



# Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

April 2011 e-mail newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season. Kalo Pasca, Pesach Alegre, and Happy Easter to all our readers. In this issue, we add an additional dimension to our newsletter. One of our readers, Gershon Harris, who has a BA in Judaic Studies and History from Rutgers U and is presently living in Israel, will be offering us, what we hope will be a regular column, discussing items of religious interest. Appropriately, his first column in this issue will discuss foods eaten at Pessach.

Page from Sarajevo Haggadah



This newsletter, our 39<sup>th</sup> will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website ([www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org)).

We now reach over 5000 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

Pessach Services will be held at Kehila Kedosha Janina. For additional information on the schedule, access our website ([www.kkjsm.org](http://www.kkjsm.org) )

This month we lost too many. We mourn the passing of Mollie Weissbard at the age of 101. Mollie was the daughter of Hanoula Colchamiro and Isaac Cohen. Morris Levis, passed away at 81. Morris was born in Greece and survived the Holocaust in hiding in the mountains with his family. Louise Meyer, daughter of Herman Barouch of Blessed Memory passed this month, along with another relative of Ed Coffina, Essie Ganis Harris (age 97). We thank Asher Matathias for informing us of the passing of Elias Kones in Volos, Greece at the age of 88.

Special note is made of the passing of Edzras Moisis, who left us on January 1<sup>st</sup>. When I first met Edzras he was still President of the Jewish Community of Larissa. A prolific writer, we can thank him for his books on the Jewish community of Larissa. Due to his commitment, this precious community will not be forgotten.

This month, one of the most colorful figures of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki left us. Born in Cairo to Greek Jewish parents in 1918, Moisis Bourlas grew up in Greece (Naousa and Salonika). He served his country on the Albanian Front, fought in the Greek Resistance Movement (EAM/ELAS), and was imprisoned on Macronisos, the barren island in the Aegean that served as a prison for 'political' prisoners. Moisis was a Communist and wrote a fascinating book about his journey through life. He lost his Greek citizenship when freed from Macronisos and allowed to live in Israel. He fought for years to get his Greek citizenship back. I fondly remember Moisis regaling us with stories at the Saul Modiano home, as we ate mezedes, drank ouzo and sang songs in Ladino and Greek.

We welcome the birth of another member of the Colchamiro family. Mathew Thomas Dicks, son of Rebecca Colchamiro Dicks and Douglas Dicks, grandson of Jesse Colchamiro, great-grandson of Morris Colchamiro and Sarah Mazza Colchamiro, great-great grandson of Leon Colchamiro and Julia (Joyia) Mazza Colchamiro, and great-great-great grandson of Jessula Colchamiro & Rachel Galanos Colchamiro was given his name at his Brit Milah on March 6th 2011. MAZAL TOV!

## MUSEUM NEWS

March was a busy month in our Museum as we hosted the showing of "Ottoman Salonika" written and directed by Bob Bedford, a collaborative venture of FASSAC (the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture) with Joe Halio and Stu Fishelson. The enraptured audience was spellbound by the film. We will let you know when it is available for distribution.



Still from film "Ottoman Salonika"



Audience at Kehila Kedosha Janina

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On March 27<sup>th</sup> we joined with other organizations on the Lower East Side to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. Rabbi Romm of the Bialystoker Synagogue treated us to a thought-provoking discussion of Jewish response to tragedy. The event was co-sponsored by the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy.



Rabbi Romm leads discussion on Jewish response to tragedy.



Our Torahs are always fascinating to visitors.

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Our Museum was filled with visitors this past March.



Congregation Sons of Israel

Congregation Rodeth Shalom





**Δikoi Mas (Our Own) comes home.**



**David Goodman, great-grandson of Julia Matsil Cohen and Isaac Cohen (both of Ioannina)**

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**Shalom to one and all!  
Gershon Harris  
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel**



**In this column, I hope to present various traditions, customs, Sephardic Rabbinic Responsa (questions and queries addressed to Rabbis by individuals and entire communities over the centuries), and even anecdotes that I hope will make a small contribution to readers' knowledge of their proud and colorful history and heritage. Feedback is more than welcome! Enjoy....**

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**One of the most fascinating issues of Passover is what we might call the "kitniot controversy". "Kitniot" is a rather generic Hebrew term for several types of edible beans and seeds, usually referred to in English as "legumes" or "pulses" (string beans, peas, chickpeas, sunflower, soy, lentils, etc.). Even though the Talmud definitively rules that "hametz", or leaven, can come from only five types of grain: wheat, oats, barley, rye and spelt, Ashkenazi Jewry banned the consumption or use of kitniot in almost any form, as well as rice, on Passover.**

**Even the definitive ruling of the author of the Shulhan Aruch, Sephardic Rabbi Yosef Karo, that such beans and rice are permissible for all Jews to eat on Passover, did not end the controversy. Karo's Ashkenazi counterpart, Rabbi Moshe Isserles of Cracow, ruled definitively that Ashkenazim do not eat these items, this already being a time-honored and inviolate custom in the 16th century! And even though Isserles' prohibition can be interpreted as being limited to only eating kitniot or kitniot by-products, most Ashkenazim did not even allow non-edible uses of kitniot or their by-products, despite the fact that they are not hametz.**

