Anusim in North America: The Ingathering

--Draft--

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"And the pig," that is Edom....
Not only does she not nurture the righteous, but she kil
– Leviticus Rabbah

There have been widespread reports in recent years of descendents of converts of Spain and Portugal who have surfaced in various parts America.[1] The past two years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the recognition these lost brethren received within Orthodox Judaism.[2] Mar anusim (Hebrew for "coerced ones," ä-nü-sim, or ä-nü-sa in singular) have made attempts to rejoin Jewish communities, with varying degrees of success. Bu understanding of their history is now paving the way, both here and toward a general procedure for those seeking to rejoin normative Judaism ease the burden of proof and distinguish them from gerim.

In this article, I explore the historical background and some feature extraordinary Jewish group and attempt to place these individuals in the rabbinical writings regarding anusim on the Continent.

Background

As is well known, in 1492, Spain expelled all 300,000 Jews who had no their faith.[3] About half the refugees crossed into Portugal. Over the

[1] The New York Times (Nov. 11, 1990; Nov. 29, 1992); Time Magazine (Mar. 4, 1991); Natio Radio (1988; Dec. 1992; Apr. 1995). Other stories include National Catholic Reporter (Feb. 2 Paso Times (Mar. 5, 1990); Lillith (Winter 1991); Greater Phoenix Jewish News (Mar. 8, 1991) Mercury News (May 11, 1991); New Mexico Magazine (June 1991); Echoes of Sepharad (O Jewish Monthly (Oct. 1991); Hadassah Magazine (Jan. 1992); D The Magazine of Dallas (Jan. Worth Star Telegraph (Apr. 5, 1992); Quantum (Summer 1992); Melton J. (Autumn 1992); Newsday (Nov. 29, 1992); Miami Herald (Dec. 21, 1992); Forward (Jan. 29, 1993); Jerusalem Report (Jan. 14, 1993); Jewish Currents (Feb. 1993); Spirit (Spring/Summer 1993); Dallas Jewish Life (June 1993); El Palacio (Summer 1993); Southwest Jewish History (Fall 1993); The Sephardic House Newsletter (1994).

[2] There was an address on anusim in the Americas at the Midwest Sephardic Rabbinic Co Dec. 1993; in Spring 1994, R. Aaron Soloveichik wrote a responsum on their behalf (see halakhic aspects of this matter were discussed by R. Daniel Raccah at the Conference of the of the Sephardic Rabbinate in New York, attended by the Rishon Le Zion, Hakham Bakshi-Doro 1994; a Leadership Conference for Descendants of New World Anusim took place in the Shehet Jerusalem, where the attendees also met with the Rishon Le Zion (Jerusalem Post, Aug. 19, 19 May 1995, R. Marc Angel, leader of Congregation Shearith Israel, travelled to the Southwe anusim.

[3] This is the number given by Don Isaac Abravanel, introduction to Maayanei Hayeshua (Commentary to Daniel). For an English translation, see L. W. Schwartz, Memoirs of My People, Jewish Publicati

years, Portugal forcibly converted all Jews and prohibited their em Significant numbers of Spanish Jews who converted to Catholicism und between the pogroms of 1391 and the expulsion of 1492 and of those late in Portugal maintained Jewish practices in secret, while outwardly acting Christians. These people were pejoratively called marranos." Earlier forced conversions to Islam under the Almohads had resulted in underground ob Judaism, as described in Maimonides' famous Epistle of Martyrdom (Igerret Hashmad). It was, therefore, natural for similar survival measures to b after the Christian Reconquest of Moorish Spain.

Whenever it became possible, Jews escaped Portugal. Having to exit by went to various destinations in Europe and North Africa, as well as the N Widespread disease, enslavement, and volatile political situations added to facing these refugees.

In most places in the New World, Judaism was illegal. Only in the mi hundreds did Jews begin to settle there openly (though some are know arrived by 1502). R. Isaac Aboab came to Brazil in 1641 to lead the congr Recife, largely comprised of anusim who, under Dutch rule, returned Judaism. When, soon after, the Dutch capitulated to Portugal, some of t reached New Amsterdam, where they established Congregation Shearith Isra

Wherever they ended up, these Sephardim considered themselves to be "Spaniards," often preserving the language and customs of their Iberian

Anusim in the New World

Only with perfect hindsight can one say which destination was the safes to the colonies was not unreasonable in light of the global situation of th century. The inquisitorial tribunal had not yet been set up, and local were not very active in ferreting out secret Jews and sending them back Later, when the Mexican Inquisition was established (in 1571), Jews went d the frontiers to escape detection, thus arriving (among other places) in N Texas, Colorado, Arizona and California of today. In the sixteenth through centuries, over a hundred people were martyred at the stake for their hundreds if not thousands of others were tortured, buried alive, lashed,

Phila., 1943, pp. 43-47.

