



Jewish Voice Ministries International

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PRESS RELEASE

JEWISH VOICE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL (JVMI) BRINGS HEALING AND HOPE TO ETHIOPIA'S FORGOTTEN COMMUNITIES

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA—March 30-April 4, 2009: More than 7,500 patients of all ages received much needed treatment at a **free medical clinic** arranged by Jonathan Bernis of **Jewish Voice Ministries International**, a Phoenix, AZ based ministry dedicated to reaching scattered Jewish Communities around the world that need practical and spiritual assistance.

Eighty-three volunteer professionals from North America and Europe joined 100 local volunteers to provide healthcare treatment that included dental care, eye glasses, family medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN services, optical surgery and pharmacology in this week-long humanitarian event. Patients treated at the Kechene* clinic totaled 6,100 with another 1,200 treated at another location. The medical team also visited a local orphanage where they treated 200 children. This outreach received wide media coverage throughout Ethiopia, and Jonathan was invited to be a guest on the primetime national talk show, "Meet E-TV."

"The poverty and need in Ethiopia is immense," JVMI President/Rabbi Jonathan Bernis said, "it is a bottomless pit of humanity needing our help. It is like digging in sand. You help one and ten more are waiting outside begging you to help them. You just have to be thankful for those you were able to help this time and say, next time, with God's grace, we will help many more! We are committed to work in Ethiopia until the Lord returns or all the Jews are able to go to Israel."

Rabbi Bernis and his team came to Ethiopia representing thousands of American, Canadian, Latin American, and European citizens who funded this event by donation. The value of the medical care performed during the week totaled \$1.4 million U.S. dollars (\$15.4 million Birr).

Through the love demonstrated from the compassionate volunteer staff of medical professionals, nearly 500 Ethiopians discovered the love of God and the Messiah of Israel. Many critically needy people who presented with medical conditions that were too complex or incurable were referred to prayer counselors. In this atmosphere of faith, more than 375 people were miraculously healed of afflictions ranging from deafness, blindness, lameness, to the disappearance of tumors!

Jonathan, and the **JVMI** staff, volunteers, and donors have developed a deep love and affection for their unique patients. Ethiopia is home to the poorest Jews on the earth—the *Beta Israel* and *Beta Avraham*, the *Black Jews* of Addis Ababa and Gondar. Also numbered among the Lost Tribes of Israel, they live in abject poverty while awaiting *aliyah*, immigration to Israel.

Jewish Voice and Jonathan Bernis were warmly welcomed by the President of Ethiopia, whose palace is filled with Hebraic symbols harkening back to reign of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, who considered himself the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Jonathan and the team were honored to be able to perform a Passover Seder at the Presidential Palace during Passover week in Addis Ababa. During the week, JVMI leaders were invited to meet with both the U.S. Ambassador and the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. “God’s favor was on this outreach like never before,” Jonathan said, “doors to the highest levels of government and religious leadership opened for us. This is a result of God’s grace and 10 years of consistent medical assistance to the Ethiopian People.”

With a strong desire to provide clinics more often, this year **Jewish Voice** will announce the opening of a permanent medical clinic to serve the people in the Kechene community of Ethiopia.

Jewish Voice Ministries International was founded in 1967 by Rev. Louis Kaplan. **JVMI** expanded its scope with international medical missions (first to the former Soviet Union), in 1999 when Rabbi Jonathan Bernis assumed the **JVMI** presidency. **Jewish Voice** has conducted free medical clinics and working to help the remaining Ethiopian Jewish Community in Ethiopia since 2000. Between 2006-2008, additional clinics were conducted in both Addis Ababa and Gondar. The ministry’s focus is proclaiming the Messiah to the Jewish People scattered throughout the world, as well as to the Nations. JVMI is also dedicated to teaching the Church its Hebraic foundation, its responsibility to Israel, and equipping it to reach the Jewish People with an authentic and relevant message of salvation.

Cheryl Schang, Vice President of International Outreach for JVMI, cschang@gmail.com 602-971-8501 is available for media interviews.

*Kechene is a suburb of Ethiopia’s capital city, Addis Ababa, inhabited by some 30,000 Jews known as the *Beta Avraham* (Jews who converted to Orthodox Christianity over a century ago, but secretly retained Jewish customs and practices). Originally from Gondar, these people are not yet officially recognized by Israel so they must remain in Kechene, the poorest community in the capital region and one of the poorest in Ethiopia.

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