



Jottings

The newsletter of
Etz Hayyim Synagogue

Issue **26**



Special Lockdown
Edition

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Editorial

This edition of *Jottings* reaches you in very strange times. We were all confined to our homes for weeks, facing uncertainties and unfamiliar challenges; at the same time, pre-Corona-crisis lives and routines have begun to take on the aura of idyllic memories.

Etz Hayyim Synagogue was closed on 9th March; for over two months, no services (notably no community Pesah Seder) took place nor did any visitors or school classes pass by. This edition of *Jottings* is thus a reflection of this current situation. Looking back at the pre-Corona events and projects which you will read about is almost like looking back to another reality: the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of Etz Hayyim when the synagogue was filled well beyond capacity with friends and visitors, the International Holocaust Memorial Day in January which was officially observed for the first time in Hania, our EU-funded Heritage Contact Zone project and the Gedenkdienst collaboration. There is also news from the Etz Hayyim Board of Trustees and its new leadership team.

You will also read about planned, upcoming events that have had to be cancelled or postponed and projects which have had to be adjusted to new realities such as our educational outreach programme which we will now adapt to online formats. The map for a self-guided walking tour through Hania's historic Evraiki neighbourhood, now ready for printing, will be supplemented by a virtual tour that visitors, who probably won't be able to come to Hania in sizable numbers for some time, will be able to take online. We have also included an article by one of our favourite tour guides about her culinary tour of Hania. If you haven't missed Crete (and Etz Hayyim) yet,

we hope that after reading the article, you will start making travel plans again.

On a more sombre note, this edition of *Jottings* also includes obituaries for two long-standing friends of Etz Hayyim who both sadly passed away in December 2019. Ida Mordoch and Giray Ertas were also close friends of Nikos Stavroulakis. Memories of Nikos are shared in this edition by British author and friend Ruth Padel whose poem "The Hebrew for Egypt means narrow" we have printed here. At Pesah, Nikos used to focus on the symbolism of "Mizraim/narrow": life as a struggle with the narrowness of one's own 'Egypt,' the narrowness of

one's own existence. Nikos will be especially on our minds when, over the next two years, we will be cataloguing what will become the 'Nikos Stavroulakis Collection', a resource for researchers and a repository for keeping Nikos' legacy alive.

Your interest in Etz Hayyim and your ongoing support for the maintenance of the synagogue, as well as our work, is more appreciated than ever particularly now that the current worldwide crisis is affecting all of us in so many ways. With the synagogue now operating under the general Corona crisis restrictions, community life will continue to be impacted and, at the same time, the number of visitors and their donations (*Tzedakah*), which usually covers a good portion of our annual budget, will be limited.

We would therefore be very happy

if you stay in touch and continue your support where possible.

Sending you all best wishes from Hania and looking forward to hearing from you and welcoming you all again to Etz Hayyim, hopefully sooner than later.

Anja Zuckmantel (Admin. Director)



Contact us and stay in touch



Phone: +30-28210-86286

Email: info@etz-hayyim-hania.org

Web: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org

Facebook: Synagogue Etz Hayyim

Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

Co-editors of Jottings

Alex Ariotti, Jonas Baumgartner, Giorgos Psaroudakis, Anja Zuckmantel

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Disclaimer: Views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.



At this time last year, I wrote about the ‘tree’ or ‘wood’ (γν, ξύλον) which sweetened the bitter water of Marah so that the Israelites leaving Egypt could drink (Exodus 15:25). The biblical text comments: “There he (Moses) made rules and laws for him (Israel)” – i.e. the tree or wood symbolised the Torah, which is described in the Bible as a tree/wood of life (דִּילְמוֹן γν, ξύλον ζωής).¹

The tree of life is sometimes identified with the *grape vine*. For example, in the synagogue of Dura Europos on the Euphrates (3rd century; the only ancient synagogue whose painted walls survive), a vine twined up above the Torah niche; it is thought to represent the tree of life. The tree is also identified with the *palm tree*, as we read in Psalm 92:12: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” Both these trees are thus connected with the Torah.

But as we ponder on the symbolism of the tree of life, we should also think about another ‘tree’: the Menorah, which one scholar has called ‘the tree of light’.² The origin of the menorah, the same scholar says, is in the Tree of Life of ancient Mesopotamian mythology. This tree “grew in the mythical Paradise at the source of the

‘A Tree of Life’ (2)

Nicholas de Lange

Water of Life (Dilmun, Eridu), where it was guarded and tended for the chief deity by the primordial Man-King”.³ It is easy to see what a short step it is from this myth to the Tree of Life of the Garden of Eden in Genesis. In Indo-Iranian mythology, the juice or fruit of the tree bestows the gift of eternal life, exactly as in Genesis 3:22, where Adam is expelled from the garden “lest he reach out and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever”. Sacred trees play a large part in the religious imagery of many peoples, and in time (Yarden argues) they came to be portrayed in a stylised fashion, and also became associated with light. The seven-branched lampstand which stood in the Jerusalem temple can thus be seen as a

descendant, and perhaps even a stylised image, of the ancient Tree of Life. The Greek Jewish historian Josephus states that the seven lamps on the menorah symbolised the seven planets. Jesus, who was familiar with this lampstand, probably refers to the lamps of the menorah when he says to his pupils: “You are the light of the world. A city that stands on mountains cannot be hidden. And when people light a lamp [λύχνον] they do not put it under a bushel [a container to measure corn], but on the lampstand [λυχνία, i.e. the menorah], and it shines out for all those who are in the house. So may your light shine out before people, so that they may see your good works...” (Matthew 5:14–16). I am sure those pupils, hearing this, were immediately reminded of the vision of the prophet Isaiah (2:2–3): “The mountain of the Lord’s house will be established in the top of the mountains... and many people shall go and say, Let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways and we shall walk in his paths; for from Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The seven-branched lampstand became a powerful sym-



bol for Jews all over the world. Long before the six-pointed star came to be a Jewish symbol, the menorah was the main Jewish symbol, appearing in synagogues, on tombstones, and indeed on oil lamps. And the symbolism of the menorah was precisely as we have seen it in the Sermon on the Mount and the vision of Isaiah: the light of the menorah, illuminating the world, symbolised the ‘good works’, God’s ‘ways and paths’, and indeed the Torah, the ‘word of the Lord’. There is a special resonance in Hebrew between the sounds of the word *menorah* and of the word *torah*, and the connecting link between them is the word *orah*, which means “light”.

The Christian scholar Jerome, who lived in Bethlehem and translated the Bible into Latin, commenting on the solid gold lampstand mentioned by the prophet Zechariah (4:2), says that the Jews, “by whom we are instructed about the Old Testament”, interpret it as the Torah (νόμος). And the Midrash (Numbers Rabba 14:10) also sees the menorah as a symbol of Torah, as it says (Proverbs 6:28): “For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is a light.” The Midrash adds: “Why is the Torah called a light? Because it lightens us about how we should act.”

We say in our prayers, about the teachings of the Torah, that “they are our life and give length to our days.” Pesah tells of liberation, and this liberation from Egypt leads to Mount Sinai and the revelation of the Torah, which we commemorate at the festival of Shavuot. The Torah is the unique heritage of the people of Israel. Its

teachings are life-giving and life-enhancing. The Torah is a light, which illuminates our path, a light which shines out into the world.

All these intertwined thoughts are suggested by the name of our synagogue, ‘Tree of Life’.

In these difficult days, I wish you all a very joyous Pesah and Shavuot. May the light of the Torah shine into your home and your life, and light up your path.

¹ In Hebrew the word γν can mean ‘tree’ or ‘wood’. In Greek ξύλον normally means ‘wood’, but in Hellenistic Greek (including the Septuagint translation), and occasionally earlier, it can also mean ‘tree’. Christian writers use it in this meaning to refer to the Cross.

² L. Yarden, *The tree of light: a study of the Menorah, the seven-branched lampstand* (London, 1971).

³ Yarden, *Tree of Light*, p.35.

Illustrations: (p. 4) Reconstruction of the original painting over the Torah niche in the Dura Europos Synagogue, now in the National Museum in Damascus (3rd century CE); (p. 5, left) “Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” (Psalm 85:11) From the marriage document of Namer son of Elkanah and Evdokia daughter of Caleb, in Mastaura in Asia Minor, 9 March 1022; (p. 5, right) ‘Tree of Life: Encounter’, sculpture by Helaine Blumenfeld OBE, installed at the Woolf Institute, Cambridge.





The Hebrew for Egypt Means Narrow

The iron lamp burning on the courtyard wall
at Passover is a cage of wasted light in daytime.
Someone has forgotten or not noticed
and the wise child would turn it off.

But I don't, I sit under it after spring rain
in this garden of chipped
inscriptions and new-risen sap
beside white pebbles placed on broken slabs

for rabbis buried when citizens here
were too hostile to chance a trip
to the burying ground at the edge of town.

We are out in the wilderness now. Behind
is the word for Egypt. Narrow, constrained –
but an easy life. Do you want to go back?

I began this poem in the back garden of the synagogue a few days before Pesah. I was inspired by Nikos Stavroulakis' vision of the escape from slavery in the Haggadah and found the way his mind worked revelatory – that profound and very imaginative mix of the historical with the psychological, the erudite with the personal.

I also loved that back garden, which he restored with his sympathetic gifts of gardener and archaeologist. His historical sense of this small enclosed space as a haven, a protection against hostility outside, rabbis buried there at a time when it might provoke a hostile populace to take their bodies out to the Jewish cemetery, suddenly seemed to mirror his understanding of this moment in the Haggadah as a challenge. Are you bold enough to break out of any narrowness and rigidity in the way you see things? Do you want to live your life behind the walls, stuck in the 'slavery' of your set way of acting and feeling, the 'Egypt' of defences which keep you safe but also restrict you, and mean you will never see the land that could be yours? Or face the 'wilderness' of searching, in which we all spend most of our lives: a search

where we have to bear being vulnerable and lost, dependent on others, on faith and perhaps on luck in order to find that promised land of the 'best you' that you can be?
Ruth Padel

'The Hebrew for Egypt means Narrow' was first published in Ruth Padel's 'Learning to Make an Oud in Nazareth', Chatto & Windus: London, 2014.



Ruth with Nikos, 2014.



Holidays and Havurah

Community Life: Before and During the Corona Crisis

In view of social distancing and the shutdown of public life which we have all become accustomed to during these past months, regular community life now seems like a distant, almost nostalgic reality. Yet, it did take place, until quite recently, in the usual relaxed and welcoming atmosphere of Etz Hayyim.

For the High Holidays in September/October 2019, we were again joined by our Visiting Rabbi, Nicholas de Lange and for the first time by Rabbi Jordania Goldberg (Las Vegas/Montreal) who also conducted the services with Nicholas. On Yom Kippur, Gershon Coren, a friend from Israel who has joined us for the festival for several years now, beautifully led the Neilah service. The services and the Erev Rosh Hashanah community dinner and Seder, as well as the fast breaking at the end of Yom Kippur, saw a very good turnout of local Havurah members, friends from abroad and visitors.

Sukkot, Self-made Lulav and Twenty Years of Etz Hayyim

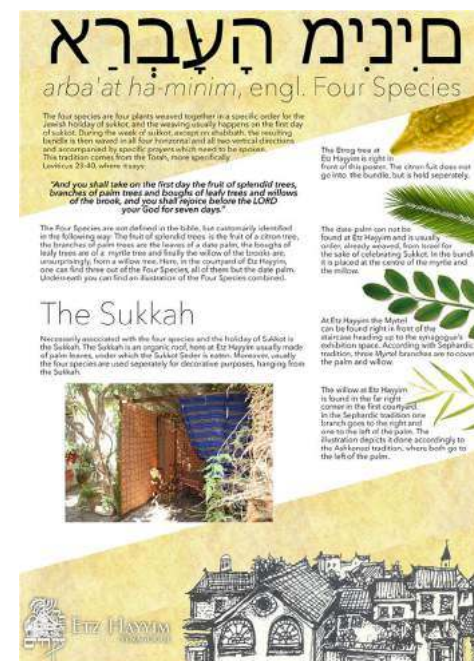
Our Sukkah was set up as it is every year in the northern courtyard and decorated by the Havurah. The Erev Sukkot service in the Sukkah, led by Rabbi Nicholas de Lange, marked the beginning of two weeks of festivities celebrating the 20th anniversary of the reopening of Etz Hayyim Synagogue (see report on p. 12f).

During the week of Sukkot, numerous visitors prayed, sat and ate in the Sukkah. Many of them admired the ornate, marquetry-decorated wooden box which our dedicated volunteer, Gerry Dutton, had especially made to

encase the gigantic Etrog which had been growing on the tree in the Etz Hayyim courtyard. Unfortunately, this impressively large Etrog did not last until the festival and we therefore had to use a somewhat smaller one from the same tree.

As the imported lulav is usually in a poor state by the time it arrives for the festival (leaves falling off the myrtle branch or molding), it has also become a custom to assemble our own lulav with myrtle and willow planted for this purpose in the Etz Hayyim courtyard. A new information poster, researched and designed by our Gedenkdienst volunteer Jonas, informed visitors about the symbolism and customs of Sukkot and pointed them to the three of the "Four Species" growing in the Etz Hayyim courtyard. The fourth one, a palm tree, we lost a few years ago to an invasive bug devastating palm trees throughout Crete. Since then, Gerry has been providing palm branches from his garden, coordinating the annual trimming of his palm tree with the date of Sukkot.

The Havurah got together to celebrate the lighting of the first and last Hanukkah candle and again for celebrating Tu B'Shevat with traditional food like the Ashure prepared as usual from a recipe from Nikos' Cookbook of the Jews of Greece. Havurah members from across Crete travelled to Hania for these holidays and of course we could not have foreseen then that we wouldn't be able to get together again like this anytime soon. The last of the weekly Erev Shabbat services was held on February 28 as a few days later, we received a letter from the Cen-





tral Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE) suspending all community activities in accordance with Greek governmental regulations in response to the Corona crisis.

"Compared with other European Union members [...] Greece has fared better."

As journalist John Psaropoulos remarked an article, "How Greece flattened the coronavirus curve" on April 7, "[when] Greece cancelled carnival celebrations in late February, many people thought the measure excessive. [...] Greeks quickly put their revolutionary spirit aside, however, and largely heeded government advice to remain indoors. The result has been a remarkably low number of deaths - 81 by [April 7], compared to more than 17,000 in neighbouring Italy. Even adjusted for population sizes, Italy's fatality rate is almost 40 times greater. Compared with other European Union members, too, Greece has fared better. Its fatalities are far lower than in Belgium (2,035) or the Netherlands (1,867), which have similar populations, but a much higher gross domestic product (GDP)." Psaropoulos is probably right to attribute the early drastic measures taken by the Greek government to very real concerns that the country would not have been able to tackle a large outbreak: after all, a decade of austerity depleted the public health system and public resources in general are limited. "All this has meant", writes Psaropoulos, "that a forward line of defence was Greece's only real defence - but it has paid off. Greece is using only a tenth of its ICU beds, and has plenty of capacity left over." These fairly positive news pale of course in view of the impending catastrophe should there be a large-scale outbreak of Covid-19 in the overcrowded refugee camps like on the island of Lesbos - largely abandoned by the European Union. And of course the as yet undetermined impact on the Greek tourism industry might one more time lead Greece into a major economic crisis, or rather continue the one from which



the country has supposedly only recently emerged.

While several Havurah members have started celebrating Kabbalat Shabbat online since the beginning of the lockdown and many are in regular touch via social media, community life at Etz Hayyim has come to a halt. For the first time, there was no community Seder for Pesah, which was particularly sad as many long-term friends of Etz Hayyim had informed us in the previous months that they had made arrangements to join us for the festival. In a message from a friend in the USA for the holiday, she expressed her sincere hope that in spite of the adverse circumstances, "there may be people reading the Haggadah, even at home, in Crete, this year." And this was indeed the case. Many Havurah members celebrated a Seder at home. In preparation for the festival, we shipped Matzot and kosher wine across the island by courier as far as Agios Nikolaos at the other end of Crete. (A sincere thank-you is due to Besnik Seiti, the synagogue's caretaker, for arranging these shipments.) Nikos Stavroulakis' Etz Hayyim Haggadah was read in many homes as photographs of festive Seder tables show, which we received from as far away as Oxford, UK, from Sally Roland. Lea Ventura in Irakleion even made her own Matzot (and shares her experience of Pesah this year in a article on the next page).

At this moment, nobody knows of course what the following months will bring. The meeting of the Board of Trustees and the annual memorial service for the Cretan Jewish community have been postponed. The planned visit of a group from the Cambridge Jewish community for Shavuot had to be cancelled.

On 17 May, the first day this was legally possible again in Greece and - incidentally the day of his passing according to the Jewish calendar - the Havurah came together at Etz Hayyim to commemorate Nikos. The group had to be small due to official restrictions, which also applies to the Erev Shabbat services and other community events that can now resume.



Pesah 2020 - Amidst a Pandemic

Pesah this year was definitely unusual. Many things were different. Mainly we couldn't celebrate with our Havurah as we are used to doing every year, but due to all the restrictions we had to celebrate confined in our own homes alone or solely with our immediate family members. This resulted in some changes regarding how we experienced Pesah this year, of course.

For one thing, it caused me to start thinking about Pesah much earlier than usual, because I realised that if I wanted to celebrate Pesah this year, I would have to roll up my sleeves and get to work, planning and preparing - together with my parents - instead of just driving to Hania. I didn't know yet that the Athens community had already sent Matzot and wine, so I set myself the task of baking my own Matzot. Unfortunately, I found no such recipe in Nikos' cookbook - although there is a very interesting description about how Jewish communities in Greece used to bake their communal Matzot.

Well, OK, I admit I searched the internet and found a couple of recipes and got down to it. I (almost!) man-

aged the 18 minute restriction and the Matzot were actually edible. Amongst other dishes, on the menu were: Huevos Haminados, of course, lamb and an old Sephardic recipe my aunt Sylvia Kofina (née Mizrachi) in Athens used to make, called "Sfogos", made with leeks instead of spinach.

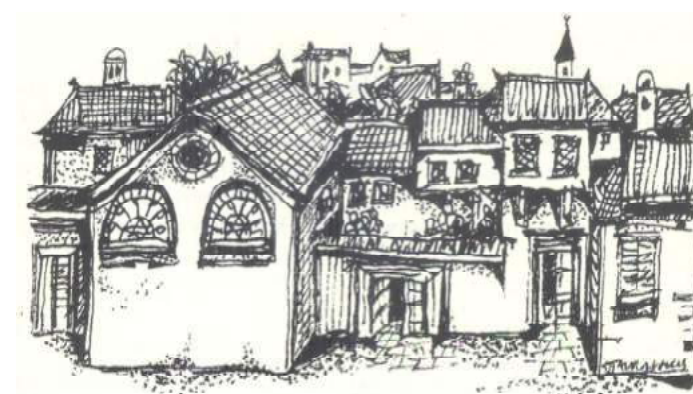
So all in all, this Pesah will be well remembered by everyone, I'm quite sure. It caused us to be inventive, find old recipes, try new ones, and to try out/initiate new ways of having the Seder, e.g. online - to join our relatives via Zoom, Viber or whatever other apps we had available. I admit I missed visiting Hania and enjoying the Seder among people from all over the world, hearing many languages and most of all, being with the Havurah. But the pandemic forced some of us to get more involved with the customs and celebrations and to turn back to good old tradition, which has something steady and familiar to offer, being in that sense, a 'safe haven' amidst a crisis.

Lea M. Ventura



Services and Community Events at Etz Hayyim

Etz Hayyim Synagogue is currently operating under a **strict public health protocol limiting the number of attendees** for community events (see: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/visitor-information). Please **contact the Synagogue office if you plan a visit or want to participate in a community event** to make sure you can be allowed onto the premises. Thank you for your understanding!





Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim: New Leadership and Appreciation for Accomplishments

October was an eventful month for Etz Hayyim, not only due to the two week celebrations commemorating the 20th anniversary of the rededication of Etz Hayyim, but also because of the changes in the leadership of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim, a.k.a. "The Board". The Not-for-Profit was established in 2010 to provide a legal framework ensuring the long-term operation of Etz Hayyim. Currently, there are thirteen members on the Board of Trustees, among them two representatives from the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE).

