



## Profile of a Leader: J. J. Keki

By Karen Primack

Joab Jonadav Keki – known as “JJ” to his friends – may be considered a “Renaissance Man” of East Africa.

JJ has been chairman of the Abayudaya Congregation some 10 years, spanning a period that saw the little-known community of practicing Jews escalate in fame around the world. Since a 1992 visit by American students Matt Meyer and Julia Chamovitz -- during which plans were laid out to increase the Abayudaya's contacts with world Jewry -- and a 1995 visit by a 15-member Kulanu delegation, the congregation has become a popular offbeat tourist destination for Americans, Canadians, Europeans and Israelis seeking a unique Jewish adventure in eastern Uganda. JJ's charm, intelligence, and winning interpersonal skills (along with those of many of his colleagues) have impressed all types of visitors.

JJ has recently overseen a period of restructuring of the community, as a newly-written constitution comes into being -- a constitution developed by a wide representation of Abayudaya. JJ has just stepped down from the Abayudaya chairmanship to run for local public office, and the vice chairman of the congregation, Jacob Mwosuko, has become acting chairman pending elections this spring.

JJ is a successful farmer and a businessman. He grows coffee on his 20 fertile acres and is chairman of the local 83-member Farmers' Society, which runs a coffee collective.

And JJ is a musician. He directs the congregation's *Kohavim Tikvah* Choir and is the composer and featured soloist on many of the songs in Kulanu's recording of Abayudaya music, *Shalom Everybody Everywhere!* For example, melodies to the popular Abayudaya renditions of “Sh'ma Yisrael” and “L'cha Dodi” are his creations.

JJ is also a *mensch* with a sense of community. As Kenny



Schultz recalls in a college thesis he wrote following his 1994 study-visit to Uganda: “As Joab and I were returning from town one day, we were stopped by a few men who had placed a long, thick branch in the middle of the road. Instinctively, Joab got off his bike, picked up a shovel, and distributed the moist soil into the huge ditches along the eroded dirt path. Joab said to me as he was working, ‘Everyone who passes must contribute. This is how we fix our roads.’” Believing in the importance of integrating with the surrounding community, he has headed a political organization under the National Resistance Movement of President Museveni, chaired a nearby school, and presided over the Nankuse Youth Wildlife Association, which helps protect the environment.

(Continued on page 12)

## A Tribute to Elias Lipiner

By Helio Daniel Cordeiro

Elias Lipiner was born in 1916 in Khotin, Bessarabia. He came to Brazil at a young age and emigrated to Israel in 1968. A lawyer by training, a talented and dedicated historian, he was one of the most prolific researchers on the presence of the Jews in Portugal and to a certain extent, in Brazil. He died in Israel in April 1998, at age 82, leaving behind a substantial body of work in Portuguese, Hebrew, English and Yiddish.

Late in 1992 I had my first face-to-face meeting with this unforgettable and sweet man, a Tzadik in the truest sense of the word. I had the privilege of meeting him a few more times in his offices and libraries in Tel Aviv in March 1994, and in January 1996 I met him at Jerusalem's Mount Scopus. We met for the last time in Sao Paulo, in November 1996, when he came to receive a tribute from the Brazilian Jewish community during the event marking the 500th anniversary of the forced conversion of Portuguese Jews.

In April of 1997 I received his last letter, in which he mourned the recent death of my father-in-law, Israel Mucinic, his fellow countryman from Khotin. He wrote with wise realism: “We are all in the waiting line for Heaven.”

Rest in peace, Master Lipiner, and thank you for having written such beautiful books, for having taught me so much, for giving me the opportunity to meet you, profound scholar of the Inquisitorial vocabulary.

(The next newsletter will feature Cordeiro's comments on Lipiner's book *The Holy Inquisition: Terror and Language.*)

KULANU (“ALL OF US”) is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who wish to (re)join the Jewish community. Kulanu is undertaking a variety of activities worldwide on behalf of these dispersed groups, including research, contacts, education, conversion when requested, and relocation to Israel if desired.

## "PARTNER SCHOOLS" SOUGHT

# New Abayudaya High School Needs Our Help!

By Karen Primack

The new Semei Kakungulu High School has just opened in the Mbale District of Uganda. It is named for the Muganda warrior-governor who, in 1919, after studying the Bible that British missionaries had introduced, led his people to embrace Judaism. The Abayudaya Jews of Uganda still follow this path 80 years later.

The school was established by Gershom Sizomu, the first Abayudaya to graduate from college. It was made possible with funding received from the sales of Abayudaya recordings and hand-knit kipot, which are marketed worldwide by Kulanu (see page 16).

Abayudaya students welcome the opportunity to attend a school that recognizes Jewish holidays and that will teach Jewish subjects.

Students have started attending the new school, and the office is functioning, but work is still going on to make desks and prepare classrooms. **The school will not be accredited, however, until it can afford scientific equipment – chemistry, biology and physics apparatus. The school is seeking "partner schools" all over the world that will help with books, materials, and teacher/student visits.**

Although the thrust is on academic subjects, the school would also like to accommodate student requests for vocational courses such as computer training, carpentry, and sewing. For these to be possible, new or used computers, woodwork tools and sewing machines are needed.

The school also is requesting sporting equipment such as footballs (for soccer), net balls (for basketball) and volley balls, as well as musical instruments.

Books are also in need – library books as well as textbooks. Science books at the secondary school level, including general science, biology, botany, physics and chemistry, have been requested. Math books would also be useful.

Book donors are asked to send the books directly to Uganda if possible. Ask for an "M" bag at the US Post Office, which will allow books to be shipped at the relatively reasonable rate of 79 cents per pound. Send to Semei Kakungulu High School, c/o Gershom Sizomu, PO Box 225, Mbale, Uganda. Please keep Kulanu informed if you mail books so that we can recognize your help in our newsletter.

**Last, but not least, TEACHERS are needed! Experienced teachers in almost any secondary school subject – including Hebrew -- would be welcome to come and be volunteer guest teachers for a few weeks, a few months, or a school year.** (Think of it as a mini-Peace Corps experience!)

Interested schools and individuals wishing to help in any way are invited to discuss the possibilities with Dr. Aron Primack at <primack@mindspring.com> or call either (410) 786-9739 or (301) 565-3094 or write c/o the Kulanu office.

Aron hopes to attract "partner schools" that will adopt the new high school by donating books and equipment, raising

funds, establishing pen pal programs, arranging visits to Uganda, and ultimately making it possible for Ugandans to visit their schools. Having visited the Abayudaya myself, I know this will be a rewarding experience for both sides.

Thank you.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# *Educating the Educators*

By Jack Zeller

As president of Kulanu, I sometimes wonder about my ability to get things done, what should be my priorities, what opportunities have been missed, whether we use our very modest resources properly. And I very much appreciate ideas/criticism and volunteers for almost any initiatives.

