

Jottings



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The newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Issue 27 | 2nd lockdown edition 2020



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The newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue
Issue 27 | 2nd lockdown edition 2020/21



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

We would also love to hear from you.

Contact the synagogue if you would like to contribute an article or share information, ideas, feedback or criticism. The next *Jottings* will be published for **Rosh Hashnah 5782**. Please send contributions by **15 August 2021**.

Contact us and stay in touch



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Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

Co-editors of Jottings

Alex Ariotti, Giorgos Psaroudakis, Tobias Schmitzberger, Anja Zuckmantel

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



Editorial

Etz Hayyim literally filled beyond capacity, more people flocking around both synagogue doors and even peering through the window of the Ezrat Nashim ... this scenario from the two weeks of celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Rededication of Etz Hayyim in October 2019 now almost feels like from another era.

The spring lockdown in Greece officially ended on 17 May, incidentally the equivalent to the Hebrew date for the third **annual memorial for Nikos Stavroulakis**, for which the Havurah came together.

We are now in a second country-wide lockdown that began on 7 November, the day after we held a **memorial service for Joseph (Dozis) Ventura**, our committed Havurah and Etz Hayyim Board member (an obituary for Joseph in included in this edition of Jottings, p. 8). Sadly, only four months after Joseph's passing in October, his wife Natalie Ventura passed away as well. Joseph's and Natalie's passings are a heartfelt loss for the Etz Hayyim Havurah as they were dedicated and active members from the very beginning. An obituary for Natalie Ventura will be published in the next edition of *Jottings*.

Between May and November, Etz Hayyim was once again open to the public and for services. In July, tourism resumed – of course on a limited scale with about one tenth of the usual number of visitors – eventually bringing about a spike in Covid-19 cases that was unfortunately to be expected. The stricter public health measures that followed in response impacted not only the number of our visitors, but also the nature of the High Holidays at Etz Hayyim.

For all of us, the holidays have been, in many ways, unusual and challenging this year. Due to restricted numbers of participants, at Etz Hayyim we had to learn to say "No!" to visitors who asked to join us for the holiday services. Turning away anyone is effectively against the welcoming and open philosophy that has underpinned Etz Hayyim since its reopening twenty years ago. We tried to be as kind as possible and most visitors were understanding of the situation. However, quite a few visitors were also surprised, in disbelief or even offended that we wouldn't accommodate them. In addition to learning to say "No!", we also had to adapt to holding our **holiday services** (p. 6) without our Visiting

Rabbi Nicholas de Lange who, for understandable safety reasons, could not travel to Hania for the High Holidays. But Nicholas is always with us in spirit and even if he won't be able to join us for Pesah either, he kindly contributed an instructive text about an **Ancient Greek play on theme of the Exodus from Egypt** (p. 4).

The one major event that still took place at the synagogue, although with much delay and a very limited scale, was the **memorial service** for the victims of the

sinking of the Tanais ship. The event saw more (albeit socially distanced) participants and public officials in attendance than ever before, including the Ambassador of Israel (p. 11ff).

As the summer tourist season was unusually quiet with just a handful of visitors per day, the staff had the opportunity to focus on several ongoing projects: the videos for our **virtual tour of the historic Jewish Quarter** are now complete and available online (p. 17). We have also continued cataloguing what will become the **Nikos Stavroulakis Collection** and in this edition of Jottings, we again **call for contributions to this important archival collection** (p. 16). More

recently, we started a new project: adapting Etz Hayyim's **educational outreach program** for online teaching formats (p. 33). Finally, one major project came to a close: the two-year EU-funded project, **Heritage Contact Zone**, which ended with an online conference (p. 16ff). In retrospect, the project helped us to conceive of Etz Hayyim more fully as an active heritage organisation and we hope to initiate more projects in this field.

In the short few months between the two lockdowns, we also had the pleasure to welcome volunteer Mille Vinther from Denmark for a month and the new **Gedenkdienst** volunteer Tobias Schmitzberger for his one-year stay with us (p. 29). Former volunteer Maria Sanadaki opened her photo **exhibition** at Etz Hayyim in September (p. 14) and former Gedenkdienst volunteer Moritz Plattner returned for another visit (p. 32ff).

The winter of 2020/21 has no doubt been a difficult and challenging time for many of us in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. We wish that all of you stay safe and healthy. Please be in touch and we hope to see you again soon at Etz Hayyim.

Anja Zuckmantel
 Administrative Director, Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim





Exodus or Exagoge?

by Nicholas de Lange



At Passover we think about the ‘exodus’ of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. (Strictly speaking, it was only later, on receiving the divine revelation and the Torah at Mount Sinai, that the people of Israel came into existence. It was the Hebrews, or the *Benei Israel* (בני ישראל), the υἱοὶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, ‘children of Israel’ – in other words the descendants of the Patriarch Jacob – who left Egypt, together with a ‘mixed multitude’, according to the biblical story.)

‘Exodus’ is, of course, a Greek word, meaning ‘a going out’ or ‘departure’. It has become naturalised in English, largely because in the Greek church from early times it became the title of the second Book of Moses. However, among Jews, even earlier than this, a slightly different term had been in use: *exagoge* (ἐξαγωγή), ‘a leading out’, from the verb ἐξαγειν. The difference between the two terms is a subtle one. Ἐξαγειν is used several times in the Greek Bible with God (or Moses acting under God’s orders) as its subject, and it underlines that the Children of Israel did not merely ‘go out’ of Egypt – they were ‘led out’, by God.

There are various indications that ‘*Exagoge*’ was a usual term for what we call the ‘Exodus’ among Greek-

speaking Jews in antiquity. It is the title which was used by one of the earliest Jews writing in Greek, the philosopher Aristoboulos, who dedicated his book *Exegesis of the Law of Moses* to Ptolemy VI (181–146 BCE). In this book he claims that the book ‘*Exagoge of the Hebrews from Egypt*’ was translated into Greek even before the time of Alexander the Great’s conquest of Persia (ca. 330 BCE). The same title is used by the Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BCE – ca. 50 CE) on several occasions, and he makes it clear that for him this was the name of the biblical book: “Very well did the Hierophant (i.e. Moses, the ‘Revealer of Holy Things’) give the title ‘*Exagoge*’ to a whole sacred book of the Legislation, having discovered the appropriate name for the oracles contained in it” (On the Migration of Abraham, 14).

Not many people are aware that ‘*Exagoge*’ is also the title of an ancient Greek drama on the theme of the Exodus from Egypt, by an otherwise unknown author named Ezekiel. Unfortunately, we only have fragments of this interesting drama, but they are fairly substantial (amounting to 269 lines), and enough survives for us to form an idea of the play and its character. In its style it closely resembles the classical dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, by which it is clearly influenced. The story, however,



comes straight from the Bible, apart from some details which are not found there.

Moses is obviously a central character. The play begins with a speech by Moses, in which he tells the familiar story of the arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt, the enslavement of their descendants, Moses’ own birth and his adoption by Pharaoh’s daughter. Moses then tells how he killed an Egyptian, and fled from Egypt to the foreign country in which he now is. Suddenly he sees seven young women approaching, one of whom, Sephora, tells him that he is in Libya, and she and her sisters are the daughters of the king. Sephora is later betrothed to Moses by her father.

A striking feature of the play is that the other main character is God – or rather the voice of God. It is this voice that addresses Moses out of the burning bush and instructs him to go with his brother to the king, and later predicts the ten plagues and the actual departure from Egypt. It is in keeping with the established conventions of ancient Greek drama that violent and dramatic events such as deaths or battles are not enacted on the stage but described. Similarly, the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army are not shown, but described by a messenger.

We can imagine the play being performed, perhaps at Pesach, in ancient Alexandria or elsewhere, before a Jewish audience in a theatre or a synagogue hall, as a celebration, as an entertainment, and also as an effective way of teaching the Jewish public the origin and meaning of the festival, and the correct way to carry out its rituals. In the words of the play (casting the biblical words in Greek poetry) :

This festival for the Lord you shall keep:
Seven days unleavened bread, and no leaven
Shall be eaten. For there will be release from these evils,
And God gives exit (ἐξοδος) in this month,
It is the beginning of months and times.

Although the word ‘exodus’ is used, it is made perfectly clear that the exodus is a gift from God, and that the festival is kept in his honour. This in a nutshell is the message of Pesach: we keep the festival for seven days, to thank God for rescuing the ancient Hebrews from slavery in the land of Egypt. The rest is commentary.

I wish you all a very happy Pesach!

Nicholas de Lange

50 The Exagoge

ΜΩΣΗΣ ἀφ’ οὗ δ’ Ἰακώβ γῆν λιπὼν Χαναναίαν
κατήλθ’ ἔχων Αἰγύπτου ἐπτάκις δέκα
ψυχὰς σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπεγέννησεν πολλὴν
λαὸν κακῶς πρᾶσσοντα καὶ τεθλιμμένον,
ἑσάχρη τούτων τῶν χρόνων κακοῦμεθα
κακῶν ὑπ’ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δυναστείας χερσός.
ιδὼν γὰρ ἡμῶν γένναν ἄλις ἠὲ θλιμμένην
5
δόλον καὶ ἡμῶν πολλὴν ἐμχανήσατο
βασιλεὺς Φαραώ, τοὺς μὲν ἐν πλινθεύμασιν
οἰκοδομίας τε βαρέσιν αἰκίζων βροτούς
10
πόλεις τ’ ἐπύργου σφόν ἑκατὶ δυσμόρων.
ἐπειτα κηρύσσει μὲν Ἑβραίων γένει
τάρσενικά ρίπτειν ποταμὸν ἐς βαθύρροον.
ἐνταῦθα μήτηρ ἡ τεκοῦσα ἔκρυπτε με
15
τρὺς μῆνας, ὡς ἔφασκεν. οὐ λαθούσα δέ
ὑπεξέθηκε, κόσμον ἀμφιδεῖσά μοι,
παρ’ ἄκρα ποταμοῦ λάσιον εἰς ἔλος δασύ·
Μαριάμ δ’ ἀδελφὴ μου κατώπτευεν πέλας.
κᾶπειτα θυγάτηρ βασιλέως ἄβραις ὄμου
κατήλθε λουτροῖς χρώτα φαιδρῶναι νέον-
20
ιδούσα δ’ εὐδὸς καὶ λαβοῦσα ἀνείλετο,
ἔγνω δ’ Ἑβραῖον ὄντα· καὶ λέγει τάδε
Μαριάμ ἀδελφῇ προσδραμούσα βασιλίδι·
Ἐλέεις τροφὸν σοι παιδί τῷδ’ εἶρω ταχύ
25
ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραίων; ἡ δ’ ἐπέσπευσεν κόρην.
μολούσα δ’ εἶπε μητρὶ καὶ πατρὶ ταχύ
αὐτὴ τε μήτηρ καὶ ἔλαβεν μ’ ἐς ἀγκάλας.
εἶπεν δὲ θυγάτηρ βασιλέως· τοῦτον, γύναι,
τρόφευε, κἀγὼ μισθὸν ἀποδώσω σέθεν.
30
ὄνομα δὲ Μωσῆν ὀνόμαζε, τοῦ χάριν
ὕγρας ἀνείλε ποταμίας ἀπ’ ἡόνος.

* * *

The Exagoge

Moses: * When Jacob left Canaan
he came to Egypt with seventy
souls and fathered a great
people that has suffered and been oppressed.
5 Till this day we have been ill-treated
by evil men and a powerful regime.
For king Pharaoh, when he saw our people increas-
ing in number,
devised many plans against us.
He afflicted us with brickwork
10 and the hard labor of construction
and he had turreted cities built by our ill-fated men.
Then he ordered that the Hebrew
male children be cast into the deep-flowing river.
My mother hid me for three months
15 (so she has told me). But when she could no longer
escape detection,
she dressed me and exposed me
by the bank of the river in the thick and overgrown
marsh.
My sister Mariam stood guard nearby.
Then the princess with her maidservants
20 came down to bathe.
When she saw me, she took me up and
recognized that I was a Hebrew.
My sister Mariam then ran up to her and spoke,
‘Shall I get a nursemaid for this child
25 from the Hebrews?’ The princess urged her on.
Mariam went to fetch our mother who presently
appeared
and took me in her arms.
The princess said to her, ‘Woman, nurse this child
and I shall pay your wages.’
30 She then named me Moses, because
she had taken me from the watery river-bank.

* * *

*This translation is intended solely as an aid to readers with little or no Greek.

Illustration: ‘speech by Moses’, in: Howard Jacobson: The Exagoge of Ezekiel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 50f.



Holidays and Havurah

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot 2020 and Tu BiShevat and Purim 2021

As every year, we celebrated the festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot in September/October at Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

Traditionally, this is our busiest time of year with hundreds of visitors a day and our holiday services such as Erev Rosh Hashanah often filled to capacity. This year was different. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and strict government health guidelines, we hosted a high holiday schedule that had to adhere to these guidelines, one of which (at the time) stipulated only sixteen people allowed inside the synagogue at any one time.

For us, this meant a drastically scaled down, intimate holiday season with fewer participants compared to previous years. Rather than offering services at the synagogue which were open to international and local visitors as we usually do, this year, we could only invite Havurah members to take part, and even then, many members could not attend in the end. In the absence of two of our Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange, who customarily leads the services at this time of year, Havurah member Ahouva Amar with the help of others in attendance valiantly led the prayers for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. **Instead of the usual community dinner** at nearby Ela Taverna, following the Erev Rosh Hashanah service, about twenty of us sat at tables of four in the northern court-

pared by the guests such as Persian rice, apple pie or 'milopita', spinach pie, mushroom pie, baked fennel with cheese and leak omelet.

Similarly, to mark the breaking of the fast at Yom Kippur, the attendees of the Kol Nidre service congregated afterwards in the northern courtyard to enjoy some appetising snacks, many of which were served by Nikos on this occasion every year including small rusks called 'boukisses', cucumbers, boiled eggs, olives and Cretan cheeses plus Ahouva's special raisin bread (her mother's recipe from Libya) and mint tea. Talk centered on the upcoming festival of Sukkot and the building of the Sukkah in the northern courtyard which took place the following week.

Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, was marked by a Friday Kabbalat Shabbat service inside the synagogue, with the Kiddush and 'blessing on the lulav and etrog' recited under the Sukkah in the northern courtyard. After the service, we enjoyed some snacks brought by the attendees, all of us mingling together, masks on and social distancing, over the din of Greek, English and Hebrew.

For the High Holidays in 2021, we hope that everyone who wants to join us will again be able to do so and that our synagogue will once again be filled to capacity.

2021 started with a celebration of **Tu BiShevat** in a very



yard of Etz Hayyim. Thanks to Anja, Ahouva and her girls and the 'To Xani' staff, the courtyard was atmospherically lit by candlelight, tables set with all of the accoutrements required for Rosh Hashanah from apples and honey to dates, and with a variety of delicious dishes pre-

pared by the guests such as Persian rice, apple pie or 'milopita', spinach pie, mushroom pie, baked fennel with cheese and leak omelet. Similarly, to mark the breaking of the fast at Yom Kippur, the attendees of the Kol Nidre service congregated afterwards in the northern courtyard to enjoy some appetising snacks, many of which were served by Nikos on this occasion every year including small rusks called 'boukisses', cucumbers, boiled eggs, olives and Cretan cheeses plus Ahouva's special raisin bread (her mother's recipe from Libya) and mint tea. Talk centered on the upcoming festival of Sukkot and the building of the Sukkah in the northern courtyard which took place the following week.



staff member Giorgos Psaroudakis based on the recipe in Nikos' "Cookbook of the Jews of Greece." The gathering for **Purim** was even smaller because, at the time, only 3 people were legally allowed inside the synagogue.

With Hania once more being in the strictest level of lock-

down, just like in 2020, unfortunately there will not be any opportunity for the Havurah to come together for a community Seder as we usually do. However, we remain optimistic that "next year" we will all be together at Etz Hayyim again.

Alexandra Ariotti

The Search for an Etrog for Sukkot at Etz Hayyim

We all know that you can't have a Sukkah, or for that matter properly celebrate the festival of Sukkot without an Etrog (citron). Every day during Sukkot, we say a blessing over the Lulav (palm branch, myrtle and willows) and Etrog, with the fruit held in the left hand and the Lulav in the right hand after which the Lulav is shaken in six directions to remind us that God is everywhere. Under the Sukkah, the Etrog is stored in a special ornamental box to protect the fruit as it must remain un-

blemished according to Jewish law. **Etrog began in earnest**, with Etz Hayyim's staff members each making phone calls to local growers, nurseries, to a representative from the local agricultural institute, but with no luck other than learning that 30 years ago many citron/etrog trees were grown in the Apokoronas region east of Hania. Some of us went on foot to some fruit and vegetable retailers in the quest to locate an Etrog, but no luck.

At the end of the day, we wondered what we would do



The Etrog of the year in its small wooden box, inside the large wooden box specially made last year by Gerry Dutton.

blemished according to Jewish law.

Every year for Sukkot, Etz Hayyim receives a special package containing a Lulav and Etrog from Israel via the Athens Jewish community, which usually arrives some days before the festival. This year, however, no such package was sent from Israel because of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time, we didn't worry too much as we knew that we could at least make our own Lulav as we have a willow and myrtle in the synagogue courtyard and palm trees are also quite easily available in Crete. And more importantly, we have an Etrog tree in the northern courtyard which usually bears a large number of fruit at this time of year¹. As with so many other things: Not so in 2020. Our Etrog tree was looking remarkably bare and we began to worry. The search for an



Table in our Sukkah with Lulav and the Etrog during the Erev Sukkot service.

without the all-important Etrog for this year's Sukkot and then we spotted it. Looking up at our seemingly bare Etrog tree, our eagle-eyed former President, Marianna Vinther, pointed to its green leafy branches and exclaimed with understated excitement that we indeed had our Etrog, a small green fruit looking more like a lime, but an Etrog nonetheless. And so, our search for this special symbolic fruit ended as we gently placed it in its ornamental box alongside the Lulav under the Sukkah, perhaps the only Etrog currently in existence on the whole island.

Alexandra Ariotti

¹ And often quite enormous ones, as we reported in Jottings no. 25, p. 36. All editions of Jottings are available online on our website: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/research-library/jottings-etz-hayyim-newsletter/



In Memoriam Joseph Ventura (י"ט)

Professor Emeritus, Department of Physics, University of Crete
7 March 1938 – 5 October 2020 | 4 Adar II 5698 – 17 Tishrei 5781



Etz Hayyim Synagogue is saddened to announce the passing of Joseph Eugene Ventura.

He will be dearly missed as a cherished and dedicated member of our Havurah and Treasurer of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim, which operates the Synagogue, since the Corporation's establishment in 2010.

Joseph's connection with

and care for Etz Hayyim stretched much further back and was much deeper than such a technical position might suggest. When, in 1983, he first met Nikos Stavroulakis, then-director of the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens, Joseph could not have foreseen the reconstruction of Etz Hayyim by Nikos nor the impact it would have on him. Joseph characterized the inauguration of the newly restored synagogue in Hania sixteen years later (in 1999) as an "impressive gathering." Following the reopening, which for him meant a new focal point for Jewish life on Crete, he attended at every possible opportunity – together with his wife Natalie and daughter Lea – holiday services, communal meals at Rosh Hashana and Passover, and community events at Etz Hayyim, where he became an integral part of the Havurah.

On the third anniversary of the rededication, he wrote

"Etz Hayyim is [...] admired by throngs of visitors to Hania as an architectural ornament to the town, as well as a place of prayer and peaceful contemplation; it is a place of study through its unique library, and also a rich spiritual and cultural center with a substantial and widening range of activities. It is a source of pride that there is again a center of Jewish presence on Crete, and in fact one that with its vitality has a strong appeal to both its Jewish and non-Jewish friends."

As a Board of Trustees member, too, he was a dedicated supporter of the work and various projects of Etz Hayyim. He regularly called the office to ask: "So, how are things? What's new?" And he was always very obliging when tedious administrative matters called for his signature or visiting a notary. He contributed to Jottings, Etz Hayyim Synagogue's twice-yearly newsletter, several times.

In 2018, at the age of 80, he drove from Heraklion, where he'd been a resident since late 1983, to Hania to attend the two-day seminar "How to teach about the Holocaust in Greece", which Etz Hayyim hosted together with the Jewish Museum of Greece. We always sincerely appreciated his presence and warm support; and during all of his visits we found the opportunity to sit together in the Etz Hayyim courtyard and offer him his beloved tea. Sadly, the last time we sat together like this was on 3 August 2020, the day after the Memorial service for the Tanais victims, for which he had come to Hania specially.

Joseph was a very calm, soft-spoken person; his voice still occasionally filled the Etz Hayyim Synagogue. On one



Joseph Ventura (centre) with his wife Natalie at an Etz Hayyim community Seder



Joseph Ventura (2nd from left in front row) attending the seminar "How to teach about the Holocaust in Greece", Hania 2018.



memorable occasion he filled in for the rabbi saying the blessings over the marriage vow renewal of Hannah Nerbovig and Gerardo Ojeda Ebert, who came to Crete all the way from the USA for their special event. During several memorial services he read the Greek version of his wife's poem dedicated to the lost Cretan Jewish community. In 2015, he launched his own book, "Leaves in the Wind. Memoir of a Sephardi Family," in which he recounts the fascinating and dramatic story of his family's life before and during the Second World War.

Joseph was born in Athens in 1938 and survived the German occupation of Greece during the Second World War as a young boy having obtained false papers and hiding in the outskirts of Athens along with his family. He later learned, as he wrote in his memoir, that "the process by which false papers were obtained was relatively simple. The then-director of the Athens Police Force, Angelos Evert, gave orders to his inner circle of local police chiefs to discreetly issue false documents to Jews (and to other needy categories as well, I would assume). In addition, Greek Prime Minister Rallis and, especially, Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens made repeated requests to the local German administration to put an end to the deportation of the Greek Jews. [...] Nevertheless, the acceptance and support of the Greek authorities might not have been enough. Key to the collective survival of the Athenian Jews was also the compassion and solidarity of the Greek population, which actively countered the German brutalities."

"At first we were protected by the fact that southern Greece had initially been under Italian administration, and the Italians hadn't collaborated with the German plan for the extermination of the Jews. This state of affairs was overturned towards the end of 1943, however, following the Allied invasion of southern Italy and the subsequent Italian surrender (September 8, 1943). After this, southern Greece came under German jurisdiction,

and it was then that the real persecution began for us. Central to our survival was the initiative taken by the Athens Jewish Community in declaring that all its records had been destroyed in a recent fire, and in arranging for the escape of Chief Rabbi Eliahu Barzilai, who was 'kidnapped' along with his family by the ELAS guerilla on September 25, 1943. Following this, we ourselves go into hiding at a friend's (dentist G. Ioannides) country house in the suburb of Holargos north of Athens, with false papers.

"Throughout the year that followed, I'm called Constantine Vasiliades, and, of course I celebrate my name-day on May 21 along with my mother "Eleni." My father, "Aristidis Vasiliades", has a photo taken for his new I.D. card sporting a thick mustache that drastically changes his appearance.

"It was said in the family that I had fully internalized my wartime-occupation self in Holargos, and it had never occurred to me that I would call anyone by their old names."

Joseph had an accomplished career as an academic and political activist: Having particular interest in and sensitivity toward environmental issues, he was an active member of the Green party.

His academic career as an astrophysicist with a focus on the physics of strong magnetic fields, pulsars and magnetized neutron stars began with an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from the National Technical University of Athens in 1962. In 1966, he completed a Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Physics at the Weizmann Institute in Israel and received his PhD in theoretical astrophysics in 1975 from the City University of New York. Between 1975 and 1980, he was a research associate at the Universities of Köln and Hamburg as well as at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics (MPE) in Garching, West Germany. From 1981 to 1983, he was a visiting researcher at the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris and University of Tübingen (Germany). Between 1983 and 2006, he was a faculty member of the Physics Department of the University of Crete, and an associate researcher with the MPE and at the Foundation of Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH). He was a member of the Greek National Committee for Astronomy and served as one of its presidents; he also served as a national representative to the journal Astronomy & Astrophysics.

May his memory be a blessing.

We would like to thank those who have already made contributions to Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Joseph's loving memory, namely Lea Ventura, Florence Baturin, Adele Graf, and Sherri Moshman.



Poster announcing the presentation of Joseph Ventura's "Leaves in the Wind" at Etz Hayyim Synagogue, 2015.



Nikos Stavroulakis (ניקוס סטאוולאקיס)



left: view of the construction site from the south, before the tombs were unearthed. © personal archive V. Varouhakis

White linen bags, sweat, lots of sun, tense faces. Not much of a grand exit from the underworld; a delicate matter of high importance for some people, a nuisance for others- better forgotten or at least a job to get done swiftly. After all, these white linen bags were there for us to collect the remains of fifteen individuals whose bodies were exhumed on a construction site in Hania's Nea Hora district where the city's Jewish cemetery was once located. Part of a material past that remained in the shadows of local memory for too long, these bones would put the history of a whole community back on the map in a very tangible way.

The occasion was rather awkward. According to Jewish religious law, the removal of the dead from their burial ground is prohibited. Yet, modern life has other priorities. So, there we all were, with Nikos and Alex, in time for the collection of the bones on this sunny, hot day in June 2009. They also brought with them a metal flat-bed cart in order to move the body bags to the synagogue where Nikos planned to build an ossuary for them.

At that time, it didn't come to mind, but what took place was, in a surreal way, a reverse funeral procession. Following a route leading from the Firkas fort on the western side of the Chania's Venetian fortification and heading towards Evraiki, the old Jewish quarter, we somehow reenacted, although backwards, the steps of the Haniote Jews who, for centuries, carried their dead out of the city walls to the Jewish cemetery.

It was striking, but true that the majority of modern Haniotes didn't know that there was a Jewish cemetery in Nea Hora up until WWII. And for some of those people who did know about the cemetery, they certainly didn't want to remember- judging from the reactions of an ill-tempered woman living next to the construction site

who, from her rooftop, accused us of being responsible for awakening the Jewish vampires buried there.

Amidst this situation, Nikos remained a pillar of sobriety and painful recollection, once again gathering fragmented traces of a lost community - nothing less than his heritage. He and I had already been acquainted, since I asked for his assistance from time to time when I was cataloguing the lithics collection of the Ephorate. This collection included three broken Jewish tombstones from the cemetery, their Hebrew inscriptions requiring translation. He was always willing to help and eager to get his hands on any piece of Cretan Jewish history that he was not already familiar with. When I met him and told him about the graves being unearthed in Nea Hora, he was not at all surprised. Since his return to Chania and the reopening of Etz Hayyim Synagogue twenty years ago, Nikos received sporadic visits from people building or renovating their houses in that area, usually asking him to collect "some bones found" and perhaps even asking him to recite a prayer to "keep the disturbed spirits away". Nikos was always there, saddened that he was not able to provide the much-needed care to the deceased or that there was very little or no concern expressed on behalf of the state authorities to research and rediscover the mortuary archaeology of the Chaniote Jews.

However, this particular occasion seemed to represent something altogether bigger. Most of the tombs were not disturbed. They were not simply bone fragments or just one single, partially discovered tomb. The site was surely within the boundaries of the former Jewish cemetery. Yet, the bones were recovered under circumstances that were far from ideal. Under conflicting jurisdictions, the 28th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities (now

White Linen Bags

by Vasileios Varouhakis



part of the unified Ephorate of Antiquities of Chania) was forced to intervene in order to remove human bones from fifteen roughly-made graves which clearly dated to a later period and were certainly not medieval. This led myself and my colleagues, as well as Nikos to think they were related to the twilight of Chania's Jewish community during WWII. Heading the operation, I found myself overwhelmed by the hastiness of the situation and the historicity of it too.

