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Sommario/riassunto	Not many people know of the utterly extraordinary events that took place in a humble southern Italian town in the first half of the twentieth century-and those who do have struggled to explain them. In the late 1920's, a crippled shoemaker had a vision where God called upon him to bring the Jewish faith to this "dark corner" in the Catholic heartlands, despite his having had no prior contact with Judaism itself. By 1938, about a dozen families had converted at one of the most troubled times for Italy's Jews. The peasant community came under the watchful eyes of Mussolini's regime and the Catholic Church, but persisted in their new belief, eventually securing approval of their conversion from the rabbinical authorities, and emigrating to the newly founded State of Israel, where a community still exists today. In this first fully

documented examination of the San Nicandro story, John A. Davis explains how and why these incredible events unfolded as they did. Using the converts' own accounts and a wide range of hitherto unknown sources, Davis uncovers the everyday trials and tribulations within this community, and shows how they intersected with many key contemporary issues, including national identity and popular devotional cults, Fascist and Catholic persecution, Zionist networks and postwar Jewish refugees, and the mass exodus that would bring the Mediterranean peasant world to an end. Vivid and poignant, this book draws fresh and intriguing links between the astonishing San Nicandro affair and the wider transformation of twentieth-century Europe.

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