

Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."
-Isaiah 2:3



SET THE CAPTIVES FREE

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Columbus Before Isabella and Ferdinand.
By Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, 1843.
These Spanish monarchs expelled all the Jews in 1492 and subjected the remaining Anussim to the horrors of the Inquisition.

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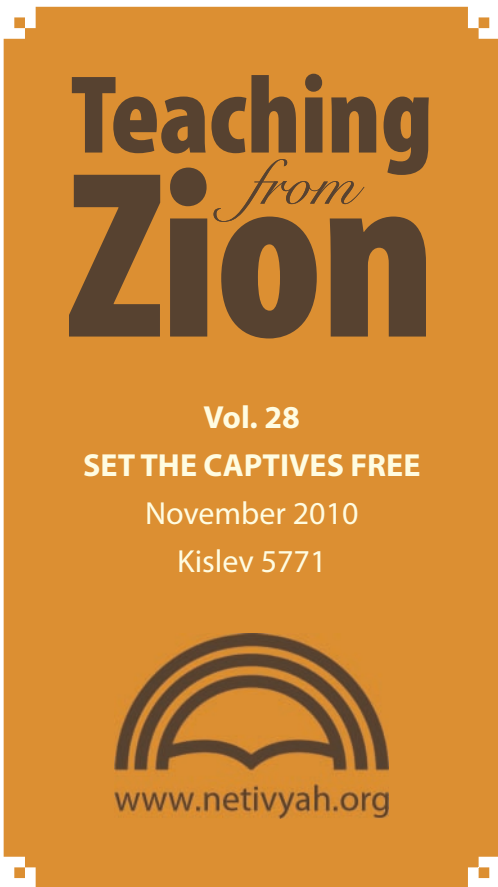
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A Word from the Editors

The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions began in the 15th Century and continued until the mid-1800s, as hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced to convert to Catholicism and then were later tortured and executed for continuing to practice Judaism in secret. In light of the upcoming Restoring the Lost Heritage Conference sponsored by Netivyah, (see page 26 for details), this volume contains a variety of articles on the B'nei Anussim, the descendants of the Jews who were forcibly converted, also known more pejoratively as "marranos," "conversos," or "New Christians". Here we prefer the Hebrew term "Anussim," "those who were forced or compelled" to describe these, our unfortunate brethren.

As one reads through these pages weighted with suffering, one may well wonder why it is necessary to dredge through the depths of Jewish history when we have plenty of tragedies happening today in our world. Let us be very clear then about what our goals are and are not for why we are reliving this pain. First of all, there is great value in honoring the memory and the lives of the martyrs of history, and understanding how the mixture of militant religion and politics brought about their victimization is imperative if we wish to prevent anything like it from happening again. We also hope with this magazine to clarify some common misunderstandings about the Inquisition and to put it in its proper political-socio-religious-historical context for our readers. We have no desire to pity ourselves or to cast blame on the descendants of our ancestors' persecutors, but we pray somehow to redeem part of the hidden suffering of the Anussim by bringing the truth of their persecution to light and honoring their attempts to remain faithful to the God of Israel.

We are well aware that since most of our readers are Protestants or Messianic Jews that there is a tendency to blame the Inquisition on "those Catholics" and to therefore try to absolve ourselves and our ancestors of responsibility. The truth of the matter is, however, that if any of us as believers had lived in the 15th Century in Spain, we too would probably have been one of the Church members who persecuted its Jewish flock. The Reformation had not even

occurred yet, and none of us, no matter what we tell ourselves, would have been "an earlier Martin Luther and reformed the Church all by ourselves." Additionally, even the Messianic Jews of today cannot ignore the truth that back in those days it was the Jews who believed in Jesus who became the worst persecutors of the Anussim. Some of the most hated foes of Judaism from the Inquisition period were themselves Jews who had converted to the Church.

With these truths in mind then, we must all unite together as Catholics, Protestants, and Messianic Jews to repent before God for our ancestors' sins and to beg Him to send his renewed blessing and restoration on the House of Israel and the Church. There are many simple sociological or political lessons we could learn from the Inquisition, such as understanding why traditional Jews so greatly fear missionaries and Messianic Jews, why American Jews fear the Christian Religious Right, the dangers of mixing politics with religion, or how it is that in a war between Christians and Muslims, Jews always lose more than any other party, but we have greater goals here than simply illuminating a few ideas such as these. Rather we desire to unite our forces to repent now and to do everything we can to save the descendants of the Anussim, who after centuries of retaining their Jewish identities in secret are now beginning to forget it altogether with the advent of technology and globalization. This is the last generation in which it will be possible to redeem the B'nei Anussim, and it is our great hope that soon Israel will open its arms and its doors to these, our long lost but not forgotten, brothers.

This volume contains articles on different aspects of the Inquisition, its victims, and their descendants all over the world in the past and up until today. Although this tragic period of Jewish history is not a happy one to remember, we believe it is important for both our Jewish and non-Jewish readers to understand. Their suffering calls out from the darkness of history and begs us to lighten the load of their descendants while there is still time to restore them to the House of Israel. ♦

Birds, Lions, and Elephants:

Memories of a Secret Past in Trás-os-Montes, Portugal



Joseph Shulam

In many of the ancient cities and villages of Portugal there still exists the Juderia, the Street of the Jews, which is to this day lined with old gray granite doorways that still carry the scars of the mezuzahs that at one time adorned the doors of these Jewish homes. In some cities the old synagogues that the Jewish communities used before the Inquisition are now being discovered, excavated, and restored. Crosses carved on the doorways are not-so-silent witnesses of the horrors of the Inquisition. These crosses were carved on the doors of the “New Christians” (Anussim), those Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism, to mark their homes as places that

needed to be watched and observed to see if they were still practicing any semblance of their old faith, Judaism. The old Jewish buildings at times were also decorated with symbols particular to the Jewish community: birds, strange crosses, crosses and ladders, Hebrew letters, and at times even lions or elephants. The meaning of these symbols was essentially a mystery that the Jews did not want to share with their Christian neighbors for fear of the Inquisition.

Recently on a visit to the village of Carçao in the area of Trás-os-Montes, I saw a big, old stone lintel resting on two ancient walls. The lintel was turned on its side so that the first visible image was a cross deeply carved into the face of the stone. Upon closer inspection, however, one could

also see a bird-like figure and even another cross flanked by two birds. The underside of the stone had an animal figure that at first appeared to be a lion, but after a more careful examination, it actually looked much more like an elephant. My curiosity peaked immediately to find out more about this lintel and the meaning of the symbols carved on it. The size, age, and unique carvings on this stone make it peculiar and significant.

These symbols have a special meaning meant to be understood only by the Anussim and no one else. For this reason they are enigmatic symbols that need a special explanation. By the Middle Ages it was common for both Jews and Christians to use animals in their art as religious symbols and to tell fables and allegories about animals with moral lessons. There are some important differences in the interpretation and symbolism that Jews and Christians assigned to the various animals in their art and fables, however, even if they did start with many of the same basic plot lines and characters. Marc Epstein, a scholar of Jewish medieval art, says that when one notes these differences carefully, "A rich and fascinating tapestry unfurls itself before us, a tapestry depicting a territory of the imagination where lions carve stones, hares triumph over hunters, elephants herald the reappropriation of cultural treasures, all-powerful dragons become tamed playthings, and the horn of salvation is raised from the dust; where the breath of every living thing praises God and speaks for Israel."¹

First we will deal with the birds because many medieval Jewish documents and architecture depict birds, some of which have bird heads on top of human bodies. This figure wearing a Jewish hat, in a detail of a medieval Hebrew calendar, reminded Jews of the palm branch (lulav), the myrtle twigs, the willow branches, and the citron (etrog) which Jews wave on Sukkot. The face of this Jew is a bird's head with a beak.

Why are bird representations popular in Jewish medieval and synagogue art? The most common scholarly explanation is that the birds' heads on the human bodies were supposed to distort the image enough to make it clear that the artist

was not violating the Second Commandment against making graven images. Some Jewish manuscripts portrayed full male figures but gave the female figures birds' heads, which was probably supposed to be for the sake of modesty. These bird heads on human figures up until now have almost exclusively been found in Ashkenazi Jewish art, especially manuscripts from Germany,¹¹ so their discovery in Portugal as well is a very interesting development.

I would like to suggest another possible explanation that stems from a word play between Portuguese and Hebrew. The birds on the Carçao lintel are very likely cranes/ storks or herons, called "garcera" in Spanish and "garça" in Portuguese, which is derived from the Spanish/ Latin word "gracia," which means grace. In Hebrew grace is "hessed," and one of the largest birds that passes over the land of Israel is a type of "garça" (in Portuguese) or "hassida" (in Hebrew), i.e. the stork / crane. In Hebrew a righteous and God-fearing person is called a "hasid," which is from the same root as "hassida," the crane or stork. To summarize all this multi-lingual confusion, "garça" (stork) reminds us of "gracia" (grace), which is "hessed" in Hebrew, which also gives us the Hebrew word for a righteous person, "hasid," leading us back to the stork, "hassida" in Hebrew. Word plays like this are an important way of connecting and identifying ideas with one another in Jewish interpretation.

This metaphor of storks and righteousness in the medieval European Jewish mindset was connected with Jeremiah 8:5-7. *"Why has this people slidden back, Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return. I listened and heard, but they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course, as the horse rushes into the battle. **Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD.**"* Another important text



¹ Epstein, Marc Michael. *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, p. 118.

¹¹ Gutmann, Joseph, Evelyn M. Cohen, Menachem Schmelzer, and Malachi Beit-Arie. "An Introduction to Hebrew Manuscripts," Session 3. "The Decoration of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts." Found on July 29, 2010 at <http://www.fathom.com/course/72810016/session3.html> and "The Birds' Head Haggadah." *Jewish Heritage Online Magazine*. Found on July 29, 2010 at <http://jhom.com/topics/birds/haggadah.htm>.

along these same lines appears in Deuteronomy 33:8-9, *“And of Levi he said: ‘Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your righteous ones [hasidecha= interpreted as the Levites] whom You tested at Massah, and with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah, who says of his father and mother, ‘I have not seen them.’ Nor did he acknowledge his brothers, or know his own children; for they have observed Your word and kept Your covenant.”*”

These birds on the lintel stone in Carçao are a statement of resistance, symbolizing both hope for deliverance from Catholicism and Christian oppression and an acknowledgement of their brotherhood and common destiny with the rest of the Jewish people. Another important matter concerns the relationship of these birds to the cross on the lintel. The picture carved into the stone shows their heads down, and they are posed in an attitude of submission or conformity. One could hypothesize that these birds are worshipping the cross and are submitted to it, but it is also possible that they are kneeling to the cross under compulsion and are unhappy about their state. One must also note that the stand upon which the cross is set in this carving looks like a menorah stand, which could possibly convey a message that although the cross is a symbol of oppression, it too is Jewish in origin. This might sound far-fetched, but under oppressive conditions people often have ambivalent attitudes, even toward their oppressors.

Turning now to the lion or elephant, we must note that many ancient and medieval synagogues traditionally had bird and lion symbols on or around the Holy Ark. Medieval Jewish midrash associated the birds around the Ark both with the Levites who transported the Ark of the Covenant and the two Cherubim figures that stood on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle.^{III} As for lions, they commonly symbolize royalty, strength, power, justice, guardianship, dominion, and courage. “In addition to being a symbol of physical strength, the lion represents spiritual strength, especially scholarship.”^{IV} Most importantly for Jews, however, lions symbolize the tribe of Judah and the Davidic Kingdom. Archaeologists have found lions adorning synagogues from as early as the Third Century synagogue of Dura Europus in Syria. The synagogue of Hammat Tiberia (circa 1380 CE), south of the city of Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee contains several mosaics of lions. In fact, lions appear in Byzantine (and slightly earlier) synagogues all over the Land of Israel, including Bar-Am, Beit Alfa, Korazin, Beit Shean, Ein Samsum, and Jericho, as well as

III Epstein, p. 58.

