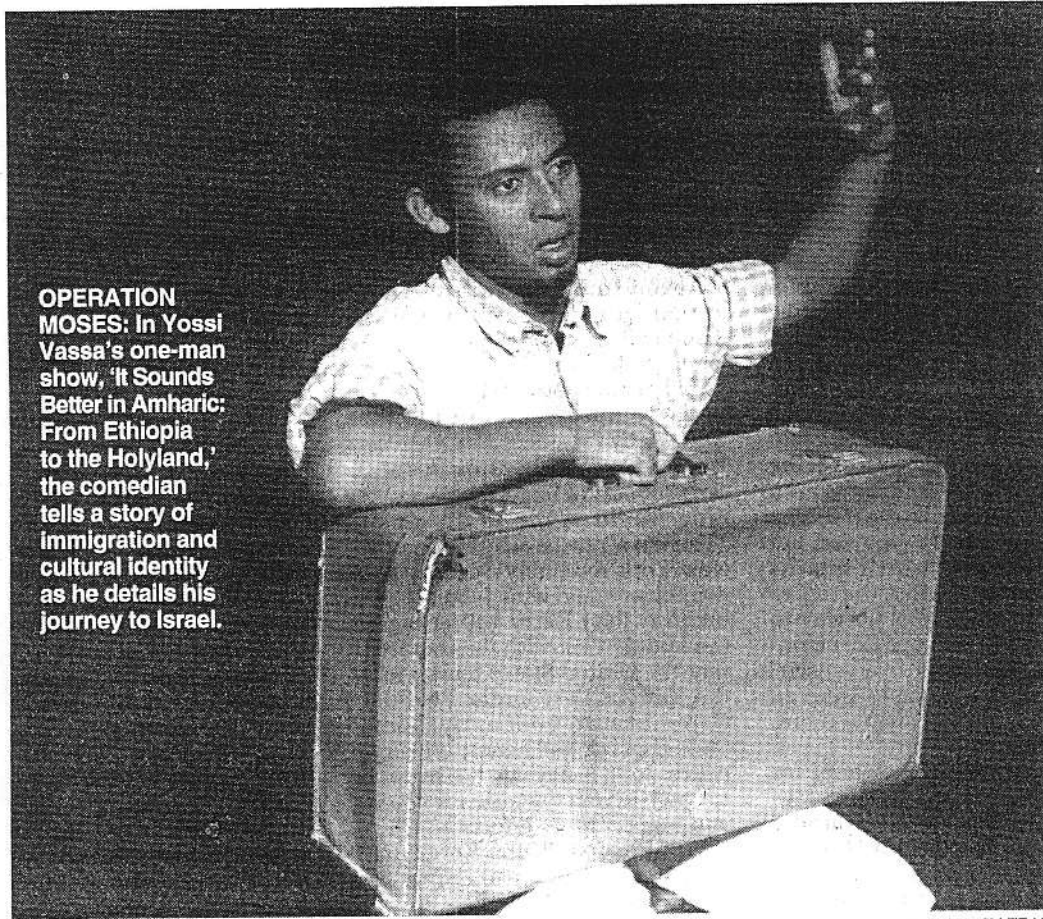


# CALENDAR



**OPERATION MOSES:** In Yossi Vassa's one-man show, 'It Sounds Better in Amharic: From Ethiopia to the Holyland,' the comedian tells a story of immigration and cultural identity as he details his journey to Israel.

RAMI KATZAV

## LIVING HISTORY

Yossi Vassa is an Ethiopian-Israeli stand-up comic who has been confronted with hardships and tragedy that most 29-year-old Americans would struggle to imagine. At age 9, he and his family were among thousands of Ethiopian Jews resettled in Israel thanks to

### NEW JERSEY

Operation Moses. They journeyed on foot for 440 miles to a Sudanese transit camp, where they waited for a year before being airlifted to Israel. Vassa's grandmother and his two younger brothers died from diseases contracted on their journey to the camp.

Though his story is full of sorrow and heartbreak, Vassa tells it with humor in his one-man show, "It Sounds Better in Amharic: From Ethiopia to the Holyland," co-written and directed by Shai Ben Attar.

"I think of it as a unique drama," Vassa said. "At the beginning we tried to define it as theatrical standup, but it's not just standup. There's also a dramatic, sad story."

"It's easier for people to understand difficulties through humor," Vassa added. "It's easier to communicate, especially when talking about something that is very strange and sensitive."

The show transcends Vassa's story, exploring larger issues of immigration, social integration and personal identity, while also investigating personal change, courage and humanity.

"I changed very much, and it's a good thing. Don't be afraid to change," Vassa said. "At the end of the show I say that I'm open to change because I'm changing all the time."

An optional Shabbat dinner with vegetarian and Ethiopian flair precedes the performance.

— SARAH KRICHEFF

*Bnai Keshet, 99 So. Fullerton Ave., Montclair; Feb. 27, Shabbat dinner at 7:30 p.m., \$10; reservations and payment for dinner required at synagogue office by Feb. 25., performance 8:30 p.m.; free, reservations required. (973-746-4889 or bnaiakeshet@aol.com)*