Various answers have been offered to try and explain this amazing dichotomy between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Some authorities insist it wasn't the actual kitniot that were forbidden, but rather the form, because dry beans and certainly rice were often ground into a type of "flour", and baked like bread, which could confuse people. Others say that the way beans and rice were (and still are) often stored was the problem, because they were placed in huge cloth sacks with regular wheat flour in order to absorb excess moisture. And still others feel that the ban was due to the respective diets of the two communities at the time: Sephardim, concentrated more in the Mediterranean basin, North Africa and the Middle East, subsisted more heavily on beans and rice, while Ashkenazim, concentrated in much colder climates, relied more on potato and other root vegetables as their main staples, with legumes and seeds being less familiar and apparently better-off avoided. Ultimately, however, no single explanation for the "kitniot controversy" could be proven, leaving the custom intact, with the vast majority of Ashkenazim all over the world still very strict about not eating or using kitniot or kitniot by-products on Passover.

But it turns out that even amongst Sephardim, the "kitniot controversy" continues! By and large, Sephardic Jews and their descendants hailing from Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, other Balkan states and parts of Italy, do, in fact, consume legumes and rice on Passover, just as the Shulhan Aruch ruled. Likewise for Tunisian and Libyan Jews and the Middle East: Persia (Iran), Iraq, Yemen, etc. On the other hand, many Moroccan Jews are strict about not eating dry kitniot and rice on Passover, just like Ashkenazim! And while some Sephardic authorities "object" to these Moroccan stringencies, claiming that they were only due to the influence of various Ashkenazi Rabbis and emissaries who lived in Morocco at different times, other highly-authoritative Moroccan Rabbis adamantly insist that the prohibition against eating rice and dried legumes for Moroccan Jewry is a time-honored custom that should not be violated. Finally, and perhaps the most interesting custom found among even many Sephardim who do eat kitniot in all forms, they will still avoid chickpeas – "humous" – because it sounds too much like "hametz"!

And all this is just the tip of the iceberg, leaving numerous questions unresolved: For example, what do families of mixed Jewish heritage do, like Ashkenazi-Sephardic, or even Iraqi-Moroccan combinations? What happened in Ashkenazi communities during times of potato blight and famine? Were kitniot allowed as a temporary emergency measure? Even more basic, if the issue was that of grinding kitniot into flour, what about the potato, whose own "flour" is an especially important staple of Ashkenazi cooking on Passover? And what about Ashkenazic Rabbinical attempts to cancel the ban on kitniot use over the centuries? But all that, dear reader, is for another column.....!

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### Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

#### Yom HaShoah: May 1, 1:00

Join us to honor the memory of Jews from Greece (Kavala, Drama, Serres, Komotini and Alexandropolis) and southern Yugoslavia (Monastir and Skopje) who were sent to their deaths by the Bulgarians in early March 1943. If you wish to light a candle, please contact us. The ceremony will be followed by a power-point presentation by Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos.



Joseph Levi, a pharmacist from Komotini, was sent to Treblinka by the Bulgarians in March of 1943 and died at the age of 45, along with his wife Fortune, age 33, son Armond, age 17 and daughter Mary, age 4.

Additional coverage on Bulgaria and Jews

We have been informed by the Consul General of Bulgaria in New York, who made an unofficial visit to Kehila Kedosha Janina on March 4<sup>th</sup>, that the Prime Minister of Bulgaria will be a guest speaker at the Global Forum Convention American Jewish Committee (Washington DC-April 27-29) and that he will publically acknowledge both sides of the story of Bulgaria during WWII (the saving of Bulgaria's indigenous Jewish population and Bulgaria's complicity in the murder of the Jews of the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation in Greece and Yugoslavia). We look forward to receiving a copy of that speech.

In conjunction with this story of the plight of Jews in the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation we welcome this article printed by JTA on the President of the Jewish Community of Bulgaria and his acknowledgement of our losses.

*A Jewish community president who can't be called to the Torah? Meet Bulgaria's Alex Oscar  
By Ben Harris • March 28, 2011*

*Alexander Oscar, 32, the president of Sofia's Jewish community, speaks at a ceremony marking Holocaust day in the Bulgarian capital, March 10, 2011. (Ben Harris)*

*SOFIA, Bulgaria (JTA) -- Under a cloudless blue sky, in a square wedged between the National Assembly and the Rectorate of the University of Sofia, Alexander Oscar, the young president of Sofia's Jewish community, issued a blunt message to his countrymen.*

*The occasion was Bulgaria's Holocaust remembrance ceremony on March 10, a day meant to celebrate the country's heroic rescue of its 50,000 Jews during World War II, a feat unequalled in any Nazi-allied country and a rightful mark of pride here. But Oscar was determined not to let his fellow Bulgarians revel too much in their self-congratulation. He reminded them of the deportation of 11,000 Jews -- most of whom perished -- from Thrace and Macedonia, territories then administered from Sofia. He recalled the 1941 law that forced Jews to wear a yellow star and prohibited them from occupying public positions. And he noted that of the Jews deported from Sofia, all of the men were dispatched to labor camps.*



