

# Tottingas



The Newsletter of  
Etz Hayyim Synagogue

Issue 25

Rosh Hashanah / Ρος Ασνά  
5780 / 2019

# Jottings



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## Editorial

Twenty years ago, a reconstructed Etz Hayyim opened its doors to the public for the first time in fifty-five years. The synagogue, which had lost its original Jewish community in the tragic circumstances of the Second World War and had for decades been abandoned and used as a dumping ground for garbage and animals, would once more be cherished as a place of Jewish worship.

When Etz Hayyim's rededication was celebrated in 1999, Nikos Stavroulakis, who had directed the restoration project with the help of grants and generous friends' support, was thought to be the only Jew living in Chania. Thanks to his patient care and empathic understanding of the once multicultural society of Chania, he established an institution of diversity. From the start, Nikos would invite whoever was curious about Greek Jewish faith, tradition and history into the newly opened synagogue in the hopeful belief that one day, a new Jewish community would take root in Chania.

Today, we have learnt from our particular case that new communities are not established so easily. Many different coincidences had to come together before a group of Jewish people could once more make their home in Chania and Crete. In the meantime, we have realized that the presence of a synagogue in this society (in spite of the absence of a fully fledged Jewish community) is wholeheartedly justified.

By founding a Not-for-Profit Company 'Etz Hayyim' almost ten years ago, a group of friends of the synagogue created the legal basis and long-term stability needed to ensure the preservation of Etz Hayyim and to support its varied work: providing knowledge about Greek Jewish culture and history to local visitors, as well as to the more than 25,000 foreign visitors whom the synagogue welcomes annually. Furthermore, a cooperation agreement with the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE) helps to make certain that the synagogue will continue to be an active and vibrant space for Jewish

worship, culture and history - respecting its Greek Jewish traditions.

In the last two weeks of this October, Etz Hayyim will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its rededication. In a series of events (see the programme on the next page), we will highlight the manifold impact that Nikos Stavroulakis' defining presence has had, not only on the life at Etz Hayyim itself, but also on the many friends and visitors who have been inspired to create film, music and literary works dedicated to Nikos and Etz Hayyim. We will also be presenting various aspects of the role that Etz Hayyim Synagogue has taken on over the years: as a centre of community life, cultural life, educational outreach, historical research, commemoration and the celebration of Cretan Jewish history and traditions. Taken together, these events will hopefully make clear Etz Hayyim's unquestionable values.

It has been a pleasure continuing the important work at Etz Hayyim - a pleasure which we want to share with as many people as possible. Therefore, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that without your ongoing interest and support, our efforts would not be able to carry on as they have these past years. In supporting us, you are supporting the continuation and dissemination of Greek Jewish cultural heritage, you are inspiring research into Cretan Jewish history and innovative educational programmes, and most importantly, you are helping the continuation of community life at Etz Hayyim shared with our visiting rabbis from Cambridge and Athens.

I warmly and sincerely thank every friend of Etz Hayyim who, throughout the year, has championed our synagogue either financially or morally, as well as everyone who has contributed to this exceptional edition of *Jottings*.

Wishing everybody a blessed Rosh Hashanah and a Happy Holiday Season.

Marianna Vinther (President of the Board of Trustees) and the staff of Etz Hayyim.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition of *Jottings*.

**We would also love to hear from you.**

Contact the synagogue if you would like to contribute an article, share information, ideas, feedback or criticism. The next *Jottings* will be published for **Pesah 5780**. Please send contributions by **15 March 2020**.

## Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

Co-editors of *Jottings*

Katerina Anagnostaki, Alex Ariotti, Jonas Baumgartner

Maike Heinrich, Marianna Vinther, Anja Zuckmantel

Cover illustration: Nikos Stavroulakis; cover layout: Nikos Afentakis



# Jottings



**Sunday, 13 October, 7:00 pm**

## Erev Sukkot Service

## Opening of Photographic Exhibition

## 20 Years of Etz Hayyim

We invite you to celebrate with us the beginning of the Festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot) with Etz Hayyim's Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange. This occasion also marks the opening of the photo exhibition *20 Years of Etz Hayyim* which takes visitors on a visual journey through the past twenty years of the Hania synagogue.

**Wednesday, 16 October, 12 noon**

## Etz Hayyim as a House of Learning

## Workshop

A workshop for teachers and the interested public presenting Etz Hayyim's educational outreach programme along with some results of student projects about Cretan Jewish history and culture. The event will be held in Greek.

The Synagogue staff will offer walking tours of the historic Jewish quarter of Hania (Evraiki) based on a walking-tour map published by Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The tours will last about 1 hour. Please book in advance, max. number of participants per tour is 15.

- Tours in Greek: **3:00 pm and 4:30 pm**
- Tours in English: **3:30 pm and 5:00 pm**

**Saturday, 19 October, 8:00 pm**

## Sounding Etz Hayyim

## Concert

A concert with Klezmer Yunnan who "play and remix Jewish klezmer and Greek folk songs influenced by rock, funk, jazz, trip-hop, disco and classical music."

**Sunday, 20 October, 8:00 pm**

## Opening of Exhibition

## Parallel Points of View

As part of the European Union funded project Heritage Contact Zone, Etz Hayyim Synagogue is co-hosting the exhibition *Parallel Points of View* from 20 to 26 October at the Sabbionara Gate exhibition space (Minoos/Kallergon Streets). The exhibition, curated by local artist Konstantin Fischer, takes a fresh and inclusive look at the wider Cretan heritage.

**Tuesday, 22 October, 7:30 pm**

## Etz Hayyim on Screen

## Audio Visual Presentation

An evening presenting a selection of visual and acoustic material of and about Etz Hayyim, i.e. documentary films and other visual material, as well as sound recordings and original compositions.

**Thursday, 24 October, 7:00 pm**

## Culinary Etz Hayyim

## Presentation & Food Sampling

A presentation of the customs and traditions of the main Jewish holidays with a sampling of Greek Jewish cooking based on Nikos Stavroulakis' Cookbook of the Jews of Greece.

**Friday, 25 October, 6:00 pm**

## Open Erev Shabbat

## Beginning of Shabbat

All events at Etz Hayyim are open to the general public, but this evening we especially would like to invite you to join the Havurah of Etz Hayyim for the celebration of the beginning of this Shabbat.

**Saturday, 26 October, 7:30 pm**

## Etz Hayyim in Poetry and Prose

## Literary Reading

During a literary event entitled *Etz Hayyim in Poetry and Prose* award-winning British poet, novelist and non-fiction writer Ruth Padel will read from a selection of literary works relating to the Jews of Crete and Etz Hayyim in particular.

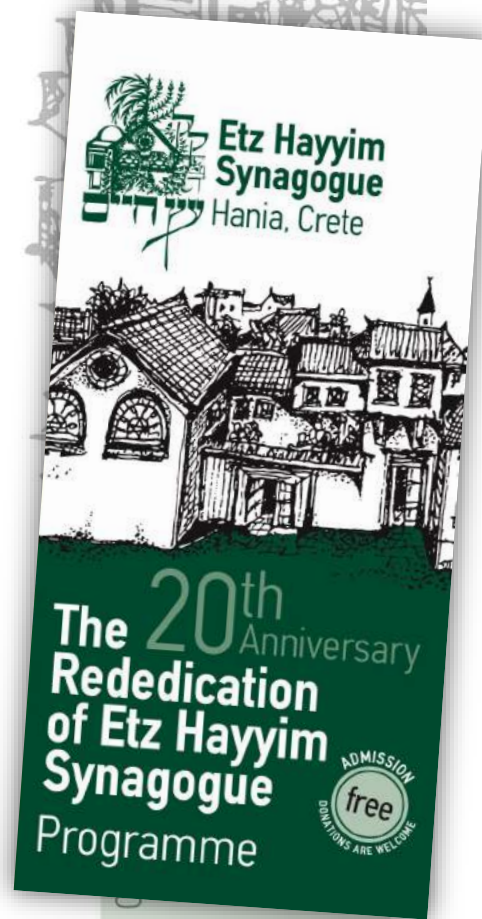
**Sunday, 27 October, 7:30 pm**

## Main commemorative Event

## 20 Years of Etz Hayyim

## The Living Tree of Life

We will celebrate two decades of the revival of Etz Hayyim in the presence of the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin, friends and supporters of Etz Hayyim, local officials, representatives of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE), representatives of institutions which have supported the Etz Hayyim project, as well as members of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim and the Jewish Communities in Greece.





## Holidays and Havurah

### The Four Autumn Festivals

I have been asked various questions over the years about our autumn festivals. Here are some answers which I hope will be useful. They are based on my book *The Penguin Dictionary of Judaism*, where you can find more information.

**New Year** (*Rosh Hashana*) is a two-day festival at the beginning of the month of Tishri, marking the beginning of the Ten Days of Penitence. In the Torah, it is not called 'New Year' (on the contrary, it is designated as the first day of the seventh month, because the Torah counts the months from Nisan). In fact, it has no particular name in the Bible: it is simply called 'a memorial of blowing the shofar' (Leviticus 23:24). It is also known sometimes as *Yom Hadin*, 'Day of Judgment': it is taught that at this time all Jews are judged in relation to their actions during the preceding year, and that on the Day of Atonement their fate is sealed. For this reason, Rosh Hashana is a time of serious reflection and self-examination. In synagogue, the *shofar* (ram's horn) is blown, which is why another name for the festival is *Yom Teru'ah* (Day of Blowing the Trumpet). The prayers contain many references to judgment and forgiveness. Many Ashkenazim dress in white (the colour of mourning in Judaism) for the services, and during the *aléynu* prayer, they kneel and prostrate themselves.

Greek Jews used to have their own special customs for New Year. The Greek church has preserved a special formula recited by Jews who convert to Christianity, which includes this wording: 'I also anathematise those who at the beginning of the indiction [1 September], during the Feast of the Trumpets, wrap the candles in silks dyed in various colours. Then they recite certain hymns which, they imagine, serve to ward off the chill and every other illness . . .' It is noteworthy, by the way, that the church still considers the new year to begin in September: this is part of its heritage from Judaism.

If the public mood of this festival is solemn, in the home there is an emphasis on sweetness, in the festive meals, and particularly in the custom of dipping the bread at the beginning of the meal into honey rather than salt, and then of eating apple dipped in honey, accompanied with the wish to be granted 'a good, sweet year'. Among Sephardim there is the custom of eating a series of symbolic foods, each accompanied with a special prayer. At Etz Hayyim, we observe this custom (called *seder*) in our communal dinner.

The folk ceremony of *tashlich* is still performed by some Jews on the afternoon of New Year: they go to water, preferably to a river or the sea where there are fish, and shake their clothes as if to cast off every trace of sin, while reciting appropriate biblical verses, such as Micah 7:18–20, which contains the words 'and you shall throw (*tashlich*) into the depths of the sea all their sins'. The origin of this custom is unknown.

**The Day of Atonement** (*Kippur*, also called *Yom Kippur* or *Yom ha-Kippurim*) is a solemn fast day, celebrated annually on the tenth of Tishri, nine days after the first day of Rosh Hashanah. Unlike the other festivals, it is celebrated exclusively in the synagogue. There are five distinct services, one in the evening (*kol nidrei*) and the other four the following day. In the morning service, the traditional Torah readings (Leviticus 16 and Numbers 29:7–11) recite the original institution of the festival and its rituals including these key words: 'It is a Sabbath of Sabbaths for you, and you shall afflict yourselves, an eternal ordinance. The priest duly anointed and installed in succession to his father shall make atonement; he shall put on the sacred linen vestments and make atonement for the sacred sanctuary, the tent of meeting and the altar, and also for the priests and all the assembled people. This shall be an eternal ordinance for you, to make atonement for all the Israelites because of all their sins, once each year' (Leviticus 16:31–4). The reading from the Prophets (*haftara*), Isaiah 57:14–58:14, castigates the false religiosity of those who adopt only the outward forms of contrition: 'Is the fast I prefer not rather this: to loosen the fetters of injustice, to untie the heavy burdens, to set the oppressed free and to smash every yoke? To share your bread with the hungry, to take the homeless poor into your home, to clothe anyone you see naked and not hide yourself from your own kin?' The additional service (*musaf*) includes a formal reenactment of the rituals performed on this day by the High Priest in the Temple. In the afternoon service (*mincha*), the biblical prohibitions on illicit sexual acts (Leviticus 18) are read, followed by the Book of Jonah, with its lesson that God is always ready to grant pardon for sins in return for true repentance. (In the Middle Ages in Crete this reading was done in Greek.) As evening approaches, the concluding service (*ne'ila*) begins. The mood becomes more confident, almost joyous, as the fast reaches its end; the service concludes with a single long blast on the *shofar*.



Throughout all five services, confessions of sins and penitential prayers predominate. In addition to the prohibition of all kinds of work forbidden on the Sabbath, five special restrictions mark this fast day: abstention from food, drink, sexual intercourse, anointing and the wearing of leather shoes. As at New Year, some Ashkenazim wear white on this day, and prostrate themselves at certain points in the service.

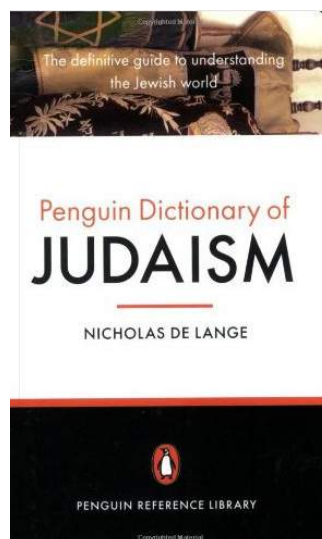
**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) begins on the 15th day of Tishri and lasts for seven (outside Israel eight) days. The rabbis sometimes refer to it as 'the Festival' (*hag*), with no further description, as though it were the high point of the religious year, or at least of the autumn pilgrimage period that began before New Year. In the liturgy, it is called 'the season of our rejoicing' (*zemán simhaténu*), and this element of rejoicing is specifically mentioned in the Torah (Deuteronomy 16:13–15). The rejoicing is related in this passage to the harvest, 'when you have gathered in your corn and your wine... because the Lord your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all your manual labour, therefore you are bound to rejoice'. The festival is also mentioned as a harvest festival in Exodus 23:16 and Leviticus 23:39. In Leviticus 23:33–38, it is described in language resembling the description of the Day of Atonement that immediately precedes it: it is to be a solemn gathering on which no work is to be done and various sacrifices are to be offered. In 23:40, the instruction is given 'You shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days'. Then in 23:41–43, it is explained differently: it is to be observed by living in huts (or 'tabernacles') for seven days, in memory of the Exodus from Egypt and the wandering through the wilderness. The festival is thus observed through the *sukká*, a frail hut which is a symbol of wandering, and through the 'taking' of the 'four species', identified as citron (*etróg*), palm, myrtle and willow. 'Taking' is understood literally as picking them up. A palm frond, three sprigs of myrtle and two of willow are bound together and held in the right hand, the lemon-like fruit of the citron is taken in the left, and they are waved up, down, and to the four points of the compass after the recitation of an appropriate blessing. The four species are also carried in procession around the synagogue, accompanied by the singing of 'Hoshannas' (*hoshanot*). On the seventh day of the festival, seven circuits are made, which is why this day is known as the Great Hoshana (*Hoshana Rabbá*). Some Jews still observe the custom of beating a

bunch of willow sprigs on this day until the leaves fall off. On the eighth day (called *Shemini Atséret*), we pray for rain: this is the day that is considered to mark the transition from summer to winter.

**Simchat Tora** (Rejoicing in the Torah) is the last of the sequence of autumn festivals. In Israel and in Reform synagogues, this coincides with *Shemini Atséret*; in other Diaspora congregations, it is celebrated on the second day of *Shemini Atséret*. This is the day when the annual reading of the Torah is concluded and resumes again immediately at the beginning. It is a time of joyful celebration, heightened by the fact that it marks the end of a very long period of solemnities and festivities. The scrolls are taken out of the ark and processed around the synagogue seven times, accompanied by singing and dancing. Members of the congregation are honoured by being called up to be the 'Bridegroom of the Torah' (*Chatan Torah*) and the 'Bridegroom of Bereshit [Genesis]' (*Chatan Bereshit*), but in some synagogues all the congregants are called up. It is also customary to call up the children, the only day in the year when they are called up to the Torah. The children are given sweets and apples, and they process behind the Torah waving appropriately decorated flags. The two 'bridegrooms' (who in progressive congregations may be 'brides') make a party for the whole congregation.

