



December 2013 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

As we end the secular year of 2013, we thank our growing community around the world for your moral and financial support. As always, it is our hope that we have made a difference, that somehow our contributions have helped to make our little corner of the world a better place. We reach out to Greek Jews throughout the world but never forget that our roots are in Ioannina. Therefore, as 2013 ends, we send you greetings from snowy Ioannina.



This newsletter, our 71st, 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 to 6000 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

In our November issue, we noted the passing of Stemma Askinazi but had few details. Thanks to our loyal reader, Dave Corito, we are now able to add the following:

"Stemma was my father's cousin's daughter. Her maiden name was Matza, her mother's name was Esther and father's name Charles who was called Charlie Chapman because he was very short. Stemma had a daughter Chordate who is about 3 years younger than I. I do not remember a son but it was a long time ago.

Stemma had 3 uncles that I remember Benny, Myer and Marco Matza. Esther, Myer, Marco and Stemma with her family all lived in the same apartment building on Sothern Blvd in the Bronx. Myer lived on the 5th floor, Stemma on the 3rd floor, their mother on the 2nd floor and Marco across the courtyard on the 1st floor. Benny lived elsewhere and had banana plantations in the Caribbean or South America.

We lived across the street from the Matzas. My father's aunt and uncle, Stemma and Joseph lived with Esther. There was another daughter Mollie and there was a Marion who all lived in the same building. Marion had a knitting store under the building. We were very close. What happened to those days?"

Simchas

We joyously celebrate the birth of Sabi Solomon, born October 31st to Anna Cohen Solomon and Victor Solomon of Larissa, the first grandchild of Carmen and Moses Cohen of Rhodes. Carmen is the Secretary of the Jewish Community of Rhodes and a dear friend of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Mazal Tov and continued joy.



Congratulations to Marcus Velelis on the birth of a son, Adam.



ikoi Mas, Los Muestros (Our Own) Come Home

This month we were honored with visitors from many branches of our Greek-Jewish family.

We love when “our own” visit. Members of the Dastis (Dostis) family, the Migionis (Mionis) family and the Battino family made special efforts to visit Kehila Kedosha Janina in the month of November.

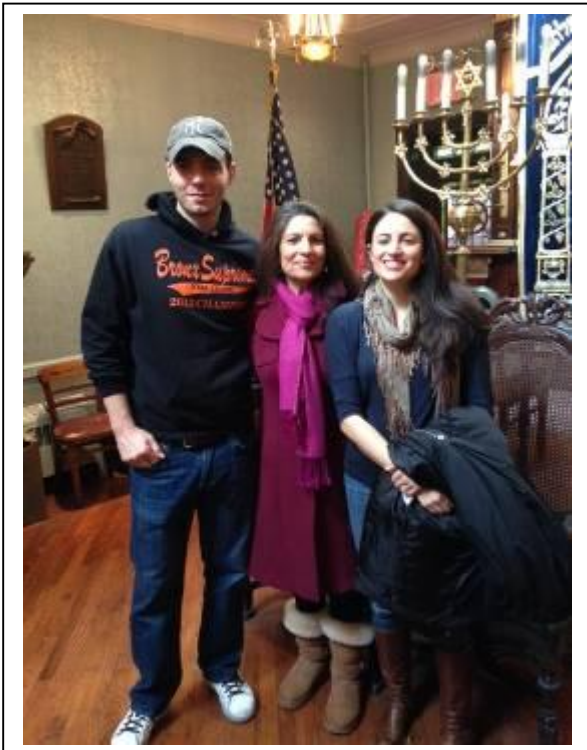
The Migionis family came from Athens Greece.



