June 2015 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we prepare for our annual trip to Jewish Greece, we are happy to announce that we will be able to give an additional donation to the Jewish Community of Ioannina of $5,000, making our total donations this year $20,000. This was a tough year for Ioannina due to a massive storm that caused extensive damage to the Jewish cemetery. As always, we never forget our sister city in Greece and are so glad that we were able to help. In addition, through the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry, we will be donating $5,000, matching our donation of 2014, to the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki to be used towards the creation of a Holocaust Education Center in Salonika that will educate the country and the world on Greek-Jews and their losses during the Holocaust.

Kofinas family in Athens

The family perished In Auschwitz-Birkenau
This newsletter, our 76th 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).

We now reach over 7000 households worldwide, with our community of ‘friends’ continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (papusoup@mindspring.com) 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. Our Kiddush on June 13th will be sponsored by Chaim and Suzanne Kofinas in honor of their son Seth who will be celebrating his 21st birthday. See article on the Kofinas surname and on the family.

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Passings

~ Last month we lost Rose Chinsky, sister of Cal Attas and Shirley Attas Zetoony and the late Matilda Attas Cossuto. Rose was the daughter of Solomon Attas and Anna Cohen Attas.

Simchas

~ Congratulations to Emily Isaacs Udler on the recent birth of her grandson, Ophir in Israel. Orphir is the brother of 3 year old Aviv and the great-grandson of Rose and Jack Isaacs, both born in Ioannina and both of Blessed Memory and the great-great grandson of Michael and Annetta Bessos, both of whom perished in the Holocaust.

~ We congratulate Annette Politis Binder on the birth of her first great-grandchild, Jack Binder, son of Annette Politis Binder’s grandson Jeffrey Binder.
~We welcome into the world Leah Paige Mayerowitz, daughter of Sheri and Scott Mayerowitz, granddaughter of Stephen and Helene Askinazi, great-granddaughter of Joseph and Shirley Askinazi and great-great granddaughter of Ezra and Molly Askinazi and great great great granddaughter of Morris and Rebecca Askinazi.

~We congratulate our dear friend, Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei on the birth of her granddaughter, Paloma.
~We congratulate Manny Asser on celebrating his 100th birthday on June 2nd.

Manny Asser

Manny Asser in service during WWII

~We congratulate Joe Josephs, son of Larry Josephs of Blessed Memory and grandson of Joe and Anna Josephs both of Blessed Memory on his marriage to Melissa Claire Mallette.

We welcome hearing about simchas from our community. It is truly our joy to share your joys.
Δικοί Μας, Λος Μοστρος (ουρ own) come home

In May we were blessed with visitors from both our Romaniote and Sephardic communities.

Iakov & Anna Tepelenis from Athens

Joshua Chadajo

Ruth Richardson & Hanna Singer from the Lafazan family
We are always overjoyed to welcome synagogue and school groups to Kehila Kedosha Janina
Past Museum Events

We were honored to welcome the Elias Ladino Ensemble for a concert at Kehila Kedosha Janina on May 3rd. This was their second appearance and, if possible, even better than their first.

Danny Elias Ensemble

Mike Yamali & Stella Bacolas

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Kehila Kedosha Janina Was Proud to Take Part in New York City Sacred Sites on May 17th

Sacred Sites
open house weekend
May 16 & 17, 2015

Celebrating New York’s Diverse Houses of Worship

On May 31st, Kehila Kedosha Janina held our first Greek-Jewish Street Festival, an event conceived by our newest, and youngest, trustee, Andrew Marcus, son of our President, Marvin Marcus. There were so many who made this possible, first of all our financial supporters: the Starvos Niarchos Foundation, Joel and Laurie Marcus, LoHo Realty, United Jewish Council of the Lower East Side, Karpoff Affiliates, Norris & Judith Wolff, American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece, the Sisterhood of Janina, Misrahi Realty, Sephardic Jewish Center of Canarsie and the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry.
We thank our Community Partners: the Tenement Museum, the Eldridge Street Project, the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy, the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy, Friends of the Lower East Side, St. Barbara’s Greek Orthodox Church, the Falafel Shop and Woodward Galleries.

We thank our many, many volunteers: Marvin Marcus, Ethan Marcus, Haim Kofinas, Suzanne Kofinas, Sol Kofinas, Koula Kofinas, Seth Kofinas, Jesse Colchamiro, Elliot Cochamiro, Matt Hanson, Judy and Gary Brown, Rose Eskononts, Penny & Ralph Santiago, Irene and Sol Matsil, Jeff Mordos, Maurice Negrin, Marty & Marla Genee, Lois Ledner, Melissa Ledner, Jordan & Laine Genee, Elias Hadjis, Jerry Pardo and my apologies to any I have forgotten.

