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“Atlantic Jewish History: A Conceptual Reorientation”

Aviva Ben-Ur, *University of Massachusetts - Amherst*



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Atlantic Jewish History:

A Conceptual Reorientation

Aviva Ben-Ur



On the twenty-seventh of November 1789, the Surinamese physician, diplomat, and historian David Nassy (1747–1806) stood at the grave of his recently deceased wife Esther as her body was lowered into the ground.¹ Many mourners were likely to have been present, including his Eurafrican slaves, Moses, Ishmael, and Isaac, whom he had circumcised and instructed in the Jewish religion.² Esther Cohen Nassy died on the savanna, a region of inland Suriname heavily populated by Jews, just short of her forty-first birthday, after twenty-six years of marriage. From the Portuguese poem her widower commissioned for her tombstone epitaph, we know she succumbed to the “cruel epidemic of smallpox” that ravaged the South American Dutch colony, leaving behind as his sole consolation their only child, a daughter named Sarah.³ Two and a half years later, when conflicts within the local Jewish community made life for him unbearable, Nassy traveled to Philadelphia with Sarah and two non-Jewish slaves named Mattheus and Amina.⁴ He arrived there carrying a letter of recommendation addressed to George Washington from Suriname’s governor Juriaen François de Friderici.⁵ About a year later, in 1793, Nassy tended to victims of the yellow fever epidemic that swept through the City of Brotherly Love. By the close

Most of the research and writing for this essay was carried out during my tenure as a fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in spring 2013. I would also like to acknowledge the University of Massachusetts Amherst for both a spring 2013 sabbatical and an “Enhanced Sabbatical Grant,” which together made possible several visits to the Nationaal Archief in the Hague, the National Archives in Kew, and the London Metropolitan Archives. In addition to the archivists of these institutions, I would like to thank Miriam Rodrigues-Pereira, Honorary Archivist, for granting me access to the records of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation in London. This essay is derived from my current book project, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society: Suriname, 1651–1863*.

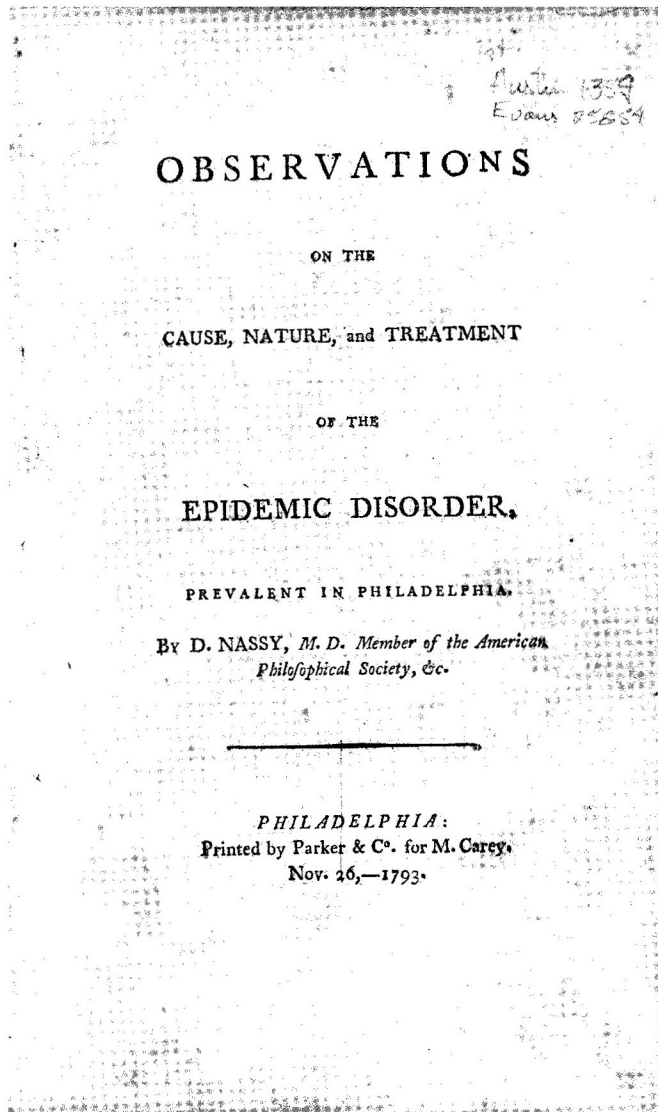


Figure 2.1: David Nassy, *Observations on the Cause, Nature, and Treatment of the Epidemic Disorder, Prevalent in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Parker & Co. for M. Carey, 1793). Considered the first medical work published by a Jew in the United States, its author, David Nassy, drew upon his experience as a physician in his native Suriname to treat successfully a yellow fever epidemic that was devastating the city's inhabitants.

of the year, Nassy had published an account of his first-hand observations of the catastrophe, together with details of his methods of treatment, which likely brought back painful memories of his futile attempts to save his own wife (Figure 2.1). Nassy's account, which appeared with his French original alongside an English translation, led to his election as a member of the American Philosophical Society, where he once lectured on botanical knowledge in an ancient and modern comparative context.⁶

Although clearly an elite and exceptionally educated person, David Nassy is in key ways representative of Jews in the Atlantic world, a region where people, commodities, ideas, and technology were vigorously exchanged among the four continents of North and South America, Europe, and Africa. Nassy lived in a time when the American Jewish epicenter was not in colonial North America or the United States, but in the Caribbean; when most Atlantic Jews were of Iberian, not Central or Eastern European origin; and when most American Jews lived in slave societies.⁷

As a self-conscious area of study, Atlantic history began to develop in the late 1980s, but has only recently attracted the attention of students of the American Jewish past. Prominent scholars, following the historiographical approach advanced by Bernard Bailyn, divide Atlantic history into five sometimes overlapping periods: European discovery and occupation; interacting and conflicting empires; the mass importation and subjugation of Africans through the slave trade and the institute of slavery; wide-scale decimation of Amerindians

through disease; economic and demographic growth; and the political rebellion that resulted in independent republics, or, in Bailyn's words, "creole triumphalism."⁸ Even though it is too early to determine how American Jewries fit into this Atlantic periodization, it is already clear that many of the dynamics of Jewish communities, in relation to both the self and the other, call for a separate subhistoriography subsumed within the whole. If it is too soon satisfactorily to answer this call, one may still highlight three major themes of Atlantic Jewish history that bear some elements

of chronology: Portuguese Jewish hegemony; slavery; and the triad of privileges, disabilities, and emancipation. A significant portion of the Kaplan Collection—amassed over the course of more than thirty years, with a broad appreciation of what encompasses “American Jewry”—directly speaks to these three themes.

The “Portuguese Period”

For roughly the first two hundred years of the Atlantic age, most of its Jewish population was of Iberian origin. These Jews were typically former New Christians who established communities all over the Atlantic world and exercised a cultural and political hegemony over other Jews that was to endure until the early nineteenth century. These Jews self-identified and presented themselves to outsiders as those of the “Spanish and Portuguese nation,” or, in shorthand, simply as “Portuguese Jews.” Only in the mid-seventeenth century did Ashkenazi Jews—Germanic Jews who traced their origins to Central or Eastern Europe—begin to migrate to Western Europe, and eventually, though to smaller extents, to North America and the Caribbean.⁹ Even after Ashkenazi Jews came to form the majority of the Jewish populations living along the North American Seaboard (around the 1720s) and the Caribbean (in the second half of the eighteenth century), Portuguese Jewish hegemony—as assessed through leadership, synagogue rites, and pronunciation of Hebrew—held sway.

The Portuguese period has its roots in the major forced conversions of Iberian Jews to Christianity in 1391 and 1497 in the Spanish kingdoms and Portugal, respectively. These cataclysmic events created a population of New Christians, some of whom were sincere, others insincere, and a third group, perhaps the majority, who moved back and forth between the two faiths striving to secure spiritual, social, and economic stability.¹⁰ The Expulsion in 1492 of what was at that time Europe’s largest medieval Jewry relocated half of Spain’s Jewish population to Portugal, where these forced immigrants joined an existing Jewish community, all of whose members were forcibly converted to Christianity five years later, bringing to an end open Jewish life on the Iberian Peninsula.¹¹ These events, following the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, meant that the entire European Atlantic Seaboard was emptied of confessing Jews at the dawn of the Atlantic age. But several Jewish communities, some indigenous, others Iberian exiles and their descendants, populated Africa’s Atlantic coast. One of these understudied communities is that of Sallé (in what is today Morocco), an important trade center whose Jews maintained close connections to Spain and Portugal and to the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam.¹²

Spain and Portugal, the first European powers to lay claim to the New World, officially banned Jews from all their territories until the independence movements of the nineteenth century replaced those colonies with republics. Seeking economic opportunities, thousands of Christians of Jewish origin, mainly Portuguese-speaking, began to leave the Iberian Peninsula for the New World. New Christians who returned to their ancestral faith played a leading role in reestablishing Atlantic Jewish communities. But sincere Christians of Jewish origins who cultivated networks with openly

Jewish relatives, or were falsely accused of professing the Jewish “heresy,” must also be considered in this initial phase of Atlantic Jewish history, not because historians should consider them as “Jews” (whether they do or not should be irrelevant), but because they were part of the common social fabric of New Christian society. As such, they not only opened up transatlantic networks between sincere New Christians and Jews, but were themselves vulnerable to accusations of judaizing. The

three Inquisitorial tribunals in the Americas were located in Cartagena de Indias (in what is today Colombia), Lima, and Mexico City, the last functioning from 1571 to 1820. One New Christian caught in the clutches of the last tribunal was Lorenzo Machado, specifically identified as “Portuguese,” and apprehended in la ciudad de México in December of 1598 (Figure 2.2).

