

# HALAPID



SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES



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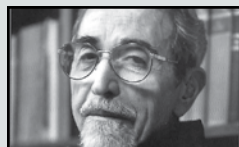
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• *Against the Inquisition*  
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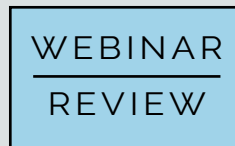


• Interview with Harry Ezratty  
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EL PASO TEXAS

**RESCHEDULED**

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# FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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

**HALAPID** is the biannual publication of  
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#### EDITORIAL POLICY OF HALAPID

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

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**ROSA MARINA SIEGEL**  
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The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies just commemorated its 30th anniversary. Over these many years, academics, artists, genealogists, crypto-Judaic descendants from the Iberian Peninsula, writers, and people of other disciplines have all provided a treasure trove in crypto-Judaic information.

Today, a rich history of Sefarad is being uncovered in the many places that were part of the Spanish conquest, from Peru to the Philippines and from Honduras to the Southwest USA.

El Paso, Texas or “El Paso del Norte” – the original name given by the Spanish colonizers of New Spain – is a city situated below a narrow pass where the Rio Grande River originates from the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado, and descends across steppes and the desert. El Paso is a city rich in history of the *mestizaje* where the New World and Old World transformed its inhabitants, travelers and those looking for a new future. Also the ones looking to preserve their past from Sefarad, the crypto-Jews and *anusim* who have returned to their faith of old. It is just surreal to think that this year the sound of the *shofar* was heard across the border in Juarez, an event held by the El Paso Anusim Center. What a great way to start the new year.

So here we are, having shared our online 2022 Fall Conference with an El Paso theme, coming away energized for a new chapter of research and collaboration and excited that we will be together in-person in El Paso in August 2023. Looking forward to seeing all of you.

Wishing you a peaceful holiday season,

*Rosa Marina Siegel*

Rosa Marina Siegel • SCIS President, 2022-2024



## ABOUT THE COVER

### Touching the Mystical

Fragment of an original painting by David Rakia, 1928-2012 in the editor's collection

Born in Vienna, Austria, the Rakia family made *aliyah* to Israel in 1938. David studied at the famed Bezalel School of Art and later in Paris. By the 1960s his work began to include metaphysical motifs from Judaism, such as the strong use of Hebrew letters and descriptions of Jerusalem. He was a member of the Jewish Painters Association, Paris, France. Rakia was a prolific artist who also made monumental art, lithography and sculpture. Light is one of the strongest expressions in Rakia's world view as it is reflected in his art. It is an ongoing attempt to touch the mystical experience and the tie between our historical past and the cosmic order around us.

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.



# Stories from former and new contributors



**CORINNE J. BROWN**  
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As another year comes to a close, I am still overwhelmed by the divisive mood of the country, the natural disasters so many have suffered, and the unfortunate cancellation of our much-hoped-for conference in Texas. We tried – but the cards were not in our favor.

On the other hand, we can only look to the future and hope for better times, the increased support of one another, and affirm healing for those in need. Meanwhile, our organization continues to grow slowly and steadily. Our board is strong and our committees now have the time to plan more fully for the newly rescheduled conference in August 2023, still in El Paso. Scholarship from educators near and far abounds, curiosity about the past draws people closer, and our common history unfolds one crease at a time.

We welcome several new voices in this issue: academic Ana Gómez-Bravo, novelist Marcia Fine, and Canadian genealogist Nikolas-Samuel Baron Bernier. Long-time members will be pleased to re-connect with a former Sosin Stratton-Petit honoree, Jônatas Chimen Dias DaSilva-Benayon, and enjoy making *bimuelos*, a treat that is near and dear to our board member Art Benveniste's heart. Even more amazing articles come from Genie Milgrom and Carlos Larralde, as well as Kathleen Alcalá, and others. Plus, you will find an abundance of news regarding recent and older books in print, and recipes from the Sephardi past and present.

Finally, we offer appropriate respect to the memory of our dear colleague and past SCJS president Abraham Lavender, a prolific author and respected professor of sociology and crypto-Judaic studies.

I hope you find something rewarding and interesting in this and every issue.

Happy Holidays,



Corinne Joy Brown, Editor

*Warmest thanks for their generous gifts*

ROBIN AND BENNETT GREENSPAN FUND  
at the  
HOUSTON JEWISH COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
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STANLEY AND HELEN HORDES  
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THE STRATTON-PETIT FUND, CALIFORNIA  
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AND MANY THANKS FOR ALL THE  
CONTRIBUTIONS THAT COME TO US  
ANONYMOUSLY.

## From Out of the Past - Between Wanderings

STEPHEN CAPUTO

In 1889 Rabbi Meyer Kayserling published a short book, *Spanish Sayings or Proverbs of the Sephardic Jews*. In it were Ladino versions of Spanish sayings that Sephardim continued to use for centuries after the Expulsion. Some have survived in the Jewish world, while others are still popular sayings in Spain.

**Walk with good people and  
you will become one of them.**

*Camina con buenos, te hareras  
uno de ellos.*

**If you love a rose, you must  
ignore the thorns.**

*Quien quere á la rosa,  
non mire al espino.*

**He who sells the sun must buy candles.**

*Quien vende el sol, merca la candela*



# READERS' FEEDBACK

## Small world

The replacement copy of *HaLapid*, Autumn/Winter 2019 has arrived at Library of Congress (LC) and is being processed. I so enjoy reading the articles and book/film reviews. They are so interesting.

We participated in the crypto-Jewish Roads Scholars trip at the end of October. Our organizer, a retired Judaica librarian from Los Angeles, Lisa Silverman, mentioned SCJS and *HaLapid* to the group. I directed them to the online site where you have the issues posted. Schelly Talalay Dardashti was one of the lecturers. I know her through our AJL (Association of Jewish Libraries) connection and through her Persian connections. Small world. If you are ever around LC, I would love to show you our “treasures” and our beautiful building.

*Personal comment from Gail Shiraz, Washington, DC  
Library of Congress, Middle East Division-Judaica*

## Mazel tov

Thank you for another fabulous issue – and becoming a grandmother. Mazel tov!

*Marcia Fine, Scottsdale, Arizona*

## More stories to come

Just read the article by Carlos Larralde. Congratulations on your good work.

Carlos wants me to submit an article on Tomás Sánchez, the founder of Laredo, Texas, a *converso*, and our common ancestor. I will try to get it to you soon.

*George Farias, San Antonio, Texas*

## Another success

I looked at the latest *HaLapid* – you did an incredible job! What an interesting issue! Yay!

*Esther Malka Astruc, Safed, Israel*

## SCJS flagship

Congratulations on a beautifully done Spring/Summer issue. Thank you for the page on the Jewish Learning Channel. You have made *HaLapid* an inviting and informative journal that is the flagship publication that SCJS deserves.

Thank you for what you are doing.

*Ron Duncan Hart, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

## Kudos

Your work on *HaLapid* and dedication to SCJS is invaluable. Love this issue. The cover is beautiful!

*Kimberly Sánchez Cawthorn, Aurora, Colorado* 





# Welcome Our New Board Member

## Diane Mock TREASURER

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies welcomes its newest board member, Diane Mock. A long-time member of SCJS, Diane is a native Coloradan. She is a crypto-Jew with family roots in the San Luis Valley and northern New Mexico.

Diane is a retired English acquisition teacher and is currently coordinating projects for Jewish Heritage Alliance. She lives in Aurora, Colorado with her husband Freddy, and dog Dulce. She will serve as SCJS treasurer, helping us manage our fiduciary responsibilities.

Welcome aboard! 🍷



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# New Master List of Books About Crypto-Judaic Studies



**BETH CHERNOFF**  
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Kudos to SCJSboard member Beth Chernoff who accepted the challenge of creating a comprehensive book list for enthusiasts of crypto-Judaic studies. We have since learned that the task is like seeking a moving target since new works are added continuously. That said, we have a wealth of titles spanning the range of studies from adult content to juvenile, from academic to personal narrative,

and from commercial fiction to non-fiction. Beth continues to broaden the list as she goes. (Sephardic studies keeps creeping in, understandably.) She recently met scholar Herb Canales at a conference who gave her his list of 150 works. In Beth's own words, "In addition to what I already had from Chana Cohen, Corinne Brown, the Library of Congress, and my own research, below is what I gleaned from Herb Canales' work."

Following this recent addition, Beth's task now is to combine all the various lists, research missing information, and format appropriately, listing by author and publisher. A major

undertaking – and the initial work is nearly complete. This list will appear on our website as a service to all who are searching for published works in this field and will be updated as necessary. 🍷

## Recently added works from Herb Canales

- 89 – Spanish / Portuguese / French Language
- 70 – Books / Chapters in books
- 31 – Articles
- 9 – Genetics / Medical Issues
- 6 – Dissertations / Manuscripts
- 6 – Reference Works - (records of marriages, baptisms, enlistments, headstones, genealogy)
- 6 – Miscellaneous - (poetry, folklore, art exhibits)
- 4 – Films (3 in one series)
- 42 – Published by societies or in publications with no attribution (includes Spanish language)





# syncretism and the Mexican Experience

**H**ow did the blending of two faiths work inside a *converso* home? Specifically, how did the Crespin family in my novel *Hidden Ones* blend Judaism and Catholicism?

In a previous novel, *The Blind Eye*, the grandfather teaches family members to utter a prayer in Hebrew when entering a church; he turns “the hanging one” (the crucifix) to the wall when no one is observing; he lies about his beliefs, although he studies hidden Hebrew texts in the attic. I see a continuum with zealots of both faiths at the ends and in the middle, a confusion of beliefs that varies between families. In reality, after a few generations the two faiths blended. They lit candles and attended church. For many the conflict between the two remained heavy in their hearts.

These rituals worked against the cultural annihilation of many Sephardic Jews in hiding. In fact, Dr. David Gitlitz and Rabbi José Faur have written about four kinds of crypto-Jews. First, many remained faithful to Judaism; second, many believed in Christ. Next, there were those who were partial converts who

.....  
**MARCIA FINE**

Syncretism:  
an amalgam  
of different  
religions,  
cultures or  
beliefs  
that fuse  
together.

*This article first appeared in the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, November 10, 2018. Many thanks for reprint permission.*

vacillated between both faiths which became a synergetic accommodation of both, and finally, some became atheists who rejected persecution and violence.

Isaac Abravental, a key historian of Spanish Jewry, in a paper by Ram Ben-Shalom, says that *conversos* were of two types: those loyal to Christianity and those who repudiated it. The Inquisition did not differentiate. They persecuted all.

## Blood Purity

Roger Martinez Davila’s paper about heraldry among *conversos* addresses the “uncomfortable genealogy and religious truths that not even Spanish nobility could escape.” Jews, Christians and Muslims had been living together for eight centuries. There were many conversions that went back and forth, a mixing of the blood that the Spanish obsessed about for purity. They believed that religion was transferred through the blood. If your blood was determined to be unclean, it kept you from royal administrations, city councils, military orders, and the Church. It had lasting effects on Spanish families, so much so that Old Christians refused to sit near New



Christians in church because they were afraid the stain from their old religion would taint them.

## Role of Women in Religion

Women memorized the Jewish prayers, kept the traditions and rituals, prepared the food, which was often symbolic, and taught it all to their children, at great risk. They had to be hyper-vigilant to keep the two faiths separate. They considered Judaism their one true faith and Catholicism their oppressor. The biggest gap came because in Judaism they could communicate directly with G-d and as Catholics they were expected to go through a priest, which included confession and attending Mass.

In El Paso at the Anusim Center (*anusim* means “forced ones”), I met Jews who returned to their original faith although no one had practiced Judaism for hundreds of years. How did they find their way

back? Through DNA, family stories and grandma’s jewelry box.

Some came through the Messianic community. For many Jews by birth, we dismiss people



who are worshipping Christ through the veil of Jewish traditions and rituals. However some have used it as a stepping stone to reach back in time. A grandmother told me she was with the Messianic community for a few years and then wanted the “original source.” Another, a religious Catholic, was invited to Israeli folk dancing at a Jewish community center and it turned her life around. As a dancer she connected to the joyous spirit. Today she and her husband are raising two girls in the Jewish faith at a Conservative synagogue. I was in awe when I heard her chant from the Torah. Bill Carvajal, the (then) president of Congregation B’nei Zion traced his family tree to find that they have held the Carvajal name over 1100 years.

## The Role of Men

The blending of faiths is still happening today as more and more people learn their heritage. For many it is difficult to leave Catholicism behind to embrace Judaism. From interviews conducted by Dr. Janet Liebman Jacobs, a professor of sociology and gender studies at the University of *Los Hermanos Penitentes*, the penitent brothers, flourished in Northern New Mexico.

These communities developed to provide a place of worship that was secretive. They focused on Holy Week feast rituals. It has been recorded that the chapter house

became the place where crypto-Jewish traditions were actively preserved. Their Catholicism was isolated. They had their prayer and hymn books which were not Catholic, as well as their own prayer services. They maintained their heritage with the women being separate as an auxiliary involved in food preparation and assuming responsibility for the ill. It was a nontraditional Catholicism with Jewish notions of the sacred. They stood for prayers, covered their heads and created their own safe space against religious persecution.

## Mexico

In historical fiction the facts have to be accurate, although the characters from the author’s imagination may be mixed among actual historical figures.

Hernando Alonso was the first Jew in Mexico after following Cortez to Nueva España. He was a carpenter who worked on brigantines (two-masted sailing vessels) and helped build 13 bridges into the interior for the Spanish Army. He was rewarded with land north of Mexico City where he developed a pig and cattle farm to become the largest supplier of meat for the troops. After his first wife Beatriz died, he married the beautiful Isabel de Aguilar. At 36 he was the first Jewish person burned alive on October 17, 1528, according to Inquisition records. His undoing was a Dominican friar who charged him with washing off





the baptismal chrisam from his son's head in Santo Domingo on the island of the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean thousands of miles away.

I have also used the actual Inquisitor, Dr. Juan Saenz de Mañozca, who presided over the 1649 *auto de fé*. In my novel, he observes the aftermath of the disaster with irony. The name Saenz is a Sephardic one, however I can only guess at his heritage. I also found that he ate a breakfast of mangoes, pineapple, oranges and ham in the morning. In other parts of the story, a priest from a *converso* family takes advantage of another in the same situation; the culture of waiting for the Messiah is acknowledged; the mental health of those who lived between two worlds saw some hold onto heretical ancestors, which brought ethnic anxiety. Finally, Renee Levine Melammed states that the "crypto-Jewish home was a center of resistance." Indeed, the *converso* were among the first to foment early support of the Mexican Revolution. Christian assimilation transformed people because it was a strategy of resistance.

Homes were divided with people of different faiths and levels of belief living under the same roof. It created great despair, especially when they fasted for *El Gran Dia*, the holiday we know as Yom Kippur.

They lived daily lives of secrets and lies, learning to be knowledgeable about Catholicism, like the grandmother Clara in my novel based on an actual Inquisition case. She could recite the rosary, the creed,

the *Salve Regina*, the Law of the Church, the 12 Articles of Faith, the General Confession and the stories of the Immaculate Conception and the Resurrection.

They also had to hide their native language of Ladino and its melodious sounds. Spanish was a Christian language; Ladino was for the Jews.

## Saint Esther

The Feast and Fast of Saint Esther followed the biblical story of Esther hiding her Jewish heritage and saving her fellow Jews. Her bravery and courage were usually celebrated with the holiday of Purim, something that Jews observed on the Iberian coast before the conversions. In Mexico this fast was as important as fasting for Yom Kippur, *El Gran Dia*, often lasting three days and causing life-threatening situations for observant women. Cecil Roth reported that a young woman died during one of these fasts. The Fast of Saint Esther was observed in Portugal at the end of the 20th century. They particularly observed the rituals of cleanliness and bodily atonement that was influenced by the Catholic view of self-deprivation. The theologies of sin and purification converged. In Mexico and the Southwest Territories this was a family celebration that became a women's holiday.

The women lit candles to Saint Esther, wine was drunk (mostly by the

men), pastries were served with meat and pumpkin, and then they fasted. About 20 years ago a bishop named Davis in New Mexico declared that this was a Jewish celebration and that there was no Saint Esther. It had become an amalgam of Catholic sainthood imposed upon a Jewish woman who was also closely aligned with Mary. He put a stop to it.

## The Belief in Mariology

Mother Mary was an important icon in Latin America and Mexico. Her image is pervasive everywhere from walls to t-shirts. She was seen as the Divine Jewish Mother. In syncretism, the world views inside a crypto-Judaic home, Mary assumed an important position as a divine healer and powerful mother. She was idealized as the Jewish mother who gave birth to the Jewish Messiah. They incorporated a female divinity into a Jewish-Christian world view. They sustained their belief in her because she represented love, healing and forgiveness. They



were not enamored of Christ on the cross and the suffering associated with his death.

Many women of Portuguese descent called themselves the *esperandos*, the waiting ones. From the outside they looked like good Catholics, but internally they were waiting for the Messiah to arrive. They remained internally Jewish until death.

## Freedom

What made them go on? They could have walked away from Judaism and some did, but many became hidden Jews known as *conversos* or New Christians. But “the stain” of their previous faith was remembered. They were not allowed to forget. In many smaller towns in Mexico the *sanbenitos* (a penitential garment used during the Inquisition, either yellow with red saltires for penitent heretics, or black and decorated with devils and flames for impenitent heretics to wear at an *auto-da-fé*) of those put to death were hung from the rafters with their family name. Today you can still find scraps of yellow cloth high overhead. The Church believed public humiliation was the best way to change behavior.

