Tudo se ilumina para aquele que busca la luz. BEM-ROSH

HALAPID

...alumina-vos e aponta-vos o cominho BEN-ROSH

Volume V Fall 1997 Issue 3

A MESSAGE FROM OUR

This is my first message as your new President, and I would like to let you know that I have enjoyed knowing all of you these past several years. It is my hope that you all will continue to support our organization for many more years to come.

I want to thank outgoing President, Michael Atlas-Acuna for his work the past two years, and his invaluable assistance with our Denver conference. Also, my thanks to one of our founders, and President Emeritus, Rabbi Joshua Stampfer for his help and guidance.

Dr. Stanley Hordes, another founder of the Society, remains as vice-president, and I thank him for his help and expertise. It is hard to believe that ten years have passed since my sister, and I met Dr. Hordes at the State Archives Center in Santa Fe, during our first visit to New Mexico.

Our special thanks go to Dr. David, and Mrs. Louise Kazzaz for helping us organize the recent conference in Denver. I would like to announce at this time, the names of the Local Chairs for next year's conference in El Paso, our new members, Karen Flores, and Sylvia Medina.

Thanks to our Editor, Arthur Benveniste, to whom we are all truly indebted. One of the many things he plans is to set up a web site for our newsletter, Ha Lapid. Not forgetting, Editor Emeritus, Bob Hattem, I would like to thank him for his help in keeping our mailing and membership lists up to date.

Some of the things we will be working on are a new membership and renewal brochure for next year. In another issue of Ha Lapid, we will publish the list of organizations that currently exchange newsletters with the Society. If you would like us to include upcoming events in your area, please send your information in to us, as early as you can for publication. One of the most important things we will be looking for is the best and most accurate information that we can bring our members.

I look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming two years, and if you have any comments or suggestions please send them to me, or anyone on the Board.

Gloria Trujillo



Gloria Trujillo, our newly elected president, talks with Vice-President Stan Hordes at our Denver Conference

Highlights of the 1997 Denver Conference

by Gloria Trujillo

This year's conference was held at the lovely Cherry Creek Inn, in Denver, Colorado. The weather was very enjoyable, and our conference room faced the pool area. On Sunday, afternoon, we held a small reception during registration, and everyone got the opportunity to chat with old and new friends.

The Denver Jewish Community Center opened their art exhibit of six well known southwest artists, especially for our group on Sunday evening. Three of the artists, Diana Bryer, Cary Herz, and Sylvia Martinez Johnson, were also attending the conference. After, viewing the art exhibit, we had an excellent kosher dinner prepared by the JCC.

President, Michael Atlas-Acuna, and VP, Dr. Stanley Hordes, each briefly welcomed everyone to the conference. Yaffa da Costa spoke about her U.S. Portuguese Jewish commemorations projects for this year, and next. The Clerk for the City and County of Denver, Rosemary Rodrigues then spoke about her reflections on her family, and life in the Southwest. Rounding out the evening, was the wonderful musical presentation by Cantor Galit Pinksy-Gotlieb, whose songs took us full circle through the Jewish year.

Monday morning at the Cherry Creek, I formally opened the conference with a few brief remarks, and introduced the members of the panel, "Under the Spotlight," The participants of the panel were Nan Rubin, Laura Nadworny, Dr. Isabelle M.

INKIZISION I KRIPTO-DJUDAIZMO EN CANARIAS SIGLOS XVII-XVIII THE INQUISITION AND CRYPTO JUDAISM IN THE CANARIES

by Jose' M. Brito

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The reestablishment of Crypto Judaism in the Canary Islands dates from the first quarter of the Seventeenth Century. The peace achieved in 1604 between Spain and England greatly increased the trade of sugar and wine from the archipelago - a commerce in which, among others, the "New Christians" of Lisbon, Bayonne, Bordeaux, and also the Jews of Amsterdam, were greatly interested. After investing in this area, various merchants occasionally traveled to the islands and some of them took up residence in Tenerife and La Palma. This colony soon increased due to a new wave of antisemitism in Portugal (between 1612 and 1630 the Inquisition in Lisbon, Coimbra and Evora held no less than 47 large autos-de-fe.)

The new community of Crypto-Jews on the islands was very different than the one which had preceded it, dating from the end of the fifteenth century. Even though all were known as "New Christians," the members of the first community were Jews of a humble social status, the majority of which had never formally renounced their Jewish faith. The newcomers, on the other hand, were essentially rich Portuguese Crypto-Jews of a high social class, and although most of them were baptized, they remained firm in their devotion to the Jewish religion.

Owing to the vigilance and persecutions of the Inquisition, this second group had preserved their Judaism in secret, and furthermore, they had "conquered" the Portuguese and Spanish, taking as wives or husbands "Old Christians."

Apart from these marriages, there were also many Old Christians - free thinkers and individuals who sought newer and more open horizons - who converted to Judaism.

It was in 1625 that the Inquisition in the Canaries, which had been practically inactive for close to 30 years, began to mobilize itself against the immigrants. In this same year, an edict of faith was promulgated against Judaism. Following this a good number of denunciations uncovered the existence of a colony of rich merchant Jews on the islands. In 1626 it was affirmed that the city of La Laguna on Tenerife was full of Jews and "heretics" (the majority of which were English and Dutch Protestants.)

The denunciations and the testimonies recorded in the archives of the Inquisition give us wide and varied information about the new Crypto-jews and their way of life. From among them, two are particularly notable: Antonio Fonseca and Fernan Pinto.

The first was an (orjinario) from Oporto and a member of a family named Pina which had suffered from the Inquisition. In Coimbra he, as well as other members of his family, were arrested and judged by the Holy Office. One of his relatives was "relajado" (burned), while he, his wife, and his father were condemned to wear the "Sanbenito." The fact that he was not imprisoned allowed him to flee to Tenerife with two brothers, and his wife who joined them later. Having relatives in various parts of Europe and America, he established commercial relations with them, sending them sugar and wine and receiving from them things from the places where they lived. There were no concrete

denunciations of him for any Jewish practices, and it appears he died in peace in the Canaries.

The case of Fernan Pinto is more colorful and historically more interesting. Like Fonseca he came from a Portuguese family which had suffered greatly from the Inquisition. He also was involved in commerce, but unlike Fonseca he did not hide his Jewish religious identity and there are many testimonies that speak especially about his missionary ardor.