Alexander Oscar, President of the Jewish Community of Bulgaria

*As one local put it, Bulgarian Jews were raped, but not killed.*

*"We do not want to be radically changing the whole perspective," Oscar said later. "Slowly, slowly we are doing it.*

*"Gradual yet determined change may well be the perfect slogan for Oscar's three-year tenure as community president. Just 32, he is among the youngest presidents of a major metropolitan*

**European Jewish community, and he has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve outreach to the young and to enable Sofia to run more like Jewish collectives in the West. But Oscar holds another distinction he is less eager to mention: He is one of the only Jewish community presidents outside the former Soviet Union who is technically not Jewish, according to religious law. Born to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother but raised as a Jew, Oscar cannot be called to the Torah in his own hometown.**

**Among the changes Oscar is hoping to institute is one that would correct that anomaly. "The challenge today is how to bring Judaism more to the people of the community," Oscar told JTA in an interview in Bulgaria's capital city. "What I mean is, 99 percent of the members of the community are non-Orthodox; they are Liberal. Unfortunately, there is only one way of belonging to the synagogue, which is the Orthodox way. And now the challenge is how we make the community more pluralistic and open.**

**"We have a bunch of people, let's say 10-12 people, observing all the mitzvot. Let's say they are Orthodox," Oscar said. "The rest of the people, they are really searching for a meaningful Jewish way which is different from the traditional Orthodox way."**

**Across Europe, tensions have flared periodically between established Jewish religious communities, which tend to be Orthodox, and the rank and file, who are overwhelmingly secular. In Germany, Reform Jews lobbied for years to win state funding that previously had been granted only to the Orthodox. In Barcelona, a legal challenge to remedy a similar situation is reportedly underway.**

**But in Eastern Europe, where there's little tradition of non-Orthodox Judaism, the idea of a Reform religious approach -- known in Europe as Liberal or Progressive -- exists largely as a Western import. This is doubly true in Bulgaria, which virtually alone among European Jewish communities is Sephardic.**

**"Some Central and Western European countries have 200 years of Progressive Jewish history to hang your hat on," said one Jewish professional working in Europe who requested anonymity to preserve his working relationships in the region. "There's nothing like that in Bulgaria. So there is more of that kind of unusual I-may-not-be-observant-but-my-observance-is-traditional-when-I-do-it."**

**Oscar believes many Bulgarians are hungry for just that sort of Western-style Reform Judaism, citing the recent visit of an American Reform rabbi who gave several well-attended lectures. But in pushing for such changes, Oscar has set himself on a collision course with the small part of the community that is religiously observant -- and possibly with a far larger group that, while not personally Orthodox, may want the community to adhere to its traditions.**

**"I cannot agree that we have to lower the standards just because most people are not observing the same level," said a member of the Sofia synagogue board who asked not to be named. "My opinion is that we have to educate as many people as we can to teach them how to live as Jews." Oscar is among the generation of Eastern European Jews who benefited from the millions of dollars of Western philanthropy that flooded into the former Soviet bloc after the fall of communism, much of it coming from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the overseas relief agency funded primarily by the Jewish federation system.**

**Those dollars have yielded a passionate cadre of young Jewish leaders, products of Jewish summer camps, leadership training seminars and sustained exposure to the Jewish organizational culture of the West. But they have also introduced particular models of Jewish**

**community -- especially, models of religious community -- to areas with no history or familiarity with them.**

**"I think at times unintentionally, and at times intentionally, we are -- all of us across the spectrum -- very much projecting our own models onto these social contexts," said Berlin-based Rabbi Josh Spinner, the American-born executive vice president and CEO of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. "It might not be possible to restore the pre-Communist way of doing things, but one has to at least be sensitive to it. Instead, the assumption is that those people need to think like me. It's all a set of discourses that we have imported."**

**A physician who holds a PhD. in neuro-ophthalmology, Oscar was not even a teenager when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Among his earliest impressions of Jewish life were the American money and volunteers that started pouring in during the 1990s.**

**"For me at that time, I was a kid of 11, 12 years of age, it was very astonishing why people who practically we had never seen are helping people that they had never seen," Oscar said. "And it was really very important for me. It was the basic question that I was asking myself in the next couple of years until I really understood that this was the main mission of Jewish people, to help each other."**

**Oscar's enthusiasm led to his being tapped for a community leadership post in 2003 by Emil Kalo, then the community president. Oscar told him he'd join the board only if he could be the vice president in charge of youth affairs. The young leader first earned his stripes by making good on a promise to open a bar where young Jews could gather. Elsewhere in Europe, such things have happened outside of community structures. But Oscar placed his hangout on the top floor of the Jewish community building overlooking Vazrazdane Square in central Sofia.**

**Now Sofia's community president, Oscar has eschewed the salary and chauffeured car that are considered standard perks for European Jewish community heads. He speaks of communal transparency and youth empowerment, and he carries with him a trio of Apple computer products: iPhone, iPad and laptop. These days, along with Martin Levi, a 23-year-old lawyer also not halachically Jewish, whom Oscar tapped for the community board, Oscar is hoping to exert a liberalizing influence on the community's religious institutions.**

