

# HALAPID



THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES



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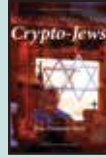
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**HEY,  
SCJS MEMBERS!**

Please send your favorite  
pictures from past  
conferences, interesting  
anecdotes, remembrances  
and highlights to celebrate  
our 30th Anniversary!  
[jb.corinne@gmail.com](mailto:jb.corinne@gmail.com)



Fostering research of  
the worldwide history  
of the crypto-Judaic  
experience and  
the emergence of  
hidden descendants from  
the Iberian Peninsula.

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## FROM OUR PRESIDENT



*Debbie Wohl-Isard  
SCJS President*

Dear Friends,  
I started composing this message a few weeks ago,  
before our world turned upside down.

In early March, the Keys Jewish Community Center in Tavernier,  
Florida, invited me to speak about crypto-Jews and the work of  
SCJS. It had been awhile since I shared an introductory  
presentation to a group that knew varying aspects about crypto-  
Judaic history or contemporary experience. My strategy in such  
instances is to begin by defining terms and important dates.

I gauge the audience

and follow what I perceive is their level of interest.  
This was a group of people who clearly were  
accustomed to learning together. They were curious  
and engaged, heads nodding enthusiastically as they  
acknowledged the importance of something newly  
revealed, taking notes to solidify retention. Their  
eyes were bright, reflecting the excitement of finally  
having someone answer their questions before they  
even asked. When I suggested that I stop to provide  
time for Q&A, they unanimously exclaimed, "No!,  
please continue." So I did.

Feedback from the participants reminded me that  
this is what I love to do — engage with people, share  
my passion for this subject from a variety of  
perspectives: history, sociology, psychology,  
religious studies. As a social worker by training, I'm  
drawn to exploring the family unit and how what  
one member of a family does impacts everyone else. As a teacher, I enjoy the role of opening a  
line of inquiry, then providing tools that others may use to pursue this topic according to their  
own interests.

This is my final *HaLapid* column as your president. By the time this issue reaches you, SCJS will  
welcome Cindy Seton-Rogers as president. She and I are engaged in productive conversations  
to ensure a smooth transition of leadership. Members with dues in good standing had the  
opportunity to vote in April resulting in prompt, unanimous support for Cindy.

Thank you all for your friendship and trust these past two years. It has been my privilege to  
guide SCJS during days of transition. As a world community, we are now faced with new  
challenges caused by the COVID-19 virus. Those of us who are engaged in the study of a people  
who demonstrated fortitude, ingenuity, resilience, and resourcefulness are no strangers to the  
testament of what individuals and families can and will do when faced with both existential and  
tangible threats to personal safety.

May we bring to bear our combined strength and wisdom going forward.

Sincerely,  
**Debbie Wohl-Isard**  
President

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 501(c)(3) organization, open to any and all individuals interested in learning  
more about this cultural phenomenon.



*Right,  
Sam Vinicur,  
longtime friend  
of Stanley  
Hordes,  
with Debbie*



*L to R, President Joyce Peckman,  
Adult Education & Librarian Medina Roy,  
Debbie, and Vice President Gloria Avner*

## Celebrate a hidden past rediscovered



Corinne J. Brown  
Editor in Chief  
weathering COVID-19

As the world faces the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am encouraged by the sense of connection via the internet of so many communities: family, neighborhood, regions, and groups with common interests. In our case, the news keeps pouring in from every corner of the world; people searching for their roots and celebrating a hidden past, clearly found again.

Each issue of *HaLapid* is shaped by the content that comes my way. More and more, stories of travel to Portugal fill my inbox. More importantly, stories of how this travel affects our members — the history, places, and impact of what was, and what was lost. From personal narratives to museum news, and more, each contributor brings their own sensibility to this profound experience; each has taken great pains to craft articles and poetry to share with us. Our Portuguese connection grows stronger.

On our own turf, we celebrate the preservation of an early American settlement by a *converso* descendant — the Gomez Mill House in New York, substantial proof that our varied history covers Revolutionary America as well as the Spanish Colonial empire. I hope you'll love learning about the *Prato Haggadah* (and this duplicate), the earliest *haggadah*, dating from 1390 and found in Spain. A true work of art, it is a cherished survivor of a time when Jews in Spain lived freely as Jews. I hope you'll enjoy the history of *conversos* in Livorno, Italy and — since it is the season after all — a fascinating article on Jewish and Christian Italian wedding practices. A must-read essay compares the story of *La Penetera* (a legendary Spanish shape-shifter) to our biblical Lilith, then to the mythical *La Llorona* of Latino culture, then to crypto-Jews and finally, to the *shekinah*, the feminine aspect of God. Consider it a meaningful addition to our study of crypto-culture; a rich banquet of ideas. Further, five excellent new books are reviewed for your pleasure, perfect for the enthusiastic reader who wants to learn more, plus exciting film news you'll appreciate. The research and creativity in our field continues to grow.

The economic and physical challenges of the virus outbreak in America have forced the cancellation of an in-person gathering in 2020; remote access options are being explored, though are not yet in place. But we look forward with determination to our 30th anniversary conference in 2021 in Dallas. And meet our new president, Cindy Seton-Rogers, ready to guide us into the future.

## ABOUT THE COVER



Entry carving in Guarda, Portugal. Photograph by Tamar Shoval, Israel

According to a Portuguese tour guide, signs such as this and many others are found mainly carved into lintels and entrances to homes. The centers of the houses are in the Jewish neighborhoods (*al Judea*) in different cities in Portugal. Trancoso, Castelo de Vide, Bellamuta and Guarda are some of the most prominent in this context.

The phenomenon is typical of the houses of the *anusim*. They tried to incorporate Christian symbols, especially the cross, covert signs suggesting their Jewishness. The location of the symbols is in the *mezuzah* area. Therefore, the *anusim* kiss the cross in their praise, indicating that they are Christians, but in fact, it is a “kiss” to a *mezuzah*.

The image of the central motif is a cross, but each of the three arms of the cross is a hint of a candle, and the whole cross basically becomes a candlestick. It is most fascinating to analyze the many signs and clues and to understand the existential reality the *anusim* have experienced over the centuries.

The reverberations from Denver's conference continue. Check out some of the responses and events, including links to internet videos. Kudos again to everyone who made it so special.

SCJS remains here for all of you — a reference point, a referral center, a family.

Respectfully,

*Corinne J. Brown*  
Corinne Joy Brown

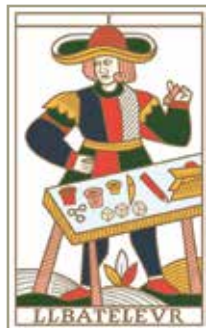
Editor



## NEWS AND NOTES

### More secrets revealed

Stav Appel wrote the article in the last edition of *Halapid* about the hidden Jewish symbols in the earliest Tarot cards, made by crypto-Jews in France. — Ed.



The Magician, the first card of the Jean Noblet Tarot de Marseilles

Thank you so much for the magazine.

Since the explanatory booklet and card set have come out, people have been pointing out several things I missed. The best so far: The lobster and the buildings in the Moon card are also menorahs. And the figure in the Judgement card with a round *challah* for a head is standing in a *mikvah* bath.

Stav Appel



### Relaxing after the feast

Congratulations on a super great *HaLapid*!!! Last night after the first celebrations of Chanukah ended, my girls and their families left, and I finally cleaned up, I sat down to look at *HaLapid*. In spite of my fatigue, this issue kept me awake as I read it cover to cover. Everything was so interesting — a little sad with news of the passing of those who made the Society work — but gently written with great gratitude.

Looking ahead, I have finally finished the *Tehillim* images for an installation I am working on related to the role of the *Tehillim* in sustaining the connection of the *conversos* to Judaism and the *Brit* with *HaShem* over so many centuries. I am hopefully preparing this for the next major

SCIS conference in 2021 in Dallas. I have not yet researched in depth other writings on this topic but have many notes. My question is what of Jewish ritual sustained us as we hid? I got a clue from the *Weight of Ink* and writings of other *conversos*.

Gail Guterrez



### Remembering the Denver Conference

You [Corinne], Debbie, and a cast of others produced a wonderful and memorable experience for those of us who attended the conference. Thank you all. I am still thinking about it and sorting out the experience. I really enjoyed speaking to and meeting the attendees, and plan to contact those who expressed interest in staying in touch. What a wonderful group of people. I have already reached out to a woman from Dallas, Texas. We've been talking. At some point my friend Valerie (from Trinidad) and I want to explore our cousin relationship. I'd like to know what line we are related through. I have a distant Jaffee (her family's line) but it is not her connection.

I loved the concert and the dancing. I have kept the Hal Aqua CD in my car. OMG—the musicians are wonderful! So captivating, like the Pied Piper. I think they could cause people to follow them out of town.

I am so pleased to have bought the necklace that you made at the auction. It's pretty and made by your hands; I won't forget that. Another reason I bought it is that it was part of the fundraiser for the Baca Duran fund. My father was a Duran who was raised by his stepbrother whom he called "Brother John" Cde Baca. Brother John raised Dad after his mother

Felipita died. Dad's father was nowhere to be found, so Brother John stepped in.

Diane Mock



### Response to the memorial of Yaakov Gladstone

Today I received the mailed copy of *HaLapid* with Yaakov's reprinted article. I agree, his energy and passion was ever present in everything he did and said.

I also enjoyed "Old Friends, Benefactors and Legacies."

Glad you are doing all you do!

Thank you,

Julie

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### A bubble of joy

Disney's first Jewish princess is a Ladino-speaking Sephardic Hispanic — somehow this makes me extremely super-happy!

See below link for full article  
[www.momentmag.com/disneys-first-jewish-princess-arrives-in-time-for-hanukkah/](http://www.momentmag.com/disneys-first-jewish-princess-arrives-in-time-for-hanukkah/)

Yliana Tuck

(Editor's note: See *HaLapid*, Fall/Winter 2019 for a short press release about this new Disney animated film or follow the link above.)





## WE PROUDLY WELCOME OUR NEW SCJS PRESIDENT CINDY SETON-ROGERS



*Cindy Seton-Rogers  
SCJS President*

**C**indy Seton-Rogers is a doctoral student at The University of Texas at Dallas, where she also received her BA and MA.

Her academic focus shifted during her master's degree from Latin American to Jewish studies when she began working as a graduate research assistant for the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at University of Texas at Dallas. Sephardic studies seemed like the perfect melding of her interests in Latin American, European, and Jewish history. Her PhD concentration, "The History of Ideas," is an interdisciplinary program in the humanities that interweaves history, literature, and philosophy. Her declared fields of research are early modern European history, anti-Semitism, and the representation of the Holocaust in literature, but the focus of her dissertation is on the Sephardic Diaspora. She is currently researching the role that Sephardic Jewry played during the Age of Exploration in both the New and Old Worlds.

Cindy now serves as the academic and outreach events manager for the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at UT Dallas. 📧

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Society for  
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Studies

**Dallas**

**SCJS 2021**

**30th Anniversary**  
Conference  
Date TBA  
[cryptojews.com](http://cryptojews.com)



### CALLING ALL SCJS MEMBERS

In mid-2021 we'll gather for our  
**30th Anniversary** Conference  
in Dallas, Texas.

Please send your favorite pictures from  
past conferences, interesting anecdotes,  
remembrances and highlights.

We'll include them in a nostalgic look  
at the legacy that is SCJS.

Please email to [jb.corinne@gmail.com](mailto:jb.corinne@gmail.com)



# Dusting Off the Debris from the Inquisition



BY RIFKA COOK

When we mention the Spanish Inquisition, it seems a distant event. More than five centuries have passed since the particular persecution instituted by the inquisitor Torquemada. Nonetheless, the cries still echo from the innocent women and men as they were consumed by the fires of the “Holy Office” for the simple reason of being Jews. When I ask some rabbis and academics why the Inquisition is not a subject for conversation, the answer I receive is the same: “That happened many years ago.” My blood boils when I hear those words, and I say to myself: In about 500 years the Holocaust might not be a topic of conversation of a class syllabus just because — it occurred a long time ago.

Last summer I had the privilege of traveling to Belmonte, Portugal where I was invited by the Belmonte municipality to give a talk about Doña Gracia Mendes, an extraordinary woman who remained faithful to her religion despite the persecutions, accusations, and imprisonment she experienced. Her economic position helped her escape every time she appeared cornered. Her faithfulness to the Jewish people is to be admired, then and now. But my goal here

is to draw attention to a treasure hiding in Belmonte — the beautiful neighborhood of the Castelo Branco district. Its excellent museums, panoramic view, and even more, its people — descendants of Belmonte’s crypto-Jews — make this place a very special tourist attraction.

When I talk about *anusim*, a Hebrew word that refers to crypto or secret Jews, many people ask me who they are. When I explain that they are what many know as *marranos* (a term I refuse to use except when necessary), then they understand. This word is pejorative (swine). To my great irritation and displeasure, in Spain it is still in use, though never adopted in the New World. This word is used to refer not only to an animal, but also, in some Latin-American countries, as a person “of little or no worth.” In medieval Portugal, Jews were known more elegantly known as *Cristaos-Novos* (Neo-Christians). In the provinces, these families are still, frankly and simply, called *judeus*, or Jews. And I imagine that is why this name was applied to the Sephardim of the 16th century who

*Top , Men's section of Beit Eliyahu synagogue, Belmonte, Portugal*



Rifka Cook

Born and raised in Venezuela, Rifka completed her undergraduate education in Israel (1974) and in Caracas (1980). She holds the equivalent of an ABD (here in the U.S.) in linguistics. During Winter and Spring 2010 she attended three courses on Sephardic language at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. She taught at a religious school in Caracas and at the *Universidad de Oriente in Nueva Esparta, Venezuela* for more than two decades. Currently she teaches first- and second-year Spanish at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Her research interests include: the Judeo-Español language and literature, Sephardi culture, crypto-Jews cuisine; teaching with technology, and learning styles. In addition, Rifka is a faculty fellow at Shepard Residence College (2009-present) and a faculty-in-residence at Allison Hall (2017-present)





*Beit Eliyahu Synagogue*

were despised by the Church and forced to convert to Christianity by an edict of the Spanish court. Those who pretended to be Christians, but secretly maintained the Jewish faith (crypto-Jews or *anusim*) had been citizens for more than eight centuries. They loved the land where they settled and raised families, a land where great Jewish philosophers, doctors, poets, artisans, and others were born. These Sephardim eventually created their own language, derived from the Spanish language of Nebrija and Cervantes. The first grammar of the Spanish language, written by Nebrija and dating from 1492, had some aspects based on Hebrew grammar.

In Belmonte, I met several people from the Jewish community. They are very proud to be part of the “People of the Book.” And when I told them that I was interested in meeting descendants of crypto-Jews, their answer was, “Here there are no crypto-Jews, we are Jews.” I felt happy to hear that! However, when I met some of the members of the community and they introduced themselves, it was with their Christian name. It was only at the Beit Eliyahu Synagogue that I discovered their Hebraic names. They do not use the word Spanish or Portuguese or Jewish when they introduce themselves. I didn’t ask them why they used the word Christian instead of Spanish or Portuguese; I wanted to respect their decision.

An event that filled me with joy was a Friday evening Shabbat at Beit Eliyahu Synagogue in Belmonte. That was one of the most emotional and moving experiences I have ever had during a Shabbat. One of the community members was Rafael, 10, the son of Pedro (Efraim) and Cristina (Judith) Diogo. He sang Shabbat *zemirot* (songs) before the start of the service. His voice trembled with emotion which, in turn, moved me, hearing him cry out with his angelic voice: “Gentlemen, inquisitors, you



*Table with Shabbat candles*

burned my ancestors, but you will never be able to quench my inner flame for Judaism.”

Listening to him was the most beautiful thing I could have hoped to experience that Friday night. Some of the *zemirot* were sung with a familiar Schlomo Carlebach melody, and some of us sang along; it touched every one of us who were present. At the end of the service I approached young Rafael and congratulated him for his extraordinary voice and his dedication. He told me his dream is to become a rabbi.

