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*Challenges in the Reintegration and  
Readaptation of Ethiopian Immigrants'  
Children in Israeli Society*

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**ABSTRACT :** The present article addresses the situation of children from Ethiopian minority in Israel. The Ethiopian community was brought to Israel thanks to subsequent rescue operations begun in 1884 and continuing into the present in the form of family reunion procedures. Emigration from Ethiopia to Israel initially began as the Zionist dream of Ethiopian Jews to return to the promised land. It soon became apparent that this idealistic emigration path was extremely dangerous and exhausting, many lives were lost. Those who managed to reach Israel had to face a whole new set of difficulties, the first of which was gaining recognition as Jews. This recognition entitled Ethiopian migrants to stay in Israel as citizens, where later on subsequent struggles would be faced surrounding the challenges of the readaptation and reintegration process. In the article the historical background of immigration waves to Israel is followed by a description of the difficulties perceived by Ethiopian children and adolescents in Israel in the fields of family structure, language and communication strategies, education and housing. Furthermore, possible strategies of overcoming the obstacles and solutions implemented by Israeli state are discussed.

**KEY WORDS :** readaptation, reintegration, acculturation, immigrants, refugees, Ethiopia, Israel

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## Israel as a state of immigrants- historical and social context

Israel is a model country which was established by immigrants and refugees from all over the world. The social movement responsible for the idea that Jews should create their own state was developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by Mordechai Emanuel Noah, an American journalist and diplomat. At the inception of this prospect, various ideas of potential locations were discussed.<sup>1</sup> In 1834 Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kalischer raised the idea of choosing what is the Israel of today for this future Jewish state. At that time a small population of Jewish people inhabited this area, but they did not constitute a significantly large society.

The first significant, organized groups of Jewish settlers arrived in 1882 after the pogroms in Russia. The so called First Aliyah (the word "Aliyah" is used to describe the return of Jews to the soil of their ancestors, the land of Israel) included in total about 35.000 people. The situation of Jews worsened significantly in consequence of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, which in the following years found its expression in the expulsion of Jews from a number of towns and the prohibition against entering many professions (Samuels, 1977). At this time, the majority of emigrants were heading to the United States, however members of the social Zionist movement from Eastern Europe decided to go to Palestine. They were followed by a small number of Yemenite Jews. The Second Aliyah,<sup>2</sup> during which 40.000 Jews came to Palestine, took place in the years 1904–1913. This second Aliyah was resultant from further pogroms and the intensification of anti-Semitic attitudes in Russia (Ettinger, 1976). This wave of immigration brought optimistic young people in search of possibilities to implement socialist ideas. It was the beginning of the Kibutz movement and the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language (Samuels, 1977). The influx of Jewish settlers to Palestine was temporarily halted by the First World War. Between 1919-1923, as a result of post-war pogroms in Russia, Poland and Hungary, new waves of emigrants could be seen leaving for Israel.<sup>3</sup> This constituted

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<sup>1</sup> Początki Syjonizmu (The beginnings of Zionism), <http://www.izrael.badacz.org/historia/syjonizm.html>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Immigration to Israel: The Second Aliyah (1904–1914), [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Second\\_Aliyah.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Second_Aliyah.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Yerushalayim Torah Academy, <http://www.yta.org.il/wp-content/uploads/Translations/Jewish%20history/Toldot-Yisrael-Vhaammim-Volume-Two-pages-87-134.pdf>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