**How divisive this effort will be depends in large part upon whether Oscar's constituents are as comfortable with his thinking as he believes they are, and upon how much they oppose change. Despite his talk of pluralism, Oscar opposed the establishment of Chabad Lubavitch in Sofia as a religious entity distinct from the established community. Oscar says he is not against Chabad's religious character, but he opposes the idea of having a Jewish community institution split apart from the rest of the community.**

**"I'm not trying to replace the Orthodox synagogue with a Reform synagogue," Oscar said. "I just want to make more options for the people in the community. So, some of them will be Orthodox. Some of them will be Liberal. We have to create as many opportunities as possible."**

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**Dedication of Holocaust Museum in Skopje in Memory of Jews deported from Yugoslavia  
Macedonia by the Bulgarians.**

**March 10, 2011 -- Skopje, Macedonia -- AJC joined today in the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia. The center, erected near the center of the country's capital city of Skopje, includes a memorial to the 7,144 Holocaust victims, a museum depicting the history of Jews in Macedonia, and a planned intergroup cultural center.**



***"The tragedy of the Jews of Macedonia during the Holocaust is a particularly painful one," said Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC Director of International Jewish Affairs, who played a central role in the planning for the Holocaust Memorial Center. Baker also serves as president of the center's international advisory board.***

***"Uprooted by Bulgarian gendarmes from their homes virtually overnight, their assets seized, they were handed over to the Nazis who took them overland and by ship to Treblinka," said Baker. "It is a story that is all the more poignant since civic and religious leaders in neighboring Bulgaria proper managed to prevent similar deportations of Bulgarian Jews."***



***Baker, who has played a central role in securing restitution for remnant Jewish communities from Central and Eastern European governments, worked very closely with the Macedonian Jewish community, which today numbers around 200, and the government over the past decade.***

***"In Macedonia there quickly emerged an exemplary partnership between the government and the Jewish community," said Baker. "Successful resolution of restitution claims enabled the creation of the Holocaust Fund in Macedonia which has in turn created this memorial and museum and cultural center."***

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**Opening of ASF Exhibit on Balkan Jews at Center For Jewish History-March 31<sup>st</sup>**

See ASF website for additional info.



## Upcoming Events of Interest to Greek Jews

### New York City

JCC In Manhattan, "Saviors on the Screen", A Film Series For Yom HaShoah. Nearly 90% of Greek Jews perished in the Shoah. Of the approximately 10,000 who did survive, most were helped by neighbors who risked their own lives to save them. This year we will screen two documentaries about the Greek Jewish experience: *In the Shadow of the Acropolis* (by Laura Zelle and Maxine Davis in Association with Tolerance Minnesota) features members of the Ackos family—Romaniote Jews whose presence in Greece dates back 2,000 years—relating their extraordinary story of survival. *It was Nothing ...It was Everything* by filmmaker Sy Rotter and the Foundation for Moral Courage recounts acts of moral courage through archival footage and interviews with Greek farmers and housewives, church leaders, and professionals. A post-screening discussion, facilitated by Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos, Museum Director of Kehila Kedosha Janina, will include representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church and Greek Jewish survivors.

Where JCC in Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Avenue at West 76th Street


When: May 1<sup>st</sup>: 7-9 PM

Please note that there is an admission charge (\$8 for members of the JCC and \$10 for non-members).

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### New Jersey

Devin Naar will be the guest speaker at the Annual Yom HaShoah Holocaust Commemoration at the Flemington JCC in Flemington NJ on Sunday, May 1, 2011 at 10:30 am.



**Flemington Jewish Community Center**  
Serving the Jewish Community of Hunterdon County with religious, educational, and social programs

ANNUAL YOM HASHOAH  
HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION SERVICE

Featuring Guest Lecture by  
**Devin E. Naar**

**In Search of Uncle Salomon:  
Recovering Family Fragments  
from the Holocaust in Greece**




Photo by Andrea Soroka

How do we go about remembering the Holocaust if the story of lost family members remains veiled in mystery? Devin Naar, a New Jersey native completing his PhD in History at Stanford University, will discuss his nearly ten year journey to assemble the fragments of his own family's experiences during the often overlooked Holocaust in Salonica, Greece—once home to the largest Sephardic Jewish community in Europe.

**Sunday, May 1, 2011 @ 10:30 am**  
**5 Sergeantsville Rd, Flemington, NJ 08822**  
**[www.flemingtonjcc.org](http://www.flemingtonjcc.org)**

## Connecticut

**Yale University: Tuesday, April 12, 5:00 PM**

**Paris Papamichos-Chronakis - PhD candidate, University of Crete**

**"Living Together in Late Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Salonica. Greeks, Jews and Muslims and the Transformation of Middle-class Sociability, 1900-1922"**

The talk approaches the question of the de-judaization of Salonica by looking not on state policy and state-community relations as current historiography does, but by focusing instead at the level of social relations and the transformations of middle-class sociality. The talk will initially analyze the ways upper middle-class Jewish merchants forged an urban hegemony in late-Ottoman Salonica by constructing, signifying and dominating the city's multi-ethnic associational world. It will then follow the gradual erosion of this Jewish public hegemony after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the city's annexation into the Greek State. It will stress the importance of the emergence of a new culture of sociality based on the (Greek) professional association for the Hellenization of Salonica and will analyze the Jewish merchants' responses to it. The paper thus argues that the decline of Jewish hegemony was not the direct outcome of authoritarian state policies but intersected with a broader transformation of the city's middle classes.

