

# THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF GREECE

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## newsletter 57

SUMMER - WINTER 2008/2009

### Temporary Exhibition



## Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece: A temporary exhibition by the Jewish Museum of Greece

May 26th 2009 saw the opening of the exhibition entitled Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece in the temporary exhibitions space of the Jewish Museum of Greece. The President of the JMG Board of Directors Mr. Samuel Matsas, members of the Board of Directors and the Museum's Association of Friends, Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Historical and Diplomatic Archives Mrs. Photini Tomai, as well as delegates from diplomatic missions in Greece graced the exhibition opening with their presence. Refreshments and white wine were served.

Research in preparation for the JMG's Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece exhibition began four years ago. The aim was to present both informed and casual visitors to the museum with interesting features of life

*The exhibition makes no attempt to reach any unique or stunning conclusions; it simply allows people from all over Greece to speak in their own words about the neighbourhoods they lived in both before and after the war.*

in the neighbourhoods of Greece where Jewish people lived before the war as well as after it. The exhibition makes no attempt to reach any unique or stunning conclusions; it simply allows people from all over Greece to speak in their own words about the neighbourhoods they lived in as children or young adults

both before and after the war. They talk about their homes, their lives, how they amused themselves, social gatherings, celebrations, games, memorable incidents and personalities, friends, relations and how they got on with their neighbours, their memories, how the war altered things; in short, anything to do with the neighbourhood that they wanted to put on record. The visitor empathises with familiar, time-honoured human stories, while also building a vivid, albeit fragmented, picture of a way of

"Jewish Neighbourhoods in Greece"



The digital installation with testimonies within the exhibition. View of the exhibition. The reception area.

life that was rich in customs and traditions; a world that the war irreparably destroyed.

The exhibition is displayed on two levels, blending in with the architectural design of the museum building. The lower level provides visitors with information about neighbourhoods where members of twelve different Jewish communities lived before the war. A special screen has been set up on the lower level so visitors can watch a video of real people giving vivid accounts of life in their own neighbourhoods. The twelve neighbourhoods featured were in Athens, Volos, Zakynthos, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Kastoria, Corfu, Larissa, Xanthi, Rhodes, Trikala and Chalkis and are presented in alphabetical order. Selection was made solely on the basis of availability and access to photographs and firsthand accounts for researchers to work from. On the upper level there are photographs with explanatory texts describing various aspects of life in each neighbourhood so visitors can feel the pulse of this bygone time; a time when peaceful co-existence with "other" and strong familial and personal bonds were notable features of the Greek-Jewish neighbourhood. A special bilingual catalogue has been written for the Jewish Neighbourhoods in Greece exhibition with texts in English and Greek, photographs and live accounts on a DVD. The Jewish Museum of Greece has produced an educational programme for the current exhibition, edited by our museum educator Orietta Treveza-Sousi. The programme

is designed to help young visitors see what life was like for children of their age in neighbourhoods of Greece before the war, to use the exhibition to help them learn about the people who lived at that time and let them listen to those people talking about their own experiences. It also prompts them to look deeper into how Jewish people and those of other religions co-existed in the same society and make them realise what a huge void was left behind when the Jews were murdered in the Holocaust and how totally different life is in cities now.

The worst problems that had to be overcome during preparations for this exhibition were, first of all, the great length of time separating us from the time we were working with, which deprived us of valuable eye witness accounts and living memories. There was a dearth of evidence and accounts for many communities that had been vital and dynamic before the war. That is why only twelve communities are featured, since only for these twelve were spoken and written accounts available along with photographs that are absolutely necessary for the visual aspect of an exhibition. Furthermore, recorded historical accounts come mainly from wealthier Greek-Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and this makes it difficult for us to give a realistic picture of what life was like for the less privileged majority who lived in most of the communities. For instance, we know the idyllic picture that eye-witness accounts paint of the life

The Director of the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mrs. F. Tomai, with the Ambassador of Israel, Mr. Ali Yahya (in the centre) next to the President of the JMG, Mr. M. Matsas, and members of diplomatic delegations. The Ambassador of Israel (left) with the Director of the JMG, Mrs. Z. Battinou and the President of the Jewish Community in Athens, Mr. B. Albalas.



