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Aerophilately of the Holy Land



יום התעופה בישראל
ISRAEL AVIATION DAY

50 שנות תעופה בישראל

הטות בגפקה פוסט, למסירה בסמטת התעופה
האזרחית הראשונה של מדינת ישראל במחיר 5 ש"ח

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- Air crashes
- Transitional period
- Commercial aviation

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The Israel Philatelist

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Holocaust

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Dear Member:

This letter is a request for 2026 Society Dues* renewal payments. *If you have already paid your Dues, thank you and please disregard this notice.*

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NOTICE: All Annual Members who have not paid 2026 dues by December 31, 2025, will not receive the 2026 IP Journal until paid. No back issues will be sent. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Thank you for being a Member of the Society of Israel Philatelists, Inc. We truly appreciate you and all our Members.

Very truly yours, Howard S Chapman, Treasurer, Society of Israel Philatelists, Inc.

FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

This, the Fall 2025 issue of the Israel Philatelist highlights several fascinating aspects of the aerophilately of the Holy Land. Included are articles on:

- an air crash during the Ottoman period and the stamps commemorating the pilot and the incident;
- the eastern voyage of the Graf Zeppelin to the Mediterranean and mail to and from Palestine;
- the transition period when formal mail arrangements were cut-off between Israel/Palestine and the rest of the world;
- revenue stamps used on boarding passes of Israeli commercial airlines;
- and, stamps and covers commemorating an Israeli designed and built aircraft.

The editorial committee would like to express thanks to those authors who contributed their time, expertise, research and good thoughts and shared them with us in this issue of the Israel Philatelist.

We would like to encourage you to share your collecting and research interests with the rest of us. Assistance is available from the editor to work with you to bring your article to fruition.

It is now time to set target dates for the next issue of the Israel Philatelists. This is important so that we know when articles, advertisements and information should be submitted.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Input target date</u>	<u>Publication (website) target date</u>
Winter	December 31	January 21
Spring	March 31	April 2
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Regards for the best
Steven Friedenthal

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THE ZEPPELIN IN THE HOLY LAND PART 1: THE 1929 JOURNEY YACOV COHEN

(TRANSLATED BY YORAM LUBIANIKER)

One of the most famous episodes in the postal history of the Holy Land is the Zeppelin flight in 1929, during which mail sacks filled with letters addressed to the Holy Land and other destinations were dropped from the sky. Letters from these sacks constitute a fertile field for collectors of the postal history of the Land of Israel, with its various frankings and the variety of stylistic postmarks that were issued for the occasion.

The Zeppelin is a rigid, lighter-than-air airship powered by hydrogen (or helium) gas, which was a common aircraft in the first half of the 20th century. The Zeppelin is named after the German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who developed the ship in Friedrichshafen, Germany, in the early 20th century, based on a model conceived by the Croatian-Jewish aviation pioneer David Schwarz. The Zeppelin was used both for civilian and for military purposes such as bombing and observation, and was widely used by the German army during World War I.

The German defeat in World War I brought an end to the German military usage of Zeppelins and temporarily halted their development. However, under the leadership of Hugo Eckner, who continued Count Zeppelin's path, Zeppelins flourished in the 1920s. Zeppelin use reached its peak in the 1930s, when the Graf Zeppelin LZ127 (LZ stands for *Luftschiff Zeppelin*, German for 'Zeppelin airship') and the Hindenburg LZ129, the world's largest airship, operated regularly on transatlantic flights from Germany to North and South America.

Commercial flights carrying passengers and mail operated from 1928 until 1937, when the Hindenburg Zeppelin LZ129 crashed in New Jersey, USA. The ship burned completely during the landing attempt, with live and film footage widely reported around the world. This accident hastened the end of the airship era as a means of air transport, and the Zeppelin gave way to airplanes. To be precise, the Zeppelin LZ 130 (Graf Zeppelin II) operated throughout Germany carrying mail from October 1938 to August 1939, thus ending the era of the Zeppelin airship.

The Journey East, March 1929

On March 25, 1929, the LZ 127 airship took off from Friedrichshafen, Germany, at 00:52 in the morning via the French air corridor and the Italian Mediterranean border towards Corsica, Rome (mail dropped at 15:45), Naples, Crete (7:05, March 26, 1929), Cyprus, Haifa,

Ramla (mail dropped towards the evening), Jerusalem, and the Dead Sea and returned via Athens (mail dropped on March 27, 07:05), Split (today Croatia), Vienna (March 28, 02:55), Munich and terminating the flight at Friedrichshafen at 10:20 in the morning on March 28, 1929. During a three-day journey, the airship covered approximately 8,000 km at an average speed of 98 km/h. The British authorities did not allow the ship to pass through Egyptian skies due to prestige and security considerations (Ref 1). [*The items that are shown in this article originate from this eastward journey of the Zeppelin.*]

The Journey to the Mediterranean, April 1929

The Zeppelin LZ 127 departed Friedrichshafen, Germany, on April 23, 1929 at 1:32 p.m. and passed through France, Spain, Portugal, and Tangier, returning to Germany on April 25 at 10:25 p.m. via Cannes and Lyon, France. On this journey, the Zeppelin covered a distance of approximately 5,400 km in 56.5 hours. The Zeppelin carried letters that were dropped off in Seville, Spain, including some which were addressed to Palestine. These letters were forwarded to their destination by regular mail.

The Journey from Egypt, 1931

On April 9, 1931, the Zeppelin LZ 127 took off from Friedrichshafen, Germany, at 6:00 a.m. and arrived in Cairo on April 11 at 5:15 a.m., a distance of 4,830 km in 47 hours. Upon arrival, and after a short layover, the ship took off at 6:18 a.m. for a circular journey of Cairo-Palestine-Cairo, a distance of 1,027 km, which took 10:46 hours. During this visit to Palestine, mail was NOT dropped in Jerusalem. After a very short time, at 5:30 p.m., the ship took off back to Friedrichshafen and arrived at its destination on April 13 at 7:00 a.m. Mail destined for Eretz Israel was sent by train from Cairo. Due to lack of time, some of the mail destined for Eretz Israel returned to Germany and was later sent to Eretz Israel via the usual routes (Ref 1).

Letters from Palestine to South America, Partly by Zeppelin, 1933-1935

In the years 1933-1935, letters and postcards were sent from Palestine via London to Germany by the usual routes, and from there they were transported by Zeppelin LZ 127 to Brazil and Argentina. These pieces of mail, which were partly transported by Zeppelin, are generally rare.

Mail from the Journey East, March 1929

In this article, we will review postcards and letters from the journey of the Zeppelin LZ 127 to the East in March 1929. All the mail sent by the Zeppelin during this journey was parachuted in Ramla, and for the purpose of this discussion, will be divided into four categories:

1. Mail addressed to Palestine: mainly to Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jaffa and Ramla.
2. Mail addressed to neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, with Palestine being a transit country.
3. Palestine as a transit country for overseas countries.
4. Mail on a circular journey: Germany-Palestine-Germany (the mail was dropped in Ramla and from there was forwarded by regular postal routes to Germany).

Part One – Mail addressed to Palestine

1. Letter Sent by Zeppelin from Friedrichshafen to Jaffa



Figure 1: Letter from Friedrichshafen to Jaffa

This letter (Figure 1) was sent by the airship Zeppelin LZ 127 on March 24, 1929 to Jaffa. It is franked by a 2 Reichsmarks (Europa-America Zeppelin) airmail stamp, the standard Zeppelin rate for a letter. The stamp, issued on October 7, 1928, shows a Zeppelin over the globe crossing the ocean from Europe to America. The cancellation is from Friedrichshafen, and reads Friedrichshafen Bodensee, *Luftpost* (*Luftpost* means "airmail" in German).

An airmail etiquette with white text on a blue background was affixed to the envelope. Below the label, we can see a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I (Ref 2), bearing the inscription *Luftschiff Graf Zeppelin, Orient Fahrt 1929*. This postmark was issued for the Zeppelin's journey to the East in 1929, and depicts the Sphinx and a pyramid, with a Zeppelin hovering above them.

The letter was dropped in Ramla on the evening of March 26. A Jaffa arrival postmark dated March 27, 1929 was stamped on the back of the envelope (for illustration purposes, the postmark appears on the lower right side of the front of the envelope).

A letter sent from Vienna to Haifa via Friedrichshafen

A letter (Figure 2) sent "under agreement" from Vienna on 22.3.1929 to Haifa via Friedrichshafen on the airship Graf Zeppelin LZ 127. The envelope has an Austrian airmail etiquette with black lettering on a blue/gray background and a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I (Ref 2), bearing the inscription *Luftschiff Graf Zeppelin, Orient Fahrt 1929*. The Austrian stamps have a total value of 360 groschen (a stamp in the value of two shillings (equal 200 groschen), and stamps in the values of 10, 10, 40, 50, and 50 groschen), the appropriate rate for shipping by zeppelin. The mail bags were dropped in Ramla at 6:20 PM using a small parachute. The envelope arrived at its destination on March 28 and was stamped with a Haifa receiver marking.



Figure 2: Cover from Vienna, Austria to Haifa, Palestine

The Austrian postal service had an agreement with the German postal service, according to which mail from Vienna franked with Austrian stamps could be sent with the Zeppelin. A similar agreement was also in-place with Danzig. Apart from the agreements of Germany with Austria and Danzig, which regulated the use of the stamps of these countries for mail sent by Zeppelin, all other countries were obliged to use German stamps for mail by Zeppelin.

2. A postcard sent from Vienna to Jaffa via Friedrichshafen

A postcard (Figure 3) sent "Under Agreement" from Vienna to Jaffa via Friedrichshafen on March 21, 1929, with an Austrian airmail label with black lettering on a blue/gray background and a red hand-made **iron** postmark of Type II (Ref 2), with the inscription *Luftschiff Graf Zeppelin, Orient Fahrt 1929*. The most prominent characteristic of the iron postmark is that the tip of the zeppelin is between the letters E and P, while on the rubber stamp the tip of the zeppelin touches the letter P. There are also additional differences between the postmarks: on



Figure 3: Cover from Vienna to Jaffa, via Friedrichshafen
The iron postmark (left, 34.5 mm in diameter) and the rubber handstamp (right, 33.5 mm in diameter)

the iron postmark the color is rust-colored and there are fewer stripes on the body of the zeppelin, compared to the rubber postmark which has a pink/red hue and multiple stripes on the body of the ship. The iron postmark is rare and is found in only about 2% of existing postal items.

The postcard is franked by an Austrian stamp of 1 schilling and 50+10+24 groschen stamps, a total of 184 groschen – 4 groschen over the correct rate for sending a postcard by Zeppelin. The stamps were cancelled with the postmark 9 Wien 68 21.III.29. 19- *9a* while there is also a free postmark 1/1 Wien 1 a 22.III.29. 11 * *Flugpost*. No arrival postmark appears.

3. A letter sent from Friedrichshafen to Jerusalem



Figure 4: Letter from Friedrichshafen to Jerusalem

The following letter (Figure 4) was sent from Friedrichshafen on the airship Zeppelin LZ 127 on 24.3.1929 to Jerusalem and bears a 2-mark airmail stamp. The envelope has an airmail etiquette with white writing on a blue background and a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I. The stamp was cancelled in Friedrichshafen and bears the inscription Friedrichshafen *Bodensee Luftpost*. The mail was dropped in Ramla on the evening of 26.3. The letter was sent to Mrs. Loister in Muristan in the Christian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. On the back of the envelope is a machine cancellation dated 27 MAR 29. 2PM of Jerusalem, type F9 (according to **The Postmarks and other Markings of Mandate Jerusalem 1917-1948** by E. Glassman and M. Sacher). It should be noted that unlike most of the envelopes in "Journey East", which are philatelic, this is a purely commercial cover.

