



Dear Firew,

They say guiding a group through Ethiopia requires knowledge, patience, flexibility, and a very good sense of direction. Guiding a group of Israeli academics, however, apparently requires an entirely different qualification!

We came as professors, researchers, and university staff—people professionally trained to ask questions, challenge assumptions, debate almost everything, and occasionally treat a schedule as merely an interesting theoretical suggestion.

We may not always have been the most disciplined group. We talked when we were supposed to listen, wandered when we were supposed to gather, stopped for one more photo approximately 100 times, and somehow discovered that every respectable academic journey should include dancing whenever possible!

But through Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Harar; through markets, universities, and ancient streets; through encounters with hyenas, wolves, and mountain nyala; from the heart of the lowlands to the freezing heights of the Bale Mountains, and finally to beautiful Hawassa—you guided us with knowledge, patience, humor, and remarkable calm.

You didn't just show us Ethiopia. You helped us understand it—its people, cultures, religions, landscapes, contradictions, history, and extraordinary diversity.

And even when we were interrupted, questioned, photographed, danced, changed places, lost focus, found it again, and probably tested your patience more than once—you kept smiling.

Firew, thank you for being our guide, teacher, storyteller, problem solver, and occasionally, highly skilled Israeli-academic-group manager!

We came to Ethiopia to learn about diversity. We certainly brought some of our own!

We leave with hundreds of photographs, countless memories, a new appreciation for injera, slightly stronger lungs after the Bale Mountains, and an enormous affection for Ethiopia—and for the person who brought it all to life for us.

Thank you for an unforgettable journey.

We will miss Ethiopia, and we will miss you.

*With love and appreciation,
The Israeli Academic Delegation
University of Haifa*

