



Jottings

Etz Hayyim Synagogue
 P.O. Box 251
 73100 Hania, Crete, Greece
 Tel. +30 28210 86286
 E-mail: info@etz-hayyim-hania.org
 Web site: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org

Editorial

Not long before we had completed the main work that had to be carried out on the synagogue, I was approached by a young British student, Benjamin Naylor. The small caretaker's lodge had been cleaned, painted and re-roofed. The mikveh was finally functioning again with the intake vents properly cleaned and aligned. I had been able as well to assess the volume of water that flowed through it and I had planted several trees and shrubs in what I had initially hoped was to become a kind of Torah Garden. The synagogue itself had not only been completely cleaned but also white-washed, its grills painted green and doors re-hung. However, there was something intimidating about its interior, as I had managed to obtain a carved teak chest that I had cleaned and which was destined to



become the Aron haKodesh. It was placed very dominantly on the brick supports that had once supported another Aron prior to its removal in 1944. All we had to determine the position and dimensions of that original Aron were the socket holes in the walls on either side, together with a pattern in the black and white marble pavement of the prayer hall. The only items in place at that time were the Aron and several chairs. The contents of this new Aron were a single Torah scroll which I had been given many years before.

It happened that the arrival of Benjamin Naylor and his offer of volunteer work occurred roughly at the same time when I was still working on some drawings based on

the destroyed synagogue of Patras that had been razed in 1993. We set the Aron on the chairs and, as Rosh haShanna and Yom Kippur approached, I remember that we both shared a sense of what a memorable event we were witnessing, not only in assisting in the new form of Etz Hayyim, but also to make it memorable. We had prayed in the quiet empty space, or 'Makom' in Hebrew, which is much like the word 'Chora' in Greek, a term used as a name of God. The two of us sat in opposite corners of the synagogue with our siddurim, sometimes alternately reading psalms or confessions into the silence of that makom or hint at the Ultimate that we are created of. It was an experience that has never left me even when I enter the synagogue even today.

Rosh Hashnah 5776, Nikos Stavroulakis

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Festivals and Liturgical Life at Etz Hayyim

As every year since the reopening of Etz Hayyim, in April we held a community Pesach Seder with about seventy participants including local and international guests from Ioannina in northern Greece, as well as the U.S., Israel and France. This year we used the newly printed Etz Hayyim Haggadah.

In early June, the synagogue was filled to the last seat for the memorial service (Hashkabah) for the Cretan community that perished during the Holocaust. The service was led by Rabbi Gabriel Negrin who has been serving as the Rabbi of our sister synagogue in Athens since January 2015. It was agreed that Rabbi Negrin will lead the service also in the coming year.

The memorial service was attended also by the deputy mayor for cultural affairs and other official representative of the Hania municipality. The local newspaper printed a report about the event; while the service was also filmed for the current documentary film project

about Etz Hayyim Synagogue (see page 8).

In early September, Nikos Stavroulakis officiated a wedding at Etz Hayyim. Family members of the bride and groom visited from the U.S., Greece and Egypt .



Nikos Stavroulakis and Rabbi Gabriel Negrin during the Hashkabah

“Intercultural Encounters” - Exhibition and Concerts at Etz Hayyim

Photo Exhibition **Εκθεση Φωτογραφίας**
Intercultural Encounters **Διαπολιτιστικές Συναντήσεις**
 Hosted by Etz Hayyim Synagogue Hania
 30 April to 31 July 2015
 Opening hours: Monday - Friday 10:00 - 18:00, Saturday 10:00 - 14:00

In the past few months, two concerts, as well as a temporary exhibition, were held at the synagogue. The exhibition was initiated by the Austrian embassy in Athens on the topic of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. It consisted of 25 photos depicting different cultures interacting with each other. The opening of the exhibition took place on the 30th

April and many members of the community, together with local people and representatives of the Austrian Embassy, attended the event. The exhibition was put on display in the women’s gallery (Ezrath Nashim) above the synagogue office. It was open to visitors until the end of July and was, overall, very well received as documented in the visitor’s book.

