

SEPHARDIC FAMILY LIFE IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WEST INDIES

by
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ABSTRACT**SEPHARDIC FAMILY LIFE IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WEST INDIES**

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Spanish-Portuguese Jews of eighteenth-century Jamaica and Barbados sustained an Iberian rooted Converso heritage through their patterns of family life. While in other parts of the eighteenth-century British Atlantic Sephardic society and culture was in a state of decay, it flourished in the West Indies. Spanish-Portuguese Jews settled in the British West Indies as extended families, actively promoted traditional marriage patterns through near exclusive endogamy, addressed the place of their children of color through distinctively Sephardic concerns, and asserted a sense of Iberian patriarchy in opposition to communal interference in child rearing. In exploring the private and familial lives of Spanish-Portuguese Jews, this dissertation reveals the long-term social-historical consequences of the rejudaization process.

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INTRODUCTION

THE “VANISHING BREED”

Caribbean Jewish history has received attention as a marginal component of two broader fields: colonial American Jewish history and Sephardic Studies. As a side note to the colonial American Jewish experience, the Caribbean is understood to be an extension of New York, Newport, and Charleston as a source of migration, trade, and familial connections. In this context, Sephardic cultural and numeric hegemony in the colonial British Atlantic did not extend past the first third of the eighteenth century. For example, attempts in New York to preserve Sephardic liturgy in a community of mostly Ashkenazim as early as 1720 demonstrates the extent to which Portuguese Jewish cultural identity had entered a period of decline.¹ As early as 1736, the communal minutes of New York were no longer recorded in Portuguese.² Jonathan Sarna has observed that although, in eighteenth-century New York, “Sephardic traditions still held...Iberian blood ties carried less and less significance...and power was slowly shifting to the Ashkenazim.”³

The decay of Spanish-Portuguese ethnic and cultural identity as their wealth diminished during the eighteenth century has been seen to permeate the entire Western Sephardic Diaspora, not just the British Atlantic. Jonathan I. Israel characterizes the eighteenth-century Western

¹ For a discussion of Sephardic decline in the eighteenth-century Atlantic see Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 19–21.

² David de Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World: Portrait of Shearith Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 460.

³ Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 19.

Sephardic Diaspora as a “picture...of slow eclipse.”⁴ In North America, not only had Spanish-Portuguese Jews been outnumbered by Ashkenazim by the 1720s, intermarriage between them had gained increasing acceptability (see chapter 3). The Spanish-Portuguese community in London, for example, lost some of its most prestigious and recognizable members to intermarriage with non-Jews.⁵ The famous physician and first generation returnee to Judaism, Jacob de Castro Sarmiento, married a Christian woman after the death of his first wife in 1756 as did the well-known dramatist Moses Mendes two years later.⁶ Their decedents no longer identified as members of *La Nação* (see chapter 1).

In the prevailing narrative, Spanish-Portuguese Jews of the eighteenth-century British Atlantic lost all sense of ethnic and national distinctiveness either by choice or necessity before mid-century. Sarna writes about North American Jewry: “if early on they were, in the Sephardic tradition, members of the...Portuguese ‘nation,’ by the eve of the American Revolution they more commonly spoke of themselves as members of a ‘religious society’... ‘pure’ Sephardim represented a vanishing breed.”⁷

In this dissertation, I argue that the British West Indies offers an important corrective to this narrative of Sephardic decay in the colonial British Atlantic. It was in the West Indies where Spanish-Portuguese society and culture flourished throughout the eighteenth century.

⁴ Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991 [1985]), 247.

⁵ On intermarriage with non-Jews in colonial North America see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 27. For the abandonment of traditional marriage patterns in eighteenth-century England see Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999 [1979]), 144–145.

⁶ Albert M. Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England: A History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community 1492–1951* (London: Melthuen, 1951), 106–109.

⁷ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 29.

Eighteenth-century West Indian Jewish testators consistently referred to themselves as members of a “Hebrew *Nation*” in their wills, often even with the Spanish “*Nación*.”⁸ It can be argued that, in fact, a decay of ethnic Sephardic identity *never* occurred on these islands.⁹ Even though Ashkenazim became the majority in Jamaica a century later than in either London or New York, Jewish identity on the islands of Jamaica and Barbados has remained intricately linked to a memory of a Sephardic past to this day. *Bendigamos* (a Spanish hymn) continues to be recited in every Caribbean synagogue and sand on synagogue floors serves as a daily reminder of Sephardic origins. It is also significant that many members of the present day Jewish community of Kingston identify as Jewish purely on a tradition of ethnic links to old Spanish-Portuguese families.

Historians of colonial American Jewish history have always realized that the Jewish Caribbean sustained a deeper Sephardic identity than North America. Jacob Rader Marcus wrote: “Most of these immigrants [to the British West Indies] were of Spanish-Portuguese stock...very few, were Ashkenazim—in which respect the West Indies differed from North American colonies.”¹⁰ In offering a social historical analysis of Sephardic family life in the British West Indies this study explores the social consequences of West Indian Sephardic singularity. Though it may be true that Portuguese Jews all but disappear both numerically and culturally in North America and London, they remained the dominant Jewish presence in

⁸ Among the numerous testators who refer to themselves as members of a Jewish “nation” see for instance the “Will of Jael Massias, 1730” IRO lib. 18 fol. 43; AJA SC-7912.

⁹ For definitions and discussions of ethnicity as a determinant of national identity in the Western Sephardic Diaspora see David L. Graizbord, “Religion and Ethnicity among ‘Men of the Nation’: Toward a Realistic Interpretation” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 32–65; see also Miriam Bodian, “Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: The Ambiguous Boundaries of Self-Definition” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 66–80; see also Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 132–151.

¹⁰ Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, 3 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), I: 98.

Jamaica and Barbados throughout the eighteenth century and long after.

MOTHER AND CHILD COMMUNITIES

The literature on the Western Sephardic Diaspora constitutes a second strand of historiography related to Caribbean Jewry. Caribbean islands maintained commercial and familial ties with Portuguese Jews residing in Amsterdam, London, Hamburg and Livorno. The islands also provided a destination for welfare strapped European communities to send their indigent members with hopes of both relieving pressure on local coffers and providing the poorest of their communities with an opportunity for more prosperous lives. But, as a single locus within a larger diasporic network, the West Indies remained entirely dependent on their mother communities of Amsterdam and London.¹¹

In this narrative, Jewish communities of the Caribbean were consistently deferential to their mother communities. They were dependent on them for financial aid and the supply of ritual objects (including Torah scrolls, Hebrew books, and tombstones) as well as for their *hakhamim* (rabbis). During the eighteenth century, the Caribbean was simply the most distant in a series of concentric circles of communal authority and autonomy with Amsterdam at the center. But despite these vital connections, Jews in the West Indies faced entirely different circumstances than their European counterparts. They lived within an unprecedented

¹¹ See for instance, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Between Amsterdam and New Amsterdam: The Place of Curaçao and the Caribbean in Early Modern Jewish History" *American Jewish History* 72, no. 2 (1982): 172–192; Yosef Kaplan, "The Curacao and Amsterdam Jewish Communities in the 17th and 18th Centuries" *American Jewish History* 72, no. 2 (1982): 193–211; Yosef Kaplan "The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World" in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Hebrew University Press, 1992), II: 240–287; Jonathan I. Israel, "The Sephardi Contribution to Economic Life and Colonization in Europe and the New World (16th–18th Centuries) in *Moreshet Sepharad*, II: 365–398.

environmental and human ecology that bore little resemblance to Europe. This study therefore seeks to understand the West Indies as a locus where Spanish-Portuguese cultural and ethnic identity existed and evolved independent of either Amsterdam or London: the process by which Jews in the Caribbean become Caribbean Jews.

REJUDAIZATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The process of rejudaization on families is still little understood. Rejudaization was the process by which Conversos living within the Catholic world or within the Iberian sphere of influence (“Lands of Idolatry”) immigrated to Protestant safe havens to reclaim a Jewish identity.¹² Rejudaization necessitated the jettisoning of crypto-Jewish religion and in its place assimilation to rabbinic standards completely foreign to the Converso experience.¹³

The consequences of rejudaization have largely been studied by intellectual historians focused on the psychological dissonance produced by adapting to rabbinic Judaism. Rejudaization is seen in this context as informing the heterodoxy, and ultimately the rebellions, of figures such as Uriel da Costa and Spinoza.¹⁴ Alternatively, the reconciliation of a Catholic past in the “New Jewish” mind has been seen as having informed the orthodoxy of Isaac Cardoso or Orobio de Castro or as imbued with messianic meaning such as in the writings of

¹² On the process of rejudaization in general see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 96–131.

¹³ On crypto-Jewish religion see David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996).

¹⁴ On da Costa see Israel S. Révah, “La religion d’Uriel da Costa, marrane de Porto, d’après des documents inédits” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 161 (1962): 45–76. For Spinoza see Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Abraham Miguel Cardoso.¹⁵

This study aims to enrich this literature by shifting the discussion away from the realm of ideas and convictions and instead focusing on the impact of rejudaization on family life: a social history of rejudaization.¹⁶ The rejudaization process tore families apart when one member migrated from Iberia. Despite its sometimes detrimental impact on family unity, rejudaization also brought some families together. It often became the mandate of a patriarchal figure who had left Iberia to offer incentives, both spiritual and material, to compel his Converso kin to also leave the “Lands of Idolatry” and openly embrace a new identity as a Jew (see chapter 2). Social family history breaks new ground in our understanding of the personal and emotional consequences of the rejudaization process. Furthermore, the history of rejudaization, and of the Western Sephardic Diaspora in general, has largely been unexplored past the seventeenth century. For this reason, there exists a lacuna in our understanding of the long-term effects of the rejudaization process.

The eighteenth century was still a critical period for rejudaization. First, many Conversos were still leaving the Iberian Peninsula over the course of the century. In fact, the 1720s saw a sharp rise in the numbers of immigrants as the Portuguese Inquisition intensified its activity. The majority of the returnees in the 1720s seemed to have also preferred London or

¹⁵ See Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization; Oxford University Press, 1989); and see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso, A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

¹⁶ For an earlier social history of rejudaization in Amsterdam see Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000), esp. 165–224. Swetschinski broke new ground in addressing the Amsterdam Portuguese community from a social historical perspective though he did not take his study past the Dutch “Golden Age” of the seventeenth century.

the New World to what was by that time a cash-strapped Amsterdam.¹⁷ Second, in order to fully understand the impact of the rejudaization process on families, it is critical to not only look at the first generation of returnees but also at their children and their grandchildren who still retained the memories of the Converso past—if only told as stories by their parents and grandparents.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Over the past decade there has been a growing interest in the Portuguese diaspora within the context of an Atlantic studies model of history.¹⁸ The early modern Portuguese trading diaspora is seen to embody those qualities most associated with the emergence of an Atlantic World: a trans-national commercial network that transcended both territorial as well as confessional boundaries. As a homogenous entity, the Portuguese maintained a commercial network that spread from the Iberian Peninsula to Goa, Java, West Africa, Northern Europe, the Caribbean, the Castilian Americas, and Brazil. Perpetually shifting their definitions of self within both the Catholic and Jewish worlds, Judeoconvertos have been understood as models of an Atlantic hybrid-identity.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, 242.

¹⁸ See Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1400 to 1800* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the World of Maritime Empires, 1540–1740* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 511–566; Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Jane S. Gerber, ed., *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, forthcoming).

¹⁹ At times, during the sixteenth century, Conversos would cross the Pyrenees into southern France where they would return to open Jewish life only to return again to Iberia and readopt a Catholic guise. On the hybrid-identity of early modern Judeoconvertos see David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 64–104; for a discussion of

As a regional history, this study puts the Atlantic Studies model to the test. Rather than homogenizing the Atlantic World as a single cohesive entity, this study reveals regional particularities. As we will see, the Caribbean experience for Judeoconversos differed in some dramatic ways from the experiences of their brethren living in Europe or North America. Furthermore, every subject of this study fully identified as a Jew though they also maintained connections with their Catholic kin and actively addressed the place of their children of color within the family, further qualifying the complexities of an Atlantic hybrid-identity.

Within this academic focus on the role of *La Nação* as an Atlantic nation, family history has also received renewed interest. Recently, the historians Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert and Francesca Trivellato have investigated the role of family life in sustaining global Portuguese trading networks and have reached markedly different conclusions.²⁰ On the one hand, Studnicki-Gizbert argues that it was a nexus of households that unified the trans-Atlantic *Nação* despite their wide global dispersion and religious heterogeneity. The Portuguese maintained such an otherwise loosely connected diaspora comprised of Jews, New-Christians, and Old Christians through marriage alliances and familial trust. On the other hand, Trivellato, studying the ledgers and correspondences of a Portuguese trading firm in Livorno, finds that they relied just as much on other mechanisms of trust such as courts and contracts in lieu of family ties. Thus, Trivellato shows that relatedness did not produce an inevitable sense of trust.

Spanish-Portuguese hybrid identity in the Atlantic world see, Adam Sutcliff, “Jewish History in an Age of Atlanticism” in *Atlantic Diasporas*, 27.

²⁰ Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crises of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). See also the recent interest in specifically Sephardic family life in Julia R. Lieberman, ed., *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

This dissertation enriches and drives forward this renewed interest in family history. Beyond observing the critical role that family relationships played in facilitating trans-Atlantic trade, I seek to define the nature of family itself and address some fundamental questions yet unanswered: What factors influenced the definition of familial belonging for Spanish-Portuguese Jews? What role did affectivity play in the definition of familial belonging? What are the continuities of familial ideologies into the eighteenth century when the nature of trans-Atlantic trade had drastically changed from what it had been in the sixteenth century? And how do regional particularities—such as the tropical environment and life in a slave society— influence Spanish-Portuguese household structures?

This study also contributes to the ever-growing body of scholarship on the relationship between Jewish modernity and secularization. Living in port cities such as Port Royal, Kingston, and Bridgetown, the Spanish-Portuguese Jews of the British West Indies provide a model of the quintessential “Port Jew.”²¹ West Indian Jews received near complete civic equality more than a century before the National Assembly emancipated French Jewry in 1791 and they lived side by side with their non-Jewish neighbors in a kind of cosmopolitan symbiosis that could have only been achieved in a vibrant port city. Though not entirely unique to Port cities, at times Jamaican Jews even made bequests to Christian charitable causes in their

²¹ On “Port Jews” see David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes Toward a Social Type” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, no. 1 (1999): 87–97; Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain, eds., *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006). See also the special issue of *Jewish History* (20, 2006) devoted to the role of Port Jews in the Atlantic and especially the introduction by Jonathan D. Sarna, “Port Jews in the Atlantic: Further Thoughts” *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 213–219.

wills.²² West Indian cities were renowned in the eighteenth century for their cosmopolitanism. When Henry Whistler visited Barbados as early as 1655 he observed that “this island is inhabited with all sorts: with English, French, Dutch, Scots, Irish, Spaniards they being Jews, with Indians and miserable Negroes born to perpetual slavery, they and their seed.”²³ But in revealing the traditional continuities of family life, this study further qualifies the nature of port Jewish proto-modernity.

West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews were also models of modern Jewish secularism.²⁴ Both Ashkenazi Jews and non-Jews alike criticized West Indian Sephardim for their lack of commitment to ritual observances. Edward Long in the 1770s, for instance, writing specifically about Spanish-Portuguese Jews (contrasting them with Ashkenazim) wrote: “the Jews of this island are not such rigid observers of the Mosaic ritual as their brethren of other countries.”²⁵ They lived in, and took advantage of, one of the most sexually free societies in the colonial European world (see chapter 4). And, many West-Indian Jews lived on plantations far removed from the “Jew Street” of Kingston and hidden from the gaze of either the *mahamad* (communal board) or the *hakham*.

Explorations of family life expose some of the limits of this type of eighteenth-century Jewish secularism. Despite their undoubtedly more fluid observance of Talmudic law and

²² See for instance the “Will of Jacob Gutierrez, 1726” Island Record Office (IRO), Twickenham, Jamaica, lib. 17 fol. 32; AJA SC-4124 who left a bequest of 25 pounds to “the poor Christians of Kingston” alongside his donations to the synagogues of the island.

²³ Quoted in Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 77.

²⁴ For a recent discussion of eighteenth-century Jewish secularism see Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

²⁵ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections on its Situation Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lownudes, 1774), II: 296.

ritual, West-Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews continually, throughout the entire eighteenth century, identified with an ethnically defined Jewish nationhood. Even if they had abandoned ritual observances, their families were bulwarks of Jewish identity. They never abandoned a sense of ethnic and national distinctiveness.

SOURCE MATERIAL, METHODOLOGY, AND PERIODIZATION

This study is a social historical analysis of notarial records, principally a sample of 300 last will and testaments from both Jamaica and Barbados (see tables I and II; see Appendix I). Wills are not only the most available source material found in West Indian archives; when read collectively, they are treasure troves of information about family life. Previous researchers have recognized the value of West Indian wills as a critical source of Jewish social history but have not studied them as a primary source base unto themselves.²⁶

The wills sampled here have been collected from two different archives: the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati, Ohio and the Island Record Office (IRO) located near Spanish Town in Jamaica. The pioneering historian of colonial American Jewry, Jacob Rader Marcus, undertook an expedition to the West Indies in 1952 in search of sources related to Jewish history on the islands.²⁷ His documentary findings were later copied by members of the expedition team and the typescript copies are now located at the AJA. Most of the 92 Jamaican

²⁶ For a cursory analysis of wills in the British West Indies and a plea for a more thorough investigation of these sources see Zvi Loker, "Caribbean Jewish Wills—A Historical Source" *Judaica Latinoamericana* 3 (1997): 296–302; for other early investigations of West Indian wills see Samuel Oppenheim, "List of Wills of Jews in the British West Indies Prior to 1800" *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society (PAJHS)* 33 (1934): 55–64; see also Bertram W. Korn, "Barbadian Jewish Wills, 1676–1740," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram W. Korn (New York: Ktav, 1976), 303–321.

²⁷ Jacob R. Marcus, "The West India and South America Expedition of the American Jewish Archives" *American Jewish Archives* 1 (1953): 5–21.

wills collected from the IRO are manuscript copies made sometime in the early twentieth century by unknown staff members of the records office. When citing wills, I include the references to their locations both in the collection of the AJA and the records offices of both Jamaica and Barbados. 207 wills are from Jamaica and 83 are from Barbados. Jewish testators in London that had previously lived in either Jamaica or Barbados and maintained property and family connections in the West Indies drafted the remaining 10. 12 wills were recorded in Spanish and the remaining 288 in English.²⁸

It often took several months, sometimes longer, between the time a will was drafted and when it was registered (“proved”) in the official record books by the notarial office. For unknown reasons it could at times take several years.²⁹ In one extreme case, the Jamaican planter David Gabay drafted his will in 1738 though it was not officially registered until twenty-four years later in 1762.³⁰ In some cases it is known that wills were registered close to the time of death of the testator even though the document had been composed several years before.³¹ It is possible that long delays in the official registration of wills were the result of contested estates. When referring to a will in the text I always refer to the year it was composed

²⁸ Though I refer to the language of these wills as Spanish, they usually contain several Portuguese terms and sometimes whole clauses in Portuguese along with some Hebrew. The Spanish wills are also all from Jamaica. It is likely that Jamaica had a Spanish notary who was recording in Spanish while testators dictated their wills in Portuguese.

²⁹ A likely cause for delay in the registration of some wills is when beneficiaries contested the testator’s wishes. There are also numerous “renunciations” found in the record books. These are cases when those appointed by a testator as an executor renounced the obligation and appointed an agent instead. I have not cross-referenced every case of a renunciation with delayed registration of wills.

³⁰ “Will of David Gabay, 1762” IRO lib. 34 fol. 9; AJA SC-3835.

³¹ See for instance the “Will of Grace Lopes Torres, 1795” IRO lib. 61 fol. 105; will not included in the collection of the AJA. Grace Lopes Torres originally drafted her will on April 2, 1786. She later attached a codicil 7 and a half years later in October of 1793. However, her will was not registered until March 16, 1795. It is known from her tombstone that she died at age 46 on March 23, 1795. She therefore confirmed her will 7 days before her death, likely during her illness. “Tombstone of Grace Lopes Torres, 1795,” Richard D. Barnett and Philip Wright, eds., *The Jews of Jamaica: Tombstone Inscriptions, 1663–1880* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1997), 94, no. 1066.

but cite it by the year it was registered.³²

Wills certainly have some limitations for the study of family history. Only propertied classes with significant estates to bequeath to beneficiaries composed wills. Registering wills also came at a cost and therefore only those that could afford the notarial fee made the trip to Spanish Town to register an official, legally binding, will. In 1739, the “secretary fee” for registering a will was two pounds and change, Jamaican currency.³³ Though that was not a prohibitive cost for the average eighteenth-century Jamaican, it was enough to prevent the extremely poor from registering wills. Unfortunately, the voices of the poor remain silent. Many residents of the eighteenth-century British West Indies, both Jewish and non-Jewish, certainly may have also preferred unofficial routes to leave inheritance to their friends and family.

The periodization of this study—the long eighteenth-century—has been largely dictated by the availability of source material. The index to early wills at the IRO contains references to wills registered between 1673 and 1814. Those years are therefore placed as bookends to this study as these years also correspond well to the ebb and flow of Jamaican wealth during this period. The mid-eighteenth century was the greatest period of prosperity for Jamaica, then the wealthiest colony in the entire British Empire.³⁴ Jamaican wealth had been on the rise since the turn of the eighteenth century when it surpassed Barbados as the largest sugar producer in the empire. By the 1770s, both Barbados and Jamaica experienced an economic downturn from

³² Wills in the IRO are recorded in the indexes by the registration year.

³³ Assembly of Jamaica, *An Abridgment of the Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Jamaica: From 1681, to 1737, Inclusive* (London: T. Baskett and R. Baskett, 1743), 10.

³⁴ Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 13.

which Barbados has only recently begun to recover and from which Jamaica never has. The American Revolution was the first catalyst leading to the downturn in the Jamaican and Barbadian Atlantic trade. It was closely followed by the devastating hurricane of 1780 that destroyed property and took many lives on both islands. By 1815, British Atlantic trade had been almost entirely stalled by the Napoleonic Wars. As will be shown, the downturn in general Jamaican prosperity had significant social implications for Jamaican and Barbadian Jews and therefore marks a convenient end for this study.

WEST INDIAN JEWISH SOCIETY

Barbados had the earliest Jewish settlement in the Caribbean. Jews are known to have been residing there as early as the 1640s well before the Curaçao settlement schemes of the 1650s and the Brazilian refugees of 1654 inaugurated large-scale Jewish settlement of the Caribbean (see chapter 1).³⁵ The Jewish population of Barbados seems to have grown concomitantly with the value of the island to the British Empire as the largest producer of sugar during the seventeenth century.³⁶ It is not until the early eighteenth century that the significantly larger and more centrally located island of Jamaica surpassed Barbados as the chief sugar producing plantation economy and the largest population of Jews in the British Empire outside of London.³⁷

Jamaica had been the possession of the Colon family under the Spanish. Though there is

³⁵ See Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 100.

³⁶ For population figures on the Jewish community of Barbados see Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 101; see also Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 91.

³⁷ On seventeenth-century Barbados see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 46–83.

no direct evidence, it stands to reason that crypto-Jews had been living there under the Spanish given the absence of an active arm of the Inquisition on the island. Openly identifying Jews began to settle Jamaica after Cromwell's "Western Design" wrested the island away from the Spanish in 1655 though the earliest record of Jewish settlement in Jamaica is from 1663.³⁸

Jews largely settled in the town of Port Royal, a city renowned throughout the British Empire for its drunken recklessness: the capital city for a "fast-living, fast dying tropical community."³⁹ The Jewish community in pre-1692 Port Royal never seemed to have surpassed 100 individuals but it is likely that they built a synagogue. The earthquake and tidal wave that destroyed Port Royal in June of 1692 brought Jewish life in that city to a standstill and most of the survivors moved across the harbor to the boomtown of Kingston.

The first Portuguese synagogue erected on the Jamaican mainland (*Neveh Shalom*) was built in 1704 in the capital city Spanish Town (St. Iago de la Vega). The *Neveh Shalom* synagogue stood as a beacon of Jewish life on the island for over two centuries until it sustained heavy damage by the devastating earthquake of January 1907. Also in 1704, a Portuguese synagogue (*Neve Zedek*) had been reconstructed in what remained of Port Royal. A Portuguese synagogue in Kingston (*Shaare Shamayim*) soon followed in that same year. For unknown reasons, *Shaare Shamayim* was rebuilt in 1744 and that building stood for nearly a century and a half until the Kingston fire of December 1882.⁴⁰ Throughout the eighteenth century, Jamaica, therefore, consistently maintained at least three Portuguese synagogues.

³⁸ See Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 49.

³⁹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 77.

⁴⁰ After the Kingston fire of 1882 there was an attempt to amalgamate the Jewish community under a single roof though the project failed and *Shaare Shamayim* was rebuilt in a more modest location and building. That location stood until the 1907 earthquake.

Ashkenazic synagogues were not erected in Jamaica until the 1780s, a testament to the numeric and cultural superiority of the Sephardim on the island.⁴¹

Jews faced few settlement restrictions in the British Caribbean. They were granted the right to receive patents of denization, a status allowing them to own land and arbitrate disputes in court though they paid for this unprecedented freedom with heavy taxes.⁴² As denizens Jews could own real estate yet still paid the higher tariffs of resident aliens—a barrier to trade only removed with an oath of naturalization.⁴³ Even fully naturalized Jews could not participate in the civil service, practice law, or serve in government. The so-called Plantation Act of 1740, in an attempt to encourage more permanent residencies in British colonies, granted naturalization for anyone who resided in a British colony for a period of seven years, targeting Jews explicitly by removing the requirement to take an oath on the New Testament.

Despite a strand of historiography portraying the Americas as taking a lead among European nations in engendering civic emancipation for the Jews, there are several instances of clear anti-Jewish hostilities from both Jamaica and Barbados.⁴⁴ In 1661, Barbadian planters petitioned the crown to restrict Jewish trading activity.⁴⁵ Struggling to recover from the

⁴¹ For useful surveys of Jewish settlement in Jamaica see Mordechai Arbell, *The Portuguese Jews of Jamaica* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 2000) and Jacob Andrade, *A Record of the Jews in Jamaica from the English Conquest to the Present Times* (Kingston: Jamaica Times Ltd., 1941).

⁴² George Fortunatus Judah, “The Jews’ Tribute in Jamaica: Extracted from the Journals of the House of Assembly in Jamaica” *PAJHS* 18 (1909): 149–177; and see also Frank Cundall, “The Taxation of the Jews in Jamaica” *PAJHS* 28 (1922): 238–239.

⁴³ On the civic status of Jews in the colonial British Atlantic World see Holly Snyder, “Rules, Rights and Redemption: The Negotiation of Jewish Status in British Atlantic Port Towns, 1740–1831,” *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 147–170.

⁴⁴ For a classic formulation of this American proto-emancipation position see Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith Hurwitz, “The New World Sets an Example for the Old: The Jews of Jamaica and Political Rights, 1661–1831” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55, nos. 1–4 (1966): 37–56.

⁴⁵ See Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 46.

devastation of 1692, Jamaican planters also petitioned the crown to place greater restrictions on Jewish settlement: “The Jews eat us and our children out of all trade. The reasons for naturalizing them, not having been observed for there has been no regard as to their selling and planting as the law intended and directed. We do not want them at Port Royal, a place populous and strong without them: And though told, that the whole country lay open to them, they have made Port Royal their Goshen and do nothing but trade.”⁴⁶

Jewish historiography itself has been overly influenced by these anti-mercantile sentiments in portraying the Jewish communities of the Caribbean as populated by inarticulate merchants engaging in a single monolithic professional pursuit. It is certainly true that the majority of Jews living in the port cities of Kingston, Bridgetown, and Port Royal identified as merchants. However, Caribbean Jews engaged in a variety of occupational pursuits. 88 out of 300 testators sampled here from both Jamaica and Barbados are identified in their wills (or on their tombstones) as “merchants.” Several other occupations are also identified in Jewish wills: shopkeepers (28), Gentleman⁴⁷ (26), planters (9), physicians/surgeons (4), goldsmiths (2), silversmith (1), Fisherman (1), bookkeeper (1), distiller (1), and housekeeper (1).⁴⁸ Other Jewish occupational endeavors are evident from other sources. For instance, Joseph Nunes advertised his services as a dance instructor and Jacob Sanguinetti (likely an Italian Ashkenazi Jew) was a teacher of “German flute.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Frank M. Cundall, N. Darnell Davis, and Albert M. Friedenberg, “Documents Relating to the History of the Jews in Jamaica and Barbados in the Time of William III” *PAJHS* 23 (1915): 25–27.

⁴⁷ According to Marcus, “gentlemen” refers to “retired businessmen living on their incomes,” Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 113.

⁴⁸ For an earlier enumeration of Jewish occupational roles see Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 133.

⁴⁹ For Joseph Nunes see the *St. Jago de la Vega Gazette*, January 27, 1790, for Jacob Sanguinetti see *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, February 19, 1781.

The extent of Jewish wealth in the West Indies should not be exaggerated. Many of the Jews residing in the English Caribbean arrived there precisely because they were indigent in Europe and had either been dispatched to the islands or were seeking new opportunities for economic mobility on their own (see chapter 1). For many, those opportunities never presented themselves. Poverty was a major social concern among all Caribbean Jewish communities. Throughout the eighteenth century, several West Indian Jews were placed in debtor's prison.⁵⁰ In addition to struggles for subsistence, several indications also appear of Jewish criminality. In one case, we find an advertisement offering "Forty Shillings reward from T. Cussans, for the return of the absconded Jew Aaron Levy."⁵¹ In 1799, the convicted French spy Joseph Sasportas held on to the ladder with his last breath as he was publically hanged in Kingston.⁵²

Jews were a highly visible minority that attracted the curiosity of creole Jamaicans. Every resident of Jamaica could open the pages of the local almanac during the late eighteenth century and see the Jewish calendar containing Hebrew typeface. Jews attracted the extensive attention of the eighteenth-century historian and ethnographer Edward Long who described the Jewish presence on the island in great detail. *The Columbian Magazine or Monthly Miscellany*, a late eighteenth-century moral journal published in Kingston dedicated to stimulating intelligent discourse on the island, published no less than twenty different articles between 1796 and 1799 related to the Jewish community in Jamaica. The journal was even delivered

⁵⁰ For instance see the case of Isaac Sanches in *The Royal Gazette*, May 20, 1780 and Isaac Bravo in *The Royal Gazette*, June 30, 1792.

⁵¹ *The Royal Gazette*, October 14, 1780. Aaron Levy's accused crime is unknown.

⁵² *The Columbian Magazine, or Monthly Miscellany* (Kingston: Printed by W. Smart, Church Street), "Domestic Occurrences," December 1799, 310–11. On the Sasportas affair see also Zvi Loker, "An Eighteenth-Century Plan to Invade Jamaica: Isaac Yeshurun Sasportas—French Patriot or Jewish Radical Idealist" *Miscellanies of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 13 (1981): 132–144.

door-to-door to subscribers by an Ashkenazic Jew, Elias Levy.⁵³ These articles and editorials included a biography of the Jamaican *hakham* Joshua Hezekiah Decordova,⁵⁴ biblical interpretations composed by Jews,⁵⁵ a biography of the South Carolina Jewish patriot Francis Salvador,⁵⁶ several installments explaining Jewish customs and practices entitled “Curious Particulars Relative to the Jews,”⁵⁷ and even an elaborate advertisement for a razor strap where a Jew, speaking in broken yiddishized English, testified that even he would shave his beard with the aid of such an effective razor strap.⁵⁸

Colonial Jewish society in the Americas has been largely portrayed as one on the margins of Jewish cultural life: A community of merchants seeking fortunes at the expense of their Jewish cultural identities. On the contrary, Jews in Jamaica and Barbados actively engaged in a dynamic Jewish cultural life on the islands. Several European trained *hakhamim* served Caribbean islands over the course the eighteenth century. As early as 1683, Josiau Pardo, the son of the prominent Italian rabbi in Amsterdam David Pardo, a graduate of the Amsterdam *Etz Hayim* yeshiva, and formerly the *hakham* in Curaçao, served the Jamaican community until his death in 1692.⁵⁹

⁵³ “Domestic Occurrences” *The Columbian Magazine*, December 1796, 404.

⁵⁴ “Some Account of the Life of the Late Revd. Chief Rabbi Joshua Hezekiah De Cordova, of This Town” *The Columbian Magazine*, October 1797, 267–271.

⁵⁵ “The Very Ingenious Letter to the Late Chief Rabbi of the Jews in this Island,” *The Columbian Magazine*, January 1798, 484–489.

⁵⁶ “Anecdotes of Illustrious and Extraordinary Persons—Salvador, the wealthy and Famous Jew,” *The Columbian Magazine*, April 1798, 695–696.

⁵⁷ “Curious Particulars Relative to the Jews” *The Columbian Magazine*, May 1799, 746–751 and June 1799, 9–14.

⁵⁸ “Packwood’s Razor Strap: A Dialogue between a Jew and a Christian” *The Columbian Magazine*, December 1796, 441–443.

⁵⁹ Isaac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 2 vols (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), I: 53–61

Jamaica also had one of the longest serving rabbinic figures in any Caribbean community. Joshua Hezekiah Decordova had been trained in the *Etz Hayim* Yeshiva of Amsterdam and had become a recognized rabbinic personality in Europe before he immigrated to Curaçao during the bitter conflicts there in the 1740s.⁶⁰ By 1755 he had taken the rabbinic post in Jamaica where he served until his death in 1797. Decordova was a prolific author who wrote a number of Hebrew treatises including an anti-Christian polemic and an epic poem on the book of Job. As a student and frequent visitor to the library of the Jewish *philosophe* Isaac Pinto, Decordova brought more than his Talmudic expertise to the island but also an active engagement with the European Enlightenment. His most enduring work has been the English language treatise entitled *Reason and Faith* (1788), a Mendelssohnian attempt to reconcile rationalism with belief in divine providence.

Decordova's attempt to address the Enlightenment among the Jews in Jamaica was not carried out in isolation. He clearly wrote the treatise to address a need among his congregants who had been actively questioning Jewish principles in light of Enlightenment philosophies.⁶¹ Undoubtedly, much of the work had been harvested from his weekly sermons. Most importantly, the publication of *Reason and Faith* was funded by the subscriptions of 35 Jamaican Jews.⁶² One of those subscribers, a Doctor Abraham Alvarenga, is known to have

⁶⁰ For Decordova's involvement in the Curaçao communal conflicts of the 1740s see Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, I: 181–212. On the life of hakham Joshua Hezekiah Decordova see biographical obituary in *The Columbian Magazine*, October 1797, 267–271. See also Bertram W. Korn, "The Haham De Cordova of Jamaica" *American Jewish Archives* 18 (1966): 141–54.

⁶¹ Decordova wrote in the preface to the 1788 edition: "this little work owes its birth to the desire I had for the happiness of a youth, fearing that he would be perverted by productions under the honourable titles of Modern Philosophers." Joshua Hezekiah Decordova, *Emet ve-Emunah Reason and Faith or, Philosophical Absurdities: Shewing the Necessity of Revelation: Intended to Promote Faith among Infidels, and the Unbonded Exercise of Humanity among all Religious Men* (Kingston: Printed by Strupar and Preston, at the cost, and for the use of the subscribers, 1788), iii.

⁶² Decordova, *Reason and Faith*, vii–viii.

also engaged in what we might call a “popular Enlightenment” on the island. In July of 1792 for example, he invited one Monsieur La Roche, a French professor of anatomy, to speak at his home.⁶³

Jamaica and Barbados were islands where distinctly Spanish-Portuguese society and culture flourished during the eighteenth century. The Jews of these islands enjoyed nearly unparalleled civic equality and took advantage of that condition to nurture their heritage and traditions within a dynamic Jewish communal and private life.

⁶³ *Postscript to the Royal Gazette*, July 21, 1792.

CHAPTER ONE

PATHS OF MIGRATION: SPANISH-PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT IN THE BRITISH ATLANTIC

This dissertation argues that even long after they had fully embraced Judaism in the English Caribbean, Spanish-Portuguese Jews continued to nurture an Iberian idealization of “blood purity” for several generations. This insistence on “blood purity” manifested itself most prominently in their patterns of family life. In exploring their paths of migration—leading from the Iberian Peninsula to the British West Indies—we can better understand the nuances of their multi-national and multi-confessional identities that later informed their definitions of family. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Western Sephardic Jews defied national and cultural boundaries as perpetual border crossers. The transnational and culturally hybrid realities of the Atlantic did not transform Spanish-Portuguese ways of life but rather complemented those patterns that they already embraced.

IBERIAN BEGINNINGS

By the time Jews were expelled from Spain in July of 1492 they had lived side by side with Converso communities for a full century. At least one third of Spain’s nearly 300,000 Jews had converted to Christianity after the deadly anti-Jewish riots that spread from Seville in 1391. The perceived Jewish failure at the Tortosa Disputation of 1413–1414, spearheaded by the apostate Jew Gerónimo de Santa Fe, swelled the ranks of sincerely Catholic Conversos even further.¹ Throughout the entire fifteenth century, up to the moment of expulsion, the Converso

¹ On the Jewishness of the Conversos see Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999 [1966]).

population of unified Spain grew out of both conviction and necessity. Those who practiced some form of crypto-Judaism had access to both Jews and Judaism sometimes by living within the same courtyard.

Over the course of the fifteenth century, medieval judeophobia was redirected into an influential new anti-Converso literature.² Alphonso de Espina, one of the most vitriolic voices against Spain's growing Converso population, accused them of corrupting the fiber of Catholic society from within. As a result of this anti-Converso sentiment that was manifested violently in Toledo in 1449, *ley de limpieza de sangre* (Purity of Blood Laws) were promulgated and briefly enacted in that city. Though later overturned by the pope Nicholas V, these statutes were more permanently implemented throughout the entirety of unified Castile and Aragon by the crown. *Ley de limpieza de sangre* restricted the civic involvement of people with "unclean" Jewish ancestry. In the sixteenth century blood purity laws effectively stigmatized Conversos barring them from positions in the municipalities, the church and administrative hierarchy as well as the universities. As a result of this heightened emphasis on lineage, which the statutes introduced, the nobility of early modern Spain invested heavily in the creation of genealogies. Conversos, too, followed suit, sometimes inventing and at other times purchasing elaborate genealogies to prove their noble lineage and *limpieza*. This near obsession with "blood purity" was even carried over by the Spanish into the Atlantic world where ethnic boundaries were harder to maintain. Through the *Casta* system, the Spanish rigidly compartmentalized different ethnic types within a colonial social hierarchy.

² On Iberian Converso life and culture during the fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries see Yosef Kaplan, "Maslulei hitbolelot ve-tamei'ah be-kerev 'anusei sefarad be-ma'ot ha-15-17" in *Hitbolelot u-tamei'ah: ha-meshkiyut u-tamurah be-tarbut ha-'amim u-beyisr'ael*. eds., Yosef Kaplan and Menahem Stern (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1989), 157-172.

The great irony of the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* is that even though this ideology had been originally implemented into law to segregate Conversos from public life, Conversos later internalized it and made it their own. Even as they converted to Judaism in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they transformed *limpieza de sangre* into an ideology in support of their own perceived ethnic purity and even supremacy. They composed elaborate genealogies, and, as we will see, resisted almost all forms of social interaction with those outside their ethnic boundaries, marrying almost exclusively among themselves.³ As Conversos, and later as Jews, the tendency toward near exclusive endogamous marriage remained the same (see chapter 3). This Judeoconverso sense of “blood purity” meant that they perceived themselves to be ethnically distinct from other Jews, including other Sephardim. It enabled them to make sense of their experiences as Conversos because, in a way, through their own *limpieza de sangre* they never ceased being Jews. Though many families had not practiced Judaism as a *religion* for over a century, through endogamous marriage and the safeguarding of their “pure” lineages they had never abandoned the Jewish *nation* and in this way could mitigate the guilt of their ancestors.

