

2023/2024

# LADINO HIGH SCHOOL CLUB OF AMERICA



# YEAR IN REVIEW



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### Orlando Shabbaton Recap

Our first national Bivas Shabbaton took place this past April in Orlando, FL with teens from all over the country gathering together to spend Shabbat learning about the Sephardic-Ladino customs for Passover. (Cont. on page 2)

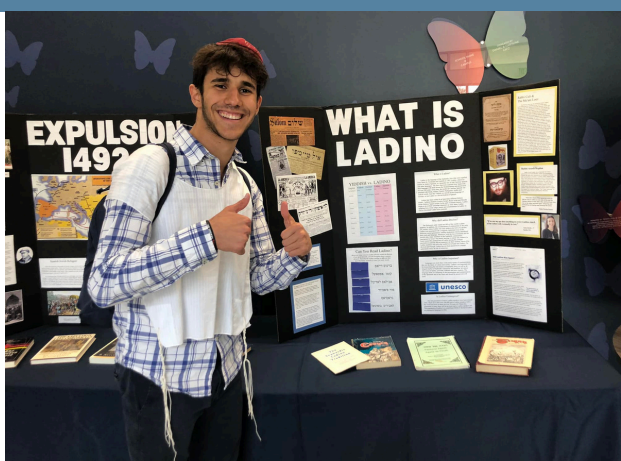


### Year in Review

What a year it's been! We started our very first year with a shabbaton in NYC for our national board and continued with programming with numerous chapter events online and locally.

## WHAT IS BIVAS.ORG?

The Ladino High School Club of America (Bivas.org) is the first national Sephardic youth movement dedicated to building the next generation of Sephardic leaders in America. The program welcomes Jewish teens in grades 8-12 throughout North America, from all backgrounds, with the goal of empowering them to connect with Sephardic Judaism in a holistic way. Through cultural engagement, Shabbatons, Ladino language infusion, the study of Sephardic customs and traditions, Torah learning, and connecting with other teens nationally, we are looking to cultivate a desire for and capacity to lead meaningful Jewish lives in the 21st century. Students are invited to start their own local clubs at their High Schools and organize Sephardic cultural events with support of our professional team and educators, and become active leaders in the American Sephardic Community.





# NEW YORK Shabbaton

**NATIONAL BOARD SINGS IN LADINO FOR 350 GUESTS AT THE SEPHARDIC GALA!**

Our first board Shabbaton was incredible! The National Board had an amazing time exploring New York, spending Shabbat at the beautiful Greek synagogue in the Lower East Side as well as singing at the International Sephardic Community Gala. Highlights of the shabbaton included a visit to the Tenement Museum, the Statue of Liberty as well as the Vanderbilt Experience at the top of the SUMMIT skyscraper. The black-tie Gala organized by the Sephardic Brotherhood of America gave our teens the opportunity to sing three Ladino songs to the gala guests with solos performed by **Sam Hadar**, **Ari Mergui** and **Sara Miller**. If you are interested in joining our National Board please contact [Judah@Bivas.org](mailto:Judah@Bivas.org)



National board members **Ari Mergui**, **Sam Hadar**, **Judah Roberts**, **Alexandra Roberts**, **Tyler Pilkington**, **Amit Sommers** and **Sara Miller** performed three Ladino songs for gala guests that they prepared via zoom with Bivas youth leaders Aaron Shapiro. Our boys also led the Ladino 'Mil Dan' Torah auctions on Shabbat morning. Many thanks to Larry Almo of SBH in Seattle for teaching the 'Mil Dan' to the boys via zoom!

The Ladino High School Club of America debuted at the Gala with an introduction from Judah Roberts and Ethan Marcus. We are very grateful to the Sephardic Brotherhood for sponsoring the Shabbaton and hosting us in the Lower East Side in the beautiful Moxy hotel. Bivas is looking forward to performing at the Gala again in December 2025!



# ORLANDO

## Shabbaton



**FIRST NATIONAL BIVAS SHABBATON WAS A SUCCESS!**



Bivas held its first National High School Shabbaton from April 4-7 in Orlando, Florida. More than two dozen Sephardic high school students gathered for an incredible three-day weekend led by Rabbi Yosef and Shoshana Kassorla, Rubissa Sharona Hassan, Ethan Marcus and Rabbi Fred and Miriam Klein.

