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## THE IDENTITY OF ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL: JEW-ETHIOPIAN/ ISRAELI-ETHIOPIAN

Eti Gilad\*, Shosh Millet

*The Department of Educational Systems Management, Achva Academic College, Arugot, Israel.  
The M.Ed. Programmes, Achva Academic College, Shikmim, Israel.*

### ABSTRACT

The paper engages in the identity of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel as they perceive it. It presents the unique perceptions of the Ethiopian community regarding their Jewish identity based on the 'peoplehood' concept which manifests a combination of religion, history, culture and Jewish values in the past, present and future. This is a qualitative research of the case study type using several instruments: an open-ended questionnaire, a focus group and semi-structured interview. The research population consisted of 28 Ethiopian pre-service teachers. The results are presented through three 'voices' which express three typical approaches. The first approach is "we are the real Jews", the second is "we belong but celebrate differently" and the third is "we became Israelis-Jews". The approaches represent the pre-service teachers' perceptions of their cognitive, emotional and behavioural belonging to the Jewish people and to their being in Israel as part of their empowerment process and demonstration of their sense of efficacy.

**Keywords:** Jewish peoplehood, *Bita Israel* (The House of Israel), Ethiopian immigrants, case study.

### INTRODUCTION

The paper presents the history of the Ethiopian immigrant community concerning their relation to Judaism in the context of Jewish peoplehood. The issue of the Jewish identity relates to the transition which has started in their previous life in villages in Ethiopia, through their immigration to Israel during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the perspective of ideology, identity, vision and education. The paper explores the theoretical, philosophical and historical aspects of the '*Bita Israel*'<sup>1</sup> in the past, an isolated community which has strictly safeguarded its belonging to the 'ancient' Jewish people in Ethiopia. The paper refers to the yearning and longing to Zion – to Jerusalem – as a key to the practical sense of the community's belonging to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The paper comprises four sections: 1. Introduction – divided into the following topics: Peoplehood; Ethiopian Jews and Jewish peoplehood; Research question. 2. Materials and Methods. 3. Results, Discussion and Insights. 4. Summary.

**Peoplehood:** Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan was apparently the first to mint the term 'Jewish peoplehood' in English,

formulated it and used it (Shner, 2008). He deemed it important in an era whereby universal ideas gained popularity on the one hand while individualism became stronger on the other. Kaplan's aim was to set a wide comprehension of Judaism in order that it embodies all those who identify themselves as Jews regardless of their ways of understanding and reference to their identity. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Judaism was usually perceived as a system of behaviour (the orthodox approach) or a set of beliefs (the reformist approach). According to Kaplan (Shner, 2008), these two approaches were incomplete. He maintained that the 'peoplehood' concept was a way of rising above these approaches by suggesting the sense of belonging as an initial sense of the Jewish being and peoplehood as an organising principle. The notion of a value which is multi-belief and multicultural was revolutionary (Shner, 2008). Shner (2008) points out that the 'peoplehood' concept can be explained by the 'Jewish people' awareness' expression, while basing the Jewish identity on

\* Corresponding Author:

Email: [giladeti@012.net.il](mailto:giladeti@012.net.il)

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<sup>1</sup>*Bita Israel* – The House of Israel

belonging to a people whose members have a shared destiny. As members of the Jewish people, the Jewish umbrella grants us a sense of relation to other Jews around the world and in all the generations.

Sabar and Hemo (2009) present 'Jewish peoplehood' as a new super-concept enabling reference to the sense of belonging to the Jewish people as a mindful and active awareness. "Peoplehood wishes to examine the deep and common structures of our collective identity as a people" (Sabar et al., 2009). The emphasis is on the awareness of personal and collective identity in its various strata and the multi-discourse about it as part of attributing a meaning to the 'Jewish peoplehood' concept.

