



# Jottings

Etz Hayyim Synagogue  
 P.O. Box 251  
 73100 Hania, Crete, Greece  
 Tel. +30 28210 86286  
 E-mail: [info@etz-hayyim-hania.org](mailto:info@etz-hayyim-hania.org)  
 Web site: [www.etz-hayyim-hania.org](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org)

## Editorial

On a small table at the entrance door to Etz Hayyim stands a large glass bottle, with *Tzedakah* written on it. It is a reminder for the visitors to show kindness and consideration towards the work as well as the maintenance of the place which they just passed through. A gesture to leave a donation. An opportunity to give. The existence of Etz Hayyim depends on people's kindness and generosity. Ever since Nikos Stavroulakis (נ"ל) started to revive the abandoned synagogue in the mid-1990s until today when tens of thousands of visitors pass through each year, educational programmes and projects on Jewish history and culture, weekly services and High Holiday celebrations take place at Etz Hayyim, we have to emphasise that the progress we have made here would never have been possible without Etz Hayyim's many friends and supporters. As a small institution run without public funding, it is a miracle that we have come so far and of course we are extremely grateful - but also look



ahead.

A year after Nikos Stavroulakis' passing, Etz Hayyim will shortly receive his remaining book collection and all of his personal documents, notebooks and copies of unfinished manuscripts and will lead to the establishing of an official Nikos Stavroulakis archive.

An ongoing project at Etz Hayyim is the development of a digital map of the Jewish quarter of Hania, based on the thorough research by historians Katerina Anagnostaki and Daphne Lappa, which will provide an intriguing insight into the history of Chania's last Jewish community. The map will be

included in Etz Hayyim's expanding educational outreach programme. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Jewish Museum of Greece, Etz Hayyim is about to become a resource institution where teachers and students can receive material about the history of the Holocaust with a special focus on Crete and Greece.

Financial support is essential for the daily running of Etz Hayyim and its many activities and projects. But we can not ignore the huge contributions friends of Etz Hayyim have made by donating their time, knowledge, or funds on every level imaginable: prayer books, knitted kippahs, new decorations or electronic items etc. Everything we have received is effectively part of the *Tzedakah* bottle Nikos Stavroulakis once placed at the synagogue's entrance door. Many of the articles in this newsletter report about stories behind which lies a selfless act of warm support and this is an opportunity to thank you wholeheartedly.

This is what Etz Hayyim continues to stand for - receiving support in order to help others understand the value of Jewish traditions, history and culture. Therefore, in the spirit of Nikos Stavroulakis' legacy, please remember during the upcoming Rosh HaShanah celebration, that Etz Hayyim is alive only because of YOUR support and donations.

Shana Tova,  
 Marianna Vinther and the staff of Etz Hayyim.

## Also in this issue:

<i>The New Year Seder</i> .....	2
<i>Memorial Service for Nikos Stavroulakis</i> .....	4
<i>Wedding of Hila Ido and Dor Levy Zlekha</i> .....	7
<i>Seminar with Jewish Museum of Greece</i> .....	8
<i>Impressions of Etz Hayyim – Photo Series</i> .....	12
<i>Inspection of Etz Hayyim;s Sifrei Torah</i> .....	14
<i>Upcoming Events and Projects</i> .....	15
<i>HCZ Cooperation and Exhibition</i> .....	16
<i>Meet the Etz Hayyim Team</i> .....	17
<i>Gedenkdienst News</i> .....	19



## The New Year Seder

If you attended our Rosh Hashanah dinner last year you will surely have noticed an innovation: the Seder for New Year. Actually this is not a new custom: it is widespread throughout the Jewish world (except among Ashkenazim), and has very old roots, as we can see from a passage of the Babylonian Talmud (Horayot 12a):

Abaye [a Babylonian teacher of the early 4th century] said: "Since you say that an omen is a significant matter, a person should always be accustomed to seeing these on Rosh HaShana: Squash, and fenugreek, leeks, and chard, and dates; each of these grows quickly and so serves as a positive omen for one's actions during the coming year."

Obviously the familiar apple and honey similarly operate as an omen, expressing a hope that the coming year may be sweet and pleasant. As we eat them we say these words:

May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors to renew for us a good and sweet year.

This is sometimes considered the first of the items of the seder, making eight in total.

At some point during times of persecution and oppression blessings were added which linked the names or characteristics of the other traditional foods to prayers that the people of Israel may prosper in the coming year and be protected from their enemies. The names of these seven foods are as follows:

**1. Kareti** (leek, represented by fried leek balls, *prasokeftédhes*)

The Hebrew name of the leek looks as though it comes from a root meaning 'cut off'. So we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that your enemies and those who hate you and all those who seek our ill be cut off.*

**2. Salka** (beetroot leaves)

The name of the beetroot looks as though it comes from a root meaning 'depart'. So we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that your enemies and those who hate you and all those who seek our ill may depart.*

**3. Tamarim** (dates)

The name of the date looks as though it comes from the root tam, meaning 'complete'. So we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that your enemies and those who hate you and all those who seek our ill may be completely destroyed.*

**4. Kara** (courgette – we use the Cretan boureki, made with courgette and potato)

This name looks as if it comes from the root kara meaning 'to read'. So we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that you may tear up the harsh decree of our judgment, and may our merits be read out before you.*

**5. Rimmon** (pomegranate)

The pomegranate contains innumerable seeds, and so we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that we may be as full of good deeds as the pomegranate [is full of seeds].*

**6. Dagim** (little fish)

Again, the shoals of little fish cannot be counted, and so we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that we may be fruitful and multiply like fish.*

**7. Rosh dag** (fish head)

We take a fish head and we say:

*May it be your will O Lord our God and God of our ancestors that we may be a head and not a tail.*

Nikos Stavroulakis, in his Cookbook of the Jews of Greece (111–112), remarks that in Salonica "the head of the fish was reserved for the father of the house, as the word rosh in Hebrew means both head and a beginning. The fish also symbolises the Great Leviathan on which Israel is to feast for eternity in Heaven."





## Liturgical and Community Life at Etz Hayyim

A service for **Erev Pesah** took place on 30 March in the newly renovated synagogue which was packed to overflowing for the evening service, partly thanks to the presence of some thirty German teachers on a study week. Services were led by Etz Hayyim's Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange and included a special prayer on seeing a synagogue that has been repaired or restored. We also prayed for two seriously ill members of the Havurah, Ida Mordoh and Georgia Kotronaki. Some eighty people attended the Seder meal in ELA Restaurant.

