



Kehila Kedosha Janina

Synagogue and Museum

May 2019 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

This May 19th we will be hosting our fifth annual Greek Jewish Festival, a landmark event that is unique throughout the world. We look forward to seeing you on Broome Street, between Allen and Eldridge, celebrating our special world with food, music, dance and culture.



This newsletter, our 122nd 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 have now reach over 10,000 households worldwide. What an accomplishment for a little synagogue on the Lower East Side of New York City. Our community of 'friends' continually grow with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at museum@kkjsm.org

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up by emailing info@kkjsm.org 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

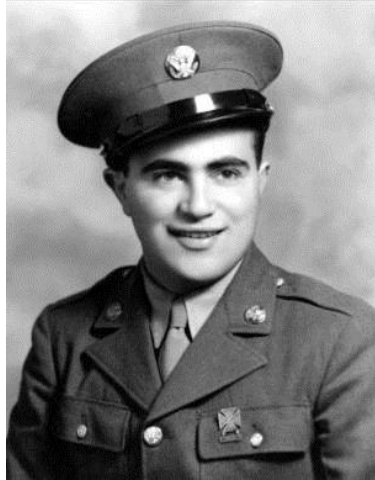
Last month we printed the obituary of Esther Benjamin, proud member of the Board of the Sisterhood of Janina, serving as a Vice President and Treasurer. We had no photo to accompany the article but a visit to Annette Binder remedied that. Thank you Annette.



We mourn the passing of Milton Ganis, son of Jacob (Jack) Ganis and Stemma (Stamoula) Samuels Ganis, at the age of 96. Milton was predeceased by his wife, Beverly. He is survived by his children, Steven (Claudia) and Andrea (Barry), and grandchildren, Brett, April and Ally. He will be mourned by a large extended family and a community of Greek Jews in New York.

Ganis brothers, founded by Milton's father and uncles was a mainstay on the Lower East Side, an example of what hard working Greek Jews could accomplish in the New World. A sewing machine made you an entrepreneur. Rodney Ganis, son of Jesse (one of the founders of Ganis Brothers and a brother of Milton's father, Jacob) gave a vivid description of the founding of the family business. "I remember my Dad telling us that when Matthew & Jacob started the business in 1906 that their first 'factory' (I assume a few sewing machines) was on Canal St. I think my Grandmother Sarah (Jeuda) was an operator in the factory. Not sure when they moved to 483 Broadway (near Broome St.) where we were until approximately 1980, then we moved to Long Island till 2006, when we went out of business. Rod"

According to additional family history, "Their "first factory" was a storefront, possibly on Canal, and when they first started Jacob and Matthew slept in the back (Avisay was already married with a baby, Rose, and lived elsewhere) and Great-Grandma Diana (Colchamiro) was their first "operator". Diana lived with relatives. Initially, when Jacob first came (his brothers were already here - he came later with his mother, Chanoula Ganis and Chun, Elias Negrin) Avisay got the bedroom of a one bedroom apt. and Jacob, Matthew and a cousin slept on cots in the living room. I guess they took their cots with them when they moved to the storefront!!!"



Milton Ganis (WWII)



Stema Ganis (Milton's mother) and her first child (Dina) who died at age 2

We mourn the passing of Irene Uffer at the age of 83. Irene was born in Brooklyn and was the daughter of Leon Lafazan and Diana (Yomtov) Lafazan, both of blessed memory. She was living in Danbury Connecticut when she passed on April 11th. Irene was the widow of Rubin Uffer. She is survived by Daryl Bain (Joseph), Howard Uffer (Lisa) and Larry Uffer (Karen); her brothers, Bension Lafazan and Sy Lafazan. She was the grandmother of eight, died on Thursday morning, April 11, 2019 at her home.

Simchas

We celebrate the birth of two beautiful baby girls, both of Yanniotte ancestry. Nat Cantos proudly announced the birth of his great granddaughter, Madeline Rae Cantos born April 5th to Dr. Andrew and Sharon Cantos. Her grandfather is Dr. Eric Cantos.

Susan and Steven Tregerman proudly announced the birth of their granddaughter, Gali Susan Schwaber born 4/16/2019 to Linda and Roie Schwaber-Cohen. Gali Susan is the great granddaughter of Esther and Matthew Colchamiro and the great great-granddaughter of Sterula and Asser Colchamiro.



Gali-Susan Schwaber



Sterula and Asser Colchamiro

ΔΙΚΟΙ ΜΑΣ – Dikoi Mas – Los Muestros

It is always a special day when “our own” come to visit. In April we had visits from members of the Eliasof, Matza and Negrin families.



Mark & Hope Eliasof



Greg Matza and Family



Eugene Negrin

Visitors Flock to Kehila Kedosha Janina

In April we had visitors from London and Switzerland. Stelios Pallas, originally from Thessaloniki, now living in London, came to see us with his friend Kathy. He impressed us with his knowledge of Greek Jewry and the fact that Kehila Kedosha Janina was top on his list to visit in New York.



Lea Cohen, a scholar and author who shares our desire for historical accuracy, came to visit with her cousin David Ben Joseph. Both are originally from Bulgaria, Lea now living in Switzerland and David in New York. Lea has just finished a book about the famous Arie family of Samotov.



A friend of Stewart Nachmias visits Nachmias Family Exhibit



Sometimes some people in our community cannot come to visit us so we visit them. Annette Binder looked great!



Visitor from Israel

Past Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

April was filled with events, from the opening of an art exhibit to a series of lectures and, to end the month, our annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration.

On April 4th we opened a new exhibit in our Ada Finifter Communal Room and Education Center, an exhibit by Stewart Nachmias. Stewart was born into the Romaniote Greek Jewish world, his grandparents living across the street at 279 Broome, and his father, Max Nachmias, a pillar of our community. Much of Stewart's work reflects his roots, highlighting Greek and New York City urban themes.

Of course, being who we are, this was a very Greek celebration, with Avram Pengas and Nick Mandoukas entertaining us along with Greek food and dancing. The exhibit can be viewed on Sundays through June 2nd or during the week by appointment.