Students participated in a special Sephardic baking session, where they learned how to bake traditional Sephardic "Borekitas" and delicious stuffed Grape leaves ("Yaprakas"). They also baked their own unique challot. In the afternoon, students had the opportunity for bonding activities including Kayaking and exploring Disney Springs.



Friday night, our teens were taught classic Ladino songs like 'Kuando El Rey Nimrod; and 'La Vida Dor Por El Raki'. The Shabbat morning Tefillah service included a Q&A session with Rubissa Sharona Hassan and renditions of 'Ein Kelohenu' in Ladino. After lunch, students broke out into session groups led by Rabbi Yosef and Rubissa Sharona, discussing questions and learning about Sephardic history and traditions including Sephardic Torah commentators like the Me'am Loez and Maimonides.

Shabbat afternoon, students had the opportunity to enjoy a beautiful day out at the basketball and soccer courts. Rabbi Yosef and Rubissa Sharona also taught the students some of our special Passover songs in Ladino, including 'Un Kavretiko' (Had Gadya), and 'Kien Su Piense' (Who Knows One). We can't wait to see everyone again at next year's Pre-Pesach Shabbaton!



**THANK YOU!**

**A Big Thank you to Our Shabbaton Sponsors!**  
 Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation  
 Sephardi Federation of Palm Beach County  
 Sephardic Adventure Camp  
 Dr. Aaron and Miriam Klein  
 Rabbi Fred and Miriam Klein  
 Rabbi Daniel and Dina Hadar  
 Jacob and Susan Kohenak  
 Marc and Lori Ben-Ezra  
 Sarah Aroeste  
 Robert Altabet  
 Temple Moses



# NATIONAL CHAPTER EVENTS



## Boreka Bake (Seattle, WA)

The Seattle chapter organized their first Boreka Bake for the teens in the community with the help of Rubissa Sharona Hassan. Over 20 teens shaped and prepared this Sephardic delicacy so that it could be served at their movie night the following day!

## Sephardic Heritage Movie Night (Seattle, WA)



Lights! Camera! Action! It was a trip down memory lane for the members of Sephardic Bikkur Cholim community in Seattle, WA as the Bivas Chapter organized a movie night for the 50th anniversary of the documentary, 'Song of the Sephardi'.



The documentary was created back in the 70s and features many members of the Seattle Sephardic community including Rabbi Solomon Maimon (the first Sephardic Rabbi to be ordained by Yeshiva University) as well as beloved cantor Ike Azose. Kudos to Bivas chapter leaders **Isaac Almo** and **Sara Miller** for organizing the event!



## Ladino Day 2024 (Boca Raton, FL)



Many thanks to national board members **Ari Mergui** and **Tyler Pilkington** for baking biscochos for International Ladino Day this past March! The two boys along with Bivas parents, Gabi Skocylas, Liz Pilkington and Miriam Raphael-Klein came together on a Sunday morning to



bake these sweet treats for the Ladino Day Festival hosted by The Sephardic Federation of Palm Beach County. The biscochos were served at a local concert where Ladino musicians Sara Aroeste and Susana Behar sang some beautiful Ladino melodies. Hiding in the crowd was Binghamton Professor Bryan Kirschen. The three of them stopped for a photo op with Bivas president, Judah Roberts. Many thanks to **Judah and Alexandra Roberts** for manning the Bivas table at the event.



## Weekly Zoom with Aaron Shapiro



For the past ten months a small group of teens have been meeting with Ladino expert **Aaron Shapiro** online to learn Ladino songs, customs and grammar. The zoom meetings, which occurred every Tuesday night, was attended by teens from all the country. We will be continuing our classes this year but will be meeting twice a month instead of weekly. We have a nice list of guest speakers who are excited to share their love of Ladino and Sephardic customs with the next generation! Interested? Find out more by emailing [miriam@Bivas.org](mailto:miriam@Bivas.org).

## 'Pan de Siete Cielos' Challah Bake (Boca Raton, FL)



Both young and old members of South Florida gathered together on a stormy Monday evening to attend the world's very first 'Pan de Siete Cielos' Challah Bake!



