

HALAPID



THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES

*Tudo se ilumina
para aquella que
busca a luz.* | *All is illuminated
for those who
seek the light.*

- Avram Ben Rosh -



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Energizing SCJS in 2014 and beyond

Nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.

HaLAPID is the biannual publication of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs.

You can find us on the web at cryptojews.com.

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Dear Colleagues and Friends —

Spring has arrived in the United States and with it new opportunities for the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.

As you know, our non-profit organization is dedicated to fostering a network of crypto-Jews, scholars, and other interested parties, who are fascinated by the 500 year history of Sephardic Jews who sought safety through secrecy and migration out of the Iberian Peninsula. Our challenge remains twofold. We must navigate a route that acknowledges, respects, and supports contemporary crypto-Jews' self-discovery and reclamation of their culture and religion. Likewise, we must be attentive to fostering scholarly research and a community dialogue that are tied to credible historical and documentable personal accounts. These parallel pathways are the essence of our commitment to the Society and its membership.

Presently, we are expanding our outreach efforts in New Mexico, Colorado and the greater Hispanic Atlantic world so that we might grow our membership, as well as encourage a broader dialogue within the crypto-Jewish community. To this end, we are excited to be hosting our 24th annual conference, July 20–22 in Dallas, Texas. We are also actively investigating opportunities for convening future conferences abroad – specifically Portugal and Spain.

Energizing our outreach and membership remains a challenge, and for this reason you are receiving a substantially revised format of *HaLapid*. Our new approach, championed by Corinne Joy Brown (Editor and Vice President for Communications), aggressively responds to the changing nature of media and readers' interests. This dynamic magazine bridges our commitment to presenting stimulating, accessible scholarly reports alongside engaging articles pertaining to culture, art and music. We hope that you enjoy it.

In closing, I personally extend my gratitude and thanks to you for your continued support and patronage of our Society.

Respectfully,

Roger L. Martínez-Dávila, Ph.D.
President, Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies



Roger L. Martínez-Dávila, Ph.D.
President, SCJS

FROM YOUR SCJS PRESIDENT



A bold, new direction...

FROM THE EDITOR

It's hard to believe six months have passed since the last edition of *HaLapid* was published under my editorship. Learning the ropes of this job and the spelling of everyone's names has its challenges. (Thank you for your patience.) This current spring/summer issue presented them all over again as we launched our first edition in magazine format, combining the best efforts of many, especially the newest member of our *HaLapid* team, Colorado graphic designer, Jacqueline Hirsch.

We are all committed to bringing you our Society's news in an easy-to-read format. We've even added advertising to help support our

costs. We hope you find it intriguing and entertaining.

Since taking the position of editor, I have been privileged to meet many more of our members than I ever hoped, thanks in part to the many submissions and referrals for articles. It's truly been rewarding. I'm enjoying this job more than I ever imagined. It's the perfect way to enlarge my scope and understanding of the SCJS and who we are; that is, diverse members of the crypto-Jewish community, academics, research buffs, Sephardic Jews, all of us. In that regard, I welcome your future submissions; please, don't be shy.

Personally, I sense a new direction for this publication, including an enlarging of the readership and greater refinement of our design skills and editorial, while still



Corinne Brown.
Editor



fulfilling the publication's original mission—helping to build community. All of you are invited to share in the creative process. Send me your photos and ideas, your family histories and discoveries. Although we are a small publication, we strive for quality. One good sign of our outreach is the fact that as the spring/summer issue went to press, the fall issue was already half full. Imagine that!

Lest I forget, a warm and sincere thank you to all of you who contributed to this issue; who wrote from the heart, took time for interviews, composed, edited, and edited again. We appreciate your thoughts and effort so much. Sharing our knowledge, insight and stories is what makes us a community. The more we know about each other, the more we care. The more the future is perceived with new eyes, the more the past is rewritten with accurate histories. The SCJS is making a difference, helping to build awareness, curiosity and even courage. I am more than proud to be in this unique position. Thank you for the responsibility and privilege.

I look forward to hearing from you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Corinne J. Brown".

Corinne Joy Brown
Editor/Publisher

Image above: ALEYNU • Photo-collage-based print by Risa Towbin Aqua • 2011 • Denver, CO. "Aleynu" means "It is up to us," and comes toward the end of the cycle of prayers. Its message is strong and explicit: we cannot merely pray to make the world a better place. It will only happen if we make it happen. (See page 43 for a full-page ALEYNU image.)

Editorial Policy of *HaLapid*

Contributions from writers all over the world are edited for grammar, spelling and typographical errors. Content embedded in family memories may or may not be historically accurate; we reserve the right to edit material and correct obvious misstatements or historical errors. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the SCJS or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may not be reprinted without permission.



FORGING A NEW PATH

*Frances Levine –
Museum Director,
scholar and
intellectual leader
heads for new
horizons*

Dr. Frances Levine, Director of the New Mexico History Museum for the last twelve years, has made a major contribution to Santa Fe, New Mexico and the Southwest during her tenure at the helm of the Museum. Her intellectual leadership and vision of the museum as an active member of the community it serves has created a dynamic ongoing institution. Her recent move to be the President and CEO of the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis means that she will be moving just beyond the other end of the Santa Fe Trail, and we can only imagine how her experience in Santa Fe will contribute to her vision and planning for events in that new venue.

Fran Levine is a multi-dimensional person, and defining her requires an extensive list of terms from anthropologist/archaeologist and museum director to community-oriented leader, creative thinker, and more. As Director of the NMHM, she led the way to a new building that is a significant addition to downtown



Former New Mexico History Museum Director Frances Levine in front of a replica of a covered wagon reflecting life on the Santa Fe Trail. (Photo by Hannah Adelbeck)

BY RON DUNCAN HART • EDITOR/PUBLISHER OF GAON BOOKS • CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

Santa Fe, and the attendance of exhibitions under her leadership has expanded dramatically. In the five years since the opening the NMHM building, the Museum has had 500,000 visitors.

While in New Mexico, Levine has been an important figure in supporting the understanding of Jewish and crypto-Jewish life in the state and region. With the collaboration of supporters, such as Seymour Merrin and Helene Singer Merrin, the NMHM under Levine supported “Sephardic Voices” in 2008, which was an event featuring writers, actors and musicians interpreting the crypto-Jewish experience through literature and song. Isabelle Medina Sandoval and Mario Martinez, each with crypto-Jewish family backgrounds, read from their works interpreting that life. Carol Lopez

dramatically interpreted a text about crypto-Jewish life. Consuelo Luz and her band opened the program with Ladino songs, and Vanessa Paloma closed the program with Judeo-Spanish songs about love and loss. This program filled the Lensic Theater and was a major event for the Museum involvement in representing the Sephardic roots that were the background of crypto-Jewish life. >>

MUSEUM NEWS



New Mexico History Museum, opened in May 2009, welcomes visitors from all over the world to Santa Fe.



Dr. Levine has continued that leadership in recognizing the unique crypto-Jewish phenomenon in New Mexico with the planning of a major exhibition for 2015, entitled “Sephardic Legacy.” Dr. Roger Martinez is the guest curator for that exhibition, working with Josef Diaz, Curator of the NMHM. Pieces have been identified from major collections in Spain, Mexico and the United States that reflect the lives of people who remembered their family background as Jews, and many of whom still identified as Jews. Leading authors have prepared articles explaining the various stages of the *anusim-converso* experience from Jane Gerber and Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano writing about Spain leading up to the expulsion; Alicia Gojman de Backal writing about the Diaspora in the Americas with special attention to Mexico; and Stan Hordes, Fran Levine, and Seth Kunin writing about New Mexico. Dr. Levine’s leadership in creating the recognition of the importance of the crypto-Jewish-*anusim-converso* experience has been an important

contribution to New Mexico and to the area of crypto-Jewish studies.

Levine was born in Connecticut but has lived much of her life in New Mexico and the Southwest of the United States. She said, “With my experience of living in this multi-cultural region, I became more comfortable with my Jewish identity. I learned so much about the suppression of identity from studying other cultures, and this made me examine the issues of prejudice toward Jewish people that I had faced growing up in New England. From studying other cultures, and from raising my children, who asked questions about where they belonged in the ‘tri-cultural’ myth of the Southwest, I became sure of who I was and how I could express my own Jewish identity.” She also mentioned that Mexico has been an important part of her life. “My mother’s cousin, truly her *prima hermana*, was a social activist and went to Mexico in the 1930s and married there. She and her husband were involved in supporting the social renovation of Mexico that

was occurring after the Mexican Revolution, and they were politically and socially active. Their commitment to social justice issues extended not only to Mexico but also internationally. She and her husband had a major role in rescuing several boatloads of Spaniards who had supported the republican side in the Spanish Civil War and had to leave the country after Franco’s victory.” Levine said, “My involvement with the Mexican side of my family has led me to have close personal and professional ties in Mexico.” Having a Spanish-speaking part of her family has been an integral part of her reality of living in the Southwest and has contributed to her insight and understanding of the Mexican cultural background that ebbs and flows between Mexico and New Mexico.

Dr. Levine mentioned that her family wanted her to go into health care, but “I wanted to be an archaeologist.” Her father told her, “You should go to a university in a western state where the archaeology programs are strong.” She took his advice and decided to go to the University of Colorado where she did her undergraduate degree, and then she went to Southern Methodist University in Dallas for Master’s and Ph.D. degrees. Later, she did postdoctoral work on museum leadership in the Getty Museum Leadership Institute in Los Angeles. She is a member of the American Alliance of Museums and professional museum associations.

She is most noted for exhibitions such as “Threads of Memory: Spain and the United States,” which drew more than 20,000 visitors, “Illuminating the Word: The Saint John’s Bible” about an illuminated Bible from Wales, and the recent exhibition “Cowboys Real and Imagined,” which has included programming about Jewish cowboys and their families in the history of New Mexico. Dr. Levine has worked with her staff and outside educators to develop classroom curricula for all the



Fran Levine spent many hours with the New Mexico legislature championing the importance of the New Mexico History Museum.



exhibits, and the Museum has public school students on an almost daily basis as they experience exhibitions and do projects related to them. The Brainpower & Brownbags Lecture series and other public lectures have become important complements to the exhibition schedule. Levine also mentioned that, “Santa Fe Community College has also offered a semester-long class in New Mexico history at the museum since 2009, making a unique opportunity for students to experience and utilize the exhibitions.”

As Director of the NMHM, she has also directed the staff of the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library and Photo Archives, The Palace Print Shop and the Native American Portal Artisans Program, each program implementing innovations during her tenure. Before coming to the Museum as Director, she was the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for Arts and Sciences at the Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe where she also taught classes in New Mexico history and the ethno-history of Pueblo and Hispanic communities of the Southwest.

Dr. Levine has authored and edited a number of books in addition to scholarly articles. Her books include “Our Prayers Are in This Place: Pecos Pueblo Identity Over the Centuries,” “Through the Lens: Creating Santa Fe” (with MaryAnne Redding and Krista Elrick), and “Telling New Mexico: A New History” (with Marta Weigle and Louise Stiver), a chapter in the 400th anniversary volume “All Trails Lead to Santa Fe” (with Gerald Gonzalez), and “Frontier Battles and Massacres: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives” (editor with Ron Wetherington). She is currently working on a book about the life of Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche, the wife of New Mexico governor Bernardo Lopez de Mendizábal, both of whom were accused before the Inquisition as Judiazers and taken to Mexico City for trial.



NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS



Top, New Mexico History Museum lobby.

Above, New Mexico became the 47th state on January 6, 1912. Note the 47-star flag.

Right, Embroidered colcha bedspread, from the Museum collections.



Levine’s husband, Tom Merlan, is a historian and researcher who has written on homesteads and ranches in New Mexico and other themes. He is from a family of long time residents in Santa Fe. Levine is proud of their children, Stephen, who lives in New Orleans, and Anna, who lives in New York. She mentioned that, “Both are actively involved in social justice work.”

Dr. Fran Levine’s leadership of the New Mexico History Museum has given the Southwest one of its most important museums, and her involvement with Jewish and crypto-Jewish programs has given an important venue of

communication for this information to the larger museum-going world. She has made Santa Fe, New Mexico and the Southwest a better place by her presence.

Ron Duncan Hart is the publisher/editor of Gaon Books in Santa Fe, known for titles on Jewish life, learning and legacy with special attention to the voices of women and Sephardic traditions. Hart is a member of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Board and former Board member at the New Mexico Book Association. A member of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, he is a former editor of HaLapid.

The Return of

One

BY YLIANA MILLER GARZA

2013 was for me a year of revelations. These actually started a year earlier, when I married a Jewish man and had to enroll in an introduction to Judaism class to prepare for our Jewish wedding. I later learned this was referred to as a “conversion” class. I didn’t join the class for conversion purposes; I initially thought it was a requirement because we were an interfaith couple. Little did I know that this class would be a gateway to discovering my family’s past. On the day we met, my would-be husband told me that he was Jewish and asked if I had any problem with that. I answered that I didn’t see how it could possibly be a problem, and added that I myself likely had Sephardic blood. This had been told to my mother by an old relative, who was told by an older relative, who was told by an even older relative. My husband expressed some relief, and went on to recount how many of his potentially romantic liaisons had been ruined by Southern Baptist or otherwise Evangelical women who kept trying to convert him to Christianity. As to my Jewish ancestry, I had heard the rumor, from my mother, I think only once when I was a teenager, but I didn’t know if it was really true.

