ELAINE: We talk about ojaldres, borekas, fritadas, you know, all the different kinds of food that you could find in a Sephardi cookbook.

SARAH: This is Heritage Words, a podcast about the words we've inherited from our ancestors and the meaning they bring to our lives. Heritage Words is produced by the HUC Jewish Language Project, which raises awareness about Jewish ancestral diversity through the lens of language. I'm your host, Sarah Bunin Benor. In season one, I interviewed Danny Jassen, a member of the Sephardic community in Seattle. He talked about the many Ladino heritage words that have remained in his family, even generations after his ancestors stopped speaking the language, and I wondered how this plays out in the Sephardic community in Los Angeles. So I contacted our guest for today, Elaine Lindheim. Elaine is a native Los Angelino. She's been very involved in the Jewish community, including as a past president of BJE, a board member at Sephardic Temple-Tifereth Israel, and chair of the advisory board of the UCLA Leve Center for Jewish Studies. She earned an undergraduate degree from Stanford University, also my alma mater, where I got my PhD, and she earned a Doctorate in Research Methods and Evaluation from UCLA. Her grandparents, from Izmir, Turkey, were founding members of Sephardic Temple-Tifereth Israel. Now Elaine is retired, and she volunteers as a literacy instructor for adult English learners and enjoys spending time with her family. Elaine, welcome to Heritage Words.

ELAINE: Well, thank you so much, Sarah. Delighted to be here.

SARAH: So I want to start by asking you about your names. So I introduced you as Elaine Lindheim, but maybe you have other names that you want to share, perhaps a Hebrew name or a maiden name. And I want you to just tell us a little bit about the stories of your names.

ELAINE: Well, let's start with my first name. I am Elaine, named for my maternal grandmother, Esther Enriquez. And so the Esther turned into Elaine. I had a middle name before I got married. It was Kay for Caden. That was my father's mother. And although both of the grandmothers were deceased by the time I was born, if they had been alive, it still would have been all right to name me after them because the Sephardic custom, you can name for the living or the deceased. So my married name, Lavis. My father was a Levi. He was asked or he decided to change his name when he came through, became an American, and he changed it from Levi to Lavis. My mother's maiden name is Amado, and that is the Sephardic family, at least on one side, that I traced my heritage through. The Lindheim, I met a very nice gentleman, Richard Lindheim who actually, after investigation, a very Ashkenazi sounding name, turned out that his—on his father's side, his father's mother was actually Sephardic and that family

had been settled in Charleston, South Carolina pre-Civil War, and they had people who fought on both sides of the war.

SARAH: Oh my gosh, wow. That's amazing. OK, and then so you mentioned Esther. Is that also your Hebrew name?

ELAINE: Yes, it is.

SARAH: And so did you grow up in Los Angeles?

ELAINE: I grew up here. I grew up in the house that my grandfather, Rafael Amado, and his wife, Esther, bought when they moved to California in the early 1920s. They moved here from Brooklyn, New York. At that time, my mother and several of her siblings were still living at home, and the house is now in what's Koreatown, but my parents inherited it after my grandparents died. So that's where I grew up.

SARAH: And so you were born…

ELAINE: I was born in Los Angeles at Cedars-Sinai at the old Fountain Valley, now a religious center. But yes, my children were born there too.

SARAH: Then your family has been involved with Sephardic Temple-Tifereth Israel, you said. When did they found that, and was it in a different location then?

ELAINE: Well, okay, Sephardic Temple-Tifereth Israel started out in what's now near the 54th Street area near Western Avenue, Crenshaw. That's where my grandfather actually was president in 1930, when it first opened. He was not one of the original-original founders. There were some people here who had started the community before. The community dates its founding back to 1920. And as he came a few years later, he joined, he knew some of the people, he joined, he was part of the group helping to raise money to build the building that's there. The building still stands. It's now a church and still the same beautiful wooden building that it was. In the early 1960s, the congregation moved west and north to where it is now in Westwood.

SARAH: And your family's been involved this whole time?

ELAINE: Well, it's been petering out. My grandfather was—his two sons, Milton and Richard, were very involved. And then Milton's son, Ralph Amado, became involved. I was involved, Ralph's daughter... Right now, the last remaining Amado relative is

actually my son, David Lindheim, who is- serves on the board. I have since retired myself from that activity.

