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OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS:
INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL JEWISH LIFE IN THE
GREEK PROVINCES BEFORE AND AFTER THE HOLOCAUST
(1913-1983)

by
Joshua Eli Plaut

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

February, 1986
Adar I, 5746

Referee
Dr. Jonathan Sarna

To the Memory of My Abba

Rabbi Walter H. Plaut ^{Sh}

&

To Three Women of Valor

My beloved Imma, whose smile and kindness forever inspire me

Sabta Nechama ^{Sh} , my special friend and teacher

Sabta Selma, who has always shared the wisdom of her years

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a labor of love. My research has taken years. I would like to thank those wonderful friends who have helped me shape my thoughts and words over the years. As thesis advisor, Dr. Jonathan Sarna has shared fine scholarly insights and provided a keen analysis of the work in progress. He is a brilliant teacher and friend. Dr. Steven Bowman's true expertise in the field of modern Greek-Jewish studies was invaluable as I proceeded with the research. His unselfish time commitment and critical analysis of the materials are deeply appreciated. Dr. Steven Stern of Los Angeles has been a constant source of inspiration, helping this project to grow and blossom.

My brother Yehudah spent many weeks with me in the Greek provinces as a fellow field-researcher and polished French translator. Brother Carmi always offered his words of wisdom when they were most needed. My good friend Barry Gruber spent many tedious hours transcribing the taped interviews and sharing his good humor.

The field research I conducted in Greece in 1983 was made possible in part through a fellowship grant provided by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture of New York.

The final editors of this thesis were David Kudan, Steve Leder, and Sarah Tanzer. Theirs was a thankless task well done. These friends have been a source of moral support and sustenance during the most difficult moments of the writing process. To Barbara Abrams, Peppy and Uri Goren, Joe Black, Scott Looper, and Betsy Goldsmith Leder--I thank you for being with me in times of need.

This thesis is a tribute to the Greek-Jewish holocaust victims and survivors. I am grateful to all those Greek Jews whom I have met in the years of roaming around the Greek provinces. More than teaching me their history, they have shown me how a proud people endures.

DIGEST

This is a study of post-holocaust Jewish survival in the Greek provinces. Jewish civilization evolved and flourished for 2,500 years in the Balkan peninsula. But since the Nazi murder of eighty-nine percent of Greek Jewry during the years 1941-1944, Jewish community life in the Greek provinces has been in a state of perpetual crisis. Whereas most historical accounts of the Jewish presence in the Balkan peninsula concentrate on the years prior to the end of World War Two, this thesis examines the period that followed the destruction brought on by the holocaust (1956-1983). Greek-Jewish identity and community life underwent changes in this period because of the decrease in Jewish population and the destruction of the communities.

The provincial Jewish communities in the northern and central parts of the Balkan peninsula had different cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions. These communities were situated in towns along the main trade route from Istanbul to Italy. When the modern boundaries of Greece took final shape in 1913, the Spanolit and French speaking Ottoman Jews living in Macedonia and Thrace were incorporated into a state which had mostly Greek-speaking Jews. The domestic policies of the period up until World War Two were aimed at uniting the Greek people around a common national heritage. The kind of Greek national identity that

was shaped in the school, army, and work place exerted conformity pressures upon Greek Jews who were accustomed to speaking many different languages, attending Jewish schools, praying in synagogues, and commanding a powerful role in the country's economy.

The hellenization of the Greek Jews in the provinces continued until the Axis powers invaded Greece in 1940. The holocaust followed, and then from 1944 to 1955 a period of physical rehabilitation prevailed for the Greek Jews remaining in the provinces. Surviving Jews set out to improve their physical well-being, by regaining their health, homes, shops and reestablishing new families. Once individual needs were partially satisfied, national and foreign Jewish organizations tried to revive Jewish communal and religious life.

The Jews in the provinces have struggled to survive for the last thirty years. The holocaust events challenged the survivors' inherited traditional values and eroded the distinctiveness and self-sufficiency of their small communities. The small Greek-Jewish communities' existing social order deteriorated and caused a new period of adaptation in which communal autonomy was largely replaced by dependency on central organizational networks in Athens.

IV

Changes in religious, educational, and occupational traditions are now shaping the post-holocaust experience of Jews in the provinces. Declining affiliation with Jewish educational and religious institutions has increased the importance of informal Jewish socialization patterns such as family gatherings, visitation, and travel to other Greek Jewish communities and to Israel. Religious identification has been displaced by a new Zionist consciousness among Greek Jews of all ages.

Even as their numbers continue to decrease, the Jews in the Greek provinces maintain a spiritual bond with their history, family, and Israel. Jewish continuity in the provinces now depends on the children of holocaust survivors. They are the ones who will determine the future of Jewish life in the Greek provinces.

G·R·E·E·C·E



INTRODUCTION:

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION WE SHALL DECLARE YOUR GREATNESS

Almost 500 years ago Isaac Ashkenazi's ancestors left Spain as exiles and found a haven in a Thracian town called Didimotiko, in the heartlands of the Ottoman empire. Today this market town sits in a lush, green valley, through which the calm Evros river flows. Four hours to the east lies Istanbul, former imperial capital of the Ottoman empire, while five hours west is the bustling port of Salonika. The Evros river has formed the boundary between Greece and Turkey since 1923, placing Didimotiko inside Greece, a mere kilometer from Turkey and twenty-three kilometers from Bulgaria. Five hundred years after his family first came to Didimotiko, Isaac and the other three remaining Jews are considering leaving this home of so many years to join their children who reside in Salonika.

There is no Jewish community left in Didimotiko. Isaac carefully guards a reminder of the tragedy that befell his fellow Jews. Inside his store, behind the neatly stacked bolts of cloth and fabric, he keeps two precious books in a safe. One book is entitled How We Saw Death, the other The Third Reich and the Jews; these books serve as a testament to Isaac that before the Bulgarians deported the Jews of Didimotiko on May 16, 1943 a flourishing Jewish community existed. Frustrated and angry at the prospect of leaving

his home forever, Isaac remains helpless in the face of a powerful force which motivates small-town Jews to migrate to urban centers. Today Didimotiko is but one of many Greek and Turkish Jewish communities struggling unsuccessfully to maintain its age-old existence. Many Jews like Isaac and his family live the drama of being the last generation of Jews to remain in the Greek and Turkish provincial towns.

The presence of Jews in Greece extends back at least two thousand years. The book of Isaiah (24:15) mentions the "isles of the sea," perhaps, a reference to Jews who inhabited the Greek Isles. Jews have resided in organized Jewish communities in the Balkan peninsula during the Greek, Byzantine, Ottoman, and modern Greek periods, . Many of the Jews living in the land of Judea during the Babylonian, Greek, and Roman conquests were exiled to Greece where they came to be known as Romaniot Jews. Although these Jews acculturated with great ease, assuming Greek family names and customs, and introducing Greek words into their prayers, they remained loyal followers of the Jewish religion. When Byzantium fell into the hands of the Turkish Moslems in 1453, a new golden age began for the Balkan Jews. On March 31, 1492 the Catholic monarchs of Spain expelled the Jews from their dominion. Over 100,000 Sephardi Jews sailed eastward to seek haven in the Ottoman empire. In 1493 the State of Apulia in Southern Italy also forced its Jewish

inhabitants to leave; they moved to the Venetian-governed Ionian Isles and the adjacent mainland.

Over the next 450 years, these Sephardi Jews in the Balkan region developed one of the longest golden eras of Jewish religious and cultural creativity. The Balkan Jewish communities thrived during these years because Ottoman Turkey was tolerant of Jews and other minority subjects. The Ottomans organized the minority inhabitants of the empire into administrative units known as millets. The millet system allowed each community a degree of legal autonomy and authority. The communal framework of each millet was based firstly on religion and secondly on ethnicity. Language served as the means of communication and as the distinguishing mark of ethnic divisions.¹

The millet subjects, who were known as dhimmis, were separated from the Moslem majority in many ways. They wore cloaks and headgear of different colors to symbolize their inferior social standing. They even used different animal mounts and saddles.² Dhimmis were never restricted to live in a certain neighborhood or work in a particular profession. Nevertheless, the dhimmis tended to concentrate in certain professions, and to live in their own quarters. The self-image of the Ottoman Jews was that of a confident community. The words of Henry Benezra, a Jew born in Ottoman Turkey in 1899, convey the sense of freedom which the Jews enjoyed even in the twilight years of the empire:

Turkey was a tolerant country because it had a millet system. Every ethnic group had its own representatives in the government. Each group lived in their own quarters and had the freedom to use their own language, their own newspapers, their own schools.³

The protected status of many Balkan Jews living under Ottoman rule gradually came to an end as Greek territorial sovereignty replaced Turkish rule. The absorption of Ottoman Jews into Greece first began with Greece's independence in 1823 and it ended in 1913, when as a result of the Second Balkan War Greece's modern boundaries were established. Since 1913 those Jewish communities falling under Greek sovereignty began to experience a series of crises, the most devastating of which came in 1943-1944 as part of the Nazi assault on the Jews of Europe. The deportations that followed the German occupation of Greece nearly wiped out its entire Jewish population. Close to eighty-nine percent of the Jewish population--65,000 people--were murdered.

At the end of the Second World War surviving Jews returned to their home towns from concentration camps and hiding places in the mountains. These Jews tried to reestablish themselves and their Jewish communities. Parallel to their co-survivors throughout Europe, displaced Greek Jews returned to their native towns to find their homes occupied by neighbors, their businesses taken over by strangers, and their Jewish communal and private property

desecrated and neglected. The life of the returning and remaining Greek Jews is thus a story of a struggle to survive.

In this thesis I will address the issue of postwar Jewish survival in the Greek provinces. I will concentrate on the shifting patterns of Greek-Jewish identification as the Greek Jews have responded to the demographic changes that have occurred since the holocaust. Ritual observance, Jewish organizational involvement, and attitudes about Israel will constitute some of the measures which are used to describe how Jewishly-oriented Greek Jews are. Identifying which Jewish rituals, activities, and beliefs are transmitted to future generations of Greek Jews will promote a better understanding of the surviving communities. While this study of survival and survivors will be confined to Greek Jews, it may suggest the essential conditions and patterns of Jewish behavior which influence small-town Jewish community survival anywhere in the diaspora.

The time period of this study is 1913-1983. While there are many studies of the pre-World War Two Greek-Jewish communities, few have followed their demise as a result of the holocaust. The study is divided into three historical periods: 1913-1935, 1936-1955, and 1956-1983. The first period begins with the year 1913, when the Second Balkan War ended and the present day boundaries of Greece were established (since then the only minor border adjustments to

occur was in 1947 when the Dodecanese Isles passed from Italian to Greek rule). Chapters one and two address the years 1913-1935, a period in which the Greek Jews were subjected to various national efforts to unify and hellenize the entire Greek population. Chapter three covers the period 1936-1956, an age of domestic fascism, Nazism, and civil war. Chapter four spans the years 1956-1983, the post-World War Two era characterized by the reconstruction of Greece and the rehabilitation of its citizens.

Each chapter covers a historical period as it relates to the experiences and attitudes of the provincial Greek Jews growing up at that time. Changes and continuities in Jewish identification occurred from one generation to the next. An understanding of what has been preserved or changed in an individual's Jewish identification over successive generations will help explain the on-going survival pressures facing the provincial Greek-Jewish communities from 1913 to the present.

The constant change and upheaval during these periods deeply affected provincial Greek Jews. For the first time in 400 years many of these Jews began to leave their small home-towns to seek stability in larger Greek cities or overseas. The small Jewish communities in Crete, Zante, Patras, Preveza, Arta, Florina, Soufli, Xanthi, Komotini, Alexandropolous, and New Orestias disintegrated and have all

but disappeared. Extinction now threatens the few remaining provincial Jewish communities.

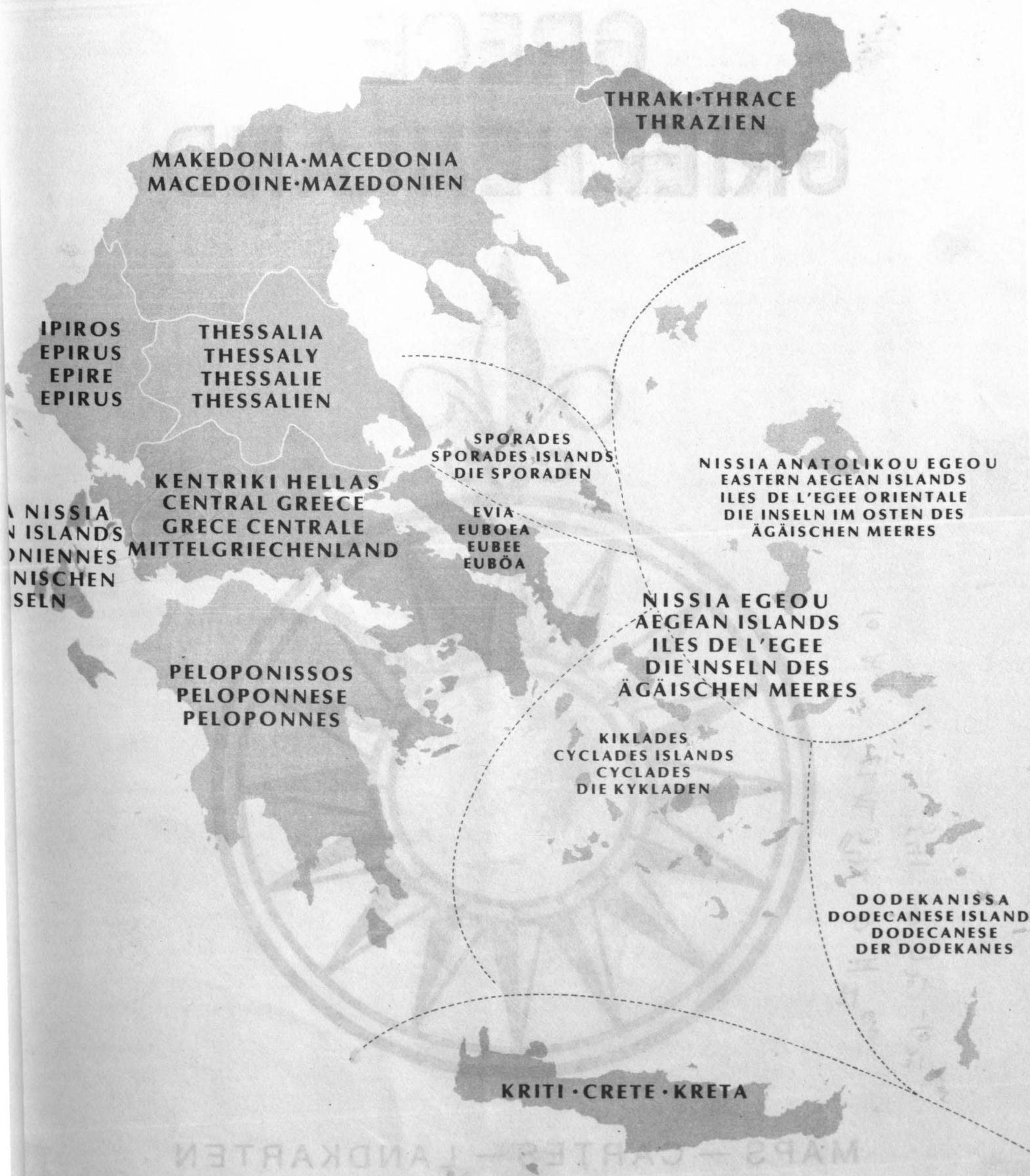
I embarked on a journey in the summer of 1982 to interview those Greek Jews residing outside the main Jewish centers of Athens and Salonika, people scattered in the countryside of central and northern Greece. I felt an urgency to document the fading remnants of communities which have left few written historical accounts. For three months I sought out the Jews in the Greek provinces, visiting seven cities--Didimotiko, Kavalla, Drama, Serres, Veroia, Kastoria, Karditsa--in which fewer than eight Jews reside. I learned why these Jews continue to reside there in the absence of a strong Jewish community and how they manage to express their Jewishness against great odds.

In addition to observing individuals' Jewish behavior where organized communities no longer flourish, I studied the seven remaining provincial Jewish communities in Trikala, Volos, Larissa, Chalkis, Ioannina, Corfu, and Rhodes--cities with 34 to 320 Jews in residence. I compared isolated Jews with those who were members of functioning Jewish communities. In many of these places I lived near the community members for seven to ten days, staying in pensions often located in the cities' old Jewish quarter. Greek Jews welcomed me into their homes for meals and I dropped by their shops for conversation over cups of Greek coffee. I visited the synagogue, graveyard, neighborhood, and any

other remaining Jewish landmarks in each city, meeting as many of the Jewish residents as possible in order to record first-hand how Jews in the provinces express and practice their Jewishness. These people spoke to me about the significance of the holocaust and the burden of the past, the younger generation's dilemmas, the balance between religious observance and secular life, the State of Israel and trauma of anti-Semitism, and the future of their Jewish communities.

This study uses anthropological and folkloristic methodologies to organize and analyze the subject matter. Accordingly, Jewish survival is examined in terms of people's religious, occupational, and educational experiences. As often as possible I have included comments made by Greek Jews in interviews and conversations, which I have translated and edited to give a flavor of their dramatic expression. I sifted through 500 pages of fieldnotes and 50 hours of tape-recordings. Selections from my own interviews appear in the body of this thesis as unattributed sources. Including direct narratives in this thesis gives the reader a sense of participation and allows the emotions and frustrations felt by Greek Jews to emerge in their fullness and distinctiveness.⁴ Through the voices of these people the reader will meet the remaining Jews scattered in the Greek countryside. What develops is a picture of people who despite their dwindling numbers are

proud of their continued Jewish identification and representation of Jewish culture and religion in the small towns. The Jews in these towns trace their family histories as far back as the Spanish and Italian expulsions. Some even claim that their ancestors arrived in the Balkans during the time of Alexander the Great.⁵ Today the Greek Jews' survival as a Jewish entity is in constant danger due to the many changes in their religious, occupational and family traditions; changes which have reshaped their lives in the provinces since the holocaust. There is a very human account of the struggle to maintain a Jewish way of life in the holocaust's wake.



CHAPTER ONE:

OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS: THE BALKAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES

A friend of Mordecai Osmo calls him an "etz"; he is a "tree" with deep roots planted on the isle of Corfu. His parents were born there. So were his grandparents and great grandparents. At the turn of the century 4,000 Jews were living on Corfu, a place Mordecai and his ancestors have always considered home. Just as Mordecai is a tree, so too is each Jewish community a cluster of trees and forests with deep roots spreading out over many generations. And just as each cluster of trees grows differently in varying climates and terrains, so too is each Jewish community affected by the environment in which it is planted.

All over Greece Jews like Mordecai Osmo feel a deep attachment to age-old family abodes. Jewish communities like the one in Corfu once flourished in all the Greek provinces but today they struggle to survive. At the turn of this century each community had its own thriving Jewish neighborhood, school, and communal institutions. While these communities often had similar communal organizations and religious institutions, there were linguistic, cultural, and historical differences between them which grew out of the regional variations which characterized Greece before

1913. The regionalization of Greece influenced the development of Jewish cultural and religious life. Following the conquest and incorporation of new regions into Greece attempts were made to unify the people of the country and alter the prevailing regional identifications. An examination of the hellenization policies enforced by the various Greek governments reveals what it was like for Mordecai Osmo's generation to grow up in the provincial Jewish communities between the years 1913-1935.

As the political winds of change were blowing throughout the Balkan lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Jews in this region were caught in the middle of the storm. Ottoman Turkey was facing assault on all sides. As the empire crumbled, most of its territories fell into the hands of other states. Ever since ancient times Greece had been divided into regional areas and this pattern has persisted during the last few centuries when the Byzantine church and the Ottoman Turks exerted a strong influence over the Macedonian and Thracian regions, while the classical European influence was felt in the central and southern regions. Until 1913 the geo-political map of the Balkans reflected this clear division between the Turkish and Greek-Byzantine spheres of cultural influence.

The Christian population of the Ottoman empire turned restive during the early years of the eighteenth century, and the influence of European ideas and commerce compounded

this threat to Ottoman society. By 1830 most European nations had recognized Greece's independence and in 1858 England ceded its control over the Ionian Isles. The new Greek kingdom embarked on a campaign to reconquer territories aligned with Greece and slowly occupied one region after another. With the signing of the Berlin pact in 1878, Thessaly province, recently invaded by the Greek army, was awarded to Greece. Crete became a part of Greece in 1912, the same year in which Macedonia, most of Epirus, and all the Aegean Isles, except the Dodecanese, joined Greece.⁶ The Greek takeover of Salonika in 1912 (a city affectionately known among its Jewish residents as "a mother city in Israel--Ir ve-Em be-Yisrael) proved to be a crucial turning point for the Balkan Jewish communities. Salonika, once the natural economic center for the hinterland of the Ottoman Balkans, became a northeastern outpost of the Greek kingdom.⁷ The 1923 Lausanne Pact awarded most of Thrace to Greece. As the new Greek State grew in size, the large population of Jews that it had absorbed dwindled in size through emigration to Palestine, France, and America, and the flourishing Jewish communities began to deteriorate.

Even after the final territorial expansion of Greece following the Second Balkan War of 1913, the Greek people continued to align themselves along regional lines in questions relating to a monarchial or republican form of government, metropolis or village living, the adoption of a

particular Greek dialect, and whether to migrate to urban centers or emigrate overseas. The complex ethnic distinctions in modern Greece followed the provincial boundaries of Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Attika, the Peloponnesus, and the various clusters of isles.

As was customary for all Greek towns and regions, every Jewish community had a unique identity, as well as a particular regional identity. Regional and geopolitical demarcations characterized the provincial Greek-Jewish communities to the extent that a Jewish person from Ioannina would gladly identify him or herself as a Ioanniotis, a native of Ioannina. This same person would also consider him or herself a resident of Epirus province.

Distinctions between the various Jewish communities date back to the time when new Sephardi immigrants arriving in the Ottoman empire referred to the local Greek Jews with the Hebrew designation toshavim, natives, or with the less complimentary Spaniolit term Gregos, Greeks. The Gregos spoke of their newly-arrived brethren as megorashim, the expelled ones.

Differences in Balkan Jewish identity emerged, depending on whether people grew up under the influence of the Ottoman or Greek cultural milieu. Jewish communities which were under Ottoman Turkish rule until 1912 generally stood out among the Christian and Moslem populations. Ottoman Jews boasted a stable economic posture, a rich religious and

cultural heritage, and outstanding communal leadership. The Jews living under Greek rule in the South were more integrated into the general community, especially since they spoke Greek as their everyday language. In Chalkis, Ioannina, Trikala, Volos, Larissa, Veria, Kastoria, and the isles, good relations prevailed between Greeks and Jews until the rise of Greek nationalism and irredentism in the late nineteenth century, developments which were accompanied by anti-Semitic incidents. Greek Jews in these places depended more on their Christian neighbors. Unlike the successful and wealthy Ottoman Jews in Thrace and Macedonia, those Jews who inhabited Greece worked in simple trades, earning meager livings as merchants and craftsmen; they did not stand out enough in their regions' economic life and, thus, did not arouse the jealousy of their neighbors. The Jewish communities in Greece suffered from poor leadership and relied upon the social and religious culture emanating from Salonika. One journalist writing at this time describes the distinctive Jewish flavor of Old and New Greece:

In Old Greece, the Jews speak and read Greek and are assimilated to Greek culture. In addition, they speak French. In New Greece, however, the Jews are not yet Hellenized; their knowledge of Greek is inconsiderable, especially in Saloniki. French and Spaniolit (the old Mediterranean Sephardic dialect) are still the languages of ordinary intercourse.⁸

Linguistic differences had repercussions on the whole array of Jewish cultural expressions. Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Ottoman Turks all had a distinctive liturgical language. The spoken language was primarily a vehicle for communication between Balkan peoples, not a means of distinguishing them from each other; in the nineteenth century language began the other purpose. This held true for the Balkan Jews as well. Most Macedonian and Thracian Jews learned Greek, French, and Hebrew in school but spoke Spaniolit at home and in the market place. Spanolit was used for traditional piyyutim (religious poems) retained from the days of the Spanish expulsion which were recited and sung in the kehal (the synagogue), and for the romancero and cancionero folk ballads sung by Jewish women in their homes. A minority of Jews in Old Greece, especially those in Larissa, Trikala, and Volos spoke Spanolit at home, but most Jews conversed in Greek at home and in the work place and uttered many prayers in Greek as part of their Romaniot liturgy. Corfu's Jews conversed mostly in Italian but also knew Greek. They spoke a local Judeo-Italian patios known as Corfuoite. Greek ^{language} songs and synagogue hymns were prevalent in Corfu until the end of the nineteenth century.⁹ Regardless of region, Hebrew remained the language of synagogue ritual for all the Balkan Jews.

These and other regional and historical distinctions in the religious and cultural customs and languages of each

community did not erect barriers between the dispersed Jewish communities. Both within and between regions the Balkan Jewish communities were linked together in a web of economic and Jewish cultural networks. The Jewish communities were originally established and located in cities along the principal trade routes. Through the stability of trade, Jewish communities in inland centers and in seaports, thus, maintained the continuity of their settlements.

Ottoman registers from the seventeenth century, as well as Byzantine and Serbian sources indicate that Jewish settlements existed in the fourteenth century in all the heavily-populated areas of Thrace and Macedonia.¹⁰ The old Roman road, the Via Egnatia, extended from Dryrachium to Constantinople, passing through Adrianople, Didimotiko, Seres, Salonika, Veroia, Kastoria, south to Ioannina, from where the trade nexus branched southeast to Trikala, Larissa, Volos, Chalkis and Athens and westward to Igomenitsa, Corfu, and Italy. Old Jewish communities existed on Chios, Cos, Rhodes, and Crete; these isles were flourishing commercial centers. Over the years as cities, regions, and groups of isles passed into the custody of new states, the Balkan Jewish communities along the land and sea trade routes continued to prosper, often in direct relationship to the prevailing political and economic climate.

The largest Jewish settlements tended to gravitate towards government, trade, and administrative centers. Urban Jews would often maintain commercial contact with co-religionists residing elsewhere in the province and even across international borders. Temporary visits to the provinces by Jewish traders and religious authorities eventually led to the establishment of permanent Jewish settlements. Jewish industrialists obtained raw materials from the countryside; each year wool was purchased for the different branches of the textile industry. Wine, dairy, and tobacco merchants going to the countryside were accompanied by special rabbinical supervisors who oversaw kashrut standards and collected taxes for the Jewish community. During the harvest season rabbis went with their students to check the kashrut standards of the wheat crop intended for Passover matsot. Ritual slaughterers and cantors were brought to the small towns to serve the religious needs of the traveling Jewish merchants. Small and outlying Jewish communities were gradually organized by the Jewish merchants who came from nearby urban centers. In this way Veroia, Kavalla, Drama, Seres, and Xanthi were founded as provincial Jewish communities. In the beginning, the new Jewish communities maintained constant cultural and religious relations with the adjacent Jewish communities in the metropolitan cities.¹¹

Salonika, for example, served as the mother city for the Macedonian Jewish communities located in Veroia, Kavalla, Seres, and Drama. The scope of Jewish Salonika's outreach to other communities paralleled the administrative territories under Salonika's jurisdiction since the end of the eighteenth century. Salonika's traders and industries extended to Kavalla, Seres and Veroia. The traders bought and sold tobacco, fabric, and woven goods. The Salonika traders hired Kavalla Jews to work in factories and farms; Askenazi and then Sephardi merchants moved to Kavalla with the growth of the local tobacco industry. Religious and cultural ties naturally grew out of these commercial developments. The tobacco concerns established by Salonika Jews in Xanthi and Kavalla prompted rabbis and teachers to move to these towns to serve the religious needs of the resident Jews.

Provincial Jewish communities looked to the larger Jewish population centers for teachers, rabbis, and Spanolit literary materials. The smaller towns were dependent on each other in commercial ties, and this enhanced contact between the various, outlying Jewish communities. While Drama's Jewish merchants carried goods in caravans to Kavalla and other adjacent towns, the small Jewish community of Drama, numbering three hundred eighty Jews in 1904, was dependent on nearby Kavalla's Jewish community. In eastern Macedonia, strong Bulgarian influences were felt in the

Jewish community of Seres, which in many ways was a daughter city of the Jewish community in Sofia, Bulgaria. Located on the trade route between Salonika and Kusta, Seres had a population of 2,000 Jews in 1904. The Jews were active in the wholesale and retail trade of cotton, tobacco, opium, wheat, barley, and manufactured goods. During the Balkan Wars Bulgaria invaded the city, burnt down Jewish houses, the school, and main synagogue. Many Seres Jews were saved by Jewish soldiers who were serving in the Bulgarian army. Some Jews took refuge in Bulgaria while others moved to Drama and Kavalla.¹²

Before the division of Macedonia in 1913, the western Macedonian Jewish communities in Kastoria and Florina maintained close contact with the Jewish community of Monastir. The new Yugoslavian border established in 1913 severed this tie and many Monastir Jews moved to Florina. Kastoria, a city of 1600 Jews in 1904, was situated on the trade route connecting Macedonia with the Danube river countries. Local Jewish merchants achieved a worldwide reputation for their role in the international trade of Kastoria's tobacco and its more famous furs.

Unlike the Jewish settlements of Macedonia, the Jewish communities of Thrace never truly aligned themselves with one metropolitan Jewish center. Komotini acted as a center for the nearby smaller Jewish communities in Soufli and Xanthi. The Jews of Soufli were active in the silk trade,

while the Jews of Xanthi worked in a tobacco business operated by the revered Kavalla Jewish writer and Zionist, Yehudah Perahia. The small communities in Alexandropolis and Nea Orestias maintained contact with the larger Jewish community situated in Didimotiko, which in turn aligned itself with the communities in Adrianople and Istanbul, a connection that persisted even after the new Turkish border separated them in 1923.

Though most of the Jews in Epirus province resided in the ancient Romaniote community of Ioannina, they maintained close contact with sister communities in Arta and Perveza. Marriages occurred between Jews who resided in adjoining communities. Ioannina's Jews married co-religionists from Corfu, Arta, Preveza, as well as from Trikala, the closest Jewish community in neighboring Thessaly province. Learned Jews from Salonika, Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron corresponded with Ioannina's Rabbis on religious matters. These communities were connected in other ways. Messengers travelling between the Jewish communities of Corfu and Palestine continuously passed through Arta, a town which had 300 resident Jews in 1904. The Jewish community of Preveza, situated 51 kilometers from Arta and 106 kilometers from Ioannina, was established at the beginning of the twentieth century by Jewish merchants from both these cities. The Preveza synagogue, Tfilat Moshe, was named after a notable Ioannina Jew. Ioannina's Jewish merchants also conducted

commerce with Italian and other European traders. They manufactured scarves, veils, and silver belts which they sold to their Albainian neighbors. Other Jews prospered as goldsmiths, dyers, glaziers, tinsmiths, weavers, painters, and fishermen.

The 6,000 Jews residing on the isle of Corfu maintained a semi-independent Jewish community which was aligned partly with the nearest mainland Jewish community in Ioannina. The Jewish community was also connected by commercial and cultural ties to Italy. The Jewish settlements in Zante and Corfu were under Venetian rule for many years, until the isle of Zante was ceded to Greece. When Greece annexed Corfu in 1858 equal rights were restored to the Jews of that isle. The Corfu Jewish community also maintained frequent contact with the major Jewish centers in North Africa and Palestine. Corfu's community, with its fine Talmud Torah and four synagogues, published prayerbooks and Hagadot which were distributed to distant diaspora Jewish communities.

In Thessaly province, the Jewish settlements of Volos, Larissa, and Trikala were related through trade contacts. They also had similar Jewish organizational and cultural features. After Thessaly became part of Greece in 1882, the Jewish communities in that province began to resemble the other communities already in Greece. The Jewish communities in this centrally located region became intermediaries between Jewish communities in Greece and those in Ottoman

Turkey. Thessaly's Jewish communities slowly came under the influence of Salonika and eventually imitated its Sephardi cultural and religious life.

Larissa, the largest city in Thessaly, served as a Jewish center for the smaller Jewish communities of Trikala and Volos. It stood at a crossroads between Macedonia's cities, Epirus province, and the cities in southern Greece. Epirus and Thessaly were connected by one road which led from Trikala to Ioannina. The geographic proximity of these two cities often led to arranged marriages between the Jews of Epirus and Thessaly. The Jewish community of Karditsa, situated twenty kilometers south of Trikala, never had any communal institutions of its own; it has always used the synagogue, graveyard, and Jewish school facilities in Trikala.

Larissa's Jews specialized in the silk, weavings, olive oil, leather, and sugar trades, and industrial and agricultural goods. Many of Trikala's Jews also worked in weaving. The commercial life of Volos, the principal port city of Thessaly, which attracted Jewish entrepreneurs from all over Thessaly, as well as from Ioannina and Salonika, led to increased cultural contact between these different Jewish communities.

In the province of Central Greece, Jews lived in Athens and Chalkis, and in the Peloponnesus peninsula Jews resided in the town of Patras; in all of these places Jews

maintained autonomous and self-sufficient Jewish communities. Following the 1912 Balkan war Athens enjoyed an economic boom that attracted Jewish merchants and traders. The Greek government first recognized the Athens Jewish community in 1889. After the 1897 Turko-Greek war many Jews fled the Turks and settled in Athens. In 1904, when 300 Jews were living in Athens, the Rothchild family donated money to build the city's first modern synagogue and school. By 1940 the Jewish community of Athens had become a Jewish enclave of 3,500 people. During the holocaust Athens served as a refuge for Jews who fled from the outlying Jewish communities in southern, central, and even northern Greece.

Most of the Peloponnesus Jewish communities (e.g. Nauplion, Mistra, Tripolitsa) were wiped out during the Greek war of independence (1821-1829). Only the community in the northern port city of Patras was reestablished (in 1905). Most of the 40-50 Jews living in the city in 1923 were merchants and commission agents.¹³ Northeast of Athens and at the end of the trade route from Lepantis, Likarda and Thebes was the small Jewish community in Chalkis. During the Greek-Turkish wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Jewish inhabitants of this ancient Romaniot community suffered greatly. Many Jews left Chalkis, (a city once called "Little Zefat") and only a small Jewish presence of 200 Jews remained there in 1904.

CHAPTER TWO:

DWELLING IN THE SHADOW OF NATIONS: THE JEWS AMONG THEIR NEIGHBORS IN GREECE DURING THE YEARS 1913-1935

1. Political Developments in Greece from 1912 to 1935 and their Impact on the Greek-Jewish Community

The Jewish communities were affected by the boundary changes which were taking place throughout the Balkan peninsula as a result of the slow disintegration of the Ottoman empire. The Greek acquisition of Macedonia and Thrace at the end of the Second Balkan War brought together for the first time into one state the 15,000 Hellenized Jews residing in communities under Greek rule prior to 1913 with the 105,000 Sephardi Jews living in communities formerly under Turkish sovereignty. The demise of the Ottoman empire and the absorption of the Ottoman Jews into Greece was accompanied by a reemergence of anti-Semitism. For the first time in centuries Balkan Jews were exposed to outbreaks of mob violence and massacres.¹⁴ The increase in Christian hostility towards the Jews of the empire was linked to the steady advancement of Jews in such key sectors of the Ottoman economy as light industry, exports of agricultural products and raw materials, and imports of manufactured goods.¹⁵ Most disturbances coincided with the approach of a Jewish or Christian holiday, when accusations

of ritual murders were commonplace. During the Easter season Jews were often attacked by mobs.

Violent incidents increased in the new territories taken over by Greece. After Greece assumed control of the Ionian Isles from the British, blood libel riots erupted in 1891, causing many Corfu Jews to immigrate. Over the next 20 years 2,000 Jews from Corfu and Zante emigrated to Italy, Egypt, or Turkey. Anti-Semitic outbursts occurred elsewhere. At the end of the Turko-Greek war of 1897, in which 10,000 Greek Jewish soldiers fought, suspicions quickly arose that the Greek Jews were in league with the Turkish enemy. Consequently, anti-Jewish riots broke out in Volos, Larissa, and Trikala and many Jews fled to Salonika and Smyrna (Izmir), Turkey.

Once the Jews who inhabited central and southern Greece were grouped together with the Ottoman Jews of Macedonia and Thrace into the expanded Greek state, all of these Jewish communities faced the same challenge of adjusting to a new set of domestic policies and constant international tensions. Nationalist currents swept through Greece, Bulgaria, and the fading remnants of the Ottoman empire. Eleftherios Venizelos led a successful revolution against the Greek King in 1906. Soon thereafter, in 1908, the Young Turks Revolt deposed the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul, proposing in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity to bring Turkey into the twentieth century. The Turks

granted general amnesty to the Greeks and Bulgarians in Macedonia, a province that had experienced animosity between these peoples dating back to 1870. For over forty years the Bulgarian Exarchy had challenged the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople's exclusive religious authority over Macedonia's Christians; through its church Bulgaria continuously attempted to wrestle Macedonia away from the Turks.

After Venizelos became Greece's Prime Minister in 1910, he organized a secret alliance uniting Greece with the Balkan states of Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria. In August 1912 these states attacked Turkey, in what came to be known as the First Balkan War. Only a few months after the end of the war against Turkey (in September 1912), Bulgaria began the Second Balkan War, attacking Greece in hope of gaining control over Macedonia. The humiliating defeat that the Greeks inflicted on the Bulgarians led to the mass migration of 15,000 Bulgarians from Macedonia across the border. The treaty of November 1913 awarded Epirus and part of Macedonia to the victorious Greeks. Greece had doubled the size of its territory owing to King Constantine's and Prime Minister Venizelos' outstanding leadership. Economic prosperity and social and cultural progress quickly followed these military successes.

The old hostility which prevailed between the Jews and Greeks in Ottoman society was rekindled when the Greeks

conquered Salonika in November 1912; the Jews could not hide their displeasure at the turn of events. They remembered that since 1860 anti-Semitic incidents occurred more frequently, especially among the Greek-Christian communities of the Ottoman empire. The charge that Jews used human blood for ritual purposes recurred in epidemic proportions; such accusations usually originated among the Christian population and were promoted by the Greek press. Violent outbursts against the Jews almost always followed the contrived accusations.

Despite these developments, the personal security of the Jews was assured. They enjoyed press, speech, and assembly liberties and could therefore protest any violations of their rights. Civil equality was reflected in the Greek Jews' admission to universities and in mandatory army service. Nonetheless, the Jews greeted the new Greek majority rule with great disdain. Jews disliked being recruited into the Greek army; their loyalties remained with the Turks. Siding with the Turks, however, resulted in hostility and persecution. The 1908 Young Turks ban on the Greek shops in Salonika was attributed to the Jews. Anti-Semitic articles appeared in Greek newspapers. Synagogues were broken into and Sifrei Torah, the scrolls of the law, were defiled. The Turks had already appropriated a section of the old Jewish graveyard for a school, and the city of Salonika tried to confiscate the rest of the

graveyard. The Jews' traditional adornment of the fez was already forbidden in the 1880s. Venerable Jewish historical monuments were destroyed, Jewish homes were searched and jewelery was removed from them. Finally, the weekly market held on Monday was transferred to Saturday in order to affront religious Jewish merchants and exclude their participation. The promises made by Venizelos at the 1913 London Peace conference regarding equal rights for the Jews were never implemented. The Jews viewed these attacks upon their rights and liberties as a manifestation of an overall dejudaization policy of Salonika.¹⁶ Though just a young child, Daniel Haguel remembers the mood of the times:

Originally we came from Spain when Queen Isbella threw us out. Before the First World War three-fourths of Thessaloika was Jewish. But when I was a kid, there was some sort of anti-semitism and the Jews saw trouble ahead. Little by little they emigrated.¹⁷

The Greek people were divided into two political groups up until the beginning of World War One: royalists who supported the King and his pro-German stance and republicans who backed Venizelos and his pro-ally views. Most of the royalists, as members of the Greek middle-class, were deeply distrustful of Venizelos' agrarian philosophy. The Greek Jews disliked Venizelos' extreme nationalist and anti-Semitic policies and supported the monarchist party. During the First World War Greek Jews favored the monarchy's

support of the Germans because of the the way in which Russia, an ally power, was oppressing its own Jewish population.

