



Rebecca Isaiah Moses, née Phillips (1792-1872), wears a modest dress typical of an observant Jewish woman; in the Sephardic tradition, her hair is covered with a transparent lace cap. The smocking on her sleeve demonstrates skilled needlework. The pearl arrow pin at her neck was passed down in the family, appearing in a 20th-century portrait of her granddaughter, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander.

## Rebecca Moses (1792–1872): The Shape of a Life

Rebecca Moses was born Rebecca Phillips in 1792, the third daughter and fourth of six children, to Hannah and Jacob Phillips. Her father recorded her birth at the bottom of a page in his *Haftarot* (page 5), a volume containing Jewish texts from which a portion is read in the synagogue following the weekly Pentateuchal portion read from the Torah scroll. Although the inscription Jacob Phillips wrote for Rebecca is formulaic—“My dear daughter Rebecca was born March 19, 1792”—it offers a welcome anchor for Rebecca’s life story because the place of her birth is hotly contested. Among Rebecca’s descendants, the story of her birthplace varied according to what each had learned from a parent or grandparent. One grandson reported that Rebecca herself claimed that she had been “born under the French flag.”

Two cousins, Harry Alexander and Hannah Marie Moses, exchanged a battery of letters in the 1920s debating the possibilities: St. Eustatius, or St. Statia, as it was then called, one of the places Rebecca’s parents lived before she was born; St. Thomas; Jamaica; Martinique. The most dramatic version puts Rebecca’s birth at sea.

This version was picked up by Jewish genealogist Malcolm Stern and repeated by

James Hagy, historian of Charleston’s early Jews. Rebecca’s birth is the only case that Stern records as “born at sea.” In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the families of New England fishing captains often lived on board ship, and many of their children were born at sea. Indeed, one ship captain delivered all six of his children at sea. Jacob Phillips was not a fishing captain, however, so if Hannah Phillips gave birth at sea, she was likely traveling as a passenger, not living aboard ship with her husband.

The cousins agreed at least that Rebecca’s birth took place in the West Indies, and perhaps the most credible story is that Hannah gave birth on Martinique. This would accord with the claim that Rebecca had been “born under the French flag.” Lending support to this version is the fact that Hannah Phillips died on Martinique six years later while visiting family.

The differing accounts of Rebecca’s birthplace are of interest primarily because they offer a window into the lives of her parents and suggest the various locales where the family had ties. Hannah Phillips’s forebears, the Mears and Isaacks families, had crossed the Atlantic from Europe by 1718. Over the years, the families had established connections up

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and down the Atlantic seaboard, from Newport, Rhode Island, to New York, to South Carolina, to the West Indies. Though far-flung, the families maintained ties, both business and personal.

In a pattern that would be repeated in later generations, Hannah's mother, Rebecca Mears, and Rebecca's sister Rachel married two Isaacks brothers,

Jacob and Moses, respectively. Early in Rebecca and Jacob Isaacks's marriage, the couple moved from New York—where Jacob's father, Abraham, had been *Parnas* ("President" in Portuguese) of the Sephardic Jewish Congregation Shearith Israel—to the bustling coastal trading town of Newport, Rhode Island. Among the town's personages was Aaron Lopez,

### Genealogy of Abraham Isaacks's *Tallit* and Hannah Isaacks's *Het*

Abraham Isaacks's *tallit*, or prayer shawl, traveled down through the years in tandem with a brooch in the shape of a *het*, the first letter of his wife Hannah's name in Hebrew. Like the *tallit*, the brooch made its way to my great-uncle, Harry Alexander, but it disappeared, probably in Georgia, where it

At almost 9 feet long and 1.5 feet wide, the *tallit* of Abraham Isaacks is unusually long and narrow. Blue squares reinforce the corners, through which the ritually-mandated *tsitsit* (strings) are threaded.



was last known to have been with a cousin of Harry's, Sarah Falk Solomons.

As described here, Abraham Isaacks's *tallit* was passed down in our family for more than 250 years—through at least eleven people—before it was given to me by my cousin Henry A. Alexander, Jr. It is made of silk, which was traditional with the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in colonial America; Ashkenazi Jews of the time made their *tallitot* of wool.

1. Abraham Isaacks (b.unknown-d. 1743); of Holland and New York.
2. Hannah Mears Isaacks (b. unknown-d.1745), wife of Abraham Isaacks above; of the Caribbean and New York.
3. Jacob Isaacks (c.1713-d.1798), oldest son of Abraham and Hannah Isaacks, above; married Rebecca Mears Isaacks; of New York and Rhode Island.
4. Rebecca Mears Isaacks (birth and death dates unknown); married Jacob Isaacks, above, in 1761; of New York and Rhode Island.
5. Hannah Isaacks Phillips (c.1770-1798), daughter of Jacob and Rebecca Mears Isaacks, above; wife of Jacob Phillips, below; of Newport, died on Martinique.
6. Jacob Phillips (c.1766-c.1820), husband of Hannah Isaacks Phillips, above; of England, St. Eustatius, New York, Newport, and Ninety-Six and Charleston, South Carolina.

whose shipping fleet was a significant contributor to Newport’s economy. Members of the Lopez family would play important roles in the family later in South Carolina.

It is worth noting at this point that when Hannah and Jacob Phillips named their daughter Rebecca for her maternal grandmother, Rebecca Mears Isaacks

was still alive. In naming their child for a living relative, Hannah and Jacob were observing a Sephardic tradition widely followed at the time in the Americas. This practice was common even among Jews of German origin, which Jacob Phillips appears to have been. The name “Phillips” derives from the Yiddish word *faibush* (“bright”), a derivation suggesting

7. Rebecca Phillips Moses (1792-1872), daughter of Jacob Phillips and Hannah Isaacks Phillips, above; born “at sea” or in Caribbean, of Charleston and Savannah; wife of Isaiah Moses. (Note: After she married, Rebecca used Rebecca Isaiah Moses as her name. I have used Phillips as her middle name here to keep track of her ‘lineage.’)
8. Hannah Moses Abrahams (1809-1875), daughter of Rebecca and Isaiah Moses above; Charleston; wife of Alexander H. Abrahams of Bremen, Germany, and Charleston.
9. Sarah Falk Solomons (1859-1938), daughter of Henrietta Abrahams Falk and Abraham Falk, of Savannah and Charleston. (Henrietta Abrahams Falk, who was never mentioned as an owner of the items by Harry Alexander, was the daughter of Hannah Moses Abrahams, above.) Sarah Falk Solomons married Isaiah Abrahams Solomons of Savannah.
10. Henry Aaron (Harry) Alexander (1874-1952), son of Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander and Julius Mortimer Alexander, of Atlanta. Rebecca, his mother, was the sister of Isaiah Abrahams Solomons, above.

11. Henry Aaron Alexander, Jr. (1922-2000), son of Harry Alexander, above, and Marion Klein Alexander; Atlanta and Eugene, Oregon.
12. Judith Shanks (1941- ), daughter of Charlotte Alexander Weil and Roman Weil, Montgomery, Alabama, and Washington, D.C.; cousin of Henry Aaron Alexander, Jr., above.



When Abraham Isaacks’s *tallit* reached Harry Alexander, he stored it for many years in a box decorated with—of all things—a Christmas motif.

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that the family came from an Ashkenazi, or German-speaking, background. In Europe, at least, German Jews generally followed Ashkenazi tradition and would not name a baby for a living relative. American synagogues of the 18th and early 19th centuries, however, followed Sephardic tradition regardless of the country of origin of their congregants.

### **Jacob Phillips: Well-traveled Merchant**

While Hannah Isaacks was growing up in Newport, her husband-to-be, Jacob Phillips, had made his way to the Western Hemisphere from England where he was born around 1750. Once across the Atlantic, Jacob Phillips is noted for his willingness to travel in his quest to earn a living. His first stop probably was the small West Indian island of St. Eustatius, where he joined a flourishing Jewish mercantile community.