of Jews in Thessaloniki before the war is not a historically true picture of what life was like for the greater part of the community. Material gathered during research for this exhibition enabled us to reach certain general conclusions regarding the life of Jewish people in Greece before the war. To be more precise, it came to light that Greek-Jewish residents of many cities usually lived close to, or not far from the community synagogue. Although the neighbourhoods they lived in were primarily Jewish neighbourhoods, they were not exclusively so; people of other religious beliefs also lived there. In other words, they had none of the features of isolated ghettos, with the exception of the Ionian Islands where historical factors played a part. Most accounts stress the fact that relations with the so-called 'others' were good and that with most Orthodox Christians they were usually very good, rare exceptions arising during Easter

celebrations, for example. Regarding the ordinary, everyday life of Greek-Jews, the same accounts note how diligently the Sabbath and religious celebrations were observed, and how they all regularly went to the synagogue, even those whose religious beliefs were somewhat less strong. However, what pervaded the memories and reminiscences of all those who shared them with us, colouring them with an air of nostalgia and emotion, was the feelings they had of a community spirit, solidarity and the strong bonds created by community life and organisation, always in conjunction with the significant role of the family and familial relations. Because of the huge public response and the great interest this exhibition has aroused, its duration has been extended to the end of 2009.

**Opening Hours: 09:00 - 14:30 on weekdays and 10:00 - 14:00 on Sundays. The museum is closed on Saturdays.**



## "A Woman's Place in Jewish Religion": A Jewish Museum of Greece Educational Programme

**Educational programmes on the subject of, A Woman's Place in Jewish Religion were conducted on the premises of the JMG on 18th March and 10th April 2008 while schools were taking part in the European programme on Equality between the sexes.**

JMG museum educator Orietta Treveza-Sousi worked in conjunction with the head teachers of Nea Chalkidona and Kastella junior high schools and presented a series of educational activities designed to focus children's attention on the significant role women play in conserving Jewish religion while also making these young schoolchildren think seriously about equality and solidarity between the sexes.

## International Museum Day

The Jewish Museum of Greece contributed to the celebration of International Museum day on 18th May 2008 by waiving fees for admission to the museum's collections, guided tours and family programmes.

## ICOM one-day Meeting

On 20th June 2008 the museum educator at the Jewish Museum of Greece took part in a one-day meeting organised by the Greek branch of ICOM-CECA on the subject of planning and conducting new educational programmes in museums.

ICOM  
CECA

## "The Environment and Culture: The Tree of Life"

On 9th and 11th May 2008 the Jewish Museum of Greece took part in a nationwide campaign launched by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage called: **The Environment and Culture 2009: The Tree of Life in Four Seasons**, by proposing an educational programme under the title of The Tree of Life. The JMG educational programme was designed in accordance with modern museum education methods and intended for children at all levels of schooling as well as their families.



## *A course for teachers at the Yad Vashem Foundation in Jerusalem*

The second course for teachers working in Greece took place at the Yad Vashem Foundation in Jerusalem in July 2008. The subject of the course was teaching the Holocaust at schools in Greece.



The course lasted seven days and was conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Ten teachers from all over Greece took part and were accompanied by JMG Museum Educator Orietta Treveza-Sousi. During the course Mrs. Treveza-Sousi was able to give detailed presentations of JMG educational programmes, activities, printed and interactive material, as well as its museum cases. Particular attention was paid to the ways and means this material

could be used most effectively for educational purposes. The International Conference for Teachers on the subject of Holocaust Education was taking place at the Yad Vashem Foundation at the same time. Through its representative there, the Jewish Museum of Greece was able to establish links with teachers from all over the world, attend lectures and museum education workshops, and discuss valuable experiences and thought-provoking issues.

### *Cultural Heritage Days: "Familiar Stories"*

On 26th and 28th September 2008 the Jewish Museum of Greece took part in the Europe-wide programme Cultural Heritage Days, whose main theme was Familiar Stories. The JMG proposal consisted of a specially-designed educational programme for schools and families entitled "Jewish Holidays: Preparation in the home".

## Educational Meeting for teachers of the 1st Directorate of Primary Education Athens

**On 2nd October 2008 a continued professional development meeting was held on the premises of the JMG for fifty teachers of the First Directorate of Primary Education in Athens. The theme of the meeting was JMG educational programmes and museum cases and it was held with the collaboration of Mrs Calliope Kyrdi, Head of Cultural & Artistic Activities at the First Directorate of Primary Education in Athens.**

This meeting gave participants the opportunity of a guided tour of the JMG and the Museum Educator at the JMG gave detailed presentations of its educational programmes and museum cases. Educational material in printed and audio-visual form was handed out to participants at the end of the

presentation, as well as books for their school libraries to help them broach issues like social solidarity, the right to be different and racism with their classes. At the end of the meeting the Jewish Museum provided participating teachers with certificates of attendance.



*The JMG Museum Educator guides the teachers through the permanent exhibition.*

## 12th Informatory Meeting on Education and Modern Greek Cultural Heritage prompted by the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)

**On Friday 12th December 2008 JMG museum educator took part in the 12th update meeting on Education and Modern Greek Cultural Heritage held by the Greek branch of ICOM. The meeting was prompted by the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) with the participation of museums in Greece that have specific educational activities.**

hoods of Greece was included in the presentation of programmes produced by museums in Greece. The museum's educational programmes based on this temporary exhibition were also presented. These programmes were designed for children in primary school and both levels of secondary school. They use the personal accounts of World War II survivors to make schoolchildren aware of features of life in these neighbourhoods in Greece before the war and help them realise what impact it had on people's lives.

## A visit by the fifth and sixth grade of the Jewish School of Athens to the JMG

On Thursday 12th February 2009, fifth and sixth graders from the Jewish School of Athens came to the Jewish Museum to see the exhibits and to take part in the Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece educational programme that was prompted by the museum's temporary exhibition.



*Educational activity prompted by the temporary exhibition Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece.*

### **This educational programme was designed to:**

- Inform young visitors about what life was like for children of their age in these neighbourhoods in Greece before the war.
- Help them learn about people who lived at that time by looking at exhibition material and listening to people talking about their personal experiences.
- Encourage them to look into how Jewish people and people of other religions and other nationalities lived side by side in the same community.
- Help them realise what a huge void was left when Jews were murdered in the Holocaust and how different an image the cities of today present.
- Make them think about their own neighbourhoods and see the differences and similarities between then and now.





The activity unfolded as follows:

The children were divided into groups. Each group chose an envelope which contained a page of general information about a specific city and the neighbourhood in it, extracts from eye witness accounts and photographs. The groups read the passages and extracts carefully and then found information in the JMG exhibition telling them what life was like for these people. The children were then invited to role play the part of children from the neighbourhood they had chosen and write their new names on a card which they pinned to their clothes. The head of educational programmes then acted as mediator in a discussion, during which the children gave their own opinions and said how they felt about life in their neighbourhood.

*The children were then invited to role play the part of children from the neighbourhood they had chosen*

Through their own investigation and presentation, an aspect of the history of cities in Greece that was previously unknown to them was revealed to the children. They formed a vivid picture of a way of life with a wealth of traditions and human relations; a world that was totally obliterated by the war. When the educational activity came to an end the children were given mementoes of their learning experience and JMG publications.

## Athens Lawyer Constantinos Anitsas donates his Collection of Stamps to the Jewish Museum of Greece.



*The Director of the JMG stressed the importance of private initiative, during the event.*

On 20th May 2009 a reception was held on the premises of the JMG to mark the donation and presentation of a private collection of stamps, envelopes and a miscellany of philatelic items by Athens lawyer Constantinos Anitsas to the Jewish Museum of Greece.

**The reception was attended by many notable guests invited by Mr. Anitsas; the president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, Mr. Moissis Konstandinis; members of the Museum's Board of Directors and its Association of Friends, including Mr. Armandos Modiano, who introduced Mr. Anitsas to the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the JMG for the purpose of making the donation.**

Mr. Anitsas is a philatelist and his collection spans the years 1947 to 2002. The stamp collection donated dates from the founding of the state of Israel in 1947 and includes complete series of successive issues of stamps, stamped first-day-of-issue envelopes and

Mr Con. Anitsa's donation of Stamps Collection



The President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece Mr. Moissis Konstandinis addresses his welcome speech during the reception.

blocks of four stamps as well as franked stamps from posted letters. **The collection covers the period from the establishment of the Israeli Post Office in 1947 to 2001, inclusive, and consists of eighteen (18) luxurious, leather-bound albums.**

The collection is presented in English and embellished with pictures and texts from the long Jewish history. Mr. Anitsas is a Greek national from Egypt who established professional and personal links with Jewish communities in Egypt early in his adult life. He saw the suffering of Greek Jews

under the German occupation. During the civil war of 1944-1949 he emigrated to South Africa where



From the reception of Mr. Konstantinos Anitsa in the JMG.



The Director of the JMG guides members of the Association of Friends and personal friends of Mr. Anitsas' to the temporary exhibition.

he again established professional and personal links with the Jewish community. When he went back home in 1951 he saw how the Jews were expelled from Egypt and this impacted greatly on his identifying with the Jewish people in their troubles. Mr. Konstantinos Anitsas' donation of his collection is made 'In tribute to his Jewish friends'.

## Baron David de Rothschild visits the JMG

**French banker and President of the Rothschild Group visited Greece on 16th March 2009 at the invitation of the “Megaron – The Athens Concert Hall” and the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. Baron Rothschild’s visit took place in connection with a series of talks and lectures that Megaron Plus holds every year. This year David de Rothschild was the main speaker and delivered a lecture on “What the Financial Crisis has Taught Us”.**

The JMG was among the places Baron Rothschild visited while in Athens and he was guided through the exhibition by JMG Director Zanet Battinou. After being shown round the museum David de Rothschild had a short meeting with members of the JMG Board of



1. The chairman of the Board of Directors Mr. M. Matsas offers a special publication to the Baron Rothschild.  
2. Baron David de Rothschild is guided through the permanent exhibition of the JMG.



Directors and its Association of Friends. Light food and warm beverages were served at the meeting which was attended by the President of the Jewish Community of Athens Mr. B. Albalas and the President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki Mr. D. Saltiel. As a tribute to its guest, Baron Rothschild, the JMG presented him with a copy of the book specially published in his honour describing the history of the Rothschild family in Greece (Athens, Chalkis and Thessaloniki) and how the family helped save the memory of Greek Jews and keep it alive. Chairman of the Board of Directors Samuel Matsas then presented Baron David de Rothschild with a museum replica Hannukiyia on behalf of the JMG, while the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece presented him with a copy of its illustrated publication, “The Holocaust of Greek Jewry: Monuments and Memories”.



3. From the reception given in honour of the Baron.  
4. The Director of the JMG gave Baron Rothschild a guided tour of the temporary exhibition Jewish Neighbourhoods of Greece.

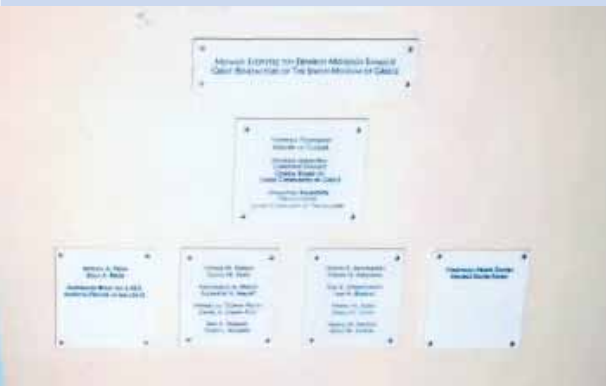
## THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM

The Jewish Museum of Greece is honoured and very pleased to be able to extend its warm thanks to all the members of the Association of Friends for their kindness in paying their annual subscriptions so promptly. It is with great pleasure that it welcomes the newly-registered members of the Association, whose moral and material support contributes greatly to this huge cultural family and helps it achieve its aim of supporting, in every way it can, the study conservation and presentation of our Greek-Jewish Cultural Heritage through the work of the Jewish Museum.

The main concern of the Association of Friends at present is to plan and organise a Fundrais-

ing Plan for the Museum to secure the necessary funds for its maintenance as well as its future. Friends of the museum, private individuals and organisations have always supported its great cultural, social and educational mission with significant monetary donations and invaluable contributions in kind.

The name of every person making a contribution is added, according to the sum contributed, to one of the following categories in the basic Donations Scale, which was drawn up as part of the Fundraising Campaign for the future of the museum:



Great Benefactor	100.000,00 € (+)
Benefactor	50.000,00 € (+)
Great Donor	20.000,00 € (+)
Donor	10.000,00 € (+)
Great Supporter	6.000,00 € (+)
Supporter	2.000,00 € (+)



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- The Ministry of Culture
- The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece
- The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki
- American Friends of the Jewish Museum of Greece

*Private Individuals (in alphabetical order)*

- Abravanel Errikos
- Abravanel Freddy
- Abravanel-Davari Lisa
- Benrubi Sam
- Kaimis Guilio
- Kovo Dario
- Mallat Alexander
- Matsas Makis
- Recanati Harry
- Resti Bella
- Rose Daniel & Joanna
- Saltiel Moris (Family)

The following is a list of donators and patrons, both private individuals and organisations that honoured us during the 2007 and 2008 administration with their invaluable support for the Museum's work and are included in the above Donations Scale. They are shown here in alphabetical order by category.

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*SUPPORTERS 2007*

- Beza Lucy
- Benoth Berith of Athens
- Seferiades Nikolaos

**DONORS AND SUPPORTERS 2008**

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**Opening hours:** Daily from 9.00 - 14.30, Sunday 10.00 - 14.00, Saturday closed

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