

Waldensians: A source of Hidden Jewish Ancestry

Dr. Douglas Schar

If you have Waldensian ancestors, they may be your source of your Hidden Jewish Ancestry! This is not a simple story, so I prepare you in advance, this is an article with a lot of twists and turns. However, if you are Waldensian, it is worth your while to go for the ride.

Before I can even begin to tell this story, I must say this. The Waldensians were a secret religious sect, from the 11th century onwards and maybe before. The word secret is a complete sentence. They did not leave a paper trail in any of the centuries in which they lived because a paper trail could lead the Inquisition, the Inquisitors, and a near certain burning at the stake to your door. It was a secret religion that survived by being secret.

Thus, telling their story from a historical perspective is challenging. You have to grab bits and pieces of information, from here and there, and piece them together. A lot of the pieces suggest to me they were either an early Judeo-Christian sect that never died out, or they welcomed a lot of Jews into their sect over the centuries, or both.

As I said telling this story is challenging, but here is my best effort.

Few people know of the Waldensians. If you read about Huguenot history, you will find them lightly mentioned. Both groups faced persecution, at about the same time, and used the same escape route through Switzerland. That exit route is now a hiking trail called the "Huguenot and Waldensian Trail". But, apart from vague mentions, you won't find much about the Waldensians. This is unfortunate because the Waldensians have a long, rich, and incredible story. They are much more than a footnote in Huguenot history!

Ok, the Waldensians (Waldenses, Vallenses, Vladesi, or Vaudois) were and are adherents to a simpler, more original form of Christianity, in existence before the reformation, and probably one that predates the Roman Catholic Church. Some say the sect was formed by a wealthy merchant turned spiritualist, Peter Waldo (Pierre Vaudois), who lived in Lyon, France (1173 BCE). From Lyon, the sect spread east into the Italian Cottian Alps and south to Provence. However, some believe the Waldensians existed before Waldo was born, were the followers and descendants of Saint Peter, who left Rome and moved to the mountainous regions of northern Italy. Once in the Valleys, they continued to practice a more original, early form of Christianity, passing it from one generation to the next. Perhaps both are true. Perhaps Waldo was from one of these early Judeo-Christian families, or joined a group of early Judeo-Christians, and just lent his name to a previous unnamed group of people.

Their origins are subject to debate. But the fact they lived in the Valleys of the Cottian Alps, and practiced a pre-Roman version of Christianity, is certain.

We know Christianity spread from Israel by way of travelling Jewish merchants who followed the teachings of Christ. One possible scenario is the Waldensians descend from one of these early traveling Jewish Christians. The Judeo-Christianity practiced by the travelling Jewish merchants matches up with the Waldensian religion. Celebrating the Jewish sabbath and the abhorrence of idol worship would be two eerie similarities. More specifically, the Waldensian belief system lines up almost perfectly with that of the Judean Essenes. The Essenes had their own unique peculiarities which find their way into the Waldensian religion. The Essenes were pacifists, they did not believe in war, or in taking oaths. They also believed that only an adult could make the decision to join the sect. This shows up in the Waldensians in their opposition to infant baptism and belief in adult baptism.

Early on, the Roman church did not approve of the Waldensians or their ways. In 1167, at the Third Council of the Lateran, Pope Alexander said the Waldensians were a “pest of long existence”. From 12th Century through the 18th century, Waldensians were subject to the Inquisition, persecution, and massacre. No matter how hard the Roman Church tried to stamp them out, they persisted and survived. But not without a lot of victims along the way.

Inquisition records, the records of the heresy trials of Waldensians, tell us the Waldensians had things they believed in, and a whole lot of things they did not believe in. And what they did not believe in was most of what the Catholic church peddled. As an example, they did not believe in idol worship (saints), they did not believe in priests living celibate lives, in fact they did not believe in priests per se, they did not believe church officials (bishops) had any power over them, they did not believe holy water was any more magical than water from a stream, they did not believe prayer offered up in a church was any more powerful than prayers said in a field. They did not believe relics had any power. They did not believe in pilgrimages. They did not believe in purgatory, transubstantiation, or that confession required a priest. They believed most of the above were merely ways the Roman Church enriched itself. What they did not believe in was all very bad from a political standpoint and got them in hot water or more accurately put, burnt at the stake. But worse, and this really is worse, they called the Roman Church the “Harlot of the Apocalypse” and called the pope the “Anti-Christ of Rome”.

The Waldensian list of “things we don’t like about the Roman Catholic Church” was aligned with the Jewish list of Roman Catholic turn offs. Idol worship being a real shared “dislike”. The Waldensians, like the Jews, believed the Bible (Torah) was the sole source of all doctrine.

It would be fair to say the Waldensians did not play nice with the other children. And the other children, namely the Roman Catholic Church, did not play nice with them. Their beliefs and non-beliefs resulted in relentless and brutal persecution. The persecution

resulted in the Waldensians going underground and becoming the “secret religion” it would become.

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on two groups of Waldensians. Those that lived on the Swiss side of the Alps and those that lived on the Italian side of the Alps. As you will see, these two groups were interconnected. It appears the Italian Waldensians came and went, to and from the Swiss Waldensian communities. The Swiss Waldensians may have done the same, but I have no evidence to that effect.

Before diving further into the Waldensians, let me say this. One of my early projects had to do with my perplexing ancestry DNA results. Namely, even though much of my family immigrated from Switzerland, they were not genetically Swiss. Their DNA indicated they were Jews who lived in Switzerland. My research project became figuring out how this was the case. You can read about that in my book “Swiss Crypto-Jews” available on this website.

In that book I identified many potential sources of my Jewish DNA. At the time, I did not think much about the Waldensians. But I have come to know I have Italian Waldensians in my family tree, and they are another likely source of my Swiss Hidden Jewish Ancestry.

As my Waldensians lived on the Swiss side of the Alps, I thought we would start on that side.

H. Frank Eshleman, historian of the Swiss immigrants to America, speaks of the Waldensians in Switzerland.

About 1159 those who opposed the doctrines of the Holy Church which we have mentioned, began to have strong and able supporters in deposed Roman bishops and others. One of these was Peter Waldo of Lyons, who separated in 1160. His adherents were first numerous in the province of Albi. They were called Lyonites, Albigenes, and finally nearly all Waldensians. They spread into every province and were objects of persecution during four centuries and more. The Roman Church began to call them Anabaptists; and by that name their descendants in faith were called down to 1710 at least, as we shall show later. Their doctrine was essentially the same as that of the pioneers who in 1710 first settled in Lancaster County. Their creed contained the following principles among others-opposition to infant baptism, to transubstantiation, to war, to participation in government, to oaths, etc. They early reached Northern Italy and the border of Switzerland ... By 1203 the Waldenses or Anabaptists had the Holy Scriptures translated into their own language, and they did not practice any other doctrine. The parts of the Bible most carefully followed by them were the commandments and the sermon on the Mount.¹

The Swiss immigrants to Lancaster County Eshelman refers to were Mennonites. Here we see the Swiss Mennonites, who made their way to Pennsylvania, shared religious

¹ Eshleman, *Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of South-Eastern Pennsylvania*, pp.3-4

ideals with the Waldensians. Eshelman says the Mennonites were “descendants in faith” of the Waldensian’s. As it turns out, they were also genetic descendants of the Waldensians. My Swiss Mennonite family has more than one Italian Waldensian branch.

We know there were Italian Waldensians communities in the Italian Valleys and the Swiss Valleys, and they moved between the two valley homes. But it must be said that there were also groups of like-minded, like living Swiss Judeo-Christian/Primitive Christians communities living in Switzerland alongside the Italian Waldensians. They were known as Swiss Anabaptists as they opposed infant baptism amongst many other things. The Swiss groups of “never Catholics” had a lot in common with the Italian Waldensian “never Catholics “. It appears these two groups not only shared many beliefs and interacted but also married into each other’s families.

When the Waldensians moved between Italy and Switzerland, they moved in total secrecy. Always trying to avoid detection. As I mentioned, the Catholic church had it in for them, and were always on the lookout for a Waldensian. Emilio Comba, in his history of the Waldensians in Italy said this of how they moved about.

Waldo and his followers developed a system whereby they would go from town to town and meet secretly with small groups of Waldensians. There they would confess sins and hold service. A traveling Waldensian preacher was known as a Barba. The group would shelter the Barba and help make arrangements to move on to the next town in secret.²

The word "barba" is interesting. Barba comes from the Latin word for beard(barbatum). Many texts suggest Barba or Barbe was a colloquialism for uncle. It also connotes a man of wisdom, knowledge or authority. An elder with a long beard. An uncle. Another thought is this. Judaism prohibits shaving with a razor based on Leviticus 19:27. Rabbis thus kept/keep beards. The Waldensian religious leaders may have been called "Beards" because they were in fact the Waldensian Rabbis.

Interesting aside. If you look at a photo of a religious Jewish family, the men sport big beards. If you look at a photo of a Mennonite/Amish family, the men sport big beards. In fact, you could confuse the two families if you look at the photos too quickly. Coincidence? Probably not.

Anyhow, between the 12th and 18th Century, Switzerland was home to Italian Waldensian communities. In each of those centuries, the Roman-Catholic Church did what they could to extinguish these “heretics”. Eshelman writes,

From the year 1382 to the year 1393, Müller tells us that by order of Pope Clement VII the Minorite Franz Borell burned about a hundred of these Waldenses, or antecedents of the Mennonites round about Lake Geneva in Switzerland on account of their religion, the papal church declaring them heretics worthy of death.