It was an amazing event on so many levels. To see our street filled with life; to see our neighbors, Asian and Spanish, dancing to our music; to see the smiles on everyone’s face; to see our synagogue and museum filled with the curious wanting to learn more about us. This is the first. Here’s to many more!
We thank the musicians who entertained the crowds and brought us to our feet to dance. And, everyone loved the belly dancers!

It was so good to see so many of "Our Own" stop by.

Negrins

Sheri Busch from the Eskononts (Askinazi) family

Estelle Shafer from the Negrin family

Solomons
Members of the extended Yohanan family

Two Matsil women (Amelia Sobel and Amy Richer)

We had visitors that from as far away as Australia, Hong Kong, Virginia, Massachusetts, in addition to the tri-state area.

News From Jewish Greece

Ioannina

From May 21-23rd, The Jewish Community of Ioannina and the University of Ioannina hosted an international conference on Jewish communities in the East and the West (economy, society, culture and politics) from the 15th to the 20th centuries.

Among the attendees were members of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS) including the President, Moses Konstantini
Kavala

In May’s issue, we announced the unveiling of a Holocaust Memorial in Kavala Greece. Unfortunately, due to the actions of the mayor, Dimitra Tsanaka, who objected to the Star of David that was prominently displayed on the memorial, the unveiling did not take place. Below are articles protesting the Mayor’s actions, the Mayor’s “apology” and, finally, the announcement that the unveiling of the Holocaust memorial will take place on June 7th. Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, was invited to both the original and the second event and was unable to attend, but will make a special trip with her group from the United States to place flowers on the memorial on June 24th. Photos of that visit will be in our July e-newsletter.

Response of AJC
May 15, 2015 — New York — AJC just learned from our partner organization, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), that municipal officials in Kavala have canceled a ceremony scheduled for May 17th to unveil a monument to the 1,484 Jews from the city exterminated by the Nazis. Only two days before the ceremony, the mayor and a majority of the city council are insisting that the image of the Star of David be removed before the monument can be displayed.

“There are no words to express adequately our shock and dismay at this news,” said AJC Executive Director David Harris, who has visited Greece frequently over the past three decades. “How can it be that the eternal symbol of the Jewish people – the very symbol that the Nazis required Jews to wear in the death camps and ghettos of Europe during the Second World War – is deemed unfit for public display in Kavala? What gall for the Jewish community to be asked to remove the Star of David as a condition for allowing the monument to be displayed!”

“We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Greek Jewish community, and indeed with all Greeks who are as outraged as we are, by this brazen insult to the memory of Greek citizens who were arrested, deported, and murdered simply because they were Jews. In this respect, we applaud the Greek Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Religious Affairs, Giorgos Kalantzis, who said in response to the news from Kavala: ’As an Orthodox Christian, I feel deeply insulted by this issue, because it would be as if someone asked us to erase or modify for ‘aesthetic reasons’ the symbol of the cross on the tombs of our grandfathers executed by the Germans.’

“Let us hope that reason quickly prevails,” Harris concluded, “and that Kavala’s city officials reconsider and reverse their appalling decision.”

Proposed Holocaust Memorial in Memory of the Jews of Kavala
Response of Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS)

Friday, 15 May 2015 14:56
The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece expresses its repudiation for the shameful decision taken by the majority of the City Council of Kavala to cancel the ceremony scheduled for Sunday May 17, for the unveiling of the Holocaust Monument dedicated to the 1,484 exterminated Jews of Kavala.

In a telephone communication with the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece just yesterday (May 14, 2015), the Mayor expressed her objection with regard to the religious symbol of the Star of David (Magen David) engraved on the Monument, and asked for the removal of the symbol in order not to cancel the inauguration event.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the Greek Jewry at large explicitly reject this demand as unacceptable, unethical and insulting and consider the Mayor’s decision a clear attack against the religious feeling of the Greek Jews, citizens of this country, as well as a brutal insult to the holy memory of the victims of the Holocaust, manifested for the first time in the post-War history of our country and of Europe alike. With the Star of David on their clothes, the Jews of Kavala, as well as those of the other Greek cities, and the six million Jews of Europe were selected, deported and exterminated in Treblinka, in Auschwitz and in the other Nazi death camps.

