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**AIRLIFT OF 14,000 ETHIOPIAN JEWS  
ACCOMPLISHED IN JUST 40 FLIGHTS**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 27 (JTA) -- In what appears to have been a brilliantly planned and flawlessly executed operation, 14,087 Ethiopian Jews, comprising over 3,000 families, were airlifted from Addis Ababa to Israel over the weekend within some 30 hours.

Code-named "Operation Solomon," the airlift was accomplished in a mere 40 flights, involving dozens of aircraft.

Twenty-four of the planes were Israeli air force jets, including Boeing 707s and Hercules transport planes. Ten El Al jumbo jets were used, and three flights used planes chartered from Ethiopia's state airline.

At one point, there were 25 aircraft in flight simultaneously.

The first flight reportedly arrived in Israel around 6 p.m. Friday local time. New immigrants, many of whom kissed the ground as they left the plane, were greeted by top officials of the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency.

During the complicated operation, 10 babies were born -- four or five of them in mid-flight. No deaths were reported, and only 195 were hospitalized upon arriving in Israel.

Israeli identification markings were painted over on all planes, which were adapted to seat far more than the usual number of passengers.

One El Al 747 jumbo jet set a world record by transporting 1,087 passengers, two-and-a-half times the normal capacity. The plane's manufacturer, Boeing Corp., found it hard to believe the number when informed of the record load.

But as one Egged bus driver remarked, as he carried a load of passengers to a reception center in northern Israel: "We could not have done it with burly Soviet immigrants, each with five or six suitcases. These thin and emaciated immigrants arrived with only the clothes on their backs."

**'We Could Have Taken Even More'**

Captain Avi Orr, head of the El Al's Operations Division, who piloted the 747, was full of praise for the speed and efficiency with which the El Al ground staff had effected the reconfiguration within a few hours of notification that Operation Solomon was on.

The plane was on the ground in Addis Ababa for only 36 minutes before taking off again.

"We could have taken even more, but there were no others left on the airfield at that moment," Orr said Sunday.

The jumbo jets were used for only one flight, as air force experts decided the Ethiopian airfield's only runway was unsuited to such large and heavily laden aircraft, in view of the congestion of Israeli and other aircraft rushing refugees and foreign residents out of the country.

Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak, the Israel Defense Force deputy chief of staff and military commander of the operation, arrived in Addis Ababa on the first plane to land, together with a group of IDF soldiers from an elite unit.

Their mission was to ensure the safety of the new immigrants, Israeli personnel and the aircraft themselves.

But the fighters were not needed on the airfield, the perimeter of which was guarded by Ethiopian troops. Instead, they helped carry babies and escort the elderly off the buses that had brought the masses from the Israeli Embassy compound to the waiting aircraft.

Another group of soldiers was made up of young Ethiopian recruits now serving in the IDF. They were called together on Thursday for what was ostensibly a day of relaxation. But once aboard military buses, they were told they were on their way to Addis Ababa, to serve as interpreters.

In Ethiopia, group leaders appointed by a central committee of local Jewish leaders were informed on Thursday night that they should begin rounding up early the next morning the 30 families on each of their prepared lists.

The Ethiopian Jews would then be herded to the Israeli Embassy compound, carrying only the clothes on their back, for transport to Israel in an airlift beginning Friday morning.

Numbers were pasted on the foreheads of all children to ensure they kept with their group and could be rejoined if lost. Miraculously, none were.

Ironically, Israelis were some of the last people on earth to learn of the airlift, because of strict censorship rules that had barred any mention of Ethiopian Jewry since the May 21 resignation of Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam.

The news blackout was imposed for fear that publicity from Israel might jeopardize the operation, just as published reports about Operation Moses halted the 1985 airlift of Ethiopian Jews from neighboring Sudan.

**NOW THAT THE EAGLE HAS LANDED,  
ISRAEL MUST ABSORB THE ETHIOPIANS**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 27 (JTA) -- Once the 40 flights of Operation Solomon had landed at Ben-Gurion Airport, the long and daunting process of absorbing the 14,087 Ethiopian Jews began.