Geller (2009) attempts to offer a new comprehension of peoplehood. According to her, there is a narrative which is common to all Jews and is sufficiently convincing for creating a commitment. This insight facilitates definition of the 'peoplehood' concept so that its meaning is the sense of relation and commitment formed by people who share a joint narrative. The narrative is powerful enough so that it not only attributes a meaning to our personal life but also entails commitment for others who share the narrative. 'Peoplehood' can be construed as a sense of relation and responsibility formed between people who share a common narrative or take part in the same prolonged discussion. The following are some of our challenges: help Jews to tell their stories within the framework of the bigger Jewish narrative, making them understand they are part of a continuous Jewish discussion; provide Jews with the skills for participating in these discussions; find ways for sufficiently enhancing the discussion in order to evoke a sense of connection which leads to mutual responsibility which in its turn leads to a true meaning in being members of the Jewish people.

The narrative of the Ethiopian Jewish community, according to all the extended definitions of Jewish 'peoplehood', constitutes an inseparable and meaningful part of the Jewish narrative: the narrative which is common to all Jewish.

**Ethiopian Jews and Jewish peoplehood, 'Bita Israel':**

Ethiopian Jews call themselves '*Bita Israel*' which means The House of Israel. There are no written sources about the origin of Ethiopian Jews and about the historical time of their arrival to Ethiopian. History was mostly kept orally and transferred in this way from one generation to the next. This tradition has been prevalent among

members of '*Bita Israel*', being delivered from fathers to sons for hundreds or maybe thousands of years. Throughout history, '*Bita Israel*' members have not considered themselves as natives of the country but rather as foreigners who had emigrated from their country, from Jerusalem, to which they would return some day. Prayers of Ethiopian Jews are filled with yearnings and supplications to the Creator, asking Him to help them return to the Land of Israel. It is not amazing, then, that the special holiday of Ethiopian Jewry, the "Sigad" (worship) consists of prayers and pleas to the God of Israel to bring His exiled sons and daughters back to Jerusalem (Feldman, 2004; Gilad and Millet, 2015a).

**Encounter of '*Bita Israel*' with the world Jewry:** At the end of the 1860s, the Chief Rabbi and Jewish leaders, among them the famous rabbi Azriel Hilesheir from Eisenstadt, Germany, acknowledged '*Bita Israel*' as a Jewish community. A few years later, Prof Yossef Halevi, an orientalist scholar from the Sorbonne, came to the Jewish villages in Ethiopia. He was sent there by the Alliance Israélite Universelle Society following accounts by white missionaries about the existence of Jewish villages in the Northern Ethiopia mountains. The European Jews sensed and understood the importance of finding 'authentic Jews' who survived as an isolated community, maintaining the foundations of original Judaism. The encounter of the isolated authentic Jews living on the Ethiopian plain and the European Jews had dual aims: saving the lost tribe and learning about the maintained roots of Judaism. The members of the '*Bita Israel*' community believed they were the last Jews in the world. Hence, when Prof. Halevi came from Paris, they were perplexed by his different appearance. It took him a long time to persuade them he was a Jew like them in spite of his different skin colour and appearance. Upon returning to Paris he published a proclamation calling for the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry (Salmon, 2008). After being detached for hundreds of years, a contact was established between worldwide Jewish communities and the isolated '*Bita Israel*' community. Belonging to the Jewish people in the aspects of religion, culture, observance of religious laws, seclusion, yearning for Jerusalem, the common destiny and historical narrative have all entailed an acknowledgement of common Jewish peoplehood of community representatives in the West and representatives of '*Bita Israel*'. Believing

they belong to the Jewish people, in the God of Israel, the return to the Land of Israel, the text of the religious book of books and history of the Jewish people formed the Jewish identity both in North Ethiopian plains and around the world.

It has been acknowledged that although they differ in appearance, dress, food and pattern of celebrating the Jewish holidays, *'Bita Israel'* is an inseparable part of the Jewish people that does not live in its country. Nevertheless, it took forty years more to establish a contact between the Jewish community in Ethiopia and Jewish communities around the globe.

