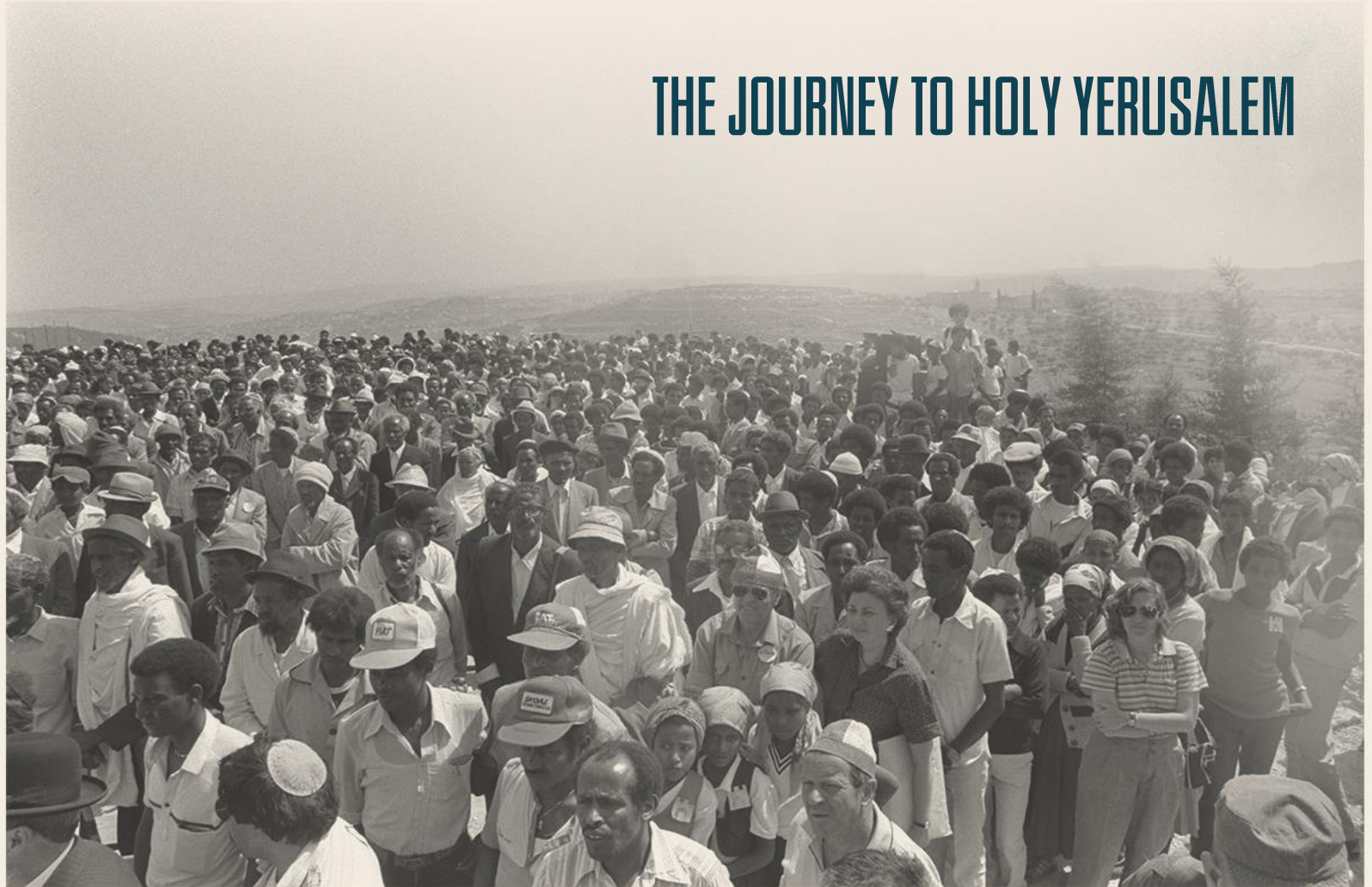


# THE RETURN HOME

THE STORY OF  
BETA ISRAEL.