[4] M. A. Cohen, The Martyr, Jewish Publication Society: Phila., 1973, p. 272.

exiled, publicly shamed, or burned in effigy (having died in jail or escap total number of anusim and their descendents who eventually came to the remains unknown, but estimates continue to grow.[5]

Nuevo Reino de Leon, possibly the largest tract of land granted anyone stretches from eastern Mexico through the Southwest of the U.S. It was grant that came without the requirement to prove limpieza de sangr Christian blood." While the whole New World was filled with secret Jews wh documents in order to get permission to come to New Spain, Nuevo L particularly heavily settled by anusim. The recipient of this 1579 gran governor, the New Christian, Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, died in the l jails, accused not of "judaizing" (practicing Judaism), but of failing to den relatives for that "offense." All his nieces and a nephew were eventually marty as well.

Following the death of Carvajal in the Inquisition cells, his lieutenant Gaspar Castaño de Sosa, along with some 170 colonists (no priest among the an uncharted, unauthorized expedition to the north, reaching into too Mexico. De Sosa, against whom there were allegations of judaizing, and h party were arrested for this illegal expedition. De Sosa himself was exiled f but many of the members of his group later returned to New Mexico in Juan de On*te. The names of a number of fugitives burned in effigy in M autos da fe match those of these settlers in New Mexico.[6] Thus, it was devoutly Jewish who are the ancestors of the anusim of today's Southwest, of those in the southern periphery of the colonies.

Luis de Carvajal the younger, the governor's nephew and a fervent religious Jew who was tortured and burned at the stake, said that were it not for the coe Inquisition, the Christians in the New World could be counted on the finger hand.[7] While this must be considered an exaggeration, a high number strengthened by the claim that in the mid-sixteenth century there were r Jews than Catholics in Mexico City,[8] and by the fact that the ap "Portuguese" became synonymous with Jew.[9]

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[5] For the history of Jews in the Americas under the Inquisition, see S. B. Liebman, The Jews in New Spain, Univ. of Miami Press: Coral Gables, FL, 1970; A. Wiznitzer, "Crypto-Jews in Mexico du Sixteenth Century," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 51(3), 1961, pp. 168-214; "Crypto-Jews during the Seventeenth Century," American Jewish Historical Quarterly 51(4), 1961, pp. 222-2

[6] S. Hordes, "The Inquisition and the crypto-Jewish community in colonial New Spain and Ne in: M. E. Perry and A. J. Cruz, eds., Cultural Encounters, Univ. of California Press: Berkeley, CA, p.

[7] Liebman, New Spain, p. 160. For one biography of Carvajal, see Cohen.

[8] Liebman, New Spain, p. 42.

The critical role of women in the survival of Judaism in secret, throu long history and wide geography of secret Judaism, cannot be overstated. carried the burden of adaptation, preservation and transmission of thei immense risk to their lives. Many were burned at the stake for being "ral "dogmatizers." The female leaders of the anusim communities and compo transmitted rituals and liturgy for Jewish and crypto-Jewish holidays (th Esther was extremely important and solemn) and for life-cycle events. ' referred to as sacerdotisas or guadalupitas(!), and were regularly turned to decisions on all religious matters. They also served as medicine women (cu employing both herbs, amulets and incantations in their healing and mic which reason some were burned at the stake, accused of witchcraft. Son preserved, practised and transmitted kabbalistic traditions, elements of wl in the Spanish-language prayers they composed. Only among anusim, we the caretakers of this esoteric wisdom.

In 1642, the discovery of a synagogue in Mexico city led to renewed vig part of the Inquisition. Tomas de Treviño de Sobremonte (b. 1592, Spain leader of one of the three large secret Jewish communities of his time in t City area. He was burned alive, refusing the last minute pretense at Chris the garotte. He became a legend and the subject of ballads. Details of th observances in his family include circumcision, prayers, fasts, careful obs the dietary laws, the Sabbath and ritual purity, and feeding the poor, a knowledge of Hebrew. The Inquisition records in his case refer to tefilli burial rites, the rabbinic preference for marital relations on Friday evenin farda – charity collected in the New World for Jewish communities abroad.[10]

Historically, the anusim of the New World maintained contact with communities in Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey and Israel. They co themselves, and were considered by the Jewish communities around the Jews. Families from the Americas married their daughters to learned Je from the Old World. Jewish emissaries, such as Ruy Diaz Nieto,[11] came to tl New World communities, teachers were imported, and money collections v for pidyon shevuyim from Turkey and for the community in Eretz Isra

[9] Oxford English Dictionary.

