

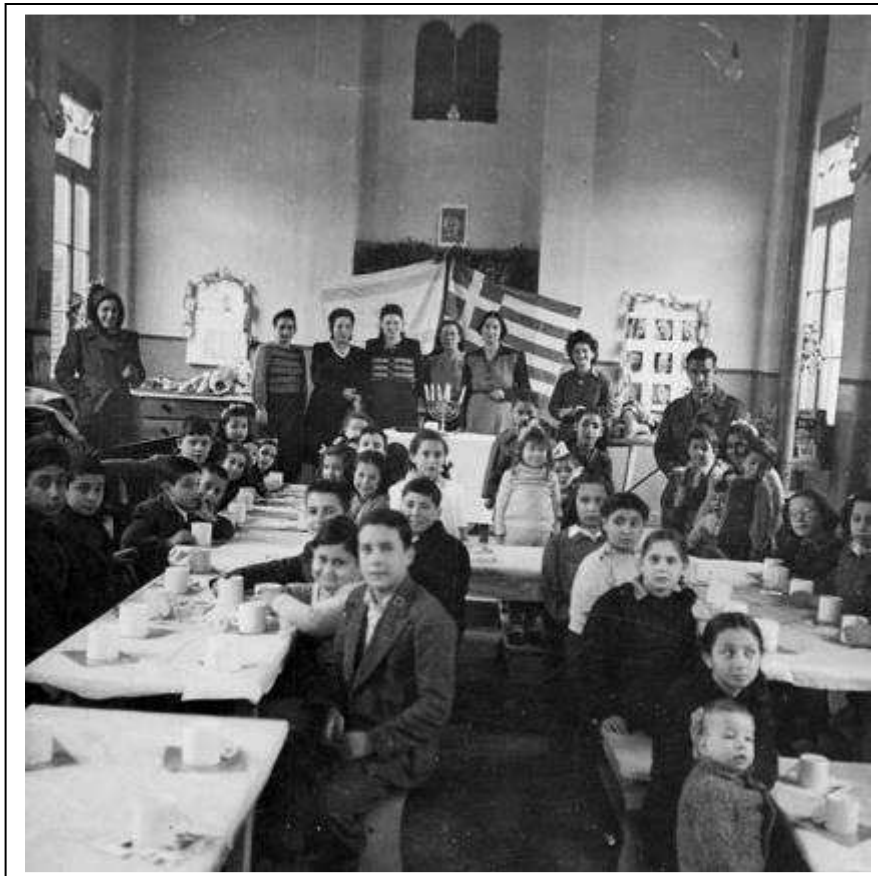


May 2015 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

April was a month mixed with joy and sorrow, as we celebrated Pessach, the story of Jewish survival and remembered those who were lost in the Holocaust at Yom HaShoah. Let us never forget those who were lost but, let us take courage from those who survived and went on with their lives, ensuring the continuance of Greek Jewry. This issue, our 75th, is in honor of the Greek-survivors, both those who survived the camps and those who survived in hiding.

**Hanukah
celebration
in Salonika
for those
children who
survived.**



This newsletter, our 75th 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.

Passings

~ This month we mourn the passing of another one of our Yanniote survivors, Yaacov Vechoropoulos (Bechoropoulos) who passed away on February 17, at the age of 88. He lived in Ramat Hasharon, Israel, with his wife Batya. Yaacov was the youngest son of Israel and Mazal-Tov Bechoropoulos who had 6 children (3 daughters and 3 Sons). Two daughters, Astro and Tikka were murdered by the Nazi's in Auschwitz along with Israel and Mazal-Tov. Another daughter, Stamula (now deceased), married Yosef Cohen of Ioannina and immigrated to Jerusalem (Palestine at the time) in the late 30's.



Bechoropoulos family in Ioannina in 1937

The 3 Sons are:

Haim (Victor)) Vechoropoulos who married Anna Levis from Volos and immigrated to Miami, Florida in the early 50s. Victor passed away in 1987. Anna is 97 years old and in a Nursing Home in Aventura.

Moshe (Moiz) Vechoropoulos was the only family member who survived Auschwitz, returned to Greece after the war and married Simha (Cecile) Tsiprut in Athens in 1949. They immigrated to Israel that year. They had two sons: Israel Peles and Aharon Peles. They lived in Ramat Gan and in their late years in Kibbutz Hatzerim. Simcha passed away in Jan.2009 at age 82 and Moshe in November 2012 at age 93.

Yaacov Vechoropoulos joined the Partisans in Greece, conducting various operations against the Nazi Occupation. He immigrated to Israel in 1948 and married Batya who escaped the oppressive regime in Syria as a young teenager, along with other Syrian Jews. Yaacov and Batya had two children, Israel David (He changed his last name to the original last name of the family) and Michal Vechoropoulos. They both live in Israel and are distinguished academic Professors.

With Yaacov's passing, the entire 2nd generation of the Vechropoulos family is now lost, but not forgotten. May they all rest in peace,

Submitted by Israel Peles, son of Moshe and Simcha Vechoropoulos.

May their memories be a blessing.

We mourn the passing of Marvin Mazza, son of Zion and Mollie Mazza, both of Blessed Memory and both born in Ioannina. Marvin was 86 years old. Martin was an exporter of industrial tape.



Marvin Mazza and cousin, Jesse Colchamiro



Colchamiro extended family gathering



Simchas

~Congratulations to Eleni Gage de Baltodano and Emilio de Baltodano Oyanguren on the birth of their second child, Nicolas Jose, born on April 2nd, grandson of Nicolas and Joan Gage. Pictured here with big sister, Amalia.



