



## “Mexicans Are Just Like Every Oriental People”: The Southwest in Sholem Asch’s Yiddish Writing

by Gil Ribak, University of Arizona

*Editor’s note: Gil Ribak presented the keynote address about Sholem Asch at the 2017 NMJHS Fall Conference in Las Vegas, New Mexico.*



In late 1909, a promising young Yiddish author by the name of Sholem Asch visited the United States for the first time. He stayed in the country for about six months until the summer of 1910. Apart from writing scenes about New York City’s Jewish immigrant life, tenement houses, and sweatshops, Asch also embarked upon coast-to-coast travel across the United States, from Niagara Falls to the Grand Canyon, and his travel impressions were serialized in the popular Yiddish socialist daily, the *Jewish Daily Forward* (*Forverts*).

As he was traveling from Chicago to California by train in the early months of 1910, Asch passed through the Southwest and recorded his impressions of the region. When he woke up one day, the train was already chugging through New Mexico, and Asch wrote that he found himself “in a completely different world.” The writer used a quote from the first chapter of Genesis to describe the landscape: “And the Earth was unformed and void, and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the earth.” Asch added, “That’s the way the earth looked when the first man saw it,” and that he could see “No tree, nothing green.”

Who is Sholem Asch, and what is his significance to Jewish history?

Novelist and playwright Sholem Asch was born in 1880 in a town called Kutno in central Poland (then part of Tsarist Russia). He was the youngest of ten children born to Hasidic parents. Though he

received a traditional education, from a very young age he was drawn to secular topics and taught himself German. Since his parents disapproved of his secular studies, he moved to another shtetl with relatives and made a living as a Torah instructor. Later he made a living writing letters for illiterate Polish peasants, and scholars believe that was an experience which offered him insight into human needs and longings.

When Asch was about 19 years old, he moved to Warsaw, where he became a protégé of the renowned Yiddish writer Yitzhak Leibush Peretz. He published his first Yiddish story at the age of 20. Three years later, in 1903, he married Mathilde Shapiro, the daughter of the prosperous Hebrew teacher and poet Menahem Mendel Shapiro, something that brought Asch a measure of financial security and allowed him to devote himself to writing.

Asch soon made a name for himself not only as a prolific writer of stories, novels, novellas, theater plays, and travel diaries, but also as the *enfant terrible* of Yiddish literature. In 1907, Asch completed his sensational play, *Got fun nekome* (*The God of Vengeance*). The play is set in a brothel, and features Jewish prostitutes and a lesbian love scene. When it was staged in New York City in 1923, the play was cut short after six weeks while the entire cast and the producer were indicted and convicted of obscenity. After

a long battle, the conviction was overturned on appeal; these events are told in a recent play titled *Indecent* that premiered on Broadway in early 2017.



*Gil Ribak*

Asch was also an avid traveler who wrote impressions of some of those journeys. In 1908, he visited the Land of Israel for the first time and wrote a series of sketches based on that visit. His sketches from his travels across America appeared in the *Forverts* in serialized form, and in 1926, he published in Yiddish *My Travel through Spain*. Asch was among the cofounders of the Joint Distribution Committee and became involved in other venues in public life – Zionism, the Jewish Agency, and mass protests against the pogroms in Eastern Europe during and after World War I. After that war, Asch returned to Europe, primarily on a fact-finding tour of Lithuania for the Joint Distribution Committee, and was profoundly shocked and emotionally disturbed by what he found.

*(continued on p. 4)*

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**NMJHS ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Sunday, June 3, 2018**  
**JCC Albuquerque, 3-5 PM**  
**See p. 3**

## President's Column



**LIFE & LEGACY: L'Chaim New Mexico  
— To Our Jewish Future**



Ensuring the future legacy of NMJHS is a priority for all of us who have a love of history, especially New Mexico Jewish history. Our opportunity to tell these stories has expanded since we became one of ten New Mexico Jewish organizations selected to participate in the four-year LIFE & LEGACY program under the umbrella of the Jewish Community Foundation and Harold Grinspoon Foundation, with additional support from the Jewish Federation of New Mexico. Each of the ten organizations, which include synagogues in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, has its own legacy team to work toward its endowment goals.

Grinspoon, a major philanthropist, has provided challenge grant opportunities to Jewish communities across the United States, either to establish or enhance an endowment to preserve these communities and their missions.

