

# ETHICS OF HOSPITALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN ISRAEL

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**Abstract.** This paper explores the challenges of Russian and Ethiopian Jew immigrants in Israel, and how those challenges relate to Israel's national identity crisis, through Derrida's concept of hospitality. Immigration has been a major issue in Israel for many years, especially among Russian and Ethiopian Jews, who bring their own unique cultural, religious, and sociopolitical backgrounds to the Israeli state. This cultural diversity has caused tension within the state, leading to a national identity crisis and difficult questions regarding the idea of hospitality. According to Derrida, hospitality is a foundational practice of societies and states, based on accepting the foreigner and stranger in order to preserve justice and peace. However, while Israel has strived to create a vibrant society where all its citizens can live in harmony, the challenges of integrating Russian and Ethiopian Jews into the Israeli state have meanwhile created a state of internal conflict. This paper argues that by respecting Derrida's notion of hospitality and prioritizing the integration of immigrants into Israeli society, the nation can continue to foster a harmonious identity for its citizens. The paper concludes that this is an important issue in Israel, which cannot be ignored or resolved without serious structural change.

**Keywords:** Russian Jews, Ethiopian Jews, Israeli identity crisis, Derrida, hospitality.

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақала Израильдегі орыс және эфиопиялық иммигрант еврейлердің мәселелерін және бұл мәселелердің Дерриданың қонақжайлылық концепциясы арқылы Израильдің ұлттық бірегейлік дағдарысымен қалай байланысты екенін зерттейді. Иммиграция көптеген жылдар бойы Израильде, әсіресе Израиль мемлекетіне өзінің ерекше мәдени, діни және әлеуметтік-саяси ерекшелігін бірге әкелген орыс және эфиопиялық еврейлер арасында маңызды мәселе болды. Бұл мәдени әртүрлілік мемлекет ішінде шиеленісті тудырып, ұлттық бірегейлік дағдарысына және қонақжайлылық идеясына қатысты күрделі мәселелерге әкелді. Дерридаға сәйкес, қонақжайлылық – әділеттілік пен бейбітшілікті сақтау мақсатында шетелдіктер мен бейтаныс адамдарды қабылдауға негізделген қоғамдар мен мемлекеттердің негізгі тәжірибесі. Алайда Израиль өзінің барлық азаматтары үйлесімді өмір сүре алатын динамикалық қоғам құруға ұмтылған кезде, орыс және эфиопиялық еврейлерді Израиль бірегейлігіне біріктіру проблемалары осы уақытта ішкі қақтығыс жағдайына әкелді. Бұл мақалада Дерриданың қонақжайлылық концепциясын құрметтеу және иммигранттарды Израиль қоғамына біріктіруге басымдық беру арқылы ұлт өз азаматтарының үйлесімді бірегейлігін дамыта алады деп тұжырымдайды. Мақала бұл Израильдегі маңызды мәселе, оны елеусіз қалдыруға немесе үлкен құрылымдық өзгерістерсіз шешуге болмайды деген қорытындыға келеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** орыс еврейлері, эфиопиялық еврейлер, Израиль бірегейлік дағдарысы, Деррида, қонақжайлылық.

**Аннотация.** В этой статье исследуются проблемы русских и эфиопских евреев-иммигрантов в Израиле и то, как эти проблемы связаны с кризисом национальной идентичности Израиля, через концепцию гостеприимства Дерриды. Иммиграция была серьезной проблемой в Израиле на протяжении многих лет, особенно среди русских и эфиопских евреев, которые привносят в израильское государство свое собственное уникальное культурное, религиозное и социально-политическое происхождение. Это культурное разнообразие вызвало напряженность внутри государства, что привело к кризису национальной идентичности и сложным вопросам, касающимся идеи гостеприимства. Согласно Деррида, гостеприимство — это основополагающая практика обществ и государств, основанная на принятии иностранца и незнакомки с целью сохранения справедливости и мира. Однако, в то время как Израиль стремился создать динамичное общество, в котором все его граждане могли бы жить в гармонии, проблемы интеграции русских и эфиопских евреев в израильское государство тем

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временем привели к состоянию внутреннего конфликта. В этой статье утверждается, что, уважая концепцию гостеприимства Дерриды и уделяя приоритетное внимание интеграции иммигрантов в израильское общество, нация может продолжать развивать гармоничную идентичность своих граждан. В статье делается вывод о том, что это важная проблема в Израиле, которую нельзя игнорировать или решать без серьезных структурных изменений.

