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Ethiopian Israelis

Housing, Employment, Education

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There are approximately 85,000 Jews of Ethiopian extraction in Israel, including 23,000 who are Israeli-born. Most immigration from Ethiopia came in two waves—8,000 in Operation Moses (1984) and 14,000 in Operation Solomon.

This report, written ten years after Operation Solomon, examines social policy in regard to Ethiopian immigrants in three main areas—housing, employment, and education—and asks how these Jews are faring in Israel.

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Housing

Most Ethiopian Israelis reside in close proximity to one another in disadvantaged neighborhoods within a small number of cities and towns.

This is contrary to the declared intentions of the official absorption policy. First, that policy aimed to prevent the development of Ethiopian “ghettos.” Second, the policy aimed to steer Ethiopian immigrants toward middle-class neighborhoods. Third, the official policy encouraged these immigrants to purchase homes in the center of the country, where employment and social services abound, and not in peripheral areas.

The first two policy aims have not been achieved; the third has been achieved to some extent.

Housing Situation

Data from the Ministry of Construction and Housing, released in 2001, show that most Ethiopian immigrants live in permanent housing that they own. Between 1988 and April 2001, 10,542 Ethiopian immigrant households purchased apartments with the help of a government mortgage (Ministry of Construction and Housing, memorandum, July 2001).

Most other households of Ethiopian origin live in rented public housing. In June 2001, according to the Amigur and Amidar public housing companies, 23,300 persons of Ethiopian extraction (29 percent of the Ethiopian community) lived in public housing (Amidar memorandum, July 11, 2001, and Amigur memorandum, July 5, 2001); 2,000 dwelled in mobile homes (Amidar, memorandum, July 5, 2001), and about 3,000 lived in immigrant absorption centers (Brookdale Institute, 2001:15).

Most immigrants who still live in absorption centers and mobile homes arrived recently. (In 1999 and 2000, there were about 2,000 immigrants from Ethiopia each year [Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, www.moia.gov.il] and in 2001 there were approximately 3,300 [Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 2002].) Some young singles who came in previous years are also still living in mobile homes.

Ethiopian Immigrants

Mediated vs. Direct Absorption

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who arrived *en masse* in the 1990s, were integrated in a process termed “direct absorption,” i.e., the authorities did not get involved in decisions such as choice of place of residence, employment, and lifestyle.

The direct absorption policy was not applied in the case of Ethiopian immigrants. When the first large group of Ethiopian immigrants reached the country, in Operation Moses, it was decided that the Jewish Agency would be responsible for their absorption and that the process would last five years. In the first stage, the immigrants would be given temporary housing in immigrant-absorption centers, hotels converted into absorption centers, and public housing. In the second stage, a year later, they would be settled in permanent housing. During their stay in temporary housing, the immigrants would undergo medical examinations and receive

medical care. After three months, they were to begin learning Hebrew and familiarizing themselves with life in Israel by means of intermediaries such as paraprofessionals from the community, social workers, and other caregivers. The first government plan described the anticipated process thus: “During the first period, they will undergo medical examinations and treatment and afterwards devote their time to learning how to function at a basic level at home and in the [new] environment, and to learning Hebrew” (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption 4: 1985). Absorption centers were also supposed to serve as “transit stations” until family members still in Ethiopia could be flown to Israel and families could be reunited before their transfer to permanent housing.

The plan was that in Stage Two, a year later, the immigrants would move into permanent housing and continue to receive help in various areas, including language study, vocational training, and social integration.

In fact, most of the immigrants stayed in absorption centers for more than one year.

Control and Dependency

The anthropologist Esther Herzog, who studied the experiences of Ethiopian immigrants in Jewish Agency absorption centers (1998), claims that mediated absorption helped to label Ethiopian immigrants as a particularly problematic group: “The absorption organizations treat ‘immigrant absorption’ as a social problem and immigrants as a social category in need of assistance. They treat the ‘absorption of Ethiopian immigrants’ as a particular problem and Ethiopian immigrants as a particularly needy social category” (ibid.: 73). Herzog describes mediated absorption as a process that aggrandizes the power of petty officials and hinders integration. Absorption centers, Herzog asserts, are closed, sheltered institutions that encourage people to relate to immigrants “as one homogeneous essence, one bloc, a category” (ibid.: 35). She shows how the institution monitors the immigrants’ comings and goings and how the employees at the center and the immigrants develop a relationship of control and dependency.

The reason given for the decision to task the Jewish Agency with the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants, rather than to apply the direct absorption policy, was the immigrants' low educational level and lack of resources upon arrival. It may also have been due to the absence in Israel of a critical mass of old-timers of Ethiopian extraction who could function as guides in the direct absorption process.

An additional factor deserves mention: immigration from Ethiopia was a lifesaver for the institutions of the Jewish Agency, which were on the verge of dismantlement. Since the direct integration of former Soviet immigrants left the Agency with nothing to do, the Agency was about to hand over its traditional role in immigrant absorption, including absorption centers, to the government. The Ethiopian immigrant absorption project gave the Jewish Agency's absorption apparatus a new lease on life and funneled tens of millions of dollars—from the U.S. government, the Israeli government, and American Jewish philanthropy—into its coffers (Lazin, 1997: 45-46).

Direct Absorption

When the direct absorption policy was extended to a small group of Ethiopian immigrants, they came out ahead. In April 1994, a direct absorption experiment carried out in three localities in the Negev – Ofakim, Dimona, and Arad – including 263 households, was examined in a report compiled by adult participants in a leadership-training program. (Notably, unlike the direct absorption of former Soviet immigrants, these immigrants were assigned paraprofessional community workers like those paired with Ethiopian immigrants housed in absorption centers.) In questionnaires that authors of the report distributed to the paraprofessionals, two issues were examined: the degree of independence that the immigrants had developed and the cost of the system. The results: the paraprofessionals found direct integration less expensive than the normal process and more conducive to making immigrants feel independent (Kedar, Edri, and Shalvi, 1994).

The Dispersion Policy

The Ethiopian immigrant absorption policy was influenced by the bitter residues of the absorption of immigrants from Arab countries in the 1950s and

1960s. Those immigrants were sent upon arrival to temporary camps, transit camps, and development towns that were typically far from centers of employment and culture, provided no more than rudimentary public services, and offered little opportunity for personal or collective advancement. To keep the problems of the 1950s from recurring, the government declared its wish to send the Ethiopian immigrants to fifty localities that ranked on the middle, rather than the bottom, of the socioeconomic scale. The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption even stipulated that efforts should be made to avoid having more than thirty to fifty Ethiopian households in one neighborhood and more than two or three Ethiopian households in one building or building entrance. In 1991, it was stipulated that Ethiopian immigrants should not constitute more than 2-4 percent of the population of any neighborhood or locality (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 49-53; Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1991: 20-21).

It was also decided that Ethiopian immigrants would not be sent to localities in the two lowest clusters of the socioeconomic scale: "It is recommended that these immigrants be sent to localities that have sufficiently strong community infrastructure in education, employment, and socio-community services.... They should not be imposed on communities that have difficulty sustaining themselves" (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 47).

Concentration vs. Dispersion

Concern about concentrations of Ethiopian Israelis lies at the core of many official discussions and documents. Even today policymakers and policy analysts find the issue troublesome. Many point to concentration as the result of a unique preference among Ethiopian Israelis. The Central Bureau of Statistics did this, for example, when it indicated that "It is characteristic of Ethiopian immigrants to wish to live with other Ethiopian immigrants" (CBS, June 6, 2001). Time and again, researchers ask members of the Ethiopian community whether they would really prefer to live in a neighborhood or building where most residents are of Ethiopian extraction.

Primarily, it is the establishment that is bothered by the concentration issue. Ethiopian immigrants seem to

behave like other groups of immigrants in Israel and abroad, who tend to live close to one another, certainly in the first generation and sometimes for several generations. (In the United States, for example, one finds Jewish neighborhoods today, four or even five generations after the mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe.)

The wish to prevent the formation of Ethiopian concentrations prompted policy-makers to establish rather detailed rules. In regard to housing, efforts were to be made to thwart the grouping of too many households in one neighborhood.

In education, the dispersion policy was reflected in instructions to limit the concentration of Ethiopian immigrants to a maximum of 25 percent per class (State Comptroller's Office, *Annual Report 1998*: 335). To demonstrate the importance of the dispersion goal, the Ministry of Education stipulated that wherever large concentrations of Ethiopian immigrant schoolchildren existed, they should be bused to schools outside their neighborhoods (or enrolled in non-religious State schools, if their parents so preferred) (ibid.).

The strong emphasis on dispersion, and the fact that the emphasis is just as strong today as it was in the years immediately following the great waves of immigration, give reason for concern about the existence of a tacit assumption among absorption policymakers that "Ethiopianness" is a fundamentally negative trait that ought to be "diluted" by dispersing these immigrants in small quantities into the sea of "Israeliness." However, the establishment's concern about "overconcentration" of Ethiopian Israelis seems largely to have been internalized by activists in the community, who tend to point to concentration - foremost in education and housing - as evidence of discrimination and deprivation. This is mainly because concentration results in the group receiving low-quality housing, education, and employment opportunities. In this respect, concentration is synonymous with the risk of marginalization. Nevertheless, community activists do not oppose concentration wherever it improves the group's socio-cultural ranking. The chapter on education, below, provides a possible example of such an improvement.

Table 1: Permanent Housing for Ethiopian Immigrants - Proposed Localities

Socioeconomic ranking of locality			
"Below average"	"Average"	"Average and above"	Unclassified small localities
Acre	Afula	Bat Yam	Atlit
Ashdod	Arad	Eilat	Givat Shemuel
Ashkelon	Beersheva	Hadera	Kefar Yona
Bene Berak	Gedera	Herzliyya	Ma'ale Adummim
Migdal ha-Emek	Karmiel	Hod Hasharon	Mazkeret Batya
	Lod	Holon	Katzrin
Or Yehuda	Nesher	Kefar Sava	Kiryat Arba
Kiryat Gat	Netanya	Nahariyya	Kiryat Ekron
Kiryat Malakhi	Pardes Hannah	Ness Ziyvona	Sederot
Ramle	Kiryat Ata	Petah Tikva	
Safed		Kiryat Bialik	
Tiberias	Kiryat Yam	Kiryat Motzkin	
Tirat Hakarmel	Upper Nazareth	Kiryat Ono	
Yavne		Kiryat Tivon	
		Ra'ananna	
		Rehovot	
		Rishon Leziyyon	
		Yehud	

Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, *Absorption of Ethiopian Immigrants: Master Plan*, 1985: 46-52.

The localities on the original list were chosen because they belonged in the “average” socio-economic category, i.e., they were neither particularly poor nor particularly rich. A few more localities, such as Kiryat Malakhi, where Ethiopian immigrants who had settled before Operation Moses wished to be joined by relatives more recently arrived, were added to the list.

The list shown above was supplemented by an inventory of neighborhoods in major cities that were also defined as suitable for Ethiopian immigrants: Kiryat Hayyim, Kiryat Shemuel, and Kiryat Eliezer/Bat Galim in Haifa; Ramot, Kiryat Hayovel, East Talpiot, Pisgat Ze’ev, Givat Mordechai, and Gilo in Jerusalem; and Yad Eliyahu in Tel Aviv (ibid.: 49).

The 1985 absorption plan for Ethiopian immigrants stressed the avoidance of concentrations of recent immigrants from Ethiopia. It stated explicitly that absorption centers serving as temporary housing for Ethiopian immigrants should not be turned into permanent housing, lest this result in too many immigrants in those localities (ibid.: 49, 52).

The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption’s 1991 policy document reiterated the principle of dispersion that had guided policy in 1985 and made minor adjustments in the list of recommended localities in view of the settlement patterns of the Ethiopian and former Soviet immigrants who had come after 1985. The 1991 document placed stronger emphasis on the importance of settling Ethiopian immigrants in major cities and the center of the country. Moreover, in response to the tendency of Operation Moses immigrants to prolong their stay in absorption centers, the document recommended moving immigrant families into permanent housing as soon as possible after their arrival: “Absorption centers should cease being a structured stage of the absorption process and should serve as temporary transit housing only for immigrants who are waiting for family reunification or permanent housing” (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1991: 3).

Policy vs. Reality

Despite the declared policy of dispersion, Ethiopian Israelis now live, as stated, in several relatively large concentrations in a few localities (CBS, 2001 [A]). Furthermore, a large proportion of the immigrants

found permanent housing in localities and neighborhoods that ranked low on the socioeconomic scale: Kiryat Malakhi; Netivot; Ofakim; Kiryat Moshe in Rehovot, the Gimmel, Vav, and Het neighborhoods of Ashdod, the Pe’er neighborhood of Hadera; Kiryat Nordau, Azorim and Shikun Hefzi-Bah in Netanya; Givat Hamoreh and Upper Afula in Afula; and the Shimshon and Atikot neighborhoods of Ashkelon. Israel’s two largest cities, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, have very small populations of Ethiopian origin: about 1,000 in Jerusalem and only several hundred in Tel Aviv (ibid.).

At the end of 1999, seven localities had concentrations of 3,000 immigrants or more: Netanya, Rehovot, Haifa, Hadera, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Beersheva.

Table 2. Locations with Relatively Large Populations of Ethiopian Extraction, 1999

Locality	Population of Ethiopian Extraction
Netanya	5,900
Rehovot	5,000
Hadera	4,200
Beersheva	4,154 (1998)
Ashkelon	4,100
Haifa	3,938 (1998)
Ashdod	3,900
Afula	2,700
Kiryat Gat	2,600
Kiryat Malakhi	2,300
Yavne	1,800
Lod	1,500
Kiryat Yam	1,400
Pardes Hannah-Karkur	1,180 (1998)

1999 data - CBS, 2001, memorandum, “Population of Ethiopian Extraction, by Localities”; 1998 data - Dolev, Fogel & Co., *Absorption of Ethiopian Immigrants: Proposal for National Project, Status Report at Locality Level*, April 2000

How Did This Happen?

There are several reasons for the high concentration of Ethiopian Israelis. First, most immigrants in Operation Moses who had no resources of their own were referred to rental housing in public dwellings, which, of course, are located mainly in development towns and

socioeconomically low-ranking urban neighborhoods. Second, at the time of Operation Moses, four absorption centers in such localities (Upper Nazareth, Ashkelon, and two centers in Afula) were converted into permanent housing - in contravention of an explicit recommendation in the 1985 policy document and without asking the tenants what their own preferences were. The decision may have been made due to a lack of sufficient resources to implement the official policy. It also seems that the Finance Ministry refused to provide the funding needed to move the immigrants out of the absorption centers (Banai, 1988, cited by Ribner and Shindler, 1996: 83). Third, when the second and larger influx came in Operation Solomon, the immigrants (after a brief stay in hotels) were housed in mobile home sites that were built in

rural areas or industrial areas near major cities. (Lazin, 1997: 51). These sites had been created for former Soviet immigrants, who either refused to live in mobile homes or quickly moved out. Thus, Ethiopian immigrants were directed to this handy stock of housing instead of to options that, although more expensive, corresponded more closely to official policy.

