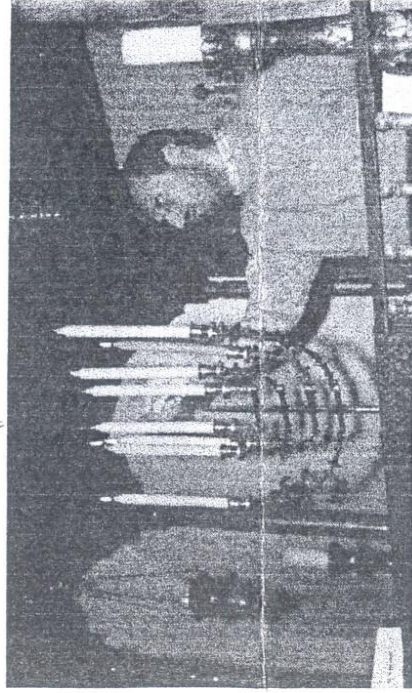


Jottings

K'K' Etz Hayyim
P.O. Box 251
73001 Hania, CRETE
Tel (08210) 86286
Tel & Fax (08210) 70397
E-mail: dori@grecian.net
Web site:
www:etz-hayyim-hania.org



Hanukah 2001

Hanukah at Etz Hayyim was celebrated publicly on the last night when people from Hania were invited to attend the evening lighting of the hanukioth. As a number of members of our havurah were in Hania the attendance was good and several people came from Herakleion and Rethymon to take part in the evening service. The Missionaries of Charity who always attend our services were present as were a number of tourists. As the weather was quite inclement (in fact quite stormy!) we did not set up the large hanukiah in the south courtyard where it normally stands for the holiday and is lit every night so that it can

be seen from the street. As we had not had a service to commemorate the tragedy of the 11th Sept. in New York it was felt that this was an opportune time to do so as well. For those who wished to participate in Arvith prayers these were said at 7:30 and then about 50 people assembled in the Kal for the lighting of the Hanukioth. The synagogue was kept quite dark and the only lights that were burning were the Ner Tamid and the memorial candle that is kept lit always. In the beginning everyone sat in the dark and there was a short explanation of the historical meaning of the

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Havurah: Study Group

A study group meets weekly – sometimes bi-weekly at the Synagogue.

Several of the members of the Havurah have initiated the discussions. It is especially gratifying that their interest was motivated by their wish to learn something about Jewish 'interior' life – the manner of prayer and values associated with it.

We normally say Arvith prayers together and then afterwards assemble in the office to discuss prepared material. Thus far we have been working on the Amidah prayer as it is so central to the Jewish daily prayer cycle.

We are also planning to prepare a Siddur with selected texts translated in Hebrew (with the transliteration), Greek as a our own guideline. Hopefully it will be ready before Pesach.

Ecumenical Retreat

An interfaith retreat took place at Etz Hayyim during the week of 31st Dec. - 6th January 002. Every evening a group of people who had indicated an interest in a common spiritual quest met in the synagogue to hear a short homily on a given subject and the to participate in a discussion of its meaning and application to you lives.

The idea of a retreat at Etz Hayyim was formulated last year by the Director of the Synagogue and Fr. David Burrell CSC. A retreat, as the name implies, is a period of withdrawal and introspection that is usually made more effective by a physical withdrawal as well from one's 'normal' life. The purpose of a retreat is to create a space in which to nurture spirituality. In a sense Jews, in reciting

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The Havurah

I am happy to announce that the Havurah has been incorporated under Greek Law as the 'Friends of Etz Hayyim'. As expected there are some formal responsibilities that will have to be eventually taken care of such as elections of proper officers and the allotment of responsibilities. Matters such as these can, in certain circumstances, be handled in a quite cavalier manner and as a consequence elections never take place and the offices become honorary and left to the mercy of individual enthusiasms. I mention this as we have taken a somewhat high-handed approach to putting the charter into effect as we wished to avoid delays, and the cost of postage since most of our members live abroad.

Members of the Havurah who are either permanent or semi-permanent residents of Hania took the following decisions unanimously.

