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P.V. Viswanath

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# Research Note

## Recife: The Cradle of Jewish America

P. V. (Meylekh) Viswanath  
Lubin School of Business  
Pace University  
pviswanath@pace.edu

The first New World Jewish settlement was in Recife, then a relatively small city in northeastern Brazil. Portuguese New Christians migrated there in the sixteenth century in search of a freer environment in which to continue practicing the Jewish faith. However, it was not until 1630, when the Dutch conquered the region, that Jews were able to openly observe their religion. With the Portuguese reconquest in 1654, this brief chapter ended. Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe and Germany arrived at the beginning of the twentieth century and flourished for several decades. Assimilation and intermarriage, however, diminished Jewish practices and identity before a revival flourished during the last twenty-five years, which has seen both cultural and religious institutions rebuilt. Still, the long-term viability of this community, far from others in Brazil, is not guaranteed. What follows is an account of the long history of Recife Jewry.

**Keywords:** Jews, Recife, Brazil, synagogues, Ashkenazi, Sephardim, Dutch period

### Introduction

More than five hundred years have passed since the first Jews set foot in the New World, not in New Amsterdam, but on the northeastern coast of South America. While considerable scholarship has been published on the early centuries of Jewish settlement in this region, its recent history has been less explored. Given this background, it seems worthwhile to take another look at the place where it all started, the town of Recife, and to provide a comprehensive overview of Jewish history there. Recife is the capital of the northern state of Pernambuco, about 1500 miles from Rio and slightly more from São Paulo, where the largest Jewish community lives. It is a bustling city of 1.5 million residents with a large metropolitan area of almost 4 million.

In this note I would like to do two things: one, present a brief history of Recife from early times to the present; and two, describe modern Recife from a personal point of view, based on a recent visit and conversations with Recife natives, as well as research in secondary sources. Though this kind of history has hoary antecedents, harking back to Herodotus, it has lost its appeal among

modern historians. Still, such an approach does have its virtues, not the least of them being an ability to bring history to life and generate interest in the discipline among young people.

I started my fieldwork in August 2018 with an early morning flight to Recife (literally “reef” in Portuguese) and was received at the airport by my tour guide, Carlos Masur, whose family has lived in the city for more than a hundred years. Although modern Recife is quite spread out, the center of the city and its original area are now located on three islands: Recife, Santo Antônio, and Boa Vista. These islands originally formed part of the mainland but were separated by a man-made canal that extended the Capibaribe River so as to provide easier access to ships. Mile Zero, known as Praça do Marco Zero on the waterfront and the putative center of the city, is on the island of Recife and is also not far from the historic Kahal Zur synagogue.<sup>1</sup> Across from Marco Zero is an interesting reef, a long tongue of land that fronts almost the entire length of Recife Island. Near the beginning of the reef is a neighborhood called Brasília Teimosa (which translates as “obstinate, pig-headed, willful” Brasília).<sup>2</sup> This area, originally settled by squatters in 1947, was scheduled for destruction in the late 1950s, however, the inhabitants did not give in easily and at night rebuilt the houses that the government destroyed during the day, hence the name. On the other side of Brasília Teimosa is a curious neighborhood called Pina, said to be named after a tightfisted Jew, André Gomes Pina,<sup>3</sup> and the Pina neighborhood was also called at one time, Ilha do Cheira Dinheiro (Money-Sniffer Island).<sup>4</sup>

## **Old Sephardic Recife**

The Kahal Zur Israel synagogue is located at Rua do Bom Jesus, 197 (Street of the Good Jesus)<sup>5</sup> This very street used to be called Rua dos Judeus (Street of Jews), but, ironically, only after the expulsion of the Jews. When the synagogue functioned in this area, it was called Boeckestraet or Goat Street. How did the Jews reach Recife? In contrast to the Spanish monarchy, which expelled Jews, the king of Portugal in 1497 forcibly converted all the Jews in his kingdom. Many faithful Jews were unable

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as Kahal Zur Israel or Zur Israel.

<sup>2</sup> See Sobreira de Moura (1987) for information on the history of this neighborhood.

