Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we close out the secular year of 2019, we wish our Jewish readers a Happy Hanukkah, and our Christian readers a Merry Christmas.

![Hanukkia](image)

Hanukkias from Spain and Italy (15th and 16th centuries)

This newsletter, our 129th 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 have now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of ‘friends’ continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at [museum@kkjsm.org](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 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.

Simchas

On November 17th Kehila Kedosha Janina was honored to host the Bar Mitzvah of Ryan Kufeld, son of Beth and Alan Kufeld. Three years ago we hosted the Bar Mitzvah of Ryan’s older brother, Spencer. Ryan is the grandson of Dorothy Lagary Kufeld of Blessed Memory, the great grandson of Irving Lagary and Jeanette Matza Lagary, the great great-grandson of Michael Moses Lagary and Chrissana (Dorothy) Lagary, and the great great-grandson of Michael Isaac Lagary and Rachil Lagary (whose ketubbah is on loan to Kehila Kedosha Janina from the estate of Dorothy Lagary Naphtali and Menachem Naptali).

We are overjoyed to announce the engagement of Melissa Binder to Justin Epstein. Melissa is the daughter of Sheri and Richard Binder and the granddaughter of Annette Binder (from the Politis and Josephs families of Ioannina).

Best wishes to Rae Yamali on her 97th birthday. Rae was born into the Matza family, the daughter of Abraham Matza and Mollie Vitoulis. Bless you Rae. You are an inspiration to us all!
With pride we announce the births of three new members of our extended community:

Vienna Rae Beja, daughter of Marc and Jessica Beja, and granddaughter of Jeff and Patty Beja.

Dr. Julia (Colchamiro-Smart) and Mikelis Visgauss welcomed Oscar and Muriel Colchamiro’s first Great-Grandchild to this world on Nov 19, 2019. Mikelis “Coley” (heretofore to be called “Coley” after Colchamiro) is a healthy little boy who is happy to be a new member of the Kehila Kedosha family!

Elliot Odin Genee, the son of Laine and Jordan Genee, the grandson of Marty and Marla Genee, and the great-grandson of Hy and Lil Genee of Blessed Memory.

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**Passings**

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Rose Nachmias Salberg, widow of Larry Salberg, daughter of Sam Nachmias and Bessie Naftaly Nachmias or Blessed Memory, and granddaughter of Mordechai and Rebecca (Mione) Nachmias. The Nachmias family was originally from Ioannina before coming to New York in 1913. They lived on Broome Street across from Kehila Kedosha Janina and were founding members of the synagogue. Rose is survived by her daughter, Natalie Salberg Schweber, sons Brad and Scott and five grandchildren.
It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Judy Korsun at the age of 92, a descendent of the Matza family of Ioannina, daughter of Lillie and Joseph Matza of Blessed Memory, the granddaughter of Steroula Solomon (b. 1883) m. Simon Joseph Matza. She was pre-deceased by her husband Staley Korsun. She is survived by her daughter, Lori and will be mourned by family, friends and a loving community.

Maurice Nadjari Dies at 95; Crusading, and Criticized, Prosecutor
Read the full obituary in the New York Times here

Maurice H. Nadjari, a prosecutor of corruption in New York City’s criminal justice system in the 1970s whose indictments and convictions were defended by crime-weary New Yorkers as the work of a zealous crusader, but often dismissed by courts that criticized his tactics, died on Friday at his home in Huntington, N.Y. He was 95.

Maurice Hyman Nadjari was born in Manhattan on June 17, 1924, to Hyman and Sadie Nadjari, Sephardic Jews who had emigrated from Greece. His father was a clothes presser. Maurice grew up mostly in Queens, graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx in 1942 and enrolled at City College in Manhattan, but enlisted in the wartime Army in 1943. After service in Europe and the Pacific, he returned to City College, graduating in 1947. He earned a law degree at New York University in 1950.
ΔΙΚΟΙ ΜΑΣ – Dikoi Mas – Los Muestros

Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

Kehila Kedosha Janina is a place that matters, as “Our Own” come to visit us from all over the world. They might have been here before, or they might have heard about from a relative who worshiped here. You can always spot them as they walk through the door, stop dead in their tracks as tears fill their eyes. Some, who may remember the synagogue from when their Nona or Papou worshiped here, look to the place where their ancestor sat. We are a place that matters for many reasons: as a still functioning synagogue entering our 93rd year, as a museum that tells the story of Greek Jewry, as a place to come together to remember our loses during the Holocaust, as a place to celebrate our simchas, as an educational center highlighted by our programming and, most of all, as a place for ΔΙΚΟΙ ΜΑΣ, ΛΟΣ ΜUESTROS to visit.

This month we had friends and family coming from Alaska, Michigan, and Maine, along with those from closer communities in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Westchester.

November was filled with visitors from around the world, old friends and new friends.
Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

December 8: Annual Pre-Holiday Book Sale

HANUKKAH IS COMING!
AND KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA WILL BE HOSTING A
PRE-HOLIDAY BOOK SALE

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS WILL BE ON SALE AT 10% OFF

ALL COOKBOOKS!

NEW ACQUISITIONS OF FAVORITES!

The Jews of Rhodes
The Jews of Ioannina
Traditions and Customs of the Sephardic Jews of Salonica

SUNDAY DECEMBER 8TH FROM 12-3PM
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC

CONTACT MUSEUM@KKJSM.ORG FOR MORE INFO
December 15: Shaddayoth and Siddurim New Exhibit Opening

KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM
IS HONORED TO PRESENT

SHADDAYOTH AND SIDDURIM:
A WINDOW INTO ROMANIOTE
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

NEW EXHIBIT OPENING RECEPTION
SUNDAY DECEMBER 15 AT 1:00PM
KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
280 BROOME STREET NYC

Kehila Kedosha Janina is thrilled to unveil the latest addition to our museum: a new permanent exhibit of Shaddayoth and Siddurim from our private collection. Featuring items gathered from community members since our founding, this opening reception will explain the unique Romaniote tradition of Shaddayoth, which are silver dedicatory plaques traditionally hung on the Torah Ark Curtain (Parohet). Hidden from public view for decades, our recently rediscovered collection includes plaques from Ioannina as well as ones created in New York.

The second component of this new exhibit includes rare prayer books that were cherished by KKJ community members, including Sephardic Jews who joined our synagogue. These religious books date back centuries and range from antique printed Siddurim to hand-written Hebrew and Judeo-Greek liturgical poetry (piyyutim) unique to the Romaniote tradition.

Join us as we unveil these communal treasures and learn more about our rich heritage. The reception includes a presentation by the exhibit curators, including KKJ Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, Rabbi Nissim Elencavé, Executive Director of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America, and Isaac Choua, KKJ Assistant Museum Curator. They will provide an explanation of the materials and highlights from their work.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.
RSVP REQUIRED TO MUSEUM@KKJSM.ORG
Past Events

On November 6th, Kehila Kedosha Janina hosted an event with the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative (LESPI). The author, Zachary J. Violette, presented an enlightening presentation on the significance of tenement architecture to our audience. So appropriate that the lecture took place in our synagogue/museum, a designated NYC Landmark.

"A reexamination of working-class architecture in late nineteenth-century urban America
Zachary J. Violette reexamines urban America’s tenement buildings borne of the housing reform movement embraced by the American-born elite in the late nineteenth century, centering on the immigrant neighborhoods of New York and Boston. Drawing on research and fieldwork of more than three thousand extant tenement buildings, Violette uses ornament as an entry point to reconsider the role of tenement architects and builders in improving housing for the working poor."

Kehila Kedosha Janina is honored to offer a limited number of copies at a discount ($35 including P&H in USA). You can order online on our website www.kkjsm.org under the donate button or mail a check to Kehila Kedosha Janina at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

November was a busy month for our Museum Director as she presented a paper at the Modern Greek Studies Association bi-annual symposium in Sacramento.

Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei and Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos

Professor Alexander Kitroeff

Lucas Tsiptsios, Dimitris Kamouzis and Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos

Fevronia Soumakis
Our Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos was part of a panel discussion, along with Sam Gruber, at the Greek Embassy in Washington DC on the presentation of Vincent Giordano’s photos of Ioannina and Kehila Kedosha Janina.

While in DC our Museum Director had the opportunity to attend a lecture by our dear friend (and excellent author) Karen Batshaw. We are honored to sell both of Karen’s recent books, all personally autographed. If you wish a copy, email us at museum@kkjsm.org
Past Events in New York

Los Corassones Avlan

Centro Primo Levi, a nonprofit focused on exploring the Italian-Jewish experience, along with the Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation, have created a pop-up installation in Greenwich Village, a few doors down from Ms. Stella Levi’s home. The show is using concerts, conversations, films, artifacts, and even food to evoke Ms. Levi’s life and Jewish culture generally in prewar Rhodes.

The title of the exhibition is “Los Corassones Avlan,” which means “hearts speak,” an old Sephardic saying in Judeo-Spanish, the language Ms. Levi spoke during her childhood in the Juderia, the Jewish neighborhood of Rhodes. Ms. Levi’s mother and grandmother would use this phrase when they found themselves thinking of a friend, neighbor or relative and suddenly she appeared at the kitchen door.

