



SHARON SHALOM



My Ethiopian name is Zaude Tesfay, and today I am known as Sharon Zaude Shalom. I first heard of Eretz Yisrael when I was a small child in Ethiopia, where I helped herd the sheep. When I asked where Jerusalem was, my grandfather pointed in the direction of the city for which we yearned. When I was only eight years old, I came to Israel by myself, with my aunt and uncle... and I went to live as an orphan in a children's home in Afula...At one point, I received the bitter news that my parents were no longer alive...The Emunah Children's Center provided for all my needs, and my aunt and uncle, Btouli and Tedu Sisay, whom I did not know in Ethiopia, became my family.

Then one day, the children's center director, Baruch Vasen, called me to his office urgently...[and then] told me that the news I had received two years earlier about my parents' death had been a mistake. My entire family was alive, and the night before they had made aliyah in a major IDF operation (Operation Moses)...When I arrived in Israel, there were very few Ethiopian Jews in the country, and I felt foreign and strange. I had the constant feeling that people were looking at me, thinking I was a character who had come out of a popular Israeli children's book, *The Little Black Boy Goes to Kindergarten*. I felt different, foreign. In Israel, it was difficult for me to reconcile the difference between the dream of Jerusalem and the reality. But I know it was harder for the adults than it was for me, a child.

My identity became a central question. Who was I? In Ethiopia I was identified as a Jew of Beta Israel. They called me "Israel." But ironically, here in Israel I was called "Ethiopian." To me, it was a jarring experience to discover I was an Ethiopian. Later, I discovered that my Ethiopian name, Zaude, had been changed to the Israeli name of Sharon. I was pleased to have this name, because people explained to me that this was a new name from Jerusalem. Wonderful, I thought, but that led me to ask: Who am I, an Israeli or an Ethiopian? ... I also asked, why am I different? Is difference a blessing or a handicap? Is this society racist or not? I had to reformulate my identity – how should I go about it? I was confused. Furthermore, I constantly heard conflicting voices. Some said that Israeli society was racist, while others said it wasn't. Some said we had to throw our Ethiopian identity out the window, but some said we should preserve our traditions...

Today I have a PhD in Jewish philosophy... [and I head the International Center for the Study of Ethiopian Jewry at Ono Academic College]. I also serve as rabbi of Kedoshei Yisrael, a community in Kiryat Gat that was established by Holocaust survivors. I am married to Avital, a highly educated woman who made aliyah from Switzerland as a young girl. We are parents to Roi, Nadav, Ziv, Gil, and Tohar. After over two thousand years of exile and wanderings, we are proud to live in Kiryat Gat in the Holy Land. It is truly a miracle, a miracle of the revival of the Jewish people, and a sign that the redemption will soon be coming.

(Excerpted from *Beta Israel: My Family Story*)

Learn More:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QByvoalfdXA>





PNINA TAMANO- SHATA



Pnina Tamano-Shata is one of the brightest stars to emerge from recent Israeli elections. She is the Aliyah and Integration Minister and is the first person (man or woman) from the community of Jews of Ethiopian origin to be a cabinet minister. Tamano-Shata had a rough start in life. She is from Wuzaba, a village in the Gondar region of Ethiopia, where most of the community lived. She was born in 1981, yet doesn't know her exact birth date as it wasn't recorded.

Tamano-Shata has very few memories of being lifted into a truck which drove across the desert to a refugee camp in Sudan. She remembers the crowding, the heat, and receiving a bowl of porridge in the camp. Tamano-Shata came to Israel as part of Operation Moses, the first wave of mass immigration from Ethiopia. Tamano-Shata served in the army and then studied law at Ono Academic College.

She sees herself as an Israeli woman, and stated that although unfortunately there is racism in Israeli society and many sectors of the population are disadvantaged, she believes that there are tools in society which enable people to break through the barriers.

[When asked to share a] place she feels connected with her soul, she answered, "The Kotel." In fact, she broke out in a clear alto voice, singing a few verses from a popular song about the Kotel and its connection to the Jewish people. Tamano-Shata is a proud member of Beta Israel, the formal name for the community of Jews from Ethiopia. She states that she was raised with Jewish values entwined with Beta Israel traditions and that her mom and sisters radiated spiritual strength and pride. The minister feels that women in the Beta Israel community have broken through barriers that were present in the more patriarchal structure of the society in Gondar, Ethiopia.

Tamano-Shata lives in Petah Tikva where she was raised and is devoted to her father, age 90 and her mother, who is 80. Her husband Zion is also from Beta Israel, and they have a daughter, Tahel, age 10, and a son, Ori, 8. Tamano-Shata acknowledges that she's only starting her political career, yet hopes to be the president of Israel.

(Excerpted from <https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/pnina-tamano-shata-from-the-desert-to-the-knesset-648658>)

Learn More:

<https://tinyurl.com/3fmus4jv>





ISRAELA TADELA



Israela Tadela, the first-generation Israeli in her family, attended Yemin Orde Youth Village from 15 to 18 years of age and still gladly talks about her experience. Her parents and three brothers — and other siblings who tragically didn't make it — were part of Operation Moses in 1984, a secret mission that brought more than 7,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. They trekked through Sudan, often through the night with no food or direction, with thousands of other Ethiopians hoping to make a home in Israel. And her parents haven't left the home they made in northern Israel for 30 years, laughed Tadela, whose name was inspired by her parents' "Israeli dream," as she was born the year after they made it to the country.

