

The Museum of Sefardi and Anousim Heritage

at Netanya Academic College



Netanya Academic College
Center of Higher Education



Architecture

The structural architecture follows the narrative of “another existence,” resonate of forced converts in an alien environment. The architectural motif is expressed in a “body within body”, “environment enveloping environment,” “structure within structure.” The image of a Jewish heart beating in a spurious body is projected onto a structure wrapped in a hidden, concealing envelope. The architectural configuration includes “layers,” “costumes,” “boxes,” and leaves the structural core in its sincerity and purity.

The building’s contours produce openings, spaces, and windows, enabling passage between the outside and the deep, hidden, concealed, and breathing inside. The architecture of the entire structure is inclusive of its immediate environment and produces hidden spaces with at the top-openings towards Heaven.

Included in the building are exhibition areas, an extensive library, music room, study areas and classrooms, a restaurant, gift shop, and administrative offices.

Conferences are to take place in a sophisticated auditorium. Classes and workshops are located close to the exhibit wings.

In the basement of the building, partially hidden, an experiential route is planned which will reflect episodes from Hispano-Jewish and Anousim history.

The architecture of the exterior walls illustrates, on the one hand, the sense of mystery, concealment, and pretense, of “another life” of constant dilemmas and alternatives in an alienated environment, and on the other, the opening up, release, return to Judaism. The architectural emphasis is on double veiling of walls and random openings in the shell casing, accentuated by lighting and color that flicker between the “boxes,” all of which stress the mystery that is taking place inside.

This incongruous juxtaposition comes across forcefully when contrasted with the dramatic intensity of the transparent, open main entrance. The front entrance is based on a wavy shell, free, dynamic, and colorful with permanent prints from the history of Sefardic Jewry and the crypto-Jews, along with complementing informative projection screens.

This bright façade will reflect the entire gamut of the center’s activities in the evening, and only its main ones during the day.

The rear façade, more modest in nature, is intended for academic use. It includes a quiet functional entrance for students and other participants in learning activities.

David Nofar

Architect

<http://nofararchitects.com/>

The Project

The vision of the Museum was conceived by the leadership of Netanya Academic College and the City of Netanya, who also generously donated the land for it.

The Sefardi and Anousim Museum will illuminate one of the most significant, albeit publicly neglected periods of the Jewish nation's history, bringing to light Spanish Jewry's rich past and highlighting its extraordinary, enduring, and multi-faceted intellectual and cultural contribution to Jewish heritage as well as the great impact it has had on the Jewish people as a whole.

Many of the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula who were forced to convert to Christianity during the late Middle Ages (the "Anousim") secretly remained loyal to their ancestral people and religion for many generations.

Our generation has seen a phoenix-like awakening of Jewish consciousness among descendants of the Anousim throughout the Western hemisphere. This is a significant movement that cannot and should not be ignored. Its current and potential dimensions present the Jewish world and the State of Israel with a remarkable challenge. Challenge, and great hope. If approached correctly, this movement could assume epic dimensions of far-reaching historical, religious, and national ramifications. We are convinced that the Museum will serve as the center of gravity for this issue, academically and educationally facilitating the return of those who wish readopt their ancestral heritage and rejoin their historic people.

The "Paseo Sefarad"

The intention is to build a dynamic Museum that will serve as a vibrant educational institution for youth and adults alike. We envisage a visit to the Museum as an integral part of the heritage education curriculum of all Israeli high school students, IDF soldiers, and other groups from Israel and abroad.

Accordingly, the Museum's centerpiece will be the "Paseo Sefarad," a historical-cultural experiential route describing Hispano-Jewry in medieval Spain. This route, which will start on the ground level, will be designed to transmit five hundred years of history and culture of the Jews in Spain through a "Time Tunnel," using the most modern technological tools to create an authentic experience. This route will continue underground to the basement of the building, whose architectural environment reflects the history of the Anousim as told through descriptions of crypto-Jewish life, the Inquisition, and specific individuals and episodes from the period. From there, visitors will "travel" through some of the main locations of the Anousim Diaspora, such as Amsterdam, London, Recife, the Caribbean Islands, and the Ottoman Empire, finally returning to the reality of the descendants of the Anousim today.