Already in 2015, when the then President of the Board Nikolaj Kiessling, z"l, fell seriously ill, Marianna Vinther, as then Vice President, took on many of his responsibilities. When Nikolaj sadly passed away in 2016, Marianna assumed full responsibility for the activities of the Not-for-Profit as Acting President. In June 2017, she was elected President by the Board of Trustees. In the years of her involvement with Etz Hayyim, Marianna was not only instrumental in facilitating major grants (like the one for the security camera system), and initiating some of its most successful projects (like the exhibition on the reconstruction of Etz Hayyim), but she also oversaw the expansion of Etz Hayyim's community activities and educational programme, as well as the programme of the 20th anniversary in October 2019. As a resident of Hania, she also participated in community events as a long-term member of the Havurah. When Nikos Stavroulakis' health started to deteriorate, and especially after his passing, Marianna also successfully oversaw the transition of the synagogue life, in order for it to continue to function without Nikos' presence, while keeping his vision for Etz Hayyim alive. As a close friend of Nikos', she was also one of his main care persons when his health declined, and was with him to the end. We owe it mainly to her resolve that what was saved of Nikos' personal documents and items for the 'Stavroulakis Collection' was indeed secured (see p. 54 for further info). During her tenure, the cooperation agreement with KISE was successfully renewed and, at the same time, the status of Etz Hayyim as one of the most active synagogues in Greece was officially acknowledged.

In summer 2019, Marianna decided that she would not run for reelection as President, as the voluntary position is very time consuming and she wanted to dedicate more time to her literary writing. Therefore, at the last meeting of the Board of Trustees on 27 October 2019, the election of a new President was necessary. Having expressed their sincere gratitude to Marianna for her commitment and achievements for Etz Hayyim, the Board unanimously elected Vassiliki Yiakoumaki as President, and Antony Lerman as Vice President.

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, a Hania native, is Assistant Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, and one of the founding members of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim. Already from her student years she had the opportunity to meet, and work with, Nikos Stavroulakis, whom she saw as both mentor and friend. She has produced the ethnographic film "Etz Hayyim-Tree of Life: Voices Surrounding a Synagogue" (2005), for the EU project "MedVoices", a program on Mediterranean cities and intangible cultural heritage. Vassiliki is among the leading researchers who promote the study of Jewish culture and life in Greece, and regularly teaches on the subject (see her report on the related workshop on p. 33). She is also active in various research projects and collaborations with universities in Israel. She has been conducting fieldwork in Israel for a number of years now, and is about to publish on the anthropology of modern Israeli society. She feels very privileged to be working for Etz Hayyim alongside Antony Lerman and Anja Zückmantel.

Antony Lerman is a founding member of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim and was its President from 2009-13. He has facilitated grants supporting Etz Hayyim's work together with contacts with organisations like H401; this particular contact has developed into the successful Heritage Contact Zone cooperation. Tony is a Senior Fellow at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in Vienna and Honorary Fellow at the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations, Southampton University. He was founding Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR, 1996-1999, 2006-2009). He was founding Editor of Antisemi-

left to right:
Marianna Vinther
Vassiliki Yiakoumaki
Antony Lerman



tism World Report (1992-1999), and former Editor and now Associate Editor of the international academic journal on racism *Patterns of Prejudice*. Between 1999 and 2006, Tony was founding Chief Executive of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe (1999-2006), a grant-making body supporting Jewish life in Europe. He has

written on racism, anti-Semitism, multiculturalism, the Middle East conflict and religious issues for, among other periodicals, the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *London Review of Books*, *New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Haaretz*, *Jewish Chronicle*, *openDemocracy* and *tachles*.

Upcoming Events ... we stay positive!



With the synagogue closed to a large number of visitors for an indefinite period, we have had to put plans for several upcoming events at Etz Hayyim on hold. Over the Pesah period, we had wanted to open an exhibition of photographs taken around Jerusalem and Tel Aviv by Maria Sanadaki who wrote a short introduction for the exhibition (see below). It is our hope that we can exhibit her photographs sometime this summer as soon as the current social distancing restrictions are eased.

'Tel Aviv & Jerusalem through My Eyes' Photo exhibition

Traveling alone, exploring with no guidance. Using just a tiny map and a camera.

I had the chance to open my eyes widely, to talk with the locals in each neighbourhood and to receive the hospitality of Israelis. Tel Aviv was as chaotic and loud as Athens. It reminded me of Thessaloniki's neighbourhoods too, the smell of fruit and baked food. There were cats everywhere, kids playing outside and people talking from their balconies to each other.

Different cultures, the sunsets, salt on the skin and the wind at the ports of Tel Aviv and Yaffo.

All of these experiences make someone wish to visit this place again.

The pure feeling I have for Etz Hayyim and the way I felt while being in Israel inspired me to depict Tel Aviv, Yaffo and Jerusalem through my eyes.

*--
The first thing you come upon when you enter through the synagogue's gate is the garden. A garden full of visitors and those people who work there. Full of life, not only from the people, but all those plants and the synagogue cats as well.*

Somehow, I eventually visited Etz Hayyim in the spring of 2015. It was then that I met Moritz Plattner, Momo, who was a volunteer there at the time. Since then, we have become very good friends. At the time, he gave me a short tour and I asked him how I could become involved and help out at the place. I volunteered to translate the website from English into Greek. However, the reason I remained volunteering there is the amazing aura which Etz Hayyim exudes. Every time I find myself there, I feel free and happy.

'It Was Nothing... It Was Everything'

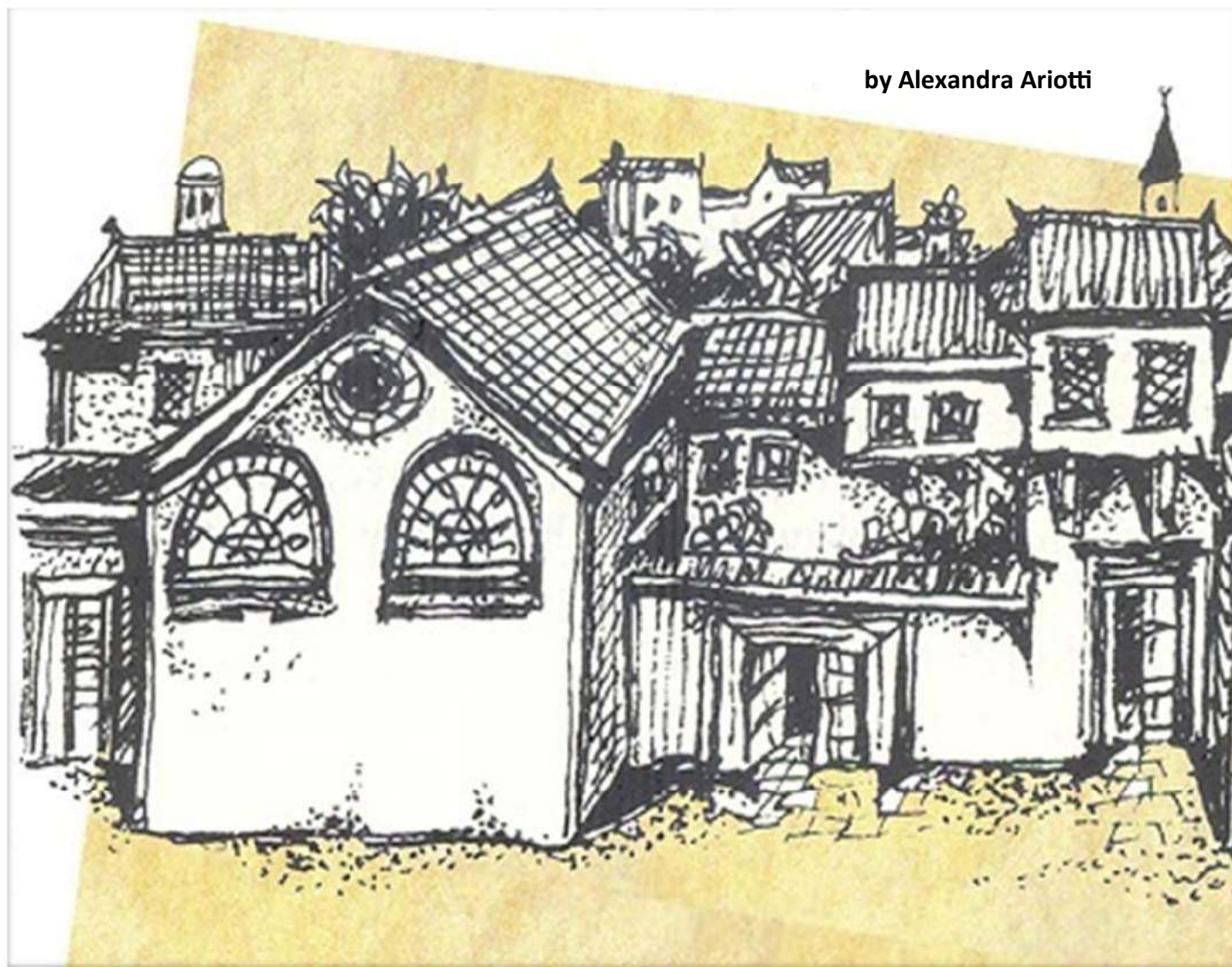
We were also hoping to show two documentaries this summer. Along with the documentary about Soultana Sarfati made by the 6th Primary School of Hania (see report about Holocaust Memorial Day in Hania, p. 24), we had also planned to present the 1997 documentary, "It Was Nothing...It Was Everything" by Sy Rotter about Greeks who helped save Greek Jews during the Second World War. This documentary includes an interview with Stratis Xirouhakis from Kastelli whose family helped save the Abraham family from Athens who passed through Crete on their escape to Egypt.



Recent Events

Celebrating Twenty Years of Etz Hayyim Synagogue

by Alexandra Ariotti



Over two weeks in October 2019, Etz Hayyim hosted a series of cultural events to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the rededication and reopening of the synagogue after its restoration under the aegis of Nikos Stavroulakis in 1999. This festival underscored the importance of the synagogue as an active and inclusive place of worship, as well as a vibrant community, cultural and educational centre in Hania. The wide ranging programme of events not only sought to include the participation of members of the Havurah where possible, but to also draw members of the wider public through its doors. We wanted to engage Hania's residents who might be interested, but not necessarily aware of how Etz Hayyim continues to play an important role in the religious, cultural and social life of Hania today. The various events ranged from a photographic essay docu-

menting the life of the synagogue over the past years to a (very popular!) presentation focusing on the culinary traditions and customs of Greek Jews where the audience was invited to sample the many dishes prepared by the Havurah members. Overall, the festival was deemed a real success with every event well-attended and reported on comprehensively by the local press.

20 Years of Etz Hayyim Photography Exhibition Opening

The 14-day festival began with the Erev Sukkot (Festival of Tabernacles) service led by Etz Hayyim's Visiting Rabbi, Nicholas de Lange, together with the opening of a photographic exhibition, *20 Years of Etz Hayyim*, on display in Nikos' former office overlooking the main sanctuary. This exhibition aimed to take visitors on a visual

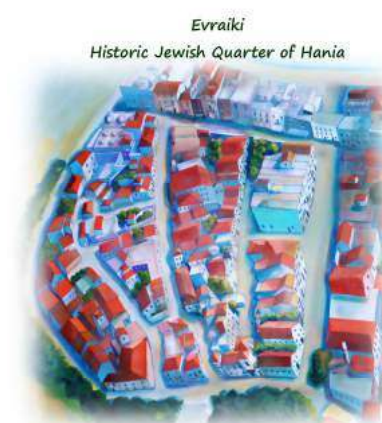


journey through the life of the synagogue over the past 20 years. We asked Havurah members for any photos of Nikos and the synagogue since its reopening in 1999, while also selecting some of Nikos' own photos that to us, reflected the very essence of Etz Hayyim as a "place of prayer, recollection and reconciliation". (See documentation on p. 16f.)



Etz Hayyim as a House of Learning. Workshop and Walking Tour through Evraiki

The next event was a workshop for local teachers that centred on Etz Hayyim's educational outreach programme which has considerably expanded over the last few years. The Etz Hayyim team introduced teachers to the various topics offered in the programme with local teacher, Christos Fradellos, discussing his experience of collaborating with Etz Hayyim. At the same time, he presented some examples of student projects about Cretan Jewish history and culture that were recently undertaken at his school. The workshop was a good opportunity to reach out to the local community of educators and as a result, several of the participants have since visited the synagogue with their students.



Guided Tour in English
Wednesday, 16 October
3:30 pm and 5:00 pm
Please sign up with the Synagogue staff.

Following the workshop, attendees were invited on a one hour walking tour through Hania's historic Jewish quarter, Evraiki, that was designed by the staff of Etz Hayyim and based on our ongoing research into the history of the Cretan Jewish community. Four walking tours were conducted by Katerina and Anja in Greek and English

respectively, and they were joined by locals and tourists alike. The tour followed a route set out on a map depicting Evraiki in the 19th and 20th centuries which was created especially for this project by British-Cretan artist, George Sfougaras. By recounting the personal, individual stories that we have learnt about the people who occupied particular houses featured on our map, the aim was to bring to life the once lively, but now barely remembered Jewish presence in the heart of Hania's Old Town. The walking tour is an ongoing initiative which Etz Hayyim would very much like to offer interested visitors to the synagogue from this year onwards.



Sounding Etz Hayyim: Klezmer Yunan Concert

Undoubtedly the concert given by the group, Klezmer Yunan from Athens, was one of the most popular cultural events ever hosted by Etz Hayyim since its reopening, with the synagogue filled to capacity and standing room only in the northern courtyard. Perhaps some in the audience expected to hear traditional Ashkenazi "Klezmer" music from Eastern Europe, yet what we instead heard was an interesting amalgam of Klezmer and Greek folk songs influenced by a variety of different musical genres including rock, funk, jazz, trip hop, disco and classical music. Klezmer Yunan's programme was especially prepared for the performance at Etz Hayyim and included a piece referencing its Mikveh, as well as the sinking of the Tanais ship.

KLEZMER YUNAN
YANA CONCERT SYNAGOGA CONCERT SYNAGOGA CONCERT SYNAGOGA CONCI





Parallel Points of View: Exhibition Opening

As part of the European-funded project, Heritage Contact Zone, Etz Hayyim co-hosted an exhibition, *Parallel Points of View: Heritage and Intercultural Dialogue* at the Sabbionara Gate exhibition space. The exhibition was curated by Konstantin Fischer and sought to shine the spotlight on ten different perspectives or “parallel narratives” that stand in contrast to the more prevailing, popular narratives associated with traditional Cretan heritage and identity. These “alternative points of view” were represented by 50 individuals within 10 respective workshops who all come from, or are closely associated to Crete. These individuals were invited to present an object and written description for the exhibition which best reflected who they are and how this identity forms part of the wider Cretan narrative, alongside some artworks commissioned by five local artists. (See report about the HCZ project on p. 28f.)

Etz Hayyim on Screen: Audio Visual Presentation

For this visual and audio event, our goal was to present some excerpts of documentaries and other material from all over the world which have been made about Nikos and the synagogue over the last 20 years. The presentation began with an introduction by American filmmaker, Sandra Barty, who is currently producing the documentary, “The Art of Repair”, the trailer of which was shown that evening followed by a collection of other documentary excerpts. The event finished with the evocative sound recording by Australian composer and sound artist, Ros Bandt of Nikos and various Havurah members, past and present, speaking about what the synagogue means to them: a vivid and sometimes haunting soundscape of Etz Hayyim.

Culinary Etz Hayyim: Presentation and Food Sampling

One of the most popular events of the whole festival was Culinary Etz Hayyim which combined an informative presentation of the customs and traditions of Jewish holidays with a sampling of Greek Jewish cuisine based on Nikos Stavroulakis’ Cookbook of the Jews of Greece. The event was introduced by Ahouva who we know is a fantastic cook, and hosted by Anja, also known for her culinary skills with an excellent simultaneous translation into Greek by Katerina. Havurah members brought dishes representing the various Jewish holidays for the audience to taste afterwards. We learnt all about the meaning behind Pesah, Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot and Shabbat, among others, and about the significance of the dishes which are especially prepared to celebrate these particular holidays. There was a lot of food to taste, and in spite of there being many people in the audience, nothing much remained afterwards which is, of course, a testament to just how delicious these Greek Jewish delicacies were on offer that evening.



Open Erev Shabbat

On 25 October, the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin, led an Erev Shabbat service with the synagogue filled almost to capacity. Before the service, Rabbi Negrin, in a personal address, reminisced about the many Erev Shabbat services that he had attended at Etz Hayyim when he was a student at the University of Crete. During these services, he always used to sit in the same spot directly opposite to where Nikos always sat and which was exactly where he was now seated. For many of the attendees that evening, this Erev Shabbat was an emotional and meaningful moment highlighting the importance of the weekly Kabbalat Shabbat service for Etz



Hayyim’s diverse and ever changing community.

Etz Hayyim in Poetry and Prose: Literary Reading

The following evening, poet and Havurah member, Natalie Ventura introduced a reading from award-winning British poet, novelist and non-fiction writer, Ruth Padel who was also an old friend of Nikos’ and a long-term supporter of the synagogue. For this event, Ruth recited poetry and prose including her own works that related to the Jews of Crete and also to Etz Hayyim.

20 Years of Etz Hayyim, the Living Tree of Life: Main Commemorative Event

The culmination of our two week celebrations was the main commemorative event, *20 Years of Etz Hayyim - The Living Tree of Life* that took place on Sunday evening, 27 October, 2019. The audience comprised local municipal and religious representatives including the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Kydonias and Apokoronou, Damaskinos, the Vice Mayor of Hania for Cultural Affairs, Ioannis Giannakakis, the Ambassador of Austria, Hermine Poppeller, the cultural attaché of the German Embassy in Athens, Monika Frank and finally, a representative of the Gedenkdienst association, who all delivered short addresses highlighting the role of Etz Hayyim from their various perspectives. Furthermore, members of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE) were present along with members of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, the Greek Jewish Youth Organiza-

tion, the Etz Hayyim Havurah and all of the previous Gedenkdienst volunteers, together with anyone else with ties to Nikos and the synagogue, as well as the local press. Although this event was always going to be fairly formal and solemn given the presence of numerous officials and religious leaders in the audience, we also wanted there to be degree of informality and intimacy, with the multi-dimensional life of the synagogue emphasised in the three main keynote speeches of the evening (see p. 16f.) and the event concluding with a more casual presentation by the Austrian volunteers about their experiences at Etz Hayyim. To this end, the event began with a moving commemorative service led by Rabbi Negrin, followed by a few short addresses from some officials and continued with the three keynote speeches. Marianna Vinther, then the President of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim talked about her old friend Nikos and his vision for reviving Etz Hayyim. Victor Eliezer, General Secretary of KISE discussed the relationship between Etz Hayyim Synagogue and Greek Jewry today. In the last of the keynote speeches, Rabbi Negrin drew our attention to the spiritual and religious life of Etz Hayyim. The evening concluded with presentations by past and present Gedenkdienst volunteers about the ways in which they view the programme, what it has meant to them individually, and about their year spent volunteering at the synagogue. This last presentation added a more personal (and occasionally funny or controversial) element to an otherwise suitably solemn occasion. The ‘Gedenks’, as we call them, have all played an integral part in the life at the synagogue, each one bringing with

ΧΘΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΧΑΝΙΑ

Επέτειος

είκοσι χρόνων

της Συναγωγής

Σύμβολο συνύπαρξης αποτελεί η Συναγωγή “Ετς Χαγίμ” που γιόρτασε τα 20 χρόνια από την επαναλειτουργία της σε μια ανοικτή εκδήλωση το βράδυ της Κυριακής.

Την εκδήλωση παρακολούθησαν εκπρόσωποι των τοπικών αρχών, μέλη της Εβραϊκής νεολαίας Ελλάδας που επισκέφθηκαν τα Χανιά αλλά και πολλοί πιστοί από διάφορα μέρη της χώρας.

«Η “Ετς Χαγίμ” αποτελεί το μοναδικό απομεινάρι της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς της εβραϊκής κοινότητας του νησιού. Το 90% των Εβραίων της Κρήτης πνίγηκε στο πλοίο “Ταναΐς” από τους ναζί» ανέφερε ο γραμματέας του Κεντρικού Ισραηλτικού Συμβουλίου (ΚΙΣ) Ελλάδας κ. Βίκτωρ Ελιέζερ. Από όλους τους μετέχοντες στην εκδήλωση επισημάνθηκε ο καθοριστικός ρόλος του Νίκου “Χανάαν” Σταυρουλάκη του Χανιώτικης καταγωγής Εβραίου που συγκέντρωσε χρήματα και κατάφερε να επαναλειτουργήσει τη Συναγωγή.

«Με αφορμή την επέτειο για τα 20 χρόνια της Συναγωγής αποφασίσαμε να οργανώσουμε την ετήσια μας εκδρομή στα Χανιά. Είναι πολύ σημαντικό ότι η Συναγωγή αυτή επαναλειτουργεί μετά την εξέλιξη της εβραϊκής κοινότητας του νησιού» είπε εκ μέρους της “Εβραϊκής νεολαίας Ελλάδας” ο κ. Η. Σαλιτέλ.

