Shirley Siana

Over 80 years ago, in Greece sixty thousand Jews lived peacefully in Thessaloniki.    It was a valued and vibrant community.

Most of these Jews worked in the port.    So much so that the port of Thessaloniki was even closed on Saturday, Shabbat.

Great emeritus rabbis also lived and studied there.    Everyone rubbed shoulders and appreciated each other.

But on September 2, 1939, on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, it is on this glorious community that the Nazi terror will suddenly rise.

On April 6, 1941, Hitler invaded Greece in order to secure its southern front before launching the famous Operation Barbarossa and its great offensive against Russia.    Of the 60,000 Jews in Thessaloniki, around 50,000 will be exterminated at the Birkenau concentration camp in sad record time!

The massacre of the Jews of Greece was brief but intense.    Very few will have the chance to make it.    But among the survivors there was a family known as Bourla.

And after the war, in 1961, a son was born into this miraculous family in the camps.    His parents called him Israel – Abraham.

He grew up and studied veterinary medicine in Greece.    A brilliant student, Abraham will get his doctorate in reproductive biotechnology at the veterinary school of Aristotle University in Salonika.

At the age of 34, he decided to move to the United States.
He changes his first name Abraham to Albert and meets a Jewish woman named Miriam and then marries her.
Together they will have two children.    In the United States, Albert was integrated into the medical industry.

He progressed very quickly and joined a pharmaceutical company where he became “Head manager”.    Little Abraham (Albert) rose through the ranks and got his appointment as CEO of this company in 2019.

Throughout the year Albert decides to direct all the efforts of the company to try to find a vaccine against a new virus which has just struck the world.    He expends great financial and technological efforts to achieve his goal.

A year later his work paid the WHO (World Health Organization) validates the authorization for his company to produce the long-awaited vaccine ... His vaccine will be distributed in several countries including Germany, which counts thousands of dead from the pandemic.

Ironically, this vaccine which will save the lives of millions of people around the world including many Germans was led and pushed by a little Jew from Thessaloniki, son of Holocaust survivors from whom most of his people were exterminated by Nazi Germany.

And that is why Israel became the first country to receive the vaccine.    In memory of his grandparents and his parents who gave birth to Israel-Abraham Bourla, known today as Albert Bourla: CEO of Pfizer!