

Tudo se ilumina  
para aquele que  
busca la luz.  
BEM-ROSH

# HALAPID

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BEN-ROSH

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## MESTIZO JEWS: THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF THE WORLD

BY MAGNOLIA MALKA ALBALAT KUNCEWIECKI

For about 100 years before the official start of the Spanish Inquisition, bloodshed and tension had been taking place in Spain due to different religious beliefs held by Jews, Moors and Catholics. In 1391 Catholics staged horrible bloody massacres of Jews and Moors in the cities of Castile, Aragon, and Seville. Spanish Jews (Sephardic Jews) began to convert in massive numbers to Catholicism, but still practiced Jewish rituals in secrecy. Those Jews who converted to Catholicism were nick named "Conversos" (Converts) and "Marranos" (Pigs). These massacres were the unofficial beginning of a 300 year "forum of justice" spearheaded by the Catholic Church of Spain and led by The Holy Tribunal Office whose purpose was to annihilate or convert all people who did not believe in the Catholic Religion. The official start of the Spanish Inquisition was in 1492-the same year that Christopher Columbus discovered the "New World." It is known that Conversos played a significant role in financing Columbus' expedition to "India" and a great number of them actually made the voyage with Columbus. As word came in to Spain that Columbus had found a "New World" and boat routes were established, the outwardly Jewish and Converso (many of whom were secretly Jewish) community saw an opportunity to leave Spain, and go to "New Spain," (Mexico and South America today) to escape from the fanatical religious tribunal who persecuted and oppressed their religious beliefs (Lerner 94).

Jews encountered barriers to get into "New Spain" (Mexico) even more so than did Conversos. Jews had to filter their way through as soldiers and sailors with Cortez in 1519 and with forged documents bearing new names (Lerner 94). Conversos who were in judicial office like Luis de Carvajal, el Conquistador, who had the title of admiral and was privilege to be awarded governorship of a newly created province, the New Kingdom of Leon in New Spain, also took flight to the New World (Liebman, The Enlightened 26).

The new world colonies were settled in accordance with Catholic rules, traditions, rituals and blessings. Therefore, when Jews began to settle into the new world, bishops and others enforced Inquisitorial rule and executed punishment for the divergence of these rules. Clergy started to execute their Episcopal powers since 1523 only four years after the beginnings of Jewish settlers. Almost fifty years before the

official establishment of the Inquisition in "New Spain" tortures and "Autos de Fe" (Burning of people at the stake) were punishment for not adhering to Catholic laws (Liebman, The Enlightened 21). In 1571 the Holy Inquisitorial Office had officially taken over the bishops Episcopal powers and had established the Holy Inquisition of New Spain (The Mexican Inquisition) (by 1590 a large Jewish community had already established themselves in Mexico City).

The Jews who fled from Spain to rid themselves of the Inquisitorial demands were doomed to meet the holy office again and endure the Mexican Inquisition in the new land, but this branch of the Spanish Inquisition did not only oppress and persecute the Jews and Moors who fled Spain, but the Indigenous communities were also subjected to

The Jews who fled from Spain to rid themselves of the Inquisitorial demands were doomed to meet the holy office again and endure the Mexican Inquisition in the new land

massacres and forced conversion. Most victims of the Mexican Inquisition were usually apprehended due to a testimony that accused them of practicing a "paganistic" faith. Jews, Moors or Indians who were tried and convicted of practicing "pagan" traditions were punished. These sentences consisted of the

following or a combination of the following: to renounce one's paganish faith under oath, receive whips or to wear humiliating attire in public, exile to remote lands as soldiers, serve prison terms, and/or death by being burned alive, choked, or hanged (Liebman, Los judios en Mexico y America Central 264). Any women sentenced to prison terms were committed to convents and some were obligated to serve a lifetime in the convents. To practice any faith other than the Catholic faith was indeed life threatening. One theory suggests many Jews turned to the indigenous population for help and sanctuary.

Jews and non-Jews lost their lives. Many of them found refuge in small Indian villages and lived among the Indian population in order to hide their identity (Lerner 94). As a result, Jewish-Indian communities were established. Some of these communities still exist today in Venta Prieta, State of Hidalgo; Toluca, State of Mexico; Apipilulco, State of Guerrero; and Monterey, State of Nuevo Leon. It is believed that the Mestizo Jewish community of Monterey, was settled by Jews fleeing from Pachuca, and Tampico, and established themselves among the Indians. It is believed they changed their names to hide their identity from the

# MESTIZO JEWS

Mexican Inquisition and assimilated as best as they could to the tribe (Belled 275). In finding refuge among another people it has been speculated that intermarriages had occurred between female Spanish Jews (Sephardic Jews) and the Indigenous males, creating what we know as the Mestizo Jew (Indian Jew) (Lerner 94). (Orthodox Jewish law dictates the mother of the child must be Jewish in order that the child be considered Jewish-- the father does not have to be Jewish.). Another theory suggests many female Indians adopted the religion of their Jewish slave masters and had mixed offspring by non Spanish white European men. (Belled 275). As the number of Mestizo Jews increased (intermixed offspring), so did their communities.

