

THE JEWS OF THE FOURTH CORNER:

**The Iglesia Israelita, a Mysterious Community
in the land of Chile's
Mapuche natives.**

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Digest:

The Iglesia Israelita is a century old pseudo Jewish community that originated in the Araucanía, the remote land of the Mapuche natives in southern Chile, South America. The origins of this group are nebulous.

This thesis is a study on its probable historical origins --its prehistory-- as well as a study on later groups that were born out of it. These latter groups are the Congregación Israelita del Diós Unico, gentiles who have abandoned any kind of Christianity to observe Judaism, and the "Judíos del Sur" a group that is now fully converting to Judaism.

The first chapter deals with the history of the Araucanía since the arrival of the Spaniards to those regions. It serves as a background for Chapter two, which presents all the antecedents on a Cryptojewish presence there. Chapter three connects the history of the region with the history of crypto-Judaism in Chile, and leads then towards a reconstruction of a possible Marrano origin of the Iglesia Israelita.

Chapter four deals with the formation of the Iglesia Israelita itself. All written recollections are taken into account, and the activity of missionaries in the region along with interviews with experts on the

Araucanía are drawn upon to picture as to how the Iglesia Israelita came to existence.

Chapter five is a description of the Iglesia Israelita, its beliefs and practices. It presents the last and historical interview made in 1993 with Don Emisael Palma, patriarch and leader of the Iglesia Israelita, before he passed away. It also describes the Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico.

The sixth and last chapter, deals with the Judíos del Sur, a group of proselytes that had come out of the Iglesia Israelita and Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico to convert to Judaism, a group whom I taught and lived with for over a year in Curacautín, Temuco and Chol-Chol.

Finally, the Epilogue reflects on the process by which Judaism is not only transmitted from generation to generation by family ties, but sometimes by subtle tides occurring under the surface. The result of it is that the Judíos del Sur are now converting to Judaism due to an impulse that transcends them in time, whose origin lies maybe centuries ago, lost in the majestic rainforests of the Araucanía.

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Introduction

"There is no such thing as the first Jew at a given place; there has certainly been one there before".

Dr. Jacob Marcus

It was a warm, sunny Sabbath day in January 1992, in the small town of Curacautín, in the heartland of the Araucanía, the land of the Mapuche natives, some 500 miles south of Santiago de Chile, South America. I had returned to Chile for some three weeks of vacation from the Hebrew Union College. While I was meditating at a nearby river I thought to myself: "I must be the first Jew who prays in these remote regions..." the thought made me feel like a human landmark, a pioneer.

Some weeks later, back at the library of the Hebrew Union College, I opened the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia and looked up under "Chile". I was delighted to read with academic meticulousness about all that I already knew empirically. Yet, in the middle of the article, suddenly I found something I had never heard of before: A whole page with two photographs was devoted to the "*Iglesia Israelita*" a "marrano-descendant community in the remote Araucanía..."

Beyond the immediate and natural interest it arose in me, I was

surprised I had never in my life heard of that community. Born and raised in Chile, and having spent many years at the core of the Jewish community there, having been in the Araucanía just a few weeks before and many times in past years, I knew nothing about it.

Back in Chile I explored the possibility of this issue as a potential thesis topic. I was told that Rabbi Eduardo Weingortin of the Comunidad Israelita de Santiago, was having some contact with people of the Iglesia Israelita. In an interview with him he told me that for about a year he had been receiving some people that left the "Iglesia" who seemed conversion to Judaism. Rabbi Weingortin helped and tutored them lovingly, but could not devote time to travel to the south. So when I told him I was interested in writing my thesis on the subject, he told me jokingly that he did not care for my academic interest but that I had already won the title of *Sheliach*.¹ Since the "*Shlichut*" did not mean interfering with the Iglesia Israelita, but referred to the small group of people that were in the process of conversion, whom rabbi Weingortin calls "Judíos del Sur" ("Jews of the South"), I accepted the role. It proved to be a crucial springboard.

THE SUBJECT

Three groups conform the matter of my research:

¹ Delegate to perform the function of teaching.

1. Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto (divided in two branches): Main group.
2. Congregacion Israelita del Diós Unico: A recent formation of Jesus-rejectionists, a more Judaizing group.
3. Judíos del Sur: People who are currently in the process of conversion to Judaism.

There are two thrusts in my study: On one hand to study the origin of the Iglesia Israelita, and on the other to describe these groups.

Yet the origin of the Iglesia Israelita is, as I begin my thesis work, still a mystery. Therefore their crypto-Jewish origin is an assumption, in fact a very good one, but still an assumption. It constitutes the hypothesis of my work.

THE PROBLEM:

The hypothesis we stated is a possible answer to the problems that the subject poses, namely:

- 1 What is the origin of the Iglesia Israelita?
- 2 Why does it emerge at the mountain regions of the Araucanía?

3. Were there any crypto-Jews in the region prior to the region's "pacification" - its incorporation to the rest of Chile?
4. If so, how did they live there and how did they transmit their tradition?
5. Was there any group of crypto-Jews that constituted a basis for the formation of the Iglesia Israelita?
6. What gave them the cohesion, the will to form a sect once the region was being civilized?
7. Who were possible agents and influences along the times?
8. How did eclecticism and Christianity become a part of their belief?
9. Why was there always a push in the direction of Judaism: Out of Adventism, out of the Iglesia Israelita by Arevalo, out of Arevalo's group by the "Judíos del Sur"?
10. How was and is the relationship between these three instances of Judaism and the established Jewish community?
11. What were and are the practices of the three groups?
12. What problems do they face? What hopes do they embrace?
13. How do they conceive themselves vis a vis Christians and Jews?

THE GOAL:

The goal of my research is to present the most solid solution to these questions, to reconstruct the most plausible historical continuum, and describe the stages of Judaism and/or pseudo-Judaism these people went through. It is hard to research subject of of crypto-Judaism, because one finds people who are constantly covering their traces in order not to be caught by the tentacles of the Inquisition. In this case it is further difficult for the following reasons:

a. The area of the Araucanía was a complete wilderness until a hundred years ago. It was in fact the site of the fiercest natives of the whole American continent, the absolute last ones to surrender to the Spanish-Creole population. So there are no archives, nor records for the region prior to this century (with exception of the Spanish documents on land ownership, that do not deal with the subject of my studies).

b. The fact that members of the Iglesia Israelita believe nowadays in Jesus at least as the Messiah, makes them feel invalidated in their beliefs when confronted with their Jewish origin. So although they speak repeatedly of the Inquisition and of Jews inhabiting the region in the past, they have a quite ambiguous stand vis a vis a fully Jewish origin, and tend to be extraordinarily contradictory on that issue.

HYPOTHESIS:

If there are families from the Araucanía that I have come to teach, that came towards Judaism aspiring for conversion, it is ultimately because there is a chain of Judaism, pseudo-Judaism, or crypto-Judaism to be traced down until the period of the Spanish Conquest, when so many *Anusim* (Jews forced to convert to Christianity) came over to the "New World". These *Anusim*, or crypto-Jews found in the Araucanía or its periphery the place to hide from the Inquisition, because its demonic presence could never reach that wilderness.

I suggest that there is a chain, an uninterrupted undercurrent of Judaism in the region, which is very hard to trace down. Not only has it endured, but strangely enough, it was able to generate a strong revisionist "back-to-the-origins" movement in recent years, reaching even conversion ("re-conversion") to Judaism.

In other words, one could talk here of a full cycle of immersion and emersion of Judaism in the region. The transmission was probably made through familiar bonds and intimate circles in the beginning, yet it did not ultimately depend on familiar lineage because the group got later a missionary spirit that enabled it to gain new

members.

RELEVANCE:

In my opinion there are three major aspects that make this work relevant:

1. It has become an educational common place to declare the origins of Chilean (and Latin American) Judaism to be found in the late nineteenth century immigrations from Europe. Thus Judaism begins with the Eastern European peddlers and *gauchos* that settled Moisesville, in the Argentinean *Pampa*. Fortunately, in recent years, some of the important and dramatic Jewish history from Spanish Colonial times has come to light to us by various notorious scholars and researchers, such as Guenther Boehm and Guenther Friedlaender.

No Kaddish is ever recited in Chile or elsewhere for men and women like Rodrigo Henríquez de Fonseca, Leonor Andrade or Francisco Maldonado de Silva, alias Heli Naçareo. Few Jews know about their lives, their extraordinary courage and martyrdom; and even fewer conceive them as brothers or forefathers along the same chain: the Jewish People in Chile.

So first I want to amend the notion that Jews came to live in Chile at the beginning of the twentieth century, and raise awareness of the fact that Jewish life, although under terrible constraints and brutal, implacable persecution, has existed in Chile since the sixteenth century. It is my conviction that it is time to embrace all these valiant and admirable Jews and recognize in our Jewish forbearers in this land, quite literally, the "Fourth Corner" of the earth.

Second, making my investigation and field work in 1992, at 500 years of the presence of Europeans in America, and having myself been that year in Curacautín and Barcelona, in Buenos Aires, Florence and Santiago de Chile, gives this work a contextual perspective in terms of all the revision that the Jewish and Native components of the "New World" are undergoing.

3. Finally, I believe that Judaism became a relevant culture when it underwent a cultural osmosis with the local culture. In Latin America this osmosis has not yet occurred. Jewish communities do not assume local culture and see themselves as outposts of European Judaism from sometime in the past. I want my work to help incorporate the cultural elements of our country in order to enrich our Jewish culture.

METHOD:

No scholarly research has ever been conducted on this subject of the Iglesia Israelita. Texts about it amount to a few very small articles or paragraphs, written without any serious fieldwork and often mythifying the group. So although I use all these texts, I stress the importance of first hand recordings and interviews with key persons, along all of the aspects of the subject.

ON FIELDWORK:

My fieldwork activity was centered around the *Shlichut* task that rabbi Eduardo Weingortin recommended me for. At my first meeting with him in Santiago, in April 1992, he told me about his guiding "*Judíos del Sur*" from Temuco and Curacautín. The term for describing the group of converts emerged spontaneously as the rabbi told his secretary to show me all the correspondence he had with the group. I xeroxed all that material and rabbi Weingortin wrote an official letter to the group appointing me as the "*Moreh*" (teacher) of the group.

So after my arrival in Chile from the U.S. in May 1992 I contacted family Díaz of that group in Temuco, and started some 10 or more trips to the Araucanía: Temuco, Curacautín, Chol Chol and Padre las Casas, over 1992 and 1993. During these trips I could speak and interview, live and share with all the three groups, while teach the Judíos del Sur, at whose homes I found marvelous hospitality. So slowly, piece by piece, I could get a picture that was whole.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ARAUCANIA

The Frontier

The Araucanía, or Mapu, is the region in Chile that has been and is inhabited by the Mapuche. These native people, whose name means "People of the Earth" (Mapu=Earth, Land; and Che= People) had already inhabited the region long before the Spanish *Conquista*. The region extends from the Itata river in the North, to the Toltén river in the South, and from the Andes to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.¹

This is the area that saw the emergence of the Iglesia Israelita and the other groups today. The question of why does the I.I. originate in this so particular region can be understood by studying its history and special characteristics.

In winter 1536, a battalion of ninety men under command of Captain Gómez de Alvarado approached the Itata river. It was an expedition sent from the northern Aconcagua valley by Diego de Almagro with the task of exploring southwards as long as strength and courage lasted. Up until then, the native resistance had been scarce, and the true obstacles to the expedition were the flooded lands and the cold. Further south, the domain of the Mapuches made

¹ Casamiquela, Rodolfo: "A que llamamos mapuches?" in CUHSO, Vol. II, Number 1, Temuco, 1985.

it very risky to continue. Besides, gold was nowhere to find and the more the column advanced southwards the rougher the climate became.

When the Spanish reached the plains of Reinohuelén, near the Perquilauquén river, they had to face masses of Mapuche warriors that overran them. It is hard to say how this first encounter might have been, but one thing is certain: Many Spaniards survived and returned later to Aconcagua.

From that moment on, until January first, 1883, that is three hundred and forty seven years long, there was war and friction in varied degrees between the Spaniards and the Mapuche. The first century or so, until 1655, the war was uninterrupted. It was fierce and cruel on both sides, yet the Spanish had the general upper hand in their vengeful gruesomeness.

During this first period of active and bloody war, there was never truce and the Spanish launched yearly expeditions. Every now and then there were "general rebellions" in which the Mapuches obtained great victories and the situation turned very dark for the Spaniards, for whom the effects of these rebellions were to be felt for many years. There were three major uprisings², and we will have to bear them in

² Mellafe, Rolando: "Las primeras crisis coloniales, formas de asentamiento y el origen de la sociedad chilena: siglos XVI y XVII" in Estudios. Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, 1975.

mind as we explore the possible origin the Iglesia Israelita:

1. The first great uprising took place in 1553, and began with the battle of Tucapel, in which Chile's most famous and important *Conquistador*, Don Pedro de Valdivia, and all the fifty men who accompanied him, lost their lives. Consequently, the second most important Spanish town of the country, Concepción, had to be abandoned. The rest of the Spanish settlements were put under siege by the Mapuche, and remained isolated. Moreover, Lautaro, "*toqui*", or military commander in chief of all the Mapuche, lead his forces on a fierce counterattack heading towards Santiago. He and his forces would most certainly have reached Santiago and maybe beyond, were it not for the fact that he was betrayed and murdered at his camp site, some 150 miles south of Santiago.

2. The second general rebellion exploded in 1598. Governor Martín García Oñez de Loyola, with his fifty men, was defeated and killed in Curalaba. With this victory, the Mapuche and Huilliche ("People of the South"), felt encouraged in subsequent years to attack the seven fortresses located south of the Biobío River, which after a fierce assault, were totally destroyed.

3. The third great uprising that shook all of the Araucanía was that of 1655, provoked by the campaign of the brothers Salazar. These men

advanced with their troops into the Araucanía in order to enslave the natives, which was obviously a fatal mistake. The Mapuche response was then not only aimed at the adventurers and the fortresses, but they actually overran the Biobío River line causing the withdrawal from and the abandonment of settlements up until the Maule river³

The Spaniard's original goal of exploiting the gold mines and the very fertile land had to be temporarily set aside. Initially they had been few men over many towns, but then realized that a defensive line along the Biobío river would mark the boundary between the Spanish and the Mapuche. This way, a closed frontier was established, even though it was frequently breached.

The main motivation for war was greed. From Governors to common soldiers, the Spaniards made *razzias* to capture slaves, or even to merely slay the Mapuche with no tactic justification. All kinds of atrocities and abuse were common practice.

Then, after 1655, more and more contact and economic relationship took place. And the blow the Mapuche inflicted on the Spanish-Creolles that year, reduced the slave trade so substantially, that enslavement of natives was abolished in 1683. The exchange of goods became so intense that it turned into regular business with

³ Brouse, Jorge: "Las fortificaciones españolas de la línea de la frontera y sus ares circunvecinas en el siglo XVI y el XIX" Memoria, Universidad de Concepción, Chile, 1975.

agents. *Mestizaje* (racial merging) grew with unions and the selling of women and children. Some missionary activity is recorded during this period, but with little success⁴. The Spanish fortresses, in need of goods, designated commissaries to maintain peaceful relations with the natives. Military clashes became less regular, though they did occur from time to time.

