

HALAPID



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**SAVE
THE
DATE!**

**June 26-28, 2016
SCJS Conference
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

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

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SCJS growth and globalization continues

Dear Members and Friends:

It has been such an exciting year with so much happening at the same time.


When I took the helm as president of our Society, I wanted more than anything to grow SCJS in a meaningful way and to spread its wings with new members and growth in other areas of the United States and indeed, the world.

The study of the descendants of crypto-Jews is taking place in so many locations including Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Canary Islands, India, Azores and so many more that I cannot list them all. To me, it was important that we reach out on a global scale and become inclusive to all those wishing to join us.

The 2015 Conference in Miami was just the springboard for this globalization to begin. The event was incredible and offered just the mix that we strive for in such a conference of cultural events, personal stories, academic narrative, with documentary and film trailers. The audience connected with the speakers in an important way, while networking and the sharing of ideas were taking place in every corner of the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel venue. Many Miami locals and new faces to the Society joined us.

We now have grown to 246 members and we are delighted to cover a vast and diverse group of people coming to us for the latest information on crypto-Judaic studies. Our Facebook page and our website continue to register record numbers of visitors; we are fast becoming a household word. Many of us speak in different locations in the U.S. and in my case, Latin America. I am truly proud to represent SCJS wherever I go.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Santa Fe in June 2016. Feel free to contact me at any time.



Genie Milgrom
President
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Genie Milgrom
SCJS President

FROM YOUR SCJS PRESIDENT



The medium is the message

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the fourth issue of *HaLapid* in our expanded magazine format. This kind of journal allows us to make a visual statement as well as a written one; after all, “the medium is the message.” We hope it’s loud and clear. Thanks to everyone for your positive feedback. We hope you’re enjoying the very visual experience.

All around the world, Jews are awakening to the true history of what happened to the Iberian Jews of the Inquisition period and their descendants. As I write this, a forum takes place in Israel at the Knesset to address the *anusim* experience. The recent 25th anniversary conference in Miami shed important light on global proof of this barely understood Diaspora, from hidden *mikvehs* in El Salvador to traces of Jewish prayer in New Mexican sacred songs to vestiges of Jewish iconography in cowboy culture, even to the roots of flamenco, and so much more. The conference brought together a stirring array of thinkers, historians, clergy, academics and artists, as well as memorable performances. In all— exhilarating.

We continue to celebrate the Society’s growth — up almost 30% in two years. And today, more than ever, we need your support. We need your advertising to promote the journal; we need your donations to cover our important arts scholarships for the conferences; and we need membership to grow in order to learn even more about this fascinating history.

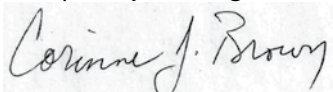


Corinne J. Brown
Editor

On a personal note, the project that brought me into the Society’s midst, a novel based on the idea of finding one’s past and forging a new personal identity as a result of it, has finally come to fruition. My book release parallels this issue. It’s been 14 long years and I treasure every step along the way. Thank you SCJS, for all the opportunities to meet various members of the *anusim* community. Does this mean I’m ending my affiliation with SCJS? To the contrary, I am committed now, more than ever, in an effort to tell your stories.

Enjoy this issue; it’s filled with fascinating lore like the history of *Las Posadas* in New World Hispanic culture, a peek into the life of a New Mexico artist who portrays the crypto-Jewish story, an investigation of the role of Queen Esther in crypto-Judaism, a preview of the upcoming exhibition on Spanish Colonial history and crypto-Jews at the New Mexico History Museum, an investigation into a unique European Protestant community with possible ties to Sephardim, memories of our 25th anniversary conference and so much more.

HaLapid is your magazine. Keep it coming!



Corinne Joy Brown
Editor, *HaLapid*

ABOUT THE COVER *Farolitos or Luminarias?*

In New Mexico, around Christmas, many homes display *farolitos* or *luminarias* on adobe walls and roofs. These are candles or lights in a sand-filled paper bag (today many are electric), or small fires on the ground. While some say they are intended to light the Christ child’s way to shelter, others mention the Hanukkah connection.

Luminaria is the Spanish word for candles, such as those for Shabbat or Hanukkah, called *La Fiesta de Las Luminarias*. *Farolitos* are described as little fires.

Some say there is a geographical line in New Mexico and that the different words are used in different areas; that *farolitos* are up north and *luminarias* elsewhere. However, many northern families use *luminarias*.

The Hanukkah commandment is to light candles at the front door or in a window facing the street so they may be seen by passersby as an announcement of the miracle. In some places, like New Mexico, this tradition has two meanings, adding to the concept of “hiding in plain sight.”

Some families recall grandmothers carefully arranging *luminarias* on either side of the front door, adding candles in sacks every night until all nine were illuminated – still a tradition among some families. Others mention the weeklong *Fiesta de Los Reyes*, when eight or nine candles burned inside the home.

Although today some say – with a wink – that the nine candles (inside or outside the home) represent the Catholic novena. If so, why would Protestant families maintain that religious tradition?

Luminaria is also used for festival lights, or an altar, or a sanctuary light or lamp, or a lamp in Catholic churches, or candles lit before statues of saints.

In northern New Mexico, a bonfire – *farolito* – is traditionally made of crisscrossed fragrant piñon branches, stacked like a small box. It may be used to mark a home hosting *Las Posadas*, a neighborhood reenactment of Joseph and Mary’s search for a room in Bethlehem, which takes place on nine consecutive nights before Christmas.

In Santa Fe, the small bonfires burning on Christmas Eve, here called *luminarias*, were originally used to light the way to Christmas Eve midnight mass. Either name may describe the lights used in *Las Posadas*.

Whether it is a geographical difference or simply a tradition, in some families it is somewhat confusing as there are many explanations. Whatever the name, the origin – or the hidden meaning – these lights always add to the beautiful scenes of the New Mexico holiday season.

[Photo Credit: TOURISM Santa Fe and photographer Daniel Nadelbach.]



SCJS and HaLapid — a “homecoming”

HaLapid is a very exciting journal. It seems like a kind of homecoming for a diaspora that didn’t know it was a diaspora. There is an energy to the publication, and the many photos included and the personal tone of the pieces make me think of a family that found one another again. Thank you again for the opportunity to read it.

Dr. Anne-Christine Hoff
Lead Professor of English,
Spanish and Speech
Jarvis Christian College
Wood County, Texas

Capturing the spirit

I received the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of *HaLapid* and I am delighted with the layout of my sonnets. You did a beautiful job, and I’m quite appreciative of the thought and talent it took to produce the finished piece. The graphics capture both horrors (the subtle background images) and hope (the bird, freely sitting on, perhaps, an ancestor’s hand) by honoring the courage of both the martyrs and our people who escaped to New Mexico. Thank you so much.

Karen S. Cordova
Irvine, California

Book review sparks active Q&A

I first want to thank you for the wonderful review of my book (Spring/Summer 2015 issue). The depth with which you analyzed and spent the time to break down its content is truly appreciated. I am grateful that you think of it as a contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the crypto-Judaic community in our American Southwest.

Last evening, I spoke at the Pueblo Library (an “Author Talk”) and the primary librarian thought enough of your review that she handed copies to a packed house with many keen observers and an active question-and-answer session following my presentation. I can tell you that many persons in rural areas are very much connected to this topic and believe that, in their pasts, they had Sephardic connections. It was a great evening!

Anthony Garcia
Denver, Colorado

More about Aristides de Sousa Mendes

I just read Harry Ezratty’s article on Aristides de Sousa Mendes, in the *HaLapid* Fall 2014 issue.

It was excellent. I would like to add a little from my experience with his legacy.

Some years ago, I attended a program on Righteous Gentiles at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. One speaker was John Paul (João Paulo) Abranches, a son of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who spoke about his father’s deeds during the war.

A few months later Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel had a program about Sousa Mendes and Abranches was again invited to speak about his father. I was scheduled to speak before him on the history of the Jews in Portugal.

I got to know him a little and in our conversations, he said that his father suspected that there was a *converso* background in his family. I told him that a Benveniste family went to Portugal after the expulsion from Spain and in 1497 when they were forced to

convert, one branch of the family took the name Mendes, and another branch became de Luna.

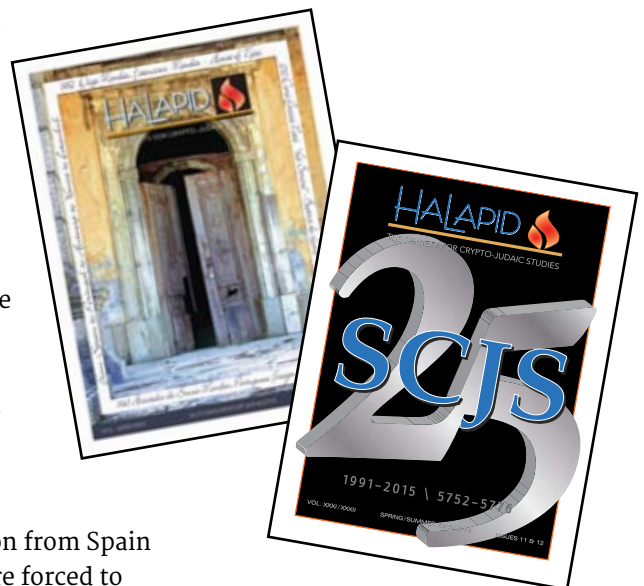
It is quite possible that the family of Sousa Mendes was descended from the Benveniste family.

In a side note, Doña Garcia’s mother was from the de Benveniste-de Luna family and her husband was a Benveniste-Mendes.

Dolly Sloan and I attended a Saudades Conference in Portugal in 2002. As part of the event, we visited the home of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and planted a tree there in his honor.

After the war, some Jewish organizations raised money to send some of Sousa Mendes’ children to universities in the U.S. Abranches studied architecture in California and settled here, working as an architect until his retirement. He died a few years ago.

Art Benveniste
Marina del Rey, California



SCJS 25th Anniversary Conference

2015 SCJS CONFERENCE REVIEW

We did it again! Rave reviews still pour in from speakers and attendees regarding our conference held in Miami, Florida in July 2015.

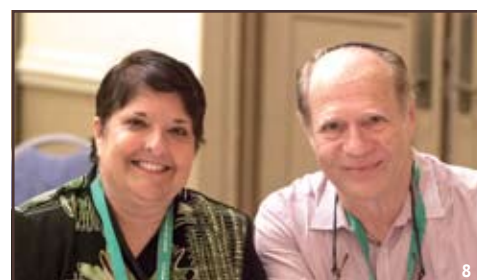
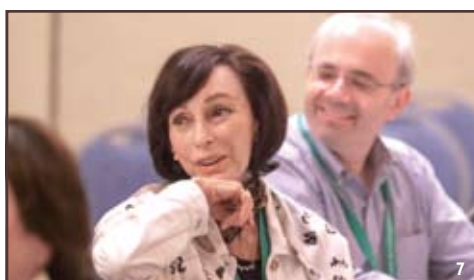
The SCJS, formed over 25 years ago, helps facilitate the study of the Jews who either fled Spain and Portugal or who were forcibly converted to Christianity during the time of the Spanish Inquisition, and their descendants. That study includes academic research, genealogical research and myriad personal narratives from those on the trail of family history or personal discovery.

The conference draws brilliant academic minds and fascinating speakers from every walk of life. Focusing this past year on the crypto-Judaic history of the Caribbean, Florida and South America, this event was the largest conference so far.

Speakers were an eclectic mix from around the world, as passionate as they were informative. The strong turnout from Miami and environs proved how local community support influences attendance. The arts, as they related to crypto-Judaic studies, presented by Marilyn Lande and Jonatas Chimen D. DaSilva-Benayon, were successfully blended into the program offering visual presentations.

The event began Sunday with a morning workshop/presentation by SCJS president and author Genie Milgrom on genealogical research followed by a program on understanding the role of DNA by Bennett Greenspan, founder of FamilyTreeDNA.com.

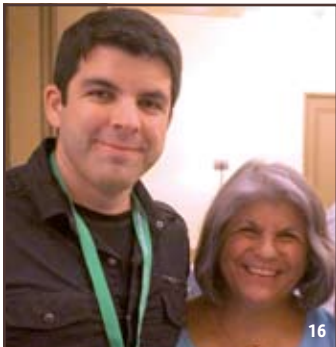
Jo Ann Arnowitz, director of the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, followed with an opening panel on crypto-Jews and literature. The evening keynote speaker



sets record in Miami



1. Henry Marcus, Abraham Lavender & Jonatas Chimen D. DaSilva-Benayon
2. Sonia Bloomfield
3. Neil Manel Frau-Cortes
4. Harry Ezratty
5. Joe Maldonado & Marc Gueron
6. Happy Conference goes Anthony Garcia, Susana Behar, Ellen Premack & others
7. Marcia Fine (c)
8. Genie & Michael Milgrom
9. Ruth Behar and her husband
10. From left, Kathleen Alcala, Susana Behar & Corinne Brown
11. Debbie Wohl Isard (r) & a happy attendee
12. Surprise flamenco dance performance
13. Susana Behar performs
14. Denise Febres & Miltiza Machuca
15. Works by artist DaSilva-Benayon
16. Jeffrey & Loretta Worthington
17. Joe Maldonado & Chana Cohen with Ariel Roman Harris from the Israeli Consulate
18. Prof. David Wachs (c)



was Ainsley Cohen Henriques, a celebrated expert on Caribbean Jewish history, who examined the essential question of what it means to be a Jew. Other primary lecturers included noted academics, David Wachs and Ruth Behar.

Panels filled the next two days covering a wide range of topics. Entertainment at noon Monday presented composer/recording artist Hazzan Neil Manel Frau-Cortes, who led us in Sephardic music and song.

The Judy Frankel Memorial Concert featured Sephardic singer Susana Behar, who filled the room with her remarkable voice in *Kanto a Sefarad*, along with the rich sounds of her flamenco musicians and the surprise addition of a flamenco dancer.

For those looking for fascinating content relating to crypto-Jewish history and research, this was the definitive conference. Honoring 25 years of growth, it certainly was one of the most memorable.



Miami Conference Feedback

The conference demonstrated outstanding organization at its best.

The speakers provided a good mix of academic and personal topics and were both engaging and enriching.

It was pleasing to see the turnout from the Miami area and how demographics have a strong bearing on attendance. Both the hotel and the food were great.

Timing was smooth. Although it would have been good to give speakers more time and thus additional time for attendees to interact, the cost would have been fewer speakers.

Genie deserves applause for a well-run event and she ran a tight ship. Her public relations outreach was stellar and her genealogy workshop presentation was excellent.

Although each event experiences a few glitches, we learn from them for the following year's conference.

Clearly, we will be exchanging ideas during the year and each of us will be conducting outreach for new members.

If you visit Philadelphia, please stop by the National Museum of American Jewish History. I am a museum docent, lead tours and focus on the crypto-Jews.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Santa Fe in 2016.

Chana Cohen

During the event, we welcomed a new board member, First Vice President Dr. Joe Maldonado of New York, who will assume the role of SCJS president in June 2016. Although the Miami conference will be hard to beat, we are heading into the heart of the American Southwest's crypto-Jewish experience from June 26-28, 2016 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend! 🔥





Song From a Withered Limb

Las Posadas and the 16th-Century *Converso* Crisis

BY REID HELLER

(Condensed from a talk delivered at the Society for Crypto-Jewish Studies Conference; Dallas, Texas; July 20, 2014)

RESEARCH / HISTORY

During the mid 16th-century, two New Christian rituals, Jewish and Catholic, arose in northern Israel and the north of New Spain in the New World, each a response to a crisis. To make sense of these rituals, it's important to identify the historical challenges confronted by Jewish converts to Christianity at this time and understand how two very different communities created rituals to restore communal confidence and continuity to a common past.

The crisis above refers to the inner life of a specific group — the Portuguese *conversos* of the 1500s. The traumatic circumstances surrounding their conversion produced a subgroup within the Jewish people at-large, distinguished by a sense of inner exile and shattered connection with their Jewish past. This experience led to a relentless search for symbols and rituals of atonement around concepts like exile, homeland, return and ritual opportunities for ancestral recognition.

Three important dates define the mass conversion of Iberian Jews (the Seville Pogroms of 1391, Expulsion of 1492 and the Portuguese Forced Conversion of 1497). The events of 1497, when the Jews of Portugal were forcibly converted *en masse* on a single day, are paramount. Imagine how a forced convert addresses the pain of an inner life estranged from its

traditional sources, severing even a tenuous connection with ancestors and a mythical past, so essential to a vision of the future. The level of suffering lies not only in the trauma of 1497 but also in the expulsion on *Tisha B'Av* in the summer of 1492 which intensified the orientation of Spanish Jewry. For those who preferred exile to conversion, escape by ship was not the only route; nearby Portugal opened its doors and for a fee, gave shelter to half of Spain's Jewish outcasts.

