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Stories of Ethiopian Jews

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Blackness in Transition: Decoding Racial Constructs through Stories of Ethiopian Jews

IN 1984 AND 1991, IN TWO dramatic operations, the Israeli government airlifted the community of the Beta Israel,¹ the Jews of Ethiopia, to a new life in Israel. The passage of this community was also a dramatic passage of identity, as the Beta Israel, Jews in black Ethiopia, became blacks in Jewish Israel. The Ethiopia-to-Israel transition offers a unique opportunity to examine changing racial constructs as they are reproduced in a concrete cultural field.² These racial constructs and identifications are inseparable from historic circumstance and ideology. Ever changing, they take shape and are articulated by stories told, exchanged, and developed in a dynamic and dialogic process. Racial consciousness in both groups is fashioned by way of interacting narratives: present realities are deciphered through stories from the past, while contemporary stories are continually evolving.

The present work confronts the complex and multi-vocal story of the Ethiopian Jews as they encounter the Israeli host society. The stories told by members of the Beta Israel, within the intimacy afforded by in-depth interviews, are a key point of access to deeply personal experiences not readily accessible through other means. For while the diversity of the Israeli host society has been well acknowledged, the racial subjectivity of the Beta Israel, which strongly impacts the group's perception of the encounter, remains hidden. Moreover, the encounter between the storytellers and the researcher, a representative of the "host" society, filters and shapes the stories told. The interview dialogue is thus an arena hospitable to exploring

how racial perceptions are embodied and articulated in stories in the wake of the immigration encounter.

Central to the Beta Israel's changing racial perceptions are the Ethiopian racial cosmology and hierarchies. As in many other systems of racial distinctions, skin color assumes the dimension of an entire spectrum, in which the Beta Israel did not perceive the color of their skin as black. Probing even further, beneath the skin, deeper layers become visible. The Ethiopian Jews, like their non-Jewish neighbors back in Ethiopia, were owners of "black" slaves—a fact that group members have not shared with outsiders in Israel.³

The slaves, known as *barya*,⁴ to this day constitute a separate, well-defined group. The term *barya* simultaneously denoted employment, status, and origin and was juxtaposed against the term *chewa*, which designated a free human being assumed to be educated and civilized.⁵ Even after the official abolition of slavery in Ethiopia and the prohibition of the slave trade in 1924, and even after Emperor Haile Selassie's anti-slavery proclamation in 1931,⁶ the slaves remained a de facto part of family property and continued to be bequeathed from one generation to the next.

Barya slaves were inaugurated into the Beta Israel by a conversion process rendering them *barya falasha*, distinct from the *barya* of other groups. Despite their conversion, however, their separate origin is fastidiously maintained in the collective memory (Salamon 1994b, 1995, 1999). As a sub-group located both within and outside the boundaries of the Jewish group, the *barya* figure prominently in the Beta Israel consciousness, particularly in all that pertains to Jewish self-identity. I have documented this system of slavery as it existed among the Beta Israel in Ethiopia in previous publications (Salamon 1994b:72–88, 1995, 1999).

Although the Beta Israel's slaves were converted to Judaism and immigrated with their masters to Israel, the *chewa/barya* hierarchy was not erased with immigration, and it continues to cast its shadow on the dynamic inherent in the encounter with "white" Israeli society. The racial constructs underlying and permeating this encounter are in constant flux, as racial boundaries are perpetually being redefined not only over time, but also in varying contexts. In the present paper, focusing on stories and story fragments selected from my ethnographic research with the Beta Israel, I listen for the actual and potential heterogeneity and nuances of these dynamic racial coordinates.

Although the narrative building blocks are many and varied, stories related to racial self-definition tend to aggregate around a number of themes: origin stories, somatic characterizations, restrictions on marital pairing, passing the racial legacy onto the next generation (children), and America as the fantastic antidote. Since the significance and power of these stories can be best appreciated in the context of the complexities and dynamics of the racial discourse, the article opens with an introduction to the unique immigration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The stories themselves are then presented, as the aforementioned themes take shape and reverberate in the different voices of the storytellers, including my own, as I listen and retell. The section on racial subjectivities presents a selection of story excerpts in which the racial concepts that differentiated between *barya* and *chewa* in Ethiopia are integral to the telling of personal stories. The narrative material presented in the following section examines the transformations of racial categories following immigration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel. What emerges is an ongoing grappling, through stories, with the changing experience of the Beta Israel's blackness. Although the voices of both *chewa* and *barya* interviewees are presented, the *barya* stories are prominent. The *barya*'s unique insider/outsider position within the Israeli Ethiopian community, with the pain and difficulty of their secret racial marginality, affords their stories unparalleled insight and sensitivity. The final section of the paper considers the multi-vocal story examined throughout the article in the wider context of post-colonial theory.

Blackness, Judaism, and the Arrival of the Ethiopian Jews

The Beta Israel, once a marginal group in Christian Ethiopia, have become a highly visible community whose presence is loaded with symbolic value in Israel. The tension between religion and race, with skin color as a key metaphor, underlies the controversy as to whether the Beta Israel are "real" Jews.

Prior to their immigration to Israel, the Jews of Ethiopia, also known as Falasha or Beta Israel, lived in northwestern Ethiopia in approximately 500 small villages scattered across a vast, predominantly Christian territory. Although similar in appearance to their non-Jewish Ethiopian neighbors,⁷ these Jews were an occupational as well as a religious minority (Schoenberger 1975; Sheba 1962; Salamon 1987,

1999; Zoosman-Diskin et al. 1991). As presently expressed in the common origin myths revealed in the field research, the Beta Israel saw themselves as a distinct group, keepers of a faith that the majority of Ethiopians had forsaken for the younger and now dominant creed of Christianity.⁸ Their belief was rooted in the Old Testament, whose commandments they meticulously observed, all the while dreaming of the coming of the Messiah and a return to the legendary Jerusalem.

While the religious beliefs of the Beta Israel may have sufficed for their Jewish identity in Ethiopia, they were recognized as Jews by the hegemonic Jewish establishment only in 1973. Drawing on rabbinical opinion from more than 400 years earlier, the Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel declared that the Ethiopian community was descended from the lost tribe of Dan. The ruling opened the doors of the Jewish State for the Ethiopians under the Law of Return, which defines the terms for automatic citizenship to Jewish applicants (Korinaldi 1988).⁹ In two major airlift operations, evocatively named Operation Moses (1984) and Operation Solomon (1991), and in continued sporadic immigration over the years, almost the entire group emigrated from Ethiopia to Israel.

