

# Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies

## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY - 2017

### ❖ *Academic Research*

- ISAS Head Prof. Avi Gross attended meetings in Lisbon and Madrid in April to discuss a **digitization project** of the **Inquisition genealogical files and documents** in the **Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid)** and the **Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon)**. While he was there, Avi conducted the first night Seder in the Belmonte synagogue, Beit Eliahu.



- In October, Prof. Gross attended the inaugural meeting on the proposed **project to preserve Jewish heritage** in the **Trás-os-Montes region** in northern Portugal. Area municipalities, most notably from the town of Chaves, will be applying to the European Union for funding to identify and preserve Jewish and crypto-Jewish artifacts, texts, customs, and traditions of Anousim in the region. The ISAS would play a role in the academic planning and supervision of the project.



- The ISAS is working in conjunction with communal entities in Brazil and public entities in Israel on a **Mapping Project of Bnei Anousim communities in Brazil**. The initial data collection phase of this groundbreaking and far-reaching project includes: identifying and contacting the communities; collecting information; and partnering with Israel's Ministry of the Diaspora and Jewish Agency, as well as with the CONIB (Federation of Jewish Communities in Brazil), who expressed interest in the project.



## *Genealogical Research*

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The ISAS conducts genealogical research throughout the year. Our chief researcher, Dr. Abraham Garcia Torres, prepares two types of reports:

- **Basic Genealogical Research Report:** For applicants who wish to determine if they have Anousim/Sefardi ancestors.
- **Report of Sefardi Origin:** The Federation of the Jewish Communities in Spain (Madrid) and the Jewish Community in Lisbon, Portugal have authorized the ISAS to prepare reports certifying Sefardi origin in order to qualify for their respective Certificates of Sefardi origin to satisfy requirements for citizenship stipulated by the new laws enacted in both countries.

We are proud to say that along with the Reports of Sefardi Origin that we prepared for descendants of Sefardim expelled from Spain (all of which have been approved), we have also succeeded in assisting Bnei Anousim to meet the rigorous requirements for the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain's Certificate of Sefardi Origin, culminating in Spanish citizenship for these Anousim.

Applicants for either report may sign a waiver allowing their genealogical information to be added to our genealogical database for research purposes.



## *Personal and Communal Identity*

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- **"Connection" Seminar for Bnei Anousim leaders.** This groundbreaking and very successful event was the first seminar in Israel for lay leaders of Bnei Anousim. Nineteen participants from Brazil were selected for our two-week pilot seminar in February/March. The Brazilian Bnei Anousim communities are the largest, most structured, and most active in the world.



This first Connection Seminar had four main objectives: to create a leadership core; to strengthen Jewish identity; to create networking/infrastructure; and to legitimize Bnei Anousim in the eyes of "official" Israel. To accomplish these goals, the pilot program included mini-courses in Jewish thought, tradition, and identity, intermixed with educational and inspiring excursions around Israel, including a

Shabbat at Sephardic House in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. We also arranged for meetings with several government representatives, rabbis, academics, and journalists.

In Jerusalem, the group was able to meet with several prominent government figures, including Dr. Ofir Ha-Ivri, head of the committee for "emerging" Jewish communities around the world in the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs; Eliyahu Shaul of the Latin America Department in the Jewish Agency; and Oren Bar El, Latin America Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Our main goal for those meetings was to educate the different ministries about the Bnei Anousim communities and their close affinities to the people of Israel and to the state of Israel. The ISAS is expected to play a crucial role during that process in the international arena.

The meeting with the Emerging Communities Committee was particularly rewarding. As a result of our encounter, the Committee will recommend sending emissaries to the concerned areas and to train lay leaders in Israel. They will also recommend revising the criteria of the right of Aliya to Israel and of permission to enter Israel for the purpose of study / conversion. They will also look into the inclusion of Anousim in TAGLIT and MASSA trips (not currently in Jewish Agency policy) and accepting Anousim as volunteers in military service in Israel.



