

July 1996

Western States Jewish History

SEPHARDIC JEWS IN THE WEST COAST STATES

William M. Kramer, Editor

Volume II: The Los Angeles Sephardic Experience

קונסטיוסיוון, ליים
אי דינלאמיינע
די לה
סוסיידאד פאם אי פרוגריסו



די לה סו'ידאד אי קונדאדו די
לום אננילים
איסטאדו די קאליפ'ורנייה.
פונדאדע 5 די פייברירו, 1917
אי אינקורפאדע
אין 31 די מאי, 1917

SEE BACK COVER FOR EXPLANATION

Published for
THE SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER
Los Angeles
by the Western States Jewish History Association

**Cover Page of the Constitution of the Peace and Progress Society
of the Los Angeles Sephardic Jews from the Island of Rhodes**

**Transliteration of the
Constitution's cover
page from the Hebrew
script:**

Constitucion, Leyes
y Regulamiento
de la Sociedad
Pas y Progreso
de la Ciudad y Condado
de Los Angeles
Estado de California
Fundada
5 de Febrero, 1917
y Incorporada el
31 de Mayo, 1917

1917



**Translation of the
Constitution's cover
page from "Ladino" into
English:**

Constitution, Laws
and Regulations of the
Peace and Progress
Society of the
City and County of
Los Angeles
State of California
Founded
February 5, 1917
and Incorporated on
May 31, 1917

The above logo is a depiction of the Colossus of Rhodes, which was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was a huge bronze statue of the sun-god Helios, and was once believed to have straddled the harbor entrance of the ancient Greek city of Rhodes, holding up a light in one hand.

It was destroyed by an earthquake about 224 B.C.E. The bronze material was later sold to a Jewish merchant from the Saracens in 654 C.E. It is believed he sold the material to be recycled for secondary uses.

The story of the sculpture inspired the French artist, Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, who designed the Statue of Liberty. It also inspired the famous sonnet by Sephardic writer, Emma Lazarus, which is etched on its pedestal.

"THE NEW COLOSSUS"



*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp! Cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

One wonders if a Sephardic immigrant from the Island of Rhodes may have made some colossal connection between Rhodes which was left behind and the United States which lay ahead—Aron Hasson.

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SEPHARDIC JEWS

IN THE
WEST COAST STATES

Volume II:
The Los Angeles Sephardic Experience

AN ANTHOLOGY



William M. Kramer, Editor

The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation
Editorial Consultants

Aron Hasson and Maurice "Bob" I. Hattem

Western States Jewish History Association

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Los Angeles

1996

Sephardic Jews in the West Coast States
Volume II: Los Angeles
The Second Wave

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THE LOS ANGELES RHODESLI SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY

Encompassing the *Sociedad Pas y Progreso*, the *Sephardic Hebrew Center*, the *Sephardic Beth Shalom* and its merger with *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*.

by Aron Hasson

In 1900, the Sephardic Jewish quarter of Rhodes,¹ called “La Juderia,” had a population of approximately 4,000 people. Historians have recorded that Jews lived on the Island (or “Isle”) of Rhodes since ancient times, although the social-cultural background of “La Juderia” at the beginning of this century was derived primarily from the large number of Jews who settled there after “The Spanish Inquisition of 1492.” Despite living on the Island of Rhodes alongside Turkish and Greek populations for four centuries, the Jews continued to speak their native language from Spain, called “Ladino,” “Judeo-Spanish” or “Judezmo.”

The Island offered limited economic possibilities, and this caused young men to seek better opportunities elsewhere, some in nearby ports of the Mediterranean, while others traveled to far off places in Africa, as well as in North and South America.² Most of the young men who traveled to other lands initially went with the intention of making some money and then returning to pursue their family life on the Island.

The first young Rhodesli Sephardic men coming to the United States traveled by ship to Ellis Island in New York. They settled in sections populated by Ashkenazi Jews, such as the Rivington Street area, although there was little contact between the communities. The fact that Judaism united them was outweighed by the fact that Ladino and Yiddish separated them. Some traveled by train to cities in the South and the West Coast. The first Rhodeslis on the West Coast established themselves in Seattle, Washington, where a few pioneers had gone ahead and sent back reports of prosperity there. A few of the Rhodeslis proceeded by train to Portland, Oregon and even more traveled south to Los Angeles.

Due to their inability to speak English, most of the young men who arrived in Los Angeles would take "immigrant" jobs, such as selling flowers, fruit or shining shoes. A significant portion of their earnings was sent back to the Island of Rhodes to help support their families. This in turn encouraged others to travel to Los Angeles to improve their own living situations.

Many of the first pioneers, being single men or married men, were working in order to raise money and reunite with their families. Although, for some there was a desire to reunify with their families in Los Angeles, there was also a reluctance of the new immigrants to sever themselves from their roots in Rhodes. If the economic conditions on the Island might have been better they would have stayed there. In fact, some of the men did return to Rhodes and tried to set up a business, but often times it did not last and then they would decide to return to the United States to earn more money again.

The young Rhodesli men lived in downtown Los Angeles within a few blocks of each other (primarily between Main Street and Central Avenue and 3rd and 9th Streets). They settled among a number of Sephardim who came from other Aegean Sea communities. As their numbers increased, it became evident that an organization was needed to take care of religious and social needs.

In September of 1912, after preliminary meetings, the first Sephardic organization of Los Angeles was formed and called itself the "*Sociedad Ahavat Shalom*" ("*Love of Peace Society*"), and it met primarily for religious services and caring for the sick.³ Approximately half of these first Los Angeles Sephardim were from the Island of Rhodes. This organization lasted only a short time before it dissolved. It had split into four groups of people primarily corresponding to regional Aegean Sea origins and cultural differences.⁴ Parallel developments came about from Rhodeslis in Seattle, and in Atlanta.

At a meeting held on February 5, 1917, at a downtown Los Angeles Sephardic restaurant, immigrants from the Island of Rhodes founded the "*Sociedad Pas y Progreso*" ("*Peace and Progress Society*") which functioned as a congregation or syna-

gogue. This 1917 meeting was attended by approximately forty-five young men and an election was held which selected the ten founding officers for this synagogue. They were: Morris Soriano (president), Jack Notrica (vice-president), Joseph B. Hasson (treasurer), Joseph Mayo (secretary), Louis Israel (assistant secretary), Marco Tarica (collector) and Victor Levy, Louis Benveniste, Abraham Hazan and Reuben Israel (trustees).⁶ This small downtown Sephardic restaurant was located at the corner of 4th and Wall Streets. The restaurant prepared the traditional Sephardic foods, and served as an important meeting place for the new immigrants who lived in nearby boarding houses.⁷

The primary functions of the *Peace and Progress Society* were to conduct religious services and to help those among themselves in need, as well as with the Sephardic communities overseas. These goals were stated in the Articles of Incorporation of the *Peace and Progress Society*, registered with the State of California on May 18, 1917:

That the purposes for which this corporation is organized are: the aid, comfort, and moral and financial assistance of Jewish men, women and children of Turkish origin⁸ or descent; to educate, uplift and ameliorate the conditions of poor or uneducated Jewish men, women and children of Turkish origin or descent; to care for sick members, and to bury the dead; to promote friendship and good will; to perform any and all acts of a charitable nature; to own and construct buildings for all the purposes of the corporation; and, to accumulate funds for the purpose of carrying out the foregoing aims.”⁹

Religious services were held primarily at the home of Marco Tarica, at 606 Crocker Street, where the *Torahs* were kept, although members also conducted prayer services at their individual homes. For High Holiday services, the *Peace and Progress Society* would rent locations in order to accommodate all of its members simultaneously. The first locations rented were the Burbank Theater on Main Street (between 5th and 6th Streets), and at the Moose Lodge (at 3rd and Main Streets). The first reader (or hazan) of the organization was Reuben Israel, who was a shoemaker.

