



Editor's Introduction

Harriet Hartman¹

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It gives me great pleasure to introduce this special issue on Iberian Jewry, “Jewish (In)Visibility in Iberia: A View from the Margins.” This special issue has been more than a year in the making, saddled with a year of pandemic which has complicated many things academic in nature including the timing of its completion, but it has been well worth the wait. The guest editors, Silvina Schammah Gesser and Teresa Pinheiro, have taken meticulous care to work with each of the authors in this volume to present an exceptional contribution to our understanding of Jewish life and community in the Iberian communities of Spain and Portugal. You may wonder why this particular region should be of interest to you, to us, now, at this particular time. Many on the editorial board of the journal were initially skeptical of the significance of this region and developments related to the Jewish communities involved. But I trust that you will soon find out why.

We have in the Iberian Peninsula of Europe, a fascinating journey from practical obscurity of Jews, some Jews hidden as *marranos* or *conversos* (see Avraham Milgram’s essay), some Jews dispersing (whether voluntarily or coercively) to the Americas or to Israel (or then Palestine) or to other places in Europe, or moving through Spain or Portugal (see Maite Ojeda-Mata’s “The Sephardim of North Morocco, Zionism and Illegal Emigration to Israel through the Spanish Cities of Ceuta and Melilla”) emerging after five or six decades, gradually or not so gradually; an in-gathering of emigrants and their descendants, some coming back to live or to live openly as Jews, some coming as visitors again and again and forging transnational ties in various arenas of Jewish life. You have in this volume the critical analysis of this re-creation of Jewish life in Spain and Portugal, situated in its historical antecedents and varied memories, and realized in contemporary culture, politics, law, transnationalism, socioeconomics, language, and religion. You have a melding of Sephardi/Mizrachi and Ashkenazi (see Avraham Milgram’s “Crypto-Jews, Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Refugees from Nazi Europe in Early 20th Century Portugal”). You have modern-day “Laws of Return” that do not originate in Israel. And you have a story of how changes in Iberian Jewry are integrally interwoven with changes in Spain, Portugal, Europe, and Israel (and more), as societies transition to

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democracy, modernization, the opening of religious freedom (though not necessarily in a linear fashion), tourism and globalization, international migration laws and options, transnational opportunities, and more. Some of the changes are strategically political and/or economic, while others are cultural and related to collective memories (see Paulo Mendes Pinto's "Recovering Jewish Identity in Contemporary Portugal"), some of which had been suppressed under dominating regimes.

The contributors to this volume illustrate how changes in very concrete microsystems are related to organizations and institutions, and reflect and/or influence broader macro-level cultural values and sensibilities, which interact with national or regional changes such as the formation and development of the European Union, and developments within the State of Israel, to bring about what Yitzchak Kerem (author of the last article in the special issue) dubs "A Golden Fountainhead." You have historical analysis and ethnography (see Angy Cohen's "On Belonging and Other Dreams"), cultural analysis (see Marina Pignatelli's "Imagined Portuguese Jews"), and statistics and their personal faces (see Yitzchak Kerem's "Portuguese Citizenship for Sephardi Jewry").

If this issue whets your appetite to learn more about the region, the special issue complements, with its original contributions, two other recent publications on Iberian Jewry, *Quest, Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 18 (2021), edited by Michal Friedman, Daniela Flesler, and Asher Salah and available at <https://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/?issue=18>, and Daniela Flesler and Adrián Pérez Melgosa, *The Memory Work of Jewish Spain*, Indiana University Press, 2020. Amazingly, there is little overlap between the three bodies of work, so together they present a very comprehensive lens on the region and its development.

I call your attention to an Erratum correcting errors in our last issue.

And our current research updates round out the issue.

I trust you will find your reading instructive and illuminating.

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