



David Eliezer Abraham & father  
Eliezer Abraham: Ioannina 1900

The Jews of Greece have lived on what is now Greek soil for over 2,300 years, the longest continuous Jewish presence in the European Diaspora. Archeological finds of early synagogues and Jewish artifacts have been discovered on the island of Delos, in the Ancient Agora of Athens, in Thessaloniki, Crete, Rhodes and Thessaly.



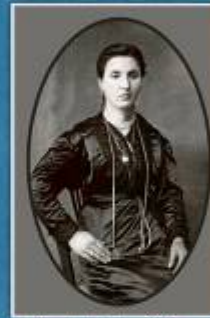
Samuel Ganis:  
Ioannina 1870



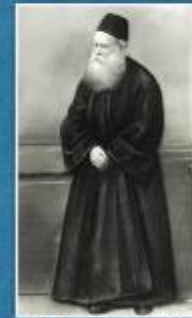
Matathia & Rebecca Ganis:  
Ioannina 1903



Cantos & Mordechai family:  
Ioannina 1912



Simcho Davsjon Cohen:  
Ioannina 1920



Rabbi Avraam Jendar:  
Ioannina 1900



Svolis Family: Ioannina 1920s



During their long history on the soil of Greece, Greek Jews developed distinctive traditions, customs & liturgy, passed down from generation within the family.

This special text on the history of Greek Jewry has been prepared in conjunction with the exhibit,

*"Oi Dikoi Mas/Los Muestrros."*

The first professional Greek photographer opened his studio in Athens in 1937. Even earlier, many cities in Greece had at least one professional photographer. In the first decades of the 20th century, families with the means to do so had photographic portraits taken in local studios. The most important moments in the lives of the local inhabitants (weddings, formal events, the birth of a new child) would be captured on film. It was also very common for those who immigrated to the United States to have photographs of their relatives, still back home, sent to them.

These Jews were Romaniote Jews, Hellenized Jews, Greek-speaking Jews who preserved their Judaism while absorbing much of the culture of the non-Jewish Greek world. It would be within the family that their Judaism would be preserved.



Pitsielos Family: Ioannina post WWII



Ezra Bakola: Ioannina 1931



Esther & Mordechai Benjamin: c. 1920



Cantos family: Ioannina 1907



Naphthali family: Ioannina c. 1900



Atrias family: Crete c. 1910



Bechoropoulos gathering in Ioannina: c. 1933

The family would insulate and protect against the threats of assimilation, allowing the Jews to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them in the outside world while still preserving their Judaism.



"Παπούτσι από τον τόπο σου κι ας είναι μπαλωμένο."



Alegre Amir: Salonika c. 1900



Errera sisters: Salonika c. 1900

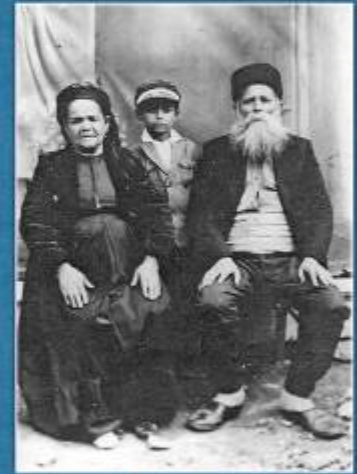


Benyamin Honan: Kastoria 1938

In 1492, thousands of Spanish-Speaking Sephardic Jews would arrive on what is now Greek soil, expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella and welcomed into the Ottoman Turkish Empire by Sultan Beyazet II. The traditions and customs they brought with them differed from those of the indigenous Romaniote Jewish population. What they did share was their strong attachment to family.



Within two generations most indigenous Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews were absorbed into the Sephardic world. In rare instances, such as in Ioannina, Romaniote Jews continued to preserve their distinct culture and traditions.



Honan Family: Kastoria 1938



Hazan Family: Rhodes 1922



Gabriel Azouvi Family: Larissa 1910



Marash Family: Salonika: 1913

*Mira la madre, tome la hija.*



Rebecca Malta DeCastro:  
Ioannina 1930s



Morris Negrin Family: Volos 1930s



Kalef Koen: Ioannina 1930s



Gabrielides Family: Athens 1930



Ackos Family: Athens 1940s



Marsas Family: Ioannina 1920s

On October 28, 1940, Mussolini issued an ultimatum to Greece. He was planning to invade through the Albanian border. General Metaxas answered back with a resounding OXI (NO!). Of the many Greeks who fought on the Albanian Front to protect their country from Fascist invasion, close to 13,000 were Greek Jews: 3,500 would return severely injured and 513 would give their lives for their country. When Germany came to the aid of their Italian allies, it was all over and in March of 1943, the first deportations would begin. By October of 1944, with the liberation of Greece, 87% of Greek Jews had perished in Nazi concentration camps.

These family photos of Greek Jews capture fleeting moments of joy. Most would shortly become victims of the madness called the Holocaust. May their names be inscribed for eternity.