The advisory board will include leading scholars in all relevant fields of knowledge and expertise alongside internationally renowned art and design specialists.

The Schalit Gallery

The permanent exhibition, the donation of the late Mr. Elie Schalit and his wife Ana, is comprised of a unique collection of books, documents, and artifacts concerning Sefardi Jewish maritime achievements during the Age of Discovery. It reflects in particular Mr. Schalit's strong interest in the career and accomplishments of Christopher Columbus. It also contains the narrative history of Mr. Schalit's own rich and unique biography and his own work in the maritime industry.

The Museum will host other changing exhibitions relevant to its themes.

The Library

This is a large collection of resources on the history and customs of Anousim, as well as archival and genealogical material. The core of the library was donated to Netanya Academic College by Casa Shalom, founded by Gloria and Lesley z"l Mound over thirty years ago. Its resources are open and available to researchers and general public.

Music Room

This room will present a collection of recorded music mainly in Ladino and will be open for researchers and the general public.

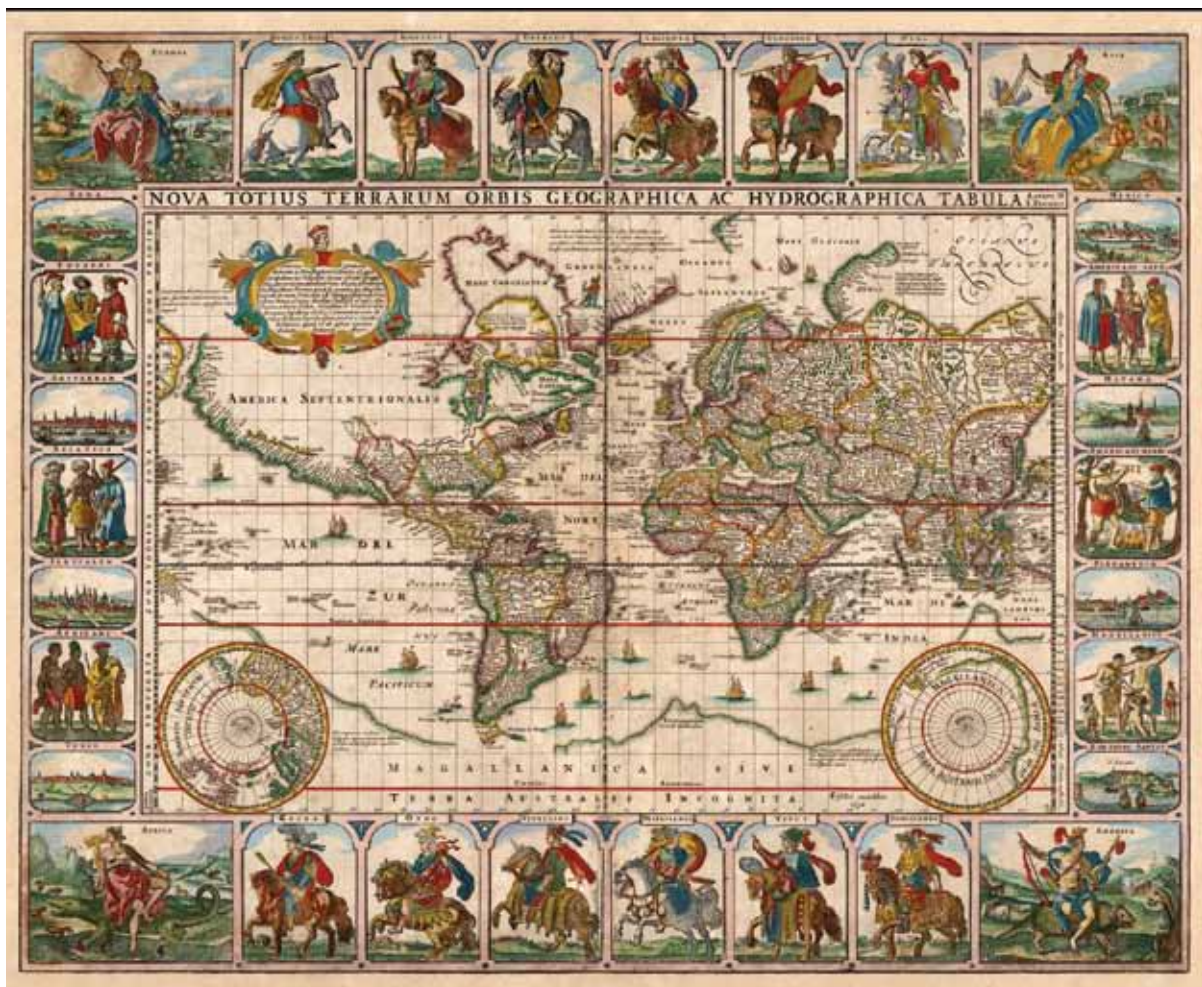
Introduction

Sefardi Jewry - A Debt of Honor

The Jewish people have gone to great lengths to maintain the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and the various horrors committed against the Jewish people, internalizing the lessons we have learned from these ordeals so that we may secure our future as a people. In addition, the Jewish people mobilized to support the struggle of Soviet Jewry, working to tear down the Iron Curtain for the sake of the physical and spiritual freedom of a community which was severed from its roots for seventy years while under Communist rule.

Our people have not, however, fully acknowledged the legacy of Spanish Jewry, whose “Golden Age” played a central role in shaping Jewish collective identity. We have yet to repay our debt to this vibrant and influential community that was either forcibly converted to Christianity or expelled from Spain. Following the Expulsion, these Jews were compelled to wander the world for centuries. Those forcibly converted who chose to remain Jews despite living in areas under Spanish and Portuguese control, were forced to live a perilous and secret double life. We have a historic duty to remember and study both the glorious legacy of Spanish Jewry, as well as the persecutions, forced conversions, Inquisition and Expulsions.

