

NACOEJ CURRICULUM

ETHIOPIAN JEWS ARE PART OF THE WORLDWIDE JEWISH COMMUNITY

TOPIC 1: THE PLIGHT OF THE ETHIOPIAN JEWS

(Italicized items are available on the Resources and Materials page. Underlined words are defined in the lesson's Vocabulary page.)

I. AIMS:

Students will:

- A. learn that there are black Jews who, since the Diaspora, 2,500 years ago, have lived in Ethiopia. The Jewish community in Ethiopia calls itself the Beta Israel (the House of Israel).
- B. learn that other Ethiopians call Ethiopian Jews “Falashas” and that they have been discriminated against and treated as outcasts in their own country, where they struggle to survive.
- C. learn that Ethiopian Jews, like other Jews over the centuries, suffer from anti-semitism, and yearn to make aliyah—to return to their Jewish homeland.
- D. learn about, discuss and understand that Beta Israel is part of the worldwide Jewish community because of its Jewish origins and its commitment to and observance of Jewish traditions.
- E. decide how they can help Ethiopian Jews.

II. MATERIALS:

- A. *Maps of Modern Africa, Ethiopia and the Middle East*
- B. *Photographs of Jews from six different countries*

Photographers:

Cece Wasserman, *Two Cuban Women*, 2000
Liat Klarfield, *Ethiopian Boy*, 2003
Lillian Baharestani, *Iranian Man*, 2005
Eadie Shanker, *Philippine Woman* 2003
Richard Sheftman, *American Woman*, 2005
Zion Ozeri, *Yemenite Bride*, 1984

- C. Video/DVD: “*Left Behind, The Forgotten Jews of Ethiopia*” (12-minutes), NACOEJ (Contact NACOEJ for free copies: curriculum@nacoelj.org)
- D. *NACOEJ program flyers: nacoelj@nacoelj.org*
- E. Vocabulary

III. MATERIALS FOR OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

A. *List of Jewish Values*

B. *Journals/Chart/Pre-lesson Focus:*

My Journal: Journey toward Tzedakah (teacher and student)
Knowledge Chart

Should the teacher choose to have students use the Journal and a Knowledge Chart, briefly instruct students on how to use them.

NOTE:

A vocabulary list is provided for students' use. These vocabulary words are underlined in the lesson text. Students should review the list prior to the lesson.

IV. MOTIVATION: (5 minutes)

- A. Here are five pictures from different countries:
- B. Do you think any of these people are Jewish? Why?
- C. What countries do you think these people come from?
(Two Cuban women, an Ethiopian boy, an Iranian man, a Trinidadian woman, a Yemenite bride)
They are all Jewish . Attach names of countries to the correct pictures.
- D. How many of you have Jewish parents or grandparents who come from another country? Which countries?
- E. What did you just learn about the diversity of the Jewish community?

V. PROCEDURE: (40 minutes)

- A. Indicate that students will learn about an ancient Jewish community in Ethiopia that has struggled to survive against starvation and anti-semitism. These Jews, after 2,500 years, yearn to make aliyah--to return to Israel, their Jewish homeland.

(Skip the following activity if it has already been done in a previous lesson.)

- B. Using maps of Africa and Ethiopia, briefly help students locate:
 - 1. Ethiopia,
 - 2. Addis Ababa (the capital city of Ethiopia)
 - 3. Gondar (the region where Ethiopian Jews settled)
 - 4. The Arabian Peninsula
 - 5. Israel
 - 6. Determine the approximate distance from Ethiopia to Israel (about 1,600 miles)
- C. Inform students that Gondar is the region where Ethiopian Jews have lived for centuries. **NOTE:** About 110,000 Ethiopian Israelis are now in Israel. There are, even now, about 10,000 Ethiopian Jews in Gondar waiting to emigrate to Israel.
- D. Show only the picture of the Ethiopian Jewish boy.
- E. How can you can tell that he is Jewish? (Point to the rim of his yarmulka/kipah) Show 12-minute video, "Left Behind". (Advise students to pay close attention to how these Jews live, so they will be prepared to discuss what they have seen and learned. They may make notes in their Journals and on their Knowledge Charts should the teacher choose to use them.)

F. Discussion

1. List the things you learned today about Ethiopian Jews.
2. How do you feel about what you saw and learned?
3. Why should other Jews care about the survival of the Ethiopian Jews?
4. What actions will you take to show your love and concern for Ethiopian Jews?

(Should teacher choose to discuss Jewish values that are relevant to this lesson, see *List of Jewish Values*.)

VI. CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES:

The teacher and students will decide upon an activity which will help Ethiopian Jews:

- A. WRITE an article for the school newsletter about Ethiopian Jews and ways in which we can help them.
- B. ORGANIZE a class tzedakah project.
(See *Tzedakah Projects: Mitzvah Page - My Mitzvah Project*)
- C. ENLIST parents or others in a drive to raise money for Ethiopian Jews.

VII. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CLASSWORK/HOMEWORK

A. *List of Jewish Values:* Teacher and students may suggest appropriate Jewish values for the lesson.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. “All Jews are interrelated with one another.”
(Kol Yisrael Areyvim Zeh Bazeh [Lazeh])”
2. “...love your neighbor as yourself.”
 (“Ve Ahavata Lereyecha Kamocho.”)

B. *Journal/Chart/Pre-lesson Focus*

C. A STUDENT WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

1. a story
2. a poem
3. a report

VIII. CURRICULUM PROJECT FEEDBACK FORM:

TOPIC 1: The Plight of the Ethiopian Jews

(See *Feedback Forms*.) Please forward the completed forms to:
curriculum@nacoj.org

IX. VOCABULARY: TOPIC 1: THE PLIGHT OF THE ETHIOPIAN JEWS

- Beta Israel:** the name the Ethiopian Jews call their community, which means the House of Israel
- Diaspora:** the dispersion of the Jews outside of Israel from the sixth century BCE, when they were exiled to Babylonia, until the present time
- Falashas:** strangers, aliens, landless outsiders; a derogatory name used by non-Jewish Ethiopians referring to the Jewish Beta Israel community
- Falash Mura:** Jews whose ancestors, parents or themselves converted to Christianity—usually under duress—who have now returned to their Jewish faith; a subset of Jews left behind after the Israeli rescue mission, Operation Solomon, in 1991
- Gondar:** the region in northern Ethiopia where Jews have lived for centuries
- emigrate:** to leave one country or region to settle in another
- immigrate:** to come into a country or region, especially to settle there
- injera:** an Ethiopian pancake-like bread made from a grain called tef
- NACOEJ:** the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, whose mission is to help Ethiopians survive in Ethiopia and be absorbed in Israel. It advocates their immigration to Israel, sponsors education programs to aid their adjustment to life in Israel, and helps preserve their unique culture
- Operation Moses:** the first airlift rescue operation, by Israelis, with American help, for the exodus of Ethiopian Jews to Israel in 1984/85
- Operation Solomon:** the second airlift rescue by Israelis, with American help, of over 14,000 Ethiopian Jews, the Falash Mura, in 36 hours in May 1991
- tef:** a nutritious Ethiopian grain used to make injera
- tribe of Dan:** one of the twelve tribes of Israel (known as the lost tribe of Dan)

X. WEB SITE: www.nacoej.org