4. A postcard sent from Friedrichshafen to Jaffa



Figure 5: Postcard sent from Friedrichshafen to Jaffa, Palestine

This postcard (Figure 5) was sent from the airship Graf Zeppelin LZ 127 to the Swiss consul in Jaffa on March 25, 1929. The postcard bears two ½ mark stamps, the appropriate rate for sending a postcard by Zeppelin. The cancellation, which was applied on board the Zeppelin, is different from the Friedrichshafen one. The text at the bottom of the cancellation reads *Grafzeppelin* rather than *Luftpost*. The date (March 25, 1929) appears without the time, and at the top of the cancellation it says *Luftschiff* and not Friedrichshafen (Bodensee). The postcard has an airmail etiquette with white writing on a blue background and a red hand-made rubber stamp of Type I. The postcard has no arrival cancellation.

5. A postcard sent from Friedrichshafen to Tel Aviv

Another postcard (Figure 6) sent from the airship Graf Zeppelin LZ 127 to the Swiss consul on 25.3.1929. The postcard bears a 1-mark stamp, the standard rate for a postcard sent by Zeppelin. As in the previous item, the cancellation was applied on board the Zeppelin, and is different from that of Friedrichshafen. The postcard has a blue-and-white air etiquette and a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I.

At the bottom of the postcard is a Ramla double cycle cancellation dated 26.3.1929 with a left index C. The back of the postcard has a picture of the zeppelin above the hangar where it was normally stored while on ground.

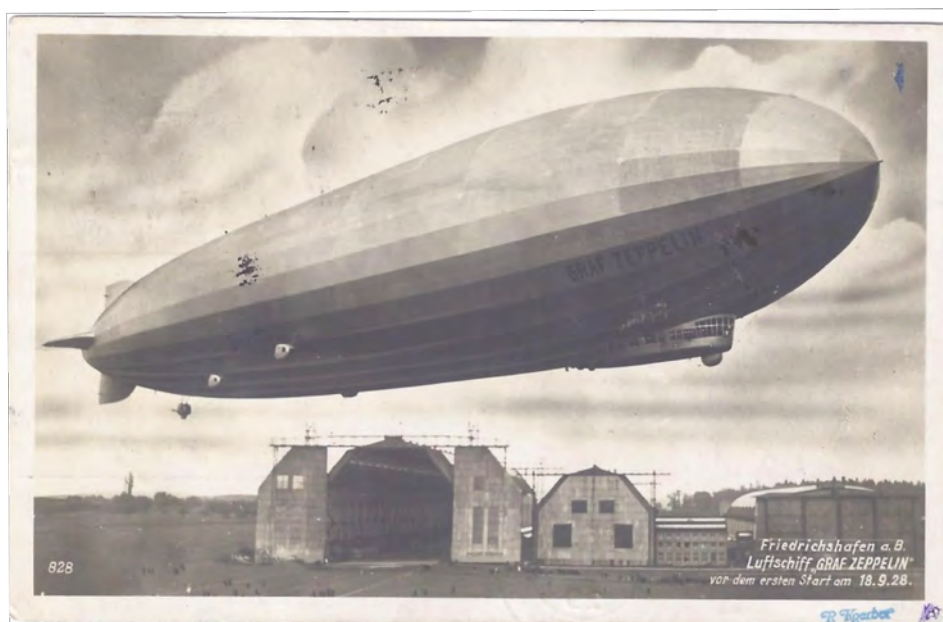


Figure 6a and 6b: Postcard from Friedrichshafen to Tel Aviv

Part Two – Mail addressed to neighboring countries via Palestine

6. A letter sent from Friedrichshafen to Beirut via Palestine

Here is a letter (Figure 7) sent from Friedrichshafen on the airship Zeppelin LZ 127 to Beirut on March 24, 1929, bearing a 2-mark stamp. The envelope has a blue-and-white airmail etiquette and a red hand-made rubber postmark, Type I. The stamp was cancelled in Friedrichshafen and bears the inscription Friedrichshafen Bodensee *Luftpost*. On the back of the envelope are a transit double cycle cancellation from Ramla, dated March 26,



Figure 7: Cover from Friedrichshafen to Beirut via Ramla, Palestine

1929, with a right-hand index C, as well as an arrival stamp for Beirut, dated March 29, 1929. The letter travelled from Ramla to Beirut by the usual means.

It should be noted that letters to Syria were sent via Beirut (for example, to the city of Aleppo) or directly to the destination from Palestine (for example, to Damascus).

Part Three – Mail addressed to overseas countries via Palestine

7. A letter sent from Friedrichshafen to Portland, Oregon (USA) via Palestine

This letter (Figure 8) was sent from Friedrichshafen on the airship LZ 127 to Portland, Oregon (United States), on March 24, 1929. The letter bears two 50-pf stamps and a 1-mark stamp. The envelope has a blue-and-white airmail etiquette and a red hand-stamped rubber Type I postmark. The stamps were canceled with the Friedrichshafen Bodensee *Luftpost* cancellation. The letter was sent to Roessler (a well-known stamp dealer at the time).



Figure 8: Cover from Friedrichshafen to Portland, Oregon U.S.A.

The handwritten message reads “*uber Palastina*” – via Palestine. The envelope was not stamped with a Ramla transit cancellation. A black hand-stamped postmark in the United States reads Not in the Air Mails – an instruction according to which the letter will not be sent by air from its arrival in the United States to its destination.

Part Four – Mail in circular journey: Germany-Palestine-Germany

8. A letter sent from Friedrichshafen to Braunschweig in Germany

The letter below (Figure 9) was sent from Friedrichshafen in the airship Zeppelin LZ 127 to Braunschweig on the evening of March 24, 1929 and bears a 2-mark airmail stamp. The envelope has an airmail etiquette with black writing on yellow paper and a red hand-made rubber postmark, Type I. The stamp was cancelled in Friedrichshafen with the Friedrichshafen Bodensee *Luftpost* cancellation. This is a self-addressed letter sent to Otto Karanga (the sender and recipient have the same address), and hence it is a philatelic letter. There is no transit stamp in Ramla.



Figure 9: Letter from Friedrichshafen to Braunschweig, Germany

9. A postcard sent from Friedrichshafen to Reff am Rhein in Germany





Figure 10a and 10b: Postcard from Friedrichshafen to Refl-am-Rhein, Germany

A postcard (Figures 10a and 10b) sent from Friedrichshafen on the airship Zeppelin LZ 127 to Refl am Rhein on 24.3.1929 at 23:00-22:00 (according to the 10-11N hours indicated in the cancellation, where N is an abbreviation for *nacht*, i.e. evening hours), and bears a 1-mark stamp. The envelope has a blue-and-white airmail etiquette and a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I. The cancellation, with the inscription Friedrichshafen Bodensee *Luftpost*, was applied in Friedrichshafen. The postcard has a Ramla transit double cycle cancellation dated 26.3.1929. The back of the postcard displays a picture of the airship Graf Zeppelin LZ 127, signed by A. Lehmann, a crew member on the ship.

10. A letter sent from Friedrichshafen to Braunschweig in Germany

A letter sent from the airship Graf Zeppelin LZ 127 to Walter Behrens in Braunschweig on 25.3.1929. The single 2-marks Europa-America Zeppelin airmail stamp, issued on 7 October 1928, shows a Zeppelin over the globe crossing the ocean from Europe to America. The stamp was cancelled on board the Zeppelin, as in items 5 and 6. The envelope has an airmail etiquette with black writing on an orange background and a red hand-made rubber postmark of Type I. A Ramla single cycle transit cancellation of 26.3.1929 with index + right was applied. Walter Behrens was a well-known stamp dealer in Germany in the 1930s.



Figure 11: Philatelic cover sent from Friedrichshafen to Braunschweig, Germany

The second part of this article, in a future issue of the **Israel Philatelist**, will cover the Zeppelin flight to Egypt, which took place in April 1931.

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FIRST AIR CRASH IN THE HOLY LAND

IZHAK BARAK

(TRANSLATED BY YORAM LUBIANIKER)

In December 1903, the Wright Brothers' airplane took flight for the first time. The progress of aviation immediately thereafter was truly amazing, and ten years later there were many airplanes and pilots in many regions of the world. The main center of aviation was in France, with about 1,000 licensed pilots.

Several aircraft manufacturers were operating in France, including Farman and Blériot. The latter became famous when he first crossed the English Channel in 1909 from France to England. As a result, he became a well-known and sought-after aircraft manufacturer, and the model of

the aircraft with which he crossed the English Channel – the “Blériot XI” – was a hit. Many pilots around the world and even several armies purchased the aircraft in quantities, as it was a reliable aircraft for the period.

By 1909 air conventions and competitions began to be held in France, attracting many pilots from around the world. Several newspapers announced relatively long-distance flight competitions, with significant financial prizes for the winners. The French newspaper “Le Matin” was particularly active in this field and initiated



Figure 1: A stamp sheet depicting the Blériot XI, showing the aircraft from various angles

many competitions between pilots at that time. In 1913 the "Le Matin" announced a flight competition from Paris to China! When it became clear that this task was unfeasible at the time, the newspaper initiated a flight competition from Paris to Cairo via the Middle East, a distance of about 5,500 kilometers (approximately 3,400 miles), with a large monetary prize for the winner.

Three teams entered the competition, all using the "Blériot XI" aircraft. The first



Figure 2: French La Poste stamp showing Jules Védrines

team – Doucourt and Roux – set-off on October 20, 1913 and arrived safely in Istanbul. Later, they were forced to land due to a malfunction in the Taurus Mountains in southern Turkey. They assigned a guard to the aircraft, and set out to seek technical assistance. The guard lit a cigarette, which caused a fire and the aircraft was burned.

The second competitor was Jules Védrines. He took off on a solo flight from the Paris

area in November 1913, landed successfully in Istanbul and continued on to what is now Israel. According to the plan, he was supposed to land at Mikveh Israel on Saturday, December 27th, where thousands were waiting for him, including the French consul and many Turkish dignitaries. However, due to various technical reasons, Védrines decided to land in Jaffa, thereby disappointing the large crowd that was expecting him at Mikveh Israel. The next day Védrines took off and landed at Mikveh Israel to the applause of the crowd and received a magnificent reception by the dignitaries of the Ottoman government. The following day, he took off towards Cairo and landed at the airport in Heliopolis. He thus completed the heroic flight and, of course, won the prize.

Despite the magnificent reception, the Ottoman government considered Védrines flight as a bit of an insult. It was unthinkable that Ottoman pilots would not be able to achieve a similar feat. The Ottoman Air Force was established in the beginning of 1913, and the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet V, decided that its first anniversary should be used to encourage



Figure 3: Védrines historic flight. In the background is the silhouette of Jaffa, where he landed.

the spirit of his people and instill national pride among them. The intention was to hold a flight across the empire, which would prove to the world the capabilities of the young Ottoman Air Force.



