THE EXODUS FROM YEMEN




GREECE
TURKEY
U.S.S.R.
CASPIAN SEA
CRETE
CYPRUS
SYRIA
IRAQ
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ISRAEL
JERUSALEM
TRANS JORDAN
LIBYA
EGYPT
ARABIA
FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA
ANGLO- EGYPTIAN- SUDAN
ERITREA
YEMEN
HADHRAM
ABYSSINIA
ADEN
GULF OF ADEN

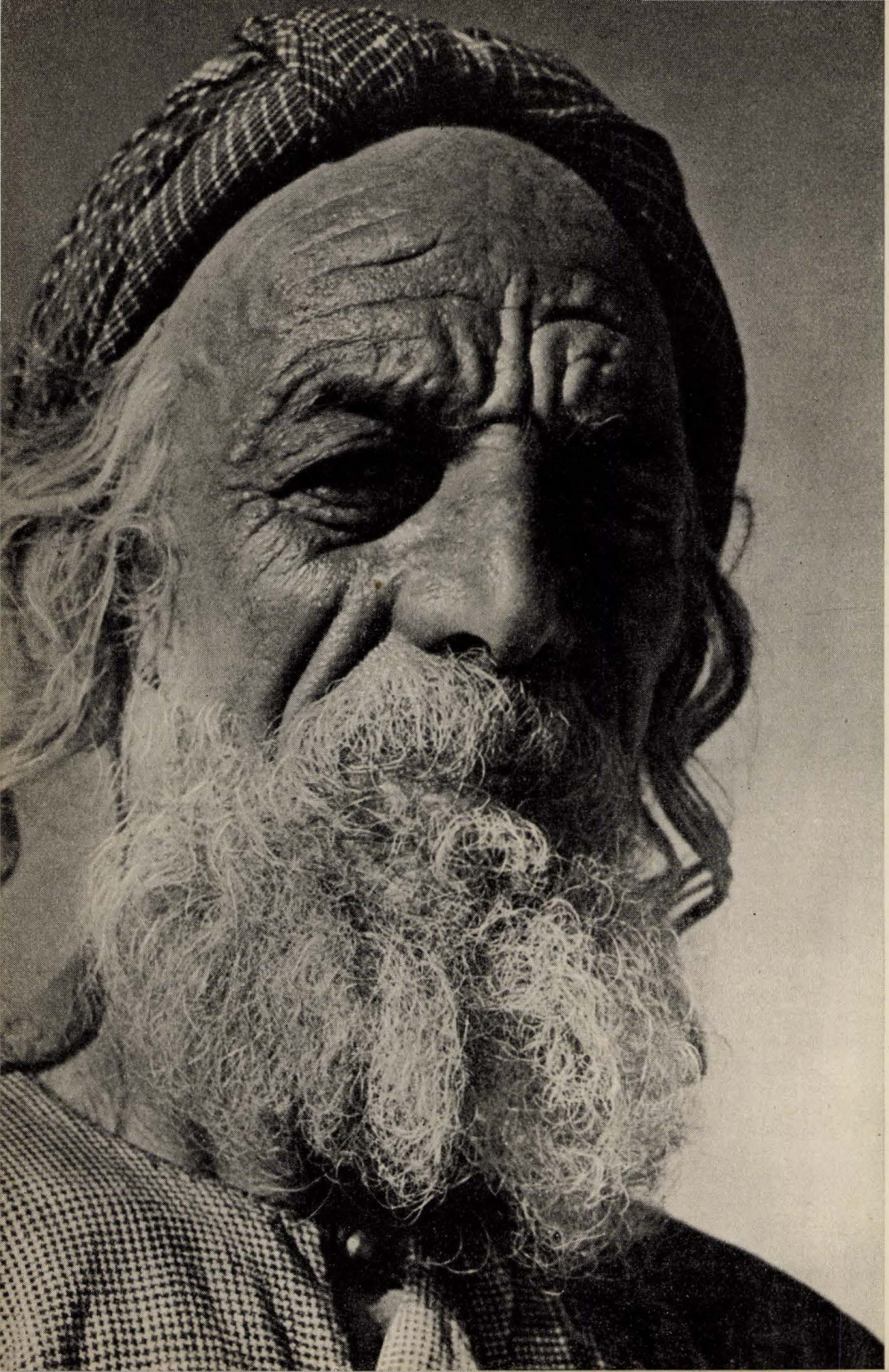
To all those who participated in the redemption of the Jews of Yemen- to the people and the Government of the State of Israel to the organisers and the camp workers both in Israel and in Aden, and to the thousands of generous donors throughout the whole world but particularly in the U.S.A., under the leadership of the United Jewish Appeal, including the United Palestine Appeal and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, who made the realisation of this messianic vision possible - The Keren Hayesod records its respectful homage.

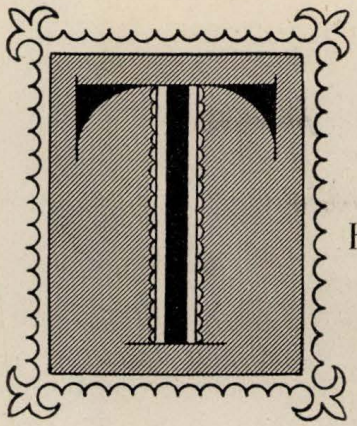
KIBBUTZ GALUYOTH • INGATHERING OF EXILES

THE EXODUS FROM YEMEN

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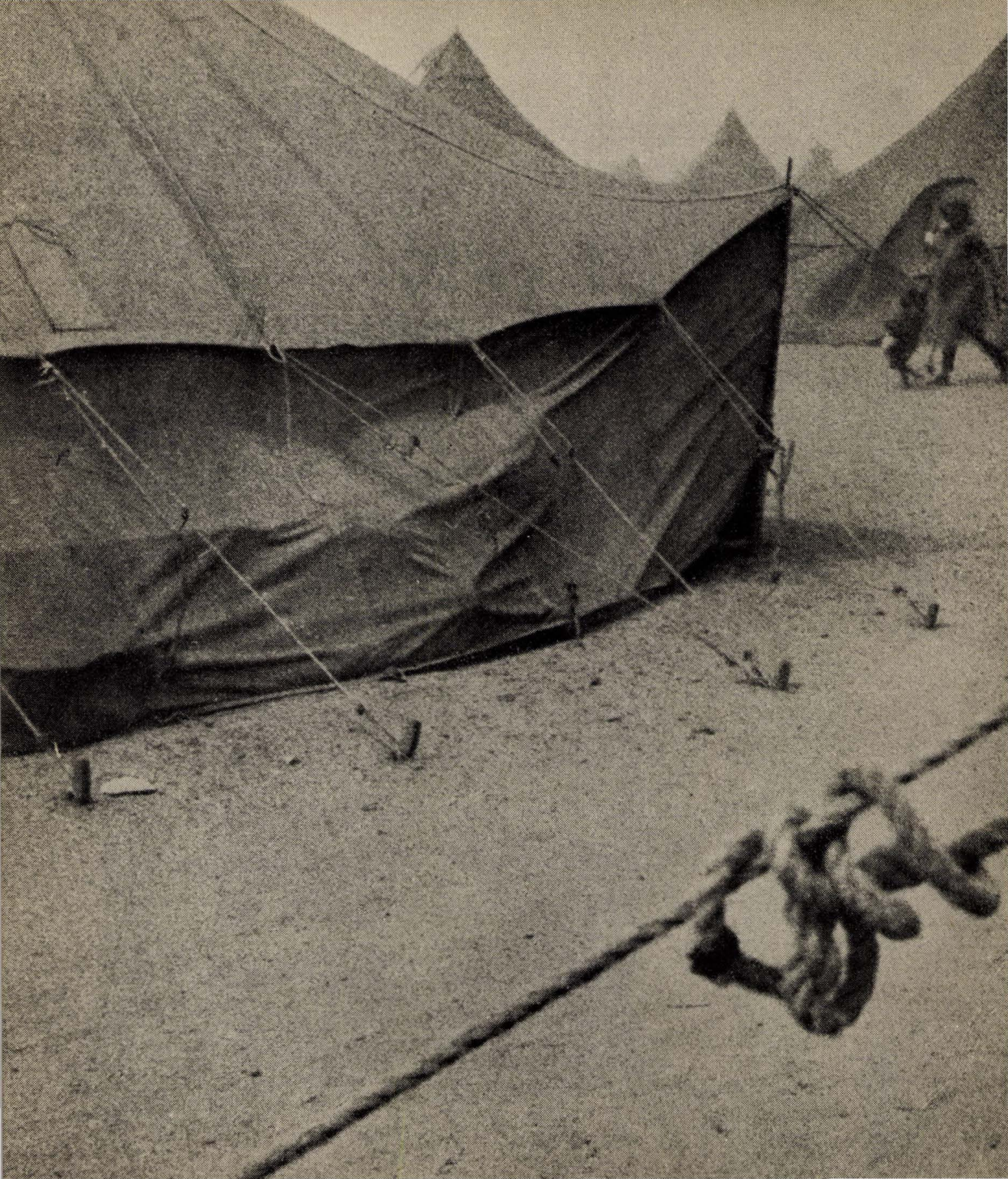
KEREN HAYESOD HEAD OFFICE JERUSALEM