For those who stayed behind, the larger problem was social acceptance in their new identity, and specifically, challenges posed by the *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) legislation. *Limpieza* statutes stigmatized those with known Jewish ancestry, barring them from certain occupations and public honors. They were classified as *Nuevos Cristianos* or New Christians, in contrast to those of old Christian stock.

Converso is the Spanish word for one who has converted to Christianity from Islam or Judaism. The English equivalent "convert," is defined as one who "turns" or "changes into" or "transforms" himself. Once transformed, the *converso* becomes something new, virtually unrecognizable to those who knew them before.



The *Limpieza* legislation of Spain also left the *conversos* of 1492 suspended between religious assimilation and permanent racial stigma. Many responded by acquiring new names and false ancestries, deepening their alienation from their past. In the confusion from the mid-16th to 17th century, most of the *conversos* of 1492 managed to acquire new identities, assimilate and disappear.

For those exiled to Portugal, a vital connection to Jewish heritage and material resources was necessary. For them, Judaism was a vital, non-negotiable part of their dignity and self-awareness. These self-identified Jews made the Portuguese situation psychologically significant. In addition to the threat of exile, members of this educated and committed Jewish population were often dragged to chapels throughout Lisbon and forcibly and violently baptized.

But it was precisely their prosperity and uncompromising Jewishness that compelled King Manuel to make the choice for them or risk losing an irreplaceable pool of royal wealth. To soften the blow of this extraordinary insult to Portuguese Jewish dignity, King Manuel agreed for some years not to inquire into the Portuguese *converso's* religious habits. ("Don't ask, don't tell.")

The circumstances of Easter Day in 1497 concludes one of the most bizarre episodes in European Jewish experience. Overnight, a remarkable Jewish community awakened to find themselves transformed into Christians. They remained in the same homes, with little else changed but their old institutions and a way of life went entirely underground.

Therefore, when speaking of Portuguese crypto-Jews in this early period of their new lives, we must

Reid Heller is an adjunct professor of Jewish Studies in the Philosophy Department of University of North Texas. In 1989, he founded the Classic Jewish Text Seminars, an egalitarian, non-lecture based format popularizing the study of classical Jewish literature by non-specialists. In 1994, he cofounded, with Dr. David Boltz, the Dallas Virtual Jewish Community (dvjc.org), one of the first Jewish community websites. In collaboration with Dr. Valerie Hotchkiss, he co-founded the Bridwell Judaica Lecture Series at the Perkins School of Theology. Over the decades he has served as officer and director in numerous nonprofits including the DFW Refugee Interagency, American Jewish Committee, Dallas Jewish Historical Society, the Beyt

Midrash of North Texas and Three Stars Jewish Cinema. For the last decade he has worked with Dr. Jeffrey Gusky, fine art photographer, to tell stories about the origins of the modern city and the modern world including the origins of Romanian fascism, Nature and the Modern City, World War I's cities of mass destruction and the Origins of the People of the Rio Grande. His article (with Ana Cristina Remundo), *La Sion sobre el Rio Bravo* appeared in the October–November issue of Nexos magazine. He is working on a novel about the American Civil War on the Rio Grande. Reid is married to Karen Heller, flamenco artist and genetic counselor, and the father of Ilana Heller Nishli and Naomi Heller. He practices law in Dallas, Texas

abandon any sense of them as isolated New Christians hiding their Jewishness from neighbors. Instead, envision large, coherent communities of Jews whom everyone knew to be Jews, masquerading as Christians without any sense of Christian commitment or understanding. In that sense, the situation of Portuguese New Christians cannot be more different than those of the Spanish Jews who remained in Spain. Although the trauma of the Expulsion in 1492 created a collective memory for the Jews of Spain, it was the conversion in 1497 that created a new Jewish national identity. Those descendants would henceforth be referred to as *La Nacion*.

Over the next four decades, Portuguese New Christians developed one of the greatest financial networks in Europe, trading in London, Antwerp, Paris, Rome, Ferrara, Ancona and Venice, among others. While Portuguese wealth flowed out of Africa and the Far

East, Portuguese New Christians forged new trade routes, bypassing the Silk Road and Muslim rulers who had dominated the Far East trade for 700 years. Small luxury goods, light and easily transported, especially spices, silks and gems, were their specialty. Simultaneously, they engaged in diplomacy at the highest levels in the great kingdoms of Europe including the Papal Court, delaying the onset of a Portuguese Inquisition, extending credits to the warring kings and ultimately, using their wealth to punish oppressors of New Christians.

In 1537, after the House of Mendes had exhausted its power and wealth, the young Doña Gracia Mendes embarked for Protestant London and a dazzling career that took her to the Court of Suleiman the Magnificent. Her departure from Portugal marked the end of the relative safety of *La Nacion*. What followed would witness the onset of the Inquisition and a severe



oppression that would condemn the once proud Portuguese New Christians to lives of constant fear. Some pursued opportunities abroad in African slaving and ivory, others as soldiers in the Far East fighting to dominate the spice trade, and others as conquistadors in Brazil pursuing mythical kingdoms and gold.

By the mid-16th century and the relative quiet of the Spanish Inquisition (in contrast to their own increasingly active one), some Portuguese New Christians claimed their right of return as descendants of former residents of Spain. Their emigration created opportunities for a refashioning of identity and adoption of new Spanish names and biographies.

The Spanish immigration continued for decades and by the 1580s (four generations after 1497) when Spain and Portugal united under Philip II, Portuguese New Christians returning to Spain re-introduced crypto-Judaism. By then, the word Portuguese came to be synonymous with Judio/Jew. Spanish crypto-Jews after the mid-16th century, defined as Portuguese New Christians, returned to Spain, burdened by a unique identity born of the Portuguese trauma.

For them, the term Spanish-Portuguese refers to a fusion of two cultures living in Portugal who shared the devastating break with Judaism. They were in dire need of rituals for expiation, reassurance and reconnection in response.

Two Portuguese Communities, Two Rituals, One *Nacion*

By the second half of the 16th century, the Portuguese New Christians' search for security had taken them far beyond Spain to the farthest corners of the earth: Brazil, Africa, India, Indonesia, Philippines, China, Korea and Japan. Those who had returned to Spain could access all of Spain's dominions, especially New Spain (Mexico), Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Columbia and the Caribbean. Some, following the example of their symbolic leaders in exile, Doña Gracia Mendes and her nephew, Joseph HaNasi, looked east to Turkey and ultimately, the land of their ancestors, Israel.

In pursuit of a homeland, they purchased from the Ottoman Sultan the right to rebuild the walls of the ancient city of Tiberias (according to Maimonides, the city from which Jewish rule would return to the Jewish people). Doña Gracia and Don Joseph subsidized a wool and silk manufacturing center there and booked passage to Ottoman Turkey for the persecuted Spanish-Portuguese Jews trapped in the Papal States, only a small percentage of whom completed the journey.



Tiberias was not the only Jewish settlement in the region. More than a generation before, various Sephardim and especially Portuguese New Christians returning to Judaism, established an academy and community in the nearby city of Safed. Safed boasted the most eminent Sephardic sages of the time, presided over by the Rabbinic luminary, Joseph Caro, of Portugal.

Caro was an influential Jewish legalist as well as a kind of messianic politician. In the 1520s, he mentored a young Portuguese New Christian, Solomon Molcho, who in 1531 led a messianic campaign to raise a New Christian army to reclaim the land of Israel from the Turks. Molcho's movement failed and he was burned at the stake for judaizing. But 30 years later, in Safed, Caro cultivated another student with messianic ambitions, Isaac Luria. Like Molcho, Luria had a profound spiritual gift and the magnetism to draw learned men to his circle. During his brief but remarkable career (Luria died at 38 in 1572), he established a revolutionary mystical movement based on the teachings of the Zohar with an emphasis on the sanctity and redemption of the land, all designed to awaken a profound love for Israel and the expectation of a messiah to gather the exiled Jews, especially *La Nacion*, from the ends of the earth.



His followers were primarily aging Sephardi refugees from 1492 and 1497 and their descendants who sought, through Luria's mystical rituals, a means of compelling G-d to send a human messiah to reconstitute a Jewish Kingdom and its classical institutions. Luria points to a ritual of peculiar importance to us in the book, *Chemdat Yamim* (Days of Delight), referring to Holy Days. He draws from Kabbalistic commentary known as the Zohar to innovate a mysterious new ritual for the festival of Sukkot, a holiday in which Jews are required to dwell in simple huts to recall their ancestors' wanderings in the wilderness after the Exodus.

Luria required his followers to invite certain guests, or *ushpizin*, to dwell with them in the Sukkah and share a ritual meal. Seven ancestral guests appear for the first seven days of the festival: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. The final two are messianic figures who play an important role in the Sukkot celebration. Luria's innovation is a response to the question that haunts members of *La Nacion*. Did forcible conversion make them permanently unrecognizable to their ancestors, thereby creating an irreparable rupture with the past? The sacred chain had been cut and many believed there was no return. This fear permeates almost all 16th-century attempts to reestablish the ancient Jewish institutions of Israel, including the Rabbinate, which was necessary to assign rituals of expiation (atonement) for the sin of apostasy.

When examined through the lens of the shattered ancestral bond, particularly in the case of the Portuguese, Luria's innovation of inviting the Jewish patriarchs to participate in a communal meal restored the hope of the former New Christians and helped heal their lingering inner wounds.

According to Luria's ritual, the Seder *Ushpizin*, the ritual leader, chants rhythmic Aramaic phrases from the Zohar inviting the holy guests to be seated. Each evening a new ancestor is announced and the celebration is devoted to the qualities assigned by the Zohar. The ritual transforms the Sukkah meal into a mythical space wherein the founding ancestors dwell and eat with the celebrant. This suggests the chain of tradition is intact and the celebrant worthy of ancestral recognition. This meal with ancestors is a most ancient and universal of religious rituals, spanning every

culture and every period. Luria's Seder *Ushpizin* becomes a powerful therapy for the guilt-ridden descendants of the Portuguese trauma, restoring confidence in their connection to the mythic Jewish past, serving as a symbol of the reconstituted chain of tradition and providing an end to physical exile with the restoration of a third (mystical) Jewish Kingdom.

The Ancestor-Recognition Ritual of the Iberian New Christians

New Christians carried on their lives suspended between assimilating thoroughly, yet enduring the indignity of racial prejudice (*limpieza de sangre* legislation). For these former Jews, the Jewish past was

a psychological burden, yet many continued to live in ancient Jewish communities like the mountaintop city of Avila, the home of Spanish Jewish mysticism, where Moses de Leon first published the Zohar in 1290. By 1580, four generations of New Christians had come and gone since the mass conversions of 1492 and 1497, a time when the Jewish past was reduced to a symbol of dishonor.

King Philip II, a dour fanatic, took notice of the suffering of the converted Jews and Moors whom he hoped to assimilate quickly for the good of the state. He therefore, supported clerical careers for talented New Christians including placement among the Jesuits and the Discalced nuns (i.e., shoeless) Order of St. Theresa. St. Theresa of

Avila was a descendant of Portuguese New Christians. The same is true of her protégé, St. Juan de la Cruz (John of the Cross). They ministered to communities like Avila, which included large numbers of New Christian families. In some cases, the New Christians had ancestral memories of Jewish rituals, like the lights of Hanukah around Christmas or open-air booths (Sukkot) at harvest time.

Following the lead of St. Ignatius, who advocated a nine-day novena in the weeks leading up to Christmas, in 1580, St. Juan innovated a ritual that would draw on those ancestral memories while simultaneously confirming the New Christians in their Catholic faith. They would march in processions at night with torches, reenacting the flight of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Joseph's

Luria's Seder *Ushpizin* becomes a powerful therapy for the guilt-ridden descendants of the Portuguese trauma, restoring confidence in their connection to the mythic Jewish past.



Posadas defined

As part of the Christmas celebration, traditional fiestas called Mexican *posadas* (inns) are held for family, friends, and neighbors.

A *posada* is the reenactment of the census pilgrimage to Bethlehem by Mary and Joseph (*los peregrinos*) in search of a room.

From December 16–24, Mexican families customarily hold a *posada* party one evening in each of their homes.

During the reenactment, the *posada* hosts act as the innkeepers while their guests act as the pilgrims (*los peregrinos*).

Holding lighted candles, each group takes turns singing verses to each other, welcoming one another and in some verses, apologizing for not recognizing the holy saints.

birthplace) in commemoration of the census ordered by Augustus and Herod. The reenactment of a flight from a temporary home to one's true birthplace was a veiled message that Jews, despite oppression and tyranny, could indeed return home, if not to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then to their divine co-religionist, Jesus of Nazareth.

It was a brilliant and subtly subversive ritual whose meaning would have been as obvious to thoughtful New Christians as it was impenetrable to Old Christians. Remaining invisible in plain sight was one of the remarkable strategies of the New Christians, best symbolized by their patron saint, the eyeless Santa Lucia.

Adapting the New Converso Ritual in the New World - *Las Posadas*

Earlier in the year 1580, in exchange for a substantial payment, Philip II made an extraordinary land grant to Admiral Luis de Carvajal, and gave permission to bring a group of Portuguese New Christians to settle northern Mexico and a portion of south Texas as far north as San Antonio. By then the foundations of a New Christian Kingdom were laid on both sides of the Rio Grande. In the coming two centuries the region would become a magnet for the far-flung Portuguese New Christian diaspora. The Rio Grande would become, in effect, a New Christian river with a distinctive culture and set of folkways. One of those folkways most associated with the region is the Avila version of the ritual innovated by Juan de la Cruz that same year, now known as *Las Posadas* (the Inns).

The first account of *Las Posadas* in Mexico comes to us in 1587, in a settlement not far from Mexico City, where Father Fray Diego adapted Juan de la Cruz's 1580 pageant for use with the Nahuatl and other indigenous peoples. Instead of St. Juan's long winding processions, Fray Diego had his pilgrims march from house to house within a traditional Indian Pueblo. Mexican Indians celebrate the same way today, with the *Las Posadas* festivities centered in the Pueblo or town's main square. But this indigenous form of *Las Posadas* is not the one adopted along the Rio Grande. There the procession winds across river banks and fields in long lines as St. Juan conceived it.

Fray Diego wrote a poem to be recited by the pilgrims as they approached each home. It bears careful study in

comparison to the verses selected for Luria's Seder *Ushpizin*. The holy pilgrims knock on a closed door, a chorus answers: "Who knocks on my door so late at night?" The pilgrims respond, "In the name of Heaven, I beg you for lodging. My beloved wife can no longer travel, and she is weary."

Unlike the Seder *Ushpizin*, the holy guests are not towering figures of spiritual dignity; rather, humble refugees looking for a safe, dry spot to lie down – images of the exiled Jews and reviled New Christians perpetually in search of a home. The chorus explains that the owner cannot let them in, they may be robbers. Joseph pleads for charity and then gives his name and trade. The chorus dismisses him again. After several more exchanges, the chorus intones a song of recognition, invitation, acceptance, honor and celebration.

Instead of celebrants welcoming divine ancestors, this ritual has roles for both the owner-celebrant and the divine guests who are not recognized but initially rejected, over and over. Then, at a moment of despair for the divine pilgrims, a flash of recognition occurs, they are recognized as divine, the tension is broken, and the holy guests are no longer mere refugees but transformed into *The Queen of Heaven*, her consort, and *The God-Child*.

The trauma and dishonor of conversion is replayed in this ceremony as a glorious transformation in which the



converso is first dismissed, and then accepted by his ancient kinsmen (at first acting with the same callousness as Christians) to the heights of Jewish glory. But so as not to offend Christian sensibilities, Jews, rather than Christians, reject the holy pilgrims. The dishonor of conversion is healed; the New Christians accepted, and the stigma of *limpieza* legislation momentarily forgotten as they are honored by their Jewish kinsmen. The break with the ancestors is thus repaired, as is the sacred chain of Jewish ancestry from the line of Abraham and David. The *converso* is both Christian and Jew in a new embodied sense and recognized as worthy of Christian honors, though scarcely anyone but a New Christian would recognize it. The *Las Posadas* ritual accomplishes a metaphysical assimilation affirming all aspects of the *converso* persona and replacing estrangement with a reconciliation of seemingly incompatible religious-ancestral identities.

