



Tudor Parfitt To Visit North America

Tudor Parfitt, author of the seminal book about the Lemba of South Africa, *In Search of the Vanished City – The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel*, has been invited by Kulanu to tour North America. He will be speaking at Congregation Beth El in San Diego on April 12, and provisional meetings are being considered for California, Washington, New York and Canada. Parfitt will be available April 6-20, and lectures may be arranged later if needed. He may also be showing his now world-famous BBC documentary on the Lemba, *To the Ends of the Earth – Search for the Sons of Abraham*.

Parfitt, a senior lecturer in Hebrew and Jewish Studies at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), will be raising funds for a grant to study the process which was started recently by Kulanu to bring the Lemba into the fold of world Jewry. Although the hard-cover edition of his book *Journey to the Vanished City* is out of print, a new paperback edition is being issued by Random House, and Parfitt will be happy to autograph copies.

Another film about Parfitt will be aired on WGBH on February 22, and a "Sixty Minutes" film on the Lemba and his work will be broadcast some time before April.

Tudor Parfitt is anxious to speak before groups and the media. For further information and to book this VIP for lectures and interviews, please contact Jack or Diane Zeller at 301-681-5679, fax 301-681-1587 or by e-mail at <jdzeller@umich.edu> .

David's Return

“Return” Certificate Issued in Israel

By Schulamith C. Halevy

David is a gentleman who, having learned that he is descended of *anousim*, came to Israel from Brazil to formalize his return to Judaism. He was lost; he had been in the country for about a year spending his time on a religious kibbutz and in a yeshiva, but sensing that no progress at all was being made toward his goal. David felt that no one was paying attention to him, no one cared, no one seemed to even know his name. Whenever he went to check on his status, people would ask “do you have a file with the rabbinate?” “Who are you?” “Do we know you?”

Born and raised in the State of Ceara in Brazil, he had lived with his family on a farm outside a small town, and interaction with the community was kept to a minimum. The land is arid and was used for grazing, not farming. Animal slaughter was done at home; pigs were raised but not eaten. Although blood is typically used for sauce and sausage in this region, it was either spilled and covered or fed to the

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An Historic Invitation

FROM: THE LEMBA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 339, SHAYANDIMA 0945
NORTHERN PROVINCE, REP. OF S. AFRICA
TEL: +27 15 9641610

TO: YAACOV LEVY
RE: YOUR VISA APPLICATION

DEAR YAACOV,
THE LEMBA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME AND STAY WITH US AND HELP THE LEMBA YOUTH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR EDUCATION: (1) PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION, (2) PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR ORPHANS, (3) THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE WHO OWN FARMS, (4) OUR EDUCATORS WHO NEED THE UPGRADING IN THE PROFESSION, (5) THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR JEWISH CUSTOMS, (6) THE TEACHING OF LIFE SKILLS TO THE LEMBA COMMUNITY.
YAACOV LEVY, YOU ARE WELCOME TO TRAIN THE YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY.
B'SHALOM, YOURS FAITHFULLY,
PROF. M. E. R. MATHIVHA SEREMANE, PRESIDENT,
LEMBA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION.

Yaacov - Thanks for reminding me of this document. Some day, long after we are all gone, some academic who writes about the return of the Lemba may come upon this.

- Jack Zeller

JOURNAL FROM LEMBA LANDS

By Yaacov Levi

December 1999, Johannesburg

Well, I am here, in SUNNY, WARM, BEAUTIFUL SOUTH AFRICA!!! It's the best kept secret in the travel world! All in all it was a good trip, and actual flight time was very good on both legs. I have had some opportunity to meet some of the Jewish community here. I spoke at a luncheon for the Zionist Federation, beginning on Eretz and the Dead Sea Scrolls and segueing over to the Lemba and their connection to pre-Temple Israel. Both subjects generated good questions but I felt there was more real interest in the Lemba. This past week there was a segment on a news program here on the Lemba, well done and also favorable; I will try and get a copy of it for Kulanu and others.

I have now had my second night's sleep of the last five days and am feeling pretty good. Will celebrate Erev Shabbat and Shabbat (Continued on page 12)

Needed: \$800 Per Bnei Menashe Immigrant

By Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail

I thought that I would bring you up-to-date on how we are coming in bringing the Bnei Menashe to Israel.

