



S F E J

2562 W. Saratoga Drive
Cooper City, FL 33026
www.sfej.org

SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWS

American Friends of Keren Hanan Aynor

Contact:
Victor Levadi
973-992-7069
Fax: 973-992-0027
vlevadi@sfej.org

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWS.....	1
MISSION	1
NEED	1
HISTORY.....	1
PARTNERSHIP WITH KEREN HANAN AYNOR	2
OPERATION TO DATE	3
GROWING DEMAND AND SHRINKING RESOURCES	3
FINANCIAL INFORMATION.....	4
OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, ADVISORS.....	5
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM	7
GRADUATES IN SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY.....	8
GRANT RECIPIENTS	9
MICHAL'S STORY	11
ETHIOPIAN JEWS IN ISRAEL	13
ISRAEL'S ETHIOPIAN CHALLENGE - William Safire.....	13
A TURNING POINT FOR ETHIOPIAN ISRAELIS - Shula Mola ...	14
BOOK REVIEW: <u>SAVING THE LOST TRIBE</u>	16
AMBASSADOR ASHER NAIM, Bio and Photo.....	18

For the student, for the community, for a stronger Israel

I. About the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews

Mission

We are dedicated to developing a pool of talented, educated, and motivated Ethiopian Israelis committed to serving their community and the society at large. We focus on funding graduate and professional level education to promote the emergence of a core leadership and enable the community to become economically independent.

The Need

In Israel today, the Ethiopian Israeli immigrants suffer from low literacy and high drop out and unemployment rates. The combination of cultural and economic walls that separates the Ethiopian Jews from the mainstream threatens to become a permanent barrier to their economic independence and social assimilation.

- 72% of the children of Ethiopian Jews in Israel grow up in poverty.
- In 1997 only 19% of Ethiopians graduated from high school.
- Currently, less than 50% of the Ethiopian Jewish students enrolled in Israeli primary and secondary schools actually complete that level of schooling.
- Only 40% of Ethiopian children under 4 yrs. old attend pre-school, compared with 95% of other children in Israel.
- 70% of Ethiopian families have no incoming salary.
- 46% of Ethiopian students are sent to boarding schools due to financial hardship.
- The rate of juvenile delinquency among the Ethiopian population is twice the national average.

As a result, these immigrants suffer all the burdens of the significant economic and social disenfranchisement caused by their lack of education. **A founding principle of SFEJ is the belief that education is the key to preventing the Ethiopian community from becoming a permanent underclass in Israeli society.**

History

The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews (SFEJ) was incorporated as a Not for Profit Corporation in the State of Florida in 1999. The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews is the only organization dedicated to graduate and professional education for the Ethiopian Israeli students. SFEJ scholarships are awarded without regard for religious affiliation of the recipient.

Ambassador (ret) Asher Naim (formerly Israel's Ambassador to Ethiopia) and Mr. Sidney Haifetz together founded the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews (SFEJ) in 1999.

For the student, for the community, for a stronger Israel

Ambassador Naim had played a pivotal role in Operation Solomon in 1991, during which 14,200 Jews were airlifted out of Ethiopia into Israel and saved from near annihilation as the Ethiopian government fell. In the years immediately following Operation Solomon, over 60,000 more Jews emigrated from Ethiopia into Israel, bringing the total number of new residents to nearly 80,000. Mr. Haifetz, who passed away in 2001, and Ambassador Naim shared the concern that the huge social and cultural barrier confronting the immigrants was proving largely insurmountable despite the vastly expanded efforts of the Israeli government to ease their assimilation. The Ethiopian immigrants and the Nation of Israel were confronted with the potential emergence of a permanently impoverished, welfare-dependent sub-culture.

In addition to their shared concern, Ambassador Naim and Mr. Haifetz shared the conviction that education was the key to breaking the poverty cycle. That meant education to create leaders and professionals to serve their community and be role models for the youth, more than half of whom were not finishing secondary school. Education was the key, and they focused on educating teachers, social workers, and other professionals who would serve their community and work directly with the people. Thus, with education as their mission, the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews was born.

Partnership with Keren Hanan Aynor

The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews is closely affiliated with Keren Hanan Aynor (KHA). SFEJ Chairman and co-founder Asher Naim also serves as the Treasurer of KHA. in Israel. KHA administers SFEJ's scholarships in Israel at no cost. One hundred per cent of scholarship funds sent to KHA to be spent on student grants, with no administrative expenses.

Along with its own educational programs, Keren Hanan Aynor provides direct educational opportunities, including scholarships, to the children of Operations Moses and Solomon. SFEJ complements the work of KHA by focusing its efforts primarily on graduate and professional education. These students tend to be older, many of whom are parents, who, by virtue of their age, do not qualify for other government educational assistance. Experience has shown that because of their maturity and perspective, these students are exceptionally well suited to teach younger Ethiopians by example the benefits of education and community service.

Scholarship recipients are selected from among eligible Ethiopian students throughout Israel. KHA evaluates the chances of success of each applicant and plays an active role together with the student and school to ensure that all barriers to success can be managed. KHA works with the student to ensure that he or she has access to all available support services, such as child care and transportation, which will be necessary for success. Recipients agree to "give back" as students and, after graduation, take increasingly active roles in service to the Ethiopian community in Israel.

Operations to Date

Since 2000, SFEJ has provided scholarships to more than 50 students. In the year ending June 2003, SFEJ's contribution of \$44,000, or 74% of total SFEJ expenditures, provided awards to 21 students.

