



Peter Fast accompanying Ethiopian Jews on their journey to Israel.

Let's Bring Them Home



Scenes from Gondar, Ethiopia

I recently boarded a plane to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to represent Bridges for Peace on a visit arranged by Keren Hayesod, an organization that, like us, is dedicated to fulfilling Bible prophecy by aiding in the Jewish return to Israel. Together with the delegation of Keren Hayesod leaders from around the world, we headed to the Gondar region in northwestern Ethiopia. There we traveled from village to village, meeting the final remnants of the Ethiopian Jewish community and bringing them hope.

Traveling through Gondar was like stepping back 2,700 years in time. This is the ancient land of Cush, first mentioned in Genesis 2:13, where tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews have lived for generations. Scholars believe they originate from the Tribe of Dan, dispersed by the Assyrians and driven there 2,700 years ago.

The level of poverty is atrocious. I saw children drinking water from muddy streams. Electricity, sanitation and plumbing are unheard of and the ravages of disease are evident. Women walk for hours to reach the market or well and men work their fields with yoked oxen and wooden plows. The famine and civil war raging in northern Ethiopia make food insecurity a daily reality. The homes are built from

mud and straw, with crude frames fashioned from eucalyptus branches and covered by a corrugated steel roof. Dirt floors stand as an obvious marker of poverty. Each shack measures roughly 10x10 feet (3x3 m.), with an entire family living inside. As many as 14 of these tiny shacks are clustered together with one communal toilet with no plumbing.

We visited one beautiful Jewish family that is currently preparing to make *aliyah* (immigrate to Israel) after waiting ten years. The outside of their home is adorned with a Star of David. The mother fed her baby while she spoke with us as her husband and seven other children looked on. We listened to their story, encouraged them and gave them a gift. The father kissed my hand to show his gratitude.

Once I overcame my shock at the poverty, the joyful hope on these peoples' faces at their imminent homecoming to Israel left me in awe at the God of the universe, who is faithful to His covenant.

Micha Feldman, who participated in the miraculous rescue of Ethiopian Jews in 1984–1985, told us, "From their mother's breast, they drank the milk of Zionism." This is the only Jewish community in the world that has never needed convincing to make *aliyah*, he said. They have put their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and after two millennia, He has proven faithful. They are returning home.

Yet the homecoming has historically presented obstacles that have left deep scars of suffering. Between 1977 and 1984, thousands of Ethiopian Jews

set their sights on Jerusalem and embarked on foot on the 1,940-mile (3,124-kilometer) trek to Israel with their young children, pregnant women and elderly in tow. They journeyed over perilous terrain and were perpetually hunted by the authorities.

Adani, who accompanied our delegation, was 15 years old when he was part of the first group of Ethiopian Jews to start the journey in 1977. He told us his modern-day Exodus story. They crossed mountains and valleys at night, hiding from the government soldiers who pursued them during the daylight. Many died along the way. Adani's group eventually reached Sudan, only to face a hostile Sudanese army. They were captured and placed into refugee camps. Nearly 20,000 Ethiopian Jews followed in their footsteps—and met a similar fate. Conditions in the camps were atrocious and thousands perished from disease and starvation, including two of Adani's siblings. Yet the God of Israel had not abandoned them. He heard their cries (Exod. 2:24) and sent deliverance. In a daring covert mission dubbed Operation Moses, Israel rescued these Ethiopian Jews in 1984–1985.

Operation Solomon followed in 1991, with Israel rescuing 14,325 Ethiopian

Jews from Addis Ababa during a 36-hour ceasefire between warring factions—a miracle of biblical, prophetic proportion! They came home to Israel on “eagles’ wings” (Exod. 19:4). Yet today, 32 years later, there are thousands more Ethiopian Jews who wait to make a similar journey to the home of their hearts.

When our delegation boarded our return flight to Israel, we were not alone. A plane-load of Ethiopian Jews making *aliyah* shared the plane with us! When they caught their first glimpse of Israeli soil through the plane windows, they burst into singing, praising God as the wheels of the aircraft touched the ground. They were finally home!

The story isn't over. Last year, 1,500 Ethiopian Jews made *aliyah*. During the recent trip to Ethiopia, we had the honor of visiting the next group of 1,500 waiting to come. There are thousands more. Israel is committed to bringing all the Ethiopian Jews home, but their *aliyah* comes at an enormous cost. That is why we will step into the gap to help.

Bridges for Peace is dedicated to fulfilling the call of God to help bring His people home according to His prophetic word (Jer. 16:14–15). Christians around the world have partnered with us as we

come alongside Israel to make this a reality. Jerusalem has pledged to bring the next group of 1,500 home in the coming months, but we need your help to make this happen. We are literally witnessing the conclusion of a chapter of Jewish exile. The Tribe of Dan is returning to Israel—and you can be part of that. We are calling on Bible-believing Christians around the world who love what God loves to take action and rescue the last remnants of Ethiopian Jews in exile. Then we may all praise the Lord that Dan is safely back, once again after 2,700 years, in the Land of Israel! Let's bring them home!

Blessings from Israel,
Rev. Peter Fast
CEO-elect



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