My parents were not religious at all. My father proclaimed himself to be an atheist, while my mother believed in God in a diffused way. They both despised the Catholic Church. However, they did send me and my sisters to Catholic school, where we were indoctrinated relentlessly by the nuns, every single day. These nuns were of the Order of the Discalced Carmelites. So here is where I begin the story of the Jewish influences in my life, with Saint Teresa of Avila (Teresa Sanchez de Cepeda Davila y Ahumada). Born in 1515, she was a reformist nun whose mystical poems I memorized and recited for winning the contests that year after year were held at school, and because they were beautiful, and evocative and captivating for my heart. Her story, and that of her fellow founder of the Discalced Carmelites, Saint John of the Cross (Juan de Yopez y Alvarez), is a story about the Jewish



Yliana Miller Garza

Conversos in Spain, and perhaps a story about the connection between Jewish Mysticism and Spanish Mysticism. These two figures are considered the height of Spanish mystical poetry. I am a total ignorant, just beginning to scratch the surface of these subjects, but from the little that I have read, I sense that the

cradle of much of Jewish mysticism is Spanish, just like the cradle of Spanish mysticism is represented by these two Jewish descendants. Even if there were to be no connection, theirs is a story about how the Jews left their indelible mark on Spain, and Spain left its indelible mark on the Jews.

For the school contests, pupils had to memorize not only the poetry of St. Teresa, but every single detail of her life as a child, conversations she had with her siblings, her juvenile agitations, summaries of her books—you name it. These were given to us as flashcards, and included all kinds of trivia, some of which was (undoubtedly) entirely invented. But we never, ever, were told about her Jewish past. This was never mentioned, and I never knew it – until less than a year-and-a-half ago, when I found out that she was Jewish, that my ancestors were Jewish, and that I am Jewish – well, at least on my mother’s side. I learned about the crypto-Jews and about Teresa de Avila’s Jewishness at the same time, because of a certain resonance with what I was reading and hearing at my “Introduction to Judaism” class.

St. Theresa’s grandparents, Don Juan Sanchez and Isabel de Cepeda,



Soul

were both from *converso* families and lived a prosperous life as members of the merchant class in Toledo, until the Inquisition came to that city in 1485. Because Don Juan had secretly kept his Jewish practices, he was condemned to wear a *sanbenito* or cloth covering, and suffer all kinds of humiliations, but was able to save his life and his children's lives by confessing to being a Judaizer and becoming reconciled.

The heavenly, non-physical version of the Torah is described as black fire on white fire, and both the black and white are equally meaningful. The black are the letters we see, while the white, the inverse space between the black, are the letters we don't see.

He later fled to the town of Avila where he and his family started over and became respected citizens. St. Theresa herself was at one time subject to an Inquisitorial process because of her writings, that some thought had heretical undercurrents.

A contemporary of Theresa de Avila, my direct ancestor Marcos Alonzo de la Garza, was born in 1520. He was the

patriarch of the most numerous of the original Sephardic families that came to New Spain with Don Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, who founded what is now the city of Monterrey in Northern Mexico. They settled as far away from Mexico City as they could. Marcos Alonzo de la Garza's father was Marcos Alonzo of Huelva, Spain. From the same province came another Alonzo, Hernando, maybe of the same family. Hernando Alonzo had arrived in 1521 with Hernan Cortez, and was the first Jew ever to set foot on the American continent. He quickly became successful and wealthy, only to be burned at the stake in 1528, becoming the first Jewish martyr of the Spanish Inquisition in the New World.

Marcos Alonzo de la Garza married Juana de Trevino Quintanilla, also from a known New Christian family, maybe the same that produced one of Mexico's most celebrated Jewish martyrs, Tomas Trevino de Sobremonte. The sagas of the

Alonzos, Garzas, and Trevinos are already the subject of several books and scholarly papers. These families practiced endogamy, and married among themselves, so the same surnames repeat and repeat across generations. My maternal grandfather's line includes only Sephardic surnames. My maternal grandmother's surname is also Sephardic. She comes from the Valdez family of Saltillo, a town that

became a refuge for the families who initially founded Monterrey. They had to flee that city when Luis de Carvajal became the target of the Inquisition, accused of Judaizing, eventually dying in an Inquisition cell. Many of the Valdezes later migrated to New Mexico, where they are now part of a genetic research project testing for Jewish ancestry. Even though I didn't know anything about Judaism, there was an affinity for Jewish symbols in my family. There was a menorah in the house. My grandmother taught us not to eat pork. She had a fig tree and a lemon tree planted in the garden of her



Retablo of Santa Theresa de Avila

patio. We wore the Star of David as a necklace, with our initial behind it. My family was rather anticlerical, and there were no crucifixes or images of the Virgin or the Saints displayed in our home, or as jewelry. I was told from a very early age that the Catholic religion was a bunch of fairy tales. I studied Hebrew as an undergraduate at the University of Granada in Spain, for no specific reason. I just found the letters so appealing that I contemplated majoring in Semitic Philology.

Until October 2012, all Jewish influences in my life had come through the sifter of 500 years of hiding, denying, or ignoring. But they were there, unacknowledged; latent, in subliminal form. In Asheville, North Carolina, where I live, there are two synagogues. I attend services at Beth Hatephila, the Reform congregation; this is where I took my "Introduction to Judaism" class. Beth Israel, a Conservative congregation, is located just a few blocks away. There, I recently listened to two messages that made me say "Aha!" One was a tale retold by one of the synagogue's leaders, in which a mystical Rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov, foreseeing misfortune threatening the Jews, would make his way to a certain part of the forest, where he would light a fire and say a special prayer, after which the misfortune would be averted. Later, his disciple the Magid of Mezritch also foresaw a calamity threatening the Jews. He went to the same place in the forest and prayed, "Master of the Universe, I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the

prayer," and the new disaster was averted. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov, in an effort to save his people, entered the forest and said, "I don't know how to light the fire and I don't know the prayer, but I know the place, and this must be sufficient,"

and it was. Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. He said to God, "I am unable to light the fire, I don't know the prayer, I cannot even find the place in the forest; all I can do is tell the story, and this must suffice," and it did. For the later

rabbis, this story illustrated the gradual loss of knowledge about practice, but demonstrated that keeping the memory alive was sufficient to ward off calamity.

The second message I heard was about the Torah of the white spaces. This was delivered by the synagogue's young, newly hired rabbi, who truly blew me away. He said that tradition states that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah. However, if you actually count the letters there are only 304,805. So, is the tradition wrong? No. These are only those letters that we see:

black ink against white parchment. But there are also the letters in white against black. The heavenly, non-physical version of the Torah is described as black fire on white fire, and both the black and white are equally meaningful. The black are the letters we see, while the white, the inverse space between the black, are the letters we don't see. The count of 600,000 includes both, black and white.

There is a law about the writing in a Torah scroll: if any letter has no space around it, the entire Torah is invalid, even though all the letters are complete, because a hidden white letter would be missing. There's yet more significance to this. The 600,000 letters correspond to the 600,000



*Hebrew calligraphy "Magical Sphere"
by Martin Mendelsberg*

Martin Mendelsberg is a graphic artist, typographer, and design educator. He has exhibited internationally in Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, China, Israel, and America. The designer's work is represented in permanent collections at The Museum of New Zealand, Victoria University School of Architecture, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Yale University: Haas Arts Special Collections, The Florida Holocaust Museum, The Mizel Museum, Greeley Holocaust Observance Committee, and The Center for the Study of Political Graphics in Los Angeles. Masterfont Ltd. in Tel Aviv, Israel distributes Mr. Mendelsberg's Hebrew typeface designs.



souls of Israel. Although there are many more than 600,000 Jews, there are 600,000 general soul clusters, which divide into the individual sparks that become each of our souls. Some of these souls are the black letters. They are well defined, their place in Torah is clear. It holds their life and purpose.

I thought to myself: "Maybe, these are the Jews that have always known who they are." The black stands out in strong contrast to the surrounding space. Those of the inverse, the white letters, may not see where they fit into Torah. These Jewish souls don't know their place; they don't know where they belong! Furthermore, they are *hidden*! I thought again: "Maybe they don't even suspect they are included in the text, or that they are even Hebrew letters."

Now, if I have learned anything from being with Jewish people in the last year, is that there are always debates and commentaries upon the commentaries. I know there must be a million interpretations about the Torah of the white spaces. But this particular interpretation came directly to my heart as the most precise arrow. I was just sitting there, almost unable to breathe, almost unable to swallow, feeling like lightning had struck.

So now I believe that I am one (or part of one) of those 600,000 Jewish souls. I am a white letter, coming to find my place in the Torah, where I am already written, outside of time, or in spite of time; I don't know. But I am here, coming back to the place that was stolen from my ancestors. History

stole their way of life; it stole their actual life in many instances; it stole their memory. And yet, something remained; something that was so tenuous, and at the same time, so strong. Perhaps it was that Hebrew letter, or fraction of a letter, that amounted to a soul or a fraction of a soul, and that unknowingly kept being passed on from generation to generation.

By the 19th century we didn't know the place, or the prayer, or how to make the fire, not even much of the story, except for nearly imperceptible fragments that were not easily connected. We didn't know anything that we could articulate, or that would tell us for certain that we were in any proportion Jewish. But it did suffice. It sufficed for me, and maybe also for those 15 generations before me, because they are included within me. The formerly unexplained hints of Judaism in my life were tiny markers on the road that brought me here, where my soul's return from exile has begun.

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Ancient Stones
MODERN JEWELRY

The Synagogue of St. Thomas, located in Charlotte Amalie on the island of St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands and called Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety), was built in 1833. It is the second-oldest synagogue and Jewish religious structure in continuous use in the United States. The congregation founded there in 1796 was composed of Sephardic Jews who came to the Caribbean with the Dutch to facilitate trade between Europe and the New World.

THE ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE

BY MARK R. BARNES, Ph.D.

HISTORY

In the mid-1990s, as part of a technical assistance effort by the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service, in Atlanta Georgia, I was directed to work with the US Virgin Islands State Preservation Office to increase the number of National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) in that area. One of the cultural properties recommended for consideration as a NHL by the state office was the St. Thomas Synagogue. Upon the completion of the study the Secretary of the Interior designated the synagogue as a National Historic Landmark on September 25, 1997.

According to various academic sources, the 1833 Jewish Synagogue and Congregation of St. Thomas may logically trace its roots over some 2,000 years of the Hebrew Diaspora, starting with the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Great Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the first

century A.D. Some of the displaced Hebrew peoples ended up in the Iberian Peninsula, where over some 1,500 years under Roman, Visigoth, Muslim, and Christian rulers they worshiped in their synagogues, attended to their businesses, and raised their families

according to religious tenets that over time came to identify them as Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) Jewish peoples.

Sephardic congregations in Christian towns could usually count on the protection of local rulers who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, in the latter part of the 14th century, the religious fervor the Castilian kings used in their war of liberation, or *Reconquista*, of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslims, also became directed at Jews. The general intent was to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, which affected tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews at this time either left the urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians," or *conversos*.

In 1469, the union by marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile concentrated the full military might of a united Spain to complete the *Reconquista* in 1492. To pursue the religious front of this effort, the Spanish Inquisition was

created by papal bull in 1478 at the request of the Spanish rulers, with the Inquisition beginning its activities in 1480 under Tomas Torquemada the first Inquisitor-General.

The Inquisition's job was to pressure Jews to convert and



St. Thomas Synagogue main sanctuary.



to ensure that *conversos* did not backslide to their original faith. During this time, Judaism literally moved underground as basements of houses became synagogues. Rabbi B. Boxman of the St. Thomas Synagogue, confirmed that, "According to Sephardic tradition, some synagogues, like theirs, covered their floors with sand to remember this time when Jews also used sand to muffle the sounds of congregations practicing their faith."

On March 31, 1492, the Spanish rulers issued a decree for the expulsion of all unconverted Jews from their realm. Jews were given three months to settle their affairs and depart Spain or become *conversos*. It is estimated half of Spain's Jews "converted," with the rest leaving for nearby Portugal, while smaller numbers took boats to southern France, Italy, and areas of the Ottoman Empire where they sought refuge among Jewish communities. Later, in 1496, a Jewish expulsion decree was generated by Portugal and the recently resettled Spanish Jews were again on the move, this time with their Portuguese cousins.

Under the Spanish expulsion decree, the prohibition on Judaism was rigorously enforced in Spain, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, and Sardinia, but appears to have been less so in Spanish overseas territories in North Africa, Naples, Milan, the Spanish Netherlands (Holland), and the New World for the displaced *conversos*. The Portuguese permitted *conversos* to immigrate to their colonies in India, Brazil, and the Atlantic Islands.

It seems ironic that the emigration inflicted on Sephardic Jews became a source of strength. The majority of the Jewish people made their living as small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, and money lenders. These were the very trades and crafts most needed as European countries entered the Age of Exploration and established colonies in faraway parts of the globe previously unknown to them in 1492.

In the 16th century Sephardic Jews in the Netherlands financed trade in northern European goods, such as iron, wood, grain, and cloth, for southern European and colonial goods, such as wool, rock salt, sugar, spices, tobacco, coffee, and cocoa beans. This trade was founded on connections with *conversos*, often family members, still residing in Spain and Portugal and the colonies in the New World, Africa, and the Far East. Many trade ships were captained by *conversos*. By the



Above, St. Thomas Synagogue; The aron hakodesh or holy ark, containing seven sefer torahs

Right, detail, Ner Tamid (the eternal light), crafted in glass and bronze. Note the brass collar created in the shape of a crown. It symbolizes God's eternal presence and is therefore never extinguished.

1590s, Jewish merchants and traders had made Amsterdam northern Europe's foremost emporium for sugar, spices, and other products from the Iberian colonial empires. In return, the Dutch government allowed Sephardic Jews to build their first synagogue in 1597 and in 1657 all resident Jews were recognized as Dutch nationals.

As Sephardic Jews managed most of the trade in New World products passing through Holland, it was natural they would play an important role as the Dutch empire expanded. When the Dutch seized the northern coast of Brazil in the 1630s from the Portuguese, "a large number of Dutch Sephardim emigrated to Brazil, mainly to Recife, and captured a large share in the sugar export business." Innovations in sugar production were introduced by the Dutch and Sephardic



Jews between 1638 and 1645, making Brazil the largest exporter of sugar. The Portuguese retook this region of Brazil in 1645, again forcing a relocation of Jews, this time to English Barbados. The English, who had settled Barbados in the 1630s, had good relations with the Dutch who were their main supplier of enslaved Africans, and Sephardic Jews would now provide capital for establishing sugar

plantations. Thanks to Jewish *émigrés* from Brazil, England was able to drive Portugal out of the northern European trade in sugar, from its own plantations on Barbados, and by the 1650s Sephardic congregations had been established in Dutch Curacao and Surinam, English Barbados, and Jamaica.