### IN MEMORIAM

**Maurice Turetsky**  
1935-2018

**Michael Schaefer**  
1949-2018

**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

**Gerald "Jerry" Levine**  
1929-2018  
**Austin, Texas**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF NEW MEXICO**  
2019 New Mexico History Conference  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Dates and Deadlines Pending

New Mexico recently has been added to a group of states and cities that includes Atlanta, greater Denver, Nevada, Pittsburgh, and Rochester, New York



*NMJHS President  
Linda Goff*

Working collaboratively, the goal of each organization is to identify individuals who would consider making a gift to grow an endowment. The first two years are devoted to identifying and speaking with prospective donors. The goal is to acquire a minimum of 18 letters of intent each year, or a total of 36 or more in two years, to contribute \$5,000 to the organization each year.

Currently, NMJHS doesn't have an endowment fund. The LIFE & LEGACY program provides an exciting opportunity to make such a fund a reality. Our legacy team members are Lance Bell, Diane Chodorow, Naomi Sandweiss, and Linda Goff. For more information, contact a team member. The NMJHS office, [admin@NMJHS.org](mailto:admin@NMJHS.org), 505-348-4471, has contact information.

Your legacy gift today promises that the stories and contributions of the Jews in New Mexico will be kept alive and passed on to the next generation. Please join us! ☆

**NMJHS is on Facebook and Twitter.**  
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and follow us on Twitter at  
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## Mission Statement

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a secular organization that promotes greater knowledge and understanding of New Mexico's diverse Jewish experiences within a broad cultural context.

*Legacy* is the quarterly newsletter of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society  
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**The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society  
2018 Annual Business Meeting and Program**

**Sunday, June 3, 2018, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
Jewish Community Center  
5520 Wyoming Ave NE, Albuquerque**

**Speaker: Dr. Noel Pugach  
"Jews in New Mexico Ranching"**



**The Dr. Allan P. and Leona Hurst Awards will be presented to:  
The Las Vegas, New Mexico, Jewish Community and Paula Amar Schwartz  
The Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Noel Harvey Pugach**

**For more information, contact:  
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## The Southwest in Sholem Asch's Yiddish Writing (continued from p. 1)

When he took his train ride across America in 1910, Asch was 30 years old. He was already quite famous, yet hardly at the peak of his career. He was famous enough to receive an invitation from *Forverts*, the most popular Yiddish daily in America, to write serialized columns about America. Asch was amazed by the desert – “no house, no water, no sign of life” – and you can see “just earth and sky and nothing more.” Here and there, though, Asch did spot a sign of life – a distant smokestack where “people discovered secrets of the land, tracked them down and found out that the land hides in its belly springs of oil, or treasures of silver, concealed cities of copper.” So people gathered, “hungry like wolves,” “ripped open the land’s belly,” and “robbed its hidden treasures, dried its springs of oil, and stole its treasures of gold, silver, and copper.”

Asch continued from what he called the “the wild surfaces of New Mexico to the valleys and mountains of Arizona.” While Asch was mesmerized by the colors, mountains, and special light of Arizona, he mentioned that unlike New Mexico, where you can see a horse or a smokestack, in Arizona you see “absolutely nothing.” Even the trees and cacti looked strange and crippled, looking like “demons.” When he reached the Grand Canyon, Asch’s heart quivered as he described how all of New York’s skyscrapers would look like cardboard children’s houses if you build them at the bottom of the canyon. As the light played on the Grand Canyon’s walls, Asch recalled his travels in the Land of Israel, from Jerusalem to Jericho and the Dead Sea, where you can see that “heavenly light.”

That reference to Zion was hardly exceptional. As the train entered Southern California and continued the journey westward, Asch described how the populated areas, green fields, villages, and orchards were conducting a battle against the desert, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. Suddenly, the

desert disappears. Asch wrote how he could detect a very familiar smell, that of orange orchards, and felt as if he was in a Jewish village in the Land of Israel.

Asch explained to his readers what Los Angeles means in Yiddish, noting that even if the residents of that city are not angels, they surely fly like angels, since almost everyone in Los Angeles has a car. He compared Los Angeles to New York City: If you leave the *Forverts* building on East Broadway and walk to Broadway Avenue, a fifteen-minute walk, you have to cross three countries – a Jewish country, an Italian country, and a Chinese one. Nevertheless, in Los Angeles, on the other side of Chinatown, there is the Japanese quarter: “What New York is for Jews, San Francisco is for the Chinese, and Los Angeles is for the Japanese.”