[10] An English translation of his processo is in the American Jewish Historical Society Archives, v

[11] It is worth pointing out that the Inquisition had jurisdiction over non-Christians, as well who were considered bad influences. Nieto was one such victim.

continued until the 1800s, at which time the decline of the Sephardi cor Europe and the loss of profitability of trade left these people completely iso

The last person to be tried and sentenced to burn at the stake was circumcised Franciscan monk accused of being a Jew and of helping hide o was scheduled to die in 1795, but after begging and promising to reper thrown into the secret cells, where he remained until liberated at about years of age in the Mexican Revolution of 1821. The last person known to executed by the Inquisition was Father Jose Maria Hidalgo y Costill (the" George Washington"). He was accused of both Lutheranism and Judaism, a other charges, and was handed over to the army to be shot in 1811.

Anusim continued to maintain a loosely organized, private, family-basec However, the annexation of New Mexico by the U.S. in 1848 brought witl difficulties. The local clergy, which had often been from among the an replaced by French Catholic clerics from New Orleans who did not counten customs; water rights and private land belonging to anusim were usurpe relative religious privacy was invaded, and people had to move about more of sustenance. The breakdown of family units, the language barrier grandparent and grandchild, and exposure to modern Western culture ha the recent break in the line of transmission. On the other hand, expos outside world is largely responsible for the recognition among some t family's religious practices are not really Catholic.

With the abolishment of the Inquisition at the time of the revolu remaining Jews were presumed to have assimilated into the larger communities.[14] There were, however, sporadic reports of secret Jews in preceding their "discovery" in the Southwest, first reported in 1987.[16] In rea descendents of anusim are not limited today to the Southwest, nor did the via Mexico. They are also likely to have arrived here from Cuba, South An

[12]Liebman, "The Great Conspiracy in New Spain," The Americas 30(1), July 1973, p. 25.

[13]B. Muske, Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies in San-Antonio, TX, Nov.

[14]Wiznitzer, p. 268: "By the end of the seventeenth century the whole crypto-Jewish communi had been destroyed." "It is another inexplicable phenomenon that, soon after religious tolerance were established in Spain, Portugal and Spanish America, they disappeared as if by have become absorbed by the respective population, and only a very small number of ther Judaism in Brazil, Mexico and Central America, where they still practice today" (The Sentine 1925).

[15]C. A. Krause, The Jews in Mexico, Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1970.

[16]R. G. Santos, "Chicanos of Jewish descent in Texas," Western States Jewish Historical Quarte July 1983, pp. 327ff..; D. S. Nidel, "Modern descendents of conversos in New Mexico," Western St Historical Quarterly 16(3), Apr. 1984, pp. 249ff.

Carribean, or Iberia. Indeed, wherever there are Latinos, there still ar aware of their Jewish heritage.

The widespread presence of anusim who maintain a Jewish identity or Jewish practises flies in the face of the Church and of those who contend were no secret Jews to speak of. The inquisitors surely were often mot racism and avarice, but that does not mean the phenomenon was imaginary

Years of danger, betrayal and exploitation have bred mistrust eve families, making it difficult for anusim who are investigating their roots the facts. Anusim often don't know what to ask, don't know what their mixed upbringing is Jewish. Even abstinence from pork and lighting of Frid candles, let alone more esoteric practises, are not always recognized as Jewis

<u>Anusim in the Responsa</u>

Before delving into the exact nature of secret Judaism in New Spain, w briefly examine how the Jewish community has responded to anusim centuries.

Discussions of the many legal ramifications of apostasy, religious coer secret observance are scattered throughout rabbinic literature. Respons subject provide the reader not only with halakhic decisions, but also with discourse on what constitutes apostasy in times of religious oppression we historical details of day-to-day problems facing communities and families persecution and conversion.[17] Questions include, for example: May ar called to the Torah, open the Ark, or be given other communal honors be circumcised? Is the wine of Crypto-Jews to be treated as kosher? Are co crypto-Jews binding?[18] What conversion procedure, if any, is a desc forced converts to undergo when she or he re-enters the Jewish communi value do commandments observed by anusim have? What procedures are for repentence? The most frequent issue dealt with was *agunot*, women not remarry because their husband stayed behind or who were childle whose levir (*yavam*) was still among the anusim. Potential implications of

[17]The rabbinic literature on anusim is best summarized in H. J. Zimmels, Die Marranen in Literature, Rubin Mass: Berlin, 1932; see also S. Asaf, Beaholei Yaakov, Mossad Harav Kook: 1943 and B. Netanyahu, The Marranos of Spain, American Academy for Jewish Research: New (The latter's conclusions remain a minority opinion.)