She made her way to Yemin Orde atop Mount Carmel, whose population is 32 percent Ethiopian, according to Friends of Yemin Orde's 2015 annual report, because she was having a difficult time with her parents. The adjustment to a new culture and language made it hard for her parents, she said, and while Tadela speaks Hebrew, her parents didn't speak it as well then, which made it difficult to communicate. After serving two years in the air force and going to the University of Haifa to study education and sociology, Tadela is now a producer at Channel 2, a main news station in Israel. She was the only Ethiopian to work at the station when she first started. Her own culture and background was one that took her time to accept. She and her younger sister took a trip to Ethiopia two years ago for the first time. They saw where their parents and family came from and the conditions in which they lived, which also changed her relationship with her parents.

"When I came to Israel again after months, I was, like, I'm so glad they are my parents, they're so brave, I appreciate them even more," she said, adding they didn't talk much about what they went through while Tadela was growing up. "I'm proud to say I'm Israeli at the same time I'm Ethiopian," she added. "I'm from two cultures, and it's OK. Five or 10 years ago, this was very difficult, I had an [identity crisis], I didn't know where I belonged to, but now I'm proud. It makes me unique, it makes me creative that I'm from both sides. I can see things outside of the box, so I'm very happy with my diversity."

(Excerpted from <https://www.impact-israel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Yemin-Orde-Israela-Tadela-Talks-About-the-Village.pdf>)

Learn More:

<https://english.tau.ac.il/ethiopian-leaders-women>





WOVITE WORKU MANGESTO



Born near Gondar in Ethiopia, Wovite, aged 10, together with her mother and seven older siblings, made her way on foot through Sudan and Aliya during Operation Moses, in 1984, a journey that took two years.

Wovite spent her high school years at Yemin Orde Youth Village and after graduating, participated in her national service as a teaching assistant at a school in Safed. This was to be her first step on the road to an interesting and fulfilling career in education.

With her national service completed, Wovite completed a B.A. in Informal Education at Bar-Ilan University, followed by a Teacher's Certificate and an M.A. in Educational Administration.

Wovite recently received her Ph.D. at a ceremony of the School of Education at Hebrew University's Mt. Scopus campus. It was, indeed, a highlight of her remarkable journey, both personally and professionally.

Today, Wovite serves as the national supervisor for new immigrant at-risk youth at the Ministry of Education, a field she loves and in which she is dedicated to making a difference. In addition, she teaches one day a week at the David Yellin College of Education; is a mentor to two talented Ethiopian students through the organization "Olim BeYahad"; and volunteers on the Parents' Patrol in her hometown of Nes Ziona.

Wovite is also the author of a new Hebrew-language children's book about her journey from Ethiopia and the challenges she and her family faced as new immigrants in Israel.

(Excerpted from <https://www.impact-israel.org/graduates/wovite-worku/>)

Learn More:

<https://www.impact-israel.org/graduates/wovite-worku/>





ROI ETNESH



Roi Etenesh was recently inducted into the Israel Defense Forces as a naval engineering officer. He grew up in Ethiopia and made aliyah with his family when he was a teenager in 2006. His father passed away in Ethiopia before he arrived in Israel. His mother passed away in Israel when he was 13 years old. It was very difficult for him to be alone.

At the beginning, everything was new. It took time for him to come to terms with the fact that both of his parents were gone. His older sister became my guardian and took care of all the children. He has six siblings who made aliyah with him, and they stayed together in an absorption center.

When he joined Yemin Orde, he didn't care much about studying and didn't think much about the future. But he had an amazing informal educator who from the first day encouraged him that it didn't matter that he was a new immigrant, because if he worked hard he would see the results. So he started to invest his time in developing himself. He decided he would try to learn each subject at the highest level: Physics, Mathematics, Robotics. He joined a leadership program for Israeli and American kids to travel together around the country. As a teenager, he was also a very active volunteer, working in an old age home and joining the choir in Yemin Orde. He was also an active member of the Yemin Orde robotics program, where he built robots and participated in the first robotics competition in Israel. This experience made him realize how much he loves the field of mechanical engineering, which led him to choose to study at the Technion because it is considered the best institute for technology in Israel.

He is not sure yet whether he will make the military his career. He envisions his future as having the ability to help others, especially children. He hopes to use his mechanical engineering skills to start a company of his own, a start-up, and in the future to have enough resources to be able to really give back.

(Adapted from <https://www.impact-israel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Interview-with-YO-Graduate-Roi-Etenesh.pdf>)

Learn More:

<https://tinyurl.com/y39d77xm>





Yael ANGADYA



Yael Angadya is the daughter of immigrants who made aliyah from Ethiopia. They arrived in Israel from Ethiopia as part of Operation Solomon.

Yael grew up with her family in the Israeli city of Sderot, and experienced some of the violence of the Second Intifada. Two of her young cousins died due to rocket attacks. Prior to joining the army as an officer, Yael went on *shlichut* to Johannesburg, South Africa as part of a program that sends young Israelis around the world to teach about Judaism and Israel. It is called the *Shinshinim* program. Many of the people she encountered were unfamiliar with what it meant to be Israeli, Ethiopian, a Black Jew. She shared her experiences and served as a role model for teenagers, grades 8-11.

Yael always wanted to be a young ambassador for Israel. She wanted to be the face of Israel – so that when people look at her, they can see the beauty of Israel, the multi-cultural makeup of the country. Yael shared that upon her return to Israel, she felt a stronger connection to Judaism, that she was a part of something bigger than herself. She continues to feel the need to give back to her people and to her country.

(Adapted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjX3fLy_SJw)

Learn More:

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=WjX3fLy_SJw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjX3fLy_SJw)

