



NEWS RELEASE

For Release: [September 1, 2013]

Contact: [Sam Heller, sjheller@gmail.com, 310-927-6273]

**North American Conference of Ethiopian Jewry Founder Barbara Ribakove Gordon to
Speak on Ethiopian Jewry
September 16-20, 2013**

[New York, NY] –The Beta Israel (House of Israel) community refers to the Ethiopian Jewish community that has dated back to more than 2,000 years ago. The Ethiopian Jewish community faced a poignant history and persecution that denied them the opportunity to practice Judaism. But in the mid 1980's, NACOEJ founder Barbara Ribakove Gordon helped organize the first of 18 trips emigrating 75,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel during the next two decades.

Today, the NACOEJ continues to assist Ethiopian Jewry Ethiopia, while helping the Beta House community emigrate to Israel. In Israel, the NACEOJ focuses on integrating the Ethiopian community into Israeli society, while preserving their indigenous culture.

Gordon, who has been involved in Ethiopian Jewry advocacy for nearly 40 years, states the importance of Ethiopian Jewry, “The simple answer is that there is very little knowledge about Ethiopian Jews in the United States, and, indeed, in the Western World. This lack of information leaves a gap in the education of our children, who need to understand the worldwide Jewish community of which they are a part.”

BACKGROUND ON GORDON: Barbara Ribakove Gordon went to Ethiopia in 1981 with the first North American mission to Ethiopian Jewish villages. The group trekked through the rugged Semien Mountains in northern Ethiopia to reach an isolated Jewish village. From there they went to Israel to report to government officials on what they had seen: appalling poverty and illness – and awe-inspiring dignity and Jewish commitment. A few months later, in 1982, a handful of dedicated men and women met in Barbara's New York apartment to organize the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ). As Executive Director of NACOEJ, Barbara was summoned to Ethiopia in May, 1991, to participate in Operation Solomon. With two opposing Ethiopian armies holding fire in a temporary armistice, she and two other NACOEJ volunteers helped the Israelis process over 14,000 Ethiopian Jews at the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa for the historic 36-hour airlift to Israel. The NACOEJ group flew out on the last plane. Today, under Barbara's leadership, NACOEJ has over 50,000 supporters and a record of having rescued thousands of Ethiopian Jews from famine, civil war and persecution.

Barbara travels frequently to Israel, Ethiopia and throughout the United States, Canada and England on behalf of Ethiopian Jews. Barbara Ribakove Gordon was named “Unsung Hero of the Year” in 1986 by the New York Jewish Week and was honored by the City Council of New York in 2004.

The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, founded in 1982 aims to help Ethiopian Jews survive in Ethiopia, aid them in reaching Israel while assisting them into integrating into Israeli society, while preserving their unique and ancient culture. Log onto www.nacoej.org for more information.