[18]The case of Doña Gracia was the most famous. See C. Roth, Doña Gracia of the House of N Publication Society, Phila., 1948.

on these issues often led to heated debates within the various Sephardic c in exile.[19]

R. Isaac b. Sheshet Perfet (d. 1408) wrote that anusim while still in thei oppression "require interrogation by a scholar to determine if they are practicing properly in private and have no opportunity to escape."[20]

In the sixteenth century, R. Binyamin b. Matityahu of Greece "annull marriage of an anusa who left Spain without her husband, since the witne (church) wedding were invalid. He severely castigates them on the gro they were apostates who chose not to leave.[21] In another responsum, h calls for the excommunication of anyone who calls anusim who have apostates. In the face of the evil decree, imposing Christianity on all,

> They stood up to sanctify God's name....Some were killed, others were slaughtered, others drowned. Still others had the [baptismal] wat forcibly sprinkled on them, and they escape from there and come un the Shekhina's wings. Shall we remind them of their being coerced? Why, most of Israel were forced there against their will.[22]

Even their ancestors' sins may not be mentioned. He expresses his fears that the anusim who are not yet back – and whom he is clearly expecting and hop return – would be discouraged by the disparaging remarks they hear. He sa do not punish those who remind them of their former apostasy, then you stumbling block in their way for the future, for they will be reluctant to r

Another approach to descendents of anusim compares them to "b captivity– " ketinok shenishba bein hagoyim, hence, not responsible fo transgressions. For instance, R. Eliyahu b. Hayim (Constantinople, 1530-16 only treat as an apostate one who "did not act according to the custom of anusim, b added to his transgression and abandoned much."[23]

The role of women as teachers and upholders of the faith and their bra called upon to kiddush hashem was universally recognized.[24] For ex Yom-Tov b. Moshe Zahalon (1559-1638) noted: "The pious Portuguese wo

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[19]See, for example, Responsa Jacob Berav, no. 39, about the debate between rabbis of the I and others as to whether to treat fourth and fifth generation anusim as Jews or not.

[20]Responsa, no. 4. As long as they do not willingly worship idols or, in the presence of desecrate the Sabbath, their touch does not make wine forbidden.

[21]Binyamin Zeev, no. 95.

[22]No. 287.

[23]Responsa, no. 46.

[24]Asaf, pp. 163-164.

whose heart the Law of Israel is planted, it is they who teach the men and close to the Law of Israel, as we have heard and seen."[25] "The righteous elderly women of Portugal, about whose piety we have been told, from whom the Judaism go forth, they are the ones who have brought the Sons of Israel wings of the Shekhina."[26] There is no need to worry that the mother of the was not Jewish, since "the Portuguese in particular are careful not to marr Gentiles, and the Gentiles are careful not to marry them."[27]

Saadia b. Maimun ibn Danan (late fifteenth century), in a moving resp the anusim, writes:

> The seed of the apostate is [considered] coerced... and the descendents an anus are coerced, as well.... There is a great distinction betwee apostates and anusim who were forced to be separated from the [Jewi community and subscribe to that nonsense with their mouths and l because of the drawn sword, the arched bow and the burden of w They do not imagine this nor does their heart so think, for the one (and His love are in their hearts, many observing commandments hiding, endangering themselves. Even the wicked among them wh tend toward apostasy think nothing of that nonsense, their hea unable to believe it has any validity. They are isolated by the Gentil who call them "Jews," and hate them and curse them all day long because of their inclination to Jewish teachings. How many of the sanctified God's name in public and gave their lives.... There is reward.. for those who put themselves at risk to observe some of the commandments more that the reward of Jews who have no fear danger... and God does not indict over coercion.... Maimonides wrote this matter in his Iggeret Hashmad; no one can add to the supports adduced and to his clear arguments.... After the destruction of t second Temple, the Romans, Christians and Ishmaelites decreed ar destroyed several communities from the Community of Israel, bu afterwards most of these communities returned to Judaism after ma generations.... There were those who fled in the first generation fro one kingdom to the other–from the Ishmaelite to the Christian and from the Christian to the Ishmaelite–and many remained in the place of shmad, and preserved what they could of God's commandments secrecy.... In conclusion, there is no sage from among the sages o Israel who calls the generations of shmad complete Gentiles, or total wicked, for their transgression was against their will... This woul discourage the descendents of those coerced by decrees and troubles

[25] New Responsa, no. 107. For some reason the editor could not fathom that a woman taught
[26] Responsa, vol. 1, no. 148.
[27] New Responsa, no. 107.

> cleave to the portion of God and attach [themselves] to His people so t they be absorbed by the nations... and their memory will be lost.