Two big uprisings occurred in 1723 and 1766. The first one was due to the abuses committed by the so called "*capitanes de amigos*" in their buying and selling of natives, and the second one, due to an attempt to force them to live in towns. Besides these uprisings, there were smaller clashes that did not seriously affect a general state of calm. The frontier was semi-open and that military apparatus was relaxed. The *guarniciones* led such a lazy life that at the end of the colonial period there were numerous reports calling attention to the bad conditions of the Spanish defense system.

At the time of the Independence war (1810-1818) the "*Realistas*"--troops loyal to the Spanish crown--escaped to the Araucanía, where they could hide and get the complicity of the Mapuche.⁵ The war years brought considerable turbulence to the region as bandits and other elements dedicated themselves to pillage. Yet after the war,

⁴ Nogger, Albert: "Cuatrocientos años de misión entre los araucanos" Editorial San Francisco, Padre las Casas, 1980.

⁵ Bengoa, Jose: "Historia del pueblo mapuche, siglo XIX y XX", Ediciones SUR, Santiago de Chile, 1985.

conditions returned to frontier *status quo* until 1851, when new elements again penetrated the Araucanía, due to the consequences of the civil war years. The same occurred during the civil war of 1859. Yet this sporadic seeking of refuge by elements of the Chilean society, though causing some turbulence, did not affect for long the dynamics of frontier coexistence.

The definitive conquest and subsequent integration of the Araucanía was launched in 1862, and took some twenty years to achieve its objectives. It has to be seen as the enhancing of the spontaneous integration that had begun much earlier, by means of coexistence. The Mapuche by then had adapted to the situation and, to a certain extent, even became dependent on it.

When colonel Cornelio Saavedra advanced inside the Araucanía with the task of "pacifying" it, he found some significant military resistance, but it was so diluted and local, that he succeeded in ending the war in the Araucanía.

Mapuche: The People of the Earth

As mentioned above, the Mapuche were the native tribes that inhabited the land between the Itata and the Toltén rivers, and between the Andes and the Pacific ocean. Yet they were composed of tribes that had somewhat different characteristics from one another.

Especially important for our subject are the mountain tribes, "Moluches" or "Arribanos" (People of the high places), who were actually for the most part a mixture between the Mapuche and the Pehuenche, the latter being the Andean tribes whose whole culture and survival was based on the fruit of the *Araucaria* tree.

The Arribanos who inhabited the slope of the Andes, between Victoria and Temuco were the most fearsome. "They conformed a real confederation with interesting common features that distinguished them from the other Mapuche groups. They were all related towards one another, coming from a common trunk lifted to mythical categories. They had friendly and economic relations with mountain tribes and with the natives of the Argentinean *Pampas*."⁶ They were obedient to one chief only who was able to count on a large number of warriors. They tried always to incite the "Abajinos", the tribes of the lower places into war against the Spanish. These "Abajinos" were more controlled by the Spanish-Creole forces.

The Arribanos, far from surrendering themselves to loose their land, fought until they had exhausted their forces. So by 1871, once the war to death with them was finished, peace could only be established with the two thousand lancers under Mapuche chief Quilapán, with a line of fortresses divided into three sections with

⁶ Parentini, Luis: "Relaciones Fronterizas"

seats in Angol, Chiguaihue and Collipulli. There were 21 fortresses and watch towers with a total contingent of two thousand sixty nine Chilean soldiers. These were really the true defenders of the Araucanía during the second half of the XIX Century, who "with the decisive cooperation of numerous aliens, Chilean and foreigners, hold an heroic resistance to the advance of the Chilean army and settlers"⁷

All these antecedents relating to the nature of the Arribanos and their region of dense subtropical rainforest, marvelous lakes and volcanoes that they inhabited, prove to be of great importance as we shall see.

⁷ Parentini, Luis: Relaciones Fronterizas, tesis en Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago 1986.

CHAPTER II

ANTECEDENTS FOR A PREHISTORY

By prehistory of the Iglesia Israelita, I understand all the antecedents that explain its presence in the Araucanía by the end of the 19th Century. Since no chronicles, or other kinds of records, be it written or oral, have been preserved, the departure point and *raison d'être* for this chapter is the notion held by the members of the Iglesia Israelita, and the few investigators who have written on the topic, that they are a "Marrano- descendant community". This chapter then, deals with the Jews that lived in Chile during colonial times, their circumstances and fate, as they may give us a hint on the emergence of an Iglesia Israelita, on the Araucanía, or on something related. It is likewise important to review these antecedents, even if the Iglesia Israelita is not a community descended from Marranos, but one only linked to Converso Jews by means of influence.

In this chapter I may refer to converso Jews, crypto-Jews or "marranos" as "Anusim", the Hebrew word conveying the meaning of Jews that were forced into a Christian way of life by the "Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisicion", the Spanish Inquisition, but who by whatever means they had available, did maintain their Judaism alive.

It is known that a large percentage of the Spanish Conquerors

were themselves Anusim, or at least were aware of their Jewish origin. It is not my aim to describe their general history, nor their characteristics, nor their dealing with the Inquisition, for that is a subject that supersedes by far the scope of my subject, and is well known. I rather want to present the antecedents of Jews that can be directly related to a crypto-Jewish presence in the Araucanía or its periphery.

As I mentioned before, the Jews of Spain and Portugal had to be professing Christians adopt a Christians in order to reach the Americas. As Professor Gunther Boehm explains: "Though they tried to maintain their Judaism in the new world, the implacable persecution by the Inquisition grew stronger and stronger, until it managed to annihilate all organized cells of Anusim. The Autos de Fé in Mexico and Lima put an end to the last traces of Judaism, and their descendants were (by the end of the eighteenth century) practically absorbed by the broader population."¹

Nonetheless some remote traces of crypto-Jewish presence are to be found today in the communities of New Mexico and Natal, Brazil. The Iglesia Israelita, which was deemed to be another case of it, is the motif of this study.

¹ Gunther Boehm. Nuevos Antecedentes para una historia de los judíos en Chile colonial, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago de Chile, 1963.

"But because the descendants of the Anusim carefully hid their Jewish traces, the only testimonies we have about them are the ones of their prosecutors. The rest of the documents that were written about conversos come from chronists whose job was primarily to underline the unfavorable aspects at the Acts of the Inquisition as well as in defamatory libels."²

Taking into account these difficulties, an extraordinary job has been done by Prof. Guenther Boehm, dean of the Judaica department of the Universidad de Chile, in his works on the history of the Jews in colonial Chile, especially his "Nuevos antecedentes para una historia de los Judíos en Chile colonial", segments from which I will quote freely:

The Jews who came to the Spanish and Portuguese Colonies lived in relative calm until the year 1570, when Inquisitor Serván de Cerezuéla arrived in Lima, Peru in order to found the Tribunal del Santo Oficio en that town. Boehm quotes a letter that the Secretary of the Inquisition had sent to the Inquisidor General saying: "Lima and the whole kingdom (of which Chile was a "Capitanía", i.e. province) was full of confessed (Jews) and of sons and grandsons of reconciled ones (Jews that had already been punished by the Tribunal), so that I certify to you that from the few Spaniards that live in these regions,

² Guenther Boehm. *Ibid.*

there are twice as many confessed (Jews) than in Spain..."

At the time, Jews were engaged in all occupations, from the most humble ones, such as servants, shepherds, farmers, miners to the most prestigious ones such as governors, Bishop advisors, constructors, surgeons and artisans.

Jews among the Chilean Conquistadors:

Among the 132 names of men that accompanied Don Diego de Almagro in his route to Chile from Cuzco, Peru, in 1536, there are already

Conversos: Rodrigo de Orgoños or Orgóñez. About him there are quite complete data. He was born in Toledo in 1505, son of a Jewish shoemaker,

Alonso Jiménez and Beatriz Dueñas. The name Dueñas is to this very day one of the most known Jewish families in Chile. Boehm also records Diego García de Cáceres, one of the first neighbors and "encomenderos" of Santiago. He is of Jewish origin as recorded in the book "La Ovandina" that was published in Lima, in 1621, and banned by the Inquisition due to the tremendous upheaval it caused there by recording a large number of names of prestigious dignitaries of the town.

Now, it is extremely noteworthy that almost all the conversos Boehm registers are to be found settling the southern towns, either in the Araucanía, or in Concepción, its periphery; but not in Santiago or La Serena:

FRANCISCO DE GUDIEL:³

Boehm says: "Native of Seville, son of Diego and Catalina de Salas, born around 1518. He came to New Spain in 1535, and to Chile in 1543, with Monroy, with whom he returned in 1545. He is a founding neighbor of Concepción, royal officer in 1554, alguacil mayor in 1563, regidor in 1517, and ordinary major in 1548. One of his daughters, dona Luisa de Salas, married with Pedro de Omepezoa and Alonso de Pereda having children with both. About him says Hernando de Ibarra in a letter that he 'was awaiting the arrival of the Messiah'". The name Gudiel is not a Spanish name. The ending -el- is Hebrew.

PEDRO DE OMEPEZOA

"Portuguese, born by 1510. Founding neighbor of La Imperial, and regidor in its Cabildo in 1554, encomendero in Concepción, regidor in 1562 and ordinary major in 1563. He died in 1590. One of his sons, captain Pedro de Omepezoa, married the daughter of the

³ Carlos Larrain de Castro. Los Judíos en Chile Colonial. Santiago, 1943.

marrano, Francisco de Gudiel". The name "Omepezoa" is likewise a strange name, in Portuguese it literally means "Man-person", an odd word combination apparently intentionally vague.

ALONSO ALVAREZ

"Born in 1498 and came o Chile in 1549. He was teniente contador in the Real Hacienda and fiscal of His Majesty in that year. interim contador replacing Esteban Sosa, also Jewish, in 1550. Francisco de Villagra named him Royal Treasurer in 1556; and from 1557 appears again as contador; he lived by October 1562 and died in 1564. In a defamatory libel written in 1557, it is meant that he was Jewish, because he 'had become rebellious...and keeps de Law of his cousin, a gentleman by the name of Gudiel...because he always awaits the Messiah'; he was also contador real in Concepción; had a daughter named dona Luisa de Salas, married to Pedro de Omepezoa, son of a Portuguese of the same name and brother of dona Prudencia de Saa, all Jews." The name "Salas" and "Saa" is a disguise for Salomon. Prudencia (prudence) is a disguise for Wisdom; in other words: Prudencia de Saa is nothing other than the "Wisdom of Salomon".

JUAN SERRANO⁴

"From Contorra, son of Juan Serrano and María Lajara, single

⁴ Luis Thayer Ojeda. "La Formacion de la Sociedad Chilena" tomo III, p 227.

servant of Hernando de Alarcon, came from Spain to Chile in 1555. He lived in La Imperial in 1560. Jew, bigamous; the Inquisition condemned him by 1575 to go out in an auto de fe with rope, gown and candle, and confess de levi, and to two hundred lashes, and to serve for five years in the rowing galeras without salary."

PEDRO DE SALCEDO

"Born in the own of San Martin, de Valdeiglesias. His true name was Cristóbal de Valderrábano, who came to the Indies abandoning his wife Juana de la Fuente and two sons. He brought along another woman, and when she died, he married a third time in Santiago. He was in Arauco with governor Valdivia. In 1554 he came from La Serena to Santiago, bringing a letter from Aguirre. The next year he was a neighbor of Valdivia. Then he went to Peru returning with Hurtado de Mendoza (another converso descendant), who named him scribe of His Majesty and *público* in Santiago, in 1559, exercising the same profession in the Cabildo. Villagra took an *encomienda* away from him in 1562. We find him as a neighbor in Villarrica in 1565, scribe in La Imperial and contador in the Real Hacienda of Valdivia in 1585. He was denounced to the Inquisition for double marriage and for having uttered a heresy, tormented, condemned to one hundred lashes and galeras for four years."

Summary of the Inquisition's presence in Chile:

Following the arrival of the first Inquisitor in Peru, in 1570, the "Tribunal" was established in Chile by 1572. Like in other territories of the continent, it was followed by a quite important number of denunciations and processes.

Among them, the most famous case was that of Bachelor Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva. About his most admirable courage and incredible suffering and martyrdom there is plenty written already. Chilean historian Jose Toribio Medina has done the fundamental work in publicizing Maldonado de Silva's case and more recently, Prof. Guenther Boehm has described his life in the very fine "Historia de los Judios en Chile, Bachiller Francisco Maldonado de Silva". He based himself not only on Medina, but on several other researchers in Spain and elsewhere. Two novels have been written about him: "La gesta del Marrano" by Marcos Aguinis, and a very fine, profound and beautifully written depiction of Maldonado de Silva's life called "Camisa Limpia" by Guillermo Blanco. I have also written a paper on Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva to be found at the American Jewish Archives, in Cincinnati.

Francisco was born in 1598 in San Miguel de Tucumán, in what is now Argentina. His father, Diego and his brother had been

punished by the Inquisition, yet his father managed to initiate Francisco in Judaism at age eighteen, while he was ostracized in the port of Callao. Francisco studied medicine the University of San Marcos, in Lima, where he graduated. He was later on appointed as a Surgeon in Santiago de Chile, married and circumcised himself there, and moved later on to La Concepción, some 350 miles south of Santiago, at the edge of the wild domains of the Mapuche. He would there do excursions to Hualpén, at the end of the Biobío River in the Pacific Ocean, all by himself, with the pretext of recollecting herbs for his patients, and invented there for himself a Jewish ritual. He would change his shirt on Shabbat days, and studied the Old Testament intensely, so much so that he could later carry on, even in the midst of his terribly long captivity at the secret prisons of the Inquisition in Lima, long debates with his prosecuting Inquisitors, and write with infinite patience and skill with the most rudimentary and improvised utensils, his ideas and letters to the Inquisitors defending his Judaism. He also wrote two letters to the Jewish community in Rome, of whose existence he knew. The letters were miraculously saved by smuggling them out of the prison and exist still.

So after he was denounced by one of his sisters, he was apprehended in La Concepción (fecha) and brought to Santiago, where after some months he was taken to Lima. He immediately confessed he was Jewish and was therefore the target of an attempt

to break his will and give up. Maldonado de Silva, who had renamed himself as Eli Naçareo, spent all in all thirteen years in the prisons of the Inquisition, and when he was taken out to the Auto de Fé, on January 23, 1639, together with dozens of other Jews that were part of the so called "Complicidad Grande" disclosed crypto-Jewish cell, he was as firm as always. He refused to carry crosses nor asked for mercy, and when his sentence was read at an enormous estrado especially built for the occasion, the Inquisitorial chronist records that a wind was blowing, so strong that it had rarely been seen one like that in Lima, and it broke the strong canvas that was stretched out on poles to give shadow from the hot summer sun. At that awesome moment, Eli Naçareo said: *"Esto lo ha dispuesto así el Dios de Israel, para verme la desde el cielo"* This has been set so by the God of Israel in order to see my face from Heaven". He was then burned alive at the stake, he and the books he had written, tied to his neck. The last comment by the Inquisitorial chronist was: *"Y notese en este preso la curiosidad de juntar papeletos"* "Note about this prisoner the curious mania of gathering little pieces of paper..."