Recipients of SFEJ scholarships have been educated at the following schools:

Adler Institute	Academic College of Law
Afik College	Ashkelon College
Bar Ilan University	Beer Sheva Technical College
Ben-Gurion University	Besalel Art Academy
Bet Berl College	Camera Obscura School of Arts
David Yellin Teachers College	Haifa University
Hebrew University	Hermlin College
Levinsky College	Rimon School of Music
Schechter Institute	Sheinborn School, Tel Aviv
Technion	Tel Aviv University

Growing Demand and Shrinking Resources

We are currently faced with a rising number of deserving applicants in a constricted economic environment. Contributions in the past year to both SFEJ and to its affiliate KHA have not kept pace with the demand. In an effort to serve a growing number of students from a limited resource pool, SFEJ has been forced to reduce its scholarship awards from \$2,500 to \$2,000 maximum. This policy places a greater burden upon the students, but in these difficult times we believe it is the best compromise. Nevertheless, we are working diligently to realize an increase in the contributions for the coming year so that we can serve a larger proportion of the qualified students.

II. Financial Information

SFEJ is run by volunteers. There are no expenditures for office space, rent or overhead other than basic office supplies and communication. Travel expenses are almost entirely in direct support of fundraising activities and speaking engagements. From time to time, minimal legal and accounting fees or other consultant fees must be incurred by the Fund. On occasion, in kind contributions in the form of services, are made to SFEJ. The relationship between SFEJ and KHA is highly beneficial as all expenses related to the outreach, selection, and case management of students in Israel are absorbed by KHA, as are the administrative costs associated with the scholarships.

History

The following table is a summary of the Scholarship Expenditures of the SFEJ since its inception:

Year ending 6/30	Total Amount of Scholarships Provided (Dollars)
2000	2,500
2001	10,000
2002	40,000
2003	44,000
2004	60,000*

* Estimate

More than 85% of funds received to date are from individual donors.

FY2004 Plan

The operating expense plan for FY 2004 is summarized below:

SFEJ Operating Plan - FY2004	
Contributions & Gifts	75,000
Scholarship Awards	(60,000)
Other Expense	(15,650)
Net Increase (Decrease)	(650)

Directors, Officers and Advisors

The following is a partial list of Officers and Directors of the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews. This is followed by a complete list of Officers, Directors and Advisors to SFEJ.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS^(*) (Partial List)

AMBASSADOR (ret) ASHER NAIM⁺, Chairperson

Served as Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia and was instrumental in the success of Operation Solomon. Continues his work on behalf of Ethiopian Jews with the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews and as Treasurer of Keren Hanan Aynor in Israel. Author of recent book on Ethiopian Jewry, Saving the Lost Tribe: The Rescue and Redemption of the Ethiopian Jews.

HON. RUDY BOSCHWITZ, Honorary Chairperson

U.S. Senator 1978-1991. President Bush's representative to Ethiopia during Operation Solomon.

RABBI PETER E. KASDAN⁺, President

Rabbi (Emeritus), Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, Livingston, New Jersey. Rabbinic Advisor to Canavan Foundation. Board Member, ARZA/ WU North America.

DR. ANTHONY CAMPO⁺, Vice President Co-founder, Two Brothers in Christ, Inc.

ROBERT COHAN⁺ Vice President

Director, North American Friends of Israeli Oceanographic and Limnological Institute.

MARLENE HERZOG⁺, Vice President, Secretary
University and Secondary School Educator.

DANIEL KRASSENSTEIN⁺, Vice President Israel
Association for Ethiopian Jewry.

Dr. VICTOR LEVADI⁺, Vice President, Treasurer
Business Consultant.

EDWIN SHERMAN⁺,

Vice President Business Executive.

ADVISORS

RABBI AMMIEL HIRSCH

Executive Director of ARZA/ World Union of North America.

DR. EPHRAIM ISAAC

Professor and Director, Institute of Semitic Studies, Princeton University.

RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN,

Executive Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

RABBI DAVID STRAUS

Mainline Reform Temple, Wynnewood, PA.

All Officers, Directors and Advisors of the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS	ADVISORS
AMBASSADOR (ret) ASHER NAIM ⁺ Chairperson	RABBI DAVID ACKERMAN
HON. RUDY BOSCHWITZ (U.S. Senator 1978-1991) Honorary Chairperson	RABBI MARC ANGEL
SIDNEY HAIFETZ Founding President	MICHAL AVARA
RABBI PETER E. KASDAN ⁺ President	DR. DAVID BLECKER
DR. ANTHONY CAMPO ⁺ Vice President	LAWRENCE J. BUNIS
ROBERT COHAN ⁺ Vice President	SIDNEY COHEN
MARLENE HERZOG ⁺ Vice President, Secretary	DR. EDNA EREZ
DANIEL KRASSENSTEIN ⁺ Vice President	BARTON FERST
DR. VICTOR LEVADI ⁺ Vice President, Treasurer	RUTHE FORKUSH
EDWIN SHERMAN ⁺ Vice President	MIRIAM FRIEDMAN
DIRECTORS	RABBI GORDON GELLER
HARRY ADWAR STANTON CHERRY RABBI AARON GABER SOL GORDESKY	RABBI AMMIEL HIRSCH
⁺ Director	HARRIS HOLLIN
	DR. EPHRAIM ISAAC
	WILLIAM B. KONAR
	MORT REICH
	RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN
	SIDNEY SCHWARTZ
	LOIS STEINER
	RABBI DAVID STRAUS
	ELLI STREIT
	JOE TROBMAN
	RABBI RICHARD YELLIN
	BETTY ZINMAN

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews (SFEJ) through its Israeli affiliate, Keren Hanan Aynor (KHA) in Jerusalem, addresses the needs of the Ethiopian immigrant community and is dedicated to developing a pool of talented, well-educated and highly motivated Ethiopian Israelis committed to serving their own community as well as the society at large. It aims to promote the emergence of a core leadership, enabling the community to eventually assume its own responsibilities.

Keren Hanan Aynor receives funding for scholarships from sources in addition to SFEJ. The number of students served by KHA has grown over its ten year history. The following are some highlights of the KHA student scholarship program, to which SFEJ is a major contributor.

Grants

Grants are awarded to students in the following categories:

1. Master or doctoral degree candidates needing help to complete their studies.
2. Undergraduate parents who wish to upgrade their educational and professional level.
3. Men and women (over age 30) who do not qualify for educational assistance from government and institutional sources.
4. Students working towards a specialized diploma to advance their employment level.

