Portuguese Nationality for Sephardic Descendants

PRELIMINARY NOTES
(1 MARCH 2018)

Having worked for three years on the certification process of the descendants of Sephardic Jews of Portuguese origin the Board of the Jewish Community of Porto (CIP) would like to emphasise the following points:

1. The overwhelming majority of the certificates issued so far by CIP were granted to applicants descending from traditional Sephardic families who for centuries lived in Balkan countries — Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia — and in Arab or Muslim countries — Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, the former Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Libya — rife with marriages between Jews of Portuguese origin and Jews of Spanish origin. These applicants may request their nationality in Portugal or Spain.

2. The Nationality Law Committee at CIP assesses applicants’ processes based on every single element that may guarantee that they have a tradition of belonging to a Sephardic community of Portuguese origin — e.g. the family surnames (and not only the applicant’s last name), the lists of surnames of the traditional Sephardic families of the countries where their forebears settled in the last five centuries, the communities and synagogues they belonged to, cemetery records, the types of ketubot and other objects the families may have kept down to the present, the religious or food rites and customs, episodes narrated in history books about the Portuguese Jewish diaspora, the applicant’s connection to the Jewish world in the present and their statues in the light of Halacha, the religious temples they still frequent today and the knowledge, however limited, of the history of such families by famous academics or Rabbis recognised by organisations with Halachic credibility — critically articulated with our knowledge and understanding of the reality, culture, religious law and Jewish communities as a whole and with other materials gathered throughout the assessment process, using the work tools at our disposal.
3. The contents described above in the preceding item led the Portuguese legislator to include the Jewish communities of Porto and Lisbon in the certification process.

4. The CIP Committee, headed by the Porto Rabbinate, is made up of authorities on the Sephardic diaspora of Portuguese origin, who call upon consultants and experts available worldwide. The team members of the Committee and the administrative services work 24 hours a day to ensure a fast and effective response to the large number of applications made from all over the world, which has led to more than 300 thousand communications being exchanged in the last three years.

5. Training sessions for Portuguese and foreign lawyers representing many applicants are held regularly at CIP headquarters. The presence of the Porto Registrar will be requested at forthcoming sessions. CIP and the Portuguese Ministry of Justice are in permanent contact.

6. Certificates may be annulled if it comes to the Committee’s notice that false documents were used in the certification process. In such cases the applicants shall be prosecuted anywhere in the world by CIP’s lawyers, the same occurring with slanderers acting for material reasons, journalistic corruption, extreme Zionism, malevolence, etc.

7. Many Jews from all over the world have visited the country where their ancestors lived, including Rabbi Isaak Haleva (Hachacham Bashi, the Chief Rabbi of Turkey) who was present at a shabbaton at Porto Synagogue (currently the largest in Sepharad) accompanied by one hundred Turkish Sephardic Jews, many of whom cried and called Portugal their home.

8. The Concert of Sephardic Memory - "Tradition and Modernity - Tribute to our Jewish musical heritage" - took place in Oporto and was attended by 1000 members and friends of the Jewish Community of Oporto and personalities of Portuguese public life. The event was performed in appreciation of the wise support of Portuguese citizens and members of the Parliament for legislating the return of descendants of exiled Jewish Portuguese citizens after more than five centuries.
9. In 2018, the Jewish Community of Oporto promoted the distribution by libraries around the world of the bilingual book (English and Hebrew) entitled "The Portuguese Sephardic Diaspora in light of the archives of the Jewish Community of Oporto", written by the historian Arthur Villares, which shows the results of the intensive work carried out by the CIP Committee: statistics, number of applications, countries of origin, age of the applicants, criteria and means of proof, lists of Sephardic surnames, etc.

10. The Portuguese Minister of Justice has already welcomed the fact that the Nationality Law "is allowing Sephardic Jews to re-establish ties with the national community from which they were once separated, thus enabling their full participation in the construction of a more pluralistic and fraternal society in Portugal". Since Portuguese Jews have in the past been denied many things to which they were entitled, it is imperative that, at present, every Jew knows that he/she may only demand that to which there is a corresponding right.

I

GENERAL INFORMATION

The average time it takes from the moment a request for Portuguese Nationality is submitted to the Portuguese Government and Portuguese Nationality is granted is approximately 8 months and it is not necessary for the candidate to come to Portugal in person to obtain Portuguese citizenship.

The applicable Portuguese Law states the following: "The Portuguese Government may grant nationality to descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews [over 18 years old] who demonstrate a traditional connection to a Community with Portuguese Sephardic origins, based on proven objective requirements of a connection with Portugal, such as family names, family language, direct or collateral ancestry."

II

CITIZENSHIP MAY BE GRANTED

Portuguese nationality may be granted to descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews, who after leaving Portugal, due to religious persecution (1496-1821), maintained ties with “organized communities” that were typically Portuguese, such as those that existed in Salonika and Smyrna before being decimated by the Shoah (KK Portugal, KK Portugal Velho, KK Lisbon, KK Évora, etc.);
or had ties with the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogues in London, Amsterdam, Curaçau, Suriname, etc.; to applicants whose families once abandoned the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain) and for centuries have been integrated into Portuguese and Spanish communities, commonly known as "Sephardim" (Turkey, Greece, former Yugoslavia, Morocco, etc.), rife with marriages between Jews of Portuguese origin and Jews of Spanish origin and who used the language known as Ladino (a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish languages with local languages); to all those descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews who after leaving Portugal, due to religious persecution, travelled far and wide, whether in an organized manner or not, as part of a Community or not and whether belonging to a Synagogue or not, and who maintain an emotional connection to Portugal, even if they have since, by virtue of circumstances, become part or not of other Jewish Communities, whether Sephardic or Ashkenazi. Sephardic Jews of Morocco, for example, may obtain the certificate of the Jewish Community of Oporto, even if they can not find "Portuguese" surnames in their known genealogy, if they are descendants of megurachim (and not only descendants of tochavim, which have names with Berber prefixes: O'hayon, WaHanun, etc.) and for centuries have been integrated into communities with an abundance of marriages between Portuguese and Spanish Jews. The modern Jewish communities of Lisbon, Faro and Azores were formed by descendants of megurachim.