Among all Chilean Jews that perished under the Inquisition, Francisco Maldonado de Silva, alias Eli Naçareo, is the most relevant to us, because he is to the members of the Iglesia Israelita the mythical founder of their Group, as we will see later on.

Besides the case of Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva, one of

the most important cases was the one against Rodrigo Henríquez de Fonseca, his wife Leonor Andrade, and her brother Luis Rivero. After some years of successfully escaping the order of apprehension that was issued against them, they were finally caught in Santiago de Chile in 1656. Rodrigo de Fonseca was accused of having said to someone to let he fowl that he would eat be killed in front of him, so that they would not be "trefes" and to keep the knives and not lend them to anybody... Once in Lima, Rodrigo committed suicide at his cell and both Leonor and Luis were tortured terribly and then burned at the stake at the Plaza de Acho, in Lima, January 23, 1664.

Luis Noble, who served as a soldier in Chile was accused by a Jesuit priest in August 1614 of practicing the Law of Moses. He was admitted into secret reconciliation without Auto nor confiscation of his goods, being absolved with lashes and *galeras*.

León Gómez de Oliva, Portuguese Jew in Santiago de Chile, appears as having *de motu proprio* confessed that he had practiced some of the Laws of Moses. There is a letter about it dated June 4, 1680; he too managed somehow to save his life, although taking his record into account, he had all his property under embargo. There was a very large number of Portuguese Jews in the Spanish colonies; so much so, that at one time the word "Portuguese" was a euphemism for "Jew".

CHAPTER III

CONNECTING THE ANTECEDENTS

What I have presented so far is first, a summary of the Araucanía's history during the Spanish conquest to serve as the historical context, and second, a summary of the history of the Jews in Chile during the colonial era, together with a brief review of the gruesome impact of the Spanish Inquisition on the country, as the religious historical context.

These contexts will be revised, and matched one with the other, so as to enable us to consider whether the Iglesia Israelita could have descended --if it does-- from any kind of Marrano past.

Why the Araucanía?

Let us then first consider the factor of the place in which the Iglesia Israelita is created or becomes visible in the late Nineteenth Century, as against the geopolitical history of the Araucanía.

The first thing to be noted, is that the Iglesia Israelita emerges in the upper Araucanía, in Cunco and Curacautín. Let us reflect for a moment on what this fact might mean for establishing a possible crypto-Jewish past.

crypto-Jews, no matter they were active in their practice or hesitant about their Judaism, were by the mid sixteenth century already subject to the cruel cynicism of the "Pureza de Sangre" doctrine. This doctrine meant that Jews, although they had converted to Christianity, are nevertheless subject to the whims of their blood, and determined to --sooner or later-- betray or contaminate their environment with undesired Judaizing. It was a matter of "Purity of blood". Since the Jews were subject to it, they were never safe from suspicion and accusations by the Inquisition. A "*Cristiano Nuevo*", i.e. "New Christian" or "converso-descendant", could easily be accused of "Judaizing" because of his or her blood.

That is why, especially when their Judaism was active, i.e. they were crypto-Jews, they tried to lead a life as far away from the Inquisition as possible. So if he communities in Natal, Brazil, and New Mexico, who claim to be of crypto-Jewish descent are truly so, they have something important in common with the community of the Araucanía: The three are located far away from the centers of power and the subsequent headquarters of the inquisitorial tribunals. But in the case of New Mexico, and especially in the case of the Araucanía, the regions are not only far away, but as removed from the presence of white people as possible. In the case of the upper Araucanía the case could not be more paradigmatic and clear.

As we have seen, the Araucanía was the homeland of the Mapuche, who fought the Spanish so bitterly and in a so longstanding a way, that the region could never be conquered by the latter. This had to wait till the Chilean forces, many decades after the independence from Spain, finally won over those territories to the *Huinca*.¹

This was then the place that, despite its wilderness, could provide the most secure shelter from the Spanish presence. No Spanish soldier could enter safely that region, and if Chile was a *Hinterland* from the *Virreynato del Perú*, (Commonwealth of Peru) then the Araucanía was the absolute wildest *Hinterland* of *Hinterlaender*, a place so utterly remote from any civilized world, that the icy, devilish cruelty of the Inquisition could never reach there.

If that was not enough, the regions of what now is Cunco and Curacautín, were, as I pointed out in the historical review, the wildest of the Araucanía, namely the upper Araucanía, the domain of the Moluches or Arribanos. These were the tribes that, unlike the ones of the lower regions, were totally invincible in their dense and humid rainforest at the Andean slopes. Moreover, the region has some passes through the *Cordillera* that were known and used by the native tribes to trade with the natives of the wilderness of the

¹ "Huinca" in Mapudungun, Mapuche language, literally stands for "thief" and was the standard term the natives used to call the white people.

Argentinean *Pampa*. Eventually, these passes could be used for a quick and effective withdrawal, in the unlikely event that the region were conquered by the Spanish.

The sites of the emergence of the Iglesia Israelita are in the region that was the domain of the Arribanos. The areas are totally congruent. These are the areas towards the mountains between the valley towns of Victoria to the north, and Temuco to the south.

We have already mentioned some characteristics of the Arribanos. As Prof. Luis Carlos Parentini has observed, they are "a confederation of tribes with interesting common features that distinguished them from the other Mapuche groups. They had a kinship relationship with one towards one another, coming from a common trunk elevated to mythical categories..." These features of distinctiveness and mythical common origin, as well as strong family ties, could well be characteristics that would relate easily to Judaism, in the hypothetical case that they would have had contact with crypto-Jews.

So the geopolitical and anthropological features of the region would hint to us, that such a region would be most favorable for these Jews in a hiding from the Spanish. Yet one crucial question is to be asked at this point. Were the Arribanos willing to receive in their region

some crypto-Jews, they would most likely be unable to distinguish from ordinary Spaniards? We have quite a few elements to answer that question:

Rolando Mellafe, in his work on the introduction of black slavery in Chile, says:² "Of course it can be maintained that there were no cells of black *cimarrones* (black slaves that escaped and formed fugitive communities); yet, the areas in which the War of Arauco was fought uninterruptedly became the common land of all the unadapted and fugitive people of the colony...the natives easily accepted all kinds of *mestizos*, (mixture of native and white) and especially *mulattos* (mixture of black and white).

Moreover, as I have mentioned before, when the Arribanos fought their war against the Chilean army and settlers in the 1860's and 70's, there were numerous aliens, Chileans or foreigners cooperating with them in setting up an heroic resistance. The same had happened long before, when the *Realistas* (the supporters of Spain against the Chilean independentists) were hiding from their enemies in the Arribano region! This, of course is most surprising, since it was the Spaniards who were so hated by the Mapuche and especially by the fearsome Arribanos. And that was back in the 1810's long before the "pacification" of the region. Other revolutions of the

² Rolando Mellafe, "La Introducción de la Esclavitud Negra en Chile (Tráfico y Rutas)" Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, 1959.

nineteenth century had their supporters hiding in the Araucanía, as in 1851.

There is thus no doubt that Mapuches and Arribanos did accept these unadapted or persecuted people in their midst. After all, these people were as eager to defend the region from the Spanish, and later Chileans, as were they.

By taking into account factors and circumstances such as these, it is highly plausible that a crypto-Jewish presence in the Araucanía, and specially in the upper Araucanía, should have eventuated. Yet, there are other factors to consider. First we have to ascertain when it was possible --if at all-- to settle there, given the tides and ebbs of the *Guerra de Arauco* ; and second, whether crypto-Jews really had the need to be there permanently, or whether it was sufficient to live in the periphery of the Araucanía.

The Inquisition was established in Lima in 1570, and in Chile in 1572. By then, one can assume, the need to go further away became more urgent for the active crypto-Jews living in the country.

Luis Parentini argues, as we shall see, that due to the fact that the complete line of fortresses along the Biobío and Villarrica valley were utterly destroyed by the Mapuche in 1598, any trace of crypto-

Jews or crypto-Judaism prior to that date is impossible.

So it seems unlikely that such a move to settle themselves in the Araucanía; would be undertaken by crypto-Jews prior to the seventeenth century. And if they did, they were most probably annihilated. All the cases of Jews being accused to the Inquisition and being prosecuted by it that are recorded occur in the 1600's, beginning with the times of the "*Complicidad Grande*" in the 1620's and 1630's. Thus it makes more sense that in the light of these events, crypto-Jews would gather at the edge of the Araucanía, much like Francisco Maldonado de Silva, and then, maybe, after the third great rebellion of the Mapuche in 1655, and more exactly, after the terrible earthquake that destroyed La Concepción completely in 1657, as the Araucanía entered into longer periods of truce and relative calm, they penetrated the Araucanía gradually.

The case of Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva may shed some light on such a proposal. After some time as the surgeon in Santiago de Chile, he decides to move to the southern coastal town of La Concepción, which today corresponds to the city of Penco.

He moved to La Concepción in 1625 or 1626. The exact date is not known, yet Boehm maintains that he decided to leave Santiago fearing an accusation by his sister with whom he had a long dialogue

in which he told her he was Jewish. Or maybe it was simply to be further away from rumors getting about.

This move to Concepción was evidently not motivated by familiar or economic considerations. It shows that for somebody who wanted to be safer from the Inquisition, escape towards the south, towards the Araucanía was not only perceived as a realistic one, but it was actually undertaken. It also shows that it was at least a clear perception by a crypto-Jew, that La Concepción, the edge of the Araucanía, was safer than Santiago, since the Inquisition was not omnipresent.

Now, if we look at the *conquistadores* who were crypto-Jewish, whom we have listed earlier on, we can see that almost with no exception, they all left Santiago for towns and fortresses in the south: La Concepción, La Imperial, Villarrica, Valdivia, etc. Although the list corresponds to the years of the *Conquista* and not of the *Colonia*, that is to say, mainly before the establishment of the Inquisition, maybe it suggests that they realized that they could be more secure in the wild outposts of the Araucanía than at the shadow of the incipient cathedrals in the towns.

Speculating however on the possibility that these crypto-Jewish *conquistadores* may have formed small groups or underground

fraternities in those southern towns is quite fruitless because there is absolutely no evidence for it whatsoever.

Let us now focus on those sixteen and seventeen century towns like La Concepción, or Villarrica; what did they look like, how many people were there and under what conditions? During the 16th century, in the earlier times of the *conquista*, according to prof. Luis Carlos Parentini, these outposts and fortresses had to be supplied with extremely meager contingents of Spaniards. Their philosophy - which they were forced to change after realizing the power of their Mapuche enemy- was to spread out sparsely, covering as much territory as possible. Only that explains the incredible achievement of conquering an enormous continent by so few people. So there were towns and fortresses "founded and inhabited by thirty, twenty, ten and even fewer men"³ Sometimes these fortresses were annihilated by siege or war, abandoned or run by three Spaniards with a few captured natives.

Meanwhile, Concepción was in the times of Maldonado de Silva "a town on seventy six houses, half of them made of wood and with straw roof, the rest made of *adobe* (mixture of mud and straw) and stone. The population was of Spanish origin, with a bit more than one hundred inhabitants, was permanently reinforced with a sizable

³ Luis Carlos Parentini interviewed by Roberto Feldmann, August 18, 1993, Santiago de Chile.

number of soldiers that arrived in transit in order to defend the fortresses of the frontier."⁴

So we see that these towns were tiny. Consider that La Concepción was among the three biggest towns of the Spanish Colony, as continues to be the case in contemporary Chile.

It was crucial for every Spaniard to be an official neighbor of a town, in order to get the feudal grants from the King of Spain. The towns and feudal outposts were the center points around which enormous patches of land were allotted to their neighbors. According to Prof. Luis Carlos Parentini: "It was impossible for a Spaniard to come to America and wander about. You have to be a neighbor. That's the reason for the craziness of founding towns. Towns were founded with seventeen, eighteen, twenty men, because the more towns they founded, the greater the chance for each one to become a neighbor. And if one became a neighbor, and since there were eight vacants in the *Cabildo*, if one founds a town with twelve people, everyone is a most important neighbor. All of them were consequently sharing the most important *encomiendas*. And to get one, they had to be neighbors. So they allotted one another all the natives "*en los terminos de la ciudad*" - "in the outskirts of the town" - and all the lands. Some of them the size of a regular European

⁴ Guenther Boehm. "Historia de los Judios en Chile" vol. I, p. 57.

country! If you were a member of the Cabildo, you had a voice in front of the King (of Spain), if you did not, you were nothing. Yet despite all this fanaticism for founding towns, it was not usual to live inside them. One would rather live in the *Hacienda*. Later on, these Haciendas became villages and towns. So it is not surprising that almost every Spaniard had a seemingly important position, such as mayor, scribe or founding neighbor.

Let us now try to synthesize all these factors and considerations, and try to reconstruct a plausible itinerary for the route of a Jew arriving in Chile during the colonial period. The following analysis was made by Prof. Luis Carlos Parentini during an interview he gave me on August 18, 1993.:

Parentini : Let us suppose that during the colonial times, Jews are arriving in Chile, and they are feeling uneasy, and that (they settle) towards the south, towards the frontier, an area with no law or order. Let's imagine they settle in those tiny settlements along the Biobío river. These places are so isolated even today, so imagine how they must have looked like during the colonial times. These places could have been used by those Jews. Let us suppose that. And this I believe could well have taken place; it is factible. They established themselves there...

Feldmann: -In fact, Francisco Maldonado de Silva does exactly that-

Parentini: Correct. Exactly so. Let us suppose now that they endure, that they last as Jews in that area. But one thing is the survival of Jewish population throughout times outside of the Araucanía, and another is that these Jewish customs might have endured all that time among the Mapuche population inside the Araucanía, as we talked in our last meeting.

In 1870 the Araucanía gets opened, the *fronterizos* penetrate into it. Who are these *fronterizos*? All kinds of people, and as you have seen now, even Jews were involved in the frontera, something I had not perceived before. So there are all kinds of people. It is a bunch of people with no nationality, they are *fronterizos*. And each one of these *fronterizos* has his own culture, which he carries. Now, this cultural backpack they carry penetrates with them since 1860 or 1870 as merchants. And since 1883 (they do so) as stable settlers with territories handed to them by the Chilean state. So they contact Mapuche at that stage, who might have taken that Judaism in whatever form these Jews carried it. But that Judaism was not there (inside the Araucanía) before 1883. But it was not there during the colonial times. That is what I maintain. I cannot believe that from 1598 until 1860, a ritual -whatever ritual- could have lasted among the

Mapuche. I do not believe it. I cannot accept it.

