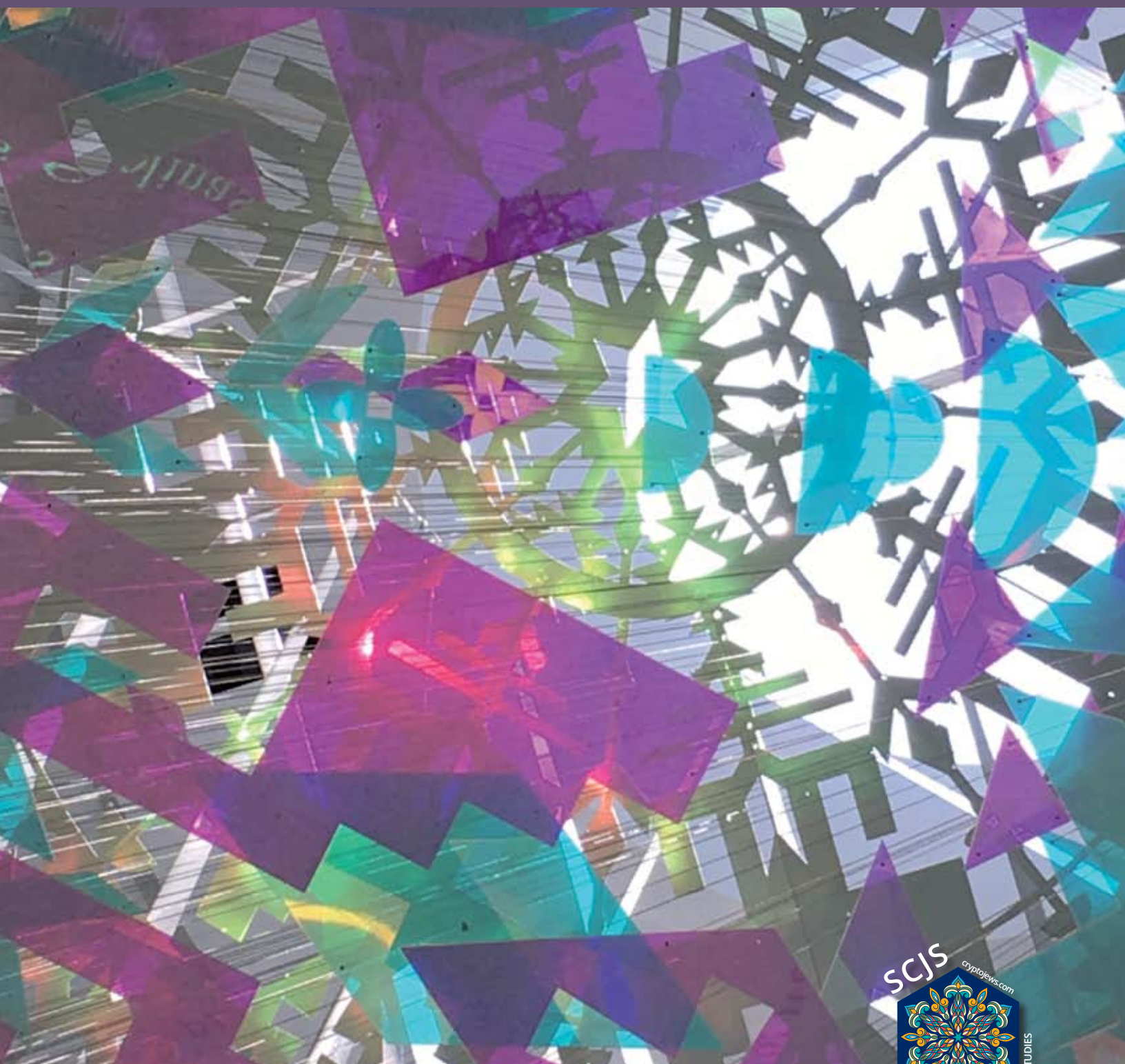


HALAPID



THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES



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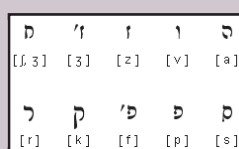
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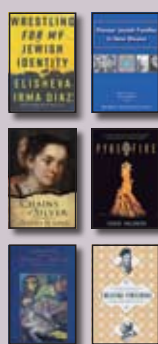
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Nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.

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EDITORIAL POLICY OF HALAPID

Contributions from writers all over the world are edited for grammar, spelling, typographical errors, and length. 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 usually mailed in the Spring and Fall of each year. Please send submissions to the editor-in-chief by March 1 and September 1..

FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Debbie Wohl-Isard
SCJS President

Hello again, dear friends,
I am delighted to be writing this “message from the (new) president.”

A year ago, we were deep in planning the November 2017 conference in Philadelphia. I was the president *pro-tem* whose term was scheduled to expire at the conclusion of that event. It was a frantic time for the organization due to the transition and challenges we faced. We set our standards high and achieved our vision at the conference which received rave reviews and enjoyed unprecedented attendance. We then set new goals and went to work behind the scenes, welcoming new board members,

modifying and updating procedures, and evaluating our goals and objectives as an organization.

Leonard Stein, program chair for both the Santa Fe and Philadelphia conferences, stepped up and assumed the role of president *pro tem*. I took a much-needed respite and appreciate greatly that my colleagues rallied together. Corinne Brown, Seth Ward, Natalie Trujillo Gonzalez, and Maria Apodaca all worked hard to hold down the fort.

During the Philly conference, the board passed, and the membership ratified, two by-law amendments. The first issued explicit permission for SCJS to hold our mandated annual general membership business meetings separately from major program conferences. This meant we could move the next major conference to summer 2019, 18 months later. The second ratified amendment approved electronic voting, enabling the general membership to weigh in on issues without having to wait a full year (or 18 months) to vote on important items.

The first electronic vote took place last month when SCJS members in good standing (current with dues) were sent an email survey/ballot to cast votes for the next president, and 35% of the ballots were returned on time. I am pleased to announce that the vote endorsed me to serve as president for a two-year term.

Essential to the SCJS mission is education and dissemination of information, along with the engagement of diverse communities interested in studying and learning more about the phenomenon of crypto-Judaic history and contemporary experience. In this issue of *HaLapid*, and in *La Granada* online, read about our participation with the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society in producing the upcoming Florida Regional Conference on December 9, 2018. We are excited to see this conference come to life and hope you will join us.

I am also pleased to announce that we’ve recently received a generous grant from the Robin and Bennett Greenspan Fund at the Houston Jewish Community Foundation. This profound show of support by one of the Society’s longtime friends, Bennett Greenspan, is already enabling SCJS to move forward with projects we’ve eagerly anticipated. These funds have made it possible to engage the services of a talented webmaster who has updated our website and improved our interactive portals. Please take a few minutes and visit cryptojews.com where you may join, renew, donate, read and share.

Further, we recently engaged our first-ever, part-time non-profit association management assistant, Maita Lester. As an organization run exclusively by volunteer board members, the addition of an experienced office services professional will enable each of us to communicate with members, advance discussions, and broaden the board’s outreach. Stay tuned and watch for *La Granada* surveys during the next few months.

It gives me great pleasure to share in the Society’s growth and progress. What’s on your mind? Please email editor.lagranada@gmail.com and share your thoughts about what SCJS does for you and what you can do for SCJS.

Debbie Wohl-Isard
President



Changes, Books, Conferences, Books, — and More Books!



Corinne J. Brown
Editor in Chief

It is with much excitement I bring you this Autumn/Winter edition of *HaLapid*, loosely referred to by me as the “book edition.” Since taking over as editor four years ago, I cannot remember when so many books related to crypto-Judaic studies were published in one year. It’s a pleasure to highlight these few

included here for you, especially since so many are written by our own members.

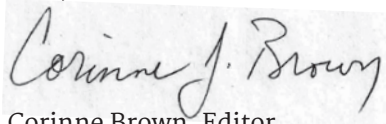
Inside these pages, you’ll find news about the upcoming regional conference in St. Augustine, Florida, not to be missed if you live anywhere nearby. In addition, note early information about our 2019 Conference in Denver, as well as the Call for Papers. We hope you’ll make Denver your highlight of 2019.

Just as important are updates on member news, important changes regarding SCJS itself, new research and more, all helpful in drawing closer together our global community of descendants, scholars, and others interested in this phenomenon.

As always, it is my privilege and pleasure, along with all our contributing writers, to bring this information to you. Soon, I’ll be changing hats (or at least adding another one) as I take the lead as 2019 Conference Chair along with our Co-Chair and esteemed colleague, Seth Ward of Denver.

Meanwhile, countdown to St. Augustine!

Best,



Corinne Brown, Editor

ABOUT THE COVER

While descending the escalator from the rental car garage to the El Paso airport in the company of Rabbi Danny Mehlman, I was thinking about the diversity found at the El Paso 15th Annual Anusim conference which I had just attended. Present were people from all over Texas, New Mexico, and across the Rio Grande in Juarez. There were Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews, anusim, messianics, and Catholics. Above me, this brilliant mobile – of sorts – caught my eye and when I looked up I saw the Star of David at its center — a metaphor for the shared experience. I took a few snapshots and later discovered that the magic continued all the way to Denver.

By sheer coincidence, the Uber driver who took me home turned out to be a gentleman named Richard Rael, an active member of the Colorado Society of Hispanic Genealogy, and a descendant. I told him about my interest in the anusim and my book. I learned later that he posted our encounter and the book “Hidden Star” on the CSHG website.

There are no
coincidences.
— Editor

Front cover
image:
An artistic
mobile in the
El Paso, Texas
airport —
a sign of
the shared
experience



A small world

Editor's Note: In the last issue we announced that HaLapid is now being collected by the Library of Congress Asian Middle Eastern Division, and Director Gail Shirazi, Israel/Judaica Section.

Dear Corinne:

A belated thank you for sharing your correspondence with the Library of Congress.

In the small world department, Gail Shirazi is an old friend of mine. Her brother and I were in Hebrew school together back in the mid-1960s. A couple of decades later, she invited me to speak at the Sephardic synagogue in Bethesda, Maryland.

Thank you for all that you do.

Stan Hordes



Reconnecting with an "activist"

Editor's note: We were contacted by email by a legal representative of Mr. Gladstone who is now in assisted living in Canada. He did not know how to reach us to revive his membership and receive our information. I sent him a few back issues as a courtesy.

From Yaakov:

Dear Corinne,

Your precious gift package of the HaLapid journals was waiting for me when I returned after a long hospital and rehab "vacation."

I am very grateful to you for reconnecting me to the Society for Crypto-Jewish Studies. A member since the mid-90s, I have attended a number of conferences and, for a short time, served on the board. As an activist, I was an advocate for the Sephardic communities and individual b'nai anusim in Portugal, Mallorca, Brazil and elsewhere.

Under your editorship, our journal is now a platform for everyone. The personal stories are inspiring and fascinating, as are the book and film reviews. Lisa Ruimy Holzkennar's poem, "For the Jews of Belmonte," and the article about her visit to Belmonte.

I moved to Toronto, Canada eight years ago, from NYC.

I reside in a retirement residence, where I founded a music theatre group with fellow residents.

Last year I led a *Tish b'Av* program which focused on the tragedy which befell the Sephardic Jews of the Iberian peninsula and elsewhere.

Looking forward to remaining in touch, and to continue receiving your excellent magazine.

Wishing you all the best.

Yankle (Jack) Gladstone
judygladstone@gmail.com
Toronto, Canada



Author appreciation

Dear Corinne,

We received your fabulous magazine yesterday. As always, the layout and the content – all together – amount to a true work of art. I do not think that my articles ever received a better display! Thank you so very much!

We had just returned from New York (again!) where I had my Jewish Cuba; this time a full-blown lecture, even complete with food, drinks, and contemporary art galleries! Will be presenting the same at the Maltz Museum in Cleveland in May. Working on my Burma and Cambodia next. American Sephardi Federation in NYC wants me to include those countries for my program there (May 29) "Traveling in the Jewish World."

Best,
Irene Shaland



Reaching those who seek their heritage

It is important to know that those of us who promote SCJS when we do public lectures are reaching people who want to join us.

Schelly Talalay Dardashti and I are meeting many here in New Mexico who are now opening up and calling us for information about what they are finding when they do DNA research; and also when parents and grandparents, on their death beds, are telling their children about this background – the truth about their origins.

Maria C. Apodaca



SCJS Officers and Board Members

President and Editor – *La Granada*

Debbie Wohl-Isard

Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Debbie Wohl-Isard earned her Bachelor of Arts in psychology from New College of Hofstra University, and a Master of Social Work from Hunter College, New York. In addition to working as a social worker, program director, event planner, litigation paralegal, and business owner, she has served as a management consultant for funeral homes and an assistant elementary education teacher specializing in working with gifted/learning disabled students. Debbie has contributed articles to *HaLapid* and serves as editor of the SCJS electronic newsletter, *La Granada*. She has also written articles about family health, pregnancy, ADHD, and education for a variety of publications. A student of Jewish pioneers of the Southwest, and the history of Christopher Columbus, she has been a member of SCJS since 2008. Raised with Ashkenazi traditions, Debbie now seeks Sephardic connections through genealogical research and international outreach. She is the mother of two adult children and resides in Phoenix, Arizona.
editor.lagranada@gmail.com.