On April 7th we were treated to a lecture by Professor Joseph Benatov, who gave us a background on Bulgaria and the Holocaust including Bulgaria's complicity in the deportation of Jews in the Bulgarian Zones of Occupation. At the conclusion of the presentation, Elka Nikolova treated us to the trailer for the film, "The Dressmaker," which tells the story of the Gattegno family, and those who survived in Bulgaria proper as opposed to those who were persecuted and deported in Bulgarian Zone of Occupation.



April 14th brought our dear friend, Dr. Katherine Fleming to Kehila Kedosha Janina for a fascinating presentation on Greek music in Israel.



On April 28th we held our annual Yom HaShoah commemoration to a packed house. As always, our ceremony was in memory of the Six Million and in special memory of the 67,000 Greek Jews who perished. "It is said that a measure of a people is how they remember their dead. We have so many to remember. Hopefully, we have measured up to this task. Our Yom HaShoah is dedicated with love, love for a community that is no more, for a community that met its untimely demise during the Holocaust, a community that we will never forget, and one we hope we have helped to be remembered for generations to come. May each of their individual names be inscribed for Eternity."



Upcoming Events at Kehila Kedosha Janina

Greek Jewish Festival – May 19 from 12-6pm Full Festival Program [here](#)



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
SYNAGOGUE AND MUSEUM

FREE
ADMISSION

PRESENTS THE
FIFTH ANNUAL



GREEK JEWISH FESTIVAL

SUNDAY MAY 19, 2019
12PM – 6PM

280 BROOME ST BETWEEN ALLEN ST AND ELDRIDGE ST
LOWER EAST SIDE NYC

DELICIOUS FOOD

LIVE MUSIC

KIDS ACTIVITIES

SYNAGOGUE TOURS

DANCING

VENDORS & GIFTS

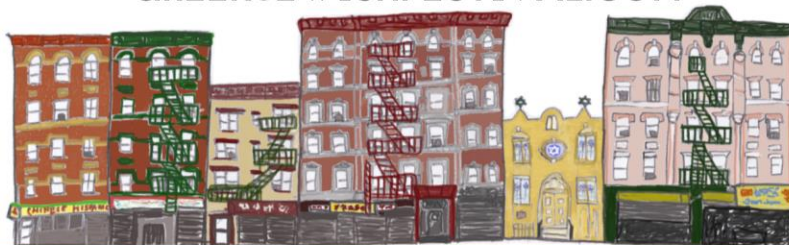
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IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE
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LEGISLATURE

Upcoming Events of Interest in New York

Celebration of Judeo-Spanish May 5th – Register [Here](#)



The Sephardic Jewish
Brotherhood of America
La Ermandad Sefaradi

JOIN THE SEPHARDIC JEWISH BROTHERHOOD
OF AMERICA FOR THE THIRD ANNUAL

CELEBRATION OF JUDEO-SPANISH

A Special Day of Songs, Stories, Culture, and Community

Sunday May 5 | 1:00pm

Sephardic Jewish Center of Forest Hills
67-67 108 St Forest Hills NY 11375

Join us as we celebrate the long and vibrant history of Judeo-Spanish, also known as Ladino or Judezmo. Day includes lectures on Sephardic Customs, Ladino Language Workshops, Sephardic Hazzanut & Liturgy, LIVE music, a Sephardic Dinner, and more!

\$50 General Admission

**Register at www.SephardicBrotherhood.com
or call 718-685-0080**

*Sponsored with Generous Support from Joel & Laurel Marcus,
Clifton Russo, & David Schribman*



CELEBRATION SCHEDULE

Opening Remarks - 1:00pm

Dr. Bryan Kirschen, University of Binghamton

Customs of the Sepharadim: A World Gone By? - 1:15pm

Dr. Daisy Braverman, University of Pennsylvania

Ladino Language Workshop - 2:00pm

Dr. Bryan Kirschen, Binghamton University

Káfe kon Echar Lashon: Coffee Break - 2:50pm

The Zemirot Project: Treasures of Sephardic Liturgy - 3:10pm

Rabbi Nissim Elneché, Sephardic Brotherhood

Ke Kere Dezir? Sephardic Gameshow Trivia - 4:00pm

Sherri Cohen, The New School for Social Research

Closing Remarks - 5:00pm

Joseph Toledo, Sephardic Brotherhood

Intermission - 5:00pm-6:00pm

**Followed by a Sephardic Dinner, Live Music, and Greek
Dancing featuring the Avram Pengas Music Group**

News from Jewish Greece

Athens

In Athens, Jewish community celebrates Pessach Seder at Greek Ministry

By Yossi Lempkowicz Full article in the European Jewish Press [here](#)



The Jewish community of Athens organized the traditional Seder meal of Pessach, the Jewish holiday of Passover, at the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The leadership of the Ministry kindly offered the venue and was represented by the Minister of Education, Kostas Gavroglou, and the Secretary General for Religious Affairs, George Kalantzis.

The Seder was also attended by Archimandrite Dionysios, representative of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Ieronymos. Approximately 350 members of the Athens Jewish Community, under the guidance of the Rabbi of Athens Gabriel Negrin, read and recited the Haggadah, the narration of the Exodus from Egypt, which is linked to the festivity of Pessach.

In his address to the participants, Minos Moissis, President of the Athens Jewish Community, said: "Pessach, which coincides with spring and the time of the rebirth of nature, is the narration of the struggle of a people fighting for freedom and dignity. We are here to proclaim that the struggle for freedom never ends. We are here to remember all people who fought or fight for their freedom, for their dignity". He also addressed wishes to all Christian fellow citizens for their great holyday of Resurrection and Hope.

Greece Chosen as Country of Honor at this Year's March of the Living at Auschwitz-Birkenau on May 2

Greece is the country of honor at this year's international "March of the Living", to be held on 05.02.2019 at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament Mr. Nikos Voutsis, the President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece and the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and Vice President of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Mr. David Saltiel, and President of the Jewish Museum of Greece Mr. Makis Matsas, will go to the site of the former Nazi death camp, where more than one million Jews were exterminated in the gas chambers and crematoria, and will participate in the March.

Also in attendance will be the Ecumenical Patriarch. Bartholomew, President of the Municipal Council of Thessaloniki Mr. Simos Bensasson, the representing the Mayor of Thessaloniki Anna Aggelidou, the Director of the Office of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, Mr. Leon Saltiel, the Director of AGAPE charity Mr. Manolis Toufexis and group of Jewish Youth Greece.