Rabbi (Emeritus) Stephen Leon of The Anusim Center, El Paso, Texas says, “The Inquisition didn’t destroy the souls of the believers.” *Conversos* or *anusim* were forced to depend on something larger than themselves to stay alive. When they reached a new place, they had to connect with the culture where they lived. The men continued their trade networks. There were secret synagogues where great risks were taken to circumcise, bathe in a *mikvah* and perform kosher slaughter. Many women owned a special knife because they killed livestock in their backyards.

What did Sephardim want? Freedom. They did not want to be controlled by the Catholic Church. The Passover Seder was always sacred because it reinforced their desire. At great risk they made *matzo* in *horno* ovens in the woods or caves, used a different day so as not to alert the authorities, held the dinner in the basement or an attic and sometimes shared only one *Haggadah*. They were not eating gefilte fish! They ate salads from



their garden, eggs from their chickens, dressed kosher meat, and traded for spices. There are photographs from the book, *Diaspora: Homelands in Exile* by the French photographer, Frédéric Brenner that showed Jews in Belmonte, Portugal in 1989 wearing white clothes with white handkerchiefs tied on their heads, standing next to their Seder table in a basement. There were no *kippahs*, *Haggadahs* or rabbis. Yet they still had a service. Perhaps this longing for freedom is why a Passover Seder is the most celebrated Jewish holiday all over the world.

What held them together? Rituals and traditions they repeated with fervor. Whether it was prayers on Friday nights or holidays celebrated in secrecy, discovery meant punishment and death. After all, a servant dismissed early on a Friday afternoon might arouse suspicion of the family they worked for; a priest who scoured a village from the church bell tower might discover the homes where no smoke rose from the chimney which meant they had prepared food earlier; or a neighbor who might overhear “*O mi Dio*” instead of “*O mi Dios*” and recognized non-believers of the Trinity.

## Syncretism Today

A deep spiritual attachment to Judaism is what drove these people. They felt something in the deepest part of their beings to hold onto a belief system with such ferocity. Yet the trauma of their experiences changed them. It would affect all of us if we lost our homes and possessions numerous times, especially after forced and sometimes violent conversions. Sephardim carry a gene pool of historical memories. Fortunately many are finding their way back to us through DNA and genealogy. Experiences are never really gone, even if they are forgotten. Indigenous people call these “soul wounds.” They risked their lives to light Shabbat candles, a tradition that many *conversos* kept alive for generations by closing drapes or hiding in closets. When they migrated north

Below, Convicted heretic before the Inquisition wearing a sanbenito (Francisco de Goya. Goya-Tribunal.Flammenhut)



on this continent they chose locations far out into the desert to avoid priestly visits. It also isolated them. Some could never let go of saying the *Shema*, communicating with G-d directly, and feeling a visceral response to injustice and intolerance. Most held onto the tenets of our faith: to follow the Law of Moses, continue a belief in one G-d, and keep the idea that the Messiah had not come.

So why are many returning to a faith that their ancestors practiced? Because their veil of memories lives on in them. Sephardim carry a gene pool of historical memories which pushed them to survive while they relied on themselves and their own recollections. A rich spiritual attachment to Judaism drove them because they felt something in the deepest part of their souls, something that may be difficult for many of us to express. I was not brought up in a religious home, yet I am connected to the Jewish people forever. It is part of me.

Today syncretism is appealing to those who have multicultural heritages. It is a way to keep ancestral traditions alive as well as a way to reach a spiritual pinnacle of beliefs. Spanish Jewish foremothers retained traditions in the face of danger and persecution. Most learn they have a Jewish

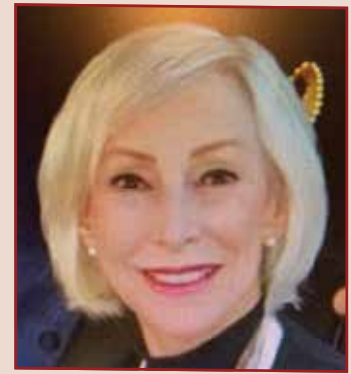
heritage from deathbed statements or, if not told in puberty, grandma's jewelry box held treasures such as *mezuzahs*, a Star of David, pieces of *tefillin*, and more.

Paul Berman, in a *Tablet* essay called "Homage to Mexico" says, "The Catholicism in Mexico contains the Indian past; and the religious architecture of Mexico is sometimes magnificent precisely because of a baroque mingling of the Spanish and Aztec." I saw this in practice in Chichicastenango in Guatemala. The Church allowed them to worship their native deities while they learned about their new faith. America's Catholicism has Protestant roots. The American attitude implies America's culture must be superior.

Let us respect the courage of the *conversos* to preserve part of their heritage so many could see the light and if they chose to, even find their way back.

In conclusion, a beautiful culture was destroyed. Sephardim worked harder, they educated themselves, prayed, kept clean, ate healthier diets and taught their children everything they knew — all of which was threatening to the monarchs and Church at the time. The ability to read meant people could think for themselves and they did not have to go through another person to speak to G-d. They also knew many languages including Ladino and Hebrew. Those who

risked their lives have passed on their genes. We have learned resilience, strength and tolerance that is being shared by numerous authors who are writing about the *converso* experience and how they lived double lives.



**MARCIA FINE**  
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**A**ward-winning author and speaker Marcia Fine has written eight novels including *The Blind Eye – A Sephardic Journey*, historical fiction chosen by the state library of Arizona for OneBookAZ 2015. *Paper Children – An Immigrant's Legacy* was a finalist for three national prizes. *Paris Lamb*, her sixth book, addresses anti-Semitism in the 1950s.

*Hidden Ones*, released in 2017, examines *conversos* in Mexico during the Inquisition. It won first prize in the categories of Historical Fiction and Multicultural as well as Honorable Mention from AZ Author, and is a finalist for the International Chaucer Chanticleer Awards. The novel was the 2019 WILLA Award winner for Original Softcover Novel by Women Writing the West in Walla Walla, Washington.

*Love and Death in Rhodes*, published in January 2020, probes the disappearance of Sephardim in a single day.

She has also written the only satirical series about Scottsdale.

Marcia has a BA from Florida State University and an MA from Arizona State University.

Traditions and rituals kept a people together through centuries of persecution around the world. The fact that some are finding their way back to their faith of origin is no less than a miracle! We are a strong, brave people. 🕯️





# Américo Paredes

## A Crypto-Jewish Legacy in South Texas

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CARLOS MONTALVO LARRALDE



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**C**arlos Larralde is a past-presenter at SCJS conferences and a retired professor of Chicano studies and Latino culture with a focus the borderlands of Texas. His PhD dissertation was on Chicano Jews in South Texas. A former professor of ethnic studies and sociology at California Community College, he taught at Golden West College and Cal-State, as well as an instructor of Chicano and Latino studies, Mexican American studies and sociology of the Southwest at other universities. He is the author and widely published contributor of articles related to the Latino and crypto-Judaic communities of California and the Southwest, as well as Colonial Mexico. Published works include *McCarthyism: Memories of a Blacklisted Bert Corona*, with Michael Lynch, and *Judge J.T. Canales, Latino Civil Rights Leader: An Intimate Portrait*.

*The following article is a historiography of the scholars who researched the crypto-Jewish legacy along the Lower Rio Grande.*

**A**mérico Paredes (September 3, 1915 – May 5, 1999) was a highly respected professor, journalist and folklorist at the University of Texas, Austin. Born in Brownsville, Texas, his writings reflected the border life, the area known as the Lower Rio Grande. His ancestors were Sephardic Jews who settled the area with Captain Jose de Escandon in 1749. Before that, like most other crypto-Jews, Paredes’ family arrived in Mexico during the 1500s. As one source noted, “His father’s side of the family had been in the New World for several centuries, first as part of a Sephardic Jewish settlement in the state of Nuevo Leon, [Mexico] and then, since the mid-1770s, became active ranchers on both sides of the US-Mexican border.” He often stressed to fellow scholars that his family married other local families who were also Sephardic.

With a timeless dignity and an everlasting gallantry, Paredes was proud of his Jewish roots all his life and encouraged his colleague, the historian Richard Santos, to document and write about the Sephardic Jewish legacy in South Texas. They both loved to hear reminiscences from elderly people. Another scholar, Amanda

Lipsitt reflected their research through her extensive studies on crypto-Jews in San Antonio. One who knew well about Paredes’ heritage was the scholar David T. Raphael. He focused on the conquistadors and crypto-Jews in Monterrey, Mexico and published his findings in 2001. The introverted Raphael was a physician and remained devoted to Sephardic studies. Another scholar who rallied to Paredes’ crypto-Jewish legacy with never a moment’s hesitation was George Farias, formerly of New Mexico, now of Texas. He published his data in 1995 on his own crypto-Jewish family who settled in Laredo during 1755. Sometime later, I found out that I am related to him.

As for myself, while going to San Benito High School in the 1960s, I struggled with anxiety over crypto-Jewish data concerning the upper Lower Rio Grande and the lower parts of the Rio Grande while I was obsessed with my own genealogy hobby. With the encouragement of my family, I slowly documented the Judaic roots of my relatives and other locals. I discovered that these families came with the Luis de Carvajal colony and established Monterrey during the 1500s.



In one way or another, they preserved numerous cultural traditions, prayers, and oral and written histories, especially in legal documents, wills and ownership of land. To do so, the significance of genealogies with their traditional special prayers were essential. These crypto-Jews saw a sacred obligation to the importance of genealogy in the Torah, such as in Genesis and in other parts of the sacred text.

Through many phone calls in the 1970s, Paredes inspired me to tackle this project as my UCLA dissertation. That meant I had to focus on the double weight of both Mexican and Anglo cultures that inhibited these crypto-Jews and oppressed their unique religious heritage. I finished the dissertation in 1978 and it created controversy. Paredes defended it until he died on May 5, 1999. In 2000, Duke University saw it as a gem and added it to their extensive Jewish Studies Center.

A friend of Paredes, the prominent Judge J.T. Canales, a giant in American civil rights, also aided me with the project. They both cautioned me that some family relatives, like most Jews, said short prayers during sunset on Saturday to mark the conclusion of the Sabbath. Numerous prayers were borrowed from the Catholic liturgy. These prayers were paraphrased with Christian hymns and much of the liturgy so that they were suitable for Jewish use. Since the 1600s these Jews used the names of Jesus and Mary in their prayers. Some relatives still use them today. They are said with “outstretched arms or with arms crossed upon the chest; or with hands overlapping below the chest and covered with a cloth; or with the left hand over the eyes and the right hand over the heart.”

As I spoke to Paredes, Santos and Farias, we realized several aspects of our crypto-Judaic legacy. One was, as Raphael pointed out, “that to keep records of Judaism was to become vulnerable to the Inquisition. Abstention from pork or fish with scales was practiced. A variety of goat dishes along the Lower Rio Grande that originated from this crypto-Jewish heritage during the 1600s are still dominant today, especially in Matamoros, Mexico.”

Also, Santos and Paredes agreed that plaited elongated-shape pastries made with plenty of eggs and sprinkled with poppy seeds were customary among crypto-Jews. Flour, water and butter also were used and fried only in mineral or vegetable oil. During the eight days of Passover these Jews would eat *pan de semit*. Among other Jews, they are called *challots*. In parts of Texas, bakers threw a piece of the dough into the fire. Santos and Paredes came across data that this habit started when religious Jewish women

in Colonial Mexico baked their bread to remember the great sacrifices made in the Jerusalem Temple.

Finally, we all cherished family moments with *capirotada*, a Mexican Jewish dish made of wheat bread, cinnamon, cheese, butter, pecans, peanuts, raisins and sprinkled with unrefined sugar. This traditional dish was recorded by the Inquisition. Also, there were other long-established dishes made with eggs. The scholar Seymour Liebman discovered that boiled eggs were common. Mexican and Lower Rio Grande crypto-Jews eat hard boiled eggs upon their return from a funeral; the egg represented the cycle of life and its tribulations.

Some families into the 20th century, practiced circumcision and lit Sabbath candles on Friday night. By the 1960s, several members of these families reverted to Judaism. Recalling the old, dignified

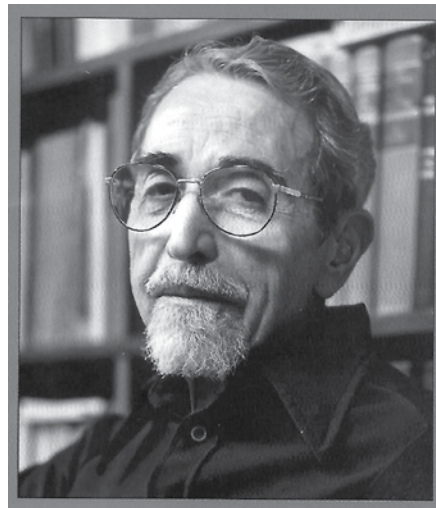
and gracious portraits on the walls of my grandmother’s house, I saw photographs of my cousin Margaret Montalvo Cortez and Ester Esparza Markos who became devoted to Judaism. Ester was the sister of my grandmother, Francisca Esparza Montalvo. As an act of respect to our ancestors, Francisca sometimes went with Ester to the Brownsville synagogue. Ester was buried in the local cemetery near the massive white marble tomb of her relative, the famous Judge J.T. Canales. As for her tomb, it is a small granite column with a carved Star of David. Her daughter Sarah remains devoted to the Torah.

As always, my San Antonio relative George Farias persisted with his genealogy. He had a surprise in 1986. One of his ancestors, Juan de Faria, was named the mayor of

Monterrey in 1610-1611. He was listed in a genealogical chart at a conference in McAllen, Texas, as a Sephardic Jew. Still puzzled over his ancestral Jewish roots, George wrote in 1995, “While I have not conclusively determined this as a fact, all my current information points to this conclusion.” His assumption was correct. Most of my relatives who had DNA blood tests during the 2000s have revealed a Jewish background.

The many scholars who promoted research on crypto-Jews in South Texas deserve recognition and made my doctoral dissertation possible. We owe them respect. Their publications were ignored because they did not fit the concept of traditional Texas history.

In addition, although his research is on the Upper Lower Rio Grande, I would like to acknowledge Stanley Hordes for his scholarship. 🔥



**AMÉRICO PAREDES**  
1915-1999



# Connecting with Your Jewish Past Through Modern Technology

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**GENIE MILGROM**

[www.geniemilgrom.com](http://www.geniemilgrom.com)

**D**ecades ago I began to avidly search for my Jewish lineage, scouring through archives in Spain, Portugal, Canary Islands, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Costa Rica and many other countries in the New World. It became an indefatigable project trying to piece together a tapestry of a family that for centuries had dedicated their lives to running and hiding as they pretended to be Catholics while remaining Jewish underground. I was determined to bring to light the bright colors of this tapestry and not the dull gray ones that lay underneath. I was fully successful at the time and understood that the process was not only costly but would span many years for an average person who tried to do this on their own.

I was born in Cuba and had to go back 15 generations to 1545 before I saw a hint of Jewish ancestry and 22 generations to 1405 to fully understand the depth and breadth of the accomplishments of my family – who they had been before, during and after the Inquisition.



This started the brainstorming to bring the information hidden in the archives to the casual family genealogist who wanted to figure it out themselves on their own time and not spend a fortune doing so.

I began working with a large company who agreed to sponsor the digitization of the Inquisition judgments lying in archives around the world and this has already begun. Yet the proper authorizations, permits and permissions have taken years and years, and this project is still underway.

Slowly I began to compile and upload data into spreadsheets that would allow someone to research on their own and find a link that could lead them back, This was a huge challenge – descendants of the Pre-Inquisition Jews live all over the world.

Through the years, I meticulously entered into spreadsheets, names, genealogies when available, aliases, descriptions and much more. All the fields for the data were the same: first name, last name, alias, origin, residence, occupation, sentence, comments and reference.

Information came from rare and out-of-print books, information that was available on the internet but not searchable, my own research, and a myriad of other sources. My thoughts were that as the information went up, there could be a computer program at some point that could read across all the spreadsheets and follow the Diaspora of a family or even a family name.

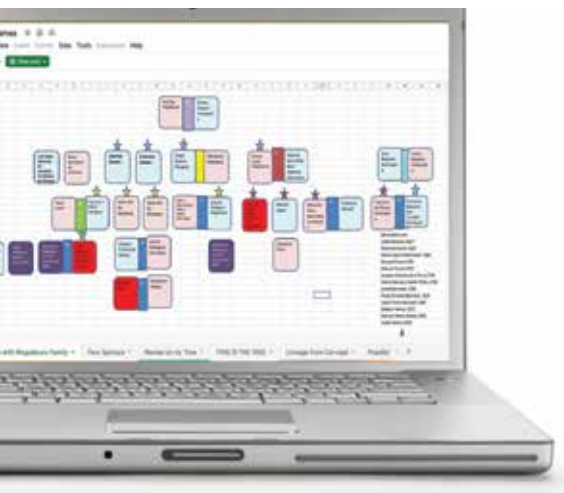
The collection contains references to the Inquisitions of Cartagena, Canary Islands, many areas of Spain, and a full and extensive collection of the Mexican Inquisition.



Eventually the digitization of the actual Inquisition judgments would be available and the results of this collection would match up with the Inquisition records.

Many sources had to be uploaded separately and finally, everything had to be pieced together, and that assumption would be correct. This was a long and scattered Diaspora, a group of people that had been Jews at one time who had either assimilated fully into the Catholic Church, or hid underground, or even left Spain and remained Jews and were only able to follow their ancestry to the country they fled to.

In addition to these types of references, there are also work sheets where I have listed all the archives, libraries and universities in Spain that have archival



material available, other sheets have links to important Inquisition collections, lists of the occupations of the hidden Jews, the taxes paid on Jewish heads and much, much more. Each one holds a tiny clue to the assemblage of what is the puzzle of a Jewish past.

