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Forgotten Giants

Rabbi Yosef Bitton

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Rabbi Yosef Bitton

FORGOTTEN GIANTS

Sephardic Rabbis before and after the Expulsion from Spain



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Rabbi Yosef Bitton : Forgotten Giants before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Forgotten Giants:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. as someone who cares deeply about Sephardi history and legacy I cannot recommend this book highly enough since it literally granBy Michelle CohenFor a long time I have been captivated by the idea that individuals have two lives - one the life they live, and one the life that is remembered by others. Very sadly, Sephardi scholars and luminaries often had only one life, having their memories fall into

oblivion. As such, as someone who cares deeply about Sephardi history and legacy I cannot recommend this book highly enough since it literally grants a second life (a sort of modern resurrection) to Sephardic rabbis after the expulsion from Spain. The book is structured around individual biographies of rabbis from different countries and centuries. It focuses on their life experiences, their rabbinic work and their scholarship. The writing style is both erudite and inspiring - showing how Sephardi rabbis after the expulsion suffered tremendously but led with great dignity and courage, helping to rebuild destroyed communities. I'm very impressed by this book and grateful to the author for his hard work in bringing the lives and works of these rabbis to life!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Must Read for every Jew who wants to develop his understanding of Judaism

By Jon Livi Fascinating accounts of Sefaradi Hachamim. No individual account is more than a few pages long, so it is surely not too lengthy. Opened my eyes to opinions I didn't know were mainstream in the communities of Sefarad. Also learned a lot of general history along the way. I read it twice and I loved it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rabbi Bitton is beautifully engaging in *Tehiyat Hametim*

By Diego Vidal As someone who descends from those who were persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition, this book could not be more valuable to me. It is a small step to remedy generations of neglect of some of the greats from Sefarad, who shaped Jewish History, and yet were forgotten by Jewish Historians. In *Forgotten Giants*, Rabbi Bitton takes the reader through the tragic and inspiring lives of 26 rabbis, most of whom have been neglected by mainstream historians. Each of these rabbis would deserve buildings, schools and institutions named after him, and yet they have been tragically forgotten. After surviving the most cruel events, often losing their entire families, and yet thriving in scholarship and leadership, most of these rabbis have unfairly faded from our memories. Rabbi Bitton is doing nothing less than *Tehiat HaMetim* (resurrecting the dead). This is a well-written, eminently readable, book, that will alert any reader to the jewels that are being missed on by subscribing to mainstream Jewish history only, and not paying attention to the lives of some true giants. You owe it to yourself, to your posterity, and to each of these forgotten giants, to get and read this book. Hopefully, somewhere out there, someone will get inspired to revive all other giants that history has forgotten. It is a crime to pass on the inspiration that their lives and contributions signify. Congratulations to Rabbi Bitton for yet another fantastic, and very necessary, work and may we continue seeing more and more works published about timely issues, as seen through the lenses of timeless values.

The expulsion from Spain in 1492 is the central event of Spanish Jewish history. *Forgotten Giants* explores the lives, works, and ideas of twenty-six Sephardic Rabbis in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, in the time period straddling this upheaval. Three generations of rabbis are included: those who were born and lived in Spain, those who were born in Spain but left at a young age, and those who were sons of Spanish refugees. Through the narratives of these twenty-six prominent rabbis' lives, we learn about the world of the Jews in Spain before the 1492 expulsion, the struggles of the rabbinical leadership against the missionary efforts of the Church to convert the Jews, and the theological debates that took place, especially during the beginning of the fifteenth century. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain is covered, together with the exile to Portugal, the expulsion from Portugal, and the birth of the new Sephardic Diaspora in Mediterranean countries. Within that Diaspora, the book pays special attention to the establishment of the Spanish refugees in the Land of Israel, in the city of Safed and later on in Jerusalem. This fascinating series of tableaux of the lives of great Sephardic rabbis paints a vivid picture of Jewish life and thought in Spain before the 1492 expulsion, during the tumultuous years of exile, and after the reestablishment of the Sephardic communities in the Diaspora. In-depth portraits of the lives and works of twenty-six great Sephardic rabbis. Covers three generations of rabbis from the late 1400's to the early 1600s. Paints a vivid picture of the years before, during, and after the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal. Revives the legacies of forgotten Sephardic giants. Details the persecution suffered by the Jews of this era at the hands of their governments and the Church. Reveals the beginnings of Sephardic settlement in the Land of Israel.

About the Author Rabbi Yosef Bitton, born in Argentina, began his rabbinic and academic studies at Yeshiva University, NY. He holds a degree in Hebrew language, Talmud, and Bible from Bar-Ilan University. He further pursued graduate studies at Ben-Gurion University and in the Graduate Department of Religion at Emory University. Rabbi Bitton received his rabbinic ordination from Israel's Chief Rabbinate. He has been a community rabbi and educator for over twenty-five years, having officiated as Chief Rabbi of Uruguay and served communities throughout Argentina and the United States. Rabbi Bitton is the author of *Awesome Creation: A Study of the First Three Verses of the Torah*, as well as numerous articles and books in Spanish. He lives in New York with his wife Coty and their children.