Nissim and Victor Migionis



Lauren and Gregory Bazhdari. Lauren is the granddaughter both of Ralph Battino and Jackie Andros

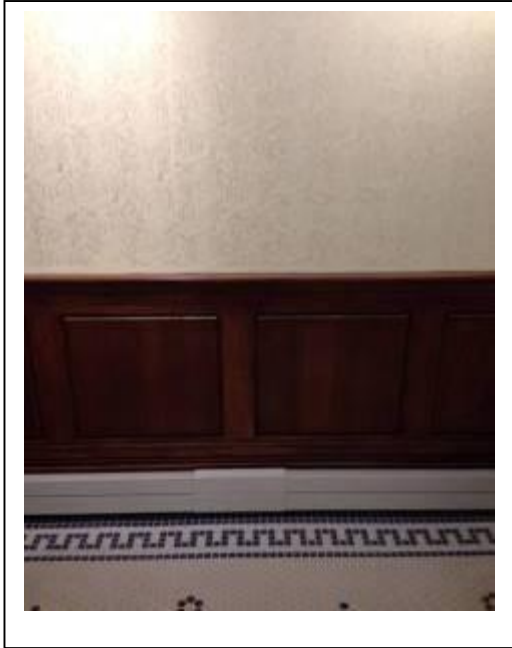


Darien and her daughter Courtney are from the Dastis family and Michael has the good fortune to marry into the Greek-Jewish world, now engaged to Courtney.

Visitors continue to flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina. We so enjoyed the recent visit of Elaine and Chris Gort from the Netherlands. Chris's family was instrumental in saving a Jewish family during WWII and are honored at Yad Vashem. We were honored by their visit.



Our new communal room is finished! We have started to book lunch tours for the spring of 2014 and will soon announce our programming schedule. Our Communal Room and Education Center was made possible by a generous bequest from Dr. Ada W. Finifter Z'L'. Our new kitchen will enable us to program our popular Koula's Kitchen cooking classes and the Education Center will soon host a series of film showings, book presentations and additional exhibits. We thank our architect, Leonard Colchamiro for his expert guidance in making this project possible.



Need for Help in identifying this picture

This picture is part of our museum collection and has been identified as the Ganis family. The question is 'which Ganis family?' Please get back to us with info. We believe the photo was taken in Ioannina in the early 20th century.



Kantikas de Sefarad

Sephardic Music from Turkey, Greece, and Morocco
a concert by

David's Harp

Sunday, December 8, 3:00 PM

Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th St.