Nikos insisted that because the construction was going ahead regardless and the bodies therefore had to be removed, at the very least, they needed to be reburied somewhere appropriate. Fully realising the importance of such a discovery that was generally ignored at the time, Nikos tirelessly searched for the more effective and modest way to offer some peace and security for

the material remains of his ancestors.

This is the story of an extraordinary excavation on the fringes of the history of Chania, a glimpse of a non-place, namely the Jewish cemetery of the city taken over by hastily planned building blocks; a story in which the main protagonists have either remained silent for a long time or are no longer with us. Partially an archaeological ethnography, partially an autoethnography, this story needs to be told and it will be told.

Vasileios Varouchakis is a Haniote archaeologist (PhD), until recently working for the Ephorate of Antiquities of Hania. This piece is a snippet from a bigger paper discussing the circumstances under which the excavation of the Jewish tombs at Nea Hora took place in May 2009, which will be presented during an international symposium scheduled by Etz Hayyim Synagogue in the near future.

Recent Events

Annual Memorial for the Victims of the Tanais and Hashkabah for Cretan Jewish Community

On 2 August, after a two-month delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual memorial for the victims of the sinking of the Tanais ship took place at the monument in the Koum Kapi neighbourhood of Hania. The event was well-attended, with more than fifty participants spreading out around the monument due to social distancing obligations. A report was published in the local newspaper, Haniotika Nea (see next page).

As in 2019, the memorial prayers for the three groups of victims – the Jewish community of Crete, Greek Orthodox members of the Cretan Resistance and Italian prisoners of war – were conducted by the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of

Kydonia & Apokoronas, Damaskinos, and pater Lucas Romani of the Catholic church in Chania.

For the first time, both the Prefect of Hania, Nikolaos Kalogeris, and the Mayor of Hania, Panagiotis Simandirakis, were present, along with the Ambassador of the State of Israel in Greece, Yossi Amrani. They all delivered short addresses which we document on page 9ff.

Incidentally, 2 August also marks, since 2015, the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. Victor Eliezer, Secretary General of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE), also mentioned the victims of the Romani genocide (Porajmos), together with other

groups of victims. The addresses were concluded by Social Anthropologist and President of the Board of Etz Hayyim, Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, who emphasized the importance of the memorial as an intercultural event and as a contribution to interfaith dialogue.

The official memorial at the monument was followed by the Hashkabah/memorial service for the Cretan Jewish community at Etz Hayyim Synagogue led by Rabbi Negrin. Because of strict public health measures, this event was not open to the public and as such, it was only attended by Havurah members, as well as Ambassador Amrani. The names of the victims of the Cretan Jewish community were read aloud and candles lit in their memory. Anja Zuckmantel



Dignitaries and public officials during the memorial event.



Report in local newspaper *Haniotika Nea*, 3 August 2020:

Remembering the Victims of the 'Tanais', in the Presence of the Israeli Ambassador

The people of Chania honoured the sacrifice of the victims of the "Tanais" – Cretan Jews, Christian members of the Resistance, Italian prisoners of war, more than 400 souls who lost their lives in the Cretan Sea in June 1944 while they were taken to the concertation camps by the Nazi invaders.

Members of the Jewish community, numerous members of the public and the local authorities were gathered at the modest monument in the Koum Kapi neighbourhood, while memorial prayers were given by the Metropolitan Bishop of Kidonias and Apokoronou Damaskinos, the Rabbi of Athens Gabriel Negrin and the vicar father Luca

Romani, representative of the Roman Catholic church. "Jews lived in Crete and in the city of Hania since 400 B.C" emphasised the Ambassador of the State of Israel, Mr Yossi Amrani, whose short speech focused in the sacrifice of Jewish community of the island, but also on the death of the Orthodox and Catholic as well. He stressed that ceremonies such as the one that took place yesterday "are a symbol of unity and fraternity of the Greek people. Greeks were one of the few nations that said 'NO' to the Nazi evil".

The representative of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, Mr Victor Eliezer, underlined in his address that oblivion "is the worst enemy of humanity. During the worst crime in history, the Holocaust, there were perpetrators, who are well known, but also there were also victims. Innocent people, members of the Resistance, people who were different: Romani people, Jews, leftists, liberals! But there were also bystanders who did not act as humanity might have dictated and allowed the deportation of 60,000 Jews from Greece to the concertation camps and six million Jews in total. This is the reason why memory is important because it leads to knowledge and in addition to the transmission of the knowledge, so that neither new perpetrators nor new bystanders will emerge." The President of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Mrs Vasiliki Yiakoumaki, emphasised the importance and the contribution of Etz Hayyim Synagogue to interreligious dialogue.

The Prefect of Hania, Nikos Kalogeris, said at his address that "we must never allow again fascism to prevail or any other kind of totalitarianism of any colour or dogma which causes fanaticism and depravity among people in order to rule."

The Mayor of Hania, Mr Panayotis Simandirakis, indicated that "Crete and the city of Hania suffered a lot and unfortunately we honour the loss of the Jewish community of our city, a community that offered a lot with the city's social, economic and cultural life."

The ceremony was supposed to take place at the beginning of June but was postponed due to the corona-virus situation.

Giorgos Konstas

T.K.A.N.

ΟΣΕΣ ΚΑΙΝΕΡΕΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ | **ΧΑΝΙΩΤΙΚΑ ΝΕΑ**

Δευτέρα 3 Αυγούστου 2020 | **ΧΑΝΙΩΤΙΚΑ ΝΕΑ**

Τη θυσία των θυμάτων του "Τάναϊς" – Εβραίους της Κρήτης, Χριστιανούς αντιστασιακούς, Ιταλούς αιχμαλώτους- πάνω από 400 ψυχές, που χάθηκαν στο Κρητικό πέλαγος τον Ιούνιο του 1944 καθώς οδηγούνταν σε στρατόπεδα συγκέντρωσης από τους ναζι κατακτητές, τίμησε η Χανιώτικη κοινωνία.

ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΙΣΡΑΗΛΙΝΟΥ ΠΡΕΣΒΗ

Μνήμη θυμάτων του "Τάναϊς"

Στο λιτό μνημείο στο Κουμ Κοπί βρέθηκαν μέλη της εβραϊκής κοινότητας, αρκετός κόσμος και οι τοπικές αρχές, ενώ επιμνημόσυνες δέσεις πραγματοποιήσαν ο μητροπολίτης Κυδωνίας και Αποκορώνου κ. Δαμασκηνός, ο ραββίνος Αθηνών Γκαμπριέλ Νεγκρίν, ο εφημέριος π. Λούκα Ρωμάνι εκπρόσωπος της καθολικής εκκλησίας.

« Οι Εβραίοι ζούσαν στην Κρήτη και στα Χανιά από το 400 πρ Χριστού» σημείωσε ο πρεσβευτής του Ισραήλ κ. Γιόσι Αμράνι, που στο σύνομο χαιρετισμό του στάθηκε στη θυσία της εβραϊκής κοινότητας τους νησιού, αλλά και στο θάνατο των ορδοδόξων και των καθολικών, υπογραμμίζοντας πως εκδηλώσεις όπως η χθεσινή «αποτελούν σύμβολο ενότητας και αδελφοσύνης των Ελλήνων. Ενός λαού από τους λίγους που είπαν "ΟΧΙ" απέναντι στο κακό που συμβόλιζαν οι ναζί».

Στο δικό του χαιρετισμό ο Βίκτωρας Ελιέζερ εκπρόσωπος του Κεντρικού Ισραηλτικού Συμβουλίου Ελλάδας υπογράμμισε πως η λήθη «αποτελεί το μεγαλύτερο εχθρό της ανθρωπότητας. Στο μεγαλύτερο έγκλημα αυτό του ολοκαυτώματος, υπήρξαν οι θύτες που όλοι γνωρίζουμε, υπήρξαν και τα θύματα. Αθώοι άνθρωποι, αντιστασιακοί, διαφορετικοί άνθρωποι, ρομά, εβραίοι, αριστεροί, φιλελεύθεροι! Υπήρχαν όμως και οι θεατές που δεν ενήργησαν όπως ο ανθρωπισμός θα επέβαλλε και επέτρεψαν τον εκτοπισμό 60.000 Εβραίων της Ελλάδας στα στρατόπεδα συγκέντρωσης και 6.000.000 Εβραίων συνολικά. Γι' αυτό και η μνήμη είναι σημαντική γιατί οδηγεί στη γνώση και στη μεταλαμπάδευσή της για να μη δημιουργηθούν νέοι θύτες, να μη δημιουργηθούν νέοι θεατές εξίσου.» Στη θέση της Συναγωγής "Εtz Χαγίμ" σήμερα και στη συμβολή της στο διαθρησκευτικό διάλογο στάθηκε η πρόεδρος του Δ.Σ. της "Εtz Χαγίμ" κ. Βασιλική Γιακουμάκη.

«Δεν πρέπει να επιτρέψουμε ποτέ ξανά στο φασισμό και σε οποιαδήποτε ολοκληρωτισμό οποιουδήποτε

χρώματος και δόγματος που φανερώνει και εξαχρεώνει τον άνθρωπο να επικρατήσει» είπε στον χαιρετισμό του ο αντιπεριφερειάρχης Νίκος Καλογεράς.

Από τη μεριά του ο δήμαρχος Χανίων κ. Παναγιώτης Σημανδिरάκης επισήμανε πως «η Κρήτη και τα Χανιά πλήρωσαν βαρύ φόρο αίματος και δυστυχώς τιμούμε την απώλεια της εβραϊκής κοινότητας του τόπου μας, μιας κοινότητας που προσέφερε και ενίσχυε με τη δράση της την κοινωνική, την οικονομική, την πολιτιστική».

Η εκδήλωση επρόκειτο να γίνει στις αρχές Ιουνίου αλλά είχε αναβληθεί λόγω κορωνοϊού.



Nikolaos Kalogeris, Prefect of Chania:

This ceremony is really important for the younger generations, as it keeps the memory of the victims of the Tanais alive. On that tragic night, the Jewish community of Crete perished in an instant, forever, and it is a crime committed by the German occupiers of Crete that I remember well as in that boat, 25 people from my village, a small mountainous village which is called Kampi Kidonias, lost their lives. Those people were arrested during an operation by the Nazi Germans and those people, among them Italians prisoners of war, 650 people in total*, were sent into the storeroom of Tanais where they suffered a dreadful death. Beyond remembering and honouring the memory of these people, it is important to protest and fight against any kind of fascism and totalitarianism, of any colour and doctrine, which devalues man and turns him against anyone who is different. This is our duty.

*Editor's note: ongoing research suggests the number was closer to around 500 people, 260 of whom were Jewish.



From left: Nikolaos Kalogeris (Prefect of Hania), Panagiotis Simandirakis (Mayor of Hania), Yossi Amrani (Ambassador of Israel)

Panagiotis Simandirakis, Mayor of Hania:

This ceremony is humble, but it commemorates an important incident. This incident reveals one more aspect about the atrocity that hurt humanity and created stories of terror. Hania and Crete suffered a great deal and unfortunately today, we honour the memory of the perished Jewish community of our city. This community was remarkably active in our city, contributing to the culture, economy and the society of Hania in general. Three hundred and fifty-three people were lost that night, the majority of them were Jews. This incident sends us an important message that during times of doubt and difficulties, like the present time, we should have faith. Ceremo-

nies like this one give us faith that we should preserve memory, memory reminding us that human life is the most important gift, regardless of religion, colour or any other discrimination. For this reason, this event has a special meaning today and I would like to thank you for your attendance; specifically, I would like to thank the Ambassador of the State of Israel who honours us today with his presence. I am sure that the timeless contribution of the Synagogue of Hania will continue to remind us of those dark moments in our history in order to help us avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

Yossi Amrani, Ambassador of the State of Israel in Greece:

It is a moving moment to be here where Jewish life abruptly ended in June 1944. It is significant that Etz Hayyim, the Tree of Life, is still alive through the memory, education and the history. Jews lived in Hania, in Crete from the 3rd century B.C. onwards. Then the end came for Jewish life in this country and significantly, we must remember that it was not just Jews; we need to remem-

ber this fact, as the three religions, Orthodox, Catholic and Jews gather here today to pray together in unity, in fraternity, in memory. But on that ship were 276 Jews and only eight were left on the island of Crete. However, there were other people on the ship, arrested to be deported because of their political views, because they were fighting against the Nazis, 600 people*. This is symbolic of the unity and the fraternity of the Greek people, one of the few people of the world who dared to say "OXI". We need to remember for all of us, as a message against the forces of evil, and evil did not come to an end with the Nazis. There is evil in the world so it is important for all of us to remember and educate the young genera-



tions about the importance of standing up on moral values, fighting for humanity, for people, regardless of the ethnicity, religion, gender. This is the message, and those birds (the monument) are flying to heaven, not drowning in to the sea. This is the legacy and what we should remember. Thank you very much for the organisers, Vasiliki and others for arranging this event and bringing people together.



Victor Eliezer, Secretary General of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece:

These days are days of memory and it is the memory that stands up against oblivion. Oblivion is the number one enemy against humanity. As you know, when crimes are committed, particularly the most dreadful crime against humanity that took place during the Holocaust, there were perpetrators who are well-known, but also victims like innocent people, partisans, Romani people, Jews, leftists, liberals. Yet, at that time, there were also bystanders who did not act as humanly as they should, so they allowed the deportation of sixty thousand Greek Jews to the concentration camps, six million Jewish people from the European continent. Therefore, memory is important, but it should be led by knowledge, by the transmission of knowledge to the next generations so there will not be new oblivions or observers. This is the reason why we are here today, three months later than the usual date on which we commemorate this event because of the coronavirus, but I believe that it is also a really important moment, as important is the role of Etz Hayyim Synagogue in preserving the memory and transmitting the knowledge.