This Jewish community anchored in Belmonte, I and all of us who maintain our Jewish heritage, resemble the phoenix — the mythical bird consumed by flame, only to resurface and resurrect from its

own ashes. Each of us has the freedom to identify as Jewish any way we choose, and maintain the traditions and culture of our great people. Many have experienced discrimination, myself included, such as hatred and envy, compelling us to acquire new perspectives. On the other hand, as expressed in Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3:5 — *Et lachavok, ve et lirchokmehabek* — קבצו קרחל תעו קובחל תע — “There is a time to hug, and a time to refrain from hugging.” In other words, we were given the freedom to choose any path or to refrain from choosing any path dictated by despair.

History has taught us and the rest of the world that Jews will never cease to exist; there will always be someone who has survived from this or that community like the descendants of the Sephardim who live in Belmonte. We must seek with all our hearts, minds and strength these precious vestiges of our heritage and dust them off so that they may shine again. We must rise from the ashes of destruction, indifference and oblivion, and be the phoenix. 🔥



*Menorah next to Beit Eliyahu Synagogue, Belmonte*





# IN A BEGINNING, GOD CREATED ADAM, LILITH, LA PETENERA, AND...

*I am destined to wander,  
by the book of God,  
and to roam over  
every land.*

*For all who are fated  
to exile move about  
like Cain and flee  
as Jonah.*

In a beginning, God created Adam and Lilith, Adam's first wife. Everything was fine until Lilith decided she wanted to be on top, after which Adam sent her away and received a more submissive wife in exchange — Eve.

Wounded, enraged, and out for revenge, Lilith was blamed for a lot of ills and quite literally was demonized, becoming an actual demon and the bane of men and their wives. She entered their homes, had sex and procreated with the husbands, had demon babies, and sometime ate the babies. Not only that, she caused any pregnant wives to have miscarriages. And she often caused men to spill their seed, a big “no-no” in Judaism.

After her demotion, did Lilith stay put in the Holy Land and sit around baking bread and keeping house? No, she moved to Spain with the other Jews who went there in ancient times, and when she was in Spain, she transformed herself into *La Petenera*, femme fatale and the bane of Spanish men. She rampantly seduced



BY HENRY RASOF

and abandoned, shape-shifting from a beautiful prostitute to a virgin, and yes, to an angry Jewess out to avenge the fate of her people still in the Holy Land. In spite of her rage, Lilith/*La Petenera* remained loyal to her people.

If *La Petenera* just seduced and abandoned, this behavior does not seem sufficient to build a whole mythology around her, since love is often about seduction and often about abandonment. Most people in their pursuit of love or marriage get jilted or at least disappointed or hurt at one time or another. Still, *La Petenera* perhaps epitomizes or embodies this feature of love. She is an archetype. The trope of the spurned woman is not the invention of any one culture, the desire for revenge a basic human instinct.

*La Petenera* became the subject of a whole category of songs — specifically, flamenco songs called *peteneras*. Most *peteneras* have pretty much the same chord progressions and melodies, and the lyrics, though not all the same, are “Jewish” in only two versions that I have heard. The *flamenca* Carmen Linares sings one of these Jewish *peteneras* about a crying woman who has lost her home



(“Pasa una mujer llorando — A Crying Woman Passes”). Curiously, she sings her *petenera* to a different melody from that of most of the other versions, that of the famous Ladino-Judeo-Spanish song “*Los Bilbilicos*” (The Nightingales). Here is an English translation of some of the lyrics of her *petenera*:

*Ay, what lament in all of Spain  
For all the Jewish neighborhoods... //  
Through the streets of Judea  
A crying woman passes by  
They say she is from Sefarad  
(Jewish Spain)...*

>>>

*Top, Lady Lilith by Dante Gabriel Rosetti,  
Decantes por La Peteneras film poster*



Was Lilith an only child? No, she had a “sister” called the *shekhinah*, a name derived from the Hebrew for dwelling, an English word meaning both “abode” and “thinking a lot about.” The *shekhinah* is usually thought of as the feminine presence of God, or His daughter, or His bride.

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, when Jews in ancient times sinned, the *shekhinah* was often blamed — by God. Her punishment was exile. Exile from earth to one of the heavens, or from one of the heavens to earth, or from God’s side. On the other hand, when the Jews were exiled from the Holy Land to Babylonia, the *shekhinah* is also described as going into exile *with them*, but not as punishment. If the *shekhinah* followed her people into exile in Babylonia in ancient times, why not also to Spain over the centuries?

The *shekhinah* going into exile is described as crying. Is she the crying woman Carmen Linares sings of in her *petenera*? The

famous Spanish painter Pablo Picasso created a painting called “The Weeping Woman,” which you might say — if you have an active imagination like mine — was his rendition of the *shekhinah* going into exile, although he probably had never heard of her.

The focus of *peteneras* and *La Petenera* in Spanish culture seems to be on the dark side, on the wounded woman acting out and seeking revenge, just as the focus with Lilith seems to be on *her* dark side, even though some artistic reproductions show her with owls, symbols of wisdom. Perhaps then, Lilith is not all bad, but encompasses both the good and the bad, the light and the dark. I will argue the same about *La Petenera*, that she is not all bad, but instead encompasses the good and the bad. When she is scorned or feared, she becomes dark, and when she is loved, she becomes light. She perhaps symbolizes all human beings, who want and need to love and be loved and who get caught up, at one time or another, in the emotional tangle that usually accompanies those wants and needs. And of course, most human beings encompass a dark side, which some psychologists call our shadow. The *peteneras* celebrate in song and dance those emotions, drives, and complexities.

The crying woman made her way from ancient times to the present, changing forms along the way to adapt to the cultures she found herself in.

“

Curiously, the words *petenera* and *peteneras* — whatever their idiomatic usage — seem to be used almost interchangeably, suggesting that *La Petenera* indeed has a dual identity, comprising both Lilith *and* the *shekhinah*, the dark and the light, the two sides of humanity, of life and existence. Think yin and yang, from Chinese philosophy. Light and dark are inseparable, intertwined aspects of everything that is. Who else but a knowledgeable Jew could have created such a human being or folk figure!

Many writers on flamenco claim Jewish origins of flamenco in general, which would lead one to conclude that *peteneras* too had Jewish roots. Although at first one might doubt that authors of *peteneras* knew or know anything about Lilith or the *shekhinah*, and that the scholar Einat Davidi argues forcefully that the *petenera* in particular is *not* Jewish in origin, I propose the opposite.

Spain once had a lot of Jews and Spanish Jews were persecuted



Right - Adam and Eve,  
by Marc Chagall

Below - Adam and Eve  
by Gustav Klimt





and then forced to convert or be killed, or forced to leave Spain. Possibly some *petenera* authors were openly practicing Jews or *conversos* (converted Jews), or crypto-Jews — secret or hidden Jews. Since apparently about 25 percent of Spanish men today have some Jewish DNA, this theory is not totally implausible.

Making *peteneras* “Jewish,” as in the lyrics of *peteneras* like Carmen’s, is a good way to deal with the tragic history of Spanish Jews, as discussed by Einat Davidi. In the other “Jewish” *petenera*, the singer asks, “Where are you going, beautiful Jewess?” He then refers to her as a healer, and she responds “to the synagogue.” This could just be man-talk, or it could be a subtle allusion to the *shekhinah*. And whether *peteneras* are simply a vehicle for the expression of certain ideas and emotions, and *La Petenera* the inspiration for a whole genre of flamenco, I don’t think anyone really knows.

Interestingly, *La Petenera* somehow might have made her way to the New World, specifically South America, Mexico, and later on, New Mexico. What is the evidence? A host of stories swirl around a New World folk figure, *La Llorona* — “the weeping woman.” Could this be the weeping woman that Carmen Linares sings about in her *petenera* or that Picasso painted? Not the same flesh-and-blood one of course, but an incarnation? *La Llorona*’s husband abandoned her, she drowned their children, and as a ghost she wreaked and continues to wreak havoc wherever she goes, wandering around searching for her dead children. This is not the same story as that of Lilith or the *shekhinah* or *La Petenera*, but there are similarities.

When did the legend of *La Llorona* first surface in the New World? Possibly in the mid-16th century, indicating that if she did come from Spain, it might have been then. And if so, why did she leave Spain and go to the New World? Given the time frame, perhaps she was fleeing the Inquisition in Spain and went to the New World

along with other refugees including many *conversos*, Jews who voluntarily or forcibly were converted to Christianity. Another reason, I would argue, is the *shekhinah*’s devotion to her people; If she followed them to Babylonia and then Spain, why not the New World?

This suggests that *La Llorona* herself — and *La Petenera* — originally might have been — yes — Jewish, or a *converso* or crypto-Jew. After all, if her pre-Spanish heritage is Jewish, why not? And since *La Llorona* is an active figure in today’s Latino community — although people don’t think of her as Jewish — perhaps she too could be described as a crypto-Jew. If this is so, I find it remarkable that Lilith and the *shekhinah* have made their way so far while traveling through alien cultures that often didn’t or don’t recognize her true nature, and that her manifestations in those cultures have been so pervasive, influential and powerful. The crying woman made her way from ancient times to the present, changing forms along the way to adapt to the cultures she found herself in.

At the same time, it could be argued from a different perspective that the weeping woman in all her forms and stories — Lilith, the *shekhinah*, *La Petenera*, and *La Llorona* — is a creation of our own psyches or of our collective human unconscious. Whatever her origins however, let us recognize, appreciate and empathize with the weeping woman wherever we find her — including within ourselves.

#### Author’s Notes

I don’t want to complicate matters — at least not too much — but if you read more about *peteneras*, *La Petenera*, and *La Llorona*, especially on the internet and in many of the books about *La Llorona*, you will find all kinds of contradictory and speculative information, plus parallels made with ancient Greek myths and other New World myths and legends. Additionally, the dates are all over the place. In some ways, perhaps the timeline



Henry Rasof

Henry Rasof has been writing poetry since 1964 and publishing and giving readings since 1968. He has degrees in music, creative writing, and Jewish studies. He worked in book publishing for 30 years, has edited literary magazines and a chapbook series, and has taught writing courses and workshops. Although he has written many “traditional” poems, it is the world of experimentation, taking many forms, that has always been his main interest.

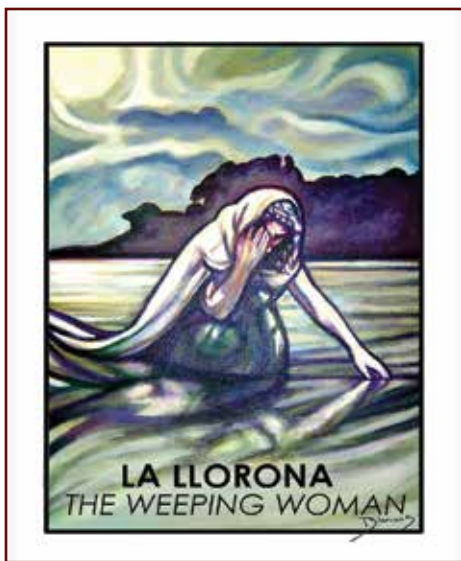
Print publications include magazines such as *Partisan Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Bits*, *Black Box*, *Midstream*, *Jewish Currents*, and *Poetica*; anthologies such as *Assembling and Text-Sound Texts*; and electronic publications such as *X-Peri*, *Numinous*, *In Stereo*, and *the Boulder Jewish News*. Rasof has also published four books of poems and prose poems: *The House* (2009); *Chance Music: Prose Poems 1974 to 1982* (2012); *Here I Seek You: Jewish Poems for Shabbat, Holy Days, and Everydays* (2016); and *Souls in the Garden: Poems About Jewish Spain* (2019).

Henry Rasof lives in Colorado and enjoys travel, especially to exotic places. He has been to India three times and Japan twice, in addition to Latin America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and Israel.

Visit [www.henryrasof.com](http://www.henryrasof.com) and [www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org](http://www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org) for well-known poets’ English translations of medieval Hebrew poems; articles and original essays; a bibliography; photographs; and other information.








La Llorona by David Blancas, San Antonio, Texas

does not matter since sometimes widely disparate cultures create similar ideas, even at the same time in history, and the basic truths of these stories are what is important. Also, the spirit of Lilith and

her “spawn” just might have been and continue to be immune to the temporal rules that bind ordinary human beings. In the world of literary criticism, some critics argue that our current reading of a long-dead author actually influences that author and what he or she wrote, so that perhaps historically *La Llorona* might have preceded *La Petenera*, but our understanding of the former was influenced by the latter. As I said however, the dates are not agreed upon, so this line of reasoning, like the others, seems suspect. Finally, I am cynical about anything I read about Jews in Spain and this includes what I have read about *peteneras* and *La Petenera*; a lot of it seems made up. For example, a marker in Seville, Spain, telling the story of a Jewish woman from at least 500 years ago, calls the story a “true legend.” Well, legends may contain a kernel of truth, but that’s about it as far as I’m concerned.

I have used the word spirit in describing Lilith and her “progeny,” not thinking of the way the famous Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) uses the Spanish word *duende*, which translates as spirit, but which he interprets in a much deeper way. His *duende* is almost a hypostasis, a philosophical term meaning something like underlying reality or essence. However you want to define the word spirit, there is an essence — a basic reality — underlying all of the manifestations of Lilith and the *shekhinah*. These stories and variations, as was pointed out, contain the same basic themes and, at least to me, these are what are important. Recognizing them might be the only way to navigate the morass of attempts to place the stories in a historical context. Still, if you want to try, please be my guest!

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A complete bibliography, footnotes and sources available by request. Please write to the editor: [corinnejb@aol.com](mailto:corinnejb@aol.com). 

## Good To Know

*Excerpt from Jane Gerber's contribution to the catalogue/book accompanying the exhibition "Fractured Faiths: The Spanish Inquisition in the New World."*

A geographic entity known as *Sepharad* appears in Jewish sources as a somewhat separate part of the Jewish people beginning around the ninth century. The Jews of this area, later to be known as *Sephardim*, formed the western-most part of a widespread Mediterranean Jewry that drew its religious guidance from venerable rabbinic academies in Baghdad.

Only in the tenth century, during the opulent and lively period of the Caliphate of Córdoba and its successor states (known as the *taifa* kingdoms), did the Jews of Spain attain their cultural independence from the religious institutions of Baghdad, establishing themselves as an independent cultural entity.

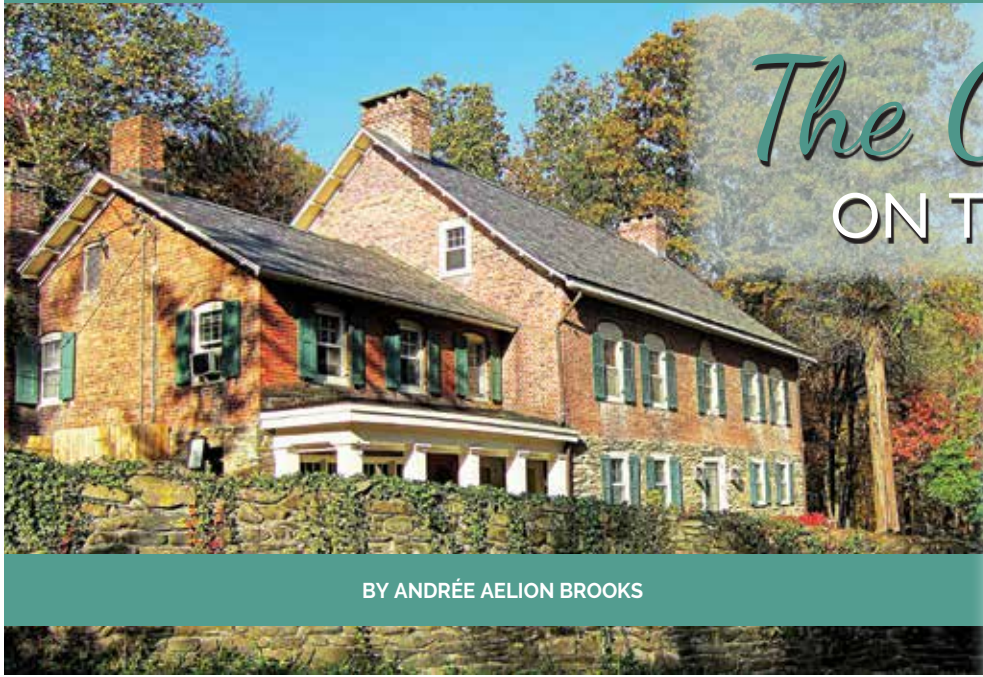
Their identity as Sephardim included an image of themselves as a separate and aristocratic part of the Jewish people who were descended from the exiles of the aristocracy of Jerusalem who had arrived in Spain in ancient times. This aristocratic self-image would endure long after the Expulsion. Their self-image as a noble people would eventually include a dimension of tragedy and heroism, as they later incorporated the crypto-Jewish chapter of their history.

