



# Jottings

Etz Hayyim Synagogue  
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## Editorial

Apologies for any result of my illness that coincided with the illness of Mr Nikolaj Kiessling, which was most unfortunate. Both of these complicating factors were alleviated by the support of people who committed themselves to the Synagogue for some time. We are especially indebted to Ida Mordoch and Artemis Petropoulou, old friends from the years that I spent as Director of the Jewish Museum in Athens.

Mr Nikolaj Kiessling, President of the Board of Trustees of the Synagogue, managed to steer a course through an illness of some seriousness and we wholeheartedly wish him full recovery. Marianna Vinther has been involved in an ill-defined responsibility as Vice-President of the Board and we owe her a special thanks for her concern and commitment to the Synagogue.

General caretaking of the Synagogue is done by Beznik Seti, a young Albanian, who has functioned as well as general caretaker of the Synagogue and skilled repairman. He also does a great deal of scouting for workmen for additional required repairs at the Synagogue. He also runs essential errands for the Synagogue such as post office, deliveries etc. as needed. He lives with his wife and three children in the building next-door that is being rented by the Board. He and his

cousin were responsible for the speedy renovation that took place in 2010 after the two fires in the January of that year and were involved in the recent (and not so recent) repairs that were required on the main Synagogue and the office of the Director.

Gerry Dutton must also be mentioned at this point, who has more than proved himself as committed to what we are doing by assuming a position of docent on Fridays. However, he must also be mentioned as the man who more or less brought to fruition the library and kitchen of Etz Hayyim Synagogue with his expertise in carpentry, shelf-building and kitchen re-designing.

What is particular in our needs at this moment is dictated by an ongoing problem with water absorption in the main sanctuary of the Synagogue, which appears to absorb water from its foundations. We have had considerable difficulty in alleviating this problem. When we did an

*continued on page 7*

### *Also in this issue:*

- Festivals and Liturgical Life at Etz Hayyim.....2*
- Just Published: Etz Hayyim Haggadah.....3*
- Thank-You to Ambassador Peck.....3*
- Times for Religious Services at EH.....3*
- Book Presentation / Storytelling Performance.....4*
- Etz Hayyim at MuCEM / Two Poem Cycles .....5*
- Gedenkdienst / Record Number of Visitors.....6*
- News from the Library / Documentary Film Project.7*
- Call for Support / Contact Info / Opening Hours.....8*

*Etz Hayyim Haggadah  
Ετζ Χαγιμ Αγκαντά*



*Hania Crete 5775/2015  
Χανιά Κρήνη 5775/2015*



## Festivals and Liturgical Life at Etz Hayyim

Not having a resident community of Jews in Hania, the Holidays are celebrated according to relevance and need. The greatest number of Jewish visitors is present in the Synagogue during these times of the year—e.g. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth and Passover—and we have ensured that our services for these festivals are in keeping with our tradition in Greece. At the same time we ensure that Jews of any personal observance feel welcome to participate in our celebrations. Thus particular means are taken for our services to be inclusive but at the same time we indicate that we are attentive to the needs of the participants.



Nikos Stavroulakis with the Sharp Family on Sukkoth

For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur especially we are grateful for the leadership in prayers and the obligation to hear the Shofar to Lior Asher, a young Israeli who for several years now has spent the High Holy Days with us.

Since 2000, we have had an annual public community Seder for Pessah in order to fulfill the obligation that we share the celebration of our freedom with non-Jews. This has been a particular challenge insofar as it means that the greater number of participants are non-Jews or Jews from other culturally defined Jewish backgrounds, e.g. Ashkenazi, Sephardic or non-affiliated. For several years we attempted to use the “traditional” Sephardic Haggadah (narrative of the escape from Egypt), however, we have found that our own situation in Hania dictated that we had to find more flexible solutions to our problems. This has meant an ongoing elucidation of the Haggadah according to our own needs. This year we are especially proud of the fact that we have managed to bring out our Haggadah (see publica-

tion announcement on p. 3) which is embracing in its relevance to present conditions and thus in the tradition of written Haggadoth in Crete in the course of centuries of which fragments and entire texts exist in various prominent libraries. The text has been adapted to a certain degree from the Reconstructionist Haggadah and the illustrations were done specifically by Nicholas Stavroulakis and hopefully are thought-provoking and in keeping with the spirit of Etz Hayyim.



