

Article

Contrasting Conceptions of *Teshuvah*: Between “Repentance” and “Atonement”—A Case Study of the Beta Israel Community (Ethiopian Jews)

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Abstract: The Ethiopian Jews of the Beta Israel community are unique in the annals of Jewish history. The community maintained its Jewish identity and devotedly upheld observance of the mitzvot, even in the face of grave physical and spiritual difficulties and unrelenting attempts to persuade them to abandon their religion. Yet, their traditions diverge significantly from the accepted Rabbinic halakhic tradition that is the norm in Israel. This paper examines Yom Kippur observances and describes key differences between the Beta Israel tradition, which reflects the centrality of atonement, and the Rabbinic tradition, which reflects the centrality of repentance. These distinctions stand as manifestations of a set of profound differences within the very consciousness that animates the two traditions. Discussion, using the works of thinkers like Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik, his disciple, Prof. Rabbi David Hartman, and Ethiopian sages, will focus on the more theocentric Beta Israel tradition, in which individuals are perceived, and perceive themselves, as a part of a collective, in contrast to the Rabbinic tradition, which places a greater emphasis on the agency of the individual and human reason. We will highlight the difference between the concepts of “repentance” and “atonement” that are at the root of the two communities’ theologies.

Keywords: Ethiopian Jews; Yom Kippur; Ethiopian Jewish customs; Jewish philosophy; *teshuvah*; Jewish theology



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1. Introduction

The meeting of Israeli Jews and Jews from Ethiopia is not just a meeting between new immigrants and veteran Israelis. It is not just a meeting between Blacks and Whites. Rather, it is a meeting between two models of Judaism that are in some ways opposites—a more biblical Judaism and a more rabbinic Judaism. These two models of Judaism are meeting in the same geographic space: the State of Israel. With this background in mind, it is clear why members of the Ethiopian Jewish community, when they were just beginning to make *aliya* to Israel, found it difficult to understand why the Israeli Rabbis did not have perfect trust in the divine words that were said at Sinai and perhaps even before Sinai (and therefore, did things differently from what is written in the Torah). On the other hand, some Ashkenazi Rabbis found it difficult to accept the Ethiopian Jews as full Jews.

The agonies of the absorption of Ethiopian Jews in Israel have seared themselves into their collective consciousness. When they arrived, they did not know its language, could not conceive of its pace of life, and did not understand its habits. They did not choose where they would live and did not find an education that would help them bridge their past with the state’s present and future. The Judaism for which they were martyred in Ethiopia was considered incomplete. It seemed that the land they had longed for questioned the legitimacy of their longings (Abbink 1984, pp. 139–53; Shabtay 2000, pp. 169–79; Shalom 2016, p. xxv; Sharaby and Kaplan 2014; Weil 1998–2001).

The Jews of the Beta Israel¹ community faced an additional, unique challenge that was unprecedented in Jewish history. On one hand, this community maintained its Jewish identity and devotedly upheld observance of the *mitzvot* for many generations in the face

of grave physical and spiritual difficulties and unrelenting attempts to convince them to abandon their religion. On the other hand, their tradition of mitzvah observance diverges significantly from the rabbinic tradition that has been accepted by other Jewish communities from the times of the Mishnah and Talmud, through the *Shulhan Arukh* and its latter-day commentaries (Ullendorff 1988).

The commonly accepted view is that the Ethiopian Jewish tradition reflects an ancient *halakha*², whose connection to the Oral Torah, which has been familiar since the days of the early Rabbis, is tenuous at best (this point is discussed in the book *From Sinai to Ethiopia* (Shalom 2016), and the similarities and differences between the two models are noted). Many of the Ethiopian Jews who immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia and grew up in Ashkenazic *yeshivot* felt that the customs and practices they learned in their parents' homes formed a barrier between them and their peers. A significant part of the research dealt with the religious crisis of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Often, observers viewed the religious world of Ethiopian Jewry through the lens of the rabbinic halakhah, particularly its Orthodox interpreters. It is time to move on to use the tools of theology and the study of religious practice to understand the Beta Israel community. We should understand the traditions of the community based on the perspective of its members, to try to understand how the Jews of Ethiopia understood the Jewish world (Abbink 1984; Shalom 2023).