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**Jane S. Gerber** is a professor of Jewish history and director of the Institute for Sephardic Studies at the City University of New York. Author of *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*, published by The Free Press, Gerber was a significant contributor to “Fractured Faiths.”

*Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition, and New World Identities*, by Roger L. Martinez Davila, Joseph Diaz, and Ron D. Hart. New Mexico History Museum, Fresco Books.





BY ANDRÉE AELION BROOKS

# The Old House ON THE HUDSON

*400 years ago, Luis Moses Gomez, a converso who had previously returned to the Jewish world, built a house in upstate New York. It is still standing. Who were these conversos who came to the Northeast?*

A weathered house tucked into a darkly wooded lane near the banks of the Hudson River, some 60 miles north of New York City, tells a tale of a former *converso*, returned to the Jewish world, who had a very different experience in North America compared to the earliest *converso* settlers of the Southwest.

There were others like him, to be sure, some of whom would also become important to the commerce of the emerging Eastern Seaboard colonies. But instead of finding their Jewish past to be a burden and a dangerous secret, it became an asset. They were a perfect fit for the moment.

The man with the aging house on the Hudson — that today has become a house museum bearing his name and legacy — was Luis Moses Gomez. According to family legend, his *converso* father had been a close advisor to Phillip IV of Spain. But by the mid-1660s, soon after Luis was born, the family had been forced to flee over the Pyrenees mountains to Southwest France. Inquisition officials were about to arrest the father on charges of being a secret Jew.

And France did not have an Inquisition.



Luis Moses Gomez

As a result, Gomez grew up in the French city of Bayonne, known for its substantial population of *converso* merchants, originally from Spain and Portugal, who were focused on the lucrative Caribbean trade. And it offered an air of tolerance, freedom and opportunity that would have allowed Gomez to gain a strong sense of self-worth and confidence.

As a young man, around 1680, he was sent briefly to London to further his understanding of this trade, and then onto Jamaica where he married and returned openly to Judaism. Jamaica, then owned by the British, accepted Jews. It even had a

synagogue. Not returning to Bayonne may also have been because, in the interim, France had enacted the Edict of Nantes which made the country less tolerant of people with religions other than Catholicism.

But trade opportunities in Jamaica did not last. In 1692 there was a catastrophic earthquake in Port Royal, its primary commercial city. This was followed by repeated fires. The mood was grim. By contrast, hundreds of miles to the north where Gomez already had other family members, the Atlantic port of New York had begun to grow rapidly. It offered a more stable environment, and that would have been important to a man like Gomez who had recently started a family. Moreover, there had been openly practicing Jews in New York since 1654.

Gomez made his move. He was now an established, respected merchant with years of experience in commerce and international trade. He had a vast network of trusted contacts. He no doubt had money. He was a family man with a wife, Esther and four sons, Jacob, Mordecai, Daniel and David. He would have spoken flawless French and English from his days in Bayonne and London. And having lived







*The Gomez Mill House on a lovely summer day*

an assimilated, urbane life since early childhood, he would have fit in with ease among the respected merchants of New York.

He wasted no time. By 1705, only a handful of years after his arrival in New York, he was already petitioning for an Act of Denization from Queen Anne of England to expand his merchant privileges. Among them: allowing him to purchase property in his own name. This was needed because the North American colonies had not yet won independence from England and he was foreign-born. The petition was granted.

New York was in the midst of a building boom and through his contacts, Gomez heard of a tract of some 4,000 acres of undeveloped land for sale one mile west of the Hudson River. It encompassed limestone cliffs and vast stretches of dense forest. The lumber and stone were in demand for construction in an expanding New York City. These supplies could be floated down the Hudson river.

He further arranged to build a stone dwelling to use as a base for his Hudson Valley venture. Tucked into a hillside, it started out with only a couple of rooms that incorporated a large fireplace for cooking and heat, and a storage area dug deep into the hill at the back. Future owners would expand it further.

But Gomez was far more than simply a business man eager to feather his own financial nest. What clearly mattered to him was the future of a Jewish world then under siege. His ancestors had been leaders back in Spain and Bayonne and he felt a personal obligation to place New York's emerging Jewish community — many of whom were returning *conversos* like himself — on more solid footing.

He began by taking a leadership role in Congregation Shearith Israel, the earliest formal Jewish congregation in North America. Founded soon after the first 23 Jews from Recife settled in New York City some 70 years earlier, the congregation had never had its own building. Instead,

members were still meeting in their homes or rented rooms.

Gomez offered to lead a fundraising effort to enable the construction of a synagogue building. He was also willing to donate cash as well as land he owned on Mill Street, in the heart of the commercial and residential community that comprised New York City at this time. Today, the interior of that first building is preserved inside the neo-classic synagogue on Central Park West at West 70th Street, where Congregation Shearith Israel now meets. The upstate house, now known as the Gomez Mill House, has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places ([www.Gomez.org](http://www.Gomez.org)).

Other former *conversos* were also taking up residence along the Eastern seaboard. Their sophistication from having lived first in the Caribbean, London, Amsterdam or France, and their merchant experience, provided almost instant stature and prominence, whether they chose to return to Judaism or not.

Consider the noted portrait painter and first photographer of the West, Solomon Nunes Carvalho. Born in 1815 in Charleston, South Carolina, he was named for his *converso* grandfather (1743–1811) who had escaped the Inquisition in Portugal and lived in both Amsterdam and London before emigrating to Barbados



*The Gomez "Blockhouse" East Room*







*The actual mill at the Gomez Mill House*

and then North America. His father, David Nunes Carvalho would help establish the first Reformed Jewish congregation in the United States in Charleston in 1825.

Consider also members of the early Jewish community in the bustling seaport of Newport, Rhode Island, known today for its Touro Synagogue. Aaron Lopez (1731–1782) was still a *converso* at the time of his birth in Lisbon, carrying the Catholic first name of Duarte. After arriving in the safety of the Rhode Island colony around 1750, he took the name of Aaron and was ritually circumcised. Lopez eventually owned over 30 sailing vessels, primarily transporting goods to and from the Caribbean where many of these former *converso* merchants still had family members who worked with them as local agents.

What distinguished these families from those in the Southwest were their lives before arriving in North America. They had gone through an interim step, moving out of Spain and Portugal to countries where their hidden origins were not a drawback. They did not have to fear arrest or denunciation from colleagues, neighbors or servants in ways that might have inhibited their activities. Ironically, those freedoms often ended up as a loss for the Jewish world. Their children and grandchildren mixed so freely in colonial America that intermarriage became commonplace.

There were exceptions. Gomez' sons remained officers of Shearith Israel down through several generations, suggesting his strong sense of mission might have been an exception that proved the rule.

Sources for this article came in part from research compiled by the author for a 2018 documentary she co-wrote titled *Luis Moses Gomez and his Mill House*, and from the work of Prof. Jonathan Schorsch, Gomez Mill House scholar for 2019. ([www.Gomez.org](http://www.Gomez.org)) 🔥

Instead of finding their Jewish past to be a burden and a dangerous secret, it became an asset.

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Award-winning journalist, author and lecturer, Andrée Aelion Brooks specializes in Jewish history. She is a popular speaker, known for her humor and insight. A former contributing columnist and news writer for *The New York Times*, she covered personal finance, the women's movement, and real estate investment,

among other issues. She was an occasional contributor covering life as an older American for *The Wall Street Journal* and is an awardee of the American Jewish Press Association. Brooks is an Associate Fellow at Yale University and the founder and first president of the Women's Campaign School at Yale ([www.wcsyale.org](http://www.wcsyale.org)), a program training women in the skills needed to win elective office. In recognition of this work, she was honored by the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame.

Andrée is a consultant and board member of the Gomez Mill House historic site in Marlborough, New York. In recent years, she has been concentrating on unusual aspects of Jewish history, writing and lecturing nationwide. She is also the author of *The Woman Who Defied Kings*, the first comprehensive biography of Doña Gracia Nasi, the Renaissance banker and financier.



*Andrée Aelion Brooks*

In 2013 she served as a historical adviser for a pilot script for a planned television miniseries based on Nasi's life.

Earlier, she created a multimedia educational program in Sephardic history and culture, "Out of Spain" for 5th-7th graders in Jewish congregational and day schools.

A later book of Jewish history, *Russian Dance*, a romantic thriller based on the true story of a Bolshevik spy, highly recommended by the American Library Association, won first place in history/biography in 2005 from the National Association of Press Women. In 1990, Brooks received the American Jewish Woman of Achievement award from the American Jewish Committee and in 2001, a special award from the Consulate General of Israel in conjunction with the American Sephardi Federation for her work in Sephardic Jewish history. In 2003, she received the Mark Twain Award from the Connecticut Press Club, as well as being named a finalist in the National Jewish Book Awards.

Andrée has also received an outstanding achievement award from the National Federation of Press Women, among other honors.

# THE Prato Haggadah

## FROM AN 1300s EXQUISITE SPAIN FACSIMILE

*This article references a stunning authorized facsimile of the Prato Haggadah, now held in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), in New York. At the time of this writing, it was made available for purchase through Wyman Books. I am sure at least some of us will enjoy the rich provenance of this book; it seems worthy of our attention. — C. Brown, Editor*

Unbelievably rich and extraordinarily refined in its artistic decoration, the *Prato Haggadah* is a Sephardic *haggadah* (a text that sets forth the order of the Passover seder) produced in Spain, ca. 1300, with incomplete period illuminations (pictured here) and additions from the next three centuries. Folios 1-53 are in square Sephardic script, with folios 54-68 in square Italo-Ashkenazic script. It includes 40 miniatures illuminated in gold and silver and 60 partially illuminated or only drawn. It was featured in the Metropolitan Museum's 2009 exhibit, "Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages."

Scholars at JTS note that, "Nothing at all is known of either the patron or scribe of the *Prato Haggadah*, and little is known of its whereabouts from the time it was produced in Spain around 1300, until the time it was acquired by the JTS Library in 1964. While the *haggadah's* text is written in accordance with the Spanish rite, at some point additional text which included liturgical poems of the Ashkenazic rite was added, most likely in Italy.

A 1617 signature of an Italian church censor, Giovanni Domenico Carretto, is proof that the manuscript actually was in Italy at the beginning of the 17th century. Nothing further is known of the *haggadah's* history until 1928, when it was in the possession of Dr. Ludwig Pollak, a native of Prague living in Rome.

The art of the *Prato Haggadah* is witty and creative. It includes

many initial word panels, foliate ornamentation, and hybrid figures. Several illustrations relate directly to the text. The *haggadah* contains motifs common in medieval manuscripts, and many folios reflect the artist's sense of humor.

For unknown reasons, the manuscript's illumination was never completed. This unfinished nature of the work allows the viewer to see the stages of production of an illuminated manuscript: the scribal arrangement of the text; the artist's preparatory drawings; the application of gesso to cushion gold or silver leaf; the addition of the leaf; the painting of a wide variety of pigments; and the outlining of the illuminations with ink.

The text of the *Prato Haggadah* is also distinctive. Although it includes the standard biblical, talmudic, and midrashic texts, as well as the ritual poetry common to other Spanish *haggadot*, the *Prato Haggadah* lacks all elements associated with the Passover meal. *Kiddush*, blessings for *matzah* and *maror*, instructions for the feast itself, and grace after meals are absent. Scholars suggest that *haggadot* of this kind may have been written to be read publicly in the synagogue, after which people would return to their homes for the meal. This phenomenon is found in other Spanish *haggadot* and is explained by medieval sources as satisfying the

requirement to recount the story of the Exodus for people unable to lead or attend a seder.

Many Sephardic Jews emigrated to Italy following the expulsions from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 15th century, often taking their manuscripts with them. The *Prato Haggadah* contains many textual changes and corrections inserted over several centuries. Though the Spanish or Ashkenazic sections of the manuscript cannot be definitively dated or localized, scribal practices and liturgical variants provide a general overview of the history of the manuscript and its owners (ITS, 2010).

This magnificent numbered facsimile comes printed on parchment and bound in full period-

style leather, in a custom slipcase. Included is a companion volume, *The Prato Haggadah*, (107 pages, with color illustrations) edited by Naomi M. Steinberger and with an introduction by David Kraemer, essays and bibliography. 





# Jewish Livorno



BY BETH LURIE

Over one million tourists visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa every year. Most of them, including Jewish travelers, have no idea that Livorno, only 12 miles south of Pisa on the west coast of Tuscany, was once an important Jewish center with astounding Jewish accomplishments in commerce, publishing, and the arts.

Livorno, also known as Leghorn, had a strong and vibrant Jewish community for 300 years, thanks to the Medici family's vision, yet it is scarcely even on the radar of Italians and not mentioned at all in textbooks. Therefore I was thrilled to hear about an important exhibition entitled *Modigliani e L'Avventura di Montparnasse* ("Modigliani and the Montparnasse Adventure"), dedicated to the works of the Livornese-born Jewish artist Amadeo Modigliani, held recently at the Museum of the City of Livorno (*Museo della Città di Livorno*). Despite Modigliani's posthumous fame, Livorno had never exhibited his works.

Fascinated by Livorno's Golden Age in Jewish history, especially by the Medicis' unique relationship with *converso* Jews, I was eager to learn more. Last summer I participated in the SCIS conference

in Denver and gave a lecture about *converso* history in Livorno. This article answers some of the questions SCIS members asked during the event. I hope it inspires you to visit Livorno and explore its Jewish soul.

Livorno is often referred to as "the city without a ghetto." In the early modern period (late 15th to late 18th century), Livorno became a thriving center of Jewish life at a time when Europe's Jews were living behind ghetto walls. Livorno's Jews however, helped turn a backwater, malaria-infested town into a flourishing commercial port and intellectual center. By 1675, Livorno became a free port. Most Italian Jews in other cities were confined to the second-hand rag trade and restricted from other professions, but Livorno's Jews were permitted to enter any profession they chose. It became a refuge for *conversos* who had endured forced conversions, expulsions from Spain and Portugal, and who fled the Inquisition. While most of Europe struggled financially, Livorno prospered. The *conversos* in Livorno thrived because the powerful Medici grand dukes extended unheard of rights and privileges to them.



Beth Lurie

The Director of Lurie Language ([www.lurielanguage.com](http://www.lurielanguage.com)) and Romance language, Jewish Journey, Beth has extensive international experience as a translator and interpreter, and has taught Romance languages to people of all ages and levels for over 35 years. A multilingual native New Yorker, Beth is a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Vassar College and has an M.A. in French literature from CUNY. Inspired by her love of both Romance languages and Jewish traditions, Beth highlights the connection between the two, in her monthly Jewish-Journey newsletters ([www.jewish-journey.com](http://www.jewish-journey.com)) and through her popular lecture series. Italy is among her favorite topics.

## Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Arrival

In 1492, Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella issued an Edict of Expulsion, expelling all Jews from Spain. Many





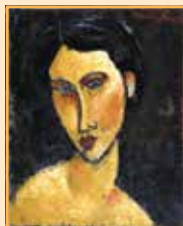
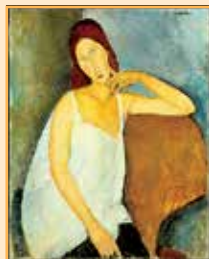
**A**madeo Modigliani, born in Livorno in 1884 into a prominent Sephardic trading family, was descended from generations of Talmudic scholars on his mother's side. A gifted painter and sculptor known for elongated faces and necks as well as nudes, he was not appreciated during his lifetime. The city of Livorno, until this past year, seldom exhibited any of his important works.