We do not know the details of his case, as the trial transcript has not survived, but Machado’s ethnic identity likely had a role in implicating him as a secret Jew. Half of the Jewish population expelled from Spain in 1492 had crossed the border to Portugal, and the term “Portuguese” thereafter became synonymous with “judaizer” outside of the Peninsula.¹³ Moreover, Portuguese people living in the Spanish Americas were often scapegoated as contraband traders, and judaizing may have been a trumped-up charge with an ulterior motive.¹⁴ Two years after his arrest, Machado was still languishing in an Inquisitorial prison, subsisting on extraordinary rations of bread that were probably purchased with funds extracted from his confiscated estate.¹⁵ Machado’s arrest came just two years after Luis de Carvajal el Mozo, his mother, and three sisters were burned at the stake along with several other self-proclaimed judaizers.¹⁶ They are a handful of more than 1,500 individuals convicted of judaizing, 200 of whom were either burned at the pyre or died incarcerated in the two and a half centuries preceding Mexican independence in 1821.¹⁷

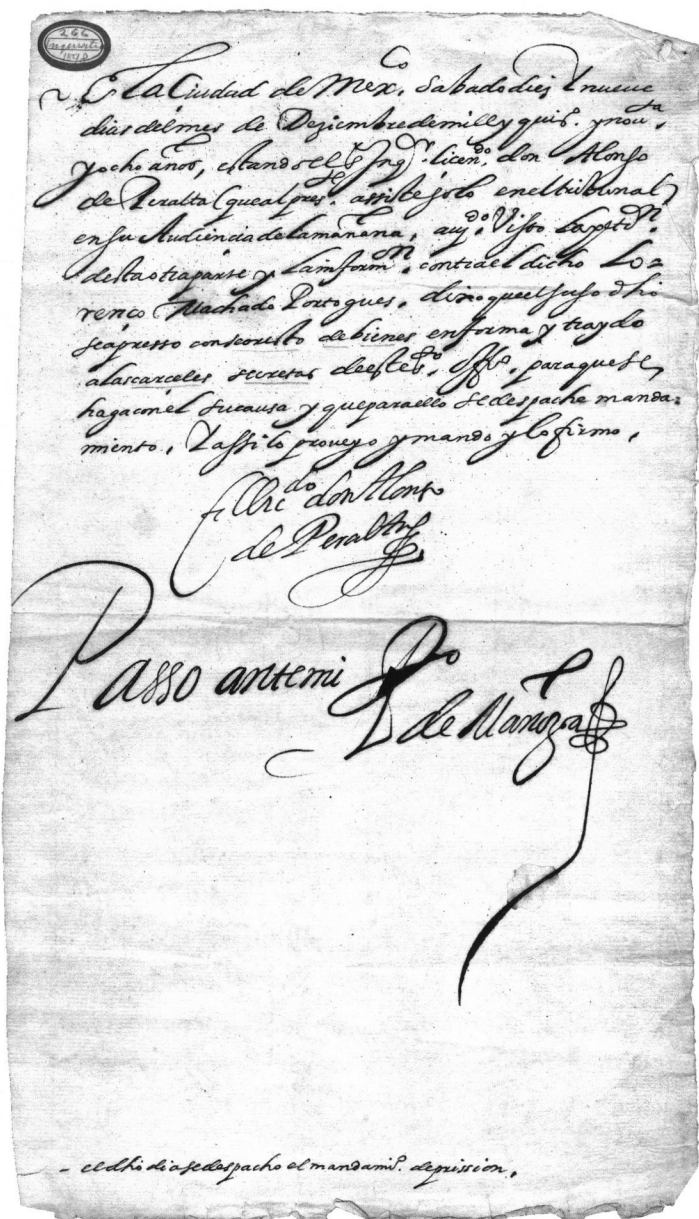


Figure 2.2: This manuscript broadside, written in Spanish and dated Saturday, December 19, 1598, is an arrest warrant, signed by Alonso de Peralta, the head of the Inquisition in Mexico City, for Lorenzo Machado, a Portuguese New Christian suspected of judaizing.

Machado may have at one point crossed paths with Goncalo Perez Ferro, a native of Villafior, Portugal, who was residing in Mexico in 1597 when he was apprehended and tried as a judaizer (*judaizante*) (see Figure 2.3). Ferro and his wife, Catalina de León, a native of Medina del Campo, arrived in the same sailing vessel as their relative, the aforementioned Luis de Carvajal, and after living a short while in Pánuco established themselves in Mexico City. Ferro was reconciled by the Inquisition in 1601.¹⁸ The intact survival of his 300-page transcript in the Kaplan Collection is wondrous given the rampage of Inquisitorial archives and dungeons in the wake of the Napoleonic wars and the subsequent dispersal of surviving documents through private purchase, estate sales, or transfer to churches and other institutions both within and outside Mexico.¹⁹ Ferro's native town of Villafior, which harbored many Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, was a hotbed of secret Judaism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁰ Owing to the persecution of New Christians such as Ferro and Machado, as well as marriage across ethnic lines and the malleable nature of cultural identity, the judaizing element of the New Christian population of the Americas assimilated within a few generations or left the Iberian Empire altogether. The few exceptions sociologists and historians have stumbled across in modern times seem to owe themselves to a combination of endogamy and relative isolation.²¹

For the first open Jewish communities of the western Atlantic world, one must turn to Dutch Brazil. The Dutch captured Pernambuco, a region in northern Brazil, from the Portuguese in 1630, creating the only space in the Americas at that time where Judaism was a legal religion. Jews, capitalizing on their multilingualism and transatlantic Portuguese mercantile networks, traded textiles, hardware, and African slaves for sugar, tobacco, and brazilwood. The collapse of the colony to the Portuguese in 1654 triggered a Jewish exodus that clogged the city of Amsterdam with impoverished refugees and stimulated new Jewish trade and agricultural settlements in the circum- and insular Caribbean, and smaller commerce-based ones along the North American

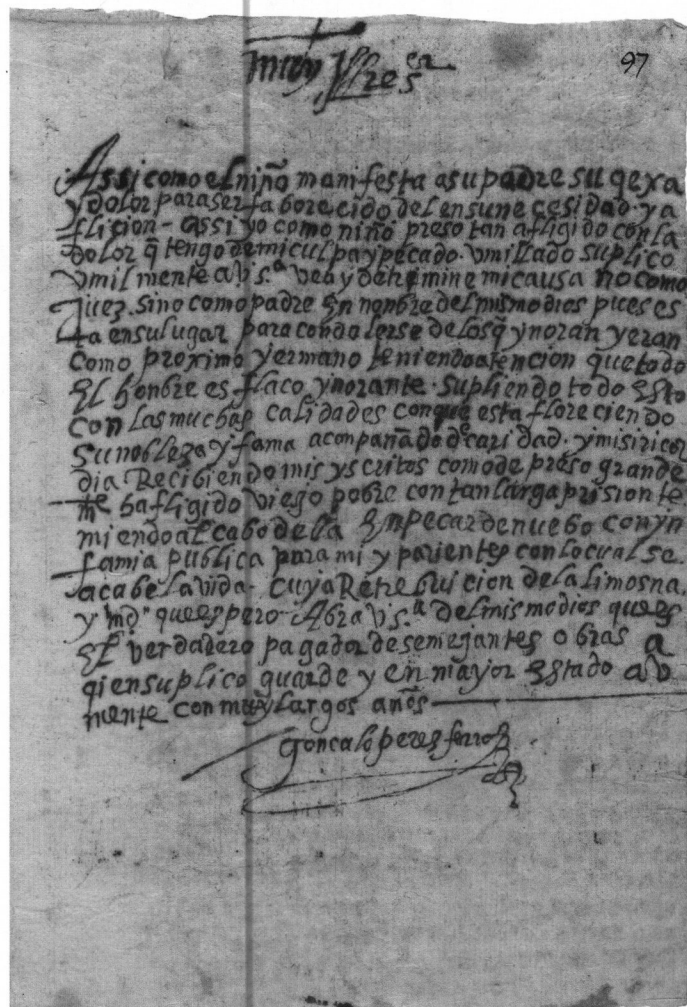


Figure 2.3: Complete dossier of the inquisitorial proceedings against Goncalo Perez Ferro, a Portuguese New Christian, on October 13, 1597, following his second arrest in Mexico City (Spanish America). Bound into the codex and foliated as an integral part of the record is a handwritten, signed confession by Ferro.

Atlantic Seaboard. Using Amsterdam and London as launching pads, confessing Jews, some of whom had lived as Christians before returning to their Jewish roots, founded Jewish settlements in Dutch-controlled Berbice, Demerara, Essequibo, Curaçao, Suriname, St. Eustatius, Tobago (disputed between various powers), and Cayenne (in what is today French Guiana); Barbados, Jamaica, and Nevis (English since 1627, 1655, and 1620s, respectively); the Danish Virgin Islands; and smaller communities in New Amsterdam/New York, Newport, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Savannah (Figures 2.4, 2.5). On the French islands, where a baptized Catholic's reversion to Judaism was criminal, Judaism was generally tolerated as an open secret, although Louis XIV expelled Jews from his Caribbean territories in 1685.

The second quarter of the seventeenth century, therefore, is what historian Wim Klooster calls "a watershed in the history of Atlantic Jewry."²² From then on, New Christians and Jews mainly avoided Iberian and French settlements and settled in the Dutch and English Caribbean. Except for short periods when St. Thomas passed under Danish rule, the Jewish experience in the western Atlantic world was centered within the Dutch and English orbits.

