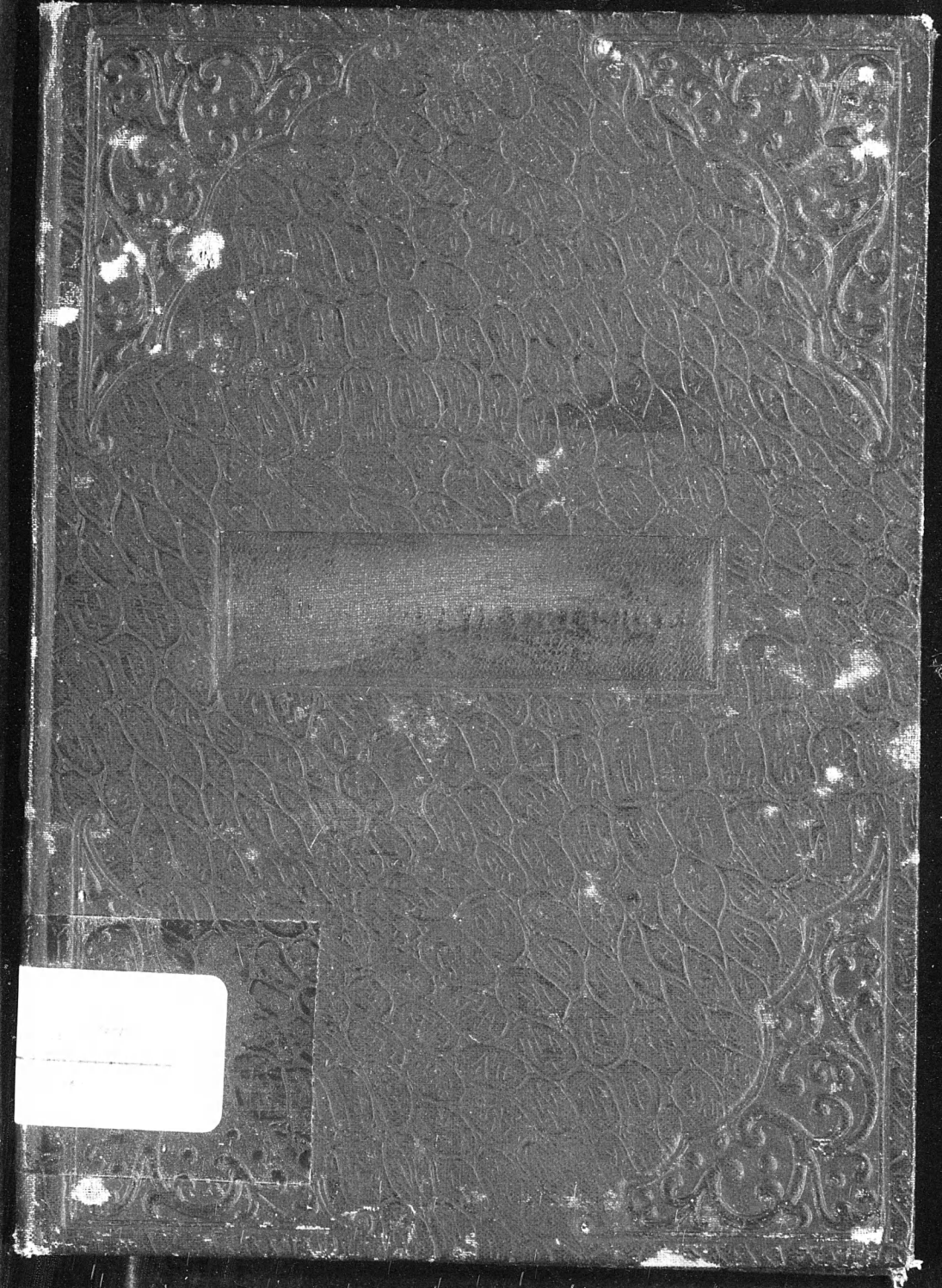
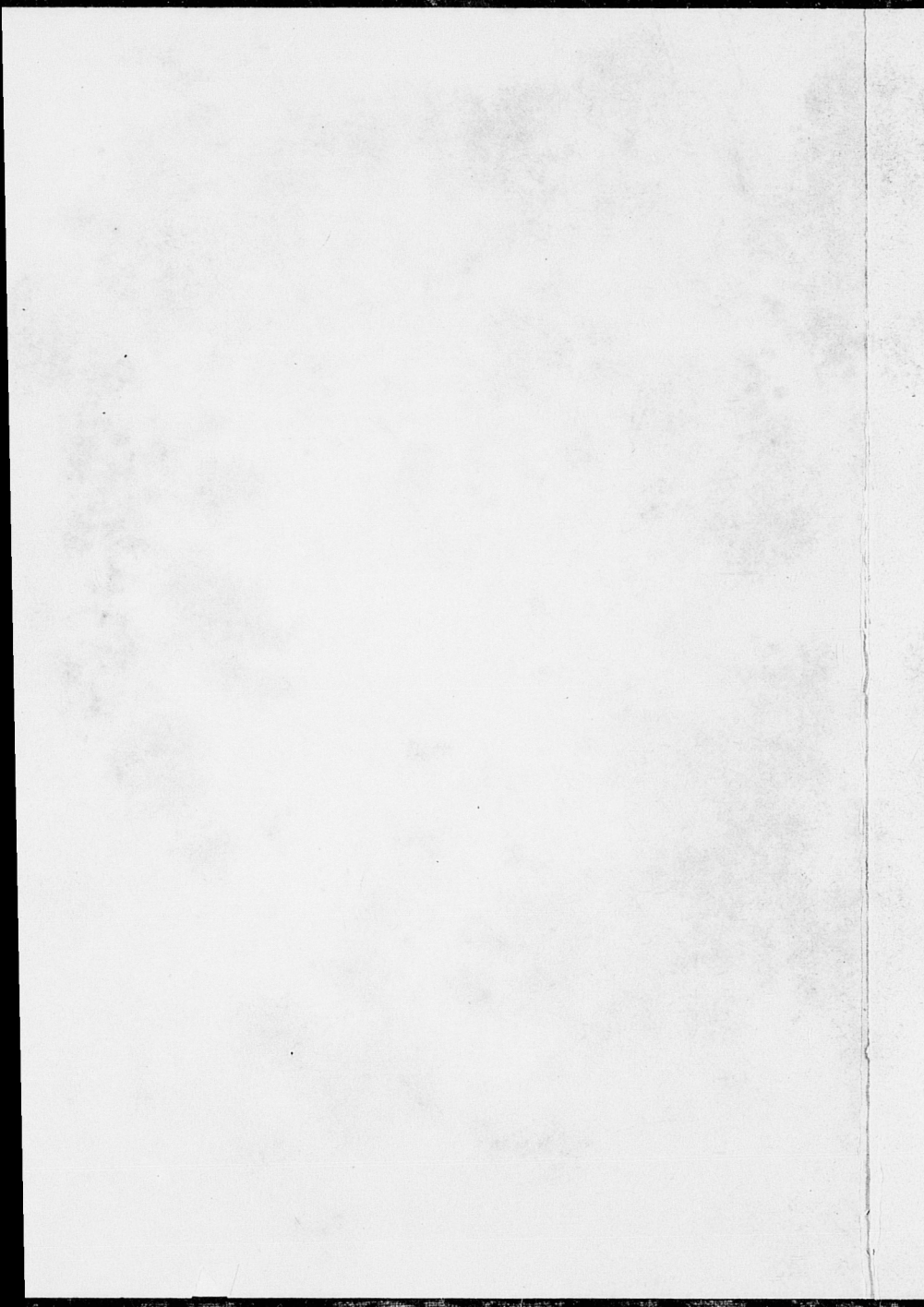