He was one of the first to arrive in Tenerife and to live in La Laguna. One of his sons, named Manuel, died in 1631 and was buried as a Catholic in the cemetery of the city where the family lived. In April 1632, seeking a more liberal environment, Fernan Pinto and his wife went to live in Flanders (Belgium of today), where a little while later they produced another son, Juan.

It is curious to note that despite knowing of his plans to flee, based on the testimony of at least five informants, the Inquisition made no attempt to arrest him. The reason is because the Institution was in frank decadence, not so much because fanaticism was decreasing within its tribunals, but because its ideology was accepted less and less, as a consequence of political compromises between religious and civil authorities.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century relations between the Inquisition and the authorities, as wicked (corrupt?) as they were religious - and none of which were good - arrived at a genuine state of crisis. Conflicts of jurisdiction along with orders of excommunication and arrests were "coins of the realm" among the Inquisitors, the archbishop and the civil governing bodies of the day.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of the islands, who already knew and greatly appreciated the important role which the Jews had played in reestablishing a very profitable commerce with England and Holland were not quick to tolerate any sort of strong measures against them.

The peace treaty signed with England in 1604 and the accord reached with Holland in 1609 greatly reduced the finances of the Inquisition, which could no longer rely on income from goods and ships confiscated from those "heretical" nations. But the fact that the Inquisitors were not able to bring charges with the same frequency as before is not to say that they had in any way decreased the fervor of perrsecution which had existed previously. They continued to use informants as a means of gathering evidence, and would then arrest the suspects. But their work was now more difficult and encountered more opposition. The "heretics" who by now lived on the islands were not only from Spain and Portugal but also from Crypto-Jewish communities in England and France as well as from the openly Jewish communities of Holland, originally established by New Christians from the Iberian peninsula.

In order to prove the "history of delinquency" of these persons one had to produce more than just local witnesses. It was also necessary to seek evidence from among sailors and merchants who had had business dealings

THE INQUISITION AND CRYPTO JUDAISM IN THE CANARIES

with the countries of Northern Europe.

As a consequence, the number of those who could be tried and condemned by the tribunals of the Inquisition was greatly reduced. After the last of these proceedings, against Gaspar de Perera, in the second half of the seventeenth century, it was already very difficult for the Inquisition to find Jews on the islands. With increasing liberty in Northern Europe, the number of marranos in Spain and Portugal had greatly decreased. The commercially active centers of Amsterdam and London discovered new commercial routes, more interesting and profitable than the possibilities offered by the Canaries. The local Inquisition had to content itself with cases of witchcraft and religious immorality at the same time it was looking to stop the flow of books into the islands. Long before it was officially suspended, the Tribunal was already subject to public ridicule and disdain.

The news of the abolition of the Inquisition, in 1813, was received on the island with great joy, as much by the people as by the official authorities. The sanbenitos of those condemned by the Inquisition, conserved in the storage cellars of the Cathedral of Las Palmas, were burned.

But despite all this, the Inquisition was not dead. A few months later, when Fernando VII assumed the throne and with him a new absolutism, the Inquisition was renewed in all of its functions and began again to persecute without discrimination all those who had shown joy at its abolition.

Nevertheless, its authority continued to be ridiculed and the public continued to be openly hostile. Its edicts were torn down and the high officials of the islands displayed no interest in, nor attended, the meetings of the Inquisition.

In 1820, with a second liberal period, the Tribunal of Canaries, along with the entire Spanish Inquisition, definitely died. From that point on the islands began to reestablish something of the good situation which they had enjoyed centuries before and for which they had been given the name of "The Fortunate Ones."

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Sandoval, and myself. Each chose a topic that dealt with her personal involvement with the crypto-Jews, and how it affected her life in ways never imagined.

Dr. David Gitlitz, author of "Secrecy and Deceit," brought up some very interesting points about crypto-Jewish practices in Spain during the Inquisition, and later in Mexico, and the Southwest. He presented five traditional ways of looking at what it means to be a Jew or crypto-Jew, and four basic tests for demonstrating that someone is a remnant or crypto-Jew.

Trudi Alexy, had planned to update the story of Mathew, whom she had interviewed for her book, "The Mezuzah in the Madona's Foot." But, instead told a very moving story about her childhood, and growing up, and why she began writing about her life, and how it evolved into the book.

Arthur Benveniste read a work by Charles Meyers on some interesting Elizabethan Jewish families. Next, Dr. Abe Lavender read his poem entitled, "The Exile," which has been included in this issue (*see p.11*). Later, that everning Dr. Seth Ward, of the Hispano Crypto-Jewish Resource Center spoke about his organization and the many excellent resources that are available to researchers in Denver.

John Paul Abranches, the youngest son of the Portuguese diplomat, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, spoke about his father's valiant efforts in issuing visa's in 1940 to Jews seeking refuge in Portugal or Spain, from the Nazi armies. John Paul's family is descended from minor Portuguese nobility, the Viscount of Mideos. There is strong evidence that the de Sousa Mendes family was of Jewish origin, and like many Portuguese Jews they were forces to convert during the Portuguese Inquisition of 1496, soon after they were forced to flee from Spain.

On Tuesday morning, Gerald Gonzales gave his thoughts on his family, and countered some of the points that Dr. Gitlitz had presented the previous morning. Dr. Isabelle Sandoval read some of her new poems, which are based on her Sephardic, and southwest background. We have also included one of her poems in this issue. Dr. Janet Jacobs of the University of Colorado at Denver, spoke on crypto-Jewish women and the inquisition, and we will note that this is the first presentation that deals solely with crypto-Jewish women.

Rabbi Seth Kunin, of Nottingham, England updated the research that he has been working on in New Mexico this past year. Near the end of the conference, we viewed, "Sacred Family Secret/Crypto-Jews in Modern New Mexico." a short documentary brought by Diana Bryer This documentary was written and produced by a high school senior, Patrick Jaramillo. John Paul Abranches also brought along a documentary about his father, "The Banished Counsul- Aristides de Sousa Mendes," which was shown after Patrick's.

Lastly, the annual business meeting was held, and new officers were elected, and El Paso was chosen as the site of next year's conference.