The experience of Portuguese crypto-Jews during the sixteenth century was significantly different than their Spanish counterparts.⁴ The vast majority of those stalwart Jews who left Spain in 1492, 80 percent of the exiles—contemporary estimates put it at between 85,000 and 115,000—crossed the border into Portugal.⁵ Though Manuel I had ordered the expulsion of Jews from Portugal on December 5, 1496, it remained a dead letter. When Jews arrived at the port of

³ For an annotated Western Sephardic genealogy that also reveals much about paths of immigration see Herman Prins Salomon, “The ‘De Pinto’ Manuscript: A 17th Century Marrano Family History” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 9 (1975): 1–62.

⁴ On the experience of Portuguese Conversos see Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Los judíos en Portugal* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992).

⁵ Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 57.

Lisbon after the allotted 10-month grace period, instead of ships, they found an army of priests who baptized them *en masse*. In an attempt to eradicate Judaism, but not Jews, Manuel I further promised a moratorium on the establishment of an Inquisition in Portugal in order to ease Jews into the Catholic fold. As an unintended consequence of these actions, Manuel I had created the conditions for true crypto-Judaism (Marranism) to flourish among the Conversos of Portugal. The periodic renewals of the moratorium on the establishment of a Portuguese Inquisition were achieved, until 1536, through collective bargaining and bribery thereby providing enough time for a subterranean consciousness of crypto-Judaism and shared destiny to be continuously reinforced.

In sixteenth-century Spain, Marranism had become an increasingly uncommon phenomenon. Spanish Inquisitorial activity against crypto-Jewish Conversos had nearly vanished. Marranos had essentially ceased to exist in Spain as a result of wholesale executions at *auto-da-fes*, amnesia, lack of reliable information about Jewish practices, lack of leadership, and immigration to New Spain where the Inquisition was substantially more active during this period.⁶ Philip II's annexation of Portugal in 1580, however, obscured this distinction. Portuguese crypto-Jewish Conversos could now cross the border freely into Spain. In this way, by the end of the sixteenth century, Marranism had become a predominantly Portuguese phenomenon. In the Castilian mind, whether Converso or Old Christian, "Portuguese" was synonymous with "Jew." Portuguese global trading networks and an acceptance of the accumulation of private wealth—anathema to Castilian honor and virtue—also helped to cement

⁶ On the Mexican Inquisition see Seymour B. Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain: Faith, Flame, and the Inquisition* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1970).

this distinction in the Castilian view.⁷ Only a year before the annexation of Portugal, the Seven Northern Provinces of the Low Countries had declared themselves independent from both Spanish monarchical rule as well as Spanish Catholicism with the Union of Utrecht. Article 13, which ratified the union, declared that no one was to be prosecuted for his religious beliefs. Though intended to ensure rights for Protestants, it provided the legal basis on which New Christians and Jews now took up residence. The confluence of these events meant that by the end of the sixteenth century, Conversos were exiting the Iberian Peninsula to openly convert to Judaism throughout Western Europe: southwestern France, Hamburg/Altona, Amsterdam, London, Venice, Livorno, as well as the Caribbean.

When Portuguese Judeoconversos left Iberia to embrace an open Jewish identity they became a distinctive and completely new early modern social type. Unlike those that had left Iberia immediately before and after 1492 as Jews to settle in North Africa, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire Judeoconversos of the sixteenth and seventeenth century did not usually identify themselves as “Sephardim” (Spanish) but rather as members of a Portuguese Nation (*La Nação*): stressing the importance of an ethnically and nationally defined Judaism that could extend to Converso kin who remained Catholics. Their language of daily life was Portuguese: Sermons were delivered and communal minutes were recorded in that language. Jewish poets in Amsterdam, such as Daniel Levi de Barrios, wrote high literature in Spanish, but never in the Ladino (Judeo-Castilian) cherished among the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire.

As they initiated the process of rejudaization, members of the *Nação* found that they had little in common with other Jews. Unlike the “Eastern” Sephardim of North Africa, Italy, and the

⁷ Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea*, 151–174.

Ottoman Empire, all of the Portuguese had at one time been Catholic, sometimes for several generations. This left an indelible imprint on their modes of religious expression. Unlike Ashkenazim, the Portuguese Jews believed that their ancestral bloodlines linked them to a nobler Jewish past. They understood themselves as heirs to the great medieval Jewish luminaries of the Golden Age of Spain. Significantly, many of them were the only Jews in the early modern world to have attended university. Thus Western Sephardim were perhaps the single most religiously fluid social group throughout all of early modern Europe existing as a hybrid “Atlantic” nation before ever leaving the European continent.

RETURN TO JUDAISM IN WESTERN EUROPE

By the end of the sixteenth century when migrants began to leave the Iberian Peninsula on a large scale there already existed a significant Converso population in Flanders and southwestern France.⁸ Antwerp, under the sovereignty of Madrid, was home to a concentrated group of Portuguese Conversos that maintained trading networks between both Jews and New Christians in Lisbon, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire. Almost all of the original returnees to Judaism who settled in the port city of Hamburg—where a charter of settlement rights had been granted to “Lusitanian” Conversos in 1595—had migrated from Antwerp. By 1612 those same rights were extended to “Portuguese Jews.” While Ashkenazim had been expelled from Hamburg in 1649, a year later, the Portuguese received rights as Jews and formed a community under the leadership of Diego Teixeira de Sampayo who had recently arrived from Antwerp under the patronage of the Converso sympathizer Count Duke Olivares.

⁸ On the paths of migration through the Western Sephardic Diaspora see Kaplan, “The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World”

Over the course of the sixteenth century, several émigrés also made their way to various Italian city-states with hopes of integrating into preexisting Jewish communities. The Duke of Ferrara allowed for Portuguese settlement there in 1538, becoming the first and initially most important destination for those escaping the Portuguese Inquisition. It was in Ferrara that the Portuguese chronographer Samuel Usque composed his *Consolação ás Tribulações de Israel* (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel) in 1553 contextualizing the Converso experience within a continuum of historical Jewish persecutions. The Ferrara Bible (1553) was printed in Spanish as a tool in the rejudaization of New Christians. In 1589, the Venetians had recognized “Ponentines” (Portuguese Judeoconvertos) as a social group distinct from Eastern Sephardim (Levantine) extending to them more generous residency privileges as such.⁹ By the 1590s, there existed a large “Ponentine” community in Livorno under the rule of the Medici.¹⁰ In Catholic-Reformation Italy, Pope Paul IV implemented harsh policies toward Jews in general (including the establishment of a Ghetto in Rome) and no longer tolerated Conversos who had returned to Judaism in Papal territories. In 1556, 25 Conversos who had publically embraced Judaism, were burnt in the Papal port city of Ancona compelling the former Portuguese Conversa Doña Gracia Mendes—who had migrated from Lisbon to Constantinople via Antwerp, Ferrara, and Venice—to attempt an Ottoman boycott of that port.¹¹

⁹ On Venice see Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, “Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the Inquisition” in *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, ed. Benjamin C. I. Ravid and Robert C. Davis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 98–99.

¹⁰ On Jewish settlement in Livorno see Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 70–101.

¹¹ On the Ancona Affair and its aftermath see Marc Saperstein, “Martyrs, Merchants and Rabbis: Jewish Communal Conflict as Reflected in the Responsa on the Boycott of Ancona” *Jewish Social Studies* 43 nos. 3–4 (1981): 215–228.

As early as the 1560s, the French monarchy began issuing *lettres patentes* to Portuguese merchants (*marchands portugais*) who resided in the kingdom.¹² Southwestern France was an attractive destination for those Conversos seeking to escape the activities of the Portuguese Inquisition for more reasons than just its shared border with Spain. The increasingly absolutist French state had vehemently resisted the establishment of a Papal Inquisition. Pyrenees border towns such as Saint Jean de Luz and Saint-Esprit-les-Bayonne were the first destinations for most Spanish-Portuguese émigrés who left directly from Iberia. Their proximity to Spain meant they could easily sustain their familial and commercial ties with Conversos who had remained in Iberia and many frequently crossed the border. By the late seventeenth century there existed an unofficial Jewish community that actively aided the rejudaization process for thousands of returnees.¹³ It was not until 1684 when they were officially recognized as Jews in Bordeaux. By 1723, Portuguese Judeoconversos were granted the same rights as openly professing Jews that they had enjoyed as *marchands portugais*.

The settlement of Portuguese Jews in the Netherlands followed a somewhat different trajectory. The signing of the Peace of Antwerp, which inaugurated a Twelve-Years' Truce between Spain and the Northern Provinces in 1609, indirectly benefited Jews even though they were not specifically mentioned in the treaty. The relaxation of hostilities that resulted from the treaty of 1609 opened the floodgates of Portuguese migration to Amsterdam.¹⁴ By the 1630s, Amsterdam had become the single largest and most prominent community of Portuguese “New

¹² On the Western Sephardic settlement in southwestern France see Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora*, 246–268; and see Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 1–26.

¹³ For an indispensable study of rejudaization in southwestern France see David L. Graizbord, “Becoming Jewish in Early Modern France: Documents on Jewish Community-Building in Seventeenth-Century Bayonne and Peyrehorade” *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 1 (2006): 147–180.

¹⁴ For a now classic study of Amsterdam see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.

Jews” in the world. There they built an entirely new community in a place without medieval Jewish communal precedents, though self-consciously modeling themselves on Venice. As expressed in Hugo Grotius’s *Remonstrantie* of 1615, which made a case for the admission of Jews to Amsterdam, the Protestant Netherlands welcomed the mercantile advantages brought through Jewish trading networks. Notably, they also acknowledged the potential value of having a Jewish presence in the Calvinist Republic to aid their attempt at recreating a Mosaic commonwealth.

Despite the fabulous wealth possessed by some highly recognizable Amsterdam Jews, and their influence in the West India Company, as well as on the floor of the stock exchange, the majority of returnees who arrived in Amsterdam arrived as poor.¹⁵ In most cases, by the time they could escape Iberia, the Inquisition had stripped them of their property and assets. Only in rare cases did refugees possess the resources or foresight needed to smuggle wealth out of Iberia and Flanders before their flight.¹⁶ While the crises of these poor refugees put intense pressure on the communal coffers of Amsterdam, New World Dutch colonies offered a natural solution to these pressures. When the Dutch occupied northern Brazil in 1630 the Amsterdam *mahamad* sent indigents there—referred to as *despachados* (dispatched).¹⁷ Brazil, of course, also attracted more established merchants seeking to expand their base of trade in colonial commodities such as sugar, cotton, tobacco and slaves.

¹⁵ On social welfare see Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare Among the Portuguese Jews of Early Modern Amsterdam* (Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011).

¹⁶ For a fascinating example of such a strategy see Salomon, “The De Pinto Manuscript,” 29.

¹⁷ For more on the history and policies of compulsory migration for *despachados* throughout the Western Sephardic Diaspora see Jessica V. Roitman, “Sephardic Journeys: Travel, Place and Conceptions of Identity” *Jewish Culture and History* 11 nos. 1–2 (2009): 209–228.

Dutch-occupied Brazil experienced the most accelerated return of Conversos to Judaism in the entire Western Sephardic Diaspora.¹⁸ Under the Portuguese, Brazil had a large community of Conversos who could engage in crypto-Jewish practices with near immunity. In fact, the Portuguese practiced a policy of forced migration of convicted crypto-Jewish Conversos to Brazil, along with other social deviants.¹⁹ After 1630, Dutch-occupied Pernambuco offered a natural place of immigration for these Brazilian Conversos. Unlike Western Europe where émigrés had to migrate to “Lands of Freedom,” in Brazil, the “Lands of Freedom” came to them. By the 1640s, Recife and its environs supported three synagogues and a Jewish population of nearly 1,500 (though it shrank rapidly when war was renewed with Portugal in the 1650s). Some provincial towns, such as Ipojuca, maintained unofficial synagogues (hermitages) where those Conversos who had not undergone circumcision—likely so that they could continue to cross the border into Portuguese Bahia—could engage in Jewish practices.

The Portuguese recapture of Pernambuco in 1654 was perhaps the most crucial watershed moment for Caribbean Jewish history. The remaining 650 Jews of Recife were given 3 months to leave along with all their property and slaves. It is this group that ultimately inaugurated stable Jewish settlement in the Caribbean. Though most went back to Amsterdam (where some joined future Caribbean settlement schemes) others populated Dutch Curaçao where there had been a small Jewish settlement since the early 1650s under the leadership of João de Yllán, Suriname, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and New Amsterdam. Some also swelled the ranks of Jews that had already been living in French Martinique and Guadeloupe, and in British Barbados.

¹⁸ For a classic study of Brazil see Arnold Wiznitzer, *Jews in Colonial Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); see also Bruno Feitler, “Jews and New Christians in Dutch Brazil, 1630–1654,” in *Atlantic Diasporas*, 123–151.

¹⁹ Geraldo Pieroni, “Outcasts from the Kingdom: The Inquisition and the Banishment of New Christians to Brazil” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*, 242–251.

The communal boards and the *hakhamim* of these new communities of “New Jews” adopted the mandate to facilitate the rejudaization process. Despite a Spanish-Portuguese sense of nobility, and even ethnic supremacy, they were, nevertheless, entirely reliant on established Jewish communities to provide education and guidance on the practices and dogmas of rabbinic Judaism. Portuguese Jews had initially settled in Amsterdam, with the aid of an Ashkenazic rabbi from Emden, Moses Uri ha-Levi. *Hakham* Isaac Uziel, formerly of Oran, one of the most prominent teachers in Amsterdam’s Jewish community, had been from a family of Jews who left Spain in 1492 to settle in Fez. Later, the head rabbi of Amsterdam during its period of greatest growth (1616–1660), Saul Levi Morteira, was an Italian. By the 1630s, Amsterdam had produced its own homegrown Portuguese *hakhamim*, such as Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, who in conflict with established rabbinic figures, found new ways to make sense of their Converso past through mysticism and messianism. These Portuguese rabbinic figures struggled to find strands of Jewish tradition that would lend credence to a belief that Conversos could return to Judaism with their immortal souls untarnished by the outward expression of what they perceived to be as idolatry.

The most ubiquitous practice to expedite the rejudaization process was for communal boards to place punitive restrictions on those that had not fully embraced Judaism or who were suspected of returning to the “Lands of Idolatry.”²⁰ In 1620, the board of the *Beit Yisrael* community in Amsterdam prevented those who remained uncircumcised from entering the synagogue. Similarly, in London, the *hakham* Jacob Sasportas (formally of Oran) waged a protracted battle to prevent those who remained uncircumcised from entering the synagogue in 1664. The uncircumcised were likewise barred from burial in London’s Portuguese cemetery.

²⁰ See Kaplan, “The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World,” 263.

After 1644, the Amsterdam *mahamad* (the leaders of the consolidated community *Talmud Torah*) penalized those who traveled to “Lands of Idolatry” after having returned to Judaism by banning their communal participation for a period of four years. At the close of the four-year ban they were then forced to make a public apology before being formally readmitted. These “Old World” precedents of social organization and religious conformity were later transported to the Caribbean.

A second, more positive, approach to aid the rejudaization of Iberian refugees was through the dissemination of a new genre of literature in Spanish and Portuguese aimed at easing their transition into a rabbinic way of life that achieved its golden age during the mid seventeenth century.²¹ Returnees could turn to a variety of Spanish and Portuguese liturgies and some *hakhamim* even encouraged prayer in either Spanish or Portuguese at the expense of Hebrew that would have been incomprehensible to Judeoconvertos. *Hakham* Isaac Athias published his *Thesoro de preceptos* in 1629, a Spanish work describing the 613 commandments of the Torah through a rabbinic mode of interpretation. In 1645, Menasseh ben Israel published his *Thesovro dos dinim* clearly explaining the practical matters of Jewish daily life in Portuguese.²²

Despite all of these efforts, considerable tensions remained among returnees for several generations as to how to reconcile their crypto-Jewish past with rabbinic Judaism. As we will see, these tensions, such as an insistence on an Iberian patriarchal imperative to provide education and social welfare for their families as opposed to the Jewish community, would continue to inform patterns of Western Sephardic family life well into the eighteenth century.

²¹ See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “The Re-education of Marranos in the Seventeenth Century” Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture Series 3 (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 1980).

²² On Menasseh ben Israel’s *Thesovro* and its relevance to Sephardic family life see Julia R. Lieberman, “Childhood and Family among the Western Sephardim in the Seventeenth Century” in *Sephardi Family Life*, 129–176.

THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE JEWS OF THE BRITISH ATLANTIC

By the middle of the seventeenth century, as the restored English monarchy began to initiate concrete policies of American colonization, the British had surpassed both the Spanish and Portuguese as the primary Atlantic power. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290. Though there was a recognizable Converso population living there throughout the Tudor and Elizabethan periods, it was not until the mid 1650s that open discussion began of the possible readmission of Jews.

The Amsterdam *hakham* Manasseh ben Israel famously petitioned Oliver Cromwell to allow the readmission of Jews in his 1655 *Humble Address* that built a case for allowing Jewish residency based on both economic as well as millenarian considerations.²³ Cromwell convened a special session at Whitehall to debate the issue and the readmission of Jews to England even gained some acceptance among lawyers.²⁴ Opposition from both the merchants as well as the clergy, however, ultimately compelled Cromwell to disband the session and grant admission to Jews unilaterally under the condition that they confine the practice of Judaism to their homes. It was not until the 1660s that a Portuguese Jewish community gained official recognition in England. The unofficial readmission of Jews to England happened to fall within just one year of the English capture of Jamaica opening that colony to Jewish settlement.

It appears that most of the initial seventeenth-century Jewish settlers in the English Caribbean had migrated on their own volition seeking to expand their trading networks in a place

²³ See Jonathan I. Israel "Menasseh ben Israel and the Dutch Sephardic Colonization Movement of the Mid-Seventeenth Century (1645–1657) in *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, eds. Yosef Kaplan, Richard H. Popkin and Henry Méchoulan (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 139–163.

²⁴ See David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1982).

amenable to open Jewish life. Those who already possessed wealth upon arrival in Jamaica and Barbados were those who settled within extended and nuclear family units and established permanent residencies on the islands (see chapter 2). It is this group that is most represented in the wills sampled for this study. The notarial sources available to us are naturally skewed toward the propertied elite who planted roots on the island rather than the itinerate poor who had been dispatched from European communities and who arrived destitute.

The arrival of pre-established traders and their families seemed to decline by the mid-eighteenth century. By that point most of the migrants to the British West Indies from Europe had been *despachados* and most of the established traders had been native born to the West Indies. These poorer migrants were more mobile and more likely to arrive in the Caribbean as single individuals. Most of those dispatched from Amsterdam to the British Caribbean were sent via London. A common route of migration to Jamaica can be seen in the case of Jacob de David Jessurun who was dispatched from Amsterdam in 1690—told to leave and never return—to London where he was to receive funds for his subsequent journey across the Atlantic to Jamaica.²⁵ Like many other early Jewish migrants to Jamaica he likely came to Amsterdam via southwestern France.

Over the course of the eighteenth century some Judeoconversos did arrive in Jamaica and Barbados directly from the Iberian world. The famous Marrano poet Daniel Israel Lopes Laguna provides an interesting example of this more direct path of migration.²⁶ He had been born of

²⁵ Most of those dispatched from Amsterdam sent on to the British Colonies were sent via London, Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 48–50, 307 n. 338. In this case, instead of moving on to Jamaica, the dispatchee returned to Amsterdam.

²⁶ On Daniel Israel Lopes Laguna see Meyer Kayserling, “The Jews of Jamaica and Daniel Israel Lopez Laguna” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 12, no. 4 (1900): 708–717; and see Ronnie Perelis, “Daniel Israel López Laguna’s *Espejo fiel de vidas* and the Ghosts of Marrano Autobiography” in *The Jews of the Caribbean*, (forthcoming).

Converso parents in the south of France and educated in Spain where he spent his young adulthood. While at university, he came under the surveillance of the Spanish Inquisition and was imprisoned for his Judaizing activity. He then appears to have migrated directly from Spain to Jamaica after his release from prison where he had embraced Judaism. It was in Jamaica that he gave expression to his Marrano experience through poetry in an elaborate Spanish translation of Psalms: *Espejo fiel de vidas* (Faithful Mirror of Life). He traveled to London in 1720 to have his manuscript published and soon returned to Jamaica where he drafted a will in 1721.²⁷ Though he likely died on the island, his tombstone is no longer extant.

As English was the most commonly used notarial language in Jamaica, it can be assumed that those that recorded their wills in Spanish all had recent Iberian roots. 12 out of 300 wills sampled here were originally drafted in Spanish/Portuguese, 9 of which occurred before 1720. Three of those testators sampled here who recorded their wills in Spanish maintained family connections to Bayonne. It is likely that these testators and their families followed a path out of Iberia and back to Judaism via southwestern France where they continued to maintain family connections.

It is also highly likely that, despite the military tensions between the British and the French in the colonial Caribbean, many of the early settlers had come to Jamaica via the French Caribbean. Martinique and Guadeloupe had a significant early Jewish settlement where they were heavily involved in the cultivation of sugar. Having learned the techniques of sugar production in their *engenhos* (sugar mills) of Brazil, Portuguese Jewish refugees such as Benjamin Dacosta de Andrade operated the most profitable sugar mills in the French Empire. After the expulsion of Jews from the French Caribbean in 1685, put into law by the *Code Noir*,

²⁷ "Will of Daniel Israel Lopes Laguna," IRO lib. 16 fol. 32; AJA SC-6566.

many of those refugees (though most had left in the years leading up to the expulsion) found their way to the burgeoning sugar islands of Barbados and Jamaica. Almost all of those who settled in Martinique had originally come from Bayonne.²⁸

London was the hub of migration for most of those who came to Jamaica and Barbados directly from Europe during the eighteenth century while Amsterdam naturally supplied the migrants to Curaçao and Suriname.²⁹ As in the case of Jacob de David Jessurun, mentioned above, Amsterdam frequently sent their poor on to London. This influx of refugees to overcrowded London during the intense period of Portuguese Inquisitorial activity between 1720 and 1735 fueled the flow of poor migrants on to Jamaica and Barbados.³⁰

If beneficiaries of Jamaican Jewish estates residing in London are taken as an indication that the testator may have come directly from there, then only 36 out of 300 testators sampled here (plus another 10 who are known to have resided in London) were not native to the islands. Add to that an additional 12 cases of those who recorded their wills in Spanish and it can be reasonably suggested that over 80 percent of the testators sampled here were creole Jews who had been born and bred in the Caribbean. As critical as the paths of migration were to Jewish settlement and the creation of Atlantic world, by the middle of the eighteenth century the West Indies had a majority of creole Jews.

²⁸ On the relationship between the Jews of Bayonne and the Caribbean see Gérard Nahon, “The Portuguese Jewish Nation of Saint Esprit-lès-Bayonne: The American Dimension,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*, 255–263.

²⁹ On the reasons for migration from Amsterdam to the Caribbean see Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 95–96. During the 1730s the Americas were the leading destination for poor migrants from Amsterdam, mostly to Suriname and Curaçao. It seems that while in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century most Jews migrated to the Caribbean voluntarily seeking to open new ports of trade, by the 1730s, most migrants were poor while the families on the islands (the will making elite) had already been established.

³⁰ See Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, 168.

Both creole and migrant Spanish-Portuguese Jews played an indispensable role in the formation of a British Atlantic world.³¹ With family connections that stretched from the Ottoman Empire, Italy, Lisbon, to the Spanish Main, they were tapped into networks of trade unavailable to most other English merchants. They were also vital in sustaining a tacitly condoned contraband trade with the Spanish Americas made possible by both family connections with Conversos as well as Jamaica's regional proximity to Spanish Central America.

The historian Holly Snyder has identified two prevailing ways in which Spanish-Portuguese Jews achieved economic agency within the British Atlantic economy.³² On the one hand, Jews were often at the cutting edge of illicit trade such as sailing English ships under Dutch banners to circumvent the various Dutch and English Navigation Acts. On the other hand, in the colonies, eighteenth-century Sephardic merchants, such as Aaron Lopes of Newport, tapped into an otherwise unexploited market—the retailing of European luxury goods. Contrary to the prevailing mercantile wisdom, practiced by most other colonial English traders, of exporting raw materials to Europe, Jews brought European luxury goods such as finished textiles and candles for resale in the New World. In doing so, according to Snyder, they were more than agents of commercial exchange but also fueled a growing trend among colonial elites to graft English gentility onto the American cultural landscape. As such, Spanish-Portuguese Jews were a critical force in shaping the cultural as well as the economic character of the British Atlantic.

As political alliances shifted between Holland and Spain and England and Portugal during the 1640s, Jews sustained perhaps the only stable link between the Catholic and

³¹ On the colonial British Atlantic World see David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds. *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

³² Holly Snyder, “English Markets, Jewish Merchants, and Atlantic Endeavors: Jews and the Making of a Transatlantic Commercial Culture, 1650–1800” in *Atlantic Diasporas*, 50–74.

Protestant Atlantic worlds. Despite the many differences between the British and Spanish in both their goals and methods of establishing Atlantic Empires, Spanish-Portuguese Jews bridged the wide gap between them.³³ They not only sustained ties with their kin living as Conversos, they also cradled a shared Iberian past and identity within English colonies. They were therefore not so much transformed by the Atlantic World as much as they were agents in its creation. Their earlier migrations from Catholic to Protestant countries—while shifting identities between Catholic, crypto-Jew, and Jew—engendered a sense of solidarity among them that transcended national boundaries.

They did, however, in other ways, defy this model of cultural hybridity. As much as they were integrated into a transnational and hybrid Atlantic system, they never abandoned a sense of ethnic singularity and a sense of a unique national past and destiny. As we will see, their family lives—how they divided estates among beneficiaries, chose their marriage partners, raised their Jewish children, formulated postures toward their children of color, and the public roles of women—served as a bulwark in sustaining their ethnically defined Jewish identity despite the fluid cultural and national boundaries that they navigated before ever crossing the Atlantic.

³³ For a comparative study of British and Spanish Empire building in the Americas see John H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

CHAPTER TWO

AT HOME IN THE CARIBBEAN: SPANISH-PORTUGUESE HOUSEHOLDS OF THE WEST INDIES

David Baruh Alvares was among the first Jewish settlers in Jamaica. He is known to have resided on the island as early as 1674 though he did not take the oath of denization until four years later.¹ By 1680, he—along with his wife Rachel, his two grown sons, Abraham and Jacob, and four daughters Rica, Judica, Ester and Sara—had become one of the most prominent merchants of Port Royal. According to the 1680 census of Port Royal, David’s household was the largest among the Jews at the time with eight white members of the family and four household slaves. David died in November of 1692, nearly six months after the devastating Port Royal earthquake, and was interred at the Hunt’s Bay cemetery located on the Liganeau Plain across the harbor in what is today Kingston.² Four years after the death of her husband, David’s wife, Rachel, took the oath of denization so that she could settle his outstanding affairs through arbitration.³ She continued to reside in Jamaica for another 27 years until her death on Purim day of 1720.⁴

David appears to have been the first generation of his family to openly identify as a Jew. It is unknown if he came directly from Iberia to Jamaica or, more likely, via Bayonne where he may have already been living privately as a Jew. In either case it is clear that his Iberian roots were still quite recent by the time he arrived in Jamaica. David wrote his will with the aid of a

¹ For his oath of denization see The Jamaican Archives and Records Center (JA) “naturalizations” lib. 1B/11/1/12 fol. 270.

² “Tombstone of David Baruh Alvares, 1692” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 13, no. 64.

³ JA “naturalizations” lib. 1B/11/1/12 fol. 277. On the public role of Spanish-Portuguese women in the West Indies see chapter 6.

⁴ “Tombstone of Rachel Baruh Alvares, 1720” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 9, no. 35.

Spanish notary and appears to have also served in Jamaica as a diplomatic liaison to the Spanish ambassador. In an elaborate reception held in honor of the duke of Albermarle's visit to Jamaica, "senior Alverious a Jew, merchant of Port Royal," likely a reference to David or his son Abraham, stood beside a Spanish dignitary to greet the English nobleman.⁵ David, along with his son Abraham, also sustained family connections through inheritance with Judeoconversos living in Bayonne.

David drafted his will in 1687.⁶ He exercised his role as family patriarch by providing dowries for his unmarried daughters Rica and Judica though he ensured that they would not receive their inheritance unless their marriage partners met with his approval (see chapter 3). In the case of his seemingly youngest daughter, Judica, he made stipulations for her inheritance of 800 pounds along with a jewel worth an additional 200 on condition that "she be married to an honorable and God fearing person."⁷ David also mentioned a married daughter, by the name of Franco, who remained in Bayonne. David included an additional stipulation that in the event he died in Jamaica, the first ship leaving for southern France after his death should bring with it alms "for general distribution" and that the same be done for the subsequent eleven months (period of *'aveylut*/mourning) after his death. His son Abraham also referred to an unspecified number of indigent kin living in Bayonne.⁸

Along with his wife and grown children, other members of his family resided in Jamaica along with David. Most prominently was David's sister, the widow Sara Narvaes, who was also

⁵ From the memoir of John Taylor, quoted from Michael Pawson and David Buisseret, *Port Royal, Jamaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 112.

⁶ "Will of David Baruh Alvares, 1693." IRO lib. 7 fol. 130; AJA SC-234.

⁷ "amigja Judica Alvares ledego otras ocho sientas libras ester linas y ademas amas seledara en mi nombre una Joya de dusientas libras ester linas, en corgando que la Casssen con jente on Rada y temiento del dio."

⁸ "Will of Abraham Baruh Alvares, 1693" IRO lib. 7 fol. 172; AJA, SC-234.

his wife's mother. As patriarch, David assumed the prerogative to care for his sister who lived with him in his home: "my sister Sara Narbaes mother of my wife who at present time lives with me."⁹ He further requested that, after his death, his sister Sara continue to live in his home alongside her daughter: "I ask her [my sister] affectionately that she shall always be with my wife."¹⁰ This unusual request appears to have been intended not only to ensure that there would be a mutual support between his wife and sister after his death but also so that they would not become burdensome to their children: "I will and request [of] my said wife that in no manner shall she place herself either with [any] son or [any] daughter so as to live together, in order to avoid conflict between them, except that, in case my said wife should be so old, she may [live] with some [daughter] of hers so that she may assist her."¹¹ Finally, the 1680 Port Royal census reveals that the Alvares family owned four household slaves. Only one unnamed woman, however, received mention in David's will. He bequeathed a token of five pounds in appreciation for his "servant woman"—presumably an enslaved woman of color—in gratitude for her "long service."¹²

This chapter explores three principal themes related to Spanish-Portuguese household structures found in the wills of the Alvares family. First, I argue that West Indian Jews maintained extensive family life in comparison to their non-Jewish neighbors who largely settled as individual single men. Second, I suggest that though diasporic family connections were crucial to the maintenance of the trans-Atlantic and multi-confessional "Portuguese Nation"

⁹ "amiermana Sara Narbaes madre demimujer qe. al presente bibe Conmigo"

¹⁰ "Iepido en Caresida mente este sienpre con mimijur."

¹¹ "y asimesmo en Cargo y pido adicha me mujer que nose ponga por mingun mada Conyjo niyja ninguna pa. biber Juntos por ebiter elque tengan disen siones en Casso. qe dicha mi mujer Sea tanbieja podra estar con alguna suyja pa. que la asita."

¹² "ofresir mucho tienpo."

during the seventeenth century, by the middle of the eighteenth century, diasporic family life began to decline suggesting a more homogenously Jewish definition of “The Nation.” Third, this chapter investigates the relationship of West Indian Spanish-Portuguese families to their Judeoconverso family members who remained in the Iberian World. The perception of Converso kin as legitimate beneficiaries is crucial in understanding how West Indian Jews perpetuated Judeoconverso conceptions of family life in the Caribbean.

PATTERNS OF FAMILY SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE

The white population of Jamaica during the eighteenth century reached its peak at around 18,000 in 1788.¹³ Twelve years prior, in 1776, the Jewish population in Jamaica appeared to be at its eighteenth-century height at around 1000 individuals.¹⁴ It is safe to say that even at its height, the Jewish population amounted to no more than 5 percent of the white Jamaican population.

The historian of colonial Jamaica, Trevor Burnard, has put forth a series of characterizations about white settlers.¹⁵ According to Burnard, European migration to Jamaica between 1655 and 1780 was characterized by a consistent majority of single men in census records. Though a small number of single females also made the trip across the Atlantic (see chapter 6), few white immigrants to Jamaica arrived as married couples. Single white men largely came from urban areas such as Liverpool or London where they had previous

¹³ Trevor Burnard, “European Migration to Jamaica, 1655–1780” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 53, no. 4 (1996): 769–796, 772.

¹⁴ *The North-American and the West-Indian Gazetteer* (London: G. Robinson, 1776), “Jamaica.”

¹⁵ Burnard, “European Migration to Jamaica, 1655–1780.”

employment in either commerce or crafts. Others arrived in Jamaica as indentured servants.¹⁶ Burnard also posits that Jamaica, unlike North American colonies, never sustained itself through native births and remained a perpetual immigrant community throughout the eighteenth century: “transiency continues to be a fundamental feature throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jamaica was a place for sojourners, a land in which to make a quick fortune before heading home to Britain.”¹⁷

Based on a study of wills from early eighteenth-century St. Andrew parish (now part of Kingston), Burnard argues further that white settlers experienced a “demographic failure” as a result of the “fragility” of their family life in Jamaica.¹⁸ He reveals that few white Jamaicans married and those that did had few children. This family fragility ultimately resulted in the inability to cultivate a self-sustaining white population in Jamaica. Furthermore, according to Burnard, those that had families lived only among their immediate nuclear kin. Inheritance patterns among white Jamaicans reveal very few extended kin of testators living in Jamaica.¹⁹

The Alvares family defies these generalizations of colonial white settlement in Jamaica. Like other members of the early modern *Nação*, the Jamaican Alvareses existed as a single part of a larger network of households extending across the Atlantic. Even though David B. Alvares and his son Abraham may have never considered their residence in the Caribbean to be a

¹⁶ See Trevor Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica.” *Journal of Social History* 28, no. 1 (1994): 63–82, 76. Jamaica appears to have been the leading destination for white indentured servants in the entire British Empire.

¹⁷ Burnard, “European Migration to Jamaica,” 792. For more on the West Indies as a community of white transient sojourners rather than permanent settlers see Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 3–33.

¹⁸ Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 64.

¹⁹ Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 73.

permanent one, David did not settle as a single male pioneer but rather as the head of an extensive family unit.

David lived on the island with his wife, sister, sons, and daughters along with their spouses. In his physical residence he lived with at least his wife, his sister/mother-in-law, presumably his two unmarried daughters, and several domestic slaves. His beneficiaries also included kin on the other side of the Atlantic in Bayonne, with whom he may have maintained commercial relationships. Insofar as the Alvares family's experience reflected general trends, it would appear that Jamaican Jews cultivated a significantly more extensive family life in the West Indies than did their white neighbors. Though a more complete investigation of the patterns of family life among white West Indian settlers would allow for a more nuanced analysis, evidence from other West Indian Jewish testators throughout the eighteenth century confirms that the Alvares family may have indeed been representative of the Jewish settlement in the British West Indies as a whole.

The vast majority of Jews appeared to have arrived and settled in the West Indies as married couples. The 300 individual Jewish testators sampled here can be divided into 7 categories of marital and familial status (listed in order of frequency; see table III):

1. **MARRIED WITH CHILDREN (92)**: male testators who include both a wife and legitimate children as beneficiaries.
2. **MARRIED WITHOUT CHILDREN (53)**: male testators who mention wives but do not specify children as beneficiaries.
3. **SINGLE MEN (52)**: male testators without reference to a wife or children; though single men could also refer to widowers without reference to children.

4. WIDOWERS WITH CHILDREN (38): male testators who include legitimate children as beneficiaries without mention of a wife.
5. WIDOWS WITH CHILDREN (26): female testators referred to as widows in their will that include legitimate children as beneficiaries or female testators with unknown qualification that include children as beneficiaries.
6. WIDOWS WITHOUT CHILDREN (25): female testators who are referred to as widows in their wills without any children beneficiaries.
7. SINGLE WOMEN (13): Female testators referred to as “spinsters” in their wills or those with unknown qualifiers who make no mention of children.
8. DIVORCED WITH CHILDREN (1): male testator who referred to both an ex wife and children.

Married men with children appear most frequently among West Indian Jewish testators with 92 clear cases. Jamaican Jewish testators that mentioned children had an average of 2.4 children and a maximum of 11 (10 children households occur in three cases).²⁰ Though more married couples among Jews had children, the average number of children per household was almost exactly the same as non-Jews: undoubtedly a testament to the frighteningly high rate of child mortality in the colonial Caribbean.²¹

Those married without children were the second most frequent group of testators. This is a problematic group. It is curious that such a large proportion of Jews appeared to live in the West Indies as married couples but without children. One possibility is that in some of these 53 cases the married male testator may have made arrangements with his surviving spouse to care

²⁰ This average does not take into account the wills of Moses Athias da Silveira (drafted in 1698), Judith Gutierrez (drafted in 1760), and Moses Brandon (drafted in 1780) who mentioned children but do not specify them.

²¹ See Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 69. Burnard’s sample of wills from St. Andrew reveals an average of 2.1 children among non-Jews.

for their children and therefore made no specific mention of them in their legally binding wills. Another possibility is that these married couples, without surviving children to stand as beneficiaries, may simply be a product of the high rate of child mortality in the West Indies during the colonial period.

The vast majority of Jewish testators sampled here over the course of the long eighteenth century settled as married couples. Those married with children and those married without children collectively account for 48.3 percent, close to half. Add to that an additional 90 cases of widows, widowers, and divorcees who had once been married and the instances of married Jewish testators in Jamaica and Barbados rises to 78.3 percent. Single men and women are a clear minority among Jewish testators collectively accounting for only 21.6 percent.

Single Jews, however, unlike their non-Jewish counterparts, had the support of the Jewish communal board that at times acted as surrogate family. Abraham Rodrigues, for instance, was a single distiller of alcohol in Kingston who drafted his will in 1734.²² He not only left his entire estate to the Kingston Jewish community but also appointed the wardens of the Portuguese synagogue as his executors. Furthermore, most single Jews, unlike their non-Jewish counterparts, lived in the West Indies among their extended family. Benjamin Sanches, for instance, was a single Jewish man living in Kingston in the 1750s but he was not alone.²³ He lived there—apparently in close proximity—with his uncle Isaac Ramalho and his two cousins Rebecca and Isaac Sanches. Though he had no immediate family of his own, his kin living with him in Jamaica inherited his entire estate.

²² “Will of Abraham Rodrigues, 1734” IRO lib. 19 fol. 248; AJA SC-10255.

²³ “Will of Benjamin Sanches, 1752” IRO lib. 29 fol. 2; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

Burnard has observed that eighteenth-century Jamaica was a “society where kin were unlikely to be present.”²⁴ The situation of Jamaican Jews was quite the opposite. In sharp distinction to non-Jews, 59.9 percent (178) of Jewish testators over the course of the eighteenth century lived in the West Indies along with extended kin (siblings, cousins, nieces/nephews, and aunts/uncles).

It would seem from these 300 testators that Jewish settlement in the West Indies followed an inverted pattern to that of general white settlement. Whether or not the intention was to settle in the Caribbean indefinitely, Spanish-Portuguese Jews settled there as families. There are, however, a variety of confounds in reaching this conclusion. The act of composing a will itself may naturally be skewed toward married individuals with children—those with beneficiaries. Also, the sample does not take into account *despachados* and other indigent Jews who did not leave wills and were presumably more likely to have migrated as single individuals. But *despachados* and the very poor seem to have also been generally more itinerate whereas those settling in family units appear to have stayed in a single location longer.

