

# the AMERICAN SEPHARDI

בטאון הקהלות הספרדיות בתפוצות אמריקה  
יוצא מטעם ישיבה אוניברסיטה ניו יורק



Dr. Solomon Gaon addressing historic first Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference at Yeshiva University. Seated (l to r) Dr. Samuel Belkin, President, Yeshiva University, and Mr. Joseph Kattan, Conference Chairman.

#428

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*The Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon*  
and  
*The Faculty of*  
**THE SEPHARDIC STUDIES PROGRAM**  
of  
*Yeshiva University*  
*extend warmest appreciation and blessings to the*  
*initiators of*  
*"The American Sephardi"*

**MR. AND MRS. DAVID POLITI**  
*whose generosity in making possible this publica-*  
*tion, and whose understanding, vision, and devo-*  
*tion to higher Jewish learning in America, will*  
*strengthen, enrich and help perpetuate our noble*  
*Sephardic heritage.*

MR. DAVID POLITI, recently elected Vice President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, is a Past President and Treasurer of the Mens' Club of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, New York City. He is also a Past President and active member of the Board of the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America, a founder of the Sephardic Home for the Aged and holds leadership positions in many other community organizations.

MRS. DAVID POLITI, is a Past President of the Sisterhood of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, New York City, Past President of the Womens' Division of the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America and actively participates in all worthy Jewish causes.

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

With the publication of the first bulletin of "THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI," the stage is set for a new adventure in the saga of Jewish group life in America. The editorial board of "THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI" has responded to the call of Sephardi leaders to launch this bulletin so it can serve as a clearing-house for the exchange of information and ideas on religious, educational and communal activities. Equally important, it will also provide a platform for the expression of significant issues affecting our group.

Much has been said about the obstacles facing us, the most formidable being the one of maintaining and strengthening the ties of our scattered brethren. In our increasingly shrinking world, the *physical* obstacles of establishing face-to-face contact and of opening lines of communication between our communities can be readily overcome. The crux of the problem lies more with our determination to strengthen our spiritual and cultural bonds. If "THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI" is to serve a useful purpose, it must address itself to the key objective of discovering effective means for the revitalization of the Sephardic group life here in America.

The enthusiastic responses to our first letter lead us to believe that we will succeed and that our expectations are well placed. Your reactions to this and future bulletins will serve as barometers of the vitality and interest value of our material. So keep in regular contact with us and let us know that you care!

Hyman J. Campeas

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### THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI

Bulletin for American Sephardic Congregations published semi-annually by the Sephardic Studies Program of Yeshiva University in association with the Community Service Division.

Address all correspondence to: The American Sephardi, Community Service Division, Yeshiva University, 186th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10033.

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Advisor to The American Sephardi

## Current Events

### *3rd Annual Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference—December 18th, 1966*

Mr. Victor Tarry, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference of Yeshiva University, has announced that all rabbis, officers and congregational leaders are cordially invited to participate in the 3rd Annual Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference to be held at Yeshiva University on Sunday, December 18th, 1966. Chairman of this 5727 Conference will be Mr. Robert Salomon of New York City.

The full day Program will begin with a Symposium on the theme, "Developing Responsible Synagogue Leadership Among our Youth." Discussants will be Rabbis, Synagogue Leaders, Youth Personnel and Youth Committee Chairmen of various congregations. At the luncheon, which will follow, the Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon will deliver the keynote address.

In the afternoon, several leadership workshops will grapple with different aspects of the problems and challenges related to the development of leadership within the synagogue among our young people. Professional consultants of the Yeshiva University Staff will serve as advisors during these discussions on effective Youth Programming, raising our educational standards in Talmud Torah, the development of a Sephardic Hebrew Day School, and the role of the Sisterhood in preparing our youth for the future.

The Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference will also pay tribute to men and women through whose generosity and vision the Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University has been sustained. Sephardic students of the University will be available to conduct guided tours of the University's Washington Heights campus and will participate in the sessions.

