

Definition: **Sephardim** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Descendants of the Jews of medieval Spain and Portugal and others who follow their customs. Iberian Jews followed the Babylonian rather than the Palestinian Jewish tradition and developed their own language, Ladino. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (1492), many settled in parts of the Middle East and North Africa under the Ottoman Empire. Continuing persecution led many of them to form colonies in Amsterdam and other cities of NW Europe.

Summary Article: **Sephardim**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(səfär'də̃m), one of the two major geographic divisions of the Jewish people, consisting of those Jews whose forebears in the Middle Ages resided in the Iberian Peninsula, as distinguished from those who lived in Germanic lands, who came to be known as the Ashkenazim (see Ashkenaz). The name comes from the placename Sepharad (Obad. 20), which early biblical commentators identified with Iberia. With the migration of the Iberian Jews, particularly following their formal expulsion from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1497), Sephardic communities were established throughout Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, in some cases absorbing smaller local Jewish populations. Smaller groups of Sephardim also settled in Holland and elsewhere in Western Europe. In many areas, Sephardic Jews retained many aspects of Judeo-Spanish culture, including a language called Judezmo (or Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, or Spaniolí), which retained many characteristics of medieval Castilian combined with Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, and other elements. Literature in the language includes religious works (e.g., the Bible translations of the 14th and 15th cent.), as well as folktales, songs (*romanceros*), essays, and journalism.

Those Sephardim who were forced to convert to Christianity during the period lasting from the 1391 massacres in Spain to the 1497 forced baptisms in Portugal, and who secretly maintained a Jewish life, were given the pejorative title of *Marrano* [pig] by the Christian populace. As time passed, many made their way to more tolerant lands, where they openly returned to Judaism, ending their double lives. They or their descendants founded the Jewish communities of Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, and New Amsterdam (New York City), among others. Many Sephardic communities were decimated in the Holocaust, and others were depleted by emigration to Israel and elsewhere. A Portuguese law adopted in 2013 (effective 2015) allowed the descendants of Jews who had been expelled to apply (under certain conditions) for citizenship; Spain enacted (2015) a similar law, but imposed a more restrictive process.

See Roth, C. , *A History of the Marranos* (1932, repr. 1966) and.

The Spanish Inquisition (1937, repr. 1964);.

De Sola Pool, D. , *An Old Faith in the New World* (1955);.

Baer, I. J. , *The Jews in Christian Spain* (2 vol., 1961);.

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Prinz, J. , *The Secret Jews* (1973);.

Elazar, D. J. , *The Other Jews: The Sephardim Today* (1988);.

Yovel, Y. , *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (2009).

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