April 2016 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

We wish Jews throughout the world a joyous Pessach. Do join us at Kehila Kedosha Janina for services (see attachment for schedule). We wish all our Greek-Orthodox Christian friends Kalo Pascha.

Immigrant Jewish children having their first Matza in Israel in 1949

On March 25th, 1944, the beginning of Passover, the Jewish Community of Ioannina was rounded up and deported. They would arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau on April 11th 1944. This issue is dedicated to their memory.
This newsletter, our 86th 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 closed over 8000 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.

Passings

~ We mourn the passing of Anita Asser, widow of Manny Asser of Blessed Memory. Anita passed at the age of 89 on March 8th, only 16 days after the passing of her husband, Manny. She was a very well respected classical pianist who spent many years teaching piano to students at Friends Academy and performing at the synagogue and local functions. Anita was also very active in the National Council of Jewish Women. Anita is survived by her children Judith Brown and her husband Gary of Mattapoisett, Seth Asser and Felice Katz of Shrewsbury and her grandchildren Matt and Adam Hanson. Our condolences to her loving family and friends. May her memory be a blessing.

~ We mourn the passing of Betty Rawiszer, a longtime member of Sisterhood. Her mother was a Negrin (Julia Negrin) from Ioannina and her father (Jack Hancock) had lived in Albania. Her sister, Mollie Hanock Jenis, was born in Ioannina but Betty and her brother Jack were born in the USA. Her husband, Larry was a member of the Pashas, and they attended all weekends and loved to dance and eat Greek food. Our condolences to her family and friends. May her memory be a blessing.
Recent picture of Betty

Betty and family

Wedding of Betty and Larry Rawiszer
~ It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Mollie Mordecai Gladstone who left us at the age of 93. Mollie passed on March 24, 2016. She was the beloved wife of Robert Gladstone who preceded her in death by many years. She is survived by her sons Jerry, his wife Marcia, Alan Gladstone, his wife Susan, and her granddaughters Karyn and Andrea Gladstone. Her sense of humor and spirit will be missed by her nieces and nephews as well. Mollie was the youngest daughter of Anna and Joseph Mordecai. Our condolences to her family. May her memory be a blessing.

~ We mourn the passing of Mark Menachem, the son of Jack Menachem and Estelle Elias, the grandson of Sabetai (Max) Menachem and Helen Baruch. Mark died way too young. May his memory be a blessing. Our condolence to his family.
Simchas

~ We celebrate the 94th birthday of Morris Abraham (son of Rachel Belil born in Volos and Simon Abraham of Ioannina). Morris’ parents were both immigrants from Greece in the early 1900’s and met and married in NYC. Morris is now living in NJ to be close to his family. Morris’ grandson Max was bar mitzvahed in Ioannina in 2013.

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~ We celebrate the birth of Everett James Guertin, first grandson of Estelle Negrin Acerno. Estelle is the niece of Oriel Jacob of blessed memory. This is Estelle’s first grandchild, the son of Estelle’s daughter, Danielle and son-in-law, Matthew Guertin, Everett was born on March 1st 2016.
~ We celebrate the birth of Stella Hannah Kofinas, daughter of Adam and Alexandra Kofinas, granddaughter of Chaim and Suzanne Kofinas, niece of Seth and Rachel Kofinas and great-granddaughter of Koula and Sol Kofinas. We at Kehila Kedosha Janina celebrate this simcha. Chaim is our spiritual leader and Sol our Shamas. This birth is especially emotional because, in the month of March, 72 years ago, on March 25, 1944, Stella’s great-great-grandparents, Rachel and Haim Kofinas were taken from the synagogue in Athens to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, never to be seen again by their young sons, Sol and Zino (of Blessed Memory) Kofinas. Stella’s great-great-grandparents, Moises and Perna Kofinas (of Blessed Memory) were both born in Ioannina.