This approach seeks to give voice to the Ethiopian Jews as they meet Israeli rabbinic culture, rather than to describe the community from the perspective of another culture. This approach will allow us to discuss the religious worldview of Ethiopian Jewry in traditional terms that are accepted by the community.

One example of the experience of the differences that always left Ethiopian Jews feeling deeply shaken was the difference between the idea of repentance that is familiar in the customs of Ethiopian Jewry and the idea of repentance that is familiar in the customs of the rabbinic tradition. They always sensed that there are significant differences between the atmosphere surrounding the days of penitence in Israel, where, as in the rabbinic tradition, they are called "Days of Awe", and the atmosphere surrounding the days of penitence in Ethiopia, where they are called "Days of Joy". As one young person reflected: "I don't know why they call these days 'Days of Awe'. In what way was there awe? In Ethiopia these were the happiest days. We would even accompany the prayers with crumbs and instruments". The Yom Kippur prayers in Ethiopia made their hearts dance; the Yom Kippur prayers in Israel made their hearts tremble. Another immigrant felt that the fear was deliberately instilled into them in Israel. "In Ethiopia, we were always happy on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, while here in Israel they injected us with fear". In summary: "In Ethiopia, we would always look forward to these holidays. Here in Israel, I don't look forward to the holidays". Haplessly, these differences between the two traditions caused them to reflect that they were living their life torn between their oath to uphold their heritage, which would brand them as different, and their yearning to join the majority culture as equals. What feelings should they manifest during these days? Reverence or love? Dread or joy? Should they emphasize "me" or "we"? And I wondered about the source of the differences between these two traditions.

2. Repentance (*Teshuvah*) Is Not Atonement (*Kapparah*), and Atonement Is Not Repentance

In this article, I will contrast the rabbinic and contemporary Orthodox model of repentance with the biblical and Beta Israel paradigm of atonement to help explain the distance that Ethiopian young people experience when they meet the yeshivas and synagogues in today's Israel. It is worth noting that my interpretive starting point in this study is not from the accepted conceptual world of sociology, social anthropology, or even *halakhah* but from a discursive realm that is closer to the discipline of Jewish thought. I will conclude the discussion by positioning the religious culture of Ethiopian Jews as a legitimate tradition within the evolution of the Oral Torah that is unmediated by the Mishnah and the Talmud.

In this essay, I will contrast the repentance paradigm of the rabbinic tradition with the atonement paradigm of the Ethiopian Jewish tradition. In particular, I use the writings of

Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and David Hartman to develop one of my central contentions, namely, that the rabbinic paradigm emphasizes the repentance of the individual, whereas the Beta Israel paradigm emphasizes the atonement of the collective. While these figures do not represent all the rabbinic tradition, which is known, of course, for its spirit of animated dispute and polyphonic voices, they do articulate in a particularly bold and even extreme way the spirit of individual repentance that is present and animates the long-standing rabbinic approach to Yom Kippur. The distinction between repentance and atonement could explain the disparity in atmosphere between the “Days of Awe” of the rabbinic tradition and the “Days of Joy” of the Ethiopian Jews’ tradition. In this essay, therefore, I wish to raise the possibility that young Jewish Israelis from an Ethiopian background experience an encounter between two types of Judaism, two paradigms. On one side is Ethiopian Jewry, which is closer to the biblical model that grew out of an atonement-based consciousness, and on the other is the rabbinic tradition, which is closer to the Talmudic model and grew out of a repentance-based consciousness (Aescoly 1951).

3. Yom Kippur in Ethiopia: Between Collectivism and Individualism

For many of the emigrants of Ethiopian Jews who grew up in an Ethiopian Jewish village, where the holidays were enveloped in an atmosphere of joy, attending an Ashkenazic yeshivah, where the “Days of Awe” were filled with dread, was a dramatic even shocking change. Yom Kippur in Ethiopia filled the heart with calmness, serenity, and reverence, whereas in the Ashkenazic yeshivah, Yom Kippur filled the heart with fear and trembling before the terrible day of judgment. The fear reached its peak in the Ashkenazic yeshiva with the recitation of “*U-netaneh Tokef Kedushat Ha-yom*” (“Let us Describe the Power of the Sanctity of the Day”) on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This liturgical composition describes panicked angels, and it illustrates how the verdicts of the day will determine “who will live and who will die. . . who will experience tranquility and who will suffer”. It concludes by describing the insignificance of human beings, who “are made of dust and will return to dust”. This is not to say that such descriptions do not exist in the Ge’ez prayers of Ethiopian Jews; there are plenty of descriptions of human beings’ insignificance. Nevertheless, something feels different. What is it?

