



Jottings

Etz Hayyim Synagogue

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Editorial

At my age, I now find that I think more about the passage of time and less about success. Since I re-opened the synagogue in 1999, its important role in bringing together people of all nationalities and faiths, not to mention commemorating Cretan Jewish history, has been rewarding. Yet, it must be remembered that we are all small players in a narrative that stretches back centuries, although we, as the synagogue's supporters, as its Havurah, are continuing this story. The theme of recollection and reconciliation which is the foundation of Etz Hayyim, is also expressed in this year's interfaith calendar in which we are reminded just how multicultural, multi-faith and ethnically diverse Hania was for so many centuries (much more than today). In many ways, we can understand the shared traditions and rituals of Judaism, Christianity and Islam when looking at these snap-shots of Hania life in the past. These shared similarities can and should bring us together, while at the same time, celebrating the differences and diversity among these traditions, especially at a time when we are surrounded



by so much religious and ethnic conflict.

On a more somber note, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sorrow for the passing of our supporter and friend, Nikolaj Kiessling, and my condolences to his wife, Irene. My illness was compounded in the last years of Nikolaj's life, but in spite of this, both Nikolaj and Irene always embraced me warmly and were very

supportive of the synagogue. I want to convey just how important the Kiesslings were to me and how much Nikolaj will be missed by all of us.

Nikos Stavroulakis

Visit of Romaniote Jews from the United States to Etz Hayyim

By Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos

On June 24th, 31 visitors from the United States had the honor to attend Friday night Kabbalat services at Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania. This visit was highly anticipated on our part and, as it was the first day of our arrival in Greece, highly meaningful. Our group was composed primarily of Romaniote Jews who had learned of the tour to Jewish Greece through The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry (A.F.G.J) and Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum (K.K.J.S.M.) in New York City. I was honored to be the tour leader and, in my capacity as Museum Director of Kehila Kedosha Janina, and President of The Association of Friends of Greek Jewry, very familiar with both the history of Etz Hayyim and the small Jewish community that had resided in Hania. A number of the members of our New York Community had their roots in Jewish Crete.

The relationship of both U.S. organizations with Etz Hayyim has been a long one, my having visited Hania in 1997 when Etz Hayyim was a desolate, garbage-strewn, bombed-out shell. The Association and K.K.J.S.M. were among the many organizations world-wide that contributed to help make Nikos Stavroulakis' dream a reality. This was not the first time I had ... continued on page 7

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Festivals and Liturgical Life at Etz Hayyim

Pesach



About 50 people gathered for the Erev Pessah service at the synagogue and later for the annual Pesach Seder at the ELA restaurant. The Seder was led this year by Nikos Stavroulakis and Rabbi Nicholas de Lange.

The preparation of the traditional food for the Seder, guided by Ahouva Amar, in the kitchen of the ELA restaurant as well as the Seder itself were filmed for the documentary *"The Art of Repair"* (page 6).

Hashkavah (Memorial Service)

The first part of the annual memorial service was held at the Monument to the Victims of the Tanais. The Prefect and Vice-Mayor of Hania, along with Victor Eliezer, representing the Central Board of Jews in Greece (KISE) emphasized the importance of remembering the fate of the Jewish Community of Crete. The main commemorative talk was held by Professor Vassiliki Yakoumaki (University of Thessaly).

A Hashkavah (memorial service) followed at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The service was officiated by Gabriel Negrin, Chief Rabbi of Athens. As part of the ceremony, Etz Hayyim Havurah member Natalie Ventura read her poem "Memorial Service", her husband Joseph the Greek translation. The names of the members of the lost community were read while a candle for each was lit.

New Torah Cover

During their most recent visit to Etz Hayyim, Gershon Coren (who had officiated the Yom Kippur service in 2015) and his wife Josanne donated a new cover for one of our Torah scrolls. Our sincere thanks to both of them for their kind donation.



Our sincere thanks to the following members of our Havurah for providing wonderful homemade Challot for the Kabbalat Shabbath services: Ahouva Amar, Diane Cook, Christa Oser, Gina Savdie-Uzan, Dennis Weinberg.



Lighting candles during the Hashkavah service.



«Το μήνιμα της νίκης της ανθρωπιάς απέναντι στην απανθρωπιά, τον πολιτισμό απέναντι στη βαρβαρότητα και της ανεκτικότητας στο διαφορετικό απέναντι στον φανατισμό του σκοταδισμού παραμένει επίκαιρο μέχρι τις μέρες μας».

Αυτό επεσήμανε, μεταξύ άλλων ο εκπαιδευτής του Ισπανικού Σημειώσεως Ελέγχου Βόκωρ Ελντερ μιλώντας στην εκδήλωση μνήμης που πραγματοποιήθηκε στο μνημείο για τα μέλη της Επανάστασης Κομμουνιστική του αμερικανικού κράτους από τους Ναζί και σκοτώθηκαν μαζί με Ελληνες και Ιταλούς αντιστασιακούς και Κομμουνιστές.