The requests from Brazilian citizens claiming to be descendants of people condemned by the Inquisition for heresies concerning Judaism cannot be automatically admitted. Usually, they are not Jews, nor have at least one Sephardic Jewish grandparent of Portuguese origin, which prevents us from accepting a proven emotional connection preserved throughout the centuries by family traditions. On the other hand, their ancestors for the most part did not leave Portugal fleeing religious persecution, inasmuch as they left Portuguese territory in the Iberian Peninsula for Brazil, which was also Portuguese territory at the time, where the Inquisition was also active in the form of commissariats. Additionally, many of those condemned by the Inquisition for heresies concerning Judaism were not in fact Jews, but devout Christians. The Portuguese Inquisition was a “factory of Jews”, not of true Jews (ie, sons of Jewish mothers and practising Jewish rituals), but imaginary Jews. Many devout Christians who, in answering the inquisitorial interrogation, claimed not to be Jews and not to have sins to confess, were condemned to death for being unrepentant. To save their lives, many other Christians who had the misfortune of being arrested, decided to make false confessions that they were Jews professing all sorts of
Jewish practices. As a result, they and their relatives, both close and distant, were then regarded as Jews, although they were not. In this confluence, the Portuguese Inquisition was a "factory of Jews" and for this reason, at that time, it was said sarcastically that a mint makes coins and the Inquisition makes Jews. (António José Saraiva, “Inquisição e Cristãos-Novos”, 1969)

III

HOW TO OBTAIN PORTUGUESE PASSPORT

Step 1: Certificate issued by the Portuguese Jewish Community
Step 2: Application for Portuguese Nationality
Step 3: Obtaining a Portuguese Passport

**STEP 1: Certificate issued by the Portuguese Jewish Community**

The applicant for Portuguese Nationality must first obtain a Certificate from the Portuguese Jewish Community which attests to his/her ties to a Sephardic Jewish Community of Portuguese origin. A request for this Certificate must be addressed to the Jewish Community of Oporto or to the Jewish Community of Lisbon. In Portugal, the Jewish Community of Oporto, founded 90 years ago, is the organization that unites local communal groups of the city of Oporto and its environs, while the Jewish Community of Lisbon, recognized 102 years ago, is the organization that unites local communal groups of Lisbon and its environs.

The request for a Certificate issued by the Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto should be addressed by the applicant, or an attorney acting for the applicant, by digital means to the following email address: portuguesenationality@comunidade-israelita-porto.org

Every request addressed to the Jewish Community of Oporto will be answered, either by means of issuance of the Certificate or by a negative opinion. The negative opinion will result from the Committee’s not having reached a unanimously positive conviction as to the validity of the applicant’s claim of ties to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin. Irrespective of the direct or circumstantial nature of the evidence provided, the conviction of the Committee is always formed on the basis of the evidentiary elements provided by the applicant, considered critically in conjunction with all of the material facts ascertained during the investigation.

The request for a Certificate issued by the Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto should be addressed by the applicant over 18 years old, or an attorney acting for the applicant, by digital
means to the following email address: portuguesenationality@comunidade-israelita-porto.org, together with the contact details and the following documents:

- Copy of passport;
- Birth certificate or similar document that contains applicant’s date of birth, place of birth and names of parents;
- Proof of residence [This proof serves to determine the nearest Orthodox Rabbinate]. Examples of documents that can be used as proof of residence: bills (such as electricity, water or telephone), official documents that contain the applicant's address, house rental contract, etc.;
- All of the supporting documentary evidence as may required for a proper evaluation of the matter and decision. Evidence of the applicant’s family history of connection to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin may be direct and circumstantial; and
- Proof of Judaism -- The applicant for Portuguese nationality must be Jewish in accordance with halacha or have at least one Jewish parent, without which it is not possible to claim a emotional and traditional connection with the former Portuguese Sephardic Community. (Proofs - Certificate of a Chief Rabbi, letter of an orthodox Rabbi recognized by organizations with halachic credibility, teudat nisuin of the parents, ketubah, membership of and orthodox Community, etc.)
- Family tree. This may be submitted in any appropriate format and drawn up either by you or by genealogists. If the applicant wishes, we shall provide a simple genealogical form that can be completed for this purpose. See attached form and as example. Please complete the form named "( ApplicantFull Name )_Family_Tree" - LINK - with your family tree, typed on the computer, not handwritten, and return it in the PDF format. Make sure to include the applicant's full name in the file's name, by substituting the "( ApplicantFull Name )" area. The family tree should include the generations of ancestors known to the applicant. In some cases, this may be only two or three generations, as is likely to be the case for families expelled from ten Arab countries during the twentieth century. In other cases, many more generations may be known, for example in the case of families that immigrated to London and Amsterdam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See family tree for an example in the file named "IsaacBitton_Family_Tree".
The family tree must be as complete as possible given the documentation in the applicant's family's possession.

In addition to sending us the family tree, the applicant must send us the documents on which the family tree is based.

Finally, the applicant must explain why records of further generations are not available.