For reservations, please contact the office of Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky, Director, Sephardic Community Activities, Yeshiva University, 500 West 185th St., New York, N.Y., 10033 or telephone him at LOrraine 8-8400, Extension 264.

### *Tour for Sephardic Teenagers*

The Sephardic Community Activities Program of Yeshiva University is featuring its second Sephardic Teenagers TOUR ON WHEELS. The first tour was to the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, and the current excursion is a two day trip to the nation's Capital, Washington, D.C. on December 26th and 27th.

1966. Boys and girls, 14 to 18 years of age, from New York State, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, are invited to participate. Rabbi Harris Guedalia will supervise the program. Mrs. Blanche Attas will serve as Advisor to the girls. Many congregations are partially subsidizing this strictly kosher, educational trip which will be an exciting experience in Jewish learning and living in addition to seeing the sites. For further information, contact Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky at Yeshiva University, LOrraine 8-8400, extension 264.

### *Lecturers on Sephardic Themes*

Through the Lecture Bureau of Yeshiva University's Community Service Division, a host of outstanding lecturers are available to discuss a variety of stimulating topics of special interest to Sephardic Congregations and organizations. Without a doubt, your organization's program can be greatly enhanced by including some of these personalities in your events. For the Lecture Bureau brochure, write to Rabbi Robert S. Hirt, Community Service Division, Yeshiva University.

### *Leon A. Ligier Confers Gift Upon Yeshiva University*

Mr. Leon A. Ligier of Los Angeles, California, author of the forthcoming book, "The Odyssey of the Sephardim," presented the manuscript as a gift to Yeshiva University, in honor of the Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon, Director, Sephardic Studies Program, and Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky, Director, Sephardic Community Activities.

It is hoped that the manuscript will appear in book form in the near future and that appropriate support for the publication of this significant work will be forthcoming from the community. We invite the participation of patrons of Sephardic Jewish history who would like to bring to light this scholarly treatise which is so beautifully prepared to attract the popular reader.



Dr. Solomon Gaon addressing Second Annual Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference at Yeshiva University.

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## Scholarship Gifts Strengthen Sephardic Studies Program

At a recent meeting of the Steering Committee of Yeshiva University's Sephardic Synagogue Leadership Conference, two scholarship gifts were announced which serve as a wonderful example of generosity and dedication to the growth of the Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University which will help train leaders for the Jewish community in years to come.

A \$1,000 scholarship gift by *Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Salomon* was offered in loving memory of Henry S. Hendricks and Judge Edgar J. Nathan Jr., former presidents of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, New York City. *Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Salomon* and *Mr. and Mrs. Robert Salomon* are patrons of the Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University. It is through their munificence and wholehearted devotion to the cause of training Sephardic Youth in the high calibre Jewish education available at Yeshiva University that this entire Program has been made possible.

A \$1,000 scholarship gift by *Mr. and Mrs. Irving Elias* was conferred in loving memory of Henry S. Hendricks and Judge Edgar J. Nathan, Jr., former presidents of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, New York City. *Mr. Irving Elias* is Chairman of the Sephardic Studies Program Campaign Committee.

May the benefactors of the Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University be blessed with good health, long life and the abundance of *nachat* from their selfless and consecrated endeavors.

### Notable Notes and Quotes

"The tragic quality of independence and disunity among Sephardic Jews results in not only the weakening of Sephardic influence on World Jewry, but also the gradual and consistent decline of spiritual and religious standards."

*New York, N.Y., Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon, Congregation Shearith Israel*

. . . When history is recalled as a living present, the future is assured. Therefore, to acknowledge that one is uncompromisingly committed to a tradition involves the individual in his peoples' creative determination. The recollection of the past enables the members of a present generation to become participants in the maintenance of a culture. . . . In the words of a contemporary writer, you are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth."

*Montreal, Quebec, Rabbi Solomon Frank, Shearith Israel Synagogue Bulletin*

An outstanding regular feature of the *Temple Tifereth Israel Bulletin of the Sephardic Jewish Community of Los Angeles*, is short biographical sketches of active members of their Board and Sisterhood.