*Amadeo Modigliani*

Modigliani was proud to be Jewish and publicly embraced his Jewish identity. He would often announce his Jewishness in public, introducing himself as "Modigliani, the Jew." He spoke out passionately against anti-Semitism when he encountered it. He left to work in Paris in 1906 where he died in 1920 at the young age of 36.

2020 marks the centenary of the death of the Livornese artist. The recent retrospective in Livorno was the first exhibition featuring Modigliani's art to be held there since 1984. His daughter, raised by her grandparents in Livorno, published a book about her father in the 1950s, *Modigliani: Man and Myth*, emphasizing his Sephardic heritage.



*Clockwise from top left: Woman Sitting in a Blue Dress; Diego Rivera (fantastic portrait); Portrait of A Woman; Jeanne Hebuterne -1898-1020-The Met; Woman's Head*

thousands fled to Portugal, the only country that would accept them. Five years later, they were tragically expelled from Portugal. King Manuel I, under pressure from Spain, ordered forced conversion of all practicing Jews. On April 19, 1506, the Lisbon Massacre began. An estimated 4,000 *conversos* were slaughtered in the city's streets. On April 19, 2006, 500 years later, a memorial was unveiled in the same square where the massacre took place, commemorating the horrific event.



*Monument to victims of Jewish pogrom on April 19 1506 in Lisbon*

Following the 1506 massacre, the king issued an ordinance forbidding authorities from interrogating New Christians about their practices or religious beliefs for 30 years.

In 1536, the Inquisition introduced ritual punishments into Portugal. Large numbers of New Christians left; many fled to the Ottoman empire. They lived as second-class citizens, but were not forced to convert. Cosimo I de Medici recognized the potential of Jewish entrepreneurship and in the 1540s began recruiting affluent Spanish and Portuguese Jews for resettlement in Florence. In 1548 he issued an invitation to foreigners, including fugitive *conversos*, to come to Livorno. His project initially met with little success. Finally in 1591 and 1593, the Livornine edicts issued by Ferdinand I, Cosimo I's successor, officially welcomed *conversos* to Livorno, with the promise of religious and economic freedom:

"Come men of the East and West, Spanish and Portuguese... Italians, Hebrews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians and others."

*Converso* Jews and Iberian emigrés also relocated. Emigration was dangerous, but some families were able to transfer their wealth.

The Jewish population grew rapidly and soon the Sephardic elite were joined by Jews from other parts of Italy. Ferdinand I was hoping to attract wealthy *conversos* to Livorno and create maritime strength. Generous privileges were granted to foreign merchants, primarily *conversos*, who would settle in Livorno and utilize their established trade networks. The Medicis succeeded in attracting some of the wealthiest Mediterranean *converso* trading companies who were given unprecedented rights to travel abroad.

*"It is better to lay a hand on a grand duke than a Jew."*

This popular proverb references the prominence of the Jewish community in the early modern period. Livorno's strategic location on the Tyrrhenian Sea made it an appealing port. Tuscany's port in Pisa had filled with sand and could no longer accommodate ships. The Medicis wanted to profit from this geographical advantage and



promoted policies that would attract *conversos* to relocate there.

The Medici granted Livorno city status in 1606. By 1614, the Livorno Jewish community separated from nearby Pisa. The Medici withstood papal and local pressure but never created a ghetto for Jews in Livorno. It became a haven for *conversos* and their descendants.

*"None shall be able to make any inquisition, inquiry, examination, or accusation against you."*

The Livornine edicts granted *conversos* exceptional rights, most importantly, religious tolerance. Jews were once again allowed to live openly as Jews. They had unprecedented commercial freedom, even to travel for business to other countries where they had family ties. They had access to education at universities, were able to work in any profession, and Jewish doctors were permitted to treat Christian patients. Permission was also granted to have Christian servants, nursemaids, and midwives with certain restrictions for wet nurses. No wearing of badges was required. Amnesty for crimes previously committed was granted to all Jews in Livorno, along with full Tuscan citizenship which included tax exemptions.

By the late 17th century, the Jewish population had increased to 3,000. Jews forced to convert in Portugal, accused by the Inquisition tribunals of remaining Jews, came to Livorno in large numbers. These *conversos* were considered to be part of a nation, rather than as individual citizens. The term *nazione* was a medieval term meaning "a community of international merchants." The freedoms granted by the Livornine, were granted to the community as a whole entity, not to individuals. The Medici granted Jews separate nation status for 25 years. Membership was conditional upon residency in Livorno.

*Conversos* were granted the right to revert back to Judaism if they chose. Many did, despite the fact that they had been forced to convert generations before. The Jewish nation enjoyed unprecedented rights of religious and economic freedom under the direct control of the Medici. As an incentive to keep the Jewish population growing, a community dowry was set up to encourage local girls to live a Jewish life upon marriage and for New Christians to return to Judaism.

*"They should come to Livorno or to any other place of Judaism."*  
— Ester Levi's Will (1681)

The Livornine specifically granted Jews permission to build synagogues, thereby becoming the leading center for Jewish and Kabbalistic study. All Jews prayed at the same Sephardi synagogue.



Sephardic rites prevailed through the 18th century and a special Talmudic court opened, presided over by the elders of the community.

The Jewish nation was considered to be a single unit until the 19th century. Despite their wealth and prominence, Jews were excluded from holding individual political office or becoming court Jews. The Livornese aristocracy wanted to keep Jews out of politics. They feared that given their numbers and economic power, they would take over. The "nation" was dominated by Iberian Jews until the late 17th century; after that Italian and North African Jews began to challenge their supremacy. The Medici tried to appease the wealthy and powerful Iberian Jews at the expense of the Italian Jews.

The Grand Synagogue of Livorno was built in 1603. In 1944 the old Grand Synagogue was destroyed by WWII bombings. In 1962 a new synagogue was built on the same site. It is the only modern synagogue in Italy built after the Holocaust and continues to be the place of worship for today's 700 Livornese Jews.

### Trade and Commerce

Sephardic merchants in Livorno traded between Italy, Northern Europe, the Ottoman Empire and India beginning in 1590. In 1593, the first major Jewish entrepreneur, Maggio di Gabriele, moved his factories from Pisa to Livorno, benefiting from new freedoms for Jews. By 1632 Jews were the first to import coffee into Italy, opening Italy's first coffee houses in Livorno. Livorno grew into a powerful commercial center. Jews focused on the coral trade became leading exporters of coral to India and Russia. They led many other industries as well — soap, sugar, tobacco, paper,



Livorno Synagogue



diamonds, textiles, and publishing. They excelled in international trade through family connections, especially in Tripoli and Tunis. By 1765, more than one-third of Livorno's 150 commercial houses were Jewish-owned. The community was so prosperous that Louis XIV's chief minister suggested the monarch offer to resettle the whole community to Marseille!

The Livornine granted Jews the right to own real estate, and live or open shops in any part of the city. They were allowed to rent to non-Jews, however Jews were often forbidden from living in the same building as Christians. Jewish leaders preferred to keep the Jewish community separate and demanded to have specific streets designated for Jews to live. They would pay Christian owners to evacuate homes in selected areas.

The new settlers were mostly *conversos* and their descendants from Spain, arriving via North Africa, Turkey or Portugal. Thus Portuguese and Spanish became the official languages used by the Jewish merchants in Livorno. *Bagitto*, a mix of Spanish, Hebrew and a Livornese dialect, became a local language spoken widely, but rarely written. Spanish was used in the synagogue for religious sermons. *Bagitto* has a sing-song cadence; its pronunciation allowed listeners to distinguish Jewish speakers from Christians and prevented them from understanding private conversations.

The Livornine Edicts included provisions for Jews to publish and trade in books in Hebrew or other languages, printed or handwritten. In 1654, the first *haggadah* was printed in Spanish in Livorno and the first Hebrew press began operating in 1659. Livorno was the only place in Italy a Hebrew book could be purchased in the 17th century. Jewish men in Livorno were overwhelmingly literate because they received a *yeshiva* (Orthodox) education.

Up until the 20th century, Livorno was a center of Sephardic publishing. Its presses supplied the Sephardic communities of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire with

## "Expulsion of the Jews from Spain"



At left we see Portuguese philosopher and statesman, Isaac ben Judah Abravanel. Born into a distinguished Iberian Jewish family, he offered his personal fortune trying to influence the Monarchy in an attempt to prevent expulsion and to revoke

the Edict of Expulsion. He was under tremendous pressure to convert, and he fled to Naples rather than convert. King Ferdinand was dissuaded from accepting Abravanel's financial offer by the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada, seen in the center of painting, who was rumored to be from a *converso* background himself. Crucifix in hand, he is seen in the painting questioning the Monarch if he, like Judas, would betray their Lord for money. In the end, Abravanel managed to receive only a two-day extension for the expulsion of the Jews to occur. The Edict of Expulsion was formally revoked in Spain only in 1968. The artist Solomon Alexander Hart, who was known for his historical paintings, was a prominent 19th-century British Jewish painter and first Jewish member of the Royal Academy in London.

Hebrew books. Many famous rabbis had their works published there. The famous Belforte publisher, founded in 1838 by Solomon Belforte supplied the North African and Levantine market with liturgical books until the outbreak of World War II and is still in operation today.

Outstanding Livornese citizens included Jewish political, cultural and religious figures. Among the most famous was Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) known as "The Protector" for devoting his life to helping Jews worldwide. Born in Livorno to a family of international bankers and raised in England, he made his fortune by the age of 30, helped by his marriage into the Rothschild family. He became one of only 12 Jewish members of the London Stock Exchange and was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1846. His charitable works were known throughout the Jewish world.

Elijah Benamozegh was a 19th century intellectual, liberal theologian, and noted Kabbalist. Born in Livorno in 1823, his family was originally from Fez, Morocco. In

1847 he was appointed rabbi and served for half a century. He wrote in Italian, Hebrew and French and called upon Jews to take an active part in Italian life, promoting dialogue between Jews and Christians. The Piazza Benamozegh where the Livorno Synagogue is located was named for him.

In 1796 after Napoleon's invasion of Livorno, things began to deteriorate for Jews. Not only was the port badly hit by the English blockade, but the French withdrew the special privileges formerly granted to the Jews by the Medicis. In 1808, trade with England was stopped during the Napoleonic Wars, and the city's economy declined. Livorno's supremacy as a commercial port faded when Tuscany was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1859, and other ports prevailed. In the 1890s Livorno lost its status as a free port, and by 1904 only 3,000 Jews remained in Livorno, down from 10,000.

As commerce waned, many Jews emigrated elsewhere. During WWII, about 120 Livornese Jews were sent to concentration camps. In 1967 after the Six Day War in





Israel, a few hundred Jews from Libya and other Arab countries arrived, welcomed by Jews from Tripoli. Today, despite the small Jewish population, the spirit of the *converso* Jewish world lives on in Livorno.

Jews have influenced Livornese tastes in many ways. Local cuisine is quite spicy, and reportedly this reflects the strong character of the *conversos* who arrived in the 1600s. In fact, many traditional dishes in Livorno are of Jewish origin, especially fish dishes. Relatives from North African cities brought back what would become key ingredients of Italian cuisine. Tomatoes for example, were introduced to Italy by Livorno's Spanish Jewish merchants and thus arrived in Livorno earlier than in other parts of Europe. Potatoes, pumpkins, corn, and peppers were also introduced by Livorno's Spanish Jews. The ubiquitous *roschette* – the little ring-shaped bread snacks found all over town similar to breadsticks – are an example of how Jewish recipes have become part of mainstream Livornese cuisine.

Livorno's famous chocolate desserts such as *budino* originated from both commercial ties to Bayonne, France, a center for Jewish chocolate-making, and trade with *conversos* in Amsterdam who started the first chocolate industry with cocoa sent by New Christians.

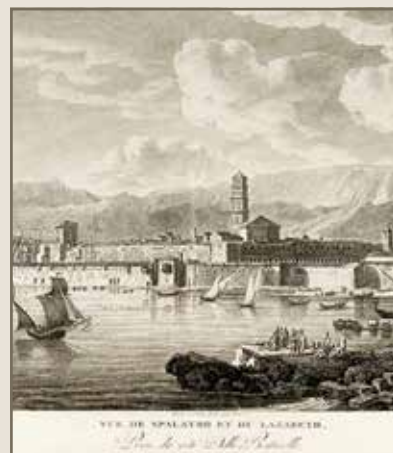
### Livorno Jewish Sites Today

Several sights are worth visiting. Modigliani's birthplace, the Casa Modigliani, is now a museum. Marini Oratory, a former 19th-century synagogue now houses the Livorno Jewish Museum exhibiting liturgical objects and the original synagogue ark brought to Livorno by Sephardi Jews during the Inquisition. A Jewish cemetery opened in 1837 is still in use today. It contains the gravestones of two earlier cemeteries as well as marble plaques, one commemorating World War I losses and the other victims of the Holocaust. 🕯

## Lazaret, the Original Quarantine in Split

BY DANIELA ROGULJ, TOTAL CROATIA NEWS

The word “quarantine” (literally, 40 days) dates back to the Venetian demand that ships arriving from plague-ridden countries wait for 40 days before docking. Sick passengers were subsequently placed in the *lazaretto*, or our more familiar *lazaret*, a hospital for those with contagious diseases. In the 16th century, when the Venetian-ruled city of Split was the busiest port along the Venetian-Ottoman trade route, the town's *lazaret* was designed by Daniel Rodriguez, a Venetian Jew of Portuguese descent. But Rodriguez demanded something in return for his plan, “that the Venetian Republic receive a colony of Jews exiled from Spain to Marjun,” one of Split's most prominent hilltops. The deal was done and Rodriguez helped Split become, “the golden ring between the East and Venice.”



*Excerpt of Louis-François Cassas' Vue de Spalatro ed du Lazareth (View of Split and Its Quarantine Hospital), 1782. (Courtesy of Collectio Felbar.)*



*The city of Split, Croatia today*

# Seeing the Light About The Spanish Inquisition

A chance meeting  
leads to a journey  
of discovery



Penny Nisson

Penny Nisson has been the director of education for Mizel Museum in Denver, Colorado for the past six years. She has worked as an educator for programs and in various roles at the museum for the past 25 years. Especially with regard to Holocaust education and working with numerous Holocaust survivors, teaching about empathy and the Golden Rule continues to drive her involvement in education. She interacts with principals, teachers and staff in schools. She communicates and partners with museum professionals and organization leaders across Colorado, the United States and beyond. Her professional responsibilities include attending meetings and workshops for organizations such as the Scientific and Cultural Collaborative, Jewish Colorado, the ADL, Colorado Holocaust Educators, Jewish Educators Council, and the Council of American Jewish Museums.

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BY PENNY NISSON

Happenstance brought me to Spain and Portugal in 2019. At a Council of American Jewish Museums conference in Los Angeles, I met an elegant gentleman, Jean-Jacques Salomon. During our conversation, a friend approached, Abby Schwartz, the director of the Skirball Museum Cincinnati. After hearing that Jean-Jacques lives in Portugal, she stated that she had a trip to Spain and Portugal planned. Upon my inquiry, it turned out the trip was open to people outside the group that Abby would travel with, and I signed on. Jean-Jacques gave us his card and invited us to visit him in Portugal, which we did.

A total of 28 people from diverse backgrounds from Cincinnati, Ohio, Andover and Newton, Massachusetts, and Denver, including three rabbis, converged and journeyed together. The itinerary took us through Madrid, Toledo, Cordova, Seville, Granada, Gerona, and Barcelona in Spain. Several members of the group (17 in all) went on to Portugal, including Abby, myself and our husbands.