The other day I had 20 minutes of relief from self doubt. I returned a phone call from Rachel Glazer, who is the director of education for Beth Israel Congregation in Owings Mills, Maryland. She was calling about her school's program of correspondence with the Abayudaya. She had not received the Kulanu newsletter, had never listened to the Abayudaya CD/tape except for a few lines from the Abayudaya web site (Kulanu linked, of course), and wanted to find out everything she could about the Abayudaya so that her students could be sensitive and valuable correspondents. Shortly she will have the Kulanu book, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*, and access to Matt Meyer, who has visited the Abayudaya on nine occasions (perhaps more).

I believe there are literally thousands of "Rachel Glazers" in the Jewish community educational network. The Abayudaya and other marginal communities that practice Judaism with an intensity, sincerity and spirituality that makes us wonder what is lacking in our own Jewish identity, are both role models and the essence of the Diaspora matrix that binds us all. I urge every supporter of Kulanu to reach out to their synagogue educators: Buy them an Abayudaya CD or tape or a Kulanu book (all tax-deductible gifts to the congregation), and print from our web site some of the stories told by our friends around the world.

I don't get a call from "Rachel Glazer-type" educators very often. A dear friend who I had begged to present Kulanu materials at the CAGE annual meeting of Jewish educators has repeatedly said "No," although recently less emphatically. So, I think often about my inability to get things done. PLEASE HELP!

# A Fruitful Expedition to Jodensavanne

By Rachel Frankel

(The author is a New York architect.)

Thanks to volunteers and donor organizations, the success of our August 1998 documentation of the Cassipora Cemetery of Jodensavanne, in the Republic of Suriname, exceeded expectation. And our upcoming expedition in August 1999 (details below) looks equally promising.

Sephardic Jews and enslaved West Africans settled Jodensavanne as a semi-autonomous sugar plantation colony within the larger colony of Dutch Guiana in the 1660's. Our expedition team confirmed the presence of 214 tombstones, about 35 more than have ever thought to exist. The team located, inventoried and photographed each gravestone. Additionally, the team's Jewish scholar, Dr. Aviva Ben-Ur, transcribed the epitaphs. With the exception of two prism-shaped gravestones, all the tombstones are horizontally laid slabs of various types of limestone and marble.

On August 5, 1998, the expedition team left Suriname's capital of Paramaribo and traveled four hours by river boat up the Suriname River to Jodensavanne, once the largest Jewish agrarian settlement in the New World. STINASU (Foundation for Nature Conservation in Suriname, a semi-governmental non-profit organization), by hire, arranged the logistics, jungle clearing, transportation and accommodations of the expedition team. The team worked for eight days and included an architectural preservationist, a journalist, archivist, forest ranger, a student, and volunteers. I served as project leader and photographer.

The expedition team stayed in the house of Julius Stuger in the small AmerIndian settlement of Redi Doti, about two miles from Cassipora Cemetery. Mr. Stuger, under the auspices and hire of STINASU, led the clearing of Cassipora Cemetery and the road leading to it.

Jodensavanne has a second historical cemetery as well, located a few miles north of Cassipora Cemetery. This second cemetery was established subsequent and adjacent to the community's second synagogue built in 1685. The community's first synagogue is believed to have existed within close proximity to Cassipora Cemetery. Despite the establishment of the second cemetery, some families and individuals continued to use Cassipora Cemetery. Within a few hundred yards of the second cemetery is the so-called Slave or Creole (descendants of slaves) Cemetery.

Our work included unearthing all the gravestones of the cemetery; creating a survey of the cemetery showing tomb orientation, location and adjacencies; creating an inventory of the architecture and art of each tomb; photographing the cemetery and each of its tombs; and transcribing each epitaph.

The work of the expedition produced many important – and some unexpected – findings. Tomb death dates indicate that the cemetery may have existed prior to the 1667 exchange of Suriname for Manhattan by the British with the Dutch and that Cassipora Cemetery served as a burial site for over 200 years. The earliest death dates found were of the esteemed members of the community: rabbis, their wives and *hazans* (cantors). Thus the apparent areas of the cemetery without tombstones may also contain early burials but may have been marked with less expensive, non-weather-resistant graves, such as wood, thereby suggesting that the cemetery originally contained both stone

and wooden grave markers. It is known that the Jews commissioned and imported inscribed tombstones from Europe, whereas a plantation carpenter of African descent most likely would have carved wooden grave markers.

Epitaphs indicate that women held leadership roles, including that of plantation master and *hazan* (who most probably led the women in prayer). Imagery expressive of identity of the deceased includes *Mohel* (one who circumcises), Mother, Levite, Cohen, Youth and Spanish Noble. Messianic ideology is expressed in the tombstone imagery. We noted that tombs with Hebrew and Portuguese (or Spanish) languages epitaphs are not translations of each other.

With a grant from the Lucius Littauer Foundation, Aviva Ben-Ur and I will develop the documentation of the expedition and produce a manuscript to be published by the American Jewish Archives. Such a comprehensive publication will not only provide a full body of information for historians, genealogists, art historians and architectural conservationists/preservationists, but also will revive the legacy of one of the most significant Jewish colonial settlements in the New World. Following publication, the original materials of the Cassipora Cemetery will be donated to the American Jewish Archives.

The expedition team also documented what is commonly referred to as the Slave or Creole Cemetery. The fragile condition of this cemetery's graves prohibited the team from clearing the cemetery. Nonetheless, the team determined the extent of the cemetery, estimated the number of burials and documented graves in fair to excellent condition. The findings of this cemetery led me to conclude that it is a Freeholders' Cemetery and not a slave cemetery or Creole cemetery. Burial for a slave, historically, occurred on the plantations of his/her master, not in a cemetery. Also, the Freeholders' Cemetery, adjacent to the Jewish Cemetery, is situated on prominent public land; such a site would never have been given for the burial of slaves. Also, the precise recording of some birth dates and the use of family names indicates that those interred were not slaves. This cemetery's early burials are most likely the free offspring of Jewish fathers and African-descendant mothers who were not accepted as Jews because their mothers were not Jewish. This cemetery holds some stone graves that resemble those of Jodensavanne's Jews. The cemetery also contains a rich variety of uniquely carved wooden graves.

Based on my studies of the persistence of African culture in the New World, I believe that African symbolism inspired the imagery of these graves. Interestingly, some of the symbols appearing at the Freeholders' Cemetery also occur at contemporaneous graves in the Jewish cemeteries in Paramaribo. The photographic materials and other documentation from Freeman's Cemetery will be donated to the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American Documentation at Duke University.

Thanks to the support of the donor organizations that made the expedition possible, there is new interest in Jodensavanne: The long dormant Foundation for Jodensavanne (SJS) is recently revived with a new board of directors and has already proven its vitality and commitment to Jodensavanne by clearing of the sites of the second cemetery and that of the synagogue. SJS also hosted a presentation on Jodensavanne at which Aviva Ben-Ur and I had the honor and pleasure of giving a slide lecture to a public audience of approximately 200 people.<sup>14)</sup>



*Tombstone Image of the hand of God taking life before its time. Photo by R. Frankel*

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Welcome, New Officers!

Kulanu welcomes Lionel Okun as its new Vice President for California Outreach and Melke Mengiste as new Treasurer. Without dedicated folks like these, Kulanu could not continue its valuable work!

