ in celebration of his bar mitzvah. Jackson is the son of Marc and Susan Winthrop, the grandson of Esther Ackos Winthrop (of Blessed Memory) and Harvey Winthrop and the great-grandson of Menachem and Rosa Ackos (both of Blessed Memory). Menachem was deported from Athens in the Spring of 1944 and was murdered at Auschwitz, while Esther, due to the moral courage of Christians outside of Athens, survived with her five children. Jackson's bar mitzvah is a testament to our endurance, a true victory.



Ackos family in Athens 1944

On Shabbat November 18<sup>th</sup>, Gabriel Feldman, son of Esther Negrin, grandson of Ari and Doreta Negrin, great-grandson of Moisis Negrin and Esther (Steroula) Mosios, and the great great-grandson of Yehudah Negrin and Hanoula Matza, was called to the Torah in Kehila Kedosha Janina as a bar mitzvah. Gabriel's Negrin family survived the Holocaust and earthquake in Volos, to come to the United States in the 1950s. Ari recently celebrated fifty years of his hat shop on Orchard Street.



Negrin Family in Greece

Eric Colchamiro and Shoshana Hecker celebrate the birth of Izidora Fen Colchamiro. "Izi" is the granddaughter of Dan and JayEtta Hecker, Ida and Steve Colchamiro, great granddaughter of Matty and Esther Colchamiro, and great granddaughter of Asser and Steroula Colchamiro of Ioannina. It is always a joy to welcome another Colchamiro to our community.



Michael and Shoshana Albala welcomed a baby boy into the world, their fifth child. Netanel ben Melech David Albala received his name at his Brit Milah (performed by his father, Michael).



On November 25<sup>th</sup>, Lilia Eden Ledner made her entrance into the world, the daughter of Melissa Ledner, granddaughter of Ed Ledner and Lois Genee Ledner and the great-granddaughter of Hy and Lil Genee (both of Blessed Memory).



Lil, Hy and  
Fani Genee



## Visitors

We love when groups visit us. We are a popular destination for synagogues, Hadassah groups, seniors, and students from near and far. In November, we had a very diversified group of visitors. Drake Behrakis, Trustee of Boston College and a Director of the National Hellenic Society, the Mitrani family from Miami, Luciana Cohen and Andre Beraha, and scores of interesting people from all over the world.



Drake Behrakis



Mitrani Family

Luciana &  
Andre



## Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

November was a very busy month for us, as, in addition to two bar mitzvahs, we had an aufruf (engagement celebration), an Italian Shabbat with the Rabbi Amedeo Spagnoletto the Chief Rabbi of Florence, and an unbelievably successful concert by Kol Dodi.

On Rosh Hodesh, Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the aufruf of Michael Brous who is marrying Shana Attas, the daughter of Lew Attas and the granddaughter of Cal and Norma Attas.



On Friday November 10<sup>th</sup> and Saturday November 11<sup>th</sup>, we were treated to a special Shabbaton hosted by Centro Primo Levi and Kehila Kedosha Janina. The Chief Rabbi of Florence Amedeo Spagnoletto, joined Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé and our spiritual leader, Chaim Kofinas, to fill our synagogue in celebration of the traditions of the Jews of Italy, the Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews and, of course, our own Romaniote traditions.





On November 19<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Kol Dodi back to Kehila Kedosha Janina. The synagogue was filled with joy.



## Past Events of Interest

We were honored to attend the Damaskinos Awards at the Boat House in Central Park, where the American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece honored Ambassador Ronald Lauder for his philanthropic support of Greek Jewry.



Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, was honored to be chosen to present her paper on "Emigration of Ioannina Jews to New York" at the Modern Greek Studies Association Symposium at Stockton University. Our dear friend, Art Dimopoulos, from the National Hellenic Society was there and, another of our dear friends, Dr. Devin Naar, received the Keeley Award for the best book of the year.



Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, was very busy in November, also attending the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) event in Wilmington, Delaware, always with the mission of spreading the knowledge of Greek Jewry and, especially the existence of our special Kehila Kedosha Janina.



Professor Dan Georgakas



Professor Gonda Van Steen

Haris Lalacos  
Ambassador of Greece to the U.S.





## Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Join us at Kehila Kedosha Janina for a special book presentation and book signing on December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.  
Full details are available [here](#).

### *Exploring Jewish South Florida: A History and Guide to Neighborhoods, Synagogues and Eateries*

A book presentation with author Paul Kaplan

**Thursday, December 7, 2017  
7:00 PM -9:00PM**



Paul Kaplan

Please join us for a talk with Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy board member, Paul Kaplan, for an engaging and enlightening lecture inspired by his latest book, *Jewish South Florida*. Beyond the stereotype of elderly Jews visiting sunny beaches and stopping in at New York-style delis lies a rich history and Jewish cultural tradition. You'll see rare vintage photos, explore some of the best Jewish eateries, hear the stories behind the region's cultural landmarks and learn the little-known history of how South Florida became one of the largest Jewish communities in the country.

