



JDC and the Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel

Summary

Hava Ullman



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A Summary of JDC-Israel Activities
with Ethiopian Olim

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A Summary of the Documentation of JDC-Israel
Activities with Ethiopian Olim

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Preface

Within the documentation framework of JDC activities, a series of four books has been published documenting JDC's work with Ethiopian immigrants, as well as an additional book summarizing, in effect, the entire series. These five books describe the depth of JDC's activities with Ethiopian immigrants during the first half of the 1980's and until the end of 2010. The documentation touches on a variety of aspects related to the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel.

The work with Ethiopian immigrants – the technique and method of operation – followed the basic mode of operations of JDC. In other words, JDC operated with intensive and committed strategic partners in the government and other organizations. The commitment of Jewish communities in North America enables JDC to cope with the challenges that Israeli society places before them.

The series describes the organization's activities with Ethiopian immigrants and deals broadly with those issues related to JDC's activities in the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in creating and enhancing employment opportunities for them. It also delves into JDC's wide-spread activities in education and the promotion of good health as well as cultivation of leadership qualities among these immigrants.

As in the material describing JDC's activities in other fields, two main goals are stressed in this documentation: the documentation itself, and at the same time, the dissemination of knowledge about the activities and the lessons that can be derived from them. The material discusses the development of

new ideas and innovative planning at the implementation phase.

The books in the series thoroughly demonstrate how the vision, principles and goals of the organization took on a form of activities were planned, complicated and focused, but most important, practical and implemented.

Arnon Mantver
Director, JDC-Israel

Introduction

By the end of 2007, the Ethiopian community in Israel numbered approximately 120,000. Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israel in two main waves: Operation Moses in 1984, during which some 7,500 olim arrived, and Operation Solomon, which brought another 14,300 olim.

As part of JDC's documentation, five documents were written describing the organization's activities for the absorption of Ethiopian olim in: Employment, Education, Leadership, Health.

In addition, JDC documented the personal stories of JDC-Israel employees who made aliya from Ethiopia.

This document provides a summary of four of the above.

The Aliya of Ethiopian Jews

The Jews in Ethiopia lived mainly in two regions, Tigray and Gondar. Their lives were focused on the desire to reach Jerusalem and the Promised Land. Once there was a possibility of fulfilling their dream, they searched for a way out of Ethiopia in order to reach Israel, despite the difficulties and problems that stood in their path.

The story of the Aliya of Ethiopian Jews is a special chapter in the saga of the unique aliya operations which brought olim from all around the world to Israel before and after the founding of the State.

The Ethiopian olim came as individuals, in small groups, and in several waves through organized operations. Local and global political events directly and indirectly affected this immigration, its urgency and the intensity with which efforts were made to implement it.

The main thrust of the immigration from Ethiopia took place in the late 1980s, however their initial interest began as early as 1955-1956. A group of young men and women – 24 in number – came to the religious youth village in Kfar Batya through the initiative of the Jewish Agency. The goal was to train them for teaching and leadership positions in their community. The first group returned to Ethiopia following a three-year stay in Israel, while the second went back after 8 years. The importance of this event – despite its limited scope and in spite of the fact that it was not defined as an aliya operation but rather as training – lies in its primacy; this training constituted the first link between Ethiopian Jews and the State of Israel. In addition, an important contribution was clearly made by part of the group members, who became leaders, Aliya activists and absorption activists for their community.

A formative event in the story of the Ethiopian Jews' immigration was the State of Israel's decision to apply the Law of Return to them. The decision was made following the recognition of their status as Jews in a ruling made in 1973 by Chief Sephardic Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. Their recognition and eligibility for Aliya, by virtue of the Law of Return, served as an important landmark in the events related to this Aliya. Along with this event, the situation of the Jews in Ethiopia worsened following the Communist revolution that took place in the country in 1974, bringing with it many cases of anti-Semitism.

In 1977, organized secret activity began to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel. This activity lasted until November 1984. Due to the difficulty in obtaining exit permits from Ethiopia, only a few traveled directly to Israel at the beginning of this period. Others fled to Sudan, hoping to reach Israel from there. The olim gathered in small groups and convoys and embarked on the long journey on foot, carrying only a small sack of belongings on their backs. In many cases, parents sent their children to the border area between Ethiopia and Sudan, hoping that the children would be the first to fulfill the dream of making Aliya

to Israel. This caused many families to become separated.

Many dangers awaited the travelers en route to Sudan. The journey took from two weeks to a month. They were attacked by bandits along the way and had to steer clear of Ethiopian army troops and rebel forces. These were further compounded by the travails of the road. This arduous journey later became a symbol of the determination and self-sacrifice shown by Ethiopian Jews in their attempt to fulfill the dream of coming to Israel. Over 11,000 Ethiopian Jews marched towards the Ethiopian-Sudanese border with the aim of reaching Israel. The number of people who died of hunger and various diseases, on the road and in refugee camps in Sudan, is estimated to be about 4,000. In the secret rescue activities carried out by the Israeli government in the years 1977-1984, about 7,000 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel through Sudan.

Operation Moses

The thousands of Jews who fled from Ethiopia to Sudan and remained in refugee camps for extended periods (ranging from months to years) were in dire circumstances. They lived in camps in sub-human conditions, and several dozen people died every day. This reality drove the government of Israel to urgently execute an aerial rescue mission. This operation was known as **Operation Moses**. It was conducted between November 1984 and January 5, 1985. It airlifted about 7,500 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Of these, about 1,500 were children and youth who came without their parents.

The operation was secret, as was the consent of the Sudanese authorities. When the secret was revealed and the story of the Aliya leaked to the media in Israel and abroad, the operation was brought to an abrupt halt. The support of Sudan, an Arab and Muslim country, for the operation behind the back of the Ethiopian regime, was an unacceptable scandal to the Arab states and their supporters. As a result of this pressure, Sudan halted its assistance, and the traffic of olim from Ethiopia to Sudan ceased immediately. Those seized by the

Sudanese authorities were thrown into prison or sent back to Ethiopia. Only the intervention of the U.S. enabled the completion of the operation and the rescue of the Jews who remained in Sudan. With the consent of the relevant countries, and with the help of American transport aircraft, about 1,200 Ethiopian Jews who had remained in Sudanese refugee camps were brought to Israel in March 1985. This activity was called **Operation Queen of Sheba**.

In 1986, the stream of Ethiopian Jews fleeing to Sudan was renewed. Between the years 1986-1989, approximately 2,000 Ethiopian Jews from refugee camps in Sudan were brought to Israel.

Operation Solomon

In 1989, relations between Israel and Ethiopia were renewed. An Israeli embassy opened in Addis Ababa and dealt with bringing Ethiopian Jews whose families were already in Israel. Many of the Jews heard about the renewal of the Aliya, came to the Israeli embassy of their own accord and requested to immigrate to Israel. Due to the unrest in Ethiopia, there was great concern for the lives and safety of the Jews there. Forces opposed to the regime took control of some areas and approached the capital, Addis Ababa. The State of Israel and US Jewry mobilized for a swift operation for the rescue of the Ethiopian Jews. A large amount of money was transferred by American Jewry to the Ethiopian authorities. Thus Operation Solomon was launched, in full cooperation between the government of Israel, the IDF, JDC and the Jewish Agency.

During the course of 36 hours, on Friday and Saturday, May 24-25, 1991, approximately 14,300 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel. Several dozen planes took part in this operation, which was of an unprecedented scale in Israel's history. Seven infants born en route were the youngest olim to come to Israel in Operation Solomon. Here, in Israel, the olim met their families, the "veteran residents," and were reunited with them following long years of separation.

JDC and the Aliya Operations

The involvement of JDC in the immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel was already evident during the period prior to Operation Moses - the first large Aliya operation. JDC operated agricultural and medical programs in the Gondar region as early as 1984.

Following the renewal of diplomatic relations between Israel and Ethiopia, about 22,000 Jews migrated in the spring and summer of 1990 from the rural areas of northwestern Ethiopia to the capital Addis Ababa. Unofficial refugee camps were created at the outskirts of the city and lacked the basic infrastructure for proper everyday life. The difficult conditions led to the outbreak of new diseases, the spread of existing diseases and a rise in the mortality rate, especially among babies and children. The Jewish Agency and the JDC came to the aid of the thousands of refugees who were awaiting Aliya. Programs were developed in the fields of health, nutrition, housing and education. These programs were intended to provide an immediate response to the unique needs of those in Addis Ababa waiting to come to Israel.

The Jewish Agency and the JDC established a clinic and a school near the Israeli embassy. They were active from September 1990 to May 1991. The clinic was managed by JDC emissary, Dr. Rick Hodes, and employed six physicians, six nurses, an in-house American physician and an Israeli pediatrician. A laboratory and pharmacy operated alongside the clinic. The clinic treated 200 patients on a daily basis. In addition, the clinic also offered a house call and follow-up program. The goal of the program was to locate patients and encourage them to come to the clinic for medical treatment. Special attention was given to children aged six and under, due to the high rate of mortality in this age group. The program trained about 100 personnel to conduct house calls and visit approximately 50 families twice a week. In November 1991, house calls were made to the homes of 4,321 families.

Another program focused on improving the nutrition of the olim. In a survey

carried out among children at the site, it was found that 80 percent of them suffered from poor nutrition. The program included instruction for mothers on child nutrition and the distribution of “papa” – a local mixture of wheat, lentils, powdered milk and vitamins for the children. This JDC activity significantly reduced the mortality rate: In July 1990, 39 deaths were recorded in a population of 22,000. From March to May 1991, only three to four deaths per month were recorded.

A school was set up near the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa and was attended by many hundreds of children and youth. With the aid of study materials sent from Israel by the Jewish Agency, the children began learning about Jewish holidays, Eretz Israel and were introduced to the Hebrew language. The pupils were also given meals and first-aid treatment when needed.

In May 1991, Operation Solomon put an end to the long months of waiting in Addis Ababa.

JDC and the Absorption of the Ethiopian Olim

The Aliya operations presented the State of Israel and its institutions with the challenge of absorbing the olim. Providing solutions for a successful absorption, while drawing on the conclusions of past experiences, required taking action in various spheres of life. Following Operation Moses at the end of 1984 and Operation Solomon in May 1991, the institutions and the organizations operating alongside them were called upon to set up priorities for the absorption activities. The agencies involved decided to make employment and education a priority in the absorption process. JDC was, of course, a partner in the first stages of the immigrants’ absorption in Israel.

The activity in Ethiopia that preceded Aliya, the Aliya itself, and the initial stages of absorption, created a firm infrastructure for the formation of special ties between JDC workers and members of the Ethiopian community. These ties made it possible to become acquainted with the unique characteristics

regarding the origin and culture of Ethiopian Jews. JDC professionals, including staffers of Ethiopian origin, accompanied the olim – from the initial absorption stages, through their settlement in absorption centers and temporary residences, to their transition into permanent housing – and assisted them with the most basic and essential issues. The direct contact with the olim exposed JDC personnel to the difficulties and severe absorption problems that impacted all realms of the immigrants' lives. JDC's activities focused on employment, education, fostering leadership and other related issues.

A study entitled "The Integration of Ethiopian Olim into Israeli Society: Challenges, Policy, Programs and Directions" (Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem, May 2001), which was financed by JDC, analyzed the absorption process of the Ethiopian olim in Israel, and pointed to the main factors that affected their absorption. Among these factors were the characteristics and culture of the olim, and the processes of transition and initial absorption in Israel. The study also highlighted the lack of education among many of the olim. Most of them had worked previously in agriculture and were unfamiliar with education and employment frameworks similar to those that operated in Israel. Learning Hebrew was particularly difficult and complex for the Ethiopian olim, and it posed a challenge for the absorbing Israeli society.

JDC mobilized to help with the "burning" issues, such as explaining the maze of the social services, employment and educational systems to the olim. Emphasis was placed on urgent social welfare issues and language programs were integrated in each of the spheres. This activity was vital and a top priority for the olim, but it was soon made clear to those involved in this effort, that the organization would have to develop for the next stages of absorption as well. To this end, it would have to prepare for a long-term program that would encompass the topics requiring the involvement of the education and the health systems, and necessitating cooperation with them.

JDC's assistance in the absorption of the olim started at the end of 1984 and

was carried out in cooperation with government ministries, local authorities and other bodies. In March 1985, in the wake of severe problems suffered by the olim, JDC decided to intervene in the health sphere as well. Starting in the second half of the 1990s, the emphasis gradually moved to overall systemic involvement by the organization in the family and community spheres. This was done along with their involvement in the employment, education and health spheres and the empowerment of community leadership.

Absorption of Ethiopian Olim: Employment

The need to integrate Ethiopian olim into the job market posed a unique challenge to Israeli society, and particularly to the systems assisting olim in finding employment. Moreover, Israel did not stop at setting the objective of full-time employment, but aspired to encourage the integration of the olim into professional jobs. In the opinion of absorption policymakers, the low socioeconomic status of the Ethiopian olim required systemic intervention and the development of new approaches and methods. This was based on the assumption that it would not be possible to incorporate Ethiopian olim into existing employment frameworks.

JDC mobilized for the task of absorbing the olim in the field of employment. The organization's flexibility, its close and direct contact with the population, and the extensive experience gained by the workers in the field, contributed to the organization's unique work. Generally speaking, JDC's involvement in various spheres can be divided, into two periods: 1) Starting from Operation Moses to the mid-1990s, there was intensive JDC activity by means of a network of employment coordinators. The network engaged in the placement and vocational training in absorption centers and temporary residential sites, and dealt with adapting the activity during the transition period to permanent housing. 2) From the second half of the 1990s, the systemic perspective was strengthened. The activity focused on promoting employment for difficult-to-place populations and for women, among whom the rate of employment was very low. This approach was expressed in the Reshet Employment Incubators; in expansion of the activities by the Eshet Chayil program for women; and in the business entrepreneurship activities done through the National Entrepreneurship Center for Ethiopian Olim at the Netanya Business

Development Center.

In 2005, the Tevet Employment Initiative was established to focus on solving the employment problems of special populations. Olim, including Ethiopian olim, were one of the target populations. The initiative is a partnership between JDC and the government of Israel, and its activities are based on long years of JDC involvement in the issue of absorbing olim in employment, and models developed on their behalf.

JDC Activities in Employment for Ethiopian Olim, through Spheres and Departments of the Organization that Dealt with the Issue

JDC's absorption activities in employment for Ethiopian olim was carried out by different departments within the organization. The organizational and structural changes that took place in the context of these activities point to JDC's commitment to the Ethiopian olim.

Activities until Operation Solomon: In the mid-1980s, after the Operation Moses Aliya, JDC did not yet have a department for employment and vocational training for olim in general, and Ethiopian olim in particular. During this period, activities in this area were conducted through the Division for Human Resource and Manpower Development and through Amishav – the center for assistance for Ethiopian olim. The latter was established within JDC to handle all matters relating to Ethiopian olim. This constellation combined the professional knowledge on employment and vocational training held by the Division for Development, with the skill and experience that Amishav had garnered by working in the field with Ethiopian olim. Policymakers in Amishav saw employment as one of the key goals of immigrant absorption. The jewel in the crown was vocational training and job placement. In 1985, the **Ethiopian staff** began vocational training. The plan of operation for this training and

the job placement project planned for 1987-1988, included four training tracks:

1. **A young people's project**, which was a joint project of the Student Authority, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency. The program trained some 1,000 young people to receive an accredited professional certificate, and prepared them to join the ranks of the IDF and the civilian employment market.
2. **Vocational training at the training centers** run by the Ministry of Labor or the Vocational Training Authority, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency. The program combined study with actual employment. Through the program, about 80 para-professional workers were trained.
3. **Internal factory training** is a program in conjunction with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, which involved roughly 2,000 olim who were placed in industrial production lines.
4. **Special programs** in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. For example: studies for practical engineering and technician degrees; training of educational social workers; dental assistants courses; practical nursing courses; courses in bookkeeping, hostelry and opening cottage industries.

Activity in 1991-1996 through Amishav and the Division for Vocational Training and Employment:

Following Operation Solomon, needs continued to mount, and accordingly, JDC expanded its activity in the employment sphere. At the initiative of Amishav, a professional survey was conducted in the absorption centers for Ethiopian olim. This survey formed a monitoring basis with regard to employment and vocational training, and was used to identify olim with special professions or those with formal education.

Areas of activity on behalf of demobilized IDF soldiers from the Ethiopian community included, among other things, integrating them into industrial jobs, on-the-job training in construction throughout Israel, and the opening of special courses. Among the courses conducted: airplane mechanics in the aeronautics industry; certification as counselors; preparation for officers positions with the Civil Guard; a course for sports trainers; teaching courses; training for instructor-counselor staff; training as educational guidance counselors.

From 1991-1996, JDC – through Amishav and the Division for Vocational Training and Employment, which was founded at the end of 1993 – was involved in numerous employment programs for Ethiopian olim. At the initiative of JDC-Amishav, and funded by and in cooperation with the Center for Employment Consulting and Information of the Ministry of Labor, workshops to prepare olim for employment were organized, during their ongoing Hebrew studies in an Ulpan. Vocational training courses were also opened at the Centers for Technological Training, under the pedagogic and professional supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Students received a subsistence allowance from the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption while they were studying. Amishav funded the cost of hiring an instructor a veteran immigrant from Ethiopia, who supervised the olim through their preparations or training, and handled social issues. In some of the training programs JDC also paid for transporting the olim from their homes to the training center.

