



# American Jewish Chaplains: Adopting an American Form

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## Abstract

This article represents the first field-wide treatment of American Jewish chaplains. As fewer Jews, like members of all religious backgrounds in the USA, are religiously affiliated and regularly join or participate in local congregations, Jews and other Americans will likely find ways to address their spiritual–religious needs outside of congregational life, in settings such as hospitals, military, universities, elder care, and other settings where “life happens.” Chaplains are religious professionals who work in these settings. While many people have done the work of chaplains—caring for others, attending to the dying, helping people engage with their spiritual–existential struggles—the evolution of those who consider themselves Jewish chaplains and their wrestling with the term chaplain, itself Christian, is at the center of the analyses offered here. We begin with a brief historical overview and then describe their work today. Our analysis is based on a series of historical and sociological inquiries carried out in 2021–2022. In the face of largely Protestant norms and expectations that shaped chaplaincy, American Jews—who made up the first non-Christian clergy to become chaplains in state and private settings—have engaged with and shifted the concept of chaplaincy and the training required to be eligible for these positions. The case of Jewish chaplains illuminates ways of navigating the seams of Jewishness in American life.

**Keywords** Chaplains · Spiritual care · American Jews · Social boundaries · Minority · American Jewish history · Religious leadership

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## Introduction

Fewer and fewer Jews, like members of all religious backgrounds in the USA, are religiously affiliated and regularly join or participate in local congregations. Growing numbers of Jews identify as Jewish “with no religion,” and an increasing proportion of Jews decline to specify Jewish denomination when asked to self-identify. Synagogue attendance declined from 37% in 2013 to 27% among Jews by Religion in 2020 (Pew 2021).<sup>1</sup>

Given these changing patterns, where congregations may no longer function in the same central way they once did, where do these American Jews address their spiritual–religious–existential concerns, mark life transitions, and so on? Increasingly it is fair to say that Jews and other Americans will find support for these kinds of concerns outside of congregational life, in settings where life happens—in hospitals, military, universities, elder care, and other contexts—where they work, study, heal from illness, face various challenges, and so on. Chaplains are religious professionals who work in these settings. A national survey conducted in 2019 found that 21% of Americans had contact with a chaplain in the past 2 years, more than half in healthcare organizations (Cadge et al. 2020b).

Along with these changing patterns of affiliation and congregational involvement, there have been parallel changes in religious leadership. Growing numbers of American religious leaders work outside of congregations (Schleifer and Cadge 2019), and chaplaincy is one of many modes of leadership. The work and role of chaplains is especially noteworthy because they do their work in settings that are not themselves devoted to religious practice, in contrast to synagogues, churches, temples, mosques, etc. Many of these settings include people from a broad range of backgrounds, religiously and otherwise. Increasingly, chaplains can connect with individuals in these secular sites of daily life, and they may indeed offer alternative or supplemental support to congregational clergy in working with individuals in the course of their lives.

Early chaplains in the USA were Protestant men ordained as clergy in their own religious traditions. In the face of largely Protestant norms and expectations that shaped chaplaincy, American Jews—who made up the first non-Christian clergy to become chaplains in state and private settings—have engaged with and shifted the concept of chaplaincy and the training required to be eligible for these positions. This article offers a short history of Jewish chaplains in the USA and an overview of where and how they do their work today and what that work includes. While many people have done the work of chaplains—caring for others, attending to the dying, helping people engage with their spiritual–existential struggles—the evolution of those who consider themselves Jewish chaplains and their wrestling with the term chaplain, itself Christian, is at the center of the analyses offered here. We begin with a brief historical overview and then describe their work today. We pay particular attention to the increasing professionalization of Jewish chaplains over time, and we

<sup>1</sup> That difference may be overstated, as it is related at least in part to different modes of data gathering in the two studies—phone versus answer questionnaire without an intermediary.

conclude with discussion of key aspects of Jewish chaplaincy that are relevant to the sociological study of contemporary American Jewry.

This article represents the first field-wide treatment of American Jewish chaplains. Research about American chaplaincy in general has been organized by sector and says little more about the character and features of chaplaincy work across the various settings (although Cadge 2023 looks at all chaplaincy in one American city). Taking a broad conceptual–legal view, Winifred Sullivan sees the work of chaplains increasingly called “spiritual care,” and “understood to be authorized, even mandated, by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment” (Sullivan 2014, 14). In creating space as what Sullivan calls “secular priests” or “ministers without portfolios,” chaplains have become “strangely necessary figure[s] religiously and legally speaking in negotiating the public life of religion today” (Sullivan 2014, 6). It is vitally important to see how Jews have played a role in this important American endeavor.

## Design and Methods

Our goal was to take stock of the history of American Jewish chaplains, the nature of their work in various sectors, and to get a sense of the patterns of professional preparation. The challenge was that the field had never been studied in a comprehensive way, so we pursued a series of preliminary inquiries to begin to develop such a portrait (Cadge and Horowitz 2022).

The history of American Jewish chaplaincy is a relatively unexplored area of scholarship. Our brief historical overview represents a preliminary foray into the topic, undertaken to illuminate the situations and contexts in which Jewish pastoral care has emerged. It draws extensively on the research conducted by Joseph Weisberg, based largely on Jewish newspapers located through ProQuest Historical Newspapers and Ethnic NewsWatch. He supplemented his primary source research with institutional and local studies as well as works from the field of American Jewish history (Weisberg 2022).<sup>2</sup>

The inquiry into today’s American Jewish chaplains in the second part of our findings is based on in-depth interviews with 31 chaplains, selected to cover the broadest possible range of settings where Jewish chaplains work in the USA, and includes people from all branches of Judaism. We consulted with a group of advisors made up of Jewish chaplains to develop an initial list of more than 60 potential interviewees. We selected 31 individuals from this list, aiming to prioritize people of different generations and geographies who had been in the field for varying lengths of time and whom we thought could see beyond the specifics of their organizational setting and sector. We sought out people, in other words, whom we thought had a broad enough perspective to help us build an initial map of the array of Jewish chaplains and where they work, and the key organizations that play a role in supporting Jewish chaplaincy. Interviews were 60–90 min long and took place between

<sup>2</sup> Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, he conducted most of this research remotely.

December 2020 and March 2021 by Zoom and were recorded and transcribed. We agreed not to identify respondents by name without permission. The sociodemographics of respondents are included in the Appendix in Table 2.

We conducted a pilot survey answered by 141 Jewish chaplains. There has never been a survey of American Jewish chaplains, and there is no preexisting sampling frame from which to draw a sample. This opt-in survey used self-identity as the defining characteristic: we encouraged all who identified as Jewish chaplains to complete our survey. We reached out through various professional networks and invited those who consider themselves to be Jewish chaplains to complete the survey and to forward it to others, as well.<sup>3</sup> As a first foray into chaplaincy, our aim was to present the breadth of organizations and people who see themselves doing this work, rather than narrowly defining it in a way not necessarily identifiable to those in it. The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents appear in Table 3.

We reviewed the posted requirements for chaplaincy preparation at the 11 major American Jewish seminaries, supplemented by clarifying conversations with educational leaders at many of the schools. These are presented in Table 4.

We came up with a provisional estimate of the number of Jewish chaplains in the USA. We attempted to pin down an estimate by getting membership counts from the key professional organizations that serve chaplains and totaling up the number of Jewish members, as presented in Table 5.

We mapped the cities that supported local Jewish community-based chaplaincy services since the 1950s, as well as those that were doing so in January 2022. The cities are listed in Table 6.