Okun has given public talks about Kulanu's work and has even ordered a carton of our books from KTAV to sell at one of his engagements. A major contributor to Kulanu, Okun is a British engineer who has retired in Seal Beach.

Mengiste is an Ethiopian Jew who has studied accounting, management and economics in Moscow and Addis Ababa and has had considerable experience working in the US. She and her family belong to a Conservative congregation in Washington, DC.

## Ethiopians Shunned at Chabad Schools

According to an article in *Ha'aretz* by Aliza Arbeli, Chabad schools in Israel – which receive government funding -- are shunning Ethiopian children because "their Jewishness is in question." Responding to charges of racism, a Chabad spokesman countered that Chabad educational institutions exclude anyone whose Jewishness is in question, including some Soviet immigrants. The Israeli government registers the Ethiopian immigrants as Jews.

## Jewish Genealogy Conference

The 19th Annual Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held Aug 8-13, 1999, in New York City. An area of emphasis will be the Inquisition of Spain. Attendees will be treated to two lectures by noted scholar and anthropologist, Dr. Lawrence H. Feldman, (1) Inquisitions and Archival Resources in Late Medieval/Early Modern Spain and (2) Spain, the Jews and the Holocaust -- Finding People in 20th Century Spanish Archives.

A copy of the Conference registration application and list of lectures can be printed directly from the web site <<http://members.aol.com/nyc99conf>>. The Conference will be held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel, located in the heart of revitalized Times Square -- accessible to all archives, libraries and resources for genealogical research. Provide the Conference information when you make your reservations with the hotel and airlines in order to receive the special rates for attendees. Note: Early registration must be postmarked May 15, 1999. For further information, contact [nyc99conf@aol.com](mailto:nyc99conf@aol.com).

## College Books Needed in Uganda

Uri Katula, an Abayudaya teacher who is pursuing a college degree in education, needs college-level books on educational theory and methods, education administration, comparative education and primary education. He would also appreciate books on psychology, sociology and geography. Please send new or used books to the Kulanu office or directly to Uri at PO Box 53, Mbale, Uganda.

## Kulanu Shabbaton in Toronto Next Fall

The Kulanu Shabbaton originally scheduled for March in Toronto has been postponed to next fall, due to Dr. Bryan Dobbs' surgery. He and Barbara Taverner would like to hear from interested Kulanu supporters in Canada and upstate New York. Bryan can be reached at [bgdobbs@globalserve.net](mailto:bgdobbs@globalserve.net) or 350 Queens Quay West, #1602, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5Y 3A7. Barbara can be contacted at [Btaverna@aol.com](mailto:Btaverna@aol.com) or 9626 Ridge Road West, Brockport, NY 14420.

## Speakers Spread the Word

A notable Scholars Weekend program at Tikvat Israel congregation in Rockville, Maryland, featured talks by Dr. Stanley Hordes and Clara Castelar. The intensive program focused on Iberian Crypto-Judaism. Other Kulanu regulars giving talks this quarter include Jonina Duker, Aron Primack, Lionel Okun, Dr. Abraham Lavender, Jack Zeller and Joe Hantman.

## South Florida Chapter Doings

Thanks to Yaakov Gladstone, South Florida is Kulanu's busiest chapter. Over 100 people attended a Kulanu meeting at the Century Village club house in February, where Dr. Abraham Lavender, professor of anthropology and sociology at the Florida International University, spoke on the Jews of India. (The program also featured a Yiddish and Hebrew sing-along and a playing of the Abayudaya recording.) Just two weeks later, a Kulanu meeting in Miami Beach attracted another 42 people, 38 of whom were new to Kulanu. That meeting included a talk by Dr. Lavender on the book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of* and a discussion on the Marranos of northern Brazil led by Jose d'Gabriel. Yaakov developed attractive flyers for the two meetings and secured considerable pre-event publicity in several local papers. He also collected \$1200 for Kulanu. He is truly an inspiration!



*Yaakov Gladstone addressing Century Village meeting, which attracted over 100.*

## Assam Synagogue Receives Torah

Beith Shalom Synagogue of Assam, India, now has a magnificent Torah scroll, brought to the congregation from Israel by Avidian Vemileah Yehudi, an immigrant from Assam to Israel. A spokesman for the synagogue, Mr. Jonah, called the gift an answer to prayers and an expression of "the loving kindness of the most high God of Israel."

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Births!

*Mazel tov* to Jacob Mwsuko, vice chairman of the Abayudaya Congregation, and his family on the birth of a daughter, Shifra Tasubira Mwsuko!

*Mazel tov* to Kulanu stalwarts Jack and Diane Zeller on the birth of their grandson, Adin Ramiel Kram. Proud parents are Ariella Zeller and Chaim Kram, and proud sister is Elianna Paia Zeller.

*Mazel tov* to Kulanu V.P. Irwin Berg and Elaine Berg on the birth of grandson Justin George Fishman, son of Elana and Steven Fishman.

## *Minyan In Kaifeng: A Work in Progress*

Subtitled "A Modern Journey to an Ancient Chinese Jewish Community," the film *Minyan In Kaifeng* is a work in progress that may now be seen in its rough-cut version. The documentary's team is seeking synagogues, study groups, educational institutions and other organizations to host a screening of the rough-cut. Each screening is preceded by a short introduction on the making of the film and followed by a discussion in which the viewer becomes an integral part of the creative process. To bring the film to your group or to volunteer your time to work on the project, call 617-308-8576 or e-mail [minyan@gorpbrothers.com](mailto:minyan@gorpbrothers.com).

## Call for Papers for Anthology

Charles Meyers and Norman Simms are planning to produce an anthology of essays on the Marranos/Crypto-Jews in Europe and the New World Colonies from the 15th through 17th Centuries. Papers are called for to deal with such areas as: Identity confusions amongst individuals and family groups; traumatic illness amongst the forced Catholic converts and children of *conversos*; re-creations of Judaism and Jewishness under the inadvertent tutelage of Inquisition codes and trials; the development of new kinds of Jewish communal organization and education in small isolated groups; manuals of instruction in Jewish tradition and custom; life-histories and responsa as sources of information on the Marrano experience; and the viability of Jewish identity in unconventional and non-halakhic circumstances.

All papers should be approximately 4000 words, normally unpublished, and submitted in typed form in duplicate plus on disk Word 6.1 or 5.1. Please enclose a brief bio-bibliography. Deadline: 1 December 1999. Send to: Dr. Norman Simms, History Department, Waikato University, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand or Dr. Charles Meyers, Independent Scholar, 7409 Ansley Drive Lake Worth, FL 33467, USA.

## Condolences

Condolences to Dr. Bryan Dobbs on the loss of his chosen son, Michael. May his memory be for a blessing.

# Todah Rabah For These Gifts!

With his latest \$1000 contribution, **Lionel Okun** has come up with a great idea – let a \$1000 donation buy a "Life Membership" in Kulanu. We hereby adopt this suggestion and confer a lifetime subscription to the Kulanu newsletter to Lionel and others in this class!