Growth

1994 Only five Ethiopian graduate students were in Israel; funds were divided among these students.

1995 11 applications received; all were approved and awarded grants. We received an infusion of funds and recognition from the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption.

1998 120 grants awarded. The United Jewish Federation of New York recognized the important mission of our work and pledged its support.

2002 269 grants awarded.

2003 271 grants awarded

In 2003, KHA is supporting 27 men and women (mostly parents) studying at the Sheba Academic School of Nursing in a specially organized program for a degree in practical nursing in addition to their continued work in the nursing field. For the first time, Keren Hanan Aynor is supporting a group of professional parent-students, who are taking part in a special training program in sexuality and sexual health, aimed at strengthening family dynamics, at the Israel Family Planning Association.

GRADUATES in service to the community

Some examples of SFEJ/KHA's graduates active in the promotion and integration of the Ethiopian community in Israeli society:

Dr. Sefafa Aychcek

Ph.D. in preventative medicine (did research on "Diseases Imported to and Acquired in Israel by Ethiopian Immigrants"); father of four; manager of the Center for Immigration Absorption in Netanya; prominent activist promoting use of education and advertising in the war on Aids.

Wonde Akale

M.A.; father of three; project manager in SHATIL, the NIF's Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change Organizations in Israel, for assistance and guidance to Ethiopian organizations.

Yardena Fanta

Doctoral candidate; initiator of project, "Thinking Science," developing interest in scientific and technological fields among Ethiopian immigrant youth in Lod and Rosh Ha'ayin.

Simha Getahun

M.A.; mother of two; social worker; head of a multi-cultural project, "Youth at Risk" (ELEM) serving religious and secular Russian, Ethiopian, Druze and Arab youth.

Natmar Hilel

M.A.; mother of three; social worker; head of the Educational Settlement Administration; in charge of 170 social workers at Youth Aliyah boarding schools nationwide.

Workei Kasai

M.A.; mother of two; President of the Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel (ALMAYA).

Rachamim Melaku

M.A.; father of three; head of project "Know From Where You Come" in Youth Aliyah boarding schools and head counselor of multi-cultural counselors at five boarding schools.

Tsega Melaku

M.A.; mother of two; broadcaster for Amharic Radio; Vice-Director of the Amharic Department at the Israel Broadcast Association; member of KHA's Board of Trustees.

Shula Mola

M.A.; mother of two; Director of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews; active advocate for the community.

Shimon Salomon

Father of two; Director of a multi-cultural project for immigrants at the Society for the Preservation of Nature of Israel, including planning outings for families and youth; lecturer for Amnesty International on human rights; former advisor to the Minister of Education on Ethiopian affairs;

Dr. Anbessa Tafera

Ph.D. in linguistics; father of three; lecturer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and guest lecturer at the University of Berlin; linguistics adviser to various organizations; translator of books and articles; chief examiner in the Amharic language; high school teacher.

Shmuel Yilma

M.A.; father of two; Senior Director of Educational Projects at JDC; member of KHA's Board of Trustees.

Over 50 additional graduates are currently employed in their professional fields, thus enhancing social change and integration of their community in Israeli society as a whole.

GRANT RECIPIENTS 2002-2003

SFEJ/KHA Grant Recipients 2002-2003 (as of Oct, 1st):

(+) refers to the number of dependent children in the household.

Parents BA (36)

Abate, Avraham (+1) - Teaching diploma, Achva College
Asegie, Genetu (+5) - Education, David Yellin College
Avraham, Elana (+3) - Teaching diploma, Achva College
Baeta, Moshe (+5) - Public Administration, Sapir College
Baru, Uri (+2) - Teaching, Achva College
Biru, Israel (+5) - Business Administration, Michlala Leminhah
Degu, Yeshayahu (+3) - Communications, Open University
Eshetie, Aelmu (+3) - Art, Beit Berl
Germay, Baruch (+3) - Business Administration, Touro College
Hawaz, Esayas (+2) - English, David Yellin College
Jmra, Aviva (+1) - Criminology, Ashkelon College
Kassu, Zeev (+1) - Law, Kirya Academit
Legyshal, Ilan (+2) - Political Science, Beit Berl
Lema, Gedion (+3) - Education, Achva College
Maharat, David (+3) - Education, Ashkelon College
Mangeseto, Tamar (+2) - Criminology, Ariel College
Mashasha, Reuven (+2) - Special Education, Oranim College
Mellesse, Ambat (+1) - Special Education, Levinski College
Messelle, Natan (+2) - Political Science, Open University,
Mitiko, Sandeku (+2) - English, David Yellin College
Molla, Shlomo (+1) - Law, Kirya Academit
Mugas, Biniamin (+1) - Social work, Haifa University
Pinhas, Orli (+1) - Criminology, Galil Ma'aravi College
Solomon, Leah (+3) - Education, Oranim College
Solomon, Orna (+3) - Education, Ashkelon College

Tadesse, Arega (+1) - Education, Haifa University

Teka, Yaire (+3) - Education, Achva College
Tezazo, Rina (+3) - Education, Ben Gurion University
Tlela, Markemo (+2) - Law, Academic Law College
Yaih, Mentwab (+3) - Preparatory Program Raanana College
Yassu, Shay (+1) - Criminology, Ashkelon College
Yeshayahu, Asaf (+1) - Physical Education, Kay College
Yeshayahu, Tziona (+2) - Business Administration, Kirya Academit
Yhaieess, Ruhmam (+3) - Education, Achva College
Yoelsht, Shimon (+3) - Education, David Yellin College
Wondem, Racherl (+3) - Education, Achva College

Parents MA (9)

Akale, Shlomo (+3) - Education Administration, Tel Aviv University
Baruch, Gadi (+2) - Public Administration, Tel Aviv University
Gerdi, Tironesh (+1) - Communications, Lifshitz College
Gete, Mekonen (+2) - Public Administration, Israel College
Kassay, Bat-Sheva (+2) - Business Administration, Ben-Gurion University
Kinda, David (+2) - Educational Counseling, Bar-Ilan University

