

## **Israel and Ethiopia: From a Special to a Pragmatic Relationship**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

From the mid-1950s to 1967, Israel enjoyed very good relations with numerous countries throughout Subsaharan Africa. Africa provided fertile ground for economic and military cooperation that brought political dividends to Israel. The Jewish state sought diplomatic support and/or strategic advantage in its ongoing conflict with its Arab neighbors, while the African states, almost all newly independent, sought military and economic assistance and technological know-how. During these years, Egypt was Israel's only rival for influence on the African continent. As a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel occupied Egypt's Sinai peninsula, an action which damaged the Jewish state's relations with the countries of Subsaharan Africa, but with the exception of Guinea, did not result in the latter's severing of diplomatic ties.

However, it was the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the subsequent rise in the price of oil, a commodity in large supply in certain parts of the Arab world, that had the greatest impact on Israel's relations with Subsaharan Africa. In a show of Third World solidarity, 20 African countries, including Ethiopia, joined 8 others which had done so beginning in early 1972 and severed formal ties with the Jewish state between 8 October and 12 November 1973.<sup>1</sup> Israel, however, was able to maintain some low-key relations.<sup>2</sup> (Mauritius belatedly joined its African brethren in 1976, but Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland kept company with South Africa in maintaining formal ties with Israel.)

During the 1980s, following Egypt's conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel and the latter's withdrawal from the Sinai, some African states began to restore formal relations with the Jewish state. This process accelerated during the latter part of the decade and has continued into the 1990s. The dominant factors contributing to this development have been security and food production, two areas in which Israel has a great amount of expertise. In addition, with the end of the Cold War, some countries have seen relations with the Jewish state as a means to improving ties with the United States.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ethiopia's restoration of formal relations, after sixteen years, with Israel in November 1989 involved all of the above considerations.

This article focuses on Israeli-Ethiopian relations which were first established in 1956. Israel has always regarded Ethiopia as a very important country both politically and geostrategically. The Red Sea is the Jewish state's maritime link with most of the eastern hemisphere and, until Eritrea's independence in May 1993,

Ethiopia controlled the only coastline on that waterway that was not part of an Arab or Somali state. Moreover, prior to Operation MOSES on 1984-85, the first of two major airlifts of Ethiopian Jewry – the other being Operation SOLOMON of 1991 – Ethiopia had the largest Jewish community in Subsaharan Africa, except for South Africa.<sup>4</sup> Ethiopia was the first country on the African continent, save for South Africa, to set up diplomatic ties with Israel. Both Emperor Haile Selassie (overthrown in 1974), who had an affinity with the Jewish state and regarded it as a key pro-Western ally in the Cold War politics of the region, and the Marxist Mengistu Haile Mariam (overthrown in 1991) were interested in Israel's common concern in countering the political influence and/or military power of Ethiopia's Arab League neighbors, who, with the exceptions of Libya and South Yemen, gave continued support to the Eritreans in their fight for independence and to Somalia over its claim to the Ogaden region. Despite their political differences, and the fact that Haile Selassie was Amhara<sup>5</sup> – Ethiopia's second largest, but most politically dominant ethnic group under Imperial rule since the reign of Menelik II (1889-1913), who had established the country's modern (and present-day) borders<sup>6</sup> – while Mengistu was regarded by the Amhara to be a *baria* (“black-skinned slave from the deep south”),<sup>7</sup> both leaders and their regimes were just as strongly committed to maintaining national unity and territorial integrity.<sup>8</sup> However, Eritrea did gain its independence in 1993, and the present-day government of Meles Zenawi, himself a Tigrayan,<sup>9</sup> which gave its blessing to that event, is determined to keep the remainder of Ethiopia intact. Moreover, it continues to look toward Israel – as well as other countries – for assistance, while Eritrea does the same.

The thesis of this article is quite simply that because of geographical location, some similar political objectives, and the exchange of Israeli military and economic assistance and technological expertise for strategic and/or diplomatic benefits, Israel and Ethiopia have been drawn toward cooperation. Nonetheless, these ties have been affected by developments in the Cold War and an Ethiopian concern not to appear out of step politically with the general mood of its African brethren as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been based in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, since 1963. Indeed, it was the Cold War environment in the Middle East around the time of the 1956 Suez crisis and war – especially Egypt's pan-Arabism and its acquisition of military equipment and munitions from the Soviet bloc – that helped to cement Israeli-Ethiopian ties into a special relationship. And the US-Soviet rivalry in Africa during the 1970s – when Ethiopia and Somalia acquired each other's previous superpower benefactor – that unsettled those relations; they were no longer special, but simply pragmatic. In the post-Cold War era, Israel's relations with Ethiopia – and Eritrea – are now stable but still not special.

## ISRAEL AND IMPERIAL ETHIOPIA

In a book published in 1974, an expert on Ethiopian affairs presented the following description of Haile Selassie's personality:

[A]fter more than fifty years of rule, [the Emperor] remains a mystery to his subjects. Little is ever known about his thoughts, which apparently are shared with no one. Rumours about the Emperor's role, motivation, and interest in decisions abound, but facts about such matters are precious few.<sup>10</sup>

One person who knew Haile Selassie well was American John H. Spencer, who served as a legal and foreign affairs adviser to the Ethiopian government from 1936-74. According to him, the Emperor's "interest in foreign affairs and direct foreign contact was an obsession."<sup>11</sup> However, he had little patience for details, which he left to his foreign ministers; the most influential of whom was Aklilu Habte Wold, who was a strong voice in foreign affairs even when he did not hold that post.<sup>12</sup>

From the time of Ethiopia's liberation from Italian control in 1941, until the overthrow of Mengistu, the Ethiopian government had four major foreign policy objectives – three of which still apply today – that were established by Haile Selassie. First was to have a major power as a provider of military and economic assistance; second was to minimize the effects of Arab nationalism or Islamic unity as they concerned Ethiopia's national integrity; next was to promote pan-Africanism, which is opposed to ethnic separatism; and finally, to have or maintain a territorial outlet to the sea – something which came to an end with Eritrean independence.<sup>13</sup> Besides the issues of Eritrea – whose population is evenly split between Christians and Muslims – and the Ogaden, which is claimed by Somalia, a member of the Arab League since 1974, it should be noted that Ethiopia, and especially its Christian leadership and population, has had a historical "image of itself ... [as] a beleaguered country surrounded mostly by hostile or potentially hostile countries with no natural friends in its immediate vicinity."<sup>14</sup> (In addition, both its Christian and Muslim populations respectively are approximately 40% of the country's total.) Such an attitude was expressed by Haile Selassie to Shimon Peres when the then Israeli Deputy Minister of Defense visited Addis Ababa in 1963:

The combined ages of [Israeli Prime Minister] Ben-Gurion [77] and myself [said the Emperor] add up to 148 years of experience in facing danger. We must always view our dangers in a cold and realistic light – and devise the means to overcome them with the wisdom born of experience.

Haile Selassie then, according to Peres, "quoted an old Ethiopian saying": "Troubles are like wild oats. They could spring up in the most unexpected places. We must study the ground carefully – and till it together."<sup>15</sup> Haile Selassie had indeed seen his share of "danger," which the Israelis could appreciate, but the affinity which the Emperor had for the Jewish state was also based on an Ethiopian view of history.

Haile Selassie called himself the “Lion of Judah,” for he accepted and promoted the idea that the Ethiopian Solomonic ruling dynasty established in 1270 A.D., of which he was the last, had its roots with the birth of Menelik I, who was said to be the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.<sup>16</sup> While the Emperor had had Palestinian Jewry employed in his administration when he was restored to the throne by the British in 1941,<sup>17</sup> his country cast one of ten abstentions (along with the British) in the United Nations General Assembly vote on November 1947, on the portioning of Palestine, which sanctioned the establishment of the state of Israel; this was done, according to Spencer, so as “to avoid giving offense [to the Islamic states, which were] ... hostile to Ethiopia on the Eritrean issue.”<sup>18</sup> At the time, those countries represented about one-eighth of the membership of the General Assembly. By the mid-1950s, with Arab nationalism and its foremost advocate, Egypt’s President Gamal Abd al-Nasser, gaining popularity, however, Ethiopia began to see the benefits of having ties with Israel.

