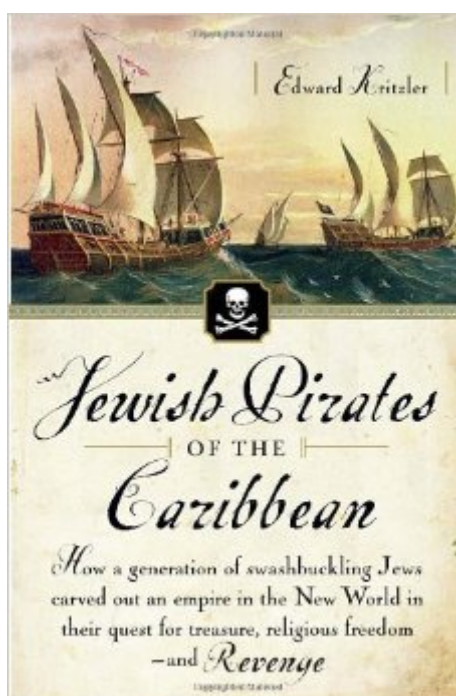


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Jewish Pirates Of The Caribbean: How A Generation Of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out An Empire In The New World In Their Quest For Treasure, Religious Freedom--and Revenge



Synopsis

In this lively debut work of history, Edward Kritzler tells the tale of an unlikely group of swashbuckling Jews who ransacked the high seas in the aftermath of the Spanish Inquisition. At the end of the fifteenth century, many Jews had to flee Spain and Portugal. The most adventurous among them took to the seas as freewheeling outlaws. In ships bearing names such as the Prophet Samuel, Queen Esther, and Shield of Abraham, they attacked and plundered the Spanish fleet while forming alliances with other European powers to ensure the safety of Jews living in hiding. Filled with high-sea adventuresâ “including encounters with Captain Morgan and other legendary piratesâ “Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean reveals a hidden chapter in Jewish history as well as the cruelty, terror, and greed that flourished during the Age of Discovery.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is true that some famous pirates such as Jean Lafitte and Sinan were Jewish, but did you ever imagine there would be a serious, non-fiction book with such a title? Although the title is perhaps a bit "Hollywoodesque", this is a well-researched and well-written account of a chapter in history that continues to fascinate. Perhaps an equally playful title could have been "Raising Cain in the New World" as early Jewish settlers became heavily involved in sugar cane production and export and some of them did cause trouble--especially for Spain. Furthermore, to a certain extent, they survived and were successful because they were their brother's keepers, and remained faithful in their own communities. There were pirates of the Caribbean, some of whom were Jews and there truly was a Port Royal in Jamaica, but don't expect Long Jonathan Silvermans or Captain Jacob Sparrowsteins to come careening across the deck or fling themselves from the rigging with cutlass in one hand

shouting "Ahoy Vey". You will find some swashbuckling adventure in Ed Kritzler's account, which took place in the time when Spain and her rivals began to explore and settle in the Caribbean and the New World. After centuries of a relatively fruitful existence in Iberia, hundreds of thousands if not millions of Jews found themselves in a precarious situation as the Catholic Empire reunited and re-established itself over the Moors. Jews were forced to convert or leave and many were tortured or murdered through the Inquisition. Columbus was likely a Jew and his three ships left the day of expulsion, headed to the New World and what eventually became a haven for the oppressed Jews and other people of Europe.

WHAT THE BOOKS ABOUT: Jewish Pirates aren't the main focus of the book, which is understandable of course. It begins with Columbus, Marranos who travelled with him, and other Marrano explorers, (referred to in the book as "conversos") such as Gaspar da Gama, a Jew who helped Vasco da Gama. Much of the book is about particular Jews or Jewish families that took to the sea, supporting to whatever extent (some privateering) certain empires, whether the Ottomans, English or Dutch - in short, Spain's enemies. Most of the book is concerned however with Conversos; hardly any of the people in the book are not Spanish or Portuguese. The most interesting part is the role of the Jews in England's early Caribbean Empire, especially the capture of Port Royal (which was called Santiago de la Vega when Spanish ruled it), which was a significant factor in Cromwell's readmission of the Jews.

WHY IT ISN'T A GREAT BOOK: To be honest, "Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean" with its hyperbolic subtitle advertises an aura and expectation which is not lived up to. Some of the "Jews" and "conversos" in fact had little Jewish blood and/or completely turned their backs on their roots, thus disqualifying the Hollywood-esque title. There are some embarrassing inaccuracies (for example Kritzler writes that "King John expelled the Jews from England in 1290") which prove the incompetence of the book's editors, and moreover the author. How such gross mistakes on basic matters come about is just a phenomenon. Another flaw is the bulk of chapter 5, going on about the Jews in Holland for 20 or 30 pages, none of which has any relevance either to Pirates or the Caribbean.

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