



Kol Nefesh ("Every Soul")

A report out from CRT's trip to Spain



Our journey to Spain provided us with an opportunity to encounter and experience the Jewish heritage of what is known in our tradition as *Sefarad* – from Roman times in the First Century through the “Golden Age” of coexistence with Muslims and Christians from the 9th to the 14th Centuries – tragically ending with Expulsion and Inquisition in 1492 - and now witnessing a new era of rebirth. We explored the beautiful cities of Madrid, Toledo, Granada, Seville, Cordoba and Barcelona. Our group of 26 enjoyed many different experiences, both happy encounters and discoveries, as well as deeply challenging moments. As always on our CRT trips, part of the wonderful experience was being able to share this time with our temple community – with both old friends and new. We attended Shabbat services at the Reform Congregations in Madrid and Barcelona where we were warmly welcomed by our Jewish brethren and shared in the distinctive Sephardic traditions, blended with familiar songs and prayers we use at our own Temple. It was inspiring to see the courageous efforts these small congregations are making to help rebuild Jewish life in Spain today. For me this was part of the highlight of the trip, and made me hopeful that Judaism will continue in Spain. Part of the challenge was learning that while countless Spaniards today have forgotten- or denied- Jewish family roots - most have never actually met a Jew. We all know that Spain is a Catholic country but it was disturbing to learn how the critical Jewish dimension of their own history is ignored and even suppressed – including the entire story of the Inquisition. A dramatic example of this was the forgotten ancient Jewish cemetery we encountered- almost by chance- underneath a parking garage in the center of Seville. This emotional experience was captured by Rabbi Berman in a poem he composed in the hours following this visit: “Kaddish at Parking Space Number 9” (see CRT’s website for Rabbi Berman’s reflections on this). We of course visited the spectacular Alhambra in Granada and stood in the ornate Throne Room where King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella both signed the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, as well as commissioned Christopher Columbus to launch his journey. In Cordoba, the major center of the Jewish Golden Age, we said the Shema in the



Kol Nefesh ("Every Soul")

A report out from CRT's trip to Spain continued

magnificent 14th century synagogue – now a museum – the only remnant of this once large and flourishing Jewish community. We gathered at the famous statue of the greatest rabbinic scholar and philosopher in our history, Moses Maimonides, who was born in Cordoba in 1135, and we read the text of his famous essay, "The Eight Degrees of Charity." In Barcelona we viewed the city's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Unlike our prominent and much visited monument in Boston, this memorial is located in a remote area in what was a former quarry. These are just some of the highlights of a rich, if complicated encounter for all of us. Overall impressions left many of us grateful for the life we have as Jews in the United States - and hopeful that one day, the model of Jewish, Muslim and Christian coexistence and cooperation that once brought pride and honor to Spain, might be reborn in today's world.

Written by Co-President Todd Katzman edited by Rabbi Howard Berman



Pictured above left to right, CRT members enjoy Shabbat dinner with the Reform congregation in Madrid, Rabbi Berman conducting Torah study by the statue of Moses Maimonides, the group in the gardens at the Alhambra