Spanish-Portuguese Jews had an entirely different set of motivations when settling Caribbean islands than White non-Jews. Though it cannot be discounted that Burnard’s characterization of the transient white settler who arrived in Jamaica “to make a quick fortune before heading home to Britain” may have indeed been true for many Jews as well; early Jewish settlers were seeking refuge in a place amenable to open Jewish life as much as a place to make a quick fortune. They also endeavored to open new ports to extend their family trading networks. This necessitated marriage alliances and long distance family connections. In the seventeenth

²⁴ Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 71.

and early eighteenth centuries, Jews made their fortune precisely by sustaining family life. As households they formed another node in the web of the Atlantic Portuguese diaspora, a deeply intertwined world of households rather than individuals.

The historian Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert has proposed that merchants of the Portuguese Nation during the seventeenth century had an edge on trade within the Castilian world precisely because they sustained trading partnerships with extended family that defied religious and national differences. Importantly, he observes that individual households formed the nucleus of success for the entire early modern Portuguese Diaspora: “the house formed the fundamental unit of the Portuguese merchant class.”²⁵

It was within the home that extended family could maintain trading partnerships and cement marriage alliances that by both design and by default opened new routes of trade. Gizbert characterizes the seventeenth-century Portuguese nation by its heterogeneity and its religious diversity: a single cohesive entity that included Jews, Conversos, and Old Christians each playing a critical role as links in a global chain. Indeed, each household of the seventeenth century Portuguese Nation existed as part of a larger pan-Atlantic network.

The importance of the Jewish household itself goes beyond this critical role in trans-Atlantic trade. The home was the site where Western Sephardim actualized their family life informed by Converso memory. The influence of the *mahamad* and the gaze of the Jewish community ended at the walls of the home where the patriarch could exercise his own authority. Perhaps the most crucial expectation for the Spanish-Portuguese patriarch within the walls of his own home was his patronage of less fortunate family members. Rather than become dependents

²⁵ Studnicki-Gizbert, *Nation Upon the Ocean Sea*, 76.

on the communal *zedakah* (charity) the indigent could be supported by their patriarchal patron, this often included members of his wife's family as well. There are several examples of this pattern found among Jamaican and Barbadian wills throughout the eighteenth century.

Hannah de Torres was referred to as a "single woman" in her will of 1706.²⁶ She lived within the home of her older sister and brother in law, Joseph and Rachel Cohen Deleon, from the age of ten. In her will, she expressed gratitude to Joseph who took her into his home and raised her. Not only did she bequeath to Joseph the entirety of her slave property but also appointed him as her executor: "I doe...appoint my brother in law Joseph Cohen Deleon who hath taken care of and maintained me from my age of ten years sole Exor [executor]." Joseph Cohen Deleon assumed the prerogative to care for the less fortunate among his wife's family. He even appears to have assumed a paternal role for his sister in law, Hannah.

In some cases it is known that married children continued to live in their parents' house. At the time that Jacob Lopes Torres drafted his will in 1767, he lived together with his daughter, son-in-law and at least two of his granddaughters, Sarah and Grace.²⁷ Through the distribution of inheritance, he was careful to ensure that they continued to live in his home, rent free, after his death: "whereas my said son in law Abraham Aguilar and my daughter Rebecca Aguilar his wife have for some time past at my desire lived and resided with me it is therefore my will...that no charge be hereafter made to them...on account thereof."

David Pinheiro of Barbados, though married at the time he drafted his will in 1781, devoted nearly the entirety of his estate toward the support of his two sisters, Deborah Nunes and

²⁶ "Will of Hannah de Torres, 1706" IRO lib. 11 fol. 23; AJA SC-2797.

²⁷ "Will of Jacob Lopes Torres, 1768" IRO lib. 37 fol. 367; AJA SC-12382.

the unmarried Rachel Pinheiro along with Deborah's two sons, Jacob and Isaac Nunes.²⁸ When his widowed wife, Jael Pinheiro, drafted her will a year later one of Deborah's two sons, her nephew by marriage, was living under her roof and presumably under her care: "I give unto ...Isaac Nunes *who lives with me...*"²⁹ Furthermore, she appointed as her executors her brother-in-law, Aaron Pinheiro, and her sister-in-law, the unmarried sister of her late husband, Rachel Pinheiro. In this case we find a sustained commitment to family through marriage even after a spouse's death.

Not only were West Indian Sephardim living within family units to a far greater extent than their white neighbors they also seemed to have a more extended and inclusive notion of family that included more distant relations. It was through this comprehensive family life, within the walls of a home, that Spanish-Portuguese Jews perpetuated and nurtured their ideologies of family belonging.

DIASPORIC FAMILY NETWORKS

Though David Baruh Alvares had settled in Jamaica with his immediate family, in his will he referred to kin living in Bayonne. Likewise, his son Abraham also maintained trans-Atlantic kinship connections to Bayonne. Abraham supported poor family members living there along with six unspecified orphans.³⁰ Not only did they maintain contacts with European family, it seems from the wills of David and Abraham Alvares that the expectation was for wealthy

²⁸ "Will of David Pinheiro, 1781" BA lib. 36 fol. 344; AJA, SC-9741.

²⁹ "Will of Jael Pinheiro, 1782" BA lib. 36 fol. 397; AJA, SC-9741.

³⁰ "Will of Abraham Baruh Alvares, 1693" IRO lib. 7 fol. 171; AJA, SC-234.

colonial merchants like the Jamaican Alvareses to send financial support to Europe. David and Abraham were not alone among West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews in sustaining far-flung family connections. A minority of Jamaican and Barbadian Jewish testators mentioned family living on the other side of the Atlantic or in other parts of the Americas.

Among the 300 individual testators sampled here there is mention of family living in another part of the Western Sephardic Diaspora in 90 wills (30 percent). Among West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews in Jamaica and Barbados family living in London was the most common with related beneficiaries living there identified in 36 individual wills. Amsterdam, naturally, was the second most common location where 26 individual testators referred to family. Bayonne was the third most common appearing in 16 different wills (see table IV). Other locations that appear in the wills of West Indian Jews (listed in order of frequency) include Jamaica among Barbadian Jews, Curaçao, Barbados among Jamaican Jews, Portugal, Livorno, unspecified locations in Europe, unspecified locations in the Kingdom of France, Bordeaux, New York, Suriname, and German Lands.

West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews who maintained international family connections appear to be a significant minority of testators. Given the global dimensions of the seventeenth-century Portuguese Nation, one would expect to find a much higher international distribution of family networks. Similarly, communal minutes from Barbados give the impression of a much greater pan-Atlantic distribution of family networks. The communal board of Nidhe Israel frequently deliberated on petitioners requesting a “dispatch” from Barbados, usually to another part of the Caribbean, most frequently on to Suriname.³¹ But, those with established households

³¹ “Minutes of Nidhe Israel, Barbados,” Spanish-Portuguese Jews’ Congregation, London Metropolitan Archives, LMA/4521/D.

in Jamaica and Barbados appear to have defined their family through a significantly more localized lens.

The pattern of global family distribution also appears to have changed subtly over time. Between the last third of the seventeenth century through the 1740s there are a total of 53 wills from Jamaica and Barbados where the testators refer to family living in other locations (58.8 percent of wills that mention international family). However, from the 1750s through the 1790s international family appear slightly diminished with only 37 cases. Though international family distribution appears only marginally reduced after the 1750s, none at all occur during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. These preliminary findings suggest that the international dimension of the Jewish settlement in the West Indies appears to subtly diminish over time as Jewish residents in the West Indies became more rooted in their Caribbean homes.

The mid eighteenth century was the subtle turning point when “Jews living in the Caribbean” start to become “Caribbean Jews” with a more internal focus and decreased deference to European kin and communities. As various Atlantic trade networks weakened around the time of the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763) and came to a near complete standstill between the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, long distance trading partnerships with far-flung family were no longer sustainable or even necessary. Spanish-Portuguese Jews began to establish a sense of permanency in Jamaica and Barbados.

This limited evidence from the West Indies over the course of the eighteenth century also points to another potential shift in the nature of the Western Sephardic Diaspora more broadly. As Studnicki-Gizbert illustrates, the seventeenth-century Portuguese Nation stood apart from other trading Diasporas on account of its global dimensions as well as its confessional diversity. The Portuguese Nation was a unified trading machine that included Jews in Western

Europe, Conversos in the Iberian Atlantic, as well as Old-Christians who in the Castilian mind were synonymous with Jews. Therefore, for the seventeenth-century Portuguese Nation there were few divisions between the Catholic and Protestant world. All ports were open to trade.

West Indian Sephardim within the British Empire certainly did not resist trade with the Catholic world. Jewish merchants of Jamaica were well known, indeed infamous, during the eighteenth century for their engagement in contraband trade with the Spanish Main and the Spanish Caribbean.³² However, through the micro-historical lens of West Indian Jewish wills, it appears that, during the mid-eighteenth century, familial attachments shifted away from the Catholic world and toward Protestant countries where Jews could live openly. Only 3 wills from the West Indies during the eighteenth century refer explicitly to family living in Portugal. And while Bayonne seems to have held unique familial connection to Jamaican Jews, most of the family ties found there occurred after 1723 when (nominally Catholic) *marchands portugais* were granted the right to openly identify as Jews with the same rights and privileges they had living as Catholics. Even for those family ties to Bayonne that occurred earlier in the 1680s and 1690s, the Conversos there by that point had essentially identified openly as Jews.³³

During the second half of the eighteenth century the international and religiously hybrid dimension of the Portuguese nation began to fade. Rejudaized Jews appeared to be less intertwined with their Judeoconverso kin living in the Iberian world. Their focus shifted away from the Spanish Americas, Flanders, Portugal and Spain—and toward places of renewed Jewish life such as Amsterdam and London. However, though the second half of the eighteenth century

³² See Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 295: “Their knowledge of foreign language, and intercourse with their brethren, dispersed over the Spanish and other West-India colonies, have contributed greatly to extend the trade, and increase the wealth, of the island”

³³ Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux*, 1–26.

must be seen as an inward looking period for West Indian Sephardim, Jamaican Jewish families still continued to play an important role in the rejudaization process.

REJUDAIZATION WITHIN THE WEST INDIAN FAMILY

David and Abraham Alvares maintained family connections to Bayonne despite the fact that the French members of their family continued to live in “Lands of Idolatry” (*terras de idolatría*) where open Jewish life was not tolerated. Rejudaization was a process of religious metamorphosis undertaken by thousands of Judeoconvertos throughout the early modern period. The process was fraught with tensions: tensions between crypto-Jewish practices and rabbinic Jewish law and between Jewish communal authority and Iberian patriarchy. The communal boards of Western Sephardic communities ubiquitously exercised their authority to normalize and regulate the rejudaization process: Returnees were denied full membership for failing to receive circumcision and those that had returned to Iberia found themselves marginalized within the Jewish communities upon their return to Protestant lands.³⁴

Little attention has been devoted to the familial motivations and effects of rejudaization. Rejudaization brought families together as much as it tore them apart. For many Judeoconvertos it became the prerogative of the patriarchal head of the household to adopt the personal responsibility for the souls of their kin remaining in “Lands of Idolatry.” These patriarchs attempted to draw their Converso kin out of the Iberian world through material incentives.

There are some famous examples of this patriarchal role in the rejudaization process. David Gradis extended his patronage from Bordeaux to returning Converso family members,

³⁴ See for instance Kaplan, “The Curaçao and Amsterdam Jewish Communities,” 201.

even serving as a godfather for one of them who came from Spain to Bordeaux at the age of 37 to be circumcised.³⁵ Aaron Lopez, the famous “merchant prince” of Newport, was originally supported by his half-brother Jose to make the escape from Portugal in 1752. Once settled in the New World, Aaron then used his considerable fortune and influence to aid the escape of his other half-brother Miguel along with his wife and three sons.³⁶

Though most Conversos seeking rejudaization received circumcision in either Amsterdam or London before moving on to the Caribbean, some Conversos did arrive directly from Iberia, or more commonly from the Spanish Main, to receive circumcision on the islands. Curaçao, because of its proximity to the Spanish Main and its well-established Jewish community, received the majority of refugees.³⁷ The Curaçao *mahamad* even allowed for the circumcision of Christians without consent from the local authorities. And, unlike their mother community in Amsterdam, the Curaçao community did not mandate a waiting period between a returnee’s adoption of Judaism and receiving full membership in the community.³⁸ Most of the returnees to Curaçao during the intense period of inquisitorial activity between 1725 and 1735 arrived as indigents. Circumcision registries and communal minutes kept in London, Amsterdam, and Curaçao reveal that Conversos continued to migrate and rejudaize in significant numbers throughout the entire eighteenth century.³⁹

³⁵ Richard Menkis, “Patriarchs and Patricians: the Gradis Family of Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux” in *From East and West: Jews in Changing Europe 1750–1870*, eds., Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: B. Blackwell, 1991), 25.

³⁶ Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 19.

³⁷ On rejudaization in Curaçao see Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, I: 118–120.

³⁸ See Kaplan, “The Curaçao and Amsterdam Jewish Communities,” 202.

³⁹ See for instance Richard D. Barnett, ed., *The Circumcision Register of Isaac and Abraham De Paiba (1715–1775): From the Manuscript Record Preserved in the Archives of The Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation*

In the absence of similar documentation from Jamaica, it is unknown how many Conversos returned to Judaism there. It is possible to speculate regarding their presence on the island. First, since there was no active Inquisition in Jamaica at the time of the British conquest in 1655, it stands to reason that some of the first Jewish settlers in Jamaica had been Judaizing Conversos. However, with the absence of an Inquisition in Jamaica, they remain silent in the available sources. Second, Jamaica, unlike Barbados, maintained a steady, contraband, trade with the Spanish Main, which was largely perpetuated by Jews. Jews frequently traveled to the Spanish Main from Jamaica where they required special privileges and certificates of Jewish birth to evade the Inquisition. It is clear from some wills that throughout the eighteenth century some West Indian Jews sustained contacts with their Converso kin living in the Catholic world and that there were attempts to offer material incentives to entice their Converso family to relocate to either Jamaica or Barbados.

19 of the 300 wills under analysis here refer to familial ties with Bayonne, Bordeaux, and “Kingdom of France.” Though Judeoconversos there were living in an unofficially recognized Jewish community already in the 1690s, 4 of those 19 wills referring to French states are drafted before 1723 when the Judeoconversos living in Southern France were granted residency privileges as openly identifying Jews: the wills of both David and Abraham Alvares, the first generation returnee Abraham Gomes Sampayo, and the Marrano poet, Daniel Lopes Laguna all maintained family ties to pre-1723 Bayonne.⁴⁰

of London Named Sahar Asamaim (London: The Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation; The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1991).

⁴⁰ “Will of Daniel Lopes Laguna, 1723” IRO lib. 16 fol. 32; AJA SC-6566. His will was originally drafted in 1721.

Outside of France, there is mention of possible Converso kin in only five wills. One of these cases is speculative. The married Kingston merchant Isaac Pereira Brandon drafted his will in 1752.⁴¹ The bulk of his estate was allocated to his three married female cousins living in Port Royal: Sarah Brandon, Abigail Davalle, and Rebecca Mendes. His wife lived apart from his household presumably as a Conversa living somewhere in the Iberian Atlantic:

...all the rents and interest of my Estate to be divided equally...for them [his three female cousins] and their heirs lawfully begotten provided my lawfull wife of the City of Spain or elsewhere should not arrive to this Island of Jamaica within the space of five years deducting the Interest my three said cousins have received before her arrival to this Island of Jamaica.

It is unknown what Isaac P. Brandon meant when he referred to “City of Spain.” Since the language of the will implies his wife had been living outside of Jamaica, it must not refer to Spanish Town. It is likely that she was living somewhere in the Iberian Atlantic. “City of Spain” may refer to what is today Port of Spain in Trinidad which at that time remained a Spanish possession.⁴²

Whether or not his wife remained as a Conversa within the Iberian orbit, this case reveals much about the nature of family life for West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews. Even though Isaac P. Brandon was living as a single man in Jamaica, he was married, and he lived alongside three married cousins whom he felt it imperative to support financially. His wife was living in another part of the world, but Isaac felt compelled to offer financial incentive for her to relocate to Jamaica by reducing the inheritance of his cousins in the event she found her way to the island and possibly back to Judaism.

⁴¹ “Will of Isaac Pereira Brandon, 1752” IRO lib. 29 fol. 1; AJA SC-1337.

⁴² Trinidad became a British possession in 1797.

Isaac Depass Almeйда, a resident of Kingston, drafted his will in Spanish in 1752 though it was registered along with an English translation six years later.⁴³ The fact that his will was originally recorded in Spanish as late as the 1750s, when most were composed in English, strongly suggests that he himself was a first generation returnee. He first bequeathed to his wife Rebecca financial assets household goods, and fourteen individual slaves. He then devoted the remainder of his estate to his Converso nieces living in Portugal: “the remainder of my Effects that shall [be] found after the Decease of my said beloved wife Rebecca Depaz Almeida I leave...to my nieces Daughters of my sister Anna de Campos Depaz by her husband Francisco Pereira Lopez who dwell and live at present in Portugall.”

In the most well-known case, the testator Isaac de Mella, in his will of 1766, offered explicit material incentive for his Converso relatives to migrate to Jamaica.⁴⁴ De Mella’s will was also originally drafted in Spanish implying that he was a first generation returnee. Like David Gradis and Aaron Lopez, de Mella provided financial incentive for his Converso nephews residing in Iberia to relocate to Jamaica so that they could “embrace Judaism” by ensuring a home for them upon their arrival:

I leave unto my beloved wife Esther De Mella my houses...in this City of Kingston that she may enjoy the rents during her life and at her death I will that the wardens of the Synagogue in Kingston...do take possession of the said houses and do give the rents thereof unto my beloved niece Rachel deMella daughter of my brother Moses deMella until such time someone of my nephews sons to my brother and sisters who reside in the Kingdom of Portugal or Spain *shall come and embrace Judaism* [my emphasis]....

⁴³ “Will of Isaac Depass Almeida, 1758” IRO lib. 31 fol. 133; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

⁴⁴ “Will of Isaac de Mella, 1768” IRO lib. 38 fol. 36; AJA SC-2780. This will is mentioned in Faber, *Jews Slaves and the Slave Trade*, 69 and in Arbell, *The Portuguese Jews of Jamaica*, 8.

Like many in the earlier generation of rejudaized Jews, Isaac continued to conceive of his Catholic kin as legitimate family to whom he held the responsibility to encourage their return to Judaism. The expectation that his Converso nephews would move to Jamaica also suggests that Isaac de Mella had regular contact with them in Iberia. Significantly, because he knew his death to be imminent, de Mella entrusted the imperative to aid the rejudaization process of his nephews to the leaders of the Jamaican Jewish community who took charge of the proceeds of his estate for that stated purpose. If the prerogative to aid and encourage the return to Judaism of Converso kin had been a patriarchal imperative then he ceded that responsibility to Jewish communal authorities, the patrons of the community as a whole, upon his death.

There are strikingly few wills from the British West Indies that include known Converso kin as beneficiaries. It is arguable that over the course of the eighteenth century the connections that had sustained a pan-Atlantic Portuguese Nation across confessional divides during the seventeenth century had lost much of its relevance. This may be because the decline in the Atlantic trade more generally made the cost of maintaining relationships with overseas kin in the Iberian world unsustainable. Yet the nature of comprehensive Jewish family life in the Caribbean may offer an additional explanation. Since the majority of Jews had settled the Caribbean as family units, over time, there may have developed a greater tendency to disavow family members who continued to live as Catholics in “Lands of Idolatry” than there had been in the seventeenth century when fewer established havens were open to them.

Despite this decline, overseas contacts with Converso kin did not disappear altogether. As late as the 1780s, what appear to be first generation Jews living in Jamaica continue to maintain connections to their New Christian family. For example, Solomon Rodrigues Dacosta, a

Kingston shopkeeper, left a humble estate in his will of 1786.⁴⁵ Though he mentioned a wife, Rachel, he specified no inheritance for her (with the unstated exception of the legally binding 1/3 of his property entitled to all wives in the English speaking world). His whole estate was instead bequeathed to his three brothers and their families, one of whom lived in Portugal. Though Solomon lived in Kingston alongside two of his Jewish brothers he made no distinction between them and his third brother who remained as Catholic in Portugal. These returnees who settled in Jamaica during the eighteenth century along with the Converso family members they supported and encouraged were the principal agents in the perpetuation of Judeoconverso ideologies of family life. They were a direct link to the Converso past.

CONCLUSION

Very few Jews made the journey across the Atlantic to settle in the West Indies alone. Most of them came and settled as families. Even those that did not migrate and settle as married couples with children were usually surrounded by extended family within their town. Their patterns of inheritance suggest an inclusive view of familial belonging that included not only their Jewish relatives living within the Western Sephardic world, but also, in some cases, their Converso relatives as well. However, though family ties with far-flung kin, including some Conversos, continue to exist into the later eighteenth century, they did so to a far lesser, and ever diminishing, extent than those of their seventeenth-century ancestors. By the 1760s and 1770s Caribbean Spanish-Portuguese Jews appear to have become much more locally and religiously exclusive in how they defined family.

⁴⁵ "Will of Solomon Rodrigues Dacosta, 1786" IRO lib. 52 fol. 65; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

CHAPTER THREE

“WITH THE CONSENT OF HER MOTHER”: SPANISH-PORTUGUESE MARRIAGE AND ROMANCE

On January 18, 1732, Moses Brandon, a thirty-three year old Jewish merchant living in Kingston died of unknown causes leaving behind a young wife Abigail and their two-year-old daughter Rebecca.¹ Six years later, Moses's father, Isaac Pereira Brandon, composed his last will and testament. Isaac not only supported the widows of his two deceased sons but also supplied the dowries for his fatherless granddaughters. Moses's daughter Rebecca, then 8-years-old, was among the first beneficiaries of Isaac's estate.

Isaac bequeathed to Rebecca the substantial sum of two thousand pounds with the stipulation that the money would only be delivered to her on the day of her marriage to her first cousin David Pereira Brandon: “upon her being...Bonafide Willing...and consenting to Intermarry with [her cousin David Brandon].” The 8-year-old Rebecca was thus presented with a financial incentive to agree to a marriage with her cousin arranged in the will of her seventy-three-year old grandfather.

In as much as Isaac offered financial incentive for Rebecca to agree to an arranged marriage he also created coercive conditions that would have prevented her from refusing. Isaac threatened that if *Rebecca* refused to marry David, her inheritance of two thousand pounds would be reduced by ninety percent to only two hundred. If, however, *David* refused the marriage, then upon reaching the age of twenty-one, Rebecca would inherit the entire sum. In such a case, Isaac wrote: “the said Rebecca Brandon shall be...at full liberty to marry with any

¹ “Will of Isaac Pereira Brandon, 1740” IRO lib. 22 fol. 83; AJA, SC-1337; “Tombstone of Moses Pereira Brandon, 1732” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 56, no. 318.

other person she shall think fit,” though with one critical caveat: “provided [that her marriage] be with the consent of her Mother.”

This chapter addresses three themes related to Spanish-Portuguese marriage found in the story of Rebecca and David Brandon: endogamy, consanguinity, and parental consent. Through proper marriage between the right partners, Spanish-Portuguese Jews not only safeguarded the wealth generated through colonial trade, they sustained the contours of their ethnic identity. Western Sephardim proudly saw themselves as the legitimate heirs to the Spanish Jewish tradition that, even though it had been interrupted culturally—through more than two centuries without Jewish communal life—nevertheless, had been perpetuated through what they understood as purity of blood.² Through “proper” marriage, Judeoconvertos could nurture the ethnic chain that linked them with the luminaries of the Spanish golden age. Through “proper” marriage they made meaning of their experiences as Conversos so that when they returned to Judaism they did not return as newborn infants but as captive nobility.³ Spanish-Portuguese Jews of the West Indies attempted to actively preserve these longstanding notions of Sephardic family and identity while at the same time integrating new familial realities of the British Atlantic world.⁴

² See Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 85–95.

³ See Yosef Kaplan, “Bom Judesmo: The Western Sephardic Diaspora” in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, 3 vols. ed., David Biale (New York: Schocken, 2002), 350–353.

⁴ On marriage patterns among Jews in Suriname see Robert Cohen, “Patterns of Marriage and Remarriage among the Sephardi Jews of Surinam, 1788–1818” in *The Jewish Nation in Surinam: Historical Essays*, ed. Robert Cohen (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1982), 89–100.

JEWISH MARRIAGE IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WEST INDIES

Unfortunately no descriptions of Jewish weddings or West Indian *ketubot* (marriage contracts) have survived from the eighteenth century.⁵ Unlike the private Converso ceremonies of the Iberian world, marriages were a highly public life-cycle event among West Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews. Edward Long mentioned that Jews in Jamaica tended to be married in the synagogues.⁶ This suggests that during the eighteenth century, perhaps because of the small size of the Jewish community, synagogues served as both sacral and public meeting spaces. Jewish weddings in the West Indies seemed also to have been quite public affairs that engaged the non-Jewish residents of the islands. According to one account, the destruction of the Barbadian Speightstown synagogue by a riotous mob in 1739 began when a non-Jewish participant in a Jewish wedding, possibly the son of a former governor, became ill and took rest in his host's bed.⁷ According to the father of the bride (Mr. Lopes), the non-Jew stole from his home when left alone. After denying the accusations, the disgruntled wedding guest incited a mob to tear down the synagogue. In another incident, Maria Nugent, the wife of the Jamaican governor in February of 1802, was invited to attend a Jewish wedding in Spanish Town but "after a little debate" decided to wait for the next one.⁸

Women married young in the Colonial British West Indies as in other parts of the western world during the eighteenth century. For the minority among them who did marry, White creole

⁵ The earliest known Jamaican *ketubah* is from 1906, Archives of the United Congregation of Israelites, Kingston, Jamaica.

⁶ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 18.

⁷ Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews in Barbados in 1739: An Attack Upon Their Synagogue, Their Long Oath" *PAJHS* 22 (1922): 197–198.

⁸ Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, ed., Philip Wright (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 63.

women married at an average age of 19 years old.⁹ Jewish women seemed to have married slightly younger. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in Barbados, for instance, Rachel, the wife of Moshe Franco Nunes, died in childbirth in February of 1717 at age sixteen.¹⁰ At the end of the eighteenth century, Rachel Cohen Deleon died in 1815 at age nineteen leaving behind two infant children.¹¹ She was described on her tombstone as “an amiable and inestimable Wife Tender mother & Sincere Friend.” The Hebrew poem on her tombstone remembered her for her youthfulness brought to a sudden end in childbirth. For men, the average age of marriage was twenty-two.¹² Minor male beneficiaries in every will from the eighteenth century received their inheritance either at age twenty-one or on the day of their marriage implying that by twenty-one men were expected to have taken a wife.

Remarrying after the death of a spouse was a common practice in the colonial West Indies.¹³ From a sample of three hundred wills along with nuptial advertisements in periodicals, 218 Jewish marriages can be identified between 1673 and 1814 where the family names of both the husband and wife are known for certain (see appendix). 13 marriages (5.9 percent) can be positively identified as being a second marriage for one of the partners. In all but one case, it was the second marriage for the wife. As with non-Jewish society in the West Indies, women remarried far more often than men. Women not only had more marriage choices in a society so skewed toward male settlement, but in many cases they were also dependent on husbands for

⁹ Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 74.

¹⁰ “Tombstone of Rachel Franco Nunes, 1717” Eustace Shilstone, *Monumental Inscriptions, in the Jewish Synagogue at Bridgetown, Barbados: With Historical Notes from 1630* (Roberts Stationary, Barbados: Macmillan Publishers, 1988 [1956]), 46, no. 25.

¹¹ “Tombstone of Rachel Cohen Deleon, 1815” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 996, no. 84.

¹² Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 74.

¹³ Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society,” 72.

sustenance and economic stability (see chapter 6). Women who sought to remarry apparently did not stay widows for long. For instance, Rachel Mendes Quixano had been married to her cousin David Mendes Quixano who died in 1738.¹⁴ Within a year, Rachel married a man by the name of Samuel Aflalo.¹⁵ Rachel's father wrote in his 1739 will: "my daughter Rachel Mendes Quixano formerly the widow of David Mendes Quixano but now the wife of Samuel Aflalo."

There is only one clear case of divorce. In 1800, the Kingston silversmith David Mendes Alvares bequeathed his entire estate to his remarried ex-wife, Rachel Torres Pinto, and their four children.¹⁶ David wrote "I give...all my estate...in trust to....Rachel Tores Pinto otherwise Called Rachel Mendes Alvares of the said Parish of Kingston with whom I have for a long time lived and cohabitated and by whom I have four children now living." From this incident alone it is impossible to speculate on the frequency with which marriages dissolved among Jews in the British West Indies.

ENDO GAMY AND ETHNIC PARTICULARITY

Endogamy had been the prevailing pattern among Conversos married in the Iberian Peninsula as well as the Spanish Americas throughout the early modern period. Before the passage of *limpieza de sangre* statutes in 1449 some sincerely Catholic Conversos found their path to social integration through exogamous marriage with Old Christians. The implementation

¹⁴ "Will of David Mendes Quixano, 1739" IRO lib. 22 fol. 44; AJA SC-9934. The testator writes, "my...wife Rachel Mendez Quixano...her father Abraham Mendez Quixano." It is therefore known that her maiden name was Mendes Quixano, see appendix.

¹⁵ "Will of Abraham Mendes Quixano, 1741" IRO lib. 22 fol. 207; AJA SC-9934.

¹⁶ "Will of David Mendes Alvares, 1800" IRO lib. 67 fol. 43; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

of these laws made Converso marriage partners increasingly unattractive to Old Christians.¹⁷ Well into the eighteenth century Iberian Conversos actively pursued near exclusive marriage among themselves. Indeed, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it has been estimated that 90 percent of Converso marriages in colonial Mexico were endogamous.¹⁸

Numerous pressures faced the Atlantic Sephardic community as they attempted to preserve these traditional Judeoconverso marriage patterns predicated on endogamy, defined here as exclusive marriage between Spanish-Portuguese Jews at the explicit exclusion of Ashkenazim. Marriage between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was taboo throughout the Western Sephardic Diaspora and, in Amsterdam, was enough to ensure an official loss of communal status.¹⁹ The Amsterdam *dotar* (dowry lottery) provided dowries exclusively to Judeoconversa women.²⁰ The *dotar* functioned as a mutual aid society modeled on both a pre-expulsion Iberian Jewish institution as well as Catholic precedents. Like its Catholic predecessor among Conversos, the *dotar* was intended to safeguard the virtue of indigent young women.²¹ In Amsterdam the *dotar* also served as an incentive to help aid the rejudaization of Conversa women living in southern France. The stated goal of the *dotar* society was “to marry orphans and poor maidens of this *Portuguese Nation*...from St Jean de Luz to Danzig, including France and

¹⁷ Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 244.

¹⁸ Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 246.

¹⁹ Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 188. On more between communal tensions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Amsterdam see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 125–131; see also Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 70–77.

²⁰ See Miriam Bodian, “‘Portuguese’ Dowry Societies in Venice and Amsterdam: A Case Study in Communal Differentiation within the Marrano Diaspora” *Italia* 6 nos. 1–2 (1987): 30–61; see also Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 103–105.

²¹ Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 104.

the Netherlands, England and Germany.”²² Though dowries were earmarked for Conversa women with the expectation that they would embrace Judaism, women living as Catholics were favored as recipients of dowries to the exclusion of fully Jewish, Ashkenazic, women living in Amsterdam who were not eligible.

Tensions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim are evident on a communal level in London, for instance, where after 1679 Ashkenazim received no communal recognition at all in the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue.²³ This law was later amended in 1682 to allow “deserving *tudescos*” to make voluntary contributions in return for a communal honor.²⁴ In London, controversy erupted in 1745 when the Sephardic *gabay* (sexton) of Bevis Marks, Jacob Israel Bernal, attempted to marry the *tudescas* Jochebed Baruch.²⁵ Apparently because of the high social standing of Jacob and Jochebed, the *mahamad* gave their grudging consent and allowed the marriage to be performed with the conditions that Jacob would renounce his position as *gabay* and could never again receive *mitzvot* (communal honors). Not a single donation was made to the synagogue in honor of this wedding. When a man of lesser communal status, Asser del Branco, attempted to marry a *tudescas* in 1772, the *mahamad* categorically refused.²⁶ In early colonial New York, marriage between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was tantamount to social suicide as illustrated in the famous case of Isaac Mendes Seixas’s marriage to Rachel Levy in the late

²² Bodian, “The ‘Portuguese’ Dowry Societies in Venice and Amsterdam,” 41–42. Emphasis mine.

²³ De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World*, 461.

²⁴ *Tudesco* is a term used derogatorily by Sephardim to refer to German Ashkenazim literally meaning Hun.

²⁵ Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England*, 171.

²⁶ Hyamson, *The Sephardim of England*, 173.

1730s.²⁷ This marriage sparked controversy on both sides of the Atlantic and ultimately forced Isaac and his wife to settle in New Jersey, then nearly devoid of Jewish life.²⁸

The eventual breakdown of marriage barriers between Ashkenazim and Sephardim has been seen as one of the principal symptoms of Sephardic cultural and social decay in the colonial Americas. Malcolm Stern identified 942 marriages of North American Jews between 1686 and 1840, of which only 10.7 percent were exclusively endogamous between two Sephardic partners.²⁹ In cultivating a narrative of Sephardic decay aimed at romanticizing an ideal of American democratic ecumenism, David de Sola Pool wrote about New York: “The integration of Sephardim and Ashkenazim and *frequent marriage between them* was a hallmark of life in the New World, in sharp contrast to the Old.”³⁰ Jonathan Sarna writes: “Throughout colonial North America, marriages between Sephardim and Ashkenazim abounded; indeed overall, more Sephardic Jews married Ashkenazim than married Sephardim.”³¹ Though these statements certainly ring true for colonial New York, they cannot be applied to the entirety of the “New World.” In Jamaica and Barbados endogamous marriage was strictly adhered to throughout the entire eighteenth century. Though the Spanish-Portuguese Jews of London and colonial New York found it increasingly difficult to sustain exclusively Sephardic endogamy—as the Jewish populations of those cities had become overwhelmingly Ashkenazic by the 1720s—Jamaica and

²⁷ On tension between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in the colonial America see Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 60–66; on the issue of marriage specifically see 65–66.

²⁸ Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore S. Meyer, *The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Colonial Correspondence: Letters of the Franks Family, 1733–1748* (Waltham, MA: American Jewish Historical Society, 1968), xx, no. 9.

²⁹ See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 66. Faber correctly states, as I will demonstrate, that though intermarriage between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was the norm for North America, “fewer marriages between Ashkenazim and Sephardim occurred in the Caribbean, underscoring the uniqueness of the amalgamation of two groups in in English North America.”

³⁰ De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World*, 463. Emphasis mine.

³¹ Sarna, “Port Jews in the Atlantic,” 215.

Barbados both sustained Sephardic majorities well into the nineteenth century. Coupled with a steady stream of female *despachados* and orphans, some even supported by the Amsterdam *dotar*, as well as returnee Conversos from the Spanish Main, West-Indian Sephardim did not want for eligible Sephardic marriage partners throughout the entire eighteenth century.³²

Among the 218 Jewish marriages known to have occurred between 1673 and 1814 in the British West Indies, the vast majority, 198 (90.8 percent), occurred between two Sephardim—28 times greater than the number of endogamous marriages between Sephardim known to have occurred over the same period in colonial North America (see appendix).³³ In only 16 cases (7.3 percent) is it known that a marriage occurred between a Sephardi and an Ashkenazi. Significantly, the majority of these exogamous marriages (9 cases, 56.6 percent) occurred during the 1790s. By then there existed a substantial community of Ashkenazim on the islands. The remaining 4 marriages (1.8 percent) occurred between two Ashkenazim. Consistent with similar trends in Amsterdam, two thirds of marriages between Sephardim and Ashkenazim (12 cases) occurred between a wealthy Ashkenazic man and what seems to have been a widowed or impoverished Sephardic female.³⁴

In the eighteenth-century British West Indies, Sephardic men were nearly 14 times more likely to marry Sephardic women than they were to marry Ashkenazic women. This is undoubtedly in large part a consequence of the substantially larger Sephardic community. Yet it

³² Amsterdam stadsarchief, Records of the Dotar, 1735–1787. Numerous examples appear of *dotar* beneficiaries in the Caribbean including Jamaica and Barbados.

³³ Out of 47 Sephardic families identified by Stern in North America only seven individuals married endogamously between 1686 and 1840. See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 66.

³⁴ Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 188.

also meant that West-Indian Sephardim were either self-consciously or at least in practice, perpetuating uniquely Spanish-Portuguese family life in the West Indies.

CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGE

Consanguineous marriage—marriage between family members—is the second element in the arranged marriage between Rebecca and David Brandon with broader implications for the entire Western Sephardic Diaspora. Rebecca and David were first cousins. In most cases it is clear that consanguineous marriage was a type of economic arrangement to ensure assets remained in the family and were shared equally between partners. Though this type of consanguineous marriage is also known to exist among Ashkenazim (including in Jamaica),³⁵ for Sephardim, consanguinity took on unique meaning as a way to sustain an ethnically defined pan-Sephardic identity dependent on the preservation of what they perceived to be “blood purity.”

Many Conversos in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Iberia practiced consanguineous marriage in an attempt to preserve their “blood purity” despite Christian laws against marriage within certain degrees of kinship. The historian Haim Beinart writes: “[Conversos] considered it their duty to ensure that marriages were contracted within the framework of Converso society.... priests complained of Conversos, both men and women, who appeared before them with the claim that a daughter of a certain family had been impregnated by one of her relatives and even though the degree of kinship precluded their marriage according to Church regulations, it was imperative to marry them in order to save the family’s honor.”³⁶ Though English law did not

³⁵ For instance Moses Adolphus married an Adolphus woman with an unknown first name sometime before 1795. See the “Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798” IRO lib. 64 fol. 56; AJA SC-127.

³⁶ Haim Beinart, “The Conversos in Spain and Portugal in the 16th and 18th Centuries,” in *Moreshet Sepharad*, 60.

explicitly prohibit consanguineous marriage, Spanish-Portuguese Jews actively perpetuated this Conversos heritage, despite Christian resistance to such marriages, as we will see.

In addition to the case of Isaac and Rebecca Pereira Brandon several other testators explicitly create coercive conditions to ensure a consanguineous marriage in their wills. Moses de Solomon Mendes, for instance, was a Barbadian merchant who lived in London at the time he drafted his Spanish will in 1717 though he continued to have family and property in his former Barbados home.³⁷ He reduced the liquid inheritance of the remainder of his estate (along with the interest it would accrue) to a set amount of five hundred pounds in the event, “my said son shall not intermarry with one of the daughters of my executor [and brother] Abraham Mendes.”

Historians of the Western Sephardic Diaspora have seen the principal motivation in consanguineous marriage as economic: motivated by the necessity of keeping wealth within the family. This is evidently the case in several known marriages between West Indian Sephardim that are not necessarily consanguineous but are clearly motivated by a desire to link two families together through ties of marriage. There are 18 known marriages where two (or more) brothers marry two (or more) sisters from a different family. For instance, in Jamaica, the two brothers Abraham and Joseph Gutierrez married the two sisters Leah and Sarah Bravo sometime before 1748.³⁸ In one case it is known that this type of arrangement was also consanguineous. In Barbados, sometime before 1746, the brothers Abraham and Jacob Valverde married their first cousins Esther and Leah Valverde.³⁹

³⁷ “Will of Moses de Solomon Mendes, 1718” Barbados National Archives (BA) lib. 4 fol. 333; AJA SC-8048.

