

From Ethiopia to Israel migration and ritual roles of Beta Israel women

Author(s): Lisa Anteby-Yemini and Helen Tomlinson

Source: *Clio (English Edition)*, No. 44 (2016), pp. 155-168

Published by: Editions Belin

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26485961>

Accessed: 12-10-2018 14:09 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Editions Belin is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Clio (English Edition)*

From Ethiopia to Israel: migration and ritual roles of Beta Israel women

Lisa ANTEBY-YEMINI

The Jews of Ethiopia, more often known as Falashas, did not use this name, which they considered pejorative, and instead called themselves Beta Israel or the “House of Israel”. Their origins remain obscure and lend themselves to numerous debates between rabbis and historians, in which two theories are pitted against one another: that they are an ancient Jewish group, exiled at an unknown period in time, or indeed a lost tribe of Israel which, it is argued, migrated to Ethiopia; or that they are an indigenous Ethiopian group which, at an undetermined period in time, is thought to have adopted a specific form of Judaism, or else was a dissident and Judaizing group of the Ethiopian Church.¹ After initial contact with Protestant European missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, who considered them a Jewish group, they were encountered a few years later by Western Jews, who attempted to reform their archaic Judaism. It was not until 1975 that the Beta Israel were recognized as Jews by the Rabbinat of Israel, paving the way to their immigration, particularly through two major repatriation operations (Operation Moses in 1984-1985, from Sudan, and Operation Solomon in 1991, from Addis Ababa). Since then, immigration from Ethiopia has continued and above all comprises “Falashmoras”, former Beta Israel who converted to Christianity, sometimes several generations ago. Their entry into Israel is permitted on grounds of family reunification, and they follow an accelerated conversion programme as a community of Jewish

¹ Kaplan 1992.

origin undergoing a “return to Judaism”. Today, the Ethiopian community living in Israel numbers over 135,000 people.

Among the studies devoted to the place of women in Judaism, few have examined the religious life of women originating from non-Western societies, besides those by Susan Sered or Lisa Gilad on Jewish women of Kurdish and Yemeni origin, respectively.² Moreover, there exists practically no analysis of Ethiopian Jewish women and their relationship to religion. However, owing to extremely elaborate purity practices relating to menstruation and childbirth, several studies have focused on this question in the Ethiopian context³ as well as on the changes undergone in Israel.⁴ In addition, other research mentions these purity rituals from a transgenerational perspective,⁵ through fertility models,⁶ or via the study of their role in the group’s ethnic construction in Israel⁷ and their everyday life in Ethiopia and in Israeli society.⁸ Though studies on menstrual taboos across the world often describe them as a form of subordination to the patriarchal structure, more recent research considers them as elements of personal and social identity offering a form of power to the woman, and sometimes even a means of resistance to male domination.⁹

Consequently, we will begin by exploring the absence of female functions in the Beta Israel religion and the invisibility of women themselves in the sphere of worship in Ethiopia. Then, in contrast, we will examine the ritual roles ascribed to women in lifecycle ceremonies and purity rites, in the light of the expertise and power that these specifically female functions granted. To conclude, we will attempt to understand how the upheavals in female purity rites as a result of migration to Israel are negotiated in a host society in which the Beta Israel practices, founded on a literal reading of biblical text,

² Sered 1992; Gilad 1989.

³ Kahana 1977; Salamon 1999.

⁴ Anteby 1999; Cicurel & Sharaby 2007; Trevisan Semi 1985.

⁵ Leitman 1995.

⁶ Phillips 1998.

⁷ Dolève-Gandelman 1990.

⁸ Shabtay & Kacen 2005; Weil 2004.

⁹ Cicurel & Sharaby 2007.

are at odds with rabbinical laws. These conflicts encompass significant identity issues for the women, as well as for the Ethiopian-Israeli community as a whole.¹⁰

The absence of female roles in the Beta Israel religion

The Beta Israel practised a distinctive form of Judaism, starting with the well-known absence of Hebrew: most of their books and liturgy were in Ge'ez, the ancient liturgical language of Ethiopia, with passages occasionally in Agaw dialects, an indigenous Cushitic language. Their sacred book, which they call the *Orit*, is written in Ge'ez in a version identical to that of the Ethiopian Church. Moreover, there exists a corpus of Beta Israel literary works, composed between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries, in which one finds Christian, Muslim and Jewish influences. Lastly, they possessed no written text of biblical commentaries or rabbinical debates, and were unaware of the Mishnah, the Talmud and the other sources of Jewish Oral Law.