IV Frankel, Ellen and Betsy Platkin Teutsch. “Lion,” *Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*. London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995, pp. 98-100.

in the Diaspora because lions had a particular importance to the Jewish people over the ages. Lions were a symbol of the hope of Israel and the revival of the Davidic / Messianic Kingdom promised by the Prophets. Lions also connected with the story of Daniel in the lion’s den, as a symbol of resistance and survival during the challenges of oppression.^V This motif becomes very important when used in a situation of oppression, discrimination, and persecution such as the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions.

On the other hand, the carved animal on the bottom of the Carçao lintel stone might not be a lion at all. At first glance it appeared to be a lion, but when I looked at the picture again it looked much more like an elephant because of its long nose and elephant-like head. Elephants are not very common in synagogue decorations and have not been commonly recognized as Jewish symbols. The Hebrew word for elephant, “pil,” never even occurs in the Bible, although it seems that 1 Kings 10:22 and 2 Chronicles 9:21 indirectly mention them in discussing the ivory that Solomon imported.^{VI} 1 Maccabees recounts the story of a battle in which the Greek army used elephants (sort of like an ancient tank) against the Jews in Israel. When I started researching this idea, I was surprised at how many times elephants figure in Rabbinic Literature, usually as a metaphor for the largest possible animal, “from the elephant to the gnat.”^{VII} There are a few medieval synagogues in which elephants appear in a very prominent position right next to the Holy Ark. Among other Jewish manuscript decorations containing elephants, the Worms Machzor, a festival prayer book completed in 1272 and now housed in the Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem, has a color plate (number VII) of a magnificent elephant right on the opening page.

An early example of an elephant in a Jewish context is a mosaic floor in the Sixth Century synagogue of Ma’on at Nirin, Israel. Domesticated elephants wearing saddles are

V For examples of such texts in the Bible see: Gen. 49:9, *“Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?”* or Jer. 49:19, *“Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain of the Jordan against the dwelling place of the strong; but I will suddenly make him run away from her. And who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her? For who is like Me? Who will arraign Me? And who is that shepherd Who will withstand Me?”* In the NT see 2 Tim. 4:17, *“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”*

VI Hyvernat, Henry and Emil G. Hirsch, “Elephant,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901-1906, p. 105.

VII See the following references in Rabbinic Literature: bBerachot 56b, 58b, bKidushin 25b, bBaba Batra 22a, bMenachot 69a, Mi-drash Leviticus p 6:3, Psikta Rabbati p 20, etc.

featured among other familiar symbols from the natural world and Jewish ceremonial symbols like a menorah, a lulav and etrog, lions, palm trees, and free and caged birds. In an Eighteenth Century synagogue in what was formerly Poland, now Lithuania, and in a Seventeenth Century synagogue at Hordova, (Ukraine), elephants are paired next to a depiction of the Ark of the Torah. The paired animal motif is common but usually features birds or lions. It is difficult to explain the presence of the elephants, since they are so far from the cultural or geographic context of European Jews. Therefore, we need to seek possible allegorical or mystical reasons for their use. Elephants were better known as Christian symbols than Jewish ones, but it seems that when used in a Jewish context the elephant symbolizes the Torah and its strength, power, and greatness.^{VIII}

Here is one interesting medieval Christian parable from the Cambridge Bestiary about an elephant, in which the elephant symbolizes the weakness and sinful nature of humanity. *“The elephant’s nature is that if he tumbles down he cannot get up again. Hence it comes that he leans against a tree when he wants to go to sleep, for he has no joints in his knees. This is the reason why a hunter partly saws through a tree, so that the elephant, when he leans against it, may fall down at the same time as the tree. As he falls, he calls out loudly; and immediately a large elephant appears, but it is not able to lift him up. At this they both cry out, and twelve more elephants arrive upon the scene: but even they cannot lift up the one who has fallen down. Then they all shout for help, and at once there comes a very Insignificant Elephant, and he puts his mouth with the proboscis under the big one, and lifts him up..... When the Big Elephant arrives, i.e. the Hebrew Law, and fails to lift up the fallen, it is the same as when the Pharisee failed with the fellow who had fallen among thieves. Nor could the Twelve Elephants, i.e. the Band of Prophets, lift him up, just as the Levite did not lift up the men we mentioned. But it means that Our Lord Jesus Christ, although he was the greatest, was made the Most Insignificant of All the Elephants. He humiliated himself and was made obedient even unto death, in order that he might raise men up.”^{IX}*

VIII Epstein, p. 44.

IX This English translation is taken from Epstein, pp. 41-43, who copied it from White, Theodore H. *The Book of Beasts*. New York, 1954.

The Twelfth Century Karaite scholar Yehudah Hadassi took this Christian parable and rewrote it in a way which polemicized against Rabbinic Jews, with the fallen elephant symbolizing those who followed the Oral Law. Then in the Thirteenth Century, Rabbi Berechiah HaNakdan adapted this story further in his book *Mishlei Shualim (Fables of Foxes)*. In this version, when the elephant hunter cannot succeed alone, he captures the beast with the help of friends,

covers the elephant’s head with his coat, and rides it into villages in order to terrify the inhabitants into fleeing the “demon,” leaving all their treasures behind for him and his friends to rob and pillage. This clever thief then offers to “exorcise” the demon from the terrified towns in exchange for half of their riches. The people agree to pay the price, and their fate changes. After an extended and complex analysis of this fable, Epstein proposes this interpretation. “Christianity, personified by Esau the hunter, at first attempts to combat and destroy the Torah. When this fails, the Church enlists the aid of many scholars and interpreters (the people of the town) to ‘master the Law’ and triumphalistically [sic] terrify the opponents of Christianity (the Jews), gathering up their intellectual treasures- even those which were most secretly hidden- and lording it over them... Ultimately, the Christians reject half of their newfound wealth (the teachings of the Oral Law), but the riches they have gained through their corrupt use of the Torah (the exegesis of the Written Law), they keep for themselves.”^X In all of these tales, the elephant is symbolic of the Torah.

Whether or not, the carving on the underside of the Carçao lintel is an elephant or a lion, it had a special Jewish meaning to the Anussim who carved it. By making these symbols, they were expressing their identity as Jews in hiding who had been forced to submit to the cross physically but who would never forget who they were or their hope for a time when they could freely choose their religious acts and beliefs. These carvings expressed their pain, while simultaneously giving them strength and hope for a future of freedom and joy. ♦

X Epstein, p. 53.

A ceiling painting in a Seventeenth Century synagogue at Hordova, Ukraine.



A mosaic floor in the Sixth Century synagogue of Ma'on at Nirin, Israel.

Political and Religious Factors in the Spanish Inquisition

Elizabeth Wakefield¹

Jews have lived in the Iberian peninsula since ancient times, perhaps even since the First Exile in 586 BCE. Yet we know very little about their existence there before 418 CE, from which we have a record of a pogrom and the forced conversion to Christianity of the Jews of the island of Minorca. After the Visigoths (German tribes who embraced heretical Arian Christianity) toppled the Western Roman Empire in 476, they soon also invaded and conquered Iberia, which had been a Roman province. The Arian Christian rulers temporarily lived in relative peace with the Jews, putting what had become the “normal” Jewish restrictions on them, including special taxes. When the Visigoth king converted to Roman Catholicism in 589, however, he began persecuting the Jews to force them to convert or emigrate, something which was also happening in neighboring France and North Africa. Many Jews were forcibly converted, but a number of others were sheltered from persecution by the still Arian nobility, who needed the Jews to help them run their estates. Yet in 634 the Visigothic Code enacted harsh restrictions prohibiting much of Jewish religious observance and property ownership.

Meanwhile in Arabia in 610, Mohammed began preaching Islam, a militant religion that spread rapidly throughout the Middle East and Africa. In 711 they invaded Iberia and quickly toppled the Visigoths from power in nearly the entire peninsula, establishing a caliphate in Cordoba and ruling the land with the Islamic custom of those days of toleration for Christians and Jews, as long as they submitted to Muslim rule. Although the Spanish Jews had long been accused of trying to topple the Christian government, little is known about their role in this war. One could easily imagine, however, that the Muslim conquest with its policy of relative toleration was a relief to the Jews after 100 years of severe Visigothic persecution. In 750 the even more moderate Muslim Umayyad Dynasty gained control of most of Iberia,

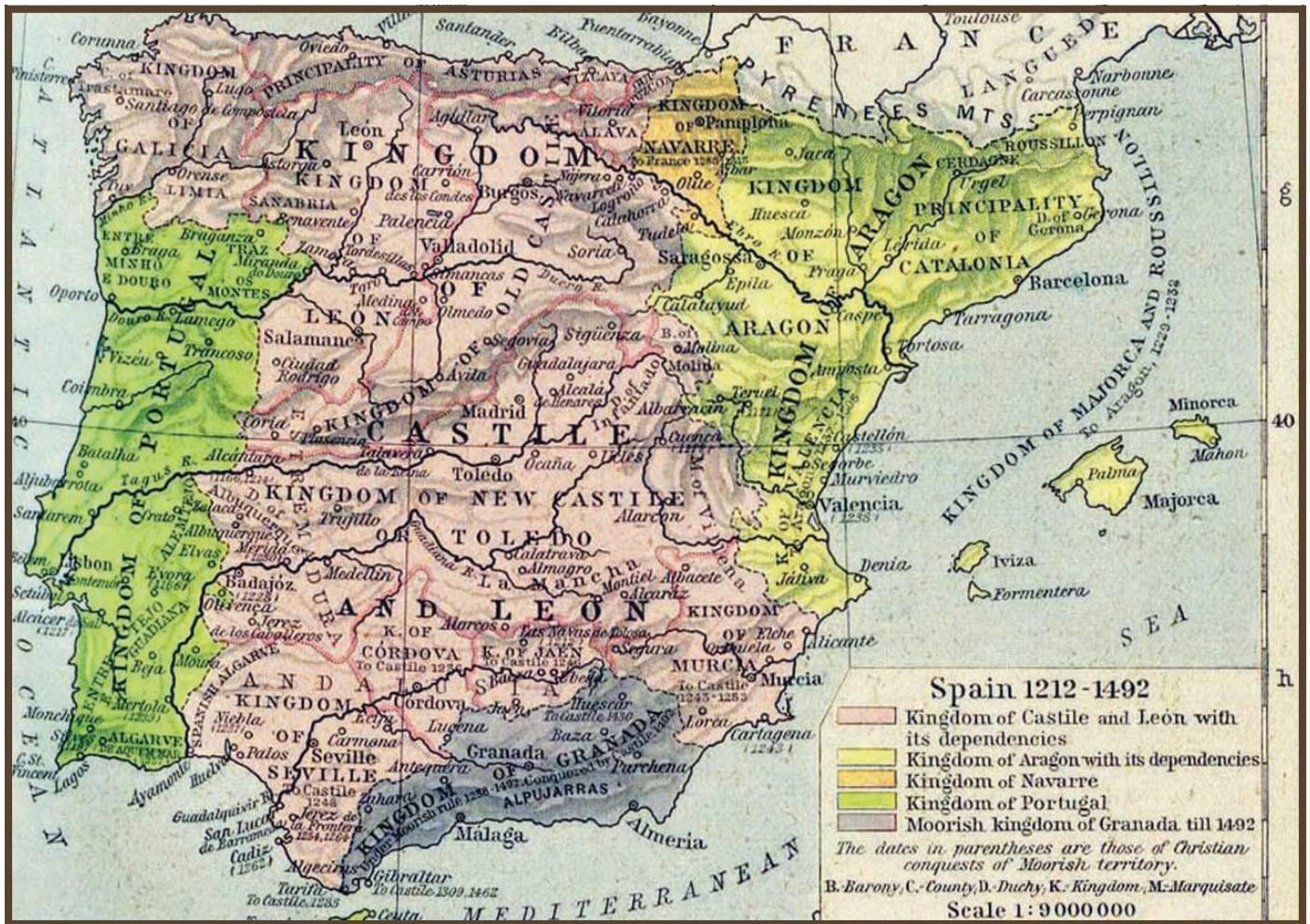
and they granted the Jews nearly equal rights. The alien Muslim rulers of the indigenous Spanish population used the Jews as intermediaries between them and their subjects in matters of taxation and government, and many Jews rose to great wealth and power in Islamic Iberia.

