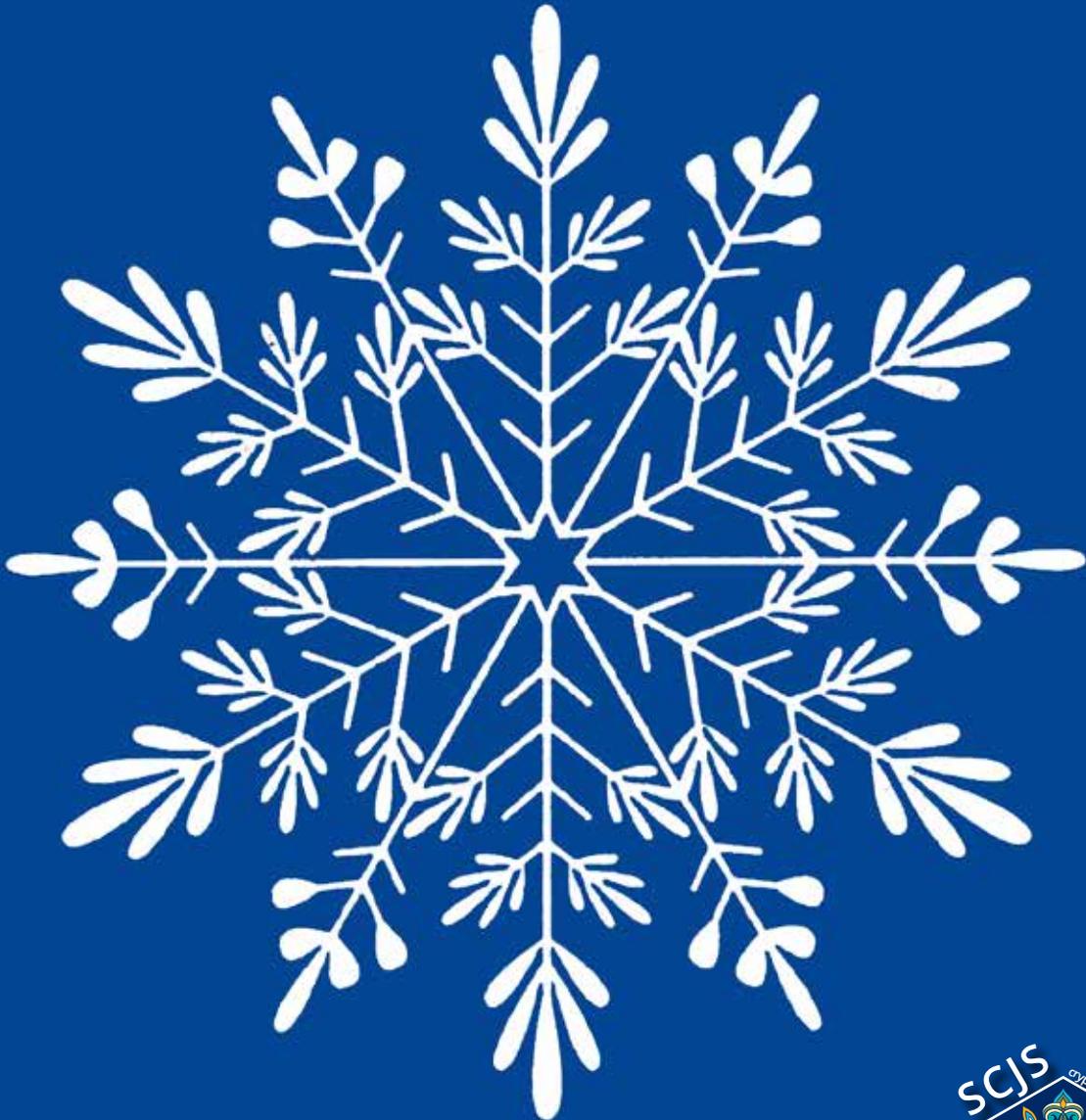




HALAPID

SOCIETY FOR
CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES



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SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES
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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.

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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 be reprinted with permission only.

HaLapid usually mails twice annually in the Spring and Autumn. Please send submissions to the editor-in-chief by March 1 and September 1, corinnejb@aol.com

We are near the end of September as I write this message. It has already been over three months since I penned my first message for *HaLapid* as SCJS president-elect sharing the excitement of taking on this role and envisioning the many ways in which I could contribute to moving this organization forward.

Over this short time SCJS hosted two acclaimed authors and scholars through the Kanter Lecture Series: Isaac Amon, JD, who exposed a new way to appreciate US history with his presentation, “The Founding Fathers and the Inquisition;” and Seth Ward, PhD, who lead us in an emotional recounting of the “Expulsion, Inquisition, and the Erasure of Jewish Identity—Then and Now.” See page 30 for reviews of these two programs and a preview of upcoming fascinating lectures.

While scheduling these amazing addresses, we collaborated closely with Dr. Seth Ward to bring you the 34th Annual Conference — fully online, Sunday, October 27, 2024 — on “Crypto-Judaism: Inheritance, Choice, and Identity.” We hope you took part.



BLANCA CARRASCO
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Plus, we are now working with Dr. Elisheva I. Diaz to bring you a one-of-a-kind experience in Los Angeles, California, for our in-person 35th Annual Conference, August 10-12, 2025. Please plan now to join us!

Another significant aspect of holding the presidency is the opportunity to work closely with visionaries and remarkable scholars whose passion is to share their research and knowledge through the articles contributed to our celebrated journal, *HaLapid*.

Such scholarly works enrich our lives and open our minds to many well-known crypto-Jewish communities and other hidden communities as well. These need to be brought to light in the same manner as the stories that have changed lives in the past and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Many thanks to our new officers and board members for supporting our efforts. We hope to achieve amazing things in the next two years. I am confident that with their help, we will take SCJS to new levels of engagement from our members and contributors, bring new people into this fantastic world of dissemination of the history of crypto-Jews of Iberian origin, and strengthen the network that our over 30 years has created with people in our beloved country, our neighbors and all around the world.

Wishing you a peaceful and meaningful holiday season.

Blanca Carrasco
Blanca Carrasco

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.

There's always more to the story

After all these years it is remarkable to me how much there still is to learn about the story of crypto-Jews. For the longest time we have focused on the Southwest and the history of *conversos* in New Mexico, somehow bypassing the rich history of Texas. The El Paso conference changed all of that, especially thanks to the probing film *Remember My Soul* and the physical experience of exploring the missions of Spanish Colonial El Paso.

Further, we have had the illuminating articles by Carlos Larralde, a native son of Texas whose rich past and endless research have led to his series of articles. Yet one more by Carlos profiles a brilliant civic leader, Judge J.T. Canales. We also have another Texas back story by new member Jeremy Covarrubias, and a personal narrative by contributor Deb Rios Villareal Pendleton. All these, plus Italian Jews, Turkish Jews, a *converso* Bible, new board members and so much more. The rest is up to you.



CORINNE JOY BROWN
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Corinne J. Brown
Corinne Joy Brown, Editor



A snowflake radiates out from a Star of David, a sign of hope and regeneration. Reinterpreted from a thank you card issued by the University of Denver, this design seemed a fitting symbol for the moment — truly celebratory in this season of darkness and light, and utterly ephemeral — as all snowflakes are. With thanks to our graphic designer Jacqueline Hirsch for making it shine. — Corinne Brown

Schifano Purchases Brenner Photo

With great pleasure we announce the purchase of the photograph “Les Marranos” by French photographer Frédéric Brenner and donated by founding member Nan Rubin, to current board member Sean Schifano. This is a historic moment for SCJS and we offer our sincerest thanks to Sean.

The amount of the sale (which include the book by the same name by Brenner) has helped us move toward our summer 2025 conference. We know the photo is in safe and good hands. With our thanks and appreciation.



The Jews of Belmonte,
1992, photograph by
Frédéric Brenner

*Warmest thanks for their
generous gifts in 2023-2024*

- THE STRATTON-PETIT FOUNDATION, CALIFORNIA
-
- THE LAWRENCE & KATHY KANTER PHILANTHROPIC
FUND OF THE JCF OF NE FLORIDA
-
- STANLEY AND HELEN HORDES
-
- EROL AMON • ART BENVENISTE
- ANDRÉE AELION BROOKS • BLANCA CARRASCO
- ELISHEVA IRMA DIAZ • DEBBIE WOHL-ISARD
-
- PROFOUND THANKS FOR ALL THE MANY OTHER
GENEROUS INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS



READERS' FEEDBACK

Thank you

Thank you! I finally received a copy of the June 2024 journal. I enjoyed reading your article on the Israel National Library on Sephardic Jews. One can only wonder what is in the Library of Congress concerning this topic. The place is magnificent.

After reading the article, I concluded that you could have had a career as a distinguished New York editor for a major book publisher. You did a beautiful job with my article, especially with the photos. (*Ed.: Credit here to our magazine designer, Jacqueline Hirsch.*)

You have my narrative on Judge J.T. Canales (see page 8)... It is about his intimate personal life, which so few scholars know about since he was so secretive about his community activities.

Regarding the series on prominent crypto-Jews of Texas:

Professor Miguel Juarez PhD, MA, MLS at the University of Texas, El Paso is interested in these articles for classroom use. There are several Chicano or Mexican American studies centers, and many secondary schools throughout the country that would be interested in getting copies. With marketing skills, *HaLapid* could generate a steady financial income.

Carlos Montalvo Larralde, Calimesa, California

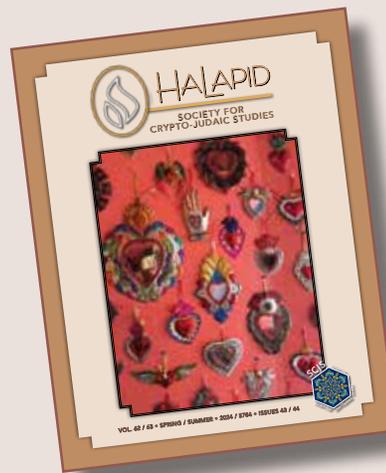
Moving forward

Note from Dolores Sloan regarding our new president Blanca Carrasco

Thanks for your good work in this. From my historic perspective, this is the door to another promising phase in our meaningful adventure, with Blanca's skilled and visionary leadership.

As a senior adviser to the board like Stan (Hordes), I have no vote, but am pleased with our move forward.

Dolly (Dolores) Sloan, Santa Monica, California



Another success

Bravo! Another excellent issue of *Halapid*. I learned so much! Thank you!!

**Norma Libman,
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

I got your latest edition today. Excellent work. Very impressive.

**Andrée Aelion Brooks,
Bellevue Washington**



*May the warmth of joy
and sparkle of happiness
fill your home this
holiday season.*



Welcome New SCJS Board Members



**GEORGINA
ESTHER GARZA**
Grand Prairie, Texas
[www.facebook.com/
SoySefarad](https://www.facebook.com/SoySefarad)

Georgina Esther Garza, MEd SPED SECRETARY

Originally from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Georgina Garza De Leon comes from the original crypto-Jewish families arriving at Nuevo Reino De León particularly from Luis De Carvajal de la Cueva, Diego De Montemayor, and Marcos Alonso de La Garza Y Falcón (Arcón). Her genealogical tree's prominent names include Leon, Garza, Gonzalez, Trevino, Cantu, Cano, Benavidez, and many more Sephardic last names.

Georgina graduated from the University of North Texas with a bachelor's in rehabilitation studies, a master's in Spanish language and culture from Salamanca University Spain, a master's in reading and literacy, and a post master's as an educational diagnostician from Lamar University. She has a certificate as a genealogist and social media specialist. She currently works as a school educational diagnostician and helps many students with learning disabilities.



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Ricardo Villarreal, PhD MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Born in Corpus Christi, Texas, Ricardo is a descendant of Marcos Alonso de la Garza y del Arcón (Falcón) and Tomás Sánchez de La Barrera, the founder of Laredo, Texas.

Ricardo is a professor of marketing at the University of San Francisco and author, with many years of experience in consumer behavior research and methodology. His areas of expertise include consumer behavior, media behavior, identity and branding, culture and marketing, and research methodology. He has held various notable appointments, including chair of the marketing department (2019-2023) and co-chair of the faculty development committee (2015-2019; 2022-present).



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Isaac Amon, JD, LL.M, JSD PARLIAMENTARIAN/ HISTORIAN

Director of academic research and program development at Jewish Heritage Alliance, Isaac graduated summa cum laude with highest honors in medieval history, with a focus on the Iberian Inquisition, before earning a JD, LL.M in alternative dispute resolution and a JSD (PhD in law) in comparative law, criminal procedure, and legal history, all from Washington University in St. Louis.

With a background in international and comparative history and law, he studied at Utrecht University, Hebrew University, and the Sorbonne; lectured on criminal procedure, the Inquisition, and Sephardic history in the United States and Canada to professional and lay audiences; and served as an adjunct professor of law to visiting students, lawyers and judges.

A first-generation American, Dr. Isaac Amon's paternal ancestors originated in 15th-century Spain before leaving the Iberian Peninsula due to the Expulsion of 1492. Over the centuries, following their arrival in the Ottoman Empire, they served as chief rabbis, diplomats and physicians to the sultans.



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Douglas Schar, BA, DipPhyt, MNIMH, PhD ACADEMIC OUTREACH

A former ethnobotanist and health journalist, author of books, and columnist to the health magazine *Prevention*. Doug is now dedicated to crypto-Jewish studies including those expelled from Spain, but also the forced converts of Northern Europe, Iran, North Africa, etc. He is also interested in the often-understudied Afro-European crypto-Jews of the New World, Cape Verde, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Doug's Jewish ancestry comes from all different directions. All four of his grandparents are of Jewish heritage. He descends from English crypto-Jews, Spanish crypto-Jews, French crypto-Jews who became Huguenots, Swiss Jews who became Swiss Mennonites, and Italian crypto-Jews who joined the Church of England.



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Sean Schifano ARCHIVIST

After earning a BS in history with a hybrid minor in religion and philosophy, Sean was a doctoral student in the history of science and technology at Johns Hopkins University and during that time completed a dual archival internship at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, gaining his first exposure to a rigorous training in archival best practices. The latter first brought to light his satisfaction in doing public history. He has held short-term teaching positions at the University of North Alabama (mathematics) and the University of South Carolina (philosophy). He is currently an MA student in public history at New Mexico State University, where the Crypto-Jewish Historical Archives (CJHA) will serve as his master's project.

Sean is a descendant of one of the first Jews to settle in North America. 🕎



CONVERSOS

The Jewish Origins of our Hispanic Heritage

JEREMY "COVI" COVARRUBIAS, MA

Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15–October 15) is one of America’s many cultural celebrations and is especially important to Hispanic communities. During the month of September, Americans celebrate the contributions of prominent Hispanic figures, culture and history. Recent history and heritage tend to be the focal point. Still, this year recognition of the very impactful yet largely-forgotten Hispanic Jews, also known as the Sephardic Jews, should be emphasized.

