

“Jognau, The Dreamer”



An original story by Sylvia Rouss and Ambassador Asher Naim

Illustrator Dawn Phillips

Authors and Illustrator and the sponsoring charity –

The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews



Sylvia Rouss is privileged to write this story with Ambassador Naim and to donate this story to support the work of the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews. She is the award winning author of the Sammy Spider series and an early childhood education teacher. Sylvia received the National Jewish Book award for *The Littlest Pair* and Sydney Taylor awards for *Tali's Jerusalem Scrapbook*, *Sammy Spider's First Shavuot*, and *Sammy Spider's First Trip to Israel*. With over 35 books in print, Sylvia Rouss is a featured author and lecturer at book fairs throughout the United States and Israel. You can learn more about Sylvia by visiting www.sylviarouss.com.



Ambassador Asher Naim immigrated to Israel from Tripoli, Libya, fought in the War of Independence, and is a veteran of Israel's Foreign Service, serving in Tokyo, Kenya, Uganda, and Washington, D.C. before becoming Israel's Ambassador to Finland, Ethiopia, the United Nations and Korea. As the Ambassador to Ethiopia in 1990-91, he was instrumental in negotiating the airlift, known as Operation Solomon, of 14,200 Ethiopian Jews during a period of 36 hours to Israel. After retiring in 1995, Ambassador Naim continued his activity on behalf of the Ethiopian community, to ease its absorption and integration into Israeli society, mainly through higher education. Ambassador Naim's book, *Saving the Lost Tribe: the Rescue and Redemption of the Ethiopian Jews*, was published by Random House in 2003. He and his wife, Hilda, have three children and reside in Jerusalem. Ambassador Naim was named recipient of the 2009 Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award.



Dawn Phillips resides in Council Bluffs, IA and has over 25 children's books published as an Illustrator. She has a Bachelor's degree in marketing management at Bellevue University, and an Associate's degree in fine arts at University of Nebraska at Omaha, as well as a technical degree in graphic arts/illustrations and electronic imaging at Universal Technical Institute and Metro Community College. You can learn more about Dawn by visiting <http://www.rdchildrensbooks.com> and <http://rdchildrensbooks.blogspot.com>.

History

Operation Solomon was a secret rescue operation to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel. In 1991, the Ethiopian government was close to being toppled in a civil war that threatened the well-being of the sizable population of Ethiopian Jews. In 36 hours, non-stop flights of Israeli aircraft, including El Al cargo planes, transported 14,325 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The operation set a world record for single-flight passenger load on May 24, 1991 when an El Al 747 carried 1,122 passengers to Israel. Two babies were born during the flight.

Dedication

To Ambassador Asher and Hilda Naim, Sara Bogen, and all the men and women who have made Israel a “democratic light onto the nations” – B’Shalom, Sylvia Rouss.



**Scholarship Fund
for Ethiopian Jews**

The Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews is an American non-profit and tax-exempt charity dedicated to the development of a pool of talented, well-educated and highly motivated Ethiopian Israelis, who are committed to serving their own community, as well that of all Israel. In the belief that education is the single most effective tool for the integration of the Ethiopian community into Israeli society, the Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews was founded to raise funds for the promotion of post-secondary education among Ethiopian Israelis. To date, contributions have assisted more than 2000 Ethiopian Israelis to achieve the education required for successful integration into the economic and social reality that is modern-day Israel.

Donations can be sent to Scholarship Fund for Ethiopian Jews, 19202 Black Mangrove Court Boca Raton, FL 33498. For additional information, you can go to our web site at

<http://www.sfej.org/>



The Western Wall glistens in the Jerusalem sunlight as I watch my brother Joseph chant the Hebrew prayers. He is the first member of our family to become a Bar Mitzvah.

Thirteen years ago, my family lived in an African village. I can still recall the mountains and lakes of Ethiopia, which were home to baboons, hippos, and gazelles.