Still, the quarter that most interested Asch was the Mexican one. In a very ethnographic manner, Asch portrayed the local Mexican population as a mixture of the Spanish Cavaliers who came from Mexico and the local Indian tribes. Asch depicted how tall, brown-skinned men with “Indian eyes” walk down the street, their faces clearly showing features of Indian faces. In detailing their hats and boots, Asch pointed to types that you “would not want to meet . . . in a dark alley at night.” Yet Asch criticized the American movie industry, which cast such people as “bandits, robbers, and anything bad.”

To be sure, Asch reflected the sensibilities and tastes of the early 20th century. He stressed how industrious Mexicans are, but also mentioned, “Just like every oriental people, Mexicans have affection to colors and ornaments, and especially silver-made ornaments.” Asch noted that on a Sunday you could see in the Mexican quarter men walking with torn pants or jacket, but with a brand new felt hat and a pair of boots for which they paid their monthly paycheck. In that context,

(continued on p. 5)

## The Southwest in Sholem Asch's Yiddish Writing *(continued from p. 4)*

Asch referred to Jewish storekeepers in the Mexican quarter, who "to our shame, it must be said" did not treat their customers with the utmost honesty.

Asch looked at the short Mexican women with their "burning black eyes," "silky black hair," and "strong breasts," as they cook different dishes on the street (in the Mexican quarter, the "whole life, naturally, is in an oriental way, on the street"). He depicted the different spicy dishes the women cooked, and how you can smell fried onions and garlic, and the whole scenery awakens "not just your appetite, but also your lust for other things..."



Asch in London, 1906. (Photograph: Polsky Brothers.)

Asch continued to the Japanese quarter, where he mentioned that it was the "cleanest quarter" of all the immigrant districts that he visited. The Japanese assimilated faster than other oriental nations, he argued, but only in terms of clothing, and even that is true only for the men. Asch was impressed by the Japanese barbershops that were run by women and commented how much better it was to get a shave by a genteel, smooth, and perfumed hand of a Japanese "geisha" who is touching your cheeks, rather than a crude hand of an Italian who is rubbing your face with his thick fingers, "with which you don't know what he had done yesterday..."

Asch dedicated a whole chapter that he titled "God's Wild Earth" (with a subtitle "The Song of the Prairie") to his inner feelings and intimate impressions during his train ride across the American Southwest, including New Mexico. The sight of an Indian wrapped in a quilt, or a "dark Mexican" who gathers wild horses into a corral, or the sound of a mission's bell, made Asch wonder where are the poets of such desolate landscape? The Russian steppes have affected so much of Russian literature, not to mention the Judean desert, where shepherds found God and the rest of history.

But the American prairie has yet to find its poet, Asch wrote, and it seems as if this whole part of

the country was made just to serve the American moving pictures industry. And in the still, lonely days and nights that the author spent on the train going through the desert, through the valleys and the mountains, he heard the singing of older generations "who sang in me for generations before I came into being."

Even though many of Asch's works were written in a realistic style, mystic,

spiritual, and religious writings, as in the quotation above, were also characteristic of his literary output, and would mar his career down the road. Asch is considered a prolific and classic Yiddish writer who would have received a place of honor next to the big three classic Yiddish writers – Mendeley Moykher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz – if it were not for his controversial and irreverent writings. Apart from his works about the Jewish underworld, prostitution, women trafficking, and pimps, and his acceptance of an award from the Polish government in 1932, Asch provoked much controversy and anger over his trilogy about the life of Jesus, part of which was published during the Holocaust. The mystical and spiritual sentiment that Asch invoked in his portrayal of the American Southwest was the element that decades later would alienate many Jews and ruin his reputation and career among Yiddish readers. ☆

### Suggested Reading

Asch, Sholem. *Gezamelte Shriftn*, Vol. 4. New York, NY: Sholem Asch Komite, 1923.

Siegel, Ben. *The Controversial Sholem Asch: An Introduction to His Fiction*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976.

Stahl, Nanette, ed. *Sholem Asch Reconsidered*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Library Gazette, 2004.

## Welcome New Members

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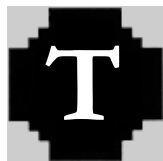
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# Stan Hordes Honored, NMJHS “Prime Mover”

By Ron D. Hart, Santa Fe Jewish Book Council



he Santa Fe Jewish Book Council honored Dr. Stanley M. Hordes with its Lifetime Achievement Award 2017 in an event at Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe on December 3, 2017. The Santa Fe Jewish Book Council promotes the work of Jewish authors and books about Jewish subjects (www.sfjbc.org).

Hordes is a former New Mexico state historian. He holds a Ph.D. in history from Tulane University, and is an adjunct research professor at the Latin American and Iberian Institute of the University of New Mexico. Hordes' book, *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*, has been a major factor in shaping thought about the descendants of Spanish *conversos* and crypto-Jews in the American Southwest. When he began as state historian in 1981, he encountered Catholic and Protestant Hispanic New Mexicans whose families observed customs suggestive of a Jewish background. He documented the experiences of those families in his seminal work.

The survival of Jewish identity was among the most important issues in Jewish communities in the Diaspora. How does Jewish identity endure the challenges of history? The work of Stan Hordes has led traditional Jews and crypto-Jews to question who is Jewish and what Judaism means in their lives.

The keynote speaker for the event was Prof. David Graizbord, a professor of Judaic Studies at the University

of Arizona. He is a leading scholar in the United States on Jewish identity and the Western Sephardic Diaspora. Graizbord is author of *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora*, among other books. He has studied how religious, social, and political identity shaped the lives of Spanish and Portuguese “New Christians” or *conversos*.



Stanley Hordes photo  
by Mercedes López Wooten

Hordes is one of the founders and “prime movers” of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. A past president of NMJHS, he was the first recipient of the Allan P. and Leona Hurst Award in 1998 for his work on Jewish history in New Mexico. In the May 1998 issue of *Legacy*, Sharon Niederman wrote: “Known nationally and internationally for his work on the secret Jews, or *conversos*, of New Mexico,

Dr. Hordes has served on the board of the NMJHS since its inception, giving generously of his time to administer the group, nourish its growth, and oversee many of its worthwhile programs and conferences.”

Hordes's book has been called a “magnum opus.” History professor Thomas M. Cohen, in the journal *The Americas*, praised the book's “contribution to our understanding of the religious and ethnic diversity of the Southwest and of the force that the beliefs and practices . . . continue to exert in the lives of the people of the region.”

Santa Fe poet and novelist Isabelle Medina Sandoval said of Stan Hordes: “I have a deep appreciation for Stan's academic work, search for truth, and passion for the *anusim*. His work has

shaped my thinking about family, research, writing, and spirituality.” Alongside this article is Sandoval's poem, “El Sabio,” which is dedicated to Hordes. In Spanish, “el sabio” means “a wise person, a scholar.” ☆



Ron D. Hart

## El Sabio

For Stan Hordes

By Isabelle Medina  
Sandoval



In a desolate desert Iberian exiles  
scattered far from the end of the earth

The incessant massive murky midnight  
skies  
eclipsed five hundred years of shushed  
cries

In the heart of a new Santa Fe  
a Jewish sage forged his path  
with facts customs and math

In the *tinieblas* of his conclusions  
Iberian *conversos* were not illusions

Whiter than infinite noon light  
refugees glowed in academic sight  
confirmed by scientific DNA might

Faster than the fleeting forced flight  
Friday night candles reinstated light

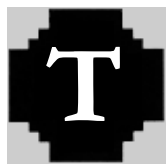
*Luç, luç, luç*  
lucid, lucid, lucid  
lights of knowledge exploded

Sentry of the displaced anusim  
schooled by keen Ashkenazim  
rooted in Rio Grande Sephardim

He is like a tree planted in *Ysrael*  
*Él es nuestro hermano sabio fiel*

# 2018 ABQ Jewish Film Fest: Celebrating the Jewish Experience through Cinema

By Phyllis Wolf, Program Director, Jewish Community Center



The Jewish Community Center of Greater Albuquerque presents the fifth annual ABQ Jewish Film Fest from July 12 to July 18, 2018. This year's line-up will showcase six acclaimed recent films from the United States and Israel.