The main purpose of the family tree is to illustrate the applicant's Sephardic lineage on his father's or mother's side. In the case of an applicant with Sephardic lineage through both parents, it is sufficient to include one of these. The family tree must include the following information for each person mentioned: (I) date of birth, (II) date of death (III) date of marriage and (IV) place of birth. In situations where some data is unknown, even after due research, the corresponding entry should be left blank. Any family tree that is not designed according to these instructions or contains incorrect data will be rejected.

All applications for certificates and documents must be physically archived by the Jewish Community of Oporto.

The contributions to the Community will be used for the maintenance of the great building of the Kadoorie Mekor Haim Synagogue and for the promotion of Jewish life and culture in the city of Oporto. The Community gives tzedakah via a vast network of Jewish organisations in many countries.

The e-mail address portuguesenationality@comunidade-israelita-porto.org is run by administrative staff members of the Jewish Community of Oporto, not by the evaluating Committee, who will only look at applications and supporting documentation. The Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto shall only evaluate requests and attached documents, as in legal proceedings, but it may ask the candidate questions by email, skype or telephone.

The Committee (for the Nationality Law) of the Jewish Community of Oporto includes Jews of such diverse origins. A complete list of issued certificates will be sent monthly by the Jewish Community of Oporto to the Portuguese Ministry of Justice. Any forged certificates will not be considered valid documents. The sovereignty of the European Union and access to the Schengen Area will not be jeopardized.

As it was agreed in Oporto city in a meeting between the Jewish Communities of Oporto and Lisbon, the certificates may only be issued following impartial and careful evaluation. The assistance rendered to the Portuguese State by the Jewish Community of Oporto and the Jewish
Community of Lisbon is a public service, determining if the applicant is a Sephardic descendant with a connection to Portugal.

**Means of proof**

1 - The Nationality Law Committee at CIP assesses applicants’ processes based on every single element that may guarantee that they have a tradition of belonging to a Sephardic community applicant’s last name), the lists of surnames of the traditional Sephardic families of the countries where their forebears settled in the last five centuries, the communities and synagogues they belonged to, cemetery records, the types of ketubot and other objects the families may have kept down to the present, the religious or food rites and customs, episodes narrated in history books about the Portuguese Jewish diaspora, the applicant’s connection to the Jewish world in the present and their statues in the light of Halacha, the religious temples they still frequent today and the knowledge, however limited, of the history of such families by famous academics or Rabbis recognised by organisations with Halachic credibility – critically articulated with our knowledge and understanding of the reality, culture, religious law and Jewish communities as a whole and with other materials gathered throughout the assessment process, using the work tools at our disposal.

2 - Evidence of the applicant’s family history of connection to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin, by means of family names, Ladino language, direct or collateral descendence, or other elements which are indicative of this connection, may be direct and circumstantial. Circumstantial evidence may be provided by means of any type of proof, provided that all of such elements of proof, when considered collectively or individually, in combination with direct evidence, will serve to convince the Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto as to the validity of the applicant’s claim of ties to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin.

3 - The use of Ladino (Eastern Ladino, spoken by Sephardim in the Eastern Mediterranean, or Western Ladino, spoken by North African Sephardim) by the candidate and/or by his or her parents and grandparents is a proven objective requirement of the connection to Portugal, as it derives (also) from the Spanish and the Portuguese languages. In order to prove that a candidate speaks Ladino or that this language is/was a language spoken in the candidate’s family, it may be necessary to provide, for example, filmed records, pictures of graves (with inscriptions in Ladino) or written documents (in Ladino) that the Committee finds acceptable, or for the candidate to speak Ladino with a member of the Committee via Skype.
4 - A Portuguese surname is a proven objective requirement of the connection to Portugal. What is a Portuguese surname? Throughout history, Jews were constantly caught out by the indiscreet inquiry as to their secular names, their Hebrew names and their nicknames. In the onomastic history of the Jews in Portugal and Spain, three periods can be identified: the period of true names, the period of names changed through political imposition and the period of true names restored. In the first period mentioned, the Jews are not subject to a great deal of persecution. The names are typically either Jewish or Iberian, the latter being adopted for convenience, not by imposition. In the lists of surnames of Jews who lived in Portugal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, up to the Edict of Expulsion, we can find hundreds of typically Jewish surnames (Abeatar, Aboab, Aboaf, Abravanel, Azecri, Baraha, Ben Hayun, Benatar, Bueno, Baruch Barzilai, etc.) and hundreds of typically Iberian surnames (Afumado, Almeida, Alvo, Amado, Alvarez, Barrocas, Beijudo, Beja, Belo, Bicudo, etc.). The second period is a period in which the Jews are forbidden to practice Judaism and forced to lose their identity. Iberian or even Christian names are adopted by imposition. After the Edict of Expulsion in Portugal, Jews with names like Abraão Abeatar, Jacob Azekri, Isaac de Leão and Leah Ferro took names like António Nunes, Pedro Pereira, José Mendes and Isabel Ferro. Finally, the third period was a period of restoration of true family names. Those in question arrived at countries of refuge, where they found the freedom to profess Judaism again, and then sought to recover their identity. All those who had memory of their true names (typically Jewish, typically Iberian or a mixture of both) soon restored them with joy. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that throughout the world there are many Sephardic Jews names that are a Judeo-Iberian mixture, for example Menahem Galego, Lea Montesinhos, Joshua Mendes, Yossef D'Ortas, Abraham Castelon, Rachel Franco, Shlomo Beja, Leon Baruc, Esther Marques, Moshe Galindo, Salomon Navarro and Ruth Levi Moreira.