Figure 4: Captain Fethi Bey and his Blériot XI airplane

Two senior pilots of the Ottoman Air Force were chosen to carry-out the mission: Captain Fethi Bey and lieutenant Sadik Bey. The mission assigned to the two was more modest than that of Védrières, although it was nevertheless considered a difficult challenge – a flight from Istanbul to Cairo. Of course, in those days, such a flight required several stopovers.

The two took off from Istanbul to Damascus in March 1914 and from there they flew towards Jerusalem with the intention of reaching Cairo at the end of their journey. Upon reaching the Samakh area, a strong eastern wind hit the fragile airplane and smashed it to the ground. Both pilots were killed in the crash. This

was the first air accident to occur in the Land of Israel. The bodies of the two pilots were taken to Damascus, where they were buried – befitting national heroes – next to Saladin.

At the site of the accident a monument was erected in memory of the two pilots. In today's terms the "Turkish Pilots Monument" is fairly close to Kibbutz Ha'on. In 2024, on the centennial of the disaster, the Turkish Post Office issued a special issue to commemorate the event. The lower left stamp shows the monument.

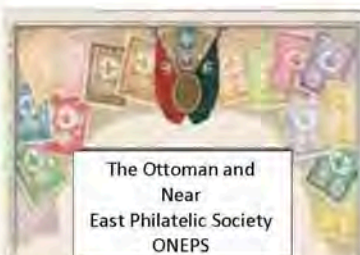


Figure 5: Lieutenant Sadik Bey. Note the Ottoman flag on the aircraft wing

This article originally appeared in Hebrew in **Noson**, journal of the Israeli Thematic Association #114, p.11-13. It is reprinted in translation with permission.



Figure 6: Special issue from Turkey commemorating the flight and showing the monument



The Ottoman and Near East Philatelic Society
ONEPS

The Ottoman and Near East Philatelic Society (ONEPS) promotes the collection and study of postage & revenue stamps & stationery of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey, and Ottoman successor states in the Near East and Balkans. Our journal, **The Levant**, is published 3 times a year and includes articles on philatelic and political history, postal administration, stamp authentication and forgeries, picture post cards and postal ephemera.

Membership gains access to the Members Section of our website: www.oneps.net which contains several philatelic studies and handbooks, and digitized copies of **The Levant** since the year 2000. ONEPS encourages contact among members by sharing information about their interests.

We also sponsor a Facebook chat site www.facebook.com/groups/oneps/. Annual dues are \$20 in North America; £20 in the UK; €25 or \$25 all other countries. Online membership costs only USD \$12, £11 or £9 and provides the same services and **The Levant** in digitized form rather than paper. This may be a good option for members outside of North America. Join us by submitting an application, available from the Secretary, Mr. Dan Boyd at danboyd@outlook.com or download the application from our website www.oneps.net, and please look through some past issues of **The Levant** which are also posted on our website.

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WARTIME AIRMAIL COVER – LOS ANGELES TO HAIFA

HOWARD S. CHAPMAN



The above cover was sent by airmail from Los Angeles, California to Haifa, Palestine on August 12, 1941. The sender wrote in the upper right "via Hong Kong Pacific". The postage rate was 70 cents per half ounce (inclusive of both ordinary postage and that for air mail service) for foreign airmail from San Francisco to Hong Kong or Singapore and air to Cairo.

The cover has the British censor seal and black triangle censor mark, along with the Haifa hexagonal violet censor mark, the cover also has the official markings "To be forwarded by air from Singapore" and the triangular marking "Passed for transmission".

This cover traveled on a long journey due to the wartime conditions.

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AIRMAIL SERVICES TO PALESTINE/ISRAEL DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD MARCH TO AUGUST 1948 EDWARD ROSEN

In early March 1948, the British authorities in London informed the offices of the UPU in Berne, Switzerland, that mail services to and from Palestine would cease to be their responsibility as of April of that year. Since the Palestine Post Office was not a member of the UPU in their own right, but part of the British Empire, the UPU published a notice (no. 48) to this effect on March 5, 1948. All UPU members were notified that the British would not be responsible for mail arriving in Palestine after April 15th.

Most foreign countries suspended postal services to Palestine, some even before the announced deadlines. Lydda Airport was closed by the Mandate authorities on March 28, 1948, and handed over to the Arab Legion. Most of the airmail to Palestine, was carried to Cairo, and then by Misr Airlines to Lydda. However, in early

April, the Egyptians began removing mail addressed to Jews in Palestine from the planes landing in Cairo. The letters were censored and returned to the countries of origin. They ultimately arrived in Israel at the end of 1948.

Between April 20 and May 5, 1948 there was almost a total suspension of civil mail, both by air and surface, to and from Palestine. Immediately after official postal links had been cut, unofficial organizations began to take their place. Their aim was to make use of every available channel of transportation open between the new state of Israel and the rest of the world. The Jewish Agency in New York and Paris, the Zionist Organization in Johannesburg, the travel offices of Peltours and Czechoslovakian Airline (CSA) and Air France were recruited to help achieve this goal.

INCOMING MAIL MARCH—MAY 15, 1948



Figure 1: AUSTRILIAN AIRMAIL COVER, April 1948, addressed to Tel Aviv, Palestine, intercepted in Cairo, censored and returned to sender.



Figure 2: APRIL 6, 1948 AIRMAIL COVER from Rome, Italy addressed to Rehovot, Palestine. Censored and returned to sender.



Figure 3:
REGISTERED
AIRMAIL COVER,
from Issi, Romania,
addressed to Tel Aviv,
with Bucharest
Transit marking
March 23, and Lydda
March 27, and Tel
Aviv March 28
receiver cancels. Late
usage of Tel Aviv
“registered” cancel.



Figure 4: REGISTERED
AIRMAIL COVER, April 3,
1948 from Prague,
Czechoslovakia, addressed
to Tel Aviv, with Prague
transit backstamp, Lydda
Air Post April 10 and Tel
Aviv, receiver cancels.



Figure 5: AIRMAIL COVER with letter from Montevideo Uruguay, April 3, 1948 with Tel Aviv transit cancel April 14 and Petah Tikvah arrival April 15. (By air from Montevideo to San Francisco, and then transpacific to Lydda.) Enclosed letter discusses changes in shipping routes.



Figure 6: April 6, 1948 REGISTERED COVER from Riga, Latvia addressed to Ramat HaSharon, and then removed from Plane in Cairo, censored (handstamp and censor strip), and delivery delayed until November 29, 1948! Haifa receiver cancel.

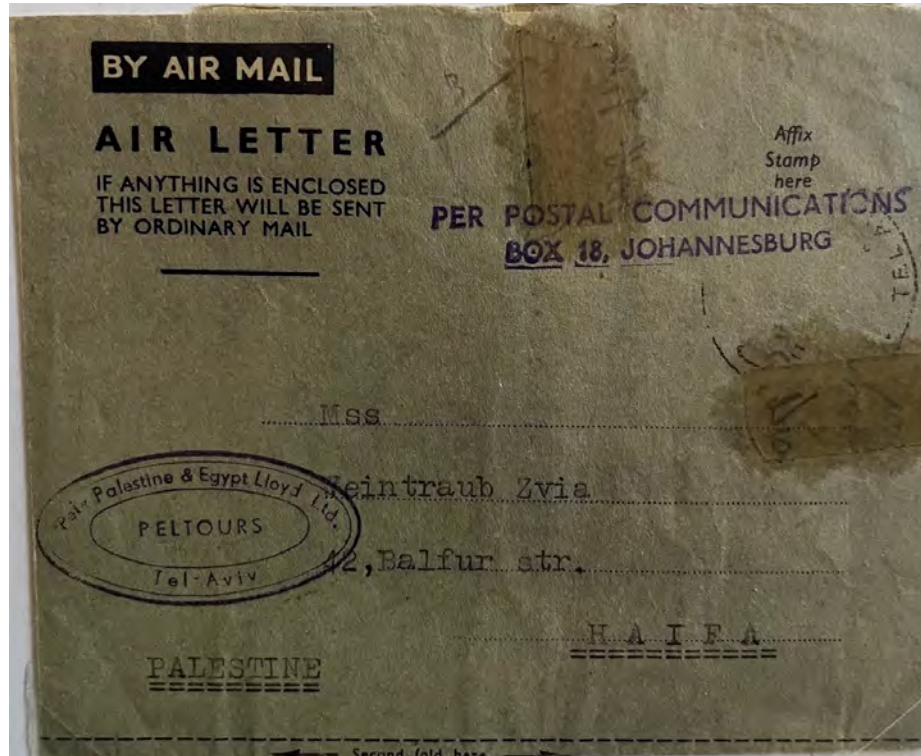


Figure 7: LETTER SHEETLET written May 9, 1948, from "Special Camp Gilgal, Kenya Colony", addressed to Haifa, carried by "PELTOURS" (with violet handstamp) and two-line straight-line handstamp "PER POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS/BOX 18/JOHANNESBURG", Tel Aviv cancel, stamp



Figure 8:
REGISTERED
COVER May 13,
1948, from
Bucharest, Romania,
to Tel Aviv, with
Bucharest transit
backstamp. This is
just two days before
statehood, during
many battles. No
receiver cancels.

OUTGOING MAIL MARCH—MAY 15, 1948

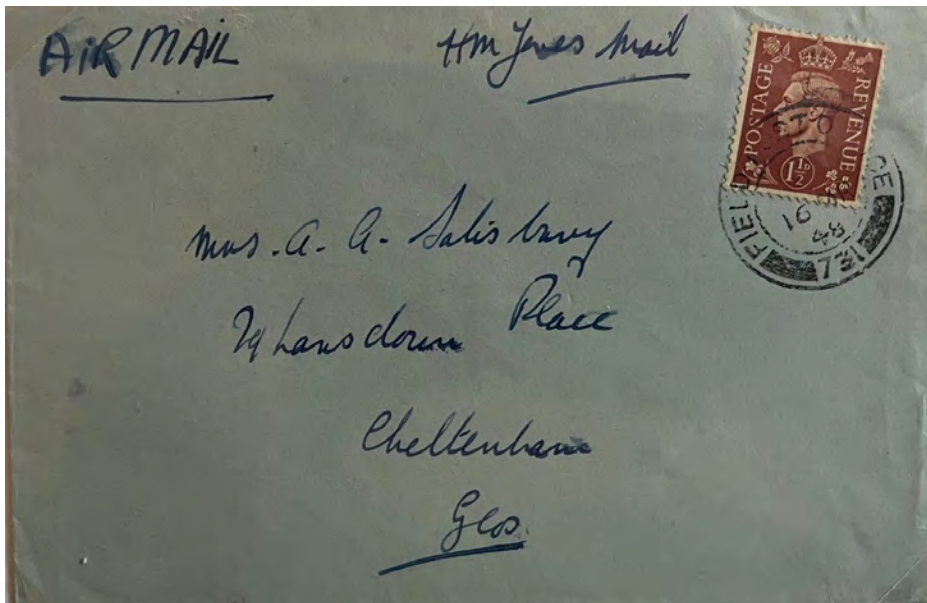


Figure 9: British Forces in Palestine, AIR MAIL COVER to England, franked 1-1/2d stamp, cancelled FIELD POST OFFICE 731, March 16, 1948, from soldier assigned to headquarters North Palestine, Derhut(?).