In the 1670s, Denmark became the last European country to colonize the smaller islands of the Caribbean. The fourth Governor of the Danish Virgin Islands, Gabriel Milan, was from a Jewish family with trading connections in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hamburg. To curry the favor of the Danish crown, Milan accepted the Lutheran faith in 1682 to improve his prospects of being employed by the Danish state, though even before his appointment, a few Jewish families had moved to the Danish St. Thomas from other West Indies islands.

Further research showed that when the Danish government acquired St. Croix from France in 1734, Jews originating from Brazil, Portugal, and Spain were among the first to establish sugar plantations there. Christian Oldendorp's history of the Danish West Indies, written in 1777, noted, "...a considerable number of Jews, particularly in St. Croix" and that "the Jews have no regular synagogue, but rather observe their worship services in private residences."

The real growth of the Jewish population of the Danish West Indies occurred as a result of the American War of Independence. Dutch St. Eustatius was a major source of military supplies for the North American rebels. In December 1780, Great Britain declared war on Holland and ordered Admiral Sir George Rodney to attack St. Eustatius. On February 3, 1781 he arrived in Oranjestad Harbor with an overwhelming force of 14 ships of the line and 3,000 soldiers. Rodney seized 150 ships, including 60 belonging to Americans, and captured more than 2,000 American merchants and sailors as prisoners of war. English, French, and Danish merchants were extradited to their homelands. The Jewish merchants had their personal possessions taken, some were beaten, others were deported to St. Kitts, and all forced to watch their goods sold at auction. After this experience, many Jewish families sought refuge in the neutral Danish West Indies. The increase in Sephardic Jews in both St. Croix and St. Thomas resulted in the formation of a congregation in Christiansted in 1784. In 1796 the first Synagogue on St. Thomas was erected with the appellation of "Blessing and Peace."

The St. Thomas Synagogue started with a congregation of nine families that increased to 22 families by 1802. The first synagogue was destroyed by fire in 1804 which burned large sections of western and central Charlotte Amalie. By 1812, a second synagogue was built on the same site, but by 1823 proved too small. In 1823, it was replaced by a larger wooden



Central bima for the rabbi raised above the sand floor.

synagogue on the same site, named "Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds," to accommodate a growing congregation of 64 families.

On New Year's Eve 1831, a fire started in the Commandant Gade section of Queens Quarter, the central part of Charlotte Amalie. Before it burned itself out New Year's Day 1832, it had destroyed about 800 buildings, including the 1823 wooden synagogue. The present St. Thomas Synagogue was built in 1833 of masonry, and has served the Jewish congregation ever since.

The first Confirmation ceremony at the St. Thomas Synagogue, held on October 14, 1843, was the first of its kind ever held in the New World, as noted in an article, entitled "History of the Jews in America," written by Rabbi



M.D. Sasso, and submitted to the *American Jewish Archives Journal* by Rabbi Gunther Plaut,

We learn from a private letter from St. Thomas that the first confirmation among American Israelites took place on the Sabbath Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles] in the Synagogue under the charge of the Rev. [Rabbi] Mr. Carillon. The ceremony is represented as having been very imposing. The names of the confirmed are, Mrs. Daniel Wolff, Misses Miriam and Rebecca Wolff, Miss Deborah Simha Cortissos, Miss [Esther] De Meza, Alexander Wolff, and Jacob Benjamin.

In all probability, the cosmopolitan nature of the St. Thomas Hebrew Congregation disposed them to a Reform type of Judaism. In the years following, membership of the Hebrew Congregation increased, with the census records of 1835 showing a population of 467 Jews living in St. Thomas. By 1851, however, the Jewish population had declined to 372 persons. As the prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the 19th century, so did the Hebrew Congregation.

The year 1867 saw a hurricane hit the island in October, followed by a tidal wave in November, which did great damage to the town, the harbor and shipping facilities. Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the congregation grew again. As it marked the second century of its founding (1796-1996), it was larger than it had ever been in the history of the St. Thomas Jewish community.

Within the confines of the United States, the St. Thomas Synagogue is surpassed in age only by the Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a

National Historic Site on March 4, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the 1833 St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the United States.

On the evening of September 25, 2000, as a representative of the National Park Service, this author had the pleasure of speaking to the congregation from the bimah of the St. Thomas Synagogue. The occasion was nothing less than the dedication of the synagogue as a National Historic Landmark and presentation of a bronze plaque for its future identification—the only one ever cast with both Hebrew and English text.

Editor's Note: The full text of this article will appear in JOSPIC in the coming months.

Special thanks for all photographs to Sean L. Krigger, VI State Historic Preservation Office, DPNR.

Dr. Mark R. Barnes is a Retired National Park Service (NPS) Senior Archeologist. He has 36 years of government service with the NPS, having worked in Washington, and the Southwest and Southeast Regional Offices. Barnes serviced in the armed forces with the JAG Corp, at the West Point Military Academy Annex and received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Arizona, Tucson, and his Doctorate from Catholic University of America, in the District of Columbia. He is currently an associate professor at Georgia State University and member of ICAHM that advises ICOMOS on cultural resources. Dr. Barnes advises readers that the landmark study for the St. Thomas Synagogue can be downloaded from either the NPS Landmark or Wikipedia websites.

Synagogue Details

Worshippers arrive to the St. Thomas Synagogue via steps leading up from the street to an ornate wrought iron gate and fence. The gate, adorned by a forged Star of David, gives access to an elegant entrance under a roofed porch, paved in alternating black and white marble tiles.

The Synagogue was constructed as a rectangular one-story masonry building, 41 feet wide by 46 feet in length. The colonnaded facade hints of Greek Revival; the Gothic shaped windows and doors indicate Gothic. White plastered walls, doors and windows are framed by red brick.

The interior maintains a traditional west-east orientation, with the Ark, holding six Torahs, centered against the east wall, and the *bimah* (or pulpit) against the west wall. A square area in the center is defined by four Ionic columns resting on tall pedestals. Raised platforms on the south and north sides of the interior of the Synagogue support mahogany pews, or *bancas*. Traditionally, men sat in the first four rows of mahogany pews, north to south. Additional rows for women and children, raised on broad masonry platforms, run west-east length wise. Seating areas for men and women are separated by 3-foot tall wooden partitions, or a *m'chitzat*.

The interior columns represent the four mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. These support an architrave, an elaborate frieze, and a projecting cornice. Each arm supports a candle stand and Baccarat crystal shade. The flat white plaster ceiling rises over 18 feet high and six sparkling, six-armed brass chandeliers with glass hurricane shades for candles light the sanctuary.

The *heikhal*, an area containing the Ark, lies two steps above the floor on the east side. Flanking this are benches originally intended to seat the Synagogue's leaders (*parnasim*). Two pedestaled Tuscan columns on the south wall support a scrolled broken pediment flanking the doors of the Ark. Two tablets with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) detailed in gilded Hebrew letters are fixed above. The Lamp of Perpetual Light, the *ner tamid*, hangs before the Ark.

On the west side is the *bimah*, where services are conducted. Two steps below lies the wooden reader's desk. All of the interior wood features, including the Ark, *bimah*, and pews are original, dating to the 1833 construction of the Synagogue. The floor of the Synagogue is paved with ceramic tile. In accordance with Sephardic Jewish tradition, the central floor area is, to this day, covered with about an inch of sand.



Tracing Genealogical History: A Path Towards an Unknowable Jewish Past

BY SARAH DA ROCHA VALENTE

In an unprecedented motion this past year, the Portuguese Parliament unanimously approved a bill that grants citizenship to the descendants of Jews who were persecuted and expelled from Portugal in 1497. More than 500 hundred years after King D. Manuel decreed the expulsion of Jews who did not accept to convert into Catholicism, the bill introduced by the Democratic and Social Centre – People’s Party (CDS-PP) and the Socialist Party (PS) in April 2013, became law in June.

The new legislation states that the government will grant nationality to those who can demonstrate *tradição de pertença a uma comunidade sefardita de origem portuguesa, com base em requisitos objectivos comprovados de ligação a Portugal, designadamente apelidos, idioma familiar, descendência directa ou collateral* (tradition that belongs to a Sephardic community of Portuguese origin, based on objective prerequisites proving a connection to Portugal through surnames, familiar language, [and] direct or collateral ancestry). The three prerequisites (surname, language, and ancestry) function as objective categories, yet, as I will demonstrate below, each category is not easily available as actual proof in most cases.

One must rely on trivial, subjective aspects of everyday life, family customs, and traditions in order to find a way into the past. Yet, how can one arrive with certainty at a past that is so unknowable? Does the fact that my maternal grandmother, Palmira de Oliveira Pereira, who was a peculiarly superstitious person, and who used odd sayings and was insistent on certain rules of conduct that had no logical explanation, mean that she was a New Christian descendant? Does the fact that she insisted on covering up mirrors when it rained, or on having candles in the house “just in case,” or teaching her grandchildren to ask for a blessing every time we greeted her (*Benção, vó, Deus te abençoe minha filha*) meaning “Blessing, grandma, God bless you my child,” or covering her eyes with her hands when praying, mean she practiced a Jewish tradition that had been slightly modified with each passing generation? Or does the fact that her grandparents, Francisco Florenço de



Sarah da Rocha Valente

...it is estimated that one out of every three Portuguese who... arrived on the Northeastern Brazilian shore in early 1500s was a New Christian.



Carvalho and Ana Rita de Jesus, named their daughter Ana Francisca de Oliveira, reflect the centuries-old fear that propelled many New Christians to name their children with different surnames in order to make it more difficult for the Inquisition to track relatives? Finally, does the fact that my devout Catholic grandparents never celebrated Christmas, and that I have never once in my life celebrated Christmas, indicate something about my ancestors' possible Sephardic origins?

Relying on details that have been so washed away by time throughout the centuries makes it very difficult for any Brazilian of Portuguese ancestry to lay claim to a Jewish past. In many ways, the Inquisition's Machiavellian intention of removing Judaism from the Portuguese population has been fulfilled: in present-day Brazil, distinctions between Catholic Portuguese descendants and Jewish Portuguese descendants have disseminated generation after generation. As portrayed in the documentary, *A Estrela Oculta no Sertão*, reminiscence of a Jewish past remains most often simply as family traditions, albeit unknown to the ones who practice the tradition, especially in rural Northeast Brazil.



My maternal grandparents, Antonio Pinto Pereira and Palmira de Oliveira, on their wedding day in 1947 in Machado, Minas Gerais (a state with a large New Christian population) with the ring bearer girl.

While it is estimated that one out of every three Portuguese who sailed on board the first fleets that arrived on the Northeastern Brazilian shore in early 1500s was a New Christian, it is unrealistic to estimate the number of Brazilians who descended from these Jews. In order to avoid persecution and death during the almost 300-year reign of the Holy Office of the Portuguese Inquisition from 1536 to 1821, New Christians created a mechanism of secrecy that now makes it nearly impossible for their descendants to claim a Jewish past.

Yet, as Dr. Tania Kaufmann, director of the Synagogue Kahal Zur Israel Museum (the first Jewish congregation in the New World from 1636-1654, now turned into a museum in Recife)

who also presides over the Pernambuco Judaic Historical Archives, points out, *se observa uma inquietação sobre as origens familiares atribuídas a algo cabalista. Essa inquietação leva-os ao encontro com os familiares mais velhos em busca de antigas lembranças, de costumes e tradições diferentes da maioria da vizinhança* ("A restlessness regarding one's family's origins is observed and attributed to 'something Kabbalist.' This restlessness leads them [New Christians] to inquire older relatives in search of 'old memories,' customs and traditions that are 'different' from the majority of the neighborhood.") This inherent restlessness is perhaps the best indicator of a possible New Christian connection.

The very mystery surrounding my maternal grandfather is what drew me towards genealogical research in the first

place. My mother's father, Antonio Pinto Pereira, used to tell her the story that his parents, Joaquim Pinto Pereira and Maria Theresa de Salles, came from a line of people who had been expelled from their homeland and who were forced to escape to Brazil. The mystery of this story lies in the fact that he never once dared say where they had escaped from or why. However, his idiosyncrasies point to a certain direction: he always wore a black felt hat



My paternal grandparents, Armando da Rocha Valente and Iracema Manuel Basílio, on their wedding day in 1950 in Campinas, São Paulo. (Photographs courtesy of Sarah da Rocha Valente)

outdoors but never inside the home, as did his father; the family only ate chicken he slaughtered in a very specific manner; every night the family ate the dinner meal together and everyone had to wait for him to be served first, and he insisted on modesty of clothing, especially for his daughters who were taught to always wear skirts.

At my paternal grandparents' house there was an unusual insistence on cleanliness (as children, when my sisters and I would spend the day at our grandparents' house, we would end up having to take at least one shower), and we were constantly reminded to wash our hands before and after eating a meal. I always found my grandfather's insistence on the fact that our family name was da Rocha Valente, not simply Rocha and not only Valente, that the two surnames

were a single family name, a bit odd. Grandpa Armando da Rocha Valente, a first generation Brazilian-born in his family, insisted on the fact that the family's surname was important to remain as his grandfather José da Rocha Valente had intended. José emigrated from Porto, Portugal to São Paulo, Brazil with his wife Maria Barros and their young sons, the eldest my great-grandfather Henrique da Rocha Valente. Until recently I was sure that the family had been from Porto. However, my grandmother Iracema Manuel Basilio, who married into the family, recently informed me before passing away, that the Rocha Valentines were actually from a place called Trás-os-Montes, but they never told people about it. This valuable piece of information indicates that they were from a region where historically many Jews sought refuge from the Inquisition and lived isolated in that region for many centuries.