Etrog in the Etz Hayyim courtyard

In February, the Synagogue opened its doors for the celebration of the Bat Mizvah of Ellie Sarah Sharp, the daughter of Philip Sharp, who is resident with his extended family in the Southeast of Crete. Of course this event is essentially a public commitment to Jewish formative values in the sense that it is when a young man or a young woman commit themselves publically to assuming not only the responsibility of being Jewish but also some of its liabilities. Ellie was well prepared by her father in the reading of the Hebrew Parashah Terumah and she and her father spoke on the meaning of the event and of their gratitude to Etz Hayyim. N.S.





## Just Published: *The Etz Hayyim Haggadah*

Talos Press (Athens) has just published the Etz Hayyim Haggadah. Please see the article "Festival and Liturgical Life at Etz Hayyim" for further details.

The illustrations are also available as postcards.

66 pages + cover | cover four-colour | inside b/w | glued bond | bilingual Greek-English | 16 drawings | price: € 15

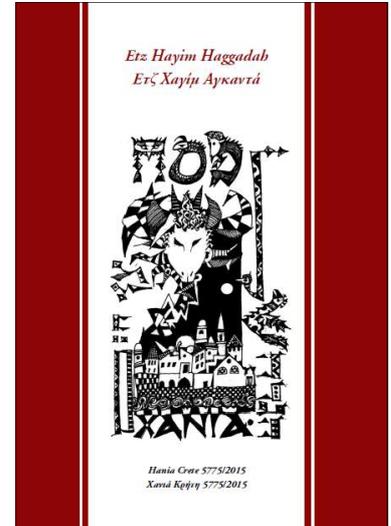
**The Haggadah is sold through the publisher Ida Mordoh:**

T: 0030 210 7485 782, 0030 6944157679

e-mail: redpoint@otenet.gr

**Orders can also be sent to Etz Hayyim Synagogue:**

T: 0030 28210 86286, e-mail: info@etz-hayyim-hania.org



## Our Sincere Thank-You to Canadian Ambassador Robert W. Peck

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency Robert W. Peck, the Ambassador of Canada to Greece, who has supported Etz Hayyim Synagogue in various ways since his visit last August. Not only do we owe a new CCTV system for the Synagogue to his committed fundraising efforts but he also provided much needed assistance when the Synagogue roof was in urgent need of repair after the first storms of the past winter. The work was done by Bekim Duro and Beznik Seti.

The latest project initiated and supported by Ambassador Peck is an application (for iPhone/iPad) which will include information about Etz Hayyim Synagogue and the History of the Jews of Crete. This app is being put together with the assistance of Anastasios Skikos of

Odysseas Project Tech Support (Athens) and will initially be available in English. A translation into Hebrew is also planned. We also hope that eventually a translation into Greek will be possible which could then be used as educational material for visiting Greek school classes.

## Religious Services at Etz Hayyim

**Kabbalat Shabbat Service** are held every Friday; service starts at sunset.

**Candle lighting times are posted on our website:**

<http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/newsandevents>

(click on the dates in the calendar).

**Other Holy Days will be announced on our website, per email and on our facebook page.**



Maintenance works on the northern roof of Etz Hayyim.

### 01 Kabbalat Shabbat Service

May Holidays

**Date/Time**

Date(s) - 01/05/2015

7:52 pm - 8:52 pm

**Categories**

- Holidays

Candle lighting followed by Kabbalat Shabbat Service. Everybody is welcome. Please contact the Synagogue Office for further questions and arrangements.

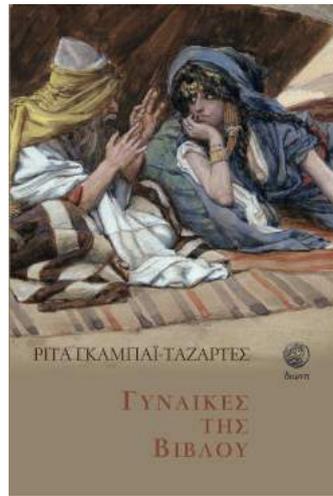


## Book Presentation: Rita Gabbai-Tazartes *The Women of the Bible*

On the evening of 11 March 2015, Rita Gabbai-Tazartes, a long-term friend of the Synagogue and a member of its Board of Trustees, presented her latest book *The Women of the Bible*. The book was introduced by Kostas Mountzouris; portions were read by actress Aktí Dríni.

In the book, 27 portraits of biblical women are presented as they are described in the Bible, but also with addi-

tional information from other sources like the Talmud and oral traditions. While the biblical stories capture the imagination of many readers, the stories of women such as Sarah, Rebecca to Judith, Jezebel and Abigail show unequalled examples of valour, courage, intelligence, but also of love and passion. The book is richly illustrated; it is currently available only in Greek.



