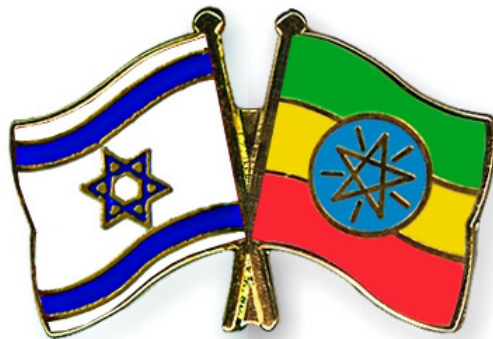




**BNEI AKIVA**  
OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

# CHOVERET CHINUCH #3 5784

JOURNEY TO  
JERUSALEM



*The Choveret Chinuch is a project of Bnei Akiva of the US and Canada's Chinuch department. For comments or questions, please reach out to Rav Avishai Berman at [aberman@bneiakiva.org](mailto:aberman@bneiakiva.org)*

Dear Madrichim,

These next two weeks we will be focusing on the Ethiopian Jewish community (known as Beta Israel) that bravely made their way to Israel in the last few decades, from the 1980's and onwards. Your Chanichim will learn about the culture, specifically about the holiday 'Chag Ha'Sigd' that took place this past week on Monday, the 29th of Cheshvan. They will also learn about the long and dangerous journeys of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel by reading an inspiring story of one such Jew.

Shani Becker

# Week One

For many years the Jews in Ethiopia had almost no communication with other Jewish communities around the world and therefore developed their own unique Jewish customs and laws. They maintained their Jewish identity through persecution and struggle and continued to preserve and create customs throughout many years of exile.

## **The Sigd:**

Sigd is a holiday traditionally celebrated by the Ethiopian Jewish community. Sigd takes place 50 days after Yom Kippur, on the 29th day of Heshvan. It's a time to remember the love for Torah and the desire to go back to Jerusalem.

In recent years, Sigd has become a national holiday in Israel and is celebrated by Jewish communities around the world, regardless of their background.

In Ethiopia, they used to celebrate Sigd on high mountains, resembling getting the Torah on Har Sinai. Now in Israel, many participants gather in Jerusalem, on the promenade in Armon HaNatziv, for a big event with a view of Har Habayit from afar.

For many years the Ethiopian Jews, who were very isolated from the rest of Jewry, believed that the Beit Hamikdash was still standing in Jerusalem, and they would pray during Sigd to return. Upon arriving in Israel, they were heartbroken and devastated to hear that the Beit Hamikdash had been destroyed, and the longing to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash was added as a traditional part of the Sigd celebrations.

During this holiday, members of the Ethiopian community fast, say special Tefilot, read from the Torah and some books of Neviim, recite Tehillim, and pray for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. Later in the day, they break their fast with dancing and celebration. Sigd is a significant event where the community comes together to celebrate their beliefs and history.

## **Discussion points:**

- What special traditions does your family have that bring you joy? Where do they come from and what do you think they represent?
- What communal traditions can you think of that we have? How do you think these affect the overall Jewish community?

- Do you think it's important for this Beta Israel community to hold onto their traditions, even though they now live in Israel?

### **Ideas for activities:**

**1. Memory Game:** In this activity, the Chanichim will engage with Ethiopian Jewish culture by recalling the meanings of words in both Amharic and English. To play the matching game, print out a set of words in both languages. Divide the Chanichim into two groups and have them take turns matching the English words to their corresponding Amharic counterparts. If a team makes an incorrect guess, the turn passes to the other team.

Hello - Tena Yastalin, good morning - Idman Edrash, how are you - Indmanch, thank you - Amsganalhu, goodbye - Dehanahun, okay - Dehana

**2. A story about a dream:** In this activity the Chanichim will work together to tell a story of a dream of an individual (connecting to the dreams that all the Jews had coming from Ethiopia to the land of Israel). Have the Chanichim sit in a circle, and each Chanich contributes three words to build a collaborative story about someone pursuing their dream.

The madrich starts the story with an opening sentence. Then each Chanich around the circle continues the story on their turn, adding only three words.

**3. Song and Discussion:** This song shows the hardships the Ethiopian Jews went through on their way to Israel. ( In 1983-84 approximately 12,000 Jews from the Beta Israel community had set off by foot from the remote Gondar area, towards Israel. The dangers they faced on the exhausting three month walk to Israel included hunger, thirst, attacks by criminals and wild animals, and living in refugee camps with lots of diseases. One-third of their number died along the way.)