**Sterling Memorial Library (SML), International Room  
120 High St., New Haven, CT 06511**

The lecture is co-sponsored by the History Department, the Judaic Studies Program and the Hellenic Studies Program at Yale University.

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## Indiana

The story of the Holocaust in Bulgaria, "Empty Boxcars" by Ed Gaffney will be shown on Monday, April 11, at 4:00 PM, sponsored by Purdue University Calumet, Indiana University Northwest and Valparaiso. For additional information, contact Ed Gaffney: [edgaffneyjr@gmail.com](mailto:edgaffneyjr@gmail.com).

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## Washington DC

Isaac Benatar, author of "Rhodes and the Holocaust" will be doing a book signing at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Where USHMM: Washington DC**

**When April 24 from 1-4**

Isaac will honor Kehila Kedosha Janina with his presence on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 (see upcoming May newsletter for further details).

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## Greece

**Two concerts by Doret Florentin**

**For a preview of the talent of this Sephardic performer list at: <http://www.mlat.org/>**

## Thessaloniki

**16.04.2011 Thessaloniki Concert Hall, at 21:00 o'clock**

**25 Martiou and Paralia St.- Thessaloniki**

**<http://www.tch.gr/greek/Events/All%20Events/2011A/E15.htm>**

**Athens**

**17.04.2011 Ioannina Synagogue, Athens, at 19:00 o'clock  
8 Melidoni St., Athens**

**Doret Florentin  
Ensemble Me La Amargates Tu  
melaamargatestu@gmail.com  
tel: 00972 544 744901  
Esteban Manzano  
tel: 0031 63 4628285  
www.mlat.org**

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**We are excited to share this good news: Devin Naar, great-grandson of Rabbi Naar of Blessed Memory of Etz Hayyim in New Brunswick NJ who was born in Salonika will be Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Washington in Seattle. The position is a tenure track joint appointment in the dept. of History and in Jewish Studies (housed in the School of International Studies). He will also have an affiliation with the Hellenic Studies program and will teach courses in European Jewish history, the Holocaust, Sephardic history and culture, and Jews of Greece, the Balkans, and the Ottoman Empire, among others. Devin is thrilled and so are we!**  
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**CALL FOR MATERIAL FOR NEXT EXHIBIT**

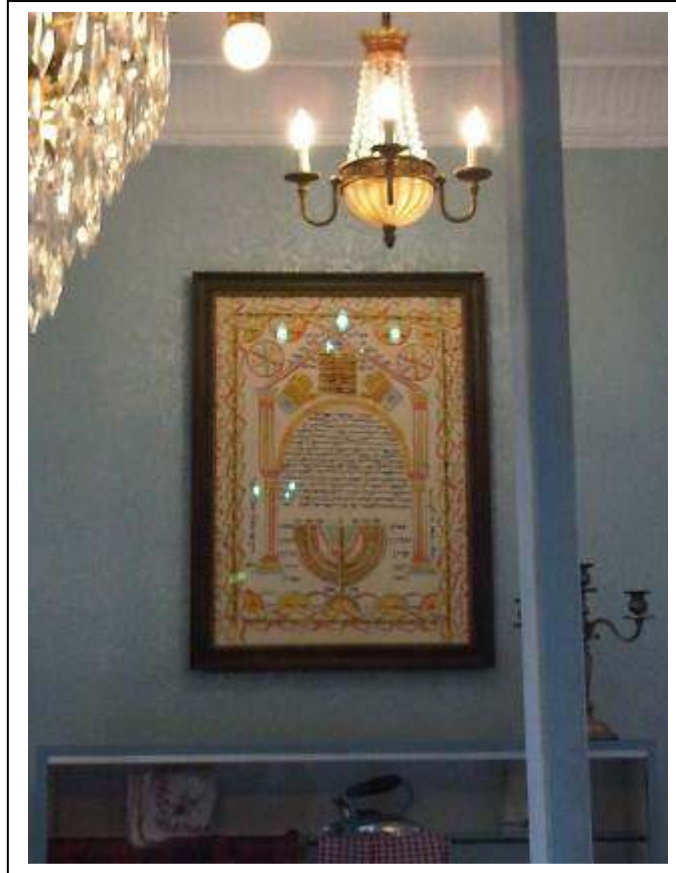
**Hunt down those old photos! This month we received this priceless photo of the Zacharia Levi family from Joanna Ioannidis Bartels (his great-granddaughter). Zacharia was the half- brother of Amelia Levi Matsil, wife of Bechoraki Matsil, all of Blessed Memory.**



