



Educator's Guide

Conversos: The Story of Latin America's Crypto Jews

In this video, we're unpacking the story of the Crypto Jews or Conversos and explaining why a surprising number of Latin Americans and people of Latin American descent have Jewish ancestry. To understand why, we're going back in time. All the way back to 1492. That's the year in which two huge historical events took place; events that shook up the Jewish community of Spain and changed the trajectory of their history forever. This explainer video unpacks those events, explains why some Latin American families have traditions that are markedly different to those of their neighbors, and looks at why the numbers of people taking up an offer of citizenship from the Spanish government has been bigger than anyone could have imagined. After watching the video, use the prompts below to learn more and get your students thinking.

[Link to video](#)

Further Reading

1. Kiku Adatto, ["Spain's Attempt to Atone for a 500-Year-Old Sin"](#)
2. Suzanne Selengut, ["The Converso Comeback"](#)
3. Jewish Virtual Library, ["Marranos, Conversos & New Christians"](#)
4. I24 News, ["Hidden Identities: In The Footsteps of The Crypto Jews"](#)

Review – Did the students understand the material?

1. In a genetic study done on South Americans, the results showed that:
 - a. 5% of them had 23% Spanish Jewish DNA
 - b. 23% of them had 5% Spanish Jewish DNA
 - c. Over half of South Americans had Sephardic DNA
 - d. Most Argentinians descended from Sephardic Jews



2. In 2015, Spain offered Spanish citizenship to people that could prove Sephardic Jewish heritage and by 2019 the country received:
 - a. 50,000 citizenship applications
 - b. 72,000 citizenship applications
 - c. 127,000 citizenship applications
 - d. 27,000 citizenship applications
3. What was the infamous Alhambra decree?
 - a. Jews needed to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain
 - b. Jews needed to convert to Catholicism or be killed
 - c. Jews were all exiled from Spain
 - d. Most Spanish Jews were executed
4. What is the meaning of Anusim?
 - a. People who willingly abandon Judaism
 - b. Spanish Jews who fled Spain
 - c. Spanish Jews who converted to Catholicism
 - d. People who are forced to abandon their Judaism
5. What is the difference between New Catholics and Crypto-Jews?
6. Which of the following Jewish traditions did many Conversos maintain?
 - a. Lighting Shabbat candles
 - b. No leavened bread around Easter
 - c. No pork
 - d. All of the above

Discussion Questions

1. The law of return gives Israeli citizenship to Jews from all over the world. Should Israel encourage aliyah from Conversos even if many don't identify as Jewish today or are uncertain of their Jewish heritage?
2. What does the increase in newly discovered Conversos mean for Israel?
3. What can we learn about tradition when we see that many Jewish customs and laws have been transmitted for hundreds of years within families that had no knowledge of their Jewish heritage?

4. How can the concept of Conversos help fight religious and ethnic intolerance?

Learning Activities

1. Watch our video [Rescuing the Wandering Jew](#) and utilize the attached educational resources.
2. Watch our video [The Law of Return: Coming Home](#) and utilize the attached educational resources.
3. Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on Conversos: The Story of Latin America's Crypto Jews!