The modest attendance of ten or so people for the **Erev Shavuot** service might have been due to the fact that it was celebrated for the first time with a full service at Etz Hayyim. We are looking forward to a larger attendance in 2019. The service was followed by a potluck meal featuring various forms of cheesecake.

The annual **Memorial Service for the Victims of the Tanais** took place on 17 June at the monument in the Koum Kapi neighborhood of Hania. For the first time, the Rabbi of Athens alongside representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church of Crete and the Catholic Church of Chania said blessings for the three groups of victims of the Tanais sinking: the Cretan Jewish community, the Greek Orthodox Christian members of the Resistance and Catholic Italian prisoners of war. Commem-



Father Dimitrios Liolios (Aghios Nikolaos Church, Hania), Father Georgios Patedakis (Aghoi Anargiroi), Rabbi Gabriel Negrin and Peter Lukas Romani (Roman Catholic Church, Hania).

orative remarks were delivered by Anastasios Vamvoukas, Mayor of Hania, and Victor Eliezer, representative of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE). Author Rita Gabbai, a member of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, gave the keynote speech. About fifty people attended the ceremony, including locals and visitors from abroad, as well as mem-

### Calendar for Upcoming Holidays

#### Έρεβ Ρός Ασανά – Erev Rosh Hashanah

9 Σεπτεμβρίου 7 μμ – 9 September 7 pm

Followed by community dinner. R.S.V.P. by 5 September.

#### Ρός Ασανά – Rosh Hashanah Morning Service, 1<sup>st</sup> Day

10 Σεπτεμβρίου 10 πμ – 10 September 10 am

#### Ρός Ασανά – Rosh Hashanah Morning Service, 2<sup>nd</sup> Day

11 Σεπτεμβρίου 10 πμ – 10 September 10 am

### Κιπούρ – Kippur

#### Κολ Νιντρέ – Kol Nidre Service

18 Σεπτεμβρίου 6:30 μμ – 18 September 6:30 pm

#### Γιομ Κιπούρ – Yom Kippur Service

19 Σεπτεμβρίου 10 πμ – 19 September 10 am

Μινχά 5 μμ – Minha 5 pm

Μνημόσυνο 6:30 μμ – Memorial Service 6:30 pm

Νεϊλά 6:45 μμ – Neilah 6:45 pm

#### Fast ends 19 September at 8:03 pm.

Snacks will be served at the Synagogue for breaking the fast.

### Σουκότ – Sukkot

#### Έρεβ Σουκότ – Erev Sukkot Service

23 Σεπτεμβρίου 6:30 μμ – 23 September 6:30 pm

Potluck dinner – please bring a contribution.

Sukkah will be up until 30 September.

Services will be led by Etz Hayyim's Visiting Rabbi Nicholas de Lange.

### Weekly Services at Etz Hayyim

**Kabbalat Shabbat Services** are held every Friday.

**Candle lighting times are posted on our website:**

[www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/events](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org/events)

(click on the relevant dates in the calendar).

**Other holidays will be announced on our website, by email and on our Facebook page.**



bers of the Board of Trustees of Etz Hayyim. The service at the monument was followed by a Hashkavah service at Etz Hayyim synagogue led by Rabbi Gabriel Negrin (Athens). As every year, the names of the victims were read aloud and a candle lit for each. For

several years now, it has also become a tradition that the poem 'Memorial Service' by Havurah member Natalie Ventura (see p. 15, and *Jottings* 17) is recited as part of the Hashkavah service both in Greek and in English.

## Memorial Service for Nikos Stavroulakis (זצ"ל)

On 29 April, Etz Hayyim Synagogue was filled with around seventy attendees for the annual memorial service (Nahalah/Yahrzeit) held for Nikos Stavroulakis. Among the attendees was the Mayor of Hania, Anastasios Vamvoukas, as well as friends of Nikos who came from as far as Israel and the USA. The service was conducted by Rabbi Gabriel Negrin of Athens. Following, memorial candles were lit.



**Marianna Vinther:** It has been a year since Nikos Stavroulakis passed away and while we are gathered here tonight to commemorate his life, I want you to take a moment's pause between prayers to reflect on his continued presence in this special place, Etz Hayyim. As you are all well aware, we come together tonight as a result of his determination and will to rebuild this once abandoned synagogue. Due to his inspired work in raising awareness of the precarious state of the building, together with its long lost Jewish community, he created out of its shadow, a solid foundation for a new synagogue. This synagogue is obviously an unorthodox place of study and prayer, but also a well-functioning and lively, vibrant environment where we now are able to celebrate his own life and achievements. Following Etz Hayyim's rededication in 1999, Nikos Stavroulakis became its soul and identity. Visitors to the synagogue will never forget this curious, white bearded man sitting cross-legged on the bench near the Ehal before Erev Shabbat on Fridays. With his pipe in hand, he always took a real interest in Etz Hayyim's visitors, enquiring about their occupation, nationality, age and religion, and with a twinkle in his blue eyes behind this

Below we print the memorial speeches given by Marianna Vinther, President of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim, and Rabbi Gabriel Negrin. A video recording of the service can be accessed online via the "NEWS" section on the Etz Hayyim website. We thank New Zealander documentary filmmaker, John Irvin, for recording the event and providing us with the video.



glasses, welcoming them in a warm manner and inviting them to partake in the service with him. Tonight, we will share another evening. Lighting a candle, praying in memory, listening to music, we will remember Nikos Stavroulakis as we knew him: as a creator, a founder and dear friend, thankful that Etz Hayyim flourishes once again because of his efforts. At this moment, I also want to take the opportunity to sincerely apologise to friends and family of Nikos Stavroulakis, especially to Dori Kanellos and Karen K. Olsen who unfortunately were not informed in a timely manner about the change of date of this memorial event and who were therefore unable to attend this evening. I'd like to take full responsibility and to tell them that they are missed dearly.

**Rabbi Gabriel Negrin:** I have to admit that, until a few minutes ago, I had not, as yet, decided what I would say to honour my teacher, Nikos Stavroulakis. However, I then remembered that Anja had mentioned to me that today is an important day for Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The President and Board members are present and the honourable Mayor of Chania is also in attendance on



# Jottings

this day which also happens to be the anniversary of the establishment of the organisation which supports Ets Hayyim Synagogue.