SPANISH-JEWISH "ROOTS:"

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY DALLAS-FORT WORTH RESIDENTS ARE RECLAIMING THE HERITAGE THEIR ANCESTORS WERE FORCED TO CONCEAL TO SURVIVE by Laurel Ornish

When Dallasite David Sifuentes Jimenez, 40, signed up to take a class at the Jewish Community Center about the medieval Spanish-based language, Ladino, he thought he was merely adding to his storehouse of knowledge of linguistics, his hobby. He had no idea the class would lead him on a voyage of self-discovery.

Jimenez grew up in a middle-class family in Harlingen. His father's family was from San Luis Potosi, northern Mexico, and his parents' marriage had been arranged. He was sent to parochial Roman Catholic schools and was raised Roman Catholic. In college, he got a double masters in finance and accounting and today works as a manager in business services at Parkland Hospital. Through an incredible series of coincidences, which some might see as no less than the hand of God at work, Jimenez learned a year ago that his family heritage is not what he believed it to be, that it had been kept a secret from him. Not only that, he also found out that hundreds of others in the U.S. and northern Mexico have the same secret: that their family was actually descended from the Jews of fifteenth-century Spain, and that their lineage has been preserved for over 500 years, to present times.

Every schoolchild knows that Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain sent Christopher Columbus on his historymaking voyage in 1492 to the New World. What is not in most textbooks, however, is that a few months earlier, the same Spanish monarchs—fresh from driving the Islamic Moors out of Spain-- issued a notorious "Edict of Expulsion," which required all of the estimated two-million Jewish citizens to either convert to Catholicism, under penalty of death, or leave Spain within 30 days with only the possessions they could carry on their backs. An estimated half went into exile to friendlier countries in Europe, north Africa, or the Ottoman Empire (today's Turkey), whose sultan welcomed the banished creme de la creme of Spanish society-- merchants, physicians, Others stayed behind and either converted or pretended to convert, while continuing to practice Judaism secretly.

These "Marranos" (literally "pigs") or "conversos" or "crypto-Jews" came under intense scrutiny by the Inquisition. Many later fled to "Nueva España," the Spanish territories in the New World, sometimes accompanying to northern and central Mexico the conquistadors, some of whom were Crypto-Jews themselves. One of the greatest, Luis Carvajál, admiral in the Spanish navy, founded Nuevo León, including the cities of Tampico and Monterrey. His land grant extended from Tampico west to the Pacific and north to present-day San Antonio. He was later accused of harboring "Judaizers" and died in an Inquisition prison. Other family members were burned at the stake. When the long arm of the Inquisition established itself in Mexico City, some even fled with Don Juan de Oñate in 1598 and established the first colony in what is today New Mexico.

No matter in which part of the world they ended up, these Spaniards in-exile fiercely clung to their dual Jewish and Spanish heritages, whether openly or in secret. They maintained their Jewish customs and traditions to modern times, and even their Spanish language, which became known as "Ladino."

When David Jimenez took the Ladino course taught by Rachel Amado Bortnick, a native of Turkey, and descendant of Spanish Jews herself, some light bulbs started going off in his head. He knew that the Spanish spoken in his home had not been the Spanish that was taught in school.

In Ladino, or "Jewish-Spanish," he learned, the Spanish word adiós is adio, because the Jews wanted to emphasize the fact there is only one God. "My mom," he says, "uses that word two or three times a day. I looked it up in three pretty hefty Spanish dictionaries, and it never showed up.

"I noticed the way Rachel pronounced other words and phrased certain things also were very much like my mother." The more he learned in the class about Spanish-Jewish customs, other things clicked: Every spring around Easter, his mother makes a special, unleavened bread pudding called capirutada for what she called the "Passover" of Christ, rather than the "passion."

No one in his family has any typically Hispanic, Christian names like "Maria or "Jesús;" they're either Greek names or Hebrew, Old Testament names. "My mother's name is Elia, the female version of Elias, my uncle is Salamon, my cousin on my father's side is Rachel. My parent's grew fig trees and lemon trees; no one else in Harlingen grew them. My sister, a physician who moved to Florida, also was growing fig trees right on the oceanfront. I thought it was a little bizarre, until I found out these are all common practices in Sephardic culture."

The clincher came when he brought in a photo of his sister's wedding, a Catholic wedding in which she had insisted on getting married with the couple draped in a large prayer shawl, explaining that it was a Spanish custom. When he found out that it was actually a Spanish-Jewish custom, he confronted his sister about it, and she revealed that she had been practicing Judaism secretly for many years.

The oldest daughter, she had been the only one of the nine children who had been told of the family's true heritage, a common practice for 500 years.

"It turns out that usually the mother would pass the information to only one or two offspring," Jimenez learned. "Parents not only were afraid they would be turned over to the Inquisition, but that children might accidentally be indiscreet and give information to neighbors or strangers, who would then turn them in. It's a whole culture of secrecy."

When he asked his mother why all the secrecy, she said very plainly, "I've never told you, and no one ever asked."

How did he feel when he found out? "To be honest with you, I was shocked! I had been sent to Roman Catholic schools, although we were anti-clerical. I felt a great sense growing up that we were part of the Hispanics of south Texas, but we were not like the rest of them. My entire family felt that way: not that we were better than them, but we were apart and different. I've since talked to a lot of people who are descended from Crypto-Jews, and there's always the sense that you are set apart."

As astounding as Jimenez story sounds, it is not unique, even

in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Juan Marcos Gutierrez, 24, an electrical engineer with ADI, International, was born in 1972 after his parents moved to Dallas from Monterrey in 1967, where his paternal grandmother's family had been for several hundred years. His mother's family came from a small town an hour from Monterrey, Garza-Gonzales, where everyone deliberately intermarried within the community. His father as a child would question why the family was different, such as why he and his brothers had been circumcised, a practice that is not widespread in Latin America even today, even as a medical procedure. They had other strange customs, such as covering mirrors when people died and strictly cleaning the house around Easter. He got the answer from his aunt, who on her deathbed took out a Bible and told him he only had to worry about the first half of the Bible, the Old Testament, because they were

Gutierrez's mother as a child overhead her grandmother saying a non traditional prayer after her husband died. She was praying to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They covered mirrors, as well, and were very meticulous about any type of blood with meat or eggs, as prescribed by the Jewish dietary laws. Although his mother grew up in a Protestant family, others in the village where she grew up called them "esos judios."

