

Revealed: Dr. Eliezer Papo Part I

[Stone] Welcome to Flames of Freedom Revealed, brought to you by Lance Toland Entertainment. I'm Richard Stone, your host and co-creator of the historical drama Flames of Freedom. In these bonus episodes accompanying our dramatic stories, we explore the historical roots of the Jewish quest for liberty with world-renowned scholars, authors, and historians.

We'll delve into the background of the characters in our story who were escaping from the cruel inequities of the Portuguese Inquisition, murderous pogroms in Eastern Europe, and virulent anti-Semitism. Why were they willing to risk their lives to sail across the Atlantic Ocean to settle in the untamed wilderness of the new American colony of Georgia, founded by James Oglethorpe, but with no assurances?

That they'd even be allowed to come ashore. In today's episode, we start with part one of a three part conversation with Dr. Eliezer Papo, Senior Lecturer of Hebrew Literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva, Israel. He serves as Chairman of the Moshe David Gayon Center for Ladino Culture and is the Chief Editor of El Presente Journal for Sephardic Studies. We hope you find Dr. Papo's extensive knowledge of the world of Sephardic Jewish culture and conversos enriching and illuminating. Dr. Papo, welcome to Flames of Freedom Revealed. We're thrilled to have you on the show. We have a tremendous amount of information to explore today as we unravel the story of the Jews in the period leading up to their expulsion in Spain in 1492 and the advent of the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions.

We know the Inquisition attempted to suppress Jewish practices even after Jews residing in these countries have been forcibly converted to Catholicism. Help us understand this important pivot point historically, religiously, culturally, and politically.

[Dr. Papo] Well, the only historical precedent I can think of, and once I elaborate it, you might not find it as laughable as one would when only hearing it for the first time.

But I don't think that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain is comparable to the expulsion of Jews from France or the expulsion of Jews from England. Rather, it's only comparable to the destruction of the First Temple and the destruction of the Second Temple. And why is that so? Because Jews of England, with all due respect to England and to Jews and to Jews of England, it was a tiny group.

And the Jews of France, with all due respect to France and to Jews and to Jews of France and so on, it is a tiny group. However, though, in 11th and 12th and

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13th and 14th century, the Jewry of Spain is the mind and the heart of the world Jewry. Basically, if you follow the crown of Torah, once it left Israel, it went to Babylonia.

And then at certain point in history for quite a few centuries, overwhelming majority of Jews lived in Babylonia, like 90 percent of the Jews lived in Babylonia. Then for a century, the crown of the Torah was not in Babylonia anymore, it moved to northern Africa. It moved to Cairo and to Fez and so on.

And then later, starting with the 11th century, it actually moved to Spain. So Spain was the mind, and the heart of the entire Jewish people. Spain was actually dictating the mode. So even if you didn't agree with things, I mean, everybody was in dialogue with Spain. Some people loved intellectual production of Spanish Jewry and they would imitate it.

Other people would refuse it. But they still were in dialogue with it. You couldn't be a modern Jew in those centuries without knowing what was going on in Spain. So many Jewish disciplines were first imagined or invented or established in Spain. Other Jewish disciplines which existed for many centuries before Spain were brought to a new peak in Spain.

I'll just give you a few examples. If you think Jewish grammar, yes, it started a bit before Spain, you know, with people such as, uh, Rabbi Saadia Gaon and Benahem Ben Saruk and so on. But then it moves to Spain. It was Spain where they discovered that the overwhelming majority of Hebrew verbs had a trilateral root.

If you think about lexicography, right, the dictionaries of Hebrew language, again, in Spain, it was brought to a new peak. If you think about secular Hebrew poetry, and that's an important issue, why all of the sudden rabbis, sons of rabbis, grandsons of rabbis, great grandsons of rabbis, were all so eager to write poetry?

Who cares? I mean, these are the people who, until yesterday, they were dealing with Talmud, and Aracha, and Jewish law, and then all of the sudden they are writing They are writing the songs, for example, about the lion in the fountain, you know, fountain, fountain with water. So, okay, so there is a fountain and then there are lions who keep the fountain, and then he's writing about those lions.