a Third Aliyah<sup>4</sup> and brought an additional 40.000 immigrants to the area of the Zionist project. The Fourth Aliyah involved 82.000<sup>5</sup> people and took place between 1924–1928 as an immediate result of economic crisis in Poland. An additional factor of the Fourth Aliyah were the anti-Jewish policies implemented by the Polish state which motivated people to start searching for a more comfortable and safe place to live.<sup>6</sup> The last pre-war, legal wave of immigrants occurred between 1929 and 1939. This Fifth Aliyah<sup>7</sup> brought approximately 250.000 people to Palestine. It was notable as most of the immigrants in this wave were more affluent, well-educated professors, scientists, lawyers and doctors from the German and Eastern European middle-classes, who were escaping the worsening situation which resulted from the strengthening of Nazi influence. The following years leading up to the official founding of the nation of Israel in 1947 were a period of illegal immigration.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of people were attempting to escape from Europe, which had plunged into the Second World War. These people included Holocaust survivors called Aliyah Bet.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth mentioning that not all of those who managed to reach Palestine, or later the state of Israel, decided to stay. As many as fifty per cent of immigrants from the first Aliyot (‘alioyot’ is a Hebrew word meaning plural to ‘aliyah’) left after getting to know the conditions and failing to find their place in this new situation. In each subsequent wave of immigrants the number of people deciding to leave decreased, achieving the level of approximately 20 per cent in the last Aliyah. Due to the unfamiliar cultural background, this demographic decided to continue their journey in search of a new home.

The majority of the Aliyot, especially the early ones, followed pogroms and other anti-Semitic events. They were clearly motivated by the fear of losing

<sup>4</sup> Immigration to Israel: The Third Aliyah (1919–1923), [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Third\\_Aliyah.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Third_Aliyah.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Immigration to Israel: The Fourth Aliyah (1924–1929), [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Fourth\\_Aliyah.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Fourth_Aliyah.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The Jewish Agency for Israel, <http://www.jewishagency.org/historical-aliyah/content/28841>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Immigration to Israel: The Fifth Aliyah (1929–1939), [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Fifth\\_Aliyah.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Fifth_Aliyah.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Zionism and Israel – Encyclopedic Dictionary, [http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Aliya\\_Bet.html](http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Aliya_Bet.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Immigration to Israel: The Aliyah Bet (1939–1948), [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Aliyah\\_during\\_war.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Aliyah_during_war.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

their lives, experiences of being attacked or oppressed and lastly the fear of extermination plans under Nazi Germany. According to UNHCR definitions<sup>10</sup>:

- 1) Refugee: Is a person forced to move from his/her place of living because of a direct danger of persecution or escaping from the zone of armed conflicts. For such people, return may potentially bring deadly consequences. Protection of refugees was sanctioned by international law in the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) Immigrant: Is a person making the decision to travel in search of better living conditions, improvement of his/her financial situation, ensuring a higher socio-economic status, educational opportunities, seeking family reunion or searching for a job.

In light of the above definitions, when applying this terminology to the current discourse, quite a large number of the people who came to Palestine during Aliyot (1882–1939) should be classified as refugees rather than migrants. Does this definition make a change? As Adrian Edwards<sup>12</sup> mentioned, naming a phenomenon and clarifying the concepts and definitions related to it allow for a better understanding of the issues described. It also allows us to more fully explore the field of migrants and refugees. However, in the available literature concerning the events addressed here the term ‘immigrant’ is most often used. This is true even of firsthand accounts by participants of those events. Therefore, for the purpose of the description and discussion of this phenomenon in this text, I will continue to use the term “immigrant”.

After the country of Israel was officially established in 1947<sup>13</sup>, its parliament (Knesset) passed The Law of Return<sup>14</sup> in 1950. This legal act remains in place today and guarantees all Jews the right to settle in Israel and entitles them to the

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<sup>10</sup> Edwards, A. (2015) UNHCR viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘migrant’ – Which is right?, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees with an Introductory Note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Proclamation of Independence, The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, Provisional Government of Israel, Official Gazette: Number 1; Tel Aviv, 5 Iyar 5708, 14.5.1948 Page 1, [https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat\\_eng.html](https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.html), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> The Law of Return, <http://www.jewishagency.org/first-steps/program/5131>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