Ten cartons of Jewish books were received from **Doris Schneider** of Baltimore. **Judy Bernhardt** donated a large collection of satin *kip-pot*. Heaps of haggadas were donated by **Cynthia and Mike Weisfield** of Pittsburgh and **Barry and Sara Landau** of Chevy Chase, MD. These will all be appreciated by our communities abroad.

The following made donations in memory of **David Primack: Cynthia and Michael Weisfield, Drs. Roberto and Patrizia Levi, Drs. Judy and Bert Neri, Lisette and Jerome Barry and Alan and Janet Levitan.**

The **Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso**, Ghana, after reading about the plight of Ethiopian Jews in the Kulanu newsletter, collected \$51 for Kulanu to send to the "suffering brothers" in Ethiopia. The Ghanaian community is experiencing a shortage of money now, so their contribution is especially appreciated! Kulanu president Jack Zeller has commented about this donation: "The deeper meaning is that what appears to be a very small part of our lost Diaspora is also resurgent, vital, authentic beyond measure and significantly inspiring."

**Bob and Jeri Lande** have generously donated \$1500 to Kulanu, \$1000 of which is earmarked for the Jewish Incan community in Peru, and \$500 for the Lemba of South Africa. **Irwin and Elaine Berg** have earmarked a \$500 donation for the Margolis Fund for Abayudaya Education. **Dr. Irene Vogel** has contributed \$500 to benefit the Bnei Menashe. **Jonina Duker and Alan Lichtman** contributed \$360 for Ethiopian Jewry.

**Fabrangen Cheder Community** and the **Fabrangen Tzedakah Collective** each donated \$100 to Kulanu. **Columbia Jewish Congregation** has donated \$100 in honor of **Aron Primack's** talk and **Tikvat Israel** has donated \$125 in honor of **Clara Castelar's** talk.

We appreciate the generous contribution from **Rabbi Irving and Blu Greenberg!**

**Tudor Parfitt** has donated a copy of his 1987 book, *The Thirteenth Gate: Travels Among the Lost Tribes of Israel*, to the Kulanu library. Published by George Weidenfelt & Nicolson Ltd. of London, the book is out of print and difficult to find, so we are delighted with the gift.

**Jonina Duker**, a popular speaker about Jewish genealogy topics, is donating the proceeds from her talks to a new fund within Kulanu to assist those doing genealogical research who cannot afford postage and other expenses.

# LETTERS TO KULANU

## Grateful to Kulanu

Our Community here in Ghana has taken Kulanu to be the root which passes through the Red Sea for the Jews from outside America and Israel to pass on to the Promised Land. The main fact is that since Kulanu started contact with our community in Ghana about four years past, we have come into a better movement than our previous years through the books they have sent to us. Because of their good newsletter, through this contact Kulanu has sent a visitor to us in Ghana, Brother Daniel Baiden. After his visit, some Brothers from America also promised to visit us in Ghana but they failed to come. Brother Daniel's visit has helped our community to enter into more improvement in the Torah faith. Kulanu has helped us know much about other lost Jews from other Nations.

*David G. Ahenkorah  
PO Box 57, Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana*

## Totally Engrossed in Kulanu

Ever since my mom & I attended a Kulanu lecture in Miami Beach, presented by Yaacov Gladstone and Professor Lavender, I have been TOTALLY engrossed in the Kulanu web site and newsletters. I've read and re-read much of the material. At times I think the whole world must be Jewish! This after being bombarded by the news that Jews are disappearing from the scene in droves. What a consciousness-raising experience this has been!

I am an unaffiliated, non-practicing Jew who knows her heritage but little more. Reading the various articles about the struggling and dedicated people who are tracing their roots, or seeking to be part of and accepted by the established Jewish community, gives me a new perspective and appreciation of the hard work that goes into perpetuating an important segment of the world's inhabitants.

*Helen Draher  
North Miami Beach, FL*

## Interested in London

I am very interested in getting hold of any other information relating to *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*. I am researching for a project in England and have found your web site to be the best source of information on the net and outside.

*Dani Kirsch  
London, England*

## Proposal for a Combined Effort

On my website on "Sephardic Genealogy Resources" <<http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/sefardim.htm>> I have been trying to provide helpful information for a couple of years now. Sephardic genealogy is still in its infancy as far as developing sources of documentation. Although there is an abundance of data for research in pre-expulsion Spain and in Inquisition records, there remains a paucity of information on where to find genealogic data for the past two or three centuries. Our Ashkenazi brethren have done and are continuing to do a tremendous job in documenting genealogic sources in Eastern Europe and Russia and I would like to suggest that we emulate them in documenting what sources exist in countries where Sephardim (and I use the term in its most inclusive definition) have lived in the recent centuries. There is a lot of work to be done in developing a list of these sources and it cannot be done by any one person alone or by "the other guy".

What I am proposing is that we pool our knowledge and research to help each other. There are lots of us out there who know of sources here and there or could find out about some and I would like to suggest that they contribute what they know by e-mailing me <[malkajef@orthohelp.com](mailto:malkajef@orthohelp.com)>. Once we have a collection of such information I will make the combined data available in a form that will benefit all of us.

What kind of information are we looking for? First let me suggest a list of countries where large number of Sephardim lived and then what kind of information might be helpful to know. Countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Rhodes, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Canaries, etc. Type of information: Although history is interesting, what is really needed for genealogic searches in these countries is where to find and write for birth and death certificates, marriage records, what Jewish cemeteries exist in the country (not just the big towns) and where to find burial records, *beth din* and synagogue records, passport applications, consulate records, etc.

The responses to these questions will be different in different countries. In some governments vital records may exist, in others only religious ones, and so on. If enough people participate we can put together a good core of information available to all.

*Jeff Malka  
Vienna, Virginia*

## An Informative Meeting in Florida

I have been collecting for years material on the Jews of the world: China, Bolivia, Iraq, Vilna, Crimea, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Brazil, Lithuania, Italy, Curacao, Amazon, Croatia, Burma, Ireland, Netherlands, Peru, Hungary, Indonesia, Portugal, Scotland and more. Found my evening with Kulanu in Miami most informative.

*Paul Epstein  
Miami, Florida*

## Indian Jewish Ritual Objects Wanted

I am interested in collecting ritual objects as well as preserving the cultural and historical heritage of the Jewish communities in India. This is why I am interested in purchasing all items related to the Jews of India as well as individual Jews in India for my collection and research. By collecting, correlating, exhibiting, and publishing such materials, the history of Jews in India will not be lost. My interests include Torahs, Torah cases, ritual objects, hannukiahs, menorahs, shvitis [mizrachs], photos, ketubahs, books, documents, photographs, and any other items.

*Kenneth Robbins, E-mail: RAJANAWAB@aol.com  
5055 Seminary Rd, Alexandria, VA 22311*

## Singer Salutes Abayudaya Music

I first heard of you on NPR, when I then transcribed the "L'Cha Dodi" for my concerts and lectures – "A World of Jewish Folk Music." I'm happy to hear you have produced a CD. Mazel tov on your work.