Portuguese-speaking communities of confessing Jews also settled on West Africa's coast in the towns of Joal, Porto d'Ale, and Recife, all located in what is today Senegal. This "forgotten diaspora," collectively numbering no more than two hundred individuals, was connected across three continents through economic and social networks that encircled Old and New Christians, Jews, Muslims, and animists within the orbit of a lively trade in hides, ivory, and illicit blade weapons (the papacy had forbidden the sale of arms to the "infidel" since 1364). The Jewish merchants who settled there were former *conversos* who had returned to their ancestral faith in Amsterdam. On the Senegambian coast, they intermarried with the daughters of local nobles, producing Eurafrican Jewish children, and maintained close ties with the Portuguese community of Amsterdam, whence they imported Torah scrolls and circumcision implements for use in their synagogue in Joal, established in 1612.²³ While no Inquisitorial tribunal operated on the Senegambian coast, the Holy Office periodically dispatched visitors (*visitadores*) during the second and third decades of the seventeenth century who not only investigated the illegal commerce and the espousal of Judaism there, but also produced a remarkable archive with narrative details of this West African Jewish collectivity.²⁴ One who would dismiss their "importance" misses the broader points that these minuscule communities illuminate. Even small enclaves were intensely connected with the broader Atlantic world, and Christianity, Islam, and African spiritual traditions were not the only religious possibilities available to peoples of African descent.

The two largest and hence most prosperous Jewish communities in the Americas, peaking at roughly 1,700 members in the late eighteenth century, were located in the Dutch colonies of Suriname and Curaçao. The latter was an arid island whose climate did not allow for the production of export goods, but its strategic location just off the coast of the South American mainland turned it into a commercial entrepôt. In Curaçao, elite Jewish merchants owned slightly more than their proportion of trade, brokerage, and insurance. Curaçao is representative of the Jewish Atlantic in

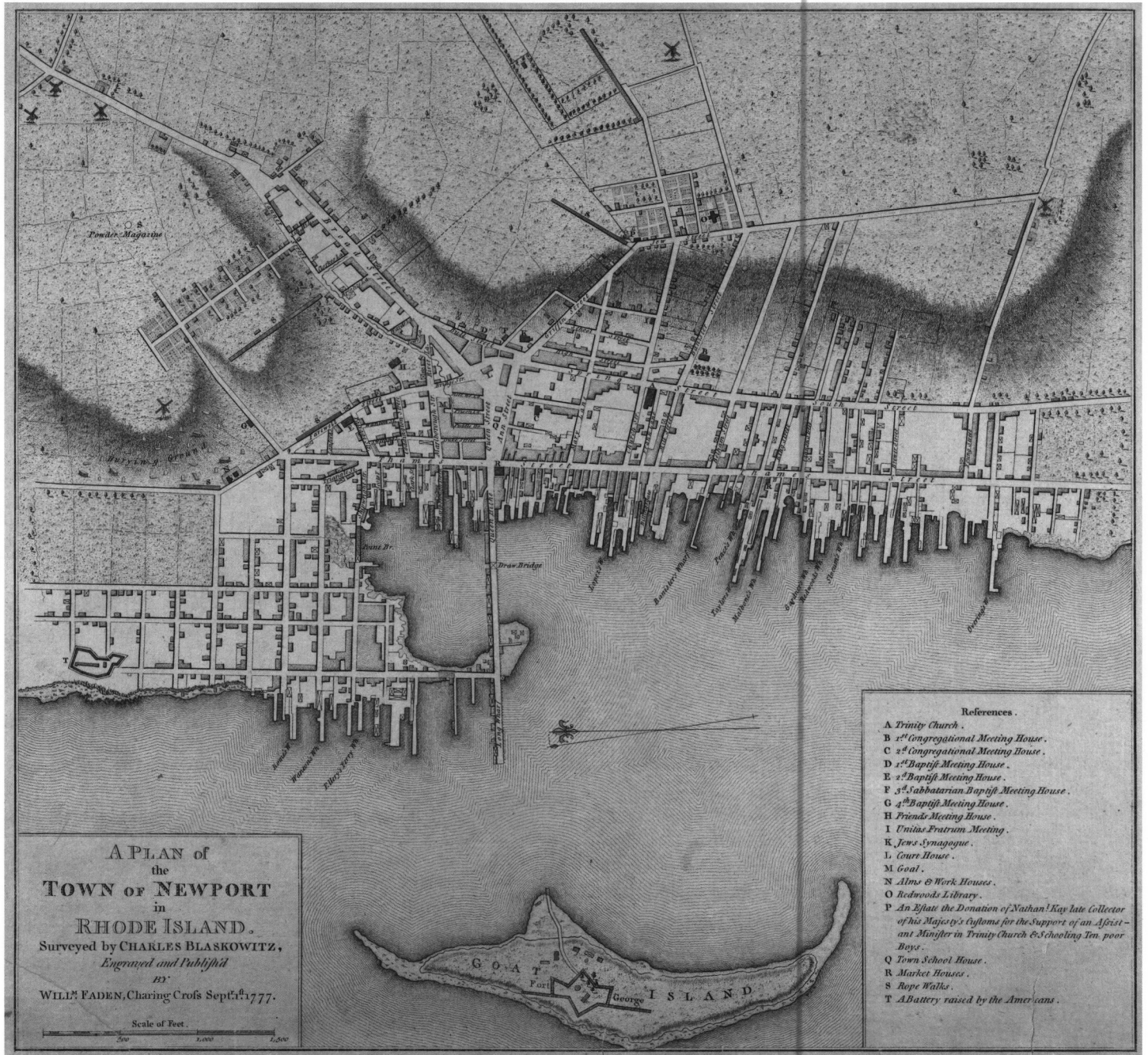
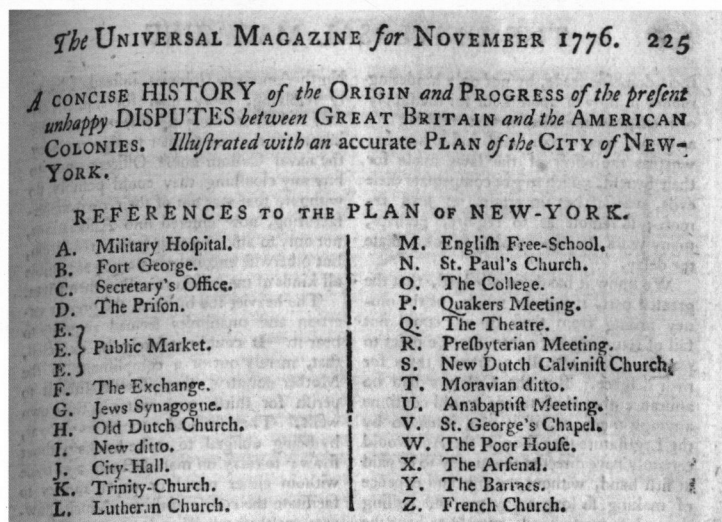


Figure 2.4: Engraved map of Newport, Rhode Island, as surveyed by Charles Blaskowitz, and printed by William Faden in London and dated September 1, 1777, indicating the first Jewish house of worship in that city.



Figure 2.5: Engraved map of New-York, appearing in John Hinton's *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* (vol. 59), New York City, November 1776. The reference key to the fold-out engraved map designates the "Jews Synagogue" in the "Plan of New-York" with the letter "G."



that the overwhelming majority of Jews in the region were intensively engaged in mercantile trade for the entire period. Suriname, on the other hand, along with the English territories of Barbados and Jamaica, were export colonies. Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, most Surinamese Jews lived in the agricultural hinterland, producing sugar, coffee, cacao, and timber cash crops.

A rare map held in the Kaplan Collection, predating 1718, illustrates the visibility of Suriname's Jews, who formed one-third of the white population, and their impact on the landscape (Figure 2.6). Drafted during the governorship of Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, the map features dozens of Jewish-owned estates dominating a long stretch of the Suriname River, with the "Jewish village and synagogue" (Joods Dorp en Sinagoge) at its median point. Outside the community, this village was known as Jodensavanne, or Jews' savanna. Its surrounding plantations, which would have been at that time predominantly sugar estates, bear the Portuguese and Spanish names of their owners: D'Avilar (which appears as the corrupted *Duivelaar*), Drago, David, de Pina, Don Pedro, Aron, Serfatijn (a probable misreading of *Serfati*), Nunes da Costa, Baruh da Costa, Nassy, Nunes, and de Casseres. Jews often named their plantations after biblical toponyms or Hebrew words, such as Hebron, Moria, Mahanaem, Sucoht, Bersaba, Nahamoe, Haran, and Petak Enaim. In the capital city of Paramaribo, where most of the colony's Jews lived by the end of the eighteenth century, the Jewish imprint is also visible, as the map of ca. 1720s Suriname and Berbice clearly indicates. The urban street plan shows "the Jewish Broadway" (*Jooden Bree-straat*) as well as the "Portuguese Jewish synagogue," officially known as *Sedek VeSalom* (Righteousness and Peace) with the German or Ashkenazi synagogue standing adjacent. The map also identifies the Lutheran church, and numerous Maroon settlements, autonomous communities that runaway slaves founded in the rainforest over the course of the eighteenth century and to whom the Dutch colonial government by the 1770s regularly paid tribute. The colonial government's bestowal of periodic gifts succeeded in pacifying Maroons, but also unintentionally created an asymmetrical relationship in favor of these former slaves and their descendants. Conspicuously absent on this map are Catholic or Moravian churches. Suriname was an intensely multiethnic population, and Jews were among the more successful groups who vied for special, privileged status.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Suriname was exceedingly obscure to most westerners, even to those hailing from the colony's former motherland, England, which ruled Suriname from 1651 to 1667 and then again as Britain from 1799 to 1815. British traveler Edward Sullivan, who set out for Suriname in the 1850s, admitted to initially having "a very indistinct idea as to its whereabouts" and had never even heard the name of its capital city, Paramaribo.²⁵ But in its heyday Suriname was hailed as a potential second Brazil, the most powerful and richest of all New World colonies, and hopes for its phoenix-like rise from the ashes continued well into the nineteenth century during the British Interregnum.²⁶