Immediate Past President *pro tem*

Leonard Stein

Leonard was most recently a Connaught International Doctoral Scholar at the University of Toronto's Centre for Comparative Literature and Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies. His research focuses on crypto-Jewish identity in literature by and about crypto-Jews from the early modern period to today. He currently resides in Israel.
tintin.israel@gmail.com

First Vice President – Position Available

Secretary

Claudia Hagadus Long

Claudia is a descendant of the Jewish diaspora and, through a very circuitous route, grew up in Mexico. Her mother was Sephardic on her maternal side, as part of a small group of Sephardim in Poland. The Portuguese and Spanish Jews were welcomed in the late 1400s by the Polish king, who allowed

fleeing Jews to own land if they converted to Christianity, and were permitted to stay as artisans if they did not. After World War II, her mother immigrated to America and, with her husband, moved to Mexico where they raised their three children. Scarred by the Holocaust, Claudia's mother preferred that her children keep their origins secret, so Claudia grew up going to Catholic church with her Mexican friends, always knowing that Catholicism was only on the outside. When Claudia moved to the US, she attended Harvard, and was unerringly attracted to the literature of Spain and Mexico, and the horrors and consequences of the Inquisition. As an adult, she embraced her Judaism, becoming bat mitzvah at age 53. Her first book, *Josefina's Sin*, only touched on the secret Jews in Mexico in the late 1600s, but her second book, *The Duel for Consuelo*, dove deep into the mysteries of living a secret life under penalty of death. When she encountered the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, she felt as if she'd come home.
claudialongauthor@gmail.com

Vice President of Communications and Editor of *HaLapid*

Corinne Joy Brown

Corinne is the author of six books and a freelance writer for several magazines. A member of the Colorado Authors' League, she is past president of the Denver Woman's Press Club, and a charter member of Women Writing the West. She was also board chair of the Mizel Museum of Judaica in Denver from 1990–2000. Corinne created Writing the West, an accredited literary conference, now a part of Western State College's humanities program. She is a Fellow of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.
www.corinnejoybrown.com

**Board positions are open to
any SCJS member.**

**To volunteer, please contact
Debbie Wohl-Isard
editor.lagranada@gmail.com.**



Co-Vice President of Membership/East

Natalie Trujillo Gonzalez

Natalie Trujillo Gonzalez, born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico, studied at the University of New Mexico and The National Institute of Flamenco. She now lives in Delaware with her husband, Rudy Gonzalez. The mother of five children and grandmother of four, she works at The Art of Natalie Trujillo studio as a fine artist and is passionate about art, history and flamenco. Her family has a long and meaningful history in New Mexico with crypto-Jewish roots. ntrujilloster@gmail.com

Co-Vice President of Membership/West

Maria Apodaca

Maria's family has been in New Mexico since 1598 with the Juan Onate expedition. She was born and raised in Albuquerque and raised a Catholic before finding out, at age 14, her family's true heritage. She made her return to Judaism in 1999 and is active in many Jewish organizations. A member of Congregation Nahalat Shalom, she served on the *va'ad* (board) for three years. Her activities include: event coordinator, annual Festival Djudeo-Espanyol; board member, SCJS; steering committee member, the Jewish Genealogical Society of New Mexico; member, New Mexico Jewish Historical Society; and steering committee member, Jewish Federation of New Mexico's Spanish Citizenship Committee. She shares her personal story and the Sephardic saga as a member of Road Scholar and Over The Road Tours which she joined in 2016. apodacam2003@yahoo.com

Treasurer — Position Available

Member-At-Large and Social Media Coordinator

Schelly Talalay Dardashti

A genealogist, journalist, international speaker and instructor, Schelly has traced her Sephardic, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi family across Spain, Iran and Eastern Europe for more than 30 years. She is the US genealogy advisor for MyHeritage.com and president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of New Mexico. A pioneer award-winning Jewish genealogy blogger since 2006, she also runs "Tracing the Tribe – Jewish Genealogy on Facebook," facebook.com/groups/tracingthetribе, with nearly 25,000 members, and is administrator/co-administrator of several DNA projects at

FamilyTreeDNA.com, including the Iberian Ashkenazi DNA Project. She speaks at some 20 genealogy conferences each year on such topics as Jewish genealogy, Jewish ethnicity and DNA, and Sephardic Resources, and presents online webinars for MyHeritage and Legacy. The former genealogy columnist for the Jerusalem Post (1999–2006), she has been published in many news outlets, such as JTA, The Forward, FamilyTree Magazine and more. www.schelly@tracingthetribе.com

Member-At-Large

Rabbi Merrill Shapiro

The founder and president of the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society, Rabbi Shapiro studied electrical engineering at Cornell University and New Jersey Institute of Technology; then Jewish studies and education at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Ohio State University. He served as a graduate research assistant at Melton Research Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has also been a *Yad Vashem* scholar at Israel's Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. He was an instructor of Jewish history at the University of Central Florida and a frequent Road Scholar guide and currently an OLLI educator at the University of North Florida. Shapiro has served congregations in Columbus, Ohio, Orlando, Florida and Richmond, Virginia. He is the immediate past national president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. He and his wife Robyn live in Palm Coast, Florida and have two daughters and five grandchildren. rabbi32164@gmail.com

Parliamentarian and Counsel

Harry Ezratty

An attorney, historian, writer, lecturer and Sephardic Jew who, for more than 30 years, has researched the history of the Sephardim in the Caribbean. He is the author of *500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean: The Spanish & Portuguese Jews in The West Indies; Jews of the New World; and They Led the Way: the Creators of Jewish America*. He is currently preparing Vol. III, *The Builders: Jews Who Shaped Modern America*. haelaw@verizon.net

>>>



Member-at-Large and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews*

Abraham (Abe) Lavender, Ph.D.

Abe received his doctorate in 1972 from the University of Maryland with a dissertation on generational changes in Jewish identity. He is professor of sociology at Florida International University in Miami. One area of his specialization is world Jewish communities, with an emphasis on Sephardim. He has been an active member of SCJS since 1996 and was president from 2003–2007. He is the author/editor of seven academic books, several articles in *HaLapid*, some 50 other academic articles, and over 80 encyclopedia articles or academic book reviews, many on Judaica. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews*.
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Member-at-Large and Society Historian

Art Benveniste

Art has been an SCJS member since 1993, traveling with society members to Belmonte, Portugal for the SCJS conference was held there in 1994. He has served as president, *HaLapid* editor, membership chair, website administrator and treasurer. He is a retired teacher of history, government and economics. His interest in crypto-Judaism has led him to travel to Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Spain, Portugal and the American Southwest. He is active as a speaker on crypto-Jews and Sephardic history and culture in California.
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Member-At-Large

Seth Ward, Ph.D.

Dr. Seth Ward is an associate lecturer in religious studies at the University of Wyoming where he has been teaching Islam and Middle East studies since January 2003. Previously, Ward directed the University of Denver's Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies for 10 years; he came to Denver after teaching in Israel at the University of Haifa and the Technion. Ward also taught at Colorado College and the University of Colorado-Boulder and -Denver. His academic interests include the Jews of Muslim lands, Jewish-Muslim relations, crypto-Jews, Mormon-Jewish relations, and Islamic sacred and legal texts about Jews and Israel. He is co-editor of *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism* and is widely published in many scholarly journals.
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Grants Administrator and Arts Chair

Corinne Joy Brown

See above.

Advisor to the Board

Seth Kunin, Ph.D.

Professor Seth Kunin studied at Columbia and Cambridge Universities, worked at universities in the UK and Australia, and is currently deputy vice chancellor at Curtin University (Perth, Australia). His academic work ranges widely, applying anthropological theory and methodology to biblical and rabbinic texts, crypto-Judaism, and currently liminal religious traditions in Japan. Crypto-Judaism, however, has been the primary focus of his academic work for much of the last two decades. He is author of many books and articles on crypto-Judaism. His book, *Juggling Identities*, is a comprehensive analysis of the ethnography of crypto-Judaism in New Mexico.
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Senior Advisor to the Board

Stanley Hordes, Ph.D.

A founding member of SCJS, Stan received his doctorate in Colonial Mexican History from Tulane University with his doctoral dissertation on the crypto-Jewish community of Mexico in the 17th century. He is the author of *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*. Hordes was the former New Mexico state historian. He also served as an adjunct research professor at the Latin American and Iberian Institute of the University of New Mexico.

Senior Advisor to the Board

Dolores (Dolly) Sloan

Author, *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal: Survival of an Imperiled Culture in the 15th and 16th Centuries*

Editor, *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews*.
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Stanley Hordes, Ph.D.

Seth Kunin, Ph.D.

Abe Lavender, Ph.D.

Matthew Warshawsky, Ph.D. 



Understanding EL PASO

BY RABBI DR. PETER TARLOW

Leaving the wide-open arid plains of West Texas for the narrow mountain pass that is El Paso is a reminder of the vastness of Texas. The geographical diversity serves as a metaphor for the diverse populations there.

Amarillo, further to the south, is a city meant for walking. The land is flat, the cars are few, and the streets are wide. Its population reflects its geography. In many ways, El Paso is Amarillo's opposite. El Paso is a land of the "in-betweens." Set in the desert and surrounded by mountains, the city is consistently thirsty and shaped by mountain making.

El Paso is a city of halves: half-Anglo and half-Latino, half-military and half-civilian (home to Fort Bliss). It is geographically in Texas, but culturally more in New Mexico. The mountain in its center forces the city to be shaped in the form of a large V, with its eastern wing



dominated by the military, its western wing reminiscent of suburban America, and in the city's downtown, at the bottom of the V, where the poor are caught, as is too often the case.

Sociologically, El Paso lives in a constant state of being half-hidden. Its two sides are hidden from each other, its populations live parallel but unconnected lives, and situated on the border, it is neither Mexican nor American but a bit of both, and yet, unique unto itself. Thus, this is the land of the *anusim*, home to the hidden Jews of 16th-century Spain, people who never really blended in, but found a home in a mountain pass

representing two halves of a culture still very much alive today. El Paso has still another half, one part caught in the horrors of history and the other, with its mountains reaching to the sky, reminding us that to live is to hope for a better future. 🔥



Rabbi Peter E. Tarlow, Ph.D.

A long-time SCJS member and regular contributor to *HaLapid*, Rabbi Dr. Peter E. Tarlow is a world-renowned expert on the impact of crime and terrorism on the tourism industry, plus event and tourism risk management and economic development. Fluent in many languages, he speaks throughout the world including Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Eastern Pacific, and Asia, lecturing on a wide range of current and future trends in the tourism industry, rural tourism economic development, crime and terrorism, and more. As an expert on Sephardic and crypto-Jewish history, Tarlow speaks and writes about the crypto-Jewish experience in the Americas, and the history of Jewish life on the Iberian Peninsula.



IDENTIFICATION

I am fairly sure that SCJS members from New Mexico like Natalie Gonzalez Trujillo and Maria Apodaca, and my friend Bill Carvajal in El Paso, and everyone else in the *converso*-crypto-Sephardic-Hispanic community will say that each person/family has completely different experiences.

My friends up north who live in isolated compounds are very Jewish once they pass through the entry gates of their properties. Some have archives dating from their arrival in 1598. Outside New Mexico, members of some families head Spanish Protestant churches, and hold top degrees from prestigious divinity schools. Some keep kosher laws and meat animals are properly slaughtered. Everyone knows exactly who and where they are on their family trees and all family artifacts and written materials are archived. They do not talk about anything when in public, and especially not to researchers. It is simply forbidden.

Those who grew up in Albuquerque do not have the same constraints as those from farther north, but do have different ones.

In my mind, I classify Natalie's family, for example, and their traditions/experiences as being perhaps the most definitive of a crypto-Jewish family: accepting, educating, but not broadcasting. I don't think she minds my saying this – we have discussed her family's traditions on many occasions.

My friends up north have dual experiences, at home or in public society. They have Jewish

The Question Persists



BY SCHELLY TALALAY DARDASHTI

Editor Note: A recent, brisk discussion about identity, privacy and secrecy among our board members led to this comprehensive summary by member Shelly Talalay Dardashti. With her permission, we reprint it here.

calendars, books, and old Judaica (not “made in Israel”).

Today in Albuquerque, we have a rabbi from Barcelona who comes from a *converso* family. His experiences are completely different. Maria and I both look forward to everyone meeting him, hearing his story and getting to know him. He is the first Spanish-born rabbi ordained by the Reconstructionist movement. A polyglot whose languages span the world, he holds a Ph.D. in Medieval

Hebrew Literature, and is also a calligrapher and bookbinder.

In contrast to some families up north, others have only one remnant passed down through the generations: Two words repeated in a quiet whisper: *Somos judios*. What do you (or they) do with that concept when there are perhaps no other traditions demonstrating that heritage? Where do you begin? Do you begin? There are a million stories for a million people!

There are the little old grandmothers – the *abuelitas* – in the villages who told their grandchildren that they could eat in one house, but could only drink water in another. There are the grandparents who get together to decide on matching

young people for arranged marriages with “good” families. There are the families who begin to embroider white cloths at the time of an engagement, which will be held over the heads of bride and groom, inscribed with their names. The longer one lives here, the more one hears and sees.

One also hears the comments of genealogists and researchers who disparage this or that family by saying their records are not authentic. Why? Because the families refuse to share the documents to validate them. The assumption is that if you do not share them, there must be something wrong. The families with the most knowledge have no desire to be validated by “experts.” They do not speak to researchers, they know who they are, and just want to be left alone. They are not interested in having a spotlight turned on them.

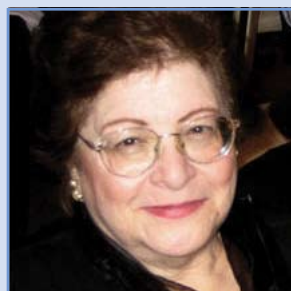


How to understand so many experiences when so few are willing to speak publicly is a conundrum. But those who do speak certainly encourage others to at least think about doing the same. It involves personally overcoming centuries of the fear of telling the “secret,” the overwhelming denial over the centuries, the idea of revealing something so dangerous to strangers (“Inquisition”), and having been taught, since they were small children, by the elders to never say anything to anybody ever about the family. It entails overcoming extremely strong familial objections against breaking that eternal code of silence and denial.

It is something to think about as the general contemporary Jewish community – mostly Ashkenazim, but also Sephardim – still doesn’t understand why the converso-crypto-Sephardic-Hispanic community doesn’t just wake up one morning and shout who they are from the rooftops because “today we are free.” Others, including some academics, think this field has been overly romanticized and that there are simply no converso-crypto-Sephardic-Hispanic “hidden” individuals anywhere – just wannabees for diverse reasons.

Everywhere Maria or I go in Albuquerque, we run into interesting people. A dressmaker from Guatemala whose family insists they come from Turkey, and won’t eat eggs with blood spots or pork. A restaurant owner who recognizes Maria’s *hamsa*, knows exactly what it means, and comes from a community up north known as a converso center and tells us his DNA test results confirmed what he already knew. A jeweler who comes from northern Mexico and quietly shares that he knows his family was Jewish. A hotel manager whose DNA result was a complete surprise until he asked his family and they confirmed that they knew who they were. There are so many of these stories. Today, with DNA testing becoming so common, these results are the first clue a person might have as to their heritage, or it may help to confirm what they already know.

It is hard to answer the outliers who don’t believe in this topic, on one hand, and to help those looking for personal answers, on the other. 📌



Schelly Talalay Dardashti

Dardashti is a journalist, genealogist and international speaker at genealogy conferences. She is the US Genealogy Advisor for MyHeritage.com. Dardashti is an SCJS board member and social media coordinator. She also serves on the Leadership Committee of Casa Sefarad at Congregation Nahalat Shalom (Albuquerque, New Mexico).

In Gratitude

SCJS Most Generous Donors

In the life of every organization you’ll find founders, directors, members and volunteers, all individuals who care about a common cause. You’ll also find patrons— those exceptional people who choose to invest in the health and future of that organization.