Returning to my original question; how can one arrive with certainty to a past that is so unknowable? Aside from customs and observations that create a constellation of small hints of a possible Jewish past, the uncertainty can be made certain perhaps through the most recent advance of DNA testing. According to Dr. Antonio Amorim, a geneticist from the University of Porto, and his team, "Jews of Trás-os-Montes share more genetic affinities with Jewish populations of Europe and the Middle East, particularly other Sephardic Jews, than with the non-Jewish Portuguese population in general." This possibility fosters a new objective way for Brazilians to learn about the their ancestors' true origins, whether or not they were Portuguese New Christians, to then rightfully claim their Jewish origins without any doubt, and ultimately, to be able to apply for Portuguese citizenship, if they so choose.

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Retrospective: Sarah da Roche Valente

It was a remarkable experience when my academic research interests intersected with my personal story. During my masters, I began to study about the recent discovery of *anusim* (Hebrew for "children of the forced ones") in present-day Brazil, and the more I studied their customs and traditions, family names, regions of residence, and idiosyncrasy of their language, the more I realized that my Portuguese ancestors must have been New Christians. I went on to write more extensively on this topic as one of my Master Thesis Portfolio paper, "New Christians, Ancient Jews: Brazil's Jewish Past and Present." Realizing that my Portuguese ancestors' surnames, Barros, Carvalho, Oliveira, Pereira, Pinto, Rocha, Salles, Valente, and their unusual traditions indeed pointed towards a Sephardic past, helped me make sense and better understand my own family and our traditions. This realization has also solidified my academic interest in Holocaust Studies, which I was already committed to prior to discovering about my family's Jewish roots. In a way, it's as if I had always known.

Bio Statement

Sarah da Rocha Valente is currently a Ph.D. student in Humanities, majoring in History of Ideas from the School of Arts and Humanities at The University of Texas at Dallas under the supervision of Dr. Zsuzsanna Ozsváth. A recipient of the Belofsky Fellowship at the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at UT Dallas, Sarah holds a B.A. degree in Literary Studies and a M.A. in Studies in Literature from UT Dallas with a Certification in Holocaust Studies from the Ackerman Center. Her research interests include Holocaust literature, the emergence of Holocaust Studies in 21st century Brazil and South America, the history of Portuguese Jews expelled to Brazil at its inception and their New Christian descendants, Latin American Studies, and Translation Studies. Sarah is a recipient of the UT Dallas Diversity Retention Scholarship, Academic Distinction Scholarship, the State of Texas Valedictorian Scholarship, and the John Stipes Motivational Scholarship. She is editor of the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, managing editor of REUNION: The Dallas Review, and principal cellist at the UT Dallas String Orchestra. Sarah was awarded the Good Citizenship Medal from the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and The President's Volunteer Service Gold Award.



Jewish Life Reborn in

SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

MEXICO



TRAVEL

Aside from the brilliant colors of the architecture and curving cobblestone streets that make San Miguel de Allende an artist's paradise, a visit to this Spanish Colonial town in the state of Guanajuato in Northern Mexico is a must for several reasons. It's a mecca for art and music lovers, the food is outstanding no matter what the cuisine, and the town has been home to a rich community of diverse cultures over the centuries, thereby giving it its cosmopolitan flair, including Jewish residents who have lived there openly or in secret.



Once an important trade center for the Spaniards, San Miguel, originally known as San Miguel El Grande prior to the Mexican Revolution, was one of the largest villages along the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. This was the famous trade route between Mexico City and

Above, view of the city of San Miguel de Allende beneath the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Left, Casa Cohen, a two-story stone building near the main plaza, stops tourists in their tracks. Carvings of the Magen David, plus biblical animals, highlight the exterior.

the silver mines in Zacatecas and beyond, all the way to Santa Fe. Before that, local indigenous tribes, the Chichimecas, called this area home.

Named a UNESCO World Heritage site, this town of some 100,000 individuals has maintained a sense of continuity in language, culture and ambiance for over 400 years. It was, in fact, established in 1555. During the settlement period of the 16th and 17th centuries, colonial Spaniards plotted out a beautiful town center with plazas and gardens; built private residences behind stone walls and massive wooden doors, and erected elaborate churches to provide places to worship and reinforce religious rule. An Office of the Inquisition was established and maintained, supposedly, up until 1895, perhaps in name only. On a recent tour of the city (via local trolley), the tour guide pointed out “La Casa del Inquisidor,” the Office of the Holy See. “It existed,” she said, “because many witches had to be hunted down.” (I suppose that’s the safest way to explain it. But we know better.) The building is well marked and now a private residence.

Yet another edifice on Calle Reloj, Casa Cohen, built in the 20th century by Syrian Jews, bears several Magen Davids on its façade, as well as numerous carved animals representing Noah’s ark. It’s a private residence today.

This fascinating visit was sweetened by the fact that a small, devoted congregation of Jewish residents worship together in a recently acquired building just minutes from the center of town; Shalom San Miguel, the JC3—Jewish Cultural and Community Center. Drawing from the Jewish community in San Miguel de Allende, it thrives with some 100 enthusiastic members. One-quarter of these are Mexican and the rest expatriates, primarily from the United States and Canada.



Above, Exterior of Shalom San Miguel, also known as the JC3, a Jewish Community and Cultural Center. (Photo by Carlos Soderman)

Right, Interior view of reception area and kitchen at Shalom San Miguel.



The congregation’s watchword, “one community, many journeys” reflects their diverse backgrounds in language, culture, and religious observance. Each member is encouraged to express his or her unique Judaism. Be their interest secular, artistic, religious, intellectual or otherwise, all are welcome who want to be a part of a Jewish entity.

The Center is a 100% volunteer organization, unaffiliated with any Jewish movement. Lay members lead worship and fill all the other roles needed to keep the community thriving. Some teach a class or workshop; some lead the minyan on Shabbat; some work on charity projects or the *Bikkur Cholim*, helping to visit the sick. Others teach Hebrew or Torah study classes or help organize the bimonthly Friday night dinners.



Vice President Dan Lessner, a retired family practice physician from Long Island, NY, moved to San Miguel de Allende in 2005 and began a Saturday morning minyan group. A founding member of Shalom SMA, he has served on every board since its inception and been deeply involved. In addition to teaching some English-language adult



Stained-glass Magen David decorates window to courtyard.

education classes and preparing the few Jewish children who lived in town for their *B'nei Mitzvah*, his relative fluency in Spanish has allowed him to begin classes in Judaism, Torah and basic Hebrew to help guide an increasing number of Mexican nationals who began to attend religious services and functions. This has led to the eventual conversion/return of 24 individuals over the past two years,

many of whom claim Jewish ancestry. He continues to lead a Spanish-language Torah discussion group after Saturday morning services, and has begun new Hebrew language classes on Sunday mornings.

While attending services on Saturday morning, my husband and I had the pleasure of meeting one attendee devoted to tracing his family's Jewish roots via church records, well over 200 years into his family's history in Mexico. He travels a good distance to San Miguel on Saturdays to attend services, although he hasn't officially converted. But he seemed visibly proud and excited to be among "his people."

The small building acquired for the Center's permanent home boasts a small library on the 2nd floor, a guest room, and a reception area and kitchen on the main floor. The "sanctuary" is a flexible meeting room with a handmade Ark created by American artist, Anado McLaughlin, in the local tradition.

Services were led that morning by member Carole Stone, a cantorial vocalist, who did a remarkable job as "rabbi for the day." Members Carlos and Linda Soberman, residents of San Miguel six months at a time, were warm hosts. They introduced us to the congregation and to visiting U.S. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin and his wife Dvorah, who also spoke that day. Before the morning was over, I explained the work of the Society of Crypto-Judaic Studies and handed out 25 brochures to a receptive audience. (Many remembered a

visit by Membership Chair Chana Cohen last year who also told them about us.) Hopefully, some of the interested members will join.



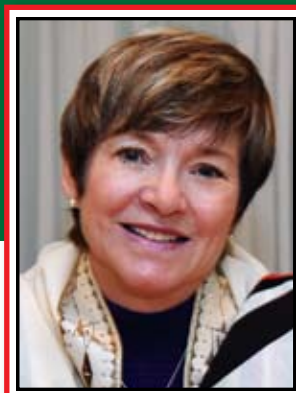
Left to right, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin of Los Angeles, Avi Brown, Carlos (Charles) Soderman from SMA, and Corinne Brown

For anyone contemplating a great vacation in a part of Mexico that is safe, exceptionally clean, and rich in cultural activities, San Miguel is the perfect destination. For an artist or camera buff, the opportunities are endless.

Accommodations are available in every price range; from bed and breakfasts to luxury hotels. We explored many and each seemed nicer than the last. I plan to return for a writer's conference next February, if not before.

For more information about Jewish life in San Miguel go to shalomsanmiguel.org. Your support is appreciated.

Jewish Worship Returns to Calabria, Italy

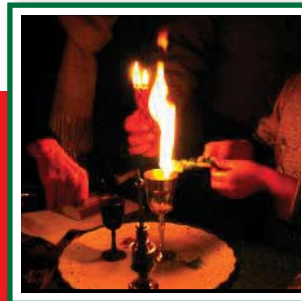


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Dr. Ofer Ben-Amots

*Composer, Professor, and Supporter of
Crypto-Jews in Southern Colorado*

BY DR. ROGER L. MARTINEZ-DAVILA, PRESIDENT, SCJS (WITH ASSISTANCE FROM TAWNIE MIZER, UCCS HISTORY STUDENT)

In fall 2010, just a few months after arriving at Colorado Springs, I had a fortuitous encounter with Dr. Ofer Ben-Amots, an award-winning Israeli classical music composer, professor at Colorado College, and supporter of the crypto-Jewish community in southern Colorado. At the time I was organizing the Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference at UCCS and I continuously heard references from colleagues and friends alike that I absolutely must meet Ofer. Upon meeting him, I quickly understood why others spoke so highly of him. His broad smile, intense curiosity, and good cheer immediately put me at ease.

It was not until a full year later, in the days preceding Rosh Hashanah, that I fully appreciated how deeply Ofer had taken upon himself to assist crypto-Jews in Colorado Springs and Pueblo as they explored their roots and faith. Over the last several years, he and other community members like Daniel Yokum repeatedly returned to the United Hebrew Center of Pueblo to celebrate Jewish religious holidays with the aging Ashkenazi community, new Jewish immigrants, and some crypto-Jews.

During October 2013 I finally had the chance to sit down and interview Ofer about a broad range of issues concerning the Sephardim, the southern Colorado Jewish community and crypto-Jews. Settling into his voluminous studio at Colorado College, appointed with his grand piano and a seemingly endless collection of musical texts and compositions, we recorded this following interview. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Roger: I am visiting with Dr. Ofer Ben-Amots today. Ofer is a very good friend of mine. We have known each other now for about two years – wouldn't you say, Ofer?

Ofer: Oh, I think three at least!

Roger: You are right – it has been that long. I wanted to make this opportunity to visit with Ofer today because he is probably one of the first people that exposed me to the Jewish community here in Colorado Springs. Over time I think we both recognized we have a shared common interest in Sephardic history. More specifically, Ofer has shared with me his interactions with a crypto-Jewish community here in Colorado Springs and Pueblo. So, I just want to ask him some questions about—well, this is probably the best place to start: How does an Israeli Jew find himself in Colorado Springs and now engaged with this other community of Jews – the crypto-Jews? How did this happen?

Ofer: [Laughing.] There is no short answer to that! Life is not that predictable and so I would have never guessed that I would have ended up in Colorado Springs and now I am celebrating 20 years here. I lived all over the world for the first 24 years of my life – in Israel and then Switzerland and Germany. I grew up in Haifa and when I finished my studies in Germany, I continued my graduate studies in Philadelphia. And after graduating with my doctorate, this is where I came to pursue my academic life.

Roger: When you arrived in Colorado, what did you think of it?

Ofer: About the Jewish community here? It was exceptional. Denver is truly a large Jewish community – even for American city proportions because you have over 80,000 Jews residing in the city...Colorado Springs is more of a free spirit – a Western place. We don't really know how many Jews we have here but there are many. I would guess that we might have anywhere between 2,000 to 3,000 Jews in Colorado Springs – which is really a very small community. >>



Roger: Well, this speaks to the dynamics of Colorado Springs in relationship to Denver – an insular, smaller community living in the shadow of a much larger one. I think that says something really interesting not only about Colorado, but also about the Sephardic and Ashkenazi in the state. By its nature, Sephardic Judaism has existed for hundreds of years in Colorado – but it's been a quiet community always residing at the frontier and adjacent to the Ashkenazi community.

Ofer: Yes! If you look in the past, at the time that Colorado Springs was established, you will see that Ashkenazi Jews who came to town founded some of the big businesses. For example, Lorig's Western Wear, which founded its first retail store in 1932. You know – the Lorig family – they sell cowboy boots and cowboy hats! They were among the first families to establish a synagogue in the city.



Dr. Roger Martinez-Dávila and Dr. Ofer Ben-Amots

Roger: This is a Western community – Jewish Cowboys!

Ofer: Yes, Jewish Cowboys! So, basically when you talk about Jews in Colorado they are like most communities throughout America. We're talking about 95% of them being of Ashkenazi descent – from Eastern Europe, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Romania. They created the American Jewish community. The Sephardim, the Separdic Jews, there are a few pockets of them but they do not constitute more than 5% of the population.

Roger: It's a tiny population?

Ofer: It is. The Sephardim cluster around specific synagogues across the United States because the Sephardic rite is distinct from other Jewish rites. For example, there is a big community of Syrian Jews in New York City and they have their own synagogue – their own way of praying, their own liturgy and traditions. Then you have the "Judio Español" or Judeo-Spanish who were actually the very first Jews to come to the United States. Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City was founded in 1654. In Philadelphia you have Congregation Mikveh Israel that is reflective of the Sephardic traditions from Amsterdam and Portugal. It was founded in 1740.

Roger: Right. We have a mixture of Jewish populations. What is intriguing is that if we take a close look at Colorado then we learn that there is not a deep-standing tradition of Sephardic synagogues.

Ofer: No. In fact our familiarity with the Sephardim in Colorado comes through the crypto-Jews. It is actually a region that extends from Albuquerque through Santa Fe and up to southern Colorado.

