

Passing of Professor Alan Corré

Discussion published by Katherine Aron-Beller on Saturday, December 2, 2017

H-Judaic mourns the passing of Dr. Alan Corré (1931-2017), a contributor to this list and longtime Professor of Hebrew Studies and then Emeritus Professor at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. We cross-post the following necrology from Scott B. Noegel on the Agade Mailing List.

It is my sad duty to report that Dr. Prof. Alan D. Corré passed away on November 27, 2017.

A native of London, England, Alan was born in the urban district of Willesden on May 2, 1931. Alan received his BA with Honours in Ancient and Mediaeval Hebrew from the University of London and his MA in Semitic Languages from the University of Manchester. In addition, Alan was ordained Rabbi by Hahám Dr. S. Gaon (London) and by Rabbis Nissim Ezran and Joseph Peretz (Jerusalem). In 1955, he emigrated to America, where he became Rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese Congregation Mikveh

Israel, in Philadelphia, the second oldest Jewish congregation in the nation. While serving that congregation, he also received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. His dissertation, on The Structure of Tamil, was supervised by Zellig Harris and Leigh Lisker.

In 1963, he and his family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he became Professor of Hebrew Studies. He remained at that post for thirty years, often serving as department chair. He retired as Emeritus Professor of Hebrew Studies in 1993. Since 2007, Alan and his wife, Nita, spent much of their time in Adventura, Florida.

Alan Corré was a rare polyglot. In addition to knowing Hebrew and Arabic, he lectured and published widely on Portuguese, French,

Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Judeo-Arabic. He loved translating poems from one language to another, and he was quite skillful at

rendering devices like rhyme and paronomasia into the target tongue. He also had an extraordinary memory. As his student, I recall starting our Hebrew classes by opening the Hebrew Bible to a random passage. A student would then start reading the verse, and Alan would finish it from memory. He would have been a very intimidating teacher had it not been for his patience, good sense of humor, and genteel demeanor. He was a brilliant teacher, but very humble. He was never showy or eager to impress.

Alan also was at the vanguard of computers. He introduced many students (including myself) to email, when it was not yet called that, and when only a handful of computer scientists were using it at the University. Most people did not see a need for it at the time, except Alan. He was way in front of all that. His monograph on Icon Programming for Humanists (1990), had a wide ranging impact on programmers, as did his article on the programming language "IBM/SPITBOL" (1990). He also was at the forefront of website creation. The Library of Congress recently archived his web resource site, A Glossary of Lingua Franca (5th. ed., 2005) as a heritage record. In addition to the glossary, the site offers a number of articles on the history of the pidgin trade language, which was used widely throughout the Mediterranean from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. (see <https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.loc.gov%2Fitem%2Flocw>

[a00095722%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cgrends%40rutgers.edu%7C8e5c6693fd994390601508d538558b12%7Cb92d2b234d35447093ff69aca6632ffe%7C1%7C0%7C636476862415598676&sdata=FdHgnwToDWJ0fD3Yj7Z%2BCutlTDfOSDdvNSx0q08Z4Vc%3D&reserved=0>](https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/discussions/993236/passing-professor-alan-corr%C3%A9)

A brief perusal of his other publications reveals his erudition and wide ranging interests. Some of his publications include *Heroes*,

Heretics, and *Hidalgoes* (1966), "Anatomy of a Decipherment" (1966), "Una elegía judeo-española para el nueve de 'Ab" (1968), *The Daughter of My People. Arabic and Hebrew Paraphrases of Jeremiah 8.13-9.23* (1971), *Waw and Digamma* (1975), *A Suprasegmental Feature of Length in Semitic* (1975), "The Lecher, the Coward and the Virtuous Woman" (1981), "A Moroccan Jewish Saint" (1981), "Sabato Morais and Social Justice in Philadelphia, 1858-1897" (1985), "Hebrew: Some Modest

Proposals" (1991), "Le vocabulaire emprunté dans le livre shay lamora" (1991), "Les Juifs d'origine ibérique aux Etats-Unis depuis

l'installation jusqu'à nos jours" (1992), and "The Influence of Hebrew on Portuguese" (1998). He is the editor of *Understanding the Talmud* (1975), *The Quest for Social Justice II* (1992), and the translator of Isaac Levy's *A Morsel of Bread* (1997). He also translated numerous Judeo-Arabic folktales, poems, and other texts, and published them online. The last time I visited with Alan, in the summer of 2016, he had finished translating into English and North African Arabic an antique Judeo-Arabic cookbook from Tunisia (c. 1910) that he had obtained while traveling there in 1970.

Alan's world was a world of genius, of unparalleled memory and linguistic abilities. Like so many other colleagues and friends, I

shall miss our conversations on everything from Hebrew and Arabic linguistics to the poetry of Ogden Nash and William Wordsworth.

With Alan's passing, we have lost a wonderful teacher, valued colleague, and dear friend (אנחנו מאבדים מורה, קולגה, וחבר יקר).

Alan leaves behind his wife, Nita, and four children: Jacob, Giselle, Raquel, and Isaac.

We extend deepest condolences to the entire family.

JONATHAN D. SARNA

Chair, H-Judaic