Stella Hannah Kofinas

~ We celebrate the birth of Joshua Arthur Schwaber, son of Catherine and Ross Schwaber on March 17. Joshua has a big brother Isaac Peter Schwaber. Joshua is the grandson of Sue Schwaber Tregerman, the great-grandson of Esther and Matthew Colchamiro (both of Blessed Memory), the great-great-grandson of Asser and Steroula Eliezer Coldhamiro (both of Blessed Memory). Asser died in Ioannina in 1919, from appendicitis, and Steroula brought her 7 children over to the United States in 1920 after burying her husband.

Proud parents with Joshua
We welcome hearing about simchas from our community. It is truly our joy to share your joys. If you lament not seeing your family photos in our e-newsletters, do share them with us. We can only publish them if we have them!

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Aikoi Mas, Los Muestros (our own) come home

Robin Rosenzerg connected with her Sephardic roots.

We are so lucky to have such impassioned volunteers among our docents.

Sol Kofinas, Stuart Chernin and Jeff Mordos all bringing their special backgrounds and experiences to KKJ
In March, Kehila Kedosha Janina continued to welcome visitors from around the world. We love welcoming school groups and synagogue groups to our synagogue/museum to learn about our special culture.

Orthodox Jewish Teachers of NYC

Marco of Congregation Agudas Achim in Austin Texas

We make new friends every month. Some live close by. Others come from far away.

Professor Ulrich Knufinke from Germany

Yeshiva of Flatbush Yeshiva Girls
Dear friends Omar Lugones and Theresa Teston Lugones from Extra TV in LA

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Purim at Kehila Kedosha Janina

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A warm gathering of old and new friends
On the Sunday before Purim, members of the Greek Jewish Young Professionals Network (GJYPN) gathered at Kehila Kedosha Janina to make up gift bags for elderly Jews on the Lower East Side.
Upcoming Event at Kehila Kedosha Janina

YOM HASHOAH AT KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA

This year, on January 27th, the International Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust, in Athens Greek-Orthodox Christian Righteous were honored for saving Greek Jews. In the words of Benjamin Albala,

“it is very difficult today to understand the disregarding of danger, the decisiveness and the heroism of those human beings, during the fearful circumstances and hunger of the period, to hide Jews who were their fellow citizens, having complete awareness that, if the SS or the Gestapo found out, certain death and torture was awaiting them.

What did it mean, then, to defy danger and play with your own life and that of your family by hiding condemned Jews? Only those who had special feelings of responsibility, desire to protect and devotion to their fellow human beings could accomplish such acts of heroism, self-sacrifice and altruism. They knew very well that being shot to death was the usual choice of the Germans for those who hid or helped Jews. However, they did not step back or waver confronted by their supreme duty to save a life, the merit which is called Humanity.”

Today, of the 25,685 Righteous from fifty countries honored by Yad Vashem, there are 328 Greeks-Orthodox Christians. There are also many who, for a number of reasons, have never been formally honored. There are those of our own congregants who were saved as hidden children and others who are here today because their parents were saved due to the moral courage of their fellow Greeks.

IT IS INCUMBENT ON US TO REMEMBER AND TO OFFER THANKS.

JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL CEREMONY HONORING THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WHO SAVED:

Sol and Zino Kofinas
Avraam, Esther & Isaac Battino
Meyer, Amelia, Ephraim & Ilias Hadjis
Elias Abraham Mordos
Rosa, Simatov, Esther, Havoula (Evelyn), Mary & Bertini Ackos

Where: Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street
When: May 1st at 2:00
Upcoming events of interest in NYC

Check out our Greek-Jewish Festival Website and save the date: May 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2016: http://GreekJewishFestival.com/

Greek Independence Day Parade in New York City on Sunday, April 10\textsuperscript{th}

In New York City, the Parade is contingent on availability of space on the busy NYC event calendar. In other cities, including those in Greece, it usually takes place on Greek Independence Day, March 25\textsuperscript{th}. Below are photos from Greece and elsewhere.