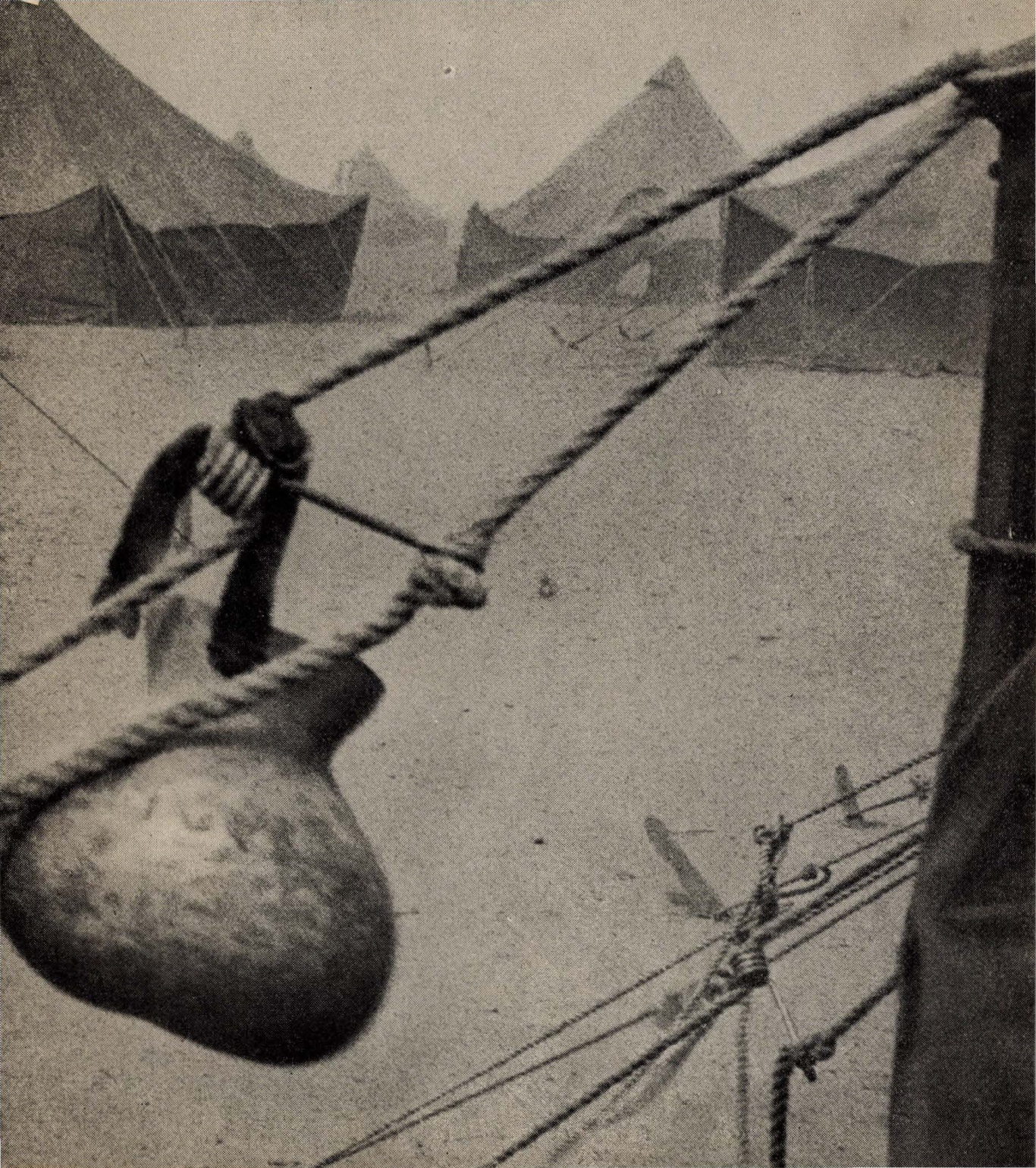


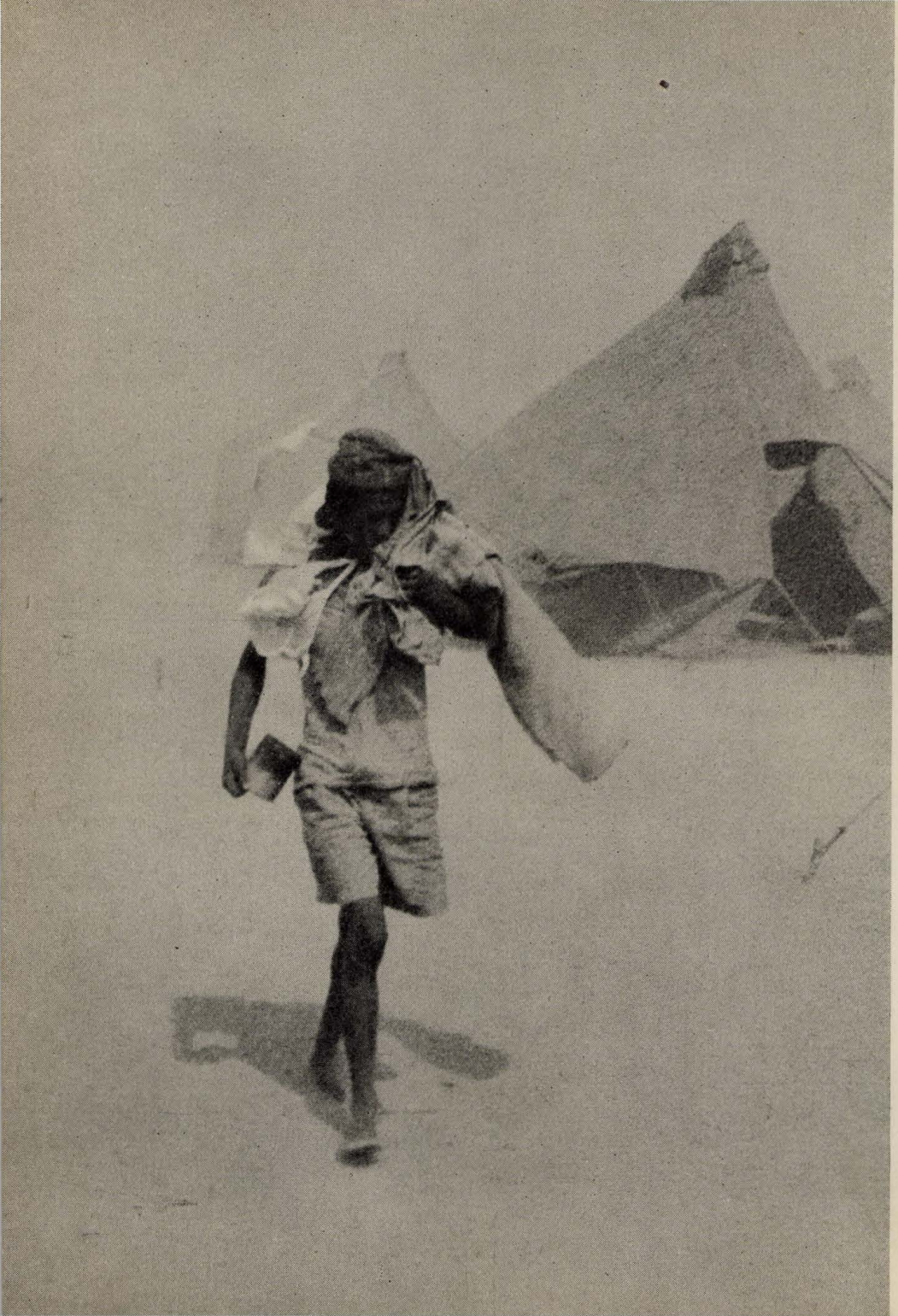


HIS IS A SIMPLE STORY, told about simple people. In this odyssey of 25 centuries, the real heroes are the nameless men, women, and children of the Jewish community of Yemen. The history of this community is briefly narrated. "The Great Return" is depicted in documentary photographs. We believe it imperative for every Jew to know and to understand this story. Let the report speak for itself. Let each be his own judge of what action the message calls for.

