

Letter from the Rabbinical Council of America
The RCA is the single largest American organization representing Orthodox rabbis.

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Over the past few years, approximately thirty thousand Ethiopians of Jewish ancestry have returned, or are in the process of returning, to the Jewish faith. Over the course of several generations this community, sometimes referred to as Feles Mura, had become estranged from their Jewish forbears' practices and beliefs. Many Feles Mura, probably most, had converted to Christianity. However, they rarely intermarried and identified themselves and were identified by their neighbors as part of the Beta Israel community.

In a phenomenon, virtually unprecedented in Jewish history, practically the entire community has adopted an halakhic way of life, including observance of Shabbat and the laws of kashrut and family purity. In Ethiopia today four thousand children attend two Jewish day schools; Thousands of adults participate daily in prayer services and classes in Jewish education. In Israel, Feles Mura appear before a Rabbinical Court to accept the yoke of the commandments, thereby complying with procedures set forth by the Chief Rabbinate. Their children are educated in religious Israeli schools, including, pursuant to the request of Rabbi Chaim Druckman, the best yeshivot and ulpanot of the Bnai Akiva system. In a recent letter, six Ethiopian rabbis who work intensively with the community attested that the Feles Mura who arrive in Israel have continued to observe the practices of traditional halakhic Judaism.

Throughout history, the Jewish people, in accordance with halakhah, have joyfully welcomed back to the fold repentant Jews, including those who have converted to another religion. The Feles Mura have eagerly embraced an halakhic way of life and are certainly entitled to be welcomed to Israel under the Law of Return.

The Rabbinical Council of America believes it is a Jewish imperative that the suffering of the 26,000 Beta Israel remaining in Ethiopia be brought to a swift conclusion. We call upon the State of Israel to facilitate the rapid aliyah of the entire Feles Mura community. We urge all Jewish relief organizations, particularly the Joint Distribution Committee and NACOEJ, as well as the United Jewish Communities, to provide the maximum possible physical and spiritual assistance to this distressed Diaspora community, until its members can be reunited with their brethren in Israel.

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President