Assistance for the needy members of the community was carried out through the creation of “el fundo secreto” (the confidential fund). Certain selected members of the board of directors would be in charge of a discretionary fund to aid financially those people who were in need. It was a tradition which was utilized in Rhodes and continues in Los Angeles.

The *Peace and Progress Society* was founded during World War I, and as a consequence, the war had an effect on the future of the Los Angeles Rhodesli community. Even though a large number of these young immigrant men were Turkish citizens, and classifiable as enemy aliens, a handful of them claimed exemption from that status and voluntarily joined the United States Army.¹⁰ These young men included Jack Alhadeff, Behor Capelouto, Leon Hanan, Joseph B. Hasson, Yousef Israel, Victor Levy and Ray Soriano. This military service consequently became a significant step in further establishing the Sephardic community in Los Angeles, since as veterans of the war, they were immediately entitled to U.S. Citizenship.¹¹ This in turn gave them status which later allowed them to petition for other relatives to immigrate to the U.S. after the immigration quota restrictions began in 1922. In addition, it gave them a respected stature in the non-Sephardic community as contributors to the welfare of the United States.

In 1919, when World War I ended, a new wave of Rhodeslis came to this country. This time it included many young women who would marry the many available bachelors. Many of the young women came for “arranged” marriages previously planned for them by their families in Rhodes. As the number of Rhodeslis in Los Angeles continued to increase during these years, it became advantageous and necessary for the synagogue to obtain a permanent location.

The *Peace and Progress Society* took an important step in 1921 by purchasing the old B’nai B’rith Lodge at 17th and Georgia Streets. The negotiators of the purchase were Jack Notrica, Victor M. Levy, Joseph Mayo and Edward Almaleh, and the sale price was \$13,000. The person representing the sale of the B’nai B’rith Lodge was L.A. Rose. This early Sephardic relationship with the

Ashkenazim was typical of the future amicable interactions among the two groups. As Edward Almaleh recalled:

I offered \$13,000 including all the furnishings. I had barely made the offer before Mr. Rose stood up and accepted it, with the condition that they could use the hall for meetings until their building located at West 8th Street and Valencia was completed. The two organizations were very compatible.”¹²

The most successful occupation with many of the young Rhodeslis in Los Angeles was selling flowers. In addition to sales on downtown street corners, the young men would fill a large basket with flowers and then ride the streetcars to different locations, attempting to sell off their entire load. Many of these flower peddlers became prosperous enough by the early 1920s to set up small flower shops or stands. These businesses have been continued by many Rhodesli families, often being passed down from fathers to sons.

Another important occupation for the Rhodeslis was selling produce. By 1925 there were as many Rhodeslis in the produce business as there were in the florist trade. Initially, makeshift fruit stands were set up in neighborhoods, while later small to large grocery stores were established by them. However, since the emergence of supermarkets, many of the Rhodesli produce stands and grocery stores were phased out.¹³ These produce businesses, like the flower shops, became occupations established by fathers and usually handed down to their sons.¹⁴

Even though the Rhodesli immigrants who pioneered Los Angeles had only a basic education they were determined to succeed financially. They worked long hours to help their families who remained on the Island, as well as to better themselves in their newly adopted home in the United States. Since they spoke little or no English the pioneer immigrants attended night school, realizing that in order to prosper they would have to learn the language.¹⁵ In the Sephardic homes the children were directed to speak English instead of Ladino so they would have a better chance to improve themselves educationally and socially as well as in the business world. This goal was accomplished since the

second and third generation of the Rhodeslis have become successful in all of the professions as well as in the business community.

Establishing A New “Juderia” in Los Angeles

As conditions changed in the downtown area, and the economic condition of the Sephardim improved, they moved to a newer neighborhood five miles to the southwest. The transfer began about 1920 and soon the community was living between Vernon Avenue and 56th Street, and between Normandie Avenue and Broadway (the South Central Los Angeles area). During the 1920s, as noted, many marriages took place among the young Rhodeslis who were intent on making Los Angeles their new home. The Island of Rhodes was now being thought of by the immigrants as the home of their parents, and not for themselves. By the 1930s there were about three hundred families re-established from Rhodes in Los Angeles. For example, the Talmud Torah (the religious school of the *Peace and Progress Society*), in 1934 had sixty-five children, all born in Los Angeles.

For the convenience of religious and social gatherings, the Sephardim found it helpful to reside near one another, and thus created a “Juderia” in Los Angeles, as a Sephardic Jewish neighborhood. This is evidenced by noting the two most densely populated blocks in the 1920s and 1930s. On 51st Street (between Hoover and Figueroa), resided twenty Sephardic families, and on 50th Place (between Hoover and Vermont), resided eighteen.

It thus became apparent that the Rhodesli community should build a temple or center, of its own, in order to centralize all of its social and religious activities. A location was found at 55th and Hoover Streets which resulted in the ground-breaking for the new synagogue which took place on October 21, 1934. The president of the temple was Peter Alhadeff, and the vice-president and chairman of the building and finance committee was Joseph B. Hasson.

Along with the new temple building came a new name for the synagogue organization. It was changed from the *Peace and Progress Society*, to the *Sephardic Hebrew Center*. The new name would correctly identify the community for its Sephardic background, though it was sometimes known as Ohel Abraham.¹⁶

The synagogue was built during the Depression; it cost \$26,000 to purchase the land and to pay for the construction. Three adjacent properties were acquired at the corner of 55th and Hoover: a small store on the corner, an empty lot and a small house. It was built by the Zimmer Construction Company.¹⁷ The architect was Edith Northman. The sanctuary seated five hundred and fifty persons, including a balcony (*ezras nashim*) used for seating the women. The auditorium and dining room seated four hundred. The building gave great pride to the Sephardic community. It was the center of the religious and social life for the Rhodeslis for about twenty years.

One of the highly respected spiritual leaders and educators of the congregation was Rabbi Solomon Mizrahi (Ashkenazim spell it Mizrahi and Sephardim tend to spell it Mizrahi), who served from 1930 to 1947. According to the October 7, 1938 issue of the *Jewish Community Press*, there were twenty men in a 1938 listing of ordained rabbis who were part of the Southern California Board of Rabbis and Mizrahi was among them. There were other rabbis in Los Angeles whose credentials were not recognized. Rabbi Mizrahi was always regarded as one of the most learned among his colleagues.

This Sephardic rabbi was also a signator of a Proclamation to Los Angeles Jewry, according to the *Folks-Zeitung* of May 15, 1936, which called upon the community to support the United Jewish Welfare Fund to help ease the burden of what was happening to “our fellow Jews in Europe, in countries where government-approved abuse has made of their existence veritable nightmares of fear.” It also called for assistance to the Jews in the Holy Land who were “attempting to make homes and discover means of livelihood for the thousands upon thousands of refugees driven out of their own lands [helping them in] reinstating the spark of hope and faith in their souls.”

