

An Autobiographical Journey Through Jewish Tradition on Margarita Island: Memory, Identity, and Resilience in a Caribbean Community

Abstract

This autobiographical study examines the formation, development, and transformation of the Jewish community on Margarita Island, Venezuela, from the 1970s into the early twenty-first century. Drawing on my personal experience as a community member, educator, and eyewitness, the article traces the arrival of Sephardic and Ashkenazi families during a period of economic expansion; the establishment of religious, cultural, and educational practices in the absence of formal Jewish institutions; and the building of Or Meir, the island's first synagogue. Through narrative reflection and ethnographic detail, the study highlights how Shabbat observance, Hebrew instruction, youth programs, and communal resilience sustained Jewish identity in a geographically isolated setting. The article also situates this microhistory within the broader context of political instability and rising antisemitism in Venezuela, which led to mass Jewish emigration beginning in the 2000s. Ultimately, the narrative reflects on the fragility of diaspora communities and the enduring need to preserve Jewish memory, tradition, and continuity.

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