What is Sigd?

Evening of Sunday, November 8, 2026 • 28 Cheshvan, 5787 - Evening of Monday, November 9, 2026 • 29 Cheshvan, 5787

Sigd is an Amharic word meaning “prostration” or “worship” and is the commonly used name for a holiday celebrated by the Ethiopian Jewish community on the 29th of the Hebrew month of Cheshvan. This date is exactly 50 days after Yom Kippur, usually falling out in late October or November, and according to Ethiopian Jewish tradition is also the date that G-d first revealed himself to Moses.

What is Sigd?

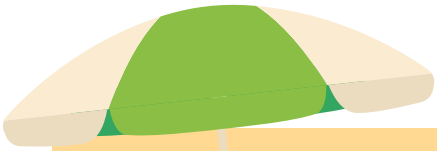
Sidg is an ancient Jewish holiday that was preserved by the Jews of Ethiopia (Beta Israel). In Ethiopia, people would fast and climb to the top of a high mountain, where they would pray and renew the Israelite covenant with G-d. When they finished praying, they danced back down the hill and celebrate with a feast.

Sigd thakes its name from the Hebrew word Sgidah, (סגידה) or Sigdet (ስግደት) in Amharic meaning “prostration” because on Sigd we bow before God.

After the mis 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 preserved through the generation 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. Ritual Components, Theological Themes, Cultural Elements, Engaging with History

Ritual Components

- Fasting
- Reading traditional prayers
- Reading passages from the Tanakh
- Listening to prayers in Ge’ez, the liturgial language of the Beta Israel.

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 tradtional Ethiopians style
- Learning about the culture 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

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