We are incredibly lucky to have found, not one, but two patrons who are making a difference for SCJS right now. Prior to this season, we have been most fortunate to have received ongoing grants from the Sosin-Petit Foundation and the Stratton Foundation, both in California, each set in place years ago by individuals who believed that SCJS was a worthy cause. Those grants also funds honoraria in part for our many distinguished speakers and presentations in the arts.

But until now, no one has invested in our internal organization, lending a hand and dollars to help us grow. As of summer 2018, that has changed. As mentioned in my president’s letter, we are indebted to Bennett Greenspan, a longtime member and founder of Family Tree DNA, for doing just that. He, along with his wife Robin, have not only gifted us with a generous grant, but introduced us to an experienced philanthropic advisor to non-profit organizations who has suggested a cohesive set of guidelines designed to help us strengthen from within — wisdom and caring. It’s like a map into the future.



We also owe a second note of thanks at this time to two of our dearest and most dedicated, longstanding members from New Mexico, Loretta Worthington and her husband Dennis, who gift us with a generous check each year. They are making this recent donation in honor of Stan and Helen Hordes and have specifically earmarked this year’s gift to enable SCJS to bring high quality musical arts to the conference in Denver. A warm thank you has already been sent their way.

To all of you, we are most grateful.
Debbie Wohl-Isard, President



SAN LUIS VALLEY

Thanksgiving

BY DIANE D. MOCK

The Pilgrims have rested securely in US history as hosts of the first Thanksgiving. But information dormant for at least 400 years in New Mexican Catholic Church history records indicates that it was actually Spanish settlers in New Mexico who enacted the first Thanksgiving in America in 1598 — predating the Pilgrim thanksgiving by 23 years.

Joyce Gunn, curator of Colorado's San Luis Valley Museum in Alamosa, Colorado confirmed, facilitated, and recently hosted a Spanish Thanksgiving to commemorate and honor Spanish contribution to both the "Valley" and US histories.

Imagine that first Spanish Thanksgiving table: it may have featured turkey but more likely included a main dish of buffalo, beef, goat, and regional or domestically raised poultry, along with standard Mexican food fare such as beans, chili, and rice. That menu may have been similar to the Mexican meal that the SLV Museum served to guests at the end of the day.

In an article published in the Valley Courier News, Gunn said, "Our beginnings in the Americas are not the Pilgrims, or the trappers or Jamestown. It is part of the history of Spain." The two-day event featured speakers, food, a Santos (saint) exhibit by artist Geronimo Olivas and dancing to music by a local band, Los Cancioneros Del Valle.

"I became curious about the possibility of the Spanish being the first Europeans to stake land claims and celebrate Thanksgiving in the New World when a visitor at the museum shared his knowledge about explorer and later governor Juan Onate who led the first wave of Spanish settlers to New Mexico," she said.



Diane D. Mock

Diane D. Mock is a crypto-Jew, whose maternal ancestry hails from the San Luis Valley. She's a freelance writer and retired educator who resides in Denver, Colorado with her husband, Freddy, and dog, Dulce.

In fall 2017, Gunn contacted Bernadette Lucero, church director and curator of the Santa Fe Archdiocese archives, who researched information in early church records to prove settlement of the area.

After researching the records, reported Gunn, "Lucero was able to confirm that Spanish settlers, not soldiers or explorers, were the first Europeans to literally occupy land acquisitions in the name of their government."

Lucero was also able to nail down the date of the first Spanish thanksgiving feast based on church doctrine that determined feast days. Lucero told her that feasts days were aligned to the closest saint day on the calendar. Saint Augustine was the saint day that was closest to Spanish arrival in New Mexico and would have been the date of festivities.

So, Lucero was able to conclude it was August 19, 1598, when a feast was prepared by grateful settlers who offered thanksgiving to God for safe arrival and promise of bounty in their new homeland. This year, the Thanksgiving was held in July as advised by the Diocese in Santa Fe. In the future, it will be presented on August 19, or as close as possible.

Local historian Dennis Lopez brought further insight into Juan Onate. Lopez's lecture piggy-backed onto the findings of Lucero. He said that Onate-led settlers went by caravan to an area known today as San Juan Pueblo, a reservation in New Mexico. Some 25 miles north of Santa Fe, it was the location of the first Spanish Thanksgiving. This area had been explored earlier and claimed for Spain by Spanish conquerors.

The caravan stretched two miles. According to Lopez, an official



census reported only upper-class men and soldiers, about 800 in all. When commoners, slaves, women and children were figured in, the frequently-debated count totaled about 1,200 souls. Lopez further verified that the caravan “definitely” included crypto-Jews who were attempting to escape the microscopic lens of the Catholic Church.

Onate’s mission, according to Lopez, was to take dominion over land that had been seized for the Spanish crown. Sojourners were promised land grants which motivated them to push towards their destinations which included territory in southern Colorado. They brought supplies for traveling, farming and stocking their new homes. Sheep, cows, goats, and poultry were food on the road and also livestock for the pioneers’ new settlements.

“The arduous trip,” Lopez said, “began in 1596. From beginning to destination took about two years. There was much starting and stopping along the way as checkpoint inspectors had to validate the caravan was meeting rules as prescribed by royal specifications. Caravans stopped until matters of state were met or clarified. He noted that on one occasion the caravan was forced to stop for nearly a year. It was held up by government negotiations and decisions that went back and forth by ship between Spain and the New World until resolved.

Another holdup during the two-year journey to New Mexico, said Lopez, was when Ponce De Leon, (an explorer from a different family than the “fountain of youth” Ponce De Leon) threw his hat into the ring for consideration to lead the New Mexico-bound caravan for the Spanish king. He told the King that he had enough personal wealth to fund the endeavor. But, De Leon’s ambitions were deflated when he became ill and authorities discovered his net worth wasn’t as extensive as reported.

Perhaps the real story here was not the Thanksgiving event itself but how it revived ethnic pride in the Hispanic community and a sense of contribution to the greater scheme of San Luis Valley history.

Although this first event (2018) was not well-attended, word traveled around the Valley, and Gunn said she has received numerous positive phone calls and fielded community reactions. People who called or stopped her on the street wanted to know how to get involved next year.

At the least, this event recovered information that adds to and challenges American history. If seriously accepted by historical scholars, it has potential to re-write US history and redefine the reality that our founding fathers were Spanish, not English-speakers, who enjoyed spicy food and joyous dancing on Thanksgiving.

Author’s Note: The delicious celebration meal at the museum included cheese enchiladas with chili, beans and rice and horchata (which tasted like rice pudding with cinnamon). 🍷

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SEE PAGE 28 FOR MORE!



Preserving a DISAPPEARING LANGUAGE

BY ART BENVENISTE

In 1492, the Jews of Spain had a choice: convert to Catholicism or leave the country. Five years later, the Jews of Portugal were forcibly converted. Historians cannot agree on how many Jews were involved in the conversions or the expulsion. The numbers were certainly in the tens of thousands, perhaps in the hundreds of thousands. Over the next centuries, many of those who chose to or were forced to convert (or their descendants), found that living as a *Nuevo Cristiano* (New Christian), had its disadvantages. They still experienced discrimination. So many of them also fled Iberia.

Where did they go? Large numbers followed the conquistadors to the New World and their descendants are the subjects of study by the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. Others took refuge in the Moslem kingdoms of North Africa, the Middle East or in the Ottoman Empire.

The exiles carried with them the traditions of their old countries, including religious customs, foods, songs and the Iberian languages of the 15th-16th centuries. For 500 years, these dialects were preserved in many Jewish communities around the Mediterranean. Eventually their language was referred to as Judeo-Espanyol, Judezmo, Haketia or Ladino.

Every spoken language evolves with time, has regional dialects, and borrows words from other languages. Ladino is no exception. Thus, the dialects of this old language varied from place to place. The dialect of the Jews of Morocco (Arabic loan words) differed from that of Salonika (with Greek loan words) and they



Art Benveniste (and grandchildren)

differed from the Jewish languages of Istanbul, Rhodes, Athens, Sarajevo etc., etc. I have found a few elements of these old languages used by the crypto-Jews in New Mexico (more on this later).

My parents were Ladino-speaking Sephardic Jews from the Island of Rhodes. I learned their version of Spanish as a child. They spoke to each other and to their friends and relatives in that language. Some of my aunts had only a basic knowledge of English and my grandmother could speak only a few words of English. When communicating with them, I had to use Ladino.

On my first visit to Spain in 1957, a man to whom I was talking said that I was speaking like Cervantes. Don Quixote was, of course, written in 16th-century Spanish. It was as if you met someone today who spoke Shakespearean English!

Today the Judeo-Spanish dialects are disappearing. Few native speakers are left, and the next generation – mine – rarely uses it. To my children and the rest of that generation, it is like Latin, a dead language from which we use a few words today. Someone once said that the way to understand if a language is dead is to listen to the children playing with each other. If they don't use that particular language, it is disappearing.

Fortunately, there are attempts today to preserve the language, even if it is only preserved as a museum piece. There is an online Ladino group called, Ladinokomunita (sephardicstudies.org/komunita.html) founded by longtime-SCJS member, Rachel Bortnick.

When you subscribe, you will receive a daily email from the group, which includes arguments about word definitions, poems, lyrics, jokes, recipes, descriptions and more.

Some of us in the Los Angeles area have formed a new group which meets monthly to speak and to read Ladino; we have held three meetings so far. Among the participants are Max Daniel, with the UCLA Jewish Archives and who is in charge of the annual UCLadino conference (ucladino.com), and Simone Salmone, who has created a Sephardic music website. She has created 13 programs already (mixcloud.com; search for "Bilbilikos").

Our first meeting began by reading the first part of a novel, *La Ermoza Rahel, Istorya muy enteresante ke akontsyo en el Portugal en el 1752*, (The Beautiful Rachel, the very Interesting story told in Portugal in 1752), which was published anonymously. We read a few pages each time. It may take nearly a year to complete the book. It begins:

En esta epoka era rigorozamente defendido alos djudyos de morar en el Portugal (pais vezino de la Espanya) onde fuertes I teribles kastigos ke azia a todo el ke no era vero I fevente katoliko.

(In that time there was rigor and defensiveness for the Jews who resided in Portugal (neighboring



country to Spain) where fierce and terrible punishments were done to all who were not true and fervently Catholic.)

Just from this short partial paragraph, we see differences between Ladino and modern Castilian.

1. The letter K is used instead of C
See: epoka, kastigos, ke, katoliko, instead of: epica (age or time), castigo (punishment), que (that) Catolico (Catholic).
2. NY is used instead of ñ, as in Espanya.
3. Some words are different: *vivia* (dwelled) is *morar* and *donde* (where) is *onde*; these two words are of Portuguese origin rather than Spanish.

Other differences between Ladino and modern Castilian are in the pronunciation of some letters. Examples: Some Castilian words today are spelled with the letter J, but 500 years ago they were spelled with an X pronounced SH (the Castilian *déjà* and *abajo* are spelled *dexar* and *abaxo*, and are pronounced *deshar* and *abasho*).

In modern Castilian, J is pronounced H, but in Ladino it is pronounced J as in English. In elementary school, my teacher said to the class, "Today we will learn a little Spanish," I thought that this would be easy for me, as I already spoke Spanish. Then she said that in Spanish the letter J is pronounced as an H I thought she was crazy and didn't really understand Spanish. I ignored the rest of the lesson.

Many of our words are also different. This can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. On my first visit to Spain in 1957, I saw a Spanish singer perform in a café. After her performance, I told her that I enjoyed hearing her. She looked at me as if I had insulted her. I did not understand why she reacted that way. It was a few years later that I learned that the

Ladino word *sentir* ("hear" in Ladino) means "feel" in Castilian.

My sister once had a Hispanic student in her class. The student was feeling sick, so her mother was called to come pick her up. She told the mother to put the girl to bed. The mother complained to the principal that my sister had told her to put her daughter in the garbage. In colloquial Ladino, "to go to bed" is *echar a la cama* (throw yourself in bed) and is often shortened to just *echar*. In modern colloquial Mexican Spanish, *echar* is short for *echar a la basura*, or "to throw in the garbage."

I often wondered if any of the 15th-century Spanish had been preserved by today's crypto-Jews. I found that some people from the villages of New Mexico pronounced *mucho* (much) in the Ladino style *muncho*. The extra "n" is found in several words, but this does not necessarily show a Jewish background. It may just be that, as in English, old pronunciations are sometimes preserved in isolated areas.

One woman of crypto-Judaic descent remembered that her mother used to sing a song in an unfamiliar language that had the words, *El nora ha lila*. She thought that it was about a girl named Nora. I recognized it as a Hebrew song used in synagogues at the end of the Yom Kippur service.

A professor from New Mexico who was teaching in Texas told me that every December, about a week before Christmas, his family ate *banuelos*. Sephardi Jews eat *bourmuelos* as part of the Chanukah celebration. I asked him to describe his *banuelos*; they were exactly the same as the holiday treat that I knew.

I found the strongest connection to the old Sephardic language in references to God. The Castilian word for God is *Dios*. It is derived from the Latin word *Deus*. But, the words end with S In Spanish; as in English, S at the end of a word implies the word is plural. To Jews,

Good news for the Ladino language!

Daniel Sugarman of the Jewish Chronicle writes that the Royal Spanish Academy has decided to invest in the preservation of Ladino, the language of the Spanish Jews who were expelled during the time of the Inquisition. He writes that plans include the establishment of a National Ladino Academy in Israel, a development which marks not only a historical step forward but an emotional moment for Sephardic people all over the world.

It is often said that Ladino is the "Yiddish" of the Sephardim, primarily because, like Yiddish, Ladino was written with Hebrew letters. Differences include Ladino's use of the Rashi script, which historians tell us was actually a Ladino script designed to separate Rashi's commentary from the Torah.

Today Ladino speakers consider the term "Ladino" to be incorrect and prefer the more accurate term, "Judeo-Spanish." In recent years Ladino has experienced a revival with colleges like The University of Washington at Seattle, the University of Pennsylvania and UCLA offering courses in Ladino language, music and culture.

God cannot be plural. So, in Ladino, the reference to God is always, *El Dio*. It does not include S and it always uses the article *El* (the). This emphasizes the deity's singularity. Once, when I was speaking at the University of Santa Fe, I mentioned this. A man in the back of the room jumped up and shouted, "That's how my grandmother used to pronounce it!" 🔥



SYLVIA RAMOS CRUZ

Memorial Day 2016

Montefiore Jewish Cemetery,
Las Vegas, New Mexico

No flags, no saints, no visitors
save five crows in black vestments
hunkered down on a wind-whirled tree
near weary adobe fence.

