



Exiles in Sepharad: The Jewish Millennium in Spain

Jeffrey Gorsky

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The dramatic one-thousand-year history of Jews in Spain comes to life in *Exiles in Sepharad*. Jeffrey Gorsky vividly relates this colorful period of Jewish history, from the era when Jewish culture was at its height in Muslim Spain to the horrors of the Inquisition and the Expulsion.

Twenty percent of Jews today are descended from Sephardic Jews, who created significant works in religion, literature, science, and philosophy. They flourished under both Muslim and Christian rule, enjoying prosperity and power unsurpassed in Europe. Their cultural contributions include important poets; the great Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides; and Moses de Leon, author of the *Zohar*, the core text of the Kabbalah.

But these Jews also endured considerable hardship. Fundamentalist Islamic tribes drove them from Muslim to Christian Spain. In 1391 thousands were killed and more than a third were forced to convert by anti-Jewish rioters. A century later the Spanish Inquisition began, accusing thousands of these converts of heresy. By the end of the fifteenth century Jews had been expelled from Spain and forcibly converted in Portugal and Navarre. After almost a millennium of harmonious existence, what had been the most populous and prosperous Jewish community in Europe ceased to exist on the Iberian Peninsula.

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