## THE JOURNEY TO HOLY YERUSALEM

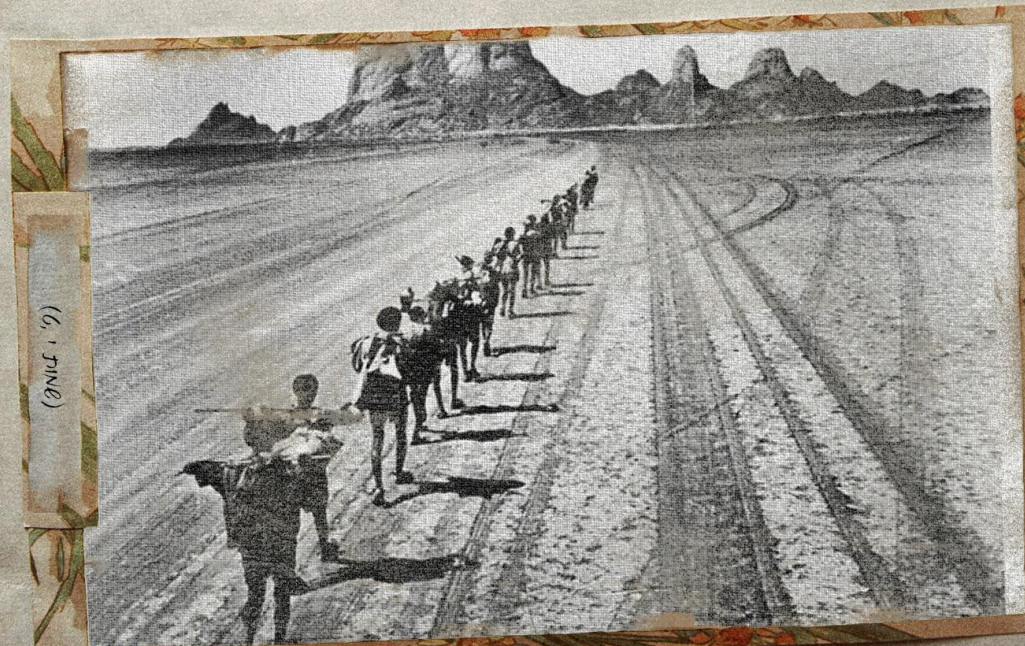


המרכז למורשת יהדות אתיופיה  
האוסף הלאומי ליהדות אתיופיה  
The Ethiopian Jewry Heritage Center



**"WITH OUR YOUTH AND WITH OUR  
ELDERS WE WILL GO, WITH OUR  
SONS AND WITH OUR DAUGHTERS"**

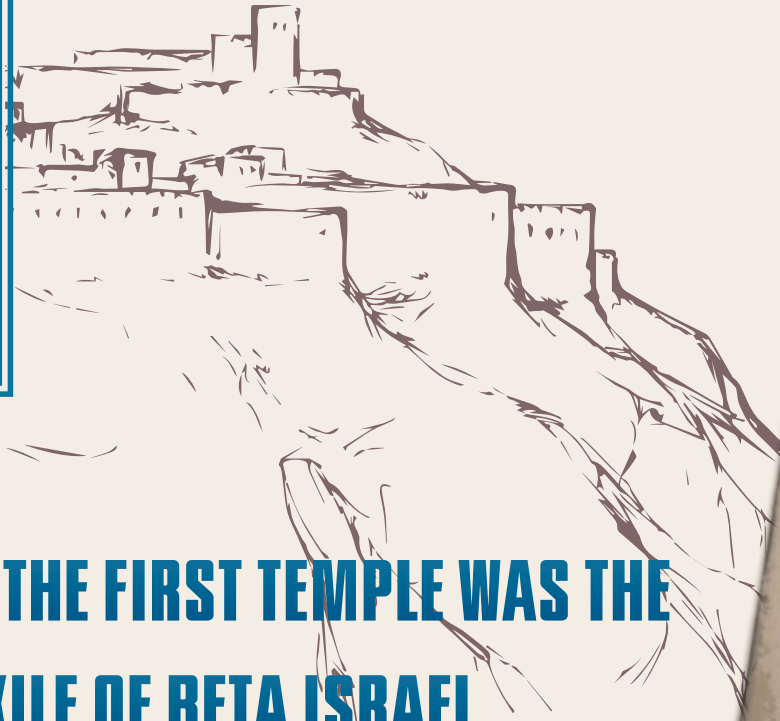
[EXODUS 10:9]