Some 300 buses operated by the Jewish Agency for Israel transported the new immigrants directly to 45 hotels, guest houses and mobile homes throughout the country.

About 3,200 olim were directed to the south, some to Ashkelon and Eilat, most to mobile homes set up by the Jewish National Fund at various sites in the Negev, including kibbutzim and moshavim. Other immigrants were taken to facilities in Jerusalem, Tiberias, Nahariya and Haifa.

About two-thirds of the immigrants are children under the age of 18, and some of them will go to institutions operated by the Youth Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency.

Those organizations are able to accommodate as many as 2,000 of the newly arrived children, who will join the 3,400 Ethiopians already there.

Arnon Mantver, director general of the Jewish Agency's Immigration and Absorption Department, predicted that the Ethiopians' absorption will be difficult.

One of the primary problems facing the new immigrants is locating family members who arrived in Israel in either the earlier Operation Moses airlift or on flights since then.

The Israel Broadcasting authority, which

began operating a special new-immigrants radio station Sunday, broadcast special programs in Amharic, the language of the Ethiopians.

The names of all of Operation Solomon's newcomers were announced, with details of where they had been taken.

Some families had been divided as they arrived in Israel at different times. Social workers and government officials were kept busy Sunday trying to bring together the divided families.

**FOR VETERAN ISRAELIS: EXCITEMENT;  
FOR IMMIGRANTS: JOY AND CONFUSION**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 27 (JTA) -- One of this weekend's most moving pictures was a photograph of an Israel Defense Force corporal carrying a baby new immigrant in his arms. Both are black, both Ethiopians.

The soldier, a former immigrant, now a veteran Israeli, is all smiles as he takes part in the holy mission of absorption.

But the baby seems to be on the verge of tears, as if asking, "Now what?"

In the lobby of the Diplomat Hotel in Jerusalem, one of the temporary absorption centers housing the new Ethiopian immigrants, expressions on the faces of veteran Israelis dramatically contrasted with those on the faces of the new immigrants.

The veterans seemed more excited than the new Israelis, and kept telling each other how exciting it was to watch history in the making.

They poured into the five-star hotel carrying plastic bags loaded with used clothing and toys for the children. Some carried trays of food.

By noon on Sunday, Jewish Agency officials at the hotel had to ask Israel Radio to tell the Israelis to stop bringing gifts. There was simply no more room in the building to store all of the clothes.

Most of the adult immigrants at the Diplomat were silent. Not only because few can speak Hebrew, but also because by nature, Ethiopian Jews are soft-spoken and reserved.

Perhaps they were troubled by thoughts of the difficulties that lay ahead: reuniting families, finding housing and employment, and bridging the vast cultural gap.

But their jubilant, smiling children went from one visitor to another, shaking their hands.

Just a few knew enough Hebrew to hold a conversation. Those children who had been stuck in Addis Ababa waiting to leave for Israel had picked up their language skills at a school run by the Jewish Agency for Israel on the grounds of the Israeli Embassy.

The school had been the largest Jewish school in the world, said Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Diniz, who proudly added, "It is now closed forever."

"At long last, the Jews of Ethiopia are in Israel with their families," said Diniz after the last of the planes used for Operation Solomon had landed. "Another chapter in the history of Diaspora Jewry is closed."

But for those who were reunited with relatives they had not seen in too many years, the next chapter was just beginning.

Moshe Shete silently faced two of his sisters, whom he had not seen for the past eight years. The girls, exhausted and shocked by the dramatic trip, just sat crying and staring at their brother, unable to talk.

**EUPHORIA OVER AIRLIFT TEMPERED  
BY CONCERN FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND**  
By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, May 27 (JTA) -- The euphoria Israel is experiencing over the successful airlift of more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel has been tempered by the realization that as many as 2,000 Jews were left behind.

But they have not been forgotten.

It is believed that between 1,500 and 2,000 Jews living in remote areas of Ethiopia never reached the capital of Addis Ababa, where the Jews had congregated and were cared for by Israeli officials and Jewish relief workers from abroad until they could leave the country.