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**Please send us the addresses where your Sephardic and Romaniote families lived (in the Bronx, Harlem, Brooklyn and the Lower East Side). If your family moved out of New York, let us know when and where to. We are compiling a data base and cross-referencing this with census and immigration records. It will give us a clearer picture of the demographic of the Greek Jewish world. We are planning "old neighborhood" reunions and this information will enable us to reunite neighbors who may not have seen each other for decades.**  
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**We celebrate the new acquisition in our Museum, the Alef (Brit Milah Amulet) of Solomon "Shorty" Matza donated by his grandchildren.**



### **Articles of Interest on Greek Jewry**

**The Jewish Palate: The Romaniote Jews of Greece**

**By DENNIS WASKO**

**03/14/2011 13:26**

**Chef Dennis Wasko explores the history of the Jews of Greece, how they integrated into the society and how they adapted their cuisine.**

**Jews have lived in Greece and the surrounding areas for over 2,000 years. The descendants of this ancient population are known as Romaniotes, which denotes their existence since the time of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire. They are a smaller Jewish subgroup, distinct from the Sephardic Greek community which did not arrive in Greece until their expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Romaniote community was once a strong segment of Greek society and large concentrations could be found in most major cities. Today, after their near annihilation during the Holocaust, most Romaniote Jews live in New York and Israel.**

**The Romaniote population is thought to represent the oldest permanent Jewish settlement in Europe. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE many Jews were taken into slavery and shipped to Rome. According to Romaniote tradition, some of those ships ran aground in the Ionian Sea near the Albanian coast. The survivors managed to get ashore and eventually came to settle amongst the Greeks in the area that would become Ioannina. They adopted Greek customs and culture, but remained Jews. They adopted the Greek language, but continued to**

use Hebrew symbols. Eventually their language became known as Yevanic, a form of Judeo-Greek.

The 12th century traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, documented the existence of large Jewish communities living in Corfu, Arta, Corinth, Thebes, Thessaloniki, and other Greek cities and towns. The largest population was in Thebes with about 2,000 Jewish inhabitants. The Jews worked in the garment industry, dyeing cloth, weaving, and making silk clothing. Benjamin referred to the Jews he saw as Romaniotes.

The year 1492 saw wave after wave of Sephardic Jewish settlement in Ottoman Greece. The expulsion of Spain's Jewish population heralded a new era for Greek Jews. Suddenly, there were two distinct Jewish populations living in Greece: the Yevanic speaking Romaniotes, and the Ladino speaking Sephardim. Not only did they speak different languages, but they also practiced different customs. The Romaniotes were followers of the Jerusalem Talmud and the Sephardim followed the Babylonian Talmud. As a result, the two groups lived in separate communities. Over time, the wealthier Sephardim gained more power and affluence, leading to the assimilation of many Romaniote communities.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Romaniote population of Ioannina had reached roughly 4,000; but by the beginning of World War II, that number had dropped to about 1,950. Time and periodic bouts of Anti-Semitism had reduced the overall Jewish population, but especially the Romaniote population which was small to begin with. The once strong Romaniote population of Corfu was forced to flee in the late 19th century during a pogrom instigated by a blood libel.

The Jewish population of Greece was savaged by the Holocaust. It is estimated that 86% of Greek Jews were exterminated by the Axis powers. In Thessaloniki alone, it is estimated that 49,000 Jews were deported and murdered. Once again, the differences among the Jewish communities became apparent. The Sephardim were easier to weed out as their Greek accent was not as pure and convincing as the Romaniote Greeks. In Ioannina, 1,860 out of 1,950 Romaniote Jews were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau in April, 1944 and murdered.

There are only 4,500 to 6,000 Jews remaining in Greece today. Most Romaniote Jews live in Israel and the United States. While there is still a small population remaining in Greece, it is an aging population and dwindling quickly. The Romaniotes of today follow the Sephardic Rite as the Romaniote Rite no longer exists except for a few Zemirots used on the Island of Corfu.

The cooking of the Romaniote Jews is classically Greek with its use of locally grown and seasonal produce. When the early Jewish refugees settled in Greece, they adapted the cuisine of their neighbors to Jewish Dietary Laws. This differs from the Sephardic Jews who held on to the culinary traditions of their Spanish ancestors. Over time recipes were exchanged between the communities so that today both Romaniote and Sephardic recipes are grouped together as one culinary tradition, though many of the Sephardic recipes retain their Ladino names.

One of the most important staples of Greek Cuisine is a pot of braised greens. Greek peasants have survived many hardships by eating the wide variety of wild greenery that grows all over Greece. Even in times of great famine the people of the mountainous regions have fared well by simply eating what naturally grew in their backyards. Drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and paired with rustic peasant bread, the greens become a vitamin packed, nutritious meal.

This is my version of classic Greek-style braised greens. It makes a great side dish or the focus of a vegetarian meal. The long, slow braising makes the greens meltingly tender and delicious and they are perfect for Passover or anytime.