«Είναι πολύ σημαντικό ότι η Συναγωγή αυτή επαναλειτουργεί μετά την εξέλιξη της εβραϊκής κοινότητας του νησιού» είπε εκ μέρους της “Εβραϊκής νεολαίας Ελλάδας” ο κ. Η. Σαλιτέλ.

Κυδωνίας και Αποκορώνου κ. **Δαμασκινός** στο χαιρετισμό του τόνισε μεταξύ άλλων πως «προσπαθούμε όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερο να συνυπάρξουμε και να μπορούμε να μεγαλωρήσουμε σε ένα πνεύμα συναλληλίας, συνεργασίας και προσπάθειας που θα δώσει καλό σε όλους τους

ανθρώπους. Η ιστορία και η μνήμη των 20 ετών από την επαναλειτουργία της Εβραϊκής Συναγωγής στον τόπο μας είναι αυτή που δηλώνει μια ιστορία πολλών ανθρώπων και ιδιαίτερος εκείνων που μαζί με άλλους πατριώτες δικούς μας βρέθηκαν στο πλοίο “Ταναΐς”.

Με ένα ποίημα της Κικής Δημουλά ξεκίνησε το χαιρετισμό του ο αντιδήμαρχος Πολιτισμού κ. **Γιάννης Γιαννακάκης** σημειώνοντας ότι «σήμερα δεν γιορτάζουμε απλώς τα 20 χρόνια της Συναγωγής αλλά αυτούς που κράτησαν την κοινή μνήμη ζωντανή».

Την εκδήλωση χαιρέτισε η κ. **Μαριάννα Βίντερ** (Marianna Vinther), Πρόεδρος του Διοικητικού Συμβουλίου της “Ετς Χαγίμ”, εκπρόσωπος της καθολικής εκκλησίας και άλλοι φορείς.

Γ.ΚΩΝ.

Η επέτειος 20 ετών από την επαναλειτουργία της Συναγωγής γιορτάστηκε στα Χανιά.

Report about main commemorative event in local newspaper Haniotika Nea.



**Address by Victor Isaak Eliezer,
General Secretary of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE)**

Dear friends of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, dear visitors,
Twenty years later ... I could not begin this address except with mentioning the individual who played a decisive role in the restoration of the synagogue, where we are gathered tonight: the cosmopolitan intellectual, the traditional Jew, the guardian of the Jewish culture, founder of the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens and the Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki, the man who revived the historic Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania: Nikos Stavroulakis.

In March 2017, only a few months before his passing, Nikos honoured me by giving me his last interview. In only a few lines he summed up the history of and the decision for the reconstruction of Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania:

"I began paying attention to Etz Hayyim in 1995. After the arrest of the Jews of Hania in 1944, the synagogue was occupied by four families until 1957 when the roof started to disintegrate. The synagogue and its two courtyards remained abandoned and neighbours kept their chickens and dogs there and used the place as a dumping ground for garbage. In 1995, a big earthquake damaged the synagogue's roof and I started worrying about the future of the building. It was the only remaining evidence of 2300 years of Jewish heritage in Crete that survived the Nazi rule.

A little later, I was invited to give a lecture at the World Monuments Fund in New York on endangered Jewish

Monuments in Greece. I mainly spoke about Etz Hayyim and its inevitable and immediate collapse in about a year. Shortly after my return to Greece, I was informed that Etz Hayyim was added to the World Monument Fund's list of the 100 most endangered sites of cultural concern which

that year also included the Aghia Sofia, the Temple of Athena in Rome, the Angkor Wat temple complex and the Kochin Synagogue.

Quite soon, I was equally informed that the Ronald Lauder and the Rothschild Foundations had sent the first donations in order to start the reconstruction project. This is how a new phase in the life of the synagogue began; I was made project director by the World Monuments Fund. I was put in charge of the reconstruction by Nisim Mais, then president of KISE."

I would like to read to you a note from the then President of KISE, Nisim Mais, who in 1995 approved the reconstruction of the synagogue, addressing today's event:

"1985-1990: a period of safeguarding the property synagogue from any further damage and stipulation of the synagogue as the only remaining evidence of the presence of a Jewish population on Crete. KISE was helped by the government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis and by the Cretan Church in order to ensure the recognition of the building as a synagogue. The Board of KISE focused on the reconstruction of the Synagogue of Hania since 1995. Nikos Stavroulakis' presence in Hania played a significant role in the rebuilding and revival of Etz Hayyim; he remains unforgettable. In 1996, he presented to KISE a detailed proposal for the reconstruction of the synagogue with the full support of World Monuments Fund. In spite of some objections to this project, the Board of Trustees of the KISE signed a contract for the reconstruction of Etz Hayyim with Nikos Stavroulakis as the representative of the World Monument Fund and the company Syntechniki with Matathia Levy as the supervising engineer. The proper implementation of the project foresaw among many other measures the clearing of the Mikveh, the most important asset of a Jewish community.

The successful operation of Etz Hayyim from then until today has confirmed the meaning of all the above-mentioned efforts. I hope that this place continues to thrive as a symbol of the Jewish presence in the city of Hania and as a point of attraction and interest for future visitors from all over the world."

The reconstruction was completed in 1999 and on 10 October, a ceremony attended by about 300 people was organised in which the Torah Scrolls were placed in the Ehal and the mezuzoth were put on its three external doors.

That was the first step and it was not an easy one. Today, 20 years later, I can tell you that many local individuals, as well as some members of the church, made an effort to hamper the reopening of the synagogue. Some local



players and church representatives tried to prevent the dedication ceremony for the newly restored synagogue. The then President of KISE, Moisios Konstantinis, had to reach out to more senior public officials to ensure that the reopening event would go ahead. Equally decisive was the decision by Konstantinos Mitsotakis to attend the opening ceremony himself. "If they dare, let them try to prevent the ceremony," he whispered to me then when I was here as a journalist, a correspondent for the then largest newspaper in Israel.

I remember that, in this capacity, I contacted the spokesperson of the Simitis Government, Dimitris Reppas, and mentioned the local reactions. He declared that the government completely supported this effort of Greek Jewry and he assured me that the government would protect the synagogue and ensure the safety of its visitors and staff.

The second major incident in the 20-year existence of Etz Hayyim were the two fires which caused its partial destruction. The fires were cases of arson, [set on January 5 and 16, 2010] and were motivated by anti-Semitic sentiments. The arson attacks on Etz Hayyim Synagogue tragically reminded us that anti-Semitism in Greece didn't belong to a sad past; that on the contrary, it endangered the safety and life of Jews in Greece.

It was then that 500 people, Jewish and non-Jewish, locals and those individuals who arrived from other places around Greece, created a human chain around the place. At the same time, the Jewish community of Athens decided that the Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Athens would become a sister synagogue to the Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Hania.

Everybody began to realise then that anti-Semitism cannot be fought with silence and inaction, and then for the first time Greek Prime Minister Giorgos Papandreou condemned all anti-Semitic incidents and specifically, the Etz Hayyim arson attacks.

Nikos Stavroulakis, once again, was there; and together with his tireless helper, the synagogue's caretaker Besnik, they rolled up their sleeves again and with the team of helpers took on the work of salvaging what had been left after the fires and to rebuild the damaged parts

of the synagogue.

The third important episode in the synagogue's story during the last 20 years was Nikos Stavroulakis' passing. His legacy is huge; the responsibility of those individuals who took on the task of operating the synagogue is immense as its continued operation had to be ensured. Already in 2014, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, under the presidency of Benjamin Albala, together with the unforgotten Nikolaj Kiessling (Z"l), then President of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim, prepared the smooth transition from the directorship of Nikos Stavroulakis to a new era for Etz Hayyim. Nobody was interested in Etz Hayyim as a static monument. All of us want Etz Hayyim to be a vibrant part of Greek Jewry, a place of prayer and reconciliation, as well as a flourishing place of culture, research and knowledge for the generations to come.

This effort was and is supported by many people whom I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart: Iossif Ventura and Lilian Kapon, the members of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for-Profit corporation Etz Hayyim: the President, Marianna Vinther, the Vice President, Vassiliki Yakoumaki, the Treasurer, Joseph Ventura and Board members Katy Fleming, Rita Gabbai, Anne Germanacos, Nick Germanacos, Morty Lazar, Antony Lerman, Kostas Mamalakis, Rupert Nabarro.

The Administrative Director and historian Anja Zuckmantel; the members of the staff: archaeologist Alexandra Ariotti and historian Katerina Anagnostaki; the Austrian volunteers who have supported the place for a number of years: Moritz Plattner, Nino Gamsjäger, Daniel Jordan, Christoph Steinberger, Maik Heinrich, Jonas Baumgartner. I would also like to thank the visiting Rabbi Prof. Nikolas De Lange and the Rabbi of Athens Gabriel Negrin, both of whom are always willing to offer their services and knowledge. I also thank Besnik Seiti, the tireless caretaker of the synagogue.

On behalf of the president of KISE, David Saltiel, and the Board of KISE, thank you all for being here tonight with us, supporting and the synagogue.

Translation K. Anagnostaki, A. Zuckmantel, G. Psaroudakis

Address by Gabriel Negrin, Rabbi of Athens

Your Excellency, the Metropolitan of Kydonias and Apokoronou, dear Mr. Vice Mayor of Hania for Cultural Affairs, your Excellency, Madam Ambassador of Austria, dear Cultural Attaché of the German Embassy in Athens, dear Secretary General of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, dear Madam President of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for Profit Corporation Etz

Hayyim, distinguished Madam Director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, dear Professors, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear brothers,

The book of Genesis brilliantly, but also with intense precision, mentions in its second Chapter, Verse 20: "And so Adam gave names to all animals, and to the birds of the air, and to every living creature of the field". From this



reference, from this verse in Genesis, Judaism acquires a special desire to give distinct names to everything; to name and define everything. Take a look at our religious holidays: for example, one holiday has at least four names. Even our own identity has three names. They are all synonyms with a different origin, and yet all of them have the same meaning: 'Israelite' from the Children of Israel; 'Judean' from the royal generation of the Jacob's son, Judah; and 'Hebrew' from our patriarch, Avraham who is traditionally called Abraham Haivri.

Everything in Judaism has multiple names because everything has many meanings just like our places of worship. Our synagogues also have three names. The first name is 'Beit Tefillah' meaning 'house of worship' because in those spaces, people, as creations of god, turn to their creator. Synagogues are also called 'Batei Midrash' or 'houses of teaching' because in these spaces each of us teaches while being taught in order to be able to embody the law; each of us opens our heart and clears our minds in order to fill it again with new innovative ideas, so that our life changes and is enriched. Finally, synagogues are named 'Batei Knesset' meaning 'houses of assembly' because in these spaces, people gather, souls communicate, ideas and inspirations are exchanged.

Still, this synagogue has a different name. In his wisdom, its founder, my teacher and mentor, Daniel Hannan Nikolaos Stavroulakis – may his memory be glorified in heaven at the foot of the divine throne – gave a different name to this space and the people who fill it so that it could be defined in a way that omits the simple terminology used for every synagogue. He designated the space a 'Havurah', a term derived from the word, 'Haver' which for Jews has particular connotations in our county since the expression, 'Havra of Jews' means more than

just a loud and happy gathering of Israelites, but rather derogatorily, a raucous crowd.

However, the term 'Havurah' gives a name to this space not by the Hebrew etymology of the word, but by its Greek etymology. The word 'Haver' means 'friend' (philos) and 'friend' in Greek means 'lover'. Etymologically, 'philosophy' means 'the lover of wisdom' in Greek; the term 'friend' in this sense applies to this synagogue for the simple reason that the people who revived Etz Hayyim, who brought it back to life, required passion to do so and everybody feels this passion when they enter this synagogue. Everyone can feel the energy of those people who return here again and again, not only to praise G-d through prayer, as we do in every synagogue, but also to be united as a community in order to deliver loudly a message to the wider society: we are soil and we shall return to the soil. Thus, what makes our lives different and therefore interesting is the passion, the love (Greek: erotas) for each other. 'Erotas' in its noble form is translated as 'love'.

In this place, people gather who understand love as justice, like Torah and Judaism teach it. They understand love as charity and as the highest theological sentiment which the Creator can offer to His creations with the sacrifice of his own life, as this is how Christianity understands it. They understand love as being completely independent from the love of their fellow humans based on the submission to and the veneration of G-d through the belief in him, as expounded and expressed in the five pillars of Islam. Everyone comes here to manifest this love, which may be a bit unusual, but this is what makes our lives worthwhile and interesting.

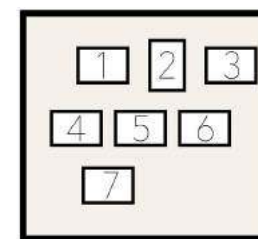
May the Lord give this place many years, and protect its existence because love grows on the foundations of this synagogue.

Translation: Giorgos Psaroudakis, Anja Zuckmantel

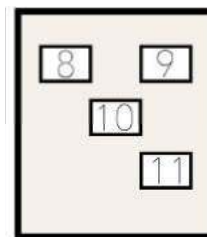


- 4 Books burned in the synagogue office after the arson attacks in January, 2010. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Καμένα βιβλία στο γραφείο της Συναγωγής μετά τον εμπρησμό τον Ιανουάριο του 2010. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ
- 5 Nikos Stavroulakis (7^{ος}) and Iossif Ventura at the annual memorial service for the Cretan Jewish Community, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross
Ο Νίκος Σταυρουλάκης κι ο Ιωσήφ Βεντούρα στο ετήσιο μνημόσυνο για την εβραϊκή κοινότητα της Κρήτης, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross

- 1 Wedding of Hila Ido and Dor Levy Zlekha, 2018. © Evyatar Nissan
Ο γάμος της Χίλα Ίντο και του Ντορ Λεβή Ζλέχα, 2018. © Evyatar Nissan
- 2 Etz Hayyim Interior, 2019. © Jordania Goldberg
Το εσωτερικό της Ετς Χαγίμ, 2019. © Jordania Goldberg
- 3 Partially damaged Romaniote Sefer Torah found at Etz Hayyim during renovation works; photographed during an inspection by the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin, 2018. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Μερικώς φθαρμένη Ρωμανιώτικη Τσρά. Βρέθηκε στην Συναγωγή κατά την ανακαίνιση. Η φωτογραφία προέρχεται από την ημέρα της επίβλεψης που έκανε ο Ραββίνος Αθηνών, Γαβριήλ Νεγκρίν, 2018. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ



- 6 Rabbi Gabriel Negrin leading the annual memorial service for the Cretan Jewish Community, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross
Ο Ραββίνος Γαβριήλ Νεγκρίν ηγείται στο ετήσιο μνημόσυνο για την εβραϊκή κοινότητα Κρήτης, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross
- 7 Service with members of the Greek Jewish communities visiting Etz Hayyim to show their support for the synagogue following the two arson attacks in February, 2010. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Λειτουργία με την συμμετοχή μελών από τις εβραϊκές κοινότητες της Ελλάδας κατά την επίσκεψη στήριξης τον Φεβρουάριο του 2010, μετά τους εμπρησμούς. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

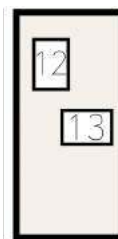


8 Nikos Stavroulakis (ניקוס) praying at Etz Hayyim, 2000. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Ο Νίκος Σταυρουλάκης (Νίκος) προσεύχεται στην Ετς Χαγίμ, 2000. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

9 Nikos Stavroulakis (Νίκος) and Rabbi Gabriel Negrin at the annual memorial service for the Cretan Jewish Community, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross
Ο Νίκος Σταυρουλάκης (Νίκος) και ο Ραβίνος Γαβριήλ Νεγκρίν στο ετήσιο μνημόσυνο για την εβραϊκή κοινότητα Κρήτης, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross

10 Nikos Stavroulakis (Νίκος) and Etz Hayyim's Visiting Rabbi, Nicholas de Lange at the end of the Erev Rosh Hashanah service, 2010. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Ο Νίκος Σταυρουλάκης (Νίκος) και ο επισκέπτης ραβίνος Νικόλας ντε Λανζ στο τέλος της λειτουργίας για το έρεβ Ρος Ασανά, 2010. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

11 Nikos Stavroulakis (Νίκος) . 2009. © Craig Golding
Ο Νίκος Σταυρουλάκης (Νίκος) , 2009. © Craig Golding



12 Albertos, 2015. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Ο Αλμπέρτος, 2015. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

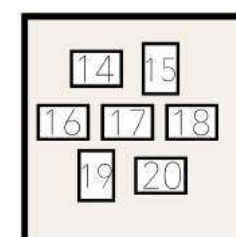
13 Northern courtyard of Etz Hayyim, 2014. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Η βόρεια αυλή της Ετς Χαγίμ, 2014. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ



14 Rothschild Gate, 2019. © Jordania Goldberg
Η Πύλη Ρότσαϊντ, 2019. © Jordania Goldberg

15 Etz Hayyim interior, 1999. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Το εσωτερικό της Ετς Χαγίμ, 1999. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

16 Member of the Missionaries of Charity Order participating in the Hanukkah service, 2002. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Μέλος του τάγματος Ιεραπόστολοι της Φιλανθρωπίας, τότε κάτοικος Χανίων, συμμετέχει στην λειτουργία του Χανουκά © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ



17 Ner Tamid at Etz Hayyim Synagogue, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross
Το Αιώνιο Φως στην Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ, 2015. © Sandra Barty & Ken Ross

18 Pesah Seder at Etz Hayyim, 2001. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Σέντερ του Πέσας στην Ετς Χαγίμ, 2001. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

19 Mikveh, 1999. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Το μικβε, 1999. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ

20 Coming-of-Age ceremony for Sky Lerman, 2010. © Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Τελετή ενηλικίωσης για την Sky Lerman, 2010. © Συναγωγή Ετς Χαγίμ



First Public Observance of Holocaust Memorial Day in Hania

On 27 January, International Holocaust Memorial Day was observed for the first time in an official ceremony in Hania, initiated by Etz Hayyim Synagogue. In January 2019, the Etz Hayyim Havurah had observed the day with a small and moving ceremony, but everyone felt that the next such event should be public to reach a wider audience. When we approached KISE with the idea, they immediately offered to send a letter of support to the Prefect of Hania who, according the legal arrangements in Greece, would be charge for organising the event. We would like to thank KISE very much for their support as it prompted the Prefect of Hania, Nikolaos Kalogeris, to immediately agree to co-organise the event with us.

We learnt that, incidentally, the Prefecture had already scheduled an event for 27 January: the screening of a documentary made by a local school (with financial support from the Prefecture). As the theme of the documentary was the story of a local Jewish girl and Etz Hayyim had assisted the school with their project, the documentary was ideal for what now became the official program of the Holocaust Memorial Day event. (see p. 32 for a report about the documentary project)

The Prefect of the Region of Hania first addressed the audience, followed by Iossif (Sifis) Ventura, last surviving member of the pre-war Jewish community of Crete and



Etz Hayyim Board Member, who spoke on behalf of KISE. He reminded the audience that “the loss of the Jews was not only sad and deplorable because of the loss of so many lives, but also because it erased an essential thread from the multicultural fabric of life in Crete.”

Etz Hayyim was represented by Professor Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, a long-term member of Etz Hayyim Board of Trustees and its new President, and Anja Zuckmantel, Etz Hayyim’s administrative Director. Below, we document their addresses which put the event in its international, Greek and local context. Short addresses by the Director of the 6th Primary School, Smaragdi Katzouraki, and the Director of the local School Board, Manolis Miliarakis, followed.

After the screening of the documentary, Pater Antonis Sapounakis from a parish church in Nea Hora spontaneously asked to speak on stage and suggested that “we should all work together” to set up a monument to Soutana and the Jewish community in the courtyard of the 6th Primary School. This suggestion was also reported in the local newspaper and Prefect Kalogeris has signaled his interest in the project. We will keep you updated on this possible next step in making the memory of Crete’s Jewish community more visible.

Anja Zuckmantel © photos: G. Konstas, Haniotika Nea



The International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

On days like today, it is important to remember the history of institutions, in other words, how something becomes institutionalised. What I have just said may sound tiresome and uninteresting or even too academic. On the contrary, the biographies of institutions are fascinating trajectories not only because they actually tell a story, but also because they directly concern us. They become part of our lives, daily or annually, on a scheduled basis. They are integrated into the “nation’s” life (or many “nations”) and they become a necessary, indispensable and essential routine.