The most exciting part of what will be available at no charge is a huge passenger manifest called *Pasajeros a Indias* which

lists every single passenger, Jewish or not, that traveled from Spain to a Spanish Territory starting in 1501. This is an amazing way to find “the missing link” or that one relative who traveled to the New World and started families.

Also included are thousands of pages found at the archives of the Museum of the Jewish People that I had digitized which contain very important information about the quotidian life of the Sephardic Jews before they assimilated to different cultures and parts of the world; a true treasure for researchers.

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## Here is a sample of sources cited.

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*Criptojudios En Europa, America, y en el Istmo de Panama Siglos XVI-XVII*

*Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World: 1391-1648*, by Gampel.

*Crypto-Jews under the Commonwealth*, by Lucien Wolf.

*Cuba-Crypto -Jews Archivo Historico Nacional-Madrid*

De Leon (Leao) Tree from several Historians Temkin, Barrow Lousada, The Martyr

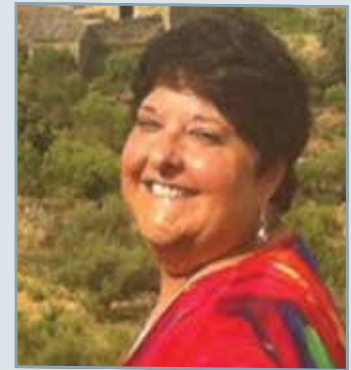
*Dels Jueus de Cervera (1281-1492) Jewish onomastic in Cervera (1281-1492)*

*Diccionario Enciclopedico de Historia Militar en Cuba* Page 323

*Diccionario Sefaradi De Sobrenomes (Dictionary of Sephardic Surnames)*

*Die Sefarden in Hamburg (The Sephardim in Hamburg, Germany) - Halevy.*

Most important, the collection is free of charge at [www.geniemilgrom.com](http://www.geniemilgrom.com) 📖



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Genie Milgrom was born in Havana, Cuba into a Roman Catholic family of Spanish ancestry. In an unparalleled work of genealogy, she fully documented her unbroken maternal lineage 22 generations going back as far as 1405 to Pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal. She traveled extensively to Fermoselle, the village of her ancestors in the Zamora region of Spain while doing field research on the past Jews of the area. She is past president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami, president of Tarbut Sefarad-Fermoselle in Spain, and past president of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.

She is the author of *My 15 Grandmothers*, as well as *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers — A Step By Step Guide* and her latest book, *Pyre to Fire*. The books have won the 2015 and 2018 Latino Author Book Awards. She also writes for several online sites including [www.esefarad.com](http://www.esefarad.com) and the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jewry*.

She has spoken at the Knesset in Israel and speaks around the world bringing awareness to the topic of Jews returning from the Inquisition.

Her work has been showcased in the *Jerusalem Post*, *The Miami Herald* and other publications around the world. She was awarded the State of Florida Genealogy award for her outstanding achievements and advances in her pioneering work in genealogy. Most recently, she was awarded the Medal of the Four Sephardic Synagogues for her ongoing work in bringing this heritage to light.



# Food and Identity in Sephardic Culture

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ANA M. GÓMEZ-BRAVO

The recent Spanish law of return that allowed Sephardic Jews to apply for Spanish citizenship has once again made communities within Spain and abroad to regard common cultural practices and points of contact. This matter is not just about looking for Sephardic presence in the Iberian Peninsula as a tradition marked by otherness and relegated to the past, but about recognizing its validity in contemporary culture in the 21st century and beyond. It also involves knowing and appreciating the long and rich Sephardic contributions to Spanish culture. Here we will take a look at some shared food practices by considering present-day Sephardic cookbooks alongside early Spanish ones. This approach is not intended as a way to trace the putative origins of Sephardic dishes, but rather to document food as one way a community preserves its identity and resists losing its collective memory and rituals. Just as importantly, it encourages us to consider food practices as an essential component of the effort to recover the memory of the Sephardic presence in contemporary Spain.

A quick review of the classic cookbooks by current Sephardic communities and some of the oldest testimonies of the cuisine of Medieval Spain shows for example, the same taste for spinach, celery, carrot, eggplant, fava beans and other types of beans, as well as lentils and chickpeas, the predominant legumes in the peninsular diet and in other parts of Europe. Recipe books published by the Sephardic sisterhoods connected with synagogues in the US are also useful as a starting point. I will comment on some very specific Sephardic communities, one located in Los Angeles and the other in Atlanta. I have also consulted books published for the wider Sephardic community, as well as traditional Spanish cookbooks from different periods to verify the points of union with the Sephardim.

As a starting example, the recipe for “Couscous, Exotic Stew” from *Cooking the Sephardic Way* from the Sephardic Sisterhood Temple Tifereth Israel, recalls the mention of “*alcuzcuçu* with chickpeas” in the dishes listed as a specialty of the 16th-century Spanish work *Lozana Andaluza*, which closely reflects the everyday life of Sephardim exiled in Rome during that century. The *almudrote* (also spelled *almudroti* or *almadrote*), a typical Sephardic

Ana Gómez-Bravo, is currently a 10-year faculty member in Spanish and Portuguese Studies at University of Washington, following a 19-year tenure at Purdue University in Indiana. Born in Madrid, she received both her BA in Spanish Literature and Linguistics and her MA in Medieval Spanish Literature from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Her PhD in Medieval Spanish Literature is from UC Berkeley.



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Gómez-Bravo specializes in 15th-century poetry. “Understanding the cultural context of the time a poem was written not only enhances the meaning and enjoyment of the poem for the present day reader,” Ana explains, “but also shows how the people of the time functioned. Material things, culture and language are interrelated... and essential to learning about a time period.”

“Poetry at that time was a common currency,” she explains. “For example, a thank you note for something as simple as a jar of quince jam was usually written as a short, witty poem. Poetry in the 15th century was an investment of time in a person’s self-representation,” says Ana “It was the 15th century’s version of social networking.”

Gómez-Bravo’s first book, *Repertorio Métrico de la Poesía Cancioneril Castellana del Siglo XV*, analyzes 15th-century poetry. Her second book, *Textual Agency: Written Culture and Social Practice in 15th-Century Spain*, focuses on the life of a poem and takes a close look at 15th-century writing, culture and social exchange.

An accomplished cook, Ana unapologetically admits to owning hundreds of cookbooks. “When we moved, I purged a lot of books,” she explains. “But all the cookbooks came with me. You never get rid of a cookbook!” she laughs. “I read them like novels — from cover to cover.” Self-described as sensory-oriented, Ana believes that “cooking expands our knowledge about and respect for food, including how to avoid waste, which is good for farmers — and good for everyone.”

While researching her books, Ana discovered abundant references to food, catching her attention from both personal and professional standpoints. Particularly in the Inquisitorial records, there was an obsession with what people ate, ingredients used in preparation, and even who was present during the meal. Initially a way to ascertain whether converted Jews or Muslims were still adhering to their former dietary laws, these methods slowly made their way into the cultural cooking of Spain and Mexico. “Food consumption morphed into an understanding of racial and ethnic differences,” Ana explains. This discovery led to pursuit of her other specialty — nutrition, writing and culture: the bio-cultural understanding of ethnic differences in which she completed a one-year fellowship while at Purdue.

Ana describes her next book, a novel, as a contemporary historical mystery set in Madrid and Seattle. “I started the book when I was directing Purdue’s study abroad program in Madrid,” says Ana. “The group I led let me see my home city through the eyes of outsiders while simultaneously giving them my insider’s view. It was an incredible experience and inspired me to write the novel.”

Ana Gómez-Bravo and her husband have three adult children and are delighted to be in Seattle and at UW.





dish often made with eggplant, is found in current Sephardic cookbooks such as *El Gizado Sefaradi* and is closely related to current recipes such as that of the *almogrote* made in the Canary Islands and with other traditional recipes such as the one found in Juan Vallés' early 16th-century *Regalo de la Vida Humana* and in the 14th-century Catalan cookbook *Libre de Sent Soví*, which in fact contains a second *almodrote* recipe containing egg, just like the typical Sephardic *almodrote* made today.

Other preparations that unite current Sephardic cuisine with that documented in ancient texts are *empanadas* and *empanadillas* (also called *pastelicos* in Sephardic cookbooks), *ajadas*, sweet quince preparations of all sorts, *bizcochos* and *bizcochuelos*, *buñuelos*, *burmuelos* or *bimuelos*, *mostachudos*, *mazapanes*, *nogada*, *hojaldres*, all of which can vary in their spelling depending on the community.

Perhaps one of the most important preparations was *adafina*, the hot dish prepared on Fridays to be consumed on the Sabbath.

The *adafina* eaten by Sephardic Jews in Medieval Spain had many points of contact in their ingredients and cooking techniques with the food consumed by their non-Jewish neighbors in the particular places where they lived. The *adafina* recipe below follows a documented one consumed in Toledo during the 15th century. It has points of contact with a similar preparation from Central Spain today known as *cocido* (literally 'boiled dish'). A big difference is the absence of pork products from the *adafina* and also the longer time the dish spent slow-cooking in the embers, a technique that is key for the smooth texture of its components. Because of its importance for the preparations made for the Sabbath, *adafina* became one of the quintessential markers of crypto-Judaism and as such it appears repeatedly in Inquisitorial records. The *adafina* enjoyed in Spain was also the one dish that the Sephardim would recall with nostalgia and longing during the early decades of their exile. The following recipe will let you understand the delicious culinary properties of the dish. 🍲

# Adafina

*Adafina* was the *hamin* or dish that Jews in Spain ate on the day of rest. It was covered in the embers or set under an iron pot filled with glowing coals and left to slow-cook until the time for the meal on Saturday. Much of the information about ingredients and techniques that Jews used in Spain comes from records of the Inquisition and from references in literary texts. Editor's note: A similar recipe was submitted in an earlier *HaLapid* by Rifka Cook; same idea, different ingredients. An example of the impact of exile.

The recipe here is based on the descriptions of *adafinas* that contain more varied ingredients and seem to have been the gold standard when those were available. Quantities are suggested, and left up to individual preferences. Because Sephardic Jews before 1492 would have had access only to organic produce and pastured animals, I recommend you find the best quality organic ingredients. They will make a difference in the taste of the *adafina*. The long, slow-cooking method turns an ordinary one-pot meal into something exquisite. It transforms the other ingredients, making the broth clear and the meats, eggs and vegetables delicate, giving them a sublime texture.

## Ingredients

Half an organic chicken, quartered  
 1 grass-fed lamb shank  
 1-lb. piece of grass-fed beef chuck  
 4 organic beef marrowbones  
 Meatballs (optional)\*  
 Organic, pastured eggs, whole  
 Chickpeas  
 2 onions with 1 clove garlic stuck to each  
 6 carrots  
 4 celery stalks  
 Several sprigs fresh cilantro or parsley  
 3 bay leaves  
 1 teaspoon ground caraway seeds, or to taste  
 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, or to taste  
 ½ teaspoon dried cilantro, or to taste  
 1 teaspoon black peppercorns  
 Fresh spinach or chard leaves

\*If adding meatballs:

1 pound organic ground beef or a mixture of beef and chicken  
 2 minced garlic cloves or to taste  
 2 tablespoons minced parsley  
 1 egg  
 Breadcrumbs  
 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

Combine the meatball ingredients using your hands. Form meatballs. Roll them in flour and brown in olive oil. Reserve.



Preheat oven to 175 degrees F. In a wide heavy casserole, combine all the other ingredients first arranging the meats and then adding the chickpeas, spices, herbs, vegetables and eggs. Add water to generously cover the ingredients. Bring to a boil on the stove. Cover and put into preheated oven. Cook for 12-15 hours. At the end of the cooking period or before you retire for the night, add the meatballs (if using) and spinach or chard. Serve in individual bowls placing a piece of each ingredient in each bowl and add some of the delicious broth. Be ready for the raves!



# Las Vegas, New Mexico Jewish Community Reclaims Historic Temple Montefiore

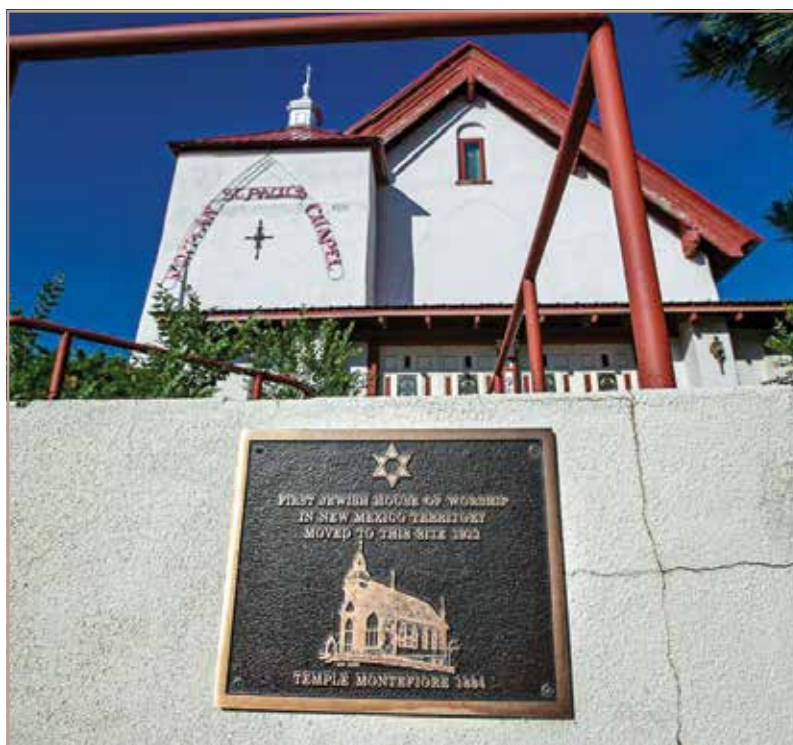
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DIANNE R. LAYDEN, PHD

**O**n Rosh Hashanah, 5783 (September 2022), a remarkable development occurred in New Mexico Jewish history: Las Vegas Jewish Community, Inc. (JCLV), a non-profit corporation, purchased Temple Montefiore – the first synagogue in Territorial New Mexico – from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

Las Vegas is a community of about 13,000 people 65 miles northeast of Santa Fe and 125 miles from Albuquerque. The Jewish community here has long wished to purchase the historic temple, built in 1886.

The building, which the Archdiocese owned for about 60 years, was used as a Newman Center chapel, a place of worship for Catholic students attending New Mexico Highlands University. The building was sold to contribute to the \$121.5 million dollar settlement with victims of clerical sexual abuse.

The Jewish congregation formed in 1884, named the building for British philanthropist Moses Montefiore (1784-1885). JCLV has been allowed to



*Temple Montefiore as Catholic Church*



*Temple Montefiore interior*



*Temple Montefiore interior*



Temple Montefiore, Las Vegas, New Mexico, circa 1890



Congregation Montefiore in background, circa 1912

hold services there in addition to meeting in private homes or other Las Vegas churches.

The Montefiore Cemetery Association maintains the Jewish cemetery built in 1881. The railroad arrived in 1878 and by 1880 as many as 70 Jews lived in Las Vegas — roughly equal to the number in Santa Fe.

Prominent German-Jewish merchants in 1860–1880 included Charles Ilfeld, Joseph and Emmanuel Rosenwald, Adolph Dittenhoffer, Isidor Stern, Adolph Letcher, and Simon Rosenstein. In 2006, Ilfeld's Great Emporium on the plaza was added to the historic Plaza Hotel (1882).

Las Vegas had the largest Jewish population in New Mexico Territory in 1900 — about 130 Jews and over 170 by 1910 — after which their numbers declined for 30 years. The Las Vegas Baptist Church owned the Temple in 1957–1962.

Beginning in the 1990s, Nancy Terr states, when the Jewish community regrouped, the membership included *conversos* and other Jews who were discovering their Jewish heritage. About a dozen core members have worked to keep the Jewish presence alive in Las Vegas.

The JCLV mailing list now includes 40 Jewish families, according to Diana Presser.

Notably, JCLV raised over \$350,000 in just a few weeks, mostly from non-members with donations from throughout the country. The Temple's purchase includes an adjacent parcel of land with a house that JCLV hopes will become a museum. 🏠

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# A SURPRISING SEPHARDIC MIGRATION

From Spain to  
New France Via the  
Principality Refuge  
of Sedan —  
The Journey of the  
Baron (Aron) Nájera  
Family to  
Quebec City, Canada

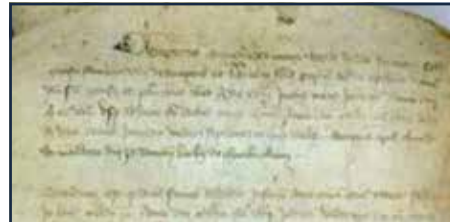


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NIKOLAS-SAMUEL BARON BERNIER

## MONTREAL IN ANOTHER TIME

A Canadian-Quebecer seeking his origins in the gold mine of the National Archives of France finds this anachronistic treasure (right):

*“Account of the Jew Samuel of Montreal of the expenditure made for the repairs of the stronghold of Saint-Genix, from April 1, 1339 to June 24, 1340.”*



The outburst of disbelief quickly subsides: we understand that in the midst of the Middle Ages there is obviously no question of the existence of our metropolis. Still, the name “Samuel of Montreal” creates a familiar image that resonates in prophetic sign, as if New France had long been a dream destination for the displaced children of Israel.

## ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The misadventures of Esther Brandeau, a young woman disguised as a boy who tried to land illegally at the port of Quebec City in 1738, are often cited as being the only case of Jewish immigration to the colony at a time when only Catholics had the right to settle there. However this is incorrect.