**Ключевые слова:** русские евреи, эфиопские евреи, кризис израильской идентичности, Деррида, гостеприимство.

## Introduction

For seventy-five years Israel emerged as a modern state, the problems in both its domestic and foreign policy have not been resolved yet. Apart from the Palestinian/Arab–Israeli conflicts, the problems regarding national identity and citizenship have not come to the end. The fact that those who built the State of Israel and who later formed the majority of the Jewish population in the society were immigrants, and that these immigrant Jewish communities came from various countries of the world, and the cultural difference between them, made it difficult to form a homogeneous Jewish national identity and dragged it into crisis. In addition, the exclusion of non-Jewish Arab, Circassian, Druze, Bedouin and other ethnic minorities from political and social life or the lack of equal opportunities in the country questions Israel's identity and citizenship policy and democracy model.

In the 2000s, 40 per cent of the Jewish population in Israel were the children of first-generation immigrant Jews. Although the immigration of Jews was important to increase the number of the Jewish population in Israel, it greatly affected the character, structure, and essence of the Jewish community in the country (Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 2004, p. 303). Identity and citizenship policy in Israel is built based on the Declaration of Independence, the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Absorption have undertaken the task of institutionally granting citizenship to Jews who immigrated to Israel and assimilation into the dominant culture. Ever since the establishment of the state of Israel, the question of “who is Jewish” has always been the source of problems. Israel's dual commitment to both Judaism and democracy has challenged the balance between the two (Ben-Porat & Turner, 2008, p. 195). The challenge of ‘Who is Jew?’, ‘What defines the democratic character of modern Israel?’ has

placed these questions at the center of the debate in the Israeli political sphere (Fisher, 2014). The problems posed by the issue of ‘who is Jew,’ in particular, pose a problem for Jews who have immigrated to Israel over the past three decades.

The two most intense waves of immigration in Israeli immigration history occurred in the 1950s and 1990s. In the 1950s, more Mizrahim/Sephardic Jews immigrated to Israel. In the second most intense wave of immigration, Russian Jews immigrated to Israel with the disintegration of the USSR. However, the emergence of the national identity crisis in Israel was mostly caused by Ethiopian Jews (Falasha) and Russian Jews (Ashkenazi) who immigrated in the 1980s-90s.

Today, Israel is faced with the problem of national identity as well as the problem of citizenship. The concepts of national identity and citizenship are now intertwined. However, Israel is still meticulous in this regard. It is seen that the policies implemented by Israel against non-Jewish Israeli citizens living in its ‘legitimate’ lands, which put the question of security at the forefront to maintain the existence of the state, are contrary to democratic principles. Implementing the ethnic democracy model, Israel excludes Arab citizens from the system by not providing equal opportunities. However, the problem of citizenship will not be discussed in this article. The article will focus on the problems faced by Israel in the process of creating a homogeneous Jewish national identity. The importance of the former Soviet Union and Ethiopian Jews, which constitute the last major immigration waves of Israel, in the fragmentation of Jewish identity in Israel will be discussed. Israel's identity politics will be discussed in the context of Jacques Derrida's concept of hospitality.

## Materials and Methods

This research seeks to investigate and analyze the challenges experienced by

Russian and Ethiopian Jews immigrants in Israel in relation to Israel's national identity crisis. To do so, a qualitative research design has been employed in which primary sources such as journals and books, as well as secondary sources such as newspaper articles and reports are used.

The greatest challenge of the integration of the Russian and Ethiopian Jews immigrants in Israel is Israel's national identity crisis. This crisis occurs when the national identity of a country is in conflict with external forces, such as immigration. With the influx of millions of immigrants from former Soviet Union, Middle Eastern, and African countries, Israel is grappling with defining who can be considered Israeli. This struggle is compounded by the unique identities of the Russian and Ethiopian Jews, who practice different customs and dialects from the traditional Ashkenazi Israeli Jews.

Additionally, there is a cultural divide between the two immigrant groups. Russian Jews are often viewed as superior due to their relative financial stability and educational backgrounds. This has led to many instances of discrimination, internalized racism, and xenophobia. Ethiopian Jews often experience more difficulty integrating because many of their practices and customs are seen as foreign or even primitive. As a result, they struggle to find their place in society and face numerous social and economic disadvantages.