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A
SYNOPSIS OF THE HISTORY

OF THE
JEWS OF CURAÇAO

FROM
the day of their settlement to the present time

BY
Rev. JOSEPH M. CORCOS,

MINISTER OF THE CONGREGATION

"MIKVEH ISRAEL"

CURAÇAO.

1897.

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PREFACE

The original design and principal motive in publishing this little work is to give the reader a fair idea of the settlement and development of the Jews of Curaçao ; a people of whose history very little is known even to their own direct descendants.

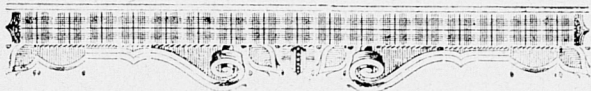
However humble it may appear in object, or limited in extent, it is the first history of its kind which has as yet been given to the public.

Very great pains have been taken to ensure correctness in facts and names and especially in dates which have been scrutinized over and over in order that errors may be avoided.

It is possible, however, that despite the care bestowed upon the work some mistakes may be espied; for these the writer craves the reader's kind indulgence.

Curacao, January 1897.





HE abominable Inquisition of the fifteenth century was attended with various momentous consequences.

A large number of the poor unfortunate Jews were constrained to leave their country, relinquishing all their wealth and property in order to escape the clutches of the ruthless Inquisitors and seek a place of refuge for the safety of their wives and children.

Many went to Italy, where the same authorities that had ratified the detestable Inquisition well aware that the Jews may

still contribute towards the prosperity and welfare of the country welcomed them with open arms and assured them of their friendship and protection.

But no sooner were they settled in their new abode, than demonstrations of hostile feelings became apparent, and many not finding themselves as comfortable as they expected, were obliged to quit the country from which they had anticipated security and defense and seek shelter in Holland, the only asylum that offered liberty and protection, where they could with impunity enjoy the great prerogative of worshipping their God according to their dictates untrammelled by priestcraft.

But Holland, territorially small, could not offer sufficient accommodation for the increasing number of Jewish families that daily emigrated thither; moreso the council had also in view the progress and welfare of its other domains, and perceiving the important advantage and immense

riches the Jews brought to the state, it decided to transport a few families to colonize its other places.

As early as the year 1650 sixteen years after Curaçao had been taken possession of by the Dutch Government, twelve Israelitish families were brought hither for the promotion of commerce and welfare of the Island, namely:— de Meza, Aboab, Pereira, de Leon, La Parra, Touro Aboab Cardoze, Jesurun, Marchena, Chaviz, Oliveira, Henriquez Cutinho.

These twelve families were provided from the Council of Holland with letters to the then Governor "Matthias Beck" ordering him to give them sufficient land, and to provide them with negroes, horses, cattle, implements, etc. in order that they may pursue agricultural occupations which had been neglected by the Dutch settlers who found the contraband trade with the Spanish Main more lucrative and more to their taste.