The Ministry of the Interior has decided to give visas fairly freely to the Bnei Menashe. This is the first time that this has occurred in the many years that I have been helping the Bnei Menashe to come to Israel. As a result, I am hoping to bring groups of about 35 Bnei Menashe to Israel three times a year. I brought 100 Bnei Menashe to Israel in 1999. I expect to bring a similar number in the year 2000. However, this depends on my being able to raise the money for this purpose.

The cost of transportation of a single Bnei Menashe to Israel is about \$800. In addition, there are costs to settle them in Israel. Unfortunately, the Jewish Agency is unwilling to provide these funds since the Bnei Menashe are not Jews when they come. While they have regarded themselves as Jews and lived as Jews for many years in India, they are not converted until after they come to Israel. They usually attend a yeshiva for about a year after their arrival and before their conversion. There are now approximately 500 Bnei Menashe in Israel. Yes, the ingathering of a Lost Tribe of Israel has begun!

Pen-Pals: Antidote to Isolation

By Irwin M. Berg

There are many ways in which we, American Jews, can help the Abayudaya of Uganda. For those of who are unaware of it, the name "Abayudaya" means "People of Judah." The Abayudaya have been observing Jewish laws and customs for 80 years in almost total isolation. There are today about 500 of them although at one time they may have numbered as many as 3,000. During these 80 years, they have been under considerable pressure from their Christian and Moslem neighbors to abandon their religious beliefs, but isolation has been the most effective weapon against their normal expansion.

From time to time, I have used this space to urge American Jews to write to members of the Abayudaya community to lessen the effect of isolation. Recently, I received a copy of the Masters dissertation of Leland Marcus, who did extensive field work among the Abayudaya. Lee confirms my own observation that isolation has been their most potent enemy. Lee quotes an unnamed Abayudaya woman saying:

"I am very happy and very strong when our Jewish brothers and sisters come here because then I learn that we are not alone. People see we Abayudaya may be few in Uganda, but we are many in America and Israel and other places."

I have the names of about 50 Abayudaya who have asked for American pen-pals. They range in age from 10 to 50 years old. They include married and unmarried men and women. Anyone wishing to have an Abayudaya pen-pal should contact me. Please let me know the age and gender of the person to whom you wish to write, and I will do my best to find someone to match. Anyone who has a child in a Jewish school should try to encourage the teacher, principal or rabbi to make a class project of writing to the Abayudaya. I truly believe that writing letters to the Abayudaya may be the best help that we can provide this struggling community. Please contact me if you are interested or if you need additional information.

I can be reached at 333 West End Ave., Apt. 8C, New York N. Y. 10023, 212-962-2800 office, 212-724-9887 home, bergiande@aol.com.

LIONEL OKUN: Profile of a Supporter

For most of his 82 years, Lionel Okun has been an active Zionist. He grew up in London, where he recalls that his mother opened a branch of Na'amat in their neighborhood. He was active in Habonim as a teenager, and knew Chaim Herzog when both were activists at the University of London's Jewish Union Society. Today he is a life member of Na'amat, as well as Hadassah and ORT, and also supports a Chaim Herzog charitable organization.



Okun also had an exceptionally early interest in Ethiopian Jewry. He recalls reading about the "Falashas" in the late 1930s and seeing a Canadian film about the Ethiopian Jews in London before World War II. Today he is a NACOEJ supporter and also contributes generously to a charitable organization in Safed, Israel, that assists Ethiopian immigrants.

Okun's support of Kulanu is no less ardent. He is a Life Member several times over, but doesn't stop there. He frequently gives talks about Kulanu's work to organizations near his home in Long Beach, California, but he doesn't stop there either. He has even ordered a carton of the Kulanu book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of* to sell at his talks! Kulanu's fascinating projects and Okun's charming British accent seem to be a winning combination, for he attracts many speaking engagements.

If there is local support, Okun is even willing to extend his commitment by founding a Kulanu chapter in the Long Beach/West Orange County area. Those who may be interested should contact the Kulanu office (see masthead of this newsletter).

Okun has a science and engineering background and worked in the family business in London. After retirement, he decided to move to California, where his sister and brother-in-law were living.

Happy Pesach!

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The Strange Evolution of the Synagogue In Maputo, Mozambique

By Michael Metelits

US Ambassador to the Republic of Cape Verde

Part I

It really isn't much to look at. It has about as much inherent beauty as an octagonal structure in a square world. I speak of the synagogue in Maputo, Mozambique. Here is an edifice that doesn't even sit square on its lot; the building seems to be facing the diagonal to the layout of the entire city's street grid. Yet there is something indescribable, something special about the synagogue. As a synagogue it is as out of the ordinary as the Jewish community was. Please let me tell you a little bit about each, as I have pieced things together.