1. As the Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece has been the aegis under which Etz Hayyim was restored its involvement to some extent is necessary and since I (Stavroulakis) am the local representative of the Central Board as well as the Gabai or Parnas of the Synagogue it was felt that I would be the appropriate person to continue in this position.
2. Members of the Havurah who have assumed responsible positions in keeping the present conditions stable are: Mrs. Rita Tezartes, Ahuvah Amar (Hania), Paola Nicotera (Hania), Amalia Reuel (Hania-Jerusalem) Constantine Fischer (Hania), Peter and Doris Naylor (Herakleion) Joseph and Natalie Venturas (Herakleion), Danny and Brouria Peterzeil (Hania-Tel Aviv). (Unfortunately Sarah and Joel Sterns will be leaving shortly to return to the US.) At present matters are still quite simple and can be broken down as such:

- a. Religious functions: The Gabai-

Parnas (Stavroulakis) – Shahrith, Minha and Arvith daily prayers in the synagogue. Organizing the form of the religious holidays. This includes the monthly Kabbalah Shabbath, the High Holidays and the minor holidays. Preparation and editing of 'Jottings', which is published four times a year. Incidental to this he also prepares all of the graphics for invitations and announcements. Correspondence with other havuroth and Jewish organizations of common interest.

b. Acting Secretary – Mrs. Rita Simantov-Tezartes

c. Publications and Web Site – Paola Nicotera is mainly responsible for this. She also has the assistance of Manoussos Daskaloyannis (Photographer) and Ithomeneos Mitsotakis (Computer and Programming specialist).

d. Mailing and postage plus presence in the synagogue as supervisor of the cleaning person are the responsibility of Ahuva Amar. She also takes care of the monthly budgeting.

e. Publicity and decent searching – Peter and Doris Naylor and in Israel Merav Reuel.

f. Guiding and information contacts – Amalia Reuel and Constantine Fischer as well as Paola Nicotera and during the 'on' season other members of the Havurah, Daniel and Brouria Peterzeil, Prof. Gabby Cohen (Jerusalem-Hania), Yali Cohen (Jerusalem-Hania).

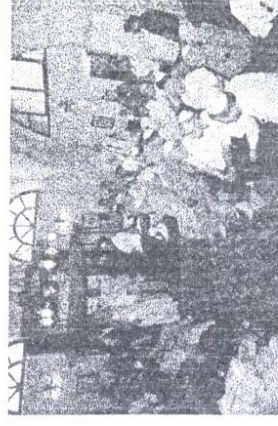
g. Maintenance of the library – Elizabeth Outram.

h. Fund collection (with tax-free exemption) and administration are in the hands of either the Silverman Foundation in New York or the World Monuments Fund (NY).

THE PRESENT SITUATION

The synagogue is open daily from 8:30 AM until 1:00 PM and as a rule from 6:00 PM until 8:00 PM (save for Shabbath when it is only open in the early

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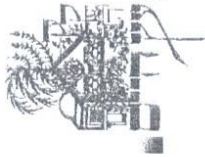
Another Marriage at Etz Hayyim

The beauty of the island of Crete, as well as the warm setting of Etz Hayyim, were the frame of another happy moment for all of us: the marriage of our Israeli friends Yoni and Lena Ziskwind

We took some snapshots for our readers to be part of this important event, that took place on September 2001.

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Etz Hayyim Exhibit in New York (→ page 3)



Hannukah

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festival and this was followed by mention of the dual character of Jewish festivals. They are both remembrances of specific historical events but also incorporate deeper meaning. In the case of Hanukah we spoke of the Winter Solstice, the dark and heavy days of winter and of the fact that both Judaism and Christianity chose this time of the year to celebrate Light. It was noted that especially in the Jewish celebration that the symbolism is developed gradually over the days of Hanukah as each night an additional light is lit and hence one has a somewhat dramatic image of how a single lone light is added to increasingly until light surrounds one everywhere when all of the lamps are lit. Each of us is in this symbolism is a light that burns in what is at times a terrible darkness brought upon us by sorrow, or personal tragedy, or the circumstances of the world about us. Each of us alone as a light, is in danger of being overcome by the darkness about us but as we join together in an affirmation of common values of compassion, awareness of suffering in the world and our own apparent loneliness we draw on the light of others about us and without knowing it we can draw strength in our lives and also illuminate the world about us. In so many ways the terrible and tragic event of the 11th Sept. in New York was a darkening of our world. Two lights that symbolized both the contradictions and achievements of civilization in this century were extinguished through violence that has affected us all in one way or another. We must never forget that either.