*This event is co-sponsored with Kehila Kedosha Janina, the only Romaniote (Greek-Speaking) synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.* Founded by Greek-speaking Jews from Ioannina, Greece, in 1927, the synagogue has functioned as a Jewish house of worship, without disruption, for 90 years. Presently, the building, also, contains a museum located in the women's section, in the balcony. The Museum tells the story of 2500 years of Greek Jewish presence, the longest, continuous Jewish presence in the European Diaspora. Of the hundreds of synagogues that once existed on the Lower East Side, we are one of only four, below Houston, that still has regular services.

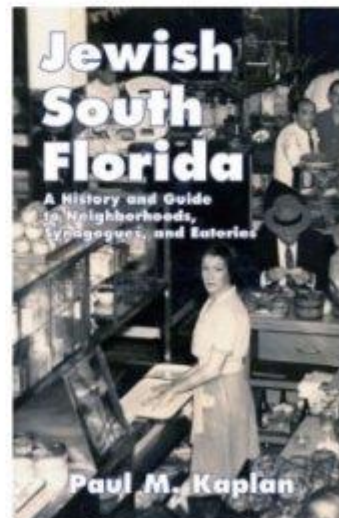
*After the book presentation, there will be a brief tour of the sanctuary.*

\$5.00 Per Person in advance and \$8 at the door. Pre-payment and pre-registration is highly suggested due to limited seating capacity. **A light snack will be served.**

Location:  
**280 Broome Street**  
**New York, NY 10002**  
**Between Eldridge and Allen Streets**

To Register:  
<http://nycjewishtours.org/calendar.htm#dec7>

for questions, please call (212) 374-4100 Ext 2

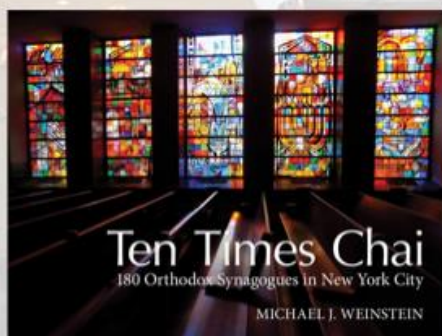


Join us on Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup> for a special book signing. This book is a perfect Hanukkah gift.

**Kehila Kedosha Janina Museum  
Invites you to join us for a special**

# **BOOK PRESENTATION AND SIGNING**

**WITH MICHAEL WEINSTEIN  
AUTHOR OF "TEN TIMES CHAI"**



**Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm  
Kehila Kedosha Janina  
280 Broome Street NYC**

Inspired by his own heritage and dedicated to the Holocaust Survivors he met on his journeys, Michael J. Weinstein gives readers a tour of 180 Orthodox synagogues throughout the 5 boroughs of NYC. This coffee table style book's 613 color photos represent each of the 613 mitzvot, or commandments, of Judaism in the Torah. Michael will share stories about each of these unique synagogues.

**Refreshments will be served**

**Please RSVP to [museum@kkjism.org](mailto:museum@kkjism.org)  
or 516-456-9336**



**Save the Date!**

**Greek Jewish Festival  
May 6, 2018**

Kehila Kedosha Janina is excited to announce our fourth annual Greek Jewish Festival will be held on May 6, 2018. Check out photos and the wonderful video from our 2017 festival at [www.GreekJewishFestival.com](http://www.GreekJewishFestival.com)

# GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL





## **Tour of Jewish Greece and The Balkans Summer 2018**

Full tour details and itinerary are available at <https://www.kkjsm.org/jewish-tours-of-greece>

**Summer  
2018**



## **Tour of Jewish Greece & The Balkans**

**July 6 – July 20, 2018**

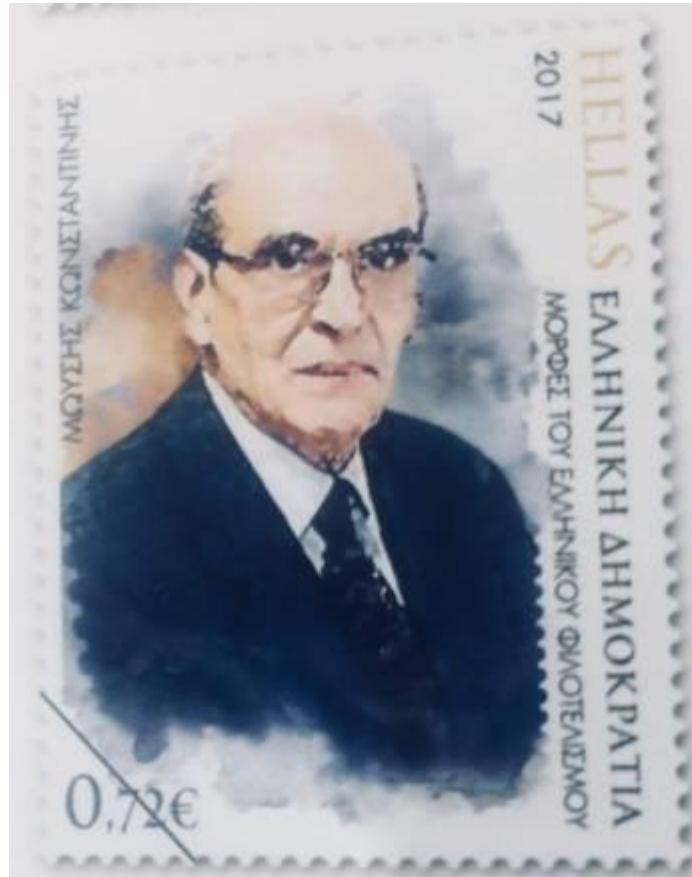
**Includes Salonika, Ioannina, Athens, Monastir, Kosovo,  
Montenegro, Sarajevo, and Albania**

**Visit [www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org) or contact [Museum@kkjsm.org](mailto:Museum@kkjsm.org)  
for full trip details**

## News from Jewish Greece

### Athens

Moisis Konstantini, former President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS) and a longtime employee of the Greek Postal system, was honored with a Greek postage stamp.