Rows of ancient headstones
vastly outnumber more recent neighbors,
struggle to remain upright,
fight burial under endless
swirls of red dust-devils
and time.

Names I saw engraved in buildings
downtown around the Plaza call me—
Ilfelds, Rosenthals, Taicherts, Sterns—
East European merchants
who traded Old World conflicts
for new lives in an alien place.

The dead lie undisturbed,
perhaps unremembered, covered
by sparse blanket of tiny, yellow-eyed
white and purple wildflowers wavering
under a painfully brilliant cloud-heavy sky.

Across the wire gate,
closer to the main entrance,
Masons and Woodsmen repose
and, just beyond a graying stone virgin,
an old woman sits shrouded in memories
unmindful of the souls around her.



SYLVIA RAMOS CRUZ
writes poems eclectic in
form and content. Many are
inspired by works of art in
all its forms, women's lives,
and every-day injustices.
Many reflect the places
that have influenced her—

Puerto Rico, New York and New Mexico.

Her ongoing project—writing *haibun* about
journeys to visit historic New Mexico, women,
and road markers—combines three of her
passions: feminism, poetry, and the open road.
Her work has appeared in *Persimmon*
Tree, *Malpais Review*, *Small Canyons*
Haiku Anthology, *Encore: Prize Poems*
2017 and *The Journal of Latina Critical*
Feminism 2018, among others.

She is a retired general and breast surgeon
and a fully engaged women's rights activist.

Published in *Encore: Prize Poems 2017* (National Federation
of State Poetry Societies) and online in the *Duke City*
Fix: The Sunday Poem, blog post 8/20/17.

Won 2nd Prize in the 2017 Donald Stodghill Memorial Award contest of
the 2017 NFSPS.

Won 3rd Prize in the New Mexico Press Women 2018 Communications
Contest. 🏆



MIRIAM SAGAN

Los Ojos

Nothingness hangs
like a curtain
in between
here and now,
five fingers
but as a child
I'd count four spaces
a pointer
shaped in silver
like a hand
keeps the reader
from touching
the sacred scroll
where the letters sit
like blackbirds in a field.

St. Joseph is the
patron of the north,
always Joseph, never *José*,
the quintessential
foster parent
who nurtures
whatever is given
into our care—
maybe a child
maybe a parcel of land
maybe a last name
maybe the way sunlight
falls through the window
shines across the
floorboards
illuminates
the rug
with its simple medallions
a few florets
stripes of color.

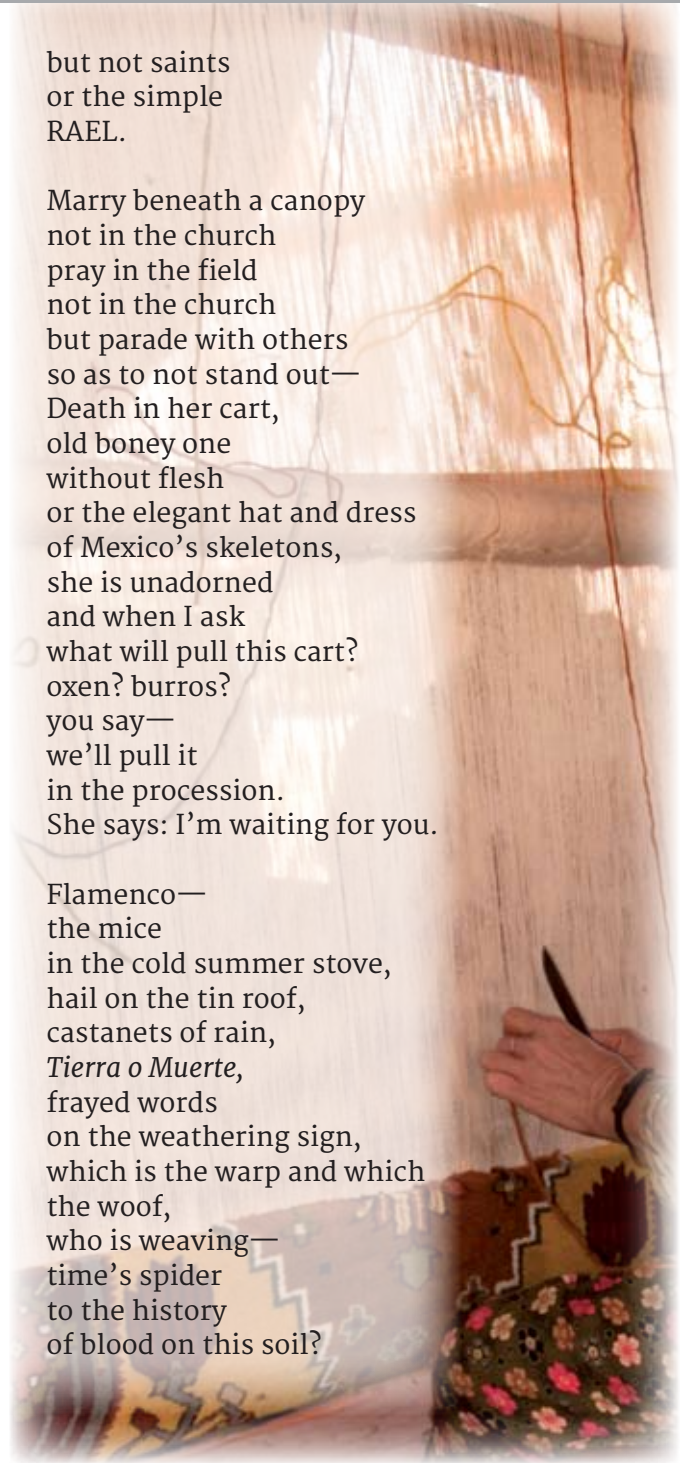
Latitude: 3672
Longitude: 10657
the weaver takes a pattern
without knowing
the silk road,
diacritic marks
tell the reader
how to pronounce
the prayer
but not
what to ask for
or what to praise
as water
bubbles from the earth
and the springs
spring forth
each droplet
out of the watershed
seeks the sea
or keeps the lilac
trees in bloom
is worn like a necklace
of crystals
on the throat
of drought.

Black lace mantilla
covers the long hair
of a woman
covering her eyes
murmuring a prayer
over two candlesticks
usually hidden
in a chest,
the gravestones
marked
with six pointed stars
and the last names
of rivers and mountains
and flowers

but not saints
or the simple
RAEL.

Marry beneath a canopy
not in the church
pray in the field
not in the church
but parade with others
so as to not stand out—
Death in her cart,
old boney one
without flesh
or the elegant hat and dress
of Mexico's skeletons,
she is unadorned
and when I ask
what will pull this cart?
oxen? burros?
you say—
we'll pull it
in the procession.
She says: I'm waiting for you.

Flamenco—
the mice
in the cold summer stove,
hail on the tin roof,
castanets of rain,
Tierra o Muerte,
frayed words
on the weathering sign,
which is the warp and which
the woof,
who is weaving—
time's spider
to the history
of blood on this soil?



MIRIAM SAGAN
is the author of 30
published books,
including the novel
Black Rainbow
(Sherman Asher, 2015)
and *Geographic: A
Memoir of Time and*

Space (Casa de Snapdragon), which
won the 2016 Arizona/New Mexico

Book Award in Poetry. She founded and
headed the creative writing program at
Santa Fe Community College until her
retirement in 2016. Her blog *Miriam's
Well* (miriamswell.wordpress.com) has
1500 daily readers. She has been a writer
in residence in four national parks, at
Yaddo, MacDowell, Colorado Art Ranch,
Andrew's Experimental Forest, Center
for Land Use Interpretation,

Iceland's Gullkistan Residency for
creative people, and another dozen or so
remote and unique places. Her awards
include the Santa Fe Mayor's award
for Excellence in the Arts, the Poetry
Gratitude Award from New Mexico
Literary Arts, and a Lannan Foundation
residency in Marfa. 🔥



NEORAH ELAINE TREMBLAY-GARCIA

Soul Tikkun

My soul has heard the call-
the cries.

Felt the memories of my
ancestors,
my ancient mothers,
grandmothers.

I feel their presence,
moving within mine.

I go through my life trying
to gather, to reconnect,
the sparks of my ancient past
to the present.

To rectify, repair, restore
what was taken away,
hidden, lost.



NEORAH TREMBLAY GARCIA

I am a Jewish woman who is passionate about everything I do, whether its cooking, drumming/chanting, creating art, or writing poetry.

I facilitate a women's healing drum circle, and have recently started to take my drums to the "elders," at elder care/living facilities. I also facilitate a healing with the arts class.

I have French/French Canadian/Native American (Mi'kmaq & Abenaki) ancestry. I was raised Catholic, and grew up within a very French Canadian culture. I discovered I had a Jewish soul 14 years ago, and have been Jewish now for 13 years. I am married to John T. Garcia, a *b'nai anusim*, who returned to Judaism 17 years ago.

I am always studying and taking classes to improve and enhance what I do, so I can help myself and others. I feel very blessed, and I am always striving to share my gifts and knowledge with others- my *Tikkun Olam*. Note- Neorah is a new member of SCJS. 🔥

ELISHEVA (ELIZABETH) ARALUCE MASON

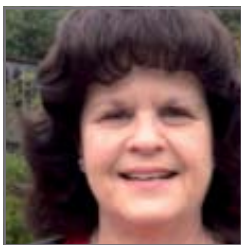
VESTIGES

Vestiges of antiquity all but extinguished,
faint voices whisper where denizens still reside.

Vestiges of fire, spewed forth to fan the flame
vitality renewed in an ancient people.

Vestiges of villages still survive, morphed into
a new nation that shakes its fist at its oppressors.

Vestiges of suppressed prophecy
appear before our very eyes,
le dor vador shehechyanu, outwits oppression and
promises continuity of an indefatigable spirit.



ELIZABETH (ELISHEVA) ARALUCE MASON

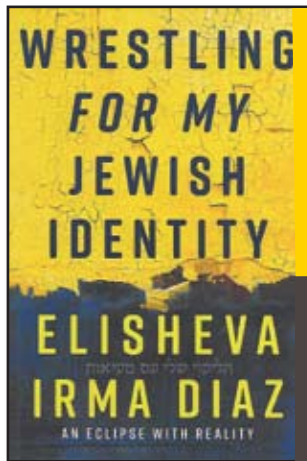
Elisheva is a licensed marriage and family therapist whose crypto-Sephardic Jewish family lived

double lives in both the Basque region of Spain and in Mexico. They were forced to flee Durango as political exiles in the aftermath of the 1910 revolution. She lives in Santa Barbara, California with her husband, Joe. 🔥



Wrestling for My Jewish Identity – An Eclipse with Reality

BY ELISHEVA IRMA DIAZ
FRIESEN PRESS, 2018



Perhaps one of the most rewarding things about personal memoir is the opportunity to meet and understand another person while tracing their growth, struggles, and triumphs. Elisheva Irma Diaz's journey from Christian pastor to rabbi (ordained by the Jewish Spiritual Leaders Institute in New York) is both inspiring and remarkable, proving that if we only listen deeply to what calls, moves and inspires us, we may end up in a very different place, closer to our own true heart.

Diaz's quest is relevant to our readers because in her research she has uncovered her own *converso* roots, a process that led her to cross the bridge from one faith (and back) to another. In a poem at the back of the book by noted Israeli historian and Inquisition scholar Shulamith Halevy, the line "the blood is calling" rings out as the anthem of this story. In hearing that call, Diaz goes as far back as Spain,

Mexico, and her childhood in the 60s in Los Angeles, where she was raised a Spanish-speaking Catholic, unaware of her family's deep roots.

A longtime religious and biblical scholar, Diaz interweaves excerpts from the Old Testament, as well as quotes by rabbis and scholars throughout her story, one that confirms a deep passion and love for the Jewish people. The journey obviously was not an easy one, but made more clear as she matured, toured the world, visited Israel, and saw her growing connection to Jewish thought and history.

Married early and the mother of three children, Diaz found herself single early, as well. A 20-year stint in politics in Washington during the Reagan-Bush years shaped her leadership skills and confidence, and introduced her to then-presidential candidate Paul Robertson who hired her as his PR campaign director. From there, her immersion into Christian ministry was inevitable, a path that nonetheless often also led Diaz to the re-emerging Jewish legacy in her work. During a pivotal trip to Spain the message became undeniable, a spiritual revelation. The return to Judaism was her only way forward.

A reexamination of her family history and especially her grandparents' lives and habits began to take on new meaning, in particular the many *dichos* or sayings, which Diaz recognized as Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) in origin. A reassuring new picture emerged of whom they had always been. Quickly abandoned by her Christian colleagues as she made the switch, Diaz saw a new truth about faith and its evil twin, hypocrisy. That loss did not deter her newfound reality.

Today Diaz, a longtime member of SCJS, is the founder of the Ayekah Jewish Foundation, and co-founder

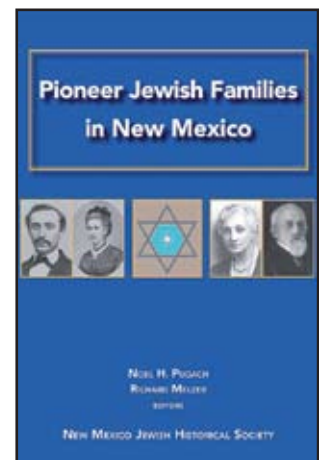
and vice president of the Coalition for Sephardic Hispanic and Ladino Legacy in Los Angeles. (www.ayeka.org.) They hold an annual celebration of Spanish-Jewish culture, open to all.

Wrestling for My Jewish Identity is beautifully written and rich with Jewish content, a story worth telling.

— Corinne Joy Brown 

Pioneer Jewish Families in New Mexico

BY NOEL H. PUGACH AND RICHARD MELZER
GAON BOOKS, 2018



A book for anyone interested in the 19th-century settlement of New Mexico profiling those courageous European immigrants who left France, Germany and Lithuania for a better life. Determined to survive in a tough new world, almost all were in search of better work opportunities and freedom from persecution. Many also came west for their health to drier climates, or because they heard there was a need to serve new communities

“

As they put down roots... many held onto their Judaism as best they could, others melding into a new Americanism that allowed them to preserve their identity...

”

in the raw emptiness of a new land. Ambitious men imported goods, ran stores of every kind, and got involved in community-building, cattle ranching, transportation and every kind of profession. As they put down roots and increased family members, many held on to their Judaism as best they could, others melding into a new Americanism that allowed them to preserve their identity, but also forge a more common one as Westerners and, more importantly, as New Mexicans.