[illegible]

του βίου ξεκινάμεν να οδηγούμε τον "Παύλο" στα πρόθυρα να αποπειράται τον θάνατο να πραγματοποιήσει στην παλαιά πύλη.

Αποφασίζω στα γυνώδια της εικόνας θέσω να εντοπιστούν σελήνη στα "Παυλίστα" του Σαμουήλ. Ο Σαμουήλ ο Βασιλιάς του Ισραήλ ήταν ο παλαιότερος, πρεσβύτερος άλλωστε και ο "Παύλος" σ'αυτά τον αλκί και τον σκεπασμένο με βότρυς και κινδυνεύει να "επιστρέψει" να υποστηρίξει την ιστορία ή Ελπίδα, αλλά ποτέ να μην αποκατασταθεί και να μην απομνημονεύσει καμιά φορά, πάλαι και πάλι τότε στον παλαιό τους.

Στο κέντρο της σελήνης πραγματοποιείται η επιθυμία του θάνατου και κατέβει σ'αυτήν και τον Ισραήλ και τον Σαμουήλ και τον Βασιλιά.

AHM. MAP.

ΔHM. MAP

Report about Hashkavah in local newspaper *Haniotika Nea*.



Exhibition at Etz Hayyim: 20 Year Commemoration of the Reconstruction 1996-1999

Over the course of several months in early 2016, the staff at Etz Hayyim prepared an exhibition about Nikos Stavroulakis and his rebuilding of the synagogue entitled "20 Year Commemoration of the Reconstruction 1996 – 1999". The exhibition marks the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the synagogue's reconstruction and was officially opened on 14th June in the exhibition space above the administrative office. The staff felt it important to honor Nikos' initiative by presenting nine individual panels that highlight the step by step process of the rebuilding project, but told in Nikos' own words and with personal quotes and photographs to accompany the text. This narrative is routinely explained by staff to Etz Hayyim visitors because the story of the synagogue's reconstruction and of Nikos are mutually intertwined. Yet, the exhibition has allowed visitors to fully appreciate Nikos' work in reconstructing the building, as well as his lasting vision for Etz Hayyim as an all-inclusive place of prayer, recollection and reconciliation, with the use of carefully selected photos showing the ruined and abandoned synagogue as it stood for fifty years from 1944 to the mid-1990s.

The exhibition begins with background information on Nikos as an academic, art historian, writer, painter and printer and describes how he came to be associated with Etz Hayyim. It touches on the events that led to Nikos' involvement in rebuilding the synagogue fifty years after WWII and the deportation of Chania's Jewish community, and immediately following a devastating earthquake in 1995 that caused serious structural damage. The exhibition details the history of the building from its origins as a Venetian Catholic church in the 15th century and how it came to be a synagogue in the 17th

century. The panels then extrapolate each stage of the reconstruction process, beginning with the southern courtyard and *mikveh*, the northern courtyard and the synagogue interior, itself. It ends with the rededication and reopening of Etz Hayyim in October 10th, 1999 that was attended by the rabbis and presidents of several Jewish communities in Greece, both international and Greek dignitaries including a former Greek Prime Minister, the then German Ambassador and the Metropolitan Bishop of Chania, together with members of the Havurah, local officials and press and other interested parties. The exhi-



bition ends with a view on Etz Hayyim today; specifically how it runs on a daily basis including the various Jewish holidays, as well as the Hashkavah (memorial service for the Cretan Jewish community), the cultural events routinely taking place, its educational outreach program, and lastly, a section on Etz Hayyim's dedicated staff and volunteers, the Havurah and the ways in which the synagogue is maintained by a non-for-profit organisation.

It is hoped that this exhibition can be shown permanently because it serves as a wonderful illustration or accompaniment to the informal talks given by staff to visitors on the history of Cretan Jews (with particular emphasis on the Chania community), the synagogue itself, and most importantly, of Nikos Stavroulakis, without whom there would not be an active synagogue in Crete and particularly one that is inclusive and welcoming to all and one that brings together a dedicated (multicultural and multi-faith) Havurah.

Alexandra Ariotti





Cultural Events at Etz Hayyim

On 8th June, Rita Gabai-Terzates, a member of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, gave a lecture about the Dead Sea Scrolls. She described the discovery of the Scrolls and the presumed context and cultural setting of their compilation and discussed the content of some of the most prominent scrolls.