The first concert took place in the beginning of May with a performance by the London-based group, “Le GazhikaneMuzikante”. They played original arrangements of traditional folk songs from southeastern Europe and the wider Mediterranean region, with explanations preceding

Le Gazhikane Muzikante
JEKH DU TRIN SHTAR
 Τετάρτη 4 Μαΐου 2015 στις 8:00 pm
 Etz Hayyim DC Hania
 Wednesday 4 May 2015 8:00 pm
 Etz Hayyim Synagogue

Γιώργος Μαυρομανωλάκης & Alejandro de Antonio
Συναυλία παραδοσιακής και σύγχρονης μουσικής από τη Μεσογειακή που ταξιδεύει από την ανατολή ως την δύση και από το χθες, στα σημάδια με εναλλασσόμενες πολλές παραδοσιακές και σύγχρονη παραδοσιακή διάθεση.
Yorgos Mavromanolakis & Alejandro de Antonio
Concert of traditional and contemporary music from the Mediterranean that travels from East to West and from yesterday to today alternating many different musical colors—with a strong improvisational mood.
 Τετάρτη, 1 Ιουλίου 2015 στις 8:00 pm | Συναγωγή Ετζ Χαγιμ
 Wednesday, 1 July 2015 8:00 pm | Etz Hayyim Synagogue
 Πάρος Κοινοότητα, Χανιά | Paros Community, Chania
 Τηλ/Fax: +30 28210 85380 | Email: info@etz-hayyim-hania.org
 Είσοδος: ελεύθερη (δωρεές είναι ευπρόσδεκτες)
 Admission: Free (donations are welcome)

each song about their specific meaning and history. The date of the second concert was the first of July with the performers, Yorgos Mavromanolakis and Alejandro de Antonio playing pieces from Yorgos Mavromanolakis’ new CD, “Karpos.” The album is influenced by many different styles and aspects of traditional, and contemporary music. Each piece was improvised and they also played rearranged traditional melodies from around the eastern Mediterranean.

M.P.



Synagogue Snapshots



Rabbi Gabriel Negrin giving a talk to pupils from Hania and Cyprus.



Pessah 2015. Seder Table at *Ela* restaurant.



Concert of Le Gazhikane Muzikante (above).
Concert of Yorgos Mavromanolakis and Alejandro de Antonio (below); as sketched by a visitor (left).



Exhibition "Intercultural Encounters" in the Ezrath Nashim (women's section) above the synagogue office (above).



Latest addition to the synagogue family of cats: Alberto (above).



From the Etz Hayyim Havurah

The Community of Etz Hayyim by Jocelyne Berdu

Etz Hayyim Synagogue, situated at the heart of the old Jewish quarter in Hania, is fairly small. Yet, it encapsulates in its walls the memory of all those people or community members who have lived in this neighborhood and also, the memory of those individuals who did not survive the barbaric Nazi occupation. Every year, a moving ceremony takes place that evokes their memory and the memory of the other victims of this dark period which cannot be forgotten. The synagogue is thus a place of memory. Visitors to the synagogue can come to explore and commemorate the rich history of Judaism on this Mediterranean island and to participate in its religious life. They remember the Jews who used to live here who had brought their own culture with them and shared it with Greeks of different faiths.

However, one does not come here only for the past. Nikos, its re-founder, has inscribed this place also in the present. He exemplifies a participatory and inclusive Judaism; he shares that humanism which extends the membership of this community. Thanks to Nikos, who created this community of shared values, I find myself in this community. Like others, I attend services on Fridays and feel that they are a precious occasion. We, who are Jewish or not, Greek, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, French, Israeli, German or Italian, share this passion for tolerance and a sense of community beyond our differences. Is this not in itself the main message of Judaism?

When we sing in Hebrew, when we pray in Hebrew, in Greek, English or French, it is a powerful message: in

this synagogue we want to work towards peace, the knowledge of others and for reconciliation. Whatever our path of life or origins, even our religion, this place gives us impetus to hope.

Furthermore, this place of prayer is also a space open to all cultures. Exhibitions, concerts, film screenings and conferences take place here. Recently, there was a successful philosophical debate among three Israeli university professors about the “religions of the book”, a book presentation about the women of the Bible and concerts of Mediterranean music. Which connection do these events have with religion? A religion that deprives itself of culture or differing approaches will confine itself to a narrow worldview and will thereby be isolated. Faith should not just confirm certainties, but rather, it is enriched by the exchange of ideas and approaches.

Writing these lines, I see the smiling faces, I remember those present, I recall the concerns and needs of the members of this community.

A heartfelt thank-you to Nikos, who, with determination, has rebuilt its foundations and secured its basis. There is no need to fear new paths in the future. Thank-you to those people who follow the same path, who keep up the same spirit.

This synagogue is an indispensable place for those who do not so much look for definite answers, but for new and exciting questions. It is an inspiring place. Its name is Etz Hayyim, the Tree of Life.