By institutionalisation, I mean specifically how a practice or ritual becomes officially accepted, legitimated or sanctioned, for instance, by the state. Any official decision or decree which establishes an institution does not come out of nowhere, *ex nihilo*. It is the product of specific historical conditions and it is up to the society in question to adopt it or not, depending on many factors. One such factor is whether this issue has “matured” in the collective conscience of this society. In this way, it is deeply political in the broader sense. Any such decision is a political decision.



Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day (every year on January 27th). After the Shoah, the Jewish Genocide, the societies of the western world did not appear ready to open up this issue for dialogue, contemplation and reflection in the public sphere. The reasons are very specific and certainly political; on another occasion, we will be able to elaborate on the matter. Therefore, the post-war period was one of silence concerning the crimes committed against the victims of the concentration camps. The same climate of silence prevailed in Greece.

More specifically, the Genocide was not officially integrated (until recent decades) into the national histories of western societies; it was never part of their official collective memory or their public memory. For instance, it was not part of the history class at school. This only began to take place more systematically in the 1970s with the emergence of the so-called “memory boom.” For Greece, this process started approximately at the end of the 1980s. Until then, at least in Greece, it was mainly the Jewish communities themselves who were responsible for preserving the memory and for organising the appropriate rituals and events (annual or other, depending on the history of each local community). Since the 1990s especially, the issue of the Genocide acquires visibility in Greece, in various cases and venues, most of them initiated by academic circles or the government in line with a host of other European-Union directives and policies.

In November 2005, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to designate the 27th of January as an “annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust,” more widely known as “Holocaust Memorial Day” or “International Holocaust Remembrance Day.” The 27th of January was chosen to commemorate the day when the Red Army (the Soviet army) liberated the Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945. Therefore, the year when the UN decided on this designation marked the 60th anniversary of this liberation.

The commemoration of the Genocide is a reminder of the fact that millions of Jews, as well as other “minority” groups such as Roma, people of “colour,” political prisoners, non-heterosexual people, people with disabilities and people belonging to various religious denominations were brutally discriminated against by the Nazi regime in Germany, and murdered in the death camps. The UN General Assembly urges governments and states to find ways to maintain and preserve memory through systematic practices pertaining, first and foremost, to education. This was a long overdue act that provided a necessary moral elevation of the memory of the Genocide to other levels. Questions about why and how this moment

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the Holocaust Remembrance (A/RES/60/7, 1 November 2005)

The General Assembly, [...]

1. Resolves that the United Nations will designate 27 January as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust;
2. Urges Member States to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help to prevent future acts of genocide, and in this context commends the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research;
3. Rejects any denial of the Holocaust as an historical event, either in full or part;
4. Commends those States which have actively engaged in preserving those sites that served as Nazi death camps, concentration camps, forced labour camps and prisons during the Holocaust;
5. Condemns without reserve all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, wherever they occur;
6. Requests the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach on the subject of the “Holocaust and the United Nations” as well as measures to mobilize civil society for Holocaust remembrance and education, in order to help to prevent future acts of genocide; to report to the General Assembly on the establishment of this programme within six months from the date of the adoption of the present resolution; and to report thereafter on the implementation of the programme at its sixty-third session.

of “institutionalisation of memory” began to take place in the 2000s demand a more academic analysis on the politics of memory.

In Greece, the Parliament voted unanimously already one year earlier, in January 2004, for the official adoption (Law 3218/2004) of 27 January as the “National Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust” (“Ημέρα Μνήμης των Ελλήνων Εβραίων Μαρτύρων και Ηρώων του Ολοκαυτώματος”). It is one of the last laws passed by the Konstantinos Simitis government.

Thus, the day acquires or evokes two layers of memory: the global and the local. It is both international “Holocaust Memorial Day” and “National Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust.” The term, “Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust” may also be seen to signify a wider remembrance and honouring of all Greeks who fought against the Genocide, regardless of religion or



ethnicity. In any case, the official term coined in Greece for this day is “National Holocaust Memorial Day” (“Εθνική Ημέρα Μνήμης Ολοκαυτώματος”). According to Greek law, the responsibility for organising annual official memorial events lies with the local administrative regions (Περιφέρειες) in cooperation with the local Jewish communities. Since 2005, annual commemorative events have taken place in Athens, Thessaloniki and in other Greek cities with smaller Jewish communities such as Ioannina, Larissa, and Volos. This year, 2020, is the first time when this commemoration is being held in Crete and we are very happy that Crete took the initiative to organise the events in Hania, with the kind cooperation of the Deputy Head of the Region of Crete in Hania, Nikolaos Kalogeris. Despite the fact that Hania today has no official Jewish community, as its entire community perished in WWII, I believe that everybody can share the feeling that the city rightfully decides for itself who to remember and honour. The commemoration does not require the existence of a living community, but the building and preservation of memory and the struggle against intolerance and preju-

dice.

Let me also note here that Greece is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) since 2005 which means that it is part of a global forum including organisations and individuals who specialise or are experts in the knowledge of the Shoah and the preservation of memory. As such, Greece, as all other member states, follows and adopts certain practices in different sectors of the state’s policies (like education) towards this cause.

I have just provided you with a very brief history, or biography, of an institution. It is important to follow the trajectory of institutions, which starts even before their official establishment in order for us to better understand history and to comprehend intellectually what politics of memory mean. In the case of Holocaust Memorial Day, the course towards institutionalisation of this event is a great lesson on many levels: European and Jewish history, “dogmatism,” state relations and alliances. Additionally, it marks an official ending of the post-war silence.

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki

Etz Hayyim and Holocaust Memory in Hania

Nikos Stavroulakis, the late founding director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania, used to say that the ruins of the Crete’s last remaining synagogue, derelict until the mid to late 1990s, was testimony to the success of Hitler and the Nazis in completely obliterating not only the Jewish community of Crete, but also its memory.

The restoration and reopening of Etz Hayyim synagogue in 1999 was thus also an attempt to reclaim this memory and to revive a presence that had lasted for over 2,300 years on the island. Nikos Stavroulakis then defined Etz Hayyim Synagogue a place of prayer, recollection and reconciliation. This definition was not just a catchy phrase, but has become reality.

Today, the synagogue is a place of prayer for a very small Jewish community of barely twenty Jewish members, but also for many Jewish tourists visiting from all over the world. At the same time, all events, religious and cultural, at Etz Hayyim are open for everyone to observe and experience. Etz Hayyim is in the best sense of the term a synagogue which, as we explain to our non-Greek speaking visitors, is first and foremost a “place of meeting”. Visitors can meet the community, along with a dedicated group of non-Jewish friends of the synagogue, and are often surprised by many commonalities in the liturgical and culinary traditions that they encounter.

Etz Hayyim has also become a place of recollection and

memory. An annual memorial service commemorates the victims of the sinking of the Tanais ship on 9 June 1944 during which the 262 members of the Cretan Jewish community perished alongside Cretan members of the resistance, as well as Italian prisoners of war. Since 2018, an ecumenical memorial service has taken place at the monument for all of the Tanais victims in Koum Kapi, just outside of Hania’s Old Town, in order to appropriately commemorate and remember all of the victims.

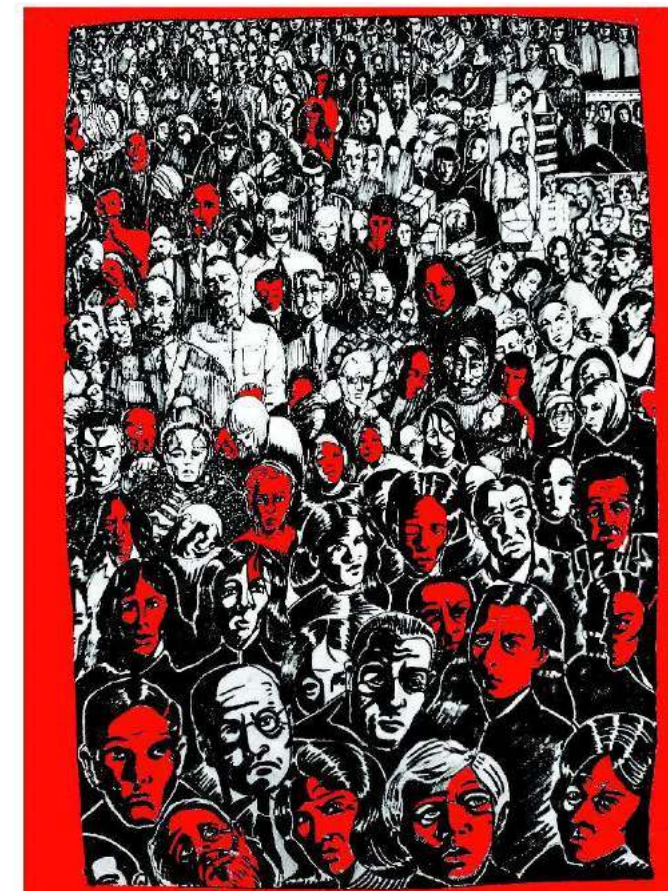
Etz Hayyim’s small staff of historians and archaeologists, supported by volunteers, gives guided tours of the synagogue and the former Jewish quarter (Evraiki) to about 30,000 visitors every year. Etz Hayyim also offers educational programs for school classes from Crete and all over Greece. Just this morning, we taught a lesson at the 1st High School in Hania, while students from the 2nd Primary School in Mournies visited the synagogue for a presentation to learn about the history of Cretan Jewish community and their fate during the Holocaust.

Etz Hayyim has become a place of reconciliation and meeting beyond religion. It is a place which promotes mutual respect and opportunity for visitors to come to terms with their family or nation’s past and trauma. There are visitors from Germany and Austria, Jewish visitors who might have ancestors from Greece, or



Greek visitors who do not know that there was a Jewish community in Crete from the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E onwards. They all find a special meaning in this place. We invite you for a visit and see for yourself.

By now, you probably wonder why I am telling you all this. I meant to show you that Etz Hayyim is not merely a restored historic building in the picturesque Old Town of Hania. It is a living reminder of a complex past and the presence of the Jewish community of Crete; a reminder of a history of about 2,300 years of a community that once was an integral part of island’s social and cultural fabric. But it is also a reminder of a community whose presence and memory was largely forgotten for many decades after World War II, but one which has slowly grown again since the synagogue was rebuilt and re-



“The People”, by George Sfougras, from his book “Stories from an Old Fort Town”, commemorating the Jewish community of Crete, published by Etz Hayyim 2018.

vived twenty years ago.

Today we are here together to observe International Holocaust Memorial Day. As you heard from Professor Yakoumaki, the day was established in 2005 by the United Nations to commemorate six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust and the millions of people killed under Nazi persecution which included: Roma and Sinti people, so-called ‘Asocials’, black people, disabled people,

freemasons, gay people, Jehovah’s Witnesses, non Jewish Poles and Slavic Prisoners of War, political opponents and trade unionists and members of the resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Today, sadly there is not enough time to learn more about the tragic fate of each group, but we hope that in the coming years, at events like this one tonight, we can explore and understand the ways in which each of these groups were persecuted and that they too are remembered on this Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Greek Parliament voted to observe 27 January as the Memorial Day for the Greek-Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust. However, what does this mean for us, here in Hania? Memory is not a status, but an active, conscious process of remembrance, a willingness to learn about what happened in the past in order to be sensitive and alert to any kind of discrimination in the present, be it in the form of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia or any kind of irrational prejudice or exclusion. These phenomena, unfortunately, are on the rise again in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, we are called upon to test and to question our own preconceptions and also give “remembrance”, the act of remembering, an immediate (local) meaning that strengthens values of mutual respect and the willingness to learn about and understand what we might initially perceive as “the other”. There are many initiatives toward this aim, but it is also the mission of Etz Hayyim Synagogue: promoting knowledge and keeping the memory of a lost community alive.

It is on behalf of Etz Hayyim that I would like to thank you for your participation tonight in what we hope is the first in a series of annual commemorative events.

I would like to thank the Prefect of Hania, Nikos Kalogeris and Mrs Athanasia Zotou for their cooperation and invaluable support in organising tonight’s event. I also thank Sifis Ventura for coming all the way from Athens to be with us for this important event.

In particular, we owe a sincere thank-you to the students of the 6th grade of the 6th Primary School of Hania and their teacher Kostas Dandinakis who will share with us tonight a wonderful example of how the memory of a lost community can be revived. In the video, which the students produced, we will follow them throughout their project of exploring the life of Soultana Sarfati. As you will learn, Soultana was not a Holocaust victim as she died from an illness before the arrest of the community. However, she is a symbolic reminder of a community that was completely lost on 9 June 1944. Rediscovering her story could not be a more meaningful act of remembrance.

Anja Zuckmantel



Ongoing Projects



Heritage Contact Zone: Exhibition, Tool Kit, Project Partner Meetings ... the Impact of Corona

On 18 and 19 October 2019, Etz Hayyim Synagogue hosted the partners of the Heritage Contact Zone (HCZ) consortium for their fourth partner meeting. Since September 2018, Etz Hayyim has been collaborating with six institutions from across Europe in this EU-funded project that deals with neglected and contested heritage.

At the beginning of the meeting, the partners were introduced to the history of the Jewish community on Crete during a guided tour of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, as well as the historic Jewish neighbourhood of Hania. The tour not only highlighted the role of Etz Hayyim as an important heritage site, but also shed some light on Crete's multi-faceted and multifaith past.

During two working sessions, the partners focused on a preliminary review of the project. Based on a series of workshops hosted by the project partners in preparation of five local exhibitions, a toolkit for small heritage organisations contending with contested heritage was drafted. The toolkit reflects the experience and insights of the project partners and is designed to assist small heritage organisations in developing initiatives that create heritage communities and engage the public in creative ways. (In a next step, the toolkit will be tested with heritage practitioners; to this end, Etz Hayyim is working with the German War Graves Commission (Volksbund) which is currently revising its permanent exhibition at the Maleme cemetery on Crete.)

On the evening of Friday, 18 October, the partners had the opportunity to participate in the Erev Shabbat service at Etz Hayyim Synagogue, along with other guests,

after which they were invited to a sneak preview of the exhibition, "Parallel Points of View", Etz Hayyim's contribution to the series of five local exhibitions envisaged by the Heritage Contact Zone project. The exhibition was officially opened to the public on 20 October and was well-attended over a week-long period. The fifty objects and stories that were provided by participants from 'non-mainstream' communities related to Hania are documented on the project website, (<http://heritagecontactzone.com/hania/>). The exhibition's curator, Konstantin Fischer, discusses its concept and impact on page 29.

In February, the fifth partner meeting took place in Timișoara, Romania, the former capital of the historical region Banat; its multiethnic and multifaith history is very much present in the cityscape, which partners were introduced to during a guided tour. The city will be Europe's Capital of Culture in 2021; the association Timișoara 2021 is one of the HCZ project partners.

The meeting took place in the Museum of the Communist Consumer, arguably a unique and atmospheric location where, during several working sessions, the partners sought to finalise the toolkit and plan for the project's final conference. The partners hoped to present the project results at a conference in Brussels to be held in June following a rehearsal at a final partner meeting in Florence in April, 2020. However, both events had to be cancelled in view of the ongoing Corona pandemic and the partners are presently looking into alternative options to conclude the project by the end of 2020.



HCZ project partners during a walking tour through Hania's old town and during one of the working sessions in the library.

Beyond
the
Mainstream

by Konstantin Fischer

"Parallel Points of View", a contemporary art exhibition (October 20-26th) in Hania, highlighting non-mainstream perspectives on who we actually are in Hania, on the island of Crete, in Greece, in Europe, in the West.

When Anja asked me to curate an exhibition as Etz Hayyim's contribution to the international project "Heritage Contact Zone", I immediately felt that this project resonated with me on a number of levels: the unpretentious simplicity of a presentation of fifty everyday objects linked to fifty personal statements; the opportunity to provide a forum for those individuals whose perspectives are often neglected and whose voices are often unheard; and finally, the idea of building bridges between those people who subscribe to the concept of (Western) mainstream viewpoints and those people who are sometimes marked for a lifetime by marginalization.

In a work-intensive effort (originally I estimated a period of two or three months, but in the end, it took us more than a year), we managed to bring together and interrelate the views and expectations of various representatives of European organisations with local stakeholders, workshop participants from various Crete-connected communities holding non-mainstream perspectives and lastly, local contemporary artists. Within ten separate community workshops leading into the exhibition, we attempted to explore and express specific forms of non-mainstream experiences of the world, both the particular perspectives per se, as well as the way in which these perspectives are being perceived by the mainstream. The outcome, the "Parallel Points of View" exhibition, was a structured mosaic of colourful personal statements often far from, but always accessible to, the local

mainstream position. As an art exhibition, it was challenging for all those individuals who dared to dig deeper and relate to the unfamiliar, but at the same time, it allowed us, both the participants and viewers alike, to simply enjoy and absorb the vivid variety of different viewpoints concerning Crete and its cultural reality.

The key to the exhibition's success (and we received mostly positive feedback from the approximately 500 visitors) rested, I believe, on the fact that we tried to avoid open confrontation with the mainstream, while firmly standing our ground. Another factor to the exhibition's success concerned the willingness of the workshop participants from our ten parallel narrative groups



Konstantin Fischer at the vernissage of "Parallel Points of View"



to open up to the public, to show their vulnerability and in doing so, to reveal their wounds. Not an easy thing to do, and our workshop participants were, most likely, only willing to do so because of the anonymity that the project outline provided. For me, I have a personal connection to each of the parallel narrative groups that we were presenting in our exhibition; either I belong to them through personal or family history, or I have been publically associated with them. I may have even been “accused” of having a weakness for them. In other words, the workshop participants understood that, as a curator, I was not merely providing and shaping a safe forum for the presentation of their perspectives. They knew that many of their stories were (and are) my personal experience too.

When you belong to one or more marginalised groups, you learn to live with the pain inflicted upon you by the



mainstream. You learn to accept this pain as one of components which make you the person you are today. You learn to live with the preconceptions held and expressed by the majority population around you. You learn to accept them as the status quo. Even when you understand that the mainstream stereotypes about you actually have very little or nothing to do with you, even when you deeply disagree with these stereotypes, you learn to accept them as the status quo in order to overthrow them. If you are not made of stone, you develop a compassion for marginalised 'others' who have to endure their own specific form of exclusion, who have to cope with their particular suffering and pain.

When working on this project, something happened to me that I would never have anticipated: in countless discussions on the topic, within and beyond our parallel narrative groups, I realised that the process of viewing or understanding ourselves within the mainstream paradigm may have severe implications on all of us. This only leads to the actual exclusion of perceived 'others', to the pain experienced by those excluded. But thinking only within the mainstream 'box' also causes fear of exclusion, and therefore unhappiness, among the majority population, a fear which drives individuals into fulfilling the stereotypical expectations of mainstream behaviour. So my question is: if the very concept of "the mainstream" causes only unhappiness and pain for all of us, why can we not simply drop this concept? Why can we not simply be who we are?



Educational Outreach

Much like community life at Etz Hayyim, our educational outreach has been severely impacted by the current public health crisis and we have had to reconsider our approaches for now and the immediate future. Since the synagogue closed its doors in early March, there haven't been any visitors and therefore no guided tours of the synagogue or the Evraiki neighbourhood. However, there will soon be an opportunity to take these tours online! Stay tuned!

For Etz Hayyim, 2019 was a year which saw a record number of more than 1,600 students and teachers participating in our educational programs for local schools and other groups. Although our website already provides information about our educational programme, over the coming months, we will be working hard to adapt our teaching content for online teaching and e-learning, especially as we cannot be sure when school visits will resume.

At the same time, we will continue to use and even develop our more traditional educational media which we have been providing to visitors for some time: our information pamphlets and laminated information cards are now available in languages other than English, Greek and German. We would like to thank Panayota Koklonis, Gabi Ancarola, Dora Abitbol and Jocelyne Berdu for their translations into Spanish, Italian and French, respectively. Hebrew and Arabic translations have also been commissioned. The laminated information cards will now also be available to visitors in an especially-made wooden storage box made by our volunteer, Gerry Dutton.

We have also recently displayed a new information poster in the Mikveh that was researched and designed by our Gedenkdienst volunteer, Jonas, with valuable feedback given by our Visiting Rabbi, Nicholas de Lange.

The poster explains the history, purpose and function of a Mikveh and its design. It was prompted by a remark from one particularly mindful visitor last summer who observed that some visitors initially assumed that the Mikveh was a baptismal basin. With the new information poster now at hand, no visitor

should leave the Mikveh with this impression.