SARAH: Okay, let's turn now to your languages. Tell us what languages you speak.

ELAINE: Well, I think I speak English pretty well. That certainly is my first and native language. I did study Spanish in school and a little bit of French. And I must say that the language gene—my father was excellent with languages—it passed on to my daughter. I don't have it. So I haven't been particularly good about maintaining other languages. And although my parents spoke Ladino at home, and I think they both perhaps qualify as native Ladino speakers because they learned it as children in their homes, I never really picked up a lot of it.

SARAH: Mm-hm. Okay, so when did your family move from, you said, Izmir, right, Izmir, Turkey?

ELAINE: Yes.

SARAH: When did they move from there to Brooklyn?

ELAINE: My grandfather moved somewhere between 1900 and 1903 or ‘04. He came over first and didn't bring his whole family, and then, after a couple of years here, brought the rest of them. My mother was born in 1909 in Brooklyn. She has two siblings who were born in Izmir, and she and her younger brother and sister were born here. My father immigrated when he was about 17. He was born in 1903, so that would have been about 1920. And at that point, things were changing politically in Turkey for the Jews, and it was a possibility of becoming enlisted in the army or elsewise. So as I understand it, there was a fairly large migration to the U.S. or other places at that time. He came through New York, lived there for a while. Actually, he and my grandfather Raphael were cousins, so that's probably how he ultimately met my mother.

SARAH: Did you hear any Ladino in your home from your parents or grandparents?

ELAINE: Well, my grandparents were all deceased before I was born. My father's parents never came to the United States. They left Izmir and went in retirement with my aunt, my father's sister, to Nice in France. And they died there in the 1930s. The Amado grandparents, came here and they died, again, before I was born. So my parents, of course, it was the secret language, the language the parents spoke when they didn't necessarily want you to understand. They did use certain phrases and so on with us,

but I wouldn't say that they were speaking Ladino to us. They were speaking individual words to us or phrases.

SARAH: So, tell us some of those words and phrases.

ELAINE: Well, it's funny because I went to ask my daughter, who is the linguist, what she remembered from her grandmother, and well, she said, of course, *otro tanto*, *otro tanto*, which is used in the context—if something good has happened to someone, let's say that you're a young girl and you're in the company of some, you know, your family and you hear that somebody just got engaged or got into the university they wanted and, you know, they might say to you, *otro tanto*, meaning 'you too'. Now my daughter tells me that her grandmother, my mother, also used it fairly sarcastically. And that was when my daughter was being difficult or stubborn, she would say, *otro tanto*, your parents are getting what they deserve. So it would be used either way. But that was certainly one of the *otro tantos*. 'The same should happen to you.' Usually in a good sense. I mean, never in a bad sense. You would never say to somebody that something evil or bad befell them, you would never say *otro tanto* to anybody else.

SARAH: Well, that reminds me of the Orthodox Jewish English phrase, soon by you, that is often said at weddings or when someone has a baby, and then they hear the good news, they say it to someone else, soon by you.

ELAINE: Another is, *si kiere El Dio*, you know, hopefully God will be willing, *si kiere El Dio*. Something will happen. *Si kiere El Dio*. You know, it's so hard for me to distinguish the Spanish from the Ladino. Another one that, you know, a parent would wish their child, *nochada buena*! Have a good night. *Nochada buena*. Of course, much of the Ladino that I know and remember is from a place in my home that I really like, which is the kitchen and cooking. And many of the words for food come, you know, I understand them when people say them. We talk about *ojaldres*, about *borekas,* about *fritadas*, you know all the different kinds of food that you could find in a Sephardi cookbook.

SARAH: Can you translate those for us, please?

ELAINE: *Ojaldres* are phyllo dough in a triangular shape that can be filled with cheese, with meat. I guess some people sometimes use spinach fillings. *Borekas* are like a pie dough that you roll out and you fill again with similar fillings. Can be potato and cheese. Some people make it with cheese and rice—you know, cooked rice. Can be with meat. And those are shaped like an empanada. You close up a circle and you make the edge, the *repulga,* it's called, which is the edge. And that's the test, supposedly, of a good Sephardic woman cook—or man—that you can make that very delicately and curl it