As incredible as it might seem, millions of people from Hispano-Jewish descent retain remnants of their ancestors’ traditions. Many of them are completely unaware of their Jewish roots. Others have been discovering their ancestral genealogy, and some want to learn more about or even seek to reconnect with the heritage of their forefathers. This recent phenomenon can be seen in the Iberian Peninsula and, indeed, throughout the entire Western hemisphere, from the USA through most of the countries of Central and South America.



New Map of the World, from Hendrik Hondius "Atlas Novus," Amsterdam, 1630.



Wall decorations in the El Transito synagogue (late 14th c.) in Toledo.

Historical Background

Intermingled with periods of persecution and suffering, the Jewry of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages knew long periods of prosperity and stability under the rule of both Islam and Christianity. This “Golden Age” was characterized by extraordinary literary and intellectual achievements. Most of the classical works in philosophy, liturgical and secular poetry, mysticism, biblical and talmudic exegesis, halakhic codices, and Hebrew linguistics were composed by Sefardi sages. This community also achieved far-reaching communal privileges through prominent courtiers who rendered important services to the Crown.

However, this glorious Jewish community was to endure a century of violence and upheaval, which eventually brought about its destruction. In 1391, anti-Jewish pogroms swept the country. Many Jews were killed as martyrs. Under the threat of death, a great many of the Jews chose baptism over martyrdom. The Hebrew term for those forced converts is Anousim.

During this time, a significant number of former Jews entered Spanish society as New Christians. Some of them still clung secretly to Judaism. Ninety years after the initial mass forced conversions, the Spanish Inquisition was established in order to extirpate by fire the “Jewish heresy” that persisted among the New Christians, or Marranos (meaning “pigs,” a pejorative term attached to the Anousim).

A few years later, in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella ordered all the Jews of Spain (those not already converted and living as Anousim) be expelled from the country. Most of them crossed the border to find haven in Portugal. However, this haven abruptly ended five years later, when the entire Jewish population of Portugal was forcibly converted by order of the Crown and denied the opportunity to emigrate elsewhere.

Over the subsequent centuries, many of the descendants of the Anousim made their way out of Iberia and into the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Some were seeking economic opportunities, while others just wished to flee as far as they possibly could from the long arm of the Inquisition.