## CHAPTER 1



**THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE WAS THE  
BEGINNING OF THE EXILE OF BETA ISRAEL**



# THE JOURNEY SOUTH

FROM EGYPT, CROSSING THE MOUNTAINS  
OF KUSH (ETHIOPIA)  
[EXODUS 10:9]

We settled in several locations and  
maintained connections between  
the Jewish villages





# WE PRESERVED OUR JEWISH FAITH AND CREATED A SENSE OF BELONGING AND CONNECTION TO SOMETHING IMPORTANT AND UNIQUE

## THE KESS IS THE SPIRITUAL LEADER

of the family and the village.  
He guides the spiritual  
aspects of their lives.

## SHIMAGLOCH

The community leaders,  
both men and women, were  
involved in settling disputes,  
mediation, and making  
peace between spouses.

## SIGD

The community convenes once a year.  
The purpose of this day is personal  
and collective introspection. The first  
half is spent fasting, while the second  
half concludes with eating, drinking,  
festivities, social and family  
gatherings, and the blessing - Next  
year in *Yerusalem*.



## PLACE OF RESIDENCE

We chose to live in our own  
villages and we kept a distance  
from the non-Jewish population.  
The villages were always next to  
sources of water in order to  
enable us to keep the laws of  
ritual purity and impurity.

## NO DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR

All of Beta Israel must  
keep God's laws in order  
to be worthy of returning  
to Yerusalem.

## MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

In routine times, farming,  
celebrations, and mourning.  
The entire village comes  
together to help families,  
contributing manpower and  
resources. No family is left to  
manage on their own.





## CHAPTER 2

**WE ALWAYS KNEW THAT ETHIOPIA  
WAS A TEMPORARY HOME**

**OUR ETERNAL DREAM WAS ALWAYS  
TO RETURN HOME, TO *YERUSALEM***





# YERUSALEM ABOVE ALL

እየሩሳሌም ከሁሉም በፊት



ጅኛ ጅኛ እየሩሳሌም ጅኛ

(Jigna jigna Yerusalem Jigna)

Tell us, tell us about Yerusalem





# STORIES ABOUT *YERUSALEM*

PASSED DOWN FROM  
GENERATION TO  
GENERATION



## HOW WE IMAGINED IT...

In *Yerusalem*,  
there is eternal life

All of the people  
in *Yerusalem* are Jewish,  
righteous people, behaving  
and looking like angels

"What did they say  
in the news today  
about *Yerusalem*?"

When someone arrived in the village, and it  
was discovered that he had a connection  
to *Yerusalem*, the first thing they asked was  
about *Yerusalem*.

A land flowing with milk  
and honey (faucets that  
provide milk and honey)







## CHAPTER 3

# THE JOURNEY HOME



# THE ACTIONS OF THE FATHERS – AN EXAMPLE FOR THE SONS

AMONG THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS WHO PAVED THE WAY OVER THE PAST 150 YEARS

**LIQA KAHNET KESS  
BARUCH ADIHNENI**

{GONDAR DEMBIYA  
REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET KESS  
TIWABE MELAKU**

{GONDAR DEMBIYA  
REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS YETSEHAK  
EYASU**

{TIGRAY REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS KESETE  
MINASHE**

{WELKAIT REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS BIRHAN  
BAROK**

{GONDAR DEMBIYA  
REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS TAYE AREYENI**

{QWARA REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS MINASHE  
ZEMRU**

{WEGERA REGION}



**LIQA KAHNET  
KESS SEBEHO  
BARUCH**

{TIGRAY REGION}





# THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY – AND THE CONNECTION WITH THE JEWISH WORLD

1855

Daniel Ben Hananya and his son Moshe, members of Beta Israel, visit Eretz Israel for the first time and meet with the rabbis of *Yerusalem*.