Read the full New York Times article about the exhibit and Stella Levi here
“She Grew Up on a Remote Italian Island. Then Came the Holocaust. Recalling the once-vibrant Jewish life in prewar Rhodes, an island in the Mediterranean.”

The Greek Jewish & Sephardic Young Professionals Network hosted a hike in Cold Spring Harbor Long Island this month. They had a great time taking in nature, visited a wonderful local farm stand, and enjoyed a delicious Persian dinner.
The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry
Announces their 2020 Tours to Jewish Greece

Click [here](#) to view the full itineraries and pricing. For additional information contact museum@kkjsm.org. The first tour offers a rare opportunity to visit Monastir (Bitola) and Kastoria plus attend a Bat Mitzvah in Ioannina.

**Updates:** The first tour is a definite go and there is limited room left. Unless there is additional participation in the second tour for Mature Singles, the second tour will have to be cancelled. The third tour is a go but the Association will have to give up rooms soon, so if you are interested contact museum@kkjsm.org immediately.

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**Summer 2020 Itinerary**

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

**Tour of Jewish Greece & FYROM (North Macedonia)**

**June 8 - 21, 2020**

Includes Thessaloniki, Kastoria, Metsovo, Ioannina, Bitola/Monastir, Skopje, and Ohrid

More information available at www.kkjsm.org
The second tour is for mature singles in their 40s, 50s, and 60s and includes a three day cruise in the Aegean. This tour seemed to be very popular but there has been very little response.

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry is proud to introduce the first

Tour of Jewish Greece for Mature Singles (Ages 40s, 50s, and 60s)

June 24 – July 6, 2020

Includes Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Rhodes, and 3-day Cruise to Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Crete, and Santorini

More information available at www.kkjsm.org
The third tour has the same itinerary with different dates and is open to everyone for those who loved the itinerary but did not fit into the mature single category. There is still limited availability on this tour.

Summer 2020 Itinerary

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry

Tour of Jewish Greece

July 8 - 20, 2020

Includes Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Rhodes, and 3-day Cruise to Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Crete, and Santorini

More information available at www.kkjsm.org
Upcoming Events in the Romaniote and Sephardic World

Seattle

**THE 7TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL LADINO DAY**

*De la fasha asta la mortaja from the cradle to the grave. Exploring Sephardic Life Cycle Customs*

Presented by the Sephardic Studies Program and the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies.

**Featuring a multimedia talk**

by Dr. Devin E. Naar

and a new **digital exhibition**

Performances by

**Seattle’s Ladineros**

&

Introductions by

**Joel Benoliel**

Chair, UW Board of Regents

**Thursday, December 5, 2019**

7:00-9:00 PM **UW Hub Lyceum**

Free and open to the public. Kosher reception following. RSVP at [http://jewishstudies.washington.edu/event](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu/event) or call (206) 543-0138.

Support made possible by the Lucie Benveniste Kavesh Endowed Fund for Sephardic Studies.

Coproduced by the Departments of Spanish & Portuguese Studies; Linguistics; the Turkish and Ottoman Studies Fund at the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations; Sephardic Bikur Holim; Congregation Ezra Bessamoth; and the Seattle Sephardic Network.

Full details [here](#)
THE 14TH ANNUAL
SEPHARDIC WINTER FILM SERIES

TUESDAY EVENING, MONTHLY
7 PM
6686 SW CAPITOL HWY, PORTLAND, OR 97219
ADMISSION & SEPHARDIC DESSERTS ARE FREE!

November 12, 2019
December 10, 2019
January 14, 2020
February 11, 2020
March 2, 2020

SPONSORS: JEWISH FEDERATION OF PORTLAND, NCJW ORGANIZATION,
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KOSHER. RON & PAM SIDS. BENE FERRERA, JOS BEHAR,
EVE STERN & LES GUTFEIND, MICHAEL MENASHE, RUBEN &
ELIZABETH MENASHE. BARRY MENASHE. GEVURTZ MENASHE,
ATTORNEYS AND ALBERT A. MENASHE & SHAWN MENASHE

Please Note the location for all screenings: Congregation Ahavath Achim’s new sanctuary, located in Hillsdale neighborhood. 6686 SW Capitol Hwy. Portland, OR 97219.
Call Ron at 503-750-0888
Rededication of Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Portland

12.22.2019

HAPPY
HANUKKAH

SAVE THE DATE!!
Congregation Ahavath Achim
Grand-Reopening
First Night of Hanukkah
4pm
New Sanctuary
6686 SW Capitol Hwy

Atlanta

44th Annual
Congregation Or VeShalom
HANUKKAH
BAZAAR

11am-5pm • Sunday, December 8

Delicious Mediterranean cuisine
Dine-in or Take-out

Hand-made Delicacies and Pastries

Premium Liquor auction

Kids Games & Activities, 11am-3pm

Gifts, Jewelry and more from local artisans and vendors

Gently-used Book Sale

1681 North Druid Hills Road in Brookhaven / 404-633-1737
MIAMI ART WEEK SHABBATON

ERMOZURA
BY FESELA
JEWISH ART FAIR 2019

Dec. 6, 2019 | 7:30PM
SHABBASEL 5780
ART BASEL WEEK SHABBAT
DINNER IN AN IMMERSIVE ART
EXHIBIT SPACE
$75 ADMISSION

Dec. 7, 2019
10:00AM - 3:00PM | AFTERNOON ART TOURS
7:00PM - MIDNIGHT | $36 ADMISSION
ART PARTY NIGHT

Dec. 8, 2019 | $15 ADMISSION
10:00AM - Noon | KIDS ART WORKSHOP
*AGES 9 AND UP*
10:00AM - 6:00PM | AFTERNOON ART TOURS
7:00PM | $36 ADMISSION
VIP CLOSING EVENT
FORMAL DRESS CODE

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
TEMPLEMOSES.COM

Miami
News from Jewish Greece

Ioannina

Urgent appeal by Moses Elisaf regarding financial needs of the Jewish Community of Ioannina

Dear Marcia

We have to pay 14,953, 25 Euros for the regular taxes and 8,877,63 Euros for the ENFIA (property tax) until the end of the year.

Thank you in advance.

Moses Elisaf

Whatever you can give will be highly appreciated. 5000 euros is urgently needed before the end of the year. If you wish to make the donation to us (and have us pass it on to Ioannina) we will be glad to do this. If you wish to make the donation directly to Ioannina, email us at museum@kkjism.org and we will give you the info for a bank transfer to the Jewish Community of Ioannina.

Arta

The Jewish community of Arta, Greece – fables, memories and the Holocaust

Read the full article by Elias Messinas in the Jerusalem Post here

The Jewish history of Greece dates back to antiquity. Cities like Salonika (Thessaloniki), Veroia and Corinth, were among the cities visited by St. Paul the Apostle, during the first century BCE. St. Paul prayed and preached in their synagogues. Today, most people associate the history of Romaniote Jewry – the Jews that lived in Greece since antiquity, long before the arrival of the Sephardim after the 15th century – with Ioannina, a fortress city in western Greece. But in fact, the Romaniote story most probably started earlier, further to the south, in the city of Arta.

Ancient Arta, called Ambracia, was established in 625 BCE. It is famous for the medieval bridge over the Arachthos River, which was reconstructed by King Pyros I, circa the third century BCE, and completed in its present form in the early 1600s. Arta, a city of fables, has a story for every important site. For example, the legend for the bridge wants the architect who built it having to sacrifice his wife in order to stabilize this magnificent and ambitious stone-built structure with arches, giving it mythical proportions. But it is not the only one....

It is at this church that I met Theocharis Vadivoulis, an Artinos – a local of Arta, lawyer and dedicated researcher of the history of the Jewish community of the city. Some readers may have been unknowingly served by him, from his research in the archives of Arta, Preveza, Ioannina and other cities. Speaking to Theocharis is like reading a book, or better, hearing a fable on the roots and family trees of Arta Jews.

While touring the Jewish quarter and Skoufa Street, the main commercial street of Arta, the houses start to become alive. “This was the house of the Mizan family. There were two brothers, Samuel and Jacko. Their
sister Elvira married, while their other sister Mathildi died after liberation on the train to Greece. This one belongs to Jacko, also a Holocaust survivor. He lives in Athens and has two children, Zozef and Anna. This one was of the Iochanas family.” Each house has its identity, and each family a story. Stories of people long lost in the Holocaust or long emigrated to Athens or abroad...

The Arta Jewish community was officially established in 1920, but its roots go back to antiquity. The first mention of a Jewish community in Arta of about 100 families was in 1173 by Rabbi Benjamin ben Yonah. It is believed that Jewish settlement near the coast of Epirus and the city of Nicopolis, dates back to the third century CE. It is therefore believed to be the oldest Jewish community in western Greece.

It is from here that apparently Jews moved north to Ioannina and other locations to establish new Romatiote communities. The Greca synagogue was established around the 13th century. In the 16th century, Jewish settlement reached its peak, with about 2000 people, after Jews expelled from Apulia and Calabria in Italy in the 15th century, moved to the area. They established Pulieza synagogue. This and Greca, were two out of several synagogues in the city at the time.