Las Posadas also draws on ancient rituals of hospitality in the Western classical and biblical world, as well as the motif of the meal with the ancestors, but its spiritual-therapeutic value validates the inner life and estrangement of the New Christians, especially those of the upper and lower Rio Grande. They are *La Nacion*, carrying on Juan de la Cruz's torch-lit processions imitating Hanukkah lights, spanning nine days, the total number of days for the Sukkot holiday as celebrated in Spain. *Las Posadas* reenacts a dramatic moment of ancestral suffering and recognition, all acted out at the doorway near a small thatched creche, containing images of a poor and oppressed Jewish family, those same Jews who brought salvation to the Christian world.

The two rituals – Seder *Ushpizin* and *Las Posadas* – appear at an ominous time for New Christians at the peak of the


counter-reformation when the fires of the Inquisition yet burned with renewed intensity and the return of Portuguese New Christians to Spain raised fresh suspicions about the *converso* problem. It was also a time of audacity and hope when heroic spiritual leaders like Isaac Luria and Juan de la Cruz revived ancient faiths. Throughout the 16th century, attempts were made to create New Christian kingdoms dominated by Renaissance politicians like Doña Gracia Mendes and her nephew Don Joseph Nasi, followed by Luis de Carvajal and his famous nephew, Luis de Carvajal, *el mozo*.

Robert Lifton, in *The Broken Connection*, comments on ecstatic conversion (which may equally apply to traumatic conversion) observing, "One never returns to exactly the same inner structure of the self. Having already broken old forms, one senses that they can be broken again, or at least extended beyond earlier limitations. A personal model is thus constructed for the symbolic reordering necessary to psychological change. That whole sequence can be regularized in cultural ritual."

The trauma of conversion that founded *La Nacion*, affecting those who remained Christian, as well as those who returned to Judaism, introduced a new kind of interior life, unleashing new vulnerabilities, energies and longings.

The Portuguese New Christians of the Rio Grande forged a unique identity. Those who did not return to Judaism evolved into a people with an emphasis on the present and future rather than the past and tradition, and with a talent for adaptability. These pioneers moved from city life to the frontier, from mercantile pursuits to the land, with toughness and self-reliance formed far from authority and symbols of the state. Their detachment from oppressive religious tradition transformed the descendants of the trauma of 1497 into something that,

five centuries later, has come to be understood as distinctly American, a synthesis still mindful of ancestors not forgotten.

The author wishes to acknowledge his debt to the work of Salo Baron, especially Volume 13, *Social and Religious History of the Jewish People*, and to the work of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, the great mapper of the inner life of the descendants of Portuguese *conversos*. For further exploration of a timeless ritual context for better understanding *Las Posadas* and Seder *Ushpizin* see the work by Virginia Herrmann and David Schloen, *In Remembrance of Me: Feasting with the Dead in the Ancient Middle East*. 

There's more to the story...

We asked Reid Heller about the title of this article. "Song from a Withered Limb" comes from a song by Leonard Cohen called "By the Rivers Dark" that is a rework of Psalm 137: "If I forget thee Jerusalem, may my right hand wither. Cohen takes the Psalm a step further, he imagines that Jerusalem is forgotten and his right hand has withered (roughly the *converso* situation), so the only thing that one can still remember faithfully is Babylon. "This is the *converso* logic I am working with to show how Jewish memory is absorbed and re-expressed in the Portuguese *converso* world," said Heller.

Here is the poem and the song: azlyrics.com/lyrics/leonardcohen/bytheriversdark.

*Though I take my song
From a withered limb,
Both song and tree,
They sing for him.*

*Be the truth unsaid
And the blessing gone,
If I forget
My Babylon.*



QUEEN ESTHER –

BY RONIT TREATMAN

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RESEARCH / HISTORY

According to tradition, around 1,900 years before the Spanish Inquisition, a baby girl named Hadassah was born in the Persian Empire. She was orphaned at a very young age and her cousin Mordechai assumed custody of her. Under his tutelage, she internalized the spark of her Jewish identity.



Ronit Treatman

After a few years, an opportunity presented itself and Mordechai placed her in King Ahasuerus' harem. He told her that her name was now Esther. Mordechai told Esther that she was still a Jew, but that she must not let anyone know. If she was lucky, one day she could be the queen of Persia. It is said that she was a vegetarian, to avoid eating non-kosher meat. Queen Esther seemed to be fully assimilated, yet she never forgot who she was. She hid her Judaism and eventually married King Ahasuerus.

When the Spanish Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella established the Spanish Inquisition in 1478, many Jews converted to Catholicism outwardly. Inwardly, they kept practicing Judaism in secret, becoming *anusim*, *conversos*, or crypto-Jews.

Queen Esther was an inspiration to the *anusim* in that she modeled a way for them to remember and retain their true, hidden Jewish identity while integrating into the society around them. The *conversos* implemented a strategy to be able to continue practicing Jewish customs while hiding their observance by inserting a Jewish tradition into a Catholic practice, or "syncretism" – the mixing of rituals from different religions.

When the Roman Catholic Church formally recognizes a person as a saint, this person is canonized. A person who has not been canonized may however, still be referred to as

a saint if it is believed that they are "completely perfect in holiness." The crypto-Jews took advantage of this loophole.

Although Queen Esther was not canonized by the Catholic Church, the *anusim* transformed her into St. Esther. They called her Santa Ester or Santa Esterica. They were able to continue honoring Purim (by reinventing it as "The Festival of St. Esther.")

The Festival of St. Esther originated in Spain.

When Spain issued the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, many Jews and *conversos* escaped to Portugal, taking their traditions with them. Their respite was short-lived and in 1497 the Portuguese king Manuel I married Princess Isabella, the daughter of the Spanish Monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand. A clause in this marriage contract extended the Spanish expulsion to Portugal, ousting the Jews once more.

The New World beckoned as a safe haven and the Spanish and Portuguese *anusim* were among the first settlers in the territories controlled by Spain in what is now Mexico. The Spanish Inquisition followed them to Mexico however, pushing the *conversos* north.

The establishment of *Nuevo León* in the American Southwest is notable in that it was almost entirely carried out by crypto-Jews. Luis Carvajal y de la Cueva, a Portuguese *converso*, received a royal charter to settle this land without the religious scrutiny of the colonists who followed him. The Festival of St. Esther was spread in the New World by these *conversos*. It was usually the women of the family who maintained this tradition.

The Festival of St. Esther had two parts. The first part was called the Fast of Queen Esther. The women fasted for three days. This fast replicated the fast Queen Esther had asked of Mordechai and the Jews of Shushan before she approached King Ahasuerus. It was too risky to celebrate the Festival of St. Esther publicly because the Spanish Inquisition considered such activity to be Judaizing, or the practice of





– Patron Saint of crypto-Jews

Faced with threat of execution for Jewish observance, Sephardi *conversos* created the festival of Santa Esterica to replace Purim

Jewish beliefs. However, the archives of Mexico's Inquisition retain testimony about this fast.

In 1643, Gabriel de Granada confessed that in his family, the women divided up the fast between them. Each would fast for one day. The punishment meted out by the tribunal of the Inquisition for Judaizing was "relaxation," which meant burning at the stake.

Fasting had a special significance for the forced converts. In "The Fast of Esther in the Lore of the Marranos," Moshe Orfali explains that the *conversos* felt that they lived in a constant state of sin. Fasting helped them atone.

The second, celebratory part of the festival was the Feast of St. Esther. In her article, "Women, Ritual, and Secrecy: The Creation of the Crypto-Jewish Culture," Janet Liebman Jacobs relates that the women lit devotional candles in honor of St. Esther. It was an occasion of mothers bonding with their daughters. They cooked a banquet together. The

mothers took advantage of this opportunity to teach their daughters special family recipes that adhered to the remembered laws of *kashrut*.

The festive, public Purim celebration was transformed into a private meal held at home. As a result, many Jewish traditions were transmitted from mother to daughter.

The crypto-Jews also had their special way of honoring Esther year round by enshrining her in a piece of art.

All Spanish colonies had a special type of religious art form called *santo*. *Santos* were statues made of wood or ivory that depicted the Virgin Mary, saints or angels. In Latin America and the American Southwest, these statues were called *bultos*. They were carved from wood and then coated with a mixture of glue and gypsum, called gesso, and then painted with vivid, homemade pigments.

In crypto-Jewish homes, Queen Esther was fashioned into



an icon and transformed into a *bulto* of St. Esther.

Santo art was also expressed as devotional paintings called *retablos*. Traditionally, these were executed on sheets of metal such as copper or tin. Since there was a shortage of metal in the New World, the *retablos* were made of wood. Like *bultos*, they were coated with gesso and painted. The paints were made from natural materials such as plants, insects, ash and clay, and then with tree resins. Crypto-Jews also commissioned *retablos* of St. Esther.

It is less common to find *bultos* or *retablos* of St. Esther in the American Southwest today. This is the legacy of Archbishop Peter Davis, who was the archbishop of Santa Fe from 1964 to 1974. According to Jacobs, the archbishop wanted to get rid of all the Jewish rituals in New Mexico. He told his parishioners that there is no St. Esther in Catholicism and explained that the celebration of Esther is called Purim, and that Purim is part of the Jewish faith.

Despite Davis' best efforts, it is still possible to find *bultos* and *retablos* of St. Esther in crypto-Jewish homes today. In *The Book of Esther in Modern Research* by Leonard Greenspoon and Sidnie White Crawford, for example, Santa Ester is portrayed as holding "a hanging rope in one hand, and a crown in the other, weighing the danger of execution against the safety of royal immunity."

There are also contemporary artists creating icons of St. Esther. Charles Carrillo is one of New Mexico's most prominent *santeros*, or artists who carve and paint saints. Carrillo earned a doctorate in archeology from the University of New Mexico. While working on a dig, he became inspired by the work of the *santeros*. He conducted research and became a self-taught artist whose mission is to preserve the homemade materials, techniques and designs of the master *santeros* of 18th-century colonial New

Mexico. In 2006, he was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Award.

According to Carrillo, there is a large community of crypto-Jews in New Mexico.

"They came here in the 1500s," he told me. "I haven't done one in a long time, but sometimes I still get a commission to create a Santa Ester." There is an old saying in New Mexico, *A cada santo llega su función*, meaning that there is a saint for every occasion.

"My Santa Ester always has dark hair," Carrillo said. "It's a New Mexico tradition. I want my artwork to reflect her attributes. Esther means Hadassah in Hebrew. *Hadas* is a myrtle or fragrant plant," he explained.

In Carrillo's *retablo*, Santa Ester is wearing a crown adorned with myrtle. She holds a myrtle branch in one hand. The rosette at the top of the *retablo* is decorated with myrtle branches. Santa Ester holds a scepter in her other hand that marks her as a queen. Her scepter is decorated with a pomegranate, an ancient Jewish symbol of fertility, promise and fulfillment.

The red curtains framing Santa Ester are traditional in a New Mexico *retablo*. They allude to a stage and symbolize that this has been revealed to us and that we had better pay attention before the curtains close.



Clockwise from top left, Execution of Mariana de Carabajal at Mexico, 1601. Source: From Palacio, 'El Libro Rojo', reprinted in the Jewish Encyclopedia. A *retablo* of St. Esther; Mid-17th century painting of St. Esther; and Hassadah (aka Esther) stands before King Ahasuerus of Persia.





Charles Carrillo
is a contemporary
artist who creates
St. Esther icons.

The Spanish Inquisition formally ended in 1834. It is rational to believe that crypto-Judaism was something that existed in the past and is no longer occurring. However, it has persisted and there are many *anusim* that continue their secret practices to this day while living in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Latin America and the American Southwest.

“Several organizations have been established in recent years to help *anusim* conduct research about their family, both here and abroad. They help those in need facilitate research into *converso* family names and customs. Two of the most popular sources are Sephardim.com and SephardicGen.com.

I wondered what it feels like for a devout Catholic like Carrillo to create an icon that he knows is for crypto-Judaic purposes.

“I am honored to be asked,” he said. “Ultimately, we all believe in the same God. It is my tradition to paint the images so the story may be told.”

REMINDER

*The deadline for submissions
for the next issue of HaLapid is
March 15.*

*Please send contributions to the editor at
corinnejb@aol.com*

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THE Jewish Waldensian CONNECTION

BY LILLIAN JACUMIN MODAK

GENEALOGY

The Waldensian Church is a pre-Reformation evangelical Protestant group headquartered in the Waldensian Valleys of the Cottian Alps in Italy on the border of southeastern France. The Church can be found in the US, Argentina, Germany, Uruguay, as well as in Italy. In the U.S., they are aligned with the Presbyterian Church and in Italy with the Methodists. Larger Waldensian communities in the U.S. are in Monet, Missouri and Valdese, North Carolina.



Lillian Jacumin Modak

Some historians of this culture have stated they were first evangelized in the Alps by the apostle Paul and claimed to be descendants of the first Christians. A place exists in the valleys where they claim Paul preached. Most historians agree they began to separate from the Roman Catholic Church around 330 AD when Constantine moved the capital to Byzantium. Early on, many in northern Italy were more aligned with the Eastern Church and had more loyalty there, a

division that grew over time as different groups separated from Rome.

The Waldensians gained a more organized movement via a wealthy merchant from Lyon, France named Peter Waldo. His name was likely Valdes (a listed Sephardic surname) or Vaudes. In the 11th century, he followed the Gospel to “give away your possessions to the poor and make disciples of all men.” One of his early adherents was a man named Durand (Sephardic surname) of Osca

or Huesca from northern Spain. The group had issues with Rome and, although they were part of the church at that time, they sought to reform it.

Primarily, they wanted the Bible in the common vernacular so people could understand and actively translate it. They were also critical of the church collecting money for the forgiveness of sins and protested the veneration of icons. They did

not believe in the need for a priest confessor, nor agreed with the doctrine of purgatory. They wanted a more pure faith and sought reform, but instead were excommunicated in 1184.

In response, the Waldensians created their own places of worship and seminaries. Even in the Dark Ages they were literate and even memorized portions of scripture so they could recreate it if necessary. During the Inquisition, one Waldensian on record had the entire book of Job memorized. Many early leaders were doctors and took the scripture

literally that said to “preach the word and heal the sick.” But dubbed as heretics, they suffered atrocities off and on throughout the centuries.

Great evangelists, they had converts all over Europe, and even today, Waldensians speak a local dialect in the valleys known as Occitan. Still spoken in Portugal, it is a sister language to Catalan. They became an underground church and, depending on the beliefs of a given monarch, were either given select freedoms or persecuted. They were closely joined with the Huguenots and after losing many pastors to the plagues and persecution, speak French to this day in their services in Italy. Their communities were a



Italy map and detail of Waldensian valleys



known refuge for persecuted groups throughout history. The word *rifugiata* appears over and over in Oswaldo Coisson's book about families from the Waldensian Valleys.

I had always assumed that Waldensians would have been a refuge for the Jewish people since, to this day, we profess a great love of Jews as the nation that gave us Jesus and the Bible. They were known as people of the Book, the Old and New Testaments. The British reformers dubbed the Waldensian Valleys, "Israel of the Alps." Our oppression or freedoms were closely tied to the Jews depending on the viewpoint of the monarch and during deepest oppression Waldensians were forced into the valleys nearly as a ghetto.

Until some of my recent discoveries, I had no idea how much I believed we are related to the Jewish people. I support an organization known as the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a very active relief organization especially in Israel. In an e-newsletter, I noted an article that mentioned the lost tribes of Israel. It spoke of an exile from Spain of Jews who were integral to the building of Spain and their centuries of presence in the Iberian Peninsula. The article listed a website, Sephardim.com, which contained a search engine for names of these exiled families.

Curious, I went to the site and put in my last name. To my surprise, names appeared very similar to mine. My maiden name is Jacumin. As I looked at the translation of the similarly-spelled names, I saw that the name meant Jacob. I was amazed that my name was more than just a French-sounding surname, but that it had a real meaning. I began to see that there were other names that were like, or just like, names that I had known to be Waldensian. This was my neophyte foray into onomastics.

We have a great deal of information about our families and I knew my mother had a book with names gathered from many records in the Waldensian valleys. The book contained a well-researched list of some 845 families known to be a part of the Waldensian Church. Slowly, I went through the book and compared it to Sephardim.com. The book is called *I Nomi Di Famiglia Delle Valli Valdesi* by Oswaldo Coisson, whose name was also listed on Sephardim.com; one spelling is Corsone or Corsono.