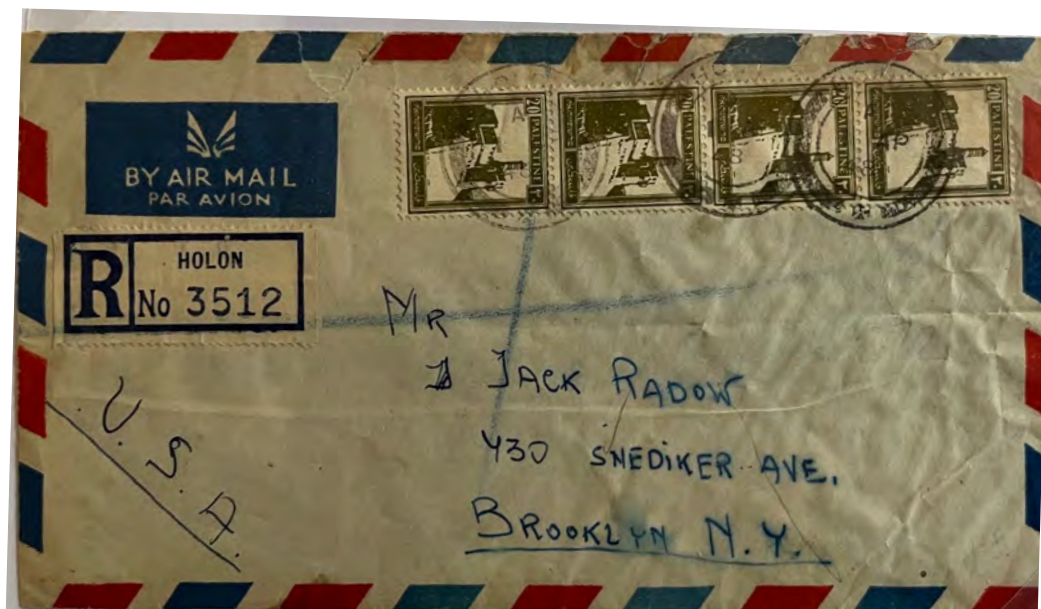


Figure 10: REGISTERED Holon, Palestine, Airmail cover, April 1, 1948, addressed to Brooklyn, with transit and receipt cancels New York, April 5, Brooklyn, April 6.

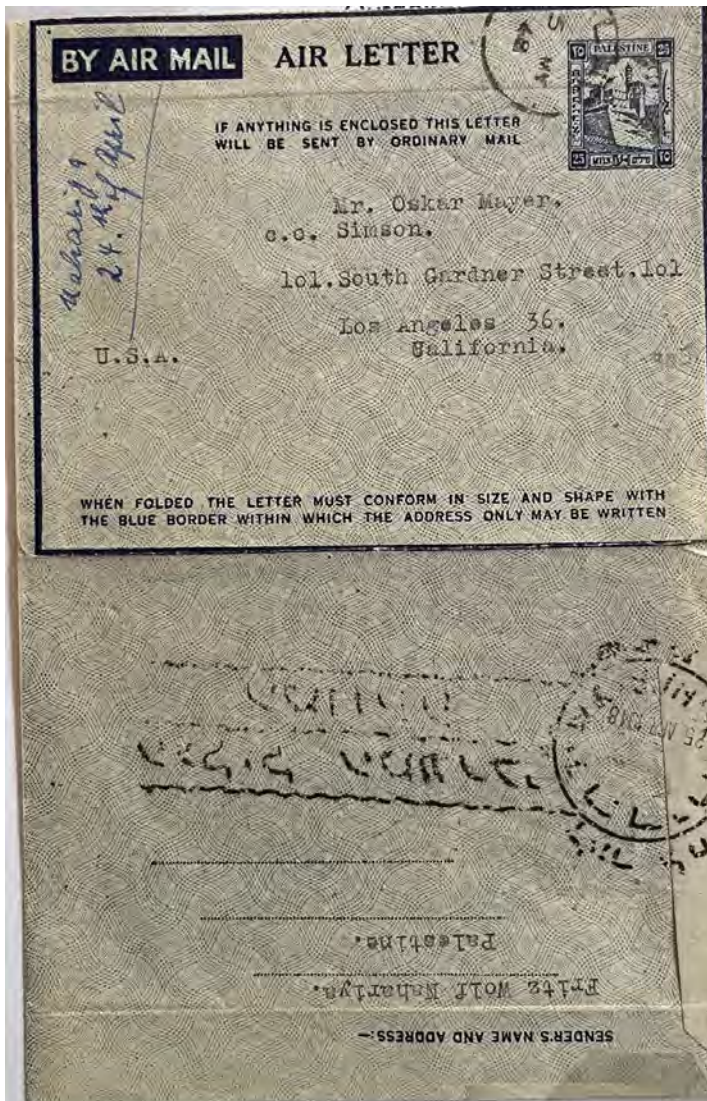


Figure 11: Palestine AIRLETTER SHEETLET addressed to Los Angeles from Nahariya, April 24, 1948 with "local cancel" backstamp, and Mandate transit cancel Tel Aviv, May 5, on front. This is the last day of Mandate post. Letter written in German, describes in detail current situation in Nahariya. Scarce.

Figure 12: REGISTERED Tel Aviv, Palestine, cover April 15, 1948 addressed to Zurich, Switzerland, arrival cancel April 23 (took 8 days).



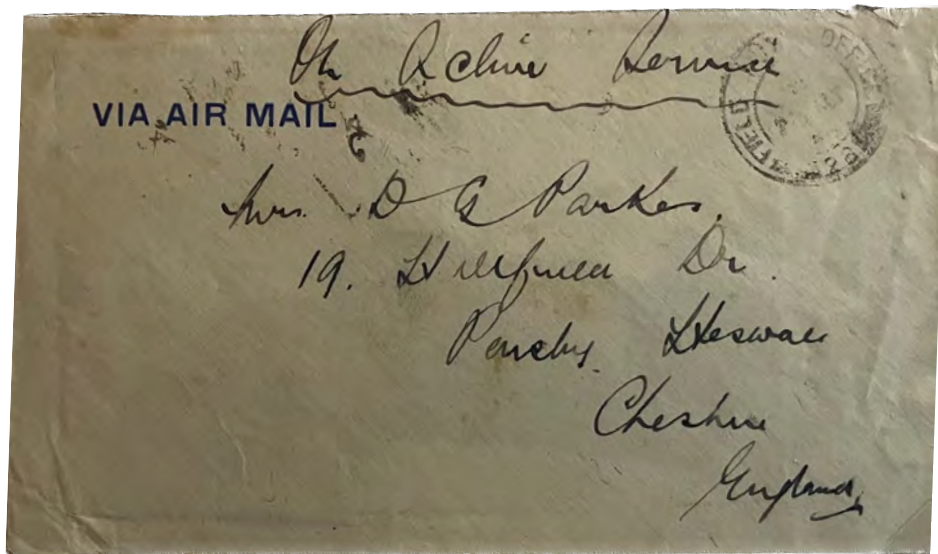


Figure 13: BRITISH MILITARY AIRMAIL COVER from FPO 28 (Haifa) May 13, 1948, addressed to England. From the end of April until the unit evacuated from Palestine on June 29, the postmark was used by the Royal Engineers' postal service in Haifa. No postal charges for military personnel.

INCOMING MAIL MAY 16—AUGUST 1948

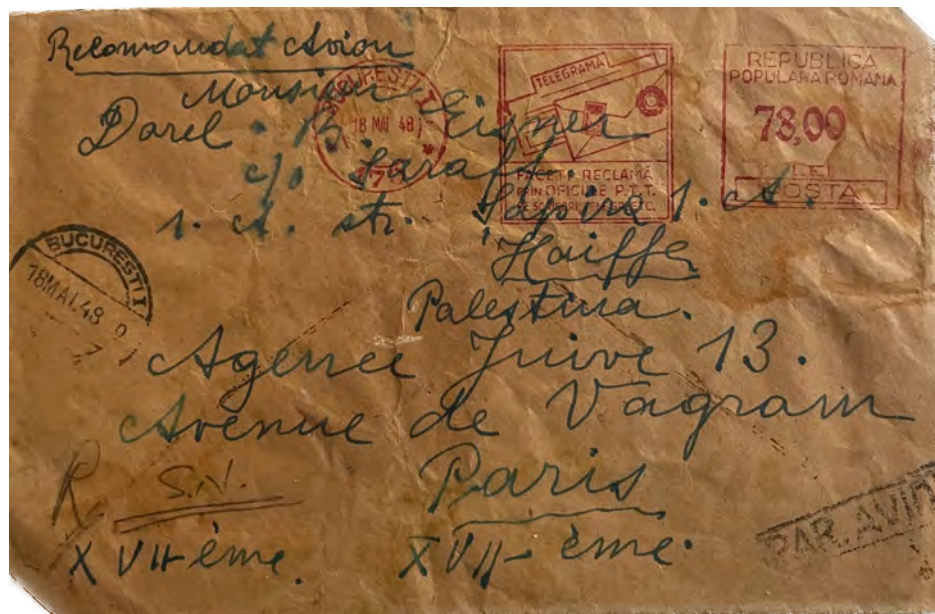


Figure 14: COURIER COVER: Airmail cover May 18, 1948 from Bucharest to Jewish Agency, Paris, to be forwarded to Haifa by Courier, transit backstamps.

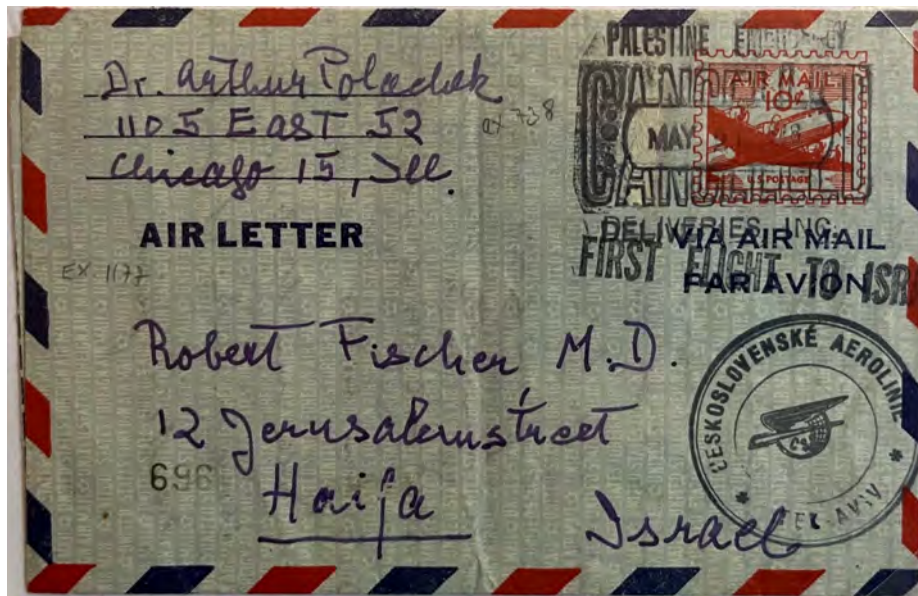


Figure 15: PEDI (Palestine Emergency Delivery Inc.). Founded by the Jewish Agency in New York as an emergency postal service to new the state of Israel. Mail was transported to Italy, and then flown to Haifa by CSA (Czechoslovakian Airways), first flight night of May 21, 1948. Special cachet was applied when the mail reached Tel Aviv.



Figure 16: PEDI (Palestine Emergency Delivery Inc.). Unaddressed 10c Airletter sheetlet with additional 15c stamp, cancelled PEDI May 21 (First Day) with handstamp "FIRST FLIGHT TO ISRAEL", probably trial or proof.