status of 'Oleh' (person making 'Aliyah'). The Israeli Government offers to all Olim ('Olim' is a Hebrew plural form for 'Oleh') an initial branch of supporting services<sup>15</sup> to assist them in settling and becoming full members of Israeli society. Jewish immigrants to Israel are treated in a special way which is very different from immigration practices in other countries around the world. This is because Olim are seen as people returning from the Diaspora (exile) to their homeland. The importance of this issue in Israeli society indicates the necessity of The Ministry of Immigrants Absorption.<sup>16</sup> The role of this government entity was previously carried out by The Jewish Agency for Israel. The initial package of state support for new immigrants includes: (1) free one-way ticket and additional baggage fees, (2) free transportation from the airport, (3) six monthly welfare payments from the time of arrival, (4) free health insurance for one year, (5) free cultural adaptation training for 5 months upon arrival, (6) up to 10 months of free, intensive Hebrew language courses (Ulpan), (7) 12 month tax discount, (8) support in renting a flat for 4 years starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> month after arrival, (9) discounted university fees if the studies begin within 3 years of arrival, (10) mortgage assistance within 15 years following Aliyah. The initial support package described above is available for people of all ages. However, Israel implements a branch of programs directed specifically at the children of immigrants as well as at entire families which are individualised according to exact needs.

A significant number of immigrants heading to Israel after the Second World War were willing to live there due to economic and social (immigrants from the Soviet Union and Former Soviet Union Countries) or religious (immigrants from Western Europe, United States and Canada) reasons (Amit, Litwin, 2010). Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. One of the most significant among these exceptions may be the Ethiopian immigration of the so called 'Lost Tribe'. This was motivated by famine, ethnically and religiously motivated persecution as well as armed conflicts in their region of origin. The process of bringing Beta Israel (בֵּיתָא דְּלִשְׁרָאֵל) tribe (the Jews from Ethiopia) to Israel began

<sup>15</sup> The Aliyah benefits guide, The Jewish Agency for Israel, [http://www.jewishagency.org/sites/default/files/Aliyah\\_Aliyah%20Benefits\\_chart\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.jewishagency.org/sites/default/files/Aliyah_Aliyah%20Benefits_chart_pdf.pdf), Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Functions and Structure, Israel Government Year Book, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/1998/pages/ministry%20of%20immigrant%20absorption.aspx>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

in 1984 through operation Moses<sup>17</sup> and in 1985 through operation Sheba (Bard, 2002: 161–170). These were followed in 1991 by operation Salomon<sup>18</sup>, and is still ongoing in so far as family reunion.<sup>19</sup> The extent of the trauma experienced on the path to the 'Promised Land' can be seen in literature and artistic appeals from these times. A Jewish song with lyrics by Chaim Idissis who made Aliyah to Israel in the 90's from Ethiopia serves as one example:

*SONG OF THE VOYAGE*<sup>20</sup>

*The moon watching over above  
On my back, the meagre bag of food  
The desert beneath me, no end in front  
And my mama promises my little brothers...*

*A bit more, a little more. To lift your legs.  
A final effort, Before Jerusalem*

*The strong moonlight scene  
Our bag of food got lost  
The never-ending desert, the howls of jackals  
And my mum calms my little brothers...*

*And in the night, bandits attacked  
With knives and a sharp sword  
In the desert, the blood of my mum  
the moon my witness and I promise my little brothers*

*A moment more, a little more. Lift your legs.  
A final effort, Before Jerusalem.*

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<sup>17</sup> Operation Moses – Aliyah of Ethiopian Jewry (1984), <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Israel approves 'last' round of Ethiopian immigration, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/16/Israel-approves-last-round-of-Ethiopian-immigration-.html>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrewsongs.com, Your Online Library of Hebrew Song Words, <http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=shirhamasa>, Access date: August 5, 2016.

*In the moon the image of my mother looks at me  
mother don't disappear  
If only she was by my side  
she would be able to convince them that I am a Jew.*

The last verse clearly shows that the physically exhausting journey that cost the lives of many of the migrants who undertook it, for those who survived was only the beginning of a much longer process of redefining their identity and building a sense of belonging in the new, alien place and culture that often failed to meet their expectations.