As such, Shabbat was scrupulously observed among the Beta Israel, with work of any kind proscribed. But, unlike rabbinical Judaism, they were obliged, among other things, to extinguish all fires in the village and to immerse themselves in a river before sunset on the Friday so as to purify themselves; consequently, sexual relations between spouses were forbidden until the Saturday evening. One of the Ethiopian-Israeli women interviewed during my research interpreted this practice in the following terms:

If my husband has immersed himself in the river before Shabbat and that evening we have sexual relations, he cannot go to the house of prayer on the Saturday morning. That is why we sleep in separate beds.

These laws, similar to those observed in some Jewish sects like the Samaritans or the Karaites, derive from a Beta Israel text, the *Te'ezaza*

¹⁰ Since 1991 I have carried out ethnographic investigation among Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, in particular those who, during Operation Solomon, arrived in integration centres in Jerusalem, in "caravan" sites in the region of Rehovot and later in permanent accommodation. I am now pursuing this research among the new second-generation elites.

Sanbat (Commandments of the Sabbath), broadly inspired by the Book of Jubilees. These laws differ from those of the Talmud, in which sexual relations are represented as a pleasure (*oneg*) of Shabbat, and where a fire can be lit before Shabbat, hence the commandment to light candles before nightfall, a female practice *par excellence* that is non-existent among the Beta Israel.

The Beta Israel clergy, who followed the same hierarchy as the Ethiopian Church, was composed of priests (*qésotch*) who fulfilled religious and political functions as the spiritual heads of the community. Cantors (*däbtära*), that is to say, non-ordained lettered clerics (such as a divorced priest), performed the liturgy and acted as scribes, copying out sacred texts. Deacons (*dīyaqon*) and monks (*malokse*) lived in seclusion, subject to strict rules of purity. There were, however, no Beta Israel nuns, whereas this institution was widespread in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. While the majority of men were illiterate, only some clerics could read and write and no Beta Israel woman had access to writing in Ge'ez or to the other religious texts. It was only at the start of the twentieth century that young women began to receive schooling in the vernacular language, Amharic, in Jewish or Ethiopian schools.

The house of prayer (*mäsäid ou yä-tsälot bet*) was often a large hut with a tripartite plan (an outside courtyard, a place of worship, and a Holy of Holies reserved for priests and containing the *Orit*, the sacred books and ritual objects). Some categories of individual, considered impure, were forbidden entry, such as married women or those having had contact with a non-Beta Israel without later purifying themselves. Daily prayers were sung by the priests to sacred music and accompanied on religious holidays by musical instruments (timpani, gongs, sistrums, drums), but here again women never partook in the singing and did not play instruments. Furthermore, in most regions only women having reached the menopause could enter the house of prayer, but had no role in worship, aside from the preparation of Shabbat bread (*barekät*), which was blessed then distributed on the Saturday morning at the house of prayer. If these restrictions in the place of worship can no doubt be attributed to the representations of women's impurity, some (particularly elderly) women had important functions in rituals associated with spirits (*zar*

cult) and possessed prophylactic or therapeutic savoir-faire (for example, as a tattooist or spirit mistress – *bälqollé* – in exorcism rites). Although Ethiopian Jewish women did not have leadership functions either – as judges or arbitrators in village affairs, in the manner of the elders (*chmagellotch*) – old women were consulted in some conflicts. In addition, the mythical figure of Queen Yodit (also called Gudit, Esato or Esther) was often evoked as a possible Beta Israel heroine who was said to have conquered Aksum in the tenth century.¹¹