The well-researched profiles include the Danoff, Fruedenthal, Lesinsky, Solomon, Goldsmith, Gusdorf, Herzstein, Ilfeld and Nordhaus families. It also covers the Loewenstern, Mandell, Weiller, Benjamin, and Drefuss clans, plus the Moise, Ravel, Seligmans, Floersheim and Bibo families. It further includes the Spiegelberg, Taichert, Wertheim and Vorenberg families. All of these are intrinsic contributors to New Mexico history.

Pioneer Jewish Families in New Mexico is filled with archival photos and

quotes from descendants who heard first-hand the unforgettable stories of their great-grandparents. They learned how they were challenged by isolation and frontier conditions and not only thrived, but managed to keep Judaism and Jewish values alive for later generations to cherish.

Editors Noel H. Pugach and Richard Melzer have done a great service for the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and subsequent generations of Jews who are citizens of New Mexico. A valuable resource book.

Reviewer's note—

At a planning meeting recently held in Denver for the 2019 SCJS conference, a Latino guest who grew up in Trinidad announced that she had just discovered her maternal great-grandfather was a Jaffe from Germany who settled in Southwest Colorado. It was the first time she realized she had Jewish relatives. Histories like those in this book are essential for many. — CJB 🔥

Chains of Silver – Tendrils of the Inquisition

BY CLAUDIA HAGADUS LONG
(VOLUME 3 OF 3) PAPERBACK
FIVE DIRECTIONS PRESS, 2018

If author Claudia H. Long could proclaim literary reign over a single period of Jewish and Latin American history, she could deservedly name herself the queen of writers exploring Inquisition-era Colonial Mexico. Her trilogy of novels especially shed much needed light on the difficulties of New Christians (*conversos*) living in the New World.

Her latest work, *Chains of Silver*, takes the reader into the heart of the new empire in the 17th century and its capital, Mexico City, a settlement growing richer by the decade, and fueling its coffers via the vast silver mines of Zacatecas.

Our heroine, young Marcela Leon, a 14-year-old girl, seeks refuge with a sympathetic family when her parents, secret Jews from Spain, are taken away by Inquisition thugs. Although in safe hands for a brief time, she is doomed by her own forthright nature, her lack of discretion, the guarding of her Jewish identity, and her growing sexual maturity. As a result, she ends up in exile, and is sent away to Zacatecas, the mountainous mining town north of Mexico City where she will hopefully be far from danger and accusation. There she becomes a housekeeper for a Catholic priest, just one step toward her transformation into an astute bookkeeper, a young businesswoman, a wife to a mine owner, a mother, and eventually (following her husband's death), a mine owner herself.



Through it all, we see the growth of a powerful woman, the difficulty in keeping the inheritance of faith under difficult times, and a carefully researched look into the customs and *morés* of Colonial Mexico, a



culture as deceitful and lusty as any in our modern world. Rich in imagery and figurative language, as well as surprising plot twists, the story keeps the reader turning the pages until the very end

Long's other two novels, *The Duel for Consuelo* and *Josefina's Sin*, are also constructed during this time period. Long is more than qualified to use this setting and era for her riveting stories about people who are, surprisingly, not so different from ourselves. Said the author, "Growing up in Mexico City, where my parents ended up after a long, post-World War II journey, lends me insights to the world of my characters. I studied at Radcliffe/Harvard, and later, at Georgetown Law, which taught me how to research, construct a narrative framework, and express my ideas on paper. I never tire of imagining colonial life, or depicting the bravery of early modern professional women."

Long has since established roots in the San Francisco Bay Area where she has raised her children, writes, works, and plays. She spends her time in California, practicing law and writing books, and has many opportunities to explore the impact that art, poetry, law and of course, the heart, had on women of long-ago.

For those who attended the 2017 SCJS conference in Philadelphia, you might recall the fascinating account of the Castellano family, a special presentation by historian David Gitlitz, whose painstaking research traced a family connected to the Colonial-era silver mining industry. Lorenzo Castellano sailed to Veracruz in 1534 and went on to Mexico City, where he was known to have maintained Jewish practices. The quest for silver became his passion. Author Claudia Long's book could

have easily portrayed any member of his many-generational family. Her talents as a novelist bring this entire period to life.

Claudia recently received second place in the Latino Literacy Now Awards for *Chains of Silver* (Historical Fiction English) and *Duel for Consuelo* (Romance). — CJB

Pyre to Fire

BY GENIE MILGROM
CREATE SPACE, 2018



For those who have not yet read Genie Milgrom's non-fiction books, *My 15 Grandmothers*, and its sequel, *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers*, one cannot appreciate the imaginative journey of her first novel and the direct connection of those first compelling works to this recent release — a fictionalized version of a real history.

The art of writing fiction demands a good grasp of character, setting and, of course, plot, carrying the reader through conflict and resolution with sustained interest. Weaving together

past and present alternately, Milgrom succeeds in every way, telling her own story in part, as she actually lived it — growing up Catholic, but eventually returning to the Jewish faith her ancestors were forced to leave behind. At the same time, she engages the reader in an imagined and suspenseful tale set more than 500 years ago, dealing with circumstances that might very well have happened.

The story opens in 1492 and follows young Catalina Levi, a Jewish girl in a family located in a small town on the border of Spain, a time when Jewish life flourished as it had for centuries. The Spanish Inquisition had not yet penetrated their small hamlet, but they had heard enough of what had happened elsewhere to know their turn would come, and that the results would be horrific. The villagers decided to take matters into their own hands, forcing the issue of conversion. Hoping to avoid the harsh penalties of the Church, the decision was made to convert ahead of time, hiding their Jewish identity under the cloak of Catholicism, no easy task. Not all were in agreement, and therein

...the decision was made to convert ahead of time, hiding their Jewish identity under the cloak of Catholicism, no easy task.



lies the angst of the gripping story you'll have to read to learn more.

Without giving away the plot, the book is an absorbing tale of life in medieval Jewish Spain; of love, loyalty and survival as well as a murder, a cover-up, an entire family going "underground" and relocating, and a relentless member of the Inquisition in search of revenge.

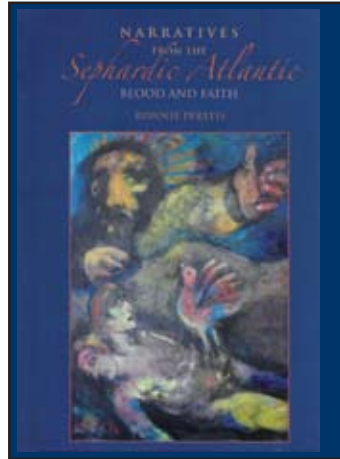
Hats off to Milgrom who seems to be able to do anything she sets her mind to in her lifelong quest for heritage and identity, the fuel behind all these works. For those who do not know, Genie (a past-president of SCJS) was born Roman Catholic in Havana, Cuba. After an extensive genealogical search that spanned decades, she discovered she descends on her direct maternal lineage from Jews who lived in Spain before the Spanish Inquisition.

Based on her success as a genealogist and her own journey as a member of the *anusim* she has become a sought-after international speaker and researcher and has helped countless others trace their own lineages back through the past 500 years. To her credit, she has devised creative ways of finding the Jewish past via Catholic and Inquisition records. Milgrom is a past-president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami and has been featured on numerous radio and television shows, and interviewed by the international press. She received the Latino Book Award for her two previous books. She is also a frequent spokesperson for returning Jews in many countries and maintains informational websites such as www.geniemilgrom.com and www.sephardicancestry.com.

With a clear talent for a tale well-told, we hope *Pyre to Fire* won't be Genie's last foray into fiction. — CJB 🔥

Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic – Blood and Faith

BY RONNIE PERELIS
INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016



Narratives from the *Sephardic Atlantic* studies the autobiographies of three Hispano-Portuguese New Christians written at the dawn of modernity to show the important and conflictive roles of family (blood) and religious identity (faith, primarily Jewish) in the self-fashioning that the authors of these works undertake. While readers of HaLapid may be familiar with Luis de Carvajal the Younger (1567–1596), the most famous crypto-Jew of the colonial era, Perelis shows how the other two individuals, Manuel Cardoso de Macedo (1585–1662) and Antonio de Montezinos (1604–1647), crafted equally compelling accounts of their respective spiritual paths.

The book helps readers understand that the "Sephardic Atlantic," after the forced conversions and expulsions of Iberian Jews at the end of the 1400s, connected communities in port cities of Western Europe with Spanish

...families of conversos (New Christians) throughout the Diaspora established networks rooted in economic, religious, and cultural ties.

and Portuguese territories in the Americas. In his introduction, Perelis describes how families of *conversos* (New Christians) throughout this diaspora established networks rooted in economic, religious, and cultural ties. Subsequently exploring such networks through autobiography, he shows how shifting notions of family and religion as well as Inquisitorial prosecution affected the stories that his three subjects created. For example, the study of Carvajal's *Vida* describes how Carvajal's quest to live as a crypto-Jew in New Spain (present-day Mexico) led him to search for substitute father figures and precipitated a conflict of faith with his brother Gaspar, a sincere *converso* and Catholic priest. Covering two chapters, the analysis of Luis's autobiography testifies to the "idiosyncratic nature of family bonds" which can be alternately unifying and the source of Inquisitorial prosecution.

Through his study of the life stories of Cardoso and Montezinos, Perelis shows the depth of the Sephardic Atlantic, because both narratives, while sharing similarities with that of Carvajal, contribute original



elements to the construction of *converso* identity. Thus, like Carvajal, who reinvented himself as Joseph Lumbroso, the other authors created new self-identities, Cardoso as Abraham Pelengrino and Montezinos as Aharon Levi. On the other hand, Cardoso's *Vida* makes clear that his path to a Jewish self was more circuitous than that of his two coreligionists. Born into an Old Christian family — one without Jewish or Muslim heritage — in the Azores, Cardoso embraced Calvinism in England, adopted the “dead” Law of Moses in the cells of the Portuguese Inquisition and practiced Judaism openly in Amsterdam. In his *Relación*, the Portuguese New Christian Montezinos narrates his encounter with a group of indigenous porters in New Granada (Colombia), especially a certain Francisco, who say they are Jews due not to blood but rather loyalty to the Reubenites, apparent descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel living in the Andes. The autobiography further narrates how, upon arrest by the

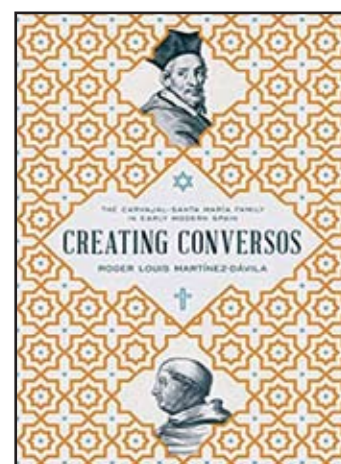
Inquisition of Cartagena in 1639 for Judaizing, Montezinos begins to see the indigenous people who led him through the mountains as a reflection of himself: “both are oppressed by the Spanish, both hide an alternative identity, and both are awaiting redemption.” However, even as Perelis frames the eventual encounter between the Reubenites and Montezinos as a moment in which the latter “sheds the cloak of his ‘Spanish-ness’ and... hear[s] a message of redemption for both the Indians and his own people,” he also indicates the limits to this newly discovered brotherhood.

Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic strengthens our knowledge of Judaism post-1492 by showing how bonds of blood and faith exerted a push-and-pull effect on this identity. Readers will also appreciate the book's references to sources about the Western Sephardic diaspora and explanations of terms such as New Christian and *marrano*. Finally, Perelis complements the evidence of the Jewishness of crypto-Jews in Inquisition records through his study of these three autobiographies, and thus contributes to a clearer understanding of the deep but also conflictive relations that joined and sometimes fractured networks of *conversos* in the Iberian world.

— Matthew D. Warshawsky (*University of Portland*). Matthew is professor of Spanish at the University of Portland and the author of *The Perils of Living the Good and True Law: Iberian Crypto-Jews in the Shadow of the Inquisition of Colonial Hispanic America*. 🔥

Creating Conversos: The Carvajal–Santa Maria Family in Early Modern Spain

BY ROGER L. MARTÍNEZ-DÁVILA
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS, 2018



In *Creating Conversos*, Roger Louis Martínez-Dávila skillfully unravels the complex story of Jews who converted to Catholicism in Spain during the 14th–16th centuries, migrated to colonial Mexico and Bolivia during the conquest of the Americas, and assumed prominent church and government positions. Rather than acting as alienated and marginalized subjects, the *conversos* were able to craft new identities and strategies not just for survival but for prospering in the most adverse circumstances.

Martínez-Dávila provides an extensive, elaborately detailed case study of the Carvajal–Santa María clan from its beginnings in late-14th century Castile. By tracing the family

“Narratives from the Sephardic Atlantic” strengthens our knowledge of Judaism post-1492 by showing how bonds of blood and faith exerted a push and pull effect on this identity.

ties and intermarriages of the Jewish rabbinic ha-Levi lineage of Burgos, Spain (which became the *converso* Santa María clan) with the Old Christian Carvajal line of Plasencia, Spain, Martínez-Dávila demonstrates the family's changing identity and how the monolithic notions of ethnic and religious disposition were broken down by the group and negotiated anew as they transformed themselves from marginal into mainstream characters at the center of the economies of power in the world they inhabited. They succeeded in rising to the pinnacles of power within the church hierarchy in Spain, even to the point of contesting the succession to the papacy and overseeing the Inquisitorial investigation and execution of extended family members, including Luis de Carvajal "The Younger" and most of his immediate family during the 1590s in Mexico City.

Martínez-Dávila offers a rich panorama of the many forces that shaped the emergence of modern Spain, including tax policies, rivalries among the nobility, and ecclesiastical politics. The extensive genealogical research enriches the historical reconstruction, filling in gaps and illuminating contradictions in standard contemporary narratives. His text is strengthened by many family trees that assist the reader as the threads of political and social relationships are carefully disentangled.

BIOGRAPHY

A past president of SCJS, Martínez-Dávila (www.rogerlouismartinez.com) was recently a European Commission Marie Curie Fellow at the Universidad de Carlos III de Madrid in Spain. He is also the instructor for the massive

...they succeeded in rising to the pinnacle of power with the church hierarchy in Spain, even to the point of testing the succession to the Papacy

open online course Deciphering Secrets (www.decipheringsecrets.org) in partnership with the University of Colorado's Coursera platform.