over. A *fritada* is a vegetable dish that can be made with or without cheese. They can come, for instance, at the time of the Jewish New Years, Rosh Hashanah. My mother would make one of spinach, one of leeks, and one of zucchini. Those are all common flavors. You can make them with tomato. Some people mix the vegetables, very common, eggs, cheese, that sort of thing. I think those were the ones. One that's very dear to me, because it is the one my mother made and I make, and I've taught my older granddaughter how to make, is *rosca*. And *rosca* really just means round. It is a round shaped bread. It's a yeast dough, it's sweetened, it also has cinnamon in it, and it can be large or small, but medium size is a little bit bigger than a bagel and you either can eat them fresh out of the oven and just tear them apart or eat them, or you can slice them like a bagel and toast them and that brings out even more of the cinnamon flavor. *Bendichos manos* is a common phrase for somebody who does something in the kitchen or perhaps artistically or outside very well, blessed hands. So those are some of the words.

SARAH: So you would use *bendichos manos*, like, would you use it at the end of a meal to thank someone for being a good…

ELAINE: No, we would just say of somebody, if you're sitting down and they put this beautiful table of all these nice baked goods in front of you, you know, like a *tabla de dulce*, a sweet table, for various occasions, you just say, of the women or woman who did it, *bendichos manos*. You have very talented or good hands.

SARAH: And what was the phrase you said about the table, tabula?

ELAINE: *Tabla de dulce*, the sweet table.

SARAH: And so would you use that phrase in your home?

ELAINE: Well, interestingly, I don't use it in Ladino. Whatever my granddaughter, who was old enough to remember my mother—I don't speak it to her. She remembers what my mother said to her and some of her aunts. And I remember it with my aunts, but truthfully, I do not remember—maybe one phrase that’s sort of become a joke in our family, *los ojos en veinte cuatro*. My mother would tell my daughter, you know, when she went away or something, *los ojos en veinte cuatro*, meaning you need to have your eyes all around you. Be aware, be alert.

SARAH: Veinte cuatro meeting twenty-four?

ELAINE: Yeah, twenty-four, I guess like twenty-four hours? I don't know what it means, I just don't know how it's used.

SARAH: Always be on the lookout for things.

ELAINE: Be careful, you know, pay attention. *Los ojos en veinte cuatro.*

SARAH: Got it, got it. Wow. Okay, so you said that you don't use these phrases—these are phrases that your daughter remembers hearing from her grandmother, right? Are there any Ladino words that you do use?

ELAINE: No, I don't. As I said, maybe occasionally, as a joke, we'll say, you know, or she's going to go do something, *los ojos en veinte cuatro* or something. You didn't have *los ojos en veinte cuatro*, or something happened. But beyond that, and only, you know, doing it to reflect that we both remember my mother, and think about her and how she'd say that.

SARAH: Ah, that's nice. So those foods that you mentioned, *ojaldres, borekas, fritada, rosca*, you don't make those yourself?

ELAINE: Oh yeah, I do.

SARAH: Oh, you do.

ELAINE: I do, particularly *rosca*, *borekas*, yes. Oh, I should have said, there's one kind of *boreka* that all the younger kids in the family seem to like, and that we call the pizza *boreka*, because it's made with eggplant and tomato, and that mixture is called *handrajo*, H-A-N-D-R-A-J-O, *handrajo*. And that is a mixture you bake, it's sort of like a... There's an Italian equivalent of taking eggplant, tomato, onion, cooking it all down together and it becomes a little bit thickened, enough to be a filling that you can put inside the dough. And those are the pizza *borekas*.

SARAH: Wow, I'm getting very hungry. So you make all of those?

ELAINE: Yes. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

SARAH: And do you refer to them with their Ladino names?

ELAINE: Yes, when I make them, when I refer to them, yes. Yes.

SARAH: Including *handrajo*.

ELAINE: Oh, well, I just, yeah, I'll say these are *borekas de handrajo*, or for the kids, eggplant *borekas*. Sometimes you might talk about it—what are the ingredients in that *fritada*? Well, *spinaka i kezo*. If somebody wanted to know, you might tell them in those words or in English, spinach and cheese.

SARAH: Yeah, that makes sense. Do your children also know those names for the foods? Do they use them themselves?

ELAINE: Yes, they would use those names. Unfortunately, not—my son doesn't like any of those foods, my daughter does, my granddaughter does. And as I said, this granddaughter, the one who's now in the 11th grade, has been learning how to cook a lot and knows how to cook a lot of them.