In contrast, women played an important role in economic life. The Beta Israel lived in small villages in the high plateaus of northern Ethiopia. Most of the men worked the land as sharecroppers for Christian landowners, raised livestock and were also artisans. The women practised basketwork, embroidery and pottery and sold their wares at the market. The distribution of gender roles observed a strict division of tasks in which the men worked outside and the women were charged with raising young children and preparing foodstuffs (toasting, crushing and grinding seeds, growing vegetables, milking cows and goats, fetching water from the river). Although the cooking area was off-limits to men, they took care of slaughtering animals and preparing and cooking the meat, following the prescriptions of the biblical text. The Beta Israel also performed sacrifices for the main religious holidays (especially Passover) as well as for offerings, propitiatory rites or expiation. Yet here, once again, women did not have a role in the knowledge or the transmission of these practices, although some told me that they had slit a chicken's throat, for example, when no man was on hand to do it. With access to education in the twentieth century, a few young Beta Israel women began to take up jobs or open their own business; in some cases, they refused to accept the marriage "arranged" by their parents and for the first time preferred to remain single. However, it was in spheres linked to sexuality and lifecycle rites that they held preponderant roles.

¹¹ Kaplan 1992: 47.

Ritual functions of Beta Israel women: the lifecycle

Beta Israel women, especially those of a certain age, did fulfil ritual functions at times of birth or death, such as midwife, circumciser or funeral wailer. These tasks specifically incumbent upon women reflected forms of knowledge and female ritual expertise that were non-existent in the rest of the Jewish world. These bodily rites, which defined gendered identity in Ethiopia, were also linked to purity practices that offered women a counterpart to male ritual roles, but in which they held the additional power of regulating both the relations between men and women and between the Beta Israel and Christian Ethiopians.

Births normally took place in a hut at a distance from the village, where the woman in labour would go, accompanied by one or two midwives, who, after the birth, would take charge of burying the placenta and umbilical cord nearby. This ritual function held an important significance because to neglect this interment would lead to harmful consequences for the future of the newborn infant;¹² moreover, it was said that when any person died he or she should be buried “where the [umbilical] cord was buried”. These matrons, considered as impure because they had been in contact with the woman who had given birth, had to immerse themselves in a river – always one close to the Beta Israel villages – and wash their clothes before returning to the village at nightfall. The woman who had given birth then spent 40 days (7 + 33) after the birth of a boy, and 80 days (14 + 66) after the birth of a girl, in the hut of the childbearing woman (*yä-aras gojjo*), according to the degrees of impurity decreed in Leviticus (12, 1-8; 18 and 15). It was for this reason that a boy’s circumcision (*gezʾäit*), performed on the eighth day, was conducted in this hut not by a priest, who sometimes recited the blessings from a distance, but most often by a female circumciser.¹³ She remained impure until the evening, then immersed herself in a river and washed her clothes before returning to the village. As a consequence, the ceremony at which the child was named was held only at the end of the period of reclusion, i.e. on the 40th or 80th day, following the

¹² Anteby-Yemini 2004: 239-245.

¹³ Anteby 1999; Trevisan Semi 1985.

immersion of the newborn and the woman who had given birth (who also shaved her head) before their return to the village at sunset.

Girls were circumcised (clitoridectomy), sometimes when a few days old, by an experienced old women – a practice also widespread among Ethiopian Christians, but which disappeared with emigration to Israel. The motive invoked was to control the woman's sexuality, since, without this operation, it was argued, she would have chased after men.¹⁴ By the same token, virginity was highly valued, as demonstrated by the marriage ceremony, which was called *kashārī* since a white ribbon (for purity) and a red ribbon (for virginity) were tied around the husband's forehead. After the spouses had retired to a hut, a blood-stained sheet was publicly displayed and the husband removed the ribbons; if the bride was not a virgin, she was sent back to her village.

The deceased body was also perceived as a source of impurity, following the biblical text in this respect. Thus, the men who washed the corpse, transported it to the cemetery, and buried it were considered impure for a period of seven days and isolated themselves in a purpose-built hut, set apart from the village. Women washed female corpses and, in this sense, in turn played a ritual role in these mortuary practices. But, more surprisingly, women's singing, absent from religious rituals, could be heard at Beta Israel funerals in the voices of wailing women who recounted the life of the deceased man or woman; relatives also recited eulogies and performed funerary dances.

It was, however, in the purity rites that Beta Israel women played a major role in the construction of the identity of the group and its alterity with their Christian neighbours. During menstruation, the woman, as soon as the period started, isolated herself for seven days in the "blood hut" (*yä-dam gojjo*) or the "hut of the curse" (*yä-margām gojjo*), built away from the village. This structure, which occasionally also acted as the "hut of the woman having given birth", was surrounded by a low stone wall, delimiting pure space from impure space, and on which food prepared by the other village women was

¹⁴ Kahana 1977: 44.

deposited.¹⁵ The women residing in this hut were exempted from all household tasks, including cooking. Though some villages had a “blood hut” for each domestic unit, others had a hut that was shared by several female neighbours, especially given that all women had to go there, whether they were single, widowed or divorced, as well as Barya women – the Barya being a group of former captives working for Beta Israel families and who had converted to their Judaism – for these reasons of purity.

This period of isolation was often described to me as a time of rest and intense socialization. As Kassa told me: “We talked a lot, we slept, we rested. We were seated and we drank coffee as we told stories; we also did embroidery.” This exclusively female universe represented both a space for communication and a site for the transmission of knowledge in which young girls learnt traditional techniques and *savoir-faire*. Others, however, Ganat for instance, recount this isolation as a moment of anxiety and solitude: “At night we were cold, during the day we were hot. We were afraid on our own and we heard the cries of hyenas during the night.” Others recall: “Sometimes they forgot to bring us something to eat!” At the end of the period of reclusion, the woman purified herself in the river, washed her clothes, cut her nails, fasted for the whole day and returned to the family home at nightfall. She was then able to resume sexual relations with her husband, and more than one woman confided to me that this very evening was the most opportune moment to conceive...

To a certain extent, it can be postulated that through their menstrual practices the women held a ritual role equivalent to that of the men rendered impure through their contact with death; a relative symmetry can be observed between menstruating women and impure men, who all also remained in isolation for seven days, as well as between the gestures of purification accomplished at the end of their isolation. However, by going to the “blood hut”, the women also fulfilled a social function, by non-verbally expressing impurity but

¹⁵ On the circulation of certain “dry” or “wet” objects from the impure space of the hut to the pure space of the village, by means of purification, and on these categories similar to those of the Talmud, see Anteby-Yemini 2004: 462.

also by publicly indicating a status such as puberty (the first time a young girl went there), pregnancy (when a woman did not go there) or menopause (when she stopped going there). Thus, although pregnancy had not been mentioned for the first few months, this state would be guessed, as Lemlem explained to me: “Everybody immediately knows if I am pregnant because I no longer go to the blood hut.” Hagar Salamon underlines, moreover, the way in which this hut functioned as an instance of “social control” if a spouse was away travelling for several months and his wife suddenly stopped going there... Finally, the Beta Israel women, through purity practices, also possessed an identity function, by distinguishing the group from other Ethiopian groups. Christian women, in effect, were not isolated when they had their period, nor during the postnatal period, although they were not allowed to enter the church premises at these times.¹⁶ Women’s blood was a marker of inter-ethnic and inter-religious differentiation.¹⁷ The purity practices of women thus cannot be limited to an expression of a form of control over their sexuality or of male domination. They were primarily a constitutive element in the identity of the person, the gender, the ethnicity and the Beta Israel religion. It can be argued that women thereby attained a status and a ritual power that compensated for their absence in religious worship.

Upheavals to purity in Israel

When almost the entire Beta Israel community emigrated to Israel after 1991, lifecycle and purity rates were radically transformed, renegotiated, and, most often, abandoned. Even in Ethiopia, contact with Western Judaism had led to changes in ritual behaviours, amplified during the waiting periods in Sudan and Addis Ababa. But it was in Israel that these practices were most radically challenged, not only because this was a Westernized and urbanized society in which “blood huts” no longer had a place, but above all as a result of the discrepancy between Ethiopian Judaism and rabbinical Judaism. Most Israelis practise no form of purity and practising Jews observe the

¹⁶ Pankhurst 1992: 129.

¹⁷ Salamon 1999.

laws of *niddah*, which are considerably different, since they relate only to the “family purity” that regulates relations between spouses and therefore concern married women alone.

Upon their arrival, the immigrants from Ethiopia were housed in integration centres in which they worked out various spatial arrangements that recreated a symbolic space of impurity as best they could, because Israeli civil servants refused to grant them a place of isolation. For example, in one of the reception centres I frequented, a section of the corridor on each floor of the building was reserved for impure women, to whom food from the refectory was brought, as foodstuffs had once been brought to the blood hut. However, although the norms of commensality excluding women were retained during the first few months in Israel, they rapidly disappeared.

Indeed, once settled in permanent accommodation, compromises relating mainly to sleeping space endure, but impure women cook and take care of domestic tasks. They sometimes sleep in the living room, and the husband in the bedroom, or stay in the bedroom (especially during “churaching”) while the husband settles down in the living room. However, the postnatal period of 40 or 80 days is no longer observed, and women leave their bedroom after two or three weeks, or on the eighth day, for the circumcision of a boy. Nevertheless, the husband does not return to the shared bedroom until the end of the traditional reclusion, on which date a celebration is still held. The only households visited in which women remain physically isolated are those of priests (*qésotché*), where a separate building in the garden of ground-floor apartments or a studio on the same landing serves as a “blood and churaching hut” for girls, wives and daughters-in-law. I was surprised to learn that even the second generation observed this practice: thus, the daughter of a priest who was studying at boarding school went to the small maisonette in their garden during her weekend visits if she was in the period of impurity, “to honour my father”, to borrow her own words. Inbal Cicurel and Rahel Sharaby show that some priests’ wives abandon these rituals, while others adopt the rabbinical practices of *niddah*, and others again isolate themselves in a hut built in their garden or in a room in their apartment set aside for this purpose. These women have fought for the right to continue these practices, against the authorities (including

women), indeed sometimes against their husbands or other priests of the old school, and voluntarily appeal to this Beta Israel custom to gain power and control over their body.¹⁸ As such, they reverse the gender roles, leaving their husband to look after the home and children for one week a month...

Women who consider themselves impure also restrict their frequentation of the public sphere. Some women told me they refrain from taking part in the traditional ceremony of drinking coffee with women neighbours, and stay away from weddings, burials and other lifecycle ceremonies. They also informed me that they do not go into a synagogue and avoid prayer during the periods of impurity.

The purification rites have also undergone changes in Israel, where a ritual bath (*mikveh*) is used by observant Jews for immersions of conversion and purification. In rabbinical Judaism, a woman is considered impure during both her period and the “seven days without blood” that follow; she therefore goes to the ritual bath around the twelfth day of her cycle, after which she can resume sexual relations with her husband, whereas the Beta Israel women immersed themselves in a river on the evening of the seventh day. In Israel, the majority of female immigrants do not go to the ritual bath, which was unheard-of in Ethiopia. Indeed, it is contested, on the one hand because it is associated with the symbolic conversions asked of Ethiopian immigrants in the 1980s, and on the other hand because the water is “stagnant” (even though it is rainwater), unlike the “fresh water” of Ethiopian rivers. Only a minority of the women who have become Orthodox frequent the *mikveh*, with the others adopting showering as a means of purifying themselves, although this is viewed as unacceptable by rabbis.¹⁹

The loss of the ritual space of female purity was thus one of the most significant upheavals for the generation of mothers,²⁰ who lost contact with their body and had to rethink their lived space, all the more so as menstruation, which was infrequent in Ethiopia due to

¹⁸ Cicurel & Sharaby 2007.

¹⁹ On the representations relating to menstruating women’s contact with water, see Anteby-Yemini 2004: 454.

²⁰ Dolève-Gandelman 1990.

pregnancies and the extended length of breastfeeding, became more regular in Israel. This situation therefore demanded ideological compromises further down the line. Indeed, many women describe themselves as tormented by the idea of dirtying the domestic sphere and by the feeling of guilt at having “blood in the home”, as one confided to me. Several adults constantly lament the fact that in Israel “everyone is mixed together”, that is to say, men and women, the pure and impure. This social disorder and the symbolic confusion of statuses produce a blemish, which, according to the theory developed by Mary Douglas,²¹ categorizes all instances that blur, efface or otherwise confuse given classifications. Though Ethiopian immigrants were initially disconcerted to learn that Israelis did not observe the purity rites, even male ones, they set about idealizing Ethiopia as a “pure and clean” territory faced with the “impurity” of the Promised Land.²² In doing so, they as it were “recuperate” the symbolic dimension of female purity rites, through their discursive strategies, in order to demand a legitimacy as “true Jews” in the face of the presumed impurity of the Israelis.

*
* *

In Ethiopia, the exclusion of the women of the Beta Israel religion was “compensated”, in a sense, by their ritual functions in the domain of purity and lifecycle rites. With migration to Israel, they lost a privileged sphere of exchange and knowledge as well as a certain power that placed them in a position of laying down the internal and external borders of the group. Furthermore, in the situation of “permanent impurity” in which they now find themselves, they must negotiate with the Beta Israel ideology of purity at the individual and community level.

The second generation, which has completely abandoned the older rites, does not undergo the “experience of impurity” nor the “inconsistency of belief and practice” that Lisa Gilad has described

²¹ Douglas 1971 [1966].

²² Trevisan Semi 1985.

among Yemini Jews who immigrated to Israel.²³ Today, the young women articulate identity constructions as women, Jews, Ethiopians and Israelis, on the basis of their new gender roles and their new functions as soldiers, musicians, actresses, journalists, singers, nurses, businesswomen, lawyers, primary schoolteachers, politicians or diplomats. Others, who participate in worship in synagogues and have completed the religious coming of age ceremony (*bat mitzvaḥ*) – which was unheard-of in Ethiopia – are attaining new positions in the religious sphere, as advisors to newly-wed young women (*madríkha kealot*), tutors for the *bat mitzvaḥ*, educators in conversion classes for Falashmoras, or supervisors of the ritual bath (*balanit*). Some of them are taking part in a programme for young Ethiopian-Israeli women at Nishmat, a centre for advanced Torah study for women in Jerusalem, in order to deepen their knowledge of Jewish studies and become leaders in their community. If gender roles are thus being redefined, when will we see the first woman rabbi of Ethiopian origin?

Translated by Helen TOMLINSON

Bibliography

- ANTEBY, Lisa. 1999. "There's Blood in the House": negotiating female rituals of purity among the Ethiopian Jews in Israel. In *Women and Water: menstruation in Jewish life and law*, ed. Rahel R. WASSERFALL, 166-186. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, Brandeis series on Jewish women.
- ANTEBY-YEMINI, Lisa. 2004. *Les Juifs éthiopiens en Israël. Paradoxes du paradis*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- CICUREL, Inbal, and Rahel SHARABY. 2007. Women in menstruation huts: variations in preserving purification customs among Ethiopian immigrants. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23(2): 69-84.
- DOLÈVE-GANDELMAN, Tsili. 1990. Ethiopia as a lost imaginary space: the role of Ethiopian Jewish women in producing the ethnic identity of their immigrant group in Israel. In *The Other Perspective in Gender and Culture*, ed. Juliet Flower MACCANNELL, 242-257. New York: Columbia University Press.

²³ Gilad 1989: 131.

- DOUGLAS, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- GILAD, Lisa. 1989. *Ginger and Salt: Yemeni Jewish women in an Israeli town*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- KAHANA, Yaël. 1977. *Black brothers: life among the Falachas*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved [in Hebrew].
- KAPLAN, Steven. 1992. *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: from earliest times to the twentieth century*. New York: New York University Press.
- LEITMAN, Eva. 1995. Migration and transitions: three generations of Ethiopian women. In *Between Africa and Zion*, ed. Steven KAPLAN, Tudor PARFITT & Emanuela TREVISAN SEMI, 66-178. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.
- PANKHURST, Helen. 1992. *Gender, Development and Identity: an Ethiopian study*. London: Zed Books.
- PHILLIPS DAVIDS, Jennifer. 1998. Fertility decline and changes in the life-course among Ethiopian Jewish women. In *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel: studies on the Ethiopian Jews*, ed. Tudor PARFITT & Emanuela TREVISAN SEMI, 137-159. Richmond: Curzon Press.
- SALAMON, Hagar. 1999. *The Hyena People: Ethiopian Jews in Christian Ethiopia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- SERED, Susan S. 1992. *Women as Ritual Experts: the religious lives of elderly Jewish women in Jerusalem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SHABTAY, Malka, and Lea KACEN (eds). 2005. *Mulualem: women and girls of Ethiopian origin in spaces, worlds and journeys between cultures*. Tel Aviv: Lashon Tzaha (in Hebrew).
- TREVISAN SEMI, Emanuela. 1985. The Beta Israel (Falashas): from purity to impurity. *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 27(2): 103-114.
- WEIL, Shalva. 2004. Ethiopian Jewish women: trends and transformations in the context of transnational change. *Nashim* 8: 73-86.