On their arrival, a large tract of land was granted to them in the out-skirts of the city, about two miles distance from the fortress now "Willemstad," which to this day is known as the "Jewish Quarter."

It is very strange, however, that although the Jews enjoyed equality of rights as citizens in the Mother Country, in Curaçao they had to accede to some restrictions; for, besides, being looked upon as foreigners they were not even permitted to be within the fortress later than nine O'clock at night; and if any one infringed this rule and was found there after that hour he was liable to severe punishment.

This, of course, is due to the great fanaticism that existed at that time, of which even Curaçao was not free.

In this uncomfortable position this handful of Jews remained for the period of four years.

In the year 1652, two years subsequent to the settlement of the twelve families in

Curaçao, the Council of Holland delegated a man of Portuguese descent by the name of Joseph Nuñez da Fonseca to transport some more Jewish families to that Island; but he failed in the attempt, as the Jews were not desirous of leaving Holland to follow him thither, and particularly knowing how their brethren were treated there, they preferred to remain in the Country of their adoption, where they were positive of absolute liberty.

It was not, however, until the year 1654 when Brazil was retaken by the Portuguese Government and the Jews were ordered to quit that country, that the small number that was then in Curaçao increased by the several arrivals of families from there.

The large number of Israelites that came from Brazil and the immense quantity of wealth they brought with them caused the old prejudices against the Jewish nation to disappear. They were allowed to

take up their abode in any part of the country they wished; and later, they not only possessed the best houses in the city but also lands and almost the entire commerce of the Island was in their hands.

Thus, the youthful Community grew in prosperity and affluence from year to year; and to this day their direct descendants of whom the present community consists, hold a prominent and distinguished position, both socially and commercially.

In the year 1656 by the consent of the authorities, they appropriated the same tract of land that had been granted to the first twelve families as a place of residence for a "Beth-Haim" (Burial-ground). This, they enclosed with a thick brick wall and consecrated it for that purpose.

The earliest interments we find there are the following:

Ishack Henriquez Cotinho 5431-1670.

Rev. Abraham Haim Lopez da Fonseca
22 de Menahem 5432-1671.

Ishack Henriquez Morao 7 de Shebat.
5434-1673.

Eliaho Hizkiaho Touro 3 de ab 5434-1673

Rachel Dovale 4 de Adar 5438-1677.

Esther de Ephraem Jesurun Henriquez 6
de Tammuz 5439-1678.

Rebecca de Mordecay Hizkiaho Henri-
quez 25 de Kislev 5440-1679.

Menasseh Jesurun Henriquez 24 de Kis-
lev 5446-1685.

Jacob de Ishack Henriquez Cotinho 22 de
Cheshvan 5447-1686.

Sarah Alvarez 21 de Sivan 5449-1688.

Sarah de Marchena 29 de Tebet 5449-1688

Rachel de Ishack Gaon 22 de Iyar 5450-
1690.

Rachel Vaez 9 de Shebat 5450-1690.

David Jesurun 15 de Adar 5451-1691.

David Abendana Pereyra 21 de Sivan
5451-1691.

Sarah Simha de Abraham de Marchena 26
de Nissan 5451-1697.

Benjamin Aboab de Paz 21 de Iyar
5452-1692.

Jacob Naar 27 de Sivan 5452-1692.

Benjamin Hizkiaho Henriquez 7 de Tishri
5453-1693.

Jacob Lopez Salsedo 8 de Tammuz 5453-
1693.

David Raphael de Marchena 11 de Tishri
5453-1693.

Abraham Hizkiaho Leao 25 de Nissan
5454 18th June 1694.

Zillah Rachel de Leao 19 de Tebet 5458-
1698.

Sarah filha de Abraham Chaviz 27 de
Tammuz 5460-1700.

Joseph Da Costa Andrade 9 de Iyar
5464-1704.

Rachel Hannah Pereyra Atias 26 de She-
bat 5465-1705.

Joshua Henriquez 9 de Cheshvan 5465-1705.

N. Z. J. David Raphael Lopez da Fonseca Hazan e Riby No Kahal Kadosh Mikveh Israel en Curacao 28 de Tammuz 5467-1707.

Leah de Abraham Molina 29 de Menahem Ab 5467-1707.

Clara de Ishack touro died 84 years old 5508-1748.

These might not be the oldest graves in the Burial-ground as there are about fifteen or twenty bearing no epitaphs and according to tradition they are the oldest.

In the same year 1656 shortly after the consecration of the Burial-ground, the Jews associated themselves into a religious body.

A small wooden house was rented where they assembled thrice a day for Divine Worship.

They elected from amongst them a Precentor, mohel and shochet,

The name of the Congregation was and is still "Mikveh Israel" [The Hope of Israel.]

The service and ritual they adopted was in accordance with the Spanish and Portuguese traditions and customs as observed by their mother community in Amsterdam.

This place where they held service for a very long period is known as "De Hoop" [The Hope]

The house being inadequate for the accommodation of the worshippers the Congregation decided to build a proper Synagogue.

At the close of the seventeenth century, they purchased a site for that purpose in one of the then main streets of Curaçao.

On the day appointed for the laying of the Corner-stones, a very large number of persons of all denominations was present.

The ceremony was performed with imposing solemnity by Hazan David Raphael Lopez da Fonseca.

Four marble stones were laid, one at each corner of the building; each one bearing the date and the name of the person who laid it.