By 1940, the community numbered about 400 people, praying in these two synagogues. The bombing of April 21, 1941, damaged Greca, and with it destroyed the important 16th century library of Benjamin Zeev Ben Matathias, former judge of the Beth Din of Arta. In the Holocaust, 324 Jews were deported from the city. Some 84% were annihilated. The community restructured after WWII with about 60 members, who soon emigrated to Israel, USA and Athens. It was finally dissolved in 1959.

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**Thessaloniki**

**March of Silent Apology Held for Thessaloniki’s ‘Absent Jews’ from WWII** view full article [here]

THESSALONIKI- In a “silent apology” to the 50,000 Thessaloniki Jews that perished during the Holocaust, the city held a march on Sunday to acknowledge those that were missing from the celebrations for Thessaloniki’s liberation from the Nazis on October 30, 1944.

Thessaloniki residents responded to the organizers’ call and took part in the march and the reading of texts and poetry that followed, intended as both an “internal personal apology” and an acknowledgement of the “guilty silence” regarding their absence in the years that followed.
The march began in Eleftherias Square, where photographs were presented of the “Black Shabbat” of July 1942, when the Nazi occupiers started shipping the city’s Jewish community to concentration camps for extermination.

The “Silent Apology March” then crossed Nikis Avenue and stopped at Agia Sophia Square, where a description of the day of Thessaloniki’s liberation by Giorgos Ioannou was read out. The march then proceeded along the Egnatia Highway to the Thessaloniki University campus and the Jewish Cemetery monument, where poetry was read and songs were sung.

“The idea was born of a contradiction: it is neither a celebration for the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Nazis nor a memorial march for the Holocaust. It is the relationship between the two, which coalesces around the moment when the city is liberated and a great celebration is held on October 30, from which 50,000 Jewish fellow citizens are missing, as Giorgos Ioannou describes,” said Thessaly University Professor Philoppos Oreopoulos, who originally proposed the idea.

He noted that this absence was not discussed until 1980 and remained a silent trauma for the city that it did not want to talk about. The March of Silent Apology, he added, was a sort of poetic reply to this event and a form of ritual.

The President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, David Saltiel, welcomed the effort and the value of ordinary people coming forward to show they remembered, were aware, and would not allow the repetition of an event like the Holocaust.

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Trikala

Members of the present and former Jewish Community of Trikala gather on November 9th for the unveiling of the restored synagogue of Trikala. Funds from around the world made the restoration possible. The German Consul General of Thessaloniki was present to present additional funding to complete the project but the synagogue is now open for tourists and possible services.

On October 31, 2004, a plaque with the names of the 139 Jews of Trikala and nearby Kardista, who were rounded up during the night of March 23rd to March 24th, 1944 and sent to German concentration camps where most of them died. The community lost 31% of its Jewish citizens.

According to Viktor Venouziou, the synagogue is a Romaniote synagogue called Kal Yavanim. There are plans to create a library and museum.
Since I briefly mentioned Rabbi Joseph Delemedigo of Crete in last week’s installment, I thought I’d elaborate a little bit more this week. Yosef Shlomo Rofe Delmedigo of Candia, Crete (1591-1655), better known as Yashar, was a colorful Jewish personality of the 17th century, what some might call a true “Renaissance rabbi.” He was a descendant of Rabbi Eliyahu Delmedigo (painting right).

The Delmdigo family lived on the Greek Island of Crete (then part of the Kingdom of Venice) but had originated from old Ashkenaz (it was not uncommon for Jews from Romaniote lands [the old Eastern Roman Empire] to emigrate to and also from German-speaking lands]). Yashar himself was the quintessential “wandering Jew”; he toured most of the major European capitals, temporarily settling in some of them and even accepting rabbinical posts in others.

Yashar writes that he followed the lectures of the famed Italian scientist Galileo Galilei in Padua during the academic year 1609-1610, and was accorded the rare privilege of using Galileo’s own telescope (he even refers to him as “Rabbi Galileo”). Yashar finally settled in Prague, where he passed away in 1655.

Continuing in his tradition are his descendants, the Nachmani family. At the end of the 19th century, the patriarch of the family, then 18-year-old Mordechai Gorodinsky (pictured, center) (later hebraized to Nachmani in honor of a biblical figure who ascended to the land during the time of Nechemia), a passionate Zionist, left the Volozhin Yeshiva, where he had just received his rabbinical ordination, and his hometown Gorodin in White Russia—to work in the swamps of the burgeoning yishuv. He did not belong to any particular organization or group but was motivated solely by religious Zionism. In fact, the family maintained close ties with the Ashkenazic chief rabbi and seminal religious Zionist figure Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Mordechai married there and went on to become one of the founders of the city of Rechovot. Gorodinsky/Nachmani was thought to bear a striking resemblance to his ancestor (judge for yourself in the photos).

Two of Mordechai’s six children later left Israel to study in the United States, where they settled permanently. One of them, Amihud, studied engineering in New York and is remembered fondly by the writer Reuven Alpert, who remembers him as one of the jolly old timers in the synagogue he attended as a child. Alpert, in his “Caught in the Crack: Encounters with the Jewish Muslims of Turkey” describes Amihud as a bit of an eccentric. His (Amihud) testimonies and visions (one describes a ship of Hebrew sailors—what Alpert calls the Jewish version of the “flying Dutchmen”—another talks of the Yiddish poet Yehoash coming to him and his wife in a dream appealing to be reburied in Israel) appear in Aaron Zeitlin’s book on parapsychology

Joel Davidi Weisberger is an independent researcher and translator. He also runs the Channeling Jewish History group and can be reached at yoelswe@gmail.com.
Rhodes

How a 500 Year-Old Torah Scroll Was Saved from the Nazi Conquest of Rhodes

The Torah scroll pictured at right was originally inscribed in Spain in either the 14th or 15th century, but that was just the beginning...

At some point, it arrived at the famous Kahal Shalom synagogue on the island of Rhodes, which is today the oldest active synagogue in Greece. It was likely brought there by Jewish exiles from Spain or their descendants and may very well have been stored in the synagogue since its founding in 1593.

The first evidence of a Sephardic-Jewish presence on Rhodes dates to the Ottoman period, which began with the conquest of the island in 1522.

For hundreds of years, the members of Rhodes’ Jewish community would read from this scroll at services held at Kahal Shalom. The community thrived and by the 1920s, a quarter of the town of Rhodes’ population was Jewish. It all came to an end with the Nazi conquest and the deportation of the island’s Jews to Auschwitz in July of 1944.

Just a few days before the deportation, members of the community were able to smuggle the scroll out of the synagogue and place it in the custody of the Mufti of Rhodes, Sheikh Suleyman Kasiloglou. The Mufti is said to have hidden the Torah under the pulpit of the Murad Reis mosque, where the Nazis would never think to look.

1,673 Jews were sent from Rhodes to Auschwitz where they were put to death. Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish Consul-General on the island, was able to save around 50 members of the community by stating that they were Turkish citizens. This was only true for a dozen or so. Regarding the rest, Ülkümen fabricated a lie claiming that spouses of Turkish citizens were citizens themselves. His heroic intervention saved their lives.

Following the conclusion of World War II, the Torah scroll was returned to the community’s few surviving members, in the presence of soldiers from the British Army’s Jewish Brigade.

In June of 1999, the scroll was deposited at the National Library of Israel by Jacqueline Benatar and her sister Miriam Pimienta-Benatar, to serve as a memorial to the martyrs of Rhodes, their parents among them. The donation was carried out at the suggestion of the President of the Rhodes Jewish community, Mr. Moise Soriano.
At Friday Night Kabbalat Shabbat Services in the Synagogue of the city of Ioannina, an old man stood up to the podium, chanting in the melodies of his community. As I sat there and listened to him, my eyes begin to well with tears and I smiled; this inspiring community leader for nearly seven decades still had it within him at 90 years old to sing, and sing with pride. As he clutched the podium for support, he sang with tremendous emotion and power, as if he was still a young man. Suddenly, at the height of the prayer, he nearly collapsed, thankfully caught by some of the congregants’ right next to him. That man, Samuel Cohen, was a Holocaust survivor from northern Greece, and recently passed away at the age of 93. That was a defining moment for me, a point which I realized that I had a duty as a Greek Jew to tell his story, and the stories of the Jews of Greece, before it disappeared for good.

My Greek Jewish heritage is one major source of pride in my life. I’ve constantly asked my father about his parents’ roots in Greece and the former Ottoman Empire, their experiences immigrating to New York and the struggles they made to get me where I am today. My congregation, Kehila Kedosha Janina (Holy Congregation of Janina), the only Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, still reads in many of the traditional melodies of my ancestors. I have given tours at my synagogue’s Museum about Greek Jewry and told visitors exactly where my grandfather and great grandfather lived in Greece. Most of all, I love inspiring other young Greek Jews within my community, helping them to realize how special they are and ignite their passions for learning their traditions and becoming more active in the community.

Yet a lot of people ask me why I am so passionate about my Greek Jewish community. Many of my friends pester me, asking why I’m so active in promoting Greek Jewry and making sure everyone knows how proud I am of it. But for me, in all honesty, this isn’t a choice. It can be a burden, a responsibility I have to the more than 67,000 Greek Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Yet this rich culture still lives on, and needs to be shared.