And you ask yourself why? And if you want, I can elaborate on that. But in any case, Spain was the heart and the mind-- the codification of Jewish law came

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from there. Jewish philosophy. I mean, new peaks of Jewish philosophy, new peaks of quantification of Jewish law. That's why, for hundreds of years, the expulsion from Spain was commemorated on Tisha B'Av.

Why? Because in national mind, it was commemorated the expulsion from Spain on the same date when they commemorated the destruction of the first temple and the destruction of the second temple. And why is that so? Because mind and heart, mind and heart, and that's what Spain really was. So, it was a shock comparable only to the destruction of the first and the second temple and to the later day Holocaust.

So we also see that all the ways that we reacted to the Holocaust. were already established by the Jews of Spain. We didn't invent anything new. Zionism as response to trauma, it was there. They started it and so on. So it was a huge trauma. It produced Jewish reaction like Lurianic Kabbalah. Lurianic Kabbalah is one of three actions to the expulsion from Spain.

The entire 16th century, all Jewish minds in the entire world, it doesn't matter whether these were expelled, the people expelled from Spain, or Ashkenazi rabbis, or Yemenite rabbis. Everybody was asking the same question, where was God? in the expulsion. The same way, the major question of Jewish 21st century is, I mean, of Jewish theology in 21st century is, where was God in the Holocaust?

In the 16th century, all Jewish minds dealt with the same question, consciously, subconsciously, or non-consciously—call it the way you want—everybody dealt with one and the same question: Where was God in the expulsion?

[Stone] Hmm. Hmm. So when the expulsion occurred, not all Jews fled from Spain; some stayed, correct?

[Dr. Papo] Yes. Uh, and, and many, many went eastward toward the Ottoman Empire and then around the Mediterranean to other Arabic countries. Some also went westward to Portugal. Um, tell us about the world, first the world of who were the people who stayed, who converted, what was their world like? Well, first of all, we have to understand that this was not first time.

One third of Spanish Jewry was forcefully converted already in 1391 and then in 139, a hundred years before the expulsion. It wasn't done by the crown. It wasn't done by the Pope or Cardinals of Spain or high clergy. It was rather a revenge of mandatory orders of the Catholic Church against the Catholic aristocracy and against the Catholic Church, uh, when they instigated pogroms

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against the Jews in which some communities were totally destroyed, whether because people were killed or they converted to Christianity.

In other communities, half of the people were forcefully converted. In other communities, third of the people. It all depends on how big the community was, and how extensive the riots were. So this is what happened in 1391. Next year, the Inquisition was established. And why is that? Because the Catholic Church decided to go by the idea that baptism is not a willing act.

So the same way you baptize a child, and later that child cannot protect himself by saying, well, I was never asked whether I wanted to be Catholic, but the church has jurisdiction over the child when it develops into, you know, into a grown up person. The same way, if you didn't want it to be baptized, In your 30s or 40s or 50s, it doesn't matter, you were baptized, so now you are a Christian.

And then the church took upon itself to establish a spiritual police, which will check the level of faith. of those converted Jews. And actually, that's one of the reasons for the expulsion. For 100 years, Spain was incapable of really assimilating, assimilating those 200,000 approximately Jews. So, 100 years later, in 1492, the crown says, well, 400,000 Jews that we have at the moment are supposed either to leave Spain or to convert to Catholicism because they wanted everybody to become Catholic.

They wanted homogenization of the society. Now, 200,000 people left and additional 200,000 converted to Christianity, just like in 1391. But again, we consider this conversion to be totally forceful because once you are left with two choices, either leave the country and it's not that you can really sell your house and, and your belongings according to their real market value.

So there was limited amount of money that you could take out of Spain. And then let's say that you had some kind of, middle-class life in Spain, and all of the sudden you are allowed to leave Spain with 5, 000 with the entire family, and you don't know where are you heading to and what will happen on the way.