## A Brief History

Religiously motivated people have long cared for those in need. The term chaplain—connected historically to the term *cappellani*—has Christian origins, describing those “who had charge of the sacred cloak of St. Martin” (OED Online). The notion of chaplaincy as a distinct kind of professional work is a relatively modern concept. In *A Ministry of Presence*, Winnifred Sullivan traces the history of chaplaincy from military chaplains working for Frankish kingdoms to people working in a range of secular organizations today (Sullivan 2014). In the USA, chaplains have the longest history in the military, dating to before the Revolutionary War (Cadge et al. 2015, 201; Faust 2008). In prisons, colleges and universities, and healthcare organizations, the work of chaplains typically emerged from the religious founding of those institutions.

<sup>3</sup> The link to the online survey was active between 5 October 2021 and 8 November 2021. Members of the Mapping Jewish Chaplaincy Project’s Advisory Committee and the Strategic Planning Group for this project ( $N=34$ ) were asked to forward the survey link through their professional associations and networks. The survey was sent to the 10,000-person mailing list of the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab (CIL), the leaders of Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC) (approximately 700 members), the Association for Professional Chaplains (APC), and the Association of Clinical Pastoral Educators (ACPE). Reminder emails were sent to each of these groups multiple times.

American Jewish chaplaincy began to emerge with the first wave of Jewish hospitals in the USA in the mid-nineteenth century (Kraut and Kraut 2007, 3–4; Halperin 2012, 611). Early Jewish hospitals protected indigent and needy Jews from evangelizing ministers in non-Jewish hospitals and addressed Jewish religious sensibilities in providing kosher food and avoiding the conduct of unnecessary autopsies (Kraut and Kraut 2007, 3–4; Halperin 2012, 611). By 1861, the Directors of Jews' Hospital in New York had invited four (congregational) rabbis to offer religious solace and to advocate for the Jewish religious needs of Jewish patients (Directors of Jews' Hospital in New York, 5621/1861, 6–9). Rabbi Samuel Isaacs of New York, often called the first Jewish American hospital chaplain, was among this group, although it is not clear that he himself used the title chaplain (Kass 1977, 10–11; Tabak 2010, 91–92).

In the same era, Jewish leaders began to advocate for the right to be military chaplains. In the fall of 1861, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites sent Reverend Doctor Arnold Fischel to Washington to lobby President Lincoln to amend a bill passed earlier that year. Fischel had been removed as chaplain to his regiment because Congress required that chaplains be ordained ministers “of a Christian denomination.” Fischel gained a personal audience with Lincoln, who was unaware of the discriminatory implementation of the bill. Lincoln reached a politically viable compromise, interpreting the phrase “some Christian denomination” broadly enough to include Jews without amending the law. Jews were then eligible to be military chaplains, and Jacob Frankel of Philadelphia became the first officially recognized Jewish military chaplain in 1862 (Sarna and Shapell 2015, 100–108).

In New York, Jewish chaplaincy expanded to include prisons and correctional facilities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Until then, congregational rabbis had visited Jewish prisoners on a volunteer basis, but as the size of the Jewish population expanded dramatically beginning in the 1880s, and with that the number of Jews in prison, this ad hoc mode of serving them proved inadequate (Kass 1977, 11; “A New Field,” 1891, 4). In 1891, the New York Board of Jewish Ministers appointed Reverend Doctor Adolph Radin to a newly created permanent prison chaplaincy position, which was funded by contributions to the Board of Jewish Ministers from local congregations (“A New Field,” 1891, 4; “Jews in Penal Institutions” 1897, 4; “New York Letter” 1891, 4; “Society for the Aid of Jewish Prisoners” 1895, 551). In 1895, the State of New York dedicated state funds to the position.<sup>4</sup> Over the next few decades, Jewish prison chaplains, many unpaid, became common across the country, including in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Galveston, Oakland, and Leavenworth, among others (Bauman and Burnham 2018, 35–39; Mass 2004, 20–22; “Rabbis Visit Prisons,” 1899, 3).<sup>5</sup> Jewish hospital chaplaincy also expanded during this period, especially in New York where evangelizing ministers eagerly

<sup>4</sup> For evidence of state funding in New York, see “Society for the Aid of Jewish Prisoners,” 15 March 1895, *American Hebrew*, p. 551 and Kass 1977, 11. There were similar calls in other cities, for example, see [Editorial], 30 January 1891, *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia), p. 4; “New York Letter,” [Editorial], 20 March 1891, *Jewish Exponent*, p. 4; and “Jews in Penal Institutions,” *Jewish Exponent*, 6 August 1897, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> As Mass shows, Jewish clergy visited prisoners at Eastern State Penitentiary as early as 1845.

awaited Jewish patients at public hospitals (Cohen (1984); [Editorial] (1904); The chaplain of the board (1911); The city (1903)).<sup>6</sup>

The presence of Jewish chaplains in the military grew in the early twentieth century, though not without internal debate. American Jewish activist Simon Wolf offered one example of this line of thinking on New Year's Day 1901. Wolf published a letter in the *Washington Post* denouncing a proposal by the Union of Orthodox Congregations to appoint Jewish chaplains in the military. Wolf argued that Jews enlisted in the military as Americans rather than as members of a faith group. In his view, "Public moneys should never be used for sectarian purposes" (Wolf 1901a, 10). More comprehensive analysis may reveal how widespread his view was among members of the Jewish community, though it clearly caught the attention of Jews across the country since Jewish newspapers in New York and Cincinnati referred to the letter (Wolf 1901b, 3; "The City" 1901, 263; "Notes and Comments" 1901, 7). However, this view did not prevail.

The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) and its Chaplains Committee were formed when the USA entered World War I, and the JWB quickly became an important part of the landscape. Unlike previous Jewish efforts to provide welfare work to the military, the JWB had the advantage of official government authorization. It was the only Jewish body recognized by the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA), the newly created government board charged with shaping the morals and behavior of young men in military camps. The JWB also lobbied Congress for the creation of "chaplains-at-large," a new development that contrasted with having regiment-based chaplains who until then were selected on the basis of the majority religious affiliation within the regiment. The commission of Jewish chaplains-at-large would instead depend on the number of Jews within the Army as a whole (Cooperman 2018, 88–89). "The chaplains-at-large bill created opportunities for minority faiths to present themselves as American," writes Ronit Stahl (2017, 36). Through World War I, Jewish military chaplains accepted hardships such as the military's refusal to alter its dining policies to accommodate the demands of a kosher diet, but over time Jews secured a place in the tri-faith (Protestant–Catholic–Jew) pluralist schema of the armed forces (Stahl 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Efforts to evangelize non-Christians within public institutions were not limited to the *fin de siècle*. As Jessica Cooperman has shown, the Young Men's Hebrew Association cited the presence of Christian missionaries as a reason to provide aid to Jewish soldiers during the "Punitive Expedition." Jewish and Catholic leaders shared the same fear when the Young Men's Christian Association was tapped as the only civilian agency to work with the newly established Commission on Training Camp Activities during World War I. Later, in 1953, famed evangelist Billy Graham described the military chaplaincy as "one of the greatest missionary undertakings." By 1968, the National Association of Evangelicals had increased its presence in the military chaplaincy tenfold from its allotment during World War II. More recently, Evangelicals have continued making inroads within the military, including a rule change that Congress passed in 2014 to allow sectarian prayer. Similarly, rabbi, chaplain, and founder of Jewish Prisoner Services International Gary Friedman called for greater attention to the topic of "Permitting vs. Prohibiting Proselytization" in a 2003 article in *Corrections Today*. Future research on American Jewish chaplaincy should help bring the nature of Evangelical–Jewish relations into clearer focus. See Cooperman (2018), 24–26, 37–41; Stahl (2017), chap. 6, 8 (esp. pp. 180–188, 229–234, 263–264); Billy Graham quoted in Stahl (2017), 181; and Friedman (2003), 90–91.

