

**Opening Remarks from Victor Isaak Eliezer,
Secretary General of the Central Board of Jewish
Communities in Greece
for the event with Fania Oz Salzberger**

Athens 9/5/2019 – Theocharakis Museum

*Your Excellency Mrs. Irit Ben Abba, Ambassador of the State of Israel,
Mrs. Nili Oz, spouse and consort of Amos,
Dear Fania Oz Saltzberger,
Mr. President of the Theocharakis Foundation,
Mr. Vice-president of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece,
Mr. President of the Jewish Community of Athens,*

Dear friends of Amos and Fania,

I would like to convey to all of you the warmest greetings of the President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, David Saltiel, who wasn't able to be with us today.

On Friday the 28th of December 2018, Amos Oz, this cosmopolite intellectual, soldier in the "Six Day War of 1967" and in "Yom Kippur War of 1973", a fighter for peace, passed away leaving behind a big literary, philosophical and political heritage to his people and to the entire world.

A meeting in Brussels between the Vice-president of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece, Mr. Albalas and Fania Oz Saltzberger helped to have Fania and her mother with us tonight! We welcome them to Athens!

Allow me at this point to read an excerpt from the book "Jews and words", in which Fania and Amos described and set the relationship between Jews and God.

"A Jewish Grandma walks along the sea side with her beloved grandchild when all of a sudden a huge wave engulfs the boy under the water. "Almighty God", the grandmother yelled, "why you did that to me?" During all my life I suffered but never lost my faith. Shame on you! Less than a minute later a second huge wave brings the boy back, safely into her arms. "Almighty God" she says "that is very kind of you but ... I don't see his kippah"!

At a first level the topic of this joke is the model of the Jewish grandma, which in its essence is a double dose of the Jewish mother and everything else this entails... The grandmother is refractory, obstreperous, making her discussant feel guilty, remaining till the end captious even though the discussant is the Creator of the World. This is very nice, wait as things do not finish here.

Where is God in this story? Perhaps nowhere. Maybe this is the story of two waves, the grandmother and her grandchild. If we assume that the Divine power has really sent these two waves, then it seems, and sorry about that, that this power is rather weak. What was in his mind? An orthodox apologizer would explain that probably God was challenging the grandmother. For us, the heretic ones, most likely the grandmother was challenging God...

In contradiction to most of the faithful in many religions, the grandmother doesn't identify belief with awe. She confronts the Almighty and Powerful with a great dose of "Hutzpah"! Meticulous, chintzy, churlish and audacious she is nevertheless awesome into her pragmatic devotion. Devoted to whom exactly: To God or to her grandchild?

Believe us; you would never like to put these two adulations into confrontation. Actually, even God himself wouldn't like to know about it. Since we do know the grandmother personally, we can reveal now that once this joke came officially to an end; the Almighty has given back the kippah without further procedure...

We tried to show in this text, that although innumerable generations of Jews strongly believed that without God, they would never have grandchildren, they deeply knew that ... without grandchildren God would never survive...

Jews got a long heritage of laughter, parallel to a long heritage of tears. This indisputable Jewish tradition of a bittersweet self-criticism, which often goes till self-whipping, has been proved to be a trustworthy tool in order to survive in a hostile world. As laughter, weeping and self-criticism were always orally expressed they found an easy way to enter the very old Jewish ethos contesting and arguing with everyone: with one's self, with friends, enemies and very often even with God himself".

Fania,

We thank you for being with us in Athens and I would like to tell you that we feel that Amos is also here with us tonight.

Today that Israel celebrates the 71st anniversary of Independence, from Athens, from this floor, we wish to the people of Israel peace and prosperity.

Dear friends,

on behalf of the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece, I thank you very much for coming to our event.