*Laura Wetzler, Nervy Girl Records  
Cummington, Massachusetts*

## More on "Marrano"

I read with interest your notes on the meaning of Marrano, especially the Portuguese context. Apart from *marra,r* which you wrote means "to force," is the word, in Mexico, *amarrar*, which means to "to tie up" or "bind".

*Pablo Rodriguez Albers  
Melbourne, Australia*









# Publications of Note

**Kevin Brooks'** new book, *The Jews of Khazaria*, has just been published by Jason Aronson. In addition to exploring the history of the kingdom, the book examines evidence for and against the hypotheses that various modern groups descend from the Khazars, such as Russian Jews, Mountain Jews, Crimean Karaites, Kumuks, Cossacks, Russian Sabbatarians and Szeklers. Brooks affirms the equality of converts – in Khazaria as well as in other parts of the world. List price is \$35.

“Havdallah in Uganda,” an excellent article by **Jon Marshall** in the Spring 1999 issue of *Reform Judaism Magazine*, features the Abayudaya of Uganda, Bnei Menashe of India, and the Jewish Incan community in Peru, as well as photos from Kulanu's collection.

The same issue of *Reform Judaism* (Spring 1999) also contains an article by **Andree Aelion Brooks**, “A Jungle Journey,” about Rachel Frankel's last expedition studying a Jewish cemetery in Suriname. (See Frankel's article in this newsletter.)

The Jonathan David (publisher) catalogue, on the web at [www.JonathanDavidOnline.com](http://www.JonathanDavidOnline.com), lists **David Gitlitz's** new book with co-author **Linda Kay Davidson** (his wife), *A Drizzle of Honey: the Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*. Singer-scholar Judith Cohen gives it a rave review: “It's great – the scholarship is all there along with the recipes, which David and Linda tested extensively. In fact, my daughter Tamar and I had a taste (Crypto-chickpeas) when we spent an evening with them. Enjoy!”

**Benjamin J. Israel's** new book, *The Jews of India*, can be ordered from: Mosaic Books, B-17, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Lajpat Nagar Part 2, New Delhi 110024, India. The publishers will send copies by registered airmail, postage free, for payment of \$20. Make check payable to Mosaic Books. The book covers the Bene Israel, the Cochin Jews, and the Baghdadis.

A new book highly recommended by the Jewish Theological Seminary library is *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture* by **Yedida K. Stillman** and **Norman Stillman**.

The winter 1998 issue of *Avotaynu* features “The Jews of the Canary Islands” by **Gary Mokotoff** and “Crypto-Jews of the U.S. Southwest” by **Arthur Benveniste**.

**David Margolis's** article, “Finding the Lost Tribes,” covers the Bnei Menashe, the Lemba, the Pathan, and the Xiang Min. The piece, which appears in the Winter 1998 issue of *The Reporter* of Women's American ORT, also mentions Kulanu.

A new book, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era*, by **Joan G. Roland**, is available from Transaction Publications (toll-free number is 1-888-999-6778).

A lengthy article by **Samantha M. Klein**, “The Jews of Timbuktu,” was published in the November-December 1998 issue of *Eretz Magazine*. It features color photographs by **Eyal Tzur** and black and white photos by the author's brother, **Joshua Klein**.

The February 1999 issue *Moment Magazine* featured an article by **Ruth Cernea** on Bagdadi Jews in Burma, “Golden Age Rangoon.”

*Old Foundations: A Newsletter for Jewish Friends* is a publication of Jewish Quakers (or Quaker Jews). We were surprised to find, in its Adar 5759 issue, information about Kulanu and its work! Thanks to **Mary Cooper** for spreading the word.

An article about Xu Xin, “A Professor in Nanjing Takes Up Jewish Studies,” by **Gustav Niebuhr**, appeared in the March 13 *New York Times*.

According to an article written by **Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva** in *Folha de Sao Paulo* (a leading Brazilian newspaper) on April 12, 1999, a film is being produced by Katia Mezel on Jewish history in the State of Recife, Brazil. It also reports on the creation of a Jewish History Documentation Center of the Americas (*Centro de Documentacao da Memoria Judaica das Americas*) by historical Maria do Amparo Ferraz to open after restoration is completed at the site of the first synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, in Pernambuco.

*The Wanderer Magazine of Jewish Heritage & Travel* debuts with its Winter 1998/99 issue, edited and published by **Bill Gladstone**. The opening issue features articles about a synagogue in Cochin, Budapest's Jewish treasures and LA's Museum of Tolerance, among many others. To subscribe to the quarterly, send \$18 (US and Canada) or \$24 (all other countries) to: *The Wanderer*, 188 Balmoral Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 1J6.

**Carla Lancit**, assistant editor of B'nai B'rith's *International Jewish Monthly*, invites travelers to write up their “favorite Jewish finds.” Send short articles to her at 1640 Rhode Island Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, fax 202-296-1092, [clancit@bnaibrith.org](mailto:clancit@bnaibrith.org).

# Traveling Among the Marranos of Brazil

© 1998 by Irwin Berg  
(second of two parts)

Joao Medeiros' family was by no means unique. While in Natal I also met Gilvanci de Oliveira Portillo. Portillo told me that his grandmother made a celebration for each child eight days after birth, observed a period of seven days of mourning after a death in the family, and, every April, went for a week without eating bread. His grandmother pretended not to know why she observed these traditions but told her children that they too must observe them nonetheless. She also had a statue of Mary whose foot she kissed when entering or leaving her home. Only after her death did Portillo realize that inside the foot was a *mezuzah*.

Portillo has no doubt that the older family members knew that they were descended from Jews and that their family customs were Jewish customs, but "they kept their silence because they were afraid of persecution." Recently, the extended family gathered to honor their grandmother. Around the Sabbath table, Portillo's mother lit Sabbath candles and his father said the blessings over the wine and bread. Then they sang a song taught to them by their grandmother which Portillo says is derived from the Sabbath hymn "Lecha Dodi." At this point the older members of the family became so emotional that they couldn't remain in the house but went outside to cry. Despite committing himself to a Jewish way of life, Portillo has not taken the final step of conversion.

Other Marranos remember that their families shunned pork, lit candles on Friday evenings, slaughtered meat in a kosher manner, read only the Old Testament, declined to go to church except for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and buried their dead differently from their neighbors. They made an effort to marry their children to the children of other Marranos, often betrothing sons to daughters at a very young age. Portillo's mother was one year old when she was promised to his father, the two families having married many of their sons and daughters to each other in this manner over the generations. This was to preserve what the Marranos called in old Spanish "cuatro castados," which indicates that all four grandparent lines were Jewish.

Despite the Marrano revival, their status vis-à-vis Judaism remains precarious, due mainly to the hostile reaction they have engendered among Brazil's traditional Jewish communities. Although Liberal rabbis in Brazil perform "return" ceremonies, Orthodox rabbis tend to refer potential returnees to Israel. Most Orthodox rabbis would require potential converts to move to Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo before conversion, where there are Orthodox synagogues, *mikvaot* (ritual baths) and *yeshivot* (religious schools). Conversion, however, is not what the Marranos want. For Medeiros, and for many others, there is something about "conversion" that belittles the sacrifices of their ancestors. The expense, difficulty, and disruption involved in moving from Natal to Rio or Sao Paulo also pose a stumbling block.

A still greater part of the difficulty Marranos face in returning to Judaism stems from their suspicion that the Orthodoxy now practiced by the Jews of Brazil was not the Orthodoxy of their ancestors. Though Medeiros considers himself and his congregation Orthodox, he finds the Orthodoxy required of converts too extreme. Neither he nor his followers wear *kippot* publicly, and not all practice *kashrut*. At the same time, however, most of them are not comfortable with Liberal Judaism because they yearn to return to the religious way of life of their ancestors in Spain and Portugal.

So far, no rabbinical authority has offered the majority of Marranos a way of returning to Judaism acceptable to them. Consequently, with the encouragement of an Israeli government representative, Medeiros has concluded that he and other Marranos must make their own way to Judaism. "Our Judaism," he says, "is that of the Iberian peninsula." In the meantime, nine members of his congregation have made *aliyah*, and the Jewish Agency has accepted them as Jews

under the Law of Return. None, however, have been accepted by the Rabbinical authorities of Israel.

I also met with a Jewish family of Moroccan descent who represented the other side of the coin to me. In speaking to them, I portrayed the Marranos as a people who attested to the enduring power of the Jewish spark, and who stood witness to the defeat of the Inquisition. Their response to this, however, was visceral and unequivocal. To them, neither Medeiros' Torah, nor his *mezuzahs*, nor his religious services are genuinely Jewish, and they believe he is leading his followers astray. They stressed that the Marranos have to meet the requirements of the Jewish religion by converting before they can consider themselves Jewish. As their own daughter approaches marriageable age, they are prepared to move so that she can have an opportunity to meet potential Jewish partners.

The vehemence of their response also hinted that they perceived the Marranos as a threat to their own survival as Jews. There are at most 850 Moroccan Jewish families along the 2000 miles of the Amazon River. They began to settle along its banks in the 1820s. Those families that have survived intact under adverse conditions hope to continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond as Jews. They fear that a child of a marriage between one of their own and an unconverted Marrano woman would not be considered Jewish, with grave consequences to their communal unity and continued survivability.

Are there, then, any avenues through which the Marranos' progress toward Judaism may be advanced? I encountered one in Recife, where I was introduced to Isaac Essoudry, a learned and religious Jew. On every Saturday afternoon for the past five years Essoudry has taught a class of Marranos the portion of the Bible read that week in synagogue. Some students come from considerable distances, and their complexions range from blond to chocolate. One young man wore a beard and side curls and looked like a traditional Yemenite Jew; yet I was told that he is not circumcised. A second young man could have been a "black-hat" yeshiva boy from Borough Park, Brooklyn. Still another woman told me that her grandmother had told her that she was Jewish, and that although her parents have no interest in Judaism, she does. They all belong to an organization called *Agudah Datit Sepharadit Bnai Anussim*—"Organization of Religious Sephardim Who Are the Descendants of Forced Converts."

The weekly Torah reading (*parshat ha-shavuah*) on the evening I attended was Lech Lecha (Genesis 12:1 - 17:27). In it, Abraham circumcised everyone in his camp, including slaves, servants and other followers. Essoudry used this incident to emphasize Abraham's generosity by including within the Jewish fold all those who wished to be admitted. After the lecture, the students sat down to a meal, which ended with *birkat hamazon* (grace after the meal), *zimitot* (songs) and then *havdalah* (ceremony marking the end of the Sabbath). All the *zimitot* were in Hebrew.

What will become of the Marranos of Brazil cannot be predicted. History offers few parallels to their situation. Nevertheless, some lessons might be learned from Japan's hidden Christians, the Kakure Kirishitan.

Catholic missionaries, mostly Portuguese Jesuits, arrived in Japan beginning in 1549. By 1614, there were approximately 300,000 Christians in Japan, a consequence of the zeal and understanding of local conditions brought by those missionaries to their work. On January 27, 1614, the Tokugawa Shogunate banned Christianity and ordered the deportation of all foreign missionaries. Local lords were instructed to destroy churches and to force Japanese Christians to return to their national religions. Astoundingly, over 2,000 Japanese Christians lost their lives rather than publicly to denounce their faith. (By 1639, page 13)

# Profile of a Leader: J. J. Keki (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

JJ's courage and determination are illustrated by a story Schultz tells about the leader in Kenya. On May 1, 1984, JJ arrived in Nairobi, nearly penniless, expecting to be warmly greeted by fellow Jews and not have to worry about such things as food and shelter. He came to the synagogue at 7 am for *Rosh Chodesh* services but found that it was closed and the rabbi was away for the day. JJ wandered around aimlessly for hours and at night decided to go to the police station, since in Uganda the police welcome stranded people. He received verbal harassment from the police, and the chief told him, "If you don't find your people tomorrow then never come back to Kenya"

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## Suddenly Joab was not only a Jew but a feared and respected man.

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The next morning JJ did have a brief exchange with the Nairobi rabbi, who told him to come back the next day if he wanted his questions answered. When JJ explained that he had no place to sleep and the police had warned him to leave Kenya, the rabbi responded, "I am sorry but I have no place for you. Try your best." JJ spent part of the night in a nearby park, where he was approached by four suspicious-looking men, and he fled to the police station. In the morning the rabbi answered a few of JJ's questions but had no interest in hearing about the Abayudaya (who have been practicing Judaism since 1919). When JJ asked him if he had any extra books that could teach the Abayudaya Hebrew, the rabbi said No and referred him to a Jewish organization in Britain. JJ left Kenya that night bitterly disappointed, concluding that the experience was a test from God.

An example of JJ's courageous leadership concerns an attempt by Muslim squatters, in 1988, to seize Abayudaya lands that were being used by their "kibbutz" youth to build bricks for a new synagogue. The squatters bribed local authorities, who issued a decree ordering the Abayudaya youths to leave the area. An irate JJ led a fight in the youths' defense, shouting, *Oba tuffa tuffa*, ("If we are to die, then let us die"). JJ led the youths in a demonstration in which he and his two brothers, Aaron and Gershom, were arrested as traitors. They were severely beaten and made to do humiliating, painful acts like punching a cement wall. During JJ's absence, unknown thugs carrying rifles appeared at a community *sukkah* and attacked some Abayudaya men. Here's how Schultz sums up the effects of JJ's heroism: "Joab emerged as the leader of the Abayudaya people. And his commitment to the Jewish cause, expressed in his refusal to sacrifice his principles for security, had an enlightening effect on the Muslim and Christian people. Suddenly, Joab was not only a Jew but a feared and respected man." Today the community lives in peace with its Christian and Muslim neighbors.

JJ has fought for progressive ideas. The local tradition is

for the man to pay a dowry to the woman's father upon marriage. However, Joab refused to do so, saying, "Men pay dowry and this is the worst thing because (in essence) men buy women. So they treat their women as property. I will not pay a dowry nor will I accept one when my daughters get married. I do not want to sell them."