### **The process of migration and acculturation**

According to Berry (2006), psychological acculturation is the process of learning the values, behaviours and customs that characterise an exact social group as a result of contact with a different culture and being directly influenced by it. The process of acculturation is long-term, taking years or even centuries, leading to personal and social changes as a result of socio-cultural adaptation. There are a number of social groups that may constitute subjects of acculturation: (1) residents of multi-ethnic metropolises, (2) local employees of international business companies, (3) occupied autochthons, (4) tourists, foreign students, diplomats, expatriates, (5) representatives of powers in exotic countries, (6) economic migrants, repatriates and (7) refugees (Boski, 2010). The last two groups are especially seen as prototypes of communities getting through the acculturation process. The very important difference among them is motivation. Economic migrants are changing their place of living due to a hope for better life conditions in another country offering more promising perspectives. Conversely, refugees are forced to move on account of persecution, war or natural disasters that endanger their lives and their health and often lead to the loss of their property.

Regardless of the reasons for migration, it is never an easy decision to make or to implement, much less to deal with the consequences of. For children and youth it is very often even more challenging than for adults, since they are frequently unaware of the reasons their parents or carers take such steps nor

the predicted results of it. Very seldom consulted about their doubts or fears, children are passively taken from a well-known environment they perceive as safe and taken into unknown or sometimes (psychologically or physically) dangerous conditions.

Bar-Yosef (2001) singles out the three stages of migration which have become the fate of Jewish immigrants, especially from Ethiopia:

- 1) **Waiting period** – This stage starts when the decision for migration is made. It is the time when the family ceases their regular routine and begins preparations for departure. It is not always possible to travel immediately. Sometimes, especially when concerning less developed countries or territories under warfare, it is necessary to wait months or even years for the possibility of escape. Such a time is characterised by concentrating all efforts on preparations for the impending journey, collecting financial resources and gaining contacts. There is no time for long-term life planning, contacts with the surrounding community are often limited and efforts towards gaining education or higher social status in the community of origin are abandoned. The family is “on alert” at all times, unsure of what will happen the next day. For children it often means resignation from their education path and loss of contact with peers. It also creates an atmosphere of anxiety and tension.
- 2) **The passage** – The process of getting from the hometown or village to the origin of transit to the destination country. Very often for families and children from war zones, especially from African countries, this stage entails many days trekking through the desert, being exposed not only to hunger, thirst, wild animals and exhaustion but also to other people. Another aspect of this process is the time spent in refugee camps which can end up being a far more protracted period than expected at the beginning of their journey – possibly weeks, months or even years. This is a stage where many families are broken and separated. The elderly often prefer to stay in their homes and avoid risking the journey at all. For children, it is the first separation with grandparents and other family members. During the time spent in refugee camps, a huge number of people, especially young children and the elderly, die due to causes related to illness, starvation, exhaustion and violent theft. For children it may mean that they lose part or all members of their family ending up without any adult care or even being responsible for taking care of younger siblings. This period may lead to a number of abusive actions

towards the children enduring it. Psychologically, it is a long period of experiencing helplessness, lack of hope and exhaustion.

- 3) The first period after arrival – The transition period between reaching the destination country and being settled. This means having a permanent place to live which would be indicated by a sense of a family “home” and establishing relations with the local community. This stage may take from a few months to a few years and is highly dependent on the resources of the immigrants themselves as well as the efficacy of the social services provided by the adopted country. It is also very sensitive to cultural gaps between the country of origin and the destination country. The bigger the cultural difference, the longer it may take to settle into the new place.

To get settled in a new place which is culturally different from the place of origin, it is necessary to adjust to the rules and customs applicable in the new place. Sometimes the traditions and laws are entirely different or even standing in opposition to the immigrants’ native culture. Both children, youth and adults implement various strategies of adaptation, however according to research findings, as well as the observations of social carers and school teachers (Ashkenazi, 1991), children and teenagers tend to be much more willing and able to adapt to their new reality, are quicker to acquire intercultural competences and learn to obey the new norms. Because of this, they sometimes become not only language but also cultural translators between their parents and older family members and the new society.