This study aims to analyze these challenges and explore possible solutions. It seeks to document the experiences of the immigrants in Israel, their interactions with each other, and the Israeli government's efforts to promote the integration of the two ethnic communities. It also seeks to assess how the current climate of shifting national identity will continue to shape the lives of the Russian and Ethiopian Jewish immigrant populations.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The concept of identity is one of the most discussed concepts theoretically today. The idea of identity remains popular and central because of the diversity of meanings, codes, and naming mechanisms it produces. However, the plurality of identity codes, the different meanings attributed to identity, and the different political discourses produced in

this way make it challenging to produce common theories on the concept of identity (Keyman, 2010, pp. 217-219).

Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner pondered the concept of individual and collective identity. Referring to self-concept terms, they identified individuals' identities, values, abilities, limits, value judgments, goals, views, feelings, and attitudes about themselves, and emphasized the importance of belonging to certain social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to Tajfel, individual identity is related to the individual's specific characteristics such as socialization, ability, individual competence and how people see themselves as individuals. Collective identity, on the other hand, is the part of the individual's self-concept that arises from the knowledge of membership in a social group to which he or she attaches importance with his/her values and feelings (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Individuals' identities are meaningfully shaped by the membership of the groups to which they belong. Because individuals take a positive place in the group and feel positive compared to outside groups. There are political, cultural, ideological, religious, ethnic, national and other identity types of collective identities to which the individual is a member. Among these, the more permanent are ethnic or national identities (Volkan, 2002, p. 2).

There are features that distinguish national identity from other collective identities. For a nation to be recognized as an identity, it needs three main foundations. First, it is social solidarity. It is for those who consider themselves members of the national group to develop a certain form of solidarity relationship. The second is that nationalist discourse has become the main paradigm in making sense of life individually and collectively. Third, the idea of nation, which is the result of the nationalist imagination, is accepted as a collective identity by the group members. The idea that the nation is a continuity and that it is different from "others" is inherent in this acceptance (Guibernau, 1996, p. 127).

According to Vamik Volkan, who prefers to use the concept of large group identity instead of the concept of collective identity, people cannot live without identity and people have their own core identity and large group identity. Loss of core identity means spiritual death of a person. An

individual's large group identity is in close connection with his or her core identity (Volkan, 2005, pp. 43-45). When a large group interacts with another large group, "we-ness" acts as an invisible force. If this invisible force, that is, the identity of a large group, is not threatened, it will not be taken care of very much. When a danger is created by another group, they become aware of their large group identities (Volkan, 1999, pp. 37-38).

With globalization, the nation-state began to be questioned, and with the emergence of multinational and multicultural societies, the categories of identity and citizenship also began to be questioned. Because the nation-state has internalizing (us) and externalizing (others) properties that determine who will join the national identity and who will become citizens. Jacques Derrida, in his work entitled *Of Hospitality*, tried to analyze the 'we-they' relationship that will help to solve the problems of identity and citizenship policies faced by nation-states in the era of globalization. In this context, Derrida put the concept of hospitality, which was developed by Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas and Pierre Klossowski before him, into the agenda by reconsidering and developing it. Derrida mentions two separate laws of hospitality in his work: (1) the law of unconditional or absolute hospitality, that is, the law ordering the stranger/other to accept, command, let in unconditionally; (2) the law of conditional hospitality that determines the conditions of this arrival and encounter, regulate mutual rights and laws. These are two fundamentally different laws, but one that cannot be separated from the other. According to him, hospitality is neither the unconditional acceptance of the stranger/other, nor an encounter situation in which certain rules are applied mutually (Derrida, 2002, p. 25).

According to Derrida's proposition, true hospitality is the welcome of the uninvited guest. In other words, it means "yes" to someone who comes unexpectedly and appears at my door without being called, to come to my space, to take my place, to enter what belongs to me, to touch me. But the commandment of this law, the absolute hospitality that commands to accept a stranger/other with their absolute difference and say "yes", passes through the overcoming of belonging/identity, perhaps its

destruction. According to the ethics of unconditional hospitality, someone (host) does not predetermine who will be the guest (guest) and accepts whoever and whatever is unexpected at any time, regardless of the intention of the intruder and without conditions (Derrida, 2000, p. 17). But Derrida also points out that in practice hospitality automatically runs conditional. Because "defining the guest as a foreigner or "other" shows the conditionality that exists in family, nation, state and citizenship" (Derrida, 2000, p. 8).

