

Topic 5: The Return of Ethiopian Jewry (continued)

1. The Jewish Agency, *New Ethiopian olim construct first tefillin*, <http://www.jewishagency.org/blog/1/article/48>

At a recent event held at the 500-year-old *Ari* synagogue in the Old City, in the northern Galilee town of *Tzfat*, 22 new olim were surrounded by proud mothers in traditional Ethiopian dress, family and friends, as their fathers aided them in taking on the religious garb of manhood - *tefillin*.

In the several week-long project, fathers and sons together constructed the two boxes that house the slips of sacred parchment, painted the two pairs of black leathers straps wound around forehead and forearm, and diligently learned the *halachot* (Jewish instruction) concerning the daily prayers and customs connected with the act.

2. Abra Forman, *Ethiopian Traditions 'Nearly Identical' to Dead Sea Scrolls From Second Temple Era*, <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/80005/>

Incredibly strict observance of the Sabbath (Shabbat) is one such example. Unlike mainstream Judaism, which abides by a Talmud teaching that violating Shabbat is permitted in order to save a life, "For the Ethiopian Jews, the sanctity of Shabbat must be preserved, even at the cost of human life," said Dr. Ziv, adding that similar stringencies were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Another Second Temple-era custom practiced by Ethiopians includes not lighting Sabbath (Shabbat) candles in observance of an ancient tradition which prohibits the use of a fire on Shabbat, even if it was lit before Shabbat started.

3. Meital Regev, *From Policy of Suspend to Policy of Immigration: The Israeli Policy towards the Ethiopian Jews 1948-1984*, [yad4.co.il/uploads/lost\\_dogs/1495212985-רוקי.docx](http://yad4.co.il/uploads/lost_dogs/1495212985-רוקי.docx)

Beginning in 1948, discussions were held in a broad range of institutions in Israel regarding bringing Ethiopian Jews... In a report from the Division of Education and Torah Culture in the Diaspora of the Jewish Agency in 1952, it was written explicitly that the tribe of Falashas are the most important Jewish tribe... Because of this, in 1953 the Zionist leadership began acting, via the Jewish Agency, to draw the Ethiopian community close to Israel on one hand and Rabbinic Judaism on the other. This was done by sending rabbinic emissaries to teach the community traditions and Orthodox law as practiced in Israel. In parallel, the Jewish Agency opened schools to teach Hebrew, Judaism and general professions. In 1957, the Jewish Agency closed the schools, and stopped sending emissaries to the community.

4. Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog, 1951 ruling, published from a 1954 letter in *Techumin* 9

I have been very, very interested in the letter he sent me. May your hands be strengthened, and may you practice wise counsel, to draw the Falashas near to the source of Israel; it would be a great mitzvah to aid in this sacred work. But there is a very interesting practical halachic issue related to marriage among Jews. The main question is whether they are descendants of converts, or from the seed of the House of Israel. Just the opposite – if they are descendants of converts, this will make their status more lenient...

5. Meital Regev, *From Policy of Suspend to Policy of Immigration: The Israeli Policy towards the Ethiopian Jews 1948-1984*, based on the work of Dr. Avi Pickar, *The Beginning of Selective Aliyah in the 1950's*

With the establishment of the State, the Zionist leadership declared that it would enable every willing Jew to ascend to Israel. Opposite this promise, in the first decade a policy of selective aliyah was established, leading to suspension of aliyah for some *olim* who deserved, under the Law of Return, to ascend to Israel. Further, stereotypes and prejudice toward North African Jewry developed, leading to social polarization.

6. Rabbi J. David Bleich, *Black Jews: A Halakhic Perspective*, *Tradition* 15 (1972)

Judaism is color blind; skin pigmentation is unknown as a halakhic concept. The problem of determining the status of the various communities of Black Jews is totally unrelated to color. The sole issue is that of Jewish identity.

7. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, קדימה, יוצאי איתיופיה, הידד במעלה,

Onward, Ethiopian migrant, Heided on the ascent!

Do not ask why I involve myself,

I am not Ethiopian.

But this is not correct.

In truth, I am not Ethiopian

But I am also not non-Ethiopian.

Simply, I am Jewish

like you.

I do not care

what colour your skin is.

Especially when it seems the colour of my ancestors

was like your colour

as is explained in Mishnah Negaim, Chapter 2,

But across generations it turned white

for various reasons

that don't interest me...