We met Jean-Jacques and his lovely wife Ariane at our hotel in Lisbon and were blessed to hear of Jean-Jacques' quest to acquire funding and see built, the Jewish Museum of Lisbon. Land has been designated in a great location near other museums, and architect Daniel Libeskind (World Trade Center, New York) is involved with design of the building. This undertaking

by Jean-Jacques is a ray of light in a region where darkness was an oppressive shroud forced upon the Jewish people.

Ayelet, "gazelle of the dawn," was the travel company that arranged our travel logistics. On this Jewish-focused tour, it was hard to fathom that Jews all but disappeared in regions bloodied by greed and intolerance in the age of the Spanish Inquisition. Profound sadness permeated our experiences as we toured magnificent landscapes that were tainted by persecution. But alive are seeds of hope for Jewish growth. In the process of understanding what I experienced, meeting Jean-Jacques was *bashert*, "meant to be." As a long-time artist, educator and museum professional, I didn't really "get" the Spanish Inquisition in a meaningful way. In my work as director of education for the Mizel Museum in Denver, the small wall display about the Spanish Inquisition was passed over to focus more on *shtetl* life and the Holocaust. Not anymore.

I will honor Sefarad and feel blessed by this epiphany.

*Top photo, Stone motif in Toledo*

*Next page, right, Peace Dove detail, Memória e Reconciliação, memorial erected by the Catholic Church in São Domingos Square, Lisbon*

*Bottom, Jewish Quarter in Toledo*





# Gazelle OF THE Dawn

I know something now  
I didn't know before,  
seeing a hallowed space  
where once was a sacred door.

I don't want to imagine  
the violence that came to fore,  
but I can much appreciate  
my freedom to explore.

I went on a trip to Spain  
so much I didn't understand,  
about the Spanish Inquisition  
spilling blood across the land.

I have become a witness  
but can't fathom the pain,  
an oppressive age of destruction  
reaching Portugal from Spain.

My touring left me pondering  
the magnitude of loss,  
from an edict of vile evil  
corruption and hatred as boss.

The buildings tell a story  
layers of history to observe,  
blatant human intolerance  
over the type of G-d we serve.

Artists depicted perspective  
in images that we see,  
they scream about injustice  
that was impossible to flee.

Picasso, Goya, Velasquez,  
Gaudi, Dali and Miro,  
genius works by Masters  
Spain inspired them so.

Soaring monuments of religion  
silver and gold glitters vast,  
blood spilled for triumph  
over Jews that lived in the past.

The cities, the beauty of nature,  
the people, the museums, the food,  
Spain is a historical landscape  
that both brightens and darkens your mood.

Two women from faraway places  
in a Casa with a kitchen and books,  
are inviting a Jewish community  
to spread light in dark crannies and nooks.

In Portugal is a man Jean-Jacques  
he's using his life for good,  
in pursuit of a Jewish museum  
where a void once stood.

The history of Jewish Portugal  
in Lisbon is soon to be,  
designed by Daniel Libeskind  
the planting of a family tree.

Jews and their legacy will exist  
Sefarad is faith and love,  
a seed which will grow and prosper  
blessed from heaven above.

Today I teach at a museum  
where freedom allows a voice,  
trying to inspire people  
to understand their choice.

In repair of a broken world  
every day we can engage,  
treat others as we want to be treated  
setting a more peaceful stage.

Now I can communicate about Spain  
to memorialize and honor those gone,  
my personal pledge not to forget  
out of darkness I see the dawn.

— Penny Nisson



## Sparks of memory light the way home

**A**ward-winning songwriter Larry Lesser in early February 2020 released *SPARKS*, an ambitious album of 24 original songs deeply grounded in Jewish text and values. The album includes “Lights Lead Home,” his heartfelt composite of experiences of *b’nai anusim* he has known from his time in El Paso, home of the Anusim Center of El Paso. Lesser has usually played this song to open most of the 15 years’ worth of annual Sephardic Anusim Conferences that won Congregation B’nai Zion a 2009 Solomon Schechter Gold Award for Synagogue Excellence in Celebrations and Dedications, and yielded the passage of a 2009 USCJ resolution welcoming *b’nai anusim* and memorializing the Spanish Inquisition as part of *Tisha B’Av* observances. The song also appeals to those who do not have Sephardic ancestry, as it poignantly reveals more generally how ritual can awaken and reveal heritage or soul that is within all of us.

A slightly earlier version of the lyric (with less Spanish) was featured in a 2010 national resource guide compiled by Rabbis Stephen Leon and Juan Mejía and a video of Lesser performing that version at a Sephardic Anusim Conference is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=psn3mGNMR-g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psn3mGNMR-g).

Information on Lesser’s new album is at [www.larrylesser.com/sparks](http://www.larrylesser.com/sparks) and the new lyric for “Lights Lead Home” is reprinted here with Larry’s permission. 



Larry Lesser

**L**arry Lesser is a Houston-raised El Paso-based, award-winning educator, songwriter, author, and speaker blessed to have integrated several realms of experience, including: education, math/statistics, and poetry/song.

His passion for combining music and math/statistics has made its way into his research, grant-writing, teaching, outreach, and service; and over 120 of his published poems/songs are discipline-related. He has even found ways to connect math/statistics education with his Jewish background, yielding some of the first national journal articles in this niche. He also recorded an album of original Jewish songs.

Larry is a lifelong learner with a gift for helping diverse audiences make connections among diverse realms of content.

### LIGHTS LEAD HOME

Words & Music ©2007, 2014 Lawrence (“Larry”) Mark Lesser  
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Rosa Mendez wonders why  
her *abuela* drew the blinds,  
lit two candles and closed her eyes  
on Friday nights.

Lights lead home, lights lead home  
over ocean of soul.

Here in this New World land,  
Rosa starts to understand  
Traditions hidden, lost or banned,  
since Ferdinand.

Lights lead home, lights lead home  
over ocean of soul.

It's like she found an ancient key  
that opened doors of memory:  
fin'ly safe now to see  
sparks redeem.

Lights lead home, lights lead home  
over ocean of soul.

Lights lead home, welcome home  
over ocean of soul,  
*sobre el alma del mar.*

### Speaking of El Paso...

**T**he Anusim Center in El Paso had been quite active until COVID-19 put things on hold. I had been visiting a group of about 50 people including children every month in the city of Juarez, Mexico, enjoying classes, services, observing holidays and other activities. Genie Milgrom visited and spoke to the group, and also at University of Texas El Paso. My last visit was in February for *Tu Bishvat*; we planted a tree and held a service. Film producer Isaac Arstenstein and crew also visited and filmed one of our Juarez programs for his new film. Thanks to board members Blanca Carrasco and Emanuel Velez, connection to Juarez has been successful. As we plan for the future, we wish everyone a safe, healthy and meaningful summer, surviving this difficult time. — Rabbi Stephen Leon, Director Anusim Center





## SEFARAD

**T**hanks to the Jewish community of Porto, Portugal, *SEFARAD*, a feature-length documentary film about its history, is now viewable online. The film explores the long history of the community and its revival in the 19th century with the help of army Captain Arturo Carlos de Barros Basto.

*SEFARAD* covers centuries of Jewish history in Portugal, alternating between the ages and following individual stories of real historical figures beginning in the 15th century to community leaders in modern times.

For more details visit

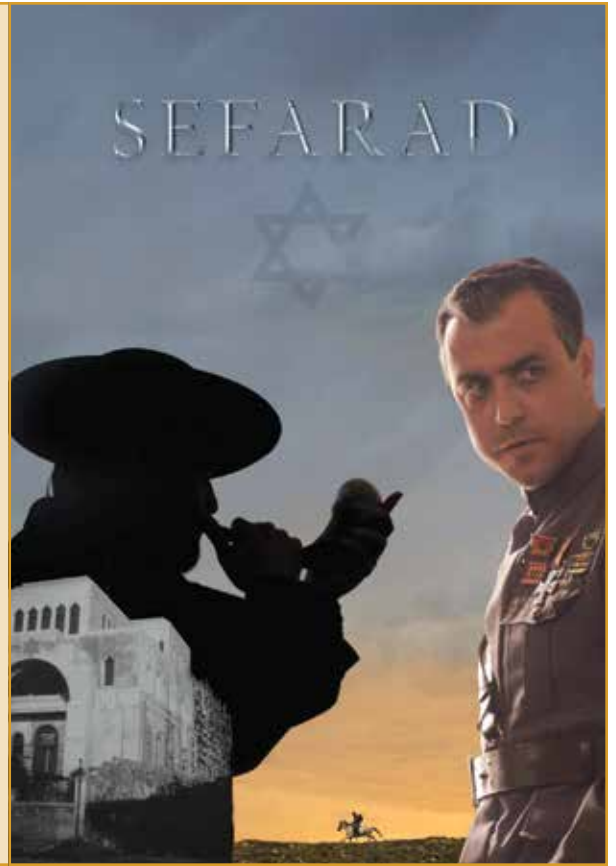
[www.jta.org/quick-reads/tiny-portuguese-jewish-community-makes-a-1-2-million-feature-film-about-its-history](http://www.jta.org/quick-reads/tiny-portuguese-jewish-community-makes-a-1-2-million-feature-film-about-its-history)

And to see the film on Amazon Prime,

[www.amazon.com/Sefarad-Rodrigo-Santos/dp/B08IDQJ8X9](http://www.amazon.com/Sefarad-Rodrigo-Santos/dp/B08IDQJ8X9)

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*Editor's note — Arturo Barros Basto was a Portuguese Jewish descendant who believed in preserving the heritage and culture of the Jews of Portugal. He started a newsletter after the end of World War I in order to connect the anusim. Our magazine carries the same name he gave the newsletter, HaLapid, the torch in Hebrew (O Facho in Portuguese), which lights the way.*



## New Film from Paula Amar Schwartz

**A** *Long Journey: The Hidden Jews of the Southwest*, a one-hour documentary by award-winning director Isaac Arstein and produced by Paula Amar Schwartz, brings to life the unique stories of contemporary families in the American Southwest whose secret was their hidden Jewish roots while living an outwardly Catholic life. Their 400-year journey started in Spain, continued through Colonial Mexico, and into remote villages in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. The physical journey of these secret Jews — the *conversos* — ended in colonial times; their internal journeys continue to this day. *A Long Journey: The Hidden Jews of the Southwest* is a Cinewest-NMPBS co-production.



*Producer Paula Amar Schwartz, former president of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, at work in the Acoma Pueblo, for Challah Rising in the Desert: The Jews of New Mexico (photo courtesy of Cinewest Productions).*

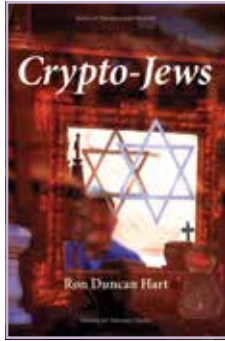
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**A *Long Journey* will air nationally on PBS in Autumn 2020. For more information and to see the film trailer visit: [www.cinewest.net](http://www.cinewest.net).**

## Crypto-Jews, The Long Journey

By Ron Duncan Hart  
Institute for Tolerance Studies  
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2020

For anyone who is fascinated by this subject, the definitive history of crypto-Jews is finally between two covers of a book. In this compelling yet easy read,



historian/publisher/and anthropologist Ron Duncan Hart (Gaon Books and Web Films and the Institute for Tolerance Studies) tells the story with an objective perspective and broad scope, starting with profiles of descendants of crypto-Jews familiar to us all — people like Sonya Loya, Rabbi Juan Mejia, Maria Apodaca, Rabbi Jordi Gendra Molina, Isabelle Sandoval, John Garcia, and Blanca Garza Enrique Carrasco.

By so doing, Hart puts recognizable faces on a history that goes back 500 years, encompassing hundreds of thousands of nameless who died for their faith, or betrayed it in order to stay alive, only to hang on in some hidden fashion for generations. Hart doesn't miss a minute of the Iberian experience, the effects of the Edict of Expulsion, the Diaspora to other lands, and more in five neatly contained sections starting with 1. Those Who Would Speak; 2. Classic Judasim in Spain and Portugal; 3. Crypto-Judasim — Moving to the Americas; 4. Crypto-Judaism in the U.S. and Mexico; and 5. The Return to Judaism Movement.

Replete with maps, archival photos, and a stunning bibliography (worth the price of the book alone), the text is deeply enriched by scholarly contributions lent by leaders in the field. Quotes from Jane Gerber,

Stanley Hordes, Roger Martinez Davila, Seth Kunin, Rabbi Stephen Leon, David Graizbord, David Gitlitz, Dolores Sloan, Judith Halevy, Janice Leibman Jacobs and Robert Chazan to name a few. Accessible in size and cost, this publication could easily form the backbone of any study group. Hart has taken the mystery out of this profound history, but not the miracle. At a time when the subject has gone mainstream, we owe thanks to an author who has made it palatable and inspiring.

— Corinne Joy Brown

## Return of Carvajal, A Mystery

By Ilan Stavans  
Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019.  
With etchings by Eko.

This little book tells the story of a manuscript written by one of the most compelling characters in the history of crypto-Judaism, Luis de Carvajal el Mozo “the younger,”

who was burned at the stake on December 8, 1596, together with other members of his family. The manuscript was tiny — about 3 inches by 5 inches, and written in very small handwriting. (Perhaps this is the reason the current book is smaller than usual—albeit larger than the Carvajal manuscript, at 4 inches by 6 inches). The booklet contains Carvajal's autobiography, and information about Judaism including a prayer manual, the Ten Commandments, and a version of the 13 Principles of Maimonides.

Carvajal's story is well-known, popularized by Seymour Liebman, Martin Cohen and others; the story of the booklet itself is less well known. It seems to have disappeared

from the *Archivo General de la Nación* around 1932. How it disappeared is a mystery. Stavans suggests a number of scenarios: one or another of competing researchers Alfonso del Torro and Joseph Nachbin might be responsible, and he mentions other theories, including simply careless librarians and inadequate security protocols. In any case, the item disappeared and researchers who claim to have seen it most likely saw a transcript, not the original.

The book resurfaced in the Schwann Auction Galleries catalogue of 2016. Stavans describes his own role and the role of others in authenticating the booklet, and convincing the purchaser, Leonard Millbank, to repatriate the book to Mexico. Stavans attempted to learn more about where the manuscript was all those years. All he could determine is that it was sold at auction in London in December 2015, and was previously it in the possession of a couple in Michigan for some decades — the London auction house could not give any further information. In all likelihood then, the mystery of how the booklet disappeared will remain.

Given Carvajal's story, this little booklet written in the 1590s, with its tiny writing, spiritual autobiography, and guidance for Jewish practice, is an iconic symbol of Jewish life in Mexico. Indeed, it is relevant

The same country that burned Carvajal at the stake is now celebrating his triumphant return.





in many areas of the world in which, on the one hand, antisemitism and racial animus are rife, and assimilationist tendencies and disinterest in Judaism a common among the Jewish population. It also is a sign that “the attempt to look, with objective eyes, at the first Jews in the Americas was a corrective in American history [emphasis in original] — that is, not only for the United States but for the other Americas as well.” Although Stavans thinks the manuscript should be in an “active secure, special collection in a trustworthy library,” not in a museum exhibition, he also notes the irony that “the same country that burned Carvajal at the stake is now celebrating his triumphant return.”

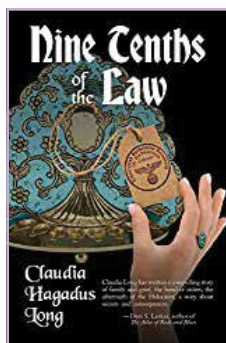
Stavans is a master stylist, this short book is a quick and exciting read. Along the way, Stavans references the most important publications about Carvajal and the Inquisition, with excellent footnotes. Images of the first and last pages of the Carvajal manuscript, and 14 etchings by Eko grace the volume. Stavans’s account of the loss and rediscovery of Carvajal’s autobiography is a worthy read.

— Seth Ward

## Nine Tenths of the Law

By Claudia Hagadus Long  
April 2020

Claudia Hagadus Long has consistently delivered compelling fiction for our readers around the themes of the Iberian Diaspora in the New World, mainly Colonial Mexico. But this time around she has incorporated the entire repertoire of subjects germane to survivors of trauma, be it the Inquisition or the modern day Holocaust.



This... might be Ms. Long's finest work to date...



Two sisters, Lilly and Zara, Sephardim in ancestry, have never fully understood or recovered from their late mother’s Holocaust experiences centered in Germany. Their mother survived, but at great cost. Her spirit haunts one of the sisters who becomes a vehicle for her memories and experiences, expressed through visual and emotional episodes. These insights and revelations bear light in the sisters’ often upside-down lives, as they engage in the hunt for a stolen menorah that once belonged to their mother’s family, as well as attempt to clarify their own mixed identities in an assimilated Jewish world.

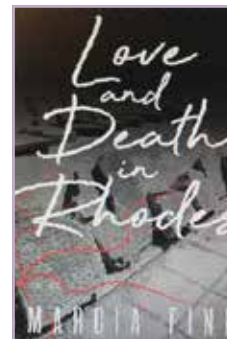
Written with wit, compassion and well-researched detail, Long takes us on a wild ride through Manhattan, into the dark world of stolen art during World War II, and deep into rural Vermont, all in search of the treasured artifact. One layer beneath is the deeper attachment to Jewish ritual, to meaning and the power of memory. This book might be Ms. Long’s finest work to date, one that will keep you turning the page with well-crafted suspense, laced with sophisticated humor. The contemporary NYC setting feels intimate and familiar for anyone who has spent any time in the city, and the unresolved ambivalence between the two sisters about how they live their lives and who they really are is painfully on target for many of us. It is a fresh look at Jewish life, what we have inherited and what we choose to preserve. — CJB



## Love and Death in Rhodes

By Marcia Fine  
L'Image Press, 2020

Whether you are looking for romance, biblical history or human tragedy, the book *Love and Death in Rhodes* by Marcia Fine offers something for you. Ms.



Fine, an award-winning author of seven novels and an exceptional scholar of the Sephardic Diaspora, has crafted a story of Luna, introduced at the age of 14, who is living in Rhodes with her Orthodox Jewish family in the 1930s and betrothed to marry a member of the community. Enter a handsome young man enlisted in the Italian navy. Events start to spin that impact the trajectory of Luna’s life and the lives of others who live on the idyllic Greek island of Rhodes before the tragic events of World War II.

This novella is written in three parts; first is Luna’s story which serves as the glue that holds the whole story together. The second part is a flashback focusing on Shabbatai Tzvi, a rabbi and false prophet who lived in the 1600s. He and his followers believed that he was the messiah and together escaped a synagogue scandal. Upon arriving in Constantinople, Tzvi was imprisoned and forced to either convert to Islam or die.

The third part of the book tells the story of Babatha, a woman of great wealth who left a cache of letters in a cave where Jews took refuge during the time of Bar Kokhba, a warrior fighting the Romans for the Jewish people in 132 CE. The tragedies of the Biblical era, the Holocaust and the effects on the Jewish people, and the community of Rhodes are all interwoven in this tale of family loyalty, survival and endurance. >>>



*Love and Death in Rhodes* revolves around a strong woman who lives, loves and manages to save herself and her family. Luna is a character who represents the Sephardic Jews of Rhodes and who shares with us atrocities that befell them during World War II, as it has for Jews throughout history. On finishing the book, readers may find themselves wanting to learn more about the real stories of the people that the book is based upon.

— Linda Katchen

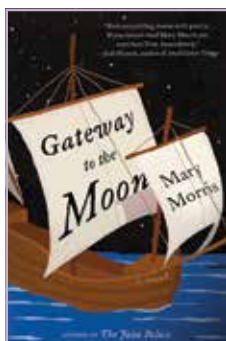
Linda Katchen PhD is a retired English teacher and longtime member of SCJS. She lives in Denver, Colorado.



## Gateway to the Moon

By Mary Morris  
Anchor Books, New York, 2019

The publication in 2005 of *To the End of the Earth: The Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*, the groundbreaking book by Stanley Hordes, introduced a subject that has since become fertile ground for the imagination of creative writers. *Gateway to the Moon* by Mary Morris is a recent addition to the list of historical novels that have appeared on the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism in New Mexico and its background trail to the sordid Spanish Inquisition.



This is a beautifully written book; the story develops and characters come to life in an interweaving of fictional and historic people and events. The central story takes place in 1992 New Mexico, but it is periodically interrupted by relevant historical episodes. There are 38 chapters, each a little story with the year indicated in the title, and an ending which simultaneously produces

suspense and a sense of connection to the whole. As we go back and forth in time, the pervasive themes of celestial navigation, the night sky, darkness (in its real and metaphorical sense), add a mystical level to the historical, familial, and even culinary and medical connections that are revealed as we progress in the story.

### The Characters and Story

In Entrada, an impoverished small town in New Mexico, 15-year-old Miguel Torres has a passion for astronomy and regularly goes to a cemetery at the top of a hill at night to look at the stars and the galaxies through his homemade telescope, trying to understand the mysteries of the universal expanse. He gets a summer job as a babysitter for a Jewish family with two small children, newly transplanted from NYC to nearby Colibri Canyon. As we would expect, he is surprised to witness rituals in this family reminiscent of those in his own. But for the time being there are more pressing issues for Miguel in his experience with the Rothsteins and the children.

Vincente Roybal, the grocery store owner who claims that everyone in town is related, is the town's amateur genealogist. He delves into archives to find out who settled here first and when, and why in the world anyone would choose to settle in this podunk town, which today everybody wants to leave.

One person who has left is Elena, sister of Miguel's father, Roberto. She is a dancer and lives in New York City, and sends postcards to Miguel from her various travels, with nothing written on them but "greetings from" wherever the card is from. Miguel does not know why she sends him these.

The town's full name is Entrada de La Luna, meaning Gateway to the Moon. As

we find out in Chapter 28, none other than the conquistador Francisco Vazques de Coronado named it, when he noticed the moon rising between the two hills there.

In 1492 we are with Christopher Columbus sailing westward on the ship *Santa Maria*. On board is the *converso* Luis de Torres, who was hired by Columbus as a potential translator for communication with "the great Khan in China" whom Columbus expected to meet! (Torres knew many languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic — but of course, none of them were useful in contact with the natives Columbus and his crew eventually met.) In this section we begin to sense the connection of the historical Luis de Torres to the fictional Miguel of 20th-century New Mexico.

In each of the historical chapters we are introduced to someone who is related to Luis de Torres, in the context of an event in a specific time and place. In 1492 Spain (Seville) we confront the terror of the Inquisition. Other chapters relate to each of

the following years: 1494 (Columbus' second trip); 1496 (Lisbon, forced conversions); 1535 (Beatrice de Luna / Doña Gracia Nasi, Lisbon, and smuggling of *conversos* out of Portugal); 1569 (*El Iluminado* in Mexico, clearly based on the story of Luis de

Carvajal el Moso); and 1599 (the Inquisition in Mexico). One of the chapters takes place in Korea during the Korean War and involves Miguel's grandfather and the Jewish dentist he works for. Briefly, with these interjections the author develops the story's premise that Miguel Torres of 20th-century New Mexico is a direct descendant of the historical Luis de Torres.

This premise is also indicated in the chart titled "Genealogy: The De Torres Family" which precedes the novel's text. There is

The story... and characters come to life in an interweaving of fictional and historic people and events.





# NEW JEWISH MUSEUM COMING TO MADRID

BY CORINNE JOY BROWN

also other introductory information in this section: Historical Note, Chronology, and Principal Characters, all of which is useful as a reference, with one caveat: there are a couple of historical mistakes, as I will indicate below.

## Conclusion

*Gateway to the Moon* is a beautifully told story that takes the reader on a fascinating historical journey. Besides basing it on facts of history, the author has woven in auxiliary information that adorns and adds spice to the subject matter. We get facts about astronomy, satellites and space shuttles, and the terrain, flora and fauna of northern New Mexico. We learn about food in Morocco and places in New York, and the history of cocoa and chocolate-making. Who knew that there was a clock with Hebrew letters whose hands go backwards, or that dung beetles navigate with the stars?

This book is such a joy to read that I wondered if I should even mention the historical mistake it contains. But I will do it for the readers of *HaLapid*, the voice of SCIS, a historical society.

The first sentence under “Historical Note” and one repeated more than once within the story states: “In 1492 with the Alhambra Decree, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ordered all Jews and Muslims to convert to Christianity or be expelled from Spain.”

Fact 1: The Alhambra Decree, also known as the Edict of Expulsion, did not mention Muslims at all. It was directed only at Jews, that is Jews who had not converted to Catholicism. In fact, after the conquest of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold, Ferdinand and Isabella gave special permission to the Muslims to remain and practice their religion. Muslims were not fully expelled until 1609.

Fact 2: The Edict does not oblige anyone to convert, nor does it mention converting at all. The conversion option for Jews was implicit, not explicit.

— Rachel Arnado Bortnick



*The building known as “The Ungovernable,” will become the Jewish Museum of Madrid; pictured here when it was still illegally occupied by far-left activists.*

Until now the Spanish city of Madrid has had no formal Jewish museum, “yet it has deep ties to Jews around the world who value Sephardic culture established prior to the Expulsion of 1492,” according to Mayor Jose Luis Martínez-Almeida. The museum will be housed in a historic building in the central Cortes area and funded by *Fundacion Hispano-Judia*, a Madrid nonprofit promoting Jewish heritage. It is scheduled to open by 2023.

*Almudena Cathedral’s stained-glass window hints at Madrid’s “deep ties to Jews around the world.”*



# THE *New* JEWISH MUSEUM OF LISBON

COURTESY OF ASSOCIATION HAGADA — JEWISH MUSEUM OF LISBON

History will soon be made as Lisbon, Portugal welcomes the new Jewish Museum of Lisbon designed by Daniel Libeskind of New York, the internationally renowned architect selected for the project.

The museum site, located in Belém, is in the major tourist area near many of the city's historical monuments and museums, facing the iconic Belém Tower and the scenic Tagus river. As far back as the 15th century, ships would depart from here on maritime voyages of discovery, a time when Portuguese Jews played a significant role as astronomers, mathematicians and financiers.

Scheduled for completion by the end of 2022, the museum will enjoy a favorable environment in a country known to be one of the most peaceful and safe in the world. Its quality of life, its recently acquired economical, political and social stability, and its tolerant and liberal society, have attracted a fast-growing tourist industry, making the 10th oldest country in the world (established 1143) one of the "Best Destinations in Europe" (as of 2018). Lisbon is recognized today as cosmopolitan, innovative and creative, adapting to modern challenges while staying true to its authenticity.

The Jewish history of Portugal, particularly between the 12th and 15th centuries,



is profound. As craftsmen, doctors, mathematicians, astrologers, astronomers, and members of trade and finance, the Jewish people played an important role in society. They lived in their own quarters (*Iudiarías*) and built synagogues, schools, cemeteries and ritual baths.

In spite of the discriminatory measures to which these communities were subjected, this period was a time of coexistence between the Jewish minority and the Christian majority. This coexistence was brutally interrupted with the Edict of Expulsion by order of the Portuguese king, Dom Manuel I in 1496, with forced conversions in 1497, and later in 1536, with the installation of the Inquisition. Over time, the mark left by the Jewish presence in society was erased from Portuguese memory.



Jean-Jacques Salomon  
Vice Chairman

Jean-Jacques was born in France and raised in postwar Germany. He is a banker who has held various senior executive positions in a leading international banking group in Paris, New York, Madrid, Nassau, Geneva, Johannesburg, and Zurich. He retired in Portugal in 2016 and joined the JML project a few months later. With a passion for history, political science and the arts, he has more particularly taken responsibility for architecture and fundraising.

Vestiges of Jewish life remained scattered throughout the country however, in architecture, public places (such as "Jewish Street," "Alley of the Jew," "Walk of the Master," "Cross of the Synagogue"), and in language, customs, culture, and mentality. Jewish heritage is part of the Portuguese national identity.

Despite this significant Jewish presence in Portugal's history, Lisbon was, until now, one of the few European capitals without a Jewish museum. In order to "uncover" this heritage that remains unknown not





only to a large portion of the Portuguese population but also internationally, its creation will attract significant sections of Portuguese and foreign visitors interested in an increasingly sought-after multicultural perspective.

Today a Jewish presence exists again in Portugal, partly in the form of descendants of ancient Iberian Jews or “crypto-Jews” who maintained their Jewish faith throughout the centuries and who reasserted their Jewish identity openly in the 20th century, and also partly due to groups of Sephardic Jews, largely from Morocco and Gibraltar, who began to settle in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The Shaaré Tikva Synagogue and almost all the institutions of the Jewish Community of Lisbon were the fruit of Sephardic

Jews. Another group, Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, arrived in the 20th century following anti-Semitic and Nazi persecutions. Finally, benefiting from the opening of Portugal after the establishment of democracy in 1974 and its entry into the European Union in 1986, Jews from various parts of the world (Brazil, South Africa, and several European countries) settled in Portugal and made their own contributions.

It is worth mentioning the acquisition of Portuguese nationality by naturalization on behalf of the descendants of Sephardic Jews of Portuguese origin whose families had been persecuted by the Inquisition. This law has attracted the interest of many potential beneficiaries and may, in the future, result in an even greater community of Jewish people in Portugal.

### The first, dealing with Jewish religious identity, will unfold in three cycles:

- A. *The cycle of wisdom*, a focus on the Torah and the Talmud, the foundation of Jewish spirituality and experience, instilling teachings, values and ethics.
- B. *The cycle of life*, with the essential moments that guide the life of a Jew from birth to death, including the *brit-mila* (circumcision), the *bar mitzvah* (religious coming of age), the *chuppah* (marriage), and death.
- C. *The cycle of time*, rhythms governed by the annual Jewish calendar, with its festivities, rites and symbols: Shabbat and Jewish festivals are fundamental to identification and transmission.

### The second, the historical circuit, will unfold in five parts:

Primary is the period of coexistence and contributions made by Jews between the 12th–15th centuries, followed by the era of intolerance, the Jewish–Portuguese Diaspora, and the contemporary return of Judaism.

- A. *Historical Testimonies and Vestiges of Portugal as a Nation*. This circuit focuses on the history of the Jews in Portugal, particularly Lisbon, and evokes the earliest records before the establishment of Portugal as a country.
- B. *The Era of Co-Existence or “Time of the Jews,” 12th–15th Centuries*. Central on the circuit, visitors will find a virtual representation of the Jewish quarter of Lisbon. The role of the Jews will be documented by magnificent bibles printed in Hebrew and numerous contributions and artifacts relating to the Portuguese maritime discoveries, to medicine, to finance, and to their work as skilled artisans. >>>



Esther Mucznik  
Founder & Chairman

Esther was born in Lisbon and lived in Israel and Paris. She is a researcher, author and columnist for *Público*, a Portuguese newspaper. Vice chairman of the Jewish Community of Lisbon from 2002 to 2016, she is also the founder of the Jewish Studies Association, founder and president of the Holocaust Remembrance and Teaching Association and member of the National Committee of the Religious Liberty Commission. Esther is the conceptual founder and author of the museum program.

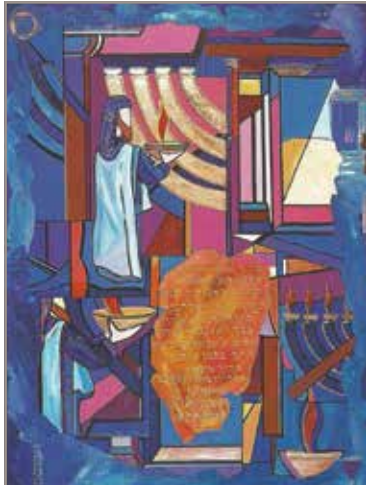
## THE MUSEUM PROGRAM

The Museum program will be composed of a permanent exhibition complemented by temporary exhibitions integrating a circuit dedicated to Jewish religious culture and another organized chronologically and thematically.

