

= Elias Abraham Rosenberg =

Elias Abraham Rosenberg (Hebrew : ?????? ?????? ???????? ; Hawaiian : Elia Aberahama Roseraberka ; c . 1810 ? July 10 , 1887) was a Jewish immigrant to the United States who , despite a questionable past , became a trusted friend and adviser of King Kal?kaua of Hawaii . Regarded as eccentric , he lived in San Francisco in the 1880s and worked as a peddler selling illegal lottery tickets . In 1886 , he traveled to Hawaii and performed as a fortune @-@ teller . He came to Kal?kaua 's attention , and endeared himself to the king with favorable predictions about the future of Hawaii . Rosenberg received royal appointments to several positions : kahuna @-@ kilokilo (royal soothsayer) , customs appraiser , and guard . He was given lavish gifts by the king , but was mistrusted by other royal advisers and satirized in the Hawaiian press .

Rosenberg and Kal?kaua often held long conversations and enjoyed drinking alcohol together ; Rosenberg told the king Bible stories and encouraged him to revive traditional Hawaiian religion , an idea that fascinated Kal?kaua but angered his political rivals . In June 1887 , Rosenberg returned to California , possibly owing to poor health or fear of unrest in Hawaii ; a short time after arriving in San Francisco , he died in a local hospital . Soon after his departure from Hawaii , the June 1887 Constitution ? which curtailed royal power ? was forced upon Kal?kaua . A Torah scroll and yad presented to the king by Rosenberg remained in the royal collection . These artifacts were later exhibited with other royal treasures and eventually donated to Temple Emanu @-@ El in Honolulu .

= = San Francisco = =

Few details are definitively known about Rosenberg 's life before he traveled to Hawaii . He is believed to have been a Russian Jew born c . 1810 , and possibly lived in Australia and England . He was married and divorced three times , and had several children .

By the early 1880s , Rosenberg lived in San Francisco , California , where he was a well @-@ known figure , regarded as an eccentric , an " adventurer " , and a " curio " . There he worked as a peddler and , in 1884 , served as a director for the Chebra Beth Abraham benevolent society . He illegally sold lottery tickets for a time , but ceased the practice after he attracted attention from the San Francisco Police Department . These problems might have led to his move to Hawaii .

= = Hawaii = =

Rosenberg traveled from San Francisco to Hawaii , possibly on a whaler , arriving in Oahu sometime before December 1886 . He was the first Jew known to have visited Hawaii . At that time , Hawaii was a predominantly Christian kingdom ; Christian missionaries had successfully converted a large segment of the population after traditional Hawaiian religion was suppressed by the monarchy . In the 1880s , however , King Kal?kaua encouraged the revival of Hawaiian traditions , hoping to inspire nationalistic sentiment . He revived traditional Hawaiian music and dance , including hula , and observed some practices of Hawaiian religion . Kal?kaua became a powerful king , unconstrained by political factors .

In Hawaii , Rosenberg was known for his long white beard and his personality , which was described by those who knew him as charming and witty . He cast optimistic horoscopes for anyone who asked , and soon became popular with Hawaiians . He was nicknamed " Rosey " , owing to his cheery attitude and witty remarks . After Rosenberg became well known , he came to the attention of King Kal?kaua , who granted him a royal audience . Rosenberg was present at a birthday celebration for King Kal?kaua at ?olani Palace in November 1886 . Rosenberg 's fame led to satire : he regularly appeared in a Hawaiian Gazette gossip column , which mockingly called him " Holy Moses " , and was satirized by a troupe of amateur minstrels at the Hawaii Opera House . In February 1887 , he paid for a notice to be placed in The Honolulu Advertiser , in which he claimed to have lost a letter that was sent to him by Queen Victoria . There has been speculation that the advertisement was a hoax designed by Rosenberg to lend himself prestige .

King Kal?kaua trusted Rosenberg 's skill as a fortune teller , perhaps because the way Rosenberg

chanted in Hebrew reminded him of ancient Hawaiian rites . In January 1887 , the king ? who had become increasingly autocratic and was facing several scandals ? granted Rosenberg a private audience at the palace . The king and Rosenberg became close , and routinely visited each other for several days at a time and held long conversations . During the audiences , Rosenberg told Bible stories and read from the Talmud . He began to teach the king basic Hebrew , and gave him an ornate Torah and yad that he had brought with him to Hawaii . He also claimed to have found references to Hawaii in ancient Hebrew texts , a statement that encouraged the king to restore aspects of Hawaiian religion . The king had previously sought instruction from several people he regarded as prophets and had established a society dedicated to the revival of native Hawaiian traditions . Finally , the king declared Rosenberg his kahuna @-@ kilokilo , a royal soothsayer .