Publicity for the group included [this video following their emotional tour of Yad Vashem](#): an [I24NEWS CLIP](#) (in French); the [Jerusalem Post](#); [Israel's Arutz 7](#) (in Hebrew); and [Brazil's Jewish Federation, the COBIB](#) (in Portuguese).

Due to the overwhelming success of the pilot program, we hope to organize two "Connection" seminars per year, with the next seminar being planned for lay leaders of Spanish-speaking communities.

- **Round Table Discussion: DNA and Judaism** [Hebrew]. In October, Mr. Max Blankfeld, co-founder of FamilyTreeDNA, gave a presentation about DNA and the Jewish People. He was followed by three respondents, who expanded on the possible significance of DNA for *giyyur* (conversion); legal issues; and scientific aspects of DNA research and results. Mr. Blankfeld was available after the event for Q&A from the audience. You can [view the presentation here \[in Hebrew\]](#).
- **Construction of a Bnei Anousim Communities Web Page.** The ISAS has a long-term goal of creating a virtual web presence, "**AnousimComLine**", to assist community-building by allowing individuals to find and link with others like them. This "virtual" community is often the only link available for small, disparate, and remote populations. We have begun the planning stages for this massive project.

## ❖ *International Conferences*

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ISAS head Prof. Avi Gross was very active this past year, appearing at several international conferences:

- Prof. Gross presented a lecture, "**Judeo-Portuguese Self-Perception in the 15th century**" at the international conference, "*Terra(s) de Sefarad - Encontros de Culturas Judaico-Sefardita / Land(s) of Sefarad - Encounters of Jewish-Sephardi Cultures*" in Bragança (Portugal), in June. This conference was part of a larger event concerning Trás-os-Montes identity.

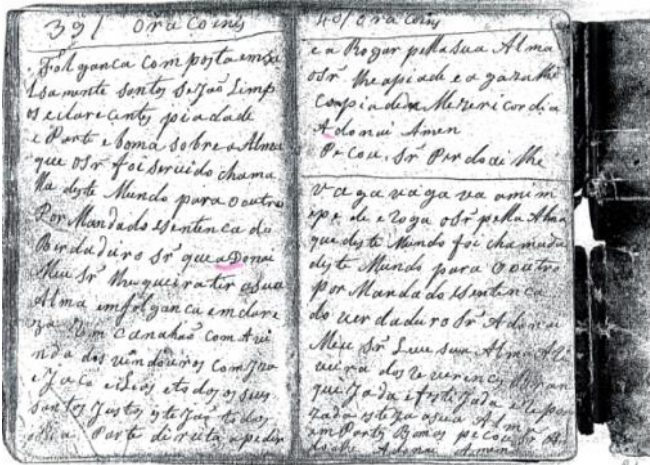


Prof. Gross in Lisbon.

- Prof. Gross was a lecturer at the Seventeenth World Congress of Jewish Studies (WCJS) in August. The WCJS convenes in Jerusalem every four years, and is the most important event in Jewish studies worldwide. Prof. Gross spoke in the "Jewish Genealogy Advances into Larger Groups" section, and the subject of his talk was "**At an Amorphous Level: Conversos – New Christians.**"
- Prof. Gross was the keynote speaker at the international conference, "**Colóquio Internacional: Gracia Mendes Nasi,**" in Lisbon, Portugal, in October. Avi's topic was "**Dona Gracia - Historical and Literary Portrait.**"

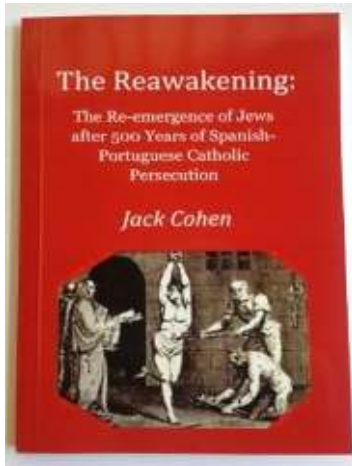
## ❖ Publications

The ISAS is seeking funding for two publications:



Pages from the manuscript.