³⁸ “Will of David Bravo, 1749” IRO lib. 27 fol. 27; AJA SC-1354.

³⁹ “Will of Aaron Valverde, 1746” BA lib. 36 fol. 160; AJA SC-12578.

Among the 198 marriages known to have occurred between Sephardim, consanguineous marriages could be positively identified in 20 cases (10.1 percent). A fuller sample would, however, undoubtedly reveal the true frequency to be much higher. Among those 20 cases, well over two thirds (17) occurred between cousins. There are only 3 known cases of marriages between an uncle and a niece: two from Jamaica and one from Barbados.⁴⁰

The sample under analysis here allows for some limited speculation on the frequency of consanguineous marriage over time. It appears that such marriages were quite common in the late seventeenth century. Four cases occurred before 1692. The rate continued to rise during the early eighteenth century with seven known cases occurring before the year 1747 and continued to remain stable through mid-century with 7 more cases occurring before the year 1777. However, between 1770 and 1800 there are only three known cases. The frequency of consanguineous marriage among West-Indian Sephardim, therefore, appears to have decreased toward the end of the century. Over the course of the eighteenth century there seems to have occurred a moral backlash throughout the British Atlantic against marriage between family members.

Rejection of consanguineous marriage on moral grounds, even among Spanish-Portuguese Jews, may be among the factors in the English *cause celebre* during the 1720s of the breach of contract case brought by Jacob (Philip) Mendes da Costa against his cousin Catherine

⁴⁰ Marriage of Abraham Narvais to Sarah B. Alvares (before 1687) see the “Will of David Alvares, 1693” IRO lib. 7 fol. 130; AJA SC-234. From the same will, marriage between David B. Alvares and Raquel Narvais (before 1687). Marriage between Mordechai Massiah to Sarah Dacosta de Andrade (before 1747) see the “Will of Angeli Dacosta de Andrade, 1748” BA lib. 26 fol. 321; AJA SC-2707.

(Kitty) Villa Real.⁴¹ Kitty and Philip had grown up together and both later testified to being in love when they originally decided to contract marriage. Kitty's father had opposed this marriage apparently because a much wealthier suitor, Joseph da Costa Villa Real, had proposed marriage to Kitty in 1726. In this instance it would seem that a Sephardic father opposed the consanguineous marriage of his daughter in order to ensure the continuity of family wealth. Kitty's father's strategy was a successful one. When Joseph Da Costa Villa Real died in 1730, after only three years of marriage, he left Kitty a mother of two and an extraordinarily wealthy woman.

It is not known why Kitty's father vehemently opposed their marriage a second time when the love affair between Kitty and Philip began anew almost immediately after the death of Joseph da Costa Villa Real. Within a year, Philip and Kitty had already made public declarations to marry each other and had exchanged an extravagant ring purchased by Kitty. After making several attempts to contact her under lock and key in her father's house, Philip saw no other choice but to take the matter to court. Either Kitty's father saw something deficient in Philip's character or opposed this marriage on no other grounds than that he stood against the institution of consanguineous marriage. His opposition to the second attempt at marriage between Kitty and Philip suggests that he may have been opposed to consanguineous marriage all along.

Marriage between first cousins was actively discussed in late eighteenth-century Jamaica as well. In December of 1796 there appeared an editorial in the monthly moral journal of Kingston, the *Columbian Magazine*, by an anonymous subscriber under the pseudonym

⁴¹ Jacob Mendes Dacosta and Catherine Dacosta Villa Real, *The Proceedings at Large in the Arches Court of Canterbury Between Mr. Jacob Mendes Da Costa and Mrs. Catherine Da Costa Villa Real Both of the Jewish Religion, and Cousin Germans. Relating to a Marriage Contract* (London, 1734).

Hymenus entitled, “On Marrying Cousins.”⁴² Hymenus explained that he had fallen in love with his cousin who had reciprocated his affection though her father prevented their marriage on the grounds that it stood opposed to the will of God. Hymenus ultimately decided to bring his case before the court of public opinion. He mounted a defense of consanguineous marriage by citing biblical proofs illustrating God’s divine approbation. Though Hymenus, of course, found ample precedent from both the Old and New Testament, his argument is sealed with a uniquely eighteenth-century flourish, the pursuit of happiness: “there can remain no reason...to obstruct such a marriage and thereby render a fellow creature unhappy, by refusing a grant, which may be necessary to the common ease of his being.”

Hymenus’s editorial reveals that at the end of the eighteenth century, consanguineous marriage had become a controversial issue within Jamaican society just when the frequency of such marriages appears to be dropping among their Jewish neighbors. It is attractive to ascribe the characterization of a pre-modern relic to consanguineous marriage and to attribute its decline among Sephardim to the increasing legitimacy of romantic love and affective individualism.⁴³ But, the irony of both Hymenus’s editorial and Phillip and Kitty’s court proceedings is that in both cases the modern legitimacy of companionate love and the pursuit of happiness were seen as legitimate reasons for the persistence of consanguineous marriage.

Though Sephardim certainly continued to pursue near exclusive endogamous marriages among themselves it appears that consanguineous marriage began to diminish in practice either in response to a rising aversion to such marriages throughout the English Atlantic or perhaps as

⁴² “On Marrying Cousins,” *Columbian Magazine*, December 1796, 461–64.

⁴³ On “affective individualism” in eighteenth-century English society see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

an outcome of the increasing acceptability of freely choosing marriage partners based solely on affective considerations.

CONSENT CLAUSES

The third element of Rebecca Brandon's story with implications for West-Indian Jewish society at large is what I refer to as a "consent clause": conditional inheritance dependent on marriage with the consent of a guardian. After Rebecca's grandfather allowed her to marry a partner of her choice—in the event that David refused the marriage—he added the critical caveat that in order to receive her inheritance her marriage partner had to meet with her mother's approval. Consent clauses were not only an attempt to exercise patriarchal control over daughters; they were also an attempt to preserve the economic and ethnic integrity of the Sephardic family. Therefore, consent clauses must be understood within the context of a broader eighteenth-century concern over the legitimacy of love and affective individualism as determinants of marriage.

In one extreme use of a consent clause, the Barbadian testator Moderchai Burgos stipulated in his will of 1736 that if his beneficiary Hester Aboab (most likely his wife's niece), married without the consent of his wife Lunah she would forfeit her entire inheritance: "I give...unto Hester Aboab the daughter of David Aboab the sum of one thousand pounds...on her day of marriage with this provisoe [sic] that she...obtains the consent of Lunah Burgos my wife...to such marriage but if the said Hester marries without obtaining such consent it is my will...that this legacy shall be absolutely void."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ "Will of Mordechai Burgos, 1736" BA lib. 27 fol. 193; AJA SC-1490.

Out of 300 wills, consent clauses appear in a total of only 16 cases (5.3 percent). They include cases of both male and female testators requiring consent for the marriage of both sons and daughters. The consenting parties include surviving parents (in every case the mother) as well as unrelated male executors appointed as guardians. The frequency of consent clauses appears to rise during the 1720s, peaking during the 1730s (4 cases), and remains stable through the 1760s (4 cases) followed by a sharp decline between 1770 and the beginning of the nineteenth century with only a single identifiable case over the course of four decades (one that occurred in the will of a Jamaican Jew then living in London).⁴⁵ Similar to the frequency of consanguineous marriage, coercive marriage wanes toward the end of the century.

The historian Yosef Kaplan has identified the distinctively Western Sephardic concern over companionate marriages on a communal level. He does so by tracing regulations regarding “clandestine marriage”: marriages performed without the consent of parents or communal leaders.⁴⁶ By the 1730s, clandestine marriage had become one of the dominant concerns of the Amsterdam *mahamad* who inaugurated several new *takanot* intended to prevent and to punish the practice. In a 1735 ordinance, which approached clandestine marriage as an act of male deception, stiff penalties were meted out to husbands and their male witnesses for marriage outside the approved channels. Clandestine marriage had been perceived by the *mahamad* as male deception by manipulating unsuspecting women into marriage in order to take sexual

⁴⁵ My sample reveals sharp dips in the frequency of consent clauses during the 1740s and 1750s. I suspect this is a product of a skewed distribution of the sample rather than demonstrative of a true decline. For the latest appearance of a consent clause, see the “Will of Abraham Aguilar, 1794” IRO lib. 59 fol. 78; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

⁴⁶ Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 280–300.

advantage of them.⁴⁷ In this early ordinance they did not suspect, or chose not to recognize, that clandestine marriage may have been a mutual decision.

By 1772, all bridegrooms of the Amsterdam Jewish community were required to swear an oath that there had been no premarital sex. Further, by the 1780s, regulations were passed in both Amsterdam and London that made women equally culpable in cases of clandestine marriage thereby tacitly acknowledging the reality that clandestine marriage was not always an act of male deception but may be motivated by mutual affection expressed equally between men and women.

The issue of clandestine marriage had also been a principal concern of the Curaçao *mahamad* during the same period. In 1726, the Curaçao *mahamad* expressly forbade the practice:

...observing that marriages celebrated among our nation in the presence of [only] two witnesses, though valid, give rise to many difficulties, have consulted with our omniscient sage...Raph[ae]l Jesurun to remedy the situation. [The] [s]aid [Hakham] found it expedient, with the approval of the gentlemen of the Mahamad and councilors, to enact a Regulation henceforth prohibiting anyone, under pain of Beraha [euphemism for herem], from performing marriages without the attendance or approval of the Hakham and prohibiting under the same penalty any member or stranger from acting as witness for those marriages celebrated without the attendance or approval of our Hakham. In addition to the marriage performer and the witnesses incurring the penalty of Beraha, such marriages shall be considered null and void.⁴⁸

This regulation, in addition to considering the marriage null and void, held to account not only the couple but also the person performing the ceremony as well as their witnesses. It was repeated in Curaçao again in 1749 with the same parameters and then again recited publicly during evening prayers one night in January of 1751.⁴⁹ In 1756, the Curaçao *mahamad* evoked

⁴⁷ Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 290–291.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 565.

⁴⁹ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 578–579.

the authority of Amsterdam in establishing even harsher punishments “to prevent all manner of deception and seduction.”⁵⁰ The new regulation punished clandestine marriage both with full excommunication and the payment of a fine.

The Curaçao *mahamad* again reissued a ban on clandestine marriage in 1768. This time they not only stiffened the penalty by threatening to garnish the wages of men found to have been married clandestinely, they also touched on the element of male deception and a sense of unique Spanish-Portuguese feminine virtue:

As honor and chastity of the daughters of Israel is one of the virtues so highly esteemed in our Holy Law and regarded as the true essence of their beauty...the Mahamad...together with the eminent Hakham, having remarked the wonton dissipation and unspeakable excess between the young men and maidens of our Nation, their unbridled levity and frivolity which, because of their close association with each other, very often results in the girls yielding their honor on the young man's promise of marriage, and without [thought of] preserving the glory of their forebears they degrade it by their ugly, filthy, ignominious deeds and trample upon and disgrace their family honor; without caring about the betrayal of a negative precept of having carnal intercourse prohibited and forbidden by our Holy Law to a *Nidah* (menstruating woman) in which they become accomplices to a crime, the penalty for which is divine extirpation, all the while not foreseeing possible death for the young man after the commission of that vile deed, and perdition and dishonor for her. The said gentlemen of the Mahamad...in the company of the eminent Hakham, unanimously...resolved to take measures toward checking this indecency and preventing immodesty and levity among the daughters of Israel. Henceforth, (anyone) committing such a base act shall not, without any exception, be protected by the gentlemen of the Mahamad...who, on the contrary, will abandon them and leave them for what they are, and when they...come to marry each other, or if they are obliged to marry, neither the Hakham nor the Hazanim [cantors] [nor] the gentlemen of the Mahamad will sign their marriage contract....⁵¹

When the ban on clandestine marriage was revised in 1809 the Curaçao *mahamad* included a critical new dimension. Whereas before, the consent of the *hakham* only had been required, now officially recognized marriage required the consent of parents: “No person

⁵⁰ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 602.

⁵¹ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 611.

whatsoever shall presume to give kedushin [marriage]...in a Clandestine manner without the Consent of their Parents”⁵²

Concern over the dangers of companionate love as a destabilizing force was certainly not unique to Western Sephardim. In 1753, the controversial “Marriage Act” passed in England annulling any marriage unsanctioned by a guardian or recognized member of the clergy.⁵³ This law put English women at severe risk. Now they could be deceived into marriage by men who knew the marriage would later be annulled. Patricia Seed reveals parallel concerns over marital instability in eighteenth-century colonial Mexico.⁵⁴ The threat of individual choice in marriage partners there required that parents resort to new mechanisms of coercion such as leveraging inheritance though usually cast within the language of a sense of Castilian honor.

But, as Kaplan points out, Sephardim met this particular challenge with their own set of considerations. First and foremost, Kaplan argues that clandestine marriage simply threatened the channels of inheritance and the preservation of family fortunes among the elite who were the ones pushing these regulations forward. However, Kaplan also recognizes that by the mid-eighteenth century, the “threat of Eros,” as he calls it, endangered much more than the continuity of family wealth. Regulations against clandestine marriage during the late eighteenth century “no longer [functioned] to ensure that family property would not flee into foreign hands [only]...but to guard the boundaries of the social identity of the well-connected class, which depended on the

⁵² Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 602.

⁵³ See Eve Tavor Bannet, “The Marriage Act of 1753: ‘A Most Cruel Law for the Fair Sex’” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 233–254.

⁵⁴ Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts Over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 96–157.

values of lineage, status symbols and memories of the splendid past.”⁵⁵ The “threat of Eros” had become a threat to Sephardic identity itself. If sons and daughters could choose marriage partners based on affective interests what stopped them from marrying Ashkenazim, or non-Jews, or in the West Indies, opting not to marry at all but rather to live with either freed or enslaved women of color in monogamous long-term relationships?

Consent clauses served a similar function on a private and familial level as regulations against clandestine marriage found in Amsterdam and Curaçao on a communal level. How then do we account for the great infrequency and the ultimate disappearance of consent clauses in the West Indies at a time when in both Amsterdam and Curaçao there appears to be increasing anxiety over unsanctioned marriage? In purely economic terms, the 5.3 percent of Jamaican testators who included consent clauses in their wills may reflect the propertied elite who did nothing more than protect their property. This would be corroborated by a comparative investigation of probate inventories that, unlike wills, give a sense of the true value of a single estate. If this was indeed the case, then as Sephardic wealth diminished toward the turn of the nineteenth century so too did the need for consent clauses.

The fact that consent clauses are so uncommon among West Indian testators in general may also suggest that romantic love and affective individualism had become largely legitimized on a familial and individual level by the late eighteenth century; thereby eliminating not only the need for consent clauses but the desire to include them at all. This would shed light on the ordinances being passed in places like Amsterdam and Curaçao with ever-greater frequency and severity. These regulations were a public response to the private validation of companionate

⁵⁵ Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, “The Threat of Eros,” 292.

love. A comparative study of Jewish wills from both sides of the Atlantic would add further dimension to the different concerns over unsanctioned marriage on both a communal and a private level. Nonetheless, it may be that anxiety over the perpetuation of Sephardic ethnic singularity was a communal construct rather than a personal reality for Sephardim living on the Caribbean peripheries of the Diaspora.

By the late eighteenth century there also appeared to be real alternatives to marriage among West Indian Sephardim. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there are at least 14 cases of clear concubinage between Jewish men and women of color. 13 of those cases occur after 1750, and of those, 10 are unmarried men who acknowledged their children of color and their mistresses in their wills. It is hard to judge if the substantial increase of concubinage in the West Indies after the mid eighteenth century reflects a true increase or simply a destigmatization allowing men to be more articulate about their extramarital relationships. But, in either case, it is clear that concubinage had become a real alternative to marriage by the late eighteenth century. While the legitimacy of romantic love may have necessitated the use of consent clauses during mid-century, the fragility of marriage in the West Indies rendered consent clauses almost completely obsolete especially in a situation where, with less wealth in circulation, there were fewer tools to coerce marriage.

CONCLUSION

Rebecca Brandon at nearly eighty years old drafted her own will in 1795 in which she was identified as a “spinster” implying that, against the wishes of her grandfather, she did not, in

the end, marry her cousin David.⁵⁶ It is unknown if she refused the arranged marriage or if her cousin David had refused, thus leaving her with a more than comfortable inheritance. If she indeed was the one to refuse she may have preferred the life of a single woman over marriage to a cousin which, as has been shown, had started to be seen as morally reprehensible among some circles in the British Atlantic. She may have refused the marriage on the grounds that it was not a marriage predicated on love but on the patriarchal decision of her grandfather. She may have also found an alternative to marriage, as was the case among the men in her society. Though we can only speculate on Rebecca's emotional reaction to coerced marriage, she seems to have been the exception to the rule. Like so many other West Indian Sephardim, her arranged marriage was an attempt to preserve and perpetuate a sense of Sephardic ethnic singularity.

⁵⁶ "Will of Rebecca Pereira Brandon, 1801" IRO lib. 67 fol. 216; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

CHAPTER FOUR
SEXUALITY AND SENTIMENT: CONCUBINAGE AND THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC FAMILY

On March 25, 1795, Moses Gomes Fonseca traveled from Kingston to Spanish Town to manumit Nancy, Sally, and Nelly James, the daughters of a “free black woman” named Eleanor Minol Thomas.¹ Moses, who does not mention a wife or legitimate children in his will, manumitted his daughters out of “the natural love and affection which I have and bear towards my three mulatto children.”² Eleanor seems to have only received her freedom from her non-Jewish owner a couple months before Moses manumitted their children. After paying the manumission fee and the cost of the administrative stamp, Moses arranged the mandatory security bond: a five-pound life annuity for each of his enfranchised children. Five years later, an ailing Moses drafted his last will and testament.³ After allocating funds for his funeral expenses and offering a donation to the Portuguese Synagogue in Kingston, Moses bequeathed the remainder of his estate to his concubine⁴ Eleanor and their three children.

¹ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/21, 125–6.

² It is possible that Moses Gomes Fonseca was a resident in St. Eustatius in 1790 listed in a census as married with two children. If indeed these are the same person then Moses was born in Bayonne and in 1787 married Sara de David Rodriques da Costa with whom he had two children. Sometime after 1790 he would have moved to Jamaica where he died ten years later. Since he does not mention a wife or children in his will it is possible that they died sometime before 1795, at which point he had children with Eleanor M. Thomas or that he abandoned his original family. See Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 1050, 1066.

³ “Will of Moses Gomes Fonseca, 1800” IRO lib. 67 fol. 58; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

⁴ I use the term “concubine” to refer to women in relationships that are not legally recognized. Therefore, “concubine” is used to refer to women even when they may have been living in what has been referred to as a “marriage Surinam-style” meaning long-term, monogamous, relationships between white men and women of color. This was almost certainly the case with Moses G. Fonseca and Eleanor M. Thomas. On “marriage Surinam-style” see Rudolf A. J. Van Lier, *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 77–8; with regard to the Jews see, 158; and see also Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 228. Schorsch brings examples where it appears that some couples had an actual marriage under Jewish law with a *ketubah*. This could also be the case in Jamaica but in the absence of internal records we can only speculate.

This chapter examines the emotional bonds between Spanish-Portuguese men, women of color, and their children in the late eighteenth-century West Indies. Whereas previous scholarship has focused on the absorption of people of color into Atlantic Jewish communities, this study of sentiment offers an alternative mode of inquiry by focusing on families. Though there is little concrete evidence to suggest the nature of Jewish identity possessed by “mulatto” children of Jewish men in Jamaica or Barbados, manumission records and wills are explored here as measures of devotion on the part of Sephardic men toward their natural children and their mistresses regardless of Jewish identity. The evidence points to the incorporation of people of color into the Sephardic family, though not without some of the same racial tensions found in other places on a communal level, and raises new questions about the role of ethnic continuity as a determinant of familial belonging for late eighteenth-century Western Sephardim.

JEWISH SLAVE OWNERSHIP AND CONCUBINAGE IN THE BRITISH-WEST INDIES

Nearly every Jewish household in the colonial British West Indies possessed enslaved domestic labor. 18 out of the 20 Jewish households listed on the 1680 census of Port Royal owned domestic slaves.⁵ In Bridgetown, Jews on average during the late seventeenth century owned four domestic slaves per household.⁶ And, among the 188 Jamaican Jewish households (both Sephardic and Ashkenazic) taxed in 1745 only 23 (12.2 percent) did not own slaves.⁷ Enslaved domestic laborers were thus a regular presence in Jewish homes and an integral part of the daily routine. Edward Long wrote in 1774 referring to Jamaican society in general, though

⁵ Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 186.

⁶ Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 47–48.

⁷ Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 188–192.

undoubtedly applicable to Jewish households as well: “if there are children in the family, each child has its nurse; and each nurse, her assistant boy or girl.”⁸

Individual slaves were mentioned by name in the estates of nearly half of all Jewish testators sampled here (144, 48 percent).⁹ An additional 28 testators (9.3 percent) mentioned slaves in their estate but did not list them as individuals raising the total number of the known Jewish slave owning testators to 172 (57.3 percent). The most slaves listed by name in any single estate are found in the 1722 will of Moses Touro, a Kingston merchant, who bequeathed 35 individual slaves to his beneficiaries.¹⁰

Freed people of color were listed as beneficiaries by 38 individual testators representing a total of 77 individual beneficiaries. Among them are some exceptional cases that demonstrate a close, almost familial, bond between the enslaved and their owners. For example, the thirty-one year old unmarried Port Royal merchant, Solomon Franco, drafted his will in 1721.¹¹ After supporting his five married sisters (one in Spanish Town, one in London, and three in Amsterdam) he dedicated the remainder of his estate to his domestic servant known as Anne, as a reward for her “honest and faithful” service. Anne must have been either indebted to Solomon, or dependent on him, because she indentured herself after her manumission:

in regard that a negro woman called Anne hath faithfully and honestly served me I have lattely given her her freedom...at the same tyme she hath bound herself to me for the term of three years by an Indenture of Apprentishipp[.] now my will [is] that immediately after my death the said indenture be...cancelled and I doe by this my last Will and

⁸ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 282

⁹ They bequeathed a total of 911 individual slaves mentioned by name with an average number of 6.3 slaves per estate.

¹⁰ “Will of Moses Touro, 1724” IRO lib. 16 fol. 99; AJA SC-12412.

¹¹ “Will of Solomon Franco, 1721” IRO lib. 16 fol. 176; AJA SC-3558; see also the “Tombstone of Solomon Franco, 1721” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 102, no. 1113.

Testament declare the said Anne free and do...discharge her of the said Indenture...And I do give... her...the sume of fifty pounds...also all my household stuff consisting of what kind soever...And I further will...that my [executors]....may...permit the said Anne immediately after my death...to take away...my said house hold stuff and also...Anne's chests and trunks without being searched by any person whatsoever

Jewish slave ownership in the West Indies has been apologetically portrayed as guided by a religiously informed humanitarianism. Isaac and Suzanne Emmanuel, for instance, wrote without qualification: “the slaves employed by Jews were generally treated more humanely.”¹² Similarly, in his sweeping history of Jewish slave ownership in the Americas, Saul Friedman echoed this assumption: “in the West Indies, it was *customary* for Jews to emancipate several blacks in their wills.”¹³

To the contrary, it is not difficult to demonstrate that a clear ethos of accumulation existed and, unsurprisingly, even dominated among Jews in the colonial British West Indies in support of Jonathan Schorsch's statement: “the behavior of Sephardim in the Atlantic world toward Blacks and toward their slaves...resembled that of their host population and often was...lacking in Jewish particularities.”¹⁴ Jewish testators in the eighteenth-century West Indies bequeathed slaves, along with the “increase” of the females, or sold them for the “highest and best price” with much greater frequency than they were “emancipated.” Slaves were manumitted

¹² Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, I: 79.

¹³ Emphasis mine. Saul S. Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 68; See also the discussion in Jonathan Schorsch, “Transformations in the Manumission of Slaves by Jews from East to West: Pressures from the Atlantic Slave Trade” in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, eds. Rosmary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 94, n. 82.

¹⁴ Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World*, 7.

by only 41 testators sampled here though they were bequeathed by 172—over thirteen times more (see table V).

Jews mirrored the slave owning patterns of their non-Jewish neighbors in more ways than just their posture toward them as accumulated wealth. Indications appear of considerable tensions between Jews and enslaved and free people of color. For instance, Jews placed advertisements in late eighteenth-century West Indian newspapers for Runaway slaves with as much frequency as non-Jews:

RUN AWAY last night from the subscriber, *Two Spanish Negro Men*, the one a SAMBO, remarkable stout and thick, about 5 feet 3 inches high, short hair, mixed with some grey, named AUGUSTINE, has a Spanish mark on one of his hands. The other is very black, named LORENZO, has a scar upon his right foot; is about 5 feet 7 inches high, and black eyed. Whoever apprehends the above Negroes, shall have FIVE POUNDS Reward for each. → As they are very artful, and pretend to be free, they may attempt getting off the Island; therefore all Masters of Vessels are forewarned from carrying them off. *Jacob Prato Henriques*¹⁵

In 1798 an enslaved woman named Jenny was tried and found guilty in a slave court for attempting to poison the wife of her owner, Abraham Nunes Henriques.¹⁶ She was sentenced to be “transported for life” from Jamaica. Moses Levy Alvares, a married shopkeeper from Kingston who drafted his will in 1765, fathered a “quadroon” daughter with the domestic slave of a non-Jewish man to whom he bequeathed a black female slave named Nanny with his initials “MA” branded on her shoulder.¹⁷

¹⁵ *The Royal Gazette*, June 18, 1780.

¹⁶ “Domestic Occurrences” *The Columbian Magazine*, April, 1798, 711.

¹⁷ “Will of Moses Levy Alvares, 1765” IRO lib. 36 fol. 9; AJA SC-234.

Concubinage with both white women and women of color was a widespread practice in colonial Jamaica both among single as well as married men.¹⁸ Despite its ubiquity, there were those among the English settlers who saw it as an affront to civil life. Edward Long testified both to the ubiquity of the practice as well as to the indignation it aroused in some eighteenth-century Jamaican settlers:

It is a question easily answered, whether...it would be more for the interest of Britain, that Jamaica should be possessed and peopled by white inhabitants, or by Negroes and Mulattos?—Let any man turn his eyes to the Spanish American dominions, and behold what a vicious, brutal, and degenerate breed of mongrels has been there produced, between Spaniards, Blacks, Indians, and their mixed progeny; and he must be of opinion, that it might be much better for Britain, and Jamaica too, if the white men in that colony would abate of their infatuated attachments to black women. And...perform the duty incumbent on every good citizen, by raising in honourable wedlock a race of unadulterated beings. The trite pretence of most men here, for not entering into that state, is “the heavy and intolerable expense it will bring upon them”.... Can we possibly admit any force in their excuse when we observe them lavishing their fortune with unbounded liberality upon a common prostitute? When we see one of these votaries of celibacy...disperse his estate between her and her brats, whom he blindly acknowledges for his children when in truth they are entitled to claim twenty other fathers?... of all the vices reigning here; none are so flagrant as this of concubinage with white women, or cohabitating with Negresses and Mulattas, free or slaves....Many are the men, of every rank, quality, and degree here, who would much rather riot in these goatish embraces, than share the pure and lawful bliss derived from matrimonial, mutual love.¹⁹

Questions of concubinage and ethnic fluidity in Atlantic Jewish society have been understudied in the British West Indies. With the exception of a short paragraph in Jacob R. Marcus’s *The Colonial American Jew*, the literature on concubinage among Jews in the colonial

¹⁸ On Jamaican concubinage between white men and women of color and enslaved women’s responses see Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire*, 209–240.

¹⁹ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 327–28. Long goes on to described mistresses of color in extraordinary negative terms, II: 331.

Atlantic has focused predominantly on the Dutch colonies of Suriname and Curaçao.²⁰ This skewed focus is not surprising given the relative surfeit of internal Jewish records from the larger Dutch communities that stand in sharp contrast to the paucity of similar documentation from colonial Jamaica and Barbados.²¹ This greater scholarly attention devoted to Dutch colonies has also helped to shape a perception of the English West Indies as settlements of peripheral importance in the Western Sephardic Diaspora. However, as one of the largest plantation economies dependent on slave labor in the Caribbean during the eighteenth century—second only to St. Domingue and far more so than arid Curaçao—Jamaica and Barbados are particularly fruitful locations for investigating questions of concubinage and ethnic fluidity among Spanish-Portuguese colonial Jews.

Marcus cites evidence of concubinage among Jamaican Jews from a survey of 8 eighteenth-century wills from Jewish male testators where slaves were manumitted or otherwise provided for, only 5 of which are convincing. One of Marcus's clear cases of concubinage is extracted from a 1765 will where the testator explicitly "leaves a bequest to his quadroon daughter." Marcus, however, also included highly speculative cases. For example, he cites a 1752 will where "a man who has a wife living out of the country manumits a Negro woman" who may or may not have been his mistress, and a will from 1722 where simply "three slaves are

²⁰ Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 121–2, n. 48 and III: 1408–9; see also the short description of concubiniage in Thomas G. August, "Family Structure and Jewish Continuity in Jamaica," *American Jewish Archives* 41, no. 1 (1989): 37–39. For the literature on concubinage in the Dutch colonial Jewish context see ns. 45 and 57 below.

²¹ The scarcity of internal records from the early Jewish settlement of Jamaica is most likely due to repeated natural disasters which destroyed communal institutions such as the devastating 1907 earthquake which leveled the islands synagogues along with the records kept within them. The earliest known Jamaican Jewish birth and death records are from 1789 (Ashkenazim) and 1807 (Sephardim) and the earliest known communal minutes book from Jamaica dates from 1907 (found in the archives of the United Congregation of Israelites, Kingston, Jamaica).

manumitted” without reference to relationship or even gender. To expand upon the groundbreaking work of Marcus and better understand the scope and nature of concubinage among Jews in colonial Jamaica it is therefore necessary to assess a wider range of sources and apply a more selective set of definitional criteria.

SENTIMENT IN A SLAVE SOCIETY

Sentiment is defined here as emotional attachments between Jewish men, women of color, and their children expressed through manumission or inheritance. Before discussing the presence of people of color within the Spanish-Portuguese family, the paradoxical role of sentiment in a slave society must be further defined. Colonial Atlantic slave societies have, quite rightly, been characterized as dominated by an ethos of accumulation—the exploitive treatment of slaves as inhuman chattel. This approach has been especially important with regard to the posture of white men toward enslaved women who were not only the chief victims of sexual exploitation, adventurism, and violence but were also commodified through long-term investment in their “increase” or offspring.²²

That is not to say that enslaved women were nothing more than passive victims. Recent scholarship has challenged a dominant narrative of the submissive role of enslaved women in the colonial West Indies by focusing on their reproductive agency and their resistance to enslavement.²³ Furthermore, enslaved women were more likely than enslaved men to serve as

²² See Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

²³ See Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650–1838* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

household labor, a position often synonymous with concubinage. As housekeepers, cooks, and nursemaids, enslaved women were not only more integrated into the routine function of the white household than men, they tended to live longer more healthy lives, assume leadership roles among the enslaved community, and at times even took advantage of their stressful sexually exploitive situations to improve their own and their children's stations.²⁴

Quotidian interpersonal interactions between the enslaved and their owners were not always hostile despite their exploitive foundations. The paradoxical nature of sentiment within a slave society is hinted at for instance among none other than the Jamaican slave manager Thomas Thistlewood, who despite his now infamous, though not unusual, obsessive sexual abuse of enslaved women, also seemed to have formed an emotional bond with an enslaved woman named Phibbah with whom he lived for several years.²⁵ The available sources are too limited, however, to give an accurate picture of the extent to which emotional bonds between a white master and an enslaved woman such as Thistlewood and Phibbah developed out of true affection or out of a mutually beneficial companionship ultimately rooted in the white male prerogative.

This paradoxical sentiment is especially evident with regard to paternity. Though companionate relationships between white masters and enslaved children certainly were not limited to paternity (see chapter 5), paternity most often translated into concrete financial and material support even at the expense of the white male father or his legitimate beneficiaries.

²⁴ See Hilary Beckles, "Black Female Slaves and White Households in Barbados" in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 111–125; see also Trevor Burnard, "'Do Thou in Gentle Phibia Smile': Scenes from an Interracial Marriage, Jamaica" in *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 82–105.

²⁵ See Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire*; see also Burnard, "'Do Thou in Gentle Phibia Smile,'" 93.

The complex negotiation between sentiment and accumulation among Jewish slave owners is illustrated in the manumission record sampled here for the 21 years between 1779 and 1799.²⁶ Out of a total of 219 slaves manumitted by Jews in those years, 95 were children. A vast majority of these freed children, 77 individuals (81 percent), are identified by complexions other than “negro.” The disparity between the manumission of black children and those identified as other than “negro” suggests a strong correlation between the manumission of children and white biological paternity.²⁷

It would have been unlikely for children to be manumitted as a reward for their “faithful service,” and manumission motivated by biological paternity is just as likely as manumission granted as a reward to mothers actualized through their children. Biological paternity was most likely the dominant motivation behind the manumission of *children* among Jamaican Jews though it should be made clear that the Jewish manumitter associated with the enfranchised child was not necessarily always the white parent in question. The great infrequency with which *black* children were manumitted, however, points to long-term investment in the enslaved and their descendants. Children of mixed-ancestry occupied a decisively more favorable social position among colonial Jamaican Jews who, echoing colonial patterns generally, treated their black slaves with the same acquisitive ethos as non-Jews.

It should also be made clear that sexual relationships with women of color, even those that produced offspring, did not always produce affective attachments. Jacob Bravo, for instance, along with his wife Sarah and three children, built a large family in late eighteenth-century

²⁶ This periodization is dictated by the availability of archival sources. There are no extant manumission records in Jamaican archives before 1779.

²⁷ For the relationship between manumission and illegitimacy in Jamaica see Burnard, ““Do Thou in Gentle Phibia Smile,”” 83 n. 10.

Jamaica.²⁸ Included in Jacob's ample assets was a small agricultural estate called Lucy Lawn where he, "did dwell together with my Negro woman slave named Betty and her two daughters named Abba and Pheba." Though Jacob most likely had a sexual relationship with Betty—based on the unusual terminology of "dwell together"—he wills that she along with her two daughters, who were presumably also his daughters,²⁹ "be immediately after my decease sold for the highest and best price that can be gotten for the same by my executors." If indeed the relationship between Jacob Bravo and Betty was a sexual one, and one that produced children, their relationship produced for Jacob no apparent sense of devotion or financial obligation toward his mistress or his children.

MANUMISSION AS AN INDICATION OF SENTIMENT

Manumission was certainly perceived as an act of kindness by some slave owners, a reward for faithful service, and perhaps even an act of affective devotion. Manumission records are, however, notoriously misleading. In most cases, manumission records are frustratingly inarticulate, with infrequent reference to motivation. Moreover, as the historian John F. Campbell has suggested, slave owners may have used manumission in the colonial West Indies as a method of manipulation by dangling the promise of freedom to ensure loyalty and hard work.³⁰ Given the general infrequency of manumission in Jamaica this is without doubt often true.

²⁸ "Will of Jacob Bravo, 1780" IRO lib. 46, fol. 81; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

²⁹ Though the will refers to the daughters as "her" daughters, the likely sexual relationship between Jacob and their mother is suggestive of his paternity.

³⁰ John F. Campbell, "How Free is Free? The Limits of Manumission," in *Paths to Freedom*, 143–59.

Nevertheless, the act of manumission itself is revealing. Manumission was an expensive undertaking in late eighteenth-century Jamaica as has been demonstrated in the case of Moses Gomes Fonseca. Owners were required to pay a manumission fee in addition to the cost of the administrative stamp.³¹ The security bond, put into law by an act of the Assembly of Jamaica in 1774, was the greatest cost to the owner, requiring a five-pound life annuity for the freed person.³² This annuity was typically deposited into the hands of the official churchwardens as one lump sum at the time of manumission and later dispensed by them on a yearly basis to the enfranchised individual: The manumission of slaves in Jamaica after 1774 was thus deliberate and certainly not an act of cruelty.

Manumission in general occurred infrequently throughout the Atlantic World.³³ In Jamaica, the prohibitive cost of manumission seems to have been but one factor preventing many Jews, as well as non-Jews, from manumitting slaves. Therefore, to whatever extent manumission is revealing about concubinage, it is only a limited measure of its pervasiveness among Jews in colonial Jamaica. In the 21 years between 1779 and 1799 Jews appear in the manumission record in only 161 cases, representing a total of 150 individual Jews.³⁴ If we conservatively estimate the

³¹ See JA, 1B/11/Laws of Jamaica, 1792–99. The Act states that “Over and above the stamp to which deed of manumission are liable by this act, a further duty of 10*l* is hereby set thereon: in cases where manumission is made by will, an additional stamp of 20*s* is to be imposed on the security-bond required by 15 *Geo. III cap. XVIII* [1774]; which bonds must be recorded in the secretary’s office before they can be admitted in evidence: Proviso, manumissions by or at the instance of any public or parochial body not contemplated hereby.”

³² JA, 1B/11/Laws of Jamaica, 1760–92, the assembly was compelled to pass this legislation as a remedy to the apparently pervasive problem of slave owners dumping enfeebled or rebellious slaves on the public coffers through manumission. The Assembly viewed these manumitted slaves as a “nuisance to the community through frequent thefts.”

³³ Robin Blackburn, “Introduction,” in *Paths to Freedom*, 2–3.

³⁴ I have disqualified some cases where the owners are questionably Jewish, mostly those of free black or mulatto owners with clearly Jewish names. For instance: Lea Ferro, a free “mulatto woman” (JA, Manumissions,

Jewish population of Jamaica to be around 1000 individuals by the turn of the nineteenth century, then no more than 13 percent of the total Jewish population in Jamaica is represented in the manumission record.

Among the 161 cases of Jewish owners manumitting slaves between 1779 and 1799, I have identified 53 cases (25 percent) where parental affection was the most likely motivation.³⁵ Though Rosemary Brana-Shute has cautioned against using the manumission of women or children of color to draw conclusions about white paternity, concubinage, or affection in general, these 53 cases are those where children identified by complexions other than “negro” are included along with or in proximity to either the manumission of a specific woman or with an explicit reference to a mother.³⁶ Some cases among the 161, though exhibiting these criteria, contain indications of other motivations and are therefore not included as possible cases of concubinage. For instance, in some manumissions the recognized owner did not pay the fee. In such cases it is suspected that the manumitted adult female or child with mixed ancestry was the mistress or offspring of another white man—though this may also have been another Jew—or alternatively, that the freed slaves themselves purchased their freedom.

From among these 53 cases some representative examples are instructive. Only two instances of manumission between 1779 and 1799 state explicitly that paternity was *in fact* the motivation. The first, as has already been discussed, was Moses Gomes Fonseca’s manumission

1B/11/6/15/219–220) and Joseph Silvera, a “mulatto bricklayer” (JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/16/58–59). These cases have been disqualified because of the difficulty of determining the Jewishness of freed slaves in Jamaica.

³⁵ Lone male owners, and the executors of deceased lone males, constitute the majority of Jewish owners, 72 cases (45 percent). I do not include cases where Jews manumitted slaves in groups. Among the groups are 24 married couples (15 percent) and 18 groups with unknown associations (11 percent).