Meanwhile on the domestic front, Venizelos, who accused the Jews of not receiving the Greeks with open arms in 1912, stepped up his campaign to diminish Salonika's Jewish character. In 1916 he led a successful revolution against the monarchy, and soon after, in 1917, he formally brought Greece into the World War. During the course of the First World War the government imposed direct taxation policies with strict collection practices. The Jewish merchants and traders were accustomed to private business conduct under the Turks and they disliked the new state intrusion into their affairs. In turn, many Jews emigrated to Belgrade, Milano, Marseilles, and Lyon, France.

On August 17, 1917 a great fire swept through Salonika, burning to the ground most of the sprawling Jewish quarter. Over 50,000 Jews were left homeless. Thirty-two synagogues and fifty Betal Midrash were destroyed. The day after the fire Prime Minister Venizelos issued a decree which compensated the Jews whose houses were destroyed; this decree prohibited both the reconstruction of the ruins and resettlement in certain sections of Salonika. It was estimated that Salonika's Jews suffered ninety percent of all the property damage from the fire, yet only one-fourth of the damage was paid off by insurance concerns. A

settlement of about 100,000 Anatolian refugees was destroyed. The American Joint Distribution Committee raised funds overseas to assist in the rehabilitation of the large majority of Salonika's Jews. On May 3, 1918 a new state law deprived owners of destroyed real-estate holdings; many of the Jews affected by the fire and this new decree emigrated to the United States, France, Italy, and Egypt.

In retrospect, the Salonika fire destroyed more than Jewish homes and businesses. It left scars on the whole body of Greek Jewry. The fire was a turning point--it became the first of many events which marked the diminishing strength of the Greek Jewish communities.¹⁸ It foreshadowed a more deadly Nazi fire which swept across Europe like a crackling brushfire, killing millions of Jews before it was finally extinguished.

At the end of the First World War (in 1920) elections were held and Venizelos' party was defeated. Most Jews voted for the monarchist party. That summer Venizelos led the army in an attack on Turkey which culminated in the conquest of Andrinople. Turkey's ruler, Kamal Pasa, reacted to the military defeat by expelling over half a million Greeks living in Asia minor. In a period of three months, over 100,000 of these refugees moved to Salonika. Greece responded to the expulsion by forcing out the Turks who resided in Greece, as well as 15,000 Muslim Dönmeh. Harry Policar, a Jew growing up at that time on the Isle of

Marmara (situated a short distance from Istanbul), recalls the undercurrents of the war and refugee problem:

We could do what we wanted until the First World War. My grandfather and father were both bakers. During the war they took the Greeks out of Marmara and sent all of them inland because the Greeks were fighting against the Turks at the time, and the Turks felt the Greeks on Marmara might get together with the enemy. With the Greeks gone, Marmara was nothing. We stayed as long as we could. Finally I came to this country (USA) because my father said 'you have to go. There's no future for young boys here.' At that time I was about to be drafted into the Turkish army.¹⁹

The League of Nations tried to turn the refugee expulsions into population exchanges. The final Peace Agreement between Greece and Turkey stipulated a general population exchange. The reciprocal and voluntary emigration of minorities in 1924-1925 culminated the slow political liquidation characterizing the waves of migrating movements after the Balkan Wars.²⁰ There were many Balkan Jews like Harry Policar who migrated to cities or emigrated overseas. In all, a transfer of over two million people occurred between Greece and its two neighbors, Turkey and Bulgaria.

The refugees arriving in Greece suffered from the filth, disease, and mental agony in the transit camps. Yet, these very refugees also provided Greece with a blessing in disguise. The refugees were capable of quickly adjusting to their new lives. They became agents of change and

transformation, tilling the land and increasing agricultural production. The Greek state awarded the refugees special rights which allowed them to sell their merchandise in front of Jewish stores and exempted them from normal rent and tax payments. Such measures increased trade competition and displaced many Jews who were employed in commerce, industry, and handicrafts. During the years 1922-1932 Salonika's city governor prohibited Jews from working in the port, the former commercial hub of Salonika's Jewish merchants. Jewish peddlers, push-cart operators, and fishermen could no longer work in the port area; they were released from their jobs with compensation and replaced by refugee workers.²¹

The Jewish condition worsened as political strife continued to plague Greece throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1923 Venizelos and his party forced King George to resign. In preparation for the December 15th election a special voting amendment was enforced against the Jews to reduce their impact as a voting bloc. The Greek Jews were denied equal voting rights and were allowed to choose only two representatives from appointed districts, a restriction that remained effective until 1934. On March 25, 1924 Venizelos was declared the election winner and he immediately pronounced Greece a republic.

The republican years, 1924-1934, were marked by new decrees and laws which increased discrimination against the Jews. Newspapers spread anti-Jewish propaganda. A Sunday-

closing law was enacted as a measure of economic protection for the Christian majority. Consequently, Jews had to close their stores on Sunday. Jews could no longer print Hebrew or Spanolit lettering on their store signs. Property was expropriated from Jews and the ancient Salonika Jewish graveyard was desecrated. It has been estimated that between the years 1918 and 1932 the Salonika Jewish community lost three-fourths of its communal property.²²

With the establishment in 1930 of an anti-Semitic group called the National Association of Greece (Ethniki Enosis Ellados--the E.E.E.), the Greek Jewish communities became a target for many fascist assaults. In April, 1930 a Kavalla Jew was falsely charged with ritual murder. The person was found innocent, but only after Jewish shops had been attacked and the entire Kavalla Jewish community terrorized. In 1931 and again in February, 1934 anti-Semitic propaganda circulated during the Salonika elections. The Campbell riots erupted on June 23, 1931; two hundred fifty Jewish families were attacked and their homes were set on fire. Shortly after the riots the Recanati family organized an exodus to Palestine of most of the Jews living in the Campbell neighborhood.

In June 1934 the Jews of Kastoria were victimized.²³ It was only after the 1935 elections in which King George returned to govern the country that the new Prime Minister outlawed fascist and anti-Semitic groups. John Metaxas'

overthrow of the government in 1936 made the Jews feel more secure of their place in Greek society. But the domestic tranquility only lasted a few years. The Nazis had evil designs on all the Jews of Europe.

2. Greek-Jewish Life During the Years 1913-1935

Isaac Ashkenazi was born at a crossroads in history. The final years of the Ottoman empire were the beginning of a new era marked by different national liberation movements each seeking political independence for their own ethnic-religious group. Two years into Isaac's life the decisive Balkan Wars were fought. Isaac's home-town of Didimotiko was briefly occupied by the Bulgarians, and a year later, in 1914, it became a part of the expanding Greek State. There were 900 Jews who lived in Didimotiko at that time, out of a total population of 12,000. The majority group in the town were Greeks, followed in size by Turks, Jews, and Armenians. The Turks toiled in agriculture, the Armenians worked as laborers, the Jews served as business people, and the Greeks were employed in every sector of the market place. Good relations prevailed among all of Didimotiko's residents. Nonetheless, growing up in the early years of the expanded Greek state presented Jewish youth like Isaac with the challenge of remaining Jewish inspite of organized national efforts to strip ethnic minority peoples of their unique cultural identities.

Isaac's generation of Greek Jews formed their Jewish identifications in a period characterized by intensive government policies to hellenize all the residents of Greece. From the early years of the enlarged Greek state until the rise of Mextaxas fascist dictatorship in 1936, the campaign to unify the people around one shared Greek Orthodox heritage left its mark on Isaac's generation of Jews.

Numerous obstacles threatened the Greek Jews' traditonal way of life. Issues related to migration, employment, schooling, and the legal status of the Jewish community concerned the Jewish generation growing up in this period. Problems arose for Jewish schools which had to alter their curricula to satisfy the state's appetite for Greek cultural nourishment. The organized Greek-Jewish community was redefined and changes occurred in the languages spoken and studied by Jews. Jewish merchants and businesses faced new and shrewd commercial competition from a swelling tide of Anatolian refugees whose presence caused the introduction of unfavorable trade laws. In reaction to these discriminatory laws, the Alliance Israelite Universelle school system trained a generation of Jews for occupations in which they could best compete in the market place. An understanding of all these developments provides insights about what it was like to be young and Jewish in the years 1913-1935.

The Legal Status of the Greek-Jewish Communities

For many years, Isaac's right to live as a Jew in an organized Jewish community was never challenged. He grew up in the Jewish quarter of Didimotiko. In any city where Jews settled during the Ottoman and Modern Greek period, they lived together in a neighborhood publicly known as the *Evraiki*-- "The Jewry" or "Jewish Quarter." In cities situated by the sea, the *Evraiki* was close to the shoreline, a location which encouraged the Jews' extensive involvement in harbor and commercial activities. Each inland Jewish community was located in the commercial center of the city. Ottoman and modern Greek law never forced the Jews to live or work in a prescribed area. Nonetheless, many Jewish quarters had, and still have a wall surrounding them. Veroia's Jews actually locked the two wooden gates which led into the *Evraiki* every Friday afternoon. In this way they isolated themselves from the commercial activities which took place outside the Jewish quarter on Saturday.

Jews voluntarily lived together in a locality and made it the center of their communal life and institutions. The *Kahal* (the synagogue) occupied a prominent place in the *Evraiki* along with the *Meldar* (study room), Talmud Torah schools, and Alliance Israelite Universelle schools. Each Jewish quarter contained philanthropic organizations, such as a home for the aged, the burial society, charitable, and

Zionist groups. The Jewish graveyard, popularly called the Beit Chaim--the house of the living, stood outside of the Evraiki, on the outskirts of the city. The legal status of the Jewish communities did not change substantially after the Balkan Wars. By the time the Thracian and Macedonian Jewish communities became part of Greece in 1913 they already enjoyed equal rights (appendix 1). The constitutional equality and citizenship enjoyed by the Jews since the days of Greece's independence and the formal recognition of the legal status of the communities in 1882 were extended to include all the new Jewish communities added to Greece after the Balkan Wars. Amendments to the law were gradually made. A 1914 law (#147) recognized the existence of the Jewish communities in the new provinces and gave them the right to organize their religious life, even to the extent of allowing them to invoke the laws of the Shulchan Aruch in cases of marriage (the Shulchan Aruch was translated into Greek by Asher Moises). A 1918 law provided for the appointment of Hebrew teachers in municipal schools with more than ten Jewish students in attendance.

With the signing of public law number 2456 in 1922, King Alexander and the Ministers of Religion and Justice gave expression to the specific character, functions, and authority that the Greek state accorded to the organized Greek-Jewish communities. The law stipulated that a Jewish community could be established in accordance with Greek

royal decree in any place where there were more than twenty families; such a community would be recognized as a legal entity with public rights. The religious leadership of the community was entrusted to a Chief Rabbi, who was elected by a general assembly of Jewish community members. The Chief Rabbi was recognized by royal decree as the Jewish representative before the government authorities for all administrative affairs.

A Jewish community council appointed committees to oversee the purchase and sale of community property and to supervise the religious, educational, and charitable institutions. Greek Jews had the right to collect taxes from members of the community and were allowed to receive donations from abroad. They could also establish schools for Jewish children, providing that Greek language instruction and Hellenic history was included in the curriculum. Public law 2456 allowed Jews to keep their business records in Spanolit or French, and recognized Saturday as the official rest day for the Jews.²⁴ A later amendment to the law in 1932 recognized the following Jewish festivals in addition to the Shabbat as official rest days for the Greek Jews: Yom Kippur and Tisha Ba'Av, and two day holidays for Rosh Hashanah, Shavout, Passover, and Sukkot.

The limits of the Greek-Jewish community autonomy was put to test in 1929 when the Greek Jews tried to organize a federation of the countrywide Greek-Jewish communities. Two

preparatory conferences were held before 1936 to organize the countrywide federation, but the Greek government intervened and opposed the establishment of such a representative body.²⁵ A more threatening challenge to the Greek Jewish community was a new law recognizing Sunday as the mandatory rest day for all peoples in the newly-incorporated provinces of northern Greece. Of all the ethnic groups, this law affected the Greek Jews in particular; they had to reconcile observing Saturday as the Jewish Sabbath while also respecting the municipal ruling to refrain from working on the Christian rest day of Sunday.

The Battle to Save the Jewish Shabbat

More than any other single law or policy, the enforcement of Sunday as the mandatory commercial rest day for Greeks of all cultural and religious persuasions signified to the Jews that overt measures were being taken to completely hellenize Greek society. The law became a turning point in the life of the Greek Jewish community; many Jews perceived it as an attack on their rights and civil liberties. Their common life as a people with a special heritage was increasingly subjected to state cultural, political, and economic influences which exacted conformity by eliminating cultural differences as possible in favor of Greek Orthodox religious and cultural norms.

Saturday was the unofficial rest day of Salonika during Ottoman days; the banks, agricultural market places, factories, most stores, and the port were closed. Greece needed time to solidify its control over the new provinces at the end of the Balkan Wars, while also appeasing the Western European countries and the powerful Salonika Jewish majority. It waited until 1917 to introduce the Sunday closing law to Thrace and Macedonia thereby extending to these areas, and especially to Salonika, a law already enforced in almost all the cities and towns of Old Greece.

The allied forces were still present in Salonika at this time and the Jews, therefore, snubbed the law. It was cancelled by the Venizelos government one day after its introduction. Because the 70,000 Jewish residents of Salonika outnumbered the 40,000 Greeks and 5,000 Bulgarians living in the city, their majority position in the city made it easy for them to force the repeal of a similar law in 1919, just one week after it was proposed. The State issued Sunday closing laws in 1921 for all the Macedonian towns except Salonika. The Jewish community in Kavalla expressed such strong opposition to the law that it was soon nullified. Salonika Jews succeeded in rescinding another law in April, 1922 which intended to harm Jewish traders by changing the market day in the town of Florina from a weekday to Saturday.

As long as Jews were a majority group in Salonika, they were able to muster enough opposition to the Sunday closing laws throughout the northern provinces. A new period began with the resettlement of refugees from Asia minor in Salonika and throughout Macedonia and Thrace. Jews were no longer in a position to bargain; they comprised seventy percent of Salonika's overall population before the influx of Asian refugees in 1924, and only twenty-five percent afterwards. The numerous refugees settling in Salonika quickly changed it from a thriving Jewish enclave into a thoroughly Greek-Christian city. The refugees presented Jewish merchants with formidable competition in the market place. Venizelos took advantage of the demographic shift in Salonika to once more propose in 1922 a public law (number 236) forcing Salonika's residents to refrain from work on Sunday. This time the law was rigidly enforced by Salonika's local authorities.

The Chief Rabbinate, Salonika's Jewish community council, and Jewish newspapers protested the decree. They tried to suspend the law by showing that it was in direct opposition to the Greek Basic Law 180 that was passed in 1914, and concerned the official weekly rest day. The law stated: "cities populated by other religious peoples will by a decree have the right to a rest day other than Sunday." Furthermore, the Greek Jews pointed to section 2466 of a royal decree from April 1923 which stated "the Jews have the

right to rest on Saturday instead of Sunday." The American Joint Distribution Committee appealed to the Geneva-based League of Nations to intervene and suspend the mandatory Sunday closing act. The Greek government retorted that the new Greek law followed the spirit of law number 2990 which was passed by the Third International Labor Conference in Geneva, in which Greece agreed to enact a mandatory Sunday rest day beginning January 1, 1925 in all branches of industry "without any distinction in religion or nationality."²⁶

The efforts to suspend the Sunday closing law failed. The Greek Jews perceived the law as an affirmation of state policy to promote the total hellenization of Greek society--in this instance to rid Salonika of its Jews or, at the very least, to decrease Jewish prominence in the country's commerce. The law presented many Jews with a choice between economic ruin or freedom of religion. Shutting their shops on Saturday, Sunday, and all Jewish holidays would amount to many closing days a year.²⁷ Moreover, the Jews felt a great personal loss in a heritage which long associated their presence in Salonika with the closing of the port and all commercial vendors on the Jewish Shabbat. Those Jews who could not accept working on the Jewish Shabbath emmigrated to Palestine and France, but the majority of Jews remained in Greece^{and} opened their stores on Saturday.²⁸

Jews in the Workplace and Jewish Education in the Years 1913-1935

The Sunday closing law was a measure of economic protection for the non-Jewish majority. In spite of the restraints imposed by this law, Jews as a minority group continued to play as prominent a role in the Greek economy as they had in the Ottoman economy. The Jews worked in every conceivable profession; by the turn of the twentieth century the majority of them were craftsmen and peddlers. Already in the twelfth century Benjamin of Tudela found Jewish craftsmen in Thebes who were masters in preparing silk and purple cloths, already a Greek-Jewish occupation since Roman times. Jews became increasingly involved in the garment industry during the Ottoman period as religious-minded Jews manufactured their own garments to ensure the ritual purity of their clothing. Jews in medieval Byzantium had a monopoly in tanning and hide preparation; they also monopolized the leather, textile, and glass trades.²⁹ Jews remained in these occupations throughout many generations like members of other ethnic groups in Ottoman society who also practiced traditional family occupations.

The economic situation of Ottoman Jews remained generally poor. Jews worked in "despised" occupations, especially in trades which were forbidden to Ottoman Muslims, such as tanners, butchers, and hangmen. Jobs which involved contact with non-Moslems, such as diplomacy,

commerce, banking, brokerage, and espionage, were shunned by Ottoman Moslems and performed by Jews.

The job stability enjoyed by the Jews deteriorated when falling educational standards among the Greek Jews resulted in the loss of useful employment skills. Jews were ousted from their traditional vocations by better-equipped, better-educated, and better-protected Greek Christian competitors. Worsening material and intellectual poverty afflicted the Jewish communities amidst diminishing Jewish participation in Greek society and growing intolerance of Jews.

By the middle of the nineteenth century wealthy West European Jewish philanthropists and the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris responded to hellenization policies by sponsoring a strong drive for educational reform among the Balkan Jews. The private Italian, French, and American schools accomodated only rich Jews of foreign citizenship. The Alliance aimed at bettering the social status of all Jews through cultural and moral elevation, and sought to improve their legal status by securing better and more effective applications of state laws.³⁰ Western European Jews wanted to promote the emancipation of Jewish communities scattered throughout the world, as well as to struggle against discrimination. To achieve these goals the Alliance established a network of sixty schools in the

Ottoman empire, ten of which were founded in Greece through the generosity of Baron Maurice De Hirsch.

The Alliance Israelite Universelle believed that the moral and material progress of Jews in a society was linked to a modern education based on linguistic, scientific, and technical studies. The Alliance schools, therefore, initiated an upward economic and social movement of Jews in Ottoman and Greek society by teaching its pupils new trades and languages. In this manner the Alliance schools in Greece produced a generation of French-educated Jews who were introduced to secular knowledge in the fields of math, physics, history, and geography. The educational upbringing of Henry Benezra was typical of the Turkish and Greek Jewish youth growing up in the early years of the twentieth century:

Everyone had their own schools, their own languages, their own courts. They nationalized the secular schools and put emphasis on the Turkish language. I started in the Talmud Torah. After three or four years I wanted to change schools so I went to the French Jewish school, the Alliance Israelite Universelle. It was a different culture there. No one spoke Ladino, so I had to learn French. After a few months I went to a German school, the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden. This school was a different setup because it was multilingual. The teachers couldn't understand each other. I had a Turkish class, a French class, a German class, and a Hebrew class.³²

The French character of this young generation's education threatened the traditional framework of Jewish community life and was also incompatible with the new nationalist spirit prevailing Greece during the Venezilos republican years.

Jews previously attained their education in Jewish religious institutions like the Meldar(study room) and Talmud Torah schools that were affiliated with the synagogue. The Alliance schools, however, offered an alternative secular education in French which was a decisive factor in obtaining a job with one of the banks or with a company involved in international trade, such as Tobacco Regie.³³ In 1912 Spanolit was still spoken in Salonika's streets, shops, and homes. But French became the most important language spoken by the Jews in the North. Store signs appeared in French and Hebrew. French became the primary language used in businesses, films, accounting records, and advertisements.³⁴

Changes occurred in the occupational status of the new generation of Greek Jews in comparison to previous generations. Occupations most frequently listed in the Alliance school records for parents of children were hawkers, ragmen, tinkers, bootblacks, match vendors and water-carriers.³⁵ Greek Jews educated in Alliance schools acquired new skills and a knowledge of French which helped them become merchants with access not only to European culture but also to European markets. Thanks to fifty years of Alliance activity, a large number of Jews participated

in the economic life of the country until the German occupation of Greece in 1941; they played a commercial role that was disproportionate to their numbers or social status in the general population.³⁶

From 1913 to 1941 many Jews worked as exporters, clerks, factory-owners, and international merchants in the wholesale and retail trade of tobacco, cotton, opium, wheat, barley, and manufactured goods. The Jewish-owned tobacco factories established under the Ottoman Turks in Salonika, Kavalla, Drama, and Xanthi continued to flourish under Greece. Jews bought the plants from farmers, processed, packaged, and supplied them to Italian, Serbian, Romanian, and Austrian tobacco monopolies. In Didimotiko, Seres, Soufli, Veroia, Florina, Kastoria, and Ioannina the silk, woven fabrics, raw metals, machinery, skins, sesame, and cereal production were all concentrated in Jewish hands.³⁷ Jews were represented in the free professions; they worked as doctors, lawyers, architects, journalists, and teachers.

Though most Jews preferred to enter professions involved with trade, Alliance schools also trained apprentices to do manual, vocational, and agricultural work. Alliance records indicate that in Salonika there were 58 apprentices, and in Ioannina there were 5 joiners and 6 smiths-mechanics.³⁷ Students were directed towards crafts with technical skills,

such as carpentry, cabinetwork, dock-mending, jewelery, and electricity. Unlike traditional crafts, all of these trades could lead to positions in light industry.³⁸

Greek Jews continued to work until 1940 in trades which required minimal capital investments such as: grocers, peddlers, butchers, cobblers, hairdressers, mason casemakers, builders, fisherman, painters, glass-cutters, jewelers, joiners, metalsmiths, mechanics, carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, hat-makers, button and ribbon makers, and sewers. Other Jews were employed as seasonal laborers, engaged for the harvest of export products such as grapes, figs, valonia and nuts.³⁹ Many Jewish workers began to organize themselves into proletarian groups, especially those employed in agriculture, spinning mills, and in textile or tobacco factories.

Alliance schools were scattered in five cities; in Seres and Didimotiko (Thrace), in Kavalla and Salonika (Macedonia), and in Ioannina (Epirus). The following chart shows the distribution and size of each Alliance school in the year 1908: 40

Jewish Population	Boys School- Founding Date		Pupils	Girls School- Founding Date		Pupils
<u>Kavalla</u> -	1800	1905	112	1905		127
<u>Didimotiko</u> -	900	1897	182	--mixed school		
<u>Seres</u> -	1200	1901	114	--mixed school		
<u>Ioannina</u> -	3500	1904	413	1904		142
<u>Salonika</u> -	90,000	1873	461	1875		437
		1897	270	1897		225
		1873	461	1875		437

This chart reflects a greater concentration of schools in the northern regions of Greece, areas more traditionally influenced by Ottoman culture. Secular and Jewish studies in these Alliance schools were taught in French. The Alliance organization supported a network of teachers, inspectors, and advisors who concerned themselves not only with education but also with the living conditions of Jews among their neighbors.

In the more hellenic-oriented central and southern provinces of Greece, the Jewish children stood out less than in the North as a result of being educated in Greek schools. These children grew up without strong religious attachments and with minimal knowledge of Jewish history; their Jewish

education was confined to learning prayers from inexperienced teachers one day a week (on Sunday).⁴¹ In the absence of Alliance schools in southern Greece, the Jewish education of the younger generation varied from place to place. Thessaly's Jews had the right from 1882 to establish their own schools. By the beginning of the twentieth century Hebrew language societies were founded in Ioannina and Volos. Many of Larissa's youth studied in the local Talmud Torah but pursued a secular higher education in Athens and Paris.⁴² Jewish children in the city of Preveza attended a secular school in which the four teachers instructed the pupils in Greek, Hebrew, and French. Jewish children reared in Corfu enjoyed a high quality Jewish and Hebrew education due to the presence of outstanding scholars, a highly-esteemed Talmud Torah, and four active synagogues.

The Greek government gave the Jews complete independence to organize communal and Jewish schools. The state even subsidized Jewish religious, educational, and philanthropic institutions. The quality of the Jewish education received by youth growing up after 1913 was, therefore, totally dependent on the presence of an Alliance school, or upon the efforts of each Jewish community to organize its own community school.

The progress of the ten Alliance schools was arrested for the first time in the interwar period, and by 1939 only four Jewish schools remained open in Greece. The crucial threat

to organized Jewish education came in 1930-1935 with a law that forbid children of Greek citizens to attend schools maintained by foreign organizations. No foreign language was to be taught as part of a school curriculum, except Hebrew which was allowed for religious reasons. Alliance schools complied with the new law by merging with local Jewish community schools before 1935. This law affected 1600 Jewish children who attended Alliance schools in which French was the language of instruction. Hebrew, Jewish history, and religion lessons were restricted to twelve hours weekly in the Jewish community schools, because although the teachers were hired by the Jewish community, they were still paid by the State. The State was so eager to reduce cultural differences that it specifically published 5,000 Greek-language school books for Jewish students which were devoid of any Christian religious content.⁴³

By forcing the Greek Jews to integrate into society through language conformity, the state once again tried to restrict the social and economic advancement of Jewish citizens in Greek society. One indication of language conformity was reflected in the decreasing circulation of Spanolit newspapers; whereas 25,000 copies were printed daily in 1932, this number dropped to 6,000 copies in 1940, and by 1941 no Spanolit periodicals were in print.⁴⁴ Many of the disadvantages that Jews encountered in Greek society

were overcome by their knowledge of many languages. Being multilingual gave them an advantage in international commerce. With the closure of Alliance schools, the educational level of Greek Jews diminished and their sense of stability and security in Greek society was once more eroded.

As more Jewish children began to attend Greek secondary schools after 1930, they slowly joined secular youth groups. Increasing socialization with non-Jewish Greeks resulted in more Jews' converting to Christianity in order to get married. Since the State prohibited marriage between people of different religions, one partner had to accept the other person's religion before consummating the marriage. In 1940 the Salonika municipality reiterated that only clergy could perform weddings.⁴⁵ Since intermarriage was in effect against the law, most Greek Jews maintained their unique cultural identity through marriage to a co-religionist.

Emigration: The Jewish Response to Cultural and Economic Restrictions.

The Greek Jews responded to the latest restriction of their cultural freedoms namely, the right to free Jewish schooling, by leaving Greece. Emigration was often the Jews' last resort to avoid further political, cultural and social encroachments on their communal life. The Balkan Wars, conscription of all Greek citizens into the army, the

influx of Anatolian refugees into Greece, and economic hardships were all destabilizing factors which caused Greek Jews to depart for North and South America, France, and Palestine.

Successive waves of emigration followed each political crisis. Jewish refugees left the Balkans every time a new international conflict arose (usually as a consequence of the disintegration of the Ottoman empire) and following each new domestic policy enactment. All Greek citizens became liable for the draft after the Young Turks rebellion of 1908; immediately, close to 8,000 Jews, many of them tobacco workers, left for America.⁴⁶ Many Jews emigrated to Turkey after Macedonia and Thrace were added to Greece in 1913; they were dislodged economically and numerically by the refugees who arrived from Anatolia. A third wave of emigration to France and America took place during the years 1917-1919 and 1922-1929, following the confiscation of Jewish property after the Salonika fire, the population exchange with Turkey, and the Sunday closing law (forcing religious Jews to close shops two days a week--on Saturdays and Sundays). The world economic depression affected various commercial enterprises in Salonika, Seres, Drama, Xanthi, and Didimotiko and a constant stream of emigrant Jews flowed from Greece to France, Italy, Belgium, England, Cuba, South America, and Palestine.⁴⁷

Between 1923 and 1934 a different and massive movement of Greek Jews began, the immigration (aliyah) to Palestine of dedicated Greek-Zionists. As long as Palestine and large areas of the Balkans were under Ottoman rule, it was difficult for Balkan-Zionists to publicly advocate a national homeland. The outburst of Greek, Slavic, and Romainian national feelings prompted Jewish nationalists to abandon underground activities in favor of publicly-organized campaigns to promote the establishment of a Jewish national homeland. The Zionist movement came of age in Greece when the Ottoman Turks relinquished control of Palestine to the British in 1917. Greece's conquest of Thrace and Macedonia in 1913 added 80,000 Jews to the small Greek Jewish populace. Many of these former Ottoman Jews resisted the prospect of long term residence in Greece and joined the Zionist movement with the hope of settling in Palestine.

The Greek government recognized the establishment of organizations for public benefit in accordance with law number 281. Consequently, Zionist groups began to appear in all of the Jewish communities in Greece: in addition to Salonika's eighteen Zionist clubs (established from 1908-1924), Zionist organizations were founded in Chalkis (1912), Crete (1913), Kavalla (1915), Ioannina (1915), Trikala (1915), Corfu (1915), Arta (1916), and Athens (1918). Other groups existed in Prevezia, Zante, Seres,

Drama, Xanthi, Komotini, Didimotiko, and Kastoria. In 1918 a convention assembled in Larissa^{of} all of the Zionist groups in Thessaly province: Eretz Zion (Trikala), Lovers of Zion (Larissa), and Poalei Zion (Volos). The convention established a federation of all the Zionist groups in Thessaly, Epirus, and Crete. Volos was appointed the federation center. In May 1919 the first Zionist Congress of all the independent chapters in Greece convened in Salonika to announce the founding of the Greek-Zionist Federation.

Once the various Zionists groups were organized Jews from all over Greece actively set out to fulfill their Zionist dreams by settling in the land of Zion. Poor economic conditions and cultural discrimination caused many Jewish people to join the ranks of the Zionists who were committed to settlement in Palestine. The first large scale immigration to Palestine occurred from 1931-1934. In the two years following the outbreak of the Campbell riots in 1931, over 10,000 of Salonika's Jews, (nearly twenty percent of its Jewish population) moved to Palestine. Many of the families who remained in Salonika, Kastoria, and Larissa sent their children to study at the Mikve Israel agricultural school in Palestine.

Economic and Zionist considerations motivated the mass emigration of Greek Jews to Palestine, Europe, and America and left the local Jewish communities without potential

young leaders and communal activists. During this period the Jewish community throughout Greece was divided into four groups: the Zionists favoring Hebrew culture and a Jewish state; the moderates advocating integration and peaceful coexistence within Greek society; the populists, who as workers, socialists, artists and democrats supported Greek leftist ideals such as labor reforms; and the traditionalists. When the Zionist group left for Palestine, the remaining part of the Greek-Jewish community was made up of Jews who were willing, at least in part, to subsume their Jewish identity to the Greek national identity. It was these people, who did not emigrate overseas but who thought to live in harmony in Greek society, who later fall victim to the Nazi slaughter of the Jews.

CHAPTER THREE

And Among These Nations You Shall Have No Rest: The Destruction and Rehabilitation of the Greek-Jewish Communities During the Years 1936-1955

1. On the Eve of the Holocaust

Isaac Ashkenazi is a survivor of the holocaust. He is one of the few lucky Greek Jews who having somehow survived two years in internment in a Nazi concentration camp returned in 1944 to his hometown of Didimotiko. Only 43 Jews came back to Didimotiko, while some 960 other Jews from this town perished in Auschwitz and Birkenau. Like most of the 1,750 Greek-Jewish survivors who returned to their family abodes throughout Greece, Isaac Ashkenazi faced harsh realities. Not only had entire Jewish communities been annihilated, but with it disappeared a way of life. But Jewish communities do not disappear so easily. Amid the ruins, Isaac and the holocaust remnant set out to rebuild their lives and to heal the psychological wounds of war.

Their task was not easy. Jews returning to Didimotiko discovered that one of their synagogues was destroyed by the Nazis and two community Hebrew schools were occupied by the Greek state. Furthermore, within months after the end of war only 4 out of 75 Jewish houses and 5 of 160 Jewish shops had been restituted in Didimotiko, while 75 shops and 160 houses remained occupied by strangers. Most holocaust survivors

were destitute; an American Joint Distribution Committee report describes the twenty-eight returning Komotini Jews as being "all in need--only one pair of shoes received from UNRRA; rations under subsistence." 48 Physical, economic, and mental impoverishment characterized not only Greek Jews but also the rest of the country. Hal Lehrman, a journalist visiting Greece in 1945, wrote about the misery afflicting the war-stricken country:

Greek Jewry was a convulsed microcosm of the Greek people, with all the stresses and strains wracking the nation, plus some added refinements. There is conflict between Right and Left, between deportees and non-deportees, between Zionists and non-Zionists. Concentration camps massacred the elite of Jewry. The physically stronger had the chance for greater survival. Most returnees therefore are simpler and less compromising folk. Like the harassed Greeks they distrust others and themselves; they lack leadership and the feeling of belonging. They expected a warm home-coming but the government ignored them. 49

The Balkan Jewish communities first began to wither long before the holocaust, during the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. In the interwar period, and especially in the 1930s, the Jews' sense of security in Greek society was threatened by officially-orchestrated political and economic pressures which caused many Greek Jews to gradually relinquish their public Jewish social identities and religious traditions and to simply become like all other

Greek citizens. Jews who were unwilling to compromise their ethnic identities emigrated in large numbers to America and Palestine; close to 10,000 Jews left Salonika for Palestine between 1931 and 1934.

Those Jews who stayed in Greece felt the spreading influence of fascism and Nazism among the poor and dispossessed. Years of bitter political disputes between the Royalists and Republicans culminated with John Metaxas appointment as Prime Minister on August 4, 1936. Metaxas convinced King George to suspend the constitution and governed as a dictator until he died in January 1941. Individual rights and personal liberties were curtailed, fascist political groups were banned, and the press was censored and prohibited from libeling any religion. Overall, these measures not only eliminated anti-Semitic attacks against Greek Jews but also had an adverse effect on activities within the Jewish community.

During the dictatorship years public pronouncements did not reflect the actual state of Jewish life. Even though the governor general of Macedonia, Dr. Georges Kyrimis, declared in 1939 that "the Jews of the country are enjoying and always will enjoy complete equality of civil, moral and other rights," and a Greek court ruled in 1940 that the constitution does not favor religious or racial discrimination, Greek-Jewish life was in fact becoming more restricted.⁵⁰ During the Metaxas years a Jewish gathering

took place only after the proper license was secured and a police observer was present. Consequently, Jewish social clubs scheduled fewer lectures and meetings.⁵¹ Because of the censorship act, language assimilation also intensified during this period. Metaxas suspended publication of the Jewish French-language newspapers, the result of which was to suppress the speaking of French and Spanolite. Wielding the authority of a dictator in most state affairs, Metaxas looked the other way when Salonika's municipality confiscated the Jewish burial ground.

Their worsening political fortunes and cultural deterioration notwithstanding, Jews maintained an active role in the country's economy until the eve of the Nazi invasion of Greece. It is estimated by one historian that shortly before World War Two one-sixth of all the urban residents in Greece were Jewish, and they controlled thirty-five percent of the country's economic sector.⁵² In 1940 Jews still dominated the paper, fabric, medicine, glass, marble, raw and finished metals, leather goods, and wood trades. According to a 1940 census Greek Jews owned 2,300 of the 9,800 factories in Greece. Their involvement in the various sectors of the economy was according to the following break-down: Greek Jews controlled twenty-six percent of industries; thirty-one percent of the import and trade of machines, building materials, and medical supplies; twenty-nine percent of the weaving, readywear, dry goods and

shoe businesses; thirty percent of the agents and representatives for shipping, insurance and industrial companies; and sixteen percent of the grocery and foodstuff concerns.⁵³

Not only were individual Jews successful in economic pursuits. So was the Jewish community as a whole. Avraham Levi, a Salonika community lawyer wrote in the May 9, 1938 issue of the Spanolit newspaper La Acion, that the Salonika Jewish community had never been richer--its public property income totaled two million drachmas a year.⁵³

Though Greek Jews maintained an influence in the country's economy far out of proportion to their numbers, and even though overt anti-Semitism was banned, the Jewish population was steadily decreasing. On the eve of World War Two approximately 79,950 Jews resided in Greece, 56,500 of whom lived in Salonika. Compared to the past, this represented a sharp decline, especially for Salonika, which was traditionally a Jewish city.

What was left of this proud Jewish presence in Greece was almost completely wiped out by the Bulgarians and Nazis. Sixty thousand people, comprising eighty-nine percent of Greek Jewry, died of hard labor, ill treatment and internment in the gas chambers. The annihilation of Greek Jewry was second only to that of Polish Jews. By 1944 only 10,371 Jews remained in Greece.

2. 1941-1944: The Occupation of Greece and the Deportation of the Jews

The Bulgarian Occupation Zone

Moshe Pesach, a man close to seven feet tall, is known today around the town of Kavalla as 'a Jew and a half.' He and his wife are among the remaining seven Jews left in this Macedonian seaside city, but a small remnant of the 2,200 hundred Jews (750 families) who were living in the city on the eve of the German and Bulgarian invasion of northern Greece. Moshe was among the fortunate forty-two Jews who returned after the war to the city's empty Jewish quarter.

In 1910 the Pesach family followed in the footsteps of other Jews and moved from Salonika to Kavalla to work with Jewish tobacco concerns. Moshe's father produced jute wrappings for tobacco bales. Born in Kavalla and educated at the local Alliance Israelite Universelle school, Moshe grew up speaking Spanolit at home, French at school, and Greek on the street. The Alliance school was used as a supplementary synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. A Chief Rabbi, and two other rabbis and cantors served the community. In the member of most Jewish and Greek youth of his day, upon finishing school, Moshe entered his father's profession.

But Moshe's involvement in the family business was brief; Greece was attacked by Italy on October 28, 1940 and a few days later the Jewish quarters in Salonika and Corfu

were bombed. Soon after, on April 6, 1941 Germany amassed troops on the Bulgarian border, invaded Greece, and three days later the first German columns entered Salonika.

Two days later, Messagero, the last surviving Spanolit daily paper was suppressed.

Moshe Pesach was one of many Greek Jews in the army at the time of the German invasion. He was wounded in battle and hospitalized on the isle of Mytelini. During the Italian-Greek campaigns of 1940-1941, the Jews of Macedonia, Thrace, and Epirus figured prominently in the army. According to the Jewish community records of Salonika, 12,897 Jews out of a population of 77,000 Greek Jews served in the Greek army as soldiers, including 343 officers.⁵⁴ Thousands of others were in special Jewish sections of the Greek underground. That 513 died during the fighting and 3,743 were wounded indicates the extent to which Jews felt committed to the defense of their country.

Moshe Pesach recalls that following the Nazi's arrival in Kavalla on May 10, 1941 they destroyed the Kehal,--the synagogue--on Palvou Mela Street, and eventually entrusted the city and part of the province to the Bulgarians. Germany divided the country into occupation zones which closely paralleled provincial demarcations. Western Thrace and eastern Macedonia became part of the German hemisphere, putting the 56,000 in Salonika and the 3,000 Jews scattered in Didmotiko, Nea Orestias, Soufli, Veroia, Florina, and

Crete under German rule. To appease their Axis allies, Germany allowed Bulgaria to annex Eastern Thrace and parts of Macedonia. Bulgaria gained access to a long-sought after Aegean port outlet. Five thousand six hundred and fifteen Jews living in the small communities of Kavalla, Seres, Komotini, Xanthi, and Drama suffered from the Bulgarians' anti-hellenic feelings which lingered from the days of the Balkan Wars. The Italians administered territory in southern Greece which included the provinces of Thessaly, Attika, Central Greece, the Peloponnesus, and the Ionian Isles. The Italian zone contained 12,500 Jews dispersed in Athens, Patras, Chalkis, Corfu, Zante, Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa, Volos, Ionannia, Arta, Preveza, Agrinion, and Kastoria.