Parentini: "So I am more certain now than in our last meeting: It is perfectly factible hat they have entered in the beginning of the Colonia. Because if they arrived in Concepción, the most logical thing is that if a Jew is persecuted, cornered, being bothered by the Inquisition,(then) it is obvious: I, in that position, would go as a *vecino encomendero* further inside the Araucanía, towards Villarrica, Pucón, etc."

"Then let us suppose that one of these Haciendas that later became villages is Villarrica. Encomenderos began to make Casas Fuertes, fortresses in order to look for gold, the ones Américo Gordon is investigating now. How many of these Casas Fuertes were so near to the areas (of Curacautín, Cunco) that you are investigating. Some Jews may have arrived here and influence with their customs the Indians. It is logical. If they were in Concepción and were being prosecuted, then (they would say) "let us go as far as possible, the more isolated I get, the better; therefore let us go to live in peace". But these ones were completely annihilated in 1598.

So if there is any link between the Iglesia Israelita and the crypto-Jewish presence in Chile from the times of the Spanish colony, it is most improbably a survival of crypto-Jewish descendants inside

the Araucanía. Rather, crypto-Jews may have moved towards the edge of the Araucanía, the cities along the Biobío valley, and towns like Villarrica, Imperial, etc., and from there at the opening of the Araucanía in the 1860's, moved with the fronterizo settlers towards the upper Araucanía. What we could call then "crypto-Jew" is rather an individual who in the best case, has a notion that he does not descend from Christians, that he is of Jewish descent, but lacking any notion of Rabbinic Judaism. The anti-catholicism so strong among the members of the Iglesia, might have been inherited by these crypto-Jewish descendants. Yet disregarding completely a crypto-Jewish link would force us to confront an even tougher question, namely : What does this pseudo-Jewish sect do anyway in the middle of the upper Araucanía in the 1890's?!

Orllie Antoine I, king of the Araucanía

King Orllie Antoine I of the Araucanía, could well be a character drawn out of a novel by Gabriel García Márquez, were it not for the fact that he was an historical personality which had quite an impact on the history of the Araucanía. In fact, García Márquez himself does not think of his novels as "fantasy" but as the only literary way to convey the Latin American reality, which in this case, as he himself would admit it: Is even richer than fantasy.

Orllie Antoine of Tounes, born in Hourgnoe, in the Dordogne, France, arrived in Vallparaiso, Chile in August 1858. He moved to Valdivia in 1860, contacting the Frenchmen Lachaise and Desfontaines, whom he told about his purpose of proclaiming himself the King of the Araucanía, which he did on November 17 of that same year, by means of a decree that named him "King of New France" with the title of Orllie Antoine I. He took possession of the Araucanía by virtue of the fact that the Araucanía was an independent state, for it had not yet been submitted. He named the two Frenchmen as Ministers of State and communicated his advent to the President of Chile. In December 1861, he gathered the Mapuchê chiefs explaining them that he had come to help them in their quest for independence and proclaimed himself king. He was betrayed by his interpreters and made a prisoner. He took his defense in court to himself and was declared insane, and interned in an assylum. He later was extradited

to France, where he wrote books on his kingdom, returning twice to Chile to claim his kingdom, in 1869 and 1974, but he was unsuccessful. The figure of Orllie Antoine I conveys the fact of how wild and unstable the area was at the times of its integration to Chile, at the eve of the Iglesia Israelita's formation.

As the process of occupying the lands of the Mapuche between the Biobío and the Malleco rivers from 1863 onwards, there were numerous clashes between the natives and the Chileans. The Arribano negotiators rejected the proposal of colonel Cornelio Saavedra to sell him their land south of the Malleco river, for the purpose of building a fortress.

The Moluche chiefs knew that to accept the proposal would simply put their communities in deadly danger. As they were already locked in their land by the fact that the passes between the Biobío and the Malleco rivers were being closed they tried to make an alliance with the Abajino natives to combat Chilean expansionism. These Abajinos, who had been their historical rivals welcomed the proposal and sent at least 4.000 warriors by december 11, 1867, to march over the upper and lower frontier.

The Arribano chiefs Quilahueque, Lemunao, Calvucoy and Quilapán received the message that Saavedra was ready for total

war. They, therefore suspended their campaign and made instead smaller, continuous guerrilla attacks in Malleco that served as a prelude for Quilapán's major attack against the fortresses of Quecheregua and Traiguen in April 1868.

The attacks went back and forth through 1869.

It was in this context that the presence of Orllie Antoine I became significant. His presence among the Indians was not merely a picturesque fact, but tells about the attraction that the Araucanía's independence and autonomy had on foreign adventurers who, along with an important contingent of bandits and white refugees, played an important role in the political events of the times.

From 1863 on, Orllie Antoine's reasoning was: "The Chilean government solemnly and publicly recognizes the independence of the Araucanía, makes plans for its conquest; would it consider conquering it were the Araucanía its own land?"

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMATION OF THE IGLESIA ISRAELITA

Written References:

We have developed so far the elements that constitute the historical context in which the "Iglesia Israelita" was born as an institution in the end of the XIX century. So as we move now towards describing its history from the times immediately prior to its formation and into its more or less recorded history in the twentieth century, let us first look at the available written references on it, before we continue unfolding its history.

As mentioned in the Introduction, there are very few written references on the Iglesia Israelita, and the few that exist are merely that: references *on passant*. I do not claim that other materials do not exist, but after a thorough research in libraries from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires, the Centro de Estudios Judaica de la Universidad de Chile in Santiago and others, I have not found more than a dozen references. Libraries such as the one of the Universidad de la Frontera (UFRO) in Temuco, and the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, in Santiago, do not have material on it either. Of these materials, half are one or two paragraphs quite clearly based on the same "*Urtext*". This "*Urtext*" is apparently Louis Brandeis' description of the group based

on his correspondence with it, back in 1919. This correspondence, if it exists, is not to be found in any of the Brandeis' letter collections, be it written or in microfilm, at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. So far, the University in Louisville, Kentucky, does not know of such correspondence either. Maybe somebody knows of this correspondence and could thus advance considerably our knowledge on the Iglesia Israelita.

Although Moshe Nes-EI (Arueste)'s work on the Sephardic community in Chile¹ records a letter written by Mr. Robert Levy from the Sephardic congregation of Temuco to Mrs. Maria de Jara of the Iglesia Israelita in Cunco dated September 2, 1934, the earliest article I could find about the Iglesia Israelita is "Los Primitivos Judíos de Chile" "The Primitive Jews of Chile"² written by Moises Riesenberberg. Only the second part of the three-page article that appeared in "Judaica" Magazine, in spring 1937, refers to the group.

In the same magazine, Judaica N 154, corresponding to April 1946, nearly a decade later, Prof. Guenther Boehm writes a three page article called "La 'Iglesia Israelita' en Chile"³. He describes a personal journey to Cunco visiting the members of the Iglesia Israelita

¹ Moshe Nes-EI (Arueste). "La Historia de la Comunidad Israelita Sefaradi de Chile" Editorial Nascimento, Santiago de Chile, 1984.

² Moises Riesenberberg. "Los Primitivos Judios de Chile" in Judaica N 51 - 53, pp. 224-225, Buenos Aires, Argentina, spring 1937.

³ Guenther Boehm. "La 'Iglesia Israelita' en Chile", in Judaica N 154, pp. 151-153, Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 1946.

there.

Another reference is made by Arthur Bab, in an article that appeared originally in the American Hebrew newspaper called "Marrano Survivors Discovered in Chile"⁴ One of the most valuable of these references is, in my opinion, the one that appears in the work of M. Senderey.⁵ In his thorough and very valuable book, Senderey mentions -again in three pages- the Iglesia Israelita in a subtitle of Chapter Two, under the title: "Semi Judíos de Chile", "Semi Jews of Chile". What I consider so important about his reference to the group is that he does engage in a brief, but nevertheless sound attempt to draw a plausible historical reconstruction on the origins of the Iglesia Israelita. And his is the first reference that differentiates three distinct groups within the "tribe". This distinction has proved to be very helpful as we will see.

Then there are quite important sub-articles in the Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana, and in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. The latter showing two pictures of families (one is the Pulgar family from Cunco and the other one "Marranos at Concepción") that belonged to the group, unfortunately without any more substantial reference.

⁴ Arthur Bab. "Marrano Survivors Discovered in Chile" in American Hebrew vol. 134, pp199, 219. New York, 1939-1947.

⁵ M. Senderey. "Historia de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile" Editorial "Dos Yiddische Wort", Santiago de Chile, 1956.

More recently, Chilean journalist Juan Guillermo Prado, a specialist in religious affairs writing for "Las Ultimas Noticias Newspaper" in Santiago de Chile, has written an article on the group, sensationally titled: "Judíos de la Araucanía sobrevivientes de la Inquisición" "Jews of the Araucanía, survivors of the Inquisition".⁶ This article is, according to Prado himself, largely *caduque* in its contents, since he no longer believes that the group is descendent from Marranos. He also mentions the group in "Sectas Juveniles en Chile"⁷

Another reference is to be found in the book that the town of Curacautín edited for the centennial of the city: "Cien Años entre Volcanes y Araucarias".⁸ It says that the Iglesia Israelita is one of the oldest churches (denominations) of the town, and shows two branches that have split from one another in 1948 of the Iglesia Israelita in Curacautín: the Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto de Curacautín, and the Iglesia Evangélica del Nuevo Pacto. It also attaches the very important date of its foundation: 1895! taken from the local Curacautín newspaper. This reference is interesting since it is the only non-Jewish one, and the only written source we have, in which the Iglesia had, it seems, a say, unlike all the other articles.

⁶ Juan Guillermo Prado. "Judíos de la Araucanía, Sobrevivientes de la Inquisición", La Semana, Suplemento de "Las Ultimas Noticias" Año II, N 93, Santiago de Chile, Sunday, December 17, 1989.

⁷ "Juan Guillermo Prado. "Sectas Juveniles de Chile" Archivo Nacional, Santiago de Chile.

⁸ T. Martinez, H. Soto, N. Rojas, O. Riveros, D. Hidalgo, N. Apablaza, J. Carlos Galdames, J. Hernandez, M. Isabel Poblete, R. Valenzuela. "Cien Años entre Volcanes y Araucarias", Impresora y Editora Austral, Curacautín, Chile, 1982.

Moshe Nes-El (Arueste)'s "Historia de la Comunidad Israelita Sefaradí de Chile" has an excellent prologue by Enrique Testa, a distinguished lawyer and scholar, raised in the Sephardic Congregation of Temuco, in the Araucanía, and currently a lawyer in Santiago. He has been the lawyer who worked out the judicial status for the group in 1974, and has an in depth knowledge of the Iglesia Israelita.

The most recent work I have encountered on the Iglesia Israelita, and by far the most serious and thorough is a ten page draft written by Prof. Daniel Bargman, on the Argentinean branch of the Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto, located in Ezeiza, near Buenos Aires.⁹ His excellent work, which he intends to continue under the auspices of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is not an historical or religious oriented work, but an anthropological and sociological study of the group in terms of ethnic boundaries. We met in Buenos Aires several times over the spring of 1992, where he handed me his yet unedited draft, in order to share information pertaining to our common interests. At the same time we decided to follow separate roads corresponding to the side of the Andes from which each of us was from: He would research the newer branches "on his side of the Andes" in Argentina (from his anthropological viewpoint) and I would

⁹ Daniel Bargman. "Entre el Cristianismo y el Judaismo: La Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto" (personal copy) Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1992.

research the original Iglesia Israelita "on my side of the Andes", in Chile.

Basic Definitions and terminology:

I will quote elements of these articles in chronological order, so that we may see the evolution of the notions on the subject, as well as the evolution of the group itself. Let us take first the very earliest article by Moises Riesenbergs: "Los Primitivos Judíos de Chile" (translated from the Spanish):

"In the extreme south of Chile, in the middle of the dense forests and mountainous fields of the province of Cura-Cautín, spread among the native Mapuche population, a rare tribe exists, that is different from the other Chilean inhabitants. A tribe that keeps its ways and rites, that holds on to its ancient traditions and that does not mix with its surrounding environment. They are the 'Benei Sion' ('Sons of Zion'), or 'sabatistas', as they are called here. They live dispersed by the villages of Cunco, Cautín, Lonquimay and others, as well as in the lost fields amidst the Cordillera. Their number is not very high. They are merely 600 families. The majority are farmers. Some of them make a living out of felling the trees of the surroundings. They count also with artisans, small merchants, teachers, State employees, pharmacy owners, etc. , but all of them are united by the

adherence to one faith, the so called 'Iglesia Hebrea'..."

What first struck my attention was the romance and exotica these lines convey. It almost sounds like a fairy tale or the heading of a good adventure film. I am not saying that this account is far fetched, but simply interpreting its character: A "rare tribe" that does not "mix with its surroundings"... called the "Benei Sion". This is the term by which the Argentinean branch is known until today, as recorded by Daniel Bargman. Riesenberberg, being an Argentinean may have known about the Argentinean branch, and therefore says "'sabatistas' as they are called here" referring to the Chilean side.

The geographic references are embarrassingly wrong. The Araucanía is not in the "extreme" south of Chile, but merely in the south and Riesenberberg mixes up the province of Cautín with the town of CuraCautín, talking about the "province of Cura-cautin" and then the town of "Cautín"...

Another amazing feature of this reference is the reference to "merely 600 families". This number is at the very least three times as large as the number of the members of the Iglesia Israelita nowadays! Further down, Riesenberberg states: "And if nowadays they are not more than 600 families, it can be affirmed that earlier their number was larger..."

The third interesting feature is the term "Iglesia Hebrea" that he records. The term is nowhere else to be found (instead it is called Iglesia Israelita). This may well be a mistake, but it remains unclear, because the group has changed its name many times since its beginnings.

As a whole, this earliest reference records the group as larger and more exotic than the later references constituting almost a romantic narrative. Again, this does not necessarily affect the accuracy of what is stated. Not because later references are more sober, one should apply Darwinism to it, and deem it therefore as less accurate or outdated. It could well be that the group was much larger in the past, and that its name was "Iglesia Hebrea" at that time.

Boehm simply records the name as "Iglesia Israelita" consistently throughout his article. He does not mention any other term, such as "Benei Sion", "sabatistas", or "Iglesia Hebrea" as Riesenberg does. And he focuses and relies on his limited, though direct field experience and not on any "*Urtext*" or romantic oral account. His reference helps us mainly for some of the social and religious characteristics of the group, more that about its defining features or its origins.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, defines the group this way:
"Centuries of oppression and opposition to the settlement by Jews were believed to have wiped out all traces of the original Chilean Jews, but one long-forgotten Marrano community was discovered in the 20th century. In the province of Cautín (of which Temuco is the capital) live the Sabbatarios, descendants of early marranos... Numbering sixty five or seventy families, they inhabit the towns of Cura-Cautín, Lastarria, Cunco and Villarrica in the Chilean *Hinterland*..." Here, the concise language of the Encyclopedia article was based on Arthur Bab's "Marrano Survivors Discovered in Chile."

