

From Holy Land to New England Canaan: Rabbi Haim Carigal and Sephardic Itinerant Preaching in the Eighteenth Century.

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Most studies of itinerant preaching in eighteenth-century New England focus on Christian preachers and missionaries. This paper augments that discussion by examining the role of early Jewish itinerant preachers, particularly Rabbi Haim Carigal of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. Carigal's 1773 sermon is the first rabbinical address printed in New England. I argue that Carigal's sermon is best understood in the context of the eighteenth-century Sephardic practice of sending *shlichim* (emissaries) from the Holy Land to the diaspora. During the eighteenth-century, Sephardim in Israel responded to a world-wide crisis of observance by sending emissaries from four Holy Cities in Israel (Safed, Hebron, Tiberias, and Jerusalem) to the four corners of the globe in order to establish and regulate guidelines on *halacha* (Jewish law). According to Kabbalistic tradition, the *shlichim's* ethical and legal preaching literally helped heal the world. Carigal's 1773 sermon delivered on the holiday of *Shavuot* reflects the eighteenth-century Sephardic Kabbalistic tradition of interpreting *Shavuot* as part of *tikkun olam* (the repairing of the world) and restoring holiness through correct adherence to law. As a Sephardic emissary from Hebron, Carigal differed in important ways from contemporaneous Christian itinerant preachers. Whereas many Christian "new England clergymen regarded the practice [of itinerant preachers] as a threat to the foundations of social order," (Timothy Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 2), early Jewish itinerant preachers like Carigal perceived themselves—and were perceived—as creating and restoring the social and spiritual order.