³⁶ Rosemary Brana-Shute, “Sex and Gender in Surinamese Manumissions,” in *Paths to Freedom*, 185–9.

of his three children through “the natural love and affection which I have and bear towards my three mulatto children”—an uncommon formulation that appears in only a single Jewish manumission from this time, implying that Fonseca likely insisted on its use. Four months later, Daniel Almeyda manumitted his “reputed daughter,” a mulatto girl named Abigail Almeyda.³⁷ Other less explicit examples are as follows: In 1782, the shopkeeper David Gomes Rabello manumitted a “negro” woman named Affey along with her five mulatto children: Mary, Alexander, Lydia, Sarah and Sophia Reallo; a name which is either a clerical error or a variation of Rabello.³⁸ In 1786, Isaac de Castro manumitted a mulatto woman named Sarah Winters along with Isaac, her infant quadroon son.³⁹ Hananel de Aguilar manumitted a mulatto infant named Allan M. Leon de Aguilar in 1788, who is identified as the son of a negro woman named Nancy M. Leon.⁴⁰ On August 9, 1799, Abraham Alexander Lindo manumitted a mulatto child named James the son of a negro woman named Sally.⁴¹ The very next day, Abraham manumitted Sally.⁴²

Cases of individual Jewish female owners manumitting slaves have not been discounted as potential cases of manumission through parental devotion. Most women who manumit slaves do so within close proximity to the deaths of their husbands. 72 percent of Jewish women who appear in the manumission record are identified as widows who were likely settling their

³⁷ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/23, 103. The term “reputed” is a notarial euphemism for illegitimacy.

³⁸ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/15, 49–50.

³⁹ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/16, 139.

⁴⁰ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/16, 175.

⁴¹ JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/24, 17.

⁴² JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/22, 212–13.

husband's estates.⁴³ For example, in 1781 the widow Grace Lopes Torres manumitted a mulatto boy named Richard, the son of a negro woman named Eve, a year after her husband's death.⁴⁴ This may even suggest that Jewish wives in Jamaica, as with Jewish wives in Curaçao, and throughout Atlantic slave societies, tacitly countenanced the public secret of concubinage.⁴⁵

Given that one quarter of the cases of manumission among Jewish owners can be shown to reasonably suggest paternity as the most likely motivation, it can be concluded that manumission may in some cases represent an expression of affectivity between white men, their children, and their mistresses. Biological parental affection was a major, though certainly not the only or even dominant, motivation behind manumissions for Jewish slave owners.

VOLUNTARY SUPPORT THROUGH INHERITANCE

Among the 300 testators sampled here there are 14 cases of clear sexual relationships with women of color (4.6 percent). Male testators composed all fourteen wills. Certainly, male testators had reasons to be inexplicit about their sexual exploits in their last will and testaments. The vast majority of male testators that recognize their mistresses and extramarital children are single men (10 cases, 71.4 percent). Only four married testators recognized their "reputed"

⁴³10 women (21 percent of women) appear in the record as deceased and their estates are being settled and only 3 women (7 percent of women) are identified as "spinsters" who are likely manumitting slaves on their own accord.

⁴⁴JA, Manumissions, 1B/11/6/21, 120–1. Grace is identified as the wife of David Lopes Torres in his will recorded in 1780 (IRO, Wills, Fol. 46 Lib.133). Though David L. Torres does make provisions for several slaves in his will he does not mention Eve or Richard explicitly.

⁴⁵ See Eva Abraham-Van der Mark, "Marriage and Concubinage Among the Sephardic Merchant Elite of Curaçao," in *Women and Change in the Caribbean: A Pan-Caribbean Perspective*, ed. Janet H. Momsen (Kingston; Bloomington: Ian Randle; Indiana University Press, 1993), 38–49; See also Aviva Ben-Ur, "Peripheral Inclusion: Communal Belonging in Suriname's Sephardic Community," in *Religion, Gender, and Culture in the Pre-Modern World*, eds. Alexandra Cuffel and Brian Britt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 200–201.

children and mistresses. This may suggest that Jewish wives *did not*, in fact, accept the widespread prevalence of concubinage in the colonial West Indies to the extent assumed by previous researchers.⁴⁶ Among these 14 male testators, 13 wills are drafted after 1750. The recognition of “reputed” children and mistresses thus may have become increasingly socially acceptable during the second half of the eighteenth century.

It comes as no surprise that the vast majority of men who recognized their mistresses and children are single without legitimate heirs at the time they drafted their wills. The earliest known case comes from the 1730 will of the Spanish Town merchant Jacob Baruh Yzidro.⁴⁷ By 1730, Jacob’s wife had died and he requested to be buried next to her in the Spanish Town Jewish cemetery. After allocating inheritance to his Jewish sister and six nephews, he made several bequests to Sarah Blackburn, his “natural daughter”: “I bequeath unto Sarah Baruh ats [aka] Blackburn my natural daughter by one Mary Blackburn of Kingston...one negro woman slave named Marrotta & a negro girl named Nancy.”

Jacob further requested that his executors pay for Sarah Blackburn’s education until she reached the age of 14. However, he added one critical caveat: “provided...that she the said Sarah shall *not* be...educated by the said Mary Blackburn her mother.” He further inserted a “consent clause” that would determine Sarah’s future marriage choice: “I also give...unto Sarah Baruh ats Blackburn on the day of her marriage the sume of one hundred pounds if she marrys with the consent of my Exors.” Jacob never mentioned Sarah’s complexion and it cannot be assumed that she was the daughter of a woman of color. Jacob’s stipulations regarding Sarah’s education and

⁴⁶ See Abraham-Van der Mark, “Marriage and Concubinage.” The assumption that Jewish wives publically countenanced the widespread social acceptance of concubinage in the colonial West Indies has been largely predicated on the testimonies of twentieth-century female informants from Curaçao.

⁴⁷ “Will of Jacob Baruh Yzidro, 1730” IRO lib. 42 fol. 130; AJA, SC-13333.

marriage may imply that he hoped for her to not only be raised and educated as a Jew—something her non-Jewish mother would not have been able to provide—but also to possibly marry a Jewish man.

In another, much less elaborate case, the testator Abraham Henriques de Sousa of Kingston supported his children of color along with their mother in his will of 1770.⁴⁸ He supported no other Jewish family: “I give...unto my two mulatto daughters Sarah de Souza and Rebecca de Souza unto each of them the like sum of five shillings...I [also] bequeath unto a free negroe woman named Phillis who has lived with me for many years and is the mother of Sarah and Rebecca de Souza the sum of fifty pounds...and all the household furniture that is in my house.” Like Moses Gomes Fonseca, it appears that the single man Abraham Henriques de Sousa lived in a companionate nuclear family with Phillis and their two daughters though without a legally recognized marriage. Besides their Jewish names, there is no other indication that Abraham’s two daughters Sarah and Rebecca possessed any form of Jewish identity.

There are two cases of married men without surviving legitimate children at the time they drafted their wills who recognized their mistresses and children. The Spanish Town shopkeeper, Moses Levy Alvares composed his will in 1765.⁴⁹ Moses lived in Kingston along with his wife Esther and his wife’s sister Rachel Abenatar who lived with them in their home. He also left to his friend Abraham Correa his Hebrew books in addition to a “common prayer book.” Moses had a child with the mulatto slave of a non-Jewish owner to whom he bequeathed a legacy of five pounds in addition to the use of one of his slaves: “My will...is that my Executrix [his wife] and executors...do immediately after my decease permit...my Quadroon child named Sally begotten

⁴⁸ “Will of Abraham Henriques de Sousa, 1773” IRO lib. 41 fol. 171; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

⁴⁹ “Will of Moses Levy Alvares, 1765” IRO lib. 36 fol. 9; AJA SC-234.

of the body of a mullatto slave named Elsey belonging to Lewis Fortune to have free use...of my negro woman slave named Nanny marked on the right shoulder MA.”

Judah Cohen Henriques was a married Kingston merchant also without known surviving legitimate children who composed his will in the year 1807.⁵⁰ After arranging an annuity of sixty pounds for the support of his wife Rebecca, Judah allocated a one-time sum of twenty pounds to each of his three “reputed” children: a “mustee” daughter named Clara and two “mustee” sons named Gerald and Isaac. To “Perina Maria Garcia a free Black Woman and unto such reputed child or children Male or Female as may happen to leave me surviving,” Judah not only bequeathed the monetary residuum of his estate but also his house on West Street in Kingston (a Jewish residential enclave). Judah also instructed his executors to keep his commercial stable in operation and to support Perina with the proceeds. Additionally, Judah provided Perina with two separate annuities for rent and medical expenses: “the Doctors Bill for medicines furnished and attendance on the said Perina Maria Garcia.” It is likely that Perina was pregnant at the time Judah drafted his will.

Judah’s three reputed children are mentioned in his will alongside members of his extended family network that included two Spanish-Portuguese cousins and two nieces. Not only are his cousins mentioned after his reputed children, they are allotted a substantially smaller sum—twenty pounds each—and are given no additional portion of the estate. Though monetary value alone is certainly not a fully representative reflection of familial affection, it does provide at least some sense of how reputed children of color shared an estate alongside Jewish family members.

⁵⁰ “Will of Judah Cohen Henriques, 1808” IRO lib. 79 fol. 30; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

Both the cases of Moses Levy Alvares and Judah Cohen Henriques who fathered children with concubines even though they had been married may be explained by a need for a surrogate mother. It is possible that these two Jewish couples had no surviving children or had been unable to conceive and therefore relied on women of color as surrogates. They may have even been relying on a precedent within both Jewish and Iberian traditions for sanctioned surrogacy.⁵¹

There are only two cases where married testators with surviving children also recognized their reputed children. It was in cases like these where there is some evidence of tension regarding the place of reputed children within the family. One is the case of Jacob Bravo, mentioned above, who not only did not recognize his mistress and children with inheritance, but also instructed his executors to sell them “for the highest and best price.”

Emmanuel Baruh Lousada, quite possibly the most distinguished Jewish legal expert living in Kingston in the late eighteenth century, drafted his will in 1795, two years before his death.⁵² Emmanuel made bequests to his wife Esther and his four sons Jacob, Daniel, Aaron, and Isaac along with his daughter, granddaughter, son-in-law, and several cousins and nieces. To his four sons he left an equal annuity of one hundred and forty pounds, later amended to two hundred, for the financing of clothing and education. Furthermore, individualized lump sums for each of his sons are mentioned in Emmanuel’s will as having been established as a legacy

⁵¹ Some early modern rabbinic figures allowed for surrogacy with a *shifka kushit* (black female slave) see Howard Tzvi Adelman, “Servants and Sexuality: Seduction, Surrogacy, and Rape: Some Observations Concerning Class, Gender, and Race in Early Modern Italian Jewish Families” in *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 88–89 and 92–93

⁵² “Will of Emmanuel Baruh Lousada, 1797” IRO lib. 62 fol. 185; AJA, SC-7495. For the year of his death see “Tombstone of Emmanuel Baruh Lousada, 1797,” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 52–3, no. 299. E. B. Lousada’s legal expertise and prominent leadership role among Jamaican Jews is clear given that he appeared six times as an executor in the manumission records for other Jews. Furthermore, E. B. Lousada’s name appeared as one of the subscribers to the 1786 edition of the Laws of Jamaica, see Herbert Friedenwald, “Material for the History of the Jews in the British West Indies,” *PAJHS* 5 (1897): 45–101, 57.

entrusted to him by his cousin Grace Lopes Torres, who had died only a day before Emmanuel drafted his will.⁵³ By far the largest portion of Grace's legacy to Emmanuel was bequeathed to Aaron Baruh Lousada, who is allotted the substantial sum of a thousand pounds.

Though in the original draft of his will Emmanuel made no distinction between his sons, 8 days later, he attached a codicil stipulating that though Aaron is only his reputed son, anyone who contested his due share would in-turn forfeit his or her own inheritance which would be given instead to Aaron:

whereas Aaron Baruh Lousada who is in my Will named as one of my sons is in fact only my reputed child now for preventing all possible controversy I do hereby declare that the person intended to be benefited in my said Will by the description of Aaron Baruh Lousada one of my sons is my reputed Son Aaron Baruh Lousada and it is my Will that if any person or persons whosoever shall in any wise controvert or call in question the right or capacity of my said reputed son Aaron Baruh Lousada to take all or any of the Benefits intended for him by my said Will such person or persons so controverting or calling in question such right or capacity shall forfeit and lose all benefits whatsoever to which he she or they might or would otherwise be entitled under my said Will.

Emmanuel anticipated that some of his beneficiaries, possibly even his wife, would challenge Aaron's right of inheritance. There are also other elements in Aaron's life story that suggest his peripheral place within the family. Perhaps because of his illegitimacy, Aaron lived apart from the Lousada household, raised under the care of his aunt, Grace Lopes Torres, who referred to him as her "adopted son."⁵⁴ Despite his familial marginality, however, upon his death in 1808 at

⁵³ "Tombstone of Grace Lopes Torres, 1797," Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 94, no. 1066. Emmanuel's will was most likely drafted to accommodate the estate of Grace Lopes Torres. Grace actually composed her will eleven years earlier in 1786.

⁵⁴ "Will of Grace Lopes Torres, 1795" IRO, lib. 61 fol. 105; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

age 25 Aaron Baruh Lousada was buried in the Spanish Town Jewish cemetery implying that he had been to some extent incorporated into the Jewish communal life of the island.⁵⁵

The qualifier “reputed” only indicates illegitimacy in general and is not used exclusively to describe illegitimate children of color. The identity of Aaron’s mother is never stated nor is any hint apparent as to Aaron’s complexion. One possible, though highly circumstantial, clue to his racial identity is Aaron’s proximity to people of color in the will of his aunt and adopted mother Grace. Aaron’s inheritance and the provisions for his upkeep are mentioned directly before and after a list of slaves to be manumitted and a list of slaves bequeathed to Emmanuel whose cumulative value is intended exclusively for Aaron’s benefit. Aaron’s proximity to people of color and his financial stake in them in Grace’s will, may suggest that he was perceived to be related or connected to them in some way. One other circumstantial clue about Aaron’s racial identity is that Grace appointed an enslaved female named Amelia to “attend upon and be for the Service of my adopted son Aaron Baruh Lousada Son of my Cousin Emmanuel Baruh Lousada.”⁵⁶ Grace further stipulated that Amelia be manumitted after Aaron reached the age of majority or in the event of his premature death. Given that Amelia’s fate was so connected to Aaron’s it is attractive, though *highly* speculative, to suggest that she may have in fact been his biological mother. If Aaron was the son of a white woman, however, his place in the Lousada family still reveals much about the nature of illegitimacy and paternal affectivity.

⁵⁵ “Tombstone of Aaron Baruh Lousada, 1808,” Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 109, no. 1161. The years of this tombstone reasonably correspond with the life of Aaron B. Lousada. I could not definitively confirm that this tombstone was indeed that of the reputed son of E. B. Lousada and not another member of the community with the same name.

⁵⁶ Amelia was bequeathed to Grace by her husband David Lopes Torres in 1776 ten years before she drafted her will. Amelia was described in David’s will as “a Negroe girl.” See the “Will of David Lopes Torres, 1780” IRO lib. 46 fol. 133; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

If Aaron was of mixed ancestry then his life serves as a compelling model of the full extent people of color could be absorbed into both the Jamaican Spanish-Portuguese Jewish family and community despite some clear acrimony. Even though he lived apart from the Lousada household and there were those in the family who clearly questioned his legitimacy, he was undoubtedly dear to his father and aunt, initially listed without distinction among his brothers, given an unaltered family name (indeed the name of Emmanuel's father), and buried among Jews in a Jewish cemetery. Perhaps most importantly, neither Aaron's father nor his adopted mother felt in any way compelled to define him as a person of color which may indicate a complete lack of racial stigma or the desire to prevent such a stigma from developing.

If Aaron was the illegitimate son of a white mistress, possibly even Jewish herself, then Aaron's case offers an important control to the other evidence presented here where the racial identity of reputed children is stated clearly. In cases where the racial identity of reputed children is certain, there are few indications of such a complete familial integration enjoyed by Aaron. Similarly, some of the tensions evident in the incorporation of Aaron into the family would reflect tensions of illegitimacy in general and therefore reveal little about racial stigma and should be considered as nothing more. If the tensions apparent in the will of Emmanuel Baruh Lousada are indeed tied to issues of race then many of the same conflicts apparent on a communal level with regard to the place of "Mulatto Jews" in Suriname and Amsterdam are also seen to be manifest on a familial level as well.

BETWEEN COMMUNAL AND FAMILIAL ABSORPTION

Previous research on concubinage among Jews in the Dutch Atlantic has been mainly focused on the question of communal “absorption” or the Jewishness of people of color: To what extent were “mulatto” children of Jewish men integrated into the Jewish community? Were “mulatto” children circumcised, encouraged to convert, or buried in Jewish cemeteries? Or were children of Jewish fathers perhaps considered Jewish by virtue of their patrilineal descent?

The Surinamese *mahamad* made explicit attempts to define the social status of “mulatto Jews.”⁵⁷ Modeled on its mother community in Amsterdam, the Surinamese *mahamad*, between 1777 and the turn of the century, enacted legislation intended to stigmatize “mulatto Jews” as second-class citizens by making it impossible for them to obtain the status of *yehidim* and by restricting their communal involvement such as their choice of seating within the synagogue and of burial plots.⁵⁸ This racial schism eventually led to a communal conflict involving the Dutch colonial authorities when the mulatto Jews of Suriname attempted to secede from the community in 1779 to form their own synagogue, *Darkhe Yesharim*.⁵⁹

According to Robert Cohen and Aviva Ben-Ur there was, nevertheless, little question of the actual Jewishness of mulatto Jews and the persistence of a strong communal imperative to convert the descendants of Jewish men to Judaism. Cohen cites a letter from three leaders of the Paramaribo community to the local governor in 1794: “Several among the Portuguese Jewish Nation, out of private affection begot children with some of their female slaves or mulattos. Out

⁵⁷ Robert Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment: Surinam in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 156–72; Aviva Ben-Ur, “Peripheral Inclusion,” 185–210.

⁵⁸ On Amsterdam see Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 51–77.

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment*, 163–174.

of particular love for the Jewish religion the boys were properly circumcised and the girls instructed by a teacher.”⁶⁰

Subsequent scholarship has attempted to further define the communal place of mulatto Jews in the Atlantic World. On the one hand, Jonathan Schorsch has suggested that as a result of the formation of a new identity among Western Sephardim as “White” during the seventeenth century, there developed a racialized aversion to the absorption of people of color into their communities, especially in the English Caribbean.⁶¹ On the other hand, Aviva Ben-Ur has argued that Euraficans who embraced Judaism culturally, if not fully halakhically (legally), played a decisive role in the continuity of Jewish life in Suriname.⁶² Over time, the discourse of communal legitimacy became increasingly deracialized as Euraficans became more integrated into Jewish communal life.⁶³ According to Ben-Ur, Jews were not unique in converting their descendants of color to the household religion, but they did seem to have taken a lead among the Surinamese planter class.⁶⁴

Given the ethnic solidarity among Spanish-Portuguese Jews that transcended national boundaries, it stands to reason that what was true for the Spanish-Portuguese community in Dutch Suriname was equally true for the Spanish-Portuguese community in English Jamaica. The scarcity of internal Jewish documentation from Jamaica and Barbados, however, prevents

⁶⁰ Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment*, 159.

⁶¹ Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks*, 166–216; see also Schorsch, “Transformations in the Manumission of Slaves,” 68–95.

⁶² Aviva Ben-Ur, “A Matriarchal Matter: Slavery, Conversion, and Upward Mobility in Suriname’s Jewish Community,” in *Atlantic Diasporas*, 152–169.

⁶³ Ben-Ur, “A Matriarchal Matter,” 164–165

⁶⁴ Ben-Ur, “A Matriarchal Matter,” 158.

firm conclusions about the communal place of Mulatto Jews. Some circumstantial evidence illustrates the complexity of the issue in the British West Indies.

Several known people of color appear in the manumission record with clearly Jewish names but there is no surviving record of those individuals buried in Jamaican cemeteries.⁶⁵ Whereas burial patterns at the Surinamese cemetery at Jodensavanne (Cassipora Creek) reflect the social marginality of Mulatto Jews, no such burial patterns are evident at Hunt's Bay cemetery in Jamaica, making it impossible to speculate on the presence of people of color there.⁶⁶ Alternatively, the lack of an apparent marginal section for people of color at Hunt's Bay may indicate their complete lack of social distinctiveness. In several wills free people of color are bequeathed properties situated within Jewish residential enclaves, suggesting at least some level of social integration.

There is a single will from the British West Indies where the testator expressed an explicit desire for his children of color to be raised Jewish. In his will of 1766, the Ashkenazic testator Michael Levy from Kingston supported—along with his family in Ansbach, Bavaria—his “housekeeper and friend” Frances Warren with household goods, a legacy of twenty-five pounds, three hundred pounds for the purchase of her own slaves, and a full year of rent. He then allocated equally substantial bequests to his two children Sarah and Abraham Levy who were “begotten on the body of the said Frances Warren.” His children's inheritance was conditional on the promise that they be “educated in England according to the Jewish Faith and religion and be maintained in as decent manner as my estate can afford.”

⁶⁵ See n. 34 above.

⁶⁶ See Ben-Ur, “Peripheral Inclusion,” 191–193. See also Rachel Frankel, “Antecedents and Remnants of Jodensavanne: the Synagogues and Cemeteries of the First Permanent Plantation Settlement of New World Jews,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*, 422–423.

Conversion, communal belonging, marriage, and burial are not the only measures of absorption. Absorption could and did take place to varying degrees in the West Indies through the incorporation of mulatto children into the Jewish family even when there is no evidence of active conversion. The place of people of color in the Jewish family was certainly not unambiguous and suffered from many of the same anxieties about race, class, and status as are found in Suriname or Amsterdam on a communal level. But in Jamaica and Barbados the question of absorption must be explored on a personal and familial level rather than through communal class distinctions.

CONCLUSION

The incorporation of the children of color into the Spanish-Portuguese household may indeed reinforce the continued relevance of ethnic identity as a determinant of family belonging throughout the eighteenth century. These children may have been absorbed into the household precisely because, as children of Sephardic men, they were considered ethnically of the Nation. Their ethnic status transcended their racial difference just as ethnicity seemed to defy religious differences between Converso and Jewish kin.

What is surprising is the extent to which the mistresses of Spanish-Portuguese men, with no ethnic connection to the Nation, also shared in their estates along with their fully Jewish family. Here is where the continuity of ethnic Spanish-Portuguese identity comes into conflict with West Indian society during the eighteenth-century. As with the challenges to marriage choices among Spanish-Portuguese Jews, the legitimacy of companionate relationships, even those not officially sanctioned, perhaps began to supersede the importance of ethnic continuity.

Especially for men with no known legitimate children or wives, such as Moses Gomes Fonseca, concubines, such as Eleanor M. Thomas, and their children formed a type of conjugal nuclear family. Moses Gomes Fonseca was indeed an emotional revolutionary when he manumitted his three daughters choosing to incorporate the conventional, but highly uncommon, phrase “the natural love and affection which I have and bear towards my three mulatto children.”

CHAPTER FIVE

“DICHOSO ANGEL MORDECHAI”: COLONIAL SPANISH-PORTUGUESE CHILDHOOD

Here Lyeth ye Body of ye Beloved Mordecay Burgos de Piza who Departed this World ye 22^d of July 1749 Aged 11 Years 8 Months & 3 Days & Was Lamented by Ye Publick¹

Sepultura/ Del Bienaventura y/ dichoso Angel Mordechai/ Burgos Israel de Pisa /que a los 11 Años 8 Meses/ y tres dias de su Vida/ paso ala major en Sabat/ 18 de Menachem Año de/ 5509 que Corresponde/ a 22 Julio de 1749

The Angel Rose Up

Mordechai, a good, beautiful, and innocent boy
He was a human with pure and god-fearing attributes
Great in knowledge was this lad for his days
Twelve years he had not reached
He made it clear of his
Desire for instruction and wisdom
Before his illness was cut short by his death
He departed from his father with these words
God will bestow on you blessing
And from my brothers and sisters you will receive happiness
And he left them wailing and crying
And he rose to the heavens happy

ויעל מלאך

מרדכי נער טוב יפה תמים
מירא דכיא בריה מדותיו
גדול בדעת צעיר הוא בימים
לשנים עשר לא הגיעו שנותיו
והודיע דעתו שהיא שלמה
בחפץ הלמוד והחכמה
קודם קיצור חליו חש מתתו
נפטר מן אביו באלה מלות
יצו השם אתך את ברכתו
ומאחי ואחיותי תראה גילות
ועזבם בוכים וצועקים
והוא שמח עלה לשחקים

Mordechai Burgos Depiza died in Bridgetown, Barbados at age 11 in 1749. His death seems to have resulted in a profound sense of loss among not only his family but the entire Jewish community of Barbados. His tombstone contained an expensive Hebrew epitaph remembering him as a child of rare distinction—notable for his love of learning, his abilities as a student, as well as his emotional intelligence. The Spanish portion of his epitaph refers to him as a “happy angel,” an expression of the joy he brought to others during his short life. Like so many other West Indian children, Jews and non-Jews alike, he was the victim of a frighteningly high child mortality rate during the eighteenth century.

¹ “Tombstone of Mordechai Burgos De Piza, 1749,” Shilstone, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 52–53, no. 98.

This chapter explores the lives of West Indian Sephardic children like Mordechai Burgos Depiza. I address three themes that expose some of the ways the continuity of Sephardic identity rooted in their Converso past shaped the lives of colonial West Indian Jewish children and their parents. First, this chapter explores the practice of god-parentage as a marker of Sephardic identity. Second, the ways in which Sephardic ideals of patriarchy clashed with a Jewish communal imperative to provide education. And third, familial attachments to unrelated children of color. In each of these themes Iberian ideals of parenting and child rearing interacted in dynamic ways with parallel trends in the colonial Caribbean.

SPANISH-PORTUGUESE INFANTS AND MOTHERS

The unusually high rate of infant mortality in the colonial West Indies merited the attention of contemporary observers as well as modern historians. Trevor Burnard writes: “life expectancy at birth was under ten years with a full third of infants born in Kingston in the second quarter of the eighteenth century dying before their first birthday.”² Between 1710 and 1879, Jamaican Jews buried at least one hundred and thirty-five of their children under the age of ten in their cemeteries.³

In one extreme case, the Portuguese Jew Joseph Dacosta Alvarenga buried three children in the span of eight years; two of them likely died from the same illness having been buried only four days apart in January of 1684 and the third may have died as a result of the devastating earthquake that struck Port Royal in June of 1692.⁴ As late as the mid-nineteenth century, the

² Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire*, 17.

³ Based on tombstone inscriptions found in Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*.

⁴ Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, nos. 37, 38, 39. Benjamin Obediente, “son of Joseph da Costa Alvarenga,” died in August of 1692 just two months after the devastating earthquake and tidal wave.

Ashkenazic couple Solomon and Rebecca Lazarus buried five of their children over the span of fourteen years between 1825 and 1839.⁵

Jewish women in the West Indies, as elsewhere, made extensive use of wet nurses. Though we are unaware of Jewish women serving in this capacity in the British West Indies there is anecdotal evidence from other parts of the Western Sephardic Diaspora to suggest that Spanish-Portuguese women had little problem relying on non-Jewish wet nurses. Moses Cassuto, an Italian Jewish traveler in the 1730s, remarked that the Sephardim of London “have Protestants in their employ...even as wet-nurses, and entrusted to them without any trouble their own little children to be brought up, the suspicion that they might baptize them never occurring....”⁶

An analysis of birth spacing patterns among Spanish-Portuguese Jews in other parts of the British Atlantic, where the extant records are more complete, also suggests the widespread use of wet nurses. The Ashkenazic settler Benjamin Sheftall kept diligent records of births and deaths within the short-lived Portuguese Jewish settlement of Savannah, Georgia.⁷ Sheftall’s records, unlike circumcision registries, included the births of both males and females. Hester Ledismo (Esther Ladesma), the wife of the corn farmer Moses Ledismo, like all early settlers in Georgia, both Jewish and non-Jewish, had arrived directly from England in 1733.⁸ According to the Sheftall records, Hester gave birth to three children in Savannah. She was first “brought to bed” with a son named Ralph (or Abraham) on July 25, 1733. Less than two years later, on July

⁵ See Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, in chronological order of the date on the tombstone, nos. 756, 778, 776, 742, 772.

⁶ Richard Barnett, “The Travels of Moses Cassuto,” in *Remember the Days: Essays on Anglo-Jewish History Presented to Cecil Roth by Members of the Council of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, ed. John M. Shaftesley (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1966), 73–121, 103.

⁷ Malcolm H. Stern, “The Sheftall Diaries: Vital Records of Savannah Jewry, 1733–1808” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 54 nos. 1–4 (1964–5): 242–277.

⁸ Ellis Merton Coulter and Albert B. Saye, eds., *A List of the Early Settlers of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1949), part II “Persons Who Went from Europe to Georgia on Their Own Account,” 82, no. 632.

12, 1735, Hester gave birth to Rebekah followed by Rachel, an additional twenty-three months later. Hester Ledismo's rapid birth spacing suggests that she had been relying on wet nurses rather than allowing time for her children to wean before conceiving another child.⁹ She and her fellow mothers in Savannah appear to have been modeling the rapid birth trends in vogue in England where pregnancy itself, along with its clothing and accessories, had become fashionable during this period.¹⁰

West Indian Jewish women probably employed women of color as wet nurses. White creole women in Jamaica appear to have been relying heavily on women of color to nurse their children much to the disapproval of Edward Long, the indefatigable champion of English gentility in the West Indies. He wrote scathingly in 1770s about how white women allowed black women to nurse their children:

Whilst I render all due praise to the Creole ladies for their many amiable qualities, impartiality forbids me to suppress what is highly to their discredit; I mean, their disdain to suckle their own helpless offspring! They give them up to a Negroe or Mulatto wet nurse, without reflecting that her blood may be corrupted, or considering the influence which the milk may have with respect to the disposition, as well as health, of their little ones. This shameful and savage custom they borrowed from England; and, finding it relieves them from a little trouble, it has gained their general sanction. How barbarous the usage, which, to purchase a respite from that endearing employment so agreeable to the humanity of their sex, so consonant to the laws of nature, at once so honorable and delightful to a real parent, thus sacrifices the well-being of a child! Notwithstanding every precaution...it is a million to one but she [the wet nurse] harbours in her blood the seeds of many terrible distempers. There is scarcely one of these nurses who is not a common prostitute, or at least who has not commerce with more than one man; or who has not some latent taint of the venereal distemper.... The place of a nurse is anxiously coveted by all of them, as it is usually productive of various emoluments to them; and on this account they are sure to keep secret any ailment they labour under, however detrimental to the child, rather than be turned off. The mothers in England are at

⁹ On early modern birth spacing patterns see Beatrice Gottlieb, *The Family in the Western World: From Black Death to the Industrial Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 121–124.

¹⁰ See Dror Wahrman, "On Queen Bees and Being Queens: A Late-Eighteenth-Century 'Cultural Revolution'?" in *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750–1820*, eds. Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 251–280.

least able to find some healthy labourer's wife; and none of them, I venture to believe, would send their infants to be suckled in any of the brothels of London. It is true, the Creole ladies have not the same advantage; they can meet with none other than unchaste nurses; and this is another unanswerable argument to prove the necessity of their administering their own breast, in preference to one that they are under so many reasons to suspect is not equally proper.

Numberless have been the poor little victims to this pernicious custom. Many innocents have thus been murdered; and many more have sucked in disease, which rendered their life miserable, or suddenly cut short the thread of it.¹¹

Long goes on to describe the various illnesses that he believed to have been the result of contaminated breast milk from black wet nurses (such as tapeworm) that, in his view, claimed far too many infant lives in Jamaica. He then also described the treatment of these disorders, citing the works of professionalized medical specialists. It appears that West Indian women had been aware and fully engaged in the new medicalized approach to child rearing in circulation throughout the eighteenth-century British Atlantic.¹² This popular approach to parenting emphasized parental noninterference with a child's natural development by allowing the infant to move about freely in resistance to the earlier practice of swaddling. Edward Long approvingly observed the parenting methods of Jamaican white creole mothers:

...the method used here in rearing children secures the graceful form of their [children's] persons.... They are clad loose and light, go without the incumbrance of stockings, are bathed regularly in water every day, and exposed freely to the air; so that no part of the world can shew [sic] more beautiful children. The girls are not suffered to wear stays [corsets] (those abominable machines for the destruction of shape and health); but, as well as the boys, are indulged in such a cool and unconfined attire, as admits the free extension of their limbs and muscles.¹³

¹¹ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 276–277.

¹² On the eighteenth-century medicalization of child rearing in the colonial Americas see Jacqueline S. Reinier, *From Virtue to Character: American Childhood, 1775–1850* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 46–71. See also Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001), 89–91.

¹³ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 273.

Part of this emerging new medicalized scientific approach toward child rearing in the eighteenth century stemmed from changing perceptions of childhood itself as a distinctive stage of development.¹⁴ Parents no longer forced their children into adulthood through invasive practices like swaddling that were seen to help accelerate a child's growth from an infant state.¹⁵ Along with medicalization came a trend to individualize infants and children and relate to them as distinctive personalities. This trend seems to have also taken hold among Jamaican and Barbadian Jews.

Affluent Jews invested considerably in the ornamentation of tombstones imported from England that often contained panegyric poetry in addition to elaborate iconography, though generally reserved for adults only.¹⁶ As Sephardic wealth diminished toward the end of the eighteenth century so too did the elaborate designs and poems on tombstones.¹⁷ Though some *children's* tombstones that date from the earlier, more affluent, period of the eighteenth century included some iconographic flourishes as well as panegyrics—as in the case of Mordechai Burgos Depiza—none existed on the tombstones of *infants*. The first infant tombstone to break with this convention in Jamaica appeared in 1802 on the tombstone of Abraham Decordova who died at nineteen-months-old: "...departed this life...after a very painful illness The Lord giveth the Lord taketh and Blessed be his Holy name for evermore."¹⁸ The second embellished tombstone of an infant in Jamaica appeared three years later in 1805 on the epitaph of Abraham

¹⁴ See the classic discussion in Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 33–49, "The Discovery of Childhood."

¹⁵ See Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, 71–72.

¹⁶ It is known that West Indian Jews were importing tombstones from Britain from several wills where the testators specifically earmark funds for a tombstone from Britain.

¹⁷ Nineteenth-century Jamaican tombstones contain almost no iconography.

¹⁸ "Tombstone of Abraham Decordova, 1802" Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 86, no. 1016.

Alberga who died at eight-months-old. Abraham Alberga's epitaph conveyed not only a sense of loss at his death, but also an individualization of an infant who is described as having been "charming":

NOT LOST, BUR [sic] GONE BEFORE here lieth the Body of the Charming Infant Abraham...whom it pleased our Supreme Master to recall to the Celestial Habitation...after only Eight Months Three Weeks, and Four Days Residence on the Terrestrial GLOBE. GOD BE PRAISED.¹⁹

Though we have little specific information about Spanish-Portuguese parenting in the West Indies, from the above incidental evidence it is possible to make some generalizations about the early infancy of Mordechai Burgos Depiza and others like him. Mordechai was not unusual in having died so young but notable in that he managed to survive his infancy. Unlike his counterparts a century earlier, he would have spent his infancy in free flowing clothing, allowed unrestricted movement, as well as regular exposure to fresh air. It is also possible that a black domestic servant or professional wet nurse nursed him.

PADRINHOS AND MADRINHAS

The cultural significance of circumcision for Western Sephardim has received some scholarly attention. Miriam Bodian, for instance, has shown that through the process of rejudaization, circumcision took on significance far beyond the rabbinic intent. It became a salvific blood ritual, an anti-baptism, or a rite of passage marking return to Judaism in the flesh.²⁰ In addition to these cultural dimensions, circumcision took on a distinctive social meaning principally through the role of the godparents. Through the appointment of godparents,

¹⁹ "Tombstone of Abraham Alberga, 1805" Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 47, no. 264.

²⁰ Bodian, *Hebrew of the Portuguese Nation*, 97–98.

West-Indian Spanish-Portuguese Jews perpetuated Iberian-rooted ideals regarding the familial and private responsibility to protect the wellbeing of children.

During the circumcision, the boy was placed on the lap of his *padrinho* (godfather). The *padrinho* was usually a respected member of the child's extended family, but was sometimes an unrelated man of greater economic station and could even be the child's own father. The historian Richard Barnett has suggested a unique role of godparents among Portuguese Jews in England in his study of the circumcision registry of the *mohelim* Isaac and Abraham de Paiba kept between 1715 and 1775.²¹ Although Barnett observes that toward the end of the eighteenth century, as it became more common for Sephardim to marry Ashkenazim in London, there were cases of Sephardim serving as godparents to Ashkenazim and vice versa, the registry lists godparents for nearly every Sephardic boy while godparents are listed for Ashkenazim in only very few instances.

It should be noted that Ashkenazim also appointed godparents during the circumcision ceremony, a practice with medieval origins.²² There is even a case in Jamaica where an Ashkenazi Jew recognized his godson as a beneficiary in his will.²³ Though Ashkenazim certainly continued to include godparents in the circumcision ritual, Sephardim constructed meaning in the ceremony differently. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, when the use of English had become dominant, *mohelim* from the British West Indies continued to refer to *padrinhos* and *madrinhas*, in Portuguese, of Sephardic boys recorded in their circumcision registries while in only very few instances are godparents listed at all for

²¹ Barnett, ed. *The Circumcision Register of Isaac and Abraham de Paiba*, 21.

²² See Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 79–83.

²³ “Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798” IRO lib. 64 fol. 56; AJA SC-127.

Ashkenazim.²⁴ Julia R. Lieberman, writing about the Portuguese Jews of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, asserts that “the role of godparents...was more Iberian than Jewish” based on the observation that the godparents played a similar role in the circumcision ritual as they had for baptisms in Catholic Iberia.²⁵ Godparents held significance for Western Sephardim as a link to a Converso past.

Godparents were expected to play a supportive role in the lives of their godchildren. Godchildren appear as beneficiaries in 14 out of 300 wills (4.6 percent) representing a total of 18 individual godchildren. These *padrinho* and *madrinha* testators offer financial and other material support to their godchildren that often matched similar bequests to their immediate family. Joseph Cohen Deleon of Spanish Town in 1825, for instance, supported his godson and nephew with legacies matching that given to his surviving children.²⁶ Sephardic legacies to godchildren often went beyond mere financial support. Jacob Mendes Seixas of Kingston, for example, bequeathed “a mulatto girl slave named Lucy” to his godson Abraham Hamis de Fonseca in 1779.²⁷ In 1781, Samuel Pinto bequeathed his house and plantation property to his two godchildren and nephews Jacob Pinto and Jacob Fonseca Pinto.²⁸ The Kingston widow Rachel Nunes in 1798 bequeathed to her godson Souao Benaim her bed along with all her bedding.²⁹ And, as late as 1846, a tombstone in Kingston for the three-year-old son of Moses Quixano and

²⁴ See American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), “Records of a West Indian Mohel” *PAJHS* 25 (1917): 114–118.

²⁵ Lieberman, “Childhood and Family among the Western Sephardim,” 146.

²⁶ “Will of Joseph Cohen Deleon, 1825” IRO lib. 106 fol. 79; will not included in the collection of the AJA and also not included in the sample for this study.

²⁷ “Will of Jacob Mendes Seixas, 1779” IRO lib. 46 fol. 25; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

²⁸ “Will of Samuel Pinto, 1783” IRO lib. 49 fol. 162; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

²⁹ “Will of Rachel Mendes, 1806” IRO lib. 76 fol. 211; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

Eliza Henriques, by the (curious) name of William Ludington, was erected by the child's *padrinho*, Jacob Henriques.³⁰

The Iberian dimensions of god-parentage may go even further than just the recreation of the baptismal ceremony. Early modern Iberian society was one built upon social hierarchies predicated on patronage. Patronage was particularly important for Conversos who gained entry into Old Christian society through the support of a patron.³¹ Godparents in early modern Iberia were, indeed, most often the family patrons.³² However, as Judeoconversos began to rejudaize in Western Europe, the Jewish community, by providing charity and education, took on the role of patron in matters of family life and social mobility. Through the institution of god-parentage there persisted an ideal among Sephardim that the inner family circle, rather than the community, would be the arbiter of a child's wellbeing.