Written in a creative, heart-warming style, these personal vignettes enable the reader to meet some of our up-and-coming leaders who, by dint of their gifts and dedication, are contributing to the renaissance of the American Sephardic community.

The colorful and substantial New Year issue presented two exciting personalities: Stella Rugeti and Irwin Lieberman.

Mr. Richard Amado, long active and distinguished leader of *Temple Tifereth Israel of the Sephardic Jewish community and Brotherhood of Los Angeles*, was the recipient of the 1965 Sephardic Heritage Award. Past recipients include Mr. Leon Ligier, Mr. Joseph V. Amira, Mr. Max Candiotty and President, Aron Cohen.

*From: Temple Tifereth Israel Bulletin, May, 1966.*

"Throughout history, including our age as well, we have learned that a Jewish education is neither a luxury nor merely a tradition, but an absolute *necessity*, if we want our children to live happy and healthy lives. The vicissitudes of life and the environment make it necessary for them to know their spiritual origin and their people's heritage. Certainly, it is the best that humanity has produced. It is necessary to inculcate these values if we want our children to be proud of their Jewish identity. . . ."

*R. Nessim Gambach, in The Candlelite Bulletin of the Sephardic Jewish Center of Canarsie, Oct. 1966.*

In the St. Thomas Convent, In Avila, where the Inquisitor Torquemada lived and died, Jewish-Christian Amity Day was celebrated. Pronouncements were made by Dr. Max Mazin, President of the community and Rev. Vicente Serrano, both of whom are vice-presidents of this Society.

*From "Hakesher" Circular of the Council of the Israelite Communities of Spain.*

## Voices From the Past

" . . . these are *Khasde Avoth*—the merits of the fathers—and vainly should we plead them at the bar of history unless we too transmit parental merits *libne benehem*, unto children's children. Unless in this new world we build up colleges, support teachers, produce an Hebraic literature, and lead intelligent, faithful, observant, Jewish lives, like those that made memorable the days of our fathers in Spain, let us keep silent."

(Address delivered by Rabbi Solomon Solis Cohen at 25th anniversary celebration of Rev. Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes as Minister of the Congregation Shearith Israel of New York, 1903).

" . . . What better Jewish activity can there be than to save Jewish souls? What better work can each of our societies accomplish than to support the Jewish education of our children, who are now neglected and abandoned to their sad fate? . . .

Editorial by Albert Levy, October 17, 1930.

. . . "The most disgraceful and sad thing to note are those Sephardic parents, who just a few weeks before their sons' thirteenth birthday, just a few weeks before becoming Bar-Mitzvah, engage a tutor to teach their son a Bar-Mitzvah speech. . . .

The youngster, who never frequented a Talmud Torah, who never saw the doors of a Jewish School, who never learned Aleph of the Torah, goes up on the Sabbath of his Bar-Mitzvah to the Bimah, and in the manner of a parrot, recites his speech, without knowing what he is saying and without knowing what he is pledging. . . .

*Excerpt from La Vara Editorial "Sephardic Parents—Do Your Duty" by Albert Levy, Aug. 15, 1930.*



## A Community Profile

### *A Birdseye View of the Magen David Congregation Brooklyn, New York*

by HYMAN J. CAMPEAS

The humble beginnings of the Magen David Congregations goes back to the first decade of this century. The initial wave of Syrian-Jewish immigration stemmed from Aleppo (Halab) and Damascus. Tradition has it that the pioneering "Halabi" was Joseph Beyda who arrived in the New World in the year 1900. Some 60 families arrived before the advent of the Great War and they settled on the Lower East Side.

Moving first into a Hester Street store, they soon after established the congregation *Sha'arei Zedek Aram Zovah*, situated on the third floor of a loft building at 52 Orchard Street. They called it "Aram Zovah" because this biblical site is identified with the native city of Aleppo.