The contact was established through Dr. Jacob Feitelovich, a disciple of Prof. Halevi. He visited Ethiopia in 1904 and acted for the Ingathering of the Exiles by introducing Jewish education which would save Ethiopian Jews from the influence of the Christian church and mission. He took with him two young Ethiopian Jews, Gatia Yirmiya and Tamrat Emanuel to be educated in Jewish schools in Europe. He became 'Our Teacher Jacob'. He brought the rabbinical *Halacha*, trying to inculcate it to the entire community, including the Ethiopian priests (*Kassim*) and the elders who were the religious and spiritual leaders of the community.

In 1924 he set up a Jewish school in Addis Ababa and at the same time continued advertising the narrative of the Jewish community in Ethiopia, its difficulties and isolation. Once again he took boys for studies in Jewish schools in Italy, France Germany and Switzerland (Salmon, 2008). Between the years 1936-1941, the Italian army conquered Ethiopia. In these years the Jewish activity was stopped, the emperor Haile Selassie went into exile and even stayed some time in Jerusalem. Although this period caused difficulties for the Ethiopian Jews, they maintained their faith and traditional devoutness to Jerusalem. When the Italian period of conquest ended in 1941, Haile Selassie became once more the Ethiopian emperor and from the 1940s until the 1970s he established diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. The condition of Ethiopian Jews during these years was good. The news about the foundation of the State of Israel brought about huge excitement in the Jewish villages. The disappointment, though, was not long in coming.

***'Bita Israel' and Jewish peoplehood:*** The Ethiopian Jews did not immigrate to Israel like their brothers from Europe, Asia and other African countries. They remained isolated, confronting the missionary activity and

conversion to Christianity. They continued observing the religious laws which were piously delivered as a closed tradition from fathers to sons, over the years, believing they were the true Jews in the world. In Israel, the political and religious leadership debated the issue of their Judaism. The Jewish identity was discussed from two aspects: the rabbinical aspects with its three levels: strict, mitigating and moderate and the legal aspect (Korinaldi, 1990).

Only in 1968, few members of the community came to Israel using various ways and began a struggle for the immigration of Ethiopian Jews (Feldman, 2004). In 1973, based on the *Halacha* verdict of Rabbi Shlomo Ben-Avi Zimra, Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, the chief Sephardic rabbi of Israel ruled:

I came to the conclusion that *'Bita Israel'* are Jews who must be rescued from assimilation. We are obliged to accelerate the process of their immigration to Israel and to educate them in the spirit of the Holy Bible. We should integrate them in the building of the Holy Land and the sons would have returned to their home. (Korinaldi, 1988, 148).

In 1975, the Law of Return was applied to *'Bita Israel'* similarly to all the Jewish diaspora communities. This was a legal manifestation of their belonging to the Jewish people, fully sharing its fate, history, culture and Jewish identity. The first years following the acknowledgement witnessed sporadic attempts by *'Bita Israel'* to immigrate to Israel. At the beginning, the immigration wave was not considerable but rather attempts of individuals or groups to arrive to Israel and actualise the dream. The Law of Return apparently opened the way for immigrating to Israel. However, a revolution occurred in Ethiopia following which the Emperor Haile Selassie was dethroned and was replaced by Mengistu Haile Mariam. As a result, Ethiopian Jews were not allowed to leave the country like all other citizens.

Following political changes in the relations between Israel and Ethiopia, the immigration wave started increasing in 1984. However, immediately after the first mass immigration it was stopped due to new political constellations. In spite of the numerous upheavals, most Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israel through Sudan between the years 1984-1991 within the framework of 'Operation Moses'. Operation Queen of Sheba was organised in order to rescue the Jews who remained in Sudan after the immigration had stopped and Operation

Solomon brought the Ethiopian Jews through Addis Ababa. On the whole about 83000 immigrants arrived to Israel (Shimron, 1998).

The voyage of Ethiopian Jews to their dreamland through Sudan was filled with hardships and troubles. Many became sick and died on the way, others were robbed and many got ill in the camps set up in Sudan. Nevertheless, their yearning to Zion and Jerusalem motivated them persevere and continue their way.