Venta Prieta is the most known Mestizo Jewish community in Mexico (Lerner 90). Sra. Trinidad Jiron de Tellez, and old woman of Venta Preita gives an account of watching her father scalded to death in boiling oil for Judaizing even though freedom of religious conscience was enacted in 1857 (Liebman, American Jewish Archives 160). This particular community believes that it was the home of the ancestors of the Carvajal family who initially settled in the province of "Nuevo Leon" and later in an Indigenous community (Liebman, American Jewish Archives 154). It also claims that the Carvajal family intermarried with the Indians because the Carvajales believed that they were the lost Jewish tribe (Liebman, American Jewish Archives 161). Mestizo Jewish Communities like Venta Preita who have identified their ancestors, have been able to practice the Jewish faith and customs in their purest forms. In Venta Preita the traditional male circumcision is adhered to. They eat matzo on Passover and adhere to the slaughtering methods dictated by Jewish ritual law (Beller 278). These Jewish Mestizo townships have synagogues, observe all of the Jewish holidays, and follow the basic Jewish traditions. However, some Mestizo communities profess themselves as being Catholics, follow Catholic traditions, but also practice Jewish customs.

Many rituals that are performed by Mestizo Jews and Catholic Mestizos in Mexico and across Latin America are a cross between Christianity and Judaism. However there are other communities that have never been able or have never bothered to investigate the origin of their "customs" and have remained Catholic, but still observe Jewish tradition. There are some Indian tribes in Latin America today where women go to church on Friday evenings, and light candles before the images of the saints. This tradition took its place in Inquisitorial times when Jewish women were afraid to light their Sabbath candles at home so opted to do it in the security of the church. These women wave their hands over the candles, cover their eyes, and say the blessing quietly not knowing the origin of this tradition (Beller 279). There is another Crypto Jewish tradition that Mestizos practice in a region that encompasses southern Arizona and northern Mexico. The tradition is that mothers pass on to their daughters on their eleventh birthday the secret of their Jewish heritage (Plevin F 16). The girls are taught special Marano prayers of forgiveness (Plevin F16). There are Peruvian communities of men who profess to be Catholic, but wrap themselves in white clothes, fast and pray all day once a year in the fall; These men also observe the day of Atonement in the Jewish Religion. But, after so many years in secrecy with

changed customs and holidays to fit their own needs, everything amounted to an approximation. The rituals developed in these towns and communities became their own unique type of Judaism. These customs are distorted and half understood. It is a life based on a tradition to be practiced secretly rather than on a knowledge of what it really is to be Jewish. Nevertheless, the Jewish customs live on, and are all a part of the vague memories of the Inquisition they so desperately wanted to hide from in "New Spain" and Latin America as a whole. In spite of these traditions and historic evidence some historians do not believe that communities, and especially the community of Venta Preita, are true descendents of Jews who fled from Spain and settled in the New World.

Many historians believe that a few thousand Jews are decedents of the Converso population in Mexico but vehemently deny that any Mestizo Jews exist in Mexico or Latin America for that matter. "Bet-El and "Casa de Dios' have been included in a census that record the number of Mestizo Jews and should not have. (Liebman, American Jewish Archives 156). These two sects are believed to have been recent converts from Christianity to Judaism (Liebman, American Jewish Archives 147). In the Structure of Spanish History, historian Americo Castro wrote: "The people who really felt the scruple of purity of blood were the Spanish Jew... there is a punctilious concern for family purity... as a consequence of the persecution in the fifteenth century he became still more acutely aware of his exclusive particularism" (Castro 525). This statement forwardly implies that intermarriages between Indians and Jews was highly unlikely. There are also accounts that individuals in the Venta Prieta and Mexico City "Mestizo Jewish" communities have admitted that their parents or forefathers were converted to Judaism only in the very recent past (Liebman, The Enlightened 159). Nothing concrete has been established to refute or agree with the possibility of Mestizo Jewry, but with all that happened who could say that Mestizo Jewry never existed.

I believe Mestizo Jewry exists and has for decades. Due to the lack of documented evidence many do not believe for one minute that Mestizo Jewry could exist. However the fact of the matter is that you can't deny the existence of people and their traditions no matter what they are. One can't close his mind and believe that if something is not documented or proven with all five senses that it could not be real. Life is not black or white and does not fit into neat categories. I have only treaded a little on the subject and definitely know there is still so much more to be discovered and I hope one day Mestizo Jewry will be as researched and known as European Jewry.

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## BACK TO BRAZIL

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn

Dear Amigos and Amigas,

I think we have made history together. Since we came back from Brazil, there have been articles, interviews, and everyone wants to know what we saw and experienced there. Judie Fein's article will be in the May issue of Hadassah, another one she wrote will be in the July issue of Jewish Traveler, and no date for the New York Times yet.....

I've decided to lead another trip to Brazil this summer, and thought you might want to come along, because it will be different from last year's trip. If you are not at all interested, perhaps you have friends who are.

The trip will leave on August 2nd, which is wintertime in Brazil, and will last 15 days. We will go to Rio, with new adventures there. For those of you who are interested, Judie is setting up an umbanda ceremony, a trip to a spiritist center and perhaps a visit to the top psychic surgeon in the world. She watched him work on 600 people, and reported that it was amazing. Several different people in Hollywood are currently planning films on the subject!

Since our last trip, Helio Cordeiro has formed a Crypto-Jewish synagogue in Sao Paulo, and we will hook up with them. My own synagogue has adopted them as their "sister synagogue" and this will be formalized in Brazil. This has made the front page of the Jerusalem Post today (March 7th)!