At the end of this homily the members of the congregation sat in the dark interior of Etz Hayyim until it was time to recite the blessings and light that Hanukah lights.

All of the members attending went up to one of the hanukioth and lit a candle or an oil lamp until the entire Kal was full of light. We had a good number of children attending and a special hanukiah was set up for them and they were helped in lighting it. After this they played with 'tops' and gold covered chocolates.

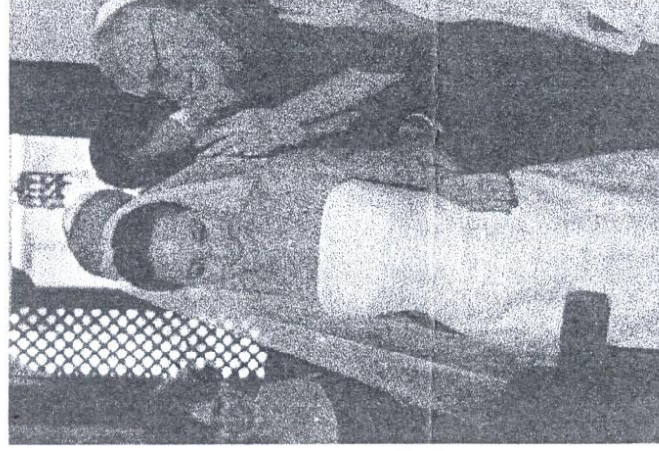
While the children were playing lokoumades as well as potato latkes (an Ashkenazi specialty made by Brouria Peterzeit) were served along with hot wine, tsikoudia and soft drinks.

Docent Programme

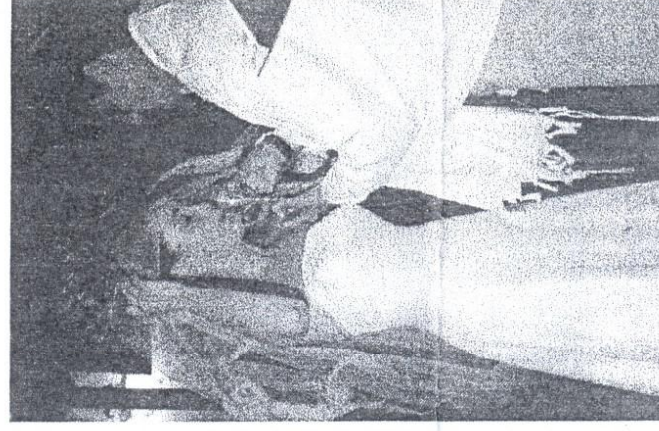
Last summer we had the privilege of having three docents assist us in the Synagogue over the summer months. Meenah Hasan and Alex Goodman from New York (ages 13 and 14) spent over a month with us.

They stayed at Stavroulakis's house and their duties were to help in

Another Marriage at Etz Hayyim



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To the newly weds our warmest wishes and blessings.

For information on marriage, bar and bat mitzvah, and other celebrations, please contact Mr Nikos Stavroulakis at Etz Hayyim, Crete, Tel. # +30-8210-86286 - email: dori@grecian.net

Tanais by Joseph Ventura

PUBLICATION NOTICE

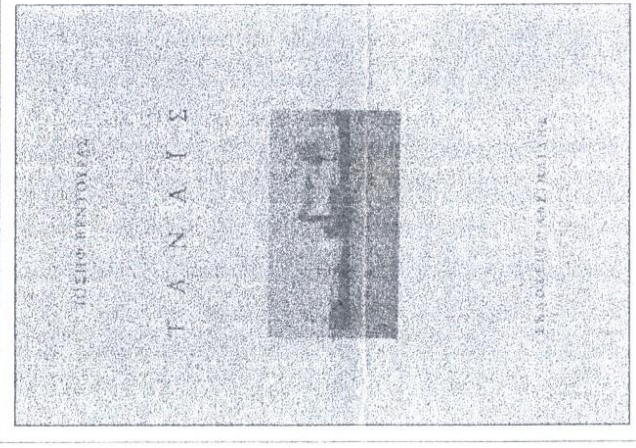
A small book of poems has recently been published in Athens titled TANAIS. The poems are by Joseph Venturas whose family originated in Hania.