By 1917, their Talmud Torah consisted of 120 pupils and a staff of three teachers. Under the guidance of Haham Mayer Waknin, the school conducted classes Sundays (3 hours), weekdays (4 hours daily) and on Sabbath afternoon (5 hours)—a "healthy" schedule even for a Yeshivah! Classes were conducted in Arabic and Hebrew. The curriculum placed great stress on transmitting their unique Nosakh in Prayer and Cantillation and accurate pronunciation of the Hebrew language. Their meticulous rendering of the Hebrew is almost legendary. The differentiation between the guttural letters of the Dagesh Hazak and the Mapik and the distinction between Kamatz Gadol and Kamatz Katan—are all characteristic of the melodious diction of this community.

With the gradual improvement of their economic lot, the community began to move to Mapleton Park in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. In 1920, they conducted services in a private home on 66th Street, and one year later built the present synagogue at 2025-67th St., near 20th Avenue. Simultaneously, a campaign for a Talmud Torah building was held and by 1924, a school edifice was erected on the same compound. The total cost for both structures was \$150,000, no small sum for a small and struggling community! The new congregation was now called *Magen David*.

The Synagogue ritual is characteristically eastern Sephardic, with the Hazzan reciting all the prayers aloud with the congregants quietly joining him in unison. The Hazzan stands on the elaborately decorated Tebah which is situated in the middle of the synagogue.

The Hazzan on Shabbat and Festivals has considerable latitude in the creative selection of melodies for the various sections of the service. A variety of tunes for example are applicable to Nishmat, the Kaddish, Shav'at Aniyim, Semehim Betzetam, Ra-u Banim and the Kedushah.

The seating is arranged in a "U" shape with the open end facing the Aron Kodesh. The Sefer Torah is enclosed in a cylindrical wooden encasement and decorated with silver reppousee and filigree work and decorative Rimonim. The Torah is read while it is in an upright position.

Magen David is, in a sense, the Mother Community of a constellation of daughter congregations that grew and prospered since the Forties, particularly after the cessation of hostilities in 1945. The most noted was the one begun in about 1940 when some 150 families moved to the Ocean Parkway section of Flatbush and established "The Shaarei Zion Congregation."

A most significant step however, was undertaken in 1943 when the Magen David congregation decided to establish a Yeshiva Ketanah. By the year 1951, the Yeshiva Magen David was moved into a spacious new Center at 50 Avenue "P" which featured a Synagogue, a library, recreational facilities as well as modern and airy classrooms. Today, there are close to 400 students in attendance. Many of the graduates continue their Hebraic studies at Yeshivoth on the Secondary level and beyond.

With its traditional emphasis on Jewish studies, Magen David Congregation continues to sponsor Sabbath lectures on Judaism conducted by home-bred young Rabbis and Yeshiva students and Sabbath afternoon classes for young people (ages 8-17) on subjects such as Bible, Laws and Customs, Mishnah and Jewish Ethics. Special events in their calendar include a "Taanith Hadiboor Day" in the month of Shevat, a Sabbath Hebrath Tehillim group which holds an annual King David celebration on Sabbath Calla or on Shavuoth itself. Other activities include a regular Midrash class, a weekly Rashi class and a daily Zohar class. A Hazanooth class for adults trains its participants in oriental melodies.

An exciting event is the annual Lag B'omer celebration (Hilulath Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai) which is sponsored by the Rabbinical Council of Syrian and Near Eastern Jewish Communities in America. Magen David Congregation, 67th Street (Rabbi Saul Kassin) Ahi Ezer (Damascan) (Rabbi Zion Maslaton), Shaarei Zion, (Rabbi Jacob Kassin and Rabbi Abraham Hecht), Congregation Ahava Ve'Ahva (Rabbi Halfon Savdie) Shaarei Torah (Rabbi Zebulun Lieberman), Magen David of Ocean Parkway, Ahi Ezer, Ocean Parkway, and Congregation Ahavath Achim, participate jointly in this characteristically Sephardic festivity.

## Recent Articles You May Want to Read

*Helen Shirazi*, "The Communal Pluralism of Sephardi Jewry in the United States," *Le Judaisme Sephardi*, 1:31, January, 1966. The author briefly traces the historical thread of organized Sephardic life in America from colonial times to the present with particular emphasis on the varied groupings that have come from former territories of the Ottoman-Empire and settled in Metropolitan New York at the beginning of this century.