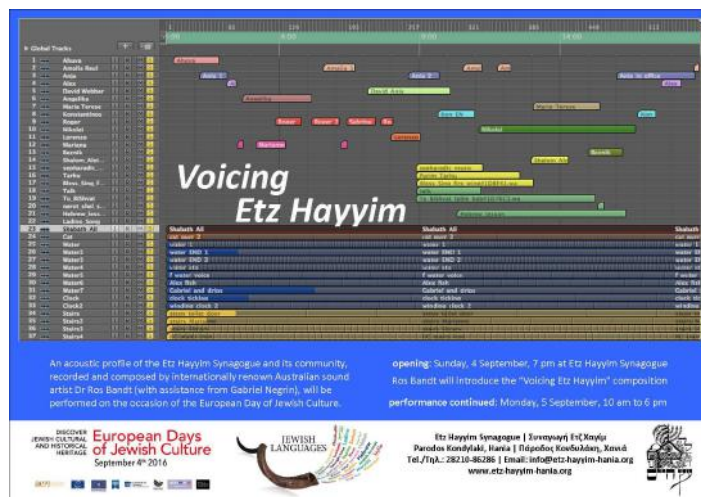
On 20th June, Etz Hayyim was the setting for a concert by Nektarios Mitritsakis (sitar) and Stella Kremida (tanpura) attended by about 70 people that was part of the 2016 European Music Day.



On 13th July, we screened the film "Stars" by director Konrad Wolf, which tells the story of the deportation of the Jews of Thessaloniki as one of the first films to portray the German culpability for the Holocaust. This film, a recipient of the Special Grand Jury Prize of the Cannes Film Festival in 1959, was introduced by Professor

Thomas Naumann, the brother of the director and Vice President of the Friedrich Wolf Association.

On 4th September, Etz Hayyim participated in another pan-European cultural program: the European Day of Jewish Culture. This year's general theme was "Jewish Languages", a topic explored in "Voicing Etz Hayyim," an acoustic profile of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue and its community, which was recorded and composed by internationally renowned Australian sound artist Dr Ros Bandt in 2011. The composition was performed in the synagogue and also played in the venue of our current exhibition (see p. 3) for two days. About 500 visitors listened to the voices and sounds of Etz Hayyim.



Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete - Launch of Mobile Application



The new mobile application "Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete" was launched on 14th June in the presence of Julie Crôteau, Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Canada, Athens (her speech is reprinted below).

We would like to express again our sincere thanks to the Embassy of Canada in Athens and particularly to Robert Peck, former Ambassador of Canada to Greece, who initiated the project. Thanks are also due to Anastasios

Skikos of Ready Labs Inc. for his dedicated and patient cooperation. The content for the app was prepared by the Etz Hayyim staff and provides an overview about Cretan Jewish history and traditions, as well as the history and virtual tour of Etz Hayyim.

The app is currently available in English and Hebrew free of charge for iPhones but its content is also accessible through a website: <http://haniajewishlegacy.com>. We hope to commission a Greek translation which would be very useful for educational purposes.

Remarks by Julie Crôteau, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Canada, Athens

I am pleased to welcome you here today to celebrate the launch of the "Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete" Mobile App project, an initiative that highlights and cele-

brates the deep historical roots of the Jewish Community of Crete. [...]

The Jews of Crete trace more than two thousand years

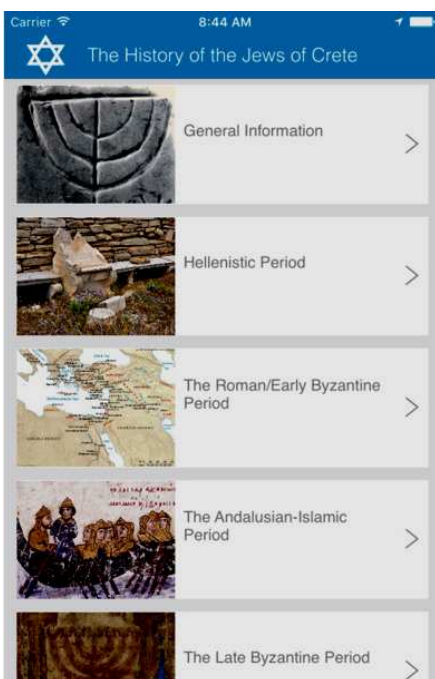


of rich history. Like other Jewish communities around Greece, Cretan Jews contributed significantly to the region's economic and commercial prosperity while enriching Crete's cultural, social and linguistic identity. The community also made important contributions in education, sciences and philosophy.

Although many Cretan Jews emigrated from the island in search of larger urban centers, Jewish life continued through a small, but vibrant community in Chania. Tragically, the last remaining Jews of Chania – 263 souls – perished in 1944 during the Nazi occupation of Crete while being transported to the camps on the ship “Tanais.” The disappearance of the Jewish community and the destruction of its spiritual and other buildings and monuments have sadly left few visible remnants of Crete's rich Jewish history.

Fortunately, Etz Hayyim Synagogue, where we have gathered today, is an exception to this fate, constituting the most important example and symbol of the Jewish heritage of Crete. It is a truly remarkable place that fulfills many central roles as a place of worship, as a memorial to the Jews lost in the Holocaust, as a museum devoted to Cretan Jewish history and as a gathering place that has brought back a sense of community. It embodies and represents the legacy of the Jewish community of Crete.