We will go to Recife again, with added stops on our itinerary. In Manaus, we will stay in a treetop hotel on the Amazon for three days--a whole different tour. We will have a

tour of the Amazon at night. In Caico, we will stay overnight and meet our new friends again, to see if they have pursued their interest in their background. And we have added another stop: Salvador. Judie and Paul and Janis Plotkin reported that it was the highlight of their trip. The Kleins were there for one day, and apparently they loved it too.

Salvador has thousands of pastel-colored, restored colonial homes, buildings and churches and is famous for its exotic culture--which we will, of course, see. The Bahian music is known all over the world. And, for those who are interested, visits to Afro-Brazilian ceremonies can be arranged.

We are planning to go to Cachoeira, in the heart of Salvador, where you will see the colorful local scene--including donkey carts, animals in the streets, and fantastic woodcarvers, where you can buy carvings to take home. Another possible alternative is the picturesque Island of Itaparica.

At the end of the trip, there is an optional tour. It will start at one of the natural wonders of the world--the Iguacu Falls--and then go on to Moisesville in Argentina--the home of Jewish Gauchos (cowboys). It's really very exciting. I have been in touch with the patriarch, the mayor, and they are planning for our visit. It's the time of year when they brand cattle, and there are culinary specialties. This is a unique opportunity for a first-time visit! From Moisesville, we may stop at another Jewish settlement and then go on to Buenos Aires. You will be pleased to know that there is a prostitutes' cemetery there too. I am currently planning the tour of the city that made Evita and Madonna famous.

You all know too well the plight of the Crypto-Jews in Brazil, and that I have been asked to assist in "return" ceremonies. I would like to perform one while we are there, so that you can participate in it and share the experience of welcoming these Jews back after so many years in exile.

Of course there is much more information. You can reach me at (412) 346 4754 -study. 1814 Shady Drive, Farrell PA 16146. You may also reach me by Email at [Jacquesc@pgh.net](mailto:Jacquesc@pgh.net)

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn

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We thank Yohanon Emek, page keeper, BNAI SEPHARD for posting information from Ha Lapid on his web page.

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# SEARCHING FOR CRYPTO-JEWS IN FRANCE: FROM SPANISH JEWS TO FRENCH HUGUENOTS

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There is increasing interest concerning where the overt Jews and crypto-Jews of Spain and Portugal settled after being exiled by the Inquisition. Morocco and other parts of North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and Holland have been of major interest as Islamic or Protestant areas which did not have a Catholic Inquisition. In these areas, exiles generally practiced their Judaism openly. Portugal, and later, Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas have been of major concern as places where the Inquisition was imposed, leading to crypto-Jews secretly practicing Judaism. But, little attention has been given to France, the only country besides Portugal (and Morocco, a short distance by water), that borders Spain. Mocatta, in *The Jews of Spain and Portugal*, in 1933, gave some attention to Sephardic exiles in France. But, Malino's *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (1978) is the only major study of a Sephardic exile community in France. Malino discusses the "Portuguese" community in Bordeaux, about one hundred miles from the Spanish border.

France, because of its proximity to Spain, was a natural point of escape for Jews fleeing across the border. This was only slightly less likely for Jews fleeing Portugal. Jews had been officially excluded from France since 1394, and the border was officially closed to Jews, but a trip through the Pyrenees was a route taken by some exiles. Nahon writes that a geographical imperative "well nigh forced" the New Christians of Spain and Portugal "to take the road to France" even if only as a way station for other places. Roth, writing of persecution of conversos in Barcelona (Catalonia) in 1488 and in the Balearic Islands in 1489, notes that "Flight to foreign countries--particularly to the southern provinces of France--began to assume panic proportions" (p. 56). In addition to the geographical proximity, before the expulsion of Jews from France in 1394 there had been a close relation between the Jewish communities of Spain and France, with Spain providing many of the leaders for the French Jewish communities (Sachar, p. 198).

France was a Catholic country, and not only expelled its Jews in 1394, but also expelled the Jews from Provence in 1481 when Provence was formally united with France. But, France also had a Catholicism different from that in Spain, basically independent and relatively without an Inquisition. Hence, the situation for Jews was different from the situation in Spain. Although Jews had been expelled from France in the twelfth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, "in Bordeaux as elsewhere in southern France, an indeterminate scattering of conversos remained behind. And after 1481, the Sephardic remnant was quietly enlarged by an uninterrupted infusion of New Christians from Spain and Portugal. Virtually all of them were judaizers--marranos" (Sachar, p. 199).

Meanwhile, although most of Provence's Jews departed in 1481, "a tiny communion underwent baptism and remained on. Nevertheless, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, augmented by periodic rivulets of Sephardic fugitives, the little enclave of Provençal conversos

began to regain something of its former demographic vitality" (p. 199).

France did continue to have restrictions against Ashkenazic Jews, mostly in eastern France close to Germany, even while it allowed the settlement of Portuguese Jews in Bordeaux in 1483, mainly for economic reasons. Bayonne and surrounding towns, only fifty miles from the Spanish border, also developed Sephardic communities. Sachar writes that "like the marrano community of Bordeaux, this trans-Pyrenean cluster of settlements became a major focus of crypto-Judaism in southern France" (p. 200). Although there were ups and downs, "crypto-Judaism could be maintained with relative impunity" because no Inquisition court existed in France, (Sachar, p. 336). As exile continued, numerous other communities developed along the Atlantic coast and inland (Nahon, p. 341).