Table 3. Main Localities where Ethiopian Israelis Reside in Public Housing, 2001

Locality	Number of Amidar dwellings	Number of Amigur dwellings	Total dwellings
Ofakim		140	140
Ashdod		245	245
Beersheva	326		326
Bat Yam	92		92
Hadera	122		122
Migdal ha-Emek		81	81
Netanya	333		333
Afula	234		234
Petah Tikva	83		83
Safed	72		72
Kiryat Gat	165		165
Kiryat Yam		136	136
Rishon Lezion	183		183
Rehovot	96		321
Ramle	127		493
Sederot/Netivot		187	187
Tel Aviv-Yafo	2	81	83
Other	477	381	858
Total	2,312	1,251	3,563

The Amigur figures include hostels and homes for the elderly.
Sources: "Results of Inquiry, by Locality," memorandum from Amidar, July 5, 2001; memorandum from Amigur, July 22, 2001.

The Special Mortgage Program

The most important action in determining the location and quality of Ethiopian Israelis' housing, beyond all doubt, is the homebuying promotion campaign that the government undertook by offering especially generous mortgages to Ethiopian immigrants. Notably, this has been the government's most meaningful positive measure in regard to the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. The operation, engineered by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption under Yair Tsaban, was conceived in response to a hunger march by Operation Solomon immigrants who were living in mobile homes at a resort village in Ashkelon. The marchers demanded that Yitzhak Rabin's new government honor an election campaign promise by Ariel Sharon, Minister of Housing in the previous Likud-led government, to assure them permanent housing within thirty days of the electoral victory, were he to achieve one (Tsaban, 2001).

As part of the homebuying promotion, the government offered Operation Solomon immigrants and others who were still living in mobile homes (mainly families) government mortgages commensurate with family size (the largest mortgages going to families with four children or more), to a maximum of \$110,000 and up to 99 percent of dwelling price. The monthly installments would be relatively low (NIS 150 per month) and most of the loan (80 percent) would become a grant at the end of fifteen years.

The creator of the plan, Yair Tsaban, considered it advantageous from two points of view. First, it would

allow Ethiopian immigrants to become property owners. Second, it would settle them in localities on the middle rungs of the socioeconomic ladder in the center of the country, near centers of employment, and not in peripheral localities or disadvantaged urban neighborhoods. Tsaban rejected a proposal from the Ministry of Construction and Housing to settle the Operation Solomon immigrants in unoccupied dwellings in peripheral development towns that had been built for former Soviet immigrants who did not want them. (The 5,000 dwellings available in such localities approximated the number of Ethiopian-origin households that were waiting for permanent housing.)

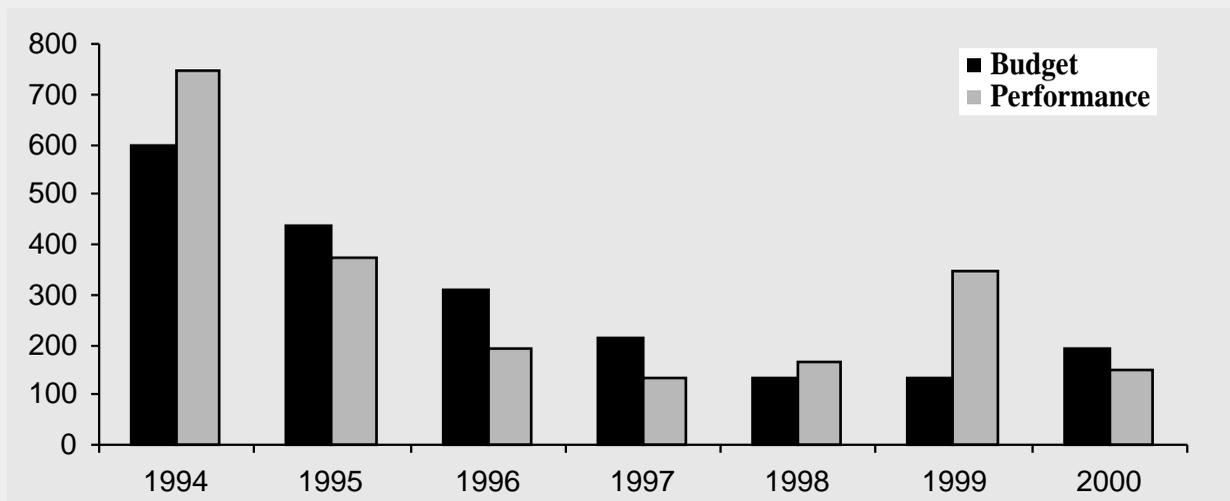
The Ministry of Finance agreed to fund the operation in the belief that no more than 500 dwellings would be sold this way (Tsaban, 2001). In fact, however, nearly sixteen times as many were sold:

Ethiopian immigrants purchased some 3,500 dwellings between June 1993 and the end of 1995 (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1996:50) and an additional 3,400 by March 2001 (Ministry of Construction and Housing, 2001 [A]).

Since 1994, the budget book of the Ministry of Construction and Housing has shown the cost of the homebuying promotion on a separate budget line, thereby allowing us to monitor the budget costs. Thus, between 1994 and 2001, the Ministry of Construction and Housing allocated NIS 2.2 billion (in 2000 prices) for mortgages for Ethiopian immigrants (Swirski et al., 2001: 34). In 1994 - 2000, actual expenditure overran the allocation by 5 percent on average; performance data for 2001 have not yet been released. The graph below presents the data and compares allocation with performance.

Figure 1. Ethiopian Immigrant Mortgage Budget, 1994 - 2000

Budget versus Performance
NIS millions, 2000 prices



Sources: Analysis of Adva Center of Ministry of Finance, *Financial Statement*, various years; Ministry of Finance, *Budget Provisions*, Ministry of Construction and Housing.

In September 1995, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption augmented the mortgage program by adding a ranking of localities based on average dwelling cost. The amounts and terms of mortgages were set commensurate with locality rankings and family size. Mortgages in localities where housing prices were especially high were increased. The largest mortgages were given in the following localities: Bat Yam, Bene Berak, Even Yehuda, Ganei Tikva, Givatayim, Givat Shmuel, Givat Ze'ev, Herzliya, Hod Hasharon, Holon, Jerusalem, Kefar Sava, Kiryat Ono, Ma'ale Adummim, Mevasseret Zion, Ness Ziyona, Netanya, Or Yehuda, Petah Tikva, Ra'ananna, Ramat Gan, Ramat Hasharon, Rehovot, Rishon Lezion, Rosh ha-Ayin, Tel Aviv, and Yehud. In these localities, mortgages were set at NIS 235,000 for childless couples, NIS 300,000 for families with up to three children, and NIS 365,000 for families with four or more children. The other localities were divided into five categories ranked by dwelling cost, and the mortgages were adjusted to dwelling cost and family size (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, September 21, 1995; Ministry of Finance, September 20, 1995). At the beginning of the special mortgage operation, it was stipulated that immigrants would be eligible for special mortgages for a period of seven years after receiving immigrant status. A 2000 document from the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 2000: 4) extended the term of eligibility for those who had immigrated between September 1989 and the end of June 2001. As of the present writing (December 2001), the program remains in effect and no date of termination has been set. Notably, in addition to the mortgage subsidy budget, the government allocates funds for the acquisition of dwellings for Ethiopian immigrants under public housing rental terms. This is done in localities that have no appropriate public dwellings. A special budget line has been recorded for this purpose since 1993. The dwellings at issue are for disabled, ill, and elderly persons who are found eligible for public housing by a medical board; the rent is low. The total budget allocation for the acquisition of dwellings for Ethiopian immigrants between 1993 and 2001 was NIS 346 million, in 2000 prices (no performance data are available) (Adva Center analysis of Ministry of

Finance, *Budget Provisions, Ministry of Construction and Housing*).

Outcome of the Special Mortgage Program

The special mortgage operation had an important outcome: today, most Ethiopian Israeli households own their homes. There is no doubt that few would have been able to accomplish this without generous government assistance. However, the operation did not attain one of the main goals of the housing policy: settling the Ethiopian immigrants in middle-income localities.

When the special mortgage operation began, the intention was to refer homebuyers to fifty-two predetermined localities. It quickly became clear, however, that most purchases were made in fewer places. After the immigrants themselves applied pressure, localities that already had concentrations of Ethiopian Israelis were added to the list. In one case, an immigrant petitioned the High Court of Justice (in conjunction with the Association of Ethiopian Immigrant Organizations), alleging that the plan did not allow him to acquire a dwelling in the location of his choosing (Tsaban, 2001).

The extra-large mortgages helped many immigrants to settle in the center of the country, but the dwellings they bought were located *on the social and economic periphery* of that center. Thus, more than 56 percent of dwellings acquired in the first period after the plan was announced (816 out of 1,342) were in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 1994: 2). In the aftermath of these initial findings, the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews warned of the need to take immediate action to change the trend. Its recommendations included the following:

- (1) Increase the mortgage allocation for immigrants who wish to buy dwellings in greater Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa by \$20,000.
- (2) Distribute information about the plan to Ethiopian immigrants by means of a video film, workshops on homebuying, a telephone hotline in Amharic to answer homebuyers' questions, a television and radio program in Amharic, etc.
- (3) Arrange for volunteers to help homebuyers. The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews noted, in its interim report, that it was prepared to organize the

“matchmaking” activity and to produce the video film, provided that the government covered the cost (ibid.: 6).

Notably, the mortgage program was designed in close consultation with the Association of Ethiopian Immigrant Organizations, a nonprofit umbrella entity made up of seven Ethiopian immigrant organizations and headed by then Member of Knesset Adissu Massaleh. Even before the operation went into effect, Massaleh warned, “We’ve got to make sure that every immigrant is closely assisted at all phases of homebuying, from beginning to end, including home visits to the new dwelling [after moving in]” (letter from Massaleh to Tsaban, December 14, 1992). According to Yair Tsaban, Minister of Immigrant Absorption at the time, the ministry did make efforts to assist immigrants in the homebuying process. However, so many households needed assistance - each in a different location - that it became a mission impossible (Tsaban, 2001). In contrast, Micha Odenheimer, founder of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, claims that the ministry assigned immigrants only a small number of interpreters and was unwilling to help pay lawyers’ fees (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, July 24, 2001). Adissu Massaleh, now a former Member of Knesset and chair of the Association of Ethiopian Immigrant Organizations, voices similar criticism. He says the immigrants should have been paired with homebuying coordinators who would refer them to better-off neighborhoods and localities. Massaleh’s organization presented the government with a proposal to include a ranking component in the mortgage plan, so that those who wished to buy homes in better neighborhoods would receive larger mortgages. According to Massaleh, a whole year passed until the plan was adopted (Massaleh, 2001).

The concentration of homebuying in socioeconomically weak neighborhoods and localities was abetted by various intermediaries, including several earlier immigrants from Ethiopia, who regarded the generous government allocation as an opportunity for profit. From the standpoint of these go-betweens, the most alluring deals were actually in disadvantaged neighborhoods and development towns, where housing prices were relatively low. As soon as the size of the mortgage was known, housing prices in these localities

aligned themselves with the largest government mortgage offered. The brokers played an active role in effecting this alignment (Tsaban, 2001). In a meeting at Ministry of Immigrant Absorption headquarters in March 1994, inflation of housing prices and real estate assessments were reported, as was the inclusion of components such as home appliances and brokers’ fees in the dwelling price (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1994).

The relatively high sale price enabled the sellers - most of whom had immigrated from Arab countries in the 1950s and 1960s - to upgrade their housing conditions. Ethiopian immigrants found themselves buying dwellings at inflated prices in cheap tenement neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the very concentration of numerous Ethiopian-origin families in a given locality or neighborhood helped to lower housing prices there. According to Micha Feldman, a former Jewish Agency emissary to Ethiopia and afterwards a consultant on the community’s acculturation, Ethiopian immigrants paid \$100,000 for apartments that are worth \$50,000 today (Feldman, 2001).

Activists in the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews agree that some people defrauded the immigrants and profited at their expense. They claim, however, that the mortgages offered to the immigrants, irrespective of their generosity, sufficed to finance home purchases in slums but not in middle-class neighborhoods. The researcher Fred Lazin concurs, stating that the government ultimately created immigrant concentrations by its own actions - first by referring immigrants to absorption centers and mobile home sites, and later on by creating the mortgage program. Even though Ethiopian immigrants were offered larger mortgages than other Israelis, they were not given enough to buy housing in middle-class neighborhoods (Lazin, 1997: 41). Government assistance enabled Ethiopian immigrants to become homeowners, but the homes they own are cheap and probably cannot serve as the springboard to better housing in the foreseeable future. Activists in the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews argued, in retrospect, that home ownership also has a disadvantage: it destines the immigrants and their offspring to live in impoverished neighborhoods (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 2001 [B]).

Table 4. Home Purchases Facilitated by Special Mortgages, by Locality, 1993 - 2001 (June)

Locality	Number of homes purchased
Rehovot	975
Netanya	966
Hadera	581
Lod	509
Kiryat Malakhi	386
Haifa	373
Ramle	338
Jerusalem	248
Rishon Lezion	269
Yavne	231
Pardes Hannah-Karkur	172
Petah Tikva	154
Kiryat Yam	132
Kiryat Motzkin	103
Other localities	2,977
Total	8,414

Ministry of Construction and Housing, Tenanting Division, "Takeup of Mortgages by Immigrants from Ethiopia, by Locality," memorandum, July 2001.

Long-Term Need for the Special Mortgage Program

Young Singles

According to the Ministry of Construction and Housing regulations, people under the age of twenty-five who arrive in Israel with their parents, or whose parents come to Israel within one year of their own immigration, do not receive housing rights as singles; instead, they are recorded in their parents' immigrant papers. In late 1995, Yair Tsaban warned about the need to solve the housing problems of singles who were living in mobile home sites (Tsaban, 1995). The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews suggested that the housing entitlements be extended to singles under age twenty-five (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews,

undated [B]:2). The Association also urged the government to find new solutions for "young people, some of whom are orphans and others who were separated from their families in the lengthy immigration process, and who today are in various phases of life, such as soldiers, students, young adults after military service (some working, others not)" (The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, undated [B]). The Association's proposals include the provision of especially large mortgages for single immigrants who do not live in mobile homes (increased mortgages are in fact available for single immigrants who do live in mobile homes) and working singles, plus the provision of public housing for unemployed young people (including the preservation of homebuying eligibility in the future) (activists in Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 2001 [B]).