Figure 17:
REGISTERED
COVER, May 22, 1948
from L'vov, USSR,
addressed to Haifa,
with transit backstamp
and receipt
backstamps, carried by
CSA DC-3 Dakota on
flight arriving at the
Haifa airfield on June 2,
postmarked upon

Figure 18: June 9, 1948
COVER FROM
ENGLAND addressed
to Jerusalem, Palestine,
with two-line violet box
handstamp, "NO
SERVICE / RETURN
TO SENDER", with
London June 14 return
handstamp.



Figure 19: June 10,
1948 COVER FROM
BUCHAREST,
ROMANIA to Kiryat
Amal, Palestine, with
arrival marking June
15, 1948. Arrival on
First Flight from
Romania by Czech
Airlines. Airmail
connection with
Romania was re-
established on June
14.

Figure 20:
REGISTERED
ROMANIA COVER
July 9, 1948 to Tel
Aviv, Israel, with
arrival backstamp
July 15, 1948.



Figure 21: July 31, 1948
AIRMAIL COVER
from France addressed
to New York, but
somehow ended up on
the fight to Israel, and
censored there. Then
forwarded on to U.S.
Most unusual usage.

OUTGOING MAIL MAY 16, 1948—AUGUST 1948, STATE OF ISRAEL



Figure 22: REGISTERED
HAIFA COVER, May 16,
1948 (First day of
statehood) addressed to
USA, with Interim
Period, Palestine, and
Israel Doar Ivri stamps.
Receival June 6, 1948
New York, and Chicago
June 7, 1948 its'
destination. On first
flight out of Israel.
Unusual, but
philatelically contrived.

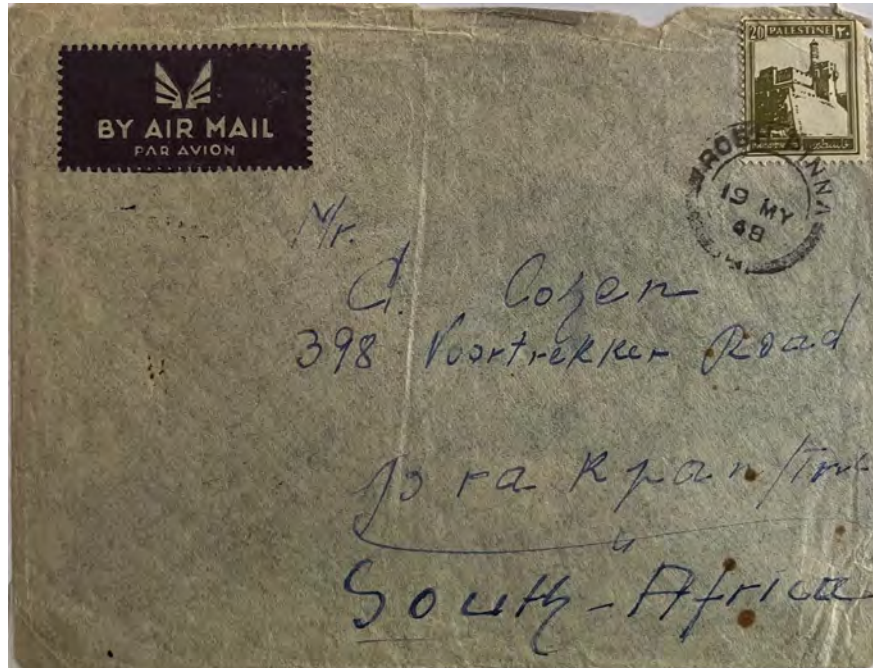


Figure 23: AIRMAIL COVER FROM ROSH PINNA (Mandate cancel) in northern Israel, May 19, 1948 to South Africa, and reached its' destination on one of the early mail consignments, probably CSA. Very Unusual.



Figure 24: REGISTERED HAIFA COVER June 10, 1948 with Hebrew/French violet handstamp "PREMIER VOL ETET D'ISRAEL—FRANCE (First Flight via Air France), addressed to Paris. Receiver backstamp June 14.

Figure 25: June 16, 1948 AIRMAIL POSTCARD from stamp dealer, Tel Aviv, addressed to USA, correct rate of 35m Doar Ivri stamps. Advertisement is already offering for sale the new Doar Ivri stamps, just one month after



Figure 26: JERUSALEM "JUBILEE" CANCELS of June 22, 1948 on cover addressed to Montreaux, Switzerland, for World Jewish Congress. Correct rate of 40m, Doar Ivri stamps. Unusual.



Figure 27: REGISTERED HAIFA COVER, June 16, 1948 addressed to New York, franked with 80m Doar Ivri stamps, correct rate. Receiver backstamp July 4, 1948.



ARTHUR HARRIS

The Israel Aircraft Industries “*Arava*” was Israel’s first domestically designed, developed and produced aircraft. It is a short take-off and landing (STOL) utility transport aircraft that can carry bulky cargo, 24 fully equipped troops or 16 paratroopers in its military configuration or 20 passengers in its civilian configuration. Figure 1 is from a PIK-O-LET postcard that shows the Arava under construction.



Figure 1: “Arava” under construction

A total of 103 aircraft had been built when production ended in 1988. Seventy were purchased by air force militaries in fourteen different countries in South America, Africa, and Asia.

Figure 2 is of an unfolded 1970 PIK-O-LET aerogramme with the April 9, 1970, inaugural flight. Figure 3 shows a registered printed matter cover with two examples of the inaugural flight special cancels. Figure 4 shows a maximum card of the “Arava” stamp (Sc 423) cancelled on the first day, July 8, 1970.



Figure 2: "Arava" in flight Pik-O-LET aerogramme with inaugural flight cancel



Figure 3: Registered cover with two examples of the Inaugural flight cancel (sent at printed matter rate)



Figure 4: Maximum card of the “Arava” stamp cancelled on the first day

Figure 5 shows the 1971 PIK-O-LET aerogramme with a different view of the “Arava” aircraft in flight.



Figure 5: “Arava” in flight 1971 Pik-O-LET aerogramme

Figure 6 is an IAI advertisement for the “Arava” aircraft. Note from the advertisement that Israel Aircraft Industries has offices at Lod Airport, New York, London and Paris.

It takes on the tough jobs

ARAVA 201 STOL

No other military aircraft is as versatile, yet so economical as IAI's rugged new transport.



Israel Aircraft Industries designed the Arava '201' to work. And work. Around the clock. On virtually any mission to which you can assign an aircraft. That's why no other military aircraft ever offered so much ... for so little.



Wide stance gear and rugged construction permit the Arava to make its own airfields. It needs only 275 meters (902 ft.) to get airborne when loaded to 15,000 lbs. takeoff weight.



The Arava's swing-tail also allows easy loading of 12 stretcher cases with ample room for medical attendants, or large unwieldy supplies.



The swing-tail fuselage permits rapid deployment of a Jeep mounting a recoilless gun, with its four man crew, or a 120 mm mortar.



16 paratroops and supporting supplies can be dropped quickly with pin-point precision, or Arava's spacious cabin can carry 20 fully armed troops or two tons of cargo, or any combination of both.

ARAVA '201'

BUILT TO TAKE IT



Manufactured by Israel Aircraft Industries, Lod Airport, Israel/New York/London/Paris

Figure 6: Israel Aircraft Industries advertisement for the “Arava”

Figures 7a and 7b show the model 201 of the “Arava” fitted out for electronic warfare.



Figures 7a (upper) and 7b (lower): Military version of the "Arava" fitted out for electronic warfare.

ISRAEL'S COMMERCIAL AVIATION STAMPS

ARTHUR HARRIS

This series of stamps was utilized in the 1960s and into the early 1970s. Figure 1 illustrates the progression of the tax rate due to increasing inflation. The commemorative-size values – 2.50 IL, 4 IL, 5 IL and 7.50 IL – have the inscription above the value that reads “Ministry of Communication” (*Misrad Ha'Tachburah*) and “Traveler's Tax” (*Agra Nosea*). The stamps were affixed to the passenger's boarding passes, to show that the airport travel taxes were paid.



Figure 1: Each stamp approx. 1 ½ inches X 1 inch.

When it became increasingly expensive and time consuming to produce the commemorative-size stamps, smaller designed stamps were produced – 7.50 IL, 7.50 IL tab and 10.50 IL tab seen in figure 2.

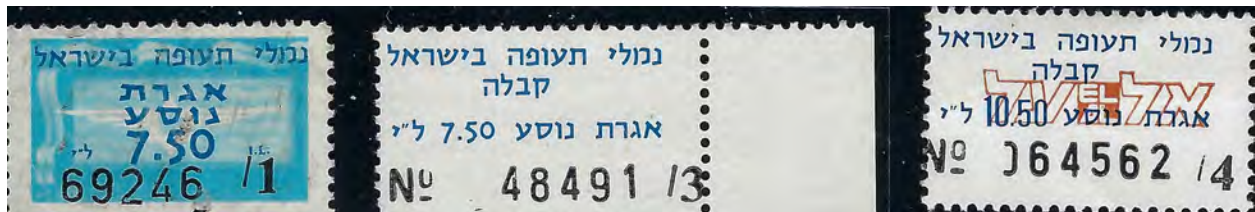


Figure 2: Stamps approx. 1 1/8 inches X 5/8 inch

Due to the time and expense required to produce the stamps as well as the increasing inflation in the early 1970s, the government decided to print the fee directly on the boarding passes to indicate that travel taxes were paid. Figure 3 reflects the increased rate of 12.50 IL. Inflation increased the rate to 15.00 IL as shown in figure 4. Seen in the 1974 boarding pass (figure 5), the rate was raised to 20.00 IL with the older 15.00 IL rate blacked out. Figure 6 shows that in 1975 the rate had increased to 30.00 IL. I do not know if there were higher printed rates because subsequent boarding passes simply state “Airport Tax Paid” (figure 7).

A later computer-generated boarding pass also printed stating that the tax was paid, as seen in figure 8.



Figure 3: Approx. 3 ¼ inches by 5 inches



Figure 4: Approx. 3 ¼ inches X 5 ½ inches



Figure 5: Approx. 3 inches X 4 3/8 inches



Figure 6: Approx. 3 1/8 inches X 5 inches



Figure 7: Approx. 3 1/8 inches x 5 inches



Figure 8: Approx. 6 1/8 inches x 3 inches

HOLY LAND GEM - THE 5 MILS "ALL-UP" POSTCARD RATE WITHIN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

ED KROFT KC, FRPSC. FRPSL

I am writing an article for an upcoming issue of the **Israel Philatelist** on the "Empire Air Mail Scheme"(EAMS") or "All-up" air mail rate structure under which letters and postcards could be sent from British Mandate Palestine within the British Empire wholly or partly by air mail on Imperial Airways. The letter rate was 10 mils per 10 grams and the postcard rate was 5 mils. There are various challenging aspects to collecting such covers. First, mail was sent infrequently from British Mandate Palestine to various uncommon countries, territories or possessions in Africa and Asia. Second, letters rather than postcards appear to have been more commonly sent.

In 1991, the legendary Holy land philatelist, Dr. Arthur Groten, wrote a series of articles on British Mandate Palestine postal rates. In his second of two articles on postcards published in the **Israel Philatelist** (page 6239), Dr. Groten wrote,

"Between 1 March 1938 and 4 September 1939, all mail to Great Britain (and certain other Commonwealth countries went by "All-up" airmail, the postcard rate being 5m. I have not seen such a card."