Lorenço Marques' (Maputo's pre-independence name) Jewish community in the first half of the 20th century was tiny. How tiny might that have been? I am told that in order to have a minyan for Sabbath services, the congregation had to send someone over to the Hotel Polana (then the only adequate hotel in town) to look through the register for a Jewish name among the South African businessmen staying there. That's what I mean by small.

Like any self-respecting Jewish community stuck into the midst of an officially Catholic country, the Jewish community of Maputo was divided among itself—Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Naturally! However, they developed a *modus vivendi* among themselves that seemed to work. One group had exclusive use of the synagogue on Friday evening; the other had it on Saturday morning. The Jews of Maputo were, to judge from the gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in the city, mostly of European origin, principally from Central and Eastern Europe. I would doubt that many of the families were resident there for more than two generations. For reasons that stretch back to the Portuguese Inquisition, the regime was not particularly friendly to the Jewish faith or its adherents. However, the Jews of Maputo identified themselves with the European community and did not, as a rule, intermarry with black Mozambicans. As Europeans they supported the colonial regime and on the eve of its fall, the Jewish community of Maputo, along with an enormous percentage of other Europeans, fled to South Africa. Our Jewish friends took with them all of the sanctified objects normally found in a synagogue, leaving just the structure, the land, and the wall around the property.

Mozambique fought hard against the Portuguese to achieve its independence. The leader of the movement, the country's first Ph.D. ever (History, Northwestern University, 1964), sought both to rid the land of foreign domination and to unite the diverse tribal groups who had never been encouraged during 500 years of colonial rule to consider themselves as members of any single entity.

Understandably, the government of the newly independent nation, Mozambique, was dominated by the group that had fought the war of independence. That organization had ties to the United States and had sought American support for its struggle against Portugal, but the United States Government refused to betray its NATO ally during the height of the Cold War. The Mozambican independence movement therefore turned to the only other source of outside help it could find: the former Soviet Union.

On acceding to political power, the new rulers began instituting a number of policies that reflected a political orientation based on the ideas of its international sponsor. One of the things the new regime did soon after coming to power was to seize the extensive lands and property of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the overwhelming target of this policy was church holdings, the regime carried out the act under the rubric of attaching the property of all religious institutions. This act, therefore, included the tiny speck of a Jewish synagogue situated on an ordinary plot of land in downtown Maputo.

The Government of Mozambique, which immediately found itself

A Melodious Shabbat in Ghana

By Michael Gershowitz

(Part I of this three-part article appeared in the last newsletter.)

Part II

The Village

Sefwi Wiawso is a village of 1,500 people in a remote, mountainous region in western Ghana. Although the main street and the access roads in the immediate vicinity are paved, regardless of the direction from which you approach, you have to traverse some horrific dirt roads. Most of the commerce is with Kumasi, about 100 miles north-east. It's a three-hour bus ride. Going there from Sefwi Wiawso, we saw construction crews building a paved road parallel to the dirt one. It will probably be open in a couple of years.

The main street, a block or two long, is lined with small shops selling most everything and, like everywhere in Ghana, there are also street peddlers. The residential areas lie along the slopes of the mountain in every direction. Most of the homes appeared to be quite nice, built of cinderblock or stucco. They have electricity and plumbing, and those I was in had nice furnishings, decorative art, and color or black and white television sets. (There is just one channel in Ghana, although hotels have cable.) There were fans rather than air conditioning. Surprisingly, all of the cooking is done outdoors. I was told the climate was too hot to cook in the house. The houses have kitchens for



The author, with two Ghanaian Jews

food preparation, but no indoor stoves.

The Jewish families live near each other in a quarter of the village called New Adiembra, which begins about halfway down the southern slope, while their Christian neighbors live in the rest of the village. I was told that there are 70 Jewish families. Most seemed to have one or two children, which would total somewhere between 200 and 300 people. Most of the Jews have Biblical names -- David, Joseph and Joshua, along with Rebecca, Sarah and Abigail. Some have archetypal Ghanaian names like Kofi. The houses are fairly widely spaced, to allow lots for chickens, goats and sheep to forage. Also, many of the families grow corn, peanuts or other crops on small plots alongside their homes.