R. Solomon b. Shimon Duran composed a special prayer for returning ; the fifteenth century:[28]

> Our God and God of our fathers, bring success to your servant -- ar bestow your grace upon him. Just as you have moved his heart return in complete repentance before you, so may you plant in l heart love and fear of you. Open his heart to your Torah and guide in the path of your commandments that he may find grace in your e So may it be, and let us say Amen.

As time went on, the subject of forced converts ceased to surface, anc appears from the mid-seventeen hundreds until early this century.

<u>Anusim Today</u>

There are today predominantly anusim villages in Neuvo Leon, Mexico Monterey, in particular), as well as Santa Fe, New Mexico, and its environs, ; vicinity of the Rio Grande. There are typically Jewish family names, such Lopez, Amado, Rael (from Israel), for which Inquisition records are a goo incomplete, guide.[29] Anusim are often given biblical first names, like Es Jaccobo, Israel, and Adonai.[30]

In what follows, I describe some of what I have learned from conversat about forty anusim of the New World:

A minority were told explicitly of their Jewishness by a parent. Freq grandmother passed on the family secrets to one elect granddaughter of (whom she sometimes raised herself), thereby preserving matrilineage. just told that they are not really Mexican, but, rather, belong to the Spani There may also be a family sense of having been betrayed by Spain. enjoined to only marry los muestros, "one of us", and to follow the ancie costuma d'antiguo, including la dieta the special diet. Another key word

[28]Responsa, no. 89.

[29]One source is Liebman, A Guide to Jewish References in the Mexican Colonial Era 1521-1821, Univ. of Penn. Press, 1964. One must bear in mind that converts took on the names of their "spor example, Peralta was the name of one of the most vicious inquisitors in Mexico, as well as t some of the Jews the Inquisition had tormented.

[30]Lists of first and last names (as well as customs) are given by F. Hernández, "The Secret Southwest," in: M. A. Cohen and A. J. Peck, Sephardim in the Americas, American Jewish Tuscaloosa, AL, 1993.

“clean,” as in, “You should only marry clean ones.” There can be familia tension over having married an outsider. Some speak an old Castilian diale ridiculed by their teachers for not knowing “proper” Spanish.[31] (People in New Mexico sent children to Mexico to learn to speak “correctly.”)

There are still secret synagogues, secret prayer rooms in the homes relatives, and secret prayer groups. Sayings include: YHWH es mi dio (“Ha my God”); El Sabado es el dia de la gloria (“the Sabbath is the day of g referring to Saturday. A few possess talit and tefillin, mezuzot, Tanakh, si other Jewish objects, presumably bought from Jewish stores or merchan avoid church; their own churches are often without icons. An implicit r the Church is often transmitted subliminally to children.

Some regions had a travelling mohel who performed circumcisions. consecrated baby boys on the eighth day, avoiding circumcision because bind the child to the Law of Moses. Interestingly, this mistaken belief (de the New Testament[32]) is recorded by R. Sh. Aboab.[33]

Candle-lighting on Fridays is widespread among crypto-Jews. They cle and change clothes for Shabbat. Some are not allowed by their paren anything Friday night, not even wash their hair. Yom Kippur is called Grande.[34] It was common to fast three days for Taanit Esther. Many cel non-Christian spring holiday in lieu of Passover. Anusim venerate “Jewish with celebrations: Santa Esterika (Saint Esther), Santo Moises, etc. Some li candles for Christmas.

The observance of kashrut was commonly referred to as la dieta. Some avoid red meat in general; others ritually slaughter beef, mutton, goats and ch special knives, tested on hair or nails), covering the blood, salting to rem porging the sciatic nerve, separating meat from milk, and avoiding po deemed “unclean” or called marrano) and seafood. Some wash hands before after eating, wait between meat and milk (bleaching or boiling dishes meals), avoid blood (throwing out eggs with bloodspots), and drink onl kosher wine.[35] Many children were prohibited to eat food prepared by a

[31] Magda Aliza Hinojosa, born in Tampico, Mexico was interviewed on the Israel Ladino rad (Jan. 1994) by Moshe Shaul, its program director and editor of Aki Yerushalayim. Shaul co she spoke Ladino well.

[32] Paul Gal, 2:3-9.

[33] Memoirs, fol. 75.

[34] Most holidays have more than one name.

their mother or maternal grandmother. These customs and others ar among anusim, and are not equally known or observed by all.

