

COLLECTANEA

NEWS IN BRIEF:

NEW ONLINE:

Thanks to an ongoing collaborative partnership with Tzavta and La Fundación IWO in Buenos Aires, we can now provide open access to the biweekly Argentinian Jewish newspaper, [El Colono Cooperador](#). Our partnership with the Gran Sinagoga Bet Shalom in Havana, Cuba has resulted in the addition of 161 rare titles added to our new [Cuban Judaica](#) website.

NEW DISCOVERIES:

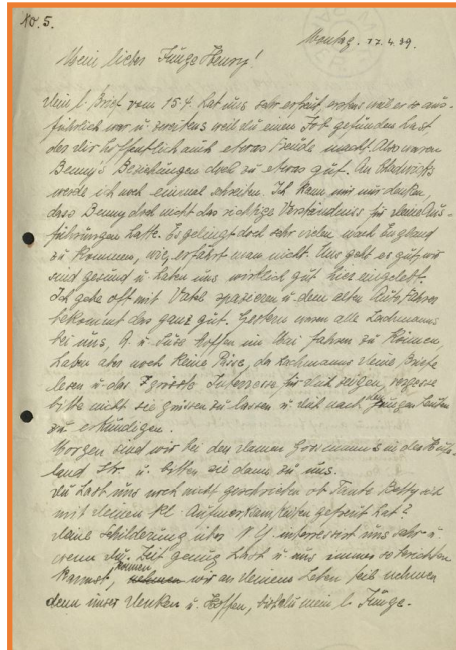
The Library's El Salvador oral history project with UF's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program contains fascinating information regarding the wartime activities of José Arturo Castellanos, El Salvador's consul general in Geneva. Castellanos helped save thousands of Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Thanks to the extensive efforts of Jean-Claude Kahn, one of the interviewees in the project, Israel awarded Castellanos the title "Righteous Among the Nations." For more about this story, see [the blog post](#) written by researcher, Dr. Francesc Morales.

ALCOVE DEDICATION:

The Jewish Society and Education Book Collection Alcove in the Judaica Suite has been named in memory of Harriet Safer by her husband, Dr. Edwin Safer. Family and friends gathered at the library on April 28, 2019 to see the alcove and to hear a beautiful tribute to Harriet composed by Dr. Safer.

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA

SCHÖNWALD CORRESPONDENCE GIFT



Regina Schönwald's letter to Henry Wald from April 17, 1939.

A small and precious gem with a long, trans-continental, and emotional history was gifted to the Price Library of Judaica at the beginning of this year. Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Florida, Kenneth Wald donated a family correspondence dated 1939-1941. It contains probably the last letters sent by his grandparents, Curt and Regina Schönwald, to his father, Henry Wald. His grandparents, who were still living in Berlin, were hoping to find an escape route from the Nazi terror and to join Henry in America in his new home in Lincoln, Nebraska. After that became impossible, they considered Cuba.

Professor Kenneth Wald had no knowledge of the existence of these letters until after his father's death: he discovered them while arranging his late father's papers. He had them translated and began a quest for more information about the history of the family leading him to the town of Grossröhrsdorf where his grandparents owned and operated a department store. Curt and Regina Schönwald were

forced to give up the store and their possessions at the beginning of the War and subsequently moved to Berlin. They were deported on March 28, 1942 to Trawniki camp near Lublin in Poland and afterwards could not be traced.

In Grossröhrsdorf, Professor Wald's research has also met local interest in studying the wartime history of the town. In the meantime, and on the other side of the Atlantic, Professor Wald published an essay on his grandparents and his determination to preserve their memory. This essay inspired high-school drama teacher and playwright Christopher Maly in Lincoln to write a play using the Schönwalds' letters. The play, *The Ghosts on the Wall*, found additional audiences as this April it was put on stage in Gainesville, Florida, at the Actor's Warehouse.

The donation of these letters to the Price Library opens a new chapter in their history. Arranged together with English translations in the [Schönwald Family Correspondence](#), they are available for students, researchers, and general readers seeking to learn about the story of the Schönwalds as narrated in their letters, the history of the Holocaust, and the 20th-century history of Jewish immigration to the US.

TORAH INSIGHTS SHARED



Steven and Sarah Levy signing copies of their *JPS Rashi Discussion Torah Commentary*.

