



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D. International Relations Activities. 1961-1992.

Box 57, Folder 10, Curaçao, 1985.



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December 6, 1985

Mr. Marc Tannenbaum  
American Jewish Committee  
48 Mamaroneck Ave.  
White Plains, NY 10604

Dear Mr. Tannenbaum:

This January, members from five major national Jewish organizations will participate in a presentation to the government of Curacao and the Netherlands in recognition for providing as a humanitarian haven for Jews for over 300 years.

The joint award is a highlight of the Curacao Jewish Festival in Curacao, January 5-23. It would be an honor to have you, as a leading figure in American Jewry, to make this presentation.

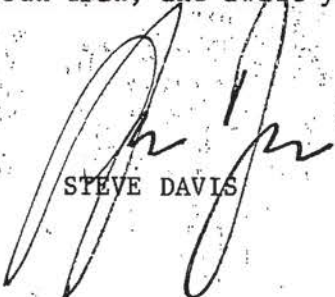
The ceremonies will take place at the Curacao Concorde Hotel on Saturday evening, January 11th (tentatively again on the 18th) to accommodate the many guests, mostly from New York, who plan to visit the island during this festive period. Also, you are welcome to attend services on the Friday evening before the presentation at the Mikve-Israel Synagogue, the oldest continually operating synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. Following services, a reception will be hosted by the Curacao Jewish community.

You and your party will be the guests of the Curacao government during your stay with air transportation provided by American Airlines. You may find it most convenient to fly down on a Thursday morning and return on Monday afternoon.

For your information, here are the participating organizations: B'nai B'rith, Bnai Zion, The National Council of Jewish Women, The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and United Synagogue of America. A backgrounder on the program is enclosed.

We look forward to having you serve as the spokesman at this significant cultural renewal on Jan 11th, and await your reply.

Cordially.

  
STEVE DAVIS

Contact: Sy Ripka/Steve Davis

## CURACAO JEWISH FESTIVAL RECOGNIZES HUMANITARIAN HAVEN

NEW YORK, NY----When the United States declared its independence in 1776, the small Caribbean island of Curacao had close to 2,000 Jews - more than all of the 13 original states combined.

For over 300 years, Curacao has been home and host to generations of Jews. From January 5 through 23, 1986, members from five prominent American Jewish organizations will participate in the Curacao Jewish Festival to renew these cultural ties. These groups are: B'nai B'rith, Bnai Zion, National Council of Jewish Women, Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the United Synagogue of America.

Visitors will attend services at the famed Mikve-Israel Synagogue, oldest in the Western Hemisphere, and be hosted at a reception by the local Jewish community. Also, a joint presentation will be made on behalf of the national organizations to the government of Curacao at a gala banquet. Both events will be held twice during this unusual program scheduled at the height of the Caribbean winter season when guests can enjoy a host of other vacation amenities including a native street carnival, special sightseeing tours and nightly entertainment and gambling at several plush hotel casinos.

This chapter of Jewish history dates back to the 1650's when Sephardic Jews from Holland crossed the Atlantic to establish a congregation in Curacao. Soon, these early arrivals were joined by Brazilian and Portuguese Jews who sought refuge from the Inquisition. The tropical crossroads provided a climate of temperance and mutual respect, under which the Jews of Curacao formed an active and prosperous community that thrives to this day.

Its Mikve-Israel Synagogue, constructed in 1732, serves as the religious beacon for the community. Antique brass chandeliers hang from a lofty ceiling. Soft, white sand covers the wooden floor (until 1880, sand from Jerusalem was always mixed with Caribbean sand).

Adjacent to the temple is the Jewish Cultural Museum which has among its exhibits the synagogue's original mikvah, silver from the 17th and 18th centuries, a collection of ancient prayer books and a 100-year-old seder table setting.

Special 5 and 8 day packages are available exclusively through the travel departments of the participating organizations. For additional information on the combined cultural and vacation packages, contact the Curacao Tourist Board, 400 Madison Ave., NY 10017, tel. 212/751-8266.

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# NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE** Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

*MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CURACAO** - Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, director of international relations of the American Jewish Committee, has been invited to address a ceremony here honoring the governments of Curacao, Dutch West Indies, and of the Netherlands in recognition of their providing humanitarian haven for Jews for over 300 years.

The ceremony, sponsored by the Curacao Jewish community and six national Jewish organizations, will be held Saturday evening, January 11, at the Curacao Concorde Hotel. In addition to his address, Rabbi Tanenbaum has been asked to make a presentation of awards to the Netherlands Governor General and the Curacao Lieutenant Governor.

The ceremony will be preceded by Friday evening services at the Mikve Israel Synagogue, the oldest continually functioning synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.

According to Rabbi Tanenbaum, Curacao is the home of the oldest Jewish community in the Western Hemisphere, having been founded in 1651-2. Most of Curacao's 800 Jews live in Willemstad, the capital of the Netherlands Antilles and of Curacao. Half of the community is Sephardi, largely refugees from the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. The Ashkenazi community, of East European origin, developed in the period between the two world wars.

Rabbi Tanenbaum said he was honored to be invited by the Curacao Jewish community to take part in this significant ceremony because "it affords the Jewish people an opportunity to reflect on the vital importance of supporting the principles of religious liberty and safe haven for refugees in a world that urgently needs such affirmations today."

The participating Jewish organizations, in addition to the AJC, are B'nai B'rith, B'nai Zion, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the United Synagogue of America.

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

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