**The People of the Lonely Star: The Jewish Diaspora in the Caribbean**

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Abstract

The Jewish presence in the Caribbean originated shortly after Christopher Columbus’s arrival to the New World at the end of the 15th century. Little is known about these early Jewish settlers however, but most seem to have been adventurers and traders who traveled from place to place with the hope of making a fortune. Recent accounts by historians reveal a more discernable presence of Jewish religious communities in the region in the 17th century. During the Inquisition, thousands of Jews who fled Spain and Portugal sought refuge in other parts of Europe. In 1630, Dutch pirates annexed the Portuguese colonies of Recife and Olinda on the eastern coast of Brazil, and thousands of Sephardic Jews emigrated from Amsterdam to settle in these colonies. When the Portuguese reclaimed their territories in 1654, they reinstated the laws of the Inquisition which once again occasioned the Jews’ immigration to Curacao, Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean where they established thriving communities. Many even reached New Amsterdam, today’s New York City. So wealthy were Caribbean Jews that in time, they helped finance the mortgages of several synagogues in the United States. This chapter traces a short history of the formation of the Sephardic communities in the Caribbean. Special attention is given to the recent merging of the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi traditions, the declining of Jewish religious practice, and the ardent initiatives to preserve the Jewish heritage throughout the region.

Nacions

Marranos

Zur Israel

Torah

The Jamaican Portugals

Ladino

The Caribbean Jewish Congress

United Congregation of Israelites

Kifniyot

The story of Judaism in the Caribbean has largely been overlooked by most historians. Their accounts tell of events related to European colonialism, European powers’ competition for new territories in the New World, plantocracy and slavery, piracy and the military skirmishes that affected the political and economic aspects of European life. Yet the historical importance of the Caribbean Jewish communities or *nacions[[1]](#footnote-1),* as they were called, cannot be overlooked primarily because of their historical importance to the culture and the economy of the region. Jews settled in wide areas throughout the Caribbean and engaged in trade routes and flourishing business ventures that became part of the mainstay of Europe’s economy as early as the 16th century. This chapter traces the significant historical events that have affected the nacions and describes aspects of their theology that have remained central to Jewish life in the Caribbean. We will also assess the state of the Jewish communities today and as well as their future prospect.

The earliest recorded dates of the Jews’ presence in the Caribbean were in the 16th century. Most were adventurers and traders who traveled from place to place seeking to make a fortune in the form of gold and other precious metals. Little is known about them, but the formal and recorded settlement of Jews in the New World was in Brazil in the 17th century. During the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled the Jews from Spain, the very year that Christopher Columbus set foot in the New World in 1492 (Kritzler 2008, 16).[[2]](#footnote-2) Those who emigrated to escape persecution became labeled as *marranos,* meaning wild pigs who were fleeing civilization to revert to a primitive state of wildness.[[3]](#footnote-3) Those who remained in Spain were called *conversos* (new converts)*,* or again *Crypto-Jews,* meaning that they became Christians but only nominally to escape the persecution of the Inquisition. They accepted baptism, attended Mass and pretended to be Christians as a veneer behind which they maintained their religious traditions. They continued to hold Friday night services and observed the Jewish High Holy Days secretly in their homes. Others settled in neighboring Portugal where King Jao II allowed their entry on the condition that they each pay the sum of eight *cruzados* either in a lump sum or in four installments (Arbell 2002, 11).[[4]](#footnote-4) The Portuguese monarch’s hospitality lasted about 3 years, and during that time Jews formed various nacions throughout Portugal. No one is sure of the number of Jews who took refuge in Portugal, but estimates vary from 20,000 to 100,000, in addition to a residual amount migrating to Italy, Turkey, North Africa and the Balkans (Kritzler 2008, 2-3).

The death of Jao II in 1496 and the accession of Manuel the Fortunate to the throne brought an end to the Jews’ Portuguese welcome. The new monarch asked for the hand of Isabel Infanta, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. The Spanish Crown agreed to the marriage with the proviso that he banish the Jews from his land. Manuel signed the expulsion order of the Jews on December 4, 1496. It was to take effect immediately and the eviction was to be completed by October 1497. Some 20,000 Jews arrived during the prescribed month in Lisbon which was designated as the point of departure. The king contradicted his own ruling however, by ordering the catechizing and baptizing of Jewish youngsters under the age of twenty-one, enrolling them in Christian schools to prevent them from emigrating elsewhere. It was a plan that he hoped would discourage their wealthy parents from leaving their children behind, and a measure that would make it possible for the government to collect the installments of cruzados from the new settlers. Many found themselves as conversos in Portugal once again.