The issue of the 'Falas Mura' immigration surfaced following Operation Solomon in 1991. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate ruled that even Jews who had converted their religion in the past and maintained their reference to Judaism would be acknowledged as Jews. However, to remove any doubt, the State demanded that they undergo a conversion process. The 'Falas Mura' immigration was approved as family reunification rather than immigration pursuant to the Law of Return. Between 1991-2009 about 45,000 'Falas Mura' immigrated to Israel and today they constitute about half of the Ethiopian immigrant community in Israel (Haaretz Daily Newspaper, 11.12.09).

**Research question:** How do Ethiopian immigrant pre-service teachers perceive their Israeli-Jewish identity in light of the wide definition of belonging to the Jewish people, based on the term 'peoplehood'?

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research aim was to present the perceptions of Ethiopian immigrant pre-service teachers [hereunder – "Students"] from a distance of about 20 years since their immigration to Israel. This was combined with their integration in pre-service teacher education college with the purpose of becoming a channel for expressing their 'voices' with regard the 'Jewish peoplehood' concept. This study was conducted by the qualitative research approach of the case study type.

Several research instruments were used for data collection: an open-ended questionnaire built following a questionnaire exploring Jewish peoplehood among pre- and in-service teachers (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua and Hemo, 2010), a focus group (multi-discourse) and personal interviews. The use of several instruments enabled us to obtain varied and rich data and to triangulate them at the content analysis and data processing stages (Shkedi, 2012).

Twenty-eight students participated in the class multi-discourse and responded to the written questionnaires. Among them 25 were women and three men, aged 24

and above. Most of them attested that they and their families were considered observant Jews, half of them immigrated to Israel via Operation Moses and the other half via Operation Solomon. Three personal interviews were conducted following the multi-discourse and the written questionnaire.

#### **RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INSIGHTS**

The research findings indicate a wide range of answers. The answers span between "we are the real Jews" and up to "we are Israelis like everyone else", highlighting the answer "we are different and belong". The students' emphases constitute highly unique answers associated with the issue of Jewish identity. The students used terms such as "sacrifice for the land of milk and honey", "this is our Judaism" or "at first we wanted to be Israelis and now we wish to remain as we are and what we are, Jews of *Bita Israel* in the Land of Israel". These terms add an interesting and special layer to the Jewish peoplehood concept, underscoring the difference in the origins of the Ethiopian Jewry and their perception of Israeli-ness from a perspective of time, i.e. when they immigrated to Israel and at present.

The findings are represented by three 'voices' expressing three typical approaches which emerged from the findings of the group multi-discourse, written questionnaires and personal interviews. First voice – first approach: "We are the true Jews"; second voice – second approach: "We belong and celebrate differently"; third voice – third approach: "We have become Israelis – Jews".

Below are depicted three students' typical 'voices' related to their perception of being Jews in Israel. These voices manifest three approaches presented by citations collected from the multi-discourse and the written questionnaires. Moreover, they were collected from the personal interviews conducted following the multi-discourse and the questionnaires with three students who represent three approaches.

#### **First voice – first approach: "We are the true Jews":**

"We are the Jews, following the holy tradition faithfully throughout all the generations, the tradition being transferred from fathers to sons. Judaism for us is the essence of life. In our family, when you are born, with your mother's milk you are immediately nurtured with the fact that you are a Jew and you are one of all and you have one God, a holy *Torah* and religious laws which should be maintained and observed. You should pray, go to Jerusalem, aspire to reach the Holy Land. You are

