

# THE JEWISH JOURNAL

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## Community Briefs: Greek and Jewish Concert, British Chief Rabbi Address Jews, Solar Power

[http://www.jewishjournal.com/community\\_briefs/article/community\\_briefs\\_greek\\_and\\_jewish\\_concert\\_british\\_chief\\_rabbi\\_address\\_jews/](http://www.jewishjournal.com/community_briefs/article/community_briefs_greek_and_jewish_concert_british_chief_rabbi_address_jews/)

### Greek and Jewish Concert Benefits College

For nearly two centuries, Thessaloniki, Greece, reigned as the largest Jewish city in the world. Sephardic Jews expelled from their homes by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain found refuge there and even referred to the area as the "Mother of Israel."

Dario Gabbai was one of thousands of Sephardic Jews living in Thessaloniki in the 1940s. But like so many others, his time in Greece was cut short. By April 1944, Gabbai found himself riding in a cattle car with his family to Auschwitz.

The Nazis had invaded, and the city would never again be the same: More than 95 percent of its Jewish population would be lost. Among them were the Jewish students at Anatolia College.

Today, Anatolia College functions as an elementary school, secondary school and a private nonprofit university in Greece, chartered by the state of Massachusetts and accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. But back then, the more than 90 Jewish students enrolled in the institution perished.

On Monday, approximately 300 people — Jews and Greeks alike — gathered at Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel for "An evening of Greek and Jewish Music," hosted by former Massachusetts governor and presidential candidate Michael Dukakis and his wife, Kitty. The fundraiser will benefit the college, helping create two memorial classrooms at the school, as well as support Holocaust education at the institution and in the city at large.

"We wanted to do it in memory of them," said Kitty Dukakis, referring to the Jewish Anatolia students who were lost during the Nazi invasion.

Kitty Dukakis, who is Jewish, said the idea for the event began when she visited the school's campus nearly two years ago but also stemmed from seeing the traveling photo exhibition, "Hidden Children in Occupied Greece," which told the stories of 16 Jewish children in Greece who managed to escape death during the Nazi occupation, thanks to the Christian families who were willing to take them in.

"It was there that Kitty and I said ... 'Maybe we can do something. Bring the two communities together again,'" Michael Dukakis said at the start of the evening, while noting that he himself was often mistaken for being Jewish on the campaign trail, although he is in actuality Greek.

Consul General of Israel Yaacov Dayan and Consul General of Greece Dimitris Caramitsos-Tziras joined the Dukakis family on stage before the music started.

"We will not be silent. And when we speak, we do it on behalf of all the silent communities around the world," Dayan said.

Craig Taubman, a local Jewish artist who has also composed music for television and films; Cantor Alberto Mizrahi, a Greek-born tenor and cantor at the Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago; the Rev. John S. Bakas, dean of the Saint Sophia Cathedral and the Greek Orthodox Community in Los Angeles; and Anna Vissi, a leading Greek recording artist, made up the eclectic group of Jewish and Greek musicians who entertained the crowd for the evening.

Gabbai, now 86, sat in the front row of the concert hall, far from the Nazi crematorium he was once forced to work in but managed to survive.

"It was a very beautiful evening, a good time" he said. "The singing brought me back to many younger days."

— Lilly Fowler, Contributing Writer

### British Chief Rabbi to Address World Jewry in Webcast on Commandment to Learn Torah >/b>

Thousands of Jews at 350 locations worldwide will hear a lecture this Sunday by England's Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks in a synchronized webcast to commemorate the biblical commandment of gathering Jews

to learn Torah.

Sacks' lecture about freedom, hope and unity is sponsored by the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI), the adult educational arm of Chabad-Lubavitch, in honor of the upcoming Passover holiday and the Hakhel year, or Jewish year of gathering. In biblical times, the entire nation would gather in the Temple's courtyard every seven years to hear the words of the Torah.

People from six continents and numerous time zones will gather at Chabad houses and other Jewish centers at the same time on March 29. Groups will begin assembling as early as 6 a.m. in Australia and as late as 9:30 p.m. in Europe and Israel. Groups will gather at around 11:30 a.m. in several locations throughout California.

Rabbi Sacks' lecture is the second in JLI's four-part "Unity Lecture" series. The first was given in January by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, who is best known for his Hebrew translation and commentary on the Talmud.

The next lecture will be delivered in June by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and former Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel.

Sacks has been chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since 1991 and is widely recognized as one of the world's leading contemporary exponents of Judaism.

For times and locations, visit [www.unitylecture.com](http://www.unitylecture.com).

— Julie Gruenbaum Fax, Senior Writer

### Solar Power to Light Eternal Lamps

Twelve Southern California synagogues will simultaneously flip the switch on new solar-powered Eternal Lamps on Tuesday, April 7, at 10 a.m., in honor of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to recite a special prayer over the sun.

Jews bless the sun in a ritual known as Birkat Hachamah once every 28 years, when tradition holds the celestial bodies are aligned just as they were when they were created. The Southern California Board of Rabbis, with a \$10,000 grant from the South Coast Air Quality Management District, is celebrating the ritual by installing solar panels in synagogues to illuminate the Eternal Lamp, or Ner Tamid, which stays lit above the ark containing the Torahs at all times.

"Birkat Hachamah and Passover are times of spiritual renewal for the Jewish community, and we believe that harnessing solar energy is a powerful symbol of that renewal," said Rabbi Mark S. Diamond, executive vice president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California.

Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills, one of the participating synagogues, will celebrate the event with distinguished guests and a children's choir. The synagogue will bury a time capsule containing children's essays and pictures about their hopes and visions of what energy sources we will be using by 2037 — the next time the Blessing of the Sun ceremony will be celebrated and when the time capsule will be reopened.

For a list of participating synagogues and more information, visit [www.boardofrabbis.org](http://www.boardofrabbis.org).

— Julie Gruenbaum Fax, Senior Writer

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