The differences in spellings depended on the record keeper's language. It is also possible that exiles sought to blend in. For instance, Peret is written in some records as Peyrot. Duran may have a French spelling with a "d" on the ending or Bon may be listed as Bueno. An Italian writer may add an "o" at the end as in Constantino. Some names attached have the common Waldensian spellings as well as the Sephardic spellings. As in Duran and Durand, it is clearly the same family name and noted as such in the Waldensian historical record.



The Waldensian crest



Replica segments of the of the Carpentras Waldensian Bible, dating from the 14th century. These manuscripts on parchment, written in Occitanare, are archived in the Inguimbertaine Museum in Carpentras, France.

When the names were not spelled exactly the same, it was easy to see that, depending on the language of the record keeper, the spelling changed according to the language they used. For example, Jacumin was listed as Jacomin, Jacoma, Giacomino and Jacquemin. One of our former pastors who helped lead our people out of Switzerland and back to the valleys in France, was Henri Arnaud. The "d" was added to make a French spelling, but the spelling found at Sephardim.com had it spelled Arnau, the same pronunciation.

At first, when the same names were seen, I thought it was an isolated settling in a safe place by the exiles. Then I began to see there were many names for hundreds of years. It could not be mere chance, but a movement! This discovery was exciting. It was as though I were finding the pieces of an ancient puzzle. The more I research, the more I find.

Next, I ordered a book – *Finding Our Fathers* – by Dan Rottenberg, and went back through my name book and found more. My list contains a vast number of more Sephardic names than Ashkenazi names. Since the Spanish Jew's story is less known and told in the U.S., it may explain why our Waldensian historians have missed this connection.

I recently discovered SephardicGen.com founded by Dr. Jeffrey Malka that listed Guigou, my mother's maiden name. One spelling from the valleys is Guige. On Malka's site, it was listed as a name from

North African Jewry; and also the name of a wadi (dry riverbed) in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco called Guigou Wadi. I look forward to more research on this.

My mother is Waldensian on both sides. Her autosomal DNA indicates she is 44% Southern European, although our family has not been in southern Italy, Morocco or Iberia since the 12th century! >>>



The papacy sought to destroy the Waldensians and I can see more of their motivation. As the already Jewish presence took in Jewish exiles from other areas, they had more evidence of their connection to the early Jewish Apostles; this would be a threat to their power and authority! Fortunately, the Lord keeps a remnant.

I have only begun to research these connections, but I can share several of those found thus far. Using the online version of the 1906 Encyclopedia Judaica, I put in



Temple Pra delle Torri, Northern Italy



San Lorenzo, Italy. Built in 1555. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times during persecutions. The words are in Italian: *Venete Adoriamo El Signore* which is "Come Worship the Lord" Over the door it reads *Dio e Amore* – "God is Love"

Waldensian names to see what might come up. My great-grandmother's name was Virginia Peyronel. One archaic spelling in the area from 1232 was Perronelle. The search engine found a note from France in 1301 stating that a widow Perronelle had purchased land in the Jewish Quarter in Provins. She was a part of this community. In 1306, King Philip the Fair exiled the Jews from northern France; they were allowed to go several places, one being Savoy, the location of the Waldensian Valleys. There was possibly family already there for this displaced widow.

Another fascinating story involved an important Jewish community in Northern Spain known as Tarazona, with a long Jewish presence. Persecutions began as early as the 1300s, but when the community was exiled in 1492, the Catholic Church began to use the Jewish documents as bindings for their books. In 2000, the newly discovered documents constitute a wonderful collection of Sephardic writings. Of these documents, civil records enabled historians to see the names of families. A list is located at *Tornatoro el Retorno* (iddoobmy.eresmas.net). Numerous "Waldensian" names appear: Amato, Bon, Constantin, Davit, Falcon, Frances, Grisa, Macal, Peret, Prats, Salamon and Samuel.

One thing I noted at Sephardim.com is the pattern for naming children. The two groups have the same practice of naming the first boy or girl for the paternal grandfather or grandmother and naming the second child for the maternal grandfather or grandmother, depending on its gender.

Waldensians also call their places of worship temples. The Waldensian seal that I have worn around my neck all my life is a stylized menorah – a candle upon an open Bible with the center flame and seven stars in an arc above it. I had never really seen it this way until now. The phrase reads *Lux Lucet in Tenebris* meaning "A Light that Shines in the Darkness."

The ancient and simple temple in Ghigo Prali was used by Catholics after the exile in 1686, but a group of Waldensian soldiers fought to gain their land back in 1689. The church in Prali was a first stop and received a purification ceremony before they conducted their services in it, removing all Catholic statuary regarded as idols. It reminds me of the purification of the temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees.

My mother was also puzzled as to how they got all those translations



of scripture! As we know, many Jews translated scripture and wrote it in beautiful calligraphy and artistry. We have copies of translations in our museum in Valdese, as well as in Italy. I would love to see a professional look at these translations to see if they can ascertain the translator. A UCLA professor said that Sephardic translators had their specific style. We have a Bible in the Valdese, North Carolina museum printed in the 1500s that still bears burn marks as it was pulled from the flames!

The Waldensian *patois* (dialect) is Occitan, a sister language to Catalan. Our family friends, Enes Durand and her husband, met a businessman and his wife from Catalonia, and they understand each other perfectly. I would love a language specialist to see

if there are remnants of Ladino in our *patois*. Ladino speakers would certainly have understood the local dialect in the Valleys when they arrived.

Another more scientific approach to understanding our past comes from DNA research. We are currently exploring the genetic backgrounds of certain demographic areas, as well as the DNA makeup of both my parents. On my father's side, he and a second cousin match two women in FamilyTree DNA's Family Finder at the very same segment. Both of these women are Hakimian, a name among Mashadi Jews of Iran, another intriguing link.

The Waldensians, due to their seclusion have a degree of endogamy that keeps repeating DNA segments,

making relations appear closer than they are. After some research, we were shocked to see my parents as relations on the Family Finder test. We know their families go back hundreds of years, so they are not closely related, but it was still—remarkable.

Since the records go back so far, I wonder if it may be possible to use triangulation to isolate certain Sephardic family markers through the Waldensian families bearing the same names and thus gain a clearer picture of their unique signature. The door has opened and I know we'll continue to walk through every portal. What an honor to have found hidden, supposed lost connections within our very beings – a blessing! 🔥

Honoring LaGranada (the pomegranate)

In honor of *La Granada* (the pomegranate) AND our quarterly email newsletter produced by SCJS member Debbie Wohl Isard, enjoy this festive drink throughout the holidays — and anytime!

For two servings, combine:

- 10 fresh mint leaves, torn
- 2 lime wedges
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup
- 2 ounces pomegranate juice
- 2 ounces fresh lemonade
- Ginger ale or light citrus soda (optional)
- Pomegranate seeds and mint for garnish

If you'd like to add alcohol, substitute 1-1/2 ounces white rum or Cointreau for the lemonade.

(And did you know? November is National Pomegranate Month!)



RECIPE



Fractured Faiths

Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition and New World Identities” at the New Mexico History Museum. opening May 22 and running through December 21, 2016. The timing couldn’t be better as our conference coincides with the opening season.

Starting with a larger context than crypto-Judaism, the exhibit purports to tell the whole story of Spanish Colonialism in New Mexico. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Spain flowered into a Golden Age as Muslim, Jewish and Catholic peoples achieved new heights in science, philosophy and the arts. Four centuries later, the tri-culturalism had deteriorated into dissent, segregation and riots. By 1492, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella unified the nation under the Catholic crown, cultural chaos roared forth.

A royal edict ordered all Muslims and Jews to either leave the country or convert to Catholicism within four months—or else. The Spanish Inquisition (and later, the Portuguese and Mexican Inquisitions) stood ready to persecute anyone who failed to abide. Violators would endure prisons, torture and death.

What would you do? Repudiate the language, religion and customs of your people in order to stay in your home and with your family? Or walk away from all you owned, all you knew, and embark upon treacherous journeys across land and sea toward a life you could barely imagine?

“Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition and New World Identities,” stands on the brink of that chasm and leaps into a diaspora that stretches back to biblical times. For the first time, a major institution tells the comprehensive story of how Spain’s Jewry found a tenuous foothold in North America. Despite continued persecution, its people persisted—sometimes as *conversos*, sometimes as secret “crypto-Jews”—to finally make a mark as successful merchants, artists and philanthropists in New Mexico. Emblems of that struggle for cultural identity appear even today: A Star of David carved into a tombstone in a Catholic cemetery; oral histories of tangled roots; Hispanic villages where genetic clusters speak to Jewish lineage.

As Jewish people fled Spain, synagogues were turned into



Above, left, *Yad or Torah Pointer, used to guide readers through the pages.*
Above right, *sephardic Inquisition emblem.*
Bottom, *shackle used on prisoners of the Inquisition.*

cathedrals and the *émigrés*’ abandoned money, artwork and households fed the growing wealth of the royal kingdom. In the Americas, *converso* and crypto-Jewish colonists began making their marks, fueling a second, 1590 wave of terror by the Mexican Inquisition, which hounded them into the farthest reaches of the Spanish empire, including New Spain. Crypto-Jews joined the expedition of Juan De Oñate, himself of *converso* background, to settle New Mexico. Other Jewish roots could be claimed by countless carpenters, miners, seamstresses and merchants.

Working with institutions in Mexico City and New York, curators Josef Díaz and Roger Martinez have gathered physical evidence, including trial testimony, 15th-century tiles from El Transito Synagogue in Toledo, an 18th-century painting of a



Must-See Exhibition Opens Just In Time for 2016 SCJS Conference!

Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition and New World Identities

NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

Mexico City *auto-da-fé*, family trees that appear to scrub out evidence of Jewish heritage, silver Purim groggers, and more.

They bring to life people like Don Bernardo López de Mendizábal, a 17th-century governor of New Mexico, and his wife, Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche. Brutally hauled before the Inquisition in Mexico City, they were charged with following “the ceremonies of the superseded law of Moses”—accusations that came from their social and political rivals. While imprisoned, Doña Teresa, a rare literate woman of her era, kept a meticulous diary that stands today as a discomfiting testament to life under the Inquisition’s zealous glare.

“Simply put,” Díaz said, “the history of Sephardic Jews and their expulsion from Spain and Portugal is a highly charged issue for Spain, Portugal and the Americas. Spain still struggles with its Jewish past and how to account for the Expulsion given our contemporary sensibilities about religious tolerance. Spain is attempting to resolve the issue through granting citizenship to the descendants of those expelled.”

“Fractured Faiths” reunites Spanish artifacts with their New World counterparts for the first time to reveal the history of the Spanish Sephardim—the stalwarts, the converts and the hidden Jews—and their long heritage within the Americas. A global story that played out on New Mexico soil, this monumental exhibit details one of history’s most compelling chronicles of human tenacity and the power of cultural identity.


Catalog: In concert with the exhibit, Fresco Fine Art Publications will produce a bilingual catalog of the exhibition’s most important artifacts and documents. A year-long programming series will deepen visitors’ understanding of Jewish life in the Americas and the struggle to preserve identity against often tragic odds.

Curators: Josef Díaz is the History Museum’s curator of Spanish and Mexican colonial collections. His exhibitions include the current “Painting the Divine: Images of Mary in

the New World” and “Santa Fe Found: Fragments of Time.”

Roger Martinez is an associate professor of history at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs, where he specializes in the study of medieval and early modern Spain, Jewish religious minorities and converts in Spain, and Spanish trans-Atlantic migration.

Other museums: Lending institutions to Sephardic Legacy include Mexico City’s Museo Franz Mayer, the *Museo Nacional de Arte* and the *Basilica de Guadalupe*, along with the Hispanic Society of America in New York City.

New Mexico History Museum Preview For more information, contact Kate Nelson at (505) 476-5019 or Kate.Nelson@state.nm.us. 

Santa Fe Conference Travel Tip

Make Airline Reservations Now For June 2016

Book Early–Get Maximum Discounts!

Direct Flights into Santa Fe:

From Denver–United Airlines

From Dallas–American Airlines

From Los Angeles–American Airlines



**Don’t miss out.
Seats will go fast!**

**SCJS 26th Annual
Conference
June 26–28, 2016**

**Drury Plaza Hotel
Santa Fe, NM**



RESOURCES & EDUCATION

So you're interested in genealogy and Jewish history? Need more resources to continue your search related to crypto-Judaic studies, the Diaspora, or Jewish culture? Try these amazing places. (Note – This list is not comprehensive. More to come in the future.)

101 South Independence Mall East
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-923-3811
www.nmajh.org



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

The National Museum of American Jewish located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia brings to life the 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the story of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories that reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of Jewish American History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Tuesday to Friday, 10 am–5 pm and Saturday and Sunday 10 am–5:30 pm. NMAJH is closed most Mondays, including federal holidays and some Jewish holidays.

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

15 West 16th Street,
New York, 10011
212-294-8301
www.cjh.org

More than five miles of archives, 50 years of history, five dozen languages, 500,000 books, 50,000 digitized photographs

When in New York, here's a resource you do not want to miss. The CJH explores history, culture and heritage, providing a collaborative home for five partner organizations: American

Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, collectively offering the most comprehensive archive of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel.

The collections span 700 years in dozens of languages and alphabet systems. They include more than 500,000 volumes, as well as thousands of artworks, textiles, ritual objects, recording, films and photographs. Its staff represents leaders in library science, digitization and public education. As a research institution, the Center offers fellowships, exhibitions, symposia, conferences and lectures. The CJH is a Smithsonian affiliate and a partner of the Google Cultural Institute. Do not miss the landmark Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute, in all, collecting, protecting and preserving the history and culture of the Jewish people for years to come.

David P. Rosenberg, Research Coordinator
drosenberg@cjh.org or inquiries@cjh.org



400 South Kearney
Denver, Colorado 80222
303-394-9993
www.mizelmuseum.org

The Mizel Museum is a portal to the contemporary Jewish experience for the Rocky Mountain region. Rooted in Jewish values, the Museum's exhibits, events and educational programs inspire visitors of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate diversity and honor the journeys of all people. Through a full spectrum of expression including fine art, objects, film, and literature, the Museum presents the history and culture of the Jewish people in interactive ways that encourages dialogue about how our lives interweave and what it takes to make the world a better place.

Penny Nissen, Education Director
pnisson@mizelmuseum.org



THE ARTS

WHISPERS & ECHOES



BY CORINNE JOY MOSKO-BROWN

I am on the verge
of rewriting my story, the one about
who I am, who I've been,
and where I'm going.
One starting point I know:
Warsaw, Poland.
I believe in a distant journey made long ago
when I crossed continents and miles
of innocence—
though time has hidden the details.

What has drawn me to this portal we share,
this view of history?
Faces of my father's family from Russia
make me wonder,
where did it all begin?
Did the rhythms of Sepharad ever run
through their veins?

Years ago, when chasing flamenco dance,
I had the feeling of déjà vu—
As if every step had been taken before, every song,
an echo of another.

I think of my Polish grandmother (may she rest in peace),
and the foods she made:
orange cake with raisins,
strudel with apples and dates, chicken
with olives, garlic and herbs.
Hints of another kitchen from a faraway time?

I make no pretense,
I dare not be other than who I am.
How well I know we cannot wear another's coat,
but we can ask if our own might need cleaning
now and then.
Or perhaps we might peek
into the lining,
to see what's hidden there.

Photo—Family of Joel Moskowicz (Mosko) circa 1900, Warsaw, Poland.



Anita Rodriguez

Painting A T

AN INTERVIEW BY

THE ARTS

In an interview with artist Anita Rodriguez of Taos, New Mexico, we acquire a better understanding of the artist's engaging two- and three-dimensional acrylic paintings and giclee prints, and her view of the world. Meet a remarkable woman whose family has been in the geographical area since the time of the Spaniard Don Diego deVargas, some 300 years ago. In addition to adding insight to her work, she expresses her fascination with crypto-Jewish culture in a larger context.

Corinne Brown for HaLapid: What drew you to this content?

Anita Rodriguez:

The power of the story fascinated me. New Mexico is a petri dish of cultural confluence and conflict. When the story of the crypto-Jews came out, it fit into the picture of intense diversity so

perfectly that it seemed to explain something I had always known or validated — a belief of which I was not conscious. Secrecy was embedded in our collective consciousness by the native Pueblo Revolt of 1680 which made religious privacy a universal law of etiquette that New Mexicans respect even today. The Diaspora scattered Jews throughout the Americas but here,

secrecy was almost a rule, making it a particularly good hiding place.

What is your background? Are you of the tradition?