Incidentally, according to our tradition, this is the week when we read the third part of the Pirkei Avot (*Chapters of the Fathers*) and in this third part, there is a story which relates to another story that I heard out there underneath the Ezrath Nashim where Nikos was sitting on a bench, smoking and silently praying. He said to me that wisdom is like olive oil. We are in Crete and almost all of us know something about olive oil. When olive milling takes place, the very first oil that is produced is not clear, but rather it is a thick, blurry liquid. This is exactly what happens when an individual attains wisdom. There is the moment when the individual wants to stay silent, to stop, to sit down and get some rest, so

that this wisdom can settle inside of him. Wisdom becomes clear just as when olive oil settles and becomes mature. This is the story that my teacher taught me, and this week's passage from the Pirkei Avot teaches us that silence is the protection of wisdom.

May the Lord remind us that silence is the most deafening prayer of all. Whenever we pray silently, may we remember that Nikos was a champion of this kind of prayer; he who stood there wisely and smoked his pipe on the bench, just outside the Mikveh, by the graves of the four rabbis, oscillating between holiness and daily life. May his memory be glorious and blessed, may the Lord water him from his prime river at the foothills by the footrest of his throne, the source of every single life and this is his will, so you can all say amen.

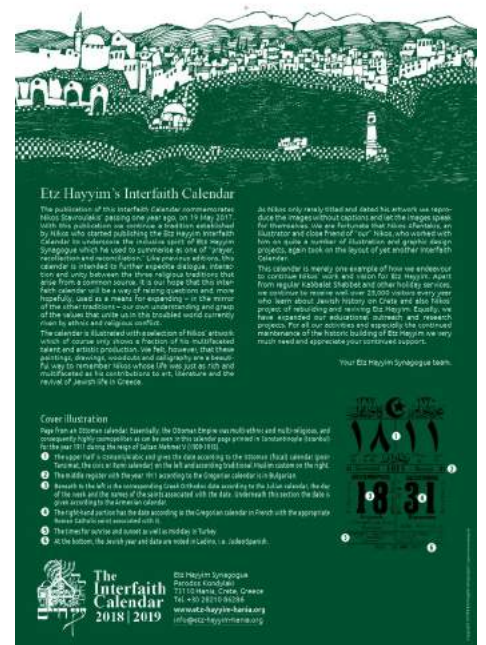
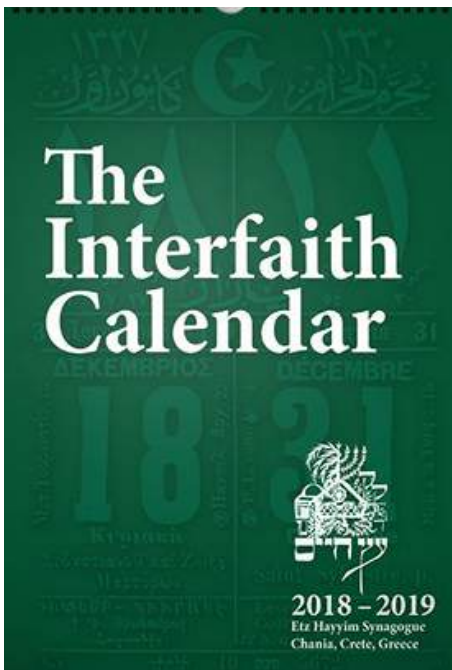
## Now available: Ets Hayyim's Interfaith Calendar in Memory of Nikos Stavroulakis (נ"ל)

Ets Hayyim has published the latest edition of its Interfaith Calendar in memory of Nikos Stavroulakis. The calendar covers the period May 2018 to December 2019 and thus makes a wonderful present for friends or yourself.

With this publication, we continue a tradition established by Nikos who began publishing the Ets Hayyim Interfaith Calendar to underscore the inclusive spirit of Ets Hayyim. The calendar is intended to further expedite

dialogue, interaction and unity between the three religious traditions (Jewish, Christian, Muslim) that developed from a common source.

This most recent edition of the calendar is illustrated with a selection of Nikos' artwork which, of course, represents only a fraction of his multifaceted talent and artistic production. As Nikos only rarely titled and dated his artwork, we reproduce the images without captions and let them speak for themselves.



Your copy of the Interfaith Calendar is available for a donation of 15 Euro (plus shipping; Greece € 2, Europe € 3, world € 3.30 ) from the Synagogue office.



## Wedding of Hila Ido and Dor Levy Zlekha

We are Hila and Dor, a young couple from Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel. About a year ago, we got engaged during a trip to Crete, immediately after visiting Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Chania. We then decided to return and get married there. Our wedding ceremony took place in the synagogue in May 16, 2018. The ceremony was led by our dear friend, the Rabbi of Athens, Gabriel Negrin. It marked a beautiful moment in our lives in which we shared our love and beliefs with our loved ones who came from all over the world to celebrate with us.



The island of Crete has been at a cultural crossroads throughout history. By choosing to get married in Crete, we chose to take a part in this history. When our family and friends marched together through the old town of Chania following the wedding ceremony, cheering and



playing music, we felt as if the whole city was reaching out to greet us. We felt that we were at home.

The city of Chania has been home to a Jewish community for hundreds of years. For us, Etz Hayyim Synagogue not only embodies a rich cultural heritage of the Jews in Crete, but also represents a living space which is actively shaping Jewish life and thought on the island. By signing

our marriage legally in the *Lixiarchio* (registrar's office) of Chania as a Jewish religious marriage, we felt that we were taking an active role in this process. We hope that it will make it easier in the future for more happy Jewish couples to follow.

Another way for us to take part in the life of the local community was to contribute several items essential to the religious life of Etz Hayyim. A new *Parochet*, made in Jerusalem, but based on a design by Nikos Stavroulakis (זצ"ל), was donated to the synagogue by Hila's family. A



handmade table cloth for the high holidays depicting the Tree of Life and accompanied by a biblical quote was donated by Dor's family. We hope that they will both serve the space and the community well.

We would like to express our deep appreciation and thanks to Anja for her generous support along the way, to Rabbi Gabriel Negrin for his presence and guidance, and to our friends in the community of Etz Hayyim for welcoming and hosting us. We could not imagine a better way to start our new life together.

Yours truly, Hila Ido and Dor Levy Zlekha

© photos: Evyatar Nissan





# Jottings



Synagogue entrance during renovation works.

## Renovation Works Spring 2018



above: cat paw prints in the dust on the synagogue floor during renovation works.



left: synagogue interior during renovation works, flash reflection in the dust caused by wall scraping.



Right: Cleaning up after renovation works.