The honour of laying these stones was conferred upon the following gentlemen:

The first stone was laid by Mr. Mordecai Alvarez Correa; the second by Samuel de Casseres; the third by Jacob Hizkiaho Morao and the fourth by Manuel Hizkiaho Levy.

Two stones were also deposited one at each pillar by Dániel Aboab Cardoze and his wife Rebecca.

The Synagogue was completed and consecrated on the eve of Passover 1692.

This prosperous community having accomplished its long and cherished object of building a holy fane for the service of the God of their fore-fathers, now turned

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their attention to the procurement of a Rabbinical leader having so long existed without one, and perceiving the necessity of a competent and qualified person amongst them who could decide all religious discussions, which were of frequent occurrence, and which consequently caused unpleasantness between the members of the community,

They appealed to the chief Hacham of Amsterdam to send them a person who should give lectures, decide all questions of law, and teach the rising generation whose religious education was retrograding through the advanced age of their Hazan Revd. David Raphael da Fonseca which rendered him inadequate to the requirements of the community.

The Hacham of Amsterdam recommended to them for this purpose a perfect Hebrew and classical scholar in the person of Rabbi Eliaho Lopez who con-

tinued as their spiritual guide and chief until his decease in 1712.

After a period of twenty years' arduous labours with energy and perseverance this great Hacham was gathered to his people when about sixty five years of age.

The highest honours were paid to his remains by the community.

Two scrolls of the law were buried with him, one at each side.

He was highly esteemed and respected by both Jews and Christians.

Hacham Lopez's wife, Rachel, died fourteen years before him on the 21st of Iyar 5459—1699 leaving no posterity.

In the year 1693 a party of Hebrews, about ninety in number, left Curaçao and set sail for America.

Nothing definitely is known of the names of these families; it is quite likely however that among them were the families of Touro, Gomez, Molina, De Meza

Casseres, Rodriquez Da Costa, Cohen Henriquez, and Luis,

The similarity of appellations we find in Curaçao strengthens this opinion.

These families established themselves in Newport, Rhode Island, where Ishack de Abraham Touro, the father of the great philanthropist Judah Touro and a nephew of Eliaho Hizkiaho Touro who died in Curaçao on the 3rd of Ab 5434 became the Hazan of the community.

In that same year another number of Israelites left Curaçao for Venezuela.

The majority of these however were Italians, who taking advantage of the permission granted to David Cohen Nassi by the West Indian Company in 1659 to establish a Jewish colony in Cayenne emigrated from Leghorn to that country ; but after the war with Portugal, and again with France which took possession of Cayenne in 1664 the Jews finding themselves uncomfortable quitted the coun-

try and came to Curaçao, from where they went to Tucacas, Venezuela, where they established and formed themselves into a congregation.

On the 2nd of September 1720 the congregation of Tucacas known as "Santa Irmandade" directed a letter signed by Samuel R^{ss} Gradis Gabbay of the community to the "Mikveh Israel" congregation of Curaçao with an enclosure of three hundred and forty dollars, soliciting its acceptance as a present from them for the purpose of purchasing a "Sepher Torah" (scroll of the revealed Law) with its adornments for the use of the Synagogue in Curaçao.

In the year 1715 the members of the congregation "Mikveh Israel" founded an institution which they named "The Hebrew Benevolent Society."

The great quantity of letters now extant are an excellent evidence of the good work this society accomplished.

The board of this institution consisted of a President, Vice-President and three assessors who were elected by ballot to serve for one year.

These gentlemen were active workers, they visited and nursed the sick, clothed the naked and buried the dead. Their sole object was to aid the needy and uplift the unfortunate, irrespective of country and creed and they endeavoured always to answer the call of the destitute with promptitude.

The assistance this Society afforded was not confined merely to the poor of Curaçao; but it was also extended to many other parts of the Globe, and to this day though the Society exists no more, the good work is still continued by the officers of the Synagogue.

A Jewish pauper is never seen strolling the streets of Curacao for aid, the Synagogue provides home and sustenance for

all those persons who are unable to earn their living.

It is a known fact that the jews of Curaçao have always been noted for their charitableness and hospitality to their own people as well as to strangers.

The "Hebrew Benevolent Society" also rendered assistance towards the establishment of places of worship in other countries.

In the year 1720 a letter was received from the congregation "Shearith Jacob" now Shearith Israel" of New York, dated 3rd of Shebat 5489 and signed by Moses Gomez President, Benjamin Mendez Pachuo Jr. and Daniel Gomez in which they said knowing that the Jews of Curaçao are always noted for their willingness to render assistance to their brethren, and particularly in sacred causes, they appealed to them in the name of the community to contribute towards the fabrication of their

Synagogue, the site of which was already purchased.

Another letter of this kind was also received from the congregation "Nephutsay Israel" of Newport, Rhode Island, dated 7th of Tishri 5525 and signed by Ishack de Abraham Touro Hazan, Aaron Lopez Parnas [President] Moses Levy, Nathaniel Hart, Jacob Rodriquez Pereira, Jacob Hart, Moses Lopez, Isaac Hart, and Jacob Elizer in which they also appealed to their brethren of Curaçao for assistance.

The community of Curaçao having sustained a severe loss through the demise of their beloved Rabbi Eliaho Lopez, the office remained vacant for a period of three years, until the end of the year 1715 when the position was tendered to Rabbi Raphael Jesurun, a descendant of a celebrated family of Amsterdam who was noted for the many excellent qualifications he possessed.