John Berry (2011)<sup>21</sup> developed The Model of Acculturation Strategies, in which he describes four strategies of acculturation which include:

- 1) Assimilation – Resignation from their own culture followed by laying roots for the acquisition of the culture of country accepting the immigrant. It is easier for children than adults to adapt this way.
- 2) Integration – Acquisition of a new, strange culture with simultaneous maintenance of own culture. At present it is the most preferable form of acculturation promoted within European countries for new immigrants and is realised through programs supporting newcomers to gain social competences needed in a destination country while maintaining their own cultural identity.

<sup>21</sup> Berry, J.W. (2011). ‘Integration and Multiculturalism: Ways towards Social Solidarity’, Papers on Social Representations, Peer Reviewed Online Journal, Volume 20, pp. 2.1–2.21, [http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR2011/20\\_02.pdf](http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR2011/20_02.pdf), Access date: August 1, 2016.

- 3) Marginalization – Rejection of both the original and new culture and customs, often as a result of a failed acculturation process. May appear as a consequence of frustration perceived when the person does not find a way to adjust to the new culture and simultaneously lacks the possibility to return to the original one. Leads to exclusion from the society.
- 4) Separation – Insulation from the new culture and its rejection. Happens when immigrant does not accept norms and customs of their new home country, wants to be separated from it and keeps their original culture intact. Leads most often to reducing the necessary minimum contacts with representatives of the new culture (e.g. only to dealing with officials) and complete separation. In practice it supports the creation of ghettos and living strictly among its own cultural members.

The first and second of the above strategies produce good opportunities both for the immigrants and the community of the host country for fruitful coexistence and mutual benefits. The remaining two (3&4) bring challenges for immigrants as well as for their host country. It is crucial to provide good support and to direct immigrant children and youth from the very beginning to choose the right options. The range of possible reactions to being a part of a multicultural society indicates that while positive acculturation affords new possibilities, badly managed acculturation may become a reason for frustration and obstacle.

### **Ethiopian immigrant children – chances and challenges through the readaptation and reintegration process**

The nation of Israel has been accepting successive waves of immigrants and refugees from its inception and that pattern continues up to now. Due to this fact, it has had to establish effective mechanisms of supporting the newcomers in order to give them the best possible chance to become valuable members of their new society.<sup>22</sup> This is true both in terms of education and economic existence, as well as the ability to earn a living and adjust to social norms and customs of the state with the

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<sup>22</sup> Methods of Immigrant Absorption in Israel Presented to the Committee on Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs, The Knesset The Research and Information Centre (2011), <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/me02775.pdf>, Access date: August 2, 2016.

aim of becoming a part of the community. Since the majority of immigrants establishing the country of Israel came from European countries, the following Aliyot coming from this part of the world as well as from North America had a relatively easy transition because their native culture was very similar to the culture of the country they had moved to. More visible difficulties were perceived by immigrants and their children from the so called FSU (Former Soviet Union Countries).

The biggest cultural shock was faced by children of Ethiopian immigrants for a number of reasons since their original culture was entirely different from the culture of Israel. Additionally, they had to face strong debate as to whether they had the right to be seen as Jews or the entitlement to acceptance by the Jewish state. This was due to the fact that a substantial number of these communities practice a very primitive form of Judaism which was followed before the Talmud was written or accepted as the main interpretation of Jewish doctrine. Furthermore, even being ethnically Jewish, some of them accepted parts or all aspects of other denominations while living for centuries among followers of these religions, and incorporated them into their own religious practices. As a result, they were seen as alien by both communities and their rights to be accepted as citizens of the Jewish state was questioned for many years. Additionally, representatives of Ethiopian immigration encountered a number of barriers, starting from the initial shock of meeting people with white skin. These foreigners claimed to be Jews coming to rescue them, which caused consternation and disbelief among the inhabitants of remote villages who had never met Europeans before, had no or very basic education and very limited contact with outside world. I will further explore how this relates to a major number of difficulties and programs described in reference to this group. In the following analyses I will concentrate on four spheres important for the development of children and adolescents: family structure, language and communication, schooling system and housing.