So these decisions were totally personal. One brother would leave, another brother would stay. One sister would leave, another sister would stay, and so on. We cannot point to the profile of people who stayed and say, well, you know, people who were less religious stayed. No, it was totally individual, and people were trying to save as much of their life as they could.

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And many people believed, okay, whatever, you know, this is not the first time we have such a thing, but you know, five years later, 10 years later, 15 years later, maybe we will be allowed to return to our faith or they might believe that, whatever, let me stay now here as Catholic. Then, once the property returns to its normal market prices, I can sell my house and I can sell my enterprise and then I can move to Turkey or whatever to the Ottoman Empire. So now again, some people left via boat to the Ottoman Empire. And some people went to Portugal. For many years, there was a tendency in research to believe that people who left for Portugal were people who didn't have money really to, to afford, leaving the country by boat. But Today, we know that this is not true.

Uh, so what happened is that some people lived very near Portugal, so it was easier for them to get over to Portugal. Other people were, I don't know, seasick. They were afraid of the sea. Other people, they were afraid of, not of the sea, but they were afraid of pirates and what might happen there. Other people believe that, you know, the Ottoman Empire is a big cultural unknown.

And Portugal is very similar to the Catholic Spain that we know. And when you need to pick between two evils, many people tend to pick a lesser evil. And some people obviously felt that Portugal is lesser evil because it's similar to Catholic Spain before it went crazy. So many different people, for many different reasons, went for Portugal.

Um, what happened though is that in the moment when the King of Portugal put his eyes on the Spanish crown, because the Spanish ruling couple didn't have son. So he, the King of Portugal wanted his son to get married with their daughter. And in that case, he believed he would become the sole ruler of the entire Iberian peninsula.

But then Spaniards, or basically the queen of Castile, Reina Isabella, right? She made a condition. Either you convert the Jews or you expel them. Otherwise, you know, this marriage is never going to happen. Now, Spain and Portugal at that moment were like, I don't know, like America and Canada, Germany and Austria, you know, the big brother and small brother.

So Portugal was always less successful. And the influx of the Jews who came from Spain, many of them highly professional people. intellectuals, doctors, and so on, many of them rich. In any case, the Jews of Spain were urban population, right? They were urban population and they had urban knowledge and urban traditions and urban professions.

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And Portugal didn't feel like depriving itself of that, of the economic potential of the newcomers. So instead of giving them two options, either convert or leave, they told them, no, you just need to convert. So they didn't even let them leave, which was much worse than Spain. In Spain, at least, you know, let's suppose that at least half of those Jews who were Jewish enough, whose identity was strong enough to leave Spain, they would also leave Portugal.

I mean, what was connecting them to Portugal? They moved to Portugal five years ago. So they would just leave. They would proceed leaving, but they were not allowed to. They were forcefully converted, all of them. So then something that will last until today. It depends who you ask, but it lasts until today.

People who lived clandestine Jewish life. outwardly being Christians and both Spain and Portugal are known for a huge population who was outwardly Catholic and underneath they proceeded to keep Judaism to the extent they could and to the level of their knowledge and information. So all of these, what they were came to be known as conversos or new Christians.

They are, integrating at some level with the Portuguese society, yet the Inquisition comes to Portugal as well. And in some ways becomes even more vicious than the Spanish version of the Inquisition. Could you tell us a little more about the Inquisition and its practices and how that evolved? Well, between the Inquisition and the Nazis, the Nazis and the Inquisition, there is nothing as bad.

So. On one side you hear about, you know, this idea, Jesus loves you and Christianity is all about love. So it's against blood shedding. So in order not to shed any blood, they would burn the Jews. It's no blood involved. No blood involved. So it's, it's a very, you know how in Christian, lexicon, they use the Pharisees as a derogatory term to say, you know, when they want to say a bigot or religious formalism without the spirit of true religion, they say Pharisees, pharisaic.