Activities through the Division for Vocational Training and Employment of JDC, in conjunction with government ministries, were conducted along two tracks. One was the subject track – workshops, preparation programs and vocational training courses in a variety of subjects, such as metalworking and welding, forklift operator, tractor driver, mechanics and electricity, silversmith, day care workers, nursing, dental assistants and dental hygienists. The second was a regional track, based on areas where Ethiopian olim were concentrated. For example: a project to promote Ethiopian olim in Upper Nazareth and Afula;

and a unique program for integrating olim nito professions and education in the Migdal Ha'Emek industrial area.

The network of employment coordinators is a positive reflection of JDC's intensive involvement with regard to employment for Ethiopian olim. It was deployed in a hierarchical-geographic structure: a national coordinator, regional coordinators, local coordinators, and mentor-instructors. In addition, there were coordinators in charge of certain industrial spheres, such as agriculture, flower-growing and construction. The placement of coordinators was done according to various vocational training programs. JDC also appointed a national coordinator for employment among Ethiopian women.

The coordinators performed a variety of tasks, with emphasis placed according to the program and its location. For example: they dealt with all professional and personal matters of the employees, including salary, work conditions, employee rights, employee-employer relations, preventing employment dropouts and instructing employees during their work; initiating programs for on-the-job training with the help of community and government agencies; assisting Ministry of Immigrant Absorption staffers and employers in filling out forms related to the Absorption Ministry's various assistance programs. This network also included coordinators for training courses, who supervised the olim during the training. Working alongside the coordinators were also **instructors** and **mentors**, who helped the regional coordinators with their various tasks. In early 1993, approval was received for the special mortgages campaign of the Ministry of Absorption for Ethiopian olim in an effort to encourage the olim to purchase apartments. JDC recruited the employment coordinators for this work as well. These coordinators helped map out the olim as they moved from temporary to permanent living quarters. Since there is a direct link between employment and housing.

The employment coordinators activities in coordination with the activities by absorbing institutions, bore fruit. The employment status in the mid-1990s

was quite optimistic: Most of the capable Ethiopian olim either were employed or studying, and the scope of employment among those living in the Ethiopian olim residential sites was close to the national unemployment figures. From 1991-1996, JDC participated in programs developed by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption for the vocational training of many hundreds of Ethiopian olim, including 500 graduates of Youth Aliya programs at the training centers. The placement and advancement of the olim was especially prominent in the flower and construction industries. Some 400 Ethiopian olim from various temporary living sites throughout the country were placed in jobs in the flower industry. JDC also initiated and participated in operating a program to place 300 Ethiopian olim in businesses, in cooperation with the Bureau of Chamber of Commerce. During this period, JDC was also involved in initial programs to encourage business entrepreneurship among Ethiopian olim.

Activity through the Division for Immigrant Integration, Employment and Entrepreneurship (1996-2000)

In early 1996, the Division for Vocational Training and Employment of JDC was renamed the Division for Immigrant Integration, Employment and Entrepreneurship. Within this new framework, were three spheres dealing with Ethiopian olim: employment and entrepreneurship; advancing Ethiopian Jewry and absorbing olim; education, health and society. Later on, the Division's activities focused on teaching professions to Ethiopian olim and their professional advancement, through vocational training courses. Additionally, there were several preparatory programs for Ethiopian soldiers who were about to be demobilized from the IDF, to generate national service from the Ethiopian community. At the outset, JDC still funded the work by employment

coordinators in different regions around the country, but this was gradually phased out over time.

The issue of promoting women and integrating them into jobs was highlighted during this period. The **Job Placement for Women**, program which began as a pilot program in 1994, continued under a new name – **Eshet Chayil (Woman of Valor)**. The Eshet Chayil program, in conjunction with the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, was originally aimed at providing a suitable means for integrating Ethiopian women into the workforce. The program operated in 1996 in 14 localities, and included over 250 women. Through the program, workshops were provided for women who did not work – in an effort to offer them basic information – along with Hebrew ulpan classes with a work orientation. To date, the program also operates among women olim from the Caucasus; groups of unemployed men from Ethiopia; and as of 2005, among unemployed women as well. Activities include providing the olim with tools, knowledge and skills, as well as support and supervision as they join the workforce. Besides this, the coordinator – in each locality where the program operates – is responsible for offering individual assistance in finding jobs, supervising the woman during her initial integration period, personal monitoring later on and maintaining contact with the employer. Language improvement, personal empowerment and reducing dependency on the welfare system, boosting motivation and willingness to join in language-teaching programs, education and vocational training – these are also among the program’s accomplishments. By the end of 2005, some 1,449 women who had participated in the program found jobs in the workforce, as well as 191 out of 280 men who participated in the program in five localities. As of 2005, the program has become part of the Tevet Employment Initiative. In early 2008, the program was operating in 15 localities with approximately 1,400 Ethiopian women participating; 65 percent of them have been placed in jobs.

The **Reshet (Employment Services Network) – Employment Incubators**

Program was begun with a view towards resolving the problems of job placement for special Ethiopian olim who are hard to place due to language problems and lack of education. Participating in the program was the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the National Insurance Institute, local authorities and the Jewish Federation of San Francisco. The program was unique in that it related to the entire employment integration process, while creating an incubator that contained all phases of vocational training, supplementary education, and supervision into the workforce. The principles underlying the program included creating continuity between the different phases as well as focusing on placement and supervision while the immigrant is acclimatizing to his job.

Business Entrepreneurship for Ethiopian Olim from 1996

As part of the process of absorbing Ethiopian olim in employment, a great deal of money and effort was invested in developing initiatives for opening small businesses. In 1996 the Netanya Business Development Center (MATI) established the “National Center for Assisting Business and Entrepreneurship among Ethiopian Olim.” The Center was founded in an effort to combine all the information regarding Ethiopian olim in the sphere of entrepreneurship and small businesses, and to serve as a center for learning and the development of unique programs for training the olim. During 1997, MATI - Netanya, together with JDC, operated five courses in business entrepreneurship. In addition, a business-owners club was founded in Tel Aviv, where several encounters were held. Activities included: providing initial and ongoing business advice; holding explanatory meetings for olim from all over the country; preparing business plans for the

olim; a business mentoring project which included pre-business consulting and ongoing mentoring; group mentoring, workshops and courses; and briefings on marketing activities in Amharic that were broadcast over the radio.

A turning point in the sphere of business entrepreneurship took place in 2000, and was characterized by increased activity in the field. The level of interest in the small business track continued to grow. That year, MATI-Netanya opened courses for business entrepreneurship that also included vocational training. About 285 Ethiopian olim took part in the courses, which also included courses for women on family day care centers for young children.

At the end of 2004, the National Center for Business and Entrepreneurship for Ethiopian Olim of MATI-Netanya mapped the businesses of Ethiopian olim in the spices industry. The mapping was conducted with the support of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and JDC, based on the recognition that the spice industry was a leading industry among Ethiopian olim in Israel. The mapping identified the obstacles, deficiencies and challenges faced by these businesses. As a result, the National Center began providing individual assistance to suitable businesses.

From 2005-2007, as a result of the mapping, the Center operated an assistance program to help olim open businesses, providing consultation and support. In 2007, there were approximately 300 businesses operating within the Ethiopian community.

Tevet Employment Initiative

As stated above, with the establishment of Tevet at the end of 2005, the issue of employment for weaker populations, including olim, has been given the highest priority by JDC-Israel.

Ethiopian Olim were also part of this initiative. From an organizational perspective, JDC-Israel had established a new division on the basis of a

partnership between JDC and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. The Tevet Employment Initiative refers to job placement as a tool that aims to remove the individual and his family from the cycle of distress into the main circle of society. Three basic concepts underlie the Initiative's activity: 1) Employment capability – the ability to be accepted at a job and to persevere. This involves a combination of elementary training, supplementary education, and acquiring Hebrew language skills. 2) Employment stability – by removing obstacles while being engaged in a process of experimentation in a job, through supervision of employees in their training and placement, and through the mentoring. 3) Social mobility – acquiring an education or advancement into a public or political position. These will help advance the employees into more prestigious employment with a higher income, thereby helping to advance them socially.

The emphasis on olim in the Tevet Employment Initiative is reflected in the amount of funding devoted to them, out of the budget for the entire target population. The budget for the Initiative for olim for three years of activity – from 2006-2008 – is \$8,146,468. The overall cost of the employment programs is \$14,720,144. The planned number of participants is 13,620 olim - 10,000 of them Ethiopian olim.

The Tevet Employment Initiative continues to operate previous programs for absorption in employment for the community of Ethiopian olim, alongside several new programs:

1. **Eshet Chayil** (see above).
2. **Reshet – Employment Services Network – Employment Incubators** (see above).
3. **Atzmaut (Independence)** – A program that has been in operation since 2001 and is geared to Ethiopian olim who are not part of the workforce. Employment is one component of this holistic program, which deals with the family as an entire unit. The program operates in 10 localities for

Ethiopian olim, and two localities for olim from the Caucasus. It includes 50 families in each location.