Because he was already in the army, Moshe Pesach was not included in the Bulgarian round-up and deportation of the Jews. But when he was released from the hospital, Pesach relates that his life was in constant danger:

I was in a work camp on the Bulgarian-Romanian border, near the Danube river. Conditions were very difficult--seventy grams of bread each day and one onion. For seven months I was in the work camp, then I escaped to the village Filipoupholi in Bulgaria. I stayed in the Kehal for fifteen days. The Bulgarians caught me again and I was sent to another work camp. At that time the Russians were fighting near the Danube. I ran away from the camp and returned to Kavalla, where the Bulgarians were still present. The date of my return was at the end of 1944. After one month the Bulgarians left Kavalla. This was the end of the war.

Moshe Pesach was fortunate to escape the plight that befell the majority of the Jews in the Bulgarian occupation zone. But the partition of Greece became a tragic death sentence for about eighty-nine percent of Greek Jewry. Pesach describes the gloomy destiny of those who were not as lucky as himself:

Approximately 9,000 Jews were removed from eastern Macedonia and western Thrace on the night of March 4, 1943. They were taken at night, interned in tobacco warehouses, and after three or four days, were taken to Gorna Dzhumaya and Dupnitsa and then to Lom, where they were turned over to the Germans. The initial Bulgarian measures were: mobilization for forced labor; registration of property and confiscation of twenty percent; forced display of the yellow six-pointed star on clothing, homes and shops; forbidding of any kind of work for merchants, employees and even porters; forbidding us to walk along the main streets or in public places; and finally the confiscation of all belongings...Only sixty-five to seventy persons returned after the war, of whom thirty-six were from Kavalla and four from Drama.⁵⁵

The removal of the Jews from Macedonia and Thrace followed a common pattern: evictions, midnight roundups, deportations and finally, confiscation and liquidation of property. On the evening of March 3, 1943 Jews throughout Thrace were dragged from their beds in their night garments. They were evicted from their homes in sub-freezing temperatures without adequate warning, arrested and taken hostage, and marched through the main city streets until

they reached the tobacco warehouses which served as temporary camps. Three days later all the Thracian Jews were brought to the town of Drama. They were then taken to the old Greek-Bulgarian border and transported to concentration camps in Dunpnistsa and Gorna Dzhumaya. In the last week of March they were loaded on freight cars and shipped to Lom (situated on the banks of the Danube river), taken across the river on barges, and then put on trains to Treblinka, where they eventually perished.

The Bulgarian murdering of Greek Jews was most efficient; of the 4,200 arrested Jews, only 216 survived. A handful of Jews, like Moshe Pesach, escaped deportation from occupied Thrace on account of illness and were conscripted by the Bulgarians to work in labor gangs preparing roads and railroads in southwest Bulgaria. Other Jews were spared by virtue of their foreign citizenship. The Bulgarians deported to Poland all citizens of nations occupied by Germany but those Jews who claimed they were citizens of neutral and independent Axis allies such as Italy, Spain, and Turkey usually escaped deportation.⁵⁵ (appendix 2). Many Jews also fled before the deportation to the Italian zone.

Immediately after the deportation of the Jews, perhaps as early as March 6, 1943, the Bulgarians implemented prearranged measures to liquidate movable Jewish property belonging to the deportees. The handling of Jewish property merits serious consideration because after the war this

issue became one of the most problematic and irresolvable issues for the few Greek-Jewish survivors. After the Bulgarian deportation, all personal valuables such as jewelery and gold were deposited in sealed packages with the Bulgarian National Bank (In 1978 many of these objects became part of the collection of a new Jewish Museum in Athens). Only in Kavalla did the confiscation committee place property in boxes with an identifying inventory, but in spite of these precautions, property looting still prevailed. In other cities the authorities collected the Jewish property in warehouses and sorted the articles by type, not by owner. Money from the sale of Jewish property was deposited in the frozen accounts of the owners, if known, otherwise the money was transferred into a Jewish community fund.⁵⁶ The Bulgarian government accumulated over \$257,000 (21 million leva) from liquidations of Jewish community property in Thrace; the Greek (Thracian) Jewish community share of these assets included:

4,162,272 leva (\$54,055)	from Drama
5,803,380 leva (\$75,368)	from Kavalla
2,528,175 leva (\$32,833)	from Seres
1,978,079 leva (\$25,689)	from Xanthi

While another \$187,945 came from the auction of Jewish household items in these towns, there were also many Bulgarian officials who became extremely rich by stealing Jewish property.

The German Occupation Zone

A few days after the Bulgarians rounded-up and deported the Thracian Jews to Poland, the Germans, in their zone, began to deport Jews from Salonika to the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps. Since the end of 1942 the Germans were busy rounding up the Jews in their occupation zone. Within five months of the first convoy's departure from Salonika (on March 15, 1943), the Germans had deported the bulk of the Greek Jewish population to extermination camps, so that nearly all of Greek Jewry passed through Auschwitz and Birkenau and perished there.

The autonomous Jewish community of Salonika was dissolved immediately after the Germans invaded Greece. The Nazis were less interested in policing the outlying Jewish communities in the provinces. The small Jewish communities in the German zone (in the Aegean isles, the territory along the Turkish frontier, and the hinterlands of western Macedonia) maintained their communal autonomy temporarily. The complacency of Jewish organizations coupled with the German-appointed Jewish leaders' mistaken perceptions of the impending danger misled the Jewish community about the seriousness of the local police ordinances and the impending enforcement of the Nuremberg laws in February 1943. The Nazis imposed racial decrees which compelled Salonika's Jews to live in one neighborhood and to wear yellow badges at all

times. Jews were forbidden to use public transportation, were forced to surrender their radios, and were required to register all of their property for purposes of eventual expropriation.

The tremendous success of the German propaganda machine fooled the Greek Jews into believing that nothing harmful was about to happen to them. The gullability of the wartime Jewish leaders further misled the Jewish community in northern Greece. There was also a deeper confusion within the Jewish community as to their own specific historical role in the region. These Jews had no historical anchor except for their Jewish identity which was detrimental to the point that children accompanied parents to the concentration camps. The Jews did not understand that the Greek nationalist and Nazi socialist currents sweeping through Macedonia and Thrace were basically anti-Semitic expressions. In the south of Greece, the Athens rabbinic leadership understood the implications of the Nazi racial decrees and encouraged Jews to go into hiding. On the other hand, people who escaped from the Nazi and Bulgarian deportations in the North understood the looming danger and broke away from the conservative inertia that characterized the Jewish community.

Nazi policies generally intensified the antagonism of the local population toward the Jewish community and resulted in a physical assault on the literary-religious

heritage, most notably the destruction of the 400 year old Salonika Jewish graveyard on July 6, 1942. Physical annihilation followed next: from March 15 to August 3, 1943 48,000 Jews from Salonika and its environs were sent to Auschwitz in 19 convoys; all but 3,000 of these people were gassed there.

Not everybody supported the Nazis' oppressive policies against the Greek Jews. The attitude of the non-Jewish population was divided. Long-time residents of Macedonia were willing to protect the persecuted Jews. World War Two served to unify some of the Greek people against the common Nazi danger. The Greek Jews benefited from this sense of solidarity when Archbishop Damaskinos encouraged his colleagues to preach in the churches that people should hide Jews in their homes. Damaskinos was personally responsible for the concealment of 250 Jewish children in gentile homes and the issuing of forged papers and baptism certificates to Jews. Elias Levy's family from Chalkis was but one of many Jewish families who were saved from deportation by sympathetic Greeks. They first found shelter in the home of a priest in the mountains and by the war's end the Levys--parents, brothers, and sister--were in Athens under the assumed name of Papadimitriou. A sympathetic policeman provided them with false papers.

Greater numbers of Jews survived in those places where the local population came to their assistance. Jews in

central and southern Greece resided in the Greek state for many more years than the Macedonian and Thracian Jews; consequently, they were better integrated into society. This accounted for a much lower deportation rate among Jews from Old Greece and greater assistance on part of the local population.

Many of the Anatolian, "new" Greeks who were residing in Greece since the mid-1920s sympathized with the anti-Jewish measures which freed them of Jewish commercial competition. The Germans played upon the greed of the local population, giving some Jewish homes and businesses to collaborators and taking over for army use Jewish public buildings such as the Jewish hospital founded by Baron de Hirsch. The Nazis founded an organization called YDIP (Administration Service of Jewish Properties) that supervised the expropriation and seizure of Jewish businesses, warehouses, and properties. The YDIP achieved the objective for which it was created--depleting Jewish wealth in Macedonia. Any cash assets realized from the sale of Jewish property was deposited in a collective credit bank account.⁵⁷

The situation of the Jews in the outlying communities of the German zone was somewhat different from Salonika. The Jews in the provinces were able to lead a fairly normal life because the German authorities did not enforce the racial laws there. An order was eventually dispatched on February 13, 1943 to apply the ordinances current in Salonika to

Jews residing elsewhere in the German zone, primarily Didimotiko, Nea Orestias, Soufli, Verioa, Langadas, Florina, Naussa, and Katerini.

In each one of the outlying Jewish communities in the German occupation zone the Jews were gathered together and transported to Salonika, and from there deportated to Poland. On April 30, 1943 372 Jews from Florina and 660 Veroia Jews were evacuated to the Hirsch ghetto in Salonika, followed on May 8, by 670 Jews arriving from Didimotiko, 160 from Nea Orestias, and 32 from Soufli. One day later this group was loaded on trains destined for Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Many eye-witness accounts given by holocaust survivors reveal the extent of their naivete and innocence of the impending deportations. Isaac Ashkenazi was living in Didimotiko during this traumatic period and was one of the people deported to Auschwitz. Askenazi's upbringing was typical of his generation of Greek Jews. Born in 1910, his early years were marked by the deaths of his brother, mother and a two year old baby whom she was nursing at the time. At the age of eight Ashkenazi went away to a Jewish orphanage in Adrianople (in those days part of Greece). Isaac attended an Alliance school there for ten years (up until 1928); classes were conducted in French, yet he spoke Greek, Turkish, Spanolit, and Bulgarian outside of school. From 1921-1931 he served in the Greek army as a bugler with

troops stationed in Komotini. Upon completing his army duty, he formed a Jewish orchestra made up of six musicians; they performed regularly at the Didimotiko Hatikvah club, and also played every Monday, Wednesday, and Sunday at the local Greek center. Isaac worked in his family's textile business until the Germans arrived in Didimotiko in May 1943.

Isaac was typical of many Greek Jews residing in the provinces; he knew what was happening not only to the Jews in far-off Poland but also to those who were residing in the nearby Bulgarian-controlled cities of Alexandropolis, Drama, Xanthi, and Komotini:

Bulgarians would walk into the stores in these towns and terrorize and kill people. No distinctions were made between Greeks, Jews and Turks. The SS came to Didimotiko in 1943 and stayed until 1945. My first wife, who was killed in Birkenau, had a Turkish passport and could cross the border easily. Before the deportation I arranged with my friends in Turkey to have two trucks come on a Friday night to store the furnishings and clothing from our house. We too could have crossed the border but my wife refused to flee to Turkey. So I handed over our possessions to our neighbor, Mrs. Pascal. One week later the SS took us away. I embraced Pascal and told her: 'If I come back alive, give me back some of my belongings, otherwise keep it for your family.'

Upon his internment at Birkenau, Isaac performed the job of removing the bodies of Jewish people who had died from illnesses, beatings, and famine. Isaac was in a different

section of the camp on the night that his wife and other family members were killed in the gas chambers. An inmate friend told Isaac that when he saw the contingent of Didimotiko's Jews being led into the chambers, he thought to himself 'there go my Greek friends from Didimotiko.' During the ally air-raids on the camp in April 1944, Isaac and his nephew Soloman Bechar escaped behind French resistance lines. At the end of the war, at Solomon's urging, they returned to Didimotiko.

Not all the Jews in the German zone were deported to the concentration camps. The Nazis granted exemptions to Jews with foreign citizenship, mostly Spanish and Italian, but also a few of Turkish and Bulgarian nationality. Culturally and linguistically, most of the Jews in the German zone were Spanish Jews, many of whom could trace their descent to the expulsion of 1492, but only 640 were registered as Spanish nationals before the tragic days of World War Two (of this group, 511 resided in Salonika, 12 in Didimotiko, and 11 in Nea Orestias). Spain had no interest in absorbing these Jews or any other refugee group who intended to stay in the country indefinitely. Before Spain accepted the Spanish-Jewish nationals, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee had to guarantee that any refugees admitted to Spain would immigrate to another haven. Because the Spanish government delayed the evacuation of refugee camps in Spain, the 367 Spanish citizens waiting for

permission to enter Spain from Greece found themselves, instead, part of the final convoy that left Salonika on August 2, 1943 for Bergen-Belsen. These people were released a short time after their internment at the camp and sent to Spain.⁵⁸

Jews of Italian nationality, who were living in Greece, were readily helped by the Italian consulate in Salonika. On July 19, 1943 350 such Jews arrived in Athens.⁵⁹ Jews without Italian nationality, who could afford the costly train fare or car trip (which cost close to 300 pounds sterling; or 150,000 drachmas) hastened to find refuge in the Italian zone, where racial policies were not enforced against Jews. Pepo Koen, tells about his escape from Salonika to the Italian occupied zone in 1943:

Although Italy was a German ally, the Jews in her zone were not persecuted. To the contrary, the Italian authorities offered help to Jewish refugees. Any Jew who illegally crossed the existing demarcation line and who reported to an Italian border post received a pass to proceed through the Italian occupied zone and could even get a free ride on military transports. I then went to Athens.⁶⁰

Nearly 5,000 Greek-Jewish refugees safely reached Athens, a city whose Jewish population grew considerably during the war.⁶¹

A very small number of Greek Jews were able to reach Turkey where they were treated like the other Greek

refugees. After a brief internment, these refugees choose a frontier of their convenience, usually requesting entrance into Syria, where they were readily admitted by the French authorities and then cared for by the Greek Ministry of Assistance. Many such refugees continued to Palestine or Egypt; in the latter place they were cared for by the Greek government.⁶²

The Italian Occupation Zone

Most all of historic Greece, which included the provinces of Thessaly, Central Greece, Attika, the Peloponnesus, and the Ionian Isles was in the Italian zone. In spite of the existence of racial laws in Italy during World War Two, the Italian military authority did not enforce the fascist laws in its occupation zone on the pretext that no precise directive had been issued by the government in Rome. The south of Greece became a haven for Jews fleeing from the northern Bulgarian and German occupation zones, since the Jews in the Italian zone continued to enjoy full equality in civil rights with no limitation or restriction of a racial nature. Repeatedly, the Nazis wanted to equalize conditions in the Italian and German zones, and to introduce the racial measures that were adopted in the German zone. The Jews in this zone, considered themselves to be hellenized and fully integrated into Greek society. They believed that the fate of

Salonika's Jews was a consequence of their separation from the other city residents in their language, work, and schooling. Thus, the Jews in the south felt no reason to fear persecution, for they lived peacefully amongst their neighbors.

As long as the Italians were in control of southern Greece, the Jewish community continued to live undisturbed. No sooner had the Italians surrendered to the Allies on September 8, 1943, however, than the Jews in southern Greece found themselves under Nazi dominance. The Nazis immediately occupied the Italian zone, but the Jews who were living in Athens and other towns managed to lose themselves within the local population in the cities, or in the woods and mountains among the partisans. In the Italian zone, a relatively large percentage of Jews managed to survive, perhaps an indication of how well integrated the Jews were in these areas; thirty-six percent of the Jews from Thessaly, Central Greece, and the Peloponnesus died during the war years. However, not all Jews in this region were able to escape. Close to ninety percent of the Jewish population in Epirus and the isles vanished. On the isles, the Jews were trapped with no place to flee. The Jews were easily rounded up in in Rhodes and Corfu, and they were deported to Auschwitz via Athens in June 1944. Many of the Jews in Crete were put onto boats and drowned. Only the whole Zante Jewish community of 275 people was saved.

Meanwhile, on the mainland, more Jews survived in the Italian zone than in any other occupation zone, because aof the many Jews who actively sought out hiding places or joined the partisan underground. The mountains became a safe refuge for such Jews. Italian-occupied Greece became the center for the partisan underground fighters, a movement attracting many Jews. Owing to their high level of education and language proficiency, Jews became involved in administrative aspects of the resistance movement. EAM recruited Jews who knew English and sent them to headquarters, where they functioned as interpreters between British and American commandos and the local partisans. At least 91 Greek-Jewish partisans died in the war, 85 in Greece and 6 in Auschwitz.⁶³

Many of the Jews who did not join the resistance movement were saved by their neighbors. Thousands of Greeks hid Jews and shared limited food rations with them. Jewish families were dispersed in non-Jewish homes in Athens and Piraeus. Three-quarters of the Jews in Chalkis hid in the villages of Euboea, while at least 1,800 Jews from Volos, Larissa, and Trikala emerged after the war from hiding places in the Pinos mountains and the Kapirinnissa region. In order to obtain a hiding place, Jews often had to pay from one and a half to two million drachmas monthly, or even pay in advance one hundred gold coins to indemnify the

people furnishing the hiding place in case they were caught and punished by the occupation troops.⁶⁴

Louisa Solomon, who now resides in Athens with her husband Yehoshua, recalls how during the war, while living in Trikala, cousins from Salonika were smuggled south, and soon after, as the Germans assumed control of the south, they all left Trikala and went into hiding in Athens:

In 1943 some of Yehoshua's cousins were taken from Salonika to Poland. They gave money to a Greek person to smuggle two of their children by train to Athens. My husband's brother's wife and and three children and all the in-laws also came from Salonika to Trikala. After Pesach of that year, my husband went to Athens, and he learned about the Salonika ghetto, and the round-up and deportation of the Jews. He decided we must leave Trikala. All of the children in our family and the three wives went to live in Athens (1943), while our husbands minded the store in Trikala. The minute the Germans arrived in Trikala, in September 1943, my husband ran away to Athens.

When we came to Athens, we arranged identification cards with the Greek names Spiros and Louisa Andonopolous. We rented an apartment, and the Greeks in our building knew we were Jewish because we were three families living together, including a grandmother who only spoke Spanolit (two families from Trikala, and one from Salonika). Eventually we split up, moving to outlying areas of Athens.

While the Solomon family escaped from Trikala before the Germans arrived in that town, Avraham Negrin, the President of the Larissa community during the war years, remembers what it was like to witness first-hand the coming of the

Germans in 1941, the intervening Italian rule, and the return of the Germans to Larissa in 1943:

The Germans entered Larissa during Nisan (April) 1941. At that time there were British soldiers present from Palestine and New Zealand. The Jewish soldiers in the British army came to me and asked me to perform mincha and arvit services every day. We knew the the Germans were coming. We followed the war developments and when we heard they were coming south, we ran to the mountain villages. We returned to our homes one month later, after they handed over the city to the Italians. Only one German division stayed on, but they had no permission to harm the Jews, since this was now Italian territory.

Nonetheless, incidents did occur. During the Pesach seder of 1941, Italians, Germans, and Greeks came to one Jewish home looking for Salonika Jewish refugees who had fled to Larissa. They caught some refugees freed them after being bribed by the Jews. These were not authorized troops--their intention was to blackmail Jews and get money from them, not to take them away. Then, on a Shabbat morning in July 1942, while we were praying in the kehal, the Germans came in and took away our books. Our Chacham Yitschak Cassuoto cried out, quoting the Psalms [94:1]: 'O Lord God to whom vengeance belongs; O God to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth.'

We were scared. We thought they had come to take us away, just as they had rounded-up Salonika's Jews in 1942. But the Germans just took all the books from the Talmud Torah and left.

I was President of the Jewish community from March 1941 until the Italian surrender in March 1943. The council members abandoned the community. Their responsibility was to stay and lead. But they took their bags and left, leaving

the community without leaders. Chacam Cassuto and I filled the gap. The Governor of Larissa chose us to be leaders of the community. That's when my agony began. It was a terribly cold winter with lots of snow and lice everywhere, and bread for none. Seven hundred Jews spent this winter in Larissa--all poor Jews, old and sick, babies and widows. Winter came, and with it people dying from lice, cold and hunger. Every time a person would die I would collect money to buy a coffin and bury the person in the snow. I couldn't touch the dead person for the body was full of lice. My wife warned me she would leave me because I too was full of lice.

I was in contact with a top official in the Larissa police force. He came to my store and said 'I am sorry for all that has happened to your people in Salonika, and I want to make up for this. I am at your service to assist. Everyday I will send you my assistant to see how I can help you'. When Jews came to Larissa from Salonika I told them to bring me pictures, which I turned over to the police officer who issued them Greek identification papers in the name of deceased Greek Christians.

One day the mayor informed me by messenger that the Jews must leave before the Germans come, otherwise once they are present, nobody would be able to leave. I told all the Jews to leave. Some left. Others couldn't go, because they were poor and were entitled to free Red Cross food as long as they stayed in Larissa. More than half of the 700 Jews fled. I left behind 235. The Germans ordered them to establish another council. Everyday Jews had to appear before the Greek police.

Towards the end of the war even the Jews in the southern occupation zone were deported to Auschwitz. Two weeks before Passover, on March 25, 1944, 350 Jews from in and

around Athens were lured out of hiding to come to the Athens synagogue to collect matsa for the forthcoming holiday. They were immediately imprisoned in the building together with 450 additional people who were rounded-up by the Gestapo. That night, March 25, became a black day in Greek-Jewish history. In all of the small provincial towns, Jews were arrested: 50 Trikala Jews, 130 Volos Jews, and 90 Chalkis Jews were rounded-up and sent to Larissa, where they joined 225 Larissa Jews who had been arrested by the Germans. The majority of Jews from these four towns, succeeded, however, in going into hiding, and thus evaded arrest. All of the Thessaly Jews who were put on the train to Athens, were later deported to Auschwitz together with the Athenian Jews. Concurrently with the round-ups in Thessaly, 352 Arta Jews and 272 Preveza Jews were assembled and sent by way of Patras to Athens, and days later they were deported to Auschwitz. That same night of March 25 over ninety percent of the Jews residing in Ioannina (1,860) and Kastoria (865) were rounded-up and sent to Salonika, where they too were put on trains to Birkenau.⁶⁵ On that night of March 25, only the forty Jews in Agrinon escaped deportation. Most of the Jews assembled on that black night were never to return home.

THE DECIMATION OF THE GREEK JEWISH POPULATION DURING WORLD WAR II

Communities	1940 Jewish Population	1945 Jewish Population	Percentage of Population Reduction	Date of Arrest
<u>German Zone</u>				
Soufli	40	--	--	May 8, 1943
Didimotiko	900	33	96%	"
Nea Orestias	197	3	98%	"
Naussa	50	10	80%	"
Langadas	50	--	100%	"
Katerini	50	35	32%	"
Salonika	56,000	1950	96%	March-July, 1943
Veroia	460	131	72%	May 1, 1943
Florina	400	64	84%	April 30, 1943
Chanea	350	7	98%	June 6, 1944
<u>Bulgarian Zone</u>				
Alexandroupolis	140	4	97%	March 3, 1943
Komotini	819	28	96%	"
Xanthi	550	6	99%	"
Kavalla	2,100	42	98%	"
Drama	1,200	39	97%	"
Seres	600	3	99%	"
<u>Italian Zone</u>				
Karditsa	150	150	--	
Trikala	520	360	31%	March 25, 1944
Larissa	1,120	726	35%	"
Chalkis	325	170	48%	"
Volos	872	645	26%	"
Athens*	3,500	4,930	+45%*	"
Patras	225	112	50%	"
Kastoria	900	45	95%	"
Ioannina	1,850	163	91%	"
Preveza	250	15	94%	"
Arta	384	60	84%	"
TOTALS	75,052	9,754	87-89%	

DECIMATION OF THE GREEK JEWISH POPULATION DURING WORLD WAR II

Communities	1940 Jewish Population	1945 Jewish Population	Percentage of Population Reduction	Date of Arrest
Corfu	2,000	187	91%	June 9, 1944
Rhodes	1,900	200	89%	July 20, 1944
Zanthe	275	275	--	
Agrinon	40	40	--	
TOTALS	4,215	702		
TOTALS Page 1	<u>75,052</u>	<u>9,754</u>		
	79,267	<u>10,456</u>	87-89%	

* Athens lost one thousand Jews during the Holocaust. The population increase after the war was due to the influx of Jews from the provinces.

POPULATION OF JEWS IN GREECE 1904--1983

	<u>1904</u>	<u>1928</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>App. 1983</u>
<u>Thrace</u>										
Didimotiko	906	1000	1000	900	33	33	38	40	14	4
Nea Orestias		200	197	197	3	3	0	0	0	0
Alexandroupolis	200	200	165	140	4	4	0	0	0	0
Komotini		900	850	819	28	28	22	0	0	0
Xanthe	1200	600	600	550	6	6	0	0	4	0
Soufli	25		40					0	1	0
<u>Macedonia</u>										
Kavalla	2000	2200	2200	2100	42	42	43	47	16	7
Drama	380	1500	1200	1200	39	39	39	17	4	5
Seres	2000	750	600	600	3	3	--	--	1	1
Salonika	75,000	62,500	53,500	56,000	1950	1950	1950	1279	1200	1000
Veroia		500	850	460	131	131	112	38	3 Fam.	8
Kastoria	1600	1000	900	900	35	35	38	27	2	5
Florina		500	400	400	64	64	64	7	1	0
Langadas			50		--	--	--	--	--	0
Katerini	80		50		--	35	--	--	2 Fam.	4
Naussa			50		--	10	--	--	--	0
<u>Thessaly</u>										
Trikkala	1000	600	520	520	360	360	356	123	33 Fam.	59
Larissa	2500	2100	1175	1120	726	726	621	482	400	320
Volos	1100	1000	882	872	645	645	558	230	190	138
Karditsa			150			100		51	30	8
<u>Central Greece</u>										
Chalkis	200	400	350	325	170	170	181	108	101	90
Athens	300	3200	3500	3000	4930	4930	4000	2718	3500	3000
<u>Peloponnesos</u>										
Patras (Agrinion)		300	337	265	145	152	153	37	16	4
<u>Epiros</u>										
Ioannina	4000	2000	1950	1850	163	163	150	100	100	69
Preveza	200	250	250	250	15	15	11	1	1	0
Arta	300	400	384	384	60	60	54	20	0	0
<u>Islands</u>										
Corfu	3500	2000	2000	2000	187	185	125	100	70	60
Zante	175	300	275	275	275	275	69	--	1	0
Rhodes	4000								36	34
Kos	103)	2200) 1900) 200) 200	60) 49	1	0
Mytilene	100)							--	0
Chios	350								--	0
<u>Crete</u>										
Iraklion	52								--	0
Chanea	525	400	350	350	7	7	6	1	--	0
Lassethi	38								--	0
Rethymmon	31								--	0
<u>Total</u> (Approx.)	110,000	83,000	79,950	77,317	10,226	10,311	8,650	5,475	5,000	4,806

3. The Return to Life: To the Relief of the Holocaust Survivors.

The defeat of Nazi Germany ended World War Two and stopped the persecution of European Jewry. Salonika was recaptured by the Greek and Allied forces in October 1944. Greek Jewry was in shambles. Eighty-nine percent of the Greek-Jewish population had been exterminated. A great Sephardi civilization, flourishing for over 400 years, was destroyed. The Italian-speaking Jewries of the the Ionian and Dodecanese Isles disappeared in one day. Greek-speaking Jews, descendants of the Romaniot Jews, survived many of the round-ups by melting into the local population, but they too suffered from the trauma of being among the few to survive the war. The wounds inflicted on Greece as a whole, and on the Jewish communities in particular, were indeed severe; to the Greek-Jewish journalist, Sam Modiano, the restoration of Greek Jewry was akin to reviving a corpse.

Greece suffered from every ailment that could plague a modern state:

Lack of national unity, international security, economic resiliency, civil liberties, economic policies directed at improving prosperity of the broad masses, constitute the background of a virulent state of civil war, foreign intervention and counter-intervention, economic dislocation, inequitable distribution of goods and official venality.⁶⁶

The Greek state faced the two-fold problem of establishing a stable government and carrying out a program of economic

rehabilitation. Disastrous inflation coupled with a balance of trade in which exports covered only twenty-five percent of imports, forced Greece to rely on the aid provided by the American-sponsored Marshall Plan. Most of the \$252 million provided in 1949-50 and the additional \$80 million of assistance in 1951-52 improved agricultural and industrial production, and revitalized commercial and housing projects.⁶⁷ The economy was put back on track, but it took ten years until a stable government was established.

The Greek Jews Return Home

It was extremely difficult for the Greek Jews to return to a normal life in such a state of affairs. In addition to being affected like all Greek citizens by the domestic political divisions and economic pressures, Jews had unique problems to resolve as members of Jewish communities that suffered tremendous personal losses and immense property damages.

Estimates of the number of Jews in Greece before and after the war vary. In 1945 a census was prepared for a delegates conference called by the American Jewish Joint Distribution in Athens for January 1946. This was the first accounting of the Jewish population of Greece in a generation. According to reports filed by all but 3 of 24 localities known to have had some Jewish population, there were about 10,000 Jews in Greece in 1945. Twenty-four

Jewish communities remained after the war. In 11 communities, ninety percent of the population or more was lost, while 6 communities still had more than fifty percent of their former Jewish population.⁶⁸ Only the Jewish community of Athens escaped a paralyzing blow; it replaced Salonika as the new Jewish center in Greece, absorbing many of the provincial Jews who took refuge in the capital during the war and remained there after liberation.

Jewish Population in 21 Localities in Greece, December 1945

Locality	1940	1945	Locality	1940	1945
Athens	2,500	4,930	Florina	400	64
Saloniki	50,000	2,000	Arta	382	60
Larissa	1,120	731	Drama	1,200	43
Volos	872	650	Kavalla	2,100	42
Trikala a	-----	267	Didimotiko	1,300	40
Ioannina	1,850	190	Kastoria	900	35
Corfu	2,000	185	Agrinion	15	30
Chalkis	325	170	Komotini	819	28
Veroia	460	132	Preveza	170	17
Patras	240	122	Xanthi	550	6
Karditsa a	-----	83	TOTAL	67, 203	9,825

a

Trikala & Karditsa together had 492 Jews in 1940

Overall demographic trends of returning Jews indicate that outside of Athens and Salonika (the latter suffered a loss of 48,000 Jews) no large Jewish communities were left in Greece. Instead, survivors resettled in small groups dispersed around the country, returning to their native homes and towns without giving much consideration as to whether a viable Jewish way of life could be restored with fewer people in residence.

The Economic Plight of the Survivors

Nobody welcomed the survivors back home. Persons of all ages, losing their families in the great holocaust storm, became orphans of history. The Jews' former neighbors and other folks in the small towns occupied and looted Jewish residences and businesses. People in Salonika referred to the Jews back from deportation as 'unused cakes of soap.'⁶⁹ Vandalism and the expropriation of Jewish personal property contributed to the moral discouragement of the Jewish remnant in post-war Greece. The ensuing crises faced by the returning 1,750 concentration camp inmates and the surviving Greek Jews who emerged from hiding was even more desperate than that of the Greek population at large.⁷⁰ There was bitterness on the part of concentration camp survivors towards Jews who were not deported; they thought that people who went into hiding betrayed Jewish traditions and obligations. Tensions between these two groups of Jews are still evident today in the Jewish community of Corfu, where those survivors who fled from the Nazis feel somewhat guilty for having escaped death, while people who survived the concentration camps feel as though they fulfilled their obligations by not deserting other family members and friends who were deported.

Most people in Greece were impoverished by the war. The destitute condition of two-thirds of the Jewish population

required immediate relief care and rehabilitation. Each day after liberation scores of Jews died of disease and exposure. Many others were starving and half-naked. Utter despair characterized the survivors' mood. The neglect and disregard accorded to Jewish property was evident not only to the returning Jews; it was witnessed by outsiders, such as the historian Cecil Roth, who visited Greece shortly after the war:

Everywhere one could see traces of loot. I found a child in the street sitting on a synagogue chair carved with a Hebrew inscription; I was given a fragment of Sefer Torah which had been cut up as soles for a pair of shoes; I saw carts in the cemetery removing Hebrew tombstones, on the instructions of the Director of Antiquities for the province, for the repair of one of the local ancient churches. In 1946 there was barely a minyan on Shabbat. There was no religious education for the children.⁷¹

Yet, life went on despite the distress and agony caused by the annihilation of the majority of the Greek-Jewish population. To confront problems such as the widespread occupation and looting of property, and the need to assist 6,000 indigent people, the Greek Jews relied more on the help extended by international Jewish organizations than on Greek government assistance. Unemployed Jews were denied assistance from the state employment agency. Impoverished Jewish families, denied aid from the state welfare centers on the grounds that Jewish charities were available, turned

for help to Jewish organizations and kinsfolk throughout the world. In the first years after Greece's liberation world Jewish organizations, primarily the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), and to a lesser extent the Jewish Agency (who assisted prospective immigrants to Palestine), and the World Jewish Congress assumed the responsibility for the material support of Greek Jewry. The first AJDC emissary arrived in Greece in early 1945. Because the United Nations Refugee Relief Agency (UNRRA) was barred by charter from giving special consideration to Jews, the AJDC working under UNRRA, became the main support of Greek Jewry, aided by technical personnel of the British Committee for Relief Abroad and a Palestinian Magan David Adom team.⁷² The AJDC devised a two step rehabilitation program for the Greek Jews: physical revival in the form of emergency relief care for the destitute, followed in 1951 by the Jewish revival of communal life and institutions through the restoration of such institutions as the synagogue, school, youth center, and summer camp.⁷³

The Greek Civil War

Before the relief efforts began, the Greek government issued a decree on October 23, 1944 which restored full civil rights to Jews and provided for the establishment of temporary Jewish communal councils for Athens and Salonika.⁷⁴ A civil war broke out in Greece during the implementation of the early stages of the AJDC's reconstruction plan. Greece suffered a series of earthquakes after the civil war, making a difficult situation worse. The Greek Jewish community and its new representative organ, the Central Board of Jewish Communities (Kentrikon Israelites Symbolikon--KIS), was hampered by the prevailing political atmosphere from taking an effective stand on vital Jewish interests, especially property claims. The civil war from 1944 to 1949 split the general population into communist and royalist camps, and in the process divided the Jewish community as well. Many of the holocaust survivors belonged to the leftist EAM-ELAS camp, the same resistance forces that helped save many Jews during the Nazi occupation. Non-political Jews were treated as enemies and taken as prisoners during the civil war, merely because of their association with the EAM during the Second World War. As the fighting intensified in 1948-49, the national-royalist press represented Marxism as "a world Jewish intrigue" in which

every Jew was a either communist or an agent who spread hersies to weaken the Greek-Orthodox church.

The Rebirth of the Organized Jewish Community

The factional strife that plagued Greece affected the Jews in a political sense; it caused internal divisions within the countrywide Jewish community and increased the ineffectiveness of the national Jewish community leadership. The departure of 10,000 immigrants to Palestine in between 1932 and 1934, and the death of many more Jews in the gas chambers eliminated the traditional leadership of the Greek-Jewish community. The surviving Jews were either political moderates, leftists, or Zionists. The outcome of the power struggle between these groups determined the composition of the postwar generation of Greek-Jewish leaders, and set forth the priorities dominating the agenda of Greek-Jewish organizations up until the present. A political cleavage surfaced between the postwar Zionist leadership and the moderate pre-war Jewish leaders; the latter group's role in the country's economic domain enabled them to maintain some influence with the government, thereby preventing a unified national Jewish position to emerge. The moderates on the Central Board of Jewish Communities routinely blocked leftist proposals, causing the radicals to complain that they had been excluded from policy-making. Eventually the number of leftist board members decreased;

two of its representatives died in the civil war and another was ousted from the board, leaving just one remaining member. The Zionists argued that Greece was not worth fighting for in the civil war. They demanded special treatment for holocaust survivors who were immigrating to Palestine. In response, the moderates deplored the board's confusion of communal and Zionist policy, attacking the Zionists' idea that emigration was the only answer to postwar Greek-Jewish rehabilitation. The moderates believed that the Zionists' ideas would spread apathy and discontent within the already weakened Jewish community, while also encouraging government indifference to the plight of the Greek Jews. Most of the board members insisted that the Jews were Greek citizens, not emigrants, and should, therefore, strive to reestablish their rightful place in Greek society.⁷⁵ Not only did the royalist side prevail in the civil war, but the moderates on the Central Board of Jewish Communities won out over the other factions. The most pressing issue for the young organization became restitution and property reclamation.

The divisions on the Central Board caused delays in the distribution of medical and food supplies and the provision of welfare aid to the needy Jews in the provinces. This prompted the Jewish community of Ioannina, in particular, to dispatch letters to worldwide Jewish communities, summoning them to contribute money and supplies for the Ioannina

destitute whose needs were being neglected by the Central Relief Committee in Athens. The result of this was the establishment of a separate Ioannina Rehabilitation Fund, managed by the Central Relief Committee and the Joint. (appendix 3)

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Post-War Welfare Relief

Two organizations assumed responsibility for the organized relief efforts. The Central Board of Jewish Communities concentrated on the reclamation of individual, communal, and heirless property, while the AJDC helped individuals reconstitute their family and work life, both in Greece or overseas. The Central Board depended on the AJDC, not only for monetary support in the rehabilitation process, but also for the international political leverage that it could exert on the Greek government. While the overall welfare and financial assistance of Greek Jewry was supervised by a Central Relief Committee appointed by the Central Board, it was funded by the AJDC, with supplementary allocations coming from the sale of heirless property.

The holocaust experience created a situation in which Greek Jews became orphans and widows, poor and sick people. The AJDC assistance during these most difficult years was largely limited to welfare, providing help for the local needs of each community in the form of cash relief, food, clothing and other supplies. Some 4,000 Greek Jews received

cash. relief, and 21 Jewish communities received assistance.⁷⁶ Medical care, child, widow, orphan assistance, and medical aid to tuberculosis and malaria victims absorbed the largest part of the funds disbursed.

The AJDC even provided monetary aid to young couples getting married. One journalist visiting Greece after the war reports that on the one hand fifty widows and many old people became wards of the Salonika community, while in the very same city many Jews were getting married. In 1946, there were only forty-six married Jewish couples in Salonika, and many new and second marriages were arranged. A typical post-war wedding involved a young groom marrying for the second time, having lost his first wife and baby in Auschwitz. The AJDC established a dowry fund which provided wedding rings, kitchenware, and kerosene stoves to impoverished Jews intending to marry. On one day in February, 1946 nine weddings took place--the brides wore veils made of mosquito netting.⁷⁷

One of the AJDC's most successful ventures was the creation of a European network of free loan societies (loan kassas) which extended short term loans to people resuming work. Founded in the interwar period, the loan fund was a manifestation of the Jewish traditional form of helping needy people; the first loan kassa was established in Athens after World War Two. The initial capital investment was \$105,000. ⁷⁸ In 1948 41 small industrialists from

Salonika received \$36,000 in loans.⁷⁹ From 1945-1951 the fund granted 3,000 small loans, and by 1955 the number had reached 6,200 loans. Loan clients were charged nine percent per annum, compared to the commercial interest rate of forty-eight percent per annum. ⁸⁰ The AJDC also helped finance schooling and emigration projects, equipped a library, and purchased tools for laboratory and clinical work for use by Jewish students. Six hundred students received loans for vocational training in four hachsharot camps in preparation for emigration to Palestine. ⁸¹

A Ioannina Rehabilitation (Loan Kassa) Fund was established within the General Jewish Loan Kassa, in response to the Ioannina Jewish community's successful appeal for aid from the Association of Ioannina Jews in New York (a group of Jews who had immigrated to the United States during the years 1910-1930s). The Central Relief Committee and Joint used Ioannina funds for dowries for Ioannina girls, and portions were turned over to the loan kassa and to the Rehabilitation and Vocational Training committee. Money was disbursed from the Ioannina Rehabilitation Fund for Hebrew teacher salaries and special housing assistance to Jewish victims of earthquakes in the Ionian Isles, Volos, Larissa, and Trikala (during 1952-56).⁸²

The following charts indicate the assistance provided by the AJDC to the Greek-Jewish holocaust survivors:

THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, INC.