Ishaki Family: Ioannina 1930s



Rachel Osmos: Corfu 1930s



Fani Haim: Ioannina  
March 25, 1944



Bahartias Family: Athens 1930s

**"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness."**

**Elie Wiesel**



Corito Family: Ioannina 1912



Eliezer Family: Ioannina 1920s



Hamets Family: Ioannina c. 1920



David Family: Ioannina: c. 1900



Menachem Asser Family: Ioannina 1910



Ganis Family: Ioannina c. 1910

Families in pre-war Jewish Greece were large, often with eight or more children. Marriages were arranged and young women became brides at an early age, continuing to have children throughout their childbearing years. Unfortunately, some of these women would die in childbirth, often at an early age, forcing the husband to find a new wife to care for the family. A second wife would be taken and the new bride, often substantially younger than her husband, would continue to produce offspring, hopefully sons. A wife's status in the community would increase with each son.

Much of the impetus to emigrate was due to the need to provide for family since family businesses could only feed so many mouths. "Family" was the cement that kept the communities strong, reinforcing traditions and customs, providing heirs and assuring the continuation of Judaism.

**In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.**

**-- Alex Haley**

**The family is one of nature's masterpieces.**

**-- George Santayana**

**"The family is the nucleus of civilization." - Ariel and Will Durant**

**"What God is to the world, parents are to their children." – Philo**

**"The love of a family is life's greatest blessing" – Unknown**



Joseph Negrin & Family: New York c. 1918



Mazza Family: New York c. 1910

With the immigration of so many Greek Jews (both Yanniotis and Sephardim) to New York in the beginning of the 20th century, the tradition of large families continued for the first and, sometimes, the second generation. But, inevitably, as the community absorbed the values of the New World, families became smaller in size. As the Greek Jews moved to the suburbs (and states other than New York), close family relations become more difficult to maintain. In many ways, family reunions promoted by Kehila Kedosha Janina, and exhibit such as this, have reinforced the sense of family and re-attached the families to their center (Kehila Kedosha Janina). We celebrate the return of 'our own' (dikoi mas, los nuestros).



Cabellis Family: 1934



Bechoraki Matsil Family: c. 1931



Lala Moses & family: New York c. 1909



Leon Colchamiro Family: c. 1919

***"A family with an old person has a living treasure of gold." Unknown.***

***"Una Buena mujer yena la kaza."***



Iggy Elias



Max Nachmias



Joseph Ezra Cohen

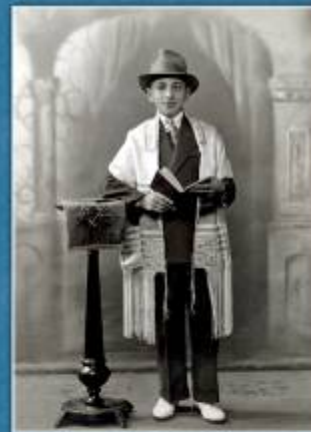


Mo Cohen

Both in Greece and here in the United States, family gatherings to celebrate simchas (moments of joy) were always occasions for family photos. A Bar Mitzvah was one of the most celebrated occasions.



Jerry Pardo



Hy Genec



Jesse Colchamiro



Marvin Marcus



Marvin Marcus  
President



Marcia Hadzidaki Kouzoupoulos  
Museum Director

For the conservative, observant, traditional Jewish communities of Greece, the birth of a child was the beginning of a 'family' and, especially, the birth of a son was celebrated. Here, at Kehila Kedosha Janina, we celebrate all the children born into our communities.

*A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on.*

Carl Sandburg

*Quien hijo cria, oro hila. (One who raises a child spins gold.)*

*Το μήλο κάτω απ' τη μηλιά θα πέσει. (The apple will fall under the apple tree.)*

Meet our Board!



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Max Nachmias

**"Το κρασί και τα παιδιά λένε την αλήθεια."**

**"Το παιδί σου και το σκυλί σου όπως τα μάθεις."**

***"Catholics believe life begins at conception. Atheists believe that life begins at birth. Jews believe that life begins when the children leave home and the dog dies."***

***Author Unknown***

***"Whoever teaches his son teaches not only his son, but also his son's son - and so on to the end of generations."***

***Talmud, Kiddushin 30a***





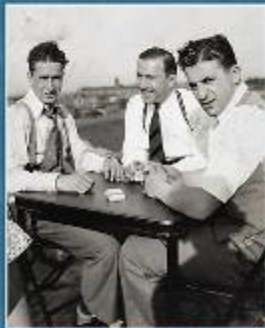
Mo Cohen on corner of  
Allen & Broome



Greek Kafentions on Allen Street



Murray Fisher & Mollie Fiskomonts  
on rooftop on Broome Street



Playing cards on rooftop of  
275 Broome



Under the Second Avenue El - 1927



Nachmias family on  
Allen Street - 1936

Broome & Allen was once the center of Greek Jewish life on the Lower East Side. The fronts of the apartment buildings acted as gathering places to sit and talk, show off new babies and reconnect with extended family. The rooftops offered a refuge from the summer heat.

The Allen Street Park, especially the section between Delancey and Grand, was a mecca for Greek Jewish families, and the coffee shops lining Allen Street, offered a respite for the men, as they sipped their cafes, discussed politics and read their newspapers (either Greek or Ladino).

Most of the families have moved, the children have grown up, but Kehila Kedosha Janina still remains to remind us of a life that once was.



Allen Street Park - 1940s



Coffinos on Broome Street



Broome Street - 1942