The title is derived from the name of the boat into which the members of the last community of Hania were herded in June 1944.

The destination of the Tanais and its Jews, plus some 600 Greek and Italian prisoners of war, was for Piraeus/Athens and then on to Auschwitz.

However, not many hours after leaving Herakleion the boat was torpedoed and sank within 15 minutes taking all on board save 17 crewmen.

An English translation of the poems is to be published shortly and both can be ordered through Etz Hayyim.



the Kal mainly during the morning hours.

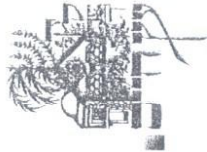
They were an enormous help in scraping down the walls, cleaning the garden, and generally looking after lamps and fixtures – polishing the mezzuzoth, benches, and bronze handles on the doors. Ms. Daliyah Moss

from England, a student at Brighton University, spent almost three months with us and threw herself energetically into the life of the Kal.

She studied hard and became an excellent guide to not only the synagogue but also introducing people to the history of the Jews of Crete.

To order the book, please, call
Tel. # +30-8210-86286

Or send an e-mail to
dori@grecian.net



Etz Hayyim Exhibit in New York

The Ioannina Jewish Museum in New York recently opened an exhibit on Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania. Its director, Isaac Dostis, was responsible for assembling the material including photographs, documents and maps that give a general view of Cretan Jewish history as well as a closer view of the events that lead to the loss of the last community of Jews in Crete.

As a Romaniote (Judaean-Greek as opposed to Sephardi) community it is fitting that Ioannina be connected with us here in Hania. The present community in Ioannina numbers about 70 persons and there is a 'Ioannina Diaspora' with descendants of Jews from the city who now live scattered in New York and Israel (Jerusalem). In both places they have

kept close to each other and have built synagogues though the mold 'minhag Romania' has unfortunately been, for the most part, lost. That these 'Naniotes' have kept alive their association with the great tradition that they represent is in itself remarkable. I remember many years ago speaking with a woman from New York who told me of the difficulties they encountered even from other Jews when they first came to the New World – they could not be fit into the generalized categories of 'Jews' – (not unlike the Falashas perhaps). They only spoke Greek, they had some peculiar customs and though Jews were neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi. A young woman whom I met at that time told me that she socialized (as did her family) with the community of a rebellion is hinted at in the act of the redemption of trees that is essential to the Festival.

There is a very ancient Hebrew myth concerning the rebellion that asserts that after Adam and Eve had been created the Lord was dissatisfied since they obeyed Him as would slaves and dogs.

Being made in His image meant as well that they enjoy freedom and the ability to choose and hence become partners in the on-going creation of the world and to participate in dialogue with Him.

According to this myth the Lord assumed the appearance of a Serpent, crawled into the Tree and from there drew out from Eve and Adam the choice that was made of their free will. Through this act, however they were cast into the world of relativity, the world of good and evil, and, to a degree, confusion. It was precisely this world that had to be redeemed according to the Kabbalists and man's role was to perform this "tikkun", or healing. The role of men and women as co-creators in the realm of relativity is to further the evolution of order and the application of the values of the Torah within the world – to be righteous, just, merciful and loving.

Eventually the holiday was revived in some respects and made part of the annual celebrations of Jews in the Diaspora as a focus for people's attachment to the Land of Israel. Though one could no longer bring the produce of one's fields to the Temple the household table became an altar upon which we ate fruit, nuts and berries – and drank wine. It became a day of rejoicing for the existence of fruit bearing trees and of thanking the Lord for their existence.

How this was accomplished prior to the 16th cent. is unknown but we have many traditions that come down to us from the period after that when

(→ page 1)

nearby Greek Orthodox Church simply because language, dances, songs even, provided a common cultural basis that they lacked with either Yiddish or Judezmo speaking coreligionists.