Not really. I just had my DNA tested. I am 23% Native American, 3% Polynesian, the rest Iberian, with some Scot, Irish and English too.

Why do you use skeletons in these paintings?

Skulls and skeletons are part of my heritage; Mexican artists have used skeletons in their art since pre-Columbian times up until the present. I am a big fan of Guadalupe Posada, a



"Hora" — dancers celebrate at a Jewish wedding



Paintings & Nichos: Tale of Many Cultures

CORINNE BROWN



Above, "Las Posadas Hannukah 1" — closed (l) and open (r)

The Nicho in Folk Art

Nicho art originated as a popular adaptation of the Roman Catholic retablo tradition of painting patron saints on wood or tin. Unlike the large, flat panels of retablo, nichos are small and built in shadow box style. Common structural conventions include hinged doors, carved borders, and multiple panels

Within the box there is a key object or central figure for whose honor or memory the nicho has been created.

Nichos are usually painted with striking colors, often contrasting bright and dark, and tend towards garish. In addition to painted designs, nichos are decorated with all variety of images and objects from religious and popular culture, especially depictions of the Virgin Mary, saints, the sacred heart figures from loteria, Dia de los Muertos characters and objects, and folk heroes. Thematically, traditional nichos are part or extensions of household altars, and depict patron

saints, ancestors, or an ex-voto. They can act as shrines, protection, or devotional objects, and may be part of active religious practice. The most common central figure is the Virgin Mary, and in Central America especially the Virgin of Guadalupe. Contemporary nichos have expanded into more non-traditional subject matter, including the secular or the humorous, but continue to represent themes and figures in popular Latin American culture.



20th century illustrator for the Mexican tabloids. His characters were often skeletons posing as politicians, mariachis, popular heroes and villains. I simply took the motif further, starting with what you could call 1990s Mexican Pop Art to magical realism – with what I currently identify.

By painting this narrative in *nichos*, or boxes with doors painted on both sides, what are you trying to say?

I can tell two stories at once, do two paintings in one. On the outside, there is a public rite of passage, such as a Catholic communion or confirmation, and when you open the doors the secret is revealed – a Bat Mitzvah or marriage under a *huppah*.

My fascination with multiple cultural identities or perspectives comes out of a need to reconcile my many cultural experiences and synchronize them into something that has meaning, a pattern, a composition. The tension and fertility of diversity is the seedbed of my art. For me, art is the antidote to violence, the opposite of destruction. It brings social change without violence.

Where do you sell your work?

It is available from my studio by appointment (anitarodriguez.com), and at the Garden and Soul Gallery, just off Taos Plaza.



José Guadalupe Posada (1815–1913), the father of Mexican printmaking, was an engraver whose work has influenced many Latin American artists and cartoonists because of his satirical acuteness and social engagement.

So, beneath the obvious, you have a hidden message?

The paintings speak in the visual vernacular of my culture about universal human truths. One obvious message is that life is eternal – living skeletons laughing, getting married, dancing. On another level, I am trying to find a way to reconcile the paradoxes, the contradictions and the conflicts of

this rich, wonderful diversity that I inherited. Diversity, ethnic and cultural differences, are critical to the national discourse right now. It is a deep fault line in the national psyche. But our problem is not diversity itself – we don't all have to be the same religion, culture or color – but we must all have equality and justice. In themselves, differences drive evolution, enrich the intellectual and gene pools and lead to invention and more efficient alternatives. Remember the Golden Age of Spain when Catholic, Jew and Arab lived in harmony and advances were made in agriculture, medicine, architecture and art?

You can apply the need to reconcile religious and cultural differences to the micro-level of the individual human psyche. We have to open the doors of our souls and our houses and accept with empathy the lives of those who are different, of the “other,” the part of the global community, city or the part of ourselves that we have hidden, repressed. So, in a way, the *nichos* are shrines, the footprint of my spiritual journey to make sense out of all the suffering and tension of differences. To something beautiful, harmonious and balanced out of otherness – even enemies. 🍁



“Nicho–Pink



Coming full circle to discover a passion

I was born in 1941 in Taos, New Mexico, the daughter of Alfredo Antonio “Skeezix” Rodriguez and Grace Graham King of Austin, Texas. My mother was a painter and met my father when she came to Taos to study art with Walter Ufer. My father was part owner of a drugstore on the plaza and made my mother a chocolate soda that must have had all the legendary powers chocolate is reputed to have because they married a year later.

Taos was on the cusp of “discovery” at that time and the solitude of centuries was ending before our eyes. The United States had swallowed half of Mexico and us along with it, and we were no longer Mexicans but Spanish Americans. It was like Rip Van Winkle and the first of what later became a wave of newcomers were the artists, drawn to paint our only natural resource – we were rich in beauty.

Our nuclear family was somewhat exotic, being one of almost no cross-cultural marriages. My mother knew all the painters and my father loved to entertain and was a renowned raconteur, raised in a rich oral tradition among polished story tellers. He felt tremendous nostalgia for the world he saw disappearing and without his stories I would be culturally poorer, historically more ignorant and a lesser painter. My imagination was further fattened on stories from the other cultures, from *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, to stories about the ant people, to the miraculous appearances of saints. But it was my mother who taught me to paint. She supplied art materials and taught me to draw. My childish watercolors were critiqued by her painter friends.

But I was mortally bored by the weight of centuries, all those backward-looking stories, I wanted to write my own stories, have an adventurous life and forget xenophobia, provincialism and isolation.



**Anita
Rodriguez**

At the impressionable age of 16, I went to Mexico City as an exchange student. I saw the murals of Diego Rivera in the Zocalo, of Siguieros at the UNAM, the work of Guadalupe Posada, Freida Kahlo, Remedios Varos, Tamayo. I fell in love with my grandfather’s culture and decided that somehow, someday I would live in Mexico.

But many adventures intervened. I went to Colorado College to study art and left for Haight Ashbury to participate in the spirit of the ‘60s. But I fell in love again, my daughter Shemai was born. I remembered the remote mountain town I thought I would never return to, of my extended family and the tranquil safety of a rural world as opposed to race riots, traffic and sirens.

So Shemai and I returned to Taos, where I started an adobe finishing business based on the techniques of the *enjarradora*, the traditional woman builder of New Mexico.

Shemai was raised on construction sites, and was running crews of men in their 40s by the time she was 18. When she left home, after helping me build my house, on Christmas day 1988, I decided to become a full-time painter.

It was really just like that. I found a box of colored pencils Shemai had left behind and began a series of colored pencil drawings. A reel of images began running in my head and I couldn’t work fast enough to capture half of them. A year later I had a show at a local bank, got great reviews and sold half my works. I retired my contractor’s license, sold my precious mixer and began to make a living as an artist. In 1996, I moved to Mexico but have now returned to live in New Mexico.

Contact Anita at anitaorodriguez@yahoo.com.



In October, Joe traveled to Israel to present clips from “Children of the Inquisition” at the Knesset Anusim Caucus conference in Jerusalem. This historic event launched Reconectar, an initiative that aims to build bridges to *b’nai anusim*, who want to have contact with the Jewish world – including conversion, *aliyah*, or just access to their history. Caucus director Ashley Perry, an

English-born Sephardi, says, “There are few Jews who don’t have someone in their ancestries who wasn’t forcibly converted.”

The stories in the “Children of the Inquisition” clips demonstrated, to the attendees, the emotional insight and historical perspective from the descendants of early *conversos*. Genie Milgrom, SCJS president, also addressed the Caucus.

The presentation included a sample of new sequences from an April shoot in Spain with New York Times writer Doreen Carvajal on the trail of her ancestors in Segovia. There she came face to face with the funeral statuary of her 16th great-grandparents.

The Lovett team (Joe, producer Hilary Steinman, cameraman Sam Shinn and soundman Sergio Fuentes) followed Doreen as she climbed to the top of the Arias Davila (her 16th great-grandfather) Tower and looked out over Segovia, imagining what it must have been like for her family in the 15th century.

On that same shoot, historian David Gitlitz helps to convey a sense of what life was like for the Jewish and *Converso* communities of that time. David, a leading expert on Hispano-Judaic and pilgrimage studies, has studied and published extensively on the lives and religion of crypto-Jews of Spain and Mexico, including the Arias Davila family and the 200 Inquisition depositions against them. The



CHILDREN OF THE INQUISITION

JOE LOVETT’S
DOCUMENTARY
FILM AND
TRANSMEDIA
PROJECT,
BROADENS ITS
GLOBAL REACH.



Joe Lovett, Director
“Children of the Inquisition”

Lovett editing team is now working on sequences with David, Doreen and Joe at the National Archives in Madrid going over those Inquisition testimonies against the Arias Davila family and others.

The Lovett team is also talking to the Center for Jewish History in New York about archiving all the material from what will be seven years of shooting by the time the project is finished. These video archives with transcription would be an invaluable resource available to scholars and journalists forever. In addition to David

Gitlitz, experts include Jane Gerber, Gerard Nahon, Ainsley Henriques, Miriam Bodian, Andree Brooks, Eli Faber, Ronnie Perelis, Rachel Frankel and Mordechai Arbelle, to name just a few. The team is also hoping to collaborate with the American Sephardi Federation and others moving forward.

The material from these expert interviews gives perspective to the secrets of the past 500 years. Gitlitz, for example, points out that during pre-Inquisition times, most of the population was illiterate. However, Jewish men were literate; each had to know how to read, but also how to analyze and debate in preparation for his bar mitzvah. Due to their education and training when they converted and entered the Christian world — they had advantages their Christian-born business competitors did not.

In fact, the *limpieza de sangre* laws began in the trade guilds to cut competition.

Rough cuts have been assembled of David Gitlitz taking Joe through the Inquisition process from accusations through imprisonment, interrogation, torture, *auto da fé* and execution. In one sequence, he takes Joe through the torture museum of Toledo, demystifying commonly held beliefs about what forms of torture were practiced during the Inquisition.

The future goal is to broaden this emotional and historical



awareness. Funds are being raised now to make the project truly global and represent the extensive reach of the Sephardic Diaspora. The team is planning shoots this winter in Mexico and Brazil to highlight stories of the diaspora.

“Brazilian artist Carlos de Medeiros will take us back in time to Brazil during the Age of Exploration and the *converso*/crypto-Jewish migration; how the Portuguese affected both crypto and public Jews,” said Lovett. The story includes his 14th great-grandmother Branca Dias, a legendary victim of the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil. It also shows how historical events affected the lives of the Jews. The audience learns how the Dutch won the northeastern section of Brazil from the Portuguese allowing crypto-Jews to “come out” as Jews after a century of hiding. It then covers how the retaking of the area by the Portuguese military in 1654 forced the now “out” Jews to hide or escape, which led to the first Jewish community in Nieuwe Amsterdam (now New York), composed of escaping Jews from Recife.

The Mexican shoot will show how ferociously the Inquisition came to Mexico, clamping down on those Portuguese and Spanish *conversos* who had been less than discreet about their Jewish backgrounds. It will also connect the stories of the Mexican Americans already filmed in the American Southwest with the lives of their ancestors who made their way from the fires of the Inquisition to the deserts of the Interior.

“Funds are being raised to make the project truly global.”

Adding to our list of academic experts featured in the film, Professor Devin Naar will bring to life the history of the Ottoman Empire’s treatment of the *expulsados* through the Jews of Salonika (now Thessaloniki). Few people beyond Diaspora aficionados know that after Isabella expelled the Jews in 1492, the Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II welcomed them to the new empire where he needed educated functionaries throughout the empire. During 500 years of Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire, Salonika developed as the jewel in the crown of the

empire, growing rich financially and culturally with Jews comprising more than 50 percent of the population.

Devin, a professor at the University of Washington and director of its Sephardic Studies Program, is the ideal specialist to bring this aspect of the story to life in all its complexity. He is descended from a Thessaloniki rabbinic family, many of whom were deported and murdered by the Nazis along with 50,000 Thessaloniki Jews. It was the furthest the Nazis went to take Jews to the concentration camps. Devin has devoted years to researching his personal family history and is equally passionate about collecting and preserving Sephardic documents, music and artifacts.



David Gitlitz, Doreen Carvajal and Hilary Steinman



Ashley Perry



DoreenCarvajal

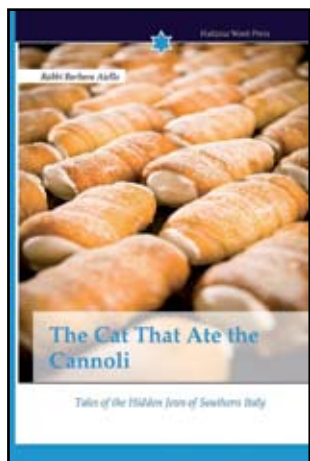
If the Ottoman shoot takes place in June 2016, Joe hopes to complete the film by the end of December. Funding has been the greatest challenge, he says. “Working on ‘Children of the Inquisition’ between other projects is not the most efficient way to finish a film,” he says. “But hopefully with the international attention ‘Children of the Inquisition’ has been getting, substantial funding will allow us to finish this amazing story.” 📌



The Cat That Ate the Cannoli: Tales of the Hidden Jews of Southern Italy

BY RABBI BARBARA AIELLO
2015, HADASSA WORD PRESS

BOOK REVIEWS



Rabbi Barbara Aiello is the first woman rabbi and first liberal rabbi in Italy. She is a *bat anusim* whose parents, grandparents and ancestors had been hidden Jews in Calabria since Inquisition times. In 2015, her work was featured in a documentary, “The Secret Jews of Calabria.” She returned to her ancestral village, Serrastretta, where all her Italian ancestors

had lived, hidden for centuries, in the “toe” of the “boot.”

Her family history begins in Toledo, Spain where the original name was Ayala (El Al in Judea), then to Gibraltar, Morocco, Sicily and eventually to the mountains of Calabria. Her family names include Aiello, Scalise, Mascaro, Nicotera, Grande and Marucca. According to scholars of Italian Jewish history, at one point, the Jews numbered 40% of the entire population of Sicily and Calabria.

The Cat That Ate the Cannoli is a collection of Rabbi Aiello’s writings that have appeared on her website and elsewhere.

For thousands of Italians who today live in Calabria (in the south of Italy), on the island of Sicily and in the Aeolian Island chain, connecting Jewish heritage with family tradition is sometimes just a matter of luck. Aiello describes asking women who live in the mountain villages about a three-branched candelabra lit on Friday nights. The middle candle, described one woman, was “the helping candle,” and was used to light the other two. Some families remember a beautiful ceremony in which the matriarch lit the middle candle and passed it to the youngest family member. Each person around the table had his or her own candle that was lit with the “helper.” Once all the other candles were lit, the matriarch lit the last two Shabbat candles.

According to Aiello, the *Seder Hamishi*, a Passover Seder conducted on the fifth night of the holiday, had its roots in Spain, Portugal, Sicily, Sardinia and then on the mainland. The Inquisition was always on the hunt for those who kept their ancestral customs and the first night of Passover was often when homes were raided as they hoped to find the Jews celebrating. She tells of stories of Christian families who allowed Jews into their cellars to prepare the space and observe the fifth night seder.

At her weekend *Shabbatons* (Shabbat gatherings), which began in 2007, attendees shared their own experiences, such as Adelina: “When my grandfather died, we covered all the mirrors in white and sat on small low chairs. We ate eggs after the funeral. My *nonno* (grandfather) asked that he not be buried by a priest or have a rosary put in his hand. Instead he asked that we stay at home for seven days and remember him.” All are Jewish mourning customs. Ennio

shared “When there was a wedding, the bride and groom received a *coperta*, a special lace cover. It was held over their heads while the fathers made a blessing and then given to the couple as the covering for the marriage bed,” describing a *huppah*, or Jewish wedding canopy.

Aiello’s work includes the Italian Jewish Cultural Center of Calabria (IJCCC), a research and archival group that aides in the discovery of the Jewish heritage of surnames used today in Calabria and Sicily. Working with documents describing the persecution, arrest and murder of Jewish families and archival lists of Jewish family surnames, historian Vincenzo Villella and archivist Enrico Mascaro help people connect traditions to identity.

Certain customs are described in each chapter and the reader learns about traditions that he or she may have never encountered, such as the blowing of a *shofar* on New Year’s Eve. When the church bells in Serrastretta ring 12 times, a visitor may hear the ram’s horns in the forest, when it was safer, than to blow them on the Jewish New Year.