The Visigoths did not give up so easily, however, and launched counterattacks against the Muslims, leading to the establishment of small Christian kingdoms in various cities around Castille. Because they needed Jewish support in these battles and in order to run their kingdoms, they ceased persecuting the Jews in their areas and granted them rights and government positions. Internal Muslim religious and political rivalries soon broke up their Spanish empire into many small kingdoms, making it easier for the Christians to re-conquer their land one city or small kingdom at a time.

In the endless battles that followed, both the Muslim and Christian rulers competed for Jewish support and loyalty by granting them power and rights, leading to a great improvement in Spanish Jewish life and scholarship. Jews served in the courts as doctors, writers, treasurers, tax-farmers, diplomats, foreign ministers, and even “prime ministers” of sorts. Despite occasional outbreaks of persecution and riots in various towns, Iberia quickly became the best place in Europe for Jews, giving rise to tremendous population growth, literature, scholarship, wealth, and a flourishing religious and political life. Some of the greatest Jewish scholars, including the Rambam, the Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Judah Halevi lived in Spain in this Golden Era, which some Jews even hailed as the fulfillment of the Messianic Age. Not all was peaceful and prosperous for the Jews, however.

Faced with Islamic conquests all over the world, Christianity also became increasingly militant, and the Church launched the First Crusade in 1096, which perpetrated many atrocities against all the Jews and Muslims in its path to the Holy Land. Likewise, during this time the Spanish Christian kingdoms began trying to permanently re-conquer Iberia, working from north to south. This war of Reconquest continued for hundreds of years of fighting, retreating, and advancing, leaving the people never certain from one day to the next which government would rule them. Most of the time the new Muslim or Christian rulers kept the

¹ This article is based primarily on the chronology presented in Baer, Yitzhak. *The History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Vols. 1-2. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961, with other details included from Lindo, Elias Haim. *The History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970, and the lectures of Professor Yom-Tov Assis of Hebrew University.



Jews in their court positions to stabilize the government, but occasionally there were still anti-Jewish riots, pillaging, and murders carried out by both sides of the conflict, since the peasants viewed the Jews as agents of whichever government they were rebelling against. This violent turmoil led many Jews to seek refuge in Kabbala, messianic pretenders, and apocalyptic expectations that this war would be the “birth pangs of the Messiah” and culminate in the Messianic Age.

The Muslims imported more fighters from North Africa to retake their positions, the Almorivides and the Almohades, the latter of which were a more fanatical sect of Islam. When they invaded southern Iberia around 1140, they killed any Jews and Christians who refused conversion to Islam. Even Rambam’s family had to temporarily convert to Islam to save their lives before they managed to flee. This fanaticism led most of the Jews to flee northward into the Christian kingdoms, in which they were considered the personal property of the kings whose whims determined the fate of their lives and fortunes. Each ruler pursued his own contradictory policy towards the Jews, some writing highly restrictive laws but not

enforcing them, others leaving them alone completely, and still others engaging in severe persecution.

In 1182, France became the first country to expel all its Jews, and although it let them return a few years later, it set a precedent of expulsion. Contemporaneously, anti-Jewish actions and sentiment increased all over Europe, with France putting the Talmud on public trial and burning it in the streets before expelling all its Jews again in 1254. Many anti-Semitic Frenchmen moved into northern Iberia, and popular sentiment against the Jews kept growing.

The Christian rulers sought to solve their “Jewish problem” through forcing the Jews to listen to sermons about the superiority of Christianity. They hoped to keep the Jews with their money and scholarship in the country and to simply convince them to convert through these missionary endeavors. Some did convert for various economic and occasionally religious reasons, but many of them became virulent anti-Semites who collaborated with the Church hierarchy to denounce Jews and used their skills in Bible and Talmud to attack Judaism. They also wrote apologetic books

and tracts to prove the Messiah had already come by using passages in the Bible and Talmud.

In 1263 a Jewish convert renamed Pablo Christiani convinced King Jaime I to force the Jews to publicly debate him in Barcelona. Nachmanides was chosen as the Jewish champion, and the Jews were compelled to listen to the debate. The king guaranteed the right to free speech in this now infamous Barcelona Disputation, and in the end both sides naturally claimed victory.

The Jews who did convert quickly found out that being “Christians” still did not guarantee their safety, as they then became subject to suspicions and accusations of mixed loyalties, a lack of true Christian zeal and belief, and the secret practice of Jewish rites. Some were tried by the Inquisition, the Papal commission to investigate and eliminate heresies within the Church. Contrary to popular misconceptions about the Inquisition, it had little to no power over Jews and in fact only had jurisdiction to try Jews who had converted to Christianity. Other victims of this early Inquisition were French Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism while still in France, fled to Spain, and with new identities tried to return to Judaism in their new communities. Jews who helped their former co-religionists return to Judaism were punished with high fines and property confiscation.

At this stage of the Reconquest, the Muslims retreated to the southern end of Iberia, in the area of Granada, with the Christian kings consolidating their small holdings into several larger kingdoms- Aragon, Castille, Catalonia, Navarre, and Portugal. By the end of the Thirteenth Century, the whims of the Christian kings became more consistently negative toward the Jews, although there were still occasional cases of indispensable Jewish government officials. As the Christian kingdoms established themselves more securely, the populace successfully lobbied for their removal and the reduction of Jewish privileges, and the kings began to use them as a source of tax revenue at a very high rate instead. The missionary campaigns continued with Jews being forced to listen to apologetic sermons, often followed by riots in which peasant mobs killed or baptized any Jews they found on the streets and looted their property, in what was just a small foreshadowing of what was to come. Historian Yitzhak Baer says of this era, “The war of Reconquest was virtually ended, and existing borders were being carefully guarded. The Spanish rulers now began to bring their treatment of the Jews in line with the prevailing nationalist and religious mood of Christian Europe.... It was directed, consciously or unconsciously, toward the assimilation and absorption of the Jews into the Christian society or, failing that, their expulsion

from the land.”^{II} “There is no doubt but that status of the Jews of Spain in the thirteenth century was superior to that of their brethren in the rest of Europe, who were exposed to constant plunder and violence. Yet even in Spain they felt a sense of insecurity and a consciousness of a state of internal war. The Jews sat on the crater of a volcano seething with religious and nationalist tensions.”^{III}

This state of affairs continued until in the mid-1300s a civil war broke out in Castille over who was the legitimate king. Each rival fined the Jews huge sums to finance the war and imported English and French mercenary troops, who frequently massacred the Jewish communities of the towns they conquered. Blood libels, hostile informers, and host [Eucharist bread] desecration charges popped up and spread all over the peninsula in the decades following the war and brought many sorrows. By the end of the 1300s, many young Jews became discouraged with their restrictions and persecutions and began converting to Christianity for their own social benefit. “A new type of apostate now emerged. Previously, Jewish apostates had entered their new faith as penitents, become monks, and appeared in public chiefly as persecutors of and missionaries to their former co-religionists. Now, change of religion was prompted by political considerations, serving as an ‘administrative ticket’ to a world that was wholly secular and to a career in the civil and political bureaucracy.”^{IV}

In 1378 Archbishop Ferrant Martinez began preaching sermons urging violence against the Jews in Seville. Action did not follow immediately, but the king feared to try to stop him, and when the king died in 1390, leaving the crown prince still a minor, the cataclysm began. On June 4, 1391, Martinez incited anti-Jewish riots in Seville which spread to nearly every city and town in Castille within a month. Whole Jewish communities were wiped out by murder and conversion, some by force and some by choice, with synagogues torn down and property looted. In July and August these riots spread to Aragon, Valencia, the islands, and Catalonia, with only Navarre remaining relatively unscathed. In some cases the rulers attempted to save their Jews by granting them temporary refuge in their castles, sending a few troops to quell the rioters, and punishing a handful of the ringleaders. For the most part, however, the rulers waited until the storm was over and then contented themselves with launching weak investigations into what had happened and confiscating for themselves the property of the Jewish martyrs. A few Jews, such as Rabbi Hasdai Crescas,

II Baer, vol 1, p. 178.

III Ibid, p 181.

IV Baer, vol 2, pp. 93-94.

“Moderate Christians felt that compulsory baptism was not pleasing in the sight of God; but, once they were baptized, the converts were regarded by canon law as Christians, and those who reverted to their former religion, as well as those who encouraged them to do so, were considered heretics...” (Yitzhak Baer)

managed to hide or flee until the riots ended and so preserve their lives and religion, but scholars estimate that only a third of Spain's Jewish population survived the summer of 1391 and did their best to rebuild their shattered communities. Even many of the community leaders and rabbis converted to Christianity in this period and the decades that followed, making restoration very difficult.

These riots were the source of Spain's converso problem. “Moderate Christians felt that compulsory baptism was not pleasing in the sight of God; but, once they were baptized, the converts were regarded by canon law as Christians, and those who reverted to their former religion, as well as those who encouraged them to do so, were considered heretics.... The public, whether Christian by birth or conversion, voluntarily maintained a close watch upon the behavior of the conversos.”^v Some of these Anussim eventually managed to flee to Israel or other countries under Muslim rule where they re-adopted Judaism, but the majority stayed in their homes in hopes they could outlast the persecutions and return to their faith when times became more favorable to Jews.

Then in the early 1400s a preacher named Vincent Ferrer began to stir up anti-Jewish riots in Castille and convinced the king to enact severely restrictive laws in 1412 in hopes the Jews would convert to avoid them. He also propagated similar laws in Aragon and then convinced the Pope to force the Jews of Aragon and Catalonia to supply spokesmen for and attend a disputation in Tortosa against the prominent convert Joshua Halorki. The Tortosa Disputation continued for 14 long months in 1413-1414, ending with a self-proclaimed Christian victory. It led to many conversions due to the lower scholarship and lack of freedom of speech granted the Jewish defendants, the absence of the Jewish leaders from their communities since they were required in Tortosa, and the hostile tactics of the Christian accusers. Next the Church demanded that the Jews defend the Talmud in another disputation in San Mateo for the rest of 1414, which the Jewish scholars escaped by saying that they were too ignorant to respond to the charges and begging to return home. Riots, forced conversions, and more restrictive

anti-Jewish laws followed the Disputations, which nearly decimated the community until a political accident set milder kings on the thrones of Castille and Aragon and a milder Pope in Rome who granted the remaining Jews a few of their former rights.