Athens, Greece

London

Amsterdam

Crete

Ioannina
Once home to the largest Ladino-speaking Jewish community in the world, the Aegean port city of Salonica (Thessaloniki) provides a unique window into the experiences of the broader Sephardic Jewish world.

This lecture will explore the history of the "Jerusalem of the Balkans", where Jews represented half of the city's residents and the port closed every week in observance of Shabbat. It will focus on the dramatic changes that accompanied the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of modern Greece in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Ultimately the Nazi occupation of Salonica resulted in the complete destruction of the city's Jewish community and few echoes of the memory of Jewish Salonica may be heard today.

Sponsored by the Sevy Library Memorial Fund in memory of Mildred and Dr. Harry Quain

Dr. Devin E. Naar is the Isaac Alhadeff Professor in Sephardic Studies, Assistant Professor of History and Jewish Studies, and founder and Chair of the Sephardic Studies Program at the University of Washington.

Professor Naar also directs the new Sephardic Studies Digital Library and Museum, which seeks to collect, digitize and make accessible Ladino literature as well as other artifacts pertaining to the Sephardic experience.
News from Jewish Greece

On March 3rd, there was a moving event in Xanthi in memory of the Jews who were deported by the Bulgarians on March 3, 1943. Included in the events was a visit to the Jewish cemetery.

On March 20th there were moving ceremonies in Salonika on the 73rd anniversary of the arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau of the first transport of Jews from Salonika.

There was a ceremony in Kastoria in Memory of the Jews who were deported to the concentration camps in March of 1944.
On March 30th, there was an event in Kavala in memory of the Jews deported by the Bulgarians in 1943.

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**Athens Mayor Signs Anti-Semitism Declaration**

Athens Mayor Giorgos Kaminis on Saturday signed up to a campaign launched by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to fight anti-Semitism.

Kaminis, who met with a 15-member delegation of the AJC, signed the declaration of Mayors United Against Anti-Semitism and stressed the commitment of the city’s authorities to combat racism and xenophobia.

According to a statement by Athens municipal authorities, both the AJC and members of the Central Israeli Council of Greece lauded Kaminis for his determination to stamp out anti-Semitism within Athens and the city council.

To date, around 60 mayors from Europe and more than 300 in the US have signed the declaration.
Looking For Rescued Boys

A teenager who saved 17 Jewish boys from the Nazi’s

Neoklis Girihidis was only 16-years old back in 1943, when he was assigned a very dangerous mission; to transport 17 Jewish boys from Thessaloniki to the guerilla fighters in the mountains, in order to escape the Nazis. 73 years later, the old man seeks again and again those children in his dreams. “Before I die, I want to know what has happened to those children” says Mr. Neoklis.

If this picture looks familiar to you and/or you are one of these rescued boys, contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

The Last Jews of Rhodes

A Daunting Discovery:
The largest Carabinieri Archives Outside of Italy and a List of 1661 Names Shed Light on a Greek island’s Darkest Moments

These papers cover the years between 1912 and 1946, a period of time when Rhodes was under Italian sovereignty; the occupation of the Dodecanese islands was part of Italy’s colonization policy. But unfortunately, for a short but fatal period, at the end of World War II, the island fell under German yoke.

The documents include information about many of the approximately 100,000 people formerly living on the island: about their social and economic life, their friends and enemies and their opinions regarding the different rulers of the time. A treasure for historians.
For the full article see:

Greek President at the Greek Club in Jerusalem

Greeted by our own Yvette Nachmias!
Absolutely unique 3rd century AD floor mosaics from the Antiquity Synagogue in the southern city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria’s only Jewish temple from the Antiquity period, have been restored by the Plovdiv Museum of Archaeology.

The mosaics, which are made with red, orange, green, black, and white stones, have never been shown to the public before, and this is the first time they can be seen in a form that is as close to their original as possible.