SARAH: Do you ever give that granddaughter cooking lessons?

ELAINE: Oh, absolutely. That's how she learned.

SARAH: Oh, I love that.

ELAINE: So the one piece of kitchen equipment that I have is a wooden bowl, a mixing bowl—a fairly large one—that was in my mother's kitchen. I remember her using it, but when—after she died, I found it in her apartment, and she put a piece of paper in it, and it said, from mother to daughter to daughter. So the mother in that was her mother, my grandmother, then she, then me. Well, I'm gonna have to write that to say from mother to daughter to daughter to granddaughter because the daughter in between isn't that interested in cooking, but her daughter has learned.

SARAH: Wow, that's so special that you still have that bowl in your family. Was it from Turkey?

ELAINE: I don't know, I don't know its history, how much they brought with them from Turkey as opposed to bought in Brooklyn, as opposed to bought in LA, that part it doesn't reveal.

SARAH: Yeah. Do you have other things like that in your family that have been passed down the generations?

ELAINE: No, not really. I mean, I have a mortar and pestle from an uncle and aunt of mine. I have some candlesticks, some bronze candlesticks that came from my mother, and I think probably from her family. I had—my mother loved the *ojos*, the kinds of decorative eyes on jewelry and elsewise. So I have some of hers. My mother also loved all the gold chains and the bangle bracelets that are typical of, I guess, Sephardic Jews. I don't know if it's unique to Turkey or not. I only know that's where mine came from. So I have a long gold chain that I have a piece of, my brother's wife has a piece of. And I saved a lot of the bracelets and other things—those things. And those will pass on to my granddaughters.

SARAH: Do you refer to those as heirlooms?

ELAINE: Not heirlooms. They're very nice, but I don't know how far back beyond my mother they trace.

SARAH: Well, in my family, we have candlesticks that were my great-great-grandmother's, and I think of them as our family heirloom, and I have them, I use them on Friday nights.

ELAINE: That's wonderful.

SARAH: Yeah, and so I started thinking about language as an heirloom. It's something that is passed down the generations and is special to us, and even when the spoken language itself is no longer used in our families, we still have some words, and I consider those to be heirlooms as well.

ELAINE: That's a very lovely concept. Thank you for teaching me that.

SARAH: Thank you. So let's turn to your studies of Spanish. So you said that you studied Spanish and French, and I'm wondering, with the Spanish in particular, when you started studying it, did it seem familiar because of the Ladino in your family?

ELAINE: Oh, yes, very much so. And also familiar because in my family, my mother and my aunts all had Spanish help in their homes, like a housekeeper or somebody who'd come in and help. And they were always Spanish-speaking. So I was surrounded by Spanish even before I started studying it in school. I studied it in high school and took the minimum needed to complete my college requirement on it. And I was far less successful with the French. My father, who went most likely to an Alliance school in Izmir before he came to America, was fluent in French, as well as Spanish, as well as

Ladino, as well as English. Actually, he was fluent enough in French that he joined the French Masons in Los Angeles, so he could practice his French. It didn't rub off on me.

SARAH: Did you ever hear him speaking French?

ELAINE: And then he would speak it with my daughter. And they would, yeah, get along in French, uh-huh.

SARAH: Oh, interesting. So was it also easier when you took French compared to your classmates?

ELAINE: I just really don't have an ear for language. I know that.

SARAH: And when you took Spanish, were there things that were confusing because they were so different in Ladino versus Spanish?

ELAINE: I don't think I knew enough Ladino grammatically or elsewise to be confused truthfully. You know, words would pop up and I'd say, well, that's the same.

SARAH: And did you, when you were growing up, did you ever learn about the dialect differences in Ladino between, say, Greek and Turkish Jews?