The Jewish community of Castille underwent a brief revival in the Fifteenth Century with the eased restrictions, and many of the Anussim returned to Judaism as best they could or at least kept Jewish traditions in secret while officially being Christians. They visited and contributed to synagogues, asked rabbis for halachic opinions, and practiced Jewish rituals. Most of the Anussim failed to integrate into Christian society, which differed from them greatly and always regarded them with suspicion. Most of these Jews were too wealthy and educated to fit in with the Christian peasants but not wealthy, educated, or “pure-blooded” enough to be accepted by the Christian upper classes. A few conversos rose to great heights of power in the Church and the government since they were now unrestricted by anti-Jewish laws, became targets of Jewish contempt, and in turn ridiculed and made Jewish life more difficult in an attempt to deny their connection to them. From 1449 onward, however, race riots broke out in several cities between the “Old Christians” and the “New Christians,” with the former claiming that these Jews had converted in order to destroy the Church from within and to dilute the “pure Spanish blood” with their Jewish descent. It was not long before the Inquisition resumed, dragging many of the Anussim to trial, torturing them, and forcing them to confess to being secret Jews before their execution. Despite these dangers, many of them still participated in the Jewish community whenever they could, and the Jews tried to aid their brothers' return to Judaism.

In 1469 when Isabella, the heiress of the throne of Castile, married Ferdinand, the prince of Aragon, both Jews and Anussim alike were still being slaughtered in all of the peninsula. In 1479 the couple inherited their respective crowns, united the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile into “Spain,” and proceeded to reorganize their kingdom politically, socially, and religiously in their goal to establish a state of “law, justice, and religious unity.” At first they remained relatively tolerant of the Jews and Anussim,

^v Baer, vol 2, pp. 124-125.

many of whom served as their close advisors. Yet by 1480 Ferdinand and Isabella decided to purify the Spanish Church by forcibly separating the Jews from the Anussim. They therefore decreed that Christians, Muslims, and Jews live in separate districts and minimize contact with one another in order to prevent the Jews from influencing their brothers to return to Judaism, and they hand-picked their own Church officials to run the Spanish Inquisition. Within only twelve years thousands of Anussim had been burned at the stake and many more forced to repent in public and return to the Church after torture and trials that ignored all principles of justice.

Several Anussim personally traveled to Rome in 1483 to request Papal intervention, and he shortly afterward demanded legal trials, the right to appeal, and the removal of some of the worst inquisitors. Ferdinand and Isabella were infuriated at the Pope's attempt to reduce their power and redoubled their efforts, as they appointed their own new chief inquisitor, Thomas Torquemada, and effectively "nationalized the Inquisition" in order to bypass the Pope's leniencies. The Spanish Inquisition "thereby became a political institution even though its purely religious character was not obscured."^{VI} In that same year they decided to solve the converso problem in one province by expelling all the Jews from it, a solution they were to pursue *en masse* in the future.

VI Baer, vol 2, p. 333.

As the Inquisition moved from city to city, its usual method was to first proclaim a "period of grace" in which any converso had a month to come to the court, confess his Jewish practices, repent, receive mild penalties, and be received back into the Church. After this grace period finished, however, the court encouraged anonymous denunciations of Anussim by "Old Christians," fellow converts, servants, family members, and even Jews. There is no space here to recount all the travesties of justice that occurred in these "trials," which spared no one, regardless of class, position, or wealth. As the Inquisition approached each city in succession, many Anussim fled and so succeeded in only being burned in effigy. Of those who remained, some were let off with various penalties or imprisonment, but the majority was condemned and burned at the stake. This process culminated in a huge show trial in 1491, which had the goal of "uncovering the Judaizing tendencies within the *conversos* and with the influence wielded on the latter by the Jewish community itself."^{VII}

During Ferdinand and Isabella's reign, they renewed the war of Reconquest against the Muslims in their last Iberian stronghold, Granada. After a ten year war, on January 2, 1492, they finally drove the last Muslim armies out of Spain, entered Granada, and officially united the entire peninsula

VII Ibid, p. 423.



The Alhambra Palace, the last Muslim stronghold in Granada, Andalusia, Spain.
Photo by Vicente Villamón.

under Christian rule. Now that they had accomplished their goal of reunification and the absolute political power of the Church in Spain, they made new plans for the Jews, whom they no longer needed to help them win the war. "It was the politics of the Reconquista which had originally established the peculiar status of the Jews in the Christian states of the Iberian Peninsula. With the consummation of the great scheme of unifying all Spain under Christian rule, the political foundation of the Spanish Jewish community was undermined."^{VIII}

The Inquisition had clearly revealed that as long as a Jewish community existed in Spain the Anussim would be drawn to return to it, since all other methods of separation had failed. Therefore on March 31, 1492, (the same year "Columbus sailed the ocean blue") the monarchs signed the Edict of Expulsion which ordered all the Jews to leave Spain before the 9 of Av (in July) of that same year and forbade them to take most of their wealth with them. At the same time the Church promoted conversion as an alternative to expulsion, and thousands flocked to be baptized. Beginning in May the government seized the Jewish quarters and property, with all those who were able to do so (about 50,000) boarding ships and sailing to Muslim countries for refuge. France forbade the entry of Jews, so the only land emigration options were Portugal, which allowed 120,000 of them (at a high head tax) to enter its domain temporarily and the small kingdom of Navarre, which allowed 12,000 immigrants. Those who could not flee were forcibly baptized and soon terrorized by the Inquisition, and many of these "Christians" fled the country and "re-converted" to Judaism in the coming years. There is no space to tell of the many horrors the exiled Spanish Jews met on their journeys to find new homes and religious freedom, but many of them met death from starvation, exposure, drowning, and violence in lands far from their homes.

For the Jews who fled to Portugal the trauma had only just begun, however. Conditions for Portuguese Jews had been mostly favorable for many centuries, although they never reached the heights of the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. Unfortunately, King John II's good treatment of his own Jews did not extend to the new immigrants whom he enslaved if they stayed longer than 8 months in Portugal. He stole their children, forcibly baptized them, and then sent them to an island to be raised as Christians by strangers.

A brief respite occurred in 1495 when King Emanuel took the Portuguese throne, freed the slaves, and tried to convert them with kindness instead of cruelty. This relief lasted only one year until Emanuel desired to marry the

Spanish princess. Ferdinand and Isabella made the marriage conditional upon Emanuel expelling all the Jews from Portugal as well. He reluctantly issued an Edict of Expulsion, giving the Jews three months to leave or convert, but he in fact had no intention of allowing their wealth and talents to escape. He therefore stole and baptized as many Jewish children as he could find and ordered all those Jews who intended to emigrate to report to Lisbon in 1497, where he promised to furnish them ships for the journey. Once there they were crowded into a small area and deprived of food and water for several days until many of them accepted baptism just to escape the torment. Those who remained were driven into Rossio Square in Lisbon where dozens of priests infiltrated the crowd and sprinkled holy water on the heads of everyone within reach. The confused Jews were then informed that they had been baptized for their own sakes and also by proxy as representatives of every Jew in Portugal and that as Christians they were now forbidden to leave. They were promised a 20 year respite from the Inquisition as long as they kept their Jewish practices strictly private and sent back to their homes, with the entire Jewish community of Portugal neatly eliminated in a single day by this unique baptism by proxy. In what was to his eyes an ingenious plan, Emanuel got to keep the money and talents of his Jews, marry the princess, and still solve all his religious problems on a technicality.

Thus perished the greatest Jewish communities of the Middle Ages in a long, multi-act tragedy of religious and political factors which conspired together for their destruction. Baer summarizes the situation with these words, "History brought one of the most creative Jewish communities of the Diaspora into collaboration with one of the most gifted peoples of Christian Europe, the Spaniards. Far-reaching historical developments, affecting both groups, carried this association to dramatic heights and brought it to a tragic end. The war against their Moslem neighbors caused the Spaniards to become at once the most tolerant and the most fanatical people in medieval Christendom. The political objectives of the Reconquest opened up to the Jews broad opportunities for outwardly directed growth, but its religious motivation aroused the zeal of the Christians and subjected the internal religio-ethnic existence of the Jews to a severe trial."^{IX}

The long and bitter exile exacted its terrible price, which only in our generation finally has a chance for redemption. May we be quick to seize this, our first and last opportunity to release our brothers in captivity. ♦

VIII Baer, vol 2, p. 432.

IX Baer, vol 1, pp. 2-3.

Zalman Shneur:

“Thus Said Don Henriques”



Udi Zofef

The poet Zalman Shneur (1887-1959), alongside more familiar names such as Chaim Nachman Bialik and Shaul Tchernikovsky, belonged to a distinguished group of pioneers who were responsible for the renaissance of the Hebrew language. Like most of his generation in the Russian Diaspora, Shneur had an Orthodox Jewish upbringing, but as many of his contemporaries, he was exposed to the new winds of radical change that grasped the Jewish world in those days as it opened itself up to the wide world of secular and foreign culture. This new development, which caused deep controversy in the Jewish world, also meant a new encounter with the text of the New Testament, from which Orthodox Jews had always distanced themselves up until the time of the Haskalah, “the Jewish Enlightenment.” Scholars found that they could not deal with Russian literature and poetry, which were greatly influenced by Christian Mysticism, without recognizing the New Testament’s impact on European culture, literature, arts and philosophy. The formerly forbidden text became a cornerstone of cultural influence to Jewish authors who re-evaluated the place of Yeshua and his disciples in history, especially their crucial role in fulfilling the Messianic prophecies about bringing the Gentiles into God’s kingdom. This first-hand exposure of Jewish writers to the New Testament and the personality of Yeshua also brought a fresh outlook on his spiritual world and a realization that it was no less Jewish than theirs.

In her comprehensive and challenging research on the presence of Yeshua in modern Hebrew literature¹, Neta Shtahl observes an interesting attitude shift among the authors and poets who lived in the new Israeli environment and were free of the heavy burdens that Christian history had laid on the exiled Jews of Europe. Yeshua was no longer the ultimate stranger to them, but rather a newly discovered, lost brother. Instead of being perceived as the creator of a new religion who was hostile to the Jews, his personal biography began to be seen as the prototype of the collective biography of his nation and their suffering and persecution. This new perception of Yeshua rose to great heights in the mouth of Don Henriques, one of the countless converted Jews of Spain who is the speaker in one of Shneur’s poems. In this poem this “Marrano” opens a long monologue in which he calls out to his “Brother of old” while he was burning at the stake for observing Jewish rituals in secret. This poem is very long, but here are a few excerpts translated into English from the original Hebrew.

¹ Stahl, Neta. *Tzelem: Representations of Jesus in 20th century Hebrew Literature*. Resling, 2008.

**“Thus said Don Henriques, in flames at the stake,
As a crucifix of the Savior sways in the wind before him:
‘Son of Man from Nazareth, Yeshua, my brother of old!
With your garment stained in solitary confinement, you hid the light of the sun;
With your pierced feet you have reddened all rivers of Spain.
None is holy but you, and none afflicted for heaven’s sake,
Besides Yeshua the Jew, crucified at Golgotha.”**

This is a very dramatic statement for any Jew to make, let alone one who had experienced the hardships of Jewish life in Russia, where Christian anti-Semitism, persecution, and pogroms were daily routine. Nevertheless, he saw a common thread woven through generations of afflictions brought

upon the Jews by the Gentiles, going from the persecution of a Galilean Jew by the Romans, to his brothers in the times of Spanish Inquisition, and even to his own experience of exile and persecution in Russia. In retrospect, he has some good advice for his Brother of old:

**“Don’t trust the Gentiles, Yeshua.
Through hundreds of years of wandering I have learnt their talk, and their secret I have known.
As the straw to the mouths of tigers, so is your mercy tasteless to their hearts;
In their temples Moloch is still alive, the craving for prey still in their blood.”**

“A day shall come, and it is not far”, foresees Don Henriques, when Yeshua will be chased away from the countries of the Gentiles, thrown out of their churches, and his crucifix removed from their necks. “Go away, dirty Jew!” they will shout after him, “You have deceived us far too long.” The concluding piece of this long poem portrays Yeshua leaning on his broken cross as a crutch and embarking on his

last Crusade back home to the hills of Judea. The powerful images of the poem are quite breathtaking as long lines of Jewish “Pietas” (mourning women) will wait on both sides of the road leading to Jerusalem to welcome the returning brother. Each one of them will recognize in him her husband, son, or brother that she has lost:

**“And you, the noble martyr leading the camp,
Shall be met by a new Sanhedrin wearing new sky-blue prayer shawls.
They shall lead you to the banks of the Jordan, to baptize in its holy water....
Purified, fresh, and polished, as Naaman in his day,
We shall receive you with songs of salvation, with new psalms,
Our arms and hearts open with love.”**

Having returned from their long exile, Yeshua and his brethren are re-united, just like Joseph and his brothers when he made himself known to them. With no Egyptians or Romans around, everything becomes a family matter again in this poem’s vision of the future. Although the “happy

ending” of Don Henriques’ vision starts to get charred by the flames coming up from the stake upon which he is burning, he calls out in his last breath to the Lord asking for just a bit more strength to call to his people:

**“Listen to me! Listen all Israel!
Oh, call with me, Yeshua:
‘The Lord our God... is O-N-E!’”**

Recollections of a First Trip among the Anussim of Portugal



Rossio Square, Lisbon, Portugal. Photo by Ceinturion.