Aikoi Mas, Los Muestros (our own) come home



Aaron Solomon

Lee and Nel Attas
and friends



Sophie Nachmias and friends

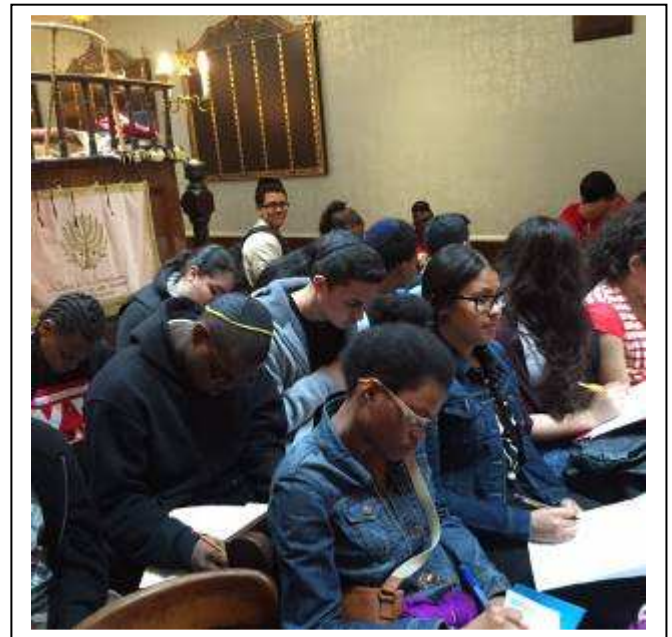


Martin and David Samuels with Dina Klein (a stewardess with EL AL)

We had a visitor from Israel, Mazal Levy, descended from the Negrin family from Ioannina, who brought great pictures with her.



~We are always overjoyed to welcome synagogue and school groups to Kehila Kedosha Janina



Lyons School from East Williamsburg

Past Museum Events

Book signing on April 12th. Kehila Kedosha Janina was thrilled to welcome Isaac Dostis with his US presentation of his new book, "Ioannina My Ioannina."



Sol and Rhea Solomon



Eliza Solomon, Fani and Steve Negrin



Paul and Rebecca Solomon



Rachel, Alexa and Richard Solomon



Isaac Dostis with members of the Dastis family and Millie Froot

This year we were greatly heartened by our excellent turn-out for Yom HaShoah on April 19th. It is a mark of the times that this year we had no survivors from the camps present.



Opening of Viktor Koen's photo exhibit, Sylvia on April 19th

The exhibit will be on display through May 24th.



Honoring Solomon Kofinas of Kehila Kedosha Janina at Bronx Criminal Court

Each year, in the Bronx, at the Bronx Criminal Court, a survivor of the Holocaust is honored. This year, the honoree was Sol Kofinas. Sol spoke of his experience as a hidden child and, how, in one day, his life was completely changed. Sol was only 7 years old, his older brother, Zino of Blessed Memory, a mere 14, when they were left orphaned.



Sol Kofinas



**Sol and Koula Kofinas with two
Lawyers from the Bronx Court**

Upcoming Events of Interest In New York Area

On view through June 2015 in The David Berg Rare Book Room

Sephardic Journeys

A new exhibition at the Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street, New York, NY

The Sephardic Diaspora extends from Shiraz and São Paulo to Salonika, Seattle, and Sheepshead Bay. What unites the beautiful, complex, and diverse mosaic culture of Sephardim is a history of journeys—sometimes by choice, too frequently by force—that have driven Sephardi travelers and traders, publishers and philosophers, scientists and singers to transcend borders and barriers as they pioneered today's globalized world.

The rare books and artifacts in this exhibit, *Sephardic Journeys*, reflect a rich tradition of scholarship and culture shaped by migrations, and they invite, in turn, reflection upon the physical, emotional and spiritual journeys of Jewish history.

**SAVE THE DATE
MAY 31ST
GREEK JEWISH STREET FESTIVAL**

See Enclosed Flyer



Ari Negrin on Orchard



Economy Candy



Pizza Place on Broome

Shop owners advertising our Greek-Jewish Street Festival on the Lower East Side

OPENING RECEPTION:
Sunday May 3, 2015
5:30 - 8:30pm

Curated by Carolyn Ratcliffe and Paul Bridgewater
Coordinated by Eileen Kim and Erik Bottcher

Please join the LESPI as we debut this collection at The
Clemente Soto Velez Cultural
and Educational Center
LES Gallery, 1st Fl
107 Suffolk Street, New York, NY

This remarkable collection of contemporary photographs, shot by photographers whose artistic roots are in the East Village, shows unique and beautiful portraits of a now familiar neighborhood. Please join the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative as we debut this collection, to remind people of our neighborhood's beauty, wonder, and individuality, and to call out for the preservation of its invaluable, irreplaceable legacy, for our own and future generations.

Admission is free. Light refreshments will be served.

Contact Info:
LESPI
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative
232 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10003
www.LESPI-nyc.org
info@LESPI-nyc.org
347-827-1846
Subway:
FMJZ to Delancey



CLEMENTE SOTO VELEZ
CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL CENTER



LOWER EAST SIDE
HISTORY MONTH



NYSCA



NYC
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



50
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE NYC
LANDMARKS LAW

May 3 - May 30, 2015

East Village
Lens on the Lower East Side



LESPI

A photo exhibition to celebrate
the 50th Anniversary of the NYC Landmarks Law
and
Lower East Side History Month