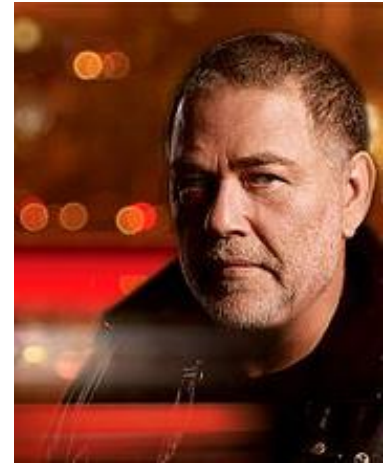
Tens of Thousands of People Will March to Fight Antisemitism

By Jerusalem Post Staff April 6, 2019

US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman will head a delegation of US ambassadors and White House representatives on the March of the Living, which will be dedicated this year to the struggle of the future generation against antisemitism and the memory of Greek Jewry.

"We are marching to remind the world of the horrors of the Holocaust," said Dr. Shmuel Rosenman, founder and co-chairman of the International March of the Living.

The 31st annual March of the Living will take place on May 2, 2019. Some 10,000 Jewish and non-Jewish youth from all over the world will walk 3.2 kilometers between Auschwitz and Birkenau in memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and in a call to fight antisemitism. This year, the main event of the Holocaust Day will be devoted to Greek Jewry and the singer Yehuda Poliker, who will participate in the parade and perform at the ceremonies.



Yehuda Poliker

Poliker, born in 1950 in a suburb of Haifa, is the son of Holocaust survivors from Thessaloniki.

Thessaloniki

A post on the website of the Italian Embassy in Athens, announcing the sale of immovable assets of the Italian State in Greece, retrieves memories on a tragic aspect of Greek history, the extermination of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki and the Occupation. The Italian Government has put up for auction in Thessaloniki the famous Villa Olga, on the Queen Olga Street, an architectural symbol of an era, but also building a carrying a heavy historical burden.

The starting amount, according to the statement, was set at 1,500,000 euros, which probably will rise much more since the plot of land is prime real estate and the building a jewel. But the historical and sentimental value cannot be redeemed for cash. The building played an important role during the Occupation, housing the Italian consulate, which was involved in the rescue of a number of Jews in the city.



Articles of Interest

Italy

A New Museum Explores 2,000 Years of Jewish Life in Italy

By Harry D. Wall. Full article in the New York Times [here](#)

The new Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah in Ferrara explores the long and complex relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

The epigraph etched in Latin on the ancient stone tablet was short and tender: "Claudia Aster, prisoner from Jerusalem." Brought to Rome in chains after the quelling of the revolt in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., she was apparently the concubine of a Roman notable who wanted to give her a dignified burial and added an unusual element to the funerary stone. "I pray," it said, "take care and follow the law that no one should remove the inscription."

That tribute is one of many revelations at the new Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah in Ferrara, and is at the heart of the museum's first major exhibition, "Jews, an Italian Story. The First Thousand Years," which examines the long and complex relationship between Rome and Jerusalem, Christianity and Judaism.

Jews have lived on the Italian peninsula for more than 2,000 years, one of the oldest communities in the Western Diaspora. Even before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, then the centerpiece of Judaism, and the ensuing transport and enslavement of Jewish prisoners to Rome, there had been Jews living in the city and southern provinces, where they had arrived as traders and refugees.

The history of Jewish life in Italy might seem like one long saga of suffering and trauma: slavery by the Romans; the Inquisition and persecution by the Church; forced segregation to cramped neighborhoods in the Middle Ages. The first of many ghettos was established in Venice in 1516. The 20th century witnessed the rise of fascism, anti-Semitic racial laws and the Holocaust, when nearly 7,700 Jews out of a total population of 44,500 were killed.



Street in Ghetto

However, there is another part to the Italian Jewish story, one of acceptance, integration and even appreciation throughout the long arc of civilization on the peninsula. "The historic dialogue with the culture of Italy has enriched Italian Judaism and has also brought to the Italian culture much of Jewish values and contribution," said Simonetta Della Seta, who was appointed the museum's director in 2016.

As the museum moves chronologically through the eras of Italian history, additions are being made to the permanent exhibit. The second major exhibit opened in April, on Jews and the Renaissance. The Holocaust will be addressed by the museum with a permanent exhibition that will open in September.

Ferrara, in northeastern Italy between Bologna and Venice, and once a medieval center of Jewish life, might seem like an improbable choice for the museum, known in Italy as MEIS, for Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah. A once important Renaissance city dominated by a large castle, the hub of the powerful Este family, and ringed by medieval walls and ramparts, Ferrara is off the beaten path as far as Jewish life and popular tourism in Italy is concerned. MEIS may change that.

The museum is partly built on the converted remains of a former prison on Piangipane Street, a two-story brick compound near the former Jewish ghetto. Used to detain anti-fascist partisans and Jews during World War II, it was closed in 1992.

So why choose a former prison to house the new museum? "The challenge is to take a place where people were closed in, where it was dark; transform it into an open space, open to ideas, open to culture, open to dialogue, and this is our mission," Ms. Della Seta said.

The museum's collection of more than 200 artifacts and multimedia installations supports that alternative narrative, of coexistence and contribution. A fifth-century mosaic of two matronae, one with the Old Testament, the second with the New, shows a single community of faith, a chapter in an otherwise fraught relationship with Christianity. There are precious documents and instruments depicting Jewish contributions to medicine, science and astronomy.



Key to the Ghetto

Also on display are fragments of ancient manuscripts and texts, highlighting the importance of literacy in Italian Jewish history. "Jews for centuries were the writers, the scribes. Then they became the printers of the Italians," Ms. Della Seta said. She noted that among the first publishers in Italy during the medieval era were the Jewish printing houses in Venice and Soncino.

Ferrara represents what was, for a time, a golden era of Italian Jewry. It was the policy of the Duke of Este in the 16th century to welcome Sephardic exiles from Spain and other Jews to the city, a period when the Church was ascendant and Jews were being confined to ghettos in Rome and Venice.

"The Duke understood that the Jews, being mainly merchants and traders, could contribute to the Estes' ambition to grow the textile industry of Ferrara," said Andrea Pesaro, 80, a retired engineer who now lives in Milan but returns often to his hometown, where he is head of the small (80 person) Jewish community.