Well, this was very pharisaic. You know, on the part of the Inquisition to go around the divine law and say, Oh, we are not shedding any blood. We are just burning them to death. So the Inquisition would usually get the reality approval of its worse nightmares. Why? Because their scientific methodology of investigation was based on torturing people.

Now, when you torture someone, and especially if you torture his kids in front of him, or you torture his wife in front of him, people tend to accept whatever

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accusation your dirty mind could invent against them. Why? Because they just wanted the torture to stop. So the Inquisition was never getting it wrong.

This actually converted into a nightmare of the entire Spanish society, because it was easier to accuse an ex-Jew of Judaizing. of acting as a Jew, but one could accuse the plain Catholic of Judaizing also, because Judaizing is not a racial thing. It's when somebody that was baptized in a certain moment is acting as a Jew.

So, if somebody loved your wife or he loved your house or he took some money from you and he never intended giving it back, it was enough for him to denounce you to the inquisition. And then the inquisition would take you and they would torture you. And then you would accept whatever they heard and they would never put the witnesses against you.

It was anonymous, how to call it, denouncement. So I could just do it, not only anonymously. But I could just write a note to the Inquisition, just like today we have those, you know, P. O. B. So, the Inquisition and the main building of the Inquisition, they had one P. O. B. like that, and you could put into that whatever you wanted without disclosing your identity.

So what happened is, everybody was afraid of his own shadow. And this brought about homogenization of Jewish groups. This also brought about the worst nightmares of the anti-Semites. Because many Jews fled away from the danger of Inquisition to Inquisition itself. They became the Inquisitors, thinking, well, if I become an Inquisitor, nobody's gonna look after me.

Other people became a clergy. But trying to, to escape from the church, they are penetrating the church and, I picked the words on purpose. They are penetrating the church even more, which on the other side produces even bigger nightmares for the anti Semites who say, Wow. You know, this is Jewish conspiracy.

They are everywhere. They are in the Inquisition. They are in the church. They are in the high echelons of the church. Yes, they were because you chased them there because they were looking for the most secure place. And to some of them, it seems to be that the inquisition is the most secure place or that the church is the most secure place.

So it's a crazy social game of cat and mouse. Which actually ripped the Spanish society for subsequent 500 years, or at least 300 years. Now there were, at least today, speaking from safe distance, we can actually say that Spain wisely, But

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this also, to a huge extent, it also goes well for Portugal. There were four different types of Conversos.

One type of converso, far left, are the conversos who would say, I would never have a courage to convert myself. But once I'm converted by force, then at least let me enjoy it. You know, if there was God and if there was really God who really cared about Judaism, he wouldn't let this happen. So obviously this is some kind of divine will.

So that's far left. And then on the far right, you would have people who would say, of course there is God. Of course God chose us. Of course God gave us Torah. Of course we need to keep Torah in this world in order to get to the worlds to come. However though, for whatever reasons, God brought upon me this temptation and I need to stand up to the best of my knowledge, to the best of my ability, to the best of my capacity. So this is far left and far right. And then in the middle, you would have people who were skeptic. At least one type of Conversos would be equally skeptic towards Judaism and Christianity, right? They would say, well, obviously God wouldn't allow for such, injustice.

So I might ask myself whether there is God. Whether he really cares about Jews and, uh, and whether he's really standing behind Christians with all of their cruelty and, and vicious deeds against the Jews. And then there was another group of Jews, again, in the middle. Who would say, well, once I'm Catholic, let me at least, take advantage of being Catholic, but for the worlds to come, I'll also keep Judaism.

So, I'll outwardly, I'll keep the commandments of Catholicism or appearance, keeping appearances, as they say in English. So, I'll keep appearance of, of a Catholic. That's for this world. That's all, you know, that will get me through in this world. But also, the overwhelming majority of people in those times believe in the world to come.

So he says, and for my soul, and for the world to come, I will also keep commandments. So basically, you have one group that leaves Judaism, really, another group that only wants to keep Judaism, one group that leaves both religions, basically, doesn't believe in any of them. For real and one group which is practicing both, but usually believing mostly in Judaism.