The synagogue also published a monthly newsletter during the 1930s called “*El Messajero*.” The newsletter was published mostly in Ladino, using Hebrew and Latin characters, while some articles were written in English, to inform its multilingual members of social events and other news of interest. “*El Messajero*” was

named after a similar publication printed in Rhodes during the Italian occupation.

The ladies auxiliary, which was established to promote the activities of the organization, became even more active in supporting the synagogue's events. The women undertook and assisted with major fund raising events. Their skills and hard work in preparing the traditional Sephardic foods made the events and social affairs very successful. The Rhodesli women also contributed to the community by binding the families with social and moral values. It is important not to see the women as simply assisting the men, because they were leaders in their own right, and in many cases it was the men who assisted them!¹⁸

The Synagogue in Ladera Heights

During the 1950s the synagogue membership was dispersed into other neighborhoods of Los Angeles. This movement was primarily westward into the newer suburbs. With this new shift in demographics, the temple at 55th and Hoover began losing its importance as the neighborhood synagogue of the Los Angeles "Juderia." With great reluctance it was agreed that the synagogue location must be moved. It had been the locale of many events and was sentimentally remembered.

The 55th and Hoover synagogue was sold in 1958 to an African-American church organization,¹⁹ and the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* began using the Maccabean Sephardic Center at 5969 Crenshaw Blvd., for most of its activities.²⁰ For High Holiday services, the synagogue rented the Youth Center at Crenshaw and Santa Barbara (Martin Luther King) Boulevards.

It was finally agreed by the members of the temple to go forward with creating a new temple. A lot was purchased at 59th Street and Fairfax Avenue in Ladera Heights. In September 1966, in time for the high holiday services, the temple was newly completed. The president of the congregation was Ted Hasson, and Edward Mizrahi was chairman of the building committee. This synagogue served the Rhodesli community for twenty seven years.

Another monthly newsletter started during the 1960s was the *Sephardic Star* of the *Sephardic Hebrew Center*, edited by Jack Israel. In 1987, a previous member of the women's board of directors, Rebecca Amato Levy, published a very successful book called "*I Remember Rhodes.*"

The *Sephardic Hebrew Center* honored special individuals by presenting them with the "Man and Woman of the Year" award. Those recipients were: Joseph B. Hasson, Joseph Mayo, Dr. Irving Benveniste, Ted Hasson, Lou Angel, Jake Agoado, Morris Mizrahi, the Benon Brothers (Morrie, Leon, Sam and Joe), Robert Cohen, Lou Hasson, David Peha, Morris Y. Angel, Nace Surmani, Jack Israel, Tillie Scapa, and Albert Collins.

From the time the first Rhodeslis came to Los Angeles to the present, there has always been a blending of families as well as social affairs with other Ladino-speaking Sephardim. Many social and religious activities were organized among the two main groups (the Rhodeslis and what is now the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*.) There has also existed other organizations which combined all of the Ladino-speaking Sephardim, such as *The Maccabeans*, which conducted a *talmud torah* and served as a social club, the *Los Angeles Sephardic Home for the Aging* (LASHA)²¹ which established a home for the elderly members of the community in association with the L.A. Jewish Home for the Aging, the *Sephardic Educational Center*, and the *Sephardic Hebrew Academy*, which are teaching institutions. It should be noted that the September, 1969 issue of the *American Sephardi* publication spoke of the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* as raising funds in order to "expand the synagogue services by the addition of a beautiful Hebrew School building." It never came to pass.

The Reunification of the Ladino-Speaking Sephardic Communities

On August 1, 1993 the Rhodesli synagogue and the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel* voted to merge together into a greater Ladino speaking Sephardic congregation. The new entity, with an enhanced spiritual center of one-thousand members, took on the name and location of the larger partner, the *Sephardic Temple*

Tifereth Israel, in Westwood.²² Readers will remember that both communities were originally part of the same synagogue, the *Sociedad Ahavat Shalom*, from 1912 to 1916.

In a large Sephardic ceremony held on December 5, 1993, the six torah scrolls from the *Sephardic Beth Shalom* were led in a procession around the outside of the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*, and then led into the main entrance, where they were greeted by a *sepher torah* held by the president of *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*, the universally respected Ralph A. Amado. The scrolls were then carried into the sanctuary where they made seven circuits around the *bema (tevah)*, before being placed in the *ehal (aron ha kodesh)*. President Amado made a gracious welcome statement followed by a warm reply by Rae Cohen, President of the *Sephardic Beth Shalom*.

This reunification between the two oldest and largest Ladino speaking Sephardic synagogues in Los Angeles helps perpetuate the special traditions of this unique Jewish community, as a major constituent of Jewish life.

The Catalina Story

There is a Rhodesli custom that independently survives the reunification of the *Sephardic Beth Shalom* with the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*. It is one of charm and as often happens, it is a charm which flows from nostalgia.

Ever since those young men from Rhodes established themselves in Los Angeles, they were attracted to another island for their vacations near Los Angeles, called Santa Catalina. From the beginning it has been a favorite annual vacation spot for the immigrant families.

Catalina, and its primary town of Avalon, is situated 25 miles across from the Southern California coastline, and is coincidentally similar to Rhodes' distance from the Turkish mainland. Louis Benveniste first vacationed in Catalina in 1918, with his wife, Behora, and son Bob, who was one year old at that time. The boat trip cost \$2 round trip in that year, and the house they rented cost \$7 for one week. Louis Israel visited Catalina in 1920 with a few other friends, and stayed in the villa area, which had tents,

instead of homes and motels as it is today. He explained his enjoyment of Catalina by saying, “once you are born on an island with the water all around you, you just like the ocean. The water attracts us.”

Every year in August, many Rhodeslis still take a week holiday in Avalon. The traditional Sephardic foods are served at parties in the beach town. There are so many members of the synagogue there during that week in summer that a person could not walk down the Avalon boardwalk without seeing someone they know.²³

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Rhodes is a Greek island (Turkish from 1522 to 1912, Italian from 1912 to 1946), situated ten miles from the southwestern mainland of Turkey. The Jewish community was located in the largest city of the island, also called Rhodes.
- ² A smaller number of young men left the Island in order to avoid the Turkish army.
- ³ Constitution of the “*Sociedad Ahavat Shalom*,” incorporated with the state of California on January 17, 1914. See the account of the Sephardic community in Los Angeles in Joseph M. Papo’s *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America*, San Jose, 1987, p. 294ff.
- ⁴ The largest group consisted of the Rhodeslis, who left the group in 1916. In 1919, the remainder of the “*Sociedad Ahavat Shalom*” dissolved and divided itself into three groups. These were the *Sephardic Comunidad*, the *Haim Vahessed* and the *Yacov Tovil*. Within two years the small *Yacov Tovil* group disbanded and its members joined either the *Haim Vahessed* or the *Sephardic Comunidad*. In 1959 the *Haim Vahessed* (also known as the *Sephardic Brotherhood*), combined with the *Sephardic Comunidad* (which later changed its name to the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel*).
- ⁵ It later changed its name to the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* (in 1934) and to *Sephardic Beth Shalom* (in 1990).
- ⁶ Constitution of the “*Sociedad Pas y Progreso*,” dated May 31, 1917.