And on this happy note, I wish all of you a very happy and sweet year, always remembering that this is also a period of serious introspection and soul-searching in which we examine our actions in the year that is ending and make a conscientious resolve to make more of an effort to live up to our highest standards in the year ahead.

Nicholas de Lange



Rabbi Nicholas de Lange is Emeritus Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Cambridge. He is a long-term friend of Etz Hayyim Synagogue and has been its Visiting Rabbi for several years. Among his latest publication is *"Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Greek Bible Translations in Byzantine Judaism"* (2015). The text above draws from his *"Penguin Dictionary of Judaism"* (2008).





# Jottings

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## Between Pesah and Shavuot

We celebrated Pesah this year as we always do with a community Seder meal, but unlike most years, this year we had an unusually large number of attendees: a record number of ninety-two Havurah members, friends and visitors came together at ELA restaurant for the Seder led by our Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange. Among the international participants were Jewish families from Scandinavia and Israel, Jewish and non-Jewish US Navy personnel, as well as two Greek academic researchers interested in various aspects of Etz Hayyim and its community life. Here are two notes from participants describing their Seder experience:

*"I wish we could stay longer, but tonight is one of the best nights in my whole life! I got to sing Mah Nishtanah on my own (well, almost). And I answered when Mr. Rabi asked, "Why do we eat unleavened bread?" I even got to speak into the microphone!" Mathilde (9)*

*"What an incredible experience to sit together with Jews and Non-Jews from every corner of the planet to celebrate 'freedom from slavery' - a Pesach to make memories forever." David & Cathy*

On 26 May, we gathered with friends for the annual memorial service for Nikos Stavroulakis at the synagogue, again beautifully led by the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin (see Marianna Vinther's article, p. 8). Remembering Nikos' work and legacy will also be a central part of the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the rededication of Etz Hayyim this coming October.

The memorial for Nikos was followed a week later by the annual memorial service for the victims of the sinking of the Tanais (see p. 13f.), which this year, for the first time, took place in the presence of a high-ranking representative of the Greek Orthodox Church of Crete.

Another major highlight was certainly the visit by a group from the Oxford Jewish Congregation for the holiday of Shavuot. (See p. 8ff.)

Lastly, the regular services taking place at Etz Hayyim are the weekly Kabbalat Shabbat services led by Havurah member Roger Yayon. In the summer months especially, attendance is impressive, ranging from forty to sixty people. Participants are invited to join in the reading of the service and in particular international visitors are invited to lead the Kiddush.

### High Holidays Schedule

**Erev Rosh Hashanah** 29 September 7 pm

Followed by community dinner. R.S.V.P. by 25 September.

**Rosh Hashanah Morning Service**

**1<sup>st</sup> Day** 30 September 10 am

**2<sup>nd</sup> Day** 1 October 10 am

**Yom Kippur**

**Kol Nidre Service** 8 October 6:30 pm

**Yom Kippur Service** 9 October 10 am

Mincha 5 pm

Memorial Service 6:30 pm

Neilah 6:45 pm

*Fast ends 9 October at 7:35 pm.*

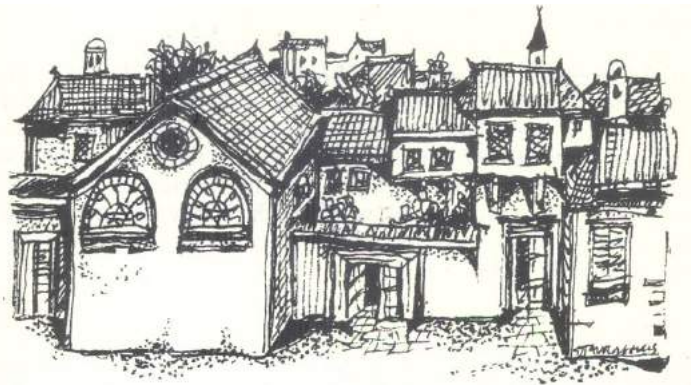
*Snacks will be served at the Synagogue for breaking the fast.*

**Erev Sukkot Service** 13 October 6:30 pm

Potluck/bring-a-dish dinner - please bring a contribution.

*Sukkah will be up until 20 October.*

**Services will be led by Etz Hayyim's  
Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange.**



### Weekly Services at Etz Hayyim

**Kabbalat Shabbat Services** are held every Friday.

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

[www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/events](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/events)

(click on the relevant dates in the calendar).

**Other holidays will be announced on our website, by email and on our Facebook page.**

### Contact us and stay in touch

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**Email:** [info@etz-hayyim-hania.org](mailto:info@etz-hayyim-hania.org)

**Web:** [www.etz-hayyim-hania.org](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org)

**Facebook:** Synagogue Etz Hayyim





## Memorial Service for Nikos Stavroulakis (נצ"ל)

On 26 May, a group of friends gathered in Etz Hayyim to commemorate Nikos Stavroulakis on the second year of his passing away. It was a beautiful Sunday morning with a clear blue sky. People were dropping by after casting their vote in the local and European elections, chatting away in the court yard before making their way into the synagogue to attend the service led by the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin.

After the service, and as a continuation of the casual and friendly atmosphere, we shared some of our memories of Nikos facing each other on the long benches which the Romaniote layout of Etz Hayyim provides.

Gabriel Negrin contributed with a impromptu and true speech, in which he drew attention to Nikos Stavroulakis' real legacy in Greece. He reminded us of how Nikos, through his life-long work on Greek Judaism, brought the important Greek Jewish heritage and traditions back into the narrative of Greece's history, never to be forgotten.

I read an old poem by the Anatolian poet and mystic, Yunus Emre who, in the 12th century, combined humanism with Sufism in a way that, when I read it, immediately reminded me of Nikos. Yunus Emre talked of human dignity and created a picture of the human being as the extension of G\_d's reality and love. Sitting in our synagogue,



reading an Islamic poem in memory of Nikos Stavroulakis was quite an exceptional moment. As we gathered in the courtyard for a Cretan snack of olives and cheese, sharing a glass of raki, no one could deny our morning had been composed in the diverse and inclusive spirit of Nikos. Always to be remembered.

Marianna Vinther

Poem by Yunus Emre.

I haven't come here to settle down.

I haven't com here to settle down.

I have come here to depart.

I am a merchant with lots of goods,  
selling to whoever will buy.

I didn't come to create any problems.

I'm only here to love.

A heart makes a good home for the Friend.

I've come to build some hearts.

I'm a little drunk from this Friendship.

Any lover would know the shape I'm in.

I've come to exchange my twoness,  
to disappear in One.

He is my teacher. I am his servant.

I am a nightingale in His garden

to be happy and die singing.

They say " Souls which know each other here,  
know each other there."

I've come to know a Teacher  
and to show myself as I am.

(English version by Kabir Helminski & Refik Algan;  
original language Turkish.)

## Reflections on the Shavuot Visit from the Oxford Jewish Congregation

*For Shavuot, we had the honour and pleasure of being joined by a group of visitors from the Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC) and from the Leicester community, which also included OJC's President Alison Ryde.*

*The visit was initiated by OJC member Sally Roland whom we would like to thank very much for her love and support and for making this gathering possible. Indeed, this year's Shavuot was very special and the presence of the friends from Oxford decisively supported the small number of participants from our Havurah. We very much look*

*forward to continuing this new form of cooperation and support.*

*Below, we print some reflections by members of the group visiting from Oxford and Leicester. We particularly thank The OJC News and the Oxford Menorah Magazine for permission to reprint (the copyright for the articles is theirs).*

*A special thank-you also to Michele Benn from Leicester who shares here impressions in a poem (p. 12) that beautifully sums up the visit.*



# The OJC News

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Oxford Jewish  
CONGREGATION

Issue 203

July 2019

Sivan/Tamuz 5779

## Letter from the OJC President

Chania is a beautiful city on a charming island, but behind there is a darker story. The Jewish community was settled there in the Old Town, with at least two synagogues, a rabbi, and congregation of around 300 individuals, much like the OJC. In 1944 they were all taken by the Nazis and shipped away from Crete on the ship "The Tanais", which also carried troops and weapons, Greek Orthodox Christians, members of the resistance, and Italian prisoners of war under the Nazi flag. They were destined for Auschwitz, but the Allies inadvertently saved them from that fate, by sinking the ship in the night. No one survived. One might suggest that their deaths were gentler than what awaited them in Poland.

There will be at least one article to come about the OJC's visit to Chania over Shavuot, and the renovation and re-opening of the Etz Chayyim shul, but I would like to share some thoughts about our experiences there and its affinity to OJC.

They have no resident Rabbi there. As in Oxford, this allows them the flexibility to conduct their services as suits their members and the visitors who come to share in the activities. There are some chumashim and siddurim, in the Bevis Marks style of service, and some photocopied booklets for Holiday services and Friday nights. The members include a handful of Israelis living in the area, often married to locals, and visitors from overseas who stayed. Their original homes were in a diverse range of places including Egypt, Germany and Scandinavia, France. Services often do not attain a minyan, although during high season for tourists, a completely random selection of visitors attend, and obviously come from every conceivable Jewish background of worship (and some of little or no experience at all). Due to the dearth of religious expertise, there is often a sharing approach, so that parts of the service are read in whatever language congregants are most comfortable with, to enable maximum participation. Women and men sat together when we attended. If there were larger numbers of males and females, I imagine they might separate. There was no rigidity in the practice: it was whatever worked. In the past, they only counted men towards a minyan, but Penny Faust expressed her desire to say Kaddish for her late



Alison Ryde, Sharon Fleming, Penny Faust, Liz Rosney, Rachael Horwitz, Jack and Cara Massarano before the service on Friday night.

father, and an adjustment in practice was made, on the spot, to allow this to happen.



Rabbi Nicholas de Lange and Cara during the Havdallah service.

Continued on P3



On High Holidays, Rabbi Nicholas de Lange visits – 3 times a year – to lead services. The shul itself is charming, and to be able to hold a havdallah ceremony and enjoy a 'bring fresh food and share' Shavuot supper in the courtyard was a memorable experience of togetherness which I doubt any of us will forget.

Much of the flexibility was absolutely necessary to make this very special community retain its spark of life. Those who form the tiny, core congregation, along with any visitors who swell their numbers, must all compromise to ensure that it functions. Naturally this reminded me of our own, very special, OJC. Compromise and tolerance must be our watchwords and underpin all of our direction and activity.

Enjoy the Summer!

Alison Ryde

© The OJC News, 2019



Enjoying the Shavuot bring a dish feast in the beautiful courtyard.

## Shavuot in Chania

Sarah Goodman offers reflections on the *Mosaic* trip.

The old town of Chania, on the northwest coast of Crete, is a warren of lanes around the old harbour, sheltered by massive Venetian ramparts from the bustling modern city that surrounds it. Within the walls is the English dream of the old Mediterranean, courtyards and terracotta pots, like the line drawings in an Elizabeth David cookbook, a tiny Venetian chapel off a bookshop, Latin inscriptions on lintels, the stump of a minaret in the corner of a souvenir shop. And within the old town, the few streets of the quarter still known as *Ebraiki* ('Hebrew') in a dead-end street within streets, you find the wooden doors of a gateway, opening into the courtyard of Etz Hayim, shaded by an *etrog* tree, and the synagogue restored from dereliction in the 1990s by the dedication of Nikos Stavroulakis, London educated archaeologist son of a Chaniot Greek father and an Anglo-Jewish mother from Istanbul.

We were a collection of Jews from Oxford and Leicester, here to celebrate Shavuot with services led by Nicholas de Lange, scholar of Greek Jewry from antiquity, translator of Amos Oz, and a Reform rabbi. After Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evening, we ate with local staff and volunteers at a long table in the street outside. On Shabbat morning the Torah was read and we took turns to read in English or in Hebrew from their selection of prayers from the London Spanish and Portuguese prayer book. Saturday evening, after evening service, we broke for food in the courtyard, then read and discussed Ruth and studied a text from Philo, the Greek Jewish philosopher, till midnight. Morning service again on Sunday: the giving of the Law and the wild visions of Ezekiel. It was deeply moving that prayer and study continued despite

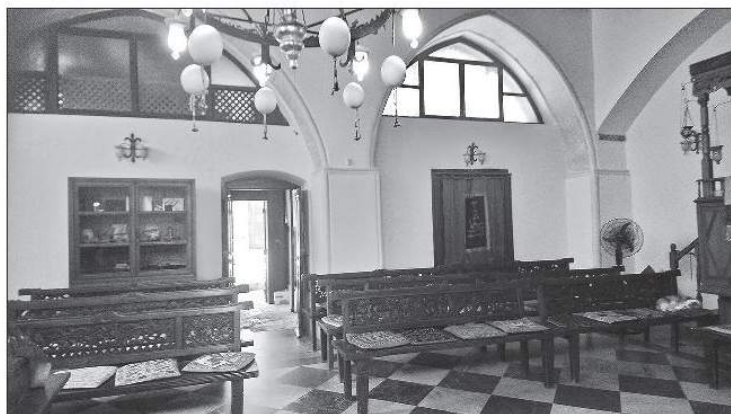
there being no local community to speak of: it was not just a museum. As well as us, there were visitors who lived elsewhere in Crete, and others from London and Israel who came because they had family who had left Salonica for England or Palestine before the war destroyed that huge community and wanted to revisit something of what is left.

Greece was invaded by the Germans in 1941. Three years later, its Jewish communities were deported to Poland with such speed and efficiency that 97% did not survive. The 400-odd Jews of Chania were taken with Crete's other Jews to Heraklion before transfer to the mainland. They never made it: the German-flagged vessel was torpedoed at night by the British navy. Of Chania's two synagogues, the Sephardi was destroyed by bombing, the Romaniot (Etz Hayim), stripped and left derelict. Rubbish filled its courtyard, the stinking *mikveh* a cause of local complaint. When restored, no one knew what its interior had looked like. It has been put together with care and some ingenuity. The ark is an Indonesian cupboard

**"... [the interior] has been put together with care and some ingenuity..."**

*Interior of the Etz Hayim synagogue, showing the ostrich-egg chandelier.*

© Oxford Menorah magazine, 2019





turned upside-down. One of the chandeliers is a wrought-iron wheel from which are suspended some of Nikos Stavroulakis' collection of ostrich eggs, each with a dangling tassel.

The building is well-visited by tourists, mostly not Jewish. What do local people make of it? Until 1897, Crete was ruled by Turkish Muslims, and Greek national identity is still strongly aligned with the Orthodox church, as its Catholic and Protestant minorities would attest. Judas is still burned in effigy at Easter. In modern Crete, we learned, the bishop of western Crete opposed services being held in the building at all, as the community could not muster the 50 congregants (now 20) required by law to hold them, and an opening service went ahead only when overruled from Athens. Yet after the opening, women came to light candles for their school friends, deported 40 years earlier, and when in 2010 two arson attacks (by Britons and Australians) on the offices in the courtyard destroyed many books and documents, local people rallied round to help out. Even so, as we followed a guide around the quarter identifying former Jewish buildings, the school, the other *shul*, and family homes, we wondered if local shopkeepers were ambivalent; it is said some fear Jews will return to demand restoration.

The visit was inspired and coordinated by Sally Roland. Great thanks are due to her.

And from **Sharon Fleming**: *Bikkurim*, beaches, and boat-trips.

**T**here was much to celebrate at Shavuot when sixteen of us descended on Chania, Crete; twelve from Oxford and four from Leicester. We received a very warm welcome from the staff and community at Etz Hayyim synagogue.

The synagogue is charming, with ornamental ark, *bimah* and seating. Paper notes and prayers have been inserted in the carved wooden crevices of the ark, giving it a distinctive appearance. Another interesting feature is the chandelier in the middle of the interior, which has several ostrich eggs hanging from it. Looking up at it from below there is a *Magen David*. Most unusual!

We were hosted at Friday night, Shabbat, and Shavuot services, led by Rabbi Nicholas de Lange, in partnership with our own Martin Goodman, and these were very inclusive. On the first day of Shavuot, we introduced them to the *Bikkurim* (First Fruits) ceremony, which was a first for them!