New York, NY 10011

General admission: \$18

Students/Seniors: \$9

ASJM/AJHS/CJH members: \$12

To buy tickets click on flyer

or go to www.smarttix.com and

search for David's Harp

Joseph Alpar, santouri, darbuka, vocals

Brenda Alpar, keyboard

Cynthia Folio, flute

Mavrothi Kontanis, oud

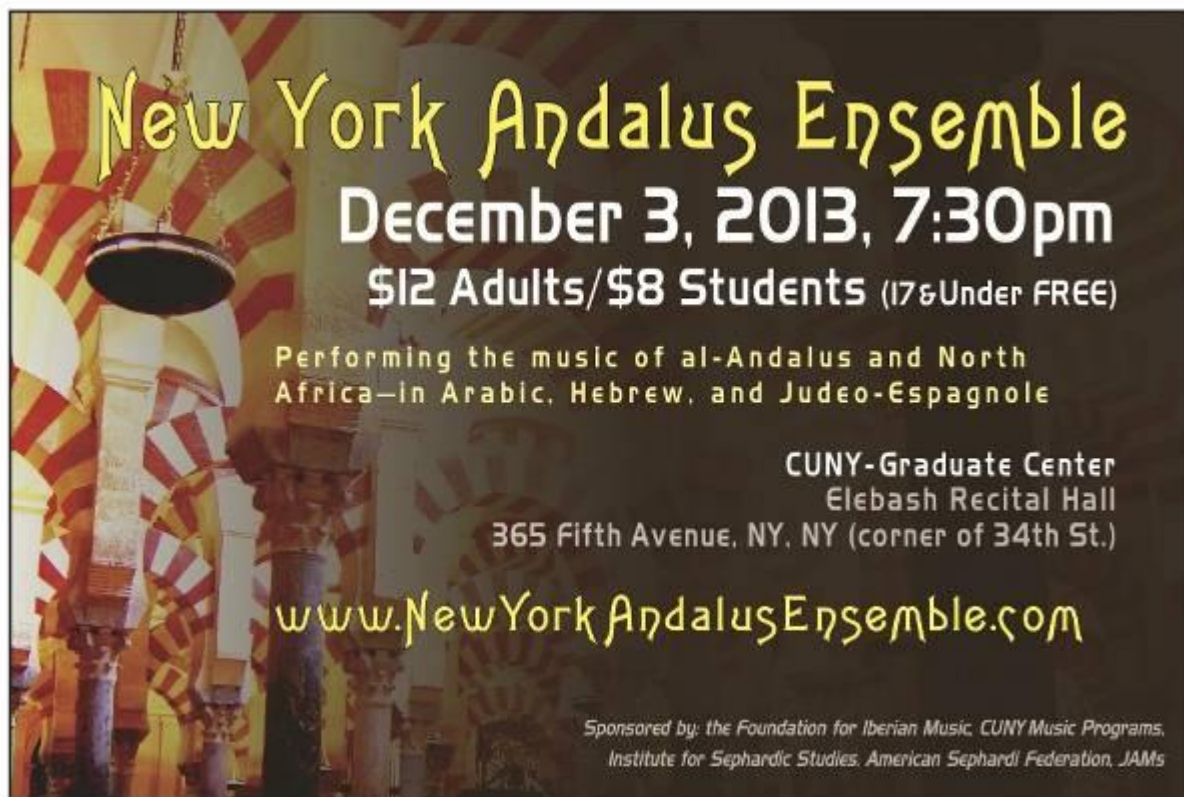
Negin Moshtagh, daf

Sergei Panov, violin

Carlo Valte, guitar

presented by
American Society for Jewish Music
American Jewish Historical Society

Our friends at ASF are pleased to support this event. ASF Members get student price of \$8



News From the Greek-Jewish World of the United States

We are very interested in a new film project based a true story of a Sephardic Jew who was saved because of his knowledge of ladino. Check out the website for "Saved by a Language"

<http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/saved-by-language>

An Evening of Everything Ladino in Seattle

If You Go International Ladino Day takes place on Thurs., Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. at Hillel at the University of Washington, 4745 17th Ave., NE, Seattle. Free, but RSVP required at ladinoday.eventbrite.com. Space is limited.

It took more than 500 years of waiting, then six or so months of planning, and on Dec. 5, the last day of Hanukkah, the first International Ladino Day will take place in Seattle and cities around the world.

"It came as a result of a proposal by an institution in Jerusalem called the National Authority for Ladino, which is an official organization in Israel," said Devin Naar, the Marsha and Jay Glazer Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, and heads the Sephardic Studies Initiative in the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies.

Ladino, the language that many Jews of Sephardic heritage spoke over the centuries as their day-to-day tongue, came close to extinction with the eradication of many of Europe's Jewish communities during the Holocaust. The last generation of native Ladino speakers is aging, so the language's champions want to celebrate it while those speakers are still alive. The hour-and-a-half-long event will be "an attempt to highlight the richness and diversity of the Ladino language and culture," said Naar.

Given that the Seattle program is a collaboration between community members and UW faculty and students, the presenters will range in age from 19 to 90-plus, Naar said. A group of 20-plus Ladino speakers that meets each week in Seattle's Central District will play a prominent role in the event, telling histories of the city's Sephardic History.

"I've got a whole history of Sephardic Jewry and how it got started in Seattle," said Isaac Azose, hazzan emeritus of Sephardic Congregation Ezra Bessaroth. He translated portions of the history into Ladino, and then distributed them to members of the weekly Ladino group for them to read onstage. Azose will lead a few songs as well, including Flory Jagoda's Sephardic Hanukkah hit "Ocho Kandelikas."

Also attending will be Lela Abravanel, a Greek-born woman who now lives in the Seattle area who has collected more than 500 Ladino proverbs. "I've asked her to share her top five," Naar said.

In addition to Jewish Studies sponsoring the program, the Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies is involved, as are Congregations Sephardic Bikur Holim and Ezra Bessaroth, and the Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood.

Azose told JTNews that everything started in January of this year, when Zelda Ovadia, who works for a Ladino-language magazine called "Ki Yerushalayim," posted — in Ladino, naturally — a message to the online Yahoo! listserve Ladino Komunita.

"Organizing something like this, it would be necessary for a lot of cooperation among different facets in the world," Azose translated to JTNews, "but with everyone's good will, we can do the impossible."

The Israel National Authority for Ladino's founder and head, Yitzchak Navon, a native Ladino speaker, listened and issued the proclamation for Dia de Ladino Internationale. Conversations that followed between Azose and Naar, among others, fueled the drive for a Seattle event. For this year's event, Seattle joins cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Dallas in the U.S., and Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Madrid, and Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel to celebrate the language and culture.