In 1550, France officially opened its borders, and conversos fleeing Spain and Portugal were officially allowed to live in France. As Beinart notes, "the proximity of the territorial border made it possible for conversos fleeing Spain and Portugal to maintain ties with their families who had remained there and to establish business connections supervised from France" (p. 118).

Despite some overtress, Malino shows that the "non-French, suspiciously non-Catholic" merchants Portugais did live a tense balancing act. Scarcely fifty years after recognition the "New Christians" who had been in Bordeaux for less than ten years were asked to leave, and settled mostly in Peyrehorade, Bidache, and Bayonne. In 1615, Louis XIII published an edict demanding that all Jews, disguised or not, leave France in one month, but the Parlement of Bordeaux prevented the expulsion from taking place. In 1656, Louis XIV issued an edict which in effect confined the "New Christians" to the Bordeaux, Bayonne, and surrounding areas. As Malino writes, the nouveaux Chretiens "continued throughout this time to live within the frame of Catholicism. They were baptized, married, and buried according to the Catholic tradition and made no apparent attempts to reveal a Jewish heritage. They were repeating the history of the Marranos of Spain" (p. 5).

Slowly, however, the crypto-Jews of southwestern France began to be referred to as Jews, and the king and his advisers "gave clear evidence that the future of these newly designated Jews was uncertain" (Malino, p. 5). By 1700, Louis XIV no longer believed in "their Catholic camouflage" and began to treat the merchants Portugais as Jews. If viewed as Jews, they would have no status, and would have "to pay exorbitant taxes for rights the nouveaux Chretiens had always freely enjoyed" (p. 7). The worse was over, however, and gradually the nouveaux Chretiens returned to practicing Judaism, and disciplined those members of the community who strayed from the community. In addition to the ups and downs in the Bordeaux and Bayonne areas, there were problems for crypto-Jews in other parts of France. In 1632, for example, in Rouen, thirty-seven New Christians were arrested

for their "Jewish ways," and an auto-de-fe was possible. They declared their fidelity to Catholicism, paid money, and were released (Nahon, p. 340)

While there were distinct Sephardic communities (especially Bordeaux) which eventually openly returned to Judaism, most of the Sephardic Jews in France "disappeared." One theory claims that they later showed up in Holland, and another theory claims that they merged into Catholicism in France (Nahon, p. 342). While it is clear that some of the family names did show up later in Holland, it is not clear that all members of these families moved to Holland. Even if one agrees that most Sephardim/crypto-Jews moved to Holland, the possibility remains that some members/descendants of the families remained in France. The fact that the community attempted to discipline "straying" members indicates that some individuals hesitated to return openly to the community. Recognizing individual differences, it also is unreasonable to believe that all exiles and their descendants were able to overcome the pressures of the ups and downs of Christian intimidation. The fact that crypto-Judaism lasted longer in France than in any other western European country of exile (Kaplan, p. 243) increases even more the possibility that over time some descendants would have been lost to the open practice of Judaism. If some of the Sephardic exiles in France did convert to or openly follow Christianity, would they have converted to or followed Catholicism or Protestantism?

The Sephardim who went to France, as either overt or secret Jews, found a religious situation very different from that in Spain and Portugal, particularly because of the rise of Protestantism in France. The rise of Protestantism (French Protestants were called Huguenots) in France was significant for Jews. Protestantism had several factors that would make it more attractive than Catholicism for secret Jews who wanted a Christian outward identity or for Sephardim actually accepting Christianity over a period of decades. First, Protestantism, like Judaism, had a mutual enemy in Catholicism because of the Inquisition's attack on both. Mocatta argues that the rise of Protestantism in western Europe added to the insecurity of Catholicism, and was one factor leading to the Inquisition. In Spain, Huguenots also were persecuted. In 1565, for example, in Pamplona, the capital of Spanish Navarre, there was "an intensive round-up of active French Huguenots" (Monter, p. 149). While Pamplona was a major center of repression of Protestants, other areas also were similar. In Toledo, for example, in 1565, a tribunal "made short work" of a group of accused individuals, some of whom were Protestants (Lea, p. 450).

Second, Protestantism, like Judaism, had a special appeal to merchants and to the financially well-off and well-educated segments of society. Third, and related to the second point, Protestantism had a special appeal in seaports and shipping areas of France, especially in the LaRoche area of western France, on the Bay of Biscay about two hundred miles from the Spanish border and about eighty miles from Bordeaux. The Sephardic and Huguenot areas of settlement overlapped to a noticeable extent. Fourth, at its height, before their most severe persecutions under Louis XIV, Huguenots comprised one-tenth of France's population. The largest numbers were in western and southern France, the areas closest to Spain.

Fifth, in removing many of the trappings of Catholicism (rituals, liturgy, saints, a church hierarchy, etc.), Protestantism returned to a more original Christianity which was closer to Judaism. Customs such as naming of children also followed this pattern with Old Testament (Holy Scriptures) names, instead of New Testament Saint names, being used much more frequently

by Huguenots than by Catholics. By the end of the 1500s, for example, in Rouen, of the ten most frequent Protestant male names, seven (numbers 4 through 10) were Old Testament names (Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, David, Jacob, Salomon, and Samuel). Among Catholics, there was only one "Old Testament" name (Abraham), and it was in tenth place (Lavender, 1990, p. 186). This pattern of Huguenot naming continued, although weakening with time, in the United States. As late as the 1700 period, for example, Ester and Judith remained among the nine most frequent female Huguenot names in Charleston, South Carolina, while Abraham, Daniel, Isaac, and Jacob were frequent male names (Lavender, 1990, p. 194). Even as late as 1790 in the United States, Huguenots, despite rapidly assimilating and generally following non-traditional Christianity, were more likely than most other Protestant groups to have Old Testament names. The exceptions were in the Puritan areas of New England, areas which were the most traditional in their following of Christianity. Among the sixteen most frequent Huguenot male names in 1790, seven (Benjamin, Samuel, Jacob, Daniel, Abraham, Isaac, David) were Old Testament names (Lavender, 1990, p. 192). There clearly is a connection between naming patterns and ethnic/religious identity (Lavender, 1988, 1989; Nasrallah, p. 30).