4. **Delet Ptucha (Open Door)** – A new program for teaching the Hebrew language, supplementary education, preparation for employment and advancing employees through classes, is aimed at adult olim from Ethiopia, the Caucasus and Bukhara. To date, the program involves some 300 Olim in 10 localities throughout the country, from ages 20 to 50.
5. **Business Entrepreneurship** (see above): The National Center for Business Assistance and Entrepreneurship for Ethiopian Olim was in operation at the end of 2007 in cooperation with and funded by Tevet and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption.

Initiatives for integrating Ethiopian academics into employment:

1. In 2007, in an effort to cope with the difficulties of academic olim in the job market, JDC initiated the **Multicultural Internship Project**. The courses take place at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as part of the curriculum, and combine academic studies with a practical internship. Students attending colleges in Jerusalem can also take part in the internship. Target population: students who are olim – both old and new – from the Ethiopian, Caucasus and Bukhara communities.
2. In addition to activities relating to academics from the various spheres of education, the Tabka Association, in cooperation with Tevet, the Jewish Agency and other agencies, operates the **Olim in Law and Justice** program.

Employment in JDC Activities for the Rehabilitation of the North

Since the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War, JDC – with assistance from the United Jewish Communities (UJC) – has come to the assistance of residents in the north. These activities are focused on localities situated along “the first line of fire” – Safed, Nahariya, Acco, Ma’alot, and Arab and Druze villages. JDC is also active in Haifa. As part of its emergency activities, the Tevet Employment Initiative was also activated, and began operating in the north. Included in the Initiative’s activities were: assistance to small businesses, programs for employment infrastructures (such as an authority to promote employment and transfers), and employment training programs.

Summary

The integration of Ethiopian olim in employment has been accompanied by the severe problems that unskilled workers have encountered in the Israeli job market during the past decade. The level of employment in non-professional jobs among Ethiopian olim is significantly higher relative to Jewish workers in general. In contrast to this, the percentage of workers employed in academic, technical and management positions and in free trade is low. We can connect these figures to the low level of education of Ethiopian olim, compared with the general Jewish population. However, there appears to be a positive trend with regard to education, a rise in the percentage of those completing 12-13 years of schooling, and a drop in the number of uneducated olim.

Despite the numerous obstacles faced by Ethiopian olim in finding employment, such as a lack of education and a poor mastery of Hebrew language skills, it would seem that many olim of all ages and all educational

levels are employed, and the rate of their participation in the work force is on the rise. Nevertheless, during the first half of 2007, statistics noted a low rate of employment and high unemployment rates among Ethiopian olim compared with the entire population. Ethiopian academics are pioneers and a source of hope for the Ethiopian community's economic and social integration. But they are also coping with the many challenges and difficulties facing all Ethiopian olim.

Absorbtion of Ethiopian Olim: Education

In addition to the general difficulties faced by olim from Ethiopia as they are absorbed into Israeli society – such as the profound difference in cultures, unfamiliar behavioral norms, and language difficulties – the children of Ethiopian olim also encounter absorption difficulties in schools and in their integration with their native Israeli peers. The Brookdale Institute processed statistical data from the 1995 census in an effort to examine the demographic structure and social capital of the Ethiopian community. As far as education is concerned, this process produced two key findings:

- A. Many of the adults arrived in Israel with no education, and in some cases were illiterate in their native language. The study assumed that this had an impact on their children's absorption into the education system.
- B. The experiences of most of the immigrant children in the Ethiopian education system were limited in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

The study also yielded important information relating to environmental aspects:

- A. A high proportion of Ethiopian olim live in peripheral areas and impoverished neighborhoods. This influences the opportunities open to them in terms of education, employment, and access to high-quality services.
- B. Ethiopian students are concentrated in a small number of schools, mainly in the State-Religious track and in residential schools.

The educational system was required to prepare itself for the absorption of Ethiopian immigrant students while learning about the complex problems involved, as well as appreciating the difficulties faced both by the absorbees and by the absorbers – schools, teachers, classes, and students. Learning was required both in the pedagogical field – by examining the suitability of existing

curricula and adapting them to meet the needs of the olim and linguistic difficulties in the absorbing society, as well as in the social and cultural spheres – by recognizing the need for teaching staff, therapeutic workers, and teaching the students to understand unfamiliar cultural codes. The Ministry of Education, as the body responsible for educating children in Israel, was required to provide the institutional and educational response to the needs of Ethiopian immigrant children.

JDC-Israel's efforts to help in the absorption process included work in the educational field. In organizational terms, activities relating to education for Ethiopian olim were undertaken by various divisions and spheres within the organization; JDC-Israel did not create a specific division for this purpose. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Amishav – the Assistance Center for Ethiopian Olim – was the address within JDC-Israel for all aspects relating to the absorption and welfare of Ethiopian olim. The first programs developed by Amishav included an educational program in the field of sexual health. This project was operated at the caravan sites, absorption centers, and vocational training centers. During this period, the emphasis was on addressing the urgent needs of the olim in the field of welfare; less attention was paid to the large systems for which the Ministry of Education is responsible.

During the second half of the 1990s, after Operation Solomon, JDC-Israel intensified its efforts to initiate educational programs and projects for Ethiopian immigrant students. The goal was to meet vital educational needs and to promote the projects offered by other bodies. The emphasis was initially placed on adapting existing educational projects to meet the needs of various target groups within the Ethiopian population. For example, the **Mifneh** program for disaffected youths was amended and adapted for the Ethiopian immigrant population in three educational institutions. The **Etgar Early Childhood Program**, in which JDC-Israel is a partner, was also adapted to meet the needs of Ethiopian immigrant families at the caravan sites who

had children in the relevant age group.

According to figures received by JDC-Israel from the Ministry of Education, as of the end of 1993 – almost ten years after Operation Moses – the number of Ethiopian immigrant students was 8,170. Approximately 65 percent of these students were in elementary school, 17 percent in junior high school, and 18 percent in high school. Most of the students (7,626) attended schools under the supervision of the State-Religious stream. The level of academic achievements of most of the students was low. Many of the students were placed in special classes, something that did not contribute to their social integration. The teaching staff in the schools found it difficult to cope with the absorption problems faced by the students and with their unfamiliar culture.

After examining the situation in the field, and in response to the criticism raised by Ethiopian immigrant organizations, JDC-Israel concluded that there was a need to intensify and expand its operations. The process of expansion was undertaken in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, and focused in particular on regions with a high percentage of olim. This decision led to a dramatic change in the scope of JDC-Israel's activities in the educational sphere. JDC-Israel began to see the subject of education within the institutional framework as a legitimate arena for intervention and action, even in cases that did not relate to youth who have dropped out of the system – the organization's classic target population.

In the mid-1990s, JDC-Israel established a special division to focus on educational and immigration issues – the Education and Youth Division. Localized educational projects reaching a limited number of students, and focusing mainly on the caravan sites, were replaced by systemic intervention across a broad geographical field.

Establishment of the Education and Youth Division reflected a new policy: The initial approach had been to address the subject of the absorption of

immigrant children into the educational field while treating the other aspects of their absorption. From this point on, special attention and emphasis were placed on education as one of the overall objectives in the absorption of olim.

Programs developed under the auspices of the Division included special action strategies, professional support services, and cooperation between the school and the community. Some of the programs sought to support children and youth in danger of dropping out, including immigrant youth, while others were specifically intended for children and youth from the Ethiopian community (some of these programs were later expanded to the FSU immigrant population). The underlying perspective of the intervention was to develop programs for children at risk through a broad-based process of influence within the school. The programs sought to secure outputs in diverse fields – not only academically, but also in the emotional, social, and community dimensions.

The first educational intervention program developed by JDC-Israel as part of its efforts to promote the absorption of children of Ethiopian origin in educational institutions was the **Shiluvim** program. Shiluvim (Integrations) constituted an anchor project that reached a broad population. The program addressed all aspects of the school community in order to foster integration among students in the school and between the absorbing and absorbed cultures. The program also combined the use of pedagogic and psychological methods in order to reach each individual student. The main themes were spread over a four-year timeframe in each of the schools participating in the program. The Division was based on a definition of three key spheres of intervention: the pedagogic sphere (with an emphasis on language skills); the social and community sphere (with an emphasis on exposing teachers to Ethiopian culture); and the systemic and organizational sphere (development of management personnel and task teams).

The Ministry of Education, the Religious Education Administration, and JDC-Israel were partners in this program. It operated on a pilot basis from the end

of 1993 (in the Immigrant Integration Division) and was expanded during the second half of the 1990s (under the auspices of the Education and Youth Division) to many other schools around Israel. The target population were students in schools that were absorbing olim. The teachers and ancillary staff in the schools where the program operated constituted a further target population. During the six years of the program (1994-1999), 20,000 students participated in Shiluvim (30 percent of whom were olim). Three thousand staff members from 54 schools absorbing Ethiopian olim participated in the program. Shiluvim enabled immigrant students in the participating schools to make progress and help promote their social integration. Despite this, a significant gap remained between the immigrant students and their native Israeli peers. From the perspective of the JDC-Israel staff who were responsible for developing the program, Shiluvim represented a breakthrough and helped promote the development of additional systemic intervention programs within the institutional education system.

The New Educational Environment Program and the Springboard Program, which were developed on the basis of Shiluvim, sought to secure a broad-based impact. These programs were developed by JDC-Israel with the goal of creating systemic change in schools. The objective was to improve the ability of schools to work in a heterogeneous environment by identifying students with low academic achievements. The New Educational Environment (**Sahah**) Program, which was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Shahaar Division, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs – reflected a social ideology that sought to address the issue of social inequality in Israeli society. This inequality is reflected by the educational gaps between different population groups and in the growing phenomenon of dropouts, including covert dropouts, studies have shown that covert dropout is relatively widespread among Ethiopian immigrant students, who also show a high rate of mobility between schools. The staff members who developed

the program saw as their main objectives the need to reduce this dropout phenomenon and improve academic behavior. Improving academic behavior means reducing the problems inherent in violent behavior and raising the self-image of the students and their sense of belonging. The point of departure was the belief that the educational system constitutes one of the main tools to be applied in the attempt to narrow gaps and address social inequality. Among other aspects, creating a new educational environment required a number of systemic changes within the school. These included developing a flexible learning space, rich in technology, and providing professional support from external staff alongside the school staff.

The program began its operation in 1993 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education: in the remedial classes in comprehensive schools; in the education centers, which are attended by approximately 30,000 students; and in vocational training frameworks under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Social Services, which are attended by some 15,000 underachieving students. In 2005-2006, JDC-Israel phased out its involvement in the program, and full responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Education. The New Educational Environment program's goal was to shape the worldview of all those exposed to its activities on both the individual and the organizational levels. In January 2004, a document was published summarizing the practical knowledge accumulated over years of work in the program, with the intention of inculcating this knowledge among all those with an interest in these activities. On the basis of this program and its underlying principles, JDC-Israel developed a systemic educational program for Ethiopian youth in junior high schools – the **Kesharim Program**. Kesharim seeks to help students advance in the pedagogic, social, and cultural spheres. The program was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Ashalim, the local authorities, and the educational networks. The objectives of the program were organized under three spheres of intervention that combine to influence

the student's world:

- i Family sphere – extending parents' familiarity with their children's learning processes and their involvement in these processes. This aspect also included strengthening the connection between parents and schools.
- i Educational staff – providing educational staff with diagnostic tools for developing a work plan to enhance the efficiency of their educational work and improve the outcomes.
- i Organizational and systemic sphere – the work of the school as a learning organization, and mapping needs relating to the integration of students.

One of the channels of activity of Kesharim was **the Community Channel** – a process by which counselors from within the Ethiopian community provided training for a group of parents. This group became a learning group and was exposed to the conceptual world of the informal education system. The group also learned to recognize the structure of the educational institutions attended by their children, the different figures in the institution, and the diverse possibilities and streams it included. These activities helped strengthen the connection between the parents and the school and encouraged the parents to become involved and take the initiative in their children's education. This channel of activity later became a separate program in its own right and obtained considerable success. The Community Channel program led to a breakthrough in the development of programs involving and helping parents, as well as programs focusing on the improvement of language skills. During the period 1996-2003, the Kesharim program operated in 24 schools in 12 localities. According to a report by the Brookdale Institute, the main achievements of the program were: the activation of learning centers in schools; the establishment of training workshops for parents from the Ethiopian community; and the provision of guidance for teachers in psycho-pedagogic aspects and in the field of alternative didactics. The program also led to an improvement in the

level of academic motivation among immigrant students.

Educational Programs in Special Frameworks

The Education and Youth Division of JDC-Israel also developed additional programs in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in order to provide a flexible and comprehensive response to the needs of students at risk. The response was provided both by means of partial participation in a special framework alongside continued participation in the regular home class, and by the provision of social, therapeutic, or academic support.

The Malei Program (Alternative Academic Space) includes the establishment of special units for disaffected children or children who have adaptive difficulties. The units enable the children to receive special attention from an interdisciplinary team on the basis of their personal needs. The program was developed for all students attending junior high school and are in danger of dropping out, including Ethiopian immigrant students. The work in the **Malei** program is individual and therapeutic in nature, and takes place within a specific physical space in the school. Each of the participants is allocated physical space (e.g. a room), special staff, and a clearly defined timetable. The program was introduced in 1996 and is still operating in 2008.

The Ogen (Anchor) Program strives to reduce the dropout rate among immigrant students

Unlike the New Educational Environment and **Malei** programs, **the Ogen** program was intended from the outset for immigrant students, approximately 65 of whom were from the Ethiopian community. The program was developed by the Ministry of Education and the JDC-Israel Education and Youth Division, and was intended to reduce the dropout rate among students in junior high schools with a high proportion of immigrant students. The program seeks to locate these students as soon as possible after they begin junior high school

and to activate a preventative intervention program before the dropout process begins. The program operates by encouraging positive characteristics within the students themselves and within their environment, and by providing an organizational structure including a school coordinator, the **Ogen** staff, and additional empowering educational forces. The program began to operate in 2003. In the 2007-8 school year, the program operates in 150 schools and residential schools around Israel.

The **Ofek LeBagrut** (Matriculation Horizon) Program is an additional program that was specifically developed for Ethiopian students. The program is an initiative of JDC-Israel and the Israel Association of Community Centers. Its objectives are to prevent dropping, out raise motivation, provide personal empowerment, foster social integration, and expand the circle of immigrant students eligible for a matriculation certificate. This will enable the students to become integrated in academic studies in institutions of higher education. The program was originally developed for Ethiopian immigrant students in senior high schools. Over time, it was extended to include students from the FSU. The program has been operating since 2000; in 2007, it operated in 13 localities that have a high percentage of olim. Approximately 2,800 students participated, including approximately 1,000 students of Ethiopian origin. Of the students who graduated from the program in 2006-7, 75 percent were eligible for a full matriculation certificate. Approximately half the participants secured a good matriculation certificate enabling them to study in academic institutions. Two additional tracks were added to the original program. The **Pirhe Ofek** Program is a pedagogic and social program that provides a second opportunity for students to study for their matriculation examination; **Ofek Mitnadev** offers **Ofek** students a chance to volunteer in their own communities, where they help youngsters and senior citizens.

Another group of programs are the volunteer-based programs to help

immigrant children.

Gamla (Pensioners For Ethiopians) is a well-established program developed by JDC-Israel and Eshel – The Association for the Planning and Development of Services for the Aged in Israel and founded by the Israeli government and JDC-Israel. This program fosters a unique cooperation between the target population of the Education and Youth Division and the target population of Eshel. Over the years, this target population was extended to include olim from other communities, as well as Arab and Druze students, the children of foreign workers, and “sabara” children from weak socioeconomic backgrounds. All these groups face difficulties in acquiring basic skills and need assistance in their studies. The program sought to provide individual assistance for students, and enable them to improve their academic achievements, thereby reinforcing their self-esteem and promoting their social integration. The program operates in 44 local authorities and includes some 1,600 volunteers and 1,800 students, many of whom are from the Ethiopian community.

In addition to developing educational programs for Ethiopian olim, JDC-Israel also initiated the creation of two major organizational frameworks: **The Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Ethiopian Olim and the PACT Program.**

The Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Ethiopian Olim was established in 1997.

This body was intended to serve as a forum for professional educational thought, to provide a framework for addressing problems from a holistic perspective and developing responses for this population. The initiation and establishment of this body constituted a turning point in the work of JDC-Israel within the Ethiopian community in Israel. From the organization’s standpoint, this turning point relates to the emphasis on activities to promote the integration of the community in educational issues, alongside diverse social and employment

aspects. The Coalition brought together the full range of government, local, and voluntary organizations involved in providing services for children and youth from the Ethiopian community and for their families. The overall goal was to improve educational and cultural activities, to provide the members of the community with tools for social mobility, and to accelerate their integration into Israeli society. JDC-Israel led this broad-based intervention effort.

The Coalition operated through five professional subcommittees devoted to different age groups, including early childhood – the first time JDC-Israel had been specifically involved in this sector. The committees focused mainly on collecting information, defining needs, and setting priorities. The main achievements of the Coalition related to the establishment of infrastructures on the national and local levels. These infrastructures enabled the development of programs and fostered cooperation among all the partner bodies.

Under the auspices of the Coalition, JDC-Israel developed a unique program – **the Parents and Children Together program (PACT) for the advancement of young children of Ethiopian origin and their families**. The program was intended for towns with a high percentage of Ethiopian olim. JDC-Israel cooperated with ten Jewish federations, government ministries, local authorities, and Ethiopian NGOs in the operation of the program. PACT was initiated in 1998; in 2007, the program operated in 14 localities. More than 13,000 students of Ethiopian origin have benefited from the program, along with some 5,000 parents and hundreds of professionals from different echelons. The principles guiding the activities in the program are: to develop activities geared to meet the unique needs of each individual and each group; to promote parental involvement as the main individuals responsible for their children’s educational process; to promote integration and coordination among all the bodies active in the system; to empower the Ethiopian community and to strengthen the reference to its culture and heritage as a source of learning and pride. Dozens of programs operate under the umbrella heading of PACT. These include day frameworks,

family intervention programs, and enrichment programs. The program was expanded to include **PACT+** for first and second graders. PACT created an umbrella structure for the existing early childhood programs, developed new responses, and brought together the different bodies and systems involved in this work. This includes those involved on the governmental and municipal levels, as well as the various organizations and NGOs active in the field. PACT also enhanced an awareness within the Ethiopian community of the existing services, and provided the community with a single address in each locality for issues relating to early childhood. JDC-Israel sees the creation of PACT and attention to early childhood issues among the Ethiopian community as a significant professional achievement.

JDC-Israel's activities in the field of education for Ethiopian olim identified the integral need to integrate treatment for children of all ages while also paying attention to their families. This takes place on the basis of a perspective that relates to the needs of the family as a whole, and on an understanding of the range of difficulties and problems faced by the community as a result of the traumatic transition which it has undergone.

As part of the effort to influence the target population on an individual, family, institutional, and community level, the framework was extended to include students of all ages. The framework now includes all the programs active in the field relating to children, from birth through the end of their senior year in high school.

Absorbption of Ethiopian Olim: Leadership

Traditional Leadership

The traditional leadership of the Ethiopian community comprised two groups in Ethiopia – the Kesim and the Shmaglitz. The Kesim served as spiritual leaders and performed the religious ceremonies of the community, including weddings and divorces, as well as issued rulings on all religious matters. The Shmaglitz – the elders of the community – operated alongside the Kesim in the area of internal law, and mediated disputes between individuals and families.

With their immigration to Israel, the status of the Kesim was weakened. One of the main reasons for this were the doubts raised by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate regarding the Jewish status of the community. Moreover, the Kesim were not initially recognized by the Chief Rabbinate as a religious authority empowered to issue Halachic rulings. The Kesim were also prevented from officiating at marriage ceremonies and divorce proceedings. The status, function, and authority of the Shmaglitz were also damaged due to the disintegration of the rural and family structure of the community and its dispersion to various localities around Israel. This process created a vacuum in the leadership of the community, weakened the possibility of preserving its cultural and spiritual heritage as well as transmitting it to the younger generation.

One of the tasks facing the institutions responsible for absorbing the Ethiopian olim was to help find a solution to the leadership crisis. Their first tasks were to rehabilitate and preserve the status of the spiritual leadership and to nurture young spiritual leaders with a firm grasp of modern Israeli society. JDC-Israel took on this task and was a partner in two programs geared to train spiritual leaders. One program trained Kesim during the period of 1985-1987, and the second was a training program for young rabbis during the period between 1988-1994.

The **Kesim training program** was implemented soon after the immigration of Ethiopian Jews in Operation Moses. The program aimed to train the Kesim to serve as spiritual leaders of the community within the framework of the local rabbinate. Training took place at the Meir Institute, a religious educational institution operating in the spirit of the Religious Zionist stream, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Absorption, and the Israeli Chief Rabbinate. The program included the study of the Hebrew language and issues in Judaism, as well as training of the Kesim as **shochtim** (ritual slaughterers). Their training as **shochtim** enabled them to regain a level of authority they had enjoyed before the community moved to Israel, and constituted partial compensation for the injury to their status. In the period between 1988-1990, the Meir Institute also ran an enrichment program which included the study of the weekly Torah portion, Halacha, the prayer book, and the philosophy of the Jewish sages. In 1988, eight Kesim were integrated into the religious councils. Some saw this development as a breakthrough, while others argued that the achievements were limited in scope, since the “integration” of the Kesim in the religious councils left them without genuine authority. Nevertheless, the training helped the Kesim become better acquainted with the rabbinical religious world, which had hitherto been alien to them.

By the end of 2005, there were 75 Kesim throughout Israel. Of these, 45 were trained in Ethiopia and their status is unchallenged. Some 30 others came to Israel while they were in the middle of their studies for ordination as Kesim; they were ordained in Israel by veteran Kesim. Although the functions of the Kesim have for all intents of purpose, been restricted to running festival ceremonies and mourning rites, Ethiopian olim still consider them to be the supreme spiritual leaders of the community.

The **training program for young rabbis** was a joint initiative of JDC-Israel, the Meir Institute in Jerusalem, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The program

sought to nurture young spiritual leadership alongside the traditional leadership of the Kesim. The program was introduced on the basis of the perspective that these young leaders had their roots in Ethiopia, but were focused on the absorbing society. They were also in their physical and intellectual prime. This leadership could create a bridge between the past world of the olim, with its religious customs and Jewish traditions, and the rabbinical and Halachic world. The leaders of the program believed that by nurturing spiritual leadership among young people ordained in Israel and from among the younger Kesim they could help members of the community during the adaptation process. This would also help them reconcile themselves to the new reality while maintaining their unique heritage and culture. It was decided to launch a groundbreaking program to train rabbis from among the Ethiopian immigrant population.

At a festive ceremony in 1995, ordination certificates were awarded to 12 graduates from a group that initially comprised 25 students. On the basis of their ordination, these graduates were placed on religious councils in the localities in which they lived, and were granted the authority to run wedding ceremonies for community members in these localities. The young rabbis now play a significant role in the spiritual and social life of the community in the neighborhoods in which they work. The program's achievements include the involvement of young rabbis in absorbing olim from Operation Solomon. This involvement was reflected, inter alia, in their participation in training programs for these olim. It is important to emphasize, however, that a section of the community sees these rabbis as "Western" implants removed from their authentic roots. Tension still exists between these rabbis and the Kesim, the traditional leaders.

Social Leadership

JDC-Israel continues to be involved in programs which nurture social

leadership. Its efforts to help create such leadership within the Ethiopian community was consistent with the policy of JDC-Israel during the second half of the 1990s, when the emphasis shifted from individual programs to systemic programs relating to all aspects of life. These programs sought to promote advancement in the social, educational, and employment fields on the basis of a broad-based community approach. Programs included **Leadership Development for Women, Nurturing Employment Leadership** (as part of the Eshet Chayil Program), and the **Aleh Program**. The central goal of Aleh is to nurture young leaders who emerge from within the community. These young leaders empower themselves and, in so doing, empower the entire community. The young leaders are involved in various programs run by JDC-Israel and its partners with the goal of advancing the community and helping to promote social integration in various spheres.

Leadership among Ethiopian Immigrant Women

Women's leadership cannot be taken for granted among the Ethiopian community, and particularly so among the traditional spiritual leadership of the community. The JDC-Israel staff who promoted the program were aware of the difficulties, but believed in the ability of women with leadership potential to help raise the status of women both inside the community and in Israeli society as a whole, thereby helping the community progress. The program operated during the period 1997-2003 on a national basis, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Almaya (the Association for the Advancement of the Family and Child in the Ethiopian Community in Israel), and the Israel Women's Network. A program for developing local leadership was later added. The training programs for women leaders emphasized the personal empowerment of the participants, addressing the question of self-esteem by emphasizing respect for traditional culture and for the themes brought by the women themselves. After completing

their training, each participant was required to establish a community pilot project in their locality. The projects developed included helping women at a battered women's shelter and a sex education project for young Ethiopian girls at a local school.

The main achievements of the program were the empowerment of the women and their reinforcement as a group. The process of internal reinforcement also influenced their attitude toward their children's education, among other issues. This personal empowerment had an impact on the community at large, leading to minor changes within the confines of the community. Women who had previously been involved in community action (mainly in the field of mediation), once again became active and more confident following this training. Women leaders in the Ethiopian community are no longer seen as "out of the ordinary", and an increasing number of women are taking part in social action and involvement.

Employment leadership among Ethiopian immigrant women: This program is one of the constituent programs of the long-running Eshet Chayil (Woman of Valor) Program. The program addresses the employment of women. In the final stage of the program, leading women in the community undergo training relating to employment leadership. The goal at this stage is to train the women to run the process of work placement by themselves and to encourage and motivate their peers to become integrated into the job market and to achieve progress in this field. The members of the group collect information about available jobs and work together with professional bodies in the locality. The women serve as leaders for their peers in issues relating to employment and help solve various problems.

The training prepares the women to cope with questions regarding employment issues, run meetings and discussions, on a group level, in committees, and in work with the community. The employment leadership component of Eshet

Chayil has achieved some impressive achievements, such as the operation of a similar program for men in the Avichail program. Since 2005, the scope of this Program has been gradually reduced.

Aleh (Working For the Public). This program, which operated during the period of 1996-2005, was developed by JDC-Israel in cooperation with the Ministries of Absorption, Labor and Social Affairs and the IACC. **Aleh** operated for a decade in the localities that absorbed the majority of Ethiopian olim. The program emphasized the empowerment of the community through the nurturing and support of young leaders, as well as the work of groups of activists in the different localities. These activists have taken responsibility and launched independent initiatives while trying to become integrated into the bodies that make decisions relating to the life of the Ethiopian community and the locality in general.

The areas of involvement of the **Aleh** volunteers were diverse. In the field of education, volunteers were active in efforts to bridge the gap between parents, students, and teachers in schools; in organizing ancillary lessons for students on an individual or group basis; in arranging personal mentors for children through volunteers from the community or through students active in the Perach program; in assisting youngsters who were not attending any academic framework; in opening or running a computer room for students in the locality; in encouraging the use of the local library; and in running clubs. Other areas included the bond between parents and children, and involvement in organizing traditional and social events in the Ethiopian community.

Under the leadership of the program director, regional coordinators took upon themselves the responsibility for locating counselors from among educated young people in the community. The coordinators organized training workshops while enabled the young participants to work as community leaders. They

coordinated activist groups in each locality. The size of the group depended on the size of the locality and the extent to which the Ethiopian community had been consolidated. In the main cities – Haifa, Beersheva, and Rehovot – the number of activists was considerable. Activities began on a local level and later extended to a city-wide level. This was reflected in the creation of the **Municipal Forum** – a body that included representatives of the NGOs in the Ethiopian community, the local authority, civil servants, and **Aleh** activists. An essential condition for the success of **Aleh** as a community-wide program was cooperation between the head of the local authority and the program leaders. This was manifested by encouraging activists to work independently; in helping provide vocational training for the program counselor; in allocating a skilled community worker to serve as a program liaison; and in allocating necessary resources.

At the height of its activity, the program operated in 11 localities and employed 30 local counselors. The emergence of voluntary leaders from within the Ethiopian community who were active on behalf of the community on a city-wide level, raised the self-esteem of the activists and, in some cases, of the Ethiopian community in which they worked. Several **Aleh** activists now serve as members on local councils, and others work as consultants for the heads of authorities of the Ethiopian absorption desks.

The leadership development programs for Ethiopian olim reflect JDC-Israel's vision for their social integration. This includes the transfer of responsibility from the external bodies providing assistance and support based on their abilities and understanding of the situation, to the members of the community themselves and, in particular, to young people.

Absorbption of Ethiopian Olim: Health Needs

The Ethiopian immigrant community in Israel constitutes a distinct ethnic group that has its own specific health needs. The olim came to Israel with a system of beliefs, behaviors, and expectations that were suited to traditional Ethiopian society, and which differ completely from the accepted norms in the Israeli medical system. Accordingly, attention to the absorption of the Ethiopian olim required a distinct approach in the field of medical treatment.

JDC-Israel began to be active in health-related issues for olim in the mid-1980s, immediately after Operation Moses. These activities continue to this day.

In the early 1990s, before the main wave of immigration under Operation Solomon, JDC-Israel was active in health-related issues in Ethiopia prior to the olim coming to Israel.

The principles guiding JDC-Israel's activities for olim in the health sphere are based mainly on a holistic perspective of the immigrants' vital needs, and of the health system in the context of the weaker population groups in Israeli society.

Key subjects requiring attention included the need to ensure the efficient and proper use of the health services offered by the system. The lack of proficiency in Hebrew, combined with cultural differences and their lack of familiarity with basic health concepts in Israeli society, were among the factors that impeded the immigrants' ability to benefit from the available health services. The same factors also made it harder for the health system to provide services for Ethiopian olim in a proper manner. In order to promote these issues, JDC-Israel developed programs and forms of intervention adapted to Ethiopian culture. The goal was to promote health habits, improve their contacts with the health services, and ensure the proper use of these services.

The activities in these areas were implemented in coordination and cooperation with the state health system, which is responsible for all Israeli citizens.

JDC-Israel's contacts with the olim, its flexibility, and its ability to recruit resources in order to meet vital and immediate needs, are all assets that the organization was able to share with the large state health system. This was reflected in the development of programs in cooperation with specific professional bodies involved in each particular area.

In the early 1990s, JDC-Israel launched informational programs on various health issues for the Ethiopian immigrant community. Subjects included: dental hygiene, preventing accidents in the home, proper nutrition, issues relating to breastfeeding and care of babies, the use of medication, and so on. One important subject is that of infectious diseases - particularly AIDS and includes means of prevention. These programs were limited in scope, however, and lacked a systemic perspective. Most olim were living in temporary accommodations during this period (in absorption centers) and the programs were adapted for these frameworks.

One of the programs launched as part of the JDC-Israel Infectious Diseases Project was **Your Life in Your Hands** (1992-1996). This was a training program for the prevention of infectious diseases and for health education, planned and implemented as a partnership between JDC-Israel, the Ministry of Health, the School of Public Health at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Clalit Health Services, and JAFI. As part of the program, extensive ancillary materials were prepared for the purpose of education and information, including audio cassettes, training booklets, and training kits which included colored posters with headings in Amharic for work with audiences in the community. In order to reach as many olim as possible, this material was published via various means, including radio and television broadcasts in Amharic. During the years 1993-1998, the **Open Line** Amharic broadcasts were introduced in order to answer questions about AIDS. This project was a partnership between JDC-

Israel and the School of Public Health at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. JDC-Israel also organized seminars and in-service training on the subject of infectious diseases; distributed educational material for health trainers and mediators; and organized seminars for medical staff and professional volunteers involved in the activities of various informational projects.

JDC-Israel was a partner in developing a multicultural educational program for Ethiopian immigrant youth in particular, and for immigrant youth in general. The program – **Living Bridge (Gesher Lakesher)** (1995-1997) – addressed subjects relating to adolescence, intimacy, and sexuality in the context of the cross-cultural transition. Counselors participated in a special sex education training program for immigrant youth and in cross-cultural courses before working with groups of youngsters at residential schools around Israel. The goal was to provide young olim with tools for coping with the specific challenges of adolescence and with their entry into the world of intimacy and sexuality, against the backdrop of the cross-cultural encounter they were experiencing. The program provided tools and knowledge on ways to cope with intimacy and sexuality in the context of immigrant youth, and also helped legitimize discussion of these issues. The program yielded two publications and was recognized outside Israel.

Within the community, JDC-Israel also operated an informational and counseling program for young olim (1996-1997). JDC-Israel joined the **Open Door** Program – community centers providing counseling on family planning and ways to avoid unwanted pregnancy. These centers were transformed into **Community Counseling Centers for Young Olim**, accessible to young people from the Ethiopian and FSU immigrant communities. The centers were operated by social workers, teachers, and counselors working on a voluntary basis. The volunteers participated in training programs with an emotional and cultural perspective. The **Hafuch Al Hafuch** Program (from 1998) established counseling centers designed to have the appearance of a cafe. The centers

address various issues, including sex education. This initiative is based on the development of the counseling centers, with special emphasis on cultural aspects. The program includes twenty centers around Israel operated by Elem – the Association for Youth at Risk. The local authorities, government ministries, and National Insurance Institute are all partners in the project. Alongside informational and educational efforts to prevent the spread of AIDS, an additional channel has also been developed in the field of treatment. The **Treatment Adapter** Program has established a new function in the AIDS treatment centers. This function is based on a decision taken at the conference of the directors of these centers and the directors of the district health offices initiated by JDC-Israel. The project is a joint endeavor of JDC-Israel, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Absorption. The “treatment adapters” were integrated into the work of the AIDS centers and operated in a sensitive and discrete manner. The function of the adapter is to mediate and build connections between the AIDS treatment center, the health office, and the family. Workers chosen from within the Ethiopian community underwent training and began to work at the AIDS centers. The adapters served as intercultural mediators, helped locate carriers in the Ethiopian immigrant community, and encouraged them to come to the center for treatment. The adapters’ work with the family reflected a holistic emphasis on the needs of the entire family facing this unique challenge. In 1996 the Ministry of Health took over full responsibility for the program. A special committee, established in 1996, was appointed to discuss the level of awareness in the health system to the AIDS problem among Ethiopian immigrants and the resources invested to address this problem.

