



# JEWISH TRAVELER

By Maxine Silverstein

## ARUBA



Our December ten-night cruise on the Ruby Princess was such a relaxing trip.

Our final port was Aruba and the Beth Israel Synagogue was setting up for their Hanukkah celebration while we were visiting. What a treat to spend Hanukkah in this beautiful Dutch port.

Dutch influence still lingers on this balmy Caribbean island, part of the Netherlands Antilles until independence in 1986. Aruba is a contrast; the island's arid interior is dotted with cactus and windswept divi-divi trees, while secluded coves and sandy beaches form its coast. Aruba's long and colorful heritage is reflected in its language. Called Papiamentu, it is a tongue that combines elements of Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, African and English. Jews have been recorded living in Aruba since the 16th century. In 1754, Moses Solomon Levie



Maxine with Rabbi Gurevich.

Dutch West Indies Company and founded the Aruba branch, Maduro and Sons. In 1994, Maduro and Sons celebrated 250 years of Jewish settlements by their ancestors.

A small cemetery in Oranjestad contains eight gravestones dating back to 1563. This cemetery is the only landmark of the Jewish presence in Aruba during the past centuries. The community opened a Jewish center in 1943-the Jewish Country Club-and four years later, with the arrival of some Holocaust survivors, the community was officially organized. By 1960, as many young Jews left Aruba for the United States, the Jewish Country Club was closed. On November 4, 1962, the Beth Israel Synagogue was established in Oranjestad. Both Beth Israel and the Jewish Community of Aruba share their place

of worship. Today the congregation has about 75 members, plus 180 over-seas members. Due to its small size, the synagogue blends Sephardic and Ashkenazic tradi-

tions and cultures. We were delighted to meet and tour the facilities with Rabbi Mario Gurevich. Originally from Argentina, Rabbi Gurevich is a fascinating man and is also a pilot and physician. Unfortunately we didn't have too much time to explore this beautiful island. We did enjoy discovering Aruba's perfect beaches and incredibly clear aqua-blue water. We found some wonderful hotels - the Hyatt Regency, the Aruba Marriott and the Westin Aruba. There is also great duty free shopping and lots of gourmet restaurants. There is even a kosher restaurant the Kineret Aruba Glatt Kosher Deli at the Playa Linda Beach Resort. And there are lots of casinos too! What a great place to visit - we only wished we had more time here. But we will definitely go back for a longer stay. ✨



Maxine at Temple Beth Israel.

Maduro, a prominent member of a Sephardic Jewish family in Curacao, established himself in Aruba, with his wife and six children. Maduro worked for the

of worship. Today the congregation has about 75 members, plus 180 over-seas members. Due to its small size, the synagogue blends Sephardic and Ashkenazic tradi-

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\* Dr. Avraham Yitzhak, an IDF major, immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia at age 18 and received a scholarship to study medicine at Ben-Gurion University. He was the first Ethiopian immigrant to graduate from medical school in Israel. He currently serves as a medical officer of the Southern Command of the IDF and is a surgeon at Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva. He is widely admired among his colleagues as an excellent doctor and commander, and served in both the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead. Dr. Yitzhak, the first Ethiopian Israeli doctor, recently accompanied Israel's delegation to Haiti, where he saved many lives.

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