



The Importance of Ethiopian-Australian Relations

An Address to the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce

*By HH Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie,
President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia*

The State Reception Center, Perth, Australia: June 29, 2017

The leadership of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce;

Our sponsors here today, Harold Clough and Stephen Quantrill of McRae Investments, and the team from Herbert Smith Freehills;

Distinguished citizens of this beautiful State of Western Australia:

... Many thanks for the incredibly gracious hospitality you have extended to me today, and since my arrival in this beautiful land. I have been anxious since arriving in Australia to reach the shores of the Indian Ocean, knowing that they also reach into the Red Sea and to the historical lands of the many peoples who have made the saga of Ethiopia. I cannot continue without also paying tribute and thanks to some great Australian companies which have made this visit possible: Virgin Australia – a remarkable, and truly Australian airline – and Globetrotter Tours, and Penny Inc. – two Perth-based companies – as well as Kefford Corporation. So many Australians and Ethiopian-Australians, as well as Americans, came together to make this visit so successful and special. For me, this has been especially overwhelming and emotional.

These wonderful supporters understood why this visit was so significant and I hope, after my remarks, you will too. I only wish that I could have met that wonderful West Australian Sir Charles Court, who escorted my Grandfather on his Perth visit. Greg continues to speak of him with great affection

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

and said that he was, with Sir John Monash, one of the great Australian statesmen. I know the Emperor enjoyed his time with Sir Charles.

I have entitled my section of the remarks today “The Importance of Ethiopian-Australian Relations”, which I hope follow nicely from Gregory Copley’s global overview. Greg and I work every day on global strategic issues, as well as on Red Sea and Indian Ocean issues, so I am familiar with the global context which Greg has described to you. This leads us to the great significance of Australian-Ethiopian relations which, ultimately, is why I am here in this city of black swans.

The visit here in 1968 of my Grandfather, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie, was very much about cementing and developing relations between two countries which, at first glance, might seem stunningly different. And yet we are also stunningly compatible in our approach to life, and in our understanding of the historical importance of the seaways which bind us.

Notwithstanding the importance in the past half century of Western Australia’s great resources trade with Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and then the People’s Republic of China, it is clear that Australia’s maritime links across the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and Suez Canal have vital trade and security implications for Australia. The Indian Ocean will always remain the crucial strategic zone – the dynamic arena – for both of our countries.

It is no surprise to Ethiopians that Australian warships still help to protect the Red Sea and north-western Indian Ocean, or that Australian troops help to stabilise the parts of Africa and the Middle East. It was unfortunate that the long ties between Ethiopia and Australia were so tragically interrupted by the coup of 1974 in Ethiopia, which cut short my country’s progress toward democracy, education, and productivity. But we are back on the path toward all of those cherished goals of my Grandfather. And we have recently seen the re-establishment of embassies between our countries.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

Emperor Haile Selassie recognised that our two nations were linked by the Indian Ocean; that our peoples had consistently fought on the same side of history;

that our cultures were inevitably the product of the same Abrahamic ethos.

And that the unbroken Solomonic line which, for Ethiopia, began with the union of King Solomon and Queen Makeda of Saba – the Queen of Sheba – produced an historical line which represents the timeline and bloodline of Western civilisation.

It almost goes without saying that my Grandfather continued Ethiopia's love of Jerusalem, which formed the cultural origins of Ethiopia because of the union of King Solomon and Queen Makeda of Saba – the Queen of Sheba – more than three millennia ago. So it is fitting that we are here today to discuss this tripartite relationship of Australia, Israel, and Ethiopia. When you, here in Perth, think of Israel, think also of the Second Zion which Emperor Menelik the First – the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba – created in Ethiopia.

But my Grandfather's particular fondness for Australia partly originated in his love of horses, and particularly for the Walers which found their way into the Imperial Guard Regiment as a result of the Australian Light Horsemen having to leave these gallant mounts in the Middle East before they sailed for Gallipoli.

At least in that light, we see the ANZAC Spirit still at the gallop in Ethiopia's beautiful terrain.

Earlier, of course, we had the scent of Australia because of the eucalyptus groves which Emperor Menelik II planted around Addis Ababa to reforest the city as he built it in the late 19th Century.

So for me, my first scent of Australia was a scent of home.

It was a point of great comfort and pride that last week I was able to lay a wreath at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in remembrance of Australian-Ethiopian ties and mutual sacrifice.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

My Grandfather laid a similar wreath in 1968. And I am sure that he was as moved as I was at the solemnity of that sacred place which carries the soul of Australia.