Gutierrez himself was raised Assembly of God, Evangelical. "But in the midst of that, my father would tell me that we came from Jews. He told me that Jews were God's chosen people, and I was always to pray for Israel. When I turned 13, in our limited understanding, he sat down and told me I was responsible to the instruction that God had given to us. In a sense that was, you could say, my Bar Mitzvah. It had been done with him, as well."

Frank Longoria, 59, of Arlington, found out as an 8-year-old child shortly before his father's death from liver cancer that his family was descended from Spanish Jews on both sides. One ancestor came to Nuevo León around 1620 and married Ana Rodriguez, a Crypto-Jew descended from the original settlers who came over with Carvajál. Later ancestors founded Camargo in south Texas and the first ranches in south Texas. Until 1820, Longoria points out, it was a crime to be other than Catholic, and those who practiced Judaism did so at the risk of their lives, although some did, to a degree.

His father was born in south Texas, but he moved to San Luis Potosí, where Longoria was born in 1937. "We were pseudo-Catholics," Longoria recalls. "We kept up a public appearance, we went to church a couple of times a year, but in our homes we really didn't. Most people who knew they were descendants of Jews kept it way in the background. There were no synagogues, no contact with other Jews to keep the rituals alive. My father kept ties as much as he could, but I don't think he had a dream of returning to Judaism. "In our home, we didn't have any statues of saints or pictures of Jesus or the Virgin, which was very strange, because everybody else had them. Also, even though we didn't observe Shabbat, we ate meat on Friday, which was against the Catholic tradition in those days. When my mother cracked an egg, she would make sure there was no blood. She would go berserk if a maid had cracked an egg directly into the frying pan. She always insisted we wash our hands, more as a ritual. When my father died, they covered the mirrors. My father refused to have a priest when he was dying. He was a freemason, and I found out later that in the lodge he had observed Passover."

With his U.S. citizenship, Longoria came to the U.S. in 1952, was in the army, and later got a job with the U.S. government, for which he worked until his retirement in 1995. A genealogy buff, he has traced his ancestors to Spain to the late 1400's, some to prominent Jewish families. Because of the land grants, there are also records at the University of Texas. When he confirmed his Jewish heritage, it also confirmed that everything his relatives had told him was true.

RESPONSES TO LEARNING THE TRUTH

For Longoria, Jimenez, and Gutierrez, each man's response to dealing with the truth of his Jewish ancestry has been profound and personal-- and each has been different.

Rachel Amado Bortnick, in whose Ladino class David Jimenez discovered his Jewish heritage, has been instrumental in helping many descendants of Crypto-Jews in the Dallas-Fort Worth area wrestle with their new identities. She says the reactions vary. "Some are not ready to declare they are of Jewish background. Some feel a kind of pride for being associated with this history, but they are not ready to become Jews again.

"Many Christians who come from Jewish background are very secretive even today, sometimes without even knowing why, because the fear of being discovered by the Inquisition almost has become part of their culture. It's a very difficult thing. They come from Christian culture, sometimes tinged heavily with anti-Semitism. They don't really know where they belong, so there are a lot of ambivalent feelings. But the fact is, whether or not they become Jewish, just knowing that these people are descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were forced to convert, and we are their cousins, we're from the same stock, this in itself is very exciting and should be open and shared."

Amado Bortnick, who was raised as a Sephardic Jew in Turkey speaking Ladino, came to the U.S. as a college student, married a U.S. citizen, and stayed. She herself faced a huge culture shock coming here to the U.S., where most Jews are "Ashkenazic"

(descended from Jews of Germany, eastern Europe, and Russia), rather than Sephardic (from the Hebrew word for Spain, Sefarad.) Many Jews she encountered here couldn't believe she knew nothing of gefilte fish and bagels, spoke Ladino, and knew no Yiddish. She, on the other hand, was shocked that U.S. Jews knew little of their own Spanish heritage, especially because the Sephardim-- even those who came to the U.S.-- considered themselves the aristocrats among the Jewish people. Today she is also president of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society.

For her, it is exquisitely ironic and touching that 500 years after the Edict of Expulsion tore families apart, their descendants are now coming forward and discovering each other. "I feel very privileged that I'm here to re-establish contact with them, and I find it a very emotional and touching experience. In 1492, families and friends were split. Some chose to stay and convert or practice Judaism in secret, others-- like my family-- left and went east and went through a different kind of hardship: exile from the motherland of Spain. Still others went west and came to this hemisphere, hounded by the Inquisition in Spain and continued to be pursued by it here.'

'Now, 500 years later, we are meeting each other here together, the descendants of these families who were split apart. It's a phenomenal event, sort of like cousins coming full circle and meeting again. "The reaction from the Jewish community has been mixed. So far, there is no formal outreach program. Some who learn of their heritage wish to return to Judaism and have done so, but even they face controversy as to whether or not they need to go through a formal conversion process, Amado Bortnick says. "Some of these people say, 'My family has never mixed with people who were not of this background, even in 500 years, so why should I have to convert? I'm already a Jew.' I think it's a difficult position. They really need

counseling and don't get it. You are not who you thought you were, and after you discovered who you really are, the people from that group don't accept you."

Seven years ago, the former state historian of New Mexico, Stanley Hordes, now a private archivist, started the Society for Crypto-Judac Studies. Hordes had researched the colonists who first settled New Mexico and discovered they probably were Jews fleeing with Carvajál's lieutenant governor after Carvajál was arrested by the Inquisition.

After Hordes published his research and received publicity, people would come into his office, close the door, look around, and say, "My grandfather never ate pork, all the boys in my family were circumcised, and this family across the street from us would always light candles on Friday night." Hordes began putting two and two together and traced their lineage as much as possible, discovering there were still descendants of these early settlers who were practicing Judaism. In many cases, they had passed the information to their descendants; in others, just certain practices and rituals.