<sup>3</sup> According to an exhibit at the Zur Israel Synagogue museum. It is difficult to find proof that the barrio was indeed named for André Gomes Pina. According to Niskier (2006), its name refers to the family name Pina, borne by Jews such as Aaron de Pina, Benjamin Pina, and André Gomes de Pina. He notes that André Gomes de Pina owned sites on the Ilha do Cheira Dinheiro Island and had a reputation of being particularly tightfisted. According to Da Fonseca e Silva (2007), André Gomes de Pina was denounced during the visit of the Holy Office to Pernambuco in 1593–95; he is identified as having been a clerk for the Soares brothers, selling their goods in outlying villages and mills (*Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil* 1984, 258). The other two Pinas whom Niskier (2006) cites are from a later period. Benjamin de Pina is mentioned in the Minute Book of the Zur Israel Congregation in the accounts of the plenary meeting of 1648 (Wiznitzer 1953a). Aaron de Pina was a member of the executive board of Congregation Zur Israel in 1653 (Wiznitzer 1960). Da Fonseca e Silva (2007) mentions several other colonial Pinas such as Francisco Gomes Pina, Francisco de Thaide (Pina) and Lionis de Pina. According to Da Fonseca e Silva (2007), Gonsalves de Mello (1996) treats this family in depth. Francisco Gomes Pina and Paulo de Pina, New Christians in pre-Dutch Pernambuco, are discussed in Klooster (2006).

<sup>4</sup> According to Niskier (2006), Ilha do Cheira Dinheiro is an island that is part of the Pina barrio.

<sup>5</sup> The name of the synagogue, Zur Israel of Rock of Israel may itself be a reference to the meaning of the word Recife, i.e., rock (Wiznitzer 1953a, 222).

to leave, and the resulting suspicions about these New Christians made life difficult for them. When the New World was explored, and Portugal began colonizing Brazil, many took the opportunity to emigrate, hoping to continue practicing Judaism in secret (Wiznitzer 1960, 1, 2; Elkin 2014, 5). The Portuguese went to Recife as early as 1534.<sup>6</sup> A large proportion of whites in Pernambuco in the sixteenth century were reported to probably be Judaizers, many of them farmers, managers of sugar mills and plantations, and owners of boarding houses. According to historian Judith Elkin, Inquisition records from 1618–19 show that many Brazilian converts (*conversos*) were openly Judaizing and in touch with the Jews of Amsterdam (2014, 12; see also Klooster 2006).

A well-known Jewish woman from those times was Branca Dias Fernandes, wife of Diogo Fernandes,<sup>7</sup> and the first Brazilian Marrano to be identified by name (Wiznitzer 1960, 25). She ran a school for girls and ladies in Olinda, but she and her husband later moved to Camaragibe, where Diogo was the administrator of a sugar mill and farm belonging to Ento Dias Santiago, a New Christian and relative of Branca.<sup>8</sup> According to denunciations of her to the Inquisition after her death, she and her husband secretly celebrated Rosh Hodesh (the new month), Yom Kippur, and other Jewish holidays in secret. Rumor had it that a disguised messenger used to walk through town in a special dress, which signaled that a Jewish service would be held at Camaragibe. *Esnogavar*, or celebrating clandestine Jewish services, is how the population referred to this practice. Celebrants alternated between Christian services (openly) and Jewish services (in hiding) in this Terra das Sinagogas (Land of Synagogues), as the Camaragibe plantation was called.<sup>9</sup>

It was, however, only in 1630, when the Dutch West India Company conquered Recife, Pernambuco, and Olinda, that the opportunity arose for Jews to practice their religion openly. According to local historian Tânia Neumann Kaufman, between 1637 and 1644 Jews enjoyed complete religious freedom under the reign of the local Dutch administrator, João Mauricio de Nassau.<sup>10</sup> Many Dutch Jews also came with the conquerors and settled in these areas. Olinda today is a beautiful little town with several imposing churches.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Wiznitzer (1960), the first known sugar plantation and mill was in Pernambuco and sugarcane was transplanted to Brazil before 1516. Documents of 1526 refer to customs payments for sugar imported from Brazil. This gives us some idea of the earliest dates of the Portuguese presence in Pernambuco. The date 1534 for Brazilian entry into the Recife metropolitan area is given by Vasconcelos and de Sá (2011).