The suppression of Jewish culture among Hispanics in South Texas is grounded in five historical phenomena. The first begins with the Inquisition of the 15th century that sent Sephardic Jews to Nueva Espana and Mexico City, Mexico. Upon arrival, the Sephardic Jews faced continued persecution by the Catholic Church. Sephardic Jews who converted to Catholicism were called *conversos*. Those who practiced Catholicism publicly but retained their Jewish heritage in secrecy were known as crypto-Jews.

Secondly, *conversos* faced constant attacks and eventually were influenced by the Comanches and other native tribes from 1650 to 1875. Surviving *conversos* embarked on a path to colonize areas further north, such as Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, and South Texas along the Rio Grande.

By the 1870s the *conversos* assimilated to a cultural blend of Mexican culture, Judaism and Catholicism. According to Carlos Montalvo Larralde (1978), following the adoption of a new culture, their original ancestral identifier of “Hispanic” began to give way to the unique ancestral identifier, “Chicano.” The identifier served as a new unifier among all with Mexican blood, regardless of Jewish heritage. This group included the Sephardic Jews from Spain, the Hispanics mixed with Native Americans, and the descendants of African slaves, who escaped from America into Mexico, called Afro-Latinos. Everyone included under this Chicano title, whether Jew or gentile, felt the persecution and attempted extermination



by a newly created paramilitary force. This force served as the third hindrance of Jewish culture among Hispanics and was known as *Los Diablos Tejanos* or the Texas Rangers.

As Chicano communities were established in South Texas, the Texas Rangers patrolled the border and often disregarded the law. Some of the more merciless Rangers found employment with ranchers along the border and helped to acquire ranch land and ranch hands. Some of these ranch hands were the *conversos* who left the constant attacks of the Comanches to settle in Tamaulipas. In the 1850s, Texas Rangers gathered up the citizens of Tamaulipas to work the ranchers' newly-acquired land. The Texas Rangers and the ranchers shared anti-Semitic opinions.

By the early 1920s, the threat of the Texas Rangers began to decline, only for Chicanos to face their fourth obstacle in the Ku Klux Klan. Many more Chicano Jews fell at the hands of yet another oppressor, and another generation of Jewish heritage was lost.

Chicano Jews would ultimately face the final of the five phenomena that suppressed the remnant of their nearly-forgotten heritage: policies enacted by the Texas state government which limited the educational growth of Chicanos, such as the segregation of Mexican Americans in public schools that forced them to remain in first grade for three years and often prohibited them from speaking in their native language (CA 1384 Hernandez et al. v. Driscoll Consolidated ISD).

The history of Hispanics reminds us that they were no strangers to religious practices prior to their time in America. Hispanics share commonality with many of the Jewish faith who have held onto their devotion despite constant persecution. To continue to overlook the peregrination of the Sephardim is to do a disservice to the overall Hispanic culture and minimize over 400 years of Hispanic heritage that has always had a firm foundation in the worship of Yahweh (the god of Moses). Bringing awareness of this information to Hispanics is pivotal when uncovering the origins of our faith and the consequent customs and traditions. 🕯️



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Jeremy "Covi" Covarrubias is a veteran of the US Army where he served as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division and 10th Special Forces Group. After being honorably discharged, Jeremy used his VA benefits to earn his BA and MA in ministry from Stark College and Seminary. After graduating, Jeremy applied what he learned at Stark to further research the history of religious ideologies among Hispanics in South Texas. His research led him to discover Jewish ancestry in his own family that originated in Spain prior to the Inquisition. This unprecedented discovery served as the foundation for exploring theological ideologies among Hispanics in South Texas and the reasons for the suppression of Jewish philosophy there.

Jeremy is currently pursuing a master's in divinity (MDiv) from Stark College and Seminary as well as an MA in Jewish studies from Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership.

With this specific discipline and concentration, Jeremy hopes to aid in tearing down the partition between Jews and Christians in order to encourage unity.





OUR FAMILIES
OUR SECRETS

A Judge and a Mystical Healer

The Story of Judge J.T. Canales

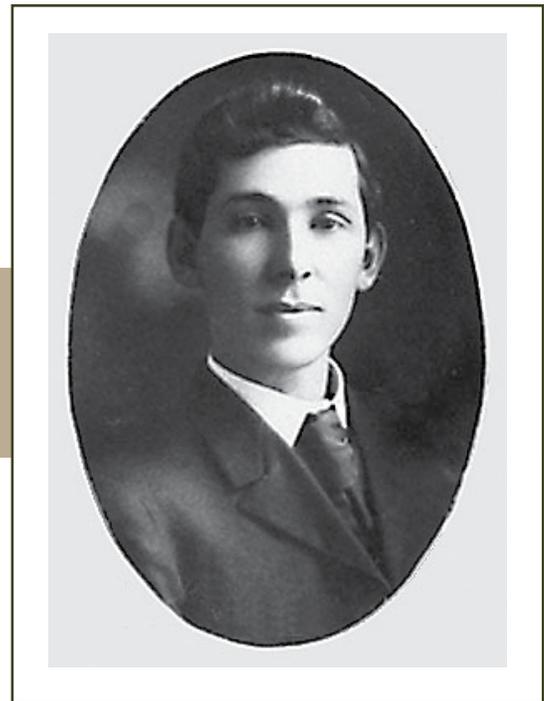
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CARLOS MONTALVO LARRALDE

During my high school days in the 1960s in San Benito, Texas, I often dwelt on history projects about South Texas as a hobby on weekends. In particular, I enjoyed researching a relative, Judge J.T. Canales. Born in Nueces County on March 7, 1877, he later lived in Brownsville, a few miles from my home. After the death of his wife, he looked forward to my visits to ease his loneliness.

As I got to know him, I learned that he was already a towering figure in American civil rights. He battled stiff-necked bureaucrats, ready to defend the rights of those who were voiceless or impoverished. I kept in touch with him after being drafted during the Vietnam war. I ended up in California and went to UCLA, but always stayed connected. Canales helped me with my graduate studies concerning the American Latino until his death on March 30, 1976 at age 99 in Brownsville.

We often discussed genealogy and Lower Rio Grande history. He shared with me his many memories about characters he knew personally; people that had helped shape Texas. He himself was a descendant of José Salvador de la Garza, a recipient of the Espiritu Santo Grant during the 1700s, and most of his relatives were related to the settlement of Monterrey founded by *converso* Luis de Carvajal during the 1550s. Canales took genealogy as a pillar of faith, family and tradition since the Torah gave it crucial importance, as in the sections: “The Generations of Adam,” and “The Genealogy of Aaron.” To Canales,



J.T. Canales, Cameron County, Texas

the Torah was a sacred connection to our ancestors who brought “the true faith” to the New World and tried to protect it.

Most crypto-Jews believed it was a holy obligation to know one’s genealogy. Every morning, Canales woke-up with the sun to read extensively about history, theology or law and later, to read the Torah for religious reflections concerning justice and compassion. Besides his sacred readings, Canales hired tutors to help him learn Latin, French and Greek so he could read classical literature.



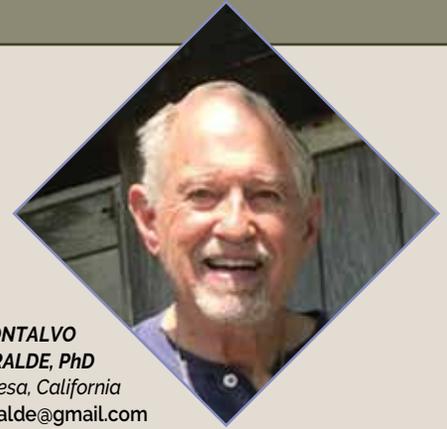
Reaching the Spiritual World

Canales attended the University of Michigan from 1896 to 1899. He received a law degree and opened a law office in Brownsville. When he could, he enjoyed assisting the vitality of Mexico City with its entertainment and festivals. He soon became a consultant to Mexican President Porfirio Diaz on border issues.

While in Brownsville, Canales came across the captivating Gorgonia Villarreal, a San Benito *curandera* or folk healer. As he got to know her, he saw a practical, wise and inspiring woman who was also a midwife. She saw her patients in a private room with burning puffs of perfumed incense, as she said, "...to stay connected to the celestial world." In this smoky room, the sweet smell created intoxicating fumes; Gorgonia would appear like a ghostly figure with her black vestments or white robes. Vigilant attendants



(L) A photograph of la Santa Gorgonia Villarreal was used in a local shrine in San Benito, Texas to honor her. People would visit the shrine to leave flowers and decorate the place with flowers. This is the photograph that I recalled seeing on the chapel altar. In 2011, I received this particular photograph from her grandson, Professor Alfonso Cavazos, University of Texas, Edinburg.



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Carlos 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*.

dropped resin or grams of spices into the incense burner. The place flickered with candlelight while fire guided her rituals.

To Canales' surprise, Gorgonia performed rites of divination while using psychotropic substances to reach a sacred world. For her, healing was derived from herbal remedies that combated illness, and often through the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Another therapeutic aid – peyote, a hallucinatory cactus – generated glowing visions said to enhance perception and create euphoria. She also used morning glory seeds. A mixed concoction of herbal medications was said to cure heart trouble or breathing disorders. As the scholar William Hickling Prescott wrote in 1843 about medicine in Mexico, "No country has afforded more numerous species for herbology than New Spain... their virtues were perfectly understood by the Aztecs for whom medical botany may have been understood as a science."

Gorgonia predicted Canales' forthcoming when she was 16-years old. Although he knew the Torah disapproved of divination and soothsaying, as a curious lad he saw no harm in visiting this seer. After all, the Torah revealed that such things were possible with the example of Joseph and the pharaoh. Canales saw Gorgonia as a modern-day Joseph wearing a cross to prevent accusations of witchcraft. But he also knew well that she was, in fact, a learned Jewess determined to survive at any cost. >>>



Canales often questioned her oracles but Gorgonia always stood firm. During a session with her herbs, a delirious Canales told her about his vivid dreams revealing massive wars and a world of immense poverty ahead. Reportedly, Gorgonia raised her arms and proclaimed his prophecy, after asking him for a gold coin (which he refused to give). “As you grow older,” she said, “every time you blink your eyes, you will make money. Everything you touch will turn into wealth. You will be powerful and famous, and the world will respect you with high esteem. But no one will love you and there will never be any happiness in your personal life.” She concluded by telling him that “God intended for him to serve his people and that he would be remembered by posterity, and would incur the wrath of God if he consumed his fortune on himself.”

One of Gorgonia’s prophecies was confirmed in 1904 when Canales and several friends returned to Brownsville from San Benito during the early morning hours. From the road, they saw a man hanging from a tree with his abdomen slit open and his intestines protruding. The horrified Canales later discovered that several Texas Rangers had done this. He went back to Gorgonia. She replied, “God has revealed to you that Texas needs justice, and you are a lawyer with resources.” He promised her that he would dedicate his life to justice and civil rights.

At first, Canales tackled abuses through the legal system, but realized it was corrupt, starting with numerous law enforcement agencies. One was the Texas Rangers. In 1918, Ranger Frank Hamer threatened Canales because of his denunciation of the force. By January 1919, newspaper headlines throughout Texas reported the Ranger’s condemnation of Judge Canales. However, as a delegate of the 77th District (Cameron and Willacy counties) in the Texas House of Representatives, he drafted reforms on the Rangers and filed 19 charges against them. He compiled a legislative investigation of their reorganization. Canales also criticized the Ku Klux Klan

who had Ranger members. It became a monumental task to enforce drastic reforms since Canales knew that Texas ignored crimes against minorities. But thanks to community support and, as a lawyer with economic security, Canales was successful and too powerful to have his career blighted by critics.

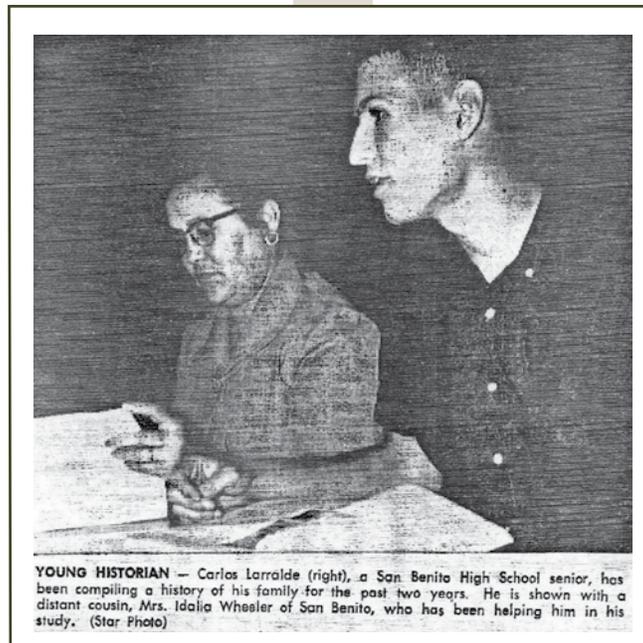
By now, Gorgonia’s prophecy regarding his wealth was seen as frivolous until Canales’ father, Andres gave him a ranch in Nueces Country to help provide a steady source of income. By 1925, oil wells discovered on the ranch produced gushers of oil. The humble Canales still refused to believe his assets. One morning, his bookkeeper played

a joke on him. While still in his bathrobe, Canales discovered the massive tub full of money. Even the toilet paper had been replaced by a roll of \$100 bills while more currency fluttered from the heat vent on the wall.



Driven by her commitment to help others, Gorgonia sought a just and humane society. She saw the poverty, low wages, and wide-spread starvation on both sides of the Lower Rio Grande. Canales could no longer ignore the malnourished and illiterate slums either. During the 1930s’ Great Depression, his money aided those mired in poverty. To assure that his cases were properly attended, Canales established his own public relief program for the impoverished. To help Brownsville, Canales hired numerous janitors,

painters, landscapers, gardeners, and repair men. Social workers reported to him every month concerning each family’s circumstances. He supported thousands of these families. In fact, several children of these recipients later went to college funded by Canales’ educational grants. Surrounded by cronies who were officials or influential merchants, most of them were indebted to Canales, since he aided them financially during the ravages of the Depression.



YOUNG HISTORIAN — Carlos Larralde (right), a San Benito High School senior, has been compiling a history of his family for the past two years. He is shown with a distant cousin, Mrs. Idalia Wheeler of San Benito, who has been helping him in his study. (Star Photo)

YOUNG HISTORIAN — Carlos Larralde (right), a San Benito High School senior, has been compiling a history of his family for the past two years. He is shown with a distant cousin, Mrs. Idalia Wheeler at San Benito, who has been helping him in his study. (Star Photo, year?)