SEPHARDIC JEWS IN THE WEST COAST STATES

7. This small Sephardic restaurant was owned by Israel Hanan and Isaac Solam. Later that year it moved two blocks away to 214 Winston Street, under the ownership of Israel Hanan and Yacov Levy.
8. The term “Turkish origin” was used amongst Sephardim as a generic term which included Rhodeslis and other Sephardim.
9. Articles of Incorporation of the *Peace and Progress Society*, incorporated with the State of California, dated May 31, 1917.
10. Joseph B. Hasson, Los Angeles, Interview, March 13, 1972.
11. Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 329, 8 USC Section 1440.
12. *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, July 24, 1982, by Edward Almaleh in “Letters to Editor.”
13. The only one remaining is *32nd Street Market*, owned by Morris Notrica and previously called *Morrie's*.” He continued in the grocery business which his father, Joseph, was also in.
14. For an occupational analysis of the Rhodeslis, see the “Rhodeslis Listed in the Los Angeles City Directories” in this volume.
15. An exception to this was the close relationship of Ladino to Spanish, which actually served as an advantage in communicating with the growing Latino community.
16. *Sephardic Hebrew Center Souvenir Dedication Program* (Los Angeles, March 17, 1935); *Jewish Community Press*, October 21, 1938, p. 26.
17. Max Zimmer was a contractor for many Jewish community buildings. His life has been told by our editor, William M. Kramer, in his book entitled, “The Century of Max Zimmer,” *Western States Jewish History*, Los Angeles, 1993.
18. The first woman president of the synagogue, Rae Cohen, served from 1992 to 1993.
19. It was sold to the *Second Methodist African Episcopal Church*.
20. The Maccabean Sephardic Center served the entire Sephardic community at that time for a *talmud torah*, youth center, social hall, as well as for conducting religious services.
21. Founded in 1953, in Los Angeles, its first President was Joseph Arouh.

22. *The Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel* is comprised primarily of Ladino speaking Jews of other Aegean Sea communities, such as Istanbul, Izmir, Salonica, Brusa and Rhodes. This synagogue was established in Los Angeles on March 22, 1920, and is presently located at 10500 Wilshire Boulevard in the Westwood section of Los Angeles.
23. The following people were interviewed for information regarding the history in this article: Peter Alhadeff (10-19-82); Esther Altabet (Tarica) (7-21-82); Jack Avzaradel (11-18-74); Sepora Benon (Amato) (2-27-72); Jean Bensusen (Almeleh) (7-25-82); Irving Benveniste (1-30-83); Louie Benveniste (7-18-82); Behor Capelouto (4-19-72); Joe Capelouto (4-26-72); Aron Cohen (11-5-74); Lena Cohen [Hasson] (7-11-82); Jean Conae (Israel) (7-29-82); Catherine Elias (Caraco) (10-22-74); Eli & Reina (Hazan) Israel (10-15-74); Louis Israel (4-18-82); Gladys Rubin & Ann Cordova (Mayo) (8-3-82); Morris Mizrahi (1-2-73); Gracia Hasson (7-26-82); Joseph B. Hasson (3-13-72); Albert & Amelie (Berro) Notrica (6-22-74); Francis Elmgreen (Soriano) (7-11-82).



The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation



The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation

A RHODESLI REGISTER OF LOS ANGELES PIONEERS AND A SOURCEBOOK FOR RHODESLI SCHOLARSHIP

by *Aron Hasson*

THE PIONEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE PEACE AND PROGRESS SOCIETY

Morris Soriano—President

Morris Soriano was born in Rhodes and came to the United States about 1910. He first went to Atlanta and Montgomery, then was called by his brother, Vital, to come to Los Angeles.

Soon after he arrived in Los Angeles, a marriage was arranged for him to wed Rosa Codron. This was planned by the two families in Rhodes. Rosa came to Los Angeles in June 1911, and they married five weeks later. This is believed to be the first marriage among Rhodeslis in Los Angeles. The following year, their daughter, Francis, was born, and three years later their second daughter, Regina, was born. Thus, this marriage between Morris and Rosa, and the establishing of a new family was an important step in the colonization of Los Angeles by the people of Rhodes.

In addition to selling flowers, Morris was a merchandise salesman in downtown Los Angeles, using a horse and wagon, as well as selling house to house.

Being actively involved with the Sephardic community in Los Angeles, Morris saw that the community was growing rapidly, and had various interests. Therefore, as president he spearheaded the creation of the *Peace and Progress Society*,¹ whose members were comprised of those from the Island of Rhodes.

Morris was a dedicated first leader of the synagogue, guiding it in the important formative years. His importance to the synagogue was reflected by a later remembrance of him which read:

it was through his energetic laudable impulse, foresight, and intuition that we are formed today ... He has been our guiding spirit, and we shall always remember the wisdom and the benevolent spirit of our beloved first president.”²

Jack Notrica—Vice President

Jack Notrica received his basic education at the Alliance Israelite Universelle School in Rhodes, and was the oldest of six brothers and four sisters. In 1909, he left Rhodes, and traveled to Buenos Aires prior to coming to Los Angeles. The conditions were not good for him in Argentina, so his brother, Albert, who had been in Los Angeles already, sent him the ticket to come to Los Angeles. Jack Notrica arrived in September 1916 and went into the tailoring business.

In 1917, when the *Peace and Progress Society* was established, Jack Notrica became the vice-president. In 1921, he was instrumental in the acquisition of the synagogue's first permanent location on 17th and Georgia Streets.

In 1936 he became president of the synagogue when it was located at 55th and Hoover Street. During his term as president, he met Linda Cohen, who was visiting Los Angeles from Shanghai. The following year they married there in 1938. Jack Notrica returned to California in 1940 and continued his involvement in several Jewish and Sephardic organizations and activities.

Joseph Mayo—Secretary

Joseph Mayo was born in December 1896 in Rhodes, and came to Los Angeles in 1914. He lived with his brothers, Yuda and Ruben, in the downtown neighborhood.

When the synagogue organization was formed, Joseph Mayo became the first secretary. He kept meticulous records in those formative years, taking the minutes of all the meetings. Joseph Mayo was instrumental in the purchasing of the B'nai B'rith Lodge for the synagogue in 1921, which served as the first permanent location of the temple.

For many years young Joseph Mayo worked as a teller downtown for the Bank of Italy, which later became the Bank of

America. It was during this period of his life, that an arrangement was made by families for him to meet Freda Ades. They met in San Francisco, and later married on January 24, 1924. From this marriage Joseph and Freda had two daughters, Gladys (Rubin) and Ann (Cordova).

Joseph was in the dry cleaning business for over ten years, with a location near 6th and Rampart. Based upon his background in bookkeeping, he studied and took the civil service exam for accounting, and went on to work for the County Assessor's office until he retired.

Joseph Mayo's dedication to the synagogue was a prime concern throughout his life. Besides serving on the original board of directors, in subsequent years he served as president six times. In honor of his devotion to the *Sephardic Hebrew Center*, the "Man of the Year Award" was named in tribute to him.

Louis Israel—Assistant Secretary

Louis Israel was born in Rhodes on June 25, 1901, where he attended the Alliance Israelite Universelle School. Prompted by stories an uncle had told about the opportunities in America, he decided at the age of fifteen to leave Rhodes with his family. His father had passed away when he was young, so Louis came to the United States to earn money to send back to his mother and sister in Rhodes.

In the winter of 1916 he arrived in New York, but disliked the cold weather. With the help of a cousin, money was sent for him to come to Los Angeles where he stayed at a boarding house with other young Rhodesslis at the Bixby Hotel at 429 Wall Street.