As pressures periodically increased against the "New Christians" in France, it is difficult to believe that some did not overtly convert to Christianity. And, if they did, it is reasonable that some would have chosen Protestantism rather than Catholicism in the period when Protestantism was still strong. Huguenots also had a mixed treatment in France, some times being good and some times suffering much persecution because they were not Catholic. Thousands were killed, sent to prison, or had their children taken away. Louis XIV ended Huguenot rights in 1685, and gave the Huguenots a short period of time to convert to Catholicism or go into exile. About 160,000 Huguenots went into exile, and about 850,000 openly converted to Catholicism. Similar to crypto-Jews, some overtly practiced Catholicism but remained crypto-Protestants (Nouveaux Convertis). Paul Revere's family is believed to have been crypto-Protestants (Forbes, p. 5). There were times when it was safer to be a crypto-Jew overtly practicing Catholicism than to be a Huguenot, but in the earlier years (up to about 1572) it was safer to be a crypto-Jew overtly practicing Protestantism than to be an overt Jew.

Throughout Huguenot history, French Protestantism has had a special affinity for Jews. The Huguenots, especially in the Lanquedoc area of southern France, later (beginning about 1700) referred to themselves as living in "The Desert" which they likened to the Hebrews living in the Desert. The Huguenot shield had a burning bush in the middle, with God's name written in Hebrew (Lavender, 1993). In the Nazi period French Protestants had an admirable record of defending Jewish refugees.

Did crypto-Jews or former Sephardim come to the United States as part of the Huguenot migration (the decade after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 being the most active decade)? One prominent Huguenot family in the southern United States has maintained a traditional family belief (not accepted by all members of the family, of course) that they are descended from a prominent Sephardic family exiled during the Inquisition.

Part of the reason is the similarity of their surname to that of this prominent Sephardic family of Spain. My research so far has found two members of this family who think there is some truth to the family folklore. Others, of course, are hesitant to believe in or acknowledge Jewish ancestry because of their strong and prominent membership in the Christian culture.

Other Huguenot family names also suggest a possible connection with Jewish origins. Mauze, for example, according to one source, comes from the small town of Mauze near LaRochele. This source, which spells the name as Mauze or Moze, says the name is believed to have been derived from the Arabic word "mauz" meaning plantain tree (Mauzey, p. 112). Another source lists one spelling as Mose (Liddell, p. 394), which some researchers would say suggests a possible Jewish origin. Simons, DeSpain, and Pardieu (Pardo?) are other surname examples which raise questions about possible Jewish or Spanish origins. Pardo usually is a Sephardic name (Moya, p. 13). Simons (Simoes) is a fairly common Portuguese name, and could be either Old or New Christian. Novinsky refers to Francisco Gomes Simoes as an Old Christian (p. 113), but Filgueira refers to Francisco Simoes Tinoco as a New Christian (p. 26). Simao (Simon), common as a Jewish given name and surname, is also a Portuguese surname, although much less common than Simons. Simons is rare as either a Spanish and French surname, although Simon is fairly common in both languages. DeSpain means "from Spain." Of course, these names also could have non-Jewish origins, requiring detailed research to determine whether the origins are Jewish or non-Jewish.

In the United States, and more so in some specific areas such as Charleston, South Carolina, the Huguenots intermarried with prominent other Protestant families and became full members of the Christian (mostly Protestant) aristocracy. As in other areas of crypto-Judaic studies, research in this area is hindered because of reluctance of some descendants to acknowledge either overt or covert Jewish ancestry. In the 1920s, after becoming active with the crypto-Jewish community in Belmonte, Portugal, Lucien Wolfe helped organize a "Pro-Marrano" Committee in London, with branches in the United States and France. This was not continued, and more questions than answers remain on crypto-Jews in France and on French Huguenot descendants in the United States.

From a historical sociology perspective, however, the historical situations are too suggestive to overlook the possibility of a Spanish-French connection leading to crypto-Jews in France. As interest increases in Sephardim in general (Lavender, 1975), interest should also increase in specific areas in order to give a better understanding of the tremendous diversity within the Jewish community.