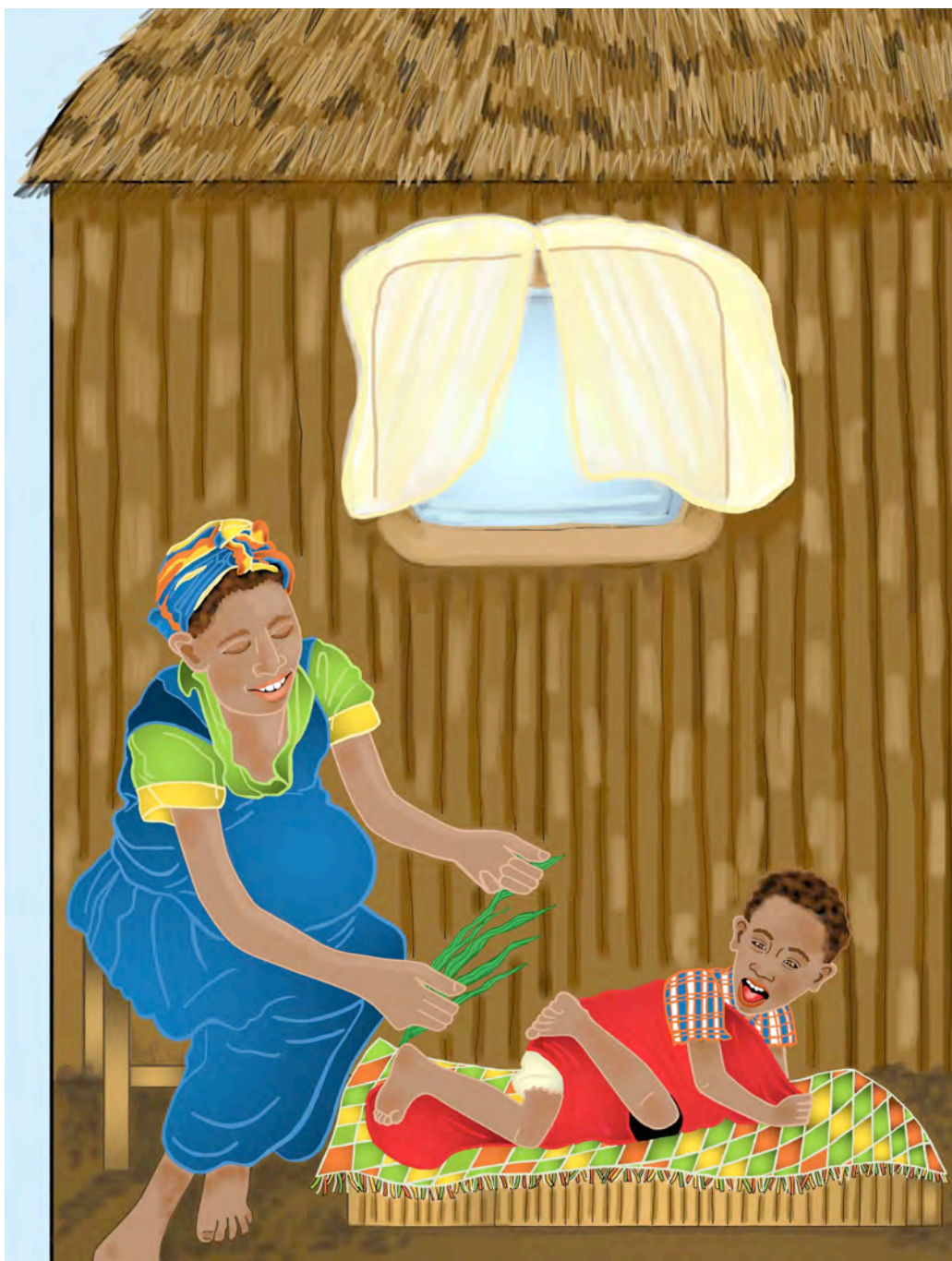
Although Jews had lived there for thousands of years, we never felt at home. We were called Falashas, strangers, and we thought we were the last remaining Jews.



My village was made up of thatched huts built near a small stream. The largest hut with a Star of David woven into it's ceiling was our synagogue. Every evening my family gathered in our hut for dinner. At night, we slept on straw mats. I was a sound sleeper and the last one up each day.



I thought about one morning shortly before we left for Israel, I heard my mother’s voice saying, “Jognau, wake up.” I squirmed away as she tickled my feet with a reed used to weave baskets. “You don’t want to be late for school.”



I dressed quickly and approached my sister, Maniye who was baking bread. As I reached to take a warm piece, Maniye snatched it away. “You haven’t brushed your teeth!” she scolded. I grabbed a twig and scraped it across my teeth. Satisfied, Maniye handed me some bread. My sister was a great help to my mother. Besides cooking, she wove baskets and designed pottery.





I looked at my mother’s rounded belly and knew that soon she would rely on my sister even more. I was thrilled to know that with the arrival of the baby, I would no longer be the youngest. As I swallowed the last bite of bread, my mother handed me a basket of food. “Jognau, please take this to your father and brother on your way to school.”

