

ped us, and asked the executioner why upon his knees, and begged he would cing, which being granted, I went on, h bows and arrows. After many wind- mber, and after waiting some time he n was, how came I there? I answered, ith in the woods, and who persuaded how old I was? I told him not fifteen. fore I met with this man? I answered, ed to confound him. He turned round, e from? I answered, yes, and here also. e did not see him; but I told him I felt nees, and intreated the king, and told ord. At this instant the king's eldest erson about 19 years of age, and stood y hand, which she took out of it, and eemed much delighted with it. When king asked me what it was? and I told ed there; and, after several questions, larly the 53d chapter of Isaiah, in the l also the 26th chapter of Matthew's name of Jesus, the particular effect it ng. When I had finished reading, he with so much reverence? I told him, nes belonged made heaven and earth, inted to the sun, and asked him who and preserved them in their regular r town that did it. I laboured as much rary. His daughter took the book out l it, and kissed it again; her father bid t said, with much sorrow, the book ioner then fell upon his knees, and er, which being granted, we all went displayed his glorious power. In the l out, particularly the king's daughter, executed, and several others seemed ide the king very angry; he called me rust into the prison, and to be exe- ough to make me think, as old Jacob t me;"<sup>2</sup> for I was dragged away, and ndignation; but God, who never for- I was weak in body, yet was I strong shall let it?"<sup>3</sup> The executioner went to put me to death, his daughter would all their doctors that afternoon and

he did not understand the English language" [Marrant's note].  
2. Genesis 42.36.  
3. Who will hinder or prevent it? See Isaiah 44.13.

night; but physical prescriptions were useless. In the morning the execu- tioner came to me, and, without opening the prison door, called to me, and hearing me answer, said, "Fear not, thy God who delivered thee yesterday, will deliver thee to-day." This comforted me very much, especially to find he could trust the Lord. Soon after I was fetched out; I thought it was to be executed; but they led me away to the king's chamber with much bodily weakness, having been without food two days. When I came into the king's presence, he said to me, with much anger, if I did not make his daughter and that man well, I should be laid down and chopped into pieces before him. I was not afraid, but the Lord tried my faith sharply. The king's daughter and the other person were brought out into the outer chamber, and we went to prayer; but the heavens were locked up to my petitions. I besought the Lord again, but received no answer: I cried again, and he was intreated. He said, "Be it to thee as thou wilt;"<sup>4</sup> the Lord appeared most lovely and glorious; the king himself was awakened, and the others set at liberty. A great change took place among the people; the king's house became God's house; the soldiers were ordered away, and the poor condemned prisoner had perfect liberty, and was treated like a prince. Now the Lord made all my enemies to become my great friends. I remained nine weeks in the king's palace, praising God day and night: I was never out but three days all the time. I had assumed the habit of the country, and was dressed much like the king, and nothing was too good for me. The king would take off his golden ornaments, his chain and bracelets, like a child, if I objected to them, and lay them aside. Here I learnt to speak their tongue in the highest stile.<sup>5</sup>

1785

4. In Matthew 15.28, Jesus says this to a woman from Canaan. He has agreed to cast a devil out of her daughter.  
5. Eventually, Marrant had a dramatic home-

coming at his mother's house. At the end of the *Narrative*, he is in London and preparing to depart for Nova Scotia.

REBECCA SAMUEL

L ike her contemporary Abigail Adams, Rebecca Alexander Samuel (fl. 1790s) wrote letters that offer a fascinating glimpse into her cultural milieu. In Samuel's case, that milieu involved Jewish life in the early republic. Little is known about Samuel apart from her letters. She and her husband, Hyman Samuel, a silver-smith and watchmaker, lived in southern cities and towns including Petersburg, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; and Charleston, South Carolina. They probably came originally from Germany and may have spent time in England. Writing in the German Jewish dialect of Yiddish to her parents, in Hamburg, Germany, Samuel described various challenges that her family experienced in practicing their faith and sustaining their religious identity. Samuel also emphasized her appreciation for the absence of religious coercion in the United States and the relative acceptance that they found in the southern states.

Letters to Her Parents<sup>1</sup>Petersburg, January 12, 1791, Wednesday, 8th [7th?] Shebat, 5551.<sup>2</sup>

Dear and Worthy Parents:

I received your dear letter with much pleasure and therefrom understand that you are in good health, thank God, and that made us especially happy. The same is not lacking with us—may we live to be a hundred years. Amen.

Dear parents, you complain that you do not receive any letters from us, and my mother-in-law writes the same. I don't know what's going on. I have written more letters than I have received from you. Whenever I can and have an opportunity, I give letters to take along, and I send letters by post when I do not have any other opportunity. It is already six months since we received letters from you and from London. The last letter you sent was through Sender [Alexander], and it was the beginning of the month of Ab [July, 1790] when we received it. Now you can realize that we too have been somewhat worried. We are completely isolated here. We do not have any friends, and when we do not hear from you for any length of time, it is enough to make us sick. I hope that I will get to see some of my family. That will give me some satisfaction.

You write me that Mr. Jacob Renner's son Reuben is in Philadelphia and that he will come to us. People will not advise him to come to Virginia. When the Jews of Philadelphia or New York hear the name Virginia, they get nasty. And they are not wrong! It won't do for a Jew. In the first place it is an unhealthy district, and we are only human. God forbid, if anything should happen to us, where would we be thrown? There is no cemetery in the whole of Virginia. In Richmond, which is twenty-two miles from here, there is a Jewish community consisting of two quorums [twenty men], and the two cannot muster a quarter [quorum when needed?].

You cannot imagine what kind of Jews they have here [in Virginia]. They were all German itinerants who made a living by begging in Germany. They came to America during the war, as soldiers, and now they can't recognize themselves.