The JWB's Committee on Chaplains included six representatives, two from each of the major movements within Judaism, who reviewed and endorsed applications from Jews wanting to become military chaplains. Despite its supremacy as the only Jewish endorsing agency, the JWB was not always able to suppress disagreements within the Jewish community. As Jessica Cooperman argues, "The JWB's significant innovation in Jewish leadership lay in bypassing the support of a fractious Jewish public by securing the endorsement of the US government" (43). It could not, however, smooth over all of the fault lines within the Jewish community. For example, its attempt at a single prayer book during World War I satisfied neither Reform nor Orthodox Jews (Sarna 2019, 212–213; Cooperman 2018, 28–30). In a similar vein, the JWB Committee on Chaplains faced criticism for only endorsing Reform and Conservative rabbis. This apparent discrimination, however, reflected the reality that many Orthodox rabbis could not meet government-imposed citizenship and education requirements (Cooperman 2018, 91; Stahl 2017, 30). Over time, some Orthodox rabbis were able to secure endorsement from the JWB and served in the armed forces by World War II. Even with disagreements sometimes bubbling under the surface, the JWB remained the only Jewish agency that could endorse military chaplains until 2006, when the Chabad-affiliated Aleph Institute emerged as a second endorsing agency. An additional organization called Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim also endorses (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish chaplains (Popper 2006; Interview 31).

Starting in 1950, the JWB used an "internal draft" process to fill military chaplaincy positions with students graduating from the flagship seminaries of the time: Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR, Reform); the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS, Conservative); and Yeshiva University (YU, Orthodox). This draft fell apart with conflicts over the Vietnam War in 1969, when HUC-JIR became the last of the contributing seminaries to withdraw its support for compulsory service in the military chaplaincy (Stahl 2017, 212–219).

In response to profound differences between the several liberal and Orthodox denominational movements about the ordination of women as rabbis, the JWB ended up reorganizing in the mid-1980s. When Rabbi Julie Schwartz applied to join the Navy chaplaincy in 1986, Orthodox members of the JWB objected to endorsing a female rabbi and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) independently endorsed her application (Goldman 1986, A17). Eventually, the three major movements reached an agreement that created a new commission called the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, which permitted each group to endorse its own applicants without input from the other members (Hansen 1986, A5).

Jewish leaders have also done the work of chaplaincy on college and university campuses, though they have not always conceived of themselves as chaplains. In 1923, Rabbi Benjamin Frankel founded Hillel at the University of Illinois as a spiritual, cultural, and social club (Solberg 1992, 228–229). B'nai B'rith became a major underwriter of Jewish American spiritual care on campus as Hillel grew through the twentieth century and was present on 200 campuses by the early 1950s (Solberg 231–232; Rubin 2002, 10; Kun 1954, 13). In 1951, Boston University reportedly became the first historically Protestant institution to charge a rabbi with campus-wide chaplaincy ("Rabbi Charles Freedman Appointed B.U. Chaplain" 1951, 1). The landscape on campuses continued to evolve when, in 1969, the

first university Chabad House opened at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) (Fishkoff 2003, 94). By 2010, Chabad had centers on 119 American campuses (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018, 117).<sup>7</sup>

Many Americans became more familiar with chaplains through their experiences in World War II. As soldiers returned home, some communities created new chaplaincy positions under the auspices of local Jewish organizations. In Philadelphia, the Jewish Welfare Society appointed Rabbi Marvin Nathan a “community chaplain” in 1942 to reach Jews in institutions without Jewish chaplains. The Jewish Federation expanded this Philadelphia program in 1954 to reach “patients at present not affiliated with congregations” (“Our Community Chaplaincy: How It Serves Philadelphia Jewry” 1946, 18; “Expansion of Community Chaplaincy Is Launched” 1954, 1).<sup>8</sup> The number of Jewish chaplains working in hospitals also increased after World War II.<sup>9</sup> In some cities, such as Boston, Jewish hospital chaplains assisted out-of-town patients and their families through the Associated Synagogues of Greater Boston (“Coordinator’s Report for October, 1959”). Jewish prison chaplaincy also continued during this period. By the twenty-first century, chaplains were involved in a larger debate about the provisioning of kosher food in American prisons (Alvarez 2014; Friedman 2012; Genis 2019; Howland 2006; “Unkosher” 2012; Zeveloff 2012).

While the military relied on the Jewish Welfare Board as the singular voice of American Jewry until 2006, little else about the training and work of Jews working as chaplains has been consistently coordinated across settings. In the mid-1950s, Rabbi Fred Hollander likely became the first Jew approved to supervise clinical pastoral education (CPE), a training modality for chaplains developed in Protestant contexts earlier in the century, and relatively rare among Jewish chaplains until the 1980s (Tabak 2010, 94). By the 1990s, CPE training was available in some non-Orthodox Jewish seminaries, although most jobs for Jewish chaplains did not require it.

The first professional organization for Jewish chaplains started in 1990 with the creation of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC), today known as *Neshama* [soul]: *Association of Jewish Chaplains*. Started by chaplains working mainly in healthcare, NAJC founders settled on the term chaplain rather than rabbi “because the military paradigm predominated and largely carried over without much explicit examination...”<sup>10</sup> In other words, the military usage of the term

<sup>7</sup> One consequence of the expansion of American Jewish chaplaincy, especially on college campuses, has been the increased potential for conflict between different movements and organizations. See also note 21.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the fact that chaplains work outside of traditional congregations is likely a source of conflict within some Jewish communities. For example, after World War II, the Jewish Community Council in Newark simultaneously requested the creation of a permanent chaplaincy at Beth Israel Hospital and tried to eliminate the presence of an ad hoc congregation that formed there. In the eyes of the Jewish community, the ad hoc congregation attracted people who might otherwise purchase tickets at struggling urban synagogues. Future research may clarify the extent to which these conflicts characterize American Jewish chaplaincy. For more, see Kraut and Kraut (2007), 137–141.

<sup>9</sup> For examples, see Kraut and Kraut (2007), 138; Tabak (2010), 94.

<sup>10</sup> Tabak, personal communication, 2022.

chaplain made it more broadly legible in the civilian world. Additionally, the founders sought to “have a voice and home base alongside the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and the largely Protestant organization College of Chaplains.”<sup>11</sup> NAJC provided for the certification of Jewish chaplains starting in 1995 and began to require CPE for certification in 2003. NAJC represents the most deliberate attempt to create national standards for Jewish chaplains, though these standards are not required for employment in all sectors. NAJC aims to work with Jews across the religious spectrum, and its current board includes chaplains educated in Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism. At least one of its past presidents belongs to the Reconstructionist movement (Tabak 2010, 98–101).

## The Landscape of Jewish Chaplains Today

People who function as Jewish chaplains—historically and in the present—are not a monolithic group. They include both clergy and non-clergy from across the spectrum of Judaism.