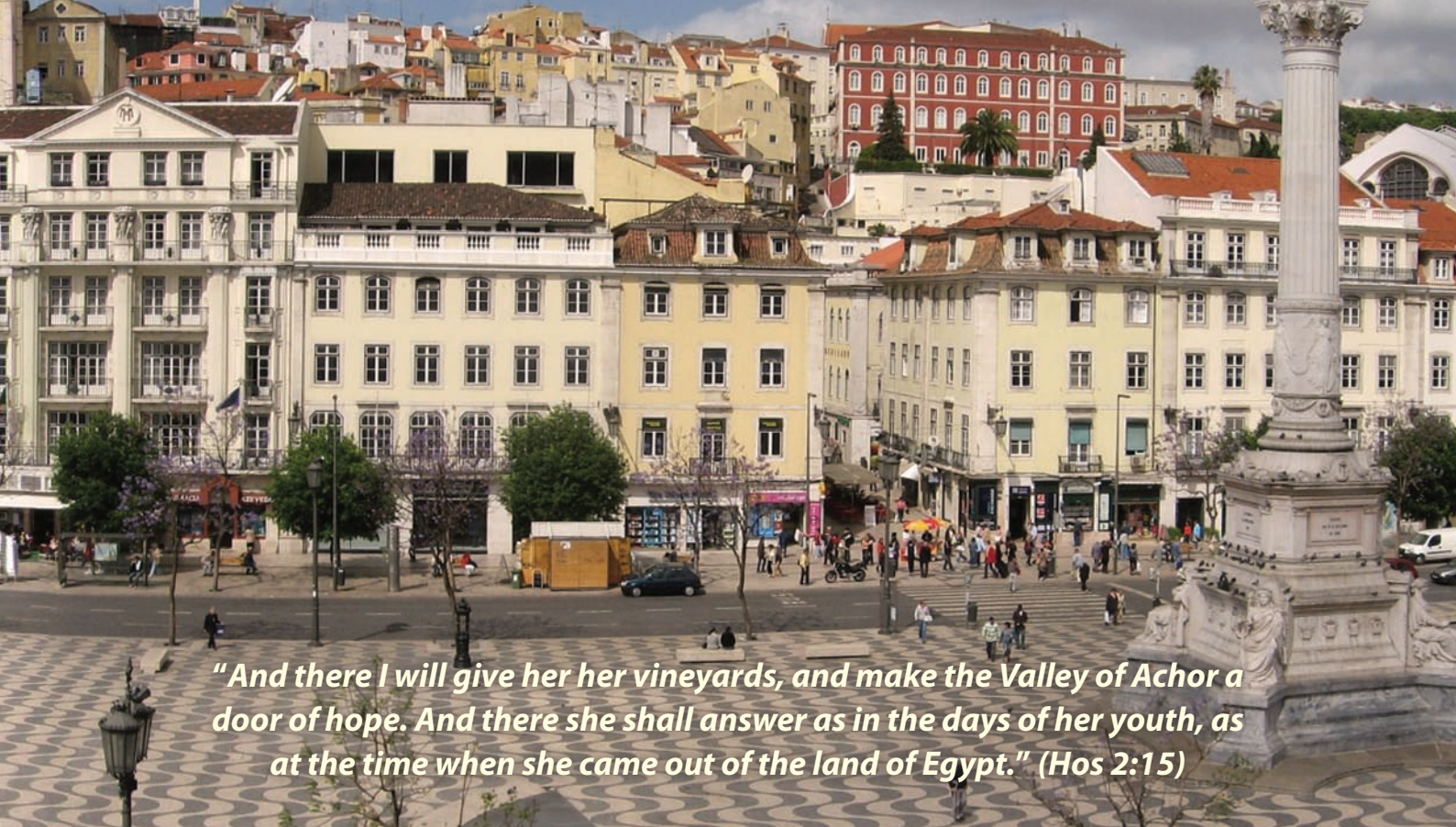
Victor Escroignard

One day in the summer of 1984 as I was reading the newsletter of the Jewish telegraphic agency, my eyes stopped on a few lines that said, “There are still Jews in Portugal - in Pinhel, Guarda, Beira, Villa Nova de Fox Coa, and Belmonte.” As I read those lines, I felt a strong internal urging that refused to leave me alone and even gave me insomnia. Although I felt that I absolutely had to go there, I soon lost my job, and my car died. I was still living in France then and went weekly to the house of Mr. Leijb Feldman for Bible study, prayer, and sharing about spiritual questions. When I told him about my burden, he listened to me, got up from his chair, went to his room, came back, gave me the documents and keys to his car with a bit of money, and told me “Go!” As I left his place, I ran into a brother in the faith in the street. We exchanged a few words, and I told him about my plan to go to Portugal. He told me, “Come and see me before you leave.” Two days later, I went to his home where we prayed together, and he gave me 70 Bibles in Portuguese and some money for the trip.

The next day at dawn I began my journey, making a stop in the Pyrenees Mountains, arriving at 3 AM in Guarda the following day. During the morning as I was looking for a room to rent, I saw a sign entitled “amidad [friendship]

Portugal-Israel.” I immediately tried to contact the organizer of this meeting, who turned out to be the journalist José Domingos. I visited the Judéria of Guarda and the municipal library, where I discovered a few documents on local Jewish history and on the Anussim. José introduced me to his grandparents in a small mountain village, where I discovered that the Anussim keep a wine carafe that they only use on Friday night, but on this occasion they took it out of the cupboard and offered the customary Friday night toast: “To Jerusalem!” I met the mayor of Vila de Meda, and on the way to the town hall, I noticed that many houses had crosses chiseled in the granite of their door posts. I later learned that this was a distinctive sign used to designate the homes of “New Christians,” in other words Anussim. These signs were used as much by the Inquisitors to identify and watch them as by the Anussim themselves to recognize each other. Later during my travels in the provinces of Beira and Trás-os-Montes in Portugal, but also in Spain in the provinces of León and Estramadura, I found this distinctive sign on many houses.

I came to Vila Nova de Fox Coa, where a teacher by the name of Pissaro showed a particular interest in local Jewish history and claimed himself to be Jewish. I learned that I was in a region commonly called “Pais dos Judéos” – the country of Jews. I was shown the ancient synagogue of the small town,



"And there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (Hos 2:15)

and I asked unsuccessfully how they knew its identity. When I asked them if they were of Jewish descent, the inhabitants seemed embarrassed. They looked at one another uncertainly, mumbling "No sé... No sé..." – "we don't know," and being frankly disturbed by the insistent question, they changed the subject.

I drove towards Beira, a small medieval city surrounded by ramparts. In order to enter the city, I had to leave the car and walk up a small rocky path to cross through the city gate. I went into the main street and walked into a kind of inn where I decided to eat. The city seemed almost deserted, and the innkeeper told me that many inhabitants had emigrated. When I asked him if there were any Jews in the city, he immediately answered "yes." When I asked him if it was possible to meet some of them, he lowered his head. I repeated the question, but he remained deaf. As soon as I crossed the doorstep to exit, a man on a terrace greeted me, and seeing that I spoke French, invited me to share a glass of Porto with him and to chat a little bit because he had worked in France. Suddenly I saw the innkeeper below us, leaning near his door, straight against the wall with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on me with an expression full of anxiety. I then understood that I had to avoid asking that fateful question concerning the Jews. I understood how heavily the original "Jewish stain" weighed on these poor people, a stain from which they could not free themselves,

like the atavism of a defect or a sort of shameful illness, the disgrace of belonging to a people who, like Cain, carries inexorably an indelible mark of belonging to the people who "killed God" in popular Christian imagination. In my later travels, I often saw this feeling of shame that had been inculcated for centuries.

I arrived at Trancoso, where I met with the younger brother of the recently elected young mayor, Mr. Lévi-Sarmiento, and I noted that the city was also heavily marked by a tragic past of Judeo-Marrano history. In Belmonte while I was buying bread, I asked the baker if there were any Jews in the area. With a movement of his chin, he pointed to a child in front of the shelves and said, "his father." I followed the child and greeted his father, telling him that I had something to share with him. When I asked him if he was Jewish, he jumped sideways in fright and looked at me from head to toe as if taken aback. I tried to reassure him that I came from France, that he had nothing to fear, and that I had a message to share with him. As he regained his composure, he showed me his house and told me to meet him there in the evening at 5 PM. At the appointed time I arrived at his home. Discreetly seated in front of the hearth of the large chimney was a frail old woman completely dressed in black, and further away from the large central table sat the child, another woman, and a pre-adolescent girl.

They invited me to sit at the table, upon which I placed

I became aware of the enormous Messianic potential that hides under the ashes among these survivors of the Inquisition, whose hope is as the burning bush by Mount Horeb, which although burning, was not consumed.

two Bibles, one in French and one in Portuguese. To my surprise, no one knew how to read except the young girl. I gave her a letter of introduction which she read aloud while standing. When the grandmother mumbled something, the mother went out discreetly and came back almost immediately with three women. They whispered together, and one of them went out and came back. Eight men then entered, then more, and in no time the room was full. They were attentive and silent in great respect as I told the young girl to read some texts in various prophetic books. She read with great care, and the listeners were seized with emotion. Quoting Isaiah 49, I told them that the time had come when God would end their disgrace and that the Lord would open their graves and bring them back to life. I saw tears streaming down some of their faces. As soon as I had finished speaking, young and old alike threw themselves at the Bible to kiss it; many even tried to kiss my hands. I was overwhelmed with emotion, too. Each one wanted a Bible, and when I told them that I had a few with me, a compact flock followed me to the car. As soon as I had opened the trunk, the 70 Portuguese Bibles disappeared. Some, frustrated not to have received one, gave me pieces of paper upon which they had written their names and addresses so that I could send them copies of the Bible when I got home.

Later, with a few elders, I was able to address some of their deeper questions pertaining to faith. They told me about some of their customs and prayers, but also about the feelings of suspicion if not hostility that they experienced from the “Old Christians.” They questioned me about my faith and about my affirmation that Yeshua is the Messiah of the Scriptures, after which some noted that this is not accepted by all Jews. Visibly this is a disturbing question because they feel and know that they are Jews. Manifestly they seem to have integrated faith in Yeshua like the Catholics around them, but they reject what they perceive as idolatry in the Church. Although they submit to the life of the Church, before crossing its doorstep, they often pronounce the following words: “O my Lord Adonai, do not consider anything that I will say or do in this place.” As soon as the freshly baptized newborn is brought back from the church, he is immediately washed off from his baptism. Before engaged couples go to the church to proceed with the marriage ceremony, the elders pronounce the ritual blessings over them at home. When a

“Judéo” kneels next to an “Old Christian” and makes the sign of the cross, he does not say “in the name of the Father” but “no to stone” (the pronunciation is almost the same in Portuguese) and the same for the following words: “in the name of the Son” becomes “no to wood,” “and the Holy Spirit” becomes “no to plaster.”