First, in July 1631 the *Don-de-Dieu* bound for Quebec carried on board a passenger simply designated “The Jew” who signed a

“solemn protest.” Then, as Daniel-Arthur Hart reports, “On April 1, 1752, a Jew born in Holland, aged 48 years and three months was brought to Louisbourg after he had embraced the Catholic faith on board the ship *La Fripponne*, while on her way to Quebec. “Forcibly baptized in the open sea, his name would have been Joseph Moise Kel.”

There is also the case of Jean-Baptiste Rodrigue, a Portuguese privateer, pilot of the *King* and merchant in Quebec, Port-Royal and Louisbourg from 1712. Carlos Taveira’s research carried out thanks to the Gradis Fund, disclosed during a conference at the *Musée de la Civilisation*, reveals

that the one known also as Jean de Fond was a Jew.

Finally, Jean-Marie Gélinas demonstrated through contracts that his ancestor Étienne (1658), officially Protestant, belonged to a small crypto-Jewish community in Saintes and would have been of Spanish origin.

In his article “A Jewish Presence in New France?,” the historian Pierre Ancilil writes, “There is no doubt that a small number of Jews, especially Sephardim, arrived in the colony of Canada before 1763 and that many of them were able to settle in Quebec.

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*Image above, detail of an illumination with fleur-de-lis from the parchment manuscript of the Sephardic Bible of Cervera (1299-1300), dating before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1496). (Archives of the National Library of Portugal-World Digital Library. [www.wdl.org/en](http://www.wdl.org/en))*



# OUR FAMILIES OUR SECRETS

As these immigrants embarked in French ports could not openly declare their religious identity under penalty of being forced to return to Europe, it is very difficult to specify the number. The same is true of those who had ‘converted’ after a more or less prolonged stay in France and who did not stand out, according to the authorities, from the mass of newcomers. These ‘discreet’ or ‘crypto-Jewish’ Jews were able to escape the unenviable fate that their co-religionists suffered at the same time in France, on condition of hiding their real feelings in an America that was still vast and undifferentiated.”

It is therefore possible that our knowledge of these migrations might increase and that other “native Quebec” families will reveal their surprising Jewish or *marrano* roots.

Before sharing an overview of an investigation into the little-known migrations of some ancestors to New France, let us quote the case of David Dugas who, in *Were Crypto-Jews in Early New France Settlements?*, alleges the strong possibility that his ancestor Dugas (Ducas) was Jewish by combining the historical approach with genetic analyses, faithful to the approach of Deborah Jensen, head of the Canadian Anusim DNA project at FamilyTreeDNA. Jensen hopes to combine genealogical and historical research along with YDNA and mtDNA results of French Canadians to demonstrate the presence of Jewish ancestry in New France one day giving them their rightful recognition among the first settlers.

## SEDAN: LAND OF REFUGE

A major event influences the migratory movements of Jewish populations in Europe and toward North and South America and North Africa at the end of the 15th century and in the 16th century: the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1496. Another migratory pressure was exerted in Europe and in France during the Renaissance: the wars of religion and the “hunting” of Protestants.

Sedan was a principality independent from France from 1549 to 1642 and has the largest medieval fortified castle in all of Europe. The Principality of Sedan was a refuge during the wars of religion for Protestants and also for Jews who obtained the right to officially reside there in 1609. A small Jewish community made up of refugees from the advent of the principality was reportedly already present there. >>>

Nikolas is a biologist, actor and editor for an educational service founded to popularize Jewish scientists who have been ignored or misunderstood in the history of science.

He has played characters such as Albert Einstein and Sigismund Mohr, a

Jewish immigrant from Prussia who was the pioneer behind the first hydroelectric power plant in Canada. Nikolas has published articles in the field of biomedical research and molecular neurobiology in various professional publications. More recently, he was involved in the development of the family business, Baron Lafrenière Lawyers and was also an agent for his mother, the artist Suzan Edith Baron Lafrenière. He also researches and writes for Canadian television and other media.

Following a religious study trip to Israel at the age of 17, Nikolas undertook the genealogical and anthropological investigation that led him to document his family’s history as *b’nai anusim* of Sephardic origin, and to deepen his own connection to Judaism. He has long championed the fight against racism and antisemitism, organizing and participating in events promoting cultural and religious diversity. He and his wife, Elizabeth Garcia Carrillo, have been involved in the Jewish community of Quebec City mainly through Unity-Quebec, an organization advocating peaceful co-existence. They also help the integration of war refugees from Colombia through a local non-profit.

Nikolas lectures on the history of *Judeo-conversos*, crypto-Jews and *b’nai anusim* to the general public. He hopes to arouse interest among Quebec researchers and historians in this little-explored theme. Following the path indicated by oral traditions of his maternal family and so visible in his family tree (along with 14 other Jewish roots: 12 Sephardim of Spain and Portugal and two Ashkenazi from Germany and Czechoslovakia), and identifying several contemporary Jewish and Sephardic traditions, he would like to see further research on Quebec families. This is to focus on the contribution of Jewish immigration to the colony of New France, despite historical dogma suggesting the non-existence of such immigration due to the laws prohibiting it at the time.



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[www.lvsomagazine.com/2020/11/de-lespaigne-a-la-nouvelle-france-via-la-principaute-refuge-de-sedan-une-surprenante-migration-sepharade/](http://www.lvsomagazine.com/2020/11/de-lespaigne-a-la-nouvelle-france-via-la-principaute-refuge-de-sedan-une-surprenante-migration-sepharade/)



Sedan had an academy that attracted several intellectuals of the Reformation. From 1577, we find there Emmanuele Tremellio, a Jew from Ferrara (Italy) who converted to Protestantism and who obtained a Hebrew chair.

At first glance, the principality of Sedan does not appear among the places that have experienced a strong wave of Jewish-Spanish immigration. However a careful examination of the Protestant registers of Sedan shows the existence of Spanish immigration, especially from the 1580s. Is it a coincidence, when we know that from 1580 the Spanish Inquisition redoubled its vigor in Spain to hunt down *conversos* from newly annexed Portugal or those who remained despite the Alhambra decree?

Here are some of names of Spanish families with possible Jewish heritage, found listed in more than 300 civil status documents in the Protestant registers of Sedan: Gerard Malaga (1593), Jean Mirandal (1584), Suzanne Gonzal (1575), Jeanne Bazan (1575), Laurent d'Aragon (1589), Elizabeth Siga (1600) Suzanne Sigal (1583), Marie Pina (1596), Louise de Guarigua (1622), Samuel Bogan (1595), Sara Botter (Botero) (1587).

## SIDRACH BARON ATTEMPTS TO RETURN TO SPAIN

In Sedan we find the Baron family, to whom we pay special attention since we find Sidrach, the ancestor of several New-France families including that of the author of these lines. The investigation which led us to Sedan on the trail of potential *conversos*/b'nai anusim of Spanish origin converted to Protestantism but retaining a Jewish identity/memory, was initiated several years ago in order to verify the oral tradition about the Judeo-Spanish inheritance and the origin of the surname coming from Bar Aaron. Were certain ethnological characteristics –transmission of the Spanish language, contemporary economic, social, cultural and emotional links with Spain, possession of land, a family residence and a network in Spain, Jewish consciousness pronounced and transmitted to children, unconscious customs related to Shabbat and other traditions – one part of the branches of the Baron family of Quebec? Could this be supported by documents?

The “family legend” seems well-founded. First, it is verified primarily by circumstantial evidence highlighting the matrimonial network developed with other Sephardic families and second, by direct evidence supported by a recently discovered archive. Protestant records indicate that Sidrach was baptized on March 17, 1585 in Sedan. His father is Michel Baron, his mother Marguerite Husson, and his godmother Marie Serva.

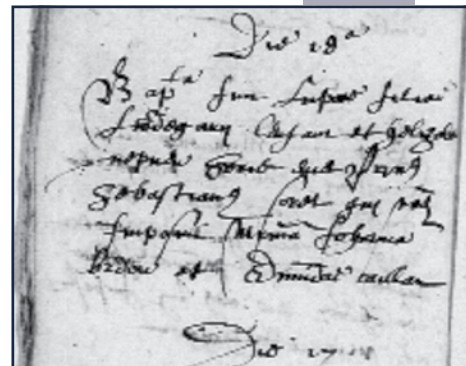
By researching the names of families and the cities of origin of the godfathers and godmothers of the other children (Abraham, Jérémie, Thomas, Marie) of the Baron-Husson couple, as well as the names and cities of origin of their spouses several years later, we find of a small community of people of Sephardic origin. This also includes the network of the brothers of Michel Baron, Thomas and Jean, and their children (Jonas, Élizabeth, Isaac). For example, Thomas marries Perrette Badach, who is from Bone (Algeria) according to Perrette’s death certificate. The Badach patronym has been correctly identified as a name carried by Sephardic families from the Maghreb. Other names within the same family circle are Camis, Camizo, Caloz, Loys, Brandeau (Brandao).

As for the first name Sidrach, it comes from the Book of Daniel and is the Chaldean version of Hananiah. In the prayer of the *marranos* of Castile Bendeçid Todas Las Obras Del Señor, there is a blessing to the three Hebrew children in the furnace of Babylon who calmly refused to abdicate their faith and customs despite the repression, and miraculously emerged from the flames unharmed: “*Bendeçid Sidrach, Misach y Abnedago, al Senor*”

## LUPIEN BARON, SON OF SIDRACH, VILLENAUXE (TROYES), CHAMPAGNE

The recent discovery of this archive document in the register of baptismal records of Villenauxe (Troyes) provided direct evidence concerning the Spanish origin of Sidrach and his family (images at right).

The baptismal certificate of Lupien Baron dated March 19, 1608, shows that his parents,



Transcription de l'acte de baptême de Lupien Baron, archives de Villenauxe (Troyes) (1573-1643)

Registres des enfants baptisés - Année 1608-mois de Mars

« Dio 19 »

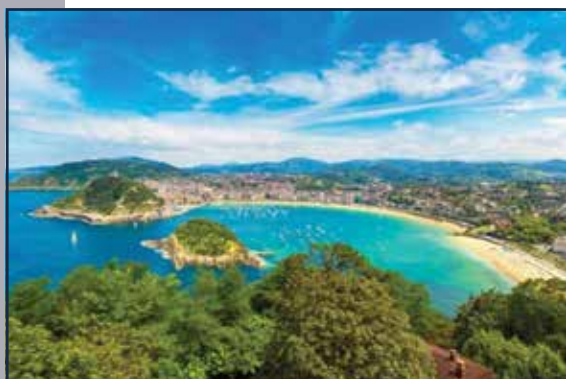
**Bap le <sup>a</sup> fuit Loupieno filious  
Sidrach aron defun et Halzoga  
najera tout deue de San  
Sebastian Fucros (ou Foros) que nous  
Sanctifions maraine Johanna  
bardou et Dominictas millar »**

Transcription réalisée le 20 Janvier 2008 - 12 juillet 2020 - par Nikolaj-Samuel Baron-Denisier à partir des manuscrits numérotés des Archives en ligne de l'Aube-Villenauxe-Baptêmes-mariages et décès 1573-1643, p.114





The medieval castle of Sedan today  
(photo credit: CRTCA)



Modern day bay of San Sebastian  
(photo credit: CRTCA)



Family house of Wilfrid Baron Lafrenière, hay and grain merchant in Maskinongé, Canada, circa 1928

Sidrach Aron and Halzola Nájera are from San Sebastian (Spain) and benefit from *fueros*, a term used for human rights and respect for certain customs of Spanish citizens. The mother's real name is Francisca Nájera Alzola, daughter of Juan Lopez (Lope) de Nájera and Catalina Alzola, according to her baptismal certificate dated January 9, 1591 found in the archives of San Sebastián. The godmother is Johana Bardou and the godfather, Dominictas

Millar. Interesting to note, a few years later (June 17, 1645), another member of the Millar family (Nicolas) will be godfather with Catherine Lohr (or Loher) godmother at the baptism of Nicolas Baron, son of Lupien and Jeanne Thierson, still in Villenauxe (Troyes).

We learned however, that Juan Lopez de Nájera, from the city of San Sebastian, is identified as *Judeo-converso* and was to be expelled in the *Actas de junta de Fuenterrabia* in 1593. Research on this branch of the Nájera family in the Spanish archives indicates to us that it is a Jewish family converted to Christianity after 1492. Several documents attest to the openly Jewish presence of the Nájera in the region of Cordoba in Andalusia and in the Spanish Basque country during the period before the Expulsion.

In 1488, Rabbi Abraham Nájera, originally from Valmaseda near San Sebastian, wrote a request as "Procurator of the *aljamas* of these kingdoms," to recover the houses and property confiscated from the Jews so they could give them as an inheritance to their children, as they have done until now. A large part of the Nájera refused to convert and were expelled in 1492, while others remained as *conversos*. So far we have found in the archives of the Inquisition of the 16th and early 17th century, a dozen members of the Nájera family condemned or accused of "Judaizing."

## NICOLAS BARON, SON OF LUPIEN: CAP NOUVELLE-FRANCE, ULTIMATE REFUGE

Nicolas Baron, son of Lupien and Jeanne Thierson, left Champagne for New France around 1672 and married Marie-Marthe Chauvin in 1676; they multiplied rather abundantly. Their numerous descendants were to "settle" in the same place, Maskinongé and the Trois-Rivières region for a good 10 generations – a new fact following the nomadic peregrinations in Europe.

This history is only a brief overview of a few humble discoveries about the turbulent migrations of our *converso* ancestors to New France. The integrity of the search results will be published later; perhaps a small breach along with other research, in an all too well-established historical dogma and monolith of identity.

An anonymous pen who, meditating on the family tree of his ancestors as well as on his own existence, once fittingly wrote "We are all the fruits of countless loves." 🍁





Detail of Jônatas, "5 Madonnas In Exile" (2018), mixed media

Many SCJS members will remember meeting Jônatas at the 2015 Miami Conference when he was the Sosin Stratton-Petit Foundation recipient, a special honor. It was a thrill to discover him online by chance and see what he is doing now. — Editor

Growing up in Brazil, Jônatas Chimen Dias DaSilva-Benayon (who goes by simply Jônatas) knew his family was different. While other families faithfully attended Catholic masses, his family stayed home. There were strict rules about how to prepare food, who you could marry, and how to prepare a clean home for special Friday night, candle-lit dinners, but the reason they kept these traditions remained a secret. It was only when he was 18 years old that Jônatas's parents revealed to him that they were members of a long line of Sephardic crypto-Jews.

The term crypto-Jews refers to people who practice Judaism secretly, usually while outwardly professing to belong to another faith. Since its colonization, Brazil has been home to a tight community of the descendants

of exiled Portuguese and Spanish Jews who fled the persecution of the antisemitic Inquisition to live in Dutch colonies, only to be ruled over by the Portuguese once again for hundreds of years. Many kept their Jewishness a secret from their own descendants, even though they continued altered spiritual traditions. Upon the discovery of his family's history, Jônatas' parents encouraged him to research this complex history.

The artist's parents said, "You seem to be attracted to this side of our family. Why don't you go learn, and come back and teach us?" Since then, the multimedia artist has seamlessly blended academic research with sculpture, painting and performance, in a lifetime journey to unravel his family's story.





# J Ô N A T A S

[www.theartofjonatas.com](http://www.theartofjonatas.com)

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**ISABELLA SEGALOVICH**



*Jônatas, "5 Madonnas In Exile" (2018), mixed media*

Jônatas's work dives deep into a tangled tale of migration and Diaspora. In a play on "Doña," an Iberian address for a distinguished woman, "5 Madonnas In Exile" (2018) was an installation dedicated to his family's Sephardic matriarchs. In a parody of Catholic imagery, he sewed and sculpted a dazzling fabric "Refugee Cathedral" which included a silhouette of the archetypal Mother Mary, holding up a baby with tiny horns and cow's ears. "This piece was a slap in the face to the Catholic Church," he said. "I had to do it at least once."

Although he is now a practicing Jew, Jônatas does not describe himself as a "Jewish artist." His Brazilian background also plays heavily in his work, from which he draws, alongside his

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*Detail of Jônatas, "5 Madonnas In Exile" (2018), mixed media*



Sephardic family's exile story, to address the global migration crisis. Although it deals with a serious subject matter, "5 Madonnas" features bright, joyful colors that swirl around defiant portraits of his female subjects. One of the "Madonnas" exudes power as she steps down from a stone block engraved with text that proclaims, "FOR I AM QUEEN." Jônatas makes a comparison between the Inquisition-era treatment of Jews and the United States' criminalization and simultaneous exploitation of Latine, Indigenous migrants. "I wanted to speak about sacrificing the strength of a country, which in the US, is the immigrant."

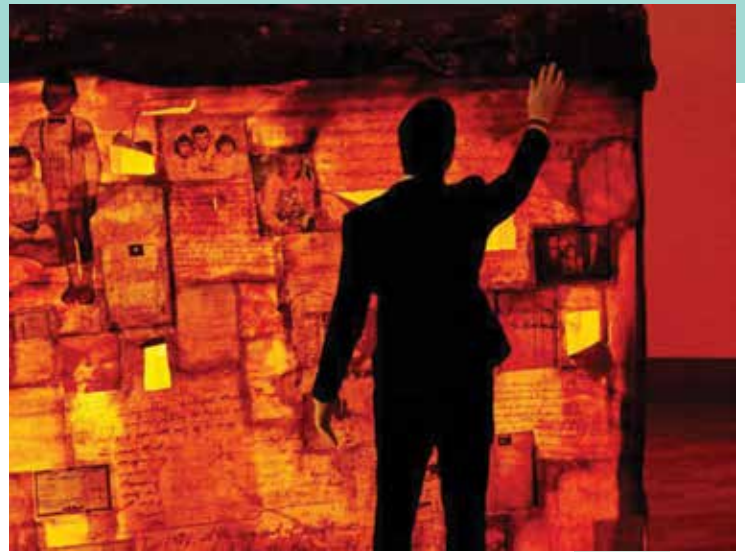
Around 2018, research led Jônatas to his ancestors documents of their oppression under the Inquisition. "These books were over 1000 pages long. They were being tortured and being asked to confess to Judaizing." Some were the records of his family members' executions. "I didn't want to illustrate my experience anymore via paintings," he said, adding that he instead used the documents themselves as his medium, pasting them together to mimic the quarantine room that members of his family were confined to after their immigration from Spain to Brazil in the early 1900s. Entering the glowing, womb-like cell titled "In Thy Tent I Dwell" (2018), visitors were surrounded by photographs and records, forced to confront the hardships and perseverance of crypto-Jews.