The “Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete” Mobile App



Screenshot of Mobile App

was created as a means of preserving that legacy. The project involved the development of a mobile device application which digitally traces the history, culture and traditions of the Jews of Crete, giving users immediate access to an especially significant part of Cretan Jewish history. A key section in the app is dedicated to the Etz Hayyim Synagogue including the first virtual tour of this historic building.

ΣΕ ΚΙΝΗΤΑ ΤΗΛΕΦΩΝΑ

Εφαρμογή για τη Συναγωγή Ετζ Χαγίμ

Η πορεία της εβραϊκής κοινότητας της Κρήτης στον χρόνο, και η ιστορία της Συναγωγής “Ετζ Χαγίμ” αναδεικνύεται μέσα από την εφαρμογή για κινητά τηλέφωνα (application) που παρουσιάστηκε το μεσημέρι της Τρίτης στον χώρο της Συναγωγής.

Η εφαρμογή αναπτύχθηκε από τον Κέντρο Ελληνικών Σπουδών του Εθνικού Στάυρου Νιάρχου στο Πανεπιστήμιο Simon Fraser στο Βανκούβερ του Καναδά με την υποστήριξη των Προσέτιών του Καναδά και του Ισραήλ σε συνεργασία με τη Συναγωγή Ετζ Χαγίμ.

«Η εφαρμογή είναι εύκολη στη χρήση της, δίνεται δωρεάν και εύκολα μπορεί κάποιος να την κατεβάσει στο κινητό του» ανέφερε η κα Τζωάννα Κρότσι, επιμελήτρια της Καναδικής Προσέτιας στην ΕΑΜΕΑ.

Από τη μεριά της η κα Τάμπε Μπεν-Χαΐμ, σύμβουλος Ισραηλινής Προσέτιας σημείωσε πως «είναι σημαντικό να γνωρίζει ο κόσμος ότι η Εβραϊκή Κοινότητα έχει 2.000



Η επιμελήτρια της Καναδικής Προσέτιας κ. Τ. Κρότσι (άνηφο), η σύμβουλος της Ισραηλινής Προσέτιας κ. Τ. Μπεν-Χαΐμ (δεξιά) και η κ. Ζ. Δελήμπαση (Ισραηλινή σύμβουλος Τύπου της Καν. Προσέτιας).



εξαφανίστηκαν από τους ναζί.

Η εφαρμογή είναι διαθέσιμη στα αγγλικά, τα ελληνικά και την εβραϊκή γλώσσα στην ιστοσελίδα: <http://www.haniajewishlegacy.com>.

Στην εκδήλωση παρουσίασε τα παρόντες ο διευθυντής της Συναγωγής Νίκος Χανδάν Σταυρουλάκης, ο πατρ. σύμβουλος Δ. Μικελόγιαννης κ.ά.

ΕΚΚΛ.

Report about App launch in local newspaper *Haniotika Nea*

The “Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete” Mobile App was developed by a talented team of Canadian software experts from the New Media Lab of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Centre for Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. [...] The New Media lab has already developed mobile applications for the Jewish Communities of Ioannina and Thessaloniki respectively. These unique applications show how technological tools can contribute to promoting the rich history of the Jews in Greece. The project was initiated during the term of Canada's former Ambassador to Greece, Robert Peck, and is now ready and available to the public in Greece and elsewhere. I invite you all to download the apps to your smartphones and mobile devices. I wish to congratulate the New Media team at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and their associates in Greece for “bringing to life” such an important project. We regret that they were not able to join us here today. The New Media team asked me to convey its regards to you here today.

As many of you know, the revival of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue is due to the vision, passion, perseverance and tireless work of a very special individual, Nikos Stavroulakis, who is with us here today. His commitment to the preservation and teaching of Cretan Jewish history was the catalyst that resulted in the realization of the Mobile app project. We are deeply grateful to him and congratulate him on an incredible accomplishment.



I wish to acknowledge Anja Zuckmantel and the team of Etz Hayyim for their invaluable work in collecting and compiling the historical content for the app, as well as Marianna Vinther for her continued support.

The "Etz Hayyim and Jewish Legacy in Crete" Mobile App project would not have been possible without the important contribution of the Embassy of Israel and I am so pleased to be joined here today by my Israeli colleague. Our collaboration underscores the importance of international partnerships in initiatives contributing to education on tolerance, acceptance and social inclusion.

On this day of Holocaust commemoration, we are reminded that such engagement is significant in teaching current and future generations the lessons of the Holocaust so as to help prevent future acts of racism, discrimination and anti-Semitism. It is our hope that the

app will serve to complement other efforts in support of Holocaust education and remembrance for a broad Greek audience for just that purpose.

I am proud of the partnerships leveraged in the realization of this project. As a nation, Canada has been profoundly shaped by approximately 40,000 Holocaust survivors who resettled across the country after the Second World War. Canadians understand the need to always remember the Holocaust, commemorate its victims, and renew the commitment to fight against racism, discrimination and anti-Semitism. As Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, said: "The Holocaust is a stark reminder of the dangers and risks of allowing hate, prejudice, and discrimination to spread unchallenged. It also reminds us that silence must never be an option when humanity is threatened."