These Anussim led me into the cemetery, to the tombs of close relatives. Nothing distinguished their tombs from the others, except that they were not adorned with images. These Anussim also did not have crosses in their homes.

One family invited me to a meal for which the woman of the house had set the table in a room on the upper floor. Someone drew my attention to an image on the wall in a golden frame, which contained the portrait of a man with his head covered with a veil, who had a majestic beard and a peaceful face resting on two tablets of stone, which he held tightly in his right hand; in his other hand he held a staff. With pride and a sparkle in their eyes, they said, “Mosès! Mosès!” I then understood that we were in a privileged place, a kind of upper room in the intimate universe of these Anussim, far from the outside world, yet so close. By the grace of God, they had preserved the torch of Israel’s hope despite centuries of oppression and threats. Around the table and for the length of the meal, conversation centered around Israel and biblical prophecies in an attentive and respectful atmosphere.

As I crossed arid Spain on my return from this first trip, the strong images that I had just experienced completely overwhelmed me. I had discovered the previously unsuspected field that had unveiled before me, and these facts would be confirmed upon my subsequent trips in these regions, which still were isolated at that time in the provinces of Trás-os-Montes and Beira and later in the Alentejo. I became aware of the enormous Messianic potential that hides under the ashes among these survivors of the Inquisition, whose hope is as the burning bush by Mount Horeb, which although burning, was not consumed.

God has not finished confounding the nations!

“Comfort, comfort my people... Speak tenderly to Jerusalem... and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40:1-2) ♦

Pillars of Zion

David Bar Meir

Part 2

Elizabeth Wakefield & Naomi

In our last edition of Teaching from Zion, we began the life story of one of Netivyah's earliest members, David Bar Meir. Born in Hungary, David and two brothers alone out of all their large family survived the Holocaust. Shortly after the end of World War 2, David tried to pass through the British blockade to immigrate to Israel, was caught and held in a prison camp in Cyprus, and finally allowed to make aliyah, immediately after which he joined the Palmach and fought in many battles in Israel's War for Independence in 1948. (See the previous TFZ volume for more details). Here is the second part of his story...

After the War of Independence, I saw that the new Israeli government was very secular and unfriendly to religious soldiers because they refused to give us kosher food and made us fight on Shabbat. I believe that it is permissible to fight on Shabbat if it is absolutely necessary to save lives, but they made up excuses and said that attacking on Shabbat would give us a greater element of surprise since the Arabs would not expect us to fight that day. I thought that this was purposefully creating ways to break the Torah and therefore told the government that I would not do reserve duty after I finished the Palmach.

When I was released from the Palmach, I started looking for other believers in Jaffa and Jerusalem, and I found Rabbi Daniel Zion who lived in Jaffa. He had been the Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria before he moved to Israel. Even though he was a believer, he always stayed Orthodox also. When he came to Israel, he was offered the chance to be the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, but they told him he had to choose between this position and Yeshua. He said he would rather give up being a rabbi than Yeshua, so he became a simple rabbi in a regular synagogue in Jaffa. I lived in the same house with him for some time, and he helped me grow in my faith. The synagogue in Jaffa was just like a regular Orthodox synagogue, except that Rabbi Zion would give messages that included the New Testament, and the other members believed in Yeshua too.

I remember one Shabbat in particular at the synagogue when Yad L'achim (the anti-missionary organization) sent 3



young secular Jewish men to our service in order to disturb us. They remained quiet until Rabbi Zion mentioned some verses from the New Testament in his sermon, at which point they stood up and started yelling and arguing with him in order to keep him from speaking. I was so angry that I stood up too and told them to be quiet and respectful, but instead of sitting down they came over to me and started kicking and beating me. Then one of them ran outside and called the police on the phone to come to the synagogue. When the police came (still during the middle of the service), the 3 young visitors told the police that I had come into the synagogue uninvited and started a fistfight with them. The police wanted to arrest me right then, but I cried to them about how I did not want to ride in the police car on Shabbat,

“It is sometimes difficult to live in two worlds- the Orthodox and the believers, but Yeshua said that we would suffer if we follow Him until everyone starts believing in Him. It is important to do this- to believe in Him and to follow the Torah also.”

so they agreed to wait and hear what the rabbi said about me once the service was over. Once they talked to Rabbi Zion and found out that I was supposed to be there, they decided not to arrest me, but they just left and did not arrest the 3 troublemakers either.

My brother Yaakov finished his service in the British army and came to Israel. We moved together to Bat Yam, and then my brother Yosef arrived in Israel and came to live with us there as well. I started looking for work and ended up becoming a teacher. I taught third and fourth grade Hebrew and math for one year in a children’s institution in K’far HaRoeh near Hadera. The children were religious new immigrants from Yemen and North Africa, and they loved me. I left after only a year though because I did not think I was qualified to be a teacher, since I had never formally studied education. There is a proverb that says, “The wise learn, but the foolish teach.” I did not want to be foolish, so I decided to try a new career.

After teaching I studied in a six month long course in Haifa to learn how to be a social worker. I worked in Tiberias for a year but then decided to become an independent social worker in a village near Meron. I stayed there for four years, and Yosef came to live with me there, too.

While we had still been in Europe, my brother Yosef had decided to become a vegetarian for ethical reasons, and he convinced me that I should be one also. We were both radical vegetarians back then, although I do eat fish now. I believe we can eat fish because they are carnivores who eat each other, unlike the other kosher animals who are vegetarians too. There are two kinds of vegetarians: those who do it for health reasons and those who do it because they do not want to eat animals. I am a vegetarian in order to be healthy, and I think that everyone would be healthier if they were too. Before Noah no one ate meat, and God gave the plants to Adam to eat.

I helped found a completely vegetarian village near Meron called Amirim, which is still meat-free to this day. Unfortunately, I was also one of the first people to leave the village because I discovered that instead of eating meat, vegetarians eat one another. When I left Amirim, some of my secular friends asked me to help them start another village for secular vegetarians. I then helped bring them closer to Judaism by taking them to the synagogue and teaching them

about the mitzvot. I brought them to a friend of mine who was a *sofer* (a scribe) named Mr. Charizman who taught them about Judaism too and connected them with a young yeshiva student named Zefanya Druri, (now the chief rabbi of Kiryat Shemonah), who could help them learn more about the Torah. I also took them to visit a congregation of believers, but when Rav Druri found out that I had introduced them to some Christians, he got very angry. I had thought that he would be more tolerant because he had studied at the Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva (of Rav Kook), and Rav Kook did not have any problem with believers in Yeshua. Yet Rav Druri was different when he found out I was a believer. He called me to his house to tell me that I deserved the death penalty and that he himself was ready to throw the first stone.

We used to have weekly vegetarian group meetings with Rabbi Daniel Zion, Mr. Charizman, and other vegetarians in which we used to sit and learn together. When I told the group how Rav Druri had threatened me, they got angry at him and wrote him a letter saying he had no right to treat me like that. Then Rav Druri also told Mr. Charizman that I was a believer, so I stopped going to our vegetarian group meetings. When Mr. Charizman asked me why I had stopped coming, I said I was afraid he would be upset about me being a believer. He asked me if I said the *Shema* and laid *tefillin* every day, and since I said “yes,” he said that was enough for him. For all I know, even he might have been a secret believer. I think there were many rabbis and Jewish leaders in those days who secretly believed in Yeshua but who were afraid of the repercussions if they told, which is very sad. After my friends wrote to him, Rav Druri invited me to return to his house and to bring a New Testament. I eventually gave in and visited him but did not take a New Testament because I was afraid he might try to destroy it. We spoke briefly and ended on a cordial note, although he made more trouble for me several years later.

I moved to Jerusalem and worked as a gardener for ten years during the 50s. My friend Mr. Charizman asked me why I did not want to get married since the Torah says, “It is not good for man to be alone.” He also warned me, however, that it is not always “good for a man to be married” either. Then I met a woman who was from a secular kibbutz where they used to roast pork and eat it on Shabbat. She fell in love with me and wanted to get married. I told her that I was

the complete opposite of everything that she was: a religious, vegetarian, believer in Yeshua and that it was not a good idea. She insisted that she still wanted to marry me, though I am not even sure she understood what I meant when I said I believed in Yeshua. We got married in 1965 when I was 39, and the problems started right away. We had a daughter but got divorced when she was only a year old. My wife had not wanted any children at all and did not want to take care of even the one we had, which was a big reason we got divorced. In the divorce settlement, my wife got to raise our child, but I got to choose which school she attended and to have her stay with me every other Shabbat. I sent her to a religious school, but when she was 5 Rav Druri conspired with my wife to take my daughter away from me. He went to a *Beit Din* (religious court) and testified that I was a missionary and therefore dangerous to my daughter. They completely separated her from me and kept me from seeing her at all during her childhood.

In 1973 the Yom Kippur War broke out, and I started working for Shaarei Zedek hospital in Jerusalem. They had to send a lot of their elderly patients home to recover in order to make space for all the wounded soldiers, so I started going to these patients' homes to help take care of them and make sure they had food and medicine. I did this job for 20 years until I retired, although I still do it now as a volunteer also.

When my daughter grew up and got married, she contacted me for the first time to invite me to her wedding. She had maintained contact for all those years with my brother Yaakov, and so when she invited him, she asked me to come also. I was afraid to go and uncertain what to expect after 25 years of separation, but Yaakov refused to go without me, so I went to my daughter's wedding and reconnected with her. She and her husband are religious and have three children whom I see sometimes. They are not too happy that I am a believer, but at least we are in contact.

During my whole life in Israel I have been persecuted by Yad L'Achim for being a believer. They posted notices all over town with my picture and phone number warning people that I was a missionary. In the Nachlaot neighborhood people still call me "the missionary." Yad L'Achim sent all kinds of stupid people to argue with and persecute me, and I am convinced that there are no normal people who work with them. They still threaten me a lot, although they have never actually attempted to kill me. One time they did beat my brother Yosef almost to death at the Kotel though. I would like to write a letter to the newspapers about how this organization is endangering Jews all over the world with their terrible behavior against believers in Israel. It is sometimes difficult to live in two worlds- the Orthodox and the believers,

but Yeshua said that we would suffer if we follow Him until everyone starts believing in Him. It is important to do this- to believe in Him and to follow the Torah also. There will come a time when the trials become even more severe, just as it says in Revelation, in order to test our faith. If it is hard, God will help us. We have to get ready for this time and not be surprised when it comes.

As for the end of days, I believe there will be a new Temple in Jerusalem just like the Prophets say, but it is possible that there will not be animal sacrifices there, only grain and oil offerings after a short period of animal sacrifices, which is what Rav Kook said also. Sacrificing animals is a cruel thing, but I think that God let us do it back in the time of the Torah because all the nations around us were doing it also. He did not want us to start worshipping idols with them just because we wanted to have animal sacrifices and eat meat.

Today I do volunteer work and attend all kinds of Orthodox synagogues and Messianic congregations. I officially belong to none of them, but I really belong to all of them because God brought me to believe in Yeshua but also told us to keep both the written and the oral Torah. Yeshua said to do what the rabbis teach, even though He opposed their hypocrisy sometimes. Their **teachings** are still correct, in my opinion. I believe that the job of every Jew is to bring non-Jews closer to the God of Israel and Judaism. We suffer persecution from the world of non-Jews because we are not doing our job. If we were truly keeping God's commandments like He told us, we would not even need an army to defend us because He would fight our battles for us. The army and America will not save us, and it is a mistake to rely on other people for our security. Good will come to us when we do good and obey the Torah. The world attacks us not just because they are evil, but also because we are evil. We still have so many enemies because we are not keeping the mitzvot. We are even now in danger of being destroyed because of our sins. God allows the nations of the world a time when they can hurt us, but someday they will be punished for their hatred and will come here to Israel to learn the truth about God from us.