Pan de Siete Cielos ("Bread of Seven Heavens") is a Sephardic tradition practiced by the Ladino speaking communities of Greece up until WWII to bake challot with symbols of the Torah decorated on its surface. Sadly, this tradition died with the destruction of the Greek Sephardic community when they were shipped to death camps during WWII by the Nazis. Our Bivas teens arranged a Challah Bake to revive this custom along with modernizing it (just a bit) to bring it into the 21st century!



Teens, parents and grandparents of all ages joined to bake their own version of Pan de Siete Sielos. Rubisa Dina Hadar and Rabbi Fred Klein both gave relevant words of Torah at the event and Rubisa Shoshana Kassorla acted as our impartial challah baking judge. Many thanks to Bivas member **Donielle Schandler** for helping to set and clean up! First place winner was Bivas teen **Naomi Hadar**. Congrats!



# WHAT IS LADINO?



Ladino is a Romance language, derived from Medieval Spanish, that originated in Spain after the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. The Jews that were expelled from Spain took their language with them across the Mediterranean and preserved it for over 500 years. Over time, the medieval Castilian Spanish was enriched with Greek, Italian, French, Portuguese, Hebrew, Arabic and Turkish words. Ladino, also known as Judaeo-Spanish, was traditionally written in a Hebrew script called Solitreo which Rashi script was derived from. In the early twentieth century, Ladino began to also be written in Roman characters as well. Many Ladino speaking Jews wrote songs, poems and Torah commentaries in Ladino as well as circulated Ladino news journals. Ladino at one point was the most spoken language among Sephardic Jews.

## CAN YOU READ LADINO?

בוינוס דיאס קומו אסטאש?  
אב'לאס לאדינו?  
חאבריס בווינוס! פור פ'אביר

LADINO, LIKE YIDDISH, WAS TRADITIONALLY WRITTEN WITH HEBREW LETTERS. TO THE LEFT ARE SOME COMMON LADINO PHRASES WRITTEN IN HEBREW. CAN YOU RECOGNIZE THEM? IF YOU SPEAK SPANISH, YOU WILL FIND THESE COMMON PHRASES EASY TO SPOT! ANSWERS ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE.

### Why Did Ladino Decline?

The Holocaust sadly wiped out 90% of the world's Sephardic Ladino speakers. In addition, the secularization of Jewish communities in the early 19th (continued on page 12)

## YIDDISH VS. LADINO

Yiddish and Ladino are both Jewish languages that originated from a combination of Hebrew and local languages. Yiddish developed in the 9th century among Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe whereas Ladino developed in the 15th century after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal. Yiddish has a Germanic grammatical structure and vocabulary but also incorporates a substantial number of Hebrew and Aramaic words. Just like Yiddish is a Jewish hybrid language of German, so too Ladino is a Jewish hybrid of Castilian Spanish. It also incorporates other languages including Portuguese, Greek, French, Turkish, Italian, Arabic, and Hebrew.

English	Yiddish	German	Ladino	Spanish
SYNAGOGUE	SHUL	SYNAGOGA	KAL	SINAGOGA
THANK YOU	DANKEN DIR	DANKE	MERSÍ MUNCHO	GRACIAS
GRANDPA	ZAYDE	OPA	NONNO/PAPPOU	ABUELO
GRANDMA	BUBBE	OMA	NONNA	ABUELA

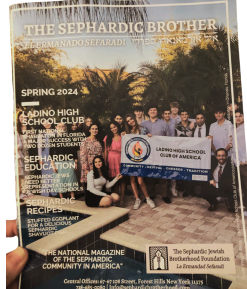
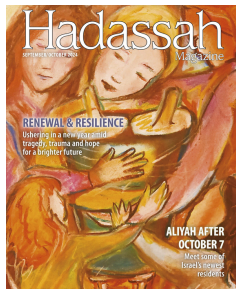
### BIVAS!

The Ladino word 'Bivas' originates from the Latin word 'Vivas', meaning live. It is a Sephardic-Ladino custom to respond 'Bivas' after someone sneezes - similar to the way one says 'Bless you' or 'Gesundheit'.

# LATEST LADINO NEWS



## BIVAS IN THE NEWS



The Ladino High School Club of America ('Bivas') was featured in three magazines this year! Both Tablet Magazine and Hadassah magazine wrote features on our Bivas teens and their mission to save the language and customs of the Sephardic-Ladino Community. In addition, The Sephardic Brotherhood featured our teens on the cover of the National Sephardic Community Magazine. Bivas!