Herself of Sephardic descent, Rita Gabbai-Tazartes has become well known for her poetry in Ladino and her work as a translator. She teaches the Judeo-Spanish language Ladino in Athens.

Ρίτα Γκαβαΐ-Ταζάρτες: Γυναίκες της Βίβλου, Αθήνα: Διώνη, 2014, 190 σελίδες. [www.dionibooks.gr](http://www.dionibooks.gr)

## Storytelling Performance with Medieval Sephardic Music

**Μουσική Βραδιά**  
Ιαβρίτικες λεπτομέρειες

Απογευματινή εκδήλωση με θέμα τις σφραγισμένες λεπτομέρειες του Ιαβρίτικου κόσμου από τον 15ο αιώνα ως σήμερα. Η παρουσία της μουσικής και της λογοτεχνίας στην ιστορία των Ιαβρίτικων είναι αναπόσπαστο κομμάτι της ζωής τους. Η παρουσία της μουσικής και της λογοτεχνίας στην ιστορία των Ιαβρίτικων είναι αναπόσπαστο κομμάτι της ζωής τους.

Συνεργεία: **Ελί Γιάννη** & **Ελί Γιάννη**

**8 Δεκεμβρίου**  
**December**  
**2014**  
**8:00 PM**

**Σεφαραδίτικες Ρομάντζες**  
Sefardic Romances

Παρασκευή Αφίτηρας & Παραδοσιακή Ήραση  
Μουσική από την Ισπανία

**Ελί Γιαννικόπουλος**  
Elias Giannikopoulos

**Αιμίλιος Ψώνης**  
Dimitris Psonis

Παράδοση & Καινοτομία  
Το 15ο αιώνα, η Ισπανία  
και η Ελλάδα. Μουσική και λογοτεχνία που μιλάει σήμερα.

Η παρουσία της μουσικής και της λογοτεχνίας στην ιστορία των Ιαβρίτικων είναι αναπόσπαστο κομμάτι της ζωής τους.

On the 8th December 2014, despite a day, afternoon, and early evening of winter rain, the Synagogue was filled with locals and others to enjoy an evening of Sephardic music played on traditional instruments. This was an integral part of a richly textured series of tales of the Sephardic journey to the southern Balkans in the 15th century after the expulsion of the Jews of Spain. The

synagogue was almost tangibly reminiscent of a time long past when story-tellers provided the links of traditions now lost and apparently and unsuccessfully replaced or smothered by the TV and other multi-media. Of such success was the evening that we hope to be able to bring back both performers in 2016. N.S.

performance and selection of music and personal experiences of Sephardic Jews formed the core of the programme that was written and performed by Elias Giannikopoulos with music played by Dimitris Psonis. Both created an atmosphere that was literally spell-binding as



Elias Giannikopoulos & Dimitris Psonis performing; Malek Saharaiyah filming (left)



## Etz Hayyim at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations

The well-planned visit of Malek Saharaiyah overlapped with the storytelling performance/concert in December 2014. Malek had participated in the seminar at the French School of Classical Studies in Athens in May 2014 at which N. Stavroulakis gave a paper. In the course of that seminar he was sufficiently intrigued by what we are doing at Etz Hayyim that he organized this visit that fortunately coincided with the concert. He is a highly successful free-lance creator of documentaries especially for the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseilles (MuCEM).

His and their interest in us is that we are part of a general growing concern over the indifference to the rich

cultural, religious and even ethnic strands that make up the Mediterranean *in toto* even as a quiet response to the technocratic values that seem to stem out of a Europe that seems more and more indefinable. The Mu-

seum in Marseilles has seen an enormous success in only two years and has had some 2,000,000 visitors since its opening. The choice of Marseilles for its creation and locus reveals the dominating spirit and vision of its creators: located geographically central in the Mediterranean it was founded in

the 6th century BCE by Greek colonists as Massalia and has acted as an entrance into Europe that enriched the interior of Gaul, or as it was later called, France, from Hellenic, Hellenistic and Roman times.

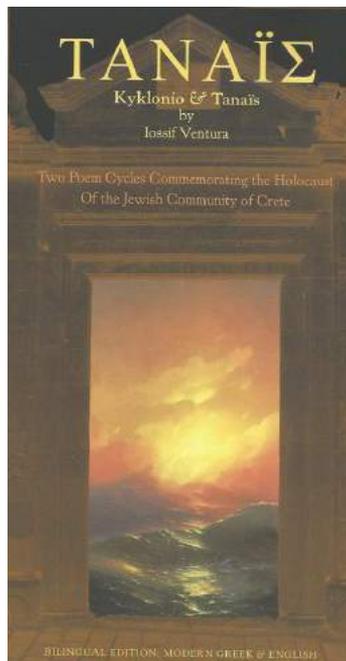
N.S.