REPORT FOR GREECE - OCTOBER 1914-DECEMBER 1972

<u>Years</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>General Emergency, Rehabilitative and Reconstructive Work (Non-Functional)</u>	<u>General Reconstruction Work</u>	<u>Repatriation and Refugee Work</u>
1968	\$ 1,692.86	\$ 1,692.86		
1967	11,582.62	11,582.62		
1966	8,408.51	8,408.51		
1965	13,090.41	13,090.41		
1964	32,360.28	32,360.28		
1963	26,345.04	26,345.04		
1962	37,303.98	37,303.98		
1961	51,886.81	51,886.81		
1960	51,407.42	51,407.42		
1959	48,283.65	48,283.65		
1958	39,252.16	39,252.16		
1957	63,833.20	63,833.20		
1956	62,000.00	62,000.00		
1955	52,481.53	52,481.53		
1954	12,240.79	12,240.79		
1953	15,578.89	15,578.89		
1952	12,841.27	12,841.27		
1951	16,503.07	16,503.07		
1950	54,263.09	54,263.09		
1949	211,510.58	211,510.58		
1948	115,285.21	115,285.21		
1947	123,439.76	123,439.76		
1946	429,554.05	429,554.05		
1945	713,345.27	713,345.27		
1941	4,500.00			\$ 4,500.00
1940	17,900.00	1,000.00		16,900.00
1939	7,500.00			7,500.00
1931	<u>5,000.00</u>	<u>5,000.00</u>		
Sched. #95A	\$ <u>62,003.38</u>	\$ <u>19,000.00</u>	\$ <u>13,003.38</u>	\$ <u>30,000.00</u>
Totals	<u>\$2,301,393.83</u>	<u>\$2,229,490.45</u>	<u>\$ 13,003.38</u>	<u>\$ 58,900.00</u>

SCHEDULE #95ATHE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, INC.REPORT FOR GREECE - OCTOBER 1914-DECEMBER 1972

<u>Years</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>General Emergency, Rehabilitative and Reconstructive Work (Non-Functional)</u>	<u>General Reconstruction Work</u>	<u>Repatriation and Refugee Work</u>
1927	20,000.00			20,000.00
1923	13,000.00		3,000.00	10,000.00
1922	10,003.38		10,003.38	
1920	<u>19,000.00</u>	<u>19,000.00</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u>Totals</u>	62,003.38	19,000.00	13,003.38	30,000.00
Totals from Sched. 95	<u>\$2,239,390.45</u>	<u>\$2,210,490.45</u>	<u>\$ </u>	<u>\$ 28,900.00</u>
<u>Totals</u>	<u>\$2,301,393.83</u>	<u>\$2,229,490.45</u>	<u>\$ 13,003.38</u>	<u>\$ 58,900.00</u>

ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNITIES OF PROVINCE

Budget for the First Half 1951

	A S S I S T E D		A M O U N T S			T O T A L
Communities	Cases	Persons	Cash	Medical Care	Hospital Care--Athens	Drachmas
			(in thousand drs.)			
1. Arta	2	3	1.200	1.000	500	2.700
2. Verioa	1	1	600	--	--	600
3. Volos	14	19	9.600	3.600	3.000	16.200
4. Zante	4	13	4.200	1.000	800	6.000
5. Ioannina	4	7	2.800	2.000	700	5.500
6. Karditsa	4	4	1.100	600	500	2.200
7. Corfu	5	5	2.400	600	500	3.500
8. Komotini	1	2	1.800	--	--	1.800
9. Larissa	10	18	4.200	3.000	2.000	9.200
10. Patras	1	1	450	--	--	450
11. Preveza	1	1	600	--	--	600
12. Trikala	8	13	2.500	1.500	1.000	5.000
13. Chalkis	4	5	2.500	600	500	3.600
Total	59	92	33.950	13.900	9.500	57.350
Medical care to Provinces pupils of ORT in Athens				1.500		1.500
Home for Aged	2	2	3.600	--	--	3.600
Special cases	10	10	9.000	--	--	9.000
Unforeseen			5.000			5.000
General Total	71	104	51.550	15.400	9.500	76.450



The AJDC intensified its relief efforts during the year after the war ended; in 1945 American Jews gave their Greek brethren close to \$60,000 a month in aid, and continued to provide the Greek-Jewish survivors with generous assistance through 1949. During these years the greatest single drain on the AJDC budget was the Greek government's requirement that relief dollars be converted at the official rate despite the inflation, which depreciated the value of the aid. In the mid-1950s, a series of earthquakes resulted in increased emigration and housing assistance to the provincial Jews. By 1964, the Greek-Jewish community had become self-supporting through repossession of heirless property, and the AJDC terminated most of its activities in Greece. The AJDC bought and shipped close to 4,200 kilos of matsot to Greece in 1966, a service it continues until the present day. Finally, AJDC provided care to stateless and transient Jewish refugees passing through Greece, and allocated scholarships for the training of community leaders, rabbis, and teachers.⁸⁴

Reclaiming Personal Jewish Property

While the AJDC contributed money to the budget of the provincial communities (as is shown in the 1951 chart), the relief work itself was turned over to the communities and to Jewish organizations centered in Athens. The AJDC

looked after the welfare needs of the Greek Jews, while the problem of reclaiming individual, communal, and heirless property became the chief priority of the Central Board of Greek Communities, who in turn delegated the responsibility to a new organization called OPAIE (Organismos Pariphalpesos Kai Apokatastasos Israeliton Ellados)--the Heirless Property and Jewish Rehabilitation Fund.

Almost all Greek-Jewish property was confiscated and occupied during the war, mostly illegally (through fictitious sales).

Some Jews managed before they were deported or went into hiding to make arrangements for the safekeeping of personal property, just in case they survived the war. A story is still told on the isle of Corfu, that before deportation a Jew sold a bed to a neighbor for five drachmas, and upon returning from Auschwitz a year later, the Jew bought back the old bed for five hundred drachmas. The Jew proceeded to crack open the hollow metal bedframe and removed hundreds of solid gold coins. In a similar manner, at least sixty Jewish families throughout Greece managed to conceal the better part of their fortunes.⁸⁵ More frequently, Jews entrusted all of their belongings to their Greek friends. This is what Isaac Ashkenazi did:

When I returned to Didimotiko after the war I discovered that all of the merchandise was stolen from my store. My house was standing empty; everything was

taken from the inside. Before I left, I gave lots of merchandise to my friends and upon my return I asked them for it. They said that the Germans took everything. I didn't believe them. They sold everything. Everybody stole from me. Even the gold that was hidden in my garden was dug up.

There was only one sincere person from the days of my pre-war business activities. Her name was Pascal Capposuzis and she lived in Pityon. One week after we stored all of our clothing and house furnishings at her house, the SS came to take us away. I embraced Pascal and said to her: 'If I ever come back alive please give me back some of my things, if I don't return, keep it all for your family'.

Three months after I was deported, the communists killed Pascal's husband. She sold what was left of my possessions. On my return after the war, Pascal embraced me and started crying. She told me that she remained alive during the war because she was able to sell some of my possessions to get some money to feed her children. We wept about all the family members we had both lost in the war. When Pascal brought me a cup of coffee, she handed me a large chunk of gold worth 10,000-20,000 drachmas. I couldn't take it from her because she was so honest with me. I just wanted my carpets and household goods. My attorney and other friends all stole from me. They were not real friends.

I stayed in Didimotiko after the war even though all of my family was killed in the camps. All of my fortune was in Didimotiko. I could sell 6-7 houses, land, and immovable possessions which belonged to my deceased family. I automatically became the sole inheritor of all of their possessions. I still own their property [in 1983], and want to sell it, but I can't find any buyers.

Isaac's experience was typical of many Jews returning after the war to their hometown. Many of the Greeks who undertook to care for Jewish property later refused to return it. Jews found their homes occupied by neighbors, their businesses taken over by strangers, their Jewish communal property desecrated and neglected. With their own residences occupied, the homeless deportees lived in makeshift shelters. Fifty-one Larissa Jews, 30 of whom were believed to be tubercular, lived in a windowless and wall-shattered hostel for two years before applying for help in repairs. No serious attempts were made by the government to find shelter for displaced Jews, whose homes were illegally occupied by strangers. In fact, many of the Jewish shops had been given over to people as a reward for collaborating with the Germans. Not one single collaborator was expelled to make room for Jews.⁸⁶ Greek authorities were unsympathetic to the returning Jews because they considered the people who were living in Jewish-owned houses to be poor Greek refugees, and legitimate war victims who had fled from villages which were destroyed by Bulgarian soldiers.

The economic rehabilitation of holocaust survivors was directly related to their success in reclaiming personal property. This matter became an extremely sensitive political issue. The Greek State favored the Christian majority in questions related to individual property which was owned by Jews before the war, but was taken over by

squatters while the Jews were away. The illegitimate tenants were viewed as a political force, while the Jews were not. The tenants organized an association to protect their common rights, and they engaged in an anti-Jewish campaign in which they condemned Jews as subversive conspirators. Also, the war weakened the political and economic influence of the Jews in the affairs of the country. The electoral strength of the Greek Jews following the war was less than one percent of the total national population. This was too small a percentage to gain representation in the Greek parliament, National Assembly, or any other political office.

Consequently, Jews yielded none of the necessary political influence to reclaim their property. No rent was paid by the illegal tenants to help the destitute Jewish owners. This discrimination against the Jews explains why after seventeen months of liberation less than five percent of the Greek Jews regained possession of their homes. Most of the personal property restitutions to the Greek Jews were made while ELAS was in power before the civil war. Joseph Matsas, a partisan fighter during the World War describes how property was restored to Ioannina Jews after the war:

When the war was over in Ioannina, about twenty or thirty Jewish partisans came down from the mountains. After the Germans left Ioannina a partisan government took over in the town for two months. This government gave back to the

Jews their family houses and stores. Jewish and Christian partisans came with weapons in hand to homes occupied by Christian villagers; 'Why are you here?' the partisans asked them. 'The Germans put us here,' replied the villagers. Because they had cooperated with the Germans, the Greek partisans threw them out. Jews were given possessions equal to thirty British gold coins, as compensation for possessions taken by the Germans. Empty stores were returned to the thirty Jewish partisans, and thirty gold coins were given for the missing merchandise.

After two months, a right wing government came to power. Six months later the Jews who survived the camps returned to Ioannina. The government gave them only old clothes sent from UNNRA. They were treated as refugees. They asked that their homes be returned to them. The government said: 'How can we expel the villagers residing in these homes? and we do not know if these houses belong to you. Show us documents to prove it.' Jews had great difficulty in producing documents; they had to hire lawyers and prove through birth certificates who their parents were.

It took many years for Greek Jews to move back into their pre-war dwellings. The authorities were unwilling to dispossess thousands of Greeks who were occupying Jewish homes. Jews often had to share their homes with the squatters. Law number two, issued by the Papandreou government, nullified decree 1080 which had authorized confiscation of Jewish property in southern Greece during the Second World War. This new law was difficult to enforce when ninety-five percent of Jewish movable properties, with an estimated value of \$154,000 had vanished while the Jews

were away.⁸⁷ Repossessing personal movable property in the south of Greece was easier than in the north; in the former Italian war zone, Jewish property was confiscated only in early 1944, whereas in northern Greece the Germans and Bulgarians already began to systematically expropriate Jewish property in 1942, often giving Jewish buildings to collaborators. In 1947 Jewish claims for property restitution in northern Greece engendered anti-Semitic sentiments; in assorted trials, the courts almost always confirmed the Greek tenants' right to the title of the Jewish property which they were occupying illegally.⁸⁸ Sometimes it was easier for Jews to produce forged identity papers and to give false court testimony to reclaim heirless property of concentration camp victims than to repossess their own homes. It is difficult to determine exactly how long it took for Jews to reclaim property and how much of the property repossessed by survivors was their own or heirless. Most property problems were resolved very slowly and only after political stability returned to Greece at the end of the civil war in 1949. One estimate shows that out of 12,000 Jewish homes occupied by squatters, only 600 claims were contested by Jews in court, of which only 300 dwellings were awarded to the original Jewish owners; thirty of them returned completely intact, while the other 270 homes were given back damaged.

.Efforts to repossess Jewish-owned stores and factories were even less successful than reclaiming homes; out of 2300 occupied business establishments, only 50 were returned to their owners.⁸⁹ Jews in Salonika who succeeded in repossessing their stores or starting new shops faced discriminatory taxes which were set two to three times higher than those of their Greek competitors. Finally, a 1948 moratorium on shop and home rents, also included a clause which prohibited the eviction of squatters thereby making Greek Jews' repossession of personal property an impossible task. ⁹⁰

Reclaiming Communal and Heirless Property

The process of gaining custody over community and heirless property assumed a legal dimension. A large number of the 63,000 Jewish victims of Nazism in Greece died without leaving heirs. The property holdings of the heirless remained mostly in and around Salonika. Heirless property was at first administered by the State, who believed the assets amounted to several million dollars. On October 22, 1944, the Sophoulis government passed a decree transferring to the Jewish community the State's rights over all unclaimed Jewish property. The decree invalidated acquisitions of property by the Germans and by persons acting under their orders, yet it did not affect property taken over by beneficiaries who were Greek citizens.⁹¹ Problems

of multiple transfers of property and compensation for unidentifiable property were not covered in this law. Even though this was the first property restitution law of its kind in post-war Europe, its enforcement depended on the issuing of executive orders, a move that no subsequent Greek government has ever implemented.

The Central Board of Greek Communities appointed OPAIE to estimate the material losses suffered by the Jewish population in order to establish the claims of both the community itself and its individual members for property repossession and German compensation. Conservative estimates put the value of vandalized immovable property at 102 million gold francs for Salonika alone, and another 25 million gold francs for the rest of the country, while losses in movable holdings amounted to 168 million francs for Salonika, and 32 million francs for the rest of Greece. Survivors received one percent reparations from the total lost movable possessions, and fifteen percent of the total immovable property.⁹² A 1948 law increased inheritance taxes on Jewish property and consequently lowered the actual reparations even further. ⁹³

Internal divisions within the Salonika Jewish community over the use of communal assets postponed the signing of the reparations agreement with the German government. Finally in 1966 500 million drachmas in reparations were given to the Salonika Jewish community, of which 650,000 was paid to

the lawyer, 2.5 million drachmas was a gift to Israel, one million went to the Central Board, and the balance to the Athens Jewish community. Compensations paid by the German Federal Republic represented only a small fraction of the actual losses incurred. Thirty years after the end of World War Two, a large number of claims remain unsettled due to the indifference of the German courts coupled with the death of those people entitled to restitution.

The Greek-Jewish community accorded a higher priority to recovering confiscated Jewish communal and heirless property in the cities and provinces. Communal property and public endowments (which included buildings as the synagogue, school, graveyard, orphanage, hospital, old-age and charitable institution, and other real estate) were often used as German military installations during the war. After the 1944 restitution legislation was announced, communal property slowly reverted to each community that had twenty or more Jewish families in residence. In places with fewer than the minimum, communal property was transferred to the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens.

A Jewish community that repossessed its buildings often consolidated and liquidated some of these holdings since the small postwar Jewish population in each community had no need for large and multiple physical facilities. The small communities began to liquidate unused synagogue buildings. The government bought former Alliance school buildings and

turned them into public schools. The Corfu Jewish community rented its communal real estate holdings to local entrepreneurs. Perhaps the largest single sale of Jewish communal property took place in 1951 in Salonika, when the local Jewish community sold to the Greek government the Hospital de Hirsch for two million dollars (three billion drachmas). A third of the income from the hospital sale was used to repay the AJDC for previous loans, while the remainder was spent on welfare and emigration assistance.

The total communal wealth commanded by all the Jewish communities in Greece was estimated in 1953 at \$15 million.⁹⁴ No central organization supervised the use or liquidation of communal property and assets. Immediately following the war, it was almost impossible to sell houses, whose prices had fallen on the average to eighty percent of their pre-war values (while in the past decade the reverse is true; rentals bring in excellent revenues). Salonika had lost its importance as a commercial center; in a poor postwar investment climate, it was difficult to sell properties in the city. In the period following the war, rents for communally-owned houses and shops were based on the pre-war levels, and the income did not always meet the welfare and rehabilitation expenses of provincial communities. Many of the small communities even purchased new real estate holdings in order to make good use of communal assets. Owing to their inability to cover their

needs in other ways, the small communities continued to sell and rent communal property to secure income for communal expenses. Supplementary aid came from income derived from heirless property assets.

Unlike the case of communal property, heirless property was administered by OPAIE (the Heirless Property and Jewish Rehabilitation Fund), an organization created under law number 846, promulgated on January 22, 1946, to receive all the Jewish property confiscated by order of the Nazis from 1941 to 1944. OPAIE has cleared the claims of legal heirs of deceased property owners since 1949 and continues to attend to the unclaimed heirless property, whose income is assigned to the Central Board to benefit the welfare institutions of small provincial communities; in 1950 OPAIE gave the Central Board \$20,000, in 1951 \$18,000 and in 1952 \$12,500. OPAIE's assets include large areas of downtown Salonika, and even the central fruit market. The total value of Jewish heirless property in all of Greece was estimated in 1953 at \$5-\$10 million.⁹⁵ In 1953 OPAIE had under its custody the following heirless properties throughout Greece: 97

City	Houses	Stores	Lots	Fields
Salonika	557	53	92	6
Kavalla	30	3	27	-
Drama	4	4	1	-
Didimotiko{				
Alexandropolis{	65	13	20	5
Nea Orestias {				
Xanthi	25	1	-	-
Komotini	10	2	-	-
Florina	5	-	-	-
Kastoria	22	3	35	-
Ioannina	151	43	-	-
Arta	3	-	-	-
Corfu	9	6	-	-
Chanea	9	1	-	-
<u>Total</u>	890	129	175	11

OPAIE has been in a state of permanent crisis ever since its establishment in 1949. Disagreements and internal partisan rivalries divided the nine member board and resulted in inefficient administration and resignations from the board. A controversy arose between the Zionists and other board members over the former's request to allocate funds from the liquidation of heirless property to help the new State of Israel settle the 7,000-10,000 Jews who had

emigrated there.⁹⁶ In 1953 the Athens representative of the state of Israel recommended that sixty percent of the realized heirless assets should be allocated to Israel, but the Greek-Jewish community took strong exception to this. To resolve the conflict, an international commission was formed of representatives of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities, OPAIE, the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, and the AJDC to dispose of the heirless property if and when the necessary Greek legislation was enacted to enable the property to be reclaimed.⁹⁸ In 1954 OPAIE urged the Greek parliament to pass law 846 from 1946, giving it the power to realize the heirless property. The law was never brought to vote. Nonetheless, money was and continues to be given to Israel every year, but now OPAIE's allocation of funds to Israel and the Central Board are no longer publicized as was customary in the early 1950s.

After the Civil War: Earthquakes and Emigration

In the general elections conducted following the end of the civil war, in March 1950 and September 1951, no single party succeeded in securing the necessary majority for the administration of the country. During this period, the Greek Jews were trying to repossess their property and to establish themselves in jobs. But a series of earthquakes disrupted their efforts, leaving many Greek Jews homeless

and destitute once again. The whole Jewish community of Zante was one of the very few communities to be spared during the holocaust, but in August 1953 an earthquake struck even this isle, as well as Ithaki and Cephalonia. A telegram received at that time by the AJDC Geneva office described the earthquake damage:

For six days all the Jews of Zante, with the exception of an old woman who died there, are now living in Athens. They left their village after all their belongings had been destroyed by fire. They are completely ruined. The group includes thirty-eight people.

The AJDC provided clothing, food, accommodations, and medical help to the victims, assistance amounting to 2.5 million drachmas daily.⁹⁹

Numerous earthquakes struck towns in Thessaly province: homes and shops were reduced to rubble in Volos (April and May 1955), Larissa and Trikala (1955 and 1956). The AJDC, the Jewish Colonization Association of London, and the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany assisted the afflicted Jews by financing new housing projects and helping them emigrate to the United States. In Volos, some of the 37 homeless families (a total of 127 persons) moved into low-cost housing projects, the first of their kind in Greece. Four buildings totaling 16 apartments (accommodating 20 families) were built, while 57 loans were granted for self-housing projects. The cost of the Volos

project was \$90,000. Three buildings consisting of 24 apartments were built in the city of Larissa and one building with 8 apartments was constructed in Trikala.¹⁰⁰ Larissa's Jews established a local group, the "David Society," which sent letters of appeal for earthquake assistance to American Jewish communities in Boston ,New York and elsewhere (appendix 4). The apartment dwellers paid small monthly rents which were considered installments toward the acquisition of the homes. The Central Board repaid the loans made for self-housing improvements to the Jewish Colonization Association.¹⁰¹ The amounts collected in repayment of the Volos housing projects were reinvested in 1968 with JCA approval in Trikala and Larissa . The Central Board of Jewish Communities eventually took over the individual payments to the JCA and the AJDC.

Not all of the earthquake victims wanted to make another start at rebuilding their homes and lives. In the aftermath of each destabilizing and traumatic event since 1945, many Greek Jews decided to begin a new life for themselves away from the provinces, migrating to Athens and Salonika, or emigrating to Israel, South or North America. These migratory trends deprived the post-holocaust Greek Jewish community of much needed leadership. Major waves of Jewish emigration occurred in 1900, 1920, and 1932. The first post-holocaust wave of emigration occurred in 1945. The destruction of the Jewish communities during the war was the

main motivation for Jews to leave. Many of the younger survivors of the holocaust who had lost their families and were without any financial means felt that moving overseas promised a better life than Greece. With only a small Jewish community left in a provincial town it was difficult to observe the holidays in the manner in which they were celebrated before the holocaust. Through the help of the AJDC, HIAS, and the Jewish Agency several thousand Greek Jews left for North and South America. Approximately 500 Greek emigrants moved to Latin America; they used Spanish as a basis for easily mastering the closely related Spanish language of these countries.

Greek Jews also left for Palestine in 1945; the Greek government issued 210 immigration certificates. Because passports were refused to most Jews interested in going to Palestine, a group of 212 Greek Jews chartered a Greek ship and smuggled themselves ashore in Tel Aviv.¹⁰² Jews destined for Palestine went to preparation camps near Athens (hachsharot) where they were given minimal training in Hebrew and potato-planting. Following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, legal immigration to Israel became a possibility. A second wave of emigration began when the civil war ended in Greece in 1949. Many holocaust survivors and Zionists renounced their Greek citizenship and were then given passports to leave for Israel. From 1945 to 1951 some 2,000 Greek Jews moved to Israel.

The destruction of Jewish communities in Greece during the war was the chief motivating factor behind individual migrations. In addition, the postwar emigration included Jews who were hiding in the mountains and did not want to fight in the civil war. The right-wing anti-Semitism that prevailed in Greece during the domestic war (1944-1949) caused many Jews to leave the country. Israel lured only part of the emigrants. Economic reasons swayed many Greek Jews to leave for America instead of Israel. A third wave of emigration, this time almost exclusively to the United States, occurred from 1951 to 1955. The civil war and earthquakes made readjustment to a normal life extremely slow for many Greek Jews; most of them found it difficult to make a decent living. These trying conditions convinced Jews to take advantage of the United States 1950 amendment to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 which granted 10,000 visas to Greek refugees. Under this law about a 1,000 Greek Jews emigrated to the United States in 1951 and 1952. The AJDC spent \$130,000 toward this effort.¹⁰³ Nearly 150 Greek-Jewish families settled in Los Angeles, 15 in Washington D.C., 10 families each in Atlanta and Baltimore, and others in Miami and Seattle. The 1955 earthquakes in Thessaly province resulted in an extension of the 1948 immigration act; the extension included a provision for issuing an additional 17,000 visas for Greek nationals interested in immigrating to America.¹⁰⁴

The emigration of Jews to America brought to a close a turbulent era in Greek-Jewish history. Twenty years of unrest, spanning Metaxas' and Hitler's persecution of the Greek Jews, civil war, and natural disasters left the provincial Jewish communities extremely weak. By the end of 1956 less than 6,000 Jews remained in Greece, of these approximately 1,700 resided in the provinces. Those who were dispersed in the provinces became the small surviving remnant of an age-old Jewish presence in the Balkan peninsula. Today these Jews are constantly struggling to confront new issues of survival, especially how to maintain a small Jewish community without leaders or teachers, a community in which the younger generation is intermarrying or leaving the provinces for life in the big cities. These are among the crucial questions which have challenged the existence of the provincial Greek-Jewish communities in the past thirty years.

CHAPTER FOUR

And You Shall See Your Children Inherit the Land: Greek-Jewish Life in the Provinces From 1956-1983

Greek Jews use a series of contrasts to describe their lives in the aftermath of the holocaust. They speak about Jewish life in the provincial communities in terms of before and after the holocaust. They live in dissolving communities but envision evolving ones. They want to remain in the provincial communities yet distrust their neighbors.

Living in the shadows of the past, Greek Jews perceive World War Two and the ensuing Greek civil war as decisive historical events which transformed stable and flourishing provincial Greek Jewish communities into increasingly weak and crumbling entities. The provincial Greek-Jewish communities and their few surviving members never recovered from these war tragedies. Every holocaust survivor lost many family members during the Second World War. Every provincial community suffered a drastic reduction in its Jewish population.

The civil war, coming on the heels of the Second World War, pitted Greek against Greek, communist against royalist. Many Jews were accused of being communist traitors; some Jews were imprisoned, while others fled to Palestine. Jews returned from the concentration camps to their hometowns in the midst of the civil war; they found themselves without

shelter or work. They tried in vain to regain custody of their homes and stores. Jews slowly started new businesses and looked for new places to live, both in their hometowns and elsewhere.

Survival in an environment full of memories was not easy. Many survivors were unable to reestablish themselves in their native communities. Demoralized by the disappearance of their families, the confiscation of their possessions, and the devastation of their Jewish communities, they moved from the provinces to Athens and Salonika. The Thracian Jewish community in Xanthi is an example of one community remnant that relocated to Athens. Many survivors left Greece. The Zionists among the holocaust survivors immigrated to the newly-established State of Israel. Other Jews hoped to improve their standard of living elsewhere. They emigrated to the United States under the American immigration acts for displaced persons, which were part of the Marshall Plan and earthquake relief programs. In all, close to 5,000 Jews left Greece between 1945 and 1955, leaving 6,000 Jews in Greece.

Some Jews stayed in the provincial towns, perhaps, because of personal attachments to the places in which they and their forbears had inhabited. Some Jews remained in the towns to be near surviving family members. Other Jews did not want to move away from the small towns because of their keen interest in reclaiming former homes and stores, and

perhaps even heirless property; this group was not as destitute as some of the other Jews who left.

Those who remained in the provinces started to build a new life for themselves. The holocaust remnant residing in the small towns during the years 1956-1983 faced challenges to their survival both as individual Jews and as Jewish communities. The post-holocaust era began in 1956 with the end of an emigration cycle which led to the first stabilization in thirty years in the provincial Jewish population level. After 1956 large-scale movements of Greek Jews ceased. However, immigration was replaced by sporadic migrations from the provinces to Salonika and Athens.

The post-holocaust years, 1956-1983, will be discussed from the vantage point of Jews dispersed in the provinces, both in towns with and without organized and functioning Jewish communities. The urban Jewish communities in Athens and Salonika will be mentioned only in terms of their influence on Jewish life in the provincial towns. After understanding postwar demographic developments, the provincial Jewish life of three generations, particularly the post-holocaust generation, will be examined on three levels:

1. The Jewish communal and institutional context; the ways in which Jews organize themselves and operate as a Jewish community in terms of institutions, property-management, and leaders;
2. The Jewish social context; examining traditional patterns of Jewish social behavior in the workplace, the religious education and ritual observance of provincial Jews, and finally, contrasting formal interaction with informal patterns of Jewish identification as expressed in visitation, travel and family gatherings;
3. The general community context; Jewish participation in the social and political life of the general community, and the relationship between Greek Jews and Christians.

The crucial issues of this period concerned the transmitting of Jewish education to the post-holocaust generation, ensuring the continuing existence of the small communities, and maintaining a sense of Jewish identification as religious observance and Jewish educational opportunities lessened. Inter-marriage, the shift from traditional occupations to professional careers, and migration to the large cities threatened the continuing presence of Jews in the provinces. Even when there were so few Jews left in a given town that an organized and autonomous Jewish community could not be maintained, the few Jews, involved as they were in business pursuits, continued to struggle with being solitary Jews in a completely Christian environment. Caring for the local Jewish graveyard and synagogue, forever defending the good name of the state of Israel, these people retained in their hearts a strong feeling of Jewishness and a sense of unity with the people of Israel.

Demographic Features of the Provincial Jewish Communities After 1945

Many Jewish communities completely vanished as a result of the holocaust. In 1945 no Jews remained in Chios, Crete, Cos, Naussa, Katerini, Langadas, and Soufli. The rapidly changing national, social, and cultural dramas taking place in Greece until 1956 affected the continuing existence of the sparsely populated and scattered provincial Jewish communities for the next thirty years. Even though the disintegration of the remaining communities really began with the hellenization policies pursued at the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913, the actual dissolution and disappearance of communities occurred only after the holocaust. An American Jewish Joint Distribution report gave this summary of the Jewish demographic situation immediately after the war:

Twenty-four Jewish communities remain in Greece. About 8000 Jewish people managed to remain alive in hiding. In 5 communities just a few Jews remain, and there is practically no Jewish life. The only problem in these communities revolves around restitution of property. In 11 communities, ninety percent of the population or more was lost. The demographic composition in these communities is abnormal and permits them no future as communities. Six communities which had been in existence for many years and still have more than fifty percent of their former Jewish population are active. There are 1,500 children under 16 years of age, 8 of whom live outside of Athens, and of these 440 are orphans. Only 240 Jews of ages 65 or over

are left. 1,750 members of the population are classified as deportees. Those who escaped or survived concentration camps are in a wretched situation.

Aside from Athens and Salonika, where more than half of Greek Jewry resided after the war, there were 3,346 Jews dispersed in the provinces. By 1960 ,the small Jewish communities in Nea Orestias, Alexandropolous, Komotini, Xanthi, Preveza, and Zante had disappeared. Isaac Askenazi from Didimotiko recounts the end of the Jewish presence in certain Thracian towns:

The three Jews from Nea Orestias (Kalvo, Modiano and Moshketel) went to Israel, two brothers from Alexandropolis parted ways, one of them, Jack Reytan, moved to Athens and the other, Pepo Reytan, went to Philadelphia. Among the Komotini Jews, Aharon Albocher moved to Athens, and the other Jews moved to Israel and America. The only Jewish family remaining in Xanthi (Jack Kazeis) immigrated to Tel Aviv, Israel.

Generally, the very last Jews to leave a provincial town went to cities where they had family. By 1960 only 1,478 Jews were left in the countryside. Clusters of less than twenty Jews each were dispersed in Drama, Seres, Kastoria, Florina, and Arta. Twelve small communities continued to function in Didimotiko, Kavalla, Veroia, Trikala, Larissa, Volos, Karditsa, Chalkis, Patras, Ioannina, Corfu, and Rhodes.

There are no definitive explanations as to why some communities gradually disappeared in the period preceeding

1960, but there are a variety of factors which contributed to the disintegration of the small Jewish communities. In the ten years following World War Two, the American Jewish Joint Distribution and the Central Board of Jewish Communities concentrated their efforts on providing economic relief mainly to individual destitute Jews in Salonika and Athens. Less monetary assistance was given to provincial Jew than to Jews in Salonika or Athens, and usually at a much later date. The relief agencies never separated the problems of the provincial communities from the needs of the urban Jews. In fact, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee increased its assistance to the provincial communities in 1951 precisely because it had previously neglected them by putting the small town communities secondary to Salonika and Athens (see page 100). The Larissa Jewish community, however, was given special attention above all the other smaller communities, perhaps, because it had the ability to pay back more than it was receiving in relief funds.

The Central Board, in particular, disregarded the provincial communities' rehabilitation needs, prompting the Ioannina and Larissa communities to establish their own self-help organizations (the Ioannina Brotherhood and the Larissa "David Society") which appealed to worldwide Jewish communities for the financial assistance that was not forthcoming from the Central Relief Committee in Athens

(appendix 3 & 4). Many Jews in the provinces decided that the best way to improve their life was to move to Athens or leave the country. The following American Jewish Joint Distribution record (from January 30, 1950) demonstrates that after the war some of the Jews from Ioannina returned to their homes while others went to live elsewhere, primarily Athens and Israel:

<u>Destination</u>	<u>Number of Jews</u>
Ioannina	52
Israel	31
Athens	18
Salonika	3
USA	2
Karditsa	1
Larissa	1

More than economic depression afflicted the small town Jews after the holocaust. People were in a state of mental despair. The Jewish relief agencies slowly helped individual Jews overcome unemployment, health, and housing problems. But the survivors' economic and welfare rehabilitation was not accompanied by a revitalization of the community's religious heritage. Relief agencies could not replace the thousands who perished in the concentration camps nor restore the former cultural and religious vitality of each individual Jewish community. Jews resettled in communities that had lost from thirty to ninety percent of their Jewish population. Given that most of the community

teachers, rabbis, and leaders had died in the war or left the provinces immediately afterwards, it was nearly impossible to revive autonomous and flourishing Jewish communal and religious life as it was known before the holocaust.

Partly at the urging of the Central Relief Committee in Athens, the returning Jews attempted to repossess confiscated personal Jewish property in their hometowns. As a result, no Jewish organization encouraged survivors in the provinces to reorganize themselves into larger Jewish communities. Jews resettled in sparsely populated communities. The dispersion of Jews throughout Greece in 1945 determined the fate of many Jewish communities which are still struggling to survive today. Of the 24 communities in existence after the war, only 9 remain active today. Aside from Athens and Salonika, these small communities are the surviving remnant of Greek Jewry: Larissa, Volos, Chalkis, Ioannina, Corfu, Trikala, and Rhodes.

There are other towns in the provinces where Greek Jews continue to reside, but the Greek state and the Central Board of Jewish Communities do not recognize them as members of functioning Jewish communities. The Jewish community in postwar Greece was officially recognized as a community based on law number 2450 of 1920 which states that each Jewish community in Greece is a legal body with privileges

of complete financial independence. This law has become the official measure of what constitutes a living or dissolved Jewish community in the postwar period. It stipulates that any group of twenty or more Jewish families has the legal right to function as a community. This law assumed greater importance after World War Two than had been intended at its inception in 1920. Many Jewish communities in the Greek provinces had lost the bulk of their Jewish population during the war and did not contain enough Jewish residents to qualify as independent legal entities.

Since 1945 the state has applied this law in a haphazard and lenient manner. The Greek government has been inconsistent in its determination of whether twenty Jewish families or twenty individuals constitute a Jewish community. It appears that the State now recognizes twenty individuals rather than twenty families as constituting a Jewish community. This is evident from the government's reaction to the situation in Rhodes. Because so few Jews were living on the isle of Rhodes, the state decided in 1957 to confiscate all the Jewish communal property on the isle (it has been rumored that the Jewish community owns one third of all the land on the isle). The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens reacted swiftly, by resettling on the isle a few poor and unemployed Jews from other parts of Greece; this move protected local Jewish land holdings on the isle. But even after Jews resettled on Rhodes the

number of Jewish residents on the isle never reached the twenty family requirement set by law, yet the State did not pursue the matter further.

Jewish residents in the provinces, especially those in towns without a Jewish community, dislike the implications that the community law has for their own Jewish status within the town they inhabit. Since 1945 the state has empowered the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens to be the legal guardian of the rights and communal property holdings of Jews in any places where there are less than twenty Jews in residence. In 1983 there were very few Jewish families living in the following towns where no organized Jewish community exists: Didimotiko (4 Jews), Kavalla (8), Seres (1), Drama (5), Katerini (5), Veroia (8), Patras (5). One or two Jews were living in Cos, Florina, Pevza, Arta, Candia and Soufli through the early 1970s. Some of these people will never leave these towns while others will join their families living elsewhere in Greece or Israel. Jews who remain in these towns are denied the right to maintain an official Jewish communal presence nor can they represent the Greek-Jewish community at any public community functions without the approval of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens.

Law number 2456 from 1920 was never enforced uniformly until the dictatorship of the Colonels prevailed in Greece from 1967 to 1974. Suddenly, in 1972 the law was strictly

enforced by the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens. Many of the Jews living in the provinces believed that the Central Board took advantage of the political situation in the country to gain control over the communal property in the custody of the dispersed Jews. In spite of the implications of the law, Jews still cling to vestiges of a Jewish communal identity. Only seven Jews reside in Kavalla, and among them is Moshe Pesach who still likes to refer to himself as the President of the Kavalla Jewish community. Some municipalities are not aware of the State law and continue to request Jewish representation at official town functions. Each year Isaac Askenazi, one of only four Jews left in Didimotiko, receives an invitation to represent the Jewish community of Didimotiko at the memorial day gathering at the tomb of the unknown soldier. He cannot attend the ceremony as an official representative of the Jewish community unless he is authorized to by the Central Board in Athens.

The actions taken by the Central Board of Jewish Communities have angered the few Jews still residing in Kavalla, Drama, Didimotiko, Kastoria, and Veroia. The Central Board has been liquidating Jewish communal property holdings in these towns (synagogues, former schools, buildings and lots), using the income generated from these sales to cover Central Board expenditures for the Athens Jewish community. Further, the Central Board has turned a

deaf ear to requests made by the Jews in these towns to maintain the neglected Jewish graveyards and synagogues, and to respond to the constant vandalism of these facilities. Isaac Askenazi's directs his frustration at being an isolated Jew living in Didimotiko at the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens; he holds the Board responsible for the deterioration of the community and the final desertion from the town of most of its Jewish residents:

In 1972 the Central Board confiscated the possessions of the Jewish community of Didimotiko because there were fewer than twenty Jews in residence. The Armenians and Turks have maintained their community representation and property holdings because their communities have many members in residence. But the Central Board's representative, Mr. Joseph Taraboulous, moved from Didimotiko to Salonika, and then acting on the Central Board's behalf, sold the community's property. This community had an Alliance school, a rabbi's house and lots.

After the Central Board sold all of the communal property except the synagogue, the remaining Jewish people moved to Salonika in 1975-1977, because there was no representation for the Didimotiko Jewish community. These Jews should have stayed in Didimotiko to maintain our status as an active Jewish community. They have abrogated their responsibility. They should be here, for they are just as responsible for the community's dissolution as the government law. Even though Didimotiko's Jews have moved to Salonika, they still claim to be residents of Didimotiko because of their immovable property here.

Besides losing our communal possessions, we are not represented as a community and do not receive invitations for town functions. When there was a national liberation day commemoration, Didimotiko's Jewish community was not represented. I called the Central Board in Athens and told them, but they responded that it was too late to have Mr Taraboulous come from Salonika.