***The Art of Repair.* A note from filmmakers Sandra Barty and Ken Ross**

We're happy to announce that the trailer for the feature length documentary we're making about the synagogue – *The Art of Repair* – is now complete and we'd love you to see it (accessible at this website: <http://hartleyfoundation.org/etz-hayyim-art-of-repair>).

Thus far, we've shot in Hania on three trips from New York and are now busy with the initial editing and con-

tinued fund-raising to return to Hania to continue shooting and complete the film. We welcome your comments, financial contributions and any family stories, including photos and home movies, that might be appropriate for the film.

Our new website, www.artofrepairfilm.com, will be live very soon. Please visit!



If seeds are sown, nurtured, and given the right attention, sites of tragedy can blossom into places of forgiveness and healing. ***The Art of Repair*** tells this story of hope.

As a generation of Jewish holocaust survivors pass on, and the holocaust deepens into our history, we enter a new era for redemption. ***The Art of Repair*** tells the story of an ancient synagogue in Hania, Crete reconstructed from the devastation of WWII into a renewed, inclusive Jewish community.

The main character of this film is the synagogue itself – a compelling, captivating, charismatic synagogue – visited by thousands of tourists of all faiths and ethnicities. People come to be in community, to heal, to worship, and to listen.

In the film we get to know key community members and find out what connects them to this sacred space. The walls of Etz Hayyim contain an incredible deep silence, echoes of the lack of sounds of the Jewish community it once served – taken away one May morning in 1944. At its core, this is a story of death and renewal. It is, as well, the story of vision, determination, struggle, and survival.

***The Art of Repair* celebrates the transformation of profound loss into newly created Jewish continuity, inclusivity, and vitality.**

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

Our sincere thanks to the friends and members of the Etz Hayyim Havurah who contributed to this newsletter. We would also love to hear from you. Please contact the synagogue if you would like to contribute an article, share information or ideas.

The next *Jottings* will be published for Pessah 5777. Please send contributions by March 1, 2017



continued from page 1: Visit of Romaniote Jews from the United States to Etz Hayyim

re-visited Etz-Hayyim, but it was, by far, the most emotional. To walk down the streets of the Old City of Hania, through the neighborhood where the small Jewish community of the city once lived, to enter the synagogue and hear the words of Jewish prayer vibrating throughout the sanctuary, made me realize so many things.

We often wonder if our efforts on earth will mean anything in the future, wondering what difference one person can make. Here inside the walls of Etz Hayyim, the words of Rabbi Hillel come alive: "If I am not for me, who is for me; and if I am (only) for myself, what am I. And if not now, when?" This quote states the essence of what it means to make a difference in the world. This quote so beautifully summarizes the importance of Nikos Stavroulakis' work. Nikos saw a wreck, a pile of stones that cried out to him, an insult to the memory of those Jews who had once worshipped inside the ancient synagogue, especially those who perished in the Holocaust. He made the decision to restore the synagogue, travelled the world raising money and succeeded, in spite of all those who doubted that he could. And here, on a warm summer evening in June 2016, 72 years after the loss of the small Jewish community of Hania, Jews from across the Atlantic had come to worship in the only remaining synagogue on the island of Crete.

Coming from a Romaniote tradition, the words of the liturgy reverberated in our souls. This year at Kehila Kedosha Janina, it truly appeared that all roads were leading to Hania. We were honored with the visit of Iossif Ventura in April, presenting his book of poetry, *Tanais*,

and, in June, the showing of the trailer, "The Art of Repair," by Sandra Barty and Ken Ross. All of this just whet our appetite for an actual visit. Returning to Hania, and Etz Hayyim, after a 14 year absence, made me realize that my visits, as part of our annual Tour to Jewish Greece, had to be more frequent. Not only does Hania wrap itself around your heart, charming all visitors, but Etz Hayyim offers a rare opportunity to see a traditional Romaniote service. This is not true in most other Romaniote synagogues in Greece where the absence of a congregation makes it impossible to hold services except when a visiting group brings a minyan or, in rare instances, on major Jewish Holidays. For Nikos Stavroulakis, the possibility of a service overrides other prerequisites de-



manded by other Jewish communities. On Friday evening, June 24th, there certainly was the requisite minyan but many non-Jews joined in, beautifully expressing Nikos' ecumenical dream for the synagogue. Realizing in 1996 that many might question the necessity of a synagogue in a city where there was no Jewish community, Nikos opened the doors to all, creating both a Jewish house of worship and a cultural center that welcomed all the ethnicities of the multicultural world of Hania.

