



Educator's Guide

Ethiopians

Since Israel was established, Jews have returned to their homeland from all corners of the earth. One of the most prolific stories of return is that of Ethiopian Jewry, a group of Jews that had been entirely separated from the rest of the Jewish people for over 2000 years. Join Chloé to learn about the fascinating history of the Ethiopian Jews, their immigration and integration into the modern State of Israel. Through the story of Ethiopian Jewry, we learn about the diversity within the state of Israel, the successes and challenges of integrating different groups of immigrants, and how to make a more equal and inclusive society for all. Watch this video and use the prompts below to learn more.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/iJvTAjotZvl>

Further Reading

- 1.** Jerusalem U, "Mekonen"
<https://unpacked.education/film/mekonen-the-journey-of-an-african-jew/>
- 2.** The Times of Israel staff, "Ethiopian - Israeli Protests"
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/topic/ethiopian-israeli-protests/>
- 3.** Unpacked for Educators, "Ethiopian Community in Israel - Shooting, Protest and Response"
<https://unpacked.education/ethiopian-community-in-israel-shooting-protest-and-response/>
- 4.** Nomi Levenkron, "Are Israel's Police Really More Violent Toward the Ethiopian Community?"
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-are-israels-police-really-violent-toward-the-ethiopian-community-1.5447523>



- 5.** Judith Antonelli, "The Plight of Ethiopian Jews"
<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/plight-et-hiopian-jews>
- 6.** Unpacked for Educators, "Rescuing the Wandering Jew"
<https://unpacked.education/video/homeland/>

Review – Did the students understand the material?

- 1.** Ethiopian Jews traditionally refer to themselves as:
 - a.** Falashas
 - b.** Beta Israel
 - c.** Falash Mura
 - d.** Olei Ethiopia
- 2.** Falasha is a derogatory term in Amharic used by non-Jewish Ethiopians to refer to Ethiopian Jews, meaning:
 - a.** Converts
 - b.** Jewish
 - c.** Strangers
 - d.** Pious
- 3.** Approximately, how many Ethiopian Jews live in Israel today?
 - a.** 1.4 million
 - b.** 400,000
 - c.** 14,000
 - d.** 144,000
- 4.** Which ancient Israelite tribe do some Ethiopian Israelis trace their lineage back to?
 - a.** Dan
 - b.** Simeon
 - c.** Naphtali
 - d.** Zebulun
- 5.** What was the name of the first operation to rescue Ethiopian Jews and bring them to Israel in 1984?
 - a.** Solomon
 - b.** Eagle
 - c.** Daniel
 - d.** Moses



- 6.** True or false: Until the 19th century, Ethiopian Jews knew of the existence of other Jews around the world.
- 7.** Name two well known Jewish holidays that Ethiopian Jews did not celebrate in Ethiopia.

Discussion Questions and Learning Activities

- 1.** After seeing the video and learning about the Beta Israel community's often tumultuous journey from Ethiopia to Israel, how do you think the journey itself helped shape Ethiopian Israeli identity? Have your students answer this question by writing down three thoughts they have. Students can then share their responses in a class-wide discussion or in small groups.
- 2.** Watch this [video](#) in class. Have your students come up with questions about Ethiopian Jews. Give them time to research their questions and present their findings.
- 3.** Even though the Ethiopians spoke Amharic and not Hebrew, had never heard of the Holocaust, and rabbinic holidays like Hanukkah and Purim were not part of their tradition, Israelis have always felt like Ethiopians are part of the Jewish people and that saving them was critical for the Israeli government. What do you think is the common link that unites all Jewish people?
- 4.** Why do you think that at times the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants into Israeli society had more challenges than other immigrant groups? (Keep in mind the different culture and lifestyle that Jews from Ethiopia were bringing with them.) Discuss.
- 5.** Watch this [video](#) and use the accompanying educational resources to learn more about the plight of the Ethiopian Jewish community.
- 6.** One of the most important holidays that is unique to the Ethiopian Jewish community is the [Sigd holiday](#). In 2008, [Sigd](#) was officially recognized as a national holiday in Israel. For the majority of the Israeli public (and Jewish world) that does not celebrate Sigd, what is an effective way to help incorporate this holiday into Israeli society as a whole?
- 7.** Watch our own film [Mekonen](#) and have your students write a movie review including:
 - a. 3 things they learned about Ethiopian Jews
 - b. 3 questions they have about Ethiopian Jews



- c. 3 big-idea takeaways they got from watching the movie

Reflection Questions

- 1.** How can your new understanding of the Ethiopian-Israeli experience help you think about your own identity as a young Jew? Have your students respond in a [reflection vlog](#). You can use the free app [flipgrid](#).
- 2.** What do you think are the challenges of being a minority in your own society, and how does it compare to the complexities of being a minority in Israeli society? Have your students reflect on this question by making [sketchnotes](#).
- 3.** In the last year, there have been numerous protests and complaints by Ethiopian Jews about lack of opportunity, educational gaps, poverty and [police harassment](#). At the same time, Ethiopian Israelis have made monumental achievements in Israeli society when it comes to [politics](#), [religion](#), the [military](#) and more. Have your students read and discuss the following [two articles](#) to see the multiple successes and challenges facing the Ethiopian community.
- 4.** Having been separated from the rest of world Jewry for over 2000 years, the Judaism practiced by Ethiopian Jews was very different than the Judaism practiced by the rest of the world. They observed biblical Judaism rather than rabbinical Judaism and didn't celebrate holidays like Chanukah and Purim, which took place after they had already been separated. If you were an Ethiopian Jew reuniting with the rest of the Jewish people, would you want to maintain your own unique way of observing Judaism or would you try to adapt to the rest of world Jewry? Have your students discuss in small groups and then share their thoughts.
- 5.** Until the 19th century, Ethiopian Jews believed that they were the only Jews left on earth. After learning about Ethiopian Jews and their story, how does it affect your own Jewish identity? Give your students 5 minutes to write their responses.