² Emilio Comba, *History of the Waldenses of Italy, from their origin to the Reformation*, (New York: AMS Press, 1978)

The Waldenses who lived in the Catholic Bishopric of Basil where they began to be numerous about 1487 were one of the most zealous congregations in all Switzerland, and the authorities of the papal church were at their wits' end to know how to suppress them. As we shall show later the authorities of Basil and Berne in the 16th century held a convention to devise some plan to get rid of as they called them "these unchristian and damned heretics."³

Beyond a display of the obscenity which was the 15th century Roman-Catholic Church, lurking here is something significant. The Church did not see Waldensians as Christian. They were something else. They were "un-Christian". That is a telling designation. So, if they were not Christian, then what were they? They believed in Christ. What exactly was unchristian about them? What made them "unchristian"?

My ancestors, the Eby family, were Waldenses who moved to Switzerland during one of the persecutions on the Italian side of the Alps. This account comes from Ezra Eby, a relative, in his book on the Eby family.

The Ebys ... an ancient race of people of Asiatic origin, who formerly inhabited southern, central, and western Europe. During the early ages they lived in the northern part of Italy, where they were brought from heathendom to the worshipping of the true and living God through the labors of the Vaudois (Waldenses) with whom they came into contact with at a very early date. They soon became strict adherents of the Vaudois faith. While the Church of Rome was gaining power and extending her influence over western and northern Europe, these Vaudois, in their mountainous homes, were for some time left unmolested. From the eighth to the eleventh centuries these primitive worshipping and God-fearing people (Vaudois) became very numerous, and were becoming quite a power to resist the influence of the Church of Rome. In order to gain full sway over civilized Europe, the Church of Rome adopted means whereby these Vaudois were to be either subdued or expelled from their homes. But these people (Vaudois) were not so easily subdued or brought under the sway of Rome. The ministry, known as the Inquisitors, were first sent out to bring these people over from their faith to that of the Roman Catholic. This was as early as 1308. The Vaudois would not yield to the Inquisitors, and the result was, that in 1453 the whole Valley of Luzerna and all the country of North Italy and Savoy were laid under an interdict. Between the years 1400 and 1500 the Vaudois were most bitterly persecuted by their enemies, for not renouncing their primitive faith. History tells us that in 1487, Innocent XIII fulminated against these Vaudois a Bill of Extermination. In 1560 the persecutions became so fierce, that quite a number fled from their homes and went to the northern parts of Switzerland, where they led a wandering life for some time. They finally settled in Cantons Bern, Luzerne, Zurich, and Schwyz. Among those Vaudois who thus settled in these Cantons we find the name Eby, then spelled Ebee. Here they led a God-fearing life, and were rigid in the keeping of their primitive faith and forms of worship ...

After the founding of the Mennonite Church in A.D. 1537 by one of the early reformers named Menno Simon, a native of Holland, these Swiss Vaudois or Swiss

³ Eshleman, *Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of South-Eastern Pennsylvania*, pp.5, 7

Protestants, as they were then called, united with the Menno Simon party, now known as Mennonites. Among the parties who thus joined the Mennonites we find the names Herr, Graaf, Mylin, Shank, Witmer, Landis, Eby, and others.⁴

This account of the Eby family is interesting on many levels. Ezra states the Swiss Eby family were Waldensians who came from Italy and were of Asiatic origin. They were not Italian they were Asian. So here we know the Waldensians in Italy absorbed “Asian” people. Israel is officially part of Asia and is relatively close to Italy. So this quote could indicate the Waldensians were absorbing Jews as late as the 12th century. If my Eby ancestors started out in Israel, it could explain some of my Jewish “Swiss-not-Swiss” DNA.

One of the problems with a secret religion is, it’s hard to know who the members were. Eby suggests that the Herr, Graaf, Mylin, Shank, Witmer, and Landis families were also Waldensians from the Italian valleys who joined the Mennonite sect. He might have inadvertently pointed out some heretofore secret Waldensians who lived on the Swiss side of the Alps. All these families are in my family tree.

As Ezra indicates in his story, at a point, Swiss Judeo-Christians and Italian Waldensians, were enjoined under the leadership of Menno Simons(1496-1561), a “Dutch” Priest. Thus, some of the Waldensians disappeared into the ranks of the Swiss Mennonites, and into my family tree, before they made their way to America.

The Menno Simmons part of this story is intriguing. In 1536, Simons rejected the Catholic Church, and cast his lot with the primitive/ Judeo-Christians in upper Holland. Simons was born in 1496, in Witmarsum, Friesland. Little is known about his family, but due to Dutch naming practices, we know he was the “son of a Simon”. Some believe he came from a Sephardic Jewish family that had found refuge in the Netherlands. Though the Mennonite sect got their name from Menno Simons, he was not the founder of the sect. It would be more accurate to say he was the organizer of unrelated groups of primitive Christian/Judeo-Christians already in existence in northern Europe. Like the Swiss anabaptists and the Waldensians.

This was Waldensian life on the Swiss side of the Alps.

On the other side of the Alps, there were Waldensian communities in Provence, Calabria, and the Cottidian Alps. Historical records indicate Waldensians from these various communities were not only in contact with each other, they visited with one another.