At its peak in the Middle Ages, about 2,000 Jews lived in Ferrara, Mr. Pesaro said. They included notable scholars, doctors and printers. But after the reign of the House of Este ended, the church became ascendant, anti-Semitic persecution intensified and Jews were confined to living in a ghetto from around 1627 until the emancipation in 1859.

"Jews have been living in Ferrara for over 1,000 years," Mr. Pesaro said as we stood in front of the synagogue building on Via Mazzini, 95, on its original site since 1603 and renovated many times since then. It is now being repaired after sustaining serious damage from the earthquake of 2012. The building is simple, red-bricked and almost undistinguishable from others on the street except for the two plaques next to the arched entrance, commemorating the victims of the Holocaust from Ferrara. There are two synagogues inside. The larger, the Ashkenazi synagogue, with its barrel-vaulted ceiling, multiple chandeliers and bright Jewish drawings on the walls, contrasts with the simple dark wooden pews and Torah ark.

A walk through the former ghetto with Mr. Pesaro provides a moving glimpse into a distant time. Via Mazzini, once the main ghetto street, is now dotted with cafes and shops. It bustles with bicyclists riding to the nearby main square of the historic district, dominated by the cathedral and moat-ringed castle. Jewish life is invisible to all but the most discerning pedestrians.

Two narrow cobblestone streets, adjacent to Via Mazzini, form the more recognizable heart of the ghetto. We walked on one, Via Vignatagliata, as Mr. Pesaro pointed out buildings that once housed the matzo bakery (No. 49) and the Jewish school (No. 79), whose numbers swelled after Jews were barred from attending

public schools by the racial laws of 1938. On the left is a small square, Piazzetta Isacco Lampronti, named after a renowned rabbi, scholar and physician of the 18th century. At night, however, when the winding, narrow streets seem so melancholy under dim lights, it is easy to imagine that dark time for Ferrara's Jews.

The Jewish cemetery, outside the ghetto, is startling, if only for its sprawl and large grassy areas, free of headstones. When I asked Mr. Pesaro where all the gravestones had gone, he explained that the marble and stone were taken during the Inquisition in the 18th century, when some were used to build the two pillars framing the municipal hall across from the cathedral.

The cemetery draws many visitors, Italian and foreign, mainly to pay tribute to Giorgio Bassani, the distinguished Jewish writer from Ferrara, best known for his novel, "The Garden of the Finzi Continis." A tilting bronze headstone, with a jagged facade that pierces through a stone base, marks his grave, isolated in the cemetery. The book, later made into a movie by the same name, is about a wealthy Jewish family contending with the racial laws of 1938 and about to be engulfed by the Holocaust. It is a source of contention for Mr. Pesaro and others in the community, who feel Bassani offended his family, on whom the book seems to be based, by depicting them and the Jews of Ferrara as out of touch with fascism and their impending doom.



The museum is a public, state-funded institution, proclaimed by the Parliament of Italy in 2003. Originally conceived as a museum of the Holocaust, its mission was changed later to encompass the history and heritage of Italian Jewry. It was inaugurated on Dec. 13, 2017, in two of the former prison buildings that were renovated and designed by an international team based in Milan. Four new buildings, designed to look like five, inspired by the books of the Torah, are to be added so that by its completion in 2021, the museum will contain nearly 100,000 square feet of space, at an estimated cost of \$50 million.



At the entrance, visitors are encouraged to watch a 24-minute video (in English and Italian) that conveys the sweep of Italian Jewish history through individual stories — a Jewish slave, deported from Jerusalem to Rome in the first century, a scholar from the Middle Ages who enjoys a privileged status, and a young girl in 1938, forced to leave school as a result of the racial laws. Following that compressed virtual history, a short walk leads to the second building, crossing an educational garden where visitors can learn about Jewish dietary laws.

The "First Thousand Years" exhibition is largely focused on Rome and the southern regions — Sicily, Puglia, Campania, Calabria — as that is where Jews mainly settled during the first millennium. After passing a replica of the Arch of

Titus, commemorating Rome's victory over Jerusalem, and depicting soldiers carrying the seven-branched menorah, visitors are offered a well-lit and spacious display of original and replicated artifacts: ancient engravings, amulets, rings, seals and oil lamps with Jewish symbols, medieval manuscripts, some now on permanent loan from other national Italian museums.

Turkey

Turkish Synagogue Firebombed; No Damage Reported Full article in Haaretz [here](#)



A man threw a firebomb at the Beth Israel Synagogue in Izmir, Turkey. The attacker's Molotov cocktail, thrown on March 28, fell to the sidewalk and did not damage the synagogue. The incident was first reported on Tuesday by the Turkish-language Salom Jewish news website. The unidentified attacker reportedly told police that he attacked the synagogue in order to protest Israel. Mustafa Yeneroğlu, the Istanbul lawmaker for the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, condemned the attack on social media, saying, "There is no difference between attacks targeting synagogues, churches and mosques; they all target social peace with their hate," according to Salom. In a statement, the Turkish-Jewish community praised the Izmir Security Directorate for its quick action in catching the attacker and condemned "this heinous attack threatening our lives, peace and unity."

Brazil

In Brazil, a rabbi opens the world's first summer camp for descendants of forcibly converted Jews

By Cnaan Liphshiz Full article from JTA [here](#)

At the world's only summer camp for descendants of forcibly converted Jews, Oseias Teixeira had numerous first-time experiences.

Even mundane activities like studying the Bible in a group or singing at synagogue were milestones for the 17-year-old Brazilian. But for Teixeira, who lives in a small and remote town where streets are earth roads, one of the most memorable moments from Yeshiva Camp had nothing to do with Judaism. It was riding an escalator for the first time in his life.



"I had never been to a large city before," Teixeira said, somewhat defensively. "The experiences I've had in Sao Paulo, I'll never forget them. They've changed me." The high school student said he wants one day to live in Sao Paulo.

To Yeshiva Camp's founders, Teixeira's experience underlines the multiple layers of their mission with bnei anusim — descendants of Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity during the 15th-century Inquisition campaign of persecution against Jews in Spain, Portugal and their colonies.