Before the holocaust there was no monolithic Jewish community in Greece but after the war the Jewish cultural and regional differences among the communities faded away. Before the war there was a language and cultural gap between the Jews from Macedonia and southern Greece. After the war the provincial communities were united by the common threat to their survival. The functioning small Jewish communities and the pockets of Jews dispersed throughout the provinces are now at different stages of disintegration but share similar problems. Albert Kovo, a former President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities, has pointed out a common survival problem faced by the provincial towns that contain up to ten Jewish families and those places where a Jewish community framework is maintained:

Places with no more than ten Jewish families are completely condemned to die from the Jewish point of view, and will become completely assimilated. If these people care, they will show an interest and priority in doing something about their Jewish way of life. The real

question is to see if the potential of the community will survive.

Functioning communities will survive for one more generation. Their big problem is the deterioration of the community in every way. There is a one way movement in the population from the province to the urban center, and from the urban center to overseas. You can not oblige a people to stay in a place they want to leave.

A Generational Profile of Greek Jews in the Provinces

1. The Pre-Holocaust Generation

The most serious challenge facing the Jews residing in the provinces during the last thirty years has been the basic question of the ability of individual Jews and their communities to survive. A number of major factors must enter into any prognosis of the provincial communities' continued existence: the problem of intermarriage, the supply of young leadership, the level of involvement in Jewish communal affairs, and the size and age of community membership. Three generations of Jews now reside in these communities; the pre-holocaust generation of Jews, born in the provinces during the years 1900-1935, educated in Alliance or local Jewish community schools, and well-versed in many languages, chiefly French and Spanolit in the northern regions of Greece, and Greek in the southern parts. This generation worked as merchants and skilled

professionals before the war. The majority of them either emigrated abroad before the war or were murdered by the Nazis. The few holocaust survivors from this generation reconstituted the provincial communities as they now exist. Approximately fifty percent of the provincial communities' current Jewish population stems from this generation. In Volos the percentage is even higher; seventy-five percent of the Jews were conceived before 1920 while only twenty-five percent were born after this date. Since most of the Greek-Jewish community belongs to this generation, the Jewish population of Greece is a rapidly aging one.

2. The Holocaust Generation

The holocaust generation of Jews, born in the provinces during the years 1936-1956, comprise fifteen to twenty percent of the current Jewish population in the provinces. Due to the long and continuous years of war and the death of many young children in the holocaust, the birth and survival rate was extremely low for this generation. A slight increase in the birth rate occurred in the ten years after the end of World War Two as members of the pre-holocaust generation began to remarry and have families. There were differences between the Jewish upbringing of the pre-holocaust and holocaust generations. Before the war children received a formal Jewish education usually in an Alliance or Jewish community school. Jackie Cohen's

childhood was typical of the Jewish youth born during the holocaust:

I was born in 1942. My father, a man by the name of Cohen, was from Drama. He was killed by the Bulgarians in September 1941, just five months after marrying my mother. My mother went to stay with her father who was the Grand Rabbi of Volos, and on the way there I was born in Kavalla. After my brit milah we entered the German occupied area and after joining up with our family in Volos, my mother, my aunt and uncle from Drama hid in the partisan-held mountains outside of Volos, near the village Keramidi.

After the war, in 1947, my mother remarried a man from Didimotiko named Isaac Askenazi. I lived in Didimotiko for three years and then went to live with my aunt (my mother's sister) in Drama, for she could not bear any children of her own. I grew up in their household with nothing in the way of a Jewish up-bringing. I was not Bar-Mitzvah because there was no community left in Drama.

In 1953 many people went to America and Israel, leaving only four families in Drama. These were difficult years in Greece and people preferred to live elsewhere. Only my uncle, Moshe Pesach, stayed in Drama because of his business. Even though there was no Jewish community in Drama and no rabbi, I still grew up feeling Jewish. I lived in Israel for one month in 1965 to get acquainted with my uncle's brothers and sisters.

When it was time for me to get married, I never thought that I could take another woman. I felt this way since I was a child. Nobody forced me to marry a Jew. I married a Jewish woman from Kavalla and now we have two children whom we are trying to raise as the only Jewish children in a town full of Christians.

Most members of the holocaust generation were like Jackie Cohen; they received a minimal Jewish education. By 1934 the government had forced the closing of foreign-directed Alliance schools, some of which merged into local Jewish community schools. Formal Jewish learning ceased during and immediately following World War Two due to the destruction of the Talmud Torah schools and their rabbis. The only Jewish education acquired by Jewish children who grew up in this period was whatever their parents taught them informally at home. In 1948 a traveling teacher instructed Jewish children in Trikala, Larissa, Ioannina, and Karditsa. However, Jewish religious and cultural education was not organized after the holocaust for sparse concentrations of Jews in the small towns.

Before the war Jews in northern Greece spoke Spanolit and French as primary languages, and reserved Greek, Turkish, and Bulgarian for business purposes. Jews who grew up during the holocaust understood Greek and Spanolit. In central Greece, the elderly and holocaust generations were educated in communal schools where Greek ranked first. They spoke Greek everywhere except in the synagogue, where a combination of Hebrew and Greek were used. In Corfu, Cos, Rhodes Jews were bilingual in Italian and Greek.

Members of the holocaust generation who remained in the provincial towns either entered the family businesses or embarked on new commercial enterprises. They worked chiefly as small merchants of dry-goods, manufactured textiles,

THE AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GREEK JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN 1972*

CITY	AGE GROUP						TOTAL
	1-6	7-13	14-17	17-18	19-25	26 +	
ATHENS	125	211	82	25	231	2096	2770
SALONIKA	23	95	48	12	213	738	1129
LARISSA	32	32	37	6	19	300	426
VOLOS	16	14	6	3	9	153	201
TRIKALA	3	6	1	1	10	76	97
CHALKIS	11	9	2	2	2	73	99
IOANNINA	2	7	3	1	12	62	87
CORFU	2	7	5	-	19	51	84
KARDITSA	2	1	1	2	11	20	37
RHODES	2	2	3	1	5	23	36
VEROIA	1	2	3	-	3	16	25
KAVALLA	-	3	-	-	3	15	21
DIDIMOTIKO	-	3	-	-	5	12	20
PATRAS	-	3	2	-	2	11	18
	219	395	193	53	544	3646	5050

* Courtesy of the Jewish Agency

THE AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VOLOS JEWISH COMMUNITY IN 1983

AGE	NUMBER
1-5	3
6-10	4
11-18	15
19-35	34 --)Married: 16)Single: 18
36-55	21
56 +	79

Total Members	156
Total Families	69
Single	20
Married	49

POPULATION OF RHODES JEWISH COMMUNITY 1966--1983

1966	36
1978	37
1979	33
1980	36
1981	32
1982	34
1983	34

Source: J. Plaut's Fieldwork

THE AGE DISTRIBUTION IN FOUR GREEK JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN 1972*TRIKALA

<u>YEAR OF BIRTH</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Until 1900	8	6
1900-1925	20	20
1925-1950	10	7
1950-1965	9	6

VOLOS

<u>YEAR OF BIRTH</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Until 1907	21	23
1908-1925	32	31
1926-1947	13	17
1948-1955	17	6
1956-1958	--	4
1959-1964	7	8
1965-1972	6	8

KARDITSA

<u>AGE</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Over 90	-	1
81-90	-	1
71-80	2	-
61-70	-	3
51-60	5	3
41-50	-	3
26-40	2	1
19-25	6	5
6-18	1	3

IOANNINA

<u>AGE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>
1-6	2
7-13	7
14-17	4
17-18	3
18-25	<u>9</u>
TOTAL	25

* Courtesy of the Jewish Agency

groceries, appliances, hardware, general merchandise, and kitchenware. Some Jews pursued vocational trades and became tinsmiths, metalsmiths, glaziers, wood-workers, tailors, shoemakers, electricians, and mechanics. Over time, most of the Jewish families in the provinces improved their economic status considerably and today they live comfortably.

The remarkable economic recovery of the Jews was not accompanied by any comparable revival in Jewish education and religious activity. The generation born during the war was torn between their parents' world and the postwar reality downfall of Jewish life. The memory of the holocaust became a strong force of Jewish identification in their lives. Even though they knew less than their parents about the religious traditions and the importance of communal life, they still heard languages other than Greek spoken in the home and were old enough to observe their parents practice Jewish customs. In the period before and immediately after the war children spent most of their early years around other Jews, so that when they matured they retained their solidarity with other Jews. The holocaust generation participated in provincial Jewish communal life by joining Jewish social groups like WIZO, Bnai Brith, and the Zionist Federation. They affiliated with the synagogue less than their parents' generation.

The Jews from the middle generation led an active secular life, frequenting cafes and restaurants with Christian friends. In spite of the absence of formal Jewish education

and a weak commitment to religious life, few people in this generation intermarried. The holocaust made an impact on the perceptions and the Jewish behavior of the maturing generation. This was the generation that assumed from their parents the task of rebuilding the ruined Jewish communities.

3. The Post-Holocaust Generation

The post-holocaust generation of provincial Jews, born between 1956 and 1983, comprise nearly thirty percent of the Jewish population in the provinces. This group is the key to the survival or dissolution of the small Jewish communities. As the younger generation marries and has families, their low birth rate becomes more evident. With deaths outnumbering births, there are simply not enough replacements even to sustain a limited presence in the provinces. Each young family has only one or two children. Greek is the main language spoken by this generation, and Hebrew and English have become their secondary languages. Spanolit is rapidly disappearing as a spoken language for the Jews in northern Greece. French is no longer the cultural language of Greek Jews. The new generation understands some Spanolit, but they do not speak it because Greek was predominately adopted by their parents as the language spoken at home (some parents from the holocaust generation still speak Spanolit among themselves). On the

isle of Corfu and Rhodes, Jews continued to speak Italian after the war, but Greek became the main language spoken by children at home and in school.

The problems confronting the small town youth in particular accentuate the survival dilemma faced by the Jewish community as a whole. The younger generation's attitudes and choices between secular and Jewish education, traditional occupations and professional careers, religious commitment versus secularism and Zionism, intermarriage and Jewish marriage, and migration to urban centers are crucial for the future of the provincial communities. The younger generation's commitment towards the continuing existence of the Jewish community will be discussed in terms of their participation in the organizational life of the provincial Jewish communities, Jewish and secular social activities, relations with Greek Christians, and finally a contrast of three generations' self-perceptions of being a Jew in Greece.

Jewish Communal and Institutional Life in the Provinces

The internal organization of the Jewish community is the product of external forces interacting with Jewish tradition. Most Jewish communities in Greece had a traditional community structure which included institutional roles, organizations such as the synagogue, the school for religious learning, rabbinic courts, charitable provisions,

kosher meat regulation, and ritual immersion and graveyard facilities. As autonomous Jewish communities, they also had their own system of financial support derived from taxation and synagogue gifts.

In the postwar era, neither the provincial Jewish communities nor the solitary Jewish families in the small towns are able to act with total autonomy or authority in the management of their Jewish communal affairs. Greek Jews still maintain the old Ottoman tradition of working collectively through a central organization. They rely on the involvement of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens (KIS) in most of the affairs of the community. The Central Board is totally responsible for every Jewish concern in small towns where no communal organization exists. Whereas before World War Two each provincial Jewish community looked after its own cultural and religious needs, occasionally calling upon the services of rabbis and teachers from Salonika, after the war Athens replaced Salonika as the center of Jewish life; it became the seat of Jewish organizations such as OPAIE, the Zionist Federation, WIZO, Bnai Brith, the Jewish Museum, and the new countrywide federation of Jewish communities---the Central Board of Jewish Communities (an affiliate member of the World Jewish Congress).

The small communities had enjoyed local autonomy in running their affairs since Ottoman days. A clash has now

surfaced between the provincial communities and the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens over the centralization of Jewish life in the postwar period. This is accentuated by the psychology of this period, in which property has become the only important issue of Jewish existence.

1. The Creation of the Central Board of Jewish Communities

At its inception the Central Board of Jewish Communities served the sole purpose of channeling relief funds from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Conference of Jewish Material Claims against Germany to individual communities. When these organizations ended their activities in Greece in 1964, Salonika's Jewish community and OPAIE (the Heirless Rehabilitation Fund) became the chief funding sources for the Central Board's budget. The Central Board's financial autonomy empowered it to become a self-sufficient umbrella organization representing the Jewish community to the government, army, and church. The Salonika community subsidizes over thirty percent of the Central Board's total budget (Estimates of Salonika's communal assets vary from \$20 to \$40 million because the value of Salonika real estate has increased in recent years). Until 1969 the Salonika community was always late in making its payments to the Central Board. In 1965 a congress of the Greek Jewish communities decided that it was

a moral and real obligation for Salonika to cover the central budgetary deficits for the economic rehabilitation of the Greek-Jewish communities. This problem was resolved upon the formation of a new Salonika local community board in 1969. The Salonika community also provides direct assistance to the provincial communities.

**The Heirless Property and Jewish Rehabilitation Fund
(OPAIE) and the Small Communities**

Another postwar organization working closely with the Central Board and affecting the monetary welfare of Jews in the small communities is OPAIE--the Heirless Property and Jewish Rehabilitation Fund-- which was created by a government decree in 1949. Individual, communal, and heirless property issues preoccupied the Greek-Jewish holocaust survivors. OPAIE administers heirless properties and distributes the income to the Central Board. OPAIE is an autonomous body composed exclusively of Jewish people; it has an advisory council in which the Greek government dominates. The OPAIE board is elected every three years; it was in a constant state of instability during the 1960s. After the military coup of 1967 the new military government tried to appoint non-Jewish members to OPAIE, but the Jewish community succeeded in reversing this decision.

In 1964 a major controversy surfaced about whether to use the OPAIE fund for the rehabilitation of the communities or to equally distribute the \$200,000 cash in

the fund to individual Greek Jews. The OPAIE and Central Board executives favored the first option as an answer to finding the means for putting individual communities in a position to meet their individual expenses with funds under their own responsibility. The decision to use OPAIE funds for the rehabilitation of the communities instead of individuals was made by OPAIE and the Central Board without clearance from the government advisory council. OPAIE did not want any state interference and was quite willing to risk protests later.

The practical outcome of OPAIE's decision was that heirless property in Salonika and Larissa were given over to the construction of income-producing buildings. These investments generated an estimated twenty-five percent return on projects in Salonika, which served other needy communities, mainly Athens; and a projected twelve percent return in Larissa, which enabled that community to take care of its own needs.¹⁰⁷ In pursuing this reinvestment policy, it was hoped that the OPAIE capital endowment would grow to over one million dollars. OPAIE has been constantly liquidating properties under its control and using the income for community rehabilitation. A 1965 AJDC memorandum expressed that fifty million more drachmas were needed to complete the rehabilitation and transformation of the Jewish communities into self-supporting entities.¹⁰⁸

The Central Board of Jewish Communities' Involvement in the Small-towns

The small Jewish communities with twenty or more members are represented at the meetings of the Central Board of Jewish Communities. Some, but not all, small communities have representatives who are members of the Central Board. Until the dawn of the Regime of the Colonels in 1967, the Central Board was elected by representatives of all the Jewish communities. Each community elected a general assembly which appointed an executive board. Representatives of the various community executive boards elected the twelve members of the Central Board every three years. Formal elections were prohibited during the military dictatorship years (1967-1974). The junta appointed five members to the Central Board, and designated one member, Joseph Lovinger, as President, a position he occupies to the present day (Lovinger has been reelected President in each new election of the Central Board). The Central Board held one meeting a year until the return of democratic rule to Greece in 1975, at which time elections for the Central Board resumed. Since then, every four years each community sends representatives to a national congress which selects the Central Board members. At the present, only two representatives from the provincial communities sit on the Central Board.

The Central Board has been involved in a benign way in the religious and educational activities of the small communities. The Central Board is officially responsible for the Jewish educational needs of all Greek Jews. Except for Larissa, where a Jewish day school was established in the mid-1950s, the Central Board made informal and temporary arrangements for the other provincial towns, whereby many of the children in these places received a few hours of Jewish instruction each week from a traveling teacher, while in the summer they had the opportunity to attend summer camp.

The Central Board has especially disregarded the educational and religious needs of the smallest concentrations of Jews in the provinces. In 1956 a concerned tourist traveling around Greece sent a complaint to the AJDC office in New York about the dismal condition of the sole six families in Veroia who were losing their Hebraic heritage, especially their children who were not learning Hebrew or being Bar-Mitzvah. In the opinion of the tourist, these people needed Hebrew instruction books, Bibles written in Greek-Hebrew, and financial help. An AJDC interdepartmental correspondence on the matter concluded that the claims were an exaggerated story of the situation and needs of the Veroia Jews. Two of the seven families in residence were already on the welfare list and the others were comfortable in their jobs. Further, there had never been any beneficiary of a loan kassa (a low-interest loan)

in Veroia. Thus, the AJDC representative in Athens expressed the opinion "that the economic situation of the members of that community is rather satisfactory...and if the cultural needs were not being met this would be well known to the Salonika community, and even to the general Jewish community" especially since the Salonika Rabbi was from Veroia and still had family there.¹⁰⁵ The AJDC correctly evaluated the improved economic welfare of Veroia's residents in the aftermath of the holocaust, but like the Central Board, it refused to recognize nor satisfy the pressing religious and educational needs of these Jews.

Property matters and allocation of communal income, more than cultural matters, have occupied the position of greatest importance within the communal framework. The Central Board has expressed over the years a keener interest in significant amounts of Jewish communal real estate assets in places where the Jewish population is at a minimum; in 1966 the Central Board became interested in the plight of property holdings in Ioannina, Corfu and Kavalla, and in 1971 and 1972, in Didimotiko and Kastoria. If and when properties were sold, the Central Board hoped to receive some monetary benefit.

For years the Central Board tried to liquidate properties in Kastoria but the only Jewish family in Kastoria, and two other natives of this city who resided in Salonika and one in Athens, with the collaboration of two officials, siezed

Kastoria communal property and handled it according to their own interests. A delegation of Kastoria Jews in Israel was given a mandate of authorization by the Committee of Kastoria Jews in America to reclaim the communal property. In 1971, two of the Kastorian Jews relinquished the rights to the communal property, but only after being paid 500,000 drachmas. In return, the Central Board received the titles to three property-holdings owned by the Kastoria Jewish community. One of these titles, for the Jewish graveyard, could not be sold as the land had already been expropriated by the Greek army and converted into army barracks.

Elsewhere in the provinces, the Central Board sold communal real estate with greater ease, but in all cases these sales engendered great bitterness on the part of the remaining Jewish residents towards the Central Board; as a result Jews in Kastoria and Didimotiko have severed all ties with the Central Board. The Central Board liquidated the former Alliance school and buildings in Seres; buildings, lots, and the Alliance school in Didimotiko; buildings and a synagogue in Kavalla. In Rhodes, the Central Board saved the communal fortune of four synagogues, a graveyard, and vast land holdings from confiscation. Back in 1957, when the government became interested in reclaiming the communal property of the dissolved Jewish community, the Central Board decided to reconstitute the Jewish community on Rhodes. The Central Board solicited contributions to support

the project from Rhodian Jews in America and Africa. Close to thirty unemployed and improverished Greek Jews from the mainland, and a few Egyptian-Jewish refugees resettled the Jewish community. The late Greek-Jewish historian, Sam Modiano, recounted the resettlement project:

We have remanned the community of Rhodes. In Rhodes there were exactly Morris Soriano, the President of the Community, and two other poor families. We have sent people who were jobless and could do some work, because Rhodes is a very active tourist center. Thanks to Soriano, they found work. They are very happy there.

Today the reconstituted Jewish community of Rhodes has property valued at several million dollars; it is typical of the other small Jewish communities in Greece who have no intention of relinquishing any of their communal property to the Central Board. Communal property remains an issue of contention between the Central Board and the remaining small provincial Jewish communities.

Over the years a variety of scholarly institutions in Israel have shown an interest in the neglected Jewish libraries and manuscripts in the small Greek communities. The Ben-Zvi Institute dispatched Salonika-born David Benveniste to Greece to arrange for the transfer of various collections to Israel. He brought back to Jerusalem the libraries of Rabbi Shimon Pesach of Volos and Yehudah Perahia of Kavalla. Pre-war community records from all the

Greek-Jewish communities have been given to the Central Archives of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.

Jewish Community Institutions: The Synagogue and Graveyard

In contrast to the serious consideration that it accords to endangered communal real-estate holdings, the Central Board gives little attention to the upkeep of the various synagogues and graveyards in places without Jewish communities.¹⁰⁶ The Central Board is responsible for looking after Jewish synagogues and graveyards in localities where a Jewish community no longer exists. In many instances the graveyards and synagogues are the last reminders of the former importance of the local Jewish community in a given provincial town, and these too are now disappearing. The Greek Jews refer to their burial grounds as *Beit Chaim*--the house of the living. Many of the Jewish graveyards were established in the North in the sixteenth century on the city outskirts. With the rapid expansion of provincial towns following World War Two, Jewish graveyards were surrounded by new housing projects and suddenly found themselves situated on valuable property in close proximity to city centers. In order to erect new public buildings, the Greek government confiscated the Jewish graveyards in Corfu, Rhodes, and Salonika and moved them along with the bodily remains to new locations. In the early 1970s the

Central Board of Jewish Communities financed the construction of pathways and walls to protect the remaining graveyards in Trikala (in 1971), Didimotiko (1978), Drama, and other towns. Many of these walls are now crumbling and the burial grounds are overgrown and littered with trash.

All the Jewish graveyards in Greece, but especially those in Veroia and Cos which are without surrounding walls, have been desecrated by the local population. Marble gravestones are constantly stolen from these burial grounds and recycled for use as building materials. Many tombstones from the former Salonika graveyard have been used for sidewalk pavements, staircases, and even as building blocks for the reconstruction of St. Demetrios, the Salonikan metropolitan Church. Whenever a stone was too large for its new function it was cut in half. Tombstones in Rhodes were stolen and reused in the construction of private homes. Army barracks were erected on the former Jewish graveyard in Kastoria; most of the tombstones disappeared, except for a few stones which were made into a floor of an army storage room. In Nea Orestias, the graveyard is under plow and in Xanthi nobody cares for the land. The municipality of Seres constructed a reservoir on the site of the local Jewish graveyard. A few stones can now be viewed at the Seres city museum. In Trikala, Kavalla, Corfu, Larissa, and Drama graves are occasionally dug up by Greeks who believe that Jews bury their dead with gold and jewelry.

One unusual place is Zante. No Jews remain on this isle yet the graveyard is well cared for by communal funds administered from Athens. When the Jewish community was dissolved, it gave enough communal funds to the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens to cover the salary of a graveyard caretaker. Hence, the graveyard in Zante is well maintained. Even though Jews no longer reside on the isle of Cos, (an isle that served as a regional graveyard for the Dodecanese isles), a caretaker is also supported here by Athenian funds. However, the protective wall that was built in the early 1970s has crumbled away and the theft of many gravestones has ensued.

It is generally feared by Jews in the provinces that when towns have no more Jewish residents, the local municipalities will reclaim the land occupied by the Jewish graveyards. These Jews believe that graveyard land may revert back to the state if the tombstones disappear and people erect houses on the burial grounds. This has already begun to happen in Veroia; children who live in the neighborhood use the graveyard as a soccer field. The few remaining Jews in Veroia, Drama, and Didimotiko have written letters to the Central Board in Athens complaining about the vandalism and negligence of their graveyards. Their letters have gone unanswered. The Chief Rabbi in Athens has been consulting a Sephardi rabbinic court in New York City about the possibility of gathering and transferring the bodily

remains of the desecrated and disappearing graveyards to communal graves in Salonika or Athens. To stop the further encroachment of new houses onto Jewish graveyard property, the five remaining Veroia Jews are interested in transforming a section of the graveyard into a public park which will contain a monument to commemorate the presence of Jews in Veroia since the times of the Christian apostle Paul. Though the Central Board has not responded to this particular proposal, it has cooperated with other individual communities in erecting thirty memorials around Greece to honor the Jews who perished in the holocaust.

In another instance, the Jewish community of Ioannina was involved in 1966 in a dispute with the municipality over the ownership of the Jewish graveyard in the Dodoni section of that city. The Jewish community wanted to sell part of the graveyard to finance the construction of an apartment building. The local tax authorities intervened and demanded that the land be awarded to the Greek state; they contended that the plot was never purchased by the Jews, but was a gift of the Ottoman empire to the local Jewish community. The Ioannina Jewish community decided to search the archives in Turkey for documentary evidence and to appeal to the Turkish government to prove that the five acres of land was indeed not a gift. The issue was resolved when the Greek authorities dropped the matter. As it turned out, the Jewish community never sold the land.¹⁰⁹ It seems as though

the local municipality wanted to appropriate Jewish communal property, an act which would have removed an important historical link in the local heritage and identity of Ioannina's Jews.

Perhaps the history of the Chios Jewish graveyard is indicative of what will happen to the rest of the graveyards in the Greek provinces if Jews abandon an isle or a town. In 1823 the absolute rights to the graveyard were presented to the Jewish community by the Turkish authorities. The graveyard fell into disuse after the majority of the Jews departed from Chios. The last Jewish family was deported by the Nazis and the land fell into total neglect. Tombstones were carried away by vandals. In 1957 the Athens rabbinate presented the few remaining stones were presented to the Chios Museum. The rabbis then deconsecrated the graveyard and abandoned the land. In recent years a prison has been built on the site. In 1962 scattered tombstones were collected from the Churches of Agia Marina and Agia Ioannis and others were discovered in a field near a girls gymnasium. Thus, the final historic landmark preserving the memory of a Jewish community on Chios has vanished.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities has been as careless in its responsibility for the maintenance of the remaining synagogues in the provinces as it has been for the graveyards. It is easier for the Central Board to monitor the synagogues than the graveyards. The Central Board

usually protects or disposes of the synagogue buildings, depending on whether or not there is any Jewish presence left in a town. Komotini is one example of the Central Board's total neglect of a magnificent but empty synagogue building. No Jews have lived in Komotini since 1948. All that remains of former Jewish life in this Thracian town is the hollow shell of an early seventeenth century synagogue. The synagogue was used by the Nazis for stabling horses. When the building was in danger of being torn down in 1980, the Athens Jewish Museum succeeded in having the building declared a national historical landmark.

In Didimotiko, too, an empty synagogue shell is all that remains from the Nazi desecration of the building. In 1982 the army began to build guard booths in front of the entrance to the synagogue. As long as Isaac Ashkenazi resides in the town, he will watch over the synagogue, but should he move away, it is easy to imagine what will happen to the building. The last Jew on the isle of Cos died in 1978; today a Christian family who lives across from the synagogue watches over the building and safeguards the keys, occasionally clearing away the garbage that is thrown over the walls. In Chanea, Crete a synagogue and several other buildings still stand in the old Jewish quarter.¹¹⁰ The synagogue is maintained as a popular tourist site.

Many synagogue buildings have been sold since the holocaust. In towns where with few Jews in residence, the

Central Board has relinquished ownership of the synagogues for which it has legal custody. The synagogues in Kastoria, Seres, Drama, and Kavalla were sold and eventually torn down by the new owners. Only in Kavalla was another synagogue reestablished to replace the abandoned one; the synagogue has been relocated to the Jewish community center where it is maintained but never used by the remaining seven Jews (since 1970). The synagogue in Patras was about to be torn down, but it was salvaged through the great effort of the Athens Jewish Museum and reconstructed in a room at the museum. It has been renamed the Alkabetz synagogue and was rededicated in 1984 by the Chief Rabbi of France, M. Shlomo Sirat. The synagogue in Veroia is old and creaky on the outside and dirty and unused on the inside. The few remaining Veroian Jews have given all but one of their Torah scrolls away to the Athens Jewish community. David Cohen, one^{of} the remaining Jews in Veroia, looks after the empty synagogue building.

The current Jewish residents in the communities in Trikala, Volos, Chalkis, Larissa, Ioannina, Corfu, and Rhodes are responsible for the maintenance of their synagogues. Descendants from some of these cities who permanently reside overseas contribute towards the upkeep of the buildings; Jews of Rhodian extraction have refurbished the synagogue on that isle while the Ioannina Sisterhood

group in New York City collected \$4,000 to subsidize repairs of the Ioannina synagogue.

The Local Jewish Councils in the Provinces

The Greek-Jewish community in the postwar period has been better organized and more influential on a countrywide basis than at the level of the local community. The local council of each community is the ruling body that makes decisions regarding community services and activities. Each one of the seven active communities has an assembly which meets once a year as a legislative body. They elect a community council of five members, including a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and two Secretaries. The President of the local Jewish community, recognized by both the Jews and Christians in the town as the leader of the Jewish community, also represents the local community at meetings of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Athens. Each provincial community differs in the unity of its local board. Unlike the factional rivalry which characterizes the Central Board, there is usually no contest for local council membership. Because Jewish communal activities do not occupy an important place in the lives of individual families, few people seek a position on the board. Those people who are elected to the local board serve for several years and the offices are usually rotated among them.

Corfu is one example of a Jewish community in a state of strife; certain families in the community refuse to serve on the local council or attend the synagogue services. The community is small in number (60), and substantive issues are resolved along family lines. Deep divisions exist between the different families making up the community. This is especially so with regard to the use of communal property and in the selection of one younger community member as Chazan. The Chazan carries an important status because he is entitled to claim this religious position as a reason for army duty exemption. Four years ago one member of the Jewish community attacked the President of the community over the council's refusal to honor a community-wide vote which approved the rental of a community-owned facility to the member. The matter ended up in the civil courts and has left the Corfu Jewish community even more divided.

More characteristic of the local councils in the other provincial Jewish communities is their lack of influence the lives over the Jews resident in the small towns. Perhaps, communal stagnation is due to a general lack of enthusiasm on the part of council members and the few demands made on them by the Jews of their communities to provide an organized Jewish life. In Ioannina, Larissa, Volos, Chalkis, and Rhodes, the composition of the community boards changes only infrequently. Members of the younger generation have

joined the community council in Trikala, but their presence has not altered the passivity of that community council.

The local Jewish council is responsible for the upkeep of communal property, as well as for the religious, cultural, and educational life of the community. Most programming for the latter is minimal and revolves around the synagogue and community center; the functions of both of these have been combined into one facility (as in Corfu, Kavalla, Larissa, Chalkis and Volos). The Central Board assumes overall responsibility for Jewish education, mainly hiring teachers and providing supplies, but the cost of teachers' salaries is shared by both the communities involved and the Jewish Agency of Israel. When a rabbi is brought to officiate at a life cycle ceremony, the particular family requesting the services of the functionary pays the expenses involved, with assistance extended to needy Jews by the communal council.

The provincial communities support themselves from the rental income of real-estate belonging to the community. Assets directly owned or liquidated by the communities are considered communal property. The fiscal health of each small community is directly related to the amount of its communal property-holdings. To secure sufficient income for their needs, some communities sell off unprofitable land and buy new property. Making profitable use of old and new real estate, the resources of certain communities are growing.

The Corfu Jewish community is extremely wealthy, because it retains ownership of the former Jewish quarter, which is today the main tourist center on the isle. The community rents out its many buildings for tourist shop concessions.

On the other hand, the Ioannina Jewish community is comparatively poor, owning only fifteen small houses and shops which have yielded minimal rent since 1966.¹¹¹ The Central Board helped the Ioannina Jewish community fund the construction of an apartment building. This became the residence for most of that community's Jews who suffered the loss of their homes in the 1969 earthquake. The Trikala community is also quite poor, especially in comparison to the land-rich Jewish communities of Larissa, Chalkis, and Rhodes; land wealth is a factor which enhances the autonomy of these latter communities. Because of its immense assets, the Larissa Jewish community will be able to relinquish its outstanding debt of \$20,000 on schedule (in 1988) to the AJDC for the funding it provided in the construction of community housing following the 1956 earthquake.

Though some communities are wealthier than others, no financial assistance is exchanged between them. Only the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens and the Salonika Jewish community provide financial help to the provincial communities. A 1968 AJDC memorandum mentions a shift in the relationship between the Greek-Jewish communities from a "mentality of everyone for his own parish

until October 1968, to a feeling of growing responsibility to weaker communities in the country as well as abroad."¹¹²

While there is no intercommunity sharing of financial resources, the small communities are informally connected to each other through local chapters of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) which sponsor occasional joint meetings and field trips. The Pan-Hellenic Jewish Youth Movement, incorporated in 1977, brings together the Jewish youth from adjoining communities (Chalkis and Volos, Larissa and Volos, Larissa and Trikala) for occasional social weekends. The most important bond between the Jews in the provinces is the family link; Jews who inhabit different provincial towns are often related through marriage, a fact that has brought the small provincial communities closer together as extended families.

Jewish Leadership in the Provinces

The postwar Jewish communities in the provinces lack leadership. The holocaust left more than vacant Jewish neighborhoods and demoralized survivors; it robbed the returning Jews of their Chachamim (rabbis) and teachers who stood in the front of their communities as leaders. Before the war the leadership of the community was traditionally divided into social and religious areas. This arrangement continued after the war. The President and Vice-President of the community are responsible for community

organizations, social welfare, the Jewish center and education. The role of the Chacham is confined to the religious domain; his responsibilities before the war included leading services and life-cycle events, and acting as ritual slaughterer during Passover and the High Holidays. The Greek Jews' decreasing interest in religion has led to a corresponding weakening of the status and religious authority of the Chacham in the postwar period. One sign of this is the attitude toward kashrut. Because of the small percentage of Jews in each small town, and the fact that even fewer of these are willing to buy more expensive kosher meat, ritual slaughtering has been difficult to maintain except during the High Holidays. Rabbi Mizan of Athens sums up the frustration he feels towards what has happened to religious authority since the holocaust:

The nucleus is missing--there is not one family that keeps the Shabbat in all of Greece. There is no hope that they ever will. They work on Saturday. No one keeps kosher. I accept all this. There is a movement away from religion to secularism. Things were not different when I was growing up in Larissa. The Jews do not need me here in Greece. Why should I save the Jews of Greece. They have nothing to do here. They should all go to Israel. I will go to Israel the minute I can get a job there, for I have my own children to care about. I want to raise them as good observant Jews. This can not be done in Greece.

Such secularization of Jewish life in the postwar period is paralleled to similar trends in the general Greek-Christian community.

There has been a shortage of learned leaders since the war. Most of the pre-war rabbis either have died or emigrated. After the last remaining rabbis in Corfu, Ioannina, Trikala, and Chalkis passed away, they were never replaced. Though they taught the post-holocaust generation basic some Hebrew and Jewish history, students felt that the rabbis were too old to be effective teachers. Today three ordained Chachamim, all of them born in the provinces, serve the Jews of Athens; two of them were trained in a Paris seminary and the third one was trained in England. Another elderly Chacham and his assistant serve the Salonika community.

No fully ordained Chachamim reside in the provinces. The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens hoped that one of the three rabbis who has been ordained since the war would take up permanent residence in a town in Thessaly, and from there serve the Jews in the surrounding communities. The rabbi ordained in England returned to his hometown Trikala, where he served for a few years, until he grew tired of small town life. Today he lives in Athens and is employed by the Central Board of Jewish Communities as a circuit-rabbi for the provincial communities during Jewish holidays and life cycle events.

Two self-taught Chachamim, who were formerly Chazanim (cantors) reside in the provinces, one in Volos, the other in Larissa. After thirty-five years as Chalkis' unordained acting rabbi, Menashe Cohen, went to Jerusalem to receive ordination at a Yeshiva. After ordination Cohen stayed on in Israel. On occasion he returns to Chalkis to lead High Holiday services.

The severe shortage of rabbis is partly due to financial considerations. The individual communities are responsible for paying the religious functionaries. If certain communities really wanted to hire a full-time rabbi, they could employ one, but most members of the provincial communities are unwilling to pay for the services of a rabbi. An Israeli who was interviewed in 1970 to become a Chazan and mohel in Athens felt that the \$300 monthly salary was insufficient.¹¹³

The provincial Jewish communities of Ioannina, Corfu, Trikala, Chalkis, and Rhodes are without trained religious practitioners. They rely on their most learned members to lead the community in observance of Jewish rituals and holidays. But even the most learned members of a community cannot read Hebrew, and in such places services do not take place on Shabbat morning unless the Torah can be read in Hebrew. For major Jewish holidays, one of the three rabbis is brought in from Athens at the expense of the local community. The Trikala, Ioannina, and Volos communities must

share the one traveling rabbi during Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover. The President of the Corfu Jewish community, Armando Cohen, lived in Israel for several years and knows enough Hebrew to act as a prayer leader. The Larissa Chacham usually officiates at life-cycle events in the various Jewish communities in Thessaly. Mostly he conducts wedding and funeral ceremonies, as well as services commemorating death anniversaries. Circumcision and ritual slaughtering for kosher Passover meat are performed by one of the Athens rabbis who comes to the provinces especially for such occasions.

As the number of provincial Jews continues to decrease, more members of the community are sharing responsibility for the maintenance of Jewish life. Leadership has fallen on new shoulders since the end of World War Two. Today the President of the Jewish community, usually an accomplished businessman, acts as community representative in all matters which arise involving the local Greek authorities and the national Jewish organizations. The members of WIZO have become activists involved in daily Jewish communal affairs. With lessened religious activity, WIZO's organizers have become leaders in the sense that they plan social events which bring Jews together in a community setting. Betty Chalewa is the current President of the local WIZO chapter of Trikala (and also the Vice-President of its Jewish community council); her enthusiastic leadership has

instilled new life into the cultural and Zionist communal gatherings held in Trikala. Young and active WIZO leaders in Ioannina and Larissa have made their organization and its activities an important new Jewish social outlet for the community.

People presently holding top voluntary leadership positions in the small towns share many characteristics. All were born before or right after World War One; all received a Jewish education in an Alliance or Jewish community school, and then entered business. They are all holocaust survivors. They have governed the Greek-Jewish communities since the end of World War Two, a period over which they have become wealthy and have established good ties with the local elite in their towns. The present leadership is not recruiting potential leaders from among the middle and younger generations. The problem now is who will succeed this older generation as the new Jewish leaders. An exception to this trend was the election in the mid-1970s of then thirty-year old Alberto Ganis to the Presidency of the Trikala Jewish community. Ganis brought a positive, forward-looking attitude to his job, and yet he was also realistic about the problems which the Trikala community faced:

Sixty percent of the people are old and twenty percent are young. The old people's only problem is that they feel the absence of the rabbi...but the young

must take over and find solutions to the problems. To keep young people in Judaism you have to be young. We must involve the old people with the feelings of the young. We need religion. Man is confused and can't throw it away. Since having a child, I feel the problems, I think of what will happen to him. There is the problem of giving the young a good Jewish education and culture. In the absence of the rabbi, there has been no educating of the young for three years. Education today can't give directions to people, only traditions can. We must keep the community center alive. Children go to the center for Kabbalat Shabbat and films.

Today there are no young Jewish leaders like Ganis anywhere in the Greek provinces. And Ganis is no longer President of the Trikala Jewish community; after divorcing his wife, he quit the community council and separated himself from the Jewish community. The reins of leadership have been handed back to the middle generation in Trikala, but there are still two younger members on the local board, one of whom is married to a Christian. Given the small size of the provincial communities, the rapidly rising average age of its membership, the high rate of mixed marriages, and the rather low level of active participation in communal life, especially among young adults, it is not surprising that the unanswered question of who will provide future Jewish leadership poses a serious obstacle to community continuity.

As the small communities slowly distintegrate, those people who maintain various communal facilities become

extremely important for community continuity. The small clusters of Jewish families dispersed throughout Thrace and Macedonia attest to the importance of managerial aspects of leadership in communities that are growing smaller in size. Today's leaders serve not only as Jewish representatives in a predominately Christian town environment, but also as the keepers and guardians of communal facilities. Moshe Pesach, one of seven Jews left in Kavalla, is not only self-acclaimed President of the non-existent Jewish community; he also watches over the graveyards, synagogues, and heirless properties still owned by defunct Jewish communities. Similarly, in each of the the seven active communities, the managers and caretakers of the functioning institutions are assuming those roles which are crucial to community continuity: recordkeeper, synagogue caretaker (shamas), and graveyard attendant. The people who perform these duties help ensure the maintenance of the community.