The transmission of tradition as well as family genealogy was most often to women. A feature of the anusim is that many did not bear the name of parents, and that names were frequently changed, making the task of re a genealogy in most cases impossible.[36] Women taught Tanakh and ruled questions. They took care of the purification and burial rituals of the dead and female. Anusim buried within one day, used burial shrouds, cover had water spigots in cemeteries. They rended garments in mourning, seven days, then one year. Some avoided contact with the dead wheneve There are tombstones in hidden cemeteries bearing Hebrew names an symbols.[37]

Some women also possess kabbalistic knowledge and practices. Prayers Presencia (the Shekhinah) are indicative. They had a tradition of sev names of God (not seventy or seventy-two, as in other traditions), as Portuguese anusim,[38] and as is found in an early midrashic source.[39]

The customs among anusim first reported by modern scholars and the mostly of biblical origin, leading to skepticism on the part of cultural ant and rabbis alike, since many fundamentalist churches tend to promo observances. This argument does not, however, take into account the fact practices were proof of judaizing for the Tribunal, thus exposing those them to danger. Many anusim resorted to joining non-Catholic denomi order to get their hands on the Torah–which was not available to Catholic in order to be somewhat less scrutinized by the Church. Furthermore candles on Friday night, ritual slaughter and various degrees of dietary that could not have been deduced from the Torah, confirm their connection with the Jewish teachings.

Moreover, among anusim living in Mexico and in former Mexican provi

[35]Shulhan Arukh, Y.D. 119:9,12.

[36]A responsum of Josef b. David ibn Lev (vol. 3, no. 25) mentions two brothers, Gabriel Manuel Alvares; the latter had a son Geronimo Dias who changed his name to Samuel Troges. 104.

[37]Cary Herz of Albuqurque, NM has had several photographic exhibitions of such headstor Emilio and Trudy Coca of Santa Fe, NM. See also Hernández..

[38]N. Slouschz, ha-Anusim be-Portugal, Dvir: Tel-Aviv, 1932, p. 167. Slouschz was unaware of for the number 73.

[39]Midrash Konen, in: J. D. Eisenstein,Ozar Midrashim, p. 253.

part of the U.S., I have found surprisingly widespread evidence of relative practices of rabbinic Judaism, including fasting on Mondays and Thu penance,[40] sweeping floors towards the center of the room (originall respect for the mezuza),[41] and orienting beds north-south.[42] These followed today by people who often have no awareness of their significance, but who continue to follow them as the ancient custom.

The discovery of such rabbinic observances among anusim is a ver argument for a surviving Jewish heritage, since such observances indicate link to the ancestral faith. These customs are especially significant as they have been derived from a reading of the Torah and are not shared by These customs are so rarely known today that it is inconceivable that norr could have in recent centuries taught them to anusim. Consequently, strong evidence of Jewish origin. Most also lie mainly in the domain of w primary preservers of Jewish traditions among anusim.

The Future

When anusim first came to the New World there was not yet an inq tribunal. These people hoped to practise their Judaism with more fre autonomy than in Europe. When the Christian inquisitional monster foll sought ways to escape. Some entered the clergy and monastic orders; so nominal "Lutherans" because Lutherans were not bothered as much by the tribunal. Under this guise they continued to observe every commandment the preserved many Jewish practises, and had access to more sacred books. entered the Christian clergy in order to be the confessors of their co-r thus protecting them from being denounced. Not only was Catholic lai access to the "Old Testament," but the incredibly comprehensive the Church b New World on virtually all books served as strong incentive for Jews to s children to study for the clergy. There are many cases of judaizers from t clergy and monastic orders in the autos da fe. (Incidentally, being sch

[40]The custom appears in Tur (Orah Hayim 134) and as penance in Responsa Levi ibn Havi It appears in the Travelogue of David haReuveni (ed. Kahane, pp. 72-74; see Asaf, pp. 154-155 in inquistional records (Slouschz, pp. 71-73), and continued until recently in Portugal.

[41]This very matrilinial custom is described as something the Portuguese still give their li others have abandoned) by R. Moshe Hagiz (Mishnat Hakhamim,Page 53a) two hundred yea expulsion. It is confirmed in Portuguese Inquisition records (E. Glazer, "Invitation to Intoleran Union College Annual, 1956, pp. 353-354).

[42]This requirement is of Talmudic origin. I have found no reference to the arrangement Inquisition records, though it appears to still be very common.

itself an indication of Judaism worthy of the Tribunal's investigation!)

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sporadic information about Mexico, descended from anusim, continued to trickle out, but received littl New Ashkenazic Jewish communities in areas inhabited by anusim acknowledge their existence. The only hope left for these people was in I this land the doors seemed closed.