Once again, the name of the group appears as being a different one here. In this reference it is the "Sabbatarios" (misspelled, in Spanish it would be "sabatarios"). Although written around the time of Boehm's article, this reference of Bab does not record any term such as "Iglesia Israelita" or "Iglesia Hebrea". Interestingly enough, the Encyclopedia goes head on into drawing the "Sabbatarios" Marrano-origin, and expounds very briefly on how it came about in an interesting way, as we will see in the next point, when reviewing what the references have to say on the group's origin. The number of "sixty-five or seventy families" appears clearly in contradiction with Riesenbergs' "merely 600 families", because it is hard to assume that from 1937 to the early 1940's (the time the Encyclopedia was edited) the group could shrink by 90%. I am much more inclined to Bab's

numbers, as they seem very plausible in the light of the later development of the group.

It is puzzling where Riesenbergr draws his figure from.

So these early reports on the group are in general, very limited, deficient, or simply wrong in terms of presenting accurate and correct information. They appear as reports on a group of which they have not been direct witnesses, and quite often stressing romance and a taste for legend. They quote largely from Bab and maybe other related articles.

Senderey, in 1956, gives an analysis of the historical context in which the "Iglesia Israelita" emerges, and calls the group "*semi-judio*" (semi-Jewish). Testa, in his fine prologue to Nes-El (Arueste)'s "La Historia de la Comunidad Israelita Sefaradi e Chile" written in September 1984, records the group as "Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto", which is indeed the name of the main group today. The addition of "*del Nuevo Pacto*" (of the New Covenant) shows the development towards evangelization the group has undergone in recent years, as we will see later.

Reflections on the Iglesia Israelita's origin in the

written references:

If there is one common motif in the scarce bibliography on the Iglesia Israelita, it is that all the written references touch on its probable marrano origin, with varying degrees of certainty. Yet, with the exception of Bargman, it has been the only theory that has been put forth to solve the puzzle of the group's origin.

Riesenberg was certain of the marrano origin. He thought of a crypto-Jewish group that passed its traditions through the generations: "They married only among themselves and thus maintained their purity without diluting in the rest of the population." He thought that it was under the threat that the Jesuits imposed on them that they had joined "openly in a religious community under the name of 'Iglesia Hebrea'".

Moreover, for him the doubt was whether they were "one hundred percent Jewish, concluding that they are probably not, because "it is evident that in their belief there have been accumulated layers coming from Christianity." Yet he maintains: "There is no doubt that they descend from Marranos who arrived in Chile in the XVII century."

It is interesting that he puts the arrival of these marranos in the

17th century instead of the XVI century when the Spaniards first arrived.

The seventeenth century is the one in which, as we have already seen, the most remarkable Inquisitorial cases take place. It is also the century in which, after the third native uprising, a more favorable status quo would have allowed the settlement by crypto-Jews of frontier areas between the Spanish and the Mapuche domain.

Boehm, in his 1946 article on the group raises the question as to the origin of the "Iglesia Israelita", but does not answer the question, limiting himself to the time since its foundation "in the beginning of the (twentieth) century". Yet he contributes some important data about the first part of this century's history.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, based on Arthur Bab's "Marrano Survivors Discovered in Chile", reads assertively: "Centuries of oppression and of opposition to the settlement by Jews were believed to have wiped out all traces of the original Chilean Jews, but one long-forgotten Marrano community was discovered in the 20th cent. In the province of Cautín (of which Temuco is the capital) live the Sabbatarios, descendants of early Marranos who retreated from the coastal cities where the Inquisition was most active..."

Here we find the theory that the crypto-Jews retreated from the

coastal towns, as dealt with in Chapter III. This is the same idea as Bab maintains: "It seems probable that at least a good portion descends from refugees from Valdivia and Concepción during the Colonial period..." And it is here that Bab adds what I regard as the crucial notion: "...hiding during generations in the valleys of what was by then the territory of Angol (today the province of Cautín) that was a frontier region, a kind of '*Niemandsland*' between the Gran Capitanía de Chile and the invincible Araucanian Indians."

This notion of the crypto-Jews inhabiting what Bab rightly calls the "*Niemandsland*" of the valleys of Angol, fits in perfectly with Parentini's certainty that they did not live inside the Araucanía, but inhabited the Biobío valley. Yet Bab, by suggesting the Angol valleys gives a more plausible and accurate solution.

Senderey makes also an important contribution in his effort to reconstruct the past. The notions he puts forward are these:

1. In order to maintain certain Jewish rituals, no matter how diluted, the individuals and families had to count on the household servants to keep the secret. This did not always work, as we see in the tragic case of Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva. For that reason, Senderey argues, "it is conceivable that the marranos would approach non-Catholic sectarians, heretics, just as persecuted natives who had

recently converted and had therefore to keep their ancestral religion in secret, becoming thus the obligated allies of the marranos".

2. This way "it was possible that remnants of marrano Judaism influenced the few Protestants who had from the beginnings of the Colony lived in Chile and who for the reasons mentioned had to approach the families suspected of being of Jewish origin and engaged in Jewish practice.

3. The immigration of marranos "was almost continuous during the Colonial period. Also in later centuries came marrano families, specially from Portugal, some with a major patrimony of Jewish consciousness and ritual practice." He records examples of this, such as the case of a letter that the Jewish magazine "Nosotros" received from a Christian municipal secretary requesting a subscription, that said: "The only right I have to request receiving your magazine is that I know I descend from a Sephardic family that arrived in Chile in 1756..."

4. He stresses the recurrent importance and influence of frontiers in Jewish history. Spain was a frontier between Islam and Christianity, Alsacie was a frontier between Germany and France, Poland was a frontier between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Turkey between Christianity and Islam. "the place where he semi-Jewish tribe of Chile

existed, is also a frontier".

5. The region was outside the domain of Christianity.

Senderey concludes then that: "It was in these regions bordering with the Araucanía, a semi-independent native region, where the descendants of marranos could maintain themselves and conserve the remnants of the Jewish rites they still had left and the memory of their Jewish origin which had survived until the present times."

Enrique Testa also places the origin of the group in crypto-Judaism, and quotes Cecil Roth's stress on the "semi-secret" character of the community. Juan Guillermo Prado does similarly: "Their origin is unknown. They point out that they descend from old Jews who, escaping the Inquisition... maintained here in Chile, clandestinely, their rituals and costumes throughout the centuries until after the national emancipation they chose to manifest their faith publicly."

Finally we have Bargman's analysis. His historical sequence stresses four factors that "do not exclude one another":

1. "Creole ancestry"

2. "Hypothetical contribution or contact with crypto-Jews."
3. "Probable religious substrate from diverse Protestant sects (Adventists, 'sabatarios'), and missionary activity by Christian preachers (possibly North American) of uncertain denomination".
4. "Contact with the modern Jewish immigration during this century, in Chile and in Argentina, as well as with the Zionist ideology and the State of Israel".

I very much agree with Bargman's sequence of factors, and am inclined to think that all of them played a role along the pre-history and the history of the Iglesia Israelita. It is noteworthy that he rules out a direct descendance from crypto-Jews, but rather suggests that the members of the Iglesia, or whatever group may have existed before, "had contact" with marrano-descendants or were only partially constituted by them. Since the group is highly proselytist, I also think that only before the institutionalization of the group in 1896, "may the main body of members have been Marrano descendants. And even then, it is highly probable that other elements partook of the circle.

So taking into consideration these four chronological factors, I

have so far done an extensive historical analysis of points 1 and 2. The last step to be undertaken before we begin the actual description of the group since its institutionalization is reviewing what might that Protestant influence have been.

I asked this question Prof. Parentini in my interview with him:

Feldmann: "What is known about Protestant missionary activity at the end of the XIX century in the Araucanía? Was it a region where there was more missionary activity, say by Adventists, than in other regions?"

Parentini: "No. Catholicism was overwhelming. 99.9%. It was violently Catholic. And this was so until the (period of the) reservations."

Feldmann: "When was that?"

Parentini: "The reservations were created in 1890."

So in terms of organized missions, the only ones that existed almost to the year of the establishment of the Iglesia Israelita in 1896, were the Catholic ones. This undercuts the claim made by Juan Guillermo Prado and others, that the group emerged out of an

outgrowth of Adventism, or, as Boehm maintains, that it emerges out of Sabbatarianism. It may well have been influenced by Adventism later on, in the early twentieth century, but not earlier.

The first Protestant Church in the Araucanía was the Anglican Mission. This mission, as we will see later, sent individual missionaries as early as 1838, but all these efforts failed, often tragically, and only in 1894 was the Mision Araucanía established.

Catholic missionary activity however, has existed throughout the colonial times although without much success.¹⁰ It became very important under the policy of "*patronato*", that joined the church and the state in terms of religious affairs. The Most important ones around the time of the establishment of the Iglesia Israelita are three successive missions: the Spanish Franciscans, the Italian Capuchinos, and the Bavarian Capuchinos. The latter religious order launched its first missionary expedition in 1895 from Hamburg. Its goal was not only the conversion of the Mapuches from the Cautín River to the south until the Chacao Channel, but to counteract the influence of the waves of "*Fronterizos*" who, as in the case of the North American "Wild West" had overrun the Araucanía.

Among the first missionary caravan we find the priest Felix Josef

¹⁰ Albert Nögger: "Cuatrocientos Años de Mision entre los Araucanos" Editorial San Francisco, Padre Las Casas, Chile, 1980.

von Augusta, who devoted himself to the learning of Mapudungun, the Mapuche language. The leading missionary figure during those years and successor of von Augusta was Father Guido Beck von Ramberg. He is especially important because he initiated his work in Padre Las Casas in 1912 and then continued in Cunco. Both are key sites for the Iglesia Israelita to this very day, the latter being the town from which it originated. He worked in Cunco and founded there, in 1925 an organization called the "Union Araucanía" for the welfare and Catholic education of the Mapuches. He was appointed bishop in 1928, in Santiago.

It is difficult then to think of a significant Protestant influence in Cunco during the late XIX century, since the Anglican mission was in Chol Chol (far away from Cunco) and the first Protestant church established in the Araucanía, the "Sociedad Iglesia Evangélica Alemana" in Victoria, was established May 27, 1905, serving the German pioneers there. And more, to think that under the shadow of the missionary activity of people like Beck von Ramberg, Mapuches or "*Fronterizos*" would be exposed to such a Protestant branch that would lead them, by means of spontaneous inquiry to become pseudo-Jewish, is hard to believe.

Yet there were individual efforts of Protestant missionaries during the late XIX century, which were nevertheless scarce and quite

unsuccessful. As I pointed out, before the Mision Araucanía succeeded in 1894, Allen F. Gardiner went by the Araunanian frontier by he end of 1838. He failed completely and "attributed it to the opposition exercised against him by Catholic missionaries that had evangelized those regions for a long time"¹¹ After a period in Australia, he returned to Chile in 1844, failing in his efforts to convert the Pehuenches, whom he never found because he looked for them in a wrong place, and with the Huilliches in Chiloé, then decided to move to Tierra del Fuego where he died in 1851 of hunger amidst the hostility of the Fueguino natives.

Allen W. Gardiner, his son, tries the work again between 1860 and 1870, failing again, and dedicating himself to proselytize among the poor miners of Lota. He left Chile in 1870 reportedly due to health reasons.

"In 1890, W. Gardiner's son William R. Gardiner, wanted to follow his father's and grandfather's footsteps. He made the trip to Chile as a missionary doctor, but died of typhus at arriving in Valparaíso..."¹²

So after three generations had tragically failed during the XIX

¹¹ Rolf Foerster, quoting Ignacio Vergara, "El Protestantismo en Chile", p. 18, Editorial de Pacífico, Santiago de Chile, 1962.

¹² Rolf Foerster, "La Mision Anglicana, primera Iglesia Protestante entre los Mapuches" in NUTRAM Año II, pp. 14 - 28, Santiago de Chile.

century, sufficient funds were raised in 1894, and in April 1896 the work began in Chol-Chol with four missionaries.

Seventh Day Adventism also has been suggested as the originator of the Iglesia Israelita. Their presence in South America became notorious in the 1930's with their work in the Peruvian Amazonia.¹³ In Chile, there were two Seventh-Day Adventists, Fredrick Bishop and Thomas Davis, who first attempted to draw proselytes there, arriving in Valparaíso in December 1894.¹⁴ While Bishop went to Iquique, in the north, Davis managed to sell one hundred books in Victoria. Since they had no success in the province, they went to Santiago. Davis abandoned Chile returning to the United States in 1901, and Bishop stayed in Chile, marrying there Petronila Neumann in 1897. He continued to be a colporteur until 1921, and died in 1929. He was the only Seventh-Day Adventist in Chile by then, and his influence was very limited.

So, on the grounds of chronology alone, it becomes quite clear that the Iglesia Israelita as such, does not originate out of a a mutation of a Protestant sect. Perhaps later on it may have been influenced by it. In more recent years, the influence of Protestantism has in fact been enormous, as we will see.

¹³ Jose Marín. "Las Misiones Indígenas del Protestantismo en América Latina: el caso de la Amazonia Peruana" in Arinsana, N 10, Caracas, 1989.

¹⁴ Robert G. Wearn: "Sowing the Seed in Chile" in Adventist Review, p.818., 1984.

Chronological elements according to Carlos Arevalo:

Carlos Arevalo is the leader of the group of people that went out of the main Iglesia in 1986 order to assert their belief in the Old Testament only, rejecting Jesus altogether. No member of he main Iglesia Israelita could give me any written data on the Iglesia's founders and its history. But Carlos Arevalo did collect all he knew about it and made a one-page diagram, I hereby reproduce:

"PIONEERS OF THE IGLESIA ISRAELITA DEL NUEVO PACTO"

It is known by the data of old brothers, transmitted to others, that since the end of last century the Iglesia Israelita that we know of today in Chile began to be formed without impediments."

According to this data, some oldest brother ministers and preachers are:

Brothers:

Approximate date:

Tricot

End of last Century

Schuster " "
 Federico Segesser (*Argentina / Uruguay*) " made several
 leaflets

Leland "

Conrado Saller (*Shalosh Haregalim only*) "

Martin Avalos " until approx. 1925.
 He came out of the Adventists and gave great impulse to the Iglesia
 Israelita.

Bruno Sandoval	Preached in Cunco in 1908
Jorge Villalobos	1912 Celebrated Cabanas* in Pehuenco
Lorenzo Fuentes	1912 Celebrated Cabanas* in
Pehuenco	

Justo Palma (<i>very old</i>) died	
in Quitratur	1913 in house of sister Nieves Pesuar
Benjamin Arevalo died in	1914 in Pucon
Amelia Matus	From the last Century
Jertrudis Lira died in	1933 near Lican-Ray (<i>very old</i>) "

* Succot, Tabernacles.

Italics are Arevalo's oral comments to the document.

It is interesting to that Arevalo talks here about the end of last century, that then the Iglesia Israelita could be formed without impediments". Two things are suggested by this: 1. That its idea may precede the date of its foundation; and 2. That somehow the Catholic Church may have managed to suppress it.