<sup>7</sup> Branca Dias has entered Brazilian Jewish folklore as a heroine; see Niskier (2006). See Wiznitzer (1960) for more extensive information on Branca Dias Fernandes and books written about her.

<sup>8</sup> Olinda was the most important center of Portuguese settlement in the early part of the seventeenth century; Salvador and Rio de Janeiro were also significant (Boxer 1973). Founded in 1535, Olinda served from the last years of the sixteenth century onward as a major center of the sugarcane industry (UNESCO).

<sup>9</sup> This colorful description is from the Zur Israel synagogue museum. Wiznitzer (1960), based on the records of denunciations, also describes synagogue services in Camaragibe. The information about the signal for the Jewish service may derive from the Bahia Denunciations—*Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil* (1984)—where it is stated that a Jorge Dias de Caja “walked through Olinda with a piece of white linen on his foot and a sword in his belt as a signal to call the Jews of Olinda to the synagogue” (Wiznitzer 1960, 20).

<sup>10</sup> In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in 2004 (Luxner, 2004). However, Israel (2007) cautions against making too much of the Dutch policy. Referring to ordinances drawn up by the West India Company (WIC) governing body for the governance of all conquered territories in the New World, he says: “The 1629 ordinances . . . included an article directing WIC commanders to accord liberty of conscience, as it is expressed, to the ‘Spaniards, Portuguese, and natives of the land, whether they be Roman Catholics or Jews.’ However, this was not regarded as a right, or a

It would seem that the Jews were in Recife from the very beginning of Dutch rule, since they had already acquired land for a cemetery by 1630. As early as 1640, documentary evidence shows a large community of Jews owning sugarcane mills and mansions. The congregation of Zur Israel was founded in 1637 (Bohm 1988); however, at first, Jews were not allowed to worship publicly (Wiznitzer 1953c, 128). Only in 1640 did they start to build their own synagogue (*esnoga* in local parlance), which was completed in 1641 and seems to have functioned until the Dutch expulsion. I visited this structure on Rua do Bom Jesus, where a museum is now located. Two religious schools, Talmud Torah and Ets Hayim, were attached to the synagogue. The synagogue's first rabbi was the well-known Rabbi Isaac Aboab, himself a New Christian born in Amsterdam, who was brought by the community at a salary of 1600 florins and served from 1642 to 1654.<sup>11</sup> In addition to Rabbi Aboab, the first religious functionaries of this synagogue were the *chazzan* (cantor), Moses Raphael Aguilar; the elementary school teacher, Samuel Frazão; the *shochet* (ritual slaughterer), Benjamin Levy; and the *shamash* (sexton), Isaac Nahamias (Wiznitzer 1953a).

Prior to the construction of the Zur Israel community synagogue on Rua do Bom Jesus, Dutch Jews used the house of David Sênior Coronel, for worship (Vainsencher 2003).<sup>12</sup> Another congregation of Jews called Magen Abraham lived in Maurisstad on the neighboring island of Antônio Vaz,<sup>13</sup> however, they do not seem to have had their own building, worshipping rather in the house of Joshua Jesurun de Haro (Bohm 1988, 5). The two congregations merged in 1648. An interesting aspect of the Jewish presence here was their attempt to adjust their prayers to their location in the Southern Hemisphere. In a religious query addressed to Haim Shabetai, the rabbi of Salonica, the Jews of Recife wanted to know if they should pray for rain, as Jews elsewhere in the world did, or if they should change the timing according to the dry or rainy seasons in that part of the New World (Di Leone Leoni 1985). Many of the names recorded in the Livro de Registros (registry) of the Zur Israel synagogue in Recife are known even today: Aboab, Sarfatty, Diaz, Pereira, Mendes, de Azevedo, Navarro, Cardozo, Machabeu, Da Fonseca, Nunes, Nahmias, Cohen, Henriques, Baruh, da Costa, D'Oliveyra, Coronel, Barzilay, Levy, Castiel, Ferreira, Da Silva, Lopes, Burgos, Da Gama, Coelho, Salom, Azuly, Rison, Alvares, De Morais, Pinheiro, Bemvenist, de Torres, de Avila, Preto (Wiznitzer 1953b).