Last Friday, at the beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, I planted a tree near the tree planted there a half-century ago by the Emperor. I shoveled the first earth onto the new tree using the spade my Grandfather had used. And then the rest of the earth with another spade, which was inscribed with my name.

We see the constancy of our ties.

In Canberra, too, I enjoyed three separate Parliamentary receptions to celebrate the visit. They were at the highest ministerial levels. I was privileged to meet and talk with the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. I was hosted at dinner by former Governor-General – and former Western Australian Governor – Michael Jeffery and Mrs Jeffery, old friends. The Ethiopian Ambassador in Canberra also opened the doors and heart of the Embassy to me. And, as in Sydney, I met in Canberra with Ethiopians whose loyalty to the Emperor has not dimmed, and has been passed on to the next generation.

In Sydney, we were received wonderfully at the New South Wales Parliament. At that august establishment, as in Canberra, my visit was acknowledged from the parliamentary floor, wonderful tributes. But there have been many other meetings here which have shown how much people cherish the memories of the Emperor and the ties with Ethiopia. Those meetings, too, with members of the Ethiopian community in every city I have visited have been profoundly moving and rewarding.

There were many factors which caused my Grandfather to come here on a formal State Visit in 1968. He saw in Australians a population he admired, taking the best from its British origins but fighting – as he saw in World War I, World War II, and Korea – with an easygoing, good-humoured spirit to defend a tradition of civilisational values.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

He saw an Australia committed to the principles of collective security; of participation in the defence of the rights of many peoples. This, for my Grandfather, resonated profoundly. He had seen the failures of talk among the international community when the League of Nations could not prevent the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. He, and Ethiopia, were left alone, cast adrift, and seemingly bereft of hope by the failure of the global community to stop the invasion.

His words as he left the podium at the League of Nations were: “Today it is us; tomorrow it is you.” And finally, as the world collapsed into World War II, he saw Britain throw him the first lifeline of hope with a small force — which included Australians — to support the Ethiopian resistance. When they re-took Ethiopia they gave the Allies the first great victory of World War II. It was in a broader Middle East in which Australians were already heavily committed, understanding then that Australia’s lifelines passed through Ethiopia’s sphere of influence to Europe.

But from that point forward, the Emperor championed the causes of collective security, as Australia itself did. He threw himself into the development of international bodies to work for the common good, from the United Nations to the Organisation for African Unity. He committed himself and the blood of the Ethiopian People to these concepts, as did Australia. Ethiopian and Australian troops were to fight together on the same side again — the side of the united nations; the Allies — in Korea.

So my Grandfather saw in Australians an egalitarian people who spoke directly to each other; *with* each other. There is no question that some of the World War II links with Ethiopia continued. Certainly, Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies was familiar with the role of Ethiopia and the Emperor in World War II, and Australia’s Governor-General, Lord Casey, had been heavily engaged in the Middle East during the war. Casey was familiar with the Emperor and Ethiopia. And so began Australia’s overtures to Ethiopia, starting with a typically Australian gesture: cricket diplomacy.

Sir Robert Menzies’ sent a youth cricket team to Ethiopia in 1965. It was a team of New South Wales schoolboys under the tutelage of the great Australian test cricketer, Bert Oldfield. They went to play the Wingate School

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

team in Addis Ababa. Of course, Wingate School was named after Ord Wingate, the British soldier sent by Churchill to assist Ethiopia recapture the country, and who later fought in Burma alongside the Australians. Anyway, Bert Oldfield took a cricket bat to give to the Emperor from Sir Robert, and it was a gesture which touched my Grandfather greatly.

It led to the State Visit of 1968, by which time Sir Robert was no longer Prime Minister. But the fundamentals did not change. When the State Visit took place with Australia under the Premiership of John Gorton, the nation was still seen as an ideal by the Emperor.

Today, the nephew of Sir Robert's envoy, Bert Oldfield, Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM, Australia's first astronaut, and one of the world's great polymaths, is a scientific advisor to the Ethiopian Crown Council. He looked down upon Ethiopia from the Space Shuttle, remembering his uncle's stories, not realising then that he and I would one day meet, and that he would become a great friend himself to Ethiopia.

There were many personal touches in the links between Australians and the Emperor; and between our two strikingly compatible but vastly different cultures. The Emperor saw in Australia's political structure something which embodied what he sought to create in Ethiopia.

He *wanted* governance devolved upon the People.