They come with different backgrounds and forms of preparation, and they work in a variety of settings, each with distinctive features.<sup>12</sup> While the NAJC aims to standardize training and certification for all Jewish chaplains, there has never been common agreement about the skills and competencies required to be a Jewish chaplain or a chaplain from any religious background (Cadge and Rambo 2022; Cadge et al. 2019; Cadge et al. 2020a, b).

In the past 20 years, Jewish chaplaincy has been in a process of professionalizing. Nearly every 1 of the 11 major American Jewish seminaries that prepare professional rabbis requires some kind of grounding in chaplaincy for rabbinical students, although the curriculum is not standardized and there are many variations in what the preparation for chaplaincy entails. Yet even with this increased professionalization, studies across religious traditions suggest gaps between what chaplains learn in training and the skills they need to do the work on the ground (Cadge et al. 2020a, b; Chaplaincy Innovation Lab <https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/resources/working-papers/supply-side>).

The specific qualifications required to be hired as a chaplain depend on the employer and sector. Federal chaplaincy positions—in the military, Veteran’s Administration, federal penitentiaries—require endorsement and certification, while those in healthcare increasingly require certification, and those in community contexts often require neither (Chaplaincy Innovation Lab 2021).<sup>13</sup> Jewish chaplains,

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<sup>11</sup> Interview 37.

<sup>12</sup> In particular, sources of funding can vary from chaplaincy to chaplaincy. Different sources of funding—such as taxpayers, institutional funds, Jewish federations, and volunteer programs that may have minimal operational budgets—create distinct agendas, incentives, atmospheres, and challenges. As the literature on American Jewish chaplaincy develops, scholars may note how different economies of chaplaincy affect spiritual care and its providers.

<sup>13</sup> Since the US government does not regulate or oversee religion, endorsing bodies are entities from within the various religious institutions that provide support, advocacy, and accountability for those

like chaplains in general, have not functioned as a single professional group: They have not regularly gathered across all sectors to think about their work collectively, nor have they articulated a clear strategy for how their work impacts Jewish communities.

## Population and Sector Estimates

We attempted to estimate the full population of Jewish chaplains in the USA as of January 2022, an almost impossible task given the lack of agreement about the definition, training, and /or positions required to claim this label. We came up with a count of approximately 1000 Jewish chaplains in the USA working in healthcare (including hospice), military, elder care, community chaplains, prisons, and those who are working as university chaplains.<sup>14</sup>

In our in-depth interviews and survey, we were aware that the term chaplain poses several challenges. First, with its Christian origins, it is a title that many Jews, including those employed as chaplains, hear as more foreign than familiar. Some Jewish chaplains prefer terms such as spiritual care. Others, particularly in the military and hospitals, use the term chaplain as a job title. Second, it turns out that some chaplains understand “Jewish chaplain” to denote a chaplain who works with Jews only, in contrast to “a chaplain who is Jewish,” whom they understand to be a chaplain who works across the board with individuals, irrespective of background or religion. Among our interviewees, chaplains toggled between these foci. We use the term chaplain here while recognizing that it does not sit well for all Jews working professionally in these roles, and we define the Jewishness of the chaplain as an attribute of the individual, without presuming that this phrase leans one way or the other (working with Jews only versus working with everyone). Our stance here is that those who consider themselves Jewish chaplains are Jewish chaplains.

Just over 140 individuals responded to our survey in the fall of 2021. Of the 141 individuals who responded, the majority ( $N=83$ , 59%) worked in healthcare as described in Table 1. Ten or more respondents also worked in elder care ( $N=14$ , 10%), the community ( $N=10$ , 7%), prisons ( $N=10$ , 7%), or the military ( $N=10$ , 7%). The survey is based on a convenience sample, not a random sample, which makes it impossible to ascertain the true distribution of Jewish chaplains across sectors.

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Footnote 13 (continued)

within a given tradition. Chaplaincy Innovation Lab. <https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/training-credentials/chaplaincy-endorsers>

<sup>14</sup> We arrived at this number by gathering counts of Jewish chaplains from key organizations that work with them, presented in Table 5. The estimate may double count individuals who belong to more than one organization. The estimate does not include chaplains who do not belong to these groups, for example, those working around addiction and recovery, with police, firefighters, etc. There is no way to estimate state prison chaplains, although we know that Jewish chaplains operate there. Finally, regarding university chaplains, Hillel professionals are not included in this count unless they belong to Association of Chaplaincy and Spiritual Life in Higher Education (ACSLHE), or another of the main membership organizations for chaplains.

**Table 1** Sector of work

|                  | <i>N</i> | %   |
|------------------|----------|-----|
| Healthcare       | 83       | 59  |
| Elder care       | 14       | 10  |
| Community        | 10       | 7   |
| Prison           | 10       | 7   |
| Military         | 10       | 7   |
| Higher Education | 7        | 5   |
| Not reported     | 7        | 5   |
| Total            | 141      | 100 |

### Chaplaincy Positions and Credentials

Little is known about chaplaincy positions nationally, including the fraction that are full or part time, the proportion that are paid by the employer versus other organizations, and average salary and benefits information.<sup>15</sup> In our survey of Jewish chaplains, about half (51%) of the 141 respondents work in full-time, paid chaplaincy positions; 41% work in part-time, paid chaplaincy positions; and the remaining 7% work as volunteer chaplains. Chaplains working in the more established sectors of healthcare, higher education, and the military are more likely to hold full-time rather than part-time positions. Those working in prisons, elder care, and community chaplaincy are more likely to hold part-time positions.<sup>16</sup>

The credentials of the chaplains who responded to the survey vary. Three-quarters of the paid chaplains are ordained (mainly as rabbis, plus a few cantors), which is not surprising, considering that until recently ordination alone was viewed as the main credential for Jewish chaplaincy work. In recent years, as the routes to Jewish chaplaincy have professionalized, we expected there to be more people with formal chaplaincy preparation—both among those who are ordained rabbis and cantors, as well as among individuals who are not ordained.

The survey results reflect these changing patterns. Using clinical pastoral education (CPE) and board certification (BCC) as measures of professional preparation—they are the main but not the only rubrics—the survey shows that three-quarters of the paid Jewish chaplains in our survey had completed at least one unit of CPE and just under half (47%) reported being board certified. We discerned three main patterns among paid chaplains. The first pattern—more than one-third of the sample (36.2%)—reflects the older route to chaplaincy: rabbis and cantors—without CPE or BCC—typically work as part-time chaplains, alongside their other work, typically in congregations. The second pattern (38.5%) is made up of chaplains who have BCC certification and who are ordained, more than two-thirds of whom (68%) work

<sup>15</sup> However, this report is beginning to address this gap: <https://chaplaincyinnovation.org/resources/working-papers/chaplain-costs-compensation>

<sup>16</sup> Federal prisons are required to have chaplains. State prisons and local jails are not, which is where the per diem positions are.

in full-time chaplaincy positions. The remaining 25% of the paid chaplains are not ordained. Most of them (63%) are board certified, and most of the rest have some CPE preparation. Across all groups, individuals who hold full-time positions are likely to be both younger and board-certified compared with those in part-time positions. This suggests a generational pattern where younger chaplains have some CPE exposure, aligning with the growth of CPE preparation offered in rabbinical school.