The strong Romaniote character was still active in Hania prior to the IInd World War and common family names linked certain individuals with Jews living in other Romaniote communities such as on Zakynthos, Corfu, Arta, and Ioannina.

The exhibit can be seen at Kehila Kedosha Jamina, 280, Broom St., New York, NY 1002. Tel: (212) 431-1619. Fax: (212) 673-4441.

E-mail: kkj@mymailstation.com.

Web site:

www.kehila-kedosha-jamina.org

Monthly Concerts

The CD concerts have been a success and on the first Wednesday of each month a new programme is put on in the Kal. The choice and presentation is made by Mr Hugh Bryan of Hania. The acoustics of the synagogue are excellent and the selection of music is very carefully done. Our next concert will be on Wed. 7th February, 2002 and will include The Vespers of the Virgin Mary by Monteverdi, as recorded in the Basilica of San Marco, Venice.

Admission is by donation and wine, soft drinks and oddments are served afterwards.

Unlike most other festivals of the Jewish Year, Tu B'Shvat – the New Year of the Trees – is not mentioned in the Mishneh where it appears not as a holiday but as legal date (the 15th of Shevat) by which one could determine the tithing of trees. In order to fulfill the mitzvah regarding how fruit was to be tithed it was necessary that a date be set to 'fix' the agricultural year. In this way the fruit of a given tree could be determined, according to the commandments of "orlah": first fruits and tithes. Orlah forbids the picking of the first fruits of a tree for three years after it has begun to bear fruit. At the time of the Temple, in the fourth year fruit was taken to Jerusalem and there redeemed, and then eaten. In the fifth year the fruit could be used freely though the law of first fruits still applied and the tithe had to be given to the Temple annually.

After the destruction of the Second Temple it is not surprising to find that the fulfillment of the mitzvah became not only difficult but, in some respects, impossible and gradually Tu B'Shvat became a somewhat forgotten date. It is barely mentioned by Maimonides but oddly enough one of the names of the Festival, The New Year of Trees, became associated in spirit to the Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashanah. If at Rosh Hashanah men's souls are judged and the span of their lives determined, so too at Tu B'Shvat, trees are also judged. Both participated intimately in the story of the rebellion as given in Genesis. If Adam and Eve committed their act of rebellion by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, it was the Tree of Good and Evil that provided the means for the serpent to conceal itself and it was of its fruit that Eve was tempted. The close association and involvement of man and nature in the exercise of 'freedom' that was the essence of the

the mystics of Saphed in Eretz set out carefully planned seders to be celebrated in the evening of the festival.

It is especially to the School of R. Isaac Luria and his disciples that we owe a special debt as it was these rabbis who sought to bring much of the esoteric teaching of the Kabbalah in its oral tradition as well as the Zohar itself to bear on finding a deeper meaning to Tu B'Shvat. It is interesting that most of these Rabbis were Ashkenazic though eventually their influence had quite profound influence on Sephardic Jews everywhere.

Oddly enough amongst the Jews of Europe the festival tended to decline whereas reciprocally it became widely celebrated amongst Sephardic Jews. Only with the rise of Hassidism did the festival once again assume importance amongst the Jews of Europe.

By the end of the 17th cent. the celebration was well articulated and the ritual for at least one seder is set down in the "Hemdut Yemim" (The Choicest of Days).

A separate chapter from this anonymous work, "Pri Aitz Hadar" (Fruit Form an Excellent Tree - The Jerusalem Talmud), was used widely in establishing the form of the seder. In it the traditional kabbalistic seder is outlined according to its parts and components.

The seder is, a compilation of texts and readings from the Torah, rabbinic writings, as well as the Zohar. It is of interest that the term "tikkun" (healing) is used to describe what takes place.

According to the Kabbalists every act that we perform in this 'lower' world has an effect in the 'upper' world. Divisiveness, hatred, anger, deliberate acts of evil, lack of mercy and love (to the entire ecosystem – plants, animals, insects, the

very earth itself) all have immediate effects that further evil and essentially deny the Unity of The Name. Reciprocally acts of mercy, loving kindness, compassion, righteousness and justice are acts of reconciliation or "tikkun" and hence further the evolution of the Cosmos of which we are a part.