educated on the principle that belief in God will result in materialisation of the dream. The sacrifice of going to Jerusalem is part of being a Jew. We believe that suffering on the way to the Land of Milk and Honey is an element of being a Jew. We are the only dark-skinned Jews in the world. There are in fact Jews who came from Yemen and Cochin but they are not considered as dark as us. Our external appearance attract attention and it's a pity people refer to it rather than to the really important issue which is: 'We are Jews'. In fact, firstly 'we are Jews' and only then Ethiopian immigrants. Now that we are in our country, the Holy Land of Israel, some Kassim (Ethiopian priests) believe that we should observe the Jewish tradition. They want to maintain the prayers which have been kept for thousands of years and therefore they teach the young children. In some synagogues, the grownups and the young people try integrating the prayers, tunes and songs which are ancient and those which are easily absorbed. Together they invent versions of the traditional Ethiopian prayers and the new Israeli melody. Sometimes, there is a difference and gap between the prayers of the grownups and the young Ethiopian people who have studied a 'new singing'. We understand that our Jewish customs should be safeguarded because they are the most ancient Jewish customs in the world. We should not lose them since our ancestors had been detached from all the Jews around the world and had never been lenient with themselves. They observed Jewish laws at any cost and were not assimilated among the gentiles. The issue of Jewish identity for us is meaningful and clear because this is how we grew up. Hence, the discussion about our belonging to the Jewish people was unclear to us in general and to the elders and leaders of our community in particular. We are observant Jews and Jerusalem has been the apple of our eye and our aspiration. In every prayer we appeal to God Almighty to bring us back to the Land of our Ancestors and make peace prevail in Jerusalem. During prayers and the kosher slaughter the eyes were always turned in the direction of Jerusalem".

The first voice holds on to the saga of the community, its historical narrative. This is in fact the historical narrative of the coming into being of the entire People of Israel and proves the uniformity of its origins. It emphasises the unique Jewish past and the present whereby efforts are exerted for safeguarding the nuclei of the ancient tradition of *Bita Israel* together with a process of integration into the Holy Land.

**Second voice – second approach: "We belong and celebrate differently":** "The holidays preserve the identity and tradition and constitute symbols of Judaism. We belong to the Jewish people and celebrate the holidays in a similar and different way. The Israeli society is characterised by different Jewish cultures. One of the cultures is our community, the Ethiopian community. One of the differences between our community and the other communities is manifested by the holidays and festivities which the community commemorates. We live in fact in two worlds, the home and community world, that of holidays and festivities kept as a sacred Jewish tradition and a world of holidays and festivities, customs and symbols prevalent in the other communities in Israel. We observe the holidays differently than the way they are observed in Israel. In our community we were accustomed to celebrate all the holidays mentioned in the Written Torah. Since our community lived in isolation for hundreds and thousands of years, we maintained the tradition from the days of the First Temple. We were not acquainted with the *Mishnah*<sup>2</sup> and the *Talmud*<sup>3</sup>. The Written *Torah* is the holiest and most important book for the community. Its format is different from the Book of *Torah* prevalent in Israel. It is indeed made of parchment but not as rolled sheets stitched together. Rather, it consists of drawn pages bound in a book with three columns on each page. The holiday names are in Amharic, which is our speaking language and in Geez<sup>4</sup>, the ancient holy language known to the Kassim. Geez is an ancient language which is similar to Aramaic and to Hebrew. From the perspective of prohibitions and customs there are similar features between the *Bita Israel* holidays and those common in the other Jewish communities both in Israel and abroad in spite of our [Ethiopian community] complete detachment from the Jewish tradition which came into being over the years. Similarly to the Hebrew lunisolar calendar, the Ethiopian calendar was also set by the moon. Consequently, holiday dates fall usually at the same time. Determining the dates of the holidays and the fasts was one of the major elements of the relations

<sup>2</sup>Collection of oral Laws which forms the basis of the *Talmud*

<sup>3</sup>Commentaries on the *Mishnah*

<sup>4</sup>Ethiopian (classic), Eritrean – a Semitic language prevalent in the northern district of the Horn of Africa, serving as the formal language of the Ethiopian Empire

between the Jewish communities living in various districts of Ethiopia. The calculation was performed by two actions, i.e. watching the moon and counting the days. In addition to the traditional holidays mentioned in the *Torah*, there are unique holidays set down in the community tradition. For example: the "Sigad" (worship), the holiday of renewing the covenant between the people and its God, repenting and expressing the longing for Zion as well as praying for the peace in Jerusalem. The names of the holidays are as follows: New Year – Barhan Saraka (Rising of the Light), Atonement Day – Baal Estersario (to atone), Sukkot – Baal Matzelet (Holiday of the Shade, the thatch), Fast of Esther, Passover – Psicha, Feast of Weeks – Baal Marer (harvest), Sabbath – Snabet in our tradition. The Ethiopian community celebrates additional days of rest: every 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month; every 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month; every 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month (to commemorate the Feast of Weeks); every 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month. On the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the month, in order to commemorate the three Forefathers, one reads in the Holy Writings of the community about the life of the three Forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Tamuz (Tomas), the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the year and in Av, the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the year, commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem, one fasts during the day and eats at night.