I will focus on the Italian Waldensians that inhabited the other side of the Alps. These Waldensians lived principally in the Chisone, Germanasca, Pellice, and Angrogna valleys of Cottidian Alps. A key feature of their existence in the Valleys was isolation. They had religious beliefs that involved isolating from the greater world, and certainly hiding out in the Valleys accomplished that mission. But it also had a practical

⁴ Ezra Eby, *A Biographical History of the Eby Family: Being a History of Their Movements in Europe During the Reformation and of their early settlement in America: As also much other unpublished information belonging to the family.* (Ontario: Hett and Eby Publishers, 1889), pp.3-4

application. They were perpetually running afoul of the Roman Catholic Church. When there was trouble, they could climb to higher locations in the mountains. And when the heat was off, they would come back down to their lower valley homes. Valley dwelling provided natural protection from the intrusions of the Roman Catholic Church. Literally, you could see them coming.

Even so, the Roman Church played a cat and mouse game with the valley dwelling Waldensians from the 12th century through to the 18th Century. Some persecutions were worse than others. In the 12th century, when the Roman church declared them heretics, they suffered through a period of Inquisition and murder. In 1487 Pope Innocent VIII issued a bull calling for the extermination of the Waldensians. A persecution lasting nearly a hundred years ensued. Finally, a treaty was signed June 5, 1561, which granted the Waldensians freedom of worship. For almost a century, the Valley dwelling Waldensians enjoyed a period of peace.

In 1650, the Valley Waldensians faced a new threat to their existence. At that time, the Roman Catholic Church created the New Council of Propagation of the Faith and Extermination of Heresy (Concilium Novum de Propaganda Fide et Extirpandis Haereticis). And the council took direct aim at the Waldensians. Edicts were issued that rolled back the privileges they had previously enjoyed.

On May 15, 1650, an edict was issued which nullified the privileges afforded 100 years before. The heretic council did not stop there, and on January 25, 1655, an edict of expulsion was ordered. They could convert or leave. The Waldensians refused to obey the 1655 edict of expulsion, and this led to the Piedmont Easter Massacre. The Duke of Savoy unleashed his soldiers on the Waldensians and between 2,000 and 6,000 Waldensians were murdered. Children were split in half, women were raped and then murdered, and men were quartered. The soldiers reportedly took joy in bashing the heads of babies. People think Hamas is bad, because they are, but the Catholic Church once shared similar tactics. The barbarity of the attack gained notice around Europe and resulted in a mass exodus of Waldensians. Ultimately, international condemnation followed the brutal attack and the Duke of Savoy acquiesced. On August 18, 1655, the Pinerolo Declaration of Mercy was issued, effectively a peace treaty between the Waldensians and the Church and the Aristocracy.

Here is where things get interesting. The peace treaty included the Waldensians being restricted to living in the four Cottidian Valleys of Chisone, Germanasca, Pellice, and Angrogna. They were ghettoized like the Italian Jews were ghettoized. Discriminatory legislation deprived them of the basic civil rights, in manners identical to that of the Italian Jews. They were still seen as “unchristian”. They and the Jews of Italy lived as non-citizens for another 200 years. The Waldensians and the Jews were granted full political and civil rights on February 17th, 1848, by King Carlo Alberto.

Was this a coincidence? That Jews and Waldensians shared the same social position and were made citizens by the same legislation? Perhaps.

There is more evidence the Valley Waldensians were of Jewish descent. At some points in time, they were called Sabbatini, Sabatati, or Insabathaires. Some say this is because the early Waldensians all wore a shoe called a sabot. However, this is an unlikely source of the name. They belonged to a secret religion and travelled around in total secrecy. If they all wore a specific type of shoe, they would have been easily identified. A more likely explanation is the fact they observed the Jewish sabbath and not the Roman Catholic sabbath.

In P. Gerard Damsteegt paper, "Decoding Waldensian Names: New Discoveries", Damsteegt states the following:

"The analysis of the second major interpretation of the Waldensian names insabbatati and sabbatati as characteristic of their faith or belief, expressing their rejection of Catholic festivals, holy days, or sabbaths, led to the following observations:

1. This interpretation is in harmony with the longstanding historic self- image of the Waldenses. It was the prevalent view in the earliest Waldensian literature and revealed that the unique practice of the earliest Waldenses was to refuse to observe Catholic holy days and teachings. The Waldenses held to this view for centuries.

2. The primary sources do confirm the Waldensian practice of opposition to Catholic holy days, Sabbaths, and teachings for centuries, while the wearing of unique shoes was only of very short duration during the first half of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, the wearing of unique shoes would have made them an easy target of the inquisition, which could be easily avoided by changing their shoes."

Confirmation. The Waldensians refused to celebrate any and all Roman Catholic holidays including the Catholic sabbath.

Then there is this. If you compare a 15th century Waldensian Bible, with a 15th century Spanish Jewish Bible, the similarities are rather compelling.

Insert photo array here.

Is it a coincidence the two bibles share an artistic style? If you notice, the one page of the Waldensian bible features a yad, the device Jews use in synagogue to read from the Torah. For these and many other reasons, I suspected Waldensians were Crypto-Jews of some description.