Apart from the services, Etz Hayyim arranged delicious meals featuring Cretan Jewish dishes, a guided tour of the former Jewish Quarter, and a trip to the ancient sites of Aptera and Rethymnon.

*Shavuot styles modelled by Alison Ryde, Sally Roland, and Liz Rosney.*



*Nicholas de Lange in the synagogue courtyard.*

**"We certainly all contributed to the vibrant statement of Jewish life..."**

As for the beaches and boat trips, there was plenty of free time to enjoy the delights of Chania!

Grateful thanks to Sally for organising such a wonderful trip. I'm already thinking about a return visit, and hope others from OJC will come, too.

#### Liz Rosney adds:

**I**t was with some trepidation and excitement that I booked to go to Crete with some fellow OJC members. I needn't have worried, Sally was a phenomenal 'fixer', effortlessly ensuring we had a varied, informative programme of activities which we could join in if we wanted to. The Etz Hayyim staff were extremely hospitable, treating us to a fascinating talk on the history of the synagogue, as well as a walking tour round the old city. Nicolas de Lange officiated at services on the Friday night, Saturday morning, evening and Shavuot itself on the Sunday, in the atmospheric, beautifully restored synagogue.

We had some wonderful group meals, discussions, and a fantastic day outing to Rethymnon. It was a truly memorable, informative and unforgettable trip.

Thanks Sally!

#### Sally Roland responds:

**T**hank you to the 'Gang of 16' who put their trust in me. We certainly all contributed to the vibrant statement of Jewish life, vitality and values that Etz Hayyim has come to represent... and we had lots of fun.

The 20th Anniversary of Rededication of Etz Hayyim Synagogue is taking place at the end of October 2019. For more information please contact me: \_\_\_\_\_





## Etz Hayyim: Tree of Life

### Sabbath eve

Huddled together in the courtyard  
in the former Jewish quarter of Chania  
under the cool leafy shade of an etrog tree  
forming a canopy beneath the clear starry night  
roots secure in the firmament  
branches reaching to the heavens  
marvelling at the improbability  
of a living community in this jewel of a place  
a breathing building shuttered  
behind great wooden doors  
hidden in the backstreets  
between lively restaurants and quaint tourist shops  
our devotional prayers within the walls  
blending with surrounding rhythms  
of bouzouki and mandolin.

### Sabbath morning

– *Etz hayyim hi lmachazikim bah* –  
*She is a tree of life to those who hold fast to her*  
*and all who cling to her are happy*  
we intone as the Torah scroll is returned  
to the holy Ark of the Covenant  
standing in the synagogue lovingly restored  
after years of desecration and empty dereliction  
the entire Jewish community drowned  
torpedoed by the British off the coast of Crete  
a navigational irony, the ship *Tanais* flying a  
German flag  
bound for the death camp Auschwitz  
sunk with its human cargo of eight hundred:  
Jews, dissidents, and Italian resisters  
imprisoned below deck with no means of escape.

### Sabbath afternoon

Diving down in clear waters to gaze through a  
misty mask  
at the skeleton of a plane sunk without survivors  
gravity pulling it into the sand, soon nothing will  
remain.

### Sabbath evening

Standing in the synagogue intoning ancient  
prayers  
lost in the rapid mumble of Hebrew  
struggling to keep pace, losing my place

surrendering to my slowness, my deafness  
so just standing, swaying, gazing at the windows  
the walls, the carved wooden seats  
softened with ornate sequined cushions  
the *parochet* with the word *Chayim*, life,  
descending letters embroidered in red thread  
hanging over the holy Ark concealing copper  
doors  
guarding against fire after the last arson attack.  
wondering at the incongruous ostrich eggs  
hanging by threads from the central candelabra  
fragile and whole, symbols of renewal and the  
cycle of life  
practical guardians against spiders and cobwebs.

### Sunday morning

Festival of Shavuot, returning to stand clothed in  
white  
feeling myself tentatively connected by a thread  
of Greek grandparents,  
a great-aunt who survived the round-up in Rhodes  
hidden by a Christian family  
unknown and re-discovered by my mother in  
recent years.

### Sunday afternoon

Dined and feted and guided through Ovraiki  
the historic Jewish quarter of Chania  
stopping at places on a reconstructed map  
reviving the memories of a lost community  
looking at a few remaining photographs  
of the Rabbi in attendance at a Nazi funeral  
later rounded up and drowned on the *Tanais*  
of the fiancée of a legendary beauty, dead at 16  
of the late Nikos Stavroulakis, artist, teacher,  
visionary.

### Sunday evening

Standing for a final prayer grateful to this  
community  
of local residents, visiting tourists, Austrian  
volunteers  
welcoming us from Oxford and Leicester  
to make a minyan  
gathered together to breathe a synagogue to life.

Michelle Benn



## Recent Events

### Memorial Service for the Victims of the Sinking of the Ship Tanais



Article in the local newspaper *Haniotika Nea*, by Eleni Phoundoulaki, about the memorial service for the victims of the sinking of the Tanais, published 3 June 2019. Translation (below) by Katerina Anagnostaki.

#### A message Against Racism

The memorial for the Tanais victims: a meeting of religions in Chania.

Yesterday's memorial event in front of the Tanais Ship Memorial sent a strong message against fascism and the rhetoric of hate. The event was organized by the Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Chania. The main speech was given by the General Secretary of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Greece (KISE), Mr. Victor Eliezer. The event was attended by the Metropolis of Kydonia & Apokoronas [the Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in the region of and around the city of Chania], Mr. Damaskinos, who recited a short memorial prayer, as well as the Rabbi of Athens, Mr. Gabriel Negrin, who followed with a prayer for the deceased. The representative of the local Roman Catholic Church, Father Luca Romani, also held a short prayer for the victims of the ship. The prayers were followed by the speech of Mr. Eliezer,

On 2 June 2019, the annual memorial service for the victims of the sinking of the Tanais on 9 June 1944 took place at the monument in the Koum Kapi neighbourhood in Chania. For the first time, a high ranking member of the Greek Orthodox Church on Crete, Damaskinos, Metropolis of Kydonia & Apokoronas, was present at the ceremony and recited a memorial prayer for the victims, along with the Rabbi of Athens Gabriel Negrin and Father Lukas Romani of the local Catholic Church. In recent years, Etz Hayyim has made a special effort to invite representatives of both the local Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches to the memorial service as the sinking of the Tanais claimed also a substantial number of Greek Orthodox and Catholic (Italian) victims. The ecumenical nature of the event has also drawn the attention of the local press which this year published a full-page article (see translation below). The service was attended by a considerable number of people from Chania including students from local high schools, together with international visitors.

The ceremony at the Tanais monument was followed by the memorial service (Hashkava) for the Cretan Jewish community at Etz Hayyim Synagogue which was conducted by Rabbi Negrin. During the service, an updated list of the victims from the Cretan Jewish community was read (see article on p. 26). Traditionally, a candle was lit for each victim.

who stated that "the Holocaust oblivion and the forgery of history cannot be accepted". He also referred to the uprooting of the Jewish community of Chania which "totally disappeared from its hometown in the name of anti-Semitic hate. The traces of a long historical presence were deleted. Recently, in 1999, Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Chania was renovated by the Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Athens, with the leading initiative taken by Nikos Stavroulakis. Today, Europe, alongside the rest of the world, is going through an extremely difficult period due to the expansion of fanaticism, fundamentalism, terrorism, the rise of anti-Semitic incidents and neo-Nazi parties all across Europe. Recent events make us sceptical and even shock us. The alarm is already ringing to remind us where we can all be led if we underestimate the dan-



ger of extreme ideologies and racism. This is the reason why now, more than ever, there is the need to preserve memory, to research the past, to make all the aspects of local history known, to advance humanistic values. We have seen very important initiatives all around Greece lately that aim to promote knowledge, education and culture. Those initiatives are a source of faith and courage to keep on in the future”.

However, Mr. Eliezer added that “all of those efforts must intensify. Seventy-five years after the dreadful crimes committed against humanity in Auschwitz and Birkenau, we come across vandalisms of Holocaust memorials, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. In Pittsburgh, innocent people were murdered while praying just because they were born Jews; in New Zealand, there was a cold blooded execution because people were born Muslims; in Utrecht, three people were killed because somebody thought that they didn’t have the right to live. Here, in our country, the Holocaust deniers in 2019 are writing libels again and again in an effort to rewrite history, in an effort to white-wash the inspirers and the executors of the greatest crimes against humanity”.

As an outcome, the General Secretary of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Greece pointed out that memorial events as the one in Chania “have a didactic character, since the citizens and the visitors of this

town have to know what had happened then, during the darkest period of human history, when six million Jews, among them 65,000 Greek Jews, thousands of Roma and many others, were horribly and industrially exterminated in Auschwitz, Dachau, Birkenau and other death camps. Those people were not just numbers. A face exists behind each number. Those events remind us of what can happen in humanity if oblivion dominates memory, if hate becomes normality in a society. The absolute evil didn’t start from Auschwitz. It started from the rhetoric of hate and ended up in Auschwitz. We gathered here, in Chania, not only to remember those who perished, not only to honour their memory, but also to send a message, together with the citizens of Chania, that the Holocaust oblivion and the history forgery won’t be accepted, cannot be accepted, should not be accepted”.

## *The Tanais*

The boat departed from Heraklion on 8th June, 1944 on its way to Athens. It was under a Nazi flag and was transporting prisoners who were to end up in the concentration camps by trains. The prisoners, around 350 people, were locked in the hold. They were Italian prisoners of war, members of the resistance groups and the Jewish community of Crete. Some hours after its departure, the boat was torpedoed by a British submarine and all of the prisoners were lost at sea, drowned.

## Memorial Event for Tanais Victims at Makasi Gate, Heraklion

Stavros Sfakiotakis, a philologist and turkologist, who teaches at a high school in Heraklion, has taught his pupils and advised other teachers about Cretan Jewish history. Earlier this year, he accompanied his students, whose film was among the winning entries of a Greece-wide contest,

It is a great honour and responsibility for me to be here today to pay my respects to the people who lost their lives in this place of witnessing in the city of Heraklion. The ceremony, which takes place here every year, is particularly meaningful to the collective memory of the city. While researching the historical facts about which I was asked to speak to you today, I came to realize that the month of June was filled with the loss of Cretan lives during the period of the Nazi Occupation: in June 1942, the 62 Martyrs were executed; in June 1943, the “Big Blockade” of Crete took place with more than 300 people arrested and executed; and in June 1944, more than 600 Jewish and Christian prisoners aboard the Tanais were lost. I will not expand on the historical facts or number of victims: this information is readily available elsewhere in many sources. I would, however, like to express some

on a study trip to Auschwitz concentration camp.

This past June, he was asked to give the commemorative speech during the annual memorial for the victims of the Tanais at Makasi Gate, in Heraklion, where they were imprisoned prior to the ship’s departure.

thoughts and feelings that came up for me when I began looking into these facts and as I wandered through the Makasi Gate.

We are gathered here today (and this fact on its own is tremendously significant) to pay our respects to the Cretans who sacrificed their lives resisting the Occupation forces. Yet, among those who died, who are we actually honouring, and how? June 15th was chosen for this event, a date memorializing those individuals who died in 1943. This year, the date happens to fall on a Saturday, a day on which in the Jewish tradition, no public ceremonies can take place due to the holiness of Saturday, *the Sabbath*.

I invite you and challenge you to look at the space around us. We can see an outdoor monument honouring the Greeks who belonged to the anti-Nazi Resistance and





were killed here, and an indoor, almost secret, monument to the Jewish people who spent the last days of their lives here. This arrangement of the monument makes me think that some of the people who died at Makasi Gate are “more dead” than others.

Most of the people belonging to the Resistance who were arrested and executed had been brought here after having made a conscious choice. They had had the courage to raise their voices and resist the conqueror. They suffered as a result and in the end, they died for their ideas, for the future of their offspring and for this land. Their families mourned them, grieved for them; they are remembered with pride and respect. The public’s memory of them has shifted over the years: for decades we did not dare to pay tribute to these people who participated in the epic national Resistance. Today, we may have arrived at the opposite end, where the offspring of Resistance fighters gain political privileges and careers because of the sacrifice of their forefathers.

It is possible, as I have read in different publications, that the names of those who gave their lives may not be completely accurate on the Makasi monument, and even this shows that there are descendants who protest, who would keep the memory of their ancestors’ sacrifice as a holy relic in their own hearts and souls. Probably some of them are here among us today, commemorating their dead. And all of us inhabitants of the city today can wander around the monument and commune with the ideals and emotions of these people. The city is proud of its dead, and this is manifested publicly and visibly as we celebrate these heroic people and their sacrifice. Conscious sacrifice is a clearly heroic act worthy of every distinction and recognition. However, the monument inside the Makasi Arcade that pays homage to the dead from the Tanais shipwreck – Christians, but mostly Jews – is a “closed” monument. Very few fellow citizens of Heraklion know that it exists, and on very few occasions during the whole year, the monument accessible to the public. Beyond practical reasons, it seems to me that the memory

of the Jews of Crete is “internal”; it perhaps does not apply to the general public or official history. The monument exists in the interior of the city, like a hidden story, a secret that only few people know about. The approximately 350 Jews of Crete who spent the last days of their lives in Makasi are not heroes. They did not have the choice of becoming heroes. They did not sacrifice themselves for any ideals, any homeland or future. They simply vanished from the face of the Earth, suffering up to the end, without the dignity of knowing why they were dying. The Jewish community of Crete was completely wiped off the island, not because it resisted or fought against the Occupation forces, but because its existence did not fit into the world that Fascism dreamt of building across Europe. The community of 350 Cretan Jews presented such a serious obstacle to the Nazis that their extermination was worth the organization of the whole procedure of their arrest in Chania, their transport to and stay in Heraklion and finally, their planned transport to Auschwitz which, in the end, was not actually fulfilled. Their memory was not honoured for many years simply because there were no family or community members left to honour them. Almost no one survived the Shoah to tell their story, to recall them or pray for their souls. Even the names and total number of the lost Jews have not, as yet, been completely testified to, as there are few surviving documents. In recent years, however, historians and writers, each in their own way, are bringing the memory of the Jews of Crete into the public domain. Events about the Shoah are taking place in the city, fiction and non-fiction are circulating on the topic, schools are visiting the Makasi Monument, and documentarians even make movies and win awards in pan-Hellenic contests. So, let us consider that today’s memorial service is another opportunity to broaden the discussion of the Jews of Crete, to talk about the people who vanished, and bring them back into public memory with respect, research and documentation. Let us mourn their loss with a humble prayer.

***Makasi Gate is open for visitors on the day of the annual memorial.***





## Upcoming Events

### Exhibition “Parallel Points of View”, Chania, 20 to 26 October

How does a Byzantine drawing of Muslim invaders, a family photograph preserved in today's Turkey, a somewhat worn out mascot toy of the 2004 Olympic Games, a bowl of Cretan mountain greens and a small orange plastic boat together create a kaleidoscopic view of modern-day Chania? The exhibition, “Parallel Points of View: Heritage and Intercultural Dialogue. Heritage Contact Zone, Hania”, which will open at the Sabbionara exhibition space in Chania on 20 October, attempts to answer this question. The exhibition is part of Etz Hayyim's ongoing 'Heritage Contact Zone' project (see p. 17). It is fitting that the exhibition is included in the programme of festivities for the 20th anniversary of the rededication of Etz Hayyim Synagogue. Etz Hayyim, itself, is a heritage contact zone in the best sense of the word; it is a conduit for bringing together and bridging such perspectives that otherwise would remain marginalised and silent.