70 years since the 1,484 Jews of Kavala were deported and murdered wearing the Star of David, some people in the city of Kavala attempt to distort history by erasing the symbol that kept Jews alive for 5,700 years: The Star of David.

Therefore we do not accept the erasure or the modification of the Star of David from the façade of the Monument.

We are sure that the citizens of Kavala, our fellow citizens, the Government and all the democratic forces, together with enlightened religious leaders of our country, will soon pay due tribute to the 1,485 Greek Jews of the city, victims of the Nazi atrocity and will isolate all followers of bigotry and anti-Semitism.

Athens, May 15, 2015
Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece

Mayor Dimitra Tsanaka’s “Apology”

The Mayor, Dimitra Tsanaka, apologized to the Jewish community if they felt insulted by her words and for all the drama that has taken place in the last 24 hours regarding the placement of a Holocaust memorial to the 1,484 Greek Jews of Kavala.
In the afternoon she addressed about 100 people who had initially gathered in the public garden, and afterwards in front of the town hall. Among the gathered were Jews who were visiting from Israel for the unveiling of the memorial, which did not take place and, who were seeking direction from the municipality of Kavala.

The mayor appeared absolutely convinced that the misunderstanding was due to the Central Board of Jewish Communities and, in general, with the Jewish community of the country and said
that the placement and the unveiling of the memorial would take place very soon, honoring the Jews of Kavala who fell victim to Nazi brutality.

She admitted that she personally suffered pressure both within and outside the municipal team as to the exact form that the Holocaust Memorial to the Jews of Kavala would take. However, she stressed that in the end it was her initiative and that of the citizens of the city to create a memorial, the decision of the Municipal Council to do so pending from 2004. She stated that since the time of the previous municipal authority, the placement of the memorial had been postponed at least five times, provoking prolonged and justified reaction from Viktor Venouziou, the donor of the memorial.

Mayor Dimitra Tsanaka

The mayor, in an apologetic mood, noted that whatever objection she personally had was due solely to protect the memorial from possible acts of vandalism and honor the memory of fellow citizens from Kavala who fell victim to Nazi brutality.

Answering a citizen who called out that she was a racist and that Kavala was a racist city, the mayor stressed that the history of Kavala is the exact opposite. She emphasized that Kavala, from ancient times, had a multicultural citizenry where all religious communities, Christians of all denominations, Jews and Moslems lived together in perfect harmony, emphasizing that even today, citizens from Kavala are known for respecting and honoring all foreigners, helping them and supporting them irrespective of their race or religion.

Mayor Tsanaka went on to say that the Municipal Council had still not received an image of the form of the memorial and confided that to the Assistant Mayor of Culture who handled the project. She also stressed that tomorrow she would send a letter to the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece in which she would notify them of the intention to place the current memorial, submitting Sunday, June 7, 2015 as the proposed day.

At the end of the interview that the mayor had with the gathered crowd, she remembered friends of hers, members of the Jewish community of Kavala who lost their lives in Nazi concentration camps and relatives of the victims who were members of the local community and were loved and respected by the city.

Earlier in the day, the mayor visited the Jewish cemetery of the city and place flowers on the Holocaust memorial to the 1,484 Greek Jews of Kavala that had been erected in 1952. She noted that after World War II, Kavala and the citizens of Kavala were the first local community in northern Greece to pay tribute to their fellow citizens of the Jewish faith who fell victim to Nazi brutality. Thus, the Holocaust memorial erected in 1952 inside the Jewish cemetery to the 1,484 Jews of Kavala was the first in the country.

During the interview, Mayor Tsanaka had the opportunity to meet with relatives of Jews from Kavala who had come from Jerusalem for the inauguration ceremony.
Upcoming Events of Interest

After winning the Sephardic Prize at the International Jewish Music Festival in Amsterdam last fall, Sarah Aroeste will be performing in Spain next month to claim our prize at the International Sephardic Music Festival in Cordoba! Catch us on June 12th if you happen to be in Spain!
Interestingly enough, since the holiday of Shavuot was celebrated at the end of May, the month of June, which corresponds to the second half of Sivan and first half of Tammuz, will be totally bereft of any Jewish holidays or fast days! While this is somewhat challenging when trying to write a monthly column on Jewish topics of interest, it also presents an opportunity to take a look at the Book of Numbers as a unit and learn some interesting, and perhaps less known, facts of Jewish life and history.