In 1955, Haile Selassie “put out feelers” about establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>19</sup> During that year, an Israeli delegation attended the Emperor’s Silver Jubilee, but it was not until just after the 1956 Suez War, in which Israel, allied with Great Britain and France, defeated Egypt, that Ethiopia and the Jewish state set up formal ties. Nasser’s interest in the Horn of Africa remained. While Haile Selassie had cordial relations with the Egyptian leader, the latter’s pan-Arabist philosophy gave encouragement to Eritrean Muslim separatists; many of whom – along with Eritrean Christians who were “frustrated by Ethiopian methods of doing away with their autonomy” – went into exile in Cairo and by 1958 had established a military training camp near Alexandria.<sup>20</sup>

As mentioned earlier, two of the most important foreign policy concerns of Ethiopia following its liberation in the midst of the Second World War were the respective political fates of Eritrea and Somalia; both of which were occupied by Italy – the latter only in part as Great Britain and France took smaller shares of Somali territory – during the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century. Initially, Ethiopia claimed both Eritrea and Somalia, but soon realized there was no hope of the United Nations accepting its political presence in the latter.<sup>21</sup> While Ethiopia was to gain hold over Eritrea – in 1952, that region joined its larger neighbour in a federation in which it became only nominally autonomous and, ten years later, it was formally annexed<sup>22</sup> – Italy returned to Somalia to administer its former colony as a trusteeship from 1950-60, while the Ethiopian-Somali border remained, as it does today, undefined.<sup>23</sup> (When Somalia became an independent state in 1960, it comprised the former British and Italian possessions, while it continued to covet, in addition to the Ogaden, French Somaliland [Djibouti] and a portion of Kenya.)<sup>24</sup>

In the Cold War environment of the 1950s, the Ethiopians had Western political support for the consolidation of their control over Eritrea, which given its location on the Red Sea was of strategic interest to the Americans. Early in the decade when the United States still looked toward Egypt becoming a player in

Western defense plans in the Middle East, Haile Selassie lobbied for American military and economic assistance. In 1950, he committed 5,000 Ethiopian troops to the UN military effort in Korea, that were attached to the Seventh Division of the US Army.<sup>25</sup> And three years later, he signed an agreement with the United States formalizing the latter's use of military facilities in Asmara – the Kagnev Station for communications – and Massawa, Eritrea. In return, over the years between 1953 and 1976, Ethiopia received \$279 million in military aid and \$350 million in economic assistance, accounting in total American aid to Africa for the time period, for more than one-half of the former and one-fifth of the latter.<sup>26</sup> Under Haile Selassie's rule, relations with Israel and that country's assistance complemented the above ties with the United States, who, by the time of the Suez crisis in 1956, "finally provided Ethiopia with the type, if not the amount, of American assistance the emperor really wanted."<sup>27</sup>

When Israel and Ethiopia established diplomatic relations following the Suez War of 1956, they set up consulates in Addis Ababa and Jerusalem, respectively. By 1963, the Jewish state upgraded its diplomatic mission to an embassy,<sup>28</sup> while the Ethiopians preferred to maintain a lower profile in official relations. Although Ethiopia cooperated with Israel in security matters in the Horn of Africa, especially after the Eritrean struggle for independence became an armed conflict in 1961, Egypt and most Arab states "avoided giving the rebels significant support" until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, at international forums the Ethiopians maintained a somewhat neutral position on issues relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>30</sup> While Haile Selassie wished to avoid diplomatic confrontations, Ethiopia's security was his overriding concern.

In April 1957, Haile Selassie met in Cairo with Nasser and Sudan's Prime Minister Abdallah Khalil to discuss African affairs. At the time, Nasser was unsuccessful in trying to persuade the Ethiopian and Sudanese leaders to have their countries join a military alliance with Egypt.<sup>31</sup> His failure is not surprising given the Egyptian president's support for Eritrean and Somali nationalism and the fact that secret contacts had taken place between Sudanese and Israeli politicians and government officials from 1954 to 1958; indeed, Khalil, of the pro-Western Umma Party – who was overthrown in an army coup in November 1958, which brought to power a government that improved relations with Egypt – reportedly met Israel's then Foreign Minister Golda Meir in Paris in August 1957.<sup>32</sup> As far as Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was concerned, Sudan and Ethiopia were prime candidates for a cooperative arrangement, which came to be known as the "Periphery Alliance," to counter both Nasser's pan-Arabist and Soviet influence in the Middle East.

On 24 July 1958 – just days after the overthrow of the pro-Western Hashemite regime in Iraq, and the landing of American troops in Lebanon – the Israeli leader described such plans in a letter to President Eisenhower:

Our object is the creation of a group of countries, not necessarily in formal and public alliance, which by mutual assistance and joint

efforts, in political, economic and other fields, will be able to stand up steadfastly against Soviet expansion through Nasser ... [W]e have begun to strengthen our links with four neighbouring countries on the outer ring of the Middle East – Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia and Turkey. Ben-Gurion, who was especially concerned by the recent establishment of the United Arab Republic, an Egyptian-Syrian union that would last until 1961, continued:

As for Ethiopia, in particular, the prime minister maintained that such measures were needed as Nasser was “actively stirring up agitation and discontent” in Eritrea, Djibouti, both Somalilands (British and Italian) and “amongst” the Muslim population in “Christian” Ethiopia. The Israeli leader concluded with regard to the “Periphery Alliance”:

I do not speak of a far-off vision .... But two things are necessary: United States support – political, financial and moral; and the inculcation of a feeling in Iran, Turkey, Sudan and Ethiopia that our efforts in this direction enjoy the support of the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Within weeks, Ben-Gurion received a favorable reply from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and then made a secret trip to Turkey for consultations. According to the Israeli leader’s official biographer, Michael Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion “toy[ed] with the idea of paying a similar clandestine visit” to Ethiopia, but decided not to do so. Nevertheless, Israel concluded a “secret pact” with Ethiopia, Turkey and Iran sometime during the latter part of 1958.<sup>34</sup>

In December 1960, when Haile Selassie was touring Brazil, both the United States and Israel helped the Emperor establish contact with political and military allies who suppressed a coup which had been organized by two brothers – one the commander of the Imperial Guard and the other a governor of a subprovince – who sought modernization and a constitutional monarchy.<sup>35</sup> All total, according to General Matityahu Peled, who was formerly with the General Staff of Israel’s Defense Force (IDF), Israeli advisers to the Ethiopian secret police “saved Haile Selassie three times from coup attempts” prior to Ethiopia’s 1974 revolution which brought the military to power.<sup>36</sup> For a decade and a half, at least, in the above regard the “Periphery Alliance” was very successful. But Haile Selassie saw Israel as a valuable ally for other reasons as well.

In the words of one reporter from the *Washington Post*, in mid-1967:

They [the Ethiopians] believe that for the West, as well as for themselves, the threat to the empire [posed by Eritrean nationalism] should be viewed as part of a major cold war power play .... In this they are joined and even encouraged by Israel which sees the Eritrean problem and pressures on the empire as part of its own battle with Egypt.<sup>37</sup>

To this assessment, one might also add Somali nationalism, though for the Israelis, Ogaden did not have the strategic value of Eritrea. Israel wanted to see Ethiopia

remain united and militarily strong.<sup>38</sup> While Somalia's military posed no serious problem to Imperial Ethiopia,<sup>39</sup> Egypt was nonetheless that country's main source of equipment and training at least until 1963, when the Soviet Union took on that role. Furthermore, Somali leaders had identified themselves politically with Egypt and the Arab world since the 1950s.<sup>40</sup> And along with Mauritania, which also received its independence in 1960, Somalia was the only non-Arab League member in Africa not to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. (It should be noted that the two African countries eventually joined the Arab League just after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.) In June 1967, Somalia tried unsuccessfully to get the OAU Council of Ministers to meet in an emergency session on the matter of Israel's military action against Egypt, something which the latter thought politically unwise to pursue at the time. At the UN, Subsaharan African countries still were quite supportive of the Jewish state.<sup>41</sup> For the time being, Israel's efforts in Africa over the past decade had paid off politically.