Seymour Liebman, the historian of the Jewish presence in New Spain, h to suspect the existence of crypto-Judaic communities in Mexico, but upo was told (by anusim!) that no Jewish traces were left in the area. Togeth Shlomo Goren, chief rabbi of Israel, he visited Venta Prieta, where ther Mexican-Indian group claiming descent from the Carvajals.[43] Goren d that the group was not of predominantly Jewish descent and the Israeli therefore required of them full conversion.[44] Many did convert and Israel.[45]

The emerging anusim typically search for many years and wait until fairly certain before they approach an acquaintance or rabbi.[46] They may be jeopardizing their relationships with their family, friends, co-w well as their jobs, and they justly fear the lack of welcome on the part of communities they may seek to join. No gain of material or social nature these people. To the Jewish community they remain Latinos while to t community they become Judios. They come humble, often bearing a great guilt and shame for the sins of their ancestors. What happens to the anus now charting their way back is carefully watched by many more who are the wings. They are test cases – pioneers and leaders of the next generation

Bertha, of blessed memory, discovered she was a Jew because her Gentil kept insisting she must be (judging from her abhorrence of pork, and otl with "clean" and "unclean"), and– after a geneological investigation her confro mother who then admitted to her that they were Jews and that she had Judaism by the aunts who had raised her in Texas. Her children now s

[43]Indian Jews in Mexico, American Friends of the Mexican Indian Jews, Jan. 1944; M. M. Wei Jews of Mexico, Syosset, NY, 1965. There are also fundamentalist "Israelite" churches in Mexi U.S., members of which do not usually claim Jewish descent (see L. Levi, Jewish Folklore and I Review 15(2), 1993, pp. 138-141).

[44]J. Beller, Jews in Latin America, Jonathan David: New York, 1969, p. 278.

[45]These people were thrown out of the mikve in Mexico City when they came there, with Avichail, to formally convert, and had to immerse in the ocean instead!

[46]Women, who form the majority of today's returnees, have been having an especially d communicating with rabbis and male officials of synagogues.

anti-Semitism and confusion. Before her recent tragic death, she spoke (tc Jewish audience) at a meeting of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies:[47]

> I need to say that you have the right to hate us; you have the right feel anger towards us–because we chose the easy way out.... [They chose the easy way out. They might have preserved some things tl they could not do away with, but I think that they preferred surviv and I do believe they compromised. And I apologize for it. I feel hu when I think Jews died in the concentration camps, and we did not t notice of it, that we as a people could not have taken notice.

Another anusa said at the same occasion:[48] "Please remember that we l of pain inside us which we have to deal with.... [T]his one soul still feels th burden of apostasy of our ancestors over a six-hundred year period."

Now that more is understood about the historical context, the m transmission, and rabbinic observances of anusim, the road back for those it, is being paved. The revelations regarding the anusim in the New Worlc to discussions and correspondence within the Ashkenazic and Sephardic Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik[49] writes:

> I am taking the liberty to write about the people in the Americas w claim to be descendants of the marranos of Spain and Portugal.
>
> They must be treated like full Jews in every way (counted for minyan, given aliyot, etc.).
>
> Only when one of these anusim wishes to marry a Jew, must he or s undergo full conversion. That is, he or she must undergo immersion a mikve (without the blessing) and full acceptance of mitzvot o commitment to the Torah. A man, if he is uncircumcised, must i addition undergo circumcision; if he is already circumcised, then he to undergo hatafat dam brit.

Rabbi Soloveichik's letter spares these people their "last inquisition." It facilitates the extension of hessed and support to anusim on the part c Jewry, and assures that their complete return is done thoroughly, but

[47] Bertha Muske, Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, San Antonio, T 1993.

[48] Magda-Aliza Hinojosa, Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, San Antc Nov. 1993; see Sephardic House Newsletter, Winter 1994.

[49] Letter dated 1 Nisan 5754.

compassionate embrace of the Jewish community. (It moreover prev untimely conversion of those who ultimately find they cannot bear the mitzvot, and end up retreating.) For many anusim, conversion is the eas travel; digging incessantly into their ashen past can prove to be too much and most do not object to the formality of a conversion which does not p as attempted rejection. Anusim today, like those in the time of R. Jacob desired absolution by receiving lashes,[50] often express a need for a for undo or atone for the "apostasy" of their ancestors.