In 1654 the Portuguese defeated the Dutch, and most professing Jews chose to leave. Some opted to stay, but they fled to the *sertão*, or backcountry, and lived as crypto-Jews; if the Inquisition discovered them, they would be sent to Lisbon and burnt alive. The Zur Israel building itself was given

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necessarily permanent privilege, but merely a political concession to two particular groups, a privilege deemed strategically advantageous to the Company" (18).

It is revealing in this context that "(i)n December, 1641, a Jew was compelled (*by the Jewish community*) to pay a fine of 4,000 florins to the poor of Recife for having ridiculed the practices of the Christian Church. A few months later Jewish broker Daniel Gabilho was sentenced to death by hanging for a similar offense but was freed upon the payment of 15,000 florins by the Jewish community and on the condition that the Jewish community would assume responsibility for his conduct in the future" (Wiznitzer 1953a, 239).

<sup>11</sup> The salary figure is mentioned in Baron (1973).

<sup>12</sup> David Sênior Coronel is mentioned in the records of the synagogue (Wiznitzer, 1953a).

<sup>13</sup> From about 1640 on, a bridge connected Maurisstad/Cidade Maurícia and Recife, according to Wiznitzer (1953a, 228).

as a gift to the leader of the rebellion against the Dutch. At a later time, the Rua dos Judeus began to be called Rua da Cruz and ultimately Rua do Bom Jesus after 1879. The building seems to have existed for about two centuries; when fire destroyed the structure, it was replaced by a new building occupied by the Banco de Crédito Real de Pernambuco.

Of the Jews who left, in Elkin's words: "One hundred fifty families returned to Amsterdam; others went elsewhere in the Caribbean; and twenty-three stragglers wound up in the port of New Amsterdam, where Governor Peter Stuyvesant reluctantly admitted them on orders from his stockholders back home. The congregation they formed, appropriately named Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel), was the first Jewish congregation on Manhattan Island" (Elkin 2014 based on Wiznitzer 1954). It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that Jews from Europe and North Africa once again went to Recife, and not until the twentieth century did a community of Jews once again flourish in Recife (Wiznitzer 1954, 85).

## The New Ashkenazi Community

The newer immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe to Recife started in the second decade of the twentieth century, mainly from Poland, Ukraine, Bessarabia, and Lithuania (Museum of the Jewish People at Beit HaTfutstot. The community lived principally in the neighborhoods of Boa Vista and Boa Viagem, which is still a major Jewish residential area. A main artery, Avenida Boa Viagem, runs along the coastal side of the neighborhood and is separated from the sea by a beautiful promenade and attractive beach.

According to Kaufman (2013, chapter 6), little or no anti-Semitism existed when the Ashkenazi community got its beginnings in the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Two groups arrived: those from German-speaking areas, more educated and speaking German and other European languages; and those from Eastern Europe, from *shtetlekeh* (small, rural Jewish communities in Eastern Europe), less educated and tending to speak Yiddish. The former did not mingle with the latter as they tried to integrate into the majority culture as quickly as possible and were more highly represented in the professions. The latter had little formal education, other than from the *cheders* (Jewish primary schools), and despite not knowing the local language, went into business. Typically they did something called *klientelshik*, which involved selling goods to the poorer sections of the Brazilian populace and providing

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<sup>14</sup> Levine (1968) opines that there has been little anti-Semitism in modern Brazil, despite official expressions of anti-Semitism during the pre-Second World War presidency of Getúlio Vargas: "(I)n the cities, particularly in melting-pot Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Jews often were indistinguishable to the average Brazilian from the many other immigrant groups present in significant number." "Few barriers remain to native-born Jews today, and obstacles against naturalized but not native-born Brazilians are rapidly disappearing. Unlike Argentina and some other Latin American countries, in Brazil the Catholic faith is not prescribed for public office. Jewish legislators have been elected since the 1940's; in 1966, there were six Jewish generals in the armed forces." See also Lesser (2001), who, while acknowledging that anti-Semitic incidents are few and minor, says that: "(f)or Brazil's Jews anti-Semitism is palpable, and anti-Semitic rhetoric is placed into a context where Jew hatred is felt, not studied." Kaufman (2013, Chapter 6) provides a good summary of the place of Jews and Zionism in modern Brazil.

credit with weekly repayments.<sup>15</sup> The ancestors of my guide, Carlos, were among these pioneers who served as a sort of hybrid money-lenders/peddlers. They also performed an important role in the Brazilian economy by introducing new products and accelerating the development of a formal economy. Often living far away from home, they tended to stop following Jewish law and not keep kosher or respect the Sabbath, while maintaining their cultural identity.