Victor Eliezer (Secretary General of KISE); wreath laid in the name of KISE and the Board of Trustee of the Not-for-Profit Etz Hayyim.

© photographs: Thrasivolos Papastratis
Translation of Haniotika Nea article and speeches:
Giorgos Psaroudakis

Photo exhibition by Maria Sanadaki: "Tel Aviv & Jerusalem Through My Eyes"



Maria Sanadaki could hardly find a more suitable space in Hania to present her photographs. This is because Nikos Stavroulakis' former office immediately adjacent to Etz Hayyim Synagogue, dedicated as the Jennifer Stein Memorial Library, is a special place. As you climb the dark wooden staircase, all sounds around you slowly wash away. You enter a cosy room cloaked in an especially peaceful atmosphere. A huge, arched window offers a view of the main hall of the synagogue below. In former times, this place was the *Ezrath Nashim* from where Jewish women could follow religious services. This room was constructed for praying and contemplation, and somehow this space has never lost this aura.



Since mid-September 2020, Maria Sanadaki's photographic exhibition, "Tel Aviv & Jerusalem Through My Eyes" has been on display here. In 2019, Maria visited Israel for ten days without having a smartphone with her. "Traveling alone, exploring with no guidance. Using just a tiny map and a camera", as Maria has written in the description of her exhibition. During Maria's trip, she experienced much hospitality from all of the Israelis whom she met. "When they saw me looking on my map, many people initially asked 'where are you from?' or 'do you need any help?'. They gave me tips for restaurants and bars. They also told me about special places in their neighbourhoods that I should see. This happened to me all the time!".

During her trip, Maria shot approximately 400 photos in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem. For the exhibition, she selected eleven images from each city. The photographs show both the people and architecture of these cities; you can see a clothes line full of white laundry in front of an empty balcony or two black dressed Jewish-Orthodox men with cylinder-type hats, walking and gesticulating as they talk in front of a sandstone wall. Maria organised her photographs thematically for her exhibition: "I decided to show mainly people in Jerusalem and old structures or interesting building parts from Tel Aviv-Jaffa."

Maria has some favourite pictures. One of them portrays a white dressed man outside the Church of the Ho-

ly Sepulchre. He is kneeling and praying alone in front of a sandstone wall.

Shortly after Maria had arrived in Jerusalem, she ended up in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by chance. As she entered, Maria saw hundreds of people waiting in front of the empty tomb of Jesus. Only four people can enter there at the same time so Maria decided to return the next morning. "When I arrived there at 7:00 a.m., there were again about 200 people waiting in front of the tomb. However, I stayed and waited. After I was finally allowed to enter the tiny room, I had roughly 15 seconds to stay. Suddenly, a priest knocked on the door. It was the sign to leave." After this stressful experience, Maria saw the praying man in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He stayed there alone, outside the building, undisturbed. "He spent about 30 minutes there. The man just looked at the wall so he could focus on meditating. He had his eyes closed ... blocking out what was happening behind him and in the tomb in front of him." After Maria had observed him for a while, she took her camera and took that photo.

Pictures like this one now decorate the Jennifer Stein Memorial Library, further enhancing and intensifying its peaceful atmosphere. A calm room with quiet, thoughtful photos; that's harmony. Maria's exhibition makes climbing up those dark wooden stairs to Nikos' former office even more worth the visit.

Tobias Schmitzberger



One of Maria's favourite photographs: "morning prayers".



Photograph "trapped shadows", taken in Tel Aviv.

The exhibition "Tel Aviv & Jerusalem Through My Eyes" will remain in place throughout the summer of 2021, when hopefully Etz Hayyim can welcome visitors again. A series of greetings cards (A5, folded) and original high-quality prints of selected photographs by Maria Sanadaki are available with proceeds being donated by Maria to support the work and maintenance of Etz Hayyim Synagogue.



Ongoing Projects



Looking back on two years of cooperation, learning and innovative heritage presentation

When I wrote in Jottings 23 (September 2018) that “Etz Hayyim has the opportunity to participate together with six partner organisations in a project on cultural heritage funded by the European Commission as part of the European Year of Culture Heritage,” little did I know then what this project really held in store for us. As of 15 December 2020, the Heritage Contact Zone (HCZ) project has now been officially concluded which gives me the opportunity to recapitulate some of the major outcomes of a project that, in my view, turned into a major milestone for the development of Etz Hayyim.

Milestone for Etz Hayyim as a heritage organisation

Etz Hayyim, located on the island of Crete, an idyllic holiday destination that also evokes the mythology and heritage of the Minoan civilization for its many visitors, seems to be far removed from the current surge in public attention to history and heritage in the political context of post-colonial discussion, revisionism over national identities, the Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements. And yet, in many respects, the presence of Etz Hayyim in Hania is a fitting illustration of how much our histories and roots, our places of memory and the stories we tell about them matter for the cohesion

of a society and the feeling of belonging for all its members. The HCZ project investigated the potential of heritage spaces for creative processes and dialogue. By focusing on contested, neglected or marginalized heritage, HCZ aimed to develop innovative and inclusive forms of heritage representation, using heritage as a space for dialogue and for making potential conflict over interpretations and narratives constructive. At Etz Hayyim, this project challenged us to explore new ways of engaging with the local community that go well beyond the inclusive narrative of the place of the Cretan Jewish community within the larger history of Crete and Greece which we present to our visitors during guided tours.

For Etz Hayyim, HCZ was the first major European collaborative project and thus an exciting opportunity to learn from the diverse experiences, projects and methodologies employed by our six project partners from the Netherlands, Hungary, Romania, Germany, Italy and Belgium. At regular partner meetings, we were able to learn more about the specific, often challenging local contexts that our partner organisations are working in, e.g. in Budapest (see *Jottings* 24), Marseille (*Jottings* 25) and Timisoara (*Jottings* 26). The partner meetings also represented welcome opportunities to advance the joint pro-

<p>Goethe-Institut</p> <p>The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide.</p>	<p>Culture Action Europe (CAE)</p> <p>Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the only cross-sectoral network representing all sub-sectors in culture: performing arts, literature, visual arts, cross-arts initiatives, design, community centres etc.</p>	<p>Etz Hayyim Synagogue</p> <p>Etz Hayyim Synagogue is the last remaining witness to 2,300 years of Jewish history on Crete and a testimony to the island's multi-faith past at the intersection between Europe, Africa and the Middle East.</p>
<p>Timisoara European Capital of Culture Association</p> <p>The vision of Timisoara European Capital of Culture Association is for Timisoara to become a pole of excellence in the Central European cultural space.</p>	<p>Human Platform / Living Memorial</p> <p>Human Platform (HP) unites professional associations and individuals working in the field of culture, education and social care.</p>	<p>The European University Institute</p> <p>The European University Institute is an academic institution, created in 1972 by the Member States of the founding European Communities.</p>
<p>H401</p> <p>H401 is a private foundation located in the Herengracht building of late artist Gisèle d'Ailly.</p>		

The Heritage Contact Zone consortium.



ject by sharing ideas and developing project content together. The two-year project, now fully documented on the HCZ website (<https://heritagecontactzone.com/>), produced four major outcomes: five local exhibitions, one of them in Hania; a Toolkit for working with contested heritage; five new permanent “heritage contact zones”, one of them in Hania; and the online conference “Open Up!”, which concluded the project.

Exhibitions developed in participatory workshops

In October 2019, the exhibition “Parallel Points of View” was on display in Hania (see <http://heritagecontactzone.com/hania/>). The exhibition presented ten alternative perspectives on the history and society of Crete that covered the mediaeval Emirate of Crete, the Ottoman period and today's Muslim presence to Romaniote and Sephardi Jewish views and a women's perspective, together with views from the Roma, LGBTQ+, expatriate and refugee communities. The exhibition was co-created in participatory workshops with ten groups representing the various perspectives which resulted in a compilation of fifty individual stories and objects. In the exhibition, these objects were juxtaposed with works by Cretan modern artists. In *Jottings* 26, Konstantin Fischer, a local artist and Etz Hayyim Havurah member, who curated the exhibition for Etz Hayyim as part of the Heritage Contact Zone project, reflected on the exhibition and the participatory workshops.

Collaborative writing and testing of the Toolkit

The opening of the exhibition coincided with a meeting

of the HCZ partners in Hania. However, the main focus of that meeting was the commencement of the co-writing of a Toolkit for dealing with difficult and contested heritage. In retrospect, this was a key moment for the collaborative project as the partners could reflect on their participatory workshops and co-created exhibitions: the methods they had employed, what had worked or where they had faced difficulties and how they had addressed those difficulties and challenges. The Toolkit was conceptualised as an aid for other heritage organisations in developing initiatives that create new memory communities and engage the public in creative ways. The Toolkit includes two sets of questions – conceptual and practical – with corresponding suggestions how to address those thirteen questions ranging from “How to claim and communicate legitimacy for the initiative of a project?” to “How to build and engage your memory community?” and “How to disseminate and deal with the media?”.

The Toolkit was created in a co-writing process over several months with the project partners contributing individual sections and giving feedback on the other partners' contributions. We were quite a diverse group of practitioners contributing a wide range of participatory workshop and exhibition concepts and, at the same time, varying levels of theoretical frameworks, different institutional contexts, as well as different local and national contexts. As a result, the Toolkit has quite a broad scope and applicability and is indeed a “toolbox” from which heritage practitioners can pick specific tools applicable to their specific contexts. The project partners came to realise this broad applicability during a series of five Toolkit



left: selection of items from the “Parallel Points of View” exhibition;
right: cover of the HCZ Toolkit.

Heritage Contact Zone

Toolkit

Project Heritage Contact Zone 2019-2020



testing workshops during the summer of 2020. For one such workshop, Etz Hayyim hosted the German War Graves Commission (*Volksbund deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge*) in July 2020. The Toolkit was tested for a very specific project: the reconceptualisation of the permanent exhibition at the German war cemetery in Maleme, just west of Hania.

The associate partner *Volksbund* was founded in 1919 after the First World War and maintains more than 800 German military cemeteries in 46 countries. One of them is located in Maleme, which is also the one most frequented by visitors among all the cemeteries maintained by *Volksbund*. In recent years, *Volksbund* has placed more emphasis on making their cemeteries not only places of individual commemoration, but first and foremost places of learning and critical reflection. It is in this context that the longstanding exhibition at the Maleme war cemetery is presently under review and the staff of Etz Hayyim has been consulting *Volksbund* on this project upon the request of the *Volksbund* Secretary General. (The current exhibition in Maleme is problematic on many levels; in the next edition of *Jottings* we will publish an insightful article by our current *Gedenkdienst* volunteer Tobias about the Maleme project.)

The concept for a new exhibition at the Maleme cemetery states as one of its main aims that visitors shall not simply absorb information, but also be offered the opportunity to learn about the complexity of historical events and to leave the exhibition with questions rather than with reconfirmed certainties. One of the main changes will be the focus on the impact of the German occupation on the daily life of the local population, repression and atrocities, as well as the fate of the Cretan Jewish community.

In the Toolkit workshop, which took place online due to the Covid pandemic, the staff of Etz Hayyim discussed the challenges and potential content of a revised exhibition with Daniela Schily (Secretary General of *Volksbund*), Harald John (head of public relations at *Volks-*

bund), Henrik Hug (representative of the local chapter of *Volksbund* in the federal state of Thuringia), historian Corinna Kuhr-Korolev (curator) and Albrecht Viertel from the *kursiv* company in Dresden, which was commissioned for the new exhibition in Maleme. It became clear that one of the main challenges centred on how to present the history of the German Occupation of Crete to a broad audience – ranging from local Cretans and schools to visiting tourists – in an engaging way and to raise awareness and gain acceptance for this new inclusive and critical approach to presenting this painful and often contested part of Cretan history.

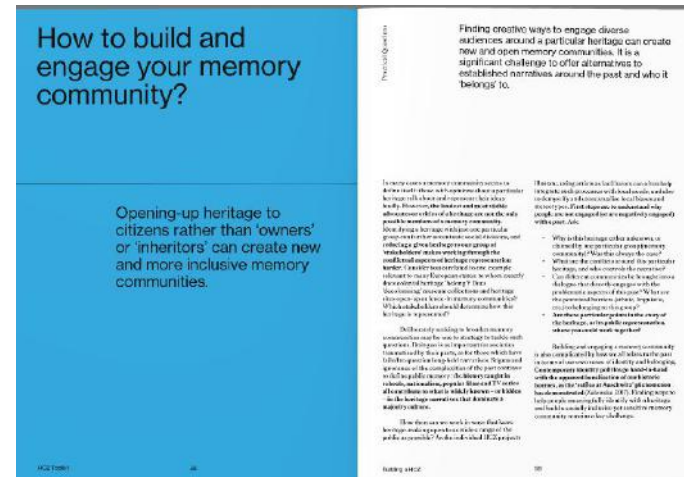
Permanent contact zone: Tour of Evraiki and participatory project “Mapping Hania”

The destruction of the Jewish community of Crete during the Second World War will be presented in the new exhibition at Maleme as an integral component of the history of the German Occupation. This adds to our continued efforts to make the history of the Cretan Jewish community more visible both to locals and visitors alike.

Applying the HCZ concept made us also more fully aware to what extent Etz Hayyim is indeed a contact zone, that is, a heritage site where the wider public can learn about aspects of (Cretan) heritage and history that have been neglected or sidelined by mainstream and nationalist representations of the past. This heightened sense of our role as a cultural mediator made us re-contextualise the map for a walking tour through the historic Jewish quarter of Hania, which the Etz Hayyim staff had been developing since spring 2019. This map has now been published as part of the Heritage Contact Zone project as a “new permanent contact zone”: it offers a new layer to the past and present geography of Hania. It will give new, more tangible meaning to the name “Evraiki”, which is still applied today to the area around Etz Hayyim, but with little meaning or connotation for locals about what life in this centuries-old Jewish neighbour-



Participants of the Toolkit workshop (left), sample page from the Heritage Contact Zone Toolkit (right)



hood was like or what the historic quarter could mean for today's Hania. In keeping with the participatory character of the HCZ project, we added an interactive element to the Evraiki map: the “Mapping Hania” project invites the wider public to share their personal view and mental map of the city and will eventually create a multilayered mosaic of personal maps of the town and potentially start a conversation of what we do, could or maybe should see. (We will present the “Mapping Hania” project in the next edition of *Jottings*.)