Jews have had a continuous presence in Greece for over 2,300 years, dating back to the time of Alexander the Great. This ancient community, known as Romaniote Jews, has the distinction of the longest, continuous Jewish presence in the European Diaspora. Romaniotes possess a unique set of practices, poetry, songs, and traditions unlike any other Jewish community in the world. They developed their own Judeo-Greek language, a combination of ancient Hebrew and Greek still spoken by some today. While much of the Jewish world follows the Babylonian Talmud, they follow the Jerusalem Talmud. Yet this historic and incredibly rich tradition is under threat. The Romaniote minhag is struggling; only around 5,500 Jews remain in Greece today, and those who still remember their communal customs prior to the Holocaust are in their 80s and 90s. Time is of the essence – many have already passed away and if something is not done to document this heritage, it may slowly fade away.

That is why I am currently serving as a Fulbright Research Scholar in Greece, working with the Jewish Community of Athens under its Rabbinate and the Jewish Museum of Greece. My research is focused on
creating an online database of documented recordings of the liturgical traditions, developing corresponding booklets of these written traditions paralleling the online resource, and collaborating with the Jewish Museum of Greece to curate a public exhibit on these traditions.

I have been privileged enough in my work thus far to be able to closely collaborate with the leadership of the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Jewish Community of Athens, including the current Rabbi, Gabriel Negrin, who as a young, native Athenian is doing amazing work to reconnect the next generation of Greek Jews to their heritage. I have not only begun conducting interviews with Rabbi Negrin and working with him one-on-one to document his extensive knowledge of Romaniote customs, but have also connected with an important network of contacts throughout Greece, both among the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. The Jewish Museum, which houses a robust historical archive and is doing amazing work producing new scholarship on Greek Jewry, has also been gracious enough to grant me access to explore many of its records, including beautifully digitized Romaniote manuscripts that are hundreds of years old. I’ve also begun to shadow Rabbi Negrin at religious services and community programs during my time in Greece, giving me the chance to record unique elements of the community prayer as well as learn some of them myself.

Engaging with the local populace throughout Greece will be an integral part of my research as well. I’ve begun to connect with some of the elderly, most knowledgeable members of the Jewish communities, with plans on traveling to the historic centers of Romaniote Jewish life in Greece, such as the cities of Ioannina and Arta. This will consist of personal interviews through audio and video recordings to document their expertise of specific traditional practices. These interviews will also include conversations of what life was like growing up in pre-WWII Greece, descriptions of their communities, and most importantly, discussions of the traditional songs and customs of Greek Jewry.

As I collect materials to develop an online database, I am also working to compile the available texts that parallel these recordings, drafting Booklets organized by life cycle events, holiday practices, unique Greek Jewish piyutim (liturgical poetry), and cultural traditions that have been gathered through my individual research and interviews. I hope that by Spring 2020, we’ll be able to develop a public exhibit on my work through the Jewish Museum of Greece, using it as an opportunity to not only promote my work in Athens, but to publicly highlight the importance of mutual engagement between the United States and Greece through the Fulbright Program. My hope is that this can eventually turn into a traveling exhibit, allowing it to move to Museums in the United States.

My greatest hope, however, is that this project will not only serve as a resource for academic inquiry around the world, but will directly help both the Jewish Communities of Greece and my own Greek Jewish Community in New York. These beautiful traditions, whether it’s the unique hazzanut, piyutim, holiday customs, halakhic interpretations, or even special Jewish worldview, cannot end up being just something one reads about in a museum. They must remain a part of a living, active tradition, one practiced by my Greek Jewish Community in America as well as the one in Greece itself. I want the next generation of young Greek Jews that come after me to be proud of their heritage and work towards giving it a voice within the wider Jewish world. Indeed, it needs to be an integral part of the collective Jewish experience.

With time, I have realized how important it is that I not only continue to promote and serve my small Greek Jewish community, but I learn its traditions and love of life that so many Greek Jews did not have the chance to express themselves. I have a direct responsibility to ensure this rich identity not only continues to survive, but thrive. These traditions and memories cannot die. For Samuel’s sake, I cannot let them die.

Ethan Marcus is currently serving as a Fulbright Research Scholar in Athens, Greece and is a recent graduate of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Prior to his arrival in Greece, he served as the Community Development Director for the Seattle Sephardic Community and the Communications Director for the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America.
Clothing worn by Jews during Ottoman times on display at Portuguese Synagogue full article here

The exhibition "Jewish Clothes in the Ottoman Empire," featuring the clothes that Jews wore when they lived within Ottoman borders, will open at the Portuguese Synagogue in İzmir province on Nov. 4, 2019. The "Jewish Clothes in the Ottoman Empire" exhibition is about the clothes worn by Sephardic Jews during their 500-year existence within Ottoman borders, who have contributed to the formation of exporter identity in Turkey.

Moris Saul, the Chairman of the İzmir Sephardic Cultural Heritage Association, stated that the Jewish community of İzmir has been living on the Ottoman territory since the early 17th century and that the Jewish community with such a long history has a rich cultural heritage. Pointing out that they are working hard to preserve historical culture, Saul continued: "In addition to historical synagogues and religious items, our cultural values also include sephardic songs, sephardic cuisine and Ladino, the medieval Spanish language which has been used until today but is now forgotten. We are delighted to be hosting the exhibition, curated by Silvyo Ovadya, featuring the clothes of the Jews living in the Ottoman Empire from 1400 to 1900. As the İzmir Sephardic Cultural Heritage Association, we will continue our activities and projects aimed at maintaining our culture and protecting our cultural heritage."

Jak Eskinazi, the Coordinating Chairman of the Aegean Exporters' Association, indicated that the Jews who have been living in İzmir for more than 500 years have made a significant contribution to the formation of the exporter identity of İzmir, adding that the Jews have made a significant contribution to the cuisine and culture of İzmir as well as the city's trade. He noted that the opening of the exhibition "Jewish Clothes in the Ottoman Empire" in İzmir after New York and Istanbul is a "right decision."

Eskinazi stated that offering the visual material which has remained only in the archives of private collectors so far to the public will fulfill an important function in terms of documenting both the multiculturalism of the Ottomans and the history of the Jewish community living on the Turkish territory. "We wish all İzmir residents to visit the exhibition, which consists of illustrations by illuminators and miniaturists Ruhiefza Verdön, Olcay Çetinok and Harika Yazıcı, in accordance with the colors used in the period, based on nearly 70 engravings, postcards and photographs of the clothes worn by the Jews from the Byzantine period up to the 19th century," he said.

The exhibition, which will be held through the cooperation of the İzmir Sephardic Cultural Heritage Association, the Aegean Exporters' Association and the 500th Anniversary Foundation, will be open to visitors until Nov. 8, 2019.
Istanbul

Eti Koen’s “Our Story” Exhibition in the Museum of Turkish Jews full article [here](#)

Eti Koen is an artist creating art using her 'fabric fusion' technique to portray the stories she wants to tell. Her journey started in 1990 when she attended Linda Robinson’s classical patchwork classes at the Turkish-American University Association. In time, with her passion for Ottoman and Turkish motifs, she decided to seek ways of incorporating them into her artwork using fabric. Thus she developed her technique 'Fabric Fusion'.

She chose Ottoman Miniature Art as her starting point, but then started creating original themes of her own. Traditional motifs, Istanbul views, and Sephardic immigration are the samples of these works. She has opened many personal exhibitions as well as taking part in joint exhibitions.

Eti Koen's Fabric Fusion exhibition "Our Story" will be opened in the museum of Turkish Jews on Thursday, November 21st at 17:30. The exhibition can be visited until December 20th during the working hours of the Museum. 

Pictures and information about fabric fusion technique are taken from Eti Koen's webpage [https://etikoen.com/](https://etikoen.com/)

Address: Bereketzade, Büyük Hendek Cd. No: 39, 34421 Beyoğlu/Istanbul, Turkey

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Archaeological Discovery in Ancient Greek City in Turkey full article [here](#)

One of the most important cities in the Eastern Roman Empire was Zeugma: A once flourishing city home to 80,000 inhabitants situated in the present-day province of Gazientep in southern Turkey.

Now, researchers are digging up exciting ancient mosaics. Excavations began in 2007 and just seven years earlier, in 2000, the ancient city was completely submerged underwater.
To this day, 25 houses of the 2000-3000 discovered remain under water. Not only were the finding of the houses remarkable, but three incredibly well preserved colored glass mosaics that date back to 2nd century BC were also discovered.

The first mosaic depicts the nine Muses – the goddesses of the inspiration of literature, science and the arts.

The second mosaic depicts Ocean – the divine personification of the sea – and his sister Tethys. The third, smaller in size mosaic, depicts a young man.

"From now on, we will work on restoration and conservation. We plan to establish a temporary roof for long-term protection. We estimate that the ancient city has 2,000-3,000 houses. Twenty-five of them remain under water. Excavations will be finished in the Muzalar House next year," said head of the excavations, Professor Kutalmış Görkay.

The complete excavation is set to be completed in the next few years. If you liked this make sure you check out the Archaeologist who spent 35 years building a massive scale model of Ancient Rome.