## **Greek-Style Braised Greens**

**Serves 6**

### **Ingredients**

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped**
- 4 to 6 garlic cloves, sliced**
- 2 pounds rinsed and stemmed kale, Swiss chard, dandelion greens or a mixture, roughly chopped**
- 1 cup fresh or canned tomato puree**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked pepper to taste.**
- Extra virgin olive oil for garnishing**

### **Directions**

- 1. Heat a large saucepan over medium low heat. Add olive oil, onion, and garlic. Sweat until the onion turns translucent and is very soft (about 15 minutes).**
- 2. Add chopped greens, tomato, lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir to combine, cover the pot, reduce heat to low, and allow the vegetables to steam for 10 minutes.**
- 3. After 10 minutes, stir the greens. Cover the pot and allow the mixture to braise in natural liquid for 1 hour.**
- 4. Check pot to be sure there is enough liquid. If too dry, add a little water to moisten the greens. Continue cooking for one more hour or until the greens are very soft and tender.**
- 5. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Serve the greens drizzled with more olive oil.**

**<http://www.jpost.com/FoodIndex/Article.aspx?id=211945>**

**We thank Nora Romerstein for the previous article.**

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**Greetings!**

**We have good news for Spring!**

**Gogo's Garlic Dip - authentic Greek skordalia will arrive in all 6 Whole Foods Markets in Manhattan this Wednesday, March 23!**

**Skordalia is a flavorful and piquant dip, known in the Greek kitchen, and ready to be discovered by the rest of the world! Our skordalia is made from a base of bread and delicious extra virgin olive oil (imported from Crete) and is available in four flavors: Original, Dill, Olive & Rosemary and Roasted Red Pepper.**

**Gogo's Garlic Dip is new to the marketplace and represents the first skordalia that we know of that is made for a broad audience. Here's where you can find it:**

- CHELSEA, 250 7th Ave at 24th Street**
- COLUMBUS CIRCLE, 10 Columbus Circle, Concourse Level, open from 8:00am to 11:00pm, seven days a week.**
- UPPER WEST SIDE, 808 Columbus Avenue, between 97th and 100th Street**
- BOWERY, 95 East Houston St, at Bowery**
- UNION SQUARE, 4 Union Square South**

- **TRIBECA, 270 Greenwich Street, between Murray and Warren Streets**  
Take some home and experiment with new and creative ways to use it too! Try the Olive & Rosemary on
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## **REQUESTS FOR OUR HELP**

**Michael Waas is looking for help in locating relatives from the municipal archives of Larissa and Volos. His family included Angels and Amariglios. We would appreciate any information on accessing these records and, especially information as to whether the archival records have been digitized.**

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**I'm on a quest to find a picture of my Papu. His name was Isaac Cantos and whenever I meet someone from the lower eastside they identify me as the grandson of the man that made and sold Italian Ices from the push cart. My father, all of my aunts and uncle are gone and none of my cousins have a picture of him. I see that you come across so many pictures of the lower east side and my Nona and Papu lived next door to the Temple so maybe there's a picture of him someplace. It's very sad for me because he died before I was born and I have no memory of him. My Nona was Ester Myones Cantos, they lived at 91 Allen Street, my aunts were Sarah, Ester, Katie, Regina, Ray and Uncle Nissan (Big Chick) and my father Sam (Little Chick).**

**Thank you  
Ike cantos**

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**We were contacted by Jean Papadopoulos, living in Brussels, Belgium, whose family is from Paramythia, Greece.**

**As he was researching his family, he discovered that there were 3 or 4 Jewish families who lived in the small city of Paramythia. He is looking for descendants of the following families.**

- **Erza Bakolas and his wife Dinah or Dinoula (daughter of Yesula Calchimiras or Calchimiro), her son Nissim (married with Esther Kohen?)**
- **Matathias Eliezer Chadzopoulos and her sons Haim and Machicos**
- **Matathias and Yehuda Calchamiras**
- **Elias Cohen and his son Iosif Cohen**

**They are looking to create a possible museum and will incorporate the stories of Jews in their city. They found photos of their stores and a junk broker had one or more furnishings from one of the families.**

**Of course, we recognized most of these names, most coming originally from Ioannina. We will do our best to help Mr. Papadopoulos and would appreciate any additional contact information on descendants from these families.**

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**We were contacted by Eitan Fiorino who sent us the following message:**

**Hello,**

**I own a megila of the purim katan celebrated by the Jews exiled from Sicily. The scroll dates from the 1800s and was probably written in Salonica. I understand that descendants of Sicilian Jews in Turkey and Greece continued to celebrate this purim katan (is it referred to as Purimoplo or Purimpoulo?) at least until the Shoah. I am wondering if there are any among your kehila who still celebrate this purim katan or who know the tune with which the megila is read. Thanks so very much in advance for any help you can offer. We believe that Eitan is referring to the special Purim celebrated by Jews in Ioannina who (according to oral history) came from Siracusa. Please send us any information that you have.**



## NEW ITEMS FOR SALE

Write up on Richard Solomon's CD interview with Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos by Jerry Lippman of LI Jewish World/Jewish Sentinel

*March 25, 1944, sixty-seven years ago, the Jewish Community of Janina Greece is taken by the Nazis to the concentration camps. The survivors and descendants of this extremely small Greek-Jewish Community can be found today on the lower East Side of Manhattan. This is their continuing story reported in a one hour audio book.*

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*Join Museum Director Marcia Ikonomopoulos and 88.1 FM's Richard Solomon through a fascinating audio journey discussing the Greek Jewish experience in America.*