"The aspiration, I think, is that it would be an annual event and that it would be celebrated annually on the last day of Hanukkah in a variety of places across the world," Naar said, "so our hope would be to do another program next year."

Prof. Noam Pianko, director of the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, said the International Ladino Day was just one in many initiatives within the center's Sephardic Studies Program that has gathered steam over the past two years. That includes bringing in a visiting professor, David Bunis, who heads the Ladino language program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and,

starting in winter quarter, the only Ladino language course in the U.S. that will use Hebrew letters instead of transliterations.

“One of the advantages of having the Sephardic Studies Program at the University of Washington is, thanks to Devin’s leadership, we are able to mobilize around a major event like [International Ladino Day] and provide a home,” Pianko said. “It shows how quickly the Sephardic Studies Program has grown into a real central player in helping to contribute to Sephardic life and culture in Seattle.”

News From the Lower East Side

While we all know how special the Lower East Side of Manhattan is, we are always thrilled when others acknowledge this. This past November, Orchard Street was chosen as a site for the filming of a Cinamax series, ‘The Knick.’ Select stores in the vicinity of Orchard and Broome Streets were masquerading as turn-of-the-century businesses. The series is a period piece that focuses on the staff of the Knickerbocker Hospital in New York City circa 1900. Clive Owen stars and Steven Soderbergh is the director chair. Of course, the Lower East Side is the star.



For additional photos, check out the LoDown article:

<http://www.thelodownny.com/leslog/2013/11/scenes-from-the-knick-shooting-on-orchard-street.html>

We love when our community passes on family recipes. Thanks to Renee Yomtov Rosenthal for this banya (okra) recipe. We love its simplicity.



Saute onion in olive oil, add okra, tomatoes, parsley, pepper and salt and some more olive oil. Cover and bake about 45 minutes at 400.

News from Jewish Greece

Creation of Jewish Studies program at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki



Plans are moving along for the creation of a Jewish Studies Program at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki. For the article in Greek: <http://auth.gr/news/articles/16485>
If you want a complete translation, contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net

Greek Righteous from Trikala honored



On November 27th, in Athens, at the Israeli Embassy, Thanasis and Evangelia Pispa were honored as Righteous Among Nations by Yad Vashem. The Pispa couple saved the Nachmia family in Trikala. David Nachmia was there representing the Nachmia family, along with 12 grandchildren of Avisar & Rebecca Nachmia and Dario and Allegra Nachmia. Representing the Pispa family were the grandchildren of Thanasis and Evangelia (Thanasis and Dimitra). The Nachmia family was living in Florina and fled two days before the deportation of the Jewish community of Florina. They fled first to Kastoria and from there to Grevena. The Nachmia family consisted of Avisar and Rebecca Nachmia, and Rebecca's brother Dario and his wife, Allegra, along with the young son of Dario and Allegra, Dano. Allegra Nachmia was ready to give birth and the group fled to the outskirts of Trikala where they found Thanasis Pispa whose wife, Evangelia, was a midwife. Allegra gave birth to her second child on November 26, 1943 while Rebecca gave birth in August 1944 to her son David (who came from Israel for the ceremony). The two Nachmia families stayed in the home of the Pispa family until the end of the Occupation. At the end of the war, the two families returned to Florina and, then, settled in Israel in 1949. Needless to say, after 70 years, this was a very emotional event.

News From Greece



Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras announced that he plans to cover Greece with a Wi-Fi cloud and give everybody in the country free internet access. Samaras made the statement during a televised interview broadcasted on Mega TV during which he also spoke about current affairs.

Although he did not offer much detail on how his government would accomplish this nationwide Wi-Fi cloud, he said that the process has already started and that Greece will have free Wi-Fi for all in 2014.

During his televised interview he also mentioned that he will make available to Greek youth who want to start a business in Greece up to 8% of the new European Union funds that are distributed to Greece, also known as NSRF ().

Greece is trying to attract investors and give hope to its young generation which is facing up to 60% unemployment and free internet will definitely reduce household expenses by one bill per month.