“Le Sofer” — Alain Kleinmann



**C. The Age of Intolerance: Expulsion, Forced Conversion and Inquisition.** This wing shows the darkest period represented in the museum when Judaism was outlawed and forced conversions were decreed by King Dom Manuel in 1497, a new period of



*Stained glass by David Kessel, Lisbon, 2018*



*Engraving of Gracia Nasi in The Last Days of Shylock, by Ludwig Lewisohn and illustrated by Arthur Szyk, London/New York, 1931*

Portuguese history marked by New Christians and *conversos*. Here visitors will see the royal decrees that dictated the Expulsion and forced conversion of the Jews, as well as the subsequent Papal Bull establishing the Court of Inquisition in 1536.

**D. The Jewish Portuguese Diaspora, 16th–18th Centuries.** As a direct consequence of Inquisitional persecution, this chapter of Judeo-Portuguese history and its worldwide



*Romain ring stone, 2nd - 3rd century AD, National Museum of Archeology, Lisbon  
Tombstone with Menorah, dating from 5th century, Mértola (Portugal)*



*Stone panel from the Great Synagogue of Lisbon, 1307*

impact will be experienced via a tactile globe identifying the main destinations and points of refuge, as well as select routes of prominent figures. Artifacts of Jewish culture such as documents, paintings, ceramics, and stories of daily life and work will illustrate the exceptional contributions that these men and women, pioneers of Sephardic globalization, made in the countries that welcomed them.

**E. The Contemporary Resurgence of Judaism in the 19th and 20th Centuries.** Made possible by the end of the distinction between new and old Christians by the Marquis of Pombal and the abolition of the Inquisition in 1821, the return of Judaism will be told with an emphasis on Lisbon, but also include its main centers in the Azores, Faro, Porto and Belmonte.

This includes the creation of the Shaaré Tikvá Synagogue in 1902–1904; the legal recognition of the CIL in 1912; World War II and the role of the community — men and women who stood out for innovative contributions to Portuguese society; and the current experience of Portuguese Judaism will give visitors a picture of a living reality, a future-oriented and integrated community linked to the civic and cultural life of the city and the country.

For the relevance of the Jewish Museum of Lisbon to the contemporary debate on Jewish heritage in Portugal's history and the challenges facing the current presence, the museum will feature various pieces of interpretive modern art.

#### **Editor's Note:**

We have been in communication with Jean-Jacques Salomon and SCIS looks forward to collaboration with this museum, a much needed addition to the cultural institutions of Lisbon. 🔥

## **History in the Making**

The Portuguese Parliament has designated March 31st as an annual Memorial Day for victims of the Inquisition.





# MEIS

# THE MUSEUM OF ITALIAN JUDAISM AND THE SHOAH

COURTESY OF BETH LURIE

The Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah, *Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah*, (MEIS), is being constructed in Ferrara, Italy on the grounds of a former prison that was used to detain anti-fascist partisans and Jews before sending them to death camps during World War II. Italian laws of 2003 and 2006 guaranteed the creation and



*Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah (MEIS), Ferrara, Italy*



*MEIS Auditorium*

funding of the museum with the purpose of “bearing witness to the events that have characterized the 2,000 years of Jewish presence in Italy.” Permanent exhibits such as “Jews – An Italian Story,” highlight the unique and little-known contributions of Italian Jews throughout their long history which began during Roman times.



*MEIS at night*



*Street elevation*

We also learn how Italian Jews formed their own unique identity in the Diaspora.

Due to be completed in 2021, MEIS will consist of five modern buildings, inspired by the five books of the Torah and is expected to serve as the center of Italian Jewish culture and history. 📖



*Original prison building*

## Denver Conference Offered Information, Insights and Inspiration

BY CECELIA KRAMER • REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION • DOROT, THE JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, VOL. 41, NO. 3, SPRING 2020

Last summer, weary, but not world weary, I chose to attend a conference in a quiet nook of Denver, and let the world come to me. Over three days the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies 2019 Annual Conference presented memorable concerts, theatre, film, poetry and oral presentations.

Some of my personal highlights can actually be experienced by you. The first is the documentary, *Children of the Inquisition*, produced and directed by Joseph Lovett. Since being shown at the conference, it has been presented at Jewish and international film festivals, as well as congregations in the United States and Spain. The film's website has a calendar of future screenings, as well as clips, a trailer and interviews.

Covering 500 years, from the beginnings of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions to their aftermaths in the present day Sephardic Diaspora, the film details why *conversos* have hidden their religious identity for centuries, even in the Western hemisphere. Lovett utilizes paintings and voice-overs to create the impression that we are watching a newsreel, making historic experiences immediate. Granted access by the Prado Museum, he photographed graphic artwork depicting tortures, trials and murders of Jews during the ensuing centuries of the Spanish Inquisition. One massive canvas, *Auto-da fe in the Plaza Mayor of Madrid 1680*, depicts a huge crowd watching a heretic from stadium seating and three-story windows, evoking the sport of Sienna's Paleo, or Rome's Coliseum. The last *auto da fe* was as recent as 1850 in Mexico. The film's present day footage ranges from a *bat mitzvah* in a Jamaica, West Indies synagogue to



Joe Lovett and SCJS President  
Debbie Wohl-Isard



Ami Dayan presents "CONVICTION"



Guitarist Grisha Nisnevitch



Jeff Wheelwright, Keynote Speaker

I wrote about [the SCJS] conference in Dorot... as a kind of thank you for organizing the best conference I've ever attended, and to let readers know about SCJS. — Cecelia

interviews with former *conversos* who have reclaimed their hidden heritage.

Another personal highlight was a joint presentation by Genie Milgrom and Schelly Talalay Dardashti. I'd read Milgrom's first book, *My 15 Grandmothers*, and was interested to hear her in person. She discovered she was Jewish after following her affinity for Judaism and converting. A candid speaker, she does not waffle about difficulties she encountered when seeking

to be declared Jewish by birth, or familial issues that can arise when someone converts. She has since published *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*, translations of a cache of recipes found in her mother's kitchen drawer, some dating to the Inquisition. (Slight digression: Dardashti would appear later in the summer at the IAIGS conference in Cleveland, where she and Maria Apodaca screened a visually appealing, almost aromatic treat filmed in





New Mexico, *Challah Rising in the Desert*. Like a five-strand braided *challah*, this documentary entwines interviews with descendants of diverse Jewish populations who settled there, among them *conversos*, German Jewish pioneer traders, 1960s' commune members, and Los Alamos scientists. Archival photos with voice-overs augment their accounts. The film can now be purchased online and would make an engrossing draw at your organization's film festivals or fundraisers.

Guggenheim Fellow, Jeff Wheelwright, was the keynote speaker at the SCJS conference. He authored *The Wandering Gene and the Indian Princess: Race, Religion, and DNA*, which details how some women of Colorado's San Luis Valley learned they had Sephardic ancestry by way of their breast cancer mutations. Until their diagnosis, they were only aware of their Native American/Spanish Catholic background. Attending his talk were family members of a woman who died of this disease. The mutation has also been discovered in male members of their family. His presentation aligned with the theme of other speakers: Don't make assumptions about who you really are.

Exceptional musical interludes were threaded through the program, including Gregory Nisnevitch's flamenco instrumental, "In Memory of Those who Died By Fire;" The Lorenzo Trujillo Trio with its eponymous folklorist and violinist; and David Wohl's commissioned work, "Hiddenness and Reawakening as Musical Drama." Ami Dayan soloed in *Conviction*, a play set in the time of the Spanish Inquisition. 🕯

## SCJS Conferences 2020 & 2021

Pending the full re-opening of the country and its hotel and transportation systems, we look forward to our gathering in 2021 (date to be announced) celebrating 30 years of fellowship, research and sharing.

Meanwhile, we regret the cancellation of a physical conference in 2020. We'll keep you posted on our website should an online experience be scheduled.



## SAVE THE DATE! 2020 NMJHS FALL CONFERENCE

"West of Hester Street:  
The Galveston Movement  
and Jewish Immigration  
and Communities  
in the Southwest"



**October 23-25, 2020  
Las Cruces, New Mexico**

Keynote program: *West of Hester Street* Film  
Speaker: Allen Mondell, Producer



New Mexico Jewish Historical Society  
(NMJHS) is a beneficiary agency of the  
Jewish Federation of New Mexico

## You never know where you'll find "family"

Just want to share a story with you. I was at a local arts center for an exhibit of local African-American artists that featured a music group from Mali. There was a Caucasian woman there who had some African blood, from Angola. Turns out she's descended from *conversos* from Portugal.

When she was about 40, her family found a menorah among the possessions of a recently deceased relative. At first they didn't even know what it was but eventually figured it out — and discovered the whole family story. After meeting me and a Jewish friend who was also in attendance, she will probably participate in the few Jewish community events we have here. The next one will likely be the periodic group *kaddish* at the old Gold Rush Jewish cemetery.

This family, the *converso* descendants, are everywhere.

— Mark Bennett, California



# Centro Sefarad New Mexico to Focus on Sephardic Heritage

BY SCHELLY TALALAY DARDASHTI



Centro Sefarad New Mexico (CSNM) is the new innovative Sephardic Heritage program of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico, headed by Executive Director Rob Lennick. Dr. Sara Koplik, outreach director, also heads the Sephardic heritage program, staffed by Rabbi Jordi Gendra Molina, with volunteers Maria Apodaca and Schelly Talalay Dardashti. The CSNM advisory board (formation in progress) includes Hazzan Neil Frau Cortes and Reuben E. Last MD.

The CSNM mission is to provide bilingual cultural and educational programs, with resources for descendants of those Spanish Jews forcibly converted to Catholicism who found refuge in New Mexico, elsewhere in the Southwest and in Mexico. It also promotes and will work with similar organizations at regional, national and international events to create awareness, as well as emerging communities.

One major component will be a monthly series of online webinars, "Our Stories." A dozen speakers have agreed to present their personal stories of discovery.

CSNM's goals include building bridges between the Jewish and Hispanic communities, creating bilingual programs, bringing Sephardic heritage and history to our communities, while raising awareness of our unique New Mexico history — and Sephardic history in general — within the larger Jewish community. This will include a robust social media presence, a weekly/monthly publication, webinars on diverse topics, and other methods of sharing information and resources, as well as future conferences.

Over the past four years, the Jewish Federation of New Mexico provided Sephardic heritage certificates for those seeking Spanish citizenship. It helped to raise considerable interest in Sephardic heritage and ancestry among many people across our state and region, and among similar groups in other countries.

In February, Rabbi Jordi Gendra Molina, Maria Apodaca and Schelly Talalay Dardashti attended the world's largest genealogy event, RootsTech, in Salt Lake City. The 10th anniversary event attracted some 30,000 attendees. The annual event is open to everyone from everywhere and is organized by Family Search, the genealogical arm of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). Internationally-known experts spoke about technology and genealogy, while major companies introduced their newest features and tools. Schelly spoke on Sephardic resources and research and also presented a MyHeritage booth talk on ethnicity and DNA.

At the CSNM booth, staffed by Maria Apodaca, attendees received information packets including Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies material, resources and more.

Schelly and Maria were scheduled to speak at the Memphis (Tennessee) Jewish Historical Society in April, and in Boston in May at Temple Emanuel (Newton) adult education program, at the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, and at the Sephardic Synagogue, Bet Sasson. Unfortunately, due to the virus pandemic, these in-person visits were canceled, but the Temple Emanuel Adult Education and JGS of Greater Boston programs will now be presented online in May and June.



*Schelly Talalay Dardashti*

Schelly Talalay Dardashti is a journalist and genealogist with over 30 years of experience tracking her families across Spain, Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, and Iran. Her award-winning Jewish genealogy blog, "Tracing the Tribe," is now on Facebook with over 33,500 global members. She is the U.S. genealogy advisor for MyHeritage.com, and speaks at many conferences each year. A native New Yorker and a New Mexican by choice, she is also a fluent Farsi speaker.

Centro Sefarad New Mexico, with its much larger perspective and mission, is an outgrowth of Casa Sefarad at Congregation Nahalat Shalom in Albuquerque.

CSNM will have a Facebook page, as well as a Twitter and Instagram presence.

For more information and to join our mailing list, contact us at [centrosefaradNM@gmail.com](mailto:centrosefaradNM@gmail.com)

>>>







Sarah Koplick

**Sara Koplick, PhD** is director of community outreach at the Jewish Federation of New Mexico in Albuquerque. She founded its Sephardic certificate program in March 2016. Dr. Koplick is editor of the *New Mexico Jewish Link*. Her academic publications focus on the Central Asian and Afghan Jewish experience and include *A Political and Economic History of the Jews of Afghanistan* (Brill, 2015).



Rabbi Jordi Gendra-Molina

**Rabbi Jordi Gendra-Molina, PhD** is the rabbi-in-residence at the Jewish Federation of New Mexico. He is the first Spanish-born rabbi ordained since the Inquisition. He has worked with the Sephardic heritage program since November 2018. He has led synagogues in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania and Sewell, New Jersey; taught at Wilson College, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical

College. His academic publications focus primarily on medieval Spanish Judaism and include *Les Responsa de Rabbi Simo ben Tzemakh Duran* (Leonard Muntaner, 2001). He holds a PhD in Medieval Jewish literature (*Universitat de Girona*); MA in Hebrew letters and rabbinic ordination (RRC); MA in Semitic languages (*Universitat de Barcelona*). He is a polyglot, a calligrapher, and a bookbinder.



Maria Apodaca

**Maria Apodaca** is her family historian and became interested in DNA genetic genealogy when she discovered her paternal DNA carries the Cohen Modal Signature. Her traditional research goes back to Diego Blandin Gonzales (b. 1558, Coimbra, Portugal; d. 1598, Nueva Espana). His sons came with Captain Juan Onate to today's New Mexico in 1598. Her family was forcibly

converted to Catholicism by the Inquisition. She is the first returnee to Judaism in her family in over 500 years and is active in the Jewish community. Retired — and even busier now — she has 30 years' experience in hospital patient care coordination. 📖

## Recent Presentations

Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Boston, Sephardic Bet Sasson, and Temple Emanuel Adult Education present

**Schelly Talalay Dardashti**

May 3 — “Sephardic Research: An Introduction”

June II — “Jewish Ethnicity: History, Migration, and DNA”

**Maria Apodaca**

June II — “My Journey: And it Only Took 500 Years!”

## Genie Milgrom — Reaching New Audiences

**I**t's almost impossible to keep up with Genie Milgrom, a past SCIS president who continues to share her remarkable history with local (Floridian) and global audiences. Her Autumn 2019 book signing at the Jewish Museum of Florida at FIU for her recently released cookbook *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*, drew appreciative crowds. The book has already sold thousands of copies around the world.



Genie Milgrom

A work of practical and historical value, it not only inspires one to cook but to more fully understand the long history of the exiled Jews of Iberia. Her family's journey went from Spain to Portugal to the Canary Islands to Costa Rica to Cuba and then, Miami.

Take the time and enjoy her online series at her Genie Milgrom FB site, “Finding Your Jewish Roots through Catholic Inquisition Records” taped last winter. Recently, interested viewers tuned in to an online workshop created for the American Sephardi Federation; “Tracing Your Roots,” ran April 12 and April 19, 2020. This past spring, Genie and her husband Michael were also part of a several-week ASF series on crypto-Jews.

Milgrom also recently gave a Zoom talk in Spanish for American Sephardi Federation, on “How to Trace Your Jewish Roots via Church and Inquisition Records.”