5 - More important than having a Portuguese surname in the name of a applicant, is having it in his or her genealogy. The applicants need to be descendants of Portuguese Jews. There are many Jews with Portuguese surnames who are not descendants of Portuguese Jews. The Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto analyses surnames on a case by case basis.

6 - According to the Portuguese Nationality law, the Ladino language and Portuguese surnames are objective criteria of connection to Portugal. However, the Jewish Community of Oporto can give the certificate to whom do not have Portuguese surnames and don’t speak Ladino if he/she is able to prove that he/she is descendant of Sephardic Portuguese Jews. This is the point.
7 - Other examples of documented evidence: family records, family tree, Community archives of births, marriages and deaths (such as those in Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Curacao, St. Thomas and Sofia), cemeteries and lists of tombs (like those found in Surinam, Thessaloniki, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Curacao, Bayonne, Paris and Vienna), brit milah records, general Government archives that show arrivals from Portugal, lists of ships and passengers arriving from Portugal. It is a criminal offense to falsify documents. The Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto will always strive to ascertain the veracity of documentation submitted, which will be evaluated together with the other evidence obtained during the course of the investigation.

8 - Expert evidence, ie, support of an expert on Portuguese Jewish diaspora. Expert evidence must be submitted in writing. The reports of experts in Portuguese diaspora must be in writing and signed by the expert(s). Languages: Hebrew, English Spanish or Portuguese.

9 - Testimonial evidence, ie, reputable witnesses who can attest to a family's oral tradition. Testimonial evidence must be submitted in writing. Testimony must be in the form of written depositions, signed by the witnesses and certified by a Notary Public. The depositions must be sent to us together with copies of passports or ID cards of the witnesses. Witnesses must be credible and their testimony convincing. It is a criminal offense for a witness to falsely testify in writing to any legally relevant fact. The Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto will always endeavour to ascertain the credibility of depositions, which will be evaluated together with other evidence and information gathered during the course of the investigation.

10 - All probative means can be considered in the evidence submitted. Such is the case of DNA test results, which will be independently evaluated by Dr. Luisa Pereira, an expert on human ancestry at IPATIMUP (Institute of Molecular Pathology and immunology of the University of Oporto), with whom the Jewish Community of Oporto has a cooperation agreement. It is also the case of documents that prove the candidate’s use of non-Portuguese surnames that were once used by Jews of Portuguese origin. It is worth repeating that we are referring to "Jewish", "Sephardic" candidates who have made "allegations" of belonging to Portugal which were considered "credible" in light of our knowledge of the Jewish world.

11 - DNA test evidence. The tests based on uniparental markers, mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome, provide information on the maternal and paternal lineages, respectively. Females only can get information about the maternal lineage, while males can get both maternal and paternal information. It is not possible to say that a certain lineage indicates, with a 100%
certainty, that the individual has a Jewish ancestry. But there are founder lineages of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities, which attain considerably high frequencies in those communities, being a powerful additional evidence of a probable Jewish ancestry. Many companies provide information of matching of lineages in considerable databases across the globe, helping in ascertaining a probable genetic origin for those lineages. It must be reinforced that if the potential Sephardic lineage is maternal, there must be a female transmitting it along all generations, from that ancestral till the present descendant, otherwise it will be lost. The same applies to the paternal lineages, always a male transmitting it along time. Another test (for females and males) focuses on autosomal genetic markers, which are equally transmitted by both parents. This test can work as a genetic GPS, providing information on the most probable location of your ancestors, when ascertained against a broad database for several populations across the world. In this specific case, this test can be particularly informative if the Portuguese Sephardic ancestors are recent, in the order of five generations, and there was not much admixture with other communities. In fact, all the ancestors will have an equal contribution for the autosomal markers; so, if an individual was generated by the admixture of ancestries from different continents or different parts of the continent, the result will be in between those regions. Please provide: information on the company where the tests were done; the complete genetic information provided by the company (genotype, haplotype, haplogroup); the matching results.

**STEP 2: Application for Portuguese Nationality**

Once the applicant has received a Certificate from the Jewish Community of Oporto (or Lisbon) attesting to his/her ties to a Jewish Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin, it is prudent that he/she seek legal advice in the preparation and submission of the documents required for application to the Portuguese Government for Portuguese nationality. If the application is rejected by the Portuguese Government, an appeal to an Administrative Court must be interposed by a knowledgeable lawyer who will need to be already familiar with the case. If this not done within the established period, the application will be rejected definitively and the applicant will not be able to obtain Portuguese citizenship through this law.

Lawyers who usually work for the Jewish Community of Oporto: Yolanda Busse, Oehen Mendes & Associados (ybom@netcabo.pt) and Mrs. Mónica Teixeira (monica@mjt.com.pt). However, there are 30,000 lawyers in Portugal and the petition for Portuguese Nationality addressed to
the Portuguese Government can be submitted by any lawyer. The Community is not partner of any lawyer.

The request for Portuguese Nationality addressed to the Portuguese Government by Lawyers must be accompanied by the following documents:

- Certificate issued by a recognized Jewish Community in Portugal (Jewish Community of Oporto or Jewish Community of Lisbon) that attests to the applicants ties to a Jewish Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin. (This certificate must be obtained in the manner described above under Step 1.)
- Power of attorney granting specific powers to lawyers of the chosen Law Firm, who will provide the respective Portuguese text.
- Applicant’s birth certificate (issued within the previous six months) translated and certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the document in question.
- Criminal Record from the applicant’s country of birth and country of which he/she is a citizen, as well as from those countries where the applicant has resided, issued within the previous ninety days, certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the documents in question.
- Translation into Portuguese of the above mentioned criminal records certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the document in question.
- Portuguese Criminal Record (which the applicant’s Lawyers may obtain for applicant in Portugal).
- Full copy of applicant’s Passport certified by a Portuguese Consulate.
- Indication of the circumstances which establish the connection to a Portuguese Community of Sephardic origin mentioned in the Certificate issued by the Jewish Community of Oporto.