Just then, I was fortunate enough to meet Lillian Modak, American Waldensian historian, Waldensian, and descendant of Valley Waldensians. She had spoken at the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies and presented a fascinating piece of work, "The Jewish Waldensian Connection Continued". Modak too believes the Waldensians have a Crypto-Jewish connection. I don't think there is anyone who is more passionate, more knowledgeable, more dedicated to Waldensian history, than Lillian Modak. Her research is beyond impressive.

Anyhow, in her presentation, Lillian Modak made the following points about the Waldensian-Jewish connection.

The Waldensians were known to observe the Jewish sabbath. Indeed, were often subjects of the Inquisition because they observed the Jewish sabbath.

The Waldensians used the Sephardic naming system for children. Namely the first son is named after the paternal grandfather, the first daughter is named after the paternal grandmother, the second son is named after the paternal grandfather, and the first daughter is named after the maternal grandmother.

Waldensian Temples had no images of people or animals and were kept plain. They insisted there be no idolatry in their temples.

They were skilled translators and scribes. Sephardim were translators in Spain.

Pastors were called Uncle (Barba) because they had one and only one father. They did not call their holy men Father, because, well, they already had a father. Jews believe in one G-D and only one G-D.

Waldensian Temples always had scripture over the entrance, like a Mezuzah would be placed in front of a Synagogue.

The Barba often had traditionally Jewish occupations, merchants, craftsmen, doctors, and surgeons.

Quite convinced her Waldensian ancestors had Jewish ancestry, Modak then investigated her family's ancestry DNA, looking for evidence of Jewish connections. Her effort revealed her Waldensian family did indeed have connections to the Jewish world. Her father, Emile Martin Jacumin, had DNA connections to 964 Iberian men, 100 Ashkenazi Jewish men, 18 Sephardic Jewish men, and 4 Mizrahi Jewish men. Specifically, connections to the Hakimian family, a common Persian Jewish surname meaning "son of a doctor". In addition to this, her father had connections to the Boas, Carmona, and Diaz-Palomares families. These are known Sephardic Jewish surnames. Her mother, from the Gugou family, had 534 matches to Iberians, 32 connections to Ashkenazim, 8 matches to Sephardim, 1 match to an Ethiopian Jew, and 1 match to a Mizrahi Jew. Specifically, she had connections to the Oliverira Cavaleiro, Roman, Torres, Dimas, and Kimhi/Camhi families. Again, a laundry list of Sephardic Jewish surnames.

Modak proved her Waldensian family had genetic ties to Spanish, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi Jews. To my knowledge, Modak is the only Waldensian to investigate her DNA ancestry looking for links to Jewish populations. But she did and found her Waldensian ancestors did in fact have Jewish roots. Her next goal is to create a Waldensian DNA family group to widen the knowledge of the Jewish ancestry of Waldensians.

In conversation with Lillian Modak, I learned that Osvaldo Coisson had written a book, "The Family Names of the Waldensian Valleys". (Nomi di Famiglia delle Valli Valdesi (Torre Pellice, 1976). Though the book is available online, I purchased it. Using this book, and a roots web list of Waldensian surnames, I created a spreadsheet of all available Waldensian surnames, a total of 2480 Waldensian surnames.

I then compared these Waldensian surnames to my database of Italian Jewish Surnames and Genie Milgrom's database of Sephardic Jewish surnames. The result was a whole lot of matches. It turns out, Waldensian have both Italian and Sephardic Jewish surnames. Here are the results of my comparison.

Waldensian surnames that match Italian Jewish surnames (370/2480)