Today, the society is mainly academic, but through it, people are finding each other. At the society's fifth annual meeting in Albuquerque last year, presentations were given both by scholars and Crypto-Jews themselves. "We found there are many more than we originally thought," says the society's Arthur Benveniste of Los Angeles, himself a descendant of Spanish Jews. "At first we thought there might be 1,500, but now it's quite a bit more like several thousand. It's difficult to say how many are in Mexico, where the state of Nuevo León was settled by Jews and there were originally tens of thousands. I just got back from Brazil, where there is an organization that so far has received 2,000 inquiries." Benveniste says those who are contacting the organization are, for the most part, returning to Judaism. "Several are the only members of their family doing so. We also have members who want to remain Catholic or Protestant but still be affiliated with us."

A separate organization is being formed made up of Crypto-Jews themselves. Why now, 500 years later, is this phenomenon occurring? For one thing, it is only in this generation that many Crypto-Jewish families have mixed with other people. Until now, those of Crypto-Jewish background, not even knowing why, did not mix or marry with others. "The world is changing, and the old traditions are dying out," Benveniste points out. "These people talk about customs their grandparents did, such as slaughtering animals in the kosher way. Of course, today they go to the supermarket. As the traditions are dying with the old generation, the young want to preserve at least the knowledge of it. It's also part of our culture in the U.S. to come out and acknowledge who you are, what your roots are. And with world-wide communications, with the Internet, it's becoming easier to do so."

Since David Jimenez learned of his Jewish heritage a year and a half ago, he has made contact with people throughout the U.S. and researched the Jimenez family genealogy. Even the name, Jimenez, he learned, is a Sephardic name, literally son of Simon. Jimen, he says, is the old Ladino pronunciation for Simeon. In Ladino, the "j" is pronounced 'Ez' and stands for son He also is proactively learning more about Judaism, including taking Hebrew and reading Jewish theology and learning the liturgy of the festivals and synagogue services. "It doesn't feel uncomfortable. I grew up going to Catholic school and a Catholic university. Our liturgy, and so much of what Catholics do, is based on Judaism. People don't know that. I wouldn't say it's been traumatic for me, but it was difficult reconciling with my 40 years of Christianity. If I convert, it's going to be to orthodox. If you do it, you should do it right. Both Catholicism and orthodox Judaism demand a lot of their laity." Jimenez, who is single, says he gets support from his Jewish

sister, although his younger brothers and sisters-- whom he calls the "MTV generation" -- are secular towards all religion. His mother, he says, is happy he knows, although her own set of beliefs is somewhat fused between Catholicism and Judaism. "Even though we live in America and there's freedom of religion, among Hispanic Catholics, finally coming out and admitting we're of Jewish background for most is very traumatic. Three months ago," he says, "I was at a little 'hole-in-the-wall Central American restaurant' on Garland Road in east Dallas. For some bizarre reason, they had a painting of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, and right next to it they had a Star of David. They were very secretive, and the proprietor didn't want to talk about it. Just by her not wanting to talk about it, you know what's going on. So it's even bigger than I even imagined. It's not strange or unique, as I first thought it was."

Juan Marcos Guitierrez and his family are members of the so-called "Messianic" congregation, Baruch Ha-Shem ("Praise the Lord"). The congregation, which is an anathema to the Jewish community, has the outward appearance of a normal synagogue, but its members are Christians who believe in Jesus, but who outwardly practice Jewish rituals. Most see it is merely a church in Jewish drag, whose primary agenda is to provide a place where Jews can feel outwardly comfortable enough to turn over their Jewish souls to Jesus. It was strongly criticized for proselytizing among newly-arrived Jews from the Soviet Union, many of whom mistakenly took it to be a synagogue.

For Gutierrez-- raised in the Assembly of God Evangelical Protestant church-- Baruch Ha- Shem has been a sort of "halfway house." He also regularly attends services at two orthodox Jewish synagogues, Tiferet Israel, and Young Israel, where services are closer to the Sephardic tradition. Like David Jimenez, he's tried the more reform brands of Judaism, but didn't feel comfortable. "My definition of a Jew," he says, "is more something that is completely related to Torah and the covenantal relationship that God established with Israel, rather than as someone who doesn't believe in Jesus."

He's also traveled to Mexico City to view the Inquisition's *quemadora*, and he plans to discuss the issue more with his uncles, aunts, and cousins. "I think it's something they need to be confronted with. What choices they make after that are obviously theirs. I think they have to face the ghosts of the past. That fear has to be laid to rest. Our ancestors certainly determine quite a bit of who we are, and I think it's something they need to realize."

Gutierrez says he doesn't feel he needs to convert, and wouldn't, on principle. "Because in the U.S. it's mainly an Ashkenazic-dominated community, I have to struggle with the Sephardic issue, then after that I struggle with the converso issue. Yet I know what path I have to take for myself. Meeting other people, I see they face the same problems."

He also has a catalogue from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and hopes some day to embark on some historical studies there. "I've gotten fairly proficient in *midrashim* (Jewish biblical commentaries). It's open to anyone of any affiliation. That's something I'm still debating. We'll see what happens."

For Frank Longoria, discovering his Jewish heritage led to a full return to Judaism in 1981. After his genealogical research had verified for him that he was, in fact, of Jewish ancestry, he started visiting with his distant cousin, Magda Hinojosa, who had converted back to Judaism and married a Jew. "She encouraged me to find out more about Judaism. She was like my mentor and guided me through the process to

various readings and rabbis. There is no outreach program. The Jews in Mexico don't bother, because they're worried it may be held against them, but here in the U.S., I was fortunate."

He read about Carvajál circumcising himself, "and it gave me courage to seek out a physician and undergo the ritual operation. I said, 'Carvajál did it; I should be able to do it.' I know some conversos take the position that they're just as much a Jew as you are, but I don't agree. I felt if I were going to do it, I was going to do it right. I lost all this, and I want to gain it back. I had a Bar Mitzvah, too, last April."

His wife Charlene, who is not Hispanic, also converted and is very active in Arlington's Beth Shalom synagogue. One of Longoria's sons, age 30, and his wife also are in the process of converting. "He read some of my books and went to the synagogue and liked the people there and the rabbi, so he decided to convert, of which I'm glad. My grandchildren are going to Hebrew school and are being brought up Jews. I have two daughters. They may some day come around, but I don't want to force them."