CHAPTER V

THE IGLESIA ISRAELITA

The Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto is then a pseudo Christian, pseudo Jewish church. The official current name is "Congregación Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto". The most important Jewish features of the group are:

1. Observance of the Sabbath
2. Observance of Dietary Laws
3. Observance of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles
4. Observance of the *Rosh Hashanah* and the Day of Atonement.

All these observances are clearly *Mideoraita*¹ and no trace of Rabbinic laws or regulations are known to the group. Like most Cryptojews, the ones that may have had a part in the origin of the group had clearly lost almost all connection with Rabbinic Judaism. Most current elements of Rabbinic Judaism, such as the Hebrew dates for the Holidays come from contemporary Jewish calendars and materials.

1. The Observance of the Sabbath is, although only Biblical and not Rabbinical, very strict. Work and money are strictly interdict as well as cooking and smoking. There is no notion of the prohibition on writing

¹ Laws stated in the Pentateuch as opposed to the ones stated by the rabbis.

for example. It starts with the notion of "*Recibir el Sabado*" "to receive the Sabbath" a terminology that is quite Rabbinically Jewish.² Three statutory services are held during the Sabbath, corresponding to *Ma'ariv*, *Shacharit* and *Mincha*³ (footnote: the three statutory times of prayer).

2. The Observance of Kashrut (footnote) is Biblical too. They do not eat meat of animals that is "*inmunda*"⁴, like pork, horse, etc. and do drain out the blood at slaughtering, which is often done by the families themselves, when in rural areas.

3. The three Biblical Pilgrimage festivals are called by them "*Fiestas Solemnes*". Passover, or "*Pascua*", is celebrated by them according to the Bible, in a rather peculiar syncretism with Jesus' Last Supper: They do wash each other's feet at one point during the ceremonial "*Cena Pascual*" "Pascual Dinner", a form of Passover Seder, as Jesus did to his apostles. They make their own unleavened bread, which cannot be made by somebody who does not belong to the Iglesia, and are very strict in their avoidance of bread and leavened products. Once again, there is no notion of "*Chametz*" as understood by Jewish Law, as including legumes, and other ferments.

Pentecost, or "*Fiesta de las Semanas*" is celebrated, and special significance given to the "Pacto", "the Covenant" or better

² *Recibir el Sabado*, literally - "Welcoming the Sabbath" : *Kabbalat Shabbat*.

³ The three statutory times for daily prayer in Judaism: Morning Afternoon and Evening.

⁴ *Inmunda*: Dirty, Teref.

"*Nuevo Pacto*", "the New Covenant". It is celebrated during one day, always beginning on the eve of the day.

Tabernacles, or "*Cabanas*" has become such an important holiday for the Iglesia that the group was known in the past as "*Cabanistas*", "Boothers" and even today there are people who call them that way. The whole congregation gathers in an open area, like a soccer field for example, and build the booths together. They do not have the notion of the Succah as being intrinsically fragile and modest in its intention, but rather think that the more equipped the tent is, the better. So the whole family lives in it during the entire days of the festival. Beds, kitchens, refrigerators, generators for electric light, etc. cause the site to resemble a Gypsy encampment. There is a central tent that functions as the place for assembly and payer. In the past, members of the Iglesia would gather in one of the little towns of the province to celebrate it together, and would therefore make real pilgrimages for as long as two weeks, on donkeys over the snow-covered slopes of the Andes.

Once, at a new branch of the Iglesia in Pudahuel, there was a usual building of the communal Succot celebration, back in 1973, right after the Coup d'etat, when the military dictatorship had taken over. One night, the group's lawyer Enrique Testa got a call by a military officer, asking him to witness that the celebration was not an assault by leftist workers on private property, nor an illegal camp for

the resistance... It was hard for the officer to believe that these people in Gypsy-like tents were actually engaging in a religious ceremony, while the country was in complete upheaval.

I participated in one of these Succot celebrations in Padre las Casas, in 1992, that had been set up by Arévalo's group.

4. Rosh Hashanah, "*Trompetas*" ("trumpets" i.e. *Shofarot*), and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, called "*Expiacion*" (Atonement), are also celebrated by the group, during the same days as the Jewish people do. Fasting and prayer are the main features of "*Expiacion*".

The Christian component of the Iglesia Israelita is the belief in Jesus, be it as Messiah, or prophet, as mediator or even lawyer. It is hard to say when the belief in Jesus entered the creed of the Iglesia, and that, in the case that it was not there in former times, which does not seem the case. In a first impression, it appears as if there has been an evolution towards more Christianization or better "Evangelization" specially during the period of the military dictatorship 1973-1990, that caused the countermovement of more Judaizing elements of the last decade. But it is rather the opposite: gradual revisionism of the group's belief in Jesus elicited a Christianizing "counterreform".

Upon entering the Iglesia there is no Christian image whatsoever. There is no crucifix, nor are any other images. like in the

Catholic Church. There is no belief in the Virgin Mary nor in the Saints. In fact, the group is very strict in its avoidance of icons, following the Biblical interdiction zealously. The only images that are to be seen are the Star of David and the Menorah, both inside and outside the temple. New members are baptized in the classical Christian way, in rivers. Yet, one could argue that this could be a Jewish feature as well, namely *Tevilah*⁵

Current Doctrinal Guidelines:

After 1986, when the revisionist, more Jewish-inclined camp walked out of the Iglesia not without much pain, bitterness and accusations specially by the main group, the Iglesia made an official "Internal Ruling" that serves as the group's "*Carta Magna*" for all matters and purposes. With the date of November 22, 1989 in San Carlos, the hereby presented document is the Iglesia's current doctrinal constitution.

On new members, the Iglesia recognizes "as members in Full Communion, and takes responsibility for all those persons who, having been in the Congregation for a period no less than one year, fulfill the following basic requirements:

A) Be baptized

⁵ *Tevilah*: Ritual Immersion in water

B) Accept all the doctrinal statements recognized by the Iglesia, according to the Holy Scriptures.

C) Accept and recognize the authorities of the Institution, both spiritual and administrative, in the national and local context."

This same article ten demands that people dress "in a distinguished, honorable and modest way", and "makes clear that beards are allowed exclusively due to reasons of spiritual kind."

Non-baptized participating spouses or children of members are considered "believing members", with right to voice but not to vote. People that are not blood related to members, and that attend with "respect and regularity" are considered "believers". They can voice their opinions and take on some role with authorization of a spiritual director. All those who attend irregularly are considered "sympathizers", and have no voice in any decisions of the Institution.

Chapter four deals with matters of doctrine and is as important as it is ambiguous:

The Iglesia recognizes:

- A) "the Bible as the absolute source of instruction and truth"
- B) God the Father, as the supreme power in the universe [John 10-29]
- C) accepts "the praising of the Father as one only God, and the Lord

Jesus as His essence."

D) accepts " the Lord Jesus as our mediator and lawyer"

E) accepts "that the Lord Jesus guides His church by means of the Holy Spirit".

The ambiguity between the attempt to state the oneness of God, to downplay some of the role of Jesus, not as son, but as "essence" (nowhere is the word "son" or "Christ" mentioned), and at the same time talk about the Holy Ghost is typical of the Iglesia. It shows that the belief in Jesus is not well settled yet and confirms the revisionists' version that it was not there (partially or totally) in former times. In point O it says that the Iglesia "accepts and lives by the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus in his Second Coming, to reign in the Earth for a thousand years."

The article "accepts the imposition of the hands, as an act of faith to reach healing" quoting Exodus 15:26, and "accepts the restoration and conversion of Israel, as part of the doctrine of God" [Romans 11:25-26]

The mobility of the doctrinal base is expressed in the last two points of the article: " Any other knowledge emanated from the Holy Scriptures, that is not contained in the doctrine of the Iglesia Israelita can be presented in writing, duly documented, and put forward to the

Investigation and Doctrinal Evaluation Department, for its study and qualification... for its final resolution. Only after this circuit, if it is accepted, will it be a part of the doctrine of the Institution, and could be taught by the Congregation."

On one Hymnal, the prologue says: "Every religious organization offers chants to its God or gods. Likewise the Congregación Israelita adores with chants Its one God. Therefore chants have been compiled from many different hymnals; many have been corrected and transformed according to the Israelite faith and doctrine..." Again, the old pride of the Iglesia Israelita to be worshiping one God vis a vis Catholicism comes through, and is contradicted by the hymns themselves. Although from the 148 hymns and psalms of the book the first ones do reflect the belief in one God with no additions, from psalm 50 "The Lord God sent the Messiah" onwards there is worship of Jesus as the son of God. Only the words "Jesus", "Messiah" and "son" are used. There never is a mention of the word "Christ." No mention is made of the Holy Spirit. And all in all, from the 148 hymns only seven mention Jesus by name. Some hymns talk generically about the messiah or the son of God. So there is a quite an ambivalence. It seems quite understandable that while the Jesus worship was growing and becoming more and more ambiguous, some members felt restless and came to the conclusion that abandoning the belief in Jesus altogether was the thing to do.

Two later hymnals, one in Chile and one from Cippoletti, Argentina, do adopt a clear Christian stand, and mention Christ all along. And so the ambiguity grows. The Iglesia in Curacautín for example, split over the issue of the mention of Christ, where the supporters of Christ formed the Iglesia Israelita Evangelica del Nuevo Pacto.

It is clear that as time goes by and isolation diminishes, the group has lost the sense of itself and the notions that made it in the first place, namely the belief in one God, based in their "Judaism" as understood from the Old Testament. The most critical and potent influence has been the mushrooming of Evangelical churches in the country, specially during the dictatorship. To analyze the political reasons behind it goes beyond the orb of this work, yet it can be said that given the Junta's tension with the Catholic Church over Human Rights, Evangelic sects were welcomed and encouraged by the dictatorship, last but not least because they promoted a clean-cut, sober and "apolitical" image, that was exactly what the regime wanted. So from 1973 onwards the whole area has seen the tremendous success of all kinds of Protestant churches whose popularity and influence strongly exceeds now the ones of the Catholic church, which has failed to attract the popular strata of the population. Abstention from alcohol by these sects may appear as a

secondary feature, yet it has had a tremendous impact in the Araucanía, where alcoholism has been a major problem. Wives encourage their husbands to join these churches expecting them to drop the consume of alcohol, and farmers prefer Evangelic workers because they know they do not drink.

And so the influence of these churches has been strong towards the Iglesia Israelita, which -one could rightly say- is, to a certain extent, becoming just one more Evangelic denomination, that happens to promote Old Testament festivals and dietary observance.

Yet the Jewish undercurrent is stronger than one could imagine, and the countercurrent let itself be heard as we will see.

The "Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico":

Carlos Arévalo is a man of in his late fifties who was born inside the Iglesia Israelita. His father, an "old guard" member of the Iglesia, was according to him, among the ones who very early on doubted on the "issue of Christ". He is the leader and founder of this new branch. Already before 1986, they discovered "to be steeped in idolatry". The break occurred not by external influence but by inquiry and doubt. Arévalo explains that he was by then the secretary of the national

board of the Iglesia, and as such sent letters to all the congregations asking whether the Christ that the Catholic Church had was the same the Iglesia was adoring. The answer was that it was the same, but that the Iglesia did not have him as an image. He tells that he thought to himself: "Having him in the hearts is even worse than having him hanging in the church"... The controversies were such that the outgrowth was expelled from the main group, while the latter agreed in a 1989 congress to worship Christ. The expulsion was brought about by court order.

He defines the branch as "little groups that have the disposition of not closing themselves up...". They are learning, specially from Jewish books that they get from the Jewish Congregation in Temuco and Santiago, and evolving. He explains that "there is one thing nevertheless that we will not change, and it refers to idolatry: adoring more than one God. That we have definitely overcome." They have left behind the New Testament to adopt exclusively the Hebrew Bible "otherwise it would have meant two religions" and a clear belief in one God. "Only now are we getting genuine information" he says, "and we are adapting to it".

They bear the belief that Jerusalem was "the world's center and will become again the world's center... and the kings will be reestablished as in the earlier days". They believe that all nations

received the revelation "but the ones who were nearest were the Israelites". Perhaps the most important question of the ones I asked him during my interview with him in June 1993 was: what prevented him from becoming a Jew? Why then not to convert to Judaism? He says; "I would like to serve God as the Israelites served him in the desert, when they went out of Egypt. Israel nowadays does not seem to have the same fervor." I asked him further: "You are not a Christian, and you are not a Jew, how would you then define yourself?" He answered: "I try to serve God as any mortal human being in the universe. I think about Noah, who was not an Israelite. So I think that not being of Israelite blood, God likes one to serve Him anyway, isn't it? Maybe I am a Jew. What would I lack?" "How about circumcision" -I asked him- "That's true. We give more importance to what God commands than to the customs of the people. (footnote: He is obviously wrong here) For example: Every nation has its own folklore. We believe that with any folklore one can serve God... So we are foreigners among the people of Israel, just like the Bible says. If we serve the one God and Israel serves the one God, then what difference is there?... Israel is going to indoctrinate the whole world, as the prophecy says."

Arévalo declines saying how many members the Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico has. He expects the members of the Iglesia Israelita to "do the next step forward", drop the belief in Jesus and

embrace the one God. On Israel and Zionism, Arévalo has a peculiar and quite pragmatic approach: "If all the gentiles who accept the doctrine of a single God would wish to emigrate to Israel, would there be place for all of them in Israel?..." He also underlines the fact that the Mapuche believed in one God. Proselytizing is not yet assumed by the group because it is still building up its ideology and unity. Yet from the Jewish perspective, the group has had the role of a springboard for the third conglomerate of people that our study will deal with, namely the "*Judíos del Sur*", the small group of people that came out of Arévalo's congregation in order to convert to Judaism.

Zionism in the Iglesia Israelita:

Zionism has been a crucial element in the Iglesia Israelita amazingly early. Already in 1919, the group sent delegates Jara and Martinez to sign as official members at the founding of the Chilean Zionist Federation. This is quite extraordinary if one thinks of the remoteness of the region in terms of communications by then. The group had been an adherent to the Zionist Federation in Argentina even before it co-founded the one in Chile, and sent a letter to a Zionist conference in Rio Gallegos Argentina, asking for contact with "true Jews", as Arthur Bab records it. Probably the contact was established via the Argentinean branches of the Iglesia. Yet the

prophecy -oriented character of the Iglesia saw a return to Zion in highly religious terms and not in popular or political terms. Last but not least, Zionism may have made roots in the movement due to the very fact that the Jews they happen to contact were Zionists, and therefore it was "the Jewish thing to do".

Enrique Testa writes: "Besides their religious devotion, the members of the 'Iglesia' are profoundly Zionists. Many of them have already gone to live in Israel, but all, in general vehemently aspire to be able to return to the Holy Land and profess in a purified fashion the Jewish faith they so zealously and overcoming so dramatic doubts have conserved throughout history."⁶

Luis Carvajal, a "Judío del Sur" proselyte from the town of Curacautín, told me the following anecdote of Rosamel Zúniga, an "old guard" member of the Iglesia and former national president of it. In 1948, when the Jewish State, the State of Israel, was born, there was a tremendous fervor among the members of the Iglesia that was messianic and Zionist in character. Zúniga, by then a young boy, was so distressed that he would not be taken to Israel *pn Aliyah*⁷ that he cried and cried until he climbed the tower of the church intending suicide. Miraculously somebody from his family passed by and

⁶ Enrique Testa. Prologue to Moshe Nes-EI's "Historia de la Comunidad Israelita Sefaradi de Chile" Editorial Nascimento, Santiago de Chile, 1984.

