



For Immediate Release
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JEWISH COSTUMES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Exhibition Opens at the Center for Jewish History

Jewish Costumes in the Ottoman Empire, a selection of illustrations depicting traditional Jewish attire in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th to the 19th centuries, will open on March 31, 2004 with a gala reception organized by the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House at the Center for Jewish History in New York. The exhibit, the dream of Turkish curator Sylvio Ovadya, was created by “tezhip” artists based on old postcards of Ottoman Jewish clothing. The paintings have been brought to the United States with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and will travel to key cities around the country as part of a year-long program dedicated to highlighting the history, culture and traditions of two peoples who have lived together in friendship for centuries, *The Jews in Turkey: Living Together Throughout the Ages*.

In the early 1980's Curator Sylvio Ovadya began collecting books and old postcards containing examples of Ottoman Jewish clothing, but it was not until 1999, walking around a handicrafts bazaar at Fez House in Eyup that he discovered a number of miniatures depicting **Ottoman Jews**, and it was these, which helped him realize a project he had been dreaming of for years. In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, he writes, “The story of the Jews of Turkey is a fascinating one, for its rich and multi-layered history. We know that there was a large number of Jews living in Constantinople as far back as Byzantine times, and that the Turkish tribes encountered Jews on their arrival in Anatolia. Ottoman Jewry expanded dramatically in the late 1490s with the expulsion of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. These Sephardi settlers brought

with them new cultural elements which enriched the community, but unfortunately, not much has survived from this era of Jewish history.”

The March 31st event hosted by the Consul General of Turkey in New York and The American Sephardi Federation in collaboration with the Jewish Community of Turkey and The Assembly of Turkish American Associations will feature an introduction by the curator, Sylvio Ovadya who will travel from Turkey especially for this event. Aron Rodrigue, Stanford University, Eva Chernov Lokey Professor in Jewish Studies will speak about the history and culture of the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire, discussing their arrival in Ottoman lands, their place in Ottoman society, the evolution of their communities and their socio-cultural transformation in the modern period. Vivian B. Mann, Morris & Eva Field Chair in Judaica at the Jewish Museum in New York will talk about *clothing worn on ceremonial occasions and its afterlife* and will include a slide presentation. Turkish music and food will complete the evening.

Reservations for the March 31st opening are a must. Admission is complimentary for American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House members and \$15 for others. Please call 212-294-8350. The exhibit will be open to the public Sunday through Thursday from 10 AM to 5 PM through May 7, 2004.