Another opportunity to improve our educational impact presented itself in November 2019 when Etz Hayyim's Administrative Director was invited to join the first group of educators from Greece to travel to the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz. The two-day seminar was organised by the Greek Ministry of Education and the Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG) and we would like to sincerely thank Zanet Batinou, the Director of JMG, for the invitation to participate in this initiative. As a cooperation partner of JMG, we offer seminars for student groups preparing their study visits to Auschwitz and teaching sessions on International Holocaust Memorial Day. In this context, the seminar was particularly insightful with a series of lectures and discussions with researchers and educators who shared teaching materials and methods. The seminar also included a guided tour of both former concentration camps, Auschwitz I and Auschwitz-Birkenau, given in excellent Greek by a local Polish tour guide. The tour focused on the fate of the Greek Jews and included a visit to the special exhibition on this topic.

Also in November, the 6th graders of the 6th Primary School of Hania visited Etz Hayyim as part of their research for a documentary about Soultana Sarfati and the Jewish community of Hania. Drama teacher, Kostas Dandinakis, describes this impressive project on the next page. We hope to show the documentary at Etz Hayyim sometime this summer; it was also screened during the public event for International Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January. A few days earlier, Haniotika Nea published an article about the destruction of the Jewish cemetery and the school project, itself. The latter included insightful statements by students, some of which we document below.

Anja Zuckmantel

Ilias Nikolikia: "An important experience for me. I was impressed how the residents of Nea Hora remembered so many things about the Jews, so many details."

Anastasia Iroglidou: "In the Jewish neighbourhood, we visited an old woman, Mrs Giorgia, and she told us that she remembered Soultana who was seven years older than her and was like a big sister to her. She said that Soultana was beautiful like a noble woman, like a rose among weeds, the most beautiful girl in the neighbourhood and she was very upset about Soultana's death and the loss of all of her family at sea."

Leo Muzhaqi: "I liked our visit to the synagogue and what we learned there about the Jewish faith and Soultang."





'The Sleeping Jewish Beauty of our School'

The 6th grade students of the 6th Elementary School of Hania made a documentary as a contribution to the preservation of the historical memory in Crete. The project was inspired by a post-war photo of the destroyed Jewish cemetery of our city. This 40 minute documentary is entitled "The Sleeping Jewish Beauty of our School" and it was first screened on 27 January 2020 at a public event to mark the occasion of International Holocaust Memorial Day organised by the Prefecture of Hania, Etz Hayyim Synagogue and the 6th Elementary School of Hania at the local Cultural Centre.

It is well known that the 6th Elementary School of Hania was built on the site of the former Jewish cemetery of the city in the Nea Hora neighbourhood. Two photos of the only surviving grave, taken just before the construction of the school, prompted the students to explore the story of Soultana, a Jewish girl whose name was inscribed on that tomb and who is locally remembered for her legendary beauty.

The research undertaken by the students revealed that Soultana passed away two years before the sinking of the Tanais ship which was to transfer her family along

with the entire Jewish population of Crete to concentration camps, but was sunk on 9 June 1944. The students' research included the study of public and private archives, newspaper articles, books and websites. Integral to the success of the project were interviews which the students conducted with local residents of the Nea Hora neighbourhood and prominent personalities of the city such as the 99-year old former teacher Vasilis Inglezakis, as well as Giorgos Pitsitakis, another former teacher and historical researcher who had attended the 6th Elementary School, himself.

A particularly emotional moment in the documentary is the testimony of an 87-year old resident of Evraiki (Hania's Jewish neighbourhood), Georgia Malamadaki, who was a friend of Soultana and her brothers.

The 6th grade students worked over a period of two months on the documentary and were supported by their teachers Lina Lirantonaki and Panagiotis Siakos. Their teacher of theatrical education and director Kostas Dandinakis oversaw the scenario and filming. Finally, the principal of the school, Smaragdi Katzouraki, encouraged all the students who were participating in the project. Students from each grade took part in the making of the documentary with musical, theatrical and artistic contributions, for example, students learnt and performed Sephardi songs and drew portraits of Soultana as no photograph of her exists.

The event at the Culture Centre was also attended by the last surviving Jewish resident of Hania, Iossif Ventura who expressed his appreciation for the students' work. His presentation was followed by speeches given by Anja Zuckmantel, historian and Administrative Director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, together with Vasiliki Yiakoumaki, cultural anthropologist (University of Thessaly) and President of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

Kostas Dandinakis



Soultana's grave in Nea Hora, Hania.



6th graders visiting Etz Hayyim as part of their research for their documentary.



Cretan Jewish History & Academic Trajectories

"The Jewish Presence in Crete, 19th to 20th century" - A Workshop in Hania

Last October, a successful workshop on the 'Jews of Crete' took place in Hania, and we are proud to say that it was the first scholarly workshop to be undertaken in this particular subject in Greece. The idea came up when Marina Aretaki, then Acting Director of the local branch of the State Archives (and by now, a good friend and interlocutor), reached out to us, a small circle of academics carrying out research on this topic, enquiring whether we were interested in making our research more public. We are predominantly a working group of historians, anthropologists and educators from all over Greece and beyond. The group also includes a few academics based overseas who are researching Jewish communities in Crete from the 18th century to present times. As both university and independent scholars, we actively promote interdisciplinary dialogue and our hope is that the group expands to encompass more interested researchers from all over the world. In this way, our knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of various Jewish populations, for example, Jews in the Ottoman Empire (of which Crete was a part) or modern Jews of the 20th century as national subjects (i.e. Greek Jews) can be more widely shared.

Although some of us have been working in this field for quite some time, and have participated in various academic forums on this subject, until recently, we had never made our ongoing research and findings available to the broader public. Perhaps, we never had the opportunity to do so. Only in the past couple of decades has this country become an increasingly friendlier place for the promotion of this topic, Jewish culture and history, in its public sphere. Prior to the 1990s, the few scholars in Greece who worked on the topic, used to confine themselves to the academic world which, in a sense, is a fairly limited domain. We firmly believe that scholars also belong outside academia. Scholars must always be finding ways to diffuse their research findings to the non-academic, non-scholarly public. It is part of the or-

ganic relationship that should exist between academia and society.

We began to realise that it was possible to organise a long-awaited forum on the 'Jews of Crete', even though we felt 'small' and without much financial backing for such an endeavour. With the initial inspiration from and assistance of our colleagues in the Hania branch of the State Archives, and by joining forces with the Friends of the Historical Archive of Crete, we felt more confident in doing so. From this time onwards, we were able to approach other official entities and bodies including the Region of Crete (the Hania headquarters) and the Mayor's Office in Hania. We are grateful for their moral and material support. We held the event at the Centre of Mediterranean Architecture/the Great Arsenali on the harbor-front which is an ideal venue for such meetings, as well as being one of Hania's most historically important buildings.

What we had in mind, or rather what we expected, was a small turnout of people, mainly teachers and local scholars with special interests, alongside our friends (!); after all, we are used to attending small symposia on topics of specialised interest. However, the turnout for our workshop was large, and we could not really believe it. I must say that we were very moved to see so many people.

Either as a gift to us for all these years of intellectual labour, or as generous confirmation that what we are doing is indeed a worthwhile pursuit (in the sense that it concerns many people), this workshop, as an event in Crete, tells much about the changes in Greek society in the recent years. It was not only scholars who attended our workshop, but also individuals with a variety of different backgrounds (I am trying to avoid the term 'ordinary people,' but that is what it was, and it was amazing). In Greece, therefore, there is an increasing sensitivity to and interest in issues concerning memory, ethnicity, multiculturalism and tolerance among wider





circles of people at local level.

I am not painting an idealised image of present-day Greece; we know that prejudice and hate are prevalent in western societies such as this one, particularly in the midst of economic crises. Rather, what I am saying is that there is a new social category emerging in Greece (the Greek periphery included) with increased awareness. This also means an increasing sense of responsibility to 'memory' and a sense of the importance of civil society. The people of Hania made our workshop their own workshop. They engaged in a dialogue with us, they were very concerned, and they also appeared ready to commit to this cause in the future. The Jews of Crete are by now their 'own' Jews. For me, this was one

of the most important results or 'successes' of the day. A reconstitution of memory. A society acquiring sense of its historical identity.

We are now working towards publishing the findings of our workshop. As for some of us who are also connected to Etz Hayyim, we have committed to planning follow-up projects on a larger scale, thus hoping to bring together all the above actors and institutions, and creating a larger consortium to this end.

We are a small group, but we know we can make a difference. We are not just anthropologists and historians; by now we feel we are much more than this.

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki

We are offering a translation of the workshop topic and the programme:

Workshop:
**"The Jewish presence in Crete,
19th to 20th century"**
**Centre of Mediterranean Architecture, Hania,
13 October 2019**

The increasing interest in Jewish studies over the last few years in social sciences such as History and Anthropology in Greece has focused mainly on Thessaloniki as a multiethnic city with a significant Jewish population during the Ottoman period, as well as the Greek nation state. Research into smaller Jewish communities in Greece is developing at a much slower pace. The history of the Jews of Crete, as one of the understudied cases of small communities, has only recently attracted scholarly interest and yet, our knowledge of this community remains fragmentary. In order to contribute to further research on the history of Cretan Jewry, the General State Archives / Historical Archive of Crete (Hania) are organising a scholarly workshop in Hania on the topic of the Jewish presence in Crete. The workshop will focus on the historical period between the early 19th century and the first postwar years, aiming to address a number of issues pertaining to the political, social, economic and cultural history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ
ΓΑΚ Ιστορικό Αρχείο Κρήτης
Η εβραϊκή παρουσία στην Κρήτη 19ος-20ός αιώνας
Κυριακή 13 Οκτωβρίου 2019
Κέντρο Αρχιτεκτονικής Μεσογείου (Κ.Α.Μ.) Παλιό λιμάνι, Χανιά 3:00 - 9:00 μ.μ.

Συνδιοργάνωση:
ΚΕΠΠΕΔΗΧ-Κ.Α.Μ., Δήμος Χανίων
Περιφερειακή Ενότητα Χανίων
Φίλοι του Ιστορικού Αρχείου Κρήτης

Δεύτερη συνεδρία - Πρόεδρος: Γιάννης Κοκκινάκης, επίκουρος καθηγητής Νεότερης Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
Ζητήματα «κοινότητας»
17:10-17:30: Η «ισραηλτική κοινότητα» Χανίων κατά την περίοδο της Κρητικής Πολιτείας (1898-1913)
Στέλλα Αλιγιζάκη, φιλόλογος-ιστορικός
17:30-17:50: Κινητικότητα και ταυτότητα στην εβραϊκή κοινότητα της Κρήτης στο τέλος του 19ου αιώνα: η περίπτωση της οικογένειας Φράνκο.
Αντώνης Νάσης, υποψήφιος διδάκτορας Οθωμανικής Ιστορίας CETOBac/EHESS και Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης

Τρίτη συνεδρία - Πρόεδρος: Δάφνη Λάππα, ιστορικός - μεταδιδακτορική ερευνήτρια, Ελληνικό Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Σπουδών Βενετίας - Κατερίνα Αναγνωστάκη, υποψήφια διδάκτορας Ιστορίας Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης
Αντισημιτισμός
18:50-19:10: Κρητικός αντισημιτισμός: Μια προσέγγιση
Θρασύβουλος Ορ. Παλαστράτης, δικηγόρος - ιστορικός ερευνητής
19:10-19:30: Πτυχές του αντισημιτισμού στο Ηράκλειο στο πρώτο μισό του 20ου αιώνα
Παναγιώτης Λάμπρου, εκπαιδευτικός - κάτοχος Μ.Δ.Ε. στη Σύγχρονη Ελληνική και Ευρωπαϊκή Ιστορία, Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
19:30-19:50: Ο αντισημιτισμός στον λόγο και την πρακτική των τοπικών αρχών στην κατεχόμενη Κρήτη
Πάννης Σκαλιδάκης, διδάσκων Τμήματος Πολιτικής Επιστήμης Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης
Συζήτηση: 19:50-20:10
Μνήμη
20:10-20:30: Εβραϊκότητα και ελληνική δημόσια σφαίρα
Βασιλική Γιακουμάκη, επίκουρη καθηγήτρια Κοινωνικής Ανθρωπολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας
Καταληκτική συζήτηση και κλείσιμο ημερίδας: 20:30-21:00.

Επιστημονική επιτροπή ημερίδας:
• Κατερίνα Αναγνωστάκη, υποψήφια διδάκτορας Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
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Χορηγός ουσίας:
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Τηλ./Fax: 28210 52606 - <http://gak.chan.sch.gr>
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Workshop Programme

15:00 Greetings and Welcome Messages

1st Session

Chair: Antonis Anastasopoulos, Associate Professor of Ottoman History, University of Crete

Introductory Presentation

15:20-15:40: **Reconstructing an Absence: Jews in Hania, Crete, 19th-20th century**

Dafni Lappa, postdoctoral researcher, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Venice; Katerina Anagnostaki, PhD candidate of History, University of Crete
Discussion: 15: 40-15:50.

Jews and Administrative Authorities

15:50-16:10: **"The Peloponnesian Jews residing in the city of Kydonia..." Issues of citizenship of Jews in Crete during the 19th century**

Stavros Sfakiotakis, M.A. (Turkology) University of Crete

16:10-16:30: **Relations between the Jewish community of Hania, the central Ottoman Administration and Local Authorities in Crete in the late 19th Century**

Petros Kastrinakis, PhD candidate of Ottoman History at University of Crete, Institute of Mediterranean Studies, Foundation for Research & Technology
Discussion: 16:30- 16:50

2nd Session –

Chair: Giannis Kokkinakis, Assistant Professor, Modern History, University of Crete

"Community" Issues

17:10-17:30: **The "Israelite Community" of Hania during the period of the Cretan State (1898-1913)**

Stella Alygizaki, philologist-historian

17:30-17:50: **Mobility and Identity in the Jewish Community of Crete in late 19th Century: the case of the Franco family**

Antonis Nasis, PhD candidate of Ottoman History CETOBac/EHESS and University of Crete

17:50- 18:10: **A Neighbourhood that has changed its Identity: A Short Photographic Flashback to the Evriaki of Hania**

Manolis Manousakas, independent researcher/historian, collector

Discussion, 18:10-18:30

3rd Session

Chair: Dafni Lappa, postdoctoral researcher, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Venice

Antisemitism

18:50-19:10: **An Approach to Cretan Antisemitism**
Thrasivoulos Orestis Papastratis, lawyer, researcher of history

19:10-19:30: **Aspects of Antisemitism in Heraklion during the First Half of the 20th Century**
Panagiotis Labrou, educator, M.A., Modern Greek and European History, University of Crete

19:30-19:50: **Antisemitism in the Discourse and Practice of the Local Authorities in Occupied Crete**
Giannis Skalikakis, instructor, Department of Political Science University of Crete
Discussion 19:50-20:10

Memory

20:10-20:30: **Jewish-ness and the Greek Public Sphere**

Vasiliki Yiakoumaki, Assistant Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Thessaly

20:30-21:00: **Final discussion and closing of the conference**

Πρόγραμμα Ημερίδας

Ωρα έναρξης: 15:00
Χαιρετισμοί

Πρώτη συνεδρία - Πρόεδρος: Αντώνης Αναστασόπουλος, αναπληρωτής καθηγητής Οθωμανικής Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
Εναρκτήρια ομιλία
15:20-15:40: Ανασυγκροτώντας μια απουσία: οι Εβραίοι στα Χανιά της Κρήτης (19^{ος}-20^{ος} αι.)
Δάφνη Λάππα, ιστορικός - μεταδιδακτορική ερευνήτρια, Ελληνικό Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Σπουδών Βενετίας - Κατερίνα Αναγνωστάκη, υποψήφια διδάκτορας Ιστορίας Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης
Συζήτηση: 15:40-15:50

Εβραίοι και διοίκηση
15:50-16:10: «Οι εις την πόλιν της Κυδωνίας διαμένοντες Ισραηλίται Πελοποννήσιοι...»
Ζητήματα υπηκοότητας των Εβραίων της Κρήτης κατά τον 19^ο αιώνα
Σταύρος Σφακιωτάκης, εκπαιδευτικός - κάτοχος Μ.Δ.Ε. στην Τουρκολογία, Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
16:10-16:30: Η σχέση της εβραϊκής κοινότητας των Χανίων με την κεντρική οθωμανική διοίκηση και τις τοπικές αρχές στην Κρήτη στα τέλη του 19^{ου} αιώνα
Πέτρος Καστριανάκης, υποψήφιος διδάκτορας Οθωμανικής Ιστορίας Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης και Ι.Μ.Σ./Ι.Τ.Ε.
Συζήτηση: 16:30-16:50
ΔΙΑΛΕΞΙΜΜΑ: 16:50-17:10

Δεύτερη συνεδρία - Πρόεδρος: Γιάννης Κοκκινάκης, επίκουρος καθηγητής Νεότερης Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
Ζητήματα «κοινότητας»
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Αντώνης Νάσης, υποψήφιος διδάκτορας Οθωμανικής Ιστορίας CETOBac/EHESS και Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης

Τρίτη συνεδρία - Πρόεδρος: Δάφνη Λάππα, ιστορικός - μεταδιδακτορική ερευνήτρια, Ελληνικό Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Σπουδών Βενετίας
Αντισημιτισμός
18:50-19:10: Κρητικός αντισημιτισμός: Μια προσέγγιση
Θρασύβουλος Ορ. Παλαστράτης, δικηγόρος - ιστορικός ερευνητής
19:10-19:30: Πτυχές του αντισημιτισμού στο Ηράκλειο στο πρώτο μισό του 20^{ου} αιώνα
Παναγιώτης Λάμπρου, εκπαιδευτικός - κάτοχος Μ.Δ.Ε. στη Σύγχρονη Ελληνική και Ευρωπαϊκή Ιστορία, Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
19:30-19:50: Ο αντισημιτισμός στον λόγο και την πρακτική των τοπικών αρχών στην κατεχόμενη Κρήτη
Πάννης Σκαλιδάκης, διδάσκων Τμήματος Πολιτικής Επιστήμης Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης
Συζήτηση: 19:50-20:10

Μνήμη
20:10-20:30: Εβραϊκότητα και ελληνική δημόσια σφαίρα
Βασιλική Γιακουμάκη, επίκουρη καθηγήτρια Κοινωνικής Ανθρωπολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας
Καταληκτική συζήτηση και κλείσιμο ημερίδας: 20:30-21:00.

Επιστημονική επιτροπή ημερίδας:
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• Αντώνης Αναστασόπουλος, αναπληρωτής καθηγητής Οθωμανικής Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
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• Βασιλική Γιακουμάκη, επίκουρη καθηγήτρια Κοινωνικής Ανθρωπολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας
• Γιάννης Κοκκινάκης, επίκουρος καθηγητής Νεότερης Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης
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Promoting Cretan Jewish Studies as a Field of Interdisciplinary Academic Inquiry

The Etz Hayyim team is envisioning an international conference on the Jews of Crete. The subject is largely unexplored, and we firmly believe that this conference will play an important role in shedding new light on the history, culture and societies of the Eastern Mediterranean/Southern Europe in the *longue durée*.

The topic of Cretan Jewry reaches far beyond issues pertaining to Crete. It enriches our knowledge of Late Antiquity and of the Roman, Arab, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman periods, together with the early 20th century Jewish communities within the European nation-state, the latter being a subject largely neglected.

We aim to promote an interdisciplinary approach by

bringing together scholars from different fields including anthropologists, historians, archaeologists and other social scientists.

After a successful workshop on the Jews of Crete which took place in Hania in October last year (please see p.33), we believe the ground is now well-prepared for developing an academic biography on this subject. We are presently at the stage of planning a collaboration with local institutions in Crete, as well as around Greece and with international organisations towards fund-raising. We also welcome any ideas that would contribute to this endeavor.

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki



A view of Hania, Nikos Stavroulakis, ink drawing, 2010 © Etz Hayyim Synagogue

What happened to the Roma Community in Greece during WWII?

“What happened to the Roma in Greece during WWII?” This question was raised while we were preparing the presentation for the first public local observance of Holocaust Memorial Day (see report on p. 24). We realised at that moment that we did not know the answer to the question and, as a result, were even more curious about their fate.

The history of the Cretan Jewish community is our main academic focus for research and educational programmes (see report on envisaged conference above). However, the experience of other communities and individuals during the Second World War has long been part of our research interests and activities; for example, our Gedenkienst volunteer is currently working on a documentary about Stavros Papoutsakis, a Cretan Greek Orthodox survivor of Mauthausen concentration camp; we have also started investigating the story of the sinking of the Tanais ship from the perspectives of the various groups of victims, as well as the Nazi perpetrators; and in the recent exhibition, “Parallel Points of View” (see p. 29), we looked at how a group of young Roma, among

others, view contemporary Cretan society.