## Where Jewish Chaplains Work

Today, Jewish chaplains work in the military, healthcare organizations, prisons, colleges and universities, and in a range of community settings. Varying policy requirements, funding mechanisms, and organizational models shape where and how Jewish chaplains work. At the federal level, chaplains are mandated in the military, federal prisons, and the Veteran's Administration, and there are funds allocated to pay for this. While the provision of specifically Jewish chaplains is not itself enumerated, these policies have led Jewish chaplains to be essentially required in these settings to serve Jewish service members and veterans. In other settings, such as healthcare, elder care, and higher education, there is a historical precedent for the work of Jewish chaplains, as is the case with chaplains more generally. This work often continues because of non-chaplain champions in the settings who see the value of trained chaplains and continually marshal support. Finally, in the face of changing circumstances, Jewish chaplains are reinventing, expanding, and extending what it means to be a chaplain in many community settings. Their traction or long-term viability in community settings is less clear, absent policy mandates or historical precedents that often serve to clarify chaplains' roles and ensure more consistent financial support.

## Military and Federal Prisons

The number of Jewish chaplains serving in the military, in the Veteran's Administration, and in federal prisons was listed as 139 by the JWB in 2022, and our pilot survey puts them at 10% of the sample. These chaplains serve everyone, Jewish and non-Jewish. Those serving on active duty in the military are re-assigned every 2–3 years and tend to develop longer-term relationships with their constituents than their counterparts serving in healthcare. The work of military chaplaincy ranges from counseling to ritual support. They are the only military professionals who can offer absolute confidentiality.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, military chaplains have worked especially around suicide prevention, resilience, and moral injury (Stahl 2017, 196–225). As one military chaplain we interviewed explained, "...most people are looking for... just another human being... a help channel, a

<sup>17</sup> Per a military chaplain source, military confidentiality for chaplains is absolute, and on par with the expectations of the Catholic Church for its priests. Per instructions and regulations, military chaplains cannot break confidentiality even for suicidal or homicidal ideation from service members, their dependents, or retirees.

godly presence... and a sense of and feeling of humanity. That's really what we do.... I used to describe it as spiritual social workers" (Interview 19). For Jewish care recipients, this includes "helping Jewish members connect with their Jewish identity" and supporting life-cycle rituals (Interview 19). It is not uncommon for an active-duty Jewish military chaplain to be one of the few, if not the only, Jewish individuals on base (Interview 21).

In the military, Jewish chaplains also serve members of other minority faiths and act as ambassadors helping non-Jews learn about Jewish traditions. "I serve mostly non-Jews (95%)" one explained. "An additional responsibility is called a collateral duty.... I am the chaplain to all the minority faiths. I also have a specific assignment to facilitate the Muslim midshipman club [organization], Buddhist club, Hindu midshipman club, Latter-day Saints... when I was in Japan, I was responsible for taking care of the Catholic community" (Interview 15). These responsibilities include handling the logistics, supply, and administrative needs of religious groups not represented by a chaplain in their tradition. Because the military is predominantly Christian, another Jewish chaplain explained, "The role that one has, anyone who joins the military Chaplain Corps does play an important ambassadorial role. But I think being a good ambassador also entails understanding better the culture that you have joined. It's not just military, it's Christian, and to learn about it and to cultivate a sense of appreciation for it" (Interview 19).

Points of tension for Jewish military chaplains are many. Many are isolated and challenged to sustain themselves religiously absent a Jewish community. The military contexts require regular adaptation to the dominant Protestant culture. "I learned to pray extemporaneously...from my Protestant colleagues," one Jewish chaplain explained, "because as a rabbi, everything is formulaic. But when someone goes, 'Chaplain, would you offer a prayer for us?' I had to learn to, to spew it out, in a moment..." (Interview 13). There are also not easy or obvious ways to connect with young recruits, especially as more and more are not religiously affiliated. Differences between branches of Judaism also require ongoing negotiations. Agreements facilitated by the Jewish Welfare Board with its denominational partner organizations require Jewish chaplains to serve kosher food at all events. They also prohibit Jewish chaplains from conducting intermarriage and same-sex marriage, even though the Reform and Conservative movements allow same-sex marriage. The practices of Jewish chaplains are affected. In the words of one:

We have limitations. I'm not allowed, even though my denomination [Reform Judaism] allows it...I'm actually not allowed to marry a Jewish person to a non-Jewish person... even if it's on my own time. I'm active duty. Reservists might have slightly different rules...I could lose my endorsement. If you lose your endorsement, you can't stay in the military. It comes from the Jewish Welfare Board...That has to do with the fact that they endorse all denominations, so they're playing a balancing game. We're also not allowed to marry same-sex couples. I wonder if that will change one day but because of the different denominations that the Jewish Welfare

Board endorses, we're not allowed. So even if I disagree, I have to abide by their rules if I want to be in the military (Interview 17).

Like in the military, the federal prison system requires chaplains to be available to all inmates. Federal prison chaplains hold Sabbath and holiday services, offer text study, and provide one-on-one support. They also provide items needed for religious worship and adjudicating requests for kosher food (Interview 8). Most Jewish prison chaplains do not serve in the federal system where chaplains are legally mandated, but in state, county, and local institutions where their presence arises instead from historical precedent. Some are paid. Others volunteer, which means their positions are precarious and they are not always allowed to enter the facilities (Interview 16). They represent the various branches of American Judaism, ranging from the ultra-Orthodox supported by Chabad and Pirchei Shoshanim to religiously liberal rabbis.<sup>18</sup> Prison chaplains emphasize how they help Jewish prisoners feel a part of the Jewish community. "I think the idea is that we're the connection to the Jewish community outside, and these men feel that they're connected and supported, and they feel they're part of a larger whole," one reflected (Interview 16). In addition to Jewish inmates, Jewish chaplains serve whoever needs chaplaincy in prison. "I'm the only one here," said one chaplain serving prisoners on death row (Interview 22).

### Healthcare, Elder Care and Higher Education

The work of Jewish, like all, chaplains in healthcare organizations, elder care settings, and higher education is not required or strongly shaped by law or policy. It results mostly from historical precedent, including the Jewish founding of care institutions, particularly in health and elder care. There is no way to estimate the number of chaplains in healthcare altogether, let alone the number of Jews. They make up the largest proportion of respondents to our pilot survey at 59%. These chaplains devote most of their time to supporting patients, family members, and staff, including both those who are Jewish and those who are not. Healthcare chaplains tend to focus on spiritual distress, meaning-making, and aspects of health and healing beyond the specific reason the person is seeking medical care. While social workers make discharge plans, nurses dispense medication, and nutritionists advise on food choices, one Jewish chaplain in healthcare explained, "The chaplain meets people where they are and gives the patient a safe space. We are licensed to loiter with intent. We can hang around and wait. Most people in the hospital can't do that. That's a real gift" (Interview 12).

Jewish healthcare chaplaincy differs markedly from the act of *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick) that is a Jewish religious obligation. "Chaplaincy is a sophisticated intervention aimed at helping people find healing, and respecting them, and

<sup>18</sup> As an additional note, the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) includes some prison-based congregations created by the incarcerated themselves, such as, "Congregation Bet Tikvah U'geulah, located in the Miami Correctional Facility in Bunker Hill, the third Union congregation located within a prison." <https://urj.org/press-room/reform-movement-continues-growth-three-congregations-join-union-reform-judaism>

also respecting boundaries, and recognizing how to be there for them in a holistic manner. *Bikkur cholim* is like bringing chicken soup,” another chaplain explained (Interview 10). Some Jewish chaplains in healthcare, most frequently members of the Orthodox community, do interact with Jewish volunteers, support *bikkur cholim* rooms, and help ensure access to kosher food and other needs for Jewish patients.<sup>19</sup>

In elder care, 10% of our survey respondents, Jewish chaplains make distinctive contributions to the broader field of chaplaincy. Jewish chaplains have longer histories working in elder care than chaplains from other religious traditions, mostly Protestant, that have also opened elder care facilities.<sup>20</sup> Jewish chaplains work in Jewish nursing homes, assisted living, supportive senior housing, and continuum-of-care retirement communities. They tend to have longer-term relationships with residents, both Jewish and non-Jewish, than chaplains in healthcare, and spend most of their time connecting with residents. Many seek multidimensional ways of engaging the whole person in various kinds of found opportunities, using holidays as a jumping off point, but tailoring the activities to engage the elderly residents holistically through all their senses.

