

Lopez da Fonseca

Since they are not forebears of Joshua Piza or of his wives, we have really no reason for including notes about the Lopez da Fonseca family in this work. But we have so often encountered references to this old Portuguese name, variously known as *Lopez da Fonseca*, *Lopez de Fonseca*, *Lopez Fonseca* and frequently just *Lopez*, that we imagine it will be a matter of family interest. There is a tradition that all the *Eliases* and *Esthers* were to call themselves simply *Lopez* after a distinguished pair of (Maternal?) ancestors of that name. At any rate, we know that there was an *Eliau Lopez* who after being Haham at Amsterdam, went in 1675 to Barbados to lead the Jewish community there; and later, in 1690 served in Curaçao. There are also *Fonsecas* galore, but we do not know that we have any claim to them; one of the very first names found in the annals of the Netherlands West Indies is that of *Jacob Nunes da Fonseca*, also known as *David Nassi*, a merchant of Curaçao, who obtained a grant of land in 1652 from the Dutch West India Company to found a Jewish colony on the island.

In Lima, Peru, in 1639, there lived a wealthy Marano merchant, *Diego Lopez da Fonseca*. It was said that he sold goods at half price to anyone who, on entering his shop, trod on a certain stone of the threshold of which he had buried a crucifix. He was burned to death for judaizing.

In 1690, *Hazan David Raphael Lopez da Fonseca* laid the cornerstone of the Mikve Israel congregation in Curaçao. He was their first minister and died in 1707.

The death of his brother, *Reverend Abraham Haim Lopez da Fonseca* is recorded on a tombstone of 1723.

In Bayonne, France, *Yshac Hiskiahu Lopez de Fonseca* is mentioned as a friend of David Meldola. Meldola lived 1685-1748.

From 1765-1817, *Jacob Lopez da Fonseca*, who studied in Amsterdam, officiated as Rabbi to the Mikve Israel congregation. The day after his Golden Jubilee he fell ill, and he died two years later.

Moses Lopez da Fonseca, from Curaçao, was one of the early Rabbis of the Shearith Israel congregation in New York. He served there from 1728 to 1736. His annual salary was "£50, wood and matzoths."

Esther Lopez, the sister of Rebecca and Leah, the two Lopez FONSECAS who married the brothers Moses and Judah Piza, was known in St. Thomas as *Ashee* and was a notably pious woman. So holy was she considered, that during a season of terrifying earthquakes, her neighbors for three weeks kept her praying for safety, without surcease. On the occasion, Rabbi Chumaceiro wrote out for her a cabalistic talisman, still in the family.

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