ELAINE: No, because, again, I was primarily exposed to Turkish and Rhodesli Jews, Turkish from Turkey, some from Greece. It never arose. I mean, occasionally, one difference I do notice because one project that I got involved with at the Sephardic Temple here in the 1970s I think it was, the Women of the Sisterhood published a marvelous cookbook, Cooking the Separdic Way, that's become a classic. My mother has some recipes in there including for her *rosca* recipe and for the different charoset for the holidays and such. I wasn't involved in that. But in maybe, oh more than 10 years ago, the sisterhood, the whole synagogue had changed very much in composition. There were still some of the original Sephardim there, but many Persians, and were looking for a way to kind of bring all of this together. And so I suggested let's do a second cookbook and include recipes from the Persians and the others who have been here since the first one. So, in that process, I, you know, got exposed to other words for food and such. And what I noticed is that not everybody from Turkey calls things the same thing. And an example to me, is that there is a round sweet cookie that is not yeast-based, that is sort of round, just like a *rosca* and the edges are kind of cut, and you can put cinnamon and sugar on it or you can put sesame seeds on it, and then there is a yeast-based—more like a pretzel—kind of cookie that has some, usually some salt on top and so on. And what I would call a *reshika*, my Rhodeslis cousins and

the people in the sisterhood would call it a *biscocho*. And what I would call a *biscocho*, which was the yeast-based one, they'd call it *reshika*. That was kind of interesting. I don't know how that happened.

SARAH: That is really interesting. So it seems like the way you engage with Ladino is primarily through food.

ELAINE: Absolutely.

SARAH: And aside from food, are there other ways that you engage with Ladino, like learning about Ladino literature or singing songs in Ladino?

ELAINE: I don't sing them personally, but I'm very interested in the history of Ladino. I once took a class at the Skirball from Bryan Kirscher, Kirsch-

SARAH: Kirschen.

ELAINE: Kirschen. So I was curious to explore the language further. I like subscribing to things about Ladino, reading books with Ladino phrases in them, and so on. So I very much enjoy the culture, the language, the things associated with it, memoirs from people who that's part of their background. I'm very interested in that, from a Sephardic history point of view, knowing more about my Sephardic heritage.

SARAH: And it seems like there's somewhat of a resurgence of interest in Ladino now, especially since the pandemic. People have been learning Ladino and talking about it, and there are new Ladino-based organizations like the American Ladino League that Bryan Kirschen is one of the founders of. And I'm wondering what you think about all that and if you're involved with any of them.

ELAINE: I'm only involved from a point of a spectator. I think it's great. I think that it's wonderful. I mean, I would be surprised to see Ladino revived as a living language. I understand there are still native Ladino speakers, a few, I know them through our temple, a few, many of whom, unfortunately are—have passed on. And in Israel. So I guess maybe it's somewhat like Yiddish, a real interest in it, but perhaps the number of people who will be next-generation native speakers is far less. But I'm happy to encourage and to promote anybody who's, you know, any serious efforts, scholarly and elsewise, in studying it. It's certainly an important language for scholars to know, to be able to research things that were written in Ladino. Yeah, and to know about it.

SARAH: Yeah, and you're right to point to the similarities with Yiddish, there are a lot of similarities in that there is a resurgence of interest in it among young people whose ancestors spoke it and it didn't get passed down the generations to them, but now they're looking into it again. But it's also different from Yiddish in that Yiddish is kept alive in Hasidic communities, and there isn't a comparable community for Ladino.

ELAINE: Right, I mean, in the Yiddish community, there are students who are taught it in school, and the families who speak it at home.

SARAH: Yeah. But there are Ladino classes at a number of universities, University of Washington, Berkeley, Tufts, Harvard, and maybe a few others in the U.S., and then a bunch in Israel and in Spain and France, I believe. So what's your advice to young people who are just learning about Ladino and starting to learn the language? Do you have any advice for them?

ELAINE: I mean, I'm fascinated by the fact that there are young people many come without any Ladino background, some with some, you know, it was part of their family heritage, but others for whom it's no part at all, but are interested from the point of view of other angles into it, and I certainly would encourage them. I'm delighted to know that people are still studying it, finding out, translating documents that haven't been translated yet, so I can read them. That's sort of a selfish point of view, but so people like myself, who don't know Ladino well enough to read it, can know what it says. I think it's great, and I'm, in general, very pleased by the increased interest in Sephardic culture, history. It's an important part of the Jewish story, and I'm delighted to see that, as compared, for instance, when I was growing up, and what I was taught in religious school and elsewise, far more emphasis on it.

SARAH: Did you go to religious school at Sephardic temple?

ELAINE: I did not. It was kind of far away, actually. I was raised and confirmed in the Wilshire Boulevard Temple. My parents belonged there as well as at the Sephardic Temple. My brother also and my husband went through the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, but my brother was bar mitzvahed at the Sephardic Temple.

