



## NAMES ANALYSIS REPORT Vaz Surname Meaning & Origin

There are many indicators that the name **Vaz** may be of Jewish origin, emanating from the Jewish communities of Spain and Portugal.

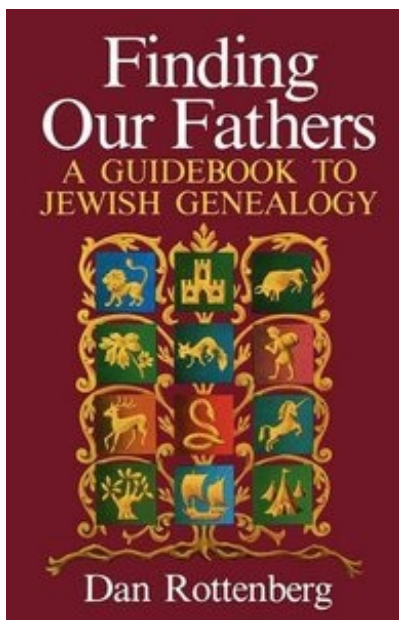
When the Romans conquered the Jewish nation in 70 CE, much of the Jewish population was sent into exile throughout the Roman Empire. Many were sent to the Iberian Peninsula. The approximately 750,000 Jews living in Spain in the year 1492 were banished from the country by royal decree of Ferdinand and Isabella. The Jews of Portugal, were banished several years later. Reprieve from the banishment decrees was promised to those Jews who converted to Catholicism. Though some converted by choice, most of these New-Christian converts were called CONVERSOS or MARRANOS (a derogatory term for converts meaning pigs in Spanish), ANUSIM (meaning "coerced ones" in Hebrew) and CRYPTO-JEWS, as they secretly continued to practice the tenets of the Jewish faith.

Our research has found that the family name **Vaz** is cited with respect to Jews & Crypto-Jews in at least 14 bibliographical, documentary, or electronic references:

- Sources 1 - 10 for Vaz

## From the civil records of Amsterdam, The Netherlands |

The Amsterdam Municipal Archives possess a complete set of registers of intended marriages from 1578 to 1811, the year when the present Civil Registry was started. Between 1598 and 1811, 15238 Jewish couples were entered in these books. Both the number of records and the volume of data that may be extracted from them are unprecedented.

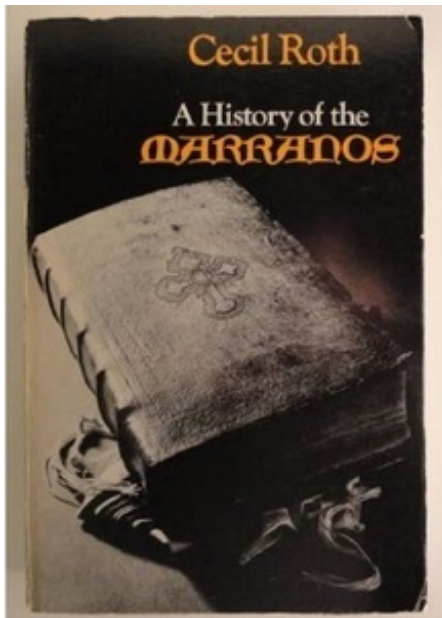


## **Finding Our Fathers | A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy, by Dan Rottenberg**

In this work Dan Rottenberg shows how to do a successful search for probing the memories of living relatives, by examining marriage licenses, gravestones, ship passenger lists, naturalization records, birth and death certificates, and other public documents, and by looking for clues in family traditions and customs. Supplementing the "how to" instructions is a guide to some 8,000 Jewish family names, giving the origins of the names, sources of information about each family, and the names of related families whose histories have been recorded. Other features included a country-by-country guide to tracing Jewish ancestors abroad, a list of Jewish family history books, and a guide to researching genealogy.

