



Israel

NACOEJ's educational efforts to promote integration and reduce educational gaps for Ethiopian Israelis encompass programs from first grade through high school, college, and post-grad, including our ground-breaking professional development programs for social workers and teachers. These programs are needed more than ever given the long war's economic impact on government programs, school budgets and in-person learning.

Elementary School Limudiah

This year NACOEJ operated in five cities (Bat Yam, Jerusalem, Kiryat Ekron, Lod and Rehovot), where students receive ten hours a week of intensive education in language, math, and study skills.

We usually share with you inspiring stories, accompanied by photos, of our Limudiah students engaged in educational activities around the Jewish holidays (Purim, Passover, etc.). Sadly, the war with Iran caused the children to celebrate these holidays close to, or in, bomb shelters instead of in class.

However, earlier in the year, the children were able to celebrate Sigd in the Limudiah. Sigd is a unique Ethiopian Jewish holiday which was officially recognized by Israel in 2008. Celebrated 50 days after Yom Kippur, it is a day of fasting, prayer, and renewal of the covenant with G-d. This year, the holiday was particularly joyous because of the cease-fire with Hamas and the return of the hostages.

Middle School Limudiah: Rising to Excellence

Last year, 13 out of the 21 sixth-graders in the two Jerusalem schools were accepted into high caliber schools. All ten of the 8th grade students in Lod were accepted to the city's best schools. Without NACOEJ these prestigious tracks would not have been available to these students.

High School Limudiah: Sderot and Kiryat Gat

Following the war with Gaza, NACOEJ created an educational reinforcement program for high-school students in two towns bordering Gaza with large Ethiopian Israeli communities,



*Kes blessing Dabo (traditional bread)
Sigd 5786 – November 20, 2025*



Limudiah

partnering with the 8200 Association (graduates of the elite IDF intelligence) to add entrepreneurship and technology to the curriculum.

AAS College Program

The program is more critical than ever now that the government has reduced its tuition support of Ethiopian students. By assisting AAS students, sponsors are supporting the wider Ethiopian-Israeli community, as the excerpts from student letters show:

A nursing student writes: One of my main goals is to become a professional voice for my community within the healthcare system. Many people from my community receive medical care without fully understanding what is happening around them. Due to language barriers, cultural gaps, and a lack of accessible medical knowledge, they often follow decisions made for them without being true partners in their own treatment.

A psychology student writes: Looking ahead, I dream of working in the field of clinical psychology, particularly with children. I hope to one day open my own clinic that provides support for children coping with emotional and mental health challenges...I feel a strong desire to create change within the Ethiopian community by encouraging greater openness toward seeking psychological support.

Mental health is still often seen as a taboo, and I would like to help normalize and make it easier for individuals to reach out for help when they need it.

Professional Development

ALEKA Program, Educational Leadership

This two-year program, in partnership with Herzog College, prepares Ethiopian-Israeli teachers for leadership roles within the education system, to increase their representation in senior and management positions. The program includes lectures, professional workshops, and a two-day summer seminar. Each teacher also receives personal guidance from a mentor.

The program is recognized by the Ministry of Education; teachers accrue sixty annual credits, which automatically raises participants'



David Mirhet, NACOEJ-Israel Director, at a monthly meeting with the seventeen teachers who are participating in the program.

salary. There are now over sixty graduates, and another eighteen teachers who participated this year will have completed their first year.

Training Social Workers

This year NACOEJ began an exciting new program in partnership with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and the Vesta Tsega Association, which works to provide culturally adapted mental health treatment within the Ethiopian community. Fifteen Ethiopian-Israeli social workers with masters' degrees began training as clinical social workers and qualified therapists in family, marital, individual, and addictions therapy, all areas where the community need is tremendous.

Mental health hospitalization and suicide rates within the Ethiopian-Israeli community are much higher than within the general population. There are few Ethiopian-Israeli clinical psychologists and not even one psychiatrist. It therefore made sense to structure a program around social workers. Participants receive a stipend for this two-year program.

Ethiopia

Feeding Center in Ethiopia

NACOEJ, together with our partner SSEJ, is funding meals for children under five and pregnant and nursing women. Meals consist of eggs, milk, potatoes or fortified porridge, vegetables or fruit and bread, and are provided to about 1,200 people daily.

Malnourished children under five are the most vulnerable to stunting, disease and death, outcomes which this feeding program has prevented. Malnutrition during pregnancy can



Feeding Center

cause anemia, pre-eclampsia, hemorrhage and death in mothers, and lead to stillbirth, low birthweight, and developmental delays for children, while nursing women need extra calories to aid milk production.

Kaytana (summer program)

NACOEJ provides daily lunches – eggs, potatoes, fruit and more – to over 3,000 Jewish children in Ethiopia enrolled in the Kaytana. For most of these children, this is the only significant meal of the day.



Kaytana

Formal classes in Judaism and Hebrew, and informal Jewish education in the form of songs, plays, games, etc. are run by our partner in Ethiopia, SSEJ. The structured learning and enjoyable activities are a boon for these children, who live in terrible poverty. The program is currently in session.

Grain Distributions

For many years now, Jews in Ethiopia have dealt with the rising price of food due to civil war, drought, and other factors, including the ongoing war in Ukraine and now the war with Iran. Currently, there are few jobs in Gondar (where most of the community, about 12,000 strong, live) due to the ongoing militia warfare. Limited fuel supplies are affecting the price of food, and also its availability.

NACOEJ is funding grain distributions for the entire community in an ongoing effort to ameliorate the hardship and hunger. This year NACOEJ also funded the special grain the community needed to make matzah for Passover.

New Compound in Ethiopia



Workers at the new building site

The new compound is slowly becoming a reality, partly due to the sizeable seed money provided by NACOEJ. When it is finished, there will be a synagogue, school, mikva, bathroom facilities, a vegetable garden and more. Emigration from Ethiopia is currently nonexistent, but the situation in Ethiopia has only grown worse for the beleaguered Jewish community.

In other news

A heroine retires

As we wrote in our December 2025 letter and email, after 43 years devoted to the cause of Ethiopian Jewry, Barbara Ribakove retired from her position as Executive Director. Barbara founded NACOEJ in 1982 with a handful of people in her living room in New York City. She has been Executive Director ever since. (Barbara was a writer and journalist before.)

Her first trip to Ethiopia on a 1981 mission led her down this path. Watch the video here:

She was fiercely passionate in her dedication to the Ethiopian-Jewish community in both Ethiopia and Israel. With the ongoing support of the NACOEJ community who rallied to this cause because of her, she and NACOEJ made a huge difference to the Ethiopian Jewish community on both sides of the Red Sea.



Barbara visiting NACOEJ compound in Ethiopia

NACOEJ will carry on her legacy of love for, and commitment to, Ethiopian Jews. Gary Metzger (formerly our COO) is now our CEO.

Office Move

Last fall, our U.S. office moved to a small, flexible working space to optimize our resources so more funds go to our important work.

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LIFELINE • SUMMER 2026



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