Since becoming the first ordained rabbi in Jamaica in thirty-three years, I have been working tirelessly with my community to build a Jewish future on this tropical island. Every Jewish community wants to survive and indeed thrive, but there is a particular importance to the preservation and development of the Caribbean Jewish community. As I see it, our collective Jewish future depends on it.

Before I explain my reasoning, let’s briefly review the history of our community in Kingston, Jamaica. The Jewish community of Jamaica traces its origin to Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, who came to the Caribbean in order to escape from the Inquisition. In the late 17th century, the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, known as the Sephardim, settled in various Caribbean and Central American islands. Among the important Jewish communities were those in Curacao; St. Thomas, Virgin Islands; and Suriname. This narrative needs to be preserved and enhanced in actual living terms, and not just through museums, books and museum exhibits. We must be able to tell living examples of that history.

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