Louis Israel was sixteen years old and the youngest member of the founding board of directors of the *Peace and Progress Society*, serving as the first assistant secretary.

He worked in the produce business in downtown Los Angeles with his partner, Harry Alhadeff. They sold the business called "A-1 Market" in 1928 and the following year established a wholesale grocery business at 9th and Towne Avenue, called "Buyer's Wholesale Grocery Company." Louis was first married to Rita

Capelouto. Louis retired from business in 1952. Being a widower, he married Sarah Capelouto in 1973.

Joseph Behor Hasson—Treasurer

Joseph Hasson was born in Rhodes in 1893, and was raised in Megre (now called Fethiye, which is a small harbor village across from Rhodes on the Turkish mainland), where his father was a merchant. In 1912, in order to avoid conscription into the Turkish army, he fled on a boat which was headed to the United States, where he would meet his uncles, Mike and Haco.

When the first Sephardic organization, the *Ahavat Shalom*, was incorporated Joseph B. Hasson was the secretary. In February 1917, Joseph Hasson took part in the establishment of the *Peace and Progress Society*, acting as its first treasurer. He also served in the United States Army during World War I, from 1918 to 1919.

Joseph married his cousin Victoria Hasson in 1921, and from this marriage were born three children, Ted (Israel), Jack, and Rachel. Joseph went into the produce business at 7th and Main Streets. Later, in 1928, he purchased a grocery market at 9th and Figueroa Streets.

In 1934 he was chairman of the Building and Finance Committee for the purpose of establishing the synagogue on 55th and Hoover Streets. Joseph Hasson also served as president of the synagogue in 1923, 1937-38, 1940-41 and again in 1960-61.

In recognition of his lifetime of dedication to the synagogue, Joseph Hasson was honored as the first Man of the Year of the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* in 1968. In 1971, Joseph and Victoria celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a celebration at the synagogue hall in Ladera.

Marco Tarica—Collector

Marco Tarica was noted for the raising of funds and the raising of consciousness during the earliest days of the organization of the Sephardic community in Los Angeles. Born in Rhodes about 1875, there he married Rachel Touriel in 1907. Marco, wishing to improve himself financially, traveled to Los Angeles in 1910, where his cousins, Vital and Morris Soriano, had already established themselves. Two years later, he sent for his wife, his son,

Sam, and his daughter, Esther. Their family was complete with the birth of their third child Morris, who was born in Los Angeles.

From his first years in this country, Marco Tarica's impact on the founding of the Sephardic community was profound. As one of the eldest of the Sephardic immigrants in Los Angeles, he provided caring support for the other young men who were in need. He collected the modest amount of ten cents per week from everyone who was able to give, and he directed those funds to help the needy. In 1912, he was the "collector" for the first Sephardic organization, the *Ahavat Shalom*. He assumed the same role for the *Peace and Progress Society* when it was established in 1917.

Religious services were held regularly at the home of Marco and Rachel Tarica before the *Peace and Progress Society* acquired the B'nai B'rith Lodge. Marco Tarica voluntarily accepted responsibility for helping members who were sick and in need as well as for purchasing burial plots for the deceased. As one of the most respected members of the Rhodesli community, Marco Tarica continually served as advisor of the synagogue in its formative years, and as its *gabbai* until the end of his life.

Working in partnership with Marco Tarica was his wife Rachel, who counseled, assisted, and advised new immigrants as they adapted to life in America. She became the first sisterhood president of the *Peace and Progress Society* complementing the work of her husband. Today we remember and honor them as early models of commitment to the Sephardic community.

Abraham Hazan—Trustee

Abraham Hazan's father was a merchant, as well as a hazan for the *Kal Shalom* synagogue in Rhodes. About 1909, Abraham Hazan left Rhodes and traveled to Seattle, where he had relatives trying to make a new home for themselves. Lured by stories of the Alaska gold rush, he traveled north in 1910, and worked in the Guggenheim gold mine. He then wrote home to Rhodes and called for his brother, Haco Hazan, to work together in Nome, where they hoped to make a good income. They soon went back to Seattle with little of the fortunes they had hoped for, but with many stories. Abraham Hazan then went back to Rhodes, and

married Esther Alhadeff. From his marriage he had four children, Reina, Tillie, Morrie and Rita.

Abraham returned to the United States in 1913 and traveled to Los Angeles, where he became a flower peddler with a horse and buggy and later had a flower stand.

He was always a respected person in the synagogue community. As Joseph Mayo stated, "he did so much for the sick and helped his brothers in need at all times and worked in the Bikor Holim."³ The social hall of the synagogue which was built in 1966 in Ladera was named Hazan Hall in dedication to this prominent member of the Sephardic community.

Louis Benveniste—Trustee

Louis Benveniste was born in Rhodes in 1890. As a young man he was skilled as a shoemaker, and traveled often to work in Dalian, which was a small harbor village on the Turkish mainland across from Rhodes. Young Louis left Rhodes in 1909 in order to avoid conscription into the Turkish army, as well as to find himself a better life. He traveled to the United States with his brother Haim, and they both went to Seattle to meet their other brother, Nissim, who came to the United States a couple of years earlier.

In September 1912, Louis Benveniste traveled south from Seattle to Los Angeles. In 1917, when the *Peace and Progress Society* was formed, Louis Benveniste was on the first board of directors, serving as trustee.

Because Louis had a background in shoemaking from Rhodes, he established a shoe repair and shoeshine concession in the Bullocks department store downtown. He worked in this business for forty-five years before retiring in 1960.

In 1916, he married Behora, and from that marriage they had five children, Bob (Isaac), Rachel, Leon, Jack, and Shirlee. In 1981, Louis and Behora celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

Reuben Israel—Trustee

Reuben Israel was born in Rhodes in 1880, and was a shoemaker there as a young man. In 1913, he married his cousin, Esther Israel.

Like many other young Rhodesli men, he decided to come to the United States to earn more money for his family. Therefore, in 1914, he came to Los Angeles where he had relatives. In Los Angeles he worked at 305 W. 2nd Street, between Broadway and Spring Streets, as a shoemaker, as he had been in Rhodes. Reuben kept his shoemaking business in Los Angeles for over 40 years.

Reuben was an excellent reader, and he therefore served as the first hazan of the *Peace and Progress Society*, leading the religious services with the traditional Sephardic melodies and customs.

When World War I started, it was no longer safe for Esther and his first daughter, Victoria, to take a boat across the Atlantic Ocean, therefore, Reuben brought them over in 1919 when the fighting had ended. Reuben and Esther moved away from the downtown neighborhood in Los Angeles to 49th Street in 1922. Their other four children from the marriage were Jean, Emelie, Sarah and Victor (Haim).

RABBIS OF THE SYNAGOGUE

When the *Peace and Progress Society* was founded, services were led by its own members. During the first years, the services were led by Reuben Israel, who acted as hazan. Other "readers" included Behor Soriano, Sabatai Benoun, Reuben Cohen and Marco Tarica. From 1920 to 1930 the primary leader for services was haham Haim ("Haji") Levy. Much later, from 1964 to 1972, the Rhodesli community had the Sephardic spiritual leader, Sam Azose, who was born in Marmara, Turkey.