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**Anniversary of Neve Shalom Bombing**

In New York, we commemorated the loss of 23 fellow Jews on the Anniversary of the 2003 Istanbul Synagogue Attacks. In recognition of the 16th year since the bombing, a Special Service was held in New York led by Rabbi Nissim Elencave, Executive Director of the Sephardic Brotherhood and Sedat Behar, native of Istanbul. A special candle was also lit in memory of the victims of the first year since the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shootings. May their memories be a blessing.

On November 15, 2003, two trucks carrying bombs slammed into the Bet Israel and Neve Shalom synagogues in Istanbul, Turkey and exploded. The explosions devastated the synagogues and killed twenty-three people, and injured more than 300 others. An Islamic militant group, IBDA-C, claimed responsibility for the blasts, but it was later determined that the attacks had been carried out by Al Qaeda.
Bosnian Jews and Muslims tell the story of ‘Sarajevo’s Purim’ full article here

Communities mark 1819 event when Muslims rose up against Ottoman governor who threatened to kill off the imprisoned elite of the city’s Jewish community

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina — Bosnian Jews and Muslims gathered this week to mark a holiday unique to their city: the 200-year-old “Purim of Sarajevo,” a day they say has bound their two communities together in a model of coexistence.

Two centuries ago in 1819, Sarajevo Muslims rose up against an Ottoman governor who had threatened to kill off the imprisoned elite of the city’s Jewish community. Jewish and Muslim groups in Bosnia commemorated the bicentenary of this “miraculous deliverance” and hailed their inter-religious bonds at a conference Thursday.

“Bosnian Muslims and Jews are a body, our bonds have been forged both in times of trial and in times of prosperity,” Bosnia’s Grand Mufti Husein Kavazovic said in a message read by his representative at the event.

The Jewish holiday of Purim is traditionally celebrated in early spring to mark the rescue of Jews from persecution under an ancient Persian Empire. But in Sarajevo, the city’s now tiny Jewish community marks its own Purim every autumn to celebrate the release of the 11 Jews, including a rabbi, who had been locked up in prison. The Ottoman governor of Bosnia at the time, Ruzdi-pacha, had demanded a huge ransom for their release.

“Muslims in Sarajevo rose up, went outside the prison and threatened to destroy everything and set it on fire if (rabbi) Rav Mose Danon and the others were not released,” Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish community in Bosnia, said at the conference. According to lore, some 3,000 men joined the uprising.

Finci hailed the history, and the largely peaceful coexistence of the two religious groups ever since, as a “model for a normal and common life between Jews and Muslims.”

Sephardic Jews first arrived in Bosnia after they were expelled from Spain in 1492. They numbered around 12,500 — or up to 20 percent of the city’s population — before the Second World War.

Like other Jewish communities in the Balkans, they were almost completely decimated during WWII by Nazi forces and their allies, who sent them to camps from which they never returned. Today, a population of around 800 Jews makes up a tiny sliver of a city whose 340,000-strong population is mostly Muslim.
Albania

At least 23 killed as 6.4-magnitude earthquake strikes Albania
(CNN) At least 23 people have been killed, several more are missing and hundreds have been injured after an earthquake struck Albania on Tuesday.

The quake, which had a preliminary rating of 6.4 magnitude, hit the European nation at an approximate depth of 20 kilometers (12 miles) early Tuesday local time, according to the United States Geological Survey. It is the strongest to hit Albania in 40 years.

The epicenter was in the port city of Durres, about 36 kilometers (22 miles) from the capital Tirana. Social media videos from the area show several buildings have collapsed.

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama’s office revised the death toll upwards several times on Tuesday. At least four victims died in Durres, spokesman Endri Fuga told CNN. Another two died in Thumane, one person died after jumping from a building in panic in Kurbin, and one victim died while driving on a badly damaged road in Lezhe, the spokesperson added.

Around 45 people were rescued from the rubble, Fuga told CNN, and more than 650 people have received medical attention throughout the day. He added that 30 people are being treated in hospitals.

Fuga did not want to speculate on how many people may still be missing, but added that search and rescue teams would continue working throughout the night in the affected areas.

Nearby Bosnia and Herzegovina was also struck by an earthquake on Tuesday morning, the country's interior ministry told CNN. That quake had a 5.4 magnitude rating.

Note: Italy, Israel and Greece have responded with rescue aid.

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Stories of Interest for Everyone

The Forgotten Stories of Muslims Who Saved Jewish People During the Holocaust full article here

Even in the darkest times, there are heroes—though sometimes they may be the people we least expect.

That’s the message a global nonprofit group hopes to spread Friday on Holocaust Remembrance Day, when it displays a small exhibit in a New York synagogue highlighting the little-known stories of Muslims who risked their lives to rescue Jewish people from persecution during World War II. Though the two religious groups are often presented in opposition, this exhibit is a reminder that they have also shared an important history of cooperation and mutual assistance.

The tales include those of Khaled Abdul Wahab, who sheltered about two dozen Jews in Tunisia, and Abdol Hossein Sardari, an Iranian diplomat who is credited with helping thousands of Jews escape Nazi soldiers by issuing them passports.
The group also recognizes the Pilkus, a Muslim family in Albania who harbored young Johanna Neumann and her mother in their home during the German occupation and convinced others that the two were family members visiting from Germany. “They put their lives on the line to save us,” Neumann, now 86, told TIME on Friday. “If it had come out that we were Jews, the whole family would have been killed.”

“What these people did, many European nations didn’t do,” she added. “They all stuck together and were determined to save Jews.”

The collection of 15 stories shows how people organically came to protect one another, even in extreme environments of war and conflict, organizers said. “Those stories are very powerful together because they show a different side to humanity. It shows that we can have hope even at a time like the Holocaust,” said Mehnaz Afridi, a Manhattan College professor who specializes in Islam and the Holocaust.

Though the narratives are being exhibited on a day observed by remembering the past, they are also vital to remember in today’s world, “given the rise of hatred,” said Dani Laurence Andrea Varadi, co-director of I Am Your Protector, the organization behind the exhibit.

The New York City-based group encourages societies and people to stand up to injustices, and Varadi points as an example to the climate faced by many Muslims around the world and in the U.S. as an example of what can happen when a group of people are seen as a monolith rather than as individuals. Hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S. soared 67% in 2015 from 154 in 2014 to 257, the latest figures from the FBI show. During his campaign, President Donald Trump pledged to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the country. Just this week, Trump’s administration announced new immigration plans, and the White House is expected to order that the U.S. temporarily stop issuing visas to people from several majority-Muslim countries.

“It makes people think it’s legitimate to hate,” Varadi said. “It is natural and normal to be scared and to think that we have to resist or fight, but we can also have a mechanism where we can catch ourselves and say, ‘OK, there are some people who might be problematic, and we can look at them one on one.’”

She added that the historic tales of courage show the impact that can be made when people protect targets of hate in climates of rising fear, suspicion and hatred. Varadi hoped the stories inspire others to follow suit.

“We can speak up, stand up for the other when we witness something, raise our voices in a peaceful, nonviolent way,” she said. “Whenever people think, ‘There’s nothing I can do. I cannot make a difference,’ this is the most dangerous thing to think because it is not true.”

The exhibit debuted in the headquarters of United Nations in Geneva a few weeks ago. I Am Your Protector will revive the display for a one-day commemoration event Friday at New York City’s Temple Emanu-El. However, organizers hope the stories have a lasting effect.

“I think history shows that people stand up for each other—and those were the ones who created change. And if there’s enough people who do that, then the whole reality changes,” Varadi said. “When communities come together with that mindset, whether it’s small or big, it becomes a huge force that can basically change the course of history.”

Chief Rabbi attends mosque for Mitzvah Day activity, saying: 'This is what the world should be like all the time' full article here

'We're making a huge statement,' Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis declares. 'I thank all our brothers and sisters in the Muslim community for joining in the initiative'

Rabbi Mirvis joined Muslim leaders at the Al-Khoei Mosque in Queen’s Park – once the site of a synagogue – for the planting of fig and apple trees, primrose, hyssop and basil. The trees and plants have ritual significance to both faiths and the event chimed with the “going greener” theme of the day of social action.
The Chief Rabbi said: "When people come together in an atmosphere of harmony and peace for the sake of growth – for growth within the environment which is a symbol of human growth and development in our very challenging world – we’re standing here making a huge statement.

"We are all part of mankind and we should be blessed in togetherness and unity all the time. And I thank all our brothers and sisters in the Muslim community for joining in the initiative of Mitzvah Day."

Rabbi Mirvis told the JC that "Mitzvah Day provides a wonderful opportunity to reach out to people of other faiths – as you can see right here – and I’ve also been very impressed to see the extent to which Mitzvah Day has resonated with people right around the country.

"When I engage with Cabinet ministers, they all know what Mitzvah Day is – from the Prime Minister down. It certainly has been a wonderful reflection of Jewish values, something which is respected and something for which there is a huge desire to emulate.

"Performing mitzvahs inspires us to do many things and there are many varieties of mitzvahs. I am very pleased that interfaith activities have been included as one feature of the broad spectrum of mitzvahs that we can perform."

However, he acknowledged that rather than Mitzvah Day, "I would prefer it if we had a 'Mitzvah Life' - that really is the essence of mitzvot.