### Presentation in Athens on the Jewish Community of Arta

The rich history and cultural heritage of Jews from Arta were revived in an interesting and touching event organized in Athens, at the Cultural Center of the Jewish Community of Athens, on October 20th. Books, pictures of both prewar Arta and the modern city life, traditional costumes, portraits, art and architecture, traditions and traditional food, local products and music, were only some of the features that embellished the event. The event was organized with the hope of reviving ties with the Jewish roots, and spreading the message that these ties continue in today Arta, a city that once had a vibrant Jewish past. The exhibit also honored the memory of the children who perished in the Holocaust.

The event started with a short video projection and a welcome for the Second Vice President of KIS, K. Viktora Ib. Eliezer, who was the moderator of the evening. The event also hailed the president of JC Athens Minos Moses who -after welcoming the representatives of the Municipality of Arta and their coreligionists who hailed from Arta.

Then speeches addressed the mayor of Arta Christos Tsirogiannis and deputy Vice Mayor, Konstantinos Charaklias stressing the importance the Municipality attaches to the preservation of Jewish cultural heritage in Arta. The mayor reported on recent events on preserving the Memory of Artian Jews, the commitment of the municipality to highlight the history, and future initiatives such as the marking of Jewish houses with inscriptions etc. On his part, K. Charaklias presented photos and videos about life today Arta, attractions and the natural beauty of Epirus with a diversified landscape, and that Arta has become an interesting tourist destination. Both representatives of the Municipality urged the Jewish community to frequently visit Arta, continuing the city unbreakable ties with the Jewish element.



Among the recent contributions mentioned was that of Mr. Vadivouli who has undertaken the creation of the web page "former Jewish Community Arta" on Facebook. The consensus of those who spoke emphasized the harmonious relations between Jews and Christians in Arta. Bella Aaron, in her speech, praised the cooperation of the municipality of Arta in the identification of a Jewish soldier from Arta killed in the war of Israeli independence in 1948.

The highlight of the event was the presence of Isaac Mizan, a survivor of the Holocaust, who was born in Arta and Mr. Dimitri Vlachopanou, author of the book "Isaac Mizan - Number Arm 182 641." Isaac Mizan spoke with emotion about the Arta of his childhood, while Mr. Vlachopanous stressed that Isaac Mizan symbolizes not only the memory of Holocaust victims but, also, their strength for living and procreating. The author said: "Through the story of Isaac Mizan we learned the story but not as it was taught us in school." The Mayor of Arta presented to Mr. Mizan an honorary plaque paying homage to everything Isaac Mizan represents.

The event ended with a musical note offered by composer Chloe Lambrou, which interpreted traditional songs with tambourine and flute.

Finally, attendees had the opportunity to enjoy a buffet with dishes from Epirus.

## **Thessaloniki**

### **David Saltiel Receives an Award from Germany**

The President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, Mr. David Saltiel, received the Cross of Merit of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany on November 2, 2017. The award was given for his contribution to the German-Jewish cooperation. The Federal Cross was awarded to Mr. David Saltiel by Mr. Michael Roth, Minister of State for Europe in a ceremony held at the residence of the German consul in Thessaloniki.



Mr. David Saltiel accepted the great honor that was made to him, with a toast to life, the life that the Holocaust has brutally cut short for the members of the thriving Jewish Community of Thessaloniki. Mr. Michael Roth said that the President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, Mr. David Saltiel should be praised for the hard work for reconciliation. David Saltiel vowed that he will continue to fight for reconciliation in order to create the better future that we deserve and that unites us all together. In his speech, Michael Roth referred also to the Holocaust Museum of Thessaloniki and applauded Mr. Saltiel's personal involvement and commitment to the realization of this project. Mr. Saltiel said that Mr. Roth believed in this project from the very beginning and supported in every way.



Earlier on the same day, Mr. Saltiel welcomed Mr. Roth to the offices of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki where he presented German Minister Roth with a papyrus and a symbolic commemorative gift at a special ceremony in the presence of the leadership of Greek Jewry and representatives of the German Consulate.

### **The Possible Loss of Villa Olga**

A 96 year old resident of Thessaloniki laments the possible loss of Villa Olga. Living close to the former Villa, he has watched the continuous corroding of the building. He laments the fact that the building has been left abandoned and may possibly collapse, abandoned to the ravages of time. The fact that this building was very much a part of the history of the city and the site of one of the most glorious tales of bravery and humanity during the Occupation only adds to the pain of its possible loss.



During the Occupation, members of the Beraha family (photo on right), Miriam and Jacko were able to escape the Baron Hirsch Ghetto and received false IDs at the Italian Consulate.