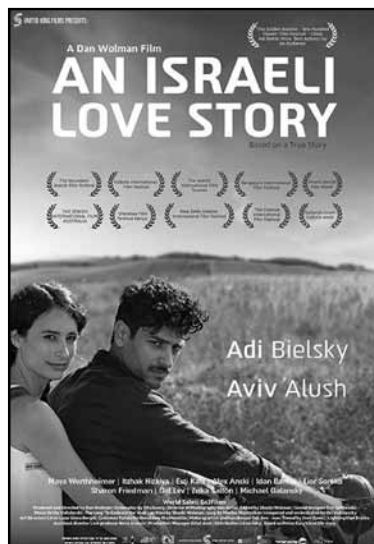
In June, prior to the July Film Fest, the JCC is partnering with the Albuquerque Film and Music Experience to show *Challah Rising in the Desert: The Jews of New Mexico*, on Tuesday, June 5, at 7 PM, at the JCC, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE. This is a great opportunity for any who have missed seeing this film. A question-and-answer period with Isaac Artenstein, the film's Los Angeles-based director, will follow the screening. Tickets are \$10 and available at ABQFilmx.com or JCCABq.org.

The ABQ Jewish Film Fest films portray a rich and varied tapestry of Jewish life past and present. In honor of Israel's 70th anniversary, three films have a strong connection to Israel. New Mexico Jewish Historical Society members will find many of the films have historical significance. The first five films of this year's Film Fest will be held at the UA High Ridge Movie Theater, 12921 Indian School NE, west of Tramway.

## Thursday, 7/12, 7 PM:

*An Israeli Love Story.*

Israel, 2017 | Drama, 93 minutes. Director: Dan Wolman. The film is set during the turbulent period of pre-state Israel. Margalit meets Eli on a bus and falls in love with him instantly. She tries to get close to him, but he's too busy with the Palmach (Israel's first fighting force). Finally, the barriers come down, Margalit moves in with



Eli, and they set a date for their wedding. But Israel's harsh reality intervenes.

**Saturday, 7/14, 7 PM:** *Humor Me.* USA, 2018 | Comedy, 93 minutes. Director Sam Hoffman. Actors: Elliot Gould, Jemaine Clement, Annie Potts, and Bebe Neuwirth. *Humor Me* is a heartfelt father-son comedy about a struggling playwright who is forced to move in with Bob, his aging, joke-telling dad in a New Jersey retirement community.



## Sunday, 7/15, 2 PM:

*Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel.* Israel, USA, 2018 | Documentary, 91 minutes. Directors: Seth Kramer, Jeremy Neuberger, Daniel A. Miller. A stirring story of sports, patriotism, and personal growth, *Heading Home* charts the underdog journey of Israel's national baseball team compet-

ing for the first time in the World Baseball Classic. Their line-up includes Jewish Major League players – Ike Davis, Josh Zeid and Ryan Lavarney. With their Mensch on the Bench mascot, the team laughs, cries, and does much soul-searching, reconnecting to Judaism and discovering the pride of representing Israel on the world stage.

## Monday, 7/16, 7 PM:

*Norman: The Moderate Rise & Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer.* USA, 2017 | Drama/Thriller, 118 minutes. Director Joseph Cedar. Actors: Richard Gere, Michael Sheen, Lior Ashkenazi, Hank Azaria, Steve Buscemi. Norman Oppenheimer (Gere), a small-time operator at a low point in his life, befriends a young Israeli politician on the rise. Three years later, when the politician becomes an influential world leader, Norman's life dramatically changes for better and worse.



Phyllis Wolf

## Tuesday, 7/17, 7 PM:

*Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story.* USA, 2017 | Documentary, 90 minutes. Director: Alexandra Dean. Hedy Lamarr, the 1940s screen siren (*Ziegfeld Girl*, *Samson and Delilah*) and Austrian-Jewish émigré, starred alongside Hollywood giants



like Spencer Tracy, Jimmy Stewart, and Clark Gable. Behind the glamour and sex appeal, though, was a talented and inquisitive inventor who created a radio system during WW II, with the hope of helping to defeat the Nazis. That system

(continued on p. 10)

# The Rising of *Challah Rising in the Desert*

by Sarah Winger

**D**reams do come true. Just ask *Challah Rising in the Desert* creator and producer Paula Schwartz. The film that began as a dream has risen beyond local screenings to appear at nationally scheduled film festivals.

The film, using the metaphor of challah, braids together the historical stories of the Jews of New Mexico. Challah, five stranded and braided, is a traditional Jewish bread that is eaten ceremoniously on Jewish holidays and Shabbat. Like challah rising in the kitchen, this film has come together to rise out of the New Mexican desert, and in doing so has taken with it the stories of local Jewish heritage.

## The Ingredients

Paula, who came to New Mexico as a graduate student from Pittsburgh in the early 1960s, recalls that some of the most intriguing parts of her many years in the Land of Enchantment are filled with the multiculturalism and the openness of the local people. Believing that the amazing yet little known stories of New Mexican Jews were not heard beyond the borders of the state, she set out to tell the stories of these Jews, the state's rich cultural diversity, and its people's special welcome to newcomers.

After a film was shown about the Jewish pioneer merchants of Colorado at the 2014 New Mexico Jewish Historical Society fall conference, a discussion ensued about New Mexico's own Jewish history. Paula recalls waking from a dream several nights following the conference with the image of the challah as a metaphor for the state's rich

Jewish diversity. Jotting down her idea as five bullet points on a single sheet, she knew the five-stranded braided challah would represent each of the five waves of settlement of New Mexico's Jewish community, discussed below.

Paula shared the idea with then-Jewish Federation of New Mexico Director Sam Sokolove, who strongly encouraged her to contact the award-winning filmmaker Isaac Arstenstein, thus launching the production.

## The Recipe

One of the first challenges was raising money. The filmmakers began with a grant from The Maurice Amado Foundation and then were offered financial

approaching descendants of early Jewish New Mexican families to hear their stories. "I loved researching these families, conducting the interviews, and learning from these descendants about their rich and diverse histories."



Sarah Winger

One of the hardest parts of Paula's filmmaking experience was cutting down the 50 hours of interviews, all of which provided a wealth of information, to 90 minutes. "I would have loved to include them all," she adds.

Paula recalls everything about the film coming together in a very special way. Books were available telling pieces of the story, pointing her in the directions they needed to go. Descendants of early pioneers told their families' stories, and descendants of *conversos*, the *anusim*, came forward to tell their families' stories, each one unique, each one adding another piece to the evolving story.

In 2016, at the NMJHS showing of the 30-minute work in progress, three individuals informed Paula of the communes of the counterculture near Taos – New Buffalo and Lama Foundation. After researching the communes and finding people who lived there, their stories were included in the film. Also, historians on the film's advisory committee reminded the filmmakers that the coming of the railroad changed New Mexico's population, and the film was changed to tell these stories as well. These two alterations finalized the focus of the remaining two challah strands, thus completing the metaphor of the challah.

In the final film, the five waves of Jewish settlement of New Mexico are portrayed

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<https://www.ChallahRising.com/Galleries/>

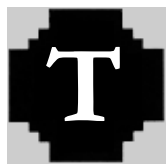
support by other individuals and organizations. Financial support was matched with encouragement, as the filmmakers worked closely with the Jewish Federation of New Mexico, Jewish community, and New Mexico Community Foundation. Paula's husband, Mel Schwartz, took on the role of executive producer to assist with financing the film.

With filmmaker Isaac Arstenstein excited about the project, he recruited cameraman Sergio Ulloa, editor Keith Shapiro, and musicians Allan Phillips and Jaime Valle. Paula fondly recalls the experience of working with "true filmmakers" as she learned the filmmaking process. Equally satisfying was the experience of



# Interfaith Leadership Alliance of Santa Fe: A History

By Rabbi Neil Amswych, Temple Beth Shalom



his history, which is not definitive but at least is based on contributions by key people, starts in the mid-1970s, when the Santa Fe Ministerial Alliance was in full swing. It would meet in the old St. Vincent's Hospital downtown (now the Drury Hotel) once a month, with lunch served by the hospital. Conversations were based around congregational life in general, cooperative efforts for serving the community, sharing concerns, and interfaith services.

Membership was limited to only a few faith traditions at the time. The new hospital was built and the meetings moved there, with lunch still provided by St. Vincent's. When those free lunches stopped, the Alliance moved to other places – First Presbyterian and Holy Faith, among other locations, before finally settling on St. John's Methodist Church. The meetings there continued monthly, and members brought their own lunches, elected an annual president, shared history and stories of their own traditions, and listened to pleas for money, despite the Alliance not having much at the time!