"Connecting these youngsters with Judaism is only the beginning," said Gilberto Ventura, the charismatic rabbi who established, with his wife Jaqueline, Yeshiva Camp as part of their Synagogue Without Borders congregation and outreach project. "What follows is connecting bnei anusim to the rest of Brazilian Jewry and society."

A little over a year after its creation, Yeshiva Camp has already had dozens of participants aged 11 to 25. They stay with the Venturas at their spacious synagogue in Sao Paulo, which the couple transform into a youth camp for each new group. Nianne Darc Pereira da Rocha, Yeshiva Camp's youngest participant, decided following her visit that she wants to switch schools in favor of the only Jewish school in her city of Recife. A straight-A student, the 11-year-old girl already speaks fluent Hebrew, much of it self-taught. Camps are supposed to go on for two weeks. But true to Brazilian society's relative fluidity regarding the concept of time, they tend to stretch. The last camp, which ended last month, went on for 40 days, "and really tested our ability to the maximum," said Ventura, who runs the camp with his wife on a shoestring budget.

"Simply put, we're exhausted," he added, chuckling.

Most of the activities take place inside the synagogue, a three-story apartment with 10 rooms, two kitchens and at least 5,500 square meters of floor space. Located in Jardim Paulistano, one of Sao Paulo's most expensive neighborhoods, the Venturas can afford renting it thanks to donations. Running the camp on a budget of about \$5,000 is possible because the Venturas buy food wholesale and participants do their own cooking and cleaning. On some days, the participants barely leave the synagogue, Ventura said. "These kids, they have a huge thirst for knowledge," the 45-year-old rabbi added. "They come from places without Jewish schools. Many of them have no framework."



For many other Brazilian Jewish youths "Judaism classes are something that comes before the fun stuff at summer camp," Ventura said. "With the bnei anusim, studying is the main course." Studying was the motivation and favorite activity at Yeshiva Camp for Monaliza Geovana Nobrega de Macedo, 25, of Campina Grande in northern Brazil.

"Just being able to practice and study Hebrew in a kosher environment, studying kashrut laws and how to cook with them, immersing myself in the Torah, that's an enormous thing for me," she told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Excursions to Sao Paulo's museums, Krav Maga lessons and beach time are some of the less spiritual activities at Yeshiva Camp. The camp also features a meeting with Nanette Koning, an 89-year-old Holocaust survivor who was friends with the famed diarist Anne Frank.

"It's a jarring encounter for participants, many of whom don't know much about the Holocaust and almost none of them ever met a survivor," Ventura said.

Aldrey Ribeiro de Brito, 24, recently moved to Sao Paulo from his town in Paraiba, a northern Brazilian state. "I came to Yeshiva Camp mostly to connect with other bnei anusim to feel I'm not alone. But it had a major influence on my decision to move to the big city, be a part of a Jewish community," he said.

Like many bnei anusim who are returning to Judaism — there are thousands of them in Brazil alone — Monaliza became aware of her origins through studying her own family's unusual customs. They include lighting candles on Friday evening and spring cleanings that roughly coincide with Passover. The customs opened her eyes as to how her "ancestors passed down Judaism through many generations," she said.

In Teixeira's case, the journey back to Judaism began when he was 14, with a casual remark by his father, a practicing Christian, about their family's Jewish roots. "I wanted to know more. It put me on a path of discovery," Teixeira said. Living in "a very remote, very small place," as Teixeira described his native Itamaraju, "I've been seeking contact with other Jews." This interest led him to Ventura and Yeshiva Camp. For Teixeira and his family, the \$200 for his trip from Itamaraju was a major expense.

"There's not really a culture of summer camps where I come from, so it was a strange concept," he said. "But I worked throughout the school year to save money, and my parents helped."

Monaliza sold T-shirts on the street to fund her trip. Teenagers Lucily Guimaraes Santana and her older sister, Esther, sold ice cream for months in their native state of Tocantins in Brazil's interior to save up. Sara Angelo de Lima from Brasilia also sold hundreds of cones to afford the trip.

Ventura says he finds the investment by participants crucial to the camp's mission. "Being Jewish is a sacrifice. So the financial sacrifice these kids are making puts them at exactly the right place for the journey they're undertaking," he said.

Ventura's journey to the rabbinate took him to Jerusalem, where he studied for his ordination at Yeshivat Mesilot Hatorah, and he still works closely with a former leader of the Sephardic Orthodox Shas party, Rabbi Haim Amsalem. A bit of an outsider in Brazil's Jewish community for his outreach and interfaith agendas, he nonetheless works on joint projects with more mainstream Jewish congregations and organizations. Ventura, a veteran activist against racism and class differences in Brazilian society, views introducing underprivileged bnei anusim from the interior of the country to Sao Paulo as a way of helping them "open doors in life." It's also an important opportunity to have them meet other Jews from Sao Paulo's large and vibrant community, he said.

Such encounters often leave Sao Paulo Jews speechless when they hear bnei anusim from towns without a Jewish school speak fluent Hebrew and recite entire pages from the Bible, Ventura said.

Some parents, like Raniery Cavalcanti, can afford to help send their children to Yeshiva Camp.

"I don't see it as a sacrifice, more like an investment in the family's future," said Cavalcanti, a 37-year-old lawyer from the northern city of Recife. He sent his only son, 17-year-old Angelo, to two weeks at Yeshiva Camp. The trip "wasn't cheap, but it's cheaper than a ticket to Spain, so as ancestral trips go, this is a bargain," he joked.

Having reconnected to Judaism in his teens, Raniery "did not get to go to Jewish summer camp." Sending Angelo to one, he said, "is a huge bonus. It's a chance to build a stronger Jewish generation."

But doing so is requiring some extra effort on Raniery's part, he added. "Since he came back from Yeshiva Camp, Angelo is constantly on my case to recite the blessings before meals, to put on tefillin, to go to synagogue," Cavalcanti said.

Don't let Ladino Die

By Michael Freund. Full article in the Jerusalem Post [here](#)

Ladino and all that it embodies are part and parcel of our people's long and winding journey on the historical stage.

By any rational yardstick, the legacy of medieval Spanish Jewry should long ago have met its demise. The community, Europe's largest and most influential at the time, was expelled in 1492 and scattered to the wind, spreading throughout the Middle East, the Balkans and North Africa. Few cultures could possibly hope to survive such a catastrophic and collective trauma, as its adherents were forced to rebuild their lives in foreign lands.