The work of chaplains in elder care settings is shaped by changing religious demographics of residents. As one chaplain explained, “The vast, vast majority of the residents [here] are Jewish, which makes us unique in AJAS (American Jewish Aging Services) because a lot of Jewish homes are struggling to have a Jewish population” (Interview 26). One-fifth of those this chaplain serves are residents; the remaining four-fifths, who do not reside in the facility itself, are not Jewish. One rabbi described how he was helping his agency to reorient itself from operating as an exclusively Jewish institution, hearkening back to the era in which it was founded, to being a Jewish agency with a Jewish name that serves people of all faiths:

I spearheaded changing the *kashrut* policy of the building because it was so restrictive. If the product didn’t have a *hechsher* [kosher certification] it wasn’t allowed past the front desk. So, if you came in with a Starbucks coffee and someone baked cookies for Grandma, they weren’t allowed to have it. And things had reached a head with a particular case. And I started calling some of my colleagues around the country, what are they doing? How are they handling this? And we revised our [regulations] based on those terms, that the resident’s room is their home and private space, and it doesn’t have to be kosher, [while] the public spaces are kosher. So, I changed what had been for decades and took the policing out of the culture. There was this culture of policing at the front desk. So much so that every once in a while, someone threw a drink at the receptionist because they were so mad. People get personal about their food (Interview 27).

<sup>19</sup> This can be a source of tension for chaplains to manage, as patients and families may note the availability of this volunteer-supported resource to Orthodox Jewish families.

<sup>20</sup> With a long history of serving people in congregational settings in the Jewish community, serving elders with highly developed programs in senior living settings may be a Jewish model to be emulated by others.

Like all chaplains, Jewish chaplains also work frequently around death and dying. A community chaplain explained, “If there’s a Jewish patient on hospice who’s unaffiliated and wants rabbinic support, they call me” (Interview 27). Some Jewish chaplains work specifically for hospices or in palliative care in Jewish and non-Jewish settings (Dorff 2005; “Judaism, Hospice and Palliative Care,” n.d.; Metropolitan Jewish Hospice, Metropolitan Jewish Palliative Care, n.d.; Popovsky & Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life, 2007). Some Jewish hospice chaplains serve everyone, while others work specifically with Jewish patients. As one hospice chaplain explained, “If there is a Jewish special request for a rabbi [not in hospice care], then I’ll often go ahead and do that. Although there is a community rabbi who used to come to the hospital, now with me here, he doesn’t really need to do that” (Interview 2).

Higher education also has a long history of rabbis on campus, particularly through Hillel (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018). The terms chaplain and rabbi suggest different organizational bases and responsibilities in higher education. In the pilot survey, 5% of the respondents indicated they were chaplains in higher education; the Association for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Life in Higher Education (ACSLHE) counted 30 Jewish members in 2022. Rabbis on campus are likely to think of themselves as chaplains when they have job titles to that effect, in which case they are typically based in the university chaplain’s office, or the department of student affairs or religious and/or spiritual life. Hillel rabbis are less likely to call themselves chaplains. (There are Chabad Houses serving many campuses, too, and they operate separately from Hillel and from the university. We doubt that any Chabad rabbi uses the term chaplain to describe his role.)

Hillel International operates on 750 US campuses. Most Hillel organizations (approximately 60%) are independent, 501c3 organizations—each with its own board and fiduciary responsibility connected to a single campus. A second type of Hillel is a constituent part of the university; Hillel International calls these “embedded” Hillels (25–30% of the total). At large universities with large Jewish student populations such as New York University or Duke University, these Hillels function as their own departments within the university, with sizeable staffs. On smaller campuses, the Hillel employs 1–2 people and is housed within the Office of Student Life, or the Chaplain’s Office. In a less common, third arrangement, the Hillel is part of the local Jewish Federation. The target of these various types of Hillels depends on the structure. The autonomous, freestanding Hillels serve the Jewish students on campus and in the area. For Hillels that are part of the university, it depends on local circumstances. Large entities like the NYU Bronfman Center serve Jewish students on campus. They have autonomy in their decision-making. On smaller campuses rabbis serve both Jews and other students, usually as part of a team of chaplains from several different religious traditions.

We spoke with individuals in each of these kinds of settings about their work. All say they connect with the students’ spiritual and existential needs, their search for “the meaning of life,” for making sense of what they are learning and how that fits with where they come from and where they might be heading. One interviewee described this role as offering students a “spiritual hammock”:

That means that I'm there, seen as an approachable and comfortable presence that's supportive, that holds people in the ways that [are] able to move with people and supporting different parts of themselves as needed, that changes over time, and has both the strength to hold them and the flexibility to move with them. In a sense of allowing them to feel comfortable, feel supported, feel held and, hopefully, gives them the time, space and strength to rejuvenate and to prepare to get up for what's next and move in various directions (Interview 5).

Another individual explained, "I think of myself as being present and listening. Hyper-listening, so that you're not distracted, you're focused on them. It also means being quiet and not trying to solve problems unless they need to be solved. It just means sometimes people need to process things with you" (Interview 9).

The Hillel rabbis describe themselves as helping Jewish students "find their Jewish voices within the 3000-year-old Jewish tradition" (Interview 5). Sometimes they serve non-Jewish students, too; for example, one Hillel rabbi organized a trip to Israel and Brazil for campus leaders of different backgrounds. They say they might be called upon if there needs to be a Jewish voice or a Jewish person to represent the Jewish community—for example, helping to navigating politics surrounding Israel—among stakeholders and students. Both Hillel rabbis and Jewish chaplains interface with their counterparts on campus from the various religious traditions, as well as with Chabad rabbis on campus.<sup>21</sup>

Several rabbis we interviewed served as chaplains of the university as a whole. Their jobs take a "university-wide [perspective], serving the entire community," one explained (Interview 6). Another explained the variations in terms of roles:

Being a campus chaplain, I assume chaplaining is only a portion of the job. I mean, you also are doing a lot of administrative work, you're also teaching. You might teach a course. You're doing program planning. The title chaplain, I think, is more rooted in how the university saw that person's role as being minister to the university (Interview 20).

As stewards for the broader climate on spiritual life on campus, university chaplains play a role in bridging difference. One strategy is to work directly with students from different backgrounds to help them learn about one another's religious traditions. Another way they work is by setting up the cultural and administrative infrastructure to promote a sense of common purpose.

## Community Settings

Community chaplaincy is a fairly well-established field for the American Jewish community that represents a novel development in chaplaincy more generally.

<sup>21</sup> These efforts to collaborate with other groups, including Chabad, do not necessarily erase conflict. Hillel Rabbis, university chaplains, and Chabad representatives can carry their own particular attitudes to their work and often pursue slightly different agendas that may remain in tension.