"If Mitzvah Day can encourage us to perform mitzvahs round the year, then it would have reached its ultimate achievement."

Dr Sheikh Ramzy of the Oxford Islamic Information Centre said: "It is important we celebrate each other’s special days. This is very important for integration, for cohesion, because, after all, we are cousins.

He also felt Mitzvah Day was “very important for our children, [who] can put all the hatred, all the difficulties away and come together.

"Every little counts. This [event] is maybe very small, but it still counts towards the world we cannot neglect.

"A thousand mile journey starts with the first step. Everybody has to do something. It’s part of a bigger network which we are trying to do - and for the sake of peace.”

Arab States Are Claiming the Heritage of Their Expelled Jews full article here

On or around November 30, Jewish communities around the world will be holding events to remember the mass exodus of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran. Almost a million people were displaced in the past 50 years, leaving billions of dollars' worth of property behind.

Not only have Arab governments never compensated Jews for their stolen homes and businesses, they are waging a pernicious campaign to claim communal property and Jewish heritage as their national patrimony. Synagogues can't be moved and clearly, it is better for Arab states to preserve them as memorials to an extinct community than not at all. However, these states are also declaring Torah scrolls, communal archives and books to be part of their cultural heritage.
For instance, the Egyptian government claims that all Torah scrolls and Jewish archives, libraries, communal registers and any movable property over 100 years old are “Egyptian antiquities.” However, Jews consider Torah scrolls their exclusive property. It is forbidden to buy or sell them. Fleeing Jews have often prioritized scrolls and books over their personal possessions.

What does international law have to say? The Hague Convention of 1954 “protecting cultural property in conflict” was brought in to stop the massive looting that has always occurred in war and specifically during WWII. There is also the post-colonial understanding that the new states that emerged in the 20th century have ownership of their own cultural heritage; the days when Britain could ship the Elgin Marbles from Greece, or Napoleon could plunder ancient Egyptian obelisks as “war booty,” are over.

In Egypt, registers of births, marriages and deaths of Jews from Alexandria and Cairo dating back to the middle of the 19th century were once kept in the two main synagogues in each city. But in 2016, government officials took away the registers to be stored in the Egyptian National Archives.

Egyptian Jews living abroad cannot even obtain photocopies of certificates, often the only formal Jewish identification Egyptian Jews have to prove lineage or identity for burial or marriage. Repeated efforts since 2005 to intercede with the Egyptian authorities have come to nothing.

Egyptian government policy has been backed by the tiny remnant of the country’s Jewish community. Its leader, Magda Haroun, intends to leave the community’s assets to the government. She has even suggested that two paintings in the Louvre once owned by an Egyptian Jew should find their way back to Egypt.

Under the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, thousands of books, manuscripts and other documents were seized from Jewish homes, schools and synagogues and stored at the headquarters of Iraq’s secret service in Baghdad. In 2003, the archive was discovered in the flooded basement after the building was bombed by the Americans.

The Americans shipped the archive to Washington, DC, for restoration and hastily signed a diplomatic agreement promising to return the material to the Iraqi government. The United States spent over $3 million to restore and digitize the archive, which has since been exhibited across the country. The collection includes a Hebrew Bible with commentaries from 1568, a Babylonian Talmud from 1793 and an 1815 version of the Jewish mystical text Zohar, as well as more mundane objects such school reports and a Baghdad telephone book.

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Israel

Building Bridges Through Music in Jerusalem by Yvette Nahmia-Messinas full article here
An article in short stories

Audition to the IDF orchestra
Our eldest daughter Maya has an audition coming up next week to join the army’s orchestra. That is a high for us, a family of Greek Olim, descendants of Holocaust survivors who owe our existence to interfaith cooperation and solidarity. Both my father’s and my husband’s mother’s family were saved hiding as Christians in Athens. Maya has practiced music from the womb. At the time I was pregnant with her I was taking - along with my husband Elias- voice lessons with an amazing American teacher Melissa Mott. And Melissa and Maya met again this week seventeen years later to practice towards Maya’s upcoming audition. Their session had an amazing chemistry and energy to it, bringing it all full circle, from the womb to today.

Jerusalem Tolerance Week
I got an invitation by my friend Lilly Halperin to join her lecture on Tolerance and Music in the framework of the Jerusalem Tolerance Week. The event took place at one of Jerusalem’s jems, the Louis and Tillie Alpert Youth Music Center in the Hinnom Valley headed by Roni Glas. Lilly who heads the Emet Center for Tolerance promotes teaching methods and tools that counteract the phenomena of exclusion, violence and racism, to children and young adults. Lots of young kids from the city attended the event and the musical interludes on the piano by Zeev Toren were making Lilly’s point, on how music can heal and bridge, visible on the spot.

**Musical Kabbalat Shabbat at Nava Tehila**
Bracha (Barbara) Goldsmith a favorite astrologer I have been following on YouTube visited Jerusalem. The minute we met in person, I sensed meeting a good old friend. And as a good old friend I offered to immerse Bracha, to a musical Shabbat celebration in Jerusalem led by Rav Ruth Gan Kagan. A former pianist in training and a sensitive soul I knew Bracha would enjoy the vibe of weaving bridges through song that Rav Ruth is a master of. Indeed, Barbara rejoiced in this musical Kabbalat Shabbat, and danced and sang and blended her energy in the interfaith, communal bridging that Rav Ruth weaves in these circles of song that connect you to source and community through song.

**Marianne and Leonard: Words of Love at the Jerusalem Cinematheque**
My husband Elias and I went on a date to the Marianne and Leonard: Words of Love documentary screened at the Jerusalem Cinematheque this week. We are both fans of Cohen’s music and sing it at home with our girls. The Greek island of Hydra and its artistic scene in the 60s’ was also part of the movie’s pull as Hydra has been our family’s favorite vacation spot for short winter weekends. The film was about the relationship between the poet, singer and musician Leonard Cohen and Marianne Ihlen, his muse with whom Cohen shared a deep connection to the end of their days. And their love story expressed in the lyrics of the “So long, Marianne” song has touched millions!

**The Jerusalem International Oud festival 21-30 November**
The Jerusalem International Oud festival under the artistic direction of Effie Benaya, Confederation House’s director is celebrating its 20th year. The ultimate bridge building event connecting musical traditions from east and west, exposing Israeli audiences to artists from Armenia, Greece, Kurdistan, and Turkey. The festival’s aim is to create a dialogue across geographical and cultural borders, particularly between Islam and Judaism. This year the festival hosts my favorite Greek singer Alkistis Protopsalti, thanks to Bracha Cohen Greek productions in Israel. Protopsalti not only has a strong captivating voice but also an unforgettable stage presence. Together with Estoudiantina Neas Ionias Orchestra, they will take us on a journey, a feast of sounds and rhythms to Constantinople (Istanbul) and Smyrna, (Izmir) from the Rebetiko of Pireaus, to a diversity of sounds from the Mediterranean and the Balkan cultures. Artistic director is Andreas Katsigiannis. The crystal clear voice of Alkistis Protopsalti will be the grand finale event of the oud festival celebrations and will take place on Saturday November 30 at 9pm at the Sherover Theatre in Jerusalem. Tickets can be purchased through Bimot at *6226 and 02 6237000.

Jerusalem boasts a unique musical tapestry woven by Jerusalemites from east and west uniting us all through song! We rejoice in walking on these bridges daily, traversing the bridges connecting cultures, to meet those on the other side! From Jerusalem with love, Yvette Nahmia-Messinas

**Upcoming Event in Israel**

![Image of an event poster]

**International Association for the Heritage of Greek Jews in Israel**

We are honored to invite you to a photo exhibition “Fragments of memory”

Indication of “the journey to self-indulgence, strength and continuity immortalize the illegal immigrants of Haviva Reich”

The event will take place on Wednesday, December 25, 2019 at 6 p.m.

At the Salonika and Greece Jewish Heritage Center,
23 Einstein St., Petach Tiqwa

Conference Program:
- Welcome and tour of the exhibition.
- Gathering in the courtroom.
- Opening remarks - Mr. Ronnie Aria, Dr. Abraham Hull, Hannah Aizik.
- Lighting a third Hanukkah candle - Yosef Matza, the survivor of the ship.
- Lecture - Professor Isaac Kerem.
- Guest artist – Shiran Shachar Boran.

We will be happy to see you

* Donations are welcome
Hanukah will begin this year on Sunday night, December 22nd, with the lighting of the first candle of the eight-day festival. And there is no doubt that this year, like every other, virtually every Hanukah-lighting ceremony in almost every Jewish home or institution, will include the singing of the most famous and popular Hanukah song the world over: “Maoz Tzur”, usually translated as “Rock of Ages”, though a more literal translation would be a ‘mighty stronghold’ or ‘sanctuary’. It would therefore be worthwhile to delve a bit deeper into this Hanukah ‘classic’, which not for naught has become an integral and inseparable part of the celebration of Hanukah everywhere.