Roger: Well, that makes good historical sense because the city of Pueblo, which is just 40 miles south of Colorado Springs, is located on the Arkansas River. This river was the northern-most border of Spain in Colorado up until roughly 1821.

Ofer: This entire area – that includes Raton, Trinidad, and Pueblo – had its own hidden Jewish communities. There were Spaniards here, but not all of them were "pure" Catholics.

Roger: This is the complicated history of the Sephardim who were expelled from Spain in 1492. After the date anyone who still lived in Spain had to accept Catholicism. But, some families continued to practice Judaism in secret. Others, willingly converted to Catholicism. When the Spanish encountered the Americas, both Catholics and secret Jews emigrated into present-day Mexico and the southern United States. Spain prohibited Jews and their descendants from coming to the New World, yet, some still slipped through as "good" Catholics and crypto-Jews.

Ofer: This naturally leads to questions of identity. Some of those who came to the New World lived between Catholicism and Judaism. Over time and across generations some Hispanics in New Mexico and Colorado would come to understand that their ancestry and traditions came from Jewish origins.

Roger: And they have revived these traditions?

Ofer: Yes, but the one interesting thing about crypto-Jews is that there were no real way to identify them. With the exception, at least from my perspective, of one manner – their marriage choices. In some crypto-Jewish families they would say to a young man, "When you marry, you can only marry a woman from one of these families. Don't ask why."

Roger: Don't ask?

Ofer: Don't ask. The grandmother on her deathbed might ask for the promise to only marry with certain families and not others. And to some extent, this seems to have been related to a desire to preserve their identity even if they may have not have understood the religious reasons for doing so.

Roger: Since we are on the topic of crypto-Jewish families, after moving to Colorado Springs when did you start to hear about or encounter people that identified as crypto-Jews? >>

Ofer: I discovered them in Santa Fe. When I went to Santa Fe, I encountered and met people who identified as Jews. I didn't know what to make of it. But I also never doubted if somebody said, "That's what I feel, that's who I am." You kind of take them at their word.

Roger: Would you say that that would be a typical response inside Judaism? That you'd be accepting?

Ofer: I would say that at one point I just found it almost like a trend.

Roger: In some ways it feels like it's just trendy to become Jewish?

Ofer: Yes, maybe, it seems to be a New Age perspective. But, you still need to respect the people for what they feel. Everyone has a spiritual search to conducted during their lives. If that's what they find—good for them. Still, I think it doesn't make them Jewish until they become Jewish. And becoming Jewish is a very strict process.

But... I started hearing other stories when I returned to Colorado Springs. There was a women here who considered herself to be Jewish just by "feeling." But, then suddenly she discovered that indeed she descended from a Sephardic Jewish family and she became more observant.

Roger: The response you are communicating is an interesting one because I think there's a whole host of responses to this example. From acceptance to deep skepticism. As a historian, I think it's important to approach it with skepticism. Skepticism in terms of documenting a family's religious tradition and connections back to Spain and Portugal. However, we certainly want to acknowledge a person's individual feelings and responses to spirituality. We want to be respectful.

Ofer: Yes, my approach is not to second-guess what these persons are feeling. They either have this feeling or not. And if they feel it, then there must be a good reason for it. Now, this does not transform them and make them immediately

Everyone
has a
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Jewish. And that's something that we deal with in Israel all the time in terms of conversions to Judaism.

Roger: I think what's fascinating here is this juxtaposition between the American perspective on this issue and the Israeli perspective. Which is, in America we have certain processes of assimilation and acculturation and we are familiar with those in terms of how immigrants (Irish, Mexican, etc.) are assimilated and acculturated into American society. But, in the United States, we are not as familiar or comfortable with the idea of religious acculturation. It sounds like this is a common topic of discussion and a matter

that must be dealt with every day in Israel.

Ofer: There is a very clear rational for this distinction. The difference between the American nation and the Jewish nation is that in Israel Judaism is not only a religion it's also a nationality. So if you wanted to become part of the Jewish nation, you have to accept the Jewish religion. There is no separation between the two. From an Israeli perspective, there is no nation separate from religion. It's all one and the same. And here in America, we make no distinctions about religion. Other Americans do not care what religion you profess as long as you are a part of this nation and carry an American passport. And so that makes a big difference. »



United Hebrew Center Synagogue in Pueblo, Colorado



Roger: It does make a huge difference. The process of conversion and welcoming people back requires a formalized process of accepting Judaism as your belief system as well as nationality. This is very different than what occurs in the United States. Let's return to the topic of the United States. Can you tell me more about Pueblo, Colorado, and how you became connected to the United Hebrew Center in that city?

Ofer: Since I am a trained musician and knowledgeable about the Jewish liturgy, in fact a Hebrew cantor, I am accustomed to performing and praying in front of the community. First I was a cantor in Germany and later in Philadelphia. Here in Colorado Springs, my expertise was invaluable because I know how to read from the scroll of Torah and I know the many different tunes of the different prayers that are celebrated on Jewish holidays.

When I first visited the synagogue in Pueblo, I came across a dying institution. It it was very sad because it used to be a glorious building and a large congregation. Each seat in the synagogue has a brass plate with the name of a person — row after row you could see all the families that have made this a vibrant community at one time. But no one is there anymore. They're all in the cemetery.

[Authorial note: Although Ofer did not expressly state it — I think it is clear that his decision to participate at Pueblo is connected to his deep commitment to care for this important Jewish community.]

Roger: This was my experience—of a dying community—when I visited the United Hebrew Center with you during Rosh Hashanah during October 2013. How many people attended that service?

Ofer: We barely had a minyan — a minyan is the number in Judaism for 10 people. The orthodox would say 10 men are required and they would not consider women in this number. We cannot afford orthodoxy. All that matters is that the participants are Jewish. And when we are short a person, we count the Torah scroll as our 10th person.

Roger: Who attended that night and who regularly participates?

Ofer: There are many people from Pueblo who come to pray but are not Jewish. If you ask them, "What are you doing here? Why would you sit in the synagogue for eight hours to sit quietly and pray with everybody?" They say, "Oh, because we are conversos, we are Jews." When I ask, "How do you know?" They respond, "My grandma told me." So it is clear they feel something very sincere, but you still cannot count their numbers toward the Jewish ritual if you want to do it the right way.

Roger: Right. So there is connectivity here. What's interesting is that at the United Hebrew Center there is this circumstance where a small Jewish community is trying to be welcoming to a broader population but it also recognizes there are still distinctions — there are still separations.

Ofer: Yes, but these conversos feel very comfortable because the prayers—most of the prayers—are very universal. Bring peace to the world and its inhabitants because they are all your creation. Bring wisdom to the government of this country so they will do these things justly and honestly. So many persons can identify with this perspective.

Roger: In Pueblo, do you think there is a common community response to the crypto-Jews or do you think it's more complicated?

Ofer: I think that it's complicated. And I think that the relationship between Jews and crypto-Jews needs to be explored further. I believe the approach of many in the Jewish community is: "We recognize that you feel as you do, but if you come to the synagogue, do not expect to be accepted immediately." Overall and in general I believe the response to date has been one of suspicion. Why? Because there were times in the past when people came from the outside to Judaism for ulterior motives — persons that came in order to convert and proselytize to the Jews.

Most of the prayers are very universal. Bring peace to the world and its inhabitants... Bring wisdom to the government... So many persons can identify with this perspective.

Roger: What I hear you stating is that some suspicion of the crypto-Jews is connected to much deeper concerns within the Jewish community. These are historical worries about the longterm survival of Judaism and how outsiders impact that survival.

Ofer: Yes, I believe many Jews want to make sure to place you through two or three years of training before you are considered to be Jewish. They want to be sure you are not proselytizing.

Roger: So it's a type of preservation?

Ofer: Yes, preservation. Jews have had to be very careful—especially in Spain after the anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1390s and up until the expulsion in 1492. During this time many Jews, for whatever reasons, converted to Catholicism. These converts had great knowledge of Judaism and some would twist things around. They would come back to their former Jewish community and say, "Why do you have to keep doing that? You can be Catholic and you would have a much better life. You will be considered equal to others and you won't be so segregated." In Judaism, the community was always very worried about this type of existential threat. >>



Roger: It seems now the same kind of complications exist in Pueblo. This is a very small community that is shrinking. It wants to live and welcome people in, but it also has to be careful.

Ofer: Yes, but there is room for optimism. Pueblo is growing and it's becoming an energetic city once again. There are now several new families coming to services. These are everyday Jews that have immigrated to Pueblo from places like Israel, Tajikistan, Georgia, and North Carolina.

Roger: Ah. It's a new immigrant Jewish community.

Ofer: Exactly.

Roger: I should ask you before we run out of time, about your family. The surname – Ben-Amots – doesn't sound very Ashkenazi? Perhaps the details of your name might reveal why you care so much about the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities.

Ofer: No, I am not Ashkenazi. First of all, my father's name was not "Ben-Amots," it was "Cahlon" which is a biblical name. He came from Libya in North Africa, so I'm likely of Jewish and Berber origins. So, I am, definitely in a way – African American! My mother is from Bulgaria and she comes from a Sephardic family who were expelled from Spain and relocated to the Balkans. We have names in the family like "Catalan" and "Bejar" and her direct name was "Nicimo" which is "Son of

Nicim." So, I am pure Sephardic from my mother's side and Eastern Sephardic (North African) from my father's side. That's the way we grew up – it's the same Judaism as Ashkenazi except the attitude is a little bit different. It's much more liberal, it's much more flexible, it's much more relaxed. There's not the strictness.

Roger: Do you think that this personal background has shaped the way you approach persons that self-identify as crypto-Jews?

Ofer: You know, I consider myself not to be religious, but rather to be traditional. So I keep the tradition. And because I feel so strongly about my Judaism I am not afraid that with every encounter I will lose my connection to it. It will not happen. I have a very strong identity so that's why I can be more flexible in accepting others. With somebody who feels very weak about their Judaism – they might be afraid to walk into a church. I am not afraid to walk into a church because I am not going to become Christian.

Roger: [Laughing.] You are not signing up?

Ofer: [Laughing.] No. I love the music, I love the art, I love the people, but I am not going to change my religion the next day. This sense of security, internal security, fits well with learning to accept other people for who they are.

Roger: Very good! Well, Ofer, thanks for visiting with me.

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REPAIRING THE WORLD IN EL PASO, TEXAS

BY CORINNE BROWN

While members of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies explore the history and heritage of the crypto-Judaic experience worldwide, congregation B'nai Zion in El Paso, Texas opens its doors each year to help those of *converso* descent in the Southwest explore the possibility of return. Each summer for the past 11 years, a summer conference unites the curious with the faithful, the Catholic with the Jew, and the hidden with the revealed.

This year's conference, scheduled for August 8-10, promises to be a pivotal event, open to any who wish to attend. Under the guidance of Rabbi Stephen Leon since 1986, the Congregation stands as a welcoming portal of possibility and change, a sanctuary offering an opportunity for sharing, learning, and Jewish identification for all who seek it.

Much of the Conference success must be credited to the Rabbi and his co-chair, Sonya Loya from Ruidoso, New Mexico, who have devoted time and energy to building its attendance.

The Rabbi, originally from Brooklyn, New York, has become a great friend to the crypto-Jewish citizens of Texas and New Mexico. Sonya, born in New Mexico and a *converso* herself, is dedicated to helping others come forward and learn.

No stranger to Jewish history, Rabbi Leon is a graduate of Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, with a long history of synagogue and community leadership. He served as Dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion from 1974 through 1986. Currently on the board of Kulanu and the El Paso Holocaust Museum, he



Rabbi Stephen Leon

has also served as an instructor in the religion department of the University of Texas at El Paso for the past decade.

"This year's *Anusim* Conference will be historic," said Leon. "Possibly the most important one yet. We will officially dedicate an *Anusim* Center right here in El Paso. Located on the site of a former Holocaust Museum, the Center will be part museum, part study center, and a place to consider a return to Judaism. We hope it will become a place to learn about the Inquisition, to hear testimonies, to see art exhibitions, and experience quality programs. If people want to explore their

identity, we want this to be the place to start, including conversion."

The Center is already a 501(c)(3) and hopes to have non-profit status by August of 2014. Key volunteers are working on grants.

"This inauguration, I believe," continued Rabbi Leon, "will change the Jewish world. The news is out and the momentum is growing. Once our doors are open, we hope to be accessible by anyone."



Sonya Loya

Rabbi Leon's long time commitment to the cause is one of the major forces behind the realization of the Center. In 1999 he received a grant from the El Paso Community Foundation to visit places in Europe where crypto-Jews have lived, including Belmonte, Portugal, a city where 300 crypto-Jews formally returned to Judaism. At the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism Biennial Convention in December 2009, he presented an historic resolution to make *Tisha B'Av* an official time to educate and emphasize the Spanish Inquisition and welcome the return of the *B'nei Anusim*. In addition, he has spoken on the subject of "The Return of the Crypto-Jews to Judaism" throughout the United States, in Cape Town, Barcelona, Jerusalem, and Budapest.

This summer's inauguration puts El Paso at the epicenter of the quest for knowledge and guidance in the crypto-Jewish search for identity. The effort will bring together a number of luminaries in the telling of this story: the conference keynote speaker is historian/writer David Gitlitz, author of "Secrecy and Deceit." Honorary Conference Chair is Joseph Lovett, producer of the film "Children of the Inquisition."

Additional conference details and registration forms are available by emailing Rabbi Stephen Leon (Rabbisal@aol.com), Sonya Loya (tav_22@yahoo.com) or by calling Congregation B'nai Zion Synagogue at 915-833-2222.

SUMMER ANUSIM CONFERENCE



Mourning the Loss

BY ANNETTE-CHANA PASCAL-COHEN

TRAVEL

Dotting the landscape of the rocky Spanish terrain are pencil-thin, dark green, toweringly tall cypress trees. They are often planted at a burial site to mark the loss with a grand gesture. The regal cypress offsets the sadness. In Israel there is a similar meaningful landscape. Looking out over the hills toward the Mount of Olives from the Jewish Quarter in the Old City one sees the ancient Jewish cemetery on the hillside where sages are interred. Scattered in front and among the tombs are the ubiquitous cypress trees. The two countries seem oddly bound to me by this anomaly.