Those who could integrate into the majority culture, such as the German-speaking Jews and those from Eastern Europe cities such as Odessa and St. Petersburg did well in the professions and were accepted for Brazilian citizenship. The Yiddish-speakers from the shtetlekh, however, felt the need to keep together in neighborhoods such as Boa Vista. They started the Yiddish theater, brought in well-known European actors and immersed themselves in Yiddish literature of all sorts, both political and artistic. Zionists also existed, as did leftists groups; their activities to a certain extent modeled what was happening in the old country. Certain tension appeared between the notions of being Brazilian and being Zionist, yet the feeling of security allowed for this.<sup>16</sup> Intellectual ferment abounded, with groups of young people meeting and engaging in *kestlumen*, which referred to the practice of putting chits bearing discussion topics into a *kestl* or box and picking topics at random (Kaufman 2013).

The Jewish Virtual Library site<sup>17</sup> records that the Jewish community was very active in the early days with a network of institutions, including six schools, the assistance organization Relief, a sports club, library, Yiddish theater group, youth and Zionist groups, and women's organizations such as WIZO and Pioneiras. Ashkenazi Jewish life flourished in Recife in the prewar years with regular Yiddish theatrical performances by both local and visiting artists from Eastern Europe. Plays such as "Der Kenig Lir" (King Lear), "Der Daytsh un der Yid" (The German and the Jew), "Afn Veg keyn Buenos Ayres oder Dos Royte Vinkl" (On the Way to Buenos Aires or the Red Corner), "Akeydes Yitzkhok" (The Sacrifice of Isaac), and "Tevye der Milkhiker" (Tevye the Dairyman), attest to the varied nature of Jewish theatrical fare.<sup>18</sup>

The website of the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit HaTfutsot in Israel provides more information about communitarian and politically oriented activities in Recife at this time, particularly the existence of groups such as the Grupo da Juventude Israelita Max Nordau (Group of Israelite Youth, founded 1925), the Organização Vita Kempner (1940) and the Sociedade Israelita Chaim Jitlovsky. Jewish schools were set up, beginning in 1918 with the Ídishe Shul, which is still in operation

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<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Isio Jacobowitz in October 2018. Isio was born in Recife and still has family there. One of his cousins, Carlos Masur, was my guide.

<sup>16</sup> Falbel (1986) mentions the establishment in Recife of the Herzlia Zionist Association by Dr. Yehuda Wilensky after his arrival there in 1921.

<sup>17</sup> Online. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org>.

<sup>18</sup> The website *O Obscuro Fichário dos Artistas Mundanos*, <http://obscurofichario.com.br/>, provides information about the actress Sofia Rafalovich, Herman Klatskin, and others. It also provides information about theaters, such as the Teatro de Santa Isabel (<http://obscurofichario.com.br/lugar/teatro-santa-isabel/>), where some of these plays were performed. The permanent exhibit at the Zur Israel synagogue has photographs of posters of many of these plays, as well as copious information about this period.

in the Torre neighborhood, under the name of the Colégio Israelita Moises Chvarts (Museum of the Jewish People).

The generation that followed in the late 1930s and 1940s continued the same activities but became more Brazilian, changing their language of interaction to Portuguese. Little was known in Recife about the actual events surrounding the Holocaust while they were occurring;<sup>19</sup> however, after the war, a feeling of responsibility for the maintenance of Jewish culture prevailed. By that time, however, the role of Yiddish had irreversibly declined, and Jewish literature was absorbed mainly in translation. New works also reflected the needs and concerns of the Brazil-identified youth, as opposed to the predominantly immigrant issues that had been the focus in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup>