KEREN HAYESOD, JERUSALEM







"By strength
of hand
the Lord
brought you
out from
this place."
(Exodus 13,3)



"REMEMBER THIS DAY"



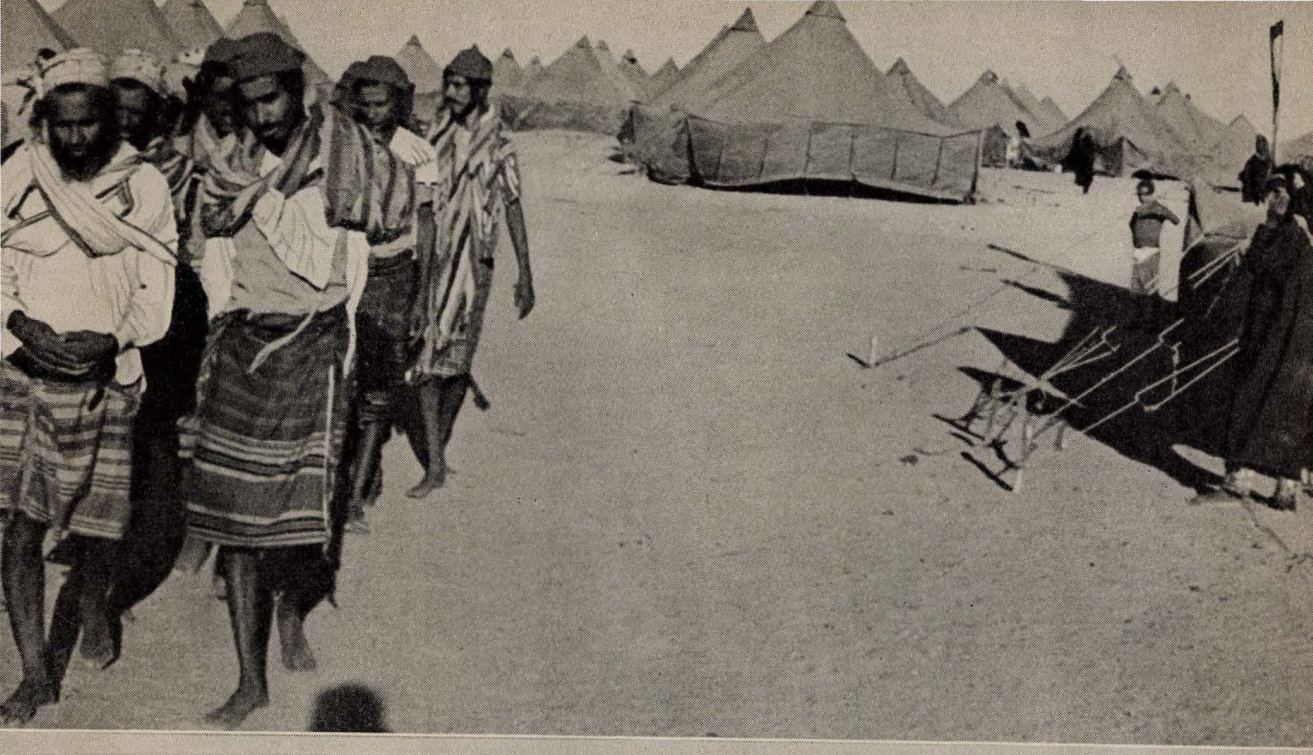
Hope breaks through the darkness of the centuries.



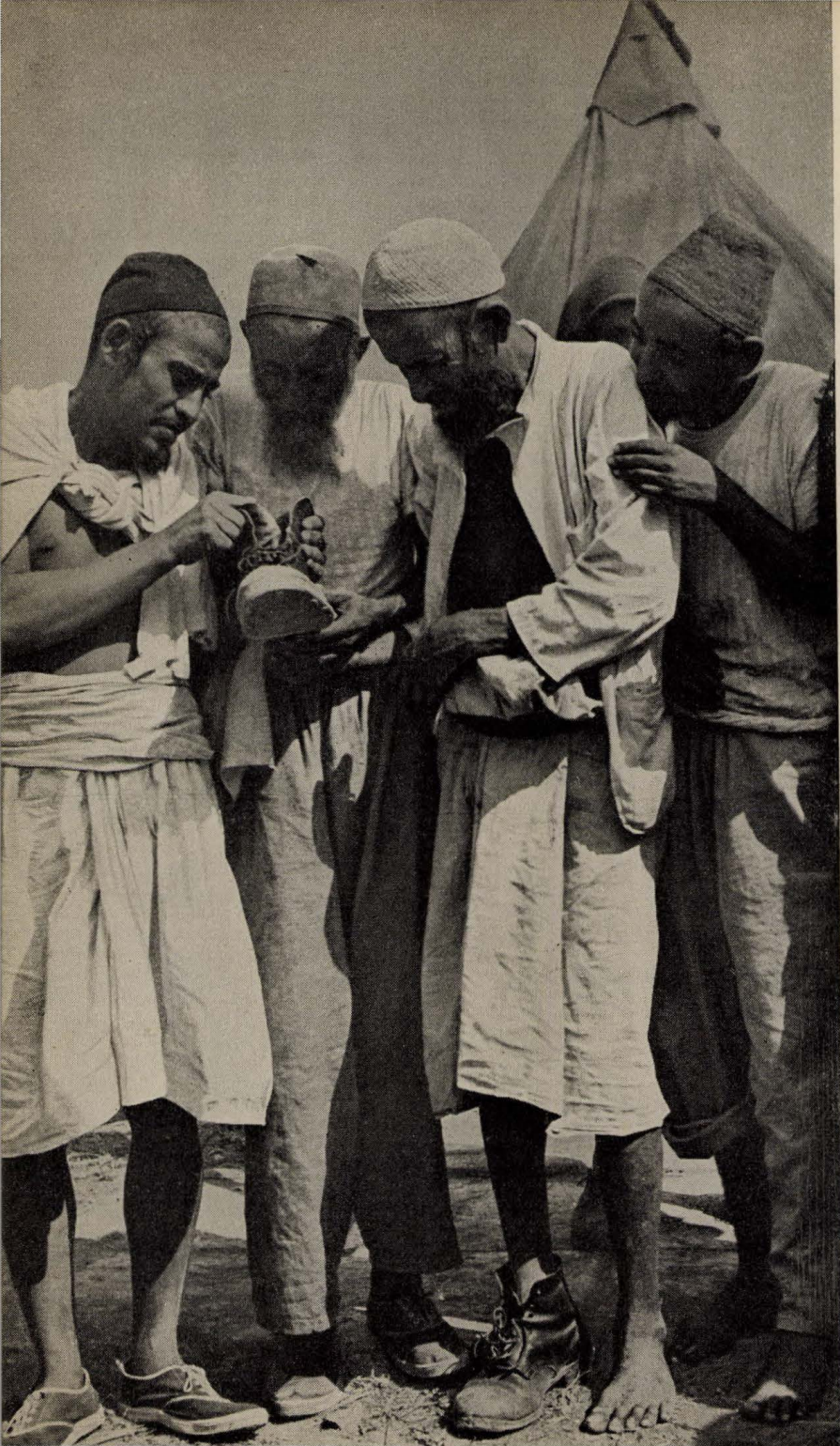
Israel and American Jewry extend a succouring hand to their brethren in the ancient Galuth of Yemen.



When news of the redemption
of Israel reaches them,
thousands leave their homes in haste
and flock to the transit camps
in the Protectorate of Aden.







The puzzle in hand
is one of the least
of the problems
of adaptation
to Western life
with which they will
have to grapple.



Inoculation against disease will replace his faith in an esoteric amulet.



Manna in the desert, a modern variation.



Tattered ra
are replace
with new
clothes.

Mother-love
is the same
the world over,
but practical
details differ.





Comfort ye,
my son,
the doctor
means you well.





Jewish orphans
were once subject
to forcible conversion
to Islam,
and became
the personal property
of the Imam.

Knife, fork,
and plate
technology
enters their lives.







THE LAST DAY OF EXILE





THE MESSIAH'S MAGIC CARPET ABOUT TO TAKE OFF

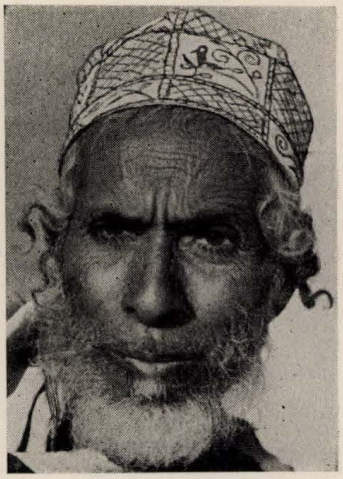



N66756
NEAR EAST AIR TRANSPORT

THE STORY OF 25 CENTURIES OF BONDAGE

For 25 centuries, the Jews of Yemen were subjected to alien rule, abused and oppressed. But in the long night of their exile, they kept the flame of their longing for the Promised Land burning, lightening their darkness. Now the promise has been fulfilled. Preceded by pioneers among them as early as seventy years ago, all the Jews of Yemen have this year returned to their ancient homeland, "on eagles' wings".