Minewab, Bat-Sheva (+2) - Education, Hebrew University
Solomon, Shinon (+2) - Public Administration, Hebrew University
Yimam, Merkebu (+1) - Business Administration, Derbi College

MA / Thesis (10)

Baynesan, Emembet - Pharmacology, Tel Aviv University
Degahun, Ilana - Education, Haifa University
Adgoechao, Esther - Anthropology and Sociology, Haifa University
Akale, Asmara - Education Counseling, Tel Aviv University
Darar, Elisheva - Int. Relations, Bar-Ilan University,
Getahun, Gila - Social Work, Hebrew University
Mekonen, Levana - Business Administration, Ben-Gurion University
Sahalo, Ilan - Education Counseling, Haifa University,
Yosef, Kefalea - Public Administration, Haifa University
Zaro, Bili - Business Administration, Ben-Gurion University

BA (10)

Ayano, Teowdore - Computer Science, Derbi College
Getahun, Yuval - Law, Haifa University
Hizkiyahu, Yacov - Law, Academic Law College
Mamo, Vered - TV and Cinema, Sapir College
Melesa, Rada - Accounting, Lev Institute Jerusalem
Mellese, Orli - TV and Cinema, Sapir College
Takura, Orli - Management, Touro College
Yaacov, Amare - Education, Haifa University
Yimarhan, Dana - TV and Cinema, Hadassah College
Yonas, Adi - Computer Science, Lev Institute Jerusalem

Professional Studies (43)

Adabe, Avi - Truck driver, Israel Transportation School
Akalie, Emebet - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Andegana, Zina (+3) - Nursing, Tel Aviv University
Assefa, Tehitina - Acting, Rina Yerushalmi Ensemble Theatre
Aylin, Benny (+1) - Parent Counseling, Adler Institute
Baruch, Zehava (+2) - Family Counseling, Shinui Institute
Baruda, Kidist - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Ben-Eliyahu, Suzy (+1) - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Bitew, Shlomit (- Medical Secretary, Petach Tikva College
Dass, Atla - Nursing, Ziv Nursing School
Dasta, Gila - Medical Secretary, Petach Tikva College
Efriem, Solomon (+1) - Lab Technician, Hadassah College
Frado, Shai - Acting, Nisan Nativ Acting School
Gangul, Aviva (+1) - Kindergarten Teacher, Gordon College
Gehyu, Tagest - Nursing, Tzfat Nursing School
Germay, Adi - Makeup artist, Il Makiage Make-up School
Germay, Shalomit - Nursing, Ziv Nursing School
Gete, Dafna - Acting, Beit-Zvi acting School
Girmay, Tadele - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Habtaya, Sibhat - Medical Equipment technician, Tel Aviv

College

Hizkiyahu, Mali - Accounting, Hebrew University
Kabda, Kassa (+3) - Bus driver, "Wall Street" English School
Ligalme, Justin - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Malako, Pnina (+5) - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Negosse, Ephraim - Financial Counseling, Bar-Ilan University
Noga, Zehava - Nursing, Ziv Nursing School
Paso, Eti (+1) - Youth Guidance, Beit Berl
Pikado, Benny - Sexual Education, Israel Family Center
Prdu, Miriam - Youth Guidance, Beit Berl
Sandeke, Edna (+3) - Nursing, Tel Aviv University
Sayym, Devora (+1) - Kindergarten teacher, Hamichlala Hameshutefet
Senbeta, Yosef (+4) - Truck driver, Israel Traffic School
Snidke, Hodaya - Nursing Tzfat Nursing School
Taka, Ofira - Jewelry Design, Bezalel
Tarekeyn, Yeshambel (+1) - Electricity technician, Ashdod College
Yaacov, Shoshi - Physiotherapy, Ariel College
Yallow, Ziva - Nursing, Haifa University
Yalmorak, Rasrasa - Nursing, Ziv Nursing School
Thahai, Efrat (+2) - Detal nursing, Michlala Leminhall
RehovotB Zerfa, Batel - Nursing, Ziv Nursing School

Engineering (10)

Alamu, Oren - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Avraham, Dani - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Ayele, Abebaw Avi - Space Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Bayeh, Ayichew - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Brihon, Ilan - Mechanical Engineering, Ben-Gurion University
Dassa, Ilan - Mechanical Engineering, Ben-Gurion University
Farada, Avraham - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Lilai, Israel - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa
Mellesse, Martha - Chemical Engineering, Ben-Gurion University
Mozson, Deyn - Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa

Practical Engineering (21)

Avnt, Hagush - Engineering, Emek Hayarden College
Awoke, Addisalem (+2) - Engineering
Ayele, Rachel - Software engineering, Rupin College
Dessie, Mulu - engineering, Michlala Leminhall
Dinku, Terefe - Engineering, ORT Braude, Carmiel
Fakeda, Bzinassea - Engineering, Hagalil Hamaaravi College
Gambar, Miriam - Engineering, Hagalil Hamaaravi College
Goodo, Zehina (+2) - Engineering, ORT Neviim
Kinda, Fantahun - Engineering, Beer-Sheva Technical school
Mekonen, Drora - Engineering, Beer-Sheva Technical school
Rasskay, Dina - TV engineering, Sapir College
Rasskay, Ziva - Engineering, Sapir College
Yalwo, Daniel - Electronics Engineering, Emek Hayarden College
Tarken, Gil - Engineering, Afik College
Tasmu, Pnina - Engineering, Beer-Sheva Technical school
Tefera, Batel (+1) - Engineering, Hamichlala Leminhall
Tsegay, Ayichew - Electronic Engineering, ORT Braude
Tzazu, Orli - Biotechnology Engineering, ORT Braude

Practical Nurses (27)

Rahel Arta, Afework Aychew, Ilana Baruk, Orna Beynu, Oshirat Bitew, Zhbete Bogale, Abebe Desse, Divora Hally, Yaffa Hanania, Naama Itzhak, Azanu Mahary, Worku Ysehitella Malo,
Tirza Mara, Mayan Mhary, Malka Mkannt, Shoshana Telahun, Aliza Truch, Tadla Tsega