To the Israelis, Africa was seen as a means of "jumping over the Arab fence."<sup>42</sup> But it was Foreign Minister Golda Meir and Shimon Peres – the "principle architect" of Israel's military aid policy toward the Third World – who showed the greatest enthusiasm within the Jewish state's leadership for developing relations with the African states. In one speech to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in 1960, Meir asserted: "Our aid to the new countries is not a matter of philanthropy. We are no less in need of ... [their] fraternity and friendship ... than they are our assistance." And on another occasion before that assembly later that same year, she stated: "Now it is possible to say that Israel has broken through the political siege ... and out onto the international scene."<sup>43</sup> Meir, whose first trip to Africa was in 1958, visited Ethiopia four years later, and when African heads of state held a conference in Addis Ababa in 1963, they refused Nasser's call for the adoption of an anti-Israel resolution.<sup>44</sup> As for Peres, in a 1966 interview he presented a list of foreign policy goals that he hoped would be accomplished over the next decade; the first of which was:

To build a 'second Egypt' in Africa, that is, to help convert Ethiopia's economic and military strength into a counter-force to Egypt, thereby giving Africans another focus.<sup>45</sup>

Just three years later (1969), the Israelis suggested to the Ethiopians that the "Periphery Alliance" be formalized with a treaty. However, as one very knowledgeable observer, Haggai Erlich, notes: "Officially, the Ethiopians shelved the idea, but in practice relations had already reached this level."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, even by late 1963, a correspondent for the Israeli news magazine *New Outlook* remarked: "Israel maintains relations with many countries in Africa, but there is no doubt that her ties with Ethiopia are of a special kind."<sup>47</sup> One indicator of this was that Israel's military mission in Ethiopia, which, in 1966, numbered about 100, was second only to that of the United States' in size.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Ethiopia received the largest amount of Israeli aid – both military and civilian – of any country in Africa.<sup>49</sup>

By the late 1950s, Israel began technical assistance programs for Ethiopia that included agricultural, medical and public works projects as well as training for service industries; they also organized exchanges of university professors and students. (These programs were quite popular.)<sup>50</sup> Earlier, in 1952, civilian trade ties were established and Ethiopia remained, over the years, one of Israel's most important trading partners on the African continent.<sup>51</sup> The most significant item that the Israelis purchased from Ethiopia during the 1950s and 1960s was beef.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, those commercial activities also provided a convenient front for intelligence operations. In that regard, the director of one Israeli company that conducted business in Imperial Ethiopia states:

Incoda [, which exported Ethiopian beef,] was a station for Israeli intelligence in Africa. We had a huge arms cache. It was there when we arrived .... There was a military delegation [in Ethiopia], and they did their correspondence through us. With Israeli spies in Arab countries as well. We were only a cover in Mossad deals.<sup>53</sup>

Israel's "elaborate intelligence network" had a "better exchange system with Ethiopian security than the CIA, which seemed to have no interest with what was going on in Ethiopia and sent few informative reports back to Washington."<sup>54</sup> In addition, Addis Ababa reportedly became the "nerve center" of Israeli covert political action elsewhere on the African continent.<sup>55</sup> Yet the most immediate security concern for both the Israelis and Ethiopians remained the Eritrean problem.

Israel had a dozen or more advisers on counterinsurgency based in Eritrea. They organized, trained and supplied Ethiopian commandos and frontier guardsmen, whose members numbered 3,200 and 1,200, respectively, by 1974.<sup>56</sup> Also, the Israelis were involved when the Eritrean conflict spilled over the border into Sudan. When civilian government returned to Ethiopia's neighbor following the overthrow of General Ibrahim Abboud in 1964, the Eritreans who had their political and military command based in Sudan, were allowed a "free run." The Ethiopians retaliated by stepping up assistance to the Christian separatist *Anya Nya* movement in southern Sudan. In the process the Israelis provided a small amount of arms and communications equipment. Interestingly, on the eve of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Ethiopia and Sudan concentrated armed forces along their common border.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to Sudan, Syria, Iraq, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Libya and Marxist South Yemen provided arms and training for the Eritrean movement. However, Egypt which, from 1962-67, sent as many as 70,000 troops to support the republican regime in Yemen – just across the Red Sea from Eritrea – was unable to provide much in direct assistance to the Eritreans. As long as Asrate Kassa, the pro-Israeli governor of Eritrea from 1964-70, had the ear of Haile Selassie, the Jewish state was in a strong position to counter the moves of the Arabs. However, by 1972, the Emperor, relying on the advice of Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold, who felt that diplomacy was a better avenue in dealing with the Eritrean movement's Arab supporters, helped bring an end to Sudan's civil war.<sup>58</sup>

By 1973, Ethiopia joined some 28 other African states and severed diplomatic relations with Israel.

During 1973, the Arab world encouraged Ethiopia to break ties with Israel. Libya and Tunisia called for the Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to be moved from Addis Ababa, while Egypt's President Anwar Sadat offered to use his influence to persuade Eritrea's Arab supporters to halt aid to the movement.<sup>59</sup> At a foreign ministers' conference of the OAU in March 1973, the Libyan delegate stated the following:

There are those among us who support Zionists and colonialists and those who allow Israel to deal with South Africa – I mean Ethiopia. Those who assist our enemies are the same as our enemies.<sup>60</sup>

Haile Selassie replied that while Ethiopia had relations with Israel, it did not support the latter's occupation of Arab lands. Many other African countries supported the Emperor's position. Indeed, one prominent leader, President Leopold Senghor of Senegal – who had shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem as the head of an OAU peace mission during late 1971<sup>61</sup> – had this to say just months earlier:

I believe Israeli penetration in Africa proved very effective, in general, because the Israelis are cultured, technically efficient and methodical. If it had not been for the six-day war [in 1967], the Israelis would have increased their influence further .... The war stopped the expansion of Israeli cooperation with Africa. If this trend is to be reversed, the Israeli-Egyptian problem must first be solved.<sup>62</sup>

However, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, at least temporarily, further complicated the "Israel-Egyptian problem," and even those countries which previously had opposed Arab pressure, adopted a position of African solidarity in support of the Egyptians.

On 23 October 1973, the Ethiopian government issued a communique, a part of which read:

Consistent with her stand on opposing territorial annexation, Ethiopia has done her best to effect the withdrawal of Israel from the territories of Egypt, Jordan and Syria which she occupied in 1967 .... Because Israel has failed to withdraw from the occupied territories, Ethiopia has decided to sever diplomatic relations with Israel until such time that Israel withdraws from the occupied territories.<sup>63</sup>

It became the eighteenth country in Africa to take such action, and the ninth to do so since the war began. Of the announcements of all the states that broke relations with Israel, Ethiopia's came as the "biggest shock" to the Jewish state.<sup>64</sup> After all, in March 1973, at the Fourth Conference of Foreign Ministers of Islamic Countries in Benghazi, a resolution was adopted supporting Eritrea's "legitimate struggle." The Ethiopian government was quick to issue a statement which included the following:

The Conference ... by expressing support for these bandits, has trampled underfoot [some] ... cardinal principles of international relations, such as non-interference in the internal relations of other nations and ... coexistence .... The Conference has done a disservice to Africa by advocating dismemberment of an African state at a time when Africa is striving for unity of action and purpose.<sup>65</sup>

In breaking off relations with Israel, Ethiopia did not necessarily choose friendship with the Arabs, but rather African unity over, what it had felt earlier to be, its common interests with the Jewish state. However, Israel and Ethiopia would be drawn together again.

### ISRAEL AND MARXIST ETHIOPIA

With the overthrow of Haile Selassie in September 1974 by the military – whose leadership was known as the *Derg* – and with the intensification of the Eritrean war in early 1975, the Ethiopians once again turned to Israel for assistance, albeit for a brief time. The composition and politics of the *Derg* became increasingly radicalized following their seizure of power. By February 1977, Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged as the undisputed leader of the *Derg* and shortly thereafter established close ties with the Soviet bloc. Indeed, the Ogaden war – which Somalia launched against Ethiopia in July 1977 and which lasted until March 1978 when the Somalis were driven from Ethiopian territory – solidified those relations. Even before the end of the war, Mengistu cut Ethiopia's ties with Israel, which had been initiated by a rival of his within the *Derg* (Sisai Habte), who was executed in July 1976. Mengistu was irritated by Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan's public acknowledgement of Israeli-Ethiopian military ties in February 1978.<sup>66</sup> That announcement, Soviet pressure of Mengistu to terminate Ethiopia's ties with Israel, and consideration of improved relations with Libya and South Yemen, resulted in Mengistu's decision to expel the Israelis. (It should be noted that the above Arab states switched from supporting the Eritreans to actively cooperating with the Ethiopians in 1976.) Haggai Erlich asserts that the "renewed practical relations" between Israel and Ethiopia during the years 1975-78 "were no less significant than those of the late 1960s," while Fred Halliday remarks: "The importance and extent of the Israeli connection have been greatly exaggerated by the conservative Arab states to justify their own intervention against the Dergue."<sup>67</sup> Both raise interesting points.

With the radicalization of the Ethiopian regime, Saudi Arabia, Anwar Sadat's Egypt and Jaafar Nimeiri's Sudan saw the Eritrean conflict as a struggle between a revolutionary Marxist state and a "movement led by ... advocates of Arabism and Islamic solidarity."<sup>68</sup> Conversely, the *Derg* "accused the Arabs of subversive activities that aimed to merge Eritrea into the Arab League."<sup>69</sup> They were also incensed by Arab League support for the Somali invasion of Ogaden. Hence, especially before the supply of Soviet arms and Cuban troops to Ethiopia, Israel's military aid, however limited, and that country's perceived influence with

the United States were of importance to the Derg. Yet, as was the case with Haile Selassie's regime, the Israelis were not the only source of assistance; the United States continued to train and supply the Ethiopian army through early 1977, while during 1976, the Libyans began to provide aid to the Derg.<sup>70</sup>

According to an Ethiopian brigade commander who defected to the Eritreans during 1977, Israeli instructors trained an elite force of 400 Ethiopian troops who later served as the "personal bodyguard" of Mengistu as well as personnel attached to the Fifth (or Flame) Division, a force of 20 battalions totalling 10,000 troops. The Israelis also provided spare parts for American F-5 aircraft as well as napalm and aircraft-fired missiles.<sup>71</sup> All total, there were about 25 to 30 Israeli advisers in Ethiopia in mid-1977 and, until Mengistu expelled the Israelis the following year, Israel had an unofficial representative stationed in Addis Ababa.<sup>72</sup>

Following the 1977 Israeli parliamentary elections, in which the Labor Party – who had ruled Israel since 1948 – was defeated by the *Likud*, the new prime minister, Menachim Begin, "as the first item in his first meeting" with President Carter "urged" unsuccessfully, that the United States reverse its decision to suspend military assistance to Ethiopia "much to the astonishment of the Americans."<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, the Americans could not have been unaware of Begin's concern that the Ethiopian government allow some *Falashas*, the name used to refer to Ethiopia's Jews, to immigrate to Israel. Subsequent to the above meeting, the Israeli leader authorized the shipment of some arms to the Mengistu regime as a *quid pro quo* for Falashas to join families in the Jewish state, but by the time of Dayan's 1978 announcement on Israeli-Ethiopian military cooperation, only a mere 122 had been able to do so.<sup>74</sup> Aside from the Falasha issue – which would be dealt with again when the Israelis were invited back to Ethiopia in the early 1980s – it suited Israel's interest to keep the United States involved in Ethiopia since most Arab states assisted that country's neighbor, Somalia, as well as the Eritreans. Furthermore, Ethiopia had not lined up with the 72 countries at the UN in 1975 – including many in Africa – that supported General Assembly Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with racism; it abstained along with 31 other states, including pro-Western Kenya and Zaire.<sup>75</sup>

In August 1981, Ethiopia signed an alliance agreement in Aden with Libya and Marxist South Yemen, in which it committed itself to a "joint struggle against imperialism."<sup>76</sup> In January the following year, the Ethiopians launched the "Red Star" campaign, an unsuccessful attempt to "crush" the Eritreans. This development, a cooling of relations with Libya over Muammar Qadhafi's failed attempts during 1982-83 to convene an OAU summit in Tripoli,<sup>77</sup> and Israel's delivery of Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) documents seized in Beirut during the course of its 1982 war in Lebanon, all helped to draw Ethiopia and the Jewish state toward cooperation. In 1983, Israel reportedly supplied the Ethiopians with \$20 million (US) worth of Soviet military hardware and spare parts that it captured from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and by 1985, if not earlier, Israeli military advisers were invited to return to Ethiopia.<sup>78</sup> Given the timing of the arms

transfer, there was speculation that it was linked to the immigration of Falashas to Israel, via Sudan.

Between 21 November 1984 and 6 January 1985, Operation MOSES took about 7,000 to 8,000 Ethiopian Jews from Khartoum to Tel Aviv via Brussels, on at least 35 Boeing 707 flights. (The airlift became an important priority as Ethiopia was suffering from famine and some 350,000 Ethiopian refugees had fled to Sudan.) The operation was conducted by the CIA, *Mossad* (the Israeli secret service), and the Sudanese State Security just prior to Nimeiri's overthrow. The Sudanese leader consented to cooperate in return for increased American aid to his country, which had a \$9 billion (US) debt, as well as bribes for himself and other Sudanese officials. At first, some Falashas trying to make their way to Sudan were beaten and/or imprisoned by local officials in Ethiopia.<sup>79</sup> When reports of Operation MOSES appeared in the Israeli and subsequently world press, the Ethiopian government claimed that the Falashas were abducted against their will and demanded that they be repatriated. Libya's Radio Tripoli was critical of the Ethiopian government:

Whatever the organs of the Khartoum regime planned in the smuggling of the Ethiopian Jews, it could perhaps be that the Ethiopian Government is a principle side in the game which took place under Zionist planning .... [T]he position of the Ethiopian Government remains unclear ... especially after the report about ... [their] acceptance of the Zionist [military] aid.<sup>80</sup>

While Operation MOSES was quite an accomplishment, it was dwarfed by Operation SOLOMON more than six years later, an airlift facilitated by the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Ethiopia.

In November 1989, taking into account the changed political situation with the collapse of communism in eastern Europe, Mengistu's pro-Soviet regime renewed formal ties with Israel – the ninth African state to do so. In an interview in late 1990 with the *Jerusalem Post*, Mengistu stated the following:

Relations between Ethiopia and Israel have been longstanding. Diplomatic relations ... [were] interrupted for 17 years [*sic.*], but not as a result of any problem between Ethiopia and Israel. The source of the problems between our two countries always springs from a third country.<sup>81</sup>

The Ethiopian leader made no mention of the Soviet Union or its former bloc, but as the Soviets had made it clear that they would terminate military and economic agreements by March 1991, Ethiopia was forced to seek assistance elsewhere and to improve its relations with the West.<sup>82</sup> Israel was seen as a means to having better ties with the US. Yet in March 1990, when Mengistu's uncle, Kassa Kebede, the "architect of Ethio-Israeli relations," visited Washington and expected to meet with President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker, he was only able confer with Herman Cohen, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, and was unable to get any commitment for aid. Almost a year earlier in May 1989, Cohen had hosted a

luncheon at the Foreign Service Club in honor of Isaias Afewerki, secretary-general of the EPLF.<sup>83</sup>

In the above interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, Mengistu also elaborated on what he referred to as the “Arab factor”:

[Restored relations] have made the anti-Israeli forces even more vociferous against us. These forces define [Ethiopia’s] relationship with Israel as a very dangerous one, one that portends great danger for the Arab countries. And this is quite evident in what has happened in the past two years, and just after the restoration of relations with Israel. This was evidenced by their clear support of our enemies. And this was particularly done by Iraq and Libya.<sup>84</sup>

Mengistu’s regime was spending half its annual budget on defense and the Ethiopian leader’s reported appeals to the Arab countries supporting the Eritrean movement for independence to cease their assistance fell on deaf ears. One analyst writing in the *Jerusalem Post* had this to say concerning Ethiopia’s restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel:

[It] should be seen as part of a desperate attempt by Mengistu Haile Mariam’s Marxist regime to cope with rebellions by Eritreans and [their allies the] Tigreans [Tigrayans] that have virtually severed the north from the rest of Ethiopia, posing a mortal threat to his rule. Furthermore, Mengistu only last June [1989] was almost toppled by his own army officers.<sup>85</sup>

With the restoration of formal ties, there were reports in the Western and Arab presses of Israeli military aid – weapons, advisers and technicians – and that it was tied to the emigration of those Falashas remaining in Ethiopia. Naturally, both the Ethiopians and Israelis denied that there was a link, while Mengistu remarked in late 1990:

Some wild allegations are already circulating. Some Arab countries allege that the Israeli army is already in Ethiopia fighting alongside the Ethiopian army, that a host of Israeli engineers is already on Ethiopian soil to construct a huge dam on the Blue Nile and stop the Nile from flowing into Egypt and the Sudan and so on. There isn’t a single Israeli soldier in Ethiopia; in fact, the [Israeli] Embassy does not even have a military attache.<sup>86</sup>

Yet there was military aid provided to Ethiopia by the Israelis. In a December 1989 banquet in Atlanta, Georgia, former US President Jimmy Carter, who served as a mediator between the Mengistu regime and Ethiopia’s insurgent organizations, remarked:

In Addis Ababa I was told that there was new hope that the war could soon be ended because the Ethiopian air force had recently acquired cluster bombs from one of our Middle Eastern allies.<sup>87</sup>

Despite such optimism, Mengistu's regime eventually collapsed in May 1991, with the Ethiopian leader fleeing to Zimbabwe. Prior to that development, the US government had taken a direct role in attempting to mediate a settlement between the EPLF – the main Eritrean insurgent organization and the one predominantly led by Christians – and Mengistu's Derg.

Both the EPLF and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) began cooperating operationally in 1988. The following year, the TPLF established an umbrella organization with other insurgent groups called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF). By early 1990, both the leader of the EPLF, Isaias Afewerki, and his counterpart in the TPLF/EPDRF, Meles Zenawi, had visited Washington and met with US officials; these men and their organizations were also in the process of formally shedding their Marxist ideology. EPLF and EPDRF military successes along with American efforts to convince Mengistu to resign resulted in bringing an end to the armed conflict in Ethiopia. US mediation also facilitated Operation SOLOMON.<sup>89</sup>

Just after Mengistu's departure for Zimbabwe, and following six months of planning and intermittent negotiations involving Israel, the US, the Ethiopian Derg and the EPDRF, Operation SOLOMON took place. Within about thirty-three hours on 24-25 May 1991, some 14,500 Falashas were airlifted from Addis Ababa to Tel Aviv on 32 Israeli and one Ethiopian aircraft, from C-130 Hercules transports to Boeing 707s and 747s. The Israelis had employed Uri Lubriani, a former ambassador to Ethiopia, to negotiate with Mengistu, who repeatedly asked for arms; an Israeli offer of water desalinization plants in exchange for the Falashas' right to leave was rejected. Eventually, Kebede acting for Mengistu settled on \$35 million (US), after President George Bush sent former US Senator Rudy Boschwitz to express American concern for the safety of the Ethiopian Jews; the EPDRF agreed not to enter Addis Ababa until after the airlift was completed.<sup>90</sup>

## **ISRAEL, ETHIOPIA UNDER THE EPDRF, AND ERITREA**

Both Ethiopia's new government and the Eritreans have maintained good relations with Sudan, which since June 1989, had been ruled by an Islamist military government led by General Omar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir. One of the EPDRF's first actions following its victorious entry into the Ethiopian capital was to expel the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) from its headquarters in Addis Ababa and to deprive that organization of its supply routes and radio station. Mengistu had backed the southern Sudanese insurgent group – which had opposed Khartoum's policy of Islamization – from its birth in 1983, while Sudan had done the same for Zenawi's TPLF/EPDRF and Afewerki's EPLF.<sup>91</sup> While certainly being grateful to Sudan for its past assistance, the Ethiopians and Eritreans also have been concerned with improving economic and social conditions in their respective countries. Thus, they both have been interested in receiving technical and/or economic assistance from Israel, among other states.

It is no wonder that when the UN General Assembly voted in December 1991 to repeal Resolution 3379 equating Zionism with racism, by a vote of 111 to 25, Ethiopia abstained along with twelve other countries, including Turkey.<sup>92</sup> Two months earlier, the Ethiopians sent a mission to Israel to discuss agricultural and industrial aid. In May 1993, Ethiopian Prime Minister Tamrat Layne came on a four-day visit to the Jewish state with a large ministerial delegation and signed numerous protocols concerning, among other things, an increase in the number of Ethiopians studying agriculture in Israel and the dispatch of Israeli physicians and health experts to Ethiopia. Furthermore, the Prime Minister was quoted as saying: "We have also agreed that either government can raise the issue of security assistance in the future."<sup>93</sup> After many years of war, the Ethiopians desire to maintain good relations with all its neighbors, but armed conflicts continue in Somalia (among various clans since Siad Bare fled Mogadishu in January 1991), in Djibouti (between the Isa and Afar people) and, of course, in southern Sudan. Moreover, the EPRDF faces internal dissent, especially from the Oromo.<sup>94</sup> Israel, for its part, is concerned with Sudan's embrace of Islamic "fundamentalism" and its close ties with Iran and Libya.

In December 1991, Iranian President Ali Hashimi Rafsanjani visited Sudan on only his second trip abroad since he assumed the presidency in 1989, and concluded a number of commercial, economic and military deals; the latter enabled Sudan to purchase \$300 million (US) in Chinese fighter aircraft (18 Chining F-7s and F-8s), tanks (160) and armored personnel carriers (210). The visit, in the words of one observer, "sent shudders through the Arab world and beyond, sparking concern that Iran might use Sudan as a springboard to promote political Islam in Egypt and across North Africa." Indeed, millions of dollars from Iran have been sent to "fundamentalist" groups in the region through the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC), an umbrella group based in Khartoum and headed by Hasan Turabi, leader of the National Islamic Front (NIF). By mid-1993, the US put Sudan on its list of "terrorist states," which also includes Iran, Libya, Iraq and Syria among Middle Eastern countries.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, on New Year's Day, 1994, Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki announced on his country's radio that Muslim "fundamentalists" wanting to overthrow his government had repeatedly infiltrated across the border with Sudan: "These people claim they are to liberate the whole region, and they are connected with the *Jihad* movement of Afghanistan and other regions."<sup>96</sup>

Eritrea, which was liberated by the EPLF in May 1991 and officially became independent two years later, is, like Ethiopia, administered politically by those people who defeated Mengistu's regime. Thus, members of the rival Muslim-dominated Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)<sup>97</sup> have either remained in Sudan or have returned as individuals, since opposition groups have been unable to organize or operate freely.<sup>98</sup> According to a correspondent for *The Economist*, the ELF accuses the Eritrean government "of delaying the return of refugees, out of fear that those who have been living in Sudan will bring militant Islamic notions home with

them.”<sup>99</sup> While this might be partially true – one has to also take into account that the refugees number about 300,000 and that Eritrea is dependent upon food assistance – within Eritrea there is a “strong sense of national unity” that the war against Ethiopia created.<sup>100</sup> As for Eritrea’s foreign policy, the government has been quite pragmatic. Foremost are its relations with Ethiopia, which has been allowed free use of the Red Sea ports of Assab and war-damaged Massawa. Otherwise, Eritrea, which has 100,000 nationals living in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states, has attempted to have good relations with both the countries in the Arab world and Israel.

In February 1991, Isaias Afewerki received Israel’s ambassador to Ethiopia, Chaim Divon, who apparently offered agricultural and developmental aid to the Eritreans.<sup>101</sup> Subsequently, Israel along with Egypt, Sudan and Italy was one of the first to establish a liaison office in Asmara. Afewerki was quoted in October 1992 by the *Washington Post* as saying: “We have a lot to learn from the Israeli experience, especially in the field of development.”<sup>102</sup> As for the Israelis, one diplomat interviewed at the same time expressed well their feelings both sentimental and practical concerning Eritrea:

It [the country’s experience] reminds us of what we went through as kids, in 1948, when our country was established. We can see the enthusiasm, the patriotism, the determination to succeed.

The Israeli diplomat continued:

It’s not just an Israeli preoccupation to have a stable Eritrea. The straits of the Red Sea are as much an asset to the Western world .... This fundamental threat is worrying for all of us.<sup>103</sup>

In an August 1992 interview with the Saudi publication, *Arab News*, Isaias Afewerki had the following to say concerning the Eritrean provisional government’s ties with Israel:

These are ordinary relations that should not be overblown. Logic says that if people have relations with the United States, which is a supporter and supplier of Israel, then where is the danger of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel? .... I don’t think we will continue to live indefinitely with Arab-Israeli differences. This issue must be settled but the differences should not affect the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and other countries. We believe this is a separate issue .... [P]eople should simply understand that diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Israel are not an obstacle to the building of Eritrean-Arab relations or an obstacle to finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>104</sup>

The attitude which he expressed reflects that of a growing number of African states in the post-Cold War era.

## CONCLUSION

Although Ethiopia is considered by geographers to be a part of Subsaharan Africa, much of its recent history has been connected to developments in the Middle East. After all, aside from Kenya – and now Eritrea – all of its neighbors (ie., Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti) are members of the Arab League; and directly across the Red Sea are Saudi Arabia and Yemen. At the same time, although Ethiopia's leadership has been of Christian background, some 80 percent of its population is roughly evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. (Almost the same holds true for newly-independent Eritrea, where the EPLF is Christian dominated and the entire population is evenly split religiously.)

Despite changes in regime – from monarchy to Marxist dictatorship and now to a government that claims to be on the road to multiparty democracy – Ethiopia has been drawn to the Jewish state of Israel by a common interest in minimizing the effects of Arab nationalism or Islamic unity in the Horn of Africa as well as a need for military and/or economic assistance and technological know-how. At the same time, Ethiopia has been concerned not to appear out of step politically with the general mood of its African brethren. (This is due to the fact that the OAU is based in its capital and that, in the past, it saw the Pan-African organization as a promoter of the idea of territorial status quo.) Eritrea seems to be following the same path. For its part, Israel has had a particular interest in Ethiopia because of its geographical location on the periphery of the Arab world and its Jewish population, which was airlifted to Israel during the 1980s. Whenever possible, regarding the above issue and others, the Israelis have sought to identify their interests with those of the United States and to work together with that superpower.

Naturally, Israeli-Ethiopian relations were affected by developments during the Cold War as they are by changes in the post-Cold War era. Under the monarchy of Haile Selassie, Israel developed a special relationship with Ethiopia. With no other country in Africa did the Jewish state have closer ties. Haile Selassie, who called himself the "Lion of Judah," had an affinity for Israel based on an Ethiopian view of history and the fact that he saw the Jewish state as a key pro-Western ally in the Cold War politics of the region. In addition to civilian technical expertise, Israel provided Ethiopia with military assistance against the separatist Eritreans and used Addis Ababa as a center for intelligence gathering and reportedly for covert action elsewhere on the African continent. The Marxist Derg government of Mengistu Haile Mariam also made use of Israeli military assistance, but cooperation was not based in any way on sentimentality. It was just geopolitics and the Israeli government and public's desire to see the Falashas airlifted to the Jewish state. Israeli-Ethiopian relations since Mengistu's downfall and those between Israel and Eritrea as well continue to be of a practical rather than special nature.

In the post-Cost War era, Israel has renewed relations with a number of African countries and has established ties with states that never had relations in the past. As the United States and other Western industrialized nations are paying a lot less attention both politically and economically to Africa than in the past, when the

Soviet Union was a rival for influence, Israel's close ties to Washington and even its rather modest assistance is appealing to Africans. Yet Ethiopia and Eritrea are of greater importance to Israel than the rest of the continent, save for South Africa and the lucrative diamond trade. The Israelis are concerned especially about Iranian influence in Sudan and assistance through the latter country to Islamic "fundamentalist" organizations in the Arab and Islamic world. While the new governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea have had good relations with Sudan, they are nonetheless concerned about Islamic "fundamentalism." But so too are a number of Arab countries. While Israel's assistance to Ethiopia and Eritrea may develop yet into providing military expertise and equipment – there is no confirmation of such by any of the three parties nor irrefutable proof – it does not seem likely that the latter countries will establish a special relationship with the Jewish state reminiscent of the time when Haile Selassie ruled Ethiopia.

### Endnotes

1. The other countries were Rwanda, Benin, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Cameroun, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Madagascar, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Gambia, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, Botswana, Liberia, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. During 1972, Uganda, Chad and the Congo broke off relations with Israel, while the next year, prior to the outbreak of the war, Niger, Mali, Burundi, Togo and Zaire followed suit.
2. Avi Gil, "Israel's 'Quiet' Relations with Black Africa," *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (London), 17 March 1977, p. 3, mentions that Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zaire, Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, the Central African Republic and "many others" were maintaining economic ties, while it quotes the director of the Histadrut's (General Federation of Labor's) Afro-Asian Institute in Tel Aviv, Akiva Eger: "the majority [of African countries], despite the break in diplomatic ties, did not recall their trainees at the time and continued to send others .... Among such countries are ... Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast [Cote d'Ivoire], Kenya, Sierra Leone, Togo, Upper Volta [Burkina Faso and] the Central African Republic ...." David K. Shipler, "Israel is Quietly Expanding Links with Nations Throughout Africa," *New York Times*, 21 August 1993, p. 1, states that an Israeli official told him that "the only [Subsaharan] African countries which Israel has no contact whatever ... [are] Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar, Benin, Mali, the Congo and Uganda." It should be noted that at the time of Shipler's article only Zaire had reestablished diplomatic relations, while Liberia was on the verge of doing so.
3. H.S. Aynor, "Black Africa's Rediscovery of Israel: Motivations and Expectations," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 12, no. 1 (1990), pp. 102-111. Aynor is a former Israeli ambassador to Ethiopia and head of the African Department of Israel's Foreign Ministry.
4. According to Howard M. Sachar, *Diaspora: An Inquiry into the Contemporary Jewish World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 485, South Africa had a Jewish population of approximately 105,000, while Ethiopia had 17,000; the latter's population was roughly equal to that of Morocco's, the largest in the Arab world, and was far ahead of Tunisia's (4,000) and Zimbabwe's (1,200). Sachar states that these figures represent a "synthesis of current estimates." However, his figure, at least for Ethiopia's population, is too small as about 22,500 Falashas – the name used to refer to Ethiopian Jews – were airlifted to Israel in the two operations. Colin Legum's estimate of 25,000 in "Afro-Arab Relations: More Talk than Cooperation," in *Africa Contemporary Record*. Colin Legum, ed (New York: Africana Publishing, 1986), 17, p. A133, is a more accurate figure.
5. Of the approximately 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia today, the linguistically Semitic and religiously Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Amhara comprise 15 to 25% of the population; the Tigrayans, who share a common linguistic and religious background with the Amhara and who inhabit the northern highlands, are the third largest in number comprising 10 to 12%; the largest are the linguistically Hamitic and religiously diverse – Christian, Muslim and animistic – Oromo (or Galla), who

generally live the furthest south of the top three groups and comprise 40 to 50% of the population. Figures are drawn from *The World Almanac and Books of Facts, 1994* (Mahwah, NJ: Funk & Wagnalls, 1993), p. 762; and Steve McDonald, "Learning a Lesson," *Africa Report*, 37, no. 5 (September-October 1992), p. 28.

6. See Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia, 1844-1913* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), especially pp. 111-248.
7. Marina and David Ottaway, *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution* (New York: Africana Publishing, 1978), p. 131. The Ottaways assert that Mengistu's father was "probably" an Amhara.
8. Christopher Clapham, "Ethiopia: The Institutionalization of a Marxist Military Regime," in Christopher Clapham and George Philip, eds., *The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985), pp. 263-65; and John Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 245. Markakis points out that "several of [the Derg's] prominent members were not Abyssinians [i.e., Amhara]." Mengistu became the undisputed leader of the Derg, the group who had overthrown Haile Selassie.
9. See note 4.
10. John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 208, as quoted in Peter Schwab, *Haile Selassie I: Ethiopia's Lion of Judah* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), p. 6.
11. John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1984), p. 153.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55 and 330; and John W. Harbeson, *The Ethiopian Transformation: The Quest for the Post-Imperial State* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988), p. 45. Aklilu Habte Wold, who was minister of foreign affairs from 1943-58 and 1960-61, was also deputy prime minister from 1957-61 and prime minister from 1961 until his execution in 1974. Christopher Clapham, *Haile-Selassie's Government* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 193.
13. Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate, *Ethiopia: Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988), pp. 163-65.
14. Negussay Ayele, "The Foreign Policy of Ethiopia," in Olajide Aluko, ed., *The Foreign Policies of African States* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 50.
15. Quoted in Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 152.
16. Schwab, *Haile Selassie*, pp. 11-12; also see Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), pp. 39-44; and A.H.M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 10-21 and 53-54.
17. Michael A. Ledeen, "The Israeli Connection," *Washington Review of Strategic and International Studies*, Special Supplement on the Horn of Africa (May 1978), p. 46.
18. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay*, p. 202.
19. Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), p. 185.
20. Haggai Erlich, *Ethiopia and the Challenge of Independence* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1986), pp. 219-20 and 154-55; and Haggai Erlich, *The Struggle Over Eritrea, 1962-1978: War and Revolution in the Horn of Africa* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), p. 62.
21. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay*, p. 198.
22. See Okbazghi Yohannes, *Eritrea, a Pawn in World Politics* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), pp. 50-194; G.K.N. Travaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition, 1941-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), especially pp. 57-76 and 81-131; and Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, pp. 4-10.
23. See I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 139-65; and John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), pp. 56-99. The border that appears on maps was drawn by the British in 1950 as a "provisional administrative line" prior to their handing over of Somalia's administration to the Italians. In April 1988, Mengistu and Somalia's President Siad Barre signed a peace accord in