The economic centrality of the Caribbean reinforced the cultural hegemony of Portuguese Jews over co-religionists both locally and in North America. Portuguese Jews in both regions provided the model for the liturgical pronunciation of Hebrew well into the early 1800s. Their

elite status predisposed many local Ashkenazim toward this accent, which preserved the guttural *ayin*, did not differentiate between the *patah* and *qames* or between the *sere* and *segol* vowels, and intoned the fifth to last and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, respectively, as an “s” and a “t.” Thus, Portuguese Jews would have intoned the words for “righteous” and “Sabbath” as “*sadik*” and “*sabat*,” rather than the Ashkenazi “*tsadik*” and “*shobbes*.”²⁷ Since colonial days, Germanic and Eastern European Jews who worshipped in Portuguese Jewish congregations adopted that pronunciation and cantillation of Hebrew in place of their own ancestral tradition and even gave up their own customary prayer for the dead (the mourner’s *kadish*) in favor of the Portuguese tradition.²⁸

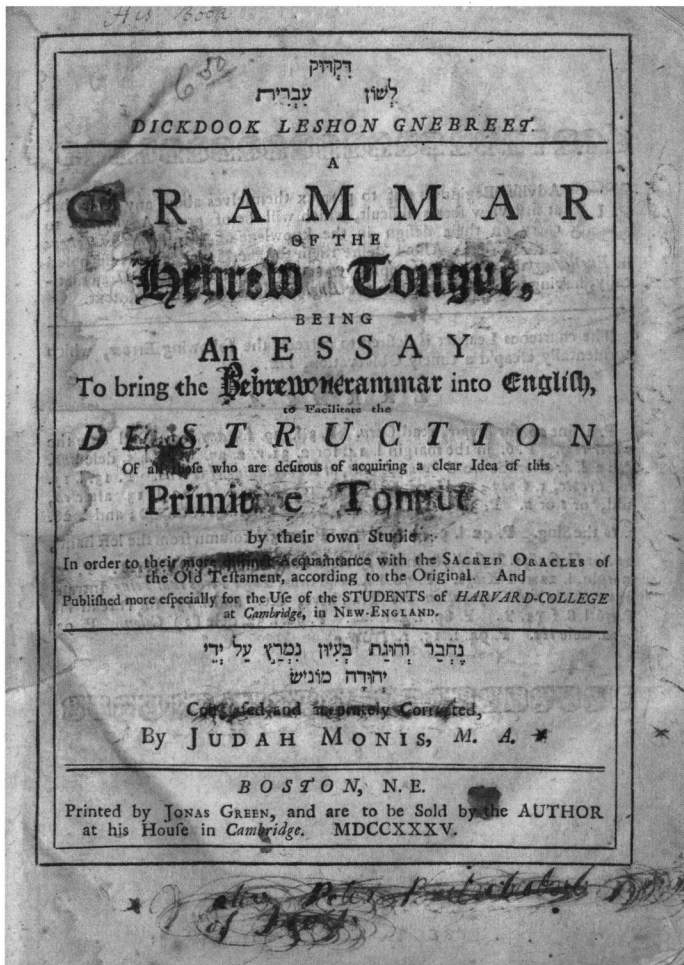


Figure 2.7: Judah Monis, *Dickdook leshon gnebreet. A grammar of the Hebrew tongue...*, Boston, N.E.: Printed by Jonas Green, and are to be sold by the author at his house in Cambridge [MA], MDCCXXXV [1735]. Monis, a convert to Christianity from Judaism, taught Hebrew at Harvard and published this grammarian, the first of its kind printed in the British colonies, for the use of his students.

The dominance of Portuguese customs among North American Jews is apparent in the Hebrew grammar book published by Judah Monis (1683–1764), an Algerian- or Italian-born convert to Christianity who taught Hebrew at Harvard University for forty years. Monis employed the Portuguese accent in his writing and teaching, as suggested in the Roman-scripted transliterations of his Hebrew grammar primer, published in 1735 and also held in the Kaplan Collection (Figure 2.7). Isaac Leeser, a Central European-born Jew who affiliated with the Spanish and Portuguese communities of Richmond, Virginia, and Philadelphia, employed this accent in the Hebrew-language textbooks he published for North American children beginning in the 1830s. These became the first primers for Jewish schools in the United States.²⁹ A Hebrew textbook published in 1834 by the American Jew Joseph Aaron, probably of Germanic or Eastern European origin, also employed the Portuguese transliteration system still in vogue among many American Jews.³⁰ The Lopez calendar (also discussed by Jonathan Sarna in this volume; see Figure 3.2) is an additional example that underscores how literary material culture both reflected and reinforced the Portuguese cultural orientation of most early American Jews, and thereafter of what was probably a sizeable minority of Jews, even into the mid-nineteenth century.

Geographical and cultural fluidity marked the rabbinical and cantorial culture of North America and the Caribbean. Preachers and cantors were readily transferred between Caribbean colonies and the early American republic, and several Ashkenazim were able to perform their duties comfortably according to Portuguese Jewish rite. Moses N. Nathan had served as Minister of the German Congregation Shangaray Yashar of Kingston, Jamaica (note the Portuguese pronunciation of the synagogue's name), and undertook a prolonged stay in the United States in 1840 to recover his own health "and that of his amiable companion [his wife]," who had relatives in New York.³¹ By 1848 he had relocated to St. Thomas and received an invitation to sermonize in Spanish Town, Jamaica, where he had formerly held a position as minister and teacher.³² A presumably Ashkenazi correspondent whose name has not survived had learned *hazanut* according to the "Portuguese Minhag" from Hazan Lopez of Kingston, Jamaica, but preferred to serve as minister in a "German Congregation (מנהג פולין) [Minhag Polin— Polish-Jewish liturgical rite] in the United States having had much more experience, and being perfectly *au fait* at the duties of the latter."³³ Henry Jacobs, who was active in both Kingston and New York and possessed a "Certificate of Efficiency as a Portuguese Reader," also learned the Portuguese minhag from Hazan Lopez, and so well, he said, "that no would believe that I had been attached to a German Congregation."³⁴

Nathan, the aforementioned unnamed correspondent, Jacobs, and Isaac Leeser were probably representative of the cultural orientation of most Ashkenazi Jews living before the era of mass migration in the American colonies or former colonies. Their fluency in both the "Portuguese" and "German" pronunciations of Hebrew was probably not unusual. As late as 1843, both accents were used in Hebrew language instruction at The Misses Palache's Boarding and Day School in New York.³⁵ Leeser's prayer books, iconic to early American Jewish history and published beginning in the 1830s, likewise adhered to the Portuguese tradition, and were marketed to Caribbean Jews, although he also published a prayer book in 1848—the first Ashkenazi *siddur* published in the United States—that speaks to the encroaching dominance of Central and Eastern European Jews.³⁶

This proliferation of publications culturally and linguistically oriented toward Portuguese Jews raises an intriguing question about nomenclature and the attendant malleable nature of ethnic identity. Iberian-origin Jews who remained in the Western hemisphere after leaving the Peninsula and after returning to their ancestral Judaism never identified as "Sephardi." In fact, nowhere in the early records of Atlantic Jewry do Iberian-origin Jews refer to themselves as such.³⁷ The label came to be commonly applied in the nineteenth century, reflecting the impact of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement and Central European *maskilim* who glorified the medieval Iberian Jews they termed *Sephardim*. The letters and documents accessible via the Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leeser Digital Repository of the University of Pennsylvania provide a telling way to gauge the gradual shift in nomenclature from "Portuguese and Spanish" to "Sephardi." By the mid-nineteenth century, the terms are often used in tandem, as in the 1850 contract to hire Moses N. Nathan as hazan "according to the customs of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews, commonly called "Minhag Sephardim" (Figure 2.8). But ever more frequently, Portuguese Jews and Ashkenazim alike (including David de Meldola of London, Abraham de Sola of Montreal, Dr. M. Mayer of Charleston, and Nathan