Few Ghanaians can afford cars -- the national per capita income is about \$500. Taxis are ubiquitous in every village, regardless how small. They're tiny, old, and very cheap; if it's too far or too hilly to walk, you hail a passing taxi and the fare anywhere in town will be 50 cents or less. I estimated that Sefwi Wiawso had, at most, 50 private cars and at least as many taxis. They cruise just about every street in the village picking up fares.

Another thing that's missing is telephones. There's just one phone for the entire village, in the Post Office. It's answered during business hours. A runner goes out and fetches the person being called. From the States, dial 011-233-272-391. (The first set of three digits is 14)

LETTERS TO KULANU

Arye Oded Offers Books as Benefit

I was delighted to learn from Kulanu's last issue about the founding of the Semei Kakungulu High School (S.K.H.S). It is an important step in the development of the Abayudaya Community. I have sent you (by surface mail) 30 copies of my study on the Abayudaya which you can sell, with the proceeds to go to the S.K.H.S

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that there are two studies in the book. One (pp. 1-65) on Kalema, a Muslim king who ruled Uganda in the 1880s, and the other (pp. 67-120) on Semei Kakungulu, the founder of the Bayudaya. Kakungulu is mentioned also in the first study because as a gifted and successful general he played an important role in defeating Kalema and thus helped to save Uganda from becoming a Muslim kingdom. Therefore his figure provides a connection between the two studies. I must admit that as a research fellow at Makerere University in Uganda in the 1960s I was attracted to the Bayudaya mainly because I was fascinated by this great man.

At present I am working on an extended Hebrew version of my study of the Bayudaya which I hope to publish some time next year. In the past I published several articles on this community also in Hebrew but I hope that a more detailed description with photos which I took during my visits to the Bayudaya, will help to bring this unique Jewish community to a wider circle of Hebrew readers. I would appreciate it if visitors to the Bayudaya could send me recent photos of the community for this Israeli publication, including the young leaders, the new synagogue, and the Semei Kakungulu High School.

Arye Oded

5 Avraham Granot St.

Jerusalem 93706, Israel

Our Most Important Project Ever!

I believe that Yaacov Levi's project is among the most important

Editor's note: Dr. Oded's remarkable 123-page study, Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism, was reviewed in Kulanu Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 3 by Irwin Berg. Dr. Oded served as Israel's Ambassador to several African countries and has taught in the Department of African Studies at The Hebrew University.

To order, send a check to "Kulanu" for \$10 for each copy desired, plus \$2 each for US mailing, to Kulanu Book Project, 1217 Edgevale Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910-1612. Proceeds will benefit the Semei Kakungulu High School.

ever undertaken with Kulanu support. For so many reasons, this project is the essence of what Kulanu is all about. The only problem is that the Kulanu treasury has only a limited amount of funds that can be provided to assist Mr. Levi's efforts. Kulanu can fund him for a while, but not for as long as will be necessary. I will send a special contribution to Kulanu, earmarked for the Lemba, and urge everyone reading this to do the same. And, if anyone has fundraising ideas and would like to volunteer for a most worthy project, this is your chance.

Bob Lande

Silver Spring, Maryland

Shmuely's Gratitude

My dear brother, friend and gardener called me today. He only works for me twice a month but managed to spend a few hours with Yaacov Levi here in Johannesburg. They had lunch together at my home. "Shmuely" called me today to share something he could not wait to tell me next week when he is due to come and work -- he wanted to say thank you to "all you people" [his words] who have sent

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Yaacov, and are helping the Lemba back to being Jews. He said you deserve the "Nobel Peace Prize." His happiness and sincerity were very touching. Shmuely is uneducated -- one of the "rural-poor" of Venda -- and as I like to describe him, "the salt of the earth." A Lemba man who has worked for four Jewish families for the last 30 years -- and not once have they acknowledged his heritage. He asked me to please convey this message to you -- you who have given him and the many others like him a new beginning, a new pride, a feeling of "belonging." I see it in his smile, his jaunty walk. He is a tall man, but now he seems a little taller.

Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

Johannesburg, South Africa

Israeli-Mizo Visits India

It was a moment of joy and happiness to have met my relatives and some friends in Mizoram, India, after a gap of almost two years, but not as complete a joy as being in Holyland, Israel. As I was busy helping my friend Hillel Halkin, an Israeli writer, translating the languages of the interviews with the people, I couldn't have much time to be with my community members. Anyway, in most of the Shabbath we spent in the capital, Aizawl, I and some of the members could avail of the opportunity of hearing the reading of the Torah from the scroll with the help of my friend Hillel, which is a very rare case as we do not yet have one who can in the community.