Aadith, Abonel, Achard, Aghit, Aghitto, Aiello, Albert, Albertengo, Alberti, Albertin, Alemand, Alesan, Alesani, Alesano, Aliberti, Amat, Andre, Andrion, Andrioni, Asari, Azari, Baile, Baille, Barac, Baral, Barus, Baruzzo, Bech, Bellon, Ben, Benedet, Benedetto, Bermond, Bernard, Bernardi, Bernardus, Besson, Bianchi, Bianchis, Bianco, Bianque, Bianchi, Blancho, Blanchon, Bon, Bonardel, Bondrano, Bone, Bonet, Bonetto, Bongiorno, Bonin, Bonino, Bonjour, Bonna, Bonne, Bonnin, Bonos, Borgo, Brunnet, Bufa, Buffa, Caglieri, Cairus, Calandre, Callandre, Calva, Calve, Calvin, Calvino, Canton, Canton-Durant, Cantone, Cantone, Cantons, Carbonero, Cardon, Cardone, Casset, Castagna, Castagno, Castelan, Castellano, Catalin, Catalino, Cattalino, Cattallino, Caviglia, Ceretto, Cesan, Cesano, Coign, Coignio, Coin, Colombe, Colombe, Colombo, Cordero, Coriera, Costa, Costantino, Cottino, Crespin, Crispino, Cupin, Cupini, Damiano, David, Davit, Davite, Davyt, Dio, De, Donaudo, Durand, Durand-Canton, Durando, Durant, Enriue, Faisan, Falco, Falcoin, Falconero, Falconnier, Faucon, , Favat, Felippone, Fenchio, Fernando, Ferrand, Ferreri, Ferrero, Filipin, Filipon, Filipone, Fontaine, Fontana, Fontane, Forneirone, Fornero, Forneron, Fornerone, Forneyron, Fournier, Fraissinet, Franchi, Francois, Frasche, Fraschia, Fraschia, , Frassia, Frizet, Funda, Gabet, Gabrel, Galean, Galero, Galissi, Gallean, Gallet, Gallian, Galliano, Gallo, Gamba, Garcin, Garcino, Garda, Garde, Garsino, Garzino, Gazai, Gerard, Gerardeti, Gerardo, Giordan, Giordan, Giordano, Giordano, Giovenale, Giovenale, , Giovenello, Giradeto, Girard, Girardi, Girardo, Grande, Gras, Grasso, Grigli, Griglio, Guglielmino, Guglielmo, Ham, Hector, Heretero, Hodier, Jacoma, Janin, Janni, Jannin, Job, Joly, Jordan, Jourdain, Jourdan, Jourdan, Jouvenal, La, Vigne, Lagar, Lanzarotto, Lombard, Lombardo, Lorans, Lorenzi, Luserna, Maire, Mairia, Malan, Malerba, Malerbe, Malherbe, Marchetti, Marchetto, Marco, Maria, Marina, , Marinnet, Marino, Mariot, Marquet, Martina, Martini, , Mas, De, Masse, Mayer, Mazonir, Melli, Mellij, Michel, Milano, Millan, Miraud, Mirot, Morel, Morello, Muglia, Mussato, Navarre, Navarro, Nazarot, Negrin, Negrino, Nicolet, Noel, Oliva, Olivat, Olivet, Olivier, Oudin, Paiaso, Palias, Paliasso, Paris, Parisa, Parise-, Parisia, Pariso, Pascal, Pascale, Pascalis, Paschal, Pasgal, Pastor, Pastore, Pavarin, Pavarino, Pelegrini, Pelegrino, Pellice, Pera, Peracchione, Perino, Pernichon, Perrin, Perron, Picard, Polano, Pollino,

Pollinque, Pomare, Ponis, Pont, Ponte, Porcero, Porciero, Porte, Porto, Prat, Rabbi, Rainaldo, Rainaud, Raynaud, Raynaude, Reimondino, Reinaud, Reinaudin, , Reinaudino, Ricardi, Ricardone, Richiardo, Ricque, Rique, Rocha, Roche, Rochia, Roghia, Roman, Romano, Rosel, Rosello, Rossane, Rosso, Rozel, Salain, Salein, Salomon, Sammartino, Samuel, San, Martino, Sapei, Sappe, Sappe, Sappei, Seizan, Semonet, Sessano, Sezane, Sezzano, Simon, Simond, Simondetto, Simondi, Simondo, Tagliero, Toia, Toije, Tolosan, Tolosano, Torre, Toscano, Uliva, , Uscegli, Usseglio, Viton, Vittone, Vola, Vole, Volla, Volle, Willielm,

Waldensian Surnames that matches Sephardic Jewish Surnames (565/2480)