In the Beta Israel tradition, Yom Kippur is called “*Asteray*” (the Festival of Seeing) or “*Be’al Yosef*” (the Festival of Joseph), for on this day, Jacob received the news that his son, Joseph, had been killed by a wild beast. The basis for this is a tradition from the Book of Jubilees:

For this reason, it has been ordained regarding the Israelites that they should be distressed on the tenth of the seventh month—on the day when (the news) that made (him) lament Joseph reached his father Jacob—in order to make atonement for themselves on it with a kid—on the tenth of the seventh month, once a year—for their sins. For they had saddened their father’s (feelings of) affection for his son Joseph. This day has been ordained so that they may be saddened on it for their sins, all their transgressions, and all their errors; so that they may purify themselves on this day once a year. (Jubilees 34:18–19, translations from VanderKam 2018)

Along with the element of sadness reflected in this passage, Yom Kippur, as described here, is also as a day of celebration, happiness, and reunited family. The day upon which father and son, Jacob and Joseph, were reunited is cause for celebration. This includes atonement and forgiveness, as well as the removal of barriers that separate family. The day becomes one of hope and faith in God and His providence, which begets happiness.

There is a somewhat different oral tradition, which I heard from my grandfather, Abba Djan Mengesha, as well as from Kes Mentsnot, that the date of Yom Kippur was also the day when Jacob and Joseph were reunited after their long separation.

This day, indeed, has many different meanings.³ Yosi Ziv explains that *Asteray* refers to what was shown on that day, namely “the brothers showed Jacob the coat of his son Joseph, which had been immersed in blood. The harm to Joseph and the lie to Jacob are an eternal sin that must be atoned each year on Yom Kippur”. Ziv cites testimony from Kes

Amhah Neghat that gives additional meaning to the festival of atonement: “The second Tablets of the Covenant that Moses brought down was on the day of Yom Kippur... For that reason, the day is called ‘*Asteray*,’ so that He shows us the Torah He gave us for a second time” (Ziv 2017, p. 139; Salamon 1999). Kes Mentsnot noted that Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness that harbors rejoicing that God atones us and forgives us. There is no mention of a day of awe, as it is described in the rabbinic tradition. There is no fear and dread over the judgment of Yom Kippur, only joy and desire to arrive at this day, as Ziv describes in his book: “Yom Kippur. Everyone yearns to reach Yom Kippur. It is the greatest festival of the year. Sigd as well. These are the most prominent days” (Ziv 2017, p. 139). Faitlovich described, in 1904, the joyous atmosphere of this day as follows:

The Yom Kippur prayers were recited with great feeling. Men, women, and children all displayed their building excitement. They sang from sunrise to sunset, and to my astonishment, they were cheerful songs. Occasionally they went out to perform beautiful dances. The men, young and old, danced together, as did the women and maidens. (Faitlovich 1959, p. 84)

Still, on that day, everyone fasted. Even children were required to fast, starting at age seven. As Ethiopian sage Daniel Mengesha⁴ notes, when people approach Yom Kippur from within a collective, communal consciousness, the day takes on a different meaning. A person does not come alone to the courthouse but arrives with the entire community. The community, together, stands before the Holy One, the merciful God. Under these circumstances, the day is not ominous; it is not awful and terrible. On the contrary, it is joyful. The Ethiopian Jews’ Yom Kippur thus has two opposing meanings. On one hand, it is a day of forgiveness and atonement, fasting, and deprivation. On the other hand, it is an exceedingly joyful day, a day whose arrival everyone awaited and anticipated. The experience was that the individual stands for the good of the community, and the community feels that it stands as a whole for the good of the individual. Spiritual accounting is on the communal level, not the individual level.⁵ Prayer is accompanied by special dancing that is unique to Yom Kippur, which involves hopping from side to side as the prayers of the *kessim* are heard in the background. The following prayer is from the beginning of the Yom Kippur liturgy:

May the Lord, God of Israel be blessed... May the Lord, God of Adam and Seth be blessed. May the Lord, God of Noah and Shem be blessed. May the Lord, God of Abraham and Isaac be blessed. May the Lord, God of Jacob and Israel be blessed... May the Lord, God of the righteousness of Azariah be blessed. May the Lord, God of the word of Baruch and Abimelech be blessed. May the Lord, God of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah be blessed... May the Lord, God of Zion and Jerusalem be blessed. May the Lord, God of the priests and the prophets be blessed. (translation based on Aescoly 1973)

That is, among the prayers that comprise the Ethiopian Jewish Yom Kippur liturgy, many reinforce the idea of God’s actions—His kindness, His forgiveness, and His atonement. Collective consciousness, as still expressed in Ethiopian Jewish religious life, promotes a political–philosophical approach that emphasizes the sovereignty of the community, trains adherents to live without anxiety, concern about change, fear of commitment, or worries about difficulty working and earning a livelihood (Shalom 2023). The difference between collective consciousness and subjective consciousness does not find expression only in the psychological and social realms but also in the theological realm and in halakhic decisions.

Either way, here we see the profound difference between the holiday atmosphere in Ethiopian Jewish religious culture and that of the atmosphere of these holidays in the rabbinic tradition. In the following paragraphs, I will claim that the origin of the differences between the two traditions is rooted in the question of how the day is perceived: as a day of atonement or as a day of repentance.

4. From the Idea of Atonement in Scripture to the Emphasis on Repentance in Talmudic Literature

There is a central paradox in repentance, one articulated clearly by the medieval Jewish philosopher, R. Yosef Albo, as follows:

There is a great difficulty in connection with repentance as we explained it, as follows: Since the transgression has been carried out in deed, how can repentance, in the form of regret and confession, avail? If a man takes a life or profanes the Sabbath, does the life of the murdered person return to him, or does the profaned Sabbath become observed through confession and regret? It is like a person throwing down a house and then rebuilding it with his mouth. Words without deeds cannot rebuild the house. How then can such repentance avail to wipe out and cleanse a sin actually committed? This is a matter that requires an explanation, viz. in what way repentance benefits the penitent. (Albo 1946, 4:26)

The Bible does not articulate the paradox, but it does respond to it. As Sagi explains: “The Bible contains two paths to repair the past: the first focuses on the idea of repentance. The second requires an outside activity that will complete the active repair, or even execute it entirely. In the biblical literature, the outside act comes to fruition in atonement” (not yet published). The term “*teshuvah*” (repentance), Sagi explains, “does not appear as a noun in Scripture. As Ephraim Urbach noted, the term was coined by the Rabbis” (Urbach 1969, p. 408).

Despite the close relationship between repentance and atonement, and despite the tendency of many to conflate repentance and atonement, they are, it seems, two distinct concepts. Sagi explains as follows:

Repentance is not atonement, and atonement is not repentance. Repentance is a human act. The individual initiates it and is responsible for it. Atonement is a metaphysical occurrence, beyond human capacity. A person cannot atone; it hinges on that which is beyond him. (Sagi Forthcoming)

In Scripture, repentance is a precondition for atonement, but the two are not identical. Repentance “does not bring about repair and change. Only atonement does... There is a need for atonement and forgiveness, beyond the act of repentance”. The biblical Yom Kippur focuses almost exclusively on atonement, while the later Talmudic Sages introduced the notion of repentance.

For the *shimagolech* (Beta Israel sages) who I interviewed, particularly Daniel Mangesha, the central experience of Yom Kippur focused on God’s eternal involvement in the world, that fact that he has never abandoned the world or Israel, and that therefore submission to God should be absolute. In the contemporary Israeli experience of Yom Kippur, the religious behavior is more anthropocentric, focused on human repentance. For *shimagolech* and the Beta Israel tradition, He is ever-present, close, and involved. Fate and submission play an important role in this Beta Israel narrative. God is sovereign, and He manipulates events based on His broad and coherent view of things. Humans see only parts of things, suggesting that the story teaches humans that they are not in control of their own fate, but instead must appreciate divine justice. In the context of Ethiopian Jewish culture, the story encourages submission before divine authority and acceptance of His vision. Like the monk, a person comes close to God through submission (and asceticism), as well as through appreciating the divine plan and justice. As Wurmbrand explains the story, “A person avoids frustration at the seeming injustices by reflecting on divine action. The person must always appreciate humans’ limited perspective, and that true justice appears only with the wider vision of God. That is why the story ends with a common aphorism: ‘A person judges based on partial knowledge, but God punishes knowing all’” (Wurmbrand 1965).

