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Special Issue Reprint

Research of Jewish Communities in Africa and in Their Diaspora

Edited by
Rachel Sharaby

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Research of Jewish Communities in Africa and in Their Diaspora

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Editor

Rachel Sharaby

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About the Editor

Rachel Sharaby

Prof. Rachel Sharaby is a full professor. She is the Head of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the Ashkelon Academic College. Her studies discuss immigration, ethnicity, identity, gender, tradition and modernity, intercultural encounters and syncretism. Her books published in recent years include the following: Constructing Ethnic Identities: Immigration, Festivals and Syncretism. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 362 pages, 2022; From a Small Place to a Big Place: The Seged Holiday in Ethiopia and Israel. Jerusalem: Carmel, Interpretation and Criticism Series, 240 pages, 2023 (Hebrew).

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Editorial

Dynamics of Identities: Jewish Communities in Africa and Their Diaspora

Rachel Sharaby

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This Special Book deals with the study of Jewish communities in Africa and their Diaspora. The Jewish communities in Africa have an ancient Jewish tradition and a rich cultural heritage. Their Judaism was integrated and gained a prominent position within the Jewish and general history of the New Age of this large continent. Research on African Jewry focused mainly on a few large Jewish communities in North Africa, in Ethiopia, and in South Africa. In the past, research was divided into separate fields according to geographical and international boundaries. This Book focuses on discussing the Jewish identity of communities all over the continent and in diverse fields.

Identity is shaped and changes as a function of the manner in which we are represented in the social systems surrounding us (Hall 1996). The dynamic picture of identities is realized in the construct "fluid identity", coined by Zygmunt Bauman (2000). The internal dimension of identity motivates people, and it is expressed in self-identification and identification with the values of the group (Ben-Rafael and Peres 2000, pp. 9–13; DellaPergola 2016, pp. 162–63). People who immigrate to different countries find ways of including their diverse identity and using it wisely in changing social contexts (Hodzi 2019; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Sharaby 2022).

Identity (in general) and Jewish identity (in particular) can be defined on two axes: a diachronic axis that indicates the relation between the present conformation and its past heritage, and a synchronic axis that indicates the broad diverse contexts that influence identity in the present (Sagi 2016).

This Special Book represents the encounter between these two axes. The articles in this Book discuss on current topics, as well as topics of historical value, using multifaceted disciplinary approaches. These articles may contribute to understanding the dynamic identity of the Jews as individuals and as a collective—in the communities in Africa and wherever they are dispersed—on the issues of tradition and modernity; Jewish education; holidays and customs; religious organizations and institutions; pilgrimage; religious and cultural syncretism; multiple identities, Jewish art; language; leadership; community/ imagined community; religious music; gender; immigration and religion; symbolic boundaries; transnationalism; rituals; etc.

This Book includes 10 articles. The first articles focus mainly on the study of Jewish communities in Africa.

Bar Kribus, in his article titled "**Jewish–Christian Interaction in Ethiopia as Reflected in Sacred Geography: Expressing Affinity with Jerusalem and the Holy Land and Comemorating the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic Wars**", examined the affinity with the Holy Land (especially with Jerusalem) in the holy sites and in the religious architecture among the Betä Ǝsraʾel (Ethiopian Jews) and among Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in Solomonic Ethiopia. He concluded that the sacred geography and religious architecture of each community was a means to express its unique identity. **Yossef Charvit**, in the article "**Jewish Education in Algerian Jewish Communities-Multiple Identities in an Era of Change (1830–1939)**", discussed the Algerian Jewish community's Jewish education during the French period (1830–1939). He found that Jewish education fueled loyalty to

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one's Jewish identity and heritage, and partially strengthened the Jewish society in this period of change. He also wrote that Algerian Jewry's multiple identities during the French period originate in the community's education, both general and Jewish.

André Levy, in the study "**Screening Out Their Own: Muslim Gatekeepers of Jewish Spaces in Morocco**", showed how Muslim gatekeepers (who are part of the majority in Morocco) screen out their coreligionists from Jewish spaces. This gatekeeping fortifies the Jewish notion of exclusive spaces within which they feel safe as a small community that has a unique identity. **Pinhas Haliwa**, in his article "**Laws of Succession Ordinances by the Religious Leadership of Sephardi and Moroccan Jewish Communities and Their Economic, Social and Gender Implications**", illuminated the status of women and the identity of Jewish communities by describing inheritance order incarnations following the wanderings of Jews. He showed that the leaders of Jewish communities in Spain were advanced in their innovative and unprecedented ordinances related to women's inheritance After immigration of Jews from Spain to Morocco, further improving women's position was created, and was ultimately assimilated into Rabbinical and Supreme Court rulings of Israel.

The following articles focus mainly on the study of the diaspora of Jewish communities from Africa.

Suzanne D. Rutland, in her article "**Creating Transformation: South African Jews in Australia**", claimed that immigrants from South Africa from the 1960s had the most significant impact on Australian Jewry. With their stronger Jewish identity and support for the Jewish day school movement, they not only integrated into the new Australian–Jewish context but also changed this context. **Rebeca Raijman** also dealt with South African immigrants. In the article titled "**African Jewish Communities in the Diaspora and the Homeland: The Case of South Africa**", she noted that immigrants wanted to live in a place where they could feel part of the majority that was culturally and religiously Jewish. Finally, ethno-religious identities—Jewish and Zionist—influenced not only the decision making of potential immigrants but also their process of integration in Israel.

Lilach Lev-Ari, in her article "**North-African Jewish People in Paris: Multiple Identities-Ethnic-Religious, National and Transnational**", conducted a comparative study between native-born and immigrant Jewish people with North African roots who resided in Greater Paris regarding their multiple identities. Her results indicate that both groups have strong Jewish and religious identities. She also found that among people of the same North African origin, there are inter-generational differences in several dimensions of identity and identification. **Elazar Ben-Lulu**, in his article "**Empathy from the Margins: Observing Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) Events in a Reform Jewish Congregation**", examines the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants into Israeli society by performing a traditional custom, called the Sigd holiday, within a Reform Jewish community. He argues that the solidarity between these communities with unique Jewish identities is based on social perceptions and experiences of social alienation, and on marking a narrative of the "other", against the Orthodox Jewish monopoly in Israel.

Ravit Talmi-Cohn also dealt with Ethiopian immigrants in the article "**Transnationalism and Hybridity in Religious Practices during the Migration Process: The Zera Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel**", in which she examined the complexity of religious practices and beliefs among a group of Zera Beta Israel (Falash Mura) members. Her findings challenge conventional binary perceptions and conceptual categories, such as Jewish–Christian or religious–secular ones, and demonstrate the fluidity and complexity identity (the hybridity) that exists in the contexts of religion and immigration. **Tal Dekel**, in her article "**Black Masculinities and Jewish Identity: Ethiopian-Israeli Men in Contemporary Art**", focused on the identity of Ethiopian Jewish male artists in Israel. She argued that political activism awareness has greatly impacted their artistic production, broadened its diversity, and contributed a wealth of artworks to Israeli culture as a whole.

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Article

Jewish–Christian Interaction in Ethiopia as Reflected in Sacred Geography: Expressing Affinity with Jerusalem and the Holy Land and Comemorating the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic Wars

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Abstract: Affinity with the Holy Land, and especially with Jerusalem, is a common theme in the sacred geography of Abrahamic religions, expressed in prayer houses and holy sites. This theme was especially prominent in Solomonic Ethiopia, both among Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and among the Betä Ǝsraʾel (Ethiopian Jews). This article will examine expressions of affinity with Jerusalem and the Holy Land in Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites and religious architecture, and shed light on the interreligious discourse related to such expressions, as well as other forms of interreligious discourse expressed by these two communities in sacred geography. This will demonstrate that in Solomonic Ethiopia, affinity with the Holy Land was a core element in expressing an Israelite identity. Both the Betä Ǝsraʾel and the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians saw themselves as the biological and spiritual heirs of the biblical Israelites, and this concept played a key role in shaping their sacred geography to allude to biblical sites and events. This will also demonstrate that, building upon a vocabulary with common features, the sacred geography and religious architecture of each community was a means to express its unique identity. As such, it provides insight regarding differences in religious concepts.

Keywords: Betä Ǝsraʾel (Beta Israel; Ethiopian Jews); Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity; Jewish–Christian relations; sacred geography; synagogues; churches; holy sites; religious architecture; Jerusalem; Jerusalem Temple

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1. Introduction: Sacred Geography and Religious Architecture as a Realm of Interreligious Discourse in Ethiopia

The concepts of Israelite heritage and affinity with the Holy Land, and especially with Jerusalem, have played a role of paramount importance in identity discourse, sacred geography, and religious architecture in Solomonic Ethiopia, most notably among the Ethiopian Orthodox[1] and the Betä Ǝsraʾel.[2] While the identity discourse of these two religious groups, as well as Ethiopian Orthodox sacred geography and religious architecture, have received considerable scholarly attention,[3] Betä Ǝsraʾel sacred geography and religious architecture have been the subject of very little research.[4] Subsequently, Betä Ǝsraʾel manifestations of and perspectives on themes expressed in Ethiopian sacred geography and religious architecture more broadly have not yet been examined in detail.[5]

This study will examine the interreligious discourse embodied in the holy sites of these two communities, with a focus on Betä Ǝsraʾel sites (due to the relative lack of research on these sites) and on the theme of affinity with the Holy Land, and especially with Jerusalem. It will also briefly refer to a second theme exemplifying interreligious discourse—the commemoration of aspects of the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic wars (fifteenth–seventeenth centuries) in religious sites. It will argue that while both communities built upon a common vocabulary of concepts, architecture, and sacred geography, these communities utilized this vocabulary to express a unique identity and define themselves vis-à-vis the other.

2. Israelite Heritage in Solomonic Ethiopia

Concepts associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Jewish–Christian relations in Solomonic Ethiopia are significantly different from their Western and Middle Eastern counterparts. A concept which plays a key role in Jewish–Christian dynamics in Ethiopia is that of Israelite heritage and ancestry: According to a tradition shared by the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Betä Ǝsraʾel, the Israelite religion was established in Ethiopia in the days of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. In its Ethiopian Orthodox form, this tradition is expressed in a literary work known as the *KəbräNägäśt* (Glory of Kings), considered the national epic of Christian, Solomonic Ethiopia, and compiled in the fourteenth century based on earlier material.[6]

According to the *Kəbrä Nägäśt* narrative, the Queen of Sheba was the queen of Ethiopia. She conceived during her visit to King Solomon, and upon her return bore him his firstborn son. This son, referred to in the *Kəbrä Nägäśt* as Bäynä Ləḥkəm[7] and known in the Ethiopian tradition as Mənilək, later visited his father in Jerusalem, where Solomon offered to name him his successor to the throne. Bäynä Ləḥkəm preferred to return to Ethiopia, and thus, saddened by his son's departure, Solomon sent with him the firstborn of his advisors and ministers, and of the elders of the kingdom, including Azaryas, the son of the High Priest.

Before their departure, Azaryas was instructed by an angel of God to remove the Ark of the Covenant from the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, and secretly take it with him on the journey to Ethiopia. The removal of the Ark to Ethiopia is depicted in the *Kəbrä Nägäśt* as a physical manifestation of the transfer of God's favor from the Kingdom of Israel to the Kingdom of Ethiopia, which became, by virtue of the Israelite faith, of its rulers' descent from the House of David, and of the Israelites accompanying Bäynä Ləḥkəm, a second Israel, and its people—Israelites.

Davidic descent was thus considered a main source of legitimacy for the Solomonic dynasty, which rose to power in 1270 and reigned until its last monarch, Haile Selassie (Ḫaylä Śəllase) I, was overthrown in 1974 (Kaplan 2011). Linked to this concept, and to the concept of the Israelite ancestry of the Ethiopian People, in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, is the concept of Ethiopia as a second Promised Land. This latter concept was expressed in medieval and modern times through localities, holy sites and prayer houses which derived their names from or were considered affiliated with sites (mainly holy sites) in biblical Israel and its surroundings.

3. The Holy Land and Second Jerusalems in Ethiopia

The clearest manifestations of affinity with the Holy Land in Ethiopian Orthodox sacred geography are two towns, both considered a second Jerusalem. The first is Aksum, in Late Antiquity—the capital of the Kingdom of Aksum, the predecessor of medieval, Christian Ethiopia.[8] Though it ceased to serve as the capital of Christian Ethiopia with gradual decline of this kingdom, it retained its status as Christian Ethiopia's most prestigious religious center, and, in Solomonic times, served as a place where Solomonic monarchs were crowned (Munro-Hay 2005, pp. 89–95). Its status as a second Jerusalem is linked to it being considered, in Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, the place where the Davidic monarchy was established in Ethiopia, and the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant (Heldman 1992), as exemplified by the *Kəbrä Nägäśt*:

> And Azaryas said: 'bring forth the Jubilee, and we shall go to Zion [the Ark of the Covenant] and there we shall renew the reign of our lord David.' And he took a horn full of royal anointment oil, and anointed him [. . .] And so the reign of David, son of Solomon, king of Israel was renewed, in the city of government, on Mount Makəda,[9] in the House of Zion.[10]

The main church in Aksum, built on the ruins of the Aksumite cathedral of Late Antiquity,[11] is dedicated to Maryam Ṣəyon (Mary of Zion).[12] A chapel in its compound is considered the place where the Ark of the Covenant is kept to this day (Figure 1).[13]

Figure 1. The Chapel of the Ark of the Covenant, Aksum. In the background, on the left, the Church of Maryam Ṣəyon, built on the podium of the former Aksumite Cathedral.

A second Ethiopian Orthodox religious center considered a second Jerusalem is the ecclesiastical center of Roḥa, commonly known as Lalibäla (Figures 2 and 3), the name of the late twelfth/early thirteenth century monarch who, according to Ethiopian tradition, established its churches. Lalibäla was one of the monarchs of the Zag^{w}e dynasty, a dynasty whose reign ended with the rise of the Solomonic Dynasty in 1270.[14] According to tradition, King Lalibäla was taken to the heavens, where he was instructed by God to construct the churches from one rock, and where their forms were revealed to him. This tradition also relates that the construction was carried out with the help of angels (Perruchon 1892, pp. 121–27).

The equation of the ecclesiastical complex with Jerusalem is apparent in the dedications and names of several churches and features within it, most notably the stream crossing the compound, bearing the name of Yordanos (Jordan), the hill of Däbrä Zäyt (Mt. of Olives), the churches of Golgota (Golgotha) and Däbrä Sina (Mt. Sinai), and a feature known as the Tomb of Adam (Heldman 1992, pp. 230–31; Finneran 2007, pp. 217–26; Phillipson 2012, pp. 237–38). An additional church in Lalibäla, Mädḫane ʿAläm (Savior of the World), seems to be modeled after the Aksumite cathedral and hence, may have been comparable in symbolism (Buxton and Matthews 1971–1972). The church of Gännätä Maryam (Paradise of Mary), east of Lalibäla, which was founded during the reign of the first Solomonic monarch, Yəkunno Amlak (1270–1285), was modeled after the two former churches, thus continuing the tradition of expressing affinity with the Aksumite past (Heldman 2005).

This equation, of Lalibäla with Jerusalem, is also alluded to in a passage from an abbreviated version of the Gädlä Lalibäla (Acts of Lalibäla), known as the Zena Lalibäla (Account of Lalibäla):

> I blessed this place and from now onwards let it be a holy place as Mount Tabor, the place of my transfiguration, as Golgotha, the place of my crucifixion, and as Jerusalem the land of my mother [...] If a man abides in it, or undertakes pilgrimage to it, it is as if he went to my Sepulcher in Jerusalem.[15]

It should be noted that the existence, in Ethiopia, of two towns considered second Jerusalems, did not diminish the importance of Jerusalem itself as a holy city or pilgrimage destination. In medieval and modern times, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church maintained a monastic presence in Jerusalem, and Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrims visited the

cityn(Kelly 2020; Pedersen 2007). A few attestations, in written accounts, of Betä Ǝsraʾel visiting Jerusalem in Early Modern and modern times are also known (see, for example, Waldman 1989, pp. 54–56, 125–28).

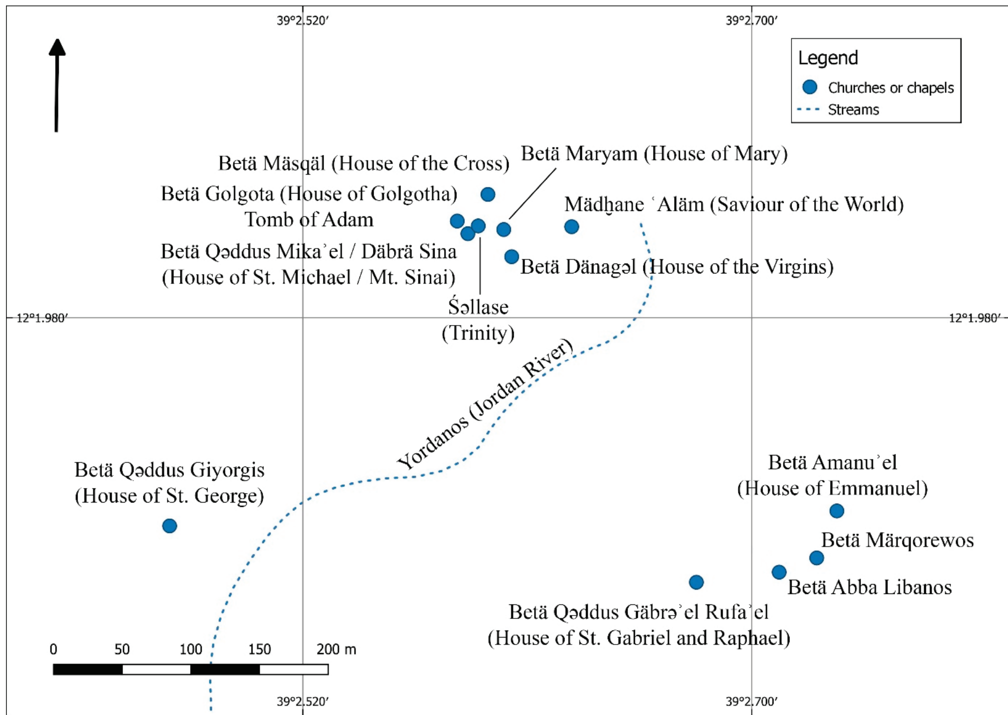

Figure 2. The church compound at Lalibäla.

Not only Jerusalem, but also many other localities in the sacred geography of the Holy Land and its surroundings were commemorated in Solomonic Ethiopia (Figure 4). Examples include the towns of Däbrä Tabor (Mt. Tabor),[16] Däbrä Sina (Mt. Sinai)[17], and Däbrä Zäyt (Mt. of Olives),[18] a locality by the name of Nazret (Nazareth),[19] the monastery of Däbrä Ṣəyon (Mt. Zion),[20] the monastery of Däbrä Gälila (Mt. Galilee),[21] two monasteries by the name of Däbrä Sina[22], and two islands on Lake Zʷay—Däbrä Sina[23] and Gälila (Galilee).[24] During the second half of the twentieth century, the town of Adama, to the southeast of Däbrä Zäyt, also bore the name Nazret. These examples are physical manifestations of the view of Ethiopia as a second Zion, and the will to express this affinity not only as an abstract concept, but as a geographical reality, linked with specific localities.

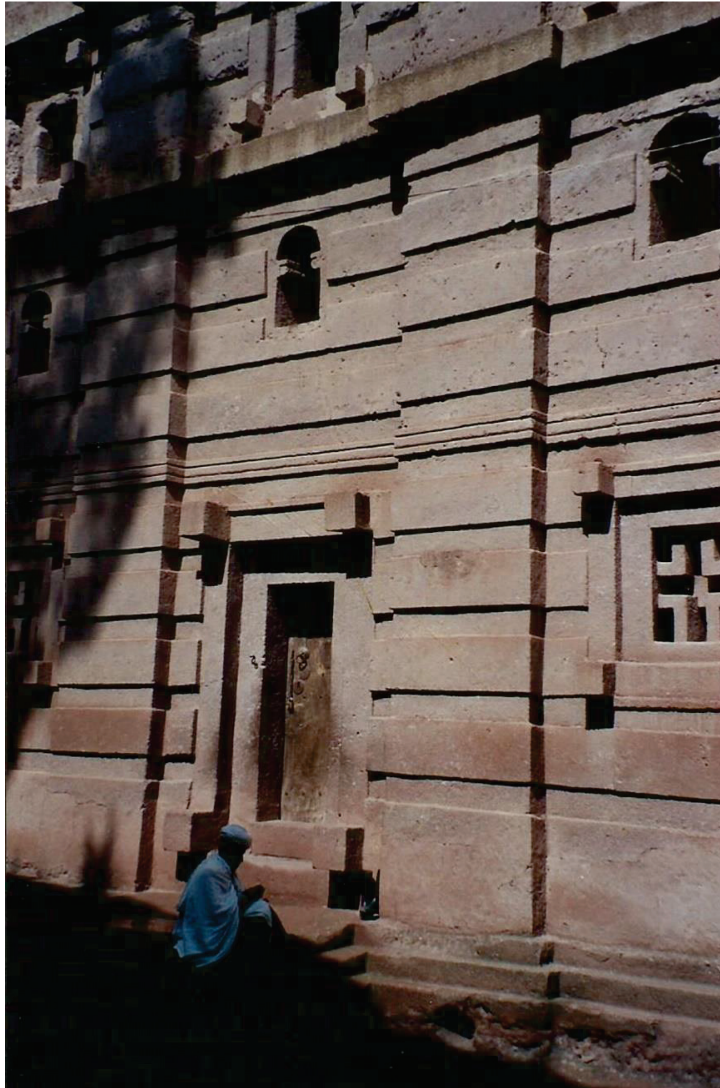

Figure 3. Betä Amanuʾel (House of Emmanuel) Church, Lalibäla.

It is against this backdrop that a remarkable comment made by the author of the chronicle of the Solomonic monarch Śärṣä Dəngəl (1563–1597) can be best understood: In a description of one of this monarch's campaigns against the autonomous Betä Ǝsraʾel of the Səmen Mountains,[25] it is written:

> Here we shall write the account of the insolence of Rädaʾi [the Betä Ǝsraʾel leader] [. . .] He called the mountains of his towns by the names of the mountains of Israel. One he called Mount Sinai and a second Mount Tabor and there are others, the names of which we have not mentioned. How evil is the pride of that Jew who likened his mountains to the mountains of the Land of Israel, on which God descended and revealed upon them the mysteries of his kingdom.[26]

What is striking about this account is not only that the Betä Ǝsraʾel leader chose to associate his domain with biblical Israel, but also that this was viewed as an affront by the

Solomonic chronicler. This demonstrates the symbolic role of expressing affinity with the Holy Land—it is not merely a matter of commemorating holy, biblical sites. Rather, it is a statement of Israelite identity, an expression of being the true successor of the biblical Israelites. Steven Kaplan (1992, p. 87) suggests that this act was viewed both as asserting Rädaʾi's sovereignty over the Səmen, and as a challenge to Śärṣä Dəngəl's claim to be a successor of the biblical King Solomon.

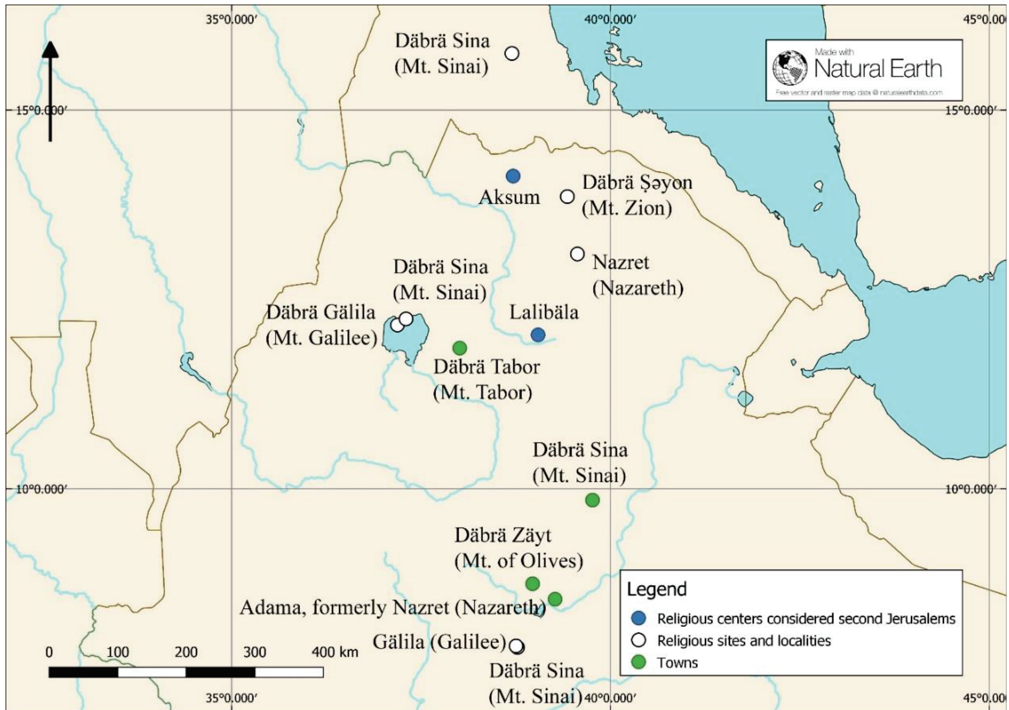

Figure 4. Localities in Ethiopia and Eritrea named after or considered affiliated with localities in the Holy Land and its surroundings.

Tantalizing as it may be, this description is the only one known to the present author mentioning localities in Ethiopia named after sites in the Holy Land by a member of the Betä Ǝsraʾel community, or, for that matter, Betä Ǝsraʾel sites bearing such names. Thus, it seems to be an isolated incident, which did not set a long-term precedent. The Betä Ǝsraʾel recognized several sites as holy sites (Figure 5), but none of these bore names affiliated with biblical Israel. Nevertheless, the affinity of specific Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites with Jerusalem, and specifically, with the Jerusalem Temple, is expressed in several traditions and concepts associated with them. It is to this topic that we turn to next.

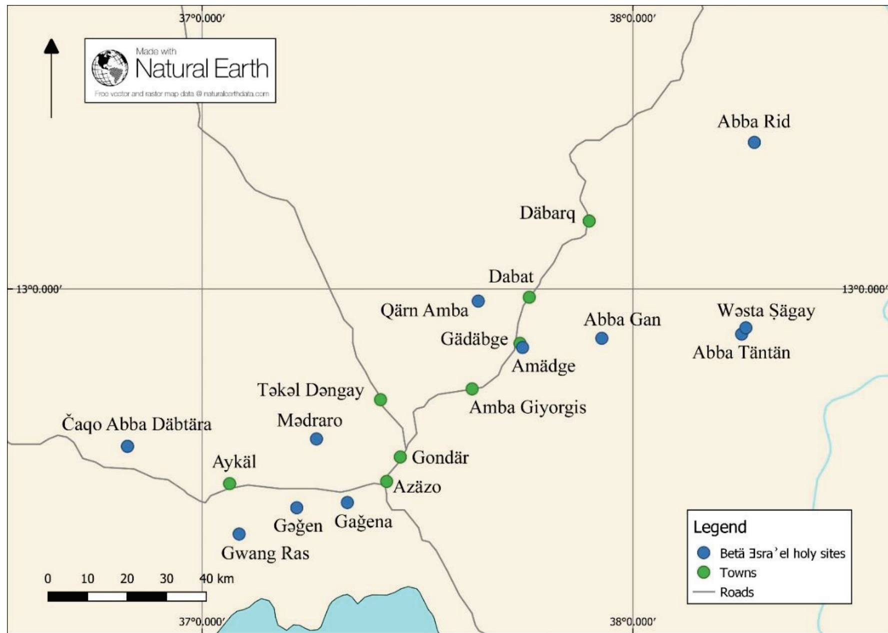

Figure 5. Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites visited or pinpointed with accuracy in the course of the survey of the dwelling places of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč* (Kribus 2022).

4. Affinity with Jerusalem in Betä Ǝsraʾel Holy Sites

The absence of a Betä Ǝsraʾel wide-scale effort, comparable to the Ethiopian Orthodox one, to recreate the Holy Land in Ethiopia, may be due to a difference in theological concepts: In Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, divine favor is believed to have been transferred from the biblical Israelites to the Ethiopian People, as exemplified by the Kəbrä Nägäśt narrative. By extension, Ethiopia assumed, to some extent, the role of the biblical Promised Land. While some Betä Ǝsraʾel traditions regarding their distant past are significantly in dialogue with the Kəbrä Nägäśt narrative (Abbink 1990, pp. 412–20), they differ in terms of their theological message: rather than claiming a transfer of God's favor (a concept that entails removal of favor from the "old" Israel), the Betä Ǝsraʾel traditions emphasize continuity—that they are those who remained true to the Israelite religion of their ancestors. The absence of a transfer of God's favor from Israel to Ethiopia entails an absence of a definition of Ethiopia as the new Holy Land—and hence, the absence of motivation to recreate the Holy Land in its sacred geography.

It should be noted, however, that the Betä Ǝsraʾel traditions in dialogue with the Kəbrä Nägäśt narrative that have been documented are mainly brief outlines. In recent decades, the need of the community to defend its legitimacy vis-à-vis arguments put forth by Christian missionaries, Rabbinical (Jewish Orthodox) emissaries, and officials of the State of Israel have had an impact on the discourse related to its oral traditions.[27] Hence, there is no certainty that the full extent of theological motifs originally present in the community's traditions regarding its distant past is, at present, known.

Jerusalem, as a concept embodying both the Holy City and the Holy Land, is a central theme in Betä Ǝsraʾel religious life and culture and an object of longing for the community.[28] It is therefore not surprising that, despite the lack of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites officially commemorating localities in the Holy Land, affinity with the Holy City is either explicitly or subtly expressed in concepts and accounts related to many of these holy sites. Following a brief overview of the nature of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites, a few examples will be provided.

4.1. *Betä Ǝsraʾel Holy Sites*

Shoshana Ben-Dor (1985a, p. 39), in her study of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites, recalls two reasons for places to have been considered holy by the Betä Ǝsraʾel: That they were associated with one of the community's holy men, or that they were the scene of acts of bravery committed by the community. In a series of interviews conducted with members of the community, including several members of the religious leadership, by the present author together with Wovite Worku Mengisto (Wovite Worku Mengisto and Kribus forthcoming), it was repeatedly stated that the community's holy places are those where miraculous events took place.

The community's holy places served as sites of pilgrimage. Purity was a central aspects in these pilgrimages: Gentiles were not allowed access to these sites. Members of the community could only enter in a state of purity—women during their menses, for instance, were prohibited from entering. It was believed that wild animals guarded the holy sites and would attack those who had transgressed the purity laws observed in them.

When at the sites, members of the community would spend several days praying and purifying themselves through immersion in water and consuming only uncooked chickpeas soaked in water. It was believed that when one reached a sufficient state of purity and spirituality, a message from the divine could be revealed in one's dreams, and those in need of healing might be healed. Some Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites were the site of sacred springs, which were believed to have medicinal qualities, and pilgrimages often entailed immersion in their water or its application to ailing body parts.

The Betä Ǝsraʾel observed an annual pilgrimage during the *Səgd* holiday—in each given region, a locality (often a mountaintop) was chosen as the site where the holiday would be celebrated. The "*Səgd* Mountain" was not, by definition, a holy site, but in regions where holy sites were located, these holy sites were often the site of *Səgd* celebration.[29]

Since this article deals with Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites, I feel that it is my responsibility to stress here that these sites are of utmost importance to the community, and to relay a request from the community's religious leadership that the community's rules of conduct in these sites by anyone wishing to visit them be observed: Only Jews, and only after purification and prayer, may access the sanctified sections of these sites. From our experience, the sites can easily be viewed from the outside, without violating their sanctity. It should be noted that in the holy sites of other religions, rules of conduct are routinely observed by visitors and scholars alike out of respect. The same respect should be given to the Betä Ǝsraʾel and the rules of conduct required by their religious tradition.

4.2. *Səmen Mənaṭa*

Səmen Mənaṭa (Figure 6) was, in recent generations, the community's most important religious site, and the last seat of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč*,[30] who served as the community's supreme religious leadership. Novices studying to become priests would travel to Səmen Mənaṭa to receive their religious instruction and/or their consecration to the priesthood from the *mäloksewočč*. The village of Səmen Mənaṭa itself was not a holy site per se, but in its vicinity were two prestigious holy sites—Wəsta Ṣägay and Abba Täntän. Wəsta Ṣägay is a site of holy springs where, according to tradition, seventy-five members of the community who were under attack by the Solomonic army chose to commit suicide rather than be captured and forced to convert to Christianity (see below). Abba Täntän is traditionally the dwelling place of one of the community's holy men.[31]

Figure 6. The valley of Səmen Mənaṭa, viewed from the west.

Since the village's name is in some cases pronounced Səmen Mənaṭa, and in others—Səmen Mälaṭa (see, for example, Ben-Dor 1985a, pp. 33, 47, 50) (the latter being the pronunciation prevalent among the village's present-day Christian inhabitants),[32] I enquired with a Betä Ǝsraʾel priest, originally from this village, regarding how the name should be pronounced.[33] The priest laughed, and related that Səmen Mənaṭa is the correct name. "Mälaṭa" means "bald" in Amharic, and Səmen Mənaṭa is not a bald (barren) place. On the contrary, it is fertile like Jerusalem.

4.3. Abba Gan (Gäntaba)

The holy site of Abba Gan, also known as Gäntaba, the name of the locality in which it is located, is traditionally the dwelling place of a one of the community's holy men, and named after him (Kribus 2022, pp. 135–42). The apex of the holy site is located on a hilltop (Figure 7), which lay pilgrims would not approach. Rather, they would gather on the spur below and the surrounding slopes. The site is renowned as a place of healing, and one member of the community, who went on pilgrimage there in the hopes of being healed, related: "Abba Gan—they say it is a place only for old and righteous people. This place is like the Temple that was once in Jerusalem".[34]

Figure 7. Abba Gan, view from the west.

4.4. G^wang Ras

The holy springs of G^wang Ras were traditionally one of the stations in the journey of *Abba* Ṣəbra, the community's most renowned religious leader and its first *mälokse*, and his disciple Ṣägga Amlak, as they were fleeing from the Solomonic monarch Zärʾa Yaʿəqob (1434–1468).[35] The springs (Figure 8) are located near the source of the G^wang River, which flows into the Nile (in Sudan, this river is known as the Atbara). The Nile Valley had long served Ethiopians as a pilgrimage route to Jerusalem (Pedersen 2007), and the proximity of the Nile's mouth to the Holy Land was well-known in Ethiopia.

According to a Betä Ǝsraʾel tradition related by Dubalä Wärqu and recorded by *Rabbi* Menachem Waldman (2015, p. 120), the waters of the G^wang were considered by the community to be flowing towards Jerusalem. A woman prepared a special dish and wanted to send it as an offering to the Holy City. She placed the vessel with the dish in it in the G^wang River at G^wang Ras. Eventually, her offering reached Jerusalem.

Figure 8. The springs of Gʷang Ras, view from the southeast.

4.5. Č̣aqo Abba Däbtära

The holy site of Č̣aqo Abba Däbtära was traditionally founded by a Betä Ǝsraʾel holy man by the name of *Abba* Däbtära, or, according to different versions of the oral tradition, by the Betä Ǝsraʾel holy man *Šum Abba* Baḥtawi Bäsämay Märḥawi (Ben-Dor 1985a, pp. 45–47; *Qes* Ḥädanä Təkuyä 2011, pp. 5–158; Kribus 2022, pp. 178–84). The site served, in the past, as a central seat of the community's *mäloksewočč*, contained a natural, raised stone platform which served as an altar, and a prayer house built in a natural depression.

Qes Ḥädanä Təkuyä (2011, pp. 53–55), one of the most prestigious Betä Ǝsraʾel priests, with familial links to the Betä Ǝsraʾel leadership in Č̣aqo Abba Däbtära, wrote an extensive description of the site and associated traditions. He relates that its holiness was like that of the Jerusalem Temple, and that when *Šum Abba* Baḥtawi would offer sacrifices there,[36] fire would descend from the heavens and consume them.[37] He adds that when he had grown old, *Abba* Baḥtawi sent his aide to burn incense at the holy site in his stead. *Abba* Baḥtawi warned his aide that when he would do so, the Ministering Angels would be revealed to him, and he must not be frightened. The Ministering Angels were indeed revealed to the aide, who was frightened, and subsequently fell ill and passed away.

A similar account was related to Ben-Dor (1985a, pp. 45–46) by *Qes* Wəbšet Ayṭägäb. According to this account (which also refers to fire descending from the heaven and consuming the sacrifices), in the days of the priest *Abba* Däbtära, an angel walked among the priests as they were offering incense. Only they could see him. Once, a layman disguised himself as a priest and offered incense together with the other priests. He saw the angel and was afflicted. After a week, he passed away.

These accounts allude to several biblical narratives, most of them linked with Jerusalem and the Temple: The fire descending from the heavens and consuming the sacrifices recalls the fire which consumed the sacrifice offered by the prophet Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18: 30–39). The descriptions of priests offering sacrifices and incense (Exodus 30: 1–10),

while referring to typical elements of Betä Ǝsraʾel liturgy,[38] place and emphasis on those elements which were also central in the liturgy which took place in the Jerusalem Temple. The appearance of angels within the holy site while incense was being offered is comparable to the divine presence in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 8: 10), and the death of people who had transgressed the holy site or acted improperly within it is comparable to the death of Aaron's two sons, when they entered the sanctuary of the Tabernacle in an improper manner (Leviticus 16: 1–16).

As we have seen, allusions to the Holy Land, and specifically to Jerusalem and the Temple, are, on the one hand, not part of the official *raison d'être* of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites, but on the other hand, they abound on an unofficial, conceptual level. Jerusalem thus serves as the symbol and prototype of sanctity, and as such, it was natural for the sanctity of the community's holy sites to be inspired by it.

The inspiration of Jerusalem and the Temple was not limited, in Ethiopia, to sacred geography. It also had a lasting impact on prayer house architecture and terminology. It is to this theme that we turn to next.

5. The Temple as Inspiration in Prayer Houses

As in the case of holy sites and sacred geography, in our treatment of religious architecture, we will begin with Ethiopian Orthodox churches, and continue to address Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogues. A detailed examination of the architectural and religious symbolism of the latter is provided elsewhere (Kribus forthcoming a). Here, we will briefly examine those aspects which reflect affinity with Jerusalem and the Temple. We will focus, in our discussion, on the concentric, circular prayer house plan which was utilized as a basis in both synagogue and church architecture in the northwestern Ethiopian Highlands.

The concentric, circular prayer house plan comprises a square central sanctuary, oriented according to the four cardinal points, enclosed within a circular structure, which in turn features an entrance in each of the cardinal points.[39] In the ambulatory surrounding the sanctuary are sections for men (in the north), women (in the south), and clergymen. The sanctuary itself is accessed only by priests. The structure is covered with a conical roof.

Ethiopian Orthodox church architecture is considerably more varied than Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogue architecture, and has been subject of considerable documentation and research. During the Aksumite period, Ethiopian churches were based on the basilica plan prevalent in the Mediterranean, while incorporating Aksumite constructional techniques and architectural ornamentation. In the Middle Ages, an array of church plans were developed in the Ethiopian Highlands, but they were all based, to some extent, on concepts derived from the basilica plan. Concentric, circular Ethiopian Orthodox churches (Figure 9) are first attested in the late fifteenth or sixteenth century.[40] They are considered a local innovation and a significant break with pre-existing church architecture.[41]

Conceptually, Ethiopian Orthodox churches (including concentric, circular churches) are divided into three sections: the sanctuary (*mäqdäs*, a term referring to a temple, sanctuary, or holy place), the *qəddəst* (literally "the Holy"), the section outside the entrance to the sanctuary, where various aspects of the liturgy are performed by the priests and the laity receive communion, and the *qəne maḫlet* (*qənə* is a type of poetry recited as part of the liturgy, and *maḫlet*—a type of hymn), beyond the *qəddəst*, where church music is performed and to which the laity has regular access (Ezra Gebremedhin 2007; Habtemichael Kidane 2011). The term *mäqdäs* could also be used to refer to a church.[42]

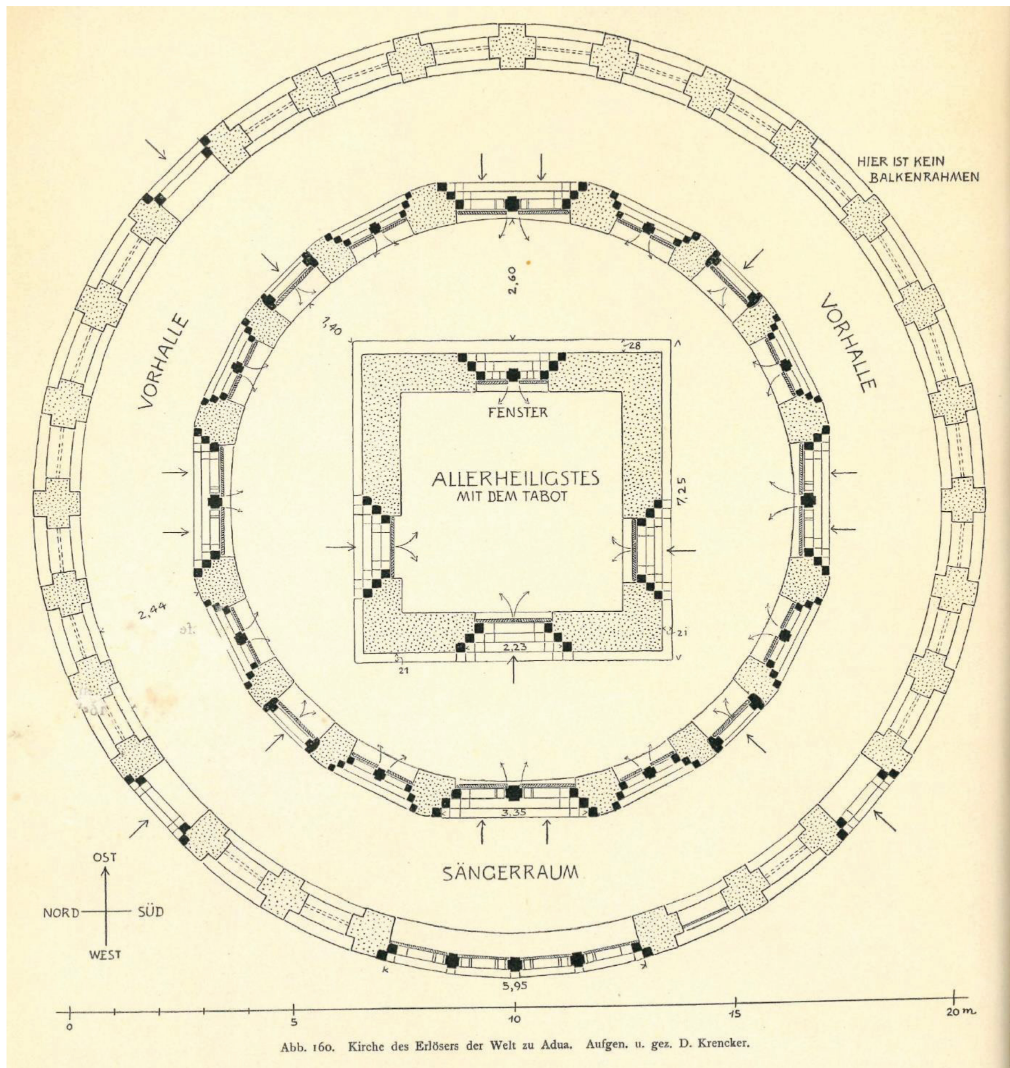

Figure 9. The church of Mädḫane ʿAläm, ʿAdwa (von Lüpke 1913, Figure 160).

This terminology bears a striking resemblance to the terminology associated with the Jerusalem Temple. The Temple, *betä mäqdäs* in Geʿez, *beit ha-miqdaš* in Hebrew (compare with *mäqdäs*), contained a "Holy", in Hebrew—*qodeš* (compare with *qəddəst*), and a "Holy of Holies", in Hebrew—*qodeš ha-qodašim*). This similarity, as well as a threefold division in both the Temple and concentric, circular churches, have led scholars to suggest that this church type was designed to emulate the Jerusalem Temple (Ullendorff 1968, pp. 87–89). A further element seen as affiliated with the Temple is the *tabot* (literally "ark", compare with the Hebrew *teiḇah*), the Ethiopian Orthodox altar slab, which is kept in the *mäqdäs*, and upon which the Eucharist is performed. The *tabot* is considered the most sanctified object in a church. It is sanctified by a bishop, cannot be viewed by laymen and symbolizes both the Tablets of Law and the Ark of the Covenant.

In recent years, it has been argued that both the *tabot* and the concentric, circular church plan were not designed in emulation of the Temple, but rather developed based

on ecclesiastical precedents in Egypt and Nubia, respectively.[43] Tracing the architectural origin of the Ethiopian concentric, circular prayer house is beyond the scope of the present article. We are instead concerned with the symbolism attributed to it. I would argue that the aforementioned terminology expresses a conceptual affinity with the Jerusalem Temple, and this is not surprising, given the concept of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians as Israelites, and the high regard in which the Old Testament is held in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.

It should be noted that to an extent, affinity with the Jerusalem Temple is a trait that synagogues and churches throughout the world have in common: In Christian liturgy, the Eucharist, as a (symbolic) sacrifice conducted by the priesthood on an altar, is likened to the sacrifices offered by the priesthood in the Jerusalem Temple (Cooke 1960). In Rabbinical Judaism, there is a concept of the synagogue as "Minor Sanctuary", symbolically acquiring some of the Temple's features and roles (Safrai 1989). I would argue, however, that in Ethiopia, affinity was expressed to a greater extent and more literally than in other regions, as exemplified by Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogues.

Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogues are known as *mäsgid* or *məkʷrab*.[44] Their characteristics and chronology are known to a much lesser extent than Ethiopian Orthodox churches, due to lack of research: While a few general descriptions of Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogues appear in the literature (Flad 1869, pp. 42–44; Leslau 1951, pp. xxi–xxiii; Shelemay 1989, pp. 71–78), Betä Ǝsraʾel religious architecture and synagogues were never been studied in detail. Following the twentieth-century immigration of the Betä Ǝsraʾel to Israel, all Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogues were abandoned. A few, most notably the synagogues at Wäläqa and Ambobär, have been preserved as tourist attractions, but in most cases known to the present author, only foundations remain. Our survey of the dwelling places of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč* was the first study to document and examine the remains of such prayer houses in detail.

The concentric, circular synagogue plan, though not the only plan utilized by the Betä Ǝsraʾel, seems to have been the most widespread prior to the late nineteenth century.[45] Synagogues clearly identifiable as the concentric, circular type were first mentioned in the writings of Protestant missionaries active among the Betä Ǝsraʾel in the 1860s (Flad 1869, pp. 42–44; Stern 1862, p. 188). One of the missionaries, Johann Martin Flad, included the plan of such a synagogue in a book he wrote on the Betä Ǝsraʾel (Figure 10). This plan is the earliest plan of a Betä Ǝsraʾel synagogue produced, and the only one to depict the concentric, circular type.

Both Flad's account and plan and the account written by Leslau (1951) following his research among the Betä Ǝsraʾel in 1947 refer to the terminology used to refer to the different components of this prayer house type: The term *mäqdäs* (sanctuary, temple, holy place) was used to refer to the interior of the structure (rather than to the sanctuary, as in Ethiopian Orthodox churches), and the term *qəddusä qəddusan* or *qəddəstä qəddusan* (literally "Holy of Holies")—to the sanctuary within. While concentric, circular churches, and synagogues are based on the same general plan, two main architectural features set the synagogues apart: a sacrificial altar, located in the structure's courtyard, in Flad's plan to the east—though Leslau (1951, p. xxii), relates that it is located north of the structure, and that the main entrance into the structure and sanctuary are located in the east rather than the west.

In Ethiopian Orthodox churches, the entrance from the west towards the east is based on the ecclesiastical forerunners of this church type—in basilica churches, as well as other types of non-centralized churches prevalent in Ethiopia and elsewhere, the structure is entered in the western end, and the sanctuary located in the eastern end. In the synagogue, the location of the altar east of the structure (if indeed this was its prevalent location) and of the main entrance from east westwards seems to recall the layout of the Jerusalem Temple, which was also entered from the east westwards, with the altar located east of the Temple structure.

Thus, it also seems that in the realm of religious architecture and related terminology, both communities conveyed their Israelite identity by expressing affinity with the Jerusalem Temple. In the Ethiopian Orthodox case, commitment to ecclesiastical precedents dictated features of the prayer house layout, and hence limited the degree of emulation of the Temple.

The Betä Ǝsraʾel, on the other hand, basing themselves conceptually on Old Testament precedents, could express affinity with the Temple to a greater degree.

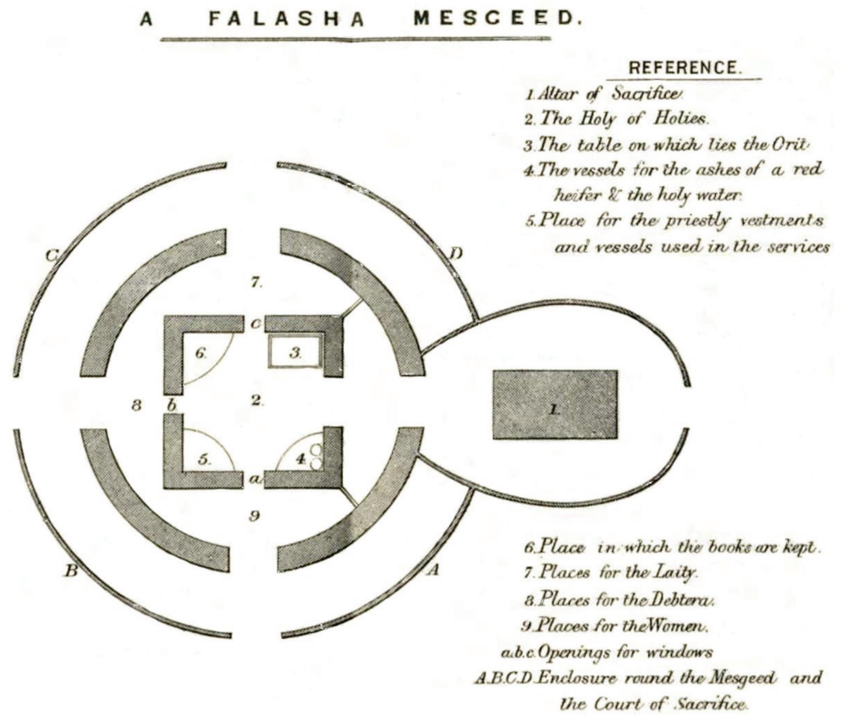

Figure 10. Plan of a Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäsgid* (Flad 1869, Figure 1).

6. Commemoration of the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic Wars in Sacred Geography

Interreligious discourse between the Betä Ǝsraʾel and Ethiopian Orthodox society in sacred geography is not limited to affinity with biblical Israel and the Holy Land. A second, fascinating aspect of this discourse has to do with the commemoration of events relating to the military conflict between the autonomous Betä Ǝsraʾel of the Səmen Mountains and their vicinity and the Christian, Solomonic Kingdom. These conflicts, here termed the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic Wars, are attested in several written sources, including Solomonic royal chronicles, Ethiopian Orthodox hagiographies, accounts written by Portuguese and Jesuits active in Ethiopia and letters written by Jews in Egypt and Jerusalem who came into contact with members of the Betä Ǝsraʾel community.[46]

The commemoration of these wars in later, sacred geography has never before been addressed in research. A detailed examination of this phenomenon is currently being carried out (Kribus forthcoming b). Here, we will provide two examples:

6.1. The Holy Springs of Wəsta Ṣägay

The holy springs of Wəsta Ṣägay are located within the gorge of the Gərzəman River, the river which traverses the valley of Səmen Mənaṭa (Figure 11). The springs are situated upstream of the village. Several versions of the account, in Betä Ǝsraʾel oral tradition, of the act of heroism which members of the community conducted there, have been documented, and some of the details vary. Here, a brief overview of the main features is provided:[47]

Figure 11. The Ṣəbra synagogue at Səmen Mənaṭa. In the background: the ravine in which the springs of Wəsta Ṣägay are located.

According to most narrations, the events in question took place at the time of the war between the Betä Ǝsraʾel and the Solomonic monarch Yəsḥaq (1414–1429/30).[48] Aṣe (King) Yəsḥaq ordered a forced conversion of the Betä Ǝsraʾel to Christianity; and declared that they would have to demonstrate their conversion by eating the meat of cats and dogs (something prohibited by the Betä Ǝsraʾel religious tradition); otherwise they would be killed. Many of the Betä Ǝsraʾel fled to the wilderness so as not to be forced to convert. Two groups of seventy-five people gathered on the mountaintops above the Gərzəman River, one on either side. It was decided that if one group were to see the Solomonic army approaching; it would warn the other on the opposite peak.

The Solomonic army arrived and charged towards one of the groups. The other group cried out a warning, but it was too late. The Betä Ǝsraʾel on the peak that the army was charging towards could not escape. They decided to die rather than transgress their religion, and gathered in a large crate which hung by a rope above the cliff face, cut the cord, and fell to their deaths. One woman, who was pregnant, landed on a rock shelf in the cliff face and survived. While she was there, she gave birth to a son. According to different versions, she named him Ṭägay or Ṣägay (or his father's name was Ṣägay), hence the name of the holy site.[49]

Afterwards, the members of the Betä Ǝsraʾel community on the opposite peak climbed down into the valley to search for those who had fallen. They discovered the bodies of the deceased, counted, and marked them, and found and rescued the woman and her son. The bodies of the deceased later disappeared, and springs flowed in their stead. These springs were believed to have medicinal qualities, and Betä Ǝsraʾel pilgrims to the site would immerse themselves in the water or apply it to ailing body parts.

The account of the act of heroism at Wəsta Ṣägay serves, among the Betä Ǝsraʾel, as a symbol for the community's bravery and devotion to its religion. In some accounts, a connection is made between the sanctification of Wəsta Ṣägay due to this act, and the

location, later, of the religious center there, at Səmen Mənaṭa. One example appears in the journal of the Israeli doctor Dan Har'el, who visited Səmen Mənaṭa in 1963, and met with the last *mälokse* living there—*Abba* Robel (Robel is the Amharic version of the name Reuben). Har'el (1963) writes: "Reuben [*Abba* Robel] tells us about Gideon [Gedewon, the regnal name of Betä Ǝsraʾel monarchs]. He says that there is a reason why they [the Betä Ǝsraʾel] live in this place [Səmen Mənaṭa]. I ask why. He answers that across from it is a place where Gideon's warriors threw themselves off the rocks [cliff] to their deaths. The rocks in this place are still red with their blood".

Wəsta Ṣägay is but one of several sites which the Betä Ǝsraʾel oral tradition associates with acts of bravery in the context of the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic wars. A second site, also in the vicinity of Səmen Mənaṭa, is the Spring of Abisäw; in this place, according to Betä Ǝsraʾel tradition, a Betä Ǝsraʾel leader by the name of Abisäw was captured by the Solomonic army, and told that if he did not convert to Christianity, he would be killed. When he refused, he was executed, and where his blood was spilled, a spring began to flow (Mengisto and Kribus forthcoming).

6.2. The Church of Yəsḥaq Däbr

An example of Solomonic commemoration of the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic wars is the construction of churches in areas previously governed by the Betä Ǝsraʾel, following successful Solomonic campaigns against them. The most renowned example of this is the church of Yəsḥaq Däbr in the region of Wägära. Two brief accounts of *Aṣe* Yəsḥaq's campaign against the Betä Ǝsraʾel appear in compilations dedicated to the history of Ethiopian kings, and subsequently known under the collective name Tarikä Nägäśt (History of Kings).[50] According to one account, following the campaign, "the king [*Aṣe* Yəsḥaq] built many churches in the land of Dänbəya and Wägära [which had previously been governed by a Betä Ǝsraʾel leader]".[51] The second account relates that "[following the campaign] many churches were built in the land of Dämbəya and Wägära. In Kossoge, there is the one called Yəsḥaq Däbr".[52] James Bruce, the famous Scottish traveler who traveled to Ethiopia in the years 1769–1771 and wrote extensively about the country's history, based on texts and traditions he encountered, mentions *Aṣe* Yəsḥaq's campaign. Bruce (1790, vol. 2, pp. 65–66) adds: "The king, coming upon the army of the Falasha [Betä Ǝsraʾel] in Woggora [Wägära], entirely defeated them at Kossogué, and, in memory thereof, built a church on the place, and called it Debra Isaac, which remains there to this day".

It is fascinating to note that an account of *Aṣe* Yəsḥaq's campaign written by a member of the Betä Ǝsraʾel community, the high priest of the Betä Ǝsraʾel in the region of Təgray, *Abba* Yəsḥaq Iyasu, also refers to Yəsḥaq Däbr in association with this war: "The emperor Yəsḥaq took control of the places where King Gideon [the Betä Ǝsraʾel king] had ruled, and from there began to spread Christianity, up to the place which is called Yəsḥaq Däbr" (Waldman 2018, p. 289). This probably indicates that the role of this church in commemorating Solomonic victory was known to the Betä Ǝsraʾel, and constitutes a reference to this role.

We can thus speak of a dialogue of sorts, made manifest in the sacred geography of Səmen and Wägära, with the Betä Ǝsraʾel expressing their bravery and religious devotion, and Christian, Solomonic society expressing its victory and dominant status in the region.

7. Conclusions

In Ethiopia, affinity with Jerusalem and the Holy Land in sacred geography, toponyms, and religious architecture was a means of expressing Israelite identity and affinity with the biblical past. Past research has examined such expressions solely within the confines of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. As demonstrated here, expressing affinity with Jerusalem and the Holy Land was no less central to the Betä Ǝsraʾel. While both communities utilized elements of a shared vocabulary, the theological and conceptual differences between them impacted the way each community expressed its affinity.

Numerous Ethiopian Orthodox localities and religious sites were named after localities in the Holy Land and its vicinity, a phenomenon linked with the concept of Ethiopia as a new Chosen Land. The comment in Śärṣä Dəngəl's chronicle, expressing anger at the Betä Ǝsraʾel leader Rädaʾi for having given such names to localities in his realm, demonstrates that such names were considered in Solomonic Ethiopia, at least in some cases, a theological and political statement. The Betä Ǝsraʾel, whose theology stressed continuity rather than transference of divine favor, did not seek to re-create a holy land in Ethiopia, as reflected by the lack of present-day localities associated with the community named after biblical sites. However, Jerusalem, as an embodiment of the sacred, was in the consciousness of members of the community when they approached the sacred—in their holy sites, and at least some of these sites were viewed as affiliated with the Holy City.

In the realm of religious architecture, both communities utilized a shared architectural vocabulary, and expressed, in their prayer houses, an affinity with the Jerusalem Temple. In Ethiopian Orthodox churches, this affinity was symbolic and expressed within the confines permitted by ecclesiastical precedents and heritage. Among the Betä Ǝsraʾel, this affinity was expressed more extensively and literally.

Finally, the dialogue between the two communities in the realm of sacred geography and religious sites is demonstrated in the case of commemoration of the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic wars. The Betä Ǝsraʾel commemorated acts of bravery and religious devotion in associated with these wars in holy sites, while Solomonic authorities, following successful campaigns, expressed their victory and dominance by founding churches in localities previously governed by the Betä Ǝsraʾel. These features and the meanings attributed to them would have been known to the inhabitants of these regions, regardless of their religious affinity, thus making the ideological discourse of each respective community manifest in the landscape.

As this study demonstrates, an understanding of the symbolic aspects, of the meaning attributed to different elements of Ethiopian cultural expression (and indeed, of cultural expression in general) cannot be fully grasped when one studies a given group in isolation, or when one only focuses on the dominant religious group. By examining the interplay of cultural elements between different groups, and how each group utilized them to express its ideology and identity, their meaning in each given group, and their role in interreligious dialogue, can be grasped more fully. The northern Ethiopian Highlands are extremely rich in cultures and religious traditions, past and present, many of which have not been sufficiently documented or researched. It is hoped that future research will address this lacuna and enable a deeper understanding of Ethiopian cultural and religious expression.

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Notes

1. In this study, the national church of Ethiopia, which at present is commonly referred to as the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church, will be referred to as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
2. The transcription system of the Encyclopedia Aethiopica will be used here for terms in Ethiopic languages: Geʿez, Amharic, and Təgrəñña. For Ethiopian names, the English spelling preferred by the individual in question will be used. In cases where this spelling is not known, the transcription of the name's spelling in Amharic or Təgrəñña will appear.
3. Notable among the works examining Betä Ǝsraʾel identity discourse and its interplay with Ethiopian Orthodox identity discourse are the works of Shelemay (1989); Kaplan (1992); Quirin (1992); Abbink (1990); and Salamon (1999). Scholarship on Ethiopian Orthodox religious architecture and sacred geography is extensive. Key works include the studies of Phillipson (2009); Heldman (1992); Lepage and Mercier (2005); and Fritsch and Gervers (2007).
4. At present, no comprehensive study of Betä Ǝsraʾel prayer house structures exist, though the liturgy conducted within them has been studied extensively (Shelemay 1989; Ziv 2017), and a general overview of such structures appears in a few studies (Flad 1869, pp. 42–44; Leslau 1951, pp. xxi–xxiii; Shelemay 1989, pp. 71–78). As part of the present author's research on Betä Ǝsraʾel monastic material culture (a central element of which was an archaeological survey in Ethiopia), a preliminary typology of Betä Ǝsraʾel prayer houses was defined, and the remains of several prayer houses were surveyed (Kribus 2022).Prior to the present author's research, only two articles examining Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites in detail had been published: Ben-Dor's (1985a) study of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites, and Leslau's (1974) publication of Taamrat Emmanuel's notes on Betä Ǝsraʾel monastic holy men and holy places, both primarily based on interviews with members of the Betä Ǝsraʾel community. The survey of the dwelling places of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč* (monastic high priests) was the first to pinpoint the location of Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites with precision and document their remains in situ. Four Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites were visited in its course, and five additional holy sites viewed from a distance.The archaeological survey of the dwelling places of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč* was led by the present author, together with Sophia Dege-Müller and Verena Krebs, and carried out under the auspices of the ERC project "Jews and Christians in the East: Strategies of Interaction between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean" (JewsEast) at the Center for Religious Studies of the Ruhr University, Bochum, and the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
5. For a study on the interreligious dialogue embodied in Betä Ǝsraʾel, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Kəmant sites dedicated to a holy man by the name of Yared in the Səmen Mountains, see Dege-Müller and Kribus (2021).The present author has recently submitted an article comparing general features of Betä Ǝsraʾel and Ethiopian Orthodox prayer house architecture and concepts associated with these features (Kribus forthcoming a). This article, while dealing with the concept of the prayer house's affiliation with the Jerusalem Temple (a concept discussed in the present article as well), does not examine the sacred geography of the two communities and the affiliation between their holy sites, Jerusalem and the Holy Land—issues that are at the heart of the present article.
6. See HaCohen (2009) and Marrassini (2007). For an examination of the Betä Ǝsraʾel versions of this tradition and the ways in which they are in dialogue with the Ethiopian Orthodox version, see Abbink (1990).
7. This is a rendering of the Arabic "Ibn al-Ḥakīm," "son of the wise man" (Fiaccadori 2007).
8. The Kingdom of Aksum emerged circa the first century BCE/first century CE and gradually expanded to encompass the present-day region of Təgray, the highlands of Eritrea, and the adjacent Red Sea coast. It was involved in the international Red Sea trade and extended its influence into the Nile Valley and South Arabia. In the fourth century, the king and elite converted to Christianity. By the sixth century, Christianity had become established as the dominant religion in the kingdom. The kingdom's decline was a gradual process, which took place during the seventh/eighth century CE (Munro-Hay 1991; Phillipson 2012).

[9] The hill towering above the town of Aksum to the west is known today as Betä Giyorgis (House of St. George), named after a church located upon it. Local tradition identifies it as Däbrä Makəda, the Mountain of the Queen of Sheba, though the chronology of this tradition is unknown. This raises the question of whether this is the locality referred to in this passage of the *Kəbrä Nägäśt*.

[10] *Kəbrä Nägäśt* 92, see HaCohen (2009, p. 223).

[11] The main church in the town of Aksum was destroyed or damaged, and subsequently rebuilt or renovated, several times in its history. A large church (perhaps the original, Aksumite-period structure) is attested to have existed in the 1520s and was destroyed during the temporary Islamic conquest of the northern Ethiopian highlands (1529–1543). A church was then built on the site by the Solomonic monarch Śärṣä Dəngəl (r. 1563–1597), burnt in a raid in 1611, and then renovated by the Solomonic monarch Fasilädäs (r. 1632–1667). Additional renovations were carried out by the Solomonic monarch Iyasu II (r. 1730–1755). A modern church structure, adjacent to the previous one, as well as the Chapel of Ark of the Covenant, were built during the reign of Haile Selassie I (r. 1930–1974). For an overview of the history of Maryam Ṣəyon Church with references to relevant sources, see Munro-Hay (2003).

[12] The precise chronology of this dedication is unknown. It is first attested in its complete form in a later copy of a fifteenth-century document. Based on a *hadith* attributed to the ninth century and mentioning the dedication of an Aksumite church to Mary, and the similarity between the Aksumite Cathedral's plan to that of the Byzantine Church of Holy Zion on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, it has been suggested that both the dedication to Mary and an association with Zion may date back to Aksumite times (Heldman 1992, pp. 227–28; Munro-Hay 2003, 2005, pp. 165–70). It should be noted that an association of Mary with the Ark of the Covenant is a common one in the Christian tradition, since the Ark, as a container for the tablets embodying the Old Testament, is equated with Mary, whose pregnancy with Jesus is understood as her carrying within her the New Testament (see, for example, Munro-Hay 2005, pp. 29–31, 36).

[13] For a detailed examination of the motif of the Ark of the Covenant in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and its expression in connection with the church of Maryam Ṣəyon, see Munro-Hay (2005).

[14] Suggested datings of this dynasty's rise to power range from the tenth to the twelfth century. For an overview on this issue, see Phillipson (2012, p. 228).

[15] This section of the text and the translation is provided by Sergew Hable Sellassie (1972, p. 276). The Gädlä Lalibäla (on which the Zena Lalibäla is based) is dated to the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century (Derat 2007).

[16] This town, east of Lake Ṭana, was founded in the first decade of the nineteenth century and served as the capital of the Solomonic emperor Tewodros II (1855–1868) (Pankhurst 2005).

[17] This town, in the province of Šäwa, was founded in 1936, however, the place-name, in the general area, predates its foundation (Omer 2005).

[18] This town, south-east of Addis Abäba, was established in the late nineteenth century (Belachew and Gascon 2005).

[19] Nazret is the name of a locality featuring an archaeological site in eastern Təgray, in which are the remains of a structure with Aksumite features, used, in later times, as a church (Henze 2007).

[20] This monastery, in the Gärʿalta region of Təgray, seems to have been established at the end of the fourteenth century (Lusini 2005a).

[21] This monastery, on an island bearing this name in Lake Ṭana, was founded in the fourteenth century (Bosc-Tiessé 2005).

[22] The monastery of Däbrä Sina in the Sänḥit region of present-day Eritrea traditionally dates back to Aksumite times and played a role in Ethiopian Orthodox theological discourse in the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries (Lusini 2005b). The monastery of Däbrä Sina on the northern shore of Lake Ṭana, near Gorgora, traditionally dates to the reign of the Solomonic monarch ʿAmdä Ṣəyon (1314–1344). Its present-day church is dated to the seventeenth century (Balicka-Witakowska 2005).

[23] This island is home to an Ethiopian Orthodox community which predated the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries that remains to this day (Henze 2005a).

[24] This island was inhabited until the 1970s. Its church was traditionally founded in the thirteenth century (Henze 2005b).

[25] Following its foundation in 1270, the Solomonic kingdom, originally centered in the northeastern Ethiopian Highlands, gradually expanded into the northwestern Ethiopian Highlands and consolidated its rule there, a process that was occasionally accompanied by military campaigns. Several campaigns against autonomous factions of the Betä Ǝsraʾel took place between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (Kaplan 1992, pp. 79–96; Quirin 1992, pp. 40–88). The chronical of Śärṣä Dəngəl contains some of the most detailed descriptions of such campaigns.

[26] Conti Rossini (1907, p. 99). My translation.

[27] Both Christian missionaries and Rabbinical Jewish emissaries attempted to bring about changes in Betä Ǝsraʾel religious practices. One method used was to argue that specific Betä Ǝsraʾel practices were not in accordance with (the missionaries' or emissaries' interpretation of) biblical decree. It was common for individuals with a Rabbinical background to be critical of Betä Ǝsraʾel religious practices differing from Rabbinical ones. This, as well as the decades of struggle the community had to undergo in order to be recognized as Jews by the State of Israel and thus, to be able to make *Aliyah* (immigrate) there, has often placed the community in the position of needing to respond to criticism. Accordingly, some modern narrations of oral traditions regarding the community's past incorporate within them such responses, or employ concepts derived from Rabbinical discourse. For instance, in response to a question, often posed, regarding why Hebrew was not used by the Betä Ǝsraʾel, a common response is

that the community had Hebrew texts in the past, but these were lost or taken by the Christians in the course of the wars with the Solomonic Kingdom (for specific examples of such responses, see Mengisto and Kribus forthcoming).

28 Longing for Jerusalem is, for example, a central theme in numerous accounts provided and literary works written by members of the community (*Qes* Ḥädanä Təkuyä 2011, p. 122; Waldman 2018, pp. 290, 292, 295–96).

29 For a detailed discussion on this holiday, see Ben-Dor (1985b).

30 The *mäloksewočč* (singular: *mälokse*) served as the community's high priesthood. They, unlike the lay priesthood (the *qesočč*), observed severe purity laws that necessitated physical separation not only from Gentiles, but also from the lay community. In scholarly and popular literature, the *mäloksewočč* are often referred to as monks. However, since, in this case, we are dealing with a Betä Ǝsraʾel institution with unique features, which played a key role in safeguarding the Betä Ǝsraʾel religious tradition and combating Christian missionary efforts, the Betä Ǝsraʾel community prefers the usage of its own terminology when referring to this institution.

31 Səmen Mənaṭa, as well as the holy sites of Abba Gan and Gʷang Ras which will be described below, were visited in the course of the present author's survey of the dwelling places of the Betä Ǝsraʾel *mäloksewočč*. For a description of this site and the holy sites in its vicinity, see Kribus (2022, pp. 93–116).

32 The letters "n" and "l" are often interchangeable in colloquial Amharic.

33 In accordance with the norms of ethnographic research, I have decided to maintain the anonymity of informants in this publication. When referring to publications in which the names of informants are provided, the name of the respective informant will also be provided here.

34 Interview transcript, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, project no. 182, folder no. 28.

35 For an overview of this holy man and the sites associated with him, see (Ben-Dor 1985a, pp. 41–45; Kribus 2022, pp. 12–18, 87–90, 167–77).

36 The offering of sacrifices by the priesthood in accordance to biblical decree was an integral part of Betä Ǝsraʾel religious practices until the twentieth century. See, for example, (Flad 1869, pp. 52–54; Leslau 1951, pp. xxvi–xxvii; Lifchitz 1939).

37 Fire descending from the heavens and consuming the sacrifices offered by the community is a common motif in traditions relating to Betä Ǝsraʾel holy sites and holy men. See (Ben-Dor 1985a, pp. 44–46; Kribus 2022, pp. 146, 175, 179–81, 215).

38 For a reference to the offering of incense in Betä Ǝsraʾel liturgy, see (Flad 1869, pp. 6, 44).

39 Concentric churches of this type sometimes feature an octagonal rather than circular exterior.

40 For a detailed overview of Ethiopian Orthodox church architecture and its development over time, see (Heldman 1992; Lepage and Mercier 2005; Phillipson 2009).

41 For a detailed examination of this prayer house type and suggestions regarding its development, see (Fritsch 2018; di Salvo 1999). It should be noted that a second Ethiopian church type with an enclosed quadrangular sanctuary also exists (Heldman 2003, pp. 738–39; di Salvo 1999, pp. 73–76). This second type is rectangular and oriented east–west.

42 See, for example, Perruchon (1893, pp. 126–27). Churches are commonly referred to as *Betä Kərstiyan*, i.e., House of Christian (worship).

43 Munro-Hay (2005, pp. 27–51) argues that the Ethiopian *tabot* is based on the Coptic altar slab, known as *maqṭaʿ*, which serves the same purpose as a *tabot* but did not acquire the *tabot*'s symbolism or sanctity. Fritsch (2018) argues that the concentric, circular church plan in Ethiopia is based, in part, on precedents in Nubian church architecture.

44 For a discussion of the meaning of these terms and possible sources of origin, see (Kribus forthcoming a).

45 For a preliminary typology of Betä Ǝsraʾel prayer houses and a discussion regarding their chronology, see (Kribus 2022, pp. 77–86).

46 For an overview on the Betä Ǝsraʾel–Solomonic wars with references to relevant sources, see (Kaplan 1992, pp. 79–96; Quirin 1992, pp. 40–88).

47 For a detailed account of the different versions documented to date, see (Kribus 2022, pp. 95–99; Mengisto and Kribus forthcoming) It should be noted that the Betä Ǝsraʾel relayed their historiography orally, and accounts of their past were not committed to writing by the community until recent generations.

48 For an overview of this conflict, see (Kaplan 1992, pp. 56–58; Quirin 1992, pp. 52–57). A few accounts situated the events at the time of the wars between the Betä Ǝsraʾel and the Solomonic monarch Śärṣä Dəngəl (1563–1597, Kahana 1977, p. 164), or in the context of a raid of Sudanese Mahdists (such raids took place in the northern Ethiopian Highlands from 1885 to 1889). According to the latter version, the religion which was being forcefully imposed was Islam rather than Christianity (Rosen 2018).

49 While accounts of this event do not appear in Christian Solomonic sources describing the campaigns against the Betä Ǝsraʾel, there are comparable accounts of members of the community committing suicide rather than be taken captive. Notable among them is a description appearing in the chronicle of the Solomonic monarch Śärṣä Dəngəl, of a captive Betä Ǝsraʾel woman who threw herself and her captor off a cliff. The chronicle's author adds that several other Betä Ǝsraʾel women did the same (Conti Rossini 1907, pp. 88–89).

50 The composition and chronology of Tarikä Nägäśt compilations vary considerably, and often, local and regional considerations had an impact on their content. The eclectic nature of such works, and the uncertain provenance of much of their source material

has posed a challenge to scholarship, and while individual works have been published, a comprehensive study of this genre has yet to be undertaken.

51 My translation. This account appears in a yet-unpublished paper manuscript, originally from Däbrä Ṣəge Maryam monastery in Šäwa. A digital version (EMML 7334) is available at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. The date of the production of the manuscript has not yet been determined, but it is clear that it significantly post-dates the events described.

52 My translation. The content of the manuscript containing this account, of suggested eighteenth-century provenance, was published by Basset (1882, pp. 11–12).

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Article

Jewish Education in Algerian Jewish Communities—Multiple Identities in an Era of Change (1830–1939)

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Abstract: Our discussion of the Algerian Jewish community's Jewish education during the French period (1830–1939) sheds light on the community's multiplicity of identities viewed through the prism of the Spanish diaspora and French colonialism and sociology. Algerian Jewry's multiple identities during the French period originate in the community's education, both general and Jewish. The Jewish education in Algeria fueled loyalty to one's Jewish identity and heritage and partially knit together the fissures that materialized in Jewish society ever more forcefully in this era of change. This article proposes a new methodological and historiographical approach based upon the examination of diverse sources—from communal and colonial sources to rabbinic, consular, and scholarly ones—using them to present a complete and multidimensional historical picture. Recognizing the many identities adopted by Algerian Jews during the French period is indispensable to conducting balanced and quality research into Algerian Jewry's history. The complexity of Algerian Jews' identity during the French period was the source of its richness and amplitude and a point of contention in the historiographical research of Algerian Jewish history.

Keywords: Algerian Jews during the French period; Alliance Israélite Universelle; Jewish education in Algeria; Israelite Central Consistory of France; Adolphe Crémieux

1. Introduction

Scholars of Jewish history should be conversant with the Hebrew and general sources of the period being investigated. This observation, made about Antiquity and the Middle Ages, is no less true of the Modern period. However, the abundance of readily available sources related to the Modern period may lead an investigator to adopt mistaken beliefs that divert his or her attention. However, in order to become familiar with the complex dynamics of internal processes of the historical experience and to faithfully represent the historical picture in all its complexity, the historian of the Modern period must also know the Hebrew sources. Relying solely upon general sources leads the scholar to draw a one-sided, one-dimensional, and ultimately distorted, historical picture; analyzing the historical moment from a full host of perspectives is indispensable.

I have endeavored to paint a picture that is faithful to the many archives and scholarly studies dedicated to Algerian Jewish history. However, rather than being satisfied solely with the French and Judeo-French archives popularized by scholars (including the Archives d'Outremer in Aix-en-Provence, the Archives Nationales in Paris, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Quai d'Orsay in Paris, the Archives du Consistoire Central in Paris, and the Archives de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris), in this study, I generally rely upon a diverse set of archives, including consular ones, as well as unpublished rabbinic sources and Hebrew and scholarly archives (ACHJ, Jerusalem; Archives Sionistes, Jerusalem; Archives diplomatiques, Nantes). Studying these sources leads us to a new form of historiography that I have termed "Hebrew historiography." Only after overcoming the methodological limitations imposed by the Hebrew sources as historical ones can the historian reconstruct the tapestry of Jewish life based upon its own internal logic. The reason is that these texts

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are not apologetic but testimony to the substantive—not the ideological—continuum of Jewish life. Thus, these sources more faithfully depict the true historical reality rather than convey an impression or interpretation of it. French historiography—which until now has played the traditional and dominant role in the study of Algerian Jewry—and Hebrew historiography do not merely parallel one another but actually enrich and enhance one another, broadening and deepening the historical picture (Attal 1996; Allouche-Benayoun and Bensimon 1989; Ayoun and Cohen 1982; Chemouilli 1976).

Therefore, in my research, I seek to correct a historiographical lacuna reaching back many years, and to stop looking at Algerian Jewish history from the outside. Thus, the goal here, to paraphrase Professor Shmuel Trigano, is to return the study of the history of Algerian Jewry to the field of Jewish history, for until now, it has been relegated to the field of French history because most of its sources are in French (Thesis defense, 14 January 1999).

Taking this approach, the study of the connection between Algerian Jewry and the Land of Israel, the study of Zionism, the study of the traditional and modern worlds, and the study of the nature of Algerian Jewry's secularization all rest upon intra-community data and communal trends which provide a picture unlike the prevailing scholarly consensus. For example, a study of Algerian Jewish education that relies solely upon the data stored in the Alliance Israélite Universelle communal archives is not undertaking its task faithfully. This is because it overlooks the religious and pedagogical materials produced by the local rabbis who molded Jewish education and who were entrusted with addressing the complexities facing their community's members. These included the colonial heritage of secularization—a secularization unique to the Islamic lands, in general, and to Algeria, in particular.

Traditional research into Algerian Jewry ultimately finds itself mired in paradox and ambiguity. In this work, I have tried to resolve these paradoxes by addressing the plurality of identities in this community as stemming from its history as part of the Spanish Jewish diaspora and the Islamic lands beginning in 1391 as well as stemming from the community being integral to the French socialization process that began with the French conquest in 1830. This may explain why the Algerian Jewish community was the only one that the Israeli establishment chose to judge in a mock "public trial" initiated by the Jewish Agency (1963) for their low rate of emigration to Israel in contrast to the massive *aliyot* (waves of immigration to Israel) from the Islamic lands in the State's early years; this also explains why the scholarly community is unsure of whether to label the Algerian underground of World War II as French or Jewish.

In this article, I will employ Algerian Jewish education as a test case to clarify and concretize the fundamental insights briefly presented at the beginning of the paper.

2. French Colonialism and Judeo-French "Colonialism"

The French expeditionary force's invasion of Algeria in June 1830 marked the beginning of one hundred and thirty-two years of French rule over Algeria and essentially signaled the opening of the modern era of European colonialism. The French conquest was a bloody one. During this process, the rebellion led by Abd Al-Qādir was repressed, the rural population was dispossessed of its land, traditional society was destroyed, and the religious leadership was eliminated. Until 1870, a military government was tasked with keeping order among the diverse populations—Muslims, Berbers, Moors, Christians, and Jews. In 1870, France finally annexed Algeria and installed a civilian government.

It can be assumed that when Algeria's 16,000 Jews—residing in Algiers and its adjacent districts, Oran, and Constantine—saw the French armies arriving, they viewed the spectacle with concern. They remembered that in the not so distant past, the involvement of the European great powers had failed to successfully guarantee the Jewish community's safety or stability—I mean mainly the days of the Spanish conquests during the 16th and 17th centuries (Schaub 1999).

Algerian natives (Indigènes) quickly realized that the French had decided to rule the area with an iron fist, and, indeed, the French began making their mark on the

area. The French notion of colonialism unquestionably differed from that of the other European great powers. It is worthwhile noting the unique elements characterizing French colonialism and the important role that French education played in this process (Schwartzfuchs 1981, pp. 1–29).

A Strong System of Government: France made it clear to all concerned who was the ruler and who were the ruled, and it perpetuated clear disparities and inequality between the ruling colonialists and the indigenous society.

The Aura of an Omnipotent State: The French conquest and transformation of Algeria into a French colony gave France the image of being an enormously powerful state. This image was the result of an intentional division between the state and society, with the state's autonomy from society achieved by establishing clear criteria that advanced the growth of an elite and promoted its success. Thus, the ethos of the French bureaucrat who shows blind loyalty to the state was born—the French administration became a power unto itself and was not dependent upon society.

Centralization: Because of the French government's centralized nature—a function of the monarchical regime—the French sought to eliminate class distinctions and abolish groups with unique characteristics. Their aim was to transform society into one of individuals, pitting the power of the state against the individual rather than groups. This centralization was a prominent feature of all of France's state systems. Thus, the model of the Métropolitain (Metropolitan)—the mother state—was formed. The metropolitan, the center, determined the colony's development policy and rate change based upon the colonizing state's interests, not necessarily those of the colonial society. With the establishment of the Third French Republic (1870–1940), direct military rule over Algeria came to an end. From 1870, Algeria was an integral part of France administered by a civilian administration composed of branches of the various government ministries in Paris.

Secularization: France's nature as a secular state was central to its character. The French Revolution, while not necessarily anti-Christian, did end the Church's role as a locus of economic power, with all the Church's assets transferred into the state's coffers. The struggle between the Church and the state reached its apex with the enactment of the 1905 law separating religion and state. Thus, the colonial governance in Algeria was inherently secular although the local society was traditional.

Disseminating Values through Education: France considered education a highly effective tool in disseminating secularism and France's national values and in nurturing loyalty to France. Furthermore, it viewed education as crucial to progress and social mobility, to promoting the integration of the many ethnic groups within the local society, to shaping the immensely influential elites, and to creating the power structure of the state.

Hierarchical Society: Algerian colonial society was hierarchical, its strata determined by ethno-cultural criteria. On the top rung were members of the ruling French society; below it were those who had adapted themselves to French culture and received French citizenship; and on the bottom rung were those rejected by the ruling elites and/or those who were estranged from the upper stratum's values and distanced from these elites. Unlike the other colonial powers, France made it quite clear to its subjects, including the Jews, that anyone who adopted the ruling class's culture could enter the upper stratum.

Imposing French Norms: France's concept of colonialization was based upon the ambition to establish France's political, social, and cultural norms in Algeria. This went in tandem with a systematic effort to settle French citizens among the local population.

All these characteristics reveal the unique nature of the encounter between the French colonial power and indigenous society and portend the clash between them.

French Jewry played a decisive role in Algerian Jewry's process of Frenchification and in the radical transformations Algerian Jewry underwent. An investigation of French archives and the archives of French Jewry indicates that there was a high degree of correlation between the goals of the various bodies: an assimilatory goal promoted by the French regime and a desire to please the French establishment and its government by the

French Jews, who practiced a form of Judaism that was shaped by the Western Enlightenment movement.

Algerian Judaism was perceived by the French authorities as an integral part of the French colonial society. As a result, they viewed the continuum of Algerian Jewish history as a natural progression towards integration and assimilation into French colonial society, to the point where the Jews would lose their independent identity and uniqueness. Assimilationist forces within French Jewry help advance this trend toward integration, the most prominent of which was the Israelite Central Consistory of France—the new communal organization established by Napoleon Bonaparte. The Alliance Israélite Universelle—the supracommunal Jewish organization founded by the French-Jewish politician Adolphe Crémieux (1796–1880)—also played an important role.

French Jewry saw itself as the "Jewish people's firstborn." It further believed that it could help Jews throughout the world. That is, just as France had benefitted humanity by disseminating the values of the French Revolution, so, too, the Jews of France, who were the first Jews to obtain equal rights (1809)—and who, as Professor Michel Abitbol put it, imagined themselves to be "the tribe of Judah (Abitbol 1993)",—would benefit the world's Jews, no matter where they might be. This was particularly the case for those living in less advanced countries, such as the countries of the Spanish diaspora and Islamic lands.

Jewish solidarity, French patriotism, Orientalism, and a reformist ideology combined to fuel French Jewry's interactions with Oriental and Northern African Jews, in general, and with Algerian Jews in particular. The traditional Jewish sentiment of mutual responsibility only increased when French Jewry was granted emancipation. A sense of gratitude to France was transformed into absolute loyalty, blossoming into French patriotism. Orientalism and reform were two of the most prominent mindsets among Western European Jewry, especially among French Jewry. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin. We may assume that the ever-increasing interest in the Orient among authors, artists, and French intellectuals—foremost among them the Romantic Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869)—that began at the dawn of the nineteenth century made an impression upon French Jews who were also extremely interested in the Jews of the Orient, North Africa, and the Land of Israel (Berchet 1985, pp. 3–20).

The Algerian Jewish community was unprepared for what was to come following the French conquest: social and spiritual crises spanning the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and affecting primarily the Algiers Jewish community. As a result, many prominent sages left Algeria and the remaining Jewish judges and lay leadership—the wealthy *mukkadmim*—acted impiously and perverted justice. The decline of Algiers, the Jewish community's most important center, cast a dark shadow over the entire Algerian Jewish community. Furthermore, the mukkadmim, who were aggressive lay leaders with close connections to the Algerian rulers—the Deys and the Beys, in whom power accrued after the departure of the Ottoman Empire—were estranged from the Jewish community. They were primarily engaged in high politics, that is, in the reciprocal relationship between the local rulers and the "Sublime Porte" in Constantinople, and in international trade. They were members of a closed elite group that was composed of wealthy and esteemed Jewish families that were, however, not unified. Driven by their aspirations for individual financial success, they became caught up in the maelstrom of local politics. This elite—which functioned as patrons rather than leaders of the community—played a limited role in guiding the members of the community and preparing them for the challenges they would face in the modern era.

When the French arrived, the Jewish communities were primarily urban. Almost the entire Jewish population was concentrated in only ten communities. The four largest—Algiers, Oran, Tlemçen, and Constantine—contained 85% of the Jewish population of Algeria; the rest of the Jews lived in Béjaïa (Bougie), Médéa, Blida, Miliana, Mostaganem, Mascara, Annaba (Bône) and El Kala—near the Mediterranean coast—and Laghouat and Ghardaïa—located in the interior (the M'zab). After the French conquest, Algerian Jewry

continued to maintain its urban character, though they were divided into many medium- and small-sized communities.

3. The French Conquest's Influence on Changes in the Jewish Community

In the 1860s, significant headway was made on the civilian front: the Central Consistory in Paris placed Algerian Jewry's emancipation above all else. Renown figures and esteemed community members declared that Algerian Jews should be granted French citizenship. Leading this charge was Adolphe Crémieux (1796–1880), a Spanish Jew from the towns of Crémieux and Carpentras in Southern France. Born in the city of Nîmes in 1796 and trained in the law, Crémieux resolutely took upon himself the task of eliminating every instance of falsehood, injustice, and discrimination that the Jews suffered in France and elsewhere. It was no accident that he was among the members of the delegation of Western European Jews that came to Damascene Jewry's aid during the Damascus Blood Libel (1840). In addition, he was one of the founders of L'Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1860 and was appointed French Minister of Justice in 1870, a position that provided him with the rare opportunity of putting his principles into practice. As a result of his family drama—his wife Amélie Silny and his sons converted to Christianity in 1845—Crémieux was not allowed to take part in the Central Consistory of French Jewry. As a result, he had to channel his energies into serving Judaism and the Jews through an organization that at the time was still peripheral—L'Alliance Israélite Universelle—but which would in time take upon itself projects of great importance for the Jewish world.

Since the establishment of the Consistory in 1845, Algerian Jews had been required to abide by French law but were still officially considered indigenous peoples. Their legal status created confusion, especially in the area of family law: the courts' contradictory rulings and the legal confusion and lack of clarity led the French authorities to conclude that the only way to resolve this disarray was to grant Algerian Jews French citizenship (Rosenstock 1956; Szajkowski 1956).

Popular opinion among the Europeans in Algeria was shaped by republicans who were the "exiles of the Revolution of 1848", and who supported granting French citizenship to the Jews. As a result of the failure of the Revolution of 1848 and the establishment of the Second French Empire (1852), many republicans emigrated to Algeria, and they—like the liberals who arrived in Algeria during the period of the restoration of the monarchy—perceived Algerian Jewry's emancipation as a logical continuation of French Jewry's emancipation. They supported abolishing the military government that had ruled Algeria since 1830 and were convinced that to accomplish this, the French population had to be increased either by expanding French settlement efforts or by granting French citizenship to the Jews and other Europeans who were streaming into Algeria.

In contrast, the French military vociferously opposed changing the Jews' legal status, fearing that any such change would result in the abolition of the military regime due to the ruling powers' interest in protecting the governmental system from the natives. They also wanted to protect Algeria's economic resources from the Jews and to prevent a dangerous feeling of unrest among the Muslim population. The liberal approach and the approach opposing granting the Jews citizenship remained in constant tension until 1870.

The Algerian Jewish community's spokespeople—the consistory heads—declared that the community wanted French citizenship. They recruited the Central Consistory and public figures to help them in their battle. The edict that Napoleon III (1808–1873) issued after his visit in 1865—the Senatus Consulte Decree—failed to endorse the consistories' assumptions and did not prompt the influx of masses to get citizenship. According to this decree, all of Algeria's indigenous inhabitants—Muslims and Jews—could petition for and receive French citizenship on an individual basis as long as they declared that they were willing to renounce their personal status and waive their right to be judged by their traditional law. As mentioned, the response was minimal. Notwithstanding the public relations campaign and the consistories' vigorous attempt to persuade the people, only 3000 out of a populous of 23,000 Jews petitioned for citizenship. Algerian Jews did not want

French citizenship, viewing emancipation as a direct assault on Jewish religious identity and traditional society.

Adolphe Crémieux, over the course of his 17 trips to Algeria, built a strong relationship with Algerian Jewry and came to understand its character, and he therefore understood why it resisted French citizenship. He concluded that the Senatus Consulte had failed and that another approach had to be tried—granting citizenship to Algerian Jewry as a collective. Thus, as mentioned above, when Crémieux was appointed Minister of Justice in France's temporary government, he had the means to issue the 24 October 1870 decree applying French citizenship laws to the majority of Algerian Jewry, with the exception of Jews from the south, the Mzab. The "Crémieux Decree" made the Algerian Jews French citizens, with all the rights and obligations of French law now applying to them, including the obligation to be conscripted into the army and participate in elections. This decree was the first step in a process that led Algerian Jews to preside over community organizations and increase their involvement in colonial politics.

While the structural changes in communal organization and legal standing were forced upon Algerian Jewry, societal and economic changes resulting from their own free choices gradually emerged among Algerian Jewry. No doubt, the slogans of modernization and civilization provided a further impetus to the Algerian Jews into choosing these paths; however, these choices never eliminated the community's traditional dimension. Likewise, the secularization that Algerian Jewry later underwent was distinct from the secularization that the Western and Middle European Jewish communities underwent. Among Algerian Jews, tradition and modernity went hand-in-hand, and the secularization process was pragmatic, not ideological.

Universality, justice and equality, individual rights, the supremacy of reason and empirical knowledge over superstitions and prejudice, the expansion of human and intellectual horizons, the promotion of citizens based on their talents and abilities, personal hygiene and public sanitation, the rule of law and the abolition of subjective judgment (Chetrit 1990)—these were all messages that permeated the atmosphere the air and captivated their listeners, influencing Algerian Jews as they made their choices. Most Algerian Jews did, indeed, integrate into the main processes of modernization:

Urbanization: About 60% of Algerian Jewry lived in Algeria's three major cities—Algiers, Oran, and Constantine.

Demographic Growth: Within a period of about 120 years, the Algerian Jewish community grew eight-fold, from 16,000 to 130,000. This increase was the result not only of the Jewish population's fertility and the traditional emphasis on the Jewish family but also of improved medical care and sanitation and lower mortality rates.

Geographical Dispersion: The wealthy families began to move from the traditional Jewish quarter to the European neighborhoods.

Employment Patterns: As a rule, there was a decrease in "traditional professions", including crafts and trade, and, concurrently, an increase in the rate of wage earners; the number of women employed outside the family framework grew, and even a middle class was created of those working in the free professions or as bureaucrats.

The Imprint of French Education: The French school was the primary conduit of French culture. Its impact was not only educational and cultural but also mental and psychological. The school taught the French language while also transmitting values, norms, and an entire culture. The school gave birth to new patterns of identification derived from the French heritage. After the publication of the Crémieux Decree (1870) and the Jules Ferry Laws (1882), which mandated compulsory primary school education, most Algerian Jewish children received a French primary school education. This process was completed on the eve of World War One and illiteracy in the French language was unheard of in the northern parts of Algeria. The people understood that a French education was the means to improving their social status. The school took upon itself the burden of uniting or "Frenchifying" the population; it was the instrument deemed capable of unifying the

diverse ethnic groups. The Jews successfully adopted the French language and gradually abandoned their traditional Judeo-Arabic one.

These changes were highly significant. The Jews quickly differentiated themselves from the Muslim population and within two generations, they collectively became French "members of the Mosaic religion". It was not only the Crémieux Decree that made them French but also their psychological willingness to take the necessary steps to fulfill this dream, understanding the social advantages that their new status would bestow upon them. The social changes were gradual but undeniable—abandoning Judeo-Arabic for French, adopting French-European dress, and leaving the Jewish quarters for new neighborhoods, where a hitherto unknown relationship developed between the Algerian Jews and the Europeans and the French. The Algerian Jews gradually adopted French first names and came into more frequent contact with the French due to changes in society's professional and economic structure. The Jews became interested in the new ideas, values, and ideologies in vogue at the time, like secularization, nationalism, and scientific rationalism. French schools and French army service were the main forces pulling Jews into French society. The Jews quickly realized that the French school was a useful tool for advancing their upward social and cultural mobility. French education, both compulsory and free, quickly developed a positive image due to its clear advantages. Academic studies and French army service provided the Jews with the opportunity to encounter the "metropolis"—with all its real and illusory charms. Last but not least, military service heightened Algerian Jewry's patriotism, a value that gained expression during both world wars and in the political arena.

Indeed, from the end of the nineteenth century, Algerian Jewry experienced a steady decline in religious practice and in their connection to the synagogue, communal life, traditions, and religious customs, and in their respect for rabbinic authority. However, this process of acculturation was selective and accompanied by some reservations. Algerian Jews were, indeed, French, but they also preserved their distinctiveness, identifying with French culture but maintaining a certain distance. The Jews remained an ethnic community capable of preserving some of their unique characteristics within the colonial context, with the almost complete absence of intermarriage in Algeria signifying exactly how far Algerian Jews were willing to go. Algerian Jewry wished to assimilate the fundaments of French culture without being swallowed up by it.

Jewish education was another factor that enabled the Jewish community to tread the fine line between tradition and modernity for many years.

4. Jewish Education in Algeria—The Basis for Multiple Identities: The Consistorial Period (1830–1900)

Jewish education is the very bedrock of Jewish spiritual life and the observance of the commandments. Before the French conquest, Jewish education occupied a central role in the lives of Algerian Jewish communities, and this reality was made unequivocally clear by the uncompromising willingness adults demonstrated to toil and labor so the children could learn. This emphasis is reflected in the words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Tzemach Duran (the Rashbatz, one of Algeria's leading fifteenth-century Torah scholars). He declared that one must set aside part of the funds in one's estate (or the inheritance one leaves) to educate the orphans, that the community must commit significant funds to children's education, and that the status of those who teach young children be raised to be even comparable to that of the Torah scholars.

Education was fundamentally based on the study of sacred texts and its goal was to shape Jewish identity. The lessons usually took place in the synagogue or the house of study, and the children learned in a Talmud Torah or in a *Midrasch*. The adolescents and adults learned in the yeshiva, which also functioned as the place for teaching Halakha (legal rulings). The learning was connected to and conditioned upon everyday life. The halakhic debates were a function of the halakhic questions that arose from the daily lives and concerns of the community members, which were presented to the halakhic authority.

Similarly, the study of the written and the oral law were connected—as one unified corpus—to the weekly Torah reading (Aminoach 2004; Weinstein 1974).

The French Conquest in 1830 would later bring about changes to the face of Jewish education as the community faced new challenges and tests hidden in the fabric of the modern world. Until the establishment of the Consistory (1845), the *Midrashim* (pl. of *Midrash*) continued to be the main vehicle of Jewish education.

The St. Cloud Decree, issued on 5 November 1845, made the Consistory exclusively responsible for Jewish education on all levels and for designing a new pedagogical program for the *Midraschim.* This decree followed the Altaras Report, published on 1 November 1842, which would later be the basis and political platform for the founding of the Algerian Jewish Consistory, and it was the source for the changes that would take place in the field of Algerian Jewish education (Schwartzfuchs 1981, pp. 75–80). According to the St. Cloud Decree, the chief and regional rabbis' role included teaching the Jewish religion; repeating the obligation to obey French law and to be loyal to France and to protect it on every possible occasion; holding prayer services; praying for the peace of the king and his family in all the synagogues in their regions; supervising the Jewish daycare centers and schools; and overseeing the religious lessons given in them. The second half of the decree established directives clarifying all the technical and substantive elements of a Jewish education. In addition, the decree declared the establishment of daycare centers for children and Jewish schools for boys and girls, emphasizing that the public administrator would supervise them. The administrator was to consult with the Consistory regarding the hiring and firing of teachers, the code of discipline, the learning materials, and the establishment of school committees. The decree also established that "the instruction would include religious studies and the study of the French language (CAHJP, 1066)".

Thus, two types of Jewish educational institutions were created in Algeria—the revised and improved *Midrasch*, supervised by the Consistory, which continued to exist in its traditional form, and a Jewish school (Ecole Israélite), which the Consistory sought to establish in the image of the vision dictated by the Imperial Decree (1845). It was the Consistory's aspiration to make the Ecole Israélite model the leading one in the field of Jewish education.

Until the end of the 1860s and beginning of the 1870s, the two Jewish educational models—the traditional and the modern—could operate without any reciprocity between them. Had it not been for Crémieux's Decree (1870) and the Jules Ferry Law (1882), this dichotomy could have made its mark on Algerian Jewish education for generations (CAHJP, AL 1, 12.7.1852, p. 157).[1] However, this was not to be. The emancipation of Algerian Jewry and their subsequent obligation to follow the French law dictating compulsory primary school education made the notion of a Jewish school irrelevant. The Consistory's supervisory role over the *Midraschim* was expanded (1876), as they became the only vehicles for Algerian Jewish education. The Algerian Consistory's plans to found a Jewish high school also had no chance of coming to fruition, as the Central Consistory was entirely satisfied with the unmediated encounter with French culture that the Algerian Jews could find in the French government schools (Uhry, 1878, 1.1.1876).

The last two decades of the nineteenth century, therefore, were marked by an ongoing erosion in the status of Algerian Jewish education and by the Consistory's strong sense of dissatisfaction. During the 1890s, the Algerian Consistory underwent a soul-searching process and reorganized all areas of their responsibilities, including Jewish education. Powers within the community pushed for change, improvement, and transformation. In response to the severe wave of anti-Semitism that swept through Algeria in 1898, the community leaders believed that the community should regroup around the religious leadership and halt the process of assimilation and estrangement from Jewish heritage that was gaining momentum.

The French Consistory criticized how the *Midraschim* were being run in Algeria, feeling that these institutions were merely stagnating. The Central Consistory in Algeria warned the French Minister of Religions of this in written letters and reports: "Algerian

Jewish religion's state of affairs is getting worse, and it is necessary to correct the situation immediately by taking radical steps," states one of the reports. The report concludes, "The Consistory and the French regime need to urgently reach an agreement regarding the grave and shameful situation that everything concerning Algerian Jewry is caught up in—Jewish ritual, social support, and religious education" (CAHJP AL3, 10.11.1878, p. 159; see also CAHJP, AL4, pp. 47, 89, 95; CAHJP, AL5; CAHJP, HM 2 5106, January 1899, April 1900, February, December 1901, June 1902). The nineteenth century concluded with the Consistory's deep disappointment at the results that failed to reflect all the resources, efforts, and energy that had been invested since the Algerian Consistory had been established.

This crisis was the result of the Consistory's lack of autonomy and its constituents' perception of it as a tool of the regime intended to infuse the Jews with the French model of modernization and strengthen their loyalty to France. The Consistory, which had been imported from France, made the Jews feel like they had no internal leadership and that growth could come only from the intervention of external forces. It was only natural that a sense of estrangement would grow between the leadership and the community. The community's willingness to accept instruction from the leadership, which had not won their trust, was limited. The centrality of French education in the Consistorial worldview overshadowed the importance of Jewish education (Schwarzfuchs 1982).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Consistory began to search for a partner—and, perhaps, for an organization that would take on sole responsibility—for the job of educating Algerian Jewry. The natural partner for such a venture was an organization that already had a close relationship with the French Consistory, an organization that more than any other emblazoned education on its banner—L'Alliance Israélite Universelle, which had been founded in 1860. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the transition from the Consistorial stage to the L'Alliance Israélite Universelle stage in Algerian Jewish education, while the local foundations for Jewish education were strengthened (Univers Israélites 50, 1898).

5. The Alliance Enters the Field of Algerian Jewish Education (1900–1907)

Albert Confino (1866–1958), the Alliance's official representative in Algeria from 1912 to 1955, explained the Alliance's reluctance to take on this communal role. According to him, the Alliance felt that it had nothing to contribute to Algerian Jewish children's education because as far as they were concerned, the Jews were already receiving the finest education possible—French education. However, the anti-Semitic unrest in Algerian (in 1898) convinced the Alliance's leaders in Paris that they had erred in their judgment regarding this community. Therefore, the Alliance decided that it should take upon itself the task of Algerian Jewish education on the Jews' behalf, so that they could help Algerian Jews complete the process of adopting French culture and, in so doing, indirectly combat Algerian anti-Semitism. The scholar Dr. David Cohen emphasizes that the Alliance was reluctant to use the same blueprint—the integration of Jewish and general studies—that they had employed throughout the Mediterranean basin for the Algerian "Jewish school" (Cohen 1995). Confino feared:

> Depriving our children of daily contact with their friends belonging to other faiths and religions, and, thus, slowing down the process of integration so devoutly to be wished for. This would have given our enemies at the time ammunition for calling out what they perceived to be our sectarianism. (Cohen 1995, p. 106)

Therefore, due to its desire to stand with the Algerian Jewish community in its time of strife and to prevent "social and cultural isolation," the Alliance proposed an original and novel solution: it would focus on teaching Judaism both through the Talmud Torah network and through charitable works, in the framework of the *Ha-Avodah* (the Labor) society, in which the students would also learn professions (CAHJP, HM 2 5190 a, b, 3.3.1903; Navon 1935, p. 126; Navon 1902–1903).

The leaders of the Alliance advocated for three fundamental principles that were included in the Algerian Talmud-Torah study program: education leading to an ethical life

"that is derived from the principles found in Tanakh"; knowledge of Jewish history designed to provide the students with a source of inspiration, experience, and identification; and Torah study as "the beginning point and origin of sacred studies, and this is the cornerstone of our entire educational enterprise." (Cohen 1995, pp. 112–13).

However, we must qualify these statements by clarifying exactly what the Alliance meant by "Torah," "Jewish religion," "Judaism," and "Jewish studies." The Alliance's attitude towards Jewish studies was predicated on loyalty to the values of the French Revolution and the appreciation of French Jewry's advancement under the banners of the Second French Republic and the Empire. From the Alliance's perspective, Judaism was primarily a religion. Every Jew was honor-bound to be faithful to the tradition. A Jew had to remain a Jew. However, there was no contradiction between loyalty to Judaism and loyalty to the values of the legacy of the French Revolution; in fact, the opposite was the case—the two were complementary. Thus, although the Alliance's leaders were avowedly secular Jews, they believed that Jewish studies had to be provided alongside the general ones prevalent in Western Europe at the time. Therefore, the Alliance supported "assimilation," in the most positive way the term was used at the time: adopting the most suitable path enabling the modern Jew to remain a Jew and simultaneously to be absorbed to the greatest degree in the national society in which he dwells.

The Alliance began operating its many activities with great enthusiasm and vigor, but it had to cope with the barriers to becoming integrated within the community. The first decade of the twentieth century was marked by the Alliance's struggle to enter the field of Algerian Jewish education. The Alliance's appearance in Algeria threatened the traditional educational system. It posed a cultural, economic, and social threat, and it created a struggle over student recruitment, the locus of authority, and the source of livelihood for rabbis and teachers. The Alliance's negative attitude toward the *Midraschim* only intensified the threat. When the Alliance, supported by the chief rabbis, decided to either abolish the *Midraschim* or merge them with their own framework, it signaled the opening of a prolonged struggle. Unlike the Consistory, which had supervised the *Midraschim* (1876), the Alliance sought to create a new kind of entity, albeit based on the local rabbi-teachers; unlike the Consistory, which wanted to establish a Jewish school based on the French blueprint alongside of the existing *Midraschim*, the Alliance aspired to unify the entire Jewish educational system.

In June 1907, the lengthy history of misunderstandings and disagreements between the Alliance, the Consistory, and the Jewish community came to a close. The heads of the *Midraschim* agreed to integrate the institutions under their aegis into the Alliance's framework. At this point, a Consistorial Educational Committee was appointed comprised of twelve members, among them the directors of the Alliance and the Algerian chief rabbis. This committee, which was responsible primarily for the financial side of Jewish education, demonstrated the Alliance's successful unification of the community's educational forces (CAHJP, HM 2, 5898 a, b; CAHJP, AL 7, p. 27, 30 October 1912, pp. 240–55, 250; CAHJP, AL 8, p. 72; Bulletin de l'AIU, Statistiques des Ecoles, 1911, pp. 645–49).

6. The Alliance and the Reform of the Algerian Jewish Education System (1907–1939)

While the first decade was devoted to conceptualizing the system and setting it up, the next two decades saw the educational system explore the question of education and cope with issues that surfaced.

The rabbi teachers in Algeria were primarily trained in the advanced yeshivas bearing the name *Etz Hayyim*. These particular institutions offered the highest level of Jewish education available in the three largest cities: Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. These yeshivas underwent ups and downs during the nineteenth century, as did the status of the rabbi teacher. With the approach of World War I, we witness an increasing awareness of the importance of the higher adolescent and adult education system and the profound importance of resurrecting Hebrew and Jewish studies on all levels. At the initiative of Moïses Scebat, the *Etz Hayyim* Society was founded, taking upon itself the task of raising the spiritual and educational level in Algiers (in 1920). The Alliance immediately joined

this movement. In 1928, *Etz Hayyim* societies with these same educational goals were established in Oran and Constantine. All these steps were taken against the backdrop of the strengthening of the rabbi teacher's status in Algeria. The rabbi teacher's status continued to strengthen until World War II. This was related to two processes. One was the local community's ever-increasing power in determining its own character and fate. This process had two significant consequences that influenced the rabbi teacher's status. The spiritual leadership that had been imported from France and that had, until this point, discriminated against the local leadership, gradually gave way to the local rabbis, thus leading to their increased stature. The Consistory also took care to ensure the rabbi teacher's stature and to undertake to find employment for the *Etz Hayyim* yeshiva graduates in their fields of specialization. The second process was related to the connection between the studies in the *Etz Hayyim* yeshiva and the general education, acquired in the French public school system. The rabbi teachers spent a substantial amount of time engaged in Jewish studies at the *Etz Hayyim* yeshiva, but gradually, an ever-increasing number of *Etz Hayyim* graduates earned the *Brevet Elémentaire* (granted at the end of Grade 9, signifying a basic French education), the *Certificat d'Etudes* (signifying the completion of France's core curriculum), and even the *Baccalauréat* (equivalent to an American high school diploma). Not only did the rabbi teacher's knowledge of the French language make communication with the students easier, but it also influenced the quality of their instruction. Furthermore, it was a positive sign of the rabbi teacher's social advancement and their acquisition of broader knowledge, which were also indicators of the rabbi teacher's enhanced status. The track for training rabbi teachers, which began in the *Etz Hayyim* yeshiva, reached the rabbinical seminary in Paris, gradually becoming a prestigious track attended by the very best students (CAHJP AL 3, p. 205; CAHJP AL 7, pp. 6, 198, 200, 233, 317; CAHJP AL 9, p. 10).

Girls' Education: Unlike the situation in France, where education for girls had been mandated since 1873, in Algeria, the girls were not part of any Jewish educational framework until the 1930s. Before the Alliance's arrival in Algeria, girls received no organized religious education. The Alliance wanted to introduce Jewish education for girls as soon as the organization was established in the educational arena—at the end of their first decade of activity in Algeria. As Alliance leadership wrote:

> The feminine element impacts on everything—on family life, on children's education, and on the community's future; we attribute the greatest possible importance to the religious and moral education of the girls who will become tomorrow's mothers in their own homes. (CAHJP HM 2 5898 a, b, 30 October 1912, pp. 25–26)

There was a gap between the girls' level of education in French and their knowledge of Judaism (Bashan 2006). The Alliance believed that the young and adult women gave equal weight to superstitions and legends as to Judaism's precepts. Confino stressed that:

> We attribute the greatest possible importance to the religious and moral education of the girls who will become tomorrow's mothers and in their homes will practice the Jewish tradition with devotion that is intended to make their children into good Jews and useful citizens for the motherland and the community. (CAHJP HM 2 5898 a, b, pp. 25–26).

The girls' education was not an immediate success, and it was only introduced in the large population centers—Oran, Constantine, and Algiers—beginning in 1930, 1935, and 1936, respectively. Parents in the smaller communities of the interior, who were more conservative in outlook, did not send their daughters to Talmud Torah, and only the boys attended. In the large communities, many women also refrained from sending their daughters to Talmud-Torah on Sundays and Thursdays, claiming that they were needed to perform housework.

Moving beyond the Jewish Quarter Walls: As the Jews moved beyond the walls of the traditional Jewish quarter, so did the boundaries of Jewish education expand towards the new neighborhoods. The decision to build synagogues with Talmud-Torah study halls next to them solved the problem created by the distance between these new neighborhoods

and the educational infrastructure, which initially remained solely located in the Jewish quarter. Eventually, a small distinction became apparent between the Jewish education offered in the traditional Jewish quarter and the new neighborhoods. The Jewish education in the Jewish quarter was perceived as more old-fashioned than that offered in the new neighborhoods, where the French language was more dominant and the pedagogical approach was more modern and open to changes (CAHJP, AL 9, p. 14; AL 10).

The Reorganization of Higher Jewish Education—The *Etz Hayyim* Yeshivas. As I have mentioned above, the *Etz Hayyim* yeshivas located in Algiers and Constantine were venerable communal institutions. Their influence and power were notable during the nineteenth century; however, at the beginning of the twentieth century, they underwent changes and a reorganization. The 1920s is marked as the period in which the enactment dictating "regulations and the design of an educational program suited to modern life" (private archive of Rabbi Maurice Zerbib, dedication of Yeshiva Etz Hayyim, Constantine, 1928; AL 7, p. 10; see also AL 7, pp. 198, 239, 317) was applied to these yeshivas in Algiers (in 1920) and in Oran and Constantine (both in 1928). The rebirth of the *Etz Hayyim* yeshivas in their modern form brought three issues back to the fore: the status of the rabbi teacher; the modernization of study, halakhic rulings, and pedagogy; and the connection between higher Jewish education and Jewish primary education. The founders of the revitalized yeshiva were certain about the yeshiva's centrality in the community's spiritual life and they maintained that the community could no longer turn a blind eye to whomever was appointed to run the yeshiva. They believed that the yeshivas of the past could not be compared to contemporary ones, as in the past, the yeshivas flourished, the rabbis were at the pinnacle of the social pyramid, and religious principles dictated the educational path taken by a child from a young age until entering the yeshiva. Furthermore, the yeshivas of the past, before the era of change, trained the rabbis, most—if not all—of whom were Torah scholars who received the Torah transmitted to them from generation to generation, without any changes being made in the methods of instruction. "That was a period in which all the Jews could proudly say "We are all Torah scholars. We all know the Torah.'" (private archive of Rabbi Maurice Zerbib, dedication of Yeshiva Etz Hayyim, Constantine, 1928; AL 7, p. 10; see also AL 7, pp. 198, 239, 317). The crisis of faith that afflicted the generation and the lack of financial stability were—so they claimed—the stumbling blocks preventing the development of Jewish education on all its levels (CAHJP AL 7, p. 239).

The main educational and spiritual messages that the recharged and innovative—the renewed and renewing—yeshiva heads had to impart concerned the need to communicate with the student in a language that would penetrate his heart and that would interest him; the importance of addressing the student's intellect and not just focusing on what he could remember; the importance of illuminating the rationality of Jewish thought through the ages—accompanied by an appeal to the student's religious feelings; the importance of translating and explaining the texts being studied and making them intelligible to the student; the need to establish a synthesis between the study of Jewish culture—Jewish history and Jewish music—and the study of general culture—classical and modern French literature and French history—in a way that would allow Jewish culture to become a source of inspiration and identification; and most importantly, to present Jewish culture to the student in a clear, tangible, and harmonious fashion. By adopting this approach, the *Etz Hayyim* yeshiva integrated itself into the overall framework whose goal was to establish a new infrastructure that would support a fresh blueprint for Algerian Jewish education. Algerian Jewish education traditionally involved the study of the following books and subjects: Tanakh and Tanakh commentaries—with Rashi's commentary being the most basic and fundamental one; the Hebrew language and Torah cantillation notes; the *shurūḥ*—the Judeo-Arabic translation of the Holy Scriptures; Oral Torah and Jewish law; prayers; Kabbalah; Jewish thought; and the principles of faith (CAHJP HM 2 5898 a, b; CAHJP HM 2 5106; CAHJP HM 2 4948; Guedj 1887).

Some of these subjects were also taught in an integrative fashion. For example, Tanakh classes also incorporated the study of Hebrew, geography, ancient Near Eastern history,

prayer, and Jewish thought. The need for translations from Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, and Aramaic into French created a dependency and connection between three central subjects in the Jewish educational system in Algeria—the Bible, Talmud, and Hebrew.

In that modern era, teaching Hebrew was in and of itself an innovation. The local rabbi teachers and the Alliance carefully considered new and more teaching approaches that were more effective than the older ones. Of course, after World War II, the various Land of Israel movements' influence on teaching modern Hebrew increased exponentially; however, the modern methodologies and the constant attempt to improve them were already a part of the educational system from the beginning of the twentieth century.

This was also true of Talmud study, which remained fundamentally traditional but was presented in a modern fashion, based on philosophical criteria reflecting Judaism's moral calculus as apprehended by the Sages of Antiquity. The crown jewel of this new curriculum derived from Jewish culture was the study of Jewish history. The Consistory and the Alliance encouraged the teaching of Jewish history, a field that was thought to shape the character of its students and that would help them cope with the "crisis of faith" afflicting the community by strengthening their faith and pride in their nation—they would learn the history of their nation, a nation scattered and oppressed throughout the ages, a nation that preserved its vitality and also continued to fulfill its divine mission.[2]

While the Alliance did promote the study of history, it also fought against the use of Judeo-Arabic in the Talmud Torah system. It believed that the use of Judeo-Arabic was in direct contradiction with Algerian Jewry's emancipation. Confino thought that "the task [of the rabbis] is to teach Hebrew and translate it into the country's official language. This had been done in the past during the Arab conquest, and, today, when France is in power, we should do it with French." (Cohen 1995, p. 122). This struggle exemplifies the lack of understanding that remained between the Alliance and the local Jews—the Alliance failed to understand Judeo-Arabic's singular position in the Algerian iteration of Judaism. It was not merely the lingua franca but a form of holy speech (*shurūḥ*) closely tied to the Holy Scriptures. The Alliance, deeply committed to the sacrosanct mission of spreading French culture, had difficulty respecting the local community's emotional needs and yearnings. The Alliance's battle was successful—on the eve of World War II, the French language obtained recognition in the Algerian Talmud Torah network. However, in traditional communities, such as Constantine, Judeo-Arabic did not disappear from the cultural landscape. Modern academic research has, indeed, revealed the centrality of Judeo-Arabic to Algerian Judaism even in later periods.

Dr. David Cohen reported that in the Alliance's "study house" there was a strong link between Jewish education and Jewish charitable enterprises. The *Le Travail* organization, founded in 1890, was its oldest venture. By World War II, the Alliance had founded thirty charitable enterprises throughout Algeria. Their programming included helping expectant women mothers and women who had given birth; issuing clothing to needy students; training seamstresses, embroiderers, and stenographers; aiding the orphans and the blind; providing dowries for brides; and the organization of a forum for Jewish culture that primarily planned lectures. We should note that the founders of these charitable enterprises were mainly graduates of Alliance-Algeria's Talmud Torah network. This indicates that there was an undeniable connection between the Alliance's socio-educational orientation and its production of leaders and community members who came to the aid of others (Cohen 1995).

7. Conclusions

The communal, social, and cultural changes that were accelerated by French colonialism altered Algerian Jewish education. However, the Spanish Jewish legacy provided the community with tools to cope with these changes. By the twentieth century, a reciprocal relationship was developed between the Alliance and the rabbi teachers that benefitted Algerian Jewish education. Slowly but surely, the local rabbi teachers developed a positive regard for the Alliance's plan to establish order in the Jewish educational system,

applying a systematic approach. Likewise, the Alliance finally realized that there was no need to negate the traditional foundations of Jewish education to bring about their desired educational reform. It was enough to simply repair the framework and add content to enable the community to advance towards Enlightenment culture, free of tensions or sensitivities. While some individual rabbis and Zionist leaders continued to disagree with the Alliance approach, they did not cast a pall over its fundamental activities, which as a rule successfully put down roots and were regarded positively throughout Algeria.

It is interesting to note that while the Alliance was a distinctly modernizing factor in most Mediterranean basin countries; in Algeria, it intentionally adopted a conservative stance: as in the past, Jewish education continued to mold Jewish identity and was not primarily functional as it was in other countries. The Alliance contended that in Algeria, the Jews received practical education in the French public schools, where the Jewish youth was exposed to French culture in all its aspects and, therefore, could achieve educational and professional success and integrate properly into French society. This was not only a necessary function of the Alliance's educational strategy but also a result of the local rabbi educators' significant influence, for while these men did integrate themselves into the Alliance educational system, they achieved such dominance within the system that its assimilatory characteristics disappeared without a trace.

The Alliance introduced equality into Jewish education; because of this blueprint for Jewish education, all the children in the community, not only those from families with the financial means, could benefit from a Jewish education. Furthermore, all signs indicate that the level of learning in the Talmud–Torah system was improved, due to students attending Talmud Torah year-round, every Monday and Tuesday, rather than attending only during the summer.

Jewish education in Algeria strengthened the Jews' loyalty to their Jewish identity and legacy and partially healed the fissures that increasingly appeared in the Jewish society exposed to an era of transformations. The multiplicity of identities that Algerian Jewry assumed during the French colonial period is the most important factor to recognize for accurately assessing Algerian Jewish history. The Algerian Jews' general and Jewish education both laid the foundations and provided the infrastructure for these multiple identities. Rabbi Y.L. Ashkenazi (Manitou), a member of the Parisian School of Jewish Thought, one of the architects of Hebrew identity, expertly analyzed the complexity of Algerian Jewish identity during the French colonial period in an interview I conducted with him. This complexity was both the basis for Algerian Jewry's rich and full Jewish identity and the Achille's heel of Algerian Jewish historiography:

The Algerian Jews did not consider the French colonial period to be a transition period, but rather the continuation of the exilic period with the addition of the French element. This identity derives from Hebrew-Arabic-Berber origins in terms of the general culture, possesses a Spanish character in terms of tradition and custom, a French character in terms of official citizenship, and a Hebrew influence from a liturgical standpoint, and all of this against the background of Andalusian music with all its nuances. There are Algerian Jewish figures who in their own unique ways succeeded in transforming their Jewish identity, which was fundamentally of a medieval Jewish-Arabic character, into a crypto-European, nineteenth and twentieth century one. Advancing and shepherding this "identity transformation" was no simple matter.

Our fathers' and grandfathers' generations were the ones who succeeded in doing this. As Israelis of French extraction and as a community indigenous to Algeria, we owe them our thanks. They were able to transmit a loyalty to Judaism that allowed us to once again become Hebrews after a lacuna of two-thousand years, during which we lived in parentheses. We think about them when we recite the verse praising faithfulness: "He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives".

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Notes

[1] "The French establishment criticized the inefficiency of the Jewish schools for the fact that they were not integrated into France's educational policy." (CAHJP AL 3, p. 205; see *Archives Israélites* 1856 (Constantine le 17.8.1856)).

[2] See the exhaustive, 420-item inventory of the rabbinic literature written by Algerian rabbis that served, among other things, the Jewish educational system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Charvit 2019, pp. 85–101).

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Screening Out Their Own: Muslim Gatekeepers of Jewish Spaces in Morocco

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Abstract: The literature on ethnic groups that were formed following migration reveals how symbolic and socioeconomic boundaries are manipulated by veteran groups to keep out the unwanted immigrants. It shows how these boundaries are to maintain and preserve the veterans' dominant position. The case of the tiny Jewish minority living nowadays in Morocco reveals a seemingly contradictory mechanism: Muslim gatekeepers, who are part of the huge majority in Morocco, screen out their coreligionists from Jewish spaces. This gatekeeping fortifies the Jewish notion of exclusive spaces within which they feel safe as a tiny and fragile community. A close ethnographic gaze reveals that screening out Muslims is enabled due to a shared "cultural intimacy" that permits the minority to control access to their spaces. This paper sheds light on a deep level of cultural understanding that allows Jews to maintain bearable life as a dwindling minority in Morocco—despite their motivations to be separated—by appointing Muslim gatekeepers.

Keywords: Moroccan Jews; religious minorities; gatekeepers; cultural intimacy

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1. Boundaries at Risk

We were sitting for a Shabbat afternoon tea in the yard of the boarding high school of ENH (*École Normale Hébraïque*) in Casablanca. I was invited by the general director of the *Ittihad* educational system (known also as *Alliance Israélite Universelle*) for a special Shabbat that celebrated the approaching oral examination in Hebrew that was part of the students' *baccalauréat*—the French national academic qualification obtained at the completion of the *lycée* (secondary school). The examinations were to be held by two supervisors who came all the way from Paris. The ENH teachers seemed in unrest and anxious but did their best to appear calm, as it was clear that the French supervisors were also assessing their competence as Hebrew teachers.

Suddenly, a few stones were thrown in our direction from behind the high walls of the school. The subsequent sounds of laughter of boys seemed to unsettle the teachers, yet they did their best to restrain their reactions. We quietly moved our chairs to the interior of the compound, away from the reach of the stones, and continued to converse. After brief and futile attempts to proceed with the conversation interrupted by the stones, one of the male teachers, Monsieur Cohen, recollected an incident like that we just experienced, and that ended up as an educational lesson: he found the home of the Muslim boy who threw stones, but when his father wanted to punish his son, the teacher asked to instead demand the boy to put the stone he threw back to their original place. "It was an effective educational act!" declared with satisfaction Monsieur Cohen. Then, as if with no apparent reason, the conversations, which thus far were mostly about the Hebrew oral exams to be taken two days after, changed direction. It began with *Mme* Miriam Levy, a Hebrew teacher in her fifties, who briefly mentioned the story of a Jew who converted to Islam after getting married to a Muslim man. "I am sure she was drugged ... ," said Miriam. Her fellow teacher, Mme Emily Sitbon, elaborated: "everyone says that *sh'chur* (سحر, magic)[1] was involved. You can't explain otherwise why she would marry a Muslim! But then her

parents went to a powerful (she) Jewish magician to undo the sh'chur. After a few months, that woman escaped to Europe."

Now more participants joined in the conversation on "mixed" intimate relationships between Jews and Muslims. Madam Ben-Amo recounted a formidable story of:

> "a young obese Jewish woman who got pregnant after having sex with a young Muslim. She regularly returned late from work. But only for one hour a day. Her parents were not suspicious. Apparently, she spent that hour with her Muslim lover. No one could notice that she was pregnant because of her obesity, even in her ninth month. One day she simply disappeared. Her parents asked the help of the Jewish Community Offices to find their daughter. It took them only a couple of hours to find her. When she introduced her newborn to her finders nobody believed her, because she concealed her pregnancy so well. But then it was an undeniable fact. Here it was. Her parents asked the Jewish physician, who was to examine her the following day, to take the opportunity to secretly ask her if she was willing to escape and to assure her that her parents are not mad at her; to the contrary, they are willing to help. Due day, the physician asked everyone to leave, although according to Muslim law he cannot examine her without the presence of a woman (nurse). The father of the newborn, who was a kind person, agreed and even encouraged everybody to leave the room. And indeed, the physician followed the parents' instructions. However, the daughter did not respond to her parents' offer. A few days later the daughter heard that her mother is very ill . . . it was clear that she is expected to pay a visit to her mother. When she came to her parent's home, her parents drugged her and smuggled her outside Morocco. The father remained in Morocco with the baby . . . "

The event of the stone throwing, and the stories ensuing it, beg for symbolic interpretation; particularly, how passivity is rhetorically invoked when facing instances in which religious boundaries are crossed or threatened: through the spell that was cast upon the woman of the first story that removed agency from her, or how drugs freed the new mother from her responsibilities as a partner of her Muslim lover and a mother to her newborn. This rhetoric also released the Jews from the need to be accountable (to their communities) for their breaching of religious boundaries. Of the various interpretative venues which one can take, what was striking for me was the "here and now" dynamic that followed the throwing of the stones; namely, recruiting "passivity" that keep an appearance of control when this was deeply shaken. The appearance of control was presented either by the unconvincing demonstration of restraint following the throwing of the stones or by *discussing* parallel occurrences in which order was reestablished (putting the stones back to their original place) while Jews were unprotected or vulnerable. In sum, the collapse of the shielding exclusive Jewish space, manifested by the stones flying over the wall in our direction, was accompanied by a rhetoric of inaction.

Jewish notion of control is not to be put to test (Levy 2020). Apparently, for Jews living in Morocco today, a rhetoric of inaction, and more broadly—of passivity—is thus a useful (though not exclusive) way to keep the sense of control intact. To be sure, Jews do act when facing Muslims, as the concrete act of searching the missing daughter, or the recruiting of the physician, demonstrate. Passivity is a common rhetorical device of the Jewish minority; it does not attest to a concrete social (in)action. That rhetorical choice is recruited in instances when boundaries are crossed against Jewish will, and where cultural mechanisms that work to monitor the crossing of boundaries are not to be found. In the case of Jews in Morocco, one crucial and effective mechanism is the Muslim gatekeeper.

This paper will thus examine ethnographically the daily and down-to-earth dynamic of gatekeeping as a cultural mechanism that recruits a member of the majority group to protect the minority. That choice is of great interest because it invites in a member of a group that is expected to be excluded. By so doing, members of the minority group expose their most intimate secrets that they wish to conceal from the Muslim majority. That invitation in grants Muslim gatekeepers an opportunity to have a close gaze on the feeble group,

is tolerable due to shared “cultural intimacy” (henceforth), which makes that seemingly paradoxical move transparent to all.

2. Political Vulnerability and the Constitution of Cultural Boundaries

It would be almost redundant to state that cultural boundaries and their operation are at the heart of this study. As the opening vignette shows, it deals with what seems to be a transgression of a boundary that separates two distinct religious and ethnic groups. The study of boundaries is vast; it preoccupied social scientists such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, and anthropologists such as Boaz, Benedict, Mead, and Douglas. The overwhelming literature on this topic is easier to capture with the assistance of comprehensive reviews that offer tools to approach it. Lamont and Molnár (2002), for instance, suggest that researchers distinguish between two types of boundaries: symbolic and social. For them, the former “are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality” (Lamont and Molnár 2002, p. 168). Social boundaries, on the other hand “are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality” (ibid.). Ethnographically, however, distinguishing between the two analytical types of boundaries is practically impossible if one adopts an interpretative approach (like I do); boundaries, like any other human phenomenon, are manifested simultaneously: as social agents, people *do* act but their actions are unseparated from meaning they infuse in them (Geertz 1973).

Following the pioneering work of Barth, I argue that interethnic encounters take place at the boundaries that supposedly partition ethnic groups. Indeed, boundaries do not separate between ethnic groups; they are the very locus of interactions. In Barth’s words: “ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built” (Barth 1969, p. 10). I wish to take one step ahead and clarify that gatekeepers serve as facilitators that mediate interactions in the boundary. They are positioned in entry/exit points along the lines of ethnic boundaries as they monitor the circulation of people who identify themselves (or are identified by others) as pertaining to different groups. To be sure, the kind of interactions between ethnic groups is affected by power relationships between them. When vulnerable ethnic groups interact within themselves, they can eschew the blunt reality of their weakness. However, absolute self-isolation is rare; minorities cannot avoid meeting other, more powerful groups, within what the literature has named “spaces of encounter” (Leitner 2012). In these spaces, their inferiority and vulnerability are apparent to all.

The increasing study of spatial encounters between politically uneven groups often focuses on tensions between long-time residents and new migrants (Allen and Turner 1996; Nelson and Hiemstra 2008; Winders 2005). By and large, these relationships are constituted by the human flow from “second” and “third” world countries to the abundant West. This migration leads to studies that portray spatial encounters between groups in which the powerful long-term resident is ethnically and/or racially unmarked, while the Others are newly arriving groups marked by distinct, often visible, traits (Romero 2008). Encounters between migrants who recently arrived from a different cultural ecology and veteran local groups are saturated with a sense of strangeness. In their encounters, the deracinated newcomers, like their hosts, experience in myriad ways misunderstanding. This, according to the research, unavoidably “incite processes of Othering and racialization, [that] are marred with racism, elicit strong emotions (primarily fear), and result in frictions, conflicts, and contestations” (Leitner 2012, p. 829).

A fundamental premise mutual to these studies is the existence of frictions and tensions generated not only by cultural differences and strangeness but also (and often primarily) by the very fact that these groups “find themselves thrown together” in shared spaces of

encounters (Leitner 2012, p. 829). The subjects of these studies are the disenfranchised groups, which usually means that the "ethnic problem" results from their status as 'strange' and extrinsic immigrants.

This article relates to a socio-political and cultural context that like the cases mentioned above underwent a massive migration. But, unlike them, it does not involve immigration but rather emigration. That is, my anthropological gaze is not towards the migrating people in their new, strange, hosting country. The unique case here observes the dynamic between the massive Muslim majority and the minuscule Jewish minority that chose not to emigrate along with their coreligionists but rather stay put in Morocco. Unlike the case of Whites in South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 2008), for instance, migration is a key experience that formed the groups as a miniscule minority and colors their daily experiences. However, like Whites in South Africa (Crapanzano 1986), Jews are waiting for their extinction as a community; they live under the straining sense that they are doomed as a collectivity because of their unstoppable diminution.

One way to cope with this demographic and political dramatically unequal reality is by fortifying a sense of control that is partially maintained by appointing Muslim gatekeepers to protect their spaces. They entrust Muslims with a task that releases Jews from being active in their own protection. With this passive way, they hope to minimize the instances in which they risk to "find themselves thrown together". Crucial to indicate already at this point is that the spaces that Muslim gatekeepers monitor are neither uniquely Jewish nor always successfully protected.

To comprehend this socio-political and cultural way of life that necessitates the employment of Muslim gatekeepers, a short, even brief, historical contextualization is needed.

3. The Emigration of Moroccan Jews

Demographically, Jews were dispersed all over Morocco for a very long period (Boum 2010; Laskier 2012). Some estimate that Jews lived in North Africa as of the destruction of the Second Temple. Hirschberg (1965, p. 5) contends that the first documentations of Jews living west of Egypt date to the third century BC, during the rule of Ptolemy I (367 BC–282 BC). Jews lived in cities, towns, and small villages. The wide scattering of Jews was to be changed in shape following a royal decree in the 15th century, which demanded Jews to concentrate in distinct spaces known in due time as the *mellah* (Bilu and Levy 1996; Flamand 1957; Gottreich 2007; Miller 1998). This spatial concentration did not involve a socio-cultural disconnect between Jews and Muslims as their wide spatial dispersion throughout Morocco lent itself to intensive and daily interactions with Muslims. Yet, these encounters were based on unequal relationships. After all, Jews were considered *dhimma*—a monotheistic minority that is free to practice its religious rituals but that was symbolically and politically subjugated to Islam. The concrete implementation of the dhimmi status to actual life was quite diverse, as it was often the case that the practicalities of being a dhimmi differed according to time and space (Gottreich 2020, pp. 26–30).

This intricate socio-cultural fabric was to be changed gradually towards modern times, and it is lucidly manifested in the gradual, yet steady, Jewish move to cities and towns. By the 18th century, a large portion of Moroccan Jews lived in urban spaces. Although Jews did not exceed 3% of the entire Moroccan population (less than 100,000 souls) in the mid-19th century, different censuses estimate that between 25% and 40% (depending on the poll) of the Jews lived in central cities. At the end of that century, more than 60% of Moroccan Jews lived in those cities while, at the same time, 80% of the Muslim population was rural (Abitbol 2004).

The moderate changes following historical events came to an end and were irrecoverably destroyed by intense and galloping historical developments: French colonialism (formally established in 1912), the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the establishment of a free Morocco following the end of French colonialism (1956). A dramatic outcome of these developments was a massive Jewish emigration. In about 70 years, the Jewish population in Morocco dropped fast. While in its peak (the 1940s) Jews numbered between

250–300 thousand souls, in the 1980s they numbered about 5000 people and nowadays there are less than 1800 Jews all over Morocco, most of whom (about 90%) live in Casablanca. Indeed, after two thousand years, Morocco is (almost) emptied of its Jews.

As minuscule as the community might be, I nevertheless wish to focus on the Jews who remained put in Morocco, instead of doing what the sociology of migration often does: follow the migrants in their new socio-cultural ecology. And unlike the study of spaces of encounters, I do not focus on a field that is saturated with strangeness; the study introduced here is based on an ethnographic setting in which two groups are quite familiar with each other. As said in the above brief historical account, Jews and Muslims in North Africa share a long, intimate history. The relationship between the Jews and Muslims in present-day Morocco is culturally intimate. Yet, that intimacy is saturated with ambivalence (Levy 1994), which is dealt with through sociocultural mechanisms that enable, as well as stem from, a shared "cultural intimacy". This concept, borrowed from Herzfeld's work, refers to "the recognition of those aspects of cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation" (Herzfeld 1997, p. 3). Elsewhere Levy (2020) has demonstrated that while relationships are ambivalent, and while this ambivalence drives Jews to strive for separate and exclusive spaces, this drive can be attained only by the cooperation of Muslims. That is, while Jewish exclusive spaces are there to prevent Muslims to be exposed to embarrassing expressions Jews utter about them, they need Muslims to constitute and maintain these spaces. Moreover, these Muslims are witnessing the expressions and utterances that should be concealed from them. That confusing complex state is made possible because all involved share a cultural intimacy on a deeper level. Both Muslims and Jews fully understand and accept the need for exclusive Jewish spaces.

In this paper, I will focus on one sociocultural mechanism that fortifies the *sense* of control over these exclusive Jewish spaces, and at the same time, how this mechanism stems from the sense of shared cultural intimacy with them. Particularly, I will analyze the dynamics between Jews and their Muslim gatekeepers that allow the minuscule Jewish minority to keep (almost) intact the *idea* that they can hold exclusive protecting Jewish spaces.

4. Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers, or "the guardians of the threshold" as called by Leach (1983, p. 253), are symbolically positioned betwixt and between. Presumably, like a bridge, the gatekeeper holds the foot in two places, enabling a safe and monitored passage from one side to the other.[2] This view assumes that the gatekeeper is someone who moves between cultures to provide information that is essential to link people; it sees the gatekeeper as a facilitator, or mediator (Kurtz 1968).

Yet, gatekeepers are not like an indifferent bridge; they are active agents who hold power: they hold the mandate to include and exclude. Indeed, as Singh and Douglas claim, the gatekeeper is "someone who controls access to an institution or an organisation" (Singh and Wassenaar 2016, p. 42). Their control appears in various ways. Sometimes, the work of gatekeeping is executed by holding resources crucial for having access to a social or political realm (Beresford 2015). Since gatekeepers have the mandate and ability to monitor the access to resources and opportunities, their work risks igniting "a volatile and sometimes violent battle over who controls the 'gate'" (Beresford 2015, p. 229). Surely, this risk exists only when the partitioning work of gatekeeping, or better the "boundary work" (Gieryn 1983) is not transparent to all involved (see Bourdieu 1979).

Unlike an indifferent bridge, the social identity of the gatekeeper might turn part and parcel of the logic that guides the work of selection. Indeed, some researchers have argued that the principle of homophily—the love of the same—is of crucial importance in understanding the logic of selection. Homophily implies "that distance in terms of

social characteristics translates into network distance" (McPherson et al. 2001, p. 416). Gatekeepers, thus, will screen out those who are perceived as "different" from them. According to this logic, hemophilia, which guides the work of screening out, might work to produce homogeneity. The work of screening out is based on essentialized identities that lean on preemptive mechanisms that facilitate a wide range of manifestations of xenophobia: misogyny, racism, antisemitism, and alike. Indeed, the principle of homophily explains, according to feminist approaches, men's screening out of women in their efforts to take a position, for instance, in academia (e.g., Van den Brink and Benschop 2014). In the same vein, that logic works to exclude, for instance, LGBTI people by Black Churches gatekeepers, "as they see same-sex relationships and policy as oppositional to the Black identity and Black sociopolitical progress" (Lewis 2022, p. 1; see also Kumah-Abiwu 2019). Or, for instance, teachers and career counselors in USA schools act like gatekeepers; they have a priori racist stereotypes about African American students; they underestimate their learning abilities and their chances to succeed (Shizha et al. 2020).

Homogeneity, the result of gatekeeping, is a tool to constitute, maintain, and fortify social superiority (Snyder 1976). That superiority is fortified by the very ability to be included in a social sphere that excludes Others. These Others, (as Ours) confirm the reality of hierarchy and validate its objectivity. Gatekeepers, thus, are part of a toolkit aimed at attaining these sociological results.

Keeping in mind the effect of hemophilia, the case of Muslim gatekeepers that maintain exclusive Jewish spaces is thus particularly intriguing, as they appear to do just the opposite of what the literature argues: they seem to be screening out their own. In what follows, I will thus present the role and positions of Muslim gatekeepers in Jewish life in contemporary Morocco.

5. Guards and Gatekeepers of Jewish Spaces

Although not completely absent, instances like the otherwise inconsequential event of stone-throwing are relatively rare. Jews use several strategies to deter such possible threats that, besides their immediate risk, might undermine the very idea that they can maintain safe Jewish spaces; an idea that is crucial to the tranquil continuation of the Jewish presence as a tiny minority in Morocco (see Levy 2020). One important way to deal with such perils is by hiring Muslim gatekeepers or placing guards as a preemptive measure that monitors encounters within spaces that are considered by Jews as their safe havens. Gatekeepers and guards are ideal for Jews as they maintain the appearance of passivity: they avoid what they conceive as problems, hence minimizing the need to react, and they entrust Muslims with a job that releases Jews from the work of monitoring and selection.

To be sure, the reason behind the need to have safe havens does not escape the eyes of the Jews: fear for personal and collective safety. Hence, most Jews see these safe havens as a necessary evil. As Monsieur Butboul, a Jew in his late fifties, told me: "Morocco is perfect. All is perfect for me here. And not only for me but also for my family as well. Well, heck! For all Jews here. But there is this little problem that we must face, and that no one can deny. A little problem called fear. Otherwise, Morocco is just a paradise." Mr. Butboul was not unique in allowing these moments of realization that paradise was not perfect. I was about to return home from the CA (*Circle de l'Alliance* Jewish club) when David Ohanah offered me a lift. It was apparent that he wishes to share with me thoughts since he knew that I lived within a walking distance from the club:

> "We live here like a ghetto! We have no place for recreation; no place to have fun. We live on a deserted island. If I were young, I would have left. Here one is afraid. One needs to take some tranquilizers to live here. I don't take them, but I should. I try not to reflect on the fact that we live amongst Muslims. But, in situations like wars [in the Middle East] you become aware of the danger."

For Moroccan Jews, unawareness is, apparently, bliss, but, as said above, minorities cannot eschew the blunt reality of their fragility for long. Muslim gatekeepers are meant to deal with just that; to lower the sense of fear. Indeed, the very physical presence of Muslim

gatekeepers supports the notion of Jewish safe spaces and validates their concrete reality as well as their efficacy.

Before delving into the role of gatekeepers in Jewish life, it is of value to note that not all guardians that are positioned to protect Jewish spaces are considered gatekeepers. One should distinguish between formal guardians and gatekeepers. The first includes policemen, for instance, who are positioned in Jewish spaces either regularly, or according to intermittent needs. In addition to a guardian financed by the Jewish community, the Lazama synagogue in the mellah of Marrakech is regularly guarded by a rotating pair of policemen during its opening hours. For professional reasons, these policemen are replaced by the chief officer of the local headquarters every three months or so. Hence, no long-term relationships can be established between them and local Jews (or Muslims) who work on the premises. Likewise, tens of policemen guard Jewish sporadic events, such as *hilloulot* (events that are celebrating the death anniversary of Jewish pious men and that gather a relatively large number of Jewish pilgrims). These policemen, amongst them plainclothes policemen whom everyone recognizes, are positioned in their specific places according to the state's security considerations and usually for no longer than a day or two. Therefore, they are *not* part of what I conceive as gatekeepers that are positioned (and financed) by the Jewish community and according to its motivations and who can hold long-term relationships with people who occupy the space they monitor. Yet, like the gatekeepers, their very presence is seen by Jews as a state's confirmation of the validity of distinct Jewish spaces. When a group of elderly Jews traveled on a bus to the holy site of Rabbi Raphael Anqaoua in Salé (adjacent to Rabat), the Jewish guide announced to all:

> "Look how all these policemen who surround us pay respect to our Torah! Even Muslims acknowledge the tsaddiq's sanctity . . . They came specially for us . . . they are here to smooth our entry and will guard us in the old cemetery of Salé. We, Jews, are unique in Morocco!"

6. Muslim Gatekeepers

All safe havens that Muslim gatekeepers monitor are territorial. They are spatially bounded spaces that are supposed to be unmistakably Jewish. Surely, the demarcation of synagogues as Jewish is uncontested. However, there are spaces that although conceived as Jewish, are not devoid of Muslims. Schools are a clear example of that. Before the massive migration of Jews in the 1950s to the early 1960s, practically all Jewish schools were religiously uniform. Nowadays most Jewish schools (e.g., *École primaire Narcisse-Leven* or *Lycée Maimonide*) are composed of a Muslim majority that partly participates in the Jewish curriculum (notably, Hebrew lessons). A towering exception is ENH (mentioned at the outset of this article), which still insists on accepting Jewish kids only.[3]

A quick look at Muslim gatekeepers in Jewish institutions gives the impression that instead of the principle of homophily, the principle of xenophilia defines their role and guides their actions. Muslim gatekeepers allow entry to Jewish spaces to Jews, while preventing entry to their coreligionists. They do so in literal gates, such as club gates, school gates, graveyard gates, or in many other community institutions' gates. Interestingly, entry is not only permitted to Moroccan Jews, but to every Jew, including Israeli tourists during the period that Morocco and Israel had no overt and formal political relationships.[4] The screening based on religious identity thus prevents citizens of Morocco from entry to institutions in their own country while allowing entry to citizens of foreign countries. This kind of selection based on religious identity was described to Levy by an interlocutor who testified that to prevent Muslims access to a Jewish youth club, he announced to Muslim parents who wished to enlist their kids to this institution that every Friday all participants are required to bless on the wine and have a sip, knowing that alcohol is forbidden to consume by Sharia laws (Levy 2003, p. 381).

Indeed, aside from protection, gatekeeping is there to assure homogeneity. Yet, due to their demography, and as the case of Jewish schools demonstrates, Jews are unable to establish an impenetrable autarchy based on religious identity. Hence, Jews might employ

gatekeepers that instead of establishing a purely Jewish space, constitute a homogeneous sociocultural space that matches their needs. The work of gatekeeping may constitute, even if momentarily, a sphere in which those who are let in seem homogeneous. Levy (1999) has described such a dynamic between Jews and Muslims on a private beach in Casablanca, Morocco. According to him, while the overall political power is uneven (Muslims being the powerful part), the work of gatekeeping screens entry to the beach on a social and economic basis, thus suspending the otherwise crucial religious identity as a relevant player in the social Moroccan dynamic. This gatekeeping enabled an appearance of equality between Jews and Muslims within the confines of the beach. In this case, the work of gatekeeping is performed by abstract social mechanisms and not concrete human beings. In his words:

> "By gate keepers I refer to the sociocultural and economic barriers that regulate the profile of those who enter the beach. First, only people who can afford the admission price can enter. Second, religious restrictions contribute to the beach's exclusiveness: those who do not approve of body exposure will not come either. Thus, orthodox Jews and Muslims will not attend the beach. These gatekeepers blur external differences between Jews and Muslims. People from both groups are part of the same socio-economic stratum that, essentially, is associated with a local version of French culture" (Levy 1999, p. 640).

As said, however, I concentrate on human gatekeepers, and not abstract socio-economic and cultural mechanisms that homogenize bounded spaces. This distinction is of analytic importance as it relates to aspects of gatekeeping as an action made by social actors, and not abstract constructs that have a concrete influence on social life. As such, gatekeepers' positioning may influence the work of monitoring as well as the social dynamic within the space they monitor. Take, for example, gatekeepers who are excluded from the realms they let others enter (e.g., Corra and Willer 2002). Such is the case with the border police who cannot afford to visit the destinations of tourism they monitor. I, myself, have witnessed border police in Morocco compensating for this frustrating deficiency in various innovative ways (e.g, asking for baksheesh). Indeed, the case of exclusion of the gatekeepers is often based on economic logic (such as doormen who cannot afford to live in the building they attend). However, Moroccan gatekeepers of Jewish spaces do not fully align with this economic facet. Surely, it has an economic aspect, as most members of Jewish clubs, for instance, are much more affluent than their gatekeepers. However, in the case presented here, cultural logic is of crucial importance.

The fact that the gatekeeper pertains to a different, and ideationally impermeable group, is of critical importance to Jewish life in Morocco. To begin with, their weak political stature does not allow Jews to appoint Jewish gatekeepers. They have no legitimacy to deter a Muslim from getting in. Indeed, one of the more experienced gatekeepers of the CA told me: "A Jew cannot tell an Arab to go away. It is impossible for him. Such a demand coming from a Jewish mouth will be an insult to Arabs. It is impossible!"

The principle of *ideational social impermeability* is at the heart of gatekeeping. By ideational social impermeability, I refer to the idea that in social reality one should not cross group boundaries. This principle is not implemented equally since Jews do not hold the same power as Muslims. A clear example of this uneven model of relationships is revealed in marriage patterns: de facto, Jews can marry a Muslim only if the former converts to Islam. Since marriage is recognized only if performed by a religious authority the couple cannot hold their separate religious identity. One of the two must convert. In principle, converting from Islam is not forbidden by state law, but, although "Morocco's penal code does not criminalise conversion from Islam- but rather guarantees the freedom of faith, article 220 penalises the 'shaking of a Muslim's faith', referring to minors and economically disadvantaged people who might be vulnerable to conversion" (El Haitami 2021, p. 15), a restriction that practically avoids conversion from Islam.

Implementing this model of uneven relationships to the field of gatekeeping means that the symbolic power to allow entry is always held by a Muslim. Indeed, symbolically, the work of gatekeeping seems like a modern transformation of the pre-colonial "patron-

client" relationships in which every Jewish family was subjugated to a Muslim patron, who was committed to protecting "his Jew" in return for his subjects' loyalty (and other economic duties) (Meyers 1996). A well-known example of patron-client relationships appears in Geertz's (1973) famous Marmusha vignette, in which he describes how tribesmen were compelled to threaten revenge on a neighboring tribe, since "their" Jew was hurt. Another ethnographic example of the cultural persistence of these relationships appears in Rosen's (1968) article, where he describes a cultural continuation of "patron-client" relationships in the mid-20th century. In this case, Rosen describes how Muslims, whose ancestors were the patrons of a Jewish family, stands at the door of that family in a politically stressful time (during 1967 war) in order to protect them. However, gatekeeping is not a simple continuation of a past tradition; after all, it is the Jews who employ gatekeepers, hence turning the Muslim dependent (in his income) on the Jew.

Note that this historical perspective demonstrates the dynamism in Jewish–Muslim relationships of recent decades. Jews are not *de facto* dhimmis anymore. Even if limiting our perspective to gatekeeping, change is apparent. I noticed that during the 1990s, when the Jewish community in Casablanca numbered some 5000 people, and when most of its institutions functioned properly, the gatekeepers of Jewish clubs were restricted entry to only the lobby. However, that state of things changed dramatically a few decades later. Nowadays, when the Jewish population in Casablanca dropped to less than 1500 people and most institutions barely function, Muslims participate in the clubs' activity and gatekeepers come and go as they please.

7. Intimacy of Gatekeeping

The work of gatekeeping conducted by Muslims is varied according to the function of the space they guard and thus demands from the Muslim gatekeepers a different depth of cultural intimacy: specifically, religious versus secular spaces. Gatekeepers of religious spaces (notably, graveyards and synagogues), who will be the focus of my gaze here, demand intimate relationships with the cultural practices of the spaces they guard. Usually, these relationships spread over a long period; hence these gatekeepers are often relatively older men.

Listen, for instance, to the story of Abdullah (in his late sixties), who served for many years as a gatekeeper in Casablanca. His life story is enmeshed with Jews' lives:

> I was born in Sidi-Rhal (near Taroudant). I know the *tsaddiq* (righteous man) Rabbi David Ben Barouch is buried there.
>
> All my childhood I was not far from the tsaddiq. Even today, the site is kept very clean and respected by Muslims who live nearby. They do not allow even cows or other animals to approach the site; they don't allow to desacralize the *maqbara* (مقبرةgraveyard). The site is meticulously kept.
>
> Once, when I was young, I came to visit a relative in Casablanca. I was walking around in the street when a Jewish woman asked if I needed a job as a waiter. It was *Le Coq d'Or* [a cabaret established by the famous Jewish singer Salim Halali]. She wanted me to start that day, but I refused and started working the next day. I also bargained for my salary. I don't know how I could be so audacious. I came from a little village to a big city! She agreed, but my parents were very angry because it meant that I would disconnect from my family. The [Jewish] boss was kind and generous. He treated me like a son and invited me many times for dinner. Many members of the CA came to the Le Coq d'Or and got to know me; they saw that I am a good and energetic worker. Some years later, Mr. Abitan, who was the president of the CA, offered me a job. They doubled my salary. I was hoping that my boss in Le Coq d'Or would match, but he couldn't. So, I switched bosses. And since that time, I worked in different jobs, always with Jewish bosses. So, my life as an adult, and even as a boy, was always with Jews. Always. I never got a salary from a Muslim.

Abdullah's life story manifests long-term and intimate relationships with Jews. This fact is remarkable since, even nowadays (i.e., after the establishment of open and formal political ties between Morocco and Israel) almost all Muslims never met a Jew face-to-face. Not only Abdullah demonstrates respect for Jewish practices, and not only he needs to testify that his past neighbors and friends respect the sanctity of holy places, but he also reveals knowledge of Jewish practices. This knowledge served him well as a gatekeeper of a synagogue during the time we met. He knew of holidays and their unique traditions. For instance, he helped build a Sukkha (a specific kind of booth) on the holiday of Sukkot (see Figure 1).[5]

Figure 1. A Muslim building a Sukkha.

Here is another encounter with a gatekeeper, who, although quite young, was third in a chain of gatekeepers in his family. He lived in a small-scale town at the foothills of the Atlas Mountains and took care of an old graveyard that had no Jewish community any longer. "All [Jews] left for France and Israel", he told me.

Me: How do you survive here?

Him: Well . . . my basic salary comes from the Jewish Organization. But their salary is meager. It hardly suffices for providing food . . .

Me: So . . . why do you keep this job?

Him: My father used to attend the *me'arah* (literally: cave, but it means graveyard in the Jewish Maghrebi dialect). So did his father before. And look, I get nice donations from Jewish pilgrims who visit the tsaddiq buried here . . . They come from France, Canada, the USA, and Israel. They are very generous . . .

Me: But what do you do when you don't have tourism?

Him: Yes . . . You are correct. That's what happened to me a few months ago. There were no tourists, and I couldn't do with the Community's salary. I decided to stop working here. You know, I whitewash fading tombstones, clean up around, weed the weeds, restore falling tombstones, nothing much. I did not yet notify the Community person [my decision to quit] when I had a terrible dream. In my dream, I saw a tall man, with bright white jellaba, a long white beard, flushing cheeks, and shiny eyes. He reproached: "Why did you decide to abandon me?!", and he pulled my left ear.

I woke up in a panic, all sweating, and my left ear was more and more in pain. I did not understand what was going on with me. I was totally confused. But the pain was so strong that I went to a physician. He gave me a small bottle of strong eardrops for my ear, but it did not help. I then went to an old man in our town who makes powerful sh'chur. He set a small fire and let the smoke of the *bkhor* (البخور, incense) enter my soaring ear.

This did not help as well. I was helpless. The pain was terrible. Then, I went to our *qadi* (قاضي). He questioned me about the chain of events. And when I told him about my decision to stop attending the tsaddiq grave he was horrified: "Are you crazy?! What a foolish decision! No one can help you against the tsaddiq's wrath. You have one course of action only. You must go to the Jewish community Rabbi and ask him what to do." And so, I did. The Rabbi told me that 'the tsaddiq does not agree that you leave him . . . he will take care of your income. You must continue with your job at the cemetery!' he instructed. And indeed, the day after my return to work at the me'arah my pain was gone!

I do not wish to discuss here the meanings of the common genre of how the Jewish tsaddiq intervention is revealed to Muslims (for that, see Ben-Ami 1998). Instead, I wish to underscore that, unlike Jewish clubs, for instance, places such as synagogues or cemeteries carry Jewish attributes that not only are unmistakable and undoubted, but religious, and require an intimate understanding of the guarded site. It seems impossible for the Muslim gatekeeper to maintain a cultural distance in such spaces. In positive terms—as the custodians of Jewish intimate practices, gatekeepers share with Jews a cultural intimacy. Hence, religious places require Muslims to be culturally close. In other words, the religious characteristics of the place allow, or maybe even enforce, intimacy to the symbolic meanings of the site they oversee. For long years, for instance, the Muslim gatekeeper of the Jewish graveyard, with its famous tsaddiq, Rabbi Amram Ben Diwane, in Asjan (near the northern city of Wazzane), was known as someone familiar with many hagiolatric practices associated with the tsaddiq. When, after long years of separation, Moroccan Israeli tourists arrived at the holy site for the first time, they could not recite even one *piyyut* (or plural: piyyutim, which is a Jewish liturgical poem) honoring the tsaddiq. Luckily, the Muslim gatekeeper salvaged them from their embarrassment. He enthusiastically sang aloud, reciting many piyyutim in Hebrew. Gradually, the tourists joined him (Levy 1997).

Not only intimacy is required from gatekeepers, but sometimes even a sort of blurring boundaries between the two religions involved (Judaism and Islam): whenever the gatekeeper of the Lazama synagogue in the old Jewish quarter of Marrakech had no time to walk to his mosque, he would spread his prayer rug, slightly modify the direction of prayer

from Jerusalem to Mecca and do his duty. His gestures did not reveal any hesitation or discomfort. The combination of intimacy with the need for a slight modification symbolizes the role of the gatekeeper. While the modification expresses distance and exclusivity, the same general direction manifests intimacy and inclusivity. Here, Geertz's claim comes to mind; when comparing Moroccan to Indonesian Islam he says: "they both incline toward Mecca, but, the antipodes of the Muslim world, they bow in opposite directions" (Geertz 1971, p. 4). I do not wish to get into the similarities between the two religions born in the desert, and that are preoccupied in deeds rather than beliefs, but the gatekeeper's prayer in a Jewish site certainly manifests intimacy.

Cultural intimacy is manifested here not only in the mutual recognition that Jews need protection, and that this protection could be offered by Muslims and non-others, but it is also manifested by the basic need to recognize Jews whom they do not know personally, or never have seen before. Interestingly, the ongoing need to recognize a Jew when you see one is the burden of the Jews as well (Levy 2020). As to Muslim gatekeepers, the repetitious answer to my questions to different Muslim gatekeepers "how do you know a Jew when you see one" was: "باينا فيه" (*bayna fih*, it shows). That ability to recognize a Jew, even as a tourist, is thus a skill that is essential for Muslim gatekeepers. Ironically, this skill, which stems from an intimate familiarity with Jewish body hexis, is recruited to implement separation. According to the gatekeeper's perspective, a Jew looks different from him. He, by definition, is weaker and fragile. He will never directly confront a Muslim. This attribute was confirmed by Jews: "*Baisse la tête!* (Head down!)" was a requirement explicitly made by community leaders in crisis times including in the presence of Muslim gatekeepers.

Yet, as guardians of the threshold, Muslim gatekeepers were tainted by Jewish fragility. I do not refer here to how other Muslims treated Muslims who were dependent on Jewish salary, but to the way Jews treated them. If in the public sphere, Jews treated gatekeepers with respect and dignity, then when they crossed the threshold and entered Jewish spaces, Jews demonstrated aggressive and unforgiving qualities and even used derogatory terms towards gatekeepers. They, for instance, assigned them with petits assignments (e.g., purchasing them cheap chewing gum) and tipped them five times its price. By doing so, they emphasized and even exaggerated the economic cleavage between themselves and the gatekeepers. These kinds of gestures were performed also by Jews who were not affluent, since stressing the gap released them from the idea that they are dependent on the protection of the gatekeepers.

8. Breaching Boundaries Again

As noted at the outset, the work of gatekeeping minimizes the breaching of ethnoreligious boundaries, but it cannot erect impenetrable walls. Moreover, sometimes gatekeepers just fail to do their job. It was a Shabbat morning in *Slat Lazama* (Lazama synagogue), the only synagogue functioning in the Mellah, and one of the two in Marrakech. The synagogue was half-full. Mr. Ohannah, who regularly tends the Lazama, looked pleased by the turnout. After all, it was rare to have almost three *Minyanim* (plural for Minyan, a quorum of ten adult Jewish men required for certain prayers) for the Shabbat *Shaharit* (morning prayer). For several years now the site has not functioned as a prayer place on weekdays due to the lack of 10 adult attendees. For unclear reasons, that specific Saturday morning the Muslim gatekeeper of the Lazama let a group of tourists in. As a rule, tourists were not allowed in during prayer hours.

The tourist guide, himself a Moroccan Muslim, encouraged the tourists to put *kipa* (yarmulke) to their heads. The guide, trying to demonstrate that there was no prevention to getting into the synagogue, left the patio of the complex and entered the synagogue. He stepped in during a section of the prayer that is considered particularly sacred and mystical, which demands the stopping of any casual conversations. Ironically, the guide entered the synagogue without kipa to his head. The worshipers ignored the incident. However, a short moment later, a mumbling voice came from the *Azara* upstairs (or *Ezrat Nashim*, women's section of the synagogue). It was Rachelle Buzaglo, the wife of Jacob,

one of the leading figures in Lazama. She was trying to catch the attention of her spouse without using words. Jacob chose not to respond. Rachelle did not give up and tried to draw his attention by raising her voice; Jacob still did not respond. At this point, the two other women present at the Azara joined Rachelle in her attempts to get the attention of the male worshipers. Jacob, like other men, insisted on ignoring Rachelle's gestures; but when Rachelle raised her voice to a degree that everyone could hear her, Jacob waved his hand toward her, dismissing her cry. "It's not important" he was forced to say. A few minutes later, the guide left the premises.

That minor incident demonstrates how Jewish men try to diminish the importance of events that breach their notion about monochrome Jewish spaces and even deny their importance altogether. They prefer doing so instead of confronting the fact that gatekeeping did not function. It is no wonder that no one reproached the gatekeeper for neglecting his duty to prevent non-Jewish visitors to enter the synagogue's compound on a Shabbat. After all, the very act of reproaching would turn the event meaningful. Like the pulling of the chairs quietly in the opening vignette, the consensual approach to deny the occurrence altogether served a better good: to keep intact the notion of Jewish spaces. This task was particularly challenging since women did not seem to cooperate with men's silence, because it was an unmistakable and uncontested Jewish space, and because it was a simple space to protect (a compound with one small gate).[6]

9. Concluding Remarks

A major branch of migration studies analyzes how ethnic boundaries are created to constitute, maintain, and fortify the superiority of the dominant group—the veterans. They describe, for instance, the exclusion of unwanted immigrants from the veterans' spaces. The work of spatial exclusion is executed by social actors as well as by constituting and maintaining notions regarding the reality of a Bourdieuan distinction that is to be respected by (of course) those who benefit from it, as well as by those who pay the toll of its socio-cultural reality. By and large, these studies often portray an image of a too clear-cut boundary separating dominant from dominated groups, in which the former enforces the spatial order upon the weaker groups.

The study presented here on the Jews living in current Morocco sheds light on these mechanisms of boundary work from a different, even intriguing, viewpoint. It showed how members of the dominant group—Moroccan Muslims who are employed by Jews as gatekeepers—collaborate in the work of separating spatial exclusivity in favor of the Jewish minority. This collaboration is not an outcome of distinction but instead a shared cultural intimacy. Indeed, the work of exclusion does not stem from a dominant standpoint. On the contrary, gatekeeping serves the Jewish need, as a fragile minority, to maintain the idea that they can hold Jewish spaces within which they live. Looking more closely at these intricate relationships shows that to maintain a separation, Muslim gatekeepers must share a deeper cultural understanding with Jews. They cooperate with Jewish inclination to exclude their own. On the other hand, Jews must share the view that they need Muslims to do the job of monitoring entry to Jewish spaces, and that only Muslim cooperation allows them to minimize encounters with them.

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Notes

1. I use a transliteration that reflects Jewish pronunciation, but to avoid confusion, I also offer the reader the Arabic spelling.
2. Note that I do not endorse a structural approach that assumes a stable ideal type of the gatekeeper. As the work of gatekeeping involves the power to control, I assume, following Foucault's understanding of power as working in a diffusing manner, that gatekeeping is unstable, changing in different contexts and along time (see Foucault 1989).
3. On the political and cultural logic of the division of Casablanca to Jewish and non-Jewish spaces, see: (Levy 1997).
4. There are two periods in which Israel had open diplomatic relationships with Morocco: 1995–2000 and from 2021 onwards.

[5] A biblical holiday that, among a multitude of religious practices that were associated with it (e.g., pilgrimage to the Temple), requires from its practitioners to build a sukkah in which one presumably resides for seven days.

[6] Elsewhere, Levy (2020) explains why, in a deeper level, the opposite reactions to the breaching of the Jewish space are in fact stemming from the same motivations, even if from different political positionings.

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Article

Laws of Succession Ordinances by the Religious Leadership of Sephardi and Moroccan Jewish Communities and Their Economic, Social and Gender Implications

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Abstract: This paper discusses the innovativeness of the Inheritance Ordinance introduced in Toledo during the 12th century and later reintroduced in Fez in Morocco following the expulsion of Jewish communities from Spain and Portugal. Community leaders in Toledo, and after the expulsion also in Fes, transformed the laws of succession established in biblical times by granting women equal rights on matters of inheritance by marriage. The ordinance also granted unmarried daughters the right to inherit alongside their brothers despite the fact that, according to biblical law, daughters do not inherit when there are sons. Inheritance ordinances had significant social, financial and gendered implications on Jewish lives in many communities. The study will show that leaders of Sephardi Jewish communities were nothing less than advanced in their innovative and unprecedented ordinances related to women's inheritance. Their innovativeness followed a number of preliminary conditions which enabled it. First and foremost was the authority vested in these Jewish leaders by the monarchy in various parts of Spain and Portugal. The laws of the kingdom in these countries granted women equal rights in succession laws. So as to avoid significant differences and reduce legislative gaps, ordinances were issued to correspond with national realities. Spain had been the world's center of Jewish Halacha following the period of the *Geonim*—the heads of the ancient Talmudic academies of Babylonia and its sages—, and the Sephardic sages felt that their position allowed them to make bold decisions. The most innovative Jewish ordinance issued in this regard back in the 12th century was the Tulitula ordinance, originating from the city of Toledo, home to one of the largest and most affluent Jewish communities of the time. The regulation granted wives rights over their husbands' inheritance regarding property established during their joint lives, as well as property which she had brought with her to the marriage. Following the Expulsion of Jews from Spain, the expelled sages, arriving in Morocco, reinstated the Tulitula ordinance in the newly established community of the city of Fez, further improving women's position beyond the provisions of the original regulation. The new circumstances following the expulsion resulted in many Jewish communities in Morocco adopting the new version of the regulation. As they had been forced to wander from place to place, the expelled communities encountered severe problems involving family law. The ordinances spread throughout nearly all Jewish communities in Morocco. In the 19th century, a number of changes were introduced to the Fez ordinances, which in practice diminished women's inheritance rights. However, the essence of the original ordinance was ultimately assimilated into Rabbinical and Supreme Court rulings of the State of Israel, due to its suitability to Israel's modern inheritance laws and to the legislation of the Women's Equal Rights Law in 1951. The leadership of Spanish sages and community leaders in various countries and of rabbinical judges in Fez, Morocco, had been both charismatic and rational and included modern components for coping with social change and new realities under the Kingdoms of Spain as well as following the expulsion.

Keywords: leadership; ordinances; community; women's inheritance; Morocco; marriage

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1. Introduction—Ordinances in Jewish Law

As is the case in many legislative systems, the Jewish Halacha can be divided into two main legislation types: supreme legislation and subordinate legislation (Alon 1988). While supreme legislation has a general legislative nature, subordinate legislation consists of detailed rules in specifically defined areas of the law. As in any other legal system, written law is perceived in Jewish Halacha as supreme legislation that is the statute of the Jewish law, while ordinances ruled by community rabbis are seen as subordinate pieces of legislation of Jewish law. As is the case in other legal systems in which the authority of subordinate legislators is exalted from supreme legislation, so does the source of the rabbinical authority—subordinate legislators—in Jewish Halacha come from the written law (Deuteronomy 17:11).

The regulation, being subordinate legislation, operates mainly on two levels:

a. It innovates in areas that did not previously exist, thereby rectifying distortions that grew over time. This is the origin of the Hebrew word '*Takana*'—something that fixes.[1]
b. It amends existing practices and imposes certain obligations, with a tendency towards amendments serving either the public or the individual (Orbach 1996).

This legislative layer in Jewish law enables it to continue achieving the purposes of the law, even when the legislative continuum leads to an undesirable legal effect. Contrary to legislative procedures expressed in '*Justice, Justice Thou Shalt Pursue*' (Deuteronomy 16:6), '*A judge has only that which his eyes see*'[2] or '*Let justice be done though the heavens fall*',[3] all of which focus the judge on the facts of the case at hand, ordinances operate on a more innovative and creative level of Jewish law. The legal scope of the ordinance is derived from Halachic interpretation, the legislator's intent, and the basic principles of the Torah. Legal norms are interpreted in spirit and not necessarily by the intricacies of their wording, meaning that substance would have preference over form in achieving the aims of the Torah.

The subordinate legislation of community rabbis was expressed in ordinances developed over generations, whose aims changed according to circumstances and timing. Often, the ordinance sets a mode of behavior in a specific Halachic area which is not directly deducted from the written norm, but rather from the laws of the Torah: '*Do what is right and good*' (Deuteronomy 6:18). Often, the ordinance serves to soften the judicial result of the law while adjusting it to the case in question and to the intent of the supreme legislator.[4]

The legal assumption at the basis of Jewish ordinances is precedence to the nature of the law, rather than to its form or to rules of evidence. The nature of the ordinance in Jewish law is the purpose for which it had been made and therefore sanctifies the means. There are many examples of subordinate legislation in Jewish law, the most prominent of which are '*Mip'nei tikkun ha-olam*' or '*Mip'nei darchei shalom*'. These regulations aim to cope with the problem of justice in law, their goal being to form a bridge between justice and equity, changing reality, the adversities of the time, and the legal case in question. These legal arrangements preceded British equity laws by thousands of years, although the latter also aim to achieve equity in their own way in cases in which the judicial result of the law may lead to only relative justice, or even to distorting the legislator's intent.

Jewish law includes many equitable elements emanating from the instrumental status of the law.[5] Its objectives differ from other known legal systems in that it is the means for achieving the purposes of the Torah and the realization of the religious ideal. Jewish law has a religious *raison d'être* that delineates a suitable way of life required for the proper existence of Jewish society and also human society. This *raison d'être* is the foundation of the law, and therefore a legal procedure that would lead to an outcome that does not correspond with it would either be rejected or changed by an ordinance. In this way, a negativistic or formalistic approach to the law is prevented in advance, as it may undermine the realization of the religious ideal. Moreover, the law can be adjusted to pressing needs through its equitable components, which are implemented through ordinances.

Legislative authority can also be found in Jewish law among authorities other than Halachic sages, such as the king's legislative activity in civil and criminal areas, which the rabbinical leadership perceived as existing for the benefit of the public in its entirety, as the saying goes—'The fate of an entire generation is determined by its leader'.[6]

Takanot HaKahal, or 'Communal Ordinances', are rules that originated from the needs of the public and its representatives. The earliest of such ordinances can be found in ancient *Hilchot* [laws] regarding the '*Benei Ha'ir*' [townspeople] as well as internal legislation of various professional associations: "The city's inhabitants mutually compel one another to construct a synagogue and to purchase scrolls of the Torah and the Prophets, the city's inhabitants are permitted to stipulate the rates (price of wheat and wine) and the measurements and the wages of laborers, and they are entitled to enforce a public fee on public matters."[7] The main role of *Takanot HaKahal* was introduced into Jewish law from the tenth century onwards, with the rising power of the Jewish community in the diaspora (Amar 2020a, p. 222).

2. Aim of the Study and Methodologies

A qualitative methodology was used, based on the interpretative approach. This methodology centers on understanding, describing and analyzing social phenomena through respondents' subjective experiences. It is a description of 'objective reality' as seen through their eyes and their stories (Tuval-Mashiach and Spector-Mersel 2010). The researcher's role is to follow actions and experiences that define social and cultural reality. This interpretative approach does not assume a unified reality, but rather argues that people define reality in different ways. Therefore, researchers should identify and interpret their own points of view and perceptions regarding the meaning of the studied phenomenon (Sabar-Ben Yehoshua 2016).

The present study relies on qualitative content analysis of early and later Jewish adjudicative literature (10th to 19th centuries) including Maimonides (Rambam), Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki), Rabbeinu Tam (Rabbi Jacob ben Meir), Ritva (Rabbi Yom Tov ben Abraham of Seville), Rashba (Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham ibn Aderet), the rulings of the Moroccan sages following ordinances published by Rabbi Abraham Enkawa in the book of rulings, and works by M. Amar (Amar 2020b), Shweka (1998), Meyuchas Ginau (1999), Baruch Megged (2009) and others. This type of literature enables an investigation of changes in Sephardi communities, and specifically deviations from the *Halacha* (collective body of Jewish religious laws derived from the written and oral Torah) as well as significant transformations in the rulings of Sephardi and Moroccan sages and their impact on laws of succession today.

Content analysis is an important stage in qualitative research. In the present paper, this includes a review of the literature of *Chazal* (Sages of Blessed Memory), early and later Jewish adjudicative literature, the rulings of Sephardi and Moroccan sages and recent studies in the field. The importance of this literature is in tracing early changes introduced in Spanish communities, specifically changes to the ordinances of the Torah and significant changes through Sephardi and Moroccan sages' rulings and their impact on inheritance laws in present times.

This methodology uses a variety of textual analysis parameters: written text, voice, picture and digital video, in order to reach conclusions about human behavior (Bauer and Gaskell 2011). The content analysis process included a number of stages, based on which the ordinances were analyzed: transcription of the collected data; reading of all documents and their classification into themes; classification into central categories and their prioritization; analysis and interpretation of the findings and contents; and finally, the investigator's own conclusions (Shkedi 2003).

3. Inheritance Law in Jewish Law

The question of inheritance has been much deliberated in Jewish Halacha throughout history, as it involves not only financial and emotional aspects but also has national impli-

cations such as the passing of property from one tribe to another. In fact, the grounds for inheritance laws in the Torah had been to avoid just that—the passing of land from one tribe to another, as stated in the main source for inheritance laws in the Torah:

> Say to the Israelites, 'If a man dies and leaves no son, give his inheritance to his daughter. If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, give his inheritance to his father's brothers. If his father had no brothers, give his inheritance to the nearest relative in his clan, that he may possess it. This is to have the force of law for the Israelites, as the Lord commanded Moses. (Numbers chapter 27, verses 8–11).

The general rule in estate law is that "No inheritance in Israel is to pass from one tribe to another, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal inheritance of their ancestors" (Numbers, chapter 36, verse 7). The order of inheritance, then, is determined by the proximity of the heir to the bequeather. The sages of the Mishna had established their rulings on the final verse of the inheritance laws: "...give his inheritance to the nearest relative in his clan, that he may possess it." (Numbers chapter 27, verse 11). Accordingly, they ruled that the father's family is to be considered 'his relatives' rather than his mother's family.[8] This leads to the conclusion that the woman does not inherit from her husband, but if she dies her husband does inherit from her. Despite this discrepancy, the Sages of the Talmud (3rd to 5th centuries) were aware of two possible extreme situations involving inheritance: if the woman does not inherit, she may starve, but on the other hand, if the terms of the Ketubah [Jewish marriage contract] are increased (for instance for the value of the land that had formed collateral for payment of the Ketubah in case of divorce), its financial value may exceed that of the husband's property, meaning that his heirs would be disinherited after the Ketubah had been repaid. The solution proposed by the Sages of the Talmud to the first situation is that a man may bequeath land to his wife in his will, and this inheritance to his wife would replace payment of the Ketubah. This rule of the Halacha depended upon the wife explicitly or silently agreeing to this while the will was being drafted. The solution for the second situation is that as long as she is a widow, the woman would subsist from her husband's estate.[9]

According to the Talmudic Halacha as described by Rambam:[10]

a. As a rule, women do not inherit.
b. Laws regulating a man inheriting his wife are considered '*Derabbanan*' (Aramaic: 'of our rabbis'), meaning that they originate from a Halacha ruled by sages, rather than directly from the law of the Torah.
c. If the wife dies, the husband inherits all her property, whether they be '*Melog*'[11] or '*Tzon Barzel*' assets,[12] and he has precedence over any other person.[13]
d. This law is valid also in cases in which his wife was prohibited to him by the laws of the Torah, as the marriage had not been conducted according to the Halacha. For instance, a widow marrying a Cohen Gadol (high priest), a divorced woman marrying a layman Cohen (who is not a Cohen Gadol), and even if she is young (below marriageable age, which is 12 years), and even if the husband is deaf (and therefore according to Jewish law legally unfit to accumulate assets), he inherits from his wife.[14]

However, restrictions were also defined for this Halacha:

a. The husband can only inherit assets that had belonged to his wife at the time of her death, and not future ones, such as an inheritance due to her from her father.[15]
b. If they were divorced, the husband has no right to her assets.
c. The Halacha does not oppose prenuptial agreements, in which case the woman is entitled to stipulate in her Ketubah that if she has no sons when she dies, all her property would return to her father's house, as this is a prenuptial condition, and prenuptial conditions are permitted.[16]

The Halachic key to changes in this Halacha over generations, and to the ordinances made on this matter by community rabbis, consists of two central rules. The first—'*Hefker beth-din hefker*' ('*That which is declared by a court ownerless property is forthwith accounted ownerless property*'): relying on the Torah, the Sages of the Talmud[17] determined that the court may make ownerless the assets of a person if there is reason to do so. Rabbi Yitzhak found reference to this in the book of Ezra: '*Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles*.' (Ezra, chapter 10, verse 8). Rabbi Eliezer based this on the following from the book of Joshua: '*These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. So they finished dividing up the land*.' (Joshua, chapter 19, verse 51). Rabbi Elazar explained: '*What do heads have to do with fathers? Only to tell you: Just as fathers bequeath to their sons anything they want to, so too, the heads, the leaders of the people, bequeath to the people anything they want to*' (Joshua, chapter 19, verse 51).

The second rule is '*The custom of the State*'—as it is permitted to stipulate upon the ruling of the Torah in inheritance laws, many Jewish laws in this area are based on local custom, and here, too, Rambam ruled: '*When a man marries a woman without specifying any conditions, he should write her a ketubah, giving her a sum that is customarily given in that locale . . . In this and in all similar matters, local custom is a fundamental principle, and it is used as a basis for judgment, provided that the custom is commonly accepted in the locale*'.[18]

Community leaders, ruling on the basis of the Halacha throughout the generations following Rambam, found it difficult to keep this specific rule in force, especially if the wife died shortly after marriage and the husband inherited all assets that she had brought with her to the matrimony. In fact, this difficulty had already been raised among the sages of the *Midrash* in their interpretation of the following phrase from the Torah: '*Your strength will be spent in vain*' (Leviticus 26, verse 20), and the sages explained: '*If a man gives his daughter in matrimony and sends her off with much capital and his daughter died even before the seven days of merriment have passed, he finds himself burying his daughter while also losing his capital*'.[19]

4. Women's Inheritance Ordinances in Various Ashkenazi Jewish Communities following the 'Schum' and Rabbeinu Tam's Ordinances in Comparison with the Tulitula Ordinance

In the beginning of the 12th century and well into the 13th century, Ashkenazi rabbis of the communities of Speyer, Mains and Worms (towns on the bank of the Rhine in Germany), legislated ordinances known as 'Schum'. These ordinances had been legislated in three separate conventions held by the rabbis of the region and accepted as binding. Some of them had even been included in the '*Shulchan Aruch*' (a book of Jewish law compiled in the 16th century by Rabbi Joseph Karo, which became part of the Halachic corpus of the People of Israel). The ordinances included monetary laws, legal procedure, levirate marriage (*Yibbum*, *Halizah*) and more. The most widely known of these ordinances is the dowry ordinance legislated by Rabbi Yakov Ben Meir also known as Rabbeinu Tam (1100–1171). The background for this ordinance is a reality of which the rabbis of Ashkenaz became aware in various cases involving a woman dying within a year of her marriage, and her husband inheriting from her. Rabbeinu Tam established his ruling on the interpretation offered by *Chazal* (Sages of Blessed Memory) to the biblical law: "If a man married a woman and she died within 12 months without leaving a viable offspring... he should return the entire dowry, and what remains in his possession which he had not taken from the dowry, and what she had not used, he should not deceive by using it... and what remains would be returned within thirty days...".[20]

During that period, the vast majority of members of the communities were poor. Often involving much difficulty, fathers used to raise dowries to marry off their daughters, and in many cases took loans from family members to enable this. If the daughter died shortly after her marriage, the husband would inherit from his new wife based on the *Halacha*

that is based on the Torah. This resulted in the father losing not only his daughter but also his money, which he now still had to return to his lenders, even though his daughter was no longer alive. Rabbeinu Tam's ordinance was bold because it amended a decree of the Torah that states that a daughter does not inherit, only sons do, and that a wife does not inherit, only husbands do. The Torah's explanation for this decree is that it prevents a family's estate from passing from one tribe to another—which in turn risks undermining the tribal division of the Land of Israel as decreed in the Torah prior to entering the land of Canaan. The history of Halacha usually shows us that adjudicators changed or innovated *Hilchot* that required change because of changing circumstances, but very few of them dared change an explicit '*d'var Torah*' (word of the Torah). The danger in such cases is that innovative and daring rulings would not gain legitimacy among community members, and the adjudicator would thereby lose his position as such.

Rabbeinu Tam later retracted this ordinance,[21] although by then it had spread among some Ashkenazi communities. According to M. Amar, his decision to retract the ordinance aimed to avoid cancellation of *d'var Torah* by a court that has no such authority. In order to change an explicit *d'var Torah*, the Halacha requires two conditions: first, the revising court—which must be a high court ('*Bet Din Gadol*' or 'Great Sanhedrin') —must be of a high authority having an identical position to that of the Amoraim Jewish scholars Rabbi Ammi and Rabbi Assi. The second condition is that the majority opinion be accepted by the minority. If the minority did not agree or did not participate in the discussion, the majority may not coerce its opinion. According to the wording of the ordinance, the minority was only informed of its contents, but their consent had not been requested. This right to enforce the law on the minority is reserved, as aforesaid, to a high court that is authorized to coerce the public and forfeit its property, but a normal court must obtain the consent of the minority, and therefore Rabbeinu Tam concluded that the ruling of the Torah should remain in force (Amar 2020a, p. 218).

During the same period, in the 12th and 13th centuries, even more innovative and bold ordinances were introduced, which reduced the husband's right to the inheritance even if children remained, and without limitation of time following the wife's death.

5. Innovation in Women's Inheritance Ordinances in a Number of Kingdoms in Spain

Evidence of the presence of Jews in Spain in general, and in Jewish centers such as Toledo, Saragossa and Barcelona in particular, dates back to the 6th century (Ray 2013b, p. 3). Until the Muslim conquest of Spain in 711, Jews endured a hostile Christian rule. They suffered religious persecution, and those who did not convert to Christianity kept their religion hidden. The new Muslim rule, however, brought better times to the Jewish communities of Spain. Special conditions were defined for the official existence of Jewish communities. Jews received the Muslims with open hands and began to display their Judaism out in the open. The Golden age of Jewish culture in Spain had begun, with yeshivas opening and Torah studies becoming a legitimate pastime. Communities gained religious freedom, with each electing their own rabbinical judges for the courts that were inaugurated under Muslim patronage. Rabbinical judges were appointed for a limited period of time, and these appointments were recognized by the rulers of the land. Some researchers claim that the authorities had been involved in these appointments, but most believe that there was no such involvement in the appointment of rabbinical judges (*Dayanim*). Nonetheless, during that period, Jewish communities in Spain enjoyed complete autonomy, as well as independence in the election of their spiritual leaders (Shweka 1998, pp. 108–98; Ray 2013b, pp. 107–8).

Even upon the Christians' return in 1085 and their conquest of many cities in Spain, the order and administration left behind by the Muslims continued to exist, and the position and involvement of Jews was upheld in all areas of government (Meyuchas Ginau 1999, p. 11). In the 13th century, with the main Jewish community situated in Lisbon, Jews enjoyed freedom of commerce and were free to settle throughout Portugal (Ray 2013b, p. 33). They served as advisors to kings as physicians, scientists and philosophers. The

physician of King Alphonso the 6th, conqueror of Toledo, was Yosef HaNasi Ben Ferruzial, a Jew who had been close to the king and acted on behalf of the Jewish community. Evidence of his work can be found in the writings of famous local poet and philosopher Rabbi Judah Halevi, who praised Ben Ferruzial's contribution to the community. Many other important Jewish leaders were born and operated in Toledo, including Rabbi Abraham Even Ezra (1089–1167); Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel, also known by his Hebrew acronym 'the Rosh' (1250–1327), who had been born in Germany but spent most of his life in Toledo; Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud, also known as Rabad I (1110–1180); and others. During the 13th century, under a different regime, pogroms were held against the Jewish community of Toledo, and about a thousand of them were massacred. In 1391, harsh laws were enacted against the Jews, thousands of whom were murdered and many others joined the Christian faith (Harvey 2010, p. 22).

With the quieting of upheavals in the kingdom, efforts were made both in Castile and in Aragon to restore public order, and by the mid-13th century, the heavily depleted Jewish communities endeavored to rebuild themselves. Leaders of various Jewish communities in Spain legislated new and bold ordinances involving women's inheritance. Early testimony of the existence of ordinances and customs in the Jewish communities of Spain at the time can be found in the '*Shu"t*' (Responsa, Questions and Answers) written by Ramah (Rabbi Meir HaLevi Abulafia, 1170–1242)—head of the Jewish community of Toledo (the capital city of Castile) and a rabbinical judge in the city's court—among the greatest adjudicators of that period in Spain:

Thus, we have seen that if you do not have among you any stipulation nor custom involving the husband's inheritance of his wife's property except for the law of the Talmud, then Reuben the husband shall inherit all of his wife's property, and nor her son or Shimon her father have any right whatsoever. And if you have among you a custom by which the son shall inherit it all, then Reuben has no claim over his wife's property while his son lives...and if their custom is that her husband and son shall inherit her in equal parts, or that one of them inherits more than the other—the letter of the law is that anything Reuben should inherit shall be according to the custom... (Elon 1988, pp. 679–80)

In fact, Ramah ruled that if there is no clear custom in the community as to the husband's inheritance, then a new Halacha shall be introduced by which the son can inherit from his mother, or the husband and son in equal measures. The innovation is that the husband's inheriting is not as clear-cut as had been stipulated in the Torah and as had been the custom in Jewish communities throughout the world. This is a bold decision which only a bold adjudicator such as Ramah would have been able to make undaunted.

As shall be shown below, a detailed and bold ordinance on women's inheritance, known as the 'Tulitula' ordinance (the Jewish name of Toledo), regulated women's inheritance, alongside other ordinances made in the city of Valladolid[22] and other cities in Spain including Soria[23] and Segovia.[24] The common line between all these ordinances is that they all discuss women's inheritance.

According to the Tulitula ordinance, a woman inherits and bequests to anyone she pleases the sum of her Ketubah, up to half of the estate, not including the dowry which is hers, and *Tachrichim* (ritual burial furnishing) and all burial needs, as in the original wording of the ordinance:

> When a husband dies in our city, while married to a woman, and she has presented her Ketubah bill as any widow, she shall not collect the [full] sum of her Ketubah, only half of all that he has left in assets, land or chattels, and the other half shall remain free of lien to the recipient of her husband's inheritance, whether present or not present, and she has no right to collect more than half the sum of her Ketubah only, whether this shall or shall not suffice from his possessions and property. But the sum of her dowry and what she had earned for him or what land she may have gained by inheritance after her marriage, or what she has bought from him in her name and her husband died, all of it shall be returned to her alone, as this is not the rectification but what had been known to have

> been the husband's possessions and property. And the *Tachrichim* and burial needs shall be from his entirety, and then the woman shall take half of his as her Ketubah, and the [other] half will remain for his heirs.[25]

The Valladolid ordinances focused on various areas in community life. Among the ordinances was one that dealt with daughters' inheritance, as follows:

> When they are survived (the husband and wife) by sons and daughters, the daughters will inherit with the sons in equal parts if the daughters are unmarried... and if they are engaged—they shall marry with their part. (Harvey 2010)

The leaders of Jewish communities in Spain acted to establish the Jewish-religious character of their communities. In the cities of Toledo and Valladolid, regulations and ordinances were formed by community leaders and rabbinical judges who aimed to restore community life to its former order. Jewish communities in these cities were larger than in other Spanish cities at the time. Jews were involved in all areas of city life—commerce, science, medicine and philosophy. The daily encounter between the three monotheistic religions in Spain in general and particularly in these cities enabled a wide range of diverse activities, with tolerance and leeway between leaders of the different religions in many areas (Meyuchas Ginau 1999, p. 11).

Behind the initiative to introduce the Valladolid ordinances in 1432 was Don Abraham Benveniste who had been close to the Kings' courts and served as Finance Minister to the King of Castile and as the country's Chief Rabbi. The purpose of the ordinances was to rehabilitate the Jewish communities of Spain following persecutions by the Christian kings that lasted until 1391. The ordinances focused on various areas: Torah studies, appointment of *Dayanim* (Rabbinical judges) and community heads, taxation, public works and the limitation of luxuries. Don Abraham took advantage of his good position with the authorities in working towards restoring Jewish community life to its prior glory. The fact that he had served in a double role as Chief Rabbi and Finance Minister gave him wide authority to act and the religious authority to implement far-reaching Halachic changes.

According to Max Weber's leadership models (Weber 1968; see also Oliver-Lumerman et al. 2018, p. 3), Don Abraham's leadership can be classified as rational leadership that relies on the rational authority granted by national arrangements, in order to uphold a social-organizational order in the Jewish community. Don Abraham's concern for community life motivated him to act based on the authority vested in him in order to regulate the needs of the Jewish community.

Toledo was home to one of the largest and most important Jewish communities of the time. As part of the community's reformation process following the upheavals against the Jews, community leaders defined new orders designed to protect the cohesion of their communities. Ordinances were ruled by the city's *Dayanim*, which, as aforesaid, obtained their legal and legislative authority from the Kingdom in many areas. Specifically, in the matter of the current paper, these ordinances involved women's inheritance. New and daring ordinances were enacted on this topic, attesting to an authoritative religious leadership characterized by initiative and charisma that closely monitored the changing realities of Jewish life.

The boldness of these ordinances can mainly be noted on the religious level:

a. All of them involve inheritance and emphasize women's right to inherit from their husbands just as husbands inherit from their wives, in contrast to the word of the Torah.
b. The couple's assets are perceived as joint property—belonging to them and to their sons, as well as to their daughters if unmarried.
c. They regulate financial relationships between the couple out of concern for their children, lest they remain penniless in the event of the father remarrying.

To understand just how innovative and far-reaching the ordinances in these communities were, we note the fierce opposition expressed by 'Rosh' (Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel) who arrived from Ashkenaz to serve as Rabbi in the city of Toledo and had finally been

appointed Chief Rabbi of the city in 1305. Rosh was born in Germany and studied the Torah with his father, Rabbi Yehiel, and with Maharam of Rothenburg (Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg), the most important and unrivaled adjudicator in Ashkenaz at the time. In 1286, Maharam of Rothenburg was jailed for an attempted escape from Germany and an alleged attempt to organize a mass escape of Jews from the region. The emperor demanded a huge sum from the Jews as ransom for releasing him from prison. With much difficulty, Rosh collected the required sum, but Maharam of Rothenburg refused to be liberated for a huge sum of money, and the attempt was unsuccessful.

During the summer of 1298, terrible pogroms were held in Germany against the Jews, with entire communities murdered. Despite this, the emperor demanded that Rosh hand in the collected ransom money to free Maharam of Rothenburg, even though the latter was not released from prison. Finally realizing that not only the money presented a problem but that his life was in danger, Rosh fled to Spain where he was accepted by the Jewish community with great honor and respect, and even offered the position of Rabbi of the city of Toledo (Shweka 1998, book 1 (Tishrei-Kislev, 5759)).

When Rosh read the Tulitula ordinance and its regulation of women's inheritance, he held a long debate with the local *Dayan*—Rabbi Israel Ben Yosef, native of the city of Toledo, who agreed with the position of former local *Dayanim* in interpreting the ordinance and the intent of its adjudicators, as had been understood until Rosh's arrival in Spain. The question raised by Rosh was whether, according to the adjudicators, a woman may endow her inheritance to whomever she pleases, including her husband in the event that he outlives her, and in doing so expropriate the rights of her heirs; or whether her rights pursuant to the ordinance are also the rights of her heirs and relatives who funded her dowry, and therefore she may not sell, transfer or waive her rights without their consent. Rosh believed that the ordinance did not grant women the right to bequeath property to whomever they pleased, but rather that it expropriated said right from the husband's inheritance to the woman's heirs. When the *Dayan* Rabbi Israel presented to Rosh the positions of former local *Dayanim* such as Rabbi Yaacov Even Sushan and his son Rabbi David Even Shushan, who had claimed that the ordinance regulates the financial relationship between husband and wife, Rosh rejected this position, alleging that in fact these spiritual leaders transgressed against the writings of the Torah, by which the woman does not inherit from her husband. Moreover, he insinuated that these old religious leaders were influenced by the laws of the Kingdom of Castile that had recognized the right of the woman to inherit from her husband (See above Shweka 1998, p. 108).

In fact, here is a difference in approaches to the Halacha, manifested in a different type of leadership. Rosh was influenced by a Halachic world view that became prevalent in Ashkenaz, by which an explicit *d'var Torah* is not to be revised. Even when Rabbeinu Tam revised the matter of women's inheritance in Ashkenaz, he had only referred to woman's inheritance after her death, so that her relatives, who had given money for her dowry, would not lose their funds if she died in the first year of her marriage, but never intended to grant a general inheritance right to women so that they may act upon this right as with any property ownership.

Again, based on Weber's leadership model (Weber 1968), the leadership style of both Rabbeinu Tam and Rosh can be seen as traditionalist leadership whose legitimacy comes from traditional religious authority. This type of leadership perceives its role as a responsibility to pass on tradition from one generation to the next and therefore does not view leaders as having the authority to change such traditions. In his argumentation, Rosh blames one of the former *Dayanin* as having been influenced by the Kingdom's law, thereby explaining the pressure to which he was exposed at the time. He saw the laws of the Kingdom as having influenced Halacha, which is an impossibility for a traditional leader that believes that his main role is to be a protector of tradition and its rules.

After the long discussion, Rosh ordered that testimonies would be collected regarding local customs, and that the city's Jewish leaders would convene in order to affix his interpretation of the ordinance. Clearly, such a gathering would not have been necessary

had there not been those who did not agree with his interpretation of the ordinance. The purpose of the meeting was to ascertain whether the local custom, by which a woman inherits from her husband according to the ordinance, in fact remained in force or whether it had changed. Rosh, as the Chief Rabbi of the city, held the religious authority to interpret as he saw fit, but he knew that local custom prevailed and therefore had to follow the customary local Halachic procedure required in order to achieve change. To succeed in his venture, Rosh acted as a social spiritual leader (Fry 2003; Oliver-Lumerman et al. 2018, pp. 4–5), utilizing his spiritual authority as the Chief Rabbi of the city, while implementing a social authority that is delegated to the leaders of the community by the Kingdom. He convened a council composed of community leaders and the city's *Dayanim* in order to reexamine the local custom. The discussion was held against the backdrop of an actual claim, which was presented to him for his ruling.[26] His position was accepted, but not unanimously as was the requirement in Spanish communities. A majority resolution required the presence of all community leaders and its *Dayanim*, which was not the case. Shweka believes that the majority of the city's leaders were not pleased with Rosh's position but preferred not to confront him, and therefore he had a majority but not an absolute one.

Following the doubt raised in interpreting the implications of the Tulitula ordinance, community leaders that had introduced ordinances elsewhere made sure to clarify their intent on this matter. In the Jewish community of the Island of Mallorca, local *Dayanim* had set the original Tulitula ordinance as their custom, before it was revised by Rosh, except if the woman died without sons, in which case her relatives would inherit half her dowry (Assaf 1925; Amar 2020a, p. 222; Grossman 2001, p. 263). Identical ordinances to the Tulitula ordinance were accepted in Molina and Segovia. In Valencia, where the Halacha remained the binding rule, no ordinance was accepted. Rosh had influenced communities outside of Spain, for instance Algiers, where in 1394 the ordinance had been introduced following his revision.[27]

According to Grossman (Grossman 2001, p. 263), relying on a general historical perspective, "The ordinances issued in Spain were more concerned with women's equal rights than the ordinance of Rabbeinu Tam", which, as aforesaid, influenced the nature of the Halacha in Ashkenaz for many years to come.

6. Other Women's Rights in the Inheritance Ordinances of Fez, Morocco

On 31 March 1492, the Catholic monarchs of the Unified Kingdom of Spain signed a decree for the expulsion of Jews from all cities, towns and lordships of their kingdoms. The official explanation for the expulsion as stated in the decree was to stop the damage to Christianity caused by the Jews in influencing Jews who had converted their faith. The decree stated that the steps taken by the kingdoms to prevent the influence of the Jews on the converts had been to no avail, and therefore the decree was issued to expel all Jews. Many Jews left Spain for North Africa, Italy and countries ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Some crossed the border to neighboring Portugal, where they were promised political asylum. However, the Portuguese king went back on his promise, and five years later the Jews again endured a mass expulsion from Portugal. For lack of any other recourse, many Jews converted to Christianity, and others did so only outwardly in the hope that reality would change and they would soon be able to return to practicing their religion in Spain or Portugal (Megged 2009, Chp. A).

The expulsion was experienced as a great trauma for all Jews and led to the annihilation of the Jewish community of Spain, which had existed in the country since Roman times, and to a tendency to settle in Muslim rather than Christian countries (Ray 2013a). It had been preceded by a long period of riots and pogroms against the Jews under Christian rule, and only during the Muslim occupation of Spain did the Jewish community enjoy true cultural and religious prosperity, a community that had produced the greatest Jewish philosophers, scientists and physicians, as well as the greatest adjudicators and scholars of the Jewish world. Its prosperous period continued even after the Christian reconquering of

Spain from the Muslims, but changes in the Kingdom led to the subsequent deterioration in the status of the Jews, culminating in their expulsion in 1492.

The expelled Jews arrived in Morocco in two waves, the first following the expulsion from Spain and the second following the expulsion from Portugal. Therefore, in addition to the influence of the regulations made in Spain, and specifically in Toledo, on matters of women's inheritance, Moroccan sages were also influenced by developments that originated in Portugal.[28]

Morocco's advantages as a sanctuary resulted from its geographic proximity to Spain and the knowledge that the Catholic monarchs did not intend to conquer Morocco, as well as the belief that maybe this period would pass and they would be able to return to Spain. Most Jews arrived in the city of Fez, which was known as a financial and political center. King Mulai Muhammad al-Sheikh (1472–1505) showed a positive attitude towards the expelled Jews, which reinforced their sense of security and preference to live in Fez (Corcos 1966). Following their arrival at the city, and after having endured a range of absorption crises and natural disasters, the leaders of the expelled Jews began the task of organizing their communities, through ordinances that relied on those previously incorporated in Spain. Leaders and sages among the expelled communities revived ordinances on various topics, aiming to set Jewish life back on its tracks and to cope with the difficulties created in family law by the expulsion. From Fez, ordinances spread to other cities in Morocco including Meknes, Sefrou, Debdou and Tetouan. They lasted for 250 years, from 1492 until 1750.[29]

Below are a number of ordinances in which changes were introduced in Fez in 1545, as indicated by the Sages of Fez:

> We, the undersigned, Sages of the sacred communities of Fez, have convened to negotiate on public matters, and we have noted that an ordinance of the expelled communities requires some amendments. And this is what we have deemed fit to amend in said ordinance. (Amar et al. 1986, p. 31)

Below are three examples of inheritance ordinances originally issued in Spain and then amended in Fez, with further changes made to them upon the arrival in Fez of the Jews expelled from Portugal, changes which, as mentioned above, were essential for coping with the new circumstances.

1. According to the original ordinance of the Jews expelled from Spain who had arrived in Fez:

> When the wife dies and her husband lives, and she did not leave after her a viable offspring, the husband should take two thirds of all her assets at the time of her death. And her heirs would take one third... and if no such heirs of hers are found down to the third generation, but only farther away, they will not inherit her estate at all. (Amar et al. 1986, p. 31)

The amendment following the emigration of Jews expelled from Portugal to Fez in 1498:

> And if she did not leave after her a viable offspring from him and from her, then the husband would share half of the half, after taking his share in the clothing and the offspring of the wife [presumably from a previous husband]... and if she has no offspring nor father nor brother or sister, then the two thirds of her estate will go to her husband, and a third to her heirs from her father's side. (Amar et al. 1986, p. 32)

2. According to the original ordinance of the Jews expelled from Spain:

> When the wife dies and her husband still lives, and she leaves after her a viable offspring from this husband, her husband and her offspring will share her estate, in equal parts. And in addition, the husband will share it with her father and her brothers. And the viable offspring, to inherit his mother, should be at least

> thirty days old, and even if it lives but one hour after his mother has died, it shall inherit his mother.

The following change was applied to the ordinance in Fez after the arrival of the Jews expelled from Portugal:

> If the woman dies and her husband lives and she has left a viable offspring thirty days old as stipulated above in clause C from him and from her, [the husband] would share with that offspring her entire estate, half and half (even if she has sons from another man, they will not share in his sons' inheritance from her...), and even if she has left *melog* assets, these will be shared as well. (Amar et al. 1986, p. 32)

3. The original ordinance of the Jews expelled from Spain had set equal rights to sons and daughters as heirs:

> When they are survived by boys and girls, the girls will inherit equally as the boys. This is true before the girls have married. And if they are betrothed, they shall marry with the part that they inherited [this would be their dowry].

The change made in Fez after the arrival of the Jews expelled from Portugal:

> All boys would inherit equal parts, as well as the unmarried girls, except for the eldest son, as the Torah has granted him the senior part. And if he shall not have an offspring at all, it shall be shared with his father. (Amar et al. 1986, p. 31)

To conclude, three important innovations were implemented in women's inheritance ordinances following the emigration of the Jews expelled from Portugal to Fez:

a. The equal division of assets, which had already been known in Spain, advanced a further step forward in the Fez ordinances, with the influence of the exiles from Portugal, when it was determined that women would inherit from the entire estate and not only from their own.
b. A further innovation involved the division of all assets, from any source belonging to the couple, upon the death of the husband—whereby the woman inherited half, and his sons the other half.
c. Girls and boys inherited equally, unless they were already married, rather than betrothed as in the original ordinance.

The writers of the ordinance did not explain the reasons that led to amending the original ordinances in a way that benefited women and in fact established equality in the division of property upon the woman's death. Investigators believe that the Jews expelled from Portugal brought with them the idea of equality in the division of assets from the laws of the Kingdom of Portugal. They lobbied for these amendments to suit the practice that had been prevalent in Portugal, and as a continuation to the inheritance ordinances of Tulitula and Valladolid. This approach was reinforced by the words of Rabbi Yossef Ben Lev, who had been among the Rabbis of Thessaloniki and the head of the yeshiva in Kushta—two cities that had absorbed thousands of expelled Jews and *Anusim*: as our rabbi teaches us, in the kingdom of Portugal there is a law and a custom that the widow is granted half the assets left by the husband, whether she has contributed much or little in her dowry.[30] M. Amar noted that the wording of the Fez ordinances was a continuation of an ordinance that had been customary in one of the communities of Castile in Spain. The Halachic basis for the ordinance had been a '*Shtar Tenaim*' (an engagement contract) between the marrying couple that relied on the Talmudic ordinance of '*Mipnei darchei shalom*' (For the sake of peace) (Amar 2020a, p. 227).

Just how bold and far reaching the ordinances were can be noted from an extreme implementation of the ordinance in Fez. In this specific case, a couple had been married and on the evening of their marriage went up to a '*Yichud*' (union) room (privacy room, where bride and groom are alone immediately after a Jewish marriage ceremony). Normally, there are no other people present, which marks the wedlock between the couple and

their sanctification to one another, but as the groom had been ill and prohibited from consummating the marriage, they were not left alone. Afterwards, his medical condition deteriorated, and he died. The wife's relatives alleged that, pursuant to the ordinance, all assets should be shared with the husband's heirs—because they [the couple] had stood together under the *Chuppah* (the canopy covering the couple during a Jewish wedding ceremony, marking their union), this in itself was a '*Yichud*', and therefore she was his wife for all matters and purposes, regardless of whether the marriage had been consummated. The *Dayanim* Rabbi Yehuda Ben Atar, Shmuel Hatzarfati Ben Danan and Rabbi Yaacov Ben Zur, among the greatest adjudicators in Morocco, discussed the question of what would be accepted by the Halacha as a '*Chuppah*' or '*Yichud*'.

Following Halachic review,[31] the *Dayamin* ruled that if the couple went into a place where a bed was placed, and they ate and drank, even though the marriage had not been consummated, the Halachic definition of a '*Chuppah*' had, in fact, taken place. Furthermore:

> If the man could have consummated the marriage, but the doctors, to be on the safe side, prevented him from doing so should his illness deteriorate, then the *Chuppah* is considered to have been complete and they shall share the assets pursuant to the ordinance. [32]

It should be noted that, in Judaism, the purpose of matrimony is first and foremost to bring forth offspring and to ensure the continuation of the human race, and therefore a couple's union is considered valid only following a symbolic act of consummation of the marriage between them. In our case, the religious law and the social concern were combined—the bride was considered a wife even though her husband died on the eve of their marriage. The wife was considered a widow and her value in the eyes of men was declined, meaning that her dowry in a second marriage would be half that of a single woman. The *Dayanim* had not been blind to this fact and wanted to compensate her as a widow that had just been married. Naturally, the boldness of the *Dayanim* and the influence of the expelled leaders had enabled such a ruling, which in Ashkenazi communities would have been unheard of. Moreover, the *Dayanim* saw themselves also as community leaders, responsible for the restoration of their communities following the expulsion crisis, and this is another reason for their boldness in legislating such far-reaching ordinances in order to rectify and reorganize their Jewish communities.

Despite the boldness of the ordinances that the expelled Jews had brought with them, the Fez *Dayamin* understood that not all problems involving women's inheritance had been solved, as the ordinance could still be overlooked in two ways (Amar 1989):

a. The husband may divide his property before his death between his sons or relatives, and even to strangers, so that no inheritance remains after his death.
b. The woman may grant her husband a waiver of her rights while she lives.[33]

If the wife's inheritance is considered a personal right as is her dowry, she can do with her right as she pleases, as well as waiving it for the benefit of her husband, while she is still alive. Such waiver may result in a dispute between the granter of the dowry and the woman, or between the granter of the dowry and the husband after the woman [wife] has died.[34] The Moroccan sages in Fez understood the Spanish inheritance ordinance as it had been understood by Rabbi Israel Hadayan and as had been the practice in Spain before the amendment introduced by the Rosh, i.e., that the wife had the right to grant half the inheritance to her husband, because the inheritance was seen as her personal right. Based on this assumption, they had been aware of the possibility that the wife would grant her right to her husband for reasons of marital harmony and the wish to appease him while they were living together, and therefore they attempted to limit these possibilities to the best of their abilities.

From a social and gender-based perspective, it is clear that despite the innovation introduced by the Spanish sages in granting women inheritance rights, the wife's status is weakened from the start—as normally her dowry is granted to her by her relatives, based on the assumption that the rules of the Tulitula ordinance apply to the marriage, meaning

that the woman inherits and they could be reimbursed. On the one side, her relatives are breathing down her neck, while on the other her husband who is living with her is urging her to waive her right. Consequently, the right granted to the wife by the ordinance becomes an obstacle in her life, since in most cases she will concede to the wish of her husband with whom she shares her life. This social reality is described in the ordinance and had been the motivation behind its amendment. In 17th-century Fez, many women preferred, while they were still living, to waive and grant their husbands the rights to the half of the inheritance reserved for their relatives upon their death (Amar 2020a, p. 227). Such waivers often resulted in disputes and arguments between the husband and the wife's relatives. Her relatives would feel deceived, claiming that the dowry was given to the wife in the first place on the premise of the terms of the *Ketubah*, by which they were assured the wife's share. To overcome such arguments and to protect women by reinforcing their financial independence, it was decided that anyone granting a *Ketubah* to his daughter would explicitly specify this term in it. As to previously signed *Ketubahs*, it was decided that a wife's waiver would apply only in the following cases:

a. The terms of the *Ketubah* should specify that the granter of the dowry had granted it to her pursuant to the terms of the ordinance by which he would have the right to her inheritance under the ordinance, and therefore a waiver required the approval of the rabbinical court in the presence of the holders of the wife's inheritance rights.
b. As to *Ketubahs* granted in the past before the ordinance had been issued, it was decided that the wife's waiver would be valid only with the consent of three *Dayanim* and in the presence of her relatives that are in the city. This arrangement was intended to prevent forced waivers and so that the relatives would be able to argue that the dowry had been granted according to common terms of the *Ketubah*, in which case the court would not approve the waiver.

Because of the importance of the ordinance and the innovation of adding to the wife's independence, all of the *Dayamin* of the city of Fez discussed and signed the ordinance: Rabbi Yehuda Uziel, Rabbi Abraham Hacohen, Rabbi Saadya Ben Raboh, HaNagid HaMeule Rabbi Moshe Halevi, Rabbi Yitzhak Aven Zur, Rabbi Shmuel Even Denan, Rabbi Jacob Hagiz, Rabbi Vidal Hatzarfati and Rabbi Shmuel Even Haviv (Amar 1989).

About two years following the signing of this amendment to the ordinance (1605), it was again amended, this time to facilitate the implementation of the original ordinance. As aforesaid, the original ordinance required three *Dayanim* and the presence of the wife's relatives. These conditions were not easy to achieve, and therefore the amending *Dayanim* decided that in order to facilitate the implementation of the ordinance, the change that the wife wishes to make in her rights by waiving her rights to the benefit of her husband requires the physical presence of one of the sages of the city. He would instruct her as to the implications of such a waiver and would ensure that it was done of her own free will. The intent behind this latest amendment, as aforesaid, had been to protect a wife that concedes to her husband for reasons of ensuring marital harmony or as a result of his pressure to grant him such a waiver. In addition, they added the following changes:

a. There was no need for the existence of an explicit term in the *Ketubah* that the dowry would return to the granter.
b. The property for which the waiver is requested is not only the dowry granted to the wife from her father's household but any property owned by her from other sources as well.
c. The presence of only a single sage is required at the time of the waiver, whose role is to admonish the wife lest she be blamed for passing property from one tribe to another (transferring the inheritance from its rightful owners).
d. There is no need for the presence of her relatives, so as to prevent arguments between them and the husband and his relatives.

A further alternative raised from the wording of the first ordinance issued in Fez, which had been the practice until 1603, is that the wife is entitled to waive her *Ketubah*

and its terms, cancel it and make new terms with her husband, without her relative's involvement and without requiring the court's consent, but with the following conditions:

a. The presence of a sage at the time of the waiver, whose role is to admonish the wife lest she be blamed for passing property from one tribe to another (transferring the inheritance from its rightful owners);
b. Witnesses to the admonishment—that in fact a sage had warned the woman and that she did not accept his warning;
c. The husband has immediately made another *Ketubah*;
d. The waiver would be complete even if she made it during illness and then recovered, and even if she divorces or is widowed, she will be entitled only to the terms of her new *Ketubah*.

Reference to this alternative can be found in the response of two sages of the same generation, Rabbi Shaul Sererro and Rabbi Jakob Even Denan, among the greatest leaders and *Dayanim* of Fez.

During a period in which women had generally not been financially or socially independent, the *Dayanim* of the city of Fez were committed to providing women with the protection they needed to ensure that the rights granted to them based on the innovative Tulitula ordinance would be protected and not lost as a result of husbands' sophisticated ploys. A further consideration among the reformers of the ordinance was to prevent disputes between the husband and the wife's relatives after her death, and between the wife and her husband while they were both living. They made it difficult to transfer the wife's rights, as they knew well that the wife would not want to argue with her husband during their married life. This position stems from the wife's lack of independence at the time, and her dependence on her husband. On the other hand, she also felt committed to her family who had given her the dowry for her marriage knowing that she would inherit half of the assets upon her husband's death or her own, and that they would be reimbursed.

The positions of the *Dayanim* of the city of Fez point to a rational style of leadership having social and political authority and legitimacy, granted in the harsh and shaky reality that followed the Jews' expulsion from Spain and Portugal. This leadership, whose members served as *Dayanim* in addition to being community leaders, relied on personal charisma (Weber 1968) that enraptured the people of the community and led to social change. The attributes of this leadership can be seen in the delineation of a new path and organization of the communities towards a safer and more hopeful future. Leadership in a religious society that was in the midst of a deep crisis grew against the backdrop of communities that fell apart as a result of the expulsion, communities that were suddenly exposed to problems in family law which they had never encountered before the expulsion, cases such as when a wife refused to accept Christianity and fled to a new country while her husband remained and became Christian, and vice versa; families who arrived with children and others who left their children behind; and more. This new reality forced the *Dayanim* of Fez to show their leadership and to sometimes act outside the borders of traditional Halacha. They based their strength on the works of the adjudicators of Spain in Toledo and Valladolid, added to them, innovated in line with the harsh new reality and prevented disputes and exploitation of women. Naturally, the laws of the kingdom in Portugal that recognized the right of the wife to inherit half the estate added to their awareness of the reality of life for the Jews expelled from Portugal.

The inheritance ordinances of women in Spain and Morocco are unique and unparalleled in any other Jewish community in the world. The *Dayanim* of Fez acted as they had been expected to act by their community members—addressing existing plights and changing circumstances. This authority was granted to the sages of Israel both by the written law of the Torah and by the essence of the idea of the oral law—which had originally not been written so that its commandments would not be frozen in time just like the written word is frozen, but rather that it would change over time, while remaining within the rules in which change is permitted. The sages of Ashkenaz did not dare change the Halachic tradition, and even when reality required change, they went back on their word. In terms of

leadership style, Ashkenazi sages represent a traditional leadership model that perceived itself as passing tradition from one generation to the next, without substantial changes and while maintaining the rigidity of the Halacha.

7. The Status of the Tulitula Ordinance in Israeli Religious Law and in the Israeli Ruling

In the beginning of the 1950s, Israel's Supreme Court deliberated whether a widow inherited from her husband as well as inheriting her *Ketubah*, or half the inheritance including the *Ketubah*. This question became pressing against the backdrop of two laws that had been added to the book of laws: the Women's Equal Rights Law in 1951 and the Succession Law in 1965. In the 1954 Skinder vs. Helen Schwartz verdict,[35] the appellant claimed her right to her *Ketubah* in addition to a quarter of her husband's inheritance. The district court as the first instance ruled that she was not entitled to her *Ketubah* in addition to the inheritance, relying, *inter alia*, on the Tulitula ordinance by which the woman inherited only half of the estate, and this included her entire inheritance. In the appeal, it was alleged that this ordinance was not customary among Ashkenazi Jews, and therefore its provisions should not be taken into consideration. In the Kipper verdict, Judge Shiloh accepted the position presented by Dr. Etzioni in the civil appeal Philosof vs. 'Taoz', which tended to accept Judge Kister's position on the right to the *Ketubah* on top of the inheritance. The court ruled, in line with the Tulitula ordinance, that a woman may choose the greater of the rights, up to half the value of the estate.

In the Levi affair[36] on which the Supreme Court ruled in 2002, Judge Edna Arbel stated that the *Ketubah* is an institution of Jewish law, and therefore Halacha rules should apply to it, including the financial valuation of the *Ketubah*.[37] In this case, a woman sued her husband's estate and demanded payment of her *Ketubah* in addition to the inheritance which she received. This particular claimant married the deceased after his first wife had died. Before matrimony, the couple signed a prenuptial agreement stating that the property of each would remain separate. However, the husband would give his new wife half of the ownership of the house in Caesarea, and if he died before her, she would be entitled to the severance pay from his employer. In addition, the funds remaining in their joint account would belong to the wife. In the *Ketubah*, the husband granted her 3 million shekels. After a while, the husband prepared a will in which he bequested everything to his sons from his first wife, excluding what he had granted his second wife. A year and a half after the wedding, the husband died.

In a plea preceding the first instance, the wife demanded 50% of the house in Caesarea, severance compensation, and the funds in the joint account. The sons did not oppose this. Then, she demanded her *Ketubah* of 3 million shekels. The family court rejected her request, adopting the ruling in the Kiper verdict[38] by which the court should examine, in such cases, the intent of the husband, meaning whether he had intended to add the sum of the *Ketubah* on top of the will. In addition, the court relied on the Halachic ruling of Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer mark Kav), which is based on the Talmud: "If [a man] writes his property to his children, and writes some land to his wife, she has lost [the right to] her *Ketubah* [marriage contract], provided that she did not protest but was silent".[39] The court also adopted the 'Philosof ruling'[40] by which the amount of the *Ketubah* was the husband's debt payable, but as stipulated in the Tulitula ordinance, this meant up to half the value of the estate. Judge Arbel rejected the ruling of the district court, by which a will cannot refute the *Ketubah*. As aforesaid, she based her decision on Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer mark Kav.

In another court ruling, Judge Hana Rish-Rothschild ruled as follows: "Limiting a widow's right to the sum of her *Ketubah* as stipulated in clause 104 (a) to the inheritance law...is not the only limitation of the right, but according to Jewish law her right is limited to half of the value of the estate."[41]

In conclusion, while the legislature chose not to explicitly state the provisions of the Tulitula ordinance and its more advanced Fez version in the Inheritance Law of the State of Israel, the reason was not that its provisions were not acceptable, but rather that

the legislature considered the fact that some communities had not accepted it. Various legal discussions on the inheritance rights of women include extensive references to the regulation; moreover, positions that doubted the legal status of the *Ketubah* or believed that its value should be left to civil law were not accepted. Legal explanations relied on women's expanded rights and Inheritance Laws, as well as the closest to them in the religious law—the Sephardi and Fez regulations that granted women equal inheritance rights. This had been possible for three reasons: the interpretative ways of the Israeli court, which adopts a practical approach to legal documents; the tendency of the court towards harmony between laws; and the absence of a uniform ruling in religious law. This freedom of action, in turn, permitted Israeli law to absorb the religious law closest to it. In this regard, the court had essentially rejected the inheritance law enacted according to the Ashkenazi Jewish custom and accepted the improved Sephardic version as it had been introduced in Spain and regulated again in Fez, incorporating far-reaching changes to inheritance law. The regulations used by the exiled Jews in Fez granted the wife equal inheritance rights from the entire estate of her husband, without stipulation as to the existence of sons or the length of the marriage, as described above. These regulations migrated from Spain to Portugal, where they were influenced by its laws and were then regulated once again in Fez, remaining the custom in Morocco for 250 years.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

Women's inheritance is a heavy matter in Jewish Halacha, having vast financial, social and gendered implications. According to the Halacha derived from the written scriptures, the wife does not inherit from her husband. The reason behind this was to prevent the passing of land from one tribe to another, so as to maintain in place the division of the land into estates as had been defined in the Torah and upon entrance into the land of Israel in the times of Yehoshua bin Nun. Despite this clear-cut rule, the sages were well aware of the problematic nature of this rule as far back as the Talmudic era. Their apprehensions were based on cases in which the wife would be left with nothing if she did not inherit from her husband, particularly when the husband married more than one woman and his heirs were not her sons. This problem also exists in case of divorce, when the husband is penniless and unable to pay the wife's *Ketubah*. The wife may remain in great poverty and without the ability to inherit from the husband when he dies. The danger in such cases is not only starvation, but also a social danger of undermining woman's honor and increasing her dependence on others who may take advantage of her plight. The Talmudic sages proposed a number of solutions for protecting a woman's honor. One solution required the husband to provide a guarantee for payment of the *Ketubah* in the form of a plot of land that was kept for that purpose. The second solution is that the woman would live off her husband's estate for the rest of her life, as long as she did not remarry. However, despite these solutions, the problem of inheritance remained a complex one, especially in the harsh reality caused by exile in various areas of the world.

The present paper presented different approaches to women's inheritance among Ashkenazi and Spanish community leaders in the 12th and 13th centuries, against the backdrop of a strict traditional Halacha and local influences. The Ashkenazi sages were confronted by inheritance issues in extreme cases such as in the case of a woman who died shortly after her marriage. In such a case, the Halachic tradition ruled that the husband inherited from his wife. The legal outcome created a twisted justice and an absurd situation in which the husband inherited from his wife shortly after they were married, while her parents not only lost their daughter but also the money that they had invested in her dowry.

This extreme situation led Rabbeinu Tam, the greatest of Ashkenazi adjudicators in the 12th century, to introduce an ordinance that in such a case the wife's dowry would be granted to her relatives, but then he retracted his ruling a year later. The idea to present an ordinance that perceives the wife's relatives as her heirs attests to the fortitude of Rabbeinu Tam as a leader and adjudicator, and yet his retraction points to the type of leadership that characterized him and most other Ashkenazi sages in exile—a traditionalist leadership

that perceived its role as dedicated to passing on tradition from one generation to the next (Weber 1968). This is a style of leadership that worked to maintain tradition as had been done by all adjudicators in the past, finding it difficult to deviate and change laws and practices that had been established many generations before. The Ashkenazi sages, led by Rabbeinu Tam, saw their religious leadership role as a tool for maintaining Halachic tradition and perceived change or innovation as a danger to Halacha and tradition. This leadership opted to protect Halachic tradition even when complex realities dictated new needs and confronted situations that did not exist in the past.

The great difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardic leadership in terms of women's inheritance and their status can be noted upon the arrival of Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel ('the Rosh') in Spain from Ashkenaz in 1304. When he was required to present his opinion on the women's inheritance ordinance that had been previously issued in Spain, he deliberated at length with local *Dayanim* and refused to recognize the interpretation granting inheritance rights to the wife similar to her husband's right to inherit. His was a traditional leadership style characteristic of Ashkenazi leaders. His years of religious and rabbinical formation were spent in Ashkenaz, under the patronage of the greatest adjudicator of the time, Maharam of Rothenburg. As a leader who studied with the traditional leaders of Ashkenaz, Rosh found it difficult to agree with interpretations presented to the local *Dayan* Rabbi Israel Ben Yosef to the Tulitula ordinance of the previous generation. Granting inheritance rights to women was in stark contrast to traditional Halacha. As noted, even when Rabbeinu Tam exceptionally adjudicated on the return of the dowry to the relatives of a woman who died shortly after her marriage, he had no intention of granting the wife land inheritance rights, but simply returning her dowry to her relatives to prevent injustice.

Rosh was unwilling to accept an interpretation of the Tulitula ordinance that granted women the same property inheritance rights as their husbands. It never occurred to him that the creators of the ordinance intended to rule in stark contrast to the Halacha. When the local *Dayan* Rabbi Israel Ben Yosef presented to him what had been written by one of the adjudicators of the previous generation, Rabbi Yaacov Even Shoshan, he explained that the ancient sage had been extremely old at the time and moreover was influenced by the laws of the kingdom.

As aforesaid, the leadership of Rosh pertains to Weber's first leadership model, as does that of Rabbeinu Tam. This type of leadership is characterized by protecting the Halachic tradition and the avoidance of change, even when the local custom dictates otherwise. The authorities of Rosh were extensive, as the Rabbi of the city of Toledo as well as through his political authority that gave him free reign. Even when the laws of the kingdom and society in Spain gave women similar inheritance rights as their husbands, Rosh refused to recognize such equality or consider the social and legislative reality that existed in the kingdoms. His stark opposition was even more pronounced in view of the general Halachic rule by which the custom of the place shall prevail, and the fact that local custom may even overrule the Halacha itself when it comes to civil law.

Contrary to the leadership of the Ashkenazi sages, the Spanish sages and *Dayanim* deliberated these issues in the 12th century and later on. As early as the beginning of the 12th century, the sages of Spain introduced the Tulitula ordinance that granted wives nearly equal inheritance rights as their husbands. Community leaders in Spain and specifically the issuers of the ordinance enjoyed religious and social freedom. This leadership had been highly influential in the Jewish world, as the center of Judaism had transferred from Babylon in the period of the *Geonim* to Spain in its Golden Age. Spain produced venerable Jewish scholars, well-known adjudicators and rabbis, scientists, philosophers, poets, linguists, physicians and more. The sages of Spain saw themselves as leaders of the Jewish world and as ones who were able to present innovations without concern of opposition from other adjudicators. Social reality in Spain and Portugal also influenced Jewish community leaders in terms of their Halachic approaches to women and their social status. Women of Sephardi descent generally enjoyed a more advanced status compared to the women of Ashkenaz.

In this context, the Spanish sages can be characterized as charismatic and rational, based on Weber's models. The first adjudicator who marked the turning point in relation to women's inheritance in Spain had been Ramah—the greatest adjudicator of his generation in Spain. His counterparts at court were Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Even Migash, the son of Rabbi Yosef Even Migash, the teacher of the father of Rambam and whom Rambam had viewed as his teacher although he did not actually study with him. To understand his position and Halachic authority, it would suffice to note that Ramban (Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman) was among those who turned to him with questions. Ramah's revolutionary nature included his open recognition of the right to stipulate property relations between spouses on a *d'var Torah*. This Halachic rule was not foreign to the Halacha, but few used it. The second thing he did was grant Halachic recognition to treating women's inheritance as did the local custom, and only if there was no local custom should the Halacha then be consulted. Women's inheritance is a financial matter, and therefore rulings on this matter may deviate from the writings of the Torah. Moreover, if the local custom stipulates otherwise, it should be followed. In this regard, he followed in the footsteps of the greatest adjudicator of all times and the greatest of Spain's sages—Rambam himself, who ruled for financial stipulation on a possible *d'var Torah*, provided that the custom is widespread in the region.

As aforesaid, Sephardi leadership shows a combination of charisma relying on the status of the sages of Spain throughout the Jewish world and a rationality relying on national arrangements and the wish to adjust the Halacha to changing circumstances. The *Dayanim* of Spain and its leaders were elected by their communities, and their authority was granted to them by the State. Their job was to ensure organizational and social order among their communities, and therefore this type of leadership can be characterized as rational (Oliver-Lumerman et al. 2018).

The inheritance rights of women emigrated with the expelled Jews from Spain and Portugal to Morocco and to the city of Fez. The expulsion had been traumatic for the Jews of Spain, creating a harsh reality which the sages of the expelled communities had never before experienced. Broken communities shattered into fragments, traveling from the Spanish countries and bringing with them difficult problems in many areas of life, and particularly in family law. The expulsion crisis forced the sages of expelled communities, who had gone into exile in Fez with some of their community members, to act quickly and authoritatively in reorganizing their communities. Although the *Dayanim* held onto Halachic authority from Spain and charismatic leadership is ingrained in religious communities, they were redefined as leaders of the communities and in a short time formed the community in Fez. This leadership gained the trust of their community members immediately upon their arrival at Fez, as they possessed the three essential components for leadership success (Maccoby 2009; Klein and House 1995):

a. The group to be led—the community members that exiled with them from Spain and Portugal—were in a traumatic state, confused and in need of leadership.
b. Supportive environment—the local king of Morocco took the expelled Jews under his auspices and gave them a sense of security. These auspices included authority granted to the *Dayanim* to rule on behalf of community members on many issues.
c. The leaders—the city's *Dayanim* enjoyed wide religious authority, and their power as religious leaders was clear to all in a community composed solely of religious members. This community aspired to return to the values of Judaism as it had existed in Spain. In this crisis situation, leaders gave hope to their communities by providing a vision of values (Popper 2002; Weber 1968; Castelnovo et al. 2017) that would return them to those of the Jewish religion and tradition as had been the custom in Spain.

The *Dayanim* and leaders of the community in Fez used ordinances to reinstate community life to its previous state, but the harsh reality following the expulsion and the customs among the expelled led them to improve the original inheritance ordinances of Tulitula and Valladolid by benefiting women more than had been the intention in the original Tulitula ordinance. The inheritance ordinance issued in Fez spread quickly to many cities in

Morocco and became the custom for 250 years. The ordinance changed the status of women, with its impact extending beyond financial matters of inheritance, also to stipulations in the *Ketubah* on the prohibition to marry a further wife—a condition that is included by the wife in the *Ketubah*. This custom, too, had spread in many cities in Morocco.

With the establishment of the State of Israel and transfer of the authority on marriage and divorce to the rabbinical court, the Tulitula ordinance was seen as binding in matters involving inheritance between couples who were descendants of Spain and Morocco. The women's inheritance ordinance that had been issued in Morocco granted wives equal property rights as husbands, and in this the rabbis of Morocco preceded the 'presumption of community property' introduced by the Israeli Supreme Court following the legislation of the Women's Equal Rights Law in 1951. The court's innovation was that the wife's inheritance rights would also apply to couples married before that year, pursuant to the 'presumption of community property' originating in an implied contract, and in fact had existed in the inheritance ordinances issued in Morocco as of the 14th century onwards.

Although the Israeli legislature chose not to include the provisions of the Tulitula ordinance and its more advanced version in Fez in the State's Inheritance law, the reason was not that it did not accept it, but rather the assumption that certain communities had not. Extensive references are made to the ordinances in discussions regarding women's inheritance rights. The approach that casts doubt on the legal status of the *Ketubah* or the position by which its values should be left to the civil law were not accepted. The legal explanations for this fact were based on the Women's Equal Rights Law and the Inheritance Law, as well as on their counterparts in Jewish law—the Spain and Fez ordinances which granted women equal inheritance rights. This was made possible due to the interpretative ways of Israeli courts in their adoption of a practical approach to legal documents, the tendency of the court to seek harmonization of the law, and the fact that there is no clear ruling in religious law on this matter. This freedom of action enables Israeli law to absorb into it the religious law that is closest to its approach. In this regard, religious law ruled by the custom of Ashkenaz in inheritance laws had been rejected, while the improved Spanish version as introduced in Spain and amended in Fez (with far-reaching changes in inheritance laws) had been accepted.

The ordinances issued by the expelled Jews in Fez granted women equal inheritance rights over their husbands' entire estate, without stipulations pertaining to the existence of sons or length of the marriage. Their influence on the Halacha can be noted to this day in Israel's customary law as well as in further ordinances such as those granting equal inheritance rights to daughters and sons and ordinances obligating men to compensate women for un unrealized promise of marriage, while women in Morocco had been exempt from a parallel obligation.

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Notes

1. Rambam divided Talmudic literature into five categories, and in the fifth, regarding laws, he wrote: "And the fifth category consists of laws based on (empirical)" investigation regarding the social behavior of individuals in those matters which do not constitute an addition to or detraction from a (biblical) commandment—or regarding things which are efficacious for people with respect to the observance of the laws of the Torah, these are called "Ordinances" and customs. (Maimonides 1995).
2. Bavli Sanhedrin 76, p. 2.
3. Bavli Sanhedrin 6, p. 2; Yevamot 92, p.1.
4. Cohen (1991). In his book, he presents examples for rules of equity in Jewish law, such as The Law of Mazranut (Bavli, Bava Metzia 108, p. 1): grants a neighbor the first right to purchase an adjacent plot of land; Shuma Hadar Laolam (Bavli, Bava Metzia 17, p. 2): by which a debtor has the right to return his property to his own hands in return for payment of his debt according to the present estimate; Mip'nei tikkun ha-olam laws: the court as the father of orphans (Gitin 37, p. 1). The court appoints them a guardian. When a debt is returned after the owner has died, only land of lower value is taken from the orphans.

[5] See paper by Prod. Menachem Mautner (1994) "On Equity in Jewish Law, according to the approach of Prof. A. Kirschenbaum in his words on Equity in Jewish Law".
[6] Numbers Rabbah, Chapter 9, 17.
[7] Bava Batra, p. 2; Tosafta Ketubot D; Yerushalmi Ketubot, Halacha 4.
[8] Bavli Bava Kamma 109, p. 2.
[9] Bavli Bava Batra 132, p. 2, in the words of Rabbi and Shmuel, Ibid.
[10] Among the greatest adjudicators of all times, 1138–1204, a physician and philosopher.
[11] Fruit yielding assets which the woman brings to the matrimony.
[12] Assets of fixed value which the woman brings to the matrimony.
[13] Rambam, Hilchot Ishut (Matrimonial Law), Chapter 12, Halacha 3.
[14] Rambam Hilchot Nachalot, Chapter 1, Halacha 8.
[15] Bavli, Bava Batra 125, pg. 2, Rambam Hilchot Nachalot, Chapter 1, Halacha 11: Hilchot Z'chiya U'Matana (Winnings and gift laws), Chapter 12, Halacha 2; Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 90, a; Shulchan Aruch Hoshen Mishpat, 248, 9.
[16] Yerushalmi Bava Batra, Chapter 8, Halacha 5.
[17] Bavli Yevamot, Chapter 9, p. 2.
[18] Rambam, Matrimonial Law, Chapter 23, Halacha 12.
[19] Sifra, Bechukotai, Parasha B, Chapter 5.
[20] Sefer HaYashar by Rabbeinu Tam, Hidushim section, mark 1530, pg. 465, Shlezinger edition.
[21] As can be deducted from the Tosafot commentaries of Bavli Cetuvot, 47, p. 2.
[22] Sh"ut Ritvah, 189th edition, Jerusalem 1958, mark 180. p. 214. Yom Tov ben Abraham of Seville, commonly known by the Hebrew acronym Ritvah, lived between the years 1250–1320 in Zaragoza, Spain.
[23] Sh"ut Rashbah (Levorno) C, mark 432.
[24] Sh"ut Zichron Yehuda, Berlin 1845, mark 76.
[25] The ordinance is presented in Tur, Even HaEzer, mark 118.
[26] The claim of Rabbi Moshe Ben Naaman Ben Alregali on behalf of his wife, who had been the heir of the wife of Moshe Ben Alregal. For further details, see: Shweka 1998, book 1 (Tishrei-Kislev, 5759).
[27] Sh"ut Tashbatz 2, mark 298 amendment C.
[28] In the Responsa Rashdam, Choshen Mishpat, Teshuvah 327, RaShDam (Rabi Shmuel de Medina) describes a case brought before him for his ruling: "One of the Anusot of Portugal marries a Rabbi Anus in the kingdom of Portugal, and at that kingdom there is an ancient Etiquette (law) of the king and the kingdom by which in all Ketubot (dowries), whether small or large, the wife takes half of the assets remaining after the husband's death, as can be seen very clearly from the wording of the Etiquette." In this case, RaShDam was forced to rule as was the custom in Portugal, despite the fact that the husband had died and the wife was in Thessaloniki. At the end, he mentions that Rosh did not agree with the regulation, preferring to minimize its strength.
[29] The ordinances were first published by Rabbi Abraham Enkawa (1807–1891) in his book Kerem Chemed vol 2, Levorno, 1861. In 1870, a new edition was published, edited by Rabbi Prof. Moshe Amar. The Book of Ordinances, Jewish Law in the Moroccan communities, A., Moroccan Jewish Heritage Institute—Jerusalem, 1979.
[30] Sh"ut Mahari Ben Lev, part 2, mark 23c.
[31] Rambam, Matrimonial Law, Chapter 10, Haacha 2 Succah, Chapter 3, mark 8; Even HaEzer, mark 62, 74 Yerushalmi (Vilna) Sotah Tractate 89, Halacha 16; Beit Yosef Even HaEzer, mark 61.
[32] Mutzavi part 2, mark 187.
[33] According to the Rosh, the wife cannot waive her right since, according to the ordinance, the purpose of her inheritance is to prevent the estate from being transferred from the wife's family to the husband. The purpose of her inheritance is only to assure the future of her heirs; she has no ownership right over the inheritance, and she cannot bequest it to whomever she pleases.
[34] This Halachic difference was the center of the polemic between the Rosh and Rabbi Israel Hadayan in Toledo.
[35] Civil appeal 95/54 Haya Skinder vs. Helen Schwartz and three others. Court rulings, volume 9–1955.
[36] Family appeal 9692/02 Jane Doe vs. John Doe. 62, (3) p. 29 (2007).
[37] On the matter of the valuation of the Ketubah according to the religious law, see also: Estates file (Tel Aviv Family court) 108514/05 8. S vs. Y. S; Family file (Tel Aviv Family court) 34700/09 N.A vs. Y.A
[38] Estate claim (Tel Aviv District Court) 951/75 Kiper vs. Adv. M. Rabshtein, the Estate administrator, District court verdicts, 1978 (2), 3.
[39] Bavli Bava Batra 132, pg. 1.
[40] Civil appeal 293/72 Yitzhak Philosof vs. Taoz, Provident Fund for Employees Ltd. 27 (2) p. 535.
[41] Estate claim (Tel Aviv Yafo) 101551/08 H.S vs. The Estate of the Deceased Z.S z"l.

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Creating Transformation: South African Jews in Australia

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Abstract: Since the 1960s Australian Jewry has doubled in size to 117,000. This increase has been due to migration rather than natural increase with the main migration groups being South Africans, Russians, and Israelis. Of the three, the South Africans have had the most significant impact on Australian Jewry—one could argue that this has been transformative in Sydney and Perth. They have contributed to the religious and educational life of the communities as well as assuming significant community leadership roles in all the major Jewish Centres where they settled. This results from their strong Jewish identity. A comparative study undertaken by Rutland and Gariano in 2004–2005 demonstrated that each specific migrant group came from a different past with a different Jewish form of identification, the diachronic axis, which impacted on their integration into Jewish life in Australia, the synchronic axis as proposed by Sagi in 2016. The South Africans identified Jewishly in a traditional religious manner. This article will argue that this was an outcome of the South African context during the apartheid period, and that, with their stronger Jewish identity and support for the Jewish-day- school movement, they not only integrated into the new Australian-Jewish context; they also changed that context.

Keywords: South African Jews; Australia; migration; Jewish identity; Jewish education; diaspora

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1. Introduction

Australian Jewry is one of the few Diaspora communities that is increasing in size. This growth, however, is due to immigration rather than natural increase. Since the 1960s, there have been three main Jewish ethnic groups immigrating to Australia: South Africans, Russians, and Israelis. South African-Jewish migration has continued consistently throughout the period into the present, with several peaks as will be discussed, compared with the Russian migration, which occurred in the 1970s and again between 1991–1997, after which their special refugee status was withdrawn. South African Jews arrive with a strong Jewish identity connected to Jewish traditions and religious beliefs and have reinforced every aspect of Jewish life in Australia (Sagi 2016). This migration is part of a broader pattern which has created a significant South African-Jewish diaspora. The most recent study of South African Jewry, notes that it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers, but that 15,635 South African-born Jews in Australia were listed in the 2016 census, with this number adjusted for under-numeration; 6671 based on the 2011 census for England and Wales; around 13,800 in Israel until mid-2018; some 8000 in Canada; and approximately 56,000 in the USA (Graham 2020, pp. 26–27). Graham (2020) stresses that if these figures are correct, "the expatriate population may now be larger than the Jewish population in South Africa" (p. 27).

2. Literature Review

There has been little written about the South African-Jewish migration to Australia, which is one of the key English-speaking reception countries, particularly Sydney, together with Toronto and London. In their broader study, Louw and Mersham (2001) argue that this lack of research is because "South African immigrants prefer to become invisible and simply assimilate into societies like Australia" (p. 306). Regarding Jewish South Africans,

Australian immigration expert, Dr James Jupp, posits that this is because they are seen as "uncontroversial and unproblematic" (Jupp 2007, p. 10).

There have been several important in-depth studies of South African Jewry published over the years. Gideon Shimoni (2003), of the Hebrew University, is one of the key scholars. His book, *Community and Conscience,* is a key study of the community surviving as a minority within the racist structure of apartheid South Africa. Milton Shain, of the University of Cape Town, is South Africa's leading scholar in modern Jewish history and is a prolific writer who has covered South African-Jewish history, and politics, including his book on antisemitism, *A Perfect Storm* (Shain 2015).

At its peak, South African Jewry numbered close to 120,000; today, the population is estimated to be around 50,000, so that this exodus is an important area of research. In their book, *Worlds Apart*, Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold, and Gillian Heller have explored the historical background with most South African Jewish originating from Lithuania and Latvia, and then many migrating to Australia and New Zealand, but only one chapter specifically focuses on Australia. Their study is based on an email survey, for which they had 608 responses, with their questionnaire exploring the respondent's life in South Africa and any Litvak (Lithuanian, Latvian, and Courland) stories of their family before they migrated to South Africa, in addition to questions relating to their migration to Australasia. Their methodology is "a mix of contemporary sociology and socio-political history". They comment that these "do not make for a ready or easy combination", but they contend it is important to understand "the history and context of this migration and re-migration" (p. 49). It is important to note that today, 89% of Jews in South Africa were born there, and that a high percentage of their parents were also born in South Africa (68% and 74% depending on gender). However, the country that "respondents' grandparents are most likely to come hail from is Lithuania" (Graham 2020, p. 19). Given that most of the South African Jews arrived in Australia before 2000, this explains the impact of their Litvak heritage on their contributions to Australian Jewry, with those who were part of the earlier migration waves clearly more connected to the Litvak heritage.

Apart from this book-length study, little has been published on the topic. Three journal articles (Rule 1994; Louw and Mersham 2001; Forrest et al. 2013) have dealt with South African migration to Australia in general. According to Louw and Mersham (2001), Jews constituted 13.5% of South African Australians. Given this statistic, there is almost nothing on the specific Jewish migration story in these articles.

Julie Kalman (2014) deals specifically with the topic of South African Jews in Australia. Her article is based on a qualitative study of South Africans who migrated to Australia since 2000; they live in Maroubra and Coogee, Sydney's beach-side suburbs in the south-east, and send their children to the Coogee synagogue's preschool. In her 2010 study, she interviewed both partners of six couples and just the wives of three other couples. She argued that "Jewish South Africans have quietly moved in to Maroubra and are moulding the suburb to make themselves at home" (p. 180). In her article, she described how her interviewees transplant the South African way of life, especially food, to their new homeland; their demography in Australia; reasons for leaving; the homogeneous nature of South African Jewry due to the Litvak chain migration between 1880–1920 when around 40,000 arrived; the fact that from 1936 onwards, the government closed the door to further migration; support networks; and a sense of Jewish identity.

Apart from these specific studies dealing with South African-Jewish migration, there is information about this migration in studies undertaken within the Jewish community, particularly the GEN17 in-depth survey and analysis conducted by Graham and Markus (2018). As well, Rutland has covered the topic in her general histories of Australian Jewry (Rutland 2001, 2005) and has also conducted a historical and sociological quantitative and qualitative study in 2004–2005 of this population group with Dr Antonio Gariano.

This article draws on these various sources to provide an overall picture of South African migration and integration. It provides an in-depth study of the contribution of

South African Jews to the evolution of Jewish life in Australia, a topic largely neglected by the other studies related to South African Jews in Australia.

3. Methodology

This article is based on a study undertaken by Rutland and Gariano (2005) from 2004–2005 at the request of the Jewish Agency of Israel. The study set out to profile and determine the needs of Australian Jewry's three largest groups of recent immigrants to Australia—former South Africans, Jews from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), and ex-Israelis. The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which these groups were involved in Australian-Jewish life given their different backgrounds, histories, and experiences. The study also set out to better understand how the different groups identify as Jews based on religion, ethnicity, culture, or otherwise. Since this study, the additional research of Australian Jewry for GEN17 undertaken by Graham and Markus (2018) provides further data about South African Jews which has been extrapolated for this study.

The methodology used was triangulation, which included analysis of census data; a quantitative survey; and qualitative research, including oral history and traditional methods of historical inquiry. The use of methodological triangulation is increasingly common within the social sciences because it enhances the confidence in research findings. By using more than one method of investigation, it is possible to approach the research task from different viewpoints to address issues and validate assumptions.

3.1. Census Data

The 1991, 1996, and 2001 Australian census data were analysed, drawing on customised matrixes purchased for this study. The census data collect information on a person's religion, which is the only indicator of Jewishness within the census. Persons are asked to identify their religion but may choose not to respond. Researchers in the field argue that the use of the census data without adjustment leads to under-enumeration of the Jewish population in Australia by up to 25% (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 2). Nonetheless, the census data are the only valid and reliable source which collects religious self-identification on a population-wide basis.

3.2. Quantitative Survey

The quantitative survey instrument consisted of 63 generic questions which were applicable to all Jews with respondents being asked to respond to a series of questions about themselves as well as describing various aspects of their household. As well, there were an additional 14 questions for those born in the FSU, nine for those born in South Africa, and six for those born in Israel.

The survey instrument was disseminated by email, on-line with a web-based survey, and a paper-based survey administered via post, with face-to-face structured interviews and telephone surveys. A total of 602 responses were elicited, of which 187 responses were from South Africans, representing 665 members in the households. This constituted 6.35% of the 10,473 South Africans in Australia, according to the 2001 census.

3.3. Qualitative Research

The qualitative research combined oral-history methodology with more traditional forms of historical data. A list of key community leaders, professionals, as well as people most directly involved in creating community institutions catering for the needs of the three target migration groups was drawn up for the three largest centres of Jewish settlement: Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth. The questions focused on the interviewee's background; perceptions about reception, integration, and contribution; the relevant history of the institution with which the interviewee was associated with; and any problems the interviewee experience.

These interviews have enabled a picture to emerge of the issues of reception, integration, and contribution of each of the groups. They have provided pen sketches of the

work of each migrant-centred institution in terms of religious, educational, welfare, and cultural activities.

3.4. Analysis of the Survey Data

The questions from the survey resulted in 245 variables for analysis. The analysis of the data was limited to descriptive statistics as the sample size and response rate was considered too small and low to apply inferential analysis, especially when considering the length of the survey, the number of variables involved, and the survey limitations.

3.5. Limitations

There were several limitations with this survey. The major issues were the short time frame for the survey; a limited budget for its promotion; and sample bias common for all opt-in surveys, where it is normally the more committed who respond.

4. Findings

4.1. The Waves and Reasons for Immigration

There have been four main waves of Jewish migration from South Africa to Australia: (1) after the Sharpeville riots of 1960; (2) after the 1976 Soweto riots; (3) 1984–1989, because of the civil war; and (4) post-Mandela period between 1994–2004 (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 15). The tide has stemmed since then due to more stringent Australian requirements. While each wave was a response to a specific episode in South African history with a "cumulative" effect (Tatz et al. 2007, p. 164), each wave was a migration of choice with pragmatic reasons largely influencing the decision of choosing Australia as their new homeland (Kalman 2014, p. 186).

The first wave migration is seen as more ideological/liberal. Many who left, particularly during the first wave, opposed apartheid and wanted to live in an equal society, so they either had to join the African National Congress (ANC) and become activists or leave. As one respondent to the 2005 survey said of South Africa, it was "a fascist country with the trappings of democracy". He also commented that he and his wife decided that they did not want to have children in South Africa because "it was a racist society, and we thought the government was entrenched (like the USSR)".[1]

The post-Apartheid immigrants leave South Africa for different reasons. They are disturbed by the high level of crime and feel insecure. They are also concerned about their children's education because of present government policy of affirmative action. Thus, as one of the interviewees expressed, the most recent migration is more "'what is good and comfortable for me' ... If this one has a four-wheel drive and a two-storey house, then the other wants a two-storey house with a swimming pool".[2] Similarly, Tatz et al. (2007), found that when they analysed the reasons according to time, "'ideological' dwindles to almost nothing after 1990" (p. 192). These reasons correspond with the factors leading to the migration of South African non-Jews (Forrest et al. 2013, pp. 51–52).

The survey (Rutland and Gariano 2005) found that the political situation in South Africa was a major factor in the decision to immigrate to Australia, with 81% reporting that it was very important/important. A total of 64% responded that a major factor for immigrating was that they "did not feel safe/secure". Of these respondents, 66% reported that the Apartheid regime was in place when they migrated to Australia. Australia was seen as a desirable place to migrate to, with 65% of the 187 South African-born respondents indicating that the major factor for choosing Australia was "better future for the family".

Tatz et al. (2007) also found that the most important factors leading to re-migration were ideological, fear for the future, crime, and family. There was very little emphasis on army service or economic factors in the decision (pp. 16–17), although the economic factors have become more important in the twenty-first century, especially with affirmative action (Tatz et al. 2007, pp. 190–92). Tatz et al. argue that this is what makes South African re-immigration unique, since economic factors are normally a major motivating reason for migration (p. 184). The more recent GEN17 survey found similar factors, with family

reunion being very important, but also "a safe environment" and "better future for my children" (Graham and Markus 2018, p. 56).

Kalman (2014) captures the way the combination of these factors led to the migration decision with this quote from one of her interviewees:

> I remember quite distinctly the one, you know just looking out at the back garden and thinking it's so perfect and then you look up and there is this big wall that contains you. It just felt like it wasn't real. I mean, for me the main thing was the limbo. I didn't want to keep asking the question 'should we shouldn't we'. (p. 192)

Thus, this interviewee and his family decided to leave, despite having their dream home and comfortable lifestyle, and this experience was common among their friends.

4.2. Demographic Profile

There is a debate about the exact number of Jewish South Africans who have settled in Australia. Based on the 2001 census, Tatz et al. (2007) estimated the numbers to be between 12,000 and 15,000 in 2007 (p. 54). In terms of settlement patterns, Sydney has been by far the most popular destination, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. "JA Survey", Rutland and Gariano (2005).

NSW	6078	58.10%
VICTORIA	2688	25.70%
WA	1334	12.70%
Queensland	243	2.30%
Other	126	1.20%
TOTAL	10469	100.00%

According to the GEN17 survey, South Africans constitute 14% of the Australian Jewish population, numbering 16,520, although Graham (2020) lists a lower figure of 15,635 (p. 26). Their distribution and percentage of the Jewish population reflect the pattern above, but their impact varies depending on the size of the local Jewish community. South Africans constitute 19% of NSW Jewry, which is the second largest Jewish community, 8% of Victorian Jewry, the largest Jewish community, and 28% of Perth Jewry, a much smaller Jewish community (Graham and Markus 2018, p. 11). Both Melbourne and Sydney are on the east coast of Australia and constitute 90% of Australian Jewry, but Sydney has attracted more South Africans than Melbourne due to the similarity of its climate and topography. Perth is located in the west coast of Australia, is a small but compact and strong community, and is considerably closer to South Africa. This explains why they constitute a higher percentage of the Jewish community, even though, numerically, there are fewer South African-born Jews in Perth.

The special geography of South African Jews in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth is distinct, with concentration in specific suburbs, unlike the non-Jewish settlement patterns which are more dispersed. Tatz et al. describe these concentrations as "Jewish belts", creating "their own versions of their former lives" (p. 228). This is in direct contrast with the non-Jewish South African migrants to Australia. Forrest et al. (2013) state that "On the other hand, Afrikaans speakers are as dispersed as Jewish community members are concentrated, principally in outer parts of the city" (p. 66). The non-Jewish South African migrants also have different settlement patterns based on their socio-economic status, with the better off South Africans settling in middle-class suburbs, while the poorer, largely Black South Africans settle in working-class suburbs. These groups have not created ethnic suburbs and, with their greater dispersion, have assimilated more easily into the broader Australian society (Forrest et al. 2013, p. 66).

In Sydney, many South African Jews initially settled in St Ives in the north, but overtime, as indicated in the 1986 and 1991 census, just as many moved to the Eastern Suburbs, many of the most recent migrants having opted to settle in Sydney's East rather than St Ives. According to Tatz et al.'s 2007 study, 64.5% live in the Eastern Suburbs with 30.6% in the North Shore (p. 229).

In Melbourne, from 1987 to 1997, there was an initially rapid growth of the Jewish population in the Doncaster/Templestow areas. Since 1997, the first area of settlement for South Africans has moved from Doncaster to South Caulfield, described as the 'South African ghetto'. As a result of their sense of insecurity and networking, many have tended to seek out other South African newcomers.[3]

Their greatest impact of the South Africans has been on Perth where the size of the community doubled between 1981 (when it was c3000) to 1991 (when it was c6000) with the main group arriving after 1987. One Perth communal worker said: "Thank God for the South Africans. I grew up in a small community. They've enriched it ... They've given us a whole community. They work very well and very productively. We need volunteers and they volunteer year after year".[4] They have also had a demographic impact. Until the 1980s, the Jewish community was largely concentrated around Mount Lawley. Since then, they have moved into northern suburbs, including Dianella, Coolbinia, Noranda, and Yokine, because of cheaper land, although these are still high-status suburbs. Forrest et al. (2013) found that, according to the 2006 census, 74% of the 1418 South African Jews in Perth lived in three adjacent suburbs in the northeast (p. 64).

All the research highlights that the South African Jews are highly educated. The 2005 JA survey found that 72% of the interviewees had tertiary qualifications. These figures confirm anecdotal evidence, with one respondent from the qualitative interviews arguing that 70–80% of South Africans are professionals which enables them to settle more quickly, as they are not going to a completely foreign environment. These findings are confirmed by the Tatz et al.'s 2007 survey, but they found that, while 84% of doctors continued to work in their profession, 48% of lawyers retired on arriving in Australia (p. 61).

4.3. Integration of South Africans

As with all immigration, there is a difficult phase of transition initially when South African immigrants feel quite unsettled, often having left family and friends behind. One defence mechanism is to harp back to what was and to seek fellow newcomers who are going through the same experience. Several respondents commented that they can identify the newest South African arrivals, not from their accent but from their attitude. One respondent summed this up: "they tend to stick together. They have remained in their own socio-economic group and have simply transferred themselves from one city to another". (See Note 3).

Very few South Africans have sought assistance from Jewish Care. One Melbourne respondent, an ex-South African, who played a very active role in Melbourne Jewish Care in the 1990s as Appeal Chairperson, commented: "South Africans do not apply for loans from the community. They have a different culture—they do not ask for handouts".[5] In Perth, the main role of Jewish Care in the early 1980s was to lend household goods to the South Africans until their "lift" arrived, but they also purchased a property to provide newcomers with short-term accommodation until they found work and a home. However, most South Africans do not need long-term community assistance. In general, South Africans cannot obtain an Australian immigration visa without a job and, by and large, they have employment before they arrive. They are more likely to work on a voluntary basis for Jewish Care, or in the larger centres to be employed by Jewish Care, than need welfare assistance.

However, the GEN17 survey found that 25% of South African immigrants complained about inadequate income, with 22% complaining about housing costs, 21% about making friends, and 35% about finding suitable employment (pp. 56–57). At the same time, this

survey found that 80% of South Africans were either "much more satisfied" or "more satisfied" than they were in South Africa (p. 59).

In general, migration of Jews from South Africa and their integration is easier than for non-Jews because the latter "have to join the club—tennis club, bowling club ... ".[6] Jewish South Africans just join the *Shule* and the school. They have Friday nights, *Yom Tov*, and other social functions (Rutland and Gariano 2005, pp. 17–19). Thus, Jewish networking with family and friends played a key role in their successful integration.

4.4. Religious Life

In general, South Africans are a much more homogeneous group than Australian Jewry because of their largely Litvak background. As discussed earlier, even though most of the current and previous generations in South Africa were born there, the grandparents' generation largely come from Lithuania and the cultural traditions from there have been maintained across the generations. All make their *kneidlech* (*matza* balls) in their own ways, their Yiddish is different in nuance and flavour, and their Yiddish dialects used in Melbourne are different.

Moreover, there are also small nuances in ritual and practice. For example, during a funeral, South Africans will change pall bearers several times, unlike Australian custom, and have a wedding choir in attendance. Further, there is a different approach to synagogue services and management. Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn, who was chief minister of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation from 1988–2013 and an ex-South African, commented: "there are great similarities, and it is easy to adapt, but one would be fooling oneself if one believed that they are the same, because there are subtle differences and expectations, and these can be quite profound".[7] The choir is a key feature of synagogue worship in South Africa, which has a strong musical tradition of *hazanut* (cantorial music). Many South African Jews are also very traditional in their approach to Judaism, but they lack a solid foundation of knowledge in Hebrew and cannot *daven* (pray) by themselves, so that the choir enables them to enjoy the service. South African congregations are also much more uniform with the rabbi's authority not questioned. This is very different, particularly in Melbourne, where each congregation is a *shteibl* (little house) to itself; there are several *Betei Din* (Jewish Courts of law), and communal discipline is not as strong as in South Africa.

Since their arrival, South Africans have established their own synagogues, in some cases associated with schools. In Sydney, there are no specific South African congregations, but they have made significant contributions to established congregations, such as South Head Synagogue and Central Synagogue, and in the 1980s and 1990s, have played a role in the newly created congregations, Kehillat Masada and Chabad, St Ives. In addition, the Jewish Learning Centre, (JLC) established to strengthen traditional Judaism in Sydney, opened its own premises in 2003; it has been funded and largely supported by ex-South Africans. Its spiritual leader, Rabbi Davey Blackman, is ex-South African, closely associated with the Ohr Somayach movement.

In contrast to Sydney, several synagogues have been established to specifically serve South Africans in Melbourne as well as strengthen established synagogues, including the Northern Suburbs *Shule*, the Central *Shule,* and Blake Street Synagogue. For example, the well-established St Kilda Hebrew Congregation, one of the largest congregations in Melbourne, has also attracted South Africans. Rabbi Heilbrunn commented in 2004 that about a quarter of the congregation's members were ex-South African. The style of service at St Kilda is very similar to Cape Town and Johannesburg with the English sermon, *hazan*, and choir.

The Northern Central *Shule* was established in the Doncaster area and is associated with the North Eastern Jewish Centre, which offers educational and social activities. It developed with the South African influx in the late 1980s, when the congregation experienced a rapid growth. By the early 1990s it had reached its zenith with around 450 families as members, of whom around 60% were ex-South African, but since its peak in the mid-1990s, its membership has declined although it continues to function.

Central *Shule* Chabad is a new congregation, which started in 1998, growing out of an association between ex-South African, Ian Harris, and Rabbi Yitzhak Riesenberg, a Chabad rabbi (not an ex-South African), who served the community until 2022. From these early beginnings, the community has grown with its attendance representing the South African religious commitment. Thus, it is packed on Friday nights, but has difficulty getting a *minyan* (quorum) on Saturday mornings, since most South African Jews still drive and carry out normal activities on *Shabbat* (Sabbath). Its service is modelled on the Johannesburg synagogues with a male choir of fifteen members mainly singing the same tunes as they used in South Africa.

Established in 1996, Blake Street is another new congregation with a smaller South African population. They acquired new premises which they renovated and moved into in 2005, and are a modern Orthodox, Zionist community.

South Africans also contributed to significant synagogue expansion in Perth, as well as strengthening the Perth Hebrew Congregation and joining the synagogue board, including president, Michael Odes (1999–2003). The Northern Suburbs synagogue, also known as the Noranda *Shule,* formed around 1987, built their synagogue in 1991. Again, it is largely an ex-South African *Shule*. The Dianella *Shule* developed with a focus on Jewish education and is called 'Beth Midrash' (House of Learning). The president of the synagogue, Rabbi Marcus Solomon, has been on recruiting trips to South Africa. It holds regular classes for both children and adults, with up to three classes being held each day at the centre for different age groups, with a large proportion of the students attending these classes being ex-South Africans.

There is not a strong tradition of Reform Judaism in South Africa so that only a small proportion of South African Jews have affiliated with Progressive Judaism in Australia, although some South African Jews have had an impact on the movement. For example, Lorraine Topol arrived in Melbourne in November 1985. She was very involved with reform in Johannesburg, and within five years, she was elected president of Temple Beth Israel, serving in that position from 1990–1992. There have been other South African Jews who have played a leading role in the Progressive movement (Rutland and Gariano 2005, pp. 35–36).

4.5. Jewish Education

The strong support for Jewish day schools, particularly from South African immigrants (75% in the JA survey) has been reflected in the rapid growth of Jewish day schools in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth.

In Sydney Masada College on the North Shore was established as a primary school by Australian parents in 1966, but with increased South African migration to the area after 1975, it became largely a South African school, with over 50% of its student body comprising South African newcomers. In 1981, its high school opened in St Ives, the first area of settlement for South African Jews, with the college reaching a peak of 800 students in the early 1990s. However, since 1995, there has been a movement to the East, so that Masada faces ongoing problems of maintaining its enrolments, while Moriah College, the largest Jewish day school in Sydney located in the East, has benefitted from the influx of South Africans.

Similarly, in 1990 in Melbourne, the first area of settlement in Doncaster was also more distant from the main area of Jewish concentration. In 1990, the Doncaster *Chabad* School was established at the North Eastern Jewish Centre and, at its peak, it had 120 students. However, with the move of many South Africans to the South Caulfield area, its enrolments decreased until the school was no longer viable. It closed in 2000, with the other Jewish day schools in the south-eastern suburbs benefitting. For many South Africans, Mount Scopus College, the largest Jewish day school in Melbourne, is the closest to what they knew in South Africa with King David in Johannesburg and Herzliya in Cape Town, and many sent their children there.

In Perth, Carmel College, the only Jewish day school, is strongly South African in terms of student numbers, particularly after 1987. One Australian parent commented:

> When my son . . . started kindergarten in 1985, the children were all Australian born. In 1987 there was a huge influx of South Africans . . . In 1985 we knew everyone in the car park. Over the next couple of years, there were all these strangers. (See Note 2)

The community has always been very welcoming of South Africans because migration has meant that there are more Jewish friends for their children and there is a greater chance that they will meet a Jewish partner in Perth and not move away. They have become very involved with the school, serving on the Parents & Friends, the school board, and in executive positions. In this way, the school has become the main interface between the established Jewish community and the newcomers. Carmel College and other Jewish schools in Australia have also sent recruiting teams to South Africa to encourage migration to Australia.

South Africans have also provided Jewish Studies and Hebrew teachers and educational leadership. One respondent to the face-to-face interviews commented:

> These teachers adjust quickly to the Australian classroom as they come from the same background, drive on the same side of the road, speak the same language, more or less are of Central and East European background, so that there is no cultural dissonance (See Note 5)

In the early years of South African migration, the newcomers did experience some problems in adjusting with Australian-Jewish children, especially at Masada College, where the Australian children felt they were being outnumbered. However, Australian-Jewish students have become so familiar with South Africans that most do not regard their entry into school as an issue. In this way, the South African migrants have significantly contributed to the growth of Jewish day schools in Australia.

4.6. Connection to Israel

Over 90% of all respondents (South Africans, Russians and Israelis) to the JA Survey agreed that it was "important/very important" that:

1. The state of Israel is very important to Jews.
2. Jews should support Israel.
3. They should keep informed on the situation in Israel.
4. Israel will always be a home to Jews, and
5. Israel is a home for all Jews, regardless of affiliation (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 61).

With the South Africans, their connection to Israel seemed to be based on emotional factors; they were not committed to living in Israel. This was confirmed by cross tabulating responses to "Israel is the place where I belong" to the question of whether respondents feel emotionally attached to Israel. Most South Africans who said that they did feel emotionally attached to Israel strongly agreed/agreed that "Israel was the place where they belonged" (Rutland and Gariano 2005, pp. 59–61). They engaged in business with Israel and/or donated to charities that directly benefit Israel, such as the United Israel Appeal (UIA), the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO).

In Sydney and Melbourne, South Africans first became involved in local community leadership as they integrated into the community but were slower to become involved in the Zionist movement, unlike Perth, where the more established South African Jews were seen as vital to Zionist activities. The UIA executive director in Perth, who was there since 1987, asked in 2003: 'Is anybody not South African'? She noted that when the South African influx started, they changed the whole infrastructure of UIA and JNF. (See Note 2).

4.7. Jewish Identity

South African Jews arrive in Australia with a strong Jewish identity. The 2005 JA Survey found that only 5% of South African Jews were intermarried and that they strongly

opposed intermarriage, with 78% of those with children attending Jewish schools and 72% of non-day school parents, "strongly agreeing/agreeing" that "Jews should not intermarry" (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 31). This strong identification has continued. The GEN17 study found that only 11% of the 18–39 age group and 12% of the 40–69 age group stated that they attach limited, little or no importance to being Jewish. These figures can be compared with the findings of a recent study on South African Jewry, with 86% of children having two Jewish parents and only 10% having one. Indeed, this study found that "compared with Jews in Australia and the UK, South African Jews are more likely to select 'very important' to a standard set of thirteen Jewish identity markers. Overall, Jewish identity in South Africa appears to be stronger, and more religious, than in either Australia or the UK" (Graham 2020, p. 6 and Figure 29, p. 37).

When asked about the basis of Jewish identity, "Jewish by birth" was the most frequent response and this applied to the Russians and Israelis, followed by "tradition" for South Africans (80%), "nationality" for those born in the FSU, and "connection to Israel" for Israelis (75%). South Africans also listed "religion" as a Jewish identifier, which was higher than 49% for Israelis and 29% for Jews born in the FSU (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 33). They also included "Jewishness by religion" as their most common pattern of identification, with 77% affiliated with Orthodox synagogues and schools (Gariano, Rutland, pp. 34–35). There are contradictions in the South African's religiosity. When asked about belief—as measured by asking respondents about the level of importance to each of the 13 basic principles of Judaism—most responses were "not so important" and the same applied to "cultural connectedness". Yet, they averaged a score of "important" for knowledge and for attitudes.[8]

South Africans have also brought their own food traditions and have opened their own shops. In Sydney, until recently, they have enriched kosher-food outlets with shops, such as Katzkies, while South Africans have recently taken over the management of well-established kosher shops. In Melbourne, there are several South African shops in Chapel Street, Pahran, Templestow, and South Caulfield, which all sell traditional South African fare, such as *biltong* (Kalman 2014, p. 55).

5. Discussion

5.1. South African Waves of Migration and Demography

Louw and Mersham (2001) have argued that there were five main waves of migration for non-Jewish South Africans to Australia. The Jewish profile is similar but there are a few differences. Jewish migration began in the early 1960s following the Sharpeville riots. As the findings revealed, a number of these early migrants came for ideological reasons due to their dislike of apartheid, rather than the Anglo-concerns about the Afrikanerisation of South Africa. The second wave started after the Soweto riots in 1976, with a significant proportion being, Jews who, as discussed, had a significant demographic impact on the local Australian community (Louw and Mersham 2001, p. 311). There was an increase in non-Jewish migration in the early 1980s, largely Rhodesians (Zimbaweans), which constituted a third wave, but for Jews, this was still part of the second wave. Thus, the fourth wave for the non-Jews, the pre-Mandela period 1985–1990, was only the third wave for Jewish South Africans, with their fourth wave occurred in the post-Mandela, 1990–1995/6.[9]

As with the Jewish findings from the surveys, the major reasons that are mentioned in surveys of non-Jewish South Africans for the post-apartheid period were "crime and the politics of racial re-ranking", with the latter being due to the African National Council's "policies of 'black empowerment' and 'corrective action'", as the new government sought to reverse the Anglo-perception that they were superior, and therefore, were at the top of the status ladder" (Louw and Mersham 2001, pp. 316–17).

In the Tatz et al. (2007) survey, "fear of the future" was the main factor leading to emigration, although, since 1990, they argue crime and family unification have increased in importance. They speculate that the fear of the future was because "White South Africans, and Jews in this instance, had a reflex (or even a neurotic) adverse reaction to the very

idea of Black government" (p. 196). They also point out that more recently, government corruption, including the police and judiciary, has emerged as an important factor (p. 196). They argue that crime, always endemic in South Africa, has only emerged as a key reason since 1990, so that crime could mask deeper reasons, such as "fear of living under Black rule or, having lived under it for a few years, not liking it" (p. 197). Their discussion of the crime factor again reinforces the findings of the 2004–2005 study, because our interviewees left not "necessarily because of attacks on them, but because of attacks on people in their social milieux, network or family", which Tatz et al. describe as "another remarkable émigré population" (p. 199).

Tatz et al. (2007) also note that, while family reunification is a reason for South African migration to Australia, families are often scattered, while aged parents often remain in South Africa. They argue that this indicates that family ties are not as strong with the South African re-migration, especially in contrast to the Litvak emigration. There are also practical reasons for current migration choices. Some elderly Jewish South Africans feel that they are too old to restart life in a new country, and they are sufficiently comfortable to remain, happy in the knowledge that their children and grandchildren have found a safer home. For others, especially the less wealthy, emigration choices are more limited, and others fear leaving means loss of their wealth and facing the challenge of restarting their lives (pp. 199–201). Yet, their research has demonstrated that since 1990, the number of people over 90 has grown exponentially (pp. 202–4). In the Australian case, family reunification is one of the factors giving permission to immigrate. Tatz et al. also demonstrate that a significant percentage of their respondents came on an exploratory trip first, again presenting a different profile from refugees who are forced to flee or expelled.

Over time, the number of non-Jewish migrants from South Africa to Australia has significantly eclipsed the Jewish numbers, but due to their more dispersed settlement patterns and their efforts to assimilate quickly, their presence has tended to be less noticeable. Non-Jewish ex-South Africans are well-educated, have tended to settle in the more affluent suburbs on Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth, and have integrated very easily into Australian society, with many having highly paid jobs (Louw and Mersham 2001, p. 323). This is largely due to the Australian skilled migration programme which operated in the 1990s to the 2000s. It is much more difficult for South Africans from the less affluent groups to migrate to Australia. As Louw and Mersham (2001) stress "self-selection and Australian immigration policy have skewed the profile of South African migrants in favor of those most likely join the upper-middle classes or the affluent in Australia" (p. 329).

Similarly, most South African Jews also arrive as professional or business migrants to Australia and constitute part of the well-off middle class who come from a culturally similar background to their new host country (Tatz et al. 2007, p. 42). The high proportion of professionals who have left South Africa, both Jewish and non-Jewish, have created a "brain drain" there (Tatz et al. 2007, p. 43). They constitute part of what Forrest et al. describe as "internationalists", having the ability to readjust quickly to their new country as part of the process of economic globalisation where "those with sought-after skills and who are highly qualified are increasingly in demand among immigrant-receiving countries in the developed world" (Tatz et al. 2007, p. 64).

5.2. Networking and Success in Australian Society

In discussing the high socio-economic status of South African Jews in Australia, Kalman (2014) argues that their success is because "they come from a position of resourcefulness and confidence" (p. 1970). These are not the only factors, as the findings of the 2004 study and her own micro-study demonstrate. Networking plays a key role in the successful integration of South African Jews in Australia due to chain migration through family sponsorship. The new arrivals also have a whole support network in terms of finding a job, a place to live, and advice relating to adjusting to Australian life. This help comes not only from family but also from friends and the broader Jewish community, ensuring that the South Africans enjoy a soft landing in their new homeland.

Jewish networking is not specific to the South African migrant experience but is part of broader Jewish migration patterns to the new world. Research has shown that social networks played a key role in the successful integration of Jewish refugees from Nazism before the war and the arrival of Jewish survivors after the war in Australia and elsewhere (Strobl 2019; Fuhse 2009).

5.3. An Easy Integration?

Compared with other waves of Jewish immigrants, the integration of South Africans has been comparatively easy, given their knowledge of English and the cultural similarities. Yet, there are differences and tensions with the local Jewish community. Language differences can lead to misunderstandings. Kalman (2014) notes that "At pick-up times cries of 'How's it? And 'You must come to me' ring out; in voices high and clear and markedly South African". She comments that the food traditions which they brought from South Africa pervade their lifestyle and are:

> ... evocative of a fondly remembered life. These new immigrants wear their difference proudly. They did not try to round their vowels. They imported their strange and different foods. They established shops so that these could be easily accessed, or they insinuated them onto the shelves of local supermarkets. (p. 181)

However, this tendency to stick together, establish their own institutions or take control of already established institutions has led to tensions. Local Australian Jews often view the South Africans as pushy, arrogant, and loud, and thus, resent their presence (Rutland 2001, pp. 368–69; Rutland 2005, p. 140). As immigrants, South African Jews expected to be accepted unequivocally and totally by the Australian Jewish community, and when this did not occur, they tended to retreat to their familiar South African circle. This contributed to increased tensions between the established Australian-Jewish community and the newcomers, with the former seeing the latter as "cliquish". There has also been some dissonance between the older and newer South African Jewish immigrants, because the new group is seen as a threat to their full acceptance by the more established South African Jews, who have also expressed concern over the newcomers' more vocal characteristics. These tensions decrease as the second generation of South African Jews become more assimilated into the general Jewish community.

5.4. Jewish Community Involvement

The South Africans have integrated most successfully into the broader Jewish community, but as discussed above, they have also developed their own structures both for geographical reasons as well as different cultural patterns, in addition to synagogues and day schools. Particularly in Sydney, South African Jews lead the full range of Jewish organisations and institutions, including The New South Wales (NSW) Jewish Communal Appeal, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the National Council of Jewish Women in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, and many other institutions. The peak organisation, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, has had two Australian presidents. More recently South Africans had taken on key leadership positions in the Zionist movement in Sydney and Melbourne, particularly with UIA. As South Africans have become more integrated into Jewish life in Australia in the two major cities, they have become more involved in Zionism. They have been involved and have reinforced the Communal Security Groups (SCGs).

One interesting development is their strong involvement in Holocaust teaching and remembrance, particularly at the Sydney Jewish Museum. In her doctoral thesis, "The missing paradigm", Holocaust descendant Sophie Gelski (2010) was initially skeptical of South Africans being able to teach about the Holocaust. As a result of her research, she came to the realisation that with their Litvak background, they felt deeply affected by the Holocaust and were effective in teaching and remembering. As they commented to her, "it could have been us" (p. 135).

5.5. Jewish Identity

The apartheid system was based on ethnic divisions, so that even though there was antisemitism, "Jewish particularism could find a legitimate place" (Kalman 2014, p. 187). She argues that "South African Jews were able to establish a strong sense of community, and to flourish, as all whites did, in a society that did not allow them to slip into the underclass: this was exclusively occupied by blacks" (p. 188).

South African Jews arrived in Australia with a strong sense of and pride in their Jewish identity. Even though they were identified with the Anglos as "white" (Louw and Mersham 2001), there was still an undercurrent of antisemitism among the Anglos. The Afrikaner relationship with the South African Jewish community was complex, initially due to the role of General Jan Christaan Smuts, Boer leader, and Prime Minister from 1919–1924 and 1939–1948. He was a Zionist and played a role in the framing of the Balfour Declaration. After 1948, Dr Daniel Malan assumed the leadership. He was known as a racist and an anti-Semite, causing the Jewish community concerns. However, he visited Israel shortly after his election in 1948, and later, ties developed between South African and Israel, with both countries experiencing a pariah status internationally. This complexity has been subject to significant historical debate but discussing it in detail is outside the scope of this article.

This complex situation, where Jews are seen as being both white and non-white, has led to a contradiction in their status, as Tatz et al. (2007) describe it: "of belonging but not quite belonging, of Jews hoping, even preaching, that they were mainstream South Africans but somehow sensing that they had no place in this white South Africanism" (p. 68). This marginalised status led them to focus on their Jewish identity, and this has intensified more recently within the contemporary South African Jewish community, even as it decreases in size (Graham 2020). Tatz et al. (2007) describe this as "the spiritual security and comfort in the return to devout Judaism, to ultra-Orthodox ritual practice"" (p. 196). In contrast, South African Jews in Australia have tended to become more assimilated, as the 2005 study has demonstrated, and this contrasts with the Russian and Israeli waves, where Jewish practice has strengthened.

The 2005 study found that most South African Jews identify through tradition, affiliate Orthodox, and send their children to Jewish day schools. It confirms one respondent's summation of the South African group:

> The South African Jew comes here with a very strong sense of Jewish identity, a willingness to commit to involvement in Jewish communal life, a Litvish mentality, which eschews the fundamentalism for the most part. (Rutland and Gariano 2005, p. 65)

As a result, they have reinvigorated and enriched the local Australian Jewish community with the establishment of new synagogues and strengthening the day schools. This is a result of the fact that in South Africa, Louw and Mersham (2001) comment, "religion is such a strong marker of ethnic identity" (p. 327).

Kalman (2014) explains:

> "South African Jews travel within this South African Jewishness. This is their home: the presence of networks of family, friends, and coreligionists allows them to place roots in Australian soil, while maintaining the sense that their South African past is somehow integral to who they are" (pp. 196–97).

In a recent article after a visit to Australia, Judy Maltz (2022), *Haaretz* journalist, quoting a leading South African Jewish businessman, David Gonski, who arrived with his parents in 1961 at the age of seven: "All immigration is difficult, and these people found solace with family and friends who were already established in Sydney ... They moved near them, set up schools with them and, eventually would all become a tribe within a tribe".

5.6. Diaspora/Centre or Post-Diasporic?

Citing data from the study by Horowitz and Kaplan, Tatz et al. demonstrate that during the first two waves of re-emigration, Israel was the preferred destination (37.5%) followed by the United States (23.7%). During the third wave, the percentage of people going to Israel declined (22.6%), with the United States becoming the preferred destination (26.9%); nevertheless, by the fourth wave from 1990–2000, Australasia has become by far the most popular destination (40%), compared with the United States (20%) and Israel (15%) (pp. 210–11).

These statistics have led to a debate about Israel's role in the twenty-first century for South African Jewry. In their book, *New Jews*, Aviv and Shneer (2005) reject the concept of Israel as the centre of Jewish life. Their thesis is that, in a globalised Jewish world, Jews can be in the "centre" regardless of where they live. Kalman (2014) supports this thesis, arguing that South African Jews in Australia are "better conceptualised as 'new' or 'global Jews'" (p. 198). She stresses that South African Jews enjoy the freedom offered in Australia and, at the same time, they see themselves as citizens of the world and argues that "South African Jews . . . are global. They make a home for themselves in both Australia and the worlds in ways that cannot be conceptualised as diaspora" (p. 199).

Yet, this debate ignores the pragmatics. South African Jews choose to immigrate to Australia, thereby forming part of the global South African Jewish diaspora, but this does not mean that Israel is not still important for them. One interviewee in the Tatz et al. survey, who arrived in Sydney in 1981, wrote that even though they had chosen to migrate to Australia, as Jews, "our 'centre' is our spiritual connection with our people and with Israel" (p. 212). Israel still plays a central role within the Australian-Jewish psyche, as indicated with the GEN 17 survey. Even though they have not chosen to settle in Israel, South African Jews recognise the centrality of Israel for Jewish identity.

Eisenstadt (2000) has argued that in the modern world, people have multiple identities and this certainly applies to the complexity of Jewish identity. Thus, within the Jewish world, there are efforts to maintain the particularism of Jewish identity and connection to Israel. At the same time, Jews also focus on universal values and aim to be global citizens. This effort to remain within the tribe, while at the same time being part of the globalised world, is complex and challenging, with some focusing more on the former and others more on the latter. However, with almost half of the Jewish world living in Israel, where the Jewish population is constantly expanding both due to natural increase and migration, this challenges the "new Jews" concept. Hence, the concept of multiple identities seems more relevant than denying the centrality of Israel.

6. Conclusions

For their book, Tatz et al. chose the title, *Worlds Apart*. This title relates to the first Litvak migration but not to their re-migration. Australia and South Africa may be separated geographically, but from the religious and cultural perspectives, the Jewish communities in these two centres are not worlds apart. This cultural affinity has meant that South African Jews have seen Australia as a desirable immigration location. As well, for most their integration has been relatively easy, despite initial challenges and a high percentage indicate satisfaction with their new life in Australia.

Those who have arrived have significantly reinforced every aspect of Jewish communal life, including the growth of synagogues and development of the day-school movement. However, unlike those who have remained in South Africa, they have tended to become less religious and communally involved than they were there, because of the greater freedom they enjoy in Australia.

One limitation of this study is that the qualitative research from the findings was conducted in 2004. While GEN17 has provided more recent information based on the quantitative survey, more qualitative research could be undertaken in the future. This could include issues, such as whether the South African Jewish sector in Australian Jewry has been characterized by demographic growth (or stability) or aging, in comparison with

the already-establish Australian-Jewish groups. Yet, the 2017 quantitative research has reinforced the findings of the earlier research drawn on in this article, indicating that the "re-immigration" of South African Jews, many of whom were originally Litvak, to Australia has been very successful from every perspective.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Jewish Agency of Israel, which approved the survey instrument. This included a statement at the start of the questionnaire, which stressed that all the information provided was completely anonymous. All participation was fully voluntary, as it was an opt-in survey.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data is available via the unpublished JA Study. The report was not made publicly available, but a copy of the report can be obtained from the author. The analysis was undertaken by Dr Antonio Gariano, but since this study was undertaken almost 20 years ago, he has not retained the original data.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] Interview, 7 December 2003, Perth; see also the reasons for Taft and Arnold leaving in the 1960s, Tatz et al. (2007, pp. 184–209).
[2] Interview, 8 December 2003, Perth. Rutland and Gariano (2005). "JA Survey".
[3] Interview, 18 February 2004, Melbourne. Rutland and Gariano (2005) "JA Survey".
[4] Interview with Perth respondent, 8 December 2003. Rutland and Gariano (2005). "JA Survey".
[5] Interview, 17 February 2004, Melbourne. Rutland and Gariano (2005) "JA Survey".
[6] Interview, 7 December 2003, Perth. Rutland and Gariano (2005). "JA Survey".
[7] Telephone interview, 18 February 2004, Melbourne. Rutland and Gariano (2005). "JA Survey".
[8] The relevant questions can be found in the survey instrument in Rutland and Gariano (2005, Appendix C, pp. 74–112).
[9] According to Tatz et al., there were five waves—they add one from 1986–1990, before the end of apartheid and its immediate aftermath, pp. 160–83.

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African Jewish Communities in the Diaspora and the Homeland: The Case of South Africa

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Abstract: As part of this Special Issue devoted to research on the Jewish communities in Africa and their diaspora, we focus on the case of South African Jews who emigrated to Israel. First, we analyze the socio-religious and cultural context in which a Jewish diaspora developed and marked the ethno-religious identity of South African Jews both as individuals and as a collective. Second, we examine the role of ethno-religious identification as the main motive for migrating to Israel, and third, we show the role of ethno-religious identity in the integration of South African Jews into Israeli life. This study relies on data from a survey of South Africans and their descendants living in Israel in 2008, and in-depth interviews. The findings provide evidence for a strong Jewish community in South Africa that created a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people and a strong attachment to Israel. As expected, two of the key reasons for the decision to move to Israel were ideology and religion. The immigrants wanted to live in a place where they could feel part of the majority that was culturally and religiously Jewish. Finally, ethno-religious identities (Jewish and Zionist) influenced not only the decision making of potential immigrants but also their process of integration into Israeli life.

Keywords: Jewish diaspora; South African Jews; motives for migrating; integration; Israel

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1. Introduction

Religion and ethnicity have played an important role in the emergence and continuity of Jewish communities all over the world (see, e.g., Bokser Liwerant 2021; Moya 2013). Though there are disagreements about the essence of Judaism, historically both the religious and ethnic facets of Judaism have been combined, with both being regarded as essential characteristics of being a Jew (Chervyakov et al. 1997). Based on this ethno-religious identity, Jews in the diaspora have established a system of institutions that support the religious and national symbols that have kept the diaspora alive (Safran 2005).

Israel is the symbolic homeland for those who feel part of the Jewish people but still live in other countries.[1] This sense of a transnational community based on ascriptive ethnic and religious grounds creates the narrative of returning to the homeland, or making aliyah, based on claims to the "natural right" to return to one's ancestral homeland (Zaban 2015).[2] For some Diaspora Jews, this narrative is especially appealing. They decide to migrate to Israel mainly for ideological and religious considerations (Palmer and Kraus 2017; Raijman 2015; Raijman and Geffen 2018; Shuval and Leshem 1998; Zaban 2015). One explanation for this strong affiliation with the Jewish people is Benedict Anderson's (1991) idea of "imagined communities". This concept describes the desire to identify strongly with a specific community (in the case of Israel, the nation) based on a mental image of their common ancestry and affinity.

As part of this Special Issue devoted to research on the Jewish communities in Africa and their diaspora, we focus on the case of South African Jews who emigrated to Israel. We analyze (1) the socio-religious and cultural context in which a Jewish diaspora developed and marked the ethno-religious identity of South African Jews both as individuals and as a collective, (2) the role of ethno-religious identification as the main motive for migrating to

Israel, and (3) the role of ethno-religious identity in the integration of South African Jews into Israeli life and the changing role of religion in that process and that of their descendants in Israel.[3]

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we present the theoretical background, followed by a general account of the Jewish diaspora in South Africa and the emigration flows to Israel. After describing the methodology of this study, we present our findings and discuss them in light of relevant theories.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Diasporas and the Jewish Case

Researchers have identified a number of essential characteristics that apply to diasporas generally and the Jewish case specifically. Communities are considered diasporas if they meet one of the following criteria: (a) they were forcibly removed from their original homeland due to violence and coerced expulsion; (b) they have a shared memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, and accomplishments; (c) they see their ancestral homeland as a symbolic home and develop a movement (in Israel's case, Zionism) to return to it; (d) they exhibit a long-standing sense of distinctiveness based on a shared history, attachment to the land, and belief in a common fate; (e) they aspire to endure as a distinctive community in their host lands by passing down a cultural and/or religious legacy that originates from their ancestral homeland and the associated symbols; (f) they maintain contacts with other ethnic members in the homeland and other countries, allowing them to see themselves as members of an imagined transnational community that extends beyond the nation state (see, e.g., Cohen 2008; Safran 2005; Sheffer 1986; Tölölyan 2007; Vertovec 2002).

Drawing on the analytical concepts of social movements theory, Sökefeld (2006) argues that migrants do not automatically form a diaspora. They become a diaspora through three processes of mobilization: (1) opportunity structures, (2) mobilizing structures and activities, and (3) framing.

Opportunity structures refer to the socio-cultural and political context, more specifically a tolerant legal and political environment, within which claims for community and identity can be promoted. Mobilizing activities and practices depend on the involvement of social actors, both leaders and followers, who create the ethnic, religious, and cultural associations and social networks at the local and transnational level through which ideologies of identity and practices of attachment to the homeland can be advanced. Frames include a set of ideas, values, and social norms that define the identity of the community based on common roots, ancestry, collective memories, and attachment to the symbolic homeland that feed the collective imagination. These three components of mobilization are the main mechanisms explaining the emergence of diasporas and their stability over time.

Based on this analytical framework, we examine the socio-cultural and religious organization of the Jewish diaspora in South Africa that sustained the cohesiveness of the members of the community. We also explore how they cultivated their ethno-religious identity and sense of belonging, and the ethos of a "return to the homeland"—Israel—as a master frame. For those who emigrated to Israel, this narrative was part of their justification for making aliyah.

2.2. Making Aliyah: The Role of Jewish Diasporas in Explaining Migration to Israel

Most migration theories conceptualize migration as driven by economic considerations. Neoclassic economic theory maintains that people compare the income they are likely to receive in the country to which they are considering moving with their current income. If they believe the former will eventually be greater than the latter, they will move (Borjas 1990; Stark 1991; Todaro and Maruszko 1987).

Sociologists also take into consideration economic factors, but are more interested in the socio-cultural factors driving migration, such as the institutional frameworks and social networks that emerge as a result of migration (Boyd 1989; Massey et al. 1998).

Prospective immigrants must seek information, assistance, and financial and emotional support from a variety of sources. Therefore, being connected to immigrants who are already in the destination country and institutional frameworks that provide information and relationships increase the likelihood that those contemplating a move will actually do so (Amit and Riss 2007; Massey et al. 1987, 1998).

Notwithstanding their emphasis on the social aspects of migration, most migration theories tend to overlook the role of ethnic, national, and religious identities in influencing migration decisions. In the specific case of Jewish migration to Israel, the role of diasporas that nurture a strong ethno-religious identity and national attachment to Israel as a homeland is crucial for understanding both the migration process and the patterns of immigrants' integration into their new land (see, e.g., Amit and Riss 2007; Palmer and Kraus 2017; Raijman 2015).

When ethno-religious identities constitute a core feature of the receiving society, as in the case of Israel, migrants who are members of the majority Jewish religious group (ethnic migrants) are viewed as "legitimate" members of the society. They are welcomed into the country, and this positive social climate affects their integration into it (Hochman and Raijman 2022). When coming to Israel, Jewish migrants hope to enhance their religious, national, and cultural well-being, as well as their sense of belonging. Sometimes, they are even prepared to reduce their material standard of living and confront the hardships of migrating in order to achieve these goals (Palmer and Kraus 2017).

Although studies have shown that Jewish identification is a significant factor in explaining Jewish immigration to Israel, the forms by which this identity drives the motivation to move to Israel and how it influences the integration process has not been examined sufficiently. Thus, additional studies are required to understand how ethno-religious identity might function as a "master status", affecting the migration process. We hope to add to the literature on this issue by focusing on the case of South African Jews. Specifically, we examine the central role played by ethno-religious identity in the process of their decision to come to Israel and their integration into Israeli society.

3. The South African Jewish Diaspora

Jews from England began moving to South Africa after the British conquered the country in 1806. However, the majority of Jews now living in South Africa came there later, primarily from Lithuania, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In South Africa, they replicated the form of Jewish life they knew in Lithuania (Shimoni 1980). They created organizations such as Jewish schools, synagogues, and various social, cultural, and social institutions (Dubb 1977). The Jewish community reached its highest level in the 1970s, with approximately 118,200 people. Jews constituted approximately 0.3% of South Africa's total population and approximately 3% of the total white population (Mendelsohn and Shain 2008).

Zionism and Judaism were the key components of Jewish life in South Africa.[4] Together, they created a strong ethno-religious identity. South African Jews were strong supporters of their local communities, Israel, and the Jewish people. The South African Zionist Federation was founded as early as 1898, and there were numerous Zionist youth organizations such as Habonim, Betar, and Bnei Akiva (Shimoni 1980).[5] Zionism was clearly very important in Jewish life in South Africa as compared with other Anglophone countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States where Jews usually avoid joining Zionist movements for fear of accusation of dual loyalty (Campbell 2000).[6]

Religious observance was also a key component of Jewish life in South Africa. According to Bruk (2006, p. 181) at the beginning of the twenty-first century, over 70% of Jewish South Africans attended synagogue fairly frequently and practiced Jewish rituals. Doing so not only signified their ethno-national identification but also provided opportunities for members of the community to socialize. Nevertheless, while the practices of South African Jewry followed Orthodox tradition, they were less rigid than those of the first

British Jews who came to the country (Herman 2007). Rather than focusing on theology, their observance had more of an ethnic identity to it.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, this trend changed with the introduction of more ultra-Orthodox practices into synagogues. Two reasons for this change were the emigration of many Modern Orthodox rabbis and their replacement with yeshiva-trained rabbis. In contrast to their moderate colleagues, these rabbis were more concerned with increased religious devotion, leading to a "shift from an identity based on ethnicity to one based on religion with a fundamentalist undertone" (Herman 2007, p. 35). Another change that resulted from this shift in rabbinic leadership was the move away from secular Zionism toward religious Zionism (Beider and Fachler 2023; Herman 2007; Shimoni 2003, p. 209).

Since its peak in the 1970s, the Jewish community of South Africa has been shrinking due to the emigration of Jews primarily to Israel and other English-speaking countries (Horowitz and Kaplan 2001; Tatz et al. 2007). Political insecurity and violence, as well as the fear of similar events in the future, were major reasons in the migration of South African Jews (Dubb 1994). The 1990s saw a spike in emigration as a result of the greater political and economic insecurity associated with the 1994 transition to a black majority government (Dubb 1994; Tatz et al. 2007). At this time, only 15% of South African Jews chose Israel as a destination, 20% moved to the US, and 10% went to the UK and Canada. Forty percent of South African Jews chose to move to Australia (Horowitz and Kaplan 2001).[7] Today, there are approximately 51,000 South African Jews, and the number is continuing to drop.[8]

4. Migration of South Africans to Israel

As the self-declared homeland of the Jewish diaspora, the State of Israel enthusiastically supports the "return from the exile" of Jews worldwide. Under the Law of Return of 1950, Jews and their offspring are granted Israeli citizenship upon their arrival in Israel. Since the 1970 reform of the Law of Return, the "right of return" has been extended to grandchildren of Jews too and their nuclear families (even if not Jewish).

Since the creation of the state in 1948, these newcomers not only have privileged access to citizenship and its benefits, but they also have access to specific policies and generous programs designed to ease their integration into Israeli life. Examples include free Hebrew instruction, loans to buy homes, grants for university students, job placement assistance, job retraining, and financial support for employers who hire immigrants, including financial assistance during their first year in Israel (Raijman 2020).

Since Israel's inception, around 25,000 South African Jews have joined the nation under the conditions of the Law of Return. Historically, slightly less than 400 South African Jews a year have made aliyah to Israel. South African Jews have come to Israel in four major waves. The first was after the Six-Day War in 1967, with over 2100 arrivals between 1969 and 1971. The second was during the Soweto uprising in 1976, resulting in over 1000 immigrants in both 1977 and 1978. The third wave came in the wake of South Africa's 1985 State of Emergency. As a result, there were approximately 1800 immigrants between 1986 and 1988. Finally, there was another major wave of immigration in the early 1990s after Nelson Mandela won the elections. For example, in 1994, there were 600 arrivals. However, since 1995, immigration has fallen to relatively low levels, fluctuating between 88 arrivals in 2003 to 250 arrivals in 2008–2009, finally increasing again during 2021–2022 with more than 400 immigrants per year arriving during the pandemic. Previous studies have shown that South Africans and their descendants have assimilated into Israeli society quite successfully, constituting one of the most economically successful groups in the Israeli labor market (Raijman 2015).

5. Methodology

We used respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn 1997) that combined institutional data from Telfed, the South African Zionist organization in Israel, and snowball sampling through social networks. We adopted this technique to ensure the inclusion of those who have no institutional affiliations or links to the South African population in Israel. The final

sample included 608 adults (hereinafter referred to as generation 1.0), 125 children ages 6 to 17 (hereinafter referred to as generation 1.5), and 174 children born in Israel to at least one South African parent (hereinafter referred to as generation 2.0). The survey included questions related to the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, the process of migrating to Israel, their social networks, involvement in the labor market, attachment to Israel, and their Jewish and Zionist identities.

In addition to the survey, we conducted 17 in-depth interviews with South African Jews during 2009. Interviews were conducted at respondent's houses and lasted approximately two hours on average. The results were helpful in eliciting the migrants' emotions as well as their narratives and interpretations of their lives in the South African diaspora and their decisions and motivations to choose Israel as a destination. The interviewees also provided insights into the process of integrating into Israeli society. Combining the quantitative data from the survey with the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews created a more detailed picture of the process of migrating to Israel and illuminated its different layers and dimensions.

6. Findings

6.1. The South African Jewish Diaspora

We begin the analysis by focusing on the context of their departure, meaning the socio-political and economic context within which decisions about migration were made. First, we analyze the socio-religious environment, highlighting the culture of the South African Jewish diaspora in which the majority of South African immigrants lived prior to their migration and their attachment to Israel (see Table 1).

Table 1. Selected characteristics of involvement in the Jewish community in South Africa.

Attended Jewish school (%)	57.6
Youth movement membership (%)	82.5
Religious practice (%)	
Secular	18.7
Reform or Progressive	4.5
Traditional	41.8
Modern Orthodox	33.4
Ultra-Orthodox	1.5
Synagogue attendance (%)	
1–3 times a week	51.8
N	608

The data show that attendance at Jewish schools (57%) and membership in Jewish youth organizations (82.5%) were fairly common among the South African respondents. As Figure 1 shows, over time there were disparities with regard to the types of youth movements with which the immigrants were affiliated. While membership in non-religious Zionist organizations such as Habonim decreased, membership in religious movements such as Bnei Akiva grew significantly, illustrating the switch to more Orthodox forms of religiosity in the South African diaspora. Synagogue attendance was quite common. On average, 52% of all first-generation respondents attended religious services and activities at least once a week. Among those who left in the 1960s, only 39% attended synagogue services with such frequency. However, that figure increased substantially to 62% for those arriving during the 2000s.

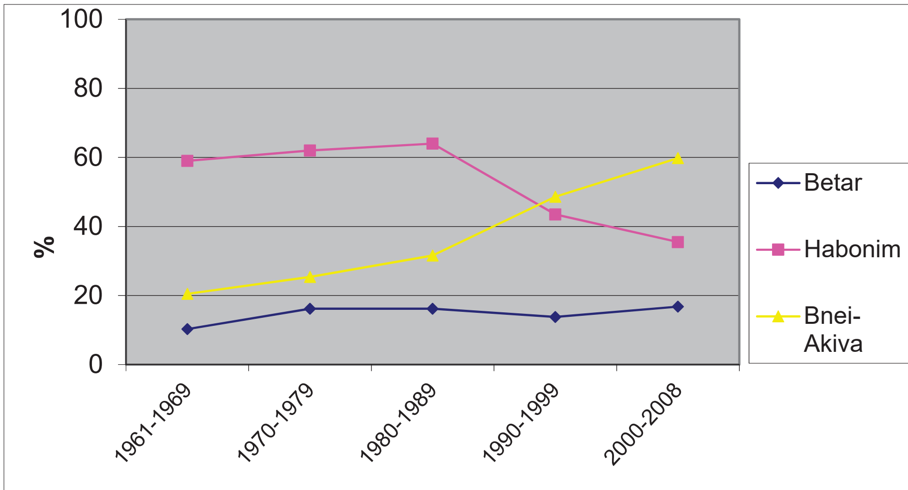

Figure 1. Percentage of young people who participated in Jewish youth movements in South Africa by date of immigration to Israel.

Figure 2 shows that while living in South Africa, most of the respondents, both generation 1 and 1.5, were strongly connected to religion, as evinced by the high percentage that reported being either traditional[9] or modern Orthodox[10] and the relatively small percentage of those reporting being secular.

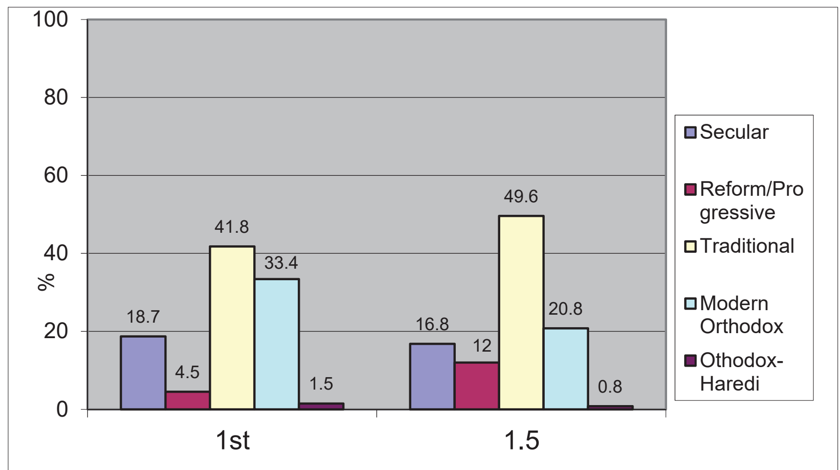

Figure 2. Level of religiosity in South Africa by generation.

Overall, the South African Jews in our study described a unified, closely knit Jewish community that had a strong Jewish identity and deep attachment to Israel. Shelly (first generation, arrived in 1996) summarized the Jewish way of life in South Africa:

> "We lived in a Jewish community. All my friends were Jewish, I went to a Jewish school, I went to Bnei Akiva, I went to synagogue on Shabbat. . . life was around the community of the synagogue. My parents also sold the house and bought a house closer to the synagogue. We went to synagogue on the holidays, on [Israel's] Independence Day, and on other festive occasions. . . People went by car to synagogue on Friday night, but it was an Orthodox service. . .; to this

day it happens there, and I think this is one of the things that helped preserve Judaism. . . because the rabbinate there is Orthodox but it is accepting and open. That's why I'm here today. I think. . . it sounds terribly idealistic, but what I learned there and what I internalized there is what led me to put Israel before any other option."

Religion was essential in the lives of South African Jews. Synagogues were not just houses of worship. They were also the center of social and cultural life for the Jewish community. As the interviewees noted, some of them would engage in traditional Jewish practices such as celebrating Jewish holidays or lighting candles on Friday night along with less traditional practices of riding to synagogue on the Sabbath. Gans (1994) refers to this unique intersection of social and religious activities among ethnic communities as "symbolic religiosity". The term means "the consumption of religious symbols, apart from regular participation in a religious culture and in religious affiliations, other than for purely secular purposes. . . it involves the consumption of religious symbols in such a way as to create no complications or barriers for dominant secular lifestyles" (Gans 1994, p. 585).

Many of the interviewees also highlighted the connections between Israel and South Africa's Jewish community as playing a key part in ensuring the Jewish and Zionist character of the community.[11] As Orah, a first-generation Israeli who arrived in 1987, put it:

"I grew up in a very strong Jewish community and was very connected to the synagogue and the Habonim movement. We went to synagogue on Friday evening. We were traditional but not Shabbat observant. As for Habonim, I participated in meetings and went to their summer camps. In these events we would talk about Israel and Jewish life and learned Israeli folk dances and songs. Shlichim (emissaries from Israel) also came to South Africa and participated in the camps, and they had a very strong influence. We also went to Israel several times and volunteered in kibbutzim. I made aliyah with Habonim."

In light of their strong identification as Jewish and Zionist, it is not surprising that attachment to Judaism and Israel were among the main reasons South African Jews gave for moving to Israel. Next, we discuss the push-pull factors driving South African migration to Israel.

6.2. *Reasons for Migration: The Role of Ethno-Religious Identification*

Table 2 displays the percentage of respondents reporting their reasons for migrating to Israel. It becomes clear that South African Jewish migration to Israel is, above all, ideological. The participants cited the decision to move to Israel as motivated by Zionism (75%), the desire to live among Jews (66%), and the desire to have their children grow up in a Jewish environment (64%). Take, for example, the case of Samantha, who arrived in 1987:

"Zionism attracted us to Israel. We thought that if we left South Africa, we would not go to Canada or Australia. We wanted to raise our children in a Jewish country. . . Israel is the state of the Jews."

Table 2. Pull factors (% to a great/very great extent).

Zionism	74.5
Having children grow up in a Jewish environment	66.3
Living among Jews	66
Religious beliefs	38.6
Career opportunities in Israel	8.7
N	**608**

Table 2 also shows that, overall, ideological reasons generally outweigh religious considerations, but the latter's relevance has been increasing for later immigrants. As Figure 3 shows, religious considerations as pull factors have grown dramatically from 22% in the 1960s and 1970s to 56% in the 2000s. These results imply that later newcomers were raised in a community that, while Zionist, had a more pronounced religious focus (see Horowitz and Kaplan 2001).

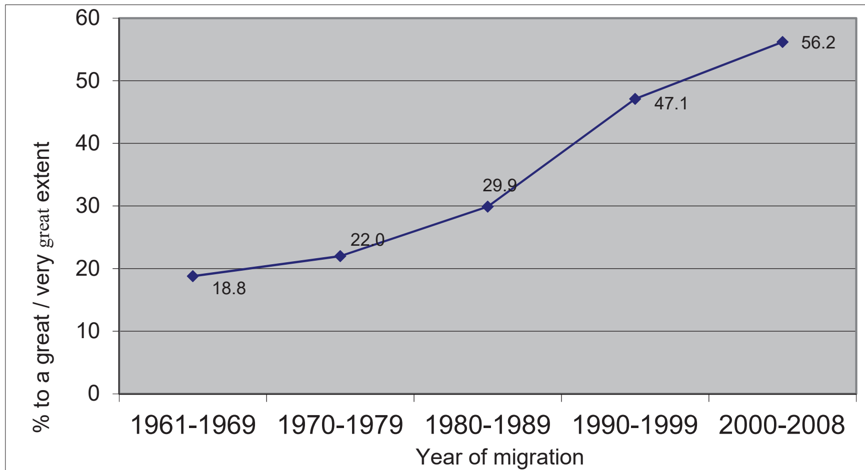

Figure 3. Religion as a motive for migrating to Israel by year of migration.

Given that Judaism and Zionism are among the primary motivations for choosing to move to Israel, it is not unexpected that many immigrants cited the desire to be part of the majority group as a reason for their decision. Having been part of a double minority in South Africa as Jews among Christians and whites among blacks, many South African Jews wanted to move to a place where they would be part of the majority Jewish culture. They wanted a less complicated life that did not involve trying to manage the demands of living in two different worlds at the same time. Feeling part of the Jewish majority was especially important on Shabbat and Yom Kippur, when many of the interviewees had to work back in South Africa. Take, for example, the case of Megan, a first-generation immigrant who arrived in 2007:

> It was very special on Yom Kippur. It was something we never ever seen. On the evening of Yom Kippur on Ahuza (the main street of the city of R'anana) everybody was walking back from the synagogue and there were no cars. That was amazing. That was incredible. It was a good feeling to be here in Israel, that was very special. I never felt like this, never ever.

Shelly, who came to Israel in 1986, summarized this special feeling quite clearly: "You do not have to negotiate being a Jew [as in South Africa]. . . [In Israel] you just live it".

Finally, despite the fact that the South African immigrants are a highly skilled group, economic motivations were not a pull factor driving them to Israel. On average, just 9% identified professional prospects as a reason for choosing Israel as their destination. However, economic motivations increased for later arrivals.

Table 3 displays the push factors reported by respondents for leaving South Africa. The data show that compared to the pull factors, relatively small numbers of Jewish immigrants cited push factors as reasons for migrating. That said, a close scrutiny of the data in the table reveals dissatisfaction with the political upheavals in South Africa (35.5%), concerns about personal safety (27.85), opposition to apartheid (27.6%), and concern for the future under a black government (25.9%) as among the most important reasons prompting them to emigrate from South Africa.

Table 3. Push factors (% to a great/very great extent).

Dissatisfaction with political upheavals	35.5
Concerns about personal safety	27.8
Opposition to apartheid	27.6
Concern for the future under a black government	25.9
Economic situation in SA	9.2
Dwindling of the SA Jewish community	8.2
Antisemitism/Anti-Israel sentiment in SA	4.5
N	608

Concerns about their personal safety was an important consideration in the decision of South African Jews to move to Israel, especially for those who came to the country later on. Many migrants noted that they lived in constant fear of being attacked and robbed in South Africa. Therefore, they valued the security that Israel offered them, which they felt would improve their quality of life.

Economic concerns were not an important push factor for those who came to Israel earlier on. However, as Figures 4 and 5 reveal that those arriving in 2000–2008 cited the economic situation in South Africa (29%) and fears about the consequences of the affirmative action policy (enacted in 1994) according preferential treatment to the black population in employment (24%) as major reasons for their decision to leave. Finally, anti-Semitism played a minor role in fueling migration to Israel.

To sum up, this study clearly reveals that economic considerations are not a relevant factor explaining the migration of South African Jews to Israel. The main driver of migration is ideological, fulfilling the ethos of Zionism of returning to the homeland and the desire to raise and educate their children in a Jewish environment.

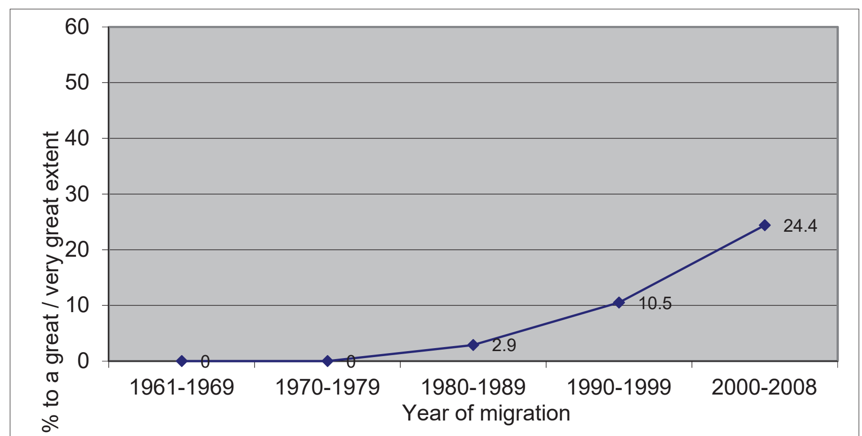

Figure 4. Reasons for leaving South Africa: Economic situation, by year of migration, first-generation South Africans in Israel.

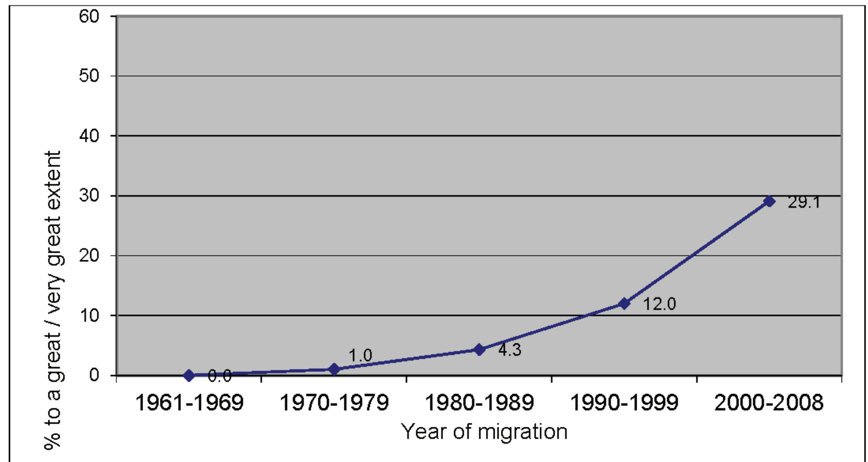

Figure 5. Reasons for leaving South Africa: Affirmative action, by year of migration, first-generation South Africans in Israel.

6.3. The Role of Ethno-Religious Identity in the Integration of South Africans in Israel

Judaism and Zionism are central values for the Jewish community in South Africa, values on which the Jews there were raised. Moving to Israel maintained these two identity components. As the information in Table 4 indicates, these two factors retained their strength not only among those who came to Israel as adults but also among those arriving as children (1.5 generation) or those born in Israel (2nd generation).

Table 4. Patterns of identity in Israel by generation.

Identity	1st Generation	1.5 Generation	2nd Generation
Jewish (% strongly to very strongly)	96.0	94.4	93.6
Zionist (% strongly to very strongly)	84.8	79.1	85.6
Comparative Identity			
More Israeli	18.9	25.4	41.3
More Jewish	33.6	13.9	12.2
Both equally	47.6	60.7	46.5
	100%	100%	100%
Satisfied with coming to Israel (%)	88.8	89.5	-
Likely to continue to live in Israel (%)	85.1	79.2	78.6
N	**(608)**	**(125)**	**(174)**

In each generation, the vast majority of the respondents (over 93%) strongly identified as Jewish. Between 79% and 86% also said they were definitely Zionists. Thus, it seems that the community was successful in passing along its Jewish and Zionist values to the next generation. In addition, those values remained significant for those arriving as children or those born in Israel. The in-depth interviews highlight the importance of Zionism and Judaism for the younger generations and the ways in which it was instilled at home within the family.

> "My father had a strong desire to immigrate to Israel. My mother says that 'it was very important to us that our children grow up knowing that they are Jewish, in a Jewish community. They will have no problem getting married. You walk down the street and ask yourself, 'Are you Jewish? not Jewish?' They are all Jews'. This was very important to my parents". (Inbal, second generation)

Respondents were asked to indicate which of the two identities—Israeli or Jewish—they deemed more important. As Table 4 indicates, all three generations noted that these

two identities were equally important to them. Nevertheless, there are some intergenerational differences, indicating changing patterns of identity over the generations. First-generation respondents tended to stress the Jewish component (34%, compared with 14% and 12% in generations 1.5 and 2.0, respectively). Generation 1.5 respondents regarded both components as equally important. Generation 2.0 respondents stressed the Israeli component (41%, compared with 25% and 19% in generations 1.5 and 1.0, respectively).

Finally, we asked our respondents how they evaluated their decision to come to Israel and how sure they were that they would continue to live in the country. As Table 4 shows, most of the respondents were satisfied with their decision to come to Israel, and most were also sure that they would continue to live in Israel. Their answers can be interpreted as a very positive evaluation of their decision to make aliyah and an indicator of their satisfaction with their life in Israel.

6.4. Changes in Level of Religiosity

While the Jewish and Zionist identities of the respondents remained stable after their arrival in Israel, the transition from South Africa to Israel brought considerable changes in their religious lives. Table 5 displays the level of religiosity of the first-generation respondents in South Africa and their level of religiosity in Israel. As the table indicates, their level of religiosity declined over time.

Table 5. Level of Religiosity in South Africa and in Israel-First Generation.

	Level of Religiosity in South Africa			
Level of Religiosity in Israel	**Secular**	**Traditional**	**Reform/ Progressive**	**Modern Orthodox**
Secular	**84.8**	29.4	40.7	6.8
Traditional	7.1	**58.1**	22.2	14.1
Reform/Progressive	3.6	2.8	**33.4**	1.6
Modern Orthodox	4.5	9.7	3.7	**77.6**
	100%	100%	100%	100%

The data reveal that, overall, the majority of the secular respondents remained secular after their arrival (85%). However, ritual observance became less important in Israel for those who regarded themselves as traditional in South Africa. Of this group, nearly one-third (29%) self-identified as secular in Israel. Among those who saw themselves as Reform or Progressive Jews in South Africa, 41% regarded themselves as secular in Israel. In contrast, most of those who identified as modern Orthodox in South Africa (77%) remained in the same category in Israel. However, 14% described themselves as traditional. Many of those in this modern Orthodox group live in towns such as Beit Shemesh and Ra'anana with a large number of native speakers of English. They fit well into the category that Israelis regard as "religious Jews".

Levels of religiosity also differ among the generations, with increasing percentages of secular respondents and decreasing percentages of more religious Jews over time (see Figure 6).

Another way to assess changes in levels of religiosity is to compare synagogue attendance in South Africa and Israel. Table 6 demonstrates that the synagogue has largely lost its significance for some first-generation respondents as a center of worship and social life. The proportion of respondents who go synagogue once a week or more dropped from 52% to 30%. Furthermore, the percentage of those who do not attend at all increased dramatically from 3.2% before migration to 25% in Israel. Robert, who arrived in 1987 explained to us that the reason for a greater religious involvement in South Africa was "the need to prove that we are Jews and that we have our religion and tradition". Moving to Israel diminished the need to actively maintain one's Jewish religious identity through participation in religious organizations: "you just live it. It is part of everyday life and

you don't have to negotiate being a Jew with your immediate environment" (Judy, first generation, arrived in 1998).

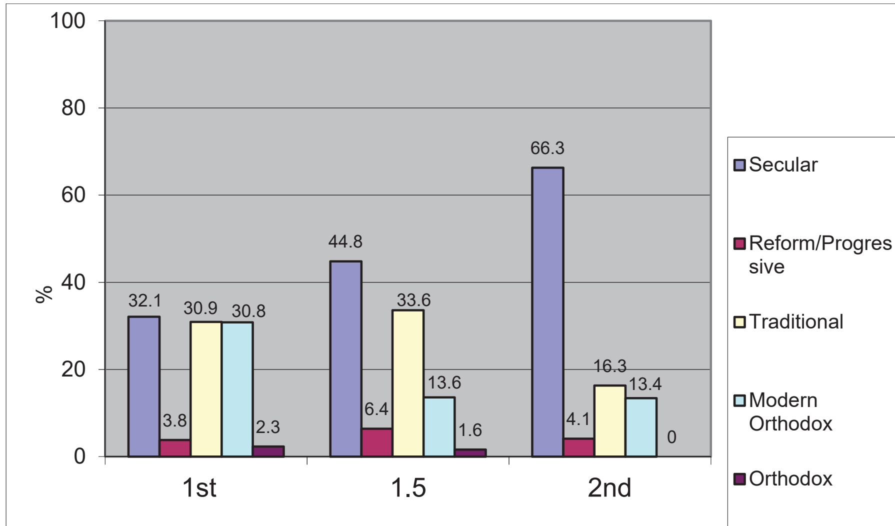

Figure 6. Level of religiosity in Israel by generation.

Table 6. Synagogue attendance in South Africa and Israel (first generation).

	Israel	South Africa
Once a week or more	29.9	51.8
1–3 days per month	9.1	13.2
Only on the High Holidays	36.2	31.9
Not at all	24.9	3.2
Percent Secular	32.1	18.7
N	**608**	**608**

7. Discussion

Similar to other Jewish diasporas worldwide, South African Jews created a system of ethno-religious institutions that nurtured both the attachment to Judaism and to Israel as the symbolic homeland. Judaism and Zionism were the anchors of its communal life. Together, they provided its members with a strong identification with the Jewish people and the State of Israel. These mobilizing practices conducted by the leaders and members of ethno-religious associations reproduced and maintained the Jewish diaspora.

The Jewish diaspora in South Africa flourished as a result of a specific opportunity structure that provided the context for a community to emerge and develop a strong ethno-religious identity. It has been argued that South African Jews' strong feelings toward both the Jewish people and the State of Israel may be due in part to their unique circumstances as an ethnic and religious minority within the white South African minority. As a double minority, they might have sought membership in a broader community such as the Jewish people or the Zionist movement (see Herman 2007; Shain 1999). Furthermore, their persistent Jewish and Zionist identities must be understood in the context of South Africa's racially and ethnically divided society. The lack of a generic, all-inclusive category of South Africans and the segregationist nature of South African society (Shain 1999) promoted the creation of ethnic identities that were not only socially acceptable but also culturally significant (Herman 2007).

We also examined the main drivers of the migration of South African Jews to Israel. As expected, ideological (Zionism) and religious considerations played a decisive role in their decision to move to Israel as opposed to other possible destinations. Many of our respondents wanted to live in a majority Jewish society in which they could engage in their religious and cultural practices more easily. However, these pull forces alone seemed insufficient to remove potential migrants from their social roots. The worsening of South Africa's political, social, and economic environment acted as a trigger for the pull forces to materialize at a precise time. These results suggest that theoretical models that focus mainly on economic drivers of migration are ineffective in explaining South African Jewish immigration to Israel. Indeed, ideology and religion are the key factors, while economic reasons, either as pull or push factors, play a secondary role. Nevertheless, economic considerations were of greater importance for later arrivals.

Finally, we demonstrated that ethno-religious identities (Jewish and Zionist) influenced not only the decision making of potential immigrants but also their process of integration into Israeli life. Once in Israel, Zionism and Judaism were also important sources of identity for the newcomers, serving as the basis for affiliation with Israeli society as a whole. Additionally, these principles were effectively ingrained in their children and continued to be important for newer generations of South Africans. Nevertheless, for the second generation (those born in Israel to South African parents) their Israeli identity is also especially relevant and sometimes is even stronger than their Jewish identity. Both generation 1 and 1.5 have very positive evaluations of their immigration, and a large percentage of South Africans participating in this study were certain that they would remain living in the country.

While ethno-religious identification remained strong during the integration process, the religious behavior of the respondents arriving as adults changed towards less religious forms of participation. Many of them felt that Israel provides the context for living a full Jewish life without the need to attend synagogue. The younger generations felt they can be Israeli and Jewish without the need of attending religious activities. This pattern is consistent with the general tendency we see in many immigrant communities in which traditional views, behavior patterns, and communal institutions upheld in the first generation weaken as the migrants and their children integrate to the host-society and culture (DellaPergola 2007).

Future research should compare the migration and integration patterns of South African Jews in other destinations with those in Israel. As already stated, while Israel was the main destination for South Africans during the 1970s, currently, South African Jews tend to migrate to other destinations, especially Australia. Research conducted among South African Jews who moved to Australia (Rutland 2022) and to England (London) (Caplan 2011) reveals that they too have strong Jewish and Zionist identities as well as an attachment to Israel, which is still considered the symbolic homeland. Similar to other Jews in the diaspora, the rhetoric of attachment to the homeland is expressed through visits, cultural exchanges, financial investments, donations and other initiatives as a way to maintain the link with and express their commitment to the homeland without actually moving there. As Tölölyan (2007) suggested, when ethno-religious group identification is attached to the homeland but less to the land, identity becomes portable and suitable as a marker of identity in the diaspora, allowing for multiple identities and even multiple citizenships (Cohen 2008).

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data available upon request from the author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. In 2022, the Jewish population in the world was estimated at 15,253,500 people, with 47% percent living in Israel and 47% percent in the US. South Africans constitute 0.3% of the total Jewish population https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world, accessed on 29 October 2023.
2. The terminology used to characterize Jewish migration to Israel has religious and moral connotations. The word aliyah means ascent- going up, going to the Holy Land. Jewish immigrants are called olim—those who are going up, making aliyah.
3. African Jewish Communities" in South Africa, as used in this paper, does not include the Black South African congregations (such as Zulu Zion) that refer to themselves as Zionists and observe the Sabbath on Saturdays.
4. Zionism is defined as commitment to the ideal of the ingathering of the Jewish people in Israel, the adoption of an Israeli identity, and the ideological commitment to both the Israeli Jewish collective and the land of Israel (Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2001).
5. Habonim Dror is a worldwide secular Jewish Zionist youth movement introduced to South Africa in 1930. Bnei Akiva is the largest religious Zionist youth movement, with branches in Jewish communities worldwide. Betar is a Revisionist Zionist right-wing youth movement associated with the Likud political party.
6. By contrast, in a study conducted among Australian olim in Israel, respondents reported high levels of Zionist involvement in their home communities (see, Mittelberg and Bankier-Karp 2020). In this sense, it seems that the social organization of the South-African and the Australian Jewish communities are very similar.
7. See Rutland (2022) for the integration of South African Jews in Australia; see Caplan (2011) for South African Jews in London.
8. The numbers are estimated at 75,000 if we include people with Jewish parents who do not self-identify as Jews and their non-Jewish family members (spouses, children, etc.). Institute for Jewish Policy Research. https://www.jpr.org.uk/countries/how-many-jews-in-south-africa (accesed on 20 July 2023).
9. In the South African context, traditional Jews are those who see themselves as part of the Orthodox community, even if they do not observe all of its rituals in full. For example, they may attend synagogue services on the Sabbath but drive to get there.
10. The Reform or Progressive movement believes in adapting Jewish religious practices to modern life. It has been less accepted in South Africa than in other parts of the Jewish diaspora in part because of the flexibility that the Orthodox community in South Africa has shown in welcoming non-observant, traditional Jews into its synagogues and communities.
11. Examples include organizing seminars and conferences to introduce the local Jewish youth to Israeli songs and folk dancing and funding tours to Israel to strengthen the attachment to Judaism and to Israel.

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North-African Jewish People in Paris: Multiple Identities—Ethnic-Religious, National and Transnational

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic-religious, as Jewish people; national, as French citizens; and transnational, as migrants and 'citizens of the world'. This study employed the correlative quantitative method using survey questionnaires (N = 145) combined with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The main results indicate that both groups have strong Jewish and religious identities. However, while immigrants had fewer opportunities for upward mobility and were more committed to national integration, the younger second-generation have higher socio-economic status and more choices regarding their identities in contemporary France. In conclusion, even among people of the same North African origin, there are inter-generational differences in several dimensions of identity and identification which stem from being native-born or from their experience as immigrants. Different social and political circumstances offer different integration opportunities and thus, over the years, dynamically construct identities among North African Jewish people as minorities. Nonetheless, the Jewish community in Paris is not passive; it has its own strength, cohesiveness, vitality and resilience which are expressed not only in economic but also in social and religious prosperity of Jewish organizations shared by both the native-born and immigrants, who can be considered a 'privileged' minority.

Keywords: Jewish immigrants from North Africa; minorities; privileged minority; ethnic-religious identity and identification; national and transnational identity; Jewish people in Paris

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic-religious, as Jewish: national, as French; and transnational, as migrants and 'citizens of the world'.

According to the definition of the United Nations (2019) international migrants are "persons who are either living in a country other than their country of birth or in a country other than their country of citizenship" (United Nations 2019, p. 5). International migrants might become ethnic groups as part of their long-term integration in the host society and construct their own social-communal, economic and cultural organizations. They build their own places of worship and develop educational institutions, communal social services and occupational niches, among others (Castles et al. 2014; Gold 2016; Lev Ari 2008). As a result of different policies, public attitudes and characteristics of the migrant group, there are differences in their migratory integration in the labor market, residential patterns and ethnic group formation. Some are fully integrated in the host society, while others are segregated for generations and might become ethnic minorities (Castles et al. 2014).

There are numerous definitions which describe what can be considered as minorities. For this paper I chose Plasseraud's (2010) definition, which distinguishes between traditional national minorities and the new migrants, composed of recent minorities (since the 1990s, see Lev Ari 2008). Plasseraud claims that the difference between the two groups is

embedded in their rights in a certain country, whereas until recently international organizations could not offer a common definition for this term. In Europe (which is the context of my study), minorities were defined as a group of citizens characterized by having lower status, as well as ethnic, religious and cultural components, such as language, which differ from those of the majority. Regarding the 'new minorities', the definition is more complex since some are citizens in their host society and are still in their integration process, whereas others have no citizenship and/or are segregated. Thus, special considerations and policies should be implemented in order to enable new minorities' integration (Plasseraud 2010).

Some of the cultural characteristics of migrants and ethnic minorities' which distinguish them from the majority are their ethnic identity and identification. *Ethnic identity* is the reported beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and feelings which ethnic minorities and migrants attach to their group. Ethnic identity is constructed dynamically as a result of cultural, social and political inter-relations with the host societies. Through daily interactions between various groups and communities, ethnic boundaries are defined and redefined (Lev Ari 2013). Furthermore, ethnic identity can be anchored in various geographic spaces; in several communities and nations, namely, it is transnational (Lev Ari 2008, 2022; Rebhun and Ari 2010). *Unlike ethnic identity, which is hidden and can be revealed through quantitative and qualitative methods according to the respondents' reports, ethnic identification* is the behavioral expression of identity, such as religious practice, which points to attachment with a particular ethnic or religious group (DellaPergola 2011a).

Furthermore, transnational ethnic identity and identification can be manifested by multiple identities, such as *hyphenated identity*, namely, and by dynamic interaction between various components, which can be distinct and conflictual or complementary (Hertz-Lazarowits et al. 2012).

Ethnic identity may be interconnected with religious and national identities as a result of interactions and affiliation with various communities. Each type of identity can be strong or weak through one's life cycle, but these identities also frequently reinforce each other. As for *national identity*, the term *nation*, a product of modernity, is "a community that has its own state or is striving to attain some type of autonomy or independence on a territory and within borders that are perceived as the 'fatherland' or 'motherland'" (Prodanov 2010, p. 47); it also shares a common economy and legal system with rights and duties and is multi-dimensional, thus making it a controversial phenomenon (Prodanov 2010).

Similar to previous concepts, defining *religion* is also complex for reasons of finding a common term for a variety of religions. Theoretical sociologist approaches define religion as a social institution which includes beliefs, ceremonies and practices based on the supernatural and what is perceived as holy in a certain community or society. According to the functionalist approach, based on Emil Durkhaim's definition, religion unites a group of people on the basis of symbols, norms and shared values which enhance social conformity and integration. Symbolic interaction theory focuses on the construction of religion as a result of inter-relations which are based on religious practices and ceremonies (Macionis 2000).

The replacement of traditional religions by nationalism characterizes secular, multicultural or multi-religious societies. Different and dynamic inter-relations between religion and nationalism can be detected as a result of socio-political changes in the course of history (Prodanov 2010).

Jewish people in western nations, once considered minorities, in recent decades constitute a *privileged ethnic minority* group. As such, and unlike most minority groups that suffer from discrimination, Jewish people have equal civic rights, and their economic, social and cultural integration within their host countries is successful (Brodkin 1998).

Data reveal that after World War II, most Jewish people world-wide (76%), both the native-born and immigrants, prefer to reside in about 15 metropolitan regions and large cities (Rebhun and Ari 2010; DellaPergola 2017) which provide them with socio-economic opportunities. Furthermore, within these metropolises and cities, Jewish people reside in

neighborhoods that suit their socioeconomic status and provide communal ethno-religious services and organizations (DellaPergola 2011a; DellaPergola and Sheskin 2015).

In this study, I used a correlative quantitative method based on survey questionnaires and a qualitative semi-structured interview method. By focusing on native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African origin residing in Paris, this study can contribute to understanding how multiple identities, particularly ethnic, but also religious, national and transnational are dynamically constructed and inter-related among immigrants and minorities. The comparison is between two groups whose roots are common but who differ in age, socio-economic status and migration cohorts, which affect their choices of identities and their importance. The following analysis of interactions with the host-majority society in a large western European city may also serve as a basis for other comparative studies among immigrants and privileged minorities, exploring their identities as well as their dynamic construction of identification.

2. Policies towards Migrants and Minorities in Western Europe, including Jewish People

After World War II until the early 1970s, most labor migrants to western European countries, including France, either came from the European periphery or were colonial migrants. In both cases these migrants were perceived as a solution for post-war labor shortage. Most of the labor migrants at that period were characterized by having low socio-economic status, including educational attainments and professional skills. (Castles and Miller 2009; Castles et al. 2014).

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the world became more globalized primarily due to new investments in the Middle East (Gulf oil states, for example) or in parts of Asia and Latin America. In this period, there was a need for more skilled and educated people for the micro-electronic revolution and expansion of the services sectors in Western Europe. Thus, the second generation, the descendants of first-generation immigrants, was socialized and educated in Europe and had different opportunities for social mobility. The younger generation has higher educational attainment compared with their parents, although not as high as that of native-born people from the same age cohort (20–29).

At the beginning of the new millennium, Western Europe faced and still does face new and increased Muslim immigration flows which force EU members to formulate policies regarding an increase in Muslim population. Contrary to previous flows of immigration to Western Europe that integrated well into the host culture which was familiar to them, the new immigrants confront Europe's own contemporary cultural identity (Castles et al. 2014).

Among colonial immigrants to Western Europe, in general, and to France, in particular, there were Jewish people who preferred to reside there since they perceived France as a non-exclusionary country and as being culturally familiar. In the second period of migration to EU countries and since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s the European Union has become a major area of residence for Jewish immigrants. In that period and until recently, Jewish people in Western Europe confronted dynamic changes regarding tolerance and pluralistic issues across the European continent. In EU countries, France included, there are constant changes regarding equal and multicultural policies toward migrants and minority cultures which are not defined by a specific territory (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020).

Recently, the Jewish population in Europe has decreased due to emigration (as a result of the new policies and new antisemitism, see Lev Ari 2022), not enough Jewish births and high intermarriage rates, which affect low Jewish identification among the children (DellaPergola 2020). Although Jewish people perceive themselves as part of an ethnic Jewish collective, at the same time they perceive themselves as being part of the nation state in which they reside in Europe. Thus, Jewish people in Europe might have a common Jewish identity, although in some EU nations such as France, where the concept of a Jewish people is 'unconstitutional,' they have to define their other identity as citizens of France.

In Europe, local culture and policy toward ethnic minorities as well as the size of the local Jewish community has a significant impact on the construction of Jewish ethnic identity and identification by enabling (or not) religious services and Jewish day schools. As for Jewish practices, only 30% of European Jewish people preserve the laws of *Kashrut* (regulations of Jewish dietary laws), which differs according to country of residence as well as socioeconomic status (Graham 2018).

3. Multiple Identities among Jewish People in France: Current State of Research

The 1789 Revolution in France established equal individual rights for all, including migrants and other ethnic minorities. In return for receiving citizen status, civil rights and enjoying equal opportunities, the French government demands individual cultural assimilation from its immigrants and minorities. However, migrants and minorities of a non-European country of birth (whether citizens or not) experience social exclusion and discrimination, residing in poor inner-city areas and having low-status insecure jobs (Castles and Miller 2009; Castles et al. 2014). According to this policy, Jewish people were granted equal civil rights as individuals but not as an intrinsic part of the majority (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020).

As mentioned in the previous section, France experienced large-scale immigration from its former colonies in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). Algerian migrants enjoyed bilateral agreements which offered them, including Jewish people, a unique status in France. Moroccans and Tunisians, in contrast, were admitted through the *Office National d'Immigration (ONI)*, which was established by France to recruit workers from Southern Europe and has since 1945.

France has the largest Jewish community in Europe. The core estimate for the French Jewish population decreased to 446,000, the third largest Jewish population in the world (DellaPergola 2022). France is known to have one of the largest, if not the largest, *Sephardi* communities in the Diaspora. Jewish people of *Sephardi* ancestry, mostly first, second or third generation immigrants from North Africa, the Maghreb, clearly predominate numerically (75%) over those of central-eastern European origin who, until World War II, constituted the main component of Jewish population (DellaPergola 2011b; DellaPergola 2017; DellaPergola 2020). Today, about a third (34%) of Jewish people in France are immigrants, versus only 12% among the total French population (Graham 2018).

The major organized religious denomination In France is modern orthodoxy (World Jewish Congress 2020). The majority of French Jewish people (85–87%) were born to both parents who are Jewish. The rates of intermarriage are relatively low (22%) compared with other western European countries such as Germany and Sweden (38% in each) (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020; Graham 2018).

A comparison of eight European nations found that in France, where Jewish people expressed the strongest feelings of being part of the Jewish community, they also have the strongest level of emotional attachment to Israel. Seventy percent of French Jewish people consider supporting Israel as a very important component of their Jewish identity, and 75% visited Israel but did not live there (Graham 2018). The French result is surprising since, theoretically, the Republic 'demands' loyalty to the French state alone, and French–Jewish identification with a second state (e.g., Israel) could be construed as dual loyalty and thus controversial. However, another previous survey confirms the finding that "the Jews of France in general have strong ties to Israel" (Cohen 2009, pp. 124–25). When asked about the sense of attachment to the Jewish people and to their current country of residence, 96% have strong feelings towards the first group, while 83% are attached to France (Graham 2018). Only a third of (36%) of Jewish people in France reported that religion is the main factor in defining their Jewish identity (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020). With regard to Jewish practice (ethnic identification), France stands out compared with other western countries. A relatively high proportion (20%), (second among eight European counties), follow five or six religious practices (attend *Seder* [Passover meal], observe the *Shabbat*, eat only *Kosher* meat at home, attend synagogue weekly or more often, light candles most

Friday nights, and fast on *Yom Kippur* most or all years), compared with the proportion (26%) that follow one or no practice (Graham 2018).

As for communal institutions, in France, Jewish schools require tuition fees. Thus, only 24% of the parents aged 20 to 54 send their children to a Jewish school or Jewish kindergarten (Graham 2018). Furthermore, with its highly centralized system and predominantly Catholic population, the concept of citizenship is at the core of education in France. State education is considered the key to political freedom and to national identity, achieved particularly through linguistic unification. The strongest normative pillar of French political philosophy is the separation of state and church, and thus, education is secular. The goal is to offer pupils equal opportunity in knowledge acquisition. Freedom in the choice of public schools is highly restricted; parents are allowed to send their children only to schools located in their neighborhood. Alongside the public school system, however, there are private schools that serve various groups in the population (Gross 2006).

All major Zionist organizations are active in France, and there are several local youth movements. Despite organizational and communal Jewish vitality in France, only around 40% of the community is officially affiliated with or are members of synagogues or Jewish organizations. Alongside assimilation, there is also a noticeable tendency toward religious revival, including a growing ultra-Orthodox community (World Jewish Congress 2020).

Similar to other Jewish people in western countries, more than half of the Jewish people in France reside in the *greater Paris* metropolitan region (337,600 people); they constitute 2.8% of the city's population (Cohen 2002; Fourquet 2015), and they are the focus of this study. Most Jewish people living in Paris are *Sephardi* Jewish people. A minority are *Ashkenazi* Jewish people of European origin (Graham 2018). Jewish people who reside in Paris are more integrated in the wider society compared with those in other areas in France. They also have much higher education—at least a bachelor's degree (73%)—compared to 66% of other Jewish people in France and 50% among the non-Jewish population in the country (Cohen 2009).

Paris is the center of Jewish organizations and communal activities in France. In Paris alone, there are more than 20 Jewish day schools as well as multiple kindergartens and religious seminaries (World Jewish Congress 2020). Paris is also the center of intellectual and cultural life for French Jewish people: conferences, colloquia, exhibitions, and other Jewish-related activities. Yet, most research carried out on Judaism, its history, its culture and Jewish languages is conducted in institutes of higher education. Numerous teams at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* deal with research focusing on the "science of Judaism and Jewishness". A dozen Paris universities have departments or courses devoted to Hebrew, to other Jewish languages or more generally to teaching and research related to Judaism and Jewish studies. Paris today is one of the main centers for Jewish intellectual life in the Diaspora (Jewish Virtual Library 2021).

4. The Study

This study employed two research methods: the correlative quantitative method using survey questionnaires and the qualitative semi-structured interview method.

The questionnaires were completed by telephone, face-to-face or via the internet; a total of 455 questionnaires were filled in. In addition, I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews (see Lev Ari 2022). For this paper, I used data only from 145 respondents whose fathers were born in North Africa. In addition, four semi-structured interviews were analyzed (out of 22) to supplement the quantitative data.

Most respondents (61%) are native-born, and 39% were born in North Africa and immigrated to France at the average age of 14 (standard deviation = 9 years). Most of them (80%) immigrated as children or in their youth; namely, they are 1.5 or second-generation immigrants (Lev Ari 2012).

More than half (56%) are women, and the average age is 46 years (standard deviation = 16 years). About a quarter are retired; 18% have liberal occupations; 14% are teachers; 12% are in sales and business. All the rest have other occupations, such as

blue-collar work, management, non-academic professions and clerical jobs or are students. Regarding their educational attainment, most of them, 73%, reported on having an academic degree, of whom 43% have a graduate degree; another 16% have a non-academic degree, and the rest (33%) have a high-school diploma. Another 20% reported on having "other" educational attainment, and 7% did not answer this question. Only 40% own a house or an apartment.

When compared by country of birth, some significant differences were found. Those who were born in North Africa are older than the native-born. As mentioned earlier (e.g., DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020), the first group immigrated to France during the 1950s and the 1970s, and their average age is 60 years (standard deviation = 13 years); thus, more than half of them are retired by now. Those who are native-born are much younger (37 years old, standard deviation = 11 years) and can be considered as second-generation (see also Lev Ari 2012). Those from the second group have higher educational attainment compared with the first group, whereas 61% have graduate degrees compared with 17%, accordingly. In addition, about half of the native-born have liberal occupations, such as teaching and business. Higher socioeconomic mobility among second-generation non-European immigrants—in general—was found in previous studies (see for example Castles et al. 2014).

As for the interviewees, all of them have fathers either from Morocco, Tunis or Algeria. The two immigrants were born in Morocco and immigrated to France in their teens. They are 58 and 64 years old. The younger (rabbi Y.) is married with seven children and serves as a rabbi in the French army with no academic degree. The older (S.) is married with five children and is retired from being a school principal and a teacher with a B.A. The two native-born interviewees (N. and R.) are second-generation immigrants in their thirties; both have B. A. degrees. N. is an accountant, and R. is a teacher for Jewish religious studies.

5. Results

Multiple Identities: Immigrants and the Native-Born Compared

Three dimensions of ethnic-religious identities were studied here: (1) Jewish identity and attachment to Israel, (2) transnational and ethnic identity with country of origin and (3) national-local identity, as French citizens, and transnational, as 'citizens of the world'.

Regarding Jewish ethnic and religious identity, in both groups it is the strongest identity component and, in comparison, almost similar. Both immigrants and the native-born feel and present themselves as Jewish, are proud of their Jewishness and are aware of their religious-ethnic identity. In addition, their emotional attachment to Israel is high and they perceive it as a spiritual center for the Jewish people.

As for identity with country of origin and transnational identity—in the case of those who immigrated to France from North Africa, there was a significant difference in the transnational component. North Africans expressed low attachment to their countries of origin regarding feeling 'at home' there, presenting themselves as North Africans and being North African as a significant part of their identity, whereas the native-born express higher affiliation to France as their country of origin.

The participants' national identity as French citizens is rather strong but to a lesser degree than their sense of Jewish ethno-religious identity and their attachment to Israel as part of it. Nevertheless, they feel 'at home,' are emotionally attached and feel 'French'. In both groups, there is low transnational identity as 'citizens of the world,' but it is stronger among the native-born (Table 1).

In sum, both groups, immigrants from North Africa and the native-born (second-generation of north Africans) are similar in their strong Jewish identity and spiritual attachment to Israel. However, in two transnational identities they differ: national identity among the immigrants is rather strong, compared with their transnational identity with their countries of origin, whereas feeling transnational identity as citizens of the world, the native-born reported on higher attachment than immigrants, although not as high as their national identity. Thus, Jewish ethno-religious identity is the strongest in both

groups, to a similar degree, followed by French national identity, then with country of origin; transnational identity is stronger among the native-born.

Table 1. Multiple identities: Immigrants and the native-born compared (*t*-test analysis for independent samples, means and standard deviation, 1 = not at all, 5 = to a very large extent).

Variables	Immigrants		Native-Born		Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Jewish identity and Israel—attachment					
Feel Jewish	4.85	0.49	4.88	0.35	n.s
Present yourself as Jewish	4.62	0.65	4.54	0.80	n.s
Proud to be Jewish	4.40	0.82	4.81	0.61	n.s
Emotional attachment to Israel	4.60	0.70	4.42	0.86	n.s
Israel serves as spiritual center for the Jewish people	4.36	1.04	4.40	0.82	n.s
Have a clear sense of being Jewish	4.38	0.70	4.47	0.74	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.70)	4.61	0.45	4.55	0.48	n.s
Ethnic identity with country of origin/transnational					
Attached to country of origin	2.61	1.35	3.46	1.27	**
Feel primarily as native-born of country of origin	2.65	1.45	3.61	1.27	**
Feel "at home" in country of origin	2.46	1.51	3.56	1.32	**
Present oneself as native-born from country of origin	3.21	1.31	3.62	1.28	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84)	2.73	1.11	3.57	1.07	**
National-local identity					
Feel "at home" in current country of residence	3.60	1.06	3.65	1.16	n.s
Emotionally attached to current country of residence	3.54	1.05	3.69	1.13	n.s
Feel French	3.79	1.18	3.73	1.24	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86)	3.62	0.94	3.72	1.05	n.s
Transnational					
'Citizen of the world'	2.12	1.01	2.97	1.45	**

** $p < 0.01$; n.s = not significant.

In the interviews there are some citations which provide further understanding regarding the participants' attitudes and feelings, which constitute their multiple ethnic identities.

As for Jewish ethnic and religious identity and the place of Israel within it, S. an immigrant from Morocco, makes a distinction between the more material component in his national identity and the religious–Jewish aspect identified with Israel: "You can live 'at home' in France, a democratic, open, tolerant country, beautiful culture, you can enjoy everything. You can... there is even a saying in French, 'live like God in France'. [...] The dimension of 'home' which is more spiritual and religious is in Israel".

Dynamic change in the participants' identity is expressed in the interviews with both immigrants. Rabbi Y., describes a 'revival' of transnational-religious identity and feelings of 'home' in his country of origin, which he left at a young age (12 years), some decades ago: "Last year I was in Morocco, for Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's celebration. I really

was 'at home'. That is how it was, we would go to the same place with the parents and the family, so we remembered everything". S. describes the dynamic change between transnational identity with country of origin, as an immigrant, versus the local-national and ethnic identities: "Someone who has lived here for forty-fifty years does not feel like an immigrant. It feels as Jews but not as immigrants".

Multiple identities can be in conflict among them or complement each other. Rabbi Y., who serves as a military rabbi in the Paris area, expresses in his words some frustration at the French's perception of him as a foreigner and different, even though he serves in the army like them. He mentions his multiple identities, the national versus a constant sense as a migrant and wanderer:

> So they [his friends in the French army, L. L.] say: 'what are you?' or when they talk about something they say: 'in your country', so I look and say: 'what is my country? What country are you talking about?' 'Israel', they tell me. So I say, 'for now, my country is here'. I'm in the army, you see what uniform I wear. How can you say I'm from Israel? If you take my passport and see where I was born, then you'll say I'm also Moroccan? Even those who have studied [. . .], they have a problem with the Jews. But let's say that when I am in Israel I'm a bit of a wanderer, when I'm in France I'm also a bit of a wanderer.

Contrary to Rabbi Y., S. who also immigrated to France from Morocco, describes a lesser conflictual interaction with non-Jewish people, whom he calls 'Goyim' (gentiles) and more complementary relations among his ethnic, religious and local-national identities:

> The feeling of an immigrant does not exist. The feeling that you as a 'kosher Jew', or you wear a hat or a kippah, or you don't participate in all gentiles' holidays. I know Christmass, but you feel that you are not part of everyone who lives in my building. You say hello, you know them, you chat with them even in the elevator. But there is some kind of difference [. . .]. That on Saturday you wear a hat and a suit, while everyone is jogging. These are the reminders, but apart from that, there is no feeling of an immigrant.

N. (wife) and R. (husband), a married couple, both native-born, have a different mixture of identities. While N. expresses a more transnational identity with Israel but understands that living there will be difficult for her professionally and family-wise, R. expresses less enthusiasm for Israel and has stronger local-national identity. R. seems to represent the second-generation in his stronger national identity, whereas his wife, N., tends to perceive Israel as part of his transnational ethnic identity, similar to those of immigrants:

> N.: "I feel good in Israel. When I'm there I tell myself that I would like to live there, even though I know that professionally it's hard and leaving my family is hard". R. noted that: "I feel 'at home' here, because when I go on holiday to Israel I am very happy to go there but not to live there. I feel here [in Paris to. L L.] at 'my place'. [. . .] For me here it is 'at me' (chez moi) speaking in my language".

As an elaboration of exploring their ethnic identity, the participants were asked in the questionnaires about the importance they attach to their Jewish identity in various areas, as well as social relations and integration among the majority, non-Jewish people in Paris (Table 2).

Table 2. Degree of importance attached to Jewish identity, social connections and integration: Immigrants and native-born compared (*t*-test analysis for independent samples, means and standard deviation, 1 = not at all, 5 = to a very large extent).

Variables	Immigrants		Native-Born		Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Jewish identity and Israel—attachment					
The Jewish religion	4.40	0.73	4.56	0.73	n.s
Residing next to other Jews	3.90	1.12	3.88	1.11	n.s
Keeping Jewish customs	4.34	0.84	4.50	0.79	n.s
Jewish education to your children	4.43	0.77	4.61	0.75	n.s
Attachment to Israel	4.52	0.81	4.40	0.79	n.s
Your Jewish identity	4.38	0.71	4.14	0.99	n.s
Social relations mainly with Jews	2.60	1.14	2.98	1.10	*
Having social relations with non-Jews	2.03	1.18	2.63	1.26	**
Acquaintance with local non-Jewish culture	2.27	1.40	2.72	1.29	*
Being part of the majority community in Paris	1.68	1.04	2.27	1.16	**
Summary index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75)	3.47	0.58	3.66	0.54	*

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; n.s = not significant.

Consistent with the findings presented in Table 1 is the importance the participants give to Jewish religion, practice, identity and Jewish education for their children; their attachment to Israel is very high in both groups and with similar distributions (according to standard deviation). As for being part of a Jewish neighborhood, it is still important but to a lesser degree, again, almost to a similar degree in both groups. However, when it comes to social relations, both with Jewish people and non-Jewish people, and integration within the majority, the degree of importance drops dramatically in both groups but in a different pattern. In all of these components, the native-born attach more importance to have social relations with Jewish people and non-Jewish people, to be acquainted with local culture and to be part of the majority in Paris.

Although in both groups the tendency to assimilate is low, it is more pronounced among the younger interviewees, the second generation, who are more interested than the immigrant generation in learning the local culture and being part of the community of the majority society in the city (Table 2).

6. Ethnic Identification

Ethnic identification includes three components: (1) children's education and community, (2) Jewish practice and (3) visits to Israel.

Children's education, both formal and informal, is more common among the native-born compared with the immigrants. Those from the first group send their children to Jewish schools to a larger degree than the second and in a more homogenous distribution (mean = 3.81, standard deviation = 1.58; 2.83, 1.86, accordingly). The native-born also send their children to Zionist movements more than the immigrants, who hardly do so (mean = 3.11, standard deviation = 1.50; 2.26, 1.52, accordingly). In addition, native-born people belong to Jewish-community organizations to a larger degree than immigrants (mean = 3.25, standard deviation = 1.51; 2.67, 1.50, accordingly).

As for other communal components such as volunteer activities for Israel, for the Jewish community and for affiliation with non-Jewish organizations, there are no significant differences between the two groups.

In the interviews, one of the immigrants, who came from Morocco in his teens and currently lives in Paris (Rabbi Y.), gives an example of a situation where he could not send his children to Jewish schools some decades ago. Previously he lived in another small city in France which did not have Jewish schools. He describes difficulties finding a suitable school for his children where they can preserve their Jewish identity and his choice of a Catholic school that was willing to consider the issue of *Shabbat* and Jewish holiday practices. Thus, despite the lack of a Jewish school there, he found a compromise that allowed at least partial observance of Jewish customs until they arrived in Paris:

> They worked on *Shabbat*, and did not want to accept our children, because we told them we would not send them on *Shabbat*. They will come on holidays, to school, but they will have a task that the teacher will give them before the holidays, or, immediately after the holidays in the evening, they will go to their friends who will give them the homework.

Indeed, the Jewish community in Paris has undergone many changes in recent decades. S. describes these changes from his point of view—from being a community undergoing a process of assimilation from the 1970s to the 1990s through the establishment of the community economically (restaurants) and culturally (synagogues):

> There was a revolution here. There was Americanization among Jews in France, [...] took off their hats, wore a *kippah*, took out tassels, stopped driving on *Shabbat*, and synagogues popped up everywhere. [...] Restaurants flourished everywhere; whereas twenty years ago there were maybe thirty or forty restaurants [...], today there are over a hundred in Paris alone. In Paris alone, in the seventeenth arrondissement, there are maybe twenty-five restaurants. Just in one arrondissement. In Boulogne [...] in the 1980s, there was not a single grocery store. There was no restaurant, there was only one synagogue in the north of the city. It was almost empty. Today you have to be a candidate to get a seat and find a place to sit. You need a subscription to enter. You have to wait five or six years until a place becomes available for you in the synagogue.

S. continues to describe this revolution among older as well as younger Jewish people in Paris:

> Many people who came to pray did not know how to pray, did not know how to read Hebrew. There were not even books in French. Today there are all kinds of '*Siddurs*' [a book of Jewish prayers] in phonetics, so everyone can read in Hebrew, [...] and their children, who didn't even go to [Jewish] schools and synagogues, today synagogues are full of children and adults. The average age in synagogues has dropped a lot.

The two native-born people, R. and N., also perceive the Jewish community as vibrant and as having many organizations and activities which attract old as well as young members:

They are united and have joint projects, *Mikveh*, restaurants, community centers, a *Chabad* house, there are many things. [...] The community is very active. They organize a lot of things every holiday. In *Sukkot* there are many organized community meals, in *Hanukkah* there is a public candle lighting. On *Hanukkah* there are parties for children every day in every synagogue.

N., his wife, adds regarding the existence of rites of passage in the Jewish community in Paris: "Weddings, engagements and *bar mitzvahs*".

Another component of ethno-religious identification is Jewish practice. In both groups there is a high degree of practicing Jewish customs in interviewees' daily lives, similar (mean of 4.31, standard deviation = 0.75) among immigrants and (4.37, standard deviation = 0.72) among the native-born. Jewish practice included lighting *Shabbat* candles,

participating in Passover *Seder*, eating *Kosher* food, fasting on *Yom Kippur*, celebrating *Rosh Hashana* and synagogue affiliation.

One of the interviewees, S., (an immigrant) perceives religion in a functionalist manner, as an important component of social cohesion. Religion acts as a compass, a framework, compared to liberal life characterized by him as 'wild'. In his eyes, religion is seen as a source of communication, as a positive and even idyllic structure:

> It gives direction. [. . .], it gives a framework for the family, it gives challenges in education, it gives challenges to you personally [. . .]. Religion consolidates, and gives some kind of sense to the Jewish society to be together. It also preserves the people socially, enabling communication, love, connection between the people.

N., a native-born, also perceives religion as important in every-day life; she emphasizes the importance of religion so that she does not work on *Shabbat* and has a place to eat *kosher* near her workplace: "Religion is very important, in the first place. When I start a new job on Friday, I have to leave at least an hour before Shabbat begins. Well, that's primary (central) and also that I can eat *kosher*." On the other hand, her husband R. mentioned religion as uniting the family but as potentially causing conflicts and disputes between Jewish people. In doing so, he demonstrates a more critical attitude toward religion, maybe as a result from his experience with the side of his family of Jewish origin (a converted mother), compared to his wife, who sees it as very important to her.

Finally, the participants' high attachment to Israel, as part of their Jewish identification, is manifested in frequent visits to Israel. In both groups, above 90% visited the country at least three times (96% among the native-born and 91% among immigrants), whereas the rest visited twice, and very few, in both groups, have never visited. However, it should be mentioned that 79% responded to this question, which might imply that a fifth did not visit or could not afford the trip.

S. mentions Israel's central place since his childhood in Morocco and as part of his school curriculum there:

> When I was a child [. . .], at home in Morocco, I remember my mother sitting at the radio to listen to news from Israel. She also listened to the Voice of America in foreign languages, but Israel was very central. Religious life was around Israel, in school we learned about it and I even had teachers who came from Israel.

Rabbi Y. also describes his strong identification with Israel, which includes his wife's Jewish-Zionist education in the past and the fact that most of their children reside in Israel. His description implies the socialization of his children, which probably strengthened their Jewish-Zionist identification:

> The first time I came here to *Eretz Israel* [the land of Israel], it was in honor of my *Bar Mitzvah* [Jewish coming of age ritual]. [. . .] I was young, thirteen years old. [. . .] As a rabbi, I supported Israel a lot, which is not just a state, but the Jewish people should live there. [. . .] My wife is very Zionist. She attended a school called *Yavneh* in Marseille which was Zionist. [. . .] She insisted that our sons would love the Land of Israel so much, that today six out of our seven children are here in Jerusalem.

7. Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic and religious, as Jewish; national, as French; and transnational, with Israel, as migrants from North Africa and as 'citizens of the world'.

Although the two groups in this study have common roots, they differ in their age, in their migration cohort and thus in their opportunities for integration in France. The immigrants are older and were socialized in North Africa and France during the 1950s and 1970s of the 20th century, when Maghreb countries just received their independence from

France. France granted migrants and minorities, including Jewish people, equal individual rights but demands integration within the French culture (see also Castles et al. 2014).

In the current study, both groups, immigrants from North Africa and native-born people (second-generation of north Africans), are similar in their strong Jewish identity and spiritual attachment to Israel, as well as their national identity. However, when it comes to other components of identity, the native-born are more attached to France as their country of origin, whereas immigrants from North Africa are less attached to their countries of origin. In addition, the native-born have stronger general transnational identity as 'citizens of the world'. Thus, the hierarchy of identities is as follows: Jewish ethno-religious identity and identification, including transnational attachment to Israel, are the strongest among both groups, followed by French national identity, identification with country of origin and general-transnational attachment, particularly among the native-born.

The native-born, who can be considered as second-generation immigrants, experienced different social, political and economic circumstances and thus had better opportunities for integration and social mobility than the first or one and a half generation of immigrants (see also Castles et al. 2014; Lev Ari 2012). It is rather evident that while immigrants had fewer opportunities for upward mobility and were more committed to national integration, the younger second-generation were mostly educated in the secular French educational system and had more choices regarding their identities. Furthermore, while the immigrants came to a Jewish community in Paris which just started to recover from World War II, accompanied by a high degree of assimilation, the second-generation native-born people were raised and socialized in a community which started to strive due to large waves of immigration composed of mainly Sephardic Jewish people from the Maghreb who were more traditionally inclined than the Ashkenazi local Jewish people at that time.

Thus, the native-born could choose to be more affiliated with their Jewish community and to send their children to formal and non-formal Jewish schools and even youth movements, which they could also financially afford due to their higher socio-economic status. Although the Republic 'demands' loyalty to the French state alone, the young generation of native-born people may have more freedom and a variety of Jewish schools and institutions compared with immigrants, and thus, they have become more confident when confronting the need to be loyal to their national identity.

The group of immigrants is more segregated from the national and Jewish communities. They are less interested in social relations both with Jewish people and especially with non-Jewish people. Only few attach importance to their countries of origin as well, probably since their immigration to France was a few decades ago. Therefore, the immigrants are somewhat 'in between worlds': not immigrants anymore but also not fully integrated, except for within the Jewish community.

Multiple and hyphenated identities could be either conflictual or complementary and constantly changing in their strength (see also Prodanov 2010). Jewish ethnic and religious identities are strong and complementary in both groups. National identity is less strong but shared by most participants—native-born and immigrants—and does not seem to contradict the first two identities. Furthermore, although in both groups the tendency to assimilate is low, it is more pronounced among the youngsters, the second-generation, who are more interested than the immigrants in the local culture and attach more importance to becoming a part of the majority. This dimension is part of native-borns' identification with their country of origin, France, and as part of their higher opportunities for integration, compared with the immigrants. Since their ethno-religious identity as Jewish people is so strong, it does not compete with their national identities and identifications.

As for transnational identities, it is composed of three components: with Israel, which is the strongest, as complementary to their Jewish and religious identities and identification (frequent visits); with country of origin, among the immigrants, which is rather latent; and as 'citizens of the world', which is low in both groups but almost non-existent among the immigrants. Since the sample is not very large, particularly the qualitative one, I am not claiming that it is representative of both groups of participants. Nonetheless, some findings

and their patterns are supported by previous studies. Thus, the finding of this study and research questions can also serve as a basis for further research regarding first and second-generation immigrants' experience and the reconstruction of their ethnic identities in France or elsewhere in Western Europe.

In conclusion, even among people of the same North African origin, there are intergenerational differences in several dimensions of identity and identification which stem from being native-born or from immigrant experience. Over the years, different social and political circumstances have offered various integration opportunities for Jewish people as minorities in France in general and in Paris in particular. For example, rising antisemitism in France (see also Lev Ari 2022) might create feelings of alienation and segregation from the French society and bring about stronger Jewish community coherence and weaker national identification. Thus, identities are constantly changing regarding their strength as a result of local policy toward ethnic minorities in general and Jewish people in particular. However, the Jewish community in Paris is not passive. It has its own strength, cohesiveness, vitality and resilience, which are expressed in economic but also social and religious prosperity of Jewish organizations shared by both younger generations of the native-born and immigrants, who can be considered as a 'privileged' minority in Paris.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted among participants who were at that time older than 20 years. The questionnaires were anonymous and were administered by research assistants or through the internet and unknown to the author. All of the participants were free to refuse or quit at any time. As for the interviews, in each one the participants were asked for their consent at the beginning of the interview, stating that if they did not want to answer a question or quit in the middle, they could do so. In addition, all details, including names, were coded, and the interviewees have been told about this before the interview began and taped. Both questionnaires and interviews included questions regarding attitudes and perceptions about various interactions and ethnic identity and none were invasive.

Data Availability Statement: The quantitative data can be obtained by contacting the author.

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Article

Empathy from the Margins: Observing Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) Events in a Reform Jewish Congregation

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Abstract: The socialization of the Ethiopian Jewish community, known as Beta Israel in Israeli society, is marked by performing cultural customs and rituals to establish its unique tradition and collective ethnic narrative. The Sigd is a holiday that is celebrated on the 29th of the Hebrew month of Heshvan, when the community marks its devotion to Zion by renewing the covenant between the Jewish people, God, and the Torah. This narrative of return to the homeland is also expressed and framed in a tragic context by observing a Memorial Day for the members of the Ethiopian Jewish community who perished during their journey to Israel from Sudan. These two commemorative dates support the narrative of Beta Israel and advance its public recognition. This ethnographic study examines why and how these practices were mentioned and performed in an Israeli Reform Jewish congregation, a community that does not include Ethiopians members, and has a religious and cultural character that is different from the traditions of Beta Israel. Both the Reform community and the Ethiopian community deal with stereotypes and institutional and public inequality in Israel. I argue that their solidarity is constructed and based on social perceptions and experiences of social alienation and immigration traumas. This political motivation to mark the narrative of the 'other', particularly as an excluded religious group that fights against the Orthodox Jewish monopoly in Israel, marks the Reform community as an egalitarian agent that gives voice to the marginalized. The fact that most Reform congregants are 'sabras' (native) Israelis sheds light on how their perception as a majority, and not only as a minority, produces a critical statement about Zionist immigration and acclimatization.

Keywords: Ethiopian Jews; Beta Israel; Reform Jewish community; recognition; ethnography; marginality; Israel

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1. Introduction

The way to establishing the place of Ethiopian Jews in Israeli culture goes through the Jewish and Israeli calendar. For example, the Sigd, a pilgrimage festival that symbolizes the renewal of the covenant between the people of Israel and God, is of great importance for understanding the religion and heritage of Ethiopian Jews. This holiday provides Ethiopian immigrants with communal pride. However, their way to celebrate their *aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Israel) also involves pain and loss. On the month of Iyar, the Day of Remembrance is marked for the members of the Ethiopian Jewish community who perished on their way to Israel during their journey and while waiting for their *aliyah* in the refugee camps in Sudan. This day is marked on the same date as Jerusalem Day, and symbolizes the deep connection between Ethiopian Jews and Jerusalem (Talmi Cohn 2018, 2020).

In this article, I examine why and how these holidays are marked not among the Ethiopian community in Israel, but rather within the Reform community—a non-Orthodox Jewish denomination that differs in almost every aspect from Ethiopian tradition and culture. I consider not only what can be learned from this observance about the way the Reform congregation perceives the Ethiopians in Israeli society, but also about the way the community sees itself. The new Reform prayer book, *Tefilat HaAdam* (The Prayer of Humankind) (Marx and Lisitsa 2021) includes two prayers dedicated to the Jews of

Ethiopia: a prayer for Jerusalem Day, and a prayer for the holiday of the Sigd. Shortly before the holiday, the Reform assembly sent out this message to all of its communities in Israel:

> Unfortunately, the tendency of Judaism in this country to isolate itself led the state to reject the Ethiopian tradition, and a tragic attempt to adapt the people of the community to conventional Judaism while cutting many of them off from their heritage. This is instead of celebrating diversity, growing and learning from it. There is more than one way to be Jewish and the Beta Israel tradition is an instructive example of this. It is our responsibility as liberal Jews to help the Ethiopian community to guard and preserve their tradition lest it be lost and sink into the land of Israel that they dreamed of for so many years . . .

This proposal justifies celebrating the Sigd in the Reform congregation as a political performance to abolish social injustices and cultural discrimination. As a movement that advocates for pluralism and deals with social exclusion in the ethno-national space (Ben-Lulu 2021a, 2022a; Ben-Lulu and Feldman 2022), marking the Sigd, as well as marking the Day of Remembrance for Ethiopian Jews, allows the Reform community to express its commitment to fight against voices of inequality in Israeli society. This signifies the community as an active agent in local identity politics, when at the same time there is recognition of the asymmetry and even the privileges that members of the Reform movement have, compared to the Ethiopian community.

This initiative to include the Ethiopian narrative as part of Reform ideology and liturgy did not arise from the movement's office in Jerusalem or from New York City. The marking of the Sigd and the Day of Remembrance is a local initiative. The members of the Yuval Congregation, a Reform congregation that operates in the town of Gedera in the central district of Israel, teamed up with local female Ethiopian social activists, and together they produced joint Reform and Ethiopian events about a decade ago. Since then, the Yuval Congregation annually celebrates the Sigd and marks the Day of Remembrance. As a result, the custom has spread to other Reform congregations in Israel.

This study will clarify the goal of the Reform community—whose theological and social signifiers differ from the traditions of Ethiopian Judaism—in including these events in the community's calendar. I explore the reactions it elicits among the Reform congregants who are exposed to Ethiopian culture and discuss what can be concluded about the cooperation between minority groups in Israeli society in general. Does the Reform congregation use their recognition of the Beta Israel narrative and their adoption of their traditional rituals as a political strategy, unifying their struggles?

As I will show, based on the following ethnographic descriptions, the Reform congregation's initiative to mark the Beta Israel rituals was not necessarily based on a shared ideology or on the adoption of similar social values, but stemmed from the will of the community members to get to know their neighbors in the urban space and from shared experiences of alienation and otherness. The appropriation and marking of the events not only helped them to become acquainted with Ethiopian culture and the heritage of Beta Israel, but to also voice criticism against the Israeli institutions and society that segregates minority groups. Not only did the shared celebrations in Gedera provide a platform for the Beta Israel to share their stories, but they also gave the Reform community an opportunity to express its own, often excluded voice.

I believe that this case study may provide a broader perspective, which exists outside the space and time of the event being studied, in its possibility to reveal mechanisms for multiculturalism and pluralism. I would like to emphasize that this discussion does not provides an empiric examination about the degree of integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israeli society. In addition, this is not a discussion to analyze how the members of the Ethiopian community construct their ethnic identity or their attitude to society, but a focused attempt that strives to decipher the positions of the members of the Reform community regarding the choice to mention these ethnic events. This study is not a macro level discussion of the social positioning of Ethiopian Jews, but a discussion on the micro level of the ritual. I

attempt to decipher the cultural interpretations that the members of the Yuval Congregation share regarding their marking of Beta Israel events. Being a researcher who is interested in the activity of the Israeli Reform community in the ethno-national space, I chose to analyze the recognition of the (Ethiopian) other as another means of deciphering the (Reform) 'self'.

2. Being the 'Others': A Struggle for Ethnic/Religious Recognition

Israeli society is a collection of immigrants, a mosaic of otherness. Immigrants, who came from both Western and 'third world' countries, were expected to undergo a process of assimilation and integration by relinquishing their particular past and traditions. Since the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state, and even before the formal declaration of the state, Jewish immigrants' identities were constructed through the melting pot project; erasing diasporic characteristics to become a 'pure' native Israeli. Over the years, this paradigm has been revealed to be a failure, causing resistance and raising objections among diverse ethnic groups.

Both the Reform and the Ethiopian communities challenge, each in their own way, the Israeli hegemonic public discourse and perception: both on the religious level (both undermine Israeli Orthodoxy and struggle with the rabbinical authority) and on the ethnic/national level (the concept of national identity, or the concept of white racial supremacy). Their struggles for recognition due to exclusion and discrimination reflect the complexity of local identity politics, and the way in which the procedures of building the Jewish identity in Israel are rooted in ceaseless struggles. First, I will trace Beta Israel's struggle for acceptance in Israel, and then I will describe the struggles of the Reform Movement. Though different, each struggle sheds light on the power of Orthodoxy in Israel as the hegemonic authority.

The story of the acclimatization of Ethiopian Jewry in Israel is a story of absorption that was characterized by institutional failures and a policy that is still tainted by discrimination and racism. Their Jewishness was questioned for fear of intermarriage, and the community leaders were not considered to be members with authority (Antebi-Yemini 2010; Seeman 2016). In Rachel Sharaby and Aviva Kaplan's book, *Like Dolls in a Shop Window* (Sharaby and Kaplan 2014), they state that the bureaucratic damage to the status of Beta Israel's leaders harmed the community's social hierarchy as well, leading to communal and domestic unbalance.

The reality of post-modern Western Israel contradicts the patriarchal and organizational values of the Ethiopian leaders and created among them a feeling of foreignness. Ethiopian Jews were not perceived by the Israeli public as having a distinct and regulated religion. They were seen as a kind of lost tribe that preserved an ancient tradition. Unlike the rest of the Jewish diaspora that encountered foreign influences and was prone to expulsion and wandering, Beta Israel was not exposed to foreign influences, and this allowed them to preserve their heritage in its ancient form (Salamon 2014).

Ben-Eliezer (2008) examines the second generation of Israeli Ethiopian Jews, and by presenting the newly formed hybrid identity that Ethiopian youth have developed to liberate themselves from a discriminating reality, his research uncovers certain mechanisms and methods of action through which a multicultural society augments cultural racism. In a study conducted by Abu et al. (2017) on perceptions of the police force among Ethiopian Jews in Israel, they find that Ethiopian Israelis report negative perceptions of the police that are rooted in strong feelings of stigmatization by these government agents.

Guetzkow and Fast (2016) argue that exclusion based on boundaries of nationality engenders different ways of interpreting and responding to stigmatizing and discriminatory behavior, compared with exclusion based on racial and ethnic boundaries. Ethiopians face stigmatization on a daily basis as part of their position as a recently immigrated group from a developing country, and react accordingly with attempts to prove their worth as individuals and ultimately assimilate.

In the context of the perception of Ethiopians as a different race, the color of skin is still a criterion in the social positioning of the individual in Israel, both on their formal

socio-political level as a citizen, and on the informal level in the wider cultural context as a person (Ben-David and Ben-Ari 1997, p. 525). Skin color plays a role in establishing feelings of foreignness and belonging also in the ethno-national space, which avoids defining the Jewish people as a race. It appears that blackness is still a relevant and 'difficult to digest' category, due to the perception of Jews being Caucasian. Hence, racist reactions towards Ethiopian Jews reveal the Zionist-Israeli narrative immersed in European, secular colonialist ideas that rejected any other cultural manifestation.

According to Ben-Eliezer, the hidden cultural racism applied to Ethiopian women places the emphasis on 'cultural' differences and not on 'racial' differences, and in the process denies being racist (Ben-Eliezer 2008, p. 134). Beta Israel's struggle reflects the extent of the distinction between the main ethnic categories in the Jewish public, which is perceived as 'one race'. Identity politics of various groups is perceived as a means to achieving recognition, acceptance, respect, and even public affirmation of differences.

Following the immigration of Ethiopians to Israel, questions of race can no longer be ignored in Israeli society, but the main ethnic division among the Jewish public is between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, who are seen, for the most part, as members of one race. However, some researchers claim that the use of the term 'ethnicity' regarding Mizrahim and Ashkenazim is the contemporary way to mask racism towards Mizrahim in Israel (Shenhav and Yonah 2008).

In addition to the Ethiopian struggle for recognition, the Reform Jewish community in Israel also yearns for social and legal legitimacy. The subject has garnered more attention in recent years, but meaningful findings are still scarce, even more so regarding the Israeli Reform Movement. The lack of significant academic research reflects the movement's exclusion from the public domain and from the political arena.[1]

Tabory (2004) claims that sociology and not theology was the primary influence on the Reform Movement's development in North America. The American principle of separation of church and state, in the context of the development of social protest movements that advocated for freedom of and from religion, contributed to the Reform Movement's establishment. Tabory also notes Reform Judaism's adoption and preservation of the American community's model of a religious movement; that is, a community that not only provides a place for conducting prayer, but also offers a multi-purpose arena for a broad range of educational and cultural activities.

According to Tabory, Israel could serve as a testing ground for Reform Judaism as a religious movement as Israelis are not subject to social pressures or any inner compulsion to join a congregation for the sake of Jewish identity (ibid). Other studies attempt to explain the movement's non-acceptance in the Jewish state (Cohen and Susser 2010), point to its inherently American nature (Zaban 2016), propose a local organizational model to explain its activities (Libel-Hass and Ferziger 2022), and examine a statistical cross-section of the community's members in Israel, presenting a demographic analysis (Feferman 2018; Orbach 2017).

Analyses of the Israeli Reform Movement are often made using tools developed in studies conducted about the American Reform Movement and adopt conclusions drawn from earlier studies conducted in North America. I do not agree with this forced conflation, although it certainly is important to acknowledge the American roots of the Israeli movement and its reciprocal relations with its parent community.

Through this study, I seek to shed light on the dynamic negotiations between the Reform Movement and the Israeli public. I identify three central processes that characterize how the movement is finding a place for itself in Israel: a grassroots approach to developing and cultivating congregations along with encouraging their growth; composing liturgy appropriate for the Israeli population; and forging connections with groups suffering from exclusion and discrimination (Ben-Lulu forthcoming in 2023). In my own previous ethnographic studies (Ben-Lulu 2020, 2021a, 2022b), which were devoted to the study of Reform practices, the focus was on a specific ritual analysis in a particular community.

Various reasons have been proposed to explain the movement's exclusion in Israel, the main contention being that it is a movement that rejects *halacha* (Jewish law) as a binding source of authority. Perhaps because of this growing pluralistic religious activism, Israeli Reform communities face continuous expressions of exclusion: they do not receive government funding, some of them are not eligible for permanent buildings, and at times they are not allowed to hold activities in public areas (Ben-Lulu 2021b). Israeli Reform rabbis (male and female) suffer from delegitimization and from the fact that the law does not give them any official status. There have even been some reports of violent incidents. In January of 2019, vandals broke into the *Natan Ya* Reform congregation in the city of Netanya and destroyed equipment. In November of 2016, hate graffiti was sprayed on the walls of the Ra'anana Reform congregation's synagogue.

Despite these discriminatory experiences, which indeed demonstrate the inequality and exclusion that Reform communities in Israel suffer from, I would like to claim that its members challenge the category of "minority". It should be noted that most members did not grow up in Reform families, and have a "Reform Jewish habitus" (Feferman 2018). Most of them are secular Israelis, but even in their secularism they place and recognize the Halacha as an exclusive source of authority, as part of the overall blindness of secular Judaism in Israel and the way in which it was understood as a counter reaction to the Halacha, instead of a liberal dialogue with it (Don-Yehiya 1987; Ram 2008). This fact highlights secular Israelis' dependence on the State for the maintenance and preservation of their Jewish identity (Yadgar 2011). This explains why only few members do define their Jewish identity as "Reform" at all, and even for the Reform movement itself, the identity definition is less important than a community affiliation. Hence, it is not a "minority" in the familiar empiric sociological sense, such as, for example, the numerical minority of Ethiopians in Israeli society. Rather, it is a matter of minority consciousness and community affiliation.

3. Field Description and Methods

This study is based on fieldwork conducted in the Yuval Congregation between 2014–2017, as part of multi-site ethnographic research. The Yuval Congregation was established in 2009 and is located in the town of Gedera, in the central district of Israel. This congregation consists of 40 official members, most of whom are young parents and native Israelis who did not grow up in religious families. In addition to religious rites, this congregation supplies diverse family activities, such as outdoor trips, study classes, youth movements, and special workshops for boys and girls and their parents to prepare for Bar and Bat Mitzvah rituals (Ben-Lulu 2021a, 2021b). This congregation was led by a female leader, Rabbi Mira Hovav.

Since its establishment, the Yuval Congregation has been dealing with local municipality restrictions. None of the Reform congregations in Israel are recognized as official religious groups in the public sphere, and in the case of the Yuval Congregation, most of their rituals are not conducted in a permanent prayer house that hosts community activities. The members of the Yuval Congregation rent a room in one of the local elementary schools, instead of praying in a traditionally appropriate synagogue as is afforded to Orthodox communities. Consequently, some of the rituals, such as the researched discussed events, are performed in different public places or sometimes even take place in the congregants' private homes. The Yuval Congregation's particular local conflict for municipal recognition is a quintessential example of the Israeli Reform Movement's struggle. Indeed, it is possible to identify (especially in the last decade) attempts at municipal support and various organizations as they provide a more encouraging picture when it comes to the change in the socio-political positioning of the Reform communities in Israel, but at the institutional level—from top to bottom—discrimination has still maintained, and the government official policy prevents the development of the Reform communities.

The primary method of data collection in this study was the classic anthropological method of participant observation. I considered this method most efficient for analyzing

the practices being examined as they are conducted in ritual space and time. I observed two Sigd events and two Day of Remembrance events, and also conducted 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews during the second and third years of the study. During the participation, I fluidly observed and participated; I examined how the ceremony was conducted, the dynamics between the rabbi and the members, and the participants' cooperation. Sometimes, once the events were over, I asked the congregants questions about the ceremony, their feelings, and first immediate impressions.

The ethnographic descriptions also contain informal conversations. During the interviews, I particularly tried to extract the meaning attributed to the Reform congregation and practices while focusing on their gender, national, and cultural contexts, and explaining the interactions and dynamics between the members of the congregation and the rabbi. Their varied references helped me analyze the tension between what the individuals say they do on the one hand, and what they actually do on the other hand. Some of the interviews took place in the homes of the community members, and quite a few of the interviews were conducted by phone and on other virtual/remote platforms, per request. I also conducted small talks with the Ethiopian participants who took part in these performances, and included several quotes that contributed to my attempt to expose Yuval congregants' motivations and perceptions.

4. Celebrating Multiculturalism: Fighting against Racism and Exclusion

The Sigd is a pilgrimage holiday that Ethiopian Jews celebrate every year on the 29th of Heshvan, fifty days after Yom Kippur, to restore the status of Mount Sinai and symbolize the renewal of the covenant between the people of Israel and God. The Qesim (religious leaders of the community) read from the 'Orit' (the *Torah* as Ethiopian Jews call it) and offer blessings and prayers for redemption and the return to Zion (Sharaby 2020).

Even today, after immigrating to Israel, the holiday is celebrated. However, it has a different religious and social meaning. Every year, dozens of community members travel to Jerusalem and gather at the Western Wall to mark the traditional ritual. Colorful cloth umbrellas, which are carried out by the community priests, protrude above the heads of fasting men and women dressed in black and white, praying, bowing, and spreading their hands to the sky. Some practice ritual bathing and purification on the day, and while breaking their fast, they make sure to eat traditional foods.

Unlike the clear decline recorded in the performance of the traditional customs of Ethiopian Jews (Sharaby 2013), the Sigd is still celebrated, and in recent years it has even gained exposure and recognition both from the state and among the Israeli public. Following a public struggle led by the community, in July of 2008, the Knesset approved the Sigd law, recognizing it as a national holiday. The holiday, celebrated in an official state ceremony, receives public performances in community centers, in unofficial organizations, and in various educational institutions. Among these organizations is the Reform Movement in Israel; as a movement that advocates cultural pluralism and deals with the phenomena of exclusion in the ethno-national space, I argue that celebrating the Sigd allows its community members to mark their commitment to fighting inequality in Israeli society.

The Sigd in Gedera is a cultural product of the cooperation forged between the members of the Yuval Congregation and activists who belong to the local Ethiopian community. A post on the community's Facebook page to market the event reads: "The event is communal and family friendly, and suitable for anyone who wants to get to know and celebrate Ethiopian culture and tradition."

Each year the number of participants in the Sigd event differed. Fifty people attended the event on average, sometimes even more, and most of the participants were women and children. The event was open to the public, hosting stands to learn about the Ethiopian tradition, which were manned by volunteers from the community. The event was not an attempt to reconstruct or imitate a religious/ethnic, authentic, 'original' Sigd ritual, but rather a scene of multicultural performances between communities that share a common urban space. Activities that take place in the public sphere have the power to promote

overt and covert attempts of ownership of the city. These activities also promote the right to protest (Misgav 2015) with various expressions of spatial activism.

I argue that the celebration of the Sigd by the Yuval Congregation demonstrates how marginal communities work to achieve the 'right to the city', a phrase coined by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre in his book *Le Droit la Ville* (Lefebvre 1968). The right to the city stresses the need to restructure the political power relations that underlie the production of urban spaces, particularly through focusing on local initiatives. This is how Rabbi Hovav emphasizes the place of the urban space in describing the cooperation between the communities:

> "It's a fact that it doesn't happen everywhere. This happens in our neighborhood, because there is a real meeting on the street, in the supermarket, at the post office. These women (members of the Reform and Ethiopian community) meet each other almost everywhere. And the purpose of the event is to really get to know the one who lives with you, not the one on the other side of the world. It's a completely different starting point for our connection... The headlines in the newspapers are not that sympathetic towards the Ethiopian community (to put it mildly)".

Rabbi Hovav heavily promoted the idea of the Sigd celebration in the Yuval Congregation. She led the community from its establishment until the summer of 2017, after being ordained as a rabbi in 2010 in Jerusalem at the beginning of her fifth decade. She represents de facto the way the Reform Movement applies the value of gender equality not only in the arrangement of its prayers, but also in the execution of the Sigd celebration and in the leadership of the community (Ben-Lulu 2017).

In this statement, Rabbi Hovav gives the Sigd a political justification, and not just a folkloristic one. The event was an arena to get to know the Ethiopian community and was a space to break stereotypes and prejudices. Her insight is not disconnected from the reality within the city of Gedera and other places in Israel, a reality that is rooted in a history of discriminatory reception. According to an article published a decade ago under the title "The Ethiopian Ghetto of Gedera" (Valmer 2008), racist graffiti was sprayed at the entrance of the Shapira neighborhood, which is home to many Ethiopian Jews. In 2019, Ethiopian Jews protested against physical violence by police officers, racism and social discrimination. Therefore, Rabbi Hovav recognizes the power of collaboration to create a new meaning for the traditional ritual; from spiritual performance of community forgiveness, the Reform Sigd is proposed for the practice of public forgiveness between the sabra native and the new immigrant.

At the beginning of the ceremony, one of the Ethiopian female activists, who is known in her promotion and involvement in this performance, said "Our blessed cooperation is so important and so necessary ":

> "Look around you. What that is happening today here is so important. There is only one way to fight against racism and discrimination—encounter. Sigd, joint with Yuval Reform Congregation, it's a real proof that it could be happen not only here in Gedera, but in other places and platforms in Israel. It is lesson in cultural pluralism, and we are working to develop this fascinating relationship not once a year by performing our traditional customs, but throughout all the year".

The appropriation of the Ethiopian praxis additionally appears to paradoxically aid the Israeli Reform community in shedding their local diasporic 'American' label, which perpetuates the community's difficulty in being accepted by Israeli society. Eli, one of the Reform congregants, shared:

> "A friend came up to me and said, "what's the connection between the Reform community and the Sigd? You're all Americans, celebrate Thanksgiving instead!" Initially I thought 'there you go, another person who's anti-Reform and isn't familiar with the community'. But then I really did wonder why we don't celebrate Thanksgiving . . . I realized that the fact that we celebrate the Sigd is

> because we're Israelis, we're an Israeli Reform community. Before we're Reform, we're Israelis. And the Sigd is part of being Israeli—the Ethiopians and their story are part of the Israeli story. It's just like the stories of the immigrants from Yemen or Morocco. What's the difference?"

The fact that the event was organized by a Reform community, which also suffers from manifestations of social exclusion, structures the Sigd as an arena for armed criticism against instances of exclusion and discrimination. After the refusal of the Gedera local council to allow the Yuval Congregation to conduct the event in the open public sphere, the congregants decided to organize the event in a small shelter. Shani, one of the congregants involved in the Sigd event, believed that the event was an opportunity to demonstrate political solidarity, and to present a unified struggle from a place of strength, coming together from the margins:

> "The involvement in social activism is important to us, in places that the rest of society prefers to deny. One of them is the issue of integration or rapprochement with members of the Ethiopian community. The vision that it is possible to create something common that will bring together hearts and promote recognition. There must be something about having someone in your situation. It's something that both sides benefit from, not from a place of weakness, of 'oh they hit me', rather from a place of strength".

In her words, Shani makes a connection between the precarious socio-political position of the Reform community in Israel and the commitment to developing a consciousness of social justice and getting to know and support other minority groups that suffer from exclusion, such as the Ethiopian community. In her statement, "there must be something about having someone in your situation," not only does she compare the experiences of exclusion and discrimination experienced by the Ethiopian community with the Reform community, but she also sees this as justification for the empathy and cooperation that is created between the Reform and the Ethiopian communities. Indeed, this recognition is far from being a reliable reflection of social reality, but it helps her to believe in the cooperation that the event created.

Regarding Shani's statement, the attempt to compare the groups' social status may be critically interpreted as delusional, with the comparison intensifying the differences between the communities. Rabbi Hovav claims that it is incorrect to compare the experiences of otherness experienced by the Ethiopian community and the experiences of exclusion experienced by the Reform community:

> "I wouldn't call it a 'depressed brotherhood'. The degree of oppression of the two groups is not comparable at all. Rather, it is an awareness of what is happening around us and a real attempt to change the world. It is clear that the Reform Movement suffers from discrimination, but it is not comparable. Our children do not have to explain to the policeman three times every night what they are doing outside. It is true that we are cursed endlessly—'you are worse than the Christians, you want to destroy Judaism', and all the other known 'blessings' the Reform in Israel receive. But the Israeli public doesn't see me as a primitive, they don't curse me because of the color of my skin or something that can't be avoided—I can decide to leave the movement and move to some ultra-Orthodox community. But, as the prophet Amos said, "a black man cannot change the color of his skin" (Jeremiah 13:23). It's not the same experience. It is true that we as a Reform community have many challenges, but relatively speaking they are 'first world problems'".

According to Rabbi Hovav, the practice gains the meaning of a rite of correction for social injustices, racism, and the exclusion that the Ethiopian community experiences. She calls not to compare the exclusion of the Reform community with the exclusion of Beta Israel, and recognizes skin color as a key identification mark to establish the discrimination and violence that Ethiopians experience. Her statement, *"Our children do not have to explain*

to the policeman" is linked to her previous reference which gives a topical spatial reading to the examination of the cooperation between the communities that share a common public sphere.

The urban space holds great significance in establishing relationships and determining the politics of common struggles. Added to this is the gender context, as both the Yuval community and the local Beta Israel community are both led by women. Although the women of the Reform congregation are not Ethiopian, from their point of view, the justification for performing the Sigd is derived from a feminist subtext of sisterhood.

During the celebrations of the Sigd in 2018, the issue of gender equality gained a painful and topical meaning. A few weeks before the event, Angutz Wasa, a 36-year-old Ethiopian resident of Netanya, was murdered by her partner; he shot her in the head.[2] The mood of the Sigd event was shaped by political/feminist protest. Galit, one of the congregants, describes:

> "This is first and foremost a feminist moment. You look around and see mostly women. Just a week ago, an Ethiopian woman was murdered. We in the community prove otherwise—a woman has power, she is part of the heritage, she is part of the leadership of the ceremony, she is part of a community, not locked in a dark room. This year, our event, more than ever, marked the struggle of women for freedom, to live in dignity, for equal rights. Ethiopian or Reform, Israeli and non-Israeli."

Despite the solidarity and empathy emerging from her words, other reactions expressed doubt regarding the success of the politics of uniting the struggles in the spirit of white feminism, following the identification of values that are contrary to the those of the Reform community itself, such as the value of gender equality. According to Riki, this principle is necessary for the existence of the Reform community and the production of the Sigd event, while the Ethiopian community is still characterized as patriarchal, one that does not have gender equality:

> "The part about joining forces sounds nice and all, but unfortunately it can't really succeed on a deeper level. It is possible to unite in the sense that we are all struggling against the mayor, or against racism or discrimination in Israeli society. However, it's just not true to say that we act from similar motives. We do not believe in those values. For example, the whole issue of women's equality among the Ethiopians is so far from what is happening here in the Reform communities. In Israel, cases of murder of Ethiopian women by their spouses occur every other day, and this is because it is a conservative and unequal culture. Therefore, the fact that we seem to sympathize with them or promote some kind of political movement, if you can call it that, does not necessarily mean that we agree with the values that characterize this chauvinistic culture. Not everything is rosy in this collaboration".

This response reveals the recognition of the gaps between the groups and the resistance to understand instances of gender exclusion. Although the dynamics created between the members of the community and the Ethiopian women allow them to develop and voice a political gender consciousness, they do not spare criticism of the Ethiopian culture itself. The idea of implementing gender equality is not an ideology that crosses identities and spaces, but is a characterization that emphasizes a real difference in values between the communities, one that may even dismantle the intersecting political strategy.

Along with supporting the idea of feminist, ethnic and religious intersectionality, it appears that the differing communal values may make it difficult to carry out the task of social protest, and they do not necessarily solve the sad socio-political reality of either of the parties. Though the strategy to cooperate with Beta Israel may increase the political capital of the Reform congregation, it is possible that, at the moment of truth, intra-communal normative decisions will be required regarding basic values, including gender equality.

This move, i.e., the attempt to fight Reform exclusion, reveals the gap between the ideology and the moment of the meeting itself, between the utopia and living social reality.

5. Cosmology of Aliyah and Rebirth: A Key for Constructing Jewish Peoplehood

In addition to the Sigd, which is an event to mark the boundaries of belonging and the settlement of the Ethiopian community in Israel that sheds light on the essence of the categories of homeland and diaspora, the marking of the Day of Remembrance for those who perished on their way to Israel is part of the community's calendar. The narrative of *aliyah* was revealed as one that characterizes both the Ethiopian and the Reform communities and justifies the importance of organizing the retelling of the painful *aliyah* story of Ethiopian Jews.

The Reform congregants gathered together in one of the members' homes and listened to a testimony from one of the local Ethiopian activists. Afterwards, they watched a documentary that was projected in the living room, which told the painful story of the immigrants from Ethiopia. One the Ethiopian women who was one of the organizers of this event said "Sharing our painful historical effort to be here, in land of Israel, is one of the most important ways to establish our place here:

> "Part of what it means to be "Israeli" is to feel pain. National pain. Bereavement loss. Many people in Israel don't know our story at all, they think we got on a plane and just arrived. Of course, it's not like that, and that's why it's so important to make this evening, to remember, to commemorate, and especially that it happens within the framework of this Zionist religious activity who still fight to place itself".

This response affirms how emotions play a significant place in establishing a sense of national belonging, particularly in the Jewish-Israeli context that is characterized by trauma and loss (Yair 2014). In addition, it reflects the recognition in the socio-political positionality of the Reform movement in Israel, as a community that itself struggles for equality—and therefore it is even more important to voice the silenced story of Ethiopian Aliyah in this space. Furthermore, her reference expresses a recognition of the community's Israeliness, and even its declaration as "Zionist"; when among other Israeli citizens and spaces, the Reform community is still considered as an American configuration.

At the beginning of the event, Rabbi Hovav stated the importance of collective memory while emphasizing her father's personal experience as a new immigrant. She considered the narrative of the Zionist immigration on which she was brought up as a link that connects and supports the performance of the event:

> "After World War II, my father was in a camp (of illegal Jewish immigrants deported by the British Mandate) in Cyprus. And a few months after the state was established, he made *aliyah* on February 9th. Every year he celebrates with his friends from Cyprus the day of their immigration to Israel. This is my education—immigrating to Israel. It was from a very young age that I understood the importance of remembering and commemorating the *aliyah*".

In an interview, she criticizes the common Israeli point of view regarding Beta Israel's motivations for making *aliyah*:

> "The perception that the Ethiopians are poor and primitive people who lived in all kinds of places and the State of Israel came and saved them and how lucky they were to come here . . . People realize that this is not the real picture at all. It depends on where and depends on when, many of them lived an excellent life, they came here because they are Zionists, they waited for it for quite some time and when they had the opportunity they paid a heavy price, 4000 people—a number that is impossible to believe".

Similar to Rabbi Hovav, Shimi, one of the dominant congregants, connects between his family's personal traumatic narrative of the Holocaust and the tragedy of the Ethiopian community. He contributed to the national effort of absorbing new immigrants through

informal volunteering. Part of his desire to absorb Ethiopian immigrants was also an opportunity for him to deepen his connection to his Israeliness and his own family's *aliyah* narrative, even though they emigrated from a different country of origin and culture:

> "My father immigrated from Poland—I don't remember experiencing such racism and humiliation as the Ethiopians. As an Israeli, I have responsibility for this. Every time I read articles about racism towards Ethiopians, I feel guilty. Like I'm part of it. My wife and I are volunteers, and we organized many activities for Ethiopians in Gan Yavneh, such as showing Ethiopian films".

The commemorative event is not only a marker for determining the relationship between the Ethiopian immigrants and sabras Israelis, but also for determining the Reform community as Israeli. According to Tabory (2004), the Reform communities in Israel are labeled as foreign, they are identified as American, inauthentic, a product of assimilation and confusion, and cause irreversible damage to the central foundations of Judaism. This performance challenges this identification tag since the appropriation of the Ethiopian event paradoxically helps in the separation process of the Reform community from its diasporic and American status, which plays a key part in barring the community from being accepted in Israeli society.

During the screening of a film to mark the Day of Remembrance, the comparison to the Holocaust was brought up. It seems that the goal—to justify the place of Ethiopian memory and narrative—reveals a strategy that strives for legitimacy and acceptance into the Israeli collective. The presence of discourse on the Holocaust proves and demonstrates the attempt to be accepted within the national narrative, within a consensus of Jewish memory and bereavement that is indisputable. One of the members of the community shared:

> "The sorrow is part of history. As in the Holocaust, it is to remember that you cannot separate the pain from the dream. The memory helps to understand that they did not die in vain. Maybe in two hundred years they will celebrate it, not in pain. The Ethiopian community that was absorbed (in Israel) was busy surviving here and being integrated and did not tell its story. Dig the story out of its grave".

Rami, an old community member, claims that holding the commemoration event is an important social statement to address the blindness that exists in Israeli society towards Ethiopian culture. This reflexive self-criticism demands a change on the national level in Israel's racist attitude towards the Ethiopian immigrants:

> "It is good to do this, if only so that people will understand that Ethiopians are not demons. As sabras, we do not treat Ethiopians well. The Jewish people who are supposed to be non-racist are the most racist people I know. And I say this as a Jew. Whoever has been labeled as 'different', it's very difficult for them to get rid of the label. And they have this label".

Rami's description emphasizes the power of the stigma surrounding the Ethiopian community. Link and Phelan (2001, p. 363) indicate that, for stigmatization to occur, power must be exercised. They argue that "because there are so many stigmatized circumstances and because stigmatizing processes can affect multiple domains of people's lives, stigmatization probably has a dramatic bearing on the distribution of life opportunities in such areas as earnings, housing, criminal involvement, health, and life itself" (Link and Phelan 2001, p. 363). These consequences can indeed be seen in the Ethiopian community in Israel as well, supporting Rami's statement regarding the difficulty one faces as someone who is 'different'.

At the end of the commemoration event, Shlomit concluded the evening with these words:

> "Who but us (Reform Jews) understand what it means for our history to slip away, to not be considered ... The fact that our children are not taught about the Holocaust of Ethiopian Jewry, but only about the Holocaust of European Jewry, is like not being taught about the history of Reform Judaism. Reform Judaism

is not another Jewish sect that does Bar Mitzvahs for dogs, this is Judaism with a very rich history. But in Israel, politics is everywhere! Even in bereavement, also in religion. Everywhere. Therefore, it is our responsibility, as those who have undergone Israeli socialization, to reveal another voice of history, and especially for those who still struggle to feel part of our society".

These reactions mark the Ethiopians as newcomers-old-timers, as those who still need sabras in order to integrate into Israeli society, to assimilate and break free from the shackles of racist adaptation. In their reference to the performance, the members of the community not only mark their Israeliness and their social responsibility to take in the immigrants, whether they condemn the institutional policy, or whether they use it as a justification for the observance of the ritual. Rather, they also mark Reform Judaism as an independent Israeli branch that is no longer a copied American model. The ritual that takes place in the community is a local result, a product of the country, one that reflects the spatial politics and is formed by it.

The liturgical choice to include a new version of *Yizkor*[3], the official prayer of commemoration, in a segment addressing the Ethiopian Day of Remembrance in the new Israeli Reform *siddur* (Jewish book of prayer), turns the *siddur* into a political-cultural tool that expands the boundaries of reference of Reform Judaism in Israel. This is how Rabbi Dalia Marks, one of the editors of the arrangement, describes this pioneer decision:

> "Our idea is that our *siddur* opens a door to all parts of Israeli society. It was clear to us that the holiday of the Sigd is part of the Israeli year cycle, just like the national days, or other ethnic festivals. The same goes for the Day of Remembrance of the Beta Israel community. In the matter of Jerusalem Day, adding the memory of the community's dead places it in the broad context of the Jewish community, which is exactly what we came to do here . . . The choice of quoting from the traditional prayer is to emphasize the fact that even if it is a memory of a disaster from modern times, it must be seen in the broad context of the disasters of our sons and daughters throughout the generations" (See Figure 1).

תפילת יזכור לזכר הנספים בדרך מאתיופיה לישראל

יזכור אלהים את אלפי בניו ובנותיו, אחינו ואחיותינו, יהודי קהלת ביתא ישראל, אשר חרפו נפשם במסע מאתיופיה לארץ ישראל ונספו ברעב ובצמא, בחם המדבר ובצנת הלילה, ואת אלו אשר נהרגו ונרצחו במסעם על ידי בני עולה, מבקשי רעתם ונפשם. ציון במר תבכה וירושלים תתן קולה. לבי לבי על חלליהם מעי מעי על הרוגיהם.

יזכור עם ישראל את גבורתם, ויתברך בזרעם ובמורשתם, ויאבל על קדשת הרצון ומסירות הנפש אשר אבדו במסע אל ארץ ציון וירושלים.

יהיו קדושי קהלת ביתא ישראל חתומים בלב ישראל לדור ודור. ונאמר: אמן.

הרב גלעד קריב

Figure 1. This particular version of Yizkor was composed by Rabbi Gilad Kariv, who served as a CEO of the Israeli Reform Movement.

The liturgy is mobilized for political purpose, and by using the language and the familiar prayer pattern to mark national traumas, the Day of Remembrance is legitimized and recognized also in the textual sense and not only in the ceremonial sense. Expanding the boundaries of the traditional text is expanding the boundaries of society and promoting the concept of *aliyah* as an ongoing project. Immigrating to Israel is only the first step; integrating into Israeli society is the true challenge.

6. Discussion

In this discussion, I demonstrated how marking Ethiopian events in a Reform congregation produces among the congregants feelings of empathy and solidarity with Beta Israel's political struggles. Another motive for solidarity is based on the strength of the experience and memory of *aliyah*, both experienced by the congregants themselves—through their parents. The national narrative of *aliyah* not only affirms their Israeliness, which is often questioned due to their belonging to a Reform community, but also requires them to be culturally sensitive and to identify with a familiar place of foreignness and otherness.

Thus, from an ethnic ritual to express the return of Ethiopian Jews to Jerusalem and to acknowledge the existence of God, these events in the Reform congregation in Gedera became a political performance for the recognition of the other. From a sociological point of view, while the Sigd, as well as the Day of Remembrance, were still preserved as a cultural site for the establishment of intra-communal and extra communal relations, the events were also charged with a new topical interpretation. A thematic change was made in the conceptual framework of the event; the traditional historical narrative of covenant renewal is converted into a contemporary political narrative. Thus, the performance places the Reform congregation as a place in which a banner of liberal ideology—for instance, feminism—is waved. The events provided a critical stage on which the patriarchy and discriminatory institutional policies were stoned.

During the events, the Reform congregants voiced harsh criticism against institutional policies and social responses that were and are blind towards Ethiopian culture and tradition, as well as other 'others'. However, when trying to unify their struggle with the Ethiopian cause, the oppression that Ethiopian women face led to general aversion towards their culture on the part of some Reform activists, which impeded on their collaboration. Therefore, as the ethnographic descriptions show, nationality or gender are not categories that stand alone in the campaign to organize the social order, but are rooted in cultural, religious, and ethnic habitus, which qualify complicated difficulties to achieve a substantial and universal solution for inequality.

For this reason, the attempts of the Reform congregants to 'rescue' Ethiopian women, who are subject to a patriarchal system, are somewhat questionable. Despite the perception of the Reform congregation as a safe and inclusive space for all gender identities, both in Israel in general and in Gedera in particular, it still cannot dismantle Western social structures that are deeply embedded in Israeli culture. However, even if the performance of the Sigd in the Reform community does not improve the socio-political position of the Reform community or the gender order in the Ethiopian community, this initiative supports the Reform movement's struggle to prove its Israeli nature, and to challenge the Orthodox and patriarchal constructs that are accepted as normative in the public sphere.

Therefore, there is no one, single strategy to fight marginalization and to break free from exclusion. The collaboration between the Yuval Congregation and the Beta Israel community contributes to the understanding of how religious communities in the post-modern reality strive towards the dismantling of tradition as a closed system, which is built from fixed schemas and patterns. It promotes breaking tradition down into units that create new collaborations. The performance allowed the participants to not only feel a cultural-historical connection to both tradition and the past, but to also experience a real connection to day-to-day sociological experiences: wandering in the shared urban space, exposure to other cultures and personal narratives, all while examining their own place in the local social order. This understanding allowed for the establishment of differences between the communities at the moment of meeting, all while celebrating their similarities.

However, it appears from the ethnographic descriptions that most community members, and rabbi Hovav, are aware of the asymmetry that exists between them and Ethiopian Jews in Israel. This is not an attempt to compare and parallel the discriminations and the consciousness of the minority/victims, but an attempt—perhaps even one-sided—to make the voice of the "real excluded" sound. Hence, it can be concluded about hierarchies of inequality that exist in the Israeli society that they do not always intersect with all

of a person's identities or affiliations; namely, a citizen can be Jewish—white—of high socio-economic status, and still be discriminated against for his non-Orthodox Jewishness.

The events in Gedera are a platform for reflecting on the way that Israeli Reform practices grow 'from the bottom up', and not the other way around. In other words, the praxis is determined by identifying the needs and desires of the community members and placing them at the center of the religious system. This trend is consistent with the way contemporary religious communities manage mutual relations between themselves and their members, and between themselves and other groups that share a common space with them (Ammerman and Farnsley 1997). Therefore, this micro case may illuminate other dynamics and cooperations between religious and ethnic groups, and contemporary social reality.

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Notes

1. This is not surprising given the Orthodox point of view, which Israeli researchers, even those who do not consider themselves bound by *halacha*, adopt—whether consciously or subconsciously. Existing research, whether it reaffirms the accepted religious–secular dichotomy or (seemingly) rejects it, examines the extent of religiosity according to observance of mitzvot, beliefs, and feelings of belonging to the Jewish people and to the Land of Israel. Therefore, these researchers, even if unintentionally, play a role in perpetuating the binary division between the secular and the religious in Israeli society. Few parts in this ethnography were published in Ben-Lulu (2019).
2. According to Edelstein, the risk factors for committing murder are higher in the Ethiopian community for reasons related to the process of social/cultural change that the women went through with the encouragement of Israeli society. The men did not start it or are only at its beginning (Edelstein 2018). For more reading about domestic violence in Ethiopian families, please see Kacen (2006).
3. This particular version was composed by Rabbi Gilad Kariv, who served as a CEO of the Israeli Reform Movement.

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Article

Transnationalism and Hybridity in Religious Practices during the Migration Process: The Zera Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel

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Abstract: This article examines the complexity of religious practices and beliefs among a group of Zera Beta Israel (Falash Mura) members before, during, and a decade after their immigration process to Israel. This community, with roots in Judaism, converted to Christianity in the 19th century, complicating their request to immigrate to Israel along with Beta Israel members (Ethiopian Jews who had not converted to Christianity). Following an average 15-year wait in Ethiopian transit camps, they spent about two years in Israeli absorption centres and underwent conversion to rabbinic Judaism. This study aims to elucidate notions of religious, cultural, and oppositional transnationalism through life experiences described by Zera Beta Israel community members. Drawing on transnational theory and an interpretative qualitative approach, it develops and analyses 25 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and conversations conducted with members of the Zera Beta Israel community in Ethiopia and Israel. The findings challenge conventional binary perceptions and conceptual categories, such as Jewish–Christian or religious–secular and demonstrate the fluidity and complexity—the hybridity—that exists in the contexts of religion and immigration.

Keywords: immigration; transnationalism; religious practices; hybridity; Israel; Ethiopia

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1. Introduction

Studies of Ethiopian Jewry have extensively examined the issue of Beta Israel's (BI)[1] eligibility as Jews focusing on the degree to which they conform with modern the definitions of rabbinic Judaism. Similar to the institutional view in Israel, these studies focus on the whether the immigrants[2] from Ethiopia suit the predominant religious practices in Israel (Shalom 2019, 2022).

With insights gleaned from field work in Ethiopia and Israel, this article offers an alternative perspective. Capturing the experiences of a subcommunity of Ethiopian Jews prior to their immigration to Israel, it challenges the binary nature of current research as well as institutional views around immigration to Israel. Drawing on literature exploring religious and cultural transnationalism, it examines the ways in which religious practices and perceptions are shaped by the immigration process itself, revealing the existence of transnational religious and cultural spaces that express hybridity.

As described in detail below, the Zera Beta Israel (ZBI, also called Falash Mura[3]) converted to Christianity in the 19th century and later returned to Judaism. The considerations surrounding their immigration to Israel—a binary decision as to whether they are considered to be halachically Jewish—have been influenced by ways in which their historic identity, transition between religions, continent of origin, and the colour of their skin have influenced how the institutions of the state and broader Israeli society, both perennially marked by political manoeuvring, have challenged their religious identity (Cohen 2011; Sabar 2017; Seeman 2009; Talmi-Cohn 2020). The state's and broader Israeli society's doubts about the ZBI's Jewishness strengthen these binary categorizations.

This article draws on a body of literature on transnationalism and religion that views religious conversion and migration as processes that take place within larger economic, political, and sociological contexts, and that touch on personal beliefs, community belonging, and religious practices. Referring to the concept of transnationalism in this examination of the experiences and views members of the ZBI shared in 25 interviews and conversations enables us to consider the possibility that physical movement in the transition between physical stations and countries over time affects cultural, religious, community, and personality spaces. As the interviews also demonstrate, the transnational process is ongoing and dynamic, resulting in both a hybridity that is a product of slow maturation as immigrants respond to the different spaces in ways that create combinations—of old and new, past and present—that allow them to survive and achieve a sense of belonging. In this study, such hybridity is juxtaposed with mainstream Israeli binary views as revealed in analyses of government ministry meeting protocols and media sources. It is important to note that the very nature of this study—focusing on individual immigrant's reflections—itself reflects a significant shift from the communal focus of the original BI community prior to emigration. This shift is a likely result not only of the characteristics of the migration process, but also the legal questions about rights the community encountered in Israel.

The first goal of this paper is to describe and analyse the tension between the state's binary definitions and structured categories of religion compared to the daily reality experienced during immigration as reflected in transnationalism. The second aim is to offer new insights into the immigration process. Together, these should help demonstrate the importance of hybridity as a concept for understanding the ability of human beings to create diverse practices that combine cultural and religious practices.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Study of Religions

Like many academic disciplines, religious studies arose in nineteenth-century Europe and America as a result of encounters with "non-Western others" during centuries of colonial expansion (King 2013; Martin and Wiebe 2012). The discipline has reflected a wide range of approaches and research agendas (Berg and Katja 2016; Hinnells 2005; Orsi 2011). Therefore, it is vital to establish our context within the discipline of religious studies. This study acknowledges that various claims made by any religion serve as important reference points among religious actors in their social practices and imaginative horizons. It also recognizes that such claims and the religious realities they create generate actual experiences and become social realities with consequences for all those involved—believers as well as those who remain undecided or actively deny any religion. This research is not intended to determine who is or is not a Jew, or what is true or false; rather, the goal is to understand the practices of religion during the migration process through these social realities.

In recent decades, the scholarly notion that religions emerge from singular traditions embodying one distinct corpus of ideas, practices, and artefacts has slowly been replaced by an emphasis on the internal plurality and heterogeneity of religious traditions. Studies increasingly recognize that the idea of one unified and hegemonic tradition is likely to be the result of discursive struggles to establish one overriding religious narrative (Faure 2021). In the course of such struggles, contested histories are unified through a process of purging unsuitable contingencies, forms, and developments that conflicts with the desired canonization processes and religious histories. Thus, specific religious traditions are often the products of proactive social constructions that create the desired history of such traditions (Grieve and Weiss 2005).

These processes also highlight the transcultural nature and history of religion as a concept that evolved through encounters between Christian missionaries, Western scholars, colonial traders, administrators, and soldiers on the one hand, and their respective local interlocutors, trading partners, informants, and colonial subjects on the other. Religion, as understood today, is the product of these encounters and the subsequent mutual reread-

ing, appropriation, and translation of then-contemporary ideas, practices, and artefacts (Bergunder 2016; Nongbri 2013).

The co-productive role of the "colonized other" in this global process of shaping religion as a modern notion has generally been neglected. Nonetheless, colonized subjects have been active agents and never mere passive recipients, sometimes speaking up and challenging established religious categories. The studies resulting from this more complex, transcultural perspective on the evolution of religion seek to shed light on the polyvocality and discursive struggles inherent in the histories (and academic study) of religious traditions. Thus, a transcultural approach allows scholars from different disciplinary, geographic, and cultural backgrounds to engage in a dialogue in which a multiplicity of voices is heard (Berg and Katja 2016; Goh 2015). This characterization challenges both the U.S. view that immigrants' religion acts as a "bridge" and the Western European view that it is a "barrier" (Foner and Alba 2008). Instead, as Connor and Koenig (2013) argue, we should reformulate the "bridge versus barrier" metaphor by using the transnationalism perspective and the hybridism it engenders.

2.2. The Consequences of Borders: Migration and the Politics of Belonging

The logic underlying nation-states' functioning influences how religion is framed, discursively constructed, and politically controlled. The overlap between religion and nation state becomes problematic when each is studied applying the same logic. This criticism was first raised almost two decades ago by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), resulting in increased caution among scholars investigating migration or ethnic and racial relations. They warn that state-related categories may have the intention of sustaining and promoting specific policies; adopting them may make scholars accomplices in further reproducing such categories (Bakewell 2008; Dahinden 2016; Horvath et al. 2017; Korteweg 2017; Schinkel 2018).

In fact, nation states create categories whereby they justify the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion as implemented through laws, policies, and practices. As noted by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), according to nation state logic, migration is problematic because it blurs the alleged cultural and ethnic homogeneity of the people living within a given national territory, establishing categories of those who do and do not belong, as well as dichotomies such as "citizens versus foreigners" and the "imagined national community" versus "ethnic or religious others". Beyond immigration status, there are also other binaries regarding who is entitled to the state's welfare benefits—categories that make sense only in a dialectic (e.g., "migrant" exists only in relation to "non-migrant").

In Israel, decisions about religion and state are particularly fraught. While other countries permit immigration based on a variety of potential migrants' desirable characteristics, the decision about who is entitled to immigrate to Israel and to receive citizenship is determined solely by a unified concept of the Jewish religion. By uncritically accepting the state's eligibility category reflecting a notion of religion, most studies, to the extent that they even consider the ZBI to be part of Ethiopian Jewry, have addressed the conformity of these immigrants with rabbinic Judaism and have sought to clarify whether and to what extent they are Jewish. In contrast, this study explores the complex—non-binary—relationship between religion and immigration regarding religious practices during the migration process. This view comports with that of Seeman (2009), who noted that Beta Israel members who migrated to Israel did not think about religion, ethnicity, or national identity in a wholly compartmentalized way because for them, each is highly contingent upon the others in ways that render such distinctions artificial.

2.3. The Transnational and Transcultural in Migration Studies

Transnationalism as an academic term has been the subject of intense debate in recent decades (Khagram and Levitt 2008). According to Tsuda (2012), the transnationalism embedded in Glick Schiller et al.'s (1994) approach was first thought to consist of two components: the *transborder aspect* (pertaining to the economic, political, social, and cultural

connections migrants maintain with their country of origin), and the *simultaneity aspect* (focusing on the fact that migrants engage, simultaneously, in social fields embedded in two different societies).

Although scholars differ on various points—for example, whether the concept has been applied over-enthusiastically (Tsuda 2012), or whether it is important to distinguish between transnationalism initiated at the grassroots or at institutional levels (Adogame 2010)—the fundamental argument involving immigration is that transnational studies are both a lens for describing dynamics across or beyond nations or states and an optic or gaze that begins with a world without borders, empirically examines the boundaries and borders that emerge at particular historical moments, and explores their relationship to unbounded arenas and processes (Khagram and Levitt 2008).

Research has clearly shown the importance of religion in migration (Stepick 2005), and numerous studies have looked at how migration, religion, ethnicity, and identity formation interact. (Levitt 2004; Kouros and Papadakis 2018; Schreiter 2009). Research focuses mainly on such questions as how migration alters and transforms religious beliefs and practices of specific groups of migrants, how migrants shape their religious community, or how migrants negotiate their loyalties to religious communities in the countries of origin and destination.

While current research into transnational religious networks and practices explores the dynamics and implications of transnational exchanges, it largely overlooks how migrants' experiences with religion and religious diversity draw on their origins. The scholarly focus seems to be on religious–political ideas, rather than on people as agents of change.

A multi-locational approach to investigating how migration impacts religion is needed that comprehensively examines the connectedness of migrants and their religious communities that considers the role of migrants as agents of change, and that examines whether and how the contexts of their migration experiences impact religious communities, practices, ideas, and patterns of interreligious relating.

2.3.1. Transnationalism and Religious Studies

A growing subfield in transnational migration theory pertains to transnational religion (Adogame 2010; Csordas 2009; Frederiks 2015; Sharaby 2022). Publications use the transnational lens as their main theoretical approach to issues of human mobility and religious practices across borders, even if the specific theoretical or practical difference between the transnational and the migration approaches is not always clear. While broad in scope, these studies seek new approaches to describe the multiple ways in which religion manifests itself through practices influenced and inspired by multiple localities.

Martha Frederiks presents various "transnational religious practices" (Frederiks 2015; see also Levitt 2004) to describe how members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in London interact with church headquarters in Nigeria. Afe Adogame uses the term "transnational migration" to describe the "complex, pendular and multidirectional movement" (Adogame 2010, p. 56) of migrants, underscoring how their migratory narratives demonstrate that their journey from Africa to Europe involves much more than a change of place. Two important works explicitly addressing the theoretical relationship between migration and religion are Tom Tweed's *Crossing and Dwelling* (Tweed 2009) and Thomas J. Csordas's edited volume, *Transnational Transcendence* (Csordas 2009). Tweed underscores the close relationship between spiritual, temporal, and spatial trajectories in the everyday lives of Cuban Catholics in Miami. Csordas' collection of articles proposes a variety of important approaches. Each expands our view of migration as a hybrid process on multiple levels.

2.3.2. Transculturalism and Religious Studies

Study of religions has been characterized by an "integrated approach," wherein the subject matter, research material, and epistemological framework determine the methods and approaches appropriate for answering the questions raised. The transcultural approach suggests a different perspective (Berg 2016). Klaus Hock (2008, 2011) applies the term

"transcultural" to describe the religious aspect of the migratory trajectory and discards the view of both culture and religion as static entities. Instead, cultures are hybrid formations in which meaning and interpretation are established in the context of and through complex processes of interaction. He further asserts that religion is a "discursive field" and not a "unit" under a cultural umbrella; therefore, it should be treated as a transcultural category. He adds that religion in migratory settings should be studied as processes of translation, adaption, redefinition, and appropriation created in the space where people from different cultural and religious backgrounds meet.

Ekué (2009) and Ramakrishnan and Viramontes (2006) support Hock's claim and terminology but apply the transcultural term to focus on the cross-cultural sensitivity skills that many migrants develop. Ekué argues that migration is a "transnational phase in which people experience both vulnerability and strength" (Ekué 2009, p. 394). Both argue that migrant religious communities can be "safe spaces" where social or cultural capital can be developed and in which transcultural relations consequently develop with religion at the core of cultural negotiations.

In the process of immigration, the connection between religion and culture strengthens. The shared transitions from place to place throughout the migration process both challenge and reinforce each other, making it necessary to see them as intertwined concepts.

2.3.3. Reactive Transnationalism

Another growing sub-area within the transnational literature examines the effect of negative experiences in one context on the strength of transnational ties. Research finds that some transmigrants who experienced individual and institutional discrimination *increased* their transnational activity (Glick Schiller et al. 1994; Smith 2006). This has been defined as "reactive transnationalism" (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2002), referring to increased transnational activity and identification with the homeland among migrants and their descendants due to negative experiences (such as discrimination and low status) in the receiving country. Reactive transnationalism is rooted in Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) notion of "reactive ethnicity". Building on their work, scholars have recently studied the phenomenon of "reactive religiosity", which focuses on the reactions generated by religious differences (Torrekens et al. 2022; Voas and Fenella 2012). "'Reactive transnationalism' and attachment to the ethnic group is not merely 'maintained'; it is strategically mobilized in inter-group relations with the majority society in order to protect minority group interests or values that are denied or rejected by the powerful majority" (Maliepaard et al. 2015, p. 2637).

2.3.4. Hybridity and Religion

According to Homi Bhabha, "hybridity" emerged as a concept in the 1980s as part of post-colonial studies, recognizing the multiplicity of influences on identity formation among colonial "subjects". Whereas transnationalism describes the broader cultural, national, religious, or political forces in which those who live in multiple physical and cultural space live, hybridity describes the variety of ways in which such individuals and communities respond to and manage transnationalism.

Bhabha points out that hybridity is "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (Bhabha 1985, p. 159). Hybrid identity develops, for example, as migrants cease to mimic the colonial identity. It then allows individuals to control their identity space by adopting elements of the host land's culture while maintaining significant parts of their own ethnic culture. Such an experience, while fraught with difficulty, can also present unique opportunities.

It can be argued that Bhabha's concept of hybridity aligns with hybridity in the "third space"—in which "even the same signs can be appropriated, re-historicized, translated and read anew" (Bhabha 1994, p. 37). Hybridity allows us to see beyond binaries, bringing into focus the other as something dynamic, open, and creative. Hybridity is a lens to

scrutinize the in-betweenness of binaries such as secular/religious, modern/traditional in contemporary societies.

2.4. Study Goals

The growing literature applying a transnational and transcultural lens to the study of religion allows for complex and multidirectional influences and reactions among migrants. Most importantly, it establishes the theoretical foundation for considering the religious practices and views of members of the ZBI as a form of religious hybridity. The processes experienced by migrant communities and individual migrants reflect a hybridity in activities, religious patterns, and practices that has emerged as the community shapes its own narrative across time and space, from Ethiopia to Israel. This article examines these processes by exploring the movement of ZBI community members as they navigate the binaries of Jewish/Christian categories and halachic/Beta Israel Judaism in their processes of immigration.

3. Methods

3.1. Design

Two methods guided this study. First, cross-sectional content analyses were conducted of the meeting protocols of the Immigration Absorption and Diaspora Committee and the Knesset's Interior Ministry Committee (1991–2022), and of articles in leading newspapers (2010–2022) to examine proposed policies and value-based attitudes about ZBI immigrants. The protocols included pre-decision preliminary discussions and the views and underlying assumptions of various state actors. They also revealed the extent to which decisions regarding ZBI immigration were implemented. Media sources were analysed for reflections of mainstream views towards the ZBI.

Second, ethnographic field work involving 15 personal interviews and conversations carried out in Gondar, Ethiopia (2005–2012) and 10 in Israel (2022) with migrants who arrived in Israel after 2005. All the interviewees were between 25 and 40 years of age and defined themselves as Jews. Of the 15 members of the ZBI interviewed in Ethiopia, six were married and three were women. All were waiting to immigrate to Israel. Of the 10 interviews conducted in Israel, eight participants were men and two were women who immigrated to Israel after 2005, when they were age 12 or older. All had lived in transit camps in Addis Ababa or Gondar and had been in Israel for 10 to 15 years. Three interviewees in Israel had also been interviewed in Gondar. Each interview lasted 1–2 h and was held in the interviewee's home or in public spaces.

There are two major studies that deal with migration and religion (Seeman 2009; Sabar 2017) and refer to members of the Zera Beta Israel community who immigrated to Israel. Unlike the present study, however, these focus on ZBI immigrants who continued to practice their Christian identity once in Israel, exploring the shaping of Christian religious practices and existence of Christian religious spaces in a Jewish state. This article continues the discourse on designing unique activity spaces following the immigration process but puts its emphasis on those who chose to return to Judaism.

Relying on the grounded theory qualitative approach (Glaser 2001), questions were not predetermined, but identified main issues. Ethnographic interview guidelines (Spradley 2016) were constructed based on participant-specific timelines listing aspects of that person's everyday life. In Israel, the participants responded to semi-structured questions about immigration, religious practices and conceptions, and the connection between Ethiopia and Israel. Interviewees were told that their identity would be protected throughout the research, that there were no wrong answers, and that they could skip questions. The interviewees provided verbal consent and were explicitly not asked for their signatures given their pending immigration status.

Interviews were conducted in Amharic or Hebrew, with an interpreter's help if needed, and were recorded and transcribed. Patterns, themes, and categories were identified using narrative analysis (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011; Riessman 2008).

In addition, there were formal and informal conversations about religion and Judaism based on many years of acquaintance with people at the community, making it possible to hear their informal voices as well. It is important to note that in all conversations, those being interviewed knew about this research project.

The qualitative interpretive approach views the subjects' reality as a whole rather than in isolated segments. The interviews and data are not intended to be statistically representative, nor to have the "saturation" effect of individual interviews (O'Reilly and Parker 2013). The aim is rather to uncover collective dynamics of construction and sharing of meaning.

3.2. The Zera Beta Israel

Ethiopian Jews preserved their religious identity for many generations in isolation from the rest of the Jewish world (Corinaldi 2001; Waldman 1995). The community comprises two main groups: Beta Israel and Zera Beta Israel. The Beta Israel community are Jews who maintained their Jewishness throughout their lives. The first immigrants arrived in Israel in the 1950s; most of the rest arrived in two large-scale operations: Operation Moses (1984–1985) and Operation Solomon (1991). The community adhered to a religious Jewish lifestyle based on the "halachic" tradition of Ethiopian Jews[4] (Shalom 2016).

The ZBI is defined by Israel's High Court of Appeals as "being of ethnic Jewish origin (Beta Israel) who converted to Christianity because of specific circumstances of time, place and environment. At the same time, they preserved their uniqueness, partly because of distinctions and aversions of their non-Jewish neighbours. Now they seek to return to their Judaism and to immigrate to Israel" (Israel Supreme Court of Appeals 3317/93). Their conversion to Christianity is attributed to man-made and natural disasters at the end of the 19th century. Known as *kapo-ken*—the bad time—the community experienced years of drought, hunger, and plagues. Many villages were destroyed in the war that broke out between the Ethiopians and Muslim Dervish invaders from Sudan. Furthermore, during the period of the Kaiser Yohannes, conversion to Christianity was made obligatory, aided by European Christian missionaries. These forces led some Beta Israel to convert to Christianity mainly as a means of survival (Corinaldi 2001; Waldman 1995).

Today, members of the Zera Beta Israel contend that the non-Jewish lifestyle adopted by their forebears was the result of their being offspring of *anusim*—converts whose parents or grandparents had been coerced into conversion. They further argue that their separation from Ethiopian Judaism was never absolute; rather, the ZBI retained their original social frameworks and maintained ties with Beta Israel families.

This view is confirmed by a variety of research (e.g., Cohen 2011; Salamon 1993; Seeman 2009; Shabtai 2006; Talmi-Cohn 2018) showing that while ZBI left the Jewish religion, their conversion to Christianity was far from complete, suspending them and their descendants between Ethiopian Jews and Christians—not fully assimilated or accepted by either group. Their arrival in Israel began around 1993 and continues sporadically today.

In summary, about 150 years ago, members of the ZBI community began converting and living in villages as Ethiopian Christians (even if the locals continued to identify them as Beta Israel). Around 1991, they began arriving at transit camps where they started a process of returning to Judaism before departing to immigrant absorption centres in Israel. There they underwent a conversion process before permanently residing in Israel. It is important to note that their conversion was not based on Beta Israel's written scriptures (the "Orit"), but on the conversion requirements emerging from state-sanctioned rabbinic Judaism's interpretation of *halacha* (Jewish law)—revealing the power of the state to define who is "in" or "out".

4. Results

Analyses of interview data and the print record reveal themes challenging binary and homogenous concepts of religion and showing that the relationship between migration and religion is better understood as transnational expression reflecting hybridity.

4.1. State and Public Attitudes: Binary Views on ZBI

Analysis of government decisions and discussions of the Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora and the Ministry of Interior and Environmental Protection committees (1991–2021), together with analysis of texts from the media clearly delineate their definition of ZBI in terms of Christianity and Judaism, and in terms of who belonged and who did not.

In each case, state and media discussions about the transit camps, entry to Israel, or conversion to Judaism all emphasized the equivocal status of ZBI—politically, religiously, and bureaucratically—and expressed ambivalence about the Jewishness that entitles an immigrant to Israeli citizenship. Whether they agreed that the ZBI did or did not qualify as Jews, they nevertheless framed their views in binary terms—they are either Christians or Jews. These attitudes have meant that ZBI immigrants must justify their Jewishness throughout the immigration process.

Doubts about their Jewishness have accompanied the ZBI since at least the Rubinstein Committee (1991) and in relatively recent media headlines (e.g., "The Falashmura are not Jews. Don't bring them to Israel" (2016),[5] and in a suit submitted to the Israel Supreme Court of in February 2022[6] contending that those waiting in the transit camps are "foreign nationals and not Jews from Ethiopia". These emphasize how the religion is the key to receiving Israeli citizenship.

4.2. Religious Practices as a Resource for Coping with Migration

During the lengthy process from transit camps to acceptance as Jews in Israel, ZBI immigrants experienced both formal and informal religious transitions. In the transit camps, they began a largely informal process of the return to Judaism. Once in Israeli absorption centres, they began a formal conversion process.

As interview findings demonstrate, religious practices serve as a resource for coping with migration. This may arise from the fact that the synagogue—the religious centre of the community—became a significant gathering space. Judaism and Hebrew were taught, messages were transmitted from Israeli representatives, young people met as part of a religious youth movement (Bnei Akiva), and community events were organized. This also separated those waiting to immigrate to Israel from the local population. Overall, these religious activities strengthened community members and served as a practical tool for coping with the long wait and dealing with feelings connected to waiting, belonging, and social and personal security in Ethiopia and Israel.

"I took the chain with the cross, I removed it and put on a chain with a Magen David, and a kippa [head covering]. In this way I said to myself and to everyone that I am a Jew. Afterwards I went to the synagogue and the community school and there we talked about Israel and Judaism and it make me happy . . . this what make me strong" (Falka 2005).

Tago, who waited in Gondar for nine years, told me: "When I learn Hebrew, prayers or songs of Israel with my friends, I feel good, it gives me hope, especially when people come from Israel and teach us about Judaism and Israel" (Tago 2014).

"I arrived in Israel, every morning I would go to the synagogue near the absorption center, all the Farang ["white person"] saw me and knew me. It took a long time until they allowed me to go up to the Torah and even then, not everyone was happy about it, but I knew that it was really important for me to know and to understand a lot. That's how I got to know the Farang who invited me to Friday night and holiday meals where I met all sorts of people . . . A few years later I moved into an apartment and I also wanted to go to synagogue. Their welcome was less hearty, and you know how it is . . . we were busy and I worked a lot so I decided that I know I am Jewish and [that I am] Jewish enough, so I can go to synagogue only on Shabbat and on holidays. Since then I also found a synagogue I like so I go there from time to time. I am not as religious as I once was, but I am Jewish and I observe the mitzvoth [commandments]" (Muloalem 2022).

These interviewees spoke of religious practices, including Jewish study, befriending local people, going to synagogue, wearing religious symbols, learning Hebrew and creating community. Such activities helped them with the difficult experience of waiting and then

of absorption and provided a sense of religious identity and a feeling of belonging. After many years in Israel, the interviewees relate that for them Jewish religious identity is obvious and they don't always feel the need to prove it with external practices, such as wearing a kippa, and they can continue to act as they believe.

4.3. Religion as Signifying National and Social Belonging

As analysis of meeting protocols and media sources reveal the main arguments about the ZBI's focus on separate units of different religions—Jews or Christians—each perceived as homogenous and binary. As exemplified by the words of the Interior Ministry in a Knesset discussion: "For 20 years they have been bringing in people who are not Jews, not the children of Jews and not the grandchildren of Jews. These immigrants deviate from the Law of Return and therefore they were brought in as part of a government decision".[7] It is evident that most of the discourse refers to the question of the right to immigrate, which is legally possible only for Jews, but also expressed in relation to their lifestyles in Israel.

The ease with which the ZBI could be placed in convenient, homogenous categories underlies covert and overt components of establishment and interpersonal behaviours towards them in life spaces such as schools, synagogues, and workplaces. This view is responsible for not accepting children in school or adults for a job because of doubts about their Jewishness. The ZBI must deal with these views every day, knowing that state-defined Jewishness is the key to national and social belonging:

"When I look at all this over the years, [I see] the attempt to define me and my attempts to define myself as a Jew or a Christian, as an Ethiopian or an Israeli. For many years I felt that people were looking for a justification for having brought me here. For one thing, I'm OK as a Jew and for another, it's OK that I'm in Israel. I remember that in high school, some teachers did not completely believe I was Jewish. The truth is, I myself did not always understand. I saw my mother had a cross tattoo. I wore a kippa and all the time I tried to understand. She believed truly in Judaism but the tattoo with the cross was not . . . [appropriate]. Today, I've grown up and I've studied, I know that yes, I am a Jew. But all the time they gave me a feeling that I am not completely a Jew and I was young so I believed it. You know how hard it is to be in a religious school when all of the others doubt that you're Jewish and you yourself don't know what you are and you try to be the most religious. Today I'm angry about that" (Tesfa 2022).

4.4. Religion as a Heterogeneous and Varied Unit (Within the Community)

The interviews depict the many ways that immigrants encounter diverse religious issues and practices related to different conceptions of Judaism and Christianity in their day-to-day lives. The transitions between religions along with multiple and diverse social and sometimes even family ties lead to a multiplicity of encounters and interactions that challenge the homogenous religious concept as a Jew or a Christian. The interviews show that these various expressions of religion have not undermined their self-perception as Jews but strengthened it. They understand that their legitimacy as Jews in Israel and the complexity of their lives in Israel is part of a processes requiring patience. Three expressions of transnationalism and hybridity will be described in the following subsections.

4.4.1. Myriad Religious Experiences

The immigration process of ZBI includes a transition from the historic Judaism of Ethiopian Jewry (Beta Israel) to Christianity, and then from Christianity to rabbinic/halachic Judaism. Throughout, most members maintain ongoing and complex relationships with each in ways revealed in ideological conceptions, life practices, and contacts with friends and family.

"I am Jewish, my aunt married a Christian but when he immigrated to Israel, he underwent a conversion and he really keeps Jewish law and Judaism. You know, for example, on Shabbat and holidays he says the blessings and talks about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . . " (Dasta 2022).

"We established a synagogue of new immigrants, well, not really new, but with our group. We follow Halacha according to the rabbinate in Israel, but we also keep things connected to Ethiopia, for example in blessings for adults, in food that we bring for the Groom's Shabbat that are both Farang and Injera. We are always trying to fit in. I know it's not like the Beta Israel synagogue but more like the Farang. We have an Ethiopian rabbi, but he follows the Halacha, not the Kes (a rabbi of Beta Israel)" (Yosef 2022).

"My parents and I go to the Farang synagogue. It's close to our house and they welcomed us very nicely. Father and mother go every Friday, Shabbat and holidays and I go from time to time ... It doesn't matter to them that they don't speak Amharic there, they are happy to be there. Slowly, another few who my parents know joined, but the majority are Farang" (David 2022).

"I know that in Israel few people go to church. [Some of] my wife's family go but I know who I am and who my family is. I cannot decide about others, only about me and my children ... of course I speak with them and everything but I don't do holidays that aren't mine with them and sometimes I argue with them. I tell them why did you come to Israel, why are you doing those things. But at the end you have to remember that we are all people, we are all family. If we are tolerant and if we give our children and their children a good education, a strong Jewish education, everything will be good" (Reuven 2022).

4.4.2. A Variety of Religious Levels

In the villages and transit camps being religious is obvious and religious actions are reflected in all ways of life, whether overtly or covertly.[8] The encounter with the options for religious practice that exist in Israel after the migration processes mainly enabled the younger generation to choose a variety of (non-binary) religious expressions, while still expressing the view that being Jewish is critical (no interviewee questioned the existence of the religion, for example).

"In the village in Ethiopia everyone is religious. In Israel we see there are many types of Jews, secular, traditional, religious. They always expect us to be religious, to prove we are Jews, so they'll see we are religious. We immigrated to Israel, and they sent me to a religious school, they gave us difficult examinations to check our circumcision, they gave us a test that I can't forget to this day, to see if I'm Jewish. Today, when I'm an adult, I understand things differently. And that I'm from Ethiopia doesn't mean that I always have to prove how religious I am or that I'm a Jew. I know I'm a Jew and what I know and believe in my heart is what's important ... You know, in the Judaism test they asked us about blessings—blessings are words and not necessarily belief. What's important is mainly the belief in the heart and what you explain to your children. I know I'm Jewish and I believe in God. Now even if someone tells me something else, I don't care" (Mulo 2022).

"My parents are really strict about religion and are religious. My children attend a secular school because it's close to our home. I travel on Shabbat and go without a kippa, but I do observe many things; for example, I'm a member of a synagogue community, pray on Fridays, fast. I think that life today in Israel is not the same as it was in Ethiopia or that corresponds to what's written in the Torah, so I'm a Jew, a believer and observant but I decide what suits me. The main thing is to be a good person and believe not only show practices as taught us" (Desta 2022).

"Look, we have them all, those who are strongly religious, almost haredim [ultra-Orthodox] ... One who lives in Beit Shemesh, he really got deep into religion, you wouldn't believe it. And then there are those who are religious with a knitted kippa, and those without a kippa but keep the commandments, and there are those who have become secular ... The Farang also have them all ... I do think that with us we believe more strongly in God and Judaism because I haven't met anyone else who told me he doesn't believe in any God, and they always talk about God, at meetings and so on ... It's not like everyone is one way or another" (Mulo 2022).

4.4.3. Religion and Culture in the Hybrid Space after Immigration

In the Ethiopian villages, the conceptions of religion and culture tie community members closely together and are interwoven parts of daily life. In the villages and transit camps, the prevailing conception is that everyone believes in something (God, Jesus, Mohammed). As Sara said, "In the village there is no such thing as secular, you've got to believe in something" (Sara 2006). Religion and culture are together. She continues, "In this village, a cross in Ethiopia is not only a symbol of Christianity, it's a symbol of culture, of shared life" (Gondar 2009). Everyone together practices their religion.

After migration, new combinations connected to culture and religion are created, challenging the local communities in Israel and those who stay in Ethiopia.

"Sometimes people think that if you walk around in Ethiopian clothing or with Ethiopian symbols, you're not Israeli or Jewish. When I was new in Israel, I was really afraid at first that that's how they would think of me. Today I don't care. I walk the way I want. I know who I am" (Mulo 2022).

"We celebrated Rosh Hashana in the village in Ethiopia, Enkutatash; it was really happy. We danced and sang and I remember that when I was small there were lots of yellow flowers. In Israel, when we immigrated, we didn't celebrate it, because it's like it's not ours anymore; we only watched on television with my parents what happens in Ethiopia. Now, after many years in Israel, we say that maybe we'll have a joyful gathering with the family, we'll drink buna [Ethiopian coffee] and celebrate together. On Facebook I also saw that we're talking about it. For example, if I celebrate this doesn't mean I'm not Israeli or Jewish but that I respect what was in Ethiopia. That was also my culture" (Ziona, Israel 2022).

"When there are holidays in Ethiopia, for example timkat [an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian holiday], I want to watch and remember what it was. That doesn't mean I believe in it; I don't pray like there but I see Ethiopia on television in the holidays. I have friends who travelled there to see the timkat. The holiday reminds them of the culture of Ethiopia and the atmosphere, you know . . . I'm Jewish and my children are Jewish but I don't forget what was, it's part of who I am today and if I know how to accept this, I know that it will be better for my children and for me" (Mulo 2022).

"When it came to weddings in Israel, we had a lot to talk about. On the one hand, we wanted the [marriage ceremony] to be with boys and girls together, like in Ethiopia, with songs in Amharic and in Hebrew. There was a rabbi from the rabbinate who said all the blessings exactly as you're supposed to, and in general, everything was the way they told us in the rabbinate, the mikveh and all . . . But about dancing, there were arguments: boys and girls separate like the religious do in Israel or together like in our culture. I thought that if we made it mixed it doesn't mean we are not religious or Jewish. It's our culture and it's better that we should respect it so that we can be really happy" (Adana 2022).

In their reflections, these participants clearly demonstrate identities that combine the religious and cultural traditions typical of their pre-immigration communities, while also adjusting or attuning to the demands of the dominant religion and culture of Israel.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

This article draws on a body of literature on transnationalism and religion that sees religious conversion and migration as processes that take place within larger economic, political, and sociological contexts, and touch on personal beliefs, community belonging, and religious practices. Referring to the concept of transnationalism in our exploration of the experiences and views of members of the ZBI shared in 25 interviews and conversations allows us to consider the possibility that physical movement in the transition between physical stations and countries over time affects cultural, religious, community, and personality spaces.

Recent literature has proposed that the theoretical lens offered by transnationalism, and the hybridity it produces better describes the complex experience of migration. Taking place within larger, transnational, political, economic, and sociological contexts, this literature

argues that migration touches on and transforms personal beliefs as well as cultural and religious expressions. In this regard, the complex experience described by the 25 interviews with members of the Zera Beta Israel community no doubt shares characteristics with other immigrant groups around the world. However, because deep religious traditions describe both the ZBI's community of origin and that of the majority culture in the country to which they immigrated, this study provides an important opportunity to specifically explore the ways in which transnationalism and religious hybridity are expressed by ZBI immigrants to Israel as they grapple with migration. The interviews demonstrate that, despite prevailing binary and homogenous views about immigrants in general, and the ZBI in particular, their day-to-day religious and cultural expressions are heterogeneous, dynamic, and hybrid.

This dynamic is evident both before and after immigration. During the migration process, transnationalism was expressed in religious activities that combined Hebrew language learning, prayer, and synagogue focus with cultural activities from Ethiopia. As the ZBI entered Israel, however, the manifestations of religious transnationalism are reflected in the study and action of halachic Jewish practitioners and not of their community of origin (Beta Israel). After a decade of living in Israel, however, a new hybridity emerged—freer, but acceptable to the broader public and recognized among community members. For example, ZBI members describe combining halachic Jewish activities with cultural activities from Ethiopia at community events, weddings, funerals, prayers, and holiday meals, concluding that such practices are "acceptable". They describe the celebration of the holiday of Simchat Torah in the Israeli synagogue as including a meal with injera and tala. Their wedding celebrations reject the Israeli religious community's preference for a separation between men and women during dancing. Such hybrid communal practices enable shades of religious sharing that produce a sense of heterogeneous, dynamic partnership between pre- and post-immigration spaces. Importantly, the emerging, diverse hybridity is defined by the immigrants themselves, who see themselves both as a single religious unit (Jews), but also as free to choose a variety of religious behaviours.

It is noteworthy that resistance among dominant societal groups to the immigration of minority groups can engender feelings of frustration among immigrants that can lead to "reactive transnationalism" such as the abandonment of Judaism. Although documented in other studies, those interviewed here, instead, expanded the definition of Judaism in ways that made it possible to remain within Judaism and have a sense of belonging.

This study represents a new effort to view immigrants from Ethiopia not only across time and space, but as part of immigrant groups around the world who, despite the hegemony of the receiving society, exercise agency to create their own narratives. It shows how religion, and especially religious practices, can serve as central resources in the processes of immigration and absorption, enabling the bridging of different geographical and cultural spaces. It further reveals how transnationalism is demonstrated in religious hybridity as community members confronted the binary concepts of religion and culture advanced by the receiving state, as well as institutional opposition to their immigration. Rather than focusing on their suitability for integration or assimilation in Israel, those interviewed for this study make clear that the lived experiences of migrants allow for Jewish religious hybridity alongside a sense of belonging.

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Notes

1 The Beta Israel community has preserved its Judaism throughout its existence.

2 The Hebrew word for immigration is *hagira*. *Aliyah* (literally, ascension) is a word used specifically for Jewish immigration to Israel. This study uses the word immigration throughout, even referring to *aliyah*.

3 They are known as Falash Mura, but in this article I will use the name Zera Beta Israel and the initials ZBI (Talmi-Cohn 2020).

4 It is important to note that this study was not conducted on the immigration process of Beta Israel, but only on ZBI who define themselves as Jews.

5 Kelner Gil, 08.03.16 *Srogim* (Hebrew) https://bit.ly/2FPRhfz (accessed date: 15 October 2022).

6 https://www.inn.co.il/news/539942 (accessed date: 15 October 2022).

7 https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/politics/article/5943799 (accessed date: 15 October 2022).

8 In the areas where the immigrants came from in Ethiopia, religion and culture form one unit.

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Article

Black Masculinities and Jewish Identity: Ethiopian-Israeli Men in Contemporary Art

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Abstract: The identity of Jewish-Israeli men of Ethiopian descent has undergone deep-seated changes in the last decade, as evident in visual representations created by contemporary black artists living in Israel. In recent years, a new generation of Ethiopian-Israeli artists has revitalized local art and engendered deep changes in discourse and public life. Ethiopian-Israelis, who comprise less than two percent of the total Jewish population in the country, suffers multiple forms of oppression, especially due to their religious status and given that their visibility—as black Jews—stands out in a society that is predominantly white. This article draws links between events of the past decade and the images of men produced by these artists. It argues that the political awareness of Jewish-Ethiopians artists, generated by long-term social activism as well as police violence against their community, has greatly impacted their artistic production, broadened its diversity, and contributed a wealth of artworks to Israeli culture as a whole. Using intersectional analysis and drawing on theories from gender, migration and cultural studies, the article aims to produce a nuanced understanding of black Jewish masculinity in the ethno-national context of the state of Israel.

Keywords: Jewish identity; Jewish-Ethiopian art; ethnonational country; black masculinity; Israeli art

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1. Introduction

In recent years, a new generation of young Jewish Ethiopian-Israeli artists has revitalized artistic representations of black Jewish men and engendered deep-seated changes in the biased images and Israeli public discourse surrounding them. As background to understanding the ways in which Jewish Israeli men of Ethiopian descent are constructed as Others, I will begin with a short discussion of the construction of images of black men in art over the course of history, both in Israel and abroad, and analyse the ways in which these images draw on popular culture. I then proceed to analyse contemporary artworks depicting Jewish Ethiopian-Israeli men in relation to several themes, such as gender and employment; gender and sexuality; gender and religion; and gender and militarism. In doing so, I argue that the political awareness of the young generation of Ethiopian-Israeli artists, which substantially grew with their massive public protests of summer of 2015 and were later nurtured by international movements such as Black Lives Matter, has increased their artistic productivity as well as the diversity of their output, leading to important contribution to the understanding of the diversity of Jewish masculine identity.

The theoretical framework, informed by genders studies, migration studies and cultural studies, takes intersectional analysis as central lens of the discussion of Jewish black men.[1] Intersectionality is an approach that studies the intersections between multiple systems of oppressions or discriminations directed at nonhegemonic groups and individuals. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who pointed to the overlap of sexism and racism working against black women, and the ways in which it creates a dimension that has to be considered and addressed jointly. Since the work of Crenshaw, the set of categories to be considered has expanded, and includes religion, nationality, sexuality, and more (Verloo 2013). Intersectionality involves the study of the

ways that social categories are mutually shaped and interrelated through social forces and cultural configurations to produce shifting relations of oppression. However, as I argue below, intersectional analysis does not only explain exclusion and oppression but also stands to offer new insights into the positive and enabling aspects of identity and agency (Guimaraes Correa 2020). As the concept of intersectionality does not always offer a clear and fix set of tools for research (Rice et al. 2019), I organize the discussion in this article through the primary axis of gender (masculinity), and add a variety of additional social categories, by discussing different artworks by artists such as Tesfay Tegegne (class), Gidon Windmagy Agaza (religion), Almo Ishta (age), and also an example of an artwork by an anonymous artist (sexuality).

The purpose of this article and its contribution to the existing literature lies in advancing the discussion about the ways in which new and alternative representations of a racial minority in Israel—that of the Jews from Ethiopia—are constructed by the members of the community themselves; yet simultaneously, this article could help advance understandings about similar representations, of other minorities, elsewhere. Moreover, using art by community members for this purpose is a novel way to discuss and communicate the subject of race, gender, class, etc., as the members of that community do so in a first of its kind manner—the researcher interviews the artists, making space for them to explain and interpret the artworks, and then their input is incorporated into the discussion (De Bruyne and Gielen 2013). This approach advances and nuances questions of belonging and otherness under conditions of uprooting and re-grounding, especially in the context of an ethno-national state such as Israel.

2. Jews in Ethiopia and Jews from Ethiopia in Israel

Ethiopia has long and close ties with Judaism and the Jewish people. For example, before Christianity arrived in the country, about half of the residents of Aksum, in the north of the country, were Jews; many Christian Ethiopians believe that they are the offspring of the ancient Israelites (Turel 2013). The Beta Israel community regards itself as the descendants of the Jews who refused to convert to Christianity and preserved their original Jewish faith throughout the generations (Shalom 2013). They were not affected by the afflictions that visited the Jewish people after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem (586 BCE), nor were they exposed to the developments in Judaism, represented by the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, the foundational Jewish texts. Over the course of centuries, they preserved customs and traditions from the First Temple period, thus making them a unique and especially important contemporary Jewish community.

Whereas the Jewish identity of Beta Israel was never questioned in Ethiopia, the Jewish religious establishment in the state of Israel was hesitant to grant the community recognition. Only in 1973 did the Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Ovadia Yosef, declared them to be the descendants of the lost tribe of Dan, a ruling that opened the gates to their immigration to Israel, as diasporic Jews (Wagaw 1993). When the Jews in Ethiopia obtained growing awareness of the option to go to their ancient homeland, they notified Israeli delegates of their decision. Thus, between 1954 and 1984 hundreds of Ethiopian Jews arrived in the country. The two major waves of immigration, however, were Operation Moses (1984) and Operation Solomon (1991), as 8000 and 14,000 Jews, respectively, arrived in the country. Today, the Ethiopian community in Israel numbers 159,000 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2021).

The modern state of Israel, established in 1948, was declared as the land of the Jewish people and is marked by ethnic nationalism insofar as citizenship is granted only to immigrants who are members of the dominant religion, Judaism. As an integral part of the Zionist ethos, the Jewish component forms a key element in Israel's identity while creating theological, political and bureaucratic complications regarding the identity definition of some of the country's immigrants wishing to assimilate. This complex situation greatly affects Ethiopian immigrants, many of whom cannot prove their Judaism to the satisfaction of the Orthodox rabbinical authorities that maintain absolute power over matters of per-

sonal status among Israeli Jews. Therefore, members of this community face significant obstacles to satisfactory assimilation and wellbeing. Still today, the Ethiopian community in Israel, which is extremely small, comprising less than 2 percent of the country's Jewish citizens, suffers from substantial discrimination. Black African Jews are considered a rare phenomenon, as throughout (Western) history, Jews were thought to have originated from Europe, Middle East or Arab countries. Their skin color attracts high visibility within Israel's otherwise white society, and Ethiopian-Israelis are subjected to additional difficulties, such as derogatory stereotypes.

3. Representations of Masculinity beyond Israel: The Image of the African American and the Pan-African Man

Representations of Jewish Ethiopian-Israelis men have been influenced by African, European, and American societies cultures (Jefferson-James 2020). Images from the United States, which have often depicted black men in a stereotypical and oppressive way, have been especially influential. Innumerable sculptures, paintings and photographs of black men as well as black characters in movies (historically mostly played by whites in blackface) portray them with exaggerated facial features (Johnson 2012). In early popular culture of north America, these have served as objects of amusement and sometimes as marketing tools for the sale of products such as black shoe polish; however, with the social revolutions of the mid-twentieth century, such images fell out of favour. Working with other progressive movements of the time, activists in the black liberation movement did their best to undermine the social order and challenge biased racial norms.

The political and cultural changes of that era had a resonating impact on the arts as well. In 1994, the struggle for black equality in the U.S. was the subject of a groundbreaking exhibition at the Whitney Museum of New York, titled *Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art*, featuring images of black men by some thirty artists, including Robert Mapplethorpe. Some depicted events and demonstrations, some expressed political dissent, others revealed the objectification of black male bodies, or focused on gender fluidity and a nuanced, liberated view of masculinity. Through this range of artworks, Thelma Golden, the exhibition's curator, made clear that the African American struggle for social equality and freedom was evident in the art of the previous decades (Golden 1994, p. 20).

The influence of younger black artists was felt in other parts of the world, including Africa. In 2010, for example, the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art in Israel mounted an exhibition of images of black men by contemporary African artists (Njami and Zyss 2010).[2] These were exhibited alongside images of male masculinity by African artists who had immigrated to the West, and whose work embodied the experience of migration and a multi-layered, hyphenated identity, the result of uprooting and building a new life elsewhere. Many of the male figures in these works were set against the red, black, and green pan-African flag, much as Thelma Golden had grouped the works according to three themes—red, black, and green—in the Whitney exhibit. In another striking example, the British-Nigerian artist Chris Ofili devoted his entire exhibition at the 2003 Venice Biennale to works in these colours. Since then, countless artworks by black artists from around the world depict black masculinity, forming a clear and recurring theme (Mercer 2016).

4. Representations of Jewish Masculinity in Israeli Art

Representations of Jewish masculinity in Israeli art take roots in the Bezalel Academy of Arts in Jerusalem, founded in 1906. The image of the muscular Jewish pioneer man of European origin, 'handsome with the beautiful forelock', became inextricably associated with the emergence of Zionism in the 19th and 20th centuries. An early example from the 1920s is the seminal painting by Reuven Rubin, *Self-Portrait with Flower*, from 1923. Images of pioneers and brave soldiers of that period, including the photographs of Helmar Lerski, established the standard of masculinity for the worthy new Hebrew man—one based on the desirable manliness then in vogue. Nonetheless, a paradigmatic shift in the

representation of the Israeli male occurred in the mid-1960s, as presented in the sculpture by Igal Tumarkin, *He Walked through the Fields*, from 1967, presenting a wounded, vulnerable man that differs significantly from the prevailing macho image of males of pre-statehood and the early days of nascent state. This shift has deepened following the Yom Kippur War in 1973, in which, after a series of triumphant wars against surrounding Arab countries, Israel had lost territories and many lives, resulting in the weakening of the Zionist ethos and the trickling down of post-Zionist ideas into local culture. The 1980s, for example, saw the appearance of 'the new man', one unafraid to break normative gender boundaries and express gender fluidity, as evident in the photography of Boaz Tal (Dekel 2009) and the paintings of Yaacov Mishori (Tannenbaum 2008, p. 50). In the popular culture in the 1990s and 2000s, the term 'metrosexual' was added to the lexicon in Israel, also affecting the image of men in the visual arts (Refael 2006, p. 5). Today, young contemporary artists in Israel are adding yet additional dimensions to masculinity: for example, Guy Ben-Ner deals with issues of fatherhood, and Adi Ness intersects issues of gender and queerness.

5. The Perception of Jewish Masculinity in Popular Israeli Culture

No discussion of the history of art in Israel can ignore the influence of mass media. As a social field not directly dependent upon 'high' art, contemporary mass media has a much wider impact on the public than do museums and galleries, which have limited public influence. Mass media also has the power to create affinity or difference between representations of men from different social groups. For example, media images of men of Ethiopian origin can either resemble or contrast with those of Mizrahi masculinity, as opposed to other ethnicities (Yosef 2010; Dorchin and Djerrahian 2020). Mizrahi people are Jews of Asian or North-African origin, and the category "Mizrahi" refers to many, sometimes very different, ethnic groups, including Moroccan, Iranian, Yemenite, and others (Misgav 2014). Still, there are far more representations of Mizrahi than of Ethiopian men in local Israeli media.[3] Indeed, the latter suffer from 'symbolic annihilation,' a term coined to signify a mechanism that excludes certain groups by reducing their visibility in media and art, and by extension, their general social-public power. Such a process clearly betokens unequal power relations in society (Kama and First 2015, p. 89). Ethiopian-Israelis are definitely underrepresented in the media, and even when they do appear, they are generally represented in negative or stereotypical ways. As Germaw Mengistu and Eli Avraham found, four patterns of representations appear in relations to Ethiopian-Israelis in the Israeli press—the cultural ignorance narrative, the surprise narrative, the cultural contrast narrative, and the cultural revolt narrative (Mengistu and Avraham 2015, p. 567). Their quantitative and qualitative analysis varies, but most reveal biased media report. Additionally, Ethiopian-Israelis are portrayed as posing unique health risks, as a social group with high rate of criminal behavior and a high youth incarceration rate, and as a population at high risk of failure in the education system and in need of special financial support (Werzberg 2003).

Gadi Ben Ezer, who studies the visibility of Ethiopian Jews in Israel, notes that as members of a Jewish minority in Ethiopia, they believed that their sense of alienation would vanish once they moved to Israel, as they would become 'like a drop returning to the sea' (Ben Ezer 2010, p. 305). In Israel, however, their skin colour set them apart, so that in many ways the strong sense of otherness they had experienced in Ethiopia only worsened. They were now subjected to the white gaze, which generated stereotypes about them. Despite their small number—less than 2 percent of the country's total population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2021)—they became the most 'visible' immigrant group in Israel in recent years (Anteby-Yemini 2010, p. 43). Indeed, most older generations of immigrants, not from Ethiopia, have little personal interaction with Ethiopian-Israelis, thus feeding stereotypes of this community as a whole and its subsequent exclusion (some obvious, some latent and indirect) from mainstream society. Indeed, the Ethiopian Jews' desire to be inconspicuous and 'like all Israeli Jews' has not been realized, explains Ben Ezer, due to white Israeli attitudes (Ben Ezer 2010, pp. 306–7). 'In Ethiopia, Anteby-Yemini explains,

'they never viewed themselves as "blacks." Only after they arrived in Israel did they begin to describe themselves using this new category of colour ... in a certain sense, that is when they discovered their "blackness"' (Anteby-Yemini 2010, p. 48). As one such individual told her about his visit to his former country, 'What I most enjoyed in Addis Ababa was that I could again feel invisible, that I wasn't conspicuous because of my colour, no one was looking at me, like in Israel' (ibid., p. 47). Sara Ahmed terms this the 'economy of visibility' (Ahmed 2000), which is also the economy of being marked. Under that logic, the hegemonic gaze in Israel marks people of Ethiopian descent as 'blacks' in a 'white' society, thereby positioning them as the 'other' and condemning them as 'outsiders.'

In terms of perception of masculinity, the Ethiopian Jewish men who immigrated to Israel, have experienced a sharp change in their masculinity in a very short period of time. In Ethiopia, the family structure and conduct were strictly patriarchal, with women in the family having lower status than men. Moreover, the Jewish communities, scattered throughout the country, were led by religious elderly men, called Kessim, who received the highest respect form the entire community, men and women alike. However, upon arrival in Israel, the men have quickly lost their gender status and pride, as in their new country, Western values catered more to the immigrant women, who were faster to adopt to the new norms in Israel (Sharaby and Kaplan 2014, pp. 22–24). This state of affairs has unhinged and drastically undermined the gender balance and traditional gender roles within the Ethiopian family. The reversal of gender roles, as women became the main breadwinners, added tension in the family. The weakening of patriarchal leadership was taking its heavy toll, and welfare and police insensitivity to cultural diversity was especially influential on the men of the community (Kayam 2014). As discussed below, contemporary young artists relate to all those changes in the status of Jewish Ethiopian men, and offer insightful comments on their various gendered positions.

6. Creating New Representations of Jewish Men in Art

Some Contemporary artists of Ethiopian descent based in Israel find existing representations created in the country to be relevant and of potential for dialogue and mutual influence, while others feel that they are completely irrelevant to their lives, and thus set out to create a new and separate visual lexicon. In either case, what is evident is the sophisticated ability of these artists to capture and formulate the black man's experience in Israel in a broad range of media. The works discussed below capture various modes of masculinity in the context of employment, institutional violence, the military, music, sexual orientation, tradition, intergenerational respect, and other issues these artists and their communities face.

6.1. Men and Employment

Tesfaye Tegegne creates sculptures out of materials such as industrial paint, glues, polystyrene, and iron, which he integrates with banana leaves. This combination of materials raises questions about the connections between modern technology and traditional modes of work, and meticulous, labour-intensive handiwork based on years of professional practice. In his sculptures, the artist also alludes to geographic places bound up with an agrarian society and a distinctive lifestyle. For his third solo exhibition in Israel, for example, Tegegne created a large sculpture of a man returning from the hunt. The figure, crafted from polystyrene and industrial glue, sheathed in banana leaves and resting on a square iron base, appears to be walking while carrying the animal he has slain (Figure 1). The label placed next to it in the exhibition galley reads: 'This artwork was inspired by my childhood memories from Ethiopia. A group would go hunting and return with their kill to show the villagers their courage. In this sculpture, a hunter is carrying the dead prey on his way to receive a blessing from his father, as is customary in Ethiopia.'

Figure 1. Tesfaye Tegegne, *Hunter*, 2011. Mixed media.

In this sculpture, the artist shows esteem for the ancient traditions of the Beta Israel community and does not hesitate to depict the traditional gendered division of labour in Ethiopia. Tegegne's sculptures stand in bold contrast to some images of black Jewish males created by other Ethiopian-Israeli artists who feel it incumbent upon them to be 'modern' and turn their back on any memory of their community's customs. With its multi-layered meaning, the piece not only addresses memories of an Ethiopian village, but also references the contemporary problem of Ethiopian men's status after arriving in Israel (including difficulties with employment, wages, and lack of social mobility). The sculpture reminds us that there are still significant differences among men from different social backgrounds in Israel, and that men of Ethiopian descent are often forced into low-paying manual labour that offers little opportunity for upward social mobility (King et al. 2012; Israeli Civil Service 2016, p. 20).

The photographer Esti Almo-Wexler also focuses on masculinity in the Israeli job market. In a 2006 photo, she captures three young Jewish men who decided to open a restaurant together (Figure 2). An image of three successful black businessmen is a rarity in Israeli visual culture, which tends to perpetuate class-conscious and orientalist views

of Ethiopian immigrants, who are mostly depicted in context of them waiting for Aliya (immigration), their arrival in Israel, their religious festivals, or during demonstrations.

Figure 2. Esti Almo-Wexler, Untitled, 2006. Coulor photo.

In an interview, Almo-Wexler explained that some people in the art world expect her to photograph heart-wrenching images of the hardscrabble lives of Ethiopian immigrants in temporary absorption camps, but that she is unwilling to do so. 'There are many stories of immigration', she stated. 'I am telling only one of them, in another way. In my art, I'm not interested in going to poor neighbourhoods because that's not my narrative. My parents are educated people, they worked hard and got ahead, they upscaled! They always made it possible for me to study whatever I want' (Dekel and Almo-Wexler 2012). Almo-Wexler seeks to transcend the stereotypes and social constructs of Ethiopian men to show the broad range of 'types' within their community—young and old, professionals and laborers, religious and secular, residents of the metropolitan city Tel Aviv and of Israel's geographic periphery, poor and wealthy. She offers us a sober and contemporary picture, as she deconstructs imaginary groups from their invented homogeneity. In her words:

One of the reasons I chose to be a photographer and filmmaker is because I did not find anything in the Israeli media that represents us, meaning someone originally from Ethiopia, but already upscaled . . . I'm trying to create new portraits that draw upon international paintings, film, literature, and various cultures together . . . I think that anyone who lives in more than one culture starts to become assimilated, I'm in a constant process of absorption, but there's also a search for an inner voice. On the one hand, I can say that getting a B.A. in art from Bezalel Art Academy and an M.A. in film from Tel Aviv University is part of my identity because I studied about all kinds of western artists; but, on the other hand, the fact that I choose black images for my work is just as relevant and authentic for me (ibid.).

Presenting Israeli men of Ethiopian descent as well-educated entrepreneurs and professionals is Almo-Wexler's way of normalizing such images and bringing them into the reality of Israeli society. But above all, she seeks to promote a more complex and nuanced view of the Ethiopian-Israeli man than those circulating in the past.

6.2. Men and Institutional Violence

As discussed above, when images of men of Ethiopian descent do appear in Israeli media, generally it is in a negative context.[4] Since the summer of 2015, representations of clashes between citizens of Ethiopian descent and the police have been added to this repertoire. In that year, many members of the community took to the streets in Israeli cities to protest their ongoing oppression, the discrimination against them, and especially the police violence directed at their youth (Admasu 2015).[5] The clashes between the Ethiopian-Israeli men and the police proved, once again, that racism is deeply embedded in Israeli establishment and society, and that encounters between black and white citizens is fraught with explosive tension. Notably, these clashes coincided with the 'Baltimore events' and the rise of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement in the United States.

The repeated incidents of police violence against Ethiopian-Israelis led to a spectrum of artistic representations of this state of affairs. A series of paintings by Nirit Takele, for example, captures Ethiopian-Israeli men in such situations, particularly during protests. *Untitled (Beating of the Israeli Soldier)* is a 2015 painting, based on a true incident, depicting three light-skinned policemen pinning down a young black man (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Nirit Takele, *Untitled (Beating the Israeli Soldier)*, 2015. Oil on canvas.

In a virtuoso play of shadows transitioning to rich dark hues, Takele builds the dynamism and volume of the figures while effectively addressing the unequal balance of power between the white representatives of the establishment and the dark-skinned soldier, who was arrested by the police in the street while wearing uniform, under the accusation that he was stealing a bike. The imbalance is represented in motion as a closed elliptical whirlwind from which there is no exit. For many young Ethiopian-Israelis, despair and hopelessness in the face of racism and police brutality have undermined their faith in institutions, as, despite frequent government declarations, little has been done to improve their lot, to help them bridge the economic gap or deal with discrimination (Goren 2015; Jan 2016). As a result, many refrain from involvement in general society and draw strength from the energies of their own community, thereby adhering to the familiar principles of identity politics and the politics of recognition.

In fact, 'identity politics', has become a label for a broadly ranging forms of activism and theoretical discourse of non-hegemonic social groups. The notion offers excluded

groups the possibility of freedom and autonomy within the general society in which they live (Ring Petersen 2012). These groups make demands that they consider important, but do not necessarily resonate with the dominant culture and the issues it regards as significant. Groups desiring recognition—not according to a separatist or binary worldview, but rather as a cultural entity—make demand under what has come to be called a 'politics of recognition' (Fraser 2004). They seek official and respectful recognition that would also be reflected in the fair distribution of allocations and support for excluded cultural groups with particular ethnic identities (Dekel 2013, pp. 38–40).[6]

To return to Takele's work, the black man is composed of different planes of shadow, which convey an impressive volume that alludes to his ability, and that of others in his community, to construct their own identity and meaning without begging for permission or acceptance of the white society. Takele thus critiques hegemonic society, drawing with a steady and balanced hand the asymmetric power relations between representatives of the authority and establishment and ordinary citizens, and between different groups of Jews within Israeli society, including whites and blacks.

6.3. Soldiers and Socialization in Israeli Culture through Army Service

Tal Magos's 2016 painting entitled *Beta Israel Soldier* depicts a saluting combat soldier with the flag of Israel in the background. He displays an officer's insignia on the shoulder of his uniform, and wears a purple beret and vest for his communications equipment and other combat devices. Gazing into the distance, he seems intent and focused on his mission (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Tal Magos, *Beta Israel Soldier*, 2016. Coulored pencils on paper.

Military service in Israel is a complex experience that offers soldiers a chance to strengthen and empower themselves, provides them with skills and expertise in professional fields, but also allows them to exercise aggression and violence. Notably, the army is a body that excludes and discriminates against some who serve in it. Nonetheless, many see army service primarily as a rite of passage into manhood that breeds courage and the power to protect. During their army service, young men undergo a process that leaves them with lifelong impressions and adds new dimensions to their identity. This process is positive if they feel that their military service has been meaningful and effective; particularly if they have served in combat and experienced male fraternity, bravery, and a chance to contribute to the greater good (Sasson-Levy 2006). Military service can also lead veteran soldiers to desirable jobs and serve as a means of improving their standing and attaining social mobility.

Studies such as those conducted by Malka Shabtay seek to emphasize the positive and empowering contributions that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) offers young men of Ethiopian descent (Shabtay 1997). Her research emphasizes socialization within the military and the power of Zionist nationalism to improve self-image and heighten a sense of belonging in the army and state. Yet equally relevant is the flip side of army service in Israel, as discussed by Flora Koch Davidovich in a 2011 study, alongside more recent information (Protocol–Knesset 2018). Data points to the lower percentage of Ethiopian-Israelis offered officer training as compared to their peers (8% versus 14%, respectively). Moreover, the higher percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli soldiers discharged from the IDF before completing their full term of service (approximately 20% versus 15% of the overall soldier population) and their proportionately greater chance of being incarcerated in military prisons (they amount to only 1.5% of the army population), despite constituting 12% imprisoned soldiers, they amount to only 1.5% of the army (Koch Davidovich 2011) indicates that the Israeli army can be a social stratification mechanism that does not necessarily benefit disadvantaged groups (Sasson-Levy and Levy 2005; Engdau-Vanda 2019). Indeed, the military administration and Israeli society as a whole have given inadequate consideration to the fact that many soldiers of Ethiopian descent end up in prison after disobeying orders and deserting, even though they often do so to find a paying job outside of the army in order to contribute and support their families economically (Cohen and Salem 2011). Returning to Magos' painting, we may wonder whether this soldier, and many others of Ethiopian descent, received the entitlements concomitant with their investment in military service—which they fulfilled with devotion—from the Israeli army or society. We may ask whether the tense salute and sidelong gaze are indication of total faith in the military ethos and Israeli nationalism, or an invitation to rethink the condition of Ethiopian-Israeli soldiers within various IDF frameworks.

6.4. Masculinity and Music

Many young Ethiopian-Israelis are drawn to American rap and hip-hop or to reggae and Rastafarianism (which link Jamaica and Ethiopia). However, they mostly prefer to listen to local music that matches their experience in their own country, Israel (Djerrahian 2018; Webster-Kogen 2016).

When Elazar Tamano made a painting of three members of the Ethiopian-Israeli band K.G.C. and posted it on Facebook on 20 December 2015, he wrote: 'Good week, beautiful people ... The year of 2015 is coming to its end. Each one of us has a unique way to sum up the passing year, I have my art to express what I went through this year. So, a second before this beautiful year comes to an end, I want to share with you the project "My Painting's Playlist", a project in which I draw portraits of the singers that I listen to while I'm painting. So K.G.C., thank you for all the powerful words and the amazing muse' (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Elazar Tamano, *Shout*, 2015. Coffee, pens and pencils on paper.

David Ratner, author of a book on the musical preferences of Ethiopian-Israelis notes that in the 1980s and 1990s, when they first arrived Israel and were urged to adopt an Israeli-Jewish national identity, their own identity began changing as they adopted to the dynamics of economic and cultural globalization' (Ratner 2015, p. 19). Nonetheless, he proceeds to argue, along with their personal identity and national identification, one must take into account their global consumption of music, which has contributed to their multi-layered identity.[7] Ratner offers a more complex analysis than does Malka Shabtay in her 2001 study of music consumption by young Ethiopian-Israelis, which was based on a binary analysis of data gathered from interviews that broke respondents down into those 'belonging to' or 'alienated from' Israeli society as well as those preferring local music or international music (Shabtay 2001).[8]

Ratner, by contrast, argues that hip-hop culture and rap music should not be perceived as a monolithic choice, a pathology, a sign of the adoption of an inauthentic identity, or signifying an identity crisis, but rather as a process through which Ethiopian-Israeli youth construct a multi-layered, transnational identity. In his view, hip-hop is a means of expressing identification with the experience of exclusion and racism elsewhere in the world. Thus, he is a proponent of the Black Atlantic approach, led by scholars such as Stuart Hall (1992) and Paul Gilroy (1993), which draws identity from pride in historical figures such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, but also sees in music a chance to connect with other communities of the African Diaspora, and thus to reduce the isolation felt by blacks in predominantly white societies. According to Ratner, 'Identifying with hip hop is a way to bond to the black, transnational diaspora, with whom they feel connected' (Ratner 2015, p. 41). Indeed, Ratner does not propose the existence of an essentialist link (a shared African origin) among members of the black diaspora; rather, he point to a symbolic resource that can help them mobilize resistance, assertiveness, and the creativity to build a sense of community.[9] Following intellectuals such as Bourdieu (1984), Peterson (1992), and Bryson (1997), I claim, as seen in Tamano's painting, that young Ethiopian-Israeli mens' interest in this music provides them with the cultural capital that they need to construct an identity within Israeli society. Accordingly, their musical taste is not dictated by the establishment's definition of 'proper' culture and 'right' taste, but rather is a synthesis

of different kinds of music that serve their needs as they construct a new kind of local masculinity for themselves, one unlike seen before in Israel.

Notably, the interviews conducted by Ratner support this stance, as two key issues emerge in the conversations: first, the sense of being 'black' in a 'white' society; and second, the interviewees' relationship with gender, money, employment, social class and economic mobility in light of social and institutional barriers. Many respondents spoke about the despair of young men who 'always did the right thing', acquired higher education, became 'real men', but still could not find jobs commensurate with their educational level and occupational skills (Ratner 2015, p. 153). These issues rouse anger and frustration, along with a belief in the righteousness of their demands, and find expression in artists like Elazar Tamano who painted the K.G.C. group, whose lyrics address these problems.

6.5. Inter-Generational Manhood, Venerated Dignitaries

In 2014, Gidon Windmagy Agaza documented Kessim, Ethiopian Jewish religious leaders, and elderly dignitaries of the Ethiopian community during the Memorial Day for Ethiopian Jews who perished in Sudan on their way to Israel (Trevisan-Semi 2005). In the photograph, six older men are garbed in traditional robes that convey their regal dignity. Ceremonial parasols are held over the heads of some of the dignitaries. Several microphones, through which they will address the audience, are visible (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Gidon Windmagy Agaza, *Kessim Praying*, 2014. Digital print.

The status and authority of the community's Kessim are a sensitive and painful issue for Ethiopian-Israelis (Sharaby and Kaplan 2015). Many within and outside the community are working to counteract their decline in status, including Rabbis Reuven Yasu and Sharon Shalom, who have written about how the rabbinic administration in Israel has stripped the Ethiopian Kessim and other Beta Israel spiritual leaders of their authority. As they note:

> Despite the cumulative experience of Israeli institutions in absorbing waves of immigrants, the absorption of immigrants from Ethiopia has been beset by serious difficulties. The main challenge, which preoccupies the community today, is their status under the Halakha, or Jewish law. After thirty years of absorption in the Holy Land, immigrants from Ethiopia still have a hard time being accepted as equal under the Jewish law (which governs family law and burial practice of Jewish Israelis), the religious councils, and the community rabbis in Israel. The immigrants from Ethiopia and their descendants now face a patently unreasonable situation whereby they are forced to prove their Judaism. Some claim that this is no different from the immigrants of other diaspora communities

> who are required to prove their Judaism, but in fact the Jews from Ethiopia are accorded different treatment. For example, children of Ethiopian descent who are born and raised in Israel discover upon their decision to marry that almost all the religious councils throughout the country do not cater to them, and only few, special agencies, are authorized to give them marriage licenses, as they are assigned a special track for Jews from Ethiopia only. (Yasu and Shalom 2015)

Although not all members of the community consider the marriage and religious acceptance challenges to be the sole, or ever the central reason, for their lack of absorption, this is indeed a lingering challenge, and one that casts a heavy cloud on the entire community. The dignitaries whom Agaza photographed reflect the desire to preserve the honour and authority of these elderly men, who are the bearers of ancient knowledge and wisdom (notably, only Kessim know the ancient language of Ge'ez and read the Orit, the holy scripts, and these older dignitaries also serve as mediators in the community).

Another work of art that expresses respect for the elderly men of the community is the 2002 drawing by Almo Ishta, depicting his father on the arduous march through Sudan to Israel (Figure 7). It is an image that clearly conveys the demand that the narrative of Ethiopian Jews be incorporated into the general narrative of Zionism. This image also seeks to shatter the myth that it was solely the state of Israel that inspired Ethiopian Jews to immigrate to Israel rather than the heroic initiatives and efforts of the Ethiopian community itself to go to the Holy Land. Indeed, here we see an elderly but determined man who takes his fate into his own hands and sets out for Zion.

Figure 7. Almo Ishta, *Father*, 2002. Pencil on paper.

Ishta's representation embodies the sacrifice made by the head of family, who puts everything at stake and leaves Ethiopia. The artist, who designed the official 2011 postal

stamp commemorating the immigration of Ethiopia's Jews and was also selected as designer of the Israeli official medal on the subject, portrays with great pride his father, who represents tradition, even at the price of having been labelled 'nostalgic' (Bekaya et al. 2013). The multilayered identity of this elderly man conveys the intersectional perspective of race, gender, class, religion, and age, in the context of the Israeli society.

6.6. Masculinity and Sexual Orientation

Gender studies have long noted the difficulty in changing rigid gender stereotypes or softening public resistance to the break-down of gender constructions, which narrow the options for how women and men choose to live. In *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell explains how social processes shape perceptions of masculinity in Western culture, noting that masculinity is not a biological-essentialist attribute, but a fluid social construct that alters within different cultures and ideologies (Connell 2005). In Israel, the traditional male gender norm, such as combat soldier, pilot, or martial arts master, is generally more inflexible than its female counterpart (e.g., people more readily accept a woman's decision to become a pilot or a combat solider than a man's to taking up a profession such as a beauty cosmetologist or preschool teacher). Resistance is even stronger to male homosexuality, due to the masculine image propagated by the Israeli military and its promotion of heteronormativity.[10] As one Ethiopian-Israeli artist who requested anonymity writes:

> Sexual identity versus an entire tradition,
> In a room without light or walls of understanding,
> I didn't choose to be different,
> I also didn't choose to deny it,
> And the moment that I chose to open a window,
> Friends and family opened a door for me,
> And now there is light. (Anonymous 2016)

This artist who identifies as an Ethiopian-Israeli gay man, shot a series of black-and-white photographs of his own body. One photo represents him wearing an undershirt and shorts, seated in the middle of a room with minimalist, modest furnishings (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Anonymous, Untitled, 2015. Black and white photograph.

Like the others in the series, this photo is marked by a dark shadow that runs diagonally from the top right to the mid-left side of the photo, sharply intersecting the composition. The shadow plays a dual role: first, by concealing his face, it safeguards his identity, as he knows that his community will not accept his sexual orientation. Second, the play of shadows in the photo as a whole reminds the viewer that there are many shades of grey between the two extremes of black and white, thereby problematizing what is 'right' and 'wrong' or 'proper' and 'deviant.' A man's gayness indicates nothing about his masculinity, as sex, gender, and sexual orientation are separate categories—as this artist insists on reminding. Gay men often encounter sweeping stereotypes that reduce them to their sexual practices, ignoring their multi-dimensionality. In short, the message of the photo is that maleness is not a fixed category, and moreover, homosexuality does not cancel masculinity. It is society that makes these definitions and artificial distinctions, but in fact, there is a harmonious whole that encompasses everything, as there are infinite shades of grey and ways of being masculine.

This artist is a member of KALA (Hebrew abbreviation of Kehila Lahatavit Ethiopit, 'LGBT Ethiopian Community'). Founded in 2015, KALA has a Facebook page that regularly posts announcements, activities, and information of interest to LGBT Ethiopian-Israelis such as seminars for youth, social events, and parties. The organization offers a support system and non-judgmental space for its community. Some of its members are out of the closet and participate in activities and events hosted by other Israeli LGBT organizations, but others choose to keep their sexual orientation a secret from their families. At the fifteenth 'Other Sex' conference held at Tel Aviv University, KALA representatives spoke about their similarities with other LGBT groups in Israel, but also discussed issues distinctive to those of Ethiopian descent, including the taboos on non-heteronormative sex within the Ethiopian-Israeli community. This social reality may account for the lack of images of gay masculinity by any Ethiopian-Israeli artists other than the anonymous one discussed above.

7. Into the (Different) Future of Representations

The aim of this paper is to complicate the discussion about black masculinity of Jewish men in Israel and fill a lacuna in the Israeli cultural discourse about belonging and otherness, while also offering insights about marginalized black communities in other parts of the globe and under various ethno-national contexts.

Representations of black men are clearly a social construct, founded on gender-racial stereotypes. In the United States, for example, common stereotypes draw either on the myth of a powerful and frightening virility of black men that inevitably leads to sexual violence, incarceration, disease, or drugs, or else of a prodigious athleticism or musical genius. In Israel, popular representations show them in contradicting identities: either passive, nostalgic men or heroic, active men. Contra their negative representations in Israeli popular media, which often portrays them as exercising violence against their female partners or features young boys as drop-outs engaging in disorderly conduct or incarcerated, and only occasionally as successful men leading positive lives (usually in combat position in the military), this paper has exposed a broad range of masculinities.

Battling their biased representation that constantly poses them as the absolute others within the Jewish people (being the Jewish other, a minority, while in the diaspora of Ethiopia, and not 'Jewish enough' when in Israel), they critically conceive their lives in Israel, the land of the Jewish people, and the degree of belonging that they feel to the place to which they have arrived. This paper examines this question by focusing the discussion on the concept of 'manliness' within the politics of nationhood. I argue that the artists discussed occupy a dual and simultaneous position; feeling themselves oppressed and marginalised subjects, on the one hand, and positive and empowered agents, on the other.

This analysis reveals that Ethiopian-Israeli Jewish men have not one but rather various, hybrid, and hyphenated identities. By drawing on critiques that undermine the possibility of fixing subjects with pre-assigned identities—be they religious, gendered, racial, national, or other—I argue that all men experience different kinds of masculinities, depending

on their diverse life stories (e.g., place of residence, educational opportunities, sexual orientation, etc.). Unlike the gender theories of the 1970s and 1980s, which analysed the elements of power in representations of masculinity to show the ways in which privilege is created and perpetuated, contemporary theories are more nuanced and multi-layered. Moreover, contemporary research points to ways in which men can experience power and exclusion, simultaneously (Kegan-Gardiner 2002), so that even if Ethiopian-Israelis enjoy power and agency, they may still face disadvantages and experience exclusion.

This paper has provided a platform through which members of the community present, articulate and define their own identities, rather than having an outsider define their identities for them. Moreover, using art in order to do so, is a novel way to discuss and communicate the subject, one that enables them to do so in a first of its kind, activist and nuanced manner (Sliwinska 2021; Dekel and Keshet 2021). Hence, I suggest that when dealing with images of black males in Israel, we move beyond the binary dichotomies—black versus white, nationalist versus individualist, domestic versus public, career versus leisure. It is in this spirit, that the African American bell hooks writes in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*: 'For those of us who dare to desire differently, who seek to look away from the conventional ways of seeing blackness and ourselves, the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status quo. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad' (Hooks 1992, p. 4). Indeed, a fresh reading of images of Ethiopian-Israeli Jewish men, created and exhibited in the Israeli art world, offers an opportunity to see the dawn of a new masculine Jewishness in Israel.

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Notes

1. This article does not take an essentialist approach that uses one or another characteristic to describe men of Ethiopian origin. Rather, its goal is to conceptualize and describe the experiences of these men, as they themselves understand and experience them.
2. For other examples in Africa, such as contemporary art in Nigeria, see (Okeke-Agulu 2015).
3. Some refer to Israelis of Ethiopian descent as Mizrahi Jews and call for their joint activism with Jews of Arab countries, as both belong to non-hegemonic groups in Israeli society that could benefit from such activism on issues such as exclusion from decision-making, a more egalitarian distribution of national resources, etc. Others claim that these groups do not share a broad common denominator and therefore should not unite in a common social and political cause.
4. A paradoxical dichotomy is evident in the representations of Ethiopian-Israeli men. On the one hand are images with positive connotations, such as soldiers serving in the army and working in respectable public jobs; and on the other—and far more often—are the media images that demonize and pathologize them by focusing on disorderly conduct among their youth, such as during demonstrations (especially since the demonstrations of 2015, which were covered by the press as negative, disorderly actions).
5. The demonstrations in the summer of 2015 were preceded by protests in Kiryat Malakhi in 2012 caused by incidents of racism, namely, the refusal to sell apartments to Ethiopians based on the directives of Rabbi Pinto (Harush 2012).
6. Notably, identity politics in contemporary art are part of a multi-layered and not binary discourse on which contemporary critics have offered complex views. Some have pointed to flaws in the strategy of identity politics, which often flattens complexity and differences, both in Western and non-Western countries. For more, see (Ring Petersen 2012). In my view, the intersectionality approach, which looks jointly at the diverse dimensions of identity, offers the most nuanced understanding of artists, particularly migrant artists. For more, see (Dekel 2016, pp. 7–11).
7. These musical styles are varied, so a general definition of 'rap' or 'reggae' is impossible. As David Ratner notes, this sub-culture is characterised by a variety of styles. For a deeper explanation in the spirit of the sociologist Bourdieu, particularly in his work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, see (Ratner 2015, p. 59).

8 It is important to remember that the hip-hop culture and rap adopted by young Ethiopian-Israelis are as bound to the mega-corporate world as they are to small industries. The music can be split into sub-genres such as political rap, Afrocentric rap, and gangsta rap; see (Ratner 2015, p. 32). Lisa Anteby-Yemini (2010) examined how young people of Ethiopian origin have come to feel connected to hip-hop culture, not just via the music, but by adopting the clothes and hair styles associated with it alongside the entertainment that accompanies it in clubs, as well as by decorating their private and public space with images of its cult heroes.

9 I tend to agree with Stuart Hall (1992), who suggests that the practices used by blacks to connect with other blacks should be understood not as a search for historical roots (which to some extent are purely imaginary) or as a longing for a better past, but as an active search for new paths that look ahead and define the goals towards which they should be striving.

10 Nevertheless, we note that changes in the image of the Israeli male in recent years have also affected the artistic representation of Israeli soldiers. Over the past decade, images of gay soldiers as well as homo-erotica have emerged in the work of artists such as Adi Nes, who looks at the military experience of men in terms of the formation of their sexual identity, male bonding, and the intense physicality of army combat service; see (Maor 2004).

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