But there is more to this initiative than just saving money for the average citizen. The Greek Prime minister wants to give a signal to society and the international community that Greece can follow Estonia's path and become a technology hub.

During his last trip to the USA Antonis Samaras had mentioned that for his government it is a priority to help Greek startups succeed. Answering Greek Reporter's question on how Greece can reinvent its culture of violent protests and replace them with a culture of prosperity, Samaras responded by offering a plan to help Greek startups.

"This is a major issue and needs a lot of time to be addressed properly. It is not easy to change a culture but we want to help the youth to be able to start businesses," said the Greek PM.

"I understand that many young people have great ideas but no collateral to go to the banks and ask them for funding. We are working towards changing that and I hope soon there will be available funding for Greek start-ups and that young people will be able to go to the banks and get funding just with a great business plan. We want to help and I wish we will have the liquidity to do so."

"I am also working towards finding a building which will house start-ups without paying rent and make this place a generator of ideas and new companies that will create jobs," concluded the Greek Prime minister to Greek Reporter.

100 Year Old Man from Crete Reflects on How Greece Has Changed in His Lifetime

On November 11, Stelios Panagiotakis who lives on the Cretan village Mourne in Agios Basilios will be 100 years old. He has lived a century where major national events defined Modern Greek history. He has lived through wars, disasters, dictatorships, civil wars and now he experiences the economic collapse of his country.

As he said in madeincreta.gr, he is really sad for the present situation of his country that has suffered and been tortured by many invaders.



Born in 1913, a year where the momentous event of the Union of Crete with Greece took place, he is now deeply frustrated because the Greeks accept the imposed measures. He concludes that "we do not have a powerful man to place in the government." For this reason "we are doomed" and concludes "in our government, one politician was worse than the other." He stated also that: "the current situation was caused by those who took advantage of the country and of its wealth. If someone steals his own worth then he has lost himself and his values. Then, what do you expect now? I wish the best for my country but I don't see that it will happen now. We lack the leader who loves Greece more than his own self-interest."

Greek Civil Unions Must Be Open To Gay Couples, European Court Of Human Rights Rules

Civil unions should not be reserved for heterosexual couples, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled Thursday, condemning Greece for creating a "life partner" legal category that excludes gays.

Judges in Strasbourg said that authorities in Orthodox Christian Greece had not offered "convincing and weighty reasons capable of justifying the exclusion of same-sex couples" when passing a 2008 law.

Grigoris Vallianatos and Nikolaos Mylonas, two Greek gay men, alleged with three other couples that the law infringed on their right to respect for their private and family life, a clause in the European Convention on Human Rights, and amounted to unjustified discrimination.

The court noted that European states have no obligation to provide some form of legal recognition for gay relationships.

But of the 19 states which authorize some form of registered partnership other than marriage, Lithuania and Greece "are the only ones to reserve it exclusively for couples of the opposite sex," the Court said.

For the complete article see the following link:

<http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/4233453>

Rescue in Albania

Last month this important story came to our attention. We wish to pass it on because members of our own community here in New York owe their lives to Albanians who risked their own to save Jews. A number of Jews from Ioannina were living or working in Albania during World War II, most of them dating their presence in Albania to before 1913 when the borders of Albania and Epirote Greece were set (after the Balkan Wars). In addition, Jews from nearby countries fled to Albania during WWII when it became known that Moslem Albanians were hiding Jews from the Germans. This is the story of "besa," the Albanian word for promise. This is a story rarely told, an important story that needs to be remembered before those who lived it are gone.



Arsllan Rezniki in the back of a car transporting Jews from Nazi-occupied Macedonia to safe hideouts. Mr. Rezniki, transported over 400 Jews to safety in Kosovo.

Mr. Rezniki's grandson, Leka, created an organization called Besa that researches stories of Albanians who saved Jews outside of Albania. I had the honor of meeting Leka in Israel in 2012 at a series of conferences at Yad Vashem.

For the complete article in the New York Times:

<http://nyti.ms/1dQyP07>

Items of interest to all

We appreciate this item from Sidney Mintz:

"I am on a Jewish music list and thought I should pass this info on to you since it deals with Greek Jewish music, although not from Janina- I have never seen any reference to Greek Jewish music songs before. There is a reference to a Sephardic list on yahoo and sephardicmusic.org website which you may/may not know of. I look forward to your monthly newsletters.