Abundet, Acay, Achard, Alamanda, Alamandi, Alamanni, Alatia, Alaxia, Albare, Albarracin de, Alberge, Alberge, Albergia, Albergue, Alberguin, Alberico, Albert, Alberti, Albertin, Alemand, Aliot, Alioud, Allamani, Allemanno, Allemdandi, Allevato, Alouer, Alye, Amat, Amstetto, Andre, Andrioni, Anselme, Armand, Arnaud, Asari, Assolo, Assoul, Aurelio, Ayasse, Azari, Baile, Bain, Bal , Balme, Barac, Baral , Barale, Baret, Barot, Barrac, Barral, Barrale, Barret, Barthelemy, Bartholomia, Bartolmio, Bartolome, Bartolomio, Barus Baruzzo, Bastie, Bec, Bein, Beleart, Bellino, Beltramino, Beltramio, Ben, Benaud, Benecchio, Benech, Benechio, Benedet, Benedetto, Benesh, Berard, Bergat, Bernard, Bernardi, Bernart, Bernaton, Berru, Beus, Beux, Beuz, Bianchi, Bianchis, Binnin, Blanc, Boerio, Boin, Boine, Bon, Bone, Bonet, Bonetto, Bongiorno, Bonin , Bonino, Bonjour , Bonna, Bonne, Bonnet , Bonnin , Bontempo, Borgo, Borrel, Bosc, Bosia, Bosia , Bosii, Bosj, Bosque, Botto, Bouc, Boudrandi, Bountemp, Bourg, Bourke, Bourlot, Bourque, Boveri, Bovero, Boysa, Bressi, Bressia, Breton, Bruggia, Brun-Bruno, Brunet, Brunetto, Bus, Cadet Cadett, Caettino, Caglieri, Cairus, Calandre, Callandre, Calma, Calva, Calvet, Calvino, Cambon , Canal , Canale, Canone, Canoni, Canton, Canton-Durant, Cantone, Cantons, Carbonero, Cardon, Cardone, Casset, Castagna, Castelan, Castellano, Catalin, Catalino, Catelin, Catine, Catre, Cauvi, Caviglia, Ceretto, Cerutti, Cerutti, Cerutto, Cervera, Cesan, Cesano, Chabriol, Chabrol, Charbonnier, Charreau, Charret, Chavet, Chiaretti, Claret, Clementi, Colomb, Colombe, Colombe , Comte, Constans, Constantin , Constanzo, Contandin, Conte, Coriera, Corriero, Corsone, Corvej, Corvelo, Coscione, Costa, Costabello, Costantino, Cot, Cotta, Cottino, Coysson, Coysstone, Crespin, Crispino, Cunil, Dagot, Dalmas, Dalmaso, Dalmasso, Dalmatio, Damiano, Damien, Dan, Danna , Danne, DAnne, Dault, Davi, Davico, David, Davin, Davit, Davite, Davyt, de Cottés, Domenici, Domenico, Dominique, Don, Doneodo, Durand, Durand-Canton, Durando, Durant, Duval, Enriue, Escolier, Estellei, Faber, Fabre, Fabri, Facioti, Falacian, Falaziano, Falc, Falco, Falcoin, Falconero, Fallacian, Farco, Farquet, Fauato, Faucon , Faure, Favatero, Favolo, Felippone, Felot, Fernando, Ferrand, Ferreri, Ferrero , Ferrier, Filhol, Filipin, Filipon, Filo, Fina, Fontaine, Fontana, Fontane, Forchino, Forneirone, Fornero, Forneron , Fornerone, Fraccia, Fracha, Frache, Frache , Fracia, Franc, Francesot, Franchi, Frasche, Fraschia, Fraschia , Frassia, Frega, Freiria , Freyre, Freyria , Frizet, Front, Funda, Gabet, Gabrel, Gaillan, Gaj, Galean, Galero, Gallean, Gallet, Gallian , Galliano,

Gallo, Gamba, Garcin, Garcino, Garda, Garro, Garrou, Garsino, Garussin, Garzino, Gazai, Genero, Gerard , Gerardo , German, Grande, Gras, Grasso, Griglio, Grill, Grillo, Gris, Grises, Guanta, Guardiola, Guerin, Guerrin, Guigou , Ham, Harbaud, Heretero, Hodier , Iacumin, Jacobin, Jacoma, Jahier , Jaime, Jalla, Jananel, Janin, Jannin, Jaquet, Jayme, Jiniux, Joan, Jobert, Joly, Jordan, Jourdain, Jourdan, Jouvenal, Julien, Jullian, Lagar, Laidet, Laurens, Lombard, Lombardo, Longho, Longo, Loque, Lorans, Machon, Maggi, Maghit, Maiers, Malerba, Malerbe, Malherbe, Marco, Maria, Marin, Marina , Marinet, Marino, Marque, Marquet, Martel, Martin, Martini , Masse, Mate, Matheus, Matteo, Mattieu, Mayer, Mayre , Mazonis, Meli, Melli, Mellij, Menier, Meyer, Michel, Milano, Millan, Mirot, Molinatto, Monelio, Moratto, Morel, Morin, Morino, Morizio, Morlia, Muglia, Mus, Mussato, Musset, Navache, Navachia, Navarre, Navarro, Navas, Nazarot, Negrin, Negrino, Negro, Nevache, Noel, Oliva, Olive, Olivier, Olma, Oreditto, Paillas, Palias, Paliasso, Paris, Parisia, Pariso, Parses, Pascal, Pascale, Pascalis, Paschal, Pasgal, Pasquai, Pastor, Pastore, Pelegrini, Pelegrino, Pelias, Pellegrin, Pellenco, Pellice, Pera, Pereti, Perin, Perino, Pero, Peron, Peroni, Perron, Perrone, Perrot, Persat, Peyret, Peyretto, Picard, Pillon, Pilon, Pilone, Poeto, Polano, Pons, Pont, Ponte, Porte, Porto, Prat, Queirus, Querus, Queyrus, Rabbi, Ramondetto, Raymondet, Revel, Revella, Revello, Rey, Ricard, Ricardi, Richard, Richardo, Richiardo, Rigat, Riva, Rive, Riveire, Robert, Rocha, Rolland, Rollo , Roman , Romano, Rosel, Rosello, Rosset, Rossetto, Rosso, Roul, Roy, Rozel, Ruet, Ruetto, Ruffin, Salen, Salin, Salomon, Salvaiot, Sammartino, Samuel, San Martino, Sape, Sapetto, Sarre, Sarvai, Serre, Sessano, Sezane, Sezzano, Sibil, Sibile, Sibille, Sibille , Simon, Simonet, Solera, Solie, Sollie, Sordel, Stalle, Tholosan, Thomas, Thoulosan, Tolosan, Tolosano, Tolousan, Torre, Toscano, Toure, Tourno, Truchet , Uliva, Ulvieri, Vachero, Vallon, Valone, Velliot, Vinay, Vincent, Viton, Vitone, Vittone, Volat, Zemoat,

Conclusion

There is a connection between the Waldensians and both Italian and Sephardic Jews. Lillian Modak proved a DNA connection between one Valley Waldensian family. DNA does not lie. In addition to that, 35.3% of known Waldensian surnames are either Italian Jewish or Sephardic Jewish surnames.