By 1581, Philip II of Spain unified Portugal and Spain and ushered a more virulent form of persecution that resulted in a Jewish exodus to neighboring lands. Many who escaped to Catholic France settled in Bordeaux, Bayonne and Rouen where they could practice their religion freely. Others traveled in search of non-Catholic places in Western Europe where they could cast off their Catholic identity and claim their faith. These joined an already thriving Jewish community in Amsterdam, Antwerp and later in London where they established flourishing congregations. Still others found passage to the Spanish colonies in Central and South America. The members of these nacions were linked by their intimate family connections, their collaborations in the import and export businesses and their investments in the trade routes in the New World. Their presence was so prominent in Spanish America that Philip II instituted Inquisition tribunals in Peru, Columbia, and Mexico with the proviso of ridding the Jews from these colonies. As a result, Judaism nearly disappeared from the Spanish territories in the New World by the end of the 17th century, except in Jamaica which, as will be seen later, the British annexed from Spain in 1655. But nowhere was the Jewish presence more notorious than in Amsterdam where there were blossoming communities whose members had reached economic and social prominence. The religious tolerance of the Dutch and the freedom of religion allowed to their citizens attracted large numbers of Jews from the Spanish and Portuguese controlled areas to Holland.

Throughout the 16th century, the Spanish and Portuguese sent large numbers of galleons to their colonies in the New World. Accompanied by armadas of naval escorts, these galleons carried precious cargoes of gold and silver that needed to be protected from the French and British pirates. For this purpose, the Spanish and Portuguese annexed as many territories as they could, establishing outposts from which they could launch military expeditions against these swashbucklers. These territories also controlled the trade routes between the Caribbean and Europe. In this spirit, the Dutch annexed the Portuguese ports of Recife and Olinda in northeastern Brazil in 1630. The Dutch West India Company which was put in charge of all the Dutch colonies in the New World, declared these territories as safe zones for Jews. Some 600 of them sailed to Olinda and Recife from Amsterdam to look for new opportunities. They worked diligently to create vibrant nacions in their adopted homeland. They cleared large sections of land on which they planted crops for the local market and produced sugar for a flourishing international market. Hyperbolic reports about the settlers’ financial successes soon reached Holland and others joined them so that by 1645, their number had reached 1,500 out a total population of 2,899 (Witnitzer 1960, 167). [[5]](#footnote-5) If these figures are correct, the Jews were in the majority in Recife. An eyewitness by a Dutch army officer gave an account of their lives in the 1640s. He stated that,

 Among the free inhabitants of Brasil who were not in company’s service (Dutch West India Company), the Jews were the most considerable in number, having transplanted themselves thither from Holland. They had a vast traffic (trade routes) beyond the rest, they purchased sugar mills and built stately houses in the Receif (*sic*). They were all traders (Nieuoff 1704; 2003, 27).[[6]](#footnote-6)

 The new settlers formed the first Jewish congregation called *Zur Israel* (Rock of Israel). They attended prayer meetings, Friday night services at newly built synagogues, and observed at home all that was required of them during the High Holy Days. Fray Manuel Calado, an eye witness of the Jewish religious life in Recife under Dutch rule in the 1640s described how the “conversos having been suckled at the breasts of the Holy Mother Church of Rome, allowed themselves after the arrival of the Dutch to be circumcised and openly professed the Jewish faith (1668: 1967, Vol. I, 26).”[[7]](#footnote-7)