IN THE BEGINNING



THE JEWS of Yemen have various legends relating to their coming to that country, the most wide-spread of which states that they arrived there before the destruction of the First Temple. This legend tells that when Ezra (priest and scribe of the fifth century, B.C.E.) went up from Babylon, he sent letters to all the communities of the Exile, and amongst them to Yemen, calling upon them to go up with him. But the Yemenites were not moved, because they foresaw that the Second Temple, too, was destined to be destroyed, and that Israel would be exiled a second time from its land. And therefore Ezra laid a bitter curse upon them that they should know neither rest nor peace. This legend, though possibly not based on fact, nevertheless testifies to the ancient feeling of guilt on account of their having settled in the Exile, a sin to which they attributed their sufferings and servitude.

Whatever the truth of this legend, it is certain that Jews were already settled in Yemen in the early centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple. It is possible that they found their way there as refugees from the wars of revolt against the Romans ; or they may perhaps have come there, still in the days of the Second Temple, with merchant caravans that penetrated into Southern Arabia from the North. The first historical evidence of their existence in Yemen dates from the third century. Among the burial caves discovered in the Lower Galilee (Beth Shearim), a catacomb was found with inscriptions testifying that there were buried in it Yemenite Jews, brought from their country for burial. Thus, the first historical evidence of these Jews happens to be linked with ancient Israel. This link, and a longing for the Promised Land, characterise the annals of Yemenite Jewry from its very first appearance on the stage of history.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the Jews of Yemen (then called "Himyar") achieved great influence, and even the Royal House of Yemen adopted the Jewish religion. The last king of independent Himyar, Joseph Du-Nuas, was a Jew, and members of the priestly house from Tiberias served as his advisers during his war with the Christian Ethiopians. Christian writers relate that the Jews of Tiberias used to send letters and messengers to Du-Nuas inciting him to war with the Christians. With his death in 525, the independence of Yemen came to an end, and evil days fell



upon the Jews. When Mohammed, founder of Islam, gained the mastery over Yemen towards the end of his life, he suffered the Jews to retain their faith, but imposed special taxes and restrictive conditions upon them. Under the rule of Islam, Yemenite Jews sank from an influential community to the status of second-class citizens, subjugated by their Moslem masters and at their wanton mercy.

UNDER THE YOKE

Most of the Arab inhabitants of Yemen belong to the Shiite sect ; they regard the Jews as unclean, and invoke discriminatory laws against them. Jews are forbidden to live permanently in an Arab town, except in a ghetto quarter ; they must pay a special poll-tax; they may not raise their voices in front of a Moslem nor build a house higher than his, nor ride on a beast of burden ; they must walk on the left side of the Moslem, must rise before him, and must greet him first ; they must always dress in black and may not wear a turban or a wide sash, nor carry arms. A Jew has no adequate legal protection. Whenever conditions there were unsettled, the Jews were the first to be affected, and every petty local ruler treated them like chattels, and imposed crushing communal fines. In times of droughts, which are common, the Jews were the first to suffer because they were dependent upon the agricultural produce of the Moslems.

The most intolerable infliction is the edict applying to orphans. According to the Islamic law in force, any child whose father dies must be compulsorily converted to Islam. Generally, this law was not rigidly enforced. But, since they were encouraged by Palestinian Arabs after the 1921 riots in Palestine, Yemenite rulers have insisted brutally on its enforcement. The law affects even old men orphaned many years ago. Jews bitterly resisted this compulsory conversion, and did everything in their power to evade it. When his father died, a child was immediately removed to his relatives or taken to another town, and when the pressure grew too strong, children were sent to Aden, and from there to Eretz Israel. The threat of compulsory conversion was one of the principal causes of Yemenite emigration to Eretz Israel between the two World Wars.



But the Jews were forbidden even to leave Yemen. Most of the emigration to Eretz Israel took place through secret flight, often with the help of bribery. And the emigrant was therefore compelled to leave behind him a good part of his possessions, especially immovable property.

JEWS AS ARTISANS

THAT THE Jews survived their harsh servitude is largely due to the fact that they were artisans whom the Arabs needed. The Yemenite Arabs regard the crafts with contempt, as unbefitting a free man, and there were accordingly no Arab craftsmen. Thus they were dependent upon the Jewish artisans and could not dispense with them without changing their way of life. The Jews were smiths, armourers, workers of precious metals, minters of money, carpenters, tanners, spinners, cobblers, tailors, potters, shoe-makers, builders, stonehewers, stone-masons, painters, manufacturers of gun-powder, etc. Since it was often difficult for a person to earn a living in such a poor country by one craft alone, each man was often master of many different crafts and easily changed from one to another. And there was scarcely a single Jew who was not skilled in at least one. Even the Rabbis and heads of the community practiced their crafts and earned their living thereby.

The women occupied themselves with all household tasks, such as gathering fire-wood, drawing water, grinding meal, baking, cooking, washing, and the like. They were accustomed to work, diligent, adaptable to new conditions, and had great regard for cleanliness.

These characteristics of the Yemenite Jews saved them in their harsh exile, and made them extremely suitable human material for Israel.

TRADITION AND HOPE

THESE JEWS keep the tradition of their fathers ; a boy is brought up from his childhood on the Torah. Nor will you find a boy who is unable to read the Torah in the traditional manner together with Arabic and Aramic translations. They are not well-versed in the Talmud, and, apart from the



Bible, the principal study of the Yemenite Jews is the *Mishneh Torah*, codification of the law, which they acquired in the lifetime of its author, Maimonides (the great Jewish philosopher who lived from 1135 to 1204). All Jews of Yemen observe the traditional practices, and they all wear beards and earlocks (which they call *simanim* or "signs").

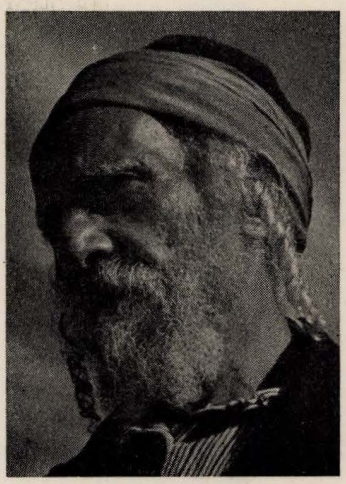
There are no printing presses in Yemen, and most of the books of the Yemenite Jews are in manuscript. Some printed books did reach them — brought mainly by emissaries from Eretz Israel — but they were expensive, and the few copies that came their way were copied by hand many times over. Owing to the scarcity, one book was used by many children in a class. They sat around it in a circle, so that the Yemenite Jew learned from his childhood to read a book not only the right way up, but upside down as well.

In every generation, the Yemenite Jews greatly longed for and hourly expected the Redemption, and these longings are expressed not only in their prayers. but also in their poetry, in the continual Messianic movements, and in attempts to emigrate.

In moments of elation, at wedding festivals and other celebrations, the chief topic of conversation is the Ingathering of the Exiles. Tisha B'av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple, is a day of deeper mourning among them than among any other community of the Exile.

They had absolute faith in the coming of the Redeemer, and when he tarried in coming, they attached themselves to anybody with Messianic pretensions. And so Messianic movements arose with greater frequency in Yemen than in any other Jewish group. The first false Messiah known to us in Yemen arose in 1172. When he appeared, the Jews wrote to Maimonides, whom they revered, asking his opinion, and that level-headed thinker wrote them a long letter, subsequently known as the "Epistle to Yemen," in which he explained in detail the circumstances in which the Messiah would come, and warned them against false Messiahs who lacked the qualities of the true Messiah.

Even after this disappointment, and after their pseudo-Messiah was killed, the Jews of Yemen continued to believe that he would return. In 1495, another Messiah arose who succeeded in gathering a great army about him, so that the king of Sana'a was compelled to go out against him in



battle, and only after hard fighting was he able to defeat him and take revenge on his followers.

Rumours of Turkish-born Sabbatai Zevi, most famous of the false Messiahs, reached Yemen in 1666, and aroused a great movement. Naturally on this occasion, too, their joy in the Redemption was changed to bitter disillusion as word came of Sabbatai Zevi's conversion to Islam. The king of Yemen condemned his followers, banished them from their homes, tried to force them to change their religion, executed their leaders, and gave over their houses to his soldiers to plunder.

Rabbi Yehuda Bar Shalom of Sana'a proclaimed, in 1859, the approach of the Redemption, and claimed to be the Messiah. Nearly all the Jews of Yemen believed in him and followed him. In the end, the king of Sana'a ordered his death. Four years after this would-be Messiah was murdered, another man arose in Yemen, who claimed to be Rabbi Yehuda Bar Shalom, risen from the dead. He was not content with the Jews of Yemen alone, but sent emissaries and wrote letters to the Jews of the neighbouring countries, to Aden, India, Egypt, and even to Eretz Israel. Rabbi Jacob Saphir, in Eretz Israel, fought against him, and wrote a special letter condemning him, which is like a second edition of Maimonides' "Epistle to Yemen." Later the imposter was imprisoned by the Turks and brought to Constantinople. Another false Messiah, Joseph Abdallah, who arose in 1893, attracted the inhabitants of the villages, but the Jews of Sana'a opposed him.

LINKS WITH ERETZ ISRAEL

THE JEWS of Yemen, who all their lives hoped for the Redemption, were closely linked with the Jewish community of the land of their dreams. We have already seen that, as early as the third century, the Jewish community sent their important dead for burial to Eretz Israel and that, in the sixth century, members of the priestly house from Tiberias acted as advisers to the Jewish king of Yemen. The movement of "Mourners of Zion", which spread in Eretz Israel in the ninth and tenth centuries, and which consisted of men who devoted their lives to mourning for the destruction of the Temple and praying for the Redemption, reached Yemen as well, and was still



extant there as late as the second half of the 12th century.

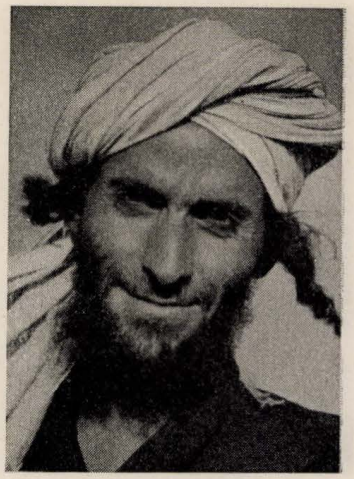
Emissaries, continuously sent to all the countries of the Dispersion, reached Yemen as well. They brought to these remote Jews news of the community which existed in Eretz Israel, introduced the books that were written there, and brought the Jews of Yemen in contact with those elsewhere. Thus they received the *Shulchan Aruch* (the most widely accepted code of Jewish Law), the *Kabbala* of the "*Ari*" of Safed (Rabbi Isaac Luria, 16th century), and prayers and poems. In every generation, individuals were stirred to *aliya* (immigration to Eretz Israel) by these emissaries.

A group migrated in the 15th century by way of Aden. One of the immigrants, Saadya ben David Adani, settled in Safed, one of the three sacred cities, and engaged in copying ancient manuscripts. During Safed's most flourishing period, in 1567, the Yemenite poet Zechariah al Dhahari of Sana'a arrived, and afterwards wrote a book describing his journeys in the country, and especially his visit to the Safed rabbinical college of Rabbi Joseph Caro, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*. Four years later one of the sages of Sana'a, Rabbi Joshua ben Rabbi David Adani, came to Safed and subsequently his son, Rabbi Shlomo Adani, author of a commentary on the *Mishna*, became one of the greatest sages of the land. Rabbi Shalom Mizrachi, who headed the Kabbalist Yeshiva "Beth El" in Jerusalem, had come from Yemen in the 18th century ; he was succeeded in this post by his son and later his grandson. There is no doubt that there were many more immigrants who made their way from Yemen in every generation.

A story is told by Haim Habashush, the companion of the explorer Joseph Halevy. While in the remote regions of eastern Yemen, in 1870, Habashush met a Jewish blacksmith whose sole longing was to go up to Eretz Israel.

"I asked him how he would live in the Land of Canaan, since he was used to the life of this remote country of eastern Yemen. He answered me : 'If the Lord bring me there, and I die on the morrow after my coming, then my wish will have been granted.' "

The first clear picture of Yemenite Jewry was given by Rabbi Jacob Saphir, who wrote a book based on the material gathered during the seven months of 1859 that he spent as a *shaliach* in Yemen.



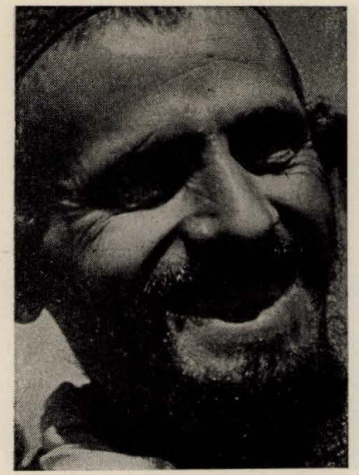
LARGE-SCALE IMMIGRATION OF THE JEWS OF YEMEN IN THE YEARS 1881—82

THE JEWS of Sana'a were aroused to migrate to Eretz Israel in large numbers in 1881. What caused this awakening ? Oppression and servitude had always been their lot, and, in fact, at that particular period their position had been somewhat alleviated : for after the reconquest of Yemen by the Turks in 1872, the Jews were able to establish contact with their brethren in Constantinople and were no longer completely isolated. An immigrant who reached Jerusalem answered this question by saying :

"A spirit from on High stirred them to go up to the Holy Mount and to join themselves to the inheritance of the Lord, to repair the mistake which their fathers made when Ezra went up from Babylon with the community of the Exile, and they did not go up with him."

But even this reply is insufficient, as the desire for the return existed in every generation. From the memoirs of people who immigrated from Yemen in those days, we learn that this movement towards *aliyah* was a part of the general movement for the settlement of Eretz Israel that arose among the Jews of Europe during the seventies. It was crystallized in the eighties among the Jews of Russia after the pogroms, in the movement of the *Biluim*, the first small band of pioneers.

Exaggerated reports reached Yemen of the land purchases by Baron Rothschild and of the activities of the Englishman, Laurence Oliphant, a non-Jewish Zionist. Rumours added that the Sultan had granted permission to all the Jews of the world to go up and settle in the land of their fathers. When these tidings reached Yemen, "all the Jews of Yemen rejoiced exceedingly, and thought that the destined redemption had indeed come, and that they would be redeemed in that very year, or in the following year, and that this was the beginning of the redemption. And all the inhabitants of Yemen were stirred by a great enthusiasm, until every man and every family sought to sell their houses, and their furniture, and their clothes, and their holy books, and everything they had, and to transfer their abode from Yemen and go to live in Jerusalem. And it was as though a new spirit had entered the heart of every single Jew, the like of which had not been seen since the day of the Exile."



Two aristocratic families of Sana'a set out in the spring of 1881, and when news of their safe arrival was received, additional families followed, and by Succoth of the same year the *aliah* had become a mass movement. One of the immigrants described the movement as follows :

"And they celebrated the festival with great rejoicing. And throughout the whole festival, day and night, men and women spoke only of the subject of Erez Israel. And all the Jews who were in Sana'a and all the Jews of Yemen agreed together to sell all their houses and all their goods in order to use the money to journey to their country. And almost all of them neither slumbered nor slept at night, out of their longing and desire and the burning enthusiasm of their love for Eretz Israel. And so strongly did this love break out in their heart, that they cast away all their money, selling all their houses and possessions at an eighth of the value, in order to find money for the expenses of the journey by land and by sea."

The journey was adventurous, for the Yemenites travelled on foot to the port of Hudaida, from there by sea to Alexandria, on another ship to Jaffa, and thence they walked to Jerusalem. Some of the ships, affected by cholera, were held up on the way, and their passengers reached Jerusalem 11 months after leaving Sana'a. An eye-witness gave this description of their arrival :

"Their skin has shrunk from their great privation and suffering, and their faces are prematurely wrinkled. They scarcely remain alive, naked and barefooted, hungry and thirsty, afflicted and exploited, and their faces express misery and sorrow."

News of the misfortunes suffered by the emigrants cooled the ardour of the Jews of Yemen, but not enough to stop the movement. Meanwhile, however, the Arab inhabitants of Yemen had applied to the government to stop the emigration, for they feared that the departure of the Jewish artisans would cause economic chaos. The Arabs accompanied their plea with bribery, and the results were new emigration restrictions.

This *aliyah*, which had lasted two years, brought 500 Yemenites to Jerusalem. They were disappointed at first, for they found neither a Rothschild nor land for the asking, and they had spent their small means on the journey. But they quickly began to adapt themselves to the new conditions. The silversmiths began their work, and those whose skills now were of no practical use



turned to other work. The women became domestic servants and the men building workers in the new quarters that were then being erected outside the city walls. But the most difficult problem was that of housing the newcomers, as Jewish Jerusalem was then terribly over-crowded. These were also years of immigration from Russia and Rumania, and the combined influx was the signal for a rent rise by Arabs, who owned most of the houses within the walls of the Old City. Throughout the summer the Yemenites lived in tents or temporary huts in the fields near the Jewish quarters, and when winter came they occupied caves and shelters in the rocks.

Then several of the heads of the Ashkenazi community came to their help. They founded a special company to build houses for Yemenites, obtained a plot of land on the slopes of the Mount of Olives from a generous Baghdadi Jew who lived in Jerusalem, and built 11 houses during 1885—6. Money for the project came from Eretz Israel, England, and Germany ; the actual work was done by the Yemenites themselves. This was the first Yemenite quarter in the country, and it set a pattern for others in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

The Yemenites soon organised themselves into a special community, which enabled them to preserve their traditions and lead their own way of life. They printed their own books in Jerusalem, and sent their special prayer books to Yemen. They described their new life in letters to Yemen, and stimulated those left behind to follow them. By 1902 the steady immigration from Yemen had increased the number of Yemenites in Jerusalem and Jaffa to over 2,500.

IMMIGRATION FROM NORTHERN YEMEN

A LARGE NUMBER of village-dwelling immigrants left northern Yemen in 1907, 25 years after the first large wave of townsmen had immigrated to Eretz Israel. This second *aliyah*, embracing workers of the land, initiated a movement to the settlements and villages of Eretz Israel.

What motives inspired this renewed immigration ? The immigrants themselves explained : "Our migration to Eretz Israel is not on account of any oppressive royal decree, nor for lack of a livelihood, nor for any reason that



causes people to leave their homes. It arises out of a great desire to go up to Eretz Israel. Perhaps it is the merit of our first fathers that accords us this privilege — one which our ancestors failed to attain."

But on this occasion as well, external factors had been required to activate the passive longing for Zion. The years preceding the immigration were difficult years in Yemen. An Arab revolution against the Turkish Government brought severe hardships to the Jews, and in addition a drought caused thousands to starve. The victorious Arabs established a theocratic Moslem state and restored the old anti-Jewish laws. The harassed Jews of northern Yemen thought with envy of those of central Yemen, many of whom had migrated to Eretz Israel since 1882.

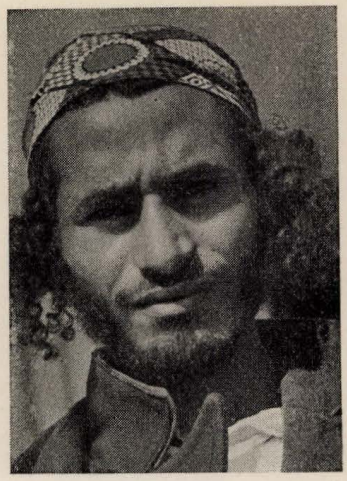
Thirteen pioneers were the first to go, and their letters, stating that they had arrived safely, spurred a group of hundred. A third group of 220, short of money and quarantined for 17 days, reached Jaffa after three harassing months. Yemenites of this second *alyah* made their homes in the settlements of Rechovoth, Rishon le Zion, and Petach Tikvah, where they became excellent agricultural labourers.

THE MISSION OF SAMUEL YAVNE'ELI

The Palestine Office in Jaffa, the Settlement institution of the Zionist Organisation in those days, realized that the Yemenite labourers, whose wants were few, and who were accustomed to work, could compete with and replace Arab labour in the colonies. Samuel Yavne'eli, one of the early members of the Second Aliya (the immigration movement from Europe to Eretz Israel from 1904 to World War I), convinced the Palestine Office that immigration from Yemen should be encouraged and organised. He himself undertook the difficult and dangerous mission, posing as a religious emissary in order to conceal his true purpose from the government of Yemen. His disguise was aided by a document and letter from Chief Rabbi Kook to the sages of Yemen.

Yavne'eli set out with a great dream in his heart : the complete redemption of a community in Exile, whose size he estimated at 24,000, and their

migration to Eretz Israel. He visited 40 Jewish communities in southern and central Yemen, organised parties of immigrants in Aden, succeeded in obtaining a reduction in the shipping fare and even obtained a subsidy from the Palestine Office to help to pay the expenses of needy immigrants.



"Emissaries from Eretz Israel come to Yemen every few years," said Yavne'eli on his return to Israel, "but they are all of a kind : they come to collect on behalf of some Yeshiva or congregation, on behalf of some fund or another... They all demand contributions. But for all that, they are valued guests : the Yemenites accept and love these sons of Zion. And I was one of these sons of Zion..."

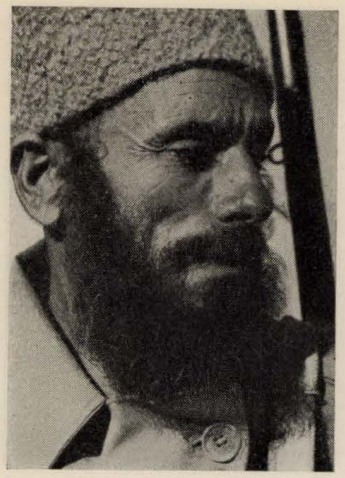
But Yavne'eli had not spoken to the Yemenites as a respectful son ; instead he had struck hard at their inertia toward *aliya*, charging that "two of every hundred of you have settled in Eretz Israel,and you have done nothing but take. You took the Talmud from there, and the books of Maimonides, and of Rabbi Joseph Caro, and the writings of the Ari and his disciples... Where are the stones that you have laid in the building of the nation ? Now you must bring your strength to the country, the best of your sons..."

"They heard from me no exaggerations or vain promises," said Yavne'eli.

About 1,500 Yemenites, who settled in the villages of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, immigrated during 1911-12 as the results of Yavne'eli's mission. The immigration continued until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and, except for that interruption, Yavne'eli's dream might have been realised in his days.

BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

The immigration of the Jews of Yemen was not immediately resumed after the war, because the sea routes were endangered by mines, and because the link which had been snapped for several years, was not easily re-welded. Moreover, the mass *aliya* of pioneers from eastern Europe had begun, and Zionist leaders were unable to turn their attention to the continuation of immigration from Yemen. But in 1921, Mr. A. Tabib, a Yemenite representative in the Immigration Department of the General Federation of Labour



(the Histadruth), wrote a letter to Yemen in the name of all the immigrants from that country already in Eretz Israel, calling upon them to immigrate. In addition to the call for *aliyah*, the letter described the new community in Eretz Israel; the work of Baron Rothschild; the World War and its results in Eretz Israel and the countries of the Exile, especially the Balfour Declaration; the British Mandate; the first High Commissioner; the work of the national funds; the coming of the chalutzim and their work in the country; and, finally, the position of the Yemenites in the country. The Yemenite, calling upon his brethren to immigrate, wrote:

"...Young boys and girls have left the countries of their Exile, where they had lived in happiness and honour in fine mansions for thousands of years, and have chosen to wander together from city to city and from country to country, to cross rivers and deserts, until they come to their destination, their Homeland and their heart's desire, to build its waste places and turn its desolation into a Paradise ; and they have forgotten their fine homes, and are content to dwell in tents, because they have seen how great is the neglect of the Holy Land... And it is not fitting that your pure hands should not participate in the building of the country together with your brethren, who come from the rising of the sun to its setting, nor is it fitting that you should remain comfortably in your houses waiting and standing aside... The truth is, that the duty rests upon every Jew to go up and live in Eretz Israel wherever possible, as long as its gates are open."

Meanwhile, a great change in Yemen itself lessened the need for encouraging letters from Eretz Israel. After World War I the Turks had left Yemen completely, and it became an independent country under the rule of Imam Yahia, who renewed the oppressive and humiliating anti-Jewish laws. In 1921 the decree ordering the compulsory conversion of orphans was re-enacted, and this harsh measure had a more depressing effect on the Jews than any other. They did everything in their power to preserve their faith, to save the orphans and get them out of the country. But it was not easy to emigrate, because the Imam, influenced by Palestine Arabs after the 1921 riots, ordered the confiscation of the property of any Jew who went to Eretz Israel. But the Jews contrived ways to evade this law, or otherwise simply abandoned their property and left. However, after the 1929 ricts

in Palestine, the Imam forbade emigration altogether. The ports of Yemen were barred to the immigrants, and nothing remained for them but to escape secretly, and completely without means, to the British-held port of Aden.



Those who reached Aden faced new difficulties, for they were often forced to live there for years before they collected the fare for the voyage and before they received an immigration certificate from the Mandatory government. The Jews of Yemen took to writing to the Zionist Executive, beseeching them "to give us certificates and relieve us of the cost of the voyage, for our Exile has lasted too long, and our poverty has increased exceedingly, and new troubles have come upon us."

The Zionist Organization gradually transported them from Aden, but their places were always taken by new arrivals, who succeeded in escaping from the interior. In the last years of World War II, when the ways of migration from Europe were blocked, about 4,000 Jews were brought from Aden. From 1923 to 1945, about 17,000 Jews came to Eretz Israel by way of Aden.

Throughout these years, the existing Yemenite settlements in the country were greatly enlarged, and new villages were founded by the Keren Hayesod on Jewish National Fund land. These settlements took firm root, and in the course of time served to absorb new settlers. During the period of the rapid expansion of Tel Aviv, many Yemenites settled there, and participated in the building of the city. On the city's outskirts, they built several quarters of their own.

At the end of the Second World War, there were approximately 22,000 Yemenite Jews in Eretz Israel, all of them workers firmly rooted in the country, and living in agricultural villages or their own urban quarters.

"ON EAGLES' WINGS"

THERE WERE still about 4,000 Yemenite refugees in Aden at the end of World War II, and every day newcomers added to their number, while it was impossible to transfer them to Palestine because of the "White Paper" (immigration restriction) policy of the British Government. It was impossible



to organise illegal immigration as in Europe, because the port of departure, Aden, and the sea-lane of the Red Sea were in the hands of the British. So the refugees languished in Aden, suffering severely from the harsh climate, disease, lack of work, and inadequate housing. Half of them were accommodated near Aden in "Camp Redemption" *(Mahane Geulah)*, established by the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency, while the others wandered about Aden and lived wherever they could. Representatives of the Jewish Agency worked among the refugees and organised schools, a health service, youth groups, and settlement training groups.