For me, a Jew, there was great sadness in my glimpse of Spain. I was traveling with a small group on a Jewish Heritage Tour. The Ministry of Tourism in Spain is promoting faith-based Jewish tours as well as festivals and events geared toward Jewish-minded people. They have created a Jewish grand tour of the country. My friends, let me tell you, it's a hollow effort. A joke.

There is no Jewish heritage in Spain. There's nothing left of their Jews whom they repeatedly abused and expelled. Most former synagogues are either mosques or churches. The Jewish Quarters from city to city are well marked, but there are no Jews there. It is a hollow gesture.

The tour guides are taught to welcome the Jews and even their return to live as citizens. It's been quite a while since this offer was made. To date, not one visa has been issued. What's the problem? The government wants Sephardic Jews who wish to return to document the presence of their families from 1492. So it's basically a non-gesture. The government has asked the Jewish community to decide "who is a Jew." Who qualifies? How nice. However, the task



Synagogue/Church of Santa María la Blanca, Toledo, Spain

has been given to the Chief Rabbi and members of the Jewish community. What's the problem then? Well, they can't agree on terms.

Why does Spain want the Jews to return – again? Could it be that their economy is in trouble? Of course. They are looking to tourism and Jewish return to help fill their coffers. The lack of sincerity is palpable.

Sometimes a chill went through me when I heard or witnessed remnants of old myths or vestiges of behavior common during the time of the Inquisition and beyond.

In Toledo, outside the synagogue of Samuel Ha-Levi, which is now the Church of Santa María la Blanca, the guide was



of Spanish Jewry

giving us an historical overview. With a tone of amusement in her voice she told us that there used to be an ATM machine just outside the old synagogue (church). She repeated it twice and said, “Can you imagine?” What was the implication? Clearly it was the common myth that Jews are penurious. You could catch the implication if you were tuned in.

In Seville during Holy Week there are festivals and parades dedicated to various saints. Elaborate and expensive floats are created to carry the icons through the streets. Throngs of people follow the floats singing religious songs. Ominously, the floats are surrounded by people dressed as penitents. This was the mode of dress during the Inquisition for humiliating religious backsliders. They wear a long black robe and a black dunce hat which is about two or three feet high. This strange, striking, frightening outfit was usually seen on *marranos* (converts who were accused of “Judaizing”). It is a mirror into the past, the present, and the future.

Why would a Jew want to return to Spain? Apparently the word on the street is that it is an *entrée* into the European Union of which Spain is a member. With a Spanish passport one could travel easily from one European country to another. The purpose is to find new ways of doing business in under-served areas.



“Penitents” in Seville during Holy Week festivals.

The Sephardim who were forced to leave Spain more than 500 years ago took their Spanish culture with them. They were very proud of their Spanish heritage. They brought recipes for food, music, dance and language (Ladino). They never forgot that they came from Spain. Many never forgot that they were once Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism. We call them *B’nei Anusim* (the forced ones).

Many were crypto-Jews—Catholic on the outside and Jewish on the inside. It was a frightening way to live. The Inquisition was always on the lookout for a heretic.

To be sure, there are still crypto-Jews in Spain. I met a young Jewish lady from New Jersey who has been living in Seville for 11 years. She told me that crypto-Jews were coming out of the woodwork exponentially. One of our guides told us he comes from a neighborhood that has been all Jewish. He said he has no doubt that he has Jewish DNA in his blood.

So many Spaniards have Jewish genes. Millions. Jews have been in Spain for close to 3,000 years. Most scholars use the 2,000-year figure. However, according to author Raphael Patel, Jews were sailing the Mediterranean for certainly a thousand years before the destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem.

There are many Sephardim in Israel and around the world. I ate the food and heard the music that they took with them when they left. It is a distinct familiarity. And yet, it is still *Judenrein*.

Spain has character. It has gypsies who created the flamenco songs and dances. It has craggy hills and valleys with breathtaking vistas. The Costa del Sol is a paradise. Whitewashed villages hang precariously on precipices; the cities abound with beautiful buildings. Life teems on the streets, cafes on the sidewalks are filled with talk and laughter.

But don’t be fooled by the glitter. Menacing undercurrents still can be felt that don’t bode well for the future of Jews in Spain.

Piece by Piece

making sense out of chaos...

BY GENIE MILGROM

THE ARTS

I can pinpoint the exact moment that my passion for mosaic art started. I had already converted formally from Roman Catholic to Orthodox Judaism and later learned that I was actually Jewish all along and a descendent of the medieval crypto-Jews of Spain and Portugal. I had personally taken my life, shattered it into small pieces and not only put it back together but rebuilt it with my husband Michael as part of a vibrant Jewish Community in Pinecrest, Florida.

Without understanding the deeper meaning of my actions, it was at that time that I started smashing large vases and collecting bits and pieces of plates as well as colorful shards and slowly putting them back into a meaningful pattern. When I

began to dabble in mosaics, I started making large 6-foot by 8-foot segments that looked like intricately woven Persian carpets, but slowly I wanted to refine my art and express myself more professionally through my mosaic work.

I had dabbled in the arts for many years. As the daughter of a skilled traditional oil painter, I had always been artsy-crafty and created and had gallery showings of my miniature art work and dioramas, acrylic and ink on canvas paintings, and polymer clay detailed faces and jewelry. But even with the versatility of the arts, none of these held my attention for very long—until mosaics came along. There was just something very

therapeutic about making sense out of chaos and there was, of course, the great feeling of releasing all aggression by breaking the tiles!

To bring my work to the next level, I realized I needed professional instruction and took classes locally in Miami yet none really elevated me to the place where I wanted to be. It was about this same time that Michael and I had decided to build our home and had painstakingly designed every nook and cranny to be a reflection of my true

Sephardic background. Amidst the blend of the Moroccan, Spanish and Moorish design, we left large and vast white walls open for my mosaic artwork. Faced with this blank canvas and two years to fill it, I felt that *maybe* I had bit off more than I could chew.

However, I am not one to be easily daunted. I finally located the ideal place to take me to the next level: a master class in Byzantine mosaics held in Venice, Italy at the Orsoni foundry. Here they make Venetian *smalti* which are the poured glass tiles that have been used for centuries in most, if not all, the mosaic artwork throughout the synagogues, churches and plazas in Europe.

Off I went to spend one week in the dormitories of the foundry and take individual

instruction in this ancient art. After learning the history and understanding the flow of the glass, we were allowed only the implements that had started the art. I was given a block of wood and a large tool that was a mix between an axe and a sledgehammer and a large box of band-aids. There



Out of the shards, I made sense of the glass; out of the shards, I made sense of my life—and both are good.



were five students from all over the world and one teacher. Italian was the language spoken with a little bit of English. This wasn't turning out as expected but after a week of three hours of sleep, I left with two incredibly crafted mosaics in the Byzantine method and had smashed more than my share of tiles and fingers. I left Orsoni with my master's degree (Master in Mosaico is a degree not like a Master in Art but showing that a person is highly specialized in that discipline) and returned home with sufficient know-how to not only fill the canvas of the walls but also to make a huge and intricate dome that sits on top of my home.

I was hooked. I returned a year later for another week of instruction in mosaic portraiture and received a second master's degree from Orsoni. Out of the shards, I made sense of the glass; out of the shards, I made sense of my life—and both are good.



Genie Milgrom, president-elect of the SCJS, lives in Miami, Florida. Multi-talented and multi-faceted, her art integrates her life.

Right, This remarkable replica of a Torah made entirely of mosaic stone is a testament to the permanence of Jewish life.



An unbroken line 15 generations into the past...

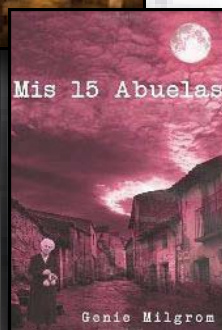


Journey with Genie Milgrom

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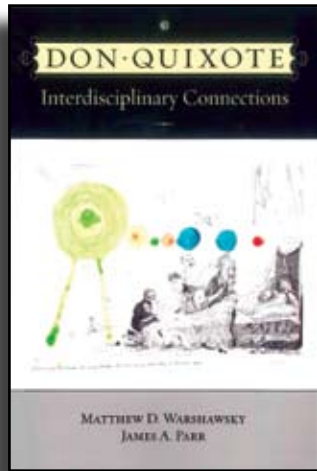


For ordering & booking information go to
GenieMilgrom.com



Don Quixote: Interdisciplinary Connections

EDITED BY
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NEWARK, DE
JUAN DE LA CUESTA, 2013



Don Quixote, by Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), is one of the outstanding works of Spanish literature, indeed, of world literature; it's often called the first modern novel. Readers of *HaLapid* are likely to be familiar with theories that Cervantes himself had Jewish ancestors, or that his Jewish background, real or imagined, is reflected in his writing. The book under review has only one essay related to this theme, “Beyond the Shadow of a Possibility: The Modernity of a *Converso* Worldview in Don Quixote,” by Matthew Warshawsky, one of the editors. Other essays are by J. Simon, I. Jaén Portillo, B. Simerka, C. B. Weimer, J. Abril Sánchez, F.A. de Armas, R. Bayliss, R. Almoguera and K. Regan, R. Miñana, S. Velasco, and M. Ertman. The chapters were originally delivered as papers at a conference in 2012 at the University of Portland. Presenters were afforded the opportunity to read and comment on each other's contributions, enriching the volume and providing it coherence beyond what is typical in such publications.

Essays in this volume look at both the novel and its eponymous hero from multiple perspectives ranging from the demonology or sexual imagery of the 16th and 17th centuries to contemporary comic-book superheroes, and debate the degree to which Don Quixote, or his squire Sancho Panza, develop throughout the novel—or in the discourse about Don Quixote over the centuries. Even those who are primarily interested in crypto-Jewish discussions will find much that is useful in these essays.

For example, Robert Bayliss' essay, “A Tale of Two Quixotes: Don Quixote Today, in Theory and Practice,” is devoted to the “reception history” of Don Quixote (the novel) and Don

The hero's ancestral home and lineage are unknown, and he asserts that virtue derives from actions rather than lineage, and criticism of purity of blood (limpieza de sangre).

Quixote (the character)—how the book and the hero are approached, including by “millions who have never actually read the book.” This is particularly important since Don Quixote is “a brand, a symbol, and archetype, and an icon...” (166). In particular, Bayliss addresses the great gap between theoretical, academic studies, often featuring “hard” readings of the novel as a satire critiquing or lampooning the title character's fixations, and more “practical,” popular, romantic and “soft” readings of the novel as being about a heroic idealist. The basic attitude towards Don Quixote has to be relevant to those who wish to see

crypto-Judaism or New Christian themes in the work, or for that matter in the person of its author, as the soft, practical approach is epitomized, for Bayliss, by *Man of La Mancha* on stage and in film,¹ a work which brings Cervantes himself on stage as the leading character and Quixote's alter ego.

Warshawsky's chapter has a lot more balance than many writings on this subject, with useful suggestions about how to read Cervantes and careful avoidance of conclusions that extend beyond the text. He reviews some of the important scholarship that suggests Cervantes may have been a “New Christian” but carefully emphasizes that Cervantes was an authentic Christian (not likely a secret Jew) and critiques some scholarship finding explicitly Jewish references in the book as carefully researched... but historical circumstances do not bear them out (174). Rather, Warshawsky points to a “subtle understanding of the contradictory realities that defined the environment in which



The sculptures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza greet guests at La Felguera, restaurant at the Hotel Posada Carmina in San Miguel de Allende.



descendants of Jews (and Muslims) lived.” (174). He does this by showing Cervantes’ critique of lineage and lying to maintain false appearances. The hero’s ancestral home and lineage are unknown, and he asserts that virtue derives from actions rather than lineage, and criticism of purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*). Moreover, the work is profoundly secular, for example, the Bible is replaced by a ledger (282). Sancho Panza says multiple times he is an Old Christian, but neither he nor even the parish priest have any Christian spirituality (183–4). Warshawsky points to the Inquisition of Don Quixote’s books, to the Don’s effusive prayers over a potion, a discussion of writings presumably in Aljamiado (Castilian in Arabic characters), Dulcinea’s “new” lineage, and other stories as evidence of Cervantes’ heightened “awareness of the perspective of New Christians,” although he expresses this “more obliquely than openly” (295). Ultimately, Warshawsky sees the Don as marginalized in ways that resonate with modern feelings of marginalization. While careful to stay close to the text and avoiding the highly speculative approaches of the authors mentioned early in the chapter, Warshawsky’s reading of Cervantes and Don Quixote offers not only a deeper understanding of a New Christian perspective for the author and the book, but also a sense as to why and how these themes speak so loudly to us in the 21st century.

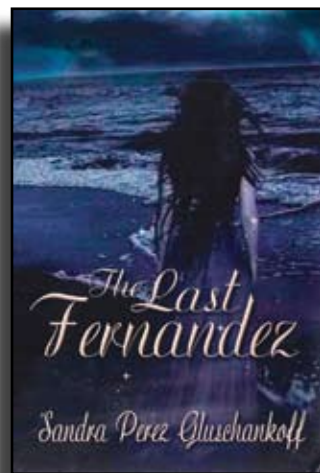
[1] 1965; Book by Dale Wasserman, Music Mitch Leigh, Lyrics: Joe Darion. Curiously, neither the play nor the film adaptation (directed by Arthur Hiller, released by United Artists 1972) are given in the reference list

—Seth Ward, University of Wyoming



The Last Fernandez

BY SANDRA PEREZ GLUSCHANKOFF
BARBOURVILLE, KY
MARTIN SISTERS PUBLISHING, 2012



Part historical fiction, part time travel, and part romance, this multi-layered tale spans 500 years and two continents. The author’s ultimate goal is to trace the persecution of the Jews of Cordoba in the 16th century and the journey of one family who left a treasured clue linking them to our modern day protagonist and providing a key to her family history.

