

SIMCHAS IN THE KEHILA

This past spring we have been honored to be chosen as the setting for two special Bar Mitzvahs, the first that of Andrew Marcus, son of our Board member Marvin Marcus and his wife, Phyllis, and the second, the “second” Bar Mitzvah of our illustrious President, Hy Genee (*see “Meet the Board”*). Both joyous occasions filled the synagogue. What better way to support us, and to assure the continuance of our precious heritage, than to celebrate your simchas in Kehila Kedosha Janina.

WE ASK YOUR HELP

Little Joseph Gilio, now age five, suffers from a rare disease (Wiscott-Aldrich Syndrome), a hereditary disease that attacks his immune system and is usually fatal. One of the few possibilities for his survival is a bone marrow transplant from a compatible donor. The disease is usually passed down through the mother (through the X chromosome) and typically occurs only in boys. Joey’s mother is of Yanniot descent (both her maternal grandparents were born in Ioannina: Anna and Nissim Solomon), and it is most likely that a compatible donor would be found among those of the same genetic background.

We are seeking help for Joey and asking as many people as possible to submit to blood tests to determine if they would be a compatible donor. It is such a small thing for us, and a matter of life or death for little Joey. Please let us know if you are willing to help, and we will pass this information on to Joey’s family.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, September 25th 1:00 pm
Report from Greece: slide show by Marcia Haddad Ikonopopoulos highlighting the recent trip to Greece (Hania, Salonika, Verroia, Ioannina and Athens).

OCTOBER

SUNDAY, October 2nd 7:00 am
Slichot.

Monday, October 3rd 6:00 pm
Rosh Hashanah services.

Tuesday, October 4th 8:30 am
Rosh Hashanah services.

Wednesday, October 5th 8:30 am
Rosh Hashanah services.

Wednesday, October 12th 5:30 pm
Yom Kippur.

Thursday, October 13th 8:00 am
Yom Kippur.

Tuesday, October 18th 8:45 am
Succoth.

Wednesday, October 19th 8:45 am
Succoth.

Monday, October 24th 7:00 am
Hoshana Raba.

Tuesday, October 25th 8:45 am
Sh’mini Atz.

Tuesday, October 25th 5:30 pm
Simchat Torah.

Wednesday, October 26th 8:45 am
Simchat Torah.

NOVEMBER

SUNDAY, November 6th 1:00 pm
Epirote family stories: Special book signing and meet the authors.

Isaac Dostis: author of *Ten Gold Medals: Glory or Freedom*, the story of Isaac’s own family’s survival and escape during the Holocaust.
Eleni Gage: author of *North of Ithaka*, the story of Eleni’s own family and the village in Epirus they came from. Eleni is the daughter of Nicholas Gage, author of the famous *Eleni*.

Authors will discuss their books and be available to autograph copies of each book purchased.

Sunday, November 20th 1:00 pm
Koula’s Kitchen: special Greek-Jewish desserts, kourabiedes and more.
\$5 admission.

DECEMBER

Sunday, December 25th 1:00 pm
Hanukkah party.
Traditional Romaniote Hanukkah services and lighting of the first candle.

2006

Sunday, January 28th
4th Annual Greek-Jewish Film Festival.
Films to be announced. \$10 admission.

KOLOKITH YEMISMENO (STUFFED SQUASH)*

5 medium squash (zucchini)
Sautéed mushrooms and onions to taste
½ pound chopped meat
¼ cup rice
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
2 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh dill
2 tablespoons oil
Cut squash lengthwise into three or four pieces. Scoop out pulp. Chop pulp and add other ingredients to mixture. Stuff hollowed-out squash with mixture and place them in pot (with stuffed side down so that mixture does not come out) with water to cover. Add two tablespoons oil. Steam until squash is tender. Transfer to heated (350°) oven and bake for 35–40 minutes. Makes about 18 pieces.

**This recipe was submitted by Hy and Lil Genee.*

The Romaniote

Newsletter of Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum

FIRST STAGE OF INTERIOR RESTORATION HAS BEGUN!

Due to an exceedingly generous bequest from the estate of Mrs. Frances Siegelbaum, we have been able to start our long-anticipated interior restoration. Soon our interior will be a fitting accompaniment to our newly refurbished exterior. None of this could have been done without your continued support. And special thanks to David Bellel for his generous donation in memory of his late father, Sol. We have been truly blessed in the support we have received. Many other donors, too numerous to mention, have given us the hope that our dreams will soon become a reality.