Presently, Dr. Martínez holds academic positions at the Universidad de Carlos III de Madrid (Spain) and the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs (USA). From fall 2015 through summer 2018, Dr. Martínez served as a CONEX Experienced Research Fellow, advancing his MOOC efforts to reach as many as 200,000 students. Since fall 2010, Dr. Martínez has served as an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. From fall 2008 to spring 2010, he served as the Burton Postdoctoral Fellow at St. Joseph's University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) and earned his Ph.D. in May 2008 from the Department of History at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Martinez specializes in the study of inter-cultural relations and how group and individual identities hybridize. He is a scholar of medieval and early modern Spain, religious minorities and religious

converts in Spain (in particular, Sephardic Jews and *conversos*), and their Spanish trans-Atlantic migration to Mexico and Bolivia.

Relying on his specialized training in Spanish paleography and Spanish and Portuguese language expertise, Dr. Martínez has conducted research in approximately 40 local, ecclesiastical, provincial, and national archives in Spain, Mexico, Bolivia, and the United States for his dissertation and current book project. His forthcoming book, *Blood, Faith, and Fate: Jews, Conversos, and Old Christians in Early Modern Spain and Colonial Spanish America*, is under contract with a university press. He has published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews* and reviewed books for *The Sixteenth Century Journal* and *The Americas*. Dr. Martínez is the recipient of several research fellowships and awards, including ones provided by the Mellon Foundation, the Council for European Studies, Spanish Ministry of Culture's "Program for Cultural Cooperation," the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy (IJG) and Paul Jacobi Center at the National Library of Israel, and UCLA's Maurice Amado Program in Sephardic Studies and Center for Jewish Studies.

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DNA WORKSHOP

Sponsored by Casa Sefarad@Nahalat Shalom with the JGS of New Mexico

REGISTER NOW

Sunday, October 14 9.30a-4.30p

Congregation Albert 5800 Louisiana Ave NE, ABQ

MAIN SPEAKER: Genetic Genealogist Kitty Munson Cooper

ALSO: Reuben E. Last, MD Schelly Talalay Dardashti and other experts

TOPICS: DNA testing & analysis tools - Jewish & other heritage projects - Privacy & ethics...
Ethnicity & DNA - Solving adoption cases with DNA - and more!

LUNCH: \$8 (bring your own) or \$20 (box lunch included)
Registration and lunch info coming soon

To register and for more information, contact

Schelly Talalay Dardashti

schelly@tracingthetribes.com

See page 36 for information about another October 2018 symposium!

2018 NMJHS CONFERENCE • NOVEMBER 9-11 • ALBUQUERQUE



New Mexico Jewish Historical Society

NMJHS FALL CONFERENCE 2018

Expressing Jewish Identities: Challenges and Accomplishments

Explore Jewish identity in New Mexico history: How have Jews expressed their unique cultural identity in everything from their film and dance to their everyday lives? What challenges have they met? How have they met these challenges and accomplished so much?

November 9-11, 2018 Sheraton Uptown, Albuquerque

Featuring:

Keynote Address: "Dancing Jewish: Jewish Women and American Modern Dance" by Rebecca Rossen, choreographer, historian and author from University of Texas Austin
PLUS: Optional Saturday walking tour of Jewish downtown Albuquerque with Naomi Sandweiss.

www.nmjhs.org

For details visit www.nmjhs.org

Join us for our 33rd Annual Conference as we return to Albuquerque after a four-year hiatus traveling throughout the state. This conference focuses on how Jews have expressed their unique cultural identity in everything from film and dance to everyday living; the challenges they have met and how they have met these challenges while accomplishing so much.

Optional activities include a pre-conference tour of Jewish downtown Albuquerque (pre-registration required) led by Naomi Sandweiss, author of *Jewish Albuquerque 1860-1960*.

Various temples and synagogues welcome attendees to join in their services.

PRESENTATIONS

- Keynote - Jewish Women and Modern American Dance - *Dr. Rebecca Rossen*
- Jews Finding Fertile Ground: New Mexico - A Landscape of Possibilities - *Harvey Buchalter*
- How Cecil Corner Lost His Accent: Creating a New Identity in the American West - *Dorothy Corner Amsden*
- Syncretism in the Crypto-Judaic Experience: Mexico and the Southwest Territories in Literature - *Marcia Fine*
- Jewish Identity Through the Lens of the Director for Israeli Film - *Marcia Torobin*
- Jews are No Strangers to the Stranger in Our Midst: Jewish Texts and Immigration - *Rabbi Jack Shlachter*
- Growing Up Cohn in New Mexico / Identity Crisis - *Yvette Cohn Stoor*
- Gaon Web and Jewish Identity in New Mexico - *Dr. Ron Duncan Hart*
- Confessions of a 21st Century Jewish Pioneer: Keeping the Candles Lit in Colfax County - *Sharon Niederman*
- A Silent Auction and Raffle are an ongoing part of the conference.
- Israeli dancing with Denis Maltz Grutcki



Telling the **Story** of **Crypto-Jews** in the **Southeast** **U.S.**



SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES
ST. AUGUSTINE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUNDAY • DECEMBER 9, 2018

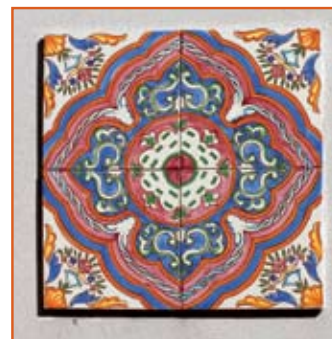
WORLD GOLF VILLAGE RENAISSANCE
ST. AUGUSTINE RESORT

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) and the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society (SAJHS) cordially invite you to attend this unique conference that will explore the lives and challenges faced by Jews and descendants of Jews who traveled to areas of America under the thumb of the Spanish Inquisition.

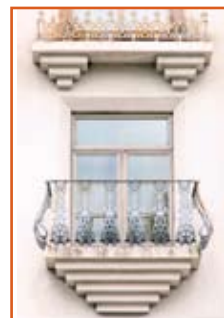
Focusing on those Jews who converted to Christianity or hid their religious heritage, the conference will discuss the

lives of these Crypto-Jews or Conversos who settled in America in the early years of the country, specifically in the Southeast.

Presentations by scholars and historians will discuss
continues on page 26



WELCOME TO
**St.
Augustine**



Crypto-Jews in the American Southeast?

Yes! Here in St. Augustine, Florida, we know a great deal about crypto-Judaism and its history in the American Southeast.

Won't you join us as we explore crypto-Judaism in the oldest European City in what would become the United States, St. Augustine, Florida? We're gathering on December 9 at the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort on the edge of our beautiful city. Here you will find an array of attractions from living history museums like the Castillo de San Marcos to Gilded-Age hotels, swashbuckling adventures, and specialized tours in the air, on the sea, and in the heart of the historic district. St. Augustine has it all!

Its unique scenery and history set this city apart from any other in the country. St. Augustine has a quaint feel, but boasts a big appeal. Visitors can see why when they stroll along the brick-lined streets and delight in the city's European flavor, with centuries-old buildings, horse-drawn carriages, hidden courtyards, and so much more. St. Augustine has plenty of history to explore — more than 450 years of it!

The city is known for its excellent restaurants serving a variety of dishes reflecting the town's multicultural heritage. Add to that the city's world-class art galleries, boutiques and outlet shopping, theater and live music, and 42 miles of gorgeous beaches. It's easy to see why more than 6 million visitors come here each year.

Make plans now to join us and stay awhile in our 453-year-old city. The Jewish history of our area is one of the most "under-told" stories of the Jewish experience in North America. Come, and then help us tell our story!

Allan Silberman
SCJS Conference Chair

Merrill Shapiro, President
St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society



Thought to be the actual site where St. Augustine was founded on Rosh Hashanah, September 8, 1565

The Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park is a privately owned 15-acre (61,000 m²) park in St. Augustine, Florida, located along Hospital Creek, part of the Intracoastal Waterway. It has been touted as the likely 1513 Florida landing site of Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon, although no evidence has been found to substantiate this claim. Recent research by amateur historian Douglas Peck has placed another possible landing site in the vicinity of Melbourne Beach in Brevard County. The park contains a well claimed to be the freshwater source referred to by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas in his *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano* and supposedly sought by Ponce de Leon, but there is no supporting evidence. Archaeological excavations made by Dr. Kathleen Deagan on the park's grounds in the 1990s uncovered remains of the first Spanish settlement and its fortifications in St. Augustine.



JOIN US -


St. Augustine

- DECEMBER 9!



continued from page 23

history of Spanish and Portuguese communities in the colonial period, operation of the Inquisition in the New World and research into crypto-Judaism especially as it pertains to what today is called the Southeastern United States.

Other discussions will provide opportunity to engage the speakers and exchange stories of family histories and experiences in the Southeast, the Caribbean and Central and South America. 

SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES TOGETHER WITH THE ST. AUGUSTINE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
"TELLING THE STORY OF CRYPTO-JEWS IN THE SOUTHEAST US"

Conference Registration

Through October 29 = \$50 • After October 29 = \$65

includes conference attendance • lunch and keynote speaker • coffee and pastry service in the morning hours.

Three ways to register and pay for the event:

- Online at scjs.sajhs.conference@gmail.com or go to the conference link at www.cryptojews.com -- OR --
- Online at eventbrite.com/e/scjs-sajhs-conference-telling-the-story-of-crypto-jews-in-the-southeast-us-tickets-48502341810?aff=ebdssbdestsearch -- OR --
- Complete the form below, make check payable to "SAJHS Conference" and mail to
SAJHS Conference, Box 174, 701 Market Street, Suite 111, St. Augustine, FL 32095

Conference Lodging

Renaissance Hotel at the World Golf Village • 500 South Legacy Trail • St. Augustine, FL 32092
A limited number of rooms have been reserved for the conference at a special rate of \$159. After November 18, the rate will depend upon availability at the time. **Contact Marriott Reservation at 1-800-468-3571 and mention the conference.**

Post-Conference Events

Following the conference, join us for two special programs

"The Secret," a dramatic production by Lee Weaver

A compelling tale of the experience of a crypto-Jew in 16th-century St. Augustine.
Sunday, December 9 • 7 pm at the hotel • Tickets for the performance = \$20

Walking Tour with Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, SAJHS president

A 1.5 mile, 2-hour walking tour visiting sites of Jewish historic significance in St. Augustine
Monday, December 10 • 10 am • \$35 • includes lunch at the historic Columbia restaurant
Meet in the hotel lobby for transportation to the initial site. Lunch follows the tour.

More information

Email scjs.sajhs.conference@gmail.com or phone 804-914-4460

Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Phone: Cell _____ Home _____

Email Address _____

Amount Enclosed (Conference rates - \$50 through October 29 • \$65 after October 29)

Conference Registration	Number Attending _____	@ \$ _____ each	= \$ _____
"The Secret"	Number Attending _____	@ \$20 each	= \$ _____
Walking Tour	Number Attending _____	@ \$35 each	= \$ _____
		Total	= \$ _____

Please send me information about: ☐ SCJS and/or ☐ SAJHS ☐ I am not interested in any follow-up.



Genie Milgrom Awarded Medal of the Four Sephardic Synagogues

Genealogist, writer and promoter of the Jewish Legacy in the Iberian Peninsula, Genie Milgrom, from Miami, Florida and a past-president of SCJS, has been awarded the much coveted Medal of the Four Sephardic Synagogues from Jerusalem. This honor was bestowed on her this past summer in Zamora, Spain as she delivered the keynote speech about the expulsion of her ancestors from Fermoselle in the Zamora region. The president of the Sephardic Council of Sephardic Communities in Spain, Abraham Haim, flew in from Jerusalem to present her with this prestigious award.

Genie has dedicated more than a decade to recovering the Jewish roots of her Cuban Catholic family for 22 generations. Not only was she able to recover her



Genie Milgrom

genealogy using methods that she herself pioneered, but she was also able to discover the Jewish history of the village of her family and many others up and down the Duero River separating Spain from Portugal. She has been able to decipher many interconnections between the lost crypto-Jews of this large and important region.

Genie is currently the director of the Converso Genealogy Project which is in the process of digitizing all the Inquisition files around the world so that others may also find their roots. This important project was given the Seal of Approval by the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy in Israel, an organization that has championed this cause, a well-deserved merit for her inexhaustible research. (For more about Genie see Book Reviews in this issue.) 🔥



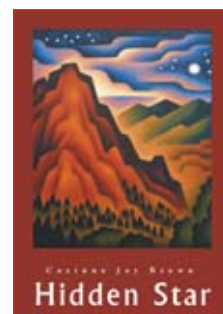
Medal of the Four Sephardic Synagogues



Corinne Joy Brown

Brown novel considered for Book into Film

Corinne Brown proudly announces *Hidden Star*, her novel about crypto-Judaism in the southwest, was recently selected as a finalist in the James Olmos Books Into Film competition in Los Angeles. Her title, one among a select few, was the only one by a non-Latino author. Fourteen copies went out for studio consideration. 🔥



SCJS Convenes in the Queen City of the West

Denver, Colorado will be the host city for the 2019 Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies annual international conference to be held Sunday, June 30-Tuesday, July 2 at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel - Denver Tech Center, 7801 East Orchard Road, Greenwood Village.

The hotel is a jewel, accessible by light rail directly from the airport, and located in a smog-free, easy access suburb on the southeast side of the city. Both double and king rooms are available at an affordable \$124 per night, with free parking and free wifi. Quick access to downtown is available within minutes.

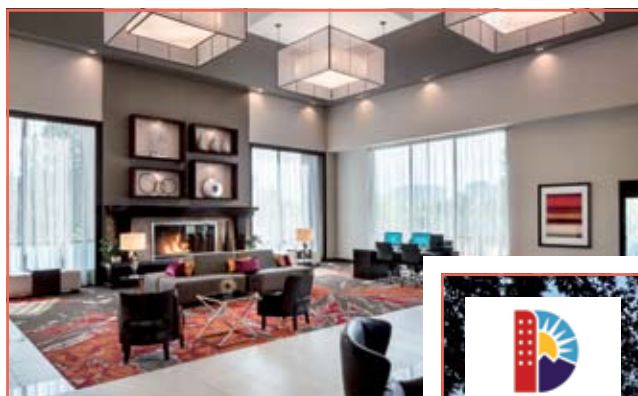
The conference theme — Place & Identity: Redefining the Crypto-Judaic Experience in the Western Hemisphere — invites presenters to share research on all aspects of crypto-Judaic history in the western hemisphere. A detailed Call for Papers can be found in this edition of *HaLapid* and on our website with a submission deadline of December 15, 2018.