Jônatas found that some Portuguese Jews purchased titles of nobility and took up heraldic coats of arms as a way to establish status and protect themselves. Similar to Ashkenazi artisans in Eastern Europe who incorporated Polish royal imagery into synagogue ornamentation, "the western Sephardim had coats of arms on their tallits." Jewish artists would ascribe uniquely Jewish meanings to traditional heraldic symbols. In his family coat of arms that he is reestablishing in Portuguese heraldry societies, Jônatas has incorporated symbols like the phoenix, representing the phoenix of Abraham, and flowers that correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel.

During his travels back and forth between Miami and Paris, Jônatas has begun drawing altered portraits of the stone royals crowning historic French palaces, combining them with his heraldry designs. Reminiscent of "The Emperor's New Clothes," an otherwise stately official poses in his birthday suit in "Exilarch II: Composure Besides Nakedness in the Wilderness."

"I'm showing the vulnerability of these people who were treated like gods. So I show them in very unflattering poses," he said. While still in preliminary sketches for a developing project, their careful composition and intricate detail make them appear like finished works. One drawing features a pile of squashed faces, bordering on the grotesque: The pairings with royal symbolism call into question the way we ascribe "officiality" to documents — and to people — through their aesthetics.

Contrary to the common belief they are completely isolated, Jewish communities throughout the world often incorporate cultural elements of their non-Jewish neighbors. Jewish heraldry is one example of many visual assertions of the right to hold dominion over one's own home and way of life, free from oppression. Jônatas' oeuvre skillfully navigates this cultural complexity of his community's history and the ways they steadfastly continued to survive under the threat of state power. 🗨️



Jônatas, "In Thy Tent I Dwell," (2018) mixed media



Jônatas, from The New Royals NFT original series (2022). "Exilarch II: Composure Besides Nakedness in the Wilderness."



Jônatas, from The New Royals NFT original series (2022).



# Bimuelos

## Sephardic Hanukkah Donuts

**A** *bimuelo* alternatively called *boñuelo*, *buñuelo*, *birmuelo*, *bermuelo*, *bumuelo*, *burmuelo*, or *bonuelo*; Catalan: *bunyol*, is a fried dough fritter found in Spain, Latin America, Israel, and other regions with a historical connection to Spaniards or Sephardic Jews, including Southwest Europe, the Balkans, Anatolia, and other parts of Asia and North Africa. *Bimuelos* are traditionally prepared at Christmas, Ramadan, and among Sephardic Jews at Hanukkah. It will usually have a filling or a topping. In Mexican cuisine, it is often served with a syrup made with *piloncillo*.

*Bimuelos* are first known to have been consumed among Spain's Morisco population. They typically consist of a simple, wheat-based yeast dough, sometimes flavored with anise, that is thinly rolled, cut or shaped into individual pieces, then fried and finished off with a sweet topping. *Bimuelos* may be filled with a variety of things, sweet or savory. They can be round in ball shapes or disc-shaped, or freeformed. In Latin America, *bimuelos* are seen as a symbol of good luck.

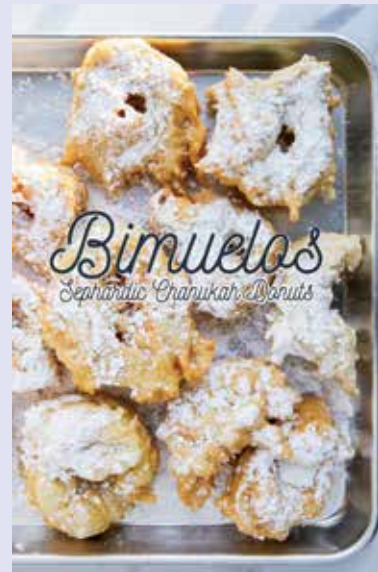
This recipe comes from [www.melindastrauss.com](http://www.melindastrauss.com).

"I grew up eating these Sephardic donuts and they are the easiest donuts you will ever make!" Melinda says.

"The dough comes together in less than 10 minutes, let it rise for 1 hour, and then you just drop messy bunches of the dough right into the oil. And don't skimp on the powdered sugar!"

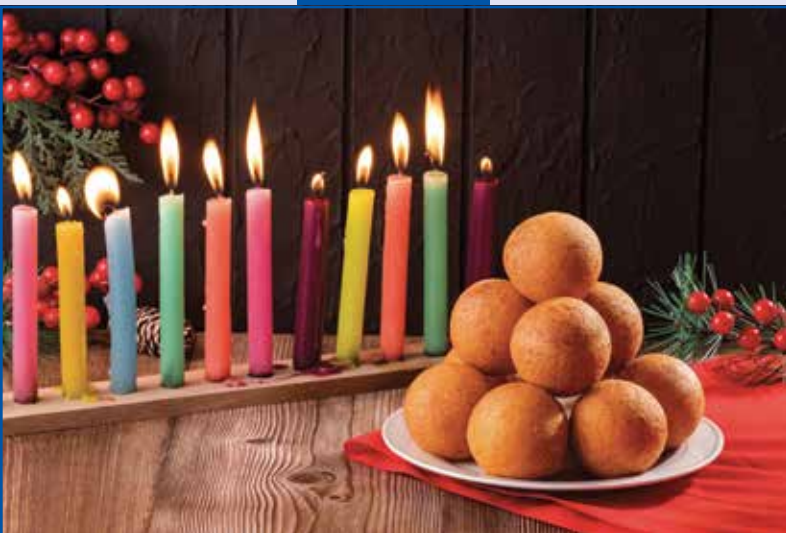
### INGREDIENTS

- 4½ tsp active dry yeast  
(2 packets)
- 2 cups warm water
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups vegetable oil, for frying
- Toppings: powdered sugar,  
honey



### INSTRUCTIONS

In a mixing bowl, combine the yeast, sugar, and warm water and set aside for 5 minutes to activate the yeast. There should be bubbles forming on top when it's ready. Add the flour and salt and stir until a very sticky dough has formed. Cover the bowl and rise 1 hour. Pour oil into a frying pan and heat to 350 degrees F. I definitely recommend using a candy thermometer when you fry. Dip your hands in cold water or oil then rip off pieces of the dough, open up the center to create a hole, and carefully drop in the fryer. Each *bimuelo* will have a unique shape. Fry for 2 minutes on each side. Drain *bimuelos* on paper towels then top with powdered sugar or honey while still hot.



# From Samizdat to Cookbooks

## A fleeting overview of crypto-Judaic publishing

*As presented at the SCJS Conference October 3-4, 2021*

In advance of the release of our current SCJS book list dealing with crypto-Judaic history and culture (titles numbering in the hundreds) we share this personal reflection by SCJS member Kathleen Alcalá. Her random sampling as presented in 2021 was by no means comprehensive and is only a taste of the list to come. We will all benefit from the work being done by board member Beth Chernoff (see page 5) who is processing this major list for inclusion on our SCJS website in early 2023. — Ed.

**W**here should we start? What is a crypto-Jew? According to the JewishVirtualLibrary.org:

*Crypto-Jews are persons who, while secretly remaining faithful to Judaism, practiced another religion which they or their ancestors were forced to accept.*

How do we define a crypto-Jewish publication? And how should we make a distinction between literature by crypto-Jews, by their descendants, scholarly literature about crypto-Jews, and writings by people who imitate the literature of crypto-Jews?



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My first instinct, as a product of the Americas, was to start with Francisco Maldonado da Silva, who managed to prolong his life in the prisons of the Inquisition for 13 years by offering to debate the priests on the merits of Judaism. When he had a chance to escape, he merely slipped into the cells of others in order to share his unflagging faith. He converted two of them.

Francisco Maldonado da Silva, Hebrew name Eliahu Hanazir was born in Argentina in 1592 and burned at the stake in Peru along with 11 others, January 23, 1639. Da Silva was a practicing Catholic of New Christian parentage until he visited his father in Chile where he read the tractate *Scrutinio Scripturarum* by Paul de Burgos, published in Mantua in 1474. The agents of the Inquisition caught up with him a year later and took him to Lima, Peru to the dungeons of the Inquisition. He defended his position during 15 disputations that took place over 13 years, writing out his positions and having them delivered to the *calificadores*, including one on the Book of Daniel. At his request, his writings were returned and burned with him.

His life was recently novelized by Marcos Aguinis in *Against the Inquisition* (reviewed on page 29). But maybe we should go back even farther. How about the author of the *Zohar*, Moises de Leon (c. 1240-1305)? He wrote under an assumed name, Shimon bar

Yochai in Aramaic, in a time and place where it was better to be incognito, but not for the same reasons most people would consider crypto-Jews. I think of him as a traveling salesman of Jewish mysticism, in itself an interesting idea.

Consider Vito Alessio Robles, (1879-1957). *Saltillo en la Historia y en la Leyenda* (1934) [*Saltillo in History and Legend* (1934)]. I have a signed copy that belonged to my grandfather, Miguel Narro. It appears that they were classmates at El Ateneo before Robles went off to engineering college and became a military notable and published journalist.

This book, one of several profiles of northern Mexican cities, includes a chapter on the Jews of Saltillo, the first published affirmation I came across in researching my family's origins. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vito\\_Alessio\\_Robles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vito_Alessio_Robles)).

Many other examples of more contemporary writing include:

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, biography of Isaac Cardoso, 1971, University of Washington Press.

Victor Perera. *The Cross and the Pear Tree – A Sephardic Journey*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

David M. Gitlitz. *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. xvi, 677 pp. Skeptic turned friend of SCJS.

Kathleen Alcalá. *Spirits of the Ordinary*, 1997, Chronicle Books. Re-published 2021 by Raven Chronicles Press.

Naomi Regen. *The Ghost of Hanna Mendez*, 1998.

*Una Pequeña Leccion en Hebreo por Rev. Emilio Saenz* (translation of *The Apocalypses of San Juan* from Spanish to self-taught Hebrew), self-published, 2000.



Achy Obejas. *Days of Awe 2001*, a novel about Jewish Cubans in Cuba and the United States and their fraught relationship with Judaism. It is somewhat autobiographical and enjoyed quite a bit of success upon publication.

Dan Rafael. *The Conquistadores and Crypto-Jews of Monterrey*, Carmi House, 2001. This is a history of one group of crypto-Jews in northern Mexico with extensive genealogical information. When I first looked for it, it was out of print, but it has recently been reprinted, and the person who provided me and my son with our official genealogy used it as a reference. I think it is self-published.

Janet Jacobs. *Hidden Heritage – The Legacy of the Crypto-Jews*, University of California Press, 2002.

Gloria Golden. *Remnants of Crypto-Jews Among Hispanic Americans*, 2004.

Ruth Behar. *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*, Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Stan Hordes (former New Mexico State Historian). *To the End of the Earth*, Columbia University Press, 2008.

Seth Kunin. *Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews*, Columbia University Press, 2009.

Yirmiyahu Yovel. *The Other Within – The Marranos Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*, Princeton University, 2009.

Isabelle Medina-Sandoval. *Guardians of Hidden Traditions*, children's books, Gaon Web, 2009.

Cary Herz. *New Mexico's Crypto-Jews: Image and Memory*, Photographs, 2011.

Ilan Stavans. (popularizing the idea) *El Iluminado*, a graphic novel with Steve Sheinkin, Basic Books, 2012.

Doreen Carvajal. *The Forgetting River*, about her search to recover her Catholic family's hidden Sephardic Jewish roots. Riverhead Books, 2012.

Genie Milgrom. *My 15 Grandmothers*, self-published, Createspace, 2012.

Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez. *Secret Jews: The Complex Identity of Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Judaism*, self-published, 2016, plus two more.

Corinne Joy Brown. *Hidden Star*, novel, Freisen Press, 2016.

Rachel Kadish. *The Weight of Ink*, Mariner Books, 2017.

Joseph Lovett. *Children of the Inquisition*, ongoing documentary film and discussion. Initial release, 2019.

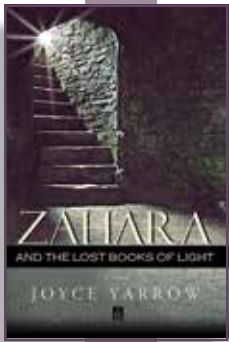
Genie Milgrom. *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers: Unique Recipes and Stories from the Times of the Crypto-Jews During the Spanish Inquisition*, Gefen Publishing House, 2019.

Ron Duncan Hart. *Crypto-Jews – The Long Journey*, Gaon Books, 2020.

Dalia Kandiyoti. *The Converso's Return – Conversion and Sephardi History in Contemporary Literature and Culture*, Stanford University Press, 2020.

Dolores Sloan. *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal – Survival of an Imperiled Culture in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, McFarland and Company, 2009. 📖





## Zahara and the Lost Books of Light

By Joyce Yarrow  
Adelaide Books, 2020

For followers of the crypto-Judaic legacy and its rich history, Joyce Yarrow's fascinating novel takes readers back to a much-touted time in Medieval Spain when Jews, Muslims and Christians coexisted in harmony. Referred to as *La Convivencia*, this term, proposed by the Spanish philologist Américo Castro, describes the period of Spanish history from the Muslim Umayyad conquest of Hispania in the early eighth century until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. It claims that in the various Moorish Iberian kingdoms, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in relative peace. Historic records and writings by poets and theologians of the three faiths have proven a clear exchange of culture and ideas that influenced the greatest minds of the period.

As if this evocative era was not enough to provide the basis of a good novel, add a "who dunnit" murder case, a blossoming love affair, and a very real modern day American reporter based in Seattle, 27 year-old Alienor Crespo, who dreams of claiming her Spanish citizenship based on her family's rich genealogy composed of Jewish and Muslim ancestors. Wrap it all up in a time-travel fantasy in which our heroine does not just travel back in time, but occupies the minds, hearts and voices of the various female characters in her past who have summoned her. A gift of "second sight" or *vijitas* in Spanish, Allie has learned to accept the mind-altering experiences and honor them. From Inquisition

persecution to the terrors of Franco's 20th century Guardia in Spain to mayhem by ruthless fascist political rogues, the story explores the fate of *mariscos* (Muslims forced to convert to Christianity) and *conversos*, Jews who suffered the same fate. An opening index of names of characters is a handy reference as the multi-layered story has a large cast requiring the reader to pay careful attention. That said, the book is an absolute page-turner.

The novel's main plotline revolves around the discovery of an ancient and secret library safeguarding the many contributions by Muslim and Jewish philosophers and wise men, a treasure trove of wisdom protected in a hidden underground complex with high tech surveillance. Finding, invading and protecting this library (Zahara) is at the heart of the relationship stories. One can only imagine it might have existed, or wish it did.

Students of Kabbalah will appreciate the names of the various collections inspired by the *tzfirot* or stations of the Tree of Life.

With a fine layering of plot and incident, Yarrow, an accomplished writer with a flair for dialogue and narrative, keeps the reader guessing what will happen next as Allie's quest for citizenship becomes a perilous journey through time and space, threatening her very life and those who surround her. Just when you think you have read it all, Iberian Jewish history comes alive in a fresh new way. A good read on every level backed by meticulous research.

— CORINNE JOY BROWN

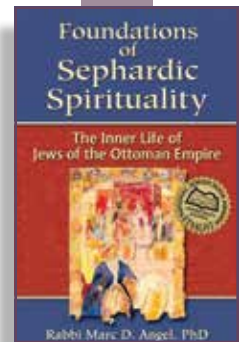


## Foundations of Sephardic Spirituality: The Inner Life of Jews of the Ottoman Empire

By Rabbi Dr. Marc D. Angel  
Jewish Lights, 2009

Who were the Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire? What lasting lessons does their spiritual life provide for future generations?

"How did the Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews of the Ottoman Empire manage to achieve spiritual triumph? To answer this question, we need to have a firm



understanding of their historical experience... We need to be aware of the dark, unpleasant elements in their environments; but we also need to see the spiritual, cultural light in their dwellings that imbued their lives with meaning and honor.” – from Chapter I, *The Inner Life of the Sephardim*.

In this groundbreaking work, Rabbi Marc Angel explores the teachings, values, attitudes, and cultural patterns that characterized Judeo-Spanish life over the generations and how the Sephardim maintained a strong sense of pride and dignity, even when they lived in difficult political, economic and social conditions. Along with presenting the historical framework and folklore of Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire, Rabbi Angel focuses on what you can learn from the Sephardic sages and from their folk wisdom that can help you live a stronger, deeper spiritual life.

— AMERICAN SEPHARDI FEDERATION



## Against the Inquisition

By Marcos Aguinis

Translated by Carolina De Robertis

AmazonCrossing Publication, Seattle, 2018

**T**ravel back in time to the Spanish Colonial South America and revisit the powerful Inquisition in this novel.

Author Marcos Aguinis creates an adventure in storytelling about a true legend of a doctor who discovers his Jewish Identity at the time of the betrayal of the Spanish Inquisition. The historical accounts are well researched and portrayed in the weaving of the story. The reader is transported to the last height of the inquisition of 1592 in South America, where the new converts are carefully watched and easily accused. A young doctor, Francisco Maldonado da Silva, faces the desire to learn his training in medicine at the best university, heal others and live a successful life. Still, his Jewish roots rise in rebellion and he discovers the mighty arm of the Inquisition.

