

In Israel, Help for Ethiopian Huddled Masses

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Body

To the Editor:

William Safire correctly points out the devastation occurring in the **Ethiopian** Israeli community because of inadequate educational opportunities (column, Sept. 9). But **Ethiopian** children have not been deliberately "shunted" by government policy to "the worst schools in the poorest neighborhoods."

Most **Ethiopian** immigrant families are poor, live in poor neighborhoods and send their children to underfinanced, overcrowded neighborhood schools. These schools are disastrous for all children, but the **Ethiopian** youngsters fare worst because their parents usually lack any formal education of their own with which to enrich their children's learning opportunities.

Moreover, there are already channels through which "outsiders can participate" in immediate corrective measures. The New York City-based North American Conference on **Ethiopian** Jewry, for example, sponsors assistance programs, and the Washington-based New **Israel** Fund provides grants to nonprofit organizations in **Israel**.

Mr. Safire doesn't mention one of the most psychologically pressing problems affecting **Ethiopian** Israelis -- the many divided families still waiting, five years after Operation Solomon, for family members left behind in Ethiopia. Their long-delayed immigration causes as much anguish in **Israel** as in Addis Ababa.

Finally, it is surely time to stop referring to, and thinking of, **Ethiopian** Israelis as "black Jews." They are immigrants to **Israel** like any others, and their problems are not due to skin color but to poverty, lack of education and an enormous cultural and technological gap.

MARK C. LEVY

Santa Monica, Calif., Sept. 10, 1996

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