## **The Inquisitors and the Jews in the New World, by Seymour B. Liebman. Reports the names of people who appeared before the inquisition in the New Spain |**

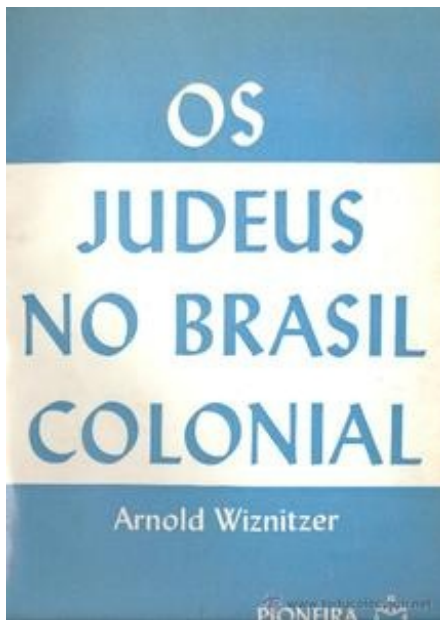
Except for a brief introduction, the entire book is a listing of Inquisition Records in the New World. This is a source for converso names in the New World.



## **A History of the Marranos, by Cecil Roth.**

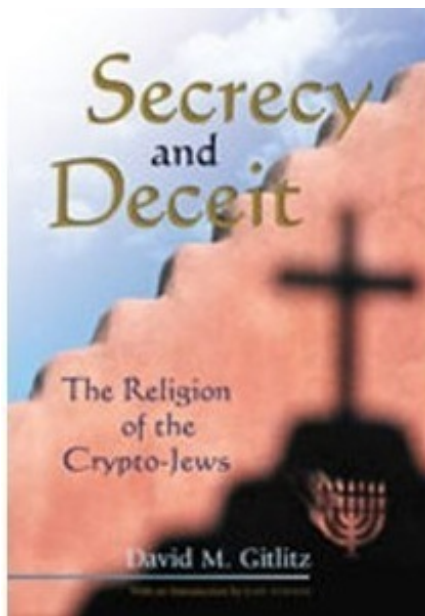
|

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 by the infamous decree of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella was the culmination of a series of anti-Jewish persecutions throughout the 14th and 15th centuries in which thousands of Jews were massacred. Thousands of others converted in order to escape death. After the expulsion many more joined the ranks of these "new Christians" as an alternative to exile. A large number of converts, while outwardly professing Christianity, secretly continued to practice Judaism. These Marranos, as they were popularly known, were then mercilessly persecuted by the dreaded Inquisition which through tortures of forced confessions and auto-da-fes sent thousands to the stake. Many others managed to escape to countries outside the reach of the Inquisition where they created a widespread Marrano diaspora. Thousands of Marranos have survived even into our times. This seminal work by the eminent historian traces the tribulation of these secret Judaizers as well as the fate of those who succeeded in escaping to other lands where many of them rose to prominence in various fields of endeavor.



## **Jews in Colonial Brazil, by Arnold Wiznitzer |**

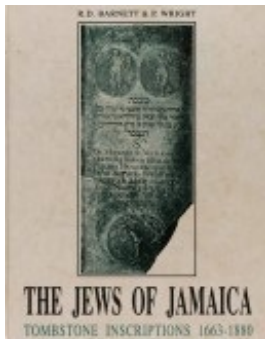
Professor Wiznitzer gathered detailed information about individual Jewish settlers in colonial Brazil and about cases where they were brought before the Inquisition at Lisbon, and his study throws new light on some phases of Brazilian colonial history. Many Jews fled to Brazil and others were deported to the colony as convicted heretics after the King of Portugal attempted to compel all of his Jewish subjects to accept Christianity in 1497. They were active in the establishment of the sugar industry and in trade, and they maintained close relations with another large group of exiles who had taken refuge in Amsterdam. Most of the "new Christians" continued to practice the old religion secretly.