Then the floodgates opened and anyone with any religious or spiritual affiliation of any kind was invited in. Some members left as a result, and some stayed but also formed an Alliance of Evangelical Churches. The Alliance struggled and started spending much of its time discussing who should belong and why it should exist. The event of September 11, 2001, changed everything. For three months following that dreadful day, the group could not agree on a common statement of faith and hope for the city, and clergy left in great number as a result.

In 2007, a woman told Rabbi Marvin Schwab at Temple Beth Shalom that she was frustrated there wasn't a single

interfaith organization in Santa Fe to which she could bring an issue. He, in turn, brought together Father Dick Murphy, Pastor Ben Larzelere, Pastor Larry Haslam, and Pastor Holly Beaumont, and with their help sent out a letter to every clergy member they could find in Santa Fe, inviting them to a lunch at the synagogue. By the end of the lunch, the Interfaith Leadership Alliance had essentially been formed, and Rabbi Schwab was its first president.

The first project that the ILA undertook was the Community Closet, initially intended to help young people put together resumes and assemble clothing suitable for interviews, as well as improve interview skills. This was one of a number of projects that the ILA has started over the years, only to spin off to become independent entities. For example, the Winter Overflow Shelter was created to house homeless women and children who had nowhere they considered safe to stay during the winter. At first, congregations from the ILA rotated winter evening housing around the congregations one week at a time, and ultimately this project became the Interfaith Community Shelter (known locally as "Pete's Place").

Envision Santa Fe provides volunteers from many faith groups to serve as mentors and advocates for families transitioning from homelessness to permanency and self-sufficiency. It was started as an ILA project and has now grown to be taken under the auspices of one of the local homeless shelters. The Faith Network for Immigrant Justice of Santa Fe, started in 2017 under the auspices of the ILA, now essentially works as a separate organization. An anti-bullying program in local schools was started by the ILA.

The ILA also supports local organizations. For example, in 2016, it ran a campaign that ultimately raised \$52,000

for the Women's Summer Safe Haven at the Interfaith Shelter. The following year, it raised over \$20,000 for Santa Fe Dreamers and Somos Un Pueblo Unido, a human rights organization.



*Rabbi Neil Amswych*

The ILA has also helped host a number of key events through the years. From 2008 to 2010, there were Interfaith Block Parties on East Barcelona, and in 2012 there was a Peace March from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation down to the Cathedral Basilica near the Santa Fe Plaza. The ILA was also responsible for New Mexico Faith Communities Against Hate Crimes, which ultimately led to the passage of New Mexico's anti-hate crimes bill in the legislature. In 2017, the ILA organized a Rally Against Racism, which was attended by 1,500 people.

There has been, of course, much interfaith work in Santa Fe over the years, such as the Jewish and Christian Dialogue circles, or sermon swaps between clergy, which involved members of the ILA but were not directly organized by the ILA. Nonetheless, the ILA remains the overarching interfaith organization in the city and a place where members of differing faiths learn from each other and work together. It is a growing organization, and once again discussions are being had about who can join and the aims and goals of the ILA. This time, though, the tone seems to be different, and the discussions are helping shape new initiatives. For example, the ILA just launched the Green Fusion initiative, which brings together faith and environmental leaders from all around the city.

*(continued on p. 10)*

## 2018 ABQ Jewish Film Fest (continued from p. 7)

is now considered the basis of Bluetooth and GPS technology. 2017 Tribeca Film Festival; Winner, Audience Award, Best Documentary, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2017-2018.

**Wednesday, 7/18, 7 PM:** *Harold and Lillian: A Hollywood Love Story*. USA, 2017 | Documentary, 90 minutes. Director: Daniel Raim. Working largely uncredited in the Hollywood system, the Michelsons – storyboard artist Harold and film researcher Lillian – left an indelible mark on classics by Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, Mel Brooks, Stanley Kubrick, Roman Polanski, and

many more. Through an engaging mix of love letters, film clips, and candid conver-


sations with Danny DeVito, Mel Brooks, Francis Ford Coppola and others, this deeply engaging documentary offers both a moving portrait of a marriage and a celebration of the unknown talents that helped shape the films we love. This film will be screened at the JCC, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, on a new big screen with digital surround sound.