[Stone] So, so let me ask you about those two groups that are on the right side of the equation there. Our story for *Flames of Freedom* opens in the early 1700s. And this is, Dr. Nunez is a converso. He's seven or eight generations away from the original conversion that would have happened in 1497. And yet he is still

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attempting to maintain some semblance of Judaism. A lot is lost. He doesn't have a synagogue to go to. He doesn't have a minyan to pray with. What is the religious life of these people like who are somehow trying to keep the flame of Judaism alive in the midst of really years of being separated from the root of the religion?

[Dr. Papo] Great question. It's really great question. First of all. For the first conversos, those of 1391, there was a huge, , Jewish infrastructure. 200,000 Jews were converted, 400, 000 Jews were still there. They could help those 200,000 with providing them with, you know, by providing them with tefillin and mezuzot and Jewish calendar and information about when is Yom Kippur and when is Pesach and how much to be prepared.

And so on. But from 1492 onwards, there are no openly practicing Jews in Spain left. And people who practiced clandestine Judaism, they were organized in small groups. Because if they would belong to a bigger group, the bigger the group was, the bigger the chance was it will be eventually picked by the Inquisition.

So, first of all, within two or three generations, they lose Hebrew. Then, they also lose the knowledge of counting the Hebrew calendar, Hebrew years, and so on. They start depending, basically, on the Spanish calendar. or Portuguese translation of the Holy Scripture. And that's a beautiful thing. Everybody in Judaism knows that Ta'anit Ester, you know, the, the fast of Ester is one of the short fasts, like Shivah Asar B Tammuz, like Asarah B'Tevet.

Actually, you fast from the morning till the evening, only 12 hours. you get up in the morning, you don't eat, right? You pray your usual prayers in the evening, you can eat again. But the original Taanit Ester, the original fast of Ester, was when Ester told to Mordecai, Go now and fast with all the Jews for me, and I and my girls will do the same.

We shall not eat for three days and for three nights, and then I will go to the king in a lawless way. Right? And if I perish, let me perish. So, the Converso Jews would fast for 72 hours without water and without food in Spain and in Portugal because they believed that there That's what everybody does.

That's what all the Jews do. That's what Esther says. So Esther became, I mean, you know, officially there are no saints in Judaism. So consequently, there are no patron saints. But if we were to speak about conversos in Catholic terms, then we could say that Queen Esther Actually became the patron saint of the converso.

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Hmm. They identified totally with her. Why? Because she lived, it's, it's, the mag, the scroll of Esther explicitly says, okay, so Esther didn't tell the king what was her nation? Right? And what was her origin? So she actually lives like a proto converso. She lives a clandestine Jewish life in the court of a pagan, idolatrous king.

So that's not a miracle that all those Jews felt the same way that the story of Esther in the Bible ends with a happy end. So shall our own story end with happy end if we do what Esther did. Right? So they fasted as Esther did, and they kept faith as Esther did, and so on. But basically, you see, today in the state of Israel, who is allowed to move to Israel?

People who would be persecuted as Jews. That basically means any person that has one grandpa or grandma, one out of four, Jewish, he can take refuge in Jewish state because he would be. So basically what do we learn from that? We learn that many a time Jews respond to outwards concepts, persecutions, ideas, and so on.

So, you say that Dr. Nunes was 7th generation, well, in Germany, there were only 4 generations of assimilation. Because the assimilation starts actually very late after the emancipation. If they had six generations of assimilated Jews, then the Nuremberg Law would state that it's enough to have one, one single great grandfather.

But being the fact that they had only four generations, they went for one grandfather. So, What was the response? If you persecute somebody as a Jew, he acts as a Jew, he feels as a Jew. I'll give you one example. You know, the community that I come from, the Sarajevo community, when the civil war in Yugoslavia started, there were like 1,090 members of the community.