"Afikim Lemada" Or-Shva (33)

Batya Adamesu, Rachel Adhanan, Moshe Aharon, Edna Aylu, Orgal Almin, Tal Anin, Shlomit Askias, Chana Aragay, Liat Baza, Mazal Barcha, Eti Guntzel, Rivka Gasahy, Rivka Dessa, Yaffa Malada, Tigist Maspin, Rivka Pinhas, Tasesa Salamwit, Negi Tesf, Osnat Tegaba, Yossi Tesma
Aliza Avishal, Sarah Adela, Anat Adhenan, David Aytegev, Esther Areka,
Sarah Getahun, Tamar Dessa, Leah Tazazu, Amir Ihias, Yisisit Yizra,
Devora Itzhak, Mali Maharat, Devora Maleko, Yaffa Tchekol

Michal's Story

Michal Avara

May, 2000

My name is Avara, but my original name, the one given to me by my parents is Tawokelech, which means wise girl, and that shows what my parents expected me to become. I was born in a small village in northern Ethiopia. In my village there were only 40 families, all of them Jewish. Life in the village was very simple: no electricity, no phone, no television. Life took place as in nature. My father worked in the fields with my brothers. He was one of the village's elders. My mother took care of us at home.

As a child I remember the hostility we felt against us from the Christians. We were afraid to go to the nearby city and mingle with them. Never-theless, I had to go there daily because I was the youngest in the family. I was also the only one that was not engaged to be married at an early age, as were my sisters.



During the week I went to school but Shabbat was the day that I liked best. Then my father and uncles would tell us stories about this golden City of Jerusalem where there is a Temple, the Land of Milk and Honey, where all people are religious, where all Jews are holy, and all of them are black like myself. As a child I remember sitting with my friends dreaming of the day when we would reach Jerusalem with its rivers of milk and honey where everything is sweet.

One day when I was 4 years old, they kidnapped my brother. He was forcibly taken into the Ethiopian army. We would not see him again for years to come.

When I was in fourth grade I discovered that my parents put away food and water. We children didn't learn that this was connected

with Jerusalem because everything was kept in secrecy. Our parents didn't want our neighbors to understand that we intended to leave for Jerusalem so that they would not reveal this to the authorities, since leaving Ethiopia was considered illegal.

Then one night my father told us to get up. We were told to keep silent. We left everything behind, our house and fields, our cows and sheep. I didn't say good-bye to my friends at school. We were about 20 families, almost all of them related.

We walked during the night and during the days we rested. We feared the Ethiopian soldiers and robbers. Once we were caught by robbers, but they took only our money and let us go. On the way we saw corpses of people who could not bear the hardship. They were not buried. They were covered only with some pieces of wood.

After two weeks we ran out of water. The men went to find water. We were afraid the men would get lost. We were sitting there and waiting for the men to return with water. I remember my Aunt saying that everything was done for us to go to Jerusalem, for Zion. I remember how thirsty I was, waiting until the men returned and gave us water, which saved us.

After six weeks of walking, we arrived at the Sudanese border. I remember the adults whispering about how much money they should offer to the Sudanese soldiers. Life in Sudan was very hard. I was still a young girl, but I still remember the picture of disease and death. You could smell it everywhere. My mother was very sick. A cousin of mine, with whom I used to play as a girl in the village, died. The dream of Jerusalem of Gold and the Land of Milk and Honey was very far away. We were busy with the daily battle for survival. Everyone in the family tried to contribute his part to this battle.

I remember the happy girl. Now I became very sad. Then after a year in a crowded refugee camp it was our time to leave. The Jewish Agency missionaries came to our hut at night to come to a place where there were already many people. We all jumped into two trucks that were waiting for us. Israeli military planes that made a lot of noise and a lot of dust. To me they looked like two big birds. Within a short period of time we were told that we had arrived in Israel. As we came off the planes I remember people falling down and kissing the Holy Land.

When we arrived I expected to see Black people welcoming us. All of the people we saw were white. They hugged us, kissed us, and gave us flowers. They took us to an Absorption Center. We started a new life in the Promised Land but we didn't find any milk or honey. Instead we found a lot of good will.

My parents and I went to school to learn Hebrew. When I was fourteen I was put in a youth village. It was very hard for me to cope with studies without any support from my parents, but they were able to give me love and courage to continue my studies.

My parents had a hard time being accepted into the Israeli society. They wanted us children to assist them, even at the cost of our studies. You have to understand that I love my parents very much. They are very old now. My father is 84 and my mother is 71 years old. In Ethiopia they were able to advise everybody what was right or what was wrong. Now I realized my parents needed me to guide them, to help them, to take them by the hand. But I was just a child. How could I make all the right decisions they expected me to make.

Studies at school were also hard for me. The other children in my class would go to their parents for help with their school work. I had to rely on myself. After we arrived in the Youth Village the Jewish Agency arranged for us to get some help with homework. When I came home every second Shabbat, my parents would ask me to take them to the Jewish Agency office to talk on behalf of my missing brother who was lost in the Ethiopian

Army. We went there many times, but then in 1990 we were told that he came to the Israeli

Embassy in Addis Abbaba. At last he arrived on 'Operation Solomon' in 1991, and our family was re-united.

In 1992 I finished high school in Israel. I was accepted at Haifa University after a lot of effort and work and a lot of assistance from Jews like you who paid my tuition and a monthly subsidy of \$150.00 I succeeded to get my B.A. in General Studies and Education and my Masters in Counseling Education in High School.

There are now several hundred Ethiopian graduates like myself and over 1,500 students taking advantage of the Affirmative Action that you support, allowing Ethiopian youngsters to go to college for up to 4 years without paying any tuition.

You understand that without proper education we will be doomed to be the wood choppers and water carriers of Israel; we would become a black underclass, and you and I would know what this would mean.

