

ISAAC ALCALAY DIES; FORMER CHIEF RABBI

97-Year-Old Leader of Sephardim Was a Yugoslavian Senator Before Fleeing Germans

Isaac A. Alcalay, retired Chief Rabbi of the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America, died yesterday at the Sephardic Home in Brooklyn. He was 97 years old.

Rabbi Alcalay was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. He studied at the Vienna Rabbinical Seminary and took his Ph.D at the University of Vienna.

After his studies were finished in the early 1900's, Dr. Alcalay was called to be Chief Rabbi of Serbia, now part of Yugoslavia. During that time, he was appointed a representative of the Serbian Government and visited the United States in 1918.

After World War I he founded the Rabbinical Federation in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and became its first president. He also founded the Rabbinical School there, and in 1925 he was appointed Chief Rabbi of Yugoslavia by King Alexander.

A Yugoslavian Senator

Rabbi Alcalay was appointed a senator in the Yugoslavian parliament, the first Jew there to be given such a post.

In 1925 Rabbi Alcalay planned and attended the first Sephardic Congress held in Vienna. He was elected vice president of the World Sephardi Federation at that time.

After the Germans occupied Yugoslavia, in 1942, he fled the country, settling in New York a year later. He was named a representative of the Yugoslav government in exile by King Alexander.

An estimated 175,000 Sephardic Jews live in the United States, about 3 percent of American Jews. About 100,000 are of Spanish origin, about 50,000 are of Arabic origin and 25,000 are the so-called newly arrived, who have come here in recent years from Israel and Lebanon.

About 75 percent of all the Sephardim in the United States, about 130,000, are in the New York area. Most of the rest live in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Seattle.

Rabbi Alcalay helped unify and organize the various Sephardic communities in this country and was elected Chief Rabbi of the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America in 1943. He retired 10 years ago. After he retirement, he moved to the Sephardic Home in Brooklyn.

He is survived by his daughter, Naomi, of New York City.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow at 10 A.M. at the Sephardic Home, 2266 Cropsy Avenue, Brooklyn.