Rabbi Jesurun was a member of the

“Beth-Din” [Judicatory] in Curaçao during Hacham Lopez’s life time, but at the latter’s death he happened to be in Amsterdam, whither he went on a visit to regain his health.

Nothing of importance took place during Hacham Jesurun’s ministrations.

For thirty years he remained in office until his decease on the 6th of Tishri 5509 corresponding with the 28th of September 1748.

Hacham Jesurun’s death caused much sorrow and lament to all those who were acquainted with him.

He was distinguished for his amiability and for his kind and loving disposition.

In the year 1731 the Synagogue being too small to accommodate the growing number of members it was deemed necessary to enlarge the building.

For this purpose it was requisite for the congregation to obtain permission from the Governor Noah du Fay for

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which they were obliged to pay a sum of eight hundred patacas. This Governor seems to have possessed a great predilection for the Jews for he gave some of them posts of importance which were denied them by his predecessors.

On one occasion he commissioned a man by the name of David Senior on a semi-political mission to Coro 1722.

This of course evinces that at that time the Jews enjoyed equality of rights with other citizens.

The required permission having been obtained, the work was commenced immediately : in the interim the congregation held Divine service in the Vestry room, whilst the Synagogue was taken down and rebuilt on the same site.

The Building was completed and the consecration took place on the eve of Pass-over 5490, the same day on which the former one was hallowed.

The service was performed by Hacham Jesurun Rabbi of the community.

This Synagogue is the largest and best structure in the West Indies, and is highly admired by all visitors from abroad.

The length of the building is one hundred and five feet and the width seventy six feet.

On entering the Synagogue the Ark which is of richly carved mahogany attracts the attention of the beholder by its elaborate and beautiful appearance; it is seventeen feet high and fifteen feet wide and is surrounded by a chaste mahogany balustrade ornamented with four large brass candlesticks three feet high, one at each corner, and two beautiful solid silver candelabums of eight branches each are also placed on this balustrade on holidays and on special occasions.

When the holy Ark is opened it presents the interior richly decorated with crimson damask.

It contains eighteen scrolls of the revealed Law, five of which are rolled on solid silver cylinders.

Surmounting the Ark are two tables of mahogany containing the Decalogue in solid silver letters.

Below the Ark is the deposit for all the silver and gold utensils used in the Synagogue, their value is estimated at five thousand florins (£ 400).

The Ark is ascended by a flight of steps handsomely carpeted.

Near the west end of the building is the Taybah, a square elevation surrounded by a mahogany balustrade corresponding with that of the Ark and ornamented also by four large brass candlesticks one at each corner, besides other silver adornments which add to its beauty.

On this platform is the desk of the Hazan (Precentor) covered with handsomely and richly embroidered velvet which bears the following inscription :

“Know before whom thou standest.”

On this same platform, three feet from the reader's desk, is a small door leading to the pulpit from where discourses are delivered.

At the north side of the Synagogue is a baldachin containing five seats for the Parnassim, it is handsomely finished and is ornamented with five solid silver candlesticks.

The Gallery and Ceiling, though of mahogany, are painted white. This was recently done in order to afford the Synagogue more light which was obscured through the dark colour of the material.

From the ceiling are suspended four large and elegant brass chandeliers of twenty four lights each.

These were the liberal donations of the following gentlemen :

[1] Moses de Abraham de Chaviz on the 7th of Sivan 5467-1706.

[2] Benjamin Henriquez Morao Fegarao on the 1st of Ellul 5469-1708.

[3] Mordicay son of Isaack and Esther de Marchena on the 24th of Kislev 5491-1730.

The fourth bears no inscription. The material of the benches in the area as well as of those in the gallery is mahogany.

In the year 1740 the several Jewish families who then resided in the other side of Curaçao known as "Otra Banda" organized themselves into a small congregation.

A house was spontaneously put at their disposal by Moses Penso, where they held Divine Service until they were able to build a Synagogue.

The name of the congregation was "Neveh Shalom." (Dwelling of peace).

The motive for this separation was attributed to the bay which they were obli-

ged to cross in boats on Sabbaths and Holidays in order to attend Divine Service in the present Synagogue; and in order to avert this, they deemed it necessary to erect a place of worship at their side where they could practice their devotions without being necessitated to desecrate the holy Sabbath.

In the year 1742 a piece of land was purchased for this purpose and with due form and ceremony the foundation stone was laid, bearing the usual enclosures and inscriptions, in the presence of all the members.

In the year 1743 the Synagogue was completed and consecrated on the eve of Sabbath 12th of Ellul 5505.

The Revd. Samuel Levy Maduro [who until then served as an assistant Hazan of the "Mikveh Israel" congregation] conducted the service.

This new Synagogue was not however, an independent one; it was only a branch

of, and stood under the direction of the chief Synagogue "Mikveh Israel" in Willemstad.

But the Jews of "Otra Banda" were by no means satisfied to be governed by the Parnassim of the "Mikveh Israel," whom they thought treated them as their inferiors, and they very often directed complaints to the Governor and Council reproaching the conduct of the Parnassim saying. "That at every posible occasion much wrong insult and contempt was shown to them."

On another occasion the Parnassim of "Mikveh Israel" appear to have given cause for dissatisfaction to the Jews of "Otra Banda" and accusations were again directed to the Governor, who ordered a reconciliation to take place between them on the Day of Atonement 1746.