Canales' accountants encouraged him to invest in junk stocks on the New York Stock Exchange to create losses and lower profits. He needed this tactic to shield himself from the IRS. Gorgonia warned him that this reckless behavior would create more grief for him. A frustrated Canales ignored the advice and let the accountants proceed. After several months, rather than showing the predicted losses, these junk stocks tripled in value instead.

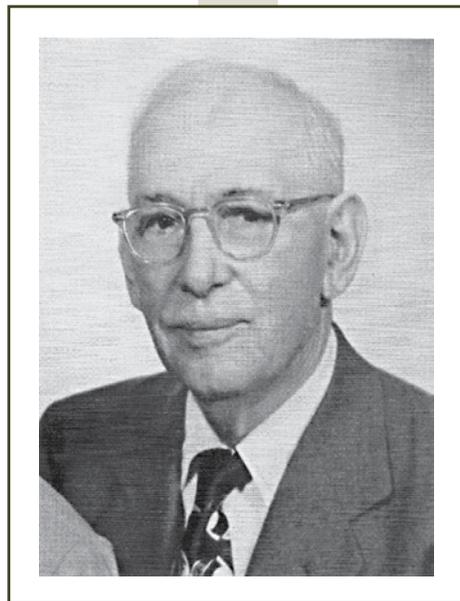
While the IRS taxed him regularly, a persistent IRS auditor in San Antonio urged him to seek more charitable causes. Canales then took the auditor out on the street where impoverished people passed. He gave them each a \$100 bill. On this one occasion, he gave away over \$4000 as people gathered around him.

Canales often forgot how many bank accounts he had. Once he used a \$20,000 oil check as a bookmark and the book got lost either in his library at home or in one of his law offices. After several months, the oil company called to ask why he had not cashed the check. He later remembered he had stored the book with the check in the bottom drawer of his roll-top desk at his Brownsville law office.

For all their success in their communities, Gorgonia and Canales coped with numerous obstacles in retaining Latino language and culture, propelled by a kind of Anglo-Latino cultural genocide. Mixed-race marriages were outlawed; after all, this was an era when the Supreme Court upheld racial segregation in the country. Minorities had no governmental or economic strength to combat injustices, enforced by a rigid Jim Crowism constructed around them. But neither refused to ignore human suffering. Canales gave to numerous charities to assuage his guilt. I attended a few of his dinners when he entertained guests. Most restaurant owners refused to charge him since they were indebted to him for endless legal advice and favors. An embarrassed Canales was often uncomfortable with money and his own prosperity.

Both he and Gorgonia coped with moments of defeat. But determined to see social change, they overcame frustration and failure even when they saw little progress. In the long run, they stood for human dignity while confronting brutal authority, never giving into fear. While connected to the outside, Canales

maintained a tight veil of secrecy intended to shield his personal life from the tabloids. He valued Gorgonia's idea that one could sublimate a prestigious personal history. She pointed out that with his oil and real estate revenues, he could remain in the background and instead, influence politicians to accomplish his motives. In that way he succeeded in limiting the Texas Ranger numbers through then-Texas Governor "Ma" Miriam Ferguson from 1925 to 1927 and later, from 1933 to 1935. As her devoted confidante, Canales convinced her to restrict the Ranger force. He maintained a clandestine friendship with "Ma" via telephone, as well as many other friends and associates in finance, diplomacy, and the law, always careful not to leave a paper trail.



Jose (J.T.) Canales, 1958

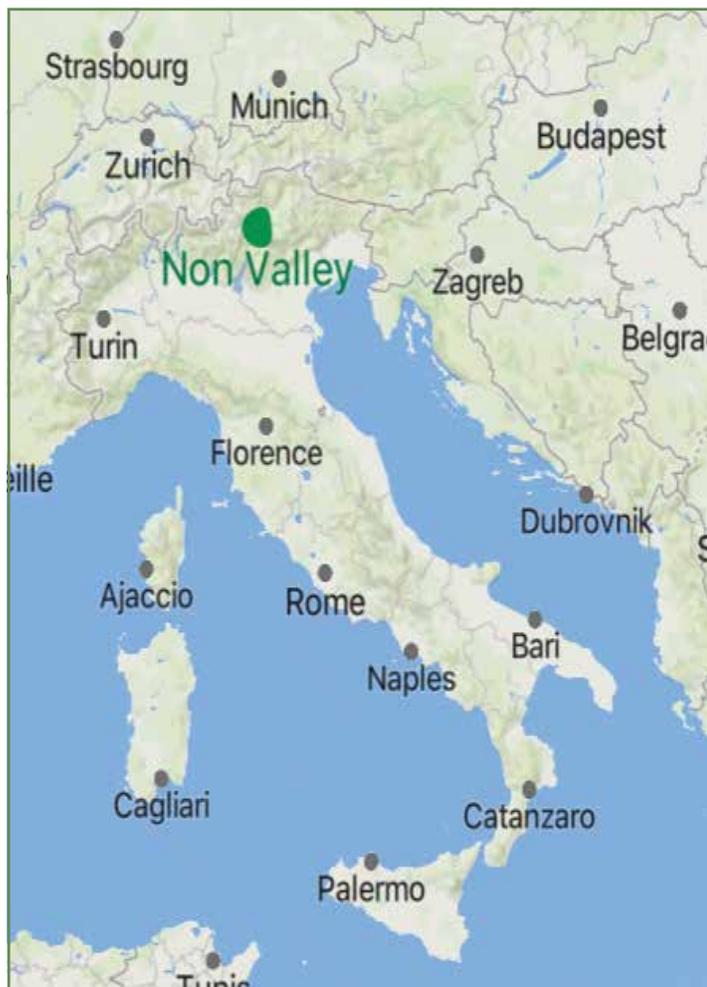
Gaps in Canales' life are difficult to document due to his private nature. He purged numerous personal papers concerning his diplomatic activities, finances and charities. He also eliminated photographs showing him with illustrious public figures such as President V. Carranza and other famous Mexican generals of the brutal Mexican Revolution during the 1910s. By the early 1940s Canales disposed of his three luxury cars and his famous silk suits. "It was a hard pill to swallow," recalled his cousin Zoila Tijerina, a Brownsville courthouse archivist. A prudent Canales continued to guard his privacy with a passion, maintaining an image of a respectable middle-class attorney.

After Canales died, he was resurrected as a father-figure, a veritable icon of American Latino civil rights, and a true image of justice. As for the mystical Gorgonia Villarreal, she became fused with American Latino folklore. She died during the 1940s; her cause of death, like her life, a mystery. People recalled her skills and knowledge of herbal medicine with reverence. Legends flourished about her impressive therapies and tales spread that "...God let her die peacefully, honoring her with a place in the heavens as a glowing star." A small chapel in San Benito survives showcasing her picture. Other *curanderos* conducted clinics as late as the 1990s. In December 2023, *New York Times* journalist Edger Sandoval wrote glowingly about these regional folk healers who helped others with their "ancient practice." 🌿



Crypto-Jews of Italy's Non Valley

.....
DOUGLAS SCHAR. BA. DIPPHYT. PHD. MNIMH.



Some time ago, I completed two projects dealing with crypto-Jews living in the valleys of the Alps. The first project dealt with the Swiss side, the Swiss crypto-Jews. The second a project dealt with the Italian side of the Alps: crypto-Jews amongst the Waldensians. Both articles can be found on my website, www.hiddenjewishancestry.com. Sometime later, I came across a *Jerusalem Post* article that spoke of yet another population of crypto-Jews living in the Alpine hills, in this case, the Non Valley, Italy (www.jpost.com/opinion/hidden-jewish-heritage-in-the-dolomites-407523).

The article explained how the local cuisine has certain Judaic elements and that many of the local surnames are Jewish in origin. There are several theories about how these crypto-Jews ended up on the third side of the Alps. Apparently in Trentino in the 16th century, the Jewish community was falsely accused of killing a Christian child. This led to the community being expelled. So the Non Valley crypto-Jews could be descendants of the Trentino Jews.

A local crypto-Judaic researcher and Non Valley native, Felice Zadra, thinks the Jewish presence may date to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Zadra has done extensive research into the local surnames with Jewish origins and in particular the history of his surname.

Zadra's research indicates the crypto-Jews who inhabit the Non Valley may have come from Spain, Portugal, France, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Persia. A list of Non Valley crypto-Jewish surnames and their variations, collected by Felice Zadra, includes the following.

Abram, Amrham, Barabacovi, Barbakoff, Bendetti, Benedetti, Calov, Calovet, Caloveto, Calovin, Campagnano, Casparo, Catan, Cattani, Chalow, Cheller, Choroszczula, Colevi, Corazzola, Corrazzola, Corrazzolla, Donati, Erlicher, Franc, Franch, Franch, Franck, Frank, Graif, Graiff, Graiff, Halov, Iob, Jalow, Job, Kaloy, Kaluv, Kaspar, Keller, Krasulszaja, Krazula, Kruczell, Kruczell, Kulav, Kulavi, Kulavi, Kulawy, Kulev, Leoni, Maccani, Machani, Maon, Maoni, Mazin, Mocnyj, Moscot, Moscoti, Mosin, Mosin, Mozen, Mozin, Nones, Nunes, Paris, Reich, Rizzardi, Rizzardo, Rokheles, Ruchell, Rukhel, Rukhelson, Salomon, Shiker, Shikor, Sicher, Sikar, Siker, Solomon, Widman, Widmann, Yob, Zadra, Zard, Zardi, Zardi.

Zadra's work is impressive. His research is comprehensive, fastidious, and just all-the-way-around amazing. If you find your "Italian" family name on this list, you may descend from crypto-Jews from the Non Valley.

And there is more to this story. When I compared Zadra’s list of Non Valley crypto-Jews to my list of Waldensian crypto-Jews, I found a number of direct matches. Crypto-Jewish surnames, found amongst Non Valley residents and Waldensians included:

Benedetti, Calvetto, Calves, Calvetti, Calves, Catan, Donati, Franc, Franch, Franchi, Jallow, Job, Machani (Machon), Muscetto (Museto), Paris, and Salomon.

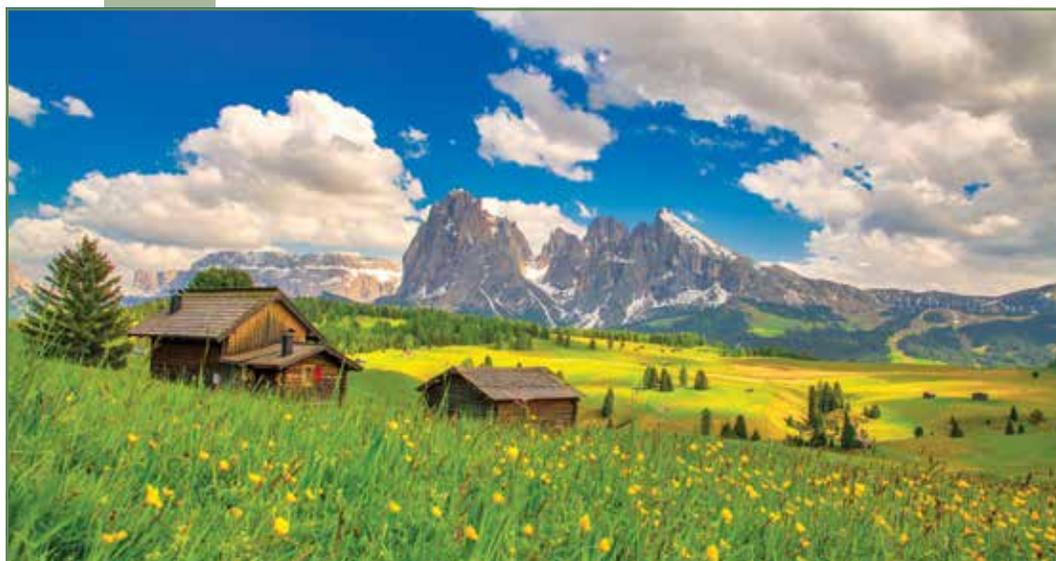
Many of these names hint at these crypto-Jewish family origins. One that stands out is Machani or Machon. Majon is the name of a Jewish family that lived in pre-Expulsion Toledo, Spain. In Genie Milgrom’s database, Majon appears as follows, “*Apellidos de Judios Sefardies (Surnames of the Sephardic Jews)* from the



Trentino, Italy

site *Comunidad Israelita Pincipado de Asturias*. There is no doubt the Majon family originally hailed from Balearics, Majon, Minorca in particular.

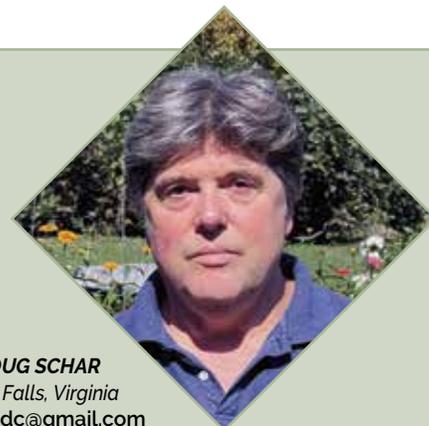
With this recent discovery, it appears Jews took refuge on all three sides of the Alps: the Swiss, the Italian and the Austrian. And over time they lost touch with their Jewish origins. However that may be changing. As a result of doing research on the Swiss and Waldensian crypto-Jews, several relatives from the Swiss side of the



Italian Alps

Alps have made contact. They have not only returned to Judaism but have made *Aliya* and are now raising families in Israel.

For more information on this story, please visit www.hiddenjewishancestry.com or contact me at ddsinc@gmail.com.



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Douglas Schar received his undergraduate degree in Jewish history. He then earned a medical diploma and a PhD in medical botany. Upon retiring from medicine, he returned to his first love, Jewish history. He now works full-time researching the crypto-Judaic identity and currently focuses on the crypto-Jews of Northern Europe. His next project involves the crypto-Jews who lived illegally in England, 1502-1626. Doug publishes his research on his website, www.HiddenJewishAncestry.com.





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<https://blog.nli.org.il>

THE BIBLE OF THE CONVERSOS

.....
DANIEL LIPSON
REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION



Years after being forced to leave Judaism behind, many of the *conversos* of Spain and Portugal sought to return to their suppressed roots. The Ferrara Bible, printed in the 16th century and revised countless times, helped them rediscover their religion. Dozens of copies of this bible are still scattered around the world today.

After many years of being cut off from Judaism, the *conversos* of Spain and Portugal migrated to other countries around the world, with many of them attempting to return to the Jewish faith. They did not have much knowledge of Judaism, and they did not even know the Hebrew alphabet. However childhood memories, family stories, and discreetly maintained traditions encouraged these “New Christians” to try to reconnect with their roots in their newly adopted homes.

Throughout the 16th century, *converso* communities began to print Jewish books in Spanish. Initially these printed works included the foundational Jewish texts, followed later by works on Jewish philosophy, anti-Christian texts, and books of poetry. A Portuguese grammar book and a play based on the Book of Esther, both printed by *conversos* during this period, have been preserved. A little later,

in the 17th century, *conversos* published what is considered the world’s first Jewish newspaper, the *Gazeta de Amsterdam*. The newspaper was published in the Netherlands and was primarily intended for Jewish merchants.