Finally, applause is due to garnering an NPR interview on December 22, 2019 titled “Trove of Recipes Dating Back to Inquisition Reveals a Family's Secret Jewish Roots.” Many Jews were forced to convert during the Inquisition, a history often lost to their descendants. Finding recipes adhering to Jewish food customs helped one woman unearth her family's hidden past. It's an exceptional interview. Go to [NPR.org/authors](https://www.npr.org/authors) and have a listen. 📖





## Congratulations to Dianne Layden

Sometimes a conference lecture is so good you want to hear it again. In fact, you want everyone who missed it to hear or read it for the first time. That is why I asked Dianne Layden of New Mexico, former editor of the NMJHS newsletter, to send us her 2019 Denver conference presentation for HaLapid (Autumn/Winter 2019 edition). I hope you all read and enjoyed the article, "Telling Crypto-Jewish Stories Through Jewish Historical Societies." Seeing it in print, Dianne decided to submit it to the New Mexico Press Women's annual writing contest. Here's the note she sent to me. — Editor

### JANUARY 2020

My article was sent to the New Mexico Press Women annual writing contest yesterday. Its category is Specialty Articles-Religion. I doubt there will be many New Mexico entries in this category. I'm just speculating, but if it wins first place in here, it will be submitted to the national conference from New Mexico. Thanks so much for asking to publish this article and for the copy you sent me with the *HaLapid* cover, always beautiful. I won't hear until March but will let you know when I do. Also, a



Dianne R. Layden

whole lot of people will learn about SCIS, *HaLapid*, and crypto-Jews.

Happy New Year.  
Dianne

### MARCH 2020

Writings that win first place in the New Mexico Press Women contest are submitted to the National Federation of Press Women contest. I'll let you know if my article wins at that level. I won a national award in 2018 for a two-part

article in *Legacy* about Holocaust survivors who were honored in Santa Fe. Thanks again. I've come this far in the Press Women contest because you asked to publish my talk at the conference.

Results will be in by June. We wish Dianne good luck! 🍀

## Mr. Ezratty goes to Washington

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD ROOM

**INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY:**  
REMEMBERING OFTEN-OMITTED SEPHARDIC & ROMANIAN JEWISH EXPERIENCES OF THE HOLOCAUST & WWII. NORTH AFRICAN, GREEK AND OTHER NARRATIVES OF RESISTANCE

**TAKE A STAND TOGETHER AGAINST ANTISEMITISM & HATE**  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020, 6:30-8:30PM  
AT THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD ROOM (RAYBURN HOB-2168)  
45 INDEPENDENCE AVE SW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

**BY INVITATION ONLY**  
RSVP TO SEPHARDIC HERITAGE INTERNATIONAL IN DC  
BY JANUARY 28TH: INFO@SHINDC.ORG

Reception to follow the program

- Keynote speaker Harry Ezratty - Sephardic Jew in resistance movements in North Africa and Greece
- Judith Cohen, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
- Holocaust survivors, including from North Africa and Greece, will be present and their narratives highlighted
- Rerian Koen, world renowned Turkish concert pianist who has an album dedicated to Holocaust remembrance - Commemorative music
- Commemorate all those who perished and survivors no longer with us
- R. Nissan Eliezer, Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America - Memorial
- David Weinberg, ADL - Standing together against antisemitism and hate

Photo (left): A young Sephardic woman trying to organize at the end of the Holocaust in March 1945. Photo (right): The National Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America (NSJB) members at the Congressional Gold Room ceremony highlighting Sephardic and Romanian experiences in January 2020.

#CongressionalHolocaustCommemoration2020

SEPHARDIC HERITAGE INTERNATIONAL (SHIN) DC  
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CONGRESSIONAL SPONSOR: REP. JAMIE RASKIN

SEPHARDIC HERITAGE INTERNATIONAL DC

The Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America  
La Remembrance Sefaradi

SCIS board member and noted expert on Caribbean crypto-Jews, Harry Ezratty was keynote speaker for Sephardic Heritage International on January 30, 2020 in Washington DC.

Held at the office building of the House of Representatives, three congressmen were present, together with representatives of the French and Albanian governments.

The theme was the role of Sephardim opposing Nazi regimes during World War II. Harry spoke about Sephardic saboteurs in Greece and North Africa, a course he will be teaching at Baltimore County Community College this fall. The conference room was completely filled, attracting over 100 people. 🍀

## Kudos to Marcia Fine

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society published author/speaker Marcia Fine's article, "Syncretism and the Mexican Experience," published in the *Legacy* newsletter, Spring

2020. Her research covers how Judaism and Catholicism were blended in the home as well as the belief in Saint Esther and Mariology. It can be accessed at: [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org).



# SCJS Member Attends DC Event

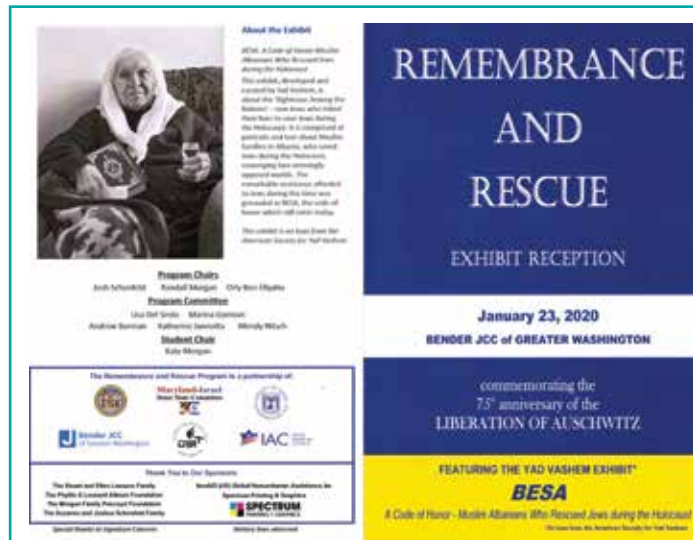
BY NATALIE TRUJILLO

On January 23, 2020, I was proud to represent SCJS at the Remembrance and Rescue exhibition sponsored by Bender Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington DC.

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, the exhibit recognizes and remembers the code of honor held by the Albanian people, "Righteous Among the Nations." It focuses on non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. The exhibit displayed portraits and texts about the Muslim people of Albania who saved Jews during the Holocaust by joining and converging their seemingly different worlds, and recognizing the code of honor held by the Albanian people.

The fascinating story was told with humility and pride by Her Excellency Floreta Farber, ambassador of Albania to the United States. The history begins during the Holocaust when many Jews were able to escape from some European countries and enter Albania to live under cover with Albanian families assisting in the effort. When confronted during this time, the Albanians would not expose their Jewish household members and pretended they were non-Jewish family. This went on throughout this tragic era. By the end of the Holocaust, Albania gained more of a Jewish population, while elsewhere European Jews were decimated. The story brought tears to all in attendance. Many dignitaries attended from all over the world representing many ambassadors sharing their family's history of the Holocaust. Many had no knowledge that Albania helped save Jews during that horrible time. "It is Albania's code of honor to help its neighbors."

The Exhibit was curated by and on loan from the American Society for Yad Vashem and produced by The Remembrance and



Rescue Program, in partnership with the Maryland-Israel Sister State Committee; Embassy of Israel, Washington DC; Bender ICC of Greater Washington; American

crypto-Judaic ancestry); Mayra Pineda, (Guatemala ancestry); and myself, Natalie Trujillo Gonzalez, Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. 🇮🇸

Society for Yad Vashem; and Israeli American Council.

The Hispanic/crypto-Judaic community was represented by Maryland Deputy Secretary of State Luis Borunda (New Mexico ancestry); Assistant to Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, Samuel LeDoux (New Mexico native,

## "Kaddish for Columbus" on Rocky Mountain PBS

Hats off to SCIS member and noted Colorado composer/musician David Wohl, D.Mus, and KRMA-Rocky Mountain PBS in Denver, plus Lorenzo Trujillo, Ed.D./J.D., Debra Gallegos, Miriam Herrera, and everyone who participated in the creation of the moving, original composition "Kaddish for Columbus," performed at Denver's June 2019 SCIS conference.



David Wohl



Lorenzo Trujillo

The performance was part of Wohl's presentation as our annual Sosin Arts Grant recipient, highlighting how crypto-Judaic studies are expressed through the arts. Lucky viewers in Colorado were able to see a part of this original performance again this past March, with thanks to KRMA Rocky Mountain PBS producer Tamara Banks. The 10-minute feature took an expanded look at the history of crypto-Jews in Colorado, told in part through the eyes and heritage of SCIS member Lorenzo Trujillo, an attorney, folklorist, and instructor who teaches mariachi music at Metropolitan State College. People of all ages are increasingly exploring their roots.

The segment is now available to view online. Visit this link — you'll be glad you did. [video.rmpbs.org/video/kaddish-for-columbus-business-for-the-arts-honorees-puqczk](https://video.rmpbs.org/video/kaddish-for-columbus-business-for-the-arts-honorees-puqczk)





# Joyce Elaine Cross-Autry Gunn



*Joyce Gunn*

Joyce Elaine Cross-Autry Gunn passed away October 30, 2019. She was 72. She is survived by her daughter Kersta Sommers (Keri Autery), her brothers Bill Summers and John Cross and her father Richard Summers. Joyce was the director of the San Luis Valley Museum in Alamosa, Colorado and a big supporter of SCIS and the *converso* history of the Valley. Many conversations with her revealed a distant ancestry to crypto-Jews that drove her passion. Last summer, she helped curate "The First Thanksgiving," a celebration of the Spanish presence in the Valley during the Spanish Colonial conquest, along with member Diane Mock.

— C. Brown 

# Elaine Berg

Longtime SCIS member Elaine Berg, beloved wife of Irwin Berg, passed away in October 2019 from liver cancer. Elaine and her husband were pioneers of Kulanu since 1995, an organization engaged in outreach to lost Jews all over the world. The couple traveled to Abayudaya in Uganda in 1995, Suriname in 2000, Turkey and Ethiopia in 2008, and Zimbabwe in 2013, as well as Kaifeng, China. They had both been ardent supporters of SCIS, attending conferences as often as possible. Irwin briefly served on our board.



*Elaine Berg and husband Irwin*

— D. Sloan 



Thanks to the efforts of Prof. Vincenzo Vilella and others, historians now document that following the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and their escape to Sicily and Calabria, more than 40 percent of the local population of southern Italy was once Jewish.

As these Jewish families ran from persecution and death, they worked hard to establish themselves in the tiny coastal and mountain villages in the “toe” and the “instep” of the Italian “boot.” Once safely settled in their new villages, they continued to practice many customs and traditions that, over time, became part of the greater southern Italian culture.

The Inquisition eventually reached Sicily and Calabria and many Jews were either tortured and murdered or forced to accept Christian baptism. Those who survived were called *b’nai anusim*, or descendants of the forced ones. Many of these *anusim* families continued to practice ancient family traditions, often incorporating them into Christian holidays and lifecycle events.

Today, southern Italian wedding traditions include many Sephardic Jewish practices brought by the Jews of Spain. And although many locals are not aware of it, Sephardic traditions abound in both Jewish and Catholic wedding ceremonies.

Rabbi Joshua Maroof, an expert in Sephardic Jewish traditions, shares important differences between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewish wedding. As a rabbi and Sephardic Jew myself who lives in Calabria, I have had the opportunity to observe how many of these Jewish traditions have become a part of the Calabrian and Sicilian Catholic wedding ceremony as well.

1. Prior to the actual ceremony, Ashkenazi tradition requires the groom to conduct the *bedeken* ceremony, or the veiling of the bride.

In Sephardi tradition, as the bride comes forward escorted by her parents, the bride’s father lifts the veil and presents his daughter to the groom who then escorts her under the *chuppah*, the wedding canopy. During the Catholic ceremony it

is not uncommon for the groom to walk halfway up the aisle, lift her veil, and escort her forward.

For the Jewish couple, the marriage takes place under the bridal canopy (*chuppah*, in Hebrew, *baldacchino* in Italian). For southern Italian Catholics who are aware of their Jewish roots, a large crocheted table cloth or bedspread is held over the couple as they exit the church. *Sotto la coperta*, or “under the covering,” the bride and groom receive a special family blessing.

## Southern Italian Wedding Customs Based on Ancient Jewish Traditions

BY RABBI BARBARA AIELLO

2. In both Jewish and Catholic Mediterranean cultures Sunday is considered the best day for the wedding ceremony. Interestingly, both cultures count Sunday as the first day of the week.

3. For both Jews and Catholics a ceremony occurs the day before the wedding where the bride greets her female relatives and friends. For this event, the bride-to-be wears all her best jewelry. After the guests have admired each necklace, bracelet and ring, she carefully takes off each piece and gives it to her maid-of-honor for safekeeping. For both Jews and Catholics the ceremony emphasizes that jewelry and riches are less important than the plain gold wedding band that both cultures prefer.

4. In Ashkenazi practice, the signing of the *ketubah*, the Jewish wedding document, is conducted under the *chuppah* at a special time during the wedding ceremony. In some Italian Catholic parishes, the signing of the wedding document happens in front of the guests at the end of the ceremony. >>>







5. Sephardic brides often wear a white gown decorated with elaborate colorful embroidery (pictured above) that signifies the boundless joy of the wedding day. It is not unusual for Calabrian Catholic brides to continue this tradition, complete with the traditional *keza*, or gold-braided headdress popularized originally by Sephardi brides in Spain.
6. Just as the Sephardic bride and groom wear a crown of flowers on their heads (called a *keza* in southern Italian dialect, from the Hebrew word *keter*), the crowning ceremony is part of the Eastern Orthodox marriage rite where the married couple each dons a ring of flowers and/or a crown of gold braid.
7. During the Jewish ceremony, the couple shares a sip of wine, often from a family Kiddush cup. The same ritual exists in the Italian Catholic wedding where a special silver cup is often presented to the couple to be used for the first time during the ceremony.
8. During the exchange of marriage vows, a Sephardic Jewish couple stands shoulder-to-shoulder, wrapped in a *tallit* (Jewish prayer shawl). Here in Calabria, often the couple makes their promises while they are wrapped in a handmade, heirloom crocheted shawl, called a *vancale*, often a gift from the bride's grandmothers.
9. The moment that everyone anticipates is the breaking of the glass! For Jewish couples of both cultural groups, the groom smashes a breakable item underfoot. For southern Italian Catholics the groom breaks a vase. For everyone the meaning is the same, that is, every piece represents a year and a blessing in the couple's married life together. *Mazel Tovissimo!* 🥂

Rabbi Barbara Aiello provides Jewish heritage tours and education and leads a synagogue in Serrestretta, Italy. Now, in this new world of virtual presentations, Rabbi Barbara comes to your group via the internet with lectures and workshops. [www.rabbibarbara.com](http://www.rabbibarbara.com)

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Own beautiful back issues of *HaLapid*! If you're a new member and would like to see what you've missed, we still have copies of some issues from the past five years (in the current format) and would be happy to send them.

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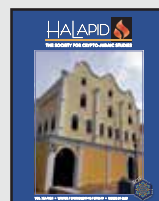
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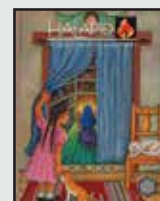
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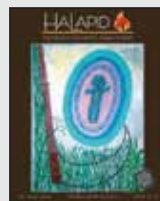
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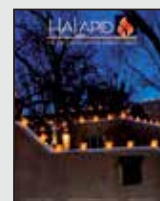
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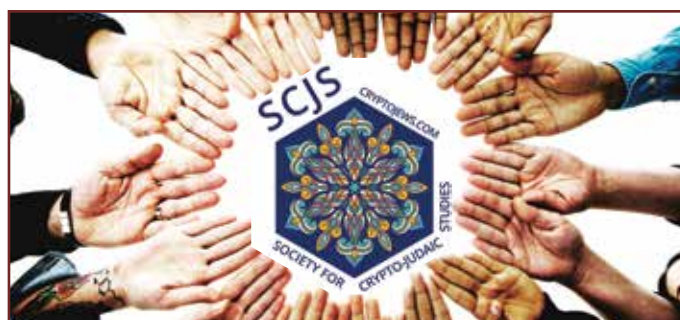


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# YOU are part of a Mission!



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

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

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

Our website, [www.cryptojews.com](http://www.cryptojews.com), has archival status because scholars and interested individuals may access hundreds of articles and papers from past issues of *HaLapid*. It also features stories and news of SCIS and related events.

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

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

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

## Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

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- Avram Ben Rosh -

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