

= History of the Jews in Mauritius =

Judaism is a minor religion in Mauritius . The first Jews arrived from Haifa , British Palestine ( now Israel ) , in the 1940s because they were denied entry to Palestine by the British Government . There currently are about 43 Jews in total in Mauritius . There is a synagogue in Curepipe , and a Jewish cemetery in Bambous .

= = History = =

= = = Patria and World War II = = =

In September 1940 , the Atlantic , Milos , and Pacific , picked up 3 @, @ 600 Jews from Vienna , Gdansk and Prague in Tulcea , Romania , to be sent to Palestine . The Jews that arrived in Palestine came without entry permits and were subsequently denied entry by the British government , specifically Sir Harold MacMichael , who was the High Commissioner . The British decided to deport the immigrants to either Trinidad and Tobago or Mauritius , both British colonies . On 25 November 1940 , the first ship carrying the 1 @, @ 800 Jews to Mauritius , the Patria , was accidentally bombed by the Haganah , who wanted the Jews to stay in Palestine . Their intentions were to cripple the ship . There were 260 fatalities and 172 injuries . There were only enough lifeboats for 805 , since the capacity was 805 when the Patria was a French ship . When the British repossessed the boat , they increased the capacity to 1 @, @ 800 but still had the same number of lifeboats .

The surviving Jews were sent to Atlit detainee camp . The remaining 1 @, @ 584 refugees from the Atlantic who were not on the Patria were initially also imprisoned in Atlit , but were sent to Mauritius on 9 December 1940 . When they arrived , they were sent to a detainment camp in Beau @-@ Bassin .

In the camp , the detainees suffered from tropical diseases and inadequate food and clothing . Jewish organizations such as the South African Jewish Board of Deputies , the Jewish Agency , and the Zionist Federation , sent food , clothing , medicine , and religious items to the detainees . Initially , a ban on interaction between the sexes was enforced ; the men were held in a former jailhouse and the women in adjacent iron huts . After the ban was lifted , 60 children were born in the camp . In total , 128 prisoners died in the camp , and were buried in the Jewish section of St. Martin Cemetery . At the end of World War II , the detainees were given the choice of returning to their former homes in Europe or immigrating to Palestine . Most chose Palestine , and on August 6 , 1945 , 1 @, @ 320 landed in Haifa .

= = = Present = = =

According to the population census of 2011 , there are 43 Jews in Mauritius . The current community is unrelated to the 1940s fugitives . The first Bar Mitzvah in Mauritius since World War II took place in 2000 .

There is also one synagogue in Curepipe , the Amicale Maurice Israel Center , which was opened in 2005 . The Saint Martin Cemetery in Saint Martin near Beau @-@ Bassin , is the only Jewish cemetery in Mauritius . The bodies of the 127 died detainees as well as other Jewish people are buried there . Part of this has been fictionalised in Natacha Appanah 's ' The Last Brother ' . It relates the childhood experiences of Raj and David , a little boy from Prague .

Many , if not most Mauritians are unaware of the existence of such a graveyard in Mauritius . Each grave recalls the story of deportee life in an alien country , the result of mass deportation from Haifa by the British of refugees who escaped Nazi barbarity , only to find themselves in jail in a tiny British island colony where they died of disease instead of creating new lives for themselves in Palestine / Israel .