The JCC appreciates the support of the Film Fest's organizational sponsors: Regal Entertainment Group, City of Albuquerque Film Office, 100.3 the Peak, and the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

Seating for all films is limited, so purchasing tickets in advance is recommended. Admission at the door will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Doors will open 30 minutes before show time. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. Series tickets for all six films are \$50. Visit [HoldMyTicket.com](http://HoldMyTicket.com) or [JCCAbq.org](http://JCCAbq.org), or call 505-348-4518. ☆



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## The Rising of Challah Rising in the Desert (continued from p. 4)

as *conversos* escaping the Spanish Inquisition 400 years ago; German Jewish pioneers of the Santa Fe Trail in the 1800s; Jews brought by the railroad to Albuquerque after 1880; scientists in the 1940s who came to Los Alamos during World War II; and members of the counterculture who lived communally in the Taos area in the 1960s and 1970s.

### The Rising

The completed film was released in 2017, and multiple screenings throughout New Mexico have shown the film to thousands of viewers in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces, as well as at several conferences. Showings at the Tucson Jewish Film Festival and Skirball Museum in Los Angeles were sold

out, with standing room only. In early 2018, the film was shown at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, and the production team was invited to submit the film to the San Francisco, Boston, Mexico City, Chicago, Sun Valley, Boca Raton, and Honolulu Jewish Film Festivals.

*Challah Rising in the Desert* is just entering distribution, and it may be too soon for talk of returning to the kitchen for the baking of another challah, but Paula hasn't ruled it out: "Ask me next year." ☆

*Editor's note: Sarah Winger serves on the NMJHS board. A licensed professional clinical counselor, she is a child and family psychotherapist at Children's Psychiatric Hospital, UNM Hospitals.*

## Interfaith Leadership Alliance of Santa Fe (continued from p. 9)

It is quite extraordinary to think about the impact the ILA has had on Santa Fe in only ten years – saving lives, protecting the vulnerable, and bringing together people of differing traditions to learn

from each other. It is an organization of which Santa Feans, and members of the faith communities, should be very proud. ☆.

## 2017 NMJHS Annual Meeting, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Hurst Award

*Photos by Ed Goff*



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*Dr. Noel Pugach  
Introduction of Kathryn Rubin*



*Kathryn Rubin, Hurst Award*



*Marcia Torobin, Keynote Address*

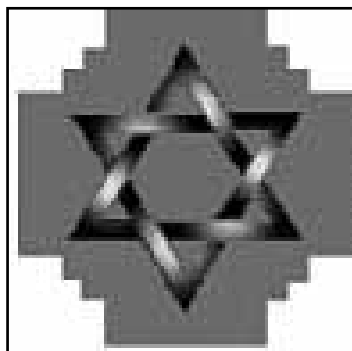


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## Membership in NMJHS

For information contact the NMJHS office at 505-348-4471 or [admin@nmjhs.org](mailto:admin@nmjhs.org) to request a membership brochure. Alternatively, you can download a membership application from the NMJHS website [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)



## Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for future events at [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)

**June 3:** NMJHS Annual Meeting (see p. 3). JCC, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, 3-5 PM.

**June 10:** Naomi Sandweiss, "A Mobster in the Family: Jewish Outlaws, Gangsters, and Bandits." NMJHS Speakers Bureau and Congregation Beit Tikva, 2230 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, 2-4 PM.

**June 24:** "Telling the Stories: The Personal Accounts of New Mexico Jews in Business and Community Life." Panel with Dr. Noel Pugach, Harvey Buchalter, Dr. Richard Melzer, Jon Bell, and Howard Friedman. New Mexico Humanities Council Grant. JCC, Albuquerque, 2-4 PM.

**July 29:** "New Mexico & Israel at 70: The People and Organizations Who Played a Role." Panel with Rabbis Paul Citrin and Jack Schlachter, Dr. Noel Pugach, Harvey Buchalter, and Lance Bell. JCC, Albuquerque, 2-4 PM.

**Santa Fe Jewish Film Festival:** *Arabic Movie*, June 24, 7 PM, Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe; Joe's Violin, August 26, check [www.SantaFeJFF.org](http://www.SantaFeJFF.org) for time and location. Visit [www.SantaFeJFF.org](http://www.SantaFeJFF.org) for film descriptions, 505-216-0672.

**2018 ABQ Film Fest**, July 12-18 (see pp. 7, 10). UA High Ridge Movie Theater, first five films; JCC, final film. Visit [JCCAbq.org](http://JCCAbq.org), 505-345-4518.