Although I knew already before that as a Bnei Menashe (Mizo) how it feels to have seen or met someone from Israel, this time I was one of those who was from Israel. It was a little different feeling but I noticed and experienced more about the love and affection the people have and show towards Israelis.

Gradually, the younger generations, being also more educated, realize the need to trace the roots of the Mizos, and I hope and wish one day, with the help of HaShem, they will succeed with undeniable evidence to prove that we, those living in the areas like Mizoram, Manipur, some in Myanmar (Burma), are the descendants of Menashe.

In the meantime, the handful of Bnei Menashe brought into Israel through the help from Amishav and Israel's Government are doing well by the grace of HaShem. And many more are eagerly waiting for their return to Erets Israel.

Samuel Joram, Beit El, Israel

Bnei Menashe in India Need Books

Our town, Moreh, is a remote town situated 116 kilometres away from Imphal, southeast along the border with Myanmar. We celebrate the Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkot in our small town. Jews from surrounding villages also join us on all occasions. We enjoy dwelling in the sukkah though rain may disturb us at night. We do not have a school building, but I usually tutor in my home. I have about 35 children (ages 10 to 15 years) who can attend regular class. I taught them Ivrit, songs, stories from the Bible and common and important halachot. However, there is a lack of textbooks. I have to collect some available books and references to continue the school, especially Midrash and Shulchan Aruch.

Benjamin Haokip, Moreh, India

Incredible Visit in Ghana

I just spent a wonderful week with the community in Sefwi Wiawso. They were very happy to see me and incredibly welcoming and generous, as I'm sure Mike Gershowitz has told you. The community of Sefwi Wiawso thanks Kulanu very much for all you have done -- you're really their lifeline to the rest of the Jewish community.

Jay Sand

Morgantown, West Virginia

(Continued on page 5)

LETTERS TO KULANU

(Continued from page 4)

Books, Mezuzot Needed

The Abayudaya have mentioned to me that they are short on *mezuzot* and that they would love to be able to get their hands on enough *siddurim* with the high holiday services in them (*machzorim*) so everyone can be reading from the same book—right now they have several editions of several kinds of prayer books. Jewish bookstores usually have a box of books that they can't sell and got credit from the publisher. Books with upside down covers etc that otherwise are in perfect condition. I have spoken to a few stores in Toronto and they are willing to donate the books. I suggest that Kulanu members approach the Jewish bookstores where they live to help build up libraries in Asia and Africa.

Stevy Epstein, Toronto, Canada

Tel: (416) 783-8763; camera@thebigdipper.net

Abayudaya CD Is "Fabulous"

Your CD of Abayudaya Jewish music was received today. I introduced it in my weekly radio program. I'll play one or two songs every week. It's very moving. It's fabulous.... Great Job. *Kol Hakavod!* Thanks for allowing me to share this experience.

Moise Rahmani

Brussels, Belgium

Grateful Student, Aspiring Doctor

I am one of the Abayudaya youth, based in Pallisa district. I shouldn't hesitate to thank Kulanu for enabling me to continue with my studies. The truth is that had it not given support, I wouldn't be learning. I am in high school science courses. I want to assure you that I will do my level best to utilize that money by passing, as I desire being the first doctor of the community. Through your encouragement, I promise to perform beyond your imagination.

The youth are doing well, determined to learn to make a change in the community. They are taking/teaching the young Judaica on Sundays and singing and drama. This is making them united.

Waman E. Samson

Mbale, Uganda

Abayudaya Music Popular

I am writing to inform you that our music has attained national recognition in Uganda. As you may have known, besides our spiritual music, we compose and sing local music that fits the domestic tastes. A fairly well produced piece is constantly broadcast on the National Radio. It is upon this background that we are requesting for US\$740 to enable us to produce a quality recording in Kampala. We are also using money we earn from Kulanu's sale of our first recording, "Shalom Everybody Everywhere!"

Proceeds from the proposed recording project are to help construct more classrooms for our new high school and to even strengthen the music project.

J.J Keki, Former Abayudaya Chairman

Mbale, Uganda

(Tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu may be earmarked for the Abayudaya recording project.)