*Irving Benveniste*, "The Glory and the Tragedy of Rhodes," *Kol Sepharad*, 2:3-4, March/April, 1966. A native of Rhodes, the writer returns to the island for a short visit. He describes the role of the Sephardim from the period of the Spanish Inquisition to the time of the Nazi holocaust.

*Israel Grama*, "From Yemen to Boro Park," *Jewish Life*, 33:4, March-April, 1966. A bird's-eye view of the history of Yemenite Jewry is given as background material for the description of the tiny community now established in Boro Park, Brooklyn.

*Jacob Beller*, "Among Jews and Crypto-Jews in Portugal," *Jewish Life*, 33:5, May-June, 1966. This is an interesting account of Jewish Portuguese history from the period of the Inquisition to the present time with particular emphasis on manifestations of Jewish group life among recent arrivals, both Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Some attempt is made to explain why the restoration of the Anusin (Marranos) to their ancestral faith failed.

## Literary Contribution

*Excerpts from the forthcoming book, "THE ODYSSEY OF THE SEPHARDIM," by Leon A. Ligier.*

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*Author's Introductory Note:* The arrival in Israel of four families of (so-called) "Marranos" from Majorca, has stirred much discussion. The Jewish Agency, sponsors of the Majorcan emigrants erroneously classified them as "Marranos."

The term "Marrano" is generally accepted as meaning "Crypto-Jews"—Practicing Judaism in secret while outwardly passing as Christians. When the opportunity presented itself, the "Marrano" discarded all pretense to Christianity and openly professed Judaism.

The "Conversos" of Majorca were devoid of any real affection for the Jewish religion after their conversion. They lost all traces of their ancestry and generation after generation continued to profess the Christian religion. After being good Catholics for over five-hundred years, called themselves "Marranos" and were taken to Israel.

L. A. L.

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### *The Background of the "Chuetas" of Majorca*

The Island of Majorca, the largest and by far the richest of all Islands of Spain, had been prosperous under the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Visigoths and the Moors.

It is said: the Jews had come to Majorca before Hadrian (117-138) C.E. They lived in Palma, the capital and enjoyed peace and prosperity under most of the rulers. The shortest period of peace and prosperity was under the Visigoths and the Spaniards.

In 720 C.E. the Moors drove out the Visigoths from the Island and ordained that religious tolerance should be extended to all. Under Moorish domination the Island of Majorca became rich; the Moors improved the agriculture, terraced the mountainside for the culture of olives, and were the first to build irrigation canals.

The Jews of Majorca, having maintained close contact with other Jews in Morocco, Egypt, Asia Minor and Flanders, extended their trade and Palma became a commercial center. In characteristic fashion, the Jews lived near their Synagogues on "La Calle del Kahal" and the Mount Zion Synagogue.

On December 31st, 1229, King James I of Aragon (1213-1276) captured Palma from the Moors and with the help of a few Moorish renegades, soon secured the whole Island. The Aragonese nobility took over the rich farmlands and the Jews left to carry on as before and to improve commerce and industry.

### *The Holocaust of 1391*

The holocaust of 1391 that spread all over Spain, reached the Island of Majorca in August. The Juderia of Palma was assaulted and every Jew in sight was murdered. Before the Governor of the Island could interfere, 350 Jews were killed and 850 took refuge in the Royal palace. Hundreds who sought refuge in the Churches were forcibly baptised. When calm was finally restored, Palma was in ruins, and the only Jews alive in the Island of Majorca were those converted to the Christian religion. One of the Synagogues was demolished. "La Sinagoga de La Calle del Kahal" and the Mount Zion Synagogue were taken over by the Church and were converted for Christian use by the new "conversos."

While most of the converted Jews in Spain continued to profess "Marranism" the "Conversos" merged with the general Christian population within one or two generations.