Thus, the story of the Roma in Greece during the German occupation falls directly under the auspices of our scope of study. While there are studies on the German racial policies towards the Roma and their application in some of the countries occupied by Germany during the Second World War and in extermination camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau, there is a real lack of awareness about what happened to the Roma community in Greece during that period. We plan to reach out to scholars with particular expertise on the Roma community or with specific knowledge and understanding of the National Socialist racial policies. We intend to initiate interest in this important, but ignored topic as we hope to include the story of the Roma community (as another minority group whose history is neglected in current Greek public memory) in our educational outreach programme, and also as a thematic focus of a future event on the occasion of International Holocaust Memorial Day.

Anja Zuckmantel



Nikos Stavroulakis (נִיקוֹס סְטַוְרוּלָאקִיס)



The Nikos Stavroulakis Collection: A Repository for Research and Heritage Preservation

Preserving the legacy of Nikos Stavroulakis (נִיקוֹס סְטַוְרוּלָאקִיס) has become one of the core-tasks of Etz Hayyim Synagogue. Thanks to a grant which we received from a major foundation in January 2020, the Etz Hayyim staff will analyse, catalogue and digitise Nikos' substantial private collection over the following two years. This project will shed light on his roles as the founding director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue and as a key figure in the rediscovery and revival of Jewish life in Greece after the Shoah, among many other aspects.

The Nikos Stavroulakis Collection is to be located at Etz Hayyim Synagogue's library and will include personal papers and correspondence relating to his academic and artistic work that reflect his philosophical, historical and spiritual views; meticulously kept diaries from several decades; prose and academic manuscripts, many of them unpublished; books and off-prints of academic articles from fields as varied as Jewish studies and religion, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, European, as well as Asian history and philosophy; personal and work-related

photographs and slides, together with artefacts, liturgical and personal items.

The project aims to produce a printed and a digital catalogue of the collection and an academic review article. These project outcomes will be indispensable resources for teaching and research and, at the same time, promote Jewish Studies within Greek academia and beyond.

The project will be conducted in close coordination with the Jewish Museum of Greece and the digital catalogue will be produced in consultation with the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (CAHJP); both institutions have already provided invaluable advice for the planning of the project.

The Collection will consist of items already located at Etz Hayyim Synagogue and a substantial number of items that are being donated to Etz Hayyim by the heirs to the Stavroulakis estate. As we hope to further expand the Collection, please consider our appeal for donations to the Collection below.

Anja Zuckmantel

Call for Donations of Materials Complementing the Nikos Stavroulakis Collection

In order to expand the holdings of the Nikos Stavroulakis Collection, we are calling on his former friends, collaborators and acquaintances to share with us material linked to or produced by Nikos Stavroulakis. This can be original material, but copies/images of the items would also be welcome.

In particular, we very much welcome gifts of materials that might shed light on his work, his interests and his professional and personal connections and networks. These materials may include:

- various forms of correspondence (letters, postcards, notes, email etc)
- manuscripts
- photographs
- audio-visual material
- art work
- personal artefacts, etc

The provenance of all donations will be recorded in the Collection catalogue and there is the possibility for con-

tractual agreements with individual donors should they request it.

All material will be treated according to professional standards regarding intellectual property rights and privacy concerns.





Desecrated Jewish memorial on the campus of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, January 2019. [© photo: Vasilis Ververides/ Eurokiniss]

Anti-Semitism: the Dark Shadow Looming Over Greek Society (Part 1)

by Alexandros Massavetas

Usually, the debate about anti-Semitism in Greece is limited to the hate speech of the radical right and its use by extreme right leaders and their rags. This perspective is problematic, since it makes anti-Semitism look like a marginal phenomenon and not as a disease infesting Greek society in its entirety.

The recent appointments of Makis Vouridis and Adonis Georgiadis as government ministers has brought the lingering issue of Greek anti-Semitism back into the forefront of public debate. Those individuals who have studied the phenomenon in Greece, along with prominent members of the Jewish community, agree that the problem lies in the spread of anti-Semitic rhetoric within the broader society, as it seeps into statements made by politicians throughout the political spectrum, into the press and the social media, as well as into some customs and pop culture. The problem is what we call “next-door anti-Semitism” in which the proponent is sometimes not conscious or aware of the fact that what he or she says or thinks is anti-Semitic or deplorable.

The foundation of anti-Semitism is the strong belief that Jews are not citizens who happen to just have a different religion and who are otherwise fully integrated into the wider society. On the contrary, Jews are considered – depending on the level of their social integration – to be members of a group with an “agenda” and interests that go against the commonweal of the country in which they live. It is believed that they are not as loyal as other citizens might be, while their national consciousness is

either in doubt or is considered as a consciousness of “another nation.”

This belief is fostering monstrous conspiracy theories. Together with age-old negative stereotypes and the denial of the Holocaust, those conspiracy theories are at the core of today’s anti-Semitism. The fact that anti-Semitism is looming over the majority of Greek society is not surprising given how susceptible our society is to such theories. Many people repeat or reproduce anti-Semitic discourse, certain that they are not at fault in any way (“Come on, it was just a joke, don’t react hysterically!”). They would really be offended, specifically if someone accused them of being anti-Semitic.

Most scholars agree that Greek anti-Semitism lacks a racial dimension that characterises the related ideologies of hate in large parts of central and northern Europe with the unique exception of the neo-Nazi party, Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn). Instead of racial anti-Semitism, we find a Judeophobia with religious and cultural references that originate in the Bible, the sermons of the “neighbourhood priest”, folk customs and the continuation of age-old stereotypes. “During their occupation of Greece in the Second World War, the Germans



Leon Saltiel

were complaining that Greeks could not perceive Jews based on racial criteria,” emphasises Leon Saltiel, a historian from Thessaloniki who has studied Jewish life in his city and has contributed to many reports about anti-Semitism in Greece, the most recent one being the report by the Anti-Defamation League.

Saltiel points out that in order to fight Greek anti-Semitism, it is necessary to distinguish the ways in which the Judeophobe narrative has been passed down from generation to generation. For Rena Molho, well-known historian of Greek Jewry who also comes from Thessaloniki, the problem starts with the Christian narrative: “Christianity is a heresy of Judaism, as it emerged from it and developed within it. Jews were the first converts. The messianic character, furthermore, constitutes the basic characteristic of Judaism.” According to Molho, this new religion, in order to be established, had to depict the Jews who did not accept it as the bad ones. “The religious antagonism between traditional Judaism and the new religion was relentless.”

Compounding this antagonism are the similarities between Judaism and Christianity that are not restricted to their theological origins, but also extend to shared customs. “The Easter bread (*tsoureki*) with its characteristic



Rena Molho

“woven” shape, for example, is nothing more than an imitation of the Jewish bread (Challah) which is used on the table of Sabbath. The characteristic shape (∞) symbolises infinity and as a consequence, God, Whom we are trying to reach. The coloured Easter eggs, once again, are similar to the eggs of Pesah (huevos hamados for Sephardic Jews) which symbolise the deceased – with the only difference being that Jews do not traditionally clink these eggs together.” For Molho, the main issue of the Christian narrative is that it never clearly states that Mary, Josef and Jesus were Jews, them-

selves. “It gives the impression that they landed with a spaceship between the Jews. On the other hand, Jews are only presented as those people who crucified Jesus.” Jesus, Molho notes, was the Jew with the greatest influence throughout world history. Many of his ideas are adaptations from the Old Testament’s prophets. Saltiel observes that in the Christian world for about two thousand years, “the Jew” was mostly perceived as the “other” *par excellence* who personifies cultural distinctness and as a result, has been stigmatised throughout history. Until the development of the racial theories in the 19th century, however, Judeophobia was based upon bigotry. Saltiel emphasises that “for a thousand years, Jews constituted the perfect victims, the perfect other.” The existence of Jews “among us” and the discriminations against them were, at the same time, used as “proof” of the Christian truth. They could say, “There you go, those who crucified Christ are here and you see them. They live in the ghetto to pay back all the sins of their ancestors.”

Xenia Kounalaki, journalist at Kathimerini newspaper, has written many articles about Greek anti-Semitism and recently gave a speech on the subject which was later published. She concurs that the narrative of the Greek Church about “those who crucified Christ” is the basis for anti-Semitism. “Judeophobia, however, has been disguised by several excuses over the centuries and as a consequence, Jews remain until today the most common scape goat.”

“A scape goat, a concept with a central significance in Judaism, is necessary so that an immature society can put blame for all its sins on it” says Molho. A wondrous variety of negative roles and characteristics, of which



Xenia Kounalaki

[© Christos Bonis/ Eurokinissi]

the majority of society wanted to absolve its members, has been ascribed throughout the centuries to Jews. Of course, loading everything negative onto “the foreigner”, “the other”, is much easier than promoting or cultivating the introspection of a community, itself. Therefore, if Jews disappear as a scape goat, another scape goat has to be found to replace them. It is a reality, and it has been written about repeatedly, that in Putin’s Russia where Jews are very few, their traditional role of the lightning rod has been given to homosexuals.



According to Molho, what made Jews suitable scape goats was the fact that Jewish communities were mostly urban, relatively small and without territorial cohesion. "Until the establishment of the state of Israel, the Jewish Diaspora was without a territory and totally unprotected. There was no a state body or any other authority that could either protect them from the violent acts against them or support them."

Are Jews a people, a nation? If the answer is yes, what consequences does this have for their "loyalty" to the countries where they live? Concerning the first question, there is no (nor has there ever been) unanimity even among Jews, themselves. Molho supports the view that Jews are not a nation, as they lack those elements which are necessary for the constitution of a nation such as a common language and traditions. "Jews constitute just a religious community and the only element that unites them is their religion. A nation was created only in Israel after its establishment, the Israeli nation and it is not congruent with Jews," remarks the historian.

Molho focuses on the cultural differences between Jewish communities in the diaspora. "There are even differences between the Jewish communities of the same country. In Greece, for example, Jews are being separated traditionally into Romaniote Jews, descendants of ancient communities that always had Greek as their native language, and Sephardi Jews who came to Greece following their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula and who spoke Judeo-Spanish. Our differences with Ashkenazi Jews, tracing their origin to Central and East Europe, are not limited to differences of language (Ashkenazi were speaking Yiddish, a language with German origin), but they extend to customs and legends. The difference is even more substantial with the Jews of Middle East and Central Asia, who traditionally spoke Arabic, Persian or Kurdish etc. A lot of people do not even know that black Jews exist in Ethiopia, the Beta Israel, with a 3000 year old history and their own specific customs." According to Molho, Jews belong to the nation of the country in which they live, being a part of them. "Jews worldwide have a cultural identity with two dimensions; on the one hand, that of their country of residence, on the other hand, the Jewish one. For this reason, we talk of Greek-Jewish, Russian-Jewish, Polish-Jewish etc."

Saltiel does not agree that Jews do not constitute a nation or people as he views Judaism as the core of a collective identity that has also a national dimension. The Old Testament is the codification of historical legends, customs and laws of a people, the Jewish people, who can only be defined through religious criteria. The phrase, "people of Israel" (Israel: *ישראל*, people: *עם*) and the designation, "Israelites" in any case were used as

abstract collective definitions for all of those who were obeying to the Law of Moses thousands years before the founding the state of Israel. Molho makes clear that the designation has only religious connotations. "Being a member of the people of Israel, one is obliged to and content with obeying the Law of Moses."

"For a Greek it is easier to understand the relationship between Jewish religion and national identity," explains Saltiel. "Jews, Greeks and Armenians are the three ancient people, diasporic and with a long history of persecution. The national identity to those three nations is closely connected with the religion to a degree that they are perceived as being identical." Even though Christianity, in contrast to Judaism, is an international religion that is not specifically related with a nation, for Greeks and Armenians it has acquired strong national characteristics. For Jews, according to Saltiel, anti-Semitism and persecutions have forged their national identity. Despite their efforts to assimilate into the local societies, Jews have remained stigmatised and "foreign"; "you are trying to integrate, but the others do not let you."

The problem of course is that the recognition of a Jewish national identity has, after the foundation of the state of Israel, led to it being equated with the national identity of Israel. This equation especially affected Jews in the diaspora who are facing a barrage of accusations that their loyalty does not lie with the state of their residence, but the state of Israel. In that way, even though she admits that Jews have a hyphenated/two-dimensional identity and characteristics of a national-religious group, Kounalaki is quick to point out the dangers of the common confusion between the terms Jews and Israelis. This confusion adds fuel to the fire of conspiracy theories. "It is disquieting," comments Kounalaki, "how often one can hear things like 'the Jews are following orders from Israel' or 'the Central Board of Jewish Communities collects money from Greek Jews and sends it to Israel'." Characteristically, in the report by the Anti-Defamation League about anti-Semitism in Greece, 60 per cent of the respondents agreed that "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the country of their residence."

Having to constantly face prejudice and sometimes antipathy on the streets and in their daily life, Jews in Greece, even those of Sephardic and thus, Spanish-speaking origin, make sure to Hellenise their first names. Quite often Esthir (Esther) is changed to Roula, Erika to Rika, Solomon to Solon and Haim to Makis, for instance. "Very often you will hear that Jews refer to all Jews as 'Mimis, Sakis, Makis.' The main 'problem' is of course the surnames. These names do not change. Two days ago, I was in a cab with my mother and we were



chatting about a few acquaintances and I thought that the taxi driver would be dumbfounded by all those strange names!" Saltiel says.

Saltiel, himself, maintains the Judeo-Spanish version of his name (Leon, Greek: Λεόν, from León), which many Greek Jews have Hellenised, to Leon [translator's note: in Greek, spelled with omega: Λέων]. Both forms are derived from the Hebrew equivalent Arie (אריה) – "lion". Molho's first name is customarily that of her 'grandmother', the Judeo-Spanish Reina, a rendering of the Hebrew name Malka (מלכה) – "queen". Molho explains that the Hellenisation of names is proof of the insecurity that Greek Jews feel even today and proof of the need "not be no different and not to provoke."

During the Shoah (Holocaust), 87 percent of the Greek Jewish population, then comprising 80,000 people, was exterminated. Today, only 5,000 Jews live in Greece and 3,000 of them in the capital. The ignorance of the general population about the history and the basic characteristics of Jews is quite often revealed. "We are so few that most Greeks have never met a Jew. A simple example is that they don't know that none of us speak Hebrew, unless they have lived and studied in Israel. My generation does not even speak the Judeo-Spanish language. We are totally Greek speakers", says Saltiel. Indicative of that ignorance are the cases of anti-Semitic graffiti written in Hebrew on the walls of synagogues (the internet is a great teacher) which members of that Jewish community cannot even read!



Graffiti written in Hebrew on the walls of the Synagogue of Volos in 2009.

It is also a widespread belief that Jews constitute a homogeneous population with the same beliefs, aims and perceptions on a global scale! "The most well-known stereotypes that I can think of are: you are all rich, you are all successful, you all uncritically support Israel, you fanatically support each other," says K, who works in the

community of Athens and asked to remain anonymous. "If someone passed by and overheard some of the gossip circulating in our community where, in accordance with our famous Greek tradition, nobody says a good word about anybody else, they would be very much surprised. We also say that if there are ten Jews in a room, there will be eleven opinions, something an outside observer will easily notice. They would also have been shocked, in the past, by the dispute between Greek and Turkish Jews about the 'national issues' between the two countries, as both communities became decidedly loyal, particularly in view of the Cyprus question."

"In a more serious analysis," K continues, "one should note that among the 5000 Greek Jews, there are atheist Jews, agnostic Jews, those people who believe, but who are not religious (the majority) and religious Jews (a small minority). There are Jews who admire and love Israel, who are concerned about its fate and there are others who keep a distance from Israel, who never visit the country and who blame Israel because its policies cause additional problems for them. As for the idea that all Jews are rich, unfortunately, many community members, especially pensioners, are facing harsh financial difficulties. I believe that any non-Jewish Greek, who would spend some time with us, will quickly reject the widespread parrotry."

Our ignorance indelibly promotes stereotypes in the collective imagination. For Molcho, Christian catechism played a key role in the transmission of stereotypes in previous generations. "They were infused with the belief that the Jew is the incarnation of the evil," says Molho. "It is difficult to free someone from Judeophobia, who was infused with it through his or her mother's milk!" However, Christian catechism has only limited influence nowadays. The historian believes that superstitions are transferred from generation to generation with the tales of the grandmothers, for example, tales about Jews who crucified Jesus or tales about Jews who put small children in barrels with nails to make them bleed! Saltiel speaks about an anti-Semitism of the "coffee house" (kafeneio) where theories of "global conspiracies" such as "the Jews controlling the global banking system" and social stereotypes are recycled.

"Anti-Semitism is common in broad sections of society," says Kounalaki. She suggests that the stakeholders and mechanisms perpetuating anti-Semitism must be subjected to systematic academic research. "We have gotten used to some anti-Semitic abominations to such an extent that the hate speech against Jews is considered 'normal' and not recognisable as such," continues Kounalaki. Greece is a sad worldwide frontrunner in anti-Semitism with the exception of Middle Eastern countries. According to related opinion polls, 67 to 69 per



cent of Greeks agree with views that reflect anti-Semitic stereotypes (the corresponding average percentage in Western Europe is 24 per cent, and 26 per cent worldwide). Only 39 to 44 per cent of Greek respondents have a positive view of Jews, while 38 per cent hold negative associations with Jews.

The views expressed by our four interviewees mirror the findings of recent relevant studies. Anti-Semitic hate rhetoric spreads throughout the political spectrum, inside or outside the parliament. "It is particularly interesting that the Jew has been adopted as the ideal scape goat both by the political left and right," says Saltiel. "The Jew is charged with all potential negative roles, even if these roles might be contradictory. So, for the political right, Jews have always been without a homeland, internationalists, cosmopolitans and communists. For many on the left, Jews are capitalists, agents of exploitation and of the system. After all, the Jew suits everyone!"

Kounalaki characterises anti-Semitism as a "cross-part and world-wide" phenomenon. "Everyone, depending on their ideological position, chooses the excuse that suits them, in order to justify their Judeophobia". It is generally assumed that the most serious contemporary problem is the spread of anti-Semitic stereotypes within the political left, concealed under the guise of the criticism of Israel and "anti-Zionism." This issue is considered so serious due to the fact that anti-Semitism of the (radical) right side is easily recognisable and can be denounced, while anti-Semitism of the left is camouflaged and its proponents stubbornly deny its anti-Semitic nature.

"It is particularly insidious to identify every Jew with Israel. It is really common for those people who criticise Israeli policy, to expect Greek Jews to feel guilty, making them responsible for the settlements in the West Bank and violence against Palestinians," the journalist says. "Many Jewish friends of mine who belong to left-wing organisations felt unbearable pressure during public events to either denounce Israel or to express support for Palestinians, as if they were Israeli themselves and even working close to Israeli decision-making circles, just because they were Jews," states Molho. "Here in Thessaloniki, demonstrations for the Palestinian cause stopped in front of the Holocaust Memorial in Eleftherias Square, at the same time as events at the Jewish Museum were also interrupted."

The "Anti-Zionism" of the left is a by-product of the Soviet rhetoric about the "anti-Zionist struggle" which culminated after the Six Day War of 1967. It is a one-sided, often hostile critique of the state of Israel and a parallel equation of every Jew with it. Associating Greek Jewry with Israel leads to its targeting, transforming their mon-

uments and community spaces into hostages of the developments in the Middle East. Anarchist collectives desecrated synagogues in Larissa and Volos in 2009, citing the Palestinian cause as a pretence for such actions. In 2006, members of PAME (syndicate of the Communist Party of Greece) desecrated the Holocaust Memorial in Thessaloniki, posting on it photos of dead civilians from the clashes between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah. PAME denied that their action was anti-Semitic, but in reality, this act represents the very embodiment of anti-Semitism: they are comparing the Nazi atrocities committed against Jews and other groups during WWII with Israeli acts against Palestinians.

For Kounalaki, there is no worse or more vulgar anti-Semitism than the one that equates the Holocaust with the 'treatment of Palestinians' by Israel. "The political left and right each compare the Shoah with something completely different; they relativise the horror and awe which most of us feel about the Holocaust. Its 'uniqueness' has to do with the industrial scale of the extermination operation intended to completely annihilate the Jewish population in the occupied countries. Until the last day of the war, when Germany had been defeated on the military front and impending disaster was certain, the annihilation continued with industrial systematisation in the extermination camps." Molcho remarks that the comparison between the Shoah and events in the Middle East, or wars elsewhere, is unreasonable due to the fact that the Nazis were not at war with the Jews of Europe who, in any case, had no territorial claim.