Rabbi Solomon Mizrahi (Mizrachi)

Rabbi Mizrahi was born in Jerusalem in 1892 of Sephardic background. Solomon Mizrahi taught Hebrew for the Talmud Torah on the Island of Rhodes in "La Juderia" for two years in 1918 and 1919. He studied at the Yeshiva of Tifereth Yerushalayim and the Beth Midrash Harabanim. He came to the United States in 1927 as a rabbi to the Etz Chaim synagogue of Indianapolis, Indiana, and served there for three years. In 1930 his career as rabbi of the *Peace and Progress Society* and the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* began. He taught the *talmud torah* with diligence,

utilizing Hebrew, Ladino and English in his classes. He served as rabbi for seventeen years, until 1947. Rabbi Mizrahi also was a major professor at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

In Haham Solomon Gaon and Dr. Mitchell Serels's book *Del Fuego: Sephardim and the Holocaust*, on page 209 there is a note that "The earthquake in Turkey at the end of 1939 brought several appeals for help. Rabbi Solomon Mizrahi of Los Angeles in particular reacted to the call to assist the Turkish victims."

Rabbi Moshe Amine

Rabbi Moshe Amine served for less than one year during 1948 and 1949.

Rabbi Michel Albagli

Rabbi Albagli was born in Izmir, Turkey in 1908, and attended the Gran Collegio Rabbinico Seminario on the Island of Rhodes where he was ordained as Rabbi. He attended graduate school in Rome, Italy and then returned to Rhodes in 1936, to become the Chief Rabbi, succeeding Rabbi Reuben Israel. In 1939 he left Rhodes to serve the Jewish communities of Montgomery, Alabama and Indianapolis, Indiana. He served as Rabbi of the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* from 1950 to 1963. In 1966 he moved to Portland, Oregon to serve the *Congregation Ahavath Achim*. He served there until 1988.

Rabbi Daniel Wajnne

Rabbi Wajnne was born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1946. Daniel Wajnne attended the academy of Jewish learning in Morocco, the Yeshivat Etz Chaim of Tangiers. It was there that he was ordained as hazan, shohet and rabbi in 1966.

In 1973 Daniel Wajnne joined the *Sephardic Hebrew Center*, serving as cantor and rabbi. He continued until 1976, when he began serving various other synagogues in the Los Angeles area, as well as mohel for both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities.

Rabbi Shelton Donnell

Rabbi Donnell was born in Los Angeles in 1950, the son of Liane Notrica and Maurice Donnell, and the grandson of Abraham Cohen and Linda Cohen Notrica, who were instrumental in

the building of the synagogue on 55th and Hoover. He obtained his religious learning from *Temple Israel* of Hollywood, where he received his Bar Mitzvah and confirmation under the rabbinates of Dr. Max Nussbaum and Dr. William M. Kramer. He first went to Pomona College and later attended the Hebrew Union College in New York City, and was ordained as rabbi in June 1977. Rabbi Donnell served the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* from 1977 until 1983. He has lectured on "Rhodes: An Island of Ladino Culture." From 1983 to 1991, he served the *Wilshire Boulevard Temple* in Los Angeles. Since 1991 he has been serving *Temple Beth Shalom* in Santa Ana, Orange County. His published work includes "a Sephardic Passover Haggadah in English, Hebrew and Ladino." He has also been an activist on behalf of the Rabbinic Network for Ethiopian Jews and has been president of the Pacific Southwest Region of the Association of Reform Zionists of America.

Rabbi Claudio Kaiser-Bleuth

Rabbi Kaiser-Bleuth was born in Argentina and studied rabbinical studies in Argentina and in Israel, and was ordained as a rabbi in Jerusalem in 1973. He served as the only Ashkenazic rabbi for the Rhodesli community, from 1983 to 1987. Since 1987 he has been serving *Temple Beth Zion-Sinai* in the Lakewood area of Los Angeles.

Rabbi Robert Rome

Rabbi Rome was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1949. His parents were Uriel (Richard) and Naomi Rome. He attended the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and was ordained as rabbi in 1975. Rabbi Rome served as Chaplain in the U.S. Navy from 1976 to 1979. He then served *Temple Judea* in Vista, California. He served the *Sephardic Hebrew Center* from 1987 to 1993. Since 1993 he has primarily pursued his practice as a licensed psychologist in Encino, and has also served the *Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel* during High Holidays.

SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS OF THE RHODESLI COMMUNITY

"Auctioneer"

The Rhodeslis carried on the tradition of selling the "mitzvot," unfamiliar to most Ashkenazi synagogues, although it was once a

part of their religious proceedings. The ritual consists of worshippers bidding for the desirable honors during religious ceremonies, such as the reading from the torah, or the carrying of the torahs down the aisles during a procession part of the service. The money collected went to supporting the synagogue. The practice consists of the "auctioneer" walking down the aisles of the sanctuary taking bids and recognizing the highest bidder for a particular honor. An example of the auctioneer chanting down the aisle would be, "*Trenta mil dar por mildar la haftorah.*" This means a person recognized in the bidding is willing to donate to the synagogue thirty dollars for the reading of the haftorah segment of the service.

One of the well known individuals who carried on this tradition was Marco Cohen. Marco Cohen was a charter member of the *Peace and Progress Society* and the "auctioneer" for fifty-three years. Marco was the husband of Amelie (Hasson), and father of Tillie, Morrie, Cathy and Ralph.

"Tokeah"

Hearing the sound of the shofar by the "tokeah" (*baal tokeah*) in a Rhodesli Sephardic kehila is a deeply spiritual sound which is louder and more pronounced than the sounds heard in most other synagogues.

The "tokeah" for the Rhodeslis since 1948 was Morris Mizrahi, and in the more recent years this honor was shared by his son Edward. Morris Mizrahi was born in Rhodes in 1905. His father was a shoemaker and a very religious person. A shofar was made for young Morris by a blacksmith on the Island of Rhodes when he was fourteen years old. He was motivated and inspired to learn by hearing the Haham Yakov Cabuli at the *Kal Grande* or Great Synagogue in Rhodes. Morris came to the U.S. in 1919, and later moved to Los Angeles in 1939, and later became the "tokeah." He was honored as "Man of the Year" for the synagogue in 1977. He married Leonora Fils, and has four children, Edward, Leon, Alex and June.

“Hermanas”

When the new immigrants came to Los Angeles from Rhodes they were unfamiliar with modern medicine. Since many people from the island were superstitious, they often utilized folk remedies, and when a higher authority was needed families would seek the advice of the “hermanas.” “Hermana” was a title given to a few of the respected women of the Rhodesli community. They were individuals who were recognized as experts of a body of knowledge combining folk remedies with religious knowledge, and thus acquired a respectful status after many years. Many of the folk remedies had positive medicinal values, whereas others took on a more religious-psychological foundation. The best known “hermanas” in Los Angeles were Caden Alhadeff (Berro), Rosha Solam (Benveniste), and Miriam Levy (Hasson).