Derrida sought to go beyond what Kant called the law of world citizens determined by the conditions of hospitality, or cosmopolitan law. In Kant, hospitality is used as not being treated as an enemy when a stranger arrives in another's territory. Hospitality is against hostility, that is, the guest who is hosted as opposed to the other foreigner who is treated as an enemy is the foreigner who is treated as a friend or ally (Derrida, 2012, p. 47). Derrida, on the other hand, tried to take Kant's understanding of hospitality further. However, while analyzing hospitality, Derrida accepts that the concept of hospitality is a self-contradictory (apori) concept and states that "we do not (yet) know what hospitality is" (Derrida, 2012).

The concept of hospitality, which Derrida tries to analyze, is built based on differences. Because hospitality requires host and stranger/other. Hospitality is the result of the interaction between these two (Derrida, 2001, pp. 16-17). In other words, the host, that is, the sovereign, must have the power to host the guest. The host's attempt to act hospitably inevitably entails a policy of conditionality, exclusion, and sometimes even hostility. According to Derrida, the host (I), the master or the power are nothing but the selfness. "The problem of being both an enemy and a guest is a problem of selfness. The more difficult it is to understand how a word meaning 'master' can be weakened enough to mean its own, the more understandable it is that an adjective indicating a person's identity, meaning 'own,' can assume the actual meaning of 'master' (Derrida, 2012, p. 68). Derrida does not propose to make a choice between political conditional hospitality and moral unconditional hospitality. Derrida has tried to show that what is problematic in the 'we-others' relationship is the selfness, and that



this one is what determines whether hospitality will be conditional or unconditional. This selfness, which Derrida emphasizes, creates an identity for the individual, shapes his/her self-perception. Identity, on the other hand, separates or differentiates I/we from the foreigner/others, creates a border between them, begins to determine who will or will not cross the border. Selfness or identity, in Derrida's terms, is a question of both being hostile and being a guest. And this problem supports hospitality that is conditional.

### **Structure of Israeli national identity**

Israel is the state of immigrant Jews. In Vamik D. Volkan's words, it is a state with 'a synthetic nation' structure (Volkan, 2002, p. 12). Almost all Jews are immigrants and come from different cultures. This cultural difference is a source of problems in the face of the process of creating a homogeneous Jewish identity in Israel. Even if everyone sees himself as Jewish, they preserve the identity they have acquired in the countries they have come from. In general, Jews are divided into Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahim (Eastern Jews), and Falasha (Beta Israel). Ashkenazi Jews have always formed the dominant culture in the country, as there were Jews from Europe, who first immigrated to these lands and made up the majority.

Ashkenazi literally means Germany, but this identity includes Jews from Germany, as well as Jews in all (Eastern) European states, former USSR countries and the USA, except for the Jews of Spain, Portugal, and Turkey. The literal meaning of Sephardic is Spain and is generally the identity given to Jews in Southern and Southeastern European countries such as Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. Mizrahim or Eastern Jews are mostly used to name the Jews living in the Arab Middle East, but also in Asian countries such as Iran, India, Uzbekistan (Bukhara Jews) (Arik, 2006). The word Falasha, which means 'exiles' and 'foreigners' in Amharic, is the identity designating Ethiopian Jews (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, p. 246).

The identity crisis in Israel emerged in the years immediately after the establishment of the state of Israel. This identity crisis was due to two reasons: religion and ethnicity (Ben-Rafael, 2002b, p.

16). Disputes over religion took place between secular Jews of European origin and local religious Mizrahim Jews. Cultural (language, religion, and other) differences between Ashkenazi and Mizrahim Jews made it difficult for the Jewish community to unite under a common identity. Second, the problem at the level of ethnic identity occurred among Ashkenazi, Mizrahim, Eastern Jews, and Falasha Jews. Israel also faced the problem of whether Arabs, Druzes, Circassians and other ethnic groups, who remained as minorities in the Jewish community after the establishment of the state, would come under the Jewish identity.

After the state of Israel was built, it first focused on identity politics. The goal was to unite Jews from different countries, representing different cultures, under a common national culture. This homogenization policy was to be carried out under the "melting pot process" model. The most important tool of this model was language: Hebrew (Pappe, 2007, pp. 234-335). The emergence of Hebrew, both as a spoken, written and state language, pushed the importance of religion to second place and differentiated the meanings of "Jewish people" and "Jewish nation." The first was used for diaspora Jews, and the second for Jews in Israel. The Hebrew language made it possible to unite the Jews who had "returned to their ancestral lands" under a common culture (Ben-Rafael, 2002b, p. 18). However, despite this, the identity issue has never been on the agenda in Israel.