The Conversos of Majorca, in spite of their great devotion to the Christian religion, they earned nothing but distrust. Although they became more Catholic than the Catholics of old, and tried to show their strong attachment to their newly embraced religion, they were shunned by the Majorcan Catholics, who continued to identify them with disdain as "Chuetas."

The "Chuetas" were still discriminated against as late as the 18th century.

Charles III King of Spain (1711-1740) recognizing the equality of the "Chuetas" with other vassals and, having proof of their loyalty to Church and State, decreed they should be admitted to all professions, also be allowed to live in any part of the city of Palma, the Capital, or any other city in the Island. The decree provided severe punishment to those who insulted or shouted at them in a contemptuous manner; it prohibited their being termed Jews, Hebrews or Chuetas.

In 1492 all Jews were banished from Spain and its dependencies, but the "Chuetas" remained in the Island of Majorca, as good Catholics.

*Sephardic Studies Program  
Faculty Appointment Announced*



Rabbi M. Asher Murciano, spiritual leader of the Sephardic Jewish Center of the Bronx, has been appointed to the faculty of the Sephardic Studies Program at Yeshiva University effective September, 1966, Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon, Director of the Program, announced.

A native of Morocco, Rabbi Murciano teaches a course titled, "The History of Sephardic Jews in the Middle East and Israel," at the University's Erna Michael College of Hebraic Studies.

Rabbi Murciano assumed his position at the Sephardic Jewish Center in 1953, following two years of service as rabbi of Mikveh Israel Congregation in Philadelphia.

The Yeshiva University instructor began his religious studies at the Rabbinical College of Tangiers and was ordained by the Mirror Yeshiva of New York. He is a 1958 graduate of C.C.N.Y. where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree for studies in the field of Romance Languages. In 1960, Rabbi Murciano received a Master of Arts degree from Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School, where he studied Jewish History.

Currently enrolled in programs leading to Ph.D. degrees at both New York University and Columbia University, he is writing his thesis on the sources and liturgy of the Arabic and Spanish traditions of the Jews of Morocco, a subject on which he has lectured widely.

Rabbi Murciano speaks Spanish, Castillian Ladino, French, Arabic, and Hebrew fluently. He recently wrote articles about the Jewish community of Tangiers for "Le Flambeau," a French publication of Yeshiva College.

He resides at 80 McClellan Street, Bronx, N. Y., with his wife and two children.

## Personalities in the News

### *Highland Park, New Jersey*

Mr. Meyer Namias, President of the Congregation Etz Ahaim, announces that Rabbi Raphael Wizman, originally from Casablanca, has been engaged as spiritual leader of the congregation. Rabbi Wizman was awarded a scholarship to study at the Mirrer Yeshiva in 1956. He has since received ordination from the Chaim Berlin Rabbinical Academy and was associated with the Sephardic Congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Hillel Academy of Perth Amboy before joining Etz Ahaim. Rabbi Wizman was placed at Congregation Etz Ahaim in Highland Park, New Jersey, through the Community Service Division, Yeshiva University.

### *Brooklyn, New York*

Mr. Louis E. Rousso, who had just completed a four-year term as President of the Sephardic Home for the Aged, has been installed as Chairman of the Board. Mr. Jack Baker was installed as President. The ceremonies are beautifully described and illustrated in the August, 1966 issue of the "SEPHARDIC HOME NEWS."

Mair Jose Benardeté, Professor of Romance Languages at Brooklyn College and the outstanding scholar on Sephardic folklore, was honored on the occasion of his retirement. See *STUDIES IN HONOR OF M. J. BENARDETE (Essays in Hispanic and Sephardic Culture.)* New York; Las Americas, 1965.

### *New York, New York*

Rev. Mr. Harris Guedalia has recently joined the Ministry of Congregation Shearith Israel. He received his B.A. with honors from N.Y.U. and his "Semihah" and M.H.L. degree from Yeshiva University. He continued his rabbinical studies at London's Jews College and simultaneously served in the London Sephardic community under Dr. Haham Gaon's guidance. He returned to New York after receiving a Certificate in graduate Talmudic studies.

