

Bringing Home and Strengthening Ethiopian Jews

The anticipated arrival of as many as 2000 new immigrants to Israel from the remainder of Ethiopia's ancient Jewish community in the coming months, coupled with increased fighting within Ethiopia that may threaten the Jewish community there, has heightened the need to make a concerted effort to bring home and absorb the new immigrants, and provide resources for the unique needs among even the more veteran Ethiopian Israeli immigrants, especially among their children and millennial age students.



Committed to building bridges between Jews and Christians and Christians with Israel in ways that are new, unique and meaningful, and to support the prophetic return home of the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth, the **Genesis 123 Foundation is taking the initiative to an establish interfaith partnership and campaign to provide resources that will make a meaningful impact.** We are assessing actual needs and how to make the most positive long term impact, engaging with existing organizations throughout Israel to do so, making sure that funds are going to where they are needed, and that we are not paying for things that are already funded.

The assessment of needs is often made based on a relatively simple equation: supply and demand. Borrowing that model, there is both an increased supply and demand among Ethiopian Jews, and within Israel to absorb them. There's another factor that's unique in Israel especially at this time, is the lack of resources, which creates additional demand. This relates both to basic services provided by NGOs and non-profits coping with decreased funding, and increased needs due to significantly higher unemployment and inability of people to earn income to subsist, whether in Ethiopia or Israel. This is exacerbated in Israel with no state budget for 2020 despite the fact that the year is over, or for 2021 yet either. This adversely impacts government ministries and NGOs that provide basic services, and non-profits which suffer not just from lack of funding, but the inability to plan or budget.

In order to fill as much of the demand as possible, **the Genesis 123 Foundation is building a broad a base of partnership and support to respond and meet the needs.** This interfaith effort brings together and will leverage the support of Jews and Christians who especially understand the compelling urgency. Collectively, through a wide range of partners, we will affirm the truism that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Our comprehensive efforts address a range of needs, making a real tangible difference as an investment in the long term welfare of the Ethiopian Jewish community: the role, status, and well-being of the Ethiopian community in Israel, and of playing an active role in bringing the chapter of the ancient Ethiopian Jewish diaspora to an end.

There are many needs, and many who provide these and other needs. Based on a wide range of conversations within the community and agencies that provide for these needs, the following are priorities that we assess have the greatest potential immediate impact and long-term benefit. Based on total funds received and partners with

whom we work, we will engage credible organizations on the ground with the greatest integrity, and who are best suited to make the positive impact we all seek.

Sustenance in Ethiopia

Until the completion of the rescue and return home of all the remaining members of the Ethiopian Jewish community, estimated to be as many as several thousand, there's an increased need to provide sustenance and support in Ethiopia. Especially as a result of the pandemic, funding is lacking for many basics, including food. Malnourishment exists at an alarming rate and is a particular threat for pregnant women and children. Because much of the community lives in both physical and social isolation, partly a consequence of anti-Semitism, there's all the more need to provide the infrastructure of medical care, education, and pre-Aliyah preparation. As more and more of the community leave to come to Israel, the need does not diminish but only becomes more costly to deliver on a per person basis.

Aliyah

Aliyah is the **prophetic return of the Jewish people to Israel** from the diaspora through the four corners of the earth to the Land that God gave to Abraham and his descendants. Aliyah means to go up, a physical, and spiritual, ascension. After seven decades since Jewish sovereignty was restored to Israel, while millions of Jews have returned home, many more remain scattered across the world and have not yet done so. Many live in communities where Judaism thrives, and others live in communities that are threatened daily.



The Ethiopian Jewish community is one the most ancient and united. They were so isolated that they not only suffered great persecution, but believed until well into the 1900s that they were the only Jews left. From the other side, the Ethiopian Jews were so isolated that for centuries, nobody outside Ethiopia knew they existed. In the 1980s, Israel led **Operation Moses**, a covert operation to bring home thousands of Ethiopian Jews, via Sudan, and in coordination with the CIA. It's a secret that can be celebrated today. In 1991, Israel launched **Operation Solomon**, miraculously airlifting nearly 15,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in a single weekend.

It is also noteworthy that the emigration of Ethiopian Jews is the first-time black Africans have been rescued from oppression in Africa to be brought out and welcomed in freedom.

