


PLURALIST JUDAISM: HISTORY OF OFFICIAL JEWISH MOVEMENTS IN RECENT CENTURIES ESPECIALLY IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

JUDAÍSMO PLURALISTA: HISTÓRIA DOS MOVIMENTOS JUDAICOS OFICIAIS NOS ÚLTIMOS SÉCULOS ESPECIALMENTE NOS SÉCULOS XX E XXI

JUDAÍSMO PLURALISTA: HISTORIA DE LOS MOVIMIENTOS JUDÍOS OFICIALES EN LOS SIGLOS RECIENTES ESPECIALMENTE EN LOS SIGLOS XX Y XXI

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Alan Freire de Lima¹, Arlete Freire de Lima²

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Judaism has been characterized by a diversity of thought and political and religious divisions since ancient times, which today can be represented by Jewish denominations or movements. Objective: This research aims to show how Jewish movements and their respective Jewish denominations have developed throughout Jewish history, focusing on Jewish movements in recent decades and centuries. Method: This research used a literature review of Jewish newspapers, Jewish websites, and scientific articles, using a qualitative, exploratory methodology. Results: Judaism has undergone several transformations, from Orthodox Judaism to non-Orthodox Judaism or Progressive Judaism. New Jewish movements have emerged, generally as offshoots of Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism, with the emergence of pluralist, reconstructionist, humanist, universalist, and renewalist Jewish movements, among several other Jewish denominations. Conclusions: Judaism has as its principles its renewing, progressive, humanist, democratic and evolutionary aspects, in constant mutation, contemporary Judaism is driven by democratic and technological societies such as the United States of America, especially.

Keywords: Jewish Denominations. Jewish Movements. Jewish Diversity. Jewish Pluralism.

RESUMO

Introdução: O judaísmo desde tempos remotos é constituído por uma diversidade de pensamentos e divisões políticas e religiosas, que hoje pode ser retratado pelas denominações ou movimentos judaicos. Objetivo: Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo mostrar como os movimentos judaicos e as respectivas denominações judaicas se desenvolveram ao longo da história judaica com foco nos movimentos judaicos das últimas décadas nos últimos séculos. Método: Para a presente pesquisa foi utilizada a revisão de literatura em jornais judaicos, websites judaicos e artigos científicos, dentro de uma metodologia qualitativa de cunho exploratório. Resultados: O judaísmo passou por diversas transformações, desde o judaísmo ortodoxo ao judaísmo não ortodoxo ou judaísmo progressista. Surgiram novos movimentos judaicos, geralmente como desdobramentos do

¹ Dr. in Psychology. European International University (EIU). Paris, France. E-mail: alan.lima79@edu.pucrs.br

² Dr. in Jewish Theology and Anthropology. Logos University International (UNILOGOS). Paris, France. E-mail: arletefreiredelima@gmail.com

judaísmo ortodoxo e do judaísmo reformista, com o surgimento de movimentos judaicos pluralista, reconstrucionista, humanista, universalista, renovador, dentre diversas outras denominações judaicas. Conclusões: O judaísmo tem como princípios os seus aspectos renovador, progressista, humanista, democrático e evolutivo, em constante mutação, o judaísmo contemporâneo é impulsionado por sociedades democráticas e tecnológicas como os Estados Unidos da América, especialmente.

Palavras-chave: Denominações Judaicas. Movimentos Judaicos. Diversidade Judaica. Pluralismo Judaico.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El judaísmo se ha caracterizado por una diversidad de pensamiento y divisiones políticas y religiosas desde la antigüedad, que hoy en día pueden representarse mediante denominaciones o movimientos judíos. Objetivo: Esta investigación busca mostrar cómo los movimientos judíos y sus respectivas denominaciones judías se han desarrollado a lo largo de la historia judía, centrándose en los movimientos judíos de las últimas décadas y siglos. Método: Esta investigación utilizó una revisión bibliográfica de periódicos judíos, sitios web judíos y artículos científicos, utilizando una metodología cualitativa y exploratoria. Resultados: El judaísmo ha experimentado diversas transformaciones, desde el judaísmo ortodoxo hasta el judaísmo no ortodoxo o progresista. Han surgido nuevos movimientos judíos, generalmente como derivaciones del judaísmo ortodoxo y el judaísmo reformista, con el surgimiento de movimientos judíos pluralistas, reconstruccionistas, humanistas, universalistas y renovadores, entre varias otras denominaciones judías. Conclusiones: El judaísmo tiene como principios sus aspectos renovadores, progresistas, humanistas, democráticos y evolutivos; en constante mutación, el judaísmo contemporáneo se ve impulsado por sociedades democráticas y tecnológicas como la estadounidense, especialmente.

Palabras clave: Denominaciones Judías. Movimientos Judíos. Diversidad Judia. Pluralismo Judío.

1 INTRODUCTION

"To save a Jewish life is to improve the world!"
(Arlete Freire de Lima)

"To save the life of a Jew is to save the world!"
(Alan Freire de Lima)

This scientific research aims to address the question of the history of Jewish denominations especially between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in a more in-depth way the Jewish movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, whose Jewish movements can provide an important understanding of the beginnings of how Jewish movements, divisions and denominations have always been present in Jewish history and culture.

One of the big problems in most societies and civilizations may be the lack of information in their official languages about how religions really worked in ancient times, and how they work today, especially the population of certain religions, countries with an almost uninterrupted democratic history such as the United States of America ended up concentrating most of the racial and ethnic-religious minorities in the world, as well as having a greater potential to offer information with greater credibility of the "living" religions in its territory.

2 HISTORY OF JEWISH MOVEMENTS AND JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

2.1 WHAT WERE THE JEWISH MOVEMENTS LIKE IN ANCIENT TIMES

Jewish movements (Jewish denominations) are not new Jewish phenomena, since antiquity Jews have formed Jewish movements relatively analogous to contemporary Jewish denominations, ranging from the different interpretations of the Jewish sacred scriptures, as well as in their degree of integration into the society in which they are inserted. Jewish movements that are more inserted in local society tend to absorb the political, socio-cultural values of the region in which they are inserted.

Contemporary Judaism adds to the list of Jewish studies, not only Jewish studies but also historical, cultural and scientific studies of the society of which they are a part, something that has not occurred continuously throughout the history of Judaism.

According to *Judaism 101*, which is a *website* that serves for a large part of the Jewish community as a reference for information, Jewish and historical studies, it allows us to make

a brief overview of the Jewish movement of antiquity, and in more detail of the most recent centuries.

The earliest records that there were formal differences of opinion and Jewish religious way of life among the Jews date back to the time of the Maccabean revolt, *the Maccabees* revolted against the rule of the Hellenists, the Jews were divided between the more Hellenistic or Hellenizing strands, and the *Chasidean Jews*, the latter more traditionalist.

However, when the *Seleucid Greeks* began to oppress all the Jews, war broke out against the Greeks, and the entire Jewish people united as a unified Jewish people, regardless of the philosophical, religious, and political differences that existed between them to face a common enemy of Judaism and Jews, the Greeks.

Even after the war that unified all Jews against Greek domination and oppression, the Jewish people once again split into three groups: the *Essenes* (they were an ascetic and mystical Jewish group devoted to strict discipline), the *Sadducees* (*tzedukim* in Hebrew) adopted a strict, narrow, and unchanging interpretation of the written *Torah*, did not believe in the oral *Torah*, and the *Pharisees* (believed that God gave the Jews a written *Torah* and an oral *Torah*, both equally binding and open to interpretation by the rabbis).

Perhaps the earliest records we have of a formal difference of religious opinion among Jews date back to the time of the Maccabean revolt, which is the basis for the Hanukkah story. At that time, the land of Israel was under the relatively benevolent control of Greece and was deeply influenced by Greek culture. Hellenizing Jews were opposed by a traditionalist religious group known as the Chasideans (not directly related to the modern movement known as Chassidism). When the Seleucid Greeks began to oppress the Jews, war broke out and the Jewish people united in their opposition to the Greeks. The war continued for 25 years, and the Jewish people remained united in purpose. But after the war was over, the Jewish people split into three groups: the Essenes, the Sadducees (*tzedukim* in Hebrew), and the Pharisees (JUDAISM 101, 2023, online).

As a result of what has been exposed above, the diversity among the Jewish people is perceived. New Jewish movements emerged in the modern era such as in the eighteenth century, in the 1700s, known as *Hasidism* which originated in Eastern Europe, founded by Israel ben Eliezer, also known as *Baal Shem Tov*. *Hasidism* introduced personal experiences and Jewish mysticism into traditionalist Judaism:

In the 1700s, the first of the modern movements developed in Eastern Europe. This movement, known as Chasidism, was founded by Israel ben Eliezer, more commonly

known as the Baal Shem Tov (Teacher of the Good Name) or the Besht (an acronym for Baal Shem Tov). [...] Chassidism emphasized other, more personal experiences and mysticism as alternative routes to G-d. This was a very popular idea because, contrary to common belief, not all Jews are intellectuals! (JUDAISM 101, 2023).

It is worth noting that before the *Chasidism* movement, Judaism emphasized Jewish education as the way to get closer to God, but almost all Jewish currents or movements, or Jewish denominations, to some degree, encourage Jewish studies as a way to get closer to God.

On *Shabbat* the holiest and most nuclear day of Judaism there is a whole ritual of prayers and cultural Jewish practices, one of the main Jewish prayers is *Shema Israel*, there are even Jewish prayers for the cure of diseases such as *Mi Schebeirach*, which practically all Jews pray for other Jews and rabbis for the cure of suffering and physical and psychological illnesses among their loved ones.

2.2 MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MOVEMENTS

Within the Jewish demographic historical perspective, the *Jewish website Jewish Virtual Library* states that in the year 1654 (seventeenth century) there were about 25 Jews in the United States, in the year 1900 there were about 1 million Jews, already in the period of the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe, in the period between World War I and World War II between 1910 and 1945 many Jews emigrated from Europe to the United States, reaching a population of about 1910 4,500,000 Jews, and since then the American Jewish population has jumped from 5,000,000 million Jews to more than 7,698,840 million Jews in 2023, the American Jewish community is at its peak, surpassing the Israeli Jewish population that in 2023 made a total of 7,400,000 million Israeli Jews.

The *Jewish website Judaism 101* (2023), points out that the percentage of Jews in the North American Jewish community who have no affiliation with the largest Jewish denominations, such as: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism, Renewing Judaism and Humanist Judaism, approaches 35%, as we will see below:

Approximately 5.7 million of the world's 14.8 million Jews live in the United States. There are basically three major movements in the U.S. today: Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Some people also include a fourth movement, the reconstructionist movement, although this movement is substantially smaller than the other three. Orthodox and sometimes conservative are described as "traditional" movements.

Reformists, reconstructionists, and sometimes conservatives are described as "liberal" or "modern" movements. And many American Jews (about 35 percent) identify as just Jews with no affiliation with any movement. (JUDAISM 101, 2023)

The above data deal with the demographic phenomenon and Jewish denominations between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries in official Judaism, whose Jewish population is growing in American territory, consequently many rabbinical seminaries (*yeshivot*) emerged to supply Jews for Jewish religious formation to the formation of rabbinic Jewish leaders. In recent centuries there has been a Jewish renewal, Jews without affiliation are increasing in number and influence with the ancient Jewish denominations.

From the twentieth century onwards there was the emergence of pluralistic Judaism with ordained rabbis, *Semicha*, in rabbinical seminaries such as the *Hebrew College*, *Academy for Jewish Religion AJR*, *Pluralistic Jewish Seminary*, *Hebrew Seminary*, *Rabbinical Seminary International*, *Jewish Spiritual Leaders Institute*, *Rimmon Rabbinical School* (Jewish Religious Movement, 2023), etc. with a view to training rabbis to serve these Jews in synagogues and non-denominational or pluralistic Jewish communities.

The number of Jews who belonged to ancient Jewish denominations who migrated to pluralistic Judaism or without affiliation is growing and extremely relevant to understand the present and future of Judaism as a *post-denominational* movement (or post-denominations and tans denominations), which means that Jews identify themselves only as Jews, regardless of the Jewish denominations in force until then.

Below we will first discuss the Jewish demographics that exist in the United States of America, which is already different from what was disclosed a few decades ago, some data on the *Judaism 101 website* is outdated, as well as the Jewish denominations both Orthodox and non-Orthodox.

The number of Jews in the United States of America has jumped from 5.5 million Jews according to estimates in the recent past to about 8 million Jews, as reported by surveys conducted by *Brandeis University* in the United States:

The Jewish population in the United States surpassed 8 million in 2020, according to a new study published by the American Jewish Population Project (AJPP) at Brandeis University in Boston, Massachusetts, up from 5.5 million in the 1990s (EICHNER, 2023, online).

Pew Research corroborates what Eichner (2023) published in the Jewish newspaper, *Ynet News*, as well as Forman (2021) published in the Jewish Journal, show us clearly about

the real estimate of the Jewish population of the United States of America, which makes up a total of between 7.5 and 8 million Jews.

In 2019, DellaPergola estimated the "connected Jewish" population in the United States at about 8 million. The *Pew Research Center's* 2020 estimate of 7.5 million Jews of all ages roughly matches the current total of the American Jewish Population Project AJPP (PEW RESEARCH, 2021).

Likewise:

A new study estimates that there are 7.6 million Jews in the United States, which is equivalent to 2.4 percent of the country's population. The new estimates and an interactive map were produced by the American Jewish Population Project, an effort of researchers at the Steinhardt Social Research Institute, which is part of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University in Waltham (FORMAN, 2021).

According to Wikipedia about the characteristics of the American Jewish population. In the United States of America, the number of Jews varies between 7.5 and 8 million Jews, and if we were to consider the law of return of the State of Israel, which considers Jews who are descendants of Jews having one of the Jewish parents or one of the grandparents as Jews and converts to Judaism, for example, for the purposes of eligibility to *allyah* (Jewish migration to Israel) the figure for the number of American Jews jumps to more than 15 million Jews. The United States of America concentrates almost twice the number of descendants of Jews and Jews in relation to the total Jewish population of the State of Israel, which is about 6.5 to 7.4 million Israeli Jews.

It is estimated that up to 15 million Americans are part of the "enlarged" American Jewish population, representing 4.5% of the total U.S. population, made up of those who have at least one Jewish grandparent and would be eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. (WIKIPEDIA, 2025).

Returning to the core of the theme, which is the origins of Jewish denominations, especially in the last centuries between the modern and contemporary eras, we will dwell on the impact of the reform of Judaism as a split between traditionalist Judaism and the new Jewish movement, Reform Judaism, which was deeply influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment and rationalism. in which science, technology, philosophy, and economic, cultural, and social development were imperative against Jewish religious fundamentalism:

Reform Judaism was born at the time of the French Revolution, a time when European Jews were first recognized as citizens of the countries in which they lived. Ghettos were being abolished, special badges no longer existed, people could settle wherever they wanted, dress as they wanted, and pursue whatever occupations they wanted. Many Jews settled outside the Jewish districts and began to live like their neighbors and speak the language of the land. They went to public schools and universities, began to neglect Jewish studies, and disregarded the Shulchan Aruch (JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, 2023).

According to the *Jewish Virtual Library* (2023) a new conception of Judaism was introduced in Germany, Reform Judaism began in a very revolutionary way in which circumcision began to be questioned and criticized, especially Rabbi Abraham Geiger, who considered it a barbaric and bloodthirsty practice, the Hebrew language was replaced by German, the religious coming of age ceremony, *Bar Mitzvah* was replaced by a confirmation of faith, the laws of *kashrut* were abandoned, the traditional *Shabbat* restrictions were no longer followed, and so on.

Between 1810 and 1820, congregations in Seesen, Hamburg, and Berlin instituted fundamental changes to traditional Jewish practices and beliefs, such as mixed seating, observance of festivals on a single day, and the use of a singer/choir. Many leaders of the Reform movement adopted a very "rejective" view of certain Jewish practices and discarded various traditions and rituals:

Circumcision was not practiced and was considered barbaric. The Hebrew language was removed from the liturgy and replaced by German. The hope of a restoration of the Jews in Israel was officially renounced, and it was officially declared that Germany would be the new Zion. The ceremony in which a child celebrated the Bar Mitzvah was replaced by a "confirmation" ceremony. The laws of Kashrut and family purity were officially declared "repugnant" to people of modern thought and were not observed. Shabbat was observed on Sunday. Traditional restrictions on Shabbat behavior were not followed (JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, 2023).

Abraham Geiger believed that women could have a prominent role in public worship, however his gender ideology was still rooted in traditionalist values as we can corroborate below:

Abraham Geiger was a key figure in the founding of the Reform movement in Germany and developed the theology and philosophy of Jewish life of the new movement in nineteenth-century Germany. Geiger believed that women should have a role in public

worship, but his gender ideology remained firmly rooted in the doctrine of the "separate spheres" of middle-class German society, that placed women in the realm of the home and men outside it. Through biblical interpretation, he portrayed the ideal Jewish woman: spiritual, submissive, obedient, modest, and above all, homebound (KOLTUN-FROMM, 2023).

The Jew and rabbi Abraham Geiger was the most outstanding Jewish Reform theologian, from an early age he was interested in secular studies such as Latin and Greek, and sought German universities to study:

Like many of his contemporary German Jewish theologians, Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), the leading theorist and intellectual founder of the Reform Judaism movement, was raised in a traditional religious home and educated in the classical rabbinic texts as a child. But after learning Greek and Latin, Geiger craved knowledge beyond his insular Jewish upbringing and sought it out in German universities. At the end of his university studies, he accepted rabbinical positions in Wiesbaden, Breslau, Frankfurt, and Berlin (KOLTUN-FROMM, 2023).

The *Jewish* website *Judaism 101* describes important data, however incompletely, as it does not include most of the Jewish denominations or Jewish movements in the United States of America, as well as in Israel.

In the twentieth century, there was the rise and formalization of pluralistic or *trans-denominational Judaism*, the creation of the Reconstructionist Judaism movement by Mordecai Kaplan, the formalization of humanistic or secular Judaism by the Reform rabbi Sherwin Wine, among other Jewish movements.

To begin with, the Jewish movements that emerged in the twentieth century will be described, the reconstructionist Judaism founded by the Jew Mordechai Kaplan, as a result of the fact that he was expelled from Orthodox Judaism (*cherem*) for his advanced ideas, that is, adaptations of Judaism within Western societies in the context of the first decade of the twentieth century.

Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the motivations for the "excommunications" called *cherem* in Judaism were the most varied, among which we will mention below:

The Talmud alludes to twenty-four offenses punishable by excommunication. Some examples include: pronouncing God's name in vain, inducing another person to sin, refusing to testify before a court of law at the appointed time, selling non-kosher meat

as kosher meat, marrying a non-Jewish individual (JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, 2023).

According to the American Humanist Association (2023) the case of Mordechai Kaplan's "cherem" excommunication of Orthodox Judaism was more complex than in the examples described above, it was more of a political divergence without disregarding religious issues, such as a non-theistic view of Judaism, in addition to some adaptations such as the modification of the siddur prayers and his interpretation of the Jewish scriptures, non-normative.

The need to create Jewish denominations, movements, and branches that would cater to diversity of thought, secularization, and the adoption of democratic, secular, inclusive, and pluralistic principles in Judaism was the order of the day to stop Jewish religious fundamentalism and the alienation of the Jewish people.

The issue of the exclusion of Jews who diverged from Judaism was an imperative to be faced in Jewish culture until the middle of the twentieth century, something to be overcome and suppressed, including rabbinic arbitrariness and fundamentalist, extremist and intolerant Jews.

Below is how Reconstructionist Judaism emerged under the leadership of the Jew Mordechai Kaplan:

In 1945, Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement, was excommunicated by the Assembly of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States. Kaplan's ideas about Judaism were critical of the Orthodox and Reform movements and thus insulted many people. Above the insults, Kaplan's ideas threatened conventional Jewish wisdom and further fragmented Jewish communities (JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, 2023).

Likewise:

Reconstructionist Judaism has a naturalistic theology developed by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan in the late 1920s. Theology combines atheistic beliefs with religious terminology to construct a philosophy that is religiously satisfying for those who have lost faith in traditional religion. There is diversity in the movement in that most Reconstructionist Jews reject theism and define themselves as religious naturalists. Kaplan believed that ultimately the world would be perfected, but only as a result of humanity's combined efforts over generations. Kaplan saw Judaism as the evolution of the religious civilization of the Jewish people. Each generation is responsible for guiding this evolution to meet the needs of contemporary Jews (AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, 2023).

Humanistic Judaism, also called secular Judaism, was founded by Reform Rabbi Sherwin Wine. Humanistic Judaism is officially considered the 5th official Jewish denomination present in the United States of America, Canada, Israel, United Kingdom etc., it offered a non-theistic alternative to Judaism that sought to abstain from superstitions and the supernatural, to be Jewish to Humanistic or Secular Judaism. It means living a life based on Jewish culture, following the Jewish calendar, Jewish cuisine, contemplating the arts and critical thinking, predominantly non-theistic, a culturalist Judaism unlike Reform Judaism and Orthodox Judaism, for example:

Humanistic Judaism, founded in 1963 in Detroit, Michigan, by (Reform) Rabbi Sherwin Wine, offers a nontheistic alternative in contemporary Jewish life. Humanist Jews believe in creating a meaningful Jewish life, free from supernatural authority, and in reviving the secular roots of Judaism (AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, 2023).

It is of paramount importance to mention that humanist rabbinical seminaries are present both in the United States and in the State of Israel, whose institution is officially called the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ) in Detroit, Michigan, in the United States, and Tmura-IISHJ, in the State of Israel. Tmura-IISHJ, the sister Israeli organization of IISHJ-North America, was founded in 2004 and held its first rabbinical ordination in 2006. Tmura-IISHJ has also sponsored a rabbinical association for its graduates and has recently started secular humanistic Jewish communities in various locations across Israel.

The IISHJ's current activities focus on its work in North America and support for its Israeli partner, Tmura-IISHJ. IISHJ's original campus is located at the Ben and Lorraine Pivnick Center for Humanistic Judaism in Farmington Hills, a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. The administrative headquarters of the IISHJ is in Deerfield, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Seminars are held online, at the Deerfield and Pivnick Center campuses, as well as with secular and humanistic communities throughout North America. (INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, 2025).

In Renewal Judaism, being here called an American Jewish movement, initiated by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Renewal Judaism calls itself a *transdenominational* Jewish movement, founded on mystical traditions, music and medieval elements, the conception of spirituality is a strong engine as in *transdenominational Jewish movements* such as that of Reform Rabbi Mordecai Finley, religious leader of the online synagogue, *Ohr*

Hatorah Synagogue, whose headquarters are in the city of Los Angeles, California, has many characteristics of Reform Judaism and *Trans Denominational* Judaism, lately the names of Judaism without filiation, *post denominational* and *non-denominational* are also used:

Renewal Judaism is a recent American movement started in the 1960s by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a Hasidic rabbi. It focuses on spirituality and social justice, but it does not address the issue of Jewish law. The term Jewish Renewal describes a set of practices that attempt to reinvigorate Judaism with mystical, musical, and meditative practices drawn from a variety of traditional and non-traditional Jewish sources and others. It describes itself as "a worldwide transdenominational movement grounded in the prophetic and mystical traditions of Judaism" (AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, 2023).

Emphasizing more on the pluralistic Jewish movement, which defines itself as a movement without affiliations with rigid, rigid and outdated Jewish denominations, they already represent at least between 30% and 32% of the North American Jewish community, according to data from *Pew Research* between 2013 and 2021, and may exceed the figure of 50% in the not too distant future.

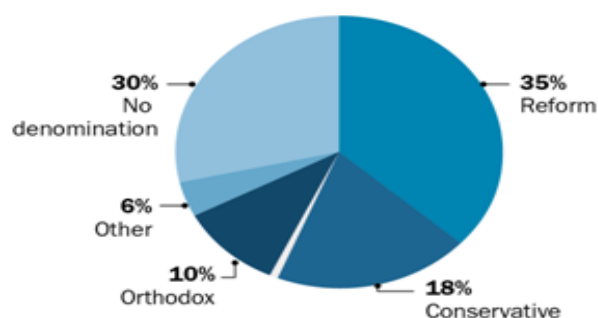
The following are figures about Jewish movements and their evolution in North American territory, which ratifies what we have shown about the growth of Jewish pluralism, pluralistic Jewish movements (trans-post-non-denominational), the United States of America concentrates the largest Jewish community in the diaspora and rabbinical seminaries, *yeshivot* and Jewish universities such as *Brandeis University*.

This tendency of Jews to organize themselves outside the largest and most prominent Jewish denominations is an influence that tends to extend beyond the North American territory, as in Israel and on the European continent as well:

Figure 1

Jewish identity by denomination

Jewish Denominational Identity



Source: Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Based on the net Jewish population (both Jews by religion and Jews of no religion).

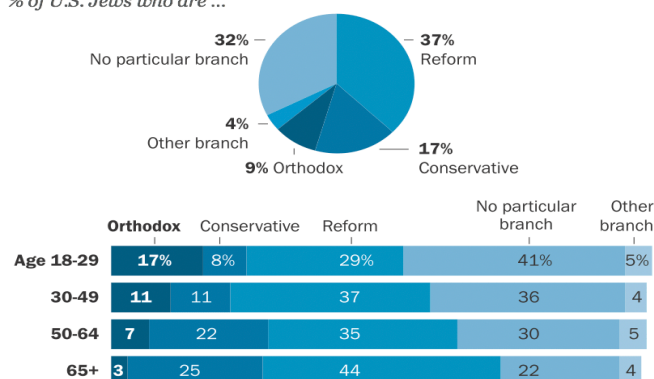
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Research Center 2013

Figure 2 - Jewish denomination by age group

Compared with older Jews, youngest Jewish adults include larger shares of both Orthodox and people with no denominational identity

% of U.S. Jews who are ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures include both Jews by religion and Jews of no religion. Virtually all Orthodox Jews (99%) and Conservative Jews (99%) in the survey are Jews by religion, as are 88% of Reform Jews. Most Jews who are unaffiliated with a branch are Jews of no religion (65%).

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 19, 2019-June 3, 2020, among U.S. adults. "Jewish Americans in 2020"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

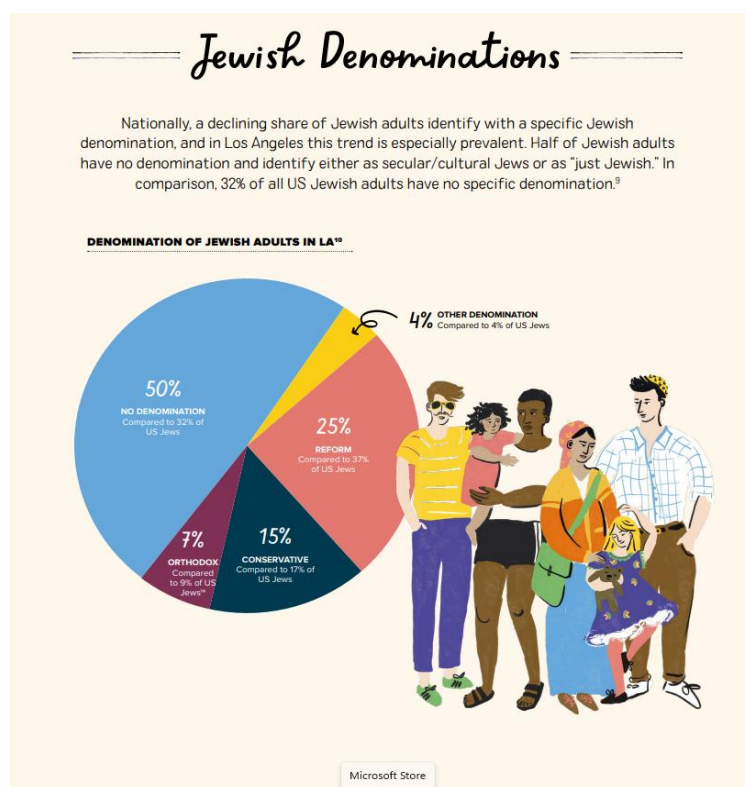
Source: Pew Research Center 2021.

The 2013 and 2021 data from the *Pew Research Center* above reveal that there is a significant number of Reform Jews and pluralistic Jews together already representing about 69% of American Jews.

In the city of Los Angeles, California, the number of Jews who identify as denominationless or pluralistic Jews already exceeds 50% of the official Jewish population, according to data from the *Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University* (2022):

Figure 2

Jewish denomination in Los Angeles, USA



Source: Brandeis University 2022.

In the Israeli Jewish newspaper *Haaretz*, Judy Maltz (2022), demonstrates that the European community is also at an evolutionary stage of Judaism, which leans towards pluralistic, *transdenominational* or *post-denominational* Judaism, as if imagined from the North American Jewish experience, is a trend that tends to spread throughout the planet.

Jewish identity can no longer be strictly linked to Jewish denominations, but rather in the autonomy of Jews to move in Jewish denominations, in new ways of aggregating Jews from the most varied Jewish denominations in synagogues and rabbinical schools that do not discriminate or segregate Jews and their Jewishness by denominations.

We can say that we are taking a leap to a present and a future that intends to settle "the pieces of the old world" that divided and separated people, curtailing their individual freedoms of thought, opinion, ways of living, political opinion, degree of observance and

Jewish secularism, which developed over so many centuries to reach the desired current state against Jewish fundamentalism and religious extremism.

Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the *post-denominational* or *trans-denominational movement*, and citing some examples of synagogues and rabbinical schools that we have already mentioned above just for the purpose of building a bridge with the Judaism of renewal:

For some, being denominationless simply means not maintaining an affiliation with a specific movement to serve individuals from a wide variety of Jewish backgrounds. Used in this manner, nondenominational is a useful descriptor of many college Hillels or community schools. Nondenominational synagogues also exist, and there is even a nondenominational rabbinical seminary, the Academy for Jewish Religion of the city of Yonkers in New York, which began ordaining rabbis in 1956 (MY JEWISH LEARNING, 2023).

As mentioned above, nondenominational Judaism focuses on serving Jews from the most varied Jewish movements and denominations, to which these Jews no longer have affinity and identification with denominations, but with a Judaism as a whole, more fluid and without denominational boundaries:

In 2000, the Academy for Jewish Religion California (AJRCA) became the first explicitly transdenominational rabbinical school. [...] Boston's Hebrew College is also an influential transdenominational rabbinic and cantorial school. It opened in 1921 as a Hebrew teachers' college, with the intention of making the Hebrew language more accessible to American Jews. Hebrew College launched its ordination program in 2003 (MY JEWISH LEARNING, 2023).

There is a *trans-denominational synagogue* among several other synagogues without affiliation to the old denominations, such as the *Ohr Hatorah Synagogue* which is located in the city of Los Angeles, California in the United States of America, which is defined as follows:

The Ohr HaTorah Synagogue was founded by Rabbi Mordecai and Meirav Finley in December 1993 with the support of a small group of families. [...] Ohr HaTorah is "transdenominational" in the sense that our approach reflects and incorporates aspects of various denominations of Judaism. Our mission is to encourage and include those who choose Judaism as their faith, religion, and spiritual path. We especially support those who hope to become Jews by choice in the future. Like those of the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, we believe that Judaism is evolutionary and developmentalist; we do not believe that Halakha – Jewish law – is the direct will of God. Jews have a responsibility in every generation to add to this evolutionary

development and growth. We do not identify as Reformation due to the more traditional nature of our services and our approach to tradition observance. We depart from the reconstructionists on the issue of a personal God—our adult services, school, and study are informed by belief in God's reality (OHR HATORAH SYNAGOGUE, 2023).

In Orthodox Judaism there are some examples of internal ramifications such as the Modern Orthodox Jewish movement, the Open Orthodox Jewish movement and the New Orthodox *Judaism*, the *Open Orthodox* Jewish movement, founded by the activist and Orthodox rabbi Rabbi Avi Weiss, who states that Orthodox Jews are not homogeneous in thought, in political vision, On the issue of inclusion and diversity within Orthodox Judaism:

Nearly 20 years ago, as Modern Orthodoxy continued its march to the right, a pioneering seminary was opened in Riverdale. Yeshivat Rained Torah (YCT), founded by Soviet Jewish activist and dissident rabbi Avi Weiss, would offer a more liberal option for men seeking rabbinical ordination. Describing itself as more inclusive and open-minded than prevailing norms, the fledgling seminary was a tangible symbol of the division that was opening up in the modern Orthodox community. [...] Rabbi Weiss says he continues to use modern Orthodox and open Orthodox interchangeably, noting that "we're all talking about the same thing, and what matters is the sacred work that we're doing." His latest book, which will be released in a few months, is titled "Journey To Open Orthodoxy." But Rabbi Lopatin went on to correct the language of the fans, even in conversations. "When they say, 'Open Orthodox,' I say, 'We are Modern Orthodox.' We are a complete part of Modern Orthodoxy" (GINSBERG, 2017).

Goldberg (2009) traces that Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) was a rabbi from Frankfurt, Germany, founder of modern Orthodox Judaism in European territory, seeking to maintain Jewish laws with the modern era. Hirsch was a Jewish philosopher who articulated the fundamental position of modern orthodoxy in the nineteenth century. Historically, he founded the Orthodox community (Torah-observant and non-Reformist Jewish) in the city of Frankfurt. The movement he established was based on the belief that it was possible to participate in secular studies, in particular the sciences, without compromising Jewish law, neo-orthodoxy.

The ideas of neo-orthodoxy spread throughout western Europe and, later, the United States. Neo-orthodoxy made it possible to preserve Jewish laws and customs in communities that, at the same time, wished to embrace modernity, secular society, and the modern world. Neo-orthodoxy allowed the Orthodox Jewish movement to adapt and survive in Western Europe. In the United Kingdom and France, the Orthodox Jewish community remains the Jewish denomination of most observant Jews to this day. In the United States of America the reality is the opposite, the majority of Jews are unorthodox, that is, progressives

Rabbi Louis Jacobs (2025) reveals that Rabbi Hirsch believed that the only way to preserve the orthodoxy of his community was to obtain permission from the German Jewish leadership to establish a breakaway Jewish organization. To further this goal, Hirsch argued that the differences between Orthodox and Reform Jews were similar to those that existed between Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians in Christianity: two religious attitudes that could not "coexist" (in the same synagogue and Jewish movement).

According to Wikipedia, modern Orthodox Judaism has had several influences, it emerged as a movement within Orthodox Judaism, its origin is not attributed to a single founder, but emerged from the work of several important rabbinic figures, particularly Rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch and Azriel Hildesheimer, along with later influences from Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and the concept of Torah Umadda. Modern Orthodox Judaism was influenced by the writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. In addition, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, founded by Rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes, played a role in the development of modern Orthodoxy in the United States of America.

As already described, Jewish movements in antiquity always had divisions, denominations, and movements that corresponded to the yearnings of the Jewish community as a whole.

Nowadays most Jews are secular Jews, Reform Jews, Renovator Jews, Conservative Jews, Reconstructionist Jews, Universalist Jews and pluralist Jews or those without a specific denomination and so on, within the spectrum of non-Orthodox Judaism, which reveals a tendency of Judaism towards secularization and humanization with a strong influence of Enlightenment, democratic values, pluralists and inclusivists, and logically with deep foundations and foundation in the way of life of a society that has as its fundamental principles the secular scientific, philosophical and political pillars of contemporary societies with emphasis on the Jewish community of the United States of America not only for its size, but for its diversity and plurality.

3 DISCUSSIONS

It is always worth mentioning the Jewess, professor and scientific researcher Anita Novinsky (2015) about the lack of information and awareness about the history itself to which both the Portuguese and Brazilians are still subjected, perhaps this is a political, educational and religious project with inquisitorial reminiscences, which we still carry the inquisitorial and anti-Semitic heritage consciously and unconsciously:

In a society in which there was no freedom of expression and in which the repressive environment viewed everything with suspicion, new ideas and conceptions were controlled. The new or the criticism of the old were whispered in the apothecary's shops, in the corridors of Coimbra, in the shadow of the convents. Those who doubted Christianity, in addition to disbelief, were left with Judaism as an alternative. Despite being clandestine, Judaism was the only belief that the "de-Catholicized" Portuguese found and that attracted them, which explains certain syncretic phenomena. Some old Christians suspected of blasphemy, in fact, expressed Jewish concepts (NOVINSKY, 2015, p. 211).

European culture underwent major transformations between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and intensified in the nineteenth century, the Enlightenment can be defined as a movement that began as a cultural movement in Western Europe from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that sought to generate political, economic, social and cultural transformations and changes in the society of the time.

However, the Enlightenment ideals spread to several countries, not only European but also had repercussions in the countries of the Americas, which at the time were still colonies of European countries, this thought generated an intellectual movement in the American colonies in favor of freedom, against slavery and the exploitation of the colonies by the European colonialist and imperialist metropolises of the time, which culminated in independence movements in the American colonies.

The Enlightenment believed in the dissemination of science, philosophy and secular knowledge, as a way of praising reason to the detriment of fundamentalist and archaic religious thought.

In this context, many Jews wanted to insert themselves into the wider European society with its technical, scientific, philosophical, political and social advances; no longer limited to education in Jewish schools and Jewish religious education, however they wanted to study in secular public schools with a strong scientific and philosophical basis in their school curricula, as well as to enter universities to follow the political, economic, social, philosophical, cultural, scientific, technological and behavioral development, aiming at knowledge and scientific progress and to exercise academic and intellectual professions, namely:

Late 17th and early 18th centuries: the Enlightenment Jews began to acquire rights as citizens in the European countries in which they lived, allowing them to dress like their

neighbors, study in public schools and universities, and pursue whatever occupations they wished (UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM, 2023).

As discussed with the "resurgence", the development and diversity of Jewish movements and Jewish denominations, it is no longer possible to synthesize Judaism composed of two or three main Jewish movements or denominations, with the *post-denominational* and *transdenominational* movements growing at a rapid pace in the United States of America.

The population growth and evolution of the American Jewish community is vibrant, inclusive, and pluralistic in essence, regardless of the Jewish movement to a common denominator as the principle, the *Tikkun Olam*, which today has a conception of justice and social equality, of reparation and fixing what is wrong in society and the world:

Along with the diversity of the branches of Judaism, one principle serves as a common bond, namely the principle of tikkun olam, literally reparation of the world. The phrase, which originated in classical rabbinic literature, had esoteric theological implications. However, it came to connote social action and the search for social justice. The phrase "tikkun olam" was often used to refer to social action in the 1950s. Subsequently, it has been used to refer to tzedakah (charitable donations) and gemilut hasadim (acts of kindness). The phrase, however, remains linked to the human responsibility to work for the betterment of society by fixing what is wrong with the world (AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, 2023).

The ethnic-racial, cultural, political, philosophical, behavioral and socioeconomic diversity within the Jewish community is a historical-cultural fact, and that the renewal, emergence and evolution of Jewish synagogues, Jewish communities and rabbinical seminaries within the pluralist and inclusivist conception, are in line with the progressive, democratic and humanist values of contemporary Western societies, practiced by more advanced societies such as the North American and European.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is of paramount importance to carry out a work of this size in Portuguese to clarify to Lusophone societies with information about Jewish culture and religion in an up-to-date way, which does not encompass that world in what is presented to us by people around us, who tend to share opinions without basis in scientific works and updated international Jewish newspapers, which encompass the most varied commentators, Jewish sages and contemporary rabbis of the most varied Jewish movements.

The opinion of a Jew or a rabbi is not 100% "invalid or valid", as well as the Jewishness or Jewish identity of a certain Jew, each point of view only expresses the Jewish conceptions coming from the Jewish movement to which it belongs and with which it agrees with a certain interpretation of Jewish precepts and Jewish law, and these interpretations and adaptations must be said to be constantly evolving and updating in favor of diversity and of Jewish inclusion.

Each Jewish current, formerly called Jewish "sects", today can call them Jewish movements and tendencies, which as we have seen Judaism tends to be *transdenominational* and pluralistic and more secularized, whose common denominator is the *Tikkun Olam*, which is the role of each Jew to do social justice, repair, improvement and fix what is wrong, unjust and exclusionary in society or in the world in which we live as a whole. Judaism's mission is to make the world a better place, not necessarily Jewish.

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