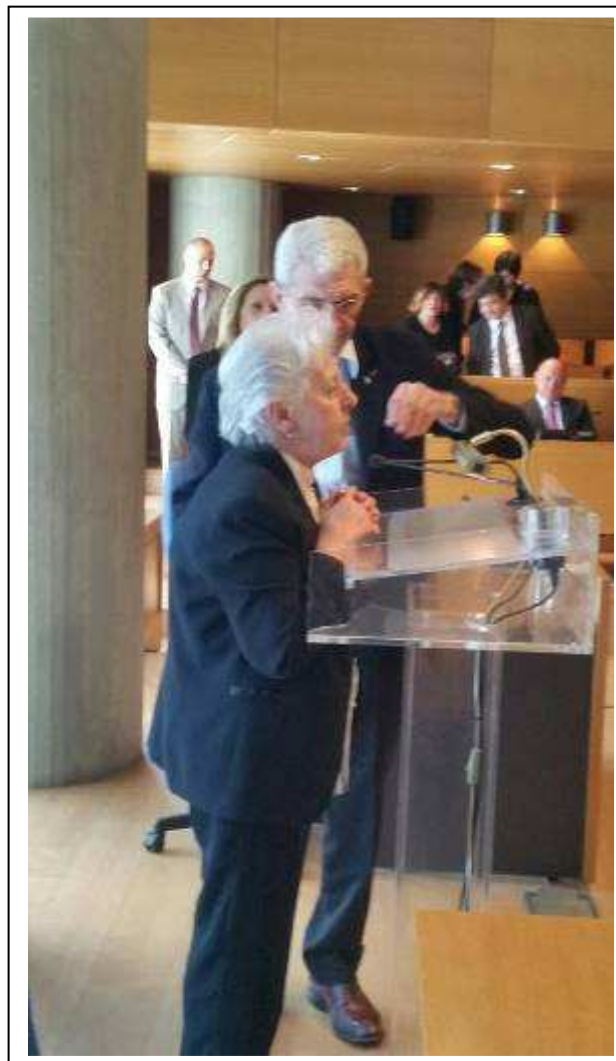
THIS PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED, IN PART, BY PUBLIC FUNDS FROM THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY COUNCIL; BY THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE.

News From

Jewish Greece

Thessaloniki

Today at the Municipality of Thessaloniki, the Righteous Among the Nations Award Ceremony took place (given to people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust). In a very touching ceremony, attended by more than 250 people, Mrs. Constantina Economakou, niece of the rescuers, received the award. Mrs. Victoria Benouzilio, who was rescued, was present. Ambassador of the State of Israel Ms. Irit Ben-Abba bestowed the award to Mrs. Economakou. Mayor Boutaris was present at the ceremony and the 28th Lyceum of Touba presented a theatrical play about the rescue story.



Kavala

On May 17, 2015, there will be the unveiling of a Holocaust Memorial in Kavala in memory of the 1,484 Greek-Jews of Kavala who were killed in the concentration camps. To date the only memorial was in the Jewish Cemetery. We will have pictures of the event in our June, 2015 e-newsletter.

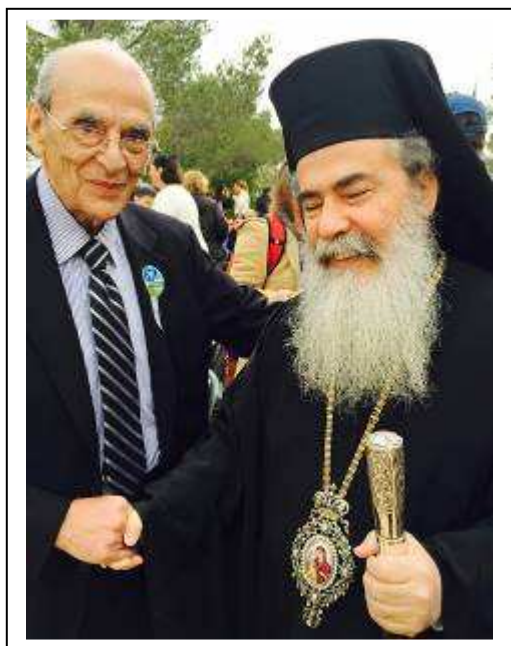
Ioannina

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

See program in attachment.

News of Interest To Greek Jews

Honoring Rabbi Pessach at Yad Vashem



Finding Savvas

An old Holocaust secret newly told

Israeli brothers Avraham and Peretz Hassid knew not to question their Greek-born mother Shoshana about what happened to her during the Holocaust, but an American author with her own family secret has changed the way they viewed their family's history.

Nir Cohen

Published: April 16, 2015 Israel Jewish Scene

Dozens of black and white photos are scattered across the small dining table in a modest house in Rehovot. Some of the people looking into the camera are smiling, others have a melancholic look. One does not need to know the figures in the photos to sense a tragic story deeply hidden. But until now, there was no one to tell it.

Avraham and Peretz Hassid have been the owners of the photo collection since their mother Shoshana and aunt Nina passed away. But the people in the pictures remained a mystery. Avraham is convinced that the little girl in one of images bears a resemblance to his mother. Perhaps the children by her side are her younger siblings, perhaps on one Purim on the Greek island of Corfu. The brothers Hassid had many questions that they never dared to ask. Their mother Shoshana had been through enough, they told themselves, and they had no desire to hurt her further.

Shoshana took her secrets with her to the grave. And neither brother imagined that they would one day receive a phone call that would turn their lives upside down. "We have a story about your mother that you have to hear," said the person on the other end of the line. Their mother's life-long secret, her personal story, was about to be revealed - and she was not there to confirm or deny it. The secret of Ereikousa was about to come to light.

A story without an ending

The events of the Holocaust in Greece have always been studied in Israel through the framework of the destruction of the large and thriving Jewish community of Salonika.

The smaller yet equally flourishing community in Corfu, which numbered about 2,000 people before the war, was taken by rickety fishing boats to the trains bound for Auschwitz, and was also almost entirely destroyed. But there are few references to it in historical literature.

And if little has been written about Corfu, there is almost nothing about the nearby island of Ereikousa. A single article was published in Israel in 1977, describing the tiny island as a magical landscape, whose hundreds of residents run a remarkably unified community. "A markedly egalitarian society", the article says of the island.