During the 1990s, most of the olim moved into permanent homes throughout Israel, and the responsibility for the field of infectious diseases was transferred to the Ministry of Health. Since then, efforts have concentrated on health

programs for Ethiopian olim within the community on three axes: **1. Community health promotion (particularly primary medicine); 2. Developing the field of chronic diseases; 3. Mental health.**

- 1. The Tene Yestalin** program (in Amharic – “may God grant you health”) operated during the period of 1994-1997. The program developed training materials on the subjects of women’s health, family planning, and sexual health, as well as dental hygiene and the proper use of medication. One of the main themes of the program was to provide workers in the health system with information on the perception of health in the Ethiopian community and on other aspects of cultural divergence. During the first half of the 1990s, a study was undertaken, with funding from JDC-Israel, to examine traditional healing methods and the use of traditional medicine in Israel; the perception and definition of sickness by patients, the impact of the process of immigration to Israel on health, and the mutual relations between the olim and the Israeli health system. The results of the study yielded informational materials, for use by health educators and others in this program. At its peak, the program employed 12 health workers at 12 sites around Israel. The findings of an evaluation study of the program showed that in addition to providing knowledge on the various health issues, it also led to real change in daily behavior in these fields.
2. As a continuation for the Tene Yestalin program, but from a different perspective and with an emphasis on chronic illnesses among olim, the **Refuah Shlemah** program was developed (1998-2001) by JDC-Israel and the Ministry of Health. This program has since been inculcated into the system and continues to operate for the benefit of olim. Refuah Shlemah is an intervention program at primary clinics operated during the encounter between olim and health service providers. The program seeks to improve the contact between Ethiopian olim and medical service

providers and to promote immigrants' health. The forms of intervention used in order to secure the program objectives relate to three target populations:

1. Professionals treating Ethiopian olim – training is provided within a dynamic in-service framework with the participation of veteran mediators.
2. Mediators from the Ethiopian community – training is provided by means of an intensive professional course; the mediators are then placed in HMO clinics serving a high proportion of Ethiopian olim.
3. Members of the community receiving treatment in the clinics – groups are opened and receive training on relevant health issues.

At its peak, the program operated in 16 clinics serving a high proportion of Ethiopian olim and provided services for over 20,000 people, including those insured by Clalit, Maccabi, and Leumit health services. Evaluation studies show that the program resulted in an improvement in the interpersonal bond between physician and patient. The studies also showed an inclination to adopt a more balanced diet, which is particularly important in the case of diabetic patients. There was also a heightened awareness at the clinics in which the program operated regarding weight and physical activity. The program created change in the behavior of the olim at the clinics, helping to reduce pressure and to prepare for medical examinations, teaching them how to use medication properly, how to schedule appointments in advance, to come on time and follow the physician's instructions. All these changes were particularly evident among the young and middle aged patients.

4. In the field of **mental health**, JDC-Israel's activities related to two channels.
 1. Systemic change in the provision of services for olim in this field, where distinct cultural differences were seen between olim and the absorbing society, therefore requiring special action.
 2. The collection and development of knowledge in order to benefit those providing services, and enable them to enhance their understanding of the mental needs and problems of Ethiopian

olim. From 1986 to 1988, JDC-Israel supported the development of a mental health education program for youngsters from the Ethiopian community. The program included four studies on such subjects as alienation and cultural bereavement, depression and decisiveness, and a study on the difficulties encountered by Ethiopian youngsters hospitalized in psychiatric wards. In the 1990s, a **study on the high rates of suicide** among Ethiopian olim was undertaken in cooperation with the Falk Institute for Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences. In 1993, on the basis of the findings of this study, as well as reports from the field on the difficulties encountered in treating Ethiopian olim, JDC-Israel and the Falk Institute undertook a study designed to help physicians locate Ethiopian olim suffering from mental problems and who presented themselves at primary health clinics with classic symptoms. The study examined ways in which the olim expressed their mental distress, the differences between the perception and the severity of the complaint among non-Ethiopian and Ethiopian patients, and patterns of use of Western and traditional medicine among olim with mental problems. The main findings of the study included the recognition of a substantial gap between complaints by patients and the significance they attached to these complaints along with the ways in which these were perceived by the medical staff. It also emerged that the olim prefer traditional medicine in cases of mental distress.

Following the study, JDC-Israel participated in the preparation of a culturally sensitive **psychiatric screening tool** for the early identification of mental distress among Ethiopian olim. The development of the tool included a comparative survey in Israel and Ethiopia in cooperation with the Netherlands-Israel Foundation for Research in the Third World. During the period of research, JDC-Israel and the Falk Institute issued two publications: **1. A Lexicon of Mental Health Terms for Ethiopian Olim in Israel**, which proved extremely useful in understanding the concepts of mental health in their different variations.

2. A Report on Encounters with Traditional Healers in the Ethiopian Immigrant Community.

Alongside studies in the field of mental health, JDC-Israel was also involved in **in-service training programs for health and welfare workers**. In 1994, JDC-Israel and the Ministry of Health held an international symposium on the subject of Intercultural Issues in Mental Health: The Ethiopian Population. On the basis of the conclusions of the studies, JDC-Israel, the Falk Institute, and the Department of Psychology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem developed a **Program to Reinforce and Develop Mental Health Services for the Ethiopian Immigrant Population** (1995-1997). The goal of this program was to train health and welfare workers caring for olim from Ethiopia. In-service training was held by mental health experts and dozens of professionals participated.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, JDC-Israel developed a special pilot program for **Treating Trauma Victims** for Ethiopian immigrant women. This initiative was a response to the realization that women were suffering from distress due to traumatic experiences undergone during their immigration to Israel. The program included a workshop consisting of 13 sessions designed to provide psychotherapeutic support and a forum for the participants to discuss the traumas they experienced during their journey from Ethiopia to Israel. The program directors reported that the pilot program was successful. The program was documented in a publication issued in 1999 entitled **Speaking About Trauma – Group Therapy for Ethiopian Olim**. This program was the last one in the field of mental health for Ethiopian olim in which JDC-Israel was directly involved.

Health Programs as a Component in Family and Community Programs

The **PACT program for Ethiopian immigrant children and families** is one of the flagship endeavors of JDC-Israel on behalf of Ethiopian olim. The program includes **health centers** that operate as part of the services developed with the various partners working for this community. The development of this model was consonant with the conceptual approach of the PACT program – to use existing services and adapt them to meet the needs of the Ethiopian immigrant community, with the goal of meeting the unique needs of this population. The program, which operates at health centers in the Mother and Child clinics, aims to locate developmental, health, and nutritional needs among young children by guiding and activating their mothers. The program also includes preventative activities based on the nutritional monitoring of the children. The program has been expanded into pre-schools.

The health centers program operates in all 13 localities in which the PACT program is found and at over 40 Mother and Child clinics providing services for Ethiopian olim. The program employs **health promotion mediators** – women who themselves come from the Ethiopian community, vocational therapists, communications clinicians, nutritionists, and developmental therapists.

The **Atzmaut** program promotes groups of Ethiopian families and currently operates in ten centers around Israel. It includes a **health program developed in health centers and Mother and Child clinics**. The goal is to improve the interaction between medical service providers and the service recipients, and to promote healthy behavior among Ethiopian olim in selected fields. Training is provided on health-related issues in cooperation with the mediators and professionals. The project also provides training for medical personnel on multicultural aspects.

Intercultural mediation in the field of health, which is integrated in the health and Atzmaut centers, is a further example of a JDC-Israel development in this

field. The mediation is intended to help bridge the wide gaps between the cultural worlds involved, and to promote understanding between olim and the medical staff who provide care for them. The mediators (mainly women) were selected from among members of the community. They have been in Israel for many years and are well integrated both in Israeli culture and in the Ethiopian community. The mediators underwent special training and were placed in various JDC-Israel health programs. They run workshops on various health issues for olim, initiate informational meetings in response to local needs, and help run workshops for medical personnel.

In conclusion, an overall perspective of the areas of JDC-Israel's activities on behalf of weak populations in general shows that the relative weight of health programs is quite limited. Issues such as employment, children at risk, the elderly, and promoting immigrant families in various fields of life currently form the central focus of concern. As noted, JDC-Israel's involvement in health issues relating to the Ethiopian olim now continues through two broad-based programs – PACT and Atzmaut. The health dimension of these programs is one of a wide range of issues which they address.

Conclusion

The question of the involvement of organizations in large and complex state systems and in issues of a strongly professional nature has also been raised in the context of JDC-Israel's interventions in the fields of employment, education, and health, all of which are the responsibility of state systems.

JDC-Israel's policy in this aspect has been consistent over the years. The organization seeks to develop programs and services for Ethiopian olim in cooperation with state bodies, and to operate these programs. It does so at least in the initial stage – the model stage – and sometimes thereafter. The aspiration is that the programs will be successfully absorbed, and the

system responsible for providing services for citizens as a whole will assume responsibility for implementation.

In the year 2000, two partnerships were established between JDC-Israel and governmental bodies. In general most of the programs for olim are now operated through these partnerships:

- Absorption Foundation – a strategic partnership was developed between JDC-Israel, the Ministry of Absorption, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Education in order to develop services for olim and foster integration between olim and native Israelis while identifying personal and community needs.
- “Tevet” – Dynamism in Employment. This is an employment project established by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Employment and JDC-Israel. The program is intended for disadvantaged members of society who have never been active in the job market, including new olim and particularly those from Ethiopia and the Caucasus.