Dreadful occurrences have been reported in the last few years in the Greek Parliament as well. Former Deputy Prime Minister, Giannis Dragasakis insisted that he did not understand why it was anti-Semitic when he pointed to Shylock from the theatrical play "The Merchant of Venice", the best known literary depiction of the "ruthless Jewish moneylender", in order to "denounce" the attitude of the lenders towards Greece [during the recent economic crisis]. The Communist Party, which has been associated with the systematic vote against human rights bills (see civil partnership, gender identity, etc.) during the last number of years, expresses anti-Semitic positions under the guise of "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism." Characteristic is the party's opposition to the return of Greek citizenship to Greek Jewish survivors of the Shoah living in Israel, with the shameless claim that it would cause "an invasion of Israeli investors."

It is not worth mentioning the Nazi Golden Dawn party. However, when it comes to frequent anti-Semitic utterings, anti-European conspiracy-theory populist right has almost outshone Golden Dawn. They have been termed



the "sprayed" ones. [translator's note: The term was coined after a speech by its leader claiming that government airplanes are spraying poison on the population, but the term has entered the everyday vernacular in Greece, meaning that someone has lost their mind.] In Greece's previous parliament, those conspiracy theorists were represented by ANEL [Independent Greeks party] and in the current parliament by the "Greek Solution" party. A statement [in 2014] by Panos Kammenos [head of ANEL] that Jews allegedly were not being taxed provoked public uproar, while Dimitris Kammenos in social media posts compared the German policy towards Greece with the Shoah and spoke of a "war" led by Judaism against Greece. This irrational and hysterical anti-Semitic discourse is also prevalent in the centrist parties. The problem with the New Democracy MPs who came from the ranks of the LAOS party (formerly a carrier of the "spraying" conspiracy view) including Adonis Georgiadis, Makis Vouridis and Thanos Plevris is well-known. Agitation was also caused by the unfortunate wording by Evangelos Venizelos in 2012 that he had managed to distinguish "some Jewish names" in the Lagarde list [translator's note: a spreadsheet containing roughly 2,000 names of potential tax evaders with undeclared accounts at a Swiss bank; named after then French finance minister, Christine Lagarde who in October 2010 passed it on to Greek officials]. The statement may have given Panos Kammenos the "courage" to make his outrageous statement a few years later.

In the report, "Anti-Semitism in Greece" (2017) by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, it is evident in the various charts capturing the results of polls that anti-Semitism has risen among the extreme right and extreme left with similar percentages; a phenomenon referred to as "anti-Semitism of the extremes". Thus, the percentage of those people who agree with the view that "Jews are taking advantage of the Holocaust to gain preferential treatment by important international decision-makers" is not significantly lower on the extreme left than on the extreme right. Support on the extreme left for the view that "Israel treats Palestinians in exactly the same way as the Nazis treated Jews" exceeds that on the extreme right.

Yet, in its recent report, the Anti-Defamation League considers it encouraging that in 2017, both Adonis Geor-

giadis and Dimitris Kammenos publically apologised for their previous anti-Semitic statements. The ADL stresses that this apology was an unprecedented move in Greek parliamentary history. (More recently, Maki Vouridis also apologised for his former "anti-Semitic companions", denying at the same time that he himself ever held anti-Semitic views). Nikos Kotzias, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in 2017 that any correlation between the Shoah and Israeli policy towards the Palestinians is not a criticism, but an attempt to acquit the culpable perpetrators of the Holocaust.

The presence of representatives of most parties in the religious celebrations and memorial ceremonies of the Greek Jews is also deemed to be positive. The report notes that most cases of anti-Semitism are unequivocally condemned by the government, the presidency of



Interior of the synagogue of Ioannina, during the visit of the then President of the Hellenic Democracy K. Papoulias and the then President of Germany J. Gauck in 2014. [© Eurokinissi]

the Greek democracy, (non-extreme) parties, local authorities and many intellectuals and analysts. It is also encouraging that Greece lacks the violent anti-Semitic attacks against individuals which are so common in other Western countries.

In the second part, we will discuss the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the press and pop culture, the role of the church, the relationship of anti-Semitism with the "victimisation" of the Greeks and the "genocide of memory" that conceals the role played by neighbours of Jews who were killed in the Holocaust in looting their property.

The article was first published in two parts; part 1: "Anti-Semitism: The Dark Shadow Looming over Greek Society" (Αντισημιτισμός: η βαριά σκιά της ελληνικής κοινωνίας), on 22 August 2019, and part 2: "We and Anti-Semitism" (Ο αντισημιτισμός κι εμείς), on 3 September 2019, on www.insidestory.gr.

Alexandros Massavetas is the author of *Going Back to Constantinople Istanbul: A City of Absences* (2007), among other books (in Greek). We thank the author for permission to translate and print this article; the second part will be published in the Rosh Hashanah 2020 edition of *Jottings*.



Etz Hayyim's Mikveh and the Climate Crisis

by Jonas Baumgartner

to Jewish law, the water in a Mikveh needs to be *alive*. This means that the water must consistently flow in and out of the ritual bath, while also emerging from a natural source of fresh water. At Etz Hayyim, this source is a natural underground spring running down from the mountains. Without breaking open the floor of the

Mikveh and hence destroying the last fully authentic remnants from the original community, it is impossible to see exactly what type of system feeds the Mikveh with water. Nevertheless, it is clear that it must be a complicated array of pipes and pools that somehow guarantee that the Mikveh is consistently full, but never flooded, no matter the time of the year or the weather. It is a manifestation of the human understanding of nature and use of technology, combined, that create a harmonic balance between these two aspects. For many centuries, the Mikveh must have worked perfectly fine. Certainly, for much of the time since the rededication of Etz Hayyim 20 years ago, it was functioning as well as it always did.

This has now changed. In December 2019 and January 2020, we found ourselves having to really consider the plumbing system of the Mikveh when we were obliged to add an extra pipe leading to the sewage system because the Mikveh was flooded, unfortunately an increasingly regular occurrence over the past couple of years. This flooding has led to too much humidity in the space, as well as water running underneath the tiles, some of which move when you step on them as a result. We might assume that the reason behind this now pressing need for restoration lies in the fact that the Mikveh, like the rest of the synagogue, lay derelict and neglected between 1944 and 1996, but this reason must be discounted for the Mikveh has been functioning well since its restoration by Nikos. A more likely explanation for

"Now, please follow me to our Mikveh. While its appearance might not necessarily compare to the Mikvoth you've previously seen, it might be the most remarkable place of all at Etz Hayyim. I am saying this because, as I told you, when the Nazis arrived in 1941, they took out all the furniture and everything that could be moved and burnt it. However, since there really is not any furniture in the Mikveh, it still looks like it did over 300 years ago when the synagogue first opened its doors. This room is like a window into the past, one of the last remaining true impressions of what daily life, for the once blossoming Jewish community of Hania, might have looked like."

This statement usually comes at the end of the tours I give at Etz Hayyim to all of its visitors. I must say too that this is my favourite part of giving these tours. This final little monologue in the Mikveh never ceases to amaze them. It is hard to exactly pin down the reason for it, but the excitement and curiosity reflected on their faces when they enter the Mikveh and listen to its history, which I have witnessed on a near daily basis, always appears to me as a striking demonstration of human empathy transcending the imaginary borders between religions, cultures and even between the past and the present.

Etz Hayyim's Mikveh embodies an extraordinary significance as a place of remembrance to the Jewish community of Hania and Crete. It also stands as a remarkable testimony to ingenious human craftsmanship. According



the need of its repair appears to be the global climate crisis.

The rise in average global temperatures is affecting different areas of the world in a variety of ways, but nonetheless affecting all people in all places. On Crete, we can see how weather patterns have changed significantly in recent years. While last winter, we experienced an unprecedented amount of rainfall leading to the destruction of many roads particularly in the south of the island, this autumn has been incomparably dry, resulting in a disastrous olive harvest for many farmers. This increasingly periodic and extreme rainfall is not what the Mikveh at Etz Hayyim was originally designed for and nor was it built to function in the face of such variables.

This demonstrates effectively how the global environmental crisis will eventually affect all of us; in many cases, not only negatively affect and at times destroy the livelihoods of many people (especially those people less privileged), but also centuries-old cultural and religious sites like Etz Hayyim.

The 21st century has thus far been marked by rapid change in all areas of life in political, technological and environmental terms. Let this be a reminder, a bit too close to home, for ourselves, that combating the environmental crisis requires immediate and often radical action so that what we consider beautiful and value most in our lives will still be there for generations to come.

News & Notes

The story of Leicester's flame

A FLAME created by Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation (LPJC) to honour victims of the Shoah was one of those chosen to be part of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's 75 Memorial Flames project. Here Miriam Levene recalls the steps in making it:

1. We found someone to work with - local Greek artist George Sfougaras. George was brought up in Heraklion, where his parents witnessed how Jews were treated by the Nazis and in particular the tragic fate of the last Jews of Chania, trapped en route to Auschwitz in a German boat torpedoed and sunk by the British. George works closely with refugees and asylum seekers, helping them express their personal memories and cultural identity in art. His own Greek Orthodox family were refugees from Turkey.

2. After discussion with members of LPJC the spark of the idea came from a number of old squeegees. These are the tools used to screen print with. The older ones had two protrusions which reminded George of Torah Scrolls.

3. George was further inspired by a beautiful Thiki, or Tik, Torah case from Ioannina in Greece. This led him to screen print, with some modifications, an image of a tree of life, adapted from old textile prints from the Middle East.

4. We all decided we wanted to leave the flame 'absent' - symbolising the people lost and murdered in the Holocaust.



5. It was felt that the piece needed more detail. On the back a more detailed version of the tree of life was printed using a screen and acrylic paint.

6. We discussed using photos of the ancestors of community members whose survival related to the Shoah. My grandson suggested that we could have mirrors around them. George decided that would be too hard, but liked the idea using a mirror.

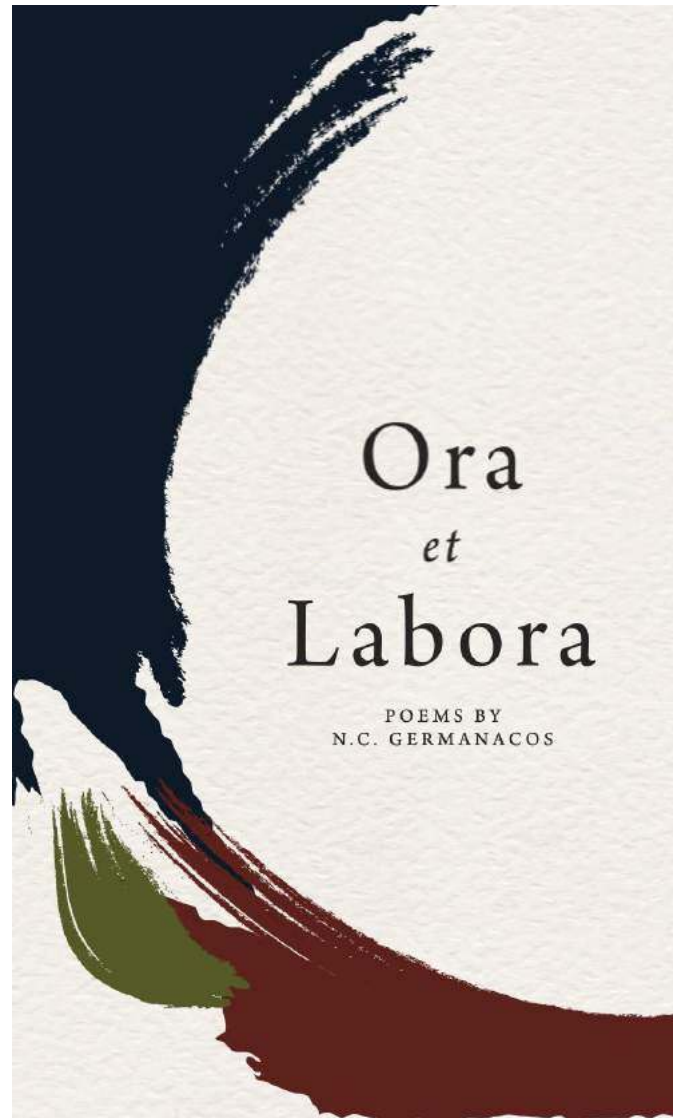
7. In the end, we felt that the absence of any images heightened the feeling of loss of loved ones. We therefore decided to leave the gap as originally intended.

8. We hope the exhibition of all 75 flames will come to Leicester in June. See them at www.hmd.org.uk/75-memorial-flames



We were very pleased to learn about one of the latest projects of British-Cretan artist George Sfougaras with whom we have worked on several occasions like his exhibition and book "Tales from an Old Fort Town" on the Jewish history of Crete and his creation of a map of Hania's Evraiki neighbourhood.

In its March/April 2020 edition, *lj today*, the newsletter of the association of British Liberal Jewish congregations published "The story of Leicester's flame" about a memorial flame created by the Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation (LPJC) to honour Greek Jewish victims of the Shoah. The flame was a contribution to the British Holocaust Memorial Day Trust 2020 programme call for memorial flames sent to faith organisations, schools, local authorities, community groups and art clubs from across the UK. Leicester's flame was among the 75 flames chosen (from more than 300 entries) for the UK's national Commemorative Ceremony; the number signifying the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The flame was created by LPJC in cooperation with Leicester resident George Sfougaras. We document *lj today's* story of the memorial flame and thank their editors for permission to reprint.



Nick's book has just come out and we are very happy that he has decided to "release" his poems and make them available to the wider public. Nick Germanacos is a Board Member, along with his wife, Anne Germanacos, as well as a dear friend. Steady, permanent, lifelong. An educator and poet, he moved with Anne to San Francisco a few years ago having lived in Greece (Crete and Kalymnos) for a long period. In Greece, Nick and Anne oversaw an exceptional study-abroad program for US students called *Ithaka* which, for some of us, was an invaluable and unforgettable experience in teaching practice and communal spirit. (We were also privileged to have Nikos Stavroulakis as Visiting Lecturer there). Nick has a farm, together with a second home in Crete, not far from Hania. We hope to be seeing him there more often, and to continue to enjoy moments of convivial gathering with his family and the local "parea" (company) of friends.

Nick's style reveals a unique trajectory, both literally and spiritually: it takes us from Cyprus to Wales, to the Greek Mediterranean islands, and to the US west coast. This trajectory is marked by mobility, a powerful perception of roots, carefree youth, colonialism, separation and uprooting, affections and passions. Its protagonists speak in different tongues and trace their origins in multiple spaces and locations, while grappling, throughout this course, with emotion and a strong sense of history. The material is a treasure for anthropological reflection. However, different readers will surely find their own ways to identify with the text. It makes such good reading.

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki

SUNDAY NOON IN THE METROPOLIS

Clatter of dishes in the sink next door.
Children at play four gardens up.
A dog barks when it shouldn't —
a shouted reprimand, the dog shuts up.
A car honks at the corner STOP.
Waft of meat from the verandah grill.
Palm fronds whisper in the ocean breeze.
Spring sun shyly licks the skin.

A verse of simple things
comes out of this.

As good at it gets
in the metropolis.



SIESTA

While reading on the porch, I nod off —
it's hard not to — is it the heat, the years,
or the encroaching crab?

Whatever.

After minutes, hours or days,
I shake awake, sure she's in the house,
writing at her desk, reading somewhere,
or in the kitchen pecking nuts.
No matter where, I could swear
she is somewhere in the house.

She is not.
She left days or weeks or years ago.

Mind curdles when stewed in sleep.
Memory clots in midday heat.

Perhaps I can cajole her back?

Resigned, I slip
into the pit she leaves behind,
fill it with busy-ness and chaff.

And yet, I could have sworn
she's somewhere in our shuttered house.

Is it the heat, the years,
The greedy crab?

No matter now.



N.C. GERMANACOS

N. C. GERMANACOS 2019, Ora et Labora. The Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study Inc.

THE DAY'S LIST

Unless you plan nothing gets done.
Do this, do that — call him, her —
go here, there — tasks
that frame the day.

So, what's on the list?
Post Office, Mother, cleaners,
medications, eggs — and, oh,
just forgot — the plumber.

A pipe
has burst, water's filled the basement,
lapped into the hall, gurgled up
the stairs, will drown the house —
drown *us*, since we have sworn
never to abandon it.

So, find the plumber first —
and don't forget the eggs —
those medications —
and Mother, too.

THE OPTOMETRIST

— Look straight ahead.
Don't blink.
Can you read that line?
— Squiggles, worms and waves.
— And now?
— I think it's **R-I-P** (wild guess).
— Wrong. It's blank. Next line?
— Blank?
— Wrong again.
It's **R-I-P**.

It's clear I am blind as a bat,
and she's messing with me.
Whatever else, I now see
that '**Blank**' and '**R-I-P**'
are interchangeable.



A Taste of Crete.

Discovering the History of the City through its Cuisine

by Gabi Ancarola

A Taste of Crete is a four-hour culinary experience that aims to show visitors the many historic (and by extension, gastronomic) faces of Hania, an eclectic scenario in which all the cultures that clashed and thrived on the island over centuries have left their distinctive stamp and memories, especially in this city.

We usually meet early in the morning to firstly taste and enjoy Hania's traditional bougatsa and it's at this moment when visitors learn about the exchange of population between Turkey and Greece. They soon discover that they're about to do a lot more than simply eat their way through the city!

We move back and forward in time, sampling the different flavors of the Municipal Market, the Agora. As we're standing in the square in front of the Agora, I often ask them to look up and read the date carved over the clock. 1913. It's a real surprise for the visitors to learn that Crete has only been a part of Greece for a little over one hundred years. It's often difficult for them to believe that so many different foreign entities have invaded, occupied and controlled the island over millennia from the

Romans to the Germans in WWII. It awakens their interest and leaves them wanting to know more about the island and its people.

Some of these cultures left a tangible mark around the city from its Venetian facades to Turkish fountains. These and other cultures have also left us habits, traditions and rituals which are still repeated today including the use of spices, coffee and tobacco which the Saracens introduced to the island between the two Byzantine periods. Our visit to the Agora allows visitors to discover the myriad tastes that were typical of the many cultures on Crete over time, and how those tastes combine and create today's special gastronomic fusion. They enter the Agora expecting to sample a Greek salad, but they leave with a new knowledge and appreciation of soups, stews, wild greens and pies. They taste extra virgin olive oil from the two local olive varieties and learn about carob, as well as over ten different indigenous grape varieties. They taste tsikoudia, but also cheeses, snails, honey, and spices. They leave with an awareness about the aromas and flavors characteristic of the Venetian and Turkish



cultures, in addition to those other cultures that also belong to Hania's past and identity.

As we enter the Old Town, it's easy for them to spot Orthodox churches, Venetian mansions, Catholic monasteries and even an Egyptian Lighthouse. And, unless they've already learnt about it out of their own curiosity and research, chances are that they have no idea that there's a synagogue in Hania.

For this reason, after tasting our pomegranate juice, we slowly walk along Kondilaki Street to Etz Hayyim in the old Jewish quarter of Hania, Evraiki. Once at the doors of the synagogue, I encourage the group to enter the building and explore a much lesser-known face of the city.

The last remaining synagogue of Crete is an important part of this culinary walking tour of Hania. It's a place full of history, but it's also where Hania's Jewish community forged a particular gastronomic identity through special dishes served during the different holidays, and all care-

fully prepared with local ingredients.

The Jewish contribution to the local cuisine also finds an expression through quince or pomegranate 'spoon sweets' which the women of the Romaniote and Sephardi communities especially prepared in order to break the fast after Yom Kippur, some of them still popular on the island. As well, the island's olive oil is a key gastronomic element used to light the candles on Shabbat.

Etz Hayyim welcomes them warmly, showing them a rich (and unexpected) heritage still, in some ways, alive today as the synagogue is active. The calm and peaceful atmosphere of the northern courtyard allows the group to contemplate the sad and poignant history of Hania's Jewish community which perished during WWII. The visitors soon realise why the Romaniote past of Crete shouldn't be overlooked.

© photos: The Tiny Book



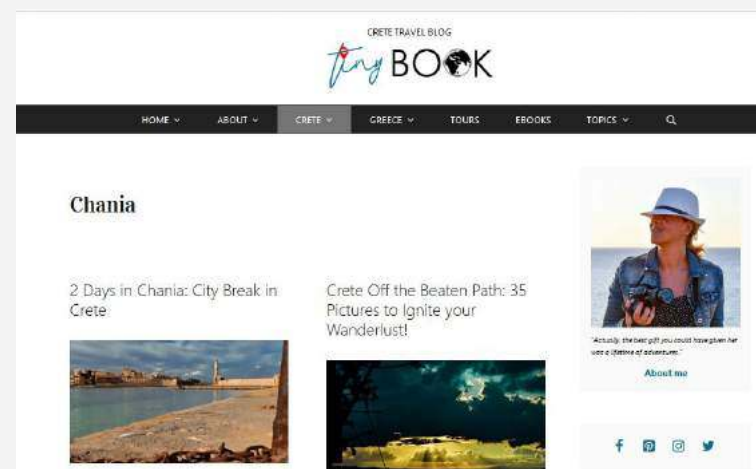
Gabi Ancarola, one of our favourite tour guides regularly visiting Etz Hayyim, is a Buenos Aires-born translator and journalist living in Hania who, every summer, offers gastronomic experiences in town and a range of other innovative tours of Crete (www.thetinybook.com/experiences).