Longoria strongly wishes to say to others that even though they may have lost their heritage, they can find their roots and hopefully can go back. "Once upon a time, we were forcibly converted to something we didn't believe in, and all these hundreds of years we've been in limbo. Some of us have been granted the blessing of returning to Judaism."

MUSIC, OPERA, DANCE COMMEMORATE THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE SPANISH JEWS

In March **The San Diego Opera** presented the world premiere of *The Conquistador* starring noted American tenor, Jerry Hadley. The opera, with music by San Diego resident Myron Fink, tells the story of Don Luis de Carvajal, one of the most prominent 16th-century conquistadors of New Spain and founder of the city of Monterrey.

On December 8, 1996, the 400th anniversary of the martyrdom of Luis Carvajal, II (El Mozo), nephew of the conquistador, was commemorated at SMU. A lecture was given about the fervently religious Crypto-Jew, whose stirring writings and testimonials are ironically preserved to this day because they are part of the records of the Inquisition. A concert of traditional Ladino songs set by prominent Dallas-based composer **Simon Sargon** also was presented.

Also on December 8, this Chicago-based, Mexican-American folk dance/theater group staged *The Enlightened*, also about the life and times of Carvajal, El Mozo. The event included an introduction by Professor **Schulamith Halevy** of the Instituto Cervantes.

SPANISH-JEWISH MUSIC ON CD

San Franciscan **Judy Frankel** has devoted much of her career to the music of the Sephardim, which she has collected from all over the world. She has three, independently-released CD's, including a new one, *Silver & Gold, Plata y Oro*: P.O. Box 470515 San Francisco, CA 94147

Dallas composer Simon Sargon's setting of

Sephardic folk songs, *At Grandfather's Knee*, is included on his CD, *Shema*, on the Gasparo label, available at the Temple Emanu-El gift shop and local record stores.

Dr. Judith Cohen, who recently joined SCJS, is a trained ethnomusicologist with many years' specializing in Judeo-Spanish music, she is also a well known performer in the field. She is a founding member of *Gerineldo*, the internationally acclaimed Moroccan Judeo-Spanish ensemble. Her works include: *Primavera en Salonica*, *Con Viela y Mochila* and several recordings with *Gerineldo*. Her website: www.fusionmill.com/core/judith_cohen. email: judithc@yorku.ca

Other recordings range from those by the group, **Voice of the Turtle**, to compositions set by the esteemed Spanish composer, **Joaquin Rodrigo**, who in the 1930's married a Sephardic woman from Turkey and converted to Judaism.

1998 Conference - El Paso, TX and a Call for Papers

One of the final matters decided in Denver was the selection of the location for our next annual conference. Those in attendance on late Tuesday afternoon voted to hold next year's conference in El Paso, Texas in early to mid August The Historic Camino Real Hotel was suggested as one of the possible sites in El Paso.

Please submit proposals for papers, panels, discussion groups or other types of presentations related to the area of Hidden or Crypto -Jews of the Southwest, and elsewhere.

Include your name, address, telephone number, and a description of your presentation, including the title. Mail or fax the information to Dr. Stanley Hordes at 1375 Santa Rosa Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505, (505)983-6564, before January 31, 1998.

More information regarding the conference will be included in the next newsletter - - Gloria Trujillo

THE KEY TO THE 500-YEAR OLD DOOR

by Judy Frankel

This article, which first appeard in Halapid last yea, r is being reprinted now in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the forced conversion of the Jews of Portugal

It was 7:a.m. on Corpus Christi Day, 1989, when my travel companion and I left Lisbon for Belmonte. 7 1/2 hours later we stepped off the train at the tiny blue and white-tiled station nestled in the hills of northern Portugal, far from the hand of the Inquisition, and hopped into one of two taxis. We asked the driver if he knew of David Canelo (who wrote THE LAST CRYPTO-JEWS OF PORTUGAL). He asked, "O, Judeos?", graciously guiding us to a cafe which had rooms to let upstairs. (The tariff read "750" and we weren't sure where to put the decimal point. It turned out our monastic-like rooms were \$7.50 per day!)

With old iron skeleton keys, we locked our rooms and set out by foot with camera and tape recorder to find Canelo and the Judeos (Crypto-jews). As we approached the center of town, we heard a slow drumbeat as a procession of darkly-clad people crossed from the church to the nearby park for a picnic.

As neither of us spoke Portuguese, we went to a cafe to ask if anyone spoke Spanish. A young man offered to help us, escorting us through the narrow dirt streets to the homes of several Judeos. However they were all at the Corpus Christi picnic. We were taken to the home of David Canelo. a non-Jew who had grown up in the town and knew the Judeos very well. Canelo offered to be our escort and interpreter (translating our French and Spanish into Portuguese).

Under a cloudy, gray El Greco sky, we squeezed into David's small, screaming-red car and threaded our way through the narrow, winding streets to the old stone church at the top of Belmonte (beautiful mountain). En route, David pointed out various houses where Judeos lived. He took us into the Catholic church and the adjacent graveyard filled with crosses and flowers. Across the vista we could see a mysterious stone castle under an eerie, stormy sky. We were completely alone on the hill. In the dusk, the air was heavy and still.

We drove down to an area of houses and parked under a streetlamp, quietly waiting to be noticed. Soon several shadowy figures cautiously approached the car, recognized David, and came close enough to exchange greetings with him and inspect the two strangers inside. After extensive discussion between David and the Judeos outside, it was decided that I was to roll down my window and prove somehow that I was a Jew! That was no easy task, given their suspiciousness, even five centuries after the forced conversions of their ancestors! In the dark, misty night I offered a few verses in Ladino. There was no response. Then I sang the "Hatikvah" in Hebrew. There was a small, timid acknowledgment; a vague recognition by a few who began pointing their fingers at

I decided to sing the "Shema", the core prayer of our culture. THAT WAS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKED THE 500-YEAR OLD DOOR! When they heard the word "Adonai", they knew that we, also, must be "Judeos", Only then did they feel safe enough to invite us, through David, for a visit in one of their homes. A plan was made to

return in two hours to a specific house, and we drove off to treat David and his wife Mimi to dinner.

Later that night, arriving at the appointed address, we found the lights out and the windows tightly shuttered, as if the house had been vacated. No one answered the door. Nothing moved behind the shutters.