Open Up! Conference and “Rooted Participation”

The HCZ project concluded with the online conference “Open Up!” which was held 23-26 November 2020. The conference offered three local workshops, a keynote presentation by Hungarian historian Andrea Pető on “Shame and the memory politics of illiberal states” and a session with European policy-makers. The HCZ partners launched the Toolkit in the session “OPEN UP! – working with contested heritage”, during which I had the opportunity to present Etz Hayyim's contribution to the project. In the session with policy-makers, the HCZ partners presented their policy paper “Rooted Participation: Heritage Contact Zone in support of new heritage policies” that was derived from the experiences and challenges of the two-year HCZ program. The policy paper emphasises that: “Now is the time to place community involvement to co-design and manage [...] processes [of heritage intervention] at the core” of European cultural programs. (See some key observations and policy recommendations from the policy paper in the box to the right).

What's next ... TCZ (Training for the Contact Zone)

After two years of conceptualising and applying innovative and participatory forms of heritage representation, what's next? The HCZ partners have applied for a grant for a follow-up project that could allow us to further disseminate and apply the HCZ Toolkit on a European and local level. We of course hope very much that the application will be successful so that we can continue the successful and inspiring collaboration. In any case, we intend to apply the Toolkit also in cooperation with other local and international partners as we plan to initiate more projects dealing with contested heritage with local and international partners.



[...] In many countries and regions, the heritage sector is deeply tied to the tourism industry, an often vital source of income for local economies. The contested relation between heritage, urban development, regeneration, preservation and tourism should be carefully re-examined with the aim to ensure the sustainability of the host communities, their

cultural practices and environment. Lack of community involvement in the management of tourism, as well as in urban and heritage regeneration, especially in rural areas, can lead to the loss of cultural diversity, displacement of communities, gentrification and erosion of local authenticity.

[...] Therefore we would welcome the stronger recognition of a value of cultural heritage that goes beyond the dimension of tangible assets: that is, heritage as a place for public engagement, reflection and re-invention of communities' contested stories and histories. Communities' engagement, co-construction and participation are critical elements that must be at the core of any heritage intervention. Informed participation of communities helps foster ownership and ensures adequate responses to local realities and needs. Promoting diversity in interventions, particularly intercultural encounters, contributes to the well-being of citizens as a whole.

Policy-makers and those who implement cultural policies need to pay greater attention to soft-infrastructure and participation, rather than traditional approaches prioritizing hard infrastructure. [...]

Finally, I would like to say sincere thanks to Lars, Frans and Michael at H401 in Amsterdam, Joachim and Cristina at the Goethe Institut in Bukarest, Marie and both Andras's at Human Platform in Budapest, Ovidiu and Cristina at Timisoara European Capital of Culture, Jasper at the European University Institute Florence, Cornelia at Culture Action Europe in Brussels and last but not least to Konstantin, dedicated Etz Hayyim Havurah member, curator for our HCZ exhibition and great inspiration throughout the project and, of course, a sincere thank you to the Etz Hayyim staff! Thank you for your generosity and collaboration during wonderful two years of implementing the HCZ project.

Anja Zuckmantel



Cataloguing the Nikos Stavroulakis Collection: A Repository for Research and Heritage Preservation

During the months without a lockdown in 2020, the staff of Etz Hayyim worked on the project of analysing, cataloguing and digitising materials from Nikos Stavroulakis' (נִיכּוֹס סְטַוְרוּלָאקִיס) substantial private collection. This project will shed light on Nikos' 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, which we reprint 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 very welcome.

In particular, we very much welcome 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 contractual agreements with individual donors should they request it. All material will be treated according to professional standards regarding intellectual property rights and privacy concerns.



Educational Outreach

Take A Tour of Hania's Etz Hayyim Synagogue and Historic Jewish Quarter from the Comfort of Your Own Home!

In the quiet months May and June 2020, Anja, Giorgos and myself were sitting in the courtyard of Etz Hayyim, bemoaning the lack of visitors and imagining a summer without tourists amidst the daily cycle of global Covid pandemic headlines.

Back then when the country's borders remained closed to non-Greek citizens, we pondered whether anyone would be able to visit the synagogue this year and if they could, it certainly wasn't going to be the almost 30,000 or so who enter through Etz Hayyim's Rothschild Gate every year.

Regardless, we wanted the synagogue to remain open and accessible to everyone in the face of an uncertain immediate future. We wanted to continue our work showing visitors around the synagogue, telling people about its unique history and to do that, with the synagogue's doors closed to the public at that time, we had to think about ways to keep this place somehow within reach to those people interested, but unable to visit in person. If people couldn't come to us, then at least Etz Hayyim could be virtually visited online.

The same for the historic Jewish Quarter of Hania, Evraiki. Over the past year or so, the staff at Etz Hayyim designed a one hour self-guided walking tour of the old Jewish neighbourhood, Evraiki, that had surrounded Etz Hayyim Synagogue for centuries. Our aim was to bring to life the once vibrant, but now barely remembered Jewish presence in Evraiki by allowing visitors to follow a route featuring ten stations set out on a map depicting the neighbourhood in the 19th and 20th centuries. The map was especially created for Etz Hayyim by British-Cretan artist George Sfougaras.

Each station listed on our map is accompanied by a story, based on our ongoing research, about the former occupants which visitors can read about while standing in front of a particular house in the neighbourhood. We were excited to be finally in the position to offer this tour to Etz Hayyim's visitors this year. We had envisioned generating donations with the walking tour maps, and also leading the tour ourselves in both Greek and English when possible, an endeavour we felt would really enhance the overall visitor experience at Etz Hayyim.

However, the pandemic changed all of that and as a result, people can now take a virtual tour of the historic

Jewish Quarter online on our website (a virtual tour of Etz Hayyim Synagogue will follow soon). Giorgos' friend Dimitrios Tsolakis (aka 'Butcher', as his family owns a butcher shop) was tasked with filming all of the surroundings both inside Etz Hayyim and around the nearby streets of Evraiki, while also recording audio commentary in English by myself and in Greek by local actor, Fanny Georgakaki about the history of Hania's Jewish community, its neighbourhood and two synagogues, Beth Shalom that was destroyed during WWII and of course, Etz Hayyim.

We hope that in the next month or two, visitors will then be able to take their time and look around the synagogue itself, its Mikveh and two courtyards at the same time as learning about all about this special place almost as if they were there in person. For more of an understanding of Hania's pre-war Jewish community, there's **already now the opportunity** to virtually walk the streets of the former Jewish Quarter for a glimpse into where and how community members once lived, like a snapshot in time. And all from the comfort of home!

Alexandra Ariotti



In the Hania Historic Jewish Quarter Virtual Tour you can explore this centuries-old former Jewish neighbourhood, Evraiki, through a series of short videos: each number on the map has a corresponding video: just click on the links in the list below. Designed by the staff at Etz Hayyim Synagogue, the tour follows a route - featuring 10 stations - set out on a map depicting Evraiki in the 19th and 20th centuries. Two of the buildings included on our route no longer exist (stations 3 and 8), while the house numbers on the map do not necessarily correspond to the present-day house numbers, but are based on the house numbers in the historical records.

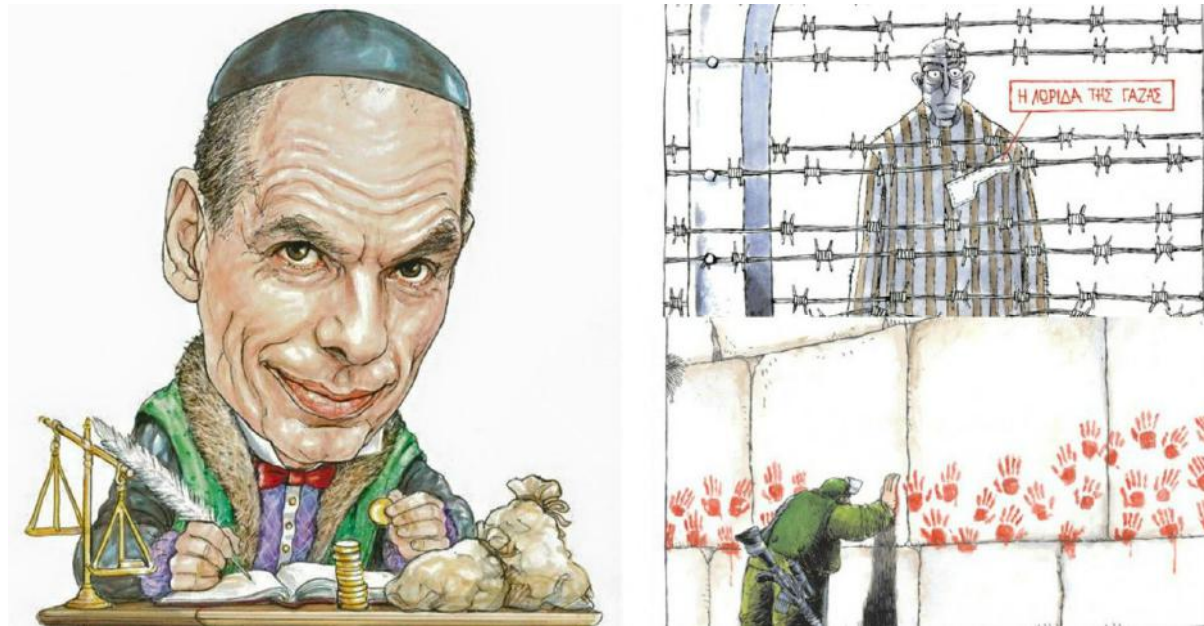
Each station listed on the map is accompanied by a story about the buildings and their former occupants. These stories bring to life the once vibrant but now almost forgotten Jewish presence in the heart of Hania's Old Town. The map was created especially for this project by British-Cretan artist George Sfougaras, based on historical aerial photographs and maps.



Take the virtual tour here: www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/the-jews-of-crete/hania-jewish-quarter-virtual-tour/



Cretan Jewish History & Academic Trajectories



Antisemitism: the Dark Shadow Looming Over Greek Society

Part 2: Antisemitism Among Us

by Alexandros Massavetas

Is it okay to laugh at the portrayal of Yiannis Varoufakis as Shylock and the comparison of Israeli policy towards Palestinians with that of the Nazis? Alexandros Massavetas identifies the cracks through which antisemitism permeates our daily lives.

The second part of Alexandros Massavetas' article "Antisemitism: the Dark Shadow Looming Over Greek Society" looks at the presence of antisemitism in the media and pop culture, points out the role of the church and explores the relationship between antisemitism and the tendency of self-victimisation among Greeks and the "obliteration of memory" which obfuscates the role that Greeks played in the looting of the property of their Jewish neighbours who perished in the Holocaust. However, we also see evidence that there might be reason for optimism.

Media and Pop Culture

The front pages of many newspapers (Makelio, Eleftheri Ora, Stohos, etc.) are full of antisemitic conspiracy theories. Such conspiracies include the current equivalent of the old story of the barrel with the nails – just as ridiculous and totally fabricated. "You see conspiracy theories perpetuated everywhere: Soros, the Jews control the world, Greek governments are agents of international Zionism" explains journalist Xenia Kounalaki, pointing out that those newspapers are hanging from the stands in public view. "Soros, of Hungarian-Jewish descent, and in particular the Open Society Foundations are the new red flag for both for the far left and the far right" says Kounalaki. In Greece, the antisemitic rhetoric of both

political ideologies is often intertwined with in a widespread philo-Russian sentiment and, more particularly, with the admiration for Putin and his methods.

The whole conspiracy, centred on Soros and his supposed actions, has become more widespread since the announcement of the negotiations that resulted in the Prespes agreement [between Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia resolving a long-standing dispute over the latter's name, editor's note]. Interestingly enough, while Soros is accused of being an agent of "international Zionism", at the same time he is detested by the Netanyahu government as he has repeatedly condemned its policies, especially with regards to the issue of settlements in the occupied territories, and criticised its actions.

Kounalaki emphasises that although the antisemitic narrative is completely absurd, it is still reproduced in media outlets that aim to be taken seriously by their audi-

Illustrations at top: Political cartoons that were criticized for their antisemitic content; left: Ta Nea, right: EfSyn, 3 September 2019.



ence rather than viewed as 'fringe'. Indeed, during the Second Intifada, Apogevmatini newspaper published conspiracy theories about Israelis trading the organs of dead Palestinians on its front page. In 2015, Nea newspaper published a political cartoon in which Varoufakis was depicted as Shylock, with a stack of gold coins and a Jewish kipa (headgear). Avgi newspaper, in a recent post, supposedly criticising the importance of economic parameters in the new policy of the Ministry of Culture, the author referred to "the culture of Shylock".



Conspiracy theories about Soros are not limited to Greece. Politico's cartoon has been denounced as antisemitic. Rothschild's hand leads the puppet, Soros who manipulates two former associates of D. Trump. [Ben Garrison/Twitter]

In times of tension in the Middle East, the Greek press, along with the internet, are filled with political cartoons of extremely antisemitic rhetoric and content. Historian Leon Saltiel, who studies the Jewish history and culture of Thessaloniki, has gathered many caricatures whose anti-Semitism "stands out". There are references to the Scriptures, the Nazis, Shylock and racial stereotypes about Jews. Thus, the Palestinians are identified with Christ and the Israelis with their executioners. The shameful historical revisionism that "Jesus was a Palestinian" is being propagated internationally with increasing intensity in recent years by Palestinian, Muslim and Western leftist organisations. Israel is portrayed as a monstrous Goliath and the Palestinians as David with a slingshot. It is also common for Israelis to be identified with Nazis, but also for the Shoah to be compared with what is happening in the Palestinian territories, which is presented as a "second Holocaust." The depiction of "the Jew" in caricatures deploys all racial stereotypes. He appears hooked-nosed and with big ears (as in the caricatures of the Nazi rag, Der Stürmer) and with the appearance of the ultra-Orthodox Jew (with *kipa*, *payot* – the characteristic locks behind the ears – and beard). He is presented as Shylock, with a typical hat and the dollar symbol or those of other currencies.

