

## Modern Exodus

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

Four years ago, Ethiopia was hard hit by a plague of locusts. More than three millenia ago, most of Egypt was filled with swarms of insects. As we are told in Exodus, the Lord made an exception for the ancient Hebrews: "I will set apart the region of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of insects shall be there."

Alas, in our own time, the 28,000 Ethiopian Jews (the long-suffering Falashas) had to endure the invasion of the insects along with the famine and drought that struck at the same time. Now when we celebrate Passover, it would be well to add a prayer for the deliverance of those who call themselves Beta Yisrael, the Black Jewish minority.

When Haile Selassie's army mutinied and de-throned him in 1974, land reform was instituted. But the Falashas, having been reaffirmed as Jews by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in 1973, were entitled under the Law of Return to citizenship in the Jewish state and yearned to move out of scenes of upheaval to the shelter and security of Israel.

Officials of the Jewish Agency assert that some 2000 Falashas have been brought to Israel in the past two years. Jerusalem reports that even now, the State manages to bring out about 300 a month from either Ethiopia or the refugee camps into which about 2,000,000 Ethiopians have fled.

What are they fleeing? According to a recent Human Rights report issued by the U.S. Department of State, political upheaval and pressures generated by war and insurrection have saddled Ethiopia with new campaigns of violence and terror. The U.S. report cites instances of torture and cruel punishment inflicted upon those out of favor with the Marxist State. This is not to say that the Falashas alone suffer. But reliable reports now coming from Ethiopia indicate that Major Melaku, the governor of the province of Gondar, has made life especially difficult for the small band of Falashas in that region.

These Jews have long known extreme poverty in a land of turmoil but have continued to live by the laws of Moses. With pride they claim descent from Menelek, first son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.

These are Ethiopians who live in a national community wherein Orthodox Christians and Moslems share equal religious power. It is a land with an illiteracy rate of 93% and an infant mortality rate of 84%. Life expectancy stops at 40 years. For the Falashas the influence of the USSR and the enmity towards Jews in nearby Saudi Arabia and Yemen add to the abundance

of fears...

When Mussolini's Black Shirts invaded Ethiopia in the mid-thirties, Haile Selassie turned in vain to the League of Nations for help to drive out those predators. Now the Falashas, our fellow Jews, have an international community as court of appeal. This court consists of Jews of many nations.

It is good to know that both the Council of Jewish Federations and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council have intensified their efforts to rescue the small band of Falashas. At the forefront of this effort is the Committee on Ethiopian Jews, created by the NJCRAC in 1979.

In this season of Passover, we all need to subscribe to the objectives of these and other thoughtful bodies determined to achieve a modern Exodus for people in a distant land.

GENEVA (WNS) -- A Geneva based correspondent of the South Korea Press Agency reported that an article which recently appeared in Korean newspapers noted that Israel rates as one of the most popular countries among Koreans. Other popular countries are the United States, Switzerland, France and England.

WASHINGTON (WNS) -- The Reagan Administration does not expect any movement on the autonomy talks between Israel and Egypt until after Israel completes its withdrawal from Sinai.

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