מכון לחקר INSTITUTE FOR
יהדות ספרד SEFARDI AND
והאנוסים ANOUSIM STUDIES

המכללה האקדמית נתניה NETANYA ACADEMIC COLLEGE



The Institute's Anousim Library



Bnei Anousim in Recife (Brazil) celebrating Purim

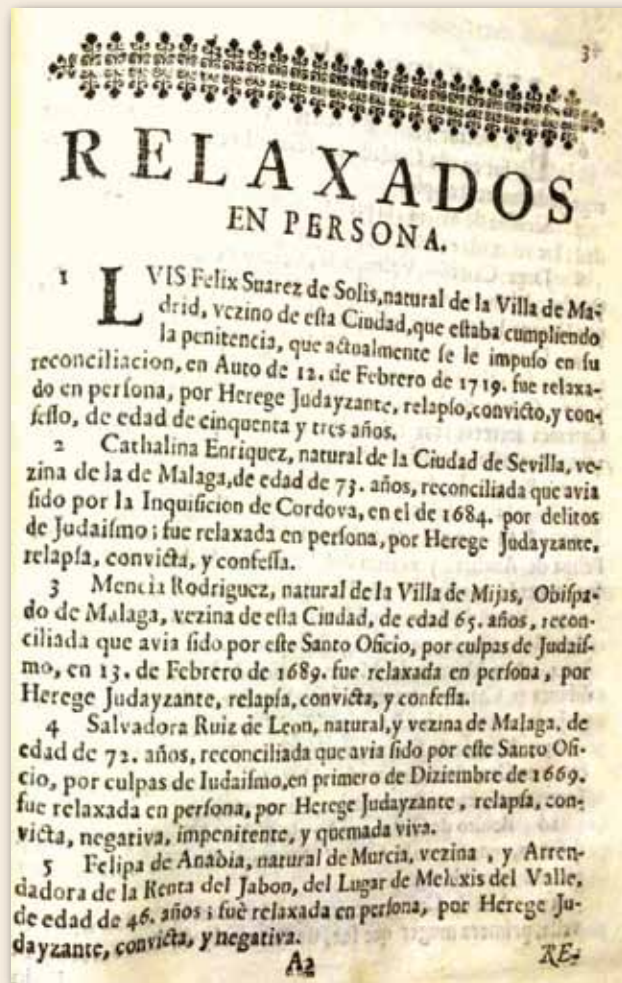
The Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies

The Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies at Netanya Academic College (NAC) in Israel was created in response to the extraordinary ongoing phenomenon of the attempt to “reclaim” or “readopt” Hispano-Jewish heritage by descendants of the Anousim.

This wish to identify with the Jewish people in some measure, sometimes even to convert or “return,” is quite unique. Although it is individualistic by nature, quantitatively this is a significant movement and cannot be ignored. Its current and potential dimensions present the Jewish world and the State of Israel with a remarkable challenge. If approached correctly, this movement could assume dimensions with far-reaching historical, religious, national, and even international ramifications.

Mission Statement

Netanya Academic College established the Institute with the aim to serve as the leading global research institution dedicated to the history and culture of Sefardi Jewry, with a specific focus on the history of the Anousim, including the study of the motives and processes of the desire of contemporary individuals of Hispanic descent to connect on some level with their Sefardi roots and heritage.



A page from a list of "judaizers" condemned to the stake in the 18th century. Published by the Spanish Inquisition.