We have motivation and ambition to succeed. We can become physicians and nurses, teachers and social workers, psychologists and military officers. But among us there are also more and more who have given up, more and more who have dropped out of school, who have left home and live on the streets and in crime.

I decided not to give up on them, and together with my friends from the University we take care of young Ethiopian elementary and high school students, and I know that you will continue supporting us, you will not let us down, You will not fail this proud Jewish community that prayed for 2,000 years to return to Jerusalem.

Together we will succeed.

Today Michal Avara counsels teachers in meeting the special needs of the Ethiopian elementary school students and is a doctoral candidate..

Essay

WILLIAM SAFIRE

Israel's Ethiopian Challenge

WASHINGTON

A marriageable Ethiopian woman falls in love with a young Ethiopian man in Israel. Both are Jewish, but their parents refuse approval of their marriage because family records show they share a great-great-grandparent.

Years later, she chooses a white European Jew. This time, her family elders approve; that's because Ethiopian Jewish tradition, while forbidding marriage within an extended family that can number a thousand, finds marrying a Jew outside that family acceptable.

Nonsensical? On the contrary; by instinctively adhering to such strict rules, the tribe of Israelites that wandered into Africa almost 3,000 years ago was able to maintain its religious and cultural identity without degrading its genetic pool.

The tribe's survival with tradition intact was near-miraculous. The rescue of its members by Israel, with American airborne help, from starvation and persecution in Africa as felashas -- "outsiders" -- was inspiring. Now that they are felashas no more, how are the black Jews faring?

They are not starving; they are not oppressed; they have roofs over their heads. Some serve in the army; one was elected to the Knesset; but most of the 60,000 Ethiopian Jews -- more than half under age 18 -- are not doing well.

They start from way behind. Almost all arrived illiterate, which made it hard to find work. Fathers, who were often a generation older than their wives, were not raised to be go-getters. Parents spoke no Hebrew and could not help children with homework; as a result, Ethiopian immigrants come to school prepared at about half the rate of other Israelis.

Not surprisingly, only about 12 percent of E.J. students make it through 12th grade, compared with 45 percent of other Israelis. Dropouts are on the rise, followed by youth gangs and petty crime. Uri Tamiat, 28, director of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, told me last month in Israel that "when kids can't keep up in school, they join a gang and roam the streets. They have to belong to something."

Avoid America's race mistakes

What happens when the Ministry of Education is accused of assigning E.J.'s to weak schools and not supplying books and materials? Defensiveness reigns; a bureaucrat proudly points to an uncut budget and issues a release warning critics "not to keep publicising . . . weaknesses and failures."

Rabbi Micha Odenheimer of Jerusalem has a better idea. He calls for Head Start education starting at age 2; a measurable, accountable target of literacy by the end of third grade; intensive after-school courses in mathematics and computers; integration of Ethiopian kids into high-level high schools near home, and a hundred more youth workers like Uri Tamiat to rescue dropouts.

This requires more than more money. Urgently needed is a public-private task force, reporting to the Prime Minister, run full time by a red-tape-cutter and china-breaker on the order of a 35-year-old Ariel Sharon.

Whenever I try this on Benjamin Netanyahu, he gives me a you-bet, great-idea -- followed by no follow-up. Natan Sharansky, head of the Ministerial Committee on Absorption, shows little grasp of the danger or the opportunity, and his constituency resents extra aid given other immigrants.

A council of Israeli industrialists, alarmed by Ethiopian suicides in the Israeli Army, is willing to help with job training and work opportunities but needs coordination. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York knows what is needed but isn't pushy enough.

Doesn't anybody see the downside risk? The Jew who discriminates against Ethiopian immigrants is anti-Semitic. To all the immediate dangers Israel faces, add this long-term danger: making the old American mistake of allowing the creation of an impoverished, welfare-dependent underclass.

And doesn't anybody see the upside potential? The Jewishness of these black Africans is Israel's antidote to racism. Of all the chances to be a light unto the nations -- not merely to win diplomatic friends in Africa, but to bring together blacks and Jews everywhere -- no opportunity is riper for Israeli Jews and Arabs than to insure equal opportunity for their Ethiopian compatriots.

Anybody would be sold on this by Shula Mola, 25, an Ethiopian Jew determined to become a teacher. "Too many people think we cannot do well. They should expect more of us."

A turning point for Ethiopian-Israelis

BY SHULA MOLA
December 12, 2002

In Gaza less than two weeks ago, Shai Germai, an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier, was killed by Palestinian gunmen while serving in his combat unit. In September 2001, Natan Sandelke, a 19-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli soldier, risked his life to stop a suicide bomber in Jerusalem, tackling him before he could blow himself up in a crowd. The bomb went off, killing the terrorist and injuring Natan, who spent months recovering from this heroic act. In October 2000, Yossi Tabaja, an Ethiopian-Israeli soldier, became one of the first victims of the intifada when he was shot dead at Joseph's Tomb at the age of 27.

Of all Ethiopians drafted to the army, over 36% serve in combat units, far above the national average. The many Ethiopian casualties and heroes of the intifada exemplify the extent to which the Ethiopian community is embedded in the heart and soul of Israeli society.

The battle against terror has amply demonstrated the self-sacrifice and Zionist idealism of the Ethiopian community. The combination of war and recession has, at the same time, deepened the absorption crisis of these immigrants.

Preoccupied by security concerns, the government has until now failed to pay attention to the warning signs that tell of a community poised at the precipice of poverty and disillusionment. Despite their valiant attempts to integrate, Ethiopians continue to hold the lowest economic position among new immigrants and veteran Israelis.

A recent report published by the Committee to Investigate Social Gaps, led by Knesset member Ran Cohen, highlights the grim reality facing the Ethiopian community today: the drop-out rate of Ethiopian students is more than double the national average, and 47% of Ethiopian Israelis aged 25-54 are not in the labor force. Surely this struggle against debilitating poverty was not part of the Ethiopian dream of returning to Zion.

