

350TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESETTLEMENT OF JEWS IN BRITAIN



27 CM FINE BONE CHINA PLATE

JEWS IN BRITAIN

There had been Jewish presence in Britain since the time of William the Conqueror, but the Jews were expelled by Edward I in 1290.

In 1655 Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam joined a small community of Spanish and Portuguese Conversos who had settled in London, and on October 31 submitted a petition to the Council of State asking for the Jews to be allowed to return to the British Isles.

Although this petition received no official response, Oliver Cromwell's encouragement, and the tacit approval of the Council of State, allowed the Conversos of England to practice their faith openly from 1656. Sephardi Jews began immigrating to England from Holland, Spain and Portugal, and opened a synagogue in the upper storey of a house in Creechurch Lane in 1657. In 1664, Charles II issued a formal written promise of protection, followed by further royal declarations in 1674 and 1685.

Ashkenazi Jews began immigrating from Germany, and started a synagogue in 1690. In 1698 the Act for Suppressing Blasphemy officially allowed the practice of Judaism. Today the Jews in Britain number some 300,000.

BEVIS MARKS SYNAGOGUE

In 1701, at Bevis Marks in the City of London, the first purpose-built synagogue in Britain after the resettlement was consecrated (followed in 1722 by the Ashkenazi “Great Synagogue” at Duke’s Place, sadly no longer standing).

Discreetly tucked away off the main thoroughfare, the synagogue is modeled on the Sephardi synagogue of Amsterdam, but with many beautiful features of its own, including a breathtaking Renaissance-style Ark.

The synagogue’s most famous member was Sir Moses Montefiore, whose seat is today permanently cordoned off.

In 1950 the synagogue was designated a Grade I listed monument of outstanding national importance. As the oldest surviving synagogue in Britain, and still in regular use, it has become a symbol for Anglo-Jewry. On Friday 13 November 1998, Lord Levene of Portsoken became the 8th Jewish Lord Mayor of London. An Ashkenazi Jew by birth, Lord Levene's first public act was to walk, with a retinue, from his official residence (the Mansion House) to Bevis Marks Synagogue, for the Sabbath Eve service.

On 13 June 2006 a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication was held at Bevis Marks to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the Resettlement of the Jews in Britain.

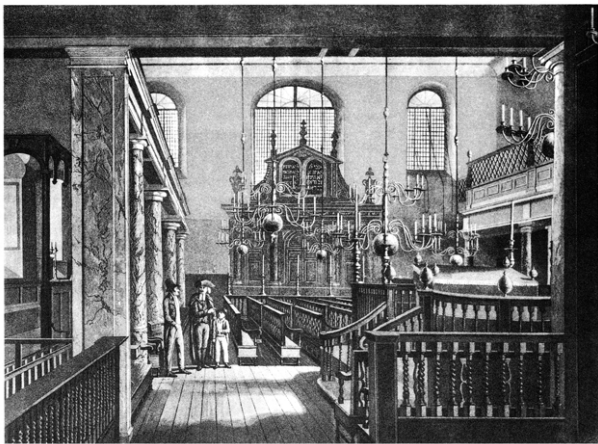
ISAAC MENDES BELISARIO

Isaac Mendez Belisario (c. 1795–1849) was an etcher and painter, apparently trained in London. He was the son of a prosperous merchant, and probably the grandson of Rabbi Ishac Mendes Belisario (1717-1791), who headed the Talmud Torah of the *Shaar Hashamayim* Community.

His water-colour painting of the interior of Bevis Marks synagogue was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815. It was reproduced as an engraving in 1812, and again (nearly 100 years later) as a mezzotint, on the invitation to the 200th Anniversary of the synagogue, in 1901. It now appears on the plate commemorating 350 years of the *Kahal*.

Among Belisario's other commissions was a portrait of the famous actress Ellen Kean, in 1832.

In 1834 Belisario emigrated to Kingston, Jamaica, where he worked as a landscape and portrait painter. He gained national attention with a set of twelve European-style lithographs entitled "Sketches of Character in Illustration of the Habits, Occupation and Costume of the Negro Population in the Island of Jamaica." Seven of these pictures were issued by the Jamaican Post Office as



Christmas stamp sets in 1975 and 1976.

Today, therefore, Belisario is remembered chiefly for two widely diverse types of image: a set of exuberant and colourful "Creole Negroes" on the one hand, and an understated English synagogue on the other.

Jonathan Cohen



Arms of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation
Kahal Kadosh Shaar Hashamayim
London

The design on this plate is reproduced in Cobalt Blue, which is fired at more than 1000°C, well over 200° hotter than the on-glaze colours used for normal domestic tableware.

Cobalt blue is unique in china decoration, in that the beautiful blue shade is produced by the absorption of the Cobalt Oxide into the underlying clear glaze of the plate during firing ("in-glaze"), rather than remaining above it.

Yonaty Design

Tel: (+972) 08-994-4095 | yonaty@netvision.net.il