Nonetheless, defying all the odds, Spanish Jewry's unique cultural, linguistic and religious traditions continue to live on – and it behooves Israel and the Jewish people to do more to cultivate and nourish this critical part of our people's heritage. I caught a glimpse of this precious patrimony firsthand at the Seder this year, when I joined my daughter-in-law and her family, part of which is of Turkish-Jewish background, for the annual retelling of the exodus from Egypt.

Suddenly, and without much warning, I was exposed to new songs, different tunes and even selections that were read in Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, an emotive dialect that mixes Old Spanish with Hebrew and Aramaic terms.

Having grown up with the familiar Ashkenazi customs and melodies, it was an enlightening peek into another proud Jewish set of traditions, one that is no less authentic or legitimate than our own. Indeed, with a little bit of imagination, it wasn't difficult to conjure an image of exiled Spanish Jews sitting around a Seder table in Izmir, Naples or Sarajevo in the 16th or 17th century and reciting some of the same incantations. In many ways, the story of Ladino mirrors that of the Jewish people over the past six centuries, having survived expulsion, assimilation and mass murder.

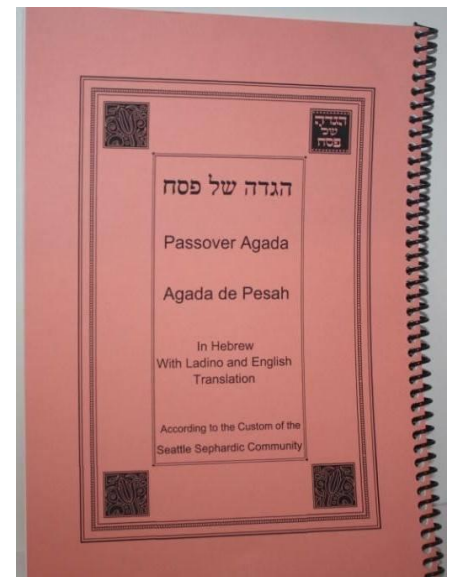
Like Yiddish, the lingua franca of many Ashkenazi Jews down through the generations, Ladino served as a cultural canvas, one used by many Sephardi Jews to compose poetry, elucidate the Torah, and grapple with questions of philosophical and mystical significance as well as investigate history, mathematics and astronomy.

Perhaps the most famous work in Ladino is the *Me'am Lo'ez*, a commentary on the Bible combining Talmudic, Midrashic and halachic expositions that was initiated by Rabbi Yaakov Culi in 1730 in Constantinople and continued by others after his death. The book, which has been translated into Hebrew and English, has gained wide popularity among Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike.

For hundreds of years, up until the Holocaust, Ladino served as the primary language spoken by many Sephardi Jews throughout the Mediterranean region. But the murder of large numbers of Ladino-speaking Jews, in places such as Greece and Bosnia by the Germans and their henchmen in World War II, imperiled the language's future and wellbeing.

For hundreds of years, up until the Holocaust, Ladino served as the primary language spoken by many Sephardi Jews throughout the Mediterranean region. But the murder of large numbers of Ladino-speaking Jews, in places such as Greece and Bosnia by the Germans and their henchmen in World War II, imperiled the language's future and among Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike.

Estimates as to the number of Ladino speakers in the world today vary from just tens of thousands to as many as 200,000. But as NBC News noted in a report two months ago, "What is not in dispute is that most native Ladino speakers are elderly, and most of their children grew up learning different languages." In other words, this rich language and culture is in danger of dying out if greater efforts are not made to preserve it.



Fortunately, a number of efforts are underway to prevent that from happening. Earlier this year, the second annual International Ladino Day was held at the Center for Jewish History in New York. Organized by the American Sephardi Federation and others, it included a festival devoted to Ladino music and culture. Similar events have been held in other cities.

Israel's Culture Ministry has a national authority for Ladino culture, which was established by the Knesset in 1996. It awards scholarships to encourage students of the language, sponsors translations and produces books and CDs with Ladino stories and songs.

Scholars such as Dr. Eliezer Papo of Ben-Gurion University and Prof. David Bunis, who heads the Ladino studies program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, have been laboring for years to raise greater awareness about it by teaching courses and writing articles and books.

And intrepid students can even find instructional videos on YouTube to learn Ladino. But for various reasons, the language has not gotten its due, receiving far less attention, resources and funding than similar programs aimed at reviving Yiddish. It is time for this to change and for Sephardi and Ladino culture and traditions to be salvaged and strengthened with the same ardor being invested in preserving Ashkenazi Jewish heritage.

American-Jewish organizations along with the Israeli government should be doing more to keep Ladino and its heritage alive and well – because Ladino and all that it embodies are part and parcel of our people's long and winding journey on the historical stage. To allow it to wither away or become fossilized would be an affront to Jewish history and an irreplaceable cultural loss. More than seven decades ago, the Nazis dealt Ladino and its legacy a life-threatening blow. Through indifference and apathy, we must not allow it to prove fatal.

Gershon Harris
Hatzor Haglilit, Israel



As we approach "Yom Ha'atzma'ut- Israel Independence Day-5779-2019", and prepare to celebrate the modern, strong and thriving State of Israel's 71st birthday, we thank Almighty God for all the miracles he has wrought for the People of Israel in its return to its homeland after so many years of exile and unprecedented persecution, suffering, and even attempted genocide.

But 71 years ago, the theological grounds for gaining the Orthodox world's acceptance and approval of the Zionist movement and the very secular and, at the time, distinctly anti-religious character of the revival of the sovereign Jewish commonwealth in the Land of Israel were not so clear. Orthodox Jewry and Rabbis were totally divided in their attitudes for supporting the new Jewish state. On one extreme were those who saw the Zionist movement and formation of the state as blasphemy and betrayal of the Torah, and therefore as totally illegitimate in Jewish terms. On the other end were religious Zionists who saw the formation of the state as no less than a Divine miracle and the beginning of the final redemption of Israel.