The exhibition provides a glimpse into present-day Chania; it aims to address whether and how today's society

The curating artist explains: “It is our goal to show the richness of the existing cultural diversity in our specific, as well as wider, area and to present this rich cultural diversity to the general public as an opportunity for Chania, Crete and Greece. We aim to build bridges given that currently cultural stereotypes tend to divide the population.” Already in the workshops with participants from various social groups, this construction of bridges began and was facilitated by the inclusive approach taken by the curating artist. This approach is to be continued when the exhibition will go on display for one week. Visitors are invited to participate, share their own stories and reflect in interactive ways on the nature and interplay of parallel narratives and perspectives in order to appreciate them as enriching “parallel points of view” and not to perceive them as possibly threatening challenges.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue documenting all fifty objects and stories, alongside texts by the curator on the concept and broader context of the

# Kan Staki

KONSTANTIN FISCHER, HANIA, CRETE

associates itself with the long and multilayered history of the city, and of the island more widely. Fifty diverse objects were chosen by fifty participants who also recounted the stories behind these objects during a series of workshops. The participants broadly represent ten different points of view that reflect perspectives not usually included in the mainstream narrative. A number of these items and their stories will be juxtaposed with modern art objects created by local artists especially for this exhibition as a response to the specific narrative.

exhibition. Furthermore, the exhibition is to be documented online, along with the exhibitions hosted by the four other project partner organisations on the project website: [www.heritagecontactzone.com](http://www.heritagecontactzone.com). The website demonstrates in a European context – with examples from the Netherlands, Hungary, France, Romania and Greece – how everyday and personal objects can become rallying points for intriguing narratives of heritage and identity as well as social inclusion and exclusion.

Anja Zuckmantel





## Ongoing Projects

### Heritage Contact Zone Project

Heritage Contact Zone (HCZ) is a European Union funded project focusing on neglected and contested European heritage (see *Jottings* 23 and 24). For the project, Etz Hayyim is cooperating with six partner organisations from across Europe: H401, Amsterdam (NL), Goethe Institut Lyon (DE), Human Platform Budapest (HU), Timisoara European Capital of Culture (RO), European University Institute Florence (IT) and Culture Action Europe Brussels (BE).

Since its launch in September 2018, the programme has made much progress: two of the partners have held local exhibitions (which are part of the two-year project along with developing a tool-kit for heritage organisations on how to deal with contested heritage): In May and June, H401 in Amsterdam showed “Impossible Journeys Now and Then. A heritage contact zone from the Netherlands, Russian and Persia” drawing on a 17th century book by Dutch traveller Jan Struys and a collection of historical artefacts. These were brought

thus to “question the influence, impact and importance of the emblematic and famous movements of modern design and contrast them with products of everyday life”. In early October, the partner organisation in Timisoara will show the exhibition “Theatre as Resistance/RefleXions” focusing on the pivotal role of the theatre in the town during the Romanian revolution in 1989 and as a focal point of the three local communities: Romanian, Hungarian and German.

For the exhibition in Chania (“Parallel Points of View”), Etz Hayyim is cooperating with the Chania educational not-for-profit association Young Citizens of the World and the curating artist Konstantin Fischer, himself a long-term member of the Etz Hayyim Havurah (see p. 16). In August, we published a promotional video on the Etz Hayyim facebook page which offered a first glimpse of the content and aesthetics of the upcoming exhibition ([www.facebook.com/watch/?v=317910048961415](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=317910048961415)); we print two images from the video below.

“Parallel Points of View” will be shown immediately after the HCZ partner meeting in Chania from 17 to 19 October. For this meeting, Chania will welcome representatives from the six partner organisations. Work during the meeting will focus on a toolkit for heritage organisations, a major deliverable of the project drawing on the experience of the partners in dealing with contested heritage in the current and previous projects.

The Chania meeting follows an earlier partner meeting in Marseille in June, which curating artist Konstantin Fisher and Etz Hayyim’s Administrative Director attended. The meeting took place at *Friche la Belle de Mai*, a former tobacco factory close to the city’s railway station that, in 1992, was transformed into a community-centred cultural institution.

Anja Zuckmantel



into conversation with modern-day objects contributed by visitors.

In early June, the Goethe Institut in Marseille focused on the 100th anniversary of the *Bauhaus* movement in an exhibition of everyday objects that had been transformed during participatory workshops into fictional *Bauhaus* artefacts. The curating artists wanted







## Map for Self-Guided Tour of Chania's Historic Jewish Quarter

A guided tour of Evraiki, the historic Jewish quarter of Hania, developed by the Etz Hayyim staff, has been integrated into the programme offered to visiting groups upon request. So far, we have taken, among others, the group of visitors from the Oxford Jewish Congregation as well as participants of an international physicists conference on such a tour.

These tours have been very well received as they make the historic Jewish presence in Hania and Crete more visible and tell fascinating individual stories of members of the pre-war community. We will offer this guided tour for the general public in Greek and English as part of the "Etz Hayyim as a House of Learning" event in the programme for the 20th anniversary.

In *Jottings* 24, we reported about the first steps in the creation of a map for a self-guided tour of the Evraiki in cooperation with Cretan-British artist George Sfougaras. Over the summer, we have made much progress in preparing the explanatory text which will accompany the map which plan to publish in October.

Individual visitors are keen to experience the history of the Cretan Jewish community. While the tours the Etz Hayyim staff gives in the Synagogue itself can respond to some of this interest, the map for the self-guided tour will be a welcome addition and allow visitors to explore the area around Etz Hayyim and see these streets and houses with new eyes.



## Educational Outreach

### New Information Pamphlets for Visitors

For some time, the synagogue staff had the idea of publishing a new information pamphlet for those visitors interested in Cretan Jewish history, the Romaniote tradition and the story of Etz Hayyim and its rebuilding, which they could then take home with them.

After weeks of writing, editing and designing its layout, the pamphlet was finally printed in July. The pamphlet, and in particular, several A3 laminated cards with the pamphlet content, have since become an essential part and a helpful addition to the synagogue's everyday mission. These cards are left inside the synagogue and much to our amazement, visitors take the time to sit down on the benches and closely read their contents. In a way, Etz Hayyim has thus become, once again, a house of study. We have also noticed that questions from visitors and ensuing conversations are now more specific and substantial.

The pamphlet is currently available English, Greek and German; it is being translated into Hebrew, French and Spanish. (*In case you can help with a translation into another language, please contact the Synagogue office!*)

Furthermore, an additional card with information about the Mikveh, the various dedicatory and funerary inscrip-



tions at Etz Hayyim and the tombs in the southern courtyard is currently being prepared. We are also collecting ideas for a pamphlet with activities for visiting children which will allow them to explore Etz Hayyim in an age-specific way.

Maike Heinrich



## Cretan Jewish History

### Shemariah ben Elia 'the Cretan'

After the Venetians gained control of Crete in the early 13th century, the Jews on the island began to flourish and prosper. Newcomers arrived, from Italy and elsewhere, to take advantage of the opportunities Crete offered for agriculture and trade. Intellectual and cultural currents from Italy also began to influence the Jews, some of whom sent their sons to study there.

One of the wealthiest and most prominent Jews in Candia (Heraklion) in the first century of Venetian rule was Elia ben Jacob, whose family had originated in Rome. He held the title of *Haham* (in Latin *Sapiens*, 'wise man') and of *Parnas* (leader of the Jewish community). He transmitted his commitment to scholarship and to communal affairs to his son, Shemariah, who was born around 1260.

Shemariah is often referred to as *ha-Ikriti*, 'the Cretan'. This title is misleading, however, because by April 1279, we find him living in Negroponte (Halkidha) and engaged to be married to Helena, the daughter of David Kalomiti, the *Parnas* of the local Jewish community, a wealthy man and a notable scholar. So, Shemariah did not spend many years in Candia, but they were formative years, and so

we may take pride in his achievements as a child of Jewish Crete. And his achievements were many. One of his pupils describes him, in high-flown language, as 'the faithful and true sage my lord and teacher, the chariot of Israel and its cavalry, Rabbi Shemariah, who encompasses all knowledge and wisdoms and the angels of heaven do not cast him in the shade...' He was learned in rabbinic literature, philosophy and medicine. He wrote commentaries on parts of the Bible and the Talmud, as well as on the

synagogue prayers, and many other works including poems in Hebrew.

One of these poems is particularly interesting, because he mixes Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words. He calls God, *shalit ba-ouranous*, 'Ruler of the Heavens', *pantokrator*, 'Lord of All', and *malka ton panton*, 'King of All'. Not

only was Shemariah clearly at home in all three languages, but probably such expressions were familiar from synagogue prayers and preaching. Some prayers may even have been said in Greek. In a letter, Shemariah claims to have translated 'the books of the philosophers', presumably from Greek to Hebrew. Sadly none of his translations has survived.

Nicholas de Lange



Map of Venetian Candia (Iraklion), 1415

## The Jews of Crete at the Jewish Museum of Greece

As briefly mentioned in Jottings 24, in April 2019 two new display cases dedicated to the Jews of Crete were launched in the Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG) in Athens. The collection donor is Dona Lilian Capon, whose association with the pre-war Cretan Jewish community is very close and still active. Her mother was Mafalda Minervou (also Minerbo), a Haniot Jew. Her mother's family was also related to two other Cretan Jewish families, the Albert and the Rizzo families. This heritage is the reason why Mrs. Capon has a deep knowledge of the Cretan Jewish history, as well as a collection of unique items connected to this community.

We had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Capon in the JMG this May and were sitting next to the newly installed display cases where she shared with us her personal narrative of her family's story that included the war, loss and survival, the return to Crete after the war and her own memories of visiting Chania as a child.

Would like to thank Mrs. Capon for sharing her story. We also sincerely thank the JMG for sending us a note about the display case and several photographs, which we print below. Last but not least, a special thank-you to our colleague Katerina Anagnostaki who transcribed and translated the extended interview with Mrs. Capon.





## A Conversation with Dona Lilian Capon

### On her ancestors and their history

"My mother's family came from Italy. The family surname can also be found as Minerbo/Minerbi; more versions exist as well. I know about their moving from Italy to Corfu in the mid-17th century. Later, my immediate family moved to Zakynthos and then to Egypt and finally to Chania, Crete. It happened that the Minervo and the Albert families were among the wealthy ones in Chania who lived outside the city walls. My grandmother, Dorotea, was the daughter of Pascuale Albert and had four



more siblings. This family engaged in important commercial activities in Crete: imports and exports with branches in Cyrene, Romania and Milan. This significant commercial enterprise was the reason why my great grandfather was named by his contemporaries

as the 'Venizelos of commerce'. Today, their once grand residence houses the local State Health Services Administrative Department. All of the Albert family moved to Milan in 1916 and there is a family grave as well.

We also know much about the Minervo family. My grandfather, Moisis, and my grandmother had eight children, five of whom died. The three children who survived were my mother, Mafalda, my aunt, Eleonora, and my uncle, Albert. Their brother, Ernesto, reached adulthood as well, but he died in Genova while he was a university student. My grandfather owned a commercial shop in the central square of the old town of Chania, Santrivani square. He opened it in 1896, following the standards of the well-known Parisian shops, Au Bon Marche. Moreover, he was the president of the local Jewish community, even though it was not an official body until 1913. Documents on his activity can be found in many sources such as the study by Bracha Rivlin, 'Rabbi Abraham Eblagon

and Cretan Jewry' (*Revue des Études Juives*, v. 152, 3-4 (1993)). His involvement in community affairs was the reason why he enjoyed a very close collaboration with the Chief Rabbi of Crete, Abraham Evlagon. Both of them had to be very diplomatic in order to secure the money needed for a functioning community. They were in good terms with the Greek government, the Sultan, the King, the Italians and the British.

Albert Minervo, my mother's brother, took after his father and continued to involve himself in the communal



affairs of the Jewish community in Chania. Furthermore, during the Occupation period (1941-45), Albert Minervo provided valuable information to the British Intelligence network and was known covertly as 'Agent G-4' (in Steven Bowman, *Η Αντίσταση των Εβραίων στην Κατοχική Ελλάδα, Κεντρικό Ισραηλιτικό Συμβούλιο Ελλάδος*, Αθήνα 2012). He later received a certificate commending his war-time activities by Marshal Harold Alexander".

### On her family story during the Second World War and the Occupation

"My uncle, Albert, and his wife, Victoria, paid a man and managed to board a small ship full of carobs which sailed from Chania to Pireaus. This is how they arrived in Athens one week later. My parents, Veniamin Kapon and Mafalda Mazaltov Minervou, lived in Athens. I was born in 1943. They came to hide with us to save themselves. There was one more person, a cousin of the family called Samuel/Sam Minervos. He was a soldier in the Albanian front and he returned to Athens following the invasion. He suffered from frostbite. The Battle of Crete and subsequent conquest of the island had already taken place when he arrived in Athens and it was very difficult for him to travel back to the island, so my parents proposed





to him to stay with us. We would share the same fate, whichever that was. For him, of course, the situation was more difficult because his sister and his mother were left behind. His father had already died, in fact he died before Samuel was born, and this is why he was named after him.

Anyway, all of us hid together and we had a big adventure, even though someone who was blackmailing us forced us to move out of our first hiding place. My family knew who the individual was who wrote the blackmail note, which you can now see in the display case. The friendly Christian couple who had offered us the hidea-



way, Nikos Panayiotou and Antonia Panayiotou-Kapsomenou, took us away by truck the same night. We then hid in many different houses, with the help of different people, all of whom have been awarded by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

How old was I? How can I remember all of these events? I can recall the basement in which we hid for some time in Alkmanos Street. All around us in the basement were tree logs. The house owner, Mr. Kollias, was a civil engineer and his fear of the house collapsing due to bombing led him to collect these logs in order to structurally support the house. He offered us space in this house and the door closed with a closet. This was the only exit and only my mother would go out from there. When leaving, she would wear a black suit and an embroidered white apron; you see, it was a bourgeois house. I stayed on a chair throughout the whole day, every day, telling myself, 'ssssshhh, someone might hear you!'. I describe all of these events in the book I wrote [in Greek], which is under publication in the Kapon Editions, with the title, *To Αίνιγμα. Από τον St. Thomas Becket στην Αθήνα του 21ου αιώνα*. [The Riddle. From St. Thomas Becket to the 21st century Athens]".

## On the immediate postwar experience

"When the war was over, we continued living in our last hideaway in Lysicratous Street No 12 until we reclaimed the second floor of a building, which had been occupied by another family, and which was the property of my father's father, who was exterminated in a camp. He hadn't been persuaded to hide. 'What have I done? What can they do to me?', he asked. He was an important merchant in Piraeus and believed that money and power could solve any problem. More than that, however, he was very tall, almost two metres in height, so it was extremely difficult for him to hide. Everybody could recognize him, where would he hide? So, he registered his name. His son-in-law, Solomon Peralia, had told him, again and again, 'create your own prison, why should you go the Germans' prison?'; you see, we didn't know where they would bring us.

An acquaintance of my father gave us the information. Someone called Sefiha who was in charge of the Stand Canada – where clothes were gathered, packed and sent to Germany – had survived. It was some time after the end of the war when they met and he told my father that one day, 'there was a huge coat that came into my hands. It was long, long! Who could be wearing this coat? I was curious to open the small pocket in the inside of the coat and I found the food coupons of Dona and Isaak Kapon'. This was how we learnt.

My mother's brother, Alberto, could not forget Crete after the war. He adored it, as we all do. He, along with Samuel, the cousin who hid with us, returned to Crete after the Liberation. They were wandering around the abandoned houses, the *mezuzot* waiting in vain for their owners. They rebuilt their lives there. Although he was a fiery personality, my uncle, in particular, had always been





religious. Since he was one of the very few Cretan Jews who survived and returned to Crete, he believed that this was the will of God. What we can read in his prayer book, which is exhibited in the Museum, is very moving: he had lots of Christian friends. He spent Easter with them, cracking eggs, but this was not how he wanted to spend his Pesah. What did he do then? Every Pesah, he left Crete and would either come to find us in Athens or would visit other places. Volos, for example, was one of his favorite. You can see comments in his prayer book about the places where he spent Pesah every year. In another prayer book, he wrote down his thoughts on events that had happened in his life. Deaths, births. For example, there is an entry referring to 'the wise, blond lad', his brother, Ernesto, who died in Genova.

This is how I ended up spending some summers in Crete. My uncle would take me with him to Chania. I remember at least two summers in Crete. We lived in Portou Street, No 22, which was the house right next to the other synagogue, the bombed one, Beth Shalom. I have so many memories there! For instance, I had a passion with the universe! We would often sit in front of the window, where I looked at the moon, wondering 'how big can it be?'. I would then ask my uncle, 'Uncle, how big can the moon be? Can it be as half the bastion?'. I had become a real Cretan girl! I liked it being in Crete so much and, on top of that, I loved my uncle and my relationship with him was something really important to me.