- which they “merely agreed to discuss the boundary issue at some future, unspecified date.” Robert G. Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: The diplomacy of intervention and disengagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 301.
24. See Saadia Touval, *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963). Interestingly, it was the late Reuven Shiloah, the “first architect of Israel’s intelligence system” – as Abba Eban describes him in his most recent memoir, *Personal Witness* (New York: G.P. Putman’s Sons, 1992), p. 33 – and a confidant of Ben-Gurion, who “suggested” that Touval write about Somali nationalism.
  25. Robert L. Hess, *Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 198-200).
  26. Yohanne, *Eritrea, a Pawn*, pp. 210-23 and 225.
  27. Harold G. Marcus, *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States, 1941-1974: The Politics of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 5.
  28. Peres, *David’s Sling*, p. 152. Golda Meir in her autobiography *My Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975), p. 341, states that Israel sent an ambassador in 1961, while Peres maintains that this was done in 1963.
  29. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, p. 56.
  30. Abel Jacob, “Israel’s Military Aid to Africa, 1960-66,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, no. 2 (August 1971), pp. 177.
  31. Tareq Y. Ismael, *The U.A.R. in Africa: Egypt’s Policy Under Nasser* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 37. Nasser also hoped to include Somalia and Uganda eventually within the proposed alliance.
  32. Gabriel R. Warburg, “The Sudan and Israel: An Episode in Bilateral Relations,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28, no. 2 (April 1992), pp. 385-96; Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel’s Intelligence Community* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), pp. 83-84; and Black and Morris, *Israel’s Secret War’s*, pp. 185-86.
  33. Ben-Furion to Eisenhower, 24 July 1958, Eisenhower Papers, International Series, Box 35, Mid-East July 1958 (4), Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.
  34. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, trans. Peretz Kidron (New York: Delacorte, 1978), p. 264.
  35. They were Mengistu and Girmame Neway. For a description and analysis of Girmame Neway’s life and views as well as the unsuccessful coup, see Greenfield, *Political History*, pp. 335-452; also see Christopher Clapham, “The Ethiopian Coup d’Etat of December 1960,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6, no. 4 (December 1968), pp. 495-507; Marcus, *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States*, pp. 116-169; and Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, p. 57.
  36. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Who Israel Arms and Why* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), p. 52.
  37. Quoted in Jacob, “Israel’s Military Aid to Africa,” p. 175.
  38. David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987), pp. 149-50.
  39. However, as Tom J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa: The Widening Storm* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1979), p. 100, points out “In 1961 and again in 1964, Somalia and Ethiopia seemed to tremble on the edge of full-scale war. Military units met in bloody combat on the border.”
  40. Negussay Ayele, “The Politics of the Somalia-Ethiopia Boundary Problem, 1960-1967,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1969), pp. 217-41. President Aden Abdallah Osman stated the following in an interview in December 1965: “[T]he Arab countries are the rock on which our outside friendships rest.” (p. 239).
  41. S.O. Agbi, *The Organization of African Unity and African Diplomacy, 1963-1979* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Impact Publishers, 1986), p. 134.

42. See Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), pp. 78-85. Rafael, who served under every prime minister from Ben-Gurion to Begin, is a former Director-General of the Foreign Ministry.
43. Both statements are quoted in Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 308.
44. Marie Syrkin, *Golda Meir: Israel's Leader* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), pp. 290-96.
45. Quoted in Brecher, *Foreign Policy System*, p. 343.
46. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, p. 57.
47. Quoted in Mohamed Omer Beshir, *Israel and Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1974), pp. 34-35.
48. Jacob, "Israel's Military Aid to Africa," p. 176. Other military missions in Addis Ababa that were providing assistance to Haile Selassie's armed forces included those of Great Britain, Sweden, Norway and India. Beit-Hallahmi, *Israeli Connection*, p. 51.
49. Farouk A. Sankari, "The Cost and Gains of Israeli Pursuit of Influence in Africa," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, no. 2 (May 1979), p. 275.
50. See Shimon Amir, *Israel's Development Cooperation with Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1974); and Mordechai E. Kreinin, *Israel and Africa: A Study in Technical Cooperation* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).
51. Kassim Shehim, "Israel-Ethiopian Relations: Change and Continuity," *Northeast African Studies*, 10, no. 1 (1988), p. 29; and Sankari, "Israeli Pursuit of Influence," pp. 273-74. Mordechai Abir, *Oil, Power and Politics: Conflict in Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 136, states that since 1967, Israel's maritime trade through the port of Eilat and the Red Sea increased at a rate of 15% a year and by 1970-71 it accounted for 9% of Israel's exports and 5% of its imports; that figure did not include shipments of Iranian oil transported across Israel's pipeline to the Mediterranean.
52. P.G., "Israel Looks Towards Africa and Asia: New Trade Policy Explained," *The World Today*, 14, no. 1 (January 1958), p. 41.
53. Quoted in Beit-Hallahmi, *Israeli Connection*, p. 52.
54. Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1991), p. 162.
55. Jane Hunter, "Israel and Ethiopia," *Israel Foreign Affairs*, 1, no. 6 (May 1985), p. 8.
56. Robert Reinhart, "National Security," in Harold D. Nelson and Irving Kaplan, eds., *Ethiopia, a country study*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 276. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, p. 58, gives the number of Israeli advisers as 10 to 12, while Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London: NLB, 1981), p. 232, states that there were 40.
57. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, pp. 64-65; and Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, p. 186.
58. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, pp. 58-59.
59. Olusola Ojo, *Africa and Israel: Relations in Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988), pp. 41 and 43.
60. Quoted in Jake C. Miller, "African-Israeli Relations: Impact on Continental Unity," *Middle East Journal*, 29, no. 4 (Autumn 1975), p. 398.
61. See Yassin El-Ayouty, "The OAU and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Case of Mediation that Failed," in Yassin El-Ayouty, ed., *The Organization of African Unity After Ten Years: Comparative Perspectives*, (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 189-212; Ran Kochan, "An African Peace Mission in the Middle East: The One-Man Initiative of President Senghor," *African Affairs*, 72 (April 1973), pp. 186-96; Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 203-24; and Agbi, *African Diplomacy*, pp. 139-40.
62. Interview with Senghor by Italian journalist Tullia Zevi in *Africa Report*, 17, no. 7 (July-August 1972), p. 13.