 After a military assault on Recife and Olinda, the Portuguese reclaimed their Brazilian territories from the Dutch in 1654. A peace treaty between the two colonial powers required that Recife and Olinda be ceded to Portugal which enacted the terms of the Inquisition once again. The Portuguese colonial authorities ordered the Jews out of Recife and Olinda within three months and imposed religious sanctions against them. Those who did not refute their religion and converted to Christianity were jailed, killed, or deported to Lisbon to face the Inquisition’s tribunals. Many resisted the Portuguese authorities and participated in insurgencies that were costly in materials and in human lives. The 17th century Dutch traveler Johan Nieuhoff described the lives of the Jews in Brazil during the Portuguese rule by noting that they were in a desperate condition. He writes that “some were resolved to die with sword in hand than be burned alive which is their doom in Portugal (Witnitzer 1960, 123).” Others denounced their faith and asserted their devotion to the Roman Catholicism but, like the conversos before them, used the church as a cloak behind which they could hide their Jewish religious practices. They formed secret societies which gathered frequently to pray and to perform High Holy Day services. It is precisely these secret religious gatherings that helped to preserve and later insured the spread of Judaism in the Caribbean. They fostered a sense of Jewish identity and encouraged their members to uphold the Jewish religious traditions. The congregants of Zur Israel taught their children the religious tenets of the faith, observed bar mitzvahs, marriages and sang the Kadesh at funerals.

 As the Portuguese widened the scope of the Inquisition, the Crown sent sixteen ships to transport the Jews to other places. Fifteen reached Amsterdam safely but the sixteenth which was bound for New Amsterdam (New York today) ran into a dangerous storm which drove it into enemy waters of Spanish Jamaica, but nevertheless made landfall miraculously. The Dutch passengers aboard the ship joined some twenty Jamaican Jewish settlers who called their nacions *The Portugals.*  They were primarily planters and traders who had settled in Spanish Jamaica as early as 1510. The Spanish Crown had bequeathed the island to the Columbus family in the early part of the 16th century as a reward for acquiring many lands in the New World and expanding the Spanish empire. The Columbuses had managed to keep the island’s inhabitants from the ravages of the Inquisition. Fearing their eventual discovery by the Spanish authorities, the Portugals wrote to Oliver Cromwell. The letter suggested that the Spanish garrison in Jamaica was weak, and that the English annexation of the island would be met with little resistance. Shortly after in 1655, a Jew from Nevis led thirty-six English ships into the Jamaican harbor and two local Portugals participated in the negotiations that led to the signing of a peace treaty by which the island passed into English hands. The treaty expelled the few Spanish left on the island and allowed the Portugals to remain. Soon, other Jews from other colonies shed their converso identity and migrated to Jamaica. This resettlement proved to be one of the sources from which many other Jewish nacions were started in various colonies in the Antilles, and it joined the company of others that were already formed in Curacao, British Guyana,[[8]](#footnote-8) Barbados[[9]](#footnote-9) and Martinique.

The Jewish communities in Curacao engaged in import and export businesses and systemized trade routes to neighboring islands and to Europe. By the end of the 17th century, they had become wealthy enough to assist other congregations with the partial payment of the mortgages of their synagogues, not only in various parts of the Caribbean but in the United States as well. These included in the *Congregation Shearith Israel* in New York City founded in 1654; the *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* synagogue founded in 1740 in Charleston, South Carolina, and the *Jeshuat Israel* (or Touro synagogue) in Newport, Rhode Island built between 1758 and 1763. These structures still exist today.

The first synagogues in the Caribbean were built in the 17th century. They were of the Spanish Sephardic tradition rather than the Ashkenazi which even today is prominent in Western Europe. There are few differences between both traditions. The Sephardic synagogues had sand covered floors. There are several explanations for this singularity. The first stems from the conversos’ fear of being discovered by the authorities during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition. Tradition has it that the sand floor muffled the sound of the conversations, the steps, the singing, and the prayers of the rituals and kept the congregations safe from harm during the Inquisition. Second, Caribbean Jews explained that as long as they were in the diaspora and not in Jerusalem, they likened themselves to the children of Israel who, during the exilic period wandered through the desert, waiting to enter the Promised Land. The following account dated September 15, 1658 by two Portuguese, namely Joseph Pereira and Jeosua Nunes Netto who settled in Jamaica by way of Recife in 1658, reflected the views of the Jewish settlers,

 We shall thank God that he has delivered us from the hell of snow and

 who has brought us in peace to this beautiful country, after many, many

 years we shall lay our bodies to rest, till the time has come when we shall
 gather them for our fatherland (Arbell 2002, 24).

