

1492 – 2002; 510 Years
Remembering a Discovery
& Forgetting a Degradation

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Every October multiplied millions of Americans remember the discovery of the *New World* by Christopher Columbus. Yet few know of a painfully degrading event in history that preceded this great discovery; the expulsion of the Jews of Spain by the *Christian King & Queen!*

Tisha b'Av & Expulsion From Spain

It seems to be more than coincidence that Columbus was set to sail on the day that all of the Jewish people were to be expelled from Spain, August 2, 1492. This day also happened to be Tisha b'Av (the 9th of Av), a day of infamy on the Jewish calendar. The destruction of both Temples, the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, the massacres carried out during the Crusades in 1298, the martyrdom of many great Rabbinic sages, among many other painful events that have occurred on that infamous day. It is a day of fasting & mourning by observant Orthodox Jews.

On March 31, 1492, King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella signed an edict ordering the expulsion of “all Jews and Jewesses, of whatever age they may be, shall depart from all our said kingdoms and dominions by the end of July next, of the present year.”

The following is an eyewitness account of the awful event by Andres Bernaldez, a Christian writer of the 15th century: *Within the terms fixed by the edict of expulsion, the Jews sold and disposed of their property for a mere nothing. They went about asking Christians to buy, but found no buyers. Fine houses and estates were sold for trifles; a house was exchanged for a mule and a vineyard for a little cloth or linen.*

Those who were rich paid the expenses of

the departure for those who were poor, practicing toward each other the greatest deeds of charity, so that, except for a very few of the poorest of the poor, they would not become converts to Christianity.

In the first week of July, they took the hardship of the road upon themselves and left the land of their birth; children and adults, the very old and the very young, on foot or mounted on donkeys, other animals or riding in carts; they continued their journeys, each on to the ports to which they had to go.

They went along the roads and through the fields with great travail and misfortune. Some collapsing, some dying, others falling ill; so that there was no Spaniard who did not feel sorry for them. So great was the concern of those who beheld this tragedy that they would invite the Jews to be baptized so as to avert this terrible suffering. Some because of the unbearable hardship did convert and remain, but those were very few.

The Rabbi's strengthened their resolve and made the women and young people play on pipes and tambourines to cheer the people until they arrived at the ports of the sea. As soon as they glimpsed the sea at the port of Cadiz, they let out loud shouts, both men and women, the old and the children. In their prayers beseeching G-d for mercy and

for miracles, that He might open a path for them in the sea.”

The Spanish Inquisition

The Spanish Inquisition was initiated by King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella. It began in 1478. The initial purpose was to discover and punish any newly converted Jews (Conversos) who showed any signs of insincerity or the Marranos (Swine) who secretly practiced their Jewish faith. It was believed that the Jews were at the root of all heresy and disobedience to the faith. Once again Hasatan hatched a plot in the minds of the spiritually ignorant, but religiously rigid in another attempt to destroy the children of Abraham. The Jewish communities of Spain were so ravaged by the Inquisition that no one felt safe or secure, even if they had openly converted to Christianity.

The Inquisition established 37 Jewish customs forbidden to be practiced by anyone who was called a Christian. If anyone failed to eat pork or shrimp on command, to work on Saturday, or to wear their best clothes to Church on Sunday they would be accused of being a heretic. Anyone who observed a biblical feast, lit Shabbat candles, said a Jewish prayer, ate Jewish food, associated with unconverted Jews or even married another Jewish convert, would be brought to trial for heresy.

Those who publicly confessed and repented were saved from death, but still faced public humiliation and were forbidden for the rest of their lives from holding public office, having honorable employment or owning anything of any value. To be reconciled to the Church penitents were forced to endure an act of penance called *Verquenza* (Shame). This public humiliation meant to be paraded through the streets, stripped to the waist (whether male or female) bareheaded and without shoes (in any type

of weather). They were continuously flogged and mocked during the procession through the city; while holding an unlit candle (indicating that they were still in spiritual darkness) until they reached the Cathedral.

At the Cathedral the Priest would make the sign of the Cross on their foreheads reciting these words, “Receive the Sign of the Cross which you denied and which being deluded, you lost.” They would be forced to repeat the entire process every Friday for 6 weeks of penance, paying 1/5 of their net worth into the Church coffers. Any subsequent failure to stringently uphold all of the edicts of the Church would result in an immediate and painful death.

If someone confessed but did not repent – they were burned alive to teach other Conversos to fear the authority of the Church. If they claimed innocence and refused to confess – they were tortured until they feigned confession, and then burned at the stake as an example for the others. The Church authorities justified this behavior by misquoting John 15:6, “If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

These are just a few of the horrific terrorist activities perpetrated in the name of Christ. It is no wonder that there are such immense historic and emotional barriers that exist between the Jewish people of the 21st century and the proclamation of the Good News of Y’shua (Jesus) as the promised Messiah.

Was Columbus Catholic or Jewish?