He also saw the vital necessity, of course, to perpetuate the great continuity which an ancient Crown and bloodline gave to the identity of Ethiopians — the sixty or so nations of people which comprise the Ethiopian entity — but he wanted that Crown to be iconic and above politics. And he knew that what ultimately drives national confidence and successful governance of any people is their sense of identity security.

The Solomonic identity, and the great saga of the *Kebre Negast* — which means the Glory of Kings — were part of what defined the Ethiopian People in the same way that ANZAC defines the Australian and New Zealand Peoples.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

Emperor Haile Selassie saw that Australia, and other British dominions in similar though different ways in New Zealand and Canada, had created something unique and special from the British parent from whom they sprang.

There is no question that my Grandfather profoundly admired the iconic, stabilising role which the British Crown gave to the United Kingdom, but he saw that Australia — as well as New Zealand and Canada — took that iconic and historical Crown and blended it with the egalitarianism of new societies. ... New societies which he saw as self-reliant; intrinsically rather than legalistically democratic; and in which the Crown and the People were a fused entity.

My Grandfather loved democracy, and fought diligently to bring it to Ethiopia, first by introducing education on a broad scale.

My Australian strategic advisor for many decades, Gregory Copley, in a talk at the US Library of Congress a month ago, said that the Emperor introduced education at a helter-skelter pace in order to create an informed and proud electorate. He introduced assemblies which were modeled on those created in the British Commonwealth. Gregory indicated that he felt that the Emperor's approach to giving an international education to as many young Ethiopians as possible worked against the Crown in the short-term.

There is no question that, by educating so many passionate young people so quickly, and bringing them back into a country struggling desperately to escape the poverty of an agrarian economy, he saw expectations rise more rapidly than his fledgling democracy could deliver. In that, he may have sown the seeds of the 1974 coup which gave Ethiopia decades of poverty, dictatorship, and regression, only now beginning to fade.

But the Emperor was not wrong in his historical vision of what Ethiopia needed.

It needed education; it needed democracy; it needed to retain its many millennia of identity.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

I do not believe that his vision was destroyed by that dreadful coup and his cruel regicide in 1974, at the hands of a few individuals who wanted personal gain and ended up having to sell our country to an alliance with totalitarianism.

I believe that the Emperor's vision *will* come to pass.

Ethiopia's return to its three millennia of Solomonic identity and the duty of Ethiopians to share that with the world; Ethiopia's commitment to modern governance and education: *all* will yield the perpetuation of our ancient civilisation, but now in a modern context.

My Grandfather saw, when he came to Australia, a constitutional monarchical democracy which sat easily on the shoulders and in the hearts of Australians.

He saw the unimpeachable valour and dignity of a society which embodied self-reliance, compassion and duty to others — an easy and loving commitment to the true meaning of mateship — and a familial relationship between their own Crown and all of society.

He saw a society in which both Crown and the People — gathered from so many places and from Australia's own ancient societies — were equal, sovereign, indivisible.

I hope you see what you have here in your great society.

Do not let it slip away.

You have demonstrated the value of the Crown in an age of uncertainty.

Some have asked why I chose to commemorate the Emperor's State Visit to Australia, when he visited so many lands.

But where else should I be?

I know why this sunburnt country; this land of sweeping plains, felt like a home to my Grandfather.

And why Australia and Ethiopia are family.

June 29, 2017

Perth, Australia

Family who should meet more often.

I realize that there was so much to say that we did not — and possibly could not — cover as much as I would have liked today. But let me say that we *know* that we are in an age when the world's strategic architecture is changing. Borders are changing; power is changing; populations are on the move. All of this profoundly challenges the way civilisations and cultures preserve themselves, and whether or not they disappear.

As someone representing the most ancient monarchy in the world, let me say that what we know from Ethiopia's and Australia's experiences is that the Crown is a safe haven.

It represents stability.

It represents identity.

And in this world of change, identity security is the only portable and enduring form of security. It gives the sense of self-confidence, hope, duty, and caring.

Let me conclude now. Let me thank you, on behalf of myself, my Grandfather, and on behalf of all Ethiopians.

We thank you for what Australia represents, and what it can and must represent in the future to my Ethiopian Peoples — in their ancient homeland and now scattered around the world — and to all those of all societies who value what a Crown and a People can do together.

God bless you. God bless Her Majesty the Queen of Australia. And God bless the work you are doing to preserve the cultural and civilizational values which have made Australia the hope of the future.