Translation from the French: Ahmed Kasimi





The Miracle of Etz Hayyim by Lior Asher

Etz-Hayyim Synagogue is perhaps a miracle that can only exist in fairy tales and legends. Like many stories in Jewish history, it comes after chaos, death and destruction. The Etz-Hayyim story is the same. Over 2,000 years of Jewish life in Crete came to an abrupt end one day in June, 1944. This day marked the end, but on the other hand, also the beginning of another miracle in Jewish history.

Many years later, God decided to send my dear friend, Nikos, to save and re-build the Jewish community of Crete. My story begins six years ago on Yom-Kippur and my destiny connected with the destiny of the Jews of Crete from the past, present and future. In order to be a part of such a thing, you have to understand the force and the connection that God sends to you. We all understand that coming to Hania every year for six years sometimes for Yom-Kippur, sometimes for Rosh-Hashanah and sometimes for both holidays, it is not something regular. Rather, it has to be something inside you, something from above. When you pray in Hania,



you can feel the direct connection to God above. You can feel him inside you. You can feel him in your body, heart and soul. Then you know you are back home. Etz-Hayyim for me is home. The people, the place, the inside and the outside.

Nikos, I will always be a part of you, apart of the story of Etz-Hayyim. I am here to stay as long as God will decide.
With great Love, Lior Asher.

Internship at Etz Hayyim by Maria Konstantellou

The synagogue is situated in a quiet side-street of the old town which is not especially easy to find, and therefore only those people who enjoy exploring these alleyways will come across this place. This at least is how I found the synagogue a few years ago. The place seems quite removed from the busy life of the old town. In the main courtyard, inside the synagogue, or even in the small back courtyard, I find the same tranquil atmosphere.

It is a place that I have often visited since my school years. Here, I found a tranquility which no other place in town could offer me. Quite some time had passed since I last visited the synagogue until March of this year. Then I met Moritz and Anja, who gave me a tour and told me about its story. They acquainted me with a history that I had not known until that moment and this is how I got even closer to and became intrigued by this place.

Then I just wanted to help in whatever way possible and we found together that translating the synagogue's



website would be a good start. Equally, I help with current projects and some of the guided tours for visitors. As I work full-time during the summer in order to finance an internship abroad planned for next year, I cannot visit and help out at the synagogue as much as I would like to at the moment. However, at the end of summer, I shall again have the opportunity to enjoy the company of people who also love and care about keeping the synagogue alive.

Maria Konstantellou studies Sociology at the University of Crete and has been a volunteer at Etz Hayyim since spring 2015.



Memorial Service *by Natalie Ventura*

For the Jews of Hania, Crete, who perished in the sinking of the steamship Tanais in June 1944 at the hands of the Nazis.

Your absence
perfumes the air
like incense in this house of prayer.

Through the evening service,
we listen still

for the music of your presence,
half expecting an act of faith

to proffer a miracle: your voices
ringing in our ears.

~

Your names, at least, survive.
We pronounce them one-by-one,
bespeak the being behind the name,

whole families grouped
like sheaves of wheat —
Elchais : Chaim, Elvira, Rebecca, Ilias.

Osmos: Solomon, Stella, Ketti, Mois.
A shower of names, unrelenting —
Avigades, Dientes, Depa, Evlagon, Ischakis, Koen.

A tide, a torrent, hailstones
hitting hard: Isaak. Zapheira. Matilda. Nisim.
Zilda. Salvador. Raphael. Rosa.

Arise, that we may know you!

~

We light candles
in your memory, carry them
to every corner of the courtyard:
set them on the steps,

the Hebrew-lettered stones,
the walls round the rabbis' tombs;
among the roses, potted palms
and jasmine; under the walnut-,

under the pomegranate tree
until the courtyard's a sea
of light, it shimmers
with spirit — yours

and ours entwined.
Joy and sorrow,
absence and presence,
Then and Now cross borders,

are one.

[A Greek translation of an earlier version of this poem appeared in *Alef*, a Jewish Community of Athens publication, Sept/Oct 2011].



© Photo: Sandra Barty and Ken Ross

News from the Etz Hayyim Havurah — We would also love to hear from you.

Our sincere thanks to the local and international members of the Etz Hayyim Havurah who contributed the previous four pieces. We would also love to hear from you. Please contact the synagogue office if you would like to contribute an article, share information or ideas.



