



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: Immediate
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EXPLORE ETHIOPIAN JEWISH OBSERVANCE AND CULTURE

October 2, 2007, New York NY – Roughly two thousand years ago, Jews who were displaced from the Middle East settled throughout the Mediterranean and even in Africa. At a remove from other Jewish populations, the Jews of Ethiopia elaborated Shabbat celebrations, music and arts, drawing on their heritage and the practices of their neighbors. Emigrés from Ethiopia, who have recently settled in Israel and the United States, will share their worship, traditions and foods at two special Shabbat evening programs, to be held at **The Village Temple**, in the heart of Greenwich Village. This is the first in a series of Synaplex™ Shabbat experiences.

The evening begins **Friday, October 12**, at 6:30 pm, with a Shabbat a worship service that incorporates Ethiopian prayers and music traditions. Rabbi Chava Koster, Cantorial Soloist Daniel Leanse and *Beejhy Barhany*, Director of Beta Israel of North America (BINA), lead the service.

A special dinner, catered by *Massawa* Restaurant begins at 8:00 p.m. Guests must make a reservation and pay a fee of \$25 per adult, FREE for children under 13.

There will also be an exhibition of photographs of the Ethiopian Jewish community, featuring works by Joan L. Roth and Jonathan Levine.

The evening concludes with an Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony, traditional desserts and conversation with members of BINA.

“We hope to transport our congregation to another time and another place as we experiment with alternative Shabbat experiences. Synaplex at The Village Temple is designed to speak to a broad range of those who live in downtown Manhattan, many of whom have no formal contact with the organized Jewish community at this point in their lives. We will import Jewish culture and traditions from far flung corners of the planet from Ethiopia to Argentina to India to our little Temple on East 12th Street for all to learn and enjoy,” said Donald Kent, Co-president of The Village Temple.

The program continues at 6:00 pm on **Saturday, October 13**, with a Kids Drumming Circle, led by renowned musician *Akiva the Believer*. The program is FREE and open to children and adults, all ages.

A traditional Havdallah service will be observed at 7:00 pm.

At 7:30 pm, the film, *Video Flour*, features two Israeli comedians of Ethiopian origin who, in Hebrew and Amharic, explore the ties, conflicts and ambivalences of their experiences in Israel. Director Avishai Mekonen will discuss the film; the program is part of the Rose and Adolph Alexander Film and Lecture Series, a component of The Well – Adult Education Institute of The Village Temple.

There is no charge for the Saturday evening programs.

Synaplex is an initiative of STAR (Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal). Synaplex is made possible by grants from UJA-Federation and the STAR Foundation.

For more information, please call 212-674-2340 or visit www.villagetemple.org.

About The Village Temple

The Village Temple, led by Rabbi Chava Koster and Cantorial soloist Daniel Leanse, has served the Reform Jewish community in Greenwich Village and Lower Manhattan for almost 60 years. It blends the beauty of tradition with the creative expression of modern Judaism, providing community and worship experiences that are both participatory and joyful. The Congregation is inclusive, progressive and diverse, reflecting the community it serves. The Village Temple is committed to social justice, supporting many community outreach activities. It has operated a Soup Kitchen for almost 20 years that continues to serve hot meals to over 150 people each week. The Temple sponsors a vibrant religious school for students in grades Pre-K through high school, exciting adult education programs, and many enjoyable social events. For further information on this event or other Village Temple programs, please contact Marina Gorbunova, 212-674-2340, or visit the Village Temple website, www.villagetemple.org.

About BINA

The Beta Israel of North America (BINA) Cultural Foundation, Inc. is an organization developed for, by and of Ethiopian Jews. The organization is dedicated to preserving and developing the culture and history of Ethiopian Jews within the US, Israel and Ethiopia. In accomplishing this, BINA encourages the development of the arts by showcasing creations that speak to the culture and history of the Beta Israel community and the Greater Ethiopian and Jewish communities. The organization is also committed to providing social services to immigrant newcomers to the US from Israel and Ethiopia.

EVENT SUMMARY

Event Type: **Worship Services, Dinner, Photography Exhibition, Music and Film**

Subject: **Ethiopian Jewish Observance and Culture**

Date and Time: **Friday, October 12 at 6:30 pm and Saturday, October 13 at 6:00 pm**

Location: **The Village Temple, 33 East 12 Street, New York NY 10003 (Between University & Broadway)**

Cost: **Dinner \$25; all other events FREE**

Contact: **Marina Gorbunova**

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