⁷ Aliyah: Settling, literally "going up" into the Land of Israel.

prevented the young boy from doing so. Arévalo recounts also: "When the war broke out in 1967, every where people were praying and volunteering to go to Israel...it was something beautiful!"

In fact many members of the Iglesia made *Aliyah*, converting to Judaism in Israel and some of them became notorious. Enoch Munoz, for example, did *Aliyah* in the late fifties, changing his name to Hanoch Maoz. He was a boxer in Chile and made a good career in the Israeli Army. Every now and then he comes to Chile, flies on a private Chilean military Jet to Temuco, where he proceeds to take a Taxi to Curacautín, his hometown, full of medals as the high-ranking Israeli colonel. He lives now in Moshav Yad Hashmona, in Israel. Arévalo remembers once, during Maoz's visit to Chile that people told him "we all want to go to Israel" whereupon he replied that in Israel everybody has to fight. When the people asked him whether that could be avoided, Maoz reportedly replied "*A esos se los considera zanganos alla*" "those are considered insects there"...

Many members of the Segura family made *Aliyah* as well, changing their name to Segulah. One of them also became a high-ranking military man in Israel. Much of the Argentinean branch of the Iglesia that exists in Ezeiza, outside Buenos Aires, originated from Chilean members of the Iglesia who, for one reason or another, could not emigrate to Israel once they had arrived in the Argentinean

capital. Another Segura made *Aliyah* just recently. To write extensively on the phenomenon of *Aliyah* among the members of the Iglesia exceeds the scope of this study, and may in fact constitute an interesting work in its own right.

Self-definition and myth, a surviving testimony:

I have held numerous personal interviews with different key people in the course of my study. They have helped me to reunite broken pieces of a whole that I am hoping to reconstruct. Many of those pieces do not fit with one another, many, too many, are still missing. Yet from all the people I interviewed, the person that made upon me the greatest impression, while at the same time being the most articulate in the subject -though himself contradictory- was Don Emisael Palma, peace be upon him. He has been a national president of the Iglesia Israelita, a leader of uncommon stature and an amazing autodidact, a man with an aura and dignity that make a lasting impression on all who meet him. I interviewed this man of almost ninety years of age on June 6th, 1993, in Curacautín. He was strong and perfectly lucid. Two months later he died. In fact this interview is the last testimony of Don Emisael Palma:

Feldmann: I am interested in the origin of the Iglesia, how does it originate, when, where and why?

Don Emisel: Well, (the thing is) how did the *Evangelio* (footnote) arrive in Chile, that is surrounded by fog in history. Because, in its time, you know, the persecutions that took place, the Inquisition, all that made a fog around the Iglesia and the Evangelio was passed *al oido*. Who were the first ones that arrived? they say it was Schuster and Tricot by 1840 or around that time. But nothing is written, its only a matter of tradition. My mother comes from the past century in the Iglesia.

Feldmann: When was the Iglesia founded?

Don Emisael: No, the Iglesia has only one founder and it is Christ. The rest are continuing figures of groups. It is not that a church is founded, our Iglesia does not invoke founders...

One can already appreciate in Don Emisael Palma's responses that there are contradictory indications. On one hand he points out to a time of persecutions and Inquisition that is foggy, and on the other he points out these foreign missionaries, Schuster and Tricot situating them in a time when the Araucanía was still not incorporated to Chile. It appears as if there are two parallel, superimposed notions of the Iglesia's origins. To make things more confusing, he abruptly comes up with the dogma of the "one and true church".

Don Emisael Palma: For me, for us, the Catholic Church is the one diametrically opposed to the Church of Christ. The Catholic Church has more or less one hundred and forty contradictions with what the Bible, the Evangelio commands... And to all the most despicable and cursed it called holy, because the Inquisition...there was never, there is not, and there will never be a more damned tribunal than the Inquisition!

Feldmann: Are you saying that the Iglesia existed during the time of the Inquisition?

Don Emisael Palma: Precisely on it the Inquisition unleashed its wrath. It was on the Iglesia Israelita that the Inquisition preyed upon.

Feldmann: Why?

Don Emisael Palma: I am not a learned man, I am an autodidact...

It is interesting to note the passionate hatred Palma carries as he speaks of the Inquisition. Does it come from within the Iglesia, his parents?

Feldmann: Is there a relationship between the Iglesia Israelita and Judaism?

Don Emisael Palma: Yes, very much so. The Sabbath, the *solemnidades* (festivals) of God, directed o God; keeping Pessach, Shavuot, Succot, and not eating *inmundicias* like pork, dog, cat, etc.

Feldmann: Did the Iglesia Israelita have Jewish members in the past?

Don Emisael Palma: Yes there were groups of Jews.

Feldmann: Where there any Jews in this region, in the Araucanía?

Don Emisael: Jews, yes, there were. I do not remember because I was a child when there were Jews in the Iglesia. But they left, the wars, God knows...

Feldmann: The Iglesia seems to have been formed at the end of last century as an institution, wasn't it?

Don Emisael: Look, for me the logic indicates... for example, the last big Auto de Fe that the Iglesia Israelita suffered, executed by the

Catholic Church in Lima, was in 1639, when more than sixty people were burned; that you must know, you must have read about it. By then there were no Methodists, nor Baptists nor Pentecostals, there were only Anglicans.

Feldmann: But the ones who were burned there were Jews...

Don Emisael: Jews and converted gentiles.

Feldmann: Why does it emerge in the Araucanía?

Don Emisael: Look, when Columbus came to America, Jews came too. They brought with them some of their Talmud. The first *fundicion*⁸ in Chile was Jewish, the first bakery in Chile was Jewish...

Feldmann: Well, the first surgeon in Chile was Jewish, namely Francisco Maldonado de Silva...

Don Emisael: Yes, he was among the first ones. The Jews brought about seventy percent of the let us say "advanced" culture, that there was back then.

Feldmann: Could it be that these Jewish conversos that (may

⁸ metal workshop

have) existed in this area, somehow had certain rituals out of which the Iglesia Israelita came about?

Don Emisael: Precisely. There were immigrants. Perez Rosales⁹ brought Germans to the south, Frenchmen came to Lautaro and Traiguen, etc. Among them I met a certain Mr. Reyes, French immigrant, who was not a Catholic... So in these migrations, many took the opportunity to come.

Feldmann: Among the Conquistadors there were Jews too?

Don Emisael: Yes, there were, but very *soterrados* (underground) as they say.

Feldmann: Could you explain me a little bit whether Conversos that existed here could have...

Don Emisael: Of course, that is what the *antiguos* (old ones) I heard. This I have in my memory from the *antiguos*.

Feldmann: What could you tell me about that?

Don Emisael: They have not written anything, only by means of

⁹ Vicente Perez Rosales: Former President of Chile, who in the middle of the 19th Century enabled German pioneers to settle in the wild rainforests around Puerto Montt.

tradition. For example there was a *hermana* ("sister") , I do not remember her name, she was an old lady, whose grandfather regularly -she said- went to a little grove, among the bushes, made a little tent and went to live there for a couple of days. She was a little girl, she did not know why. But of course it was a tabernacle he made. He was Irish according to her. And they did not eat pork. And he had a little cow's horn, and when a child became sick, he poured some oil on their heads and blessed them. Well, these are customs that are not Catholic...(he laughs) These are traditions I have heard.

This testimony is very important in my opinion, because if it is true, it clearly stands for a pseudo-Jewish or Cryptojewish presence in the Araucanía. The "Irish" ancestry of the man is puzzling, if not doubtful.

Feldmann: Now, if the Iglesia Israelita come from this culture of converso Jews that might have been there...

Don Emisael: -Yes of course!-

Feldmann:....so how is it possible today to affirm a continuity with Christ?

Don Emisael: Well this is a very great mystery...

Feldmann: Is there anybody who could be considered a founder of the Iglesia Israelita at the end of last century?

Don Emisael: As founders not, but as followers. They are all dead now: Miguel Jara ,() Jose Pulgar (), Villalobos, and so several others...

Feldmann: How may I found out about them?

Don Emisael: There is almost nowhere left (to find information). I do not mean as we say in Chile "*cachiporreo*" (bragging), but I am among the old ones left. Ana Garces, a sister that was older than me died, and so did many that came from the other century. The *Evangelio* was received so from ear to ear, and began to be practiced little by little, little by little, until it became.

Twice during the interview Palma referred to the passing of the teaching of the Iglesia, the "*Evangelio*" , "*de oído a oído*" , ("from ear to ear"), secretly. This is interesting because it fits the pattern of Crypto-Judaism.

Feldmann: There is a question I think I asked you a moment ago, whose answer I am not sure I understood well: Why does the

Iglesia emerge here in the Araucanía?

Don Emisael: Due to the persecutions, of course. This was a refuge.

Feldmann: What made out of the Araucanía a good refuge for that people?

Don Emisael: Because here there was no religion nor persecution, but the persecution and the religion were brought by the Spanish.

Feldmann: Are you a Christian?

Don Emisael: Yes, the Iglesia Israelita is Christian.

Feldmann: Couldn't there be said that you are somehow Jewish?

Don Emisael: No we are of Jewish ideals. Christians of Jewish ideals, but not of Jewish blood.

Feldmann: Do you believe in the Trinity?

Don Emisael: No. That is a falsehood.

Feldmann: Do you believe in one God then?

Don Emisael: One.

Feldmann: And that God is Christ?

Don Emisael: No. Father and Son are one. Jesus said: "Me and the Father are one thing. The one who has seen me, in me he has seen the Father."

Feldmann: Between Jews and Christians is there any assigned value you place, say more or less...

Don Emisael: Well, the Catholics we dismiss completely, we do not want anything to do with Catholicism, because it has about hundred and forty contradictions with the Jewish doctrine, and our doctrine as well.

Here again appears the despise for the Catholic Church. Is it a standard feature of the Iglesia as a "Protestant" Christian Church, or are its origins in the past?

Feldmann: And the Jew you dismiss also?

Don Emisael: No. On the contrary, we have so much in common. The only difference is Christ.

Feldmann: How do you feel vis a vis Zionism, and the State of Israel?

Don Emisael: Well, the Iglesia is Zionist by nature. It was called "*sionista*" earlier, but we did not have an authorized name. Before that, people would call the Iglesia "Cabanista", others "Sabatista", others "Sionista", etc.

Feldmann: What is the importance the Iglesia places on the Hebrew language?

Don Emisael: Well, I wish we all would know Hebrew. There was an attempt to teach it but it failed.

Feldmann: What does it take to become a pastor in the Iglesia?

Don Emisael: In order to become a priest you have to be more than twenty five years old, and possess biblical culture, to master the bible.

The interview with Don Emisael Palma was as contradictory as interesting because it hints at a double origin of the Iglesia: The Cryptojewish and the missionary. What of it is historical, and what constitutes a mythical re-writing of their origin is something hard to judge. In any case, it is an historic tape, because he was by far the oldest member of the Iglesia, and the fact that this document precedes his unfortunate passing away by two months. This makes it a very valuable testimony.

CHAPTER VI

"JUDIOS DEL SUR"

The "Judíos del Sur" are the third group of the constellation that used to be the Iglesia Israelita. They are the families that have sought conversion to Judaism and are currently in the process of having their wish fulfilled.

It was a process of doubt and inquiry amidst the Iglesia Israelita, as well as the at the "Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico" what brought them to Judaism. In other words, their seeking to become Jews stems from theological conviction exclusively.

The story of the path they underwent in seeking conversion is quite eloquent and simple: Members of the Díaz family¹ came to Santiago looking for a Synagogue. They looked in the phonebook and could not find any congregation listed under "Synagogue", so they looked under "Comunidad" (community) and discovered the "Comunidad Israelita de Santiago" (former Círculo Israelita). All other congregations have rather unusual institutionalized names. So it was that they came to Rabbi Weingortin, who was, from the very beginning, helpful and outreaching to them, despite his backbreaking schedule as a congregational rabbi. A correspondence developed

¹ Leading family of the group in Temuco.

between the Judíos del Sur and Rabbi Weingortin.

This is the correspondence that initiated me into the whole subject. As I explained above, Rabbi Weingortin needed someone to assist the group personally, someone who would be able and willing to travel to Temuco, Curacautín and elsewhere on a regular basis in order to teach them. Rabbi Weingortin wrote them a letter appointing me to the role, which I assumed in June 1992, immediately upon arrival from the Rabbinical Seminary in the U.S.A.

This group's pre-history so to speak begins around 1988. Theological doubts began to emerge spontaneously among individuals like Samuel Godoy, from Curacautín. In the first period, his ideas were found interesting by people in many congregations and he was invited to Chol Chol, Toltén and Nacimiento among other places to preach his ideas. Then sermons became more and more provocative and turned into ideological attacks between the Iglesia's ministers and the Judaizing dissidents like him. The situation grew so uncomfortable and scandalous that Godoy and others finally left the Iglesia, even though there were those who asked him to remain and change the Iglesia's view from the inside. But it was too late.

Others, like Luis Carvajal from Curacautín, spent long a time thinking privately about the same issues, sharing their dissent only

with their closest friends. In his own words: "There are too many curses for the one who renegades from Jesus Christ as the savior..."²

The process of dissenting from the Iglesia that we already have seen with the movement of The Congregación Israelita del Diós Unico was slightly different in the case of Judíos del Sur. In the first group, the dissent came from families that had been old-timers in the Iglesia, and prominent individuals that already had leadership positions. Carlos Arévalo, whose mother was a member of the Iglesia since very early times, is married to a daughter of Emisael Palma, the great patriarch of the Iglesia in Curacautín. These people of the Congregación Israelita del Diós Unico would have liked the Iglesia to follow to their interpretation and change its Trinitarian or pseudo-Trinitarian position, towards their non-Christian "instigators" monotheism. The Judíos del Sur, on the other hand, whether having had affiliation with the Congregación Israelita del Diós Unico or not, were individuals who were to a large extent sojourners in the Iglesia. Only the Díaz and the Regollo families in Temuco had been in the Iglesia for two generations. Most often these were families or individuals who entered the Iglesia in the seventies out of dissatisfaction with Catholicism and a love for Israel, and who after a dozen years or so at the Iglesia were propelled further towards Judaism.

² Interview on Luis Carvajal, June 1993.

Curacautín:

The group of proselytes from Curacautín numbered seven families who revolved around Jaime Cohen, a Jew who lived there (the eighth family), and who taught the others and prayed with them every Sabbath. The families were: Vega - Seguel, Sandoval - Sepúlveda, Sanhueza - Sandoval, Cid - Olate, Godoy - Sánchez, Contreras - Zúñiga, Carvajal - Vásquez, besides the Cohen - Osses family.