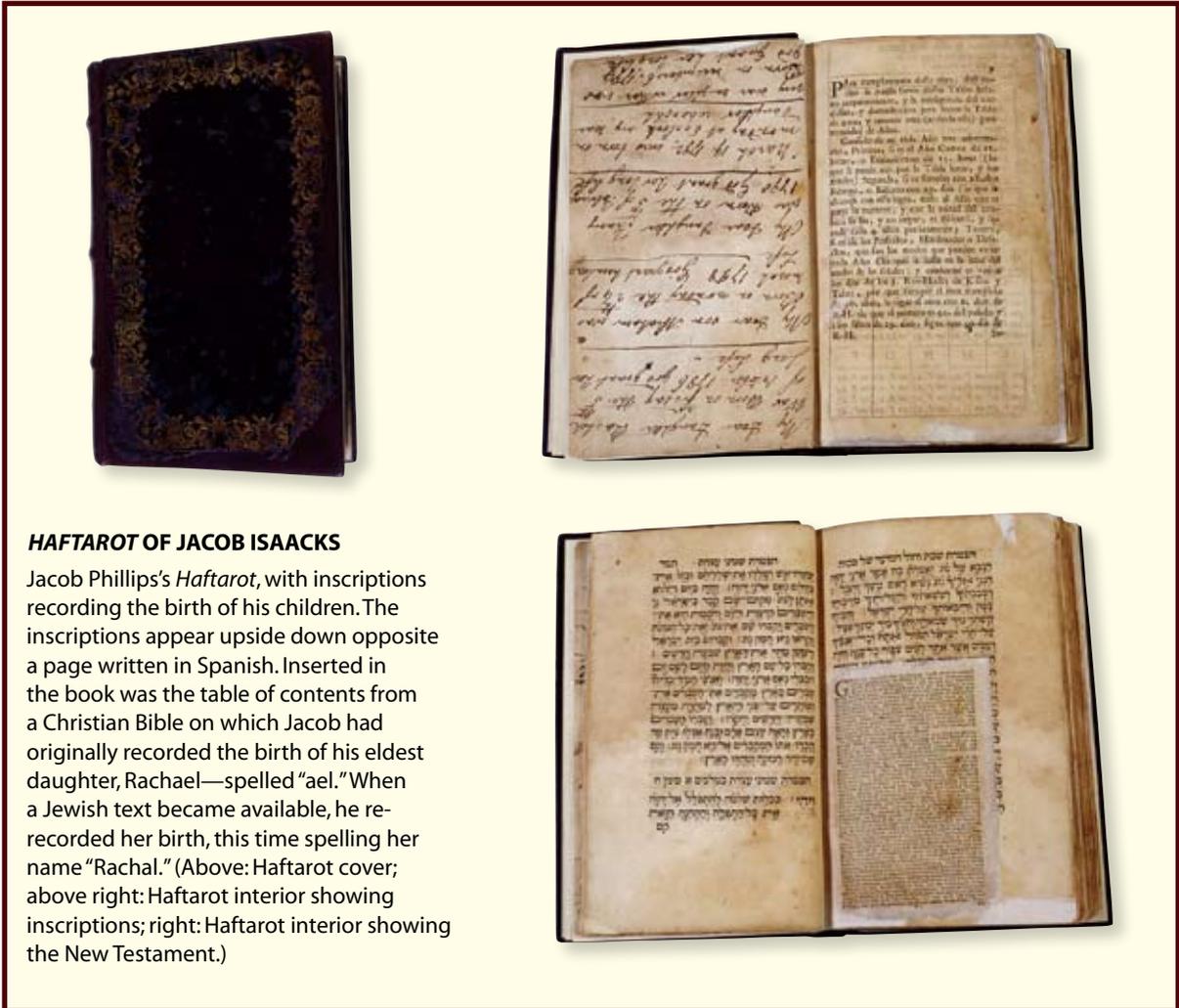
In 1776, when the American Revolution started, St. Eustatius was under Dutch sovereignty. The British and Dutch were long-standing rivals for supremacy on the seas, so it was no surprise that St. Eustatius would be at least sympathetic to the American cause. The little island's port, Oranjestad, was used for transshipping British embargoed goods to the American Patriots. In 1780, England declared war on the Netherlands, and the Jewish community on St. Eustatius suffered the consequences. British Admiral George B. Rodney, determined to wipe out the Jews and

their trade with the Patriots, sailed into Oranjestad harbor. He routed the merchant ships, burned warehouses of goods, and drove the Jews from the island.

Although most of the men of St. Eustatius were forcibly taken to the nearby British islands of St. Kitts and Antigua, Jacob Phillips somehow made his way to South Carolina, where he enrolled in the militia. When the war ended in 1783, Phillips, now based in America, resumed his career as a merchant, traveling along the Eastern seaboard, as far north as Newport, and down to the West Indies. Presumably in the course of these journeys, Jacob Phillips met Hannah Isaacks. On August 20, 1785, a notice appeared in the *Newport Mercury* announcing their marriage.

Historical records reveal Jacob Phillips's continued roaming, a characteristic of 17th-century Jews in the Western Hemisphere. Hannah and Jacob moved from South Carolina to New York, to St. Eustatius, and back to South Carolina. The 1785 and 1786 records of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York show that Jacob Phillips attended meetings there. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the family's mobility is their listing in three different locales during population counts of 1790—Fostertown, Rhode Island; Abbeville County, South Carolina; and St. Eustatius. In St. Eustatius Jacob Phillips is listed with a wife and two children. The two U.S. Census counts include others in the household.

We know nothing specific about where the Phillips family was living when their



**HAFTAROT OF JACOB ISAACKS**

Jacob Phillips's *Haftarot*, with inscriptions recording the birth of his children. The inscriptions appear upside down opposite a page written in Spanish. Inserted in the book was the table of contents from a Christian Bible on which Jacob had originally recorded the birth of his eldest daughter, Rachael—spelled “ael.” When a Jewish text became available, he re-recorded her birth, this time spelling her name “Rachal.” (Above: Haftarat cover; above right: Haftarat interior showing inscriptions; right: Haftarat interior showing the New Testament.)

daughter Rebecca was born in the West Indies, only that Hannah Phillips was probably there visiting relatives. Six years later, when Hannah Phillips was again on Martinique, she died, probably in childbirth, on March 7, 1798, twelve days before Rebecca's sixth birthday. Hannah Phillips left six children, ranging in age from 12-year-old Rachel to 2-year-old Philip.

Here the record grows murkier. Within two weeks of Hannah Phillips's death, her

father, Jacob Isaacks, succumbed to a long illness. Rebecca Mears Isaacks, Hannah's mother and young Rebecca's namesake, was 60. The next thing we know for sure about the widow Isaacks—"relict" in the parlance of the day—is that she died in South Carolina in 1802.

My presumption is that she had moved from Rhode Island to South Carolina with two of her unmarried children, where she helped to raise her grandchildren until her death four years

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later. South Carolina official census records do not help. The 1800 census locates Jacob Phillips in Greenville County, South Carolina, in the far northwest section of the state. However, the numbers of males and females in the household as recorded in the census do not match the numbers and ages of the Phillips and Isaacks children. There is no census record for a Rebecca Isaacks in South Carolina, but the census did list a female over 45 years old in Jacob Phillips' household who might have been Rebecca. A notice of her death in the newspaper of October 22, 1802, in Charleston, at the age of 64 supports my presumption about her move, but the timing of the move is just speculation.

When Rebecca Phillips's grandmother died, Rebecca's oldest sibling, Rachel, was 16. Around the same time, on October 10, 1802, Rachel Phillips married Michael Myers in Charleston. In November, Jacob Phillips gave his *Haftarot* to his new son-in-law, with an inscription recording the wedding and gift.

Jacob Phillips now had a household of five children, the youngest of whom was 6 and the eldest 14. If their late grandmother had indeed been caring for them, Jacob now needed to find another caregiver. His wife's sister Rachel Isaacks, 22, apparently lived 170 miles away in Cheraw, South Carolina. It is possible that Rachel Isaacks moved to Charleston to care for her nieces and nephews, for she died there the following year, perhaps of one of the fevers that periodically raged in South Carolina.

It was not unusual for young children, whether gentile or Jew, to be raised by relatives or family friends when parents died, so it is likely that the young Phillips children lived and visited with cousins and family friends in Charleston. And they may not always have been kept together. According to family historians Harry Alexander and Hannah Marie Moses, young Rebecca Phillips was adopted by one Sally Lopez, who taught her housekeeping skills and gave her some instruction in Jewish religion. The likely Sally Lopez of the appropriate age was born in Newport, a sister of David Lopez who relocated from Newport to South Carolina after the revolution. Thus the Isaacks family's Newport connections were maintained in South Carolina.

### **Isaiah Moses: Merchant, Planter, Traditional Jew**

About the time Rebecca Phillips and her sisters and brothers were coping with the death of their mother, Rebecca's future husband, Isaiah Moses, arrived in Charleston. The 1800 census lists him as living alone in Charleston, identifying him by the Hebrew name, Josiah. Later he appeared to use the name, Isaiah. In 1801 he was listed in the Charleston city directory for the first time—under the name Isaiah Moses.