- **Annotated edition of a manuscript of an Anousim prayer book.** Prof. Gross is currently involved in the transcribing, translating, and analyzing of an Anousim manuscript that has been handed down in the same family in Rebordelo-Chaves, Portugal, over the last two centuries. This is a significant recovered manuscript (originally discovered one hundred years ago by A. Barros Basto), and will shed important light on how Bnei Anousim in Portugal were able to hand down traditions and prayers in remote areas.
- **Proceedings book of the "RECONNECTING 2016" International Conference.** A compilation of the presentations at our international conference, RECONNECTING 2016: Reinvigorating Shared Latino-Jewish Roots and Heritage, in Miami, FL, 7-8 September, plus other articles, jointly edited by Prof. Gross and Prof. Jack Cohen. Presentation topics include demography, genetics, genealogy, and New Christian history in Iberia and the New World. The volume is in the final stages of preparation for publication.



**New Publication:** We are pleased to announce the publication of a book by ISAS board member Prof. Jack Cohen, ***The Reawakening: The Re-emergence of Jews after 500 Years of Spanish-Portuguese Catholic Persecution.*** Primarily based on his work with the ISAS, this volume recounts personal stories of the return to Judaism of over a dozen individuals. Well done, Jack!

## ❖ *Education*

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The ISAS presents a **monthly lecture series** at Netanya Academic College each academic year, and the 2016/17 series focused on **"Important Figures of Sefardi Judaism."** Prof. Avi Gross presented the lives and thought of Sefardi notables Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Shemuel ha-Nagid, Yehudah Halevi, Abraham ibn Daud, and Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) over the course of the academic year.

### EXTERNAL LECTURERS

The ISAS welcomes presentations by guest lecturers. This year we were pleased to host to two such events, **"Recife: Despierto de una comunidad Marrana"** by Renato Athias (Brazil) in January 2017, and **"Crypto-Jewish Identity,"** by Prof. Seth Ward of the University of Wyoming, USA, and the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, in April.



## ❖ *Publicity*

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**Prof. Avi Gross** was interviewed on **Israel's Arutz 7** radio station on July 31, just prior to the 9th of Av. His topic: **"The Signature that Made Europe 'Judenrein' – the Edict of Expulsion in 1492,"** which went into effect shortly before the 9th of Av. Avi also delved into the amazing phenomenon of the Anousim for the radio audience. [You can listen to the interview here](#) [in Hebrew].

**ISAS Manager Salomon (Shlomo) Buzaglo** was interviewed by **Radio Jai – La Radio Judía de Latinoamérica** on June 21. No audio file is available, but [you can read the transcript of the interview here](#) [in Spanish].



## Visitors

The ISAS is pleased to arrange meetings with Bnei Anousim who are visiting or live in Israel at our offices at Netanya Academic College. Over the past year, we have met with **Bnei Anousim from Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Portugal, France, and Bolivia.**

Additionally, this year the ISAS was honored with **visits by distinguished persons, including:**

- His Excellency Mr. Manuel Gómez-Acebo, Ambassador of Spain
- Portugal's Ambassador HE Miguel de Almeida e Sousa
- Her Excellency Mrs. Adis Urieta Vega, Ambassador of the Republic of Panama
- Diplomats from the Cultural Office of the Brazilian Embassy
- Rabbi Stephen Leon, founder and director of the Anousim Center, El Paso, Texas
- Mr. Gabriel Steinhardt, head of the Jewish Community of Lisbon.



**Ambassador Gómez-Acebo (left) with Prof. Zvi Arad**



## The Sefardi Museum

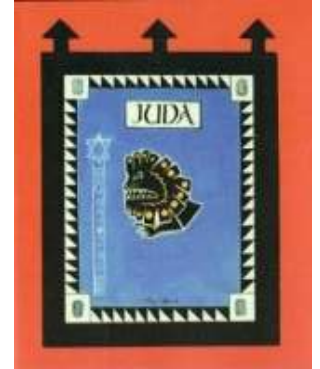
The ISAS has been deeply involved in the efforts to establish **The Sefardi Museum**, which will be a joint project of Netanya Academic College and the ISAS, the Municipality of Netanya, and the State of Israel. In February 2017, we held the first "Forum for the Launching of the Sefarad Museum Project." Since then, an energetic fundraising campaign for The Sefardi Museum has been launched in major Jewish centers, including the cities of New York, Montreal, and São Paulo. For further details, please contact **The Sefardi Museum Project Manager, Mr. Chanan Ziderman:** [sodz2@zahav.net.il](mailto:sodz2@zahav.net.il) | +972-54-461-5849.