 The meaning of the synagogues’ sand covered floors then was, and is today symbolic of a nomadic temper of a people who escaped persecution and strife in Europe and survived their frequent relocations in various parts of the Caribbean. Just as God provided for their biblical ancestors as they wandered through the desert, so too they were assured that the Almighty would provide for them in their temporary homes in the diaspora. In a way, the Jewish vision of a wandering people who were uprooted from their places of origin and yearned to return to the promised land was analogous to the slaves who longed to return eventually to their African homelands after their death.

 There are many synagogues with sand covered floors in the Caribbean today, most of which were built during the middle to the end of the 17th century. These include the *Neve Shalom* and *Zedek ve Shalom* in Paramaribo in Suriname; the *Mikve Israel Emmanuel Shamayim* in Willemstad, Curacao; the *Shaare Shamayim* in Kingston, Jamaica; and the *Beraka ve Shalom ve Gemilut Hasadim* in Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas, Virgin Island. Archaeologists who have excavated the ruins of synagogues such as the *Honen Dalim* in St. Eustacius and *Berakha Shalom* in Suriname have discovered that they too might have had sand covered floors.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Another feature that distinguished the Sephardic from the Ashkenazi synagogues in the Caribbean is their interior structures. The Sephardic synagogues comprised four columns that represented the four biblical matriarchs or mothers of the children of Israel. These include Sarah, the wife of Abraham; Rebekah, the wife of Isaac; Leah and Rachel, the wives of Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel.

Other differences between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim concerned ritual practices related to dietary restrictions (*kifniyot*) during Pesach (Passover). The Ashkenazi tradition dictated abstaining from consuming foodstuff that is subject to fermentation or leavening. Unlike the Ashkenazim the Sephardim consumed rice, beans. and various nuts among other such foods during Pesach. Moreover, the language used in the rituals marked a significant difference between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim ritual practices. Sephardic Jews used the Ladino language in their rituals which was a mixture of Hebrew, Spanish and Portuguese. In time Ladino pronunciation and vocabulary varied from region to region as it was influenced by the prevailing language of a particular colony. The melodies used in the Sephardic prayer services were somewhat different from the Ashkenazic. These melodies varied regionally depending on the prevailing musical language of an island, and many of the ritual melodies were sung in Spanish or Portuguese rather than the Hebrew as it was among the Ashkenazim. Finally, a significant difference between the two sects concerns the ritual use of the Torah which was written on parchment, stored in wooden cylinders and read upright during the Sephardic rituals. By contrast the Ashkenazi scrolls were read as they lay flat on a table or on a lectern. The origin of such a difference can be explained by the Sephardim’s need to hide the scrolls swiftly in case of a sudden intervention in their rituals by the authorities during the Inquisition.

By and large, the Sephardim took their tradition seriously. Their nacion was based on a covenantal arrangement as it had been in biblical times. It that was founded on theological principles whose goals were to preserve their traditions for their members to care and guard each other from harm. They shared their resources and submitted themselves to the vision that God would shield them from persecution. The merchants closed their shops and planters did not work during Shabbat. Navigators wore their shawls during Shabbat and brought with them their dried, salted Kosher meats during their voyages. They respected the Jewish law, and in the Dutch areas the children attended Yeshivas or Jewish schools. The rabbis and cantors who officiated in the services were imported from Europe, primarily from Amsterdam and Istanbul. They also served as spiritual guides who became central to the important decisions that affected the lives of members of the nacions. For instance, the constant relocation of Caribbean Jews separated the members of the families from each other and disrupted some of the religious practices related to levirate marriages (*Yivum*), that is, the mandatory union between a widow whose husband died without offspring and her dead husband’s brother. [[11]](#footnote-11) By the end of the 17th century, the association of rabbis had established the *shetar halitza*, that is, a rejection letter at the time of the bride’s initial marriage that enabled her to marry someone of her own choosing in case her husband died. Such important decisions were often not made locally but by groups of rabbis in Holland or in Palestine.

 According to Sephardic custom, the mother’s family name is added to the father’s. It meant that a young Jew would bear four family names: two Hebrew and, or two Spanish names. In some cases, Jews who became conversos adopted Christian Portuguese or Spanish family names to circumvent persecution by the Inquisition but continued to use their Hebrew names among themselves. Consequently, the archives in Dutch Brazil and Suriname contain in some cases as many as five or six names for each individual. The Spanish or Portuguese Christian names were used strictly in public contexts such as in trade or other business transactions to circumvent religious discrimination and reprisals against family members.