However, in 2024-2025, the expert British Mandate Palestine postal historian, Joel Slutski, wrote various articles in Hebrew in **Shovel** (Israel Philatelic Federation) and in English in the **Israel Philatelist** on the prevailing postal rates. In 2023, he also gave an excellent lecture on the subject in the Israel 75 Philatelic Academy and he also posted his comprehensive exhibit on that site (Israel75.org.il). Mr. Slutski shows an example of the elusive 5 mils postcard sent from Jerusalem to London UK on February 4, 1939. A depiction of his postcard is shown below as Figure 1.

I too have a different 5 mils postcard in my collection which I wanted to share with you. The postcard was sent from Jerusalem to Ottawa, the national capital of Canada, a Dominion in the British Empire in 1938. The postcard was postmarked on July 19, 1938 and arrived on July 29, 1938. A scan of this postcard is shown as Figure 2.

It is welcome news that, after approximately thirty-five years, two rare pieces of postal history have surfaced, each going to a different place within the British Empire. Perhaps others will be reported. More on the Empire Air Mail Scheme to follow in a future issue of the **Israel Philatelist**.

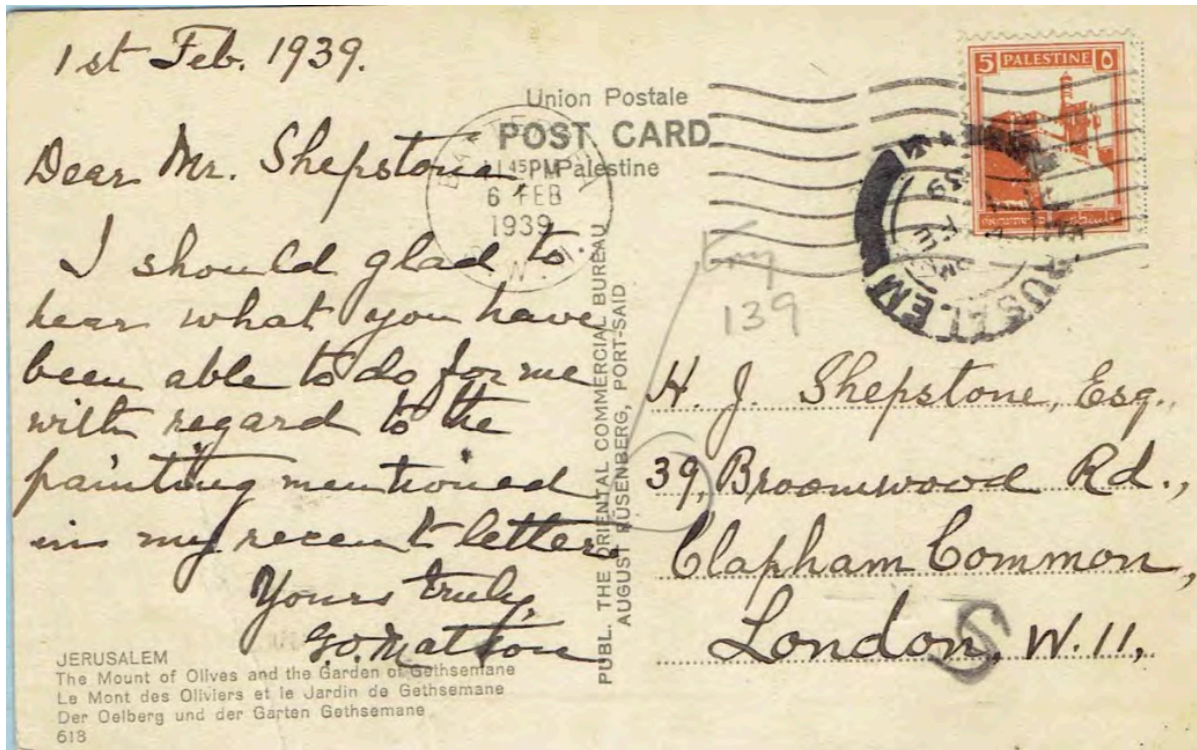


Figure 1: Postcard from Jerusalem dated February 4, 1939 to London paying the 5 mil EASM rate with London February 6, 1939 receiver.

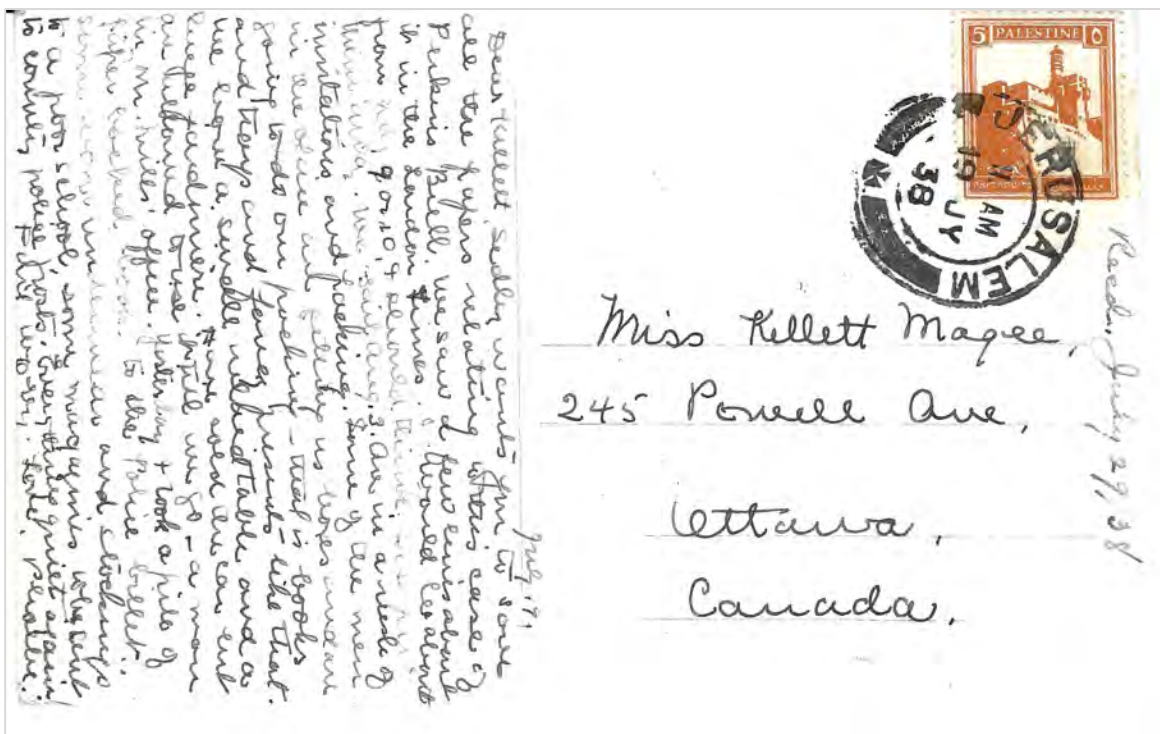


Figure 2: Postcard also from Jerusalem dated July 19, 1938 to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada paying the 5 mil EASM rate. Manuscript received July 29, 1938.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Editor Steve,

In the last issue of the *ISRAEL PHILATELIST* (Summer 2025) I found most interesting the article "Remember" by David Matlow, about Israeli artist MICHELLE SHALMIEV, and her artwork using only used Israeli stamps. I have attached a photo of the artwork by Michelle Shalmiev that I received for my 85th Birthday.

It was commissioned by a good friend of mine in Israel, and I was really surprised, and happy to see the story in the IP.

I will always cherish the picture, and have it hung prominently in my office.

Edward Rosen,
President, Society of Israel Philatelists



GREECE: JEWISH HISTORY AND JUDAICA-PHILATELY PART 2

FRED KORR



Third (2024) and Latest Jewish-Themed, Greek Postal Issue: “Synagogues in Greece”

The next Greek Post Office (Hellenic Post, EATA or ELTA – acronym standing for ELlas Telegraphic Agency) issue dealing with a Jewish subject was released 18 April 2024, when a set of six (6) stamps depicting painted images of the interiors of synagogues in Greek cities was issued (16 stamps per pane) see table 4 and *Figures 9-14*.

Table 4: The 2024 Hellenic Post Stamps and FDC Cachets Depicting Synagogue Interiors

Denomination	Synagogue Name	City Location
€ 0.20	Etz Hayyim	Larissa
€ 0.50	Kahal Kadosh Yevanim	Trikala
€ 1.20	Beth Shalom	Athens
€ 1.20	Monastir Synagogue	Thessaloniki
€ 2.00	Kahal Kadosh Yashan	Ioannina
€ 2.50	Kahal Kadosh Shalom	Rhodes
Official FDC cachet	Scuola Greka (“Greek School”) Synagogue	Corfu Town, Island of Corfu
Official FDC cachet	Etz Hayyim	Chaniya, Island of Crete

** Ioannina (Ιωάννινα) is pronounced “Yo-ah-nee-nah” or “Yah-nee-nah”.
(250,000 of each stamp were printed)



Figure 9: Etz Hayyim,
Larissa



Figure 10: Kahal Kadosh
Yevanim, Trikala



Figure 11: Beth Shalom,
Athens



Figure 12: Monastir,
Thessaloniki



Figure 13: Kahel Kadosh
Yashan, Ioannina



Figure 14: Kahal Kadosh
Shalom, Rhodes

The text of the stamps is in Greek, with the addition of the Latin alphabet “HELLAS,” (the Greek word for “Greece”) meeting the Universal Postal Union requirement that nations using non-Latin alphabets must include a Latin-alphabet text of the nation’s name. Each stamp has a small, “tab-like” label to its left, which includes English and Hebrew text of the synagogue name and city where it is located.

Hellenic Post had previously used this label-adjacent format exclusively on the stamps it issued (2008 – 2017) commemorating “Mount Athos”, a 130 square-mile peninsula in northeastern Greece, where a semiautonomous group of 20 Eastern Orthodox monasteries has existed for centuries. “I designed the Mount Athos series. I noted issues from Israel, which include a white label (tab). I added a label at the left, to (add) detail of the stamp subject. When the Mount Athos series was concluded (2017), the format became available for all Hellenic Post stamp issues.” [16]

The 2024 Greek stamps depicting synagogue-interior paintings, were drawn by Dr. Myrsini Vardopoulou, who has worked at the Hellenic Post since 1995 and has designed more than three hundred fifty (350) Greek postage stamp sets (*many containing 4 different designs*) including the Mount Athos series [16]. (See examples of her many previous postal creations and a list of awards at her web-page within the “Greek Philatelic Postal Museum [16, 17]. She has advanced academic degrees in art and sculpture. Dr. Vardopoulou provided this author with a description of how the 2024 synagogue-stamp-format came to be. [16]

“When I was asked to design the “Synagogues of Greece” series, I felt I could now use (*the Mount Athos*) format to best showcase a subject that had never before been depicted on Greek stamps. I then submitted my proposal to the relevant ELTA committees for approval.”

