

May 14th

There was **another departure in 1492**. In 1469 Ferdinand, crown prince of Aragon married his cousin Isabella, daughter of the king of Castile. Royals marrying related royals was eventually how almost all the monarchs of Europe, originally just fighting strongmen, became related like one huge extended family. (Try not to think about intermarried hillbillies wearing crowns.) Ferdinand and Isabella ruling together meant a united Spain. Hence, a united Christian nation defeated the small but lush country of Grenada, last surviving Muslim kingdom in Iberia, 1492. Ferdinand and Isabella together with the Spanish Catholic Church had introduced the Inquisition in 1479, a tribunal to find and remove heresy. The Jews were a particular target. While outwardly professing Christianity they secretly practiced Judaism at home. Today, of course, we would celebrate Messianic (Jesus believing) Jews. Such were Jesus' original followers! But Spain's Jews became baptized to save their lives. They had legal rights of Spanish Christians. The Spanish referred to them as *marranos*, "swine". The Inquisition accused them of not being truly Christian. (Try not to think of big government programs run amuck amid prejudice.)

This was part of an expulsion of all non-Christians from Spain. About ¾ million Grenada Muslims fled to North Africa, most were of the same Spanish racial stock as the Christians. Their families had converted to Islam during the Andalusian period. But Christian Jews, who were bankers, merchants, and artisans, were needed economically.

The Spanish Inquisition violently targeted all manner of people deemed enemies of the Church. (Try not to think about Mafia in vestments.) In total 341,000 *marranos* were targeted, 32,000 were burned to death, though some scholars say far fewer. Finally there was an Edict of Expulsion stating that every Jew who would not be baptized must leave Spain within 3 months of August 2, 1492. At that time there were still 200,000 Jews living in Spain. Half fled to Portugal where they were expelled just 4 years later, many traveling to the New World of Brazil. Many in Spain chose baptism, including the senior rabbi and a majority of leading families. 50,000 fled to North Africa. Hence, Morocco developed a Jewish minority. Others fled to Turkey or Netherlands, the only European country that would accept them.

Christopher Columbus set sail half an hour before sunrise August 3, 1492. His crew included a sizable number of *marranos* including the just-baptized Luis Torres, his secretary. Columbus always signed his name Colon, a Jewish *marrano* name of Genoa, Italy, strong evidence that he too was from a family of Hebrew Christians. It may also be a reason why he received little title and credit for having discovered the new land.

August 2 is a significant date for Jews. That day in 1492 was the 9th of Ab on the Hebrew calendar. Ab 9 was also the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC by Babylon and the beginning of Diaspora in foreign nations. In 70 AD it was the date when Romans began destruction of the Temple and Jews were ordered out of the Promised Land. It was also the same date that Jews were expelled from England in 1290. From the Roman massacre, mid-2nd century to the Holocaust, Ab 9 was the most momentous date on Jewish calendars.

Spanish Jews became known as *Sephardic* Jews from the ancient word for Spain. If you are looking for a way to start dialog with a Jewish friend, tell him or her how sorry you are for such history done in the name of Christianity. It is diametrically opposed to Jesus and his teachings. That is, by God's forgiveness alone, we are adopted as His children.