During the Occupation of Thessaloniki, the building, known as Villa Olga, housed the Consulate of Italy, and became a "safe house" for many of the Jews of Thessaloniki. There, at the behest of the then consul Geulfo Zamboni, documents were falsified showing their holders, Greek Jews, as being of Italian origin, sparing them from deportation and extermination in Auschwitz.

It is hoped that Villa Olga can be sold and restored.

## Kavala

### Greek Jewish Holocaust Victims Remembered in IHRA Event in Kavala

The Swiss embassy in Greece is organized a one-day conference in Kavala on October 21-22 in memory of the thousands of Greek Jews of Eastern Macedonia who were murdered in Nazi concentration camps during the occupation of the area by the Bulgarian army.

The event is part of the priorities and programs formed by Switzerland as the chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) for 2017. The embassy chose Kavala as the host city after a proposal by Swiss Ambassador Dr. Hans-Rudolf Hodel, who wished to link the historical past of Eastern Macedonia not only with the atrocities of the Nazi troops against Jews but also with the crimes committed by Bulgarian troops in the cities of Kavala and Drama against Greek Christians.



Speaking to the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA), the Swiss ambassador said the event follows activities undertaken by the country in the last decades to maintain the memory of the Holocaust.



"It is an indication of our continued commitment to keeping the memory of the victims of the Nazi regime alive. What is the reason for this commitment? First: The crimes of the Nazis against humanity and the terrible suffering of the Jewish people and millions of other victims of the Nazi regime. It is our duty to maintain their memory and sensitize [people] to fight any form of genocide today and in the future. Second: Switzerland was

never an island. Switzerland is part of Europe and its history is closely linked to European history. Swiss citizens were murdered in Auschwitz and other concentration and extermination camps. Some of them did not receive the support they hoped and deserved from the Swiss diplomatic delegations abroad. Other Swiss citizens abroad made every effort to save the Jews," he said.

Ambassadors and consuls from the 31 member-states of IHRA as well as representatives of the Greek diplomatic corps have registered for the conference.

## Serres

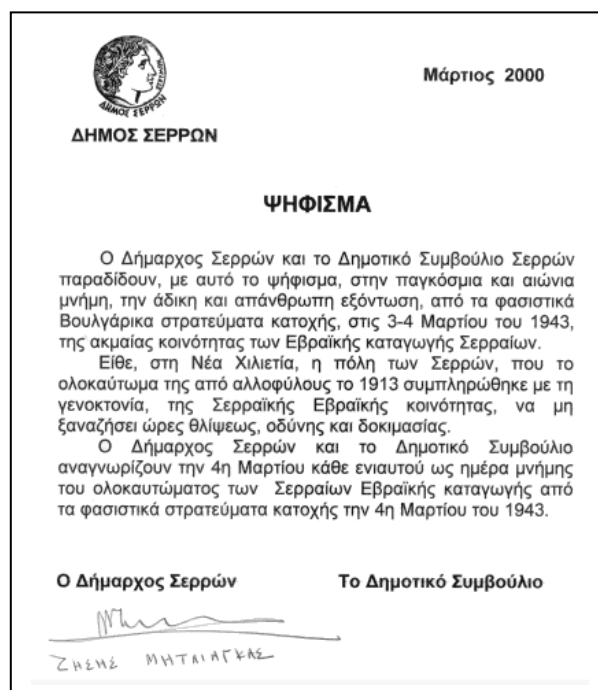
By VICTOR ELIEZER (E.J.P., Nov. 20, 2017)

ATHENS----It was a June 2017 morning when my phone rang and on the end of the line I heard the kind voice of a lady:

- "I want to talk to you about the Jews of Serres, (a city in North Greece), and the history of my family," she tells me and somehow she surprised me because –to tell the truth– I did not believe there was a single Jew from Serres that was alive.

- "I had no idea," I answer, "that you are from Serres, and of course I am interested in your story."

And so, on the evening of Friday, June 13, Mrs. Mimika Simantov-Samouilidou welcomes me in her apartment just opposite the Acropolis. The dining table was full of photos, publications and books. Her discourse is accompanied by photographs of a distant past. Favorite faces, houses and streets that no longer exist. Her voice trembles with emotion when she shows me the photos.



"My grandfather, Abraham Simantov, was born in the city of Serres in 1850 and he was a student at the school of the Jewish Community of Serres. He was a merchant and his business brought him as far away as Egypt. He was married to Rachel Abravanel and they had nine children. One of these nine children, Joseph Simantov got married to Daisy Kambeli and had two children, me and my brother Albert."

Mrs. Mimika serves the coffee drink and she is looking forward to continue the narration.

- "I will not tire you too much, but I believe people need to learn the unknown aspects of history showing that human solidarity can overcome social or religious differences in order to protect the value of human life."



My uncle, my father's brother, Menachem Simantov was a great cosmopolitan of the time, with a wide education; he had the full acceptance of the local community. His successful business in the trade of tobacco, wood, cotton, and his involvement with the first steps of the cinema made Menachem Simantov an internationally prestigious personality and Italy had appointed him as a consul in the city of Serres." Why, however, was Menachem Simantov so important? Mimika Samouilidou delivers me some relevant publications.