The Antiquity Synagogue of ancient Philipopolis (Trimontium in the Roman period), as Plovdiv was known in ancient times, was built in the first half of the 3rd century AD, possibly during the Severan Dynasty (r. 193-235 AD).

It is said to be the earliest known and the largest Antiquity synagogue on the Balkan Peninsula.

Its ruins were first discovered during rescue excavations in 1981 but its mosaics have been fully restored and showcased just now, 35 years later.

The Jewish temple was damaged several times in barbarian invasions and anti-Semitic persecution, and was rebuilt after each one of those, until the end of the 6th century AD when it was abandoned for good.

The Antiquity Synagogue was located close to the Small Basilica of ancient Philipopolis; its existence, and the inscriptions in Greek and Latin found in its ruins are taken to mean that in ancient times today’s Plovdiv was a truly cosmopolitan city.

The exhibition of the 3rd century mosaics from the ancient Jewish temple by the Plovdiv Museum of Archaeology is also the first time the mosaics have been seen in their true scale, reports the 24 Chasa daily.
The central image of the mosaics is a large menorah (a seven-branch lamp stand, the symbol of Judaism). Unfortunately, the lower part of the candelabrum could not be restored because the mosaics were destroyed in the Early Byzantine period.

To the right of the menorah, there is a depiction of a lulav (a date palm tree branch), and in the bottom corners there are inscriptions in Ancient Greek.

The inscription mentions with certainty the Jewish origin of the temple’s donors – Isaac and Joseph, who are said to be representatives of a sizable Jewish community in the ancient city.

The Synagogue, which is a basilica-type building, also had a second layer of mosaics added after a reconstruction in the 5th century AD; the artists of this second layer appears to have shied away from Jewish symbols.

"[The Antiquity Synagogue] is a unique monument of immense historical and artistic value," states lead archaeologist Elena Kisyakova who discovered the ruins and mosaics of the ancient Jewish temple during rescue excavations.

She adds that the Synagogue testifies to the important role that the Jews played in the public life of ancient Philipopolis (Trimontium), today’s Bulgarian city of Plovdiv.

The existence of the temple is also construed as evidence of the arrival of settlers from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, who are believed to have been rich merchants and craftsmen.

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Macedonian Soldiers in Bitola Help to Clean Up Jewish Cemetery of Monastir

![Macedonian Soldiers in Bitola Help to Clean Up Jewish Cemetery of Monastir](image)

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New Mexico History Museum to Open in May

Working with institutions in Spain, Mexico City and New York, curators Josef Díaz and Roger Martínez-Dávila have gathered physical evidence, including trial testimony, 15th-century tiles from El Transito Synagogue in Toledo, an 18th-century painting of a Mexico City auto-da-fé, family trees that appear to scrub out evidence of Jewish heritage (at left), silver Purim groggers, and more. They bring to life people like Don Bernardo López de Mendizábal, a 17th-century
governor of New Mexico, and his wife, Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche. Hauled before the Inquisition in Mexico City, they were charged with—though never convicted of—being secret Jews. Fractured Faiths reunites Spanish artifacts with their New World counterparts for the first time to reveal the history of the Spanish Sephardim—the stalwarts, the converts and the hidden Jews—and their long heritage within the Americas. A global story that played out on New Mexico soil, this monumental exhibit details one of history’s most compelling chronicles of human tenacity and the power of cultural identity. In concert with the exhibit, Fresco Fine Art Publications will produce a bilingual catalog of the exhibition’s most important artifacts and documents. A programming series will deepen visitors’ understanding of Jewish life in the Americas and the struggle to preserve identity against often tragic odds. Lending institutions to Fractured Faiths include Spain’s Museo de Teruel, Biblioteca Nacional de España, and Museo Sefardí; Mexico City’s Museo Franz Mayer and the Museo Nacional de Arte; and the Hispanic Society of America in New York City. - See more at: http://www.nmhistorymuseum.org/blog/?p=3080#sthash.SC9MyDYb.dpuf

Shackles from Inquisition trials in Mexico City

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Sefhardic Rabbi in Spain

On March 31, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain issued an edict, decreeing “the departure of all Jews from our kingdoms with instructions that they should never return.” That included some Jewish families that had lived on the Iberian Peninsula for more than 1,000 years.

