## CONTENTS

*List of Figures*  xi  
*Acknowledgments*  xiii  
*Author’s Note*  xvii

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Genesis</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Exodus</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Revolution</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  New York</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Constitutions</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Statesmanship</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Church and State</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Law and Politics</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Abbreviations*  193  
*Notes*  197  
*Index*  247
ON A TINY ISLAND at the edge of the West Indies, Alexander Hamilton began an unlikely journey. He overcame the perils of orphanhood and decamped from the tropics as a teenager to become a vital figure in the birth of the United States. From the battlefield and the bank to the courtroom and the cabinet, Hamilton shaped the republic to a degree that few others could boast. The remarkable events of his American years have long intrigued scholars and, more recently, theater audiences. While Hamilton biographers are exhaustive in their study of his adulthood, research into his obscure upbringing remains scarce. Yet his Caribbean past is not merely an exotic footnote to the high drama of his American life. Hamilton, like all people, was a product of his roots, and so his West Indian youth matters—not least because he was probably born and raised a Jew.

For more than two centuries, the scant treatment of Hamilton’s boyhood has proceeded from a default assumption that he and his relatives were cradle-to-grave Christians. That assumption warps how historians approach his Caribbean background and leads to a double error. For one, they make a series of claims about Hamilton’s origins that comport with the premise of his Christian identity but have little grounding in evidence. Moreover, archival sources that should prompt scholars to question this premise are mistakenly interpreted so as to preserve the presumption that he was Christian. By subjecting untested claims to scrutiny and reckoning anew with the historical record, this book concludes that Hamilton, in all likelihood, grew up as a member of the Jewish people.
To be sure, Hamilton did not maintain any identity as a Jew in America. Still, his early engagement with Judaism is hardly just a trivial curiosity. It provides critical context for understanding why the adult Hamilton, more than any other founding father, was connected to Jews and fond of their faith.¹ Many founders commended Jewry and Judaism in one breath only to condemn them in the next. In contrast, Hamilton’s favorable relationships with Jews and reverential sentiments about the Jewish religion stand unblemished by bias.

The Hamiltonian-Jewish alliance, in turn, opens a unique window onto the early American republic writ large. A paradox vexed the nation from its inception. The United States was conceived in the name of equality yet defined by hereditary hierarchy—free over slave, white over Native, propertied over landless, man over woman, Christian over Jew. American Jewry challenged the country to confront this paradox directly. Having spilled blood and spent treasure in service of the Revolution, Jews began advocating for a status that Europe denied them for centuries and the Declaration of Independence championed: equality.

The rightful role of Jewry became a subject of fierce debate among Americans of the era. Many Gentiles had long resented Jewish participation in commerce and now balked at the prospect of full-fledged Jewish involvement in civic life. They responded with consternation as Jews grasped for access to the courthouse, ballot box, and elected office. That the Jewish population was miniscule—about one-tenth of a percent—yet prompted such outsized angst speaks to the depth of contemporary antisemitism. Against these reactionary forces, Alexander Hamilton sought an economic and legal order where his Jewish compatriots would stand equal to their Christian neighbors.

The successes Hamilton achieved to that end illustrate the democratic possibilities of the new nation. Just the same, the obstacles he encountered mark the limitations of an America still rife with inherited inequality. The following chapters are as much about the Jewish world of the early republic as they are about Hamilton—and it is the relationship between the two that shows us afresh how the aftermath of the Revolution was neither an undeviating march toward modern equality nor a pure perpetuation of traditional hierarchy. We instead find a young
Any claim concerning Hamilton’s Jewishness must begin with his mother, Rachel, given the matrilineal nature of Jewish identity. She was unquestionably from a Christian family in the British Caribbean. Rachel wedded a colonist in the Danish West Indies named Johan Levine. Although numerous scholars assume he was not Jewish, considerable evidence suggests otherwise, including the unambiguous declaration from Hamilton’s own grandson that Johan was a “rich Danish Jew.”

There are compelling reasons to think Rachel converted to Judaism for marriage. When the couple had a son, Peter, they abstained from the standard Christian practice of infant baptism. Peter Levine would later be baptized as an adult under circumstances that indicate he was converting to Christianity and thus not a Christian in childhood. Hamilton scholars do not entertain the possibility that Peter had been Jewish and so remain baffled by his adult baptism.

Rachel fled her marriage and bore Alexander out of wedlock to a Christian, yet she chose to enroll Alexander in a Jewish school. His Jewish education is a well-established fact. Some biographers presume that Alexander attended a Jewish school because his illegitimacy must have precluded him from church schooling. Yet the church records do not support the supposition that out-of-wedlock birth posed an obstacle to church membership. And a host of communal, theological, and political factors give us ample cause to believe that the Jewish school would have accepted Alexander only if the local Jewish community considered him one of its own.