One can make a good living here, and all live at peace. Anyone can do what he wants. There is no rabbi in all of America to excommunicate anyone. This is a blessing here; Jew and Gentile are as one. There is no *galut* ["exile," rejection of Jews] here. In New York and Philadelphia there is more *galut*. The reason is that there are too many German Gentiles and Jews there. The German Gentiles cannot forsake their anti-Jewish prejudice; and the German Jews cannot forsake their disgraceful conduct; and that's what makes the *galut*.

[Rebecca Samuel]

1. The texts are from Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry Documents: Eighteenth Century* (1959). Bracketed material is by Marcus.

2. The year according to the Hebrew calendar. "Shebat": variant spelling of Shabbat, the Hebrew word for Sabbath.



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8th [7th?] Shebat, 5551.<sup>2</sup>

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[Rebecca Samuel]



Touro Synagogue. Built in 1763, the Touro Synagogue, in Newport, Rhode Island, is the oldest surviving synagogue building in North America. Here, rabbis read a Torah scroll on the bima (altar).

Dear Parents:

I hope my letter will ease your mind. You can now be reassured and send me one of the family to Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>3</sup> This is the place to which, with God's help, we will go after Passover. The whole reason why we are leaving this place is because of [lack of] *Yehudishkeit* [Jewishness].

Dear parents, I know quite well you will not want me to bring up my children like Gentiles. Here they cannot become anything else. Jewishness is pushed aside here. There are here [in Petersburg] ten or twelve Jews, and they are not worthy of being called Jews. We have a *shohet*<sup>4</sup> here who goes to market and buys *terefah* [nonkosher] meat and then brings it home. On Rosh Ha-Shanah [New Year] and on Yom Kippur ["the Day of Atonement"] the people worshipped here without one *sefer torah* ["Scroll of the Law"], and not one of them wore the *tallit* [a large prayer shawl worn in the synagogue] or the *arba kanfot* [the small set of fringes worn on the body], except Hyman and my Sammy's godfather. The latter is an old man of sixty, a man from Holland. He has been in America for thirty years already; for twenty years he was in Charleston, and he has been living here for four years. He does not want to remain here any longer and will go with us to Charleston. In that place there is a blessed community of three hundred Jews.

You can believe me that I crave to see a synagogue to which I can go. The way we live now is no life at all. We do not know what the Sabbath and the holidays are. On the Sabbath all the Jewish shops are open; and they do business on that day as they do throughout the whole week. But ours we do not allow to open. With us there is still some Sabbath. You must believe me that in our house we all live as Jews as much as we can.

<sup>1</sup>ear according to the Hebrew calendar.  
<sup>2</sup>variant spelling of Shabbat, the Hebrew Sabbath.

<sup>3</sup> This undated letter was written before 1796, the year that Samuel moved from Petersburg to Charleston.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew term for the person who ritually slaughters animals according to Jewish law, producing kosher meat.

As for the Gentiles [?], we have nothing to complain about. For the sake of a livelihood we do not have to leave here. Nor do we have to leave because of debts. I believe ever since Hyman has grown up that he has not had it so good. You cannot know what a wonderful country this is for the common man. One can live here peacefully. Hyman made a clock that goes very accurately, just like the one in the Buchenstrasse in Hamburg. Now you can imagine what honors Hyman has been getting here. In all Virginia there is no clock [like this one], and Virginia is the greatest province in the whole of America, and America is the largest section of the world. Now you know what sort of a country this is. It is not too long since Virginia was discovered. It is a young country. And it is amazing to see the business they do in this little Petersburg. At times as many as a thousand hogsheads of tobacco arrive at one time, and each hogshead contains 1,000 and sometimes 1,200 pounds of tobacco. The tobacco is shipped from here to the whole world.

When Judah [my brother?] comes here, he can become a watchmaker and a goldsmith, if he so desires. Here it is not like Germany where a watchmaker is not permitted to sell silverware. [The contrary is true in this country.] They do not know otherwise here. They expect a watchmaker to be a silversmith here. Hyman has more to do in making silverware than with watchmaking. He has a journeyman, a silversmith, a very good artisan, and he, Hyman, takes care of the watches. This work is well paid here, but in Charleston, it pays even better.

All the people who hear that we are leaving give us their blessings. They say that it is sinful that such blessed children should be brought up here in Petersburg. My children cannot learn anything here, nothing Jewish, nothing of general culture. My Schoene [my daughter], God bless her, is already three years old. I think it is time that she should learn something, and she has a good head to learn. I have taught her the bedtime prayers and grace after meals in just two lessons. I believe that no one among the Jews here can do as well as she. And my Sammy [born in 1790], God bless him, is already beginning to talk.

I could write more. However, I do not have any more paper.

I remain, your devoted daughter and servant,  
Rebecca, the wife of Hayyim, the son of Samuel the Levite

I send my family, my . . . [mother-in-law?] and all my friends and good friends, my regards.

## SAGOYEWATHA

The name of the Seneca leader Sagoyewatha (1758?–1830) means roughly “he keeps them awake,” apparently referring to his considerable abilities as an orator. He was also known by the English name Red Jacket, after the coat that the British awarded him for his services as a message runner during the Revolutionary

War. Following the negotiations with the Seneca in New York, American orators, including the missionary Jonathan Edwards, were lining up with “separatists” that while Christian they are fine for peoples, v

gious beliefs. Present was Erasmus, been appointed and Indian by President Granger’s was Joseph served as done on ever trans Red Jacket Granger in the April magazine.

FRIEND meet together for our C it to shine our ears you have only.

BROTHER we came have said joy; for what we man. Out

1. The text the Sequel to