The novel is intriguing and the unfolding of events well-described in picturesque settings

of the good doctor Francisco. The historic storytelling creates the journey of the doctor and the political opposition of the Inquisition and Church. It is well-written and easy to follow. Each chapter feeds the others as the story weaves around characters and situations.

Marcos Aguinis, a prize-winning Jewish author from Argentina, has published 13 novels, 14 essay collections, four short story collections, and two biographies on historical and political themes. He is the first author outside of Spain to receive the Planeta Prize for his books *The Inverted Cross* and *Against the Inquisition*. He also was a secretary of culture in Argentina in 1983. He fought against dictatorship and defended human rights with the “cultural renaissance.” This novel reflects his political insights into the Spanish Inquisition.

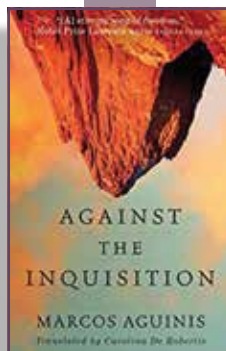
Carolina de Robertis is a writer, professor and literary translator of Uruguayan origin. She also taught fiction and was honored by the Buena Center for the Arts that added her to their list of 100 writers and thinkers who are shaping the future. It is her translation of this novel from Spanish to English that I read. Without this translation, my comprehension would have been painfully inadequate.

The novel is grouped into five sections called books with titles cleverly taken from the five books of Moses in the Jewish Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This spark of ingenuity reflects the Jewishness of the novel. The cover picture of an upside-down mountain, to any Jewish person, represents the day in the Torah when G-d wanted a commitment of the Nation of Israel called *Shavuot*. *Shavuot* also means “oaths,” for on this day, “G-d swore eternal devotion to us and we in turn, pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.” The theme of this book has an underlying call for such request. This development to expose anything Jewish led to persecution, denial, betrayal, and fear. Francisco da Silva faced them all.

Parts of the chapters are in a script font to place the reader in the character’s future and fate. It took some time to catch on that this creative peek into the future also leads to the novel’s last section.

The explanation comparing Judaism to Christianity with biblical accounts, the contrast of the political power within the Inquisition against Judaism, and the personal conviction of revealing one’s true identity as Jewish are the most brilliant parts of the writing. Each subject is a scholarly lesson on the research the author has gathered.

This knowledge comparing Christianity to the Jewish faith resonated with my experience. In my own journey, I have uncovered some of these comparisons, and was impressed with the Jewish scholar’s understanding of Christianity. The comparison is well-described when Francisco presents his case to his accusers.



It reminds me of the accounts of St. Paul the Apostle explaining Christianity to Jewish scholars. Few scholars today would tackle this study, and shows the depth of research.

Overall I find the novel pleasant to read and full of documented historical facts about the Inquisition. It is a must-read for the historian and those curious about Inquisition life in South America, Christianity, Jewish understanding, era political views, and the practice of medieval medicine.

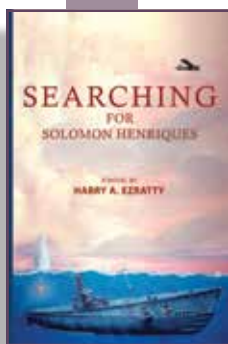
— DONNA MEDINA



## Searching for Solomon Henriques

By Harry A. Ezratty

Read Street Publishing, 2022



I had the privilege of reviewing the most recent book of our former board member and long-time active SCJS member, Harry Ezratty, for this issue of HaLapid, and interviewing him for this article. Harry is an Admiralty lawyer, a prolific writer, and a renowned historian. The review gives only a taste of the book, and the interview only hints at the complexity, humor and depth of the writer. Readers will have to dive into the novel to get the full benefit of Harry's knowledge and expertise.

— CLAUDIA HAGADUS LONG

**T**his densely packed novel features Lt. Jg. James Ennis — linguist, telepath, soldier, husband — in his search for his ancestry during the pre-internet period. If the book were merely that story, that would be enough to grab the attention of any reader with an affiliation with SCJS. But this book is so much more.

The story traces the history of the Jews in the New World from Christopher Columbus to the 1970s, while following Ennis in his own search.

The story is nonlinear, as the search itself would be, and the reader is treated to tales of daring, adventure, steadfast love, and harrowing cruelty as Ennis discovers more of his ancestral path.

Ennis is sent throughout the many war zones during World War II, and in each he feels, senses and understands his connection to the place. He sees a sign with the name Henriques when he lands in Algeria. He connects with Dani Henriques in Salonica. The threads of his ancestry are present throughout his journey.

There are chapters of adventure, chapters of terror, historical narratives — including the Yom Kippur war in Israel — and stories from Colonial America, the Caribbean, New England, Salonica, and Bergen-Belsen. All through the book, the thread of Ennis' search remains strong.

Two characters stand out along with Ennis: Dani Henriques and “Miss Miriam.” Dani Henriques is a brave soldier who fights the Nazis, and makes *alyiah* to Israel. Through his eyes we are engaged in the brutality of modern anti-Jewish hatred and given a strong sense that things do not change. Miriam, mother and wife in New England in the late 1700s and early 1800s, a time before there were many Jews in America, carries the weight of educating the few, the next generations, even when her own son assimilates. It falls to the women to keep the spark of Jewish faith alive, even when they are turned away.

A particularly sad moment in the book is when the *converso* women of New Mexico are denied their rightful place as Jews, because they cannot “prove that every generation of women since Spain” were Jews. Not only do the outside forces of war, genocide and assimilation do their level best to destroy the long chain of Judaism, but our own laws and practices keep the ones who wish to remain or return at arm's length.

In the final chapter of the book Ennis reunites with Aarnald Henriques. In a moving conclusion, tying the entire narrative together in beautifully evocative prose, Ennis is entered into the family bible of the Henriques family. And the line continues.— **CHL**

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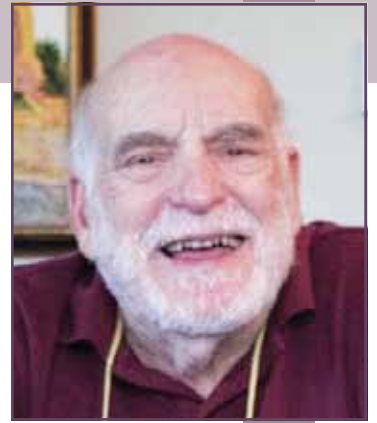
Claudia Hagadus Long is a former SCJS board member and the author of several novels about *conversos*, crypto-Jews and later, the inherited trauma of the Holocaust. Her most recent book is *Nine Tenths of the Law*. [www.claudiahlong.com](http://www.claudiahlong.com)





# Harry A. Ezratty

Author • Lawyer • Historian • Professor



HARRY EZRATTY

**CLAUDIA HAGADUS LONG:** You've had a long career as an Admiralty lawyer. How did you start writing novels?

**HARRY A. EZRATTY:** I spoke Ladino at home. My grandmother was from Salonica and she spoke French and Ladino, so my mother spoke Ladino, and I learned it. My father's side was Portuguese. When I started practicing law, I was drawn into a firm to handle many different kinds of cases, but I got their Spanish-speaking clients because of the Ladino.

I ended up opening a branch of the firm in Puerto Rico, and my Spanish is *de la calle*. But all this made me learn languages!

One day I was given an Admiralty file to work on instead of my usual work in personal injury matters — and I fell in love. The sea is my mistress. [In the background, Harry's wife Barbara laughs.] It's the only kind of law I want to do.

**CHL:** But novels...

**HAE:** I wrote articles when I first got out of law school and then I wrote what has become a textbook, *The Jews of the New World* trilogy, starting with *500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean*. So I have a lot of knowledge of the history.

**CHL:** But the novels...

**HAE:** They just come out. I know how the first chapter is going to start and then it just comes out. I write what I know and it just flows.

**CHL:** Lt. Jg. James Ennis is remarkable. What do you want us to know about him in those opening chapters?

**HAE:** I deliberately started with Christopher Columbus because I want the reader to know right away that there is more to Jewish history than what starts with the 20th century. And I wanted Ennis to be a linguist, an internationalist. My father said, "For every language you speak you have a different soul." By really learning a language, learning its idioms, you connect with a different soul.

Ennis' wife Lucy, doesn't see or experience the unspeakable things that James sees and experiences. Her war is one of inconveniences — butter and egg rations, oil shortages. His is bearing witness to Bergen-Belsen. He doesn't talk about this with her. She can't relate to his experiences.

**CHL:** Why did you choose not to carry the story to the present?

**HAE:** Because the internet would have made the search too easy! You write a check, someone digs up all the information for you. Or you go online and find it

yourself. I wanted to have the story go through the search, through libraries, documents, writing letters...

**CHL:** Your settings are so vivid. They're characters themselves!

**HAE:** I've been to all of those places. I've seen them with my own eyes. I can describe them because I know them.

**CHL:** What did you hope readers would get from *Searching*?

**HAE:** To me, the most important thing is the breadth, the great scope of Jewish history. There is so much Jewish history that Jewish people don't know, so much beyond the Ashkenazi history. There were Sephardim in Poland in the 1500s. There were Sephardim in Bulgaria — in fact the majority of Jews in Bulgaria were Sephardic. There were Jews in America long before 1898. Jews traveled to the New World with Christopher Columbus, they settled in Jamaica, they interacted with Native Americans, they settled in New England.

I teach a course, "History of the Jews," at Baltimore County Community College, because Jews don't know their own history! Most of all, I want readers to see the diversity of Jews in history, the sadness and suffering that permeates our history, and the disengagement, the dis-attachment that comes with time.

**CHL:** Dis-attachment?

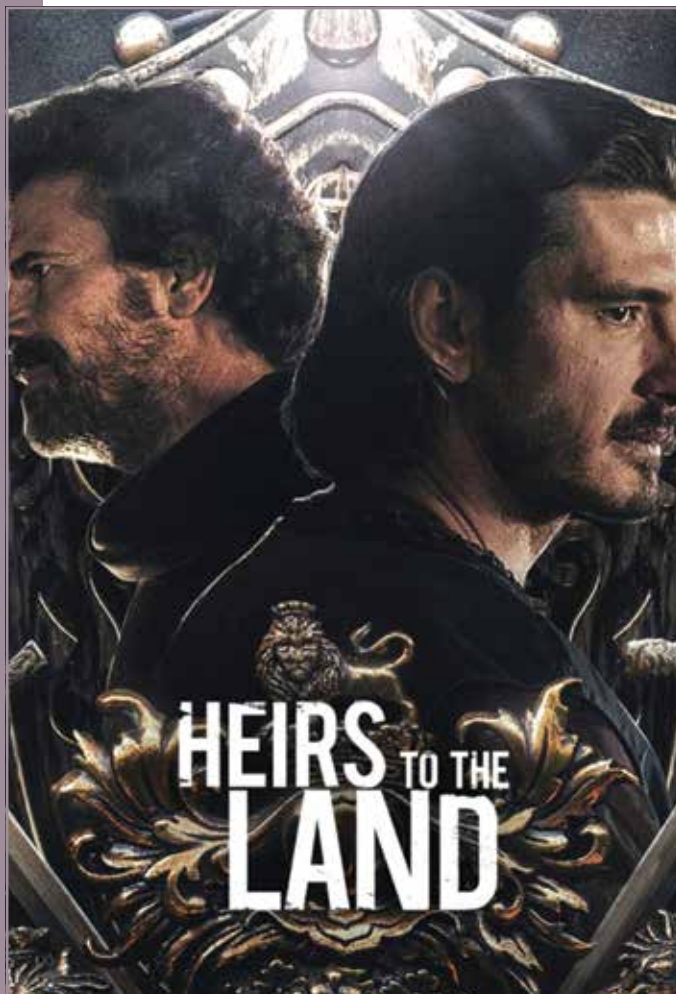
**HAE:** Yes. Society doesn't want us to be Jewish. We lose Jews to history. Jews in history were much like you and me, like Jews today. Some were very committed to their religion, some felt a mild attachment, and others, well, it didn't matter very much. Some were willing to do whatever it took to keep Judaism alive, and others felt that their own lives, and livelihoods and families, were more important to preserve. There was a lot of pressure to convert.

**CHL:** What does your next book look like?

**HAE:** Ah! I'm already working on it. It's called *The 20 Cent Quarters*. Did you know there was a time when 20-cent pieces and quarters looked almost alike, and an enterprising man cut ridges into them to make them look like quarters? Well, it's all in the next book about Noah Pardo — he was the hero of The Bureau of Military Information.

**CHL:** Thank you, Harry Ezratty. We'll be watching for that one! 





**H**eirs to the Land is based on the novel *Los Herederos de la Tierra* by Ildefonso Falcones, published by Grijalbo in 2016. A sequel to *Cathedral of the Sea (La Catedral Del Mar)*, *Heirs to the Land* is directed by Jordi Frades who also was the director of the previous series. Produced by Diagonal TV, shooting began in Barcelona in November 2020. Shooting locations also included the Castle of Hostalric, province of Girona, as well as the Tamarit Beach in the province of Tarragona. The series premiered on Netflix on April 15, 2022 for a 12-month initial streaming window, followed by a 3-month window on Atresmedia and *Televisió de Catalunya*.

The plot follows the story of Hugo Llor, who dreams of becoming a ship builder as he works to make a name for himself in 14th-century Barcelona while keeping a vow he made to the Estanyol family.

## Viewer comments

### Very good drama

Depicted in the context of Medieval Spain/Catalonia, reflecting its Moorish and Jewish legacy and the beginnings of the Inquisition. Won't win an Oscar but highly enjoyable drama... it's a sequel to the prior series, *La Cathedral Del Mar*, so if you're into this genre, watch that one first. Both are very good yet different.

### Couldn't stop watching it!

This was well worth the watch, especially if you want to learn something about the lives of the common people (Christians, Jews, Muslims, women and slaves) in a medieval kingdom that is in modern Spain. The acting was excellent and the storyline reflected the harshness of the Church and aristocracy of the time.

### Interesting look at mind, body and revenge

*Heirs to the Land* is a sequel to the series *Cathedral of the Sea* that dealt with the life of Bernat's father, Arnau Estanyol. The contrast between the two friends/brothers, Hugo and Bernat, was an interesting aspect, considering how both the mind and the body helped in seeking the revenge they had been after for years. With multiple characters and various subplots, *Heirs to the Land* manages to bring it all together in the end. 🗡️



# SEPHARDIC HERITAGE INSTITUTE NEW MEXICO



## 2022-2023 CALENDAR

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**RABBI JORDAN GENDRA MOLINA, PhD**  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
jgendra@gmail.com

### December 2022

*The Ghost of Hannah Mendes*

By Naomi Ragen

When Catherine da Costa, a wealthy Manhattan matron, learns she has only a short time to live, she realizes that her family tree will die unless she passes on its legacy and traditions to her granddaughters. But Suzanne and Francesca, beautiful young women caught up in trendy causes and ambitious careers, have no interest in the past. Catherine almost despairs until one night she is visited by the ghost of her family's ancestor, an indomitable Renaissance businesswoman named Hannah Mendes.

The ghost of Hannah Mendes encourages Catherine to use every trick in the book to coerce the granddaughters to journey across Europe and acquaint themselves with their roots. While the sisters honor their grandmother's request out of loyalty, they believe their quest is futile – until it starts to uncover ancient pages from Hannah Mendes' fascinating memoir, and brings new loves into their lives.

### January 2023

*Spirits of the Ordinary - A Tale of Casas Grandes*

By Kathleen Alcalá

A spectacular tapestry of folklore, spirituality and constantly shifting landscapes, this enchanting and original first novel will appeal to readers of Isabel Allende, *All the Pretty Horses*, and *Like Water for Chocolate*. Unfolding a rare and haunting gift for storytelling, Kathleen Alcalá begins her tale in the 1880s and follows three generations of the Caravajal family on a path of forbidden love and hidden belief that wends across the Mexico-Texas border. Estela risks the security of her comfortable home and children to pursue a consuming passion. Her husband, Zacarias is guided by an inexplicable spiritual longing and his affinity for the indigenous people who dwell in the cliffs of Casas Grandes. Zacarias' father, a cloistered Jew, studies the ancient wisdom of the Torah and the Kabbalah, hoping to unlock the secrets of his son's future. The truth, when it comes, will surprise all of them.

### February 2023

*Gateway to the Moon*

By Mary Morris

In 1492, two history-altering events occurred: the Jews and Muslims of Spain were expelled, and Columbus set sail for the New World. Many Spanish Jews chose not to flee and instead became Christian in name only, maintaining their religious traditions in secret. Among them was Luis de Torres who accompanied Columbus as an interpreter. Over the centuries, de Torres' descendants



traveled across North America, finally settling in the hills of New Mexico. Now, some 500 years later, it is in these same hills that Miguel Torres, a young amateur astronomer, finds himself trying to understand the mystery that surrounds him and the town he grew up in, *Entrada de la Luna*, or Gateway to the Moon.

Poor health and poverty are the norm in Entrada, and luck is rare. So when Miguel sees an ad for a babysitting job in Santa Fe, he jumps at the opportunity. The family for whom he works, the Rothsteins, are Jewish, and Miguel is surprised to find many of their customs similar to those his own family kept but never understood. Braided throughout the present-day narrative are the powerful stories of the ancestors of Entrada's residents, portraying both the horrors of the Inquisition and the resilience of families. Moving and unforgettable, *Gateway to the Moon* beautifully weaves the journeys of the *converso* Jews into the larger American story.