The most active provincial communities (Larissa and Ioannina) employ a paid administrative secretary who oversees communal property and institutions, and updates birth, marriage, and death records; the other communities assign these duties to members of their elected board. The Jewish communities in Corfu, Ioannina, and Rhodes hire Greek Christian gravetenders. For over seventeen years the Ioannina Jewish community has employed Evangelos Skivis (a Christian born in Albania) to care for the burial grounds.

Skivis (who has six watch dogs) lives in a house on the grounds and cultivates a large garden of vegetables and fruit trees. As one walks past the graves, Skivis speaks fondly about many of the deceased people he knew. Those Jewish communities without hired graveyard attendants must rely on their own members to maintain the grounds; without a guard on the premises, it is difficult for these communities to prevent vandalism.

The shamas (synagogue caretaker) is not normally considered a person upon whom the future vitality of a Jewish community depends. But in 1983 a community crisis involving the hiring of a new shamas in Trikala brought into question the very future of synagogue life in that town. The man who had served as shamas, Eliyahu Raphael Atun, together with his wife moved away to Chalkis, putting an end to his family's 500 year presence in Trikala. The local community council members could not agree on whether or not to hire a new shamas. Certain council members argued that the shamas' chief responsibility was opening the synagogue every Friday night and holidays. But the previous shamas had also cleaned the synagogue building, visited the different Jewish stores to inform people of upcoming ceremonies, called people to services, and announced any memorial services (a yeshiva) for deceased persons. Certain board members were in favor of hiring a Jew who had recently moved to Trikala at a salary of 4,000

drachmas a month. Other board members pushed through a motion that even though Atun was paid 9,000 drachmas a month, a lower salary was in order because only one hour of work was needed each week to prepare the synagogue for Friday night services. The shamas candidate rejected the lower salary, and the immediate care of the synagogue was entrusted to the prayer leader, Moshe Ganis, and the local President of WIZO, Betty Chalewa.

This controversy concerned more than the salary of the new shamas; it was a community crisis about the conditions under which the synagogue would stay open as a center for Jewish life in the town. Those board members who favored a lower salary, never attended Friday night services and, therefore, attached less significance to keeping the synagogue functioning as usual. However, without a shamas, the religious and cultural life of the Trikala Jewish community would change in the direction of less activity, and certain customs would disappear in the process. No memorial services took place after the old shamas left the town, because nobody took his place going around to the Jewish stores, offering the customary loaf of bread and inviting fellow Jews to the synagogue or a home to read Psalms and say Kaddish. After the shamas moved, the community even considered keeping the synagogue closed except on holidays. In the absence of a shamas in Ioannina, the synagogue opens only three times a year.

Clearly, the future stability of the Trikala Jewish community as well as other provincial communities is dependent on the commitment of its members to sustain the institutions and activities which are crucial to Jewish continuity. Jewish life in these small communities often relies on a single individual who is irreplaceable.

The small provincial communities have failed to revitalize their Jewish communal life since the holocaust. They have turned to the national leadership in Athens for direction, but the Central Board of Jewish Communities has neglected their cultural and religious needs but taken an interest in their property matters. A former President of the Central Board has remarked that the small communities are condemned to death. All the rabbis live in Athens and shun the daily religious needs of the Jews in the provinces. On a local level, the communal boards have confined their activities to the management of communal property and the maintenance of the synagogue and graveyard institutions. Very few young people are interested in working in leadership positions, and until the late 1970s no organized efforts were made to attract them. Even the synagogue and graveyard caretakers are relinquishing their jobs, and there is nobody to replace them. Overall, the decline of Jewish institutions in small communities can be explained by the waning interest of Jews (especially the younger ones) in matters Jewish, and in their commitment to Judaism.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR EXECUTION IN 1980

Function	Responsible Organization or Institution
Community Relations	The Community Board (indirectly, Central Board of Jewish Communities, WJC)
Education, Youth and Culture	Jewish Museum, Athens Day schools (Athens, Salonika, Larissa) Youth centers and youth clubs Religion program in the public schools (Salonika) Summer camp The Adult Club WIZO The Zionist Federation B'nai Brith Pan-Hellenic Jewish Youth Movement
Fund Raising	Central Board of Jewish Communities
Press	<u>Jewish Review</u> (fortnightly, private) <u>Chronicles</u> (monthly of the Central Board of Jewish Communities, <u>New Generation</u> (monthly of Pan-Hellenic Jewish Youth Movement) <u>Israeli News</u> (monthly of Greek-Israel Association)
Religion	Community Board
Sports	Maccabi (Salonika)
Welfare	Central Board of Jewish Communities (Administered through Local Boards)

(From page 20 of The Study of the Community of Greece undertaken by the Center for Jewish Community Studies, Jerusalem, 1980)

The Social Life of Jews in the Provinces

The communal and institutional framework in existence in the postwar period satisfied few of the immediate needs of the generation growing up in the provinces over the last thirty years. The absence of religious leaders and teachers after World War Two disrupted the practice of religious traditions and the transmission of Jewish education to the younger generation. But life went on for the Jews in the province. All three generations have tried to maintain some sense of Jewish identification in a social environment virtually devoid of Jews. Because of the shortage of teachers and rabbis, and a general trend toward secularization in Greek society, it has become more difficult for Jews in the provinces to engage in what were the traditional patterns of Jewish identification before the war: affiliation with a Jewish school in order to attain a Jewish education and involvement with the synagogue for religious observance. Instead of such organized affiliations, less structured Jewish socialization has prevailed in the postwar period. Getting together in the workplace or as a family; traveling to Athens, Salonika or Israel; and buying wholesale and retail merchandise from Jewish businesses. All these have evolved into the most prevalent and informal ways for Jews in the provinces to

socialize and still retain a feeling of Jewishness and group identity.

The biggest change to occur in Jewish life after the war has been the disappearance of Jewish schools in all but one provincial town. Jewish community schools were not reestablished after the war, except in Larissa, where a Jewish day school was established in the 1950s. Larissa had more Jewish children than any other towns in the provinces, and it also had the vast communal assets necessary to maintain a school facility. Yet, the Central Board as the responsible body for Jewish education in the provinces made no attempt to hire steady teachers and rabbis who would reside in the other small towns and serve them full-time. Consequently, except in Larissa, no permanent system of Jewish schooling was organized for any of the Jewish children scattered in the small towns of central and northern Greece. The absence of Jewish schools and regular religious instruction has contributed to the progressive hellenization of Jewish youth, in effect accelerating a policy officially set in motion in 1934 when the government closed all foreign operated schools, making the state schools a place where a common Greek-Christian identity was shaped.

As a result of the disappearance of the communal schools in the provinces, an educational program was formulated in a

1948 American Jewish Joint Distribution Report on the Status of Jewish Education in Greece. The report concluded that

the task is a two-fold one--if Jewish instruction is to be restored: to procure qualified teachers from abroad--preferably Greek-speaking teachers from Israel, and to develop a series of textbooks based upon the Greek language for the teaching of Hebrew, Jewish history and tradition, the history of Greek Jewry and modern Israeli life. (Prior to the war all text books of Jewish instruction were in Hebrew or French).114

According to this report there were 804 children between the ages of 6 and 14 in 1948, of these only 341 in 8 communities received any kind of Jewish instruction. A short appendix to the general report provided a short description of the educational situation in the largest provincial Jewish communities in Greece:

Larissa In Larissa, which is the third most important community, a Jewish School was operating until the first half of 1947. From September of the same year, the school was dissolved due to the fact that the building was requisitioned by the refugees from guerilla-stricken villages. From September 1947 to May 1948, 75 of the 100 children were taught in a room rented by the Community. Lessons were given in Hebrew, grammar, history, prayers, Perashsa, Tahilim, a little literature and some songs. From May 1948 the Center too was dissolved due to the fact that the only teacher and Rabbi of the town left for the United States.

Other educational centers in this town did not exist. During the holidays

(Purim, Chanukah, etc.) members of the community, specifically Zionist, meet together in the Synagogue where speeches are made and children sing Hebrew national songs.

Trikala The children of this community number 50, of whom 40 attend the children's center of the town every day except Saturday and for two hours per day. Here they are taught Hebrew and the Jewish religion by the Rabbi of the town. At the present time they meet at the Synagogue until the premises which are intended for a club and school are completed, with the help of a contribution from our organization. In this community too, special celebrations are organized for the children and adult community during holidays.

Volos A children's center was organized for the first time in October 1947 by Dr. Schreiber [He was an Askenazi rabbi who served the Corfu Jewish community in the interwar and postwar period]. Of the 56 children of this community, 40 attend the Center twice per week for one or two hours. Jewish girls voluntarily instruct the children in Hebrew and Greek songs and games. No other instruction is given to the children because of the absence of a suitable teacher. The same type of celebration as in other communities is held in Volos for holidays and festivals.

Patras Of the 13 children in this community, 9 visit the children's center organized by Dr. Schreiber, which is open for three hours twice a week. The Hazan of the community is teaching these children Hebrew and Jewish religion. The children meet, and holiday celebrations are held in the small extensions of the Synagogue in which are also housed the office of the Jewish community and the Zionist Club.

Chalikis In this community Dr. Schreiber organized a children's center where 22 of the 25 children attend twice a week for two hours. The Hazan of the synagogue,

who knows some Hebrew, is teaching the children Hebrew and Jewish History. The center is housed in an office of the community until a special center is prepared with the help of the contribution from our organization. Holiday celebrations are held in the Synagogue by the Zionist youth.

Ioannina Although there are only two children in this community of school age. Hebrew lessons are given to them by the Hazan of the Community. Through Dr. Schreiber, this community is trying to obtain the services of a teachers from Palestine who will be paid by the Jannina Relief Fund of America. Lessons will be given not only to the children but to any older members of the community in the Synagogue or the Community with great enthusiasm.

In other communities of the Provinces there are no educational centers either because there are no children or no possibilities. None of the communities has any Jewish educational center for adults nor any library.115

Formal Jewish educational opportunities were limited for most Greek Jews in the postwar period. For those who did receive a Jewish education at the day schools in Athens, Salonika, and Larissa, the maximum schooling lasted for six years, yet the majority of Jewish children throughout Greece usually received less than two years of instruction. During the twenty years that followed the war, Jewish children in small towns relied on after-school instruction once or twice a week from the local rabbi. In most instances this was fairly informal instruction and lasted no more than two years. In certain small towns a rabbi or teacher visited

only occasionally; children had no continuous Jewish education because local lay teachers were unavailable.

Once the local communal board in each small Jewish community was reestablished, it included a committee which was responsible for local Jewish education. As the surviving rabbis and Chazanim passed away or emigrated during the 1950s, the small communities, with the help of the Jewish Agency, shared traveling Hebrew teachers. Finally, in May 1957, 51 persons representing 13 communities attended a Conference on Jewish Culture and Education in Salonika to review the issues pertaining to religion and education in the Jewish communities. Among those people present were the Israeli Hebrew teachers; a representative from the Israeli consulate, Mr. Nehama; the former director of the Alliance schools in Greece; a representative of the Greek Jews in Israel; and the AJDC representative. Mr. Joseph Matsas of Ioannina presented a long and well-documented analysis of the educational problems plaguing the communities. He presented a chart which showed the age distribution of Jewish children: 116

Population and Age Distribution of Jewish Children in Greece in 1957
(from report at Salonika Conference by Joseph Matsas, Ioannina, Greece)

Communities	Members	Children 1-5 Years	Children 6-12 Years	Children 15-18 Years
Athens	2,950	90	400	130
Salonika	1,570	109	181	11
Larissa	500	33	56	31
Volos	272	14	22	15
Trikala	134	4	21	8
Corfu	104	5	20	2
Ioannina	100	14	24	1
Chalkis	122	-	4	5
Karditsa	52	5	10	4
Didimotiko	41	4	9	3
Kastoria	24	5	5	-
Kavalla	48	5	5	-
Verioa	36	2	5	2
Patras	52	2	9	3
Florina	23	7	2	2
Drama	17	-	3	3
Arta	17	-	5	-
Rhodes	50	8	10	-
Total	6,112	507	791	220
Total number of children 1-18 years:			1,318	

Day Schools:	1) Athens	Students	87
	2) Larissa	"	50
	Total		137

Supplementary Education:	1) Athens	Students	130
	2) Salonika	"	85
	3) Ioannina	"	26
	4) Trikala	"	28
	5) Volos	"	25
	6) Larissa	"	12
	7) Karditsa	"	14
Total			320

Total Number of Students Enrolled in Hebrew Courses: 137 - Day school education
 320 - Supplementary education
 457

Hebrew Teachers: Athens--2; Larissa--2; Salonika--1
 History and Religion Teachers Athens--2; Ioannina--1

Matsas divided the 18 communities into 3 groups: Athens, Salonika and Larissa, all of which could maintain a full Jewish day school; four other communities which had more than 20 children of school age and could have a one-class day school; all the other Jewish communities could be served by itinerant teachers. The AJDC representative summarized Matsas' findings on Jewish education in the Thessaly province communities with this report:

Larissa The physical set-up in Larissa, where Mr. and Mrs. Zvi Bior are working, is even more primitive. Altogether, the small Jewish communities present a very serious problem from the point of view of maintaining and preserving Jewish life. The school in Larissa had been damaged by an earthquake. The Hebrew lessons are given in a wooden structure built on top of the community center...There are 44 children of school age, divided into 6 grades and being taught in two groups. In addition, there is another group of 12 children attending High School. The Jewish school in Larissa is supported by the Government who provide two teachers and a non-Jewish director. Mr. and Mrs. Bior give two hours daily to each group. They are very devoted to the children and happy in their work in spite of the primitive conditions of life in a town like Larissa.

They require more books, posters and teaching aids. The Council has undertaken to buy these books. Mr. and Mrs. Bior are paid by the Council, the local community participating with 500 Drm. monthly.

Trikala Every Sunday morning the Biors go to Trikala where they give two hours to a group of 22 children of school age and 6 adult women. A room is provided by the community for the classes. From there they continue to Karditsa, where 16 children and 6 adults wait for them at the bus stop. Every Sunday the lessons take place in a different house. On Wednesdays the Biors go to Volos. Here are 26 children of school age and 8 adults who receive lessons. Two hours tuition is given to each group.

The above communities, all near Larissa, are taken care of by these Israeli people. The lessons are given regularly and the communities are very grateful and appreciative...The two hours per week given to the children in the small communities are far from adequate. There is a need to supplement this work from time to time for common celebrations. It should not be difficult to bring the children from Trikala and Karditsa to Larissa for Lag Baomer or on other occasions. The Central Council should enable the smaller communities to hold such common celebrations.117

The main achievements in postwar Jewish education occurred in Larissa, the only place where trained teachers resided in the provinces. Within six months of their arrival, the teachers had interested the children in speaking and reading Hebrew, and participating in Jewish activities to a degree unknown elsewhere in the provinces. So successful were the educational endeavors of Larissa, that a consultant was sent to observe those Larissa children who attended the Athens and Salonika summer camps. Observation verified that in seven months of instruction, Larissa pupils achieved a knowledge of Hebrew from eight

hours a week of Jewish instruction. An attempt to incorporate children from Volos and Trikala into the Larissa school program failed.

The Jewish education of children in all other provincial towns did not exceed four hours a week. Mr. Joseph Matsas taught Jewish history and religion to the twenty-five Jewish children of Ioannina ; classes were taught in Greek. The community wanted to establish a one-room school with an ungraded elementary school of six years, but this plan never materialized. No Jewish education was made available for the few Jewish children in Kastoria, Veroia, Drama, Kavalla, Seres, Didimotiko, and Rhodes.

The Israeli teachers working in Larissa (as well as those in Athens and Salonika) were only on temporary assignment from Israel. After these teachers returned to Israel, the small communities faced the problem of ensuring the continuation of Jewish education. The Central Board of Jewish communities sought out Greek-Jewish candidates, who after attending Greek pedagogic academies, would go to Israel for additional Hebraic and Jewish studies. The Central Board offered scholarships to entice teacher candidates from poorer families to enter the Jewish teaching profession. Half a dozen Greek Jews received teacher certification in Israel, but only two people assumed teaching responsibilities upon their return to Greece. Becky Politi was one of these people who trained as a teacher in

Israel and upon her return to Volos she conducted classes for the Jewish youth once a week. In recent years, Becky has stopped teaching, and confined herself to planning Jewish youth group activities.

The other person who became a Jewish teacher was Yakov Filus. By the time he returned to Larissa, Yakov was certified to perform ritual slaughtering, teach Hebrew, and act as a prayer leader in the synagogue. Although he works as a merchant, Filus still finds the time to teach everyday at the local Jewish day school in Larissa. His pupils affectionately call him hamoreh(the teacher). He teaches the daily one hour Hebrew classes, the one hour weekly Jewish history class, acts as youth group advisor, and has even organized a children's choir which chants certain prayers during the weekly Kabbalat Shabbat service.

The school in Larissa may soon vanish; in the 1970s there were few married couples in Larissa and the number of new students enrolling in the school has been decreasing every year. In 1975 there were 30 students in the school, in 1976 24, and in 1977 20 students, only one of which entered the first grade. In 1978 no new children joined the school and only 2 new pupils enrolled in 1979. Although the Jewish community owns the school and the surrounding property, in 1977 the city of Larissa, proceeded to build a new public library on the land without seeking the permission of the Jewish community. Rabbi Mizan, a native of

Larissa now working in Athens, believes the school will soon become a regular municipal school:

By accepting the one instructor sent by the municipality to teach all the secular courses for all six grades, the school has become dependent on the municipality. The Jewish community has hired another teacher. Yet because the school has a teacher supported by the city, Christian children began to enroll in our school. No one has quite understood how the municipality managed this.

As the enrollment of Jewish children dwindles further, it is becoming increasingly possible that the municipality of Larissa will turn the Jewish school into a normal public school.

Formal Jewish educational opportunities are available locally for children in Volos, Chalkis, and Larissa and in the case of the first two places, only on a very limited basis; everywhere else in the provinces, Jewish children do not even receive one hour of formal religious instruction per week. This means that the Jewish children growing up in the postwar period have more contact with Christian religious teachings than with their own religious heritage. All the secular schools in Greece have a strong religious component; each school day begins with a prayer invoking the name of Jesus. There are regular Christianity lessons each week. Jewish children are exempt from these classes, however, in many instances Jewish students stay in the classroom. Jackie Pesach explains what his daughter and son

face as the only children, not only in the town of Drama, but also in the classroom:

My daughter has no religious instruction. I tell her she can remain in class during the Christian religion classes, but the teacher doesn't ask her questions. It is difficult for my daughter to be a Jew among too many Christians. I try to understand her, I leave her to grow freely, but when she will be fourteen I will send her to Israel, not for fun, but to meet people, so that she will know, there is her country. Even I know more about the Christian religion than my own religion, but this doesn't prevent me from being a good Jew.

Since facilities no longer exist for Jewish education in the small towns, especially in places without organized Jewish communities, an important postwar source for imparting a Jewish education is the two summer camps, one in the hills outside of Athens, the other near Salonika by the sea. In view of the many difficulties inherent in providing Jewish education in small communities, the three week Jewish camp experience has become the only formal channel for the instruction of children from provincial towns (Larissa is the only exception). Every year youngsters, like Jackie Cohen's two daughters, attend the Jewish camp. It is a place for Jewish children from the small towns to meet each other and to establish bonds of friendship. In addition to the good food and fresh air, children get a real taste of Jewish life. There are formal classes, as well as Israeli song and dance sessions. In recent years, Jewish teenagers from the

provinces, Athens, and Salonika served as camp counselors (madrichim). Each year a specialist is brought in from Israel to create and implement a Zionist and religious camp program. A source of conflict in the camp programming revolves around the divergent views of the communal board and camp staff regarding the role of Israel-oriented activity and expression. There is common agreement, however, that those children who come back year after year will acquire a satisfactory Jewish education and develop strong Jewish feelings.

In addition to the summer camp, the community center has become the other important place (during the 1970s and 1980s) where interaction occurs among the Jewish youth in the small towns. A community center's main function is to create opportunities for Jewish youth to meet, and to provide a comfortable setting in which to nurture Jewish identification and education. The synagogues in Volos, Chalkis, Larissa, Trikala, Ioannina, and Corfu all have adjoining community centers which serve as youth centers. Jewish children socialize together there, playing ping-pong and having parties, but the Jewish content of center activities is minimal. Sammy Ashkenazi, who grew up in Larissa and now resides in Athens, recalls the Jewish club in his hometown:

The Jewish club used to be noisy as there were many people. Six years ago (in

1972) the club stopped functioning as usual because we were few people and many people went to Athens and Salonika. Now the Jewish young people are no more.

In Volos the situation is much the same, though the older Jewish teenagers continue to feel a responsibility for the younger ones. Louisa Kones' memories of a Jewish upbringing in Volos are connected to the community center:

Before I came to Athens, we were organized in a group and we took care of the younger kids aged 5-12. We taught Hebrew, songs, history and Bible. Until two years ago Becky Politi taught Hebrew. Five of us finished high school last year (1977) and now those younger than us make an effort to organize the kids. It all depends on the children now. Some want to work and some would rather play at the center...If we had money we could organize the center. Our community is one of the poorest in Greece. If we would ask the Central Board of Jewish Communities, they would send money. I don't know why we don't ask them.

In the absence of a teacher or rabbi during the 1970s, individual WIZO chapters filled the gap in their children's Jewish education. They planned local and regional educational festivities for their children on Jewish holidays. But, in recent years, with fewer Jewish children in the small towns, WIZO has stopped organizing these gatherings. Today the community centers often remain vacant. Aside from summer camp, the only remaining way for Jewish youth to socialize together and reinforce their Jewish identity at an impressionable age is through the programs of

Evraiki Neaoli Ellados (ENE), the countrywide Pan-Hellenic Jewish Youth Movement founded in 1977. This group is much less active in the provinces than in Athens and Salonika, but gatherings of Jewish youth from neighboring provincial communities occasionally take place under its auspices. In 1983 the Volos chapter planned weekend and vacation retreats with youth from Chalkis and Larissa.

But not all of the Jewish youth in the provinces enjoy participation in regional and countrywide gatherings of Greek Jewish youth; some feel isolated from and inferior to those Jewish teenagers living in Salonika and Athens. Janet Battinou from Ioannina is one person who dislikes the Jewish youth from the big cities:

I know the people in Salonika. I've been there over twenty times. Two girls and two boys from Athens came to visit Ioannina during Easter. I went everywhere with the two girls. They were snobbish. The guys in Ioannina asked me why these Athens girls were so snobbish (see appendix 5 for complete interview).

Often the one or two Jewish children left in a small town, like Janet and her brother Mordecai, comprise the entire membership of the local ENE chapter. When these youth join others at seminars, they feel a sense of estrangement from mainstream Jewish life in the big cities. But, even though the Jewish youth from the provinces feel isolated, the summer camp and countrywide gatherings of Jewish youth ultimately serve the purpose of establishing kinship ties

between members of the younger generation. It is evident from the interaction between Jewish children from small towns and big cities, that there is a clash between shared Judaism and divergent values and morals.

The educational opportunities available in recent years to provincial children are characterized by a dependency on educational networks located beyond the boundaries of the small communities. WIZO, the Pan Hellenic Jewish Youth Movement, and the summer camps in Athens and Salonika have tried to remedy the severe crisis in small town Jewish education through the creation of various programs and outlets which enable Jewish children to socialize with one another at regional gatherings. Since there are so few children left in individual towns, Jewish teenagers attend brief educational gatherings away from their hometowns.

As the number of Jewish children continues to decrease in each small town, it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide the younger generation with even an informal education. Thus, if any religious and cultural learning takes place, it is with an emphasis on Jewish socialization away from the small town. In the period between 1950 and 1970, a traveling madrich (counselor) from Israel taught in the provincial communities. The emphasis in the last fifteen years has shifted towards educating the Jewish children away from the small towns, sometimes in places as far away as Israel.

The most serious educational experiences take place in Israel. Every summer in recent years the Jewish Agency has provided Greek youngsters with the opportunity to join an organized group tour to Israel. Many Greek-Jewish high school graduates continue their education in Israel. Since the 1970s, over ninety percent of Greek Jewish youth have been attending university in Greece, France, or Israel; an average of thirty percent of all Greek Jewish students go to Israeli universities annually. All Greek Jews who attend university or vocational schools are eligible to receive scholarships from their home communities and the Central Board of Jewish Communities. From 1967 to 1977 over 170 Greek Jews studied in Israel. With applicants outnumbering the spaces available at Greek universities, and the lure of scholarships and immediate acceptance at Israeli universities, the number of Greek Jews who enrolled in 1980 at the Hebrew and Haifa Universities grew to 60 students. Since it is difficult to study beyond a bachelor's degree in Greece, many Greek Jews have also opted to pursue advanced graduate training in Israel. However, the fact that degrees earned in foreign countries are not always recognized in Greece discourages many more from attending university in Israel.

Study in Israel not only offers Greek Jews the promise of higher education, but also provides them an opportunity to live in a thoroughly Jewish environment, an opportunity

unavailable to them in the provinces. Many of these students stay in Israel permanently. Other Greek Jews who study in Israel feel compelled to return to Greece after university to serve out a twenty-eight month army duty, otherwise they may not return to Greece (or visit their families) until they have passed their thirty-fifth birthday.

While attending school in Israel offers tangible Jewish experiences, such opportunities are not necessarily available for those who enroll in the universities in Athens or Salonika. These big cities offer the Jewish youngsters from the provinces either the possibility to further assimilate into Greek society or to become more active in the largest Jewish communities in Greece. The young Jewish adult who attends university in a Greek city enters a totally secular, and at times threatening, environment in which leftist politics run rampant. Some Jewish students avoid political involvement while at university. Louisa Kones, who came to Athens University from Volos explains why:

I don't have a purpose to join any political party. All of them are against the Jewish people. I am familiar with their theories and actions. Most Jews like me, who don't join parties while at university, are Zionists. Those who join admit they are not Zionists. If they have a slight feeling of being Jewish, then perhaps they hide it. There is danger in those Jews who are anti-Zionists and have no Jewish education. I think they lose all their Jewishness.

Albert Kovo, a former President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities and Aharon Gonen, the former Israeli immigration emissary (shaliach) in Athens both believe that the indoctrination of some Jewish students with leftist ideologies will not have a lasting effect:

When maturity sets in, they understand that it's propaganda. Students that have finished university and go into real life lose it in a way. Most of them will become businessmen and after that capitalists.

Not only has the Jewish education of the younger generation been gradually taken out of the small towns in the provinces for want of teachers and enough children, but the content of this education has changed as well. Before the war a formal Jewish education consisted of history, prayerbook Hebrew, and the practice of the religious customs and traditions of the Jewish people. To be a Greek Jew born before or during the holocaust meant to grow up with a religious and cultural identity that separated oneself from other Greek nationals. In contrast, after the war an informal Jewish education consisted of learning about Zionism, speaking modern Hebrew, and celebrating Jewish holidays as social occasions. A Greek Jew born after the holocaust grew up feeling Jewish rather than acting Jewish, since there was no community environment in which to practice the religious aspects of Judaism. The educational experiences of the post-holocaust generation emphasized

social gatherings with other youth thereby reinforcing a perception that being Jewish means sharing the company of Jews. Making Israeli instructors and Zionist programming central to the postwar educational enterprise of small town Jews transformed the pre-war religious orientation of Jewish education into a minor component of a new and secular Jewish national education.

Out of this type of Jewish upbringing, the feeling of peoplehood and identification with the State of Israel has become the strongest Jewish identity component of the post-holocaust generation. For them Judaism was not so much a religious identity as it was a national identity. The modernization of Jewish education which began before the war by Alliance and has persisted since then has achieved more than the Greek state had intended. The emphasis on secular education since the holocaust has indeed enhanced the Jews' feelings of being accepted as Greek nationals. But the absence of a traditional Jewish religious education in the provinces has created a void in people's Jewish identification, a void which has now been filled with a new Jewish-Zionist political consciousness among many members of the younger generation.

Jewish Religious Observance in the Provinces in the Aftermath of the Holocaust

The primary focus of the Jewish community both on a local and national level has shifted radically away from the religious sphere. The synagogue once symbolized the Jewish community in Greece. Everyone in a community was obliged to support the synagogue and its affiliated institutions to the fullest extent.¹¹⁸ But since the war, except for attending the synagogues on holidays, Jews participate only minimally in organized religious life. This situation was caused by the war's total disruption of people's lives. Homes and families were completely shattered. There is a shortage of rabbis in the country, whereas before the war religious leaders were world-renowned. For example, in the pre-war period, Jewish scholars from Salonika were invited by Sephardim throughout the world to become the religious leaders of their communities.

Other religious institutions ceased to be part of Jewish life in the provinces after the holocaust. There are no mikvaot (ritual immersion baths) in the small towns, and the observance of Jewish dietary laws has virtually disappeared except on Rosh Hashanah and Passover, when a special effort is made to eat kosher meat. There are individuals in the Larissa and Corfu communities who perform ritual slaughtering and kashering of meat; in all other places kosher foods or a shochet must be brought from

Athens. Special kosher wine for the holidays was made in Ioannina by Meyer Shmuel, but since his death wine is ordered from Athens. Almost every Jewish family in the provinces, including the very few families who reside in Didimotiko, Seres, Drama, Kavalla, Kastoria, Veroia, and Katerini arrange to have matsot in the house for Passover. There is a rabbinic court in Athens, but with civil marriage and divorce proceedings now legal, Jews have neither need nor desire to refer to a Jewish religious authority.

Synagogue attendance has decreased over the years, even though the Jews could go to services every Shabbat morning and then open their stores afterwards. This is only the custom of a handful of Jews in Corfu, Larissa, Chalkis, and Volos. Most Jews in the small towns attend synagogue only during the High Holidays, not so much out of religious conviction as from social custom and family tradition. Holidays celebrated at home, especially Passover, as well as life cycle events, have become the most important occasions for organized religious behavior in the postwar period. Before the war Greek Jews always had a Shabbat meal in the company of family members. Since the war most Jews in the provinces keep their stores open Friday evenings instead of having the customary Kabbalat Shabbat meal. The special Shabbat meal loses its significance for the older generation as the children grow up and move out of the house. Generally, those customs and occasions that occur more regularly, such

as those related to the Shabbat, have been modified or discarded, because of economic pressures, lack of community emphasis on holidays, and the absence of the younger generation.

There are exceptions. The Kabbalat Shabbat meal remains the most important way for the seven Jews in Kavalla to reaffirm their Jewish identity. Their synagogue has been dormant for over thirteen years and the Passover meal is the only major holiday custom that they celebrate. But every Friday evening after closing their stores, the Jews of Kavalla gather at Moshe Pesach's house to usher in the Shabbat; they sanctify the wine and have a traditional Sephardi Shabbat meal. Spanolit and French are spoken at the dinner table. The special mood of the Shabbat is embellished by telephone calls in which the children of the remaining Kavalla Jews convey Shabbat greetings to their parents, all the way from their homes in Drama, Salonika, Athens, and even Tel Aviv. Few other families in Greece celebrate Kabbalat Shabbat like Kavalla's Jews. Moshe Pesach believes that precisely because there are so few Jews left in Kavalla, he has a special obligation to keep the light of Judaism shining, not only for himself, but for the gentiles to see that Jews reside in their midst.

Each provincial community maintains a different synagogue routine, depending on the number of Jews in residence and their familiarity with rituals and the Hebrew liturgy of the

synagogue. Larissa has the most active synagogue life of any Jewish community in Greece. On a Friday night in the middle of the summer (in 1983), over 60 people attended services, among them 10 children who sang and prayed with great vigor. Services are held every Saturday morning and on every holiday in full accordance with the traditional requirements of Sephardi rites and beliefs.

Elsewhere in Thessaly province services are not held with such regularity. Exactly ten Jews (from the middle generation) gather every Friday night at sundown in Trikala to welcome the Shabbat day; they sit scattered through the synagogue with prayerbooks occupying the empty seats. Since nobody among the 59 members of the Jewish community can read Hebrew from the Torah, services are no longer held on Saturdays, a pattern also prevalent in other Greek Jewish communities. Once a congregation is without a prayer leader or Chacham who is able to read Hebrew, services are held more and more infrequently. This is especially so for those services which include the reading of Torah. Though Volos has a Chacham in residence among its 140 Jews, barely a quorum gather on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. Close to 20 people participate in Friday night services in Chalkis, with a few less in attendance Saturday morning. People take turns leading the services. The synagogue in Ioannina remains locked most days of the year, opening only for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

Decreasing synagogue attendance has been accompanied by a repositioning of the pulpit (tevah) and new seating arrangements during services. These changes are a consequence of the post-holocaust situation in which there were fewer members of a community to fill a synagogue built with seating for hundreds of people. Instead of the ark (aron hakodesh) placed at one end of the interior and the pulpit (tevah) situated against the opposite wall, in both Ioannina and Trikala the pulpit has been moved from the back wall into the middle of the sanctuary in order to make the inside of the synagogue into a more intimate setting for the fewer people in attendance. Since the war, the womens' separate seating section and entrance (Ezrat Nashim) in every provincial synagogue has fallen into disuse. Today, only an aisle divides the women's and men's seats. The neglect of ritual objects is indicative of the provincial synagogue's disuse in the aftermath of the holocaust; sets of phylacteries (tefillin), old prayerbooks, and beautiful silk Torah coverings remain hidden away in cupboards. Torah scrolls have been donated to Jewish communities in Athens, Salonika, and Israel. Giving away a Torah scroll is certainly a strong indication of a community's impending dissolution.

In each one of the provincial communities, the level of synagogue activity depends on the willingness of its members to come to services and to keep it the center of Jewish

life. However, it is usually the older and middle generations who attend Shabbat services, while the younger generation go to synagogue only on the High Holidays. Children tend to come back from the big cities to spend the High Holidays and Passover with their families. Since services are conducted in Hebrew, a language unknown to most members of the community, the Central Board of Jewish Communities and the local communities have translated prayerbooks into Greek. It was hoped that the younger generation would participate in religious services if they could understand the meaning of the prayers. Prayerbooks are now available in the Greek language because of the translation skills of Rabbi Mizan and Yakov Filus but this has not led to an increase in synagogue attendance. WIZO, on the other hand, has turned the synagogue into a center for Jewish community activities by organizing social celebrations at the synagogue to accompany every religious occasion of the Jewish calendar. This lends a festive mood to an otherwise poorly attended religious service and also attracts the Jewish women, who tend to stay away from the synagogue because there is no Chacham present.

Synagogue life is somewhat different in places where there is a constant flow of tourists from abroad. The Corfu Jewish community has a prayer leader who conducts Shabbat services whenever a quorum can be assembled; this usually happens when Jewish tourists visit the isle. Services are

held in the Rhodes synagogue only if there is a tourist present to conduct them. Even though thirty-four Jews reside on the isle, during the off-season there are not enough Jews to constitute a minyan, and thus the synagogue remains closed. Whether or not a minyan is assembled, every Friday night since the end of War World Two, the synagogue caretaker, Mrs. Lucia Salem, lights the Shabbat candles and an eternal light in memory of holocaust victims.

Most Jewish women attend synagogue services only on the major holidays, but in Chalkis, Larissa, Trikala, Volos, and Rhodes they also frequent the synagogue every Friday afternoon. They replenish the olive oil used for the community eternal light, and then light a wick to welcome the approaching Shabbat eve. After visiting the graveyard on the anniversary of a beloved one's passing, women proceed to the synagogue to light a wick in memory of the deceased. When Jewish women from the middle or older generations visit the graveyard (at least three times a year) they often wash the marble headstones as a sign of respect and reverence for the deceased. These customs are observed on an individual basis by Jewish women of all ages; they are both easy to observe and do not necessitate the presence of a Chacham. Such customs provide the Jewish women in the provinces with an opportunity to frequent the synagogue and graveyard.

Personal customs and beliefs are still widely prevalent among the Jewish women in the provinces. This is especially so for those people who grew up observing family home traditions before the holocaust. In the absence of religious observance which centers around the synagogue, folk practices remain a meaningful way for Jewish women in the provinces to express their Jewish identity. This trend constitutes a shift in emphasis from religious group identification to individual manifestations of Jewishness.

Since the holocaust religious practices have declined and even the most committed Jews have assimilated linguistically and culturally. A Jewish person who lives in the provinces is forced to make a choice and commitment regarding Jewish religious observance only during life-cycle occasions. Jewish birth and death rites continue to be observed; a mohel is brought in from Athens to perform circumcisions on new born boys. The Sephardi custom of naming children after parents and grandparents is still followed, and usually the name given is Hebraic in origin. When a boy was born to the only Jewish family in Drama, it was an occasion for rejoicing, as the proud father, Jackie Pesach, recalls:

We had a big celebration for the Brit Milah. All our relatives came here. Rabbi Shabbatei came from Athens with his wife and stayed for three days. Mr. Pesach, my step-father, Mr. Burla, and Moshe Pesach from Kavalla did all the

traditional ceremonies. My father and his nephew came from Didimotiko. We had a minyan for the Brit.

Funeral rites are observed in the provinces in accordance with Jewish law, and in the presence of the local Jewish community. The Larissa Chacham presides over funerals, and ^{at} annual home and graveside memorial services in Larissa, Trikala, and Karditsa. A Chacham is brought from Athens to officiate at funerals in Ioannina, Chalkis, and Rhodes. In places such as Didimotiko, Kastoria, and Kavalla, where there are less than a minyan of Jews reside, the remaining Jews concede that they do not want to be buried in these towns, because of their belief that one day no Jews will remain there. Hence, they are making plans to be buried in places where their children reside, usually in Salonika, Athens, or Israel.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies have been celebrated in the provinces only where a functioning Jewish community and synagogue exists. The children of the few Jewish families in Drama, Didimotiko, Kastoria, and elsewhere have not been Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In active communities, the children were taught Hebrew in a group setting, and they often had one communal ceremony. It is customary for Jewish girls of Bat Mitzvah age to have a group ceremony on the second day of Shavuot. There are enough children to organize a Bnai Mitzvah class only in Larissa. The future observance of

this Jewish life cycle event in the other small Jewish communities is uncertain.

Marriage has become more than just another life-cycle event; it has become a time for the members of the younger generation born after the holocaust to choose between marrying a Jew or Greek Orthodox Christian, a decision which affects Jewish community continuity. The greatest threat to the survival of the Greek-Jewish community as a whole is the weakening from within that results from intermarriage, which is now estimated at forty percent of all marriages. Until 1981, it was difficult for Greeks of different religions to marry. The State previously recognized religious ceremonies and regarded civil marriages as invalid.

The high rate of intermarriage in the postwar period attests to the fact that Jews are well-integrated into Greek society. Intermarriage prevailed after the war out of necessity. There were many Jewish war widows who remarried non-Jews in the 1940s and 1950s, a time when there were no rabbis to consult or perform conversions. Intermarriage occurred in the 1960s as a consequence of assimilation. Jewish and Greek Orthodox youths grew up freely intermingling in the same schools and universities. Among the Jewish population of Athens mixed marriages accounted for 26 out of 92 marriages during the years 1962-1965, while in the provinces the percentage was much lower.¹¹⁹ These mixed marriages were often accompanied by an informal

acceptance of the non-Jewish spouse into the local Jewish community. Some Jews, however, converted to Greek Orthodoxy and were married by a priest. Even if the non-Jewish partner was willing to convert, there was no one qualified to perform the conversion. Until 1980, people who wanted to convert to Judaism went to Israel, Switzerland, Canada, or Turkey. From 1980 the Athens Rabbinate began to perform conversions as a precautionary measure to prevent further losses to the Jewish community through intermarriage. Conversions require nine months of studying and not everyone wanting to convert was accepted by the rabbis. Six Christians converted to Judaism in 1980.