ENDNOTES

- ¹. The following people were interviewed for information regarding the biographies of the first board of directors: Peter Alhadeff (10-19-82); Esther Altabet (Tarica) (7-21-82); Jack Avzaradel (11-18-74); Sepora Benon (Amato) (2-27-72); Jean Bensusen (Almeleh) (7-25-82); Irving Benveniste (1-30-83); Louie Benveniste (7-18-82); Behor Capelouto (4-19-72); Joe Capelouto (4-26-72); Aron Cohen (11-5-74); Lena Cohen [Hasson] (7-11-82); Jean Conae (Israel) (7-29-82); Catherine Elias (Caraco) (10-22-74); Eli & Reina (Hazan) Israel (10-15-74); Louie Israel (4-18-82); Gladys Rubin & Ann Cordova (Mayo) (8-3-82); Joseph B. Hasson (3-13-72); Albert & Amelie (Berro) Notrica (6-22-74); Francis Elmgreen (Soriano) (7-11-82).
- ². *Sephardic Hebrew Center, Souvenir Dedication Program*, (Los Angeles, March 17, 1935).
- ³. *Fifty Years in Retrospect*, by Joseph Mayo, September 1967.

**PRESIDENTS OF THE PEACE AND PROGRESS SOCIETY,
SEPHARDIC HEBREW CENTER AND SEPHARDIC BETH SHALOM**

- Morris Soriano — 1917-18
Joseph M. Mayo — 1919, 1922, 1924-25, 1931-32, 1942, 1945
Vital Soriano — 1921
Joseph B. Hasson — 1923, 1937-38, 1940-41, 1960-61
Sam O. Berro — 1926, 1952
Behor Franco — 1927
Victor Pizanti — 1927
Jacob B. Menashe — 1927
Baruch Cohen — 1928-29
Peter D. Alhadeff — 1929, 1933-35
Victor M. Levy — 1930, 1956-57
Jack I. Notrica — 1936
Morris D. Capelouto — 1939, 1946
Leo Saul — 1947
Isaac N. Benveniste — 1948
Eddie S. Almaleh — 1949-50
Dr. Irving Benveniste — 1951-52, 1967-69
Isaac D. Capelouto — 1953
Mike Mayo — 1955
Sam Huniu — 1958-59
Edward M. Mizrahi — 1962-63
Ted Hasson — 1964-66
Joseph Cordova — 1970-71
Jake Agoado — 1972-73
Robert Cohen — 1974-75
David Peha — 1976-77
Morris Y. Angel — 1978-79
Nace Surmani — 1980-81
Jack Israel — 1982-83
Joseph Franco — 1984-85
Menasce Levi — 1986-87
Joseph Remis — 1988-89
Leon Hasson — 1990-91
Rae Cohen — 1992-93

**RHODESLIS LISTED IN THE LOS ANGELES CITY DIRECTORIES
FROM 1909 TO 1916**

(Listed after their name is their profession and address,
then their residence address)

1909 City Directory

Avzaradel, Victor: shoe repair; 721 S. Broadway; r. 312 Temple.

1910 City Directory

Avzaradel, Victor; shoe repair; 41 7 W. 4th; r. 321-1/2 W. 2nd.

Israel, Asher; fruits; 312 W. 2nd; r. 321-1/2 W. 2nd.

Soriano, Vital; peddler; r. 321-1/2 W. 2nd.

1911 City Directory

Israel, Asher; clerk; r. 316 Winston.

1912 City Directory

Soriano, Morris; flower stand; r. 624 Towne Ave.

1913 City Directory

Israel, Albert; clerk; A.J. Israel; r. 761 Towne Ave.

Israel, Asher; fruit; 426 W. 6th ; r. 519 Temple.

Leon, Jack; bootblack; r. 245-1/2 S. Spring.

Notrica, Elie; bootblack; r. 216 Winston.

Piha, Jos.; bootblack; r. 767 Crocker.

Soriano, Morris; r. 918 Temple.

1914 City Directory

Berro, Isaac; bootblack; 431 S. Hill; r. 223-1/2 E. 4th.

Cohen, Leon; bootblack; 223 W. 7th ; r. 336 Winston.

Cohen, Yekir; bootblack; 205 W. 4th.

Estrugo, Jose; teller; r. 1029 W. 5th.

Hasson, B.; bootblack; r. 534 San Julian.

Hasson, David; bootblack; 822 S. Broadway; r. 714-1/2 E. Pico.

Hasson, Jacob; bootblack; r. 403 Wall.

Hasson, Jos.; r. 429 Wall.

Hasson, Michael; r. 429 Wall.

Israel, Asher; fruits; 629-1/2 S. Main; r. 519 Temple.

Israel, Solomon; bootblack; r. 620 Crocker.

Mayo, Ruben M.; bootblack; r. 336 Winston.

Notrica, Albert; bootblack; r. 429 Wall.
Notrica, Elie; bootblack; 222 W. 3rd; 429 Wall.
Piha, Jos.; bootblack; r. 767 Crocker.
Pizanti, Ruben; bootblack; 129 W. 3rd.
Soriano, Morris; salesman; r. 420-1/2 Centennial.
Soriano, Vital; fruits; r. 623 Towne Ave.

1915 City Directory

Berro, Isaac; florist; 431 S. Hill.
Cohen, David; bootblack; r. 620 Crocker.
Hanan, Israel; Hanan & Solam; r. 420 Wall.
Hanan & Solam (Israel Hanan, Isaac Solam) restaurant, 420 Wall.
Hasson, David; bootblack; r. 210-1/2 Boyd.
Israel, Albert; florist; 612 S. Main; r. 825 Wall.
Israel, Jos.; bootblack; 218 W. 4th; r. 429 Wall.
Israel, Louis; peddler; r. 226 Hewitt.
Notrica, Elie; bootblack; 219 W. 6th; r. 429 Wall.
Piha, Joe; bootblack; 610 S. Main; r. 821 Wall.
Pizante, Asher; (Caraco & Pizante); r. Bixby Hotel.
Soriano, Morris; salesman; r. 420-1/2 Centennial.
Soriano, Vital; grocer; 553 S. Main; r. 623 Towne Ave.

1916 City Directory

Benun, Isaac; tailor; r. 431 S. Hill.
Benveniste, Joe; (Alhadeff & Benveniste) r. 310 E. 6th.
Benveniste, Louis; bootblack; r. 310 E. 6th.
Berro, Isaac; florist and bootblack; 431 S. Hill.
Capilouto, Morris; bootblack; 222 W. 3rd; r. 602 Wall.
Capilouto, Victor; bootblack; r. 312 E. 6th.
Hanan, Israel; restaurant; 420 Wall; r. 455 E. 4th.
Hanan, Jacob; bootblack; 230 Mercantile Pl.; r. 825 Wall.
Hasson, Jack; bootblack; r. 538 Wall.
Hasson, Jacob; bootblack; 340-1/2 S. Spring; r. 620 Crocker.
Hasson, Reuben (Berro & Hasson); r. 538 Wall.
Hasson, Yoshua; bootblack; r. 620 Crocker.
Hazan, Abraham; miner; r. 827 Wall.
Israel, Joe; bootblack; 218 W. 4th; r. 310 E. 6th.
Israel, Reuben; shoemaker; 305 W. 2nd; r. 606 Wall.
Mayo, Juda (Mayo & Escapa); r. 313 E. 6th.

Mayo, Reuben; bootblack; r. 411 E. 4th.
 Notrica, Louis; bootblack; r. 835 Wall.
 Notrica, Albert; bootblack; 219 W. 6th; r. 433 Wall.
 Notrica, Louis; bootblack; 222 W. 3 rd; r. 433 Wall.
 Piha, Jos.; bootblack; r. 821 Wall.
 Pizante, Asher (Caraco & Pizante); r. 429 Wall.
 Pizante, Reuben (Menashe & Pizante); r. 429 Wall.
 Tarica, Marco; bootblack; r. 606 Crocker.