It all began in the city of Ferrara in northern Italy. *Conversos* settled there in the 16th century and established the earliest printing industry dedicated to works of Spanish and Portuguese *conversos*. The publishing work later moved to Venice and then in the 17th century to Amsterdam, where it remained for approximately 200 years. During the

Expulsion from Spain and Portugal in the last decade of the 15th century, there was already a Jewish community living in Ferrara, and the Jewish printing house had been operating there for several years. From 1477 to 1551, it published the *Arba’ah Turim* (a work dedicated to Jewish religious law) and commentaries on the books of Job and Daniel.

Against this backdrop, Ferrara attracted many *conversos* wishing to return to their Judaism since the location offered them such a comfortable environment. Among those who settled there was Abraham Usque, a *converso* who printed Latin books in Portugal. In 1543 he came under suspicion of practicing Judaism in secret and fled from Portugal to Ferrara.

Shortly after the arrival of the *conversos* in Ferrara in 1552, a Spanish member of the community named Yom-Tob Atias published a



siddur (prayer book) and later a book of the *Selichot* penitential prayers. Usque and Atias met each other and in 1553, together they published a complete bible in Spanish. According to an inscription found on the inside cover, this was done with the approval of the Duke of Ferrara. The full title of the bible they published was: *The Bible in the Spanish language, translated word for word from the true Hebrew by very excellent scholars, seen and examined by the office of the Inquisition*. To this day, it is commonly known as the Ferrara Bible.

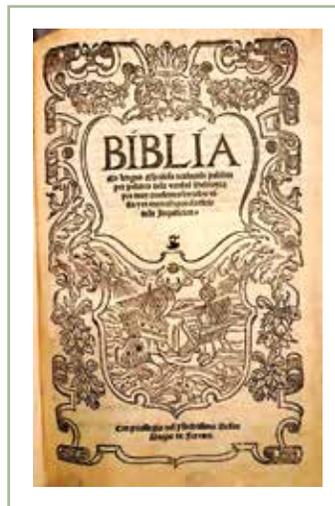
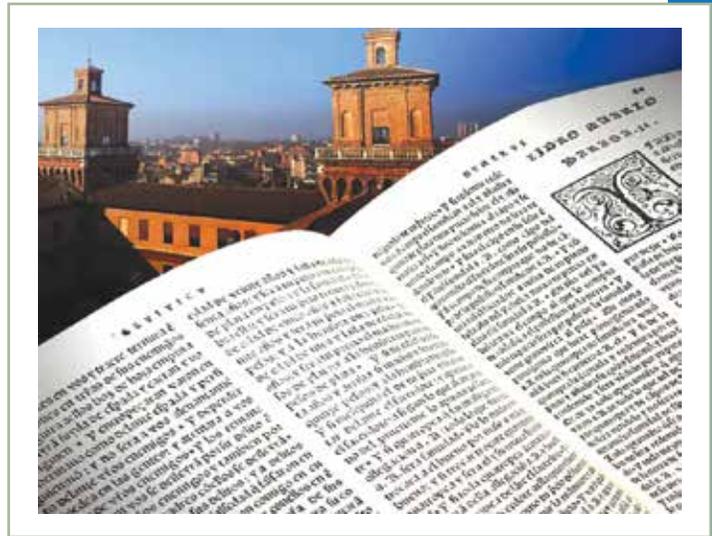
Since it is a very literal translation, it is a bit of a strange read in Spanish; rather than writing the biblical stories in Spanish, the text is translated word for word, sometimes without syntax, exactly as it is written in the original Hebrew. While the Ferrara Bible was printed in Roman letters, some people consider the translation to be written in the Judeo-Spanish language of Ladino, because it adheres strictly to the original Hebrew text.

The Ferrara Bible was first and foremost intended for *conversos* who wanted to study the bible but did not have sufficient knowledge, if any, of Hebrew. The other target audience included Spanish-speaking Christians.

In the past, certain scholars surmised that in order to serve both types of readers, the Ferrara Bible was printed in two similar versions, with the differences reflecting the respective expectations of the two target audiences. In any case, the National Library of Israel has a copy of each version.

The “Christian” version states that it was printed by Jerónimo de Vargas and Duarte Pinel. The first page includes a long dedication to Duke Ercole II d’Este, who ruled Ferrara at the time of publication and granted Jews equal rights. The Jewish version was printed by the same two publishers, but in this version, they appear under their Hebrew names – Yom-Tob Atias (who some claim was Jerónimo de Vargas’ father) and Abraham Usque. In this version, the dedication is to Doña Gracia Nasi, the famous Portuguese *converso* and Jewish philanthropist. Doña Gracia may have funded the project or supported it in other ways.

In the colophon – the final note attached to a book or manuscript summarizing its production process – some copies have the year written as 1553, while others have it written as the corresponding year in the Hebrew calendar, 5313. >>>



Top, *Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshua*, a commentary on the Book of Daniel by Don Isaac Abarbanel, Ferrara, 1551 (with the censors' stamps on the last page)

Center, *The Ferrara Bible* and the city of Ferrara.

Bottom left, Title page of the Ferrara Bible. The ship being wrecked at sea symbolizes the Jewish people.

Bottom, right, An armillary sphere, Abraham Usque's trademark, which appears on the title page of a travel journal by Benjamin of Tudela

However the differences between the two versions of the Ferrara Bible do not stop there. For example, they were printed in two different sizes and on different types of paper.

In the 1950s, Professor Stanley Rypins, a scholar of English literature, conducted a thorough examination of the existing copies of the Ferrara Bible. He found 49 different copies around the world and demonstrated that there were many differences among them, though most of these differences were small and insignificant.

Contrary to the assumptions of past scholars that the Ferrara Bible had both a Jewish and a Christian version, Rypins argued that there was in fact no version specifically tailored for Christian readers. On the contrary, over the years some have even claimed that this bible is anti-Christian and that the translations of certain verses that have been interpreted as a historical basis for Christianity maintain the original literal text in an effort to undermine official Christian doctrine.

Nevertheless, in some copies there is one significant change favoring Christian dogma. One of the verses used in Christianity for missionary purposes appears in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14. In the original, it reads as follows:

“Behold, the young woman is with child, and she shall bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel.”

In Christian literature, the verse was translated according to Christian theology, which asserts that Jesus’ mother is the Virgin Mary:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

In some copies of the Ferrara Bible, the Hebrew word *almah* is translated into Spanish as *moca* (young woman). In others, it is translated as *virgen* (virgin), and in most cases, the printers simply wrote *alma* in Roman letters, thus avoiding controversy. In about half of the copies found, the word *alma* appeared, and Rypins demonstrated that this was how the bible was originally printed. He claimed that the word was later changed to *virgen*, likely for political-religious reasons, and after several printings, to *moca*. Each change required the printer to adjust the font to maintain a uniform length of the row of text. To achieve this, abbreviated words were sometimes expanded to their full forms, and sometimes small spaces were added between words.

Throughout the period of publication, errors in page order and typos were corrected in the various printed copies that were

“... due to the prohibition against writing or pronouncing the name of God unnecessarily, most copies used the capital letter ‘A’ as a substitute for the name.”



released. Nevertheless, typographical errors can still be found here and there in some of the copies. Rypins viewed all these issues as proof that the different editions of the Ferrara Bible were indicative of an ongoing process of corrections; it was not that there were two versions, each intended for a different audience, rather – all copies of the Ferrara Bible were intended for Spanish and Portuguese *conversos* in the mid-16th century. In the copies Rypins found, it was also evident

that due to the prohibition against writing or pronouncing the name of God unnecessarily, most copies used the capital letter “A” as a substitute for the name. Some copies also included a list of the weekly *Haftarah* portions read in the synagogue.

The illustrated title page of the Ferrara Bible includes a drawing of a ship being tossed about by stormy waters at sea. One of its masts is broken, and it is surrounded by waves, gusts of wind, and sea monsters. The illustration alludes to the situation of the Jewish people in general and the *conversos* of Spain and Portugal in particular. The printers were hinting at the eternal nature of Judaism, which is forced to fight against its spiritual enemies but manages to survive and persevere despite it all.

The ship is also depicted with an armillary sphere, an instrument that serves as a model of objects in the sky and which was used in maritime navigation. The armillary sphere was the symbol of Abraham Usque’s printing house and appears in other books he printed as well.

Usque published over 25 books before his printing house closed in 1558. One of his books, *Shiltei Giborim (The Signs of Heroes)* by Rabbi Yaacov Ben Yoav Elia of Pano, included a lamentation for 24 *conversos* who were executed in Ancona in 1556. News of this lamentation reached the ears of Bishop Antonio Ghislieri (later Pope Pius V), who then demanded that the book be burned and Usque be punished.

In 1996, literary and theater scholar Moshe Lazar published an accurate facsimile edition (that is, a new print completely identical to the original) of the Ferrara Bible, with a print run of 1,000 copies. Earlier, in 1992, to mark the 500th commemoration of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Lazar released a critical edition (one that traces all known editions) of the Ferrara Bible. In the introduction, Lazar wrote that to prepare this edition, he located some 60 copies of the bible. These copies and others, which might still be circulating and unaccounted for in remote parts of the world, helped the *conversos* of Spain and Portugal return to Judaism in the 16th century. 🕯



A Family Story

.....
**DEBORAH PENDLETON
(NÉE DEB RIOS VILLAREAL)**

I always knew we were different, “separate” as my dad used to say in reference to the wider Hispanic society, “We are not them.”

I knew Dad did not go to church with us, but given his outlook, I never asked why. Indeed, my father had a quiet reserve you did not probe. I was raised with the classic “children should be seen and not heard.” As a sense of further separation, my generation did not learn Spanish. I did not understand then why it was not integral to a cultural identity that was already set apart. I always felt the subtle disapproval and lack of acceptance by my father’s family that I could not comprehend. At age 16, my father presented me with some 18th-century documents.

“You might be interested in these,” he said. “They belonged to Grandpa.” My grandfather had died suddenly of a heart attack a few years earlier. My dad added, “I regret not listening to Grandpa more. None of us (his four siblings) did.” Such began a 45-year family journey into our past and present.

At 18 I dated the boy next door and came to realize I was expected by my father to marry him. I had never seen my father that adamant about anything. It was completely out of character. After months of conflict and tears, I was worn down and submitted to the marriage. Little did I know then I was marrying into another separate-but-similar community with the same roots. Like everything else, it seemed I was only privy to partial truths. From a young age I was introduced to spiritual life. But from the start, I questioned everything about my Catholic upbringing of which my dad did not so subtly approve. My parents’ marriage was in endless conflict but why was a mystery because they fought behind closed doors in Spanish. My stepmother would speculate years later that they were fighting over religion.

I proceeded to work on a genealogy, starting with Grandpa’s old documents. I began noticing many names starting to repeat everywhere. I thought “Oh, a cousin married another cousin along the way.” I grew up seeing the prevalence of divorce in the family, yet family cohesion was maintained through monthly gatherings that usually began with the slaughter of a goat. The boys would learn the process, but not the girls, though I would watch through the fence. The blood was drained into a large pot where the head was included for the special *Cabeza de Cabrito* that was as traditional as my grandmother’s menudo made with pigs’ feet thrown in. I would later realize the family was largely secular, keeping to their worship of God the Father but largely dispensing with everything else. I came to understand the separateness as a social cohesion and network of trust that included the local Ashkenazi Jews as



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Deborah Pendleton is a clinical social worker and psychotherapist, married to James with three adult children. She was born in Corpus Christi, Texas and spent her early childhood in the Texas valley, living in Texas most of her life with time spent in New Orleans, Indianapolis and Dubai, UAE as well. She was raised Christian and remains so.

well, though I did not know labels at the time. It was a male-dominated world of business for men and domestic life for women. Indeed, my father shared more with my brother, such as the story of the Exodus.

My first marriage had fallen apart (typical for unions in my family) and I explored Reform Judaism before finding a home in Orthodox Christianity, drawn by the similarity in ritual and tradition: the eighth day naming, procession of the scripture, 40-day purification, etc. My ex found peace marrying the Jewish woman he could relate to. I do not think my father ever got over his disappointment.

I proceeded with our genealogy with the assistance of a Sephardic curator who approached me when he recognized part of my background and linked my tree to his. That opened such a world! A world I never knew as his genealogy dated back through antiquity and Jewish history. I eagerly worked on my own New World genealogy through all the unknown branches aided by DNA matching of cousins as far away as Israel and the Ashkenazi community of Monterrey.

In addition, I had an increased awareness that my progressive genetic disorder had its origins in the long-term endogamy from a community I had lost ties with. It was sad to realize the different motivations my ancestors had for maintaining endogamy long after other branches had given it up and absorbed into mainstream Mexican Catholic society. I was torn between anger at them and anger at the mainstream they felt the need to separate from. I wondered how necessary it had been. Yet it seemed reinforced by such practices as the *Quema de Judios*, an annual festival in Chiapas. Little did they know, eyes were still watching and with trepidation. But it helped to seek out others from my background who have the same genetic disorder. I feel a sense of connection now, a sense of not being so unique – not being “separate” any longer. 🌐



San Luis : A Journey Back in Time

.....

DIANE MOCK

It was Fall 2023. I thought I was going to the San Luis Valley merely as a supportive partner to my husband Fred, by joining him in a historic Cumbres and Toltec railroad trip from Antonito, Colorado to Chama, New Mexico. Just a mini-vacation. But It turned out to be so much more. It was a time of observation, wonder and renewed connections to my family and crypto-Jewish roots. It was a time that re-energized and filled my spirit. There could not have been a better place to observe *tashlich*.



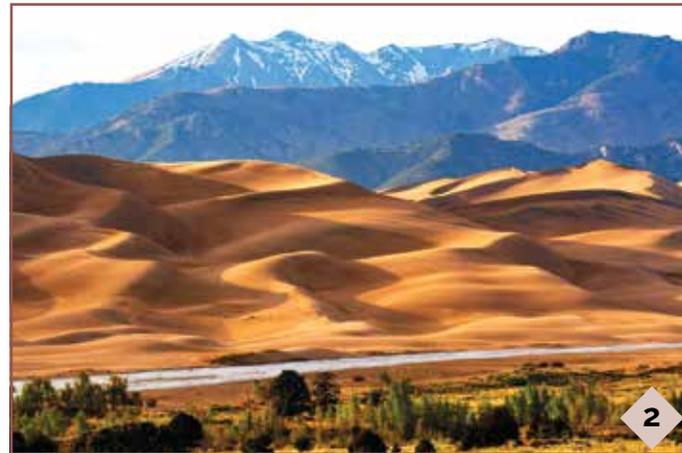
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We approached the train depot through Alamosa. Situated at the edge of town is the Rio Grande River. As we drove through town to board the Cumbres and Toltec steam-powered train in Antonito, I saw the ancient river. Because it was Rosh Hashana, I was feeling somewhat guilty — longing and lamenting for Jewish community to observe the holiday and especially, to observe *tashlich*, a traditional Jewish purification ritual performed by casting pebbles into a body of water, symbolic of ridding one's self of sins.