Sidney Mintz, grandson of Sarah and Benjamin Serota of blessed memory"

For the High Holidays ("Yamim Norayim") a new CD of prayers.

The Shilo Family (in Israel) have published two CDs containing the prayers sung by their late father, Aaron Najari, who was for many years the Hazan in "Eihal Yehuda" Synagogue in Tel Aviv. The Piyuttim/songs and prayers are in the style of the Jews of Salonica (Greece). One CD contains prayers of Rosh Hashana and Kippur, the other one -songs/Piyuttim for Shabbat and other feasts.

The two CDs (altogether) cost \$30 for all countries. They are not on sale in the market, only through Mr. Yaakov Shilo (the son of the Cantor), whose address is:
shilo394@zahav.net.il
Tel. ++972-8-9721369

For our Sephardic friends celebrating Hanuka, we thank our own Len Neuhaus for passing on this beautiful rendition of Ocho Kandelikas:



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

As we all know, the Jewish calendar is linked to the phases of the moon, so all dates of Jewish holidays and other important days are based on this lunar calendar exclusively. Thus, the Gregorian calendar plays no part in their determination with one major exception: the date Jews in the Diaspora begin praying for rain, which is either December 4th or 5th at night.

The reason for this interesting deviation lies in the supreme importance of rain for the Land of Israel. Israel has no major sources of water except for Lake Kinneret ("the Sea of Galilee) and melted snow from the Hermon mountain range, so abundant rainfall is an existential imperative. Even one year without major rainfall is immediately felt by every sector, from domestic use to agricultural and industrial needs. No surprise then that an entire Talmudic Tractate, called "Fasts", is devoted to every aspect of requesting and praying for rain, and what drastic spiritual measures must be taken when a shortage of rain or drought strikes the land.

The entire Jewish world therefore begins praising God for rain by adding a short line in the "Amida" (Silent Devotion) starting from the last day of Sukkot till the spring: "[He who] causes the wind to blow and rain to fall", which is specifically inserted in the same blessing that confirms our belief in the future resurrection of the dead, because just like this miraculous and supernatural deed, the abundance or lack of rain is considered to be exclusively in God's hands. But there is also a formal prayer for rain in the Amida, which also referred to the Land of Israel, until the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile. And though the prayer could have easily been instituted the same day as the beginning of the recitation of the aforementioned 'memo' regarding the onset of the rainy season, our Sages set the 7th of Heshvan – some two weeks after Shimini Atzeret – as the starting date for the formal prayer in order to allow all those who had made a pilgrimage to the Temple for the Sukkot holiday to make it home in relatively pleasant weather.

However, after the destruction of the First Temple and the exile of the majority of Jews to Babylonia, many were made in Jewish ritual and law in order to readjust the Jewish faith to a new spiritual reality no longer based on a sacrificial Temple-base, but rather prayer and penitence. Furthermore, even when allowed to return to Israel and rebuild the Temple, the vast majority of Jews stayed in Babylonia, which became the most formative and important for future Jewish life everywhere. And once the Second Temple was destroyed and Israel conquered by Rome, the previous 70-year exile turned into millennia, with Jews being scattered all over the world. This new reality raised many questions, one of which is how to relate to something so basic and existential as the need for rain in terms of local verses Land On the one hand, no matter how long the exile would last, the ultimate goal of Jewish redemption is to see all Jews return to the Land of Israel, so it would have been perfectly logical to continue to focus on Israel's need for rain regardless of where Jews lived.

But on the other hand, praying for the welfare of the entire world was also always part and parcel of Judaism, which is source of the term "Tikkun Olam" – making the world a better place. So even though the unity of the Jewish world and centrality of Israel would continue to be preserved by Jews the world over mentioning mention God's merciful rains in the appropriate place in the Amida, the formal prayer for rain would be based on local Babylonian needs and the welfare of the Diaspora community.