## Poems Commemorating the Destruction of the Jewish Community of Crete

On 9 June 1944, the merchant vessel *Tanaïs* was torpedoed by a British submarine off the coast of Crete. The freighter was carrying Greek and Italian prisoners of war but also virtually the entire Jewish Community of Crete. Among the handful of Jews who had evaded capture was the family of a small child named Iossif Ventura.

He survived to become a distinguished poet. In 2001 and 2009, respectively, Ventura published two poem cycles, *Tanaïs* and *Kyklonio*, commemorating the Greek Holocaust. These poems stand out for their elevated tone, tempered grief, and surrealistic imagery. They are sincere and beautiful poems, a worthy memorial to the small but ancient Cretan Jewish com-



munity that for at least 2300 years played an integral role in the economic and cultural life of the island.

Iossif Ventura lives the echoing void left by friends, playmates, cousins, uncles and aunts, in a small town haunted by his uprooted Jewish Heritage. In *Tanaïs & Kyklonio*, Ventura's grief, personal and authentic, is sublimated in verses that speak to the entire world.

Red Heifer Press just issued the first bilingual edition of *Tanaïs & Kyklonio*, in which the original Greek is accompanied by a powerful English translation that is the collaborative effort of several distinguished poets, scholars and critics.

Red Heifer Press

Iossif Ventura: *TANAÏS: KYKLONIO & TANAÏS: Two Poems Cycles Commemorating the Holocaust of the Jewish Community of Crete*. First Bilingual Edition. Red Heifer Press. ISBN 978-0-9855199-3-3. 128 Pages. US\$ 14.95

Orders through: [www.redheiferpress.com](http://www.redheiferpress.com)



## Gedenkdienst at Etz Hayyim

A lot has happened since the last time I wrote an article for the newsletter in August, when I had just started my community service at Etz Hayyim. Since then I have met lots of people, learned and did so many new things and I can safely say that this past half-year will influence me for a long time to come.

During the first few months my work mostly consisted of giving guided tours to the many visitors that come to Etz Hayyim every day. These guided tours would always be different depending on the interests of the visitors. Because the visitors come from all over the world and everybody has their own perspective and opinion, the tours often evolved into very interesting talks and discussions. A quite surprising result of some of these talks were invitations from visitors to visit them in their home country, which I always found very nice.

One encounter that I especially would like to point out was the visit of a group of students from the USA. At one point during the tour of Etz Hayyim I was asked to tell them about my motivations for working in the Synagogue. I began talking about the importance of remembering historical events for the sake of recognizing and

stopping recurring patterns early on. I also mentioned that it is very interesting to observe one's political surroundings within a historical context, and because of this a conversation between the students' Greek tour guide, their professor, Anja and me emerged where we talked about Greece's political situation, the concept of Nationalism and again the importance for an individual to be aware of their political environment. — The students mostly listened, and I assume that these topics are handled differently in their home country, but I hope that some points we made during the discussion still got them thinking even after their departure from Hania.

When winter came and the temperatures went down, so did the number of visitors that would come to Etz Hayyim. Because of that, my daily work routine was now focused on administrative office work instead of taking care of the visitors. During the winter, I worked on a lot of different projects, including translations, research and the organisation of various events. I really enjoyed it because while working I also learned something about the topic of the project.

But naturally I also spent a lot of time out of work. In summer I would often spend whole weekends in Sougia, a little village in the south of Crete with a beautiful seaside, where it is allowed to spend the night on the beach. I was also very lucky to meet a group of very nice Greek students towards the end of summer. We went out in Hania and on trips, and my personal highlight was the 10-day trip to Athens and Xanthi, where we took part at the festivities of the Carnival.

I am looking forward to the rest of my time on Crete, and I am optimistic that it will be as exciting as the past months, if not even more so. M.P.



## Record Number of Visitors in 2014: Tourists and Students

In 2014, we received a record number of visitors: 22,623. While this number has unfortunately not translated into a similar increase in overall visitor donations, we will work towards improving that ratio in 2015.

Another notable increase that we can announce was in the number of pupils and students who visited the Synagogue in 2014. The total number of 627 includes 561 pupils from 17 local and other Greek schools and 66 students from four universities in the USA and Canada.

This is a very positive development, which we hope to continue and expand. Already in the first three months of 2015 we have received 126 pupils from schools on Crete.