JJ's adherence to Judaism is also noteworthy. During Idi Amin's reign of terror in the 1970's, all religions except Christianity and Islam were banned in Uganda. Many Abayudaya fled to save their own lives, but many stayed and practiced Judaism secretly. During *Sukkot* in 1973, Joab was seen by a Muslim as he was building a *sukkah*. In order to save his own life JJ gave the man a goat, but maintained his practice of Judaism.

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## "Whatever I get, if it is good or if it is bad, I know that it is God's plan."

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JJ explained his religious beliefs to Schultz: "God is the base of my spirit. And wherever I walk, I believe in God. Whatever I get, if it is good or if it is bad, I know that it is God's plan. And, your visit, a fellow Jew sitting in our home, it is all a miracle. This (faith) is what keeps the Abayudaya people together – our unending love for God."

Perhaps JJ's attributes are best summarized by Lucy Steinitz, who visited him in Uganda three times:

*Among the many things I remember about him is his wonderful smile—how his face lights up when he hasn't seen you for a long time; how he embraces you when you arrive and when you leave again; how he takes you into his home and family and heart and makes you feel like a close relative—not even a distant one. But it goes much deeper than that. JJ is a wonderful listener, a wise thinker, and someone who is always, ALWAYS, committed to learning new things and considering new ideas. I remember walking through his farmland and seeing how he applied different (experimental) methods of agriculture (environmentally oriented) in his mix of crops, inter-dependency of natural fertilizers, and so on.*

*His sensitivity and progressiveness on many issues always impressed me, too, but without his abandonment of culture and tradition (Jewish or African). Without JJ, the Abayudaya would never have been able to make half the transition they have from the last generation to this one. JJ exudes leadership in every sense of the word—the very kind of leadership that our people—our world—desperately needs more of. I wish him all the strength and success possible as he takes his message, and his experience, to ever-wider jurisdictions. He certainly has my vote!*

## TRAVELING AMONG THE MARRANOS OF BRAZIL (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

150,000 Christians remained, but now they worshipped in secret. Between 1614 and 1865 these Christians had succeeded in transmitting Christian teachings to their descendants, although much altered by Buddhist concepts and Japanese folk religion. For 250 years, they had become the Kakure Kirishitan, the hidden Christians.

The Catholic world became reacquainted with the Kakure Kirishitan on March 17, 1865, when a group confronted a newly arrived missionary in Nagasaki. Thereafter, as the missionaries searched for the Christian remnant, they discovered people who did not welcome the advice that their beliefs, prayers and sacraments were not in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The missionaries concluded that the Kakure Kirishitan needed to be converted or were destined to the fires of hell. For their part, the Kakure Kirishitan concluded that they did not belong to the same religion as these new missionaries. Relations between the two sides quickly became strained. By 1889, conversions of the Kakure Kirishitan by the new missionaries had virtually ceased.

An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Kakure Kirishitan continue to practice their religion as taught to them by their ancestors in remote areas of Kyushu and its offshore islands. It appears that they are now dying out. The Catholic Church as a result of the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) has now endorsed the principle that Catholicism needs to adapt to the cultural life of the local population. Although this principle might have enabled Japan's hidden Christians to reconcile with the Church, that chance was lost in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Deep underneath layers of ashes spread by the Inquisition, there are sparks. Whether the sparks can reignite the fire is uncertain. Far more certain is that indifference, or worse, hostility, may give the Inquisition a final and complete victory. That may be the lesson to be learned from the Kakure Kirishitan.

Brazilian Jewry (not including the Marranos) numbers about 170,000, and it is increasingly estranged from Judaism. No one is confident that assimilation can be stemmed. Under these circumstances, the experience of the Marranos may have something to offer the wider Jewish population. The Marranos have survived in secrecy, fear and almost complete isolation for 500 years, during which time they lost most of their knowledge of Judaism. Now they are teaching themselves to worship the same God their ancestors worshipped, and in the same way. Jews both within and without Brazil might look to the Marranos to learn, or be inspired to learn, about spiritual rededication.

## Meet a Model Congregation!

By Jack Zeller

I want to share with you a very positive experience relating Kulanu to synagogue life. Several of the originators of Kulanu belong to the same synagogue, Tifereth Israel (TI), in Washington, DC. From time to time each of us has been asked to speak at our synagogue or to help provide speakers about our forgotten diaspora. The TI newsletter editor invites Kulanu to send in material for articles on a regular basis. When word got out that Ethiopian Jews in Addis Ababa were starving, some very forceful action followed.

Tifereth Israel Congregation has sent \$6000 to Addis Ababa to purchase food for the thousands of hungry Ethiopian Jews who are stranded there awaiting permission to immigrate to Israel. A check was presented to Andy Goldman of the National Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) by Tifereth Israel president Paul Bardack at a meeting of the congregation's board of directors. Goldman promised that he would use the money immediately to purchase 30 tons of tef, a grain that is the staple of the Ethiopian diet. This amount of tef will be sufficient to feed the 8718 Jewish refugees in Addis Ababa for almost a month, he said. Jewish refugees in Addis Ababa have been living in severely overcrowded make shift huts for several months without adequate clothes, sanitation, food or medical care. Until recently, NACOEJ has been the only Jewish organization providing any assistance to them. The Joint Distribution Committee has recently promised to provide acute medical care to those in extreme illness and universal vaccination, but the aid has been slow and late to arrive and most of the refugees are suffering from malnutrition.

Tifereth Israel's fund-raising activity was the outgrowth of a special *shabbaton* held by the synagogue in January. At that time, the congregation learned about the situation in Ethiopia from three Ethiopian Jews now living in the United States, including Kassahun Teffera, who is a member of Tifereth Israel. One speaker, Dr. Samuel Taddesse, had returned from a visit to Addis Ababa just days before, where he had met with many of the members of the refugee community. Taddesse estimated that 90 percent of the people he met were malnourished, but he also reported that the community is well organized and doing the best it can to care for all of its members.

Tifereth Israel's Social Action Committee, in addition to spearheading the congregation's fund-raising effort, has also taken on the task of spreading information about the Ethiopian Jews throughout the Washington Jewish community and the Seaboard region of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. As a result, both the Board of Jewish Education and the Washington Board of Rabbis recently held meetings to discuss the condition of the refugees in Ethiopia.

In addition, TI principal Lynn Golub-Rofrano says, "The kids really appreciated the ability to do more than 'just give money,' as I explained how important it was to give of themselves and their time to really make a difference!!" She is looking into whether some of the students who need community service credit might be able to help the Jews in Ethiopia.

Kulanu asks you to use your synagogue connections to expand the outreach to rejected Jewish communities. There are hundreds of synagogues that are willing to listen and act, and Kulanu needs to nudge them on!

# JODENSAVANNE EXPEDITION (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

SJS has expressed its full support of the expedition team returning to Suriname in August 1999 to document the second cemetery at Jodensavanne. This expedition is planned for the first two weeks of August. Volunteers will again be recruited through Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions (CVE). CVE volunteers pay their airfare, lodging and meals, estimated at roughly \$1,500. Additionally, CVE volunteers are responsible for their own medical precautions.