1862

Attempted immigration journey of Abba Mahari, who led a large group of Jews from Beta Israel on foot toward *Yerusalem*. During the journey, Abba Mahari tried to miraculously, like Moses in the Bible. Many died on this journey, and the survivors returned to their homes. At this time, Herzl, the visionary of the Jewish state, was just two years old.

1867

Professor Joseph Halevy (a French Jew who was an Orientalist and expert in Semitic languages) was sent by Alliance Israélite Universelle to meet the Beta Israel.

1904

Dr. Yaakov Faitlovitch (a student of Professor Halevy) visits the Jews of Ethiopia, works with them, founds schools and trains the significant civic leaders of Beta Israel.



# SIGNIFICANT PERSONALITIES ON THE WAY TO REALIZING THE DREAM

**ABBA MAHARI**

**1862**

Abba Mahari was a Jewish spiritual figure who dedicated his life to preserving Judaism and protecting the Beta Israel community. He was known for his proficiency in Jewish law and his talent as a man of peace and healer of the sick.

In 1862, Abba Mahari became convinced that the time had come for God to gather the Jews from all corners of the earth and bring them back to the land of their forefathers (as described in the prophecies of Ezekiel).

1862 Many of the Beta Israel community left their villages and walked northeastward toward the shores of the Red Sea, with the goal of reaching *Yerusalem*. The attempt failed, and the goal was not obtained. Many of them perished on the way from hunger and diseases.

The Beta Israel community views Abba Mahari as one of its greatest leaders and the one who heralded the future immigration to Israel.



**PROFESSOR  
JOSEPH HALEVY**  
**1867**

A French Jew born in Turkey. A teacher, scholar, poet and linguist, professor at Sorbonne University in France, an Orientalist and expert on Semitic languages. He spoke both Ge'ez and Amharic.

Halevy made contact with the Beta Israel community and declared that they were an authentic Jewish community.

When he returned to Europe, he took a young man named Daniel Adhanan with him to receive an education outside of Ethiopia. Throughout the years, although he suffered from harassment, he continued to encourage others to actively support the Jews of Ethiopia.



**DR. YAAKOV  
FAITLOVITCH**  
**1904**

A student of Joseph Halevy.

Yaakov Faitlovitch's work encouraged and gave new hope to the Jews of Ethiopia.

He brought two students back to Europe with him (Gete Yirmiahu and Taamrat Emmanuel).

In 1926, he established a Jewish school in Addis Ababa, while simultaneously continuing to publicize the Ethiopian Jewish community around the world.





# SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO WERE IN CONTACT WITH JEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



**PROFESSOR  
TAMRAT  
EMMANUEL**

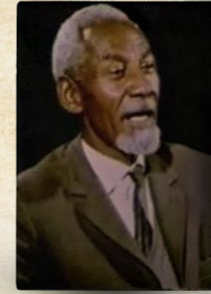
A public figure, professor, and intellectual. One of the most prominent figures to develop among the Beta Israel community in the new age, also nicknamed the "herald of the revival." Born in 1888 in the village of Azezo, near the city of Gondar. The village where Emmanuel was born converted to Christianity before his birth, and so he belonged to the Falash Mura. Between 1904 and 1908, he studied in Paris in a teaching seminary run by Alliance, followed by studies at a rabbinical school in Italy.

At the age of 27, he was ordained a rabbi and ritual slaughterer, and also became a professor; he returned to Ethiopia in 1920.



**YERMIYAS  
GETE**

Born in the village of Fenja in Dembiya in 1888. At age 17, he joined Dr. Faitlovitch and Taamrat Emmanuel to study in Yerusalem. From there, they continued to Paris and then to the rabbinical seminary in Florence, Italy. In 1931, he returned to Ethiopia and worked as a teacher at the Jewish school in Dembiya, as well as a traveling teacher throughout Beta Israel villages.



**YONA  
BOGALE**

He was an educator and the principal of the Beta Israel educational network in Ethiopia. With the encouragement and support of Dr. Faitlovitch and Professor Taamrat Emmanuel, he left to study in Israel and Europe for eight years, with the goal of learning how to serve as a civil leader for Ethiopian communities.