They contacted Rabbi Weingortin on the Sabbath, August 17, 1991, for the first time, and in a letter from September 4 of that same year, presented themselves as members of the "Comunidad de estudios del Judaísmo de Curacautín", a "Community for the Study of Judaism of Curacautín".

The group gathered in the house of Luis and Flor Carvajal, where a large wooden room served as the prayer room of the community. The whole group consisted of 32 souls. Nowadays there are only three families remaining in Curacautín: Waldo and Elena Vega, Samuel Godoy and his sons and daughters; (his wife does not espouse his beliefs) and Luis and Flor Carvajal and their children.

Jaime Cohen moved to Temuco, leaving the group was left without a teacher. Juan Sandoval could never really abandon flirting with the Iglesia, apparently due to the fact that he had a leadership position there he never really wanted to drop. He moved to Temuco as well.

This study group has sent several "*Sheilot*" ³ to Rabbi Weingortin such as on the issue of the *Succah*,⁴ on the denomination of Judaism Rabbi Weingortin belongs to, on Circumcision, etc. I visited this group and stayed with it on two occasions, in June 1992 and June 1993. To tell my extraordinary experiences goes beyond the purpose of this work, but I may say that I was surprised at the level of their Jewish knowledge, and their enthusiasm. The children knew many songs in Hebrew already, and they had already learned most of the liturgy for Shabbat from a tape sent by Rabbi Weingortin. Luis Carvajal, who by chance bears the same name as the famous Mexican Marrano martyr Luis de Carvajal, and Samuel Godoy are the inseparable friends and pioneers of Judaism in the town. They told me the story of Moisés Menahem Cohen, the first (and real) Jew of Curacautín.

Moisés Menahem Cohen Testa, the father of Jaime Cohen, settled together with his son's family in Curacautín in 1984, from Temuco. He came originally from Monastir (Bitolj) Macedonia, like

³ Questions regarding *Halachah*, Jewish Law, that are addressed to a rabbinical authority.

⁴ Tabernacle.

most of the Jews that immigrated to Temuco around World War I, and founded the Sephardic congregation of that town in 1916.⁵ He was a true figure in the town of Curacautín, and could well have been a character in a Garcia Marquez novel. Since he was totally deaf, in his senility he would attend the local Iglesia Israelita in Curacautín regularly, which he took for a synagogue since it only displays a Menorah and a star of David. There he would pray from his old prayerbook, oblivious to the people who looked at him with a mixture of pity and admiration. He used to write hundreds of little notes that dealt with Judaism, a kind of educational Jewish pamphlets, which he gave out generously to the people at the Iglesia and in the streets. He had a definite influence in the unfolding of the events of the late eighties, and the breaking away of the eight families that would later form the "grupo de estudios del Judaísmo de Curacautín", although the precise degree is hard to establish. His son Jaime, a merchant too, followed the steps of his father and assumed a role in leading the "grupo de estudios." He gave me one of the "pamphlets" that his father wrote in October 1984, which with a shaky print explains the yearly cycle of Jewish holidays starting with Rosh Hashanah.

The three remaining families of this group in Curacautín are currently pursuing conversion under the tutelage of Rabbi Eduardo Weingortin. since I could no longer visit them due to my Rabbinic

⁵ Moshe Nes-EI (Arueste). "Historia de la Comunidad Israelita Sefaradi de Chile" Editorial Nascimento, Santiago de Chile, 1984.

studies in the U.S.A. an extraordinary lady from the congregation in Temuco, Dona Benadoff, offered them help and tutorials. She proved to be not only an excellent teacher, but a woman full of compassion, patience, love and respect for them, as well as a good leader.

Temuco:

Temuco hosts the bulk of the "Judíos del Sur" group. There were twelve people before the Cohen - Osses family from Temuco joined them: The Díaz family: Don Nelson, Dona Jovita, Dona Rosario (Don Nelson's mother), Cecilia, Sara and Débora; The Regollo family: Don Leocadio and his son Miguel Angel; The Soto family: Don Adán, Dona Graciela, Job and Esdras; and the Cohen family: Don Jaime, Dona Luisa and Victoria.

Unlike Curacautín, where attendance to the study group never included the thirty two members, Temuco, with theoretically less Jews, is a much stronger group all of whose members gather on the Sabbaths. They pray, study and have the three traditional meals of the Sabbath together at the Díaz family, whose generosity is simply hard to emphasize enough. The strength of the Temuco group is due among other things to the less peripheral location it has, when compared to Curacautín and Chol Chol. I made around ten visits to

this small congregation of people to teach them and stayed with them each time for a couple of days (at the Díaz's) that included a Shabbat. Their enthusiasm, generosity and knowledge are exemplary. With Rabbi Weingortin's help and mine, these people are by now genuinely practicing Jews, the children are quite advanced in their learning of Hebrew and can sing dozens of Jewish songs as well.

Chol Chol:

In Chol Chol, an area that is eminently Mapuche, lives a Mapuche family: the Chihuaicuras. I first visited this family, also belonging to the proselytes' group, in July 1992. Since it was winter time, and the roads were flooded, Adán Soto and Nelson Díaz accompanied me and my friend Judith in a three-hour long walk through the fields and woods of the Araucanía to arrive finally at the Chihuaicuras. They are Mapuche farmers who live far away, with no electricity, gas or any modern commodity. Don Bartolomé (Bartolo) Chihuaicura and Dona Herminda Chihuaicura talk in Mapudungun between them, and pray in Mapudungun as well. Dona Herminda is especially eloquent and creative in prayers, and does so mornings and evenings.

They came to the Iglesia Israelita out of the Seventh Day

Adventist church that has missions in the Araucanía that have grown importantly during the period of the military dictatorship of general Pinochet. Theirs was a search for the one God, the same they and their ancestors worshiped: Ngenechen; and their Jewishness is fervent and loyal, and to a large extent is in conjunction with, or constitutes a syncretism with Mapuche monotheistic notions. Like Judaism, Mapuche cosmogony also postulates a single God, creator of all, has a lunar calendar and a myth of a universal flood, among other similitudes that have lead to a number of people to go so far as to suggest a Jewish (Marrano) influence on Mapuche cosmogony, which in my opinion is far fetched, Eurocentric and lacks basis.

They nourish their Judaism from Don Bartolo's regular trips to Temuco where he participates with the "Judíos del Sur" there. They also recorded Rabbi Weingortin's various tapes, which they play on a battery cassette player.

The Chihuaicuras are a clan, some of their sons and daughters live nearby and and work the fields together. Since they are distinctively Mapuche and Jewish proselytes, or maybe soon, Mapuche Jews, they are undoubtedly a curiosity, a unique cultural phenomenon. At the same time they constitute a drama: As Mapuche Chileans they are discriminated against in subtle and often not-so-subtle ways. On top of that, becoming Jewish in a countryside where

the few who know what the word Jew means have heard it from a preacher in antisemitic remarks is quite hard. After long conversations with the Chihuaicuras I got the impression that this extra burden of being Jewish where there are no other Jews has a psychological effect of playing together with their search for a stronger Mapuche identity after decades of a Eurocentric official discourse. In other words Mapuche identity and Jewish identity support and strengthen them.

"Judíos del Sur" and the Jewish Community of Temuco:

The Jews from Temuco, who founded the oldest synagogue in Chile, in 1916, know well the Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto for over half a century. Nes-El presents in his work three letters written between representatives of the Jewish congregation in Temuco and members of the Iglesia Israelita, two of them dating as far back as the 1930's! The relationship has to the most part been rather cold from the side of the Comunidad de Temuco.

Yet the whole situation worsened when the Judíos del Sur, one Sabbath eve in early 1992, decided to go to the old, small, beautiful synagogue of Temuco. Attendance in that synagogue on a regular Friday night is of about fifteen to twenty people. One night, members

of the "Judíos del Sur" arrived "en masse" sixteen strong, at the synagogue.

No previous announcement had been made by the "visitors" that they would show up and almost outnumber the old members of the Jewish congregation. Of course the sixteen thinking that a synagogue, just like a church, ought to be "a house of prayer for all peoples"... The Jews in Temuco became scared. They did not know that this group was the total group of proselytes under the tutelage of well-respected Rabbi Weingortin, but believed this was the "tip of the iceberg" of a "mass conversion of Evangelics into Judaism". The visitors were not invited for Kiddush, not even into the social hall of the synagogue and had to leave through a lateral corridor. When I once accompanied the group to the synagogue the leaders of the congregation sat with me and shared their anxiety with me. They did not believe that the sixteen people that attended on that occasion were the totality of proselytes from the "Judíos del Sur" group; (subsequently they asked the group to attend services in groups no larger than three people, which the "Judíos del Sur" did). They rather saw it as a serious threat, so serious that the issue reached the highest representatives of the Chilean Jewish community who debated angrily about what to do with the "evangelic threat" and with Rabbi Weingortin and me, as the principal instigators. The Israeli Embassy in Chile was also notified by them of the threat of thousands

of Evangelics being converted en masse, and who would shortly request to do Aliyah... Rabbi Weingortin did an extenuating job of clarifying the incident that had already reached mythical proportions, succeeding in doing so, so that it was soon dropped as an issue. Yet it taught Rabbi Weingortin to be even more discrete with the subject than he was before.

All ethical, cultural or sociological conclusions one may draw from this incident, from either side, are beyond the scope of my work. My intention is merely to present the facts.

Rabbi Weingortin and I discussed the issue of the "Judíos del Sur" undesired participation in the Jewish community of Temuco, concluding that the long term goal is the conversion of the group individually as well as collectively, so that with the help of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano the group would get a recognition as a community, and have its own little synagogue or house of prayer, with a Torah, *Sidurim*⁶ and everything. The "Judíos del Sur" felt ambivalent about this proposal. On one hand they see it as the realistic solution, but on the other feel painfully not-yet-sanctioned as Jews by the broader Jewish community, which they see represented in the "Comunidad de Temuco".

⁶ Prayerbooks

The educational work continues under the extraordinary leadership of Mrs. Dona Benadoff. Unfortunately, Rabbi Weingortin was forced to decide "ledarkei Shalom" that the children of the "Judíos del Sur" may not attend Summer Camp with the other Jewish children. Most unfortunately, the racial issue is obvious, as the proselyte children look Chilean, some Mapuche, and contrast sharply with the European look of the Jewish children. As I am near my ordination as a Rabbi, I look forward to be able to convert them, since they have long deserved this imprimatur.

EPILOGUE:

"*Chad Gadiah, Chad Gadiah...*" so goes the last song at the Passover Seder, teaching us that behind the goat there was a cat, behind the cat there was a dog, behind the dog there was a stick, behind the stick there was fire... everything has a cause, and at the end of the causal chain there is the mystery of God.

As much as children love that song, I loved to explore the mysterious causal chain that brought out of the nebulous past the reality of the Iglesia Israelita, and out of the Iglesia Israelita, the Congregacion Israelita del Dios Unico, and out of it the people that rabbi Weingortin and I have come to call the Judios del Sur. These are warm, generous and humble people who this year, on the eve of their conversion --or their re-conversion to Judaism?-- will sing again "*Chad Gadiah, Chad Gadiah...* or "*El cabritico que me mercó mi padre por dos levanim*" as the song goes in Ladino.

I recall the days in which I founded the "Mabai Eliahu" workshop to promote (and create) a Chilean Jewish culture. Our goal was to facilitate the osmosis of Jewish culture on one hand with Latin American culture on the other, in order to have a more vibrant Jewish life, congruent with the time and space in which we were living in: the Chile of the 1980's.

We would compose liturgical songs in Hebrew with Andean melodies, often interweaving Hebrew and Mapudungun in the same song. If somebody would have told me back then that I would get to know the Chihuaicuras, a Mapuche Jewish family, I would have thought that such a literal personification of our cultural goal was a poor joke in bad taste. "*Se non e vero e ben trovato*" as the saying goes, "If it's not true it is a good invention". Here the saying would be the converse: "If it is not a good invention, then it is true!"

So after all these years since Mabai Eliahu, and after all the research and intense human experience of living with them and teaching, learning, sharing with them, my inner "causal chain" closes its circle along with the outer "causal chain" of the Iglesia Israelita: from remote Cryptojews to new-old proselytes who really are a kind of "*Shear Yashuv*", a "Return of the Remaining Ones".

It is true, people like the Chihuaicuras or the Díaz are not descendants of Marranos in terms of blood or kinship. Yet they constitute an end of the chain: They are now about to convert to Judaism because there was a Congregación Israelita del Dios Unico. And the Congregación, was formed out of the Iglesia Israelita, and the Iglesia Israelita was formed by many factors, one of which was the settlement of the periphery of the Araucania by Cryptojews during the

17th century, who settled there because they were fleeing the Inquisition, following the expulsion of the Jews from Spain... *Chad Gadiah, Chad Gadiah...*

Conclusion:

There have been two hypotheses as to the origin of the Iglesia Israelita: The first that maintains that it is in whole or in part of Marrano origin. The second maintains that it emerged out of an eclectic outgrowth of sabbatarianism--generic term for people who observe the Sabbath--. After extensive research, I find myself in a cul de sac. The Iglesia Israelita emerges in Curacautin in 1894, far too early to allow us to speculate with other churches or missions that might have influenced it. On the other hand, all the historical, geographical, political and sociological factors of the Araucania and its periphery indicate very clearly that the region had been a refuge for Cryptojews. I am thus inclined to conclude, as does Daniel Bargman, that the Iglesia Israelita emerged out of multiple influential layers: Cryptojews, missionaries of who knows what confessions, immigrants (some of them might even have been Jewish as well), and the *fronterizos*, that odd cluster of people who traded and lived under no law in what might be call the "Wild South".

My hope is that my work will be of help for future scholars drawn to this fascinating chapter of Chilean and Jewish history. Some of the

antecedents I have laid out here, may serve as a guide to future researchers in their efforts at finding more conclusive historical evidence. And finally, --and this may be the most important conclusion that can be drawn out of this work-- is the fact that the transmission of Judaism does not have to be familiar, tribal, parochial. It may well take place, as in this instance by means of a cultural osmosis, a chain of cause and effect that extends throughout the centuries. It is true that it did not suffice to maintain the Jewish peoplehood of any Cryptojews, but it managed to constitute a subterranean wave that proved so strong, that in due time it emerged as an unconscious back-to-the-origins drive. This unconscious impulse worked like in dominoes, with the result that those who are becoming Jews now, are not the bearers of the first and today the ones who will become Jews finally are not the bearers of the first impulse of the wave, but the sensitive receivers of its echo. And the Judios del Sur see themselves as such: As the last links of a very old and mysterious chain they themselves did not start, but closed. And, God knows, the closing of it, the becoming Jews (again?) is in itself another start of a chain they do not control. But this new chain, unlike the old, is full of the promise and the hope, that the suffering of the *Anusim* and the martyrs of the Inquisition shall never repeat itself.

The Judios del Sur are a living monument to the mystery of

Jewish survival, which is the mystery of life itself. They are a monument to the *Galgai Haháyim*, the wheel of Life, to the fact that whatever seeds we plant we will sow in the future.

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