EDUCATION

Yosef Kaplan has suggested that one of the principal tensions in the reintegration of Judeoconverso families into Jewish communities was in having to cede the prerogative of childhood education to communal functionaries:

El paso del criptojudasmo a la profesión abierta de la religión judía implicaba, entre otras cosas, un reajuste en la estructura de la familia reconvertida al judaismo. Algunas de las funciones que cumplía mientras ejercía su condición judeo-conversa, como la educación de los niños en el cumplimiento de los preceptos judaicos o la organización del ritual religioso en el ámbito familiar, pasaron a delegarse al marco comunitario judío. La educación pasó a manos de las instituciones especializadas para ese fin y la sinagoga de

³⁰ "Tombstone of William Ludington, 1846" Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 74, no. 761.

³¹ See Jaime Contreras, "Family and Patronage: The Judeo-Converso Minority in Spain," in *Cultural Encounters: the Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 141–42. Contreras cites a few examples.

³² See Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, "A Status of Her Own: Women and Family Identities in Seventeenth-Century Aveiro, Portugal" *Journal of Family History* 34, no. 3 (2009): 3–24, 11.

la comunidad organizada ocupó el lugar que antes tenía la casa criptojudía, que servía de “templo clandestino” para el ceremonial secreto de los conversos. Estos cambios provocaron, más de una vez, tensiones entre la “familia judía nueva” y la congregación de los “judíos nuevos”³³

While in early modern Iberia education had been largely a private matter for Conversos, certainly regarding the transmission of Jewish knowledge, in places like Amsterdam or London, the Jewish *community* took on this role.³⁴ The communal life of the synagogue had usurped the “clandestine temple” of the home. Though the sources are largely inexplicit about this conflict, one early indication is found in the 1645 edition of Menasseh ben Israel’s Portuguese guidebook for “New Jews,” *Thesovro dos dinim*, where he, perhaps skeptical about a newly-Jewish father’s ability to provide a proper education, goes to great lengths to make the case that fathers should fulfill their biblically mandated duty to educate their children by sending them to *school*.³⁵

Amsterdam maintained a *talmud torah* (academy) with a curriculum—modeled on Jesuit precedents—that attracted the attention of several early modern observers.³⁶ The New York community also maintained an official *talmud torah* funded by communal taxation. With an early Ashkenazic majority, the New York community increasingly regulated education over the

³³ Yosef Kaplan, “Familia, matrimonio y sociedad: los casamientos clandestinos en la diáspora sefardí occidental (siglos XVII y XVIII),” *Espacio, tiempo y forma* 4, no. 6 (1993): 129–154, 134–135. “The passage from crypto-Judaism to the open profession of the Jewish religion involved, among other things, adjustments in the structure of the family that converted to Judaism. Some of the functions fulfilled while exercising the crypto-Jewish condition, such as educating children about the fulfillment of Jewish precepts or the organization of religious ritual of the familial sphere, passed to the delegates of the entire Jewish community. Education passed to the hands of specialized institutions for this purpose and the synagogue of the organized community occupied the place that had before been the crypto-Jewish home, that served as a “clandestine temple” for the secret ceremonies of the Conversos. These changes resulted, more than once, in tensions between the “New Jewish family” and the congregation of “New Jews.”

³⁴ On Converso education see, Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 217–242.

³⁵ Menasseh ben Israel, *Thesovro dos dinim* (Amsterdam: Estampado en casa de Elahu Aboab, 5404 [1645]), section II “Tratato do estudo da Divina Ley,” 92–97. See also the discussion in Lieberman, “Childhood and Family” 139–140.

³⁶ See Kaplan, “Bom Judesmo” 354–357.

course of the eighteenth century. The *mahamad* maintained the school with communal funds, hired teachers, set a standard curriculum, and subjected the school to monthly inspection by the *parnasim* (“elders” of the community).³⁷

The New York *mahamad* also regulated childhood decorum. In 1764 they declared “That all the Children, Whether Scholars or not, who are seated, in the places in the Corner...shall be govern’d by the Rabbi, or turnd from thence, on proper application to the Parnassim.”³⁸ Children sat in a designated section of the synagogue under the direct supervision of a communal functionary. It seems that the communal board, adopting a view not unlike that expressed by Menasseh ben Israel in his *Thesovro*, perceived fathers as insufficiently able to control their children, a task instead relegated to communal functionaries. This *takanah* (ordinance) seemed to have had little effect since it had to be reissued a second time in the 1780s.³⁹

Similar regulations were passed in Curaçao though with some significant differences. The communal board there also asserted its authority by granting itself the right of surveillance over children and adolescents. In the earliest regulation regarding childhood in 1707, the Curaçao *mahamad* addressed the problem of “disorders caused...by the big boys and lads who do not attend the Madras [academy]. The boys believe that they are accountable to no one.”⁴⁰ In order to remedy this youthful disorder they empowered the *parnas* (president) to “punish all boys, who are boisterous in the Synagogue.” In the absence of the *parnas* the *mahamad* debated allowing teachers to also carry the rod of discipline but ultimately turned down that proposal. They also

³⁷ AJHS, “From the 2nd Volume of Minute Books of the Congn: Shearith Israel in New York,” *PAJHS* 21 (1913): 83–181, 84–85.

³⁸ AJHS, “From the 2nd Volume of Minute Books of the Congn: Shearith Israel,” 89.

³⁹ AJHS, “From the 2nd Volume of Minute Books of the Congn: Shearith Israel,” 164.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 553.

added that in the event the acting *parnas* had occasion to exercise his punitive responsibilities, “his father shall be unable to prevent this unless he pays the fine specified in our regulations.”⁴¹

The Curaçao *mahamad* clearly anticipated that fathers would oppose their assertion of control over the community’s youth. They therefore, very much unlike the same ordinance in New York where there was no recognition of parental authority, offered the option that “all the gentlemen who do not wish their sons to be under the vigilance of the *parnasim*...should declare that before the gentlemen of the Mahamad so that the boys may be noted down as being subject to the Escamoth [regulations].”⁴² In other words, if fathers did not wish the community to have authority over their sons, the sons then were given the status as adults liable to the same penalties as full members of the congregation. This *takanah* was again issued without change a year later in 1708.⁴³ Therefore, though the nearly exclusively Sephardic Curaçao communal board exercised authority over children, unlike the Ashkenazi majority community of New York, it still recognized the rights of fathers over their own children.

Another important difference between Curaçao and New York is that Curaçao did not appear to operate a single communal *Talmud Torah*. It is evident from the minutes of 1711 that a number of independently run schools existed. These schools were still, however, under the supervision of the *mahamad* and their agent, the *hakham*. In 1711 the Curaçao *mahamad* stated: “all members wishing to open a Jesiba [academy] may do so on obtaining permission from the gentlemen of the Mahamad with the understanding that when the Hakham [here referring to David Nunes Torres] happily arrives, he shall head all of them.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 554

⁴² Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 554

⁴³ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 555

⁴⁴ Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, II: 557

The educational situation in Jamaica and Barbados appears more akin to Curaçao than to New York. The communal minutes from Barbados, which exist only after the year 1791, make no mention of a communal school. There are, however, several incidental reference to independently operated academies. For instance, the petitioner Lunah de Fonseca appeared (several times) before the *mahamad* to request suits of clothing for her son so that he may “attend his school.”⁴⁵ Out of 300 wills, only a single eighteenth-century West Indian Jewish testator made a bequest to, or even mentioned, a Jewish school. The Barbadian testator Aaron Valverde referred to an “academy” in his will of 1746: “I give...unto the wardens...of the Yepibah [sic.] or Accademy in this Island Six pounds.”⁴⁶ It is possible that in Barbados they did maintain a communal school or, more likely, Aaron Valverde was referring to a privately operated yeshiva, the only one in the community.

Jacob R. Marcus writes about eighteenth-century Barbados that though “we find no mention of a school and teacher...there can be no doubt that a school did exist at the time.”⁴⁷ Without relying on this assumption, it is possible to fill some of the gaps by looking at alternative education that may better fit both the West Indian as well as Spanish-Portuguese contexts casting education as a patriarchal rather than communal imperative.

Though we cannot discount the possibility that Jewish schools did exist in the eighteenth-century British West Indies, some records suggest that the more affluent sought education through private tutors for their sons and daughters. Alternatively, like most of the white Jamaican elite, they sent their children to London where their fathers financially supported them. The wealthy Barbadian merchant Mathias Lopez, for instance, recorded in his account book from the

⁴⁵ “Minutes of Nidhe Israel, Barbados,” November 20, 1791.

⁴⁶ “Will of Aaron Valverde, 1746” BA lib. 36 fol. 160; AJA SC-12578.

⁴⁷ Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, I: 131–132.

years 1779 to 1789 quarterly payments to Samuel Guinness, a non-Jewish tutor for his son.⁴⁸ Indeed, a number of Portuguese Jews arrived in Jamaica during the eighteenth century to make their livings as tutors, particularly through instruction in the arts of bourgeois leisure. For example, Joseph Nunes, who described himself as a “professed dancing master,” placed an advertisement in the *St. Jago De La Vega Gazette* in January of 1791 specifying instruction for children.⁴⁹

Wealthy West Indian Jews, like their non-Jewish counterparts, seemed to have resisted homegrown education in the Caribbean and instead sent their children to schools in England.⁵⁰ Edward Long informs us that on average three-quarters of planters sent around 300 children a year to England and at least one third never returned.⁵¹ In hopes of encouraging the establishment of public schools in Jamaica (for both boys and girls), Long chastised white Jamaicans for both failing to support domestic education and for sending their children off to England. He wrote with a bit of tongue-in-cheek that:

It at once excites our pity and regret, that Jamaica, an island more valuable and extensive than any other of the British sugar colonies, should at this day remain unprovided with a proper seminary for the young inhabitants to whom it gives birth...it has too long been the custom for every father here, who has acquired a little property, to send his children, of whatever complexion, to Britain, for education...the father, in the mean while, sends remittance upon remittance...that his son may learn the art of squandering from his very infancy...⁵²

Long also pointed to a ubiquitous fear among white parents that their children, especially their daughters, would become uneducable after prolonged exposure to the profaned English of

⁴⁸ “Account book of Mathias Lopez 1779–1789,” New York Historical Society, MSS Collection BV Barbados, W.I.

⁴⁹ *St. Jago de la Vega Gazette*, January 27, 1791.

⁵⁰ On the West Indian resistance to local education see O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 19–27.

⁵¹ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 246–250, 510–11. See also O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 19, 259 n. 45.

⁵² Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 246–247.

their nannies. He wrote that “the constant intercourse from their [white creole children’s] birth with Negroe domestics, whose drawling, dissonant gibberish they insensibly adopt, and with it no small tincture of their aukward [sic] carriage and vulgar manners; all which they do not easily get rid of, even after an English education, unless sent away extremely young.”⁵³

Jews undoubtedly had similar concerns. As early as 1697 the Kingston merchant Benjamin Henriques requested that after his death his daughter Leah be sent back to London and then on to Livorno: “I give...to my only daughter Leah Henriques all my goods...that belong to me or in any other part of world...it is [also] my will that in peaceable times meeting with good opportunity my Exors. shall send my daughter Leah for London with part of the money and the remainder to send in the next opportunity...to Mr. Nuno ffarnandes Nunes...that they may send her away for Leghorne to her kindred.”⁵⁴

The Barbadian testator Jacob de Fonseca in 1728 devoted his entire estate (after all his debts had been satisfied) to the support of his minor son, presumably a student, Abraham de Fonseca in London.⁵⁵ David Henriques, a Kingston merchant, stipulated in his 1797 will that from his estate his children are to be “maintained and educated in Great Britain...[and] that they be severally taught Hebrew, English, Latin, Greek, French, and Spanish [as well as] Dancing and my daughter be further instructed in Musik.”⁵⁶

The poor among the Jews had fewer options and in the best-case scenario could secure an apprenticeship for their children. It appears though that unlike New York, a community that provided free education for the poor, neither the Jewish communities of Jamaica or Barbados

⁵³ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 278.

⁵⁴ “Will of Benjamin Henriques, 1702” IRO fol. 10 lib. 39; AJA SC-4911.

⁵⁵ “Will of Jacob de Fonseca, 1728” BA lib. 2 fol. 524; AJA SC-2895.

⁵⁶ “Will of David Henriques, 1797” IRO lib. 62 fol. 149; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

maintained a free school for poor children. The lack of any mention of a free school in wills or in the Nidhe Israel communal minutes is corroborated by a series of editorials published in *The Columbian Magazine* of Kingston. In September through October of 1796 the anonymous author Philanthropos (a name making explicit his allegiance to the philanthropic school of pedagogical thought promoting the establishment of free public schools) wrote a series of editorials under the title “On the Schooling of Jew Children.”⁵⁷

Philanthropos opened his editorials by first criticizing the Jews of Jamaica for not adequately adhering to Jewish law and “(in too many instances)...breaking the Sabbath, by riding and otherwise, eating forbidden fruit, and making profane use of the Sacred Name on trivial occasions.”⁵⁸ He then described the public markets in Kingston overrun by disheveled Jewish youths lacking supervision and education: “What a melancholy circumstance it is, to see [Jewish] boys from ten to fifteen years of age and upwards, lurking about the Vendues in quest of contemptible bargains, at the very time they should be acquiring knowledge of reading, writing, and figures, or learning some useful trade!”⁵⁹ He went on to criticize the Kingston Jewish community for not offering educational support for the poor and put forth his own advice on how they might by either establishing their own free school or, as Long suggested before him, establishing general free schools in Jamaica that would be willing to enroll Jewish students. He marveled with an accusatory tone at the seeming incongruity between Jewish wealth and the communal board’s unwillingness to establish a free school for the Jewish poor. Taking into account Philanthropos’s clear hostilities, his editorials nonetheless offer critical insight into

⁵⁷ “On the Schooling of Jew Children,” *The Columbian Magazine*, September 1796, 244–245; October 1796, 320–321, 393–398.

⁵⁸ “On the Schooling of Jew Children,” *The Columbian Magazine*, September 1796, 245.

⁵⁹ “On the Schooling of Jew Children,” *The Columbian Magazine*, September 1796, 245.

indigent Jewish society in Jamaica. First, poverty among Jamaican Jews was a pervasive social problem about which the existing records are otherwise completely silent. Second, Jamaican communal boards, unlike New York, appear *not* to have maintained a free school.

The only child oriented initiative that generated support from West Indian Jews was the orphan society, *Aby Yetomim* [father of the orphans], modeled after its parent institution in Amsterdam.⁶⁰ Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld has argued that the establishment of the *Aby Yetomim* in Amsterdam, the first such society to be established in the Jewish world, was informed by Iberian precedents—the Spanish institution by the same name, Padre de Huérfanos.⁶¹ As indicated by its very name, commitment to a patriarchal Iberian ideal required that the community at large care only for those members of society without fathers.

Whereas most Sephardic testators in Ashkenazic dominated England supported several confraternities including a burial society (*hevra kadisha*), hospice care (*bet holim*), and a school (*talmud torah*), West Indian testators supported only a single confraternity—the *Aby Yetomim*.⁶² The *Aby Yetomim* received donations from forty-five testators sampled here (15 percent). Though little is known about the activity of the *Aby Yetomim* on either Jamaica or Barbados it appears to have existed solely at the largesse of individual Jews. The minutes of Nidhe Israel of Barbados never referred to it in their ledgers.

Like its model institution in Amsterdam, the Barbadian and Jamaican *Aby Yetomim* was likely not a physical orphanage but rather a fund for the support of orphans.⁶³ And, as in

⁶⁰ On the Amsterdam *Aby Yetomim* see Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 105–107.

⁶¹ Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 105.

⁶² See the “Will of Daniel Baruh Lousada, 1770” IRO lib. 38 fol. 176; AJA SC-7495. Though he has connections to Jamaica, he drafted his will in London and supported the London *bet holim* and *hevra kadisha* along with the London *Aby Yetomim*.

⁶³ See Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 105.

Amsterdam, it seemed to have an educational mandate. The educational mission of the Jamaican orphan society is hinted at in the 1807 will of Judah Cohen Henriques from Kingston who along with his standard five-pound bequest to the society also donated his unspecified Hebrew books.⁶⁴ Additionally, as in Amsterdam, the *Aby Yetomim* only cared for male orphans. In his 1767 will, Jacob Lopes Torres made a donation to the *Aby Yetomim* with the hope that one day an orphan society for girls may also be established in Jamaica (see chapter 6).⁶⁵

It is possible that the Jamaican *Aby Yetomim* may have differed from Amsterdam's or London's in one essential way. Illegitimacy was a much more prevalent social problem in the West Indies than in Western Europe. The Jamaican and Barbadian *Aby Yetomim* may have therefore cared for illegitimate children of color who were unwelcome within their fathers' homes. If this indeed were the case it would suggest that these children received some form of Jewish education since it is clear that the *Aby Yetomim* possessed that mandate. One possible indication that the *Aby Yetomim* did in fact shelter unwanted children of color may be found in the 1831 will of Isaac Depass who bequeathed inheritance to "two discreet orphan boys" then under the care of the *Aby Yetomim*.⁶⁶ Though this will is late for this study, no other Jamaican testator specified orphans in their bequests to the *Aby Yetomim*. The qualifier "discreet" also suggests that these two specific orphans may have been his children cared for by the community rather than within his family.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "Will of Judah Cohen Henriques, 1808" IRO lib. 79 fol. 30; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

⁶⁵ Will of Jacob Lopes Torres, 1768" IRO lib. 37 fol. 367; AJA SC-12382.

⁶⁶ "Will of Isaac Depass, 1831" IRO lib. 112 fol. 135; will not included in the collection of the AJA. Will not included in the sample for this study.

⁶⁷ On the role of Jewish communities in caring for "fatherless children" see Elisheva Carlebach, "Fallen Women and Fatherless Children: Jewish Domestic Servants in Eighteenth-Century Altona" *Jewish History* 24 (2010): 295–308.

It is precisely those who lived without the support of a patriarchal figure, orphans and widows, for whom there was an expectation of communal support. While the Portuguese Jews of Jamaica and Barbados were addressing specifically West Indian concerns over education, including an apparent resistance to locally operated schools, they were sustaining an ideal that the prerogative of education rested in the hands of fathers. This view compelled them to pursue education for their children in ways that substantially differed from models adopted by other Atlantic Jewish communities.

UNRELATED CHILDREN OF COLOR IN THE JEWISH HOME

People of color were deeply integrated into the daily routine of the Jewish West Indian household. They prepared their food, cared for their children, and nursed their infants. Enslaved female domestic servants, and their children fathered by both white and black men, were a consistent presence within Jewish homes. Chapter three discussed emotional bonds between Jewish men, their mistresses, and their *biological* children. However, one of the most telling indications of familiarity between white owners and the enslaved—the incorporation of domestic labor into the family as unrelated extended kin—are expressions of parental devotion toward children even when not biologically related.⁶⁸

Natalie Zemon Davis, in her study of the prominent Surinamese Jew David Nassy, explored expressions of familial affection from white owners directed toward unrelated enslaved children.⁶⁹ David Nassy traveled with his young enslaved companion Mattheus with whom he

⁶⁸ For a discussion of parental devotion toward enslaved children in the early modern Iberian context see Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 122–153.

⁶⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, “David Nassy’s ‘Furlough’ And The Slave Mattheus,” in *New Essays in American Jewish History: Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the American Jewish Archives Journal and the Tenth*

formed a paternal relationship that resulted in financial and material support of Mattheus both before and after David's death.

Some parallels to the case of David Nassy are found among Jamaican and Barbadian Jewish testators. In her 1792 will, Rachel Nunes, a Kingston widow, bequeathed three enslaved children to the wardens of the Portuguese synagogue in Kingston: Linda, Rose, and a boy named Jack.⁷⁰ She elaborated that this bequest was an act of gratitude toward the *mahamad*, who as a widow, granted her a monthly pension in addition to paying her rent. However, she stipulated that the *mahamad* are not to sell these three “children as I regard them[,] having brought them up from their infancy.” It appears that out of some sense of parental affection she insisted that she ensure the fate of these three children. Additionally, as discussed in chapter four, Grace Lopes Torres cared for her nephew, Aaron Baruh Lousada, within her home as her “adopted son.”

CONCLUSION

The West Indies provided a location where long standing notions of Iberian patriarchy and colonial American individualism interacted in dynamic ways to produce a deep commitment to privatized child rearing. English West Indian Jews appeared to have defied attempts by their communal boards to extend non-parental authority over children. Through godparents Spanish-Portuguese Jews sustained a sense of patriarchal patronage, to the exclusion of communal support. And, like their non-Jewish neighbors, they harbored a resistance to localized and communal education.

Anniversary of the American Jewish Archives under the Direction of Dr. Gary P. Zola, eds. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 2010), 79–93.

⁷⁰ “Will of Rachel Nunes, 1796” IRO lib. 67 fol. 78; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

CHAPTER SIX
THE HIDDEN LIVES OF COLONIAL CARIBBEAN SPANISH-PORTUGUESE WOMEN

The Columbian Magazine of Kingston reported the death of the elderly Esther Torres of Spanish Town in April 1799:

DIED—in Spanish Town, a few days ago at the very advanced age of 112, Mrs. Esther Torres, of the Hebrew Nation. Till within three months of her death, she used to work at her needle, and never was known to take a dose of physic, and retained every faculty to the last moment of her life¹

Esther lived an unusually long life, for any era, spanning the entirety of the eighteenth century. West Indian women frequently lived to old age.² She would have been born around 1687, possibly as a Conversa in the Iberian world, though it is unknown when and from where she arrived in Jamaica. Her obituary remembered her for her needlework, which was likely a professional source of income. She was also remembered as being rational in not relying on what eighteenth-century West Indian writers referred to as “quack” medicine.³

This chapter explores the lives of unexceptional Portuguese women in the British West Indies during the lifetime of Esther Torres and others like her. The existing literature on Jewish women during the early modern period has been largely devoted to the lives of unrepresentative women such as Doña Gracia Mendes, Gluckel, Benvenida Abravanel, Sarah Copia Sullam and

¹ “Domestic Occurrences,” *The Columbian Magazine*, April 1799, 704.

² Edward Long wrote in the 1770s: “The temperance of their [Jamaican women’s] life carries them on, notwithstanding [the unhealthy climate], to a good old age; it being no uncommon thing to see women here of eighty or ninety years, and upwards.” Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 285.

³ By the late eighteenth century there appears to have been a popular backlash against the use of unproven medical treatments corresponding to the general professionalization of medicine during this period. See the obituary of the Hakham Joshua Hezekiah Decordova in the October issue of *The Columbian Magazine*, 1797, 267–271.

others who were exceptional for their political or literary achievements.⁴ It is through the investigation of notarial records and periodicals that the lives of unexceptional women come to light.

In his groundbreaking work on American Jewish women, Jacob Rader Marcus devoted very little attention to the colonial period that he defined as 1654–1775. Apart from a brief mention of women who donated to the dedication of Shearith Israel in New York, the highly literate and expressive Abigail Franks is the only woman mentioned by name. Not a single Portuguese woman receives attention nor do the West Indies in general.⁵ The single life of a Sephardi woman to receive mention in what Marcus called the “revolutionary period” is that of Zipporah Nunes Machado (d. 1799) who by Marcus’s own account was an “unusual woman” for her mastery of six languages.⁶ If in 1981 Marcus began his study of the lives of colonial American Jewish women with the question, “Why is it that women are so invisible?”⁷ The question now is “why are *Portuguese* women, and particularly *West Indian Portuguese* women, still so invisible”?

Western Sephardic women in the early modern world have been understood to live secluded lives to a greater extent than either their Ashkenazic counterparts or their Dutch and English neighbors. This is seen largely as the result of an Iberian patriarchy predicated on the domesticity of wives and daughters. Rejudaized Portuguese women also faced the unusual challenge of having been the principal guardians of a crypto-Jewish tradition on the Peninsula.

⁴ On the question of representativeness and the history of Sephardi women see, Renée Levine Melammed, “Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods” in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed., Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 115–134.

⁵ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654–1980* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 15–16.

⁶ Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman*, 19.

⁷ Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman*, 15.

As they integrated into new Jewish communities of Western Europe these women found their role as arbiters of Jewish tradition diminished as Portuguese men assumed their traditional communal roles.⁸ By focusing on the lives of openly identifying Jewish women we can better understand how this tension was manifested in an almost exclusively Spanish-Portuguese community during the eighteenth century.

The voices of white European women in the colonial West Indies, in general, are also silent in the existing scholarship.⁹ There has been a much greater academic interest in the lives of enslaved and free women of color.¹⁰ As has been shown, Jews in the colonial West Indies lived as family units to a greater extent than their white counterparts and it is therefore imperative that we explore the roles of white mothers and daughters within West Indian slave society.

This chapter argues that like their counterparts in Amsterdam and London, Portuguese women in the West Indies did live largely private lives informed by an Iberian patriarchal heritage. But, this Spanish-Portuguese pattern interacted with similar trends among other whites in the West Indies casting women in a more domestic role than in other parts of the British Americas. Despite their overall seclusion, West Indian Jewish women did, however, participate in the public sphere within limits. Additionally, though widowhood was the most common route to public autonomy for West Indian Portuguese women, it was not the only path, nor was it always a guarantee of public autonomy. Lastly, despite the tensions inherent in

⁸ See Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁹ To my knowledge the single exception is Trevor Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence: Women's Status in Early Colonial Jamaica" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 48, no. 1 (1991): 93–114.

¹⁰ See for instance the essays in Gaspar and Hine, eds., *More than Chattel* and in Gaspar and Hine, eds., *Beyond Bondage*.

integrating into Jewish communal life, Spanish-Portuguese women did engage in public expressions of piety through charitable contributions and participation in confraternities.

JEWISH WOMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WEST INDIES

The women dispatched to the West Indies from England in the seventeenth century were perceived to be fitting for the libertine tropical lifestyle because they were, in the words of the supercargo Thomas Anthony, “lusty.”¹¹ These early European female settlers had largely been recruited from brothels and prisons to serve as servants and populate the West Indies with white women in an attempt to offset the rampant miscegenation on the islands as well as to pursue a revolutionary new ideal of reforming the criminal rather than penalizing her.¹²

Despite the slower rate of migratory growth in the eighteenth century compared to the seventeenth, by 1750 there existed a substantial population of creole women in Jamaica (white women born and bred on the island) though they seemed to have constituted no more than 25 percent of the white population.¹³ In the 1770s, Edward Long provided an idealized male perspective of white creole Jamaican women:

The women of this island are lively, of good nature, genius, frank, affable, polite, generous, humane, and charitable; cleanly in their persons even to excess; insomuch that they frequently bring on very dangerous complaints by the too free use of bathing at improper periods. They are faithful in their attachments; hearty in their friendships and fond, to a fault, of their children, except in the single instance which I am grieved to have been obliged to expatiate upon [their reliance on black wet-nurses]. They are temperate and abstemious in their diet, rarely drinking any other liquor than water. They are remarkably expert at their needle, and indeed every other female occupation taught

¹¹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 57.

¹² Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 76.

¹³ See Burnard, “European Migration to Jamaica,” esp. 772. In 1750 the white population of Jamaica is estimated at around 10,000. Burnard estimates that white men during this period outnumbered women 3 to 1 meaning the white female population would have been around 2,500.

them; religious in their lives and sentiments; and chaste without prudery in their conversation. In horsemanship, dancing, and music, they are in general very accomplished; in these acquired qualifications that have fallen in their way of cultivating their natural talents, which are very good, and susceptible of extensive improvements....[however] they want of proper education and good maternal examples has rendered some women here extravagant in their expences [sic], and very indifferent oeconomists [sic] in their household affairs. They employ too numerous a tribe of domestic servants, and are apt to trust too far their fidelity, which is not always proof against strong temptations. From twenty to forty servants is nothing unusual.¹⁴

His overall praise of creole women in Jamaica is thus tempered by two main criticisms: they lacked sufficient education and they were overly reliant on the labor of enslaved domestic servants fostering an ignorance of the proper domestic conduct expected of women in Great Britain.

The dispatching of white women was seen by the metropole as a remedy for widespread miscegenation among the white male settlers during the colonial period as would become a widespread practice among the Dutch and English in later periods.¹⁵ Though Long did recognize that the absence of suitable mates was a contributing factor to miscegenation, he opined that the creole women who inhabited the island did not make good wives because of their lack of education. He wrote “to allure men from these illicit connexions [sic; i.e. concubinage with women of color], we ought to remove the principal obstacles which deter them from marriage. This will be chiefly effected by rendering women of their own complexion more agreeable companions, more frugal, trusty, and faithful friends, than can be met with among the African ladies....A proper education is the first great point.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 280–281.

¹⁵ See Ann L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 330.

Despite attempts in London to entice more European women to make the voyage across the Atlantic there remained a perpetual shortage of European women in the West Indies throughout the colonial period. In 1673, for instance, even though the white female population in Jamaica had grown four times over in the span of twelve years since 1661, men still outnumbered them two to one.¹⁷ By the mid eighteenth-century, men appeared to outnumber women three to one.¹⁸

Women were among the original Jewish settlers in Jamaica and Barbados. 64 out of the 163 known tombstones at Hunt's Bay cemetery, the earliest Jewish burial site in Jamaica, are of women (39.2 percent).¹⁹ In 1745, 44 out of 188 (23.4 percent) known Jewish households and businesses owners taxed in Kingston were identified as women including an apparently single female shop owner, Esther Levy Barrios.²⁰ Of the 197 known Jewish households/individuals to be taxed 24 years later in 1769, 44 were again women suggesting a both substantial and stable presence of Jewish women on the island. 11 of those 44 women were identified as widows. 8 of them were identified as being poor (out of 16 people in total identified as poor). One woman, Rachel Castro, was identified as being both poor and "demented." Women were undoubtedly on the whole poorer than men. Despite the fact that women made up only 22.3 percent of Jewish taxpaying population in 1769, they accounted for 50 percent of those identified as poor. Jewish women were thus poor disproportionately to their population.

¹⁷ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 155. In 1673 there were 4,050 white men listed on the census and 2,006 white women.

¹⁸ Burnard, "European Migration to Jamaica," 772.

¹⁹ Based on Barnett and Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica*, 4–29.

²⁰ Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade*, 188–192.

Female testators composed 113 wills in Jamaica out of a total of 603 available wills registered by Jews between 1663 and 1814 (18.7 percent).²¹ Out of 300 testators sampled here, women composed 63 (21 percent). Therefore, the number of females in the sample under analysis here corresponds closely to the total number of wills left by women in general, implying a representative sample to their presence in the will making elite. Of those 63 individual female testators featured in the sample for this study, the vast majority, 44 (69.8 percent), are identified as “widows.” Of the remaining 19 cases, 7 (11.1 percent) are identified as either a “spinster” or a “single woman” and 11 cases (17.4 percent) include no qualifier. As in European and North American societies, married women did not leave wills. The expectation was that their surviving husbands controlled their estate and whatever wealth they brought to the family economy through their dowries and business activities. A single female testator, Rachel Mendes, who composed her will in 1798, was identified as a “gentlewoman” possibly recognizing her own independent business activities.²²

Though the population of non-Jewish white women was on the rise during the eighteenth century, the number of Jewish women seemed to remain stable. They also appear to be less represented in the will-making elite than their non-Jewish counterparts. While more progressive attitudes toward the public role of women were in circulation throughout the British Atlantic,²³ Iberian notions of patriarchy—reinforcing the private and domestic role of women—continued to prevail among West Indian Spanish Portuguese Jews resulting in their

²¹ See IRO Index of Wills, 1663–1814.

²² “Will of Rachel Mendes, 1806” IRO lib. 76 fol. 211; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

²³ See n. 27 below.

poor showing in tax records and as will makers. Despite their apparently more secluded lives, Spanish-Portuguese women did contribute to the public life of the islands.

THE PUBLIC LIVES OF JEWISH WOMEN IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld begins her study of the lives of rejudaized Western Sephardic women in seventeenth-century Amsterdam by highlighting contemporary observations by men who perceived the Sephardim to be unusually restrictive toward their women characterized by the overwhelming view that “Sephardi men kept their wives restrained, essentially as prisoners.”²⁴ By exploring the public role of women through notarial records she attempts to challenge this view of the Western Sephardic woman as “withdrawn, silent, and suppressed” by revealing the full extent of their participation in the culture of public commerce.²⁵

Despite Bernfeld’s attempt to demonstrate a more defined public role for Western Sephardic women in Amsterdam, she writes in another context: “...Portuguese girls and women generally remained in the home, in keeping with Iberian tradition. Young girls were kept indoors as much as possible, and married women too usually operated in the background.”²⁶ Women in the colonial West Indies did participate in the public life of the islands within limits. They operated businesses, were naturalized independently of their husbands, brought cases to court, acted as executors of estates, manumitted slaves and placed advertisements in the newspapers.

²⁴ Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, “Sephardi Women in Holland’s Golden Age,” in *Sephardi Family Life*, 176.

²⁵ Bernfeld, “Sephardi Women in Holland’s Golden Age,” 183.

²⁶ Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 101.

As has been shown to be the case in other eighteenth-century American colonies, European women in the western hemisphere are understood to have engaged in a broader range of public activities than did their counterparts in Europe.²⁷ Some historians have even characterized the American colonies as being “widowarchies” whereby, by virtue of the short lives of their husbands, most colonial wealth was concentrated in the hands of widows endowing women with unparalleled public autonomy and authority.²⁸ While he admits this may have been true for the New England or Chesapeake colonies, Trevor Burnard, rejects this characterization in the West Indian context where in his view women continued to live more subjugated lives.²⁹ An analysis of the lives of Jewish women in the West Indies reveals that the truth may lie somewhere in between.

Ostensibly it would seem that Spanish-Portuguese women in the British West Indies only began to pursue public activities after the deaths of their husbands or as single women. The perception of widowhood as the only path to communal autonomy was a prevailing sentiment in the eighteenth century. Edward Long quoted a former governor of Jamaica when he wrote: “the female art of growing rich here [in Jamaica] in a short time was comprized [sic] of two significant words, ‘*marry and bury*.’”³⁰

The available sources certainly do seem, at first glance, to support this morbid assertion among Jews as well that in order to live public lives Sephardic women had to be empowered by

²⁷ For classic expressions of this view see Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “The Planter’s Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 34, no. 4 (1977): 542–571; see also Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

²⁸ The term “widowarchy” belongs to Edmund S. Morgan. See the discussion in Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence,” 94 n. 3.

²⁹ Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence.”

³⁰ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 286.

the deaths of their husbands. Jacob Brandon, a Kingston merchant who drafted his will in 1710, for instance, expected his wife, Rachel, to continue the operation of his business after his death. He expected his son Joshua to assist her in this endeavor though in a deferential position to his mother: “I give...unto my loving son Joshua Brandon...the other half of my Estate [the first half having been given to his wife]...provided my said son shall live and continue with his mother Rachel Brandon during her life time and shall carry on the trade of merchandizing with her to the best of his knowledge and be in all respects obedient and dutiful to her commands.”³¹ Rachel Brandon was thus empowered by her husband to carry on his trade but she was expected to do so only with the aid of her son. Both Rachel and her son were appointed as co-executors of Jacob’s estate.

Not all widows were dependent on partnerships with men in the management of their husband’s estates. Before leaving New York on a return voyage to Jamaica in 1727, the merchant Jacob Fonseca appointed his wife Rebecca as the sole executor of his estate and guardian of their six children.³² He not only entrusted her with the management of his financial assets, he empowered her to sell off his substantial Jamaican property—a house in Spanish Town and “a thousand acres of sand”—and to then divide the proceeds for the benefit of herself and her six children. To do so would have required Rebecca to have familiarity with property values and the culture of commercial exchange on the island.

Historians promoting an unusually high level of public autonomy for women in the colonial Americas look to the frequent appointment of wives, like Rebecca Fonseca, as sole

³¹ “Will of Jacob Brandon, 1710” IRO lib. 13 fol 32; AJA SC-1375.

³² Leo Hershkowitz, ed. *Wills of Early New York Jews, 1704–1799* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1967), 44–46; will not included in the sample for this study.

executors of their husband's estates. Out of 146 married male Jewish testators sampled here, 53 appointed their wives as the sole executor of their estate (36.3 percent). An additional 56 married male testators included their wives as executors in partnership with other males meaning that around two thirds of married Jewish male testators entrusted their wives in some capacity to settle their estates. Married Jewish men then appeared to entrust their wives with the management of their estates to a slightly higher degree than non-Jewish married men in Jamaica of whom only 29 percent appointed their wives as executors (alone or with other men).³³ The appointment of women as executors, however, reveals little about the public autonomy of women since their appointment may have only been an attempt by the testator to ensure that that the executor's fee—ranging between 5 and 10 percent of the total value of the estate—remained within the family.

A similar case to that of Rachel Brandon, a widow empowered by the death of her husband, is found in the 1810 will of the Kingston physician and surgeon Isaac Dacosta Alverenga.³⁴ Isaac entrusted his wife Rebecca to continue his medical practice in “copartnership” with their two sons Jacob and Moses. The term “copartnership” implies that he anticipated a certain degree of equality between his wife and sons in the management of his practice. Isaac's will also reveals that Jewish women in the West Indies, as in other places, actively pursued careers as healers and medical practitioners.³⁵

Aviva Ben-Ur and Rachel Frankel have identified 22 women in Surinamese Jewish cemeteries referred to on their tombstones as “*matron*,” which they speculate may indicate

³³ Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence,” 102.

³⁴ “Will of Isaac Dacosta Alverenga, 1811” IRO lib. 83 fol. 194; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

³⁵ On Sephardic women as medical practitioners in Medieval Spain see Antoni Cardoner Planas “Seis mujeres hebreas practicando la medicina en el reino de Aragon” *Sefarad* 9 (1949): 441–445.

midwives.³⁶ This seems to be unique to the Dutch context since there are no extant tombstones in either Jamaica or Barbados that include this or any other possible reference to midwives or birth attendants. Undoubtedly, however, Spanish-Portuguese women in the West Indies, like their non-Jewish counterparts, and as other Jewish women elsewhere, were widely accepted as healers for both Jewish and non-Jewish patients alike. Edward Long mentioned several remedies for child ailments that were pioneered by women.³⁷ And, the *Barbados Mercury* in June of 1788, for instance, reported that there had been a successful attempt by “a lady” to prevent the onset of lock jaw in infants by applying “Jesuit’s bark” (the principal source of quinine) to the navel.³⁸ She had arrived at those finding by performing “scientific” dissections on the cadavers of deceased infants.

Despite the opportunities made available to them by the death of their husbands, Jewish women in the British West Indies do not appear entirely dependent on this eventuality to exercise their economic and professional agency. It was likely the case for instance that Rebecca Dacosta Alvarenga was already a fully practicing medical specialists well before the death of her husband. It is important, therefore, not to place too much emphasis on widowhood as the only path to public autonomy.

Husbands and wives at times worked together, seemingly as equals, in the operation of their businesses. In the last two months of 1783, the husband and wife team Aaron and Rachael

³⁶ Aviva Ben-Ur and Rachel Frankel, *Remnant Stones: The Jewish Cemeteries of Suriname: Epitaphs* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2009), 645.

³⁷ Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II: 278.

³⁸ *The Barbados Mercury*, June 14, 1788.