In 1931, he returned to Ethiopia to teach at the Hebrew school. He was the driving force behind the founding of 27 village schools, which employed teachers from Addis Ababa and graduates of Kfar Batya.

Later, he became an emissary for Beta Israel around the world, strengthening ties with Jewish community leaders internationally with his sights set on one goal – realizing Beta Israel's dream of returning home to Yerusalem.





# THE TORCH THAT ABBA MAHARI IGNITED

## INFLUENCED BETA ISRAEL FOR GENERATIONS

1956-1955

Two groups of young men and women from Beta Israel came to Israel and studied Judaism and Hebrew at Kfar Batya. Most of them returned to Ethiopia and became teachers in the community.

1960

Close diplomatic ties develop between Israel and Ethiopia, but Israel makes no impact on the condition of Beta Israel.

1960

Jewish young adults from Beta Israel smuggle themselves into Israel on freight ships carrying meat from Ethiopia. Most of them are expelled by the Interior Ministry upon arrival at the Eilat Port.

1970

**1972** - Founding of the Union of Ethiopian Jews

**1973** - Halakhic ruling of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef ZT"L

**1975** - The Knesset passes the Law of Return

**1977** - Begin orders:  
"Bring me my brothers,  
the Jews of Ethiopia"

**1977** - **122** of the first immigrants arrive (and a weapons deal between Israel and Ethiopia)





1979

## BETA ISRAEL DECIDE THAT THE TIME HAS COME THE SECOND "EXODUS FROM EGYPT"

They began with an exhausting and unbearable journey on foot, walking hundreds of kilometers toward Sudan.

During the day, they hid in forests, and at night, they continued walking, fearful that they would be caught by the Ethiopian authorities.

Anyone who was caught was jailed and tortured, and sometimes even sentenced to death.

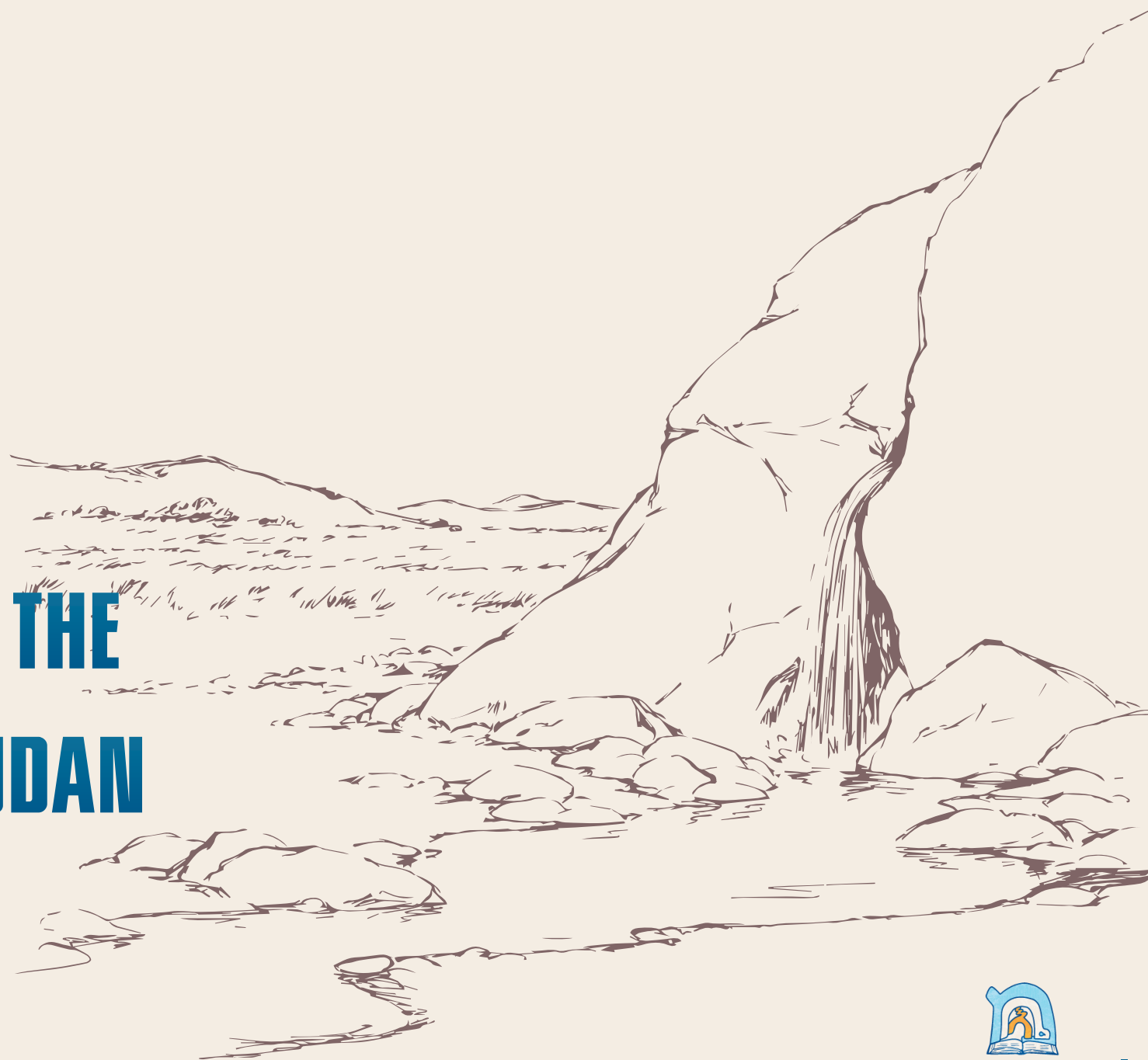
Aside from the difficult of walking such great distances, the people were harassed by robbers and rapists and suffered from thirst, hunger, and wild animals.