For safety reasons, the Portuguese State may refuse to grant Portuguese citizenship to certain people, even in cases where all the required documents and elements of proof have been submitted.

**STEP 3: Obtaining a Portuguese Passport**

Once Portuguese nationality has been granted to the applicant, the Registrar of the Portuguese Central Registry Office will issue the applicant’s Portuguese birth certificate. The birth certificate
will be mailed to the applicant who should take it to the nearest Portuguese Consulate in order to obtain a Portuguese passport.

IV
MORE INFORMATION

The Jewish Community of Oporto was consulted and contributed to the drafting of the bill amending the Nationality Law (2013) and to the drafting of the Regulation (2014). On July 3, 2013, the Portuguese Parliament approved the bill, amending the Nationality Law that allows descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews to apply for Portuguese nationality. The bill was introduced by Maria de Belém Roseira (President of the Socialist Party) and was approved unanimously in the Portuguese Parliament. There are some who speculate as to the motivation behind the bill to the Nationality Law, suggesting an economic motive. However, the bill was based only on the idea of Justice. Since April of 2012 the Jewish Community of Oporto, the scholar Inácio Steinhardt and subsequently the Jewish Community of Lisbon were involved in creating the text of this bill and know perfectly well that there was no economic basis behind its creation.

On November 5, 2013, when consulted by the Ministry of Justice in relation to the Regulation of the Law on Nationality, the Oporto Jewish Community advised that an International Committee integrated by Orthodox rabbis, historians, researchers and genealogists specialized in Portuguese Jewish Diaspora should be established. The Community even cited the opinion of Mordechai Arbell, perhaps the world's greatest specialist in Sephardic communities of Portuguese origin, a subject on which he has published numerous books, and a board member of the World Sephardic Congress.

Since no conditions were created by the Portuguese State for the establishment of an International Committee, the Oporto Jewish Community informed the Ministry of Justice, in 2014, that it had streamlined mechanisms in Portugal and abroad, in order to create its own internal Committee to operate with the highest possible efficiency but also with dignity.

V
HISTORY NOTE

The designation "Sephardic Jews" is applied to Jews descending from the old traditional Jewish communities of the Iberian Peninsula, ie, Portugal and Spain. The name Sepharad means
"Hispania", ie, Iberian Peninsula, not only Spain. In the 16th century the Portuguese King Manuel I challenged the use of the name "Spain" by Castile, considering it abusive, as the Roman "Hispania" consisted not only of Castile (together with its conquered realms), but also of Portugal, an independent country since 1143.

Religious persecutions of Jews from Portugal did not happen to a foreign people, strangers in blood, belief and ways of life. Having been around for longer than the Celtiberians, the Romans, the Goths, the Muslims and the Christians, preceding the foundation of the realm and any memories, traditions or monuments from other people, the Jews trace the origin of their position in Portuguese territories and, in general, the whole of the Iberian Peninsula (Sepharad), back to the ancient times of King Solomon.

At the beginning of the 7th century, obeying the Third Council of Toledo’s canons, the Visigoth King Sisebut published an Edict commanding the expulsion or baptism of all the Jews from Sefarad, under penalty of exile and loss of all possessions, which led to, on one hand, the beginning of Crypto-Judaism in Sepharad and, on the other hand, the mixing of Jewish blood with that of other populations. Catholic historians narrate that 90,000 Jews forcefully embraced the Christian faith, with many Jewish children being separated from their parents to be raised in an uncontaminated Christian atmosphere.

The fixation for Jewish children sustained by the time’s powerful people continued to the end of the same century, specifically the year 694, when the Seventeenth Council of Toledo took place, having declared that: "Concerning their children [Jewish children] of both sexes, it is decreed that upon their 7th year of age they shall be separated from their parents company, forbidding any relation to them, and their lords shall deliver them to devout Christians to be raised, so the firstborn males can be married to Christian women and the firstborn women can be married to Christian men, without any permission for the parents, nor the children, to celebrate, under any concept, the ceremonies of Jewish superstition, nor to return in any event to the path of infidelity."

Despite all obstacles, throughout the centuries, a prosperous Jewish community was established in Portugal and Spain. There is deep ignorance about the importance of Portugal, which is often thought to have been a small kingdom belonging to Castile that in 1492 temporarily accepted some Jews. This is totally wrong.

When in 1492 the Spanish Jews were given three months to abandon the realm – either converting to Christianity before the month of July or abandoning the territory – an intense
repercussion was felt in Portugal, where the Jews were favoured by the realm and protected by the lords. Under the scorching Sun of the peninsular summer, the Jewish population born in Portugal, an estimated 75,000 people (according to historian Lúcio D’Azevedo), was increased by the enormous contingent arriving from beyond the border.

The majority of the Spanish Jews, approximately 120,000 people (according to Abraão Zacuto), crossed the Portuguese border on foot, helping their tired donkeys pulling carts which carried the elderly, the children, books and some hidden money. Andrés Bernáldez, a priest moved by this painful image, described how the Jews "walked along the roads and over fields with great difficulty and misfortune, with some of them falling, some of them dying, others being born, and every single Christian felt sorry for them".