ג'וד'י-חו-ח'יספאני'יון  
ג'וד'י-חו-ח'יספאני'יון



100+

## THE NUMBER OF SOLITREO READERS LEFT IN THE WORLD

Solitreo is hand-written script letters that Sepharadim used for hundreds of years to communicate and compose Ladino to one another after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. The number of people left in the world that can still read Solitreo is around 100, but the font itself can easily be picked up and, with a little effort, learnt by someone familiar with Rashi script. The insert above in Solitreo says "Judeo-Espanol", (which is another name for Ladino).

A group portrait of Seattle's first Sephardic Jews (circa 1918).

Back, left to right: Mashon Eskenazi, Jacob Policar and Moshe Adatto;

Front, left to right: Nessim Alhadeff and Solomon Calvo.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### LADINO WORD OF THE MONTH **ZIARA**

During the period leading up to and in between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur there is a beautiful Sephardic custom to visit the graves of our loved ones in the cemetery, reciting a series of traditional memorial prayers called the Ziara (meaning "pilgrimage").

Did you know that Sephardic communities around the world have a custom on Rosh Hashana to recite a seder? Just as we eat and recite blessings on symbolic foods during the Passover seder, the Rosh Hashana seder contains various foods and blessings (called "Yehi Ratsons") expressing our hopes for the coming new year. This tradition is actually thousands of years old and is mentioned in the Talmud! You can find the full Rosh Hashana seder on our website, Bivas.org.



It is customary to recite the blessings first in Hebrew followed by English and then Ladino.

*Anyada Buena i Dulse!*

# Rosh Hashana Recipes

## Keftes de Prasa - Leek Patties

Prasa (meaning "leeks" in Ladino) are a favorite Sephardic dish that is traditionally served on Rosh Hashana and Passover.

**Sizzling!**



### Ingredients:

- 6-10 Leeks
- 1 cup of mashed potatoes (or optional 1 lb of ground lamb)
- 1/2 cup of matzo meal
- 2 large eggs slightly beaten
- 1 clove of mashed garlic
- Salt and Pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground nutmeg
- Olive or vegetable oil for frying
- Lemon wedges



### Directions:

1. Cut the leeks and dispose of any of the green stalk. Keep the white part and slice lengthwise. Remove any dirt.
2. Slice leeks very thinly and wash again. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the leeks, cover and reduce the heat to low. Let simmer until tender (about 20 minutes)
3. Drain the leeks and let it cool. Then take the leeks and gently dry to squeeze out as much water as possible using your hands.
4. In a large bowl, combine the leeks, potatoes, spices, garlic, matza meal and eggs. Adjust the matza meal and egg to the mixture (Too dry? Add a bit more egg. Too wet? Add some extra matza meal).
5. Form a patty with your hands about 1.5 inches in diameter. In a large skillet, add the oil and brown the patties on both sides till they are golden.
6. Serve hot or at room temperature accompanied with lemon wedges!

## Pumpkin Borekas

These fragrant, sweet borekas are also perfect for Sukkot and Thanksgiving!

### Filling Ingredients:

- 1 29oz. can of pumpkin
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons of cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon of cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1/5 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 1/2 cup of brown sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons of flour

### Dough Ingredients:

- 4 1/2 cups of flour
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 cup of oil
- 1 cup of hot water (do not use cold!)

(In a rush? Substitute filo dough instead)



**YUM!**



### Directions:

Add the oil to the hot water. Mix wet ingredients with the flour and salt. Stir until well blended. Take a golf size ball of dough, flatten and then take a 1.5 tablespoon of filling and place on the dough. Fold over the edges of the boreka, brush with egg wash and top with cinnamon and sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes until the borekas are golden.

**Shana Tova! – Anyada Buena i Dulse!**





# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## MEET SOME OF OUR BIVAS TEENS!