Rabbi Harris Guedalia was guest speaker at the One Day Retreat at Yeshiva University held by the B'nai Brith Organization—Adult Education Institute of Northern New Jersey on October 16th 1966. The topics were "The World of Maimonides," and "The Sephardic Jewish Community."

*Rabbi Ariel Toaff*, son of Dr. Elio Toaff, Chief Rabbi of Italy has come to study at Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School.

*Rabbi Henry Toledano*, formerly of the faculty of Yeshiva University's Sephardic Studies Program has accepted a post at the University of Minnesota where he is Associate Professor of Semitics. Rabbi Toledano retains his association with Yeshiva University and serves as a field consultant for the Sephardic Community Activities Program. He is available for lectures.

*Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky*, Director, Sephardic Community Activities recently lectured on "Sephardic Jewry in America—Its Prospects and Problems," to the Women's Division of the Yeshiva of Spring Valley, Spring Valley, New York and to the High School students of the Bayside Jewish Center. Rabbi Dobrinsky was Guest Speaker at the opening meeting of the Bronx Sephardic Jewish Center's Sisterhood on Monday, October 3rd where he spoke on "The Relevance of Succoth in Modern Living."

*Rabbi Solomon Maimon* of the Sephardic Congregation Bikur Holim, Seattle, Washington, was a featured participant at the recently held Rabbinical Council of America Convention.

*Rabbi Ismael Cohen*, a musmach of Yeshiva University currently visiting from Congregation Moriah in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was a warmly welcomed guest at the Yeshiva University Rabbinic Alumni Convention in Monsey Park, New York.

### *Washington, D.C.*

At the U.O.J.C.A. Convention held on Thanksgiving Weekend, *Mr. David Politi* of New York City was elected Vice President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

At that same convention, *Mr. Victor Tarry* of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, N.Y.C., a leading figure in American Sephardic life, was reelected President of the National Organization of Orthodox Synagogue Administrators.

### *Long Beach, New York*

*Mr. Joseph Levi*, President of the Sephardic Jewish Center of Long Beach, recently received a Leadership Award from the Yeshiva University Synagogue Council and was also awarded the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregation's President's Award.



## Questions to the Editor

### *What is the Derivation of the Name "Sephardi?"*

SEPHARAD is a geographical point mentioned in the Bible. The exact location remains uncertain. With the centuries, the name became identified with the Iberian Peninsula. Jews who resided in Spain, or their descendents, were therefore called "SEPHARDIM". Maimonides for example, appended the title, "ha-Sephardi" to his name. Today, the term is usually applied to all those Jews who do not identify themselves with the Ashkenazic community.

### *How Many Sephardic Jews Are There in the United States?*

No nationwide census has ever been taken. Estimates vary from 60,000 to well over 100,000. With the influx of Egyptian, North African and Cuban refugees during the last decade, these estimates will probably move upward.

### *What is Ladino?*

Ladino is Judeo-Spanish. It is spoken by almost a million Sephardim. Ladino is usually written in Hebrew characters. Ladino works can be found in the Libraries of Yale, Harvard, New York Public Library, Jewish Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University, Hebrew Union College, Y.I.V.O. and the Library of Congress.

### *How Did "Ezra Besaroth" Get its Name?*

The Hebrew phrase "Ezra Besaroth" literally means "aid when in trouble." A society of this name existed in Ederne (Adrianople) Turkey. It was a philanthropic organization that supported a Yeshiva. Its graduates served admirably as Rabbis in many parts of the Near East. "Ezra Besaroth" also maintained a small hospital and a lodge for Palestinian "Sheluhim" and other wayfayers. Funds for the support of its activities, were raised through an annual tax called "El Diezmo," or "The Tithe," which every Jew, rich or poor, had to pay. Immigrants from Ederne in America named their own organization after its illustrious counterpart in the old country.