The Hebrew name of the book is "Bamidbar" – "In the desert", since this is indeed the venue for the entire book and Israel's sojourn in the wilderness for 40 years. However, the English name, based on the Latin "Numerus" truly reflects the content, since almost every Torah portion relates to repeating census-taking of the Israelite nation.

As we all know, the desert period of Israel was a highly formative one for the nation and the Jewish faith. Beginning with the revelation and giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, and ending with Moses' inspiring speech to the people just before his death and Joshua's leading the people into the Land of Israel.

Yet it should be noted that the 40-year stay in the desert was not God's original plan. Quite the contrary: After the Jews were freed from Egypt, they received the Torah only two months later. Only several weeks after that seminal event we were supposed to enter the land under the leadership of Moses and according to tradition, would have merited the final Messianic redemption already then, and Jewish history would have been totally different! So what went wrong and why?

Unfortunately, troubles began almost immediately after leaving Egypt, and the Bible records in details the various complaints and rebellions either all or part of the fledgling nation addressed toward Moses and God along the way. And each complaint or refusal to obey God's commands brought about specific punishments and reprimands, and of course caused delays in the original plan to enter the Land soon after receiving the Torah. Such delays went from days to months and eventually grew to two years, culminating in final preparations and Moses sending scouts to check out the Land from a strategic point of view in order to know more about what the people would face. This occurs in the Torah portion of "Shlah" – "Send" which is read in synagogues on June 13th.

Unfortunately, however, rather than delivering a simple factual report, the 12 scouts brought fear into the hearts of the people by describing how impossible they felt the conquest of the Land by Israel will be. Showing a total lack of faith in God's promise to help the Israelites in their holy mission, 10 of the 12 scouts incited the people to riot and rebel against God and they cried out
that they would rather stay where they are. They even began to reminisce about the "good old days" in Egypt, even though they were slaves!

This obvious sign of never having lost their "slave" mentality, compounded by a total lack of faith in God's plan and protection constituted the "straw that broke the camel's back", and in fierce anger God himself declares that the people will get exactly what they want, which is to remain in the wilderness. And until the "generation of the desert" dies out- which God sets as anyone over the age of 20 when he or she left Egypt – this will take another 38 years. So at that crucial junction in Israel's history, the fateful decision to have the Israelites wander for a full 40 years is made. And despite an almost immediate show of regret at their behavior and request, this time God does not forgive, and the Israelites entrance and settling of the Promised Land will now wait until the end of those 4 decades.

Only when a new generation consisting of those too young to be influenced by their parents' and grandparents' "nostalgia" and slave-mentality, together with those born and raised in the wilderness, would the conquest and settling of the Land of Israel occur. And the rest, as they say, is history!

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**Articles of Interest to All**

**ISIS and Syria and Destruction of Jewish History**

Among the archaeological gems from Palmyra, the pearl of Syria's desert, at risk after the Islamic State’s takeover last week are vestiges of its Jewish past, including the longest Biblical Hebrew inscription from antiquity: the opening verses of the Shema carved into a stone doorway. Western archaeologists who visited the site in the 19th and 20th century discovered Hebrew verses etched into the doorframe of a house in the ancient city. But whether that inscription is still at the site is unclear.

The last time a European scholar documented it in situ was 1933, when Israeli archaeologist Eleazar Sukenik of Hebrew University photographed it.

"What may have happened to it since is anyone’s guess,” Professor David Noy, co-author of Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis (Jewish Inscriptions of the Near East), said in an email on Friday. Palmyra was one of the Roman Empire’s major cities, rising to prominence in the first centuries of the Common Era as a vassal state and entrepôt connecting West and East. Situated at an oasis in the desert frontier separating the empires of Rome and Parthia, Palmyra grew to an estimated population of 150,000-200,000 at its height in the third century CE. Textiles, perfumes, spices and gems came from India and the Far East, and metals, glass, wine and cash from Rome passed overland, bypassing the longer Red Sea trade route.
Because of its unique location, Palmyrene culture and art exhibited a fusion of Roman and Persian traditions. Traditional Mesopotamian mud bricks comprised the majority of the city’s architecture, Jørgen Christian Meyer, an archaeologist from the University of Bergen explained, but temples to Semitic gods such as Bel, Baalshamin and Al-lat were constructed in Classical style with stout columns hewn of stone. When the city was abandoned following its destruction in 273 CE and left to the elements, the mud brick disintegrated, leaving behind a petrified forest of stone columns. During its centuries of prosperity and decline it was home to a thriving Jewish community. “What we see in Palmyra is a multicultural, and possibly also a multi-identity city,” Meyer, who headed a Norwegian-Syrian archaeological excavation at the site in 2011, just as the civil war started heating up. “Here we’ve got this mixture of Greek, Aramaic, Middle Eastern, Roman culture. This is fantastic.”