At that moment, I thought of Rabbi Stephen Leon in El Paso and his followers from the Anusim Center in nearby Sunland, New Mexico, who I knew would be sending their sins to infinity down the Rio Grande in Texas. I recognized that I could do the same. Even though I was 900 miles upstream, I could still be spiritually connected to other *anusim*. Along with Rabbi Leon, Blanca (and her Carrasco family, also living in El Paso), and the Rabbi's congregation, my husband and I reflected on our shortcomings and released them into the rushing waters. As we did, I imagined all our sins moving with the current downstream, meeting up and being swallowed by an infinite ocean.



2



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Later, on a bridge over the Rio Grande River in Alamosa, I also contemplated other Jews who might have gone to this river before me. Because I recently received my Certificate of Sephardic Ancestry, I knew I could finally be counted among them. I had a soul-stirring feeling that I was not the only one who gathered at this body of water throughout time to practice this tradition.



Back to our travels.

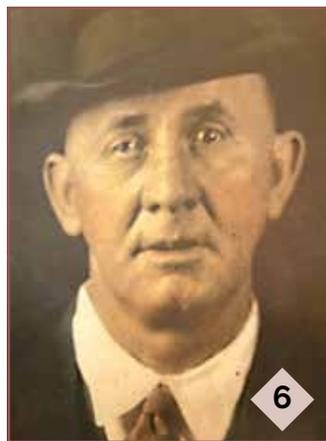
While we were boarding the train in Antonito, I asked the guide if we were riding in the Rio Grande Railroad cars. “Yes,” he



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confirmed. These rail cars and the town brought back railroad and travel stories about my maternal *abuelo*, Grampa Wilbur, and my sister Arlene.

Family history says that Grampa Wilbur had worked as a blacksmith for the Rio Grande Railroad. Documented history says that this stretch of track had been around for over 100 years. Surely, I imagined, Grampa must have traveled this route for work years ago. The guide also pointed out that the Cumbres and Toltec line meanders back and forth 11 times between Colorado and New Mexico. This is not a trip for the faint of heart.

According to Rio Grande literature, the track is only 3.5 feet wide. The route is a mixture of both high plains and steep mountain passages. In some spots it lies a mere three feet from the edge of a high drop-off. These drops gave me vertigo and I could no longer view the surroundings from an open car so I found a seat inside. Today the train caters to tourists from May through October, but years ago, when Grampa worked for the Rio Grande, it was a year-round operation, snow, rain or shine. What courage he and other travelers had!

I wish I could have met Grampa Wilbur. He was a Seventh Day Adventist with Sephardic DNA. I do not believe the family consciously honored Shabbat but Mom said the family cleaned up Fridays and ate their best meal that evening. I do not think they knew they were honoring a Jewish tradition.

My cousin Charlotte characterized Grampa as a gentle soul who liked to sit on the back porch and sing. It is said that many times he took over the daycare of his two young daughters (my aunts), June and Teresa. At that time Gramma Dulcinea was grieving the death of two daughters who died from gunshot wounds and was working to get a grip on life. >>>



7



8

- 1.) The San Luis Valley; Great Sand Dunes in background.
- 2.) Great Sand Dunes National Park.
- 3.) The Milky Way. The Park and surrounding area has International Dark Sky Designation, created to block light in order to see the deep sky.
- 4.) Historic Cumbres & Toltec railroad.
- 5.) 4-year-old Diane Mock.
- 6.) Diane's maternal *abuelo*, Grampa Wilbur.
- 7.) Diane and husband Fred, at the program commemorating Hispanic Heritage Month at Great Sand Dunes overlook.
- 8.) The traditional wedding march "human canopy."



Unexpectedly, Antonito itself brought back memories. I recalled it as the birthplace of my sister Arlene’s unprincipled father, Juan Luis. After Mom and Juan Luis divorced, my sister was raised by *abuela*, Gramma Dulce, in Alamosa, until she was about eight years old. As a child, my sister Arlene said she and Gramma Dulce would board the Rio Grande railway to Denver to visit Mom who was then a single, working mother, earning and sending money back home to support Arlene. They would spend time with Mom and visit with other relatives until it was time to return to “The Valley.” “The rail route was shut down sometime in the 1950s,” Arlene explained.



Zapata Falls

This journey flooded my heart with memories. I thought about my joy of dancing for example, something I imagine I got from my mom. She once told me how she loved to dance and would go out on weekends with her teenage cousins Cleo and Elva in the Valley vicinity. So when the folk dancers invited us to join in the wedding march to honor the recent nuptials of a local park ranger, I was instantly transported back in time and ready to move! I flashed back to Cousin Gail’s Valley-culture inspired wedding where Mom, my brother Joe and I, did polka steps, spins, and twirls

on the dance floor to mariachi music. Eventually, the tempo slowed, switching to the wedding march. We walked in a circle around the hall until it was our turn to walk through the traditional “human canopy.” When we reached the end, we locked hands for others to walk through.



For those who have never experienced Southern Colorado, not far from the San Luis Valley lies the remarkable Great Sand Dunes National Park. The National Parks Service there devoted an entire program one evening that September to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month. They featured regional folk dancers, a local well-loved Valley guitarist/singer who serenaded us in Spanish, and of course, an astronomy lesson. No self-respecting park ranger would leave out a science lesson. Ranger Patrick Myers explained the International Dark Sky Designation and showed photos taken by the James Webb telescope showing the expansiveness of literally, the universe.

“In 2019,” he said, “the Park and surrounding area became part of a natural preservation program known as the International Dark Sky Designation, created to block light in order to see the deep sky. This meant that lights emanating from the Sangre De Cristo Mountain range and surrounding towns are continuously monitored for light production and are restricted in output. I noticed it was extremely dark at the park, but did not consider why, assuming it was due to the unpopulated area. Thanks to the ranger, I understood that night how the Milky Way got its name. Looking up, the cluster of stars really seemed to be floating in milk! That night, and everything about this trip, reminded me that we are a fragment of the universe, made most apparent when Ranger Myer showed us photos from the James Webb telescope that proved there is more than one galaxy. Again, the concept of infinity was laid before me.



On our way home to Denver, we stopped to hike at Zapata Falls. While there, I realized I had always seen the San Luis Valley through the eyes of a child. For years I thought of it only as the place where Gramma and other relatives lived. As an adult, looking down from the vantage point of the Falls, I turned to look behind me. At that moment, I saw the vast, wide valley below, finally grasping an understanding of why this place is known as *El Valle*, and is a sacred home to many. Again, I was left to contemplate infinity and how this special place has shaped my family and me. We are part of its history. 🌍



Rio Grande River in Alamosa, Colorado



Science or Miracle?

A wide variety of newsfeeds in September 2024 reported on the astonishing news regarding the tomb of Saint Teresa de Ávila. – **Editor**

Saint Teresa de Ávila was born to *converso* (Jewish) parents in Ávila Spain on March 15, 1515. She entered the convent of the Carmelite nuns at the age of 20 and over time became a prolific writer and respected theologian, focused on the idea of inner prayer. Dissatisfied with her Order, she founded the Discalced Order of Carmelite nuns and was widely revered as a mystic. She suffered physically from many ailments and succumbed on October 4, 1582 at age 67. She became the patroness of Spain and was canonized in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, almost a century following her death. She was also named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI.

On Aug. 28, 2024, the Diocese of Ávila in Spain reported that the body of the saint remains incorrupt, almost five centuries later.

“Today the tomb of St. Teresa was opened and we have verified that it is in the same condition as when it was last opened in 1914,” said the postulator general of the Discalced Carmelite Order, Father Marco Chiesa of the Carmelite Monastery of Alba de Tormes, where the remains of the revered Spanish saint rest. The event took place as part of the canonical recognition of the remains of St. Teresa of Ávila, requested from the Vatican on July 1 by the Bishop of Salamanca, Luis Retana, with authorization granted by Pope Francis through the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. 🌐



Saint Teresa de Ávila



Carmelite Monastery of Alba de Tormes

CREDIT: CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY, AUGUST 4, 2024



THE 34TH ANNUAL SCJS CONFERENCE REVIEW

CRYPTO-JUDAISM: Inheritance, Choice and Identity

•••••

ISAAC AMON

The following is a transcript of the closing summary.



Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. We have arrived at the end of this gathering of minds — academics, authors, genealogists, and descendants of Sephardim and crypto-Jews. It is very hard to believe that this conference, which has spanned the entire day, is over.

Since time immemorial, the historical phenomenon of crypto-Judaism, or practicing key rituals and traditions of Judaism in secret, has spanned cultures, oceans and continents. Perhaps the most famous crypto-Jew in history was Queen Esther. Forced to conceal her identity, generations of hidden Jews took solace from her example, confident they too would be redeemed from persecution and returned to the Children of Israel.

In medieval and early modern Iberia and her overseas colonies — the most famous time and place associated with crypto-Judaism — the daily discourse, physical landscape, and mental universe were permeated with Catholic imagery. Lacking sustained connection with normative Jewish communities, a hidden religious world was created, with its own calendar, customs, and beliefs shaped by the Catholic atmosphere. This perpetuation was against all odds for it seemed inevitable that all adherence to normative Judaism in Iberia would fade once the generations who had known the faith firsthand died out, especially after the 1492 Expulsion of Spanish Jewry and 1497 forced conversion of Portuguese Jewry. This exceptional tenacity existed, as Professor David Gitlitz showed in his magnum opus *Secrecy and Deceit*, because collective memory and oral transmission helped to preserve key beliefs, which were: 1) Unity of the Deity; 2) Belief in the Law of Moses; 3) Observance of commandments was necessary; 4) Judaism was the preferred faith; and 5) the Messiah has yet to come, all core precepts of traditional Judaism.

Over centuries, “Sephardic Jewishness,” encompassing open Jews, *conversos*, and hidden Jews created a global networking system, built upon family, social and commercial ties, which connected the Caribbean and Americas with the ancestral Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean World, Ottoman Empire, and even Spanish

and Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. These intersecting connections around the world crossed religious, political and cultural divides. To ferret out this judaizing heresy, the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions established tribunals in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and India to police and oversee their global colonies, ranging from the Philippines to Mexico, the Atlantic world to Africa, and Brazil to the future United States. This is thus a subject that is of continuing interest to Spain and Portugal, other lands where crypto-Jews sought refuge from the long arm of the Inquisition, and in diasporic Sephardic communities scattered to the four corners of the earth.

In this vein, this year’s online conference treated us to a series of captivating presentations, full of a diverse array of global speakers whose particular emphases illuminate the lasting impact of crypto-Judaism:

In our first panel session, **Reflections on a New Mexico Crypto-Jewish Songbook**, thanks to **Seth D. Kunin, Vanessa Paloma Elbaz, and Matthew D. Warshawsky**, we learned about Loggie Carrasco’s dynamic voice and her deep exploration of memory and identity in her notebook; the vital role of *cancioneros*, or orality and songbooks, in preserving Sephardi identity amidst the process of establishing new post-1492 lives via the voice of Jacob, Hakol Kol Yaakov; and the late 16th-century story of Justa Mendez in colonial Mexico, “a woman so perfect keeping the law,” who remarkably defied the Inquisitional Tribunal for half a century. All talks testified to the central role of *conversa* women in preserving crypto-Judaism across the generations.

Crypto-Judaism, as the very name itself indicates, was inherently predicated upon extreme secrecy across the ages. A single mistake could prove fatal for a person, family and entire community, and yet amidst a milieu of persecution, fidelity to their ancestral faith and traditions persisted among the crypto-Jews, as best as could be achieved in isolating environments.

continues on page 34



2025 • LOS ANGELES

SCJS In-Person Conference August 10-12, 2025

The 2025 SCJS Conference will be held from Sunday, August 10 through Tuesday, August 12, 2025, in Los Angeles, California. This event promises a rich and diverse experience with a blend of academic presentations, cultural events, and networking opportunities, designed for both scholars and enthusiasts of crypto-Judaic history and traditions.

The conference will take place at the historic Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel in Beverly Hills, and our out-of-town attendees will be accommodated at the nearby Kimpton Palomar Boutique Hotel where we will hold our dinners. (Breakfasts, on your own for hotel guests, will also be available.) Watch upcoming issues of our online newsletter, *La Granada*, for registration and program information. Hotel reservations will open in early 2025.

Special Features: One key highlight of the event will be a special film presentation by Genie Milgrom, past SCJS president, renowned genealogist, author and researcher. *Between the Stone and the Flower* (her own life story) offers an immersive cultural experience that sheds light on the history and identity of



CONFERENCE CHAIR
ELISHEVA IRMA DIAZ, PhD
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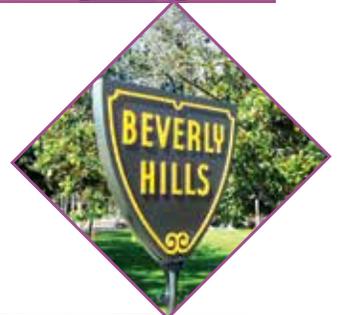
crypto-Jews. In addition, attendees will enjoy the traditional Monday night Judy Frankel Memorial Concert featuring an outstanding Los Angeles Sephardic musical group.

This conference will provide a meaningful educational platform with in-depth discussions, keynote presentations, and occasions for networking, all aimed at deepening the understanding of the research and contributions in crypto-Judaic studies. Participants will gather to explore the historic and cultural legacy of the crypto-Jewish community. Interested in contributing or helping us spread the word? Please contact our 2025 conference chair, Dr. Elisheva Irma Diaz, at scjs.la2025@gmail.com.

Sephardic
Temple Tifereth
Israel



Kimpton Palomar Boutique Hotel



Kimpton Palomar Lobby

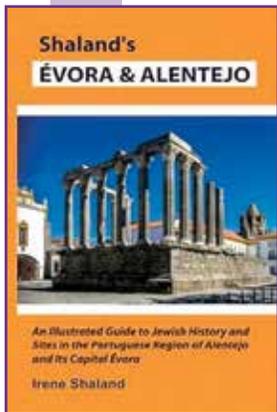


SEPHARDIM IN THE ARTS

BOOKS

Shaland's Évora and Alentejo

By Irene Shaland
Amazon, 2024



Once again, world traveler and historian Irene Shaland takes a deep dive into a specific part of the world to help illuminate hidden Jewish history, especially the ancient Jewish quarters of Iberia. In this little-known area of Portugal, she walks the cobblestone streets, eats the local food and talks to the experts who know the history, in this case, of one of the oldest cities in Europe. The content includes

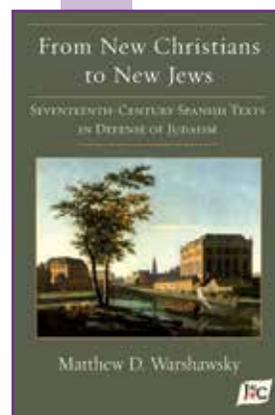
details about neighboring villages and cities like Elvas (a world heritage site), the medieval villages of Monsaraz, Portalegre, and also of Seubal, the third largest city in Portugal. Of great note is the passage called Portagem where it is recorded that over 5000 Jews escaping the Spanish Inquisition crossed into Portugal over a stone bridge.