### 2024-2025 CALENDAR

Rosh Hashana  
Oct 3-4

Yom Kippur  
Oct 12

Sukkot  
Oct 17-23

Shemini Atzeret  
Oct 24-25

\*Seattle Shabbaton  
Nov 7-11

Chanukah  
Dec 25-Jan 2

Thanksgiving  
Nov 28

\*Fruiticas  
Feb 13

\*Ladino Day  
Jan 26

Purim  
Mar 13-14

\*Boreka Bake  
TBD

\*Pre-Pesach Shabbaton  
March 20-23

Passover  
April 12-20

\*Pan de Siete Cielos Challah Bake  
May 25

Shavuot  
June 2-3

\*National Board Elections  
June 10

\*Sephardic Scholarship  
winners Announced  
June 15

### ISAAC ALMO SEATTLE, WA

Isaac is seventeen and currently a senior at NYHS. His family roots are from Salonica, Greece and his family has a long history of Sephardic-Ladino traditions. He currently serves on the National Bivas board as the VP of Education as well as the acting president of the Seattle Bivas chapter. Isaac is excited about planning future events as well as engaging his friends and peers in the Sephardic customs and traditions.



### NOA GARSON MIAMI, FL

Noa is sixteen and currently a junior at KYHS. Her family's background is Spanish-Portuguese with Sephardic ancestors from London, Manchester and from the Sephardic community of Gibraltar. She grew up singing 'Bendigamos' after Shabbat meals along with various other Ladino songs, especially on Passover. Her family's Adafina (Sephardic Shabbat Stew) is famous in their community and she is proud to share aspects of her unique family tradition with her Bivas peers.

### DANIEL KASSORLA ATLANTA, GA

Daniel is seventeen and currently a junior at Atlanta Jewish Academy. His family heritage is descended from Monastir, Macedonia and he comes from a long line of Sephardic Rabbis. His faith is central to who he is and he feels a strong connection to his family legacy. Daniel's favorite class is Gemara and he is passionate about his studies and Torah learning. He is looking forward to being active in Bivas in the coming year and recruiting in his Atlanta community.



### TYLER PILKINGTON BOCA RATON, FL

Tyler is seventeen and a senior at KYHS. He is a proud Ashkenazic Jew with family roots from Eastern Europe and the United Kingdom. Tyler discovered his love for Ladino and Sephardic culture by sharing many shabbat dinners with his Sephardic friends. He is a member of our National Board and famous for his 'Raki' bottle dance at the Sephardic Brotherhood Gala last December. He's excited to plan and attend many of the Bivas events for the coming year!

# Why We Started Bivas

By, Judah Roberts

It's March 2023. I'm a sophomore at Katz Yeshiva High School and busy with my dual curriculum, my friends and my extra-curriculars. My Mother approached me and my sister, Alexandra, trying to persuade us to mark the 2023 International Ladino Day at our high school and bring Ladino awareness to our peers. To be honest, I wasn't so interested. Why would my friends be interested in Ladino Day? Most of them are Ashkenazic, none of them know Ladino and why are we trying to revive something that is, sadly, almost dead?

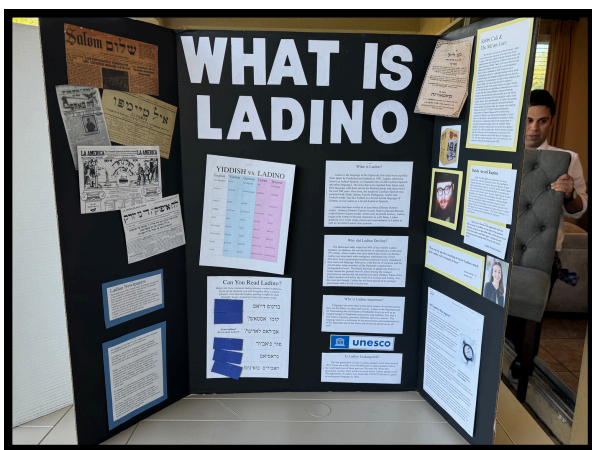
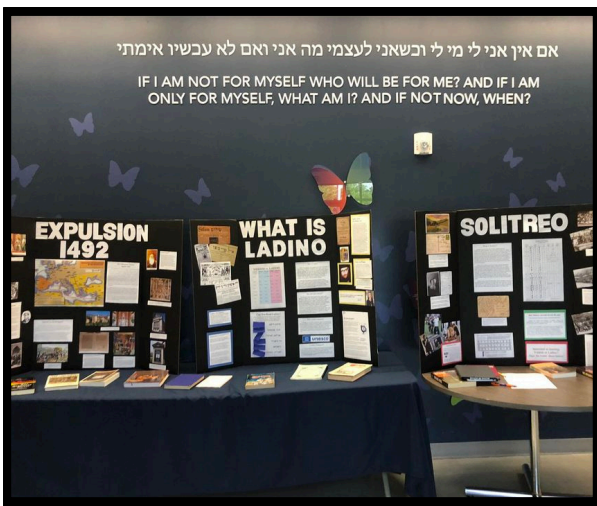
There are Pesach songs, beautiful Ladino hymns and liturgies that are sung at our home, but I knew that none of the other families in our community knew them. Ladino itself is pretty foreign to my friends. Most people that know what Ladino is know that it is dying. But even those people that know it's dying are few (I can't tell you how many adults guests we've had at our Shabbat table that don't know what Ladino is).