The original song actually consists of 6 stanzas and was written by a certain ‘Mordechai’, because the first letters of each stanza form a Hebrew acrostic of this name. However, the specific identity of this ‘Mordechai’ is unknown. Some attribute the authorship to Mordecai ben Isaac Halevi who also wrote the Sabbath hymn "Mah Yafit", and others to a scholar referred to by Tosafot in the tractate “Niddah” of the Babylonian Talmud. And based on the rather dramatic appeal in the sixth stanza, some identify Mordechai as being a Jewish liturgical poet whose father-in-law was martyred at Mayence during the Crusades. As far as when and where it was written, most scholars attribute it to 13th century Germany. The famous and familiar tune is not of Jewish origin and is most likely a German folksong going back to the 15th century. The same tune was used by Martin Luther in his chorales and I can personally attest to the fact that as a freshman in Rutgers University many moons ago, I had a Catholic roommate for a time, and when he heard me singing Maoz Tzur after lighting Hanukah candles, he was amazed to hear what he knew as a tune for a Church hymn he sang every week! As for the content, each stanza of the song contains is a beautiful and poetic rendition of a different idea or period in Jewish history. The first verse, which begins with the title “Maoz Tzur”, pleads for the rebuilding and reestablishment of Temple worship, praising God as the “mighty stronghold of our salvation”, who will eventually take vengeance on Israel’s enemies and restore the Temple.

The second verse refers to our enslavement in Egypt, and praises God for our liberation by His hand and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army.

The third stanza recalls our peaceful sojourn in the Land of Israel when the Solomonic First Temple existed. But it continues to describe how, because of our sins, Israel was exiled to Babylonia for seventy years, when Zerubbabel led us back to our homeland.

The fourth stanza describes the story of Purim, how we were miraculously saved from Haman’s evil plot and the bravery of Mordechai and Queen Esther in helping foster that miraculous salvation.

The fifth stanza brings us back to Hanukah and describes the spiritual, as opposed to physical, oppression of the Seleucid Greeks and King Antiochus, followed by the story of the miracle of the single cruise of pure oil lasting eight days, the joy of the rededication of the Temple, and Israel’s independence for some time to come.

The sixth stanza stands calls out to God to avenge “Your servants’ blood from the wicked nation, for triumph has been too long delayed for us and there is no end to days of evil”. This is followed by asking God to “repel the “Red One” and establish “the seven shepherds”. The "Red One" refers to the Biblical nation of “Edom”, which in Jewish tradition, was considered by our Sages to refer at first to ancient Rome and later to Christianity in general, which is still considered to be our the present ‘exile’ as well. As for the ‘seven shepherds’ these are the seven personalities we invite into the Sukkah for the “ushpizin” each night: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aron, Joseph and David, with the author of the hymn pleading for the coming of the Messiah and our ultimate redemption. However, because its content is not consistent with the previous stanzas and the fact that outright calls to God for vengeance against our enemies are not seen in a positive light by Judaism, some question whether this stanza was part of the original song and only added later by an unknown author. On the other hand, this stanza also contains a Hebrew acrostic spelling “Hazak” (strong), which is very common in Jewish liturgical poetry from the Middle Ages, lending credence to the belief that this stanza was part and parcel of the original hymn.

We can only hope and pray that we do warrant God’s salvation and the Messianic era speedily in our times, as we once again sing Maoz Tzur this Hanukah with gusto, both recalling our history and looking ahead to our final redemption. Happy Hanukah to one and all!
The Birthright
By Rabbi Nissim Elncavé

One of the greatest dramas of the Torah plays out in our Parashah this week. Yishak Avinu blind and in his old age, sent Esav out to hunt and prepare him choice foods in order to bless him as his firstborn. But in the meantime, Yaakov sent by Rivka his mother, overtook Esav and was blessed by Yishak their father before Esav returned. As expected, a deep family feud developed in between the two brothers.

In his commentary to the Torah, Rabbi Shemuel David Luzzatto questions the entire episode in light of the fact that Yaakov does not mention to his father that he purchased the birthright from Esav, his doing so could have averted a negative interaction with his brother and father. Rabbi Luzzato asks, "What was being requested in asking for the birthright? Some say that he would have a double portion of inheritance of his father's wealth (Deuteronomy 21:16) or that his father would bless him more than his brother (below 48:18). However, these reasons do not make sense because we have seen that Yaakov never told his father Yishak about this purchase [of the birthright] for he said "I am Esav your eldest" (below 27:19) and Esav said (27:32) "I am your eldest son Esav." If so, how did this benefit Yaakov's plan if his father was unaware [of the sale]? Behold, Esav did not write him a contract that he [Yaakov] will have in his hand as proof, and also there were no witnesses there, there was only a promise. Additionally, we see that Esav did not cease to refer to himself as the eldest when he spoke to his father, and furthermore, Yaakov told his father "Your eldest Esav." It would seem, for sure, that it did not enter Yaakov's mind to gain any sort of advantage over his brother from Yishak on the day that he inherited to them or the day that he blessed them.

Rabbi Luzzatto responds that the purchase was only done so that Esav would take an oath that after his father's death that Yaakov would be the guardian and leader of the house. And Yaakov purposely asked for this, so that Esav would not be able to expel him from his house and his land, in a way that would preclude him and his children from fulfilling Abraham's blessing concerning the inheritance of the land. Rabbi Luzzato then states that Yaakov did not need to communicate this idea to Yishak. Esav upheld his promise and after the death of his father, he went to another land and did not tell to Yaakov that he should go and leave his dwelling.

Rabbi Luzzatto believes that Yaakov did not purchase the birthright to gain the upper hand over his brother, nor to receive a double portion from his father. Rather, the purpose of the sale was for Esav to transfer the leadership of the house, held by the eldest due to his seniority, to Yaakov. By acquiring the birthright, Yaakov acquired the status of "guardian" for his father's land and as such held the claim to the land, not Esav. Thus, after his father's death, Esav moved to his own land and did not dwell with Yaakov, proving that Esav kept his promise and left his father's land, Canaan (Genesis 36:8). This enabled Yaakov to reside in Canaan without fear of being expelled by his brother and made it possible from him to pass the land to his children, the land passed down to us, Eres Yisrael (the Land of Israel). Thus, the birthright acquired by Yaakov was not acquired to gain additional inheritance or blessings but rather to ensure that he and his descendants maintained control over the promised land, the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18).

Rabbi Luzzatto's approach seems to be unique. According to Rabbi Luzzato, Yaakov's intent was to be included and to be part of the great movement that Abraham, his grandfather had started. In fact, Yaakov Avinu wanted to be the one to carry on and to lead the movement further. Yaakov had understood the meaning and the purpose of the mission and the impact that it would have on his descendants and on humanity at large. He knew that the task was going to be difficult and great challenges laid ahead, and Yaakov had begun to strategies and to set the path that he would follow to establish himself and to develop into a great nation.

Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Shemuel David Luzzato (often referred to by the acronym of SHaDaL or SHeDaL; 1800-1865), Italian scholar, philosopher, Bible commentator, and translator. His father, Hezekiah, was an artisan at Trieste and a scholarly Jew who could claim descent from a long line of scholars. He wrote his first Hebrew poem at the age of nine. His mother died when he was 13 and his father’s pecuniary status declined seriously making it necessary for the young Luzzatto to assist his father in his work. His own wife died after a long illness, and he eventually married her sister. He survived two of his children - one Philoxenus (or Filosseno), had been a young man of especially great promise. Samuel David's translation of the Ashkenazi prayer book into Italian appeared in 1821/22, and that of the Italian rite in 1829. He established a regular correspondence with the Jewish scholar, Isaac Samuel Reggio, and through the efforts of the latter, Luzzatto was appointed professor of the newly established rabbinical college of Padua in 1829. There he spent the rest of his life teaching Bible, philology, philosophy, and Jewish history. His versatility and the scope of his learning are best seen in the mass of letters written to all the outstanding Jewish savants of the day. Almost 700 of these letters were published and many run into several pages; some are in themselves dissertations. He wrote a Hebrew commentary on the Pentateuch (5 vols., with Italian translation. He was a traditionalist and had a great veneration for Rashi in particular. Luzzatto, as he himself wrote, divided seekers of truth into two groups - those who follow Rashi and Samuel b. Meir and those who are the disciples of Maimonides and Ibn Ezra. In his writings, he readily quotes the views of his pupils, mentioning their names when so doing. A natural corollary of his attitude to the classical authorities is Luzzatto's high regard for the Aramaic translation of Onkelos to which he devoted his Ohev Ger (the "Lover of the Proselyte," 1830), an allusion to the conversion of Onkelos to Judaism. He named his son Philoxenus (the Latin equivalent of Ohev Ger). He divided the work into two parts. The first demonstrates the method of Onkelos when the latter seems to depart from the literal translation of a text, especially when he wants to avoid anthropomorphisms. The second part of Ohev Ger deals with matters of text and is technical.