During the conference, a stimulating program of themed panels, keynote speakers, a genealogy workshop, related arts and musical performances, and an acclaimed drama will be offered, in addition to great gastronomy at our included lunches and dinners. The SCJS conference is open to everyone interested in this timely subject. Costs and registration details will soon be posted at cryptojews.com and via *La Granada*.

Early hotel reservations may be made directly. Look for the contact info and group number on our SCJS website, cryptojews.com.

If you've never been to Denver, you'll be amazed at this cultural mecca and thriving hub offering great restaurants (Kosher too) and cultural sites. Save time to visit Red Rocks amphitheater, the Denver Art Museum, the Mizel Museum of Judaica, the new Kirkland Museum of Decorative Arts, among others.

Stay tuned for more information!



28TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

JUNE 30-JULY 2, 2019

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON
DENVER TECH CENTER
COLORADO



Place & Identity

REDEFINING
THE CRYPTO-JUDAIC EXPERIENCE
IN THE WESTERN HERMISPHERE

SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES

→ CALL FOR PAPERS

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) invites papers on the crypto-Jewish experience from any discipline (e.g., anthropology, history, sociology, genealogy, philosophy, literature, music, art, etc.).

The 2019 conference highlights the crypto-Jewish experience as defined by the origins of Sephardic Jews in Iberia and the greater Mediterranean, Europe and North Africa, and the New World, both pre-and post Inquisition-era through today.

Topics should be relevant to the descendants of crypto-Jews, *conversos*, and *anusim*, with particular emphasis on how settlement and nationality shapes behavior, as well as group and individual identity.

SCJS welcomes scholarly papers on all aspects of the Sephardic experience and that of other global communities exhibiting crypto-Judaic phenomena. We are particularly interested this year in research covering all areas of the Western Hemisphere.

POSSIBLE TOPICS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- *Conversos* in Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Communities
- Inquisition Related Studies
- Crypto-Jews in Modern America
- Biographies of *Conversos* in Old or New Spain
- Transmission or Discovery of Family Traditions
- Evolution of Sephardic Customs or Language
- Sephardic Culture Outside Iberia
- Emerging Communities in Latin America

Personal stories or anecdotal research relating to crypto-Judaic experiences are also welcome, either for individual presentations or for specific panel discussions related to peers and/or a target audience. Proposals must include speaker contact details, a title, a 200-word abstract or summary, and a 100-word bio. Please indicate if research is completed or in progress.

Proposals must be received by **December 15, 2018**. Accepted speakers will be notified shortly thereafter.

Send proposals or inquiries to:
Professor Seth Kunin, PhD, program chair
cryptojewish.conference@gmail.com

Note: Presenters will receive a special discounted registration rate.

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, an international academic and secular association, fosters research, networking of people and ideas, and the dissemination of information regarding the historical and contemporary developments involving crypto-Jews of Iberian origins and other hidden Jewish communities around the world. Membership dues fund the programs and publications of this non-profit organization 501(c)(3) open to any and all individuals interested in learning more about this cultural phenomenon.



15TH ANNUAL ANUSIM CONFERENCE — History Lights Up the Present

Attendees from El Paso, Juarez, New Mexico, and across Texas gathered at B'nai Zion Synagogue, El Paso, to attend the 15th annual Anusim Conference held July 27–29, 2018. An annual event begun by Rabbi Stephen Leon of B'nai Zion, the conference celebrates the reemergence and, in some cases, the return of the many descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who migrated to the New World in the 15–18th centuries.

Forced to convert to Christianity, these individuals came with the Spanish colonial settlers. Professing to be Christian on the outside, they clung to their Jewish faith until, over time, only remnants remained — ritual and customs, clues to the culture of their ancestors. Across the Southwest, many Hispanic individuals are beginning to learn about their past, seeking more knowledge and even tracing their family's genealogy. Many are returning to Judaism. These are called *anusim*.

The conference was held over a Sabbath weekend and offered a remarkable roster of speakers, as well as the traditional Sabbath services observed by Jews. Friday night featured Arizona author, Marcia Fine, an award-winning writer whose novels focus mainly on Jewish life and Inquisition-era conflicts. On Saturday afternoon, Lesley Jimenez, from Israel, a descendant of Sephardic Jews who went through the Inquisition, spoke on “Identification of Holocaust Survivors with the Descendants of the Spanish Inquisition.” This was followed

BY CORINNE JOY BROWN



Corinne Brown, Lesley Jimenez, and Marcia Fine

by a stimulating panel discussion on “The Impact of the Holocaust on the Latino Community” moderated by Rabbi Peter Tarlow, Chairman of the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission. Panelists included Christian Acevedo; Hispanic Outreach Coordinator, Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission; Dr. Boris Kaim, representing the El Paso Holocaust Museum; and Alia Garcia-Ureste, who is on the board of the Texas Genocide Commission.

Saturday night, Corinne Joy Brown, author and vice president of communication for the Society for Crypto-Jewish Studies, and editor of its bi-annual journal, *HaLapid*, spoke on “New Research and



Rabbi Leon and Yoli Radcliffe share in a havdalah ceremony



*Right,
Rabbi Danny
Mehlman signs a
ketuba (wedding
contract) as the
Ochoa couple
renew their
marriage vows.*



*Far right,
Mario and Ariela
Ochoa under
the chupa.*



Rabbi Mehlman addresses the Sunday morning attendees.



B'nai Zion congregants of every age enjoy the fun.



A chocolate wedding cake is adorned with real roses.

Public Interest in the Crypto-Judaic Experience.” She mentioned many new titles exploring this subject.

Highlights of the weekend were the ceremonial “return” of six individuals from Amarillo, Texas, and the delightful renewal of wedding vows by members of the congregation, Mario and Ariela Ochoa. This festive and elegant ceremony followed the traditional observance of *Havdalah*, a Jewish ritual marking the end of the Sabbath and the start of a new week.

A wedding reception with music and song added warmth and spirit.

Sunday morning offered a lox-and-bagel breakfast and a stirring lecture by Rabbi Danny Mehlman of California on inclusion and dissent and how we must all learn to “agree to disagree” to get along. Rabbi Leon closed the event with a thoughtful discourse on the meaning of the *anusim* experience and its hopeful future, open to any and all who are interested. 🕯

**JOIN US FOR THE 16TH ANNUAL
ANUSIM CONFERENCE • EL PASO
AUGUST 2019
MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!**



**FOR INFORMATION: FACEBOOK/
THEANUSIMCENTEROFELPASOTEXAS**



Bortnick and Cohen tour Philadelphia museum

SCJS members Rachel Bortnick of Texas and Chana Cohen of Philadelphia toured the National Museum of American Jewish History.

The group on tour is LADINOKOMUNITA, a Ladino correspondence group Rachel founded in 1999 (groups.yahoo/neo/groups/Ladinokomunita/info). At present, LK has 1,636 members from over 40 countries, but only a comparative few attend the annual trips, each trip to a different country. (These started in 2008 to Israel, then to Turkey, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, the Balkans, etc.) This, the 11th, was the first time they met in the US, travelling to New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.



Long-time SCJS member Chana Cohen (center in colorful dress) was the docent. A Spanish speaker assisted her. Rachel Bortnick, former SCJS secretary, stands to Chana's right.

Apodaca and Dardashti make the rounds in New Mexico

Maria Apodaca speaks at Roads Scholar educational travel tours, an American non-profit headquartered in Boston, with the New Mexico office in Santa Fe. Speakers receive evaluations, and local speakers receive scores averaging 94-100% from tour participants. The New Mexico tour is a week-long introduction of the history of the conversos, crypto-Jews and hidden Jews. Maria has presented the story of her return for six months, including six events in Albuquerque and three events in Santa Fe. She will be presenting throughout 2018 and in the future. At every session, she promotes SCJS, providing membership brochures.

Maria has attended numerous screenings of "Challah Rising in the Desert" with Paula Amar Schwartz and they do a joint Q&A after the screening.



Maria Apodaca (l) and Schelly Talalay Dardashti

The film was shown at the Albuquerque JCC Jewish Film Festival, has been shown at interfaith programs and will be part of several upcoming national Jewish Film Festivals.

In Albuquerque, Casa Sefarad's annual 2018 Festival Djudeo-Espanyol was held last April, and the next one will be in May 2019. Casa Sefarad board members Maria Apodaca and Schelly Talalay Dardashti are in the planning stage of a combined event with the local Cervantes Institute and the Festival Djudeo-Espanyol for a week-long celebration. The event is set for May 13-19, 2019. Save the date! It will include Sephardic films, music, art, literature, talks, wine, cuisine and much more.

The third annual Jewish Genetic Conference (BRCA, breast cancer, DNA and history) was held in April 2018, sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of New Mexico, in conjunction with Casa Sefarad, and the NM Jewish Historical Society and was made possible by a grant from the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

Casa Sefarad will also sponsor the first community DNA Workshop on Sunday, October 14, 2018. This is in conjunction with the Jewish Genealogical



Society of New Mexico and is made possible by a grant from the Jewish Federation of New Mexico. Speakers include local and national expert genetic genealogists. The event will be at Congregation Albert, 3800 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Albuquerque.

Schelly Talalay Dardashti has presented at many Jewish and general genealogy conferences, including the National Genealogical Society, the Southern California Genealogical Society's Jamboree, and others. She speaks on Jewish DNA, Sephardic Resources and Jewish Genealogy for the Non-Jew. She also presents online classes for Legacy Webinars. In October, she will present at the Texas State Genealogical Society conference, San Antonio; in December at the Institute for Genetic Genealogy, San Diego; in February, at 2019 RootsTech, Salt Lake City; at the 2019 New England Regional Genealogical Conference, Manchester, New Hampshire; and at many others. The SCJS, its events and conferences are always included!

Ezratty teaches in Baltimore

Harry Ezratty, longtime SCJS board member and legal counsel, is teaching a course on crypto-Jews at the Congregation Har Sinai in Baltimore as part of the synagogue's adult education program. The course will be presented in February 2019 as a four-week presentation.



Harry Ezratty

Rabbi Leon gets virtual ink



Rabbi Stephen Leon

Congratulations to Rabbi Stephen Leon! He was recently featured in the American Sephardi Federation monthly online news magazine "Sephardi Ideas Monthly." An excellent article by Geoffry Clarfield, New English Review 2015. www.newenglishreview.org/Geoffrey_Clarfield/Across_the_Borderline_with_Rabbi_Stephen_Leon/ 

RESOURCES

Luis de Carvajal manuscript now online

BY ADAM MENDELSON

Princeton University Library has made available newly digitized copies of manuscripts written by Luis de Carvajal.

www.arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/s7526g29j

Luis de Carvajal the Younger (ca. 1567-1596), was the nephew of Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, the governor of Leon, Mexico. The Carvajals are the best known *conversos* in colonial Mexico, largely owing to Luis the Younger's testimony at his trial before the Inquisition in 1595. He denounced more than 120 individuals as crypto-Jews including members of his own family. He and many of his family were burned at the stake in 1596. These three bound documents were recently recovered after going missing from the National Archive of Mexico more than 75 years ago.

The digital images were made at the New York Historical Society from the originals owned by the Government of Mexico and loaned for the exhibition "The First Jewish Americans" (October 2016-March 2017).

For more information, contact Stephen Ferguson
ferguson@princeton.edu

www.arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/s7526g29j

FAMOUS SEPHARDIM



Franklin Delano Roosevelt with his father James, and mother Sara Delano, Poughkeepsie, New York

The Roosevelts were Dutch Jews who arrived in NYC in 1682. Claes Rosenvelt, before he changed his name to Nicholas Roosevelt, was the first Roosevelt ancestor to set foot in America, and Sarah Delano, FDR's mother, descended from Sephardic Jews.



A Chanukah Dreidel Hides in Plain Sight

BY RABBI BARBARA AIELLO

On the Italian island of Sardinia it wouldn't be Natale (Christmas) without spinning the *barrallicu*, (“bar-a-LEE-koo”), a wooden cube made to spin like... well exactly like the dreidel used by Jews throughout the world as a favorite Chanukah game! The similarities are stunning. Just like the Chanukah dreidel, the *barrallicu* is a holiday favorite with players winning or losing almonds or hazelnuts taken from a pile in the middle of the table. In fact, you can find several YouTube videos that demonstrate how to play the dreidel game.

What makes the *barrallicu* so “dreidel-ish”? Not only are the rules of the game incredibly similar, but so are the markings on the cube. According to blogger M.L. Meloni, the letter T stand for *tottu*, where the player takes all, while the letter N,

for *nudda* means the player gets nothing. The letter M for *mesu* means one half is taken, while the letter P for *poni* means that the player “ponies up” and places all his winnings back in the original pile.

Thanks to author M.L. Meloni's post at SardiniaLink we are able to view the *barrallicu* up close. Yes, *si*, and *ken*, it looks exactly like a dreidel. Could the *barrallicu* have originated from Jewish tradition? Elio Moncelsi, author of *Ebrei in Sardegna* (“The Jews in Sardinia”), believes the similarity is no accident. In fact, many historians report that ever since Rome expelled thousands of Jews in 19 CE and sent them to Sardinia, *Noi sardi abbiamo tutti una goccia di sangue ebreo* — Every Sardinian has a drop of Jewish blood. 🔥



The Sardinia *barrallicu* (“bar-a-LEE-koo”) — suspiciously “dreidel-ish”

RABBI BARBARA AIELLO



Rabbi Barbara Aiello is the first and only woman rabbi in Italy. In addition she is the first and only modern liberal rabbi who lives and works in Italy, where she serves congregation Ner Tamid del Sud, The Eternal Light of the South,

the first active synagogue in Calabria in 500 years since Inquisition times. In 2017 the synagogue was recognized as a member of the Reconstructionist Jewish movement and is open and welcome to Jews of all backgrounds, interfaith and non-traditional families, patrilineal Jews and *b'nai anusim* and crypto Jewish Italians who are discovering and embracing their Jewish roots.

Rabbi Barbara is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania where she received the Distinguished Alumni Award. She holds a MS from The George Washington University in Washington DC and received rabbinic ordination from The Rabbinical Seminary International and the Rabbinical Academy in New York City.

Rabbi Barbara is an internationally featured lecturer who was invited to present her work at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, at the United Nations special committee on religious pluralism and as a scholar in residence for synagogues and for Italian and Jewish organizations throughout Europe and the US.