One morning, he took me by the hand and we entered the dead end by Kondylaki Street. This was not the route we would normally follow to go to the old port. However, it was for me to see the other synagogue, Etz Hayyim, as I had never paid any attention to it, despite the building being right behind our house. So, we stood in front of it and he told me, 'Lilian, this is the only thing that remained from Cretan Jewry'. The only thing that reminded me of a synagogue was a sign of a Magen David on a window. I stood there; in my eyes, the destruction of the synagogue was the destruction of the whole community. I stood there and said to myself, 'I swear that, when I grow up, I won't let this happen. I will repair this place; I will never let the memory of Jews fade away. I swear this to myself and to God'. I have been trying to find solutions since I was seventeen!"

## On the Tanais Memorial

"The initial idea for building a Tanais monument began in Heraklion, the place of departure of the Tanais ship on the 8th June, 1944. I had already collaborated with Kostis Mamalakakis, with whom I enjoyed a close working relation-

ship, by earlier supporting his proposal for establishing a permanent exhibition in the Historical Museum of Crete in memory of the Cretan Jews and their tragic end. I helped him by providing photographs and documents and I know now that thousands of students' eyes stand in front of the exhibition every year and are moved by this story.

So this idea of erecting a memorial in Heraklion was first discussed with Kostis. We were exploring the opportunity to construct a monument on the dock where the ship departed. However, this didn't work out because it seemed that the local authorities were not very encouraging of the scheme. The mayor had recently cut down some trees and the local community were frustrated with him as a result, which in turn made him want to avoid the idea of erecting a memorial. Apart from that, we thought that perhaps the back and forth of tourists by the dock would eventuate in the planned memorial being misused.



Then I thought 'why not Chania? After all, Chania had the largest number of Jews'. I arranged a series of meetings in Crete and on my first trip there, I was accompanied by Moisis Konstantinis who supported me. The initiative was also championed by Konstantinos Mitsotakis. I had asked for his help since the former mayor of Chania, Kyriakos Virvidakis, had approved the construction of the memorial, but as soon as a new mayor was elected, he was no longer fond of it. I had no intention to insult anybody, but



the idea should be realized immediately, otherwise it would probably be forgotten once and for all. Nothing was easy of course. The approval, and the funds, were a huge problem. However, after a series of efforts undertaken by myself, the money was eventually secured by the Israelite Community of Thessaloniki and by private donor, Saby Mionis. We formed a committee of three members, Moisis Konstantinis, Veatriki Magrizou and myself with the support and encouragement of David Saltiel, the president of KISE. I travelled to Chania with Konstantinis where we met with the engineers of the Hania Municipality who would propose to us different spots in the city. We decided to utilize the space opposite the Wall of Sand in Kum Kapi. Although it was mostly known as a former Muslim neighbourhood, it was a spot facing the sea, the eternal grave of the Cretan Jews. We believe that this place, right across the Sand Gate, will always give life to the monument.



Until the moment that the sculpture was ready, I made regular visits to Thiva in order to co-operate with the monument sculptor, Miltos Papastergiou. For the inauguration, many people, as well as numerous institutions, were invited including representatives of all the religions existing on the island, together with members of the associations related to the resistance groups of World War II. Most of them were absent”.

## On the display cases in the Jewish Museum of Greece for the Jews of Crete

“In 1986, I spent a lot of time in my house recovering from an accident. My mother, who was aware of my love of collecting items connected to Cretan Jewry, came to my house every morning, bringing with her a small present. It might be a tiny pin that you now can see in the case, a small jewel, a piece of handiwork, a photograph, something different every morning. She knew that I was really interested in those objects and she was generous to give me most of her memorabilia. When I decided to make use of this collection, I discussed the possibility with Zanet Batinou, the Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece. Zanet proposed that the collection should be exhibited in the Museum. I explained to her that it would be a difficult task to do because I had a large number of objects. When Zanet saw all of these items laid out on my dining table, she was amazed; she was then com-



mitted to undertake all of the necessities in order to make good use of the collection. This collaboration became fruitful nine years later when my collection went on permanent display at the Museum. I believe that these display cases are very interesting, and they show a significant part of the collection. Of course, there are articles, a big cache of documents and photographs, which are currently housed in the storage room of the Museum.

So here in the first case, you can view objects that are arranged thematically. For example, you can see a photograph of one of the silk carpets of the Beth Shalom Synagogue which was brown and intricately embroidered. All of those four carpets were placed in front of the throne





of the King of Greece who would visit the synagogue whenever travelling to Chania. You can also see a necklace that was given to my uncle, Alberto, as a present by Rabbi Ilouz of Tverya in 1914. You can see some tiny swords given to me by people in Chania whenever I went there. You can see a piece of handmade lace, extremely rare, from my grandfather's shop. You can view a number of documents relating to Cretan Jewish history. I



must mention that I give credit for the rescue of these objects to all of my family, since all of us were in danger during the Occupation. As we were hiding from one place to the other, those objects could easily betray our Jewish background, but we kept them with us nevertheless.

My initial motive, the reason for my efforts in commemorating Cretan Jewish heritage until today, is that I don't want to let those people die twice, I don't want to let

their memory fade away. Some thirty years after the loss of the Cretan Jewish community, I had a conversation with some locals in Chania and they asked me, 'were there Jews in Chania?'. Time can fade out everything. This is why all my efforts are focused on memory. My contribution to rescuing the synagogue, my research into the names of people who were lost in Tanais, names of which were delivered to the Yad Vashem Database, my



involvement in the monument, and now in the display cases, all of those endeavours and more to come, derive from my eagerness to keep the memory alive. Always with the help of God.

I would like to add that, for the opening of the display cases, the Kapon family cousins, Federico, Fabrizio and Andrea Albert with their families travelled from Italy and joined us". (photos © Jewish Museum of Greece)

## The New Display Case about the Jews of Crete - a Note from the Curator of the JMG

The latest addition to the permanent collection of the Jewish Museum of Greece evokes the important moments in the history of the Jewish community of Chania. The collection, bequeathed to the Museum by Lilian Capon, consists of numerous items that each, in their own way, reflect the personal, professional and social lives of the Capon, Minervo and Albert families from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries.

There is a special focus on the German Occupation period (1941-1945) and the fate of members of those families who were desperately



trying to survive. Their personal stories of survival unfold as the Germans incrementally imposed restrictions on their daily lives which eventually led to the mass arrest and deportation of the Jewish community of Crete.

This exhibition is a case study, a 'cabinet of curiosities', a silent witness to the life, once thriving and then lost, of not only the Jews of Crete, but of Greece as a whole.

Christina Meri (curator),  
Mary Kapotsi (restorer)

The Jewish Museum of Greece, Athens



## New Publication: *IBBUR - The Jews of Crete 1900-1950*

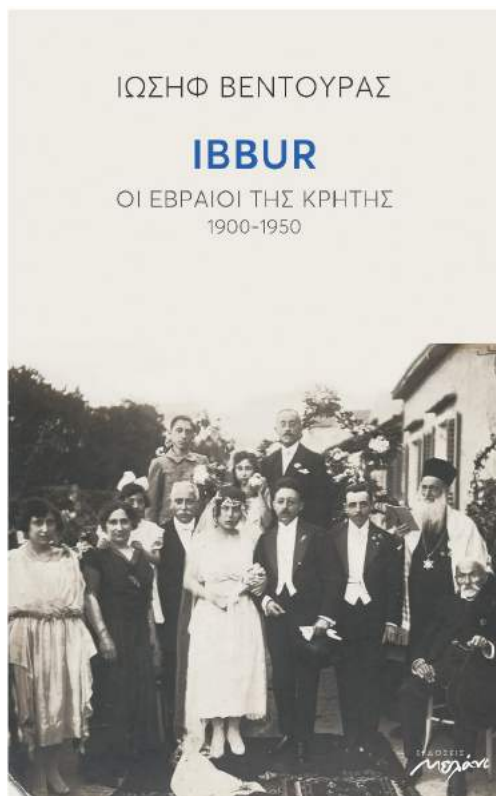
Iossif Ventura was born in Chania, Crete, and lives in Athens. He has published six collections of poems, together with an anthology of medieval Jewish poets. His poems have been translated into English, French, Italian, Spanish, Romanian, Hebrew and Serbian. He has translated troubadour poems, as well as the poems of J. Rothenberg and N. Sachs. He is in charge of the Poeticanet journal and website.

In previous editions, *Jottings* has reported about the reading of Iossif's poem *Tanais* at Etz Hayyim in 2017 and his dedicated involvement in educational programmes for schools on Crete about the Shoah and the history of the Cretan Jewish community.

The Etz Hayyim staff feel privileged to have made a modest contribution in assisting Iossif's research for his most recently published book in Greek:

"Ibbur. Οι Εβραίοι της Κρήτης, 1900-1950" [Ibbur. The Jews of Crete, 1900-1950].

Iossif has said about his book, "In Jewish mysticism, the



term 'Ibbur' stands for pregnancy. It refers to the contemporary transition of an additional soul in the body of a living person, so that a work is fulfilled".

"I felt that the souls of the Jews of Crete, who were unjustly lost during the Nazi occupation of the island, haunted me. Thus, I tried to collect testimonies in the form of a chronicle (photographs and documents) so that those readers who are not familiar with the history of Crete can, through my book, realize the continuous and uninterrupted Jewish presence on the island for centuries, a presence which enriched the fabric of the local society, but which came to a tragic end in 1944. My book also offers an account of the struggles of those few individuals who were rescued and survived the war."

At Etz Hayyim, we look forward to drawing from the book for our educational outreach programme. An English translation is being prepared by the publisher.

### **Three upcoming book presentations have been arranged in Crete:**

October 29, 2019 in Rethymnon, at the University of Crete, Department of Philology, at 8:30 pm.

October 30, 2019 in Chania, at the Centre of Mediterranean Architecture, at 7:30 pm.

October 31, 2019 in Heraklion, at the Historical Museum of Crete, at 7:30 pm.

## News from the Etz Hayyim Research Lab I: Updated List of Victims of the Tanais

On 2 June 2019, during the annual memorial service for the Cretan Jewish Community, an updated list of victims was read. Below we print a text from the booklet published for the event which explains this adjustment.

The list of members of Crete's Jewish community who boarded and subsequently perished on the Tanais ship is the subject of ongoing discussion. There are a number of extant Tanais lists that have circulated throughout the decades since the ship was bombed and sunk in June, 1944. Despite these different lists, it must be stated that no original list used by the guards when confirming, for the last time, the names of the prisoners to be locked in the Tanais' hold has, as yet, been found in the historical archives. As such, there has always been some discrepan-

cy in terms of who and how many perished on board the ship on the 9th of June, 1944. We know that there were three groups of internees who were arrested and forced onto the Tanais: the Cretan Jewish community, Italian prisoners of war and rebel resistance fighters from the region of Chania.

There have been various researchers who have approached the question of the prisoners' identity in different ways according to the group in which these researchers have taken particular interest. Oral testimonies are the main source of those researchers attempting to identify the resistance fighters on board, while a list of Jews compiled by the local rabbi in 1943 on the demand of the Nazi Administration remains the primary source for those





seeking to find out the names of the Cretan Jews who perished that night. As for the Italians, no list has been compiled since there is no source which can confirm who were prisoners and who had perished in previous shipwrecks that winter.

The interest of Etz Hayyim Synagogue is to determine as accurately as possible, the events of that night, especially how many members of the Cretan Jewish community lost their lives and whether there were any survivors or family descendants who might provide us with more information concerning the conditions of the mass arrest, as well as the daily life of the community during the German Occupation. Moreover, for us at the synagogue, it is important that any survivors are not to be remembered or thought of as victims, at the same time as victims are not forgotten due to ignorance.

This most recent list of Jewish prisoners on board the Tanais ship is an update of one that Nikos Stavroulakis had chosen to use in the annual memorial service com-

memorating the lost Cretan Jewish community over the past few years. The list has since been enriched with some important information brought to light over the last three years through the ongoing research forming part of the project, 'Reconstructing an Absence, Narrating a Presence: the Jews of Hania, Crete'\*.

There are still some matters needing to be resolved specifically the issue of who else may have been on the ship, but what you see here in this list marks the point which current research has reached until now.

On a final note, the alphabetical order of the names of the individuals on the list correlates to the Greek alphabet as they were Greek and Greek-speaking.

\*Project funded by Anne Germanakos, member of the BoT of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania. Project Supervisor: Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, Social Anthropologist, Assistant Professor, University of Volos. Researchers: Daphne Lappa, Historian & Katerina Anagnostaki, PhD Candidate in History.

## Ασκαβά

Μνημόσυνο για την Εβραϊκή Κοινότητα Κρήτης  
2019



## Hashkabah

Memorial for the Jewish Community of Crete  
2019

Matathias	Levis	Ματαθίας	Λεβ
Lea	Levi	Λέα	Λεβ
Iosif	Levis	Ιωσήφ	Λεβ
Moisis	Levis	Μωυσής	Λεβ
Matildi	Levi	Ματίλδη	Λεβ
Matathias	Levis	Ματαθίας	Λεβ
Lea	Levi	Λέα	Λεβ
Sterina	Levi	Στερίνα	Λεβ
Simon	Levis	Σίμων	Λεβ
Pighas	Levis	Πίγας	Λεβ
Roza	Levi	Ρόζα	Λεβ
Lea	Levi	Λέα	Λεβ
Viktoria	Levi	Βικτώρια	Λεβ
Mairi	Levi	Μαίρη	Λεβ
Anna	Levi	Άννα	Λεβ

## Τα ονόματα όσων χάθηκαν στο πλοίο Τάναϊς The names of those that perished on the Tanais:

Efsevios	Avigades	Ευσέβιος	Αβινάδες
Rahil	Avigade	Ραχήλ	Αβινάδε
Matathias	Avigades	Ματαθίας	Αβινάδες
Markos	Avigades	Μάρκος	Αβινάδες
Mairi	Avigade	Μαίρη	Αβινάδε
Emilia	Angel	Αιμιλία	Άγγελ
Klotildi	Angel	Κλοτίλδη	Άγγελ
Solomon	Akkos	Σολομών	Άκκος
Revekka	Alhanati	Ρεβέκκα	Αλχανάτη
Avraam	Alhanatis	Αβραάμ	Αλχανάτης
Samouil	Alhanatis	Σαμουήλ	Αλχανάτης
Louiza	Alhanati	Λουίζα	Αλχανάτη
Karol	Amar	Καρολίνα	Αμάρ
Sarra	Viktor	Ελχάις	Αττία
Viktor	Sarra	Ελχάις	Αττία
Rafa	Haim	Ελχάις	Αττία
Solo	Alvertos	Ελχάις	Αττία
Rev	Soultana	Ελχάις	Αττία
Sav	Elvira	Ελχάις	Αττία
Ral	Haim	Ελχάις	Αττία
Sai	Esthir	Ελχάις	Αττία
Pe	Revekka	Ελχάις	Αττία
Dr	Hrysoula	Ελχάις	Αττία
D	Sarra	Ελχάις	Αττία
Tzogla	Elhai	Ελχάις	Αττία
Alvertos	Elhai	Ελχάις	Αττία
Soultana	Elhai	Ελχάις	Αττία
Leon	Evlagon	Ελχάις	Αττία
Anna	Evlagon	Ελχάις	Αττία
Alvertos	Evlagon	Ελχάις	Αττία
Rene	Evlagon	Ελχάις	Αττία
Sterina	Ishaki	Ελχάις	Αττία
Bona	Ishaki	Ελχάις	Αττία
Revekka	Ishaki	Ελχάις	Αττία
Leon	Ishaki	Ελχάις	Αττία
Boulisa	Ishaki	Ελχάις	Αττία
Samouil	Ishakis	Ελχάις	Αττία
Solomon	Ishakis	Ελχάις	Αττία

## Solomon

## Ganis

## Mihail

## Esthir

## Sarra

## Astro

## Iakov

## Revekka

## Vittas

## Simha

## Sarra

## Avraam

## Esthir

## Boulisa

## Samouil

## Moisis

## Alegra

## id

## natia

## ir

## kos

## ir

## ekka

## il

## a

## n

## ir

## irtos

## n

## a

## k

## ekka

## Rahil

## Avraam

## Elvira

## Nisim

## Iakov

## Refkoula

## Hryso

## Σολομών

## Γανής

## Μιχαήλ

## Εσθήρ

## Σάρρα

## Άστρο

## Ιακώβ

## Ρεβέκκα

## Βήττας

## Σιμχά

## Σάρρα

## Αβραάμ

## Εσθήρ

## Μπουλίσσα

## Σαμουήλ

## Μωυσής

## Αλέγγρα

## Λιλίκα

## Χαΐμ

## Δαυίδ

## Σταματία

## Εσθήρ

## Μάρκος

## Εσθήρ

## Ρεβέκκα

## Ραχήλ

## Ζιλντα

## Χαΐμ

## Εσθήρ

## Αλβέρτος

## Ηλίας

## Χαΐμ

## Ελβίρα

## Ισαάκ

## Ρεβέκκα

## Ελχάις

## Ελχάις

## Ελχάις

## Ελχάις

## Ελχάις

## Ελχάις

## Σολομών

## Γανής

## Μιχαήλ

## Εσθήρ

## Σάρρα

## Άστρο

## Ιακώβ

## Ρεβέκκα

## Βήττας

## Σιμχά

## Σάρρα

## Αβραάμ

## Εσθήρ

## Μπουλίσσα

## Σαμουήλ

## Μωυσής

## Αλέγγρα

## Λιλίκα

## Χαΐμ

## Δαυίδ

## Σταματία

## Εσθήρ

## Μάρκος

## Εσθήρ

## Ρεβέκκα

## Ραχήλ

## Ζιλντα

## Χαΐμ

## Εσθήρ

## Αλβέρτος

## Ηλίας

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## News from the Etz Hayyim Research Lab II: The Sinking of the Tanais

In June, the Etz Hayyim staff came across an interesting historical source which illuminates some of the circumstances of the sinking of the ship, but which also raises new research questions.