In the early twentieth century, four main Jewish families resided in the Boa Vista neighborhood in Recife—Vainer, Cherpak, Fainbaum and Foigel. They prayed in one of their homes, called the Sukuron Synagogue, beginning around 1910. It was not until many more Ashkenazi Jews arrived, fleeing the pogroms of Eastern Europe, that the Pernambuco Israelite Center, the social heart of the community, was formed in 1918 and is still in existence today. The Shil Sholem Ocnitzer was constructed and opened in July 1926; it was later called the Synagoga Israelita da Boa Vista, and still later, the Sinagoga Israelita de Recife, or the Jewish Synagogue of Recife. More recently, it has been called simply by the name of the street where it is located, the Martins Júnior Shul. A cemetery was also created in 1927. Another Ashkenazi shul called the Shil Chaim Leib Kelner, also in the Boa Vista neighborhood, was shuttered in 1965. A number of immigrants also came from Arab countries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1930 Sephardi immigrants built their synagogue at 84 Rua da Matriz in the Boa Vista neighborhood and then moved to the premises of the Pernambuco Israelite Center. In 1950 the Sephardi synagogue closed, primarily because its members either married Ashkenazim and assimilated to that majority culture or simply moved away (Vainsencher, 2004).

## Modern Recife

In the 1970s a weakening of Jewish identity occurred. Intermarriage had been increasing, although in many cases, where the non-Jewish partner was female, she tended to convert. Where the husband was non-Jewish, the children often were given a Jewish education (Kaufman, 2013). Still, the

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<sup>19</sup> This is similar to the situation in most parts of the world. For example, a Cornell University website (<https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-understanding-holocaust-wwii-today>, accessed May 27, 2019) notes: “In the summer of 1944, the *New York Times* ran reports on the mass killing of Jewish people under the Nazis. In November of that year, 76% of Americans in a Gallup poll said they believed the stories that Germans had murdered many people in concentration camps. When respondents were asked to estimate the number of people who had been killed in these camps, however, it was clear that the extent of the atrocity was not yet understood. While 33% refused to venture a guess, 36% thought the number killed was under 100,000, 8% between 100,000 and 1,000,000, and 24% thought a million or more.” If this was the situation in New York, it would have been even worse in far-off Recife. See Seligmann-Silva and Foster (2009) for the paucity of writing on the Holocaust in Brazil.

<sup>20</sup> See Cytrynowicz (2018) for an overview of Yiddish culture in Brazil from the beginning in the early twentieth century to the present. “The 1950s may be considered the tipping point in the history of Yiddish in Brazil; theater, press and literature in the language had largely disappeared by the 1970s” (Cytrynowicz 2018, 17).

effects of intermarriage led to an erosion of Jewish institutions. Groups such as the Colégio Israelita in education and Habonim Dror, which works with Jewish youth, have tried to reinvigorate Jewish life. Beit Chabad, established in 1987, has become more influential with the arrival of Rabbi Alexander Mizrahi, a pragmatic individual willing to work with people as he finds them rather than imposing a rigid framework.<sup>21</sup> Since 1995 a non-Orthodox group has also been mobilizing couples in their thirties and forties to celebrate Shabbat every week. Finally, the Arquivo Histórico Judaico de Pernambuco, set up in 1992, has tried to use a local Jewish history focus to revive institutions that in the past had been the foundation of Jewish life.

In 1997 the Ministry of Culture initiated an archaeological project aimed at restoring and preserving the historic center of Recife. In the course of excavations, the remains of the old Zur Israel synagogue were discovered, including a *mikva* (ritual bath) that was inspected by rabbinic authorities from Israel and Argentina and determined to be genuine. A museum was built in 2000 on the site of the old synagogue, with some of the ground floor covered with transparent glass, so that the site of the old *mikva* can still be viewed. On the second floor, a new synagogue has been constructed. In addition to its use as a museum, the building is also a venue for conferences and cultural performances (Vainsencher 2003).

The Jewish school is still in existence. However, the high rate of intermarriage has caused enrollment to drop drastically, and local opinion is that its closure is imminent. The nearest communities are in Salvador, Fortaleza, and Natal, none of which is very large. While the small size of the Recife community and its distance from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro suggest that it is likely to wither away, the existence of a rich history and easy communication by telephone and physically by air with the rest of Brazil, the US, and Israel suggests that Jewish life, which started here in the Americas five hundred years ago, will not cease. What form it will take remains to be seen.

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<sup>21</sup>The JTA Archives website (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2004) quotes Rabbi Mizrahi regarding the resurgence of interest in Jewish life in Recife; still he concludes: “People who are really serious about Judaism nowadays must go to Israel or the States.”

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