In the "Siddur Yabetz" it says about this festival: 'Many fruits are eaten by people and they recite songs and praises over them which cause a great tikkun in the upper world.'

Essentially the performance of the seder is a meditation on the food from which we draw our existence and we are admonished to look at it, smell it, bless it, with reverence cut it in awareness, and to chew, swallow and participate in the mystery of the transformation of life into life.

The Baal Shem Tov in the "Seph'er HaToldot", taught that everything is in fact God and that nothing is separate from Him. It appears that there is God as He is in separateness from the world but there is also God within the world. In a sense what we proclaim in the "Shema" is that there is only One God and in the "Aleynu" prayer that we recite three times a day and which is taken from the Rosh HaShannah liturgy, we proclaim at its end – 'There is nothing else.' (i.e. there is only God.). In somewhat modern terminology we would say that there is only Reality – nothing else has its own existence apart from it.

It is the celebration of the unity of Reality that this festival is really about.

In accordance with a traditional practice amongst some Hassidim we will illuminate the synagogue, the two gardens and the exterior of the Kal with many candles.

To be continued next issue.



Ecumenical Retreat

the Amidah three times a day, make retreats that define the shape of the day.. Physically we even take three steps backward and then forward in order to create a space for the impouring of the Shechinah. When Fr. Burrell and I first spoke of a retreat

(in the Spring of 2001) the synagogue had already become the focus of more than cultural, local and tourist interest. A considerable number of persons visited regularly, used the library or even simply sat in silence in the synagogue proper or in the gardens. We also saw fit to invite non-Jews to participate in the seditors of Pesh and Succoth as we are directed to do in Torah. It was obvious during these moments that despite our theological, dogmatic and even culturally defined differences that we shared more than we realized. Etz Hayyim despite not having a 'community' in the legal sense of a kehilah, nonetheless was providing a haven or point of contact for seekers and thus was forging a religious life of its own.

When the synagogue was rededicated in 1999 I remember being asked by Rabbi Yaakov Dayan of Salonika on the night that all of the guests who shared in this memorable event were leaving - 'What are you going to do tomorrow? What is going to happen now?' It was, of course, a very good question and also a question that I had avoided. Over 400 people had assembled from Greece, Europe, Israel and even the US for the purpose of assisting in a statement of Jewish tenacity. We were only two or three Jews living in Hania. Our determination had been that Etz Hayyim not be a memorial to the success of the Nazis in destroying the Jewish presence in Crete. It had been precisely over this that serious differences of opinion had arisen during the reconstruction. How were we to do it? What were we reconstructing? And to what end? I maintained all through entire project that Etz Hayyim was going to be a synagogue again. This was not the first time that almost the entire building on its exterior and interior had been 're-done'. In the face of R. Dayan's question - 'What are you going to do tomorrow?' I realized what he was really saying - is this going to be a museum? A memorial to the dead? and 'how can it be a synagogue without a community of Jews?'

In some strange way the synagogue has created a community of its own and Fr. Burrell and I talked about this often when he had been in Hania a year ago, and before, as we are old friends. Several of the nuns of Mother Teresa attended a special evening that we had and also a number of Christians and two Muslims and it was out of this sharing that we began to think of how we could make such concurrences happen more creatively. It was not enough to say that we were all

The Havurah

AM and late in the afternoon for Minha and Havdalah and Arvith prayers.)

For visitors there is an illustrated pamphlet that gives a breakdown of the history of the Jews of Crete, Hania and all trace their origins to the great Patriarch. But obviously alluding to the 'family' begs a very serious question. Not only the family of Abraham, but the descendants of Adam and Eve are in fact almost the perfect paradigm of dysfunctional family. As a couple our first parents are obviously bad tenants. One of their children is the murderer of his brother. As the family grows their descendants construct without the equivalent of building permits and following the trail of this family, incest, bestiality, sexual abuse and manipulation as well as stealing birthrights, blessings not to mention the produce of the earth form a pattern that is well documented in both the Torah and Scriptures.