For the coming months we have already received reservations from several local schools (including the Ecclesiastical High School of Hania) and student groups from Dartmouth College, Yale University and American School of Classical Studies at Athens.



## ... continued from page 1

autopsy of the building in 1995 it was obvious that eventually we would have problems with this. The solution of the problem has been evasive and we have approached several sources to find a technical solution for this problem, e.g. in Amsterdam. Thus this is a major funding need for 2015 (please see article on page 8).

Moritz Plattner, the *Gedenkdienst* volunteer from Austria, has been a valuable addition to our team and has proofed himself as a skilled guide, research assistant and—last but not least—an attentive carer of the Synagogue cats of which there are now again three. Apart from Bosjin, the cat who was born in my office in 2011, the Synagogue has now been adopted by two more cats: Marwin and Mavigöz. The presence of the cats is dictated by their more than active participation in the life of the Synagogue and being as we are surrounded by restaurants means the ultimate attraction of cats, mice and cockroaches. This seems to be the most ecological solution to the problem as opposed to spreading poisons etc.

Alex Phoundoulakis' sudden departure for the United States at the end of last summer was dictated by family concerns. We have felt his absence in the



top left: Bosjin  
lower left: Marwin  
top right: Moritz with Mavigöz

Synagogue deeply as it was through his meeting with me that we began to further refine the needs of the Synagogue in contemporary terms. His absence is especially felt. Administrative tasks have now been taken over by Anja Zuckmantel.

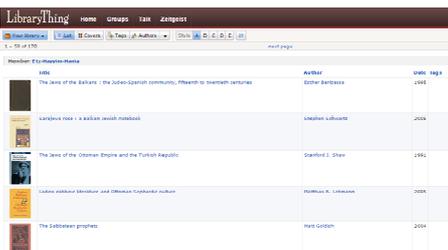
Nikos Stavroulakis

## News from the Library

The Library catalogue is currently being put online with the assistance of Moritz Plattner and local volunteers Marie-Therèse Hartzoulaki and Ahmed Kasimi.

Visitor numbers to the library are still somewhat low but we hope that once the catalogue can be accessed online more visitors will find their way to the library.

Our library and archival collection has also provided background information for the development of an app about Etz Hayyim Synagogue and Cretan Jewish history (see article on page 3).



The catalogue will shortly be available at:  
[www.librarything.com/catalog/Etz-Hayyim-Hania](http://www.librarything.com/catalog/Etz-Hayyim-Hania)

## Ongoing Documentary Film Project— Call for Materials

A team of filmmakers is creating a documentary about Etz Hayyim. The theme will be the miracle of Etz Hayyim and its importance to Chania and the world.

The U.S. group, headed by Sandra Barty, Producer and Director, and Ken Ross, Filmmaker, is being assisted by local sound engineer Anastasis Efentakis and others. They will continue to film in Chania and Heraklion April 23 to May 18, 2015.

If anyone is willing to share photos or videos of celebrations at Etz Hayyim, the team would be most interested.

Please contact Sandra Barty at [sandrabb@cloud9.net](mailto:sandrabb@cloud9.net) or Ken Ross at [cyclonepictures@gmail.com](mailto:cyclonepictures@gmail.com). Thank you.



## Call for Support: Etz Hayyim in Urgent Need for Upkeep

In 2015, one of our main tasks will be the maintenance of the interior of the main sanctuary of the Synagogue which shows signs of damage due to humidity (see both images below): plaster and paint are peeling off the walls.

Throughout the tourist season, we will call on our visitors with a special appeal for support for this urgent project.



But we would also like to bring the problem to the attention of our international friends and supporters.

An appropriate

and lasting method for replastering and repainting the walls has been determined and would cost about € 1,500.

In the next newsletter, we will update you on the progress in this matter.



### Bank Information for Donations

Acc. Name: Civil Not for Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim  
IBAN: GR 9401 7163 5000 6635 1095 59315  
SWIFT/BIC: PIRBGRAA  
Bank: Piraeus Bank (1635), Agia Marina, Hania

### Contact us and stay in touch

Phone: 0030-28210-86286  
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Web: [www.etz-hayyim-hania.org](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org)  
Facebook: Synagogue Etz Hayyim

Soon to come on our website:  
**New sponsorship opportunities and more convenient ways to donate.**



### Synagogue Opening Hours

In spring/summer (April to October)  
the Synagogue is open to visitors  
Monday to Thursday 10 am to 6 pm,  
Friday 10 to 3 pm, and again 30 min before service.

## Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

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Nicholas Hannan-Stavroulakis

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