Complicating matters was the fact that this "secular", "anti-religious" and "blasphemous" entity won the War of Independence against all odds, and continued to develop and grow under the worst possible economic, political and social conditions, that more and more Orthodox laypeople and Rabbis could only attribute to God's direct and miraculous help. One of the most famous of such Rabbis, and a recognized as American Orthodoxy's greatest thinkers, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, gave expression to these feelings in a public lecture at Yeshiva University, held on Israel Independence Day in 1956 entitled "*Kol Dodi Dofek*" – 'The Voice of My Beloved is Knocking', which became one of religious Zionist philosophy's most seminal and classic works. Rabbi Soloveitchik took the idea and title for the lecture from verses in the "Song of Songs", the Biblical book that is seen as an allegory for the God-Israel relationship, with God being the "Beloved", continually courting and seeking his "Lover", meaning Israel, who,

for her part, continues to hesitate and procrastinate as before answering her "Beloved's" persistent knocks at her door. When she finally does decide to open the door, however, the jilted Beloved is no longer there, having apparently given up hope. As a result, as written by Rabbi Soloveitchik, *"The joy of her life was exiled.....She, the Lover, still wanders through the dwellings of the shepherds seeking her Beloved"*. Rabbi Soloveitchik's point was that, despite the very real theological problem of Rabbinical and Orthodox support for the very secular State of Israel, too many "knocks" of "our" Beloved – Almighty God were too clearly miraculous to be simple chance. Should the Orthodox Jewish world not support the fledgling and struggling revived Jewish homeland, they may be guilty of once again missing a historical and Divinely inspired opportunity for the Jewish people and its ultimate spiritual and physical redemption.

Rabbi Soloveitchik then enumerated what he called six knocks by God at our "door" that demonstrated His reasons for an unhesitant and positive response in the support of the new State of Israel, notwithstanding its very non- and even anti-Orthodox fabric.

The first knock was in the political arena in terms of so many different and even hostile nations uniting to support the UN Partition Plan to create separate Jewish and Palestinian states. Rabbi Soloveitchik felt that, in the political context, it was almost supernatural, when, in the midst of the Cold War, the US and the USSR found common ground in supporting the measure. Such a rare consensus by such a dichotomy of nations could only be Divinely inspired. In fact, Rabbi Soloveitchik believed that the United Nations must have been created for this specific purpose. It was clear to him that those who voted in favor of the resolution had obviously heard a "knock" from on high, and we cannot ignore this and miss a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Second, the "Beloved's" knock was audible on the battlefield. That the then tiny Israeli army was able to defeat huge defense forces of at least 5 Arab countries and keep the new state alive was in itself a miracle, where, like on Hanukkah, "the many delivered into the hands of the few". In fact, had there been no fighting and the Arabs accepted to original Partition Plan, we would have remained without any part of Jerusalem, most of the Galilee and parts of the Negev. As Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote "Listen! My Beloved Knocks"! Israel has one against all odds.

The third knock was indeed theological. One of Christianity's most basic tenets is replacement theology, whereby, since the Jews refused to accept Christianity and Christ as the Messiah, we lost the original covenant with God, which was replaced by Christianity, i.e. the "New Testament". The Jews are therefore eternally condemned to exile and can never gain or regain any national homeland or sovereignty. Yet with God's help, the very foundations of Christianity and its justification for the Jews' condemnation and never-ending wandering, were shattered to the core, as the Jewish people actively and enthusiastically revived our sovereignty in our own Land, further strengthening our belief in God, while further weakening our enemies' own beliefs persecution of the people of Israel.

The fourth knock called attention to the massive assimilation by so many Jews who found no country willing to accept them after the Holocaust, and whose faith had been shaken and even destroyed by what they had experienced. But now, out of the blue, an autonomous and sovereign Jewish state was being created, which, as part of its founding principles and policies would call on every Jew to come "home" and become citizens automatically. No more "wandering" Jews or no place to call home. Quite the contrary: This would be the Jewish state, ruled by Jews and Jewish principles, if not yet by Jewish law. Even those who opposed the idea of a secular Jewish state could not deny the barrier to assimilation it became. Again, God was knocking at our door; we need only listen.

The fifth knock may be the most important. For the first time in Israel's history of exile, Divine Providence forced our enemies to realize that Jewish blood was no longer cheap nor expendable. Jews would defend themselves on any front with courage and determination, forcing any potential or actual enemy to understand that it will pay a heavy price when going to war with Israel.

Finally, the sixth 'knock', or call, was heard when the gates of the State of Israel first opened to immigrant absorption and the creation of a new Jewish society. Whether to escape danger and anti-Semitism or to freely immigrate out of a positive will to become part of the Jewish homeland, all Jews were, and still are, welcome, and indeed came in droves, straining every resource the still fledgling state could offer. The problems were tremendous, resources insufficient and living conditions intolerable for so many new immigrants, and yet overall immigrant absorption was an unprecedented success. This could not be a simple manmade achievement, but clearly involved Divine intervention, as once again God showed us the way. And though these steps come from a 1956 essay, Rabbi Soloveitchik's ideas are no less valid today than ever before, as the State of Israel continues to realize its destiny. *Hag Sameah!*

Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé
Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America



Parashah of the Week – Pesah
Our Mission as a Nation by Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé

The destruction and ruin that had come to Egypt, to their gods and to their land, had not been enough, they were blinded by conceit. In an act that would baffle all future generations, displaying total arrogance and stupidity, the leadership of Egypt, decided to chase the Jews into the sea with their chariots and their heavy weaponry. As they attempted to cross through, the dry land began to turn into mud, their chariots and horses became ensnared in it and the men became paralyzed with fear. The entire Egyptian army was to be perished, drowned as the waters closed in, crashing onto the mighty army of the king of Egypt. Still, one might wonder, after so many plagues, why was this punishment necessary?

It was clear to any observer that Egypt had lost the war and the Jews were victorious. Their immoral tactics had been stopped, they could not come after the Hebrews and oppress them anymore. Egypt was no more, the exodus was now truly over, the Jews had seen their enemy perished in the sea. Good had triumphed over evil. But it was also true that the gods of Egypt had been utterly destroyed. Now the onlooker could sense that there was no divinity to any of them. The gods of Egypt had not been able to fight for the Egyptians, they had not been able to protect anyone and what was worse, and they had not even been able to defend themselves against the mighty G-d of Israel. Hebrews and Egyptians alike, had lived through an experience that would completely shift their paradigms and their understanding of their surroundings. The mission of the Jewish Nation had begun, they were to proclaim and to promote the name of G-d throughout the world.