"We have no police and no courts, the residents are responsible for their actions towards others," the article quotes one of the elderly residents as saying. "We all belong to one family, and we are all cousins."

The old man was not quite right. Perhaps he did not know what happened on the island in 1943, perhaps he knew and chose to remain silent, as did all of his neighbors over the years. In the seven decades that have passed, not one of the Christian people living on Ereikousa has spoken of the Jewish family of five who hid on the island during the Nazi occupation.

It was an act of concealment shared by all of Ereikousa's residents, who risked their lives and those of their families. And it is a legacy that passed from the original keepers of the secret to their children and grandchildren.

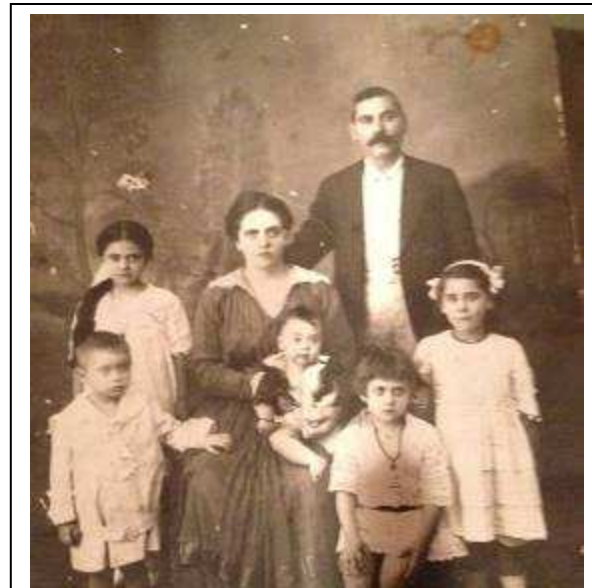
The unraveling of the secret started more than a year ago. Director and writer Yvette Manassis Corporon, an Emmy winner of Greek origin, published her book "When the Cypress Whispers," inspired by memories of her grandmother, a resident of Ereikousa.

The book recounts a key event in the life of Corporon's grandmother - the rescue of Jewish tailor Savas, who escaped from Corfu during the Holocaust. And although the book was well-received and won critical acclaim, Corporon believed that until she knew what had happened to the Jewish family, the story had no ending.

Abraham & Peretz Hassid



Savas & his Family



"My grandmother said Savas fled to Ereikousa with his three daughters and his granddaughter when the Nazis came to Corfu, and the islanders hid them," Corporon told Ynet.

"Every night, under cover of darkness, they would come out of hiding and come to my grandmother and she would welcome them with joy. The Nazis were conducting searches on another island to which Jews had fled, but despite explicit warnings that anyone hiding Jews would die along with all his family, no one revealed the secret. Everyone knew Savas and his daughters were hiding in the parsonage, but no one told."

A shocking discovery

Corporon decided to try to locate Savas' descendants, to find out what had happened to them. She never imagined the huge emotional rollercoaster to come, one that would span the globe. She initially turned to the veterans of the island, some of whom remembered the Jewish tailor and his three daughters, Spera, Julia and Nina, and a little granddaughter named Rosa. Some thought that their surname was "Israel", but no one was sure, and no one knew what had happened to them.

Corporon then turned to the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, whose staff had helped survivors from Corfu, in order to locate Savas' descendants. One Corfu native said that the name rang a bell, while another even said he that Nina, Spera and Rosa were with him on the illegal immigration ship "Henrietta Szold" in 1946. The ship was captured by the British and its passengers were deported to Cyprus.

Staff at Yad Vashem managed to track down a few more isolated details. "Nina married a man whose surname was Levi, Spera married a man named Vittorio Moustaki and Rosa apparently also married, lived in Rehovot and had children, but we did not know their names," Corporon said. Julia did not have children, and died in Greece.

"It was a very frustrating time," says Coporon. "I received an email that read: 'Unfortunately, we have reached a dead end, let us know if you have more details.'

"But I had one name - Vittorio Moustaki. I went to the MyHeritage site (a specialist in researching family trees), which I knew has a giant database of over a billion names, and typed the name 'Vittorio Moustaki.' My coffee cup almost fell out of my hand when I got results."

Corporon found a large family tree that lists Vittorio Moustaki and some first names of his family of Israel. But the details did not correspond – the ages and relationships of the family did not match. She got in touch with the principal contact listed on the family tree, and within an hour received back a family photo. Yvette quickly checked the information with people who knew the tailor's family. The people in the picture were not the ones she was looking for.

Frustrated at the impasse, Corporon asked MyHeritage for help. "It's a needle in a haystack," she was told, "but we will do all we can to help."

The details of the mysterious story reached the website's founder, Gilad Japhet, a specialist in difficult family histories. He offered to help and was immediately sucked deeper into the story.

"There is little information here, some of it contradictory," Japhet wrote to his staff. "My chances of finding relevant information through the available data are unfortunately less than 0.1 percent."

But Japhet decided not to let it go. He plunged into a mountain of documents and rescued information, and began to study names. That same night, he found Nina. Excited by the discovery, he reported his findings.

"I am delighted to report that I did it," wrote Japhet. Of all the women in Israel called Nina, he had found one who arrived from Greece after the war, and who had the previous surname "Israel". Her father's name, as it appeared in the official recordings, was Savas, and her mother's name was Shoshana.

"Shoshana could also be called Rosa," Japhet wrote to his staff, "and there was a good chance that the granddaughter Rosa was named after her grandmother."

Japheth located Nina's grave at Kiryat Shaul cemetery, and on the headstone was written her father's name, Shabtai – the Hebrew version of the Greek name Savas. Buried by her side, Japhet discovered, was her husband Rahamim Levi.