The Israeli ambassador, Asher Naim, and his two aides, who remain in Addis Ababa, reported that all is well with the Jews left behind, who have been assured of their personal safety by the Ethiopian rebels now storming the capital.

Officials of the Jewish Agency for Israel said that every effort will be made to extricate them and bring them to Israel.

But there is still the dilemma of an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 Ethiopian Jews who had converted to Christianity and were turned away at the gates of the Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa.

The Israeli rabbinical establishment, which in the past has offended Ethiopian Jews by claiming they must undergo ritual conversion to Judaism, had done an about-face and given the green light to include the converts in Operation Solomon. But Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir decided against it.

Shamir explained Sunday, "There was no way to add them on to the list of immigrants without jeopardizing the entire operation."

The converts, whose reasons for conversion varied, had joined the trek to the capital made over a year ago by Jews from Gondar province in the northwest. Although Jewish Agency officials in Addis Ababa did not give the converts immigrant cards, they provided them with medical aid and food packages.

The converts lived together with the Jews in the same poor conditions in the slums of Addis Ababa, hoping that they, too, could make aliyah.

**Converts Crying On The Runway**

A moving report was filed Monday by Tamar Golan, Ma'ariv's correspondent in the Ethiopian capital, which was ringed by rebel forces intent on taking the capital after some 30 years of civil war in that country.

She described how embassy officials had to turn back the thousands of converts, known as Faras Mora, who then threatened to break into the embassy compound. Embassy officials had no choice but to ask police to disperse the crowd.

In Israel, Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak, Israel Defense Force deputy chief of staff, who commanded Operation Solomon, recounted that just prior to takeoff from Addis Ababa, he spotted five converts lying on the runway, crying that they should be permitted to board the planes.

Shahak, who got off his plane at the pitiful sight, said, "I did not want the operation to end with such a tragic scene, and I gave orders to let them board the plane."

On Monday, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu said even though converts are no longer legally Jews, they should be brought to Israel.

Shamir has now instructed Uri Lubrani, who coordinated the diplomatic aspects of the operation, to review the converts' case.

**ISRAELI ENVOY REBUKES U.N. COUNCIL  
FOR ADOPTING ANTI-ISRAEL RESOLUTION**  
By Aliza Marcus

UNITED NATIONS, May 27 (JTA) -- Israel's ambassador to the United Nations had little more than contempt for a resolution adopted by the Security Council last Friday evening that criticizes Israel's recent deportation of four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

In a sharply worded rebuke to the Security Council, the ambassador, Yoram Aridor, charged that the resolution was being promoted at the expense of tragedies worldwide.

"The council is made to brush aside its pressing responsibilities in favor of the surrealistic agenda" of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Aridor told the 15-member body shortly before it voted unanimously to deplore Israel's actions.

"The council is being convened precipitously, at a critically sensitive juncture in Middle East diplomacy, at the urging of a discredited terrorist group, the ally of Saddam Hussein," Aridor said, referring to the PLO's weakened global standing after backing Iraq in the Persian Gulf War.

The resolution was introduced after the PLO sent a letter to Security Council members, criticizing the Israeli deportations and asking that actions be taken to stop them.

The four Palestinians were deported to southern Lebanon on May 18, after exhausting the legal appeal process. Israel had charged that the four were responsible for instigating the recent wave of violence against Israeli citizens.

Although they were not held directly responsible for the violence, Israel said the four were members of terrorist organizations and had previous convictions connected to violent attacks against civilians.

**U.S. Requested Wording**

The resolution, the third leveled against Israel in the past six months to have U.S. support, calls on Israel to halt further deportations and "to ensure the safe and immediate return of all those deported."

It brands the Israeli action a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which, it says, "is applicable to all Palestinians territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem."

The resolution also states that the deportations were carried out "to the detriment of efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Sources here said this wording was inserted at the request of the United States, which has grown increasingly impatient with Israeli actions it perceives to be counterproductive to the peace process.