Thanks to Irene's husband Alex, no site is left unphotographed; his compelling images reveal the ancient and modern world. Irene's conversational "voice" makes the reader feel as though she is right there alongside you as you visit museums, libraries and fortresses. In addition, you will find pages full of contributions and biographies of leading Sephardic scientists, leaders and writers.

Travel routes and maps are included, of course. Whether you go to Portugal yourself, or travel from your armchair, this little book is inspired reading. — **CORINNE BROWN**

From New Christians to New Jews: 17th-Century Spanish Texts in Defense of Judaism

By Matthew D. Warshawsky
Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs,
Newark Delaware, 2024



The *Siglo de Oro* — the golden age of Spanish literature — is conventionally defined as starting from the Expulsion of Muslims and Jews in 1492 and continuing to the second half of the 17th century. During this period, New Christians — descendants of Jews who had outwardly adopted Catholicism — participated fully in the brilliant efflorescence of culture and literature in the Golden-Age

Spanish Empire, yet also remained "other."

In this volume, Warshawsky studies the works of six 17th-century New Christian authors who wrote in Spanish, all of whom left Spain; only one returned to take up permanent residence. Warshawsky demonstrates that they had fully acculturated to the literary and aesthetic standards of Spanish culture, even when — safely in Amsterdam, France, Jamaica, or elsewhere — they went from secret Judaism to open Jewish practice, writing on Jewish themes, critiquing the Inquisition, opposing Christian beliefs, and defending Judaism. They did so in ways easily understood by their contemporaries, yet impossible in the Iberian Peninsula, where the Inquisition held sway and suppressed Judaizing.

Isaac Orobio de Castro wrote about Jewish identity and argued that his friend and colleague Juan de Prado should accede to the standards of Jewish belief and practice of the Amsterdam of his day; like Spinoza, Prado had been excommunicated for heterodox belief and practice. João Pinto Delgado's poetry reflected on the stigma of being a New Christian and brought this sensibility to his interpretation of biblical texts. Warshawsky suggests that the poet and playwright Antonio Enríquez Gómez's said "do not boast about lineage" and opposed the *malsín* "informer" (Hebrew-sourced Spanish word) to convey a *converso* or New Christian



mentality. Enríquez Gomez's poem about Don Lope de Vera – an Old Christian who comes to hold fast to the Law of Moses – “criticizes what [Enríquez Gómez] regarded as the hypocrisy of the Inquisitorial tribunal.” Enríquez returned to Spain and like Lope, fell afoul of the Inquisition.

The chapter on Isaac Cardoso treats his magnum opus, *The Excellence of the Hebrews*, a defense of both Judaism and Jews.

Miguel (Daniel Levi) de Barrios, author of the allegorical play *Nothing* can stand up to the Truth, uses the language of baroque Spain to “adapt a literary genre of Spanish Catholicism to privilege Judaism.” Warshawsky details de Barrios' geographical and spiritual journeys, and especially his coverage of the 1655 Córdoba *auto da fe*.

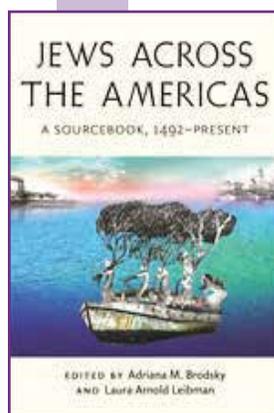
The final chapter focuses on the writings of Daniel Israel López Laguna who came to live openly as a Jew in Jamaica, the only person studied in this volume who came to live in the Western Hemisphere. His writings also used the best Golden-Age Spanish style to rail against Inquisitorial oppression, and used biblical passages especially from the Psalms, to vindicate his Jewish identity.

Brief yet crucial conclusions to each chapter bring home the continuing relevance of these 17th-century authors. In *Confronting Antisemitism in Cardoso's Time and Today*, Warshawsky points to the “trends toward assimilation amongst some Jews today, and the persistence of the very loathing that Cardoso confronted” as indicators of the work's continued relevance. One may wonder whether Warshawsky might have written even stronger words in the light of radical outbreaks of antisemitism after October 7, 2023. Warshawsky suggests that the intolerance of Inquisitorial Spain toward heterodox beliefs and practices was mirrored in the Amsterdam Jewish community's difficulty reconciling with the deism of Prado (or Spinoza), and that López Laguna's work in Jamaica challenges “American Jewish historical narratives” – which need to offer more emphasis on the New Christian background of Judaism in the Americas 300 years ago.

Readers encounter an image of the breadth, depth and diversity of the Jewish experience in the 17th century: *autos da fe*, Sabbatian mysticism, polemics, poetic restructuring of biblical texts, resistance to erasure of identity, and more. Warshawsky consistently gives readers the Spanish original of his quotes, important to those familiar with the period and its language. Most important, Warshawsky argues compellingly that these 17th-century works illustrate a strikingly modern resonance, fully acculturated to Spanish culture down to the poetic strophes, philosophical trends, metaphors and similes well-known to their contemporaries – yet struggling with Jewish identity in ways that speak strongly to us in the 21st century. — **SETH WARD**

Jews Across the Americas, A Sourcebook, 1492-Present

By Adriana M. Brodsky
and Laura Arnold Liebman, ed.
New York University Press, 2023.



In the previous review, I noted that Matthew D. Warshawsky suggests that the writings of Daniel Israel López Laguna challenge American Jewish historical narratives to recognize proud, Spanish, former crypto-Jewish voices. The volume under review recognizes this and is up to the challenge.

This sourcebook includes over 100 primary sources, each with a brief introduction written by a prominent scholar, the reference for the source, questions for discussion, and occasional notes.

Readers are introduced to this different approach on the first page of the Introduction, which starts with a reference to Olaudah Equiano's 1789 autobiography. (A selection from this work is document 32.) Readers of this volume encountering Equiano in the introduction would do well to read the passage and its careful and balanced treatment by Edith Bruder. Equiano, a freed slave, is usually credited with drawing comparisons between Judaism and the rituals and world-view of the Igbo people of Nigeria he witnessed as a child.

The book emphasizes its goal of including narratives of Jewish life in the Americas that are not simply those of European immigrants and raising awareness of such topics as Jewish involvement in the slave trade or in owning enslaved persons; it is careful to neither overstate nor whitewash this involvement. We meet Jewish slave traders and masters in a variety of locations in the Americas.

Readers of *HaLapid* will note that the very first document is the Spanish Edict of Expulsion. There are primary sources related to Luis de Carvajal El Mozo (the younger), who was at the center of a group of family, friends and associates convicted by the Inquisition in Mexico and executed in 1596. There are selections about the Inquisition and about Judaizers confronted by the Inquisition



SEPHARDIM IN THE ARTS

FILM

in Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Brazil and elsewhere, including a New Mexican narrative from 1662, and a selection from Antonio de Montezinos, made somewhat famous by Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel who published the account in his treatise, *Mikveh Yisrael (The Hope of Israel)*. The most recent crypto-Jewish selection is an example of the poetry of Isabelle Medina Sandoval, introduced by Rachel Kaufman.

Readers will find sources about Judaism in the Caribbean and especially in Surinam. While the importance of Jews and Judaism – and presence of synagogues – in places such as Curaçao is well known, this volume provides needed historical background

“[In this book] We meet Jewish slave traders and masters in a variety of locations in the Americas.”

though primary sources. Indeed, the volume’s sources from Cuba, Mexico Brazil, Peru, Brazil, Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America serve to counteract the typical foundational narrative American Jews have about Jews and Judaism in the Americas, which has recognized the role of Sephardim in 16th through early 18th centuries, and given a nod to Jewish life south of the US border, but largely focuses on the Ashkenazi Jewish world; this volume’s frequent reference to Latin America ignores this.

This volume is also interested in providing selections relating to Jews in the Americas and such issues as indigenous peoples in the Americas, LGBTQ, “Jews of color,”

prostitution and other sins often taboo to discuss, art and culture, and antisemitism.

Overall this volume goes a long way towards providing glimpses of primary sources that counteract the perceived absence of the Sephardic, crypto-Jewish and Latin American Jewish narratives in discussing the American Jewish community, albeit more so in the early

centuries of Jewish life in the Americas than in more recent times, in which the focus is more often on other communities within the Jewish world often ignored by the mainstream. And its value is greatly enhanced by the excellent introductions to each of the five sections of the book.

— SETH WARD

Human Rights and Tolerance Studies

YouTube

JLC Jewish Learning Channel JLC

www.youtube.com/jewishlearningchannel

In Conjunction with the
American Sephardi Federation



See the film on the
Jewish Learning Channel

Vanessa Paloma Elbaz

a Leading Scholar
on Sephardi Life & Music

*“Transmission of the Essence of Being
Sephardi through Music and Sound”*

- Senior Research Associate
Cambridge Univ Peterhouse
- European Commission
Research Fellow
- Scholar in Residence HBI
Brandeis University
- Fulbright Senior Scholar
- ASF Broome-Allen Fellow

With more than 15 years of in-depth research and performance with Sephardim singers & community members in Morocco, Dr. Elbaz explains how melody and voice function as a technology of transmission in Jewish culture.

Interviewed by Steve Ovitsky

Watch this film at
www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkLITgIKlnM

Finding New Hidden Communities

.....

BLANCA CARRASCO



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Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to share my journey into Judaism as a descendant of crypto-Jews at the Texas Jewish Historical Society Regional Conference in Houston, Texas. As one of three panelists, I sat next to Professor Cengiz Sisman, PhD, and Nancy Katz, doctoral student, both from the University of Houston Clear Lake. The panel consisted of questions directed to us about our experience with crypto-Judaism. Nancy’s dissertation related more closely to my own experience with Sephardic crypto-Jews in New Spain and in El Nuevo Reino de Leon, a region that I am able to trace to being the place where my ancestor Marcos Alonso Garza y del Arcon settled with his family during the era of the Spanish Inquisition.

By contrast, Dr. Sisman focused his responses on the 17th century historical figure of the Jewish Rabbi Sabbatai Sevi and the evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish *Dönmes* (Jews) found primarily in Istanbul, Edirne and Izmir, Turkey. (*Dönme* means convert in Turkish.)

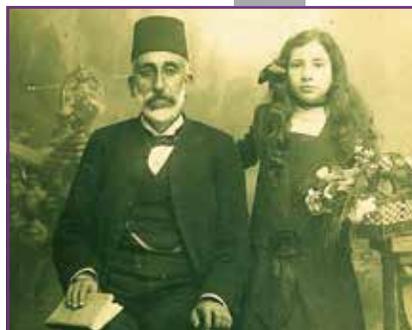
Through Dr. Sisman we learned that in 1666, Ottoman authorities imprisoned and judged Rabbi Sevi for sedition. He was given the choice to either face death or convert to Islam. Choosing to convert, many of his followers formed messianic crypto-Judeo-Islamic sects and secretly continued practicing Judaic rites. Although they remained apart from the larger Jewish community, the *Dönme*, preserved some knowledge of Hebrew, kept secret Hebrew names, forbade intermarriage with the Muslim population, and conducted their marriage and funeral rites in secret. Sevi’s followers used flexible and multiple identities that allowed them to survive despite persecution from the Ottoman authorities, internalizing the Kabbalistic principle of a "burden of silence," according to which believers keep their secret on pain of spiritual and material punishment in order to sustain their overtly Muslim and covertly Jewish identities (*The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes*, by Cengiz Sisman, 2015).

Listening to Dr. Sisman recount over 10 years of research to write a book about Sabbatai Sevi and the Ottoman-Turkish *Dönmes* and the many correlations that exist between them and our ancestors reminded me of the mission of SCJS to foster research, networking of people and ideas, and the exchange of information involving crypto-Jews of Iberian origins and other hidden Jewish communities around the world.

Learning about Sabbatai Sevi’s followers and their descendants carrying the “burden of silence” to survive persecution may serve as a bridge to connect with the more than 20,000 *Dönme* who have spread around the globe, many of whom are returning to their Jewish roots. As per Susan Nana Tarabulus’ book entitled *Daddy, Why Do They Call Us Dönme*? one of her interviewees described the phenomenon of survival this way. “In the Ottoman Empire, the penalty for converting to another religion while being Muslim was execution... like the Marranos in Spain, some of them practiced their religion secretly throughout history.”

In his prologue to the Tarabulus book, Dr. Cengiz Sisman states that the liberating effect of social media contributed to the desire of the book’s interviewees to learn more and bring like-minded people together to create a spirit of solidarity in a new learning environment. Platforms that transcend nations, borders and time give people the feeling that they are not alone.

We at the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies want to reach out to those other hidden Jewish communities to tell them that we hear them, we want to learn about them, that we are in this together, and that despite the passage of time, our interrelated identities as crypto-Jews are flourishing in all corners of this earth. 🌍



19th-century *Dönme* Turkish Jews

Fabada Asturiana

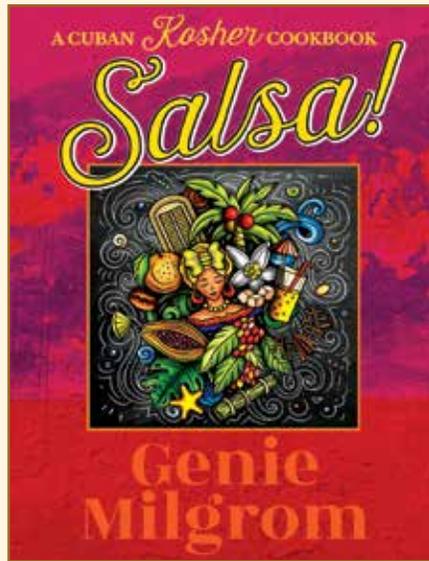
Asturian Spanish Bean Stew

.....
GENIE MILGROM • FROM HER NEW BOOK, *SALSA! - A CUBAN KOSHER COOKBOOK*

This original recipe from Spain has become a staple in Cuban cooking. It has been modified to be kosher but still maintains much of its integrity.

- 1-½ pounds of large white navy beans
- 1 smoked turkey leg or breast, boned and shredded
- 1 pound skirt steak cut into slices
- 2 mild kielbasa sausages sliced in rounds
- 2-3 carrots sliced in ½ inch pieces
- 1 cups Swiss chard, cut up but not shredded
- Water for boiling

Soak the beans overnight and remove the water. Starting with cold water in a large soup pot, bring the beans to a boil. Once the water boils, change the water and boil again until tender (2-4 hours). Add remaining ingredients except for the carrots to the pot and boil for 20-25 minutes until all the ingredients are tender. After the meats are cooked, add the carrots at the end to thicken the soup.