Based on the Babylonia climate and seasons, the appropriate date for beginning the prayer for rain was determined to be 60 days after the end of the "Tishrei period", i.e. the end of Sukkot. But since seasons are determined by the sun, the 60-day count had to correlate with the solar and not lunar calendar, which was Gregorian date of December 4th or 5th at night. However, as the Jewish Diaspora continued to expand, it became impossible to coordinate the prayer with every local climate and country where Jews lived, so for the sake of unity and consistency, the Babylonian reference became the universal standard for the entire Jewish Diaspora in terms of praying for rain. Obviously, then, what was most important to our Sages was the symbolism and overriding principal of uniting Jews everywhere in praying to God for the bounty and blessing of all humanity.

NEW EXHIBIT IN KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA

On December 15th, a new exhibit will open in the Museum of Kehila Kedosha Janina in memory of Esther Mordechai.



Websites of Interest

Recently a number of websites highlighting the history and culture of Thessaloniki have become available on the internet:

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=iOVuFxDPpak&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DiOVuFxDPpak

On the fire of 1917

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=M0-NX4f6seQ&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DM0-NX4f6seQ.

Old Salonika

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=P6g01Er4Bps&hd=1&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DP6g01Er4Bps%26hd%3D1

Thessaloniki 1889

Call For Papers

**3rd ucLADINO Judeo-Spanish Symposium:
PRESERVATION & REVITALIZATION**
University of California, Los Angeles

MARCH 5-6, 2014

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

MOSHE SHALU

Vice President | National Authority of Ladino and its Culture

ELIEZER PAPO

Director | Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

STUDENT CALL FOR PAPERS

Call Deadline: Monday, December 16, 2013

The purpose of this Symposium is to bring together students, scholars, and community members to share original research on a variety of Judeo-Spanish topics, whether linguistic, literary, cultural, or historical. This year, we encourage papers on Judeo-Spanish preservation and revitalization efforts across the globe in all spheres and domains, with a particular focus on the 21st century. Papers on other Judeo-Spanish topics, however, will also be considered.

Preservation and revitalization topics may include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| - Educational language policy | - Dialect vs. standard in revitalization efforts |
| - Literary revival | - Processes and efforts of revitalization |
| - Rashi and Solitreo scripts | - Preservation vs. revitalization |
| - Revitalization and performance | - Revitalization through technological innovation |

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Open to advanced undergraduate and graduate students of Judeo-Spanish studies.

Abstract should be between 150-200 words, in addition to selected references.

Abstracts must be submitted through Easy Abstracts: <http://linguistlist.org/easvabs/ucLadino2014>

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: Monday, December 16, 2013

Notification of acceptance will begin late December 2013.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact ucLadino@gmail.com with any questions.

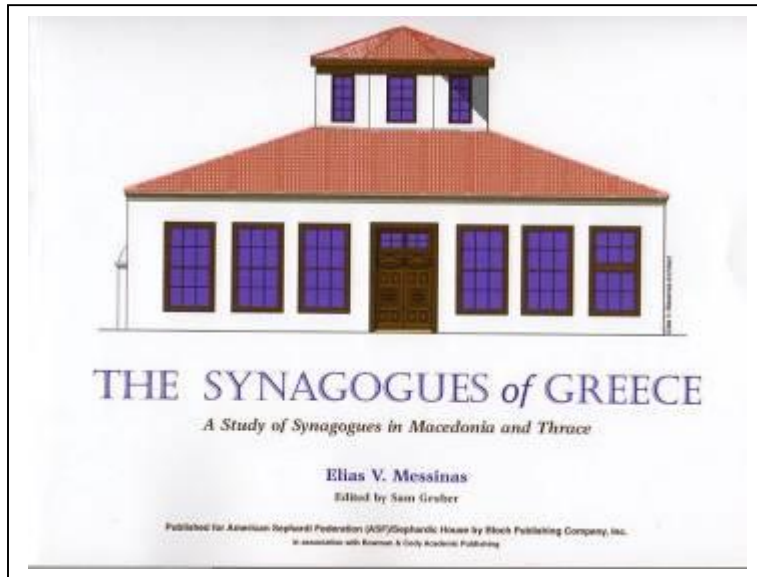
Please visit our website for additional information: <http://www.ucLadino.com>

Selected papers may be published in our Proceedings.

ucLADINO is a student-run organization at the University of California, Los Angeles
dedicated to promoting the knowledge and use of the Judeo-Spanish language(s)

New Book For Sale

We are proud to sell Elias Messinas' new book on the synagogues of Greece. The book sells for \$25 (including postage and handling in the continental USA). Payment should be made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina and mailed to us at One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743. Copies are limited. Please e-mail us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net to reserve a copy.