Even in the years of independence, the Zionists had polemic in choosing the name of the state. Before them were three choices regarding the name of the state: Israel, Judah, Zion. It was difficult to choose, as each of these would play a decisive role in the identity and citizenship policies of the state in the future. If the name of the country was named 'Judah,' all its inhabitants would bear the name 'Jews' and Arabs would become Jewish citizens with full rights. But it would have damaged the religious identification of Jewish beliefs in the world. If the name 'Zion' had been chosen, all its inhabitants would have been 'Zionists' and Arabs would have been 'Zionist' citizens with full rights. But in that case, the World Zionist Movement would probably have to be deleted. Therefore, there was no choice and eventually the state took the name 'Israel.'

But the question still remained unanswered: Who are the legitimate owners of the state of Israel? Is it anyone who considers himself Jewish or is it everyone who is considered a citizen of Israel? (Sand, 2011, pp. 344-345).

As I mentioned above, the crisis of Jewish identity was first caused by religious reasons. Serious political conflicts were focused on the structure of the state between the local decisively religious Mizrahim Jews and Ashkenazi Jews of European origin. Ashkenazi Jews, who make up the majority in the country, were trying to implement their own dominant culture in society. With their pressure, the structure of the state would also be secular (Sela-Sheffy, 2004, p. 480).

The children of the first immigrant Ashkenazi Jews born in Israel have now become different from the Jews living in the Diaspora and have called themselves 'Sabra' Jews (Ben-Rafael, 2002a, p. 59). the Eastern Jews who emigrated in the 1950s and 60s, the Ethiopian Falasha Jews who emigrated in the 1980s and 90s, and the Russian Jews who emigrated from the countries of the former USSR in the 1970s and 90s (Hacohen, 2001, p. 177) or the 'New' Ashkenazi Jews had difficulty in being included in the core identity formed by the Sabra Jews who formed the dominant culture in society. During the first years of the state's construction, immigrants, mostly Eastern Jews, were assimilated into the Sabra culture. But the inability of Jews from Ethiopia in the 1980s-90s and the countries of the former USSR in the 1990s to integrate into the Sabra culture has caused problems.

The predominance of the Sabra culture divided the Jewish community into classes and categories from an ethno-cultural point of view. It is divided into ethnically Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahim, Falasha and religiously secular and religious Jews. Due to the low educational and socio-economic level of Jews from Yemen and Ethiopia, they were placed at the bottom of the Jewish community. Russian Jews, on the other hand, were more educated, and their socio-economic level was also higher than that of Ethiopians. Russian Jews and Ethiopian Jews have difficulty integrating into the culture of the Sabra Jews, who represent the dominant culture. This does not mean that other Jewish ethnic groups are easily integrated into the Sabra culture. They are also experiencing the same problems.

However, in this article I would like to limit the topic to Russian and Ethiopian Jews. Because there are several features that distinguish Russian and Ethiopian Jews from others. If Ethiopian Jews cannot be included in the Sabra culture due to their biological structure (black skin) and low educational and economic level, Russian Jews cannot be included in the Sabra culture, in other words, the Israeli national identity, because they belong to the secular, high educational level, belong to the middle class economically and cannot give up the Russian culture.

Another factor was more important in the inability of these Jewish immigrants to integrate globalization and multiculturalism. Since the 1970s, the concept of multiculturalism emerged in Europe due to the phenomenon of globalization and the independence of colonial states, due to immigration from abroad. Now, the concept of assimilation has started to be replaced by the concept of multiculturalism (Gutman, 1994). Simultaneously with these years, the mass immigration of Ethiopian and Russian Jews to Israel began. The phenomenon of globalization and the emergence of the idea of multiculturalism have weakened the potential to absorb new Jewish communities in Israel (Smootha, 2008).