#### Topic 6: The Disengagement

8. Itai Elitzur, cited by Yair Sheleg, [en.idi.org.il/media/4494/pp\\_72.pdf](http://en.idi.org.il/media/4494/pp_72.pdf), pg. 83

Had we acted in Gush Katif as we did in Amona, this might have saved Gush and it might not have, but it definitely would have saved the houses in Amona. Had the State been licking the wounds of the police and settlers injured in Gush Katif until today, no one would have been motivated to act in Amona.

9. Rabbi Ed Snitkoff, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gush-emunim/>

The national trauma following the 1973 Yom Kippur War equaled the ecstasy that followed the Six Day War. At this time, the members of the young religious faction left their burned out tanks and bunkers with renewed determination that the secular, strategic settlement plan was not to be depended on any longer. This crisis led to a meeting in Kibbutz Kfar Etzion in 1974, the outcome of which was the founding of Gush Emunim. Gush Emunim's platform defined the movement's mission in the following way: "To bring about a major spiritual reawakening in the Jewish people for the sake of the full realization of the Zionist vision, in the knowledge that this vision's source and goal in the Jewish heritage and in Judaism's roots are the total redemption of both the Jewish people and the whole world."

10. אביב ונגבה, שרון: דין נצרים כדין תל-אביב ונגבה, Ha'Aretz Apr. 25 '02, <https://news.walla.co.il/item/212791>

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon repeated today (for the third time) that he will not evacuate isolated settlements. In a meeting of the Knesset's committees for foreign affairs and security, Sharon said, "The status of Netzarim is like the status of the Negev and Tel Aviv."

11. Address by PM Ariel Sharon to the Fourth Herzliya Conference, December 4 2003

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2003/Pages/Address%20by%20PM%20Ariel%20Sharon%20at%20the%20Fourth%20Herzliya.aspx>

Like all Israeli citizens, I yearn for peace. I attach supreme importance to taking all steps which will enable progress toward resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians. However, in light of the other challenges we are faced with, if the Palestinians do not make a similar effort toward a solution of the conflict, I do not intend to wait for them indefinitely... The purpose of the Disengagement Plan is to reduce terror as much as possible, and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security. The process of disengagement will lead to an improvement in the quality of life, and will help strengthen the Israeli economy... The Disengagement Plan is meant to grant maximum security and minimize friction between Israelis and Palestinians.

12. Micha Lindenstrauss, State Comptroller and Ombudsman, Report of Feb. 2006

The report's findings clearly indicate that the Prime Minister's office, SELA Disengagement Authority and several of the designated ministries had not been mindful enough to the absorption of the evacuees. There is no doubt that the evacuees, children and adults, elderly and toddlers, suffered from severe trauma in the evacuation and from the manner of their evacuation from the Gaza Strip. The evacuees paid a heavy personal price due to the evacuation. The improvement of the situation of the evacuees and their living conditions today is a duty imposed on the state and its institutions, a duty of great importance. Not even a single evacuee should stay without the attention of the competent authorities or their complete assistance. All roads lead, in these reports, to the state and its institutions. It must overcome all budget obstacles; give utmost priority to resettlement and rehabilitation of the evacuees. Any delay in this regard, is a clear expression of continued failure. Evacuees are eligible for immediate assistance, and the sooner the better.

13. Observations of then-IDF Chief of Staff Moshe (Boogie) Yaalon, reported in Ha'aretz July 5 2006

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1118413>

There is no doubt that the Disengagement failed. This failure was anticipated... [Disengagement] did not arise from deep strategic analysis, but from a political and personal crisis of the prime minister, Ariel Sharon... In great measure, Disengagement was media spin, and those who planned and executed it were not people with background in strategy, security, policy or history. They were image advisors, *spinologim*.

14. Observations of then-Meretz MK Yossi Beilin, reported in Ha'aretz July 5 2006

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1118413>

[Disengagement] created among Palestinians a sense that Jews only understand force. Those Palestinians came to the conclusion that only use of force, and more force and more force, will remove Israel from the West Bank, as it left Aza... Disengagement had two benefits: One was to cause us to rule fewer Palestinians. The second was to create a precedent for mass evacuation of settlements. In those two aspects it succeeded. But if anyone thought it would lead to calm – the Disengagement failed... It was the dumbest way to leave Aza...

15. Rabbi Zalman Melamed, <https://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/4684> (26 Nisan 5766/2006)

We criticize the government's steps and are very angry at them; it is hard to go about one's routine. On some level we are also angry at the branches of the army and police who did this act of evicting Jews from Gush Katif, this evil crime...