The report of the Heinrich Böll Foundation about anti-Semitism in Greece ("Anti-Semitism in Greece Today - Manifestations, Causes and Treatment of the Phenomenon", Thessaloniki 2017), however, mentions positively the frequent publication in the Greek press of articles about the Jewish presence in the country and the memory of the Holocaust in Greece and abroad, as well as reviews of books and movies with similar content. The Heinrich Böll Foundation also positively assesses the harsh attitude of the press towards the Neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.



Antisemitic political cartoon by "Stathis" in *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia*, March 2002.

Kounalaki notes that antisemitism is "constantly and in a devious way nourished by pop culture." A well-known incident was the spite of Tzimis Panousis, who, among other disgusting comments, had said: "Jews, Pigs, Murderers, have a bad day, have a terrible death. Gaza should wrap you like a shroud. You should become mummies and be buried in the bowels of the pyramids you build from the money you accumulate." These statements had provoked a public outcry, but not a unanimous condemnation of that particular individual. Shocking as well was the infamous statement by Mikis Theodorakis in 2003 that "the Jews are at the root of evil." The fact that the artist, at the time, was not met with the appropriate public outcry from Greek intellectuals and politician alike, hastened his transformation from a symbolic figure of Greek society to a beloved totem of conspiracy theorists.

In an attempt to rectify his statements to Deutsche Welle, Theodorakis revealed to what extent he confuses the concepts "Jew" and "Israeli". On the one hand, he stated that "I have always been on the side of the weak, the people fighting for their rights. And among them also the Israeli people. I sang about their suffering as best I could." Of course, in this case, referring to his



Maut-hausen composition, he should have spoken of a Jewish, not an Israeli, people (which at that time did not yet exist). His “explanation” that all of this was said during a presentation of his comparative study examining Hellenism and Judaism also makes clear that he blames the Jewish people everywhere for everything of which he accuses the State of Israel. Fifteen years later, in 2018, Theodorakis crossed the line by shouting “my brothers fascists, racists, terrorists, anarchists” at a rally for the Macedonian issue.

Antisemitism and the Church

The attitude of the Greek Orthodox Church has been tarnished by two or three infamous high-ranking members who habitually rush make pronouncements about everything from the dangers of oral sex to foreign investments. Thus, [metropolitan Bishop] Seraphim of Piraeus, who expresses (health and moral) objections to oral sex, has repeatedly warned the public of the dangers of the actions of “international Zionism.”

In a TV show in 2010, Seraphim stated that “international Zionism” is directing globalisation in order to break up the family by promoting same-sex couples and “to undermine the religious identity” of Christians. Shortly afterwards, he claimed that “Adolf Hitler was a puppet of world Zionism and was funded by the famous Rothschild family, with the sole purpose of convincing Jews to leave Europe and to descend on Israel to establish the new Empire.” In 2015, Seraphim himself labelled the MPs who voted in favour of the civil partnership law as “voluntary pawns and puppets of the internationalist Zionist system”.

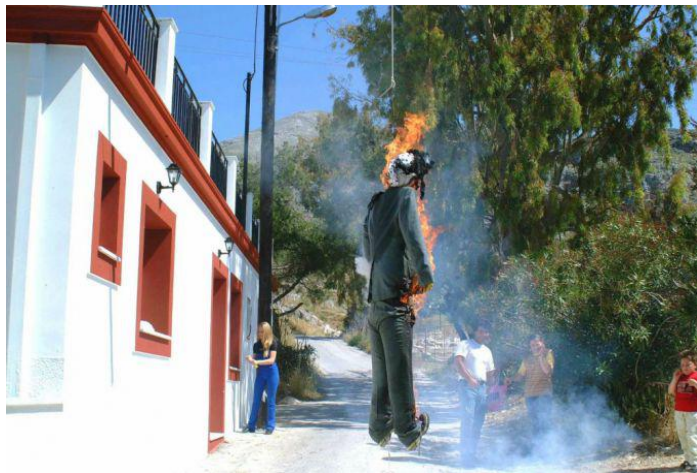
Anthimos of Thessaloniki, whose favourite hobby is to keep vigils against Gay Pride, does not lag behind in anti-Semitic outbursts. In a 2012 sermon, he berated the municipality of Thessaloniki for supporting an academic conference on the history of the city's Jews, while also stating that “Jews are flirting with Thessaloniki”. He spoke of steps taken by the Jews for the commercial or other conquests of Thessaloniki.

Later, he discussed an alleged Jewish conspiracy with the Slavo-Macedonians in order to “steal our Macedonia.” Unfortunately, theories about “an international Zionist conspiracy” against the rights of Hellenism are extremely widespread.

The aforementioned high ranking Church representatives are not the only ones who have expressed similar opinions or resorted to extreme political interventions or derisory social attitudes. The problem, of course, is that not only are they being ridiculed, they are also ridiculing the institution which they represent, as well as

the Church of Greece as a whole. It is sad and disturbing that the Archbishop and the Holy Synod never intervened to reprimand the specific individuals or to impose sanctions attempting to restore the prestige of a church that has lost the respect of a significant percentage of the population, especially that of younger citizens. And even if the catechism no longer exists, the problem remains with the “neighbourhood priest” and the ideas that he often passes on to his flock, Kounalaki points out. “The Judeophobia and conspiracy theories of the lower clergy should not be underestimated, they significantly contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes,” notes Kounalaki. Particularly problematic are some popular customs that accompany important Christian holidays, culminating in the “burning of Judas” during Holy Week. In recent years, the Greek press has paid particular attention to this custom, that perpetuates intolerance and Judeophobia, and which, at the same time, reminds us of the actions of the Ku Klux Klan, as has been widely reported.

The articles provoked the reactions of the supporters of the burning of Judas who stressed that this was an ancient custom, and that the figure being burned was not “the Jew”, but “Judas”. Therefore, the Jews are not being “punished” but rather, emblematically, the traitor. Many such supporters have argued that the burning of Judas is a custom which is practiced in many Christian countries around the world. “The antiquity or the widespread practice of a custom is not an argument for its preservation,” Kounalaki observes. After all, female genital mutilation is also an ancient custom that is prevalent in many countries. As for the claim that the one being burned in the fire is not “the Jew” but “Judas”, this is refuted by the fact that Judas is often represented with the characteristics that signify the Jew in political cartoons, either in the guise of an ultra-Orthodox Jew, or with that of the Shylock-style wealthy banker.



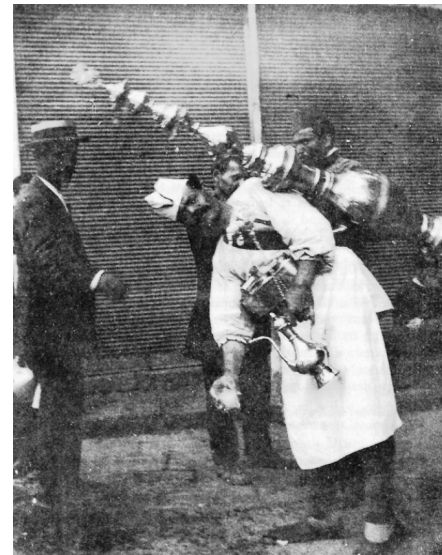
The burning of Judas in Kalymnos in 2002. [Eurokinissi]



It should be noted that the Greek Orthodox Church did not condemn this tradition in contrast to the Catholic Church in Poland which hastened to call on believers to abandon it this act as “offensive to human dignity”. The Polish bishops' synod stated unequivocally that “the Catholic Church is not going to tolerate any signs of contempt for any nation, including the Jewish people”.

Selective Narration and the Obliteration of Memory

Kounalaki stresses that the mythology existing around Jews is based on a selective and distorted narrative full of prejudices which provokes both awe and suspicion. “The Jew is always portrayed as a plutocrat, while it is forgotten that the vast majority of Jews belonged to the proletariat and were poor. It is no coincidence that the first socialist labour organisation in Greece, the ‘Federation Ovradera de Saloniki’, was founded in Thessaloniki in 1909 by Abraham Benaroya and Jewish workers of the city.



left: Jewish lemonade seller in Thessaloniki, late of 19th century [Wikimedia Commons]; right: On the left is a section of the chandelier in the Sarfati synagogue in Thessaloniki, which was removed after the Holocaust by the priest of the neighbouring Church of the Ascension. [Historical Archive of the Israeli Community of Thessaloniki]

Historian of Greek Judaism, Rena Molcho, emphasises that most Jews, not only in Thessaloniki and the former Ottoman Empire, but also in the shtetls of Eastern Europe, lived in conditions of extreme poverty. “In Ottoman cities, most Jews lived in ‘cortijos’, buildings constructed around a central courtyard where each family occupied a single room and kitchens and toilets were communally shared. They had no doors, only curtains, and earthen floors. Most families depended on charities to survive. Of course, there were some wealthy Jews who attracted attention precisely because they were Jews.”

The selectivity of the narrative becomes scandalous when the Holocaust in Greece becomes an object of memory. The big taboo is the collaboration of Greek Christians with the occupation authorities in the extermination of their Jewish fellow citizens. The official history of the Greek state claims that the Greeks in large numbers helped their Jewish compatriots to escape arrest and deportation to the extermination camps. “The narrative of the state focuses on the fact that those Jews who were saved, were saved because they were helped by a Christian – a friend, a neighbour, a stranger. While this is, of course, indeed true, it still obfuscates the sad fact is that out of the almost 80,000 Greek Jews alive in 1943, 65,000 perished, or 87 per cent – one of the highest rates in Europe. This was achieved thanks to the collaboration of the Greek police and gendarmerie and a significant part of the population, especially in cities such as Thessaloniki and Ioannina. This cooperation is still kept secret.”

Molcho suggests that the incidents of aid and intervention in favour of the Jews when the deportations began were the exception and not the rule. “The then Archbishop Damaskinos tried valiantly to rescue Jews by issuing forged baptismal certificates for Jews to appear as Christians so that they could escape; Athens police chief, Angelos Evert, issued false identity cards for the same reason; Zakynthos city council refused to hand over its list of names of the island's Jews to the Nazis. Otherwise, at best, the local population showed indifference at the time of the deportations, while at the same time, unfortunately, there were a lot of cases of betrayal



of Jews by their fellow citizens.”

For Molcho, the English edition of the “Documents on the History of the Greek Jews” is characteristic of the official Greek narrative citing only those documents that support the position that “all Greeks helped their Jewish compatriots.” Equally, Bishop Anthimos of Thessaloniki insisted in his sermon that “we love the Jews, we helped them in Thessaloniki and Athens.” Every year, the Ministry of Education organises a competition on “Greek youth and the Holocaust”. The projects that were awarded and honoured with publication do not go beyond the romance of public history, according to which relations between Greeks and Jews have always been good and the help extended to individuals persecuted by the Nazis was a universal phenomenon,” the historian points out. “Children at school know nothing about the history of Greek Jews or the Holocaust in our country,” Kounalaki agrees.

For Molcho, the decades-long attitude of the Greek state towards the memory of the Holocaust and the Jewish presence [in Greece] is indicative of the guilt for the extensive cooperation in the extermination of [the Jewish] population and the encroachment on Jewish property. “For more than fifty years, no monuments had been erected in most of the cities with now extinct Jewish populations, while authorities have been working systematically to silence the memory of the former presence of Jewish communities. In Thessaloniki, where the Jewish presence decisively shaped the urban landscape, it will be very difficult today to locate the few traces of this community that remain.” Molcho speaks of the “obliteration of memory” which Jewish communities have been facing. “They were denied remembrance,” she says. “When history is undermined, those who undermine it always become caught up in contradictions. Since everyone helped save the Jews, why haven’t we talked about the Jews for a long time?”

The “obliteration of the memory” covers co-operation with the Nazis, as well as appropriations [of Jewish property]. “In Thessaloniki, where before the war there were 10,000 properties owned by Jews, the 1960 survivors who returned could not find accommodation! They faced a new kind of violence from their fellow citizens, as all Jewish property had been expropriated”, Molcho states. “There were two completely contradictory laws. One demanded the restitution of Jewish property to their owners and the other banned the eviction of tenants, as a rental agreement had been imposed. So, I grew up in my father’s apartment in Thessaloniki which had four rooms and a living room. One room belonged to me and my parents and each of the other three [rooms] to a Christian family who had appropriated it

after the deportation. It was impossible for my parents to get them out.”

Molcho believes that the Holocaust was not mourned in Greece, it was not considered a loss of “ours” and therefore a national tragedy. “It seems that the perception has prevailed that ‘after all, we don’t need Jews, they are bad and parasitic’.” The historian refers to the number of cases in which camp survivors were greeted by trespassers in their own homes with the phrase: “Well, so many Jews have become soaps, why are you burdening us?” “In post-war quarrels, a Jew was told at the first possible opportunity: ‘It’s a pity they didn’t make you soap, too!’,” the historian recalls.

Greek “victimisation”

The intolerance of Greek society towards the acts of remembrance and the Holocaust commemoration is well-known. The erection of monuments in most Greek cities was delayed for more than fifty years. “In Thessaloniki, the decision for the construction of the monument was made in view of the proclamation of the city as the cultural capital of Europe in 1997. Initially, it was proposed to be installed away from the city centre where it would have been barely visible. Even toward this scenario, there were strong reactions,” remembers Molcho.



In 2017, the monument in Kavala was vandalized again, this time with hammers.

