

# ETHIOPIA



**AD 1903 EE1889 -1 GERSH - OBV**

ETHIOPIA, KINGDOM of  
ADDIS ABABA MINT

1 GERSH (1/16 TALARI) 16.5 MM .916FINE 2.49 GRAMS

(1903-28) EE 1889 46,141,625 frozen date

▲OV: Crowned bust of Menelik II, facing right, inscription (Menelik II, King of Kings of Ethiopia) around / EE 1889 (frozen date of Ethiopian Era 1889) below / (cornucopia) A (touch) below.

▲RV: Lion holding staff of the banner of Christ in its right paw, inscription (He is the Conqueror, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah) around / inscription for denomination.

EDGE: Reeded

DESIGNER: Jean LaGrange and Jules Clement  
Chaplain

ENGRAVER: Frank Pawlik, First Medallist of the  
Vienna mint.

MINT: (no mintmark) = ADDIS ABABA  
Dies engraved at Paris mint with marks (cornucopia)  
A and (touch)

REFERENCE: Y-5, KM-12

FOOTNOTE: Ethiopia is the land known as ancient Abyssinia and in the north east of Africa, for many centuries the only independent country in the continent. This was confirmed by the convention of Addis Ababa of October 26, 1898, between Italy and King Menelik.



**AD 1903 EE1889 -1 GERSH - REV**

FOOTNOTE: The Ethiopia issue of 1 gersh was struck between 1903 and 1928 with the frozen date of the Ethiopian Era 1889 at the Addis Ababa mint with a combined mintage of 46,141,625. The mintage is reported as follows:

(1903) EE 1889	1,352,857
(1905)	300,000
(1910)	2,000,000
(1911)	8,000,000
(1912)	500,000
(1913)	500,000
(1922)	988,764
(1925)	2,500,000
(1926)	10,568,352
(1927)	4,415,888
(1928)	15,015,760

FOOTNOTE: Abyssinia, the ancient Ethiopia, is a mountainous country, and has a fine, healthy climate, and a rich, fertile soil. The principal productions are wheat, and a small grain called teff, balsam, myrrh, etc. Among the other vegetable productions is the papyrus, so celebrated among the ancients, as the original material of paper. The inhabitants are in the lowest state of civilization; and in many of their customs, they are extremely barbarous and brutal. They scarcely regard human life, and are fond of eating raw flesh, cut from the living animal, in its warm, palpitating state. *Olney's Geography, 1849.*

FOOTNOTE: In 1928 Rus Tafari was crowned Emperor, sharing supreme power with his Aunt, the Empress Zauditu. She died in 1930 and Tafari became Haile Sellasi, King of Kings of Ethiopia.



## A Royal Council

FOOTNOTE: The first series of coinage under King Menelik II issued after he ascended to the throne of Ethiopia in 1889 were struck in Paris in 1894 with the Ethiopian Era date of EE 1887. This series of talari, 1/2 talari and 1/8 talari (20MM) with the crowned bust of Menelik II on the obverse carried on the reverse the emblem of Ethiopia, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The first dies were engraved with a lion strolling about with a somewhat resigned and sleepy expression on his face and his tail was drooping and in addition he was carrying his staff in his left paw, an unpardonable sin even for a sick lion. The natives took a careful look at this coin series and refused to accept them preferring the famous Maria Theresa taler, long the standard of eastern ports of Africa and the Indian rupee with its fractions for subsidiary coinage. This first Ethiopian series was never accepted, the coins being melted down in 1903 in Addis Ababa and a second series issued with a new portrait of the conquering Lion of Judah. This time a *Happy Lion* with staff in his right paw, a regal sneer on his face and his proud tail wagging above him. King Menelik II took the additional precaution to issue the subsidiary coinage with less weight than the talari which the natives soon discovered when they melted two 1/2 talari and found that they had less silver than the crown size coin. All of the issue from Addis Ababa bore the EE 1889 date. In place of the 1/8 talari, the 1/20 talari (gersh) was struck (16.5MM) from dies cut in Paris, equal to the British India 2 annas. This denomination was soon revalued at 1/16 talari and issued for many years through 1928.



Lion of the Tribe of Judah

FOOTNOTE: The Bank of Abyssinia has its head office at Addis Ababa. By its constitution the Governor of the national Bank of Egypt is its President, and its governing body sits at Cairo. The current coin of Abyssinia is the Maria Theresa dollar, but a new coinage (coined at Paris) has been put in circulation, with the Menelik dollar for the standard coin. This new coin, the *talari*, or dollar worth 2s., weighs 28.075 grammes, .835 fine. It has nominally the same value as the Maria Theresa dollar, but in the capital is disliked, and in some places is not taken at all. The Bank of Abyssinia has introduced a large stock of Menelik piastres (16 to the dollar). Other silver coins are half, quarter, and sixteenth (guerche or piastre) of a talari. Copper coins are the *besa* (= one-hundredth of a dollar) and the half and quarter guerche found only at Harrar. Various articles, however, are used as mediums of exchange; bars of salt are regularly accepted as money all over the country, in two sizes, and at a fluctuating rate according to supply and cost of transport. Cartridges are also currency, although there is a dead-letter edict against them; and in most places barter prevails. The Abyssinian *ounce* weights about 430 grains (the weight of the Maria Theresa dollar). *Statesman's Year-Book*, London, 1916.

FOOTNOTE: Menelik II, Emperor of Abyssinia the son of Haell Melicoth, King of Shoa was born in 1842. At the age of 14 he was obliged to wed Bafana, the daughter of Theodosius, the reigning Emperor and ten years later he became King of Shoa. The Abyssinian Empire comprised the states of Abyssinia proper, Shoa, Kaffa, and Gallaland, and Central Somaliland. The natives call the country Ethiopia. The name Abyssinia means 'Mixed', derived from Habesh, on account of the varied nature of the people. Following the death of Theodosius, Ethiopia was ruled by Negus John who was assassinated after four years. In 1889 Menelik II declared himself Emperor. In a treaty Italy assumed control of Abyssinian affairs and the Empire became an Italian Protectorate. In 1895 an uprising under Menelik II resulted in independence for Ethiopia. He was succeeded in 1911 by his grandson, Emperor Lij Yasu, and died two years later. There is an interesting story about Theodore. When Theodore installed himself as Negus in 1853 AD, Abyssinia stretched to the Red Sea and included Eritrea. The Turks had established a trading post at Massawa and wanted to take more territory. Theodore sent a note to Queen Victoria asking for aid. The story goes that no one in the British Foreign Office could read Amharic (the language in which the note was written) and Theodore's message was pigeonholed without reply. Where upon the irate Negus Theodore threw the British Consul, Captain Cameron, into prison. This led to Sir Robert Napier being sent with a force to Ethiopia. They landed at Zula, on the Red Sea, and marched to Magdala in the interior, where Theodore was encamped. Magdala was stormed and taken, April 10, 1868, and the prisoners were released. Theodore committed suicide. The British retired. Later the Italians occupied Massawa, and by the Treaty of Ucciali in 1889 AD, the Italian Colony of Eritrea was recognized.

FOOTNOTE: Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is located in the province of Shoa. It has a picturesque location at an altitude of 8,000 feet, but its streets are irregular and the buildings are poorly constructed. On an eminence is the royal palace of King or 'negus' Menelik II, which consists of several buildings and is surrounded by walls. The city has a large floating population and is the mecca of many caravans. Population 50,000. *Practical American Encyclopedia*, 1910.

