

**"The Story of the Ethiopian Community"
The 'Tradition, Academia and Community' Project
2014-15 Academic Year**

This project was initiated two years ago and was part of the Rector's Flagship Program to promote solidarity and to eliminate social exclusion. The field work focused on collecting and documenting stories which are part of the daily folklore of the Ethiopian community and make up its identity. These stories were recorded in writing, with audio devices and video.

This unique project documents the cultural heritage of the Ethiopian community in Israel. It is based on the assumption that folklore is essentially a living entity in the sense that it is taken from the daily life of humans wherever they are and is key to the sense of identity of any group. At times, the folklore is not perceived as important by those who possess it but when it is identified and presented in a certain context it provides them with a new and valuable meaning.

Through the ethnographic work in the field we wish to create a bond between the academic research of folklore and the community found on the social periphery of Israeli society; to create a direct dialogue between the academics and the people of the community, and to solidify the knowledge gained from the field into a body of academic insights which are beneficial to all.

8 students participated in the project, all of Ethiopian origin and fluent in Amharic. The students received special training in story recording from Dr. Haya Milo of the University's Israel Folktale Archives. Once they were ready, the students met with individuals and groups from the Ethiopian community, interviewed them and recorded their stories either on camera or in writing. This process was closely monitored by the faculty. The products of this process will serve as a basis for a research book. We hope that this will bring forth a sense of pride in this community.

The first phase of the Project was recently completed. So far we have collected 70 folktales from 37 different individuals from the Ethiopian community. We have also documented sayings and artifacts in the homes of the community. The meetings were accompanied by a professional photographer which took pictures of story tellers in their natural environment.

The second phase of the Project is expected to last a year: from October 2015-October 2016. It will be devoted to writing the book and to assemble an academic curriculum for a primary school class based on the stories assembled.

In writing the book we are required:

1. Translate the stories from Amharic to Hebrew;
2. Create a poetic and thematic analysis of the stories;
3. Creating a key for the characters using the Aarne-Thompson classification system and determining Jewish Oikotypes.

The proposed book will include:

1. Folktales in the Hebrew and Amharic with the photographs of those who told them. Each story will have its own barcode that will refer to the audio version of the story told by the teller.
2. A folkloristic study from a social-cultural perspective of each story.
3. Photographs of artifacts and explanations from those who own them as to their origin and use.



Gelanesh Endlu



Wuvnat Tafta



Dalia Bakala with her mother



Swomhun Matku with her daughter



Storytellers





Folk art created by the storytellers