On the website [www.historisches-marinearchiv.de](http://www.historisches-marinearchiv.de) we found a war-time diary entry dated 9 June 1944 by the then commanding German Admiral in the Aegean. After contacting historian Dimitri Galon, who located this particular document and published it on the website, he shared several photographs and additional documents about the Tanais with us. Below, we provide the translation of the most intriguing document describing how the Germans believed the manoeuvre of the British submarine that resulted in the sinking of the Tanais took place. The list of "cargo" is of special interest as it lists "492 Jews and Badoglio-Italians". While this entry does not give us the exact number of the Cretan Jews on the ship, it confirms that there must have been a precise list of prisoners on board. On the other hand, it offers a hint for the estimated number of Italian victims whose numbers and names are effectively unknown until today.

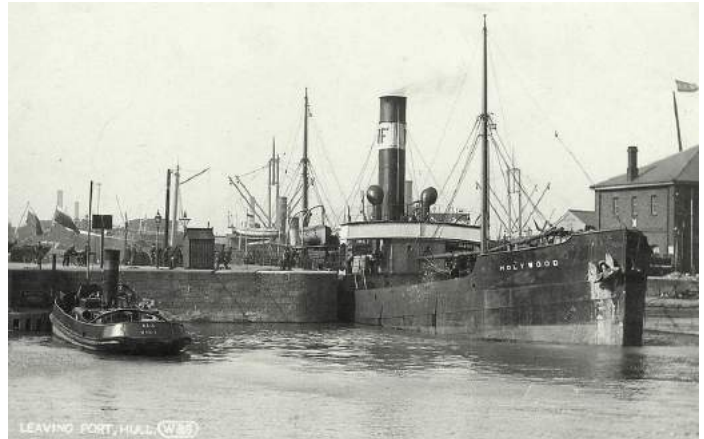
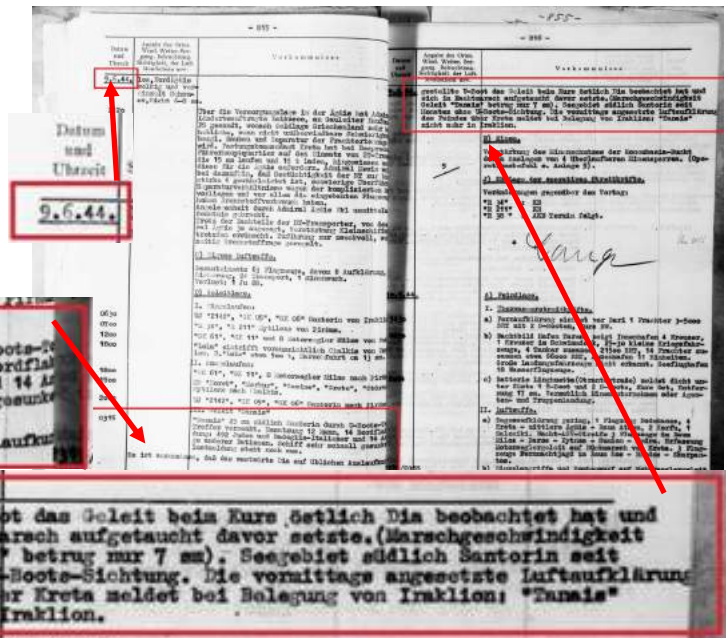


Photo of the "Hollywood" which was later renamed "Tanaïs"



**Date and time: 9 June 1944**

**03:15 am - "Tanaïs" Convoy**

„Tanaïs“ was torpedoed 25 nautical miles south of Santorini by a submarine hit. 12 crew members, 14 anti-aircraft guns, cargo: **492 Jews and Badoglio-Italians**

[Italian troops after the armistice on 3 September 1943 between Italy and the Allies; translators' note] and 14 persons of other nationalities. Ship sunk very fast. The loss report is still pending.

It is to be assumed that the submarine, having taken position on the usual sailing course west of the island of Dia [uninhabited island 7 nautical miles north of Heraklion], spotted and monitored the convoy on its course east of Dia. During the night it probably surfaced and placed itself in front of the Tanais. (the Tanais only had a speed of 7 nautical miles). Sea area south of Santorini for months without submarine spotting. The enemy's air reconnaissance over Crete reported regarding Iraklion: "Tanaïs" no longer in Iraklion.

Translation: Maike Heinrich, Anja Zuckmantel

Photos of Tanais and document above © Archive Dimitri Galon



Sinking Point of the Tanaïs: 35° 53' North – 25° 11' East





Nikos Stavroulakis (נצ"ל)

## My dinner with Nikos or "Think Ottoman!"

When I think back on my friend Nikos Stavroulakis, I always come back to the very first time I met him in May of 2001. Professor Daniel Levine and I were co-leading a group of University of Arkansas students on a three-week summer study tour of Greece, and earlier that day, Nikos had spoken to our students and given them a tour of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue (unfortunately, I had to miss our synagogue visit because I was with one of the members of our group who was dealing with a medical emergency). Nikos had very kindly agreed to meet Daniel and me that evening for dinner at the restaurant directly across from the synagogue. We all showed up, sat down, began ordering our food and drinks, and Nikos began asking me a few questions, sizing me up. He got around to asking me where my people were from, and I told him that my mom's parents were from the island of Marmara, in present-day Turkey. I then rather injudiciously added that my *papou*, like so many Asia Minor refugees, practically worshipped Venizelos—the Greek statesman most associated with the *Megali Idea* and Greece's failed Reconquista following the First World War—and even kept a framed picture of him hanging on his living room wall. Nikos frowned. "Venizelos? Venizelos was a criminal!" Caught off guard, I didn't know what to say, and probably mumbled something or other. With a twinkle in his eye, Nikos pointed his finger at me and exclaimed: "George, think Ottoman!"

Over the next fourteen years, Daniel and I brought seven more University of Arkansas groups to Chania and to the synagogue, and Nikos always made time to share an evening meal with us. Although we discussed a wide vari-

ety of things over these seven long and entertaining meals, it seemed that we always returned to the theme closest to Nikos's heart: Crete under a benign Ottoman rule, a plural Crete, as he never tired of saying. To be sure, his vision of Ottoman Crete was romanticized; nevertheless, it was a place where Christians, Muslims, and Jews did manage—at least for a time—to peacefully co-exist before modern nationalism shattered the fragile, multi-confessional Ottoman symbiosis. "Think Ottoman!" Nikos truly thought of himself as the last of the Ottomans, as Anja so aptly put it, and everything about the man, from his family background to his username to the protagonist in his novel bore this out. The restored and re-born Etz Hayyim Synagogue, perhaps his greatest achievement, stands as a living reminder of Nikos and his vision of a plural society.

George P. Paulson, University of Arkansas



Nikos and George at Etz Hayyim in 2010.

## A Few Memories of Nikos Stavroulakis

My first memory of Nikos Stavroulakis is from the fall of 1978 when, as a Member of the American School of Classical Studies, I visited the Athens synagogue on Melidoni Street with my friend Barry Strauss. There we met Nikos, who showed us some of the materials that he had collected for the Jewish Museum. He was kind and generous with his time – traits that I appreciated in him for the rest of our nearly 40-year relationship.

Passover 1979, my family came to visit Athens. My father, a rabbi, helped organize a Seder at the American School of Classical Studies. Nikos, kind and generous as ever, found us *matzot* and kosher wine, thus leaving his

mark on a memorable occasion.

We resumed our relationship some 20 years later, when I first brought a group of students to the newly-opened Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Chania. Nikos spent almost two hours with us, in what I noted at the time was a fascinating and unforgettable presentation.

Thus began a long series of visits in which I brought student groups and family ten more times to meet Nikos at the synagogue. We also visited Etz Hayyim after Nikos died. That is part of the relationship, too.

George Paulson, my colleague and friend, has co-directed these study tours with me. He and Nikos were intellectual



kindred spirits – they loved to talk about the troubled histories of eastern Mediterranean peoples, and they loved and respected each other. During Nikos’s lectures at Etz Hayyim, and after our dinners together, I took notes, recalling as much as I could of his words. I have typed up these handwritten documents, which are full of precious memories, both of his erudition and his (often acerbic) personal observations. George has written of his own memories.

Nikos opened the eyes of our college students, many of whom had had no exposure to Jews, let alone Greece. Most of the students told us that Nikos’ presentation was the highlight of their trip. He opened his world to them, and fascinated them with stories of the wide-ranging Minoans, Andalusian Arabs, Crusaders, False Messiahs, Pirates, Venetians, Holy Men and Mystics, Romaniots and Ashkenazis, Orthodoxy, Çelebi, the Dönme, Turks, Cretan camels, Nazis, and of course, his beloved Crete – and its unique history, beauty, magic, and tragedy. He told the synagogue’s story, always modest about his own tremendous contributions.

The students loved his presentations. When I told Nikos in 2007 that our students’ travel journals were full of appreciation of him, he kindly wrote back:

“Thank you for the good words - this can be such a lonely task and people always seem to assume that I am above such. You and George also deserve more than good words as I have had a lot of experience with visiting students over the years (many of them) and I always feel especially comfortable with yours.”

Ten years later, just a few weeks after his death, our Arkansas group again visited Chania. When I entered the Etz Hayyim courtyard to confirm our visit, an image of Nikos came to me. It occurred to me that I had never entered this space without Nikos being there, and tears came to my eyes. Later that day, when we returned with the students, I had calmed down and spoke to them of Nikos and the synagogue, but I still had trouble preventing my voice from cracking. It was a difficult and emotional time.

A year later, in the spring of 2018, I returned to Etz Hayyim for Kabbalat Shabbat with my brother David, who had been with us at the Stavroulakis-provisioned Seder forty years earlier. The congregation used the same photocopied *siddurim* that we had used when I had attended Shabbat services there in previous years: ‘Sephardi and Portuguese Rite’. I remembered the time when at Kiddush, Nikos offered us good black bread that he had made himself, saying, “My gift to you”. Shabbat Generosity.

At last year’s service, Roger from France was the prayer

leader. The tunes came back to me right away. They are hauntingly beautiful. I thought I heard Nikos singing with us, which was comforting. The service, like previous ones at Etz Hayyim, were friendly, inclusive, and simple.

When Nikos had led services, the custom was for people to share the readings. I told Roger that I could read V’Shamru, so I sang it – with spirit! At the end of the service, Roger asked me to lead Kiddush, which I did with pleasure, imagining Nikos’ approving gaze. It was an honor to have participated in this event, and to have shared it with a unique group of people from all over the world. Nikos would have been glad that the synagogue had hosted such an event.

I noticed that there was one chair in which nobody sat. Roger said this was where Nikos used to sit. It is kept empty in his memory. Later, at the Gallini restaurant, where we had dined with Nikos a few times, I noticed the same kind of chair. I told the owner Manolis, who had helped Etz Hayyim after the fires, that it looked like the empty one I had seen in the synagogue. He confirmed that it was his gift, to honor his friend. I was delighted to see another example of some Nikos-inspired generosity and kindness.

Later, I told my brother that this little congregation is Nikos’ gift to us all. He created both the physical space and the spiritual community of Etz Hayyim. Happily, they both survive as his legacy. Nikos has made our lives better with his kindness and his generosity. It is our task to help continue his mission of promoting peace in this sacred space.

Daniel B. Levine

University Professor of Classical Studies  
University of Arkansas



Daniel with Nikos at Galini Restaurant in 2015.





## Gedenkdienst

### One Year After

Picking up Jonas from the bus station in mid-August was a huge reality check that I am soon returning to Austria. But with Jonas being so nice, I felt better immediately. Spending a year in Chania with a lot of my time at Etz Hayyim Synagogue was the best choice I made in the last few years. I found myself undergoing many changes, personal changes, and I had the opportunity to meet so many interesting and lovely people, some of them passing by the office three times a year, others three times a week. Also, the amount of coffee I was consuming every day increased during my time at the synagogue and I loved it.

Coming to Crete and living here for a long time, actually scared me a lot in the beginning, but over the months, I started to feel at home here. Now, having to leave this place and all the people I got to appreciate and love is indeed both strange and sad to me. I am grateful for my experiences here at the synagogue, but also in my everyday life and how all of these experiences have made me a more open-minded and confident person.

Doing my Holocaust Memorial Service here was challenging from time to time and it took me some time to understand the different approaches to the culture of remembrance within Austria and Greece/Crete. In the beginning, I felt a bit weird about it because whenever somebody I met outside of work asked me, "so where are you working?" and I told them, "at the synagogue", it just led to irritated expressions or responses like "the what?". It didn't get any better after I explained that I was in a Holocaust memorial programme because most of the time the following question was, "what do you mean by 'holocaust'?". This was just one of the many unexpected things that I encountered and learnt to deal with here in Chania. There have been surprises and new situations and challenges almost every day and I feel that permanently leaving my comfort zone for a year has made me grow a lot.

Even though I am already becoming nostalgic if I think about leaving Greece, I am also excited about returning to Vienna. I am also truly happy for Jonas and the amaz-

ing experiences that he will have during his time here. After returning home, I will begin my bachelor studies in social science and social work immediately (12 hours after my flight arrives in Vienna, I will be at University, so I am not joking on the "immediately" part) and I will also attend some classes in philosophy. Next to that I will continue being active in the *Gedenkdienst* (so Christoph and I will be colleagues again, which is a match made in heaven). I have missed the museums, concerts, exhibitions and the flair of Vienna in general, but having all of these elements back in my life also means missing the sea, the more relaxed attitude in Crete, the food (gosh, the food.....), our daily chatty "amateur hour" in the office and all of my friends at Etz Hayyim and those friends I made outside the synagogue. Even though I tend to forget things quite easily and am a bit messy when it comes to memory, I will always keep the time I spent here, all the beloved people and most of my experiences inside of me.

Maike Heinrich



Maike and Jonas in the Etz Hayyim courtyard, August 2019.