## Teaching About the Holocaust in Greece - Seminar with the Jewish Museum of Greece

On 3 and 4 May 2018, the Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG) hosted in Hania a seminar entitled 'Teaching about the Holocaust in Greece' that was addressed to teachers of primary and high schools. Although now in its sixth year, it was the first time that Crete was chosen as the location of this two-day meeting. The choice of Crete at this point served two purposes: firstly, as the museum's way to express its gratitude to Nikos Stavroulakis and his service towards the preservation of Greek Jewish tradition - the seminar was held a year after Nikos' passing and was dedicated to his memory. Secondly, it served as a contribution to recent growing interest in Cretan Jewish history and culture.

Moreover, this seminar presented the opportunity to strengthen the bonds between the Jewish Museum of Greece and Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Hania. The importance of this relationship lies in our desire to collaborate in order to further our mission in providing educational outreach programs at the Synagogue.

Etz Hayyim co-organized the event and the feedback of this experience was interesting for us. On the one hand, teachers who had already a prior relationship with the Synagogue fully supported the idea of this outreach. Some of them offered to spread the word of the event to their colleagues and around seventy applications were received from all over the island. On the other hand, we would have appreciated open support from the side of the local education administration, which unfortunately was not the case. The seminar hosted around sixty participants with ten speakers contributing to this event. There was also an accompanying art exhibition: George Sfougaras, a Cretan artist based in England, created a series of paintings under the title "Tales

from an Old Fort Town" (see p. 16). As he himself describes them, the works reflect "a personal response to the Jewish history of Crete through art".

The structure of the seminar was based on the idea of combining theoretical instruction with practical advice to teachers, most of whom had never been previously informed about Holocaust teaching methods. Therefore the first day was focused on academic presentations

from the fields of history and archaeology, while on the second day a series of workshops offered examples and new perspectives on teaching about Jewish history in Greece. The first day's presentations were concerned with the material traces of the Jewish presence in Greece and their use in digital applications. In addition, the history of Cretan Jews from their Hellenistic origins through to the Second World War was discussed. The survivor Iossif Ventouras talked about his experience and memories as a hidden child during the war and, at the end of the first day, members of the Etz Hayyim staff gave a tour of the Synagogue and the old Jewish Quarter. The second day consisted of workshops covering various methods and tools which can be used

for teaching about both Greek Jewish history within the local context, and in the broader context of Holocaust education. Art, testimonies, museum artifacts, a digital map, photographs, video creation; all of them were used as tools to discuss the improvement of teaching methods on the Holocaust.

The seminar experience was multidimensional: the first collaboration between the Jewish Museum of Greece and Etz Hayyim Synagogue of Hania became reality and was deemed to be highly successful; the participants from different parts of the island were actively engaged







during the seminar presentations; and the presentations included scientifically up-to-date methods and information which teachers can directly integrate in their lessons. However, the most important benefit gained from this event is that the Synagogue was introduced to the teachers as the place to contact should they be interest-

ed the field of Jewish history and the Holocaust. The challenge for Etz Hayyim is greater from now on, since educational material should be created and made available to schools already for the upcoming academic year. The staff of Etz Hayyim is currently working on that with the valuable help of the JMG. Katerina Anagnostaki

## A Note from the Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece

The 24th Seminar for Greek educators organized by the Jewish Museum of Greece, in close cooperation with the Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Chania, took place in early May 2018, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, with the support of the S. Niarchos Foundation.

Beginning in 2012 the JMG seminar, conducted multiple times in Athens and Thessaloniki, has travelled to Ioannina, Volos, Zakynthos Patra, Larissa, Distomo and Drama. Wherever possible, we worked with local institutions to leave behind more knowledge and awareness, a closer connection and working ties between the local educational community, a local or neighboring Jewish community, and a local circle of experts. We are happy to report that this goal was achieved in Chania too, establishing the Synagogue as a focal point for all matters relevant to the study of Judaism, of Greek Jewry, including the communities of Crete and of the Holocaust, but also as a contact point for the JMG.



This seminar was dedicated to the memory of Nicholas Hanan Stavroulakis (נחמן), the founding director of the JMG and the Etz Hayyim Synagogue, who laid the foundations for the work of both institutions and inspires us

all to continue on the path of respect and inclusion. Both the synagogue and the JMG, constitute meaningful sites for discovery, acquaintance and commemoration, offering accurate and reliable experiential opportunities to all visitors.

This seminar also marks the auspicious beginning

of a close educational cooperation between Etz Hayyim Synagogue and the Jewish Museum of Greece that is aimed at highlighting the common goals of their function, while perpetuating the dream of Nikos Stavroulakis for an open society, fostering awareness, justice, knowledge and understanding.

Zanet Battinou, Director The Jewish Museum of Greece

## Welcome Note by Etz Hayyim's Administrative Director delivered at the JMG Seminar

Geia sas; I would like to welcome you all on behalf of Etz Hayyim Synagogue and thank you very much for your interest in this seminar. Furthermore, I would like to thank Zanet Batinou and Alexandra Patrikiou of the JMG for all their work to make this seminar possible and particularly for suggesting to dedicate this event to the memory of Nikos Stavroulakis (נחמן).

Please allow me to take a few moments to tell you about who Nikos Stavroulakis was and why we honour his memory with this event. It is probably safe to say that this seminar would not take place had it not been for Nikos' pioneering work both at the Jewish Museum in Athens, which he co-founded in the 1970s, and here in Hania at Etz Hayyim Synagogue, which he rebuilt in the

mid-1990s. In that sense, both Zanet, Alexandra and we at Etz Hayyim Synagogue are continuing and expanding projects initiated by Nikos.

Nikos Stavroulakis was an internationally renowned art historian, artist and writer; he taught art history at various international universities and in Greece and created wonderful and multifaceted works of art. Just one example of his art is the logo of Etz Hayyim Synagogue printed on your programs. He also developed, as he put it, a "reputation for making museums", first as a founding director of the Jewish Museum of Greece and then as curator for the Jewish museums in Thessaloniki and Rhodes.

In his view of the world, he consistently went beyond the



confines of nationalist, narrow-minded history and always looked for and celebrated connections between religious and cultural traditions about which he had a tremendous knowledge. This approach particularly came to bear fruits in his project of rebuilding Etz Hayyim Synagogue in Hania. When he retired from the JMG in the early 1990s, he settled in Hania, the hometown of his non-Jewish father. He had already taken an active interest in the derelict synagogue for several decades when an earthquake in 1995 severely damaged the building. It was then that he felt that it was time to act.