The first stage of the restoration will involve replacement of our antiquated electrical system, installation of new electricity, addition of air-conditioning, replastering and painting. It is our intention to stay as close as possible to the original interior, while bringing in some of the modern amenities now necessary. While, obviously, some of these renovations (especially, the air-conditioning) were not part of the original synagogue, there will be no major structural changes and the interior restoration will be as close to original as possible.

This is a beginning (a big beginning) but there is much yet to do. The next two stages of our interior restoration will involve the refurbishing and refurnishing of the interior and major work in

the basement area (arranging to use our communal space in the most innovative ways possible). Stage two of the interior restoration will involve restoring the Bema and Aron, along with the benches, only replacing furnishings when necessary, and replacing flooring in the sanctuary. The Sisterhood of Janina has already pledged \$5,000 towards the replacement of the flooring! Stage three will involve work on the basement. In addition to its weekly use for the Shabbat Kiddush, our basement is also used for special programs and museum exhibits, very often lacking the space necessary. Our architect (KKJ’s very own Leonard Colchamiro) will be working out plans for a “Kafenio” and a multifunctional, multipurpose and multidimensional room that offers us the possibility to change the space to fit our ever-changing needs.

As always, we have been truly blessed with aid from professionals (pro bono) who are members of our Board or congregation of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Our own Steve Negrin has supplied priceless help in advising us on our electrical needs, and trustee Randy Schoer-Vagelatos, professional interior decorator, has been there continuously with her professional expertise. Most of all, you, with your continual donations and moral support, have enabled us to continue with our restoration. Thank you!



Hy Genee, Bar Mitzvah 1935



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

***Founder:** Joseph I. Josephs ***Honorary Life Members:** Michael Aronesty • Morris L. Cohen • Morris David • Morris Eskonants • Joseph Kassorla • Sam Nahoum • Solomon Schinasi
Trustees: Hyman Genee, President • Marcia Haddad Ikonopopoulos, Museum Director • Chaim Kafinas, Treasurer • Solomon Kafinas, Financial Secretary • Elliot Colchamiro, Recording Secretary • Jeffery Mordos, First Vice President
Marvin Marcus, Second Vice President • Marc Winthrop, Second Vice President • Jesse Colchamiro • Leonard Colchamiro • Isaac Dostis • Rose Eskonants • Martin Genee • Ilias Hadjis
Holly Kaye • Lois Genee Ledner • Sol Matsil • Max Nachmias • David Negrin • Randi Schoer-Vagelatos

*Deceased

A MESSAGE FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Our museum continues to grow and attract visitors from all over the world. Over 3,000 guests visit annually, many learning for the first time about the history and culture of Romaniote Jews. Other museums around the world now contact us! To date, we have worked with the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, American Sephardi Federation exhibits at the Center For Jewish History, Etz Hayyim in Hania, Crete, and, of course, the Jewish Museum in Athens. On May 10, 2005, the new Museum of the Murdered Jews in Europe, located in the heart of Berlin, showcased an exhibit that was created with our help: the story of the Yanniotte family of Eftibia Nachmias Nachman (check our book list if you haven't purchased Eftibia's excellent book, Yannina: Journey to the Past).

Thanks to the generosity of the Colchamiro brothers (Leonard, Elliot and Jesse) a new exhibit case in the museum was funded in honor of their parents, Morris and Sara. The case now houses our latest exhibit, "Rabbi Matsliach (Bechoraki) Matsil, the Mohel" (see article on Rabbi Matsil). Rabbi Matsil, the father of our Board member Sol Matsil, circumcised over 600 Yanniotte (both in Ioannina and here, in the USA), meticulously inscribing their names in his prayer book. We are grateful to the generosity of the Matsil family (Sol, Morris, Esther and her children, Leon and Emmalin, Jean Matsil Fishman and Selma

Matsil Gilberg), who so generously shared their family heirlooms with us, enabling this exhibit to become a reality. Present at the opening on May 22nd were over 60 members of the Matsil family.

It is our hope to include additional exhibit space in the museum, enabling us to display other stories that make our community so special. Please share your ideas with us. This is your museum and your input is always welcome.

This fall, a new exhibit will open on the Jewish community of Preveza (see article on Preveza). It is our hope that this exhibit space will house revolving exhibits on other Romaniote communities in Greece.

My personal thanks to the Board of Kehila Kedosha Janina without whose support none of this would have taken place, and my special thanks to all of you who have expressed appreciation for what we are doing. As always, my dedicated volunteers are at the core of whatever we do.