We, from our little corner of the Jewish world, from a Romaniote synagogue across the sea in New York, felt so very lucky to celebrate Shabbat at Etz Hayyim. Thank you Nikos and Anya for making this possible. For those of you who plan a visit to New York City, we would love to welcome you to our special Romaniote world. Do access our website (www.kkjsm.org) and e-mail us (museum@kkjsm.org). Visit our Facebook page (Kehila Kedosha Janina). Most of all, if you are coming to Greece, do not miss visiting Etz Hayyim Synagogue, a





B'nai Mitzvah at Etz Hayyim 2016 / 5776

Vadim Wulfsohn

We are a family based in Los Angeles, originally from England and France, and when it came time to plan for our son's Bar Mitzvah, we decided that we wanted to find somewhere that was unique and meaningful. We feel incredibly fortunate to have discovered the remarkable Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Chania, Crete and the inspiring community leaders who first restored the synagogue and who now maintain its relevance as a place of worship and, of course, as an important historical site. Sixty friends and family, literally from all over the world, gathered this past July and the ensuing celebration was filled with so much that was profound, joyful and also, being Greece, unexpected. Certainly, picturesque beach front dinners for Friday night and a celebration afterward on Saturday evening were unforgettable, but unquestionably the service itself, in the gorgeous Etz Hayyim Synagogue, was the highlight for all of us. In so many ways, Etz Hayyim is a place that aligns with how we ourselves think about Judaism, as a faith that is still deeply relevant today, and also as a springboard from which to connect with people of other faiths, and to continue to ask how religion and the spiritual path can remain an important part of contemporary life. Beyond



this, we were amazed to discover that one of the two Torah scrolls in the synagogue was received on loan by the Memorial Scrolls Trust (over 1,600 scrolls rescued from the Holocaust and later restored) at the Westminster Synagogue in London where I had grown up many years earlier, and this added yet another dimension of significance to an already sacred and magical time for us. We would like to thank the entire community for giving us the opportunity to share this important moment in our family's life and we very much look forward to returning in the years ahead.

Jason, Beatrice, Vadim and Mikki Wulfsohn (Los Angeles)

Benyo Ventura Lev and Eitan Goldman

On the 25th July 2016, Iossif Ventura, the last Cretan Jew to be born in Hania, organized at Etz Hayyim the Bar Mitzvah ceremony for his grandsons Benyo Ventura Lev, living in Israel, and Eitan Goldman, living in New York. Iossif Venturas' ancestors had lived in Hania for centuries since the Venetian period. This ceremony was a chance for all the family members from Israel, USA and Greece to gather in a meeting which brought to mind the pre-war Jewish life in the town.

The ceremony was a way of honoring the cultural legacy of Cretan Jews and a return of two young boys to their roots. Benyo and Eitan had the chance to speak in fluent Greek and expressed their emotion for celebrating their Bar Mitzvah in their grandfather's birthplace. Gabriel Negrin, our rabbi, made this ceremony special with prayers, many of which were translated in Greek. He created a magic atmosphere, joyful and moving at the same time. The ceremony closed with Jewish dances and songs. Friends and family who attended were impressed



and touched. Those hours were some of the most brilliant for the after-war life of the Etz Hayyim.

Iossif Ventura (Athens)



Etz Hayyim in the Media and Academia

In June, the Chief Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin, was interviewed by the Washington-based *Monument Magazine* (<http://www.momentmag.com/ancient-community-gets-young-leader>) He was also asked about Etz Hayyim:

Monument Magazine: In Chania, Crete—a city of almost no Jewish population—the synagogue has become a rich cultural center, attracting many non-Jews to its cultural and educational programs. Is this an example you'd like to follow in the rest of the country?

Gabriel Negrin: I spent some years while studying music in Crete, in a town close to Chania, so I am very familiar with the synagogue and the great people who make it alive.

Jews are part of the cultural identity of the Greek society, as we were here even before the second Temple—we are a small part, but part of it. The Chania synagogue (a sister synagogue with our Athenian Etz Hayyim since 2010) is just one example of opening cultural activities to non-Jews. Our JCC in Athens has a rich lifelong learning program open to all. Our synagogues also receive frequent visits from university students and faculties from sociology, theology and history classes.

In May, Laura Lippstone covered Etz Hayyim for *Tablet Magazine* (www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/200906/the-lost-and-found-jews-of-crete) and in September, the *New York Jewish Travel Guide* featured an article about Etz Hayyim by Anna Metaxa (<http://newyorkjewishtravelguide.com/2016/08/29/jewish-life-in-greece-kania-the-old-town-and-etz-hayyim-synagogue>).



In April, Professor Karen Barkey (UC Berkeley) and her team visited and filmed at Etz Hayyim with the aim of including the synagogue into a project headed by Barkey. The project's website (<http://sharedsacredsites.net>) describes it as follows: "*Shared Sacred Sites* is a collaborative project that seeks to develop a rubric for the description, classification, analysis, and publication of work relating to spaces and locations used by multiple, disparate communities for religious purposes. [...] The sharing of spaces, sites, and symbolism by multiple religious communities demonstrates the practical choreographies and social possibilities of cooperation between potentially antagonistic communities, and the study of such sharing provides key insights into characteristics and features crucial to the cultivation of tolerance and understanding."