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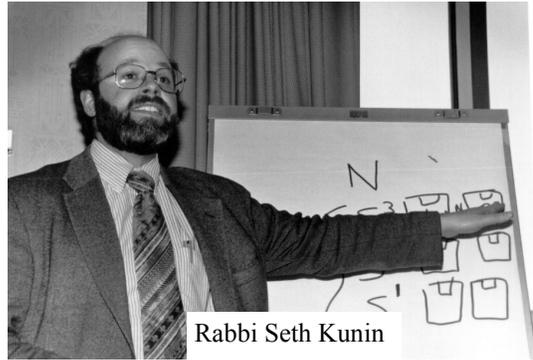
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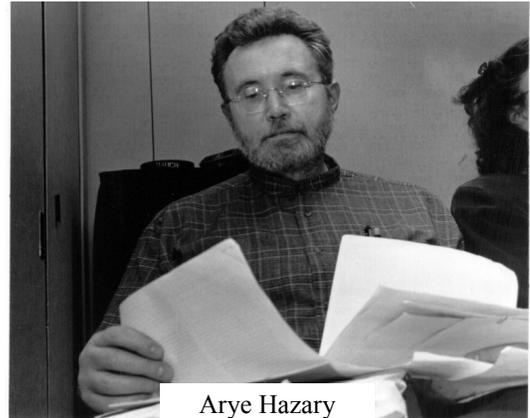
SCENES FROM THE ALBUQUERQUE CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 1996

Thanks to Cary Herz for the Photos



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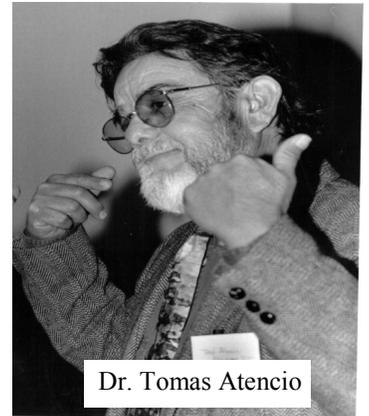
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# THE SEARCH FOR FAMILY ORIGINS

Everardo Treviño Garza

As delivered at the December 1996 Conference of the SCJS in Albuquerque

Translated from Spanish

I am grateful to God and to you for allowing me to share with you my experiences as I searched for the origins of my family.

I will begin by mentioning that this quest was begun in my early youth, and has been transforming itself gradually into the modest project in which I am now engaged.

Where does this zeal for searching come from? As far as I can remember, the family's practices and teachings were always directed towards achieving family unity and assuring the survival of the familial group. We were taught the need for respect toward the society in which we grew up, even if we were not full active participants in religious and political matters. That is to say, our participation limited itself to the economic sphere, and to those areas of social concern that guaranteed family survival, and above all those social and religious practices inherited from our ancestors and, not practiced by the majority.

For example, we accepted Catholicism as the dominant religion learning its basic concepts and followed the church practices of the majority such as wedding ceremonies and funeral rites. At the familial level, however other traditions, inherited from our ancestors, were also taken into consideration. These differed considerably from the common traditions.

The main conversation themes, and those moments of joy or sadness within the family were invariably accompanied by comments about family unity, honor, love, fear of God, and remembrance of our ancestors, practices that were not common in the rest of the society in which we lived.

This family background perceived and evaluated from the perspective of my youth, and significantly reinforced by the discreet commentaries of some of the elderly members of the family regarding our little-known and almost extinct Jewish past, made me ponder the idea of studying and researching more about the subject. It was thus that I retrieved a good portion of the data that is leading me to the Sephardic origins of my family.

The retrieval of my families's past has made me better understand the present. It has given us, a more complex idea of our identity, a closer identity, freed from myths, legends and, exclusions, which were deliberate. It has also allowed me to appreciate the true role played by my ancestors within the Crypto Judaic practices that were present during the period of colonization of the region. I have been able to understand the way practices and habits were preserved despite the process of assimilation which became more evident with time.

During the first stages of my research, I felt like someone who is trying to piece together a four hundred years old puzzle. To someone like me, not dedicated to historical research as a professional endeavor, this search constitutes something especial. It might not seem to go along with the logic of our times, since to enter the terrain of genealogy and historical restoration is to bring back the past through memory. With each piece, we reenact the past modifying the present and the future.

The first sources of information to which I turned were

logically those furnished by my family, both oral and/or written documents. This took me to the beginning of the XVII century. These data, carefully handed down and well preserved, possess an acceptable degree of reliability. In the first stage of my research, I became aware of the lack of available regional religious archives from the second half of the XVI century, and the first half of the XVII century, a most controversial period, when Crypto Judaism was strongly present. Endogamous practices have also been confirmed between second and third degree related kin. The route followed by our ancestors from their departure in Andalucia and other points of the Raya of Portugal to their arrival in the Northeastern of Mexico has also been documented. Another data which has been confirmed has been the nomadic type of life practiced by the family until about the middle of the XVIII century, period when Don Jose de Escandon lead by Blas Maria de la Garza Facon came to colonize the Northern and Northeast region of the present State of Tamaulipas. Later movements displaced them to points along the banks of the Rio Bravo as they followed its course to the Gulf of Mexico

I was able to follow the family genealogy until the middle of the XVI century, but this information needs to be examined further.

I was able to further my research by comparing the data obtained from my family and that obtained from some of the recorded trials of the Inquisition, and from research already done on Crypto Judaism and converted Jews in New Spain. With this information I was able to confirm the links of my family to the regional Sephardic culture of the XVI and XVII centuries. These were not only of a religious and ideological nature, but also established kinship relations originating from the common geography and economic networks maintained by the majority of those Spanish-Portuguese families that colonized the region.