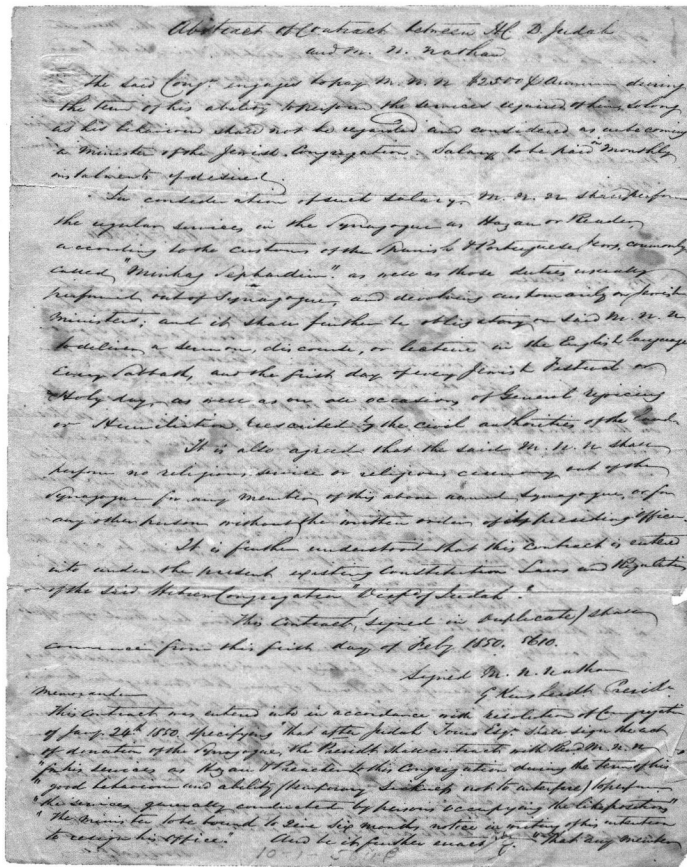


Figure 2.8: Gershom Kursheedt and M. N. Nathan, contract for Nathan to serve as cantor and preacher of the Hebrew Congregation Dispersed of Judah, New Orleans, LA, October 1, 1850, p. 1.

himself) allowed the term “Sephardim” to stand on its own.³⁸ Isaac Leiser referred to the “Sephardi tradition” when he began to publish his liturgical works in the 1830s, and Mayer Kayserling titled his history of medieval Iberian Jewry, published in the 1850s, *Sephardim*.³⁹

Historians of early American Jewry have followed this cue, going so far as to name the first period of American Jewish history the “Sephardic” period.⁴⁰ This is unfortunate because taking history on its own terms means historicizing, and the first step in that direction is to recover the nomenclature employed during the period under study. Doing so is not simply honoring the ways people in the past referred to themselves and others, however incongruous those terms may seem today. Rather, the reclamation for which I am arguing is fundamental to correcting our understanding of an entire cultural orientation and the political realities that informed it. The ethos of Portuguese and Spanish Jewry of the Atlantic age was originally quite distinct from the “myth of Sephardic supremacy” propagated by Mayer Kayserling and other enlightened German Jews since the late eighteenth century.⁴¹ Far from championing a Jewish community thoroughly

integrated into local society while remaining uncompromisingly Jewish, Portuguese Jews of the Atlantic world prided themselves on the privileges they received that elevated them above local African-origin populations and allowed them to be religiously, linguistically, and ethnically distinguished from the white Christian groups among whom they lived. Moreover, their dominant historical memory was not harmonious integration into non-Jewish society, but forced conversion, dissimulation of Catholicism, Inquisitorial persecution, and exile. A key component of Portuguese Jewishness, then, was not full integration into the ruling non-Jewish society without assimilation, but rather the privilege of fostering a corporate identity, very much a carryover from the European Christian Middle Ages. Perhaps most importantly, only the term “Portuguese” can explain how Jews saw themselves—and were seen by others—as part and parcel of the Portuguese Empire and its inter-Atlantic Diaspora. Portuguese language and culture in the seventeenth century linked Jews in the Americas to Portuguese trading partners all over the Atlantic world, regardless of those partners’ religious orientation. Diplomatic missions dispatched from Brazil to Suriname at the turn of the nineteenth century specifically sought out the local Jewish community of Paramaribo, and

Portuguese soldiers captured by enemy forces in those turbulent times and forced onto Surinamese soil immediately called for the political and monetary intervention of the local Portuguese Jewish rulers. Lusitanian politicians even made overtures to Suriname's Portuguese Jews to repatriate to their ancestral land, with the assurance that the motives that had caused their forefathers' exile from that realm no longer existed.⁴²

Slavery in the Atlantic Jewish World

Portraits of Caribbean and U.S. Jewish communities have often elided the relationship of Jews to the slave societies in which they lived.⁴³ This silence is one aspect of what I call "defensive" or "protective history," an enduring historiographical paradigm detectable in a wide range of minority group disciplines.⁴⁴ Writers whose personal identity tends to overlap with the minority group they are analyzing often seek to celebrate, praise, and showcase. Within the context of Jewish studies, this has typically meant that the links between Jewish communities and the institution of slavery are either assiduously avoided, explained away, or fetishized as having "fabulous...content" (so reads the anonymous dealer's description of Judah Benjamin's ruling in a runaway slave case from Louisiana, dated 1838). As I have argued elsewhere, the experience of slavery must be central to any analysis of a slave society.⁴⁵

Slavery in relation to Jewish history must also be normalized. Slavery has existed in every known sedentary society, and it is thus wholly unsurprising that it is openly countenanced in the Hebrew Bible, rabbinical texts, and *responsa* literature, and implicitly in the many slavery-related documents of the Kaplan Collection. We find in the collection several advertisements for the sale of slaves by Jewish owners or dealers, bearing last names such as Cohen and De la Motta (Figure 2.9). The business card of

Figure 2.9a-b: Jacob Cohen & Co., advertisement for the "public auction of an estate including an entire gang of 60 Negroes accustomed to the culture of cotton"; E. De la Motta, advertisement of the delay, due to weather, of the sale of a cargo of sugar and brandies. *Charleston Courier*, February 7, 1807.

Figure 2.9c: Marx E. Cohen, "Plantation, Brick Yard and Negroes for Sale," *The Charleston Mercury*, April 6, 1855. Cohen was a plantation owner who stipulated that slaves were not to be sold separately.

Public Auction.

In compliance with the Order of the Court of Equity, will be continued by the Subscribers, on TUESDAY, the 10th inst. before their vendue store, the sale of

THE FOLLOWING PROPERTY,

Belonging to the Estate of the late Dr. POTONEY, deceased.

—CONSISTING OF—

A N entire GANG of about 60 NEGROES, accustomed to the culture of cotton; 2 Mules, 1 Horse, 3 Mares, and 1 Colt: a Gold Watch, a Silver Snuff-Box, a gold headed Cane; 249 Volumes on Physic, Medicine, Chemistry, and Agriculture; an Electrical Maching, with all its apparatus.

ALSO,

A BRICK HOUSE & LOT, No 17, Church-street continued; the late residence of Dr. Potoney; the Lot is about 56 feet front, and about 128 feet deep; the House having 11 rooms, besides the garret; on the Lot are the usual Out-Buildings.

*Conditions of the sale are—*For the Negroes, one third cash; and for the remainder, bonds, with approved personal security and mortgage of the property, payable in one year, with interest from the date.

For the House and Lot, one fifth cash, and for the remainder a credit will be given of one and two years, giving bonds secured by a mortgage of the premises, with interest from the date.

The House may be seen previous to the day of sale, by applying to JAMES DELAIRE, Esq. Executor, who has the keys in possession.

By order of the Executor.

Jacob Cohen & Co.

Purchasers to pay for B's of Sale. Feb. 6.

Postponed on account of the Weather.

On MONDAY, the 9th instant, Precisely at 11 o'clock, will be sold on Motte's Wharf, the CARGO of the Brig *REPOUX*, consisting of:

61 hhds. & 7 bbls. Prime SUGARS,

Equal to Jamaica.

And immediately after the sale of Sugars, before my store, back of the Exchange, will be sold to close sales,

20 pipes Real 4th proof Cogniac Brandy,
20 cases Medoc Claret, of an excellent quality, six years old. The whole subject to debenture.

*Conditions—*For all sums of and under 200 dollars, cash; above 200 dollars, approved indorsed notes at 60 days.

E. De La Motta.

February 7.

PLANTATION, BRICK YARD AND NEGROES FOR SALE.

THE subscriber offers his PLANTATION and thirty-five NEGROES for sale on liberal terms. They can only be sold together. The Plantation is in thorough order, 1½ miles from this city, on Dorchester Road, contains about 1000 acres, BRICK YARD, Brick Cases, &c., Possession will be given at any time, along with the growing crops, &c. For full particulars, apply on the premises, to

MARX E. COHEN.

N. B.—BRICKS delivered at any wharf in Charleston, by the boat load, low for c. sh. ws8 Ap4

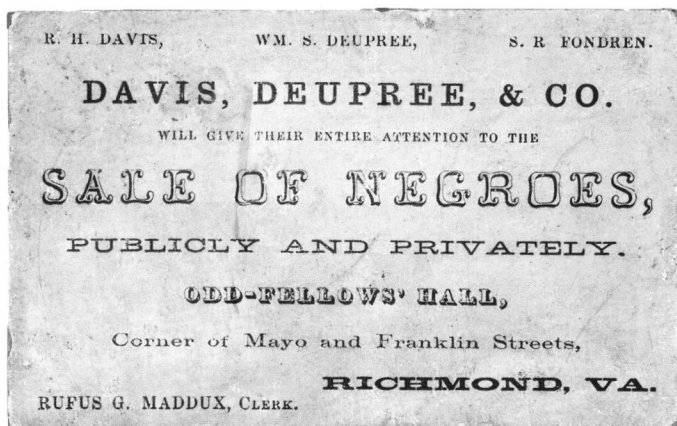


Figure 2.10: R. H. Davis, Deupree, & Co., business card, Richmond, VA, ca. 1855.

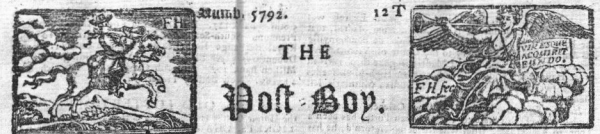
R. H. Davis and his partners announces the “sale of negroes, publicly and privately” in Richmond, Virginia (Figure 2.10). The unquestioning acceptance of slavery among the vast majority of Jews throughout history runs contrary to acrobatic attempts by generations of scholars to interpretively deny this reality.⁴⁶ What is missing from their analyses is the historical understanding that, before the European revolutions of the late eighteenth century, hierarchy and privilege were very rarely questioned and in any given society, varying forms of exploitative labor practices, often overlapping in severity, coexisted.