Post-Operation-Solomon Immigrants

Between 1992 and 2000, Israel received an annual average of about 2,500 immigrants from Ethiopia. Since these are significantly lower figures than those of Operation Solomon (although the total is greater), one would expect them to receive better treatment. The recent arrivals, however, seem to have encountered the same old problems. The two main problems are the continuing tendency to buy housing in disadvantaged neighborhoods and the lack of information and support in the homebuying process (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, undated [A]:1). Another problem is lack of coordination between central-government offices that serve immigrants and municipal authorities in localities where the immigrants buy housing (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 2001 [A]:1).

A New Problem: Home Maintenance

Housing problems do not end when the purchase contract is signed; housing expenses also include home maintenance. Since Ethiopian immigrants are largely a low-income group, the physical state of the dwellings they acquired has deteriorated over time (Hovav, 2001). Notably, many of those dwellings were in poor condition to begin with.

Housing Upgrade

The data we examined show that the Ethiopian Israeli community is concentrated in a small number of localities, in socioeconomically weak neighborhoods, and in cheap housing that, in some cases, is deteriorating. Since most Ethiopian Israelis subsist on low incomes - we focus on this in the next chapter - this picture is unlikely to change quickly. In fact, there is a strong likelihood that the level and value of their housing will decrease further.

As noted above, the flow of Ethiopian immigrants to development towns and disadvantaged neighborhoods, armed with relatively generous mortgages, allowed Israelis who had reached the country in previous waves of immigration and had found it difficult to improve their housing conditions to move into better housing. These Israelis regarded the advent of the Ethiopian newcomers as a long-awaited miracle. The question is whether a policy geared to improving Ethiopian Israelis' standard of housing can be based on the expectation that such a miracle will recur.

Organizations of Ethiopian Israelis have proposed several solutions. One is that the government buy back the apartments from the immigrants and give them new mortgages with which they may move to better neighborhoods. The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews has proposed that the government enable immigrants to leave the slums by providing new housing loans and allowing immigrants to apply existing mortgages to new dwellings (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, undated [A]). The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption is also "discussing ideas and proposals [...] to provide special grants and loans that will allow immigrants to move out of problematic areas" (Brookdale Institute, 2001:12). Most Ethiopian immigrants earn so little, however, that one cannot but doubt the viability of these ideas. Even if they receive more generous mortgages than they have already obtained, most will still be unable to acquire housing in middle - and upper-income neighborhoods.

Another possible avenue of government intervention is Project Renewal. It is known that Project Renewal, initiated in the late 1970s, did not change the socioeconomic status of the inhabitants of neighborhoods where it was implemented, and there is no reason to expect different results in the new

neighborhoods of Ethiopian Israelis. It might, however, be worth exploring the possibility of upgrading whole neighborhoods by means of neighborhood organizations, in conjunction with the municipal authority, the Ministry of Construction and Housing, and twin cities abroad, where the emphasis is on human services rather than on plaster.

As possibilities of improving existing households' housing conditions are examined, options that might help the young generation should also be weighed. One of the most important proposals in this context is to extend the eligibility for increased mortgages to the immigrants' offspring, who are ineligible today because they are considered nonimmigrant Israelis in respect to homebuying (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, undated [A]). In Israel, nonimmigrant young couples who wish to buy housing usually turn to their parents for assistance, and those who cannot obtain help from that source have to settle for housing in the geographical or social periphery. (See, for example, Spilerman, 1997). Since young Ethiopian Israelis cannot avail themselves of parental aid, if the state takes an interest in their integration and advancement, it should give them the assistance that their parents cannot provide. Otherwise, the second generation will improve its housing conditions on an individual basis only—an option that will be available to few in the foreseeable future.

Another possibility to consider for the young generation is the establishment of community settlements. This option was not explored seriously when the Ethiopian Jews immigrated, since the dominant concept was of dispersion and assimilation amidst the nonimmigrant population. However, now that community settlements have become a normative path of housing upgrade for members of the nonimmigrant urban middle class, they should be considered for young people of Ethiopian extraction as well. The initiative to establish such settlements, if spearheaded by young members of the community and backed with government assistance, will constitute a statement by Ethiopian Israelis that their community has something to contribute to Israeli society.

Employment

If geographic concentration was the policymakers' main concern in regard to housing, the chief source of worry with respect to employment was that "an entire ethnic group would gather at society's lowest stratum" (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 57).

Accordingly, the integration programs placed strong emphasis on vocational training. However, unlike the government's strenuous effort in the housing field, which made the immigrants into property owners - albeit sometimes overpriced property - the government assistance matrix in the employment field did not enrich the immigrants as expected.

The architects of the assistance system derived their inspiration from anachronistic conceptions, especially concerning the ostensibly vast cultural distance between "traditional societies" and "Western society." A common reflection of this mindset was the metaphor that depicted Ethiopian Jews' immigration to Israel as "a leap from the Middle Ages into the twenty-first century." By the time the Ethiopian Jews reached Israel, however, the globalization of labor markets and manufacturing had obfuscated demarcation lines that had once been perceived as hard to cross. Millions of workers from the Third World, including African countries, have migrated to Western countries in search of work and managed to integrate into "Western" economies without the mediation of any government training system. Furthermore, since the 1970s Western multinational corporations have been establishing production lines in "traditional" countries and using local workers there to manufacture high-tech electronic products, among other things. The same has happened in Israel, where a "Western" economy has managed to employ hundreds of thousands of labor migrants in agriculture, construction, and personal services. These workers, born and raised in countries that are typified as "agrarian" and socially "traditional," have easily found their niche in the labor market. What is more, their employers have been pressuring the government incessantly to allow them to bring over more and more workers. One may say much the same about Palestinian workers, who had been employed in Israel *en masse* before and even after the first Intifada.

Nevertheless, the crafters of Israel's immigrant

absorption policy assumed that "Placing the Ethiopian immigrants in work was a unique challenge for Israeli society, the immigrant assistance systems, and the nonimmigrants. The Ethiopian immigrant population could not simply be integrated into the existing employment systems; instead, totally new niches and methods had to be developed" (Brookdale Institute, 2001 [A]: 41).

Beyond the culture rhetoric, however, the immigrant absorption policymakers' main practical concern evidently had to do with the possibility that Ethiopian Jews would fail to hold their own in the severely polarized labor market that took shape in Israel in the 1980s and 1990s. This market consists of two parts: one including persons with a higher education, and another with persons with secondary schooling or less. The wages of the latter have been eroding rapidly relative to the wages of the former; many Israeli wage earners do not make a decent living. To illustrate: the proportion of Israeli households headed by wage earners that are at or below the poverty line rose from 21 percent in 1989 to 34.8 percent in 1999. National Insurance benefits managed to lift about half of these households above the poverty line (Swirski and Konur-Attias, 2001: 15). Furthermore, many workers are inadequately protected. The Histadrut, stripped of most of its assets, has been severely weakened, the state does not enforce its own laws, such as the Minimum Wage Law, and employers are making increasing use of employment modalities that circumvent collective agreements, such as subcontracting. Employers have also learned to exploit competition among nonimmigrant workers, recent immigrants, Palestinians, and labor migrants, and some have even moved production lines to neighboring countries. Thus, immigrant-absorption policymakers were concerned that the Ethiopian immigrants would sink to the bottom of Israel's occupational and wage scale and, by so doing, belie the implicit Zionist promise that Jews from "distressed countries," by the very act of immigrating to Israel, could look forward to a better and more secure life. This is why the authorities emphasized the need to develop "totally new niches and methods" for Ethiopian Israelis. The response adopted by the state was Zionist indeed: for Jewish immigrants, and for them alone, the state created two assistance mechanisms that are available neither to

labor migrants from faraway countries nor to Palestinian workers. One is the vocational training and job placement system; the other is the set of National Insurance benefits that supports people who cannot find their place in the labor market, as well as those who manage to find work but only at wage levels that do not suffice for a basic living as defined by the National Insurance Institute. Below we deal only with the vocational training system for Ethiopian immigrants; we will not discuss the National Insurance system.

Vocational Training Policy

Acting at the government's behest, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption prepared two master plans for the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants - one in 1985, for Operation Moses, and another in 1991, for Operation Solomon. The first plan defined its goal in the employment field as follows: "Vocational training is an essential condition in the vocational integration of Ethiopian immigrants; without it, they will find themselves at the bottom of the employment scale" (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 9).

Accordingly, the ministry developed "a concept favoring intensive, long-term action [...] a multi-phase process that should be planned as a continuum, in which periods of work and periods of training or in-service training take place in an integrated or alternating fashion. The process should be spread over several years ..." (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 57).

The program included two periods of "pre-training," i.e., preparation for vocational training courses. One term coincided with the last three months of the immigrants' six-month Hebrew language course; the second was a three-month term of full-time study. Then came vocational training courses, offered in three settings: boarding schools, regular courses of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and in-plant training (*ibid.*: pp. 68 - 69).

The 1985 master plan recommended the training of Ethiopian Israelis in four specific fields: (a) metal, motor vehicle, lumber, electricity, and electronics; (b) nursing; (c) hotels; (d) the garment industry. In the opinion of the program developers, these occupations "entail vocational skills that may be inculcated in [this]

population group, despite its typical [low] level of schooling" (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1985: 61). It should be noted that labor migrants ("foreign workers") and Palestinians hold jobs in these trades, with no prior training whatsoever.

The courses were attended mainly by Ethiopian immigrant men; women were a minority. The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption attributed this (among other factors) to language difficulties caused by women's irregular participation in the Hebrew program, since they were burdened with young children. However, a researcher who conducted a lengthy observation in absorption centers blamed the paucity of women on a discriminatory policy applied by the managers of the centers, who chose only one member of each family unit, usually the male, for vocational training. The managers justified this decision by claiming that it corresponded to the immigrants' own tradition and culture (Herzog, 1998: 102).

The policy of prolonged training was widely criticized. It was argued, for example, that this acculturation process, instead of facilitating dynamic adjustment to the host society, made the immigrants dependent on the absorption apparatus (Halper, 1987). Concurrently, the absorption centers were portrayed as gloomy places where Ethiopian immigrants acquired much of their dependency on the immigrant-absorption bureaucracy (Herzog, 1998; see also Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1991:12).

It seems that the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption changed its policy only a short time after it put together the three-phase training program. According to the State Comptroller, "In the middle of November 1985, the ministry crafted a new policy [...] after judging that the Hebrew language studies and pre-training courses were not attaining their goals. Central in the new policy is the belief that each immigrant should be helped to find work as quickly as possible to assure his acculturation in Israel" (State Comptroller, 1988: 498). Several years later, in 1991, as the government braced itself for the second large wave of Jews from Ethiopia in Operation Solomon, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption unveiled a new policy. The main innovation was a shorter set of transitional phases, including absorption centers and training courses, and an earlier entry into the labor market. The new policy was depicted as the product of lessons learned from the

experience in integrating the Operation Moses immigrants. Its authors admitted that “No findings give clear indication that participating in the [lengthy training] process ... made a significant contribution to [the immigrants’] occupational integration” (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1991: 32).

The change in policy was also influenced by the social structure of the Operation Solomon immigrants. Unlike the Operation Moses immigrants, who reached Israel alone or in fragmented families after a lengthy trek and a protracted stay in refugee camps, most Operation Solomon immigrants arrived in intact families and after an orderly stay in a transit camp in Addis Ababa (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1991: 3).

Importantly, too, the Ethiopian Israeli community had grown by 1991 to some 24,000 “old-timers” who could help receive the newcomers. What is more, a set of community organizations that could mediate between the government and the community had formed (*ibid.*: 13).

The new plan spoke of referring the immigrants to the job market immediately after completion of the Hebrew language course. It differentiated among three groups: about 900 immigrants who had acquired formal schooling in Ethiopia and would be referred to vocational courses; some 1,100 immigrants who exhibited “good learning potential” and would be referred directly to major employers - including selected ones such as the phone company, the Israel Electric Corporation, Histadrut-owned enterprises, the Prisons Service, and large construction companies—for in-plant training; and 1,000 - 1,500 immigrants who had “poor learning aptitude” and would be sent directly into the labor market. The planners expected the latter group “to subsist mainly on National Insurance benefits or to find temporary employment in seasonal or very simple jobs” (*ibid.*: 34).

The next section examines the employment statistics of Ethiopian Israelis on the basis of the 1999 labor force surveys of the Central Bureau of Statistics. Although the data do not enable us to gauge the utility of the vocational training programs, it seems that the importance of government programs, of whatever kind, falls short of two other observable factors: length of time in the country and level of schooling. The longest tenured Ethiopian immigrants, those who arrived in the 1980s, have a higher rate of labor force participation

Civilian Labor Force

The civilian labor force includes all persons actually working in the civilian (as opposed to the military) labor market and anyone actively seeking work. Persons belonging to the labor force are defined as women and men aged 15+ who are working when Central Bureau of Statistics canvassers visit their homes or who are not working but have sought work actively in the four weeks preceding visit. Who is excluded from the civilian labor force? (1) Israelis under age 15; (2) persons aged 15+ who neither worked nor sought work during the week of the canvasser’s visit - students, volunteers, full-time homemakers, people who are incapable of working, persons who live on pension or rent income, and soldiers in army service (conscript or career). Although participation in the civilian labor force is calculated from age 15, our analysis focuses on the 25 - 54 age group. This is considered the main working age, especially in Western countries, where people usually enter the labor market after they complete their studies, which often includes higher education. In Israel, this categorization is justified

than those of the 1990s, outperformed them in obtaining white-collar jobs, and are less prone to unemployment. It also seems that the only Ethiopian immigrants who moved into white-collar occupations are young people who acquired their schooling in Israel.

Ethiopian Israelis in the Labor Market: 1999

Labor-Force Participation of Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54

In 1999, there were 14,778 Israelis of Ethiopian extraction aged 25 - 54. Only slightly more than half of them (53 percent) participated in the labor force, compared to 76 percent of all Israelis in this age bracket (calculated from CBS, 2001 [F]: Table 4). Ethiopian Israelis have a low labor force participation rate mainly because of the low participation of Ethiopian women. The participation rate of men aged 25- 54 is 71 percent (compared to 84 percent of Israeli men at large in the same age group) but that of women is 38 percent (compared to 68 percent of all Israeli women in that age group) (calculated from *ibid.*).

for an additional reason: most young people are in military service between the ages of 18 and 20 (girls) or 21 (boys).