Most anusim do, however, feel very hurt by the repudiation of their implied by conversion. Although conversion without a blessing i precautionary and does not presume the person undergoing it to be a certificate received by anusim has generally been the same as one rece conversion. This matter was recently addressed by Rishon LeZion Mordecl who ruled that anusim should instead be given a teudah lashav ledark (certificate for he/she who returned to his/her ancestor's ways).[51] R. Eliyahu further distinguished between this process of return and conver reintroducing Solomon Duran's prayer (see above) for today's returning a

Not all anusim will return. Today, families no longer live together, gr and grandchildren often do not speak the same language, and intermarri past fifty years or so have blurred things completely for many. Some anusim communities here, who know that they are underground Jews, r not to make any changes for fear of losing many of their own to r Christianity along the way. They know that many of their congregants themselves unable to separate from their historic way of life. Anusim their return to Judaism public have been subjected to hate-mail, hara Christian missionaries (particularly Jews for Jesus and Mormons), and m the Jewish side. Having lived closely with Catholics, they know how Jews a of among the Gentiles. The Jewish community must learn to stretch out i embrace them and to overcome all prejudice against them.

[50] End of Responsa R. Levi ibn Habib.
[51] Letter to S. Halevy, 1 Elul 5758.

Twenty thousand people identifying themselves as Jews cheered the revolutionary army when it entered northern Portugal in 1807, but wer Between 1808 and 1834, pogroms were carried out against these "New Ch Rabbi Israel Halevi, Chief Rabbi of France, reported that a learned anus tri in 1903 to get Jewish officials' attention to the plight of his people.[52]

In 1917, an engineer, Samuel Schwartz, "discovered" crypto-Jews in Belmonte. After others investigated the communities in Belmonte and elsewhere in the issue of acceptance resurfaced, and was dealt with by the rabbinate Morocco and Great Britain.[53]

In 1929, the Council of Sages of Agudath Israel all agreed that the anusin and Portugal of today should be welcomed as Jews "with open arms, so as them back beneath the wings of the Shekhina."[54] R. Jacob Meir, chief Sephardi rabbi of Jerusalem, wrote to Lisbon that the anusim are Jews and should b a section of the synagogue's cemetery.[55] R. Jacob Niv concluded there is n problem marrying anusim:[56]

> If they convert, they may marry within Israel, but not with a kohe since there is a possibility she is a proselyte. Since the anusim are not treated as Gentiles, any one of them who comes to convert need n undergo investigation–as must other proselytes–whether they come out of love of the religion or for some other reason; rather all who come convert are converted so that they return to their Source, even if t come for ulterior motive.

In 1929, R. Dr. David de Sola Pool, his wife Tamar, and their family, were Americans to visit the new community. They brought with them an old s believed to have reached the New World with anusim, as a gift to the being dedicated in Oporto. His congregation, Shearith Israel of New York, to support the Portuguese community for many years.[57] The chief Palestine and Britain, R. Zvi Judah Hakohen Kook and Rev. Joseph Hertz, among the supporters of the new congregation.[58] Had Dr. Pool know

[52] Slouschz, p. 78.

[53] Slouschz, pp. 88-90.

[54] R. Judah Leib Zirelson, Ma'arkhei Lev, 1932, p. 131. In verbal communications, the leadin halakhic authorities concurred that the same welcoming approach should prevail vis-a-vis toc

[55] Slouschz, p. 90.

[56] Bnei Ami, Jerusalem, p. 143.

[57] D. and T. de Sola Pool, An Old Faith in the New World, Columbia University Press: NY (1955), p

[58] Letters of Hareaya, Mossad Harav Kook: Jerusalem, vol. 4, nos. 1272, 1291; Marranos in Por

anusim so close to his home, no doubt he would have extended them his w
support.

The chief rabbi of Tel-Aviv, R. Haim David Halevy, after describing his ov
encounters with anusim in South America, wrote regarding hypothetical p
marriage and divorce: "There is no concern regarding their return to Judaism. No
doubt, should they desire to return to Judaism, a clear halakhic solution wi
to permit them [to marry other Jews]."[59] His article concludes by quoting th
midrash:[60]

> Rabbi Judah, the son of Rabbi Simon, said: The nations of the world w
> in the future, bring presents to the King Messiah... They will brir
> them themselves [the Jewish people] as presents.... Rabbi Aha saic
> They will be brought with honor... as they had honored [God's] name
> the world.... If they were forgotten and against their will becam
> estranged, from them too I will take priests and Levites, from th
> Gentiles whom they are bringing.

The return of anusim leheik am yisrael will signal the final victory of
and its undying spirit over those who sought to vanquish it. It is the ulti
kiddush shem shamayim barabim, and a tribute to the many who died on th

May he who blessed our fathers,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and So
bless, preserve, guard, and assist all our bret
imprisoned by the Inquisition.
May the King of kings bless them and make them worthy of h
and hearken to the voice of their supplicat
and bring them forth from darkness to li
May such be thy divine will! and let us say An

– Sephardic Prayer Book

Marks: London, 1938.

[59]Hatzofeh, Apr. 1, 1991, p. 4.

[60]Yalqut Shimoni, Psalms, nos. 838-839.