By detailing the holidays and feasts we, members of the Ethiopian community, realise that there are more similar features than different ones. The differences are associated with the history of our community which was detached. Hence, there are some holidays which we ignored whereas other holidays were set in order to manifest the longing and hope for our return to Jerusalem. We would like to highlight the similar rather than the different features. We clearly belong to the Jewish people, just as all the other communities, although we celebrate some of the holidays in a different manner. All the differences are ethnic and not differences related to the essential Jewish values".

The way of celebrating the holidays and festivities of the Ethiopian Jews community was compared in detail with the customs in all the Jewish communities worldwide. Through this comparison, the second voice illustrates the emphasis of belonging despite the somewhat different reference to holidays. The traditions encompassed more similar and equal features than different ones.

**Third voice – third approach: "We have become Israelis – Jews":** "We are Israelis like everyone else. The

State of Israel embodies the Ingathering of the Exiles. Jews from all around the world came to it, from countries which are both near to and far from the Land of Israel. Every community lived in a foreign country, in the Diaspora, just like us and learnt the customs of this country. The Jews in every country adopted the spoken and written language. Everywhere they adapted the way of dressing to themselves and to their needs, just like they did with the food, melodies, music, culture and art. Nevertheless, they safeguarded the *Torah*, believed in God and observed its laws. We, members of the Ethiopian community, also embraced the Ethiopian customs: house building, work as potters, typical garments, dishes, agricultural plants, paintings and embroidery. Our voyage to Israel was filled with sufferings, wandering and sacrifice of many dear ones. We were not despaired. Like the People of Israel in the desert, we following our ancestors in the sublime goal of immigrating to Israel. The longing and hope motivated us so we coped with the agonies, troubles and difficulties, the death lurking on the long way. The sacrifice of immigrating to Israel is the meaning of being a Zionist-Jew. I immigrated through Sudan and the sacrifice was the dream come true. Many paid with their life. The sacrifice continued, those who immigrated before me, those who came with me and those who arrived after me and those who would still come. The shock of the absorption in Israel, the strange acknowledgement that we are so different. We stand out everywhere. People relate only to our skin colour. But after all the skin colour of the other immigrants from all the diasporas is similar to their place of residence. Their culture was like that of the place from where they came. We have undergone the process of all the immigration waves, perhaps even faster. We do not experience what the Yemenites have experienced. Members of every immigration wave have slowly become Israelis. Now we are Israelis like everyone else. We have learnt to be caring, determined, exert efforts and achieve, be cheeky and dip a pita in a plate of hummus. We are integrated everywhere, in the military, academia, industry, theatre, sport. We and especially the young people have adopted the conduct and habits of Israel. Following is an example from the previous day. One of the neighbours in my parents house passed away. Her grandchildren have just posted an obituary notice, but did not tell all the neighbours, although they have lived with us for many years. I read the notice to my mother and she was

shocked and burst out in tears together with members of my family. The dead woman's grandchildren were amazed and cold, asking: 'What happened to you? You don't have to cry so loudly, you can control yourselves and be quiet. We are in Israel now'. This example illustrates that we have turned into Israelis in every respect. We have learnt the culture and act according to local customs. When we immigrated to Israel, the authorities suggested that we changed our name to an Israeli name. Some of the immigrants kept their Amharic name and some changed it. There were others who kept two names. I accepted an Israeli name which I like, am proud of it and feel that I am an Israeli for all intents and purposes. I don't feel that my identity has been replaced or that I have been hurt. On the contrary, I was immediately accepted because this was my parents' objective: living in Israel because we are Israeli Jews. Our community managed to safeguard Judaism for many long years and in the same way we would continue maintaining our Israeli-ness. We want to contribute to the Israeli society the beauty of the culture brought from Ethiopia, similarly to any other community which donated something to the Ingathering of the Exiles. I view myself entirely as an Israeli and feel no difference. I believe it is very good to have common frameworks of studies and social activities. Nevertheless, I deem it important to preserve the Ethiopian culture; the language, customs and the food are the culture of our parents and our roots. We must not renounce them. Thus, we would be able to bequeath the tradition to our children and grandchildren. I strive to bestow the value of accepting the other and the different as they are and to use the biblical phrase 'love your neighbour as thyself' as my motto".