Arab inhabitants of Aden broke out in serious riots against the Aden Jews after the November 1947 decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine. Until then, the Jews of Aden, unlike the Jews of the interior, had lived in peace with the Arabs under the protection of the British flag. The mob killed many Jews and burned the Jewish quarter while the British looked on. Then the Jews of Aden swelled the number of refugees in the Protectorate, and it became necessary to find shelter in the refugee camps for 2,000 of them. Still the British Government persisted in its refusal to permit immigration to Palestine from Aden. But in September, 1948, five months after the establishment of the State of Israel, the British at last opened the gates of departure. The sea passage was closed to the immigrants, because the Egyptians, who controlled the Suez Canal, were at war with Israel. It was therefore necessary to send them by air. A number of large aeroplanes were hired, and by March, 1949, all the Yemenite refugees in Aden, more than 5,000, had been transported to Israel.

Meanwhile, there was a great stir in the interior of Yemen. The aged Imam Yahia, who had given the Jews a measure of protection in spite of his harsh decrees against them, was murdered, and two of his sons contested the throne. A state of anarchy ensued, in the course of which the Jews were the worst sufferers, and were subjected to rapine by the troops of both parties. When news of the establishment of the Jewish State reached them, they all prepared to go there, and many actually set out for Aden, but were stopped on the way, because entrance to Aden was forbidden, and because the Sultans of the regions under British protection which lay between Aden and Yemen refused to permit them to pass through their



territory. The refugees wandered about on the frontiers, without shelter from the extremes of desert temperature, and at the mercy of their profit-greedy enemies. But plunder and subjugation gave way to respect and fear as Yemenite Arabs heard of Jewish victories in Israel. When the British permitted departure from Aden, the Sultans under their protection no longer opposed passage of Jews through their territory. The Jewish Agency's representatives obtained permanent passage through the Protectorate at a price of six dollars for each person, and the exodus of the Jews of the interior to Aden began.

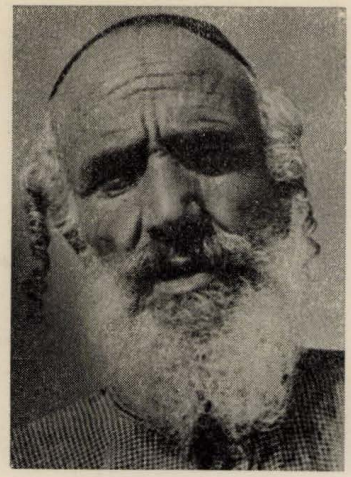
There was room in the transit camp at Aden for 1,000 people, but the flood of immigrants reached a peak of 13,000 in one month alone. Thousands of tents and temporary shelters were erected, but proved insufficient. The rate of departure had to be increased. Six "Skymasters" were hired, and these, each carrying 130 immigrants, flew regularly from Aden to Lydda ; thus began the total "Exodus from Yemen", known to the world as "Operation Magic Carpet." "Skymasters" became "eagles' wings" to the immigrants, whose dramatic flight recalled to them the words of the Lord in the days of the Exodus from Egypt :

"And I bore you on eagles' wings and I brought you unto myself."

This is how one of the immigrants described the Exodus from Yemen :

"We lived in Exile, waiting for the Redemption to come, and did not know it would come. There was one who went to the capital, and he returned with the tiding : 'There is a State in Israel.' And we knew not whether his tidings were true. Several days passed without a voice and without a sign. And during last year the rumours increased, and men kept on coming from afar and saying 'There is a king in Israel.' Afterward they said 'There is an Army in Israel, an army of heroes.' And finally they came and said 'The pangs of the Messiah — there is war in Israel.' And we remained in Exile, and knew not whether the tidings were true, hoping for the Redemption, but the spirit was impatient... We rejected the Exile, and it was as though the spirit of the Lord rose within us : 'Come let us go up to the Land of Israel.' Now and again we asked : 'Is there news of the Redemption ?' And they said to us : 'Wait, for the vision is yet for the appointed time.'

"Twice this year came the tidings that the Redemption was near, and



many sold all their possessions, and set out on the way. And only the third time, everybody left with the permission of the King. The tidings came by letter, but in the letter was written, saying : 'Urge not on the end.' But we were already prepared, and many with their possessions rolled up in sacks, waiting for the sign, and there was none... And upon a day came a letter from the *Shaliah*, saying :

" 'Arise brothers, and arouse yourselves. The proper hour has come. Our country awaits its sons and builders, for its Redemption and yours, for raising its ruins and settling its waste places. Surmount the suffering and travail of the way, because without you Israel will not be redeemed. Delay not, nor lose the proper hour, lest you be late. Dare to go up at once, and do not leave behind you the ancient culture in writing and garb...'

"We sold our houses and our possessions without money. We left our synagogues to the gentiles... We came to the synagogues, and we performed a memorial service for the dead, and we read "El Malei Rahamim", and we prayed for pardon and forgiveness, for we knew : The Land of Israel atones for all sins, and our fathers would forgive us. And we took with us on our way the Scrolls of the Law and the holy objects to bring them to our country. And in many places they buried the holy books and Scrolls of the Law in the ground, because they could not take them.

"And we prepared provision for the way, every family for itself, dry cakes and boiled butter and dried meat and spices and coffee. And we took with us flour for the way, and the women gathered sticks and baked bread over a tin in the fields, or wrapped the dough about stones and laid them in the fire...

"And the boundary was closed to passage because of the multitude of people, and we camped, some here, and some there. And the roads were tumultuous with companies of Jews, and we sat, exceedingly many Jews, about 2,500 together, and we prayed beneath the canopy of heaven... And on the Days of Awe (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), we prayed exceedingly much, broken-hearted, and weeping on the ground : When would we merit to enter Israel's gates ?"

"And there came a day, and the stress of hunger prevailed, and there was no bread for our mouth. And the heart sorrowed for the infants.



And we stood, and raised our prayer to on High. And the Lord heard our cry, and while we were still praying, Arabs came and brought us food, and said : 'Give us money, and you will get bread.'

"And many of us fell sick on the way, and there was no doctor, and no medicines, and no drop of milk to keep the infants alive. There was only a prayer in our mouth to the Lord that he should help. And many were seized with trembling of the body as though with fever, and yet they walked with us on the way. And there were women near to give birth, and they were on donkeys, and they gave birth while they were riding, and we fulfilled the commandments as was proper, and the woman and child were on the donkey.

"And one day a messenger from Israel spoke before us, and strengthened our heart, and filled us with the breath of life, and said to us : 'Do not worry. No man will remain in the Exile of Yemen, and the State of Israel will not forsake you. In a little while an end will come to your troubles. There is a Jewish heart in Israel. And you too, let there be no hunger among you.' And he fulfilled all his words...

"And companies came from all the ends of Yemen, and our heart ached in its great yearning for the Land of Israel. And thus we came to Aden as long as there was breath in our nostrils, bruised and robbed, weary and bereft of everything. After a way of travail, sometimes lasting two months and sometimes three, there was not a penny with us nor any possession. Also the rich among us came, most of them without money, in the same position as we, bereft of all. And they gathered us into the great camp which was near the city, and it was on the sands of the desert, and the place was too small for us all, and we lay in large numbers on the sand under the bare sky, next to one another, each family together, and mighty sand-storms raged about us, and in our heart was a prayer for *aliyah*, to fly "on eagles' wings" to our country. And we went up."