Other findings during this phase of my research which should open new directions for further work are:

a) The fact that the majority of surnames temporarily rejected by those living in the XVI and XVII centuries coincide with the surnames of some Crypto Jews tried by the Inquisition (Alonso, Falcón, Treviño, Baez, etc).

b) That families identified as being converted Jew's and my ancestors came from the same region of the Iberian peninsula.

c) That in several of the trails of the Inquisition. the name of persons linked to my ancestry appear. The linkages established go beyond geographical origin and include those of kinship.

d) That the route followed by my ancestors in New Spain is similar to that followed by converts mentioned in some of the documented trials of the Inquisition.

e) That the family history known between the XVIII and XIX century is one in which the frequent existence of disputes and differences between family members and representatives of the clergy is known, differences apparently motivated in the majority of cases by economic reasons (mining and cattle ranching).

f) That in the studies of the trials of the Inquisition, a high number of possible homonyms are found which makes us believe, given the coincidences and circumstances of the times, that some of those individuals were related to my family or were very closely linked to it.

g) That there is a strong similarity between the Sephardic culture revealed by the trials of the Inquisition, and practices still followed by our families regarding meat consumption, prohibitions about food mixing, rules of personal cleanliness, wedding rituals, funeral rites, house cleaning, the biblical passages often read, the insistence on family traditions, and the care of guarding genealogical information.

h) That it has been a continuous family tradition to live at the border, a visible strategic practice of Crypto Judaic families since about the XVI and XVII centuries.

i) Trying to establish how Crypto Judaic and Christian families that colonized Northeastern Mexico, at the beginning of the XVII century, benefitted from the Papal Bull of August 23 1604, by which all 'marranos' that confessed their mistakes (Judaic practices) within the lapse of two years, would be pardoned. It is known that the period between 1604 and 1606 was economically crucial in the colonization of Monterrey.

j) To establish the relationship between the name of "San Gregorio" used for the mines where Luis de Carvajal, "The Youngest" is said to have kept the Law of Moses, and where Manuel de Herrera, relative of Castano Sosa practiced Judaic rituals, with the "San Gregorio" ranch located not far from Monterrey, and where some Jews, escaping European nazism between 1939 and 1940 established themselves as farmers.

k) Trying to establish the relationship between Juan Alonso Lobo Guerrero, a rich miner close to Governor Zavala who entered the New Kingdom of Leon, and Dr. Don Bartolome Lobo Guerrero, member of the Santo Oficio (1580-1592) and incriminator of Governor Don Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva.

l) To verify if Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte met Martin de Zavala at the University of Salamanca (Spain).

m) To define if Duarte Leon, The Elder, preceded or headed the Fernandez de Castro family.

n) To confirm If it was incidental that at Toledo, the "Spanish Jerusalem", the surrender of Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva was signed on June 14, 1579.

ñ) To be able to verify the Sephardic origin of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, due to his closeness to the colonizing families of the New Kingdom of Leon.

o) To find out the relationship the descendants of one of the founders of Zacatecas, Baltazar de Temino, had with the family composed by the brothers Jose, Sebastiana and Juana de Treviño who were originally from Zacatecas, and were part of the initial colonization of Monterrey when Diego de Montemayor founded it once more (1596-1604)

I must mention another fruitful experience I recently had when I was able to establish contacts with institutions and historians that have information about this subject and who, also, foster research about this area. I have been able to broaden my vision and the area of my project with their

contribution that, for several years, was only personal and family oriented.

The following is a brief review of what I have achieved during this research:

1. I have been able to confirm that at the regional level there is a strong consciousness of an unknown, and barely studied and researched ethnic and religious past.

2. I have found abundant genealogical information.

3) I have been able to trace my genealogical tree to the end of the XVI century.

4) I have identified study and research groups on the subject of my research on both sides of the border .

5) I have experienced a strengthening of my identity.

6) I have perceived that religious prejudice prevails, based on the stigma generated by the Theocide attributed to the Jewish people.

7) I have confirmed that several families with possible Jewish origins continue to consider this subject hard to deal with, bringing to bear topics such as Theocide, the Inquisition and the Holocaust.

8) I have perceived that, due to the resurgence of extreme nationalisms, ethnocentrism and intolerance towards minorities, this type of research could be discouraged, and instead be conducted only as research for individual benefit without the possibility of being shared or disseminated.

9) I have been able to abandon the feeling that we belong to a people with an "Official History", and without a "Real History".

10) I have been able to perceive the risk of going from "voluntary segregation" to the "real segregation" of future generations.

11) I have been able to understand that the conceptualization of life as "black and white" has been throughout the centuries, one of the main causes that generated ethnic, and religious intolerance, and that converted Jewish people ("New Christians") of the XVI and XVII centuries in the Northeast of Mexico, and a majority of its descendants up to date, are a clear evidence that the fear of becoming targets of that intolerance, have not been eradicated, despite the three hundred years of assimilation that passed since the last grand autos-da-fe.

Before closing, I would like to mention the data found that had the greatest impact on me during the research process. One has been the confirmation that, in different periods beginning in the XVI century, an attitude of disqualifying any evidence which might support the evidence of the Sephardic origins of the colonizers of the region has been constant, that is, all evidence is disqualified before being examined.

The other was obtained from a newspaper article printed during the height of national socialism in Germany where, among other things, it said: "Due to persecutions unleashed by Hitler against the Jews in Germany, it is interesting to uncover some information relative to the Jewish communities established in the place now known as Monterrey during the penultimate decade of the XVI century... this was the most



Everardo Treviño Garza at the Albuquerque conference  
photo by Cary Herz

numerous and the best organized in New Spain".

If as we know today, the world during those years prepared itself for one of the worst times of religious as well as ethnic intolerance, I am still asking, myself, what would have happened if the National-Socialist winds had arrived on our continent? What were the real intentions of newspaper articles written for a national audience such as this one?

