

The Jews In The Caribbean edited by Jane S Gerber.
The Littman Library of Civilisation. Littman Library 2014.

A great deal of information, easily missed, can be contained in the title of a book. The book under review is a perfect example: *The Jews In the Caribbean* (my italics) is not the same as *The Jews Of the Caribbean*, the latter suggesting something much more organic than the former, as well as less interesting.

The Jews in the Caribbean contains a series of papers delivered in 2010 in Kingston, Jamaica, at a conference convened by Ainsley Henriques, president of the United Congregation of Israelites and Professor Jane Gerber, Director of the Institute of Sephardic Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The conference drew scholars from Europe and North America, as well as across the Caribbean, together with local dignitaries, school and university students, and members of the Jewish community.

Over its three days twenty one papers were delivered, collected under seven rubrics in the book: The Historical Background of the Caribbean Sephardi Diaspora; Authority and Community in the Dutch Caribbean; Material and Visual Culture; Jews and Slave Society; Reassessing the Geographical Boundaries of Caribbean Jewry; Personal Narratives; The Formation of Contemporary Caribbean Jewry.

The Jews In the Caribbean tells a story that spans several centuries; of refugees from Hispanic persecution, of the effect that Jews had on a variety of Caribbean nations, and the effect they had on their Jews; of the acquisition of great wealth and the creation of fine synagogues; of the relationships between Jewish merchants and slave owners; of individual lives – such as Benjamin Franks who sailed with the infamous pirate Captain Kydd – of Jewish scholarship and the advent of Reform Judaism and much more besides.

The Jews In the Caribbean is a fascinating account of Jewish adaptability and survivability, of acceptance and tolerance, of wealth and influence.

The Jews of the Caribbean, and their synagogues, are few today, but the legacy of the historical community that flourished *in the Caribbean*, and played a significant part in its history continues to be felt, and with this book is now preserved for a long time to come.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh