

Brazilians in Israel: Memories and Diversity

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Abstract

The presence of Jews in Brazil was noted in the sixteenth century, but the most significant immigration waves occurred during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to IBGE¹ data, approximately 107,000 Jews were living in Brazil as of 2010. Brazilians have been emigrating to Israel since the first decades of the twentieth century, with an increase in the flow from 1970 onwards. Currently, approximately 17,000 (DellaPergola 2020) former Brazilians live in Israel, the majority being Jews. The subject of Brazilians in Israel has not been comprehensively covered in the Jewish history of Brazil and Israel and is the focus of our ongoing project. We will present preliminary data from 300 questionnaires related to this project. The project indicates respondents' complexity, regional dispersion, and diversity. One of the results of our research will be a virtual exhibition on Brazilians in Israel.

Keywords: Brazilians, immigration, Israel, Jews

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, we have witnessed the growth of Jewish studies in Brazil. As Grin and Gherman (2017) demonstrate, research on the Jewish diaspora in the cultural context of Brazil draws on new perspectives and approaches and focusses on history, the social sciences, and language/literature. Scholars have addressed the following subjects, among others: the history of the Jewish presence in the country since colonial times (Mizrahi 2005; Falbel 2008; Blay 2013; Milgram, Koifman, and Falbel 2021); the ambivalence of Jewish identity (Sorj and Bonder 2001; Sorj 2008); intermarriage (DellaPergola 2008); the Holocaust (Waldman 2017); Zionism (Chazan 2005; Milgram 2010); Jewish education (Goldstein 2019); and tradition, politics, and religiosity (Grin and Gherman 2016).

There has been little work in either country, however, on migration from Brazil to Israel. The interdisciplinary project "Brazilians in Israel: Memories and Diversity" was conceived, then, to survey and identify aspects of this migration and contribute to the debate on Jewish studies and migration.² The project is based on the Museum da Pessoa's Social Technology of Memory oral

1 IBGE—Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

2 Project initiated from the Lady Davis Visiting Professorship granted to Prof. Adriana Russi for the academic year 2021–22 at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the auspices of the hosts Prof. Ruth Kark and Prof. Noam Levin (Dept. of Geography, HUJI). The inter-institutional project includes Debi C. Yehoshafat (Ben-Gurion University of Negev) and Carlos Alberto Póvoa (Federal

history methodology (2005), an approach that is itself indebted to the work of Paul Thompson (1992).³ This methodology is characterized by its simplicity and replicability, and is guided by principles that make it possible to record life stories for elaboration in exhibitions, articles, books, and so on. In short, it is “a set of contents and tools that motivated communities, civil society organizations, and companies to build their history, intensifying their possibility of social intervention” (Museu da Pessoa 2009, 96). Thus, this project has collected data on Brazilian immigrants in Israel by recording oral testimonies about their lives. In 2021, these Brazilians volunteered to share their stories and answered an anonymous electronic questionnaire.

This article, divided into three parts, presents some data from the questionnaire, often in the form of graphs and maps. To aid understanding of the Jewish community in Brazil, the first part is a brief survey of the history of the Jews in Brazil. The second part explores the literature on Brazilians in Israel; it analyses aspects of the immigration from the 1950s onwards. In the third part, we present data from the questionnaire regarding the responses from 300 Brazilians who made Aliyah to Israel at different times and under different circumstances.⁴ Since our research is still in progress, it is not possible to present final results on the content of the

interviews carried out so far within the scope of this article. Finally, we point out some areas that need more data and reflection.

JEWIS IN BRAZIL

It is necessary to consider Brazil within the broader context of Latin America, from which Jews have departed for Israel. The Latin American country with the largest Jewish population is Argentina (it ranks seventh in the world). In 2001, Argentina counted 197,000 Jews, approximately 2% of the total population. The same source numbered Jews in Brazil in 2001 at 97,500, making it the tenth largest population in the Diaspora. Jewish population estimates for 2021 were 175,000 for Argentina and 91,500 for Brazil. These figures took recent immigration to Israel into account; they did not include Evangelical messianic sects which sometimes report Judaism as their religion in national censuses (DellaPergola 2022).

Demographic estimates differ considerably due to sources, definitions, and methodology. The Israeli Confederation in Brazil, for example, uses data derived from the Brazilian population census conducted by the IBGE in 2010. It numbers Brazilian Jews at 120,000 in a total population of 204 million (0.06%). According to the ICB, the most numerous groups were in the southeast regions—44,000 in São Paulo and 22,000 in Rio de Janeiro—and the southern region, especially in the city of Porto Alegre.⁵ According to these data, and if the national total is correct, there were about 40,000 Jews distributed across smaller rural and peripheral localities. This is quite unlikely.

Jewish migration to Brazil took place in three phases—namely, during Brazil’s Colonial, Imperial, and Republican periods. The Jewish presence dates to Portugal’s colonization of the

University of Triângulo Mineiro). For virtual exhibition in partnership with the Museu da Pessoa, see <https://museudapessoa.org/>.

3 About the methodology of the Social Technology of Memory, see the material of the Museu da Pessoa published by Banco do Brasil and available at “Tecnologia social da memória,” <https://acervo.museudapessoa.org/pt/entenda/portfolio/publicacoes/metodologia/tecnologia-social-da-memoria-2009>.

4 Aliyah (literally, “ascent” or “going up”) is the migration of Jews from the Diaspora to Israel. An individual who makes this ascent is called an Oleh (plural: Olim).

5 See details on the official website of the Confederação Israelita do Brasil: “Historia,” <https://www.conib.org.br/historia/>.

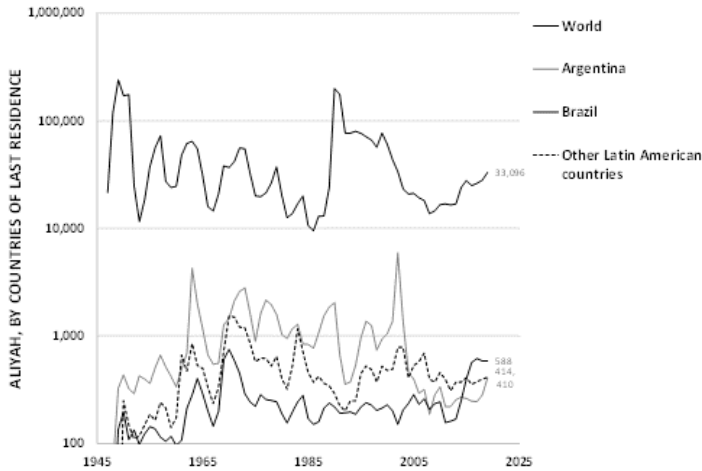


Fig. 1 Immigration to Israel from Latin America, by country of last residence, 1948–2021.

country in the sixteenth century when Jews were forced to convert and were identified as “New Christians.” The earliest Jewish communities in Brazil were in the northern region, in the cities of Manaus (1,200 Jews) and Belem (1,300 Jews). In the northeast region, the city of Recife (1,300 Jews)⁶ was the first organized Jewish community (Avni 1992). The first synagogue in the Americas—Kahal Zur Israel—dates from 1636, under the Dutch occupation.

The main migratory waves occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however; large numbers of Jews took up residence in Brazil’s south and southeastern regions. A major reason for the arrival of these immigrants was an agreement that was struck between the House of Rothschild in London and the Brazilian government at the end of the nineteenth century (Avni 1992). Between 1904 and 1924, two Jewish agricultural colonies were founded in the Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil.

Additional waves of immigration resulted in the significant growth of the Jewish community in Brazil between 1940 and 1960. Although Brazil adopted a quota system during the Holocaust, a notable number of Jewish immi-

grants arrived, some of whom settled in the country’s main urban centers. According to the IBGE, the biggest concentration of Jewish communities in Brazil is in the southeast region, which includes the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Espirito Santos. The second region with a high concentration of Jews is the southern region, which includes Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, and Santa Catarina.

BRAZILIANS IN ISRAEL: LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of those who left Brazil for Israel were of Jewish origin. According to Meir Chazan (2017), the first Brazilians in Israel were linked to the Dror youth movement, founded in Russia in 1911 and established in Porto Alegre in 1945. This movement held that young Brazilian Jews should be prepared for life in Israel. Beginning in 1949, three farms in São Paulo readied young people for collective agricultural life on a kibbutz and strengthened their Zionist ideology.

These first “pioneers” made their Aliyah in 1950. In 1952, another group of young Brazilians in the Dror movement settled in the Kibbutz Bror Chail (or Bror Hayil or Chayil). Founded by Jewish refugees from Egypt in 1948, by 1951 the kibbutz was in crisis. It was

6 The numbers refer to the Colonial period.

Table 1 A demographic profile of Brazilian Jewry—1940–2000

Region	1940	1950	1960	1980	1991	2000
Southeast	43,476	55,402	70,147	75,493	70,960	70,385
South	7,768	9,545	11,341	10,982	10,614	10,010
Northeast	2,180	3,701	2,628	2,600	1,693	3,057
North	1,562	1,791	1,390	1,394	2,308	2,060
Central West	80	148	532	1,326	841	1,312
Total	55,563	69,555	96,199	91,795	86,416	86,825

Source: IBGE.

decided that an “organized” group like the Brazilians could help the kibbutz survive and develop (Chazan 2017). A “decision to formally establish the link between the Brazilian Dror Movement and its various forms and Bror Chayil was taken in mid-1953” (222). The kibbutz soon became known as the “kibbutz of the Brazilians,” and for a long time it symbolized the continuous connection between Brazil and Israel.

Since then, much has changed in the structure and organization of Bror Chail and other kibbutzim in Israel. The collective ethos has been largely abandoned. Bror Chail’s land was gradually privatized and distributed among its residents; areas once used for agricultural activities were set aside for building. Besides that, numerous agricultural activities of the kibbutz were suspended. While few families of Brazilian origin still live in Bror Chail, the country’s flag still flies at the entrance. Throughout Israel, the flag of Brazil and signs of Brazilian culture, fauna, and flora are evident in Brazilian commercial enterprises, such as shops, bars, and restaurants.

In 2012, a small museum dedicated to Adoniran Barbosa (1910–1982)—actor, humorist, and master of Brazilian popular music from São Paulo—was founded in Bror Chail. The museum “building”—a railway car that was provided by the Israel Rail Company and the Israel Train Museum—alludes to the famous song *Trem das Onze*, which is popular to this day in Brazil. Interestingly, during the 1980s, a very

popular radio show in Israel used the song for its closing music; many music lovers grew up in Israel, trying to sing songs with Portuguese words even without understanding them.⁷ In 2017, an exhibition called the *Art of Brazilian Folklore* was curated by Einav Mintz.⁸ By 2022, however, the museum was in decline.

Scholarship on Brazilians in Israel is exclusively in Portuguese; this testifies to its status as an under-studied subject. Our survey has identified recent research by two Brazilians and one Portuguese. The first Brazilian is the geographer Carlos Alberto Póvoa (PhD dissertation, 2016; article, 2019; article cowritten with Paula, 2019). The second is the historian Debi Chaimovitch-Yehoshafat, who has used the

7 It is interesting to note that in 2019 the exhibition “Brazilians in Israel” was an initiative of the Jewish Museum of São Paulo. This itinerant exhibition circulated through public libraries in São Paulo, and reported the trajectory of Brazilians who were in Israel, their contributions, and the importance of Kibbutz Bror Chail. About this exhibition see a short video on YouTube in Portuguese, “Exposição ‘Brasileiros em Israel’ fala sobre o Kibbutz Bror Chail de Israel,” Shalom Brasil, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4MSyiLbiY>.

8 Information collected from the Facebook page of Adoniran Bror Chail Museum, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1356550871085700&set=pb.100001924018039.-2207520000>.

personal stories of Brazilian Jews to analyze their reasons for Aliyah in 1948–1964.⁹ Both scholars are part of our project team. Portuguese anthropologist Miguel Vale de Almeida's *Aliyah: State and Subjectivity among Brazilian Jews in Israel* (2019) is based on the analysis of interviews. A 2021 Technion-Israel Institute of Technology survey ranked Brazil at number one for Aliyah potential (Maltz 2021). A majority of the adult Jewish population have at least one academic degree. The researchers concluded that Brazilian Jews immigrate because they have the education and skills that Israel requires. Furthermore, the research suggested that violence and Brazil's poor economy directly encouraged Jews and others (such as the Japanese community or Brazilians in general) to immigrate to Portugal. Thinking about the future, some have decided to leave the country, and Israel became an option.

NOTES ON BRAZILIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL

If Jews in Brazil are mostly secular, the same cannot be said of Brazilians in Israel. To get an idea of census data on Brazilians in Israel, we located Israel population information from the end of 2017. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, the total population was 8,798,000: 79.1% Jews, 12.7% Muslims, 2% Christians, 1.7% Druze, 4.5% other religions.¹⁰ Since the creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, some 3.2 million immigrants have settled there. Just over a decade ago, approximately 64,700 citizens living in

Israel considered themselves of Latin American origin (Roniger and Babis 2008).

According to the 2015 Consular Report (RCN) of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12,000 Brazilians live in Israel, representing 0.14% of the population. Although these figures reveal important data, it is worth noting the difficulty of assessing their accuracy. Among the Brazilian immigrants who enter the country legally or illegally, some are Jews, some are newly converted Jews. Others think they are Jews, such as evangelicals who travel to Israel as religious tourists and remain there illegally.¹¹ RCN data, for example, uses the passports of "Brazilians" without identifying those who are or are not Jewish. On the Brazilian Olim, it would be possible to collect data from the organizations linked with the Aliyah process.

Other immigrants are also in the country illegally, and thousands are refugees. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2014)¹² and Póvoa (2019), between 1948 and 2012, the majority of immigrants in Israel (71%) originate from countries of the former Soviet Union; the Olim were from United States and Canada (8.2%), France (5.2%), Great Britain (2.2%), Argentina (4%), South Africa (1.2%), Ethiopia (5.4%), and Brazil (0.7%). Póvoa (2019) systematized these data for the period 1948–2015: 8.2% from the United States and Canada; 5.4% from Ethiopia; 5.3% from France; 4% from Argentina; 2.2% from the United Kingdom;

11 Carlos Alberto Póvoa (oral communication to researchers).

12 According to data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2020 the country housed thousands of refugees, totaling more than 60,000 from Africa, mostly from Eritrea and Sudan, but also from Asian countries such as the Philippines. Information available at the UNHCR website: "UNHCR in Israel," accessed January 10, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/il/en/history-unhcr-israel>.

9 Debora Yehoshafat-Chaimovitch, "Aliyah from Brazil 1948–1964. Understanding Personal Motivations for Making Aliyah," MA thesis, Haifa University, 2021.

10 Data accessed through the website of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), accessed January 10, 2020, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Spotlight/Pages/Israel-at-71-A-statistical-glimpse-6-May-2019.aspx>.

1.2% from South Africa; 0.7% from Brazil; and 1.9% from other places.¹³

Donna Rosenthal (2013) argues that Israel's cultural and linguistic heterogeneity threatens the country's very existence; such diversity, she proposes, leads to social and territorial destabilization. As a result, the state has established a "framework of cultural references" that all immigrants must learn. We observed this assimilationist policy: immigrants have to learn Hebrew, and military service is mandatory for men and women aged between eighteen and twenty-one. Moreover, the complexity of Israeli society is due to its multiculturalism and ethnic and religious diversity. The states introduced the concept of melting pot in order to integrate all the new immigrants in the Israeli society (Póvoa 2019; Kark and Pery 2008).

In Miguel de Almeida's research, thirty Brazilian Jews were interviewed. He observed that Aliyah processes are multiple, diverse, and associated with different political and economic contexts, both in Israel and Brazil, which prevent the development of a unique profile for "Brazilians." Still, according to Almeida, immigrant experiences in Israel "challenge cultural values and definitions of Brazilianness, Israel, *Jewishness* and Judaism" (2019, 15).

In his work on the immigration of Brazilians to Israel, Carlos Alberto Póvoa (2019) finds that immigration intensified (albeit slowly) as major political problems mounted—the Suez Crisis (1956), the Six-Day War (1967), and the Yom Kippur War (1973). From the 1980s on, the level of immigration from Brazil was tied to the country's economic collapse.¹⁴

For Póvoa and Paula, Brazilian immigrants have contributed to the formation of Israeli society and the idea of diversity in Israel:

The cultural, ethnic, religious, and national diversity that the State of Israel has received from its immigrants is not a problem for integration between the majority and minority groups. The constant leads of Brazilian Jewish immigrants through Aliyah collaborate with the nature of the Jewish population in the country. (2019, 1)

According to Póvoa and Paula (2019), the Brazilian Olim sought economic opportunity, safety, an improved quality of life, access to education, access to good health care, and wish to preserve their cultural and religious identity. Most Brazilian immigrants in Israel came from large urban centers (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Belo Horizonte, etc.), where they were middle class, and have mainly settled in Bror Chail and four cities: Be'er Sheva, Ra'anana, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, and Jerusalem.

The centralization of Brazilians in the cities mentioned above allows them to maintain their national identity while integrating into Israeli society. According to Póvoa (2019), "Brazilian Olim" are a new kind of immigrant in Israel—liberal professionals who mostly follow the same professions as in Brazil. Many are health, engineering, and free professionals. Others, however, immigrated illegally, sometimes arriving in Israel through religious tourism groups, and have no education. They do not return to Brazil, remaining in Israel illegally and depending on a preestablished network of solidarity.

Although Póvoa (2019) recognizes that among Brazilian Olim there are many cultural and regional differences, he does identify that this group has in common the Portuguese language the way to be the Jewish, cultural and

arrived, with inflation at more than eighty percent per month.

13 This percentage of 0.7% systematized by Póvoa (2019) differs from the 0.14% mentioned above. This is one of the many aspects to investigate regarding immigration from Brazilians to Israel and their memories. Data for the period 1948–2012 was updated in 2015.

14 Between the years 1980 to 1990, Brazil experienced a critical moment of recession and economic crises. In 1990, hyperinflation

religious issues He points to a “religious and ethnic-cultural identity with *Eretz Israel*—Land of Israel” (Póvoa 2019). Care must be taken, however, to avoid stereotypes or the suggestion that Brazilian Olim form a homogeneous whole. In this regard, the idea of ambivalence (Grin and Gherman 2017) when constructing the notion of Brazilian identities in Israel in its interaction with the Israeli context is useful.

According to Marta Topel, Latin American work on Jewish immigration has tended to view the Jewish population as a uniform group taking a single path. In other words, it has failed to discuss the complexity of the group, the multiple paths traveled, or the fluid immigration processes built by social actors. Topel proposes that the phenomenon of the hyphenation or hybridization of Jewish identity allows us to take account of the dynamics and flux of intercultural migration.¹⁵

If Bernardo Sorj agrees that identity is fluid, hybridized, and hyphenated, he also adds that it is a phenomenological field inhabited by social actors. Both external (institutions, environment) and internal (individual experience) forces are focused on this field. Identity is not closed. It is better understood when analyzed from the individual’s experience. It is impossible to capture the “identity” of the “Brazilian Jew,” then. While some went to Brazil to escape the Second World War, for example, others were born in the country in the twenty-first century. Moreover, he points out that people’s experiences are not exhausted by their discourse. People often have little or nothing to say about their own identity.¹⁶

Póvoa (2016) warns of the need for differentiation between Brazilian Olim:

15 *Hyphenized Identities and Migration: The Goings and Turns of the Jews in the Twentieth Century*, webinar in Portuguese, Center for Jewish Studies of the University of São Paulo (Brazil) and the University of Haifa (Israel), October 26, 2020, accessed January 10, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/centrodeestudos-judaicosdausp/videos/679531286318860>.

16 *Ibid.*

there is a considerable difference in Jewish religious and socio-economic currents, and whether they are secular Jews or religious, as well as the personal issues that led some individuals to convert to Judaism and seek Israel as their homeland, besides being the holy land for Jewish practices in their essence. (2016, 3)

Póvoa stresses the need for more research on territorialization—including fieldwork that would illuminate “linguistic, national, cultural, religious and ethnic materialization, such as the Olim of the former USSR” (3). To this end, the project “Brazilians in Israel: Memories and Diversity” has been collecting data about Brazilian Olim in Israel. The first stage of the project collected data through the online questionnaire, the second stage is starting to interview Brazilian volunteers in order to collect data about their life stories.

Through a questionnaire, initially, and the identification of volunteers with the collection of oral statements, the project aims, among other things, to give visibility to this minority group of immigrants in Israel and contribute to discussions about Jews and immigration. We will now turn to some of the data that the project began recording in mid-2021.

BRAZILIANS IN ISRAEL: MEMORIES AND DIVERSITY—PRELIMINARY DATA

The team posted a Google Forms electronic questionnaire on, for instance, Facebook and WhatsApp groups of Brazilians in Israel. Answered anonymously by 336 Brazilians who immigrated to Israel at different times,¹⁷ the questionnaire was organized into two parts, with twenty-eight questions. The first part (containing fourteen questions) aimed to collect demographic data; the second part (also with fourteen

17 The data was organized into graphics with the collaboration of Marcos Vinicius da Silva Ferreira, University Federal of Triângulo Mineiro.

questions) was designed to gather material about the respondents' memories, identities, and diversity. The respondent could identify themselves and leave their contact information if they were interested in participating in the second research phase. More than 200 respondents agreed to future interviews. From this sample, we selected forty volunteers in order to collect their oral testimony through interviews. This phase is still underway.

Among the memories questions, one asked what the respondents missed most about Brazil. Brazilian food came in third place; family was first and friends came second. From there, the team conceived the June 2022 *Açaí & Datas: Longing for Brazilian Food in Israel* exhibition at the Bloomfield Library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Mount Scopus campus. We plan to show this exhibition in different localities to promote even more interest in Brazilian Olim (see Figure 2).

Census data shows that the majority of the Olim come from the large Brazilian urban centers, like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, associated with high economic, industrial, and technological development. The following maps show that a significant number of Brazilians have made Aliyah since the 1950s. However, we noted continuous movement from the southeast region—the region that has largest Jewish communities in the country. The main community centers are the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Although the city of Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais is a large urban center in the southeast region, the Jewish community there is smaller than in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. It does not even compare with other cities in other Brazilian regions, such as Recife in Pernambuco (northeast) and Porto Alegre in Rio Grande do Sul (south).

The Brazilian Aliyah began in earnest in the 1950s, after the foundation of the State of Israel

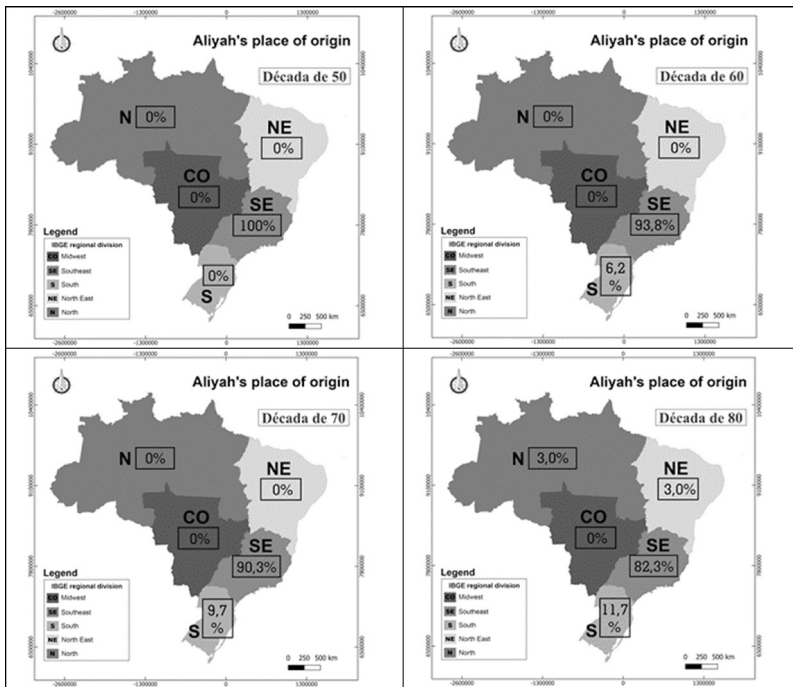


Fig. 2 Aliyah place of origin in Brazil, 1950s–1980s.

(1948), with the largest flow from the southeast region of Brazil. However, during the course of its history and territorial evolution, Israel has received several migratory waves from all over the world, adding up to approximately fifteen waves of Aliyah. These waves have profoundly affected the country in terms of multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, and number of nationalities. According to Póvoa (2015), record numbers of Brazilian Olim occurred in the Seventh Aliyah of the 1950s.

From the maps, we can see that the percentage of mobility of Olim remains significantly higher in the southeast region, where the large majority of the Jewish population is concentrated. According to our survey in the 1960s, 93.8% of the Olim were from southeast region of Brazil and 6.2% from the south region.

The south region has the second highest urban population concentration; it also has one of the most significant Brazilian Jewish community groupings. Jews from Central Eastern Europe were directed there by the JCA (Jewish Colonization Association) from the beginning of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, there was an increase of Aliyah in the south from 6.2% to 9.18%—an increase of 2.98% compared to the 90.3% increase in the southeast. This indicates that the two regions were the main areas of concentration of the Jewish community in Brazil in those decades. From the 1980s on, changes in Aliyah in Brazil highlight the northeast region, with estimates of about 3.0% for Aliyah. The southeast remains in first place with 82.3%, followed by the south region with 11.7%. This move from the southeast region to the northeast can be understood as part of a process whereby the descendants of Jews who arrived in Brazil in the Colonial and Imperial periods started reconnecting with religious Jewish values. Cities like Recife and Salvador are the main Jewish centers in the Brazilian northeast. These communities maintain themselves, despite their distance from the urban centers that have all the facilities for Jewish community life.

In the 1990s, the situation changed, as seen in the map of this period (Fig. 3). The northeast region shows an increase in Aliyah from 3.0% to 5.0%, an increase of 2% in a decade in Aliyah movement. In the same period, the south only increased by 2.5%. (For comparison: in the 1980s, it registered an Aliyah movement of 11.0% and had a vertiginous fall of 8.5%) However, the southeast region continues to lead the Brazilian Aliyah, remaining above the average among the regions, with 85%, confirming that the largest Jewish concentration in Brazil remains in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

From 2000 to 2009, the Aliyah process began more generally throughout Brazil, reaching even the north region (Amazon). The north had 2.5% of the Aliyah, compared to 84% from the southeast and 2.3% from the south. However, in the northeast, Aliyah ceased. Between 2010 and 2019, Aliyah increased from the midwest region, contributing 0.7%, compared to 86% from the southeast and 10.5% from the south, with the numbers rising again in these years and the resumption of mobility from the northeast with 2.3%. Only the north region (Amazon) did not generate Olim in this period.

The map of the post-2020 years shows characteristics similar to those of the 1960s and 1970s, when only two regions stood out regarding Aliyah from Brazil to Israel. However, the southeastern and southern regions presented data considered good for the time, as this period was experiencing the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. Aliyah rates remained high, with 96.7% from the southeast and 3.3% from the south. This confirms the importance of these two regions, which form the so-called center-south (the geo-economic area with the largest urban, commercial, and industrial concentration in Brazil), as well as a considerable percentage of the Brazilian Jewish population. It is clear, then, that Southeastern Brazil is the most important geographical region within the migratory process of Aliyah to Israel and that most of the Brazilian Olim come from large cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

In the 1950s, Brazilians arriving in Israel were almost all members of youth movements motivated by the Zionist ideology. Field interviews noted that about 2% of Brazilians made Aliyah in the 1950s, a relatively low figure. But these Olim may have been part of several processes and came to Israel in various years. In short,

there is no direct correlation between their birth date and the year of their Aliyah. Aliyah reached its peak between 1960 and 2010, when there was an increase of approximately 89% in Brazilian arrivals in Israel. Decade of birth is randomly related to the period of the Aliyah because immigration could happen in different years and not

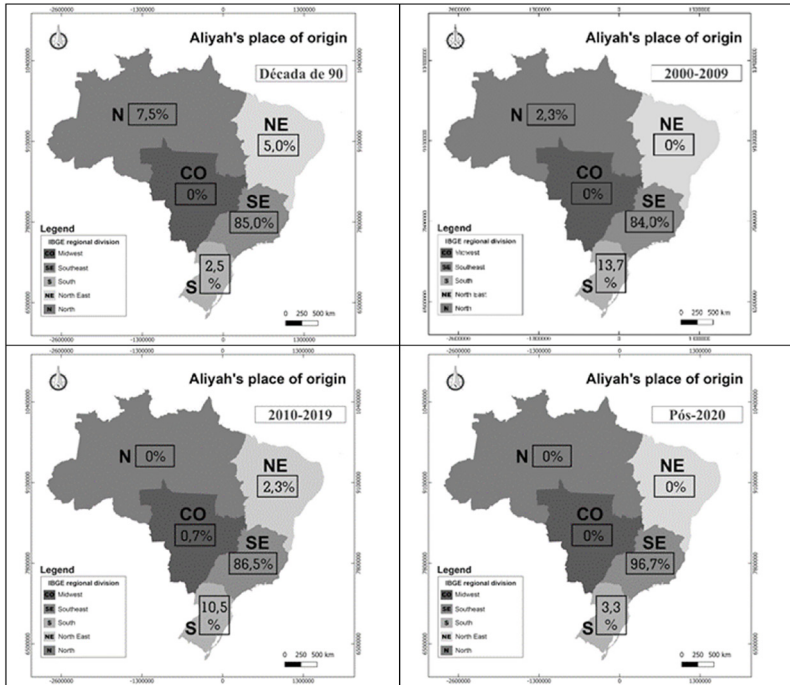


Fig. 3 Aliyah place of origin in Brazil, 1990s–2020s.

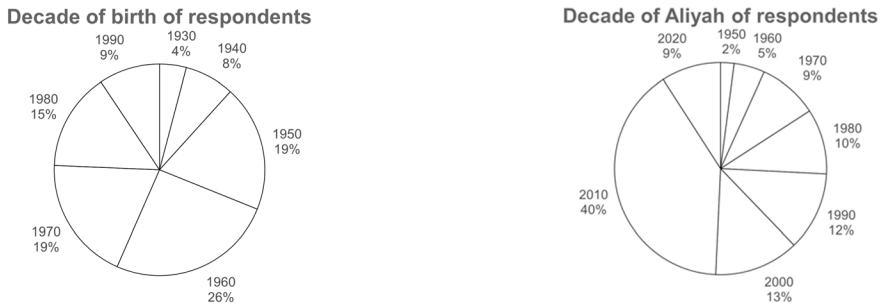


Fig. 4 Decade of birth and Aliyah of respondents, 1990 and 2020.

Circumstance of the aliyah of respondents

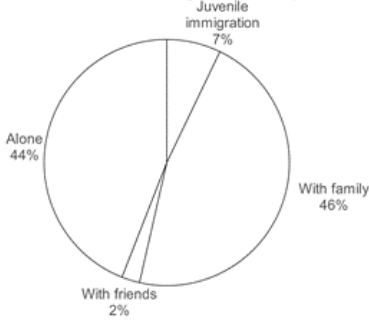


Fig. 5 Circumstances of the Aliyah of respondents.

necessarily at a specific time after the date of birth. What can be categorically stated is that the years from 1960 to 2010 are the peak of Brazilian Aliyah.

The data show that Brazilians made Aliyah in several ways: youth Aliyah, Aliyah with family, with friends, and alone. According to figure 5, youth Aliyah, correlated with the first Olim in the youth movements, makes up 7% of total Aliyah, while Aliyah with family records the highest percentage—46%. Through analysis of the decades of Aliyah, one can conclude that the 1960s and 1970s showed the highest rates of mobility; moreover, these decades saw a larger number of immigrations with families. This hypothesis is consistent with the constantly high number in all the decades of Aliyah from the southeast. This was the main way of making Aliyah, followed by those emigrating alone (44%). However, it seems that those coming to Israel by themselves likely had family members already living in Israel. This percentage correlates with the data presented in the maps, where the southeast, south, and northeast regions have greater numbers of immigrants, with it being understood that percentages registered included Aliyah of individuals. Only about 2% of those making Aliyah did so with friends. Considering that the largest percentages of Olim are linked to family immigration processes and/or arriving

alone, it is worth speculating here about the reasons that led families and individuals to seek Israel. These include the desire for a better quality of life, greater safety, improved education, and work, as well as connecting with their Jewish identity—that is, affirming a religious and even national territoriality.