SARAH: Interesting. Is that because of the gender difference that you couldn't have a bat mitzvah at-?

ELAINE: Well, actually, I precede by, maybe a couple of years, the first Reform bat mitzvah. It would not have been—yes, now in the Sephardic temple there is a bat mitzvah ceremony, not reading from the Torah, but a ceremony, but I think the first bat

mitzvah, I'm old enough to have been a little bit older than that. I could go back and be an adult bat mitzvah. I haven't, but I could.

SARAH: Well, at Wilshire Boulevard, when you were studying, did they ever mention Ladino?

ELAINE: They didn't mention Ladino, but they did have, at the point I was there, there were three rabbis. Edgar Magnin was the really big, important rabbi. Actually, he was at the dedication of the first Sephardic Temple. I have a picture of him with my grandfather. Edgar Magnin. And then he came to the second, when they moved to Wilshire Boulevard and dedicated that spot, he was there as well. So at that time was Edgar Magnin, Alfred Wolf, who had come from Germany and was involved in the camping movement, and so on. And I think of him as the middle rabbi, Maxwell Gubin, and Maxwell Gubin married my parents and married us. And he was very familiar with Sephardic customs. And, for instance, he allowed at our wedding, that the parents could hold the tallit over the bride and groom. That's the equivalent of the chuppah. And because—they didn't want, as I understood it, they weren't looking for people to look at rituals that didn't belong to them and say, oh, I like that ritual, let's do it. But he knew the background, and he was aware of it—I think Rabbi Magnin knew it as well, that we were Sephardic, but there was nothing in any of the textbooks or elsewise, and there certainly—I don't remember—there was very little Hebrew at that point, let alone any talk about Yiddish or Ladino.

SARAH: Yeah. So that's nice that they recognized that you were Sephardic and helped you to use some Sephardic traditions. In the—in the religious school, did you ever learn about the different types of Jews, Sephardi, Ashkenazi?

ELAINE: No, that was not part of the curriculum. That was something that actually as an adult, I have been trying, you know—been happy to see increased emphasis on that.

SARAH: Yeah, we at the Jewish Language Project are working on that. We created a curriculum called Beyond the Family Tree, Jewish History and Diversity through Family Languages and Names. And the idea is that Jewish day schools and religious schools will use it to teach their students about the diversity of the Jewish people, partly through their own community, by mapping their ancestors and learning about their family stories, and sharing that information with their classmates.

ELAINE: That's lovely.

SARAH: Thank you. So at Sephardic Temple, do they use any Ladino prayers? Like do they do the Ein Keloheinu in Ladino?

ELAINE: Yes. They do the blessing after meals. They do Ein Keloheinu. They do some others, particularly on the High Holidays, in the services. The cantor, Cantor Haim Mizrahi, is from Turkey. The Rabbi Refael Cohn is from Israel, so I think his background is not necessarily Ladino-speaking. I remember going to the synagogue as a child, and now growing up, obviously less Ladino now. There are more people who understand English. They do some things in Farsi for the Persians because of that increasing presence. But those would be the only languages, English, Hebrew, some Ladino, and some Farsi.

SARAH: And which grace after meals do they do, Bendigamos or Ya Comimos?

ELAINE: Well, Ya Comimos, I think, is the first phrase of Bendigamos: we ate, and we're going to go on. I have never heard it called Ya Comemos. I've always heard it—heard it called Bendigamos. I may have the title confused with the first line. I'd have to look and see. They sometimes print it. I have—next time they—I see it in print, I'll let you know.

SARAH: Okay. And so you mentioned the High Holidays. What—what Latino do they use on the High Holidays?

ELAINE: Well, Ein Keloheinu they'll do on the high holidays. They'll also do El Nora, the prayer you say at the closing, Neilah service.

SARAH: Mm-hmm.

ELAINE: That one is done in Hebrew and in Ladino.