What was also obvious, however, in the traces of this 'family' is that the serious deviations from morality and ethics in fact underlined and also assisted in evolving and defining both. Justice, righteousness, truth, benevolence, mercy, compassion and turning away from one's little 'self' were to become essential values are shared in common by all of the Children of Abraham (and Adam). Where we differ is on the level of relativity and differentiation determined by historical circumstances, local culture, and perhaps even excessive and badly directed thought. The question that we posed to ourselves was how can we truly speak together about what we shared and not be tempted to drift into dogmatic and theological wrangling. It was out of this question that the plan to have a retreat at Etz Hayyim during which common values were shared for the purpose of giving us not only strength but also companionship as friends. Family we have been - friends we have not been - and this was the to the underpinnings of the retreat.

The Buddha in his first sermon given in the Deer Park at Samath to a group of fellow ascetics proclaimed the Middle Path between extremes. The essence of the sermon was very short and became known as the Four Noble Truths which are: There is suffering, there is a cause to suffering, there is a means of escaping suffering and there is the Eightfold Path to accomplish this. The Eightfold path is made up of directives - Right Views, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Recollection and Right Absorption (meaning to grasp the insubstantiality of life and the 'self'). It was from this Sermon that something that we all share in common became apparent and also became the starting point for our Retreat.

Additional expenses usually covered by donations are for cleaning materials, occasional painting and cosmetic upkeep. Food for the Synagogue eat Dinah, candles, olive oil for the lamps and *keragita*.

3. Postage has become very expensive as has printing 'Jottings' four times a year and mailing it out. This far we have been able to manage through funds from the Tzedakah bottle.

4. The Central Board of Jewish Communities of Greece has thus far assisted us paying for utilities: electricity, water and telephone. For the Holidays and for special events - weddings and from individual gifts over the year we are usually able to draw funds for the purchase of books and other material for the synagogue library and incidentals. For two years a private donor has assumed paying for our web site and its maintenance. The cost of printing the brochure for the synagogue (including some of the translations) was also assumed by a private donor.

(→ page 1)

Income: roughly \$500.00 per month from the Tzedakah bottle from April - October - approx. \$3,500.

Salaries and postage, printing etc. per annum - Cleaning person \$850 / Secretary \$3,300. Postage and printing of Jottings approx. \$1,500-\$2,000.

All of the members of the Havurah in Hania give freely of their time, energy and even their personal finances to assist in keeping Etz Hayyim active and relevant. HOWEVER - it is a heavy burden. As we do not have a kehilah there is no fixed means of maintaining membership fees, however, as we do have a Havurah now this may be more necessary and feasible. Our feeling in Hania is that persons who receive Jottings are in some ways members of the Havurah. If members could see fit to maintain their association with us with a fixed annual sum it would relieve greatly some of the financial stress that we often find ourselves under. \$100 - \$200 a year from the members of the Havurah annually would relieve some of the present financial weight of maintaining the Synagogue, its gardens, and promoting its activities.

NB - a list of all of the members of the Havurah will appear in the next Jottings.

WEB SITE and DATA BASE

In the future the web site will be changed more frequently and in addition we are preparing a data base. The latter will evolve as material and time dictate. At the moment we are concentrating on specific subjects such as: a) Bibliography on Cretan Jewry, b) Articles on Cretan-Judaean history, c) Photographs, d) Membership lists, e) Recent events, e) Related material from other Jewish centers in Greece, f) Family trees and lineages of Cretan Jews as well as names and addresses of persons who come from families originating in Crete.

Nicholas Hama-Stavroulakis
Director

K'K' Etz Hayyim
P.O. Box 251

73001 Hania, CRETE

Tel. +30-8210-86286

TeL & Fax +30-8210-70397

E-mail: dori@grecian.net

Web site:

www.etz-hayyim-hania.org

Editor

Nicholas Hama-Stavroulakis

Graphics and Design

Paola Nicotera

Support

Ahouva Amer-Koumandorakis

Constantine Fischer

Library

Elizabeth Outram

Photographs

Manoussos Daskaloyannis

Computer

Idomeneas Mitsotakis

To be continued next issue.