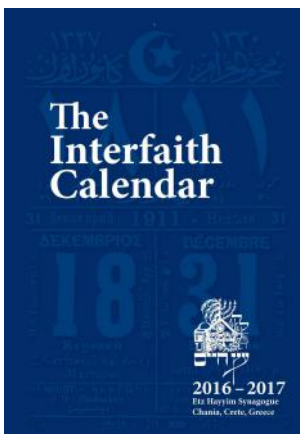


Etz Hayyim Interfaith Calendar

We are happy to announce that Etz Hayyim has resumed publishing its *Interfaith Calendar* this year. This edition includes historic photographs from Crete that portray the island's multi-faith history, as well as the Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays for the year 2017 - 5777 - 1438.

The graphic design is by Nikos Afentakis who has also designed our calendars in the past. The calendar section is introduced by a foreword written by both Nikos Stavroulakis and the Chief Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin.

The calendar can be ordered from the synagogue office.



Calendar for October 2016 to December 2017 | fully colored | spiral bound | 18 historic photographs from Crete | Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays | price: € 10 plus shipping



In Memoriam. Honorary Senator G. Nikolaj Kiessling z"l



When plans were announced in 1995 that the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich would establish the first Institute for Jewish History and Culture in Germany, a then 33-year old entrepreneur spontaneously contacted the university administration and expressed his intention to support the implemen-

tation of these plans. Subsequently, G. Nikolaj Kiessling's generous donations made possible the establishment of the Foundation for Jewish History and Culture in Europe, which provided invaluable support and seed-funding for setting up the new institute headed by Professor Michael Brenner.

Nikolaj Kiessling continued his philanthropist commitment to Jewish history and culture when, after relocating with his family to Heraklion, he became a major supporter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue. His generous support made possible the foundation of the Evlagon Institute for Cretan Jewish History. In 2010, he was

elected Vice President of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue and served as its President from 2013 to 2016. During his presidency, he was instrumental in securing the long-term operation of Etz Hayyim Synagogue through a cooperation agreement with the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE).

He also made possible close contacts between Etz Hayyim and Professor Michael Brenner by sponsoring his visit to and lecture at Etz Hayyim in 2012 and a lecture by Nikos Stavroulakis at the Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Munich University in 2013.

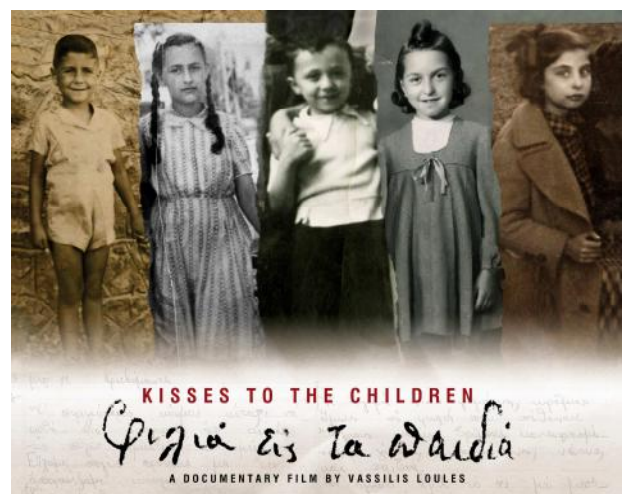
Nikolaj Kiessling was born in 1962 in Aachen, Germany. He worked in banking and financial and real estate administration in Luxemburg and Munich. In 1998, the University of Munich honored his philanthropy by awarding him the title of Honorary Senator. In 2002, he received the Federal Cross of Merit on Ribbon from the German President. After a long and severe illness Nikolaj passed away on 31st May 2016 in Heraklion. He is survived by his wife Irène Kiessling-Mastoraki as well as his daughter Janina and son Erricos.

Nikolaj will be dearly missed, especially during the Holidays, many of which he spent with us at Etz Hayyim. We have lost a close friend and ardent supporter. We will honor his memory by continuing to maintain the spirit of Etz Hayyim which he loved so much.

Upcoming Events

In November, Etz Hayyim will cooperate with the Franco-Hellenic Association of Hania to make possible the presentation of the feature-length documentary "Kisses to the Children" to the general public in Hania. The documentary by Greek film maker Vassilis Loules tells the story of five Greek-Jewish children who were saved by Christian families during the German Occupation. Among them is acclaimed poet Iossif Ventura, today a member of Etz Hayyim's Board of Trustees.

In December, Nikos Stavroulakis and Dorothy Abrams will host "PRAY, EAT, LOVE: A Jewish Experience of Hanukah, the Festival of Lights." The three-part event will include a lecture on the history of interactions between Greeks and Jews, as well as workshops on making Hanukah sweets and perfume with fragrances used in biblical times. Specific dates and times for both events



will be posted on our website and facebook site, and also circulated by email.