 In the ensuing years, new congregations were formed in Port Royal, Jamaica in 1704 and in Barbados in 1750. The Jews’ monopoly of the trade routes and the successes of their import and export businesses was cause for jealousy and resentment on the part of many Jamaican influential residents who pressured the colonial parliament to levy surplus taxes on the Jews, claiming that these sums would be used to maintain the highways and to reinforce the garrisons that protected the colony from foreign invasion.[[12]](#footnote-12) The same order forbade their public worship and eliminated their rights to absences from work during the Sabbath and High Holy Days.

 The Spanish Inquisition ended officially in 1834 but the memory of its harshness tarried in the minds of many who were discouraged from settling in Spanish Cuba. The few who settled there were Sephardic Jews whose ancestors had escaped persecution in Spain, and now were fleeing discrimination by the Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The expansion of the sugar industry in the 20th century attracted many Jewish businessmen who sought to make a fortune in Cuba’s agro-industrial sector. Others took up residence in the country at the end of the World War I with the hope of emigrating to the United States, but a significant number decided to stay. They built synagogues and established religious nacions which, until the Cuban Revolution in 1959, were the most numerous religious communities in the Caribbean.

 France and its colonies never conducted an Inquisition as did the Spanish and the Portuguese. However, articles of the Code Noir of 1685, an edict that regulated life in the colonies and which dealt with religion ordered that all new arrivals, or “salt-water slaves” from Africa be catechized and converted to Roman Catholicism within eight days after their arrival to the colonies. Other articles of the Code prohibited Jews from entering the colonies and called for the expulsion of current Jewish residents from all French territories, including Louisiana. Jews suffered from the restrictions placed on them by the colonial governments. In 1658, it is estimated that there were some 300 Jews remaining in Martinique out of population of 5,000. Even the tiny Danish colonies of St. Croix and St. Thomas, which are a part of the United States today, had a fairly substantial number of Dutch Jewish settlers. By the late 1700s they had formed the congregation *Berakah We-Shalom U-Gemilut Hasadim* in Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas -- a vibrant Sephardic congregation that remains active today (Wouk 1983, 204).[[13]](#footnote-13)

During World War II, the Dominican Republic opened its doors to Jews from Europe. One hundred thousand settlers flocked to the Dominican Republic and established communities that could trace their ancestry to Spain and Portugal. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Jews in the Dominican Republic took their religious lives in earnest by observing the High Holy Days and fasting on the required days of the year. Jewish youths studied the Hebrew language and learned the tenets of their religious traditions at Rabbinical Schools (Yeshiva) that were usually a part of the local synagogues. Today these communities maintain contacts with congregations throughout the Caribbean, the United States and Israel, as Israeli emissaries visit the congregations in the Dominican Republic from time to time.

The spirit of the Inquisition continues even today in some of the Catholic areas where the Jews are made to carry the weight of Jesus’s crucifixion. During the Lenten period in some Haitian communities for instance, *raras* (festival bands) gather in some towns during the annual Holy Week festival called *bwile jwif* (burn the Jew) during which they reenact Christ’s passion and crucifixion. Raras are bands that number thousands of people; the raras are neither sanctioned by the church nor are they supported by its clergy. The festival includes the display of a sitting effigy of a Jew consisting of a cloth bag stuffed with rags or old pillows. Onlookers are encouraged to “kick the Jew” with sticks and scold it for killing Jesus, after which the figure is burned at the stake on the eve of Holy Saturday. Elizabeth McAlister who has studied this festival notes that it is based on medieval European mystery plays in which the Jews were villains responsible for Jesus’s death. She also suggests that the observances of these festivals are part of a process of creolization in which Christian “tropes” are captured in the imagination and are reformulated to express new Haitian social realities. The effigy can be seen in social terms too where it symbolizes the dialectics in the class struggle between master and slave during the Haitian colonial period (1492-1804), and between the bourgeois elite and the peasant poor in contemporary Haiti (McAlister 202, 121-22). Such sullied depictions of the Jews have led to their clandestine practice of their religion in Haiti. As a result, there are no synagogues in the country and religious observances are performed in homes which, in normal times show no visible signs of a family’s adherence to Judaism.