Today, there's a unique opportunity to close the chapter on the history of this specific exiled Jewish community. There are several thousand people as remnants of this community. It's anticipated that as many as 2000 will be brought home in the coming months. Consequently, there's a need to get ready to bring them home and absorb them, providing resources and infrastructure to make this smooth and successful.

Immediate Absorption Needs

Upon arrival in Israel, all new immigrants no matter where they are coming from are challenged to set up a new home, even if all their belongings are in a shipping container somewhere on the Atlantic. Ethiopian Jews are not arriving from middle class backgrounds having sold suburban homes, but often from mud huts without electricity in a



remote mountainous part of Ethiopia. Setting up a new home is all the more “interesting” because their new homes have electricity, and even the simplest things as acquiring and learning to use kitchen appliances is new.

In addition to Hebrew language “ulpan” classes to acquire the language, because they arrive from Ethiopia, there is typically a need to have special help in learning how to use simple technology that we consider basic in the western world, but for them it’s all new.

Of course, Israel is home, but we want the new immigrants to be comfortably adjusted in all ways, including making sure they feel established in their homes, fully furnished and outfitted, and with warm clothes needed for an Israeli winter which is new to them as well. With a direct correlation to new immigrants’ long-term success and their sense of feeling settled and very much at home, and the extra challenges due to the pandemic, this is more of a priority than it’s ever been.

Youth – Providing Skills Needed to Succeed

Being a new immigrant brings with it many challenges and needs. This is felt particularly among children who have to acculturate, learn a new language, go to school, and make new friends. Much of the socialization of children is through school, but in a pandemic with schools not yet fully open, distance learning is an added challenge among children who have never used a computer. Their needs are greater than ever. Basics like school uniforms (common in Israel), computers, books and supplies, and new toys and games are as important as making sure that the families coming out of danger are well fed and comforted with endless hugs. This is a critical foundational element for any new immigrants.



Investment in the early stages of children’s’ absorption is critical to strengthening the family unit as well. As the children get settled, attention needs to be given to prevent a rift with parents for whom learning the language and culture is harder, and who feel at a loss to provide the resources and guidance that their children need the most. For parents, knowing that their children are well cared for and adjusted also is a respite, and relieves a burden that is added to their lives by being responsible for their children while adjusting to all the new aspects of life in Israel themselves. Helping children also helps the parents, and is critical for the family’s well-being.

Supplementary summer programs both in Israel and in Ethiopia are important models of ways to engage children both in formal and informal education during vacation, helping those in Israel maintain and strengthen their grade level activities, and in Ethiopia to provide a solid foundation upon which to be prepared to come to Israel, academically, historically, linguistically, culturally, and religiously. These programs also offer a nutritious lunch which is an added appeal and relieves the burden of families who cannot afford to provide meals for all their children on their own.

Higher Education – The Foundation for Self Sufficiency

Higher education is the foundation upon which to build one’s future success and self-sufficiency. Whether in high tech or HR, having a degree is the key to professional achievement. Ethiopian immigrants and their children often face a challenge in this regard because their parents are either uneducated or, as immigrants themselves, don’t have the abilities to understand Israeli society and help their children



with their studies. A variety of programs exist to help Ethiopian millennials overcome these challenges and achieve for their future.

Pre-College Preparatory Program

Specific guided programs exist to offer specialized preparation for Israel's *psychometric* (the required pre-college entrance exam); life skills training; academic and career counseling; social work services; extensive one-on-one mentoring, and classes that instill pride in students' Ethiopian heritage. Ethiopian students who go through such programs have a very high rate of success, and are accepted to college in a diverse array of degree programs.



Upon entering an accredited college or university program, even with the foundation of a pre-college preparatory program, Ethiopian students face unique challenges and need extra support. With many coming from large and poor families, there are often no resources to help pay for the education. Students must often work while studying to pay for tuition, room and board, books and supplies, and more, sometimes straining their resources. For that reason, generous scholarships are provided along with additional subsidies. During the pandemic when education and its related expenses have continued, the high unemployment rate in general, and among Ethiopians in specific, has created new challenges as to some students afford to continuing with their studies.

Different levels of and types of scholarships exist, both need and merit based, and are available depending on where the student is studying, typically ranging from \$3000 - \$12,000 per year.

It's also often the case that Ethiopian students require additional academic and social support in a college setting to help them overcome hurdles that remain. These are compounded by the overall demands of one's academic studies, and coming from families in which there's no model for higher education at all. In many cases, today's students are the first in their families to attend college. Additional services are often offered such as peer mentoring with a fellow student in the same field, professional tutoring, customized study groups, English lessons, crisis management and intervention, special needs' assessment and assistance, career guidance and services, time management, interview skills, resume writing, Ethiopian cultural support groups, and more.

Creating Role Models and Leaders

As a relatively new immigrant community with unique challenges even among veteran immigrants and their children born in Israel, there's added need to strengthen the community by fostering role models and leaders to whom the youth can look up. Recently, achievements have been made with the first Ethiopian woman becoming a government cabinet member, another becoming the first Ethiopian Israeli police chief, IDF officers and the first IAF pilot, an Ethiopian Israeli winning the Israeli "X Factor," and one even becoming Miss Israel. By giving Ethiopian Israeli youth examples who have "made it" to look up to, their identity is strengthened, and they see models of success to emulate. Even seeing Ethiopian Israelis driving corporate cars with the logo of their high-tech employer makes a difference.

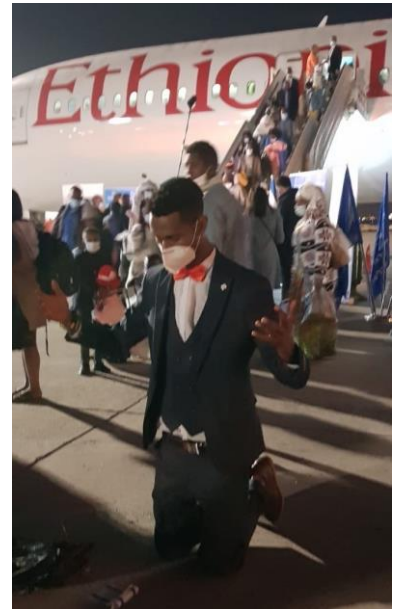


These are all informal and indirect ways of strengthening identity, however many programs transform students and their alumni into leaders for the next generation of Ethiopian Israelis through hands on interaction.

Investing in the Community

“Give a person a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a person to fish and you feed him for life.”

It is a timeless truism, and model for serious programs that seek to change the paradigm rather than continue to manage a problem. Building upon the foundation of providing academic and life skills as a cornerstone, there’s a need to provide investment and assistance for the next generation of Ethiopian Israeli entrepreneurs. From supporting small business owners to big visionaries with the next “Mobileye,” we want to sow into these people and their success. Some may require major investments, others may “only” require marketing, and essential business accounting skills. Mentorship in business, just like in academic studies, is an essential pillar of such success. Together, we can teach a lot of people to fish, and forever change the status of their lives, their family, and their broader community.



Rehabilitation

Sadly, in Israel, there are many societal problems that compound the challenges that Ethiopian Israelis face. Racism exists as it does in many places. This needs to be untaught and compensated for. One of Israel’s greatest common denominators, the army and national service, is a critical vehicle through which Ethiopian Israelis can integrate, but for which there are also social and economic impediments. While only representing a small percent of Israeli society, the poverty rate is higher among Ethiopian Israelis, as is the per capita rate of incarceration. Adding to this, Ethiopian culture is typically more restrained and Israeli culture is more aggressive.

Where we can make a targeted difference to rehabilitate and lift up people who have slipped through the cracks already, or are at highest risk of doing so, we will partner with those who have their hand on the pulse and are best positioned to make the most lasting impact, individually and societally.

Partners and Budget

This proposal deliberately is not committing to specific numbers or a precise allocation of funds. We believe that’s premature as there are many needs, and the needs are not static. We have assessed what the most urgent needs are, and will be keeping track of where other funding sources for these may come from. We will continue to do so as this campaign grows, and as allocations are determined and have engaged potential beneficiaries that provide a real, meaningful, and tangible service. It’s also critical to **fund those that have the fiscal and programmatic integrity to do so** rather than being imbued with good intentions but no ability to deliver, or goals that do not serve the priorities of Ethiopian Jews’ rescue and absorption. We have evaluated various budgets and plans, and dismissed some right away. This is an ongoing process because the situation is fluid as needs may change depending on how many new immigrants arrive, their ages, and where other sources of funding come from.