## CHAPTER 4

# A WAR OF SURVIVAL AT THE TRANSIT CAMPS IN SUDAN





## TRANSIT CAMPS IN SUDAN



Large numbers of refugees reached Sudan during these years.

**THE BETA ISRAEL COMMUNITY  
WAS DIFFERENT THAN EVERYONE ELSE**

**THEY WEREN'T FLEEING A DIFFICULT LIFE.**

**THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY HOME! TO YERUSALEM!**

## LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS WERE UNBEARABLE

The poor hygienic conditions (water that was undrinkable), the lack of food (if you were lucky, you received lentil soup and a piece of bread), diseases and plagues, the lack of proper medical care, the need to hide their Jewishness, and abuse by Sudanese soldiers.





”

One such memory remains etched in my mind since I was young. One night, a group of adults decided to escape from the Um Rakouba camp near the city of Qadarif. The Sudanese soldiers caught them and brought them early in the morning to the center of the tents with their hands tied, and woke everyone up to see.

**IN OUR GROUP, THERE WAS ONE WOMAN WITH LONG HAIR WHO HAD  
NEVER CUT IT IN HER LIFE, AND THEY CHOPPED IT OFF IN FRONT OF EVERYONE.  
SHE LOST HER MIND, RIGHT THEN AND THERE.  
I WILL NEVER FORGET THE SIGHT, FOR AS LONG AS I LIVE.**

”



# WAITING ANXIOUSLY AND SECRET OPERATIONS

1979

## The Mossad takes action

The Mossad was tasked with finding creative ways of taking the Ethiopian Jews out of Sudan. In order to execute their operation, they recruited a team of activists from within the community. Occasionally, after waiting anxiously for months and even years, secret nighttime operations were executed and the lucky few were flown to Israel.

The Mossad continued these operations until 1990, and this became an important chapter in the history of Beta Israel.

1979-1990

## Operation Brothers

Many operations to bring members of Beta Israel to Israel took place over the course of 11 years. The operation was based on commercial flights from Khartoum to Europe and Israel, and later, marine operations and flights on military cargo planes were also incorporated.

The most famous operation during this period was Operation Moses.