His matriculation at the Jewish school also stands as the best evidence that Rachel had earlier converted to Judaism. Because Jewish identity passes through the mother, any recognition by the Jewish school of Alexander as a coreligionist means that it necessarily would have regarded Rachel in the same light. If we assume that she had no prior identity as a Jew, it is hard to make sense of why Rachel would, or
how she even could, choose to arrange a Jewish education for her son. Allow for the possibility of her Jewish identity, however, and such difficulties disappear. Two other long-known details about Rachel, which Hamilton biographers mention but treat with no particular significance, harmonize with the notion that she was Jewish. Rachel kept the surname “Levine” long after she severed ties to Johan—until her death, in fact. And upon her passing she was not buried in a church cemetery.

Hamilton was only thirteen when his mother succumbed to a fatal illness, and he stayed in the Caribbean until the age of eighteen. A recently unearthed legal case from those intervening years makes plain that he presented himself as Christian at seventeen—but it also suggests that his affiliation with Christianity had not been lifelong. When assessed for his competency to swear on the Bible as a witness, Hamilton described himself as Anglican. Yet the court prevented him from giving sworn testimony after Hamilton conceded that he had never before received communion. His failure to have participated in the sacrament of communion would be an oddity if he were raised Anglican but is far more explicable if he were a latecomer to the Christian faith.

Tellingly, Hamilton in his American years was both willing and able to conceal parts of his West Indian background. Newly uncovered records reveal that he fabricated his year of birth after leaving the islands. Hamilton maintained this myth for the duration of his adulthood without any Caribbean contemporary ever exposing him, rendering it all the more plausible that he could obscure a Jewish heritage with similar success.

The theory that Alexander Hamilton probably had a Jewish past may seem, on its face, provocative. But were the foregoing facts presented about the early life and family history of any ordinary Caribbean colonist rather than an American founder, it would be uncontentious to claim that the balance of evidence points to his status as a Jew. And if indeed the evidence of Hamilton’s Jewish identity is not controversial, but the idea of it remains so, then perhaps the question of Jewish belonging in the United States is as fraught in our time as it was in his own.
This inquiry requires important caveats. Jewish identity has many dimensions—religious, cultural, legal, communal, and ethnic, among others. Often these dimensions overlap for a given individual; sometimes they conflict. The eighteenth-century Atlantic world featured a diverse array of people who were Jewish in some senses and not others, from crypto-Jews to Afro-Caribbean Jews to Gentiles who converted for marriage. An investigation into whether Hamilton was Jewish cannot, therefore, force him into either of two categories: Jew or non-Jew. It must instead center on the likelihood that he had a Jewish identity in any number of the term’s multiple meanings for any period of his life.

Furthermore, the process of recreating the personal history of an inconspicuous adult from the West Indies of that time period is an admittedly thorny enterprise, much more so a child. Hurricanes and fires have degraded the historical record. Many of the documents that do survive have been partially eaten by termites. We are left with remnants of individual lives, scraps of evidence that must be read within the context of what is known about the region and era. A great deal of what might be said about most aspects of Hamilton’s upbringing and kin are matters of probabilities rather than certainties. The case for his Jewish identity is no different.

If Hamilton were likely Jewish, then the question arises of how such a significant feature about a historical icon escaped notice for so long. It is, in fact, unsurprising that a principal part of his boyhood could have evaded his numerous biographers. After all, the adult Hamilton refrained from discussion of his youth with few exceptions. He was notoriously outspoken—often to a fault—about every vital matter in his American life, making his self-censorship around his Caribbean origins especially striking. Undoubtedly, Hamilton’s illegitimate birth was a topic he preferred to avoid.3 And the United States suffered from antisemitic biases; for a statesman whose acceptance into the highest echelons of national politics required at least a nominal pretense to a Christian identity, keeping quiet about any Jewish roots would have been highly prudent.
Hamilton scholars have largely followed the lead of their subject in glossing over his beginnings. Their interests lie in the spectacle of his American years. Excavating the details of Hamilton's West Indian past is not only a peripheral but relatively recent undertaking. Even a fact as basic as his mother’s name remained unknown to historians until the twentieth century. It should come as little wonder, then, that his religious upbringing is an underdeveloped field of study.

What’s more, materials pertaining to Hamilton’s origins are much less accessible, both linguistically and geographically, than those concerning his adulthood. The latter sources are overwhelmingly in English and either available in published form or conveniently located in archives in the United States. By contrast, documents germane to his Caribbean background appear in a variety of languages—Danish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and German—and are scattered across West Indian islands as well as the European countries that colonized them. The arduous task of reconstructing Hamilton’s elusive childhood is hardly worth the effort for his typical biographer whose native tongue is English and whose attention focuses on topics like the Federalist Papers or the Treasury Department.

When historians do write about Hamilton’s youth and family of origin, they usually proceed in cursory fashion and recycle untested claims from other scholars. Many of these claims, which take as an article of faith the Christian identities of Hamilton and his relatives, do not withstand scrutiny. And so it is a litany of factors—Hamilton’s secrecy, biographers’ interests, lingual barriers, remote sources, and faulty assumptions—that have all coalesced to inadvertently obscure important facets of his past.

The adult Hamilton never presented himself as Jewish. Nor is there evidence that he covertly practiced Judaism in his maturity. We have, moreover, no indication that upon reaching America he divulged to anyone a prior identity as a Jew. Yet his links to Jewry did not end with his Caribbean boyhood.
Hamilton is best remembered for his financial wizardry, and Jews were pivotal players in his bid to turn the United States into a banking and commercial power. He also served as a distinguished lawyer in New York City, where he represented Jewish citizens in the courts. And at his alma mater, Columbia, Hamilton helped spearhead reforms that were friendly to Jews. He proved instrumental in placing the first Jew on the college board, abolishing mandatory forms of Christian worship for undergraduates, and repealing a religious test that had disqualified Jews and other non-Anglicans from the Columbia presidency.

Keenly aware of the recurrent persecution that Jews suffered, Hamilton viewed their survival since antiquity as beyond remarkable—God’s hand was surely at work. He marveled that the “progress of the Jews . . . from their earliest history to the present time has been and is entirely out of the ordinary course of human affairs. Is it not then a fair conclusion that the cause also is an extraordinary one—in other words, that it is the effect of some great providential plan?” Perhaps he saw some divine intervention at play in his own improbable rise from Caribbean obscurity to American founder.

Hamilton well understood that the historical train of abuses against Jews continued in the United States. After all, many of his adversaries weaponized antisemitism against his various endeavors throughout his career. During the ratification debates over the U.S. Constitution, Hamilton ranked among its premier defenders while a number of his antagonists denounced the Constitution because it would open federal office to Jewish candidates. The sweeping economic programs that he then advanced as treasury secretary were repeatedly maligned as nefarious plots to benefit Jews. And in a high-profile trial, Hamilton’s Jewish witnesses in court were accused of dishonesty owing to an invidious myth that their religion encouraged them to lie under oath. That the forces of anti-Jewish bigotry assailed Hamilton’s agenda so frequently is itself noteworthy testament to his alliance with Jewry. Arguably no other self-professed Christian in the early republic confronted more antisemitism.

Despite this fraught environment, Hamilton never wavered in his affection for the people and faith of Judaism. Indeed, the most impassioned
denunciation of antisemitism in the annals of any founder came from Hamilton amid the closing arguments of the aforementioned trial. After opposing counsel impugned his Jewish witnesses, Hamilton responded by exalting Jews as the Chosen People: “Has he forgotten, what this race once were, when, under the immediate government of God himself, they were selected as the witnesses of his miracles, and charged with the spirit of prophecy?” Hamilton then alluded to the Roman conquest of the Holy Land and resulting diaspora for Jews throughout the Roman Empire. He recounted how the Jewish people fractured into “remnants of scattered tribes . . . the degraded, persecuted, reviled subjects of Rome, in all her resistless power, and pride, and pagan pomp.” The Jews were rendered “an isolated, tributary, friendless people.” Hamilton would not abide his own legal system perpetuating this age-old animosity. By his lights, the Judaism of his witnesses was not a stigma to be borne but a religion to be honored. “Were not the witnesses of that pure and holy, happy and Heaven-approved faith?” he asked rhetorically. Invoking the allegorical figure Lady Justice, Hamilton declared that she protected Jews the same as she did all others: “Be the injured party . . . Jew, or Gentile, or Christian, or Pagan, Foreign or Native, she clothes him with her mantle, in whose presence all differences of faiths or births, of passions or of prejudices—all are called to acknowledge and revere her supremacy.” Here was a giant of the early republic demanding that Jews, the downtrodden of Europe for centuries, stand equal to Gentiles in an American courtroom. Hamilton’s contemporaries remarked that no other trial in his illustrious legal career elicited from him a more emotional performance. Plainly, the case touched something deeply personal within him.

Hamilton’s affinity for Jewry undermines the conventional depiction of him, advanced first by rivals and then by scholars, as an aspiring aristocrat with a measure of disdain for those on the periphery. True, he was no populist firebrand. But neither does Hamilton deserve condemnation as an elitist. To reflexively dismiss him as a lackey of the moneyed classes is to overlook how the urban marketplace was more meritocratic than other realms of American life. An enterprising Jew—all too often closed off from the world of law, politics, and colleges—could far more
readily access the commercial and financial spheres that Hamilton invigorated. And while many Jewish merchants and brokers in Hamilton’s orbit did enjoy a degree of economic security, they were hardly invulnerable to antisemitism. His ties to a Jewish community that was subjected to cultural and legal discrimination call into question the antidemocratic caricature that his foes imagined him to be. It is not without irony that other founding fathers, despite sometimes peddling prejudice against Jews, were far less likely than Hamilton to have charges of elitism leveled against them in their day and afterward.

By fighting for an America where Jew and Gentile would partake alike in civic and economic affairs, Hamilton began to make real the principle of equality in whose name the Revolution had been waged. But the antisemitic resistance that he faced underscores the limits of a hierarchical society still marred by religious intolerance. The experience of American Jewry is certainly not the only one by which to measure the feats and failures of the founding era. Nevertheless, the Hamiltonian-Jewish connections offer us an enriched perspective on the early republic, one that suggests the egalitarian rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence was not an empty promise, even if progress was halting.