Japhet then turned his attention to Spera, assuming that if she had come to Israel, she could well have changed her first name. The name Spera, Japhet guessed, comes from the Spanish word *Esperanza* or hope; the Hebrew version, *Tikva*, was a common Israeli name.

Acting on this assumption, he went looking for all the women called *Tikva* who came to Israel from Greece after the Holocaust. The first name to jump out at him seemed promising. *Tikva Levi*, a resident of 21 Geula Street, Tel Aviv.

"This is the same street in which I found Nina," says Japhet. "I thought it wasn't a coincidence. I assumed two family members who survived the Holocaust and came to Israel probably wanted to live next to each other."

Japhet described his findings in a detailed email to Corporon. "Year of immigration to Israel - 46. It seems that was on the ship 'Henrietta Szold'. Father's name: Savas. Wow!. Mother's name: Rosa. I believe that this *Tikva* is the Spera we're looking for, because the pieces of the puzzle fit together so well. The chances of this being a coincidence are low."

With a little more detective work, Japhet located *Tikva's* granddaughter in the US, Michelle Mendelowitz, and told Corporon how to reach her. "She may lead us to Rosa's children in Rehovot," he wrote. "I am giving you the honor of contacting her and I look forward to hearing the outcome of the conversation."

"My head exploded and spun at the same time," says Corporon. She wrote back to Japhet: "You solved the puzzle, they should save you a place in heaven."

Corporon contacted Mendelowitz in Los Angeles and told her the story. Mendelowitz told her in turn that Spera was her step-grandmother, who had married a second time to her grandfather, after she had gone through a bitter divorce with a man named Vittorio Moustaki. Mendelowitz and her mother knew Rosa (*Shoshana*), who had died just a few years earlier. She gave Corporon information about Rosa's family in Rehovot - Bnaya, Avraham and Peretz Hassid.

Meeting on the street

In April 2014, Peretz Hassid's phone rang. On the other end was Aaron Godfrey from MyHeritage. "We have important information about your mother from the period of the Holocaust," Godfrey announced, and asked for a meeting.

The Hassid brothers, who were suspicious, agreed to meet with Godfrey and Japhet on the street outside their house. And soon they realized that the story they had been told was true.

"They knew everyone's name and the family connections between them," says Avraham. "They told us that our mother hid with three aunts, whom we had met, and with Savas, whom we knew nothing about, in a village in Ereikousa and that Christians hid them throughout the war. My mother's time in the Holocaust had been a black hole for us until that moment."

Among the pictures in the Hassid apartment, Japhet identified a photo of Savas. The MyHeritage researchers told the Hassids that their aunts were not their biological family but had formed an intimate connection with their mother as their fates became intertwined.

"The Germans invaded Corfu and began to round up the Jews," says Japhet. "We assume that Savas, who was a tailor and used to visit the neighboring island, fled there from Corfu with the help of friends, taking with him his daughters and a little girl called Rosa who had been left alone when her family was taken."

On June 6, 1944 a transport from Athens arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau, carrying 2,044 Jews of Corfu. The German documents from Auschwitz place *Shoshana's* father, Peretz Belleli, at Buna-Monowitz, the forced labor camp next to Auschwitz. According to the records, he was murdered on March 9, 1945. Details of the rest of the family have not yet been found.

The Hassid brothers were finally learning their mother's history. And in a Skype call from the US, an emotional Corporon told them for the first time the story of the family's rescue on the island of Ereikousa.

"Suddenly we realized where it all began," says Peretz. "We were never allowed to ask our mother about the war. Occasionally we would hear her talking to our aunts in Greek, but we were not allowed to interrupt. It is very moving to think that an entire island was involved in the rescue and that we are here thanks to the people there."

Shoshana Hassid, it turns out, was married in the 1950s to Yaakov, an immigrant from Turkey. In 1964, just a few years after she rebuilt her life, her husband was killed in a work accident.

"At that moment, her life was over for the second time. She had seven years of relative happiness, that's all. After that she only wore black and knew no happiness," says Avraham.

"The world was cruel to Shoshana," says her friend Rina Mizan, herself an Auschwitz survivor from Corfu. "She did not have a moment's relief in life. She would occasionally come to my house, and we would be silent together."

The most dramatic moment of the meeting with Shoshana's sons occurred at its close. Sigalit Hassid, Shoshana's daughter-in-law, suddenly recalled that a few years earlier, her daughter Inbar had been investigating the family's roots.

Sigalit thought that perhaps her daughter's school project included something about the Holocaust, and rushed off to look for it. Shoshana, it turned out, did not tell her children anything, but could not refuse her granddaughter.

"The Germans came to the island of Corfu, where my grandmother lived," wrote Inbar. "They gathered up all the Jews in Corfu, including my grandmother's family, her parents and her brothers, and killed them all. My grandmother and three aunts were saved because they were hidden from the Germans by good gentiles who agreed to help."

All the information finally fell into place. The Ereikousa story was true.

A brother who survived

MyHeritage researchers began to map out all the information known to them, collecting all the documents in Greek left by Shoshana, all the pictures and all the contacts, and began looking for relevant documents from around the world.

After many conversations with Auschwitz survivors from Corfu, it emerged that Savas had another son, Solomonio, who was more than likely killed by partisans who suspected him of collaborating with the Germans.

In the documents Shoshana submitted to Yad Vashem in 1999, she listed the names of just two of her six siblings – Menachem and Gabriel. MyHeritage staff contacted government officials in Greece and Israel, and they agreed to help.

A document in Greek found in Shoshana's apartment, with a birth certificate signed by a notary, led to the discovery of a file from the 1990s containing Shoshana's request for compensation, at the archives of the Ministry of Finance. The file also contains a testimony by Shoshana, in her own handwriting.

