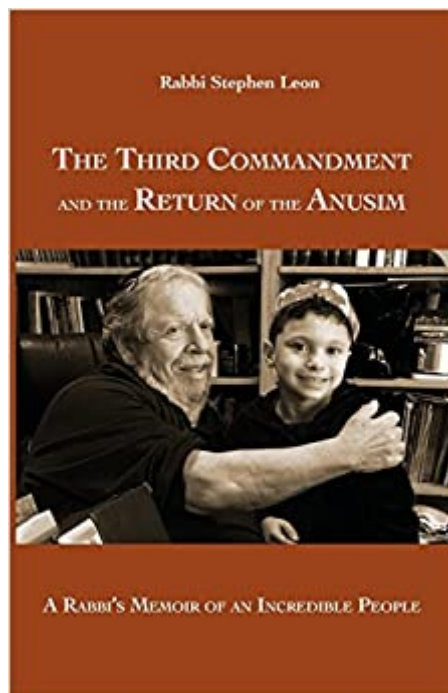




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# The Third Commandment And The Return Of The Anusim: A Rabbi's Memoir Of An Incredible People



## Synopsis

Rabbi Stephen Leon's book, *The Third Commandment and the Return of the Anusim: a Rabbi's Memoir of an Incredible People*, stands as not only a testimony of faith, but also as a symbol of religious tenacity. Anusim is the Hebrew word first employed by fifteenth century Spanish Jews to describe their co-religionists who were forced either by the sword or other means to convert to Christianity. These people were often called by many other names, some complimentary and others carrying a disparaging nuance. These names included marranos, conversos, and nuevos cristianos. Jews, however, used but one word: anusim: meaning those who had been spiritually violated. Fifteenth and sixteenth century Spanish Jews saw these people as the victims of a spiritual assault. Although it is true that some of these people, once converted, did become loyal citizens of Christendom, others, despite the trials and tribulations maintained a schizophrenic split religious personality. That is to say, that on the outside these anusim by law were practicing Christians, but in the interiors of their homes and souls, they remained loyal to the faith and people of Israel. These forced conversions changed the social structure of Spanish Jewry. Where once there had been a single and united Jewish politic within the various nations that composed the Iberian Peninsula, now Jewry was divided into four separate subcategories: (1) Jews who were practicing members of the people of Israel, (2) Jews had converted to Christianity due to issues of spiritual assault but despite the legal and economic hurdles remained at least in private loyal to their faith and people, (3) Jews, who were forced to convert, decided to adapt themselves to their new situation and became loyal Catholics and (4) a small number of Jews who for personal reasons had freely chosen Christianity.

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## Book Information

Paperback

Publisher: Gaon Books (July 5, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1935604082

ISBN-13: 978-1935604082

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.3 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #240,575 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Movements > Conservative](#) #119 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South](#) #203 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > History](#)

## Customer Reviews

"An eye-opening, compelling, and inspirational story. Readers discover Secret Jews, Secret Scandals, Secret Sorrows and Secret Survival. A brave, determined leader, Rabbi Leon works at the epicenter - El Paso/Juarez...For descendants of the Spanish Inquisition curious about their hidden Sephardic Jewish roots, Rabbi Leon is hero." -- Donna Rosenthal, author of the best-selling *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land*. "With a compassionate heart, Rabbi Stephen Leon explores the crypto-Judaic phenomenon from the Spanish Inquisition until today...An inspiring book for Jews and Christians alike." -- Corinne Joy Brown, Editor of *HaLapid*, Journal of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies; author of *Hidden Star*. "This book teaches, inspires, shows the way for other rabbis, calls for an entire Jewish generation to follow suit in what might be described as potentially the great 'Last Frontier' of the 'gathering of the exiles'." -- Professor Abraham Gross, Dept. of Jewish History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Be'er Sheva, Israel

I first met both the amazing Rabbi Leon and B'nai Anusim in El Paso many years ago. I had the

honor of hosting several for the High Holy Days and had the good fortune to hear their stories firsthand. His book enthralled me as I saw what had developed and been accomplished to help the B'nai Anusim since I left El Paso. The added thoughts on the Third Commandment have already the subject of interesting discussions with several friends. Read this book!

A mystical journey simply written with wonder and awe by a humble man who is still amazed that G-d has called on him to carry out a grand plan! What are the odds that a man born in New York, raised in Bridgeport, Connecticut and who moves to New Jersey to lead his Jewish congregation will then accept a position at a synagogue in El Paso, Texas to begin an odyssey of true biblical proportions! This reader was captivated from the very beginning by the series of events that, like an intricately woven tapestry, build one upon the other leading and showing Rabbi Leo, that he is indeed chosen, to be a guiding light for our hidden brethren fearful, with very good cause, yet determined to retain some remnant of a their long lost Judaism. Rabbi Leon relates his story in an engaging and very personal style. Readers will find his style very warm and inviting, as if the Rabbi has asked you to his office, better still, his home for a casual evening of chit chat. But, the reader will learn about love, commitment, loyalty and perseverance. All this in a little gem of a memoir that is not to be missed!

This book has taught me so much about Crypto Jews. The way that people have rediscovered their culture and faith is amazing! Rabbi Leon writes in an inspiring, captivating, and compassionate way that makes you appreciate the history and presence of the Anusim.

Rabbi Stephen Leon, Congregation B'Nai Zion in El Paso, Texas, has written his first book, "The Third Commandment and the Return of the Anusim: A Rabbi's Memoir of an Incredible People." I've read this wonderful book once, and will read it many more times. It's an inspiring, heartfelt, and important book, spoken in a gentle, honest, very personal, and brave voice. In this book, as in his life as a rabbi (teacher), he doesn't solicit converts from any religion to Judaism. He listens, teaches and hears the cries from the past and welcomes those who wish to join or come back home to Judaism. He takes you with him on a long, sometimes painful journey. Rabbi Leon lives and writes in support of humanity's victims being accepted and supported. With courage, he also challenges humanity's conscious to accept accountability. To communicate, to understand, to disagree without violence or oppression - to be a participant not a bystander in making this a better and more peaceful world. To me that's what Judaism reflects. That's what this book reflects. This well-written

book will make you think and sometimes cry. Thank you, Rabbi Leon, for sharing your journey, your intelligence, wisdom, and compassion.

Rabbi Leon does a wonderful job sharing his stories and teaching us about the history of the Anusim. I learned so much about these people and the strength and courage it has taken many families to keep their Judaism alive.

The Third Commandment meaning, as it relates to the Inquisition Period and other tragic events in human history, which Rabbi Stephen A. Leon so wisely explains, is truly most impactful & thought provoking!

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