

WHAT IS SIGD?

- Sigd is an ancient Jewish holiday, observed 50 days after Yom Kippur. It brings together community in solemn reflection and ritual as well as festive celebration. Through the generations it was preserved exclusively by the Jews of Ethiopia who are also known as Beta Israel.
- Sigd takes its name from the Hebrew word Sgidah, (סגידה) or Sigdet (ሰገደት) in Amharic meaning “prostration” because on Sigd we bow before God.
- After the mass migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel, Ethiopian activists lobbied to make Sigd an official national holiday.
- Sigd was recognized as a national holiday in Israel in 2008. Today, Sigd is taught and observed across Israel, and awareness of Sigd is growing beyond the Ethiopian Jewish community to the broader Israeli society and Jewish communities across the world.
- Like all Jewish holidays, Sigd is part of our collective inheritance. Because it was pererved through the generations by Ethiopian Jews, observances should pay homage to Ethiopian Jewish customs and traditions.

HOW SHOULD SIGD BE OBSERVED?

For centuries, Sigd was exclusively observed in Ethiopia. The holiday moved to Israel with the Beta Israel and its observance continues to evolve. As non-Ethiopian Jews come to celebrate the holiday, there are four major areas with which to engage. Authentic and respectful observance will consider all these elements.

RITUAL COMPONENTS

- Fasting
- Reading traditional prayers
- Reading passages from the Tanakh
- Listening to prayers in Ge’ez, the liturgical language of the Beta Israel. This can be done virtually

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- Recommitment to Torah
- Return to Jerusalem
- Repentance
- Humility/Submission to God’s will

CULTURAL ELEMENTS

- Serving Ethiopian foods such as Dabo
- Listening to traditional and contemporary music by Ethiopian Jews
- Dancing in traditional Ethiopian style
- Learning about the culutre of Ethiopian Jews including the use of parasols

ENGAGING WITH HISTORY

- Begin with ancient times
- Teach about Ethiopian Zionism
- Center the heroism and activism of Beta Israel in the past and today
- Highlight the experience post-Aliya
- Throughout, directly discuss complexities of race