The book highlights the synagogues of Macedonia and Thrace but, also, includes important information on synagogues throughout Greece (including Ioannina).

We apologize to those who wished to join us this year in Greece on our annual tour (June 22-July 7). December 15th was the deadline for sending in deposits but the tour filled up before the end of November. Next year!



In March of 2014, throughout our Museum and our new Gallery in the Education Center, we will have an exhibit remembering the 70th anniversary of the deportations from Jewish Communities in Greece. We are looking for photos of survivors taken after the war showing a return to life. The photo below, taken in 1946, showing Jewish mothers in Ioannina proudly showing off their new babies is an excellent example of what we are looking for. Please contact us with your photos at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.



Holocaust Museum in a Unique City:
Revisiting the spot where death stalked 50,000
By Charles J. Mouratides
CHI Executive Director

We stood silent, recently, among the rusted tracks in Thessaloniki's old, open-air, abandoned railroad station. Devoid of activity now, the landscape emphasized the tragic events of 70 years ago. The emptiness hovering in the air punctuated the few sentences my friend uttered as a matter of fact.

Painful memories of unimagined brutality and human misery haunt every stone and every broken rail switch.

"The Nazis rounded us up in the little shacks over there," said my friend Heintz Kounio, a Holocaust Survivor. He pointed to the remnants of sheds across the street from the railroad station, in the old Baron Hirsch Jewish neighborhood. "This road did not exist at that time," he said pointing to the road now separating the old railroad area from the Hirsch district. "There was just a small field, like farmland.

We crossed it at night, rushing, in groups totaling about 2,500 people. The soldiers rounded the people at night. They ordered us to climb into the boxcars of the waiting train."

Today, it is in this area that we are designing the Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Greece in Thessaloniki.



Holocaust Survivor Heintz Kounio during a recent visit to the old railroad station, the spot from where 50, 000 Thessaloniki Jews were deported to the death camps. Tracks and location have been almost abandoned, virtually as in March 1943

The steam-powered trains from Thessaloniki headed primarily to Auschwitz, as the unsuspecting Thessalonian Jews found out at the end of the 7-day trip. As part of a carefully orchestrated fraud, they were misled that they were being transported to another friendly city in Northern Europe. Human masses of up to 90 people, including entire families, were packed standing in each cattle car with its narrow window. They crossed Eastern Europe from its Mediterranean southern tip to the frigid Polish north.

Among those transported in the first group were the Kounios, a middle class family in the camera and photography business -- the parents, the 15-year-old boy, (same age as survivor Wiesel from Rumania) and his sister. Heinz, who penned the book *A Liter of Soup and 60 grams of Bread* about his experience, looked at me determined, one more time that day, to brave the onslaught of memories.

The world will not forget the tragedy that befell 50,000 Greek Jews from Thessaloniki, often known as Salonica or Saloniki. In a few months, the Nazis decimated an extraordinarily diverse, highly cultured community that had thrived since the days of Alexander the Great. They thought that extermination would erase history.

We aim to preserve in detail the facts about the Thessaloniki Holocaust, and the stories of the victims, at this time when anti-Semitism and denial of documented history are at their crudest hysteria in Greece. At a time when neo-Nazi groups throughout Europe strive to imitate Hitler's hordes, we aim to erect and organize the first Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Greece, in the city where Jewish tradition and communal life set an example for the whole of Europe.

With your support we believe we can Repair History. If you wish to participate in this historic mission, please choose your preferred, secure form of contribution. All contributors, according to the offer but regardless of amount, will be listed if the donor wishes, in a museum book. The book will be entitled *Repairing History* and contain a description of this historic project.

[Learn more about the first Holocaust Museum and Education Center of Greece »](#)

The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry is accepting funds for this project. Individual names will be sent to CHI. Send your contributions to the Association at One Hanson Place, Huntington NY 11743. We are proud to sell Heinz Kounio's book, *A Liter of Soup and Sixty Grams of Bread*, translated and adapted by our Museum Director, Marcia Haddad-Ikonomopoulos, at Kehila Kedosha Janina. 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 71: December 2013
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