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### March 2023

#### *On the Chocolate Trail* Rabbi Deborah Prinz

In this new and updated second edition, explore the surprising Jewish and other religious connections to chocolate in this gastronomic and historical adventure through cultures, countries, centuries and convictions. Rabbi Deborah Prinz draws from her world travels on the trail of chocolate to enchant chocolate lovers of all backgrounds as she unravels religious connections in the early chocolate trade and shows how Jewish and other religious values infuse chocolate today.

With mouth-watering recipes, a glossary of chocolaty terms, tips for buying luscious, ethically produced chocolate, a list of sweet chocolate museums around the world and more, this book unwraps tasty facts such as:

- Some people – including French (Bayonne) chocolate makers – believe that Jews brought chocolate making to France.
- The bishop of Chiapas, Mexico, was poisoned because he prohibited local women from drinking chocolate during Mass.
- Although Quakers do not observe Easter, it was a Quaker-owned chocolate company – Fry's – that claimed to have created the first chocolate Easter egg in the United Kingdom.
- A born-again Christian businessman in the Midwest marketed his caramel chocolate bar as a "noshie," after the Yiddish word for "snack."
- Chocolate Hanukkah gelt may have developed from St. Nicholas customs.
- The Mayan *Book of Counsel* taught that gods created humans from chocolate and maize.

### April 2023

#### *The 3rd Commandment* Rabbi Stephen Leon

Rabbi Stephen Leon's book, *The Third Commandment and the Return of the Anusim: a Rabbi's Memoir of an Incredible People*, stands as not only a testimony of faith, but also as a symbol of religious tenacity.

*Anusim* is the Hebrew word first employed by 15th-century Spanish Jews to describe their co-religionists who were forced either by the sword or other means to convert to Christianity. These people were often called by many other names, some complimentary and others carrying a disparaging nuance. These names included *marranos*, *conversos*, and *nuevos cristianos*. Jews however, used but one word: *anusim*, meaning those who had been spiritually violated. Fifteenth- and 16th-century Spanish Jews saw these people as the victims of a spiritual assault.

Although it is true that some of these people, once converted, did become loyal citizens of Christendom, others, despite the trials and tribulations, maintained a schizophrenic split religious personality. That is to say, that on the outside these *anusim* by law were practicing Christians, but inside their homes and within their souls, they remained loyal to the faith and people of Israel.

These forced conversions changed the social structure of Spanish Jewry. Where once there had been a single and united Jewish politic within the various nations that composed the Iberian Peninsula, now Jewry was divided into four separate subcategories:

- (1) Jews who were practicing members of the people of Israel,
- (2) Jews who had converted to Christianity due to issues of spiritual assault but despite the legal and economic hurdles remained, at least in private, loyal to their faith and people,
- (3) Jews, who were forced to convert, decided to adapt themselves to their new situation and became loyal Catholics and
- (4) A small number of Jews who for personal reasons had freely chosen Christianity.

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### May 2023

#### *The Forgetting River* By Doreen Carvajal

Raised a Catholic in California, *New York Times* journalist Doreen Carvajal is shocked when she discovers that her background may actually be connected to *conversos* from Inquisition-era Spain: Jews who were forced to renounce their faith and convert to Christianity or face torture and death. With vivid childhood memories of Sunday sermons, catechism and the rosary, Carvajal



travels to the centuries-old Andalucian town of Arcos de la Frontera, to investigate her lineage and recover her family's original religious heritage.

In Arcos, Carvajal comes to realize that fear remains a legacy of the Inquisition along with the cryptic messages left by its victims. Back at her childhood home in California, she uncovers papers documenting a family of Carvajals who were burned at the stake in the 16th-century territory of Mexico. Could the author's family history be linked to the hidden history of Arcos? And could the unfortunate Carvajals have been her ancestors?

As she strives to find proof that her family had been forced to convert to Christianity 600 years ago, Carvajal comes to understand that the past flows like a river through time — and that while the truth might be submerged, it is never truly lost.

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## June 2023

### *Sephardic Jews, History, Religion and People* By Ron Duncan Hart

*Sephardic Jews* is an introduction to the history and culture of the Sephardim (Hebrew plural for Sephardic Jews). Although the Sephardim were once the majority of Jews in the United States, in the last 150 years they were replaced by the monumental migration of Eastern European and Russian Jews, many of whom would have had Sephardic origins now forgotten. World-wide there are three to four million Jews who identify as Sephardic, mostly in Israel, but there are several hundred thousand Sephardim in France and the United States and smaller groups in various Latin American countries, as well as Turkey and Morocco.

For many in the United States, Sephardic Jews have become a part of memory and even a figment of the imagination, often with little information about the actual history and heritage of the group. Today in the American Southwest and in parts of Latin America, there is a movement to reclaim Jewish identity among Spanish-speakers. That has sparked interest in learning more about Sepharad, the Spain of the Jews, and the Diaspora of Spanish Jews that sent them to all parts of the earth. Myths have grown around the concept of Sepharad sometimes obscuring the realities of what it was.

There was a “golden age” for Jews during the early Muslim period, but as the reconquest heated up and Christian rule replaced that of Muslims, the Jewish experience turned dark until the light of the Jews was put out in Spain.

In this book, the terms Sephardic Jew, Sephardim, or Sephardi are used to refer to people who are of Spanish Jewish descent and have continued the practice and identity as Jews. The term *converso* is used to refer to anyone who converted from Judaism to Christianity.

The term *anusim* refers to the tens of thousands of people who were coerced into baptism under threat and those who were forcibly baptized in Spain and Portugal without their consent. The term crypto-Jew refers to people who converted to Catholicism but continued to think of themselves as Jews and to practice domestic Jewish rituals in the privacy of their homes.

Although historical records indicate that active crypto-Judaism largely disappeared from Spain by the late 1500s and from Portugal and the Americas a century later. Jewish identity did survive into the modern era in Portugal, and elements of Jewish practice and identity have survived in the Americas. Active crypto-Judaism does not seem to exist in the present, but there are important contemporary movements in various Latin American countries of people openly reclaiming Jewish identity. Today, the terms *converso*, *anusim*, and crypto-Jew are generic terms that are used for people who identify as descendants of Jews or who identify with that past as Jews.

The movement that is referred to as Messianic Judaism consists of Christians who add Jewish elements to their ritual practice, and they should be considered to be Christian and not Jews. There is no hybrid status of being Christian and Jewish that is recognized by Jewish rabbinical law, the Roman Catholic Church, or any of the Protestant Christian Churches.

*Sephardic Jews: History, Religion and People* is written with the purpose of providing a window of information and understanding about the people who have carried the light of Sephardic Judaism for centuries and those who are finding hope in it today.

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## July 2023

### *My 15 Grandmothers* By Genie Milgrom

The book *My 15 Grandmothers* takes the reader through an exciting maze of intrigue, where literally every stone that is turned, yields a new twist in the personal journey of Genie Milgrom. Having been brought up in a Roman Catholic family in Havana, Cuba and descending from Spanish ancestry did not ensure that her life would be lived within that realm. In response to strong feelings and an affinity towards Judaism, her search for her family's past, took on a deeper significance as she researched her maternal lineage and not only discovered but documented and verified her Pre-Inquisition Spanish roots to 15th-century Spain and Portugal where they lived first as Jews, then as crypto-Jews and finally as Roman Catholics. She was able to unravel the web of lies and deceit that her family had spun around themselves in order to survive the Spanish Inquisition. They lived with one foot in each world as they converted to Catholicism openly while secretly practicing their own religion underground. Genie was fortunate enough to grab the brass ring that was thrown in the air over 500 years ago. 🔥



## Discovering the Crypto-Judaic History of the Borderlands

**S**CJS thanks everyone involved in creating the online seminar “Discovering the Crypto-Judaic History of the Borderlands” held Sunday, November 6, 2022, with over 200 participating.

The seminar, featuring three distinguished speakers, was held in lieu of the SCJS conference originally planned for November 2022 in El Paso. The new date for the in-person conference is August 13-15, 2023, still in El Paso.

The Zoom presentation began with a warm welcome by Rabbi (Emeritus) Stephen Leon, Congregation B’nai Zion, El Paso who has served the El Paso Jewish community with a special commitment to those who identify as *anusim* descendants. His love of history, Judaism, and humanity has enabled him to lead the Anusim Center of El Paso for over 20 years, sharing the crypto-Jewish story with the world. He has also taught Jewish history at University of Texas–El Paso (UTEP) for many years.

The event moderator, Mark Jurado, UTEP, has a special connection to students in El Paso and holds a PhD in educational leadership and administration. He introduced our first speaker, Judith Glantz, filmmaker and historian who presented, “The Southern Rio Grande Valley: Why it Matters.”

The speaker asked, “How do you piece together the history of a community that intentionally left behind no clues?” This is the challenge that comes with documenting groups of people that, in order to survive in the face of oppression, existed by hiding. In Glantz’s feature-length documentary, *Remember My Soul*, Glantz navigated the secrecy of crypto-Judaism in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas to tell the story of Jewish history in the region. Additionally, she examines traditional foods and customs of the region that some scholars claim may derive from the crypto-Jews of Northern Mexico and South Texas. In the early 20th century, European Jews brought their own customs and integrated into the mostly Mexican communities. This is when we see an emergence of openly Jewish families, formation of congregations, and construction of synagogues across the Rio Grande Valley. However, in her research she encountered



**RABBI STEPHEN LEON**



**MARK JURADO**



**JILLIAN GLANTZ**



**JOSIAH HEYMAN**

what she calls modern day crypto-Judaism, with some individuals being uncomfortable, even scared, to speak openly or admit their Jewish heritage still today. Glantz explores the difficult but important process of documenting these stories, the joys along the way, how these histories can be shared, and what the past can teach us about the present and future.

A Dallas native, Glantz holds a BA in political science from the University of Texas–Rio Grande Valley, where she became interested in the Jewish history of South Texas. She is pursuing a PhD in history at Texas A&M University.

Glantz was followed by Dr. Josiah Heyman and “The Real El Paso.” Dr. Heyman is a professor of anthropology, an endowed professor of border trade issues, and director of the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies at the University of Texas–El Paso. His PhD is in anthropology (1988, City University of New York). He is the author or editor of five books and over 150 scholarly articles, book chapters and essays.

In essence, his topic examines our host city for next year. “El Paso is the quintessential US border city,” says Heyman. “It has the bicultural richness of the Borderlands with the safety and ease of the United States. We can ‘excavate’ it in layers going back in time. Closest to the present, it is a service (management, engineering, etc.) city for the industrial colossus of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (plus a military base city). This evolved out of the El Paso city’s foundation as a major connecting point of the east-west United States, southern-most cross-continental corridor with the south-north corridor arriving from the core of Mexico. A key connection was the unification of the railroads at the border. Before El Paso even existed as a city, the Paso del Norte region was an important stop-over on the north-south Camino Real corridor of New Spain/Mexico, with a rich settlement area consisting of Native American communities (*pueblos*), Spanish missions, and Spanish forts. Many of these places are still living communities forming the local region and can be visited easily. El Paso then,” concludes Heyman, “is a palimpsest of North American cultures and history.”



Finally, our event chair and host for next year's conference, Blanca Carrasco, spoke about discovering the Camino Real in a talk titled "A Preview to a Physical Voyage on the El Camino Real Corridor." She reminds us that in Spring 1598, the last great explorer of the conquistadors, Spanish aristocrat and colonizer Don Juan de Oñate, sought new lands to find gold and silver for Spain, and indigenous people to convert and enslave. His expedition consisted of huge numbers of livestock (horses, cattle, and mules), plus 83 wagons (*carretas*) loaded with provisions. The caravan included Franciscan friars, servants, more than 120 Spanish soldiers, and some 300 settlers – men, women and children – hoping to create a new colony north of the Rio Grande. At one point, the journey crossed the great river at a place Oñate named El Paso del Rio del Norte. That crossing eventually became modern day El Paso, Texas. The road traveled helped blaze a trail that would connect El Paso's history and heritage, as well as a legacy to the Spanish presence in the American Southwest. It came to be known as El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the royal road of the interior.

SCJS 2023 conference chair Blanca Carrasco is a descendant of Marcos Alonso de la Garza y del Arcon, co-founder of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, a major center for Mexico's crypto-Jews since colonial days. Born in Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico, her family migrated to El Paso. Raised a Catholic, research proved otherwise and in 2007, her family contacted Rabbi Stephen Leon and returned to Judaism. Blanca is involved with the Jewish community, volunteers for the El Paso Jewish Federation and was editor of *The Jewish Voice*. She is a board member of the Anusim Center of El Paso, of the SCJS, and is Program Manager, Student Success and Strategic Initiatives, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Texas El Paso.



**BLANCA CARRASCO**

This online open event served the greater membership, so our president Rosa Marina Siegel closed with a general business meeting covering new business and summarizing the events of last year. 🍷

**RESCHEDULED**

**CONFERENCE 2023**



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**August 13-15 • 2023**  
**Join Us in El Paso!**

Stay tuned to *La Granada*, our online newsletter, for more details and registration information. Hope to see you in August 2023!

**EL PASO  
TEXAS**



# CARRYING THE TORCH

## New Anusim Center

The original Anusim Center was dedicated in El Paso, Texas in 2014. The purpose of the Center was and is to provide information, research, education, cultural and social activities, studies leading to a ceremony of return for *b'nai anusim*, support, and welcome to crypto-Jews. Unfortunately due to certain unforeseen circumstances, the former facility has been closed for the past three years. As the new Anusim Center opened in August 2022, the board decided to expand its goal and establish an *anusim* synagogue in Sunland Park, New Mexico, thanks to the generosity of an incredible benefactor. The Anusim Center/Synagogue is very unique for a variety of reasons. Our services are conducted in Hebrew, Spanish, Ladino, and English. There are no financial dues to be a member, only *mitzvah* dues. Although the synagogue attracts many crypto-Jews, many supporters of *b'nai anusim* attend as well. We hold services for Tisha B'av, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and soon we will conduct Havdalah services as well. For further information please contact Rabbi (Emeritus) Stephen Leon founder and director, rabbisal@aol.com, or 915-526-3693.



## Exhibit Closing Event

After eight months at the Streicker Center and Bernard Museum of Judaica at Temple Emanu-El in New York City, the mobile exhibit, "At the Crossroads of Sefarad: In the Footsteps of Crypto-Jews" officially closed on November 15. Created in partnership with Jewish Heritage



Alliance and ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, and extended due to popular demand, this unique exhibit depicts the remarkable story of Sefarad and its crypto-Jewish offshoot, from ancient times until the 21st century. Founder and CEO of JHA, Michael

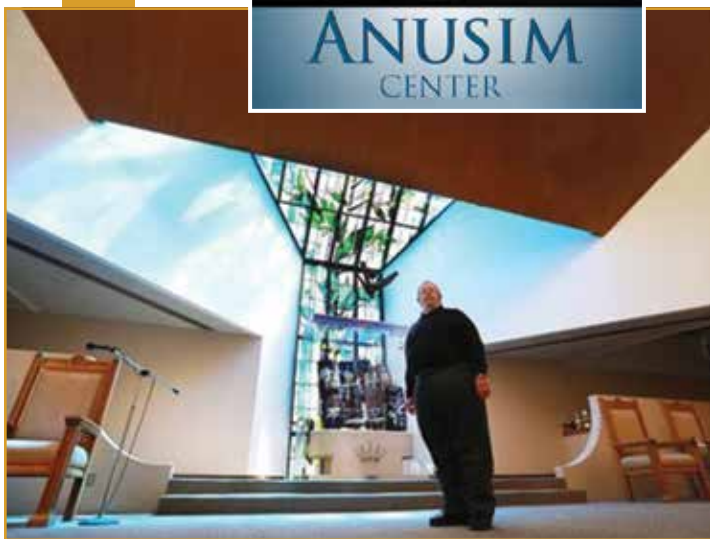
Steinberger and Director of Academic Research, Dr. Isaac Amon were proud to participate in the closing night program. Dr. Amon shared his family history and identity; Trio Sefardi performed Ladino songs; and Israeli Chef Alon Hadar treated everyone to a culinary demonstration. It was truly a night to remember!

## Daughters of the Inquisition — Retracing Long-Lost Jewish Roots

This June 12, 2022 online program, moderated by Mariana Abrantes, featured the breathtaking stories and genealogical sleuth-work of Genie Milgrom and Doreen Carvajal who succeeded in reaching back centuries to find their Jewish ancestors in Pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal.

Mariana Abrantes, moderator, is the Board Treasurer of the Sousa Mendes Foundation. Coming from a village in central Portugal, she studied economics at UC-Berkeley and earned an MA from Princeton University. After training and working in Chase Manhattan Bank, she returned to Portugal, where she worked at the European Investment Bank. She also served in the Portuguese government's Ministries of Transport and Health, and on the boards of international investment funds, and the Fulbright Commission Portugal. She is a dual Portuguese-US citizen.

Genie Milgrom was born in Havana, Cuba, into a Roman Catholic family of Spanish ancestry. In an unparalleled work of genealogy,



Rabbi (Emeritus) Stephen Leon  
at B'nai Zion Congregation, El Paso





she was able to fully document her unbroken maternal lineage 22 generations going back as far as 1405 to her Jewish ancestors in Pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal. She is the past president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami and past president of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. She is the author of *My 15 Grandmothers*, as well as *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers: A Step by Step Guide*, and *Pyre to Fire*. She brings awareness to the topic of people tracing their Jewish roots to the time of the Inquisition who are returning to Judaism. Genie is director of the Converso Genealogy Project, digitizing Inquisition files around the world.