Last week, Secretary of State James Baker criticized Israel for disrupting the peace process by continuing to build new settlements in the West Bank. He said he could think of no greater "obstacle to peace" than the settlements.

In his remarks to the council, Aridor referred to the deportations as a "moderate administrative measure" and said there was "no general policy of expulsions."

"They are carried out, if at all, only in extreme cases, when all other measures prove ineffective," the ambassador said.

"Israel, as opposed to some other states in the Middle East, has no intention of becoming a safe haven for terrorists," he added pointedly.

**ISRAEL EXPRESSES CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM  
FOR RELEASE OF POWs HELD IN LEBANON**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 27 (JTA) -- Government officials here are cautiously optimistic that Israelis held captive by an Islamic terrorist organization could be freed in a prisoner exchange.

But there is admittedly no proof that more than one of two Israelis reportedly held by the Lebanese group Hezbollah, or Party of God, is even alive. And there is no information about the fate of five Israelis captured by various other groups controlled by the fundamentalist group.

Defense Minister Moshe Arens, addressing a symposium on Iraq held Sunday at Haifa University, said there is room for a certain degree of optimism, when asked to comment on a report in Sunday's New York Times that Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah had reached agreement in principle over two Israelis held by that group.

The report, which came from Beirut, said Hezbollah and Israel reached agreement in principle Friday to exchange prisoners of war, and that such a move could also spell freedom for American and other Western hostages held in Lebanon.

The various factions that have taken credit for the kidnappings of six Americans, three Britons, two Germans and one Italian are believed to be controlled by Hezbollah.

Hopes for a prisoner exchange arose anew last week when Hezbollah's new leader, Sheikh Abbas Musawi, said the group is ready to free Israelis it holds if Arabs held in Israeli prisons are exchanged for them.

"In recent months, we have heard for the first time, here and there, talk of the possibility of a readiness to arrive at an arrangement with us," Arens said Sunday. "We are willing to do a lot to achieve this."

Defense Ministry spokesman Danny Navch said later, "First we must get some sign of life" from the Israeli prisoners.

**Willing To Release Sheikh**

Given such encouragement, Israel would be willing to negotiate an exchange involving all Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, including the release of Sheikh Abdel Karim Obeid, a Hezbollah spiritual leader whom Israeli commandos seized from his home in southern Lebanon in July 1989 and spirited to Israel.

The Times report said that four Israelis who were captured during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 were killed and that the Palestine Liberation Organization holds their bodies.

It also said that two Israelis were captured in 1986 by Hezbollah in the southern Lebanon security zone and that one of the two was seriously wounded and is believed to have died.

Defense Ministry sources point out that Hezbollah, in hints dropped about a possible exchange, has referred only to two Israelis held by the group, and has made no mention of five Israelis captured by other groups.

A lawyer serving Arens in matters of prisoner exchanges said Monday that Israel would like to have precise information about the prisoners referred to in the Times report.

"For the time being, we have had no sign of life and no proof," the attorney, Orri Slonim, said in an Israel Radio interview.

He declined to comment directly on the Times report and would not confirm any agreement between Israel and Hezbollah.

**JEWS WHO HID DURING HOLOCAUST  
GATHER TO RELIVE THEIR MEMORIES**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, May 27 (JTA) -- On the 41st anniversary of her arrival in the United States, Marguerite Mishkin peered at a 44-year-old photograph tacked to the bulletin board of a hotel lobby here, and was shocked to see a face that looked like her own.

The photo, posted at a conference here of people who as children were hidden by Gentiles during the Holocaust, showed a group of Jewish children at an orphanage, like the one in Brussels that Mishkin was taken to after the war.

But Mishkin wasn't completely sure until Tandy Stewart, who put up the photo, produced a card signed by Mishkin and her older sister.

A group of Jewish girls at the orphanage, all of whom had lost their parents during the war, had signed the card just before Stewart, then known as Annie Klein, left to join the family in Pittsburgh that was to adopt her.