Based on centuries of persecution, the Calabrians, like families in New Mexico and elsewhere, deflect direct questions about possible Jewish heritage. According to Aiello, it is a *sfida e gioia* – a challenge and a joy for her to live and work in the area. She has learned to ask the right questions after some 12 years. Instead of direct questions, she asks about family customs. What do you do when a baby is born? What happens when there is a

“... at one point, the Jews numbered 40% of the entire population of Sicily and Calabria.”



wedding? What happens at a funeral and what are the customs of mourning?

As happens in the Calabrian community (and elsewhere in the world), Aiello writes, “For centuries, we Calabrians took our Jewish traditions into our homes and our hearts and slowly, at first for safety reasons, and then for cultural reasons, the religious meanings of these rituals were lost. Our precious Jewish customs became family traditions and sadly, nothing more.”

Other chapters include a locked box and its contents, an elderly man studying for his bar mitzvah, of traditions whispered on death beds, of Good Friday customs where bands of people in red vests and yellow hats marched through streets beating others; of people who have forgotten everything except a few words, such as Aiello’s own father conducting a *Havdalah* service (added this) by pointing to the three stars and saying “*Baruch, Baruch, Baruch.*”

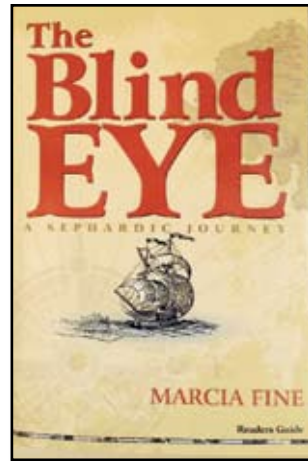
An important chapter in the book describes the way emerging *anusim* (descendants of those who were forced to convert) are sometimes treated by mainstream rabbis. Those who reach out to make a connection are sometimes met with suspicion, skepticism and mistrust. Some authorities, who do not understand what these communities have gone through for centuries, compare them to those who died at the hands of the Inquisition (“the real Jews”), while those who converted to save themselves and their families and carried their traditions underground are met with suspicion. Aiello does mention the work of known rabbis and organizations that are actively involved in assisting *anusim* to learn about their heritage and history.

I do not think any of us can say with certainty what we would do if faced with an Inquisition. Would we choose to die? Or would we choose to live to fight another day for our beliefs?

— Schelly Talalay Dardashti

The Blind Eye: A Sephardic Journey

BY MARCIA FINE
2012, 2ND EDITION,
L’IMAGE PRESS



In this historical novel, Marcia Fine conjures the personal experience of the Spanish expulsion and how the discovery of that history affects those in the modern world. The novel oscillates between the first-person perspectives of three women: Grazia, a girl from a Sephardic textile merchant family; her niece Bellina, whose mother has been abandoned by the family for getting pregnant with a non-Jewish man; and Alegra, a Cuban-American woman living in the late 1990s. With their family and community murdered by the Inquisition, Grazia and Bellina’s precarious status as unmarried crypto-Jewish women lead them to what Fine subtitles as “a Sephardic journey.”

They witness genocide and forced conversions in Portugal, flee to servitude in colonized Brazil, and finally find love and redemption with an African ex-slave (Grazia) and a wealthy *converso* in Amsterdam (Bellina). Throughout their stories, Fine demonstrates her research by historically contextualizing the 15th-century stories, vividly detailing the conditions of impoverished crypto-Jews who are willing to sacrifice their

homes, bodies and lives to maintain a sense of Jewish identity.

In the other Sephardic journey, occurring five centuries later, Alegra finally finds adventure in her life by becoming the assistant to a University of Miami professor, Harold “Hal” Guzman, who rescues her from a hapless life in Miami to discover the implicating history of Spain and Portugal.

The novel does well in delving into the nitty-gritty aspects of historical crypto-Jewish persecution as well as showcasing historical realities unpalatable to modern readers (i.e., the Jewish involvement of African slavery in Brazil). There are occasional errors, particularly in Jewish religious matters, such as the discrepancies of holiday chronology or Hebrew transliteration, which should be corrected in future editions. Because the exposition tends to drag and Alegra’s romantic subplot fizzles

“Stories, even if they are imagined, give us a certain amount of access to our past that might otherwise be unavailable.”

more than it sizzles, the novel’s contemporary setting seems unnecessary. The reader would rather get back to the drama of Grazia and Bellina, with their floundering ships and slave revolts, instead of lingering on Alegra’s more banal predicaments. Alegra’s own lost Jewish heritage remains implicit and it would have been edifying to see her struggles and transformation addressed more



thoroughly. Instead, the characters of Grazia and Bellina seem to vicariously work through her issues of finding a new life and identity.

Vicariously, because the best (and redeeming) element to the Alegria story concerns its conceit as a frame narrative that covers the story of Grazia and Bellina. Metafiction, since at least the days of Cervantes and typical of post-modernist novels, has been used as a means for a story to critically and creatively reflect upon itself. In Fine's novel, we discover that the Grazia and Bellina's first-person stories are actually written by the professor Hal, for a book called *The Blind Eye*. His travels to the Iberian Peninsula are not academic, Alegria eventually understands, but meant to facilitate the writing we, the readers, have presumably been reading all along. Alegria's research, like Fine's, provides the contextual background needed to fuel Hal's characters to life and Alegria's life in turn, becomes woven with these characters when she eventually marries their author. This reader would have enjoyed seeing a more explicitly engaged relationship between Alegria and Hal's text, or perhaps further convoluting the novel in a more experimental fashion by incorporating Fine into a character writing Alegria's story.

Nevertheless, Fine's efforts to recreate the 15th-century plight of crypto-Jewish women are commendable. By establishing her narrative as one explicitly fictionalized by another character in her novel, Fine reinforces the significance of collective memory and the pursuit of history. Stories, even if they are imagined, give us a certain amount of access to our past that might otherwise be unavailable. They allow us to give a voice to the muted and discover how closely connected those progenitors are to ourselves. This, at a time when descendants of crypto-Jews are increasingly taking control of the narratives to their family heritages, makes *The Blind Eye* a welcome contribution in the field of creative writing.

— Leonard Stein



Remnant of a wall drawing, Jerusalem.
“The heart remembers.”

A tradition is a vehicle

for carrying something through time. If wisdom is embedded in a tradition, it has a better chance of travelling safely through the centuries. For this to work the wisdom must be packed in things that do not degrade with time, things that can be unpacked at every station — things like symbols, myths, stories. These are things that no matter how often you unpack them will travel onward for another generation to unpack, and unpack differently. Sometimes the wisdom may emerge brilliant and obvious, sometime obscure and esoteric, and sometimes people will find nothing there at all. But if the tradition continues, the wisdom will keep travelling, in the hope that, at another station in the flow of time, another generation will find it and embody it once more.

— From *Making Connections*, by David Kaetz
(davidkaetz.com) available from Feldenkrais
Resources (feldenkraisresources.com).
Excerpt used with author's permission.

Stefanie Beninato

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Rediscovering

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Palermo Cathedral embraced the best of all architectural styles of medieval Sicily, Romanesque, Arab, Norman and Byzantine.

BY IRENE SHALAND WITH BIANCA DEL BELLO

The Anusim led me to Sicily

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, the first female and non-Orthodox rabbi to head the first modern Liberal synagogue in Italy, told me about the *anusim* or “the forced ones” of the South of Italy: people who are rediscovering their Jewish roots and traditions many centuries after their ancestors were forcefully converted to Christianity. For many, as Rabbi Barbara said, this new knowledge leads to a new identity: formal conversion to Judaism.

The oldest Jewish community in Europe was in Sicily

Contrary to popular opinion, Sicily’s Jewish culture was not imported from Spain but came from Judea in antiquity as part of the Diaspora. Some sources date the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in Sicily to the destruction of Jerusalem’s Second Temple in 70 AD, when Titus brought over 30,000 Jewish slaves to Rome, some of whom were later sent to the island of Sicily. Many academics agree though

that the Jewish presence in Italy began long before that. A sizable Jewish community was likely established in the southeastern part of Sicily in Siracusa during the Hellenistic Greek period. Encyclopedia Judaica quotes the record of the first known European Jewish poet Caecilius of Calacte moving to Rome from Sicily in 50 AD, 25 years prior to Titus’ slaves. These records prove that the Sicilian Jewish community is the oldest in Europe.

The Phoenicians, Semitic people, were the first to colonize Sicily in 800 BC. They established a city-port they called Zis, now Palermo. They spoke a language similar to Hebrew and developed the first alphabet that was written like Hebrew. The Greeks came 100 years later, and 500 years later, the Romans. The Vandals came 500 years after the Romans, then the Arabs, the Normans, the Schwabians, the French, and the Spanish. The last

— Reprinted by Permission from *The Israel Times*
Photos by Alex Shaland

TRAVEL



wave of invaders came after the unification of Italy in 1861. These were the “northern Italians,” as the locals call them.

When the Arabs conquered Sicily in 831, they required Sicilian Jews to pay special taxes and wear a distinctive badge. But Jews were considered “People of the Book” and respected. At that time, there were flourishing Jewish communities in Siracusa, Messina, Taormina, Mazara and other cities. The Jews of Palermo conducted lucrative trade between Sicily, North Africa, and Egypt and prospered under Muslim rule.

The Normans arrived in 1070 AD, and though the Jews still had to pay heavy taxes and wear a badge, they were recognized as citizens and allowed to hold public office and buy land. Travelers described the beauty of the Palermo synagogues and the wealth of the Jews. Benjamin of Tudela, himself a Jew, estimated that the 11th-century Palermo community numbered at least 1,500 families or close to 6,000–8,000 people. In addition to being noted merchants, the Jews of Palermo were physicians, moneylenders, translators and precious metal workers, and had a virtual monopoly on the silk and dyeing industry.

My dear Palermo friend and tour guide par excellence, Bianca Del Bello, explained that although Sicily geographically and administratively is indeed part of Italy, the Sicilians, culturally and linguistically, are not Italians. “We are the people of the most conquered island in the world, where one wave of invaders just changed another and so, we created and inhabited our own universe, where the past – Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Jewish, Arabic, Norman, French, Spanish – was never rejected but accepted and embraced.”

Seeking Palermo Jewish voices - after 500 years of silence

Unlike the European ghettos that were locked in from the outside, Sicilian Jews lived in La Giudecca, an open quarter that offered free passage and was freely chosen by the Jews to be near their fellow co-religionists. The Jewish quarter most likely extended as far west as Salita dell Ospedale in the L’Albergheria quarter. In 2003, Professor Niccolo Bucaria announced his controversial discovery of a 10th-century *mikveh*, a ritual Jewish bath, under the 15th-century Palazzo Marchesi. The Jesuits built their Church of Santa



Vicolo Meschita, the synagogue street is named after the mosque, Palermo, Sicily

Maria del Gesu or Casa Professa on the site of the Palazzo. This discovery provoked numerous arguments on whether the structure of what was long believed to be a water reservoir pointed to the location of a second synagogue. Recently, the City of Palermo installed brown-and-white street signs that show the names in three languages: Italian, Hebrew and Arabic. Many streets are named after the inhabitants’ professions: Via Calderai – for boilermakers, or Via Lamponelli – for lantern-makers. One street sign reads Vicolo Meschita, the mosque.

The Meschita—the Great Synagogue—admired by numerous travelers from all corners of the earth, was the center of the Jewish quarter. Architectural historians think that the synagogue structure most probably resembled other Norman-Arab buildings of worship of the time: square in shape, Romanesque in style, and with graceful arches and a cupola. In the 17th-century, the church and the monastery of St. Nicolo Tolentino were built on the site of the Great



La Giudecca in Palermo



“The Triumph of Death” with the Jewish figure among the pious spared by Death, Palermo, Sicily



Irene Shaland



Irene Shaland

Internationally-published art and travel writer, educator and lecturer, Irene has a life-long passion for travel with a higher purpose. Together with her husband-photographer Alex, Irene has visited over 60 countries. Her research trips result in numerous

publications and series of educational lectures and slide-shows focused on various countries' responses to Holocaust, Jewish history, little-known Jewish communities, origins of traditions and myths, sense of identity, and personal stories. Irene regularly presents to academic and lay audiences in universities, museums, libraries, synagogues, JCCs, and art galleries in Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and New York/New Jersey area.

Irene is the author of two books on the history of theater, drama, and intercultural interpretations. Her current book "Our Stories and Ourselves: Seeking Jewish Narratives All Over the World" will be out in December 2015. Her 25-plus articles dedicated to arts, theater, and cultural and historical travel have appeared in multiple journals both in print and online in the U.S., Canada, Kenya, and the U.K.

Irene holds a BA (Theater, Journalism and Art History) from St. Petersburg University (Russia); an MA (English) from Case Western Reserve University (Ohio), and an MS (Information Sciences) from Kent State University (Ohio).

Irene and Alex reside in Lyndhurst, Ohio.

Visit Irene's website: globaltravelauthors.com

Follow Irene on Twitter: @ShalandGTA

Like Irene on Facebook: GlobalTravelAuthors

Synagogue of Palermo. In the late 19th-century, part of the synagogue's and the monastery's ruins were rebuilt as the City Archives. The street nearby is Via Meschita or the mosque. Was it ignorance that prompted Sicilian Christians to name the synagogue street "the Mosque?" Or was it a historic memory? The physical place occupied by the entire La Giudecca since the 10th-century was the Arab quarter.

Darker times began in the 14th-century with the Aragonese (Spanish) rule. In 1492, striving to maintain Catholic orthodoxy and "purify" their kingdom, Ferdinand and Isabella ordered the forced expulsion or conversion of all Jews in their lands on pain of death. Historians suggest that there were probably 52 Jewish communities spread

out across Sicily, numbering somewhere between 35,000 to 100,000 people. The infamous Edict of Expulsion brought an end to the flourishing Jewish culture in Sicily and to the highly important role the Jews played in the regional economy.

Palazzo Steri: graffiti, tears, and auto-da-fe

The imposing 14th-century building was originally constructed as the private residence of the powerful Sicilian lord Manfredi III Chiaramonte. However, the palace owes its infamous place in history from 1600-1782 when it served as the tribunal of the Holy Inquisition. Today, the palace is a museum dedicated to those who suffered within the Steri walls, including the converted or *neofiti* Jews accused of secretly practicing their old faith. A generation after the Expulsion, Palermo's new Christians were still identified as Jews and persecuted as such.

Graffiti covers walls of several cells among the 16 open to the public. One drawing shows 16 figures with Jewish names that identify them as the 12 tribes of Israel, Abraham, Moses, Aron, and Adam and Eve. They come out of a giant menacing-looking fish (Leviathan?) with a big cross on its head (the Church?) to possible salvation impersonated by a strange angel with a devil's tail wearing a Jesus-like crown of thorns on his head. Was this drawn by an unfortunate *neofiti* trying to convince his executors of his supposedly true Christian faith? But it was in a cell empty of graffiti where we could not hold back our tears. "In December 2013," said Bianca, "in this cell, we had a Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony accompanied by the singing of Hebrew liturgy."

Sentencing the accused, or *auto-da-fe*, was staged as a grand public entertainment and a solemn holy day to impress and teach the masses. This ceremony took place either on the Cathedral Square or in front of the Palazzo Steri. The condemned were burned at the stake on the square near the Steri, now a park called Villa Garibaldi. "June 6, 2011," explained Bianca, "marked the 500-year anniversary of the first mass execution by the Inquisition of 'Judaizing' heretics on that very square."

"Judaizing" heretics were those *neofiti* suspected of practicing their old faith. In the late 15th-century, a large part of the population of Sicily, Spain, and Portugal were forcibly converted to Christianity or otherwise become a subject of suspicion, persecution, and the Inquisition. Estimates of how many Sicilian Jews chose to leave the island and how many stayed and converted to Christianity vary. The number was considered threatening enough, however, to justify decades of persecution of converts and their descendants. Little is known about the extent and



practices of the crypto-Jews in Palermo outside of what the Inquisition called Judaizing. These “crimes” included adherence to Jewish religious customs, observing Sabbath on Saturday rather than Sunday, and refusing to eat pork.

Palermo: Jewish cultural renaissance of the 21st century

In her article “The Italian Anousim that Nobody Knows” (2009) Rabbi Barbara Aiello writes that burning synagogues and the *neofiti* forced Italian Jews to take their traditions into cellars and secret rooms in their homes. The memories and stories were kept alive, even when descendants forgot their exact meaning. The number of those with a “call of blood,” who think they have Jewish ancestry and want to learn more about it or even embrace their newly discovered heritage is on the rise throughout Southern Italy. Classes in Hebrew, Jewish culture, and art are held in Palermo and, in 2011, Rabbi Barbara Aiello officiated at the Bar Mitzvah of Salvo Asher Parrucca, the first Bar Mitzvah in the city in 500 years. (See “Vincenzo’s Victory,” *HaLapid*, Autumn/Winter 2014.)