## What's in a Name?

### *Hispano-Arabic Names*

It is a known historical fact that Arab dominion over the Iberian Peninsula extended over several centuries and that Arabic was the lingua franca of that time. To cite an example, the Spanish compound "al" meaning "to the," corresponds to the Arabic article *al*. Sephardic names that begin with Al, often have an Arabic ring to them. The following names undoubtedly can be attributed to this influence:

Alboher	Alhadeff	Alalouf	Alcosser
Aldoroty	Altaras	Albahae	Almaleh
Alfasso	Algazy	Albala	Alnekave

### *Passover Names*

Many family names are derivations of popular Hebraic terms used in Jewish religious practices. For example, we have well-known Sephardic names related to Passover, such as: PESAH, MASSA, (MATZA) AND HAMETZ. COLCHAMIRA is most probably related to the Aramaic "Kol Khomira" which are the first words recited when removing the leaven (Hametz) from the household on the eve before Passover. It means "all leaven."

### *Place Names*

Often, a name will give some inkling of the original geographical area from which that family hails. Family names such as TOLEDO or TOLEDANO would probably indicate that their forefathers came from the city of Toledo, Spain. ESKENAZI or ASHKENAZI might reflect an ancestor who resided in ASHKENAZ (Hebrew for Germany). In a similar manner, SARFATTY is a derivation of TSORFATH (Hebrew for France). IRUSHALMI means, "one who hails from Jerusalem."

(Contributors to "WHAT'S IN A NAME?" are urged to send their entries to Editor—"The American Sephardi," Yeshiva University.)

## Letters to the Editor

. . . We extend our warmest greetings to you and wish you success in your new venture.

*Skokie, Illinois. Nathan I. Weiss, Rabbi, Iran Hebrew Congregation.*

☆ ☆ ☆

I am personally looking forward to the proposed Bulletin and I wish you every success.

*Rochester, New York. David Nahmias, President, Congregation Light of Israel*

☆ ☆ ☆

I was delighted to hear of the founding of "The American Sephardi." It will fill a great need in our community. We shall of course give you every cooperation within our power.

*Brooklyn, N. Y. Irving Bass, Executive Director, Sephardic Home for the Aged.*

☆ ☆ ☆

Dear Mr. Campeas, and my Good Fellow Sephardi:

I would like to contribute book reviews on the important books published dealing with scholarship around our tradition and culture. . . .

*Brooklyn, New York. Prof. M. J. Benardeté, Department of Modern Languages, Brooklyn College.*

☆ ☆ ☆

I was very happy to learn the news that at a recent meeting of the Steering Committee, it was decided to publish a Sephardi Bulletin. There is a sore need for one.

*New York, N.Y. Simon S. Nessim, U.S. Member of Presidium, World Sephardi Federation.*

☆ ☆ ☆

Gentlemen:

The Rabbinical Council of America wishes you every success in the publication of "The American Sephardi."

*New York, N.Y., Rabbi Israel Klavan, Executive Vice President, Rabbinical Council of America.*

## Sephardic Studies Program

The Sephardic Studies Program was established at Yeshiva University in 1964 to help preserve the rich Sephardic heritage and develop rabbis, teachers and other key leaders for the Sephardic Jewish community. The Program operates on two levels, one providing informational, educational, and cultural community service for Sephardic congregations throughout the United States. The other level provides courses on the history, culture, and traditions of Sephardic Jewry which are integrated into regular courses of study at Yeshiva College, The Erna Michael College of Hebraic Studies and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. The Program is directed by Rev. Dr. Haham Solomon Gaon, Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic Congregations of the British Commonwealth in association with Yeshiva University's Community Service Division.



Sephardic Student Committee with Rabbis: M. A. Murciano, H. C. Dobrinsky and A. Toaff.

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DR. SAMUEL BELKIN, President, Yeshiva University

DR. EMANUEL RACKMAN, Assistant to the President, Yeshiva University

REV. DR. HAHAM SOLOMON GAON, Director Sephardic Studies Program,  
Yeshiva University

RABBI MORRIS H. FINER, Director, Community Service Division, Yeshiva  
University

RABBI HERBERT C. DOBRINSKY, Director Sephardic Community Activities and  
Director, Rabbinic Placement, Community Service Division, Yeshiva  
University

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