Families leaving Brazil for a new home in Israel settled almost exclusively in urban centers, in the same places where earlier Brazilian immigrants established their new roots. It is worth noting, however, that from the 1970s until the 2010s, as shown in the research, the number of Brazilian Olim increased due to the favorable conditions for immigration, both for families and individuals. In the early 2020s, with the Coronavirus pandemic, Aliyah dropped sharply, resembling the 1970s numbers. The later 2020s are characterized by an increase of Olim, families as well as individuals.

The relationship of the Brazilian Olim to their place of residence is linked to the decade of their Aliyah, that is, to the historic context of their arrival in Israel and the territorial



Fig. 6 Main Geographical regions in Israel.

developments and transformations that were taking place at the time. During the initial stages of the Brazilian Aliyah in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the territorial distribution of the Olim was very uncertain due to the circumstances of that period. Some of the Olim settled in regions to the north (region Z2), Jerusalem (Z1), and kibbutzim (scattered over the territory). There was no space defined as “Brazilian space” in the Israeli territory. Only after the 1960s did the territorial designs of Brazilians change. Families and individuals migrated from Brazil in greater numbers and introduced the Brazilian way of life into the urban areas of Israel.

The Brazilian olim with their regional diversity contributed to Israeli multiculturalism. Thus, a variety of geographic areas spaced throughout Israel, such as Jerusalem (Z1), Haifa (Z3), Tel Aviv (Z5), the central area (Z4), the north (Z2), and south (Z6), received the Brazilian Olim. In the following decades, from the 1970s until the 2000s, Aliyah increased, with arrivals going primarily to urban destinations. Unlike the initial years of immigration, Brazilian Olim now seek a sense of community, to integrate more easily into their new lives, as well as into the economic, social, and cultural aspects of Israel. In the 1980s and 1990s, Olim were located everywhere. While this broad geographical distribution repeated that of previous years, the concentration of Olim was greatest in the central region (Z4) and Tel Aviv (Z5).

In the 2010s, immigration from Brazil reached a peak, with most immigrants settling in the central region, with lower numbers going to Haifa (Z3), the north (Z2), Yehuda and Shomron (Z7), and the south (Z6).

According to the survey, Brazilian Olim today concentrate mainly in the center of the country, in a region that comprises the metropolitan area of Tel Aviv and between the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. This is the main Brazilian territorialization in Israel, and it reflects the national and regional identities of the immigrants who have taken up residence there.

Although Brazilian immigrants are dispersed throughout the country, they have still managed to preserve elements of their culture and way of life, such as language, music, cuisine, and customs. In so doing, they are contributing to the variety of cultural life in Israel, thereby enriching Israeli culture (which is no longer Zionist-socialist, as it was in the early days of the country).

It is necessary to analyze the connection between the conservation of the Portuguese language and the concentration of Brazilians in groups around Israel. According to Lopes (1997) and Hall (2001), in communities in general, relations between language and society, territory and identity can be observed because they influence one another. Through language, one participates in social relations of power; thus, changes in the social and territorial structure result from the dynamics of these relations. However, this relationship between language, identity, and culture is intrinsic, since there is no culture without language, and identity is constructed through language and culture, legitimizing a territory. Language is a major sign that there are individuals who settle a territory, transforming it into a place and a new home through cultural, gastronomic, and musical activity. Brazilians in Israel created a new home based on their previous experience and memories, and at the same time they negotiated their new identity in Israel.

CONCLUSION

Studies on Brazilian immigrants in Israel lack data and deeper analysis. We have noticed that the migratory waves throughout the decades have been composed of young people motivated by Zionist ideology, or by families seeking a full Jewish life in Israel. Families immigrated due to financial difficulties; individuals fled the violence of the big Brazilian urban centers.

The role of Portuguese deserves further study. We observed that among those who immigrated up to the 1990s, Hebrew is the daily language, and the Portuguese language is hardly

spoken at home or among family members. Apparently, the second generation no longer speaks Portuguese. However, many who arrived from the 2000s on have maintained the Portuguese language. Perhaps the possibility of communication facilitated by social networks such as Facebook and, more recently, WhatsApp has facilitated this preservation of Portuguese. But this is just an observation based on the hypothesis that language represents more than a group identity. Through language, a group transmits its cultural heritage and reflects its diversity. Without language, an immigrant group cannot delimit its place in a foreign society because, as we said before, participants in the same group are connected through the same things—music, gastronomy, history. Something else that deserves attention is

Brazilian cuisine in Israel. When we started the interviews, some interviewees expressed nostalgia for Brazilian food and revealed that they—sometimes unintentionally—keep Brazilian food habits, such as the consumption of rice and beans.

From the testimonies, we noticed that this community has a certain invisibility in Israel. Those who volunteered to respond to the questionnaire highlighted the fact that Israeli government programs and people in general are unaware that Brazilians speak Portuguese rather than Spanish. Overshadowed by the significant group of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants, Brazilians in Israel feel in some circumstances invisible to the state's immigrant absorption policies. This area needs further research.

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