

each other give *moolmool* to the children in one another's family (by their number); this is a representation of the parents who took *moolmool* to the fields to give to their children.

In EOTC's traditional schools of our country known as *Abinet* Schools, *Debre Tabor* is a significant holiday of students. A few days in advance, the students go to nearby villages and beg for ground and whole cereal grains, shiny-leaf buckthorn (*gesho*, which is used as hops), and germinated grains (known as *bikil*). As they know the tradition well, the villagers give to the students generously. The students then brew *tella* (Ethiopian traditional beer) with the *gesho* and *bikil*, roast cereals, bake bread, and take all that to church on the day of *Debre Tabor* to share with the laity who have come for Divine Liturgy when they are done. This is our tradition that is still practiced around *Abinet* Schools.

Therefore, it is essential that we preserve and transfer this major religious holiday and tradition to the coming generations. Teaching the true history and tradition of our Church and making sure that Its dignity is protected is a duty expected of all of us, especially at this time—a time that many are arising from every corner to erase the history of the EOTC. The unforgettable and miraculous story that took place at

Mount Tabor should be kept intact and passed down to generations. Today, the "*Buhie belu*" traditional and spiritual song has become a song used for admiring athletes, singers and artists; before this trend morphs into something beyond controllable, every Orthodox Christian should stand up for his/her Church. Protecting our Church, serving so that It is able to walk with the age, and making It known throughout the world is a responsibility that all of us carry.

May we all partake in the blessings
of *Debre Tabor*!
Praise be unto God

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**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
One God, Amen**

The Feast of the Transfiguration (Debre Tabor)

The feast of the Transfiguration is one of the spiritual feasts that the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) observes. This holiday is among the nine major holidays of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Ge'ez and Amharic name of the holiday, *Debre Tabor*, which translates to Mount Tabor, pertains to the mountain on which our Lord manifested His divinity and the glory of His kingdom on Nehasie 13 (12th month in the Ethiopian Calendar) during the time that He was traveling the land of Israel, teaching.

Six days after our Lord asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" on their way to Caesarea, He left nine of His disciples at the foot of the mountain and took the remaining three—Peter, John, and James—to the top of the mountain. While they were atop, our Lord

was transfigured. His face shone like the sun; His garment became as white as snow. At that moment, He revealed His divinity and the glory of His kingdom. Moses and Elijah were heard speaking to Him. If one may ask why He chose Moses and Elijah, it was to fulfill His promise to Moses and a wish that Elijah had. When Moses requested to see Him having spoken to Him 570 times until then, the Lord answered him that no one would be able to see His face and live. Moses replied by asking how he could then be called His servant, and the Lord told him that he shall see Him when He offers Himself as a sacrifice (Exodus 33:18-23); Elijah too had such hope. For one, He also brought Moses and Elijah so that they profess by saying, “Who calls You, our Lord, Moses or Elijah when they should call you the God of Moses and Elijah!” because people thought that He was either Moses or Elijah for they had seen the Lord restore the sight of the blind, raise the dead, and heal the sick. The underlying connotation, though, is that Mount Tabor symbolizes heaven. To signify that both the married and virgins will inherit the Kingdom of God, He brought Moses to represent the married and Elijah to represent virgins. Despite their desire to see His glory, when He finally revealed Himself to them, Moses chose to go back to his grave and Elijah to his chariot as they could not stand before His glory.

Saint Peter then said, “It is good for us to be here; if it is Your will, let us build three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Moses kills enemies, parts the sea, rains down manna, brings water forth out of the rock; Elijah shuts the skies and stops the rain; all the things that He lets His saints do by His grace, Christ can do since He is God; therefore, Peter thought everything is complete if they are there. As he was speaking this, a bright cloud covered them and a voice was heard from the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” Peter and the others fell on their faces out of fear. Lord Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up, do not be afraid.” They opened their eyes. As they were coming down the mountain, Lord Jesus commanded them to not tell what they have seen to anyone until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.

If one may ask why He left the nine disciples at the foot of the mountain while he took the other three to the top, it is because among the nine was the one—Judah—who did not deserve to see His glory; should He have left him alone, Judah would have used that as an excuse to betray Jesus. If another may ask why He chose Tabor out of all mountains, it was to fulfill David’s prophecy, “Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.”

Since the area around where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ manifested His divinity

and revealed His glory—the surrounding of Mount Tabor—was filled with bright light, shepherds who were tending their flocks stayed in the fields longer than normal thinking that the day had not yet ended. Parents who were worried about their children not returning home in time went out to the fields with bread loaves (*moolmool*) and torches (*chibo*) and found their children safe. Based on this event, as the Feast of the Transfiguration (*Debre Tabor*, also known as *Buhie*) approaches, the youth in our country Ethiopia braid leather into whips and make a loud sound by whip-cracking. Mothers also prepare by cleaning and rubbing wheat to be ground for baking *moolmool*. On the eve of the holiday, Nehasie 12, the young go around houses singing, “*Buhie belu, ho!*” which means, “sing Buhie, ho!” Then mothers come out to give them the bread loaves that they baked. The next day, on Nehasie 13, villagers gather in the evening to light a bonfire.

The whip-cracking that takes place when the holiday nears symbolizes God’s voice that came through the cloud at Mount Tabor; the panic that the loud crack of the whip strikes in us teaches us that the three disciples fell to the ground due to their fear of the voice. Lighting a bonfire in the evening of *Buhie* signifies the light of His glory that was seen on Mount Tabor; it is also to commemorate parents who lit *chibo* to go in search of their children. On the day of the feast, people who closely know