To: The American Academy for Jewish Research

From: Flora Cassen, Associate Professor of History and Associate Professor of Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies, Washington University in St. Louis; Ronnie Perelis, Chief Rabbi Dr. Isaac Abraham and Jelena (Rachel) Alcalay Associate Professor of Sephardic Studies, Yeshiva University

RE: AAJR Application for the Cross-Institutional Cooperative Grants, Special Initiatives Fund 2020-2021

## Project Description:

Haiti and Cuba in the Fall of 1492 forever changed the course of world history. There could be no turning back for either the Europeans or the Americans. With each returning expedition, stories about the New World and its people were brought into the Old European world. The

unknown. As a result,

thought pales in comparison with the abundance of scholarship on the reception of the New World by Christian Europeans.

Our goal is to make these texts known and available to the wider world of scholarship. To do so, we plan to apply a translation grant from the NEH to fund a three-year project to translate the works of Yoseph Ha-Kohen and Luis Carvajal. Ha
ver been translated. It has

Lazar in 2002. The manuscript of Luis de theological and personal writings were stolen from the Mexican National Archives (AGN) in 1932 and were only rediscovered in 2016. Carvajal s spiritual autobiography has been available to scholars thanks to the transcription

transcription, Prof. Martin Cohen translated the *Vida* into English in 1966. However, today we have a unique opportunity to return to the original manuscript and produce a critical edition and English translation that takes into account all that has been discovered about the Carvajal family. In addition we plan to analyze and translate the full manuscript which includes legal, devotional and theological texts that were not previously accessible and which can illuminate vital aspects of crypto-Jewish practice and religious sensibility in the Colonial Latin American context.

This long-term collective endeavor requires careful preparation. Our intention, if we are fortunate to receive an AAJR special initiatives grant, is to organize two workshops one at Washington University in St. Louis, the other at Yeshiva University in New York Oty to discuss the analysis and translation of these texts. These workshops will not only help us formulate the best ways to bring our ambitious project to completion, but also assist us in constituting a committed group of collaborators.

Dissemination: Whereas Jewish Studies has become an established academic field, scholarly exchanges and collaboration with scholars outside of Jewish Studies remain sparse for the premodern era. One reason for this is lack of access to Jewish sources. One of the best known early Life of Judah, which was translated by a group of

scholars led by Mark Cohen from Princeton. We know many colleagues outside of Jewish Studies who use it both in their classes and in their research. These colleagues are also curious and excited about Jewish writings on the Americas. Making them available would open up the possibility of intense cross-disciplinary collaborations between scholars in Jewish Studies and in the Academy at large. For, indeed, the questions that these texts raise are urgent and important: How did Jews, an often-oppressed European minority, relate to the colonial project? How did the Sephardic experience of expulsion and exile influence these authors the Spanish colonial project? How did Jewish authors reconcile knowledge of the New World with their biblical and rabbinic corpus? How did Jews understand the new geography and cosmography of the world?

Thus, studying Jewish writings on the Americas will also bring back the forgotten Jewish voices who intervened in the important debates of their times. For example, Joseph Hawere long thought to be translations of Francisco de Gó (who was Corté

work. In reality, they are a complex combination of translation and political criticism of Góma So -Kohen darified that

-Kohen added -Kohen never

he New World.

Applicants' Short Bios

Flora Cassen is Associate Professor of History and Associate Professor of Jewish, Islamic, and