According to the historian Petros Pennas, when the Bulgarians invaded Serres on June 28, 1913, six hundred people originated from Serres sought shelter in the Simantov's family house, where the Italian Consulate was housed, in order to escape from the massacre.

The building was surrounded by the Bulgarian army. As the journalist Haralambos Vouroutsidis writes in the journal "Proodos," according to the historian Petros Pennas: "Menachem Simantov, as consul of the Italian state, he went to the Consulate and pleaded with the soldiers to save the life of his fellow citizens; as he didn't have any response, he used his personal property to save the lives of his compatriots. He threw to the Bulgarians who were ready to put on fire the siege-stricken people, hundreds of pounds of golden liras, while the expensive carpets of the mansion, had been damped and spread out on the roof of the building in order to avoid the risk of fire from the nearby buildings that were on fire. The entry of the Greek army's brigades into the ruined city earlier on in the afternoon of June 28 meant the redemption of the besieged Greeks in the Simantov building."

In 1916, after the second invasion of the Bulgarians in Serres, the family of Menachem Simantov, along with other Jewish families, abandoned the city and settled in Thessaloniki. Menachem Simantov died in 1929.

The building of the Simantov family was demolished in 1988 by the Greek Authorities; in its place, at the crossroad of Hatzipantazi and Romanos streets, there is now nothing left from the historical building of the city of Serres, nor even a commemorative plaque reminding the rescue story of 600 Christians from Serres.

Only in 2001, as part of the Holocaust memorial events, the Municipality of Serres honored Menachem Simantov for the rescue of his 600 fellow citizens.

"Of course I have a feeling of sorrow, not because there is no mention of his name anymore, but mainly because there is not even a little stone to teach to the young people that in that place there was a building owned by Menachem Simantov in which 600 fellow human beings founded shelter and were saved" confesses his niece, Mimika Simantov-Samouilidou, who along with the two great-grandchildren and the four great grandchildren of Menachem Simantov living in Athens and are the descendants of a symbolic and important personality of Greek Jewry.

The final station for the Jews of Serres was the terrible night of March 3, 1943, when the Bulgarians gathered all the Jews in a tobacco warehouse just outside the city. In a few days, they started the journey of no return. Many of them were drowned on the Danube when the barges that carried them were overturned. Those who were saved in the river, were exterminated in the Treblinka camp. About 600 Jews lived in Serres. Less than ten survived. The exemplary human attitude of the citizens of Serres is noteworthy, since no one went to the auction organized by the Bulgarians to buy the Jews' possessions.

There is only one commemorative plaque, standing in the wall of the Jewish Primary School -now a kindergarten of the Municipality of Serres- that reminds of their presence in the city. After the war, the Jewish School passed the property to the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece and it houses today the 6th and the 16th Primary Schools of Serres. In 2000 the Municipality of Serres placed a votive column in the former Jewish School in the memory of the exiled Jews of the city.

I sincerely thank Mrs. Mimika Simantov-Samouilidou for the information and the precious material that she gave me about this aspect of our modern history that remains unknown to many people.

· \*Victor Eliezer is Editing Director of 'Alef', the Magazine of the Jewish community of Athens and correspondent of Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot.

### **Interreligious Building Bridges**

Rabbi Gabriel Negrin, the Chief Rabbi of Athens, continuously engages in interreligious meeting in an attempt to build bridges with other faiths.



### **New Righteous Among Nations from Greece**

Yad Vashem; Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, recognized a 106-year-old woman from Thessaloniki and her late husband, as Righteous Among the Nations in a ceremony in November

· During the Holocaust, where thousands of thriving members of the Thessaloniki Jewish community were sent to the death camps, Vasiliki and her husband Kostas Athiridis hid five members of the Assel family: Marcus, Aida and their children Freddie, Janine and Jacqueline.

Marcus was a businessman who at one point in time had helped out Kostas. An appreciative Kostas told him that if he ever needed anything, he would return the favor.

During the Holocaust, Marcus looked for a place for his family to hide. After two people refused to hide his family, Marcus turned to Kostas, who agreed. Marcus and his family spent the remaining months of the war in hiding in the Athiridis' home.



Kostas and Vasiliki kept their young daughter home from kindergarten for months, for fear that she would tell others that they were hiding Jews in their home.

The Thessaloniki ceremony was an initiative of the Israeli Embassy in Greece, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and the city's Jewish community.

Diplomats, city council representatives, the president of the school, the head of the local Jewish community, middle school students of the local Anatolia school and members of Vasiliki's family were among those in attendance.

Source: Israel Hayom

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### **Articles of Interest to All**

#### **Gorizia/Nova Gorica: A unique transborder Jewish cemetery project; Italy and Slovenia From Jewish Heritage Europe**

The historic Jewish heritage sites of Gorizia, in northeastern Italy, comprise a rare example of local Jewish sites separated by an international border: the 18th century synagogue and former Jewish ghetto area are in one country, Italy .... and the Jewish cemetery is in another — Slovenia. (Another example is the historic Jewish cemetery in Slubice, Poland — on the border with Germany outside the German town of Frankfurt an der Oder.)