The airlift of over 50,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel, first shrouded in secrecy due to diplomatic considerations, ultimately erupted in a flood of local media coverage that tended to portray the State of Israel as an omnipotent savior (Gruber 1987; Rapoport 1986; Katz 1991:3–4; Graebner 1992). This undertaking, however, involved elaborate preparations, endless waiting, dangerous journeys on foot through the desert, hunger, and loss of life, as well as the uncertainties and daily difficulties experienced in transit camps. The Beta Israel were thus the active protagonists of the story, despite the lingering image in the Israeli and international consciousness of the big airplane, descending into nowhere to sweep the helpless refugees to safety. The hardships of immigration were compounded when a raging debate broke out regarding a decision of the Israeli religious establishment to require each member of the group to undergo conversion, due to a Jewish legal (*halakhic*) technicality (Waldman 1989). This dovetailed with a mixed reception of the group by the immigration agencies, which, although well-intended, were more focused on subsuming rather than integrating the group into modern Israel. In light of these circumstances, the reception of the group had the trappings of colonialist paternalism—a point to which I will return below—both

in its guiding policy and in its concrete and intrusive intimate expressions (e.g., how and what to eat, how to dress, and even how to use the toilet).

On a level no less fundamental to their identity, upon immigration to Israel the Ethiopian Jews found themselves turned into “blacks” in a new context, while at the same time, the Jewish hosts, themselves divided by submerged racial tensions, were recast as first-time “whites” (Doleve-Gendelman 1987; Seeman 1990; Kaplan 1999; Salamon 2001).¹⁰ Significantly, the rabbinical decision, by invoking the Tribe of Dan, linked the Beta Israel to the Jewish people in a way that did not challenge the otherwise underlying presumption of common Jewish descent.¹¹

The uniqueness of this group within Judaism also drew attention from the outside world. One of the first public reactions to Operation Moses referring to racial issues came from Africa: a newspaper editor in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi suggested that the airlift might put to rest the old “Zionism is racism” canard. On the other hand, Mengistu Haile Maryam, the Ethiopian ruler at the time, railed that the Zionists had “kidnapped” thousands of black Africans in order “to complete their ethnic collection.” William Safire of the *New York Times* countered, “For the first time in history, thousands of black people are being brought into a country not in chains but as citizens” (Rapoport 1986). As these voices raged on, Ethiopian immigrants found themselves singled out in their new home as “blacks” for the first time in their history.

While the experience of stigmatization as blacks was new for the Beta Israel, the phenomenon of differentiation according to shades of skin was familiar. The racist perceptions of the Beta Israel are materialized through the body and include hair, teeth, facial structure, and, most prominently, skin color (Salamon 1994b, 1999). Ethiopians portray individuals according to shades that are barely perceptible, in some cases even uncategorizable, in the Israeli frame of reference. The essential colors in their system include the white foreigners (*ferenji*) and the range of native Ethiopian shades, which run the gamut from red (*qey*) to black (*t'equr*). Between red and black is an additional distinction for those with light brown and brown skin color (*t'eyem*).¹² The Beta Israel had perceived themselves as *qey* or *t'eyem*—never as the racially inferior *t'equr*. “Red” and “brown” Ethiopians, including the Jews, were masters of “black” slaves. The enduring

system of enslavement, in which Ethiopian Jews and their Christian and Moslem neighbors employed household slaves who lived with them in intimate subjugation, was intertwined with the Ethiopian racial hierarchy. The color hierarchies were conveyed to me in Amharic and Tigriniya within a dialogue occurring in Israel, for the most part in Hebrew, a second language for the interviewees. The difficulty in transcending not only the unavoidable terminological barriers between Hebrew and Amharic, but also the ubiquitous conceptual gaps that cannot be resolved through attempts at literal translation, gives rise to a certain number of ambiguities. Even the term “race” (Heb. *gez’a*) is not a shared concept that can be taken for granted, as I learned from interviewees’ frequent use of the Hebrew word for “bones” in their attempts to link the Ethiopian and Israeli understandings. This interweaving of languages, no mere technical matter, encapsulates the group’s present predicament, in which the past participates in present stories, implying that memory is in fact dialogic. Although grounded in actual historical experience, the memory of Ethiopian racial cosmology is continuously recreated through current stories and is thus ahistoric, comprising the present no less than the past.

Gradient-based racial categorization, not unique to the Ethiopian cosmology, is evident in many ethnographic examples.¹³ When channeled through color terminology, it creates the illusion that straightforward translation is possible. In the encounter between two different color systems following the immigration of the Beta Israel, the attempt to translate created a dissonance that disrupted the group’s internal color scheme. Such an ellipsis of meaning befell the term “black” in the Beta Israel’s passage to Israel, as they became “black brothers” within the Jewish composite. The preoccupation with this dissonance does not presume to identify two actual and separate systems, but aims to listen for the voice of the past within the present quest for Ethiopian Jewish identity. As the Beta Israel encountered the rhetoric, no less imagined,¹⁴ of the imported United States black-white binary, becoming Israel’s blacks, their own system of hierarchical race perceptions and human exploitation, so intimately bound with life in Ethiopia, was forced underground and maintained as a well-kept secret, apparently due to their sense that it would also not be well-received by the new society. As can be seen in the narrative excerpts that follow, race hierarchies persist to this day within the

Ethiopian community in Israel and continue to have deleterious and far-reaching effects on Ethiopian racial identity.

Racial Subjectivities in the Stories of the Beta Israel

Between 1988–93 I conducted interviews with Ethiopian immigrants living in Israel as part of an ethno-historical study using in-depth, open, and flexible interviews.¹⁵ In the course of these interviews, my presence as a witnessing “other” both encouraged and inhibited the interviewees. As the past was brought to life, Ethiopian sensations—smells, sounds, images—would flood the room. Transported with them was a host of accompanying ideologies so taken for granted in the Ethiopian past, yet shockingly unfamiliar to me. With the flood of memories from Ethiopia, I felt the interviewees’ awareness of my presence alternating in and out of focus. In the moments when I felt my presence to be somewhat less obtrusive, the entire system of race perceptions that dominated the world of the Beta Israel came into relief in the stories told, as the secret of slavery was gradually revealed. For me, hearing these stories set off a process that was at once academic and personal. It was only a few years later, as I will explore below in the epilogue, that I allowed myself directly to confront the issue of racism within the Ethiopian community.¹⁶

Set apart within Ethiopian society, severed from humanity in general—these are the prominent themes in Beta Israel depictions of the “otherness” of the *barya* slaves. The strong desire of the Beta Israel to distance the *barya* both geographically and culturally suggests a fear of blurring the boundaries between the two groups. Thus, in the narratives relating to this group, it emerged that the ancestry of the *barya* was significantly obscured. Some informants hypothesized that the *barya* originated in southern Ethiopia, characterizing the region as a wild and uncivilized area where it was possible to “steal people during the night and sell them.” A related belief was that the *barya* possessed no ancestral memory. They were depicted as being completely cut off from their past, a perception reflected in such phrases as, “He doesn’t know who his mother is” or “He has nothing in his head from his parents.” Ancestral memory plays a central and valued role among the Beta Israel, and elders can recite seven or more generations of forefathers. The *barya*’s lack of even a minimal ancestral memory thus relegated them to a sub-human level in *chewa* perception. The pagan

origin of the slaves further reinforced the general view of the *barya* as a *tabula rasa*, as non-human. *Chewa* interviewees told stories of the *barya* worshipping trees and stones yet described them as “having no faith.”¹⁷ In this context, *chewa* interviewees made statements such as this: “They believed in trees and stones, in nothing,” and “just maybe in some nonsense, in some tree or something.” Another *chewa* stated: “He doesn’t know how to pray, just says bo, bo, bo.” Thus, despite the fact that the *barya* in most cases understood and spoke the language of his masters, his prayer is described as inhuman, his groans and grunts like the inarticulate lowing of cattle.

A system of mythological stories, rituals, and customs was conceived to perpetuate the *barya*’s “otherness.” Most prominent among the proof texts resorted to are the Noah stories both in the *Kebra Nagast*¹⁸ and in the Old Testament. Ham, one of Noah’s three sons, witnessed his father’s nakedness when he was drunk and, unlike his brothers Shem and Japheth, did not cover him. According to these mythologies, when Noah became sober, he gave Shem and Japheth his blessing and cursed Ham with slavery (Genesis 9:21–24):¹⁹

He [Noah] drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father’s nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a cloth, placed it against both their backs and, walking backward, they covered their father’s nakedness [. . .] When Noah woke up from his wine and learned what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan; The lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.”

The black skin color of the *barya* thus signifies their descendency from the tribe of Ham, while the Beta Israel and their other *chewa* neighbors are identified with the tribe of Shem. These genealogical distinctions served over the generations as a divinely approved explanation legitimizing master-slave relations.

While the Noah stories that reinforce exploitation are recorded in the Ethiopian historical canon, they come to life and take on a painfully intimate presence in personal life stories as seen in the following excerpt of an interview with an ex-slave:

They would always say to us that it is written in the Torah. Noah had two or three children, so they would say to us that they [the *chewa*] are the tribe of Shem and we are Ham. So sometimes they would say: Everyone

is the children of Noah, but we have different bones from you. We are the children of Shem and you are the children of Ham. Ham was punished for laughing when he saw his father naked. But no one knows the truth. They're *chewa* and we're *barya*, that's what they know. But who is really their father? That, no one knows. If you ask them, you'll see that they also don't really know. To this day, they say that our bones are something else. Ham was punished for laughing at his father, and you are from Ham, they say. What can we say?

Another personal rendering of the *chewa-barya* story, told in two voices—those of an ex-slave mother and daughter—places the emphasis on the aspect of external physical difference, again demonstrating the potency of the Noah story:

When our mistress would get annoyed, she would say: You're that way [a slave] because you cursed your father, so it's not my problem, it's your problem! It's a problem with our father, who was naked and you laughed at him. I'm not guilty, that's what she would say. I was a little girl, I would always hear her say that. [Her mother adds]: Right, she would say that. Our father would curse at the children who laughed at him and say that the teeth of the children of Ham would be white, and their hair kinky, and their faces black and ugly. [He would say:] "You'll always work for your brother, he will be above you and you below him." That's what she would tell us. [Her daughter takes over the storytelling] But they always say that we are ugly. They say it to us only because of the color. They say, like, their hair is straight and ours is really not pretty. But our mistress, for example, she has tiny tiny hair—you can't comb it, so she says and they say to her that her hair is like the *barya*. She doesn't like that we have pretty hair. We have pretty hair, so she would always cut it, shave it off when it would grow, and she has little, little [nappy curls].

In-group variation in appearance provides an ongoing visual reminder that the racial distinctions between the *chewa* and the *barya* are culturally constructed. Although the difference between *chewa* and *barya* are described in terms of skin color, the sight of a fair-skinned *barya* is at least as common as the proliferation of master-slave conjugal relations. Mixed offspring and their progeny continue to be perceived as *barya* as long as the collective memory, particularly deep in Ethiopia, can be perpetuated (Vansina 1961, 1985; Ben Amos 1975). Regardless of their actual skin color, they continue to be considered "black," and therefore categorically different.

A color-based racial frame of reference persists even today among Ethiopians in Israel. The stories told by descendants of both the master (*chewa*) group and the *barya* group reveal a continuing preoccupation with color. One *chewa* woman relates:

arya are blacker. They have that kind of hair, like they have in South Africa. They are really black . . . but one doesn't marry them. In Israel, we all know who is *barya* and it continues; we don't marry them. People always ask to which race one belongs.

The following account of a woman of *barya* origin again betrays the internalization of color hierarchies and aesthetics:

Sometimes, when we were out [in the fields], we would hear someone who knew about us . . . point and say: there, they are *barya*—they're so ugly. . . . But my cousin really is beautiful. She is light, and she [is *barya*] like us. They would always ask [her mother]: "How did you get such a white child?" [my emphasis—HS]

During another interview, a young woman of *barya* origin poignantly evoked this aesthetic while presenting me with a photograph of her grandmother:

Do you see this picture of our grandmother? You might look at her and think, "She's very, very black," and so you don't really see her. But her heart is very, very white. She loved everybody, takes care of everybody.

The most pervasive and sweeping ramification of the *barya-chewa* division is the prohibition against intermarriage, mentioned in one of the interviews already cited. Two central organizing themes in the personal stories of the *barya* group are therefore the topic of marriage itself and the related question of how to pass this painful legacy on to the next generation:

In Israel, externally, we and they are the same thing, but inside it's something else. If you go out with one of them, they say "we have to find out if he's *barya*, or *chewa*." . . . So even the little kids, my sister or my cousins, who are already pretty big, and even the ones born in Israel, we tell them that they're this way or that, you get it? So that they'll know. That's the way it is. But then the kids say to us: "We and they are exactly the same thing, so why do you tell us that we're something different? We are all dark, all the same color." That is what they understand. They didn't go through everything that we did. But in the end they also learn, and when it's very hard. And they also start to hate.

et alongside the themes of marital restriction and the dilemma regarding the next generation, a third organizing strand emerges in the stories of the young generation, that of rebellion:

You see, it also continues with the children. There's no end to it. The children don't need to suffer from this any more. That's it. . . . You see, we've already suffered, but our children, why should they have to suffer? [. . .] Even my cousin, who is a soldier serving in the army, says that's it, enough: I am serving and they are also serving.²⁰

The personal stories told by the *barya* reflect the pain and rage inherent in the separation between master and slave groups. These emotions are often channeled into an attempt to deny the differences between the groups, rather than into protest against racial differentiation per se. For example, one *barya* woman's rendering implies that if only one of the groups were black, then a justification for exploitation might exist. Her insistence that both groups are black suggests an internalization of the role of skin color as a legitimate divider:

The person—God created him. God just made a person. Afterwards God created Eve from his rib. And afterwards why *barya*? There's only a person who God made. Not *barya*. There are so many ugly *chewa*, they have their disgusting clothes, their faces are disgusting and not clean. There are! So what is this word [*barya*], I don't know. No one knows. Who knows? It's an invention. It's nonsense. They are also black. Look, everyone in Ethiopia is black. Everyone everyone. Really, we are the same as them. We lack nothing, what are we lacking?

The words of another woman of *barya* origin reflect the same assumption, incorporating a second "racial" feature: blood. A more radical departure from the internalized system of racism might be reflected in a narrative that bases a condemnation of *chewa* exploitation of the *barya* on ethical grounds, not on an argument claiming racial similarity:

They simply assumed power over the poor people, and said that we were different. . . . But they have the same color, the same blood. . . . Tell me, if we [i.e., all Ethiopians, *chewa* and *barya* alike—H.S.] are all the same color, then where did we come from? Are we Swedish?²¹

Another interviewee's rage is evident as she dares, liberated by the new reality in Israel, to challenge these sacred assumptions:

[Laughing bitterly]. But what are bones, really? They mean that there is a difference. As if flesh and blood is not important, but bones are the most important—that's what remains. The bones remain. What, are my bones different? Tell me? It's bullshit, all that. Maybe you'll research it really. But it's just a story, just nonsense. Really, sometimes I say that I will ask in the synagogue: What is this? What is the difference between us? Maybe someone learned could help . . . could tell me how it is, how they even got to this. I simply don't understand. Believe me, I think that they themselves don't know. Go ask even the top rabbi that you know if he knows, ask him what the difference is between you and them. Let's see what he tells you. Just ask him and he will get totally tripped up. He won't know. Because everyone is the same.

This manner of telling, however, assigns the listener the task of confronting the official narrative, the narrative in which she herself still participates. Only through a complete outsider can she fully fantasize reducing the story to the realm of human invention.

The acceptance of blackness as a determinant of racial otherness, of a shared color aesthetic between *chewa* and *barya*, as reflected in the narrative material presented above, indicates cultural collaboration in upholding the racial cosmology. The protest expressed in these *barya* accounts rejects stigmatization of the *barya* group without challenging the basic legitimacy of racial categories and hierarchy in Ethiopia.

In the hegemonic Western corpus (imbued as it is with Western cultural perceptions), and even among its most eminent critics, systems of racial oppression are overwhelmingly projected as white and non-white ("other"): it is this contrast that renders them visible (Winant 1994; Snowden 1983; Eze 1997; Rigby 1996). The Ethiopian racial system, seen from the outside as black on black, is therefore obscured by the lack of relevant contrast to the uninitiated observer's own categories. The difference between the systems extends to more fundamental levels.²² For example, during a visit to the home of a former *barya* slave, while watching an American film on television featuring a black actor and a white actor who played side by side, my hostess pointed at the screen and said: "I'm dying to go to America. There, there is no racism like [there is] here." Questioning her comparison, I replied: "I'm not sure that blacks in America would agree with you," and so she explained:

There it's not racism. It's different there between blacks and whites. Surely whites and blacks are different, but here, when blacks say things about *other blacks*—that's racism! [emphasis added].

The frequent references to skin color are supplemented by stories referring to other indices, most specifically race-specific “bones.” It was explained that even in the case of fair skin color, the bones remain those of a *barya*—“black” bones.²³ According to a story shared by a woman from the *barya* group:

They always said, “You, your bones are something else.” That’s what they think. But what kind of bones do *barya* have? They say that if he’s a *barya*, everything is different. But these are only thoughts. Nobody has actually checked our bones . . . What’s the difference between human beings? We were all brought into the world by a woman, a female human being, and there’s no difference . . . We and they came from the same dust. What are they talking about [when they say] different bones? Who are they anyway? We are all the same.

The flesh and bone, external/internal dialectic plays a vital role in establishing “black” otherness as a fixed category. Unlike bones, skin color, while retaining its distinguishing fixed categories, is subject to a mysterious metamorphosis. Consider the story of one woman of *barya* origin:

They [the masters] let a *barya* prepare flour, but they don’t allow her to make the *injera* [Ethiopian bread made from a thin batter and baked on a sizzling pan]. They think that the color of her skin can enter the *injera* and blacken their own skin.

Another example of the contagiousness and fluidity of skin color is the popular belief of the Beta Israel that they were originally “white” like other Jewish groups, but became dark due to the Ethiopian climate. According to this belief, upon immigration, the skin of the “real” Jews would turn white again.²⁴

From Ethiopia to the Promised Land: Changing Racial Consciousness in Host and Immigrant Societies

Given that shared origin is at least as much a defining criteria for Jewish belonging as religion, the Jews who live side by side in the State of Israel, with their rich assortment of skin color and physical appearances, pose a constant visual challenge to Jewish identity. Tensions relating to this heterogeneity, perhaps due precisely to their potential to undermine the “shared origin” myth, were never explicitly expressed in racial terms. But while it was once ostensibly pos-

sible to turn a blind eye to these physical distinctions, the case of Ethiopian Jews rendered such avoidance more difficult. Although in Israel one can find ethnic tensions between Jewish groups of varying skin colors, the arrival of a distinctly “black” group allowed the term racism to enter Israeli public discourse.

The Ethiopian immigration led the racial discourse in Israel from a state of denial to explicit discussion. In the course of Operation Moses and the absorption of the first large wave of immigration, the racial otherness of this group was a constant subtext but was rarely addressed directly. One telling example of sublimated racial concerns was the oft-repeated warning of the need to be *particularly careful* with this “special group,” so that they would not come to perform all of “our” “Arab labor,” also known as “black labor.”²⁵

This concern, aimed at preventing exploitation, carried its own racial paternalism, in which the Ethiopians’ religion was viewed at the mythical level as more pure and original, and their behavior as more “demure” and “civilized” than that of the hegemonic religion and culture.²⁶ On many occasions when I referred to my academic interest in the Ethiopian Jews in conversation with veteran Israelis from a variety of backgrounds, the typical response was a mixture of apology and condolence: “They’re so beautiful. I really feel sorry for them. Look what we’ve done to them. Such a quiet group [Heb. *edah*]. So noble. Look what we’ve put them through.” Or, in another vein, following a public lecture I delivered in a series for senior citizens, one woman commented. “I really like the Ethiopians. But please tell me, why are they *so* black?” A highly reactive interchange occurs, then, in relation to this unique Jewish group, as shared faith disrupts the colonial system; the idealization of religious authenticity merges with orientalist fantasies of an exotic, pure, unspoiled, and ancient Judaism preserved so long in the “wilds” of Africa.²⁷

During the initial immigration period, the public in Israel attempted to place the Ethiopians on a single continuum with other Jewish groups, particularly those from Yemen and India. The attempt to identify them with the darker-skinned Jewish groups in Israel obscured the unequivocal racial otherness that potentially threatened their inclusion within the boundaries of an origin-defined Jewishness. Jokes connecting the Ethiopian immigrants with those from Yemen and India circulated, and even the immigrants themselves, seeking a

physical likeness, were often heard saying, “The Yemenites aren’t really different from us, we are alike.” This shared rhetoric of a racial continuum aspired to the dismantling of categorical distinctions between black and white.

Racial issues simmered over the years, but following a headline-breaking scandal concerning Ethiopian blood donations in early 1996, Israeli racial consciousness lost its guise of innocence. A major evening newspaper revealed that officials of the country’s blood bank had for years been routinely—covertly—disposing of blood donated by Ethiopians. This had been the practice since research linked the HIV virus to Africa, and in fact, among the group that waited for visas in Addis Ababa, the incidence of AIDs was relatively high. All of the blood was disposed of, even the many donations that tested negative. This revelation brought a series of confused explanations by the Ministry of Health, which sought to portray its motives in terms of the general public’s safety. Within a few days, unprecedented expressions of frustration and rage were heard from Ethiopian immigrants. Their bitterness and anguish culminated in a violent demonstration by thousands of Ethiopian Israelis and their sympathizers in front of the prime minister’s office. In their eyes, the rejection of their blood was the result of racial discrimination, and claims of protecting public health were seen as mere camouflage.²⁸

The blood scandal marked a point of no return in the discourse on race and racism in Israel. The fact that the incident focused on a physical matter as permanent and unchangeable as blood—the same hue no matter what color the skin—strengthened growing feelings that racism had for many years quietly existed behind a “color-blind” veneer. Using the terms “race” and “racism” in relation to internal Jewish affairs had until then been taboo in a society that reserved them exclusively for relations between Jews and non-Jews. Explicit discussion of the question of racial boundaries led to new questions in additional arenas, both within Jewish society in Israel and in reference to non-Jewish groups in the country—principally Palestinian Arabs and Bedouins. In the wake of the demonstrations over the blood scandal, a young leader of Ethiopian origin was included for the first time by the Labor Party as a candidate for the Knesset (Israeli parliament). The election campaign was financed in part by a Muslim Bedouin living in the Negev (southern Israel), who in a public inter-

view explained his support with the words: “We blacks must help each other.”²⁹

The inversions imposed on the Beta Israel racial labeling take on many forms, including radical reinterpretation of traditional usages. A prominent example deals with the popular use of the Hebrew term “*kushi*,” used to express black otherness. Because of the biblical passage identifying *kush* as a son of Ham, “And the sons of Ham: Kush, Mizraim. . . .” (Genesis 10:6), the derogatory term *kushi* translates directly for the Ethiopians, well versed in the Noah stories, into the “*barya*” sons of Ham, as seen in a number of the personal stories told. One Ethiopian woman of *barya* descent explains:

They [the *chewa*] say that we *barya* are so ugly. They always point out our ugliness. Like *kushi*. You say *kushi*, no? They think that we are *kushi*, and not they. But the problem is that the Israelis tell them “You’re *kushi*.” So they lose out. [. . .] It insults them, you see?

Another woman of *barya* descent relates:

The Israelis don’t distinguish between us and them [meaning between *barya* and *chewa*]. They, the Israelis, call them [the *chewa*] the same thing: “*kushi*.” I don’t mind if they call me that, because my color really is black. But I’m really glad that they call them [the *chewa*] *kushi* too. That makes me really happy!

In another interview, a woman of *barya* origin further elucidated this permutation of racial hierarchies:

They (the *chewa*) all hated us, and there were beatings and everything . . . They said to my mother, “You have no right to complain whatsoever, because your race [Heb. *gez’a*],” they said, “should be sold and subjugated, so you all have no right to complain.”

The comments of these interviewees, all identified as *barya*, upset the Ethiopian racial conventions. In the upshot, *chewa* find themselves labeled *kushi*, or black. In the *chewa-barya* hierarchical dynamic, then, red and black find their symbolic counterparts in Israel in the basic distinction between whites and blacks, or Israelis and Ethiopians. Ethiopian Jews, *chewa* and *barya* alike, now find themselves in a negation of the former situation that is also a literally visual negative—black on white relief. The first period of the group’s struggles for full recognition as Jews was characterized, then, by denial of racial otherness. These attempts to suppress color distinctions were ultimately re-

placed with a painful resignation, which evolved into pride, expressed in the saying, “Our color does not wash out in the laundry.”

Both as an identity symbol and a potential rallying point for political power, color is assuming increasing importance among Ethiopian youth in Israel. One interviewee relates:

The Ethiopian youth increasingly feel that they are getting closer to the blacks in the US. Really. Whether it's in dress, or how they walk, or how they stand. Have you noticed that now there's already a uniform walking style? All the young Ethiopians—whether it's the haircut, or the earring, or the songs. They don't like Israeli songs at all. The Ethiopians, the youth, identify more with the blacks in the US or in Jamaica. That's how it is in recent years—the youth identify with them because they're looking for a certain identity . . . they aren't finding their place, either in Israeli society, or in the Ethiopian community, because in our community, the adults don't understand them.

In another interview a young Ethiopian woman of *barya* origin relates to this phenomenon:

They [the Ethiopian *chewa*] look for a certain identity in order to imitate it, because suddenly they're black themselves. They think that in the US there's no racism and everything is fine and dandy. Because they see the singers—on MTV there are tons of singers—they see the television, the football players, the movies and they say: hey, let's go to America. They think that there's no such thing as racism, and they rebel against the fact that there's racism in Israel.

In the course of my fieldwork, I encountered overwhelming identification of Ethiopian youth with Western black singers. Posters of Michael Jackson and Bob Marley, on backgrounds of green, red, and yellow, symbolizing in their view the Ethiopian flag, are displayed in their rooms.³⁰ Occasionally, “Rastafarian” dreadlock hairstyles, “boom boxes,” and other symbols of identification with American blacks are seen as well. Observed on a recent New Year's Eve at one of the reggae clubs in Tel Aviv were not only foreign workers (mainly from Ghana and Nigeria) and black American marines temporarily stationed in Israel, but also young Ethiopian Israelis.

The idealized identification with blackness also renders a change in the definition of “the white other.” The “other” has evolved from “not Ethiopian,” encapsulated in the term *ferenji* (foreigner), to the totally new color-specific categories of *se'ada* and *s'eado* for speakers of Tigrinya,

or the terms *bula* and *bulit* among Amharic speakers, which include anyone who is not black (lit. “white” and “gray”). I was told that these terms are unflattering. With these new inverted black/white coordinates in view, a young woman of *barya* origin shares her astonishment:

I met an Ethiopian guy who didn't know that I'm actually *barya*. So one day we were talking, and he told me that if he had to choose between marrying a *barya* or a *se'ada*, he would prefer the *se'ada*. Imagine! And that's a racist person who hates Israelis! I told you that *se'ada* is a word that makes fun of the color white. The Ethiopians don't want to marry them—it's considered disgusting. So think about what that means: that he'd rather marry a *se'ada* than marry us!

Negotiating the Metaphor of Blackness

Of the vast body of racial studies, it is the focus on specific cases of racial phenomena that demonstrates that actual race relations are far more complex than any text can contain and that they are hardly unequivocal or even coherent. The immigration of the Beta Israel to the State of Israel shows to what extent power relations, as articulated in the metaphors of black and white, are negotiated by the different sides in shifting arenas. The power dynamic is projected through multiple subjectivities in the shape of intertwining, sometimes competing, origin stories. The dominant Jewish narrative based on shared belief and origin joined the Ethiopian Jews, as descendants of the lost tribe of Dan, with Jews around the world vis-à-vis a non-Jewish “other.” The immigration to Israel thus underscores the act of reconnection, the reunion of all Jews. However, this construction clashes with reality on the level of daily confrontation, in an ongoing process of racial splitting, attaching stereotypical meanings to the metaphor of skin color which, as mentioned, took on a number of paternalistic manifestations. The resultant colonialist system is at odds with that based on shared Jewish faith and origin. In other words, this is a colonialist schema with a twist. Alongside the colonial picture is the radically different image of a homecoming, not of the colonial “other” but rather the lost “brother.” The Jewish common faith combined with blatant racial otherness rattled the foundations of the traditional colonial dynamic.

The obsession with the mythical moment of split and separation between the tribes of Israel is reflected in the contemporary ambiva-

lence stemming from the sameness and otherness of these “black brothers.”³¹ Ethiopian Jews are conceived as primitive and tribal, threatening, but also quiet and submissive. Their Jewishness has been questioned, but at the same time they are idealized as bearers of a primordial religious truth. The colonialist fantasy, captured so vividly by Homi Bhabha (1994), is a constant search for difference and liberation from difference—as the beginning of a history that is repeatedly denied. Being both black and Jewish, Ethiopian Jews are located precisely along the boundary through which Jewish culture discovers, in a constant back-and-forth of verification and negation, its “border-text.”

Oscillations are not the exclusive mode of the colonizer. By presenting a multidirectional dynamic, the post-colonial reading³² makes room for a subject who is not merely passively present. When applied to the case of the Beta Israel, it relocates the group’s immigration to Israel within a constantly changing dialogue negotiating identity in terms of race and religion.³³ Just as the controller represents himself by way of a “detour through the other” (Yeğenoğlu 1998:1) and through reshaping the story of colonization accordingly, so are the *chewa* Ethiopian Jews, in experiencing themselves for the first time as blacks, assigning black identity a variety of alternative meanings without relinquishing the racial cosmology they brought from their homeland. Exposure and even resistance to a new racial system have not yet transformed their relationship with their own “blacks.”

The racial reorganization among Ethiopians in Israel includes the reshaping of narratives and the reshaping of stories, fashioning them into political strategies oriented towards the new reality. In this vein, one finds not only Scott’s “public scripts” but also other types of strategies discussed by Scott, including “hidden transcripts” of resistance and subversion (1990).³⁴ The present study suggests that dominant discourses on race and religion today in Israel—themselves in constant flux and dialogue with modern Western images—contribute to the group’s race rhetorics regarding both past and present. One striking example of the commutation of racial terms is the restructuring of racial alignments by Israeli Ethiopian youth, who retell their stories in a manner that transports the arena outwards. The attachment to African Americans circumvents the limitations of the local, without ignoring or resisting the stamp of black otherness.³⁵ Due to a subjectivity that is unwilling to assume the role of “border text,” a

revised alternative narrative emerges: identifying and allying with blackness in the controlling Western culture. Whereas in the first stages of immigration to Israel the *chewa* sought to disconnect their very bodies from the identity to which they aspired, through their magical stories of skin transformation and their identification with the Yemenite Jews, now their stories are reuniting identity and body. At this juncture where the Beta Israel acknowledge both their religious belonging and their racial difference, the seeds of a new, de-essentialized, Jewish self-definition are planted.

Epilogue

The rapid and dramatic transformation of Ethiopian Jews' racial subjectivity is a tale spun in a multi-vocal, dialogic context. One of the voices is that of the researcher. My discovery of the existence of internal Ethiopian racism overshadowed the hope that resides at the basis of my attraction to this group: that the Ethiopian Jewish immigration to Israel signified the possibility of a color-blind option. Listening to the voices of both *chewa* masters and *barya* slaves was a painful process. As a second-generation Israeli in a family of Holocaust survivors, facing the reverse alternative, in which the black and Jewish double victim—perceived as the controlled—is transformed in front of my eyes into the racist controller, left me with shattered fantasies and a reality that challenges the most familiar conventions of control and racist ideology.

The shocking effects of this discovery may very well extend beyond my internal world, including my belonging to the larger Israeli and academic culture, once the topic enters the public realm. The traditional perception of the blacks and Jews as historical victims risks compromise by this revelation: that fellow Jews had slaves and that black Ethiopian Jews have their own "blacks." Disclosing the existence of *barya* within the Ethiopian community in Israel could also stoke the flames of the already heated debate surrounding the Beta Israel's Jewish identity.

The confusing and contradictory feelings that I experienced supported the veracity of the dialogic model of racial power relations.³⁶ It was with these mixed feelings and hopes that I accepted an invitation to present this material at a conference entitled "Black Responses to Enslavement, Exile, and Resettlement," held in Israel in 1998. One

of the respondents to my paper was an Israeli-Ethiopian academic. As I delivered my address, the look of mortification on her face compounded my anxiety. When her turn came to respond, she did not conceal her agitation: it had come to her as a surprise. She did not know that Israelis knew about “all this.” Regaining her composure she said, “But overall, I think it is a good thing that these issues come to the surface. Ultimately, I believe it is all for the better.” I felt revived. It was as if I had found an ally in the Ethiopian community. But then she explained: “It is a good thing, because currently, native Israelis think that all Ethiopians are black, and we are not. Once they know, they will be able to differentiate.” In trying to disentangle this web of emotion, I suddenly understood that the *barya* and *chewa* were caught in a similar trap of paradoxical victimization. The reversibility of race relations and the rapid transformations from racializing—black on black (*chewa/barya*)—to racialized—white on black (black Ethiopians in Israel)—and again to racializing—black on white (*se’ado* or *bula*)—reveal that there are no certain terms in the never-ending stories of self-definition.

The public meeting of voices at the conference was a vivid demonstration of the ongoing process of constant mutual narrative reinterpretation, in which Ethiopian and Israeli race perceptions are refracted within one another, both in the sense of fracturing and of replication. The research takes shape in a hall of mirrors, of reflected stories, and the division between researcher and researched is all but obliterated by the impassioned human response evoked on both sides in parallel fashion.

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Notes

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1. In most publications this group is referred to as the Falasha. Group members consider this term to be derogatory and prefer to be known as the Beta Israel (the House of Israel). In Israel, this group is generally known as the “Ethiopian Jews.”

2. The research dialogue on this topic is quite vast, encompassing a range of conceptual frameworks. The present article continues in the direction set forth in Bhabha (1990, 1994), in the excellent collection by Goldberg (1990), and in West (1990).

3. Personal interviews by the author. See also Griaule (1934–35), Messing (1963), Seifu (1972), Levine (1974), Derrik (1975), Pankhurst (1976), Leroy (1979), Quirin (1997), Fernyhough (1986), and especially McCann (1988). Regarding indications of past slavery among Ethiopian Jews, see Flad (1869) and Rapoport (1980:19).

4. Although the term *barya* is considered to be related to a northern Ethiopian tribe by the same name from which slaves were taken in earlier periods, it has since acquired a wider association, implying an inferior slave status and racial origin not necessarily related to the original *barya* tribe.

5. On the use of the term *chewa*, see Rosen (1985).

6. On slavery in regions where the Beta Israel lived, see McCann (1988:347–48).

7. See Sheba et al. (1962) and Zosman-Diskin et al. (1991).

8. See also Kaplan (1992:13–32).

9. It should be noted that this same rabbi required them to undergo a formal partial conversion to Judaism, which most of the immigrants rejected bitterly.

10. The ambivalence surrounding color is well illustrated by the confusion associated with its names. The most widely accepted Hebrew term for black is *shachor* and for white, *lavan*. However, *lavan* is not frequently employed in social hierarchies by the general Israeli public, as the implied racial opposite of *shachor* is *Ashkenazi*. Another frequently used epithet is *kushi*. Although popularly *kushi* is akin to the American term “nigger,” an additional connotation derives from the biblical reference to *Kush*, identified by commentary as ancient Ethiopia. Early in the development of written Hebrew, *Kush* was extended to include all of black Africa, and black people generally. The Ethiopians themselves, as well as the press, tend to employ “Ethiopian” and “Israeli”—for non-Ethiopians—rather than the above terms.

11. On questions of Jewish identity as they pertain to this rabbinic decision, see Salamon (2001).

12. The term “*qey*” or red—considered in Ethiopia to be an attractive skin color—is by no means an ethnic category per se. However, interviewees invoked this color term in the context of our discussion on ethnic and racial hierarchies, indicating a conceptual identification between the realms.

13. The highlighting of shade distinctions appears throughout history and across the globe. To offer some examples, Winant (1994) provides a compelling comparison between race perception in the U. S. and Brazil. On color diversity in the Carib-

bean, see Martinez-Alier (1974), Alexander (1977), and Smith (1996). A special volume of the *William and Mary Quarterly* offers a selection of works on the construction of race from historical perspectives, affording a glimpse at the threads joining diverse systems of racial distinctions; see especially Davis (1997), Blackburn (1997), and Braude (1997). Color distinctions were brought to the fore and even institutionalized in the heart of colonial America, as conveyed in Morgan's "American paradox" (1972), and as revealed in the centrality of shade distinctions in the history of Louisiana (Dominguez 1986). Cross (1991) offers a consideration of "nigrescence" in contemporary African American identity.