Beta Israel tradition combines practices that are grounded to a great degree on ideas from the biblical period that were colored by the spirit of the biblical prophets, which are merged with Ethiopian Jewish values of innocence, integrity, simplicity, and closeness to God, all grounded in a theocentric worldview. These values are expressed in stories and

experienced and are manifest in a life of personal connection and a deemphasis on legalism. This is not the Oral Torah of the rabbinic tradition. It is an alternative tradition Beta Israel literature. The Prayers of the Falashas, The Death of Moses, and the Death of Aaron all contain apocalyptic motifs related to the sanctity of Shabbat, and they have had a vast influence on Beta Israel religious culture and life.⁶ In addition to severe punishment for those who violate Shabbat and descriptions of the place of Shabbat in saving the sinners and rewarding the righteous in the underworld, the works articulate a theocentric worldview and the distance between humans and the world of mystery. The practical lesson is that humans should submit themselves to God and to the mystery and power of Shabbat, against which humans are powerless. Beta Israel emphasizes the role of keeping Shabbat to the point of martyrdom and does not give dispensations for saving lives. Saving lives does not overcome commandments, in contrast to the rabbinic tradition.

Here lies the difference between 20th century scholar, Rabbi Prof. David Hartman and Mengesha. Unlike Hartman, who claimed that God removed Himself from the world out of recognition of the value and abilities of human beings—that is, human beings did not drive God out of the world, rather, God withdrew Himself from the world for the benefit of human beings (Hartman 1985, 2002)—Daniel Mengesha claims that God’s hiddenness is not a sign that God recognizes human worth but rather of God’s acknowledgment of sins on an interpersonal level. The individual person must limit himself out of absolute submission to God.

The theological difference between these two views is readily discernible. One reflects the consciousness of submission embodied in the figure of the prophet; the other reflects a consciousness of dignity embodied in the figure of the sage. The difference between these two forms of consciousness has implications for the conception of God, human beings, and their relationship. Moreover, in the biblical conception, as is still reflected in the Ethiopian Jewish tradition, the element of collective consciousness is a fundamental element of worship of God. Given this, it seems that the element of collective consciousness, which endures in Ethiopian culture, can indicate, *inter alia*, a key difference between these two traditions. Collectivism, on one hand, promotes a philosophical, political, religious, economic, and social worldview that emphasizes the interdependence of people. On the other hand, individualism promotes a political–philosophical approach that emphasizes the sovereignty of the individual over his life. That is, the question is whether the individual is perceived as an independent, autonomous, distinct unit, in which case the community is not the center, but rather the individual person is the center, or whether the opposite is the case, and each person determines the right thing to do in relation to the goals and objectives of the collective, in which case the community is more important and significant. Which is more correct? What is freedom of thought? Does the good of the community take priority over the good of the individual, or does the good of the individual supersede the good of the community? The Ethiopian sage Daniel Mengesha said, aflame with passion, the following:

In Israel [that is, in Judaism] in our religion, there is no such thing as individual introspection. A person is not alone. He is always part of something, of a community. In Ethiopia, when it is time to eat, everyone eats from one plate. Here in Israel, everyone has their own plate. Everyone thinks he is God. In Ethiopia, we lived with faith that “there is none but Him”. Only God is great.⁷

According to Mengesha, the Ethiopian sage, this lifestyle allows us to feel alone. Loneliness and solitariness of human existence are the source of fear’s energy. Lack of fear, in contrast, is the secret that enables people to expand their love for fellow human beings, to fill themselves with compassion, and to be impartial. Paradoxically, a consciousness of submission leads an Ethiopian away from diminished, fearful consciousness toward a consciousness imbued with profound serenity and completely liberated from fear; from a consciousness that lives and experiences itself in a diminished state to consciousness that lives and experiences itself in its fullness; and from consciousness that lives its life in relative slumber to a fully alert consciousness. Ethiopian Jewry, which, as noted, continued the

Jewish tradition rooted in Scripture and the experience of the Temple, seems to emphasize, in its religious world, the principle of collective consciousness more than that of individual consciousness (Corinaldi 1998; Shalom 2016; Ziv 2017; see, at greater length, Shalom 2019). Collective consciousness can provide confidence in the ontological existence of humanity. That is, paradoxically, it seems that the absence of the concept of the individual personality can prevent feelings of alienation, and the stronger the consciousness of individual existence, the more profound the sense of estrangement (Sagi 2002). In the Ethiopian Jewish world, as mentioned, a person does not come alone to court but is accompanied by the entire community. The entire community stands together before God, Who is merciful. Under such conditions, the day is not threatening. It is not a day of awe, but a day of joy.