Both Italy and Slovenia are in the Schengen area of the EU, and the border is pretty much invisible.

An international Slovenian-Italian project, spearheaded by Italy's Foundation for Italian Jewish Cultural Heritage and with the architect Andrea Morpurgo as project leader and architect Renzo Funaro as coordinator, is now under way to fully document and restore the cemetery, which lies just a few hundred meters over the border in the Nova Gorica suburb of Rozna Dolina, or Valdirose.

(The synagogue is owned by the Gorizia municipality, and the cemetery by the Nova Gorica municipality; there is no Jewish congregation in Gorizia.)

Shaped like a triangle, the cemetery occupies around 5,000 square meters and is enclosed by a thick masonry wall. There are approximately 900 gravestones, but many are not in their original location and some were brought to the cemetery from elsewhere. The oldest gravestone in the cemetery dates from 1371 — a



monument to “Regina, daughter of Zerach, wife of Benedetto” — but it was brought from Maribor to Gorizia in 1831. What is believed to be the earliest identified stone from the current cemetery dates to 1652.



There is a ceremonial hall, originally built in 1928: a simple building with a peaked roof and a small attached structure to one side. It was in ruinous condition after World War II, and the then-existing Gorizia Jewish community gave the building to the municipality of Nova Gorica in 1977 in return for guarantees that the municipality would maintain it. It was reconstructed in the 1980s — but was used as a cafe and then, until a few years ago, a gambling casino.

Currently, it stands empty following further renovation — and the crossborder plan to restore the cemetery foresees the installation there of an Information Point and exhibit on local Jewish history. This will provide a complementary resource to the synagogue, which houses a Jewish museum that opened two decades ago. Part of its focus is on some of the notable figures who lived in Gorizia and are buried in the cemetery — most notable among them, the early 20th century philosopher Carlo Michelstaedter, a precursor of existentialism, who was born in 1887 and committed suicide in 1910.

The restoration of the cemetery will entail several stages, with a total cost estimate of around €500,000. Some of the work foresees the involvement of students as participants in a hands-on restoration and documentation project.

The project includes:

- Archival and historical research on burials and other information
- Detailed mapping and topographical relief of the cemetery, with digitalization and creation of a database.
- On-site research to determine the presence of gravestones that remain hidden or buried under the surface.
- Analysis of vegetation/pests; removal of encroaching vegetation; regulating other vegetation.

- Documentation and cataloguing of gravestones and monuments; also assessing their state and restoration needs.
- Repair and rebuilding of the surrounding wall; repair or substitution of gates.
- Resetting and/or restoration of the gravestones.

Volunteers from the Friends of Israel Association in Gorizia, which manages the synagogue and museum, have been carrying out a preliminary survey of the cemetery in the past few months. Jewish Heritage Europe Coordinator Ruth Ellen Gruber is grateful to Friends of Israel President Lorenzo Drascek, who is carrying out this work, for taking her on a tour of both the synagogue and the cemetery.

Perhaps it is fitting that Andrea Morpurgo is project director of the major restoration project — as the Morpurgo family is that with the most number of graves in the cemetery. Many show the Morpurgo family emblem — Jonah in the mouth of a whale.

A census of the gravestones carried out in 1876 showed that some 139 of the 692 graves documented were of members of the Morpurgo family, followed by 127 Gentillis, 80 Luzzattos, 56 Pincherles, 37 Senigaglias, 34 Bolaffios, 23 Jonas, 17 Richetts, 10 Dorflies, seven Michelstaedters, six Reggios, five Pavias, two Windspachs, and one each from the Schnabl and Schonheit families.

The Morpurgos had their origin in the town of Maribor — known in German as Marburg — in northeastern Slovenia, whose medieval synagogue is now used as a cultural center. They spread out through much of Europe after Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I banished Jews from the provinces of Styria, Wiener Neustadt, and Neunkirchen in the 1490s.

Andrea Morpurgo curated an exhibition at the synagogue in Maribor this past summer about the Morpurgo family, its history, and its present.

<http://jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2017/11/10/gorizianova-gorica-transborder-jewish-cemetery-project/%E2%80%9D>

## New Books



**Gershon Harris**  
**Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



While everyone knows about the heroism of the Maccabees in the Hanukkah story, it would be safe to say that far fewer people know about the heroine of the Hanukkah story. In fact, some of the medieval commentators like Rashi consider her to be the real heroine of Hanukkah, even more than the Maccabees!

Her name was Yehudit – Judith – whose life and heroism are described "The Book of Judith", which while only extant in Greek, scholars are fairly certain that the original text was in Hebrew. The book, which contains several obvious historical inaccuracies and errors, was never canonized into the Jewish Bible, and remains part of the Apocrypha – the "external" books because of either questionable authorship or content.