14. For a case study of race as an ideology, not a physical fact, see Fields's analysis of race in U. S. history (1982).

15. "Ethno-historical research" in this usage refers to the non-essentialist approach employed in my work on Jewish life in Ethiopia, rather than to an historical excursion into the group's past.

16. The use of the terms "race," "racist," and "racism," modern European conceptions, clearly cannot be simply translated across cultural boundaries, but there is a strong case for employing them in this instance. Of interest to this discussion, see Gilroy (1995), who discusses the movement of blacks from one cultural context to another, Wade (1997) on the complex formation of "black identity," and Gordon and Anderson (1999) on the diaspora paradigm—specifically, the African diaspora, with the concept of race at its center.

In the Ethiopian context, the categories of tribal origin, bolstered by their mention in holy scripture, and the supposedly different "bones" of each group can only be understood as racism, the unifying term for the human tendency to base power hierarchies on ascribed and physiognomic "facts" that from within a given cultural context are considered axiomatic and irrefutable. See Goldberg (1993), especially Chapter 3, on "Racialized Discourse."

Invoking the rhetoric of racism as perceived in the Israeli context when reflecting on Ethiopian hierarchies, a frequent phenomenon in the interviews, demonstrates the conceptual affinity between cultural articulations of racism. For example, following the blood scandal, in which the Ethiopian community claimed that Israeli handling of their blood donations was racist, the category of blood entered internal Ethiopian hierarchies. The indignation of one member of the *barya* group found its voice within the framework of our dialogic interview in this manner: "You tell me. Our [*barya*] blood is black and theirs [the *chewa*] is white? Why don't you ask them if their blood is white and ours is black? . . . See—that's racism!"

17. Testimony from interviews. In one interview, one of the Beta Israel priests said: "The *barya* does not know how to pray. He only says, 'bo, bo, bo.'" Such bleating sounds contribute to the extra-human image of the *barya*. Yet some *chewa* interviewees told of some slaves who were particularly devout and observed Jewish customs fastidiously.

18. The *Kebra Negast* is the Ethiopian national epic. On its sources and meanings in Ethiopia, see Ullendorff (1968).

19. Urbach (1988). See also Salamon (1994b).

20. The choice of words (Heb. *meshartim* "serving") evokes the double entendre as serving both in the IDF for the State of Israel and being servants (*meshartim* "servants") of the *chewa*.

21. In Israeli slang, Swedish is the prototypical white image, and the interviewee

has invoked this usage to demonstrate the ultimate possible white otherness. This is vividly illustrated in a popular contemporary Israeli joke: Two Ethiopian guys are walking down the street and see two Yemenite girls. One turns to his friend and says, “Hey, look at those Swedish chicks!” The humor in this joke, for the Israeli audience, lies partly in the fact that the Yemenites, until the arrival of the Ethiopian Jews, were perceived as among the darkest groups on the Israeli color spectrum. This color ranking was turned on its head when the Yemenites were “transformed” into “Swedes” with the arrival of the Ethiopian Jews.

22. This raises also the issue of the inclusion—and, predominantly, the exclusion—of Jews from the “West” throughout history. However, Jewish society is occupied with its own categorizations that echo the “West”-“non-West” dichotomies, as indicated by the present paper.

23. This symbolism, as I have suggested elsewhere, is related to the boundary between life and death. After death the bones remain; they are the unalterable essence of the human body (Salamon 1994a).

24. See also Krempel (1972). On “the black men who turned white” in Ethiopia, see Marcus (1971).

25. “Black labor” (in Hebrew, *avoda shechora*) suggested that such work was dirty, i.e., it blackened the skin, rather than being a racial reference.

26. This association has been sounded repeatedly in relation to the violent demonstration following the “blood scandal” (see below). See also Seeman (1997, 1999).

27. For a theoretical discussion of such a view, see Fabian (1983).

28. In this context, see *Hav'eda lebirur parashat terumot hadam shel olei Etiopia* [The investigating committee of the “blood donations affair” of Ethiopian immigrants], Jerusalem, July, 1996. Seeman (1999) also touches on racial aspects of this scandal.

29. Israeli National Television, 1996.

30. Rastafarianism credits Ethiopia with paving the way to freedom for blacks. For Jewish Ethiopian youths in Israel, reggae and its symbolism create a double link as blacks, in the Western sense, and as young Israelis proud of their country of origin.

31. See Kahana’s book of the same title (1977), one of the first works on Ethiopian Jews written for the general reader. On the peculiar “betwixt and between” position in which Israelis of various ethnic groups, including those of Ethiopian origin, find themselves, see also Virginia Dominguez (1986, 1989). For an historical perspective, see Kaplan (1999).

32. This reading liberates the discourse by dismantling the central binary relationship typically manifested as a Western, white controlling self, versus an oriental, black indigenous controlled “other,” reworking it at each of its poles into a reciprocal tandem in which the controller is also controlled (Fanon 1952; Said 1978, 1986; Clifford 1988; Bhabha 1994:66–84; Young 1995).

33. Previous attempts to reify the group’s identity are evident in the writings of Christian missionaries and Jewish explorers from the 19th century onwards, who, projecting “white” facial features and “Jewish wisdom” onto the group, debated their “proper place” on the white-black racial continuum (Kaplan 1999; Salamon 2001). In these European portrayals and reflections concerning the group, both race and religion were continuously contested, belying the constructed nature and exploitability of these coordinates of identity. The fluidity between the categories of race and religion is evident in the contradictions that arise between the various his-

torical accounts. On historical approaches to the race and religion of the Ethiopian Jews, see, for example, Waldman (1989), Seeman (1997), especially chapter 1, Kaplan (1999), and Salamon (2001). For another example of strategic uses of terms of race, ethnicity, and religion in demarcating group boundaries between the Jews and their Christian neighbors in Ethiopia in order to boost their own claims to Jewishness, see Salamon (1999), especially the chapters on the *barya* and on Beta Israel converts to Christianity.

34. On subversive strategy and opposition among Ethiopian Jews, see Doleve-Gendelman (1992) and Kaplan (1997).

35. It is worth noting the special relationship Israel enjoys with the U. S. at all levels. In addition to a cultural closeness felt by Israelis toward the U. S., American Jewry, in cooperation with members of U. S. administrations, were particularly active in the Ethiopians' airlifts and their subsequent absorption in Israel.

36. Regarding the totality of this specific research experience, see Salamon (2002).

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