Rosenberg was granted a room in the palace to use for fortune telling , which the king made sure was stocked with alcohol , as they enjoyed drinking together . In late January , the king appointed Rosenberg as a customs appraiser in Honolulu , although the appointment was controversial ; by mid @-@ February he was fired by the head of customs . One month later , Rosenberg was reappointed by order of the king and the following month the head of customs resigned . Archibald Scott Cleghorn , the king 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , was appointed as the new head of customs . Between March and May 1887 , Rosenberg was paid \$ 300 , ostensibly for working as a guard at the Customs Office , although it was alleged that Rosenberg 's position was a sinecure .

On June 1 , the king gave Rosenberg a gold medal , a silver cup , and \$ 260 . The cup and the obverse of the medal were inscribed with the words " His Majesty Kal?kaua I to Abraham Rosenberg " . The reverse side of the medal featured a profile of the king ; a gold crown on the rim attached the coin to a blue ribbon . The following week , the king made a payment of \$ 100 to a local jeweler , but it is not known whether it was for the gifts given to Rosenberg .

Some royal advisers , who were angered by the trust the king placed in Rosenberg , regarded him with suspicion . For example , Walter M. Gibson , the Prime Minister of Hawaii , noted that King Kal?kaua withheld most of the specific details of his conversations with Rosenberg from him . Kal?kaua 's autocracy and nativism , along with allegations of his corruption , convinced a powerful group of western businessmen and children of Christian missionaries that action should be taken against the king . This led to the June 1887 Constitution , which stripped Kal?kaua of much of his power and significantly weakened the Hawaiian monarchy .

= = Return to San Francisco and death = =

Rosenberg left Hawaii on June 7 , 1887 , booking steerage class passage on the steamer Australia . Some reports state that he left owing to health issues , although others suggest that Rosenberg departed the island because he was concerned about political unrest . He left three weeks before the king signed the June Constitution . Rosenberg returned to San Francisco , but was hospitalized within a month of his return , and died on July 10 , 1887 . He spoke of King Kal?kaua on his deathbed , whispering the king 's name with his dying breath . He was buried at the cemetery of Congregation Sherith Israel in the San Francisco Peninsula ; brief death notices were published in Hawaii- and San Francisco @-@ based newspapers .

Rosenberg left a will in which he requested that his body be cremated using quicklime . Most of his estate was left to his children ; the will stated that his Torah and yad were to be given to his son Adolph , but this was not done as they remained in Hawaii .

= = Legacy = =

In 1888 , the Torah and yad Rosenberg left with King Kal?kaua were included in an exhibition of royal possessions at a bazaar held by King Kal?kaua 's wife , Queen Kapiolani . After King Kal?kaua 's death in 1891 , his stepson David Kaw?nanakoa inherited the items . When Kaw?nanakoa 's wife , Abigail Campbell Kaw?nanakoa , inherited them after David 's death , she loaned them to members of the Hawaiian Jewish community on religious holidays . Her granddaughter , Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kaw?nanakoa , later acquired the items . The yad was bequeathed to Temple

Emanu @-@ El in 1959 , and formally dedicated for use in Torah readings the next year . The Torah was lost in the 1940s , but was recovered in 1972 when a Honolulu attorney found the scroll in the possessions of a recently deceased client and donated it to the temple . The Torah had been damaged and could not be used in services , but the temple later installed a plaque describing Rosenberg below a glass display case housing the Torah and yad .

Although Rosenberg 's Torah was a prized possession of the royal family , there were no recorded Jewish religious services in Hawaii until years after his death . The first Jewish temple in Hawaii was not built until 70 years after Rosenberg presented the Torah to King Kal?kaua . Although Rosenberg styled himself as " Rabbi Rosenberg " ? and the king promised him a plot of land for a synagogue ? there is no evidence that he was a rabbi .

William DeWitt Alexander advanced a negative view of Rosenberg in a late 19th @-@ century history of Hawaii , characterizing him as an accomplice to what he saw as the king 's " efforts to revive heathenism " . A 2008 article in Honolulu magazine also advanced an unfavorable characterization of Rosenberg : a writer for the publication described him as a " smooth talker " and compared him to the 19th @-@ century industrialist Claus Spreckels , arguing that each was a " huckster basking in the rays of Kal?kaua 's power " . A more positive description was offered in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle in 1938 by Harry Rubenstein , who compared Rosenberg to the Baal Shem Jewish mystics of the 1700s .