“That’s why it’s a unique place from a historical point of view, a cultural point of view,” he said.

Solomon’s Tadmor

That fusion included Jews. Two locally produced terra cotta lamps found next to one of the great pagan temples bear menorahs on either side of a conch, suggesting close integration of Jews and gentiles. Known in Hebrew and Aramaic as Tadmor, Jewish legend attributed the city’s construction to King Solomon. Josephus Flavius, writing in the first century CE, ascribed its construction to King Solomon, saying that the city of Tamar referred to in Kings I was the “very great city” Josephus’s contemporaries knew in the Syrian Desert.

“Now the reason why this city lay so remote from the parts of Syria that are inhabited is this, that below there is no water to be had, and that it is in that place only that there are springs and pits of water,” the Jewish Roman historian said. “When he had therefore built this city, and encompassed it with very strong walls, he gave it the name of Tadmor, and that is the name it is still called by at this day among the Syrians, but the Greeks name it Palmyra.”

Modern scholars, however, dispute the veracity of Josephus’s claim that it was built by Solomon. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Classical city of Palmyra didn’t predate the first century BCE, and the biblical city of Tamar was likely in today’s Negev Desert.
"The place had certainly existed and had been referred to centuries before. But there is nothing in the archaeological record to show that there was any settled occupation of the site through the Hellenistic period,” wrote Fergus Millar in The Roman Near East. "Suggestions of a phase of urban development in Palmyra before the disturbances of the late Hellenistic period can only be speculation.” Nonetheless, during Palmyra’s height during the Roman era, the city became home to a substantial Jewish community, as testified in Jewish texts. Two 3rd century CE Jewish tombs in Beit Shearim, outside Haifa, identify individuals as the interred sons of Palmyrenes. A passage in the Mishnah, compiled in the first to third centuries CE, also refers to one Miriam of Palmyra as living in the city during the first century CE. “It’s clear that there was a serious Jewish community. Jews from [Palmyra] brought them for burial [in Israel] and wrote on the sarcophagus that they were from there.” Daniel Vainstub of Beersheba’s Ben-Gurion University of the Negev said. “We know from the Talmud that some of the locals converted to Judaism.” But most significantly, etched into the doorway of a house in central Palmyra, northeast of its main colonnaded street, were the four opening lines of the Shema, one of the central Jewish prayers, verses from the book of Deuteronomy. Scholars have debated whether it was an entryway to a synagogue, but now they lean toward it having been a private home. The Biblical passage differs from the traditional text only inasmuch as it substitutes God’s name Yahweh for adonai — my Lord.

On the sides of the doorway were two other apotropaic inscriptions in Hebrew script believed taken from Deuteronomy as well. It was last photographed in the 1930s, and scholars contacted by the Times of Israel couldn’t ascertain whether it was still at the site, or whether in the intervening decades it was destroyed or sold on the black market.

“They’re part of the limited but clear evidence for Jews at Palmyra,” Tawny Holm, a Jewish Studies professor at Pennsylvania State University, said of the missing finds. They likely dated from before the 6th century CE, possibly from before the city’s destruction in 272-3, but “the inscription could have been added later,” she noted.

In one of its more thrilling episodes, Palmyra was briefly ruled by Queen Zenobia, who launched a rebellion against Rome. After taking the throne from after her husband’s death in 267 CE, she succeeded in conquering much of the Levant, including Judea, and by 271 had taken Egypt. Though Christian accounts claimed she was Jewish, there was no contemporary Jewish acknowledgement of such. In fact, Judeans sided with Rome, and Rabbi Johanan bar Nappaha, who lived in the Galilean town of Sepphoris during Zenobia’s rise and fall, is quoted in the Mishnah saying, “Happy will he be who sees the fall of Tadmor.” (He died happy in 279, a few years after the city fell to Rome in 273.)

Evidence of Jewish inhabitation of Palmyra tapers off after the 4th century, Vainstub said, when the re-inhabited city was a shadow of its former glory. Centuries later, after the Muslim conquest, Palmyra began its slow decline into obscurity. At some point a Jewish man, one Tsadik the Cohen son of Eliezer, carved his name into a column of the Temple of Bel, which had years before been converted into a church and then abandoned.

