



# The history, culture, and Jewish life of Spain

## Suggested reading

### **The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience**

Jane S. Gerber

The history of the Jews of Spain is a remarkable story that begins in the remote past and continues today. For more than a thousand years, Sepharad (the Hebrew word for Spain) was home to a large Jewish community noted for its richness and virtuosity. Summarily expelled in 1492 and forced into exile, their tragedy of expulsion marked the end of one critical phase of their history and the beginning of another. Indeed, in defiance of all logic and expectation, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain became an occasion for renewed creativity. Nor have five hundred years of wandering extinguished the identity of the Sephardic Jews, or diminished the proud memory of the dazzling civilization, which they created on Spanish soil. This book is intended to serve as an introduction and scholarly guide to that history.

### **The Jews of Iberia: A Short History**

Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez

The history of Jews in Spain and Portugal spans more than thousand years. By most measures, it is even longer than the large-scale settlement of Jews in the land of Israel which was interrupted several times in Jewish history. Legends ascribe the arrival of the earliest settlers to the days of the biblical prophet Obadiah, but archeologically speaking, the first record of Jews is much later. This book includes an overview of Jewish life in the Iberian Peninsula from its early days through the Expulsion. It includes a special focus on the rise of the Conversos, Jews who were forcibly converted to Christianity.

### **Maimonides: Life and Thought**

Moshe Halbertal

Moshe Halbertal vividly describes Maimonides's childhood in Muslim Spain, his family's flight to North Africa to escape persecution, and their eventual resettling in Egypt. He draws on Maimonides's

letters and the testimonies of his contemporaries, both Muslims and Jews, to offer new insights into his personality and the circumstances that shaped his thinking. Halbertal then turns to Maimonides's legal and philosophical work, analyzing his three great books—*Commentary on the Mishnah*, the *Mishneh Torah*, and the *Guide of the Perplexed*. He discusses Maimonides's battle against all attempts to personify God, his conviction that God's presence in the world is mediated through the natural order rather than through miracles, and his locating of philosophy and science at the summit of the religious life of Torah. Halbertal examines Maimonides's philosophical positions on fundamental questions such as the nature and limits of religious language, creation and nature, prophecy, providence, the problem of evil, and the meaning of the commandments.

## **Exiles in Sepharad: The Jewish Millennium in Spain**

Jeffrey Gorsky

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 a millennium of harmonious existence, what had been the most populous and prosperous Jewish community in Europe ceased to exist on the Iberian Peninsula.

## **The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939**

Antony Beevor

A fresh and acclaimed account of the Spanish Civil War by the best-selling author of *Stalingrad* and *The Fall of Berlin 1945*.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War's outbreak, Antony Beevor has written a completely updated and revised account of one of the most bitter and hard-fought wars of the 20th century. With new material gleaned from Russian archives and numerous other sources, this brisk and accessible audiobook (Spain's number-one best seller for 12 weeks) provides a balanced and penetrating perspective, explaining the tensions that led to this terrible overture to World War II and affording new insights into the war - its causes, course, and consequences.

# **Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History**

Aviva Ben-Ur

A significant number of Sephardic Jews, tracing their remote origins to Spain and Portugal, immigrated to the United States from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans from 1880 through the 1920s, joined by a smaller number of Mizrahi Jews arriving from Arab lands. Most Sephardim settled in New York, establishing the leading Judeo-Spanish community outside the Ottoman Empire. With their distinct languages, cultures, and rituals, Sephardim and Arab-speaking Mizrahim were not readily recognized as Jews by their Ashkenazic coreligionists. At the same time, they forged alliances outside Jewish circles with Hispanics and Arabs, with whom they shared significant cultural and linguistic ties.

The failure among Ashkenazic Jews to recognize Sephardim and Mizrahim as fellow Jews continues today. Often, these Jewish communities are simply absent from portrayals of American Jewry. Drawing on primary sources such as the Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) press, archival documents, and oral histories, **Sephardic Jews in America** offers the first book-length academic treatment of their history in the United States, from 1654 to the present, focusing on the age of mass immigration.

