



For Immediate Release

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## **JEWS, CALVINISTS AND CHRISTIANS IN 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DUTCH BRAZIL**

University of Sao Paulo Historian to Speak at the Center for Jewish History

The year 2004 marks the anniversary of 350 years of Jewish communal life in North America. On November 16<sup>th</sup>, in conjunction with the exhibition *Pernambuco, Brazil – Gateway to New York*, the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House, and Yeshiva University Museum, will bring noted historian and University of Sao Paulo Professor, Anita Novinsky from Brazil to speak about ***Jews, New Christians and Calvinists in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch Brazil***. She will present a fascinating lecture exploring the conflicts faced by Sephardic Jews as they moved from Spain and Portugal to the New World. She will discuss, “the divided soul of the Sephardic Jews”, and the important role played by them in the economic and cultural development of Northeastern Brazil.

Dr. Novinsky, who has studied and written about this subject for many years, is uniquely qualified to evaluate the remarkable history of the Jews from Portugal, the “secret Jews”, who lived in Brazil for centuries. “The greatest emigration of Sephardi Jews from Portugal was to Brazil”, says Dr. Novinsky. “For three centuries they lived secretly as Jews, persecuted by the Inquisition. Many were forced to convert and become “New Christians”. The only time that the Jews, scholars and adventurers, poets and writers, lived freely and could practice their religion was during the 24 years of the Dutch occupation of the northeast of Brazil in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was the enormous creativity of the Sephardi Jews during their stay in Pernambuco that

contributed to the transformation of the city to a modern metropolis,” she says. Dr. Novinsky will explain the conflict between the Jews, Calvinists and Christians and the lost dreams of the Jews to live in freedom in Brazil.

A leading scholar worldwide on the topic of New Christians and the history of the Jews of Portugal, Brazil and Spain, Dr. Novinsky is the author of numerous articles in scientific journals and newspapers, has contributed to dozens of other works on this topic and has written seven books. Born near Krakov Poland, she came to Brazil at the age of one. She received her doctorate degree with a thesis on the “Inquisition and Anusim” in Brazil. She has been invited to give seminars and lectures in universities around the world from Warsaw to Paris to Minnesota. In the U.S. she has been a visiting professor at several universities including Brown University, the University of Connecticut and The University of Texas. Dr. Novinsky was elected “One of the Ten Women of the Year” in Brazil by the commission of the National Council of Women of Brazil, an affiliate of the International Congress of Women, for her pioneer work in the field of Historical Research and for the integration of women in the political, social and economic development of Brazil. She was featured in the film, “Paths of Memory”, a colorful documentary that tells the story of the Jews in Portugal.

The lecture will take place at the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House at the Center for Jewish History on November 16, 2004 at 7:00 PM. General admission is \$10; \$5 for ASF & YUM members, students and seniors. The price of admission will include entry, from 6:30 to 7:30, to the exhibition *Pernambuco, Brazil – Gateway to New York* that examines the lives led by the original Jewish settlers in Brazil during the brief period of Dutch sovereignty from (1630 -1654), before coming to America.

The Center for Jewish History is located at 15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

The **American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House** is a national Jewish organization dedicated to ensuring that the history, legacies and traditions of the great Sephardic communities throughout the world be recorded, remembered and celebrated as an integral part of Jewish heritage.

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