Check what we are doing. Access our Web site (<http://www.kkjsm.org>). Thanks to the brilliance of Maurice Askinazi, we have received thousands of hits this past year, and applause from around the world. Visitors can now access hotels to stay at, restaurants and directions.

*—Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos
Museum Director*

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It is our hope to complete stage one of the interior in time for the High Holy Days. We anticipate your attendance for our meaningful Yanniotte services.

*Please join us in rededicating our newly restored "snagor." —Hy Genee
President, Kehila Kedosha Janina*

MATSLIACH MATSIL, RABBI AND MOHEL (1877-1962)

Matsliach (Bechoraki) ben Yitzchak Matsil, the oldest of seven children, was born in Ioannina in 1877. His parents died when he was very young and, as the oldest in the family, it became his responsibility to raise his siblings. In so many ways, Rabbi Matsil was representative of the traditional Jews of Ioannina. His religion was something he lived on a daily basis. He would take care of his siblings, marrying off his sisters and sending his two younger brothers to seek their fortune in the United States. Only in 1919 would he move his own family to the New World. He already had five children (Isaac, Renee, Matty, Jeanette and Manny) and five more would be born to him in the U.S.A. (Morris, Julie, Selma, Sol and Israel, who would die in infancy).

Having studied in Salonika, Bechoraki received his rabbinic degree and was also certified to become the shohet and the mohel. He circumcised over 600 male infants, both in Ioannina before he left, and in the United States after he arrived, meticulously listing their names in a prayer book. Included among the circumcisions were five of his six sons and nine of his grandsons. Most were performed with no charge, especially those performed during the Depression when money was so scarce.

Initially, on his arrival in New York, in 1919, he went to work with his younger brothers at the bathrobe factory they had established (Matsil Brothers) at 628 Broadway. Even though he had helped finance this venture, his role in the firm would be short-lived. The younger brothers thought that Bechoraki's ways were too European!

Bechoraki Matsil was active in Kehila Kedosha Janina until the family moved to Brooklyn (first Williamsburg and then Bensonhurst), and he then served as the rabbi of the first Mapleton Synagogue on 66th Street (also called Kehila Kedosha Janina of Mapleton), a small Greek congregation housed on top of a large Ashkenazi synagogue, until his passing in 1962 at the age of 85.

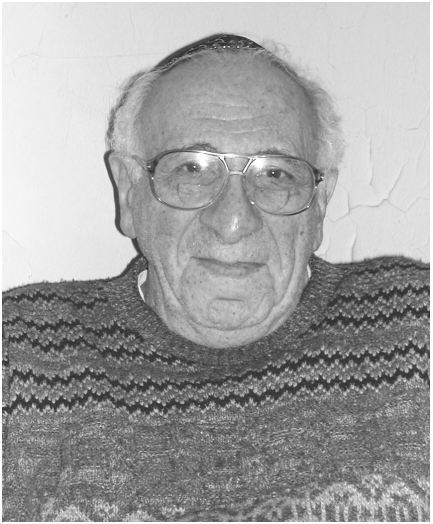
His youngest son, Sol, has carried on the traditions, serving on the Board of Kehila Kedosha Janina and as past president of the Brotherhood of Janina and the Pashas.



THE SISTERHOOD OF JANINA

The Sisterhood of Janina recently celebrated its 73rd anniversary at a lovely luncheon, June 8th, 2005, at the Harvard Club of New York, which was a rousing success. Through the years, since our creation in 1932 on the Lower East Side of New York by the Yanniotte community, we have evolved into a group whose membership spans the country. We are known far and wide for our many philanthropic accomplishments, foremost of which was the recent purchase of a fully cardiac equipped ambulance for Israel. Currently, we are setting our sights on 2007, which will see a double celebration: Kehila Kedosha Janina will be observing 80 years of continuous service to our community, and we will be commemorating our 75th anniversary. Save the date, Sunday, April 29, 2007. Hopefully, we will have a blowout gala, with you all attending.

MEET THE BOARD – HY GENE



When this continuing column ("Meet the Board") was first proposed, our present honoree said, "Skip me, everyone has heard my name enough." Well, guess what, Mr. Genee, we never tire of hearing your name!

