

**HANUKKAH FEATURE**  
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Consul there, the arrival of Hanukkah will have special meaning this year. We had recently experienced a "rededication" of the 130 year-old synagogue, "Sha'ar HaShamayim" -- "Gate of Heaven," at 16 Rua de Brum in the City of Ponta Delgada, Sao Miguel, Azores. It had not witnessed a minyan for twenty years, since Philip Reich, the last resident rabbi, departed for Israel.

For one brief week-end we had grasped the "mystique" of Jewish survival, the tenacious determination to hold on to that which gives unique form and expression to the Jewish spirit. Such a moment was ours when the microcosm of contemporary Jewry represented by our group joined hands with the remnant of Ponta Degada Jews to form "a congregation" on Yom Kippur day.

We were Jews representing all branches of the U. S. Armed Forces, the diplomatic corps, the Civil Service; we came from Ashkenazic, Sephardic and American Jewish religious traditions; on this small island between the Old World and the New we intoned the prayers of our Hebrew tradition with modern insertions in English and Portuguese.

At the Jewish cemetery we held a memorial service among gravestones of Jews from Morocco and Portugal, and most recently those who had fled from Germany during World War II. Often these were inscribed with dual inscriptions in Hebrew and the language of origin of the person interred.

When we stopped at the synagogue which also houses the apartment of Halia and Raquel Albo, octogenarian sisters, I chatted with them through an interpreter. When the Shofar was sounded to conclude the worship, both ladies spontaneously burst into joyful tears. For the first time in 20 years they heard the voice of the Shofar.

Since Chaplain Barry Dov Schwartz had visited the synagogue at Passover 1965 and brought its attention to the American Jewish military community at Lajes Air Base on the island of Terceira, 90 miles away, Robert Richman, the lay leader at Lajes, and other members of the base had visited the Albo sisters and contributed to the synagogue's upkeep.

Then, during the High Holidays in 1966, Chaplain Kalman Levitan went with Mr. Richman from Lajes Air Base to Ponta Delgada and arranged for the loan of one of the Sefer Torahs of the synagogue. Following Chaplain Levitan's visit Rabbi Howard R. Greenstein, of Temple Beth Shalom of the North Shore, Peabody, Massachusetts, many of whose temple members trace themselves to Portuguese roots, took interest in the remnant of Jews at Ponta Delgada, and have since undertaken to support them and help preserve the synagogue.

In an agreement drawn up with the help of Malcolm Hallam, former American Consul to the Azores, when there is only one surviving member of the Ponta Delgada community the sacred objects of the synagogue will be transferred to the Peabody congregation. There, in the foundation for the sacred arts in Judaism being established by Rabbi Greenstein and his congregation, the spiritual contribution of the Azorean community will continue to make itself felt.

Hyman Bloom, who succeeded Mr. Hallam as American Consul last spring, has been of help in facilitating communication between the Peabody congregation and the Jews of Ponta Delgada, none of whom speaks English.

The earliest settlement of Jews in the Azores, according to Pedro de Merelia, is probably traceable to the account of Alexandre Herculano in his book, "Origins of the Inquisition in Portugal," in which he wrote: "A sailing ship with new Christians had left Portugal and was going to Africa. However, due to a big storm, it came to the Azores Islands and the unfortunate passengers, arrested and condemned to slavery, were presented to Vasco Anes Corte-Real, as a gift from our King of Portugal." Another Portuguese writer, Gervasio Lima dates this event as 22 May 1501. He further states that this occurred on Terceira Island, and speculates that perhaps they mixed themselves with the population on its ever-increasing expansion through the islands, but left no trace of themselves, particularly because the attitude of the people was not in their favor.

The current community of Jews at Ponta Delgada and those buried in the cemeteries of that city and Angra on

Chaplain (Capt.) Landman, the Jewish chaplain at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, describes the dramatic rededication of the so-called lost synagogue of the Azores on the eve of Hanukkah. Chaplain Landman visited the Jewish congregation of the Azores as part of an Air Force assignment to Lajes Air Force Base, a typical undertaking of the Jewish military chaplains recruited, endorsed and served by the National Jewish Welfare Board Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy.)

Terceira Island, are all descendants of the group of Jews who came to the islands in 1819. Dr. Alfredo Bensaude traces six Jews as the vanguard of these settlers who came from Morocco in that year. By 1840 there were over 150 Jews on the island of Sao Miguel.

The most prominent Jewish family in the Azores was the Bensaude family, descendants of Abraham Bensaude, one of the six original Moroccan Jews who came to Ponta Delgada in 1819.

The synagogue building at 16 Rua de Brum Street was acquired in 1836 for about \$2,000. A plaque on the synagogue wall notes the names of the founders.

The sanctuary itself comprises the second and third story of the apartment in which Halia and Raquel Albo live. In the center of the Eastern wall is the Holy Ark, completely accoutred with green parochet, mahogany frame and doors, and containing four Torah Scrolls. (The fifth is on loan to the Lajes Air Base Chapel.) A large magenta draw-curtain covers the entire Ark. Over the Ark rest two tablets in marble inscribed with the Ten Commandments complete, in Hebrew, on top of which rests a silver crown. Several silver candelabra are suspended from the ceiling, and the permanent mahogany pews contain prayer shawls, siddurim, tractates from the Mishnah and Talmud and the commentaries to the Bible from Eastern Europe, Germany, Portugal, Tunis and Morocco.

All of these reflect the stream of Jewish settlers who have come through the portals of the synagogue of Ponta Delgada, some to move on to better opportunities, some to find their final resting place.

When the Sabbath of Hanukkah comes this year, we shall once again read the Haftarah portion from the prophet Zechariah, "Not by power, not by might, but by My spirit, saith the Lord." For each of us who participated in the whorship services on Yom Kippur this fall at the synagogue "Sha'ar HaShamayim", and for all of those who continue to contribute to the preservation of the Jewish community of Ponta Delgada, the reading of those stirring words will be no recital of a phrase, but a continuation of the call for dedication to K'lal Yisrael which our experience had so vividly dramatized.

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