Other conclusions:

1. Northeastern Mexico has been mostly colonized by Portuguese "New Christians" of Sephardic origin.

2. Colonization originated simultaneously from three main points,

From La Raya de Portugal

From the area of the Panuco

From Zacatecas and Saltillo

3. The more traveled routes in order to reach Northeastern Mexico were:

a) Route One: Raya de Portugal-Sevilla-Tampico-Mazapil-Saltillo-Cerralvo-Monterrey-Monclova-Cerralvo-Camargo-Matamoros.

b) Route Two: Raya de Portugal-Sevilla-Veracruz-Mexico-Zacatecas-Cuencame-Saltillo-Monterrey-Cerralvo-Camargo-Matamoros.

4) The persecutions of the Inquisition were, in many cases, of an economic rather than religious nature.

5) There is a shortage of sources, due to situations of religious intolerance during the XVI and-XVII centuries.

6) There was no total assimilation to Catholicism in the case of the majority of the "New Christians" that colonized Northeastern Mexico.

7) Even today, among the majority of the descendants of the converted colonizers there has been no complete displacement of some of the Crypto Judaic practices prevailing during the XVI and XVII centuries.

8) Theocide continues to be a stigma that limits the free circulation of research.

9) Religious intolerance has not disappeared, and the recurring political and economic crises we are living, provoke its resurgence, discouraging this kind of research.

10) Genealogies constitute an alternative source of data for this kind of research.

11) There Is a strong current on the border of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila with Texas that is promoting regional historic research with the intention of rewriting existing official versions.

12) That this kind of research is long-term due to the limited economic resources available for its pursuit.

I would like to thank persons and organizations that supported me. Without their assistance, I could not have completed this research. They facilitated information which bolstered my desire to continue with the project. I would like to thank Mr. Stanley M. Hordes, Mrs. Schulamith Halevy, Mrs. Alicia Gojrnan de Backal, Mrs. Ana Portnoy de Berner, the Israeli Embassy of Mexic, the Cultural Institute Mexico-Israel, the Latin-American Association on Judaic Studies, Editorial Keshet, and I would also like to thank my ancestors that with their faith, worth and perseverance were able to survive physically and spiritually during times of heightened ethnic and religious intolerance.



Isabelle Medina Sandoval at our Albuquerque conference.

photo by Cary Herz

## Certificate Of Right To Return

Particles of paper pulp and ink letters  
formulate our nexus to Mount Sinai  
while synthesizing our loyal formal union

Antique Hebraic script illuminating darkening  
Ladino shadows yoking Torquemada's relentless  
obsession to break the faith of anusim converses

Half a millennium of tormenting psychological abuse is  
portrayed in the remnant faith of Jewish Hispanos silently  
suffering multiple generations of post traumatic stress

Crisp English letters on the tree of life paper  
validate the valor of our victorious Sephardic ancestors  
praising the Iberian return to our beloved Jewish family

Tearing eyes dim my acuity as I read tenderly  
this document granting me religious propriety  
and authenticating my prolonged shielded Jewish entity

Elohim protects the anusim's fragile wounded spiritual  
quarter  
for the refugee personifies the heart of the first sabra's  
mortar  
fortified for a hardier Am Israel and crafted by the Master  
Potter

by Isabelle Medina Sandoval  
December 26, 1996

# Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies - 7th Annual Conference

Denver, Colorado

July 20 - 22, 1997

Things are progressing nicely for this summer's conference which will be held at the Cherry Creek Inn in the mile high city of Denver, Colorado.

Good News!!! "Custom Travel." in Denver has arranged discount airfare for our Conference, so please use the registration form on the next page for your room and flight arrangements. Custom will be handling room and flight reservations, but note that you will need to make payment to the hotel directly, as you have in the past.

Our President. Michael Atlas Acuna has been very busy on the telephone. and meeting with members of the "Hispano Crypto Jewish Resource Center," coordinating activities between them, SCJS, and the Jewish Community Center. Our thanks go to the enthusiastic team of Dr. David Kazzaz, Dr. Isabelle Medina Sandoval, Dr. Efrén Martínez, and Catherine Sedillo.

Sunday evening's dinner will be held at the Denver JCC. and our entertainment will be provided by Cantor Galit Pinsky Gottlieb, former Cantor of Temple Emanuel in Pueblo, Colorado. The JCC is also sponsoring some other exciting activities that they have planned to coincide with the conference.

Conference registration includes a Kosher dinner and entertainment at the JCC. Also two continental breakfasts, and dinner on Monday night at the hotel. You will have the opportunity for "On your own" lunch on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, Conference registration is separate and follows the Custom Travel registration form.

Our tentative list of presenters, are: Trudy Alexi, author of "The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot", Rabbi Albert Plotkin, Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, Laura Nadworny, Dr. Stanley Hordes. Rabbi Seth Kunin, Dr. Isabelle Medina Sandoval, Schulamith Halevy, Arthur Benveniste. and Nora Glickman. A panel featuring, Edie Lopez, Dr. Evette Martínez-Hochberg, Dr. Sandoval. Catherine Sedillo, and myself has already been arranged.

Our business meeting will be held at the conclusion of the conference. And everyone is invited to attend. but only members that have paid their 1997 dues will be eligible to participate in any voting.

TO REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE SEND \$100 (\$125 for non-members) TO:  
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