A little is known, there is much more to know. But, if you have Waldensian ancestry, this may be the source of your Hidden Jewish Ancestry! If you find your surname in the above lists, you may have found your Hidden Jewish Ancestry.

In discussion with Lillian Modak it became clear we have a shared opinion. The early Waldensians were of Jewish ancestry. And, for reasons probably related to this, the Valley Waldensians offered a safe place for other European Jews on the run, at various times in history. They welcomed successive waves of Jewish refugees.

The overwhelming number of Sephardic Jewish surnames found amongst the Valley Waldensian's indicates Sephardic Jews somehow found their way to the Valleys. The how is a real mystery. However, Lillian Modak's ancestry DNA research indicates it more than just surname matches, it's a DNA fact.

One possible source for the Sephardic Jews that made their way to the Cottian Valleys may have been Livorno. Livorno was built by the Medici family and specifically offered the Spanish Conversos a home and the promise of self-governance. At a time, Livorno was second only to Amsterdam in its Sephardic population. In the 18th century, 15% of the population of Livorno was Sephardic Jewish.

In a previous paper found on this website, "Sephardic Jews Amongst Huguenot Refugee's" I concluded that some Spanish Conversos, having spent 100 years as Catholics, found the idol free French Protestant Church a comfortable fit. They could maintain an outward Christian exterior and be part of a religion that was similar to Judaism. Not to underestimated, the Conversos and the French Protestants shared a hatred of the Roman Catholic Church.

I think Spanish Conversos might have found a similar comfortable home in the Waldensian Church. The super abundance of Sephardic Jewish surnames found amongst the Valley Waldensians suggest many migrated there.

What of all the Italian Jewish names found in Waldensian families? Sicily, being property of the Spanish crown, was subject to Spanish law. In 1492, when the Jews in Spain were given the choice of conversion or deportation, the Sicilian Jews were given the same order. At that time, Sicily was home to 30,000 or more Jews living in 52 different towns and cities. They either converted or forfeited all the possessions and left. 9000 are estimated to have stayed and converted. The other 20,000 Jews found refuge in Calabria, Apulia, and Naples. However, in 1494, disease broke out in the Naples region and the exiled Sicilian Jews were blamed and expelled. Perhaps some made their way to Waldensian Valleys.

The Jews that stayed in Sicily and converted did not have an easy time of it. Between 1511-1515, an Inquisition was established and active. 81 converted Jews were burned at the stake. In Spain and Portugal, the burning of Conversos caused waves of Converso refugees. No doubt when 81 Conversos were burned at the stake in Sicily, the surviving Sicilian Conversos began exploring alternative places to live. It is possible some of the fleeing Sicilian Conversos made their way to the North of Italy.

During the dark days of the Holocaust, the Waldensians welcomed and harbored Jews. This may not have been the first time they offered Jews a safe haven!

Hidden Jews Hiding in Hills

One of the many interesting things about the Swiss primitive Christians that became Mennonites, and the Valley Waldensians that remained Waldensian, is this. They both took a hard pass on joining the reformation or Protestant denominations. This was not such a big deal in Italy. However, when Swiss cantons adopted Protestantism, and the Swiss Mennonites refused to join, more than one Swiss Mennonite ended up on the

business end of a bonfire. Both primitive Christian sects had their own thing and just stuck to it.

My previous research revealed many of my Alpine dwelling Swiss ancestors were of Jewish descent. This piece of research revealed the Cottian valley dwelling Waldensians, were of Jewish descent.

Then I came across an article about Hidden Jewish Ancestry in the Non Valley in the Jerusalem Post. The article detailed the remnant of a Jewish community living in the Non Valley. Evidence of these hidden Jews, detailed in the article, was as food culture and the super abundance of Jewish surnames amongst Valley residents. Apparently, in 1475, the Jewish community of Trento was accused of murdering a Christian child, Jews were burned at the stake, and the community dispersed. The hidden Jews of the Non Valley may descend from the Trento community.

The article mentioned Felice Zadra, a Non Valley resident, who has researched his families Jewish surnames and Jewish past. Zadra thinks the community may date as far back as the 2nd and 3rd century CE and has compiled a list of several hundred Jewish surnames found in the Non Valley. Names that hail from the Sephardic, Italian Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Persian Jewish communities.

This would be the third group of Jews who disappeared into the hills and valleys wringing the Alps. A third community, in the same vicinity, adds weight to the idea that at various times, Jews took refuge in the hills and valleys of the Alps and disappeared into Christianity.