And then overwhelming majority of them left for Israel. But all of a sudden, there was 1,000 new Jews. 1,000 people who really had a Jewish grandfather, Jewish grandmother, a Jewish mother, a Jewish father, both parents Jewish, both grandparents Jewish on one side, doesn't matter. They never wanted to be members of the Jewish community.

But now being a member of Jewish community meant that you had medical care, you had international Jewish support, you could leave the city which was under the siege. And then all these people came to the community presenting documents. So the question was whether they should be recognized as Jews or not.

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And being the, also in my free time, the rabbi of that community, I was asked the question. So what was my answer? I remembered that there was a similar question, similar, question in the Mishnah. They were asking about Kelev Yom. I don't know how to say Kelev Yom in Hebrew. In English, that's the animal that lives in the river, and they also make, you know, those walls in the river who prevent...

[Stone] You mean beavers?

[Dr. Papo] Beavers! Beavers! Yes. So there's a question whether beaver is an earthly animal or a water animal. It has relevance for a certain aspect of Halakha. So, they didn't know how to answer. So Rabbi Akiva asks, Well, where do they eat? And they say, well, sometimes they eat in the water, sometimes they eat on the earth.

So they say, okay, where do they sleep? Well, sometimes they sleep in the water, sometimes they sleep on the earth. So he says, okay, whatever. Where do they escape when they are chased after? And then the answer was they escape to the water usually. And he said, okay, so then they are water animal. So when I was asked what I was asked, I said, well, where do these people escape to when they are chased after?

To the Jewish community. Well, obviously they are Jewish. So I, I used the answer of Rabbi Akiva to give a acceptable modern 21st century Jewish answer. No, it was 20th century in any case. So basically. If these people were not chased after, six, seven, eight, nine, ten generations, they probably wouldn't even feel Jewish anymore.

But being the fact that they were chased after, actually, that's exactly the reason why it was the Inquisition. It was the Spanish Inquisition and it was the Portuguese Inquisition which kept their Judaism alive, which kept the spark alive, which kept it relevant. And you see, once the Inquisition ceased to exist in Spain, we had less and less people coming out of the closet.

But before that, they were in the closet, and that's why they felt Jewish. If somebody chases after you as a Jew, it doesn't mean that, you know, they were 724 Jews. It doesn't mean that, this was the only thing they ever thought about. But this was part of their identity, and the more they were persecuted, the more important that part of their identity was becoming.

To make a long story short, and just to show to what extent the world is not black and white. These people, even when they leave Spain, even when they

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leave Portugal and they establish their own communities, whatever in Caribbean, for example, have you ever seen the Jewish cemetery in Curacao, the Converso cemetery in Curacao?

I have not, but, yeah, tell us about it. You can see, first of all, you can see, totally Catholic iconography. There is not a single non ex converso Jewish grave on which you would have a skull with, you know, X bones.

[Stone] Crossbones.

[Dr. Papo] Yes. Yes. But in, but on, on their graves, it's a usual sign. Why? I'll just give you one example of a person.

The guy writes theater plays in Spain and then He leaves for Amsterdam and he writes theater plays. And then the research is puzzled because all of a sudden, there are new plays, new theater plays in Spain after the year that we know that he left for Amsterdam. So we are like, oh no, these must be postdated or whatever.

But then we see there are new plays later in Amsterdam again. But then we see that there are new plays in Spain. So today we know that person actually went back and forth. He left Spain, he went to Amsterdam, he published plays, theater plays under his Jewish name. Then he didn't like it, so he went back to Spain.

He assumed a Catholic identity when he went back to Spain. Exactly. And he proceeded publishing under his Catholic name in Spain, then he comes back to Amsterdam and he proceeds publishing under his Jewish name. Then he goes back to Spain for the second time and he publishes under his Spanish name and Catholic name.

And then he, finally he moves, or for example, when you look who established the, Western Safari community in London, in Amsterdam, in New York, you see the same names. Then you say, Oh, this must be grandsons of those people. But then you say, no, this can't be grandsons of those people because it's five years later.

