

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT JEWISH LIFE IN AFRICA?



*Dr. Caliben Ike Okonkwo, co-founder of the Igbo Israel Union, studies Torah together with his family in their Nigerian home.*

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- Igbo boys are traditionally circumcised on their eighth day, in accordance with the covenant between Israel and “Chukwu Abiama” (the God of Abraham).
- Over their nearly 3000 years in exile, the Igbo Jews never appointed a king or ruler over themselves, choosing instead to live solely by their oral laws and historical customs.
- Igbo families traditionally follow strict guidelines of spiritual purity. Women regularly immerse in a flowing body of water, such as a stream, and men are forbidden from marital intimacy during the time of their wives' monthly cycle.
- Since their first exposure in the late 1700's to the biblical writings describing Hebrew culture and ritual, Igbo writers have always identified their religious culture with that of the biblical Jews.

FOR SOURCES, SEE F. C. OGBALU, *OMENALA IGBO*, (LAGOS: UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING CO. ACADEMY PRESS, 1979); G. T. BASDEN, *NIGER IBOS* (LONDON: FRANK CASS AND CO., LTD., 1966); AND MATTHEW O. ORJI, *THE HISTORY & CULTURE OF THE IGBO PEOPLE* (NKPOR: JET PUBLISHERS, LTD., 1999).

**“I'm sure Igbo are descendants of the Jews.”**

**- Noam Katz, previous Israeli ambassador to Nigeria  
(*The Daily Sun*, March 28, 2004)**

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