Allocations will be determined with involvement of the diverse board of Genesis 123, and other funding partners and leaders. We will collectively assess the needs, the related expenses, and to be sure that we are filling a gap and not funding a project that's already been funded. Larger funding partners will have the ability to direct their financial participation to one of the program priorities within the range of areas as outlined above.

In addition to a broad based email and social media campaign appealing for individual donations, Genesis 123 is **calling upon individuals and organizations of all denominations and backgrounds, as well as businesses, to join us as funding partners**, leveraging the impact of funding something with a collective goal of at least \$700,000, using the model below, but potentially \$1 million or more. We aim to attract partners at the following levels:

- 20 organizations and individuals to join us as partners at \$10,000 each
- 40 organizations and individuals to join us as partners at \$5,000 each
- 80 organizations and individuals to join us as partners at \$2,500 each
- 100 organizations and individuals to join us as partners at \$1,000 each
- 150 organizations and individuals to join us as partners at \$500 each

The success of this campaign will be largely volunteer driven. We will enlist a broad team of people (pastors and rabbis, community leaders, businesspeople, lay people, and more) to join us in recruiting an equally broad based group of donors. The intent is that it not be a long, drawn out campaign, but one that has a specific time frame so that, for instance, if every volunteer can commit to recruiting just 20 donors, that can be done over several weeks so it not be a burden. But that with this structure, everyone will be committed to the wider goals and realize that his or her success will be a critical part of the broader success of the campaign. Volunteers are invited to join us by email at Gen123Fdn@gmail.com.

Donations should be earmarked for the **Genesis 123 Foundation Ethiopian Jewry Program**, [on line here](#). Checks may be sent payable to Genesis 123 Foundation (33 Hageman Ln., Princeton, NJ, 08540), or contact us for instructions for wire transfer or donation of appreciated assets. Gen123Fdn@gmail.com.

Beneficiaries

In assessing the needs and cost to provide these services, the Genesis 123 Foundation has identified several prospective organizations to be the beneficiary of this comprehensive campaign. As noted, it's critical that we work with and provide funding to existing programs that have a track record, fill a need as highlighted in the priorities above, and operate with fiscal and programmatic integrity. As new immigrants arrive and needs shift, actual funding will be considered in response to these needs, and the beneficiaries will be engaged so that funds provided go to where they are intended, and we are not funding a program that's already paid for. Where possible we will also engage them to have a matching campaign of their own so that our funding leverages even more concrete results.

- Ariel University –is one of Israel's major universities that attracts the largest number of Ethiopian students in a wide array of academic fields. They have unique programs as well as scholarships to assist the Ethiopian students with the unique challenges and needs they have.
- BIBC – invests in growth through entrepreneurship, and increasing the prosperity of and establishing role models within a prosperous Ethiopian Israeli community. This includes local businesses to those with international appeal in technology and other areas. BIBC provides formal and informal training and guidance to support Ethiopians in business.



- Jewish Agency – is the long-time non-governmental arm that has as its primary responsibilities to promote and facilitate Aliyah, the actual immigration of Jews from around the world. For the Ethiopian Jewish community this includes the actual flights, as well as arrangements on the ground in Ethiopia and immediate absorption in Israel.
- NACOEJ - The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) is a veteran pillar advocating for Ethiopian Jews which: helps Ethiopian Jews survive in Ethiopia, assists them in reaching Israel, provides aid in their absorption into Israeli society, and helps preserve their unique cultural heritage.
- Netanya Foundation – Netanya is one of Israel’s largest and most thriving and fast-growing cities. It is also home to the largest community of Ethiopian Israelis. The municipality through its non-profit arm provides unique services to them in the city, and scholarships and other services for students and soldiers.
- Nishmat - supports young Ethiopian women in Israel who are provided with tools for their personal and professional advancement, enabling them to succeed academically, and develop their unique identity as independent Jewish women, proud of their Ethiopian heritage. The vast majority of graduates continue on to higher education and academic professional training.

Summary

We are privileged to present this broad-based vision and pray that you will see and choose to sow into this vision along with others. Rather than committing to raise a certain amount and invest it in X, Y, or Z as specific projects, we seek to be strategic and will collaborate with our partners, and assess where the immediate need and most impactful outcome can be made.

For information, or to join us, please contact Jonathan Feldstein, President, Genesis 123 Foundation, at Gen123Fdn@gmail.com or by phone at 1-201-203-0983, or +972-53-761-4220.