Employed and Unemployed Persons

The civilian labor force is made up of two categories of people: employed and unemployed persons.

Employed persons are those who performed any form of work, for a wage, profit, or other remuneration, for at least one hour during the week in which the CBS canvasser visited them.

Unemployed persons are those who did not work at all during that week and who reported actively seeking work in the preceding four weeks.

The data presented below were analyzed from the Demographic File of the Central Bureau of Statistics labor force surveys for 1999. The analysis pertains to persons aged 15+ who were born in Ethiopia or had one parent who was born there, and

who settled in Israel in or after 1980. *It should be pointed out that since this is a small-population sample, some of the figures are prone to sampling errors.*

The table below shows that Ethiopian Israeli men have a more or less stable participation rate: 74 percent in the 25 -34 age groups, 61 percent in the 35 - 44 age groups, and 76 percent in the in the 45 - 54 age group. Among women, however, participation rates decline as the age rises—from 46 percent for the 25-34 age group to 35 percent for the 35-44 age group and 18 for the 45-54 age group. The participation rates of both sexes are higher among the Israeli population at large than among Ethiopian Israelis and are more stable, especially among women. The rates are 81 percent for the 25-34 group, 86 percent for the 35-44 group, and 86 percent for the 45-54 group among Israeli men, and 66 percent, 69 percent, and 69 percent, respectively, among women (computed from *ibid.*).

Table 5. Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25—54, by Labor Force Participation Rate and Sex, 1999

	Men				Women			
	Total	25-34	35-44	45-54	Total	25-34	35-44	45-54
Total	6,916	3,774	1,925	1,217	7,862	4,213	2,059	1,590
In Labor Force	4,878	2,780	1,177	921	2,953	1,946	720	287
Not in Labor Force	2,038	994	748	296	4,909	2,267	1,339	1,303
Participation rate	71%	74%	61%	76%	38%	46%	35%	18%

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Survey 1999, Demographic File.*

Figure 2. Labor Force Participation, Total Israeli Population and Ethiopian Israelis, Ages 25-54, 1999



Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Survey 1999, Demographic File.*

Who Participates More in the Labor Force - 1980s Immigrants or 1990s Immigrants?

The government invested both time and money in efforts to find a place for Ethiopian immigrants in the labor market. Furthermore, as noted above, it adjusted the method after the first large wave of immigration to increase the immigrants' labor force participation rate. The 1985 master plan was based on a lengthy Hebrew language course and a relatively long period of vocational training; the 1991 plan shortened both phases.

At first glance, and since everyone thought the approach in 1991 was better than that of 1985, we would expect the 1990s immigrants to exhibit a better employment record than the 1980s immigrants. The figures, however, tell a different story. Table 7 presents the Ethiopian Israelis' labor force participation rate by period of immigration. It shows that the total labor force participation rate of the 1980s immigrants, 60 percent, surpasses that of the 1990s immigrants, 44 percent.

Table 6. Civilian Labor Force Participation, Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25-54, by Period of Immigration, 1999

	Total	1980s immigrants	1990s immigrants
Total	14,777	7,976	6,801
In Labor Force	7,830	4,821	3,009
Percent	53%	60%	44%
Not in Labor Force	6,947	3,155	3,792
Percent	47%	40%	56%

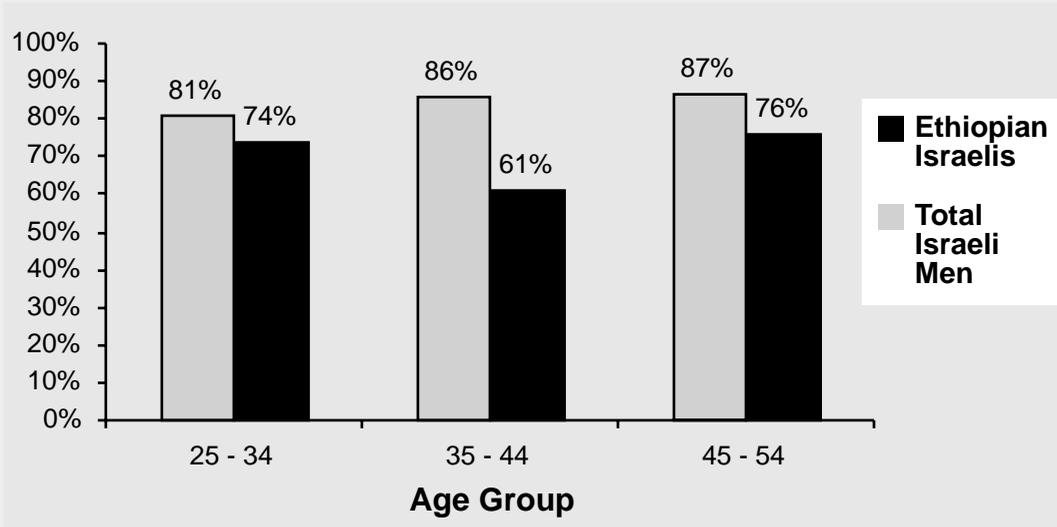
Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Survey 1999, Demographic File*.

Table 7. Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate, Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25-54, by Period of Immigration and Age Group, 1999

	1980s immigrants			1990s immigrants		
	25—34	35—44	45—54	25—34	35—44	45—54
In Labor Force	65%	53%	59%	52%	43%	23%
Not in Labor Force	35%	47%	41%	48%	57%	77%

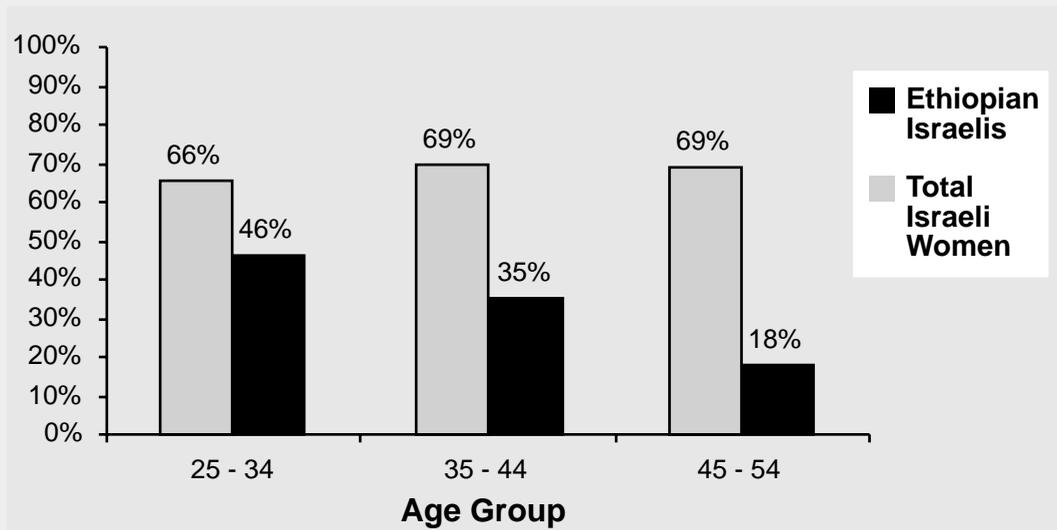
Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Figure 3. Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate, Total Israeli Men and Ethiopian Israeli Men, Three Age Groups, 1999



Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Figure 4. Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate, Total Israeli Women and Ethiopian Israeli Women, Three Age Groups, 1999



Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Who is not in the Civilian Labor Force?

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, 47 percent of Ethiopian Israelis aged 25-54 do not even participate in the labor force. Before we go on to examine the employment of Ethiopian Israelis who do participate, let us survey the nonparticipants.

The table below repeats a point noted above: nonparticipation in the labor force is more prevalent among women (62 percent) than among men (29 percent). Comparing the two periods of immigration, we find that Operation Solomon immigrants have a higher nonparticipation rate than Operation Moses immigrants - 56 percent as against 40 percent.

Finally, the table shows a correspondence between schooling and labor force participation: the nonparticipation rate is 66 percent among those with no formal schooling, 35 percent among those who completed primary or junior high school only, 29 percent among graduates of vocational high schools, and 26 percent among graduates of academic high schools. The nonparticipation rate of degree holders is surprisingly high at 36 percent. The probable reason for this, in most cases, is that the nonparticipants are still active students.

Table 8. Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54 Who do not Participate in the Civilian Labor Force, by Various Characteristics, 1999

	Characteristics	Percentage of respective population on each line
Sex	Men	29%
	Women	62%
Immigration	1980s	40%
	1990s	56%
Schooling	None or some but without any diploma/certificate	66%
	Completed primary school or junior high school	35%
	Graduated from academic high school	26%
	Graduated from vocational high school	29%
	Bachelor's or advanced degree	36%

Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File.*

Where are Ethiopian Israelis Employed?

Ethiopian Israelis are most likely to be employed in manufacturing and public services: In 1999, almost 40 percent of employed Ethiopian Israelis worked in manufacturing and 28 percent worked in public services. Another 12 percent were employed in trade, accommodation and restaurant services and 8 percent worked in banking and business activities.

Table 9. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Economic Field, 1999

Economic Field	Persons employed	Percent
Manufacturing	2,576	39%
Public services	1,839	28%
Trade, Accommodation services and restaurants	795	12%
Banking and Business activities	514	8%
Other fields	813	12%
Not known	97	1%
Total	6,634	100%

Note: "Other fields" include agriculture, electricity and water, construction, transport, storage and communication, domestic services, and extraterritorial organizations and bodies.

Source: Adva Center analysis of CBS, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File.*

Employment by Period of Immigration and Age Group

Table 10 shows that the rate of employment in manufacturing is high and relatively stable in all age groups and among immigrants from both Operation Moses and Operation Solomon.

In the public services, the second-largest employer of Ethiopian Israelis, there are significant differences between the two immigration groups and among the various age groups. The highest employment rate was observed in Ethiopian Israelis aged 25 - 34 who immigrated in the 1980s (i.e., young people educated in Israel) - 44 percent. In the corresponding group among 1990s immigrants, the employment rate was only 6 percent. In the 35-44 age group that immigrated in the 1980s, the employment rate was 32 percent, compared to 26 percent for those who immigrated in the 1990s.

Table 10. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Economic Field and Period of Immigration, 1999

	1980s immigrants			1990s immigrants		
	25—34	35—44	45—54	25—34	35—44	45—54
Manufacturing	39%	42%	42%	43%	24%	46%
Trade, Accommodation services and restaurants	8%	13%	18%	12%	15%	16%
Banking and Business activities	2%	8%	6%	14%	18%	—
Public services	44%	32%	17%	6%	26%	16%
Other fields	6%	—	17%	25%	17%	22%
Not known	2%	5%	—	—	—	—
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: “Other fields” include agriculture, electricity and water, construction, transportation, storage and communication, domestic services, and extraterritorial organizations and bodies.

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Labor Force Participation by Gender

Most Ethiopian Israelis employed in manufacturing are men: 49 percent of men aged 25 - 34, 44 percent of men aged 35 - 44, and 45 percent of men aged 45 - 54 held manufacturing jobs in 1999. Among women, only slightly more than one-fourth of those in the 25 - 34 cohort and a little more than one-third of women aged 45 - 54 worked in manufacturing.

The largest employer of Ethiopian Israeli women is the public service, which in 1999 employed 47 percent of women aged 25 - 34 and 58 percent of women aged 35 - 44. Among men, only 19 percent of members of the 25 - 34 group and 22 percent of those aged 45 - 54 worked in the public services.

The Occupations of Ethiopian Israelis

The large majority of Ethiopian Israelis - 76 percent of men and 62 percent of women - are employed as either “skilled workers” (in agriculture and manufacturing) or as “unskilled workers.”

Few Ethiopian Israelis - 4 percent of men and 15 percent of women - are to be found in the academic, liberal, and technical professions. *Academic* occupations include, but are not limited to, university lecturers and researchers, practitioners of the liberal professions, persons with academic occupations in the humanities, and teachers at the post-secondary and post-primary levels. *Liberal and technical professions* include practical engineers, laboratory staff and operators of technical instrumentation, teachers at the primary and preschool levels, etc.

Table 11. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25-54, by Economic Field and Gender, 1999

	Men			Women		
	25—34	35—44	45—54	25—34	35—44	45—54
Manufacturing	49%	44%	45%	26%	17%	34%
Trade, Accommodation services and restaurants	7%	15%	10%	13%	12%	45%
Banking and business activities	8%	14%	—	4%	10%	21%
Public services	19%	12%	22%	47%	58%	—
Other fields	15%	11%	23%	10%	2%	—
Total	2,268	1,102	856	1,497	677	234

Note: 1. The total does not add up to 100% due to the proportion of “Unknowns.”

2. “Other fields” include agriculture, electricity and water, construction, transportation, storage and communication, domestic services, and extraterritorial organizations and bodies.

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Table 12. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Occupation and Sex, 1999
Percent of Age Group

	Men			Women		
	25—34	35—44	45—54	25—34	35—44	45—54
Academic	—	—	6%	2%	—	—
Liberal and technical	2%	8%	—	15%	14%	—
Clerical	6%	-	13%	15%	-	-
Agents, sales, services	20%	12%	—	15%	19%	—
Agriculture	2%	12%	9%	—	—	—
Manufacturing	47%	38%	37%	10%	—	—
Unskilled	23%	30%	35%	44%	66%	100%
Total	2,154	1,055	856	1,496	678	234

Note: “Other fields” include agriculture, electricity and water, construction, transportation, storage and communication, domestic services, and extraterritorial organizations and bodies.

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

The relatively high share of women in liberal and technical professions and white-collar occupations, mainly in the two youngest age groups, is noteworthy. In contrast, all women employed in “unskilled” occupations belong to the oldest age group.

The Occupations of Ethiopian Israelis in Three Economic Fields

Now we can merge the information about economic fields with that concerning occupations. Some 39 percent of employed Ethiopian Israelis hold jobs in manufacturing, and nearly all of them (92 percent) have blue-collar positions, i.e., are either “skilled workers” or “unskilled workers.” A small minority engage in other occupations, including 6 percent in white-collar jobs. No Ethiopian Israeli in manufacturing is employed in academic, liberal, and technical occupations.

In the public services - the second-largest employer of members of the Ethiopian community - 30 percent are employed as either “skilled workers” or “unskilled workers”; 31 percent as agents, sales workers, or service providers (a category that includes nursing caregivers, food service providers, and police and security workers); 29 percent as practitioners of academic, liberal, or technical occupations; and 10 percent as white-collar workers. Thus, only 39 percent of Ethiopian Israelis who work in the public services hold pronouncedly white-collar positions, nearly one-third have blue-collar jobs, and a little more than one third provide miscellaneous services.