This month, we were pleased to host in the Judaica Suite a talk by authors Steven and Sarah Levy about their new book the *JPS Rashi Discussion Torah Commentary*. Steven Levy, son of Gainesville locals Norman and Roslyn Levy, now lives with his wife, Sarah and their five daughters in Jerusalem. The authors were pleased to return to Gainesville to share insights into the process of creating a co-authored book with an audience of family, friends, members of UF and the public. Together, they spoke about the joys and challenges of writing this work with its unique combination of commentary, essays and discussion questions. But this intense labor of love, they explained, resulted in a book that can be used by readers who have a deep knowledge of Judaism along with readers who have little or no knowledge of Hebrew, the Torah or Jewish practice.

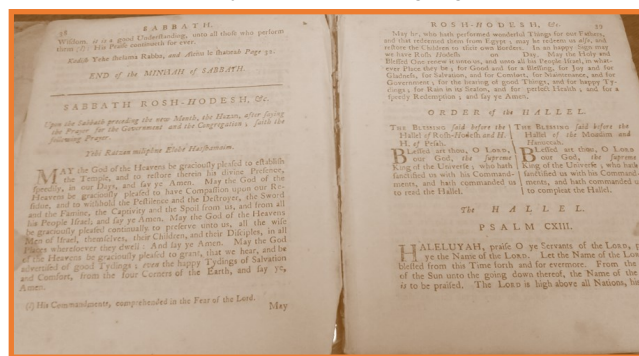
In order to demonstrate how the book works, Steven read the commentary to the Torah chapter on Korah's rebellion against Moses by Rashi, the famous medieval French Rabbi and commentator. Rashi's commentary was followed by an essay in which the Levys explained how, if it had existed thirty-three hundred years ago, Moses should have received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to seek peace with his antagonists. The essay is accompanied by three questions posed by the authors, one of which allows readers to think about their own choice for a modern-day recipient of the award. Other questions in the book use Rashi's commentary to relate to current concerns or to encourage self-reflection such as "What do you believe are the most important character traits to cultivate to help you (and perhaps others) rise above negative environmental influences?"

The book, which has even garnered praise from the likes of Britain's former Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, is proving popular. Steven, a lawyer, and Sarah, a psychologist and granddaughter of Rabbi Louis Lewin, attribute the success of their book to the unique blend of thought and approach brought about thanks to their mixed professional and religious backgrounds and differing perspectives. Audience members waited in line to purchase their own signed copies of the book.

FIRST AMERICAN SIDDUR 1766

The first English translation of the Siddur for the High Holidays was published in 1776 by Isaac Pinto, a Sephardi Jew. Pinto arrived to the American Colonies as a merchant at the age of 20 and became a member of Shearith Israel, America's oldest Jewish congregation. He also engaged in the politics of the day, supporting American patriotism and condemning British taxation, and he gave his signature to the Non-Importation Act of 1770.

As to Judaic practice, Pinto was surprised to discover how many of his fellow congregants had no familiarity with the Hebrew language. Recognizing the need for a prayer-book in the vernacular, Pinto set about producing a translation. In the preface to his work, he noted that "it has been necessary to translate our Prayers, in the Language of the Country



Prayers for Shabbath, Rosh-Hashanah and Kippur, trans. I. Pinto, 1766, Price Library of Judaica

wherein it hath pleased the divine Providence to appoint our Lot." Thanks to his linguistic abilities, Pinto was hired as an official translator by the United States Government in 1781. The Price Library's precious copy of this extremely rare 18th century prayer-book will become one of the first items available for adoption in our new "Adopt a Book" program. More details about this program will be shared in the next issue of *Collectanea*.

NEH Challenge Grant



Please support our [NEH Challenge Grant](#). The federal government will give us **\$1 in matching funds for every \$1 you donate**. [No gift is too small!](#)

Thanks to your generous support, we can provide the resources and knowledge for vital and groundbreaking scholarship into the global Jewish experience and help preserve endangered materials.

Further Information

To inquire about the Judaica Library and how you can assist with the preservation and study of its materials, please contact the curator, Dr. Rebecca Jefferson, at rjefferson@ufl.edu, or our Jewish Heritage Coordinator, Dr. Katalin Rac at katalin.rac@ufl.edu.

To visit the Judaica Suite, please see our website at: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/judaica> for opening hours and visitor information. We look forward to giving you a tour!

Wherever you live in the world, you can explore our Library collections and those of our many partners through more than 280,000 pages of digital content in our [Jewish Diaspora Collection](#). (JDoC): <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/judaica>