

→ Coriat Family), Elijah undertook traditional Jewish biblical and rabbinic studies; at a very early age he also began the study of Kabbala, especially the *Zohar*.

Forced to enter the world of business to earn a living, Benamozegh worked in a counting house for several years, but left it to pursue his Jewish studies at the Beth Israel Franco yeshiva. He also acquired, mostly through self-teaching, a good knowledge of English, French (which he particularly mastered), Latin authors, Greek philosophers, and European thought. He began his rabbinical career in 1847 as assistant rabbi of the Livorno community and subsequently was appointed its rabbi. From then on he devoted himself to preaching, teaching theology in the local rabbinical school, writing, and publishing and editing Jewish books.

Among the works printed by Benamozegh's publishing house were the two-volume responsa collection *Toqpo shel Yosef* by Joseph → Elmaleh (1854–55); the responsa *Berit Avot* of Abraham → Coriat, his maternal grandfather (1862); an early edition of the liturgical poetry (Heb. *piyyutim*) of the Syrian rabbi Mordechai → Abbadī (1864); the *Zikhron Yerushalayim* of the chief rabbi of Tripoli, Elijah Bekhor → Ḥazzan (1874), followed by his *Ta'alumot Lev* (1879); and the *Sefer Ot Berit Qodesh* of Joseph Knafo, a kabbalistic work (1884). After Benamozegh's death, his publishing firm was continued by his only surviving son, Emmanuel (a lawyer by profession), until it was absorbed by the Belforte publishing house in 1925.

Elijah Benamozegh was, in addition, a prolific author in his own right. His many books on Jewish history and ethics in Hebrew, French, and Italian expounded a balanced but forceful defense of the uniqueness of Judaism among the religions. All his works reveal extensive and profound knowledge of the Jewish sources, which he used also to defend the value of the Kabbala within Judaism. In fact he collaborated in compiling the monumental edition of the *Zohar* that was published in five volumes in Livorno in 1851 and subsequently went through many editions. Then in 1855 he published *Eymat Mafgi'a* (Fear of the Gnat/Adversary [the words are homonyms]), a refutation of the attacks on the Kabbala by the Venetian rabbi Judah Aryeh Modena (1571–1648). His

dispute with Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto on the same subject is famous, and he later published their correspondence in his book *Ta'am la-Shad* (Common Sense for SD [Samuel David]; Livorno, 1863).

Benamozegh's eclectic method of biblical interpretation, utilizing sources from philology, archaeology, and the natural sciences, is represented by his famous commentary *Em la-Miqra'* (Matrix of Scripture; 1862–65). When the book was harshly criticized by the rabbis of → Aleppo and Jerusalem because of its departures from orthodoxy, Benamozegh replied with his *Ṣari Gil'ad* (Balm of Gilead), arguing that Judaism had no choice but to harmonize its traditional sources and the secular sciences if it was to meet the new challenges of modern times. He reiterated this position in his extensive correspondence, which included important non-Jewish figures like Giuseppe Mazzini, Auguste Renan, Adolphe Franck, and Aimé Pallière. The latter edited and published *Israël et l'humanité* (Paris, 1914; Eng. trans. 1995), left unfinished at the time of Benamozegh's death and regarded as the final synthesis of his religious thought.

Elijah Benamozegh died in Livorno (which he never left) on February 6, 1900.

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Laura Bonifacio Roumani

## Benardete, Maír José

Maír José Benardete (Mair José Benardete; M. J. Benadete; Meyer Benardete; Mercedes Benardete; 1895–1989), the eldest of nine children, was born in the Ottoman Empire in the city of → Çanakkale to a Ladino-speaking family. At the age of eight, he contracted a serious illness that left him unable to walk for months. He spent his year-long convalescence among

the Sephardic women of his community, absorbing the → Judeo-Spanish folklore and language that would later serve as a focus of his scholarship. After recovering, he enrolled in the → Alliance Israélite Universelle school, where he studied for four years and, upon graduation, taught in the lower grades.

Seeking better economic prospects, Benardete immigrated to the United States in 1910, where he joined an uncle living in a lower-class neighborhood in Cincinnati. Benardete accelerated through elementary school, attended high school, and graduated from the University of Cincinnati, earning a B.A. in Romance languages. Perhaps his earliest research experience came in 1913, when he assisted the Ashkenazi social worker Maurice Hexter in a demographic survey of Cincinnati's Ladino-speaking community. Benardete's college years were interrupted by service in the U.S. Army during World War I (1917–1919), which earned him American citizenship, and a visit to his parental home (1919–1920).

Benardete's interest in Spain and Sephardic Studies was profoundly shaped by his mentor and teacher at Columbia University, Federico de Onís (1885–1966), who encouraged him to undertake an M.A. thesis on the Ladino ballads of the Lower East Side and Harlem. Benardete's fieldwork among the city's older Sephardic women represents the first endeavor to gather and record Judeo-Spanish ballads in New York. He began his academic career as a professor of Spanish literature at Hunter College in 1925, and taught at Brooklyn College from 1930 until his retirement in 1965. His doctoral dissertation, a monograph on Sephardic civilization completed in 1950, was finally published in 1953 and translated into Spanish a decade later. Most of Benardete's other publications focused on Sephardic Studies and Spanish literature.