Hamilton’s appreciation for both Judaism and Jews also has implications for understanding church-state relations. Scholars often presume that historical figures who promoted the separation of church and state were the most compassionate toward minority religions and, correspondingly, that those who saw a role for faith in civic life must have had the least sympathy for religious dissenters. Hamilton’s approach complicates these assumptions. In word and deed, he exhibited great esteem for the Jewish faith and its followers. Hamilton also argued for a harmony between devotional and civic ends, contending that religion could help nurture the new American republic. Consider, conversely, Thomas Jefferson. He stood as the foremost proponent of the separation of church and state; Jefferson himself coined the phrase. Yet he was blunt in his contempt for Judaism. Jefferson maligned the Hebrew Bible as “defective,” the ethics of biblical Judaism as “repulsive,” and the Jewish conception of God as “degrading.” Hamilton and Jefferson, in opposite ways,
illustrate the same point: there was no necessary relationship between respect for Judaism and the principle of separation in their age.

This book does not read the adult Hamilton’s veneration of Jewry and Judaism backward as all the more proof of a Jewish identity earlier in his life. Rather, Hamilton’s Caribbean roots can help us more fully make sense of his subsequent support for Jews and their faith. It is a fundamental truism that we are all shaped by our childhoods. To be sure, a measure of humility is in order when a historian draws connections between a subject’s youth and maturity; no biographer can insist with exacting precision how a given element of a figure’s upbringing informed decisions made decades afterward. But so too is it folly to think, for instance, that Hamilton’s exposure to the brutalities of bondage in the West Indies had no bearing upon his later attitude toward slavery. We would be equally misguided in assuming that his clerkship in adolescence at an import-export firm—which afforded him a real-time education in credit, currency, and trade—was wholly unrelated to his financial acumen as treasury secretary. And surely it is no mere happenstance that among the founders, Hamilton was the only one to attend a Jewish school as a boy and then cultivated the greatest involvement with Jews as an adult.

That Jewry and Judaism are the central themes of this book is not meant to imply that they were the central pillars of Hamilton’s American years. It would be inaccurate to depict him as engaged in a daily toil on behalf of Jews or perpetually preoccupied with the Jewish religion. Hamilton’s affiliations and influences were numerous; other important strands in his story have received extensive treatment elsewhere. This volume seeks to add the relevance of Judaism and its people to our understanding of Hamilton.

Among Hamilton’s beloved hobbies in New York was the theater, so it is altogether fitting that the Broadway stage has made him the country’s
favorite founder. His pride of place in American culture at this moment indicates that his story is highly resonant. And yet Hamilton is a profoundly enigmatic character. Here was the treasurer who saved the nation’s finances but died in debt, the strikingly decisive leader forever haunted by insecurities, the champion of the rule of law who met his demise in an illicit duel. For all the attention thrust on Hamilton, he eludes us still.

His youth remains the most esoteric of the many mysteries surrounding his life. Hamilton spilled gallons of ink on seemingly every topic but maintained a singular silence about his Caribbean origins. Even with his own children, he was largely mute on the subject. And yet, tantalizingly, he broke from his usual secrecy to share with them a warm memory from boyhood—his time at the Jewish school. If Alexander Hamilton left this clue about his cryptic past, then it is the intent of the pages that follow to explore what larger truths it may suggest.
INDEX

Note: Page numbers in italics indicate figures.

Abrahams, Isaac, 45
Adair, Douglass, 47, 215n48, 236n76, 243n85, 245n8
Adams, John: correspondence with Franklin, 93–94; on Hamilton, 49, 189; Hamilton on, 184, 245n13; inconsistent attitude toward Jews and Judaism, 103–105, 191; on New York, 47–48
Anti-Federalists: fears about strong central government, 118; opposition to Hamilton's plans as treasury secretary, 123; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 111–113, 114, 115, 180, 191; view U.S. Constitution as elitist, 121, 228n30
Arnold, Benedict, 63–65
Articles of Confederation, limitations and weaknesses of, 80, 88–89, 139, 184
Ashkenazi Jews, 13, 19, 52, 55, 85
Atherton, Gertrude, 17
Bank of New York, 78–79, 79
Bank of North America, 68, 69, 77, 97, 129
Bank of the United States, 66, 128–130, 131
Barbary states, Noah and mission to, 156–160
Beekman and Cruger, Hamilton clerks at, 39–40
Beth Elohim synagogue (Charleston, SC), 111, 120, 136, 138, 146
Bishop, Abraham, 151–152
Book of Common Prayer, The, Christian communion and, 40, 202n48, 202n50, 211n34
Brown, Kate Elizabeth, 229n33
Burr, Aaron: debt to Lewis, 175–176; Hamilton's death and, 187, 189; Hamilton's decision to “throw away” bullet during duel with, 184–186; Hamilton's similarities and disparities, 75–76; Le Guen case and, 166, 174, 241n45
Bush, Solomon, 216–217n72
Cardozo, Benjamin, 220n56
Chernow, Ron, 20, 28, 201n41, 202n53, 240n37, 243n86, 244n91, 245n15
Christian Constitutional Society, proposed by Hamilton, 183
Church, Angelica Schuyler, 81
Church, John, 81, 83
Cissel, William, 17, 19, 20, 199n28, 202n48, 210n21
Cohen, Daniel, Nevis grave of, 25
INDEX