Nobody could have a son within two years and a grandson within. Then you recognize these are the same people. What does that mean? Conversos were looking It's crazy. It wasn't easy to appease them. Once they left Spain and once they came to Amsterdam, you would think, okay, this is, you know, this is their math dream coming true.

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No, it wasn't. Many of them were totally disappointed when they discovered what Judaism was really all about. Why? Because 7th generation or 6th generation or 8th generation, as you previously mentioned, in Spain didn't really, or in Portugal, They didn't really have a clue about Judaism. So they would follow the following equation.

They would say, I'm Jew. I don't believe stupidities. I don't believe dogmas. So Catholicism is all about dogmas. Judaism must be free thinking. Uh, Catholicism is all about rituals. Judaism must be about understanding things. Then they come to Amsterdam and they join the fold and they are expected to believe in Jewish dogmas like resurrection of the dead, you know, the coming, and they are like dogmas?

I was under the impression that there are no Jewish dogmas or ritual eccentricism. I was under the impression that stupid Catholics are ritual eccentric. We are supposed to be philosophical, Aristotelian, rational, free thinkers, and so on. So yes, many of them would be disappointed in Portugal. Many is, sorry, coming from Portugal to Amsterdam.

And if you live on the edge, there was something hazardous about being converso in Portugal. Any moment you could be taken by the Inquisition and you could be tortured and then you would accept whatever was imposed on you. So it's living on the edge. Now imagine you get rid of those circumstances, you come to Amsterdam, you are allowed to have a middle-class life.

And you feel like the coke is missing in your life. You need some drugs. You need something to keep your adrenaline, or whatever is the English word, high. Really, this is really. Yeah, it gave him a deep sense of purpose to be able to defy the church. I'll give you one example, a beautiful example. A Jewish doctor, leaves Portugal.

He comes to the Ottoman Empire, he circumcises himself, he re embraces Judaism, and now you think, okay, he will go to the ninth course for adults of Judaism, and he will be happy to No! He goes to Rome to convince the Pope to convert. And then Pope doesn't feel like converting, so he has him burned alive.

In Rome, but that's the name of the guy he went. I mean, can you imagine it? You just left your life on edge in Portugal and now you could return to Judaism and just have your middle class, how to call it a suburb life. No, no, he doesn't feel like that. He wants action. So yes, there is a messianic fever about them.

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There is living on the edge about them. There is something revolutionary about them. And you know what? I'm going to write about this. Not because that's what I usually focus on, but only because I feel that nobody did it, so somebody has to do it. Nobody dealt with the huge question of the converso contribution to the development of the secular state.

The idea of secular state was actually a converso idea. Why? Nobody in Catholic Spain, even before the expulsion in 1492, the Jews in Spain were not bothered with the fact that Spain was a Catholic country. What does that mean? Because the Jews had their own narrative. We are here by mistake. tomorrow that mistake will be rectified and we will go back to our own country and this country is yours.

In spite of the fact that Jews were older on Iberian soil than Christians themselves, Because Jews were there at the time of Islamic conquest, and they were there at the time of Christian conquest. Reconquista, reconquest. So the Jews were actually the only people who were there all the time. So they could actually say, if they didn't have Jewish narrative, they could say to Christians, this country is more ours than yours.

We were here before you. But no, the Jews had their own narrative, which is, no, this country is yours.

[**Stone**] Thank you, Dr. Papo, for this rich introduction to the Jewish world of that era. It's truly illuminating to unveil this part of the history of Spain and the Jews. In part two of our interview with Dr. Papo, we will delve more into this question of identity and land and how it has shaped our understanding of what it means to be a Jew today in contemporary society.

Thank you for listening to *Flames of Freedom Revealed*, hosted by Richard Stone and produced and directed by Mark Simon. Our executive producer is Lance Toland. Original music by Dave Wilson at Q Tone Productions. Special thanks to Rabbi Saul Rubin, whose assistance throughout the development of this series was invaluable.

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