Nikos was determined that Etz Hayyim must not remain, as he put it, a symbol of the victory of Adolf Hitler. He raised donations and renovated the building which he reopened in 1999. On the eve of the opening, the Rabbi of Thessaloniki asked him if Etz Hayyim would become yet another museum – as that is what Nikos had become known for. Yet he was determined that Etz Hayyim should be an active synagogue and function as a place of prayer, recollection and reconciliation. And this is what Etz Hayyim has become thanks to Nikos' presence and intriguing personality.

In the tradition of inclusive synagogues of the Hellenistic period, Etz Hayyim is open to people of all backgrounds and emphasizes dialogue and education. About 30,000 visitors come to Etz Hayyim every year, including several hundred pupils. They then learn about the long and complex history of the Jewish community on Crete but also about the tragic fate of the community during the German occupation. There is also a strong emphasis on interfaith dialogue. Nikos, for in-

stance, regularly published an Interfaith Calendar with holidays for Judaism, Christianity and Islam – a tradition we continue with the most recent publication of such a calendar.

It is our hope that through this seminar, you will also get to know Etz Hayyim Synagogue as an intriguing, perhaps even surprising place in Chania that can offer interesting insights for you and your pupils. Nikos, who gave fascinating talks to pupils and students, would have loved the thought that Etz Hayyim keeps its doors open for everyone with questions and a thirst for knowledge.

Throughout his life, Nikos inspired countless people. Let me just mention one among them: George Sfougaras, a Cretan artist living in the UK, whose artwork is on display in the foyer. He approached us about 18 months ago to present his artistic response to the tragic fate of the Cretan Jewish community which he learned about during a visit to Etz Hayyim Synagogue. We felt that displaying George's artwork here was an appropriate way to commemorate both Nikos' enduring impact together with the



Sample worksheet handed out during workshop

Cretan Jewish community. Nikos' passing on 19 May 2017, almost a year ago to the day, was of course a great loss, not only for his family and friends, but also for everyone at Etz Hayyim and the Jewish community of Greece. However, Nikos' legacy and memory lives on in the institutions he created, in the works he inspired and in events like this seminar. Anja Zuckmantel



## Visit by Greek MA student Georgia Gleoudi

*In February, Greek MA student Georgia Gleoudi visited Etz Hayyim and published an article about her visit in various online outlets. She is interested in religion and*

*state relations, faith-based diplomacy and intercultural relations. In the text below, she reflects on the rationale of her academic work and motivation to visit Etz Hayyim.*

All these years, I have been working and studying the history of Jewish communities all over Greece. I was devastated and then challenged when I began realizing that communities which once blossomed, have now either died or are ready to collapse. Through my work, I committed myself to reveal these stories and bring to the surface the multireligious and multiethnic fabric of our history. Deeply inspired by this motivation, I first became acquainted with Etz Hayyim Synagogue and the work of Nikos Stavroulakis (נ"צט) two years ago. Many times I was ready to visit the Synagogue and write a detailed article about the life and mission of Nikos and of course the history of the synagogue and of the Jewish community there. Each month I decided to postpone my travel to Hania until the next month until I learnt that Nikos had passed away. Some days later, the only thing I could do was to order my Interfaith Calendar and send via an e-mail my condolences to the Synagogue. In September 2018, I started my post-graduate Masters program at Uppsala University in Religion in Peace and Conflict. The second semester finally arrived and I was assigned to write the biography of an individual whom I admired and who was involved in a faith and peace-making process. It was my unique chance to visit

Etz Hayyim and ask my own questions. My center of interest was more the personality of Nikos Stavroulakis and his work for the Synagogue. What my professor wanted me to learn was how he did it, how he took the decisions, which steps he took, what encouraged him, what motivated him and what inspired him. However, my own interest was not only these questions. My thoughts focused on how the local society reacted to Nikos' endeavours, how a Jewish community would flourish again here, how people in this Synagogue became a family and lastly how I would become a member of this family even though I am not a Jew. The results of a brief academic dissertation became finally two articles, one in English and one in Greek for my blogs in Modern Diplomacy, World Religions News, Huffington Post Greece and Helpis. Thanks to the help of the team at Etz Hayyim Synagogue and their support, the articles had a great impact. What I wanted people to learn was that someone, somewhere managed to do something that no one had ever imagined before. What I wanted people to learn is that if we do not remember our past and if we do not try to coexist in peace, we will repeat the mistakes of our past.

Georgia Gleoudi

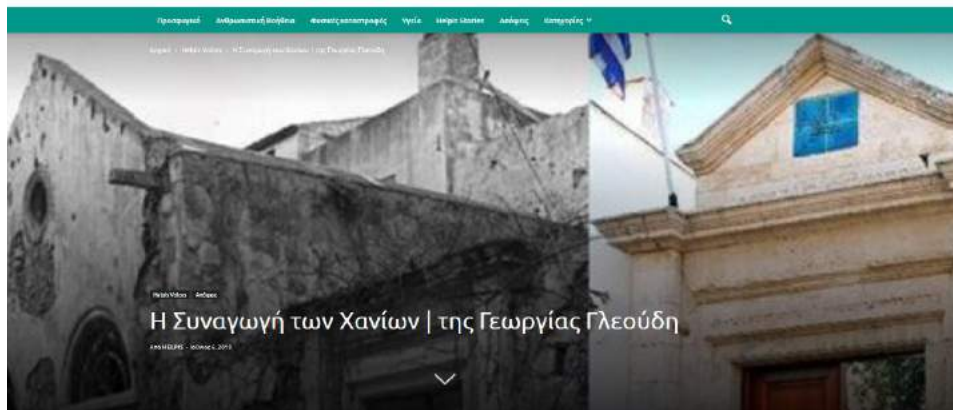
NEW SOCIAL COMPACT

### The Havurah of Chania

Published 2 months ago on June 1, 2018  
By Georgia N. Gleoudi



Helpis





## Etz Hayyim Impressions



Etz Hayyim remains heaven for our synagogue cats, by now probably in 4th or 5th generation. Latest additions are the three month old Roberto, Felix and Aris, born on the premises.



right:  
... could be also Etz Hayyim, but it's actually not. The photos were sent by a family in the Netherlands who bought a paper model of the Etz Hayyim during their visit and wanted to show us the result of their crafts project.