Many parental and commercial relationships existed between Jewish families on both sides of the border dividing the Sepharad in half. Rabbi Isaac Aboab hastily travelled to Portugal requesting from King D. João II permission for settlement in the country for him and thirty other families, followed by another six hundred, and many others after that in uncountable numbers, stripped of their homes, stores and belongings, all of them fleeing from Spain, with nothing to stop the unrestrained vigour of such an unfortunate mass of persecuted people.

Within a few weeks, Portugal, in the far shore of the Sepharad, became the world’s Judea. The invasion largely exceeded previous predictions. Fearing that the new demographic reality – approximately 200,000 Jews in a total population which did not exceed 1 million people – could inflame the Christian people, and excited to make profit from the hospitality of the newly arrived, the king commanded that they pay some "cruzados" each for their entrance in Portugal and kept the receipt of tax payment with them, at all times. Unfortunate would be those unable to present such receipt. They would be turned into slaves.

On the other hand, D. João II soon ordered the Jews to deliver all of their worship books and ritual objects with Hebrew inscriptions at the Great synagogue of Lisbon, to be destroyed. Concerning the people that had crossed the border coming from Spain, the books were practically everything they had brought to Portugal.

Forced to extreme poverty, many of the Spanish Jews without any ties in Portugal were not able to pay the king, resulting from having left everything at the other side of the border, and from having been victims of robberies by the hands of all kinds of thieves. They had no work, not enough money to start their own businesses, and not all had the best welcome from the
Portuguese Jewish colony, who soon feared they would be put at risk because of their brothers in faith from the other side of the Sepharad.

Those unable to pay the amount fixed for asylum, or unable to present the payment receipt, D. João II declared as slaves, distributing them as prisoners among the kingdom's nobility and keeping many others for himself, among which were hundreds of minors who were forcefully Christianized and sent in boats to colonize the island of São Tomé. Whole families, both powerful and respected in Spain, were enslaved in Portugal. They had no right to rest and were exposed to all kinds of violence.

This dramatic situation experienced in 1493 and 1494, meant “expulsion” from Portugal for thousands of Jews, in as much as they felt the need to leave the country and, in fact, they fled.

The first large waves of Jews who left Spain and Portugal towards the Ottoman Empire gathered scholars, renowned rabbis and a great culture. The small Jewish communities who welcomed them, often composed totally of Arab Jews (mustarabim), were quickly absorbed by the weight and superior culture of the newcomers, who, sharing their faith, established independent synagogues, schools, cemeteries, rabbinical courts and a highly developed Jewish life. These communities, which were called Sephardic, included Portuguese Jews and Jews of Spanish origin (and others), who always married each other without obstacles. They assembled also into congregations according to their cities and regions of origin in the Iberian Peninsula, preserving the local customs, languages, traditions, rituals and particular rules of the communities to which they had belonged in Sefarad. But despite the existence in certain cities of the Ottoman Empire, and in other parts of the world, of “Kehilot Hakodesh” with names relating to different geographical origins within Sefarad (Kahal Kadosh Portugal, Kahal Kadosh Castile, Kahal Kadosh Aragon, etc.), usually Sephardic Jews intermarried. Thus were formed, in blood and spirit, communities of “Sephardim”, a word that did not even exist prior to this, as with “Ladino”, a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish languages with local languages.

On the other hand, thousands of Jews from Portugal and Spain set forth towards Morocco, and specifically, to the port of Asilah, controlled by Portugal. In view of their family and ethnic ties, as well as their common religious and historical identity, Portuguese and Spanish Jews did not create separate congregations. They united. The "Sephardic" community thus formed rapidly radiated to other areas of Morocco and the Mediterranean in general. Local Jews (called toshabim, i.e, indigenous) quickly recognized the numerical, social and intellectual superiority
of the Sephardic newcomers, who cultivated the memory of a legendary aristocratic ancestry and a link to the Davidic dynasty.

In Portugal, the King D. Manuel I, who rose to the throne in 1495, started by freeing the Jews previously enslaved by his ancestor, but soon lost his compassion and became even less merciful in the attempt to force acceptance of Christianity as their religious faith. The harshest example took place in the first night of Jewish Passover, when the kingdom's soldiers carried out a hunt for minors under 14 years of age, who were taken from their terrorized mothers and fathers. Having those minors forcefully baptised, the king had hoped their parents would voluntarily convert to Christianity, as to not be separated from their children.

It was told by Solomon ibn Verga that a heartbroken mother approached the king on his way out of Sunday mass: «Asking for his mercy and throwing herself under his horse's hooves. The king commanded his servants to remove her from his presence, but the woman remained and the king said: “Leave her, she is but a bitch from whom the pups were taken”.

The Edict of Expulsion, proclaimed in December 1496, resulted in the expulsion of the Moors, not the Jews. The ports were closed, the ships were sent out to sea, land borders were monitored and all exits were hampered, leaving the Jews with no choice between expulsion or Catholic baptism. They were proclaimed Catholics - "new Christians" - and forced to stay in Portugal.

The city of Lisbon, the great capital of the Portuguese empire, became small for the crowd of desperate Jews urging to flee the country. Many were dragged to the baptismal font. The General Conversion, effective and by decree, and know as the "standing baptism", officially ended the Jewish presence in Portugal, leaving only "new Christians".

The Edict was not felt in Oporto the same way as it was in Lisbon. No violence was exercised upon the Jews who, generally and under the circumstances, accepted their conversion to Christianity, though secretly keeping their faith. "Their abandoned synagogues –, according to writings by Captain Barros Basto, founder of Oporto's Jewish Community –, were falling to ruin over time and the prayers and psalms recited and sung were now whispered in improvised prayer rooms inside the houses of false Christians, which originated the Crypto-Judaism practised by those unable to flee or connected through intense love to the beautiful Portuguese land where their ancestors rested over centuries."