**GENIE MILGROM**  
Miami, Florida

Doreen Carvajal is a former *New York Times* culture reporter and the author of *The Forgetting River: A Modern Tale of Survival, Identity, and the Inquisition*, which explores her quest to recover her Catholic family's secret Jewish identity that led from Costa Rica to Segovia, Spain to the tombs of 15th-century ancestors investigated by the Inquisition for heresy. Based in Paris, she is co-founder of the Orphan Art Project, which aids descendants seeking restitution of looted art and recovery of family history. She appears in *Stealing Italy*, the final episode of the History Channel's documentary series *Hunting Nazi Treasure*.



**DOREEN CARVAJAL**  
Paris, France



**H EL ENE JAWHARA PI NER**  
Paris, France

## SCJS Members Goes Viral

The BBC podcast, "The Food Chain," examines the business, science and cultural significance of food, and what it takes to put food on your plate. A recent segment, "Forbidden Food: The Jews of Spain," featured SCJS past president Genie Milgrom and one of our European members, H el ene Jawhara Pi ner (interviewed in *HaLapid*, Autumn/Winter 2021).


Today's Sephardic Jewish community has its roots in Spain and Portugal. The Hispanic Jews lived for many centuries in those countries but faced increasing persecution in the 13th and 15th centuries.

Many were forced to convert to Christianity, but some secretly continued their Jewish faith and practices.

In 1478, the Spanish Christian royalty created the Inquisition, a series of trials aimed at identifying those who had not converted. Food and methods of food preparation are frequently cited as evidence against Jewish people in Spanish Inquisition trial records.

Ultimately the Jews were expelled from Spain and they fled to other countries. This was the beginning of a Diaspora which carried its Spanish food traditions with it.

Podcast moderator Ruth Alexander meets three women who have published Sephardic cookbooks reflecting on this turbulent past. Stella Hanan Cohen lives in Zimbabwe; in her book *Stella's Sephardic Table* she records the cuisine of the Sephardic community that settled on the island of Rhodes, now part of Greece. H el ene Jawhara Pi ner is a French historian and chef, she studied Spanish Inquisition trial records for her book *Sephardi: Cooking the History*. Genie Milgrom who was born in Cuba and now lives in Miami, Florida, found handwritten recipes that had been passed down by generations of women in her family, which she published as *The Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*.

Tune in to this fascinating look at what we eat — and why we eat it. [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct38nk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct38nk) 



A dish of Swiss chard and chickpeas cooked by "The Food Chain" moderator Ruth Alexander. (Credit: BBC)



## JIMENA Cohort

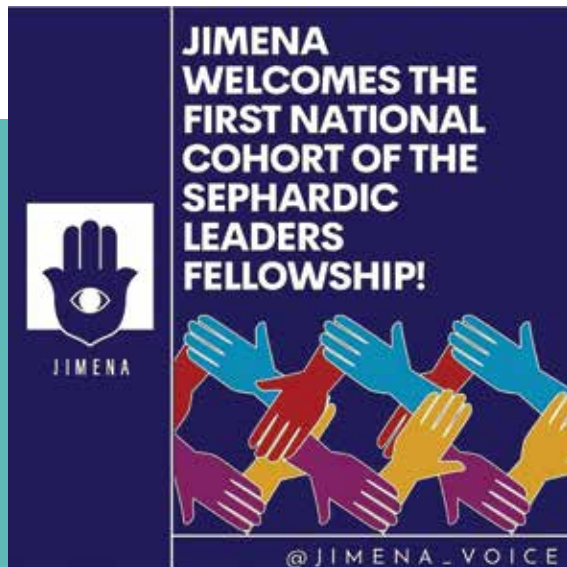
SCJS member Dr. Isaac Amon, Education and Research Director for Jewish Heritage Alliance, was recently accepted for the JIMENA (Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa) Sephardic Leaders Fellowship! It is the first ever cohort of 20 religious, communal, and lay Jewish leaders across the United States.



ISAAC AMON, PhD  
St. Louis, Missouri  
isaac@jewish  
heritagealliance.com

This exceptional cohort of rabbis, educators, strategists, Jewish communal professionals and lay leaders will converge throughout six months of bimonthly learning and engagement sessions facilitated by top Mizrahi and Sephardic thought leaders, scholars, activists and rabbis from around the world.

Through a Sephardic and Mizrahi lens, fellows will build foundational knowledge of contemporary issues facing the Jewish world, including anti-Semitism, Jewish diversity, Arab-Jewish relations and Jewish education. Fellows will gain traditional and contemporary knowledge and skills to bring back to their respective agencies and Jewish spaces in an effort to build institutional abilities in order to better integrate Sephardic content, needs and culture in a meaningful way. The membership represents a diverse group from across the United States, a most prestigious list.



## Long-awaited face-time

Editor Corinne Brown had the pleasure of meeting SCJS member and *HaLapid* contributor Esther Astruc in Safed while on vacation in Israel.



Corinne with Esther Astruc

## Alcalá audio excerpt

Check out the recording of Kathleen Alcalá reading an excerpt from her work, *Spirits of the Ordinary*, in an audio archive at the Library of Congress called PALABRA. She appears at approximately minute 18.31, [www.loc.gov/item/2021758322](http://www.loc.gov/item/2021758322).



Wishing you warm and relaxing holidays

## Kudos to Irene Shaland

For some time now, Irene Shaland has been presenting ongoing lectures about Jewish life all over the world. Her latest, “Rediscovering Portuguese Secrets: How the Jews of Iberia Changed the Course of World History,” hosted by the New City New York City Library, focuses on Portugal’s rich Jewish past.

This lecture reveals a most fascinating Jewish history which is largely unknown. Jews are believed to have been present in the Iberian Peninsula since biblical times. The Sephardic Jewish heritage in Portugal has greatly influenced the country’s development throughout the ages, from the Roman and Visigoth times to the brilliant Age of Discovery; through the dark centuries of Inquisition and persecution, when the Jewish faith and traditions survived in secret, to World War II, when the country became a safe haven for thousands of European



*Carção Village, Tras-os-Montes  
— one of the Portuguese  
“hidden secrets”*



*This mysterious Sephardic Torah with an  
Ashkenazi cover is kept in the Public  
Library Archives, Ponta Delgada,  
Sao Miguel Island, Azores*



*On the streets of medieval mountain village Monsaraz,  
Alentejo, Portugal. (Photo credit: Alex Shaland)*

## “Frosty” Hot Chocolate

For each mug:

- 1 tsp. chocolate syrup
- 1 piece candy corn
- 3 marshmallows
- 1 Tbsp. heavy cream
- 3 Tbsp. whipped cream
- 1 package hot chocolate mix
- 1 cup hot milk
- 1 long toothpick
- 2 pretzel sticks, ci

Insert toothpick through all 3 marshmallows. Use chocolate syrup for eyes, mouth and snowman buttons.

Use a knife to cut a nose slit and insert a piece of candy corn.


Cut slits for arms and legs; break pretzel sticks to length and insert into slits. Option: use cinnamon sticks or candy canes.

Prepare hot chocolate with hot milk, heavy cream and whipped cream. Then top it with “Frosty.”

refugees and to today’s small but blossoming Jewish community.

Remarkable stories of courage, resilience and survival plus the enduring legacy of the Sephardic Jews are evidence of the importance of Jewish history in Portugal within a broader history of the world. The lecture follows Irene and her husband, Alex from Lisbon and Belem to Mafra and Evora, from Sagres and Tomar to Coimbra and Guarda, from Castelo de Vide to Belmonte and tiny mountain villages, even crossing the border to Tui in Galicia, Spain.

A second lecture scheduled for December 20, 2022 offers “The Hidden History of Jewish People on the Islands of Madeira and Azores and the Unsolved Mystery of a Sefer Torah.”

For more information contact  
[Irene.shaland@gmail.com](mailto:Irene.shaland@gmail.com) 



## In memory of a great friend Dr. Abraham D. Lavender 1940-2022

Abraham D. Lavender (born 1940) was a professor of sociology at Florida International University in Miami, Florida, since 1990, where his special areas of interest included ethnic relations, Judaica, political sociology, urban sociology, the sociology of sexuality, and social deviance. He was editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews*, and was past president of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. He has previously been a professor of sociology at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

### Early life and education

Born in New Zion, South Carolina, Lavender's formal education started at Salem Elementary School in New Zion. He graduated from East Clarendon High School in Turbeville, South Carolina. He received his BA and MA degrees in psychology from the University of South Carolina at Columbia in 1963 and 1965 respectively. While at USC, he was a member of Phi Epsilon Pi (which later merged with Zeta Beta Tau) fraternity, and the AFROTC's Arnold Air Society, was president of the Hillel Foundation, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

### Career

Lavender served in the United States Air Force from 1964 to 1968 and completed his service as a captain at Whiteman Air Force Base in Warrensburg, Missouri, where he was a personnel casualty officer, and in Izmir, Turkey, as part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). After completing military service, Lavender began his doctoral studies and earned a PhD in sociology in 1972 from the University of Maryland, College Park with a doctoral dissertation on generational changes in Jewish identity.

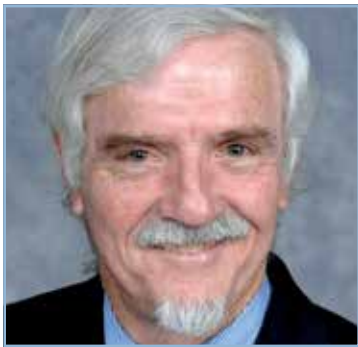
A prolific author, Lavender wrote dozens of books and academic articles, mostly about ethnicity and Sephardic Jews, as well as other scholarly publications including journal articles, reference book/encyclopedia articles, book reviews, and research reports, on a wide variety of sociology-related topics. In addition to his books listed below, among his major publications linking multiple areas of interest (Jews, Latinas, ethnicity, political sociology) are *A History of Jewish and Hispanic Interaction in Miami-Dade County* (published by the American Jewish Committee) and *Jews, Hispanics, Blacks, and Others in Miami Beach: An Ethnically Divided City or a Cosmopolitan Multiethnic City?*, a monograph published by the Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship Studies at Florida International University to which the answer is cosmopolitan multiethnic city. In 1977, Lavender published a collection of studies on non-mainstream Jewish people in the United States, *A Coat of Many Colors*. In 2014 he completed a seventh book, *Early Social Life in Miami Beach: From Mangroves and Mosquitoes to Mansions and Millionaires*. He also was selected to write the article on Judaism for the *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, and to write seven articles on the relationship between anthropology and DNA for the *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Lavender has argued that since Sephardic Jews constitute a separate group, they should be granted the same attention bestowed on other ethnic groups.

On six occasions, Lavender was honored for his civic activities in Miami Beach including Distinguished Citizen Award, Key to the City, Certificate of Appreciation, and others.

Lavender also had close ties to Charleston, South Carolina, his second home, where he lived part-time, had many relatives and friends, visited frequently, was a speaker at the historic Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue (founded in the 1740s), conducted extensive research at the Huguenot Society, and was involved with the International Huguenot Conference held in Charleston in 1997.

## Civic and political activities

Lavender was also active in civic and political affairs, serving as advisor to Miami Beach Mayor Seymour Gelber, vice-chair and commissioner of the Miami Beach Housing Authority, chairperson of city's Homeless Committee, and as a member of the city's Safety Committee. He served on the board of directors of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami, and conducted extensive genealogical research. An academic and personal area of interest, DNA is used in genealogical and historical research,

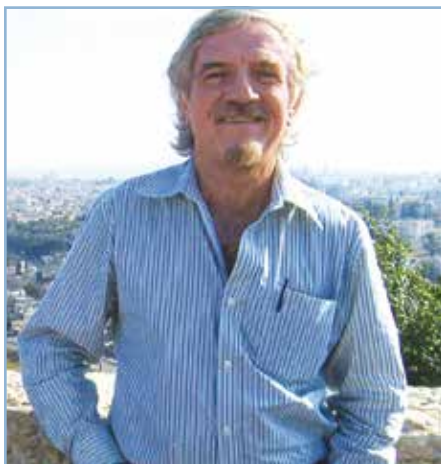


Abraham Lavender

His strongest personal genetic matches were in Spain, especially among the *chuetas* (*marranos*) of the island of Mallorca.

His direct paternal ancestor, Benjamin Lavender settled in the Sumter/Turbeville/New Zion areas of South Carolina c. 1790, and among Lavender's presentations

was "Where in the World are Benjamin Lavender's Distant Male Cousins?" (*¿Dónde Están en el Mundo los Primos Distantes de Benjamin Lavenda?*), presented in Turbeville in August 2010. With 13 Y-chromosome markers, the answers are, in order, Italy



Abe in Jerusalem, 2006



Abe, Genie Milgrom and Bennett Greenspan, Sante Fe, 2016

(especially Marche); Cologne, Germany; Central Portugal; the United States (four European background, two Hispanic background, and one African background); Brazil (especially Rio Grande Do Sul); and Warsaw, Poland.

Lavender was a frequent speaker for academic, civic and genealogical groups, with frequent presentations about the Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal, and their descendants in North America and South America. Some presentations included "The Secret Jews of Brazil." Other favorite topics included Miami Beach history, political behavior, and DNA with presentations including "The Secret Society of Moses according to Flavio Barbiero." His academic visits included Portugal, Spain, and Israel.

## Organizations

Lavender was president of the Miami Beach Historical Association and president of the South Florida Association of Phi Beta Kappa. He was a member of Temple Beth Tov in West Miami, and president of the men's club. He was a member of Hibiscus Lodge #275 of F&AM, and a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Freemason. He was a member of Mensa, and the board of directors of the Miami chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He was a life member of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

## Books

*Miami Beach in 1920: The Making of a Winter Resort.* Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2002.

*Black Communities in Transition: Voices from South Florida.* Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 1996 (edited, with Adele S. Newson).

*Jewish Farmers of the Catskills: A Century of Survival.* Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1995 (with Clarence Steinberg).

*French Huguenots: From Mediterranean Catholics to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants.* New York, Bern, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990.

*Ethnic Women and Feminist Values: Toward a 'New' Value System.* Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 1986.

*A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Subcommunities in the United States.* Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1977 (edited). >>>



## Memories of Abe Lavender

It is with great sadness that I convey the news of former SCJS board member, president and editor of *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto Jews (JOSPIC-J)*, Abe Lavender's passing. May his memory be a blessing. — **Stan Hordes**



Dr. Abe Lavender was the first expert I ever met on the topic of crypto-Jewry and I was able to attend his lectures often. He was the only person who encouraged me early on to be public with my research and often times turned the podium over to me in crucial and important conferences to give me a leg up. From the get-go he helped me with the academic articles I wrote for *JOSPIC-J* and insisted that I should write for each edition. He gave me my start and followed closely to make sure I was successful. I owe Abe a great deal for believing in me and the person I became with his encouragement and tutelage. I miss him greatly. — **Genie Milgrom**



I am so sorry to learn about Abe's death. Just that morning, I was looking through a copy of *JOSPIC-J* to find an article about Italian crypto-Jews. I greatly admired Abe. He will be missed. — **Art Benveniste**



Abe was in many ways a pioneer in this field, bringing together skills as a speaker, editor, researcher, and public figure. He will be missed indeed. — **Seth Ward**



I feel grateful that I got to know Abe when we started what became *JOSPIC-J*. He was president of SCJS and was open to the idea when I proposed it to him, and then he made it happen! He secured support from his dean at Florida International University and a grant to publish a first edition. I think I also got the Sosin Foundation to contribute: my memory isn't clear about how they also supported it. Then we got SCJS on board as a supporter. Abe was a warm, considerate person and a good friend. Our friendship was enhanced by his habit of staying up into the wee hours of the morning so we could make the three-hour time difference work for telephone calls with me in California and he in Florida. He was an active and creative SCJS president. I bless his memory and am grateful to have known him.

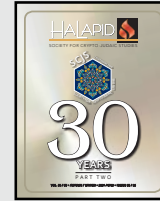
— **Dolores "Dolly" Sloan** 

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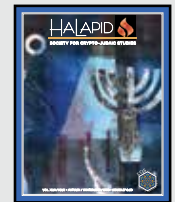
Spring/Summer 2021



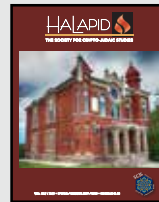
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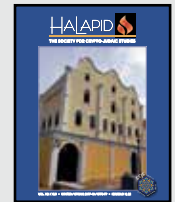
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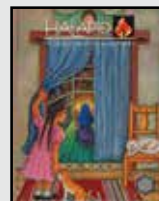
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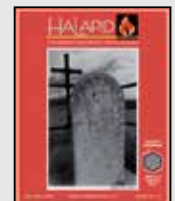
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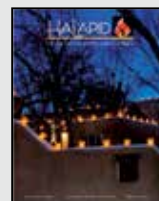
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Through your support of our studies of the history, cultures, arts and current status of crypto-Judaism in the United States and throughout the world, we continue our mission of nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Judaic 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 SCJS to foster research and the exchange of information about *conversos* who settled in the outer regions of the Spanish Empire. The secret observance of Sephardic customs and traditions by many descendants continues still.

Today, SCJS is regarded as the primary body of scholars, artists, crypto-Jewish descendants and interested individuals investigating this phenomenon and inspiring new research directions. Although our roots are in the American Southwest, our horizons extend worldwide, with enriching 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 SCJS and related events.

Since 1991, we have attracted members from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Latin America, Spain, Portugal, Scotland, England, France, Italy, Israel, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Macao, Goa, Central America, the Spanish Caribbean Islands and elsewhere.

Your continued membership and donations make it possible for us to continue our mission. We welcome new and renewing members. We are all active participants in this important field of study.

In addition to membership, we welcome donations to our other funds. The Randy Baca/Dennis Duran Fund provides assistance for those researching possible Sephardic ancestry and 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 contributions supports our mailing and publication expenses.

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

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- Avram Ben Rosh -



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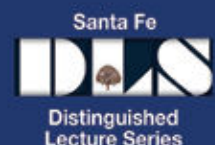
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