## Photo Series by Maike Heinrich, Christoph Steinberger and Gerry Dutton

right: Our huge *Etrogim* impress visitors and are photographed probably 100 times per day. For many visitors it's a revelation the an Etrog doesn't come in a box but actually grows on a tree...



below: view of small garden in northern courtyard which Nikos dedicated to his friend Judith Humphrey; the garden will be redone later this year as part of the ongoing renovation project.



below left: Bimah of Etz Hayyim Synagogue

below right: wooden bench and embroidered cushions



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

Our sincere thanks to the friends and members of the Etz Hayyim Havurah who contributed to this newsletter.

**We would also love to hear from *you*.**

Contact the synagogue if you would like to contribute an article, share information, ideas, feedback or criticism. The next *Jottings* will be published for **Pesah 5779**. Please send contributions by **March 15, 2019**.



## Inspection of the Sifrei Torah of Etz Hayyim by Rabbi Gabriel Negrin (Athens)

On the Monday after the annual memorial service for the victims of the Tanais, Rabbi Gabriel of Athens dedicated an entire day to inspecting our Torah Scrolls in order to guarantee that they are still “kosher” (meaning in this context: „not damaged, with no broken letters”). On this rare occasion, Rabbi Gabriel did not hesitate to share his rabbinical knowledge with us.



We learned about Hebrew letters always consisting of other letters and that each Torah has exactly 304.805 letters. We also talked about different materials that a Torah can be written on as well as the differences between Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Romaniote Sifrei Torah.

Currently, Etz Hayyim has three Torah scrolls; one from each main European tradition. The Ashkenazi one is on loan from the „Memorial Scrolls Trust” (MST), ergo, our scroll is originally from what is today the Czech Republic and was saved during the Holocaust from the Nazis and later brought to the Westminster Synagogue in London, where the MST was established. After the war they were

given to synagogues which are still operating and thus undisputed symbols of Jewish resilience and „Am Yisrael Chai.” Rabbi Gabriel inspected this scroll and, unfortunately, the ink is fading. We sent a report to the MST and the scroll will be fixed as soon as possible. The Sephardi scroll, which is written on gazelle leather, faces some different issues as the seams are coming off. And last but not least, we also have a Romaniote scroll but apparent-



ly it was already buried, hence it cannot be used anymore and will become part of an exhibit at Etz Hayyim in one way or another. But the first two scrolls are thoroughly reparable. All in all, we can say that they are in relatively good shape and after correcting them nothing is going to prevent further usage.

Christoph Steinberger



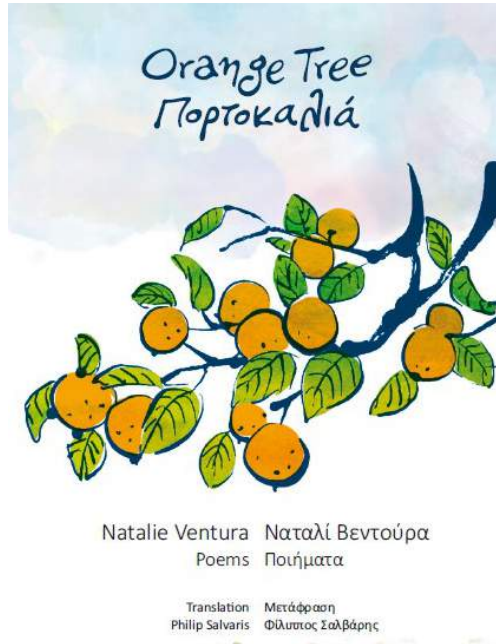


## Upcoming Events and Projects

### **Orange Tree, a Bi-Lingual Book of Poetry by Natalie Ventura, to be Presented at Etz Hayyim**

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to be someone else? To experience life through another person's eyes? How a child reacts to the death of a parent. How a young woman responds to early love, or a mother to her six-year-old's questions. What ingredients go into writing a poem. How living long-term in another culture seeps into your being. *Orange Tree*, a bi-lingual poetry book by Natalie Ventura, answers these questions. It reflects her journey from the land of her birth to Germany, France, and, finally, to Crete. Its 48 poems are rooted in her different worlds: the Mediterranean and the Anglo-Saxon, internal and external experience, and seeing the past in light of the present. On the broader themes of relationship, love, loss, and joie de vivre, these poems show you "dry grass" as well as "soaring ascents." Na-

talie Ventura's sensitive eye and pen draw you into whatever she describes – a beach scene at the New Jersey coast, or a small boy at a Latvian waterfront.



Orange Tree was translated into Greek by Philip Salvaris in close and fruitful collaboration with the poet, and will now be presented at Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

Natalie was born in the U.S.A (New York State) and moved to Europe in 1974. She began writing poetry systematically on settling in Crete in late 1983. Some of her work has been published in Greek, British and American journals, and in the chapbook *Three Women and a Lion*. Natalie lives and writes in an old stone house where Nikos Kazantzakis also once wrote, in Heraklion, Crete. She is a member of the Etz Hayyim Havurah.

**The book presentation will take place on 8 September at 7 pm at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The presentation will be in English and Greek.**

## **A Town called Brzostek - Documentary Film Screening**

On October 17, during a scheduled visit by Jonathan Webber, a British social anthropologist and professor emeritus at the Institute of European Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, the documentary "A Town called Brzostek" will be screened in Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The film documents Jonathan Webber's project of rebuilding the Jewish cemetery in the Polish town of Brzostek, where his grandfather was born, and shows how this project had a deep effect not only on him personally and on the town, with no current Jewish community, but also on people worldwide who have become fascinated by this intriguing project. This story has of course striking similarities to that of the Cre-



tan Jewish community and Nikos Stavroulakis' project of rebuilding and reviving Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The film screening will probably be followed by an interesting discussion about efforts to revive lost European Jewish communities and what such projects can mean for Jewish communities worldwide and non-Jewish towns and cities across Europe. Jonathan Webber is also the brother of the late Judith Humphrey. During his visit we will talk about various projects to honour this pioneer of Cretan Jewish Studies and close friend of Nikos.

**The film screening will take place on 17 October, 7 pm at Etz Hayyim Synagogue. Free admission.**

FINNROSE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A TOWN CALLED BRZOSTEK. MUSIC BY NEEL WESTERLING. VOICED BY BEN FROM LONDON AND POLAND. MUSIC BY CAMERON SWAIN. JACKET DESIGN: JACQUA. GRAPHIC ASSISTANT: PROFFERS. FINAL JACKET DESIGN: PROFFERS. EDITOR: JACQUA. NARRATOR: CAMERON SWAIN. JACKET DESIGN: JACQUA.