The fear of disparagement among Jews in many parts of the Caribbean has resulted in the gradual disintegration of the faith. Although most Jews would claim a strong affinity with the community and prize their Jewish heritage, many do not attend religious services and hardly follow the required conventional rituals. There are several reasons for the decline of the Jewish religious practices in the Caribbean. First, Jewish families are wealthy and can afford to send their children to study abroad. Many attend some of the finest institutions of higher learning in the United States and elsewhere but do not return home after their course of study because of their perception that there is a lack of opportunity at home. Some who remain at home find the Jewish Orthodox way of life impractical and perhaps too confining in overwhelmingly Christian environments. Others find the dietary restrictions dictated by the faith particularly constraining and especially impractical in tropical climates. Second and until recently, the Sephardim have continued to use Latido, Spanish and Portuguese languages in their religious services. These have distanced young Jews from the religious practices, especially in the English and French countries. Third, the advent of the Ashkenazi tradition from the United States is slowly replacing the Sephardic traditions and has contributed to the gradual erosion of the religious vitality of Jewish religious orthodoxy. This is especially true in Jamaica and Venezuela where the Sephardic traditions merged with the Ashkenazi. In the Dutch areas such as Curacao where the Sephardic tradition has been prominent through the centuries, the substitution of the Dutch prayers in place of the Latido or the Spanish has lessened a sense of shared identity with the past. Fourth, interfaith marriages with Gentiles have caused the gradual disappearance of Jewish customs and the erosion of the religious observances at home. Many Jewish young people who marry Gentiles live in non-Jewish neighborhoods and rear their children with little or no formal religious training. Lastly in the case of Cuba, after the socialist revolution of 1959 which placed some restrictions on religious practices, many Jews left the country and emigrated elsewhere in other parts of the Caribbean, in Spain, or in the United States.

There are new initiatives to revive the Jewish heritage in various parts of the Caribbean. Organizations like the Caribbean Jewish Congress and Jamaica’s United Congregation of Israelites are working assiduously to recreate the Jewish customs and encourage the Jews’ participation in the religious observances. These organizations are also collecting archival information about the history of their communities. They are discovering family lines and make that information available to those who wish to retrace their lineages to the early settlers. In Jamaica especially, there are efforts to refurbish the old and abandoned Jewish graves by clearing away the growth and debris from the cenotaphs to recapture the history of the community. From these initiatives, new customs and forms of rituals may emerge in the future. They will undoubtedly bear the mark of the cultures to which they belong.

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1. The word *nacion* was used to designate a religious community, but it also referred also to an ethnic or cultural local Jewish community. By extension the word was also used to designate the entire Jewish communities in the New World. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It has been suggested that Columbus was of Jewish descendance, namely the Spanish Colón family which moved to Genoa from Spain shortly before 1391. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There may be a connection between the meanings of the term *maroon* used to designate the African slaves who ran away from the plantations in the Caribbean. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. These figures are from a census taken in that year. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Manuel Calado was a Portuguese Catholic priest who was allowed to reside in Recife during the Dutch rule between 1630 -1654. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Many resettled in British Guyana or present day Suriname. The British were hospitable to the Jews and had encouraged them to settle there by extending to them licenses to maintain trade routes throughout the region. When the colony passed in Dutch hands in 1667, they gave the same rights and full citizenship to the Jews as those in Amsterdam. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It is estimated that a small Jewish community in Barbados was started in 1628, cf. http://www.sefarad.org/lm/011/jewcar.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The number four is also symbolic of the four quarters of space. The synagogue can also be seen as a symbolic microcosm of the cosmos.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. An elaborate Halitza ceremony was regarded by rabbis as important as the marriage contract (*ketubah*) itself and existed among the Ashkenazi as well. The ritual was based on Deuteronomy 25: 5-6. “If two brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead brother … shall not go to a stranger, but her dead husband’s brother shall go in to her as his wife and perform the duties of a husband to her. And her first son shall bear the name of his father who is dead so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The Barbados Historical Museum and Historical Society archival document September 9, 1682. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Detailed records of the Jewish nacion in Danish St. Thomas exist at the Royal Archives in Denmark and at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)