Although banking is decidedly a white-collar industry, this field employs Ethiopian Israelis mainly in service positions such as food services and security, and as “unskilled workers.”

Table 13. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Economic Field and Occupation, 1999
Percent in Economic Field

	Total (N)	Academic	Liberal/ technical	Clerical	Agents, sales, and services	Skilled farm workers	Skilled manu- facturing workers	Unskilled workers
Manu- facturing	2,503	-	-	6%	2%	-	60%	32%
Trade, Accomm- odation services and restaurants	794	-	-	18%	21%	-	9%	52%
Banking and business activities	514	-	-	-	20%	-	-	80%
Public services	18%	5%	24%	10%	31%	-	1%	29%
Other fields	813	-	-	-	-	30%	34%	36%
Unknown	8	-	-	-	-	-	100%	-

Note: “Other fields” include agriculture, electricity and water, construction, transportation, storage and communication, domestic services, and extraterritorial organizations and bodies.

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Labor Force Participation by Gender

Table 14 examines the participation of Ethiopian Israelis in various occupations and economic fields by gender. In manufacturing, most persons employed - 93 percent of men and 90 percent of women - are blue-collar workers (“skilled” or “unskilled”). Only men hold white-collar jobs in manufacturing and only women work as “agents, sales workers, and service providers.” (Most such employment, one presumes, is in food services.)

In banking, all women are categorized as “unskilled workers.” In contrast, two-thirds of men in this industry are defined as unskilled and one-third are “agents, sales workers, and service providers” (most likely security guards).

In the public services, women account for a majority and are represented in most occupations. Their 29 percent share in the liberal and technical professions is especially noteworthy.

**Table 14. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54,
by Economic Field and Occupation and by Gender - Selected Economic Fields, 1999**
Percent of Gender Group

	Total (N)	Academic	Liberal/ technical	Clerical	Agents, sales, and services	Skilled farm workers	Skilled manufa- cturing workers	Unskilled workers
Manu- facturing	2,503	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Men	1,912	-	-	7%	-	-	72%	20%
Women	591	-	-	-	10%	-	21%	69%
Banking and business activities	514	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Men	333	-	-	-	32%	-	-	68%
Women	181	-	-	-	-	-	-	100%
Public services	1,840	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Men	742	7%	17%	6%	49%	-	3%	18%
Women	1,098	3%	29%	12%	19%	-	-	37%

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Ethiopian Israelis in the Public Services: Joining the Mainstream?

The data we examined revealed a rather small group - several hundred young people - who have found academic, liberal, technical, and clerical positions in the public services. This group is noteworthy because it has crossed the blue-collar barrier, that of workers “at the bottom of the occupational scale,” that so troubled the architects of the immigrant absorption policy. Arguably, this is the main group that seems to have joined the Israeli middle class.

The Central Bureau of Statistics does not tell us what jobs these young people hold and in what fields they work. Our conversations with activists suggest that most such jobs involve care for members of the Ethiopian community itself, either in government offices or in municipal authorities. As one of the activists expressed it, “The 1980s immigrants found work *thanks to* the 1990s immigrants.”

The labor force survey does not tell us whether their jobs are permanent or temporary. One possibility is that, at least in some cases, these ostensibly middle-class Ethiopian Israelis are employed in a rather large number of “projects” for Ethiopian Jews run by various government offices, mainly the ministries of Education, Immigrant Absorption, and Construction and Housing. Additional projects are conducted by social service associations that also belong to the public services sector of the economy. These projects, by their very nature, are budgeted for fixed periods of time and do not necessarily offer access to permanent employment. From this standpoint, the 1999 figures may indicate that these Ethiopian Israelis are engaged in temporary positions and do not have a stable foothold. If this is so, then the middle-class membership of this group depends on the continuation of funding for government and public projects that aim to assist the Ethiopian Israeli community. Even if this is the case, however, this group has gained occupational and organizational experience along with familiarity with Israel’s governmental and public systems, from which they will probably be able to derive benefits in the future.

Unemployment

Thus far, we have discussed Ethiopian Israelis in the 25 - 54 age group who participate in the labor force and are employed. Now we move on to consider participants in the labor force who were unemployed when the 1999 Labor Force Survey was conducted.

The figures show that Ethiopian Israelis are more prone to unemployment than Israelis at large. In 1999, 15 percent of Ethiopian Israelis aged 25 - 54 in the labor force were jobless: 13 percent of men and 18 percent of women. Corresponding rates for the Israeli population at large were 8 percent (general population), 7 percent (men) and 8 percent (women) (CBS, 2001 [F]: Table 4). Ethiopian Israelis also had higher unemployment rates than residents of some Arab localities and several Jewish development towns.

In unemployment rates, as in other fields, immigrants from the 1980s have done much better than the 1990s immigrants; in 1999, the unemployment rates among these two groups were 13 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

Finally, unemployment was more prevalent among persons with some schooling - primary, junior-high, senior-high, and academic - than among those who had never attended school or had attended school but received no diploma. Perhaps people without formal qualifications find work more easily, especially since they concentrate in blue-collar industries and occupations, whereas those with some schooling encounter greater difficulties because they have higher expectations concerning appropriate employment.

Education and Employment

To conclude the chapter, let us examine the connection between education and employment among Ethiopian Israelis. The figures in Table 15 show, generally, that the investment in schooling pays off for Ethiopian Israelis as it does for the general Israeli population.

As one may see, almost all uneducated Ethiopian Israelis work as either skilled or unskilled laborers in agriculture, manufacturing, and other economic fields; only 9 percent work in a different category (“agents, sales workers, and service providers”).

Most persons with primary and junior high schooling are also employed as blue-collar workers - but at the slightly lower rate of 67 percent. About 15 percent of

them work as agents, sales workers, and service providers and 11 percent hold clerical jobs or practice liberal or technical professions. Blue-collar occupations are also prevalent among high school graduates, but the share of such people in these fields - 61 percent - is slightly lower than that among persons with only primary and junior high schooling. In contrast, 22 percent are employed as agents, sales workers, and service providers and 17 percent work in pronouncedly white-collar occupations.

Among those with post-secondary schooling, the proportion of unskilled workers is much smaller than among the previously mentioned groups, at 24 percent. All the others - 76 percent - work in occupations that correspond to some extent to their education level. Finally, no Ethiopian Israeli with academic schooling is employed as an unskilled worker; 75 percent of members of this group work in pronouncedly white-collar occupations.

Table 15. Unemployed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Various Characteristics, 1999

	Category	Percent of total on each line
General	All persons aged 25 - 54 in civilian labor force	15%
Sex	Men	13%
	Women	18%
Time of immigration	1980s	13%
	1990s	19%
Schooling	None or no diploma/certificate	8%
	Completed primary and/or junior high school	22%
	Graduated from academic high school	21%
	Graduated from vocational high school	16%
	Attended institution of higher learning	24%

Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Table 16. Employed Ethiopian Israelis Aged 25 - 54, by Education and Occupation, 1999

	No schooling	Primary / jr. high	High school	Post-primary	Academic	Other	Unknown	Total
Academic	-	-	2%	-	14%	-	-	1%
Liberal / technical	-	3%	6%	76%	23%	15%	-	7%
Clerical	-	8%	10%	-	37%	-	-	7%
Agents, sales, and services	9%	15%	22%	-	3%	12%	-	14%
Skilled farm workers	6%	7%	-	-	7%	-	-	4%
Skilled manufacturing workers	25%	24%	37%	-	16%	36%	100%	29%
Unskilled workers	60%	43%	24%	24%	-	37%	-	38%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Ethiopian Israelis Aged 15 - 24 in the Labor Market

Our main analysis focused on Ethiopian Israeli men and women aged 24 - 54. However, quite a few persons aged 15 - 24 also participate in the labor force. They deserve our brief attention.

As Table 17 shows, one-fourth of Ethiopian Israelis aged 15 - 24 participate in the labor force. Among the Israeli population at large, this age group has a higher participation rate, one-third (computed from CBS, 1999 [F]: Table 4). Below we examine the data for three subgroups: senior-high age (15 - 17), military service age (18 - 20), and demobilization and post-secondary studies age (21 - 24).

In the 15 - 17 age group, the participation rate is a low but significant 11 percent, slightly higher than that among the Israeli population at large, 9 percent. The figure for Ethiopian Israelis is somewhat consistent with data on the high dropout rates of Ethiopian Israeli students (see chapter on education, below). Most boys

who participate in the labor force are employed; most girls are not. In the subgroup of military service age, 10 percent of men and 30 percent of women participate in the labor force. (We cannot compare these data with corresponding figures for the population at large, since the CBS releases only aggregate data on the 18—24 age group.)

Most (69 percent) women of military age who participate in the civilian labor force actually work. In contrast, only a minority (16 percent) of military age men who participate in the civilian labor force hold jobs. Apparently the other 84 percent of 18-20 year olds are young people who were rejected by the army and also by the labor market.

In the post-army age group, labor force participation rises significantly, to 40 percent for men and 45 percent for women. Several factors may explain the lower rate among men, such as the larger number of men who serve in the standing army.

Table 17. Ethiopian Israelis Aged 15-24, by Labor Force Participation and Gender

	Men				Women			
	Total	15-17	18-20	21-24	Total	15-17	18-20	21-24
Total	4,857	1,780	1,667	1,410	4,857	1,577	1,460	1,820
Nonparticipants	80%	87%	90%	60%	71%	91%	69%	55%
Participants	20%	13%	10%	40%	29%	9%	31%	45%
Thereof: employed	66%	74%	16%	76%	68%	44%	69%	72%
Not employed	35%	26%	85%	24%	32%	56%	31%	28%

Source: Adva Center analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys 1999, Demographic File*.

Entrepreneurship

Thus far, we have used CBS data to present an employment picture for Ethiopian Israelis. However, the figures do not tell the whole story; censuses and surveys cannot reflect every type of economic activity. For example, a position paper by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research notes that “quite a few” Ethiopian immigrants, mainly women, work informally at domestic jobs that they avoid disclosing to the authorities in order to evade taxes or maintain eligibility for National Insurance benefits (Kaplan and Salamon, 1999).

The researcher Haim Rosen used anthropological methods to probe a business entrepreneurship phenomenon among some members of the community—elderly men who visit Ethiopia regularly and import commodities for sale in Israel, mainly to members of their community. Although they are few in number and their businesses are small, Rosen views this activity as evidence that many immigrants aspire to a higher standard of living than the government vocational training system can provide (Rosen, 2001: 25).

Alternatives

Discussions of Ethiopian Israelis’ position in the Israeli labor market usually focus on policy alternatives aimed specifically at members of this community. We take a different view: the main path to improvement, we believe, is a government policy that would focus on bettering the lot of low-wage Israelis as a group. This involves a long-term effort to raise wages, improve terms of employment, and introduce compulsory pension insurance. From all these standpoints, Ethiopian Israelis belong to the large stratum of Israelis who find it difficult to support their families on their labor income. The point of departure is effective enforcement of existing labor laws, since the non-enforcement of these statutes today has facilitated the gradual erosion of wages and terms of employment, not to mention an influx of Palestinian workers and labor migrants who work under conditions that do not meet the requirements of Israeli law.

The vocational training programs that evoked such high hopes when the two waves of immigration from Ethiopia arrived in Israel have proven to be of little utility. Recent neighborhood-level surveys by the

Brookdale Institute show that few people who attended the courses are working today, or worked in the past, in the occupation they had learned or in any occupation approximating it (see, for example, King and Efrati, 2001: 9). Notably, nonimmigrant Israelis also use vocational training courses, at least in some cases, more as refuges from temporary unemployment than as a way to integrate into the labor market.

One occupational field deserves special attention: well-educated Ethiopian Israelis who work in government offices, municipal authorities, and non-profit organizations that offer assistance to the Ethiopian community. As we have shown, this is the only group of employed Ethiopian Israelis that has managed to gain a foothold in the Israeli middle class. Unless these government programs and community-level non-profit organizations continue to operate for at least the next few years, this foothold will not last. In view of the importance of this group (at both the leadership and the symbolic levels) as a model for additional young people, the continued existence of this occupational field, if not its expansion, should be assured.

Finally, the importance of government investment in education should be noted. Among Ethiopian Israelis, like among Israelis generally, people with a college education have a higher labor force participation rate than the population at large and few find it difficult to support their families on their labor income. Therefore, the various assistance and reinforcement programs in education, discussed in the next section, should be sustained if not expanded considerably.

Education

“The Lost Jews”

The Israeli education system determined where Ethiopian Israeli youngsters would go to school long before their arrival. In 1973, Rabbi Ovadia Yossef ruled that the “Falashas,” as they were called then, are “Jews who must be rescued [...] rushed to Israel, and educated in the spirit of our holy Torah” (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 202). In the aftermath of this ruling, the Law of Return was applied to this community and official actions to bring Ethiopian Jewry to Israel began (ibid.: 202—203). Even earlier, in the 1950s, the World Zionist Organization Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora numbered Ethiopian Jewry among the *nidhei Yisrael* (“the lost Jews”) (ibid.: 202), a categorization used primarily in reference to Jewish communities in Asian and African countries.

In the early 1950s, a sharp conflict arose over which education system would enroll the offspring of immigrants from Arab countries. The two religious education systems in Israel, the State Religious (founded by the Mizrahi movement, forerunner of the National Religious Party) and the Independent (founded by the ultraorthodox Agudath Israel) vied for the right to educate these youngsters in their schools. Both systems argued that religious schools would meet the children’s needs more effectively than the secular state schools, since Jews in the Arab sphere had lived in “traditional societies” and the majority of them were religiously observant.

The conflict between the State Religious and the ultraorthodox school systems over who would get the pupils from Arab countries led to a severe political crisis that ended in 1953 with a compromise among the political parties involved. The settlement awarded large segments of the new student population to the State Religious system and to the ultraorthodox system (see Swirski, 1991: 38 - 42). This outcome strengthened both systems’ claim that the children of Jews from Asian and African countries “belonged” to them.

“The Lost Jews”

Property of the National Religious Party

The partisan strife of the 1950s makes it clear how it came about that, when the decision to bring over

Ethiopian Jewry was made two decades later, “Everyone who dealt with this community saw clearly that the provision of religious education [...] is the basis for returning [the community] to Judaism and bringing it to the State of Israel” (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 203). When Operation Moses, the first of the two large influxes from Ethiopia, began, “It was decided, with the informed consent of the Prime Minister at the time, Menachem Begin, that all Ethiopian immigrant children would be referred to the State Religious system in the first years of their acculturation” (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 203). This decision was formalized in a coalition agreement between the Likud and the National Religious Party without any consultation with the Ethiopian Israeli community (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, *Stepchildren of the Education System*, 1995: 30). Uri Gordon, head of the Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah Department, supported the decision (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 203).