Cohen, Solomon Myers, 175
Coinage Act of 1792, 132
Columbia: Gershom Seixas as first Jewish trustee of, 85, 87–88, 145, 180, 190, 220n58; religious freedom and charter of, 84–85, 220n51. See also King’s College
Commercial Advertiser (New York), 170
Connecticut: Bill of Rights and, 136; religious test for holding office, 100; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 110, 112
Cruger, Nicolas, 39–40
Crypto-Judaism, 26–27, 208–209n121
Cursory Remarks on Men & Manners in Georgia (pamphlet), 98
Daily Advertiser, 188
Dalin, David G., 240n37
Deism, Hamilton and, 184, 244n91
Delaware, religious test for holding office, 96, 100, 231n5
Denmark, Caribbean islands and, 12–14
Dodge, Nehemiah, 152
Duponceau, P. S., 241n45
Elitism, founders and charges of, 8–9, 121, 134, 226n12, 229n33, 231n86
England, antisemitism in, 93, 99–100
Enos, Roger, 175
Establishment Clause. See U.S. Constitution: First Amendment and Bill of Rights
Faucette, Ann, 15
Faucette, John, 12, 28, 31
Faucette, Mary, 12–15, 28, 36
Faucette, Rachel. See Levine, Rachel Faucette (mother)
Federalist Papers, 84, 114–115, 124, 134
Federalists: antisemitism and, 180–182; as early dominant political faction, 123; church and state issue, 151–152, 154; Jews and, 226n12; U.S. Constitution ratification and, 111, 113, 116–117, 123–124
Fisher, Miers, 97
Flavius Josephus, 162
Flexner, James, 17, 208n121
Franklin, Benjamin: ambivalence toward Christianity, 62; attitudes toward Jews, 92–95, 222n17; at Constitutional Convention, 107, 111; Great Seal of the United States and, 94–95; Hamilton’s proposal for mint and, 131
Franks, David Salisbury, 63–66, 209–210n11, 216n65, 237–238n101
French Revolution, 150, 180–183
Funding Act of 1790, 128
Georgia: Bill of Rights and, 136; Jewish community in Savannah, 120, 137, 138, 147, 223n39; religious discrimination, 98–99, 231n5; religious test for sworn testimony, 165
Georgia Gazette (Savannah, GA), 99
Gomez, Isaac, 166–168, 176–177, 242n57
Goodchild, Rev. Cecil Wray, 37–38, 209n11
Gouverneur, Isaac, 166–168, 170–172, 240n31
The Grange, Hamilton home in New York, 179, 180
The Grange, Lytton home on St. Croix, 15, 19, 202n47; Rachel Levine buried at, 36–37
Gratz, Rebecca, 189, 190
Hamilton, Alexander, 169; Adams and, 104, 245n13; Bank of New York and, 78–79; Bank of North America and, 97; boyish appearance of, 44, 212n55; Broadway musical and, 1, 10–11; Burr’s similarities and disparities, 75–76; Columbia charter and, 84–85, 88; devotion to rule of law, 76; duel with Burr and death, 184–190, 245n8; Federalist Papers and, 114–115; Franks and, 63, 64, 65, 66; grandson of, 3, 17; individual rights and, 121, 136, 229n33; Jefferson’s differing concepts of Constitution and, 129–130; last contact...
with brother James, 83; marries Elizabeth Schuyler, 61; mother’s estate and, 38, 71; negotiations on assumption and location of U.S. capital, 128; Revolution and, 59–60, 70, 148; slavery and, 197n9; U.S. Constitution and Constitutional Convention, 88–89, 106, 108, 109, 110–111, 111, 134, 136; U.S. Constitution’s ratification and, 113, 114–115, 117, 118; Washington’s Farewell Address and, 148–150, 151, 235n70; Washington’s Newport letter and, 145–146

Hamilton, Alexander, at Department of the Treasury, 119; antisemitic response to economic policies of, 121–128, 133–134, 151, 182, 191, 231n82; Bank of the United States and, 128–130; coinage and proposal for mint, 130–133


Hamilton, Alexander, religion and: affinity for Jewry, 2, 7–10, 190–191; Christianity and politics, 182–183; Christianity as undergraduate, 46–47; on Christian truth, 245n15; deism and, 184, 244n91; describes God as participant in world events, 183–184; educated at Jewish school on Nevis, 3, 27–29, 32, 190, 205–206n98; fails to take communion, 4, 40–41, 188–189, 245n8; identity as Jew, 3–6, 27–29, 32–33, 38, 62; issues of religion and the state and, 9–10, 148–151, 152, 153, 162; legacy of reverence for Judaism and vision for U.S. future, 190–192; no baptismal record for, 27, 205–206n98; presented himself as Christian at seventeen, 4, 40–41; support for religious pluralism and for religion’s role in civic life, 148–151, 152, 153, 162

Hamilton, Alexander, as youth: clerks at Beekman and Cruger on St. Croix, 39–40; date of birth, 4, 43–44; description of hurricane on St. Croix, 42–43; education at Elizabethtown Academy, 43; education at Jewish school on Nevis, 3, 27–29, 32, 190, 206–207n99; education at King’s College, 43, 44; elusive sources of information on childhood of, 5–6; illegitimate birth of, 3, 5, 24, 28, 29, 205–206n98; lives with Stevens family on St. Croix, 38–39; as marginal person on Nevis, 33; mother’s death and burial, 4, 36–38; Rachel returns to St. Croix with, 34, 36; study of finance, 67, 70; study of Hebrew and Hebrew Bible, 28, 42, 43, 46, 212n62

Hamilton, Elizabeth (Eliza) Schuyler (wife), 61–62, 62, 71, 72, 81; Hamilton and Washington’s Farewell Address and, 149, 235n70; Hamilton’s correspondence with, 171, 183, 240n31, 244n107; Hamilton’s duel and death, 185, 186, 187–188, 190

Hamilton, James, Jr. (brother): apprenticeship on St. Croix, 38, 83; born out of wedlock, 24; Hamilton’s last contact with, 83; Jewish school on Nevis, 28, 83; lack of baptismal record for, 27, 83; mother’s estate and, 38, 71

Hamilton, James, Sr., 21, 24, 32, 34, 208n121

Hamilton, John (son), 27–28, 206n99, 245n15

Hamilton, Philip (son), 72, 183

Hancock, John, 77

Harison, Richard, 183, 239n11

Harvey, Marvin, 47, 215n48, 236n76, 243n85, 245n8

Hayes, Rutherford B., 142

Hecht, Marie B., 37

Hendrickson, Robert, 17, 37

Independent Gazetteer (Philadelphia), 95, 97–98

Isaacks, Jacob, 140, 237–238n101
Israelites, ancient, 26, 94–95, 103, 142, 151–152, 236–237n85
Israel Vindicated (pamphlet), 102, 224n54
Jacob Mark and Company, 132–133
Jay, John: Adams's correspondence with, 104; Columbia and, 84, 191; Federalist Papers and, 114–115; hostility toward Catholicism, 224n53; proposal for mint and, 131–132; remarks on Jews, 101–103
Jefferson, Thomas, 132, 140, 182, 188, 231n86, 234n54, 236n77, 238n104; Adams and, 103, 104; attitudes about Jews and Judaism, 9, 153–155, 191, 237–238n101; concerns about Hamilton and federal power, 124; Hamilton and differing concepts of Constitution, 129–130; Madison's book recommendation for, 161–162; negotiations on placement of U.S. capital, 128; on New York, 47; opposition to Hamilton's plan for central bank, 129–130; religion and state issues, 9–10, 153
Jewish identity: diverse aspects of, 5, 26–27; matrilineal nature of, 3–4, 12, 20, 26, 27; ritual of circumcision and, 27, 53, 87, 127, 181. See also Jews and Judaism
Jewish “memorialists,” in Philadelphia, 96–97
Jones, Ebenezer, 74–75
Josephson, Manuel, 146–147
Keene, Richard, 157
Kemble, Peter, 166–168, 170–172, 240n31
Kent, James, 172, 174
Kidd, Thomas S., 222n17
King's College, Hamilton's education at, 43–47, 45, 59, 171, 212n62. See also Columbia
Knox, Reverend Hugh, 42, 43
Kol Nidre prayer, and questioning of Jewish integrity, 165
Lafayette, Marquis de, 154
Lazarus, Emma, 86
Lazarus, Samuel, 86
Levine, Johan Michael: divorce from Rachel, 34, 44, 202n47, 208n121; has Rachel imprisoned for adultery, 21; Jewishness of, 3, 16–17, 18, 19, 201n35; meets and marries Rachel, 16, 19, 21, 202n47; Rachel's estate and, 38, 71; wealth of, 16–17, 199n28
Levine, Peter (half-brother): baptized as adult, not as infant, 3, 19–20, 202n48; birth of, 19; Rachel's estate and, 38, 71
Levine, Rachel Faucette (mother): Alexander born out of wedlock to, 3, 5, 24, 28, 29, 205–206n98; born a Christian, 3, 12; childhood on Nevis, 12, 21; death and burial of, 4, 36–38, 209–210n11; Hamilton sons and estate of, 38, 71; James Jr. born out of wedlock to, 24; Jewish identity and, 3–4, 20–21, 27, 32–33, 36–37, 38, 202n47, 203n57, 208–209n121; Levine has imprisoned for adultery, 21; Levine marries, 19, 202n47; Levine's divorce from, 34, 202n47, 208n121; as marginal person on Nevis, 33; moves with mother from Nevis to St. Croix, 12–15; never marries.
Hamilton Sr., 208n121; Peter Levine’s birth, 19; returns to Nevis with James Hamilton, 21; spelling of name, 37, 210n14
Lewis, Francis, 175–176
Lewishohn, Florence, 28, 201n36
Livingston, Brockholst, 168, 220n57
Lopez, Moses, 176–177, 242n57
Lyon, Joseph, 177
Lytton, James, 15, 16
Lytton, Peter, 38
Madison, James: antsemitism and, 155–160, 191; book recommendation for Jefferson, 161–162; concerns about Hamilton and federal power, 14; Federalist Papers and, 114–115; Hebrew language and, 239n125; negotiations on assumption and placement of U.S. capital, 128; opposition to Hamilton’s plan for central bank, 129; religion and state issues, 153, 155–162; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 110, 112, 161; Washington’s Farewell Address and, 148, 149
Marchant, Henry, 142
Mark, Jacob, 132–133
Maryland: religious test for holding office, 96, 100, 231n5, 234n47; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 110; Washington’s reply to collective letter from synagogues, 147
Mason, George, 121, 135–136
Mason, Reverend Dr. John, 47
Massachusetts: Bill of Rights and, 136; religious test for holding office, 103, 105, 222n17; Shays’ Rebellion in, 89; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 112; Washington’s reply to collective letter from synagogues, 147
Merchant of Venice, The (Shakespeare), 127, 170
Mikveh Israel synagogue (Philadelphia), 77–78, 86, 94, 109, 116, 147
Mitchell, Broadus, 37
Monroe, James, 156–159
Moore, Bishop, at Hamilton’s death, 188, 245n8
Morris, Robert: Bank of North America, 69, 129; Hamilton’s correspondence with, 67–68; Hamilton’s proposal for mint and, 131; Isaac Moses and, 77
Moses, Isaac: Bank of New York and, 78–79; Bank of North America and, 97; collective letter from synagogues to Washington, 136; Gershom Seixas and, 86; Hamilton and business of, 80–83; New York and Philadelphia synagogues and, 76, 77–78; Revolutionary War and, 76–77
Myers, Asher, 116
Myers, Moses, 80–82
Myers, Samuel, 80–82
Nassy, David Cohen, 206–207n99
National Gazette, 133
Neufville, Jean De, 93–94
New England Palladium, 182
New Hampshire: religious test for holding office, 100, 231n5; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 112; U.S. Constitution ratification and, 115
New Jersey, religious test for holding office, 100, 231n5
Newport Herald, 140
Newport Mercury, 112
Newton, William, 39

For general queries, contact webmaster@press.princeton.edu
New York City, 49; British occupation of, 60, 68, 72, 73; described, 47–50; economic boom of 1790s in, 163–164; Federal Hall in, 123; Jewish life in pre-Revolutionary, 51–57; Jewish Patriots from, 58–59; Jewish population in 1794, 227n15; as national capital, 66, 128, 137, 143. See also Hamilton, Alexander, law practice; New York State; Shearith Israel synagogue

New-York Evening Post, 152, 184

New-York Gazette and General Advertiser, 170

New York Journal, 127

New York State: blue laws and effects on Jews, 101; constitutional convention of, 78; no religious test for holding office, 95–96, 102; religious test for sworn testimony, 165; U.S. Constitution ratification and, 115, 116–118. See also New York City

New York Weekly Journal, 56

Noah, Mordecai, 104–105, 154, 156–160

North Carolina: religious test for holding office, 100, 231n5; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 110, 112

Odd Destiny (Hecht), 37

Olsen, Poul Erik, 202–203n55

Pencak, William, 92, 214–215n36, 216n65

Penn, William, 106

Pennsylvania: antisemitism in, 90–92, 95, 97–98, 181–182; religious test for holding office, 91–93, 96–97, 100, 109, 222n17, 223n30, 231n5; U.S. Constitution ratification and, 115–116; Washington’s reply to collective letter from synagogues, 147. See also Philadelphia

Pennsylvania Evening Post, 91–92

Pennsylvania Gazette, 95, 125, 126–127

Philadelphia: described at time of Constitutional Convention, 106–109; “Grand Federal Procession” in, 115–116; Jewish “memorialists” in, 96–97; Mikveh Israel synagogue in, 77–78, 86, 109, 116, 147; population of, 48; as temporary U.S. capital, 128, 143, 146

Philadelphia General Advertiser, 130

Phillips, Jonas, 109–110

Pinckney, Charles, 110

Pittsburgh Gazette, 182

Poughkeepsie Journal, 126

Ramsing, H. U., 20, 37, 199n28, 220n48

Randall, Willard Sterne, 37

Randolph, Edmund, 133, 160


Report on a National Bank (Hamilton), 128–129

Report on Public Credit (Hamilton), 124–126

Report on the Mint (Hamilton), 130–132

Republicans, 124, 151–152, 154, 181–183

Revolutionary War: British occupation of New York City, 60, 70, 73; Franks episode and, 63–66, 216n65; Hamilton and, 59–60, 61, 63–65, 66–68, 70, 148; impact on New York City and commerce, 72–74; Jewish support for, 57–59, 95–96, 97, 99, 109, 214–215n36; Salomon and finances of young nation, 66–70, 77

Rhode Island: civil restrictions on Jews, 100, 231n5; ratification of U.S. Constitution and, 137, 138, 139, 142; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 111. See also Touro Synagogue (Newport, RI)

Rivera, Abraham Rods, 177
Roget, Isaac, 177–178, 242n59
Rosenwaike, Ira, 223n39
Rush, Benjamin, 115–116, 154, 221n68

Salomons, Haym: aggrandizement of, 217n83; Bank of North America and, 97; Madison and, 160–161; Pennsylvania’s religious test for holding office and, 96; Revolution’s financing and personal history of, 66–70, 77
Sarna, Jonathan, 206–207n99, 224n54
Schachner, Nathan, 47
Schuyler, Elizabeth. See Hamilton, Elizabeth (Eliza) Schuyler (wife)
Schuyler, Philip, 61, 68, 197n9
Seixas, Gershom: as Columbia’s first Jewish trustee, 85, 87–88, 145, 180, 190, 220n58; Pennsylvania’s religious test for holding office and, 96; Revolution and, 85–87; Shearith Israel synagogue and, 85, 86–87, 118–119, 138, 221n67; Zuntz and, 178
Seixas, Moses, 53; collective letter from synagogues to Washington as president, 137–139; Washington in Newport and, 142–144
Sephardic Jews, 13, 19, 25, 52, 55, 85, 86–87, 119, 168, 176–177, 197n16
Shays’ Rebellion, 89, 122
Shearith Israel synagogue, 51–53, 54, 55, 73, 74; collective letter from synagogues to Washington as president, 136–139; Washington in Newport and, 142–144
Stevens, Edward (Ned), 38–39, 41
Stevens, Thomas, 38–39, 41
St. Kitts, 21, 22, 25, 30, 204n66

Touro Synagogue (Newport, RI), 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142–145, 233n42
Trinity Church (New York City), 183, 190, 243n85–86
Troup, Robert, 47, 171–172, 174, 241n45

Union Library Society, 49–50
U.S. capital: Congress’s discussion on future of, 128; New York City as, 66, 128, 137, 143; Philadelphia as, 128, 143, 146
U.S. Constitution: Article VI, Section 3 and ban on religious tests, 106, 110–113, 135, 222n17; First Amendment and Bill of Rights, 103, 110, 120, 135–136, 143, 151, 153, 161, 234n47; Hamilton and Jefferson’s differing concepts of, 129–130; Hamilton as delegate to constitutional convention, 88–89, 111; states and ratification of, 114–118, 136, 139, 142

Synagogues’ collective letter to Washington, 136–137
Smertenko, Johan J., 203n57
South Carolina: religious test for holding office, 100, 231n5; synagogue in Charleston, 111, 120, 136, 138, 146; U.S. Constitution and ban on religious tests, 110, 111; U.S. Constitution ratification and, 121
Spinoza, Baruch, 92, 222n12
Stamp Act (1765), 48
St. Croix, 15, 22; Danish law and, 202–203n55; described, 34–36, 35; Jews and, 13–14, 36, 38, 198n14, 209–210n11; land register from, 18; Rachel and Mary move to, 12–15; Rachel returns to and dies on, 34, 36; social hierarchy on, 41; sugarcane crops, 12, 13, 14, 16
Stevens, Edward (Ned), 38–39, 41
Stevens, Thomas, 38–39, 41

Touro Synagogue (Newport, RI), 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142–145, 233n42
Trinity Church (New York City), 183, 190, 243n85–86
Troup, Robert, 47, 171–172, 174, 241n45

Union Library Society, 49–50
U.S. capital: Congress’s discussion on future of, 128; New York City as, 66, 128, 137, 143; Philadelphia as, 128, 143, 146
U.S. Constitution: Article VI, Section 3 and ban on religious tests, 106, 110–113, 135, 222n17; First Amendment and Bill of Rights, 103, 110, 120, 135–136, 143, 151, 153, 161, 234n47; Hamilton and Jefferson’s differing concepts of, 129–130; Hamilton as delegate to constitutional convention, 88–89, 111; states and ratification of, 114–118, 136, 139, 142
Varick, Richard, 64, 65
Virginia: Jefferson and citizenship for foreigners, 155; no religious test for holding office, 95–96; public dollars and religious education in, 150; ratification of the Bill of Rights and, 136; Statute for Religious Freedom of, 155; synagogue in Richmond, 120, 136, 146, 147
Voltaire, 105

Wadsworth, Jeremiah, 81

Washington, George: Burr and, 75; Constitutional Convention and, 109, 111; Farewell Address of, 148–151; Franks and, 64–66; Hamilton in Revolutionary War and, 59–60, 70; image on flags, 117; public reading of Declaration of Independence, 58; reaction to death of, 190; synagogues’ collective letter to, 136–139, 146–148; Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1789, 118; trip to Rhode Island and Newport letter to synagogue, 139, 140–146, 233n42, 234n47
Woodward, William E., 203n57
Worcester Magazine, 112
Yates, Abraham, Jr., 114

Zuntz, Alexander, 178–179