Field volunteers will assist in creating a plan of the cemetery grounds and in inventorying and photographing the tombstones of the cemetery. Hebrew volunteers will be responsible for transcribing the epitaphs. Individuals interested in volunteering should contact Caribbean Volunteer Expeditions, Box 388, Corning, New York 14830 <<http://members.aol.com/ahershcv/>>.

Funding and support for the expedition came from the following sources: International Survey of Jewish Monuments, Kodak, Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, Maurice Amado Foundation, Mitrani Family Foundation and Vogelstein Foundation. With continued support from the donor organizations, the success of this future expedition is certain to equal that of the first!

For further information, I can be contacted at 10 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016, Tel 212- 683-1067, Fax 212 683-6150 <[RachelArch@aol.com](mailto:RachelArch@aol.com)>.



## *Bnei Menashe Update*

By Bruce Terris

The Bnei Menashe in India, remnants of the Lost Tribe of Manassah, are receiving some good publicity of late. Hillel Halkin, who accompanied Rabbi Avichail to China, Thailand and India last June, has been commissioned to write a long article for *The New Yorker* (the magazine paid for the trip). Halkin is also writing a book based on the trip.

As to other publicity, a one-hour documentary has been produced in French concerning the Bnei Menashe in Mizoram and Israel. And an English-language documentary by a Canadian group about the Lost Tribes (including India, Pakistan and North Africa) should air on Canadian, American and Israeli television. The Canadian film makers had accompanied Rabbi Avichail to India last year.

The civil war unrest in Manipur has calmed down, with a truce prevailing among the warring tribes, at least for now. The approximately 1000 Bnei Menashe refugees who were displaced in the violence have not returned home. Some are still in temporary homes in the places to which they fled, while others have moved permanently out of the troubled areas and begun new lives.

In his determination to bring the Bnei Menashe to Israel, Rabbi Avichail has two alternative plans. He can continue the present procedure of bringing them to Israel for study and conversion. However, this requires that the Ministry of Interior be willing to allow more Bnei Menashe to come to Israel and for the Chief Rabbinate to improve the conversion procedures. (There are now about 330 Bnei Menashe in Israel; the last group of 35 came in March 1998. Efforts to bring additional Bnei Menashe immigrants have been unsuccessful.)

The second alternative is for the Bnei Menashe to learn Judaism in their own localities in India. Rabbi Avichail would send two instructors from Israel to teach families in India (one to Mizoram and one to Manipur) for about three months. Every six months he would send a *beit din* to India to convert the people who have learned and are ready for conversion. Rabbi Avichail would like to raise funds for the purchase of a large house in Mizoram where families would learn prior to conversion. An appropriate house, which is for sale for \$300,000, has been identified that could accommodate 15 families to study at the center at a time.

Rabbi Avichail has recently given funds to build two synagogues in different towns of Mizoram. In addition, the government of Mizoram has given land to build a synagogue, school and community center.

## More Raves for Kulanu's "Astonishing" Book!

"In this astonishing book, 45 exceptional Jews – doctors, social workers, anthropologists, rabbis, historians, lawyers – write about their firsthand experienced with little-known Jewish communities around the world."

No, this is not Kulanu's promotional literature about its recent book, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*, edited by Karen Primack and published in cooperation with KTAV.

These are the opening words of a review of the book by Bernard Baskin in *The Canadian Jewish News* of October 29, 1998.

If you have not yet read this "astonishing" book, buy it now using the order form on page 16 of this newsletter. **It makes a great gift, too!**

# INTERNET NOTES

Rick Gold's web site for Jewish visitors to Morocco is: <http://www.skyinet.net/~rickgold/>.

[www.geocities.com/Athens/Crete/1340/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Crete/1340/index.html) is a web site about the Mexican Inquisition. It contains Richard G. Santos's article, "Crypto-Jews and the Mexican Inquisition."

According to publisher Arimasa Kubo, a Japanese Christian living in Japan, many of the traditional ceremonies in Japan seem to be the traces that the Jews and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel came to ancient Japan. Check out his web site at [www.ask.or.jp/~remnant/isracame.htm](http://www.ask.or.jp/~remnant/isracame.htm).

Harry Stein's extensive listing of names used by Spanish and Portuguese Conversos in the New World, England, and Holland, mentioned in our last issue, has been moved to [www.sephardic.com](http://www.sephardic.com).

A web site on Ottoman Sephardic Jews, complete with music, can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/Cabana/5947/>.

Art Benveniste's article, "Finding Our Lost Brothers and Sisters: The Crypto Jews of Brazil," originally published in the Western States Jewish History, April 1997, is now available on his web site: <http://home.earthlink.net/~benven/cryptojewsofbrazil.htm>.

## IS THIS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER?

Is your subscription to the Kulanu newsletter up for renewal? It is, if more than one year has elapsed since you last made a contribution to Kulanu. One simple way to tell is to look at your mailing label, which indicates the month and year of your last donation. If there is NO date next to your name, your subscription has expired and this will be your last issue. (Readers in Africa, Peru, and India receive free subscriptions.). To continue receiving your newsletter, become a supporter of Kulanu for a minimum donation of \$25; this status includes a free one year subscription. (A subscription alone costs \$18.) See form below.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP KULANU

- ⇒ Attractive cards are now available for a minimum donation of \$18 to honor special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, bar or bat mitzvah) or in memory of a friend or a relative.
- ⇒ Think of memorializing a loved one with a Kulanu endowment.
- ⇒ Consider including a bequest to Kulanu in your will.

### SUPPORTER APPLICATION

**I/WE WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A SUPPORTER OF KULANU (MAIL TO KULANU, C/O HANTMAN, 3520 TARKINGTON LANE, SILVER SPRING, MD 20906)**

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# The K U L A N U Boutique

***Jews in Places You Never Thought Of***, a new book published in February 1998 by KTAV in association with Kulanu. The 305-page hardback includes descriptions of personal interactions with returning and emerging Jewish groups around the world. Based on Kulanu newsletters, with expanded articles and new material, it also contains over 30 photographs, essays about the significance of these communities to modern mainstream Jewry, and suggestions for ways individuals and groups can get involved! *Proceeds support Kulanu's programs.*

***Shalom Everybody Everywhere!*** the acclaimed recording of the unique sounds of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Hear traditional Jewish liturgy and new compositions set to African melodies and rhythms, sung in English, Hebrew, Luganda, and Swahili. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

***Hand-Knit Ugandan Kippot*** available in small, medium and large, some in dark colors, others in bright colors, some in the traditional skullcap shape, some in the pillbox or Bukhara shape. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

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	Number	Cost Each	Shipping/handling	Total
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Cassette	_____	10.00	ea. addl. \$1 in US & Can., \$2 elsewhere	_____
<i>Kippot of the Abayudaya</i>	_____	10.00	\$2 (ea. addl. \$1)	_____
Indicate SML, skullcap or pillbox, dark or bright color: (sorry, no returns!)				
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Please make checks payable to "KULANU" and mail to 1217 Edgevale Road, Silver Spring, MD, 20910-1612. Allow up to 5 weeks delivery but orders are generally filled within 5 business days.

Deadline for next issue: July 15, 1999      recycled paper      Edited by Karen Primack

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