**OTHER SEPHARDIM LISTED IN THE LOS ANGELES CITY
 DIRECTORIES IN 1906**

1906 City Directory

Bramy, David H.; oriental goods; 316 W. 7th; r. 424 S. Olive.
 Caraco, Jacques; French Cornucopia Co.; r. 520 Wall.
 Levy, Mandolino; French Cornucopia Co.; r. 72 Wall.
 Zitoun, Mardache, oriental goods; 316 W. 7th; r. same.

SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES

“Sephardic Community Welcomes Physician”

It is recorded in the *B'nai B'rith Messenger* on March 28, 1930, that Dr. Robert E. Benveniste began his medical practice in Los Angeles. He was graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle, and then the Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago. Prior to coming to Los Angeles, Dr. Benveniste practiced medicine in Seattle for a number of years.

Dr. Robert E. Benveniste later took on the important role of editor of the synagogue's newsletter during the 1930s, called *El Messajero*. He also served on the Board of Directors during the same period.

Dr. Irving E. Benveniste

Dr. Irving E. Benveniste was born in Rhodes and attended the Alliance Israelite Universelle. He traveled to the United States in 1914. He attended the University of Washington in Seattle. Later he attended medical school at the University of Southern California, and finished his courses at the University of Chicago, Rush

Medical College. He began his medical practice in Los Angeles in 1938. He twice served as president of the synagogue (1951-52 and 1967-69). He was honored as "Man of the Year" in 1972.

His efforts extended beyond the Sephardic community, to the Jewish community as well as Israeli causes.

"LADINO" DOCUMENTS FROM 1917 AND 1918 OF THE "SOCIEDAD PAS Y PROGRESO"

The following two documents are from the Los Angeles Sephardic synagogue of the "*Sociedad Pas y Progreso*" which later changed its name to the "*Sephardic Hebrew Center*" and later to the "*Sephardic Beth Shalom*." They are from the annual financial reports of the synagogue's initial two years of existence for the Jewish fiscal years ending September 16, 1917 and September 5, 1918. Since the founders of the synagogue were recent immigrants from the Island of Rhodes, they incorporated on their letterhead a logo which included a depiction of the Colossus of Rhodes.

The information of the financial reports is written in the now extinct "Ladino" handwriting, called "solitreo."¹ This handwriting was used in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages and was brought to the Island of Rhodes with the refugees of the Spanish Inquisition, and was subsequently brought to Los Angeles with the Rhodeslis. The two documents were handwritten by Joseph Mayo, who was the secretary of the synagogue. The synagogue continued to keep their records in the "Ladino" handwriting through the 1930s.

The contents of the annual reports reflect the purpose and concerns of the newly formed Rhodesli synagogue. The first year's financial report of Sept. 16, 1917 shows that it earned \$226.35 from its weekly collections from members." During the first year of existence, the primary financial concern was to make purchases to promote its religious needs, including the spending of \$71.24 to purchase rimonim, "poncheros" ("pointers") and shofars.

During the synagogue's second year, the charitable nature of the organization is manifested. From the \$555 of total expendi-

tures: \$109 was sent to the people suffering in Rhodes; \$90 was sent to the people suffering in Salonica; \$60 was “given in the name of the veterans and the suffering ones of the war”; and \$71 was given to “charity to the sick ones.” The synagogue continued its charitable function by establishing the “fundo secreto” which still exists.

¹“A Guide To Reading And Writing Judezmo,” by David M. Bunis. Adelantre! The Judezmo Society; Brooklyn, New York (1975).

TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTEMBER 16, 1917 DOCUMENT FROM THE LADINO “SOLITREO” HANDWRITING INTO “LADINO” AND THEN IN ITALICS FROM “LADINO” INTO ENGLISH

Reporto Anual y Financiar—Entradas: *Annual and Financial Report—Earnings:*

- 226.35 Colecciones de semanas para la sociedad. *Weekly collections for the society.*
- 26.52 Donos recojidos en total paras y guchadas. *Donations collected in total from “paras” (moneys) and “guchadas.”*
- 73.75 Donos hechos a la sociedad para miembros y particulares. *Donations made to the society for members and individuals.*
- 94.00 Colecciones recojidos a cuenta de las mitzvot de la moadim pasados. *Collections from the account of “mitzvot” of the past holidays.*
- 44.00 Suma recojida a cuenta de la rifa por un par de rimonim. *Sum collected from the account of the raffle for a pair of “rimonim”*
- 50.00 Suma recojida a cuenta de la vendeta por teketas de entrada para la kehila. *Sum collected from the account of the sale of tickets of entry for the “kehila.”*
- 514.62 Suma total que entro desde fundamiento de la sociedad Febrero 5, 1917. *Total sum earned since the society’s foundation on February 5, 1917.*

308.85 Suma recibida de la sociedad anterior. *Total sum received from the past society.*

Salidas (Gastis): *Expenditures:*

20.85 Papeleria, postages y otro gastos diversos. *Stationery, postage and other expenses.*

25.00 Gastos para el partir de la sociedad. *Expenses for the start of the society.*

10.00 Gastos particulares. *Special expenses.*

71.24 Gastos por la compra de un par de rimonim, ponchero, y shofarot. *Expenses for the buying of a pair of "rimonim," "pointer" and "shofars."*

10.00 Gastos por libros de moadim para la kehila. *Expense for holiday books for the "kehila."*

TRANSLATION OF THE SEPTEMBER 5, 1918 DOCUMENT FROM THE "LADINO SOLITREO" HANDWRITING INTO "LADINO" AND THEN IN ITALICS FROM "LADINO" INTO ENGLISH

Salidas (Gastis) *Expenditures:*

90.00 Esto de los sufrientes de Salonica. *For the suffering ones in Salonica.*

60.00 Esto de los sufrientes de la guerra del benefizios governo retirado del banquete dado en favor de la ultima. *For the banquet given in the name of the veterans and the suffering ones of the war.*

100.00 Esto de los sufrientes de Rhodes. *For the suffering ones in Rhodes.*

100.48 Gastos para comprar de un bono de la libreria. *Expense for the buying of a credit in the bookstore.*

71.00 Hechos enfermos ayudo de caridad. *Charity for the sick ones.*

39.85 Gastos para el ano pasado kehila. *Last year's expense for the kehila.*

20.00 Gastos por hall de kal por el año pasado. *Last year's expense for the hall.*

- 20.00 Gastis por hall de kal por este año. *Expenses for hall of this year.*
- 47.00 Emprimeria por los libros del constitucion y por otros papeles del Sociedad. *Book printing of the constitution books and for other paperwork regarding the society.*
- 8.30 Postages, y otros gastis diversos. *Postage and other expenses.*
- 9.00 Gastis para hall por el año ahora. *Expense for this year's hall.*
- 9.95 Gastis para el pasatiempo dado el beneficio de los miembros. *Expense for the get together given in the name of the society's members.*

TRANSLATION OF THE HEBREW SCRIPT ON THE “PEACE & PROGRESS SOCIETY” LETTERHEAD:

Above the Colossus logo: “Havarah Shalom Veholchech Kadima”;
Peace & Progress Society.

Below the Colossus logo: “Sociedad Pas y Progreso.”

On the right portion of letterhead: “Sociedad de Benefizencias,
Pas y Progreso.”

The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation