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**Shabbatai Zevi – V**

**Lead: In 1665, Shabbatai Zevi declared himself the long-awaited messiah of Israel. Within a year, he had converted to Islam and thrown the Jewish world into chaos and disruption.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: After being cast out of his home town of Smyrna, Zevi began a long period of wandering, through Palestine and Egypt, attracting followers and continuing his life-long struggle with alternating periods of**

**manic-depression and exaltation, during the latter of which he evidenced truly bizarre behavior. This both offended and attracted a growing number of followers. His most important was a brilliant rabbi, Nathan of Gaza, who, after meeting Shabbatai Sevi in February, 1665, experienced an ecstatic vision that saw his new friend as the Messiah. From that point, Nathan tried to convince him and others that he was, in fact, the long-awaited representative of God. This highly respected, independent confirmation tying his appearance with the kabbalistic story of creation, kicked off the Shabbatean Movement. By May 1665, Zevi was sure of himself and fully engaged in asserting his messianic mission.**

**The Jewish world came alive. Everywhere he went, he won converts among the poor, the wealthy, the rabbis. Jerusalem, Aleppo, Safed, Smyrna and in far-reaching centers of Jewish life such as Amsterdam, pledges of allegiance poured in. In community after community, the faithful divided into pro and con factions, disrupting religious life. Commerce came to a halt and soon he was projecting a circuitous approach to Constantinople where he said would assume worldly power as well as spiritual control.**

**Such disruption made the Turkish authorities understandably nervous. When he sailed into the Sea of**

**Marmara off the coast of Constantinople in February, 1666, they arrested him. He remained more or less in custody for the rest of his life first in Gallipoli and then Albania. In September of that year, Turkish authorities threatened his life unless he converted to Islam. He did so.**

**Remarkably, the movement he founded did not collapse, but continued to influence spiritual and social life in world-wide Judaism for decades.**

**From Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.**



## Resources

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