In an effort to confront the increasing tide of intermarriage, the Central Board decided in November 1977 to permit mixed marriages for a two year period, hoping to prevent the rejection of Judaism by those Jews who wanted to marry Greeks. Although the Chief Rabbi of Athens was opposed to this move, he eventually agreed to officiate at such ceremonies. The trial period was extended.

During the last fifteen years the problem of finding another Jew to marry has been most exacerbated in the small towns because there are so few single Jews there. In early 1981 Minas Nachmias went to Yugoslavia to wed his Christian wife, Aroula, because civil marriages had not yet been legalized in Greece. Minas, the grandson of a rabbi, commented that "it was difficult to marry a Jew when there

were so few Jewish girls in Trikala." Minas and his wife attend synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and attend church together on Easter. The requirement that marriages be conducted under the auspices of a religious body was dropped following the ascent of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu's Socialist government in 1981. The new government legalized civil marriage and since then intermarriages have increased considerably between Jews and Christians.

Many people involved in mixed marriages remain active in the Jewish community; non-Jewish spouses often participate in Jewish community activities. One of the five members of the Trikala Jewish community council is a young Jewish man married to a Greek Orthodox woman. The consensus among the younger Jewish generation is that a person remains Jewish if married in a civil ceremony, but that the Jewish partner forfeits his or her Judaism if married in a Christian religious ceremony. Yakov Soussi, a young and single medical student from Corfu, explains his feelings on this matter:

Jews who intermarry are lost to the Jewish community because neither partner in the intermarriage can vote in the Jewish community elections. If a Jewish girl marries a Christian man in a church, we lose her. But, if a Jewish girl doesn't convert to Christianity when she marries a non-Jew, and has a civil marriage she can vote in the elections of the Jewish community.

The passports and birth certificates of children from intermarried couples identify them as Christians. According

to the rabbis in Athens, in order for the child of a mixed marriage to be registered with the Jewish community, the couple must have a Jewish wedding ceremony. Nonetheless, the Athens rabbinic ruling has been disregarded by some intermarried Jews in the provinces who would like their children to be considered Jewish. In Trikala one child of a mixed marriage has been recorded by the Jewish parent (who is a member of the local board) in the birth and death registry which is maintained by each Jewish communal council. In the eyes of this Jewish parent, the act of registering his child in the community records makes him a member of the Jewish community. But, Betty Chalewa, the Vice-President of the Trikala Jewish community, disapproves of this practice. Her views on this matter are representative of the attitude held by Jews of the middle and older generations:

Matatias Baruch and his Christian wife have a small child. This child is not registered in the community records. Yehudah Negrin's son married a Christian who gave birth to a child who also isn't registered. This is because they didn't have a Jewish wedding, they had a civil marriage. Minas Nachmias has a daughter one and a half years old. He too married a Christian. He didn't have a Jewish wedding. He had a civil marriage.

Jewish continuity among intermarried couples depends on whether they raise their children as Jews. With few available opportunities for formal Jewish education or

religious observance in the small towns, it is difficult to imagine how a Jewish up-bringing can be realized.

The future of these small Jewish communities depends on their abilities to draw the younger generation into the community life. As much as intermarriages are a detriment to the continuity of the Jewish community, marriages between Jews directly benefit Jewish survival. One of the ways the Jews in the provinces preserve their Jewish identity is by arranged marriages and more frequently, by arranged meetings between two Jews, which eventually lead to marriage. Both traditions (arranged meetings and arranged marriages) are prevalent not only among Jews, but also within the Greek Orthodox community. Makis Capeta was one of only six Jews living in Karditsa in 1981, a town that ^{has} never had its own Jewish graveyard, school, or synagogue. Traditionally, Karditsa's Jews have always traveled to Trikala to participate in Jewish communal life. Through an intermediary, Makis met Mary, a twenty year old woman from Larissa, and they married soon after. They reside in Karditsa with their young daughter, Suzzanah, but Makis says that when his children get older "I must move to a larger city so my children will have a synagogue and school to attend. In a few years we will leave Karditsa."

The arrangement of meetings and marriages has been customary among Greek and Ottoman Jews for hundreds of years. With the few Jewish singles scattered throughout the

provinces, arranging meetings between them helps ensure that a person has the chance to marry a Jew, and that the Greek Jewish community will not diminish further on account of intermarriage. Today's Jewish youth have mixed feelings about the place of matchmaking and dowries in a modern society. Yet, many of the Jews residing in the small towns meet a marriage partner through a friend or a relative. Yakov Soussi voices his disapproval of matchmaking practices:

There are too many matchmakers around. Most of the Jewish weddings taking place are of this kind. If you know a girl from another city, you can send someone else to make an arrangement. I think this is very bad because most of them are not free, and they do not know what type of person they are meeting. Here in Greece the girls are not free to make their life as they wish, so there are a lot of divorces in the Jewish community resulting from these arranged marriages.

My brother's marriage was arranged. I think he has a happy marriage, but this is not the rule. When arranging a marriage, none of the interested parties gets involved in the matchmaking. A third party comes along and says 'I have heard that you have a boy. There is a nice girl I know, a rich girl.' If you are interested in getting married, the person will respond 'I would like to meet her.' Then you get some information about the family and their economic situation. A dowry is a great asset for the girl to get married. The boys prefer girls with money.

If you are progressive, you don't have to ask for a dowry. But the family knows they have to give it. They say to you 'we

will give you a house or a car'. Something is given, but the way it is given is not so typical or formal as in the old days. The parents still help out and give money or a house. I heard that in Saloniki the Jews have alot of arguments about the dowry and even get divorced because of it.(appendix 5)

At least fifty percent of all marriages in the provinces are between Jews. Most people from the younger generation prefer to marry a Jew. The easiest way for a provincial Jew to find a Jewish mate is to move to Salonika or Athens, or even Israel; in these places the chances are greatest for meeting a Jewish marriage partner. While such a move away from the provinces may encourage urban Greek-Jewish continuity into the next generation, it unfortunately also brings with it the gradual demise during this generation of the small Jewish communitie.

Jews in the Workplace: Traditional Occupations Versus Professional Careers

Many members of the generation born in the provinces after the holocaust pursue professional degrees at universities in Athens, Salonika, France, the United States, or Israel. Others Jews, however, remain in the small towns because of their successful businesses. As the communities in the provinces grow weaker in the range of Jewish cultural and religious activities which they have to offer, the occupations and professions performed by Greek Jews become an increasingly important part of their self-esteem and

individual identity. These people express the importance of their work with a Spanolit proverb:

"No hay Komerco, No hay kavod"

"If one has no work, One has no honor".

Most of the Greek Jews remaining in the provinces continue to work in the businesses that their parents and grandparents started before the Second World War. These family trades, in which fathers passed down occupational skills to their children (usually the oldest son in the family), have also been professions performed exclusively by the Jewish people in the Ottoman empire. Today, Jews are still active as silversmiths, tinsmiths, coopers, carpenters, hatmakers, and as merchants of readywear clothing, dry goods, textiles, and houseware items.

The waves of emigration that preceded and followed the Second World War and the widespread destruction of the war created a gap in the social, economic, and intellectual life of the country, necessitating the creation of a new commercial and industrial infrastructure after the war.¹²⁰ The Jews who survived the war belonged to the middle class; they worked as artisans, peddlers, and employees. Very few of the doctors, lawyers, or engineers who survived Nazi persecution remained in Greece.¹²¹ The Alliance Israelite Universelle came to the rescue of the Greek Jews after the influx of Anatolian refugees into Greece in the 1920s,

providing Jews with new job skills to be competitive in the market place. In a similar way, ORT Geneva retrained holocaust survivors. ORT organized a vocational school in Athens where an estimated total of 80-100 Jewish students received vocational training in mechanics, electrical engineering, and sewing.¹²² ORT trained Jews to perform manual and skilled labor; young people and adults took courses in welding, dressmaking, carpentry, and electro-technics. Low interest loans (kassa) were then made available to people starting businesses.

ORT provided destitute Jews the opportunity to become self-supporting. ORT's scholarship students came from families supported by the Jewish community. Upon the completion of their studies, the trainees were able to support their family. This in turn reduced the community's burden while raising the individual's self-esteem. Jews from the provinces entered the ORT school and returned to their hometowns with the skills to work in a particular job. The ORT Athens Training Center closed in 1956. The number of Jews in Greece had narrowed to only a few thousand, and as a result, the need for job training declined considerably. ORT Council continued to operate. It registered young boys and girls who were interested in learning a trade and helped stituate them in private and state vocational schools. ORT constantly sent circular letters to the Central Board of Jewish Communities, to the Athens Jewish Community and to

the provincial communities, urging parents to send their children to learn technical skills. Jews in the provinces attended schools in their hometowns. A 1965 ORT report lists one Jewish student each, enrolled in a mechanics evening course in Trikala, Patras, and Larissa. In 1966 one ORT-supported graduate started to work in a mechanics shop in Corfu.

The economic circumstances of the Jews in the provinces have improved because of the loan kassa fund and ORT training program. ORT graduates have worked at trades they learned in schools, some of them occupying top posts in industry. Most of ORT's graduates, however, have emigrated to Israel, the United States, or Australia. Those remaining in Greece work in trades and make a good living. On a visit to Larissa in 1966, an ORT official was told by the leaders of that Jewish community that ORT made the largest contribution to the economic recovery of the poor Jews in Greece. 123

In many respects, the training received by the provincial Jews has given them employment skills which they can utilize in their hometowns, in jobs traditionally performed by Jews. Within twenty years of the end of the Second World War, Jews once again occupied a central role in the economic life of the small towns. Some of Larissa's Jewish merchants recently estimated that the thirty Jewish shops account for thirty percent of the total business cash flow in that town. The

Jewish tinsmiths are one example of a Jewish monopoly of a trade in the postwar period. Before the war many Jews worked as tinsmiths, including 5 in Ioannina, 7 in Trikala, and 6 in Larissa. (Before the war it was customary for Trikala's tinsmiths to present a hand-fashioned Chanukah menorah to every newlywed Jewish couple and every family new to that city). At present, all of the 6 tinsmiths in Larissa, a city of 120,000, are Jewish. Most of them have been practicing their trade for over 40 years. The tinsmith trade is threatened, however, by the substitution of plastic to produce articles once made out of tin.

Another example of Jewish dominance in a particular trade is the well-stocked textile and dry goods shops owned by Jews and found all over the provinces. Isaac Ashkenazi, one of four Jews left in Didimotiko, runs the busiest and best stocked clothing-fabric store in town. Throughout Greece Jews own thriving textile stores--the Mizrachi shop is the biggest of its kind in Larissa. Jackie Cohen, and his family are the only Jews among the 30,000 residents of Drama. Jackie owns a bustling textile shop, which he inherited from his step-uncle, Leon Pesach. Inside his store are colorful bolts of cloth, neatly stacked from floor to ceiling. Small town merchants such as Cohen often buy their goods from fellow Jewish wholesalers located in Salonika and Athens.

Readywear clothing is another field in which Jews continue to have an excellent reputation. Elias Yitschak Levi followed in his father's footsteps, taking over the family dry goods and readywear business. Elias honors his father's memory in the customary Greek fashion of displaying the deceased's portrait in the workplace. The store in Volos has been in the Levi family since 1924, but Elias' son and daughter recently moved to Salonika and entered new professions, thereby diminishing the possibility that the store will stay open much longer. In Volos, Trikala, Chalkis, and Corfu there are many flourishing stores like Elias Levi's, all of them facing the prospect of one day closing down because the younger generation has little interest in this type of work.

The efforts made by Greek Jews since the end of the Second World War have considerably improved their economic status. The Jewish communities in the small towns now count many families in comfortable circumstances who are working in business, the free professions, and industry. For many generations small town Jews have worked as merchants, peddlers, and shopkeepers. Their family enterprises have an excellent reputation among the general population. The vocational and skilled employment training sought out by the younger generation during the 1950s and 1960s has helped them continue the tradition of Jewish work excellence in the small towns.

In recent years, however, a change has been taking place. Jewish youth are leaving the provinces and moving to urban centers to acquire vocational or university training toward professional careers. The shift from working in traditional occupations in the provinces toward pursuing professional careers in Athens and Salonika is occurring in both the Jewish community as well as the Greek population at large. As a member of the European Economic Community, Greece has been diversifying its economy away from an agriculturally-intense base toward greater emphasis on developing its industrial sectors. The restructuring of the economy has increased the demand in the big cities for lawyers, engineers, advertisers, architects, accountants, doctors, managers, and other professionals.

The young Greek Jews from the provinces and metropolitan centers have been filling these key professional positions in the expanding economy. Instead of staying in a profitable, but small dry goods store back in the provinces, the younger generation prefers to work in the business administration of a supermarket or a factory. Usually, the oldest son in a family is favored to take over the small-town business from his father. This leaves the other siblings with a need to look elsewhere for new and different types of work. The most attractive jobs to be had are in the big cities. Whereas in the past only men took jobs, today Greek women--among them many Jews--are also working. Jewish men and women alike are

choosing professional careers in Athens and Salonika over traditional forms of employment in the provinces.

The survival of each provincial Jewish community will depend on whether its native sons and daughters continue to work in family occupations. As the younger generation leaves the provinces, their departure marks more than the shrinking of a local Jewish community, it signifies the end of generations' of family and Jewish involvement in specific trades in the small towns. Both these changes contribute to a further disintegration of the Jewish communities in the provinces.

Informal Patterns of Jewish Identification in the Greek Provinces

The traditional forms of affiliation within the small Jewish communities in the provinces have disappeared. The vitality of the small Jewish community before the war, organized around religious observance and formal Jewish learning, has given way since the war to informal attempts at feeling Jewish by sharing the company of Jews. Whereas a group of Jews must be present for the staging of a successful community function (especially those of a religious nature), it is much easier to celebrate the Passover seder or have a Shabbat meal in the intimacy of one's home. The home environment is a less threatening place in which to behave in a Jewish way; there is a greater sense of personal comfort and security in holding a

(yeshiva) memorial service at home than at the synagogue or graveyard.

The home has replaced the synagogue as the place in which some religious traditions may still be preserved. The summer camp away from home has become the local Jewish school room. The younger generation is not the hope of the future but the disappointment of the present. Infrequent life cycle events have become moments of fear and distress for Jewish parents' whose children may choose a Christian spouse. And Athens, Salonika, and the State of Israel are not only part of each extended small Jewish community, but are also some of the reasons for its demise.

Effective leaders and active community boards are indeed crucial for the survival of a Jewish community. But Jewish continuity and survival relies on more than the vitality of its institutional structure. Even without leaders or teachers, committees or organized activities, a Jewish community will not necessarily vanish, but may in fact continue to survive. The will to endure as a Jew and as a community is often stronger than the support provided by an organizational network. The formal structure of the small Jewish community is but an extension of the Jewish family and friendship ties, which because of the character of Greek society, are still strong among the small town Jews. Since the holocaust people have become less interested in assembling for Jewish types of activities. Instead, the

close kinship relations that Jewish people feel for one another bring them together and more importantly keep them together as a people who share a unique cultural identity.

What is keeping the Greek Jews "Jewish" in the provinces when the synagogue gates are locked and the children live far from home? The Greek-Jewish family provides the strongest cement to bind people together into a community. Though the building blocks of family life have been weakened through intermarriage, the Jews in the provinces still feel deep kinship ties with other Jews in their own towns and beyond. They see each other often. Local visitation, telephone communication, tourism, and travel are among the the most important ways in which Greek Jews stay in touch with each other.

Below the level of Jewish community organization, the family and its extensions are the major frameworks in which Jewish identification occurs. Since the war the Jewish family residence has extended beyond one location, to include the many places in which relatives, children, and friends now reside. The small size of the postwar Jewish community in Greece ensures that most people in each town know and see each other. This is especially true of the 900 provincial Jews; they either reside in the same community, or are acquainted with the other Jews who inhabit adjacent towns and regions. All of the dispersed Jews in Thrace are related to each other. Rebekah Ashkenazi, born in Volos and

now a resident of Didimotiko, is the mother of Jackie Cohen, one of the five Jews left in the town of Drama. Jackie met his wife Leah on Yom Kippur in the Kavalla synagogue. Leah's father, Sabi Tchamino, still lives in Kavalla. Isaac Ashkenazi has one son in Tel Aviv and another in Salonika. The only other family in Didimotiko, Solomon and Rosa Bechar, are related to Isaac--Solomon is Isaac's nephew. Moshe Pesach from Kavalla has one daughter living in Israel and another in Athens. Such tangled webs of family relationships are the most important and invisible bonds between the handful of remaining Thracian Jews. Every Passover the Jews from Kavalla, Drama, and Didimotiko (all of whom are related to one another) assemble for seder in one of those three towns. If these dispersed Jews don't see each other for a while, they still maintain frequent telephone contact.

The only family in the western Macedonian city of Kastoria is related through marriage to one of the four remaining families in Veroia. In the words of Aharon Gonen, the former Israeli immigration emissary, the only 4 families left in Veroia "first are related as family and then are related as Jews." The 60 Jews who comprise the contemporary Corfu community come from 2 large families; there are 8 different branches of the Soussi family in Corfu and a large Cohen clan. The 3 remaining Jewish families in Karditsa, the Capetas and Semachs, are related as brothers and sister.

Some of Trikala's Jews are also related to the Capetas. Every year during the Christmas season all of the extended members of the Capeta family and their friends come from all over Greece, and even from Israel and America, to play card games together in Chalkis. Perhaps the best illustration of how closely interwoven the various communities are is the case of a Ioannina Jewish woman who was about to give birth in the summer of 1983. In the event that the newborn would be a boy, about 80 relatives and friends from Larissa, a fourth of its entire Jewish community, intended to go to Ioannina to celebrate the Brit Milah.

The modern-day Greek Jewish community is truly an extended family that branches out in to the various provincial communities. But, the connection stretches still further, to Athens and Salonika, and beyond that, to Israel and the United States. Every Jewish family in the provinces has relatives in Israel. People from the provinces travel to Athens, Salonika, and Israel to visit their family and friends. When a certain Tel Aviv family took a trip to America in 1983, they sent their children to stay with aunts and uncles in Trikala. Grandchildren journey from the isle of Rhodes to spend the summer months with their grandparents in Karditsa. In traveling between the Jewish communities of Greece and beyond, Jews from the provinces are maintaining more than family ties, they are reinforcing their own Jewish identity.

When former residents of the Jewish communities come from overseas to visit their native hometowns in the Greek provinces, they reinforce the sense of Jewishness felt by the current community residents. Those overseas Jewish tourists who return to the provinces for extended summer visits fill the role of teaching the current Jewish residents about the history and traditions of Greek Jewry. Tourists not only transmit the Sephardi or Romaniot Jewish heritage to the surviving remnant, they also bring the outside Jewish world into the small communities, making the Greek Jews feel proud of their own unique identity and making them feel a part of the Jewish people (Klal Yisrael).

The provincial communities serve as an anchor for the far-flung Greek Jews of the diaspora. The annual pilgrimage of tourists who flock to Rhodes every summer illustrates further how important outsiders are for a local community's continuity. While tourists play an important role in providing a psychological and educational booster to the Jews remaining in the small towns, group memory is also preserved by those who have stayed in these towns. Every year during the summer months, former residents of Rhodes who are scattered throughout the world converge on the isle. They come from Zaire, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Belgium, France, Portugal, the United States, and Israel. They stay in the same five-star hotel. They take frequent walks around the Juderia--the Jewish quarter--and visit the local Jewish

graveyard which contains 1700 graves. As long as tourists visit the isle, the synagogue, which is closed most months of the year, holds Friday night and Saturday morning services (which sometimes attract close to 70 visitors per service). Without this flow of tourists who make an annual pilgrimage to Rhodes year in and year out, the local Jewish community would quickly disappear. In May 1986, the first world reunion of Rhodian Jews will gather in Jerusalem, and then spend an additional seven days together on the isle of Rhodes.

Travel within Greece and abroad links scattered Jews in the provinces into a much larger Jewish community than the one in which they themselves reside. But, even when Jews stay at home in a small town local visitation provides a strong bond between co-religionists. Jewish folks are constantly visiting one another in their respective stores. The central business district in each small town is located in what was the Evraiki--the Jewish quarter--before the war. Today most Jewish shops and storefronts are still adjacent to each other in the former Evraiki, making it easy for a person to drop in and have a cup of coffee with a fellow Jew. Avraham Svolis' grocery store in Ioannina is typical of most Jewish shops in the small towns. His and other Jewish-owned shops throughout Greece serve as a central meeting spot for local Jews. It is close to other

Jewish shops and homes, so that when fellow Jews pass by the store, they stop in to visit with Avraham. In this way, the simple Jewish storefront has become more than a place to earn a living, it is a meeting place where Jews can keep in touch with each other on a regular and daily basis.

The Small-town Jew in the General Community

The Jews residing in the provinces are not only members of a Jewish community. They live in a Greek society which accords them full and equal rights with all other citizens. Equality for Greek Jews is guaranteed by the country's constitution which states:

Freedom of religious conscience is inviolable. Enjoyment of individual and civil rights does not depend on the individual's religious beliefs.

The Greek Jews have always exercised their voting rights. After the war, many Greek Jews voted gratefully for leftist parties, often because of the role that the communist-led Greek partisans played in saving so many Greek Jews. That mood has now changed. Only a handful of youthful idealists in the Jewish community support the leftist camp. The younger generation's political affiliations are the same as those of the general public, with Jews counted among the supporters of various right, center and leftist parties. The middle and older generation of Greek Jews largely votes for the conservative New

Democracy Party. In Athens, in particular, Jews feel a moral obligation to support the New Democracy Parliamentary deputy Miltiades Evert, whose father, Angelos Evert, issued many false identity cards to Jews during the period of German occupation.¹²⁴

The Greek Jews' constitutional equality has not translated into full participation in Greek society. Before the war Jews were in the vanguard of politics; some of the leading scientists, intellectuals, and progressive thinkers of Greece came from the Jewish community. Very few Jews have become involved in politics in the postwar period. In the words of twenty-eight year old Joseph Molho:

The mentality is 'we'd never be elected.' But why not try? It's the Holocaust psychology of being inferior. It's up to our generation to resurrect Judaism--to say 'I'm a Jew' with understanding and pride.¹²⁵

Recently, Greek Jews began to play a more active role in domestic politics, though on a limited scale. In the municipal elections of March and April 1975 (the first in eleven years), four Jews ran for the city council, two in Athens, one in Larissa and one in Trikala. None of them were elected to office. Jews have not run for elected national positions since the Second World War when Salonika sent Jewish deputies to Parliament.

Thirty years after the end of the war, Jews now find themselves represented in all professions, particularly in

medicine, engineering, commerce, and banking. There are now a few senior Jewish civil servants, but no Jewish diplomats or high-ranking army officers. Under the previous New Democracy Party administration, a Jew headed the Public Power Corporation. Although not an official policy, no Jews until 1983 were allowed to become army officers. A Jewish doctor doing medical check-ups on military personnel noticed that the army files of Jewish soldiers in particular were highlighted in a special color ink. Nico Saltiel, a Salonika Jew in his mid-forties, is among those who believe the Jews are excluded from positions in the public sector:

It's almost impossible for a Jew to enter the government or administration. We [Jews] have only one professor at the university here [Salonika]. For our generation, we're businessmen, it didn't matter. But for the young people out of university, this will be a problem if they're not given the choice. 126

The present PASOK Socialist government has not appointed Jews to any political posts. The reason for this may be found in the absence of Jews as registered members of the PASOK political party.

Aside from limited participation in the political processes of the country, Greek Jews have been the target of a variety of publicly held misconceptions. Jews in the small towns, as well as those in the large cities, are singled out and perceived as different from other Greek nationals. Even where there are only a handful of Jews, as in Kastoria,

Drama, Seres or Kavalla, the average Greek citizen when speaking separates Jews from the rest of the population. Jacko Eliyahu, his parents, wife, and daughter are the only Jewish residents in Kastoria. Jacko bitterly dislikes being singled out by the town folk:

Living in a small town like Kastoria, all the Greeks know that we are Jews without us trying to make it known. Often we come across situations where people call us 'the Jew,' not the Eliyahus. Most of our customers know us as 'the Jew,' which doesn't offend us. It's a habit now. We don't have other minorities in Kastoria. If you walk in the street and ask somebody 'where is the house or shop of Jack Eliyahu,' they probably would not know. They would say 'who is he, we don't know him.' But if you ask 'where is the Jew's house or shop?' they will tell you immediately 'over there.' Or if you ask 'where is Eliyahu?' they will say 'you mean the Jew. Yes. We know him, he is over there.'

In Corfu one can hear the same references to "the Jew." Yakov Soussi discusses the attitudes held by customers who frequent his mother's hardware and appliance store:

If a person buys something and another person asks them 'where did you get this?' the other will reply 'I bought it from the Jew.'

In a similar manner all over the provinces Greek Christians know that there are Jews living in their midst and they commonly single them out as "the Jews." Usually, in the same vein Jews are identified as being rich. "The Jew" is even singled out in the army, as Yakov Soussi indicates:

The mentality is very low in the army, lower than you can imagine. There is anti-Semitism, not very obvious, but hidden, because the Greek constitution says that you have to respect the country, the family, the various religions. An officer doesn't bother you because you are a Jew, but the other soldiers say 'you are a Jew,' 'where is the Jew,' 'have you seen the Jew?'

Such references to the Greek Jews are not new; they have always been a normative part of the various Greek dialects in recent history. Jews did not belong to the family, clan, or religious pattern of the majority group and have thus been identified as "the Jew," to designate their status as "the Stranger" (*xenos*) or "the Foreigner" in Greek society. For some people this type of speech may constitute a subtle form of anti-Semitism, for others it is merely a matter of ignorance in which everybody says "the Jew" without intending any perjorative connotation. Even Greek Catholics are treated as foreigners in a predominately Greek Orthodox country.

This isolation of the Greek Jews as expressed in other people's perceptions seems to indicate that after seventy years in the new and expanded Greek state, the Greek Orthodox still consider the Jews a foreign element in Greek society. In spite of a 500 year local Sephardi heritage, and a much older Romaniot tradition, many Greek Christians feel like the Jews are a foreign people who have their roots elsewhere. Greek Christians sometimes ask Greek Jews the

question "when are you going home [to Israel]?" out of curiosity and ignorance, again without any negative intention. As a minority group among the local population in the provinces, the Greek Jews' different customs and languages gives rise to envy and sometimes enmity within that population.

But the perception that Greek Jews are different is not confined to the average citizen. Greece is a religious state; the Greek identification card and passport list the cardholder's religion. From time to time the Greek clergy point out the religious differences which separate Jews from the Greek majority. In some churches around Easter time Jews are vilified as the killers of Christ and effigies of Jews are set afire. The clergy's anti-Semitic statements are usually uttered as part of their overall verbal attacks on communism and Jehovah's witnesses. In such cases, Judaism is presented as a dangerous threat to the Greek Orthodoxy. Public schools are another place where religious differences are accentuated. Louisa Kones recalls that when priests came to talk about the Jehovah's witnesses at her Volos high school "they pointed out its many similarities to Judaism, and they spoke against the Jews." Jews have been equated to heresies in religious terms since Byzantium. Yet, today the effects of such clerical statements on individual Jews is minimal. They are probably felt most by Jewish school children.¹²⁹

It is the media and government, however, that most frequently single out the Jews in Greek society. In the process evoke anti-Semitic sentiments among the Greek population at large. This type of subtle anti-Semitism, expressed more in words than in actions, is directed not at the indigenous Greek Jews so much as at the State of Israel. Following the overthrow of the junta in 1974, newspaper headlines scored the "Jew Kissinger," the CIA and the United States government for their role in supporting not only the fallen dictatorship but also the Turkish stance on Cyprus. To a large extent such attitudes are influenced by pro-Russian sentiments and corresponding leftist language which is at once pro-Arab and anti-Israel.

Perhaps the best examples of recent public attacks on Greek Jews come from the PASOK political party now in power. Their political policies have been unfavorable to the Greek Jewish community because they have engendered anti-Semitic sentiments among the population. Already before he was elected Prime Minister, back in 1978, Andreas Papandreou's favorite campaign target was the "American-Zionist plan" to "push Turkey into seizing all Cyprus so that US bases can be established there to aid Israel!" 127 When the Socialists assumed power in the 1981 election, one of their first acts was to grant diplomatic status to the Palestine Liberation Organization (the PLO). That same year, in August, two bombs damaged the gate of the Israeli consulate in Athens.

During Israel's war in Lebanon, Papandreou's anti-Semitic accusation that Israel was repeating the crimes of the Nazis, gave official sanction to a wave of anti-Israeli feeling that was already sweeping the cities, villages and isles of Greece. That same summer, Papandreou welcomed Yasir Arafat, the chairman of the PLO, to Greece (appendix 6).

Over the years there has been little conscious spillover of Greece's pro-Arab policy into domestic anti-Semitism. But, the political and ideological rhetoric has been accompanied by social repercussions. As a result of Papandreou's anti-Israeli pronouncements in 1982, the morale of the Greek Jewish community fell to its lowest point since the holocaust. An undercurrent of anti-Semitism undoubtedly accounted in part for the fierce criticism of Israel, symbolized by the interchanging of the Greek words for Israelis (Israelinos) and Jews (Israelitis) in newspapers and on state-controlled radio and television. The slogan "don't give even one drachma to Jewish stores" appeared on a university billboard in Ioannina, while swastikas were painted on the synagogue and graveyard walls, as well as on Jewish storefronts and houses, in this and other provincial towns. Yakov Soussi recalls threats against his family in Corfu during the 1982 Lebanese war:

We had some phone calls, and they said
'we protected you from the Nazis and now
you are doing the same to the Lebanese.'
Aharon, the community President, and my

mother got some letters. These very aggressive letters which said 'we are going to fight back against you for what you are doing in Lebanon, we will do the same to you.' Aharon went to the Police. But, these people who wrote the letters will not do anything to us, because they are afraid. This outburst bothers me, but I do not have the courage to do anything.

The Central Board of Greek Jewish communities reacted swiftly to this upsurge of anti-Semitism. The Central Board appealed to mass media officials, and to the responsible government ministers, including the Prime Minister, himself. When the Vice-Minister of the Press and the Prime Minister appeared on television they deliberately made a distinction between the "Israelitis" (Jews) in Greece and the "Israelinos" (Israelis) who were occupying Lebanon. Subsequently, the tone of anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli broadcasts was mitigated.

The Greek Jewish communities in the provinces were concerned with the domestic repercussions during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. In recent years, synagogues in the provinces have been kept under police surveillance during Jewish holidays and festivities. In all the provincial towns, the Jewish community maintains excellent relations with the local police force; the Jewish community always invites the police to be guests at certain annual Jewish community functions. Even though there is not much anti-Semitism in the small Jewish communities, there still is an uneasy feeling among the Jews. Yet, the Jewish people

residing in the provincial towns do not feel the pressure of anti-Semitism, they only speak of its existence. The danger of anti-Semitism in Greece lies in its sudden outbursts, when subtle words and comments suddenly turn into swastikas and hate letters.

While Greek Jews suffer from anti-Semitic backlashes triggered by the State of Israel's policies, this in its own way has provided a new outlet for rallying the small communities and uniting them. Zionism now instills a sense of communal vitality which was provided before the war by religious faith. Zionism has become a powerful and new source of Greek-Jewish identification, and has in the process caused a dememphasizing of religious expressions. The Greek-Jewish community's identification with Israel is absolute and unequivocal. The small communities recognize the importance that Israel holds for their own existence; Israel is an indispensable bond of internal community unity and a source of outward pride. The manifestation of what many Greek Jews believe is the strongest force of survival for the small communities, lies in what Rabbi Mizan of Athens call "supernationalism." Israel gives Greek Jews the pride to be Jewish and to be able to say without fear 'I am a Jew.' This sense of nationalism has transformed people's identity from Greeks of a Jewish religion to Greeks of a Jewish nationality. Albert Kovo, former President of the

Central Board of Jewish Communities, offers an explanation of how this has change occurred:

Before World War Two religious life was one of the basic elements in human life. Today religion does not exist in any life. Tradition is disappearing. As we leave religion behind, we must substitute something else. What remains is to keep our national past-time, which is Israel. Call it a kind of chauvinism, if you want, but that's it. Even if you want to be a local nationalist the moment will come when you will be treated as a foreign body in the society you are in.

Most Greek-Jewish identifications since the holocaust revolve around the State of Israel. As a result of the predominance of this type of identification, Jews in the small towns reach out to the general community on those occasions related to the holocaust and Israel. Israel's Independence Day is a much celebrated public event in certain provincial communities. Jewish communities throughout the provinces invite local town dignitaries, including the mayor, army, and police officals to attend a religious service and reception in honor of the State of Israel. Even the Holocaust Memorial Day has become a communitywide ceremony in which representatives of the Christian and Jewish communities gather in Jewish graveyards and synagogues to honor and remember the victims of Nazism. Israel serves as both a source of pride and unease for the Jews in the provinces. The non-Jewish population often reveres the State of Israel and accords the local Jewish

community honor, while at other times condemning Zionism and its domestic supporters. Yakov Soussi points to the mixed feelings which characterize Greek's attitude toward the small town Jews:

People make distinctions because we are different. But I think that deep down they admire us because they understand that a lot of similarities exist between the Jews and Greeks. In ancient history the Greeks were outnumbered by the Persians, and even today there are enemies to the East [Turkey]. The Greeks feel that they can fight them, just like Israel can fight the Arabs. They admire us Jews.

In spite of the Greek-Christians' perception that the Jews in their midst are strangers and foreigners, nonetheless, with each passing year since the end of World War Two, the Greek Jews in the small towns have become increasingly integrated into the general society. Earlier in this century, the Greek-Jewish poetry of Yosef Elias (1908-1938) encouraged Jews and Christians to live in greater harmony so that Christians would understand the Jews better. Elias pointed to the similarities between Greek and Jewish religious philosophies which justified to him the modern hellenization of the Greek Jews. The poet recognized that the intimacy between Christian and Jew would change the Jews, and that positive Jewish values would be lost in the process, however, Elias advocated that Jews must adapt their traditions to the conditions of Greek society.

Elias' words were prophetic. Greek Jews have both consciously and unintentionally become integrated into Greek society. As a minority group in Greece, Jews inevitably adopt Greek traditions and customs. The Greek national and cultural heritages have been incorporated into the everyday life of Greek Jews. The younger generation of Greek Jews regularly cite and admire those ideas of Elias that espouse the need to blend with the majority culture.

Social integration is evident among the students in primary schools and universities. Jews have accepted Christian religious practices as well; many Jews in the small towns celebrate Apokreas(Carnival) and Christmas. It is even customary among some Jews and Christians to exchange gifts on Christmas (even though gift-giving is against church law). Some Jews from the middle generation know more about Easter than about any single Jewish holiday. Jews attend baptisms, not only as guests, but as godfathers to the newborn. Christian mourning habits have been accepted by Greek Jews; they wear armbands and blackties just like the Christian mourners. Many Jewish widows follow the Greek Orthodox custom of never marrying again, in spite of the Jewish belief that a person's normal life should resume after the mourning period is over. Even the practice of lighting a wick in the synagogue on Friday afternoon, is explained by some people as an adaptation of a parallel church custom (which is practiced on Sunday). Jews twirl

worry-beads (which are in fact rosary beads) and often affix horse-shoes over the entrances to their homes instead of the traditional Jewish mezzuzah. Greek Jews seem to have embraced those Greek Orthodox customs which demand minimal or no involvement in church activities. Even those Christian customs which have an obvious religious connotation are practiced and accepted by the Greek Jews as social customs.

The Jews who have resided in the provinces since 1945 are more dependent than ever before on the general society. Middle-aged Mattathias Baruch interprets this development as inevitable:

They are many and we are few. We live with them, we receive the same education, study in the same schools, know their customs. They are our friends.

Most Jews in the provinces have never feared assimilation. Those Jews who remained in the provinces while others emigrated believed they could live in harmony with their neighbors in Greek society. The problem has been that while Greek Jews have always had the opportunity to adapt themselves to the majority culture it is precisely the Greek Orthodox majority group who does not want to accept them.

What the Jews in the provinces fear most is not that they will become Greeks, but that they will disappear as Jews. The hellenization policies introduced by the government seventy years ago have succeeded in making the Jews feel like Greek nationals. But, Greek Jews are more

worried about the Jewish part of their identity that is rapidly fading away, even though the society they inhabit provides them with the freedom to maintain autonomous Jewish communities.

Almost 2500 years of Jewish presence in the Balkan peninsula is not easily extinguished. The heritage of the Greek-Jewish people throughout the ages has one of glory and misfortune. In the past, fire has been used to destroy Greek-Jewish culture. The 1917 Salonika fire burnt the sprawling Jewish quarter to the ground. Twenty-five years later the Nazis burnt the Greek Jews in the Auschwitz and Treblinka crematoria. But, it is also by the light of fire that Greek Jews continue to express their will to survive as a people. Every Friday afternoon throughout the Greek provinces Jewish women go to the synagogue. They replenish the olive oil used for the communal eternal light and light a wick to welcome the descending Shabbat day. As long as there are such Greek Jews who create a sense of Jewish time and space within Greek culture, then the flames of Judaism in the Greek provinces will be yet eternal. The continuity of the small Jewish communities in the provinces depends upon the children of holocaust survivors. This generation will now decide whether the light of Judaism will continue to glow bright or instead grow steadily dimmer until it fades completely away.

CONCLUSIONS:

And You Shall Tell Your Children:

The Shaping of Greek-Jewish Identity Over Three Generations and Principles of Small Town Community Survival and Disintegration

1. The Shaping of Greek-Jewish Identity Over Three Generations

Three generations of Jews have now resided in the expanded Greek state. Over seventy years ago, in 1924, a royal decree and parliamentary laws accorded organized Jewish communities full rights to function as autonomous entities within the Greek state. This official recognition of the Jewish community entity has created some staying power, yet people's identity as individuals and citizens has been in flux ever since the end of the Second Balkan War in 1913. The definition of what is a Greek Jew is problematic. This is due to the piecemeal growth of the modern Greek state, as well as the anomalous position of the Jew in Greek society. Present national boundaries are a measure of nationality; Jews living within the borders of the country are Greek nationals.

Jews themselves have been ambivalent regarding their own status and identity. On the one hand, they welcomed their new rights as citizens and began to assimilate into the larger society. They tried to preserve elements of Jewish

life while adapting to the cultural norms of the majority. Religion determined identity in the Ottoman empire, and each religious group organized itself into autonomous millets. Jewishness was a matter of religion, not race. With the break-up of the Ottoman empire, most of the ethno-religious millets became nation-states, with the exception of the Jews and Armenians.

The monolithic character of the modern Greek state combined romanticised Hellenism with Orthodox-Byzantine Christianity. Being a Greek meant speaking Greek, belonging to the Orthodox church, and living under Greek law. The Jews in the modern Greek state became a peculiar remnant from Ottoman times; they were not Christians, many of them spoke Spanolit, and most adhered to the mores of a 2,000 year old Jewish culture. The Greek Jew's choice was either to emigrate or to become a non-Christian Greek. Jews made a conscious effort to drop customs which distinguished them. Jews in northern Greece stopped wearing their distinctive traditional costumes in the 1920s. Language became less of a barrier separating people in Greek society, and in place of traditional religious learning, Greek Jews favored a more secular-oriented Alliance Jewish education.

The modernization of the educational system functioned not only as a catalyst for change in many areas of society, it also signified the first involvement of a large Jewish organization--the Alliance Israelite Universelle--in Greek

life. This school network united many Jewish communities throughout Greece by providing social services and a standardized education. It also defended the Greek Jews against persecution. After the war, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and then the Central Board of Jewish Communities followed the course first set by Alliance in which one central organization cared for the needs of the provincial Jewish communities.