*Located below Manhattan's skyscrapers, just around the block from today's Chinatown on the historic Lower East Side of New York City lies a hidden treasure few know about...*

*A 2,000-year-old culture virtually unknown, even to its neighbors. A tiny group. A minority within a minority. They are called Romaniotes. An obscure branch of Judaism, which few Jews have ever heard of, with traditions dating back to Roman times.*

*The founders of this community are the descendants of Jews who, after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., were sent on a slave ship to Rome. Instead, a storm forced them to land in Greece, where over the next 2,000 years, they developed uniquely different ethnic and religious customs adopting many local customs while maintaining their religious identity.*

*Today, all these years later, you can visit the only synagogue in the Western Hemisphere of this, obscure Jewish community. The Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum. Still operating in its original form since 1927.*

**CD Content: Greek Jewish Genealogy and Research Tools, Family Names and their Origins, Nicknames, The Synagogue History (founded in 1927 by Greek Speaking Jews), the food!, Arranged Marriages, Occupations, The Journey to America and Ioannina today.**

**The CD is available for purchase as a CD on CDBaby.com, and as a digital download on Amazon.com and on iTunes.**

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**Itunes and <http://www.digstation.com/AlbumDetails.aspx?albumid=ALB000069114> for a digital copy and on CD Baby for a physical copy: -800-289-6923 (or, of course, through us at the Synagogue or by mail (e-mail us at [kehila\\_kedosha\\_janina@netzero.net](mailto:kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net))).**

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**GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY IN GREECE AND USA: March 25, 2011**





**WEBSITES AND INTERNET ITEMS OF INTEREST**

"The Great Fire of Smyrna is the name commonly given to the fire that ravaged Izmir/Smyrna from 13 to 17 September 1922. Turkish armed forces systematically burned the city and killed Greek and Armenian inhabitants. This is based on extensive eyewitness evidence from Western troops sent to Smyrna during the evacuation, foreign diplomats/relief workers based at Smyrna and Turkish sources." - Wikipedia.org

Robert Davidian's grandfather, George Magarian, born in 1895, educated at the American College at Konya, Turkey and, later, director of the Konya YMCA, filmed Smyrna, Turkey, immediately after it's genocidal destruction.

The resulting 35mm edited nitrate film was hidden in my grandmother's apartment in NYC for 60 years. I was lucky to transfer it to digital before it completely disintegrates. -Robert Davidian 5 March 2008

<http://www.vimeo.com/10069165> We thank Orestes Varitsiotis for the above information.

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We thank Leon Saltiel for this information on a video of Thessaloniki from 1915 (taken by the British).

<http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=80610>

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Do catch the story of the deportation of Ioannina Jews on Radio Sepharad:

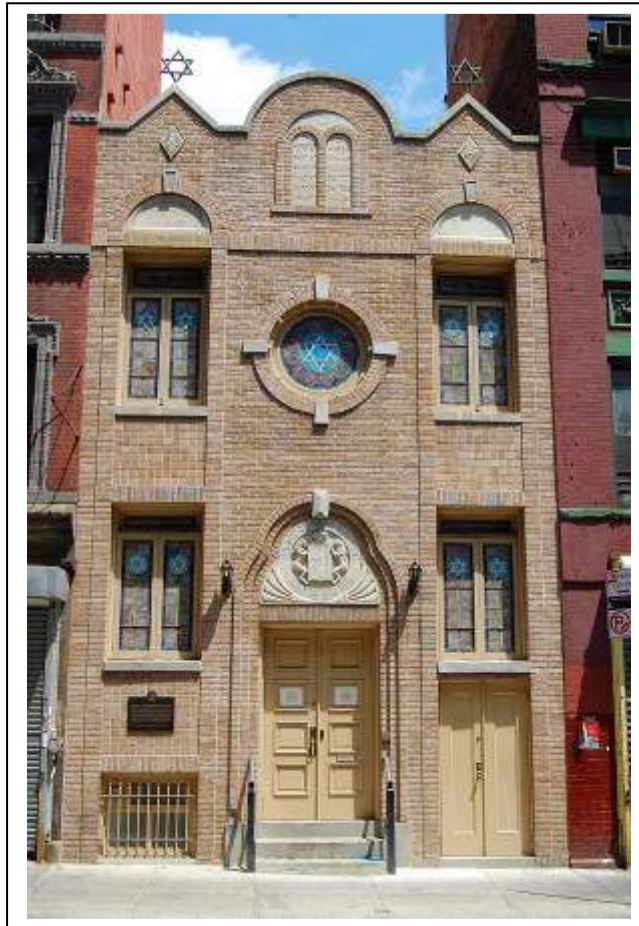
[www.radiosefarad.com/html/index.php](http://www.radiosefarad.com/html/index.php)



**And finally, if you need a good smile today:**

**<http://www.youtube.com/athenos#p/u/1/JmD-wDEeOds>**

**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.**



**Kehila Kedosha Janina e-newsletter: number 39: April 2011  
Kehila Kedosha Janina, 280 Broome Street, New York NY 10002  
kehila\_kedosha\_janina@netzero.net**