## Heritage Contact Zones - Etz Hayyim participating in European Year of Cultural Heritage

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. We were invited by friends at Castrum Peregrini cultural centre in Amsterdam, who visited Etz Hayyim last year and are coordinators for the project called "Heritage Contact Zones." This two-year project brings together seven partner organisations from across Europe: Castrum Peregrini, Amsterdam (NL), Goethe-Institut Lyon (DE), Human Platform Budapest (HU), Timisoara European Capi-

The project focuses on neglected and contested European heritage and will engage communities and citizens in building new approaches to European heritage, which will be showcased in art exhibitions in five partner countries and a transnational online exhibition to celebrate the European Year of Cultural Heritage. In the second year, the project partners will look at other existing examples of using heritage spaces for a dialogue about neglected aspects of the European past to build a modular tool for small and medium sized cultural heritage organisations to implement community based



tal of Culture (RO), European University Institute Florence (IT), Culture Action Europe Brussels (BE) and Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

curating for the sake of new, more inclusive narratives and heritage activities for all Europeans.

The project starts with a coordinating meeting of all partners in September 2018. We will keep you updated on activities and progress.

---

## Exhibition *Tales from an Old Fort Town* by George Sfougaras

On 24 October, an exhibition of a series of drawings by George Sfougaras about the fate of the Cretan Jewish community will be opened at Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

In *Jottings* 20 (Pesah 2017), we had reported that George Sfougaras, a Greek-British artist, had then just contacted Etz Hayyim to let us know about his project "Tales from an Old Fort Town" in a very moving email message, which we reprinted in that edition of *Jottings*. After a previous visit to Etz Hayyim, George had produced a series of ink drawings as a personal artistic response to the fate of the Jewish community in Crete, and in Irakleion in particular – his home town and the Old Fort Town in the title of the project. Along with his email he sent us a small booklet he had produced including the drawings and an account of his encounter with the history of the Cretan Jewish community as well

as the general silence about their historic presence and tragic fate.

We received George's email and the booklet in early spring 2017, just in time for Nikos Stavroulakis (ל"צ) whose work, particularly at Etz Hayyim, had made such an impression on George during his earlier visit, to still be able to see the artwork and give the feedback that George had kindly asked for. Nikos shared the view that the history of the Cretan Jewish community has been too much neglected and thus very much appreciated the approach as well as the execution of George's project; he suggested that the artwork should, one day, be displayed at Etz Hayyim. It is therefore even more our pleasure to host this exhibition from October 2018.

For the exhibition opening, George's book "Tales from an Old Fort Town" will be published by Lycabettus

---



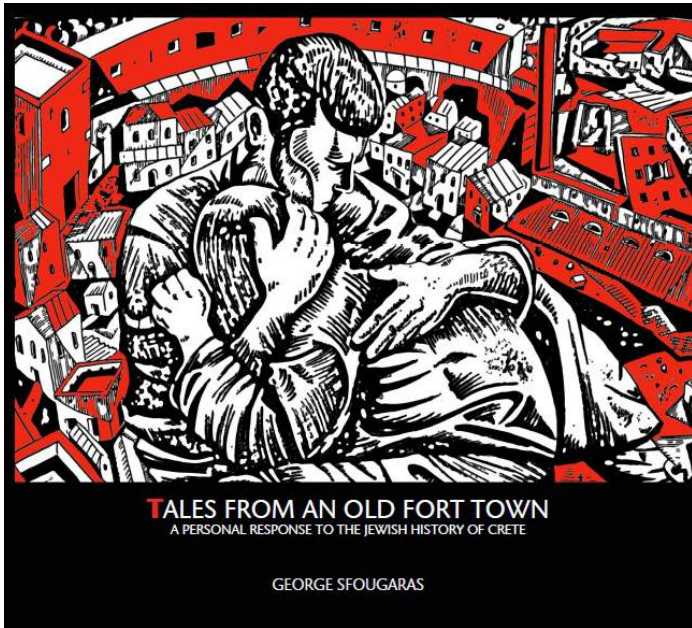


Press, Athens. We thank the publisher, John Chapple, very much indeed for invaluable assistance in making this publication possible. George also kindly offered to make 50 prints of the drawings on heritage archival paper which will be available for purchase in a fundraising effort in support of Etz Hayyim Synagogue.

Already in May, George's artwork was displayed during the seminar Etz Hayyim co-hosted with the Jewish Museum of Greece for local educators (see p. 8ff.) and we

are considering ways to include it in our educational outreach program as a means to approach the fate of the Cretan community about whom we unfortunately we have only quite limited historical resources.

***The opening of the exhibition will take place on 24 October at 7pm. Free admission. The exhibition will be open throughout the year during the opening hours of the synagogue.***



## Meet the Etz Hayyim Team

*Many of you have been receiving emails from the Synagogue office signed by "the Etz Hayyim team" and might have wondered who is "hiding" behind that phrase. The team includes Marianna Vinther, the President of the Board of Trustees of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim, the Administrative Director Anja Zuckmantel as*

*well as historian Katerina Anagnostaki and archaeologist Alexandra Ariotti. We introduce these team members with a short bio and a personal note below.*

*The team is complemented by our annual Gedenkienst volunteer (see p. 19), the janitor Beznik Seiti and the cleaning lady Garoufalia Stavrou.*

**Katerina Anagnostaki** is a Hania native and a historian with a particular academic interest in contemporary history, specifically World War II, and how people remember this event. She joined the Etz Hayyim team in order to further her research into Greek Jewish history and the small and relatively unknown Jewish communities of islands like Crete. She is now working on a digital map of the historic Jewish quarter of Hania, a project that aims to better understand the pre-war Cretan Jewish population and make that knowledge available for educational purposes.

*In my view, the history of the Jews of Crete enriches our understanding of the past and challenges our certainties about the present.*



**Alexandra Ariotti**, a long-term Australian resident of Hania, has been part of the Etz Hayyim team for four years, making the most of her academic and work experience background which incorporates Middle Eastern and Mediterranean history and archaeology, as well as languages such as Hebrew, Arabic and Greek. In this time, she has enjoyed the opportunity to undertake research into the history of the Cretan Jewish community along with her colleagues, and has also assisted in the preparation of the synagogue's permanent exhibition on Nikos Stavroulakis and the Etz Hayyim reconstruction project currently still on display.