We hope her article might entice you to visit Crete as soon as this will be possible again. For planning your next trip to Hania and Crete - or for dreaming about it already now, you might want to take a look at her blog: www.thetinybook.com. In the Crete section, she publishes Visit Guides to popular spots and articles about lesser-

known areas on the island from the perspective of a local resident. Her section about Hania is a particularly rich guide to our region including her own maps and photography. She publishes new articles every week.

We also recommend her guide book "Chania & West Crete" (available as an e-book) depicting the gems of the region of Hania, in which she includes a detailed description of Etz Hayyim.

Gabi Ancarola also writes for Greek Reporter, an American newspaper for the Greek diaspora community. She has published "Due Settimane nelle Cicladi", a travel guide in Italian for the Cycladic Islands.





Obituaries

Memorial Service for Ida Mordoch at Etz Hayyim

On 3 January 2020, the Havurah of Etz Hayyim held a memorial service for Ida Mordoch who sadly passed away on New Year's Eve after years of battling serious illness.

Ida was a thoughtful and dedicated friend to Nikos Stavroulakis. As a young graphic designer, she became his personal assistant, helping him in every possible way for the rest of his life. Ida was part of the small team which Nikos headed in the 1970s. Under his supervision, this team assembled a large valuable collection of Greek Jewish cultural items which were donated by Jewish families in Greece or salvaged after the Second World War from abandoned homes, synagogues and graveyards. This collection eventually became the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens.

In the 1990s, Ida established the publishing house, Talos Press with Nikos. It was at Talos that most of Nikos' books, papers and selected artworks were published due in large part to her unfailing persistence and perseverance. The last major project was the publication of the Etz Hayyim Haggadah in 2015.

When Etz Hayyim was rededicated in the autumn of 1999, Ida was a natural ongoing supporter of the synagogue and its new era. Her creative talents and commitment would profoundly shape Etz Hayyim up to the pre-

sent-day. Inspired by her frequent visits, she designed ceramic painted Kiddush cups, embroidered challah covers, postcards featuring Nikos' artwork and images of Etz Hayyim. Along with Talos Press books, these items would generate manifold donations that decisively contributed to the preservation of Etz Hayyim.

Ida was a humble, warm and caring person who, throughout her life, cheerfully preferred an 'Eastern' lifestyle which was manifested in the style and colouring of her clothes, her taste in foods, arts and the books she read. Deeply aware of having been born during a painful time in history when her family's Sephardic Jewish roots had almost been entirely eradicated, she knew that she would never be able to identify with a European way of living. Instead, she advocated for animals which she loved, Greek nature and for Mediterranean art and was, throughout her life, a generous and understanding human being to her family and friends. She was a rare gem of a woman who would hide her worries with a laugh and vividly encourage us all with the belief that we can all overcome more than we might believe.

We, who had the privilege to know her, will miss her dearly and we send our warm thoughts to her family, who will miss her even more.

Marianna Vinther



Left: Ida with Nikos Stavroulakis in Bangladesh.

Centre: For the memorial service, Havurah member Paola Nicotera prepared a calligraphy of Psalm 36:9: "For you are the fountain of life." As Paola expressed it: "I wanted to share my belief that Ida is fully alive in the Lord who is the source and creator of life in all its expressions."

Right: Still from a short video made by Havurah member David Ben Ivgi about the memorial service for Ida. The video can be viewed here: www.facebook.com/EtzHayyimSynagogue/videos/2698826336873444/



Giray Ertaş (1969-2019)

Giray Ertaş from Istanbul, a close friend of Nikos and regular visitor to Hania and Etz Hayyim, tragically passed away in a car accident on 4 December 2019.

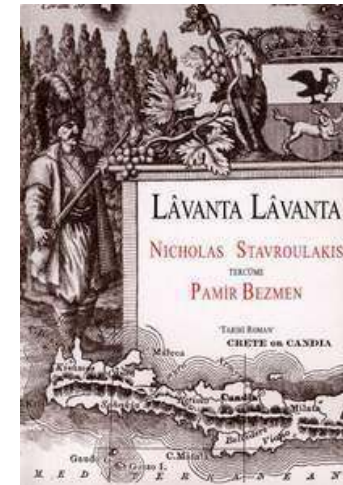
Giray first contacted Nikos after having read his historical novel, "The Lavender Seller", published in 2000 as "Lâvanta Lâvanta" in Turkish (the novel has not been published in English yet). As he liked the book and was curious who would write such a compassionate story about Ottoman Crete, he travelled to Hania and visited Nikos. His enthusiasm and resolve to pursue his interests and passions was captivating. Nikos and Giray became close friends and enjoyed together more than one good Turkish raki and stories about the "Poli" in Nikos' iconic kitchen.

Giray was also of immense help when several books in

Nikos' collection on Ottoman art history had to be replaced after they were lost in the first arson attack in 2010. He also attended many Etz Hayyim community events like the 2010 Pesah Seder and the last celebration of Hanukkah with Nikos in 2016.

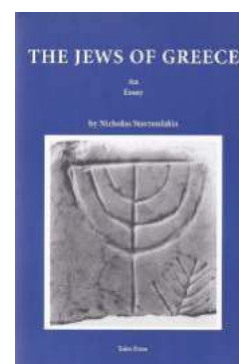
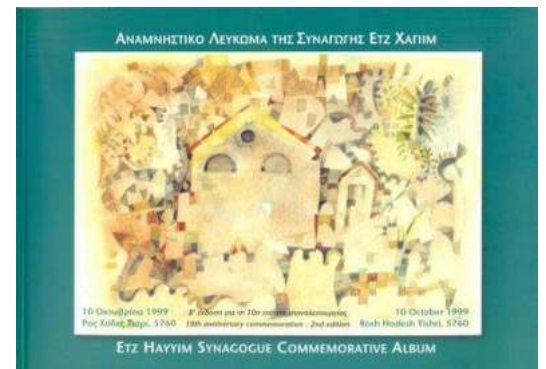
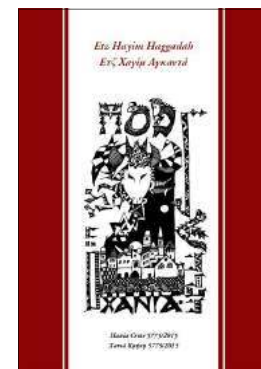
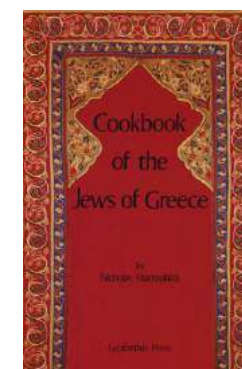
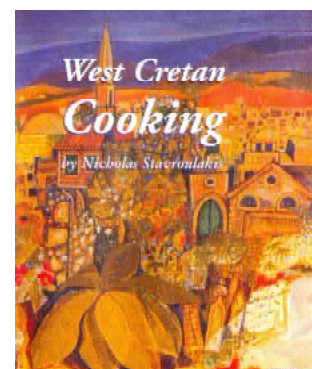
Giray was a true globetrotter; there was hardly a country in the world that he had not travelled to: the photos he sent from his travels came from places like the Congolese jungle or North Korea. But still, he stayed in close touch and regularly returned to Hania, Etz Hayyim and his friends here. Just last summer he visited Crete with his partner Zeynep to show her the island he had fallen in love with, too. Giray is dearly missed and it is still hard to believe that he won't visit again.

Anja Zuckmantel



left: Giray with Nicholas de Lange and Nikos Stavroulakis in 2008.

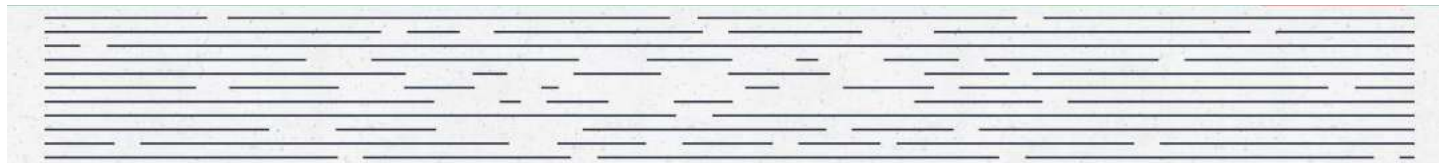
right: cover of "Lâvanta Lâvanta"



We wanted to remind you that several of Nikos' publications are available from Etz Hayyim, against donation. His **Cookbook of the Jews of Greece**, a classic and much more than just a cookbook with delicious holiday recipes. **West Cretan Cooking**, with watercolour illustrations by Nikos, presents Jewish, Muslim and Christian recipes from Crete. The **Etz Hayyim Haggadah** and the **Commemorative Album**, both reflecting Nikos' personal take on Jewish heritage. The essay **The Jews of Greece** about the 2,500 years of Greek Jewish history and a folder with copies of woodcuts depicting ten verses from **Proverbs**. Please contact us for further details. All proceeds support Etz Hayyim Synagogue.



Gedenkdienst & Volunteers



My First Very Own Daily Routine

Halftime. It's a difficult time and place to reflect and write really about anything. I am no longer at the beginning of an exciting adventure where I can let my nervously beating heart speak for me. Nor I am at the end of it and so cannot provide a clear, sorted-out view of things. Instead, I have found, on first sight, a slightly mundane routine which I enjoy immensely and by which I simply live, practice and embrace with all its smallest details, one day after another. Since I find myself unable to write about anything else, I will use this opportunity to describe this routine which is something very special for a 19-year-old: my first very own daily routine. After getting up in the morning, going for a run and drinking a cup of coffee, or several cups, I make my way to the synagogue. As always, before I have the chance to knock at the housekeeper's door to ask for the keys, Bosdjin, our grey and stinky cat, sits in front of the synagogue's gate and won't let me pass until he has received his well-deserved morning attention: minutes of petting. Later on it's coffee time (again), and Anja and I go through the schedule of the day and I am usually equipped with enough article and book recommendations for a whole month. Day after day. Then, since in winter time visitors are a very rare sight, I work mostly on my laptop on projects like the upcoming Jewish Quarter Walking Tour and a video project as well. At

around noon time, I make use of the calmness which befalls Hania in winter time, devoid of tourists, and go and buy some groceries to make lunch for Anja and myself, together with any of the synagogue's friends who might decide to visit the place that day. I then return to my work and often end up talking to a handful of visitors in the afternoon which I appreciate more than ever given that we have less visitors coming in January, February and March compared to the summer months. At around five in the afternoon, I go home and embrace the most important life lesson I've learnt on Crete so far, "σιγά, σιγά". I sit down in a café, meet some friends, read a book and simply try to comprehend how lucky I am to live in this town on this wonderful island for a whole year. Even though I still find it close to impossible to make my friends back home understand my experience of Hania, photography, to me, comes the closest to communicating the beauty of this place.

Well, we know that this year has so far been upended in a way we could never have foreseen. Due to the ongoing coronavirus situation I came to the conclusion, after much discussion with all parties involved and interested in my personal safety, that it would be best to return to Austria for the foreseeable future. While I prided myself so much (as mentioned in my last *Jottings* article) as refusing to take airplanes, I had no choice but to jump on

one. This meant six hours of travelling instead of 63 - I suppose air travel has its advantages after all, even though I prefer the seats of rusty old Bulgarian buses over airplane seats!

Now I am back in my hometown, not knowing when I will return to Hania just yet. I suppose most of us are currently experiencing radical changes to our daily lives because of the coronavirus pandemic, and although these measures are necessary right now, we all long to return to our lives as they were before this global crisis. As do I, and I am really looking forward to returning and to perhaps reinvent my very first own daily routine.

Jonas Baumgartner



A January in Hania

by Gwen Ellis

Hello wonderful Havurah members! My name is Gwen, and I had the pleasure of volunteering at Etz Hayyim for three weeks in January this year. How I came to be there is kind of a strange story! I am currently studying for a year in Athens, although I am originally an American college student. The Athens program does a few field trips each semester, and one of the first ones we did in September was a week-long trip to Crete. We wandered all over the island, but I remember our time in Hania most vividly. On our first evening in Hania, we visited Etz Hayyim (past closing time; they graciously stayed late to give us a tour). I remember being so amazed! The story of the synagogue is so remarkable, and as a history student, I was totally fascinated. Our tour guide mentioned that there are two historians conducting research at the synagogue too, which was just the cherry on top. I knew I had to come back.

The American school year is typically divided into two semesters, with a month-long gap between them in January. I thought to myself, 'oh, well, I have three weeks with nothing to do, why not see if I can somehow go back to Etz Hayyim?' It was definitely crazy, as no one from my study abroad program has ever done something like this, but I felt I had to try. Long story short, I got in touch with Daphne Lappa and Katerina Anagnostaki, two historians working with Etz Hayyim, and I convinced them to let me help with their research! The office also offered to let me sort through Nikos Stavroulakis' personal collection, a portion of which Etz Hayyim had just received. My crazy dream came true!

I am sure most people associated with Etz Hayyim know about Daphne and Katerina's research project into the Jewish community of Hania on the eve of the Nazi occupation. For any who aren't totally updated, they are currently working on a digital map and searchable database with the names of every Hania Jew from the mid-19th to early 20th century. The database will be available in Greek and English, and the task they assigned to me was the transliteration of all 1,200 or so Greek names into

Latin alphabet. It involved a lot of squinting at spreadsheets! They also had me comb through historical newspapers in English for any articles which mentioned the Cretan Jewish community. When I wasn't working on things for Katerina and Daphne, I was working on sorting/organising Nikos' slides in the Etz Hayyim library. That was its own challenge, as I had to decipher his labelling system and the logic of his organisation method (or lack thereof!). As a prospective historian, it was all such valuable experience. And so much fun!

I have to say though, the best part about volunteering at Etz Hayyim was the people. Before I arrived in Hania, Anja, the director of the synagogue, told me that Etz Hayyim is a special place, and she was definitely right! Most weekdays, friends of the synagogue would drop by to have coffee or tea with us in the office and chat about new project ideas, political happenings, and so on. The Friday Shabbat service was small, but so warm and welcoming.

None of the Havurah members had ever met me before, but they treated me like family right away. Even the cats were wonderful (although Bosjin can sometimes be needy). Overall, I am so glad that I got to be part of the community, even if only for a month. I only wish I could stay longer! I am sure I will never forget all the lovely friends I met here, and the magic of Etz Hayyim.

Editorial note: Like Jonas, Gwen had to leave Greece and return home due to the Corona crisis in March. She is now taking her College Year in Athens (CYA) classes online and has actively lobbied her university that study abroad students won't suffer financial consequences in this unforeseeable situation.

We hope that Gwen will set an example and that there will be volunteers from the CYA programme in the future. Nadia Meliniotis, CYA Executive Director of Student Affairs, and incidentally an old friend of Nikos Stavroulakis, has already expressed sincere interest.



From the Etz Hayyim Office

Greetings from the now reopened Etz Hayyim office! We have been officially back to work at the synagogue since early May and we're gradually transitioning from home-office arrangements, which we had somewhat gotten used to after almost two full months, to what can be called 'regular operations' in these strange times. As of 17th May, the synagogue has been open to visitors, although under very strict guidelines limiting the number of people inside the building to a maximum of ten. The guidelines are posted on our website: <http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/visitor-information/>.

On 1st April, our small team reunited again for the upcoming season with Alex Ariotti returning after several months of archaeological work abroad and Haniote historian, Giorgos Psaroudakis joining us for the first time (see his intro message in the box). We also hope that our Gedenkdienst volunteer, Jonas will be able to return to work with us in person once more before his term is over at the end of August. At the moment, he regularly joins us in online staff meetings and continues to work on various projects from his home town in Upper Austria.

For obvious reasons, this year we will undoubtedly receive significantly less than the 29,000 visitors who entered through the Rothchild Gate in 2019. While this is a serious setback for us, we are endeavouring to make the best of the situation as we will now have more time dedicated to our research, to expanding our educational outreach programme and adapting it to digital formats. We are also in the process of cataloguing the 'Nikos Stavroulakis Collection' and have increased our fundraising efforts to make up for the expected drop in visitor donations this year.

In January, Jonas made our repeated mantra of "we should prepare our own lunches more often" a new year's resolution and until early March, he cooked the most delicious dishes in the Etz Hayyim kitchen on an almost daily basis. However, Mondays remained "Falafel Monday" because we just couldn't resist the delicious falafel at Falavela, a fairly new falafel place in town. These shared lunches and the coffee/tea and cookie

breaks were much missed during the last two months, but the lockdown, itself, created another peculiar culinary challenge for us: the



Legume and wheat-berry stew (Sympetherios) made by Jonas

Hello Friends of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, My name is Giorgos Psaroudakis and I am a new member of the team at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. I was born and raised in Hania until the age of 17 when I moved to Athens to study history and archaeology at the University of Athens after finishing high school. On completing my Bachelor degree in History, I then went on to study for a Master's degree in European History, also at University of Athens, specialising in Modern and Contemporary History of Central Europe. While studying for my Masters, I also taught history in a few private schools in Athens for a couple of years. I then decided that I wanted to return to my hometown of Hania where, for the last four years, I have been teaching Greek history, as well as the modern Greek language in a private school. In addition to my teaching, as a hobby, I run free historical walking tours in the city with a friend. I have always been particularly interested in the history of Hania and through my walking tours, I realised that the Hania's pre-war Jewish community is a really important part of the history of the city. In my view, the island's once vibrant Jewish heritage enriches the culture of Crete. Therefore, I feel really happy that I will be contributing to the efforts to preserve the memory of the Hania's Jewish community through my work at the synagogue.

Giorgos Psaroudakis

cancellation of the Pesah community Seder left us with several boxes of Matzot and we are now looking for ways to use them in our daily cooking. If you have any ideas, please share your favourite leftover Matzot recipes!

In early March, Anja was interviewed for the project *Istorima* about the story of Nikos Stavroulakis reviving Etz Hayyim Synagogue, the history of the Jews of Crete and



the work of Etz Hayyim over the past 20 years. This account will become part of a public archive of over 50,000 oral histories from all over Greece. *Istorima* was initiated by Professor Katherine Fleming, a founding member of the Etz Hayyim Board and Greek journalist, Sofia Papaioannou and funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

We hope you enjoyed this edition of *Jottings*. We would be happy to hear from you and receive your feedback or contributions for future editions.

All best wishes and stay healthy!
Your team of Etz Hayyim.



Fundraising



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.

We understand that this is a difficult time to ask for your support and we sincerely thank you for taking a moment to consider our immediate fundraising needs.

Help us maintain Etz Hayyim Synagogue: Ehal and Bimah

The structural maintenance of the historic building of Etz Hayyim is an ongoing project. A thorough inspection of the building undertaken in February revealed the extent of the constant problems of humidity and salinity which are commonplace in old port cities like Hania. Furthermore, due to the extensive flooding in 2017/2018, both the Ehal and Bima of Etz Hayyim suffered major structural



New, solid wood, basis of Ehal after repair works in March/April 2020.

Donations by Bank Transfer

Account Name: Civil Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim
IBAN: **GR94 0171 6350 0066 3510 9559 315**
SWIFT/BIC: PIRBGRAA
Bank: Piraeus Bank (1635), Agia Marina, Hania
Please list your contact information when making a transfer so we can send you a donation receipt.

al damage. It was an urgent matter of security to take immediate action and have them repaired before the then-expected beginning of the tourist season. When we made the decision in February, we were hoping to cover the costs of EUR 7,192 with donations from visitors which we will now, more than likely, be unable to collect. Indispensable to the maintenance, upkeep and security of Etz Hayyim are our janitor Beznik Seiti and cleaning lady Garoufalia Stavrou, who have both been with us since the reopening of the synagogue in 1999. Support toward their salaries is also a major support for Etz Hayyim.

Help us maintain and expand our educational programme

More than ever, we will need your help to cover operating costs. A solid educational programme requires thorough research, development and printing of appropriate materials and qualified staff for implementation. Donations towards operating costs like staff salaries, acquisition of books and printing are therefore much needed and welcome.

All help counts and is appreciated. 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).

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**.

Please note that **FJC no longer accept checks**, see their website for **other options: <https://fjc.org/donate-now>**.

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