Gedenkdienst at Etz Hayyim

Year after year, a new volunteer from the Austrian organisation *Gedenkdienst* (Memorial Service) makes his way from Austria to Crete in order to provide help and support to (and learn from) the community of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, and this year, it is my turn.

My name is Daniel Jordan, I am 19 years old and I have been volunteering at Etz Hayyim since mid-August. Even though I am from the federal state of Carinthia, which is in the south of Austria and has the warmest weather of all the other Austrian federal states, I needed a long time to get used to the warm weather on Crete.

At the moment I am busy learning my first words of Greek while also learning to answer all of the questions that visitors to the synagogue might ask me, but luckily, many ask the same questions most of the time. I also learned to read the Hebrew alphabet in my first week at Etz Hayyim, just in time for the first Kabbalat Shabbath service.

I am looking forward to getting to know the whole community of Etz Hayyim and spending my next year in Chania working in a synagogue where people of all religions and even those without a religion are welcome. This is something which is really special to me and this might be the reason why Etz Hayyim is often the first synagogue that people ever set foot in. This is what I would like to do in my next year in Chania: to keep the synagogue a welcoming and open-minded place as it is now and how it should be.

Daniel Jordan



Nino Gamsjäger (left) and Daniel Jordan

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Daniel and to express our sincere thanks to Nino, without whom many projects in the past year would not have been possible. He showed dedication, keen curiosity and persistence and was particularly instrumental in putting together the research and layout for the exhibition about the reconstruction of Etz Hayyim. He was a (multi-lingual) skilled, knowledgeable and charming tour guide for the many visitors we receive. And last, but not least, we thank Nino for contributing delicious dishes, including his legendary fava, to our daily staff lunches.

Alexandra Ariotti and Anja Zuckmantel

For over a year, I worked at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. Looking back at this period, all kinds of memories of this very special, multi-faceted place come to mind. I was part of a wonderful team of people who volunteer or, just because of sheer interest for Etz Hayyim, work there. My "Gedenkdienst" was made possible by the amazing figure of Nikos Stavroulakis who literally lifted the synagogue from the ground. I remember him saying, when we first conceived the exhibition together with him, that he had been quite disappointed by "Etz Hayyim being an example of Hitler's victory in exterminating the Jewish people." Although this might have seemed so when he first saw the ruins of the synagogue, today Etz Hayyim is open again and represents the last place of preserving the legacy of Crete's

lost Jewish community as well as being a place of gathering of a somewhat unusual community, where nationality and religious background does not matter. I am quite curious myself as to how it will evolve in the future and I hope the synagogue will be able to host more cultural events and extend its educational outreach program.

Throughout the year I spent in Hania, I was considering what path I wanted to choose for my future and I am certain that my experiences at Etz Hayyim have helped me in my decision-making. When I will finally begin to study environmental resource management in October in Vienna, it will show if it was a good one. Now I leave with good memories, but surely, I will come back at some point to see how Etz Hayyim and my (now) former colleagues are doing.

Nino Gamsjäger



Calendar for High Holidays 5777/2016

Rosh Hashana (officiated by Rabbi Nicholas de Lange)

Shabbat Morning Service, 1 October, 9:30 am

Erev Rosh Hashana, 2 October, 7 pm
(followed by community dinner, € 15 p.p.;
please rsvp by September 30)

Rosh Hashana Morning Service, 3 October, 10 am

Yom Kippur (officiated by Lior Asher)

Kol Nidre, 11 October, 6:30 pm

Yom Kippur Service, 12 October, 9 am

Neilah, 12 October, 6:30 pm
(refreshments served for fast breaking)

Sukkot (officiated by Nikos Stavroulakis)

Erev Sukkot, 16 October, 6:30 pm
Our Sukkah will be up until 23 October.

NEW: Tax-deductible Donations in the USA

Etz Hayyim can now accept tax-deductible donations in the USA through a collective giving account at *FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds*. Any check should be made out to FJC, with "Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim" in the memo line and mailed to FJC's office at:

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

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

Bank Information for Donations

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

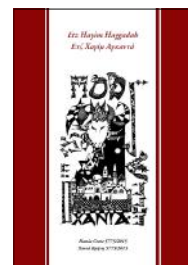
We very much appreciate your continued support of our work at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. Donation receipts provided.



Still available: *The Etz Hayyim Haggadah*

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

Sold through the publisher **Ida Mordoh**:
T: 0030 210 7485 782, 0030 6944157679
e-mail: redpoint@otenet.gr
Orders can also be sent to Etz Hayyim.



Weekly Services at Etz Hayyim

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

Candle lighting times are posted on our website:
<http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/newsandevents>
(click on the relevant dates in the calendar).

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

Synagogue Opening Hours

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

Contact us and stay in touch

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



Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

Director of Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Nicholas Hannan-Stavroulakis

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Alex Ariotti, Nino Gamsjäger, Daniel Jordan, Anja Zuckmantel