## Secrecy and Deceit | The Religion of the Crypto-Jews, by David Gitlitz

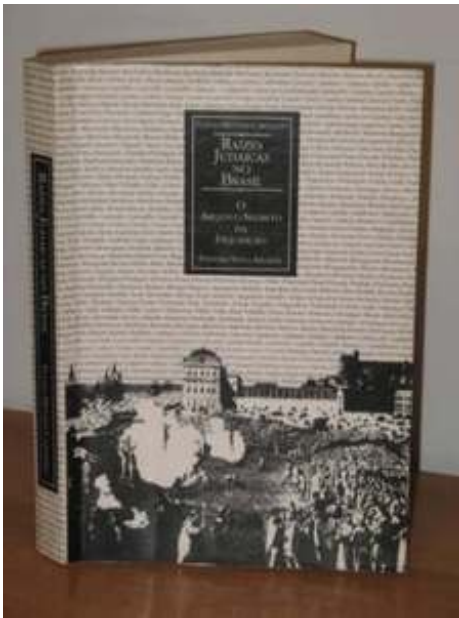
Despite the increased attention given to Hispano-Jewish topics, and the "conversos" or Crypto-Jews in particular, this is the first thorough compilation of their customs and practices. The author has culled from Inquisition documents and other sources to paint a portrait of the richness and diversity of Crypto-Jewish practices in Spain, Portugal, and the New World. The history of Spanish Jews, or Sephardim, stretches back to biblical times. The Jews of Spain and Portugal made formative contributions to all Hispanic cultures, the impact of which is first being measured and recognized today. The Sephardim experienced a Golden Age in Iberia between 900-1100, during which they acted as the intermediaries between the rival political and cultural worlds of Islam and Christianity. This Golden Age ended with the Reconquest of Spain by Catholic overlords, though for another 300 years the Jews continued to contribute to Iberian life. In 1391 and again in 1492, intense and violent social pressures were put upon the Jews to join the larger Christian community. Many Jews converted, often unwillingly. In 1492 the remaining Jews were exiled from Spain. The converted Jews (Conversos) became an underclass in Spanish society. Many of them clung tenaciously to Jewish practices in the face of torture and death at the hands of the Inquisition. Having lost contact with other Jews, these people developed a religion which was an admixture of Catholic and Jewish rituals. David Gitlitz examines these practices in detail and attempts to answer the question of whether the Conversos were in fact Jewish. Gitlitz's research is exhaustive. He has combed through thousands of Inquisition records, showing that a sense of "Jewishness" if not Jewish practice remained a core value of many Spaniards' lives well into the 1700s. Gitlitz is convincing in showing that the Inquisition unwittingly aided crypto-Jews in perpetuating themselves by publishing Edicts of Faith. Essentially checklists for informers, they described the behavior of

"Judaizers" (sometimes the practices listed were absurd or simply erroneous). These, ironically, were used by Judaizers as guides to religious behavior. It is revealing that as the Inquisition faded, crypto-Judaism waned, though never totally vanished. Gitlitz's knowledge and research on the subject is encyclopedic. The book is written in a "textbook" style which makes it somewhat technical and dry, though it is enlivened by excerpts from Inquisition records, which Gitlitz has apparently chosen for their interest, irony, unintended comedy, or spiritedness. It is difficult to imagine that human beings would face the tortures of the rack for not eating pork. That these same tortured people could summon the will to laugh at their executioners is something wondrous. The book includes the names of the Sephardim (and sometimes their residences too).



## **The Jews of Jamaica, by Richard D. Barnett and Philip Wright. Oron Yoffe, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, 1997. |**

The product of many years of painstaking research by two late scholars, Richard D. Barnett and Philip Wright, this volume presents the texts or summaries of 1456 tombstone inscriptions of Jews who lived in Jamaica between 1663, when the British ousted the Spanish, and 1880, when systematic registration of deaths was introduced. Jewish families who had fled the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal settled in Jamaica in increasing numbers during that time. Ashkenazic Jews also settled there in the eighteenth century. The Jews played a significant part in developing the island's natural resources and its international trade. Featuring detailed indexes by name, date and language, *The Jews of Jamaica* is a valuable tool for the study of immigration to the Americas, the surnames, given names and genealogy of Sephardi Jews. The texts of the inscriptions, many of them in three languages (Hebrew, English and Portuguese or Spanish), are of cultural interest and sometimes refer to dramatic events in the lives of the Jewish residents of Jamaica during a turbulent period.



