

2007-A year of decision by Yilma Bekele

Happy New Year Ethiopia (መልከም እንቁጣጣሽ) Meskerem is a special month. We love and



honor Meskerem so much that we name our children by it signifying a new beginning for the long journey ahead. Meskerem is the end of the rainy season and our high mountains and valleys adorn themselves in bright yellow flowers as far as the eye can see, totally overwhelming our senses. For a Diaspora, Meskerem in a strange land, is another hard pill to swallow as an exile from a precious homeland.

The physical comfort, the sense of total security and a feeling of being free compensates for that deep longing emanating from the bottom of the heart. I am afraid it is all an illusion. How could one half survive without the other? How could part of oneself feel safe and secure while the other side is threatened and abused? It is a dilemma that unsettles a lot of us.

It is not particular to us to feel the need to give back to the place we left behind. The Diaspora has played a vital role in the economies of India, Israel and Turkey to mention a few. The fact that we Ethiopians are not free to work, invest and help our country has hindered our participation in sharing the wonderful knowledge and skill we have acquired. When they said good will emerge out of bad they must have been thinking about us.

The lack of real Democracy, the absence of the Rule of Law, the non-existence of transparency, the rampant corruption and most of all the favoritism of one ethnic group over the other (currently Tigrai) coupled with the fear factor permeating the society is too much a stress to bear when there is no earthly reason to. Thus the best and the brightest stay away. That does not mean there are not a lot that are daring and energetic and try to sail this stormy waters and add value to our home. All that we can do is wish them well.

It is not that our country does not need help. Nor is it that most of us have nothing of value to contribute. The only reason the majority of the Diaspora is not involved is due to the absence of Good Governance in Ethiopia. The country is still run like in the Feudal times using brute force and intimidation by the War Lord (TPLF this time around) and its subordinates. How could a person that accumulated capital by working for it invest in an enterprise that does not have any rules so to speak of?

This Enkutatash all is not well at home. Our young people are still fleeing their homes not knowing where they are going. They just travel any which way to try their luck some places they have heard of. The boys are going South by foot and the girls are going East by plane hoping to make it and be somebody. There are a lot that make it and there are some that somehow disappear without a trace never to be heard again. We are witnessing hell on earth. Here is what was reported by EMF (ethioforum.org)

Eighteen illegal immigrants from Ethiopia were Sunday arrested Kiutine, Igembe North, Meru County on their way to Nairobi. "The illegal aliens were nabbed at a road block at Kiutine at 8am, aboard 2 saloon cars. They were heading to Nairobi. We will take them to court, together with their two drivers, both Kenyans," said Cornelius Sing'oei, the Igembe North OCPD. As reported by Phares Mutembei of Standardmedia.

Our people were most probably on their way to South Africa to be part of the ever growing Diaspora. When we are referred to as 'illegal aliens' in Kenya you know there is a problem in Habesha land.

How to help those that are being brutalized by the ethnic regime at home and also come to the rescue of those that are wondering in Southern Africa and the Middle East is a question that we should all ask ourselves as we celebrate the New Year with family and friends. What can I do to relieve the pain of my people should be in our mind as we sit down to give thanks to the good fortune that has saved us from servitude to tyrants.

If we really think about it there are plenty of ways we can make a difference and reap the benefits of doing the right thing. There might not be immediate satisfaction or something tangible to show in a short time. Like everything good in life it takes time for our best deeds to mature. Like one does not plant one day and expect to harvest the day after, our good deeds take time to develop and show results. One thing we do know for sure is the medicine we are prescribing is proven to work.

What exactly can the millions of us in the Diaspora do to help our people and country escape this vicious cycle of tyranny, famine, hopelessness and despair? We learn from those when faced with the same problem like us dealt with it and won. We are all familiar with the history of the struggle of African Americans, South Africans, Indians and millions of others that were in the same situation we are in today.

It is true they appealed to humanity to help them but they just did not sit and wait. They took matters into their own hands and started the process and sure enough plenty came to their aid. Those that could pick the gun fought back while others participated in isolating and weakening the enemy using different means. That is exactly where we the Diaspora Ethiopians can complement the struggle of our people by shunning all persons and enterprise connected to the minority regime. It is how we display our displeasure and help our country and people.

What are the actions that we can take to make our feelings known? What the Diaspora has in abundance and the TPLF regime salivates for is our economic power. That is the potent weapon we can use to make the Woyane regime feel our resolve to fight back injustice. It is done not out of hate but as a matter of self-defense to survive.

We all can tell the current situation is not sustainable and we are aware when it implodes from inside the damage can deal a fatal blow to our very existence as a country. If you think that is an exaggeration just look at Syria, Libya, Iraq, Somalia that were imperfect unions but far from a waste land they are today. Our country is ripe for any power to exploit the weak foundation of ethnic division, abject poverty, millions of

unemployed youth that our country is sitting on. We should use our economic and intellectual power at our disposal to stop such catastrophe.

- 1) Participating in the so called 'condominium' scam is giving free money to TPLF.
- 2) Building a home is not a job creation scheme. Most of the construction materials imported support the TPLF business enterprise. You are giving cash to TPLF.
- 3) Drinking 'Ethiopian' beer is not helping Ethiopia. All the major breweries belong to foreigners, the exporters are TPLF or junior associates. You are helping TPLF.
- 4) Buying Teff imported from Ethiopia is the ultimate betrayal of country and people. There is not enough harvested, our people do not have the economic power to purchase due to double digit inflation any and you have zillions of bread products to choose from, why would anyone with good conscience do that?
- 5) Buying injera flown here is a slap on the face of our people. Selling such product by an Ethiopian owned business is _____ use any adjective to describe such deed!
- 6) Flying Ethiopian airlines is putting money in Woyane's pocket. They run it and they own it. You are lining the pocket of the criminal enterprise.

We are here because home is not such a good place to experience the full harvest of life like most other human beings. I am sure most of us would rather be working, living raising a family and contributing to our neighborhood in our own land. Due to the TPLF mafia in power that denies basic human dignity to our people we are forced to settle in strange places. Why would anyone that left his country because it is not such a hospitable place turn around and give money to those that are causing agony to his people?

This is not an exercise to put blame anyone or shame each other but a chance to use this celebration to start anew. Meskerem is a beginning. It is when adey abeba covers our land with bright yellow and white flowers signifying the coming of a New Year. That is what we should do today. Start fresh and stand up for our people. They are sacrificing the very essence of their existence is it too much to ask you to consider your actions and the consequences that follow? Is drinking Miller instead of Giorgis such a sacrifice?

I am glad most of us are safe where ever we have been exiled to but let us remember those that are languishing in Woyane jail, keep in mind those that are stranded in no man's land, in confinement in some dirty jail, afraid and disoriented somewhere on this planet and use this Awdamet to resolve to do better next year.

Let us start the New Year with determination to right that what is wrong. We can do it. We will do it. Next new year we will celebrate our holidays in a free and democratic Ethiopia. As the Jews used to say during their Passover dinner in exile "L'shanah haba'ah biyerushalayim – Next Year in Jerusalem." It is an expression of hope fulfilling their dream of being a free people in their own land. I say to you: የሚመጣው አመት አዲስ አበባ -- መልካም አዲስ አመት ለሁላችን