The third voice highlights the commitment and belonging to the Israeli society. They are manifested by phrases and examples, illustrations and expression of thoughts related to the present and future situation.

#### **SUMMARY**

The three voices – three approaches presented in detail reflect that the Ethiopians held on to the community history, observed the holiday laws and perceived their coming to Jerusalem and to Zion as a place of Israeli life for themselves. Acquaintance with community members' thoughts and emotions as to their Israeli-Jewish identity revealed the components of the 'peoplehood' concept. In his chapter dealing with the Jewish identity of Ethiopian immigrants, Korinaldi (1988) underscores:

The merging of the communities is a reciprocal process and the Ethiopian Jewry, being an ancient ethnic group, should be granted a worthy place in the culture of the renewing Israel. To use the words of the Italian-Jew Viterbo, The tradition of the Falas Mura which was manifested by their customs, ceremonies and prayers as well as by their literature should be appreciated and properly investigated by researchers... due to the huge historical value; however, above all, it should be considered by the Jews as part of the spiritual legacy and hence be respected and esteemed like other traditions of our people" (Korinaldi, 1988, 234).

These words are in line with the words of Rabbi Ovadia Yossef who argued about the tradition of the Falas Mura *Bitá Israel* members that, "the Falas Mura Jews should be treated equally in Israel..." (Korinaldi, 1988, 236). This perception was presented by the authentic voices of the young members of the community.

The voices of young Ethiopian immigrants who study at a pre-service teacher education college, illustrate the fundamental components of the 'Jewish peoplehood' concept. Through them we managed to demonstrate the various and diversified meanings presented by the research participants regarding their Israeli-Jewish identity in the third millennium. They express their sense of self-efficacy, pride and belief in their ability as part of the Israeli society which constitutes an Ingathering of the Exiles (Gilad and Millet, 2015b). Each voice-approach demonstrates the power: 'as true Jews', followers of their Forefathers, as "Jews who belong" to the Jewish people although some of the holidays and customs were celebrated in a slightly different manner, and as Israelis-Jews. They feel capable of contributing their share to the Israeli-Jewish society just as the other communities belonging to it do. Some of the challenges of education and teaching consist of helping children of Israel from all the communities to tell their personal stories as part of the wide Jewish narrative so that they realise they are part of a continuous Jewish discussion. They should provide the children with the skills required for participating in these discussions, find ways to enhance the discussions, aiming to create a sense of connection leading to mutual responsibility for each other. In such a situation, being partners to the Jewish people will have a true meaning (Gilad and Millet, 2014). The voices particularly illustrate the wish of the pre-service teachers to make a contribution which is unique

to the Ethiopian community. We, the teacher-educators, consider them as the chance of becoming 'other teachers', more tolerant, promoting inter-culturalism (according to the European concept), enhancing communication with children from all sectors. These are true Jews with their values which are both Jewish and universal and they will also be true teachers. Moreover, for pupils at school who are not Ethiopian descendants, the presence of Ethiopian immigrant teachers in the education system is important for expanding their social view. Moreover, it allows them to overcome the risky stereotypical identification of Ethiopian immigrants capable of fulfilling simple roles whereas the white population is seen as fulfilling senior functions.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons, the order of the hour of the education system and of the State of Israel is promoting the equalitarian integration of Ethiopian immigrant teachers. This should be done for them, as part of the Israeli society, and for all the children of Israel who will grow up in an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance, equality and social and humanistic responsibility. Pre-service teacher education for members of the Ethiopian community constitute, as mentioned, a goal of changing the face of the Israeli society to which we aspire.

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