But to tell the larger tale, Gluschkoff begins with the story of an orphaned girl in a village in Argentina in the 1950s. Sheltered in a convent for safekeeping, following the untimely death of her parents, young Angelina finds solace in the awareness of an imaginary friend, Sara di Laurenti, a kindred soul who is her musical counterpart and who lived centuries before her in Spain. Both girls play the harpsichord, their spiritual link and time-traveling “highway” by which they experience each other’s lives.

Author Gluschkoff has done her share of research to create two parallel worlds; the Argentinean one which houses Angelina from childhood, raised in the protection of a nun who grows to love her like her own daughter, and the other; the world of

medieval Spain under the reign of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, drawn in rich detail embracing culture, costume, and everyday life.

Sister Lucia sees her young, lonely Angelina to adulthood, all the way through to college in Buenos Aires, and the hostile climate of repression and terrorism during the “Dirty War” of the 1970s. There, political activists, extremists, and even college students fell victim to the military police.

Sara’s story, rich and complex, unfolding within the world of the *conversos* (or *marranos*) of Spain, leads to love and marriage to a gifted rabbi and healer, Dr. Leon Fernandez. The couple’s happiness and plans to flee Spain end with a vicious attack upon them by the thugs of the Spanish Inquisition.

In a surprise ending, Angelina is captured in a raid and narrowly escapes her torturers. Her rescuer, a man who also shared a part of Angelina’s past, takes her back to Spain to make sense out of the dazzling clue, a brilliant amulet worn by her ancestor. Its image, visible in a painting of Sara, drove him to search for her in the first place. By so doing, he connects Angelina with her rightful past.

For anyone who loves history and great love stories, a compelling read.

—Corinne Brown, Editor



About the author:
SCJS member
Sandra Perez Gluschkoff
was born and raised in Argentina and immigrated to the US in the early 1990s. Her

academic background is in psycho-analysis, anthropology, Judaic studies, and Hebrew. Over time she has worked as a freelance writer and screenplay consultant.

THE CRYPTO-JEWS OF ITALY

Editor's Note A few years ago I had the pleasure of meeting SCJS member Rabbi Barbara Aiello from Florida. She presented a fascinating topic: her mission to restore the true history of the medieval Jewish community in Calabria, Italy, (long hidden due to the Inquisition and the predominance of the Catholic Church) and the establishment of the present day Jewish community there.

The Rabbi also takes heritage tours to Italy for anyone who thinks they might have Italian Jewish roots. Among many other remarkable things in her presentation, she pointed out this unique window. I am attaching a typical Baroque window found in Spanish Colonial Mexican architecture for comparison.

Read her intriguing explanation.
—CJB

The Italian word for “ridge” is *timpone* and this is the name given to the ancient Jewish quarter in Nicastro (the historical center of what is now known as Lamezia Terme, in Calabria, in the south of Italy).

Timpone marks a thriving Jewish presence which began in the 1200s and continued through the 1500s when Italian Jews perfected the silk and indigo trade that characterized their special contribution to the local economy.

At the center of the Quarter, the old synagogue still stands, now transformed into a Catholic Church. But not completely. Historians believe that the window above the entrance was once a Magen David (Star of David) and, as was the custom in Inquisition times, three of the six points of the Star were left intact – an affectation that became an architectural standard throughout the south of Italy and a

way of identifying those churches that once were synagogues.

Rachele Taverna, now nearly 100 years old, is one of the oldest residents of Timpone. “*Si, nel tempo fa, siamo stati ebrei,*” (“Yes, in the past we were Jews”). Both her surname and given name attest to her Jewish roots.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello is the founder and director of the Italian Jewish Cultural Center of Calabria (IjCCC) and the first woman rabbi and non-orthodox rabbi in Italy. She is rabbi of *Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud* (The Eternal Light of the South) the first active synagogue in Calabria and Sicily in 500 years since Inquisition times. Her work includes officiating at the first ever Bat Mitzvah in Italy (where a girl read directly from

the Torah scroll) and the first acknowledged Bar Mitzvah in Sicily in 500 years. Through the IjCCC, Rabbi Barbara and her staff help Italians discover and connect with their Jewish roots. Contact Rabbi Barbara Aiello through her website: www.rabbibarbara.com



Top right, Catholic church (former synagogue) with detail of unusual window. Above left, a typical Spanish Baroque church window. Above right, Rachele Taverna, past 100 years of age, a Jewish member of the community.



The Pomegranate

When selecting the logo for the new SCJS online newsletter, the process was one of pure imagery. Artistry reflected imagination. As art, it can portray whatever the viewer may find in it. Designers of the pomegranate logo selected this royally luscious fruit at first because of its historical connection between Mesopotamia and the Iberian Peninsula, and its later introduction to the Americas by Spanish settlers in the early 1500s. It is mentioned by Homer in Greek mythology and included in the Hebrew Bible within poems written by Solomon. It was cherished by Mohammad and included in Moorish architecture. It appears in Christian artworks and was invoked as a symbol by Queen Isabella of Spain.

The pomegranate is considered by many cultures and traditions to be a fertile symbol of life and renewal. How fitting it is, then, to celebrate the pomegranate as a symbol of this Society dedicated to researching, gathering, and disseminating a broad spectrum of information about the lives of crypto-Jews throughout the past five centuries and today.

Like the many-seeded pomegranate, Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were scattered across the world. Hidden beneath a protective shell of secrecy, seeds of the banished and escaped multitudes took root, becoming early establishers of communities in the New World and in enclaves around the Old World, in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. Like the pomegranate tree, crypto-Jews have survived harsh conditions, emerging from branches that appear lifeless during the deciduous winter season of diaspora.

La Granada's readership includes scholars and researchers within various academic disciplines from the American



Debbie Wohl Isard



La Granada Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies



Southwest, all around the country and the world; talented artists, musicians, and writers; descendants of crypto-Jews who "return" and want to share their voyage of discovery with others; descendants of crypto-Jews who are interested in the historical but not necessarily religious implications of their discoveries; genealogists; geneticists; speakers of English, Spanish, Ladino, Yiddish, Turkish, Aramaic, Hebrew and other languages and dialects; and lay people with and without Iberian, Sephardic, or crypto-Jewish ancestors.

Please share **La Granada** with others and help us grow our mailing list like the branches of the pomegranate tree.

Debbie Wohl Isard,
Editor, **La Granada,**
Society for Crypto-Judaic
Studies, cryptojews.com

*Thank you, Marilyn Rose,
for painting the original pomegranates and creating the
La Granada logo. — Debbie*

Spice box—"Pomegranate," copper (above) **Avi Biran, 1964 – Born in Haifa, Israel**

Internationally acclaimed award-winning artist

Bachelor of Fine Arts. Department of Gold and Silversmithing
Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, Israel

Member of "The American Guild of Judaic Art." Solo and group
exhibitions throughout Israel and the United States. Carried by
The Jerusalem House of Quality, 12 Hebron Road, Jerusalem
93542, Israel

Featured in private, civic, and museum collections around the
world and in books on art and design

Remembering BOB HATTEM

First Editor of HaLapid

On Friday, April 4, 2014, the SCJS lost one of its earliest members and I lost one of my best friends.

In 1992 Bob Hattem called me. He said that he had regards from Judy Frankel. I asked him where he saw her. He responded that he ran into her at a conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies in Buena Park, California, not far from Los Angeles.

I said, "What is the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies?"

He told me about the Society and I cursed him for not telling me about it before the conference. The next year he and I flew together to San Antonio for my first experience with the SCJS.

Bob's father, a Sephardic immigrant from Turkey, opened the first supermarket in the Los Angeles area and Bob spent his working life in the family business. But his first love was the study of history, especially of the Jews in the American West. He was an active member of *Los Californianos*. I attended several of their conferences with him.

His library contained books on California history, the American Revolution, Jews in Colonial America, the Spanish exploration of California, and the West. He had a complete collection of *Life* magazines dating back to the first edition in 1936.

Bob became aware of the SCJS more than 20 years ago. He was in New Mexico for a conference of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. There he met Stan Hordes and Gloria Trujillo who were at that time organizing the Society. He joined and attended the first conference in Taos in 1991. He suggested that the SCJS start a newsletter and he became its first editor. The publication was at first called simply "The Newsletter of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies." After a few issues, someone suggested that we adopt the name used by Artur Carlos Barros Basto in the publication that he initiated in the 1920s: *HaLapid*.

Bob published Volume 1, No. 1 in the winter of 1993. Its

table of contents contain: "A Spotlight on New Mexico Secret Jews," "Seville has a Major Archive for Crypto-Jews" and "Crypto-Jews in Spain Today."

Bob was born in Los Angeles in 1919. He is from a family with a long history of activism with Sephardim. His grandparents were Ladino-speaking Jews from Kuzguncuk, on the Asian side of Istanbul. His family was among the founders of *La Comunidad Sefardi* of Los Angeles, now known as Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel, his grandfather was treasurer in the early years and his father was president in 1929. Bob himself was a member of the board and the founding editor of "El Shofar" the organizational newsletter. He edited the publication for six years before leaving it to become founding temple archivist/historian. In March 1932, his was the first Bar

Mitzvah held in the new Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel.

Prior to his work with the SCJS, he had been active in many historical societies, such as President, as well as the Editor of the newsletter of the Native Sons of the Golden West; Santa Monica Parlor Editor and past Vice-President of the Los Angeles City Historical Society; Editor of the Associated Historical Societies of Los Angeles; founding Editor of the Department of California, Jewish War Veterans newsletter;

founding Editor of the Association of American Jewish Friends of Turkey Newsletter; a member of the San Diego Historical Society, Santa Barbara Historical Society, The Alliance Israelite Universelle, the Monterey Historical and California Historical Societies, the Southern California Historical Society, and *Los Californianos*, an historical genealogical group for which he received two awards for outstanding service to the organization.

In his mid-80s, declining health restricted his activities. He gave up editing *HaLapid*, but I remember the many times he worked with me in getting *HaLapid* ready for mailing.

He lived to see his 95th birthday. Bob Hattem contributed much to our Society and I will miss him.

—Arthur Benveniste



Bob Hattem



Welcome, You!

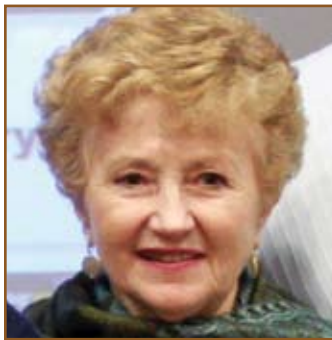


BY RACHEL AMADO BORTNICK

I am very excited to host the next Society of Crypto-Judaic Studies conference taking place in my city, Dallas, and can't wait to welcome all of you here! You will enjoy an outstanding conference with fascinating guest speakers and presentations, set in the luxurious Hilton Anatole Hotel of this amazing city.

In the 25 years I have lived here, Dallas transformed itself into a truly world-class city, with spectacular modern architecture, countless art galleries and museums, a rapid-transit system, one of the world's few parks built over a major highway, a free historic trolley line downtown with stops at every major point of interest, and so much more. Summertime is especially filled with free outdoor events such as music, dance, and food festivals all over town.

We also have two important institutions of specific relevance to Spanish and Latino culture: the **Meadows Museum** at Southern Methodist University, which has the largest collection of Spanish art outside of the Prado (in



Rachel Amado Bortnick

Madrid) in the entire world, not even counting the amazing temporary exhibitions; and the **Latino Cultural Center**, a beautiful modern building designed by the famous Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta, which serves as "a regional catalyst for the preservation, development and promotion of Latino and Hispanic arts and culture."

I know you'll be impressed with the beautiful **Hilton Anatole Hotel** with its immense park-like setting, three swimming pools, its own collection of art at every corner of the buildings, and all the amenities expected in such a

luxury hotel. It's your chance to take advantage of all this at the incredibly low room rate we've arranged. So allow yourself extra time before and after the SCJS conference to visit and appreciate Dallas. I promise you'll be glad you did.

See you soon!
¡Hasta la vista!
—Rachel

CONFERENCE ONLINE REGISTRATION:
bpt.me/63946

HOTEL RESERVATIONS:
resweb.passkey.com/go/2014SocietyforCJStudies

Visit these websites to make plans to enjoy your stay in Dallas!

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www.guides.milespartnership.com/da/ovg/2013/index.html

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www.dallasculture.org/latinoculturalcenter

SCJS CONFERENCE



SCJS IN DALLAS: An adventure awaits us!

BY DOLORES SLOAN

I settled in for Sunday breakfast recently, opened the *New York Times*—still warm from lying in the April sun outside the door—and pulled out the Travel section for a pleasant surprise. **Doreen Carvajal**, who will be speaking at the SCJS 24th Annual Conference in Dallas, was the author of the featured article therein, “Family Reunion, Centuries Later.”

In the three-page article, Carvajal describes her visits to Segovia, 55 miles north of Madrid, Spain, seeking evidence of a prominent ancestor, Diego Arias Dávila, a Sephardic Jewish convert to Catholicism, who served royalty in the 15th century and was hounded by the Inquisition for practicing Judaism in secret (www.nytimes.com/2014/04/06/travel/in-spain-a-family-reunion-centuries-later.html?_r=0).

When her memoir, “The Forgetting River,” was published in 2012, we invited Carvajal to speak at our then upcoming Albuquerque conference. We wanted to learn about her experience living in a familial village of origin, Arcos de la Frontera, in Andalusia, and the insights gained about her family’s Sephardic Jewish heritage. Short notice prevented her, based in Paris as a *Times* writer, from accepting, but this July she will be with us, speaking at our conference in Dallas at the Anatole Hilton Hotel, July 20–22.

Carvajal is one of several noted speakers to grace the program this year. Keynote Speaker is **Angelina Muñiz-Huberman**, Mexican novelist, poet of Sephardic origin and recipient of her country’s prestigious *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* award, who will address the annual dinner Sunday, July 20. **Ilan Stavans**, noted scholar of Hispanic literature and professor at Amherst College, will speak on “The Crypto-Jew as Metaphor,” the Annual Martin Sosin Address to Advance Scholarship in the Crypto-Judaic Arts, on Monday, July 21.