Community chaplains made up 7% of our pilot study sample (and below, we counted 25 cities that supported Jewish community chaplains in 2022). While the Jewish community has a history of supporting chaplains such as Adolph Radin, who served prisoners in New York in the 1890s, and Marvin Nathan, who reached out to unaffiliated Jews in Philadelphia in the 1940s, the notion of community chaplaincy as a distinct kind of work has taken on new importance as rates of congregational affiliation have declined, elderly populations have grown, and the ways in which people age have changed. A 2016 study by Chicagoland Jewish Child and Family Services found that the organized Jewish community in Greater Chicago was not reaching Holocaust survivors, patients at certain hospitals, unaffiliated Jews, Russian speakers, individuals struggling with substance abuse, and people who felt isolated from the Jewish community. They suggested that community chaplains address this service gap (Rubin and Ozarowski 2016).

Other Jewish communities across the USA have also felt a need for community chaplains. We identified 25 local communities that supported community chaplains in 2022 and 48 communities that ever had such services, presented in Table 6. Some started as chaplaincy commissions after World War II. Others were part of the wave of Jewish Healing Centers that emerged in the 1990s.

The work of community chaplains varies and most commonly includes work with Jews not affiliated with synagogues. Some are people on the “fringes” who are not able to affiliate with congregations due to health, language, or other factors. Others are recent arrivals who are not integrated into local synagogues and/or do not have a preexisting relationship with a rabbi. Community chaplains care for members of congregations when individuals end up in a hospital where there is not a Jewish chaplain on staff and/or they are far from home. In cities with major medical centers that serve patients and families who travel for care, community chaplains help address the religious and communal needs of visiting families (Interviews 1–4). Community chaplains can also be definitionally connected to smaller sectors that do different types of population-specific outreach, such as the Base Movement serving young adults in a family-home model, those who serve Jews struggling with addiction and recovery, and those who support the re-entry of Jews post-incarceration.<sup>22</sup>

## Summary of Chaplains’ Areas of Responsibility Across All Sectors

The nature of the responsibilities of paid chaplains varies based on whether they work in healthcare, elder care, community settings, prisons, the military, or higher education. Overall, across all sectors we identified four main clusters of responsibility for Jewish chaplains<sup>23</sup>: 1) providing spiritual care to individuals, their families,

<sup>22</sup> Examples of these organizations are Base Movement (<https://basemovement.org/>) and Beit T’Shuvah (<https://beittshuvah.org/>). Base Movement, originally affiliated with Hillel nationally, is now affiliated with Moishe House ([moishehouse.org](https://moishehouse.org)); <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/moishe-house-taking-over-hillels-base-movement-a-rabbinical-network/>.

<sup>23</sup> We arrived at this categorization on the basis of two separate analyses—one of the in-depth interviews and a second by means of a factor analysis of items included in the survey. The two analyses reproduced the categories we report here.

and agency staff; 2) offering programs and opportunities for Jewish learning, study, and Shabbat and holiday religious observance; 3) addressing issues of *kashrut*, including liaising with nutrition services; and 4) serving the entire organization, by addressing mission integration, institution-wide events, representing the organization to the larger community, and building a space for “all.”

All chaplains reported working with clients and their families, but those working in prisons and in higher education report doing less client and family care than do chaplains in healthcare, elder care, community chaplaincy, and the military. Military chaplains and those in higher education are most likely to report having organizational responsibilities, as is the case to a lesser extent in healthcare and elder care. Responsibilities tied to kosher food are a special purview of prison chaplains and are features of Jewish chaplains’ work in elder care, higher education, and healthcare. Responsibilities related to Jewish worship, learning and study is the most typical activity for chaplains in working in elder care; it features prominently in the work of community chaplains, and those in prisons. It is also present in the work of those in higher education and in the military.

## Conclusions

Historically, the idea of a Jewish chaplain was not self-evident. The first chaplains in the USA were Protestant men. This provenance makes the idea of a “Jewish chaplain” seem like a category error—combining things that do not belong together in one frame. How this combination became a possibility reflects the changing social location of American Jews over the past 150 years, from “outsider” to an accepted, if differentiated, part of mainstream culture, although this was hardly a linear process. The initial need for Jewish chaplains arose as Jews entered domains such as the military, prisons, and hospitals, where Christian norms predominated. Jewish chaplaincy provided opportunities to create Jewish spaces within Protestant institutions or Jewish alternatives to those institutions. They also sought to protect Jews from proselytizing. In the nineteenth century and until World War II, being Jewish was a stigmatizing, “master status” that limited the life chances of individuals (Hughes 1945). Over time, mirroring the growing diversity on the broader American scene that was expressed in the initially tri-faith (Catholic–Protestant–Jewish) pluralistic paradigm, and more recently, in a broader conception of religious pluralism that encompasses a wider spectrum of beliefs and non-beliefs, American Jewish chaplains helped to transform chaplaincy to include not only serving their co-religionists but also attending to the spiritual–religious–existential needs of all individuals. All in all, the case of Jewish chaplains is one where Jews have been able to take on what started as a Christian form—being a chaplain—and use that to accommodate their needs, by both adopting chaplaincy and adapting existing aspects of chaplaincy work and revising them.

Examining Jewish chaplaincy opens new horizons to consider regarding questions of belonging and leadership for twenty-first-century American Jews. Sociologically, pastoral care is a form “connective labor” that is deeply important but typically undervalued (Pugh 2022). There is room to look at how Jewish leaders—both

ordained and lay—relate to the emotional well-being of their communities and their allies and counterparts from other religious backgrounds. Attending to the emotional component of rabbinic work is an important dimension that has not typically been included in framing Jewish leadership. Where do chaplains and spiritual caregivers fit within conceptions of religious life and the nature of rabbinical and other leadership? One can see echoes between today's chaplains and Hasidic models of the rabbinic caring.

Finally, studying Jewish chaplains offers an instance of American Jews living their lives in a variety of settings, often not solely within a Jewish frame. This point of view can illuminate how they navigate between Jewish and non-Jewish settings, as well as cases that do not neatly fit in either category (Horowitz 2015). The term chaplain indicates some interface with the world (i.e., individuals, workplaces, other settings and contexts) beyond a delimited Jewish context. When and how do Jewish chaplains deploy Jewishness relative to the context and the audience? Chaplains—who operate “on the seam” in the course of their everyday lives—offer one possible to answer to that question.

## Appendix

See Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

**Table 2** Background information for chaplain interviews,  $N = 31$

|                                  | <i>n (%)</i> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Female                           | 13 (41.9)    |
| Male                             | 18 (58.1)    |
| <i>Age, years</i>                |              |
| 26–35                            | 3 (9.7)      |
| 36–45                            | 11 (35.5)    |
| 46–55                            | 6 (19.4)     |
| 56–65                            | 9 (29.0)     |
| 66–75                            | 2 (6.5)      |
| <i>Race/ethnicity</i>            |              |
| Black or African American        | 1 (3.2)      |
| Caucasian or white               | 25 (80.6)    |
| Other*                           | 3 (9.7)      |
| Prefer not to respond            | 2 (6.5)      |
| <i>Highest degree earned</i>     |              |
| Bachelor's-level degree          | 2 (6.5)      |
| Master's-level degree            | 23 (74.2)    |
| Doctoral degree                  | 6 (19.4)     |
| <i>Years in current position</i> |              |
| < 1 year                         | 1 (3.2)      |
| 1–2 years                        | 5 (16.1)     |
| 3–5 years                        | 7 (22.6)     |