In every organization, there is one person who exemplifies the dreams and goals; who, by his every action, acts as an impetus for growth. The thread that binds us together, the fiber that has gently woven its way into the very fabric of our life, is the President of our Board, Hyman Genee. Hy was born April 27, 1922 on the Lower East Side of New York (54 Orchard Street) to Bechorak (Morris) Genee and Firo (Fani) Genee, both born in Ioannina. The youngest in the family, Hy celebrated his first Bar Mitzvah in Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue in 1935 and, just recently, on June 11, 2005, celebrated his second Bar Mitzvah to a packed house who braved the early summer heat to applaud his

accomplishments.

A graduate of Seward Park High School (class of 1939), Hy went on to serve his country in World War II in the U.S. Army from

1943 to 1945 and was in the Signal Corps in the European Theatre. Hy, like many of the Yanniotte who founded and worshipped in the Kehila, worked in textiles. He was the sole proprietor of Hi-Mart Pants for 40 years, making and selling men's trousers.

For the past 59 years, Hy has been married to his lovely wife, Lil, the mother of his two children, Lois and Marty, both of whom now also serve on the Kehila Kedosha Janina Board. He is also the proud grandfather of four.

Hy has always been active in community affairs and has served as an executive board member of the B'nai B'rith and was a president of the United Brotherhood of Janina, among other positions. Always dedicated to Kehila Kedosha Janina, Hy has served as the President of the synagogue for the past 30 years. Without Hy Genee, none of what we have been able to do would have been possible. Thank you, Hy! We are eternally grateful.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF GREEK JEWRY

Dear Friends,

As promised, our latest publication, Ten Gold Medals: Glory or Freedom, by Isaac Dostis, was released in June 2005. Accolades have been pouring in. Based on a true story of survival of members of Isaac's own family in Greece, Ten Gold Medals: Glory or Freedom has already been endorsed for use in New Jersey's Holocaust Studies program. If you purchase the book through Kehila Kedosha Janina (see book list) all proceeds go towards the Kehila.

As always, the Association visited Greece this past summer.

We went to Hania, Salonika, Verroia, Ioannina and Athens. The ten-day trip (July 21–31) was highly successful and gave the group, many of Yanniotte background, a chance to visit what we think is the most beautiful country in the world. More important, it enabled us to reinforce the small Jewish presence in Greece and to show them that we care. We are already planning next summer's trip. Come with us and visit Jewish Greece.

—Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos
President, AFGJ

PREVEZA

In the fall of 2005, after the initial interior restoration is complete, the museum at Kehila Kedosha Janina will be opening a new exhibit on the Jewish community of Preveza. We have acquired photographs of the Jewish neighborhood and will display them, along with a photograph of the no-longer-existent synagogue. We are looking for family photographs of Jews who lived in Preveza, to complete this exhibit.

The history of the Jewish presence in Preveza, a sister community of Ioannina, is a short one, lasting but 63 years. The modern Jewish community of Preveza was first founded in 1881, after Arta became part of the modern state of Greece. Most of the Jews who initially settled in Preveza came from Arta, drawn to the city out of a need to continue their economic ties with other Jewish communities still within the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Yanniotte Jews would join them, as would Romaniote Jews from Corfu.

In 1903, the community was large enough to warrant the building of a synagogue (Kal Kadósh Tefilá Lemosé), named after Rabbi Mosé Koen of Ioannina who financed the purchase of the plot. The synagogue was located on Kariotaki Street in the heart of the Jewish neighborhood. It was a commanding structure, adjacent to the neighborhood church. During the bombings of World War II, the church suffered substantial damage but the synagogue remained virtually untouched.

The Jewish neighborhood was only four square blocks, created by Kariotaki, Politexniou, Ioanni Moustaki and the market, with Christian and Turkish residences intermingled. Very few lived beyond these limits. Their businesses were only a few short blocks from their homes. Most of the Jews of Preveza made their living in textiles and haberdashery. Before the war, almost all owned their own business but few

were wealthy. Most struggled to survive, only doing so by strict control of their expenditures.

The bond between Jews and others in Preveza was stronger than in most other cities because the Jews engaged in new areas of commerce and did not compete with Christians.

In 1940, there were 250 Jews living in Preveza. Some would flee to Athens with the occupation, hoping to find a safe haven. On March 25, 1944, the Germans forced the 172 remaining Jews of Preveza from their homes and transported them to Auschwitz-Birkenau: only 15 would survive. There is no longer a Jewish community in Preveza.

We are grateful to a recent article in *Chronika* for the information presented here. Join us for the opening of the Preveza exhibit. Check our Web site for announcements of the opening.