Gedenkdienst at Etz Hayyim

One Year at Etz Hayyim by Moritz Plattner

My introduction for this article is very similar to the one in March. Again, I met lots of interesting people and also learned and experienced many new things that will influence me long after my Memorial Service at the synagogue comes to an end in September this year.

Looking back on my time here at work, I mostly took care of the visitors who came in increasing numbers as the temperature rose over the summer months. I also helped with the organisation of two concerts that took place in the main room of the synagogue. Because of the small size of the space and the close proximity to the musicians, these concerts felt very intimate. In May, a London-based group called *Le Gazhikane Muzikante* performed. The members of the group largely played both traditional Roma and Balkan music which they collected around various countries and sang in different languages. What I especially liked was that before each song, the lyrics and the story were explained for the audience's benefit. Combined with the already engulfing presence of the synagogue the music created a very impressive atmosphere.

Another project with which I was involved was an exhibition about "Intercultural Dialogue" funded by the Austrian Embassy in Athens. I really enjoyed playing an active role in all the various tasks regarding the planning and preparation of the exhibition. I helped in finding an appropriate location, designing the poster, coordinating the logistics with the embassy and numerous other tasks. I liked being a part of the organisation process from the start until the opening ceremony.

In these past few months, I also noticed that I was feeling more at home working at the synagogue than ever before and that my time here allowed me to develop my general mind-set. I think that one of the reasons for this realization is that there are lots of interesting individuals

in contact with Etz Hayyim who regularly visit and support this place. And by working in the synagogue for one year, I was able to meet a lot of these people and soak up all their ideas, stories and different ways of life. In my opinion, this was such a valuable personal experience because it helped me in opening up to new topics and developing my own ideas and opinions.

My successor, Nino, who is also from Vienna, started working at the synagogue in the middle of August. I believe that working at Etz Hayyim is a really beneficial experience, especially for young people, and I can only hope that Nino's year will be as interesting and exciting as mine, if not more so.

As for me, I will return to Vienna and start studying political sciences at university. Of course, I will stay in contact with Etz Hayyim and come and visit it again. Summing up, my twelve months in Chania has been an amazing experience that will probably never leave me.



Just arrived at Etz Hayyim by Nino Gamsjäger

My name is Nino. I am eighteen years old and my hometown is Vienna, Austria. As I am doing my community service in Chania, I will be working at Etz Hayyim Synagogue for one year until September 2016. I am now living on my own for the first time which is a peculiar experience since I have a whole floor to myself including a shared room that is provided by the Catholic Church for my first month in Chania.

In the two weeks I have been in Chania, my colleagues at Etz Hayyim have warmly introduced me to the remarkable synagogue and its long, rather turbulent past. What I like most here is that everyone, regardless of their beliefs, is welcome and that visitors, both Jewish and non-Jewish, from all over the world enjoy being given a tour by us.

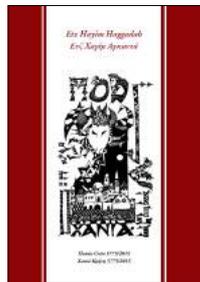
When I am not working at the synagogue, I like exploring



around the alleys in the old town and getting to know my new home-town, or riding my bicycle to one of the beaches close by. I am glad that I took my chance to apply to work at Etz Hayyim in December last year and now I really look forward to acquainting myself with many new people, to enjoy new experiences like learning to speak Greek and broadening my knowledge of Greek Jewish history, and to make the upcoming year a great one.

Still available: *The Etz Hayyim Haggadah*

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



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.

Ongoing Documentary Film Project— Call for Materials

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

The U.S. group, headed by producer and director Sandra Barty and filmmaker Ken Ross is being assisted by local sound engineer Anastasis Efentakis and others. They will continue filming in Chania in October 2015.

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

Please contact Sandra Barty at sandrabb@cloud9.net or Ken Ross at cyclonepictures@gmail.com. Thank you.



Bank Information for Donations

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We very much appreciate your continued support of our work at Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

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 relevant dates in the calendar).

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

Synagogue Opening Hours

November to April the synagogue is open to visitors
Monday to Thursday 10 am to 5 pm, Friday 10 to 3 pm,
and again 30 minutes before Kabbalath Shabbat service.

Contact us and stay in touch

Phone: 0030-28210-86286
Email: info@etz-hayyim-hania.org
Web: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org
Facebook: Synagogue Etz Hayyim



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Director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Nicholas Hannan-Stavroulakis

Co-editors of Jottings

Moritz Plattner
Nino Gamsjäger
Anja Zuckmantel