Now, more than five centuries later, Jewish life is blossoming again. One remarkable sign of that is 34-year-old Haim Casas, who, when he completes his rabbinic training at the Leo Baeck College in London next year, will become the first Spanish-born rabbi since the expulsion.

Casas grew up in a Catholic family in Cordoba, the birthplace of Moses Maimonides, the famed medieval rabbi, physician and philosopher. As a teen-ager, Casas felt a tug of history and he became attracted to Judaism and Jewish history. He believes he descends from “converso” Jews, who centuries ago became outwardly Catholic but observed truncated forms of Jewish rituals and liturgy in secret.

“It’s just a memory, a feeling, a connection you have,” he said, explaining the attraction to Judaism. For Full article see:
Five Hundred Anniversary of the Ghetto of Venice

Our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, will be visiting the Museum in Venice in May and will give an update for our June E-Newsletter. In the meantime, do access the following for an excellent preview:

www.beitvenezia.org.

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Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel

The central theme of the Passover Seder is the 'four sons' and their questions: the wise son, evil son, simpleton and the one who doesn't even know how to ask questions. As anyone can see from the oldest to most contemporary editions of Haggadot, these sons are portrayed in ways that usually reflect prevailing attitudes/personalities regarding Jewish faith and involvement in Jewish life in every era. As such, they can be of any age, gender, and level of religious observance or lack thereof.

I will therefore take the liberty to change the terminology to four "children" of every age. Some of you might want to have a Haggadah next to you to compare the ideas and personalities.

The 'wise' child asks about specifics of the holiday and Seder. From the answer provided by the Haggadah, it is obvious that he/she is curious about details and specific Jewish laws, implying a rather good level of general Jewish knowledge, but more important, symbolizing that he or she has no significant question or doubt about Jewish faith or identity. Yet this child must always remember that he or she is often the exception to the rule, and not to denigrate those are less knowledgeable, or who have difficult questions of faith that must be reconciled. He or she may not identify with such individuals, but neither can they be dismissed or treated as not being part of a rather "exclusive" and homogeneous Jewish community.

In direct contrast, the 'wicked' child does not relate to the specific rituals, but rather shows an antagonistic attitude toward the entire Passover experience and even Jewish ritual altogether. He or she may actually be as knowledgeable as the wise child, but what is clear from the answer is that he or she willingly and knowingly excludes him/herself from the Jewish collective: "What does all this mean to YOU", as opposed to me; Why do you all persist in these rituals? I want no part of them. Therefore such individuals are answered rather harshly and basically told that by excluding themselves, they would have indeed stayed in Egypt and been lost to their own heritage and people. Yet the fact is, this 'wicked' child is attending a Seder! Despite open
agonism and purposeful baiting, he or she obviously feels comfortable enough to argue and even be reprimanded in the harshest way. The message must be clear to everyone: this individual is NOT YET totally lost and perhaps after a jolting reprimand be engaged and brought back into the fold; we must not give up in at least trying to encourage this person's involvement in Jewish life – no matter how uncomfortable it may be.

The so-called 'simpleton' merely looks around and asks "what is all this?" No 'attitude' or agenda. Many see this child as being overwhelmed by the entire ritual. Ostensibly he or she has some knowledge of Judaism and a certain level of observance, though minimal at best, and certainly has never really investigated or thought much about his/her heritage. So we emphasize the main theme of the meaning of the Passover celebration and the Exodus and G-d's role so that he/she will feel more part of the experience. We have an opportunity to use innocent and sincere curiosity and thirst for knowledge to increase awareness of G-d's miracles and greater knowledge of Jewish law and lore.