# DURING OPERATION BROTHERS, BETA ISRAEL JOURNEYED ON FOOT, BY CAR, BY SEA, AND BY AIR.





# OPERATION MOSES

Born in 1938 in the city of Liège, Belgium to parents who had immigrated from Poland. During World War II, he and his brother lived with Christian families, who saved their lives. During the seventies, he founded an airline called TEA - Trans European Airways.

Over the years, he became a trusted ally of the State of Israel. When the Mossad contacted him asking for help in flying the Jews of Ethiopia, he immediately agreed and provided the company's Boeing 707 aircraft and its pilots for the operation.

Over the course of a month, the planes made 35 flights and transported 7,000 new immigrants. After the operation was discovered, Gutelman received death threats for himself and his family, and following an Arab boycott, his airline went bankrupt.



GEORGE GUTELMAN

COLLABORATION BETWEEN: BETA ISRAEL,  
ISRAEL, AND AMERICA.

AAEJ – THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
ETHIOPIAN JEWS.

THE JEWS WERE TRANSFERRED ON CIVILIAN  
FLIGHTS OF AN AIRLINE CALLED TEA

FROM THE REFUGEE CAMP IN SUDAN TO  
BELGIUM, AND FROM THERE TO ISRAEL.





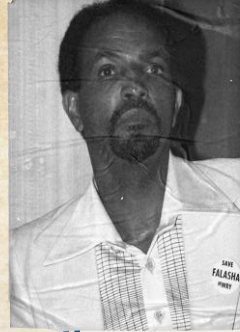
# PIONEERS BEFORE THE CAMP



**ZECARIAS  
YONA**

Born in 1949 in Addis Ababa. Raised on Zionist ideologies inspired by his father, Yona Bogale Z"L. While still a high school student in Ethiopia, he began his Zionist activism, and in 1971, he immigrated to Israel.

Between 1984 – 2010, he worked as a member of the Mossad in Ethiopia and Sudan in immigration operations and life-threatening missions that are still banned from publication.



**ZIMNA  
BIRHANE**

A pioneer of the struggle to bring the Beta Israel community to Israel and to open the gates of the country for their immigration. He was a member of the Mossad involved in intelligence and special roles, and he established the organizational infrastructure at the Sudanese refugee camps to bring the Jews of Ethiopia to Israel.



**FEREDE  
AKLUM**

He was a dedicated educator who became a community leader, a fierce fighter in the Mossad, and revolutionized Ethiopian Jewish immigration to Israel via Sudan. His impressive personality is a reflection of the heroic story of the entire Beta Israel community.



**BERUK  
TEGEGNE**

Beruk Tegegne fought tirelessly, against all odds, to bring Ethiopian Jewry to Israel. Thanks to his unique personality, he succeeded in gaining support in Israel and worldwide. His determination and strength of character are a rare source of inspiration.



# BETWEEN 1979-1990, BETWEEN 16,000-18,000 JEWS FROM BETA ISRAEL IMMIGRATED TO ISRAEL VIA SUDAN.

Approximately **4,000** elderly people, women, and children perished.

Most of them perished at the transit camps in Sudan, but also on the journey from Ethiopia to Sudan, due to thirst and hunger, diseases and plagues. They were not able to receive a proper Jewish burial, and in some cases, there was not even enough dirt around to cover their bodies.

**89** members of the community went missing and their fates are still unknown, even to this day.

Today, many families are still waiting in Ethiopia to immigrate to Israel and realize their dream.





# THE JOURNEY HOME IS NOT OVER YET



The Beta Israel that survived the immense challenges eventually reached *Yerusalem*, and those who perished are cherished in their hearts forever. The names of those who fell are etched on the monument erected at Mount Herzl.

**WE ALL CONTINUE TO ANTICIPATE THE DAY THAT THOSE WHO WENT MISSING WILL RETURN TO YERUSALEM, TO THE PROMISED LAND.**

”וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יוֹסִיף אֲדֹנָי שְׁנוֹת יְדוֹ  
לְקִנּוּת אֶת שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂאֵר מֵאֲשׁוּר  
וּמִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִמִּתְרוֹס וּמִכּוּשׁ וּמֵעִילָם  
וּמֵאֵי הַיָּם” (ישעיהו יא, יא).



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