## **Raizes Judaicas No Brasil,(Jewish Roots in Brazil) by Flavio Mendes de Carvalho. |**

This book contains names of New Christians or Brazilians living in Brazil condemned by the Inquisition in the 17th and 18th centuries, as taken from the archives of Torre do Tombo in Lisbon. Many times details including date of birth, occupation, name of parents, age, and location of domicile are also included. The list also includes the names of the relatives of the victims. There are several cases in which many members of the same family were tortured and sentenced so some family lines may end here.

## **A Origem Judaica dos Brasileiros (The Origin of The Brazilian Jews), by Jose Geraldo Rodrigues de Alckmin Filho |**

This publication contains a list of 517 Sephardic families punished by the inquisition in Portugal and Brazil.

## **ETSI, Volume 4, No.12 dated March 2001, "Aliases in Amsterdam", by Viberke**

# **Sealtiel-Olsen, a list of alias names used by Sephardim in Amsterdam. True Sephardic Name=Alias Name |**

When the Conversos fled Portugal to settle in Amsterdam they returned openly to Judaism. Because they often still had relatives in Portugal, they tried to protect them by using aliases in their transactions. However, it wasn't only the Portuguese who wound up in Amsterdam. Even a century after 1492, conversos were finding their way from Spain to Amsterdam. Listing a person as a Portuguese merchant generally meant he was Jewish. Their family contacts worldwide, along with their language skills, were great commercial assets in their farflung business ventures. And in their contacts with family back home, they had to be discreet as to not bring suspicion on relatives left behind This work is a wonderful research tool for Sephardic research in Amsterdam.

+ Sources 11 - 14 for Vaz

# **ETSI, Volume 4, No.12 dated March 2001, "Aliases in Amsterdam", by Viberke Sealtiel-Olsen, a list of alias names used by Sephardim in Amsterdam. Alias Name=True Sephardic Name |**

When the Conversos fled Portugal to settle in Amsterdam they returned openly to Judaism. Because they often still had relatives in Portugal, they tried to protect them by using aliases in their transactions. However, it wasn't only the Portuguese who wound up in Amsterdam. Even a century after 1492, conversos were finding their way from Spain to Amsterdam. Listing a person as a Portuguese merchant generally meant he was Jewish. Their family contacts worldwide, along with their language skills, were great commercial assets in their farflung business ventures. And in their contacts with family back home, they had to be discreet as to not bring suspicion on relatives left behind This work is a wonderful research tool for Sephardic research in Amsterdam.





## **The Circumcision Register of Isaac and Abraham De Paiba (1715-1775) from the Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of Bevis Marks (London. England). |**

This register is from the manuscript record preserved in the Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of London named "Sahar Asamaim" transcribed, translated and edited by the late R.D. Barnett, with the assistance of Alan Rose, I.D. Duque and others; There is also a supplement with a record of circumcisions 1679-1699, marriages 1679-1689 and some female births 1679-1699, compiled by Miriam Rodrigues-Pereira. The register includes surnames of those circumcised as well as the names of their Godfathers & Godmothers.

## **The Abarbanel Foundation Website, "Reintegrating the Lost Jews of Spain & Portugal" |**

List of names of forcibly converted Jews who were tried by the Spanish Inquisition for practicing Judaism in Mexico in the years 1528 - 1815

## **Jewish Community of Belmonte, directors list, Belmonte, Portugal, 1993. |**

On January 19, 1998 the Mayor of Belmonte received an official announcement from the highly connected network of Marrano families regarding the holding of the founding-meeting of the Jewish Association of Belmonte. One year later in 1990 the establishment of a new organization was proclaimed: The Community.

Around the 12th century, surnames started to become common in Iberia. In Spain, where Arab-Jewish influence was significant, these new names retained their old original structure, so that many of the Jewish surnames were of Hebrew derivation. Others were directly related to geographical locations and were acquired due to the forced wanderings caused by exile and persecution. Other family names were a result of conversion, when the family accepted the name of their Christian sponsor. In many cases, the Portuguese Jews bear surnames of pure Iberian/Christian origin. Many names have been changed in the course of migration from country to country. In yet other cases "aliases", or totally new names, were adopted due to fear of persecution by the Inquisition.

Some common variations of **Vaz** are [Vas](#) and [Vais](#).