The Mishkin girls, who were hidden during the war by a Catholic family near Antwerp, were later adopted by a family in Chicago.

The reunion was one of many such encounters that took place here Sunday and Monday at the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II.

The exchanges of stories and mementoes did more than revive long-buried memories. They proved the fact that these survivors, who often knew little or nothing of their own families, had indeed had childhoods of their own. It proved, in fact, that they existed.

It was an awakening for people who had been dogged by a sense of having missed out on the first parts of their lives.

"It makes it real," said Mishkin, 50, who was taken in by a Catholic family before her first birthday and never knew any of her family outside of her sister.

**'I've Never Felt That I Belonged'**

Mishkin had not anticipated running into this human link to her past.

After more than 40 years, the childhood friends discovered tremendous similarities in their lives. Both Mishkin, a Chicago high school teacher, and Stewart, who lives in Hillsdale, N.J., lost their parents at Auschwitz.

"I had no idea how overwhelmed I'd be," said Mishkin. "I've never felt that I belonged. I felt utterly alone, and now I've found somebody out there who could almost be my twin!"

The gathering, a joint effort of the Hidden Child Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, brought together some 1,600 child survivors and their spouses, along with many of their Christian rescuers.

One of these survivors, Abraham Foxman, who is now national director of the ADL, said there are an estimated 10,000 to 100,000 hidden children throughout the world.

Many of those children protected by Gentiles during the Holocaust will never know their true identities, because no family members survived the war. And many of the Christians who protected these children were and are still afraid to admit that they harbored Jews.

Some Jewish child survivors, particularly in Eastern Europe, have in fact not gone public with their true identities. There, it could be dangerous to be a Jew, Foxman said.

Foxman hopes that one result of this gathering will be a new ability for those hidden in their past to come out into the open. "Perhaps if this story is told, if it is put in a positive light," it will "help bring some of them out of hiding," he said.

Most of those attending the New York gathering were confronting their memories for the very first time, according to Foxman.

**'Realized It's All Right To Be Alive'**

Among those was Jacqueline Sheirr, who stood in front of the bulletin boards scanning hundreds of scraps of paper and photographs. She saw the names of people alive and long dead, coming from all over Europe.

She searched in vain for some recognizable name, perhaps the name of the Catholic boarding school near Paris where she had been sent to survive the war. Unable to find anything that would bring recognition, she turned away in tears.

"The loneliness never, never goes away," she said, crying.

Sheirr, who saw her parents and grandparents for the last time as she watched the Gestapo round them up, was hidden by a Christian woman who then took the young girl to each of the homes where Sheirr's mother had left some of the family's possessions, threatening to turn over the 10-year-old girl to the Gestapo if the items were not given to her.

The woman, who had succeeded in taking of the family's possessions, then sent her to a boarding school, bringing her back to her home on school vacations only to cook and clean.

Since she was brought to the United States by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in 1947, Sheirr has not had much contact with other survivors or the French Jewish community.

She was not completely sure why she decided to spend her day off from her job as an assistant manager at a Manhattan clothing boutique attending the conference.

"I don't know what I came to look for," she said. "There are things I have totally blocked out. But after 50 years, I realized it's all right to be alive."

**CROWD OF 20,000 SERENADES ABIE NATHAN  
By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, May 27 (JTA) -- An estimated 20,000 people attended a "Serenade to Abie Nathan" on Sunday night, to show support for the peace activist, who has been on a hunger strike for the past four weeks to protest an Israeli law that prohibits contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Popular performers were joined by the crowd in the serenade, which was held around a tent which Nathan has erected in Malchei Yisrael Square, in front of the Tel Aviv municipality building. Nathan, who operates the Voice of Peace radio station from a ship moored outside Israeli territorial waters, is receiving supporters daily in the tent.

Among those who came to wish him well were Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat, a maverick Likud politician who has urged the government to amend the law prohibiting contact with the PLO.

Nathan, who has been warned by doctors that he is endangering his life, has lost about 37 pounds since he began the hunger strike April 29. But he insists on drinking only water and fruit juice and takes no solid food.