"In '43, the Germans came to Corfu and immediately began to round up all the Jews, but the Germans could not catch those who fled. I ran into the mountains and villages with the help of other people. After the Germans occupied the city, I wandered from place to place with no clothes and no food. I feared that the Germans would catch me."

The file states that Shoshana was the only one of her family who remained alive, and that she had been afraid her entire life that the Germans would return and take her too.

To obtain conclusive evidence about her family, MyHeritage staff explored every possible avenue, including the testimony by Shoshana, who had been just 9 when the Germans caught her family.

"My brother Gabriel Belleli, 15, was killed in Auschwitz," she wrote in her testimony at Yad Vashem. But international searches turned up an exciting fact: Gabriel Belleli, born in Corfu in 1930, is on the list of survivors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The last recorded date on which Belleli appears is September 1945, six months after the war ended. Could it be that Shoshana's older brother survived?

The information converges with the examination of documents at the City Hall in Corfu, and chances of this being the right person drastically increase. Gabriel Belleli, born in 1930, is the son of Peretz - the same name as Shoshana's father.

In 1955, Gabriel Belleli is removed from the population registry in Corfu, and is now listed as "Not in Existence."

"Now the task is to track down Gabriel Belleli," say the MyHeritage staff. "If he managed to survive, it is possible he never knew his sister Rosa survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel."

Common fate

For Avraham and Peretz, this is startling information. Until recently, they knew nothing about their mother's history, and suddenly the family that they knew was no longer the same. They look at the picture of the three young children, and wonder whether one of them is Gabriel, and whether he survived.

"Seventy years after the Holocaust, suddenly everything is up in the air," says Avraham. "It pains me that my mother is no longer alive and I cannot talk to her about what happened there, as I now know what happened to her."

As the investigation continues, the story reaches the organization of Jewish communities in Greece, who decide to hold a special ceremony to honor the residents of Ereikousa for the rescue. Corporon, who has found the end to her book, was suddenly hit by a fateful event. In April 2014, thousands of miles from Israel, a neo-Nazi opened fire at a Jewish community building in Kansas City, killing three people. The motive for the murder was anti-Semitic, but the dead were passers-by and Christians.

Two of the dead, 14-year-old Reat Underwood and his grandfather, Dr. William Corporon, were Yvette's relatives. "In one moment, at the height of the investigation, I became a victim of anti-Semitism myself," she tells Ynet. "My fate is now tied to the fate of Savas' family."

Savas' daughters, Nina and Julia, were married but neither had children. Julia remained in Greece, and was married and died in Athens, where she is buried in a Jewish cemetery. Nina died in Israel, as did Spera.

Now, the investigation is focused on trying to locate Gabriel Belleli and finding the burial place of Savas, who apparently died after the war and was reportedly buried by his daughters with their own hands. The trauma experienced by Savas' daughters during the Holocaust went with them to the grave.

Avraham and Peretz, the last surviving biological members of the family, will go to Ereikousa in June for a ceremony, during which Savas' old sewing machine will be placed in the parsonage where the family was hidden during the war.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4647522,00.html>

In Memory of Joseph Laxana

In 1948, during the Israeli War of Independence, Joseph Laxana gave his life for his new country, Israel. He was born in Arta, Greece.



Articles of Interest To All

Ottoman-era Athens as it has rarely been seen before

Gennadius Library showcases aspects of the Greek capital in 1458-1833

By Nikos Vatopoulos

Presenting a new narrative, an exhibition currently on display at the Gennadius Library digs up Ottoman-era Athens and presents it from an entirely different perspective. A collaboration between the library, the Benaki Museum and the Museum of the City of Athens – Vouros-Eutaxias Foundation, the exhibition sheds light on the years between 1458 and 1833, a period we are accustomed to seeing at best in the halflight or through the prism of stereotypes.

The time is perhaps ripe to be addressing the past and present of Athens and speaking with greater confidence and conviction about a significant period in terms of time and history which was by no means static.

According to the organizers, the exhibition explores several themes about the everyday life of the inhabitants of Ottoman Athens, as well as examining the interest shown by foreign visitors and travelers. The significance of excavations at the Athenian Agora, which revealed the remains of the Classical-Roman-Byzantine and Ottoman city, is also highlighted.

But it is also about the relationship of people in the early modern period with the city of Athens, “juxtaposing the remains of its classical past with the customs and lifestyles of the Ottoman period; it investigates the impact of the past on the negotiation of people’s identities in later periods.”

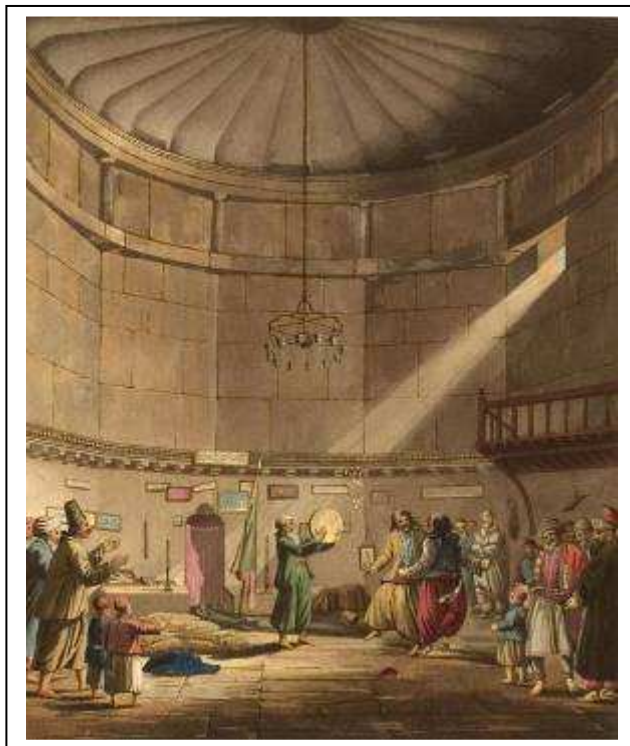
Ottoman-era Athens, as it is showcased in the exhibition, has different hues, strata, dark and brilliant moments, and, of course, a native class of Athenians, most of whom led a bourgeois life. Together with the Turks, the Arvanites, the Armenians and other subjects of the mighty empire, as well as many Europeans, whether living here permanently or passing through, Ottoman-era Athens, though a small city, had a vibrant life that unfolded against a backdrop dominated by antiquities, small churches, a bazaar and Turkish monuments. Among these were dotted old Athenian houses, typical examples of Ottoman urban architecture.

This entire world has been studied through a wealth of testimonial material, which allows us to draw a mental map not just of how the city looked at the time but also of those pieces of modern-day Athens that help us understand how the city was back then; and not just landmarks, but collections and artworks that survive and are stored in museums and archives.



This is a collaborative exhibition. Curated by Gennadius Library director Maria Georgopoulou, with Alikí Asvesta acting as scientific supervisor, and with the contribution of dozens of researchers and designers, the exhibition draws from a vast pool of knowledge. Descriptions penned by travelers constitute the canvas and the team has added material from “A History of Athens” by Ioannis Benizelos (1753-1807), evidence from studies on finds such as ceramics, and knowledge of the products, narratives and customs that prevailed at the time: “Ancient inscriptions built into the homes of the wealthy symbolized the unbreakable bond that Athenians had with their city’s glorious past... The Europeans were ever-present: consuls, ambassadors, poets, artists, Philhellenes and scientists. Others studied and made maps of Athens, while others still were living it and drawing their own map.”

Other museums and institutions have also contributed to the exhibition, such as the Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation, which made it possible to access the material digitally. Maps, images and scenes of life in the city are brought to life thanks to the Gennadius collection, while Athens, as it was at the peak of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th century, is captured in a monumental painting by Jacques Carrey, which belongs to the Museum of the City of Athens.



A rich variety of costumes, as seen in the Gennadius Library's exquisite publications, as well as objects which belonged to Lord Byron, complement this comprehensive exhibition. The viewer leaves with the knowledge that Athens was not what we thought.

The exhibition "Ottoman Athens, 1458-1833" runs through June 30 at the Gennadius Library at the American School of Classical Studies (61 Souidias, Kolonaki, tel 210.721.0536, www.ascsa.edu.gr). A colloquium titled "The Topography of Ottoman Athens. Archaeology and Travel" will take place on April 23 and 24.

ekathimerini.com , Saturday April 4, 2015 (14:46)

Shalom to one and all!

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



Shalom one and all!

This year's special memorial event on Holocaust Remembrance Day in the KKL- JNF Martyrs Forest near Jerusalem was dedicated to Rabbi Moshe Shimon Pessach (1869-1955), the Rabbi of Volos, and later the Chief Rabbi of Greece. He, together with help from the Archbishop Joachim Alexopoulos, Metropolitan of Demetrias and Bishop of Volos (died, 1959 and honored as Righteous Among the Gentiles in 1977 thanks to efforts by survivors from Volos), managed to save the lives of 74% of the Jews of Volos.

The details of this amazing story can be found on many websites, one of the best and most detailed being the KKL-JNF site itself: <http://www.kkl.org.il/eng/people-and-environment/israeli-and-jewish-festivals/yom-hashoa/rabbi-shimon-pesach-biography/>. I would strongly suggest that KKL readers read this amazing story.

But the amazing rescue of almost his entire community came at great personal sacrifice and tragedy to Rabbi Pessach: the capture and murder of two of his sons by the Nazis and the death of his wife while in hiding in the Greek mountains. Yet not only did the Rabbi exhibit extraordinary courage in rescuing his fellow Jews, he also established a partisan unit that helped rescue allied soldiers and fight the Germans. One can only stand in awe while reading of the actions and bravery of this extraordinary individual, because in the greater context of Jewish history, Rabbi Pessach's life and actions represent some of the most basic tenets of Jewish faith and holiness.

Judaism is a religion of life, and the love and preservation of human life is probably our most precious and loftiest principle. Jewish law itself demands that in a case when someone's life is in danger, or even might be, all commandments are suspended or even violated, with the exception of three cardinal "sins" which we will discuss below. Death, therefore, may be an inevitable and unavoidable part of the life cycle of mortal man, but it is never to be worshipped or perpetrated as any kind of pathway to divine favors or paradise. Nothing sums it up better than the Mishnah in the Talmudic tractate of "Sanhedrin": *"Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world."* Therefore, first and foremost, Rabbi Pessach's determination to save his community was a clear fulfillment of Judaism's demand to preserve human life at almost any cost.

But the darker side of this demand can be very cruel. Though martyrdom as such was never sanctioned in Judaism as a way of reaching divine favor, Judaism considers any Jew who is killed because he or she is a Jew to be a holy martyr. And though death is to be avoided at almost any cost, there are still three transgressions that a Jew cannot commit, even on the pain of death: Idol worship, incestuous/forbidden sexual relations and murder. Obviously, the horrors of the Holocaust all-too-often presented Jews with the impossible third option, where one Jew's life might be saved if he or she was willing to send another Jew to his or her death. In the nightmare world of the Nazi monsters and cruelty, obviously not everyone could meet this lofty principle and we have NO right to judge anyone's actions in the context of the Holocaust. But Rabbi Pessach demonstrated in the most painful way that he could not stop his rescue efforts for saving the lives of Volos' Jews, even at the expense of seeing his own sons murdered. And even if he had no control over their fate, what gave him the strength to carry on in his mission after his own flesh and blood were no more? Furthermore, his wife died while still in hiding, and yet Rabbi Pessach continued. I cannot help but thinking that certainly a major factor in his determination was his Jewish faith and understanding of the value of a single Jewish life, and that he would be violating Judaism itself by somehow saving his own sons at the expense of other Jews.