*I especially enjoy talking to Etz Hayyim's many visitors about the synagogue and its unique, moving story because I feel it is an important responsibility to uphold and celebrate the memory of Cretan Jewry, of the life-work of Nikos Stavroulakis and also to play a small part, together with my colleagues, in continuing to help Etz Hayyim thrive as active and vibrant place of "prayer, recollection and reconciliation".*

**Marianne Vinther** is Danish and has lived in Greece for more than thirty years. She studied Modern Greek at Copenhagen University and has worked for Amnesty International and SOS Children's Villages International, among other organisations. She has a daughter and is currently residing in Chania.

*I have been committed to Etz Hayyim for more than ten years. After years of attending lectures and Kabbalat Shabbat services, I volunteered as a guide, secretary, and general all-round help. I was a close friend to Nikos Stavroulakis and from 2013 until 2017 I was the Vice President for Etz Hayyim's Not-for-Profit Corporation. I currently hold the position of President and am responsible for the general running of Etz Hayyim, as well as its ongoing cooperation with KISE.*

**Anja Zuckmantel** is a historian from Germany. Her academic interests focus on the history of Europe and the Middle East with a special emphasis on Jewish history. She has been part of the Etz Hayyim team since 2007, first as guide, librarian and researcher, later as Administrative Director for the Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim since 2014. She is also a member of the "Young Citizens" association in Hania organizing study programs for students and educators from Germany about the impact of the German occupation in World War II on Crete and Greece. She has two daughters and has been living in Hania for more than ten years.

*I had the privilege of working with and learning from Nikos for ten years and could very much identify with his thorough and inclusive approach to history, religion in general and Judaism in particular, which is reflected in the life of Etz Hayyim. Passing on this approach to visitors is a challenging task but very much needed in an increasingly polarized world.*



## Contact us and stay in touch

**Phone:** 0030-28210-86286

**Email:** [info@etz-hayyim-hania.org](mailto:info@etz-hayyim-hania.org)

**Web:** [www.etz-hayyim-hania.org](http://www.etz-hayyim-hania.org)



from left:

Katerina, Anja, Alex, Gedendienst volunteer Maike



## Gedenkdienst News

Oy vey, it's been a year. A year of discussions if most Jews of Galician origin love pickles, if a synagogue would offer shelter from a vampire attack and if barbecuing cats would be considered kosher. Time is flying by and before I could even think about it, my plane ticket towards home was booked.

I firmly believe that for the first time I was exposed to opinions of all kinds and I was more or less forced to deal with all of them as long as they were compatible with the European human rights convention. (Some of them weren't though.) Many projects have been completed and I am more than glad that I had the opportunity to be part of the Etz Hayyim Synagogue for this year but everything has an end and it's time for the "next generation" to rise. I put all my trust and confidence in Maike and I rest assured that she will become an essential part of the synagogue and her ideas will help this place prosper.

I have to thank my colleagues for never limiting me and supporting my ideas by all means, no matter how "unorthodox" they were. Thank you for recognizing my strengths and my weaknesses and thank you for all the advice that helped me realise many projects. Surprisingly enough, it is hard to write these lines as I am fully aware that those will be my last here in *Jottings*. Finding words to say goodbye is something quite delicate: divided between sadness for leaving and in happiness for a new period of my life. I will attend the University of Vienna and study Political Science and History. Unfortunately, I promised Anja to have a PhD before I am 30, so I guess a burnout with 31 would be appropriate. Writing these articles has always been a special pleasure for me. Additionally, I worked on a project about the Mikveh, viewed from a gender and sexuality perspective which required some Talmud study and a confrontation with correlations between gender and religion. Furthermore, we are working on establishing a cooperation with a Jewish museum in Austria but that is still a work in progress.

Christoph Steinberger

the Synagogue with a big cup of coffee in my hands and a bunch of lovely people around me. And that's what coffee and lovely people do – they make you feel welcome, confident and optimistic. After finishing school, I was working for one year to save some money and then started studying History and German to become a teacher. Now being here in Chania doing a Holocaust Memorial Service feels like the best decision I made during the last years. I hope to improve my language skills and to learn some Greek and Hebrew but also to get a better understanding of Jewish culture and historical research. Right now I'm still a bit overwhelmed by all the impressions and the new life routine I'm encountering here – but it is definitely a good kind of overwhelming and I'm beyond excited about all the things that will happen during the following twelve months and the impact they will have on me.

Maike Heinrich



Maike and Christoph in the Etz Hayyim courtyard.

Last week I was waiting completely sleep deprived and nervous at the Viennese airport with my flight to Chania scheduled for 5 am. I didn't have much of an idea what to expect from the following year and myself. Me - being 20, but not really feeling grown-up or ready to manage life on my own. A few hours later I was sitting in

## Jottings

Newsletter of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Hania, Crete

Co-editors of Jottings

Katarina Anagnostaki, Alex Ariotti,

Christoph Steinberger, Marianna Vinther, Anja Zuckmantel

Cover illustration: Nikos Stavroulakis © Etz Hayyim Synagogue



## 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.

### **Help us maintain Etz Hayyim Synagogue**

The structural maintenance of the historic building of Etz Hayyim is an ongoing project. After major renovation works in Spring 2018, in a next step wooden installations like the Ehal, Bima and doors need repair and an air-condition has to be installed to reduce humidity in the building.

### **Help us expand our educational programs**

A solid educational program requires thorough research, development and printing of appropriate materials and qualified staff for implementation. Donations supporting operating costs like staff salaries are therefore very much needed and welcome.



### **Bank Information for Donations**

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

### **Immediate fundraising needs**

In addition to the **maintenance** works, a **large touch-screen** is needed for the educational outreach program to make the digital map of the Hania Jewish quarter available on site to visiting students and tourists. For seminars with students a **small set of affordable tablet computers** would allow us to integrate digital sources in the educational seminars.

The **synagogue office** needs a new set of **office chairs** for the increased staff and the almost ten year old **printer and scanner** need to be replaced. 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 will receive a donation receipt from the Synagogue office. There is also the possibility to make tax-deductible donations in the USA (see info below).

You can also make **purchases by way of donation** from our special publications (Interfaith Calendar, Etz Hayyim Haggadah etc.), our collection of Judaica (locally made Kiddush and Sarena cups, handmade kippoth etc.) or books on Greek Jewish topics in the broadest sense including Nikos Stavroulakis' *Cookbook of the Jews of Greece*.

... and you are of course always welcome to **visit** Etz Hayyim and leave a donation in the Tzedakah bottle.

### **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*.

Any check should be made out to FJC, with "Not-for-Profit Corporation Etz Hayyim" in the memo line and mailed to FJC's office at:

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

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