The 2024 Hellenic Post “Synagogues of Greece” stamps are just one example of Dr. Vardopoulou’s many achievements, unique in the history of philately. She was awarded a 2024

“Medal for Exceptional Support to Organized Philately” by the Federation of European Philatelic Associations (FEPA), whose February 2025 “FEPA News” publication described Dr. Vardopoulou’s achievements as follows [17]:

“Dr. Myrsini Vardopoulou, a painter and engraver, has been a stamp designer for over 30 years. Formerly a professor at the Athens School of Fine Arts, she is currently a consultant for the documentation of archival material at the Philatelic and Postal Museum in Athens. Since 2013, she has designed the front covers of *Opus*, the annual publication of the Académie Européenne de Philatélie, along with several other highly acclaimed philatelic books.

She was a member of the organizing committee of, and created the logo for, NOTOS 2021 (The European International Philatelic Exhibition). Dr. Vardopoulou has received numerous distinctions, including the First Prize of Asiago Philatelic Art Medal for the Greek 2012 London Olympic Games stamps. Her book, **History, Ideology, and Aesthetics of Greek Stamps**, was awarded a Large Gold Medal at Italia 2018.”

Clearly, Dr. Vardopoulou is one of today’s most talented and prolific stamp and graphic arts designers.

The 2024 set of six “Greek Synagogues” stamps raised the following questions, which will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

- 1] Was there any significance to the 18 April 2024 issue date? Perhaps a notable event in Greek-Jewish history?
- 2] Was there a specific intent in issuing stamps having a Jewish subject?
- 3] Was there any specific reason that Jewish synagogues, in contrast to Jewish religious articles, were depicted?
- 4] Are there currently only six cities with active synagogues in Greece?
- 5] What visual sources were provided to designer Dr. Vardopoulou?

1] Significance of 18 April 2024 First Day of Issue?

Ms. Zanet Battinou, director of the Jewish Museum of Greece (in Athens) responded, stating there was no Greek-Jewish significance to that April date [18], which was chosen by Hellenic Post Office officials.

2] Hellenic Post intent of issuing stamps with a Jewish subject

Stella Kovatsi, Director of Philately at Hellenic Post, answered the second question, “This stamp series was issued as part of Hellenic Post’s broader mission to highlight Greece’s rich cultural and historical heritage. The Jewish presence in Greece has deep historical roots.” [19]

3] Why were Greek “synagogues” selected for this stamp set?

Postal agencies of many nations have honored their Jewish communities by depicting Jewish ceremonial objects on postage stamps. Dr. Xenia Eleftherios, Scientific Officer of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki [20] advised that the extensive research, lectures and publications of Greek architect, Dr. Elias Messinas into the heritage and architecture of Greek synagogues, provided the impetus for selecting synagogues as the subject for the 2024 Hellenic Post stamps honoring the Jewish communities of Greece.

Dr. Messinas has advanced academic degrees in architecture from Yale and the National Technical University of Athens. Dr. Messinas doctoral thesis at the University of Athens was regarding the history and architecture of Greek synagogues. He also did a post-doctoral fellowship at Haifa’s Technion Institute of Technology Faculty of Architecture. [21]

Contributions from governments – notably Germany and Greece – as well as private foundations and local citizens have provided funding to rebuild many Greek synagogues severely damaged in recent years by earthquakes and salt-air.

“Elias V. Messinas is an architect and urban planner. He was the first architect to complete a comprehensive in-situ survey and documentation on Greek synagogues, backed by extensive archival research and interviews by survivors. His work has been published widely, recently by two books on his thirty-year journey throughout Greece. Since 2016, he is the leading architect for the preservation of synagogues in Thessaloniki, Trikala, and Kos. Commissioned by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture to enrich the Archaeological Registry with nearly 400 Jewish sites throughout Greece. He has lectured and published widely and has guided workshops and tours on architecture and design for nearly two decades.” [22, 23]

Dr. Messinas’ books include: “The Synagogues of Salonika and Veroia” (Athens, 1997) and “The Synagogues of Greece” (New York 2011) and on-line “The Synagogues of Greece: The Physical Archive” – from his own web site www.ecoama.com

The first 32-pages (of 155 total pages) of his 2011 book “The Synagogues of Greece: Macedonia and Thrace”, published by the American Sephardi Federation – discusses many of the 2024 Greek Synagogue stamps and includes many historical photographs. Those first pages available are available, gratis, on-line at [22]:

https://www.ecoama.com/publications/images/synagogues/messinas_synagogues_intro_copyright.pdf

4] Number of currently active, Jewish synagogues in Greece

Information about the number of active Jewish synagogues in Greece was provided by Ms Effie Ezrati, Public Relations Office, Central Board of the Jewish Communities of Greece [24]. There are eight cities in Greece with active synagogues. The synagogues in two Greek cities with active Jewish communities – Chalkis and Volos - were not included among the set of 6 stamps. Ms. Ezrati explained:

“Usually all sets of stamps issued by the Hellenic Post includes up to four items. Following consultation, Hellenic Post – in order to accommodate our request to include the largest possible number of synagogues in this set – agreed to issue 6 stamps on *two (official FDC)* envelopes. (The official cachet designs depict paintings of the interiors of the “Greka Synagogue” in the city of Corfu Town (on the Island of Corfu) and the “Etz Hayim Synagogue” in Chaniya also drawn by Myrsini Vardopoulou, (who designed the stamps). (Each FDC was serviced with 3 of the 6 stamps in this set.)

“The choice of the synagogues (depicted on the stamps) was made by Hellenic Post – probably based on esthetics or historic tradition, with our board’s consent.” [24]



Figure 15: First Day Cover Cachets depicting the Greca Synagogue in Corfu (top) and the Etz Hayim Synagogue in Chania (bottom).

5] What sources did the stamp designer have for the depicted synagogue interiors? Did she perhaps visit the synagogues?

Costas Chazapis, a Greek member of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations, <https://fepanews.com>, relayed my question to, and provided the response from the stamp designer, Dr. Myrsini Vardopoulou, about her source(s) for the depiction of the synagogue interiors used on the April 2024 Greek postage stamps.

"These designs were created exclusively for the stamps in question. In fact, this was the first time I designed interiors of Jewish synagogues. I was provided with photographic material from various sources, following the (assistance) of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the President of the Hellenic Post, Mr. Daniel Benardout. After selecting the most suitable images, I worked with watercolours at a size twice that of the stamp."

The paintings were thus approximately 8cm square. Such small 8 cm x 8 cm (3 inches x 3 inches) "miniature paintings" have been popular for centuries. The (*British*) "Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers" defines such rectangular-format items as having a maximum size of 4.5 inches (11.5 cm) square [25]. The technique requires fine-point paint-brushes, magnifying lenses and, most importantly, patience and practice. See "Miniature painting techniques" <https://creativetwilight.com/tips-better-miniature-painter/>.

Dr. Vardopoulou spoke at the First Day ceremonies, providing insights into her perception of the art of postage stamp design.

"A stamp should not (just) reduce an image, but summarize its meaning. This is the only way it can function as a product... In the case of the Synagogues, the images should convey the greatest possible information. The spaces were literally studied with care (to show) respect for the history of the Jewish community." [23]

The Greek Post Office web site offered thanks to those who contributed to the stamp-set honoring Greece's Jewish cultural heritage, noting:

"The Hellenic Post wish to thank the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, the Jewish Museum of Greece, and the Jewish Communities for providing photographic material which contributed to the issue of this Series."

"(They also) warmly thanked Mr. Emmanuel Georgoudakis, Art Historian of the Philatelic and Postal Museum, for transcribing the texts into Hebrew, and Mr. Ion Vassiliadis, Cultural Affairs Office at the Embassy of Israel in Greece, who had the final check." <https://philotelismos.gr/en/blog/synagoges-tis-elladas-32024>

Discussion of Eight Communities with Synagogues Depicted on the 2024 Stamps and FDCs

The images depicted on the 2024 postage stamps did not represent the current status of all the synagogue buildings. Several had suffered structural damage over recent decades from

earthquakes and weathering. In such cases, older photos, depicting the synagogue interiors prior to the damage, were provided to Dr. Vardopoulou.

Athens – The Stamp (*Figure 11*) shows the interior of the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Athens currently serving the Athens community. The web site from which the photo was taken offers further history of the area. <https://synagogues-360.anumuseum.org.il/gallery/beth-shalom/> The web site also provides a brief history, quoted here:

“From the time the ancient synagogue of Agora was destroyed in the 5th century until the 19th century, the Jewish community of Athens did not have a synagogue. At the beginning of WWII, approximately 3,000 Jews lived in Athens. This number swelled as Jews in the north of Greece fled to Athens during the war. Thanks to the strong resistance movement, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the efforts of the Chief Rabbi of Athens, many Jews hidden throughout Athens were spared from the Holocaust. Currently, there are approximately 3,000 Jews living in Athens and there are two synagogues, Beth Shalom and the older Ioanniotiki.”



Figure 16: Beth Shalom Synagogue, Athens (Sephardic) Built 1935 contemporary photograph from web page: <https://synagogues-360.anumuseum.org.il/gallery/beth-shalom/>

Chania - A Jewish community has existed on the Island of Crete since the 4th or 3rd centuries BCE, following the conquest and Hellenization of the Near East by Alexander the Great. Thus, they constitute one of the oldest Jewish-diaspora communities in the eastern Mediterranean.

In the 1850s, the Jewish population was approximately 700. As World War II approached, the population is estimated to have been 400. The 2024 Jewish population is 60.

The Etz Hayyim synagogue (also known as Kal Kadosh Etz Hayyim) was built in 1645 CE, atop a previous church (built ca 1400 CE and destroyed by an Ottoman siege). It was purchased by Chania's Jewish community and converted into a synagogue.

In 1941, Nazi forces deported all 376 remaining Jews on Crete when they captured the island. The ship carrying the prisoners was attacked and sunk, killing all those aboard.

<https://www.wmf.org/projects/etz-hayim-synagogue> WMF = World Monument Fund

Plans to rebuild Etz Hayyim were initiated in 1995 by Chania resident, Nikos Stavroulakis (a writer, academic and founding director of the Jewish Museums of Athens and Thessaloniki). Through Mr. Stavroulakis' efforts, Etz Hayyim was added to the prestigious list of the world's "100 Most Endangered Sites" of international cultural concern compiled by the World Monuments Fund in 1996. The synagogue was officially rededicated on 10 October, 1999. [26]

To foster an understanding of the Island's rich Jewish history, a mobile phone app that allows visitors to discover the Etz Hayim Synagogue and learn more about the Jewish heritage of Crete was developed. <https://www.wmf.org/projects/etz-hayim-synagogue>

Corfu - Jews have lived on Corfu for 1800 years. The Jews on the island were subject to violent attacks and persecution. In 1522 there were about 200 Jewish householders; in 1558, about 400; and in 1663, 500. In 1923 about 3,000 Jews lived on the island. There were four synagogues in the town of Corfu.

On the eve of World War II, the community numbered 2,000. The Germans occupied the island and 1,800 Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

In 2024, fewer than 50 Jews remain in Corfu. Of the four synagogues that existed in the ghetto before World War II, only the "Greek synagogue" - in reference to islands' political attachment to Greece in 1864) "La Scuola Greca", meaning "Greek School") remains. [27]

Ioannina - Ioannina is a city in Northwest Greece, near the Albanian border. The Jewish Community of Ioannina has traces back to Hellenistic times (3rd century BCE). Greek-speaking Jews, or Romaniotes, have lived in Greece continuously and the center of the Romaniote-Jewish population was the city of Ioannina.