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, a 12th century Spanish Jew who chronicled his travels through Europe, Asia and Africa, visited Palmyra during his travels around Syria in the late 1160s or early 1170s. Describing Palmyra, he compares it to the ancient ruins he saw at Baalbek in Lebanon. "At Tarmod (Tadmor) in the wilderness... there are similar structures of huge stones,” he wrote. Cataloguing Jewish communities he visited, Benjamin of Tudela said Palmyra was hope to about 2,000 Jews — Damascus at the time had 3,000 and Jerusalem he said only had 200.
"They are valiant in war and fight with the Christians and with the Arabs, which latter are under the dominion of Nur-ed-din the king, and they help their neighbors the Ishmaelites," Benjamin of Tudela wrote.

In 1400, Turkic Muslim conqueror Tamerlane sacked the city and razed it, effectively ending centuries of Jewish inhabitance in Palmyra.

With the site’s conquest to 21st century Islamist warriors, however, archaeologists and historians are fearful for the ruins of the ancient city. The Islamic State may destroy them for the sake of propaganda as they did the antiquities of Hatra and Mosul in Iraq in recent months. UNESCO chief Irina Bokova called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for the international community "to do everything in its power to protect the affected population and safeguard the unique cultural heritage of Palmyra."

"No harm has really happened to the ruins of Palmyra, until now," Meyer, the Norwegian archaeologist who excavated the site, said on the phone on Wednesday. "What will happen now is quite another thing."

"What I fear now is that ISIS will also use the ruins in Palmyra in their psychological warfare, and that means the destruction of the place," he said.

The Kofinas Surname

As with many Greek-Jewish surnames, Kofinas is an occupational name, meaning “Little Basket” and was shared by both Jews and non-Jews. While the name is associated with Ioannina, it was also found in other communities, such as Athens, Preveza and Volos. The name is not to be confused with the Sephardic surname, Confino, which means "with finesse." Kofinas, due to errors on recording of ship manifests, took the form of Coffina and Coffino in the United States and even took the form of Coffineau for one family.

The Kofinas family in Ioannina was a well-known family but, like many families, at the beginning of the 20th century, went to Athens to seek their fortunes, the small confines of Ioannina making it difficult to make a living. Unfortunately, many were lost in the Holocaust, including the family of Solomon Kofinas, our shamas.

One of the first Yanniotes to come to the USA was a Solomon Kofinas who was living at 57 Rivington Street when Samuel Davidson came over in 1903 and David Kofinas was the first of the Yanniotes we found who left from the port of Patras. He arrived in New York Harbor on August 11, 1906 on board the S.S. Sofia Hohenberg. He was a 17 year-old literate clerk from Ioannina going to his brother, Elias Coffina at 311 W. 120 Street.

The first appearance of the Kofinas name in the Ioannina archives is that of Moses ben Elias Kofinas in 1856.

The Kofinas family is an important part of the Kehila Kedosha Janina community, Solomon Kofinas acting as our Shamas, his son, Chaim, leading our services and Koula Kofinas, the wife of Solomon and mother of Chaim our famous Koula of “Koula’s Kitchen.”

Our photo archives are filled with Kofinas photos. Let us share some with you.
Mildred Coffina honored by Sisterhood of Janina

Elia Coffina, his father and brother

Sarah Coffino Altman

Meyer Coffino

Sol Kofinas as a baby in Greece
Come join us on June 13th Shabbat services to celebrate the Kofinas (Coffino, Coffina) family. Please let us know if you are coming so we can prepare for the kiddush.

Looking For Our Help

We received this question in response to our photo in the May 2015 issue:

I recognize this picture is from the Yad Vashem / USHM archives and it is always attributed to Salonika, however I am certain the girl in the white bow in the back is my mother. She was placed in a Jewish run orphanage after the war, she called it the Stayee and remembers it was run by a Celia Bloom. Although my mother was from Salonika this orphanage was in Athens. Could there be an error?

We leave for Greece on June 21st and will not return until July 6th but our July e-newsletter, although late, will be filled with fascinating information from our trip to Greece. Joining us this year are the descendants from many Yanniote families, among them Yohanan, Negin, Mioni, Askinazi, Levy, Genee, Naftali and Eliasof. Their ancestors left Ioannina to come to the United States to find a better life. Now their grandchildren and great-grandchildren return to the city of their roots.
Websites of interest


http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/cretes-etz-hayyim-a-synagogue-open-to-everyone/

Etz Haim Synagogue in Crete


Shira’s Journey

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) to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

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