With a little encouragement (dare I say nagging?) from my Mother, we went about creating the posterboards describing the exile from Spain, the decline of Ladino, the annihilation of the Sephardic Ladino speaking communities during WWII and the Solitreo script. We also added a signup sheet for students to add their name if they'd like to learn more about the language. Lo and behold, we had quite a number of signatures! It had become clear that there was a genuine interest in Ladino and a desire from my peers to try to perpetuate and save it. Thus the Ladino High School Club of America (Bivas.org) was born.

The Sephardic-Ladino customs are beautiful and unique and I've always really connected with these traditions instead of cookie-cutter Judaism. My father, who is Ashkenazic but loves Sephardic customs, also embraces the Sephardic customs. Even if you don't connect with the Sephardic-Ladino tradition, as a Jew, it should hurt you to see its demise. Every Jew should aid in preserving a tradition that connects you to your ancestors and previous generations who lived through centuries of adversity. It's so important to maintain and pass on these traditions.

So what's on our agenda, you ask? Right now we just returned from an amazing Shabbaton in Orlando and we're currently planning a Shabbaton in Seattle, WA for November. Our group also meets weekly with Aaron Shapiro to learn Ladino and connect virtually with other teens in America. Our Bivas group is still small but we're hoping to attract more teens throughout the country to share with them the beauty of the Sephardic-Ladino tradition.

*Judah is currently the National President of the Bivas Ladino Club. He is currently a senior at The Jewish Academy in South Florida.*





# Shemittah & Bereshit: The Shabbat Connection

By Isaac Almo

In a few weeks we will conclude reading the last Torah portion and then begin the Torah cycle again by reading Sefer Bereshit with the story of the creation of the world. In the first chapter of the Torah, Hashem 'works' for six days creating the world and humankind. He then abstains from creating on the seventh day. Why did Hashem need to abstain? Obviously it wasn't because he was tired! God's resting from creation teaches us that as human beings are created in the image of God, we too need to make time for rest. The desire to create can sometimes be dangerous — especially for a society like ours that prides itself on its ability to build, manipulate and control the world around it. Where else in the Torah is there another depiction of Shabbat?

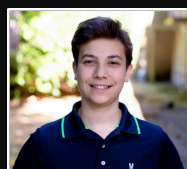
In Perashat Behar, we see Moshe instructing the Jewish people that every seventh year, the land shall be given a rest. What does that entail? No agricultural work is to be done on the land, and landowners are commanded to relinquish personal ownership of their field. This seventh year is called the Sabbatical year or the Shemita year.

What purpose does this Shemita year have? Wouldn't leaving the land fallow have a huge effect on the Parnassa (livelihood) for the Jewish people who worked their land? Why would Hashem command this? There are many reasons and benefits for why it is good to follow the Shemita year just as there are many benefits for a Jew to keep the weekly Shabbat.