The Kahal Kadosh Hadash Synagogue was built in 1540 CE when the Jewish Community of Ioannina numbered more than five thousand. It did not survive the German occupation. About half the community (an estimated 2,000) immigrated to the United States between 1902 and 1924. Most settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan not far from the present site of Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Of the 1950 Jews living in Ioannina in 1941, only 181 people, survived. Today there are fifty Jews left in Ioannina, though some former residents live in Athens. A rabbi is brought-in to hold services in Kahal Kadosh Yashan during religious festivals and on special occasions. [28]

Larissa – The Ets Hayyim Synagogue is shown in *Figure 9* (synagogue postage stamp) and *Figure 17-18* (Photographs of old, debilitated synagogue); *Figure 19-20* (Reconstructed synagogue, 2025). The web-site of the Jewish Community of Larissa (JCL) included many photographs. <https://www.jcl.gr/en/restoration-of-ets-hayim-synagogue/>

The exterior of the old Sephardic Etz Hayyim Synagogue, built in 1866, is seen in *Figure 17*. Above the exterior door, note the Hebrew and Greek lettering, a combination that Americans and western Europeans rarely see.

ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ ΕΤΣ ΧΑΪΜ ("Synagoge Etz Hayyim")



Figure 17: Old Entry door of Etz Hayim Synagogue, Larissa, pre-reconstruction. (reconstruction completed in 2025). Note the Hebrew and Greek lettering above the door
ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ ΕΤΣ ΧΑΪΜ (synagogue Etz Hayim)

Figure 18 is from a photograph taken during reconstruction (begun in 2019) of the interior of Etz Hayyim Synagogue. The synagogue had been gutted during the NAZI occupation, used as a stable, then damaged by earthquakes and general weathering. *Figures 18 and 19* show the newly completed renovation (May 2025); photos provided by Alina Moissis, Jewish Community of Larissa [29], who added:

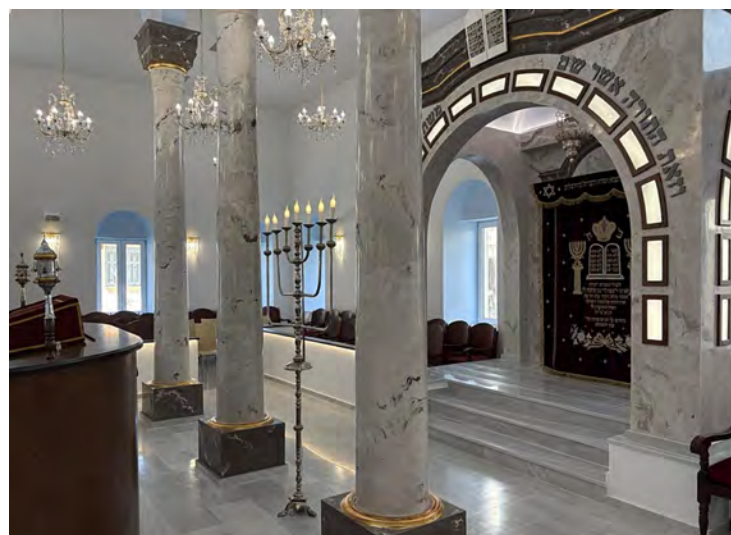


Figure 18: Etz Hayyim Synagogue interior, Larissa Greece. When closed for Reconstruction
<https://www.jcl.gr/en/restoration-of-ets-hayim-synagogue/#>

“The stamp was painted according to an old photo of our (*Larissa*) synagogue. (That is how) the Aron HaKodesh looked until October 2019, when a reconstruction project began. “

“(We are now) reconstructing the interior of the synagogue, the Aron Kodesh and the Bimah. They will look almost the same as before; a little more modern.”

“The project is almost finalized and the inauguration of the synagogue has been programmed for June 15, 2025.” [29]



Figures 19 and 20. Exterior, left, and Interior, right, views of Etz Hayyim Synagogue, Larissa, Greece. (Renovation completed and photo taken May 2025)

Rhodes – One of the oldest Jewish Communities (and synagogues) in Greece is in city of Rhodes (on the Island of Rhodes).

“The first settlement of Jews in Rhodes was in the 2nd century BCE. ...The island was close (to Judea) and was an important port for commerce between the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.”

“Jews (fleeing the Spanish Expulsion) arrived around 1523, when the Moslem, Ottoman Empire took over the Island. The community had five synagogues before the Second World War. The Kahal Shalom is (now) the only one functioning.” [30]

The stamp showing Kahal Kadosh Shalom Synagogue is in (*Figure 14*) “Rhodes City” which is the capital of the Island of the same name, “Rhodes”. It is among the southeastern islands of Greece. The name “Rhodes”, from the classical Greek word ΡΟΔΟΣ (Ródos), is the same in Ladino and Hebrew - רוֹדוֹס - and notes the many **roses** that grew in that sunny climate. That warmth was also a big draw for Jews (who spoke Ladino or Judeo-Spanish) who fled Spain’s Inquisition. Rhodes lies just 11miles (18 Km) off the southwest coast of Turkey. As with many of the Jewish communities of Greece, the Jewish Community of Rhodes has a web site (www.jewishrhodes.org) that provides a lot of information. Rhodes is one of the oldest Jewish community in Greece - perhaps because of its geographical proximity to Biblical Judea - dating back to the second century BCE [30]. The Roman historian Josephus also mentions the Jews of the island in the 1st century C.E. The Kahal Kadosh Shalom (Holy Congregation of Peace), built in 1577, is the oldest Jewish synagogue in Greece, and the sole remaining synagogue on the Island of Rhodes used for services. [30]

Thessaloniki – Salonica - Jews especially prospered in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki – named (in 315 BCE) by its founder, King Cassander, after his wife Thessalonike (meaning “victory of Thessalians” because Thessalian horsemen had helped her father to achieve a military victory). (The Greek word “Niké” means victory.) Jews prospered in Thessaloniki and accounted for the majority of the population by 1917. That city became known as “The Jerusalem of the Balkans.” [31] During the Ottoman Turkish-Empire rule, the city was renamed “Selanik,” better known as “Salonica” in Ladino or Judeo-Spanish [32].

The “Monastir Synagogue” (built 1925-27), stamps (*Figure 7 and Figure 12*) is so named because it was founded, after World War I, by families who had immigrated to Thessaloniki from the city of Monastir (in the former Yugoslavia). The name Monastir derives from the Greek word “Monasterion,” meaning “monastery,” after a monastery in that area. The city of Monastir - now named Bitola (the Slavic word for ‘men of a monastery’) – is in present-day North Macedonia. The Monastir synagogue was rebuilt in 2016 (after earthquake damage) as a museum. It now serves as a synagogue only during the High Holidays and special occasions.

Prior to World War II there were 50 synagogues in Thessaloniki; There are now three synagogues: Monastir, Yad Lezikaron, and a Jewish senior-citizen facility with a synagogue. [31, 33]

One of the favourite sons of Thessaloniki is Dr. Albert Bourla whose insight in promoting CRISPr gene splicing technology led to quickly developing COVID-19 vaccines. An article on Dr. Bourla appeared in Spring 2021 issue of the IP <https://israelstamps.com/wp-content/uploads/2021-Spring-IP-web.pdf>.

Trikala - Trikala’s Jewish community grew during the 16th century as refugees arrived after the Ottoman conquest and from Spain, Portugal and Sicily. Its three Synagogues were named Kahal Kadosh Yevanim (Greek Community), Kahal Kadosh Sephardim (Spanish Community) and Kahal Kadosh Sicilyanim (Sicilian Community). In 1520–35, there were 1,000 Jews in the city and region.

On the eve of World War II, the number of Jews had decreased to 500. On March 23, 1944, 112 Jews were arrested and deported. Only about ten survivors returned to Trikala at the end of the war. By 1967 the community numbered 101.

The Kahal Kadosh Yevanim Synagogue (Greek Community Synagogue), opened in 1930, was damaged during the NAZI occupation, and suffered further damage in an April 30, 1954 earthquake. A rebuilding effort - funded by grants from the German government and support of donors from Greece and abroad – was completed in October 2022. [34]

EPILOGUE

The Hellenic Post stamps reviewed are a reminder not just of the travail of the Greek Jewish community, but of the resilience of Jews of Greece - and everywhere - to thrive, despite myriad adversities.

Of the many holocaust monuments in Greece, the 3-meter (10 feet) tall memorial (*Figure 21*; dedicated 1998) in the City of Volos – although not among the city-synagogues depicted in the 2024 stamp-set - made the greatest impression on this author. Photographs kindly provided by the Jewish Community Center staff, Volos. [35]



Figure 21: Volos Greece, 3-meter-tall Holocaust Monument

On one side “*Shema Yisrael*” [Hear, O Israel!] is seen at the base; above it, a hand is raised to protect the face. On another side, one sees the dates 1941-45, the years when the Greek Jewish Community was decimated. This evocative monument notes the travail of the Jewish past and the ever-present hope for a peaceful future.

Hope is one of mankind’s strongest drives and desires. British poet Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744), noted this in his poem “An Essay on Man”: “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Naphtali Herz Imber (1856 – 1909) wrote the Hebrew poem whose text became the lyrics to Israel’s National Anthem “HaTikvah” (“The Hope”).

Hate and bigotry flourish in the absence of knowledge and understanding. The history of Greek antisemitism – as is the case for every hatred - is long and complicated. Efforts by the Greek government, Post Office and the various Jewish Community Centers and Museums across Greece to educate citizens about Judaism and its long history in Greece are progressing.

The Israel-Hellenic Forum (created in 2019) has used economic and technical cooperation to strengthen ties in the eastern Mediterranean between Israel, Greece and Cyprus. [36] The geographic proximity of those three democracies has created a political alliance that provides coordination between militaries, governments, and law enforcement. Such actions require "not only technical expertise but deep mutual trust". [36] Efforts to strengthen that alliance, with the assist of the USA - in a "3+1 alliance" - were noted in a May 2025 report in the Athens "Kathimerini" newspaper [37].

[editor's note: These stamps and others are available from Hellenic Post

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear SIP Members,

I am planning now for the BOSTON 2026 WORLD EXPO STAMP SHOW taking place in Boston, MA. May 23-30, 2026, where the SIP will have our annual meeting and elections. The SIP will have a booth, speakers, and some of the most outstanding Holy Land Philatelic exhibits. Our own Ed Kroft will be judging. The SIP will have a "no host" dinner on Saturday night, with more information available at a later date.

The show celebrates America's semiquincentennial, and is the 12th U.S. international philatelic exhibition, and will feature 100+ dealers, 60 societies, and 40 worldwide postal services.

I have attended all of the last few international stamp shows here in the U.S., from Chicago, to San Francisco, to Washington DC, to New York; and upcoming Boston is expected to be just as great.

Make your hotel reservation now while the better hotel rates are available.

I hope to see a lot of you there.

Philatelically yours,

Edward Rosen



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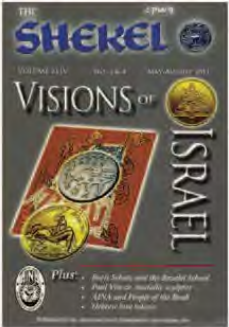
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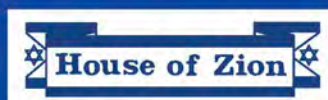
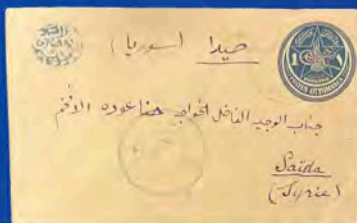
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