"Ke Haber?"

Winter '98/'99 Newsletter Describing "What is New" Regarding the Preservation of Rhodesli History
By Aron Hasson

This publication of The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation is to serve as a link between "La Juderia" of Rhodes and those people who are interested in the current state of affairs for restoring its special history and heritage. Presently there are numerous projects being undertaken to fulfill these goals. These observations are based upon my most recent trip to Rhodes where I spent my High Holidays in "La Juderia" (the old Jewish Quarter) and at the Kehal Shalom synagogue.

One of the highlights of my trip occurred during the Kol Nidre service of Erev Yom Kippur. The President of the Jewish Community of Rhodes, Maurice Soriano, gave me the honor of carrying the Torah. It was during those minutes when I had a sentimental experience connecting me to my ancestry by reliving the religious aspect of their lives in Rhodes exactly the same way and in the same "Kehilah" as them. During the recent High Holiday services there were always over 100 people in attendance at the Kehal Shalom synagogue.

Rejuvenation of the Jewish Community of Rhodes

After the tragedy of the Holocaust, there were several noble efforts undertaken to restart the Jewish presence in "La Juderia" of Rhodes. There were several young Jewish individuals who moved to Rhodes, primarily from the mainland of Greece. The Rhodeslis who survived the War were not able to overcome the personal emotional loss to return to the Island.

Now, over 50 years later, there is a continuing effort by the Administrative Committee of The Jewish Community of Rhodes to advance all aspects of Judaism. In addition, it is interesting to note that commercially, Rhodes now maintains a few shops that are now either owned by Jewish Israelis or staffed by Israeli salespeople.

The Jewish Museum of Rhodes

The Museum was established on October 1, 1997, in two of the vacant rooms adjacent to the Kehal Shalom synagogue. Now, over 25,000 people from around the world who are visiting Rhodes on holiday have viewed it. During the summer months, an average of 100 people visit the Museum daily. Since the newly installed electrical lighting fixtures and air conditioning were added in April, the visitors have a safer and more pleasing environment to view the Museum displays.

As a side note, I would like to mention that during the past months The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation has received new photos, documents, ketubbahs, and other artifacts. Thanks to the generous contribution of many people, the photo collection of the Foundation has grown rapidly. They will be used to enhance the Museum for a new exhibit next year.