How is that mission better accomplished? Basing himself on Maimonides, Rabbi Hai Moshe Picciotto (1) states that in Judaism there are three basic principles on regards to our belief in G-d. The first is that G-d exists, the universe did not form by accident; there is a Creator that brought forth everything that is. The second is that G-d oversees His creation. G-d did not abandon the universe and leave it to be run by the stars and the constellations of the zodiac. The third and final is that G-d is unique and there is none other like Him. There are no two separate forces that rule the universe, one which constitutes good and another representing evil, there is but only one G-d and all emanates from Him.

Quoting from Hovot HaLevavot of Rabbi Bahya ibn Pakuda (2), Rabbi Picciotto adds that in regards to matters of faith, it is of little praise to display and to state a belief in G-d based only on what one has been told by his elders, a father or a teacher, without internalizing any real understanding and meaning. Rather, it is praiseworthy to search and to investigate properly and to find proofs and to verify all these matters in order to strengthen one's knowledge and understanding of G-d and to further develop true beliefs. (3)

As we conclude we note how the exodus from Egypt allowed us to become a free people and that true physical liberty could only come with our victory over the Egyptian army at the Sea of Reeds. As a nation, we were now at liberty to choose our own destiny. Yet, the new paradigm that was created by the ruin and destruction of all the deities of Egypt, allowed the Jews to understand their freedoms and choosings in a greater way. Namely, that there are no other gods or forces that rule our life, we are truly free and the creators of our destiny. As the sea closed on the Egyptians, the Jewish Nation sang and said, "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted." (Shemot 15:1) The mission of the Jewish people is to proclaim and to promote the name of G-d throughout the world, to teach and to guide the peoples of the world to what it means to be truly free.

- (1) Rabbi Hai Moshe ben Hayim Hillel Picciotto (Pichiotto)- Damascus 1815) During his tenure, three new Yeshivot were opened in the city of Aleppo in order to better instruct and educate the public, Rabbi Picciotto became the head of one of these institutions. He was the author of Vayihal Moshe, Bereshit and Shemot, and many other writings which remained as manuscripts. He was the son in law of Rabbi Moshe Galante, who was amongst the leading Rabbis of Damascus. Rabbi Galante described his son in law Rabbi Picciotto as loved and pious, a wholesome individual, wise and full of knowledge.
- (2) Bahya ben Joseph ibn Paquda (also: Pakuda, Bakuda, Hebrew: בחיי אבן פקודה, Arabic: بهية بن باكودا) was a Jewish philosopher and Rabbi who lived at Zaragoza, Al-Andaluz (now Spain) in the first half of the eleventh century.
- (3) Rabbi Hai Moshe Picciotto, Vayihal Moshe, Sermon for Parashat Beshalah

We love to highlight accomplishments of our Romaniote Jewish world and what can better exemplify this than the recent honor accorded **Sid Ganis**, a Yanniote by birth.

Academy Museum's Gift From the George Lucas Foundation Will Allow Kids To Visit For Free

The George Lucas Family Foundation has provided what the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences calls a "transformative grant" in support of the Academy Museum's educational mission.

Kerry Brougher, Director of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, did not reveal the amount of the Star Wars creator's donation but said the funds will be used to create an endowment underwriting free admission to the museum in perpetuity for visitors ages 17 and younger.

He added that the George Lucas Family Foundation established the grant **in honor of Sid Ganis**, former president and current VP of the Academy's Board of Governors and Chair of its Museum Committee. The museum is "committed to helping educate our youngest visitors: the children and teens who will be the next generation of filmmakers, writers, and visual artists," Brougher said. "To succeed, though, we must break down the financial barriers that make it difficult for families, students and teens to visit cultural institutions. ... Although not every child who visits the Academy Museum will embark on a career in filmmaking, each young person deserves to be inspired by the new perspectives and ideas that come through their exposure to the arts."

Said Ganis: "I could not be more honored and humbled by George's gift to young movie lovers around the world. Education has always been a primary goal of George's storytelling. Now through his incredible generosity young people from everywhere can experience and learn about the art and the techniques of filmmaking."



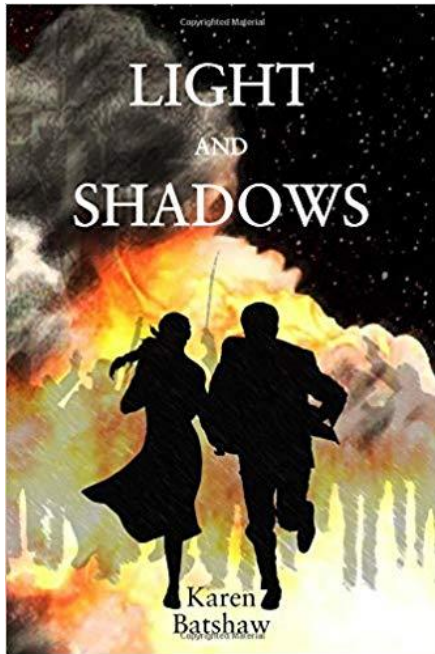
Greek Independence Day in New York – April 14



We hope you can help us identify the couple in this photo. It sits in our photo archives identified as "a couple from Kastoria." Please e-mail us at museum@kkjsm.org if you can help.



We are honored to be selling Karen Batshaw's latest book at our Greek Jewish Festival. If you wish us to save you an autographed copy, contact us at museum@kkjsm.org.



We thank Tica Negrin for this addition to our photo archives. This is her Benjamin family. "My Mom was going through old pictures and found the attached, she asked that I send a copy of it to you. It was taken in Ioannina around 1912-1913, in the middle is my Mom's father Benjamin Benjamin, age 2-3, in front of his Mother Esther Benjamin. The others in the picture are not identified. It would be another 4-5 years before they came to the the US, to eventually move to their Broome Street apartment across the street from the Kehila. Regards, Artie Negrin"



So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

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

Some of our major donations have been generous bequests, which have enabled us to complete major work in our synagogue/museum. Do remember us in your will. Your legacy will be present in our legacy.

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday morning at 9:30am and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11am-4pm and by appointment during the week.



Kehila Kedosha Janina E-Newsletter – Number 122

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Kehila Kedosha Janina

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