## Family structure

Originally, Ethiopian families cultivated the tradition of patriarchal structure, where the man is the provider for the family and a central figure, while the woman is responsible for the home and raising children. They also gave high

status to the elderly, which meant that children were expected 'to be seen and not heard' and to show respect to adults. By comparison, the average contemporary Israeli family is very child-centred. Children are allowed loud behaviour, encouraged to be independent and outgoing and to fight for their rights. All of this leads to a situation in which children and teenagers must develop alternate ways of behaving at home versus outside in order to fulfil both family and public norms (Bar-Yosef, 2001).

Another important issue is the role of the father. In Ethiopia, the man must learn very specific skills in order to provide the earnings for his family. In the Israeli new reality, the expertise acquired within the Ethiopian socialization process is no longer valid. Suddenly, an entirely different set of qualifications is required and both children and women seem to be much more flexible in their adjustment to the new conditions as well as far more resilient to unexpected difficulties. This leads to the breakdown of traditional family structure. The instability of the family may be a significant risk factor for the development of children and adolescents, hence this issue has become one of the priorities for support programs (Mantver, 2010). Israel implemented a range of education support programs which, on the one hand, were designed to assist adults in receiving matriculation certificates and gain professional skills allowing them to start a regular job. On the other hand, emphasis was put on children's education at schools and encouraging and supporting adolescents in continuing their education within college and university programs, which led to a significant increase of Ethiopian students.<sup>23</sup>

## **Language and communication strategies**

The official languages of Israel are Hebrew and Arabic. Quite a large number of people can also fluently communicate in English, Russian or Ukrainian. Ethiopian children that came to Israel did not know any of these languages and their native language was not known to the Israeli society. At first, the state of Israel provided interpreters to help children and adults overcome the administrative barriers.

<sup>23</sup> The Integration of Persons of Ethiopian Origin into the Higher Education System Submitted to the Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee, The Knesset The Research and Information Centre (2011), <https://knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/me02892.pdf>, Access date: August 4, 2016.

The next step were intensive Hebrew language courses which, in case of adults, lasted half a year and operated under the name 'Ulpan'. For children, Hebrew classes were organised as part of standard school education. While learning the grammar structures and memorising new vocabulary turned out to be achievable within 1–2 years, much more significant challenges came with communication styles. Modern Hebrew is very direct in expressing the needs and feelings of the speaker and Israelis tend to be extremely direct. By comparison, in the Ethiopian tradition there are numerous metaphors used in speaker expression and it is not polite to say 'no'. Hence, when the partner in a dialog is unaware of this rule, he or she might not understand the message at all or may misunderstand it entirely. A significant number of parents learn the new language more slowly than their children and prefer to speak their native language at home. For children, this causes a conflict between public and home language spheres. At home, with parents and other family members, they speak their native language, while in the public zone they use Hebrew. It is not uncommon that children do not want to be perceived as strangers. Adolescents in particular feel ashamed of talking with parents or grandparents publicly in a foreign language, which leads to tensions within the family. It also causes a disturbance in the traditional respect afforded to older family members. When the younger generation becomes more fluent in language skills than their elders, they cannot receive support from parents who do not have the same competences yet (Bar-Yosef, 2001). Worse still, some young children are neither fluent in their family's native language (which creates challenges in contact with family members) nor fluent in Hebrew (which causes inefficient communication with the outside world). Fortunately, such cases are rather uncommon and constitute rare exceptions (Berhanu, 2005). For older generations the process of learning new language skills and expression styles is a very challenging task. By contrast, for children and teenagers it turns out to be a natural process, especially while being in constant contact with new peers.