Luzzatto's philosophy may be compared with that of Judah Halevi. "I esteem Maimonides very greatly" he wrote (Letters no. 83), "but Moses the Lawgiver never dreamed of philosophy and the dreams of Aristotle." He lists his objections to the Guide of Maimonides and to some remarks in Sefer ha-Madda and to others in Maimonides' commentary on Mishnah Sanhedrin (ch. Helek) and in the Shemonah Perakim (commentary on Avot). He was opposed to Maimonides' enumeration and formulation of the 13 principles of faith and his condemnation of those who did not subscribe to these (Letters no. 238). Luzzatto's attitude to Greek philosophy was negative and even hostile. Luzzatto's religious thinking does not rest at the rejection of "atticism" - Hellenism - as diametrically opposed to Judaism, and of a moral rationalism as represented in the Middle Ages by Maimonides and in modern times by Kant. For him the idolizing of "progress" and the utilitarianism which speaks from the craving for (outer but not inner) emancipation of modern Jewry were the very antithesis of free Jewish thinking and living. He had nothing but contempt for the rotten European civilization. In his theological writings, most of them published lectures such as Teologia Morale israelitica (1862; English translation by S. Morais in Jewish Index, 1872) and in his Yesodey ha-Torah (1880; repr. 1947; English translation by N.H. Rosenbloom, Foundations of the Torah, 1965) as well as in his letters, he develops his own positive system of Jewish theology and religious philosophy, based on the firm belief in revelation, tradition, and the election of Israel. These he wants to see protected from the prevailing winds of Christian-Protestant criticism and an evolutionary historical relativism. The Torah and the Commandments must not be rationalized and submitted to such relativism, nor can one separate morality from religion. They both flow from the same innate human quality of hemlah (empathy). The Jewish people is both the carrier and guarantor of this revealed, national religion which embodies its own universality and humanitarianism. Hebrew language and literature, the main object of Luzzatto's scholarly work, help to foster and deepen Jewish spirit and loyalties. This romantic and nationalistic conception of Judaism embraces a sort of religious Zionism, while rejecting the "false holiness" of the idle ḥalukkah Jew. Luzzatto wants the youth of the yishuv to return to the soil and the soil of the Holy Land to its former productivity. This conception is apparent in his liturgical researches, in particular by his edition of the Mahzor Roma which he provided with a comprehensive introduction (1856; new edition of the introduction by E.D. Goldschmidt, 1966).
"...and by thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves" (Bereishith 26:4).
In this week's Torah portion, God assures Yitzhak that the nations of the earth will find blessing in his descendants. God had made a similar statement to Yitzhak's father, Abraham; and later makes this statement to Yitzhak's son, Yaacov. The children of Abraham, Yitzhak and Yaacov--the people of Israel--have a special destiny. They live not only for themselves and their immediate families; rather, they live for the benefit of all humankind.

In many ways, this promise of God has been fulfilled throughout history. The people of Israel--the Jews--have made incredible contributions to humanity and have been a genuine blessing to countless human beings over the centuries. The Bible has been a powerful force in shaping Western civilization. Jewish prophets, sages and poets have had a profound positive influence on innumerable people. In the modern period, Jewish individuals have made incredible contributions in the arts and sciences. The State of Israel, in spite of its enemies and detractors, has been a beacon of justice and democracy in a part of the world characterized by tyranny and lack of freedom.

Some perceptive non-Jews have recognized the blessings given to humanity by the Jews. The historian, Paul Johnson, in his History of the Jews, has written: "Certainly the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place....To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. Without the Jews it might have been a much emptier place."

While Paul Johnson and many others have expressed appreciation for the Jews' blessings to humanity, much of humanity has not been as forthcoming. Indeed, Jews have suffered--and continue to suffer--under a burden of anti-Semitism, anti-Judaism, anti-Israel propaganda etc. Enemies of Jews seem predisposed only to find fault in the Jewish people, and not to see the virtues and blessings of the Jews.

God assured Abraham, Yitzhak and Yaacov that the nations of the earth would find blessing in the people of Israel; and assuredly, the nations of the earth have received many blessings through the Jewish people and through individual Jews. Yet, there is a long way to go before God's promises are truly fulfilled. The Jews have so much more to contribute to the betterment of humanity, and will continue to strive to be a light unto the nations.

But God's promises will not really be fulfilled until the nations of the world openly and lovingly acknowledge the unique positive contributions of the people of Israel to the human family, until they rid themselves of the scourge of anti-Semitism, until they relate to Jews and to the Jewish State with respect and appreciation.

Jews are eternal optimists. We believe confidently that we will live up to God's expectations and that the nations of the world will find blessing in us--and will acknowledge these blessings lovingly. When God makes a promise, He will keep it.
Unforgettable Holocaust Remembrance Concert from Renan Koen full article here

The guests who met in the extraordinarily beautiful atmosphere of Haydarpaşa Hemdat Israel Synagogue, on the eve of October 24th, got to witness a concert full of meaning and emotion.

Renan Koen, who had previously performed many important concerts on Holocaust in Turkey and abroad, was accompanied by the Czech pianist Jiří Hrubý, in this Holocaust Remembrance Piano Concert, sponsored by the Czech Consulate General in Istanbul.

The program consisted of the pieces of Jewish composers Pavel Haas, Viktor Ullmann and Gideon Klein who were at first held captive in Theresienstadt Concentration Camp and then sent to other camps for extermination, and Erwin Schulhoff, whose father was killed in Theresienstadt and himself killed in Wülzenberg Concentration Camp. The program was especially striking since the pieces were composed either while the composers were in the camps or before they were captured but still during the war. The program put together by Renan Koen, with this aspect of it, helped us deeper understand how full of resistance the pieces composed in the camps were, in their struggle to hang on to life. The concept Koen calls ‘Positive Resistance’ and what I believe is essential in understanding the other art pieces created in the concentration camps during Holocaust, just floated from the notes and filled our souls that evening.

Also present in the concert, were the students who attended the ‘March of the Music’ experience this year, as the outcome of the ‘Positive Resistance through Holocaust Reality’ training created by Koen. Each of these young people who came upon the stage, in between the pieces, and told their feelings about the Holocaust reality as to what they witnessed in Theresienstadt Concentration Camp, became a source of hope in the night’s wing toward the future.

Holocaust remembrance concerts are also important in the aspect that they signify a very special solidarity among the composers and the artists performing them today. Renan Koen and Jiří Hrubý, while they were offering their talents and hearts to these very special composers, acted as art messengers assigned to deliver their pain to our day, rather than artists.

Both artists, while they felt in their hearts the responsibility to deliver the pieces composed under captivity and what was lived there and then, engaged all the listeners to these emotions. With the notes they played, whilst they freed these pieces full of resistance, beyond the walls of the concentration camps, they gifted us moments so profound that they will never be forgotten.

Ottoman Immigrants in Lower Manhattan full article here

Through a walking tour across the island of Manhattan, two historians shine a light on a great many connections that existed between the former Ottoman Empire and America.

When one thinks of New York City’s Lower Manhattan area, iconic images of gleaming skyscrapers overlooking the Hudson River tend to spring to mind. Now home to the city’s bustling financial district, Lower Manhattan’s history as a trading port has been largely physically erased, and consequently forgotten. However, unearthing historical archives reveals an unexpected relationship between the city and the Ottoman Empire.
At its zenith, the Ottoman Empire spanned Hungary and Algeria in the West to Armenia in the East and contributed heavily to the large volume of goods that moved through the port of New York City (NYC). Beginning in the late 19th Century, a significant Ottoman presence was established in the city, and included an entire residential and commercial area called Little Syria, which was home to Ottoman subjects from Greece, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Armenia, and Palestine.

The history of Ottoman New York is now at the heart of a walking tour led by historians Todd Fine and Isil Acehan.

During the tour, Fine explains: “For the Americans and British, everyone was a Turk whether you were Syrian, Armenian, or from this Ottoman region. In the 17th Century when New York was founded as New Amsterdam, the Spanish and Ottomans were world powers and the British and Dutch were on the periphery dealing with the Ottomans in shipping and piracy.”

In the late 1800s, thousands of immigrants from Greater Syria arrived in New York City, despite an emigration ban put in place by the Ottoman Empire until 1896. Acehan said the main trigger for this was the arrival of American missionaries in Anatolia in the mid-19th Century. Anatolians were exposed to the US and learned there were jobs and that they would have money when they migrated.

Armenians also started migrating because they attended missionary schools and could speak English. After migration started and money started trickling back home, there was a domino effect. The declining economic conditions in the Ottoman Empire accelerated emigration numbers.

Fine said that immigration from the Ottoman Empire was so substantial that by 1914 it was estimated that 20 percent of the population was in diaspora in the US and Latin America.

4. Former cigarette factory, 48 Broad Street
The cigarette factory was established by Morris (born Musa) Schinasi, a Turkish Sephardic Jew who came to the USA in the 1890s. He designed a cigarette rolling machine and exhibited cigarettes he made with it at the 1893 Chicago World Fair. After meeting with success at the fair, he set up a small factory in Broad Street with his brother Solomon to produce ready-made cigarettes. Their success was based on importing expensive high-quality Turkish tobacco to the US. They brought other Sephardic Jews from Turkey to work at their factory. Sultan Abdul Hamid II awarded Musa Schinasi a medal of honor for his services to the Ottoman Empire.

Little Syria

Washington Street was one of the main streets in Little Syria. It was made up of dozens of tenement buildings and shops. Today, only one tenement building remains and is located at 109 Washington Street. It is still rent-controlled and has a Greek landlord.

Note: The Schinasi Brothers came from Kavala, now part of Modern Greece. Both Romaniote and Sephardic Jews worked for the Schinasi Brothers
So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina, to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

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

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