The recent case of Kavala, in 2015, was particularly characteristic. The then-mayor postponed the unveiling of a monument to the citizens of Kavala who were lost in the Holocaust for reasons of “aesthetics”, a decision which was supported by the metropolitan and most members of the city council. She demanded that a smaller Star of David be placed only at the base of the monument – the visibility of the star was considered “unaesthetic”! The decision caused an outcry in Greece and abroad and the mayor backtracked. A few days after its unveiling, the monument was desecrated with graffiti and the slogan



“Jews, murderers of the people.” At the official inauguration ceremony, the then-government spokesman P. Sgouridis made another comparison between the Holocaust and the embargo on Gaza, the Turkish occupation of Cyprus and the “economic war of the creditors against Greece”.

In addition to the need to repel a guilty past, public opinion often seeks to stop what it considers a “Holocaust exploitation”. According to a report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 65 per cent of respondents (2014-2015 polls) agreed that “Jews are taking advantage of the Holocaust to be treated better by international decision-making centres.” In the most recent relevant report of the Anti-Defamation League, this percentage had dropped significantly, to 45 per cent but remains high. At the same time, 24 per cent stated in the first report that they completely disagree with the teaching of the Holocaust in schools, while 17% regard the desecration of [Holocaust] monuments “justified”. The victimisation that has a central place in the Greek national narrative is also responsible for the hostile attitude towards the memory of the Holocaust. According to this victimisation, Greeks have suffered more than other peoples during their long and turbulent history. This perception cultivates feelings of competition and bitterness. Thus, 70 per cent of those people who were



Protesters during Angela Merkel’s visit to Athens in 2015. [topontiki.gr]

surveyed in the Heinrich Böll Foundation report believe that “Greeks have suffered more than Jews.” Commonly, they don’t want to remember the Holocaust [because] as we Greeks have “more important” things to remember such as the massacres of Greeks in Minor Asia and Pontus whose importance is reduced by the “continuous reference” to the Shoah.

At a time when a section of the public assumes that “we are being wronged again”, the vandalism of Jewish monuments is increasing. During a rally for the Macedo-

nian issue in 2018, the Holocaust memorial in Thessaloniki was desecrated once again. In the midst of the recent economic crisis, very often at “anti-memorandum” rallies and in the press, Greeks were referred to as “modern-day Jews” and the “lenders” as Nazis. Former Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras spoke in 2013 about a “social holocaust”, while Merkel and Schäuble, along with Greek politicians supporting the “memorandum”, were being caricatured in Nazi uniforms (the use of the term “Holocaust” and its connotations for something unrelated reduces the gravity of its meaning).

The statement of the then-Deputy Minister of Education Theodosios Pelegrinis in 2016 was a revelation regarding the widespread perception that Jews are taking advantage of the Holocaust to gain sympathy and that the suffering Greeks “should imitate them.” “The Jews have succeeded in identifying the Holocaust with the tragic fate of their nation (...), with the ultimate goal of evoking wrath against those who have committed crimes against their national existence and of arousing the sympathy of the civilised world for what they have suffered. With patience and perseverance, they ensured the appropriation of the Holocaust (...). In a similar way, perhaps, we could appropriate the catastrophe too, a constant companion in the history of Hellenism.”

One of the clearest representations of the passionate envy that characterises the ideological construction of Greek antisemitism is the article published in the newspaper ‘Proinos Logos ton Ioanninon’ (Morning Voice of Ioannina) immediately after the unveiling of a monument to the city’s exterminated Jews. Already its title “Why the persistence of the Jews ... to honour them constantly?” is suggestive. According to the author, the Jews “receive special honours every now and then, and in fact to the degree that no one, except the Jews themselves, fully realises,” since “the Holocaust of the Jews is not the only Holocaust. All of Greece is a Holocaust!” His explanation is that their persistence “has the purpose that we recognise the distinctiveness of the Jews, their uniqueness, their contribution to international progress, their influence on the development of the world and, of course, of our country.”

The author, after stating the absurd claim that “more than a million Greeks” (!) lost their lives as a result of the war and the Occupation, does not fail to claim that in the commemoration ceremonies for non-Jewish Greek victims, “we did not see Jews participating nor was there any call for participation from the Israeli community.” Writing about an Israeli [in Greek: *israelini*] instead of a Jewish [in Greek: *israelitiki*] community is not simply a stupid mistake, but a malice and a deliberate confusion of the Greek Jews with Israel, as the following



sentence reveals: “That Israel has exterminated thousands of Palestinians, to such an extent that many speak of genocide, should not be discussed! This is considered ... necessary for peace in the Middle East and beyond!”



Moisis
Elisaf

This contemptable article was unfortunately one a series of similar texts by the same author targeting the then-president of the Jewish [*israelitiki*] (and not “Israeli” [*israelini*]) community of the city, Moisis Elisaf. Hate rhetoric paved the way for the desecration of the synagogue [in Ioannina], one of the historic synagogues still existing in Greece, with swastikas. Is there ground for optimism?

The results of the relevant polls show that the percentages of those people who hold antisemitic views are declining with age, although percentages remain high even among young people. Saltiel, however, notes that all of the incidents that he has experienced concerned either his fellow students or his fellow soldiers, or in other words, young people. Kounalaki believes that antisemitism remains unchanged in the younger generation. “The difference is that in the past, the issue of antisemitism was only discussed in circles of intellectuals. Today,

on the contrary, it is part of the public debate, while an (albeit small) minority has formed that is very dynamic in condemning expression of antisemitism. However, the view persists that the fight against antisemitism is not an existential issue for Greek society.” In Greece, anti-semites accuse Jews of “exploiting the Holocaust” for financial profit and other benefits. Yet, the problem are the anti-Semites themselves, especially the politicians who are exploiting the ignorance and prejudices of the people, particularly the lower social classes, in order to build their careers. These people take advantage of anti-semitism.

The recent election of Moisis Elisaf, in 2019, to the Ioannina mayoralty is considered a major victory against anti-semitism. “The city seems to want to atone for its sins during the Occupation,” says Kounalaki. All the interlocutors emphasise that antisemitism is not only a problem for Jews, but of the whole society. “The allegations of the anti-semites are so outrageously absurd that tomorrow, instead of the Jews, the image of the evil and the persecuted victim may be those people who have thick eyebrows or who are overweight,” says Kounalaki. “When one injustice is accepted or tolerated, then fatally, all the others will equally be accepted or tolerated,” warns Molcho. There have been justified calls for the building of an “Alliance of Memory” between Jews and the descendants of all victims of violence, Pontians, Minor Asians, Armenians, who were slaughtered during the Occupation.

Recently, the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) was assigned to Greece for 2021. Our country now has a special secretariat for Religious and Cultural Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its head, Efstathios Lianos-Liantis, is also the special envoy for the fight against antisemitism and the defence of the Holocaust memory.

This article was first published in two parts; part 1: “Anti-Semitism: The Dark Shadow Looming over Greek Society” (Αντισιμιτισμός: η βαριά σκιά της ελληνικής κοινωνίας), on 22 August 2019, and part 2: “Anti-Semitism Among Us” (Ο αντισιμιτισμός 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 first part was published in the first “Lockdown 2020” edition of *Jottings*.



Gedenkdienst & Volunteers

My start as a new *Gedenkdienst*: ... finally, I am here. For real!

by Tobias Schmitzberger



When I applied for my voluntary *Gedenkdienst* year at Etz Hayyim Synagogue last December, Corona wasn't part of my planning. I had to google it now to remind myself: the first Corona cases in China became known in January.

At that time, my plan was simple: finish my Masters thesis and leave Austria! Since I studied history in Vienna, with an emphasis on Nazi-Germany and the Holocaust, I believed that working in a place like Etz Hayyim Synagogue would fit my focus.

On the one hand, I hoped to get in contact with the local Jewish community. I wanted to learn something about Judaism. While I was reading tons of pages on the extermination of the European Jews during my studies, getting to know and understand Jewish customs and culture was missing.

On the other hand, I liked the variety of tasks which I knew I would have to undertake at Etz Hayyim that combined research, mediation and becoming acquainted with the local community and its traditions. Guiding tourists, writing articles, doing some research, all of these things sounded appealing to me. So, I applied for a voluntary *Gedenkdienst* year and felt very lucky when I was

illustration above: The (then) new *Gedenkdienst* Tobias Schmitzberger and August-volunteer Mille Vinther in the Northern courtyard

finally chosen in January!

However, the Corona pandemic threatened to upend and disrupt all of my plans. When many countries, including Austria and Greece, started to implement shut-downs, suddenly even my *Gedenkdienst* was at stake. Jonas, my predecessor, had to leave Crete in March. During the next few months, I had no idea whether I'd be able to travel to Hania, even though the situation in Greece was quite stable compared to other countries. But I had to be patient.

After a while, I couldn't help but feel constantly nervous about my *Gedenkdienst* year. While I personally didn't fear the risk of becoming infected by Covid that much, I was nevertheless nervous about whether I could start my service without problems. How would the Covid numbers develop by the end of August? Would Greece let me enter the country? Would Austria let me leave? Such developments were outside of my control and this was quite annoying.

When I finally arrived in Hania on August 30th, I felt relieved. It was amazing when I left the airplane. I just thought: “You are in Crete – yes, yes, HELL YES!” The first thing I did that evening was walk to the Venetian port, open a can of Mythos beer and watch the sunset. Back in Austria, I had told my friends that this is the first thing I wanted to do in Hania. It felt unbelievably satisfying to follow through with this proclamation.

Now (in September 2020), I am looking forward to the upcoming year. It's always exciting to enter a new city without knowing anybody. Luckily my first day at Etz Hayyim immediately gave me a good vibe. If 2020 had been a usual year, Jonas would have been still at the synagogue and introduce me to my work. However, 2020 isn't a usual year and, as I said, my predecessor had already left Hania in March. That's the reason why on my first day, I had to walk to the synagogue alone. Of course, I got lost, even though Anja had shown me the way (which is not complicated) the day before. My navigational skills are clearly improvable.

Although I arrived there a few minutes late, Anja, Alex, Giorgos and Mille gave me a warm welcome. I received a lot of information and explanations and tried to memo-



rise as many aspects as possible. We enjoyed our first lunch in the courtyard together, ordering from *To Xani*, “our” restaurant opposite the synagogue. I ate my first “Imam” in Hania and many other delicious snacks. At a certain point, I will make some “Kaiserschmarren” for us, the only real traditional Austrian dish that I can cook myself.

Obviously, cooking will not be my main task at the synagogue this year. As a historian, I want to support the Etz Hayyim team to analyse, catalogue and digitalise Nikos Stavroulakis’ private collection. Furthermore, I used to work as part-time-journalist in Vienna. Now I plan to publish some articles about Etz-Hayyim-related topics. For example, I want to write a text about the transformation of the German military cemetery in Maleme in the quarterly published GEDENKDIENT newspaper. And

of course, I hope to give some guided tours in the synagogue, especially as soon as the Corona pandemic is over and more tourists will enter through our “Rothschild gate” once again.

I am very optimistic that Etz Hayyim Synagogue is the right place to be for me this year. I am grateful that I have the opportunity to become part of this project and I am very curious what is going to happen during the upcoming months: whom will I get to meet, which new ideas will I come up with?

After many uncertainties over the previous months, it feels good to have some certainty now – to sit under the small olive tree in the cool courtyard of the synagogue and drink a cup of tea while realising, “Tobi, yes, you are really there!”

Behind the Rothschild Gate

by Mille Vinther

Hello, my name is Mille and I’m studying sociology at Aalborg university in Denmark. I was volunteering at Etz Hayyim for the whole month of august. This is my experience as a volunteer in the synagogue:

Behind the Rothchild gate, through the smell of olive trees and hand sanitiser, I sit in the Etz Hayyim synagogue. I sit here because I wanted to get more knowledge about the life that belongs here. The fact that I even got to spend half of my summer in Crete seemed unreachable just a few months ago.

As for me, a typical week here in the synagogue offered a little bit of everything. In the beginning I spent most of my time translating the informational pamphlet about the synagogue from English to Danish. This gave me basic historical knowledge and made me ready for giving guided tours in the synagogue to visitors from around the world. Little did I know that basic historical knowledge was not the only thing I was going to learn about. Etz Hayyim is a dynamic place. It has its own life with its own people, both short-term and long-term relations. This surprised me. Etz Hayyim means “tree of life” in Hebrew and life is definitely present here on Parodos Kondylaki.

After translating the pamphlet and getting a little more comfortable with the guided tours, I asked the staff about the social media of Etz Hayyim. It’s no secret that we live in a digital age where an online image may seem more important than reality. I thought it was time to get the synagogue up and going on social media. Branding on social media as a marketing strategy is one thing, something else is the sociology and social psychology behind it. Sometimes you might even be able to call it

nudging, if you ask me. Anyway, I think it’s fun to play with social media. For the synagogue, it’s not just about gaining followers, likes and recognition. The goal is to show the life of Etz Hayyim to the people who are interested. One day we were having our usual morning coffee in the courtyard and the president of Etz Hayyim’s Board of Trustees said: “I think one of the things that attracts people to come to this place is the life here. When we’re sitting and drinking coffee, it gives the impression of life and that’s attractive”.

According to Erving Goffman, a Canadian microsociologist, we’re surrounded by total institutions. This term was made to describe behaviour inside and outside of an institution in society. With these total institutions, internalisation and intersubjectivity, an outer stigma and as for religious institutions a light smell of segregation can be sensed. As for Etz Hayyim, it seems to have found a golden middle ground, at least from an internal point of view. Both sides can of course be argued.

Anyway, in Etz Hayyim I discovered the space to learn and let creativity flow. Space for ‘hygge’, as we would call it in Danish, and dedicated work. The keyword of the synagogue must be space. Room enough for you and me in all facets and the social media should reflect this. The essence of social media is to share, and I have a desire to share Etz Hayyim. I can’t possibly be the only one who thinks this place is interesting, so you know sharing is caring!