## Education

The attitude of the Israeli Government and the Ministry of Education towards educational processes that should be applied to children from Ethiopian Aliyah have changed significantly with time from the first wave of immigrants until

nowadays. The first concepts based on both political motives as well as the genuine but misguided wish to take good care of children, involved implementing a system that led to pronounced segregation. Since Ethiopian religious practices were very different from modern Israeli customs, religious parties which are quite influential in Israel claimed that to assure their good adaptation, it would be necessary to enrol children in religious schools. This was intended to impart the knowledge of Jewish customs and practices present in the official praxis (Lazin, 2002). Another reason mentioned was that the traditional society model of Ethiopian Jews was much closer to orthodox Jews than to secular Israelis. Since parents were not able to afford payments for private religious schools, children from Ethiopian Aliyah were placed in the public, religious school system where a significant number of educational establishments were governed by the ultra-orthodox. These schools based their curriculum largely on religious matters and employed quite a low methodological and scientific level of teaching. Furthermore, since Ethiopian pupils were concentrated in one kind of school, in many of these schools their numbers quickly rose to 40% or even more than 50% of the total student population. All of this led to a specific kind of insulation that in the long run impeded efficient adaptation processes. Change was needed so the government allowed Ethiopian students to attend regular, secular schools. However, since their skills were far below their peers, Ethiopian children were placed in special needs classes meant to bridge this skills gap. These classes were created especially for them but involved a curriculum for students a few years younger. This did not greatly improve the situation of Ethiopian students. The first idea caused even stronger segregation and the second one lowered pupils' self-esteem, not to mention prevented socialization among different peer groups. Quite a large number of Ethiopian children, who did not succeed in the regular school system, were moved into the special education path.

Additional challenges were created by the fact that in Ethiopia it is the father that is responsible for children's education and teaching is mostly a male domain. Women are not subjects of authority. Since in Israeli society, much like in European countries, teaching is one of the most female-dominated professions, especially in early education through high school, this new power structure creates many tensions. The first difficulty can be seen in the relationship of teacher and father, which is doubly complicated due to language barriers and cultural differences. Men who used to be the main authority are now supposed

to consult and accept advice from a woman representing an alien cultural standard. Further challenges were seen in the attitudes between teachers and pupils. In European and Israeli models, teachers should act as role models for students. To Ethiopian children, the teacher is first and foremost female, representing the female role in society which is not respected in their own culture. Secondly, following a female teacher may be seen as a betrayal of the values of the student's family as well as its norms. All of this fosters an ambivalent attitude towards the schooling system as a whole. Conversely, particular teachers may be seen as representatives of a social group identified as having a desired standard of living, holding higher communal positions and possessing social acceptance (Lazin, 2002).

In recent years, to ensure a rise in the level of education for Ethiopian students of all ages, the authorities have imposed regulations stating that immigrant children cannot constitute a majority in classes. This rule was with the intent of ensuring the integration of immigrant children with their local peers and to prevent cliques made of own ethnic group members. Furthermore, special classes with well-qualified teachers were created and programs were put in place which encouraged Ethiopian adolescents to apply for a higher education courses at colleges and universities. This brought visible improvement in this group's educational status (Bar-Yosef, 2001).

## Housing

The majority of Ethiopian immigration waves occurred without any significant resources that would allow the immigrants to not only develop but even maintain a simple way of life in Israel unassisted. Subsequently, these immigrants were dependent on Israeli social care benefits both for everyday life expenses like food or transportation, and even more so as regards housing (Berhanu, 2005). Most Ethiopian immigrants were not and are not able to fulfil bank requirements for attaining mortgage loans. Thus, the only living space they can normally afford is public housing assigned by social care officers. This kind of accommodation is usually placed on city peripheries, which are distant from city centres and cultural life midpoints. This in turn makes them concentrated in the exact areas where contacts with other parts of society are not natural but

dependent on their active involvement. That can slow down the process of natural acculturation via contact with representatives of the new culture. The location also influences employment opportunities, relegating them to lower-paid, simple positions offered in poor areas of such neighbourhoods.