Such modernization trends marked a change in the traditional and autonomous character of the individual Jewish communities in the provinces. The language and culture gap narrowed considerably between the Spanolit-speaking Macedonian Jews who previously lived in an Islamic environment and the Greek Jews who were exposed to the Greek Orthodox classical tradition. The state imposed measures to foster a Greek identity in the schools, army, and workplace. The Jewish communities in the newly-expanded Greek state had not been linked with each other prior to the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire, but once they became part of the same polity, they forged regional ties based on trade. Regional Jewish identities gave way to a uniform national Greek Jewish identity. People began to identify themselves as Greek Jews, rather than as "Greeks." Although Jews maintained good relations with non-Jews, they still felt uncomfortable in Greek society; underlying tensions always remained. Greek Orthodox citizens had no

problem with their own identity because for them religion and nationality were identical. Jews were identified as a separate religious group, a people who were not members of Greece's recognized religion or ethnic body; hence, they were often viewed as aliens.¹³⁰

The first expression of anti-Jewish sentiments in Greece since the Balkan Wars of 1913 followed the influx of over a million Anatolian refugees into the country. These displaced persons, many of whom spoke languages other than Greek, vented their frustrations on the Jews. New government policies affected the Jews in particular--enforcing a Sunday mandatory closing law for all stores (in 1924), and the closing of all foreign-operated schools (in 1934). With the onslaught of the Nazis, traditionally-oriented Sephardi life suffered a death blow. The majority of Greek Jewry perished in Auschwitz and Birkenau.

The destruction of the Greek-Jewish communities during the holocaust caused a shift away from ethno-religious values to social identification with Israel. Greek Jews were not the only ones who increasingly associated their Jewishness with the State of Israel. Greek-Christians also viewed Jews against the dramatic events surrounding the State of Israel; to them Greek Jews' were Israelis whose real home was not in Greece, but in Israel. The various wars involving Israel over the last thirty years have been occasions in which the people considered the Jews to be

Israelis residing temporarily in Greece; during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars many Greek people (though not the government) supported the State of Israel, but by the late 1970s, Israel had become an arch-enemy of Hellenism, with parallels drawn between the Cypriote and Palestinian refugees.¹²¹

Jews living in the provinces today express their Jewishness on a family level. They feel strongly bound to the Jewish people in the State of Israel and elsewhere. Interestingly, this is also how the Greek Christians perceive the Jews in their midst--as Israelis who constitute an extension of the State of Israel. As in 1913, so too today, Greek-Jewish equality is a legal fact but not a reality of everyday life in Greece.

Before the holocaust Greek Jews defined their Jewishness in terms of religious identification. A person was considered Jewish by the community if he or she was born to two Jewish parents. Since the war, and especially in the last twenty years, the number of intermarried Jews has increased, causing a more liberal definition of who is Jewish. In the post-holocaust period most Jews in the Greek provinces are divided according to their Jewish self-perception. The elderly generation consider themselves Jews by religion but not of Greek nationality; they feel an attachment to their Sephardi, Romaniot, or Italian Jewish heritage. The holocaust generation consider themselves Jews

by nationality and religion. The younger, post-holocaust generation which resides in the provinces thinks of itself foremost as dual nationals (Greek and Jewish). They show a certain interest in Jewish life and participate in a few (usually non-religious) community activities, but unlike the two previous generations they do not feel like members of any religious community. Instead of feeling like a part of the continuum of a unique Sephardi or Romaniot heritage, the younger generation defines its Jewish identity in terms of a new political consciousness expressed by attachment to the peoplehood of Israel, and particularly to the State of Israel.

On an official level, the small Jewish communities in the postwar period maintain that only the individual who is of Jewish descent is a member of the community. On a pragmatic level, they recognize as Jewish virtually anyone who wishes to be considered as such. Since the holocaust, one Jewish parent is sufficient criterion for an individual to be accepted as a community member. The key to this lenient policy of acceptance within the community lies in the extraordinary high rate of intermarriage. The marriage records of the Jewish community of Volos show that at least half of the marriages that took place in the 1950s were mixed marriages. Many of the children of these marriages, who are now in their twenties, were raised as members of the

Jewish community even though the non-Jewish spouse never converted to Judaism.

The differences in Greek Jewish self-identification and Jewish affiliation in the post-holocaust period have usually followed generational demarcations. External conditions have influenced the particular shaping of each generation's Jewish identity. However, the variations from one generation to the next are not always sharply defined and fixed. In recent years the distinctions between the three generations have fused into a common identity. Today most Greek Jews feel Greek culturally, ethnically, and nationalistically. At the same time every Jew feels Jewish. Greek Jews perceive of themselves today as Greeks who belong to a different religious group.

2. Principles and Patterns of Small Town Jewish Community Survival and Disintegration in the Greek Provinces

The survival of the remaining small Jewish communities after the holocaust is indeed threatened, but the Jews who are living in the small towns are compensating for the disappearance of communal life by finding new ways to remain Jewish without the support of a local Jewish community. Certain generalizations can be made about how the provincial Greek Jews and their communities confront threats to their survival in the postwar period. These principles constitute an attempt to explain what happens to Jewish communities and their members when they experience survival crises. Although

the principles apply specifically to the provincial Greek-Jewish communities in the post-holocaust period, particularly during the past fifteen years, they may have wider applications as well.

First Principle: The Shrinking Community Nucleus

There is some critical mass necessary for a Jewish community to survive. Without this unspecified number of children, activities cease, and remaining members fade away. In a small community where more people die than are being born, and where some people migrate without a corresponding inflow of new Jewish residents, such a community cannot survive over a long period of time but will eventually disappear.

This principle is illustrated by the situation today in the provincial communities where the Jewish population is a rapidly aging one. There are not enough births in the new generation to replace dying members. Young families are having one or two children. The nucleus of people that is required for community continuity is either having fewer children (one or two), or else is migrating or emigrating. The Jewish community fades a little more with each death of an elderly member. Clearly, the size and age of a community's membership, and the rate of intermarriage are crucial variables in determining a prognosis for the continued existence of a small community.

The minimal dimensions of the viable Jewish community have become much larger since the holocaust. What was considered a normal size Jewish community before the holocaust is now thought of as too small, even though in

some places only slight changes have occurred in pre-war and postwar Jewish population levels. Before the holocaust a Jew might have been attracted to a Jewish community of 300 by its full complement of Jewish services, but in the 1980s the still strongly attached members of the same community are equally attracted to a larger community because they can find in it all the Jewish institutions which they need and may not have in their own communities.

Second Principle: The Evolution and Dissolution
Cycle of a Small Community

The first and last stages of a small Jewish community's existence revolve around individual family survival. Small Jewish communities first evolve and finally dissolve with a handful of extended Jewish families in residence.

The rise and the fall of a small Jewish community undergo a similar cycle; both the evolution and dissolution of a community involves a few families. A small Jewish community begins with a few families, grows into a larger entity, and when it falters, there are but a few families left in residence. Often economic factors motivate Jewish families to establish a presence in a given town and to maintain that presence even when there are few Jews left in residence.

This pattern has characterized the establishment of many of the small Greek-Jewish communities in the last few hundred years. Itinerant merchant Jews from urban centers (like Salonika) settled in small towns to take advantage of new business opportunities. And today, as the Jewish

population level in small towns decreases, the remaining Jews belong to a few extended families, who stay in a town because of successful commercial pursuits. If and when the last Jews leave the small towns, they often move to urban centers, thus completing the evolutionary cycle of a community. The remaining Jews in Didimotiko, Corfu, Karditsa, Veroia, Kastoria, and most other communities maintain their presence in the small towns because of their business interests and the presence of other family members. And those people who intend to leave these towns will move to the large cities where their children reside.

As separate small Jewish communities evolved with their own unique cultural and occupational traditions, they eventually became linked to adjacent communities through trade and cultural ties and in the process assumed a common regional Jewish identity (such as the Macedonian or Epirus Jewish communities). Gradually since 1913, and especially after the holocaust, the small Greek Jewish communities countrywide have been woven together into a monolithic community by virtue of their common problems and extended family relations which unite many dispersed communities. Hence, there has been a movement from a regional to a national Greek Jewish identity; common survival crises after the holocaust have caused the Greek Jewish communities to unite.

Third Principle: The Paradox of Individual and
Communal Jewish Survival

The Jewish survival of individual Jews is not always synonymous with the survival of their community. The same variables and factors that strengthen an individuals' Jewish identification can simultaneously cause a weakening of the small Jewish community.

There is a paradoxical nature to Jewish identity in which the one same variable can have a positive effect on individual survival and a negative effect on community survival. This is one of the ironies of Jewish continuity: people's efforts to remain Jewish may ultimately contribute to the disintegration of small Jewish communities. There is a clash between shared Judaism and divergent values and morals.

There are variables which are operative today among Greek Jews which may reinforce a person's own Jewish identity while at the same time hindering the prospects for community continuity. In the absence of Jewish educational opportunities in the Greek provinces, it is often easier and better for the younger generation to study in Israel. Israel becomes the Jewish summer school or university for many a Greek Jew. This situation often results in the person taking up permanent residence in Israel; in effect Israel reinforces and strengthens the young person's Jewish identity to the point where he or she may decide to stay there and never return to the provincial communities. Hence,

an individual's personal Jewish continuity may have a negative effect on small town Jewish community survival.

The involvement of central Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Athens in the affairs of the provincial Jewish communities has helped them temporarily, often at the expense of their local communal autonomy. The small communities are experiencing simultaneous feelings of estrangement and Klal Yisrael; through the Central Board the small communities are united into a countrywide Jewish community, yet this organization's interest in constantly relinquishing the communal property in the small towns and its role in denying certain Jews the privilege to maintain an official Jewish presence in a given town hastens the disintegration of the small community. In helping the small communities, central organizations unwittingly often worsen their chances for survival.

Fourth Principle: Identity Compensations Ensure Continuity

When changes occur in the normal functionings of the Jewish community or in the Jewish identifications of its members, Jews compensate by maintaining their identity in new ways.

a. The religious and cultural traditions that have preserved Judaism through the centuries in the Balkan peninsula are withering away. There is now an absence in the small towns of those amenities of Jewish life which allow a

Jew to lead a complete Jewish life; the active synagogue and Jewish school have all but disappeared in the small provincial towns. As formal patterns of religious identification lessen, informal religious habits and Jewish secular socialization have taken on a greater importance for community and individual Jewish survival. Even as organized attempts to bring Jews together diminish, the prevalence of other informal patterns of identification, such as ethnic signaling, visitation, travel, and family gatherings assume a new dimension in Jewish survival.

b. As the number of Jews decreases in a small community, it often happens that a person's awareness of his or her Jewishness increases. The person who becomes "the Jew" in town or the "Jew and a half" feels a greater obligation to represent the Jewish community. The feeling of growing isolation creates a greater responsibility for group survival. Each person is forced to take on leadership roles or else community institutions start to wither.

c. As the opportunities and occasions for the traditional forms of Jewish identification and affiliation lessen in a town, there is sometimes an increasing need to reach beyond the community boundaries to provide both individual and communal sustenance. When Greek Jews are isolated and do not reside in a vibrant or functioning Jewish community, their Jewish identity is reinforced from beyond community and town boundaries. Their Jewishness is transported into the small

towns from the outside world through telephone conversations with their children who reside in Athens or Israel, news reports about Israel, travel, and even reflections about the holocaust, and the glories of their Sephardi heritage. Greek Jews compensate for the absence of local Jewish life by maintaining a spiritual bond with their history, family, and the State of Israel.

Fifth Principle: The Informal and Psychological Dimensions of Jewish Self-Preservation

Maintaining Jewish identity depends on factors not always directly related to Jewish religious behavior or social affiliation.

a. The Greek Jews' memory of collective Jewish history provides psychological strength which contributes to their community and individual survival. Greek Jews feel a deep pride in their age-old Jewish heritage. They are proud the golden age of Jewish life in Salonika. Pride in the past has become an important source of hope for the future.

b. Physical property imposes a degree of community continuity. The maintenance of communal property such as the synagogue or graveyard requires that people come together to manage the property within the framework of a Jewish community. Even where there are only a handful of Jews living in a community, their care of the unused facilities becomes an important reinforcement of their Jewish identity.

c. The extended Greek Jewish family network spanning the Greek provinces and cities, together with the presence of tourists and outsiders who occasionally visit the provincial towns and isles help the few remaining Jews feel like members of a larger Jewish community than the one they inhabit.

d. Having a Hebrew or Jewish-sounding name makes the person feel more Jewish. Greek Jews still adhere to Sephardi naming practices. Most people name their children after their parents and many biblical names are popular choices. In accordance with Greek law, each store in Greece must display the owner's name on the storefront. The display of the the traditional Sephardi names of Greek Jews in public places separates them in the eyes of most non-Jews as a unique ethnic group dwelling in Greek society.

e. The Greek Jews' knowledge and acquisition of an ethnic language preserves their cultural uniqueness. While Spanolitic and French are fast disappearing as Jewish folk and cultural expressions, Hebrew is now studied not as a liturgical medium but as a spoken language used by the younger generation of Greek Jews.

Sixth Principle: Indicators of Community Dissolution

Telltale signs of decline precede the death of a small Jewish community.

a. Many Jews in the small provincial towns want to be buried elsewhere than their current residence because of the feeling that no Jews will be living in the given town in the next generation. This is but one indication of a disintegrating community.

b. Changes in synagogue seating patterns (resulting in women sitting directly opposite men), complete disuse of the Ezrat Nashim, moving the pulpit into the center of the synagogue, and the giving away of Torah scrolls to other Jewish communities all indicate that the religious vitality of a community is dwindling.

c. The absence of people in a community who can read Hebrew leads to the elimination of the Torah service from prayer occasions, and ultimately causes the end of synagogue worship on a weekly basis. The closure of the synagogue may also ensue.

d. The failure to prevent or repair the desecration of the graveyard or synagogue is a sign of weakness and negligence on the part of the community. A community that cannot take care of its synagogue cannot ensure its continued survival either.

e. The shift from traditional occupations to professional careers is an indication that those involved will look for

employment away from the small town, most likely in the large cities.

f. Going away to universities in the big cities creates a whole range of new choices for the person involved (job, marriage, residence). Experience has shown that those seeking a higher education in Athens or Salonika will rule out the possibility of an eventual return to the small town.

g. In recent years, Jewish shopkeepers in the provinces have started to keep their businesses open on Yom Kippur, something they had never done before. This practice is yet another indication of decreasing community vitality.

h. Some members of a Jewish community are irreplaceable. When a community loses its shamas or Chacham, the range of activities associated with these roles disappear in the process.

Seventh Principle: The Denial of Disintegration

People living in a disintegrating Jewish community often deny what is happening and instead speak about the past and the future of the community.

Many Greek Jews believe that nothing critical is threatening the existence of the small communities. They talk about their evolving Jewish community, while to outsiders it may seem apparent that the community is in fact dissolving. When outsiders claim that the small Jewish communities are vanishing and becoming exotic, this becomes a source of irritation to the remaining members of a small community who dislike the stigma of a death sentence imposed upon them. Scholars and journalists who label Jewish

communities as "dying and vanishing" may be engaging in a self-fulfilling prophecy. The label itself may be a factor in the demise of the small community, by reducing it to an object of history and scholarship.

It is possible to identify exactly who is remaining in the small provincial towns from among the younger generation of Greek Jews. Those youngsters who enter their family businesses will continue to work and reside in the small towns. Those Greek Jews who intermarry with a person whose family lives in the small town are likely to remain in the town because they have acquired a new set of local relationships which connect them further to the small town. Finally those Greek Jews who own vast property assets in the small towns see no reason to move away.

The survival and continuity of Jewish life in the Greek provinces now rests with the younger generation. It is extremely difficult for them to express their Jewishness with very few individuals left in a community. There are not enough people for Jewish schooling, dating, marriage, or cultural activities. The younger generation seems to be developing a culture with decreasing connection to their inherited past. They face the challenge of trying to keep Jewish culture alive even as they themselves feel less of a connection to the religious, historical, and cultural heritage of the Jewish people.

Appendix 1

THE GREEK NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

Section II: Relations of Church and State

Article Three:

1. The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. The Orthodox Church of Greece, acknowledging our Lord Jesus Christ as His head, is inseparably united in doctrine with the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople and with every other Church of Christ with the same doctrine, observing unwavering, as they do, the holy apostolic and synodal canons and sacred traditions. It is autocephalous and is administered by the Holy Synod originating thereof and assembled as specified by the Statutory Charter of the Church in compliance with the Provision of the Patriarchal Tome of 29 June 1850 and the Synod Act of 4 September 1928.

2. The ecclesiastical regime existing in certain areas of the State shall not be deemed contrary to the provisions of the preceding paragraph.

3. The text of the Holy Scripture shall be maintained unaltered. Official translation of the text into any other forms of language without prior sanction by the Autocephalous Church of Greece and the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople is prohibited.

Article Four:

1. All Greeks are equal before the law.

2. All Greeks living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour, and freedom, irrespective of nationality, race, or language and of religious or political beliefs. Exemptions shall be permitted only in cases provided for by international law.

Appendix 2a

Deportation Testimonies taken from A History of the Jews in Macedonia, by Alexandar Matkovski, Skopje: Macedonian Review Editions, 1982

Deportation testimony given by Mois Pesach of Drama

On the night of 4 March 1943 in very cold weather, the police surrounded the Jewish quarter. All the inhabitants were brutally removed from their homes. All were forcibly taken to the tobacco warehouse just as in Kavalla and elsewhere. This was a large building with two stories. The unfortunate people remained here for several days. They were later taken in cattle wagons through Simitli to Lom and there all traces of them were lost. (page 166)

Deportation testimony given by Abraham Solomon Ovadia of Seres

Our Jewish community numbered approximately 600 in a town of 35,000 inhabitants. All were exterminated. We had to bear a double occupation: German and Bulgarian. In Serres, just as in other towns, a Jewish quarter had existed for centuries. The people were surprised in their sleep. The police were so brutal that they did not permit us even to dress properly. Everyone was taken to the Marulis Monopoly under guard. We heard later that a round-up had taken place that same night in Kavala, Drama, Komotini, Alexandropolis and Xanthi. About 5,000 people were collected in Drama: men, women and

Appendix 2b

children of all ages, healthy and ill. None of the deportees has remained living. (pages 164-165)

Deportation testimony given by Moris Benveniste of Kavalla

Kavalla, in Macedonia, is situated on a bay across from the island of Thassos and was occupied on 10 May 1941. First there was a parade of Germans and then came the Bulgarians. The Germans did not stay for long, maintaining only one base for hydroplanes...The new government wanted to quickly Bulgarify the region...On the night of 4 March, a monstrous round-up was carried out. In weather of five degrees below zero the detectives collected 1,800 Jews. Not one of the deportees ever returned. The people were first interned in numerous tobacco depots, where they remained three days and nights. They were then sent to Drama and on to Poland, where they were exterminated at Treblinka. During the occupation our beautiful synagogue and cemetery were destroyed. After the war, our Jewish community had only 30 people in it. (page 168)

Appendix 2c

Testimony given by a Christian Woman Describing the Deportation of Jewish Neighbors in Kavalla:

My name is Evangelitsa Hamuri. In the house where I lived there was one Jewish family. One day I saw them with a gold star and I said to myself 'They're marking these people; it doesn't look good.' They also marked Jewish homes and shops...It was midnight and we were asleep, as were Tamara Simantov and her husband and children...All of a sudden, here were the Bulgarian police with a large night lamp. They came up the stairs and illuminated every door. As soon as they saw the yellow Jewish star they knocked on the door and when no one answered they opened it by force. The Simantov children began to cry. Those poor ones thought the Bulgarians had come after their father. They were told, 'Don't cry, you'll stay together. We'll take you all out.' Poor Mrs. Simantov quickly took whatever was within reach. She lost her head. I said to my husband, 'Oh Lord, they're taking them on such a cold night'....From our quarter they took another Jewish family, that of Isak Koen, his wife, three children and Flora Yuda from Salonika, a 90 year grandmother who was deaf and blind. There were people who carried nothing with them, while others carried barrels on their backs. Whoever witnessed the departure of the Jews will never forget it...They took them to the monopoly. We neighbors decided to bring them something, but the police

Appendix 2d

dogs wouldn't let us get near the fence. They remained there three days and were then taken somewhere from which no one returned. The police sealed the apartment. After a while, civilians and police opened it. They sold everything cheaply at auctions. Bulgarians bought mostly. One Greek woman who had bought a mattress found money and other valuable hidden in it. (page 168-169)

COPY

KINGDOM OF GREECE
ISRAELITE COMMUNITY OF JANINA
RELIEF COMMITTEE
FILE No. 22

AT JANINA
15th February, 1947

To the
JEWISH COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
IN CAPE TOWN

Dear Brothers,

We enclose herewith copy of a letter addressed by us to the Central Relief Committee at Athens.

It is brimming over with soul-distressing tragedy, which we suffer daily under the abovementioned Committee, tragedies which has as their subject unprotected girls, widows, orphans and one tubercular person.

Being moved by Jewish feeling and friendly consideration, we have repeatedly warned these Gentlemen, but they have shunned our appeal as men shun a reptile.

We have among other complaints to inform you that we have been excluded from the last distribution of parcels of goods, which was carried out by the abovementioned Committee, as if we did not have ninety-two percent losses spiritually and one hundred percent materially.

Our Chief Rabbi is bedridden suffering from Mia Cardia and we are unable, not only to assist him, but even to pay his salary for the past six months, which is still unpaid. We have no funds and are overwhelmed with debts owing to Doctors for medical treatment of our people.

Because of all this, dear brothers, we summon you as volunteers to join this fight, which we have undertaken for the rebuilding of the second Jewish Race.

We summon all those who have the feeling of a Jewish heart.

We summon those who have suffered in the losses of the Jewish Race. We summon those who hold high the ideals of our race, its honour and traditions.

We

COPY

AUTOMEN, INC.
"THE LANGUAGE METHOD OF SPEECH"

Kingdom of Greece
The Jewish Community of Janina
Relief Committee
Protocol No. 15

To the Central Relief Committee, Athens

We acknowledge the receipt of one million in the distribution of which we will proceed immediately.

Gentlemen:

Having seen your criminal indifference for the Community of Janina, indifference for which we do not know the reasons, we were forced to send, with our own personal funds, the Secretary General of our Committee, to ask you for the appropriate explanations to the following:

- (1) We have one tubercular, victim of the German cruelty whose health is becoming worse every day because he lacks not only the proper food for the present condition of his health, but even his everyday bread. Many times, Gentlemen, we rang the bell of the danger but you thought it would be better to answer with your silence, thus condemning the poor tubercular and his family, taking the place of the authors of the crime which you are committing.
- (2) We sent you a notice, according to your orders, that Emilia S. Bacolas and Armata S. Konta, are in the eighth month of pregnancy, to send them their parcels, the Moncoudices, but you did not care a bit. Now we dare, Gentlemen, to tell you that in the eighth month of their pregnancy are also; Tuli M. Nachmia, Euthemia Moses Matathia, Esther Elia Mordechai and Anna Sol. Mordechai. We do not know whether we shall be given the same answer, but we ask you to kindly give the parcels for the six (6) pregnant above to the Secretary of our Committee, Mr. Maurice Egra, unless in your opinion the Jewish Women of Janina have no right to them because they are blamed for working intensively for the renaissance of the Jewish race, which perhaps it is a check to your program.
- (3) You are detaining the money of two more months, viz. October and November and nobody knows under what excuse, you will condemn the little girls of our Community either to death from starvation or dishonor.

Should we gentlemen, send you pictures of these little girls, to understand the crime you are committing? We do want to emphasize that you commit a crime going on with your way of action. But we strongly protest against your method, not a method of Jews who want to smooth the sufferings of helpless people in their race, but of men who proceed in criminal acts, without knowing what are the motives of their actions.

Under these circumstances, Gentlemen, we affirm that the Relief Committee of Janina will ring the bell of danger where there are men with real Jewish conscience, wherever they are, denouncing the criminality of your actions, thus working for the interest of the race.

We are yours,
For the Relief Committee of Janina
The Secretary General
Maurice Egra

The president.
(Sion Bacolas)

The Members

A. S. Gambai
So. Mordechai

Maicos Batinos
M. Matsas

Moses Giomtor

Appendix 4

Greek

English

WELFARE SOCIETY FOR THE REHABILITATION
of the Jews of Larisa

8 Thoukididou St., Larisa, Greece

To the Jewish Community of
New York

Dear Brothers:

The City of Larisa and its surroundings have been stricken by a terrible earthquake. Everything that has remained undamaged from the previous earthquakes, has been demolished by the new one. All the buildings crumbled and most of them are no longer inhabitable.

Panick-stricken the inhabitants are afraid to enter their houses; they spend the nights in the Jewish clubs, outdoors, in tents, and in temporary shelters, or in the homes of their relatives.

Because of the prevailing cold weather and the incessant rain and constant earth tremors their plight is even more dramatic.

Lack of employment and entire stagnation in business have created such a state of affairs where we are unable to buy our daily necessities to keep our families alive. Therefore, our lives and that of our children are endangered, because of lack of shelter, clothes, and food.

We, therefore, appeal to your charitable feelings to assist us to stay alive, and to prove by deeds your brotherly willingness to offer us the help we need and which circumstances impose.

Trusting our appeal will not have been made in vain,

We remain,

Very respectfully yours,
Larisa, March 11, 1957

The Executive Board of the
Society

(7 signatures)

P. Venouziou
(Illegible)
B. Moses
Alb. Bezos
(3 signatures illegible)

Seal: "DAVID" Aid Society
for the Rehabilitation
of the Jews of Larisa

Appendix 5a

Interview on July, 1983, Ioannina, Greece
between Janet Battinou and Joshua Plaut

Janet: About the matchmaking between Ioannina and Larissa. The first couple got married six years ago. It was John Mattahias and Matoula, she is from Larissa. They live here they have two children. That was the first matchmaking. They told him(John/David?) that there was a good girl in Larissa, 'do you want to meet her?' he met her, and they married.

Josh: Is this the way Greeks marry today?

Janet: Of course not. After them, the second couple. My uncle's Makis (Chaim) wife is her cousin, and my uncle is her husband's friend. He (Makis) went to Larissa with John and they knew a very nice girl Matoula, would like to meet her, and they got married. They married after a year and a half. She came to visit here for 15 days, he went there for a week. When they saw that they matched together after six months, they got engaged. First they decided together, then they went to their parents and told them. They went to my grandfather and said 'we got engaged.' Then he said to my mother 'I would like them to ask me first, I wouldn't have said no.' He said 'if its the new way to make things, what (an I say?') Her parents came here and discussed the dowry. My uncle said he didn't want a dowry. They just gave her what ever they wanted. They had something for her, of course, for when she got married. They gave her an apt. A week or two after we all went to Larissa, and that's when the engagement took place. Eight months later the marriage took place in Larissa. She was still going to school. She was 17 years old and my uncle (my mother's brother) was 27 years old. The meeting was arranged. It doesn't go on the way it usually did. They went to my grandfather and said 'grandfather we got engaged' while in other marriages they say 'this girl, what's your opinion of her, should I get engaged?'

Josh: Was there an engagement party?

Janet: Yes, it took place in a restaurant with dancing and folksongs. The Jewish people said Mazal tov. Then they got married. Relatives held the chuppah poles, and it took place inside the kehal.

My brother's wedding took place in this synagogue. It is a very old one. It took place 20 years ago (1963) with a Rabbi from Athens. Their meeting was arranged.

Appendix 5b

Sometimes the matchmaking goes through relatives, other times through friends. Sometimes the match doesn't take place because of the dowry, mostly in the big cities like in Athens and Saloniki. Women feel like their merchandise. Its awful when somebody you are going to be married with asks for money. Who pays for the wedding is a different thing.

I found out about it myself. They have seminars in Athens for the young people. I've been at one, it was disgusting, and I'm never going again. The boys get together at night when the seminar is over and they say how about this girl, she this and that. I was also at a seminar in Salonika when I was 17 but then I didn't understand.

ENE, the Jewish Youth Union of Greece, runs this group. Here in Ioannina its just me and my brother. They arrange meetings. You go there alone, and leave there not alone. Perhaps I'm preoccupied, because I'm a bit sensitive about these things. I just hate them. They wrote to me from Athens and told me there was going to be a seminar (Evraiki Neaoli Ellathos). It was a meeting to call members from all Greece to expand the Athens group into a union for all Greece. We did some good work there. We elected a chairman and six board members. We voted on a constitution.

The whole idea was that there was going to be a unified Greek Jewish youth and make every member feel his Jewish identity, help people go to Israel for studies or to settle. We met on March 25, 1983 on Greece's Independence Day. Seventy people mostly from Athens, and from other cities, mostly from Saloniki, less from Larissa, and less from the other cities. Thwere were even three guys from here, two boys and me. One was 20 and the other was 22 years old. They are university students in Athens. One was Sakis Negin, the other Marcel Svolis.

The Athenians are very snobbish. If you are from some other city they just don't speak to you. When the seminar in Salonika took place they met nobody. I didn't get to know anybody. They think you are not important. I knew the people from Salonika. I've been there over 20 times. Two girls and two boys came here during Easter from Athens to visit some of their friends. I went everywhere with the two girls. They were snobbish. The guys here asked me 'why are they so snobbish to you?'

Appendix 5c

Josh: Joseph Matşa calls this group the bad society. Why?

Janet: I hate the gossiping. Men are the worst gossipers. They are gossiping about what a woman does. If they learn something about a girl in one moment all of Greece hears about it and in the second moment even Israel knows about it. It's negative gossip. I heard things about girls whom I do not even know, what they did, where they ate, who did they meet, what did they tell him. Everything. I hate this type of community. It's a struggling network. It's exclusively Jewish people. The centers of gossip are in Salonika and Larissa. Every type of gossip. Who got married, who got divorced, why, all the details.

Josh: Did you talk about marriages?

Janet: I thought that there wouldn't be such talk. All the people were between 17 and 27 years old. I thought that they would have new ideas, that they wouldn't be like that. But they talk between themselves, who has a dowry, how much money she has.

Josh: How do they know how much is in the dowry?

Janet: They know. Boys from Saloniki know about the girls from Saloniki. Boys from Athens know about the girls from Athens. I have a friend who told me what to expect at the first of the seminars I attended. I thought we would learn things about being Jewish. He told me don't kid yourself, these gatherings are for people who come here alone, not to go back home alone, to have an affair with someone. I didn't believe him then but I do now. Many of the older members aged 26 years old went to university in Israel and came back.

I have received papers from the Jewish Agency many times saying that if you want to go to study in Israel write to us about information, tell us dates, we will help you with everything. It comes from Athens. It is just a principle of the group to help who ever wants to go to Israel with information.

This year there is a seminar July 24-30 on Jewish-Greek identity, lead by the ENE. They had some help from Europe and Israel. It took place in Lithokoro, near Salonika, the place of the Jewish camp. I was a counselor there two years ago. You write to the camp council in Saloniki and if they accept you, then you become a counselor. You volunteer, no salary. It is for three weeks, with one week of training

Appendix 5d

before hand. The leader of the camp is a Christian. He was with the scouts for many years. The educational program was organized by "Hamorah" [the Jewish studies teacher] who lived in Saloniki. His name was Avi Hausman. I had very small children aged 7 and 8 years old. The Jewish program was not strong, because the boys and girls just wanted to play. The Greek director was there only for that one year. There were nine counselors, 4 boys and 4 girls and one responsible for sports. There were 90 children, 10 of whom were from Israel. Camps for children aged 7-14 years old. I actually have a lot of friends in Saloniki, as all the camp counselors who worked with me were from there.

Makis (Janet's 16 year old brother): Of course I liked the camp. I've been there twice. I don't like to write letters so I don't keep in touch with the children from camp. Sometimes I see them when I go to Saloniki (my father's sister lives there).

Janet's Father: My marriage wasn't from a matchmaking. I just met my wife here in Ioannina (father now draws whole family tree on piece of paper). I went to her father to ask him for permission to marry his daughter. My parents said that if this makes you happy, then it is all right with us. I first asked my wife before we married 'can you live with me, can we make it together?' She said yes. She was very young, 16 years old. I'll ask you first and then ask your father. We were seen together, this is a very small town. My mother's father saw them together, and she went to him and said, we saw our daughter together with that man, and he asked his wife, is he serious or does he want to play with her. My grandfather was very strict. He did not let my mother go to parties, or even to school alone.

Janet: First he [father] asked the girl, then he asked and told his parents and they said if you like her, take her. Then he told my mother, should I go to your father, as I want to marry you. I went to her father's store to speak with him, but he said to me 'not here in the store.' We went to a kafenion by the airport and drank an ouzo. I told him 'What do you say, will you give me your daughter to marry?' He said, 'if she wants you too, then you have my blessing. But first you must tell me what you want, what dowry do you want.' He said I don't want a dowry, just to marry her. I work, we will eat. If you want to give her something, whatever you give to her is fine. I didn't demand anything. He [[father] knew her family was poor, and that he couldn't give much. Even if he knew he had money he wouldn't ask for it. He just wanted to marry her. He gave

Appendix 5e

her a sewing machine, clothes, linens, and the expenses of the marriage, a full set of bedroom furniture, except the bed, as it is custom here for the groom to provide the bed.

He lived together with his mother and father. We still live together. They have their own apartment, but we spend the whole day together. We eat together, we all watch T.V. together and then they go back to sleep in their own apartment.

Janet: The father-in-law paid for the wedding.

Josh: Has your father thought about a dowry for you?

Janet: We don't have much money, if a guy is going to ask for money, then he will go back to his mother, but if he does like my father did, I don't want money, but if you want to give something it is welcome, this is okay.

Janet's Father: I will tell him do you love my daughter, and if he says I also want a car and all sorts of things, I will say you are not good for us. If he is clever he will say 'give me whatever you want.'

Josh: In earlier times there was an open discussion about dowries. After the war, your father was one of the first to move away from the old system.

Janet: In those times the two families would sit one opposite the other and they would discuss how much, 100 gold liras?

Janet's Father: In Athens, 20 years ago, they would sit and ask what do you have to offer? 4000 gold liras. After 3 months the man stop coming home and they got divorced.

Appendix 5f

Interview conducted at an outdoor restaurant in Northern Corfu, July 1983, between Yakov Soussi, age 24, and Joshua and Yehuda Plaut

Yehuda: Who says that intermarried Jews are lost to the community?

Yakov: The Jews do because the intermarried cannot vote in the elections of the Jewish community. If a Jewish girl marries a Christian she is thrown out of the community [registrar?].

Josh: What if a Jewish girl doesn't convert to Christianity but marries a non-Jew, can she still vote in the elections?

Yakov: Yes, if she has a civil marriage, which is legal now, but if she has a religious wedding in the Christian church, we lose her, because before one year people of different religions could not marry in the church, they had to convert to one religion. But now if you have a civil marriage you can remain Jewish.

Here in Corfu a Jewish woman married a Christian man; in most of the intermarriages, the Christian girl converts to Judaism. The old Rabbis used to convert them, or the Athens or Turkish Rabbis. Only in one case did the boy become a Catholic. Now he doesn't come to synagogue anymore, but he

Appendix 5g

does go to Israel frequently. He has relatives there, and perhaps he feels Jewish.

Josh: How many single men are there in the community now?

Yackov: Three men, and two-three women. They are over 50 years.

Josh: Are there still any matchmakers around?

Yackov: Yes, there are too many. Most of these weddings are of this kind. If you know a girl from another city, you can send someone else to make an arrangement. I think this is very bad because most of them are not free, they do not know what type of person they are meeting. Here in Greece the girls are not so free to make their life as they wish, so there are alot of divorces in the Jewish community. It is for this reason that the majority of the Jews at the age of 18-22 go to Israel to get married and after that they come back here, or stay there, or go to the States, or go to countries with great, big, strong Jewish communities.

Even those who are successful in the Greek universities, leave them and go to Israel.

There is still the obligation to go into the army.

Appendix 5h

Josh: Is there any anti-Semitism in the army?

Yackov: The mentality is very low, lower than you can imagine. There is anti-semitism, not very obvious, it is hidden, because the Greek constitution says that you have to respect the country, the family, the religions. So they won't bother you too much. An officer doesn't bother you because you are a Jew, but the other soliders say 'you are a Jew' 'where is the Jew' 'have you seen the Jew?' This happened to my brother when he was in the aremy.

Josh: Was your brother's marriage arranged?

Yackov: Yes. I think he has a happy marriage, but it is not the rule. None of the interested families is involved in the matchmaking. A third party comes and says, I heard that you have a boy, there is a nice girl there, a rich girl. If you are interested to get married, the person will respond 'I would like to meet her.' You then get some information about the family, their economic situation. A dowry is a great asset for the girl to get married. The boys prefer the girls with money.

Josh: Did your brother's wife have to give a dowry?

Yackov: No, if you are more progressive you don't ask for a dowry. But the family knows they have to give it, they say to you 'we will give to the girl 5 apartments, for example. Or we will give a house, or a car. Something is given, but the way it given is not so typical or formal like in the old days. They parents still help out and give money, or a house. I heard that in Saloniki they have alot of arguements about the dowry, they don't agree about the dowry, and have divorces over it.

Josh: Were there any threats against your family last year during the war in Lebanon?

Yackov: Yes, we had some phone calls, and they said 'we protected you from the Nazis and now you do the same to the Lebanese.' Aharon and my mother got some letters. The letters were very aggressive, saying that we are going to fight back against you, for what you are doing in Lebanon, we will do the same to you. Mr. Aharon went to the police, but they will not do anything to us because they are afraid. This bothers me but I do not have the courage to do anything.

Appendix 5i

Josh: Is there any anti-Semitism in your mother's store?

Yackov: There is nothing organized. But if a person buys something and another person asks them, 'where did you get this?' the other will reply I bought it from the Jew. People make this distinction because we are different. But, I think that deep down they admire us because they understand that alot of similarities exist between the Jews and the Greeks because in the ancient stories they are a small people against the Persians, and now today we have alot of enemies from the North and the East. They feel that they can fight them, like Israel can fight the Arabs. They admire us.

Appendix 6a

Pasok Political Literature (translated from Greek)

LIBERTY TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

THE EXPANSIVE PLANS OF THE IMPERIALISTS SHALL NOT PREVAIL

With agony and sorrow and deep concern the Greek people are watching struggle of the Palestinian people, who after the barbaric invasion of Israel into Lebanon, are facing one of their most critical moments with many acts of heroism and sacrifice.

The Israeli invasion not only proves the expansive and imperialistic role of Israel in the area, but it is also proof of the implementation of a plan for the dismembering of Lebanon, which already began in 1976. The realization of this goal presumes the total destruction of the Palestinian movement and full control over the Lebanese fighters, by pushing the Lebanese north and keeping them there.

The absence of action by the world's powers and others who have a duty to actively stand by the Palestinians, brings us to the realization that the Palestinian chests shall become the only front-line defenders in the way of the Zionist atrocities.

P.A.S.O.K. and the Greek government have expressed their absolute support for the struggle of the Palestinians and have also stated their intention to do whatever is possible on their part to provide political, moral and material help to the heroic people of Palestine and Lebanon. The Prime Minister and President of P.A.S.O.K., Andreas Papandreaou supports the platform of help proposed by P.A.S.O.K. and the Greek government.

This multi-faceted help towards the Palestinian people is not accidental. Through the fights and sacrifices of the Palestinians our Greek people sees its own struggles for national independence, for the defense of the administrative rights, for the expulsion of the Attila troops from Cyprus, for the safety of the marching towards the Change. The justification of the struggle of the Palestinians shall mean justification of our struggle too. It shall mean Peace in all areas of the the Middle East and Eastern Mediterrean Sea.

Appendix 6b

The P.A.S.O.K. states its support for the struggle and final victory of the Palestinian people. The peoples with courage and quality are the peoples who live always free. We are certain of the victory of the fighters of the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine.

COUNCIL FOR DISTRICT OF LARISSA
P.A.S.O.K.

FOOTNOTES:

1

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