As for the one who doesn't know how to ask, we don't wait for any question. We initiate the conversation, begin from the beginning, patiently and lovingly, so that he or she will feel a part of Jewish heritage and its unique legacy and want to learn. This individual may also be someone too embarrassed to ask anything! Therefore, no short cuts or assumptions can be made. Whether a child or adult, we must begin with the very basics of Judaism and faith, and draw such people into the fold almost like a newborn child.

We must therefore be very careful about not only how we teach Judaism to each individual, but also never to exclude any Jew who demonstrates even the most marginal – and even antagonistic – attitude toward Jewish identity. As the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Shneersohn said, "Unfortunately, there is, in our time of confusion and obscurity, another kind of a Jewish child, a fifth child, if you were: the child who is conspicuous by his/her absence from the Seder; the one who has no interest whatsoever in Torah and G d's commandments... who is not even aware of the Seder, of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent revelation at Sinai. This presents a grave challenge, which should command our attention long before Passover and the Seder night, for no Jewish child should be forgotten and given up. We must make every effort to save also that "lost" child, and bring the absentee to the Seder table. Determined to do so, and driven by a deep sense of compassion and responsibility, we need have no fear of failure..."

Happy Passover to one and all!

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Kashkaval

For an excellent article on the historical roots of Kashkaval:


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Looking For Our Help

I have a question: My maternal grandmother was a Greek Jewess who married my Christian Orthodox grandfather, I believe about 1935 in Thessaloniki. At the time my grandmother was shunned by both her family and his, as was my mother subsequently when she was born. My grandmother was renamed and baptized as Katerina. My grandfather’s name was Sotiri Totokostopoulo. According to what I know, he owned the first auto garage in the city, and his nickname was "miteras." Of all the times I’ve been back to Thessaloniki, I never tried to find his family, since they all rejected my grandmother and mother. I have one photo of the two of them.
He died of TB when my mother was 3, and my grandmother died of cancer, in hiding from the Nazis with my mother 12 years later. Any help would be appreciated. This is the only photo I have of them together. Her name was Allegra Alboher aka Katerina Totokostopolou and he was Sotiris Totokostopoulu. My mother, their only child, was Liza Totokostopoulou. She was named after his sister from Thessaloniki. Thanks

From Sue Tregerman:

Aunt Sarah (Lenny, Jesse, and Elliot's mom) used to make the Greek cookies different than my mom, using sesame seeds.
Could you send me that recipe? Do you have it? Jesse does not.
Do access the article written by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, for NEO Magazine on the visit of Jack Jacobs.


Greek-American Hero, Author and TV Commentator Jack Jacobs – NEO Magazine
The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration presented by the United States government to a member of its armed forces. Created during the Civil War, the recipients “must have distinguished themselves at the risk of their own life above and beyond the call of duty in action against an enemy…

neomagazine.com

There have been a number of recent websites containing articles on Greek and Sephardic Jews that we would like to share with you.

One is an interview with Isaak Nehama who survived Auschwitz and testified at Eichman’s trial in Jerusalem. If anyone knows where we can find the descendants of Isaak, please contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/trials/nechamasalonika.html

Another interesting website (USHMM) recently posted a picture of Rabbi Kassorla from Monastir.

http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/trials/nechamasalonika.html
New CD for Sale

Aroeste’s album of Ladino music geared for children, Ora de Despertar (Time to Wake Up), has just been released and we are honored to sell it for $15 (including P&H within the continental USA).

Send you check made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina to us at One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743.
This newsletter is in memory of the 1,861 Jews of Ioannina who perished in the Holocaust. Rounded up in the middle of the night, March 24-25, 1944 and taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where most were led to the gas chambers and murdered on April 11, 1944. May their memory be Eternal. We will never forget.
So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

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

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