Pinheiro placed several advertisements in the *Barbados Mercury* identifying themselves as “copartners” when calling in their debts.³⁹

Some married women appeared to have also pursued business endeavors independent of their husbands. In Barbados two seemingly unrelated married women—Sarah Belinfante and Rachel Nunes Costello—formed a business together. They placed several advertisements in April through June of 1784 calling in their debts as a result of the acrimonious dismantling of their partnership.⁴⁰ Sarah Cohen Belinfante placed a notice in the newspaper independently announcing that all repayments to the corporation of Rachel Nunes Costello and Sarah Belinfante had to be cleared with her in person explaining: “there have been attempts to ruin my credit by forging my name.” It appears that her former partner Rachel had been receiving debt payments in both their names and pocketing the money.

Though some women did work detached from their husbands, men still had considerable control over the public conduct of their wives. On January 20, 1781, Daniel Rodrigues Cardozo placed a highly unusual advertisement in the Kingston *Royal Gazette* publically demonstrating his controlling posture toward his wife:

THIS IS TO CAUTION THE PUBLIC
NOT TO TRUST MY WIFE

Mrs. Sarah Rodriguez Cardozo,

On any pretence [sic] whatsoever, I will not pay any debts she may contract after this public notice.

The Public are in particular cautioned from giving her credit under the pretence [sic] of Wearing Apparel, as she may have what is necessary, by applying to [me]

Daniel Rodrigues Cardozo

³⁹ *The Barbados Mercury*, November 8, 1783.

⁴⁰ *The Barbados Mercury*, April 24, 1784.

Both the Iberian tradition of female domesticity and the prevailing patriarchal patterns in the West Indies, described by Burnard, interacted to keep Jamaican and Barbadian women more removed from public life than in other parts of the British Americas. These limited examples suggest, however, that they nevertheless did play a considerable role in the public life of the islands. Though widowhood did often empower women, the literature on the public role of Jewish and non-Jewish women has over emphasized widowhood as the only recourse to public autonomy for women. At times Western Sephardic women certainly worked alongside their husbands or fully independent of them. It is also true that widowhood was not always a sure path to public autonomy. In some cases men could continue to exercise control over their wives even after their deaths through leveraging their wives' inheritance.

REMARRIAGE CLAUSES

As shown in chapter 3, one common way Spanish-Portuguese men asserted patriarchal control was through the use of a "consent clause" aimed at influencing their daughters' spousal choices. Another type of clause that appears in Jewish wills from the West Indies is a "remarriage clause" stipulating that wives forfeit their inheritance in the event they remarry.

As Trevor Burnard has demonstrated, remarriage clauses appeared with much greater frequency in the West Indies than they did in the more widow friendly North American colonies leading him to reject the hypothesis that widows enjoyed unprecedented economic autonomy in the colonial Americas as a whole—Jamaica being the prime exception.⁴¹ He found

⁴¹ Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence," esp. 104–106.

that in St. Andrew Parish between 1667 and 1734, 12.3 percent of married male testators made their wives inheritance conditional on their remaining single.⁴²

Married Jewish men tended to include remarriage clauses with around the same frequency as their non-Jewish counterparts. 15 out of 146 married male testators included them (10.2 percent). However, far more married Jewish men drafted wills without a remarriage clause than those that did. Remarriage clauses also appear with varying degrees of severity. In the least extreme example of a remarriage clause, the testator Daniel da Silva, a Kingston merchant with three known children retracted all inheritance from his wife Rachel in the event she remarried except the value owed to her by their *ketubah* in his will of 1757 (this amount appeared to be the same 1/3 of the estate entitled to her by English law): “I do hereby declare that the said rents and income of my estate...given to my said wife shall be in lieu...of...all right title or claim which my said wife may have to any part of my estate...on Account of her Dower or Ketubah.... But if my said wife shall marry again then my...will is that from the time of her second marriage she shall only...receive...[the value of] her dower or Ketubah.”⁴³

Some more extreme remarriage clauses not only reduce the inheritance of the testator’s widow but also her right to act as guardian to their children. Samuel de Campos, a Barbadian merchant who drafted his will in 1719, not only withdrew his wife Rebecca’s inheritance (with the unstated exception of 1/3 of the estate) but also her right to hold the inheritance for their five children: “in case my said wife happen to intermarry⁴⁴ that then and such a case what I

⁴² Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence,” 104.

⁴³ “Will of Daniel da Silva, 1757” IRO, lib. 31 fol. 24; AJA, SC-2636.

⁴⁴ The term “intermarry” was commonly used to refer simply to the act of marriage and does not imply exogamous marriage.

have hereby given to my said Children shall be remitted to Mr. Isaac Fernandez Nunez...by him to be placed out at Interest for the use and benefit of my said children.”⁴⁵

In another similarly severe remarriage clause from the 1733 will of the Kingston merchant Jacob de Castro, not only did his wife Leah forfeit her inheritance in the event she remarried, she also forfeited her right to act as guardian to their three children along with the unborn child she was pregnant with at the time Jacob drafted his will.⁴⁶ In the event she remarried, then the guardianship of their three (possibly four) children fell to his two friends and executors, Jacob Mendes Gutteres and Isaac Furtado. Perhaps he did not trust an unknown man to raise his children and preferred to rely on his friends whom he knew to be reliable. He may have also been fearful that another man would squander his children’s inheritance or use it for his own benefit, or he perceived his wife as his own personal possession: “I do hereby Nominate...my said wife Leah DeCastro....Guardian of...my said Three Children... [as well] as of the child she...is now Ensient during their several Minoritys and her Widowhood, But in Case my said Wife should happen to marry again after my decease then....my Will...is...that her Guardianship of...my said Children...shall cease.” Through the use of such clauses men leveraged inheritance to prevent their surviving wives from acting with full economic autonomy. In contradiction to Edward Long’s observation, “burying” husbands was not always a “female art of growing rich.”

⁴⁵ “Will of Samuel de Campos, 1719” BA lib. 6 fol. 31; AJA SC-2710.

⁴⁶ “Will of Jacob de Castro, 1739” IRO lib. 21 fol. 178; AJA, SC-2636.

FEMALE EDUCATION

Daniel Swetschinski correlates female literacy with prosperity finding that Portuguese women who had immigrated to Amsterdam in the seventeenth century from prosperous places of origin, such as Antwerp or Hamburg, had lower rates of illiteracy than those from more destitute places such as Italy.⁴⁷ According to Swetschinski, Spanish-Portuguese women who immigrated to Amsterdam from Italy in the seventeenth century had a fifty percent rate of illiteracy. Generally, though, he concludes that female literacy among the Portuguese in Amsterdam corresponded closely to the general rate among the Dutch.

Wills are perhaps the only measure of Jewish female literacy in the British West Indies. The very act of composing a will suggests a certain degree of literacy, as does the general economic profile of the will making elite to which they belonged. If wills are indeed a measure of literacy then the limited presence of Jewish women in the will making population of Jamaica suggests that the rate of illiteracy would have been quite high. Similarly, the seemingly disproportional rate of poverty among Jewish women in the West Indies also implies a higher rate of female illiteracy. Despite his biases toward the encouragement of a genteel English society in Jamaica, there is no reason to suspect that Edward Long's observation that women in Jamaica lacked sufficient education was not an accurate portrayal. Though it is impossible to quantify Jewish female literacy in the West Indies with the sources currently available to us, it is likely that Jewish women in Jamaica and Barbados shared the same high rate of illiteracy found among the non-Jewish white female population.

Unlike in Amsterdam, where there existed orphan societies that provided education for both male (*Aby Yetomim*, est. 1648) and female orphans (*Mazon Abanot*, est. 1734), the *Aby*

⁴⁷ Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 88–89.

Yetomim of Kingston only provided education for male orphans.⁴⁸ Some Jews, however, did actively seek to promote a female orphan society in Jamaica. Jacob Lopes Torres, a Kingston merchant, pledged a hundred pounds to the communal board as an incentive for the establishment of a female orphan society.⁴⁹ At the time he drafted his will in 1767 it is clear that his pledge had failed to produce results. He continued to hope that a female orphan society would be established after his death and he therefore entrusted his hundred pound pledge to his daughter with the hope that she would put it toward the establishment of a female orphan society if and when the *Mahamad* agreed to establish one in Jamaica.

It should be noted that though there did not exist an orphan society for girls and, likewise, there was no West Indian equivalent to the Amsterdam *dotar* (although some West Indian women were beneficiaries), some poor relief for female orphans came from private donations. The extravagantly wealthy Kingston merchant Abraham Gonsales, for instance, bequeathed the remainder of his ample estate to supply dowries to orphaned girls on the island in 1753 though he gave priority to his relatives. He made this bequest with language such as “my blood” and “Jewish Nation” that also suggests a continuity of ethnically defined Spanish-Portuguese national identity: “my will is that the said trustees...dispose of the said residue...for portioning and advancing in marriage poor female fatherless children of the Jewish Nation but still with this especial caution...that all poor fatherless females of my blood or which are related to me by consanguinity...shall be preferred....”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 100–108.

⁴⁹ “Will of Jacob Lopes Torres, 1768” IRO lib. 37 fol. 367; AJA SC-12382.

⁵⁰ “Will of Abraham Gonsales, 1753” IRO lib. 29 fol. 108; AJA SC-4139.

In the 1760s, the testator Isaac Dasilva Fonseca, who lived near Montego Bay on the west coast of Jamaica, made special stipulations for female education.⁵¹ Isaac lived in this remote part of the island—far removed from the centers of Jewish life on the east coast, though there did exist a small but active Jewish community there⁵²—along with his wife Sarah and his two young daughters Judith and Rebecca. After including a remarriage clause following the adumbration of bequests to his wife, he stipulated that “It is my will...that my daughters may be maintained decently and kept at school and that they have all the education fitting and necessary for young women in this Island and that they have each of them a negro girl or young wench to attend and wait on them.”

The nature of that education for “young women of this island” was described more explicitly in the 1797 will of David Henriques.⁵³ David requested that his children should be “maintained and educated in Great Britain...[and] that they be severally taught Hebrew, English, Latin, Greek, French, and Spanish [as well as] Dancing and my daughter be further instructed in Musik.” Wealthy Spanish-Portuguese women, appear to have been no exception to Edward Long’s characterization of creole women who were expected to be active members of the bourgeois gentry conversant in dancing and music. There is no mention at all of daughters expected to have any type of Jewish education.

⁵¹ “Will of Isaac Dasilva Fonseca, 1767” IRO lib. 36 fol. 181; AJA SC-3505.

⁵² It is known that at least four Jews were among the dead in Montego Bay as a result of the devastating 1780 hurricane. See *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, October 21, 1780.

⁵³ “Will of David Henriques, 1797” IRO lib. 62 fol. 149; will not in the collection of the AJA.

SEPHARDIC FEMININE VIRTUE AND PIETY

Though little has been written on the lives of *rejudaized* women, Conversa women have received greater attention in the existing scholarship. This is partly the result of more available source materials from inquisitorial dossiers. Renée Levine Melammed has identified Conversas as the principal source of transmission of crypto-Judaism, a largely domestic practice, in the absence of Jewish communal life in Iberia.⁵⁴ The rejudaization process thus had gendered consequences as women had to accept a male dominated public ritual with the reestablishment of Jewish public life in Western Europe.⁵⁵ In what ways then do rejudaized women find a role within public ritual?

Echoing the historiography casting women in the colonial Americas in a more publically autonomous role compared to their European counterparts, Holly Snyder identifies one of the central developments in the lives of colonial American women as a shift from domestic to public expressions of religion.⁵⁶ She argues that whereas pre-modern European Jewish women had been passive observers of public ritual, colonial American Jewish women, influenced by a Protestant American individualism, became actively involved in the devotional routine of the synagogue. However, recent scholarship has shown that Jewish women were not necessarily passive participants in communal devotion during the early modern period or

⁵⁴ Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel?*, 166–174.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the gendered effects of rejudaization in Amsterdam see Bernfeld, “Sephardi Women in Holland’s Golden Age.”

⁵⁶ Holly Snyder, “Queens of the Household: The Jewish Women of British America,” in *Women in American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*, eds., Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 2001), 15–45.

before.⁵⁷ They offered donations to synagogues and participated in extra-communal activities as members of confraternities. Though a tension did exist among rejudaized women in integrating into unfamiliar communal roles, they did nevertheless find alternative ways to pursue communal expressions of piety.

Every female West Indian Jewish testator allocated funds for the public recital of memorial prayers (*hashkava*; *escava*) for eleven months after their death. Their names were read and their memories honored in public from the *tevah* (reading table) of the synagogue. These donations were also critical in sustaining public Jewish life on the islands.

Charitableness seems to have been perceived as the religious quality most associated with female piety in the West Indies. Women are frequently remembered on their tombstones for their charitable endeavors as well as their modesty and virtue.⁵⁸ Women do appear to offer private charitable donations in their wills to a greater extent than did Jewish men in the British West Indies. There is not a single female testator that does not devote some portion of her estate to the communal coffers.

One example of an unusually charitable woman is found in the 1732 will of Judith Baruh Alvares. Judith lived in the then semi-defunct town of Port Royal and was committed to the continued survival of Jewish life in that city, though she also offered the customary gestures of support to the synagogues of Spanish Town and Kingston. She first left a bequest of sixty pounds to the “poor inhabitants of the Jewish Nation” of Port Royal to be distributed based on

⁵⁷ See for instance Elka Klein, “Public Activities of Catalan Jewish Women” *Medieval Encounters* 12, no. 1 (2006): 48–61.

⁵⁸ On the concept of a uniquely Castilian sense of feminine virtue see Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey*, 61–74. For the Sephardic context see Hannah Davidson, “Communal Pride and Feminine Virtue: ‘Suspecting *Sivlonot*’ in the Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Sixteenth Century” in *Sephardi Family Life*, 23–69.

the traditional intervals of Jewish mourning.⁵⁹ In addition, she also bequeathed “a sett of Silver Bells belonging to the Five Books of Moses... for the use of the Synagogue of Port Royal.”

Perhaps the most unusual charitable bequest in Judith’s will was a donation to the *hevra kadisha*, one of only two testators sampled here to mention this confraternity in Jamaica during the eighteenth century:⁶⁰

One hundred pounds...for making a convenient cause way or walk from the usual place of landing of corps [sic] of the Parish of St. Andrews to the Burial place of the Jewish Nation [Hunt’s Bay]...well fenced on each side with pinguins [braces] in order to [facilitate] the more commodious carrying [of] my own and other Corps [sic] to the grave and for the better accommodation of the people of the Jewish Nation who shall accompany my corps to the grave [the *hevra kadisha*].

She further supported the confraternity *bikur holim*, the only mention of this confraternity on the island: “the people who usually sett up to watch...the sick people of the Jewish Nation...” Therefore, if Spanish-Portuguese women did not participate fully in the public ritual of the synagogue, they found an alternative expression of public piety through the support of and participation in confraternities. In doing so they may have sustained a sense of ownership over Jewish tradition as a private expression.

Perhaps the most dramatic act of charity is found in the 1769 will of Rebecca Pereira Mendes who in addition to the standard bequests to the three synagogues (she also supported Shearith Israel in New York), offered an unusual *weekly* “annuity” to her domestic slave manumitted in her will and identified as her “nurse.” She further offered an unusually generous overture toward the poor Jews of the island—a thousand pounds for the purchase of six homes

⁵⁹ Twenty pounds to be distributed within seven days after her death, twenty pounds to be distributed within one lunar month, and the remaining twenty pounds to be distributed eleven months after her death.

⁶⁰ The only confraternity to receive donations in Jamaica appears to be the *Aby Yetomim*. Judith’s will is the only one of two testators who mentioned this confraternity. The will of Aaron Da Silva, a fisherman in Passage Fort, Jamaica, is the only other testator to mention the *hevra kadisha*, “eight bearers for the washing and shrowding [sic],” “Will of Aaron da Silva, 1720” lib. 15 fol. 274; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

to be allocated to the poor Jews of Kingston: “I...bequeath to...the wardens of the Synagogue of this parish of Kingston the sum of one thousand pounds...in trust that they...shall purchase five or six small convenient houses for the receptacle of the poorest needest [sic] and indigent of our Jewish nation as shall appear to them to be objects of charity.”⁶¹ In this case, by relying on the communal authorities to actualize her charitable donation she was explicitly participating in a public expression of Judaism.

CONCLUSION

Like their counterparts in Western Europe, Spanish-Portuguese women did live largely secluded and domestic lives in the British West Indies. The patriarchal tendency to shelter women from the public sphere did not, however, *fully* prevent their participation in public commerce. Perhaps informed by a sense of Protestant American individualism, Jewish women in the West Indies appeared to be slightly more publically autonomous than in Europe. West Indian commercial culture naturally tended to be more male oriented, when compared to other parts of the colonial British Atlantic, if only as a result of the skewed gender distribution. Therefore, of all parts of the British Atlantic, creole West Indian women tended to be the most removed from public life. Close analysis of the lives of women also reveals that widowhood, previously believed to be the only route to women’s public autonomy, in fact had some severe limitations. Jewish women’s roles in the eighteenth century therefore ought not be cast into a dichotomy of public versus private life but rather their activities should be seen as alternatives to public commercial and ritual life

⁶¹ “Will of Rebecca Pereira Mendes” (1770) IRO lib. 39 fol. 126; will not included in the collection of the AJA.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to address three overarching questions: Was the history of Western Sephardim in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic a story of social and cultural decay? In what ways did Jewish family life in the West Indies inform a Spanish-Portuguese national identity distinctive from European mother communities? And, how did the process of rejudaization continue to influence patterns of family life into the eighteenth century.

Is the history of Western Sephardim in the British Atlantic a story of cultural and social decay? While, in North America and London, Sephardic society was in decline by the mid-eighteenth century, it flourished in the British West Indies. Spanish-Portuguese Jews sustained their settlement and perpetuated their shared sense of ethnic distinctiveness through settling within both extended and nuclear family. Unlike their non-Jewish counterparts, they lived in the tropics not as single individuals but as families. It was therefore within the home, rather within the communal realm, that Sephardic culture and identity was sustained.

Unlike the communities in London and North America, West Indian Sephardim married nearly exclusively among themselves. They perpetuated traditionally endogamous marriage not only to safeguard their wealth, but also to sustain the contours of ethnically defined familial belonging. At times this may have even been a self-conscious endeavor when, for instance, testators leveraged inheritance to ensure that their children would not abandon these marriage patterns.

The widespread practice of concubinage with women of color posed perhaps the greatest challenge to sustaining exclusively Sephardic family life in the West Indies. Despite this challenge, the children of these unions were often integrated into the family as recipients of

inheritance, even while racial tensions surrounded their presence in the household. The full extent of their incorporation, however, may only serve to reinforce the importance of ethnically defined family belonging. Like Converso kin who were seen as legitimate family despite their religious difference in the seventeenth century, children of color may have been perceived (or even perceived themselves) as ethnically Sephardic. As a result, the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community of the British West Indies does not disappear as much as it changes complexion.

Unlike Amsterdam, London, or New York where a sophisticated, communally operated educational system had been in place, the Sephardim of the British West Indies held fast to the Iberian rooted ideal that education should remain a private enterprise in the hands of fathers rather than communal functionaries. Through these patterns of marriage and parenting, West Indian Sephardim nurtured a sense of distinctive ethnic nationhood throughout the entire eighteenth century.

In what ways did Caribbean Sephardic society develop and evolve independent from their mother communities of Amsterdam or London? Whereas the trans-Atlantic nature of the Portuguese Diaspora during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries necessitated widespread family networks between both Jewish and Converso kin, over the course of the eighteenth century, it appears that Caribbean Jews became more locally oriented. Indeed, perhaps as much as 80 percent of the testators sampled here were native born to the islands. Though many testators sustained family ties to Europe, including in some rare cases to “Lands of Idolatry,” these testators were in the minority. By virtue of the fact that they lived within established and settled families on the islands, most Caribbean testators were locally oriented in the distribution of their estates. The collapse of the Atlantic trade by the first decade of the nineteenth century resulted in the final dissipation of trans-Atlantic family connections.

Since London and New York both had significant Ashkenazic majorities among Jews by 1720, it was far more difficult, and perhaps less desirable, to sustain endogamous marriage. The Sephardic social and cultural decay in those places was an inevitable outcome of such a skewed population. West Indian Sephardim, however, did not want for eligible marriage partners. Through their numeric superiority, West Indian Sephardim could actively sustain the “blood purity” of their families. Even in our present day, West Indian Jewish communities actively promote a proud Sephardic heritage that celebrates both the ethnic and cultural ties to their colonial pioneers.

The unprecedented reality of life for Jews in a slave society also engendered a distinctively Caribbean identity among Jews. Though their mother communities continued to influence Caribbean Jewish cultural expression, over the course of the eighteenth century, Caribbean Jews stood as a breed apart from their European brethren. Though both sides of the Atlantic maintained an orphanage society, for instance, the *Aby Yetomim* operated with a different mandate in Jamaica than in Amsterdam or London. The Jamaican and Barbadian *Aby Yetomim* most likely supported children of color who received some form of Jewish education. Unlike other parts of the British Atlantic, West Indian Jews appeared to even support that confraternity to the near exclusion of all others. Thus, future scholarship must be focused on the Caribbean as an independent entity with a distinctive communal evolution rather than as simply an arm of Europe.

What were the long-term familial effects of rejudaization? Despite attempts by Spanish-Portuguese communal boards and *hakhamim* throughout the Western Sephardic Diaspora to dislocate the Converso experience from the worldview of “New Jews”—by placing restrictions on the communal participation of the uncircumcised and those that traveled back to the “Land

of Idolatry”—they could not erase their memories. It was through their private and family lives that returnees and their children sustained an Iberian rooted heritage and memories of a Converso past. They held on to notions of ethnic “blood purity,” honor, and patriarchy in the ways they defined themselves and their families. In the West Indies, Sephardic male testators nurtured their patriarchal roles to support their family and encourage the rejudaization of their Converso kin independent of the Jewish community. They further believed that the Jewish community had little authority over the education and material support of their children.

The “Sephardic Period” of American Jewish history does not end in the 1720s. By shifting the focus away from North America toward the West Indies it is clear that Sephardic numerical and cultural hegemony thrived throughout the century and even longer. The threads linking fully identifying Jews to their Converso past are exposed by shifting the focus away from communal history toward the private life of the family. It was in the West Indies, unlike anywhere else in the Diaspora, where Sephardim perpetuated their sense of ethnic singularity. It was in the home, rather than within the community, where Sephardim preserved their historical memories and hopes of shaping a future.

TABLES

TABLE I: WILL SAMPLE

	<i>N</i>	%
Jamaica	207	69
Barbados	83	27.6
London	10	3.3
Men	237	79
Women	63	21
English	288	96
Spanish/Portuguese	12	4
AJA	208	69.3
IRO	92	30.6

TABLE II: WILL SAMPLE BY DECADE

	<i>N</i>	%
1673–1699	9	3
1700–1709	11	3.6
1710–1719	20	6.6
1720–1729	38	12.6
1730–1739	29	9.6
1740–1749	26	8.6
1750–1759	39	13
1760–1769	38	12.6
1770–1779	27	9

1780–1789	27	9
1790–1799	21	7
1800–1815	15	5

TABLE III: MARITAL STATUS OF TESTATORS

	<i>N</i>	%
Married with Children	92	30.6
Married without Children	53	17.6
Single Men	52	17.3
Widowers with Children	38	12.6
Widows with Children	26	8.6
Widows without Children	25	8.3
Single Women	13	4.3
Divorced with Children	1	0.3

TABLE IV: INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY BENEFICIARIES

	<i>N</i>	% ¹
London	36	40
Amsterdam	26	28.8
Bayonne	16	17.7
Jamaica	9	10
Curaçao	8	8.8

¹ Percentage of testators of testators who list international family as beneficiaries out of a total of 90.

Barbados	5	5.5
Portugal	3	3.3
Livorno	2	2.2
Europe (unspecified)	2	2.2
Kingdom of France (unspecified)	2	2.2
Bordeaux	1	1.1
New York	1	1.1
Suriname	1	1.1
German Lands	1	1.1

TABLE V: PATTERNS OF SLAVE OWNERSHIP AMONG JEWISH TESTATORS

	<i>N</i>	%
Slaves Bequeathed	172	57.3
Slaves Manumitted	41	13.6
Concubinage	14	4.6
Possible Concubinage ²	11	3.6

² Estates that include enslaved or free children (either as beneficiaries or as property) identified with complexions other than “negro.”

APPENDIX I: WILL SAMPLE

Testator	Drafted	Location	Qualifier
Gomes, David	1673	Jamaica	Merchant
Deleon, Solomon	1679	Jamaica	Planter
Alvares, David	1687	Jamaica	Unknown
Alvares, Abraham	1692	Jamaica	Merchant (tombstone)
Henriques, Jeosuar Bueno	1695	Jamaica	Unknown
Henriques, Benjamin	1697	Jamaica	Unknown
Silveira, Moses Athias da	1698	Jamaica	Unknown
Alvarenga, Joseph Dacosta	1699	Jamaica	Unknown
Pacheco, David	1699	Jamaica	Unknown
Deleon, Joseph	1701	Jamaica	Unknown
Meza, Jacob deFonseca	1701	Barbados	Unknown
Deleon, Jacob Rodrigues	1702	Jamaica	Doctor (tombstone)
Gomes, Abraham	1703	Jamaica	Unknown
Ydania, Joseph	1704	Jamaica	Planter
Abila, Isaac	1706	Jamaica	Merchant
Gomes, Aaron	1706	Jamaica	Unknown
Torres, Hannah de	1706	Jamaica	Single Woman
Deleon, Abraham Cohen	1707	Jamaica	Unknown
Narbona, David Lopes	1707	Jamaica	Planter
Cohen, Asher	1708	London	Unknown
Brandon, Jacob	1710	Jamaica	Merchant
Continho, Isaac	1710	Jamaica	Merchant
Castello, David	1711	Barbados	Unknown
Mendes, Rachel	1711	Barbados	Widow
Pereira, Isaac	1712	Jamaica	Unknown
Sampayo, Abraham Gomes	1713	Jamaica	Unknown
Delyon, Benjamin	1713	Barbados	Merchant
Ulloa, Daniel	1713	Barbados	Merchant
Yzidro, Moses Baruh	1713	Jamaica	Unknown
Cohen, Jonathan	1714	Jamaica	Merchant
Henriques, Daniel Cohen	1715	Jamaica	Unknown
Depiza, Abraham	1716	Barbados	Unknown
Letob, Benjamin Gabay	1717	Barbados	Unknown
Mendes, Moses de Solomon	1717	London	Merchant
Brandon, Moses	1718	Barbados	Unknown
Carvalho, Rachel Nunes	1718	Barbados	Unknown
Ferro, Moses Gabay	1718	Jamaica	Planter

Campos, Samuel de	1719	Barbados	Merchant
Deleon, Aaron Rodrigues	1719	Jamaica	Unknown
Nahar, Abraham	1719	Jamaica	Unknown
Gabay, David	1720	Jamaica	Planter
Medina, Jacob de	1720	Barbados	Merchant
Silva, Aaron da	1720	Jamaica	Fisherman
Azevedo, Abraham	1721	Jamaica	Unknown
Laguna, Daniel Lopes	1721	Jamaica	Unknown
Franco, Solomon	1721	Jamaica	Merchant
Alvares, Jacob Baruh	1722	Jamaica	Merchant
Alvin, Isaac Henriques	1722	Jamaica	Merchant
Massias, Joseph	1722	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Narbona, Jacob	1722	Jamaica	Planter
Touro, Moses	1722	Jamaica	Merchant
Valverde, Eleazer	1722	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Bravo, Isaac	1723	Jamaica	Unknown
Pereira, Isaac	1723	Jamaica	Merchant
Correa, Jacob	1723	Jamaica/London	Unknown
Cunha, Sarah da	1723	Jamaica	Widow
Gutteres, Jacob	1723	London	Merchant
Nunes, Rachel	1723	Jamaica	Widow
Pereira, Benjamin	1723	Jamaica	Merchant
Quixano, Moses Mendes	1723	Jamaica	Merchant
Torres, Joseph de	1723	Jamaica	Merchant
Lopes, Mordechai Rodrigues	1724	Jamaica	Unknown
Delyon, Matthias	1724	Barbados	Unknown
Massias, Isaac	1724	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Cardoso, Moses Jesurun	1725	Jamaica	Merchant
Depass, Esther Lopes	1725	Jamaica	Widow
Gonsales, Diego Luis	1725	Jamaica	Merchant
Marques, Jacob	1725	Barbados	Merchant
Silva, Joseph	1725	Barbados	Merchant
Valverde, Jacob	1725	Barbados	Unknown
Andrade, Raphael Rodrigues	1726	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Medina, Joyce de	1726	Barbados	Widow
Fonseca, Jacob de	1728	Barbados	Unknown
Massias, Esther	1728	Jamaica	Widow
Alvares, Moses	1729	Jamaica	Merchant
Castello, Moses	1729	Barbados	Unknown
Delyon, Abraham	1729	Jamaica	Housekeeper
Henriques, Abraham	1729	Jamaica	Merchant

Delyon, Joseph	1730	Jamaica	Gentleman
Franco, Moses	1730	Barbados	Merchant
Gabay, Isaac	1730	Jamaica	Planter
Carvalho, Daniel	1730	Jamaica	Merchant
Massias, Jael	1730	Jamaica	Unknown
Yzidro, Jacob Baruh	1730	Jamaica	Merchant
Brandon, Isaac Pereira	1731	Jamaica	Gentleman
Ladesma, David Carvalho	1731	Jamaica	Unknown
Alvares, Judith Baruh	1732	Jamaica	Widow
Arrobas, Miriam	1733	Barbados	Widow
Castro, Jacob de	1733	Jamaica	Merchant
Rodrigues, Abraham	1734	Jamaica	Distiller
Nunes, Abraham	1735	Barbados/London	Unknown
Burgos, Mordechai	1736	Barbados	Merchant
Ferro, Jacob	1736	Jamaica	Unknown
Massias, Joseph	1737	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Pereira, Menasseh	1737	Jamaica	Unknown
Silva, Mordechai da	1737	Jamaica	Merchant
Andrade, David Dacosta de	1738	Barbados	Unknown
Brandon, Isaac Pereira	1738	Jamaica	Merchant
Castro, Jacob jr. de	1738	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Gabay, David	1738	Jamaica	Planter
Quixano, David Mendes	1738	Jamaica	Unknown
Valverde, Moses	1738	Barbados	Unknown
Carvalho, Isaac	1739	Jamaica	Unknown
Lousada, David Baruh	1739	Barbados	Merchant
Quixano, Abraham Mendes	1739	Jamaica	Merchant
Ulloa, Solomon	1739	Barbados	Unknown
Valverde, Elias	1739	Barbados	Merchant
Pereira, Aaron	1740	Barbados	Merchant
Almeyda, Abraham	1741	Jamaica	Merchant
Lopes, Abraham Rodrigues	1741	Jamaica	Merchant
Bravo, Benjamin	1742	Jamaica	Planter
Massiah, Daniel	1742	Barbados	Merchant
Ulloa, Esther	1742	Barbados	Unknown
Valverde, Isaac	1742	Barbados	Unknown
Almeyda, David	1743	Jamaica	Merchant
Laguna, Aaron Lopes	1743	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Nunes, Abraham Israel	1743	Barbados	Merchant
Oliveira, Esther Policarpio de	1743	Jamaica	Widow
Pereira, Menasseh	1743	Jamaica	Shopkeeper

Barrios, Joseph Levy	1744	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Delyon, Lebanah	1744	Barbados	Widow
Depiza, Isaac	1745	Barbados	Unknown
Nunes, Benjamin	1745	Barbados	Merchant
Valverde, Abraham	1745	Barbados	Merchant
Valverde, David Jr.	1745	Barbados	Unknown
Andrade, Joseph Dacosta de	1746	Barbados	Unknown
Carvalho, Sarah	1746	Jamaica	Widow
Valverde, Aaron	1746	Barbados	Merchant
Andrade, Angeli Dacosta de	1747	Barbados	Widow
Gabay, Samuel	1747	Jamaica	Planter
Bravo, David	1748	Jamaica	Merchant
Lousada, Jacob Baruh	1748	London	Merchant
Massiah, Judah	1749	Barbados	Unknown
Brandon, Esther Pereira	1750	Jamaica	Unknown
Ladesma, Abraham	1750	Jamaica	Merchant
Pereira, Rachel	1750	Jamaica	Widow
Dacosta, Daniel Nunes	1751	Jamaica	Merchant
Delapenha, Jacob	1751	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Cardoso, Jacob Jesurun	1751	Jamaica	Gentleman
Almeyda, Isaac Depass	1752	Jamaica	Unknown
Brandon, Isaac Pereira	1752	Jamaica	Merchant
Castello, Sarah	1752	Barbados	Spinster
Quixano, Abraham Henriques	1752	Jamaica	Merchant
Sanches, Benjamin	1752	Jamaica	Unknown
Valverde, David	1752	Barbados	Unknown
Gonsales, Abraham	1753	Jamaica	Merchant
Lopes, Rachel Rodrigues	1753	Jamaica	Widow
Alvarenga, Isaac Dacosta	1754	Jamaica	Physician
Dacosta, Daniel Mendes	1754	Jamaica	Merchant
Henriques, Isaac	1754	Jamaica	Merchant
Miranda, Rebecca Rodrigues	1754	Jamaica	Widow
Henriques, Abigail	1755	Barbados	Unknown
Henriques, Jacob	1755	Jamaica	Planter
Pinheiro, Abraham	1755	Barbados	Unknown
Alvarenga, Rachel DaCosta	1756	Jamaica	Widow
Brandon, Abraham	1756	Barbados	Unknown
Gutteres, Abraham	1756	Jamaica	Merchant
Mendes, Emmanuel	1756	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Silva, Rachel Gomes	1756	Jamaica	Widow
Touro, Deborah	1756	Jamaica	Widow

Furtado, Isaac Henriques	1757	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Martins, Rachel	1757	Jamaica	Widow
Silva, Daniel da	1757	Jamaica	Merchant
Delara, Joseph Cohen	1758	Jamaica	Gentleman
Fernandes, Daniel Alves	1758	Jamaica	Merchant
Gutteres, Leah	1758	Jamaica	Widow
Henriques, Abigail	1758	Jamaica	Widow
Mendes, Jacob Pereira	1758	Jamaica	Merchant
Castello, Judith	1759	Barbados	Widow
Delapenha, Rebecca	1759	Jamaica	Widow
Henriques, David	1759	Jamaica	Merchant
Lousada, David Baruh	1759	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Barrios, Daniel Lopes	1760	Jamaica	Gentleman
Carvalho, Abraham	1760	Barbados	Unknown
Gabay, David	1760	Jamaica	Gentleman
Gutteres, Judith	1760	Jamaica	Widow
Cohen, Daniel	1762	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Delara, Abraham Cohen	1762	Jamaica	Gentleman
Henriques, Moses Lopes	1762	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Lazarus, Elias	1762	Jamaica	Gentleman
Lopes, Moses	1762	Barbados	Unknown
Riz, Moses Lopes	1762	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Ydana, Abraham	1762	Jamaica	Unknown
Alvin, Judith Lopes	1763	Jamaica	Widow
Fernandes, Moses Dias	1763	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Letob, Leah Gabay	1763	Barbados	Unknown
Lindo, Abraham Sr.	1763	Barbados	Unknown
Nunes, Isaac Rodrigues	1763	Jamaica	Merchant
Dacosta, Isaac Mendes	1764	London	Merchant
Nunes, Jacob	1764	Jamaica	Unknown
Nunes, Isaac	1764	Jamaica	Gentleman
Silva, David Mendes da	1764	Jamaica	Unknown
Sueyro, Daniel	1764	Jamaica	Goldsmith
Lousada, Aaron Baruh	1765	Jamaica	Merchant
Alvares, Moses Levy	1765	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Alvares, Moses	1766	Jamaica	Merchant
Castro, David da	1766	Jamaica	Merchant
Fonseca, Isaac daSilva	1766	Jamaica	Merchant
Gutteres, Joseph	1766	Jamaica	Merchant
Levy, Michael	1766	Jamaica	Merchant
Mella, Isaac de	1766	Jamaica	Unknown

Saldana, Solomon	1766	Jamaica	Goldsmith
Torres, Rachel	1766	Jamaica	Widow
Navarro, Daniel Lopes	1767	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Silva, Jacob Gomes	1767	Jamaica	Gentleman
Torres, Jacob Lopes	1767	Jamaica	Merchant
Dacosta, Sarah Rodrigues	1769	Jamaica	Widow
Deleon, Isaac	1769	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Lousada, Daniel Baruh	1769	London	Merchant
Mendes, Rebecca Pereira	1769	Jamaica	Widow
Brandon, Isaac Pereira	1770	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Pinheiro, Lunah	1770	Barbados	Unknown
Sousa, Abraham Henriques da	1770	Jamaica	Planter
Henriques, Sarah	1771	Barbados	Spinster
Arrobas, Abigail	1772	Barbados	Spinster
Lyon, Isaac	1772	Jamaica	Gentleman
Nunes, Jacob Rodrigues	1772	Jamaica	Unknown
Azevado, David de	1773	Jamaica	Gentleman
Furtado, David Orobio	1773	Jamaica	Unknown
Henriques, Moses Nunes	1773	Jamaica	Merchant
Abarbanel, Benjamin	1774	Barbados	Merchant
Almeyda, Daniel	1774	Jamaica	Gentleman
Almeyda, Moses	1774	Jamaica	Merchant
Castello, David Nunes	1774	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Nunes, Judith	1774	Barbados	Unknown
Rodrigues, Abraham	1774	Jamaica	Gentleman
Brandon, Jacob Rodrigues	1775	Jamaica	Merchant
Massiah, Simeon	1775	Barbados	Gentleman
Nunes, Rebecca	1775	Barbados	Widow
Torres, David Lopes	1776	Jamaica	Merchant
Bravo, Jacob	1777	Jamaica	Merchant
Decordova, Moses	1777	Jamaica	Gentleman
Delyon, Rachel	1778	Barbados	Spinster
Dacosta, David	1779	Barbados	Unknown
Lopes, Moses	1779	Jamaica	Gentleman
Mendes, David D. Pereira	1779	Jamaica	Merchant
Seixas, Jacob Mendes	1779	Jamaica	Merchant
Brandon, Moses	1780	Jamaica	Bookkeeper
Pinheiro, David	1781	Barbados	Unknown
Pinto, Samuel	1781	Jamaica	Gentleman
Henriques, Benjamin Nunes	1782	Jamaica	Merchant
Massiah, Benjamin	1782	Barbados	Unknown

Massiah, Esther	1782	Barbados	Widow
Pinheiro, Jael	1782	Barbados	Widow
Valverde, David	1782	Barbados	Unknown
Henriques, Jacob Nunes	1783	Jamaica	Physician/Surgeon
Lindo, Abraham Jr.	1783	Barbados/London	Esquire
Ulloa, Daniel	1783	Barbados	Unknown
Valverde, Jacob	1783	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Bravo, Judith	1784	Jamaica	Widow
Aguilar, Rebecca	1785	Jamaica	Widow
Castro, Leah da	1785	Jamaica	Widow
Massiah, David	1785	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Dacosta, Solomon Rodrigues	1786	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Pixotto, Judith	1786	Barbados	Widow
Torres, Grace Lopes	1786	Jamaica	Widow
Delima, Haim	1787	Barbados	Unknown
Furtado, Isaac Aboab	1787	Jamaica	Gentleman
Gutteres, Joseph	1787	Jamaica	Gentleman
Henriques, Moses	1787	Jamaica	Merchant
Massiah, Simeon	1787	Barbados	Merchant
Castro, Jacob de	1788	Jamaica	Gentleman
Lousada, Rachel Baruh	1788	Jamaica	Widow
Lopes, Sarah	1789	Barbados	Widow
Brandon, Debora Pinto	1790	Jamaica	Widow
Burgess, Moses	1791	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Carvalho, Rachel	1791	Barbados	Widow
Pinheiro, Aaron	1791	Barbados	Shopkeeper
Arrobas, Lunah	1792	Barbados	Unknown
Nunes, Rachel	1792	Jamaica	Widow
Aguilar, Abraham	1794	London	Esquire
Decordova, Raphael	1794	Jamaica	Gentleman
Adolphus, Moses	1795	Jamaica	Merchant
Brandon, Rebecca Pereira	1795	Jamaica	Spinster
Lousada, Emmanuel Baruh	1795	Jamaica	Esquire
Massiah, Esther	1795	Barbados	Widow
Depinna, David Sarfaty	1796	Barbados	Unknown
Massiah, Sarah	1796	Barbados	Unknown
Pinheiro, Isaac	1796	Barbados	Unknown
Henriques, David	1797	Jamaica	Merchant
Depass, Jacob	1798	Jamaica	Shopkeeper
Gomes, Esther Levy	1798	Jamaica	Widow
Mendes, Rachel	1798	Jamaica	Gentlewoman

Deleon, Joseph	1799	Jamaica	Gentleman
Fonseca, Moses	1799	Jamaica	Gentleman
Alvares, David Mendes	1800	Jamaica	Silversmith
Fonseca, Moses Gomes	1800	Jamaica	Unknown
Lousada, Jacob Baruh	1800	Jamaica	Esquire
Deleon, Isaac Rodrigues	1801	Jamaica	Merchant
Delapenha, Moses	1802	Jamaica	Merchant
Furtado, David	1804	Jamaica	Merchant
Deleon, Jacob Cohen	1805	Jamaica	Merchant
Henriques, Judah Cohen	1807	Jamaica	Gentleman
Silva, Rachel Gomes	1808	Jamaica	Spinster
Dacosta, David Rodrigues	1809	Jamaica	Gentleman
Nunes, Sarah Rodrigues	1809	Jamaica	Unknown
Alvarenga, Isaac Dacosta	1810	Jamaica	Physician/Surgeon
Henriques, Rebecca Cohen	1810	Jamaica	Widow
Henriques, Abraham Nunes	1811	Jamaica	Merchant
Decordova, Jacob Sr.	1814	Jamaica	Merchant

APPENDIX II: WEST INDIAN JEWISH MARRIAGES (1673–1814)

* unknown first name

Husband	Wife	Year¹	Location	Source	Evidence
* Gabay	Sarah Gomes	1673	Jamaica	Will of David Gomes, 1673	my nephew Jacob Gabay...Jacob Gabay and David Gabay sonnes of Sarah Gabay widow
Abraham De Aguilar	Ester B. Alvares	1687	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of David Alvares, 1693	amiermana ester deaquilar
Abraham Narvais	Sarah B. Alvares	1687	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of David Alvares, 1693	amiermana Sara Narbaes
David B. Alvares	Raquel Narvais	1687	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of David Alvares, 1693	amiermana Sara Narbaes madre demimujer...mi mujer Raquel Alvares
Jacob DeCastro	Ester B. Alvares	1687	Jamaca/ Bayonne	Will of David Alvares, 1693	amigja ester que esta casada Conel dotor Jacob decastro
Jacob Lopes Torres	Sara B. Alvares	1687	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of David Alvares, 1693	amigja Sara que esta Casada con miso brino Jacob Lopes Tores
Joseph Dacosta Alvarenga	Abigail Franco	1692	Jamaica	Will of Joseph Dacosta Alvarenga, 1700	Mulher Abigail DaCosta Alvarenga...canhado Benjamin franco....Canhada Ester Franca
* de Aguilar	Esther B. Alvares	1692	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of Abraham Alvares, 1693	Mi Jia. Ester de Aguilar...y amy Primo Ishak de Aguilar
* Gonsales	Rica B. Alvares	1692	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of Abraham Alvares, 1693	amy hermana Rica Goncales

¹ Unless the marriage is known from a periodical source that explicitly mentions a date of marriage, marriages may have at times occurred many years before the date they are first mentioned in a will.