Research into historical documents has brought to light evidence that there may be more to Columbus than has been told thus far. The Spanish name for Columbus was

Colon (pronounced Coh-lone), which is Hebraic in origin. His father came from Catalonia, a region in northeastern Spain, from which Jews fled pogroms (organized massacres of the Jewish people) in 1391. He did not speak or write in Italian, but in Castilian, the language spoken by the Jewish refugees of Catalonia, who immigrated to Genoa, Italy, where Christobal Colon was born. His trade was that of a weaver, one of the few open to the Jews of that time period.

In 1476, Columbus traveled to Portugal, where his life became intertwined with the Jewish community of Juderias, the Jewish ghetto of Lisbon. There he met and befriended Don Isaac Abarbanel; Jewish theologian, Biblical commentator, Financier and Treasurer to King Alphonso V. Years later; Isaac Abarbanel became the Treasurer to King Ferdinand V & Queen Isabella and helped to finance the first voyage of Christopher Columbus.

He also made the acquaintance of Abraham Zacuto, Astronomer to the King of Portugal and Scientific Advisor to his Sea Captains. Zacuto invented the first metal Astrolabe (used for navigation), which made the voyages that Columbus would make possible (considering that he was sailing in uncharted waters).

Other useful tools Columbus used for navigation were the *Baculus Jacob* (Jacob's staff), invented by Levi ben Gershon and the *Quadrant Judaicus*, invented by Jacob ben Machir Tibbon. Yehuda Cresques of Majorca, a center for Jewish Cartography, produced many of the maps that Columbus used. All the nautical instruments and maps that Columbus used for his voyages were produced by the most brilliant Jewish minds of his time.

Luis de Cerda, the Count of Media-Celi, took Columbus in during a difficult period in his life and introduced him to his cousin, Cardinal Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza of Toledo. Both the Count and the Cardinal were related through the same Jewish grandmother. Cardinal Mendoza endorsed the plan that Columbus proposed to the Spanish monarchs and Count de Cerda also lobbied them on his behalf.

Columbus gained the support of some of the most powerful and influential Jews with access to the royal court. Abraham Senior, Luis de Santangel and Isaac Abarbanel were among those who not only caught the imagination of Ferdinand & Isabella but convinced them of their confidence in Columbus by partnering with them in the financing of his expeditions too. It is assumed that these men must have converted to have such trust from and access to the King & Queen.

12 letters that Columbus wrote to his son Diego have survived to this day. In the upper left hand corner are the Hebrew letters, Bet & Hay, written in his own handwriting. Some scholars claim that these letters stand for *Be'Ezrat HaShem* (With the help of the Name of G-d). Others believe it stands for *Baruch HaShem* (Blessed be the Name of the L-RD). These 2 letters were a common code among the Jews of that era. They were found only in his letters to his son, Diego, the child of his marriage to Dona Felipa Perestrello e Moniz, who was of Marrano descent on her mother's side.

All of his crewmembers were believed to be Christians, including some Conversos (some having been baptized only days before the 1st voyage). Luis de Torrez, the first to sight land, was hired as an interpreter, because it was believed that when the ships reached India, they would find remnants of the lost

tribes of Israel and would need to speak to them in Hebrew. Columbus made constant reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses David and Isaiah, as well as the City of Jerusalem. He even computed the age of the world by reference to the Biblical Jewish calendar.

Near the end of his life he signed his will with a coded signature in the shape of a triangle that was common among the Marranos. Scholars suggest it stood for a Latinized Hebrew prayer. His signature read as follow:

Sanctus
 Sanctus, Adonai, Sanctus.
 Chesed Moleh Yehovah
 Christoforo Colombo
 El Almirante

Which means: Holy, Holy, L-RD you are Holy. L-RD grant us Your mercy. He strongly encouraged his son, Diego to use this type of signature himself.

It is of further interest that within his will, Columbus asked that a tenth of all his wealth be given to the poor by providing a dowry for impoverished girls. This was to assist them in their finding a good husband. He requested that he remain anonymous. He also requested that ½ mark in silver be given to a certain Jewish man who lived at the entrance to the Juderias, the Jewish ghetto of Lisbon.

While there is no absolute proof that Columbus was a Jewish believer in Jesus, there seems to be ample evidence that he was well connected with the well-placed and influential Jews of his day. If it had not been for the many Jewish financiers and cartographers, would Columbus have been able to embark on so perilous a journey? Did G-d use him to open us the way to a haven for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, until

Eretz Yisrael should be restored to us in these latter days, to once again be our homeland, forever!

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Scripture Promises of Deliverance & Restoration for the Jewish People

“Thus says the L-RD, In an acceptable time have I heard you and in a day of salvation (Y’shua = Jesus) have I helped you. I will preserve you and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways and their pastures shall be on grass covered hills.

They shall not hunger or thirst: neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them. For He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.

And I will make all My mountains a way and my highways shall be exalted. Behold these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west and these from the land of Sinim (China).

Sing O heavens and be joyful O earth and break forth into singing O mountains. For the L-RD hath comforted His people and will have mercy on His afflicted. Isaiah 49:8-13