But Jewish tradition attaches great significance to Judith's story, which can be summarized as follows: The Biblical book opens with the successful campaign waged by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, against Arphaxad, king of the Medes. Nebuchadnezzar then sends his chief of staff, Holofernes, on an ambitious military campaign against many nations, defeating all but the Jews, who decide to resist because of the declared war against Judaism and Jewish spiritual life decreed by Holofernes. He attempts the siege of a town called Bethulia, in Judea, whose Jewish residents were determined to block the Assyrians' path to Jerusalem and the Temple. The Jewish resistance is fierce, but when food and water begin to run low, the people of the town press their leaders to surrender to the Assyrians and Uzziah, the chief leader, promises to capitulate if there is no relief within five days. It is at this point that the pious, beautiful widow, Judith, enters the picture. She summons Uzziah and his fellow leaders to her home and reprimands them for their lack of faith in God. She describes her plan to leave Bethulia for the enemy camp, accompanied only by her faithful maid, and charm Holofernes by both her beauty and promise to deliver the Jews to the Assyrians. She manages to gain his confidence, and Holofernes invites Judith to a private party. She agrees, and feeds him large quantities of very salty cheese, and quenching his thirst by equally large quantities of wine. When he collapses in a drunken stupor, Judith seizes Holofernes's sword and beheads him, returning to Bethulia with Holofernes's head in a bag. Given the death of the enemy leader, the Jews of Bethulia follow Judith's advice to surprise attack the unprepared enemy, and indeed defeat the Assyrians.

However, due to numerous historical inaccuracies and other literary deficiencies in the Greek version, most Bible scholars feel that the "Assyrians" are really the Syrian-Greeks, and place the venue of the entire story during the Hasmonean Jewish rebellion against Syrian-Greek rule preceding the famous story of Hanukkah. Likewise, Jewish tradition considers Judith as being either a sister or niece of Judah the Maccabee, whose heroic act preceded the actual Hanukkah story, but which definitely inspired and encouraged the more famous Hasmonean struggle against the Syrian-Greek occupiers. Judith's bravery and decisive role in helping save her people is compared to Queen Esther of the Purim story, though the latter is commemorated in an entire tractate of the Talmud, and of course with the required reading of the "Megilat Esther" on Purim. No similar memorial or honor is bestowed on Judith, perhaps because of the fact that the original Hebrew manuscript is long gone, and our Sages saw the extant Greek text as being questionable in its authenticity, leading to their decision to leave it out of the Jewish Biblical canon.

Nonetheless, Judith's heroism and association with the fight against the Syrian-Greek battle against Judaism has made its impact on both Jewish law and custom. Halachically, women are required to fulfill all the commandments of Hanukkah on equal par with men, because our Sages taught that "women were part and parcel of the miracle", referring to Judith. Furthermore, it is customary in numerous Jewish communities,



Sephardic and Ashkenazi alike, to eat cheese and other dairy products during Hanukah to commemorate how Judith accomplished her daring and dangerous mission on behalf of the Jewish people. One might that "Yehudit" may be less famous than "Yehuda", but she is no less, and perhaps even more, important! Happy Hanukkah and Season's Greetings to one and all!

### Research

This photo was taken in a DP camp (Feldafing) in 1946 and is of Greek Jews who survived the concentration camps. We have identified some in the photo and are looking to identify others. Please send us any information at [museum@kkjsm.org](mailto:museum@kkjsm.org)



## Feedback from our Readers

"I am always heartened and delighted to receive the Newsletter etc. Living away from NYC for so many years has otherwise distanced me from my Greek/Jewish heritage. The Newsletter and everything that is reported in it, brings me back.

The news about what is happening in Athens is also great to read about as are so many Negrin names that come up. I still have many cousins living in and around Athens, and although I have not seen them for many years, I know that they are doing fine. There was a time however, when their financial situations were decaying, with losses in pensions etc. I visited Athens on business many years ago and spent time with all of them....it was great to see them and to meet those whom I never did before.

In summary then, thank you for having me "remember" what being a Romaniote Jew is/was all about. That my grandfather, Matsliach Behor Matsil was the spiritual leader at the Kehila on 65th street in Brooklyn is no longer a distant memory, thanks to you keeping our heritages alive and well. Thank you thank you thank you.

I almost never get into NYC any longer, with all my relatives no longer there, but I will somehow get there some day.

Again thank you for all you do.

Warmest regards,

Matsliach, Tsadik, David, Michael Negrin.....or just plain Marv Negrin

Thank you Marv!"

*Shared from Shoshana Ohana who attended our Italian Shabbat on November 10-11:*

"This past Shabbat we visited the synagogue of the Greek-Jewish community in Manhattan's Lower East Side, Kehila Kedosha Janina (KKJ). The Shul follows the Romaniote tradition of Greek Jews, and prides itself as the only active Romaniote synagogue on the Western Hemisphere (North and South America). There were other such synagogues in New York that were founded by Greek immigrants to the USA, but due to assimilation, congregants relocating to other areas or synagogue, or becoming less affiliated, those other synagogues closed down. The name of the Shul refers to the Holy Community of Janina (Ioannina, Greece), whose emigrants to America founded the Shul.

This is really the story of most of the Shuls in the Lower East Side. In a neighborhood of large apartment buildings (called tenements), there lived hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants in small, cramped apartments, and living very meager lives getting by with very little. Today only a handful or two of these Shuls still function, most only on Shabbat.

The Shul itself is a modest yet beautiful building built in 1927, it was restored ten years ago retaining many of the elements and styles of the original structure.

The small but very involved and active community primarily comprises descendants of those Greek Jews who frequented the synagogue decades ago. They are joined by other Jews of Sephardic tradition that help make their weekly Minyan (prayer quorum).

