

Transfusion Medicine Illustrated

The emperor and the blood center

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It's not often that an emperor comes by the local blood center, but in 1969 Emperor Haile Selassie, His Imperial Majesty, King of Kings, of Ethiopia visited the new Red Cross Blood Center in Addis Ababa and was escorted by the interim Medical Director, Dr. Cyril Levene.



Figure 1. Dr. Levene explains to Emperor Haile Selassie how donors' blood was collected and matched for transfusion to patients. Dr. Levene, who was Medical Director, Blood Bank, Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center, Jerusalem, Israel, was on leave to establish the new Red Cross Blood Bank in Addis Ababa. Dr. Levene had previously served as Medical Director, Red Cross Blood Center, Auckland, New Zealand. Emperor Selassie's title reflects his lineage as a descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Figure 2. Dr. Levene demonstrates to Emperor Selassie how typing reagents determine a donor's ABO blood group. Dr. Levene remained in Addis Ababa for two years. He returned to Jerusalem, Israel where he served as Director of the National Reference Laboratory for Blood Group Serology before he retired in 2017. In 2011, management of the Ethiopian National Blood Bank Service was transferred to the Federal Ministry of Health.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared no conflicts of interest for this article.