



South of Sepharad: The 1492 Jewish Expulsion from Spain

Eric Z. Weintraub

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In Eric Z. Weintraub's novel *South of Sepharad*, a Jewish family faces separation and exile from the only home they've ever known.

After centuries of rule, the Moors lose control over Spain to the Catholic monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand. With this change comes a devastating edict: all Jews must leave Spain or convert. Vidal, a Jewish doctor, determines that the best way to protect his family is to emigrate to Morocco. Only Vidal's eldest daughter Catalina, who converted to marry a Catholic, remains behind in Granada.

Right or wrong, this decision sets them on a path that will push their faith to the breaking point.

Under the Moors, people of all faiths lived together in relative peace. Under the Catholics, the basic tenets that always ruled life in the Jewish quarter—stability, loyalty, and human decency among them—crumble with alarming ease. Far from home on a treacherous journey, Vidal, too, begins to lose his grasp of right and wrong in scenes as crushing as they are inevitable. Meanwhile, Catalina (who is naïve and eager to please) mourns the callous destruction of her old Jewish neighborhood. She also witnesses the arrival of the Inquisitors, brutal men bent on assessing the sincerity of *conversos* like her.

After so much loss and hardship, no one and nothing could remain unchanged—especially not the outlawed religion that the Catholic monarchs despise and that Vidal depends on. Even those who make it to the comparative safety of Morocco spend lifetimes struggling to look ahead instead of behind, forging new paths for future generations rather than obsessing over the roads not taken.

South of Sepharad is a wrenching novel about how morality changes or stagnates in times of crisis.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (January / February 2024)

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