



AMERICAN SEPHARDI FEDERATION / SEPHARDIC HOUSE
15 West 16th Street New York, NY 10011
212.294-8350

PRESS RELEASE

THE JEWS OF SPAIN PAST AND PRESENT

A Symposium: December 5-7 2009 in New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Symposium to Focus on the Sephardic Experience: Spain and Its Jews

Contact: Lynne Winters at 212.294.8350 x2

NEW YORK, NY (November 16, 2009) - The historic link between Spain and its Jews has been a study of contrasts. Renowned as both the historic birthplace of Sephardic culture, Spain was also the site of dark moments in Jewish history.

The *American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House* (ASF/SH) will examine this historic link between Spain and the Jewish people in a Symposium entitled: "The Jews of Spain: Past and Present" which will take place December 5 - 7, 2009 at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. Senior Spanish Government officials will be coming to New York to join eminent scholars from the United States, Canada and Israel in addressing both the triumphs and travails of the Sephardic Jewish legacy in Spain. ASF is organizing this international initiative with the invaluable assistance of the Consulate General of Spain in New York.

The Saturday night opening will feature a Gala Concert and Dessert Reception with Spain's Paco Díez, who brings his voice, guitar, hurdy-gurdy, bagpipes, percussion, and scholarship of the folk traditions from the varied regions of Spain.

The Symposium program will initially address the contributions of Jews to Spain through scholarship (Jewish thought, mysticism, Maimonides, etc.) Culture (e.g. artists, poets, etc) then focus on the darker medieval period (the Inquisition, the Dispersion, etc.) finally addressing "Spain and its Jews Today," with the participation of Enrique Múgica Herzog, Spain's Ombudsman and Jacobo Israel Garzón, President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Spain. A book published on the proceedings of the Symposium, documenting the deep roots of the Sephardic heritage in Spain, will be translated into Spanish and distributed to universities, libraries, etc. throughout Spain.

The entire program has been made possible through the generous support of The Edmond J. Safra Philanthropic Foundation. The Symposium has elicited the support and participation of Casa Sefarad/Israel in Madrid; the Red de Juderías in Girona, the Instituto Cervantes, New York and The Catalan Center at NYU.

While this project will no doubt be of interest to Sephardim, the ASF/SH is committed to promoting this program to a wider Jewish and non-Jewish audience in order to enrich the public knowledge about the Sephardic Jewish experience.

The Symposium is part of a year-long initiative that ASF has organized throughout 2009-2010, on "The Jews of Spain: Past and Present". Other programs include an exhibition entitled "Jerusalem and the Jews of Spain: Longing and Reality" which is free and open to the public through May 2010, the February 4-11, 2010 NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, which will feature selected films on Spain; and a series of lectures on a variety of topics including "Maimonides, Spinoza and Us"; "Daughters of Sara, Mothers of Israel"; and "The Jewish Presence in Contemporary Catalan Literature."

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