SARAH: Oh, wow. OK, I got to check that out. So at the Sephardic synagogue in Seattle, they auction off the honors for, like, who's gonna have an aliyah, who's going to lift the Torah, in Ladino. Do they—do they do that at Sephardic—

ELAINE: No, they don't do that. What they've been doing for quite a few years is actually having the auction conducted before the High Holidays. They often have it online, and people can, you know—because there are so many Torahs, there are lots of positions. But what they have been doing, I don't remember if this year they did it the same way, is they'll leave the very last, the honor of opening and standing by the *ehal* for the closing Yom Kippur service, they'll auction off in the temple right before it, when

everybody's there, so it becomes like a public auction. But the others are not auctioned, they're already determined, so you come for the High Holidays knowing who's the person who's going to lead the Torahs, who's the person who's going to open or close the ark. You know, all of that has been determined beforehand.

SARAH: And when they do auction that final honor, is it in English or?

ELAINE: English. Because remember, now the congregation, Ladino, perhaps a quarter of the people might understand.

SARAH: Hardly, yeah, probably not even that many.

ELAINE: Probably not even that many.

SARAH: Right. And that's also the case in Seattle. Hardly anyone actually speaks Ladino, but I guess probably a larger percentage of that congregation descends from Ladino speakers than the one in LA, because there's so many Persians and Moroccans and Yemenites, and others here. But in Seattle, I mean, this was going to be my final line of questioning, is about the differences between Seattle and LA. Why do you think it is that in Seattle, so much more Ladino has been preserved, that they still auction the honors off in Ladino in a ritualistic way, and they still have so many Ladino words that they use in their community?

ELAINE: No, I mean, I think there's a stronger Rhodesli presence there. Maybe I'm wrong on that. But I know people here who were in Seattle first. I don't know whether it was a function of the rabbis who were there, because the Sephardic community here, my knowledge of it is that almost until Rabbi Bouskila, they hadn't really had a Sephardic Rabbi. Jacob Ott, who was the rabbi for 35 years, the rabbi when I was growing up, was Ashkenazi from Chicago. Now he took a very deep interest in Sephardim, and actually I think, in my mind, helped the Sephardim of the community realize that they really had something there. He was the, you know, in the first book he wrote, the beginning of it and everything, and encouraged this and saw it as something, a heritage that you should be proud of. But before that, on the holidays, when I was growing up, it would be a traveling, it would a rabbi they'd bring in for the services. They had cantors who were Sephardic, but I think my understanding of the Sephardic community in Seattle is that they had several very strong rabbis who were Sephardic who probably immigrated at the same time. And even here, I'm not sure about the leadership of—there was another—there are several Sephardic communities in L.A. now, but there was one, Sephardic Beth Shalom, that merged eventually with Sephardic

Tifereth Israel, and they may have had more of people who were Ladino speakers in their leadership and in their clergy.

SARAH: That's a really good point and—about the rabbis and then also I think it may also have to do with the concentration of Sephardic Jews within the broader Jewish community because even though there are probably more Sephardim in L.A. than Seattle, I think there's a higher percentage of Separdic Jews in the Jewish community in Seattle than in L.A.

ELAINE: Right, yes, in percentage in relation to the Jewish community. Right, no, L.A. is such a large Jewish community that the number of Sephardim is less prominent.

SARAH: Okay, well, we're almost out of time, but I have one last question. Do you have any other thoughts you'd like to share about your ancestral language, identity, community, and culture?

ELAINE: Well, what can I say? I love being Sephardic. I'm very—I feel very fortunate in the heritage that it brings me, and the traditions. I love learning about it, reading about it. Everybody has their background, and it's important to know what it is. And, to me, it's a very beautiful one.

SARAH: Thank you. And thank you so much for this wonderful, rich interview. I learned so much about your community and your family, and all this food. And I think I'm going to go eat something now.

ELAINE: Well, whenever you want something, just let me know and I'll come over and I'll bake for you.

SARAH: That sounds wonderful.

ELAINE: Okay, thank you, Sarah.

SARAH: Heritage Words is a partnership of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Language Project and HUC Connect, supported by tax-deductible donations from listeners like you. I'm the producer and host, Sarah Bunin Benor. Kyle Elbaz Fingerhut is assistant producer, Avishay Artsy is editor, and Talia Ehrenberg is video editor. The music is from Maurice El Medioni's French and Algerian Arabic album "Cafe Oran," featuring the Klezmatics' David Krakauer and Frank London, courtesy of Pirana Records. This podcast is one of the many ways the Jewish Language Project raises awareness about the diversity of the Jewish people and the phenomenon of heritage words. We also have online crowdsourced dictionaries where you can find the words

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