In addition to Carvajal, Muñiz-Huberman and Stavans, the conference will feature presentations by various scholars, speakers with crypto-Jewish roots, artists from several venues, and individuals sharing research or cultural information. Special attention will be given to the historical and cultural background of the descendants of Spanish settlers, who made their way from the north of what is now Mexico, beginning in the sixteenth centuries, and became the founders of Texas borderland communities. Many of these were *conversos*, Sephardic Jews converted to Catholicism.

Hector Galán, documentary filmmaker whose work has appeared on PBS’ *Frontline* and *The American Experience*, will present on “Capturing Lost and Untold Stories on Film.” Conferees will view selections from Galán’s “Songs of the



Dolores “Dolly” Sloan

Homeland,” about *conjunto*, Tejano music. Galán calls *conjunto* “true American folk music,” with the musical legacy of *converso* settlers contributing, along with other ethnic groups, to its development. **Los Morales Boyz** will perform for the Judy Frankel Memorial Concert.

Carlos Larralde, whose 1978 PhD dissertation, “*Chicano Jews in South Texas*,” predated much of the contemporary research on crypto-Judaism in the American Southwest, will present on the Tejano legacy of his family as crypto-Jews. A past presenter at the 2011 SCJS Conference,

Larralde’s articles have appeared in *HaLapid*, *The Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* and in numerous publications.

Hiram Jacques will speak on research from the Roman era to the present, which led to the publication of his monumental work on the Jacques and Galán families of Texas and others whose genealogy intersected theirs. A copy of the book is in the archives of the University of Texas, Austin. His paternal Jacques Y chromosome and his maternal mitochondrial DNA have been of interest to *National Geographic* and to the Mexico DNA Project, respectively.

Pamela A. Patton, author of “Art of Estrangement: Redefining Jews in Reconquest Spain,” and Chair, Art History, at Southern Methodist University, will speak on images concerning *conversos* and Sephardic Jews during the *Reconquista*. Patton, Galán and Jacques are among those whose presentations relate to the crypto-Judaic arts and are recipients of awards from the Sosin-Stratton-Pettitt Foundation. Another recipient is Sephardic singer and composer **Stephanie Cohen**, who will perform songs with Sephardic roots and describe how they have been utilized in programs for crypto-Judaic participants in Albuquerque, NM.

There were 23 presenters at last year’s conference, creating a rich program. Program Chair **Matthew Warshawsky** accepted proposals up to the May 1 deadline for this year’s gathering. The descriptions above are for just a few of those who will be presenting.

I’m looking forward to learning what I can and having a chance to interact with the presenters. Most will be conference attendees, as well speakers. I expect reunions with old friends from past SCJS conferences, and look forward to making new ones in the friendly environment of our gatherings at meals and shared times when the schedule brings us together. I hope to meet you as well, and hope that I’ve piqued your interest and motivation to attend for the intellectual enrichment, the memorable entertainment and the warm fellowship—or to just hang out.





Join interested students and academics of the crypto-Judaic experience while exploring the history of Sephardic Jews and their descendents following the expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Meet individual members working on family genealogies related to Sephardic-Jewish heritage, its modern-day existence and cultural renewal around the world.

Two full days of presentations, enriched by art exhibitions, music, and informal gatherings, plus the telling of personal narratives and a genealogy workshop on Sunday.

The Judy Frankel Memorial Concert, highlighting an artist whose music has been influenced by the *converso* experience, will feature **Los Morales Boyz** on Monday night. Their style, *conjunto*, emerged from the borderlands where songs from Spanish settlers, many of them *conversos*, combined with other regional ethnic elements, creating a fusion that has become a true American folk music idiom.

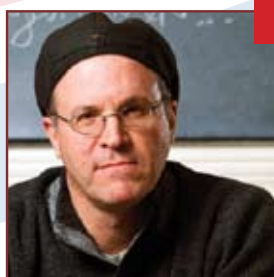
Join us at the new Hilton Anatole Dallas with preferred group rates.



FEATURED SPEAKERS

ANGELINA MUÑIZ-HUBERMAN

is a Mexican novelist and poet of Sephardic origin whose work has been recognized with prestigious literary awards such as the Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz prize.



ILAN STAVANS

Professor at Amherst

College, is the foremost scholar of Hispano Literature. Stavans will deliver the annual Martin Sosin Address to Advance the Crypto-Judaic Arts. He has taught courses on a wide array of topics such as Spanglish, modern American poetry, Latin music, popular culture in Hispanic America, world Jewish writers, the cultural history of the Spanish language, Jewish-Hispanic relations, and U.S.-Latino culture.



DOREEN CARVAJAL

author of

the memoir *The Forgetting River* and writer for the *International New York Times* in Paris, is one of several artists at the conference whose presentation is funded by the Martin Sosin-Stratton-Pettit grant. She will speak about tracing her family's history to Segovia, Spain, in the era of Inquisition prosecution of *conversos*.

JOIN SCJS IN DALLAS!



REGISTRATION \$250. Go to BROWN PAPER TICKETS: BPT.ME/639496

Fees include complete meals and beverage services beginning with the Sunday dinner event. Partial registration is available for those who cannot attend all days of the conference.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT CRYPTOJEWS.COM or contact

Dr. Roger Martinez • 719-255-4070 • scjs@uccs.edu

FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS: Hilton Anatole Dallas • 2201 N. Stemmons Frwy • Dallas, TX, 75207 • 214-748-1200
Special Rate - \$105. Call and mention group code: CJS; go online to resweb.passkey.com/go/2014SocietyforCJStudies





CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

The conference offers presentations by members of the crypto-Jewish community, arts displays, music performances and scholarly presentations. The genealogy workshop will include Sephardic Resources, Sephardic Genealogy, *Converso* Research Techniques and DNA.

The *Judy Frankel Memorial Concert*, highlighting an artist whose music has been influenced by the *converso* experience, will feature *Los Morales Boyz* on Monday night, July 21. Their style, *conjunto*, emerged from the borderlands where songs from Spanish settlers, many of them *conversos*, combined with other regional ethnic elements, creating a fusion that has become a true American folk music idiom.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Angelina Muñiz-Huberman
Ilan Stavans
Doreen Carvajal

PANEL SPEAKERS

Rabbi Juan Bejarano-Gutierrez
David Ben Yosef
Corinne Joy Brown
Hector Galán
Bennett Greenspan
Reid Heller
Marie-Theresa (Terri) Hernandez
Genie Milgrom
Andrew Rapoza
Marc Shanker
Schelly Talalay Dardashti
Peter Tarlow
and many more to come!

SUNDAY, JULY 20

9-11:30am	Pre-Conference Board Meeting
11:30- Noon	BREAK
Noon-4pm	Pre-Conference Genealogy Workshop with Schelly Talalay Dardashti, Genie Milgrom and Bennett Greenspan
4-6:30pm	Conference Registration
5-5:30pm	Welcoming Remarks - SCJS President Roger L. Martínez-Dávila, Ph.D.
5:30-7pm	Panel 1
7-8:15pm	Buffet Dinner
8:15-9:30pm	Keynote Address Angelina Muñiz-Huberman: <i>Crypto Judaism: Memory, Tradition and Transgression</i>

MONDAY, JULY 21

7:30-8:45am	Breakfast Buffet
8:45-9am	Monday Morning Welcome
9-10:30am	Panel 2
10:30-10:45am	BREAK
10:45am-12:15pm	Panel 3 — featuring Doreen Carvajal: <i>Personal Narratives about Crypto- Judaism</i>
12:15-1:30pm	Lunch— music by Stephanie Cohen
1:30-2:45pm	Third Annual Martin Sosin Address to Advance Scholarship About the Crypto-Judaic Arts Ilan Stavans: <i>The Crypto-Jew as Metaphor</i>
3-4:30pm	Panel 4
4:30-4:45pm	BREAK
4:45-6:15pm	Panel 5
6:15-6:30pm	BREAK
6:30-7:45pm	Buffet Dinner Annual Membership Meeting Announcements
7:45-9pm	Judy Frankel Memorial Concert <i>Los Morales Boyz</i>

TUESDAY, JULY 22

7:30-8:45am	Breakfast Buffet
8:45-9 am	Tuesday Morning Welcome
9-10:30am	Panel 6
10:30-10:45am	BREAK
10:45am-12:35pm	Panel 7
12:35pm	Conference Adjournment

*Information is subject to change. Please visit our
website for updates — cryptojews.com*





To register, complete this form or go to Brown Paper Tickets: bpt.me/639496

Full Conference Registration includes all presentations, entertainment, Sunday genealogy workshop, two dinners, one lunch, and two continental breakfasts. Kosher meals and Vegetarian/Vegan options are available and *meals must be reserved no later than July 13, 2014*. Additional charges apply.

EARLY REGISTRATION SPECIAL: Register before June 1, 2014 and receive a bonus \$10 discount. *This early registraton discount is not available for partial registration, meals or vendor sales tables.*

Information subject to change. Please visit our website for updates — cryptojews.com

FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

	QTY	X RATE	TOTAL
SCJS Member Early Registration through June 1, 2014, per person	_____	x \$210	_____
SCJS Member Registration from June 2, 2014, per person	_____	x \$250	_____
Supplemental charge for Kosher meals, per person	_____	x \$75	_____
Vegetarian Meals - no charge	_____		_____

PARTIAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

	QTY	X RATE	TOTAL
Monday (all meals) and Tuesday (breakfast), per person <i>Excludes the Sunday Night Dinner and Genealogy Workshop</i>	_____	x \$180	_____
Pre-Conference Genealogy Workshop, per person <i>Workshop is free with full registration</i>	_____	\$35	_____
Supplement for Kosher meals for partial registration, per day	_____	x TBD	_____
Vendor Registration: One vendor sales table for full conference	_____	x \$75	_____

TOTAL CONFERENCE PAYMENT _____

If using this form, you may pay via PayPal from our website: cryptojews.com.

Or send this registration form and check (payable to SCJS) to:

SCJS Mail Box • Art Benveniste • 333 Washington Blvd. #336 • Marina del Rey, CA 90292 USA

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email (important) _____

HOTEL RESERVATIONS: HILTON ANATOLE DALLAS • 214-748-1200 • SPECIAL RATE - \$105.

Call and mention group code: **CJS**; or go online to resweb.passkey.com/go/2014SocietyforCJStudies



SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES

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or contact Dr. Roger Martinez • 719-255-4070 • scjs@uccs.edu





In 1991, the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies was founded in Taos, New Mexico. Shortly after its first conference, the society began publishing its quarterly newsletter.

Under the founding editor Bob Hattem, HaLapid became the public voice of the SCJS. It grew with the membership of the Society, expanding from 14, to 14, then 16 pages. It included news about crypto-Judaism, announcements, scholarly articles and personal stories. With this issue, the format enters the digital age and digital printing, allowing us to use color. We dare not forget the origins of the title however. Reprinted here by permission, from Halapid, Winter 2003.

The original *HaLapid* was published in Portugal by Artur Carlos Barros Basto. In World War I, Barros Basto commanded a Portuguese infantry squadron in Flanders. He even survived a gas attack. He knew that he was descended from Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism. After the war he returned to the open proactive of Judaism and traveled the country to encourage other crypto-Jews to do the same. With the aid of philanthropists, he obtained funds to build a synagogue in the northern city of Oporto. He adopted the Hebrew name Avram Ben Tosh and under that

he published a newsletter for *anusim*. He called it *HaLapid*, Hebrew for “the torch.” The subtitle, *O Facho*, was the Portuguese translation of the name.

When SCJS started its publication, it was natural for the Society to adapt the name of Barros Basto’s original. Some years ago, Inacio Steinhardt, Basto’s biographer, sent SCJS past-president Art Benveniste some of the original copies of *HaLapid*. Art saw that it contained two sayings at the sides of the title, and added them to the masthead of the publication. To the left was written, *Tudo se illumine para aquelle que busca a luz*. (All is



illuminated for he who seeks the light.) On the right is written *Alumia-voz a aponat-vos o caminhjo* (Enlighten and direct yourself to the right path.) Each is followed by the name Ben Rosh, Barro Basto’s *nom de plume*.

We are proud that our publication is inspired by and continues the tradition of the original *HaLapid*.



HaLapid, 1927



HaLapid, 1958

HaLapid invites the submission of articles related to the mission statement of the SCJS.

Submission deadlines are September 15 and February 15. Articles should be submitted in 12 pt, double-spaced MS Word to the editor at corinnejb@aol.com.

Subscription available with SCJS membership. Visit cryptojews.com for details.

For advertising rates and specifications, contact the editor.







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JUDY FRANKEL MEMORIAL CONCERT



July 21, 2014 • 7:45 pm • Hilton Anatole Dallas

The Judy Frankel Memorial Concert highlights an artist whose music has been influenced by the *converso* experience. The 2014 concert features **Los Morales Boyz**.

Breaking onto the *conjunto* scene in 2012, this group of four teenagers includes three brothers and a cousin. Lead singer and accordionist Nachito Morales, 18, attends the prestigious Booker T. Washington School for the Performing Arts and won Texas Folklife's Big Squeeze state-wide youth accordion contest in 2011. Brother Rudy, 13, plays *bajo sexto*, while youngest brother Cheque, 9, plays drums and their cousin Mario Morales, 15, plays electric bass. The Boyz recently won the Young *Conjunto* of the Year Award at the South Texas *Conjunto* Association Awards. They released their first CD, *Conjunto Nunca Muere*, this year.

Conjunto emerged from the borderlands where songs from Spanish settlers, many of them *conversos*, combined with other regional ethnic elements to create *conjunto*, and it spread to become a true American folk music idiom. Preview this talented group on Facebook and YouTube.

Join us at the conference. To register, go to Brown Paper Tickets: bpt.me/639496 or complete and mail the form on page 41.

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

Nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.

For membership information visit cryptojews.com