# **Sephardi: Cooking the History. Recipes of the Jews of Spain and the Diaspora, from the 13th Century to Today**

Hélène Jawhara Piñer

Steeped in the history of the Sephardic Jews (Jews of Spain) and their diaspora, these recipes are expertly collected from such diverse sources as medieval cookbooks, Inquisition trials, medical treatises, poems, and literature. Original sources ranging from the thirteenth century onwards and written in Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Occitan, Italian, and Hebrew, are here presented in English translation, bearing witness to the culinary diversity of the Sephardim, who brought their cuisine with them and kept it alive wherever they went. Jawhara-Piñer provides enlightening commentary for each recipe, revealing underlying societal issues from anti-Semitism to social order. In addition, the author provides several of her own recipes inspired by her research and academic studies.

Each creation and bite of the dishes herein are guaranteed to transport the reader to the most deeply moving and intriguing aspects of Jewish history. Jawhara-Piñer reminds us that eating is a way to commemorate the past.

# **Franco: A Personal and Political Biography**

Stanley G. Payne

General Francisco Franco ruled Spain for nearly forty years, as one of the most powerful and controversial leaders in that nation's long history. He has been the subject of many biographies, several of them more than a thousand pages in length, but all the preceding works have tended toward one extreme of interpretation or the other. This is the first comprehensive scholarly biography of Franco in English that is objective and balanced in its coverage, treating all three major aspects of his life—personal, military, and political. The coauthors, both renowned historians of Spain, present a deeply researched account that has made extensive use of the Franco Archive (long inaccessible to historians). They have also conducted in-depth interviews with his only daughter to explain better

his family background, personal life, and marital environment, as well as his military and political career.

## **Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy**

Paul Preston

Paul Preston, the author of the definitive biography *Franco*, explores the political and personal mysteries of the Spanish monarch's life in *Juan Carlos*, a story of unprecedented sweep and exquisite detail. Handed over to the Franco regime as a young boy, Juan Carlos was raised according to authoritarian traditions designed to make him a cornerstone of the dictatorship. How then did he later emerge as an emphatic defender of the democracy that began to form after Franco's death? In his peerless voice, Preston provides the details necessary to answer this central question, examining the king's troubled relationship with his father and his vital work in consolidating parliamentary democracy in Spain. What begins as the story of one monarch becomes at once a history of modern Spain and an indispensable exegesis of how democracies come to be.

## **A History of the Marranos**

Cecil Roth

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 by the infamous decree of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella was the culmination of a series of anti-Jewish persecutions throughout the 14th and 15th centuries in which thousands of Jews were massacred. Thousands of others converted in order to escape death. After the expulsion many more joined the ranks of these "new Christians" as an alternative to exile. A large number of converts, while outwardly professing Christianity, secretly continued to practice Judaism. These Marranos, as they were popularly known, were then mercilessly persecuted by the dreaded Inquisition which through tortures of forced confessions and auto-da-fes sent thousands to the stake. Many others managed to escape to countries outside the reach of the Inquisition where they created a widespread Marrano diaspora. Thousands of Marranos have survived even into our times. This seminal work by the eminent historian traces the tribulation of these secret Judaizers as well as the fate of those who succeeded in escaping to other lands where many of them rose to prominence in various fields of endeavor.

## **Or I'll Dress You in Mourning**

Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre

From the City of Light to the Suit of Lights with the authors of *Is Paris Burning?* as they trace the rise of matador El Cordobés from anonymous, impoverished boyhood to fame and multi-millionaire. Collins and Lapierre have again chosen a magnetic subject, but this less complex story is less appropriate to their multi-view method which stretches to represent the suffering and glory of Spain. In the small Andalusian town of Palma del Rio ruled by the autocratic landowner Don Felix Moreno, a ragged boy saw a stereotyped film of bullfighting that changed his life. He fought Moreno's bulls by moonlight until, to avenge public humiliation for orange stealing, he killed his seed bull and was exiled; there followed the years of struggle as one more malctilla trying to make it. Finally, Rafael Sanchez, Manolete's manager, pawned the family jewels to bring him into the arena--at Palma. "I'll either buy you a house or dress you in mourning," he told his sister Angelita.