To underscore Moses Finley’s distinction, in the case of indenture or hired labor, a person’s work is owned. In slavery, by contrast, both the person’s labor and body are owned.⁴⁷ In practice, however, the actual experiences of slaves and hired laborers, or sailors, for that matter, often overlapped, with the important distinction that indenture or service at sea was not biologically heritable, as was the uterine system of slavery. An enslaved woman’s child was automatically a slave, regardless of the father’s identity. Jews in the Atlantic world (unless they had recognized sub-Saharan African descent) were classified as white and hence permitted to own human property. Under certain conditions, free people of African ancestry could—and many did—own slaves. Slavery, particularly when domestic, could be compared with the long experience European Jews have had as employers of Jewish and gentile female servants, known in the *responsa* literature as *meshartot* and *shivhot*. The interactions between domestic servants and their masters and mistresses engendered many of the same types of situations and complications as did slavery, as we may surmise from Rebecca Kobrin’s analysis of servitude among nineteenth-century U.S. Jews.⁴⁸

Another direct experience of Atlantic Jews with slavery was at the hands of the Barbary pirates who captured passengers and crew members at sea and auctioned them off on the North African mainland. On August 10, 1726, an English ship sailing from London to New York was seized and brought to Sallé. Besides the crew were eleven Dutch Christians, five Jewish men, and one Jewish woman, all “carry’d into Slavery, and their Goods confiscated.” Nine other passengers, all English, were for unspecified reasons not detained (Figure 2.11). Atlantic Jews had an institutional mechanism in place to respond to such crises: communal funds collected for ransoming co-religionists. Portuguese Jews of the Atlantic world specifically designated a separate charity chest for “captives” (*caixa dos cativos*).⁴⁹ London’s Portuguese Jewish community even had an official in charge of Jewish captives, known as the president of captives (*parnas dos cativos*).⁵⁰ Some wealthy Jews, like Isaac Bravo of Suriname in 1716, legated hundreds of guilders for the redemption of captives.⁵¹ Jewish victims beyond the Atlantic realm were keenly aware of this communal largesse,

and some undertook long and dangerous journeys to the Americas to tap into it. Among them were Johanan ben Jahacob de Gurgias, who requested funds to redeem his family members imprisoned by the “Turks” in 1767.⁵² Jahacob and Ishak de Haim Acohen of Macedonia requested assistance of Suriname’s Mahamad in 1752 for financial aid to help rescue their “afflicted and captive families.”⁵³ Moses Treves, described in the archives as a “stranger” and “resident of the Levant, who claims to be a pilgrim,” arrived in Suriname in 1788 to raise funds from various lands to liberate his wife and children, imprisoned by Muslims.⁵⁴ In 1754, two Livornese Jews appealed to London’s Portuguese community for the rescue of six Jews captive in Malta.⁵⁵

Robert Davis argues that Barbary pirate raids on European populations helped condition whites in the Atlantic world to oppose the institute of slavery.⁵⁶ If we extend his theory to the Atlantic Jewish world, it is possible that the periodic requests Jewish communities received to aid their captive co-religionists gradually conditioned Suriname’s Jews against tolerating the existence of Jewish slaves within their own colony. In 1819, just a few years after the battle of Algiers, when the U.S. and British forces bombarded the North African coast, Suriname’s Portuguese Jewish community ruled that it was no longer acceptable for Eurafrican Jews to remain in slavery. Tellingly, the communal records use the term captives (*cativos*) to describe these Jewish slaves.⁵⁷ Generally speaking, the Dutch had a very weak legacy of abolitionism, in contrast to Jews of the Anglophone Atlantic world. Sabato Morais’s “Thanksgiving Discourse for the Year 1864,” in which he called slavery “human degradation,” an obstacle to “progress and civilization,” and an institution that made the Union worthless, is a very late expression of the abolitionist sentiment that had been building up in England since the late eighteenth century.⁵⁸



From Thursday September 1. to Saturday September 3. 1726.

Yesterday arrived the Mail dce from Holland.

Curfew, July 15. N. S.



E have Advice from Maricao, that a Bilander and a Ship commanded by Capt. Francisco Romero, bound from Cadix to the Canaries, and from thence to Maricao, were call away. A Bilander that sail'd from New-York to carry Provision to Brazil for a Market, was hinder'd breaking Bulk by the Callonhoote Officers; whereupon the proceeded with her Cargo to Surinam; but found such Plenty of Provision there, that she is come hither to dispose of this can. On the 20th instant arrived here a Bilander from Jamaica, the Master of which reports, that he met off the Cape of Kannah, to English Men of War under the Command of Rear-Admiral Hoffer; namely, two of 70 Guns, four of 60, and a four of 50, steering toward Porto-Bello and Cartagena. A French Monk of S. Domingo, who came over hither in a Vessel from Rio de la Hache, reports also, that he saw, off S. Domingo, five or six French Men of War, steering for Porto-Bello and Cartagena; but we take it for granted, that these were English Ships of the aforesaid Squadron. We hear that a French Barque of Maricao had a smart Engagement with two Pirates, one of which took, and the other was just upon the Point of striking, when the Bark Young a Leak, which obliged her to quit, and make the best of her way with the Prize, till she came up with a Dutch Ship, to whose Master the Barque entrusted the Custody of the Prize, for her better Security. Three Spanish Ships lie at Porto-Caballo, lading Goods for Vera-Cruz. We hear of no Pirates at present in these Parts.

Gibraltar, Aug. 10. N. S. The English Ship lately taken and carry'd into Saltee, is releas'd with her Crew and Cargo; but eleven Hollanders, that were on board as Passengers, to wit, seven Women and Girls, and four Men, together with five Jews and a Jewess, were carry'd into slavery, and their Goods confiscated. This Ship was bound from London to New-York, and had, besides the aforesaid nine English Passengers, who are now detain'd. Letters from Te-tuan, of the six infant, advise, that another Saltee Rover had taken another English Ship homeward-bound from Lisbon, which whether releas'd upon the Sea, or not, they could not say; but the Rover was come in there without his Prize, having taken out of her four Dutchmen, with 200 Gold-Cruisades, 40 Four-Pillote Pieces, and some Chests of Goods. [The said that this Imposition of the taking and detain-ing of the English Ships by the Saltee Rovers, is chiefly set on foot and encouraged by one Pillier, a French Renegade, who has now the chief Command at Saltee.]

Cadix, Aug. 13. N. S. The Advice-bott express'd, that the Gallions but by Guess. Yesterday arrived an Express from the Governor of S. Antonio, with Advice of the Arrival of the English Squadron upon the Coast of Biscay; and that Admiral Jennings had detach'd two Men of War, which he had design'd to enter the Port of S. Antonio: Whereupon the King immediately call'd a Council; at the Breaking up of which, an Express was sent to Col. Stanhope at Madrid, to sit the Ambassador the Meeting of the English Squadron upon the Coast of Biscay: And his Excellency is set out this

Evening for S. Ildefonso; where, 'tis said, he will carry till the Court comes to Town from thence. Be that as it will, first Orders were before sent from hence, to keep sufficient Guards upon the Coast of Galicia, as also at Cadix, and in all our Ports of the Mediterranean, to secure them against any Enterprizes of the English. For this end, the two Regiments of Foot sent from Cadix to the life of Leon, are order'd back; and all the Shops and Booths erected under the Walls of that City are taken down and demolish'd. Moreover the Conquistador and S. Joseph Men of War are to fall from the Bay of Cadix to Malaga, to convey Provisions for our Garrison upon the Coast of Barbary from that Port to Ceuta. It is certain, that the Duke de Bourbonville, Captain of the Life Guards, is nominated by the King to go to the Court of Vienna in the Quality of his Majesty's Ambassador; consequently the Duke de Sully is to return hither. The Duke his Father is still confined in the Castle of Segovia; the Court having yet taken no Resolution about his Affairs, notwithstanding the Reports long since given out, that Commissioners were named to lift to the Bottom of it, and draw up Articles against him.

Hanover, Aug. 24. N. S. Yesterday the Foreign Ministers took their Leave of the Electoral Prince of Saxony, who set out Post this day for the said Electorate.

Breslau, Aug. 26. N. S. On Monday last in the Evening, the Electoral Prince of Saxony went Post thro' this Place, on his way from Warsaw to Dresden.

Hamburgh, Sept. 6. N. S. They write from Dantrick, that although the Duke of Courland has enter'd his solemn Protest to the King and Republick of Poland, against his States Election of a Succellor to his Duchy, yet it is not doubt'd, but his Majesty's Party will endeavour in the ensuing Day to get their Choice of Count Maurice of Saxony confirm'd. All their Letters from Riga are full of the extraordinary Diligence that is us'd in filling the Magazines there; to wit, to which, each District in Livonia and Courland is to furnish a certain Quantity of Corn and Forage by such a Day in November. The Army assembled near Riga continues in its former Post; but four Regiments are order'd to Courland, whole Place is to be supply'd by others from above; to wit, without Question the Russians are to winter in that Duchy. While Prince Mezzick is at Riga, the Nobility of Livonia feel Depress'd to him, praying that their Estates might be exempted from quartering of Soldiers; but the Prince's reply'd, that he is oblig'd to the Czars here; a sufficient Proof that their Petition cannot be granted.