It, therefore, seems that, given the situation of the Ethiopian Jewish migrant society in the State of Israel, there is, for the first time, an encounter between two different consciousnesses of Jewish faith.⁸ The encounter between Israeli Jews and Jews of Ethiopian origin is not only an encounter between new immigrants and veteran immigrants, between Blacks and Whites, sharing a slice of this world and fighting over resources, but also an encounter between opposed models of Judaism in general and Yom Kippur in particular. This conclusion contains significant implications for the encounter between those of Ethiopian Jewish origin and the reality dictated to them from the ideological, organizational, and halakhic base of the Israeli rabbinic establishment. This finds expression in the meaning that Yom Kippur has within the two traditions the rabbinic tradition, which is based on a Talmudic conception and animated by the “covenant of Sinai”, and the Ethiopian Jewish tradition, which is rooted in a scriptural conception and animated by the spirit of the “covenant of the Exodus”. Furthermore, this arena of discourse can serve as a key to a useful interpretive view of the Jewish religious culture of the Beta Israel community. If so, what should be the connection between rabbinical hegemony and the community that preserves the ancient tradition and the rabbinic interpretation that does not depend on the rabbinic tradition? What are the appropriate ways to create dialogue between the two traditions? What are the appropriate ways to enable dialogue between two different cultures? The appropriate framework does not position the parties against one another in a hierarchical and judgmental system, as the existing rabbinic hierarchy has often done toward Beta Israel practices and traditions. An appropriate framework enables a reanalysis of the elements that shaped and that still shape the discourse on religious experience and thus, enables angles for self-examination and the search for the self as an invitation for a slow process of study and rebuilding of Jewish identity. That is to say, positioning the religious culture of Ethiopian Jews in this book as a legitimate tradition in the chain of events of the Oral Law, not via the Mishnah and Gemara, makes it possible to examine the question of how the discourse on the position of Ethiopian Jewish religious culture has been conducted until now and how it should appropriately be conducted in the future. This is not the end of the story but the beginning of a new chapter.

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Notes

- ¹ It is worth noting that in Ethiopia it was customary to give multiple names not only to holidays, but to people as well. In general, an Ethiopian has at least four or five names. From these names, we learn the different meanings that this person had for relatives.
- ² While ‘Beta Israel,’ is also acceptable, ‘Bete Israel’ is considered to be more correct; in this article, I have used Beta Israel. For more on the meaning of the name Beta Israel, see Eshkoli (1943, chp. 1, pp. 1–12).
- ³ The interview took place in the city of Beer Sheva in August 2019.

- ⁴ The concept of how Yom Kippur, in the theology of Ethiopian Judaism, encompasses the meaning of *collective* atonement also arose in conversations with Kes Mentsnot Eli Wnde and Kes Brhan Yehiis. These discussions took place in Kiryat Gat.
- ⁵ See note 4 above.
- ⁶ This conversation took place in Beersheba several months before Mengesha's death. There is a great, important storehouse of knowledge; we must interview and document the elders of the community to preserve this knowledge, or it will be lost.
- ⁷ Comparing the traditions of Ethiopian Jews with those of other groups in Israel, like the Samaritans and the Karaites, would certainly be a worthy academic endeavor. However, the conflict between Ethiopian Jews and the rabbinic institutions differs from that of these other groups because Ethiopian Jews are considered Orthodox Jews according to the law and Halacha in the State of Israel.
- ⁸ There are a number of synagogues in Israel that continue praying the Yom Kippur service as was customary in Ethiopia. I had the privilege of participating in one of these Yom Kippur prayer services. The experience is entirely different from that of praying in an Ashkenazi synagogue on the holiday.

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