



Subscribe to Print Edition

Sun., December 27, 2009 Tevet 10, 5770

ynet

Israel Time: 10:02 (EST+7)

**HAARETZ.com**

[Back to Homepage](#)

Search

web  haaretz.com

**Crowne Plaza &  
Holiday Inn Israel**  
*Simply Choose*

**10**  
**Recommended  
Restaurants**

[Jewish World](#) [Haaretz Toolbar](#) [Diplomacy Defense Opinion](#) [National](#) [Print Edition](#) [TV](#) [Car Rental](#)  
[Focus U.S.A. Stronger than Fiction](#) [Business](#) [Travel](#) [Magazine Week's End](#) [Anglo File](#) [Books](#) [Singles](#)

## Saving a heart in the nick of time

By [Cnaan Liphshiz](#)

Last Update: 25/12/2009 01:17

A dramatic race against time involving a sick Ethiopian boy and an international team of volunteers ended in success earlier this month, when Israel-based doctors fully repaired the boy's failing heart. "We're used to dramatic cases, but this one is unusual even by our standards," said Tamar Shapira, the international relations coordinator for Save a Child's Heart - the local nonprofit which saved the life of nine-year-old **Tamru** Dmase.

A string of serendipitous incidents brought **Tamru**, a child with two leaking cardiac valves here from northern Ethiopia, a tale involving last-minute interventions by volunteers from three continents.

Advertisement

**Tamru** doesn't understand the story as it is being delivered in English by colleagues at the Save a Child's Heart children's hostel in Azor, where the association founded in 1995 by American-Israeli surgeon Amiram Cohen houses dozens of patients from developing countries to await and recover from surgery.

A naturally polite and introverted boy with an intelligent expression, he patiently plays with a few random objects lying about. He occasionally looks up at the adults whenever they mention his name, but quickly hunches his scrawny shoulders - he is small for his age as a result of undernourishment - back over his toys.

The story of his arrival from Ethiopia for surgery in Israel on his heart - damaged by an autoimmune condition caused by a throat infection - begins in Australia with Sandi Peterson - a volunteer officer for World Families Australia, which sponsors children from developing countries.

Peterson heard about **Tamru** from a local Ethiopian charity in the city of Lalibela and immediately felt a bond. "He is the same age as one of my children, so part of [my commitment] is from imagining how it would be for my son to be in **Tamru's** circumstance," she says about the boy, who became separated from his family. She raised funds for the sick boy's welfare and to seek a solution to his desperate condition.

In Ethiopia, **Tamru** - who was living at a makeshift orphanage - caught the attention of a 23-year-old local volunteer, Yared Waldu, who had suffered a similar condition and was saved at the age of 13 by Save a Child's Heart through open-heart surgery in Israel. Yared began treating **Tamru** while Peterson made arrangements to bring **Tamru** to Israel.

Save a Child's Heart has trained dozens of physicians and nurses from developing countries and treated more than 2,000 seriously-ill boys and girls. But most patients come accompanied by either a family member or chaperone.

\* [Portion of the Week:](#)  
[Shamot - Two rebellious daughters](#)

Print

Send to a friend

Send response

### Top Articles

#### Clerics urge J'lem to ban gay parade

"Please do not upset our lord" was the joint appeal from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim clerics at a news conference in Jerusalem on Wednesday to protest plans to host the WorldPride gay festival in August.

By **Amiram Barkat and Daphna Berman**

#### Just when you thought it was safe

Three sharks have been caught in fishing nets over the past few days off the coast of Ashdod.

By **Yuval Azoulay**

#### More Headlines

**09:09** U.S. to Israel: Explain killing of Fatah militants

**06:42** Was Israel's Gaza offensive worth it?

**08:50** Netanyahu: I hope Livni realizes time is crucial for Kadima

**08:11** World airport security beefed up following foiled Detroit attack

**04:06** Hamas official likely target of Beirut car bombing

**07:59** U.S. official's criticism of Israel ambassador sparks furor

**21:31** Vote for Person of the Decade and you could win a home entertainment system

**23:01** TV ROUND-UP: IDF kills Palestinian militants; Livni, Netanyahu to meet

**07:59** It is easy for Netanyahu to circumvent Obama

**08:52** One killed as train hits

### Special Offers

Advertisement

**Eldan Rent a Car**  
Israel's leading car rental company offers you a 20% discount on online reservations

**100% Pure Dead Sea Salt**

Lowest price in the U.S.A. for genuine Dead Sea Salts

**Award-Winning 'Obsession'**

Watch 'Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West' Online FOR FREE!

**Protea Hills**

A Retirement Village in Nature Nestled in the Foothills of Jerusalem

**Date Local Jewish**

Alone, **Tamru** could not fly for the first time in his life unaccompanied.

Through a string of urgent emails, Peterson's friend in Israel and long-time volunteer with Save a Child's Heart, U.S.-born Sheila Shalhevet, learned that one of the organization's volunteers was just about to fly to Kenya for her work. In a complicated logistic operation, Bruria Gal, an ornithologist, picked **Tamru** up earlier this month from Addis Ababa during a layover on her way back to Israel from Kenya.

In Israel, **Tamru** was rushed to hospital on the very morning of his arrival to prepare for surgery. He has since healed well and put on some weight under the watchful eye of Dr. Abraham Haileamlak Mitike, an Ethiopian pediatric cardiologist from Jimma University who is in Israel for a year to work and train with Save a Child's Heart.

This week, Sandi Peterson will close a circle by meeting **Tamru** in Israel before his return on Wednesday, and will sponsor a schooling and health program for him.

[car in southern Israel](#)

[09:44 Study: Gap between wages of Ashkenazim, Sephardim growing](#)

[02:25 Crumbling Tiberias synagogue to regain its former glory](#)

[05:04 Comment / Gilad Shalit and the changing concept of captivity](#)

#### Singles

Ready to meet your match? Join Jdate today!

#### Junkyard

Junk a car - get free towing nationwide and a tax-deductible receipt

[↑](#)  
Top



[Subscribe to Haaretz Print Edition](#)

[Home](#) | [TV](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Diplomacy](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts & Leisure](#) | [Sports](#) | [Jewish World](#) | [Site rules](#) |

| [Advert: Recommended Restaurants](#) | [Makom: Engaging on Israel](#)

| [Search engine marketing](#)



Haaretz.com, the online edition of Haaretz Newspaper in Israel, offers real-time breaking news, opinions and analysis from Israel and the Middle East. Haaretz.com provides extensive and in-depth coverage of Israel, the Jewish World and the Middle East, including defense, diplomacy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the peace process, Israeli politics, Jerusalem affairs, international relations, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli business world and Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora.

© Copyright 2009 Haaretz. All rights reserved