

Ethiopian Jews and the Promised Land: An Ancient Dream Realized or A Journey Yet to End?

Sigal Kanotopsky is one of Israel's most accomplished and acknowledged female social leaders, and CEO of the award-winning Israeli civil-society organization Olim Beyahad. On Thursday, February 1, 2018 she will be at GIL to share the dramatic story of the Jews of Ethiopia: their mass migration to modern, urbanized Israel, and their ongoing challenge to make the Promised Land their home.

They journeyed to Zion on foot, covering hundreds of miles. The route was arduous and perilous; four thousand died along the way. But more harrowing than even that was the challenge to become Israeli, to gain acceptance in Israeli society, to acclimatize in the Startup Nation where even the Judaism they practiced was often at odds with everyone else's.

So, how did Israel actually take in the Jews of Ethiopia? What was it like to be so different and yet so Jewish? And is it at all possible to change public perception in Israel today? Sigal Kanotopsky will be here to report firsthand.

Sigal Kanotopsky arrived in Israel from Ethiopia at the age of 5. She has a B.A. in International Relations from the Hebrew University, and an M.A. in Dispute Resolution and Management from Tel Aviv University. She speaks Hebrew, Amharic, and English and is a Board Member of both the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Israel's Employment Diversity Forum. As the CEO of Olim Beyahad she is member of the Forum of Activists and CEOs of organizations that work with the Ethiopian Israeli community. Under her leadership Olim Beyahad has systematically impacted the employment opportunities of Ethiopian Israeli university graduates, and launched them into prominent positions in both the public and business sectors. Its award-winning model is now being adopted by other social-change organizations tackling employment integration.