Unlike the case of immigrant children from Arab countries in the 1950s, education institutions associated with the National Religious Party had a monopoly on those from Ethiopia. The ultraorthodox system did not compete for the new pupil population “because its rabbis took issue with the ruling that defined ‘Falashas’ as Jews and that required them to undergo only a downscaled, ‘just-to-be-sure’ conversion procedure” (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 204); they did not consider them real Jews.

Furthermore, in contrast to the 1950s, when the Labor Movement and the two religious systems vied for the enrollment of immigrant children from Arab countries, in the 1980s, the State secular system (successor to the Labor Movement system, among others) stepped aside and, without putting up any resistance of consequence, allowed the State Religious system to enroll the Ethiopian immigrant children.

Integration by Dispersion

The government’s policy regarding Ethiopian immigrants in the education system was typified by the declared intent of “integrating” them mainly by dispersing them in small groups among the nonimmigrant population. As we showed in previous chapters, the integration-by-dispersion goal runs like a

thread through most government documents about Ethiopian Jews. In education, the dispersion policy was manifested in guidelines to prevent Ethiopian pupils from constituting more than 25 percent of enrollment in any class (State Comptroller, 1998: 335). The dispersion goal was deemed so important that the Ministry of Education made an extraordinary ruling: wherever large concentrations of Ethiopian pupils amassed, they would be bused to schools outside their places of residence (or referred to state secular schools, if their parents so preferred) (ibid.).

Notably, the education system's commitment to dispersing the immigrant pupils stemmed in part from practical administrative motives. Since the immigrant students needed special attention in respect to language, as well as other scholastic fields, the system wished to keep them from becoming a heavy burden on the system. The education system hardly departed from its routine patterns of activity in preparation for these immigrants, the idea being, evidently, that dispersion would enable it to avoid crises.

The education system might have absorbed these immigrants more effectively had it deviated from its routine. For example, concentrating the Ethiopian pupils, at least in the first phases, might have been advantageous for their integration. It might have pressured the education system to allocate special teaching resources (such as experienced teachers with special training or training of teachers from the Ethiopian community) or to base studies on the immigrant children's language and the community's historical and cultural narrative, in order to create scholastic contents with which students could identify and a learning climate based on a sense of community.

Concentration and Tracking

In contrast to its declared goal - integration reflected in dispersion - at the practical level the education system created a very high level of concentration of Ethiopian Israelis in a small number of settings.

The decision to refer all youth of Ethiopian origin to the State Religious system automatically confined them to a small number of schools. In 1980, shortly before Operation Moses, only 19.4 percent of all primary-level pupils and 22.2 percent of all high-school students were attending the State Religious system

(CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 1981: Table 22/17). In 1990, shortly before Operation Moses, this system, now reinforced by the Ethiopian immigrants from Operation Moses, had 21.2 percent of primary enrollment and 18.4 percent of secondary enrollment (CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1990: Table 22/18). In 2000, shortly before this report was written (and after the education system had admitted tens of thousands of pupils from the former Soviet Union, most of whom joined the State system), the State Religious system constituted 19.2 percent of primary enrollment and 18.2 percent of secondary enrollment (CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 2000: Table 22/16). The referral of youngsters of Ethiopian extraction to the State Religious system created a long-term trend. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics for the 1998/99 school year show that this system was attended by 73.9 percent of all pupils of Ethiopian extraction that year, compared to 18.9 percent of Israeli children at large. Some 25 percent of Ethiopian Israeli youngsters attended school in the State system and only 0.4 percent were enrolled in ultraorthodox schools (CBS, 2001 [D]: Table 6).

Education Ministry figures for October 1999 show a similar picture: of 14,523 school-age children who emigrated from Ethiopia after January 1980, nearly three-fourths - 10,367, or 71.4 percent - attended State Religious schools (calculation made from Ministry of Education, 2000: 13 - 14).

Notably, the high concentration of Ethiopian Israeli pupils in the State Religious system has been a long-term impediment to attempts to consider and make changes, because the State Religious Education Division has such a degree of autonomy within the Education Ministry that it has been called a "ministry within a ministry." As soon as the Ethiopian Israeli youngsters became part of the Division's "empire," Ministry officials who were not affiliated with the National Religious Party found it difficult to intervene, and any issue related to the education of youngsters of Ethiopian extraction led to intra-ministerial political tension (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 1995: 30 - 31).

The referral of Ethiopian Israeli youngsters to the State Religious system is only the beginning of the story. Within the system itself, Ethiopian youth are channeled

into only certain parts of it, especially its boarding schools. As early as Operation Moses in 1984, a decision had already been made to refer all Ethiopian immigrants aged 12 - 17 to the religious boarding schools affiliated with Youth Aliyah (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 204). In Israel, most boarding schools belong to the religious education systems, including the ultraorthodox one. In 1989, two-thirds of boarding schools belonged to the religious and ultraorthodox school systems, and more than three-fourths of these were affiliated with the State Religious system (Weil, 1997: 48).

Since the 1980s, Ethiopian Israelis have become an important component in Israel's boarding school population. In 1999, 3,508 of them were enrolled in such schools, and they constituted 31 percent of the 11,366 youngsters who attended boarding schools countrywide (Ministry of Education, 2000: 52; the reference is to pupils placed in boarding schools inspected by the Rural Settlement Education Division of the Ministry).

Thus boarding school education became typical of the secondary schooling of young Ethiopian Israelis. According to a comprehensive survey in 1997, 62 percent of Ethiopian Israeli boys aged 15 - 18 and 44 percent of girls attended boarding schools (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998: 45). Notably, in recent years fewer Ethiopian Israelis have been attending boarding schools and more have been enrolled in neighborhood schools; the numbers in the former category declined from about 5,200 in 1991 to 4,200 in 1997 (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 1998: 10) and to 3,508 in 1999.

Within the matrix of State Religious boarding schools, Ethiopian Israelis are sent to only a small number of institutions. Elbaum and Weinstein, reporting on the enrollment of young people who immigrated to Israel in Operation Moses in boarding schools, speak of "the religious boarding schools and youth villages to which the Ethiopian immigrants were referred" - reflecting the fact that the Ethiopian youth were sent to certain schools only (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 204). The same researchers reported that "Large concentrations of Ethiopian immigrant students have formed. In several youth villages, 80 - 90 percent of the pupils are immigrants from Ethiopia. At Hofim boarding school,

all the students are from Ethiopia" (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 205).

The pattern persisted in later years. A comprehensive study by the Brookdale Institute found that 55 percent of Ethiopian Israeli boarding students attended classes in which more than 25 percent of pupils were from Ethiopia, one third attended classes in the 25 - 50 percent range, 17 percent attended classes with an Ethiopian majority, and 5 percent attended all-Ethiopian classes (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998: 20). High concentrations of Ethiopian Israeli pupils were more typical of boarding schools than of other schools attended by Ethiopian Israeli pupils (*ibid.*: 23). The last aspect of the concentration phenomenon concerns the program of study: a large proportion of youngsters from Ethiopia were channeled to vocational programs. A follow-up study on young people who finished high school in the late 1980s found that most were referred to boarding schools of middle or low prestige and that 70 percent of them were enrolled in vocational programs (Weil, 1997: 50). Ten years later, in the 1998/99 school year, it was found that 2,206 of the 4,940 Ethiopian-born students who attended schools at the senior high level (46.4 percent) were enrolled in technological/vocational programs, compared to 32.4 percent of the Israel-born. By adding the 681 students who were enrolled in agricultural programs, which are vocational for all intents and purposes, we arrive at a total proportion of 60.7 percent of Ethiopian Israelis studying in vocational tracks, compared to 33.3 percent of the Israel-born students (CBS, 2001 [D]: Table 7). Boys were more likely to take vocational or agricultural programs than girls, at 70.1 percent and 51.3 percent, respectively (*ibid.*).

Boarding School Education and Community Disintegration

The referral of young Ethiopian Israelis to boarding schools not only helped to concentrate them in specific programs of study in a small number of institutions, in contravention of the official goal of dispersion; it also had far-reaching effects on the Ethiopian Israeli family and community.

The practice of referral to boarding schools has marginalized the role of Ethiopian Israeli parents in the shaping of their children's education. At the beginning

of Operation Moses, when a large proportion of children arrived parentless, referral to boarding schools was a reasonable option. However, when it became standard operating procedure for all youngsters of Ethiopian extraction, it amounted to a tacit statement by the state: we are depriving parents of Ethiopian origin of their status as the agents responsible for raising and educating their children and taking over this responsibility ourselves.

Boarding school education need not be the result of coercion; sometimes communities choose it as a way of educating their youth. Ruling classes and religious communities, such as the British nobility and various Christian denominations established boarding schools to give their future leaderships a controlled generational form of training. In Israel, the Labor Movement adopted this practice by founding agricultural boarding schools and the National Religious Party leadership did so by establishing high school yeshivas. In the case of the Ethiopian Israeli youngsters, however, the almost universal extent of referral to boarding schools, carried out at the state level, is reminiscent of a different use of these institutions. Examples that come to mind are those established by colonial regimes in Third World countries to train a pro-colonial local elite and those that Native American youngsters were forced to attend after the American army defeated their nations (Adams, 1995). Closer to home, the referral of Ethiopian Israeli youth to boarding schools brings to mind the referral of *Mizrahi* (from Arab or North African countries) youth to boarding schools in the 1960s, in order to train a Mizrahi elite in the spirit of the values of the old-time state leadership, in the process cutting them off from their parents' community.

Boarding school education has transformed the Ethiopian immigrant parents into a "desert generation" whom the education system disregards in its effort to assure the social "integration" of the young generation. The disengagement between boarding schools and parents first took shape at the time when many young people reached the country without their parents. However, even when the boarding schools began to enroll youngsters whose parents had immigrated with them, problems arose: "Even with 'normative' families [those with two parents—S. S.], it was difficult to maintain an educational process due to difficulties of

language, communication, travel, and busing to school (loss of work days, large financial outlays under conditions of hardship, and difficulties in familiarity with transport arrangements to distant locations)" (Elbaum and Weinstein, 1997: 212).

By skipping over the "desert generation," the education system sent Ethiopian Israeli youth a tacit message: they, and not their parents, ranked at the forefront of Israel's community of Ethiopian extraction. Indeed, most activists in organizations for Ethiopian Israelis are young. This is another aspect of the disintegration of the traditional community structure, on top of the other disintegrative conditions that accompanied the move from Ethiopia to Israel. Eli Amir, former head of Youth Aliyah, wrote about this in a memorandum to the Director General of the Ministry of Education: "The sweeping removal of children from their families sends the parents from Ethiopia [the message] that they are unfit and incapable of caring for their children This message sends the children [a message]: their parents cannot take care of them and cannot be responsible for raising them. Thus, it causes irreparable harm to the image of father, mother, and family. In a broader sense, we are saying that we have despaired of their parents and are taking their children away" (quoted from Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 1995: 15).

The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews commented, in this context, that "Throughout the history of Israeli society, no [other] community has experienced such a separation of so many of its young people. The massive displacement of Ethiopian young people has dealt the structure of the family in the community a severe blow, with grave implications for the community's future" (Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, 1995: 14). Importantly, young Ethiopian Israelis themselves take a dim view of the policy of referring them to residential schools. In a follow-up study of Ethiopian Israeli youngsters who attended high school in 1987 - 1989, conducted in 1995 - 1996, 71.5 percent of respondents expressed opposition to enrolling their children in boarding schools (Weil, 1997: 102). The object of their disapproval was the very fact of attending boarding schools, not the religious nature of most of the boarding schools that Ethiopian Israeli pupils attended. Indeed, 55 percent expressed willingness to enroll their children in religious schools (ibid.: 105).

Ethiopian Israeli Pupils in the Education System

By the 1980s, when Ethiopian Jews began to immigrate to Israel, there was already a strong correspondence between the level of education provided by a school and the socio-economic level of residents of the locality or neighborhood served by the school. As our chapter on housing showed, most Ethiopian Israelis settled in poor neighborhoods and localities and, accordingly, sent their children to schools that, for the most part, were typified by a low scholastic level. Furthermore, Ethiopian Israeli pupils integrated into an education system that had become severely unequal. In the past two decades, school resources in disadvantaged neighborhoods, development towns, and Arab localities have been decreasing in relative terms, due to the erosion of education budgets, on the one hand, and the spreading of “gray education” on the other. Under “gray education,” schools in affluent neighborhoods build up their resources gradually by charging co-payments, while schools where parents cannot afford this have to make do with the Ministry of Education’s eroding budgets. Consequently, Ethiopian Israeli pupils found themselves in the same boat with large groups of nonimmigrant Israeli youngsters whose relative status in the education system was steadily losing ground.

In October 1999, a total of 14,523 students who had immigrated from Ethiopia after January 1980 were enrolled in the education system - 6,322 in primary schools, 3,985 at the junior high level, and 4,122 in senior high. Nearly three-fourths of them (71.4 percent) were in the State Religious system (computed from Ministry of Education, 2000: 13 - 14; for CBS data for the 1998/99 school year, see CBS, 2001 [D]: 17). According to November 2000 data, about two-thirds (65 percent) of pupils of Ethiopian extraction were concentrated in six localities: Netanya, Rehovot, Beersheva, Ashkelon, Hadera, and Ashdod (Ministry of Education, 2001: 10).

Primary Schooling

In February 1994, shortly after Operation Solomon, the Brookdale Institute examined the preparations made by primary schools to receive some 5,000 new pupils from Ethiopia (Lifschitz and Noam, 1995). The study was

conducted in forty-eight primary schools countrywide, in which 2,960 immigrants were enrolled, and focused on professionals: principals, teachers, immigrant-absorption coordinators, counselors, and psychologists. The inquiry showed that 75 percent of the new students attended integrated classes (immigrants and nonimmigrants together) and the rest attended classes made up of immigrants only. A large majority of schools received the package of auxiliary resources that the Ministry of Education had put together for Ethiopian pupils (see below). However, youngsters in immigrant classes received less assistance than their counterparts in integrated classes. Furthermore, only 10 percent of teachers in integrated classes, compared to 50 percent of teachers in immigrant classes, were aware of the existence of curricula that had been tailored to the immigrant pupils’ needs. About 60 percent of immigrant pupils were in the lowest track in Hebrew and arithmetic.