### Challenges of Ethiopian Jews

Ethiopian Jews (Falasha) immigrated to Israel as a result of two operations. The first was during 'Operation Moses' in 1984–1985, and the second during 'Operation Solomon' in 1991 (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, p. 246). According to data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, in Israel, the Ethiopian Jews population totaled 159,500 people as of the end of 2020. Around 88,500 were born in Ethiopia and 71,800 born in Israel. The population of Ethiopian descent is concentrated in the country's center, with 59,000 people (38.1 percent) living in the Central District and around 10,000 people (6.7 percent) living in the Tel Aviv District. The Southern District is home to around one-quarter of the population (39,000 people) (The Population of Ethiopian Origin in Israel: Selected Data Published on the Occasion of the Sigd Festival 2021, 2021).

The 'melting pot' process model, which has been used in identity politics since the Ben-Gurion period, has not been used for

Falasha Jews. According to Uri Ben-Eliezer, Falasha Jews have been considered an 'immigration of distress' (aliyat metsuka) by Israeli society. The result of this 'immigration of distress' has been the emergence of racism. This new racism was more cultural than ethnic. It was 'cultural racism,' as Balibar calls it. According to him, cultural racism occurs when a dominant culture perceives another culture as a threat (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, pp. 248-250). According to Volkan, big group identity, which is an invisible force, becomes aware of big group identities when it is threatened by another group (Volkan, 1999, pp. 37-38). This awareness, to protect its own identity, excludes other identity or causes cultural discrimination. It is possible to see the first signs of a Jewish national identity crisis in Israel in the cultural discrimination against Ethiopian Jews. It is possible to see what kind of hospitality was from the behavior of the host, sovereign Sabra Jews towards the newly arrived 'guest' (Ethiopian) Jews. Israeli hospitality offers politically conditioned hospitality rather than Derrida's morally unconditional hospitality. That is, to immigrate to Israel, they must first prove they are Jewish (Burstein & Norwich, 2018), and then they can automatically acquire Israeli citizenship based on the Immigration Law. However, naturalization is not enough. Biological, socio-economic, cultural, historical, and educational differences also determine behavior towards new immigrants. For Ethiopian Jews, religious identity was the only thing that showed they were Jewish (Yakhnich et al., 2021). Because the Israelis who greeted them when they first arrived in Israel were disappointed when they saw that they were black. Other than being black, Ethiopian Jews did not suffer the same fate as European Jews. Antisemitism, the Holocaust, the pogrom, the 1948 War of Independence were events that were not in the life experience of Ethiopian Jews (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, p. 252).

One of the discriminatory incidents that dishonored Ethiopian Jews was the 1996 'blood feud' incident. The report published in the Blood Bank that the blood collected in the last 12 years should not be used for medical purposes, because the blood donations of Ethiopian Jews had AIDS virus, caused 10,000 Ethiopian Jews to protest in front of the Prime Minister's Building (Ridder, 1996).

The slogan "We will not allow our blood to go ownerless" (lo nitan dameinu hefker) became popular during the protest (Seeman, 1999, p. 164).

As we have seen in the example of the Ethiopian Jews, Israeli hospitality is what Derrida refers to as "saying 'yes' to someone who comes unexpectedly and appears at my door uninvited, to come into my space, my place, enter what belongs to me, touch me," and "accept the stranger/other with their absolute difference" (Derrida, 2000, p. 17) is not moral unconditional hospitality. According to the ethics of unconditional hospitality, host does not predetermine who will be the guest and accepts whoever and whatever, regardless of the intention of the uninvited guest at any time and without condition (Derrida, 2000, p. 17). However, the new generation of Ethiopian Jews are excluded from society by being exposed to 'racism in daily life' because they are 'black' and 'other' in school, in the military, in the grocery store (Walsh & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012). Israelis do not want to shop at the same grocery store, study at the same school, or sit next to each other on the bus. Their children are not admitted to kindergartens, equal opportunities are not recognized in the labor market (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, p. 255). This cultural racism by the Sabra Jews would also apply to Russian Jews who immigrated to Israel in the years immediately after the Ethiopian Jews.

### Challenges of Russian Jews

Between 1989 and 2006, 1,600,000 people (including non-Jewish families) immigrated from countries of the former Soviet Union. Of these, 980,000 immigrated to Israel, 320,000 to the USA, and 220,000 to Germany (Leshem, 2008, p. 29). Already in 1970 170,000 and in 1980 300,000 Jews had come to Israel from the former Soviet Union. However, most of them came from regions where the influence of Russian culture was weaker (Smootha, 2008, p. 12).