For children, developmental stability and security given through the home are crucial. Children lacking these suffer from social housing which is temporary in nature (Bar-Yosef, 2001). The research shows that during the first six years of their stay in Israel, most Ethiopian families moved between four and six times. This means that children from those families change neighbourhood at least every one and half a years and some even more often. In the extremely stressful situation of facing cultural and educational gaps, lack of language skills and trauma caused by the Aliyah (long way, loss of family members, time spent in refugee camps and various kinds of oppression and exploitation), the prolonged instability may have a significant influence on children's and adolescents' psychological health and the possibility to adjust to the new cultural situation. The situation is worsened by the fact that many schools refused to accept children in the middle of the school year, which meant that many of them remained excluded from education for many long months. This is not mentioning the great stress of adapting again and again to new classmates, while knowing from experience that making friends is useless since you never know when you might be moved again (Berhanu, 2005). All of this contributed to the attempts to build more social housing closer to city centres, academic and business areas. It also contributed to putting effort to provide stable housing for these families as quickly as possible upon arrival. Such projects, however, have not been implemented due to lack of funding.

## Conclusions

Analyses of the presented data show that, as indicated at the beginning of the article, migration, especially connected with moving to an area or a country of entirely different cultural background is extremely challenging both for children and adolescents. Even if objectively the standard of life is improved and the sense of physical security restored, it is insufficient. What plays a significant role both for children, adolescents and adults is the feeling of belonging

to a community, knowledge and acceptance of the norms and values of the new place. As the concept of social anchor indicates (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2013a, Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2013b), the psycho-social stability of individuals is ensured by anchors defined as reference and support points. It is particularly important in the situations connected with a significant number of changes and a high level of stress, like migration. Several kinds of anchors are distinguished. The main types include: objects, physical features/appearance, culture/language/customs, personality traits, values, social roles, group membership, social bonds, economic aspects, places as well as legal and institutional issues (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2013b). In case of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel, especially minors, a great majority of or even all of the anchors are breaking. It means that all the points that gave the members of this group the feeling of security and the sense of belonging are destroyed. This includes even those aspects which seem to be inalienable, like physical appearance. While in their place of origin dark skin was one of the features which identified Ethiopians as members of the community, in Israel the dark-skinned Ethiopian immigrants felt alien in the community consisting primarily of people of European origin. When upon their arrival even their religious unity, and what follows, the right to become Israeli citizens were called into question, the need for security as such was shaken in its foundations. All that did not support the acculturation process, which became ineffectual. Without full adaptation to the new situation, developing an efficient and satisfying presence in the new country of residence is not possible. In terms of gaining new skills and knowledge, the acculturation process itself seems to be easier for children and teenagers, since they learn the new language and assimilate new customs at a much faster pace. However, since they tend to demonstrate significantly lower understanding of the need of change than adults, the emotional difficulties may have serious long-term effects. In consequence, their reaction may be to oppose the internalization of new norms perceived as a threat to their identity, stabilization and the preservation of family unity.

The complexity of dealing with the difficulties caused by migration and cultural gap can prove that even the Israeli state, which has significant, long-term experience in the field of immigrant and refugee absorption, is not able to identify and implement thoroughly satisfying solutions that fulfil the expectations of both immigrants and indigenous populations. The idea of a melting pot, which

assumes that various planned and natural integration initiatives should lead to the unification of people of different origin brought to one place<sup>24</sup>, seems not to work as efficiently as expected. Research data shows that the new generations born and raised in Israel are still more similar to their parents in terms of economic well-being than to the rest of the country's population (Schechtman, Yitzhaki, 2007), which may also regard the level of education and the choice of professions. What may bring hope for the future is that the strategies of readaptation and reintegration of migrants' children are being constantly developed on the base of previous experiences and new approaches are being tested.

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