In the contemporary European context of increasing anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli attitudes, Sicily presents a new and unusually optimistic chapter in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. The destruction of synagogues and the burning of Judaizers five centuries ago failed to extinguish the Jewish spirit. Rabbi Barbara told numerous stories, some from her own family, of traditions whose meaning was often forgotten, but that survived in their homes’ secret cellars and in people’s hearts. Cooking continued to conform to kosher dietary laws. Family burials were done outside the church with bodies wrapped in simple shrouds. Special marriage blessings were recited in a “strange language” at home under a crocheted canopy. Deathbed confessions of Jewish ancestry to the families were common. The *anusim* descendants, whose heritage was so cruelly stolen, hidden, and ignored, sustained their history in their flesh and blood. And perhaps it is the call of blood that drives a continuously growing number of *b’nai anusim* to search for their historical legacy and reclaim it.

While writing this article, I came across Steven Spielberg’s speech addressing the audience during the 70th-anniversary commemoration of Auschwitz liberation. “If you are a Jew today,” said the Shoah Foundation founder, “you know that we are once again facing the perennial



St. Nicola. This 17th-century church was built on the site of the Great Synagogue of Palermo.



Palazzo Steri, now Museum of the Inquisition. This imposing 14th-century building was originally constructed as the private residence of the powerful Sicilian lord Manfredi III Chiaramonte. Palermo, Sicily.

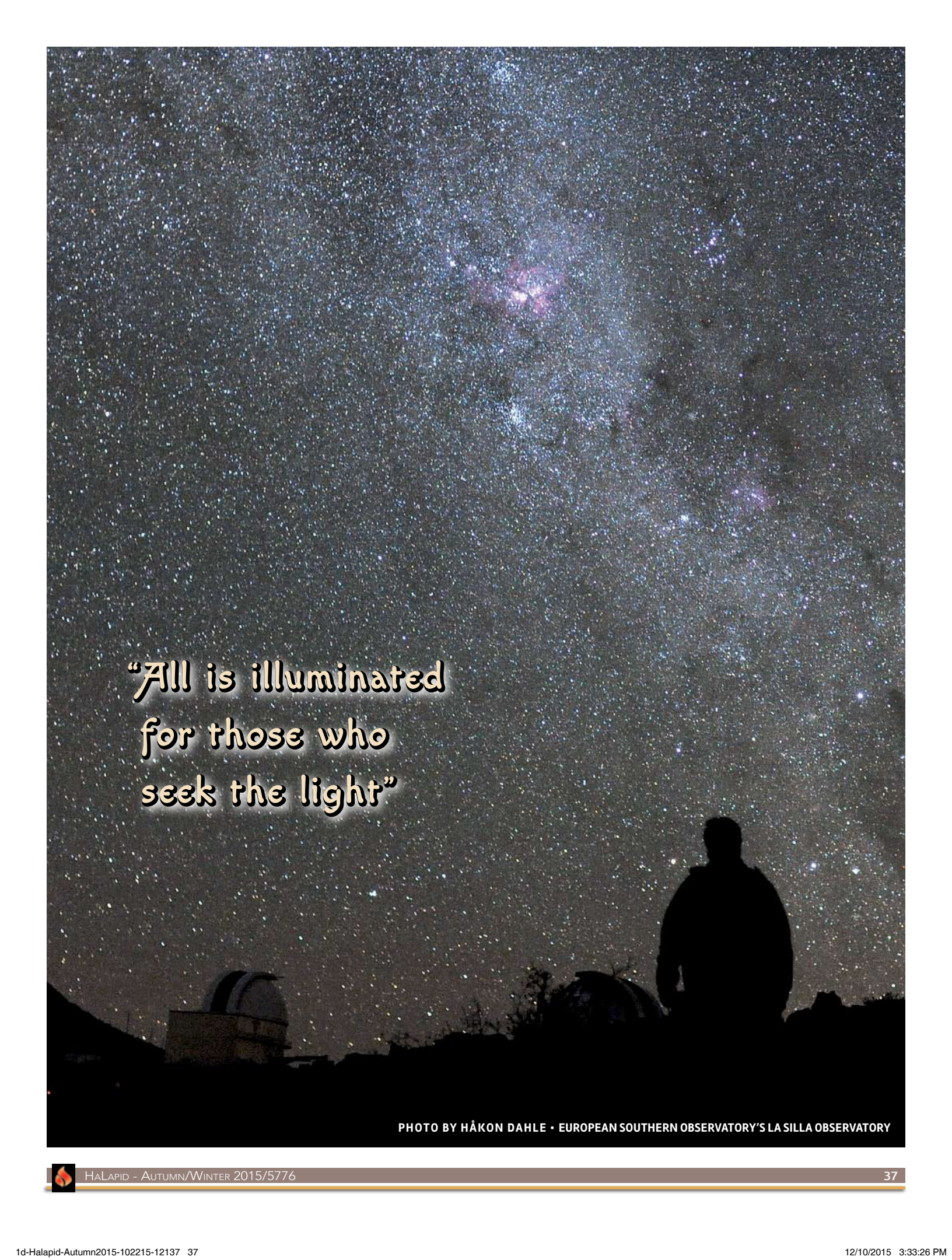


Detailed drawing depicting 16 figures with Jewish names that identify them as the 12 tribes of Israel, Abraham, Moses, his brother Aaron, Adam and Eve, all coming out of the mouth of a giant menacing-looking fish with a big cross on its head. Was that an unfortunate *neofiti* trying to convince his executors in his supposedly true Christian faith? Palermo, Sicily.

demons of intolerance. Anti-Semites, radical extremists and religious fanatics that provoke hate crimes — these people want to, all over again, strip you of your past, of your story, and of your identity... causing Jews to again leave Europe.” (*World Jewry Digest*, January 2015).

It seems, I thought, that southern Italy and especially my beloved Sicily prove to be different, again trying to recreate the once and future world of acceptance and multiculturalism. *SheElohim yevarach otha* – may this be blessed. 🕯





*"All is illuminated
for those who
seek the light"*

PHOTO BY HÅKON DAHLE • EUROPEAN SOUTHERN OBSERVATORY'S LA SILLA OBSERVATORY



"... To be sure, wherever there are Latinos, one finds a chance of crypto-Judaic heritage."

—CHANA COHEN

SCJS



Outreach



Many thanks to Chana Cohen for her enthusiastic efforts to share SCJS with many people in many places from January through June 2015!



Florida

St. John of the Arts • Miami

Chana attended four lectures at St. John of the Arts regarding *anusim* in some aspect. She mentioned our Miami conference at each lecture and the event flyer was distributed or made available.

Jewish Community Center • Davie

She attended two lectures by a well-known professor who, regarding crypto-Jews, was familiar with SCJS. Chana asked him to mention SCJS and the conference, which he did, and also posted it on the board for some 30 attendees at each talk. Brochures and conference information were provided in the lobby.

Israel

Jerusalem

Relevant to *anusim*, Chana took a thorough tour of The Four Sephardic Synagogues in the Old City of Jerusalem, which date back to the Inquisition and the Ottoman Empire.

Netanya

Chana attended the Diaspora Conference at the Academic College in Netanya; Genie Milgrom, Doreen Carvajal and incoming SCJS president Dr. Joe Maldonado were also attendees.

Philadelphia

National Museum of American Jewish History

Chana presented some 10 crypto-Jewish highlight spots and participated in a first-ever Ladino education event. A young Spanish teacher had worked with the Penn Institute to develop this as a language, history and sociology program. He brought his Spanish class of some 20 teenage students. The in-depth event was outstanding and bridged many modalities. She was able to make some corrections and modifications.

With SCJS member and journalist Ronit Treatman, they submitted our conference PR to *Al Dia* newspaper and its online publication, *Jewish Voice*.

American Jewish Committee

Chana joined the Philadelphia regional Latino outreach committee in September 2015 to further shared goals.

The Gershman Y

She attended a reception for art photographer Wyatt Gallery, whose exhibit included Jewish sites in the Caribbean. Our information and conference materials were given to the guide and to others with him and to all attendees in general.



Los Angeles

In October, **Art Benveniste** spoke at a synagogue in East Los Angeles to a group of crypto-Jews from El Salvador. They were very interested and kept him there for quite a while. He distributed our flyers to a very warm reception.

Washington, DC

Rabbi Barbara Aiello spoke at the National Press Club this past August in Washington, DC, enlightening an important audience about the hidden Jewish past of Calabria, Italy and her role there as the first female rabbi in Italy.



Schelly Talalay Dardashti and Ellen Premack
at the first Santa Fe Jewish Book Fair

Santa Fe

Ellen Premack, SCJS Arts chair, and Schelly Talalay Dardashti represented SCJS at the well-attended, first-ever Jewish Book Fair on Sunday, November 22, at the Chabad Center for Life, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Nearly all 2016 conference flyers and membership brochures were distributed to attendees, including the rabbis or board members of almost all synagogues in the city. Numerous attendees stopped by to relate their personal stories, while Ellen and Schelly met several people who might participate in the program.

A large 2016 conference poster was left at Chabad, where many visitors to the building will see it.

Colorado

Corinne Brown will speak to a history class on “Witches, Heretics and Medieval Persecution” in February 2016 at Columbia College in Aurora, Colorado.

A year of events for our president

Here's the extensive list of **Genie Milgrom's** outreach efforts.

- Conducting five-part crypto-Jewish genealogy workshop in Miami.
- Spoke on crypto-Judaism at the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU series of historical narratives.
- Keynote speaker at the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Palm Beach, Florida luncheon.
- Speaker at the *Mapping the Anousim Diaspora* Conference; Netanya, Israel.
- Spoke on crypto-Judaism in Montevideo, Uruguay.
- Spoke in Guayaquil, Ecuador on the crypto-Jewish experience.
- Keynote speaker at the Florence Melton School of Adult Education graduation ceremony.
- Voice of the Descendants of crypto-Jews at the Knesset (Jerusalem, Israel) Caucus for the Reconnection of Spanish and Portuguese Jews.
- Keynote speaker at the Keshet Luncheon in Aventura Florida.
- Kickoff speaker at the six-part educational program *Sephardim!* 🇮🇱



(From left) Avi Grossman, Marc Gueron, Joe Lovett and Genie Milgrom at
Mapping the Anousim Diaspora Conference in Netanya, Israel.



Center for Latino-Jewish Relations

BY RABBI PETER TARLOW

CONFERENCE REVIEWS

The Center for Latino-Jewish Relations (CLJR) held its second annual conference in Rancho Viejo, Texas, just outside of Brownsville, on October 18-19, 2015. It attracted participants from all over southern Texas and the northern part of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas.

Scholars often describe the lands that hug both sides of the Rio Grande River as the heartland of a culture populated by people whom Jews traditionally call the *anusim*, and whom Latinos call the *conversos*.

The conference is not meant to be a religious event, but rather an opportunity for people from both the Latino and Jewish communities to get to know each other and to discuss common problems.

This year the conference was truly bilingual in that the Saturday presentations and discussions were in Spanish and the Sunday presentations and interactive discussions were in English. Organizers chose this format so people would feel comfortable in whatever language they chose, or even in both languages.

This second annual conference brought together a wide variety of people, from Catholic priests and scholars to political figures and members of all economic classes, races and religions. Its goal was to help both Jews and Latinos understand their common history and culture and to permit the flowering of mutual respect and collaboration.

The conference is both secular in nature and apolitical. Speakers are encouraged to state their opinions in a respectful manner and with the understanding that no one person or group has a monopoly on the truth.

CLJR director Rabbi Peter Tarlow provided – in both English and Spanish – the cultural, historical and linguistic background of the people and lands of the Rio Grande Region. Father Francisco Nieto Rentería spoke on the efforts of translating the Hebrew Bible into modern universal Spanish.

Sunday's speakers included Attorney Jacob Monty, who addressed how the CLJR brings Latino leaders to Israel as a



way uniting both people and assuring that Latino leaders understand the centrality of Israel in Jewish life. He also addressed the similarities of Latino and Jewish culture. On both days, Mr. and Mrs. Ricardo Backal of Mexico City shared reproductions of their original Inquisitional documents. Mr. Backal's parents have lovingly labored to collect and save these documents and Ricardo's mother, a

famous Mexican scholar, has been awarded the Memoria del Mundo honor.

Following a bi-cultural luncheon at which delegates were encouraged to sit with someone whom they did not know, Guy Cohen of the Israel Consulate General spoke and screened a film about Jewish and Latino students working together at the University of Texas-Austin campus.

Right,
Dr. Tarlow with
Catholic Priest
Francisco Nieto
Renteria from
Matamoros,
Mexico.

Below, speaker
Peter Svarzbein



Many Latinos attending the conference were moved by the depth and devotion of Jewish students seeking to help their Latino brothers and sisters. The film sparked a lively debate on how Latinos and Jews in the Rio Grande Valley and the state of Tamaulipas need to come together for their common good.

Douglas Carter, Adjunct Professor at the College of Business at Texas A&M–San Antonio, represented the Cervantes Institute, which is both working to right the historic wrong inflicted on Spanish (and Portuguese) Jewry, and also assisting these people in recovering their Spanish citizenship, stolen from them some 500 years ago.

One important item to emerge from this conference is how aware the Latino community is concerning this historic wrong and how many people in both Texas and Tamaulipas can trace their heritage to this historic event.

The final speaker was Peter Svarzbein of El Paso, Texas. Svarzbein, an El Paso City Council member, has created the Kosher Taco Truck. His artistic presentation demonstrated how many Latinos in the El Paso area are seeking, via various means, to regain all or part of their Jewish heritage.

Special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Lupe Gonzales for their hard work and technical know-how. Their efforts were critical to our success. The conference ended on a high note with all looking forward, not only to next year's event but to even closer communication and collaboration between the two groups. If you are interested in more information about the center's activities, our website is latinojewishrelations.org

Rabbi Peter Tarlow is the director of the Center for Latino–Jewish Relations. Contact him or ask to receive his weekly email newsletter at ptarlow@latinojewishrelations.org or visit latinojewishrelations.org. 📧

The Coalition for Sephardic-Ladino Legacy

BY ELISHEVA DIAZ



Vanessa Paloma (seated) and Elisheva Diaz

The Coalition for Sephardic Ladino Legacy hosted a well-attended powerfully-themed women's gathering on "Sephardic Women in the Mediterranean," held on Sunday, August 16, 2015 at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, California.

Guest speakers were Vanessa Paloma, founder and director of KHOYA: Jewish Morocco Sound Archive, and Dr. Elisheva Irma Diaz, president and founder of the Coalition for Sephardic Ladino Legacy.

The morning was designed to focus on yesterday and today, including the transmission of culture, hopes and dreams in the world of

Sephardic women and the harmony we can achieve with Jewish Unity.

Vanessa Paloma performed a selection of authentic Sephardic women's songs demonstrating their connection to our legacy.

The Coalition hosts historical and cultural events to educate Jewish communities and today's *anusim* on what is happening as the wave of our returns increase.

For more information on the Coalition or to have Dr. Diaz speak, visit coalitionforsephardicladinolegacy.org or email ladinolegacy@gmail.com. 📧



GSHA Genealogical Society
of Hispanic America

Genealogical Society of Hispanic America

This year the GSHA conference was held June 5-7, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, only a few blocks from the historic Plaza, in the new Drury Plaza Hotel. The event broke all previous attendance records, with some 200 attendees from California, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. Attendees also enjoyed the location of the hotel, with surrounding streets filled with shops, art galleries, museums and restaurants.

The program was excellent – this year's theme was "Our Mothers." New Mexico assistant state historian Rob Martinez offered "Researching our Mothers: The Maternal Side of Hispanic Genealogy," and there were several DNA programs.

Doreen Carvajal's presentation, "Buried Lives: The Female Victims of the Inquisition," sharing new discoveries of her Sephardic ancestors, was well-received as she described her latest trip to Spain with Joe Lovett and the production team for "Children of the Inquisition." Historian David Gitlitz was with them.

The event included many raffles and giveaways, discount coupons and subscriptions for organizations and websites.