The mass immigration of Russian Jews had led to a rapid increase in the Israeli population. The fact that Russian Jews make up 17% of Israeli society and they remain loyal to Russian culture has put the method of absorbing the Sabra culture that dominates in Israel in a difficult situation. The majority of Jews from the former Soviet Union countries wanted to settle in cities.

Because they lived in cities in their old country. They came from big cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Odessa, and Tashkent.

As a result of the Law of Return, it was determined that 300 thousand of the approximately one million Russian Jews who immigrated to Israel were not Jewish (Stern, 2010, p. 2). Those who were determined to be non-Jews by the decisions of the Rabbinical Court were excluded from the Jewish collective identity. According to Halacha (religious law), Jewish identity is defined in terms of two criteria: being born to a Jewish mother and being a convert to the Jewish religion. Jews from the former Soviet Union countries, whose ethnic identity was determined by their father, defined themselves as Jewish because their fathers were Jewish. Non-Jewish Jews of Israel who identify themselves as Jews are now included in the category of 'others' by Israelis (Cohen & Susser, 2009, p. 53). However, it was also thought that non-Jewish Jews, who formed a very important community in terms of their numbers, would pose a danger to the Jewish collective identity in the future. For this reason, ways to assimilate this community under the Jewish identity have been investigated. Acceptance of Judaism has been preferred as a solution. About 1200-1500 non-Jewish Jews convert to the Hebrew religion every year. However, research shows that since about 3000 non-Jewish Jewish children are born every year, it is more than the number of those who convert to Judaism, and the Judaization process is not very successful (Stern, 2010, p. 3).

In addition to the non-Jewish Jews who immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union states, it is not easy for Jews who are Jews to be included in the dominant Sabra culture of Israel. The 'demographic threat' that emerged in the 1990s due to the rapid proliferation of Israeli Arabs was tried to be overcome thanks to Jewish immigrants from Russia (Yonah, 2004, p. 203).

Because Russian Jews immigrated at a time when the 'melting pot' policy in Israel was weakening, they remained more loyal to Russian culture. Russian language and Russian-Soviet culture play an important role in the formation of Russian Jewish ethnicity (Remennick, 2009, pp. 268-270). The opening of Russian-language newspapers,

TV channels, culture and art centers (Geshen Theatre), and schools using the Russian education method (MOFET) show that Russian Jews are more successful in preserving the culture of their former country than other immigrant Jews. However, in a short time, they also showed success in the political field. The Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) and Yisrael B'Aliya (Israel for immigration) parties formed by immigrants from the former Soviet Union were among the leading parties in the Knesset elections. Because they grew up in the Soviet political culture, Russian Jews have a perception of 'enemy complex,' that is, to distinguish the world as 'good' and 'evil,' 'us' and 'others' (Philippov, 2010). This feature caused them to support right-wing nationalist groups in Israel and to see the Palestinians as enemies (Cohen & Susser, 2009, p. 63). The significant influence of Russian Jews, both inside and outside Israel, is that they have the potential to reshape the dominant Sabra culture that underpins Jewish identity. This shows that it can promote identity fragmentation among Jews in Israel between ethnicity, nationality, and religion (Smoocha, 2008, p. 17).

Sammy Smoocha states that two theses have emerged about the fate of Russian Jews in Israel: ethnicization and assimilation (Smoocha, 2008, p. 16). According to the ethnicization thesis, Russian Jews will preserve their cultural characteristics in the future and will weaken their Jewish collective identity. According to the assimilation thesis, the sons of Russian Jews will be absorbed into the dominant Sabra culture in the future and unite under the Jewish collective identity. Smoocha stated that these two theses will be valid and that the ethnicization thesis will be realized among non-Jewish Jews born outside Israel and the assimilation thesis will be realized among the generation born in Israel and growing up in Israel (Smoocha, 2008, p. 17). In fact, it is a difficult task to immediately predict which of these theses will come true or not. However, if we take into account the weakening of state sovereignty with globalization and the effect of multiculturalism, I think that the ethnicization thesis is more valid.



## Results

The results of this research indicate that Russian and Ethiopian Jewish immigrants face several challenges due to their unique identity in a country that has historically been dominated by European Jews. For example, the Russian Jews face a language barrier as Hebrew is the official language of the state of Israel. Additionally, there is a cultural divide in terms of social norms, expectations for gender roles, and religious practices. Both Russian and Ethiopian Jews are marginalized and discriminated against in many areas of Israeli society, from education and employment to housing. Moreover, although there is a legal framework that provides protection from discrimination and encourages cultural integration, many Russian and Ethiopian Jews still lack access to basic services and resources.