## ❖ *Acquisitions*

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The ISAS is constantly working to extend our collection of books, art and artifacts, and other material. This past year, we received a selection of books from the estate of the late **Ambassador Mordechai Arbell z"l**, who was an expert on the Caribbean; from the estate of the late **Elie Schalit z"l**, founder and supporter of Casa Shalom and of the ISAS; and from the estate of the late **Gloria Mound z"l**, founder of Casa Shalom. We also were gifted with a unique collection by the Anousim artists **Socorro and Torquato: The "12 Tribes" collection of ceramic plates and panels**, representing a fusion of tradition and Anousim interpretations of the symbols of the Twelve Tribes. This collection was exhibited at the "Maison de L'Amérique Latine" in Paris.



We also received various volumes of family history, including the memoir ***The Life of Moyses and Abraham Pinto in the Amazon Jungle (1879-1893)*** as told to Abraham Pinto (1945) (in English, French, and Hebrew) as well as volumes about various families in Brazil and other Latin American countries.

Occasionally, writers of historical fiction call upon the ISAS to give advice, research suggestions, and "inspiration" for novels concerning Anousim characters and events in various periods of history. We are proud to be the recipient of works by the two authors who turned to us for advice this year: **Stanislas Mahe, author of *Ker Shalom***, and **Hilah Aravon, author of *A Seal upon Your Heart*** (כחותם על לבך).



Each donation is gratefully received and acknowledged and in cataloged in our Gloria and Leslie Mound Memorial Library.

## ❖ *Milestones*

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The Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies and Netanya Academic College were saddened by the passing of **Gloria Mound z"l**, founder of Casa Shalom – Marrano and Anousim Studies, in February. When the ISAS was founded at Netanya Academic College in 2011, Casa Shalom gifted us its unique library. Gloria was a pioneer in the field of modern Anousim studies, initially concentrating her research on the Anousim in Ibiza and other Balearic Islands of Spain. Gloria later turned her attention to studies in other areas, such as the unrecognized Anousim in Spain sent to Mauthausen concentration camp during the Second World War, and the Anousim of Ireland. Gloria always strived to help the many people who appealed to her from all over the world, and she will be remembered for her unwavering dedication to her life's work.



## ***"Friend" Raising***

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This year, the ISAS launched our **"Los Pilares: Special Supporters of the Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies"** campaign.

We are requesting our respected friends and supporters to help us continue our unique and essential work by donating a crystal tile to the *"Los Pilares"* Supporter's Wall. We are thrilled that **acclaimed Sefardi artist BETTINA CARO** has graciously allowed us to use her beautiful painting "The Cordoba Synagogue" as the background for our *"Los Pilares"* Supporters Wall. This visually striking fixture will be a prominent element of the ISAS Library and also be featured as a VIRTUAL WALL in our website.



### ***"Los Pilares" Supporters Wall tile options:***

**\$5,400 - "Platinum" / \$3,600 - "Gold" / \$1,800 - "Silver" / Other**

The tiles can include the donor's name and/or personal message, and can include a logo or image. They can also be dedicated in **honor or memory of someone** or for a **Sefardi congregation, community, or organization**. Please contact Adina Moryosef for more information: [adinamor@netanya.ac.il](mailto:adinamor@netanya.ac.il).



**"Cordoba Synagogue" [courtesy of Bettina Caro]**



## ***Contact Us***

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The ISAS is located in Netanya Academic College, Netanya.

We invite you to visit the [Institute for Sefardi and Anousim Studies website](#), available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese versions, and our [Facebook page](#). We invite you view our ["Challenges Projects Portfolio"](#) to get more information about partnering opportunities in research, education, and publications.

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