Play the song. Discuss with the Chanichim the journey, hardships and sacrifices the Beta Israel went through to come to Israel. (You can print the words for a Peula on shabbat). <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/hamasa-leerets-israel-journey-land.html>

**4. Traditions from home:** Have the Chanichim bring something from home that symbolizes one of their familial traditions.

## Week Two

The Jewish Ethiopian community (Beta Israel) began to return to Israel in large numbers and make aliyah in the 20th century, from the 1980s and onwards, and many Jews around the world began to learn about the traditions of Ethiopian Jews at that time.



**Meet Rabbi Dr. Sharon Shalom, who is a rabbi, lecturer and Jewish author.**

Here is his story:

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 a village 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. It was unclear to me what happened to my parents.

As a child in Ethiopia, I thought that Jerusalem was made of gold. I dreamed of a land of milk and honey, in which everyone was Jewish and the gentiles did not hate them.

Rumors began to fly around our village and others that Jews from Jerusalem had come to Sudan in order to help the Ethiopian Jews go to Israel. We all did everything possible to get organized and start moving in order to go up to Jerusalem. Every item that could be sold, we sold. Whatever we couldn't sell, we left behind in our clay huts. One night, when the sign to begin the journey was given, the residents of several villages gathered at a meeting point and began the great journey to Jerusalem.

We walked for over two months from Ethiopia to Sudan, exposed to the dangers of the road. The Mossad and Jewish Aliyah Agency representatives worked to push up the pace of aliyah. While on the other hand, they had to be careful not to arouse the attention of the soldiers of the president of Sudan.

My family was in the camp, and we were told we would have to wait two or three

years for our turn. As it was more of a danger that kids will get sick if they stay, my parents decided to send me at eight years old, with my aunt and uncle to Jerusalem. I was torn between my love for my family and my love for Jerusalem. I followed my parents' wishes. Along with hundreds of other children, adults, and elderly, I was packed into a crowded truck. The bed of the truck was covered with a heavy tarp, and we were off.

Conditions inside the truck were hard. No one dared to make a sound. We didn't know where they were taking us or how much longer we would have to travel in this horrific state. Finally, the tarp was lifted from the truck bed, and we climbed out. I saw an amazing sight, something I had never seen before. I saw the shore of the Red Sea – my first glimpse of the ocean. Then suddenly a miracle happened. From out of nowhere, from deep within the darkness and the fog, commandos from Unit 13 of the Israeli Navy rose up out of the sea. They shed tears, and we cried along with them. It was a meeting of two brothers who had been separated for two thousand years.

The soldiers loaded us onto rubber boats. It was a dark night, and the boats floated silently into the sea. After a while, the boat reached an Israeli naval ship. We climbed up and sailed to the southern Sinai Peninsula. From there, we flew to Ben-Gurion airport, our gate to the promised Jerusalem – the first step in a reality that for many years had been only a dream.

In January 1982, I went to live in a children's home in Afula. At one point, I received the bitter news that my parents were no longer alive. For two years, I lived with the knowledge that I would continue in this world without my family. Then one day, the children's center director called me to his office urgently. I went in and sat down cautiously, petrified I had done something wrong. Then he 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).

I took a shower and put on new clothes in preparation for the meeting. The trip to them, which took just half an hour, seemed like an eternity to me. We knocked on the door, and my mother opened it. We embraced and wept, and I felt that I was experiencing a miracle.

After over two thousand years of exile and wanderings, we are proud to live in the Holy Land. It is truly a miracle, a miracle of the revival of the Jewish people, and a sign that redemption will soon be coming.

**Discussion points:**

- What lessons can we learn about the Beta Israel community from the story we just heard?
- What do you think was the most difficult part of Rabbi Sharon Shalom's journey?
- What is your most cherished dream?
- If you could have your dream come true, what would you be willing to give up for it?

**Ideas for activities:**

The Jews of Ethiopia had to go through a very secret journey in order to get to Israel. In these next activities, the Chanichim will work together on different secrets and deciphering codes.

- 1. Secret Word:** One Chanich steps out, while the others think together of a word (to be used in this round as the secret word). The Chanich steps back in and asks, in turn, a question to each participant. Each answer must incorporate the secret word, as unobtrusively as possible. After asking a round of questions he has three guesses as to what the chosen secret word is.
- 2. Scavenger Hunt:** Spit the Chanichim up into two groups. Create a scavenger hunt where the Chanichim need to follow clues to find secret messages hidden around the Snif. The messages can reveal a final surprise at the end.
- 3. Two Truths and a Lie:** Chanichim take turns sharing two true statements and one false statement about themselves. Others try to guess which statement is the lie.