**Table 2** (continued)

|  | <i>n</i> (%) |
|--|--------------|
| 6–9 years  | 3 (9.7)      |
| 10–14 years  | 8 (25.8)     |
| 15–19 years  | 4 (12.9)     |
| 20 years or more   | 3 (9.7)      |
| <i>Years in chaplaincy</i>   |              |
| 3–5 years  | 4 (12.9)     |
| 6–9 years  | 4 (12.9)     |
| 10–14 years  | 9 (29.0)     |
| 15–19 years  | 9 (29.0)     |
| 20–29 years  | 2 (6.5)      |
| 30 years or more   | 3 (9.7)      |
| <i>Denominational affiliation</i>  |              |
| Reform   | 7 (22.6)     |
| Conservative   | 11 (35.5)    |
| Orthodox   | 6 (19.4)     |
| Reconstructionist  | 4 (12.9)     |
| Non-denominational   | 2 (6.5)      |
| Missing  | 1 (3.2)      |
| <i>Rabbinical school</i>   |              |
| Academy for Jewish Religion (Non-Denominational)                         | 1 (3.2)      |
| American Jewish University (Conservative)                                | 1 (3.2)      |
| Chabad (Orthodox)  | 1 (3.2)      |
| Hebrew College (Non-Denominational)                                      | 1 (3.2)      |
| Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion (Reform)              | 8 (25.8)     |
| Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative)                               | 8 (25.8)     |
| Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (Reconstructionist)                 | 4 (12.9)     |
| Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (Orthodox)                                       | 2 (6.5)      |
| R. Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University<br>(Orthodox) | 3 (9.7)      |
| Non-Rabbis   | 2 (6.5)      |
| <i>Sector</i>  |              |
| Community  | 4 (12.9)     |
| Healthcare   | 5 (16.1)     |
| Higher education   | 5 (16.1)     |
| Military   | 6 (19.4)     |
| Prison   | 3 (9.7)      |
| Senior living  | 3 (9.7)      |
| Professional organization  | 3 (9.7)      |
| Other sector   | 2 (6.5)      |

N 31

\*Included one response selecting both “Caucasian or White” and “Other (option to specify)—Ashkenazi Jewish.” Two responses selected “Other (option to specify)—Jewish”

**Table 3** Demographic Information from the National Survey of Jewish Chaplains,  $N = 141$

|  | <i>n (%)</i> |
|--|--------------|
| <i>Age, years</i>  |              |
| 26–40  | 33 (23)      |
| 41–55  | 37 (26)      |
| 56–70  | 55 (39)      |
| 71+  | 16 (11)      |
| <i>Gender</i>  |              |
| Female   | 65 (46)      |
| Male   | 73 (52)      |
| Other  | 3 (2)        |
| <i>Race/ethnicity</i>  |              |
| White  | 117 (83)     |
| Multiple   | 16 (11)      |
| Hispanic/Latinx  | 1 (1)        |
| Not reported   | 7 (5)        |
| <i>Current family status</i>   |              |
| Married/with partner   | 114 (81)     |
| Single   | 13 (9)       |
| Divorced, widowed, other, NA   | 14 (10)      |
| <i>Census region of respondent's work</i>  |              |
| Northeast  | 60 (43)      |
| Midwest  | 24 (17)      |
| South  | 20 (14)      |
| West   | 33 (23)      |
| Multiple regions   | 4 (3)        |
| <i>Location of respondent's work</i>   |              |
| Large city, suburb near a large city   | 107 (76)     |
| Small city/town, rural area  | 13 (9)       |
| Multiple locations   | 14 (10)      |
| Not reported   | 7 (5)        |
| <i>What type of religious community do you currently affiliate with or most frequently attend?</i> |              |
| Reform   | 28 (20)      |
| Conservative   | 47 (33)      |
| Orthodox   | 34 (24)      |
| Reconstructionist  | 13 (9)       |
| Chabad   | 11 (8)       |
| Jewish Renewal   | 6 (4)        |
| Independent or non-denominational Jewish   | 31 (22)      |
| No current Jewish affiliation or attendance  | 6 (4)        |

$N = 141$

**Table 4** Chaplaincy preparation requirements in American rabbinical seminaries

| Institution                                 | One 400-h unit CPE requirement   | Has a separate track for chaplains?  |
|---|--|--|
| Academy of Jewish Religion (NY)             | Required for those pursuing chaplaincy   | Yes, within the rabbinical school  |
| Academy of Jewish Religion California       | Required for all rabbinical students   | Yes. There is a separate chaplaincy program, with CPE requirements, for individuals who are not ordained         |
| Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal          | Required for all rabbinical students   | Yes. There is a separate program for Rabbinic Pastor, where CPE is required for those who do not already have it |
| American Jewish University (Ziegler School) | Not ascertainable through the website  | Unknown  |
| Hebrew College                              | Encouraged for all students  | Yes  |
| HUC-JIR                                     | Rabbinical students are required to complete a pastoral care internship; most complete a full unit of CPE to meet this requirement | Yes  |
| JTS   | Required of all rabbinical and cantorial students  | Yes  |
| RRC   | Required of all rabbinical students  | Yes  |
| YU-RIETS                                    | No   | Yes, there is a specialization in pastoral counseling, with an advanced certificate in pastoral counseling       |
| Yeshivat Chovevei Torah                     | Required   | Yes  |
| Yeshivat Maharat                            | Encouraged   | Unknown  |

**Table 5** Jewish chaplains enumerated by each of 7 organizations,  $N=948$ 

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| JWB Jewish Chaplains Council                                | 115 |
| Endorser Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC) | 21  |
| Bureau of Prisons (federal)                                 | 3   |
| NAJC  | 670 |
| APC   | 94  |
| ACPE  | 15  |
| ACSLHE  | 30  |
| Total   | 948 |

**Table 6** Places that had Jewish community-based chaplains/healing centers from 1950 to 2022,  $N=48$ 

|                        |                                   |                    |                    |  |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|
| Allentown, PA          | Cleveland, OH*                    | Los Angeles, CA    | Orlando, FL        | Scranton/Lackawanna County, PA         |
| Atlanta, GA*           | Dallas, TX*                       | Madison, WI*       | Paramus, NJ*       | Somerset-Hunterdon-Warren Counties, NJ |
| Baltimore, MD          | Denver, CO*                       | Metro West, NJ*    | Philadelphia, PA*  | St. Louis, MO*                         |
| Bergen County, NJ      | Detroit, MI*                      | Miami, FL*         | Phoenix, AZ*       | St. Paul, MN*                          |
| Boston, MA*            | Framingham, MA                    | Middletown, NY     | Pittsburgh, PA     | Tampa, FL                              |
| Broward County, FL     | Greenwich, CT                     | Milwaukee, WI      | Portland, OR*      | Washington, D.C.*                      |
| Cape May, NJ           | Harrisburg, PA                    | Minneapolis, MN    | Rochester, NY      | Westchester, NY                        |
| Central New Jersey, NJ | Houston, TX*                      | Nashville, TN*     | San Diego, CA*     | Wilmington, DE                         |
| Charleston, SC*        | Jacksonville, FL                  | New York City, NY* | San Francisco, CA* |  |
| Chicago, IL*           | Greater Kansas City, (KS and MO)* | Orange County, CA  | Sarasota, FL*      |  |

\*Places that currently have at least one Jewish community-based chaplain ( $N=25$ )

We view this list as provisional and hope that communities with chaplaincy services not listed here will contact us so that we can update the list

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