* Nunes	Judica B. Alvares	1692	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of Abraham Alvares, 1693	amy hermana Judica Nunes
Abraham de Azevedo	Raquel da Silveira	1698	Jamaica	Will of Moses Athias DaSilveira	mina filla Raquel...meo Teneo Abram DeAzevedo
Naftali Bar Moses	* Nahar	1701	Jamaica	Will of Joseph Deleon, 1701; Will of Abraham Nahar, 1719	my niece Minjam Naphealy (the daughter of Naphealy Bar Moses late of the parish of Port Royal deceased)
Joseph Cohen Deleon	Rachel de Torres	1706	Jamaica	Will of Hannah de Torres, 1706	my dear sister Raichell Cohean Deleon ye wife of Joseph Cohean Deleon
* Cahanet	Sarah Cohen	1708	Jamaica	Will of Asher Cohen, 1708	my daughter Sarah Cahanett
* Gomes	Rachel Brandon	1710	London	Will of Jacob Brandon, 1710	my loving sister Rachel Gomes of the City of London...Widow
* Mendes	Rachel Namias	1711	Barbados	Will of Rachel Mendes, 1739	my brother Manuel Namias
Abraham Mendes	* Mendes	1711	Barbados	Will of Rachel Mendes, 1739	son-in-law Abraham Mendes
David Castello	Rebecca Namias	1711	Barbados	Will of Rachel Mendes, 1739	my sister Rebecca Castello
Moses Mendes	Judith Castello	1711	Barbados	Will of David Costello, 1711	my daughter Judith the wife of Moses Mandaz
Daniel Decrofts	Sarah Ulloa	1713	Barbados	Will of Daniel Ulloa, 1714	my daughter Sarah Ulloa formerly intermarried with one Daniel Decrofts
Matthias Brown	Rebecca B.Yzidro	1713	Jamaica	Will of Moses Baruh Yzidro, 1713	my Daughter Rebecca wife of Mathias Brown

Joseph Nunes Miranda	Rica Gomes Sampayo	1713	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Gomes Sampayo, 1713	yerno Joseph Nunez Miranda...ami hija Rica Miranda
* Sousa	Reyna Cohen	1714	Jamaica/ Amsterdam	Will of Jonathan Cohen, 1717	my sister...Reyna Sousa of the city of Amsterdam
* de la Torres	Sarah Cohen	1714	Jamaica/ Amsterdam	Will of Jonathan Cohen, 1717	my sister...Sarrah de la Toress..in Holland
Abraham Nunes	*Esther Valverde	1717	Barbados	Will of Moses Valverde, 1740	to my niece Deborah the daughter of my brother Abraham Nunes
Jacob Correa	Esther Gabay Faro	1718	Jamaica	Will of Moses Gabay Faro, 1718	my sister Esther Correa the wife of Jacob Correa
* Salzedo	Sarah da Silva	1720	Jamaica	Will of Aaron da Silva, 1720	My sister...Hannah Salzedo of Amsterdam
* Abenacar	Bathsheba Franco	1721	Jamaica/ Amsterdam	Will of Solomon Franco, 1721	my dear and loving sister Batseba Abenacar als. Franco of the city of Amsterdam
* Abonaca	Ester Franco	1721	Jamaica/ Amsterdam	Will of Solomon Franco, 1721	my dear and loving sister Ester Abonaca als. Franco now living in the City of Amsterdam
* Sarfaty	Judica Franco	1721	Jamaica/ England	Will of Solomon Franco, 1721	my dear loving sister, Judica Sarffatty als. Franco now living in the Kingdom of Great Britain
Abraham Aguilar	Rebecca Franco	1721	Jamaica	Will of Solomon Franco, 1721	my dear and loving sister Rebecca Aguilar als. Franco of the said town of Spanish Town;
David Gutierrez	Leah Lopes Laguna	1721	Jamaica	Will of Daniel Lopes Laguna, 1723	my cousin [sic] the daughter of my brother Moses Lopez Laguna named Lea Gutierrez the wife of David Gutierrez

Isaac Pereira	Rachel de Cunha	1721	Jamaica	Will of Sarah de Cunha, 1723	my son in Law Isaac Pereira
Moses Mendes Quixano	Esther B. Alvares	1723	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Baruh Alvares, 1723	my daughter Esther is lately married unto Moses Mendes Quixano son of Abraham Mendes Quixano
* Nunes	Rachel Correa	1723	London	Will of Jacob Correa, 1723	my sisters Rachel Nunes of London Widow
Abraham Depass	Deborah Correa	1723	London	Will of Jacob Correa, 1723	my sisters...Deborah DePaz wife of Abraham Depaz
Benjamin Pereira	Rachael Lopes Depass	1723	Jamaica	Will of Benjamin Pereira, 1723	my truley and lawfull wife Rachael Pereira daughter of Aaron Lopez Depaz
David Bravo	Rachel Gutteres	1723	London	Will of Jacob Gutteres, 1726	my daughter Rachael Bravo and David Bravo her husband
David Mendes Henriques	Judith Gutteres	1723	London	Will of Jacob Gutteres, 1726	my sister Judeth Mendes Henriques Widow of my Brother David Mendes Henriques
Elias Paz	Rebecca Bravo	1723	Jamaica/ London	Will of Isaac Bravo, 1723	unto my beloved brother Elias Paz of London and unto my dear sister Rebecca his wife
Isaac Furtado	Esther Pereira	1723	Jamaica	Will of Benjamin Pereira, 1723	my son in law Isaac Fuertado of Kingston Merchant and Esther his wife my daughter
Jacob Nunes	Rachel Jesurun Cardozo	1723	Jamaica	Will of Rachel Nunes, 1724	my loving brother Moses Yeshurum Cardoso
Moses Mendes Quixano	Esther Baruh Alvares	1723	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Baruh Alvares, 1723	my daughter Esther is lately married unto Moses Mendes Quixano son of Abraham Mendes Quixano
* Rodrigues Bernal	Esther Rodrigues Lopes	1724	Jamaica/ Bayonne	Will of Mordechai Rodrigues Lopes, 1743	amy Amado Hermana Ester Rodrigues Bernall de Baiona

David Lopes	Sarah Leah Delyon	1724	Barbados	Will of Mathias Delyon, 1724	my daughter Sarah Lopez wife of David Lopez
Joseph da Silva	Rebecca Delyon	1724	Barbados	Will of Mathias Delyon, 1724	my daughter Rebecca DaSilva the wife of Joseph DaSilva
* Lamego	Sarah Gonsales	1725	Jamaica	Will of Diego Luis Gonsales, 1726	my daughter Sarah Lamego
Daniel Massiah	Sarah Burgos	1725	Barbados	Will of Mordechai Burgos, 1736	my brother-in-law Daniel Messiah
Jacob Soares Pereira	Rachel Rodrigues Andrada	1726	Jamaica	Will of Raphael Rodrigues Andrada, 1726	my brother in-law Jacob Soares Pereira
* Abilla	Sarah Massiah	1728	Jamaica	Will of Esther Massias, 1729	my wel beloved daughters...Sarah Abilla
* Azevedo	Rachel Massiah	1728	Jamaica	Will of Esther Massias, 1729	my wel beloved daughters Rachael Azevedo
* Tavares	Luna Massiah	1728	Jamaica	Will of Esther Massias, 1729	my wel beloved daughters...Luna Tabarez
Moses da Silva Sollis	* Delyon	1729	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Delyon, 1730	my niece Rebecca da Silva Sollis daughter to Moses da Silva Sollis
Jacob Valverde	Rachel Franco	1730	Barbados	Will of Moses Franco, 1730	my late Brother in Law Jacob Valverde Merchant Decd.
David Salom	Esther Carvalla Ledesma	1731	Jamaica	Will of David Carvallo Ladesma, 1731	my dear grand daughter Abigail Salom the daughter of David Salom and of my dear loving daughter Ester Salom
Jacob Nunes	*Sarah Baruh Alvares	1732	Jamaica	Will of Judith Baruh Alvares, 1732	my son-in-law Jacob Nunes

Jacob Gonsales	*Leah Baruh Alvares	1732	Jamaica	Will of Judith Baruh Alvares, 1732	my son-in-law Jacob Gonsales
Jacob Decastro	Leah Gutteres	1733	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Decastro, 1739	my beloved daughter Sarah DeCastro...her late Grand Father Moses Gutteres Decd...my Wife Leah
Moses Lopes	* Nunes	1735	Barbados/ London	Will of Abraham Nunes, 1736	my grand daughter Hester Lopez the daughter of Moses Lopez...my Son in law Moses Lopez
David DaCosta DeAndrade	Angel Massiah	1736	Barbados	Will of Mordechai Burgos, 1736	my niece Angel Decosta wife of David DeCosta
Isaac DePiza	* Burgos	1736	Barbados	Will of Mordechai Burgos, 1736	my son-in-law Isaac Depiza
Moses Lopes	Esther Hannah Delyon	1736	Barbados	Will of Lebanah Delyon, 1747	my sons in law...Moses Lopez
David Gabay	Sarah Henriques	1738	Jamaica	Will of David Gabay, 1762	my beloved wife Sarah Gabay sole executrix...my brother-in-law Moses Henriques may assist my said wide on all occasions
David Mendes Quixano	Rachel Mendes Quixano	1738	Jamaica	Will of David Mendes Quixano, 1739	my...wife Rachel Mendez Quixano...her father Abraham Mendez Quixano
Moses Nunes	Leah Valverde	1738	Barbados	Will of Moses Valverde, 1740	my niece Abigaill the daughter of my brother Moses Nunes
Abraham Gomes	Jael Valverde	1739	Barbados	Will of Elias Valverde, 1739	my daughter Jael [is] already married and received [her] portion...to my beloved partner and son in law Abraham Gomez

Isaac Henriques	Leah Mendes Quixano	1739	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Mendes Quixano, 1741	my granddaughter Sarah Henriques Daughter of Isaac and Leah Henriques...my said daughter Leah Henriques
Samuel Aflalo	Rachel Mendes Quixano	1739	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Mendes Quixano, 1741	my daughter Rachel Mendes Quixano formerly the widow of David Mendes Quixano but now the wife of Samuel Aflelo
Jacob Gonsales	* Almeyda	1741	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Almeyda, 1744	my brother in law Jacob Gonzales
* Baruch	Esther Massiah	1742	Barbados	Will of Daniel Massiah, 1742	my daughters Esther Baruch
* de Par	Rebecca Bravo	1742	London/ Jamaica	Will of Benjamin Bravo, 1742	my niece Sarah Harnis Par daughter of my sister Rebecca de par who is now in England
Jacob de Fonseca	Deborah Massiah	1742	Barbados	Will of Daniel Massiah, 1742	my daughters...Deborah Tonseca [sic]
Jacob Henriques	Rebecca Bravo	1742	Jamaica	Will of Benjamin Bravo, 1742	Rebecca Henriques wife of Jacob Henriques, Planter daughter of the Said David Bravo
David Nunes Dacosta	Esther Pereira	1743	Jamaica	Will of Menasseh Pereira, 1743	my beloved sisters...Esther Nunes daCosta wife of Mr. Daniel Nunes DaCosta
David Valverde Jr.	Rachel Nunes	1743	Barbados	Will of Abraham Israel Nunes, 1745	my loving brothers...David Valverde Junr
Moses Pereira	Rachel Pereira	1743	Jamaica	Will of Menasseh Pereira, 1743	my beloved sisters Rachel Pereira wife of Mr. Moses Pereira

Isaac Gomes	Deborah Delyon	1744	Barbados	Will of Lebanah Delyon, 1747	my daughter Deborah Gomez...my sons in law...Isaac Gomez
Abraham Valverde	Esther Valverde	1746	Barbados	Will of Aaron Valverde, 1746	my sister Hester Valverde Wife of Abraham Valverde...my said brothers in law Abraham Valverde...and my beloved Sister Esther Valverde Wife of the said Abraham Valverde
Jacob Valverde	Leah Valverde	1746	Barbados	Will of Aaron Valverde, 1746	my Sister Leah Valverde Wife of Jacob Valverde
Mordechai Massiah	Sarah Dacosta De Andrade	1746	Barbados	Will of Angeli Dacosta De Andrade, 1748	my granddaughter Ester Massiah daughter of Mordecay Messiah...my loving brothers...Mordecay Massiah
Abraham Ladesma	Abigail Carvalho	1746	Jamaica	Will of Sarah Carvalho, 1756	My dear and Loving daughter Abigail Ladesma wife of Abraham Ladesma
Abraham Massiah	Rachel Dacosta De Andrade	1747	Barbados	Will of Angeli Dacosta De Andrade, 1748	my daughter Rachell Massiah wife to Abraham Massiah
* Gabay	Luna Massias	1747	Jamaica	Will of Samuel Gabay, 1751	Luna Massias Daughter of Samuel Massias senior my now daughter in law
* Almeyda	Abigail Baruh Lousada	1748	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Baruh Lousada, 1753	my nieces Ester Rachael and Abigail Almeyda of Jamaica Spinsters daughter of my sister Abigail Almeyda deceased
* Rodrigues Lopes	Rachel Baruh Lousada	1748	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Baruh Lousada, 1753	my sister Rachael Rodrigues Lopes of the Island of Jamaica
Abraham Gutteres	Leah Bravo	1748	Jamaica	Will of David Bravo, 1749	my daughter Leah Guttires the wife of the said Abraham Guttieries

Isaac Mendes DaCosta	* Baruh Louasada	1748	Jamaica/ London	Will of Jacob Baruh Lousada, 1753	my brother in law Isaac Mendes Dacosta of London
Jacob Baruh Lousada	Abigail Lamego	1748	Jamaica/ London	Will of Jacob Baruh Lousada, 1753	my father [in-law] Isaac Lamego
Joseph Aguilar	Rebecca Baruh Lousada	1748	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Baruh Lousada, 1753	my sister Rebeccah Aguilar wife of Joseph Aguilar of Jamaica
Joseph Gutteres	Sarah Bravo	1748	Jamaica	Will of David Bravo, 1749	my son in Law Joseph Guttieres
* Rodrigues Dacosta	Sarah Rodrigues Deleon	1750	Jamaica	Will of Esther Pereira Brandon, 1750	my daughter Sarah Rodrigues DaCosta
Isaac Ydana de Caseres	Benvenida Ladesma	1750	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Ladesma, 1756	intermarriage of my daughter Benevenida with Isaac Ydana de Casress (since deceased)
Jacob Delapenha	Esther Mendes	1751	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Delapenha, 1751	my beloved wife Esther...my Honoured Father in Law Moses Mendes
Joseph da Fonseca Chaves	Hannah Nunes Dacosta	1751	Jamaica	Will of Daniel Nunes Dacosta, 1752	my sister Hannah de Fonseca deChaves
* Ferro	Miriam J. E. Jesurun Cardoso	1751	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Jesurun Cardoso, 1752	my loving sister Miriam Judith Esther Ferro
Benjamin Pereira	Sarah Henriques Quixano	1752	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Henriques Quixano, 1753	my Godson Isaac Pereira (the son of Benjamin and my sister Sarah Pereira)...my sister Sarah Pereira wife of Benjamin Pereira

Daniel Almeyda	* Henriques Quixano	1752	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Henriques Quixano, 1753	my friend and brother in Law Daniel Almeyda
Moses Gomes	* Henriques Quixano	1752	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Henriques Quixano, 1753	my niece Ester Gomez daughter of Moses Gomez
Aaron Baruh Lousada	Rachel Mendes Dacosta	1754	Jamaica	Will of Daniel Mendes Dacosta, 1755	My much esteemed and loving son in law Aaron Baruh Lousada... my grandson Emmanuel Baruh Lousada son of Aaron and Rachel Baruh Lousada
Isaac Mendes DaCosta	Rebecca Lamego	1755	Jamaica/ London	Will of Isaac Mendes Dacosta, 1766	(June 16) by a certain deed or marriage contract bearing date the sixteenth day of June one thousand seven hundred and fifty two by me entered into with Isaac Lamego and the said Rebecca my now wife
* Ydana	Esther Henriques	1755	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Henriques, 1761	my sister Esther Ydana
Jacob Bravo	* Henriques	1755	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Henriques, 1762	my brother in law Jacob Bravo
* Alvin	Judith de Azevedo	1756	Jamaica	Will of Deborah Touro, 1757	my two dearly beloved sisters...Judith Alvin
* De Campos Pereira	Rachel Brandon	1756	Barbados	Will of Abraham Brandon, 1756	my daughter Rachael DeCampos Pereira
* Touro	Deborah de Azevedo	1756	Jamaica	Will of Deborah Touro, 1757	my niece Rachel De'Azevedo...my niece Dina De'Azevedo the daughter of David DeAzevedo...my niece Sarah Azevedo

Elias Lazarus	Rebecca de Azevedo	1756	Jamaica	Will of Deborah Touro, 1757	my two dearly beloved sisters Rebecca Lazarus...my loving brother in law Elias Lazarus
* da Silva	Judith Mendes	1756	Jamaica	Will of Emmanuel Mendes, 1757	my daughter Judith DaSilva
David Nunes Carvalho	Sarah Henriques Furtado	1757	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Henriques Furtado, 1757	My loving sister Sarah Nunes Carvalho wife of David Nunes Carvalho
Benjamin Cortisos	Sarah Martins	1757	Jamaica	Will of Rachel Martins, 1758	my beloved son in law Benjamin Cortisos and my beloved daughter Sarah Cortisos
* Cohen Deleon	Esther Henriques	1758	Jamaica	Will of Abigail Henriques, 1760	my loving daughter Esther Cohen Deleon
* Dacosta	Rebecca Pereira Mendes	1758	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Pereira Mendes, 1759	my daughter Rebecca Dacosta Alvarenga
Abraham Henriques Quixano	Sarah Henriques	1759	Jamaica	Will of David Henriques, 1766	my niece Leah Henriques Quixano (daughter of my brother [in-law] Abraham Henriques Quixano
Abraham Massiah, Jr.	Rebecca Baruh Louasada	1759	Barbados	Will of David Baruh Lousada, 1759	my Brothers [in law]...Abraham Massiah Jnr
Benjamin Massiah	Esther Baruh Lousada	1759	Barbados	Will of David Baruh Lousada, 1759	my Brothers [in law]...Bazamin Massiah
David Nunes	Rebecca Castello	1759	Barbados	Will of Judith Castello, 1759	my dear/beloved daughter Rebecca Nunes wif [sic] of David Nunes
Isaac Lindo	Judith Baruh Lousada	1759	Barbados	Will of David Baruh Lousada, 1759	my Brothers [in law]...Isaac Lindo

Moses Gomes	Sarah Henriques	1759	Jamaica	Will of David Henriques, 1766	my niece Esther Gomes (daughter of my sister Sarah Pereira and Moses Gomes deceased)
* Mendes	Rebecca Delapenha	1759	Jamaica	Will of Rebecca Delapenha, 1760	my granddaughter Rebecca Mendes wife of Isaac Mendes and daughter of my son Jacob Delapenha
David Decastro	Leah Mendes Gutteres	1760	Jamaica	Will of Leah Decastro, 1790	my sister Rebecca Mendes Gutteres...Spinster
David Gabay	Rachel Ydana	1760	Jamaica	Will of David Gabay, 1760	my dear wife Rachel Gabay formerly Rachel Ydana
* Melhado	Rachel Ydana	1762	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Ydana, 1762	my two sisters Rachel Milhado
* Morais	Sarah Ydana	1762	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Ydana, 1762	my two sisters...Sarah Moraise
* Nunes Paiba	Esther Cohen Delara	1762	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Cohen Delara, 1763	my sister Esther Nunes Peve
Abraham Lopes	Sarah Lopes Riz	1762	Jamaica	Will of Moses Lopes Riz, 1762	my wife Rachell <u>Lopez Riz</u> ...my son David <u>Lopez Riz</u> ...my daughter Sarah <u>Lopez</u>
Samuel Sanches Morao	Sara Cohen Delara	1762	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Cohen Delara, 1763	my sister Sara Sanches Morong
Mordechai Nunes	Rebecca Lopes	1762	Barbados	Will of Moses Lopes, 1762	my son in law Mordecai Nunes...my daughter Rebecca Nunes, his wife
Moses Aflalo	Leah Ydana	1762	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Ydana, 1762	my dear and beloved sisters [sic] Mrs. Leah Aflalo the wife of Mr. Moses Aflalo

Moses Lopes, Jr.	Sarah Lopes	1762	Barbados	Will of Moses Lopes, 1762	my son in law Moses Lopess junior...his marriage to my daughter Sarah
Moses Lopes, Sr.	* Delyon	1762	Barbados	Will of Moses Lopes, 1762	my daughter Lebannah Lopes...her grand mother Lebannah Delyon
Judah Massiah	Esther Lindo	1763	Barbados	Will of Abraham Lindo, Sr., 1763	my loving sister Esther Massiah widow
Meir Cohen Belinfante	Sarah Lindo	1763	Barbados	Will of Abraham Lindo, Sr., 1763	my nephew Joseph Cohen Belinfante...my sisters...Sarah Belinfante
Abraham Lindo, Jr.	Judith Lindo	1763	Barbados	Will of Abraham Lindo, Sr., 1763	my loving sister Judith Lindo wife of said Abraham Lindo, Jr
Jacob Nunes Dacosta	Rachel Rodrigues Nunes	1763	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Rodrigues Nunes, 1763	my beloved sister Rachall wife of Jacob Nunes DaCosta
Jeremiah Baruh Lousada	Sarah Gabay Letob	1763	Barbados	Will of Leah Gabay Letob, 1763	my beloved grandson Sollomon Benoney Baruk Louzada...my loving grand daughter Rachel daughter of Jeremiah Baruk Louzada
Moses Levy Alvares	Hannah Lopes Alvin	1763	Jamaica	Will of Judith Lopes Alvin, 1766	I leave...unto Hanah Levy Alvares wife of Moses Levy Alvares and daughter of Aaron Lopes Alvin...
Abraham Levy	Rebecca Mendes DaCosta	1764	Jamaica/ London	Will of Isaac Mendes Dacosta, 1766	my brother in law Isaac of Abraham Levy of Amsterdam...and to my sister Rebecca his wife
Daniel Sueyro	Esther Coleman	1764	Jamaica	Will of Daniel Sueyro, 1764	my mother in law Goal Coleman...my loving wife Esther
David Ximenes	Abigail Mendes Dacosta	1764	Jamaica/ London	Will of Isaac Mendes Dacosta, 1766	my brother in law David Ximenes...my sister Abigail Ximenes

Samuel Peixotto	Sarah Mendes DaCosta	1764	Jamaica/ London/ Bordeaux	Will of Isaac Mendes Dacosta, 1766	my sister Sarah Peixotto wife of Samuel Peixotto of Bourdeaux
* Carillo Saldana	Abigail Saldana	1766	Jamaica	Will of Solomon Saldana, 1767	
* Thalavera	Esther Saldana	1766	Jamaica	Will of Solomon Saldana, 1767	my loving sister Esther Thalavera
* Torres	Rachel Pinto Brandon	1766	Jamaica	Will of Rachel Torres, 1768	my brother the said Isaac Pinto Brandon
Isaac da Silva Fonseca	Sarah Orobio Furtado	1766	Jamaica	Will of Isaac da Silva Fonseca, 1767	my loving wife Sarah...my wife's brother Aaron Orobio Furtado
Isaac Gutteres	Esther da Castro	1766	Jamaica	Will of David da Castro, 1766	my three sisters...Esther Gutteres the wife of Isaac Gutteres
Isaac Mendes Gutteres	Rebecca Gutteres	1766	Jamaica	Will of Joseph Gutteres, 1766	my brother in law Isaac Mendes Gutteres
Jacob Furtado	Sarah Da Castro	1766	Jamaica	Will of David da Castro, 1766	my three sisters Sarah Furtado the wife of Jacob Furtado
Moses Gutteres	Rachel da Castro	1766	Jamaica	Will of David da Castro, 1766	my three sisters...Rachel Gutteres the wife of Moses Gutteres....
Moses Nunes Miranda	Esther Gutteres	1766	Jamaica	Will of Joseph Gutteres, 1766	my sister Esther Nunes Miranda
Abraham Aguilar	Rebecca Lopes Torres	1767	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Lopes Torres, 1768	my daughter Rebecca Aguilar (the wife of Abraham Aguilar)

Daniel Baruh Lousada	Rebecca Baruh Lousada	1769	Jamaica/ London	Will of Daniel Baruh Lousada, 1770	my mother in law Abigail Baruh Lousada...my loving [current] wife Rebecca Baruh Lousada
Abraham Correa	Esther Deleon	1769	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Deleon, 1799	my daughter Ester Correa the wife of Abraham Correa
David Correa	Judith Deleon	1769	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Deleon, 1799	my daughter Judith Correa the wife of David Correa
Abraham Rodrigues Pereira	Abigail Deleon	1769	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Deleon, 1799	My daughter Abigail Rodrigues Pereira wife of Abraham Rodrigues Pereira
* Nunes	Esther Pinheiro	1770	Barbados	Will of Lunah Pinheiro, 1770	my daughter Esther Nunes widow
Benjamin Israel Nunes	Deborah Pinheiro	1770	Barbados	Will of Lunah Pinheiro, 1770	my daughter Deborah Nunes
David Henriques de Sousa	Abigail Henriques de Sousa	1770	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Henriques de Sousa, 1773	my cousin David Henriques de Souza who was married to my sister Abigail Henriques de Souza
Abraham Mendes Bonitto	Sarah Pereira Brandon	1770	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Pereira Brandon, 1771	my sister Sarah Mendes Bonito wife of the said Abraham Mendes Bonito
Jacob Rodrigues	Esther Rodrigues Nunes	1772	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Rodrigues Nunes, 1773	my sister Esther the wife of Jacob Rodrigues
Jacob of David Melhado	Seuilae de Azevedo	1773	Jamaica	Will of David de Azevedo, 1773	My daughter Seuale Milhado the wife of Jacob of David Milhado
Moses Aboab	Sarah de Azevedo	1773	Jamaica	Will of David de Azevedo, 1773	my daughter Sarah Aboab the wife of Moses Aboab

Moses Aboab	Hannah Abarbanel	1774	Barbados	Will of Benjamin Abarbanel, 1782	my brother in Law Moses Aboab...and to his wife my Sister Hannah
Joseph Gutteres	* Almeyda	1774	Jamaica	Will of Moses Almeyda, 1775	my son in law Joseph Gutteres
Moses Gomes	Sarah Rodrigues	1774	Jamaica	Will of Abraham Rodrigues, 1775	my sister Sarah Gomes the wife of Moses Gomes
David Pinheiro	Jael Nunes	1775	Barbados	Will of Rebecca Nunes, 1775	my son in law David Pinheiro...my Daughter Jael his wife...
Moses Lopes	Esther de Mattos	1775	Jamaica	Will of Moses Lopes, 1784	marriage had...between Esther De Mattos Spinster/ now my present wife
David Lopes Torres	Grace Aguilar	1776	Jamaica	Will of David Lopes Torres, 1780	my brothers in law Abraham Aguilar...my...wife Grace Lopes Torres
David Henriques	Sarah Bravo	1777	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Bravo, 1780	my grandson Jacob Israel Henriques the son of my Nephew David Henriques and my Daughter Sarah Bravo now Henriques
Isaac Mendes Quiro	Clara Decordova	1777	Jamaica	Will of Moses Decordova, 1789	my Daughter Clara the wife of Isaac Mended Quiros
Joshua de Chaves	* Brandon	1780	Jamaica	Will of Moses Brandon, 1780	my son in law Joshua de Chaves
Jacob Decordova	* Brandon	1780	Jamaica	Will of Moses Brandon, 1780	My son in law Jacob de Cordova
Abraham de Campos Pereira	* Brandon	1780	Jamaica	Will of Moses Brandon, 1780	My son in law Abraham de Campos Pereira

Aaron Salome	Judith Pinto	1781	Jamaica	Will of Samuel Pinto, 1783	my loving sister Judith Salome wife of Aaron Salome
Abraham Lindo, Jr.	Esther Mocatta	1783	Barbados/ London/	Will of Abraham Lindo, Jr., 1784	my beloved wife Esther Lindo...her family in Amsterdam...I give...unto Rebecca Mo.Catta of Amsterdam the daughter of my brother in law Moses MoCatta deced
Moses Yesurun	Sarah Lindo	1783	Barbados/ Curaçao	Will of Abraham Lindo, Jr., 1784	my sister Sarah Yesurume wife of Moses Yesurme of the Island of Corasoa
David Massiah	Sarah Aboab	1785	Barbados	Will of David Massiah, 1788	my dear and loving wife Sarah Massiah (formerly Sarah Aboab Spinster)
* Pereira Mendes	Judith Gutteres	1787	Jamaica	Will of Joseph Gutteres, 1790	my daughter Judith Pereira Mendes
* Mattos Mucatta	Abigail Baruh Lousasda	1788	Jamaica	Will of Rachel Baruh Lousada, 1790	my three granddaughters Daughters of my late Son Daniel Baruh Lousada...Abigail de Mattos Mucatta
* Carvalho	Rachel Massiah	1791	Barbados	Will of Rachel Carvalho, 1791	my dear sister in Law Ester Massiah Wife of my brother Abraham Massiah
Joshua Delapenha	Rachel Pereira Mendes	1791	Jamaica	<i>Saint Jago De La Vega Gazette</i> , March 3, 1791	MARRIED: In Kingston, Mr. Joshua Delapenha, to Miss Rachel Pereira Mendez
* Alverga	* Alvarenga	1791	Jamaica	<i>Saint Jago De La Vega Gazette</i> , October 20, 1791	MARRIED—Mr. Alverga to Miss Alvarenga

* Levy	* Carillo DeMattos	1791	Jamaica	<i>Saint Jago De La Vega Gazette</i> , October 20, 1791	MARRIED—...and Mr. Levy to Mrs. Carillo de Mattos, widow—Last week
Abraham Rodrigues Dacosta	Rachel Alvares	1791	Jamaica	<i>Saint Jago De La Vega Gazette</i> , October 20, 1791	MARRIED—In Kingston, Mr. Abraham Rodrigues Da Costa, to Miss Rachel Alvares
Solomon Depass	Esther Pinto Brandon	1791	Jamaica	<i>Saint Jago De La Vega Gazette</i> , September 15, 1791	MARRIED—in Kingston, Mr. Solomon De Pass, to Mrs. Esther Pinto Brandon
Moses Levy	Betty Solomons	1792	Jamaica	<i>Royal Gazette</i> , August 4, 1792	MARRIED—In this town Mr. Moses Levy of Lucea, Merchant, to Miss Betty Solomons, lately arrived from London
Benjamin Rodrigues	Rachel Chaves	1792	Jamaica	<i>Royal Gazette</i> , May 12, 1792	MARRIED—in this town on Thursday Mr. Benjamin Rodrigues to Miss Rachel Charves
Jacob Levy	Esther Levy Moreno	1792	Jamaica	<i>Royal Gazette</i> , May 12, 1792	MARRIED... Mr. Jacob Levy to Mrs. Esther Levy Moreno, widow daughter of Mr. Solomon De la Pena
Moses Bravo	Sunha Decordova	1794	Jamaica	Will of Raphael Decordova, 1794	my beloved daughter Sunha Bravo the wife of Jacob of Moses Bravo...
* Gabay	Lunah Sanders	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my beloved nieces Lunah Gabay...daughters of my sister Abigail Sanders
* Meyers	Rebecca Adolphus	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my sister Rebecca Meyer

* Sanders	Abigail Adolphus	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my sister Abigail Sanders
Daniel Ximenes	* Baruh Lousada	1795	Jamaica	Will of Emanuel Baruh Lousada, 1797	my son in law Daniel Ximenes
Jacob Lopes Alvin	Rebecca Adolphus	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my nieces...daughters of Jacob Lopez Alvin...my brother in law Jacob Lopez Alvin
Moses Adolphus	* Adolphus	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my brother-in-law Moses Adolphus
Moses Cohen	* Adolphus	1795	Jamaica	Will of Moses Adolphus, 1798	my brother in law Moses Cohen
* Massiah	Sarah Depiza	1796	Barbados	Will of Sarah Massiah, 1796	my brother Emanuel Depiza
Isaac Pinheiro	Leah Nunes	1796	Barbados	Will of Isaac Pinheiro, 1796	my niece Leah Pinheiro...daughter of my said sister Deborah Nunes and wife of my said nephew Moses Pinheiro
Aaron Correa	Sarah Deleon	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , July 1796	Married in Spanish Town, Aaron Corea, Esq. to Miss Sarah Deleon, daughter of Abraham Deleon, Esq.
* Wolfe	* Gabay	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , July 1796	Married...in Kingston...Mr. Wolfe to Miss Gabay
Jacob Cespides	Rebecca Menasseh Pereira	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , October 1796	Married...Mr. Jacob Cespides, to Miss Rebecca Manassah Pereira; All of the Hebrew Nation
Jacob Salom	Sarah Cespides	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , October 1796	Married...Mr Jacob Salom, to Mrs. Sarah Cespides, relict of Mr. Isaac Cespides;

Samuel Morais	* Pinto	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , October 1796	Married—In Kingston...Mr. Samuel Morais, to Miss Pinto, daughter of Mr. Manassah Pinto, dec.;
Abraham Quixotte Henriques	Leah Gutteres	1796	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , September 1796	Married—In Spanish Town, Mr. Abraham Quixotte Henriques, to Miss Leah Gutteres, both of the Hebrew Nation
* da Silva	Leah Henriques	1797	Jamaica	Will of David Henriques, 1797	my sister Leah Da Silva
Lazarus Solomon	R. G. Silva	1798	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , August 1798	Married—in Trelawny, at Falmouth, Mr. Lazarus Solomon, to Miss R. G. Silva
Jacob Basan	Judith Reitta	1798	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , January 1798	Married—in Kingston, Mr. Jacob Bassan to Miss Judith Reitta, both of the Hebrew nation
Samuel Pinto	Esther Rebeiro	1798	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , June 1798	Married—in Kingston, Mr. Samuel Pinto, to miss Esther Rebeiro
Isaac Gomes Mesquita	Esther Prado	1798	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , March 1798	Married—in Kingston...Mr. Isaac Gomes Musquito, to miss Esther Prado
Joseph Emmanuel	Rebecca Depass	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , June 1799	Married—in Kingston, Mr Joseph Emmanuel to Miss Rebecca De Pass
Benjamin Alves	S. Mendes Cunha	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , June 1799	Married—in Kingston...Mr. Benjamin Alves to Mrs. S. Mendes Cunha, relict of the late Dr. Cunha
Michael Levy	* Abrahams	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , July 1799	Married—in Kingston Mr. Michael Levy to Miss Abrahams
Abraham Mendes Henriques	Sarah Riz	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , November 1799	Married—in Kingston Mr. Abraham Mendes Henriques to Mrs. Sarah Riz, relict of Mr Moses Riz, painter

Simon Phillips	* Melhado	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , November 1799	Married—In Port Royal, Mr. Simon Phillips to Miss Melhada
Jacob Isaac	Judith H. Fonseca	1799	Jamaica	<i>Columbian Magazine</i> , November 1799	Married—in Lucea Mr. Jacob Isaac to Miss Judith H. Fonseca
Jacob Depass	Esther Yesurun Henriques	1805	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Depass, 1805	my Brother in Law Joseph Yeshurum Henriques...my said wife Esther
Isaac Nunes Cardoso	Esther Gomes Silva	1808	Jamaica	Will of Rachel Gomes Silva, 1809	my two nieces...Rebecca the daughter is Isaac Nunes Cardozo
Abraham Rodrigues	* Dacosta Alvarenga	1810	Jamaica	Will of Isaac Dacosta Alvarenga, 1811	my Son in Law Abraham Rodrigues
Isaac Benjamin	Simha Decordova	1814	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Decordova, 1814	my Daughter Simha Benjamin the wife of Isaac Benjamin
Jacob Sanguinetti	* Decordova	1814	Jamaica	Will of Jacob Decordova, 1814	my Son in Law Jacob Sanguinetti

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