Latin America has had a Jewish presence since the 15th century when Jews fleeing the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition began to settle in the region. Today, there are more than a half-million Jews in Latin America. Some descend from the Jewish “cowboys” who came to South America from the Russia Empire in the late 19th century while others arrived as refugees from World War II era Central Europe. Still more came from the Middle East in the 20th century, as the region de-colonized. All lived in a society that remains predominantly Catholic and has a long history of institutionalized anti-Semitism. Most have lived through difficult economic and political moments. Yet in spite of their minority status, the Jewish-Latin America continues to thrive.

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