First and foremost, farming and tilling the soil lead to erosion and the removal of nutrients, leaving the land desolate. Leaving the land fallow for one year is good for the well being of the soil and restores its fertility. Shemita also forces us to reconsider our relationship with the land - instead of trampling and taking pleasure from it, we are forced to elevate and sanctify it for one year. Another reason for Shemita is that everything Hashem created needs some form of Shabbat (rest). From humans to animals, Hashem commands us to take a day of rest - Even our phones need a break to charge! Debts are forgiven and the land becomes 'ownerless'. This allowed the poor farmer and the wealthy landowner to eat from the same field, with no man being above or below the other - in effect, humbling the wealthy and uplifting the poor. Last but not least, the spirit of Shemita reminds us that everything belongs to Hashem. In theory, our ancestors were probably super stressed. Questions going through their mind may have been along the lines of, "What if we run out of food? What if we are not going to be economically stable after this year?" Relax everybody, Hashem is taking care of us. Don't worry about all the possible consequences that come with keeping Shemita, because it won't happen! We are following Hashem's law, and with that, he promises to protect us by giving enough abundance in the sixth year so that there are enough provisions in the Shemita year. We see this same theme when we keep Shabbat. Hashem tells us not to worry, relax, and trust in the creator. Instead of worrying about your work and commitments, Shabbat instead provides an opportunity to unite with our fellow Jews and realign our communal and spiritual bonds.

My challenge for everyone reading this article is to make a commitment with the coming New Year that when Shabbat comes around, not to think about your schoolwork, your job or your external obligations. Make sure instead to relax and engage in spiritual pursuits on Shabbat so that we're "recharged" to take on the rest of the week!

**Tizku Le'shanim Rabot! - "May you merit many years!"**



*Isaac is currently the National VP of Education of Bivas. He is currently a senior at Northwest Yeshiva High School in Seattle, WA.*



The Ladino High School Club of America presents ד"ב

# Sleepless in Seattle

## SHABBATON

NOVEMBER 7-11, 2024

### HIGHLIGHTS

**The Space Needle**  
Ride to the top of this iconic tower with the world's only revolving glass floor!

**Scenic Mountain Hike**  
Hike along the highest volcanic peak in the contiguous USA!

**The Original Starbucks & Pike Place Market**  
See the original Starbucks and one of the oldest markets in America

### LEARN

**Songs + Traditions**  
Learn our unique Sephardic customs, Shabbat liturgies, and folk songs in Ladino!

**Foods & Cooking**  
Learn to cook traditional Sephardic dishes and recipes

**Ladino & Solitreo**  
Learn to write your name in the the script used by Ladino speakers for centuries and the predecessor of modern cursive Hebrew.

**\$195**

\$250 after 9/15

Open to Teens Ages 14-18

**Learn More & register at:**  
[WWW.BIVAS.ORG/SEATTLE](http://WWW.BIVAS.ORG/SEATTLE)

**Register for our Fall Shabbaton in Seattle Today at [Bivas.org/Seattle](http://Bivas.org/Seattle)**

*The Ladino High School Club of America is a proud project of the Sephardic Jewish Brotherhood of America*



The Sephardic Jewish  
Brotherhood of America  
*La Ermandad Sefaradi*

(continued from page 6)  
century where Ladino was once spoken also led to its decline. Ladino was associated with a religious, traditional way of life. However, newer generations seeking modernism slowly abandoned their roots and language. Moreover, with the rise of Zionism and the Jewish state, many members of the Sephardic communities immigrated to Israel. The Israeli ideology to speak only Hebrew in Israel caused the gradual loss of Ladino among the younger generation as parents did not transmit it to their children.

The last generation of native Ladino speakers were born around 1945. There are a little under 100,000 native Ladino speakers left in the world and most of them are over 70 years old. When this generation is gone, there will be no more native Ladino speakers left. The population of Ladino is so small that UNESCO declared Ladino an endangered language in 2002. Most of the Ladino speakers still left in the world live in Israel and Turkey. For the most part though, Ladino has not been passed on to younger generations and is at risk of extinction.

### **Why is Ladino Important?**

Languages are more than just words and a means of communication - they are the fabric of culture and society. Ladino is an important tool for transmitting the rich history of Sephardic Jewry as well as an integral marker of Sephardic community and tradition. It is also a rich source of poetry, proverbs, folktales and historical news sources. The language alone is a testimony to the persecutions and condemnations of the Spaniards and of the Nazis and should be preserved at all costs. Ladino has been designated by UNESCO as a highly-endangered language. The Ladino High School Club of America is committed to reviving Ladino and passing the Sephardic-Ladino customs, traditions and liturgies to the next generation!

*For more information on Bivas, go to [www.Bivas.org](http://www.Bivas.org) or email [info@Bivas.org](mailto:info@Bivas.org)*