The stream of immigrants coming into Aden grew each day, and according to the promise given to the British Administration in Aden, the newcomers had to be transported to Israel immediately. Nevertheless, at the end of September 1949, there were more than 13,000 people in Mahane Geulah They came sick, weary, and penniless—many two and three year olds weighing less than new-born infants. Campworkers, most of whom were Israelis,



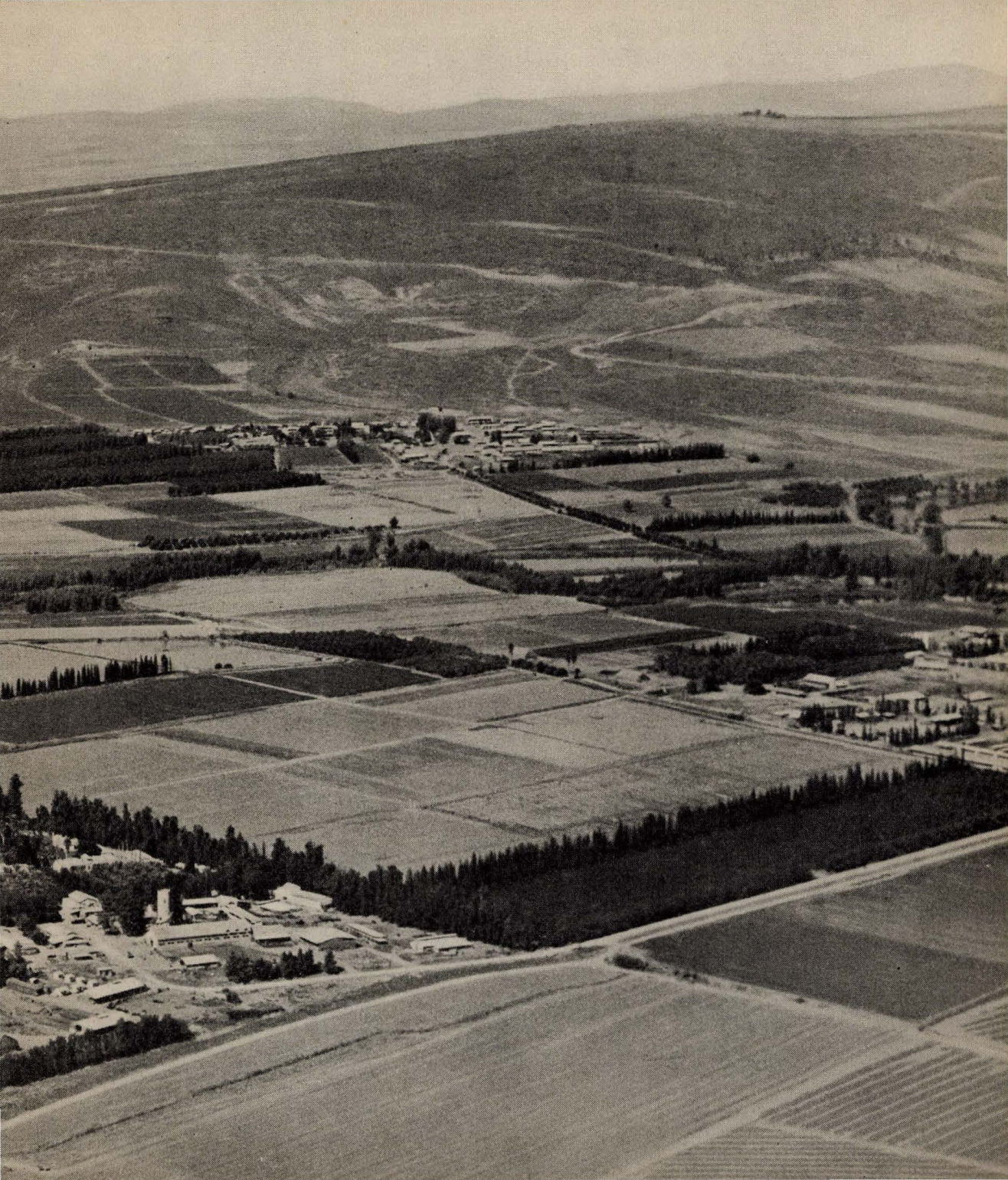
did whatever they could to cure diseases contracted along the way — 80 per cent had malaria. After a few days they were sent, "on eagles' wings", to Israel. Twenty-eight thousand people were transported by air from Aden to Israel during July to November, 1949. By the end of March 1950, the number reached 40,000.

If the liquidation of the *Galuth* of Yemen was an undertaking so great as to defy the imagination, the real work begins only after the arrival of the immigrants in Israel. Here they must be restored to health, their infants must be cared for and educated, they must be fed until their strength is back to normal. They must be clothed, imbued with concepts of hygiene and social life which were unknown to them in Yemen, and, lastly, they must be housed and settled and provided with work. This second tremendous task is in process of fulfillment. Malaria has been completely wiped out, the immigrants now readily accept medical treatment and learn how to prevent disease. Many thousands of them have already left the immigrant camps, and have settled permanently in all parts of the country,through the means of the Keren Hayesòd. Thousands more have been housed in work villages near existing settlements, and they work planting trees, building roads, and the like. They are growing roots in the country, and are being restored in the process of its restoration.

A whole Exile, the Exile of Yemen, has gone out from slavery to freedom, from bondage to Redemption. They have come from the most far-flung quarters of Yemen, from places where the existence of Jews was unkown. Tidings of the revival of the State of Israel reached their ears, and they came with little material property, but they brought with them hands ready for any kind of work, a strong love for the country of their fathers and for the tradition which they had devotedly preserved for 2,000 years. Surely their planting in the land of their fathers will bear glorious fruit.

AND NOW
IN ISRAEL
WHERE
THE KEREN
HAYESOD
COMPLETES
THE WORK
OF
REDEMPTION

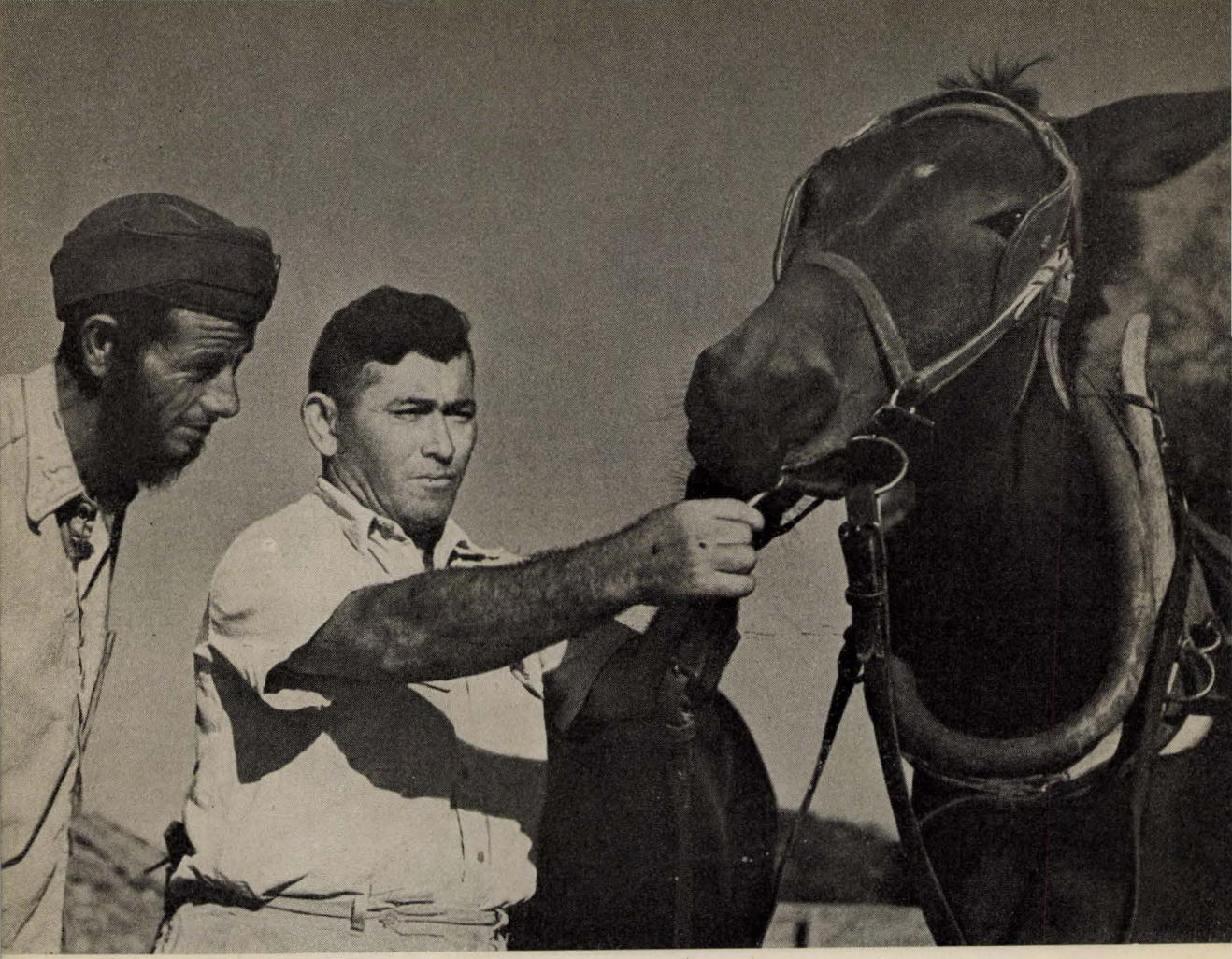








FREE MEN ON THEIR OWN LAND.
THEIR FUTURE DEPENDS ON
HOW FRUITFUL THEY CAN MAKE IT



How to handle a farmhorse . . .
and a tractor.


DIESEL



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Free men must learn
to defend their freedom.


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The
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PRINTED IN ISRAEL
Produced by Lion the Printer, Tel Aviv ; Printed by Goldberg's Press Ltd. Jerusalem ;
Photos : Hershbein, Kluger, Lersky, Sternberg, Weissenstein

AN ISRAEL PUBLICATION BY LION THE PRINTER, TEL AVIV

PRINTED IN ISRAEL