She is host of The Radio Rabbi program, a weekly radio show that features topics of Jewish interest, good news from Israel and new and traditional Jewish music. The program is in its 17th year and available each week as a podcast. Rabbi Barbara is also a member of the executive board of Kulanu, an international organization that supports isolated and emerging Jewish communities worldwide. Contact Rabbi Barbara through her website www.RabbiBarbara.com



The Midnight Shofar

BY RABBI BARBARA AIELLO

It is New Year's Eve in Calabria, the deep south of the Italian peninsula. At the stroke of midnight on December 31, the bells in the church tower in the tiny village of Serrastretta ring 12 times. But if you are very quiet and the night is very still, you will hear something more. From deep in the forest of the *Reventino*, a local Calabrian mountain range located in the “instep” of the “boot,” you will hear first one, then another, then another long low moan of the ancient ram's horn. The same ram's horn that in Hebrew is the “shofar.” The same ram's horn that inaugurates Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Yet, for centuries on the night that marks the beginning of the secular New Year, families in southern Italy blow a shofar-like instrument that is the hallmark of the Jewish celebration that occurs, not in December, but in the autumn of the year.

It is a custom that on the surface seems strange, but a deeper look into the life and traditions of the *b'nai anusim* (a Hebrew term that describes Jews that were forced into Christian conversion during Inquisition times) and who now inhabit this area, the practice makes perfect

sense. Centuries ago, during Inquisition times, the Jews of Spain and Portugal had one of two choices; convert to Christianity or leave their homes. Those Jews who were forced from Spain and Portugal found refuge on the island of Sicily and on the tiny islands that make up the Aeolian chain. There they lived in relative peace until the long arm of the Inquisition reached them there as well. Forced to flee yet again, Jewish families made their way onto the Italian mainland, first to the “toe” and then north through the “foot” of the Italian “boot” and into the Calabrian mountains.

For centuries, these Jewish families lived in relative safety, but fear is a *minestra*, a soup that cooks slowly. Stories of persecution, arrests and public burnings percolate through these mountains — so much so that if one were to ask about a family's Jewish heritage, the downcast eyes and blank expressions say it all. That's why it is such a great challenge to connect these *b'nei anusim* with their Jewish history. But for me, the first rabbi of the first synagogue in Calabria since Inquisition times, it is “*una sfida e una gioia*” a challenge and a joy. >>>



During my 12 years in the Calabrian hills I've finally learned to ask the right questions. No longer do I ask, "Do you think your family was once Jewish?" No. Calabrians have learned that admitting to a Jewish heritage can be dangerous. Instead I ask, "What does your family do when a baby is born? When a couple marries? For a funeral and mourning? Do you have special family customs to celebrate the holidays?" This is how I learned about the midnight shofar.


Francesco, a local baker, explained it all to me when he said, "*Tanti anni fa...* Many years ago our families celebrated a different new year. It was the at the harvest time when we found a *stambeco* (wild goat, or in English, "ibex") or *montone* (ram) and made his horn into a musical instrument. But it was dangerous to be different so we learned to wait. To wait for the last day of the year when everyone else was celebrating. Now there are fireworks and trumpet blasts. When we sound the ram's horn, it is not so strange anymore."

Cautiously, I asked Francesco, "Do you know that the ram's horn is a Jewish tradition?" Francesco replies that once his grandfather spoke about their secret Jewish background, but with no point of Jewish reference,

their heritage remained only as a part of family lore.

And so it goes. 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.

As a part of the *b'nai anusim* heritage myself, it has become my mission and my passion to uncover more of these family traditions that were once a part of a thriving Jewish past. Now we have a synagogue, the first in Calabria in 500 years and this year recognized by the Reconstructionist Jewish movement. As we celebrate Rosh Hashanah, and sound the shofar according to the Hebrew calendar, it is my hope that I can continue to give my Calabrian *meshpucha*, the *b'nei anusim* who have so carefully and cautiously preserved the vestiges of their Jewish heritage, an opportunity to discover and embrace their Jewish roots, and an opportunity for me to say, "*Bentornata a casa*," Welcome home.

More examples like this one are included in Rabbi Barbara Aiello's book, *The Cat That Ate the Cannoli, the Hidden Jews of Southern Italy*. Available at www.amazon.com 

2018 NASGS • OCTOBER 18-20 • DENVER

NORTH AMERICAN SYMPOSIUM OF GALICIAN STUDIES

Galician Studies Moving West: Galician Language and Culture at the Crossroads

With the goal of advancing the field of Galician Studies to the West, Regis University, Colorado College, Metropolitan University of Denver, together with The Xunta de Galicia and the Galician Culture Council will co-sponsor the third North American Symposium of Galician Studies in Denver, Colorado co-sponsored by Regis University, Metro State University, The University of Colorado, and Colorado College. The conference is aiming to create a collaborative space where critical thinking guides an interdisciplinary and multi-cultural dialogue between international and North American scholars, artists, and intellectuals from a wide variety of fields to engage in an open and reflective multidisciplinary conversation on issues related to the Galician experience as part of a globalized/localized world.

This dialogue will give us the opportunity to expose North American students and scholars to the richness and complexity of the Galician reality and the diversity of theoretical approaches to the study of minoritized languages and cultures. The third meeting of the North American

Galician Studies Research Group will continue the multi-disciplinary dialogue started at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2014 and at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in 2016. With Galician Studies at the center, this symposium will include interdisciplinary panels and presentations on a wide range of topics emphasizing the study of issues pertaining to language, literature, culture, and identity in situations of minoritized languages and cultures including, but not limited to, Galician language, linguistics, education, literature and the arts, history and politics, gender studies, translation, the environment, etc."

October 18-20, 2018 • Denver

All Thursday, Oct. 18 and Friday, Oct. 19 sessions will be at the Auraria Campus (Springhill Suites),
1190 Auraria Parkway Denver, CO

All Saturday, Oct. 20 sessions will be at the Regis Northwest Denver Campus: 3333 Regis Blvd., Denver, CO

For more info contact: ocastro@regis.edu





The Jewish World Loses a Literary Gem

Prof. Yirmiyahu Yovel

(1935-2018)

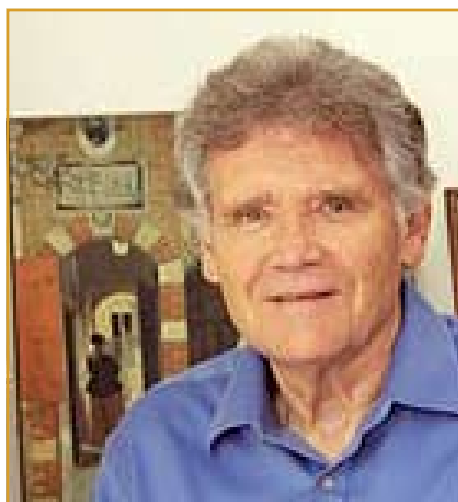
Prof. Yirmiyahu Yovel, emeritus professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University, winner of the Israel Prize, and one of Israel's best known public intellectuals, recently lost a long battle with cancer. Known for luminous volumes on Kant and a highly influential two-volume work entitled "Spinoza and Other Heretics" (1989), plus among many other books and articles, he was also a winner of the Israel Prize.

Many members of SCJS may not be aware of the important contributions of Yirmiyahu Yovel as an Israeli public intellectual and philosopher.

In my opinion, his two-volume work on Spinoza, available in English, should be seen as an important work in crypto-Jewish studies. Regardless of whether one accepts Yovel's conclusions and their ramifications, it's an important component of any discussion of issues defining what we sometimes call "return to Judaism" within this community.

Yovel painted Spinoza as a *marrano* descendant (the accepted historical term at the time) — who could delineate a path shaped by the possibility (and actuality) of a return to Judaism, with study of Jewish values and texts, but also by the lack of a meaningful survival of any living Jewish tradition defining the content, practices and beliefs of Judaism. In this of course he was not alone! Nevertheless, I read Yovel's book as a striking argument celebrating secular Jewishness, one no longer necessarily based on tradition—an argument about the importance of the kind of secular Jewish identity of Spinoza—and by extension of

SCJS
board member
Seth Ward
remembers
Yirmiyahu Yovel



Prof. Yirmiyahu Yovel

other *marranos* who came to have access to Judaism—for the modern world.

Some years ago, I wrote some remarks about books by Kunin and Hordes in which I indicated several approaches to the question of what to make of *converso* identity.

I identified three approaches, one of which I characterized as: "*marrano* religiosity—fidelity to the Law of Moses—is a new phenomenon within Judaism, indeed, even within European religion." This approach was distinct from at least two other ways of understanding the *marrano* experience: "*conversos* and Jews remained a single community" (i.e. "*conversos* are Jews"), or "most converso descendants assimilated completely into Christianity," (i.e. "*conversos* largely became complete Gentiles.").

Instead, Yovel's approach emphasized the significance of Marrano return to Judaism as a "new phenomenon" in Judaism, and the role independent study of Bible without access to Jewish tradition might have had in formulating the thoughts of "the *marrano* of Reason." Luther's awareness of *converso* descendants and their approach to Judaism may have shaped some of his own ideas leading the Reformation. Karen Armstrong (basing herself on Yovel) has discussed the importance of this new approach in shaping religious growth in general in the 16–17 centuries. >>>

continues on page 39

Golden Rice with Raisins and Pomegranates

Fall is a time for harvest, cooking and the comfort of rich, flavorful foods.

With thanks to Joan Nathan, Tablet Magazine's food columnist and the author of 10 cookbooks; and "The Sephardic Kitchen - the Healthful Food and Rich Culture of the Mediterranean Jews" by Rabbi Robert Sternberg, may we suggest this colorful, flavorful side dish. Add or subtract as your tastes prefer, just dress it up any way you'd like. You can't go wrong.



RICE

2-1/4 cups water
1/2 teaspoon salt
scant tablespoon oil or butter
1 cup rice (Basmati preferred)

In a sauce pan, bring water to a boil. Add salt and butter, return to boil. Add rice, lower heat to simmer. Cook until rice is tender.

SEASONINGS & FRUIT

1 teaspoon turmeric
1/4 teaspoon cumin
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
Juice from 1/4 fresh lemon
1/3 cup raisins (light or dark)
Seeds from 1/2 fresh pomegranate

Melt butter in skillet, add turmeric and cumin, stir over high heat briefly. Lower heat and add the rice. Stir until spices are thoroughly mixed, rice is coated and golden all over. Squeeze lemon juice to brighten flavor. Add raisins. Scatter pomegranate seeds for color.

SWEET CARROTS

6 fresh, young carrots
2-3 tablespoons olive oil or butter
1 cup orange juice
1/2 cup water
dash of salt
cinnamon and brown sugar to taste

Peel and chop carrots. Lightly sauté in olive oil or butter. Add orange juice, water, and salt. Boil for 10 minutes. Lower heat. As juice and butter forms a glaze, add cinnamon and brown sugar. Serve alongside rice or decorate platter with sweet carrots.



pomegranates

Images of pomegranates are mainstays of Rosh Hashanah cards, Jewish jewelry and a range of Jewish ritual objects, and the fruit itself makes frequent appearances in Jewish cuisine. But what's so Jewish about this ancient treat? Quite a lot!

The pomegranate is one of Israel's "Seven Species"

The pomegranate is one of the seven species of Israel (along with wheat, barley, grapes, figs, olives, and dates) listed in the Torah in Parashat Eikev (Deuteronomy 7:12–11:25).

Pomegranates traditionally symbolize fertility and love

In Jewish tradition, pomegranates are a symbol of fertility and love, winning them frequent mention in, among other biblical texts, the Song of Songs. For example (Song of Songs 4:3): "Your lips are like a crimson thread; your mouth is lovely. Your brow behind your veil [gleams] like a pomegranate split open."

Pomegranates decorate many Torah scrolls

Rimonim (pomegranate-shaped ornaments) top this Torah scroll. (Israel Defense Forces/Flickr). The decorative ornaments at the top of many Ashkenazi Torah scroll covers are often shaped like pomegranates and are called *rimonim*, the Hebrew word for pomegranate.

Pomegranates are part of the Sephardic Rosh Hashanah seder.

(Avi Deror/Wikimedia)

The pomegranate is one of several symbolic foods incorporated into the



Pomegranates in the sunshine

Rosh Hashanah seder, a ritual. Before eating the pomegranate seeds, Jews traditionally say, "May we be as full of *mitzvot* (commandments) as the pomegranate is full of seeds."

A pomegranate is often the "new fruit" on the second night of Rosh Hashanah

(Julien Menichini/Wikimedia Commons)

Many Jews use pomegranates on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, for the custom of saying a blessing over a "new fruit," one that people have not eaten in a long time.

Pomegranate seeds are associated with the 613 Mitzvot (Commandments)

The pomegranate is often said to have 613 seeds, corresponding to the 613 *mitzvot* derived from the Bible. While this is not actually true (the number of seeds in each pomegranate varies widely), some have theorized that this belief stems from a misinterpretation of a passage in the Berachot 4, which concludes that even "the empty ones

among the Jews are full of *mitzvot* like a pomegranate is [full of seeds.]"

Pomegranates continue to grow in Israel

Pomegranates have been cultivated in Israel (and throughout the Middle East) for thousands of years, and they continue to grow there in abundance. When pomegranates are in season, fresh-squeezed pomegranate juice is available in kiosks throughout the country. According to the Israeli Agriculture International Portal, Israel harvests approximately 60,000 tons of the fruit annually, of which about half are earmarked for export. 🍷

Yirmiyahu Yovel

continued from page 37

I do not exactly remember what if anything Yovel wrote about the contemporary phenomenon of return to Judaism by persons with *anusim* heritage, although he was prolific and I have vague recollections of tracking some additional writings of his on the subject. However, his writings about the impact of Early-Modern *marranos* such as Spinoza and his contemporaries on Judaism, and on European religion as a whole, remains an important contribution to discourse about crypto-Jewish studies.

May his memory be a blessing.

—Seth Ward 🍷



LISA RUIMY HOLZKENNER

Chag Hanukkah Sameach

For family and friends



May the miracle and the glow of the menorah light
continue to kindle its flames against the dark.
May the eightfold lights warm our hearts and souls
like rays of hope blessing Am Israel, its brothers,
sisters and cousins all around the globe.
May the luminous light of Hanukkah and its spirit,
like bright stars of heaven
usher in a peaceful world for all mankind.



We wish one and all, whatever their tradition,
a time of peace and hope, and shared
joy among friends and family.

Welcome to Our Newest Members

Adam B. – Scottsdale, AZ
Danna S. – Portland, OR
David W. – Fort Collins, CO
Diane M. – Denver, CO
Eddie B.V. – Costa Rica
Elana V. – Bala Cynwyd, PA
Ian E. – Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Irene S. – Phoenix, AZ
Jonathan L. – Wynnwood, PA
Judith R. – New York, NY
Laurie K. – Bloomfield, MI
Lawrence K. – Jacksonville, FL
Lisa K. – Newton, PA
Lisa S. – Pflugerville, TX
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