Details of his personal or family life before this period are few. We know he was born in 1772 and was originally from near Hanover, in Germany. In the early



Isaiah Moses (1772-1857), pictured here at about the age of 65. This portrait and the similar one of Rebecca Moses (page xii) were both commissioned by their daughter Hannah, although it is not clear they were painted at the same time. Isaiah's portrait, by Theodore Sidney Moise, is dated by his collar style to the mid-1830s.

1790s, he moved to England, where he married and had four sons with a woman whose identity is now lost. Isaiah moved to Charleston when his first wife died. He left his sons in England, but he apparently maintained some ties with them. (These sons—Phineas, Morris, Solomon, and Simeon Moses— were later among the first Jews to settle in Cincinnati.)

While still in England, Isaiah Moses had doubtless been aware of Charleston as a thriving Jewish community. Between 1776 and 1825, a third of the 140 Jewish

men new to Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE) congregation had, like Isaiah Moses, migrated from Europe by way of England. Historian James Hagy estimates the number of Jews in Charleston to have been 600 in the year 1800—more than any other city in the United States (though only one-quarter to one-third of the Jewish population of Spanishtown, Jamaica.)

Carolina's prosperity was initially based on the exportation of deerskin, timber and beef. By the mid-18th century, indigo,

### Rebecca's Shabbat Candlesticks



Silversmith marks on Rebecca's Shabbat candlesticks indicate they were made by English silversmith John Settle in 1790, the year of Rebecca Phillips's birth and a time when neo-classical features of beads and swags were in vogue. The popularity of English silver in Carolina, a former colony of Great Britain, suggests the candlesticks may have been purchased by Isaiah Moses or they may have been a gift from English cousins. The earliest inscribed date, 1813, under the initials "RIM" for Rebecca Isaiah Moses, suggests the candlesticks were obtained the year Isaiah Moses bought the Oaks. The initials of subsequent owners, all direct descendants of Rebecca and Isaiah Moses, are also inscribed around the square base.

The date inscribed with each set of initials is the year the person inherited the candlesticks

from the deceased previous owner. Cecil Abraham Alexander had his name inscribed in 1938, the year his mother died.

My mother felt the candlesticks should have gone to her directly, not to her father—because they had always been passed to a daughter. Then her father gave them to his son, my mother's brother, Cecil Abraham Alexander, Jr. Because my mother felt strongly that she should have had the candlesticks, her brother gave them to her. In a moment of sentiment, or gratitude, she then gave one back to her brother.

Cecil Jr. agreed to lend his candlestick, to be shown with Charlotte's, during the *Portion of the People* exhibition in Charleston in 2002. At the end of the exhibition, his candlestick was returned to him, and Charlotte's to me.

a dyestuff made from a plant in the pea family, joined the list of commodities. Due to the efforts of Moses Lindo, a Jew from London, Carolina indigo became so prized that the British paid a bounty to encourage indigo production in the colony. Indigo, grown in the Upcountry as well as Lowcountry, was used to make the blue dye for British uniforms. During and after the Revolution, with the bounty no longer available, the crop ceased to be profitable. The major export crop then grown on the Carolina coast was rice, locally known as Carolina gold. However, rice was not necessarily a moneymaker, as Isaiah Moses would one day discover.

Isaiah Moses's early years in Charleston were probably the most financially successful of his career. He is listed in the Charleston city directory as a grocer—that is, a provisioner for plantation owners. He seems to have moved up the social ladder, next listed as a shopkeeper, then in 1819 as a planter. Merchants were considered higher on the socioeconomic scale than shopkeepers, with planters at the top. Isaiah apparently had ambitions early on to attain the elite status of planter. This was in stark contrast to social opportunity in his birthplace; in Hanover, Jews had not been permitted even to own land. Moreover, Isaiah's years among the English had Anglicized him, thus helping to bridge the differences between Hanover and Charleston. In America, Isaiah could aspire to whatever he wanted.

At some point, through connections in the Jewish community in Charleston, Isaiah Moses met young Rebecca Phillips. Isaiah was doing well in business, and he was a respected, responsible member of the Jewish community. In fact, Isaiah's financial prospects appeared quite sound in contrast to those of Rebecca's father. It is more than likely that Jacob Phillips regarded his daughter's suitor as a fine potential husband.

### **R.I. Moses: Life as a Wife, Mother, and Businesswoman**

Rebecca and Isaiah—Josiah in the notice that appeared in the *Charleston Courier*—married in Charleston on November 11, 1807. We do not know whether Rebecca followed the Jewish custom at the time of being married at home. Rebecca had a *ketubah*, or Jewish marriage contract (page 10). As far as we know, she did not have a civil contract.

She also had another traditional Jewish document, a *Shetar Halitzah*, which was signed at the time of her wedding by Levi Moses, Isaiah's brother, who had come to South Carolina with him. The *halitzah* released Rebecca from the obligation to marry Levi if Isaiah died before she had children, as would otherwise be required by traditional Jewish law.

When Rebecca married Isaiah, she was 15 years, eight months old; he was 35. This was unusually young for a Jewish bride, even in Charleston in the early 19th century—five years younger than the average. Not unusual, however, was the

### Marriage Contracts

Rebecca Moses's material legacy includes two types of marriage documents: a *ketuba*, the typical Jewish marriage contract widely used and well known, and a *Shetar Halitzah*, a document not widely known today. These are contractual legal documents that become moot once the parties die.

Rebecca and Isaiah Moses's *ketuba* is typical in its formulaic text; it is written in Aramaic, the ancient Semitic language that is the legal language of the Talmud. The document records the financial obligations the bridegroom undertakes toward his bride, and traditionally is executed by the groom and a male, usually a family member, acting on behalf of the bride. The document becomes the legal property of the bride, even though she is not a contractual party. Another *ketuba*, belonging to Rebecca and Isaiah's daughter Hannah, is similar to that of Rebecca and Isaiah Moses and is also shown here.

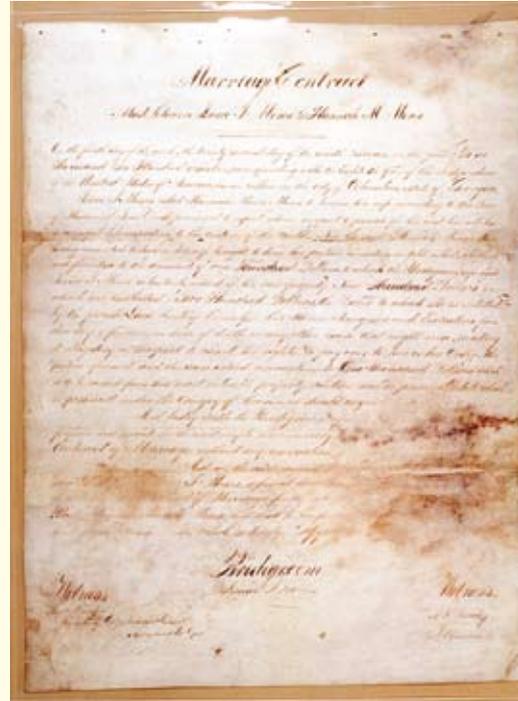
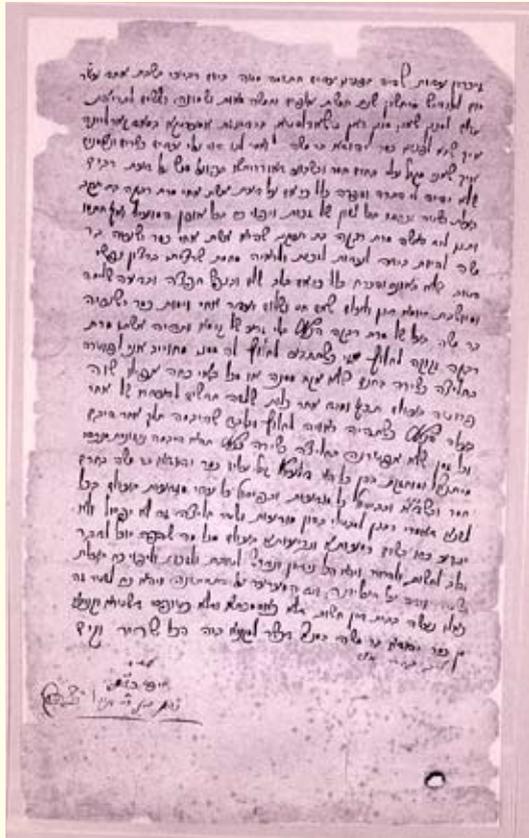
The most unusual surviving document is Rebecca and Isaiah's *Shetar Halitzah*, which releases Isaiah's brothers from the obligation known as Levirate marriage, designed to ensure the continuation of a man's family line by requiring a widow to marry her brother-in-law if her husband dies without children. In Jewish tradition, the release of both parties from the obligation dates to the Bible, and a conditional ceremony of *halitzah* can be performed at the time of marriage. In the ceremony, the widow removes from her brother-in-law's foot a special leather boot, spits on the ground, and says, "my brother-in-law refuses to marry me." Thus, *halitzah* is performed; she is released from the Levirate bond.