63. Quoted in Miller, "African-Israeli Relations," p. 401.
64. Susan Aurelia Gitelson, "Israel's African Setback in Perspective," in Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson, eds., *Israel in the Third World*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1976), p. 196.
65. Quoted in Arye Oded, *Africa and the Middle East Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1987), pp. 117-18.
66. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, pp. 103-04.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 103; and Fred Halliday, "US Policy in the Horn of Africa: *Aboulia* or Proxy Intervention?," *Review of African Political Economy*, 10 (September-December 1978), p. 25.
68. Erlich, *Struggle Over Eritrea*, p. 69.
69. Oded, *Africa and the Middle East Conflict*, p. 118.
70. Bereket Habte Selassie, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), pp. 137-38 and 160-61.
71. Dan Connell, "Israelis, Out of Favor in Africa, Still Find Home in Ethiopia," *Washington Post*, 1 October 1977, p. A12; Rinehart, "National Security," p. 247; and Ojo, *Africa and Israel*, p. 74. Ojo cites the *Jerusalem Post*, 5 February 1978, in stating that "U.S. government sources confirmed that Israel had given Ethiopia ... aircraft-fired missiles and napalm."
72. Ledeen, "Israeli Connection," p. 48.
73. Shipler, "Quietly Expanding Links," p. 11.
74. Tad Szulc, *The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Story of the Rescue of the Jews Since World War II* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 293-97; and Teshome G. Wagaw, "The International Political Ramifications of Falasha Emigration," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, no. 4 (December 1991), p. 565. In an interview with Raviv and Melman, Yehiel Kadishai, Begin's political secretary, stated that the Israeli prime minister spoke to Carter at their initial meeting in Washington for "several minutes" about the Falashas' wanting to immigrate to Israel. *Every Spy*, p. 225.
75. Such countries as Nigeria, Tanzania, Mexico, the Philippines, Singapore and Turkey voted for the resolution. Among those African states also abstaining were Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Lesotho and Mauritius. Thirty-five countries voted against the resolution, including the Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Malawi and Swaziland. Ojo, *Africa and Israel*, p. 64.
76. Paul B. Henze, *The Horn of Africa: From War to Peace* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), p. 164. According to Henze, the US National Security Council staff were so alarmed by this development that proposals were presented, but subsequently rejected to aid "rebels in Ethiopia."
77. According to Robert Bruce St. John, "The Libyan Debacle in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1987," in Rene Lemarchand, ed., *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 133, Qadhafi wanted to convene a summit under his chairmanship, but that it was opposed by "moderate African leaders ... who had no desire to attend a high-level meeting that could appear to vindicate Libyan policy in sub-Saharan Africa." An OAU panel recommended that a meeting be held in Addis Ababa in June 1983; it was chaired by Mengistu. St. John states further: "Qadhafi attended the summit briefly but soon departed after suffering the double indignity of being denied the chairmanship and seeing his protegee, the Polisario [the Western Saharan independence movement], effectively barred from the meeting. Qadhafi was the first African leader in OAU history to be denied its chairmanship." David A. Korn, who was chief officer (charge d'affaires) at the American embassy in Addis Ababa from 1982-85, states in his memoirs of his experience there, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 82 and 86, that Ethiopia linked up with Libya in alliance in 1981 because the Libyan leader promised Mengistu large amounts of money, but the latter was not satisfied with the "few hundred million dollars" he received.
78. Roy Pateman, *Eritrea: Even the Stones are Burning* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1990), pp. 108-09. Michael G. Bard, "The Evolution of Israel's Africa Policy," *Middle East Review*, XXI, no. 2 (Winter 1988/89), p. 27; Colin Legum, "Afro-Arab and Muslim Relations: Failure to Stop Israel Eroding OAU Boycott," in Colin Legum, ed., *Africa Contemporary Record*, (New York: Africana

- Publishing, 1987), 18, p. A170. Interestingly, David E. Albright in "The Horn of Africa and the Arab-Israeli Conflict" in Robert O. Freedman, ed., *World Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Pergamon, 1979), pp. 169 and 189, claims, citing "a private conversation with an Israeli official," that Mengistu, who had received some training in Israel, did not sever all military ties with the Jewish state between 1978 and the early 1980s.
79. See Tudor Parfitt, *Operation Moses: The Untold Story of the Secret Exodus of the Falasha Jews from Ethiopia* (New York: Stein and Day, 1985), especially pp. 89-107; and Ahmed Karadawi, "The Smuggling of the Ethiopian Falasha to Israel through Sudan," *African Affairs*, 90 (January 1991), pp. 23-49. Karadawi, at the time that his article was published, had been assistant commissioner for refugees in Khartoum and had access to some important documents. Also see Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy*, pp. 242-42; and Wagaw, "International Political Ramifications," pp. 566-74. While it is uncertain whether Ethiopia was paid off to turn a blind eye to the operation, the Sudanese received approximately \$197 million (US) in American financial aid for 1984 and were promised \$250 million (later doubled) for 1985. It is uncertain what Nimeiri and his other Sudanese officials received for themselves.
  80. Quoted in Legum, "Afro-Arab Relations," p. A135.
  81. *Jerusalem Post*, International Edition (all references to this newspaper are of that edition), 17 November 1990, p. 2.
  82. Wagaw, "International Political Ramifications," p. 576.
  83. Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A transformation from an aristocratic to a totalitarian autocracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 360-61.
  84. *Jerusalem Post*, 17 November 1990.
  85. David Makovsky, "Why the Ethiopians have turned to Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, 18 November 1989, p. 5.
  86. *Jerusalem Post*, 17 November 1990.
  87. Quoted in Jane Hunter, "Cluster bombs and Falashas," *Middle East International*, no. 368 (2 February 1990), p. 11.
  88. The EPLF was established during the early 1970s; it defeated the predominantly Muslim Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) – that began the war against Ethiopia in 1961 – in a military conflict from 1981-82. Patrick Gilkes, "Recent History" of the "Ethiopia" section in *Africa South of the Sahara, 1994* (London: Europa Publications, 1993), pp. 353-54.
  89. Paul B. Henze, *The Defeat of the Derg and the Establishment of New Governments in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992), pp. 9-22.
  90. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-27; Szulc, *Secret Alliance*, pp. 209-306; Wagaw, "International Political Ramifications," pp. 578-80; Jane Hunter, "Ethiopia: The Airlift," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, 7, no. 6 (9 July 1991), pp. 1 and 6-8; David Makovsky, "Airlift a culmination of intense diplomacy," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 June 1991, p. 28; and Louis Rapoport, "Ethiopian Jewry rescued," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 June 1991, pp. 1-2. Also see Ehud Katz, "Dangerous Liaisons, Uri Lubrani: Israel's Trouble Shooter," *Israel Scene* (a supplement of the *Jerusalem Post* International Edition), July 1991, pp. 3-4. Henze points out that Mengistu never collected the money as the New York account in which it was deposited became the property of the EPRDF government that was established in Addis Ababa immediately following the airlift. Kebede fled to Israel during Operation SOLOMON.
  91. Lemmu Baissa, "Ethiopian-Sudanese Relations, 1956-1991: Mutual Deterrence Through Mutual Blackmail?," *Horn of Africa*, Quadruple Issue, XIII, nos. 3 and 4 and XIV, nos. 1 and 2 (1990-91), pp. 15-18; and "Sudan: A regional setback for the SPLA," *Africa Confidential*, 32, no. 12 (14 June 1991), pp. 4-5.
  92. No African states, outside of Arab League members, voted against repealing the resolution. Angola, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe abstained, while Chad, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia were either absent or did not vote. Paul Lewis, "U.N. Repeals Its '75 Resolution Equating Zionism with Racism," *New York Times*, 17 December 1991, pp. A1 and A6.

93. David Styan, "Israel, Eritrea and Ethiopia: a convoluted relationship," *Middle East International* no. 456 (6 August 1993), p. 18; Jonathan Schachter and Herb Keinon, "Ethiopian mission coming to discuss aid," *Jerusalem Post*, 12 October 1991, p. 2; and an untitled caption by David Makovsky, *Jerusalem Post*, 22 May 1993, p. 24. The quotation is from the last source.
94. John W. Harbeson, "The Future of the Ethiopian State after Mengistu," *Current History*, 92, no. 574 (May 1993), p. 212; and Makau Mutua, "Democracy's Bid Fades in Ethiopia," *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 August 1993, p. 19.
95. Khalid Medani, "Sudan's Human and Political Crisis," *Current History*, 92, no. 574 (May 1993), pp. 206-07; Abd al-Salam Sid Ahmed, "Tehran-Khartoum: a new axis or a warning shot?," *Middle East International*, no. 418 (7 February 1992), pp. 18-19; Abd al-Salam Sid Ahmed, "Sudan on the US 'terrorist' list," *Middle East International*, no. 460 (8 October 1993), pp. 18-19; and Gill Lusk, "Civilians bear the brunt," *Middle East International*, no. 415 (20 December 1991), p. 11.
96. Quoted in "Nation reveals war with foreign rebels," *Gainesville Sun* (Florida), 2 January 1994, p. 12A.
97. See note 88.
98. Stephen Hubbell, "Towards an uncertain future," *Middle East International*, no. 449 (30 April 1993), p. 10.
99. "Onions, potatoes, and T-54s," *The Economist*, 20 March 1993, p. 52.
100. Peter Biles, "Birth of a Nation," *Africa Report*, 38, no. 4 (July/August 1993), p. 17; and Styan, "Israel, Eritrea and Ethiopia," p. 19.
101. Jane Hunter, "Breakthrough to Eritrea," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, 8, no. 4 (28 April 1992), p. 3.
102. Quoted in Jennifer Parmelee, "Emerging Eritrea Finds Friendship – and a Model – in Israel," *Washington Post*, 14 October 1992, p. A24.
103. Quoted in *ibid.*
104. Muhammad Ibrahim, "Afwerki on Eritrea's Future, the EPLF," *Arab News*, 16 August 1992, p. 9.