## Arriving in Chania

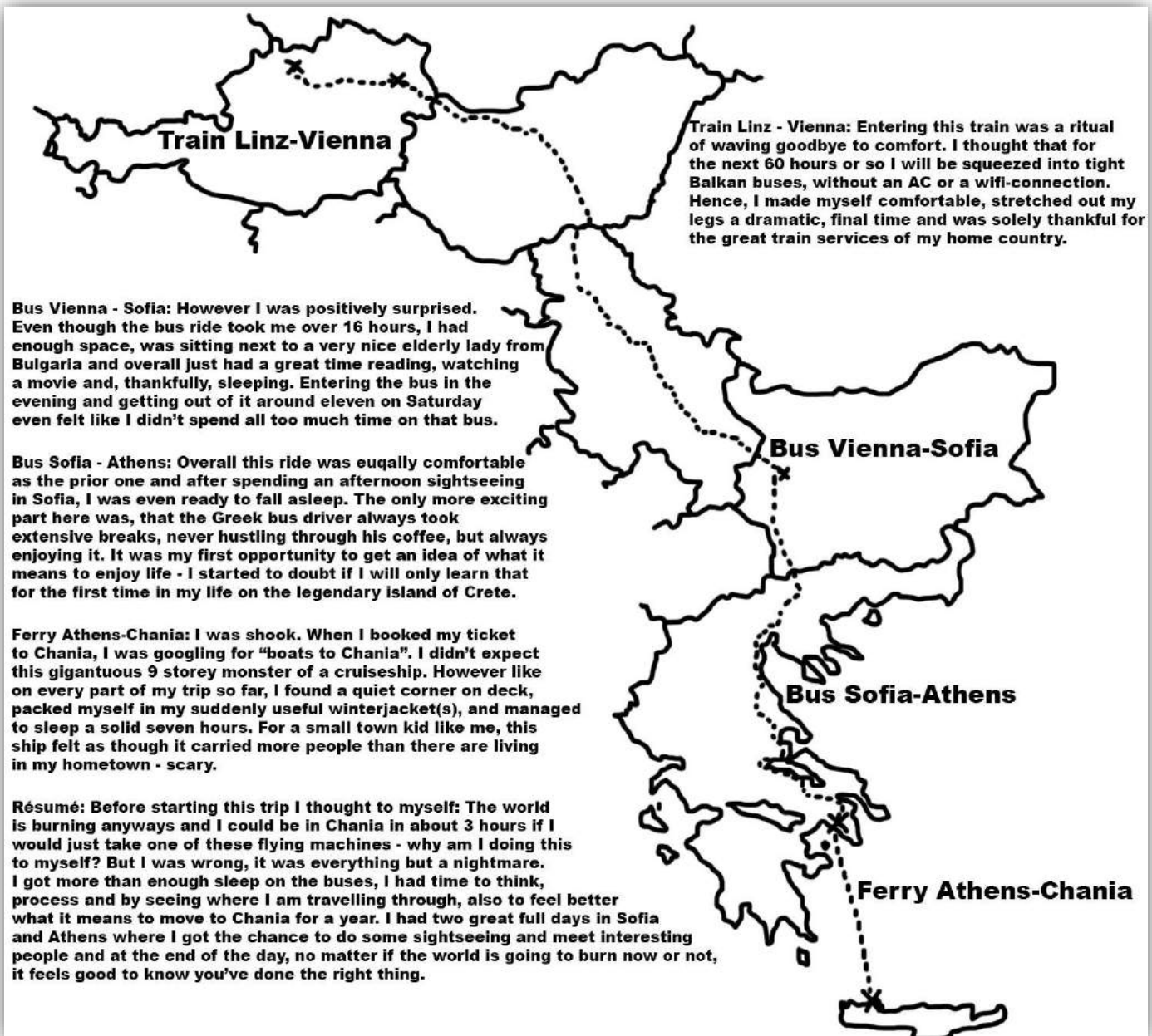
After 63 hours of travelling by bus and boat, I finally reached Chania in a fashion at least somewhat appropriate in the age of the burning forests of the Amazonas and Siberia. As soon as I stepped out of the bus onto Cretan ground, which was more like a crash due to my luggage-for-a-year on my back, I was warmly welcomed by Maïke.

Immediately everything started and I had the pleasure to get to know Anja, Katerina, Alex and Konstantin and many others. (my apologies here, names just need a lot of repetition to settle in my mind for good). And what can I say? I couldn't have imagined a better welcome, a warmer atmosphere or a place that felt more right. For that, already, a preliminary thank you. As one might call it obvious, the mag-

ic of Etz Hayyim already got me. It truly is a place where characters meet and I genuinely hope that I will be able to do my part in contributing to the astonishing community that has been created in a place for which it took fifty years and tremendous determination for it to flourish again.

Whatsoever, now I am here. Jonas, sweet 18 years old and truly excited for what is about to come. What exactly my year at Etz Hayyim will be like is still hidden behind the fog of time, but I am determined to make the very best out of it. And with the same beautiful trust with which I was welcomed to Chania, I will trust that the next 12 months are going to be an adventure of the very best kind.

Jonas Baumgartner







## Fundraising

*Since early 2019, Etz Hayyim has been fortunate and grateful to receive a three-year grant from the Dan David Foundation. Below, Ariel David tells the intriguing story of*

*the foundation and its founder.*

*Please see further info about our fundraising efforts and needs on p. 39 of this edition of Jottings.*

## The Dan David Foundation

The Dan David Foundation is proud to join the many individuals and organizations from around the world that are supporting the Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

The Foundation is a charitable organization established by the entrepreneur and philanthropist, Dan David, to support research, higher education and breakthrough achievements in the sciences and humanities. Its signature initiative is the Dan David Prize, a joint endeavor with Tel Aviv University, which annually awards three prizes of US\$ 1 million each for achievements having an outstanding scientific, technological, cultural or social impact.

The Foundation supports additional projects, focusing mainly on archaeological and historical research, anthropology and paleontology, environmental protection and education, as well as the preservation of Jewish heritage. The remarkable rebirth of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue and the ongoing efforts to preserve it are very much in line with the Foundation's mission and with Dan David's values, particularly the importance he attached to Jewish culture and history.

Dan was born in 1929 in Bucharest, Romania – and his life was very much a mirror of the tragedies and triumphs that affected the Jewish people in the 20th century. As a Jewish child growing up in Axis-allied Romania during World War II, he experienced the virulent anti-Semitic persecution and violence of the country's Fascist regime. In the aftermath of the war, he joined the *Hanoar Hatzioni* youth movement, quickly rising to a leadership position and taking on a role in organizing trains and ships for the *Aliyah Beth*, the clandestine immigration of Jews to what was then British-controlled Palestine. Dan planned to follow those immigrants soon, but by the time the State of Israel was established, the Communists had consolidated their power in Romania, closing the borders and banning all organizations not affiliated with the party. Forced to start a new life, Dan studied economics at University in Bucharest and became an accomplished photographer, producing award-winning shots for various newspapers and magazines. However, Dan's earlier role

in a Zionist organization drew the attention of the Communist regime's secret police, who arbitrarily arrested him on several occasions and had him fired from his job. At 31, he was finally allowed to leave Romania, emigrating to Israel with his mother and grandmothers. They were allowed to leave the country with just one suitcase each and 10 US dollars. Upon reaching Israel, Dan initially continued his activity as a photographer, but in 1961, as

he put it, he decided to "leave the art of photography for the business of photography." His dream was to introduce Israel and other countries to the concept of automatic instant photography – what today is commonly known as a "photobooth."

As a nearly-penniless refugee, he did not have the initial capital to invest in his idea. Fortunately, a businessman who believed in him came to the rescue, offering a partnership and a no-guarantee loan that helped jumpstart the activity. Dan went on to create and manage companies in Israel, Italy, Spain, Japan, the United States and elsewhere, operating thousands of automatic machines that today continue to offer a variety of services to the public.

The initial loan he received was a pivotal experience, teaching him the value of giving back

and helping others achieve their dreams. It was in this spirit that he initiated his philanthropic projects, establishing the Dan David Foundation in 2000 and the Dan David Prize in 2001. He was also strongly connected to Jewish charities and supported initiatives like the *Italia Judaica* project, a decades-long project to document the history of Italy's Jewish communities.

While Dan passed away in 2011, the Foundation strives to keep his spirit alive through projects that reflect his love for the land of Israel and his deep connection to his Jewish identity. For those who knew him, there can be little doubt he would have been proud to witness and learn about the Jewish renaissance taking place in Hania centered on the historic Etz Hayyim synagogue.

For more information on the Dan David Foundation visit [www.dandavid.org](http://www.dandavid.org).

Ariel David





## From the Etz Hayyim Office

### News & Correspondence

On the last few pages of Jottings, we share with you some **correspondence** we have received at the office over the last months: Gerardo Ojeda-Ebert and Hannah Nerbovig from Seattle share their thoughts on the upcoming renewal of their wedding vows at Etz Hayyim. There is also a much appreciated letter by Havurah member, Natalie Ventura from Heraklion and finally, an Open Letter (take it lightly) from someone you probably did not expect to hear, Turu, who will explain this best on page 36. We also print some more recent entries from our guest book which is placed at the entrance at Etz Hayyim and widely used by our many visitors.

In **news**, we are pleased to announce that one of our Havurah members has agreed to offer regular **lessons in**

ceived through the assistance of Mrs Ruth Shaffer (1910-2006), then Director of the Memorial Scrolls Trust. Our Memorial Scroll is currently the only Memorial Scroll in Greece and it is designated as an orphan scroll; 216 out of the 1,546 Czech MST Scrolls are designated as "orphan scrolls", meaning that when the Torah Scrolls arrived in 1942 at the Jewish Museum in Prague from the communities in Bohemia or Moravia, it was no longer possible to identify these scrolls' origin.

While the exact age of the Memorial Scroll at Etz Hayyim is not known, it does show some considerable wear. For this reason, we have been in contact with Jeffrey Ohrenstein, Chairman of the Memorial Scrolls Trust. He suggested that our Scroll must be thoroughly checked by a Sofer associated with the MST in London following the High Holidays. Based on this examination, we will receive a recommendation as to what type of repairs will be necessary and what the expected costs will be. For these costs we will initiate a special fundraising campaign.

For us at Etz Hayyim, conserving this Scroll is not only an obligation as the current holder of Scroll No. 1227; as a Memorial Scroll, which commemorates a lost Czech Jewish community, it is also a historic artifact of high symbolic value. In addition, it was Nikos' initiative, together with the help of several friends of Etz Hayyim including Ruth Shaffer and Rabbi Nicholas de Lange, that the Scroll was brought to Etz Hayyim in the first instance. The Scroll has been housed at Etz Hayyim for almost 20 years. We will update you on our efforts to maintain this scroll and hope for your support for this important project.

You can read more about the Memorial Scroll at Etz Hayyim Synagogue on our website: [www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/the-synagogue/memorial-scroll/](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/the-synagogue/memorial-scroll/).

say it in

עברית

**Modern Hebrew.** While this offer is probably of more interest for Havurah members residing in Crete, we still wanted to let you know about this exciting new possibility. In case you are interested, please contact the Synagogue office for details.

Other news concerns the state of the **Memorial Torah Scroll** which is used for services at Etz Hayyim. The Scroll requires a **thorough examination and considerable repair**. In Jottings No. 20, we recounted the story of how Nikos Stavroulakis, in February 2000, received for Etz Hayyim, the Memorial Scroll No. 1227 from the Memorial Scrolls Trust (MST) based in London. The Scroll was re-







## Renewing the Marital Promise: Reyim Ahuvim

*Gerardo Ojeda-Ebert and Hannah Nerbovig, who will renew their wedding vows at Etz Hayyim in October, sent us the following note:*

Many Rabbis have examined sources in Jewish law that underscore the Jewish tradition found in the beauty of renewing wedding vows. Rabbi Yosef Rosen (1858-1936) wrote that a wedding is not a *"one time event."* Instead the wedding ceremony is the initial event that *"reverberates and repeats itself every moment for the duration of the couple's married life."*

Rabbi Naftali Silberberg makes the case for renewing one's marriage vows when he emphasizes that the Wedding Blessings are recited after the marriage has been *"finalized,"* meaning that the couple and their witnesses have signed the *ketubah* (the Jewish wedding document) and the rings have been exchanged. The chanting of these blessings and their place in the ceremony symbolize that the marriage is not a static event, but one that grows, changes and adapts throughout the couple's life together. *"Marriage is actually renewed at every moment!"*

The Kabbalists, the Jewish mystics, would agree. In fact, it is Kabbalistic teaching that uses delicate imagery to explain the relationship between Jewish tradition and the love that couples have for one another. Referring to the

first "wedding" held more than 3,300 years ago in the Sinai Desert, Kabbalists say that God became "bridegroom" to the mystical bride, the Jewish people, and presented us with Torah as our wedding ring! And every year we return to be present to the teachings and blessings of the Torah and we read again out of the source of our spiritual path to encounter new meanings in the ancient text. In the words of Riva Pomerantz: *"During the holiday of Shavuot, the entire Jewish Nation is invited to attend the 'Re-Nup' of the year, where we renew the vows we took at the marriage ceremony on Mt. Sinai over 3,000 years ago. No tuxedo required"*.

Hannah and I have made it our own little tradition to renew our wedding vows every ten years, following the new life stages that those decades mark in our life. With this act, we renew our commitment to each other and symbolically rekindle the light of our bashert relationship. This time we have chosen to do it in a simple and modest way during our romantic adventure in Chania, Crete, while exploring the possibilities of us possibly relocating for active retirement in the future in Crete. A few family and friends will come from different countries to join us. And we hope to meet also new friends in Hania and at the Etz Hayyim congregation. We are deeply grateful and we feel most blessed being able to do this!

## Etz Hayyim's Interfaith Calendar 2019/20

We continue a by now well-established tradition and have published the latest edition of the Etz Hayyim Interfaith Calendar. As usual, the calendar includes Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays, meticulously researched by our Gedenkdienst volunteer, Maike. This edition covers October 2019 to December 2020. The calendar layout is done again by Nikos Afentakis. The illustrations, drawings by George Sfougaras, invite you to a stroll through Evraiki, the historic Jewish quarter of Cania and thus bring Etz Hayyim closer to your own doorstep. The calendar can be ordered from the Synagogue office. **All proceeds from the Calendar directly support the maintenance and work of Etz Hayyim Synagogue.**

Your copy of the Interfaith Calendar is available for a donation of 15 Euro (plus shipping; Greece € 2, Europe € 3, world € 3.30) from the Synagogue office.





# Jottings

35

## From the Visitors Book

Hello, upon coming back home from your wonderful island, I just want to thank you again for the Kabbalat Shabat service we participated in last week. Today, while lighting our candles we will be thinking of you with gratefulness and love! Shabbat Shalom! Magda and Tomek



5-6-15.

Beautiful Old Synagogue - I have seen many but this one is pure.  
Miriam from Holland.

18/6/18 Great Project!! We liked the liberal and inclusive type of "Judaism" represented in the spirit of this small community being formed around the synagogue!! Thanks for the inspiration! Kobi & Eric Bengim Jerusalem

Thank you - the visit was most uplifting.

From the daughter of a Holocaust survivor  
Deborah Randa Melbourne Australia  
26/9/18

March 26 & 28, 2019

What Eitz Haggim has achieved is amazing and gives hope that more resurrection of Jewish communities and their values can be accomplished. I am overwhelmed by Nikos Stavradakis' leadership, art and success - and I hope the influence of Eitz Haggim grows wide throughout Jewish & non-Jewish communities. The idea of an interfaith calendar and its message of acceptance and respect for diverse faith traditions and humane values is wonderful - and I hope it influences many others in this direction.

Mazal tov - and todah rabah.

Jayson Miller, Boston

Great Reading about the reconstruction but also remembering the Jewish families lost from Crete for ever (RIP) - one of the most peaceful & moving sites I have visited since being in Greece  
Thankyou  
03/08/18 Christine Eyles  
(United Kingdom - London)

22 Adar II 5779

What a privilege to be here. Thank you for all of your efforts to preserve and commemorate Jewish history.

Ruth Morris, Culvercity, CA, USA

Thank you for sharing this beautiful sacred place with the world!

Bob Wisler Elton + Michael  
Los Angeles California

Sept 26 2018

As I write this my mother is visiting Israel for her first time. We are simultaneously moved and connected by the tragedy and perseverance of being Jewish members of this world. Thank you for the reminder that even in the face of hate and destruction that beauty and love can remain.  
Colin Blakey, California

20.01.19 Absolutely incredible! I am Greek + of Jewish descent, and this is the first place in the world where I've truly felt wholly connected to who I am. Thank you for this incredible place  
Alyssa Rosenblum, University of Delaware Study Abroad

Eitz Haggim is an uplifting joy to visit. The sadness of the past and the joy of the living present. Hope for the future.

Julie Vogel  
Switzerland 26 Sept. 2018

What a special place - we are so grateful to be able to see it. It is always a wonderful and moving experience to encounter Jewish communities and sites in the world, small and precious. Thank you for making this open to the public: it is so important.

Eric Halpern Rosenbaum &  
Scott Lawrence  
San Francisco, USA

So peaceful, so beautiful.