And he didn't stop after accomplishing the impossible by saving so many Jewish lives: he formed a partisan group to help allied soldiers, which one can assume were not necessarily Jewish, and fight the Germans, which was like fighting evil itself. This is also an illustration of another very basic principle of Judaism that goes back to Creation itself: Every person's life is precious because man was created in God's image, and that we have a duty to try and improve the world, ergo evil must be fought and subdued in every age.

Finally, given all of these uncanny and extraordinary actions, Rabbi Pessach merited performing Judaism's greatest mitzvah, which is "Kiddush Hashem" – the sanctification of God's name –

through his own life, and not death. May we be inspired by the great deeds of Rabbi Moshe Shimon Pessach of Volos, but may we never be put to the test as he was!

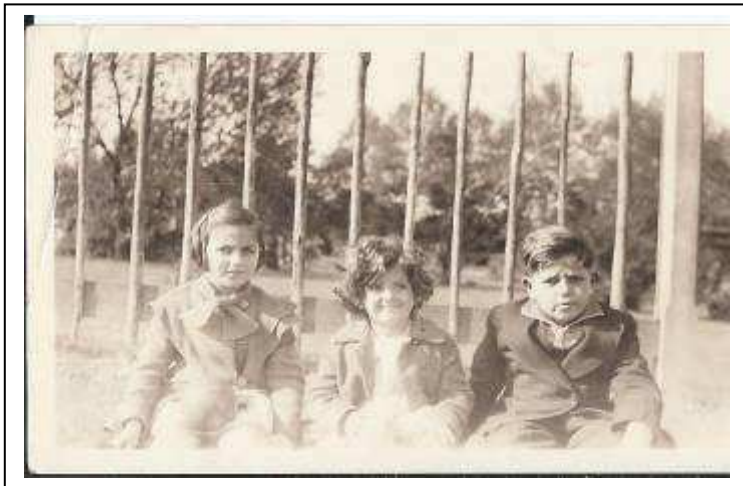
Looking For Our Help

Emily Udler is looking for recipes for "Patrijan Gliko."

My mother used to make "Patrijan Gliko" peeling baby eggplants, putting them in lye boiling for hours and them boiling in syrup with cinnamon and cloves. Heaven!!!

Is it possible that a lady in the community knows exactly how with measurements?

We are always looking for new photos for our archival collection. Many of our readers are now taking our advice and going through those old boxes filled with photos. We recently received photos from the collection of Annette Politis Binder, Jacob Ishakis and Marvin Abraham. Maybe their photos will help inspire you to send yours.



Annette Politis, Annette Honan, Bernie Honan

Annette and her mother
Esther Politis





**Chaido Nikokiri Matza
& 3 of her children
Abe, Esther and Sarah**

**Front row: Samuel Nikokiri, his wife, Sarah Bacola
Nikokiri and their grandson, Mattathias Nikokiri**

**Back row: Avraam Nikokiri (son of Samuel and Sarah.
Pernoula Naftali Nikokiri (his wife).**

We thank Jacob Ishakis for the following photos taken in Ioannina before the family immigrated to the United States:



Ishaki family in Ioannina synagogue 1949

**Marianna Moustaki Ishaki, Jesoula Ishaki,
Jacob and Mordechai**



Websites of interest

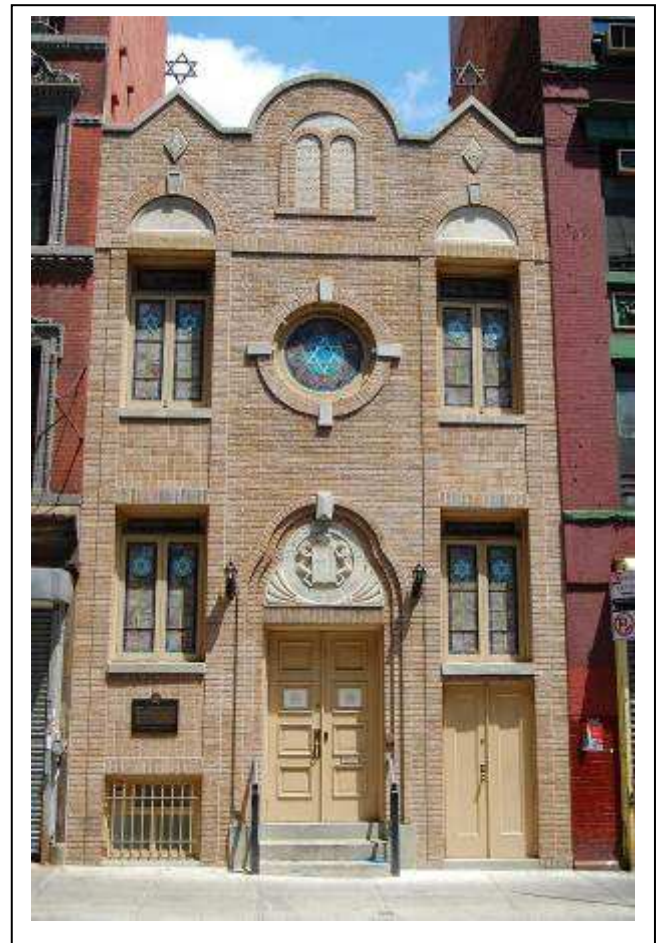
<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=1631178260449036>

Beautiful video of Zorba's dance done on the island of Crete.

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.



**Kehila Kedosha Janina e-newsletter: number 75: May 2015
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