The Institute's Aims Include

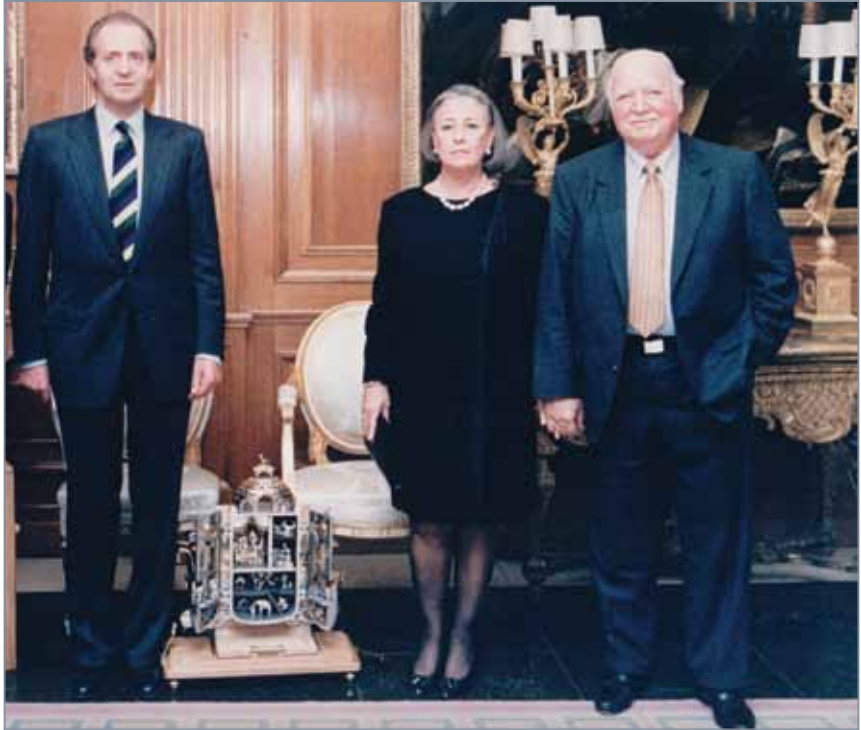
- Conduct historical research of Sefardi Jewry and its cultural legacy with special emphasis on the history of the Iberian Anousim, their Diaspora, and those who claim to be their modern descendants.
- Collect data on the Anousim Diaspora, and provide genealogical research services to individuals.
- Educate youth about Sefardi heritage and increase awareness of the contemporary search for Ibero-Jewish roots and identity throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- Alert decision makers in Israel and world global Jewish institutions about issues concerning this phenomenon.

Activities

- Research workshops, seminars, lectures, cultural and artistic events in Ladino, adult and youth educational seminars, academic publications.
- An annual international academic conference.
- Competitive research grants.
- A Genealogical Research Unit for general research and as service to individuals seeking their Iberian-Jewish roots.
- Youth cultural trips to Spain and Portugal.
- Expansion of our unique scholarly library containing thousands of books and rare documents.

The Institute's offices and library will be located at the Museum. Its conferences, lectures, seminars, and other activities will vitalize the Museum and provide a platform for visits, events, and musical performances, as well as research and education.

Multilanguage Website: Sefardi-anousim.org.il



The late Elie and Ana Schalit, with the king of Spain, 1992



Mr. Samuel Pinto, Mr. Shmuel Sabah, The Sabah Foundation, with Prof. Zvi Arad, 2014

Netanya Academic College

Netanya Academic College has brought the spirit of higher education to the narrowest part of the State of Israel – only eight miles from border to sea.

Netanya Academic College has also brought higher education to the million residents of the Sharon and periphery, which include hundreds of thousands of new immigrants to Israel as well as native-born Israelis, who have settled this area that protects the heart of the State of Israel.

The Netanya Academic College boasts an attractive modern campus with manicured lawns, environmental sculptures and secluded restful corners. The interior design of the College was carefully planned with an eye to detail and atmosphere, as reflected in the roomy corridors, spacious study halls, radio and TV studios, large library, computer laboratories and a trading room. The campus includes the Feldman Water Sports Center with its tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, swimming pool, and more.