In the year 1749 Rabbi Raphael Samuel Mendez de Sola succeeded Hacham Jesurun as Rabbi of the community.

Hacham de Sola was the descendant of a very ancient Jewish family which can be traced seven hundred years back.

He was highly talented, and was distinguished for his patience, his conciliatory disposition and modesty.

He was a famous Orator and a great Talmudist.

Hacham de Sola was the witness of very sad scenes which took place amongst the members of his community, when but nine months in office.

In the year 1749 a quarrel took place in "Heerenstraat" between some thirty jews.

In vain did Hacham de Sola exercise all his power and influence to quell the confusion and to restore peace amongst them, but he failed; it required a stronger authority than his to quench the outburst.

In that same year another altercation broke out between the Parnassim, members of the "Mikveh Israel" and forty jews of "Otra Banda."

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This breach within the community was painfully felt.

It threatened the whole Jewish population with grave consequences, and might have been detrimental to the progress and welfare of the Island itself had it not been for the interference of the intelligent and high minded Prince William Charles Henry Friso of Orange Nassau, who put a stop to all disputes and contentions.

This feud which lasted for several months must have been very severe for they actually raised a wall at the Burial-ground in order to separate the dead of the dissenting parties, and avoided entering into the usual business relations with each other.

The interposition of the Prince of Orange Nassau in Jewish matters is an excellent evidence of the great interest he evinced for his Jewish subjects, and at the same time we grasp a clear idea of the influence and control the Israelites had even

then upon commerce and the welfare of the Island.

The liberal minded Prince sought to smooth the difference between the Parnassim and the members, and to establish the former order and harmony amongst them without resorting to harsh means.

In August 1750 the Jewish Congregation of Curaçao received through the Parnassim of the community of Amsterdam, a Publication which was issued by the Prince of Orange Nassau on the 30th of April of that same year, and as our illustrious friend Abraham Mendez Chumaceiro L. L. D. rightly says in his "Zal Het Kiesrecht Curaçao tot het Kannibalisme voeren?" "Such documents must from time to time be brought under the eyes of posterity so that they may not be forgotten," we therefore lay the Publication for the perusal of our readers as translated from the Dutch language by a friend.

PUBLICATION

“We William Charles Henry Friso by the grace of God Prince of Orange Nassau etc.”

“After having come to our ears the discrepancies and variances, which have arisen since some time between the Parnassim, the Board of the Synagogue and the Hacham or preacher of the Jewish nation at the Island of Curaçao on the one side, and some members of the aforesaid community on the other, and from which nothing but very prejudicial consequences may result for the welfare of the Island:”

“Have we thus found right to ordain and to decree:”

“That all the dissenting members of the Jewish Portuguese Nation immediately after the publication of this, shall again join the congregation to be governed as of old by the Parnassim and Board of the

Synagogue according to the Jewish Portuguese constitution" (named Escamoths).

"That further Parnassim and Board of the Synagogue of the Jewish Nation at Curaçao have to adhere punctually and strictly to the regulations and ordinances which shall be forwarded by us to them, through the Parnassim of the Jewish Portuguese community in Amsterdam."

"And to render this reconciliation more solemn and permanent, do we ordain besides the dispositions taken on that account by us that a solemn and general thanksgiving and prayer-day be held at a time [the sooner the better] to be fixed by the Governor and Council of Curaçao." "Thus done and resolved at our Court in the Hague.

the 30th. April 1750

(Signed) Prince of Orange and Nassau."

The day this publication was received was for the Jewish community of Curaçao

“A day of gladness and feasting, and a good day of sending presents to one another,” for no sooner were its contents read and made known, than the former peace and harmony reigned amongst them.

Wednesday the 19th of August was the day appointed by the Governor and Council for the celebration of the thanksgiving and prayer as was commanded by the Prince of Orange Nassau.

Both Jews and Christians attended and witnessed the solemn ceremony.

The service was conducted by Rabbi Mendez de Sola who after its conclusion delivered an eloquent and impressive sermon, taking for his text Psalm 122nd, seventh verse.

“Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.”

This learned Rabbi in his dedication of the discourse to the Prince of Orange

Nassau styled him "Instrumento desta Paz" — (the instrument of peace).

This sermon was published in Amsterdam in the year 1751 and was headed "Triumfo da Uniao contra O pernicioso vicio da discordia" [The triumph of Union against the pernicious vice of discord]

Thus ended the strife between the Jews of Curaçao and henceforward the incessantly dissatisfied members of the Synagogue "Neveh Shalom" of "Otra Banda" were apparently reconciled and continued to be governed by the Parnassim of the chief Synagogue "Mikveh Israel".

However, a kind of monument remained which reminded the descendants of the contesting parties of the sad and terrible event.

This was the wall which was built at the Burial-ground in order to separate the dead as mentioned before, and which remained intact until the year 1858 when

by order of Hacham Chumaceiro it was demolished.

The disturbances which had greeted Hacham De Sola the first year of his ministration did not occur again.

He spent the remainder of his days in peace and tranquility until his demise Wednesday 19th. May 1761.

Hacham De Sola was succeeded by Rabbi Isaac Henriques Farro, a native of Amsterdam, who after serving only the short period of ten months, died at the early age of forty six on Sabbath July 10th. 1762.