Well-done for restoring this place, Jewish community. This is very powerful as is the atmosphere.  
Shalom,  
Susannah (U.K.)





## Turu, the Etrog: An Open Letter from the Etz Hayyim Courtyard

*Kalimera* and greetings from the courtyard of Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Chania, Crete, where I've been growing and growing and growing for the last months to some size that for my kind is really not too shabby: 19 cm tip to toe (well, rather from stem end to blossom end) and a circumference of unbelievable 41 cm. Without being immodest, I can honestly say that I've now become the most talked-about and photographed VIP of Etz Hayyim. – I'd like you to take note that syndicated *Washington Post* cartoonist Nick Galifianakis drew my likeness. I'm quite presentable, don't you think?

If you must know, I've grown really tired of hearing from visitors "Look at this huge lemon!" ... this simply reduces me to my size and I guess nobody would like that. Also, if one more person calls me a 'lemon', I will drop myself on their head! I'm NOT a lemon! I'm a proud Cretan Etrog, although I'm aware that I literally don't fit expectations ... and of course I don't

fit the standard size Etrog box for *Sukkot*. Standard sizes are for the average Etrog and I'm quite happy with being extraordinary ... exceeding expectations is fun and watching people respond to it just the same. From an anthropological perspective it's fascinating to experience the broad range of reactions: Some people utter an excited "Oh my G-d!" and take a step back in awe of my massive presence. On the other hand, there are the "touchers" who can't help but grab and pull on me as if this would make them realise more tangibly my presence and size. At the same time, it's great fun to observe some of the synagogue staff jumping up and yelling at some of the visitors with irritation: "Don't touch it! If everybody does it, the Etrog will fall off." Clearly, some of the staff are a bit obsessed with me and are overprotective.

Some of the staff also use me to promote their educational goals by citing me as an example that just as milk

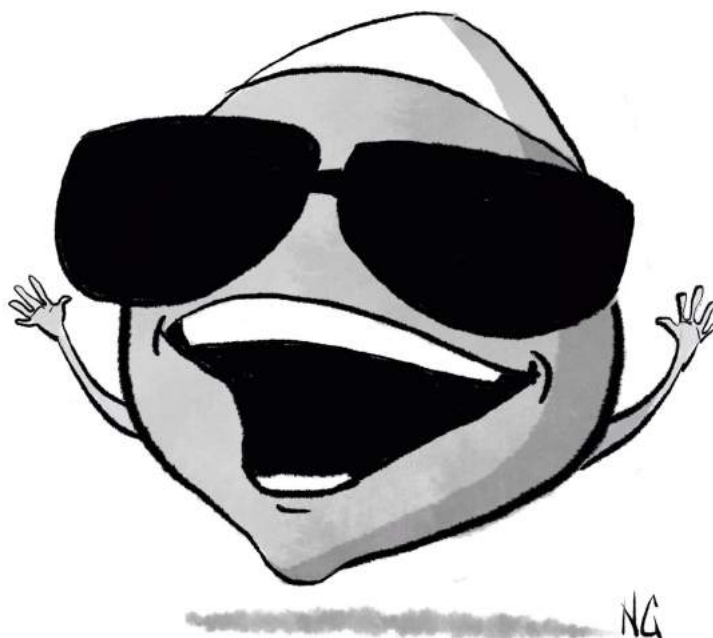
doesn't come from a carton, *Etrogim* don't come in packages delivered from Israel. For *Sukkot*, Etz Hayyim, like probably everyone else though, receives the set of *Lulav* and Etrog from Israel. However, I'll do my best to not inadvertently fall off the tree before *Sukkot*, or, more likely, try to avoid being knocked down by one of the "touchers" as I hope that I can be part of the *Sukkot* festivities at Etz Hayyim in October. I've already made arrangements with Gerry, the British volunteer who also does some fine

wood work, to make a beautiful special box for me so I can exhibit myself in style on the table in the *Sukkah*.

In view of all this fuss about *Sukkot*, I was quite surprised to learn that my Hebrew name is assumed to derive from the Persian name for my kind: *turung*. It's almost a bit ironic considering the kind of press which the modern-day Persians receive at the moment. I still pick "Turu" as my *nom de plume* – I think it's hot! I was even more surprised to learn from overhearing the discussion by some of the Etz

Hayyim staff about the history of *Etrogim* in Crete. By growing here, I'm apparently reviving a great tradition of generations of *Etrogim* which, especially during the Middle Ages, grew in Crete and were then sent to communities all over Europe. Not to mention my size again, but considering how well I've been doing here, Crete seems to be quite a good place to grow as an Etrog.

Digging a bit deeper into history and tradition, however, I had to realise that the presence of my kind at the *Sukkot* celebrations is a bit of a late innovation, well a 2000-year old innovation ... but if you think in biblical terms, that is rather recent, right? Did you know that the Bible doesn't mention anywhere an Etrog as one of the four species used for the *Sukkot* ritual? Leviticus (Va-Yikra') 23:40 mentions *peri etz hadar* (the fruit of goodly trees). Also in the good old Septuagint translation not a single Etrog mentioned! And on top of that, Nehemiah 8:1 associates





olive branches with said fruit of goodly trees ... well, I certainly won't tell the olive tree, that grows barely a meter away from me in the Etz Hayyim courtyard and whose leave I can almost touch, about its famous mention in the Bible. It could claim: "I was there first!" and ruin my Sukkot plans!

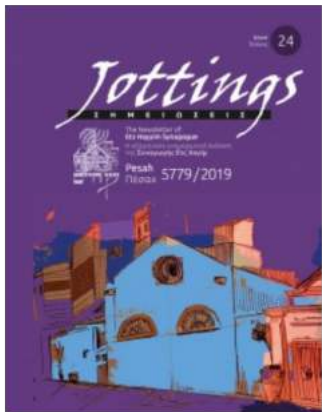
Apparently, it was not until probably the first century CE, when Targum Onkelos translated that part of Leviticus (Va-Yikra') as: "You shall take for yourselves, on the first day, fruit of the Etrog tree, palm fronds, myrtle and wil-

low." At about the same time, Josephus, who was smart enough to take a wife from Kissamos, Crete, mentions in his 'Antiquities' an Etrog (*pomecitron*) as part of the four species used for *Sukkot*. Well, while I can't claim to be biblically sanctioned, being part of a 2000-year tradition is quite something, don't you think?

Trying to hang in there and hope to see you at *Sukkot*.

Sincerely yours, *Taru*

## A letter from Havurah Member Natalie Ventura (Heraklion)



We received the following response to JOTTINGS, Issue 24 from Natalie Ventura (Heraklion, Crete):

Congratulations to the editors of *Jottings* on its spiffy new format (Issue 24, Pesach 5779/2019) including color cover, its debut in a separate Greek language edition, and its rich content!

The ever-broadening scope of activity at Etz Hayyim reflected in its pages is not only very impressive – it is *dazzling* to this reader who has watched Etz Hayyim evolve over the past twenty years.

In the opening Editorial, Mariana Vinther, President of Etz Hayyim's Board of Trustees wrote, "It is with pleasure that we present this variety of intelligent and enthusiastically-written articles, stories and letters which we have received from many contributors". I can only say it was a pleasure to receive it! A pleasure – and privilege – to be handed the opportunity of reading what Etz Hayyim has become, the amazing place Etz Hayyim *is* at this moment in time – a living, growing presence.

Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange's writing on the symbolism associated with Passover – the exodus, bitter water, affliction, the tree of life – was much appreciated, gave pause to reflect on the deeper meaning of the holiday. I was particularly struck by the interpretation of *affliction* as "the hard work of improving our lives by pursuing virtue instead of the bodily passions." A lot of food for thought here (and more was offered at the study session after the service on the first day of Pesach by Rabbi de Lange). It seems fitting that this article came first.

The mention of "etrog" ("Yom Kippur at Etz Hayyim and

Travels of an Etrog from Etz Hayyim to Israel") reawakened interest in the quizzical tree standing in the Synagogue's north courtyard. The planting of this citron tree must almost certainly have been a choice of Nikos Stavroulakis (unless its roots pre-dated the Synagogue restoration works), as was almost everything else. A moving gesture, to have presented Gershon Coren with an etrog in appreciation of his role in our 2019 Yom Kippur services, and to be used in Israel on Sukkot!

I was moved, along with Roger Yayon, to learn that the lost Cretan Jewish communities are remembered in the Bat Yam Holon Cemetery in Israel.

Tony Lehrman's talk to the Oxford Jewish Congregation on Nikos Stavroulakis and Etz Hayyim ("Against the Odds: The Story of the Rebirth of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Chania, Crete"), as reported by Louise Gordon, sounded extremely interesting indeed – I would have liked to have been there myself! I realize again how fortunate we are to have Tony aboard. In this article, Etz Hayyim is characterized elegantly: an "exquisite space, traditional and fresh and lushly green, with library, exhibition space and mikveh bringing a renewed Jewish presence in Greek society and new seeds for interfaith relations with community Seder and Sukkot buffet."

I can hardly wait to take the self-guided walking tour (pp. 16-17) through Chania's historic Jewish Quarter!

How promising that Etz Hayyim, in cooperation with the Young Citizens of the World non-profit organization, is a partner in the Heritage Contact Zone project! This project "focuses on neglected and contested European heritage, and engages communities and citizens in building new approaches to European heritage which will be showcased in exhibitions in five partner countries and a transnational online exhibition to celebrate the European Year of Cultural Heritage" (article, pp. 18-19). The project's website ([www.heritagecontactzone.com](http://www.heritagecontactzone.com)) has a





concise, well-written piece on why Etz Hayyim qualifies for inclusion in this initiative. The exhibition to take place in Chania's Sabbionara exhibition hall this October is eagerly awaited.

Individual responses to Etz Hayyim – an art exhibition and a classical music concert, both inspired by the fate of the Jewish community in Crete – were also reported in Issue 24. George Sfougaras' exhibition, "Tales from an Old Fort Town" (still on, at the time of this writing) is brilliantly housed in the mikveh, – "brilliant", because the mikveh, as a quiet contemplative space, can and does aid in art appreciation, while the paintings themselves invite viewers to linger and experience more fully the unique physical space. The second individual response, an Upcoming Event in Issue 24, but by now a *faite-accomplie*, was the musical tribute by violist Ulrich von Wrochem, in memory of those who never returned to the Ovraiki after the Nazi round-up in May, 1944. Works by Czech, Swiss-born American, Israeli, Austrian American, Hungarian, and German composers of Jewish descent were heard. An especially moving point in the concert was the abrupt halt of one of the pieces; the composer died in the camps before having had time to complete it.

On the literary front, Cliff Cook's poem "Human Rights Day Athens" raised the issue of the vandalizing of Jewish monuments. Ioanna Galanaki's short story dedicated to Nikos Stavroulakis, "The Blind," read like myth. Keep the creativity coming!

It was delightful to make the (literary) acquaintance of Elijah Del Medigo (p. 24-5). This "true son of Crete: a cosmopolitan figure and a cultural intermediary" was, after all, an ancestor of the, of *our*, present Cretan Jewish community. Over coffee in the north courtyard on a recent morning, Board of Trustees member, Rita Gabai told us that her great-grandfather was a Dal Medigo. (Both "Dal" and "Del" Medigo, and even "Delmedigo" spellings of the famous family name are found in the literature.)

The recent publication of the Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG), reported on pp. 25-26, struck me as a must-read for those of us interested in "the long-standing presence as well as the distribution of Jewish settlements in the Greek lands". The report also referred to "The Inscriptions of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue," an article by Nicholas de Lange which appears in "The Jews of Crete I" booklet (Etz Hayyim publication). Mention of this article spurred me on to wander through Etz Hayyim's courtyards on a quiet afternoon, booklet in hand, to contemplate the wall, lintel and tombstone inscriptions *in situ*. There is so much history at our feet.

How encouraging that this long-standing Jewish presence on Crete, and its fate during the Holocaust, is becoming increasingly known at the local level; Etz Hayyim, building on initiatives from the JMG and engaging in on-going research on its own, is playing a huge role in this (pp 20 & 21). Etz Hayyim's educational outreach is an exciting newcomer on the block. The creativity and imagination being poured into developing tailor-made materials for the outreach programs is highly praiseworthy.

It is hardly surprising that the school visits by Iossif Ventura, another son of Crete, were greeted with such interest, given the "extremely important personal history on his shoulders" combined with his talent for communication. As the teachers filing the report (p. 22) wrote, "The meeting was beyond our best expectations.... The children were magnetized by Mr. Venturas' presentation. Even those individuals who had declared their indifference earlier, stayed up to the very end of the discussion that followed the presentation."

The Vad Yashem Award Ceremony which honoured Athena Varvataki posthumously for having saved Iossif Ventura as a child during WWII (reported on pp.11-12) was extremely well-organized and moving. "A real gift to her [Athena Varvataki's] relatives and to Iossif Ventura himself, by the students of the 1<sup>st</sup> High School of Chania." I would add "a real gift to those of us in the audience as well", to see how deeply and creatively the high school students presented the personal and political events of the time.

It's always a pleasure to read what Gedenkdiener have to say about their experiences at Etz Hayyim, and the report this time by Maike Heinrich (p. 32) was no exception. Nice to hear also from past Gedenkdiener, Christoph Steinberger, and to see a photo of all past volunteers in a Vienna café together! Interesting that volunteers' experiences at Etz Hayyim live on, and may even influence life choices, such as volunteers' future course of study. Not only does Etz Hayyim have a rich cultural past but it can also be seen as playing a role in current personal histories!

Even the "Little Projects, Correspondence and New Ideas" (p. 34) was fun – and informative—to read. The new key holder handcrafted and installed by Gerry Dutton looks super!

So then, once again: hats off to Administrative Director Anja Zuckmantel and her team Katarina Anagnostaki, Alex Ariotti, Maike Heinrich and Marianna Vinther for their outstanding work! Wishing every success for future *Jottings* - and for all other endeavors!



## Help us maintain Etz Hayyim and Nikos Stavroulakis' work and legacy

In 2010, on the initiative of Nikos Stavroulakis, the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim was established in order to ensure the long-term future of Etz Hayyim Synagogue as a place of "prayer, recollection and reconciliation." As a registered charity, Etz Hayyim relies on donations for implementing its tasks and goals.

### Help us maintain Etz Hayyim Synagogue

The structural maintenance of the historic building of Etz Hayyim is an ongoing project. After major renovation works in Spring 2018, the next step requires that the wooden installations like the *Ehal*, *Bima* and doors be repaired, while an air-conditioning unit needs to be installed to reduce humidity in the building. In Autumn 2019, we are still trying to raise the necessary funds.

### Help us expand our educational programs

A solid educational program requires thorough research, development and printing of appropriate materials and qualified staff for implementation. Donations supporting operating costs like staff salaries, acquisition of books

and printing are therefore very much needed and welcome.

### Immediate fundraising needs

In addition to the **maintenance** works, a **large touch-screen** is needed for the educational outreach program to make the digital map of the Chania Jewish Quarter available on site to visiting students and tourists. For seminars with students, a **small set of affordable tablet computers** would allow us to integrate digital sources in the educational seminars.

You might even consider sponsoring the **food and vet costs** for the synagogue cats which Nikos loved so much.

**Ways to give** ... You can send **donations** to the Etz Hayyim bank account at Piraeus Bank (Greece) and you will receive a donation receipt from the Synagogue office. There is also the possibility of making tax-deductible donations in the USA (see info below).

You can also make **purchases by way of donation** from our special publications (Interfaith Calendar, Etz Hayyim Haggadah etc.), our collection of Judaica (locally made Kiddush and Sarena cups, handmade kippoth etc.) or books on Greek Jewish topics including Nikos Stavroulakis' *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*.

And you are, of course, always welcome to **visit** Etz Hayyim and leave a donation in the Tzedakah bottle.



### 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

### Tax-deductible Donations in the USA

Etz Hayyim also accepts tax-deductible donations in the USA through a collective giving account at *FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds*.

Any check should be made out to FJC, with "Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim" in the memo line and mailed to FJC's office at:

FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds  
520 8th Avenue, 20th Floor  
New York, NY 10018

Donors will receive a donation receipt valid in the USA directly from FJC; the funds will be made available to Etz Hayyim Synagogue.



# *Jottings*

The Newsletter of

**Etz Hayyim Synagogue**

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