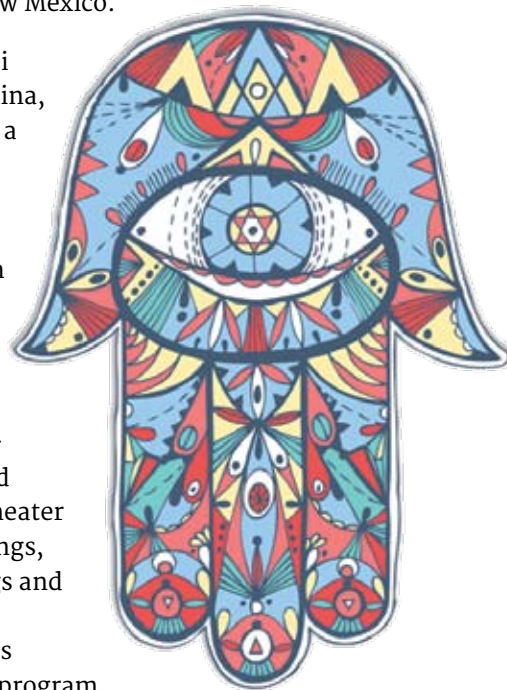
Schelly Talalay Dardashti spoke to numerous people about SCJS and our conference. Several people expressed interest, and some did attend our Miami conference. It was a great opportunity to share what we do and who we are with many individuals interested in genealogy and family history. Visit gsha.net for more information. 🔥



Festival Djudeo-Espanyol

The fifth annual *Festival Djudeo-Espanyol* took place May 29-31, 2015 at Congregation Nahalat Shalom in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Directed by Rabbi Jordi Gendra Molina, who comes from a *converso* background in Barcelona, the event began with a vegetarian potluck dinner on Friday night. Hazzan Neil Manel Frau-Cortes performed several times. Theater and poetry readings, personal sharings and more, as well as academic lectures rounded out the program.



Dr. Enrique R. Lamadrid's talk was "The Persistence of Song: *Djudeo-Espanyol Romansas and Cantigas in Nuevo Mexico*." "Telling Our Stories: Four Personal Journeys" included emotional experiences of attendees.

The program also included a "Sephardic Selfies" exhibit from around the world in the art gallery of Congregation Nahalat Shalom.

The main dinner, part of the Café Sepharad, was catered by Paella Olé, owned by renowned artist Jacobo de la Serna, a proud descendant of a *converso* family and who has researched his Jewish roots. The meal included authentically-prepared vegetarian paella, potato torta, spinach empanadas with piñon, almond cake. Jacobo spoke about how much the Festival means to him personally, as well as to the community.

The sixth *Festival Djudeo-Espanyol* will be held June 24-25, 2016 at the Drury Plaza in Santa Fe just prior to the SCJS conference — the first time the Festival has been held outside of Albuquerque and hopes to attract many attendees from northern New Mexico.

Several people who shared their experiences at the Festival will offer their voices at our conference, including Festival coordinator Maria Apodaca. 🔥



12TH ANNUAL ANUSIM CONFERENCE

Held July 31–August 2, this year’s conference at Congregation B’nai Zion, El Paso, Texas included presentations on genealogy and emerging communities (Southern California, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Brazil and others). Prof. Avi Gross (Institute for Separdi and Anousim Studies, Netanya Academic College, Israel) was the keynote speaker.

In addition to the presenters, attendees included those who are just beginning to connect the dots between their heritage and current lives, those who have returned publicly, as well as researchers, rabbis and others.

The fascinating presentations by Rabbis Daniel Mehlman and Peter Tarlow on their experiences with emerging communities in Central and South America provided an excellent additional aspect of the current



centers in Israel and Texas. A member of B’nai Zion’s Pioneer Families, Bernard A. Goldberg, presented “*Ovadio Ravino, Secrets of a Converso*,” a fictitious account drawn from his grandparents’ experiences in El Paso and Ysleta. Schelly Talalay Dardashti provided an overview of Sephardic genealogical resources.



12th Anusim Conference Speakers: From left, Schelly Talalay Dardashti, Rabbi Peter Tarlow, Rabbi Daniel Mehlman, Rabbi Stephen Leon, Prof. Avi Gross and Zehava Gross

international phenomenon of those interested in their Jewish heritage. Prof. Avi Gross, Rabbi Stephen Leon (B’nai Zion, El Paso) and Rabbi Peter Tarlow (Latino–Jewish Relations and Crypto–Jewish Studies, Texas A&M University)) spoke about the current state of and future plans of *anusim*

Svarzbein screened interviews with individuals and families. His Kosher Taco truck (“established 1598”) served wonderful food following the wedding; an art installation, the truck has appeared at events in several cities in New Mexico and Texas as it raises awareness. 🍌

On Saturday night, a renewal of vows was conducted by Rabbi Stephen Leon for a couple who had returned publicly many years ago and who were attended by their children and grandchildren. Local artist and youngest El Paso City Council member Peter

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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 SCJS or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may not be reprinted without permission.

HaLapid is mailed in May and November each year. Please send submissions to the editor before March 15 and September 15.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Jewish Genealogical Society of New Mexico, FORCE and Congregation Albert

will hold a

JEWISH GENETICS CONFERENCE

Sunday, April 3, 2016 • Albuquerque

Speakers include

Bennett Greenspan of FamilyTreeDNA
local oncologists, genetics counselors and others

The goal of this conference is to raise awareness of BRCA-related cancers prevalent in the Hispanic population of Jewish ancestry, as well as other conditions. The event has received a \$500 grant from social media genealogy guru **Thomas MacEntee** in connection with his "The Genealogy Fairy" grant program for genealogy-related purposes.



The Jewish Genealogical Society of New Mexico
meets at Congregation Albert

3800 Louisiana Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Fourth Sunday of the month • 1:30-3:30 pm

Programs cover Ashkenazi and Sephardic topics and most meetings attract numerous Hispanic attendees. Come join us for information, insight — and bischochitos!

Contact jgsnm@tracingthetribes.com
for information and meetings



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SEFARDI AND
ANOUSIM STUDIES
המכללה האקדמית תלנחיה
NETANYA ACADEMIC COLLEGE

The Institute for
Sefardi and
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International
Conference

Reconnecting 2016:
*Reinvigorating Shared Latino Jewish
Roots and Heritage*

May 22-24, 2016 • Miami

Trump International Beach Resort
Miami, Florida USA

Visit sefardi-anousim.org.il

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies

36TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

August 7-12, 2016 • Seattle



Keynote speaker: **Dr. Devin E. Naar**,
chair of the Sephardic Studies Program
and assistant professor in the History Department
at the University of Washington.

"The Wandering Jew" is the conference theme.

One of the main tracks is the
Sephardic Experience in the United States.
Program proposals may be submitted
through December 15.

For information visit iajgs2016.org



Anusim of El Paso Show Support for the People of Israel

BY RABBI STEPHEN LEON

The Anusim Center (El Paso, Texas), in conjunction with the El Paso Federation, Congregation B'nai Zion and Temple Mt. Sinai, rallied to demonstrate shared support of our brothers and sisters in Israel, who have been victims of violent, hateful attacks in recent weeks in Jerusalem, Hebron and elsewhere.

Over 100 people attended the event on Sunday, October 25, 2015. Among the speakers were members of the El Paso community who had returned from a visit to Israel just prior to the rally.


Anusim Center vice-president John Garcia spoke passionately of the shared aims of the *b'nai anusim* - who are returning to their Jewish roots - with those of the citizens of Israel who welcome the return of all Jews to their

Jewish homeland. Rabbi Ben Zeidman of Temple Mt. Sinai connected the Torah portion of Vayeira to our commitment to the Jewish State.

Jewish Federation president Dori Fenenbock urged all to visit Israel to show support at this difficult time. Grace Rendall of the Christian Television Network offered the loyalty of the Christian community of El Paso to the State of Israel.

Rabbi Stephen Leon, founder and director of the Anusim Center of El Paso and spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Zion reminded attendees that we have risen from the heinous crimes of the Inquisition and have returned and reconnected with our brothers and sisters in Israel and that we will stand tall and proud,

united with our fellow Jews in Israel and throughout the world. He concluded by chanting, in Hebrew, the Prayer for the State of Israel and leading attendees in Israel's national anthem, *Hatikvah*.

Rabbi Stephen Leon of Congregation B'nai Zion (El Paso, Texas) is director of the Anusim Center. 



Anusim at Israel's Knesset

*Anusim pro-Israel protest in Recife, Brazil**

Anusim (descendants of forcibly converted Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities) held solidarity marches around the world in the face of the wave of terror attacks in Israel. Locations included Recife, Brazil, and El Paso, Texas, two places with high concentrations of *anusim*. In Brazil, the march began symbolically outside the Kahal Zur Israel Synagogue, considered the oldest synagogue in the Americas, built around 1636.

Said Ashley Perry, Director General of the official Knesset Caucus for the Reconnection with the Descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Communities, "Expressing solidarity with Israel is an important part of the *anusim* identity and it is vital that the love and affection they have for Israel and the Jewish People is returned. Our people are reconnecting every day around the world in their thousands and we call on Jewish religious and lay leaders and individuals to embrace these people who have overcome so much historic oppression and are now seeking to reconnect."

*Monday, October 26, 2015. Reprinted with permission www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/anusim-express-solidarity-with-israel-around-the-world/2015/10/26/





Plan now and join us!
Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies
26th Annual Conference
June 26-28, 2016
Drury Plaza Hotel • Santa Fe, New Mexico

Our 2016 Conference

Much of this *HaLapid* focuses on New Mexico, home to many of our members. It is also the birthplace of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, founded just over 25 years ago near Taos. Most of us have learned that the crypto-Jewish experience is remarkably different for each individual.

Some of those descendants, living today in the Southwest, have been aware of the historic or spiritual connection of their families for a lifetime. For others, it has been a recent discovery. Some have chosen to share the news with everyone they know. Still others keep this awareness to themselves and maintain their privacy.

It is important to realize as we head to Santa Fe in 2016 to discuss this subject, that those who do not seek academic validation or who do not wish to share their family archives are no less worthy of our respect. Their stories and artifacts are their own, handed down over many generations. Their ancestors have been here since the 16th and 17th centuries. Many have kept and still keep their traditions quietly and privately at home, remembering the Inquisition and persecution, while living a public Christian life.

The 2016 SCJS Conference will take a closer look at the fascinating evolution of hidden Jewish life in the American Southwest. We expect participants from up and down the Rio Grande, from neighboring states and even from Mexico. Let us receive them with dignity and welcome them with open arms.

— Stanley M. Hordes





Call for Papers

“Redefining Crypto-Judaic Identity: Then and Now”

Deadline February 15, 2016

We cordially invite papers on crypto-Judaism from any discipline (anthropology, history, sociology, philosophy, literature, music, art history, etc.) and from any geographic location or time period. We are particularly interested in papers that explore questions of crypto-Jewish identity, both historical and contemporary.

We welcome papers on all aspects of the Sephardic experience and that of other communities exhibiting crypto-Judaic phenomena anywhere in the world.

We welcome proposals from individuals with personal stories or other personal research relating to crypto-Judaism. These may be for individual papers/presentations or for panels on specific topics. Please indicate if the proposal represents completed research or work in progress.

TOPICS INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- ◆ Recent Research/Developments in New Mexico and the Southwest
- ◆ The Transmission or Discovery of Family Traditions
- ◆ Biographies of Historical *Conversos*
- ◆ Crypto-Jews in Hispanic/International/Sephardic Culture
- ◆ Studies in Crypto-Jewish Art
- ◆ Literary Representations of Crypto-Jews
- ◆ Research on the Spanish Inquisition and Expulsion

Presentation proposals must include a title, a 200-word abstract/summary, a 100-word biographical resume/CV and speaker contact information.

Proposals must be received by February 15, 2016.

Accepted speakers will be notified by mid-April.

Please note: All speakers are asked to pay the conference registration fee to participate in the conference. Further, no personal compensation is offered. Hotel costs are the speaker's responsibility. Group reservation rates are available. The conference offers an exceptional opportunity to share your work and publications with peers and a target audience.

**Please submit proposals
or inquiries by
FEBRUARY 15, 2016 to
Leonard Stein
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev
CryptoJewish.conference
@gmail.com**



**For more information
about SCJS, our 2016
conference and
past meetings,
and archives
visit
cryptojews.com**



Member Milestones

Congratulations on your retirement!



Arnold Trujillo

SCJS board member **Arnold Trujillo** has recently retired from his position as vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Pacific Union Conference, the regional administrative entity of the Church in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Hawaii.

An enthusiastic SCJS member, Arnold initiated our genealogy workshop in 2012, now a popular program at every annual conference.

He has been a valuable resource on how to run non-profit organizations like ours. He is always available, providing feedback on many organizational matters.

In an article for *HaLapid* (Fall/Winter 2010/2011), Arnold explained how he discovered his Sephardic ancestry and what it means to him. At

our 2011 San Diego conference, he addressed the much disputed claim that crypto-Jews of New Mexico learned about candlelighting from Seventh-day Adventists, a subject occasionally voiced by various naysayers who do not believe in the crypto-Judaic heritage. He carefully set the record straight.

Arnold expects to return to active SCJS status and plans to speak at the 2016 Santa Fe conference.

Congratulations

Genie Milgrom received the International Latino Book Award for her non-fiction work *How I Found My Fifteen Grandmothers*.

Mazel Tov

to board member **Leonard Stein** on the birth of his son, Nogah Salo, born July 21, 2015, Netanya Israel.



In Memoriam

Albert Dardashti
(David ben Mordechai)
Born January 21, 1948
Teheran, Iran

Died June 19, 2015
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Husband of member

Schelly Talalay Dardashti

Dr. Milton A. Wohl
(Moshe ben Michael v' Reisa)
Born November 6, 1924
Died April 20, 2015
Father of member
Deborah Wohl Isard

*A contribution was made
to SCJS in memory of
Albert Dardashti and
Milton A. Wohl by
Corinne Brown*

Welcome to Our Newest Members

Rose Pappo Allen
Barbara Allman
Stacy Beckwith
Stefanie Beninato
Victor Castillo
Leonel Chevez
Yehonata Elazar-DeMota
Militza Machuca Franco
Eli Gabay
Anthony Garcia
Mitchell Gomez
Cosme A. Gomez
Alma Gottlieb
Wilma Grover
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Gavriel Peretz
Albeyra Rodriguez
Joel Rosenthal
Cynthia Sens
Irene & Alex Shaland
Marina Siegel
Daniel Simonsohn
Mary Torrez
David Wachs
Loretta Worthington
Yeshive University



YOU are part of a mission!

Through your support of our studies of the history, cultures, arts and current status of crypto-Judaism in the United States and throughout the world, we continue our mission of nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.

Our first conference, held near Taos, New Mexico in 1991, was organized by a small, dedicated group of people who established SCJS to foster research and the exchange of information about *conversos* who settled in the outer regions of the Spanish empire. The secret observance of Sephardic customs and traditions by many descendants continue still.

Today, SCJS is regarded as the primary body of scholars, artists, crypto-Jewish descendants and interested individuals investigating this phenomenon and inspiring new research directions. Although our roots are in the American Southwest, our horizons extend world-wide, with enriched conferences, exciting new media and affiliations.

Our website, cryptojews.com, has archival status because scholars and interested individuals may access over 230 articles and papers from past issues of *HaLapid*. It also features stories and news of SCJS and related events.

Since 1991 we have attracted members from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Latin America, Spain, Portugal, Scotland, England, France, Italy, Israel, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Macao, Goa, Central America, the Spanish Caribbean Islands and elsewhere. Your continued membership and donations make it possible for us to continue our mission. We welcome new and renewing members. We are all active participants in this important field of study.

In addition to membership, we welcome donations to our other funds. The Randy Baca/Dennis Duran Fund provides assistance for those researching possible Sephardic ancestry but cannot afford to attend conferences. A donation to our Conference Fund ensures the participation of outstanding keynote speakers and supports special conference programming. In addition, your contribution supports our mailing and publication expenses.

With continuing support, we look forward to a long future of outreach, encouragement and discovery!

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

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Membership benefits include: Our journal *HaLapid*, the annual *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews* and our online newsletter *La Granada*.

Please mark your membership status, category and contribution amount.

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- HALAPID -

Tudo se ilumina
para aquele
que busca
a luz



All is
illuminated
for those
who seek the light

- Avram Ben Rosh -

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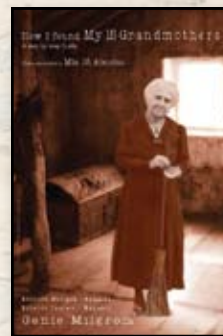
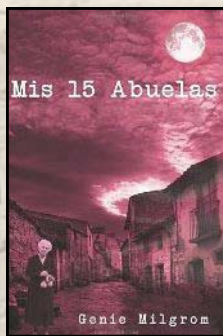
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