Through the demise of this Hacham the office remained vacant for a period of three years, until 1765 when the position was tendered to Rabbi Jacob Lopez Da Fonseca.

Rabbi Da Fonseca was a native of Curaçao and a pupil of Hacham De Sola after whose death he was sent to Amsterdam to complete his studies.

He occupied the Rabbinical office for fifty two years.

The fiftieth anniversary of his ministration was celebrated with great enthusiasm on Sabbath Tammuz 1st. 1815.

Special hymns were composed and sung on the occasion by the Dayan Rev^d. D. L. Penha who officiated.

After the service amidst shouts of joy Hacham Da Fonseca was carried home by the members.

In the midst of their rejoicings, however, a change suddenly took place; the venerable and esteemed Rabbi who was already advanced in years fell ill the following day after the Jubilee.

He was confined to his bed for a period of two years until his decease 5575 A. M.

The death of this worthy Rabbi was the cause of much lament to the community.

Both Jews and Christians mourned for

him for he was distinguished for his amiability and rare qualities of mind.

The community remained without a spiritual chief for a considerable time ; one of the Dayanim performing the various functions of Hacham in the interim until the year 1856 when the community obtained the services of a Rabbi, who was by no means inferior to his predecessors.

This was Hacham Aaron Moses Mendez Chumaceiro, who arrived in Curaçao on the 19th. of January 1856.

Hacham Chumaciro was a profound scholar, and was distinguished for his gentleness and love of humanity.

He endeavoured always to see the poor well provided.

Hardly had he been in office one year when he devised a plan of opening an exhibition for the benefit of the poor in the Island.

The committee which was appointed to conduct the fair consisted of Hacham

Chumaceiro [president], Revd. Meyers (Protestant Minister) Vice President, Rev^d. Kieckens (Catholic Minister) Secretary and Mr. David Senior Jr. Treasurer.

The funds received were two thousand seven hundred and eighteen florins which were distributed amongst the Jewish, Protestant and Catholic poor of the Island.

In the year 1858 the Board of Directors of Mikveh Israel established a "Mikdash" (school) for the promotion of Hebrew and Religious knowledge among the Junior members of the community.

By the recommendation of Hacham Chumaceiro Rev^d. Haim Israel Sant Cross was engaged and brought from Holland as teacher.

But fate, however, did not permit Hacham Chumaceiro to enjoy the prerogatives of his office; for scarcely had he been in Curaçao seven years when a great

change took place which caused everything to become disagreeable to him; and which subsequently was the motive of his retirement from office.

In the year 1863 a number of families seceded from the old community and organized themselves into a society on modern Reform principles.

A hall was put at their disposal where they held service until a place of worship was ready.

A piece of land was voluntarily given to them by the Government for the purpose of erecting their Temple.

Sunday the 17th of December 1865 (*) was the day appointed for the laying of the Corner-stone.

A very large number of persons assembled in the oratory of the community in Scharlo, where a religious service was held.

[*] Curaçaosche Courant 23rd December 1865.

The service opened with Psalm 29th which was chaunted by the Choir, after which followed a prayer composed for the occasion by Mr. J. Naar Jr., acting minister of the congregation.

Some Verses from the 145th Psalm were also sung by the Choir, after which Mr. J. C. Henriquez Vice President of the Community delivered an eloquent and impressive discourse, at the conclusion of which the Choir chaunted the 150th Psalm.

The service being over, the assemblage proceeded to the place where the Cornerstone of the Temple was to be laid.

A large number of persons gathered in and about the grounds where stood a large tent decorated with wreaths and flags.

Upon a small table near the tribune lay an open Bible and a portrait of the King wreathed with garlands of flowers.

The President opened the ceremony with a short speech welcoming all present

in the name of the Society, after which he gave place to the Vice-President who delivered a sermon taking for his text the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

In the course of his sermon the Orator thanked the Governor in the name of the Community for his early recognition of the Society and for the grounds which were kindly donated by the Government, after which the laying of the Corner-stone took place.

A copper box was as customary on such occasions enclosed in the stone containing various documents which related to the Community and to the erection of the Temple; coins in circulation were also deposited.

When the Stone was finally laid, a salute of twenty one guns was fired by the Dutch Schooner "Cleopatra."

The Government Band which accom-

panied the ceremony played the national air, and after that the Temple March which was composed for the occasion by Mr. J. G. Palm, organist of the Community.

The service was performed by Messrs. J. A. Jesurun, Daniel C. Henriques, E. A. De Lima, J. Penso and M. Salas.

A silver trowel which was used on the occasion bore the following inscription:

"The Dutch Reformed Hebrew Congregation to its President J. A. Jesurun on the occasion of laying the Cornerstone of the "Temple Emanu-el" Curaçao 17th December 1865."

The name they gave the Temple was "Emanu-El" (God with us).

The reforms adopted were an abridged service according to the ritual used in the Temple "Emanu-El" of New York; an organ; family pews in which both sexes sit together; custom of worshipping with uncovered heads and without religious garment: the abrogation of the second

days of Festivals. The three year cycle of perusing the Law and the discontinuance of calling up individuals thereto.

All these innovations were not pleasing to Hacham Chumaceiro who was a thorough Orthodox.

He occupied his post only a few after the Reform movement, until 1869 when he went to Holland leaving Rev^d. Sant-Cross as Hazan and Chief of the Congregation.