Having arrived in Portugal only the day before, we were fatigued and felt disheartened. Our spirits sagged as we drove back to the same street lamp and turned off the motor. Again, we waited in the blackness. Again, mysterious figures emerged from out of nowhere, encircling the car. After more negotiations and assurances we were finally escorted back to the house. This time the door was opened and we were welcomed in with bottles of soda and a tray of candies. (Astonishingly this was David's first visit inside the home of a Judeo, the home of a man he had known since childhood, a man he had interviewed for his book!)

It was modest but tidy inside, decorated with several old Israel travel posters, bits of Judaica and a tin menorah on the bookcase. Our host, in his 50's, said that he thought of himself as "a good Jew" and that he intended for his son to make his Bar Mitzvah next year. Our host's mother and son appeared to live with him, and all three seemed excited about the upcoming celebration.

I was asked to sing, which I did in Ladino and in Hebrew. After awhile, our host agreed to let me tape record his singing of the prayers he and the other secret Jews sang, hymns they had sung as long as he could remember. They were in Portuguese. (Had they been in Hebrew, the Jews most surely would have been caught centuries ago.) One was about the Exodus from Egypt, and another, with the "Hatikvah" melody, was about hope and "the place where David wanted to dwell". He sang them softly but with conviction.

Disappearing into one of the back rooms for a few minutes, our host reappeared reverently carrying two statues. With pride he told us that they were "St. Esther" and 'St. Moshe".

Although we were asked not to take any photographs, the evening concluded very cordially, and we were invited to meet the host's sister-in-law and family the next day at her home.

Our meeting took place in the rear of the house, in the family's beautiful dark, wood-paneled dining-room where we were seated around a large wooden table. There was a Magen David on the wall. After introductions and brief pleasantries, our hostess agreed to let me record her singing some of the Crypto-Judaic prayers. Just as we were about to begin, a group of male family members burst into the room and a heated discussion ensued. The debate centered on my tape recording the songs. In the end, the men left and the sister-in-law, in a velvety alto, sang several of the prayers we had heard the previous night. Again, we were asked not to photograph anyone or anything that we had seen.

Many of the Crypto-jews of northern Portugal manufacture men's trousers, later selling the goods at the marketplace. We were taken to one of these "pants factories" where a number of Judeos shyly greeted us. The family

THE KEY TO THE 500-YEAR OLD DOOR

cont.

resemblances were striking because they tend to marry only within their own group.

In general, the Judeos seem reserved; timid and somewhat distrustful of strangers. Belmonte is isolated and until recently, the Judeos had little contact with the Lisbon Jews

During these 500 years, the forced converts (anusim in Hebrew) would go to the church on the hill, on the 'bel monte', for family baptisms, weddings and funerals. I was told that as a Judeo entered the Catholic church, he would whisper to himself: "I come here neither to worship wood nor stone; only to worship You, Highest Lord, who governs us."

A LETTER FROM ARYE HAZARI: RESPONSA OF RABBIS SOLOVEICHIK AND ELIYAHU

David Gitlitz has suggested that the two enclosed rabbinic responsa concerning anousim returning to normative Judaism might be helpful if published in newsletters like Halapid. I got them originally from Schulamith (Halevy) and she has emailed me that it is okay to publish them. ... By the way, it is to her that Rabbi Eliyahu refers to "your question" in the first paragraph and "your activities" at the beginning of the second.

Note that while Rabbi Soloveichik's responsum contains the ultimate requirement of conversion in the case of a marriage to a Jew, Rabbi Eliyahu makes no such prerequisite. Schulamith told me that when she informed Soloveichik of Eliyahu's responsum, the former expressed an intention to revise his responsum along the lines of Eliyahu's.

Arye Hazari

RESPONSUM OF RABBI SOLOVEICHIK

1 Nisan 5754

To whom it may concern:

I am taking the liberty to write about the people in the Americas who claim to be descendants of the marranos of Spain and Portugal.

They must be treated like full Jews in every way. (counted for a *minyan*, *given aliyot*, etc.).

Only when one of these *anusim* wishes to marry a Jew, must he or she undergo full conversion. That is, he or she must undergo immersion in a mikve (without the blessing) and full acceptance of mitzvot or commitment to the Torah. A man, if he is uncircumcised, must in addition undergo circumcision; if he is already circumcised, then he

has to undergo hatafat dam brit.

Hoping that this will clarify the solution to this problem, I remain-Respectfully yours.

Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik

RESPONSUM OF RABBI ELIYAHU translated from Hebrew by Arye Hazari

As to your question regarding the matter of the "anusim" (forced ones: Spanish and Portuguese Jews compelled to convert to Catholicism in the 15th century. subsequently persecuted by the Inquisition, and their descendants today among the Hispanic population) and how to return them to Judaism.

First of all. I want to praise your activities on behalf of returning the hearts of the sons to their fathers. To the ways of the Torah and reverence. However, since much time has passed from the period of the anusim until today and there us a possibility of intermarriage with non-Jews, and It is difficult as well to check their genealogy, and one has to fulfill in them all that is said in Shulhan Aruch and Yoreh Dey'ah* etc. "To treat him kindly and with affection." that is to praise them who come today to fulfill all the commandments of the Torah in the open. After the covenant that you arrange for him, bless him by saying "God and the God of our Fathers, grant success to [name of anus(a)) whose name in Israel will be (Hebrew name] and extend to him your lovingkindness and as you inclined his heart to return in full repentance before you so plant in his heart love and reverence for you and open his heart to Your Law and lead him on the path of Your commandments in order that he may find favor in your eyes: may it be Your will: Amen and Amen."

After all the processes of Torah learning, receiving the Torah and yoke of Torah and mitzvot, circumcision (it he has not been circumcised and If he has been circumcised there must be a symbolic circumcision) and immersion In a ritual bath according to the Law, give him (her) a certificate titled "Certification of One Returned To The Ways of His Fathers."

And may it be the wish of the Holy One, Blessed be He, that He will impress Upon us and them love and reverence to do His will and to worship Him with a complete heart. Amen may it be His will.