The challenges faced by Russian immigrants are mostly related to culture and language. During the early years of immigration, many did not speak Hebrew or understand the culture and customs of their new home. This language barrier proved to be a major obstacle when it came to accessing basic services, finding employment, and integrating into the local community. Additionally, the influx of large numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union resulted in a sense of competition for resources and cultural acceptance. The gap between the Russian immigrants and their Israeli-born peers also created a sense of isolation and alienation. Russian immigrants have had to deal with being labelled as other and face a significant amount of discrimination in the Israeli labor market. Furthermore, the Russian Jewish community has experienced a lack of political representation, which further marginalizes their voice in the Israeli society.

The challenges faced by Ethiopian immigrants are similar to those faced by those of Russian origin. Like the Russians, Ethiopians emigrating to Israel faced language barriers, cultural alienation, and a lack of political representation. In addition, Ethiopian immigrants were often discriminated against due to their skin color and place of origin. This has resulted in a lack of job opportunities, access to housing and basic services as compared to other

Jewish immigrants. Moreover, due to a long history of abject poverty, many Ethiopian immigrants lack the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their new home. This leaves them further marginalized in the Israeli society, unable to fulfil their potential.

## Discussion

The challenge of integrating Russians and Ethiopians in Israel is a multifaceted problem with social, political, and economic implications. From a cultural standpoint, the ubiquity of European Jews in Israeli society has contributed to an atmosphere of exclusion for other Jews with non-European backgrounds. This has been especially true for Ethiopian Jews, who are subject to particularly acute levels of discrimination and exclusion due to the stigma attached to their African roots. Conversely, the relatively well-integrated Russian Jews often struggle to achieve full inclusion due to their native language and culture.

In response to this challenge, some have suggested the concept of hospitality as proposed by Derrida. This concept holds that the host should strive to create a space that is meaningful and conducive to welcoming the foreign visitor in their own language and culture. In this context, hospitality could provide a framework to help bridge the cultural gap between Russian Jews and their Ethiopian counterparts. Additionally, the concept of hospitality could be employed by policymakers and other leaders to help reduce discrimination and promote integration. Ultimately, however, successful integration of the Russian and Ethiopian Jewish immigrants in Israel requires that all parties remain open to one another and willing to accept each other's differences. Only in this way can the nation of Israel overcome its national identity crisis and ensure that all members of its society can live harmoniously together.

The potential impact of Ethiopian and Russian Jews on the identity crisis shows that Israel needs to reconsider its identity policy. The rise of 'cultural racism' among Jews also fuels hostility. Because, as Derrida rightly pointed out, identity is a problem of "being both an enemy and a guest." The self, which shapes the identity, is the thing that determines whether the hospitality will be conditional or unconditional (Derrida, 2012,

p. 68). Derrida also stated that “absolute hospitality will go through the overcoming, perhaps the destruction, of belonging/identity” (Derrida, 2000, p. 17). But whether the issue of identity will be overcome in Israel, which puts the security issue at the forefront and is very meticulous about identity, is the question of the future.

### Conclusion

In this paper, it has been examined the challenges of Russian and Ethiopian Jews immigrants in Israel and Israel's national identity crisis problems related to hospitality. Building on the works of Jacques Derrida, it has been argued that Israel's concept of hospitality is deeply flawed, with language and discrimination being the main factors

that lead to exclusion from the national schema and sense of identity. It has been shown that current policies and responses from the state have not been able to effectively address the challenges for immigrants in Israel and called for a reconsideration of the concept of hospitality to properly include all the different backgrounds of the immigrants in the nation. With the rising number of immigrants from both Russia and Ethiopia, it will be imperative for the state to reevaluate their approaches to create a more inclusive concept of hospitality for all within the nation's borders and creating a much-needed sense of a shared national identity. That is the only way for Israel to overcome its identity crisis as a nation and allow all its inhabitants a place to call home.

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#### ҚОНАҚЖАЙЛЫЛЫҚ ЭТИКАСЫ ЖӘНЕ ИЗРАИЛЬДЕГІ ҰЛТТЫҚ БІРЕГЕЙЛІК МӘСЕЛЕСІ

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#### ЭТИКА ГОСТЕПРИИМСТВА И ПРОБЛЕМА НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В ИЗРАИЛЕ

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