Fabada Asturiana, often simply known as *fabada*, is a rich Asturian bean stew, originally from and most commonly found in the autonomous community of the Principality of Asturias, but widely available throughout the whole of Spain and in Spanish-heritage countries worldwide. Canned *fabada* is sold in most supermarkets across the country.

Fabada is a hot and hearty dish, and for that reason, it is most commonly eaten during the winter and as the largest meal of the day, lunch. It is usually served as a starter but may also be the main course of the meal. It is typically served with crusty bread, Asturian cider or a red wine.



SALSA! – AVAILABLE MID-NOVEMBER AT AMAZON





Esther and the Prince

A Jewish Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups

.....

**TOLD BY ANDRÉE AELION BROOKS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOWARD MUNCE**

As reconstructed from 14th-century documents found in the Girona municipal archives
by Silvia Planes i Marc, Director of the Nahmanides Institute



nce upon a time,
long, long ago,
in the faraway
kingdom of Aragon, there lived
a beautiful Jewish girl named
Esther Caravita. When she was
16-years old, her father gave her
in marriage to David Bonjorn de
Barri, an astronomer who was
one of the most prestigious men
in that royal realm. A real prince
of a man.

The trouble was that her husband was
not the handsome young prince she
had been dreaming about. Rather,
he was a frog-like old man, already
45-years of age, who was mean-
tempered and only cared about his
precious scientific instruments, rare
books and research.

Esther grew very sad. “You only love
your work,” she told him. “You never talk to me. All you do is
yell and complain. I beg you to give me a Get and let me go back
to my family.”

“No!,” he thundered, knowing full well that only a husband can
apply to the Jewish courts for a divorce. “You belong to me. You
will stay right here and do as I say.”



A tear rolled down Esther’s cheek. Her heart
was broken. Then one day an idea came
upon her like manna in the wilderness.
While her husband was out of the house
she took all his scientific instruments and
precious books and hid them away.

When he came back and saw they were
gone, he exploded in rage. As soon as
everyone in the house had been questioned,
Esther admitted it was all her doing.
“I was just having a bit of fun,” she said
with a teasing shrug.



This made him even more enraged.
He knew he could not trust her
any longer.

“Get out of my sight,” he yelled.

“Go from this house. I don’t want you
as my wife anymore. You can have
your Get. The sooner the better.”



She crept silently away – smiling.

Soon she was riding back to the home of her beloved father
and mother and sisters, dreaming of a real prince and a second
chance to live happily ever after. ☺



SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES

KANTER LECTURE SERIES

LAWRENCE & KATHY KANTER
PHILANTHROPIC FUND OF THE
JCF OF NE FLORIDA

JUNE 30, 2024 Isaac Amon

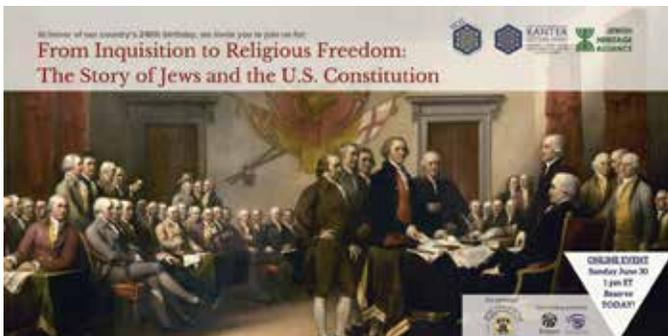


ISAAC AMON, PHD
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Honoring the birthday of the United States, this event was a co-sponsored partnership with Jewish Heritage Alliance,

With the 4th of July in mind, **“From Inquisition to Religious Freedom: The Story of Jews and the US Constitution”** took attendees on a brilliant dive into American history and the background of the founding fathers, almost all of whom were

very familiar with the terrors and punishments of 17th- and 18th-century Europe, England included. The concept of the separation of Church and State was foremost on their minds as these new patriots, determined to create a new country based on freedom, forged the goals and parameters that would guide the way, especially the freedom to worship as one pleased. This very special presentation, rich in research made accessible to the layperson, is available on YouTube via Jewish Heritage Alliance.



SEPTEMBER 15, 2024 Seth Ward, PhD



SETH WARD, PHD
Denver, Colorado
sward@uwoyo.edu

An appreciative gathering tuned in for Dr Seth Ward’s Kanter lecture on September 15, 2024 that kicked off our Fall season, addressing **“The Spanish Inquisition and its Impact on Subsequent Generations.”**

Reminding us that the pogroms of Spain began as early as 1391, the key question explored in this talk was “what does it mean to erase the memory of a people?” What

followed was a contemporary discourse on cultural erasure and the maintenance of cultural identity.

Ward walked us through a brief history. In the 3rd and 4th centuries, a strong Jewish presence prevailed in Spain. Persecution began in earnest however, in the 6th and 7th centuries, to be followed by the Islamic conquest, a time when Jews lived in relative peace. (One can think of the Transito synagogue, a symbol of Jewish presence in Toledo.) But forced conversions became commonplace and converts were not welcome by real Christians.

In 1378, Jews were murdered in Sevilla, triggering a deadly rampage across Spain. In Valencia, only 10% of Jews survived. Exact estimates of how many New Christians (*conversos*) survived are not known, but in 1412 some 25,000 were forcibly converted. Finally, the Spanish Inquisition was installed by Papal decree and in 1480, the Inquisition ruled. Their biggest concern was Judaizing. Punishment was designed to instill fear; the first *auto-da-fe* or public burning of heretics was in 1483, the same time the Crown expelled the Jews from Andalucía. Formal trials followed by torture to extract confessions were the norm. Over all, the goal was to discourage any Jewish practice.



Fast forward to the New World and the establishment of New Spain in 1570. The rulers continued the oppression of awareness, the eventual erasure of history. It was largely successful. In the current era however, we see a new shift among Spanish Americans who are open to accepting the idea of Jewish heritage before 1492. The myth of self-centrality is slowly giving way to a broader understanding of inheritance and culture, in part thanks to the Stan Hordes book, *To the End of the Earth*, and the work of SCJS.

Dr. Ward's history was a timely reminder of the challenges the Jewish people have faced and the reality of the *converso* experience.

NOVEMBER 17, 2024

Rabbi Barbara Aiello



RABBI BARBARA AIELLO
Serrastretta, Italy
rabbi@rabbibarbara.co

From our longtime member Rabbi Barbara Aiello comes the remarkable back story of the re-discovery of southern Italy's hidden Jewish past, "**The Secret Jews of Southern Italy – The Untold Story.**" Tapped in all way from her home in Serrastretta, Italy, we are forever grateful for her time and wisdom in bringing this remarkable history to us.

"Welcome to Southern Italy – to our hidden mountain villages," exclaims Rabbi Barbara, "where ancient olive trees dot the landscape, bright bouquets of tropical flowers burst around every corner, and where Jewish traditions, long hidden, are just now coming to life." Rabbi Barbara Aiello, descendant of crypto-Jews, shares a wealth of hidden Jewish secrets.

For nearly 2,000 years Jews have had a presence in Calabria, the southern-most Italian region. Calabria is not only Rabbi Barbara's ancestral home but her tiny mountain village of Serrastretta boasts the first active synagogue in Calabria in 500 years since Inquisition times. It is here in synagogue Ner Tamid del Sud, ("The Eternal Light of South Italy") where local Italians

have gathered to discover their lost Jewish heritage and to begin their journey to embrace their hidden Jewish roots.

From the southern-most point on the Italian 'boot,' rich Jewish traditions, kept secret for centuries, are coming to light. We thank Rabbi Barbara for her guidance on a southern Italian Jewish journey to uncover a remarkable Jewish past – a secret flame that never died.

COMING UP JANUARY 19, 2025

Rabbi David Kunin



RABBI DAVID KUNIN
Saratoga, California
rabbikunin@gmail.com

Consisting of over 17,000 islands, Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic state, the world's fourth-most-populous country, and the most populous Muslim-majority country. But unknown to many, it is also home to a small but committed number of Jews.

In "**The Jews Across Many Islands: The Jews of Indonesia: A Diverse Community Across**

Many Islands," Rabbi Kunin examines the diverse *kehillot* that comprise one of the most isolated re-emerging Jewish communities in the world. Descended from many different Jewish Diasporas, Indonesia's Jews span the archipelago from Sumatra to Papua. Each of their communities is unique, with its own history and culture, yet together they form a vibrant whole, creating a Judaism that is both authentic and uniquely Indonesian.

Rabbi David Kunin graduated from Brandeis University with a degree in medieval history and then attended the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he was ordained as a rabbi and received an MA in Judaic studies.

David is a strong believer in the importance of good and harmonious relations between people from diverse religious communities. Interfaith relations have therefore been a continuous mark of his rabbinate. He served as the chair of the Southern Tier Interfaith Coalition (Elmira, New York), where he

KANTER LECTURE SERIES

created the Walking Together program, and was a long time board member and president of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action. He received the Alberta Centennial Medal in recognition of his community work.

David has also been working with the emerging Jewish Community of Indonesia for 10 years. David is also the rabbi of Congregation Beth David in Saratoga, California.

COMING UP MARCH 16, 2025 Rabbi Juan Gutierrez



**RABBI DR. JUAN MARCOS
BEJARANO GUTIERREZ**
Grand Prairie, Texas
rambam44@gmail.com

Crypto-Jews were tasked with the challenge of remaining true to their ancestral faith while navigating the real danger of arrest by the Inquisition. In “**Crypto-Jews and Religious Change**,” Rabbi Gutierrez illustrates the changes in Jewish observance often characterized by detachment from classical Jewish sources. It can also be compared to the changes that occurred in other Jewish communities which

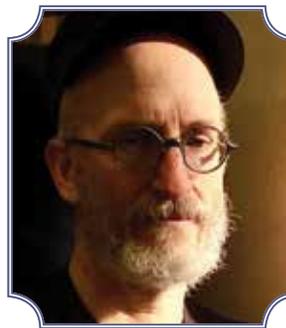
altered traditional observance in light of new social and political situations. The transformation allowed aspects of Jewish belief and practice to continue, albeit in radically different forms.

Rabbi Dr. Juan Marcos Bejarano Guterrez has been a longtime friend of SCJS. A graduate of the University of Texas at Dallas, he earned a bachelor of science in electrical engineering. He studied at the Siegal College of Judaic Studies in Cleveland and received a master of arts degree with distinction in Judaic studies. His doctoral studies were completed at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Learning and Leadership in Chicago in 2015, focused on Christian and Jewish attitudes towards *conversos*. He also studied at the American Seminary for Contemporary Judaism and received rabbinic ordination in 2011 from Yeshivat Mesilat Yesharim.

Juan writes extensively on Sephardic Jewish history, ancient Jewish history, anti-Semitism, and Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogues. He has spoken at numerous symposiums and events.

Rabbi Gutierrez was a board member of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies from 2011-2013. He has published various articles in *HaLapid*, *The Journal for Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews*, and *Apuntes-Theological Reflections from a Hispanic-Latino Context*, and is the author of 20 books including *The Converso Dilemma: the Halakhic Responsa and the Status of Forced Converts* (2020), *Why Did Spanish Jews Convert to Christianity? How Iberian Jews Responded to Persecution* (2019), *Secret Jews: The Complex Identity of Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Judaism* (2017)

Stav Appel Follow up



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Editor's Note: We have been following Stav Appel's research on the concealed Judaica of the 17th century “Tarot de Marseille” with interest since he first spoke at our national conference in El Paso, Texas 2023, and later launched our Kanter Lecture series this year.

While none of us are authorities on the history of the Tarot, we can confirm that the development

of clandestine means of Jewish continuity was a common practice in crypto-Jewish communities following the exile of Spanish Jewry in 1492. Feedback from a number of viewers has confirmed that meetings for secret Jewish worship and education were, at times, specifically disguised as gatherings for the purpose of playing cards.

Given the challenge of ascribing the abundance of Judaica in the Noblet Tarot to mere chance, Tarot historians and Torah students alike should be encouraged to further explore the veracity of Stav Appel's remarkable search, one that is sure to reveal some surprises.

SCJS looks forward to the forthcoming book on this subject by Stav sometime in 2025. 🕒



Jean Noblet Tarot

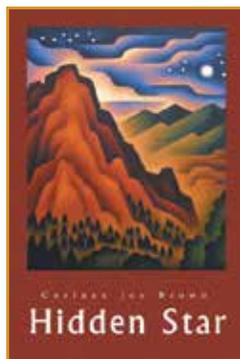


Seeds planted years ago



Back in 2014 at the SCJS conference in Miami, Florida, Corinne Brown delivered a lecture on the crypto-Jewish roots of the American cowboy (yes, really!). This is a subject she has been researching for many years and has considered a book at some point. “I am not the first person with this thesis and I am sure I will not be the last,” says Corinne.

“In the audience was a Floridian who was enthralled with the topic,” she continues. “Imagine receiving an email 10 years later (like a month ago) asking if I would give that talk again to a select Zoom audience in her community. On top of that, she also recommended my multi-award-winning novel, *Hidden Star*, about crypto-Jews of New Mexico, to her colleague who runs Miami’s Levis JCC Sandler Center for Arts, Culture and Learning (www.levisjcc.org/culture).”



“Bingo! I am now booked for February and March 2025 for two online talks. We will send details and links soon via *La Granada*.”

Corinne’s point — give presentations at SCJS (and other) conferences. You never know where it will lead!

Grant received

Dr. Ronnie Perelis, Chief Rabbi Dr. Isaac Abraham, and Jelena (Rachel) Alcalay, associate professor of Sephardic studies and director of the Schneier Program for International Affairs of Yeshiva University, received a \$299,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to translate two early modern Jewish texts by Luis Carvajal and Yoseph Ha-Kohen.