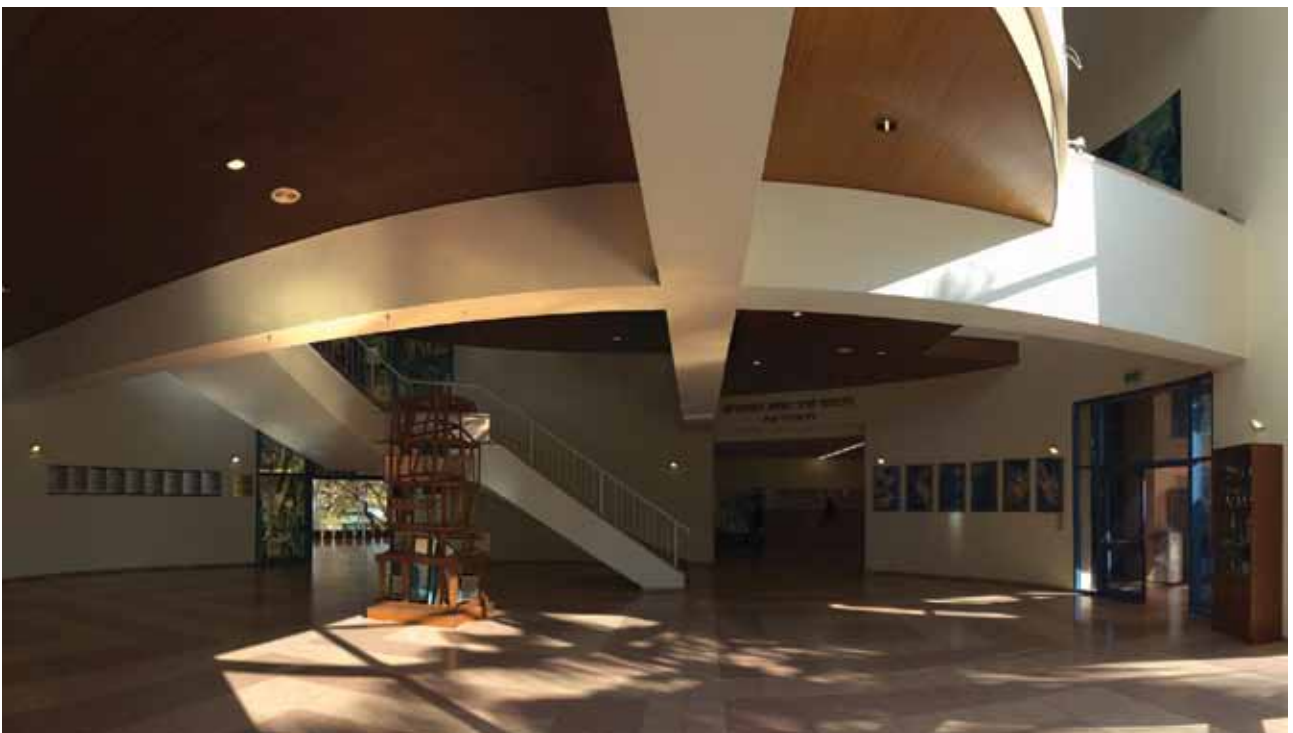
The Netanya Academic College is accredited by the Council for Higher Education to award Bachelor Degrees in a wide range of subjects, such as Law, Business Administration, Computer Science and Mathematics, Behavioral Sciences, Communications, Insurance, Banking & Finance. The College also offers an MBA degree in Business Administration (in marketing, finance, multi-purpose administration and information systems management and Management of Natural Resources and Environment), an LL.M. degree in Law, an MA degree in Communication and an MA degree in Behavioral Science. MA in Banking & Finance, MA in Real Estate, and MA in Health Management (M.H.M). The degrees awarded by the Mike Feldman School of Banking & Finance and the Ernst and Margot Hamburger School of Insurance are unique in this country. The College faculty consists of professors and scientists of renown who hold Ph.D. degrees from leading universities worldwide.

The college is a full-blown university campus, and aims to become the Sharon area university. Students will always be at the center of this institution, and to that end we emphasize the importance of teaching and research, and offer learning tracks that give our graduates the opportunity to reach the top of Israeli business and economy.

From the very start, Netanya Academic College has cooperated with the IDF and other Defense Ministry bodies. Ministry of Defense scholarships are awarded every year to students who were or are combat soldiers, and hundreds of discharged soldiers come to receive scholarships for higher education in Israel.

The Center for Strategic Dialogue was previously headed by Minister of Defense and former Chief of Staff Ehud Barak; Major-General (Res.) Danny Yatom, former head of the Mossad and former MK; former Minister of Intelligence, Dan Meridor; and today is headed by Major-General (Res.) Dr. Ephraim Sneh, former Deputy-Minister of Defense.







Cosmographical diagram from the famous *Catalan Atlas* (1375)
by Abraham Cresques of Mallorca

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