More than two years ago the Ethiopian National Project (ENP) was conceived as a partial solution to these problems. The project, initiated by the Jewish Agency in partnership with United Jewish Communities, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Israeli government, and the Ethiopian community, was designed as a \$660 million, nine-year effort to ensure a more complete absorption and integration of Ethiopians into Israeli society.

The participation of Ethiopian representatives in all stages of the project provided the first true forum for the voice of the community. The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, in partnership with 10 other Ethiopian organizations, has been exerting immense effort to guarantee the timely implementation of this project. But, again, the focus on Israel's security by American Jews has shifted the emphasis of their support away from social projects. This has resulted in the delay of the ENP's implementation and the danger that the scope of ENP programming will be significantly reduced.

This is unfortunate, for the current security situation affecting the entire country is having

an even greater impact on low-income communities. Increased security spending has led to the drastic reduction of social budgets, Dec. 12, 2002 making day-to-day life a struggle for many. Now more than ever we cannot ignore the social needs of our fellow Jews. Every day more and more Ethiopian children, youth, and even adults seem to be resigning themselves to a position in the lowest stratum of Israeli society.

In Israel today 66% of Ethiopian families are dependent on government welfare in order to meet basic needs.

Ethiopians are underrepresented in government ministries, and schools with high academic reputations have low Ethiopian enrollment. We must alter this reality and reduce existing social gaps.

Over half of the Ethiopian population in Israel is under the age of 19. Resources that have been directed towards bridging educational gaps have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that Ethiopian youngsters can make it when given half a chance. Nearly 2,000 young Ethiopians are now in college or pre-college preparatory institutions – a direct result of government "second chance" matriculation programs.

But in order to succeed, resources must be properly invested and the community must be made a partner in the absorption process - as will happen if the ENP is put into effect. The ENP has embraced the principle of full Ethiopian partnership in all stages of its development. This partnership empowers the community to believe in its own ability to enact change. But the ENP remains low on the list of governmental priorities, and I fear that without immediate action the community's faith will begin to wane. The time has come to ensure the Ethiopians a brighter future in Israel.

These immigrants, many of whom, like me, walked through the desert with faith and determination to succeed, should be given the full opportunity to do so. We are

approaching a turning point in the history of Ethiopian absorption. In the past, poverty was seen as a temporary condition, a natural byproduct of the journey of all new immigrants toward the social mainstream. Now, dangerously, both native Israelis and Ethiopian immigrants are beginning to believe that poor social integration is a result of problems within the Ethiopian community rather than faulty absorption processes.

But we have not yet lost our hope. Working together we can change this disturbing situation, and in so doing illustrate the value of Israeli democracy.

Israel has the opportunity to become an example for other nations. We can become the example of a diverse country effectively welcoming and integrating immigrants. Rather than reinforcing the mistaken image, rampant in the international press, of Israel as an apartheid state, we must become a true example of democracy. The absorption of immigrants from the "third world" into a highly technological society will change the country's image.

If Israel is unable to effectively absorb the Ethiopians, then it has failed as a Jewish democratic state, and our vision of a Jewish homeland was simply an illusion.

Investments made now ensure a more unified future for Israel. The effort is minimal compared to the results.

Working together, we can make the complete absorption of the Ethiopians a reality that will change the internal and external face of the country. It is our duty, as a Jewish nation, to recall the power of the Ethiopian dream of Zion, and to ensure that this dream comes true.

The writer arrived in Israel at the age of 12 after an arduous journey from Ethiopia. She is Executive Director of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews (www.iaej.co.il).

Tales Of An Airlift

New account of Ethiopian Jews' escape reads more like a suspense thriller than a history.

Sandee Brawarsky - Jewish Week Book Critic

As Jews prepare to commemorate the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, a just-released book adds new details to our understanding of a more recent, miraculous escape. Saving the Lost Tribe: The Restoration and Redemption of the Ethiopian Jews by Asher Naim (Ballantine) describes the miraculous escape of 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in May 1991, in the midst of a civil war there. Naim, who had been Israel's ambassador to Ethiopia at the time, speaks of their return as "redemption," in its ancient sense, the buying back of the freedom of another person. "No matter what the price, no matter what the risk, it was imperative that every effort was made to redeem the life of another Jew."

The operation was one of teamwork; other major players included Uri Lubrani, a high-level official in the Ministry of Defense, members of the Israeli Air Force, representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Joint Distribution Committee and American officials. Along with Lubrani, Naim served as the link to the Ethiopian government. They negotiated with Ethiopian president Mengistu Miriam and members of his regime, who saw the Ethiopian Jews, or Beta Israel, as a bargaining tool in their own power struggles. Naim coordinated logistics and worked to raise \$35 million, secured by American donors. Some of the events seem like they're right out of the script of a thriller, although at one point after an extraordinary request, Lubrani reminds Kasa Kabede, Mengistu's close adviser, "This isn't a James Bond film, Kasa."

Naim describes how, in the final moments of the airlift, Kabede was smuggled out, as he had requested, along with the Beta Israel. Carried out to the Israeli plane on a stretcher to avoid identification, he spent some time in Israel and is now in the U.S., according to the author.

Naim has served in Israel's foreign service for 43 years, as the cultural attaché to Japan and the United States and the Israel ambassador to the United Nations, Finland, South Korea and Ethiopia. Finland was his last posting before Addis Ababa, and in fact he had just returned from Helsinki, where he had been very involved with the emigration of Jews from what was then the Soviet Union, and was unpacking in Jerusalem when he got a call about this new assignment. At first he was reluctant, but soon realized the importance of this new posting.

"I fell in love with the country and the Ethiopian people," he tells The Jewish Week during a recent visit to New York. He found the Jews there to be "attached, umbilically, to the Bible" and was struck by their culture, politeness, patience and, respect for the elderly.

"Naim's book sheds light on the role of the Israeli ambassador in that operation, which was little known. This is an interesting angle, the role of a diplomat in a place and time of drama," Amir Shaviv, assistant executive vice-president of special operations of the Joint Distribution Committee, told The Jewish Week. The organization had a pivotal role in planning and executing the operation both in the U.S. and in the field.