I believe that God sets Jewish history, and not we ourselves. This truth can be discovered in my favorite verses in the Torah, Leviticus 26:3-6, "***If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments so as to carry them out, then I will give you rains in their season so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. Indeed your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. I shall also grant peace in your land...***" ♦

Traditions and Customs of the B'nei Anussim from Minas Gerais, Brazil

Marcelo Miranda Guimaraes

The gold, emerald, and diamond mines of the State of Minas Gerais in Brazil attracted Jews and New-Christians who came from the northern states of Brazil, Portugal, and other countries such as Spain and Italy during the 16th and 18th Centuries. This Jewish element left an important legacy in the ethnic mix of colonial Brazil. The ethnic origin of Brazil is rich and can be considered an interesting example of the mixing of races and habits.

Manuel Junior Diegues writes in his book, *Regiões Culturais do Brasil (Cultural Regions of Brazil)*, the following paragraph: “To these groups of Portuguese new immigrants, joined the foreigners that were in large numbers in Minas Gerais. Although not being large in number, reports Professor Manuel Cardoso, foreigners have made a significant influence on the economy and social life of the Minas Gerais region.

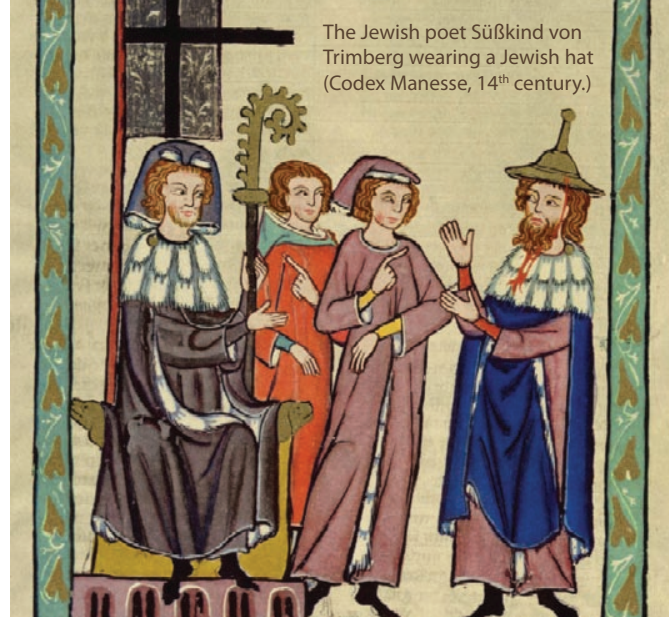
Everything seems to indicate that these foreigners (most of them merchants), were Jews or Israelites from Portugal, Spain, and Holland. History confirms that many Jews came and settled in Minas Gerais. Augusto de Lima Junior, in his study of Minas Gerais located the major settlements of Jews in the following cities: Paracatu, Serro Frio, Sabara, Pitanguí, Ouro Preto, and Mariana. Jews have formed ghettos, still recognized today by the absence of chapels on their ruins. These New-Christian Jews only inter-married with other New-Christian families, and weddings between first degree cousins are, to this day, common practice among them.”

According to another Brazilian scholar, Dr. Neuza Fernandes, who did research in registry offices, old documents, and family documents, thousands of New-Christian families from Portugal and Spain established themselves in Minas Gerais from 1712 to 1763. (I will simply mention the towns and surnames that were most frequent):

- **In Brumado:** Family Azevedo.
- **In Cachoeira:** Pereira da Cunha, Fernandes de Matos, Robinson, Moreira, Henriques, Nunes, and Sanches.
- **In Caeté:** Nunes, Ribeiro, Bicudo, Barros, and Fonseca.
- **In Catas Altas:** Isidro, Ferreira (Isidore), Pereira, Chaves.
- **In Congonhas do Campo:** Moraes and Oliveira.
- **In Córredo do Pau das Minas de Arasualhy:** Pereira, Ávila, and Fernandes.
- **In Curalinho:** Miranda, Roiz, Rodrigues, Nunes, Henriques, Lopes, Álvares, Mendes, and Mendonça.
- **In Diamantina (former Tijuco):** Ribeiro, Furtado, Fernandes, Dias, Correa, Rodrigues, and Nunes.
- **In Fornos:** Rodrigues and Cardoso.
- **In Itaperava:** Sá Tinoco.
- **In Minas de Arassuahi:** Fernandes, Pereira, Costa, Silva, and Henriques.
- **In Minas Novas de Fanados:** Lara, Fonseca da Costa, and Ferreira.
- **In Minas Novas de Paracatu:** Ribeiro, Sanches, Henriques, Nunes, Britto, and Ferreira.
- **In Ouro Branco:** Lopes.
- **In Ouro Preto (former vila Rica):** Miranda, Fernandes, Pereira, Nunes, Gomes, Fróes, Rodrigues, Moraes, Costa, Cruz, Mendes, Almeida, Vale, Roiz, and Martins.
- **In Parapanema:** Afonso and Miguel.
- **In Pitanguí:** Pereira da Cunha, Rodrigues, Roiz, Nogueira, Silveira, Bicudo, and Henriques.
- **In Ribeirão do Carmo (Mariana):** Miranda, Almeida de Sá, Dias, Fernandes, Rodrigues, Pinto, Roiz, Cardoso, Pereira, Chaves, Oliveira, Mattos, Pereira da Cunha, and Mendes.
- **In Rio das Mortes:** Miranda, Azevedo, Vale, Machado Coelho, Pereira de Araújo, Lara, Nunes, Alves, Benar, and Vizeu
- **In Sabará:** Miranda, Oliveira, Matos, Henriques, Lucena, Montarroio, Rodrigues, Pinto, Nunes de Almeida, Henriques, Ferreira, Costa, Mendes de Sá, Ferreira, and Isidoro.
- **In São Caetano:** Rodrigues.
- **In São Jerônimo:** Rodrigues de Faria.
- **In Serro Frio:** Cunha, Medanha, Sottomaio, Sá de Almeida, Fernandes, Pereira, Ribeiro, Furtado, Gomes, Nunes, Costa, Lopes de Mesquita, Paes, and Barreto.
- **In Sumidouro:** Fróis

The relationship of cities and surnames above is just one of the most obvious examples and does not necessarily mean that there are no other surnames for B'nei Anussim or other locations. Likewise, it does not mean that every surname mentioned here originated with the Anussim, but the Jews of Portugal used these names after they were forced to convert to Catholicism.

It is not difficult to identify in the inhabitants of Minas Gerais many cultural similarities with typical Sephardic Jewish families. Among other traditions I remember even from my own ancestors who lived in Minas Gerais, the following:



The Jewish poet Süßkind von Trimberg wearing a Jewish hat (Codex Manesse, 14th century.)

- Marriage within the family over many generations. Parents commonly choose the bride or groom from their own families (usually first degree cousins).
- Following the lunar calendar and intercalating it with the agricultural cycle
- Leaving grain in the fields for the poor to harvest
- Not throwing anything away and taking the most of everything without wasting a bit
- Many of them were merchants of precious stones and metals such as gold and silver. This was one of the reasons why they came to Minas Gerais.
- Compared to their neighbors, they stood out by overwork and for their intelligence.
- They were concerned to stay united, inheriting the tradition of celebrating festivals in the family. Their children are educated in the best colleges, usually in Catholic schools. This custom is very old, since the time of the Inquisition in Portugal when they placed their children in Catholic schools in order to hide their Jewish identity.
- Even when working as merchants and farmers, they retained certain traits of fine education and culture. It was the habit of the time also to hire teachers for children's education. They liked to be well dressed and bought their clothes in large shopping malls in Rio de Janeiro or imported them.
- No one can deny their religion. Most B'nei Anussim were never really Catholics. They were a people of faith who refused to bow down to saints or images. Some traditions, like asking a blessing from the parents at the time of departure and arrival at home, were until recently a common tradition.
- Laying hands over the children to bless them
- Sweeping the house towards the inside
- Killing animals by letting them bleed and then draining all the blood. Unlike Portuguese and Brazilian traditions, New-Christians abstained from eating blood.
- Washing the dead
- Throwing a handful of earth on the coffin when it is lowered into the grave
- Spilling part of the wine before drinking it. The act of pouring a portion out of the drink is called a libation.
- Wearing beards has always been a Jewish custom, although it was also very common in the colonial period.
- Avoiding work on Saturday. It was a day to bathe and to wear new clothes.
- The expression "que massada!" ("what a massada!") to explain a tragedy or surprise, in allusion to the fall of the fortress of Masada near the Dead Sea
- Popular use of the verb "Judiar" (to "Judaize" or "bring suffering") comes from the time of the Inquisition when Jews were persecuted and mistreated.
- Touching the doorpost of their houses when they enter or leave in allusion to the custom of the mezuzah. Once they could not have a mezuzah on their doorposts, they kept the tradition of kissing the plain doorpost.
- The expression "a carapuça serviu" (something like "the hood fits you!") comes from the time of the Inquisition. In the Middle Ages Jews had to wear elongated hats or hats with three tips to distinguish them from non-Jews.
- Testing the knife edge on the nail of the animal before slaughtering it
- Washing hands before meals

All of these customs are clear evidence of the Jewish influence brought by the B'nei Anussim who lived in Minas Gerais, and nobody can deny or ignore these historical facts. ◆

The Phenomena of the Anussim in Brazil

Matheus Zandona Guimaraes

“But their children and grandchildren, who, misguided by their parents . . . and trained in their views, are like children taken captive by them and raised in the laws of the Gentiles, whose status is that of an ‘anus’ (one who abjures Jewish law under duress), who, although he later learns that he is a Jew, meets Jews, observes them practice their laws, is nevertheless to be regarded as an ‘anus’, since he was reared in the erroneous ways of his parents . . . Therefore efforts should be made to bring them back in repentance, to draw them near by friendly relations, so that they may return to the strength-giving source, i.e., the Torah.”¹

History shows that more than 120,000 Jews immigrated to Portugal after the Spanish expulsion in 1492, but after 1496, the Inquisition laws against the Jews became valid also in Portugal, with the political wedding of Portugal’s king Dom Manoel, with Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of the Spanish monarchs. From that year on, Portuguese Jews were obligated to convert to Catholicism under the penalty of expulsion, property confiscation, and even death on the Inquisition stakes, also called the “auto de fé”. The Church gave the name of “Cristianos Nuevos” (New Christians) to those Jews who were converted by force. Yet even after conversion, high taxes, prejudice, and persecution made life in Portugal a great challenge for these Anussim.

In 1500 the king of Portugal hired a Portuguese navigator named Pedro Alvares Cabral and his team of New Christian captains, who discovered land below the equator in the New World. It was the “opening of the Red Sea” for these Portuguese Jews who finally had the chance to start a new life in this New World, far from the intolerance of the Inquisition. Together with thousands of other Portuguese citizens, these Anussim received the right to immigrate to Brazil at the beginning of 1503 under the leadership of another New Christian named Fernando de Noronha. This was the beginning of Brazil’s history. Unfortunately, in 1591 Portugal decided to extend the Inquisition laws to its newly discovered colony and sent the first Inquisitors to many cities in Brazil. The only place in Brazil where the Anussim had temporary religious freedom was in the region of “Pernambuco” (northeastern Brazil), since the Dutch captured it from the Portuguese and ruled it from 1630 to 1654. In the city of Recife, a group

of Portuguese/Brazilian Jews returned to Judaism, and in 1636 they established what became the first synagogue of the Americas: Kahal Tzur Israel, “The Congregation of the Rock of Israel.”