16. Rabbi Yaakov Medan, <https://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/118877> (July 23 2005)

In the past, with all of the fights, I thought we had something to learn from the secular elites. Now that I have seen the secular elites stab me in the back and turn their backs on their own values – democracy, human rights – I have nothing else to learn from them...

17. Dr. Zehavit Gross, *Walking a Tightrope: The Attitude of Religious Zionist Adolescents to the State of Israel after the Disengagement*, Religious Zionism Post Disengagement: Future Directions, Orthodox Forum 2007 pp. 162-170

The main questions that occupied the religious Zionist leadership, prior to and after the implementation of the disengagement plan, was what should their attitude be toward the State of Israel that has taken such a political action. Is the State still legitimate? Can we, as religious people, continue to cooperate with it? During the special prayer for the country, can we pray for the government and wish them success in what they are doing? To find answers to these questions, I conducted a qualitative research study among seventy-eight male religious Zionist adolescents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. In interviews, I asked them what impact the disengagement plan had on their attitude to the State of Israel...

The largest group of adolescents said that the issue didn't bother them at all. When I asked, it took them few moments to answer, saying: What? The disengagement? Who remembers it at all? Practically speaking, it didn't bother me at all. I saw the dismantling on tv, but as they say, "Life goes on."... We will continue to serve in the army and love our country. We don't have any place else to go... It should be noted that this kind of answer was prominent mainly among adolescents who live in the center and the north, but not in the south...

Another kind of reaction was found among very religious people who saw the disengagement as betrayal by secular people or by the State or by democracy. Democracy had become the enemy of religion and of religious people, and the conclusion was that they have to exclude themselves from the state...

Some of the adolescents believed that the religious community needed to take over the country, and not necessarily in a democratic fashion: It is only a matter of time until we will run the State. ... The banishment has taught us that we must take over the army, the Supreme Court. Our graduates have to take the lead everywhere...

Other adolescents expressed the belief that the religious community had itself disengaged from Israeli society. They felt that the religious should "settle in the hearts" of the general population in order to change the situation for the good of the State: The disengagement is proof that we are still not part of Israeli society. We haven't settled in the hearts of *Am Israel* [the People of Israel]... It is a holy compromise...

Some of the interviewees, though they opposed the deportation and viewed it as immoral, actively participated in it. They walk a thin line. Democracy and the law are top priorities. They sing *Hatikva* [the national anthem], raise the flag, obey the law, and view army service as a supreme value, yet are critical of them. They live in permanent cognitive dissonance: The evacuation was a real tragedy but it was the government's decision. As religious people we have to believe that we don't know all the explanations. Perhaps there was a real danger and it was really *Pikuach Nefesh* (critical to saving life). Who knows?...

18. Professor Dov Schwartz, "Religious Zionism and the Struggle Against the Evacuation", *Religious Zionism Post Disengagement* pp. 99-101

The different approaches to the Land of Israel in religious Zionist thought can be located between two distinctive and polarized viewpoints. Both had already crystallized several years after the establishment of the Mizrahi as a faction within the World Zionist Organization (1902), and their signs had been evident even previously:

1. An "earthly" land. Supporters of the first outlook concerning the Land of Israel, to which I will refer as "instrumental nationalism," approached it as a platform and a necessary condition for the full realization of halakhah, "purely" a national territory without metaphysical meanings. The Land of Israel is the only place able to ensure the wellbeing of the Jewish people and its religious and cultural development...

2. A "celestial" land. Supporters of the second outlook concerning the Land of Israel, to which I will refer as "substantialist," held that the land has an independent mystical uniqueness that, in its encounter with the national uniqueness, leads to results far exceeding the common national purpose...

19. Leading rabbi backs insubordination, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3037663,00.html> 1/26/05  
We have to clarify that we are not talking about disengagement, but rather, about withdrawal, Eliyahu said, and expressed his confidence that the plan would not materialize. "I say time and again, it won't happen," he said.

20. Notes from an American Rabbi's sermon, Parshat Ekev 5765

Wholesale eviction of a resident population of thousands of their own people, with a questionable national majority supporting the move, and yet without bloodshed? Sure, there were some cases of violence - but on such a small scale as to be negligible. Far more soldiers crying, far more mothers handing their babies to the soldiers to hold, far more minyanim composed of both soldiers *and* residents, than there were violent attacks.

21. Zechariah 4:11-14

Then I declared and said to him: What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon its left side? And I declared a second time, and said to him: What are these two olive branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that pour the golden oil from themselves?

And he answered me and said: Do you not know what these are?

And I said: No, my master.

Then he said: These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Master of the whole earth.