One problem has always been the possibility that the brother-in-law might not be nearby should the need for *halitzah* arise. In that case, the widow would be *aguna*, or "chained." (*Aguna* is the same situation a married Jewish woman finds herself in if her husband leaves



Above: *ketubah* of Rebecca Moses; below: *ketubah* of Isaac I. Moses and Hannah M. Moses.





Left: *Shetar Halitzah* (of Rebecca Moses); above: Marriage Contract made between Isaac I. Moses and Hannah M. Moses.

her without giving her a *Get*, or Jewish divorce.) In the early 19th century, in both Europe and America, the “chained woman” prospect was anticipated as a problem because of the high migration rate of Jews, especially from France and Germany. In Germany, the rabbis made rulings that provided for substantial financial settlements as the price of granting *halitzah*.

The *Shetar Halitzah* that belonged to Rebecca Moses was signed by Levi Moses, Isaiah’s brother, shortly before Rebecca married Isaiah. The docu-

ment declares Levi Moses’s intention to give *halitzah* if needed, and that he will do so freely and without making her pay. The document is evidence of Rebecca and Isaiah’s observant Jewish lifestyle. In Isaiah’s case, he wanted to ensure that Rebecca not be left in “halachic chains” in the event he should die before she became pregnant.

A puzzle remains: Isaiah Moses already had four sons, so even if Rebecca had not borne his children, *halitzah* should not have been an issue.

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

large age difference between husband and wife. Two of Rebecca's sisters, Rachel and Fanny, married men 23 and 16 years older, respectively, than they. Her grandmother, Rebecca Mears Isaacks had been 20 years younger than her husband. And her brother-in-law Levi Moses, who was just a year younger than Isaiah, also married a woman who was about 16 at the time of the marriage.

Even if such marriages were relatively common, one might wonder how Rebecca felt at the prospect of making her life with someone so much older than she. However, consider that she lost her mother before she was six, her grandmother only four years later, and her 22-year-old aunt Rachel less than a year after that. With her father constantly traveling for his business as a seagoing merchant, the stable presence of Isaiah Moses must have seemed a safe haven.

Whatever the influences on her decision to marry, glimpses into her daybook of later years reveal Rebecca as a practical woman, and she most likely welcomed the opportunity to marry. In a brief daybook entry upon Isaiah's death 50 years later, she refers to him as her "beloved husband." In accordance with what may have been a custom of the day, at least among her friends and relatives, Rebecca dropped her maiden name and took her husband's given name as her middle name. We find her monogram "R.I.M." on her silver candlesticks (page 8) and on the cover of her daybook "Moses,

R.I." There is also a Charleston city directory listing for "Moses, R.I." in 1837, and Rebecca's only census listing as head of a household, in 1860, shows her that way as well. Finally, she uses "R.I. Moses" in her will.

I have not found references to this practice more generally; it may have been adopted as a way to avoid confusion with other women with the same first and last names. In the cursive handwriting style of the day, "J" is often indistinguishable from "I", so it is never clear whether Rebecca used Josiah or Isaiah as her middle name.

The newlyweds set up housekeeping in Charleston, and a year later, in 1808, Rebecca gave birth to her first child, Levy. For reasons that are not clear, Levy Moses, often referred to as L.J. as he signed his name, was born not in Charleston but in Columbia, South Carolina. According to notations in the family bible of Rebecca's daughter Sarah, Columbia was also the birthplace of Rebecca's next two children, Hannah and Jacob.

Who or what drew Rebecca away from Charleston for her first three confinements is a mystery. According to letters in the H.A. Alexander (HAA) Collection, family lore held that Jacob Phillips lived in Columbia but moved to Charleston to forestall courtship of his second daughter Fanny by "Wade Hampton's father." However, I have found no reference to Jacob Phillips in records for Columbia in 1810, nor anywhere else for that year.

If an expectant mother went away

from her home to give birth, it would not be unusual to go to the home of a close kinswoman or other family member. Rebecca's older sister, Rachel, for example, had been born at her grandparents' home in Newport, Rhode Island. Later, Rebecca's own daughter Cecilia, living in Savannah with husband, pharmacist Abraham Alexander Solomons, would return to Charleston to give birth to her daughter Rebecca Ella Solomons. Isaiah continued to be listed in Charleston directories of this period. One possibility is that a relative skilled in midwifery lived in Columbia. Given that her own mother had died in childbirth, Rebecca would have wanted the assurance and assistance of her nearby kin.

In 1813, Rebecca bore her fourth child—Sarah—in Charleston, and the family settled more solidly into Charleston society. Isaiah's business was doing well and that year he purchased a plantation.

In Charleston of the 18th and 19th centuries, the landed gentleman was the societal ideal, and retiring merchants had a tendency to become gentlemen-planters. Although Isaiah Moses had not retired, he apparently aspired to this status. Thus he purchased the Oaks plantation at Goose Creek, less than 20 miles from town. The Charleston Directories for 1819 and 1822 list him as a planter.

### **The Oaks**

The Oaks plantation had a long history before it came into the Moses family. Created in 1680 as a warrant to Edward

Middleton by the British Lords Proprietors, the plantation remained in the Middleton family until they sold it in 1794. The Oaks had been a “show” plantation for the Middletons—not their primary moneymaking estate, but rather a place to entertain. The visibility of its entrance on the road to Charleston and several published travelers' accounts bear out the conjecture that it was meant to be seen.

A plat of the property commissioned by Isaiah Moses in 1817 (page 16) shows the plantation to be 17 miles from Charleston, along the road and also alongside Goose Creek. The acreage included 328 acres of cleared land and 389 acres of woodland. Rice was cultivated on about 60 acres, with typical swamp irrigation techniques for water control. Dams along creeks that led into the rice-growing area ended in sluice gates that could be opened for controlled flooding to drown weeds.

A detailed description of the plantation appears in an ad (page 16) placed in the *Charleston Courier* by Isaiah and Rebecca's son L.J. Moses in an attempt to sell the Oaks in 1840.

The addition of a brickyard, mentioned in the ad, speaks to an effort to bring light industry to the plantation in the economically stagnant late-1830s. According to the 1830 Census, 35 slaves were in residence at the Oaks, with no whites present. That year's census lists Isaiah as a head of household in Charleston where he was in residence and also in Goose Creek. Presumably one of the

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

slaves or a tenant acted as overseer. Since the 1840 ad mentions “a prime gang of fifty Negroes,” Isaiah Moses presumably bought additional slaves in the intervening decade.

Despite these efforts, the plantation was not a profitable venture for Isaiah. In the 1820s, the Charleston area went into economic decline. Contributing factors included the end of the prosperous post-Revolutionary War economy and the start of regular steamship service between Europe and New York and Philadelphia, which changed trade patterns. The service diminished Charleston’s previously advantageous location along the Gulf Stream flowing from the West Indies up the Atlantic coast and eastward through the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. In addition, southern ports, especially New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama, had begun attracting more trade as the cotton crop moved west and dominated the agricultural economy.

Widespread economic depression in 1837 strained Isaiah’s income further. That year, although Isaiah Moses is alive, Rebecca Moses is named as proprietor of a drygoods business, a listing that appeared only twice. The business may have been hers alone, but more likely, she took over the family business, perhaps to keep creditors at bay, or maybe because Isaiah was aging. To tide them over through the tough time, Isaiah borrowed \$2,000 from the KKBE Congregation’s fund available for personal loans. The ad to sell



The original handle on this rusted metal plantation fork—likely of bone or wood—was replaced with a silver handle by Rebecca Moses’s granddaughter Rebecca Alexander, attesting to the special sentiment bestowed on items associated with owning a plantation.

the plantation in 1840 failed to produce a buyer, and when the plantation house burned later that year, Isaiah’s financial woes mounted. To repay the loan, the plantation was sold by a master of the court in 1841 for about \$4,000—\$2,000 less than the original purchase price.

Although the entire area had fallen on hard times and was quite deserted by 1875, the place remained a romantic draw despite its desolation (page 16). A descendant of Rebecca and Isaiah Moses, Adeline Moses Loeb, unaware that the property had passed out of the Moses family in 1841, captioned a photo “Ancestral Gateway, Isaiah Moses, 1850s.” The tendency to sentimentalize the family’s history was not unusual. In 1940, South Carolina artist Elizabeth O’Neill Verner painted an oil and pastel of the avenue of the Oaks (page 16).

Given Isaiah’s listing in the 1830 Census as resident in Charleston Neck,



Moses Moses, despite suffering from dementia, at some point in his life, made these silhouettes of



his sister Cecilia and himself. The images suggest mature adults.

the peninsula above Boundary Street, and not in Goose Creek where he owned the Oaks, it is not clear how much time, if any, the family spent at the plantation. Isaiah may have been largely an absentee owner. However, because Rebecca Moses's sterling candlesticks were dated 1813, the year Isaiah Moses bought the Oaks, I assume that they envisioned living there, at least a portion of the year; they may in fact have done so in some years. The Oaks and the candlesticks were both measures of having "arrived."

Nevertheless, the plantation was at some remove from Charleston; traveling almost 20 miles by carriage would have consumed the better part of a day. Given Isaiah's active interest in the *Esnoga*, or synagogue, in the Spanish-Portuguese tradition, it is likely that most of the family's religious, business and social life took place in Charleston.

Indeed, Isaiah Moses was actively involved in the Charleston Jewish community, where his early success as a grocer and shopkeeper no doubt enabled





*Cheval's Mausoleum Entrance Jacob Moses 1850<sup>o</sup>*



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

him to become a significant financial supporter and leader of the *Esnoga*, or synogogue. In 1820 when the KKBE Congregation adopted its constitution, Isaiah Moses served on the *Adjuncta*, or governing board.

From the Charleston city directories of the period we can catch glimpses of social history—and the history of the Moses family. The listings apparently were collected by the company printing the directory and appear not to be consistently inclusive. However, they are at least indicative of the population. Most listings are for businesses, but some are residential. In early 19th-century Charleston, residences were often located above businesses, although the family living above the business was not necessarily the one running the business.

Between 1800 and 1849, Isaiah Moses is listed in the city directories at various addresses, mostly on King Street. In 1819, he is listed as “Josiah Moses, Planter.” He later bought a building on King Street, which was probably used as a residence, but may have been used for a business or an investment—or some combination changing over time. There was one listing for Isaiah Moses on St. Philips Street. Rebecca Moses’s great-grandson H.A. Alexander wrote that his mother, Rebecca Ella Solomons (later Alexander), “was born in 1854 in the same house in the same bed in which her mother (Cecilia Moses, later Solomons) was born.” — namely, the house on St. Philips St. In any

event, the addresses listed were all within walking distance of the *Snogo*, as Rebecca referred to their place of worship. As a traditionally observant Jewish family, the men would have walked to services on the Sabbath and other holidays.

Rebecca stayed busy with her large and growing family. Her stamina for childbearing was remarkable: All twelve of her children were born in good health, and her own health apparently was not jeopardized. Rebecca’s children were born starting when she was 16 and Isaiah 36, her last child when she was 41 and Isaiah 61.

All of the Moses’s children lived to maturity, and all but one married. Moses, their fourth son and seventh child, suffered from dementia as an adult. In her daybook Rebecca refers to his living at the Columbia Insane Asylum from 1845, when he was 27, until his death 18 years later. He seemed to be the only child whose welfare she felt the need to provide for after her death, for she stipulated that if Moses were still alive when she died, she wanted her house to go for his care. In the event, Rebecca survived him by nine years: Moses died in 1863, at age 45.

### **The Daybook**

The daybook in which Rebecca made notes about Moses—as well as about other aspects of her life—is preserved today only as photostats of 19 pairs of facing pages (page 20). Because Rebecca wrote the original entries, and these were at the time the only known examples of her writing and expression, I made an effort to

decipher as much of the text as possible. The entries are often out of chronological order; the earliest was made in 1842, when Rebecca was 50, and the latest in 1863, when son Moses died.

Personal family references are infrequent and terse. The only sentiment expressed is affection, with words such as “beloved” or “my dearest” used with names of family members when they died. These few references to family members are moving, and the deaths of children and grandchildren are poignant.

Rebecca recorded transactions about her son Moses beginning in 1845. Moses traveled between Columbia and Charleston, in the care of a Doctor Geddings; a Captain Yates provided the passage, which Rebecca also records. When Doctor Brigham passed through Charleston in May 1848, he made a report to her on “the state of my dear son’s health.” However, Rebecca did not give any specifics on the doctor’s report. When Rebecca’s son Levy visited Moses in 1851, Moses recognized Levy and Levy’s daughter Sarah.

In 1852, Rebecca wrote of the visit of Dr. Aaron Lopez, nephew of Sally Lopez, who had adopted her after her mother’s death: “Dr. Aaron Lopez visited the Asylum,” Rebecca wrote, “& saw my dear son Moses who knew him at first sight yet the Doctor thought that his mind was entirely lost & thought that he was better situated there than at home.” Rebecca recorded Moses’s death simply:

“Died in Columbia SC April 21 1863 My Dear Son Moses Aged [left Blank] Buried in Columbia.” No evidence of his burial exists.

Deaths of her daughters’ children recorded in her daybook included those of Sarah, Cecilia, and Leonora. These brief entries reflect her anguish:

*Leonora Left Charleston on her way to New York on the 25 June 1851 went from their to Cincinnati where she had a son & daughter [unreadable] & where her dear Herman died on the 26th March 1853. She also Buried her son Moses In Cincinnati on the 24 September 1853 her Little Rosa was born on the 23 March 1853 10 hours before the Death of Herman*

Rebecca does not mention the cause of death of Leonora’s son Herman but a reference to the death of her son Jacob M. Rosenfeld, one year old, in 1859 was reported in the Savannah press; the cause was water-on-the-brain. Below Herman’s death she records the death, in 1854, of “My son Jacob, at age 44 years, 3 months 20 days, at my son Aaron’s house.” Below this she records the death of her husband Isaiah:

*Charleston 28 January 1857  
Died My Beloved Husband on Wednesday morning at 12 o’clock after an illness of 12 Days & was Buried on Thursday at 4 o’clock in the afternoon Age 85 in March the Day Before Purim*

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

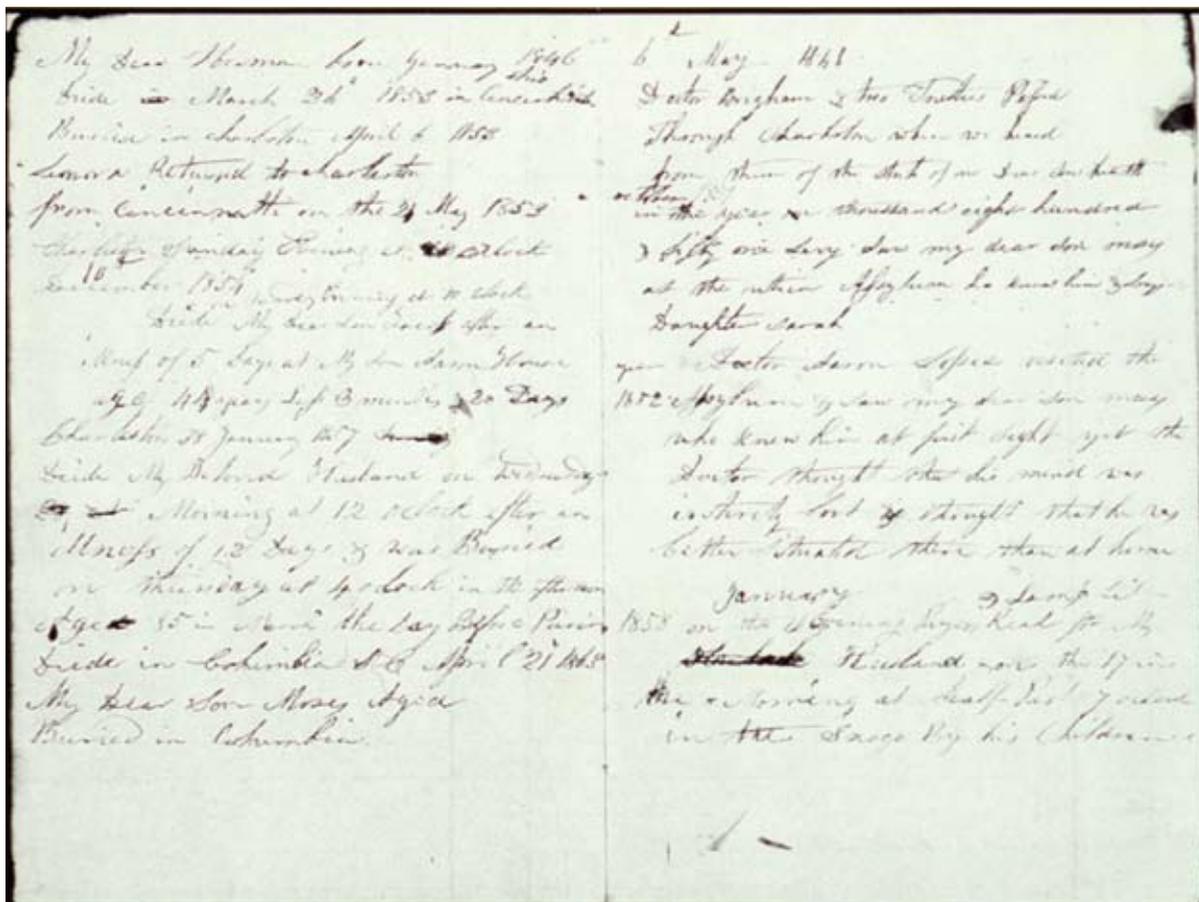
The final entry was the death of Rebecca and Isaiah's son Moses in 1863. On the facing page, beneath her report on Moses's health, she writes:

*1858 on the 16th January  
Evening Prayers Read and Lamp Lit for  
My Husband & on the 17 in  
The Morning at half Past 7 o'clock  
in the Snogo By his Children*

The entry refers to lighting a lamp and reciting *Kaddish*, the prayer for the

dead, for her husband on his *Yahrzeit*, the anniversary of his death. (Because the *Yahrzeit* date is calculated according to the Hebrew calendar, it does not coincide with the anniversary of his death according to the English calendar.)

The *Yahrzeit* ceremony constitutes another example of the family's following Sephardic rather than Ashkenazi customs: That is, the family went to *Snogo* to light a *Yahrzeit* candle, whereas most Ashkenazim light the candle at home.



Rebecca's daybook survives only as photostats of 19 pairs of facing pages. These examples of her handwriting and expression were very special when I came to them because for many years they were the only samples of her handwriting that I had; entries are often out of chronological order. The pages show Rebecca's notations about family travels—and some births and deaths, poignant in their brevity.

To understand Rebecca and Isaiah's family, both in the daybook and in this account, it is necessary to understand they had multiple connections among themselves and with other families in their close-knit community. As documented by genealogist Malcolm Stern and others, early American Jews frequently married within the same families for several generations. In Rebecca's family, as already noted, Rebecca's grandmother and a sister had married two brothers.

Connections to the Ottolengui family are described in Malcolm Stern's genealogical family tree: Rebecca's son Jacob Moses married Rinah J. Ottolengui; nine years later, after Rinah's death, he married her sister Sarah. Rebecca's son Aaron married another Ottolengui sister, Judith, and offspring from each of these marriages wed in the next generation.

The Alexanders are another family closely connected with the Moses family. The primary daybook entries that connect the Alexander family to Rebecca are those for the schooling of Joe Alexander, son of her daughter Sarah and Aaron Alexander. More entries in Rebecca's daybook concern Joe Alexander and his schooling expenses, than any other topic. These are recorded as debit and credit accounts with Joe's father. Rebecca paid for tuition, books, travel and pocket money, and clothes including shoes, boots, stockings,

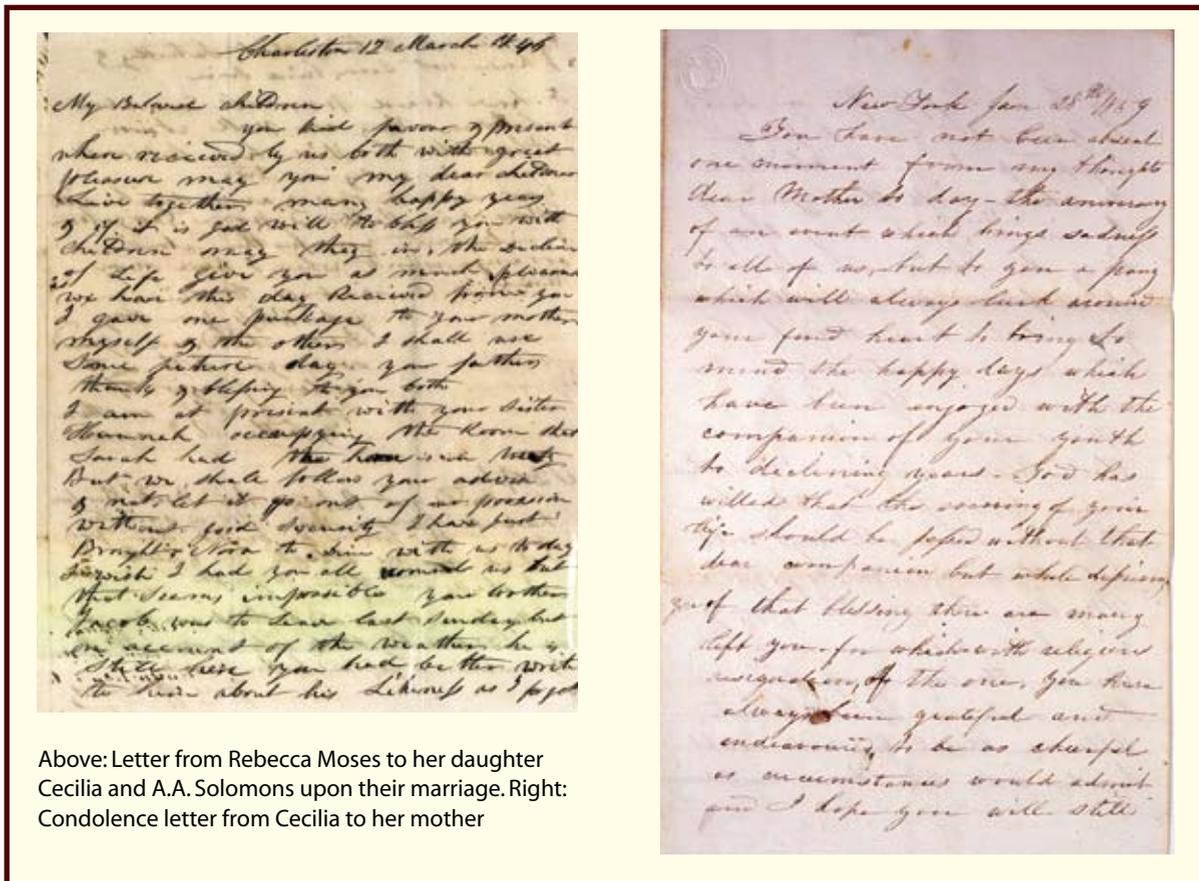
gaiters, handkerchiefs, cloth, summer pantaloons, and jackets. Books she bought for him included a history of England, a French reader, Olmstead philosophy, and anatomy. Fabrics and other items supplied, for others as well as for Joe, included long cloths for shirts, misiora cassemere, gingham, homespun and English long cloth, bonnets, bobbin lace, braid, and blankets. Of all the transactions recorded, the majority are dry goods.

A number of entries in the daybook for accounts with others include Rebecca and Isaiah's sons-in-law whom she generally referred to as "Mr.," consistent with the formal address of the time.

In addition to dry goods, transactions made on Rebecca's behalf by her sons or sons-in-law, and noted in the daybook include real estate property rental and collection of fees. After Rebecca moved to live with her daughter Cecilia and her husband Abraham Alexander Solomons, frequently referred to as A.A., in Savannah, she rented out her house on King Street and made notations accordingly in her daybook.

Another category of daybook entries records family travel. Rebecca lists a number of family trips or travels. However, I am unable to ascertain why she recorded some trips and not others as she was customarily unforthcoming with detail. Rebecca noted several visits to her daughters' homes. Daughter Leonora and her husband, Jacob Rosenfeld, lived for a time in Cincinnati, where Isaiah Moses's

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK



Above: Letter from Rebecca Moses to her daughter Cecilia and A.A. Solomons upon their marriage. Right: Condolence letter from Cecilia to her mother

sons by his first wife were instrumental in founding the early congregation Kahal Kadosh Bene Israel. The Rosenfelds later lived in Savannah, where Jacob was, for a time, rabbi at Congregation Mickve Israel—thanks in part to the efforts of Leonora’s brother-in-law, A. A. Solomons who was active in congregational politics. Rebecca’s daughter Sarah and Aaron Alexander lived in Atlanta.

Some of the family travel is noted in terse entries that only hint at larger stories, and make me wish I knew more. Of one extended trip Rebecca wrote only: “I paid a visit to Atlanta 22 June 1852 &

Left Savannah on the 27th October for home after spending two months there.” She gave no details of these four months away from home. She also made notes of her daughter Leonora’s travel to New York in 1851, and of her daughter Adeline’s trip to New York with her husband and children in 1858.

Similarly, Rebecca made a tantalizing reference regarding an account in 1860 that son Levy was handling for her: “Cash Paid to Columbia Asylum by Levy for me when I was in New York from money of mine.” Her travel to New York at that time may have been with daughter Cecilia

and Cecilia's husband A.A. Solomons, when A.A. went to meet with drug suppliers in New York during the Civil War. My guess is that A.A. did not want to leave his wife, and Cecilia did not want to leave her mother, at home in Georgia during the upheaval. Presumably while A.A. was doing business, Cecilia and Rebecca visited family, offspring from the Moses-Ottolengui alliances.

Levy later lived in New York, and once, in 1866, encouraged his mother to take a steamer to come visit him. "The San Salvador is a good steamer and you could be made comfortable in her—I know the purser Mr. Cambridge and if you mention my name as your son, you will be well cared for."

Another cryptic entry that leaves us longing for more is the following:

*1846 March 18 Abraham came home from Isaac & Returned back in November.*

*Abraham left New York in the Steam Ship Ohio on the 14 of February 1850 for California. Dated 10 March, received a letter Dated [unreadable] 10 March from Abraham on the 12 April Stating that he was to leave in the bark John L Gardener for Sanfrancisco.*

We can infer that Abraham, her then 22-year-old and second-to- youngest son, took the steamship from New York to Panama, crossed the isthmus, probably by horse-drawn carriage. The letter dated

10 March would have been sent when he reached the Pacific. But Rebecca makes no comment about his destination—San Francisco—where the madness of the Gold Rush had begun in 1849. She also does not elaborate on the difference in destinations: in 1846, up the Atlantic Seaboard, and in 1849, the longer journey seeking a livelihood in California.

### **Politics of Religion**

Although Isaiah Moses had come from Germany, he was a strong proponent of the traditional Sephardic ritual, and he opposed the reforms, such as shortening the service, generally supported by the German Jews of the congregation. The same aspirations that motivated fitting into the larger white community were probably at work in Isaiah's staunch support of the Sephardic tradition in South Carolina. At the time, the Sephardic community—whose traditions were based on Sephardic traditions of Western Europe—was considered a higher-class of society than Ashekenazi, who were identified with more recent (less refined) immigrants.

Several of Rebecca's children were affiliated with and active in their respective congregations and generally remained aligned with Isaiah in supporting a traditional congregation. Such support was necessary after a fire in 1838 burned the synagogue building of the KKBE congregation. When the house of worship was re-built, an organ was installed in

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

the new temple, an innovation of the new reform service. Isaiah and other traditionalists sued in court to restore the Sephardic *minhag*, or order of service. Upon losing the suit after several years when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene, the traditionalists broke away to start a new congregation, Shearit Israel. Isaiah relinquished his position on the KKBE *Adjuncta*, or board, and joined the board of the new Shearit Israel.

At the new Shearit Israel, Jacob Rosenfeld, husband of Rebecca and Isaiah's daughter Leonora, became rabbi. Leonora Rosenfeld taught alongside her husband. Rebecca's daughter Sarah also taught religious and secular subjects to her children and others at her home in Atlanta.

Rebecca was no doubt traditionally observant, but a story revealing her practical side is charmingly recounted by her granddaughter Hannah Marie Moses in a letter dated January 31, 1927, to her cousin Harry A. Alexander. In the letter Hannah Marie also pokes fun at Isaiah Moses's piety:

*Once when he was Vice President of the Synagogue, he had indigestion, couldn't keep anything on his breadbasket, so the doctor told him to eat raw oysters—Great Mercy! What! Never! Against all Jewish law. No shell fish. Here our wonderful Grandma spoke up. She said, "take them as medicine, your health requires it to be done." Well in order not to set a wicked example to his family, he went out to the furthest corner of the Oaks with a*

*trusted servant to open the oysters and began to eat the oysters — but alas! At that very corner just over the fence was a lot belonging to the Synagogue property. Just at that time two members came out to inspect it. What did they behold? Mr. Isaiah Moses, that pillar of the Synagogue, eating oysters!!! He was ordered to face the powers of the Congregation, but here again our Grandma came to the front.. She brought the Doctor. He was absolved.*

This story is the most specific evidence we have of Rebecca's personality, a practical woman. Hannah Marie's letters also give us characterizations of Isaiah as a "kicker" and a "cusser" — the only specific indications we have of his personality.

### **R.I. Moses, Businesswoman**

Although Rebecca's daybook is less revealing of such personality quirks, it provides an account of her business activities. In addition to the Charleston Directory listing for 1837-1838 ("Moses, R.I., dry goods" 248 King Street), the daybook entries demonstrate that Rebecca functioned as shopkeeper over a period from 1846 to 1863—even though the accounts recorded were those with her children. Dry goods were a popular business with women. In several pages of her daybook, her practical approach is revealed in detailed records on various transactions.

Rebecca actively worked alongside Isaiah, probably from the beginning of her marriage, but especially after Isaiah

sold the plantation. Isaiah's business involvements included an interest in an auction house, owned by Raphael Moses (no relation). When Isaiah bought the Oaks, his focus shifted there, and once he sold it, he became intensely involved in congregational politics.

I imagine Rebecca, the practical woman, attending to practical details of running a store, and a plantation, as the impatient Isaiah moved his attention elsewhere. When Isaiah became intensely involved in congregational politics, Rebecca played a larger role in managing the family's finances. Indeed, she may have run any family business herself, although a married woman could not generally do business legally on her own behalf unless granted the status of a "sole trader" by her husband. There is no evidence that Rebecca was ever made a sole trader, although her daughter Hannah later was.

Rebecca kept track of transactions involving slaves after Isaiah sold the plantation and focused on congregational politics. (Rebecca, according to the custom of the day, used the term "servants" in her daybook to refer to slaves.) She commissioned her son Levy and sons-in-law Adolph J. Brady and A.H. Abrahams to manage some of these transactions. For example, one of the slaves, John, was put in the charge of a son-in-law, probably A.J. Brady, who acted as Rebecca's agent. One entry notes that John was "sold in Atlanta for

detected stealing cotton and punished by law."

Other entries, in different years, note that Rachael, David, and Sampenny were sold for running away. The birthplace, and place of employment, and distance from home when running away are not recorded, nor of course the impetus to run away—whether to visit family, or escape an especially harsh situation, or some other reason.

Elsewhere, Rebecca writes of purchasing neck badges required by law. Here "neck" is a geographic designation of the area of the Charleston peninsula above Calhoun Street, not a badge to be worn around the neck. "Putting missa out" for clothes & food with a Mrs. John Davis refers to the common practice of leasing or hiring out slaves, as an economic proposition.

Rebecca also kept track, to some extent, of the children of the slaves. The page on which she lists deaths of babies born to slaves is shocking to come across—a page one would like to ignore (page 21). Although Rebecca did not list all the live births to slave women, she did list two cases in which the child was to be given to one of her own daughters. These entries followed the form: "1847... August 29 Nancy Girl Betsy Servant Leonora." I interpret this to mean, "On August 29, 1847, the slave Nancy gave birth to a baby girl, Betsy, that Rebecca gave Betsy to her daughter Leonora." This would be consistent with typical practice

OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

New York 20<sup>th</sup> August 1868

My dear Mother

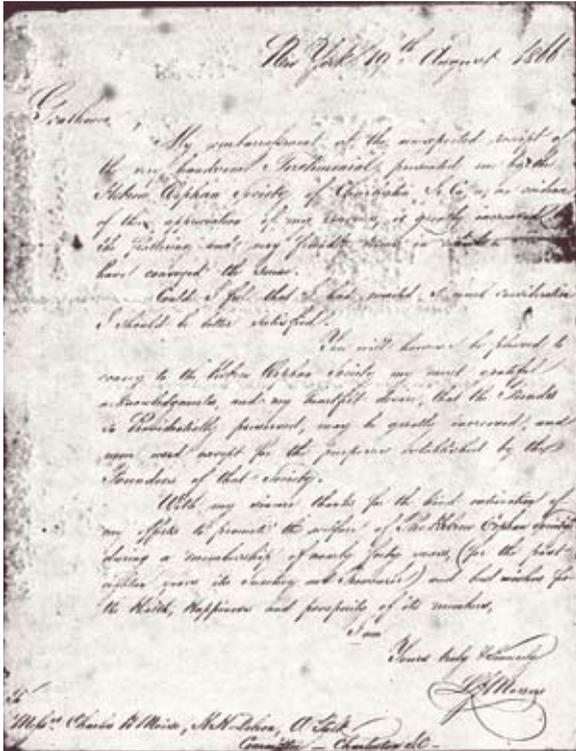
I am without any letter from you since the one sent by Mr. Brady and which was duly acknowledged by me -

You will doubtless be pleased to hear that I have received a very handsome silver Pitcher from the Hebrew Orphan Society which was forwarded to me by Charles H. Moise, A. Falk & W. H. Nelson a committee appointed for that purpose with a very flattering letter written upon parchment bound with ribbon &c. which I shall have framed - This was sent as evidence of the appreciation of my services and care taken of the funds of the Society this year - Now if you will come here, I will use it in honor of yourself, and you shall have a silver goblet to drink out of - I now have two silver Pitchers and two goblets but hope to get another pitcher and goblet to enable me to give them to my three daughters -

I dare say Adeline Brady expects me to inform her how her husband behaves, since he has been here, well you can tell her that he does not drink or play cards any more than he used to in Savannah - In fact I do think that if no cards were to be played Mr. B. would not play at all, and he only plays now because he likes Mr. Polo and Mrs. Parker and is of too obliging a disposition to decline playing when asked to do so -

How is Edwin Brady getting along? what school does he go to? I hope he does well -

I suppose Ida takes good care of her brother Edwin and teaches him his musical lessons - Matilda has enough to do to take care of her brother Isaac to give attention to Edwin - There was an awful



Page 26: Letter from Rebecca and Isaiah's eldest son, Levy J. (L.J.) Moses to his mother (original), mentioning a silver pitcher given to him by the Hebrew Orphan Society. (A relative, Abraham Isaacks, Jr., had been a founding member of the society; L.J.'s father, Isaiah, also joined.) L.J., a bookkeeper, and Secretary of the Society before and after the Civil War, had taken on the responsibility of protecting the Society's funds during the war. He obviously thought it was the right thing to



do, appreciated the Society's gratitude and recognition, and wanted to share that with his mother. Above left: Letter from L.J. Moses to the Hebrew Orphan Society (copy). Above right: The goblet inscribed *L.J. Moses, 1855*.

in South Carolina. Gifts to daughters, as provided in marriage settlements, were typically slaves and other “moveable property” and gifts to sons were typically land.

As might be expected, Rebecca supported the Southern cause during the Civil War. Her daughter Sarah and Sarah's husband, Aaron Alexander, on the other hand, staunchly supported the Union. Aaron and Sarah had moved from

Charleston, to Mississippi, to Atlanta, to Philadelphia, and then to Augusta, Georgia, where they spent the war years. After the war, Sarah and Aaron moved back to Atlanta, where Aaron became financially successful. There are no further family traditions, nor data on the travels of Sarah and Aaron Alexander. The only thing we surmise is that the family moved about in search of a livelihood. One snippet about Sarah Moses Alexander was

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

quoted by Harry Alexander: "After the ugly little night battle on the Columbus bridge, April 16, 1865, when friends ran to her to compliment her on some conspicuous act of courage of her son Julius M., she replied: "Pity it was not done in a better cause.

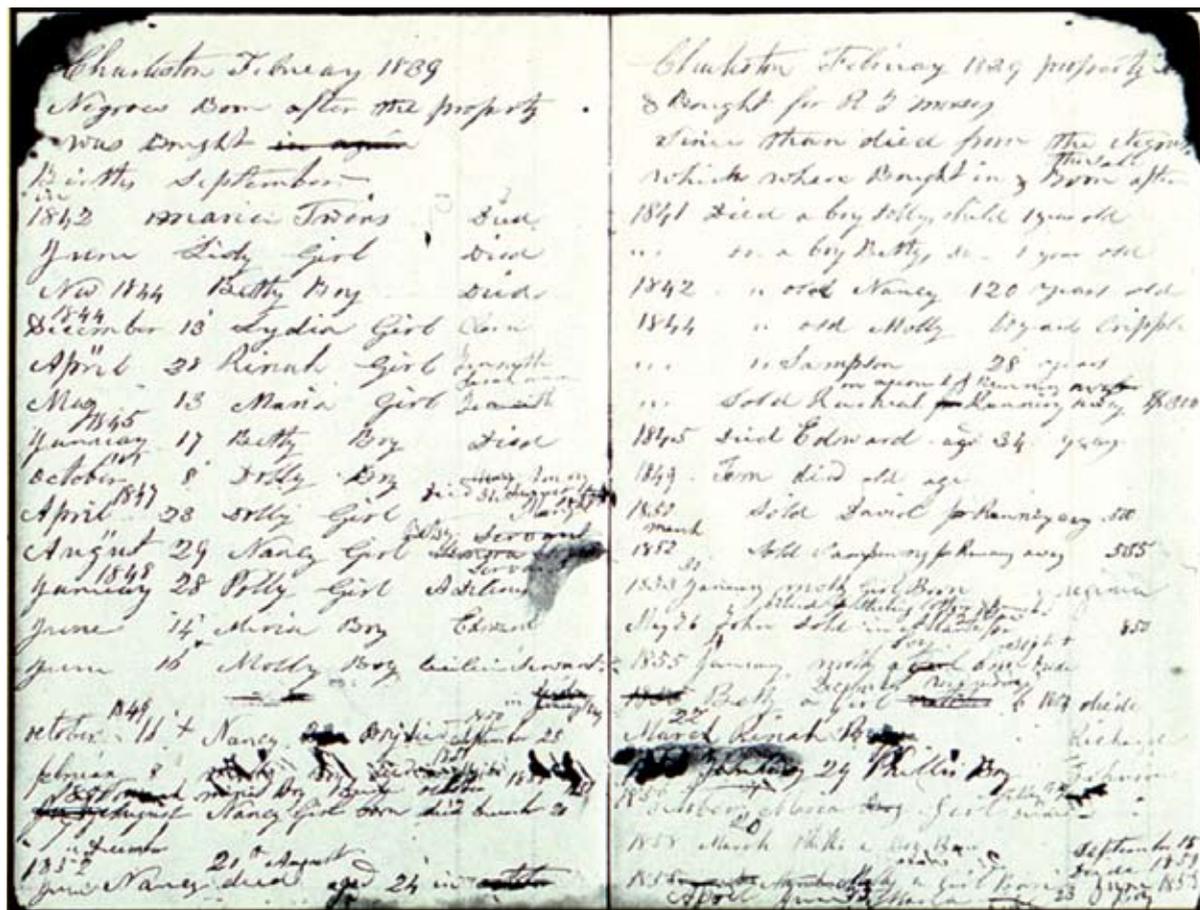
In the tradition of a number of Charleston-born Jews of the period, both Aaron and Sarah were buried in the old Comings Street cemetery in Charleston,

even though they had died in Atlanta.

By the time of the Civil War, Isaiah Moses had died, and the widowed Rebecca was living in Savannah with daughter Cecilia and her husband A. A. Solomons. A.A.'s and Cecilia's son Joe served as a doctor for the Confederates and is featured in the story of Charlotte Joseph.

When Sherman marched through Savannah, he billeted in Cecilia and A.A. Solomons' house. The house had a prime

Pages from Rebecca Isaiah Moses's Daybook that refer to the children of slaves include some details about her expected disposition of the slaves as property—as gifts to a specified daughter. The practice of giving slaves ("moveable property") to daughters and land to sons was common in South Carolina at the time. Rebecca lists transactions involving slaves, and also births and deaths of babies born to slave women.



downtown location, overlooking Pulaski Square. From her upstairs bedroom, Rebecca could hear the street noise below and follow what was happening. I imagine her a proud woman, like many Southerners, enduring the humiliation of having the Union Army living under her roof.

A family story relates that in 1865, Rebecca heard a newsboy outside her bedroom window shouting the news that Lee had surrendered. She suffered a stroke.

Rebecca lived on another seven years and died in 1872, when she was 80 years old. She is buried next to Isaiah at the Comings Street Cemetery in Charleston.