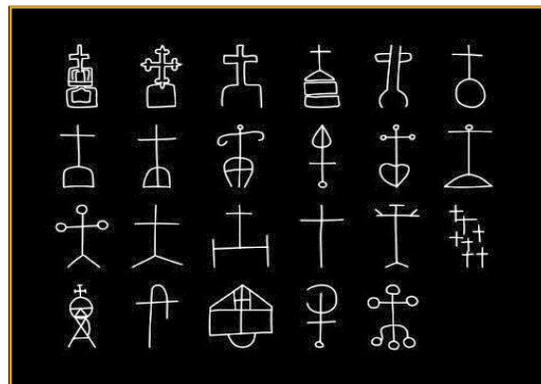
Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies
Read more at www.bit.ly/3Ub2Cgr



Portuguese Illustrated Symbols and Marks

Courtesy submission from Ronit Treatman

The town of Seia is a municipality in the Guarda district, Portugal. Jews have settled in this place since ancient times, which is difficult to place, possibly since the Roman era or especially, since Muslim domination. They were weavers, carders, dyers, blacksmiths, saddle makers, merchants, shoemakers, tinsmiths and tailors. Many of these professions are documented in the records of the Tribunal of the Holy Office relating to the municipality. Many traces remain today, represented by the symbolic Jewish marks engraved on doorposts throughout the municipality. Portuguese researchers have cataloged hundreds of secret illustrated marks that Jews left on the structures of their houses in this northern Portuguese municipality after their forced conversion to Christianity. www.visitseia.pt/judaico



Portuguese secret Jewish symbols



Congratulations

Double congratulations to Dr. Rebecca Wartell who was selected for a position as assistant professor and chair of Jewish studies at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana.

For those wanting to stay in touch her email is: wartere@earlham.edu.

We also wish to say *Kol akavod* for being selected for the 2024 SCJS annual conference David M. Gitlitz Emerging Scholar Award. The honor is given to those scholars whose work is exemplary in the field of Jewish studies, especially focused on the effects of the Inquisition, the resulting Diaspora and the generational trauma resulting from these events. We applaud Ms. Wartell for her work on women and children of medieval Spain, the rabbinic *responsa* to the Expulsion tragedy, and her research on the support of widows within the Spanish Jewish community.



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More Insights from Babylonia to Benvenistes



ESTHER MALKA ASTRUC
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By Esther Malka Astruc

I was in contact with Blanca Carrasco telling her the story about Makhir, since as a Garza whose family is from Monterrey, she is a Benveniste descendant, and the article mentions the origins of the Benveniste family. She was excited to hear about the story.

As an afterthought, it occurred to me that maybe I should have included in my story (*HaLapid*, Spring/Summer 2024), a few lines about the branch of the Benveniste family that had been forcibly converted, and sailed to Mexico and were the ancestors of the Garzas of Monterrey – since this would connect the story further to the interests of SCJS. Blanca thought this might be worthwhile to add.

A Reader's Inquiry

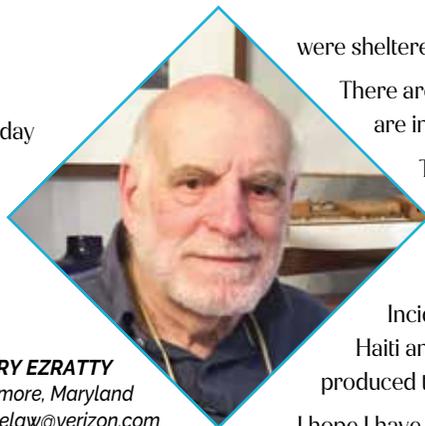
I have traced one of my ancestors to present day Haiti. Also I have learned of a abandoned Jewish cemetery in Jerieme in southern Haiti. Has any research been conducted at the Jewish cemetery? Shalom

Ricardo Ben-Safed

Dear Mr. Ben Safed

Yes: the city of Jerieme in Haiti is well-known for assisting Jews during the Haitian Revolution that sought to oust all European influence on the island.

Many families in Jerieme claim Jewish ancestry during the time Jews



HARRY EZRATTY
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were sheltered here and had intimate relations with the townspeople.

There are several topographical sites bearing Jewish names. If you are interested I can send them on to you.

The fact that there is a Jewish cemetery in Jerieme is exciting news to me. In my research I never learned that. Can you send me the names on the stones and perhaps I can find links to your roots?

Incidentally, are you a Mendes? That family was prominent in Haiti and Jerieme. They escaped to France and in the 20th century produced the Jewish Prime Minister, Pierre Mendes France.

I hope I have assisted; should you have further questions feel free to contact me.

Harry A. Ezratty 🇺🇸

THE 34TH ANNUAL SCJS CONFERENCE REVIEW — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

The second panel session, **Crypto-Judaism, Concealment and Persecution**, illustrated this leitmotif; **Maria Theresa Hernandez** spoke about Miguel Sanchez’s 1648 publication of the *Image of the Virgin/Imagen de la Virgen* in colonial Mexico, the very same year that Sabbetai Zevi proclaimed he was the Messiah in the Ottoman Empire whilst **Leonard Stein** redeemed from obscurity and brought back to life the 19th-century English novelist Grace Aguilar, child of Iberian Jews who had fled the Inquisition. Whilst this woman of valor died at 31-years old, her prolific legacy is immortalized for posterity in her published works. **Rebecca Wartell** drew our attention to the persecution of *conversos* in early modern Portugal, with a focus on the Tribunal in Coimbra. And congrats again to her for receiving the David M. Gitlitz Emerging Scholar Award.

Our third panel, staged in breakout Zoom rooms, was free-ranging, which allowed multiple yet intersecting conversations to take place, focused on the past, present, and future of crypto-Judaism. This encouraged many attendees to continue searching for the meaning of hidden faith in their own lives and those of their families, properly serving as a bridge between past generations and those yet to come.

In our fourth panel session, **Archives and Sources**, our panelists **Sean Schifano** and **Genie Milgrom** distilled the significance of historical archives — indeed, history is preserved in these documents, allowing us to help reconstruct the lives of crypto-Jews in previous centuries and to learn how they suffered at the hands of the Inquisitorial Tribunals; punished by the Church for the heresy of judaizing, many of them were burnt at the stake for their attachment to the Law of Moses/Ley de Moises.

Sean — the founding organizer and archivist of the Crypto-Jewish Historical Archives (CJHA) — spoke to the importance of archiving crypto-Jewish collections in the American Southwest, a task heretofore largely neglected, marginalized or effaced. This fundamental transformation over the last several decades was marked by a newfound engagement with family history and a desire to return to one’s roots, recognizing that people of crypto-Jewish background are part of the Sephardic legacy as well. The CJHA genuinely expands the narrative, is most promising, and we are all invited to join Sean in this great effort. Genie, who has canvassed the globe since 2015 to digitize inquisitorial records and even met with His Holiness, Pope Francis, shared resources, including tens of thousands of family names and sources, allowing individuals to trace *converso* genealogy in Spain, Portugal, and their overseas territories.

These two presentations balanced one another, connecting archives in the Iberian Peninsula with former colonies in the New World, thus linking the heartland of the Inquisition and Sefarad with the Viceroyalty of New Spain, part of which became the future American Republic. These enormously impressive efforts will certainly prove indispensable to future generations of researchers.

In our fifth session, we delved deeper into the history and mission of SCJS; this panel, composed of several dedicated, indefatigable, and eminent members, was fittingly entitled, **Generations: A Brief History of the Origins, Evolution, and Mission of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies**.

Corinne Brown, SCJS VP of communications, editor of the superb magazine *HaLapid*, and a dear friend who introduced me to SCJS a few years ago, provided an introduction and overview of the founding of SCJS, whose first meeting was in August 1991.

Dolores Sloan reflected about the early years; **Art Benveniste** (whose ancestors left Spain, like my ancestors, for the Ottoman Empire in 1492) talked about previous SCJS trips to Brazil and Portugal, including Lisbon and Porto, where Captain Artur Carlos de Barros Basto resurrected the Jewish community and created the original *HaLapid* magazine nearly a hundred years ago. **Blanca Carrasco**, SCJS president and a good friend, spoke on her family history, the 2023 El Paso conference, and SCJS contributions to the ongoing search for identity in the Southwest. The last two panelists, **Ricardo Villareal** and **Diane Mock** shared personal journeys to find a community and a spiritual home. Only by looking backward, with the assistance of those who were there at the beginning, can we plan for the future.

The installment of the incoming SCJS board occurred and the sixth and final, panel of today’s enthralling online conference was held, **The Stratton-Petit Sosin Address to Advance Scholarship in the Crypto-Judaic Arts**. This year’s address, “Blood Secrets: Glimpses into the Hidden Lives of the *Conversos*” explored secret lives and hidden roots, featuring a striking collection of poems by celebrated New Mexico poets **Joan Ryan**, **Andrea Watson**, and writer/artist **Anita Rodriguez**. The moving words of these honorees will long remain with us all, reminding us of the mystical chords of memory that continue to bind us all throughout time and space.

Special thanks to all the chairs — **Seth Kunin**, **Mark Schneegurt**, **Nancy Katz**, **Claudia Hagadus Long**, and **Kathleen Alcala** — as well as **Edgar Garcia** who masterfully handled Zoom’s technical



requirements behind the scenes. Special gratitude to **Dr. Stanley and Helen Hordes** and **Dr. Larry Kanter** for virtually attending today's conference as well. If I forgot anyone, please forgive me. To all the volunteers, to the entire SCJS board, Program Chair **Dr. Seth Ward**, and Conference Chairs **Blanca Carrasco** and **Corinne Brown**, and everyone who played an integral role in bringing today's online event to fruition, my compliments – it was remarkably intimate yet expansive, global yet local, academic yet personal. Crypto-Judaism transcends time and space and to all of us gathered virtually together, it evokes the calls of history, memory, and legacy. This phenomenon is indispensable to the global and millennia old story of Judaism, the Jewish people, and the world at large.

The late Professor David Gitlitz, a scholar whom we were privileged to know and call a mentor and a friend, wrote in his magnum opus *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* that crypto-Jews seem to have relied upon three primary coping strategies; 1) concealing, 2) dissembling, and 3) misdirecting, which manifested in the observance of traditional religious rituals. Major life ceremonies and practices were impacted throughout the ages. Modern day stories of formerly hidden communities (in Portugal, Spain, the American Southwest and across the world) stand as a testament to the crypto-Jewish drive to remain affiliated, in the face of formidable odds, with the faith and traditions of their forebears. Today's emerging individuals and communities are following in the footsteps of earlier generations of crypto-Jews.

Ultimately, as said by the late Cecil Roth, editor in chief of the *Encyclopedia-Judaica* and professor at Oxford University (where I was a scholar in-residence in antisemitism studies this past summer): "The record of the 'New Christians' is an inseparable part of the stories of Spain and Portugal... It constitutes a fundamental... chapter of ecclesiastical history. It touches on the life of every country of Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries... [and] had important reactions in politics, literature, science, and commerce... [and its appeal includes] the unique devotion which could transmit the ancestral ideals unsullied, from generation to generation, despite the Inquisition and its horrors – all combine to make a story unparalleled in history for sheer dramatic appeal." And, indeed, whenever anti-Jewish persecution ensues – as in many parts of the world today it tragically is again – hiding one's Jewish identity continues to occur. As Roth said, crypto-Judaism truly is, "in one form or another, as old as the Jew himself."

To all viewers, thank you for your attendance, and your gracious assistance and support which allows conferences like this to take place, especially in-person. Your help is much appreciated. I strongly encourage everyone to stay in touch and perhaps most importantly, to attend the next SCJS conference – August 10-12, 2025, in-person in Los Angeles! Thank you so much!

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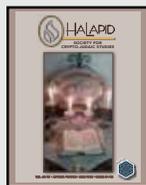
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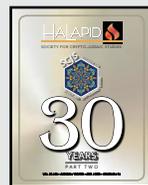
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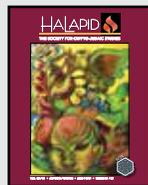
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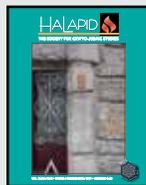
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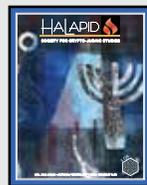
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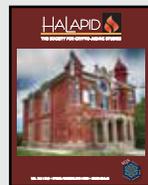
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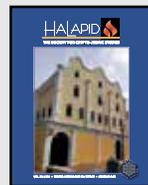
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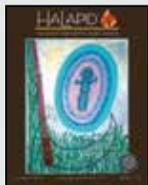
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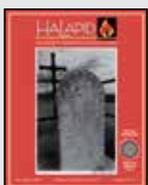
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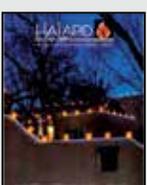
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YOU are part of a Mission!



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

Our first conference, held near Taos, New Mexico in 1991, was organized by a small, dedicated group of people who established 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, has archival status; 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 continuing 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 wish 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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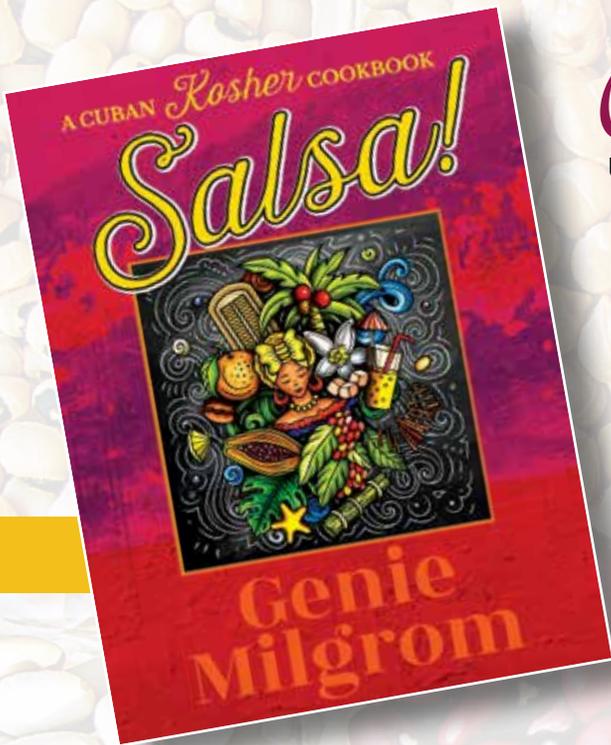
Tudo se ilumina
para aquele
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a luz



All is
illuminated
for those
who seek the light

- Avram Ben Rosh -

Mid-November 2024 Release



As fabulous as its gorgeous cover, *Salsa!* represents Genie Milgrom's best efforts over the past 30-odd years to create kosher versions of the Cuban and Caribbean recipes she grew up with. Few can claim a heritage as rich as her own, or her commitment to cooking in general, and this collection of recipes takes Sephardic cooking to new heights. Exciting combinations of ingredients and flavors with Jewish kosher dietary rules in mind, gives the reader a bevy of savory and delicious meals from Spain to the Islands and beyond. Fish, meat and vegetarian options included, of course.

Genie's ongoing discoveries of her ancestors' recipes and her understanding of food as culture make this book one to cherish no matter your geographical Jewish background. It is a remarkable sequel to *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*. Join Genie to celebrate Jewish cooking like never before!



Genie Milgrom, a past president of SCJS, is the author of four books chronicling her history as a descendant of Jews from Feroselle, Spain forced to convert to Catholicism in the 16th century. Tracing her roots through 15 maternal grandmothers from Iberia to Cuba to the US, Genie tells her story in fiction, non-fiction, through food, and now in film as the award-winning creator of the documentary biopic *Between the Stone and the Flower*.



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