We were warmly greeted by Andrew Marcus, a welcoming, friendly man in his twenties. Andrew is a knowledgeable aficionado of Greek-Jewish history and Romaniote tradition and liturgy. Andrew was also eager to share his knowledge and answer any questions we had.

Andrew is the son of Marvin, KKJ's president. Marvin is a Shul-president par excellence, making sure everything is up to par, while also being friendly, with a healthy dose of humor and a hearty laugh.

We also met Chaim Kofinas, the Shuls Chazzan. Chaim grew up living around the corner from the Shul, his Dad still lives in the same apartment and attends Shul as well. Chaim was cheerful and easygoing, he shared endless anecdotes about the history of the Greek Jews in America and in Greece, and current updates on what the remaining communities in Greece look like today. We also got to meet Chaim's wife Suzanne Schein Kofinas and son Seth Kofinas, who share Chaim's passion for and commitment to Romaniote tradition.

The Shul's members also visit the Jewish communities in Greece annually. Both to recharge their tradition-batteries, and to show solidarity and support of the remaining Jews in Greece today.

Also annually, the Shul hosts a grand street-fair, a splendid celebration of Greek-Jewish music, food, and culture. We attended this fair back in May of this year, and got to experience the people and the energy close up. Many less affiliated people of Greek-Jewish ancestry attend and mingle at the event, it was quite memorable.

The Shul hosts a variety of other events as well, primarily focused on their heritage and culture, and other Sephardic cultures as well. The Shul is also open on Sunday as a museum, where they display many interesting artifacts and accompanying stories of Greek-Jewish(-American) history.

This past Shabbat when we visited, they hosted the recently-appointed Chief Rabbi of Florence, Italy, Rabbi Spagnoletto and his family. The Rabbi (who is also a Sofer, a Jewish ritual scribe) is a charming and fine Italian gentleman. His fashionable yet casual style, and his laid back attitude, are a colorful background to his erudition and passion for Italian-Jewish history, tradition, liturgy, and general Jewish knowledge. He served as Chazzan on Friday night, spoke at Shabbat lunch, read the Torah as part of the Mincha service, all following Italian tunes and melodies. He also led a discussion on contemporary Jewish issues affecting Italian Jews specifically and Sephardic Jews in general.

We also met Rabbi Nissim Elnecave, he is soft-spoken, sincere, and scholarly. Rabbi Elnecave is the Executive Director of the Sephardic Brotherhood, and an expert on the traditions of Ladino-speaking Jewish communities in Italy and the Balkans. Rabbi Elnecave spoke beautiful and heartfelt words on Friday night, when he shared a Dvar Torah about the innocence of Sarah Imenu (the matriarch Sarah) and how that personified so many of the Sephardic-Jewish mothers he remembered from his childhood and youth. He also led the singing of beautiful Ladino songs both as part of the synagogue service and during mealtimes.

Rabbis Spagnoletto and Elnecave were invited as part of the Italian Shabbat event that KKJ was hosting, co-sponsored by Centro Primo Levy. One of KKJ's members also prepared delicious Italian vegetarian Shabbat food. The food was hearty, home-made, and a gastronomic complement to all the special history, ideas and prayers we experienced over Shabbat.

The Italian Shabbat at this Greek Synagogue was a good blend of these similar (but obviously also different and each unique) cultures and traditions, and a great tickling for our Sephardic-inclined souls.

While small in size, Kehila Kedosha Janina is brimming with energy, and has a lot to offer in many interesting areas. Be sure to check out their website <https://www.kkjsm.org> and visit them on facebook, and if you're in New York stop by and visit them in person, you'll learn a lot and experience even more."

- Shoshana Ohana



## BAR BAT MITZVAH – Special Program August 2018

### on the Greek island of Rhodes

Rhodes is truly an island paradise steeped in Greek tradition and Jewish heritage. Rhodes is where the oldest synagogue in Greece is found and where your teen and your family will find a warm welcome for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience like none other. For families returning to their Greek roots or for families looking for a unique Mediterranean experience, the Kahal Shalom Synagogue, on the island of Rhodes offers a family simcha steeped in beauty, tradition and joy. Built in 1577, the synagogue is located in the Jewish Quarter ("La Judiera") of the old walled city and is configured in the Sephardic style. The synagogue has been restored to its original splendor and is truly a Jewish treasure.

Thanks to a cooperative relationship between the Jewish Community of Rhodes and Rabbi Barbara Aiello of Italy (of Romanote Jewish ancestry), the Kahal Shalom Synagogue will open its doors to a unique Bar and Bat Mitzvah program, which includes a special ceremony held in the exquisitely restored, oldest synagogue in Greece.

In addition to the ceremony itself, your son or daughter can dedicate their service to the memory of a Greek child murdered in the Holocaust. As your child reads the words of Torah, he or she not only celebrates this important rite of passage but your child has the unique opportunity to infuse new life into one of the world's most historically significant Jewish communities.

For more information about this unique Bar Bat Mitzvah experience (August, 2018) contact Rabbi Barbara Aiello:

[Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com](mailto:Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com)



**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.

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.



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Kehila Kedosha Janina  
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Website: [www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org)  
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