Mordechai Eliyahu former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

*Rabbinic works on Jewish Law

JOHN PAUL ABRANCHES HIGHLIGHTS DENVER CONFERENCE

TO COMMEMORATE THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORCED CONVERSION OF THE JEWS OF PORTUGAL THE SCJS INVITED THE SON OF ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES TO SPEAK

THE SIMON WEISENTHAL CENTER HAS HONORED DE SOUSA MENDES AS A RIGHTEOUS DIPLOMAT FOR HIS RESCUE OF

Recently the Simon Weisenthal Center in Los Angeles hosted a reception and an exhibit dedicated to Righteous Diplomats. One of those honored was the late Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes do Amaral e Abranches. Dr. Souas Mendes was represented at the event by his son John Paul Abranches who now resided in Mesa, Arizona. Mr. Abranches was also the featured speaker at the SCJS Denver conference this past summer. He was invited to speak in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the forced conversion of the Jews of Portugal. His topic: the incredible story of how his father saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust.

When France was defeated by the Nazis in World War II, Dr. Sousa Mendes was the Portuguese Consul-General in Bordeaux. Thousands of refugees, fleeing the barbarian invasions from the east, streamed into Bordeaux, then under Vichy control. Many came

into the offices of the Consul-General seeking visas to Portugal, a neutral country. The dictator of Portugal, Dr. Antonio Salazar, had issued orders to the foreign office that no refugees were to be allowed into the country and <u>under no</u> circumstances were visas to be issued to Jews.

Dr. Sousa Mendes was distressed at these orders, he was greatly concerned for the safety of the masses of people who were begging for transit visas through Portugal as a last effort to escape the Nazis. One of those seeking safety through Portugal was Rabbi Chaim Kruger, himself escaping the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe. Dr. Sousa Mendes met many times with Rabbi Kruger and learned from him of the horrors of the Holocaust. After much anquish and consulting with his wife and family, he decided to disobey his government's



Rabbi Chaim Kruger and Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes c. 1944

orders and to go ahead and grant the visas. Working day and night, Dr. Sousa Mendes, his family and his staff issued thousands of visas. They did not rest until every request for a visa was granted. When news of this reached Lisbon, Dr. Sousa Mendes was ordered to return to Portugal. But even this did not stop him. On his way back he passed through Bayonne where he found thousands of refugees gathered at the Portuguese Consulate. Again he disobeyed his orders and issued life saving visas.

On reaching the Spanish border he found that the Spanish immigration officers had been ordered not to honor Portuguese visas issued at Bordeaux and Bayonne. With his diplomatic experience, Dr. Souse Mendes was able to persuade some border guards to accept the visas.

Because of his efforts an estimated 30,000 people were saved, 10,000 of them Jews. But, his disobedience resulted in his being dismissed from the Portuguese Foreign Service. He was denied his pension and was never able to find work again. The family lost its property, reputation and honor. His children were forced to emigrate to other countries to find work.

For the next forty years, his family sought to clear his name. Finally, in 1986, the story was featured in an American newspaper and, following that, the International Committee to Commemorate Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes was created. Eventually he was recognized by Yad Vashem (The Holocaust Museum and Documentation Center in Jerusalem). A tree was planted along the Avenue of the Righteous and a medal was awarded posthumously in his honor.

SAYING KADDISH FOR A FRIEND

by Isabelle Medina Sandoval

Memories of wandering philodendron decorating the red earthen camposanto

HALAPID - THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO JUDAIC STUDIES

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THE EXILE by Abe Lavender

Your sunny shores, Your rugged peaks, Your vineyards, fields, and forests, Your flowery gardens in bloom, With red, yellow, lavender, pink, and blue,

> Your meandering fivers, Your flowing streams, Your roads that lead everywhere, Your humble hamlets, Your teeming towns, Your courtly cities ablaze,

Your toiling farmers, Your masterful merchants, Your artful artisans and would-be scholars. Your poor, pious, pampered, and princely, Men and women of all nuances and shades,

Your lives so colorful, Vivaciously vibrant, But oppressive, Struggling to be free, To break the shackles of an ancient age,

Blood of my fathers, Tears of my mothers, Roots of my branches, All intertwined in your soil so deep, My mother earth, My father land,

How my heart weeps for you, From whom I was so cruelly exiled. In leaking boats, Over frightful borders, Hurried journeys in the darkened nights, Leaving behind so much of me, Embittered, impoverished, but free,

> Angered by the fearful tyrant, The betraying countrymen, The yoke of intolerance,

Saddened by the theft of freedom, The rupture of dreams, The hopeful hope of a speedy return,

A new beginning, In a strange new land, Different, engulfing, demanding, But flexible, sensitive, and free, This land that welcomed me,

> Exhausted, lonely, afraid, Sadder, but wiser, Stronger and prouder,

Reaffirmed in honor, From a life torn asunder, This exile that became me, Days turn into years, And years into decades, And generations multiply and divide,

> A new language, A new name, A new home, New loves to love,

In this no longer strange new land,

But, your sunny shores, Your rugged peaks, Your vineyards, fields, and forests, Your flowery gardens in bloom, With red, yellow, lavender, pink, and blue,

> My colorfully vibrant memories, That my mind cannot repress, -My meandering images ablaze, That go with me everywhere,

My mother earth, My father land, How my soul dreams of you, I am a part of you, And you are a part of me,

> The dreams, The hope, The faith, That neither tyranny, Nor time, Can ever erase.

dance to the Aramaic verbal rhythm of mental notes of my absent friend

Why did you leave without saying goodbye Like a comet blazing against the robin egg dusk you disappeared into time dusting wisps of your pathway enveloping the night

I wish you well and pray somehow and somewhere that you will know I do think of you when I say Kaddish for you my friend

SCENES FROM OUR RECENT DENVER CONFERENCE





Trudi Alexy1

Gerald Gonzales1







David Gitlitz²

Seth Kunin²







John Paul Abranches²



Outgoing President, Michael Atlas-Acuña1





Al Herandez²

Janet Jacobs²

WEBSITES

Shulamith Halevy: http://www.cs.huji.ac.il/~schalevy/ Ivri-Nasawi: http://www.ivri-nasawi.org/ The Sephardic Educational Center: http://www.sephardic.org/ Jewish Roots Ring: http://pw1.netcom.com/~barrison/jewgenwebring



Dr. Isabelle M. Sandoval. Gloria Trujillo and Nan Rubin 1

photo by Cary Hertz, ² photo by Art Benveniste