In 1920, Onís founded the Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos (later known as Instituto Hispánico), a cultural and intellectual center at Columbia University that regarded Sephardic civilization as part-and-parcel of Spain's international legacy. Sometime in the late 1920s, Onís invited Benardete to head the institute's Sephardic Studies Section. Under Benardete's direction, the Sephardic Section sponsored lectures on Sephardic civilization,

generated articles for the institute's *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, and published a Ladino/Spanish commemorative volume on the medieval Spanish-Jewish poet → Judah ha-Levi. The section's artistic endeavors included dramatic and musical presentations performed in the 1930s and 1940s by native speakers of Ladino, some of them Columbia University students. Benardete styled himself as a bridge between laymen and scholars, and colleagues credited him for achieving a cultural and political rapprochement between U.S. Sephardim and the Hispanic world.

Though Benardete lamented the paucity of studies on Ottoman Jewish civilization, he, like many other Alliance graduates, disdained Ladino as a corrupt, bastardized language and believed that the only redeeming features of Middle Eastern Sephardi culture were Iberian. Like many Hispanists of his time, Benardete advocated the “modernization” (and thus “correction”) of Ladino dialects to facilitate interactions between Ladino-speaking Jews and Gentile Hispanics.

While his students revered him as an outstanding professor and mentor, Benardete's relations with colleagues and community members could be bristly. In 1936, a series of verbal and physical disputes with New York Sephardim, some of whom were affiliated with the Hispanic Institute, stimulated much animosity against both Benardete and the Sephardic Studies Section and jeopardized some of his Sephardic-related projects. Benardete disdained social conventions; for a great while he did not bother to complete his doctoral dissertation, and, though not a Communist, he publicly defied a McCarthyite official who attempted to intimidate faculty members at Brooklyn College in the 1950s. Long after his retirement, he still invited students and friends to his Brooklyn home every Sabbath evening for *tertulias*—social and intellectual gatherings—during which he would lecture as if in a university classroom.

Benardete divorced his first wife, Doris, and subsequently married Paula Ovadia de Benardete, a Sephardi woman active in the Sephardic Studies Section and, later, an instructor of Spanish and French at Brooklyn College. Benardete died at the age of ninety-three of a heart attack in his home in Somerville, Massa-

chusetts. His three sons also became academics. Seth Gabriel Benardete (1930–2001) was a classicist and philosopher who taught at New York University and the New School; José Amado Benardete is a well-known philosopher at Syracuse University; and Diego Benardete is a professor of mathematics at the University of Hartford.

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AVIVA BEN-UR

## Benaroya, Albert

Albert (né Armand) Avram Benaroya, a Turkish journalist, linguist, and educator, was born in Edirne in 1887 and died in Istanbul on June 20, 1955. He received his primary education at the → Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) school in Edirne, from which he graduated at a precocious age, and then attended the → École Normale Israélite Orientale (ENIO) in Paris (1906). From October 1910 he taught at the École Şror ha-Ḥayyim de Hasköy in Istanbul before being appointed teacher of French at a Turkish school in Damascus (1912). He remained in Damascus until after the First World War, then transferred to the Mercan

School in Istanbul; he also taught French at the prestigious Lycée Galatasaray in Istanbul.

During his time in Damascus, Benaroya developed a system of Turkish stenography based upon two French systems. In 1917, the Ministry of Public Instruction adopted his system and appointed him professor of stenography at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales (Yüksek Ticaret Mektebi). After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, the Grand National Assembly (parliament) in → Ankara invited him to teach the first group of state stenographers (1925). Benaroya organized and supervised a group of twelve young women (nine of them Jews) who recorded the minutes of the First Balkan Conference, which met in Istanbul in October 1931. However, credit for his stenographic system went largely to a Turk, a fact of life that Benaroya accepted.

Also while in Damascus, Benaroya collaborated with Captain Mehmet Necip on a reader entitled *Lectures patriotiques* for use in military schools. He included several of his own poems, which he wrote under the pseudonym Çanak-kale (Dardanelles). Benaroya also wrote for several French-language daily newspapers, including → *Le Jeune Turc* (where he began his journalistic career in December 1911), *Stamboul* or *Istanbul* (together with Gabriel Mena-sche and Molho), *La République* (the French edition of *Cumhuriyet*), *Le Journal d'Orient* (edited by Albert → Carasso), *La Presse du Soir*, and later, *La Turquie*. Fluent in French and Turkish, Benaroya also wrote for the pro-Kemalist *İkdam*, after the War of Independence.

Together with Ya'akov Kıymaz, Benaroya published *Atikva* (*ha-Tiqva*, The Hope) in 1947, a work encouraging the Jews of Istanbul to emigrate to Israel. On July 24, 1948, he founded the French-language *L'Étoile du Levant* (signing his writings as Albert Benaroya or with his *nom de plume*, Al-Kaya), which was published weekly until two years after his death. He believed in international Jewish causes, including Zionism, and his papers often reflected such themes.

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