A parallel survey among counselors and psychologists in these schools (Kleiman and Lifschitz, 1995) found that no special preparations had been made for the professionals who were to assist the immigrants. Most counselors and psychologists devoted only a few hours a week to counseling functions. Few respondents reported that their working hours were increased so that they could devote more time to new immigrants - though the Ethiopian immigrant pupils were referred to counselors at a higher rate than the student body at large. The interviewees reported that they felt they needed additional guidance and in-service training so that they would be able to diagnose the pupils’ problems more effectively.

Secondary Schooling

In 1997, the Brookdale Institute conducted a comprehensive survey of Ethiopian Israeli youngsters studying in high schools. The survey was based on a sample of 850 students (out of 10,200 in the 12 - 18 age group), 360 students’ mothers, thirty-one principals, and some 1,300 teachers (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998).

The researchers found that many young people in the sample had graduated from Israeli primary schools with low scholastic levels and that quite a few of them had entered junior high with poorer scholastic

achievements than those of their classmates (ibid.: 17). In post-primary schools, some youngsters were referred to vocational programs and tracks (ibid.: 17). Teaching staff lacked the tools to cope with the Ethiopian Israeli pupils' unique difficulties, and parents could hardly help their children (ibid.: 17). A large majority of youngsters reported having difficulties in English. Of the 60 percent of students who reported that their schools had tracking in English and mathematics, 65 percent stated that they were in low tracks in English and 75 percent in low tracks in mathematics (ibid.: 26). A generalized discussion of Ethiopian Israeli pupils' achievements may give the impression of across-the-board failure. In fact, there is considerable variance within the group. Many do very well; when asked to rate their Ethiopian Israeli students, teachers ranked 27 percent as successful in mathematics and 32 percent as successful in Hebrew, with "success" defined as grades of 80 or more. In the teachers' opinions, these students' scholastic integration has gone very well (ibid., 89). However, the teachers also singled out a large group of failures: 32 percent in mathematics and 19 percent in Hebrew. Simple arithmetic shows that the percent of successful students in Hebrew far surpassed the percent of failures.

The authors of the study noted several changes in the educational policy concerning Ethiopian Israeli students: (1) enrollment in neighborhood schools had become more frequent, instead of almost "automatic" referral to boarding schools (ibid.: 1); (2) more youngsters, when referred to boarding schools, were placed in schools with higher scholastic level offering matriculation programs (ibid.: 1). The researchers found a higher proportion of students preparing for matriculation exams that would qualify them for a matriculation certificate (a prerequisite for college study) among boarding school students than among those in neighborhood schools (ibid.: 21).

Passing Matriculation Exams

At the high-school level, there is a recognized indicator of achievement: the proportion of students who pass the matriculation exams and obtain matriculation certificates. There are other indicators as well, including the proportion of twelfth grade students who pass the matriculation exams, the number of students

enrolled in the twelfth grade, and the proportion of twelfth graders who take the exams.

Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics for the 1998/99 school year show the following: 70.2 percent of 1,435 Ethiopian-born twelfth-graders that year took the matriculation exams and 42.2 percent of those who took the exams passed. Thus, 29.6 percent of the twelfth-graders - 425 students - obtained matriculation certificates (CBS, 2001 [D]: 18). The Ministry of Education furnished us with almost identical data. (See Table 18 below.) Notably, 52 percent of twelfth-graders born in Israel and 56.9 percent of those born in the former Soviet Union obtained matriculation certificates that year (ibid.: 18).

The highest rate of Ethiopian-born twelfth-graders in preparatory courses for matriculation was found in the academic track, where 95 percent sat for the exams. In the vocational track, only 41.8 percent of twelfth-graders took the exams. However, both groups had similar passing rates: 41.8 percent and 41.5 percent, respectively (ibid.: Table 17). Among twelfth-graders in the agriculture track, 92.2 percent took the examinations but only 37.3 percent passed (ibid.).

The State Religious schools that most Ethiopian-born pupils attend seem to have a better record, generally speaking, than the State schools in which a minority of Ethiopian Israelis is enrolled. Among 705 twelfth-graders of Ethiopian extraction in the State Religious system in 1998/99, 71 percent took the matriculation examinations and 49 percent of them passed. In contrast, only 58 percent of 250 twelfth-graders in the State system took the tests and only 16 percent of them passed (ibid.: Table 21). Thus, 91 percent of Ethiopian Israelis who obtained matriculation certificates at the end of twelfth grade came from the State Religious system and, in particular, from this system's boarding schools. These figures seem consistent with the foregoing general description of the quality of schools in most neighborhoods where Israeli Ethiopians have settled.

Ethiopian Israelis' achievements have been rising over the past decade. Based on data produced by the Ministry of Education, a Brookdale Institute research team reported an increase in the number of students attending schools that prepare students for the matriculation exams: from 480 in 1993 to 1,454 in 1997 (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998: 29). Data

prepared for the Adva Center by the Ministry of Education for the 1995 - 2000 period point to a steady long-term increase in the number of students obtaining matriculation certificates: from 159 in 1995 to 294 in 1997 and more than 400 in each subsequent year (see table below). The percentage of twelfth-graders who passed the exams climbed from 20 - 23 percent in 1996 and 1997 to 31 - 32 percent in 1999 and 2000. The most meaningful statistic is neither the proportion of twelfth-graders passing the matriculation exams nor the proportion of twelfth-graders taking the exams, but rather the proportion of those who pass the exams out of the total number of seventeen year-olds. This is because many teenagers drop out before twelfth grade. Unfortunately, there are no figures available on how many seventeen-year-old Ethiopian Israelis there were in each of the years shown in Table 18.

Table 18. Number of Ethiopian Israelis Passing the Matriculation Exams and the Proportion of Students Passing of All Students Taking the Exams, 1995 - 2000

	Students Passing Exams	Students Passing the Exams as a Proportion of Students Taking the Exams
1995	159	30.7%
1996	241	38.8%
1997	294	29.6%
1998	420	39.1%
1999	467	43.9%
2000	437	42.7%

Note: The twelfth-grade population includes students in tenth and eleventh grades who took at least one matriculation exam.
Source: Ministry of Education, memorandum, August 30, 2001.

Another important aspect to consider in studying the matriculation data is the quality of the certificate earned. At least some Ethiopian Israelis, it seems, earn poor-quality certificates that lessen their prospects of admission to institutes of higher learning. The Brookdale Institute's comprehensive survey showed that in all schools that prepared students to take the mathematics exam, the level of study was three units (just enough to meet the minimum requirement of higher education institutes). Only two pupils in two schools took the test at the highest (five-unit) level (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998: 100). The authors of the survey report noted that "Whereas a large share of these young people (65%) is enrolled in programs of study that lead to matriculation certificates, about one-third of eleventh - and twelfth-graders (35 percent) report that they are to be tested on fewer than twenty-one units, i.e., fewer than the number necessary for a full matriculation certificate" (ibid.: 176). The authors added, "In view of the current patterns of enrollment in tracks leading to full matriculation, no meaningful improvement in the proportion of youth of Ethiopian extraction passing the matriculation exams should be expected. Importantly, the main obstacle is not the program of study in which they are enrolled but the actual number of units on which they are to be tested" (ibid.: 194).

The Ministry of Education's Assistance Policy

In the 1960s and 1970s, the education system developed two main ways of tackling personal or group differences in scholastic achievements. One is tracking, which separates pupils who meet normative requirements from those who do not at an early phase, the primary level. The pupils who are not up to par are placed in low tracks in primary and junior high school. At the senior high level, they are enrolled in vocational schools or classes that teach matriculation subjects at a low achievement level. The second method is a set of assistance programs for youngsters defined as "disadvantaged." For years, this assistance was based on an ethnic key: a youngster was diagnosed as "disadvantaged" if his/her father was born in Asia or Africa, had many children, and had few years of schooling. In 1994, the definition was revised to reflect a socioeconomic basis and a new index was developed

for this purpose.

The main form of assistance for the disadvantaged is an allotment of extra teaching hours for schools attended by pupils defined as disadvantaged. The Ministry of Education has also developed assistance programs that target the disadvantaged directly, including enrichment for preschool and primary school, preparation for matriculation exams, etc.

As we have seen, most Ethiopian students found themselves in schools that have long served pupils who are routinely defined as “disadvantaged.” For this reason, the Ethiopian Israeli youngsters fit “naturally” into existing bureaucratic categories and, consequently, were offered the usual assistance plans. As the Brookdale Institute researchers noted, “As a rule, services for adolescents of Ethiopian origin are delivered by existing entities and new entities were not developed for this purpose” (Lifschitz, Noam, and Segal, 1997: 4). The education system neither developed new ways of helping Ethiopian Israelis nor even saw fit to examine the efficacy of the methods that had been in use since the 1960s and the 1970s. This happened even though it was quite obvious by the time the Ethiopian immigrants arrived that these methods were not narrowing the achievement gaps that had developed between pupils in affluent neighborhoods and their counterparts in poor neighborhoods, development towns, and Arab localities.

In addition to general assistance for the “disadvantaged,” from which all students at schools attended by Ethiopian Israelis benefit, the schools get an extra allotment of teaching hours. The basis for this increment is the designation of a pupil as an “immigrant.” Ordinarily, the Ministry of Education defines newcomers as immigrants for four years, starting from the September first after their immigration. However, the term of eligibility was extended for Ethiopian Israelis who came in Operation Solomon (1991). Ministry of Education data for 2000 show that some 80 percent of immigrants from Ethiopia were eligible for the extra quota (Ministry of Education, 2000: 13). The Brookdale Institute’s comprehensive survey (1997) found that these immigrant pupils were continuing to benefit from this definition as of the writing of the survey report (Lifschitz, Noam, and Segal, 1997: 4).

A school attended by an Ethiopian immigrant is eligible for 1.75 extra weekly teaching hours on his/her account. An immigrant teenager in eleventh or twelfth grade who takes three matriculation exams or more entitles his/her school to one additional weekly teaching hour. These extra teaching hours are credited to the school directly and are used at the principal’s discretion (*ibid.*: 4). The principal may choose among six models: (1) teaching a group of immigrants or an individual immigrant outside of the main class setting; (2) bringing an additional teacher into the classroom; (3) providing an immigrant or a group of immigrants with after-school remedial activities; (4) establishing a separate class (“absorption class”) in all or some subjects; (5) pooling all the extra hours and allocating them in accordance with the needs of an individual or a small group; and (6) allocating teaching hours for tracking, in which nonimmigrant students also take part (Ministry of Education, 2001: 15).

The allotment of extra hours is significant, especially for schools that have a large Ethiopian Israeli student population. Still, it cannot enable such schools to catch up with affluent schools of long standing. As we have shown, most schools attended by Ethiopian Israelis are poor in resources; the targeted aid they receive for taking in Ethiopian Israelis does not suffice to make major changes.

The Ministry of Education also covers a portion of schools’ expenses for textbooks, outings, school supplies, etc., for pupils who immigrated in the past three years. By so doing, the Ministry assumes a burden that parents normally cover as part of their compulsory co-payment. In 2001, the Ministry’s remittance for immigrants, known in the jargon as the “absorption benefits package,” was NIS 626 per pupil at the primary level, NIS 907 per pupil in junior high, and NIS 1,125 per high school student (for those who immigrated between September 1999 and August 2000) (Ministry of Education, 2001: 16).

Ethiopian Israeli pupils are placed in various programs that schools in low-income areas offer as a matter of course. Examples are after-hours care in family settings or in school, HORIM (enrichment and nurturing for parents of children from preschool age up); MENA (an anti-dropout program), and OMETZ (development of self-confidence, perseverance, and expectation of achievements), for junior-high graduates whose grades

fall short of the requirements of high schools that prepare students for the matriculation exams. Ethiopian Israeli students also participate in assistance programs that aim to enhance their prospects of passing the matriculation exams: MABAR, which readies pupils for matriculation by facilitating study in small classes and imparting scholastic skills; “Second Chance,” geared for those who passed only some matriculation exams; and MICHAEL, which teaches scholastic skills of use in preparing for the exams (Lifschitz, Noam, and Segal, 1997: 5 - 6).

Finally, the Ministry of Education gives students from Ethiopia, like immigrants from other countries, special dispensations on the exams themselves: (1) the right to take some exams orally, (2) the option of being tested in several subjects according to a special school-level syllabus for immigrants (upon approval of the inspector) or an external syllabus, and (3) the right to an extra ten points plus additional time to complete the standard exam. Ethiopian immigrant students may also be tested on their native language as though it were their first foreign language and may use a dictionary (Lifschitz, Noam, and Segal, 1997: 5).

In January 2000, a committee chaired by Dr. Gad Avikasis, Senior Deputy Director General for Administration and Human Resources at the Ministry of Education, submitted a report about the special programs for Ethiopian Israeli pupils (Ministry of Education, 2000). The committee recommended several changes in the implementation of these programs and a long-term budget increase for several additional programs, the most expensive of which concerned dropout prevention, preparation for higher studies, and a set of assistance activities. The total budget that the committee recommended for these programs was NIS 31.75 million. To view this sum - a long-term increment, as noted - in proportion, one need only note that it is equivalent to the extra budget (i.e., that exceeding the Ministry’s regular allocation) that just one prestigious high school - Herzliya Gymnasium in Tel Aviv - raises *each year* (*Ha’aretz*, May 9, 2001).

Over-referral to Special Education

It seems that an especially large number of Ethiopian Israeli youngsters are referred to special education, either in separate schools or in separate classes in

regular schools. Special education is meant for “a person of three to twenty-one years of age who, due to faulty development of physical, intellectual, psychological, or behavioral fitness, is limited in his/her ability to adjust and requires special education” (Special Education Act, 5748—1988). Although this definition leaves no doubt that special education is for exceptional cases only, referrals of ordinary children, mostly from minority or socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, have been known to occur due to misdiagnosis or misinterpretation of the letter and spirit of the law. In many cases, referral to special education is used, improperly, to cope with children who have adjustment difficulties stemming from class or ethnic factors. For years, over-referral to special education has been a typical feature of schools in poor urban neighborhoods and development towns. The published statistics on Ethiopian Israeli pupils in special education show large discrepancies. For example, figures for the 1997/98 school year ranged from 472 pupils to 852. Assuming that most referrals to special education occur at the primary level, and assuming that there were approximate 6,000 Ethiopian Israelis in primary schools in 1997/98, we calculate the rate of referral at a high proportion — 8 - 14 percent. In May 2000, the Network for the Advancement of Education of Ethiopian Israelis presented detailed documentation on errors in diagnosis and placement to a committee that examined the implementation of the Special Education Act, chaired by Professor Malka Margalit (Network for the Advancement of Education of Ethiopian Israelis, 2000).