So there I sat, behind the Rothchild gate, through the smell of olive trees and hand sanitiser. I sat there to get wiser and indeed I did. I have now become an experience richer that I wouldn’t want to be without.



Thank you.

by Jonas Baumgartner

Growing up in times of an ever more rapidly changing earth and humanity is an exciting, but equally distressing experience. Through an increasingly escalating collapse of the global environmental ecosystems, a hyper-connected global information network, and the downfall of a before silently agreed upon political etiquette result into a definite unknowability of what one is awaited by after waking up the very next morning.

As I wrote in my last little text for Etz Hayyim’s newsletter, I’ve considered it a great privilege to be allowed the time and trust to build my own personal space, consider my individual responsibilities and preferred activities to create my very first own daily routine. Routine being a word, I might one day find great difficulty in to explain its meaning to my children.

Day and day again I see waking up as a profoundly intimate experience. Lying basically unconsciously for around eight hours, at times fully immersing my sleeping mind into the workings of my inner psyche. Then suddenly having to open my eyes again, never being able to precisely recollect when the morning light first hit my eyes, is a mysterious if not baffling experience.

Pretty much exactly a year ago, I woke up alone in my one room apartment for the first time. In the beginning I counted the days, or to be more precise, the mornings. I counted the times I woke up next to the touristy streets of summery Hania. I tried to document how I spent my mornings. I was in love with stepping out of my front door at 7:30 and already experiencing intense sweat attacks. It really was like love at first sight, and like all the freshly love-struck youngsters, the thing I was most scared of at the time, was for this to end.

Now all of this comes to a close, and just like with most relationships, it didn’t exactly turn out as I wished it would have. Instead, against all my most strongly held beliefs, in mid-March I boarded an airplane and flew across half of Europe to flee into the safe haven of the flat I grew up in. In June, instead of conversing with hundreds of visitors a day about the fate of the Cretan Jewish community, my mother and her boyfriend had to listen to hours of monologues by me, exhibiting my amateur knowledge of Cretan Jewish history. At least they know what Romaniote means now. I guess that’s an achievement.

One of the most difficult aspects of handling a long-distance relationship is how to feel close to each other

despite the physical distance separating the partners. For Hania and me, this wasn’t very easy. I suppose it’s me who’s to be blamed, for the global pandemic did largely impair me from visiting Hania, as a city, the Cretan town is virtually incapable of moving anywhere.

Mostly for this reason, it was a long-anticipated and creeping break-up. It feels as though my relationship to Hania has started to end long ago, even though it formally ended only on the 31st of August (with the official end of my Gedenkdienst). And now it’s time to finally move on, officially, so to say. It’s not an easy task. Like with most relationships, a little bit of one’s former partner will stay with oneself for a long time to go, maybe even until the day we die. This comforts me. Knowing that I personally haven’t been the best at dealing with the distance, not always exactly meeting our agreed upon deadlines, I still know that the community I found shelter with in Hania, is a forgiving one. One which, in many instances, when acceptable, favours intent over deeds, one where the primary concern is the well-being of everyone involved, one to which I can return tomorrow, in half a year, or maybe in five.

Having found a place and becoming part of a community like this in times of a global pandemic and environmental collapse, might just be one of the greatest privileges of my still very short life-time. This says a lot, considering the unimaginably privileged circumstances which I was allowed to grow up in.

I found that words can rarely capture the feelings I’d wish to express, so I’ll resort to one of the most basic expressions the English language has to offer, in hopes the readers of this know how much these two words can mean, when they originate from the very bottom of our hearts: thank you.





Gedenkdiener Momo is visiting us: "It feels a bit like coming home."

by Tobias Schmitzberger

In September, a special guest entered through the Rothschild Gate; Moritz Plattner, otherwise known as Momo, was a Gedenkdiener at Etz Hayyim Synagogue in 2015/16. Just as the author of these lines is doing now, Momo volunteered at the synagogue for one year. Five years after his service, I asked my pre-pre-predecessor about the time he spent at the synagogue and how the city has since changed.

Tobias: If you compare Hania today with Hania five years ago, which aspects have changed?

Momo: Well, the most current thing for me is the expulsion of Rosa Nera. Rosa Nera is an autonomous, anti-authoritarian collective. Their squatted building was evicted by the police a few days ago and this makes me really sad. It was important to me because I spent a lot of time there and I associate very good memories with it. When I was in Hania, Rosa Nera was one of the first self-organised communities I saw in my life! The expulsion of Rosa Nera took with it an important part of the city.

Do you have any special memories connected with Rosa Nera?

My most recent memory is from last October when I visited Hania for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Etz Hayyim's rededication which took place at the same time as a youth theatre festival in Crete. Many young people from the theatre festival came to Rosa Nera and organised a party at the squatted building. There was a lot of food, much of it cooked on-site, music was playing, and the people were forming dancing circles ... it was great!

More than that, I have been at the terrace on top of Rosa Nera many times. It had such a beautiful view of the sea and the old Venetian port ... now the terrace is no longer accessible to the public. As I said, these things make me very sad.

What about the synagogue? Has it changed as well?

The synagogue is constant. That's what I like about it. The building doesn't change inside, and the spirit doesn't change as well. I was glad to meet you, the new Gedenkdiener, and the other people like Giorgos and Fernando. When I was Gedenkdiener five years ago, very important to me was the day when I met Maria Sanadaki at the synagogue. Our friendship is one of the best things I took with me from my time in Hania! It seems that the character of the place always attracts nice and interesting people.

Besides that, what is the most important thing you experienced during your Gedenkdienst at the synagogue?

What I experienced here was a second politicisation. My first one happened while I was active in the Socialist Youth Organisation back in Austria some years before my Gedenkdienst. When I came to Hania in 2015, politics was always a constant topic of discussion. It was the year of the economic crisis. I remember the moments when we were sitting in the courtyard and watched the news via Livestream – what will the European Union decide on that issue? How is the Troika evolving? We had many discussions about these issues, and I heard many new perspectives here.

What else?

Furthermore, my appreciation for open spaces was born. The synagogue is a very open place, you can find a critical embrace of tradition and religion in combination with openness. This creates a special social reality, a community which is intergenerational, intercultural, friendly. It's this combination of the realisation of a progressive political idea and the personal experiences I could make because of that and that's what I liked about Etz Hayyim.

What does this mean to you now?

I learnt that open spaces like this one are good for me as well and from this I developed an interest in history and religious realities. Before I came to Hania in 2015, I thought about religions in the way that Karl Marx described: "Religion is opium of the people." This viewpoint has changed to some extent. I saw the progressive implications of religions and how they can be a critique of society in their way. That was a new insight for me.



left to right: Momo, Tobias, Alex and Maria are taking a "band photo" in the Northern courtyard.



Five years is quite a time ... what are you doing these days?

I am finishing my Bachelor of Political Science at the moment. Just yesterday, I got an email stating that I was chosen to study fine arts in October. Before I came here, I made an exhibition. I built a pavilion to show some digital prints and woodcuts that I have created. The exhibition was critical of the European Union. More than that, I am an art teacher for a self-organised school project for young refugees in Vienna, among other things.

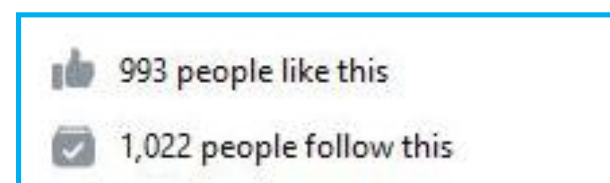
Sounds busy!

Yes, I had a bit of a stressful summer. That's why I came back to Crete. I thought, before the university term starts again, that I would like to get out of Vienna and

News from the Etz Hayyim Office

Since March 2020, the Etz Hayyim office has been closed about six out of twelve months, but during lockdowns we have continued to work from home, not only to produce our (so far) two lockdown editions of *Jottings* but also to continue our various projects and to initiate new ones as well as to intensify our fundraising efforts. Here are a few brief updates on projects and initiatives, which you will certainly hear more about in *Jottings* and elsewhere in the near future:

□ We are excited to report that we have now **more than 1000 followers on Facebook**.



□ Our **pioneering research into the history of the Cretan Jewish community** has been intensified as new findings and the extended contact with descendants make us confident to further expand Etz Hayyim's role as the foremost research institution on this topic. We will also shortly **launch a Facebook group for descendants of the Cretan Jewish community**.

In the next edition of *Jottings*, we will publish stories about three descendants and their quest for their ancestral links with Crete, among them the intriguing story of how a tallit made in Hania in the 1930s as a farewell gift is still being used in family ceremonies in Israel today.

□ In order to further our **outreach into the local Hania community**, Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, Etz Hayyim's President of the Board of Trustees, and Anja Zuckmantel, Administrative Director, have had two very constructive

Austria. And enjoy many things at the same time: sea and mountains, tranquillity, hiking. Finally, I thought, you can find everything on Crete.

You told me before that you have been in Crete several times since your Gedenkdienst has ended. Why do you like it to come back here?

It is always great to return, to visit the synagogue and let the time pass. It's nice to see that people enjoy my short visits and it's very good to know that there is a cosy place where you can pass by at any time. If I visit Crete, I more or less know how it will be in advance. It is not very stressful, which is a positive aspect. It feels a bit like coming home.

meetings with the **Vice Mayor of Hania** for Cultural Affairs, Giannis Giannakakis. The Vice Mayor offered to include the walking tour through the historic Jewish quarter of Hania into the **official schedule of walking tours offered by the municipality of Hania** once walking tours will be possible again. Furthermore, the Vice Mayor suggested that the **catalogue of the Etz Hayyim library be integrated into the catalogue of the municipal library of Hania**, which will tremendously improve our accessibility and reach.

□ We are currently **updating the Etz Hayyim website**, which will become more user-friendly and include additional content (e.g. the information pamphlets about Etz Hayyim in numerous languages, a schedule for guided walking tours through the historic Jewish quarter of Hania in English and Greek and more targeted information for potential visitors helping them to plan their visit). We will also provide more detailed **documentation of Etz Hayyim projects** like Heritage Contact Zone and launch a **memorial page for Nikos Stavroulakis** with updates on the cataloguing project. On the updated website, there will also be the **possibility for making donations online by credit card**.



□ The launch of the **online version of our educational outreach programme**, later during the year, will be yet another major addition to the Etz Hayyim website. Thanks to a grant **from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation**, we are currently reviewing and adapting the content for online use by local schools.



□ The **Etz Hayyim library is growing** thanks to ongoing donations. The most notable ones in the last months were made by Annette Windgasse and Diane Gabrysiak. Diane has pledged to donate the library of her father who lived in Ierapetra in Eastern Crete for many years. Our staff will pick up the sizeable collection once lockdown restrictions will be eased and travel across Crete will be possible again. We will then also have the possibility to talk with Diane in person and learn, and report in *Jottings*, more about Diane's father whose library will fit very well into ours as he collected books on the Jewish world but also on Islam and Christianity.



www.kreta-wiki.de

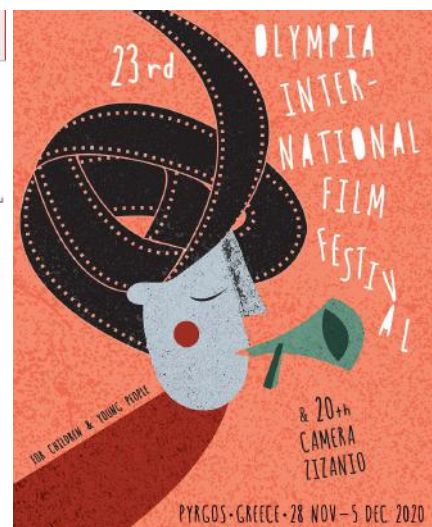
Η κατοχή στην Κρήτη
Deutsche Besatzungszeit auf Kreta

In summer 2020, we received six huge boxes with books in Greek, English and German about the German Occupation of Crete and Greece during the Second World War. The books were donated by **Annette Windgasse**. She collected these books as part of her online documentation project, which she started more than fifteen years ago: "**Kreta-Wiki**" (www.kreta-wiki.de) is a website in German, which, as Annette explained in an email to us, "is intended to inform German-speaking tourists visiting Crete about the war crimes committed by our (great) fathers' generation. During the Euro crisis and the mass movement of migrants in 2015, I was running out of time, energy and also motivation to continue working on the page, due to other commitments. I have collected lots of material and still intend to update the website." We sincerely thank Annette for donating the books to our library, which are a welcome addition to our collection and are not only a resource for our *Gedenkdienst* volunteers but also a valuable resource we can share with the "Documentation Centre Impact of the German Occupation", run by our partner organisation Young Citizens of the World.

□ The documentary "**The Sleeping Jewish Beauty of our School**" entered the competition for the Camera Zizanio at the **23th International Film Festival for Children and Young People at Olympia** (online from 29 November to 5 December 2020) in the category for children up to 12 years old. The documentary was made by the 6th grade students of the 6th Elementary School of Hania about **Soultana Sarfati**, a Jewish girl from Hania, whose grave was the only one left after the destruction of the Jewish cemetery of the city during the German occupation. The 6th elementary school was eventually built on the site of the former Jewish cemetery. The staff of Etz Hayyim had assisted the students in their research for the documentary (see Jottings 26, p. 32). The local newspaper Haniotika Nea reported about the participation of the documentary film made by local students in the renowned film festival (see below).



□ In February, we participated in the **European Days of Jewish Culture (EDJC) coordinators' meeting**. In past years, Etz Hayyim participated several times with a special event in the annually organised EDJC. This year's theme "**dialogue**" was particularly appealing to us in view of Etz Hayyim's philosophy and usual activities which, in one way or the other, are all forms of dialogue. The online coordinators' meeting was a welcome opportunity to learn more about EDJC as a large network for Jewish heritage and about specific activities to inspire new formats of dialogue. We hope to organise an event in the framework of EDJC in early September.



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.