Our Letters from Petersburg are of the 20th ult. and advise, that her Caesarina Majesty went, three days before, attended by her own and the Foreign Ministers, to view the Men of War and Gallies at Cronid. She has appointed a Commission of six principal Persons, whereof the Duke of Holstein is President, to examine into the Secret of the late Election of Count Maurice of Saxony by the States of the Duchy of Courland, at which 'tis plain she has taken great Diligence. They pretend at Petersburg to be impatient till they hear how the two Fleets will part; which, according to them, is facing each other; and they add, that there are abundance of Troops on board the Russian Ships, but more on board the Gallies: And yet it is no where else expell'd, that the Malcontents will dare to come within Reach of Admiral Wager's Squadron. Their News from Denmark was so indifferent, that they talk'd of sending some more Regiments thither, to secure their new Conquests upon the Baltic Sea against any Attacks. Four Stockholms they write, that the King and Court are daily expected in Town from Carlsberg.

The Deputies of the Provinces begin to arrive against the ensuing Dyet. The Deputies of Livonia and Eltona will carry some time longer at Stockholm. Lastly, the Duke of Holstein's Party are already taking their Measures to carry their Point in the Assembly of the States.

Figure 2.11: Reports of Jews taken into slavery, *The Post-Boy*, September 1–3, 1726. It is not widely known that Jews, whose role in the slave trade has been grossly exaggerated, were themselves sometime captured and taken into slavery.

Privileges, Disabilities, and Emancipation

The increasing aversion to slavery brings us closer to our final theme: the civil and political status of Atlantic Jewish communities. As we have seen, Jews in the Caribbean, aside from those with the requisite degree of African ancestry, were legally classified as white. However, as non-Christians, they were ascribed a not-quite-“white” status, as reflected in colonial censuses, where they were often distinguished as “Jews,” and in their position as social inferiors to Christian free colored people, particularly by the late eighteenth century. Even though Jews mingled vigorously with Christians of various denominations, socially and commercially, their worlds were “largely parallel to, rather than thoroughly intertwined with”⁵⁹ Christians, generally drawing the boundary at marriage, which—for both Christians and Jews—was a sacrament typically available only to members baptized or born/converted into the community of faith. This legal or de facto barrier prevented Jews from attaining the social and financial benefits accrued through acquisition of land and capital, as well as political connections. Their exclusion from Christian militias and from holding government offices, as well as their initial ban from public schools, pushed the “principal source of local prestige and patronage”⁶⁰ out of their reach.

As in Europe, emancipation for Jews in the Caribbean meant not a release from slavery, as it did for unfree peoples of African and indigenous descent living in the Americas, but the elimination of disabilities and privileges in order to be accorded equal status with other citizens of formative republics. This mandate, which positioned Jews at the very center of the debate about political identities in the emergent nation-states of the era, required them to disassociate themselves from Jewish nationhood and to consider their Jewishness as solely a creed. An important element of this process, epitomized in the emerging Reform movement in Central Europe beginning in the second decade of the nineteenth century, was religious transformation.

Whereas in Europe the Reform movement was formally introduced with an ideological platform tied to the promise of Jewish emancipation, a policy advocating “modernization” or religious innovation never took root in most areas of the Caribbean, and when it did the motivations were entirely different.⁶¹ Reform, generally speaking, entered long-standing Caribbean Jewish communities with a lowercase “r,” if at all. In Suriname, for example, the new practice of synagogue officials to don Christian clerical dress was formally introduced with absolutely no discussion or controversy whatsoever. Departures from Hebrew pronunciation and ritual were both subtle and gradual and were not attached to any political ideology, but rather confusion engendered by clerics trained by different cantors or by an occasional rebellious *hazan* who departed subtly from a cherished melody or order of prayers and quickly repented. Never were these perceived changes linked to the religious revolutions that divided Central European Jewry beginning in the second decade of the nineteenth century.⁶²

The Portuguese communities of the Caribbean seem to have almost entirely succeeded in bypassing these disturbances. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, the leader of the Reform movement in the United States, once commented that the Portuguese congregation lacked the “awful confusion” of the “old synagogues of Germany and Poland.”⁶³ Isaac S. Emmanuel, the Salonikan-born leader and lay historian of Curaçao’s Portuguese Jewish community, interpreted Wise’s observation in this way: “Portuguese congregations did not need Reform.”⁶⁴ The island’s breakaway Reform congregation, Emmanuel writes, was born in 1864 not out of ideological fervor, but rather long-standing family grudges. As evidence, Emmanuel points out that once in their new house of worship the rebel congregation’s older members “found it hard to pray bareheaded and without *talesh*.”⁶⁵ Isaac Leeser, who maintained “a friendly correspondence” with traditionalist Haham Chumaceiro of Curaçao, followed these events closely, judging by the pages of the *Occident* and correspondence he received from Moses N. Nathan of St. Thomas in 1864.⁶⁶ If this interpretation of religious transformation is both accurate and representative of Caribbean Jews as a whole, it would underscore both the enduring hegemony of traditional Portuguese Jewish culture and the weak appeal of Jewish religious trends from Central Europe, including the ideological and pragmatic changes filtered through the United States in more radical forms.

The close relations between rabbinical leaders in North America and the Caribbean we have just considered can be understood as one of the aftereffects of the Atlantic age. A sizeable minority of letters amassed in the Leeser collection either emanate from the Caribbean or directly reference the region. While the bulk of the Leeser correspondence (totaling about 1,700 letters) hails from the United States and Canada, the Caribbean region (including Jamaica, St. Thomas, Curaçao, Barbados, and Venezuela) accounts for the second largest bulk of letters (over 100), suggesting that the Caribbean was of greater importance to Leeser than the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the German principalities, Hapsburg Empire, and Palestine combined. If Leeser is representative of U.S. Jewish clergymen in general, we may surmise that a quarter of a century after the Atlantic age is said to have eclipsed, the Caribbean region and its Jewish populations remained distinctly on the horizons of U.S. Jewish leaders.⁶⁷

Conclusion: Archival Reflections

Noah Gelfand’s observation that few historians of Jews in seventeenth-century New York have placed that population in a transatlantic perspective applies *a fortiori* to Jewish communities throughout the Atlantic world.⁶⁸ The field of American Jewish history has many basic reasons to integrate historiography’s latest trend. The long and continuous experience of Jews with global dispersion easily lends the Jewish past to a cross-continental and transoceanic approach. For the two millennia preceding the rise of the Atlantic world, Jews were bound to neither territorial sovereignties nor specific locales. The Kaplan Collection, originally conceived as bearing upon the history of Jews in the Americas, fortuitously lends itself to an Atlantic Jewish perspective. Although the collection is heavily oriented toward the post-1825 period—the time most historians agree the

Atlantic era ends—even those relatively few sources representing early America directly speak to some of the main themes that are now emerging as defining the nascent subfield of Atlantic Jewish history. The role of the assembler of an American Jewish collection is in itself a historiographical statement. Although Jews and Jewish communities always lived within a broader context, they also often lived within specificities distinctive to Jews. The ever-expanding Kaplan Collection serves as an ongoing reminder of both broader context and specificity. Its precious documents communicate this relentless message: Atlantic Jewish history cannot be written without archival repositories close at hand.

* * * Notes * * *

1. The epitaph is fully transcribed in Aviva Ben-Ur and Rachel Frankel, *Remnant Stones: The Jewish Cemeteries of Suriname: Epitaphs* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2009), 205. My assumption is that the body was buried on the day of death.
2. Natalie Zemon Davis, "David Nassy's 'Furlough' and the Slave Mattheus," in Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman, eds., *New Essays in American Jewish History: To Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the American Jewish Archives Journal and the 10th Anniversary of the American Jewish Archives under the Direction of Dr. Gary P. Zola* (Cincinnati, OH: American Jewish Archives of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2010), 85.
3. Ben-Ur and Frankel, *Remnant Stones*, 205.
4. Davis, "David Nassy's 'Furlough,'" 82–83. Nassy complained about "a vile conspiracy" provoked by negative reactions to his *Essai Historique sur la Colonie de Suriname*, 2 vols. (Paramaribo, 1788). A copy is held in the Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica, University of Pennsylvania Libraries.
5. Juriaen François de Friderici to George Washington, 15 April 1792, in Robert F. Haggard and Mark A. Mastromarino, eds., *The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series, 1 March 1792–15 August 1792* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 10:268–9.
6. David Nassy, "Discours sur le question, si les recherches des botanists modernes ont produit plus ou mois d'utilité pour le genre humain que celles des anciens" (1794), *Catalogue of the Library of the American Philosophical Society, Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Using Knowledge* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1824), 43.
7. For a consideration of the region's cohesiveness see Bernard Bailyn, "Introduction: Reflections on Some Major Themes," in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3–4.
8. Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 101; John Huxtable Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, "Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History," in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–33; 18–21.
9. Robert Cohen, "Jewish Demography in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of London, the West Indies, and Early America," PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1976, 9.
10. David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), especially 160–77.
11. The formal end of Iberian Jewry, as marked by the expulsion of the Jews of Navarre, is technically 1498, as discussed in Benjamin R. Gampel, *The Last Jews on Iberian Soil: Navarrese Jewry, 1479–1498* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
12. Leïla Maziane, *Salé et ses corsaires (1666–1717): Un port de course marocain au XVIII^e siècle* (Mont-Saint-Aignan, France: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2007).
13. Jonathan Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 38–39; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 10–11.
14. Irene Aloha Wright, "Rescates: With Special Reference to Cuba, 1599–1610," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 3 (August 1920), 333–61.
15. John F. Chuchiak IV, ed. and trans., *The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1820: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 124.
16. Ibid., 240–245; Seymour B. Lieberman, *The Jews in New Spain: Faith, Flame, and the Inquisition* (Coral

- Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970), 159–82.
17. Seymour Liebman, “The Great Conspiracy in New Spain,” *The Americas* 30:1 (July 1973), 18–19 and “The Jews of Colonial Mexico,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 43:1 (February 1963), 100.
 18. Eugenio del Hoyo, *Historia del Nuevo Reino de León, 1577–1723* (Monterrey, Mexico: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 1972), 1:206–7.
 19. Liebman, “The Jews of Colonial Mexico,” 98–99.
 20. Menasseh ben Israel, *Spes Israelis* (Hebrew: *Mikveh Yisrael*; English: Hope of Israel). English trans. Moses Wall, 1652; ed. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon; introduction and notes trans. Richenda George (Oxford: Littman Library, 1987), 69.
 21. Prominent exceptions include the New Christian communities of Belmonte, Portugal and the “Chuetas” of Mallorca. See Kenneth Moore, *Those of the Street: The Catholic-Jews of Mallorca: A Study in Urban Cultural Change* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), and Frédéric Brenner, *Marranes* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1992).
 22. Wim Klooster, “Caribbean/Atlantic World,” in Adam Sutcliffe and Jonathan Karp, eds., *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 7: *The Early Modern Period, c. 1500–c. 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
 23. Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, “Two Early Seventeenth-Century Sephardic Communities on Senegal’s Petite Côte,” *History in Africa* 31 (2004), 240–241; Peter Mark Allen, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
 24. Mark and da Silva Horta, “Sephardic Communities on Senegal’s Petite Côte.”
 25. Edward Sullivan, *Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America* (London: Richards Bentley, 1853), 337.
 26. Nassy, *Essai Historique*, part 2, 6; Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
 27. Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 281–82; personal observation (Sáenz-Badillos speaks generally of a “Sephardi pronunciation” that displays “great regional variety,” without providing details).
 28. Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1776* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 2:1004.
 29. William Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), 254, 256.
 30. Joseph Aaron, *Sefer Mafteah el [sic] Lashon Ibri we-Hokhmat ha-Dikduk Meforash im Nekudot. Sha’ar ha-Rishon* (A Key [or Beginners’] Book of the Hebrew Language and the Knowledge of Grammar, with Vowels. First Part) [New York: n.p., 1834]. The author is identified as a “Hebrew Professor and Teacher of Hebrew Grammar.” See Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language*, 252–53.
 31. Second Annual Examination of the Sunday School for Religious Instruction of Israelites. Held at the Synagogue Mikveh Israel on Sunday The 29th of March, 1840, 24th of VEADAR [sic], 1840. Together with a Prayer by Isaac Leaser, Minister of the Congregation Mikveh Israel. Address by Moses N. Nathan, Minister of the Congregation Shangaray Yahskar at Kingston, Jamaica (Philadelphia: Printed by Order of the Congregation, 5600 [1840]). The transliteration of the letter *ayin* as “ng” in the word “Shangaray” represents the Portuguese inflection of Hebrew. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSTCAT_item229.
 32. Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leaser Digital Repository, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, M. N. Nathan to Isaac Leaser, St. Thomas, May 1, 1848. This letter and subsequent references to Leaser correspondence may be viewed on-line at: http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/leaser_map/index.html.
 33. [No name recorded] to Isaac Leaser, Kingston, Jamaica, May 7, 1849, 7. The Hebrew phrase in parentheses, indicating “the rite of Poland,” was used by many Yiddish-speaking Central European Jews, particularly by those “German” Jews from Prussian Poznan. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF6_35.

34. Henry S. Jacobs to Isaac Leiser, Kingston, April 19, 1850. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF7_9; Henry S. Jacobs to Isaac Leiser, New York, January 13, 1854. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx2FF1_4. Jacobs was Orthodox. M. Mayer to Isaac Leiser, Charleston, SC, May 2, 1853. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF10_26. The underscore appears in both sentences in the original.
35. Gershwind-Bennett Isaac Leiser Digital Repository, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, J. Palache to Isaac Leiser, New York, September 13, 1843.
36. Isaac Leiser, ed., *Services for the Fast Days According to the Sephardi Tradition* (Philadelphia: Haswell, Barrington and Haswell, 1837–1838), and *Sidur Sifte Tsadikim: . . . Kolel Seder Ha-Tefilot La-Ta-Aniyot Ke-Minhag . . . Sefaradim . . . The Form of Prayers: According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Slote & Mooney, 1853–1857). The first Ashkenazi prayer book published in the United States is his *Sidur Divrei Tsadikim: The Book of Daily Prayers for Every Day in the Year: According to the Custom of the German and Polish Jews* (Philadelphia: Printed by C. Sherman, 1848).
37. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
38. M. N. Nathan to Isaac Leiser, St. Thomas, 5 August 1847 (“Why do you not start up and effect the same for the Sephardim of whom you are the head...?”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSTCAT_item200); David Meldola, to Isaac Leiser, London, May 9, 1851 (“you are ignorant of the state of the present Sephardim congregation...”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx1FF8_42); M. Mayer to Isaac Leiser, Charleston, SC, October 5, 1857 (“What necessity can be shown in Philadelphia for two Sephardim congregations?”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx2FF4_70); Abraham de Sola to Isaac Leiser, Montreal, June 9, 1857 (“I warmly congratulate you on your becoming Hazan of the Synagogue Beth El Emeth Minhag Sephardim”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx2FF4_53); M. Mayer to Isaac Leiser, Charleston, August 10, 1859 (“Have you seen and read Dr Kayserling’s work: ‘Sephardim. Romanische Poesien der Juden in Spanien?’”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSDCBx2FF6_21); M. N. Nathan to Isaac Leiser, St. Thomas, December 11, 1863 (“There has been some demand for your prayer books (Sephardim) Pentateuch, and small English Bibles”; see http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSTCAT_item193).
39. Leiser, *Services for the Fast Days*; Mayer Kayserling, *Sephardim: Romantische Poesien der Juden in Spanien* (Leipzig: H. Mendelssohn, 1859).
40. Jacob Rader Marcus set this trend in “The Periodization of American Jewish History,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 37:3 (March 1958), 127, supplanting earlier usage of the term “Spanish and Portuguese,” employed in Peter Wiernik, *History of the Jews in America: From the Period of the Discovery of the New World to the Present Times* (New York: Jewish Press Publishing Company, 1912).
41. Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardi Supremacy,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989), 47–66.
42. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
43. See, e.g., Judah M. Cohen, *Through the Sands of Time: A History of the Jewish Community of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Brandeis University, 2004), and the historiographical observations of Wieke Vink, *Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2010), 5. See also Gert Oostindie, “Een paradox van vrijheid en slavernij,” *Academische Boekengids* 61 (March 2007), 61–63, and Jonathan Schorsch, “American Jewish Historians, Colonial Jews and Blacks, and the Limits of Wissenschaft: A Critical Review,” *Jewish Social Studies* 6:2 (Winter 2000), 102–32.
44. For a parallel among professing Catholic historians, see Joseph A. McCartin, “Estranged Allies on the Margins: On the Ambivalent Response of Labor Historians to Catholic History,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 21:2 (Spring 2003), 114–20. McCartin uses the term “committed history” (116).
45. Ben-Ur and Frankel, *Remnant Stones*, 40. A slave society (in contrast to a society with slaves) is one

whose economic undergirding is unfree labor whose absence would cause the entire economy to collapse.

46. See especially Shai Cherry, "The Hebrew Slave," in *Torah Through Time: Understanding Bible Commentary from the Rabbinic Period to Modern Times* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2007).
47. Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1986 [lectures presented in 1978]), 75.
48. Rebecca Kobrin, "'The Murdered Hebrew Maidservant of East New York': Gender, Class, and the Jewish Household in Eastern Europe and Its Diaspora," in Marion A. Kaplan and Deborah Dash Moore, eds., *Gender and Jewish History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 72–87.
49. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*; Isaac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (Cincinnati, OH: American Jewish Archives, 1970), 1:90, 97 (only the English translation of the term is given).
50. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Robert C. Davis, "Counting European Slaves on the Barbary Coast," *Past and Present* 172 (August 2001), 87–124.
57. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
58. Sabato Morais, "A Thanksgiving Discourse for the Year 1864" (manuscript). See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSTCAT_item212.
59. Natalie Zacek, "'A People So Subtle': Sephardic Jewish Pioneers of the English West Indies," in Caroline A. Williams, ed., *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practices on the Move* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 109.
60. Ibid., 111.
61. Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 1:370.
62. Ben-Ur, *Jewish Identity in a Slave Society*.
63. Jacob Rader Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775–1865* (Philadelphia: Ktav, 1974), 3:22 (observation from 1864).
64. Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 1:511. I assume I. S. Emmanuel, not his coauthor wife, is speaking because he is autoreferential in this section of their book.
65. Ibid., 1:378. See also pp. 380–381.
66. Ibid., 1:168; 374; M. N. Nathan to Isaac Leeser, St. Thomas, July 3, 1864. Kaplan Collection. See http://ubuwebser.cajs.upenn.edu/documentDisplay.php?id=LSTCAT_item34.
67. The end date of the Atlantic period varies among scholars; some even date the end of the era to 1888, the year the last American colony (Brazil) abolished slavery.
68. Noah L. Gelfand, "A Transatlantic Approach to Understanding the Formation of a Jewish Community in New Netherland and New York," *New York History* (Fall 2008), 375–95; 376. See <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/nyh/89.4/gelfand.html> (last accessed July 3, 2012).