Within the first ten years following the Edict, a few thousand "new Christians" were able to leave the country. This was certainly achieved clandestinely and facing great perils, threats and
blackmails from ship captains and land guides. The number of people leaving in this new migratory wave was certainly smaller than the amount of people that came in, and continued to come in, from Spain. The Spanish king, Fernando, the Catholic, asked the Portuguese king to command that the fugitives be sent back to the border.

In 1504, there was a riot against the “new Christians” in Lisbon, where some of them were assaulted by the people, after a rumour they were behind the extreme famine spreading everywhere. The aggressors suffered harsh penalties for their actions at the hands of the authorities, being whipped and convicted to exile in São Tomé as incorrigible criminals. Sectors of the people, vexed by the severity of the punishment, soon complained of something worse, when dozens of “new Christians” flagrantly surprised practising Passover rituals were taken under custody and set free after a few days, causing general scandal.

The sentimental effervescence thus generated, accrued by similar facts, erupted on April 19th, 1506. At the church of Saint Dominic, faithful Catholics swore that a certain crucifix was irradiating an unusual shine, calling it a miracle. One of the people present, a “new Christian”, tried to explain the fact as a mere light effect, adding as stated: “How would a dry piece of wood ever perform miracles?” Thrown to the churchyard, he was immediately killed and dragged to Rossio to be burned at a stake. Meanwhile, two friars were shouting sacrilege, inciting the mob and calling them the worst scum of the whole city and those hardened by crime, including the crews of Dutch, French and German ships berthed at the docks. Thus the death hunt for “new Christians” had started. After three days of genocide, unable to find any other “new Christians”, the bandit's wrath turned against the “old Christians”, hidden in their homes. The savage wave of murders, rapes and plunder was only stopped by the arrival of the king's soldiers, from various points of the country, who started a quick and severe repression, executing under death penalty every despicable person found, showing no mercy for women. Saint Dominic church was immediately closed and the riot-inciting friars were burned alive.

Unhappy with the whole city, King D. Manuel I declared it devoid of titles, and on all inhabitants he imposed a fine of 1/5 of their belongings, causing a generalized feeling of injustice among those who were only guilty of watching the ongoing genocide, helpless and scared.

The Portuguese poet Gil Vicente wrote at the time: "It is too much to ask the Jewish to be a Christian in his heart". Deep down, the king was aware of this. On March 1507, he determined that the “new Christians” were free to leave the kingdom and to take their possessions with them. Until then, clandestine immigration meant they lost all of their belongings.
A third migratory wave took place then. Thousands of Jews seized the opportunity to migrate to different parts of the world. In 1510, about 50,000 Jews from Sefarad were already living in the Ottoman Empire, mostly from Spain, though many also from Portugal, together with a smaller number of Jews from Italy.

However, in Portugal, once again, the vast majority of the Jewish people chose to stay. They were promised full exemption from oppressive measures by the king, an attitude assumed as authorization for their clandestine cult. By this time, thousands of Jews were still clandestinely crossing the border from Spain to Portugal, due to the Inquisition's ferocity on that side. Upon the death of D. Manuel, in 1521, many of the “new Christians” absolved him of previous sins, calling him “El-rei judeu” (The Jewish King). They predicted a dark period of war on Jewish practices and the heresies committed against the Christian faith.

In the year of 1536, during the reign of D. João III, the Inquisition was officially instated in Portugal, where, it is believed, one out of every five individuals was Jewish. The number of marriages between “new Christians” and “old Christians” never ceased to increase throughout the inquisitorial centuries. Halfway through this period, it was a difficult task to find a simple genealogy without any trace of “new Christians” in Portugal. Fearing this fact, some puritans defended a general expulsion of “new Christians” so that only “old Christians” would remain; others would correct this statement, by asserting this as an impossible task without completely depopulating the country.

It is told that in 1590, King Filipe II of Spain attended an inquisitorial "Auto-de-fé" (Act of faith) in Lisbon. Observing the faces in the crowd, he claimed that maybe the accused were the only non-Jews: "Los que miran son judios, los otros son sospechosos" (Those staring are Jewish, the others are suspicious).

In Portugal, as in Spain, Crypto-Judaism was often punishable by death. The children were taught to not commit any indiscretions which exposed their parents to persecution by the crown and the altar. Friar of Torrejoncillo later produced a highly significant report on this particular matter: "A man of the cloth was confessing a child, as demanded by Lent, and asked the child his name, to which the child replied: "Father, are you asking me for my name at home, or my name outside?”, and the priest replied: “Your name at home!”", and the boy stated: “At home I am Abraham, and outside I am Little Francis”.

Jewish heresies were then persecuted, not the descendants of Jews. However, many have tried to complete family trees spanning several generations, to prove they had no Jewish blood. A
task twice as useless. The inquisitors were well aware that 90,000 forced conversions had been performed throughout the Iberian Peninsula by the Visigoths, 1000 years before these family trees were elaborated, making it impossible to trace back to such distant times. Therefore, throughout Europe, and for centuries, Portuguese was a synonym of Jewish. This idea spread like wildfire, even within Jewish communities. A Jewish person from France hired to teach Greek in Portugal mastered his knowledge of Hebrew, believing it to be the realm's language.

The transit of thousands of Jews between Portugal and Spain never ceased. Many Portuguese names were featured within the lists of people condemned by the Spanish inquisition. For example in 1680, an Auto-de-Fé was performed in Madrid to punish 106 defendants accused of Judaism and among these, 76 were Portuguese by birth.