How Many Ethiopian Israelis Are in “Special Ed”?

In the course of one school year, 1997/98, several agencies released a variety of figures about the number of Ethiopian Israelis in special education:

The State Comptroller’s Report for 1998 found 852 - 461 in special-education schools and the rest in special-education classes in regular schools.

Ruth Penn, director of the Special Education Division, reported 613 (letter to the Public Committee on Quality Education (HILA), December 15, 1997).

Dr. Gad Avikasis, Senior Deputy Director General for Administration and Human Resources at the Ministry of Education, placed the figure at 472 (letter to

Network for the Advancement of Education of Ethiopian Israelis, May 21, 1998).

The director of the Computer Administration at the Ministry of Education spoke of 588 (letter from Yigal Duchan to Dr. Gad Avikasis, October 14, 1998 - Network for the Advancement of Education of Ethiopian Israelis, 2000).

High Dropout Rates

The disengagement of boarding school pupils from their families, the general lack of communication between Ethiopian Israeli parents and school teachers and administrations, and the use of tracking - have led to a sense of low expectations - and to high dropout rates among Ethiopian Israeli students (ELEM, 1994). The Brookdale Institute's comprehensive survey (1997) found that 6 percent of Ethiopian Israelis aged 14 - 17 — 9 percent of boys and 4 percent of girls — had dropped out of school, twice the dropout rate of the Jewish population at large (Lifschitz, Noam, and Habib, 1998: 55). A Ministry of Education report prepared by Dr. Gad Avikasis' committee reported that 798 of 14,523 Ethiopian Israeli pupils in the education system dropped out in 1999, mostly from boarding schools. The dropouts comprised 5.5 percent of the Ethiopian Israeli pupil population (Ministry of Education, January 2000: 56).

The CBS has released statistics on dropouts from grades 9 - 11 who immigrated to Israel in 1990 - 1995 and 1996 - 1999. For students who immigrated in the earlier period, the dropout rate in grades 9 - 11 was 5.4 percent, a level almost identical to that cited by the Avikasis Committee and only slightly lower than that found in the Brookdale Institute survey. Notably, this rate was lower than that of dropouts from the former Soviet Union - 7.6 percent (CBS, 2001 [B]: Table 9). In contrast, the dropout rate among youngsters who reached Israel between 1996 and 1999 was 16.5 percent, and the rate for ninth-grade pupils was especially high, at 26.6 percent (ibid.).

Higher Education

Over the past decade, more and more Ethiopian Israelis have been attending accredited institutions of higher learning. According to the Association for the Advancement of Education, which runs pre-academic

preparatory programs, one reason for the increase was a decision by the "immigrant absorption cabinet" in 1992 to grant Ethiopian Israelis government assistance for 5 - 6 years of study after compulsory schooling (Association for the Advancement of Education, memorandum, January 23, 2002). The decision, the initiative of the ministers of Immigrant Absorption and Education at the time, Yair Tsaban and Amnon Rubinstein, may be viewed as a higher education counterpart to the decision to give Ethiopian immigrant households generous mortgages for home purchase. Following the decision, several academic institutions set up special preparatory programs for Ethiopian Israelis, pre-academic programs relaxed their admissions criteria, and large financial subsidies were awarded: full tuition for five or six years; a monthly stipend; rent subsidy; funding for tutoring, psychometric courses, and textbooks (ibid.). Most Ethiopian Israelis do not go directly from high school to college. As noted above, many earn matriculation certificates that do not meet the admissions criteria of Israeli universities. Accordingly, those who wish to attend such institutions must improve their scores and/or make up scores that their certificates lack. Most students of Ethiopian extraction in Israel embark on academic studies only after taking a pre-academic program (see Lifschitz and Noam, 1996: 18). The Association for the Advancement of Education offers two main types of preparatory programs: programs affiliated with universities, which prepare students for higher education and award the equivalent of a matriculation certificate for the purpose of university admission, and programs run by accredited and teachers' colleges, which are longer in duration and amount to "pre-preparatory" settings (CBS, 1998: 9). In 1998, more than 11,000 students were enrolled in some forty preparatory programs (ibid.). The following table shows the number of Ethiopian Israeli students in preparatory programs - those run by the Association for the Advancement of Education, including those affiliated with universities. By comparing the data in the table with data on first-year university students (see below), we find that most Ethiopian Israelis who take pre-academic programs do advance to university studies.

Table 19: Ethiopian Israeli Students in Preparatory Programs Run by the Association for the Advancement of Education, 2000 - 2002

Year	Students in all programs	Thereof: in university preparatory programs
2000	950	132
2001	900	137
2002	855	116

Note: 1. The figure for students in all programs in 2002 does not include admissions to January classes.
 2. The figures for students in university-affiliated programs includes students at Machon Lev-Jerusalem College of Technology: 31 in 2000, 46 in 2001, and 21 in 2002.

Source: Association for the Advancement of Education, January 23, 2002.

The next two tables refer to the population of Ethiopian Israelis who attend universities and accredited colleges. The data concerning universities are for 1994 and 1999; those on accredited colleges pertain to 1996 and 1999.

As the tables show, the number of first-year university students doubled between 1994 and 1999 from 82 to 176.

In 1994, only one university - Haifa - had a relatively large number of students of Ethiopian extraction. By 1999, it had been joined by Bar-Ilan University and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. In both years, few Ethiopian Israelis attended at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University. In both years, over 80 percent of students were majoring in the humanities or the social sciences. In 1999, the proportion of other population groups in these two majors were 55.7 percent of total Israeli students; 55.5 percent of Jewish students; and 59.3 percent of "students of other religions," most of whom are Arab. In their large concentration in social sciences and humanities, Ethiopian Israelis are more like Mizrahi students (65.2 percent) than Ashkenazi students (51.1 percent). The group most similar to the Ethiopians in terms of concentration in these two fields are the Druze, 75.6 percent of whom study humanities or social science (all data from CBS, 2001 [C]: Table 21). The table also shows that the number of doctoral students doubled during the 1994 - 1999 period. Since the number of masters' students is negligible and did not increase over that period, the doctoral candidates

evidently obtained their masters' degrees in Ethiopia or, in any case, outside of Israel.

Ethiopian Israeli enrollment in accredited colleges has increased perceptibly, but it should be borne in mind that these colleges did not become a meaningful option for young people in Israel until the late 1990s. In 1999, fifty-nine Ethiopian Israelis attended accredited colleges, thirty-three of them as first-year students. Most of them were majoring in technological sciences; a smaller group was studying social sciences.

Table 20: Ethiopian Israeli Students by Degree, Institution, and Major, 1994

	Total	Degree				
		Bachelor's		Master's	Doctorate	Certificate
		Total	Thereof, first year			
Total	153	127	82	1	17	8
Institution						
Hebrew University	20	7	3	-	8	5
Technion	3	3	1			
Tel Aviv University	15	9	1	-	4	2
Bar-Ilan University	29	24	7	1	3	1
Haifa University	66	65	61	-	1	-
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev	19	19	9	-	-	-
Weizmann Institute of Science	1	-	-	-	1	-
Major						
Humanities	56	50	38	1	4	1
Social sciences	67	56	33	-	11	-
Law	1	1	1	-	-	-
Medicine	3	2	-	-	-	1
Paramedical fields	9	9	6	-	-	-
Natural sciences	7	4	2	-	2	1
Agriculture						
Engineering and architecture	5	5	2	-	-	-
Other	5	-	-	-	-	5

Note: Plus 39 students in 1994.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, memorandum, August 12, 2001.

Table 21: Ethiopian Israeli Students by Degree, Institution, and Major, 1999

	Total	Degree				
		Bachelor's		Master's	Doctorate	Certificate
		Total	Thereof, first year			
Total	553	478	176	2	39	34
Institution						
Hebrew University	21	12	5	-	5	4
Technion	10	10				
Tel Aviv University	31	18	8	-	11	2
Bar-Ilan University	185	154	65		5	26
Haifa University	206	192	59	2	10	2
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev	98	92	39	-	6	-
The Weizmann Institute of Science	2	-	-	-	2	-
Major						
Humanities	197	179	66	2	14	2
Social sciences	210	188	76	-	20	2
Law	6	6	2	-	-	-
Medicine	3	-	-	-	2	1
Paramedical fields	50	49	14	-	-	1
Natural sciences	39	37	12	-	2	-
Agriculture						
Engineering and architecture	20	19	6	-	1	-
Other	28	-	-	-	-	28

Note: In addition, in 1999, 71 students attended non-degree programs in universities.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, August 12, 2001.

Table 22: Bachelor's Degree Candidates of Ethiopian Extraction at Accredited Colleges, by Major, 1996 and 1999

	1996		1999	
	Total	Thereof, first year	Total	Thereof, first year
Total	9	3	59	33
Technological sciences	2	1	33	24
Economics and business management	4	2	7	6
Arts and design	2	-	5	-
Law	1	-	3	1
Communications	-	-	1	-
Humanities	-	-	10	2

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, memorandum, August 16, 2001

Possible Alternatives

As noted, the high school achievements and university admission rates of Ethiopian Israelis have improved significantly in recent years. However, the formal achievements of a large proportion of young people remain poor. The Ministry of Education continues to administer most of its assistance in routine ways, despite its own repeated statements about the unique approach that this group of youngsters needs. Thus, it is worth discussing possible new patterns of action. Below we consider two alternatives: a government investment in upgrading the schools that Ethiopian Israeli pupils attend, and the creation of elite programs of study for these pupils, along the lines of institutions that were established for former Soviet immigrants or quality programs for specific student populations, such as the ultraorthodox high-level yeshivas and Christian boarding schools. These are not the only two options; we focus on them because they represent the sorts of options that are not ordinarily considered.

Upgrading of Regular Schools Attended by Ethiopian Israelis

As stated, most Ethiopian Israelis live in development towns and low-income urban neighborhoods, whose education systems are characterized by low achievements. In seven of ten localities that had Ethiopian Israeli populations in excess of 2,000 in 1995 - Ashkelon, Beersheva, Ashdod, Afula, Ramle, Kiryat

Malakhi, and Kiryat Gat - the general rate of success in the matriculation exams was lower than the national average. In the remaining localities - Hadera, Netanya, and Haifa - the success rate was higher but probably did not include Ethiopian Israeli youngsters, who lived in poor neighborhoods and attended inferior schools. Under these circumstances, the best way to improve the achievements of Ethiopian Israeli pupils is not to add special teaching hours, which cannot change the general ranking of the school, but rather to invest massively in raising the general level of the whole school. Then, Ethiopian Israeli pupils would benefit from a high-level educational institution, together with the rest of the local schoolchildren.

As we know, the Ministry of Education stopped investing in the enhancement of schools in peripheral areas long ago. Over the past two decades, huge disparities have developed in the resources of different schools. The Ministry of Education's allocation policy is doing nothing to narrow them. The ministry allows - actually encourages - schools to raise money independently by soliciting donations, raising parents' fees, and/or allowing commercial use of school premises and services. The main beneficiaries of this policy are schools that serve affluent neighborhoods in major cities. When it comes to pupils and schools of meager means, the ministry confines its assistance mainly to an assortment of enhancement programs, which have long offered nothing that could counterbalance the private funds currently pouring into the affluent schools.

The only way that these schools will catch up with those in prosperous neighborhoods is with the help of a massive injection of state funds. Only then would Ethiopian Israeli children have an opportunity to study at a level equal to that of pupils from affluent families.

Establishment of Model Schools for Ethiopian Israelis

The second option is to turn what is currently perceived as a handicap into an advantage - to transform schools that are attended by an Ethiopian Israeli majority into high quality institutions such as those in affluent neighborhoods. This can be done by attracting teaching staff, within the community and outside it, who would consider the project a national challenge. Such schools could raise the threshold of expectations of all schoolchildren in the Ethiopian Israeli community and, indirectly, for all pupils in Israel. They could also provide a setting for the training of a future leadership under conditions of generous schooling resources. This idea may evoke opposition among Ethiopian Israelis and education policymakers alike. The opponents may argue that such a measure may impede integration and aggravate the tendency to separatism and fractiousness in Israeli society. It deserves consideration, however, as one way to promote young members of the Ethiopian community in Israel. Ethiopian-majority schools would not be a novelty in the Israeli education system, which has separate schools for Arabs, for the ultraorthodox (and, within this community, separate schools for boys and girls); there are even a few special institutions for youngsters from the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, several boarding and neighborhood schools already have a majority of Ethiopian extraction. Thus, the novelty would be not in having a concentration of Ethiopian Israeli students but in the state's willingness to invest human and financial resources in such schools on a scale currently found in affluent neighborhoods only.

The National Project

At the present writing (December 2001), a program called the "National Project" is being discussed. Its architects include Diaspora communities, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and the Government of Israel. Its goal is "to bring about the social integration of Ethiopian immigrants so that they integrate into all

sectors and fields of Israeli life, like all other citizens of Israel" (Dolev, Fogel & Co., 2000 [A]: 7). The project is to be budgeted at NIS 660 million over ten years, half from Diaspora organizations and the rest from the Israel state budget. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak welcomed the initiative and promised, on behalf of the government, to provide its share of the funding (Barak to Charles Bronfman, January 11, 2001).

A statement of principles for the "National Project," prepared for the sponsors by the Dolev, Fogel & Co. consulting firm, proposed three alternative paths of action: investment in selected fields - including family and community, employment and education, and selected localities - or investment in a selected age group, the young. Education plays a central role in each alternative. For example, investment in the young entails an investment in programs such as those that prepare students for matriculation, encourage students not to drop out, train teachers, train students for the transitions to junior high and senior high, prepare students for higher education, and so on.

A review of the aforementioned programs reveals that most of the "National Project" proposals merely reinforce existing programs and activities, run by the central government and by municipal authorities. Thus, the donations to be collected will augment funding that comes from the state budget. In other words, the "National Project" will not offer the Ethiopian Israeli community innovative and creative activities; instead, it will simply help to fund routine government programs. As for the government's co-funding, it should be noted that the statement of principles expects the government to fund only some of the increase that it pledged to the "National Project"; the current allocations of various government offices for Ethiopian Israelis will be considered part of the co-payment (Dolev, Fogel & Co., 2000 [A]: 10).

It appears that the ability of the "National Project" to make an impact is limited from the very outset. Its annual budget, apart from being quite small, will be diverted in small amounts to a large number of activities that various state authorities offer routinely in any case. It might have been worth devising a different format for the project, i.e., massive investment in a narrowly defined, innovative program such as the establishment of model schools in several neighborhoods where many Ethiopian Israelis have settled.

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