This is the first English-language book on Operation Solomon by an insider. Naim captures the excitement and also the delicate nature of the unfolding events, and the book makes for fast-paced reading. There are no footnotes here; it's more of a memoir than a work of thorough history.

Other books written on the subject have been published in Hebrew only, including, "Exodus from Ethiopia" by Micha Feldman, who worked for the Jewish Agency at the time, and "Operation Solomon: A year in 31 Hours" by Jacob Friedman, who then worked for the JDC in Ethiopia and Israel. (Both Feldman and Friedman are mentioned in Naim's book.) In English, "Surviving Salvation: The Ethiopian Jewish Family in Transition" by Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Dr. Steven Kaplan describes the rescue operation, although it focuses on the transition from African villages to Israeli cities.

Stephen Spector, a professor of English and Jewish Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook is just finishing up a book that he expects will be published within the next year. His approach is a more scholarly one,

presenting an overall history of Operation Solomon, including the political events leading up to it. He has been working on the book for seven years, and has interviewed more than 200 participants.

Along with describing the remarkable events, Naim conveys his appreciation of the land with its ancient beauty. He agrees with others' description of Ethiopia as the "Tibet of Africa," with its deep spirituality, very much connected to the landscape.

Before leaving Ethiopia 11 months after he arrived, Naim tried to press officials there to spend the \$35 million released by the State Department to build an advanced irrigation system to end the cycles of famine, plant cotton as the basis for a textile industry and develop an institute for training nurses. But he was told that the money was instead needed "for immediate use."

Born in Libya, Naim moved to Israel with his family soon after his bar mitzvah; they traveled by truck from Tripoli to Suez, and then by train to Haifa. Soon after the success of Operation Solomon, as he writes, he represented Israel in a speech at the United Nations, against the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. As a Jew born in an Arab country, who had just been instrumental in bringing black Africans to Israel, he told Israel's story and his own. Resolution

3374 was repealed after a subsequent vote. Naim was recently in the United States in connection with an effort he is coordinating in connection with five other ex-ambassadors. Through the organization they've founded, the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews, they are raising funds to help Ethiopian immigrants in Israel with their academic studies, both college and graduate school. Last year, they granted 246 scholarships, and all recipients are obligated to serve the community for four hours weekly. In addition to his work with the Fund, Naim and his family are involved on a personal level with individuals in Israel's Ethiopian community. "What we did [in rescuing them] was a small miracle. The large miracle is how to absorb them and get them into the mainstream. Their four-hour flight covered a distance of 400 years. If I had one dollar, I'd spend 90 cents for education." When asked about the Falash Mura, many of whom are now leaving Ethiopia for Israel, Naim mentions a conversation, recounted in the book, with Mengistu, in which the president told him that "we were all Jews before we adopted Christianity in the fourth century." Although he feels compassion for these people, he's worried about "an unlimited stream" of people who will want to come to Israel. "The only question I have is how do we control the numbers." He adds, "If you have a heart, you feel for them."

This story was published on: March 21, 2003
Copyright 2003, Washington Jewish Week

AMBASSADOR ASHER NAIM

Ambassador Asher Naim immigrated to Israel from Tripoli, Libya, fought in the War of Independence, and is a Master of Jurisprudence from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He is a veteran of Israel's Diplomatic Service and left his mark everywhere he served.

In Tokyo, Japan (1956-60) he was Cultural and Press Attaché. He taught Hebrew at Tokyo University and tutored Prince Mikasa, brother of the Emperor.

In Kenya and Uganda (1961-64) he laid the foundation for Israel's diplomatic relations with nascent Africa and created a basis of friendship with the leaders of these countries (Milton Obote and Jomo Kenyatta), which served Israel well in the Entebbe Raid.

In Washington, D.C. (1968-73) he was assistant to Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin as Councilor of Information and Culture. He organized the nationwide celebration of Israel's 25th anniversary.

As Consul General of Israel in Philadelphia (1976-81) he was responsible for N.J., Del., Pa., Ohio, Ky., and West Va. He developed important relations with the Jewish communities, African and Hispanic Americans, Christian organizations and academia.

In 1984, he was sent again to Washington, D.C. to coordinate the activities of Israel's ten Consul Generals and to work closely with all national Jewish organizations. He was responsible for Israel's HASBARA throughout the USA vis-à-vis the media, campuses, and later coordinated the nationwide celebration of Ben-Gurion's Centennial.

As Ambassador to Finland (1988-90) he negotiated successfully the passage of Russian Jews from Leningrad and the Baltic States by being able to use Helsinki as a transit for "Aliya" to Israel.

Asher Naim was the Ambassador of Israel to Ethiopia (1990-91) at the time of Operation Solomon. He was instrumental in the negotiating process with President Mengistu and later with the winning rebels, headed by Meles Zenawi. Largely due to Ambassador Naim's efforts, during a 24 hour period 14,200 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted and flown to Israel.

Asher Naim was appointed Ambassador to the UN (1991) in charge of the Third Committee to annul the infamous UN Resolution equating Zionism with racism.

In 1992, Mr. Naim was appointed the first Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, and in three years he succeeded in bringing Korea and Israel closer economically and politically and initiated cooperation in defense-related industries. Trade between Israel and Korea during his service (1992-95) jumped 250% and reached \$700,000,000.

After retiring from the Foreign Service in September, 1995, with the rank of Ambassador, Mr. Naim continues his activity on behalf of the Ethiopian community, its absorption and integration in Israel society, mainly through academic scholarships.

He is Chairman of the Israel-Korea Friendship Association, which works for closer relations between the two countries in the field of education and promotion of economic ties.

Ambassador Naim is a Fellow at the Truman Institute for Peace at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

He has co-authored two books on Jewish education and a book on Jerusalem.

His most recent book, *Saving the Lost Tribe: the Rescue and Redemption of the Ethiopian Jews*, (Random House, 2003) reveals the inside story of Operation Solomon.

Ambassador Naim and his wife, Hilda, have three children and reside in Jerusalem.



Ambassador Asher Naim