When I dashed into the field where my brother, Adane, was herding the sheep, I fell into a deep hole. I tried to climb out, but the sides were too steep. I called for help, but no one came. After a few more attempts, I was exhausted. I closed my eyes and entered the world of dreams. A gazelle peered over the side of the hole. “Jognau, hold onto my antlers and I will pull you out. Climb on my back, I shall take you to the tops of mountains so you can see distant places. Each day we will find new mountains to climb.”



Suddenly, a Hyena interrupted the Gazelle. “Jognau, hold onto my tail and I will pull you out. Together we can hide in the shadows and feed off the scraps of others.”

Flapping wings brushed aside the Hyena. A huge eagle looked at me. “Jognau, pull yourself out. Then hold onto my wings and we shall fly to your home, far, far, away! Wake up, Jognau!”



I opened my eyes and saw my brother Adane looking down at me. “Here take my hand, he said, reaching toward me.

“No,” I replied, handing him the basket of food. “I’ll climb out on my own.” I found a small toehold, grabbed onto a clump of grass, and pulled myself out. I began to tell Adane about my dream.

“Jognau, you’re such a dreamer!” he interrupted. He removed some food from the basket and handed it back to me. “You’d better hurry and bring the rest to Father.”



I ran to the field where my father was plowing. “Jognau, finally you’re here!” he said.

“I fell into a hole and couldn’t get out,” I explained.

“Oh, really?” responded my father.

“Yes, Then I fell asleep and had this strange dream.”

“Enough, he smiled. “You’re late for school.”

I hugged him and sprinted across the field.

When I arrived at school, everyone was gathered around a group of visitors. My friend pointed at one of the men and whispered, “He’s the Ambassador from Israel!”





The Ambassador told us that he hoped we would soon be able to go to Israel, a place many Ethiopian Jews have longed to return to for thousands of years.

“Legend says one day we will return to Israel on the wings of eagles,” an older boy said.

“It’s like my dream!” I exclaimed and then I told them the story.

The Ambassador looked at me thoughtfully once I finished. “Have you heard of Joseph?” he asked.

“Yes,” I answered. Joseph was a young Hebrew boy whose dreams foretold the future.

“I believe that, like Joseph, you will discover the meaning of your dream,” the Ambassador said.

On my way home from school, I searched the sky hoping to see the eagle from my dream, but saw only clouds.

When I approached my village, I noticed my father and several men talking.

“Soon we will leave for Jerusalem!” one man declared.

My father shook his head. “The government will never let us go.”

“Some Jews managed to leave a few years ago,” another man insisted.

I ran to my father. “The Ambassador from Israel came to school and said that we will go to Israel,” I said.



“I wouldn’t risk a trip like that. Your mother will soon give birth,” my father replied.

Over the next few weeks, many villagers prepared for the trip, but my family didn’t.



One day Maniye showed my father a large basket she had woven. “If we go to Israel, we can pack our belongings in it,” she suggested.

“Your mother can’t travel now!” my father stated.

My mother paused when she heard this.

“Please don’t deny our children the chance for a life in the land that God promised us,” she said.

“Are you sure you can make this trip?” my father asked.

When my mother nodded, his face filled with pride. “Then we shall go.”

The next week we received word from the Ambassador of Israel. “You are leaving today!”

My mother packed our belongings in the basket Maniye had made. Then my father handed us each a pair of shoes. “I traded the ox and plow for these.” I realized how important going to Israel really was to our father. He wanted us to look our very best!

Soon buses arrived. We traveled for many hours until we came to a large field. I heard a roaring noise and looked up to see a huge winged bird swoop down. “An eagle!” I shouted.





“No, Jognau. It’s an airplane,” my father said. But I knew it was the eagle from my dream. Soon other “eagles” arrived. We lined up with hundreds of others and climbed into the large belly of the bird.



In the sky, my mother clutched her stomach, “I think it’s time, she whispered to my father. And there, inside the “eagle,” my mother gave birth to my brother, whom we named Joseph-it was my idea.

It’s been thirteen years since we arrived in Israel. We live in an apartment provided by the government. My father works on a large farm nearby. Adane is studying to be a veterinarian. My sister, Maniye, and my mother have opened their own shop selling baskets and pottery. I am studying at the University after completing my army service.



And today, my brother Joseph is becoming a Bar Mitzvah. I listen to him give his speech, sharing with everyone the dream I once shared with him. “I believe that Jognau’s dream is about the choices we make. Had my family stayed with the hyena, we would still be living as outcasts in Ethiopia. Had they chosen the gazelle, my family could have traveled to other countries, never settling anywhere. But, my family decided to fly with the eagle and after nearly 3000 years, we returned to Israel, the place that is truly our home.”