After 1654 the Portuguese army expelled the Dutch and re-activated the laws against the Jews all over the region. Some of these Brazilian Jews were able to flee northward, reaching the city of “New Amsterdam” (later called New York). They were the first Jews to arrive in North America and establish there a Jewish community in the 17th Century. Sadly, however, the Inquisition arrested and persecuted most of the Brazilian Jews. Hundreds were sent to Lisbon to die



as “heretical New Christians.” Whole families were arrested in the countryside of Brazil and executed in the squares of Portugal. To protect their families and assure that their descendents would have the right to live in Brazil, thousands of Jews and Anussim converted to Catholicism, many of them for the second time. They did everything they could to keep Jewish traditions, customs, and culture, teaching their children and celebrating the Jewish holy days in secret in the basements of their houses. The Inquisition only officially ended in 1824 in Brazil.

As a result of centuries of persecution, Brazil has thousands of residents who are direct descendents of these Anussim. The majority of them have completely lost all traces

1 The Rambam- Mishneh Torah Sefer Shofetim, Hilkhót Mumarím 3:2.

of their Jewish ancestry, but some of them know that they are Jews by tradition, customs, and fresh memory. There is still an environment of great fear, and they are afraid to tell other people their origin. Almost 200 years after the Inquisition ended in Brazil, one can still easily feel the trauma planted in the minds and hearts of the B'nei Anussim. They were able to keep their traditions and their memory because they remained very closed, only inter-marrying with first degree cousins, in order to ensure that they would keep a "Jewish" family line. They go to Mass and church on Sunday, but they still remember when their grandmothers used to celebrate Shabbat with wine, bread, and two candles. They also still know the songs the Sephardic Jews brought to Brazil 500 years ago.

In the last 20 or 30 years, some of the B'nei Anussim who kept some sort of memory and tradition alive have tried to



The Inquisition Tribunal.
By Francisco Goya, circa 1815.

restore their roots and identities. They have looked for help in traditional Jewish circles, but unless they convert back to Judaism and abide by ultra-Orthodox Jewish halachah, they are not accepted as Jews in regular Jewish communities. The B'nei Anussim who do believe in Yeshua have also tried to look for help from Catholics or evangelicals, but they are always told the same thing: once you become a Christian, you are no longer a Jew! Therefore, there is no space in their current religion for such a restoration. These Anussim are rejected not only by the Christian community, but even by their fellow Jews, who consider them "meshumadim" (traitors) who are undeserving of a return to the household of Israel. Their ancestors were forced to convert, and they did it because they dreamed of a day where their descendents would

not have to hide who they really were and in what they really believed. They dreamed of a day when they would be able to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob without fear of persecution. Tragically, now that this day is at hand their Jewish brothers and sisters want to do to with them what the Inquisition demanded, i.e. force them to convert to another religion. It must be understood that most of this problem exists because many of the B'nei Anussim believe in Yeshua as the Messiah, and the Israeli Rabbinat will not accept as a Jew any person who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel. In any case, to force these B'nei Anussim to go through a formal Orthodox conversion procedure is denying their Jewish origin and centuries-long struggle to survive. This is a public denial of their blood right to be Jews and to be accepted as Jews by the State of Israel.

Therefore, a special organization called (ABRADJIN) Association of Brazilian Descendants of Jewish Victims of the Inquisition, was founded in Brazil by Marcelo Miranda Guimarães with the primary goal of helping these Jewish Anussim know and restore their identity. Marcelo is a retired engineer who took on the task of working with and researching extensively about the B'nei Anussim and their present situation. Marcelo is a direct descendent of Jews who came to Brazil to escape the Inquisition in Portugal. The goal of ABRADJIN is to provide historical research to help these B'nei Anussim re-discover their past and to open new doors into the future for them. ABRADJIN works in conjunction with Netivyah to achieve two main objectives: to equip and bring knowledge of the Anussim phenomena to Jewish and non-Jewish circles and the academic world and to fight for the recognition of the Anussim as full Jews without a formal Orthodox conversion by Israeli immigration authorities. We do stand for a proper return to the Jewish faith with a Jewish lifestyle and an in-depth learning of the Torah and traditions, but without forcing the B'nei Anussim to deny their identity once more. ABRADJIN has a museum located in the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, which displays images, documents, and important information about the great contribution of Portuguese Jews in Brazilian history from the 16th to the 19th Centuries. It also has a library and opens up its facilities for people interested in researching and learning more about the history of persecuted Jews in Brazil.

These Portuguese B'nei Anussim can be found in almost every region of Brazil, and a great number of them seeks to restore and re-attach themselves to Israel and the Jewish community. The Israeli Rabbinat should provide a fair and sincere way for these hundreds of thousands of descendants of Jews to come back to their faith without forcing them to do the very thing the Inquisition made them do in the past. ♦

Restoring the Lost Heritage

First International Conference on the B'nei Anussim



December 3-5, 2010 in Castelo de Vide, Portugal
www.anussimconference.com

In today's world we constantly hear of and are shocked by the terrible events happening all around us, but in truth there are other social and religious injustices we hardly know about that have continued for hundreds of years. One of these still-enduring injustices began in the 15th Century with the Iberian Inquisition and has left a deep stain on the history of religion and mankind. In Portugal today there are still Jewish people who live a double life as Christians in the open and as Jews in secret. Many of them want to reclaim their identity as Jews, yet are unwilling to convert to Orthodox Judaism since they are already Jews by blood and by choice of (their secret) lifestyle.

The city of Castelo de Vide is one of the places where the Spanish Jews crossed into Portugal to escape the Spanish Expulsion. Now this city is once again opening its doors to help welcome the Jewish people and to bring worldwide awareness of the suffering of the Anussim and their desire to return to their Jewish identity, community, and the State of Israel. The City of Castelo de Vide, together with Netivyah and ABRADJIN (Association of Brazilian Descendants of the Jewish Victims of the Inquisition) is convening a special conference of international scholars this December in order to raise awareness of the problems of the Anussim. This conference is both for scholars and for everyone who loves Israel and the Jewish people and who believes in the restoration of Israel and the Church. During the conference some leaders in the battle for the Anussim from around the world will present the historical data and the stories of the survival of the Anussim in Portugal and Brazil. Both Christian and Jewish leaders will clearly call the Jewish community and the State of Israel to open its doors and show hospitality to these hidden Portuguese Jews. Your participation is of great importance in order to draw the attention of the international Jewish community and the Israeli government to the plight of the B'nei Anussim.

Immediately after the conference, from December 6-9, we will conduct an optional additional tour of several historic cities of Portugal that have a Jewish heritage. Learn more about the Jews of Portugal and join us on this historic event to set free the descendants of the Jews of the Inquisition.

Friday, December 3, 2010

16:00-17:30 - Opening Comments:

Portuguese Authorities:

- Mr. António Manuel Grincho Ribeiro - President of the Municipality of Castelo de Vide.
- Mr. António Pita - Vice President of the Municipality of Castelo de Vide
- Mr. António Ceia da Silva - President of the Alentejo Regional Tourism Entity (E.R.T)
- Mr. José Oulman Carp - President of the Jewish Community of Lisbon

Representatives of Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry - Jerusalem, Israel

- Mr. Joseph Shulam - President of Netivyah
- Dr. David Stern
- Mr. Victor Escroignard

Representatives from Brazil

- Mr. Marcelo Miranda Guimarães (President of ABRADJIN)
- Mr. João Leite - Deputy Governor of the state of Minas Gerais

Special Guests:

- Mr. Jimmy McClintock- Netivyah USA
- Mr. Takeo Muraoka Sensei - Japan
- Dr. Mansuk Song - Korea
- Dr. Jack Young - China

17:30-17:45 - Break

17:45-18:30 - Kabbalat Shabbat/ Musical Presentation/ Lighting Hanukah candles

18:30-19:30 - Dinner

19:30-20:15 - 1st Speaker - Mr. Joseph Shulam- **Restoring the Lost Heritage**

20:15-20:30 - Mr. Marcelo Guimaraes - **Closing remarks from the first day.**

Saturday, December 4, 2010

9:00-9:30 - Selections of Jewish Shabbat songs.

9:30-10:00 - 2nd Speaker- Dr. Antonio Pita- **The Past, Present, and Future of Castelo de Vide**

10:00-10:45 - 3rd Speaker - Dr. Elvira Mea - **The Physical and Emotional Suffering of the Victims of the Inquisition throughout the Ages**

10:45-11:00 - Break

11:00-11:30 - 4th Speaker- Mr. Carolino Tapadejo- **The Jewish History of Castelo de Vide**

11:30-13:30 - Lunch

13:30-14:15 - 5th Speaker- Fr. Vitor Melicias- **The Current Position of the Catholic Church on the Iberian Inquisition**

14:15-14:30 - Break

14:30-15:30 - 6th Speaker- Mr. Marcelo M. Guimarães - **The Influence of the Anussim on the Colonization of the Americas and Brazil**

15:30-16:00 - Debate and Q. and A.

16:00-16:45 - 7th Speaker - Dr. Neusa Fernandes- **The Suffering of the Marranos in Brazil**

16:45-17:00 - Break

17:00-17:45 - 8th Speaker- Dr. Lucia Ferreira - **The Inquisition and the New Christians during the Bishopric of Guarda**

17:45-19:30 - Dinner

19:30-20:30 - Play: *A Estrela de Ouro das Minas Gerais (The Golden Star of Minas Gerais)*- produced by ABRADJIN.

Sunday, December 5, 2010

8:00-10:30 - **Visit to the old Juderia of Castelo de Vide and the Bridge of Marvao**- Guides: Mr. Antonio Pita and Mr. Carolino Tapadejo

10:30-11:00 - Break

11:00-11:45 - 9th Speaker- Mr. Joseph Shulam - **The Theology of Christianity, the Source of the Problem, and Israel's Responsibility toward the Anussim**

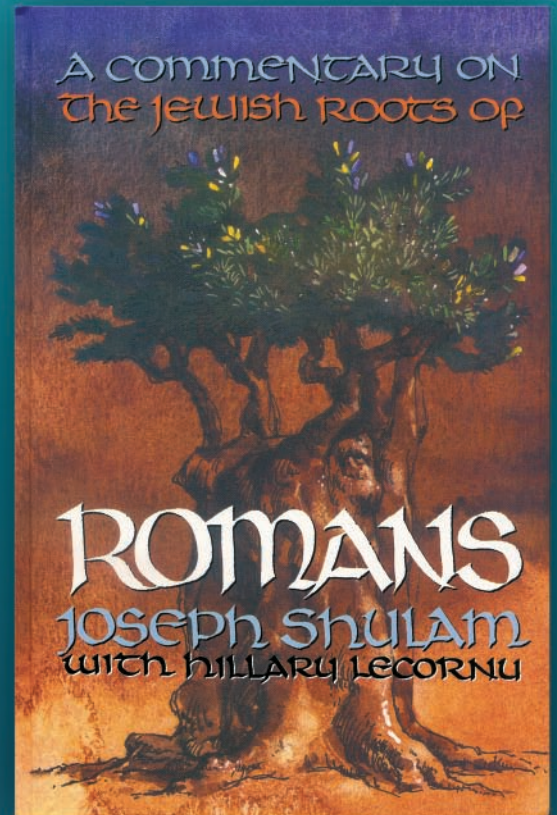
11:45-12:30 - **Concluding remarks and presentation of certificates**- Mr. Joseph Shulam and Mr. Marcelo Guimaraes

12:30-13:30 - Closing Lunch

A COMMENTARY ON
THE JEWISH ROOTS OF
ROMANS
JOSEPH SHULAM
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