It is rather difficult in a pamphlet of this kind to record and describe all the Ministers that served the Community; we must therefore content ourself with recording the names of those whose histories are at present accessible to us.

As mentioned before Rev^d. Sant Cross who came to Curaçao as teacher became Hazan and Chief after Hacham Chumaceiro's departure.

Rev^d. Sant Cross served the Congregation faithfully until the year 1889 when

his health caused him to abdicate his office and return to Holland, his native home.

Rev^d. Sant Cross was succeeded by Rev^d. J. H. Chumaceiro, a son of Hacham Chumaceiro.

Rev^d. Chumaceiro was born at Amsterdam (Holland) July 3rd. 1844; he had occupied several ministerial offices in America until he was called to Curaçao where he served as Minister until 1891.

When Rev^d. J. H. Chumaceiro left Curaçao the ministry remained vacant for some time, and Divine Services were performed by Mr. Benjamin De Casseres Jr. and Mr. Manuel Penso Curiel, two honoured and respected Elders of the Community, who voluntarily served as Hazanim until the services of a Minister were obtained.

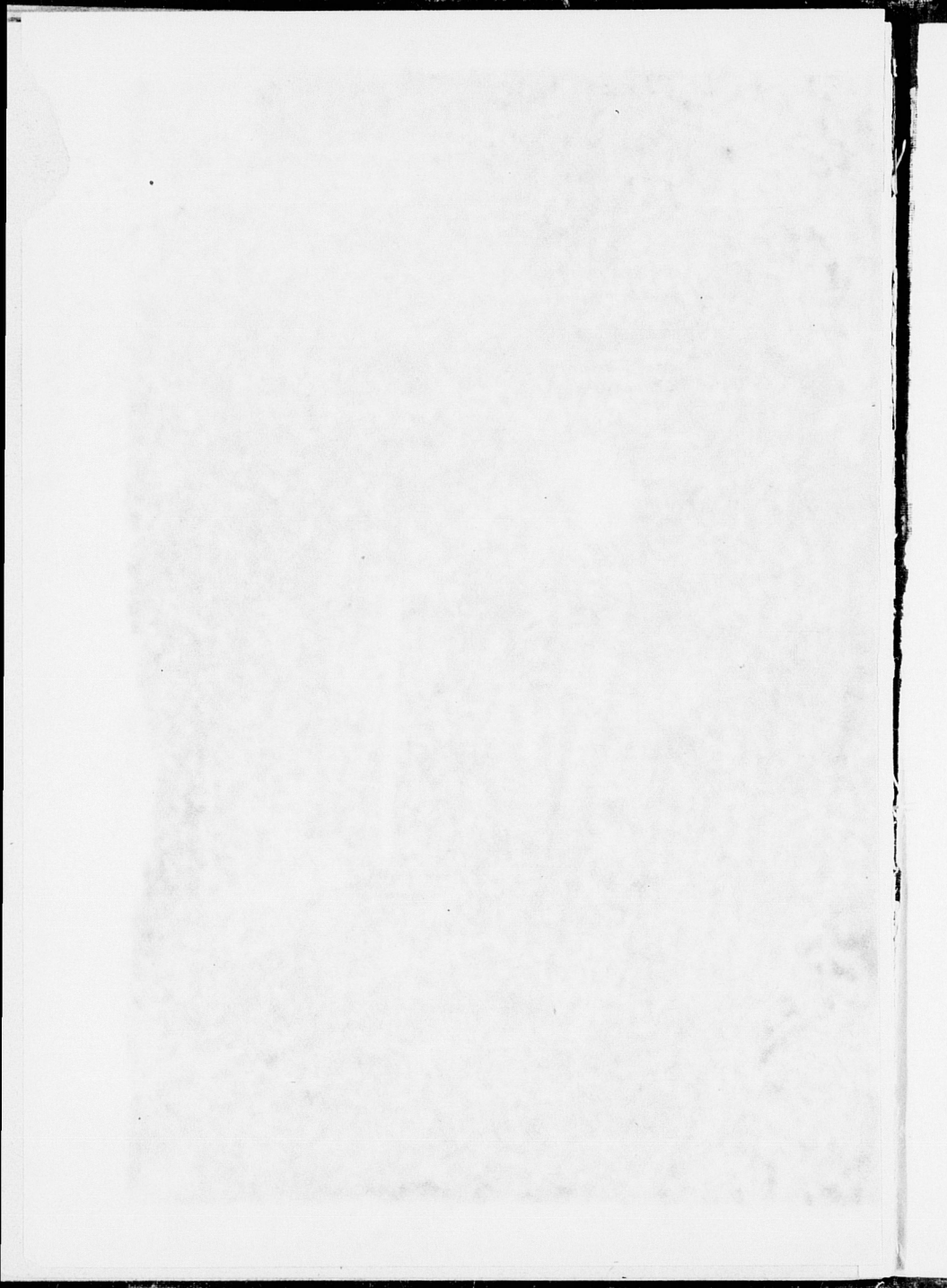
In the year 1893 Rev^d. Eleazer Polak, a native of Amsterdam was called to the office; but he died after serving only

eighteen months at the early age of twenty eight.

After his death the services were again conducted by the Elders of the Community until January 1896 when the humble writer of these pages was called to the office.

We have thus feebly endeavoured to give as much information as could be gathered from the Archives of the Synagogue, and to give a faint idea of the character of the Jewish Congregation in this City up to the present date.

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