In the lists of persons convicted by the Portuguese Inquisition, it is possible to find many Spanish surnames, for example, Alonso, Alvarez, Arroyo, Arroja, Balieyro, Bueno, Cardozo, Cazales, Cobilhos, Corgenaga, Correa, Cortez, Escobar, Frois, Galeno, Molina, Montearroyo, Munhoz, Pineda, Rozado, Ruiz, Soeyro, Toloza, Torrones, Trigillos, Uchoa, Valladolid, Vilhalva, Vilhegas and Ximinez. Other people had nicknames referring to Spain - e.g. “O Galego” ("The Galician") - or made trips to Leon or Castile to search for relatives (e.g case No. 9795 of the Inquisition of Coimbra).

During the inquisitorial period, and particularly between 1540 and 1765, it is estimated that approximately 50,000 “new Christians” left Portugal. This was the last wave of the Portuguese Jewish Diaspora spreading all over the world. Some were able to find and purchase, in Africa, Asia and other latitudes, whole collections of books that in 1493 had been gathered at the Great Synagogue of Lisbon to be taken and destroyed.

All the Sephardic communities of Western Europe - Amsterdam, London, Hamburg and others - were founded by Portuguese Jews and built on the religious tenets of rabbis from the Ottoman Empire. Such communities were the first that their Portuguese founders had the opportunity to know in their lives.

Throughout history, Jews were constantly caught out by the indiscreet inquiry as to their secular names, their Hebrew names and their nicknames. In the onomastic history of the Jews in Portugal and Spain, three periods can be identified: the period of true names, the period of names changed through political imposition and the period of true names restored.
In the first period mentioned, the Jews are not subject to a great deal of persecution. The names are typically either Jewish or Iberian, the latter being adopted for convenience, not by imposition. In the lists of surnames of Jews who lived in Portugal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, up to the Edict of Expulsion, we can find hundreds of typically Jewish surnames (Abeatar, Aboab, Aboaf, Abravanel, Azcri, Baraha, Ben Hayun, Benatar, Bueno, Baruch Barzilai, etc.) and hundreds of typically Iberian surnames (Afumado, Almeida, Alvo, Amado, Alvarez, Barrocas, Beičudo, Beja, Belo, Bicudo, etc.).

The second period is a period in which the Jews are forbidden to practice Judaism and forced to lose their identity. Iberian or even Christian names are adopted by imposition. After the Edict of Expulsion in Portugal, Jews with names like Abraão Abeatar, Jacob Azekri, Isaac de Leão and Leah Ferro took names like António Nunes, Pedro Pereira, José Mendes and Isabel Ferro.

Finally, the third period was a period of restoration of true family names. Those in question arrived at countries of refuge, where they found the freedom to profess Judaism again, and then sought to recover their identity. All those who had memory of their true names (typically Jewish, typically Iberian or a mixture of both) soon restored them with joy. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that throughout the world there are many Sephardic Jews names that are a Judeo-Iberian mixture, for example Menahem Galego, Lea Montesinhos, Joshua Mendes, Yossef D'Ortas, Abraham Castelon, Rachel Franco, Shlomo Beja, Leon Baruc, Esther Marques, Moshe Galindo, Salomon Navarro and Ruth Levi Moreira.

Of the large Jewish population living in Portugal by the year 1493, it is estimated that approximately half abandoned the kingdom during the successive migratory waves mentioned before, between the 15th and 18th centuries. Not counting the marginal cases of small Crypto-Judaic communities, the other half, approximately 100,000 people, was mixed by marriage to the old Christian population and composes the current Portuguese population.

Considering the comprehensiveness of each individual person's genealogy, it is necessarily stated that all Portuguese citizens with roots in Portugal within the last few centuries are descendants of Jewish people. The Nazis certainly knew that removing Jewish descendants from Portugal would mean assassinating all the country's population.

The fact that Portuguese citizens are descendants of Jews (and descendants of many other people: Celtiberians, Romans, Goths, Muslims and Christians) does not confer on them the status of Bnei Anousim. In fact the Bnei Anousim (Cripto-Jews) were the descendants of Jewish converts who secretly continued to pray to Hashem and maintained the Jewish spirit and Jewish
family matrilineality in marriages, as happened with the Bnei Anousim of Belmonte in Portugal. It is the opinion of the Religious Committee of the Jewish Community of Oporto, as well as of reputable scholars, that there are no longer any Bnei Anousim (Crypto-Jews) in Portugal, just as there are no longer any samurai warriors in Japan, and it is misleading to imply that there are. The matter is now one for the history books, local culture and tourism.

Nowadays, there are approximately 800 Jews in Portugal. The Jewish community of Oporto was founded 90 years ago by a descendant of Portuguese Crypto-Jewish people and merchants from Central and Eastern Europe; the Jewish community of Lisbon was founded 100 years ago by Sephardic Jews from Gibraltar and Morocco; and the Jewish community of Belmonte is a community of Portuguese Jews who kept Crypto-Judaism until the 20th century.

Despite the insignificant number of Jews currently living in Portugal, it is important to highlight that Jewish and Judaism-related traditions were highly spread and generalized in the Portuguese side of the Sephard; the forced conversions, the separation of children from their parents and the blood mixtures were performed on such a large scale and from such a long time ago, that there is almost a Jewish spirit and predisposition among the non-Jewish Portuguese people.

Even 200, 300, 400 years ago, Portuguese travellers in foreign lands were held to be Jews. Portuguese and Jewish were almost synonymous. This was not the case with the Spanish.

By Jewish Community of Oporto, Portugal

Official website: http://www.comunidade-israelita-porto.org