"Issues Facing Indian Jewry Today and in the Millennium"

The American Joint Distribution Committee in Mumbai (Bombay) organized the All India Jewish Conference last October, attended by 110 representatives from synagogues in Mumbai, Thane, Ahmedabad, Pune, Calcutta and New Delhi as well as representatives of women's and youth groups.

Jewish community leaders will now be actively involved in holding regular meetings to plan and find solutions to the 30 "Issues Facing Indian Jewry Today and in the Millennium." These issues range from codification of Jewish laws and maintenance of synagogues and cemeteries to Jewish education and career guidance.

We wanted to share this important new beginning with you.

It is about a year since the JDC dedicated a new Jewish Community Center in Mumbai. The JCC has hosted after-school and weekend youth activities, Shabbat and holiday celebrations and seminars, Sunday school classes for children, and workshops for their parents, weekend and vacation camps for youngsters and families, young leadership camps and other training programs, classes in Hebrew and Judaism, and *Rosh Chodesh* prayer groups.

This busy JCC also hosts a Golden Age Club, the King Solomon Business Club, and a large Jewish library.

We would also like to bring readers' attention to a new 35-page booklet, *Jews of Cochin, India* by Joshua Benjamin. A complementary copy will be sent to those who make a donation to The Jewish Welfare Association in New Delhi. Make Checks payable to "Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi" and mail to Mr. Joshua Benjamin, A-7 Nirman Vihar, New Delhi 110092, India.

Erna and Sam Daniel

New York, NY

**IF YOU HAVEN'T RENEWED YOUR "SUPPORTERSHIP" OF
KULANU IN THE LAST YEAR, PLEASE SEE PAGE 15!!**

(Your label shows the date of your last payment.)

The Synagogue of Maputo, Mozambique (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

at war with a group sponsored first by Southern Rhodesia and subsequently by South Africa, had slim resources with which to support its war effort. One resource was the synagogue. The Mozambican government permitted the Red Cross/Red Crescent of Mozambique to use the building—as a warehouse. In my own subsequent inspection of the premises I found that the Red Cross/Red Crescent did nothing I could identify as a desecration of the synagogue. It simply became a storehouse for several decades.

In 1989, the Government of Mozambique and its ruling party decided that the era of a one-party state, a demand economy, and Marxism had not worked and that the nation should abandon them in favor of multi-party democracy, a market-oriented economy, and a far more open society. This occurred shortly before my arrival in the second half of that year.

One of the policy offshoots of the democratic decision was that the government no longer wished to retain control over the synagogue. (Restoration of properties to the Roman Catholic Church was a more complex set of issues since some of those properties had been given over to individuals and groups who had occupied them for decades and who would have caused a significant political stir for the government if ousted.) The Mozambican Red Cross had no such ambitions and cleared its goods out of the synagogue and removed whatever shelving or other property it may have installed there.

For the Government of Mozambique—especially the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Justice—a difficult question arose. Since the entire identifiable Jewish community fled in 1975, who should receive the keys to the synagogue in 1989? This, after all, would be a decisive act in terms of recognizing exactly who had the right to control the real property. The answer they finally hit on was a young businessman of Greek Orthodox faith, whose family had lived in Maputo for generations. “Alkis” (not his real name) was in constant contact with the large and influential Jewish community of South Africa, traveled there frequently, and was said to be in touch also with Jews who had fled from Maputo. He was the obvious candidate to receive the keys.

The day came to hand over of the keys to the representative of the Jewish community, Alkis. Unfortunately, the formalities hadn't been well coordinated in advance and on the day in question he was in South Africa on business. What was the government to do? It had publicly committed itself to handing over the keys to the synagogue on a specific date. A hurried telephone conversation with Alkis led to his nominating a stand-in. This person, unlike Alkis, was actually Jewish but unlike him, she was not a citizen of Mozambique. The person in question was an employee of the United States Agency for International Development Mission in Maputo. This woman dutifully appeared at the Bureau of Religious Affairs at the proper time and accepted possession of the keys. The synagogue now belonged to the Jewish community of Maputo, even if there wasn't any such group!

Subsequently, Alkis organized some help from the Jewish community in South Africa and as quickly as possible had a new corrugated metal roof installed because the old roof was full of holes. This was the first in a number of acts of generosity that marked the re-emergence of the Maputo synagogue.

My own involvement began a little later on in 1989. When people learned I am Jewish the question arose if I would like to see the synagogue. Naturally I was very interested, so one afternoon a group of three of us piled into a car and drove over to see the building. The three included me, the woman from USAID who had the keys, and a Maputo resident named Maria, who—as it turned out—was also Jewish.

So, across Maputo we went. On arrival at the wall around the property several things became immediately apparent. The gate needed fixing and was held closed by a chain with a padlock. The grounds were a mess, overrun with weeds. Piles of garbage littered one part of the land

where people from a neighboring building got rid of their trash by tossing it over the wall into the synagogue yard. There was no caretaker to maintain the building and grounds, since there was no congregation to raise the funds to do these things, but Alkis had thoughtfully paid from his own pocket for the services of a guard.

The building itself was white—stucco walls with white wooden double doors, and small windows at the top of the wall with (as I remember it) a white cupola atop the structure. It was, frankly, as un-synagogue-like a structure as I have ever seen, but I tend to be very traditional and conservative in my architectural tastes. In a word, it was unimposing from any point of view.

A key opened the door; this brought us into a corridor that went almost all the way around the building. An inner wall created this corridor and also formed the wall of the sanctuary inside. The floor was concrete in the corridor and wood (this may well be wishful thinking) in the sanctuary. There were two doors leading into the sanctuary, each opening from the corridor from about a quarter of the way around from the outer entrance to the corridor.

We lost little time examining the corridor and went directly into the sanctuary. It was there that I discovered that there was, in fact, something very special about this building, at least for me.

(Part II will appear in the next newsletter.)

Bnei Menashe Synagogue Forms in India

By Jack Zeller

The Songbung Beith Shalom Synagogue has opened after 18 years of planning and no small amount of fund raising among the Bnei Menashe in Assam, an Indian state bordering Mizoram and Manipur. And in addition to having a regularly meeting minyan, the synagogue also has a Torah from Israel. Thanks to Sam Daniel in New York, the community also has a fair supply of Jewish educational materials and siddurim.

And very pleasing to discover, the Joint Distribution Committee has also contributed four siddurim for the high holidays. But why only four?

In the mail recently, I received a copy of Pirke Avot translated into Thadou Pao, the language of the Thadou tribes of Assam, India, and the Thadou Kuki. It is a stapled book, home published from a copying machine. The Songbung Synagogue is working on translations for many other texts.

Tefillin, mezuzot, and other ritual items are in short supply. The community is also looking for correspondence courses on Judaism. They found "A Still Voice" in Jerusalem, but the cost was prohibitive. Unfortunately they did not say what the price was.

For those who want to know more about the congregation, in New York, try Sam and Erna Daniel, 600 West End Ave, #1C, NY NY 10024-1643, tel: 212-873-4261. For Assam, write to Mr. Jonah at Songbung Beith Shalom Synagogue, P O Mahur, N.C., Assam 788830, India.

A Story of the Lemba and Me

By Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

"Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness."

My interest was first ignited a few years ago, when I read an article about South Africa's "Black Jews." I knew very little except what most others in the Jewish community knew -- that there were Black Bantu-speaking people in our country who "claimed" to be descended from Jews, lived as Jews and practiced Judaism as remembered and passed down to them orally through the ages. Believe my surprise when I received a call from Professor Mathivha, resident of Louis Trichardt, South Africa, last year. We had a mutual friend in Washington, Dr Jack Zeller, a hematopathologist who also happens to be president of Kulanu -- "all of us" in Hebrew -- a charity organization active in 22 countries, and for whom I had written a story about my personal life as "a child of the *Anousim*" (forced converts).

This charming gentleman, president of the Lemba Cultural Association and former vice-principal of the University of the North, professor Mathivha, told me how he identified with many of the things I had written about; the identity problems -- the rejection and the pain I had experienced and felt growing up, without "belonging." This was the beginning. Things snowballed after that. Another mutual friend from New York, an ex-Pretoria medical doctor, Shmuel Wapnick, who had visited Professor Mathivha and Ephraim Selamolela last year, started including me and my friend Sylvia Magid in e-mails. A network grew and developed, a network of interested Jews, researchers, historians, and anthropologists. This network included Tudor Parfitt, who was instrumental in the recent news-breaking discovery of the DNA results, proving the relationship to world Jewry of this centuries-old oral Lemba history.

The other day Dr. Shmuel Wapnick, on his way back to New York after spending four days in South Africa to attend his niece's wedding, found the time to host a little get-together at a kosher restaurant. A get-together my friend Sylvia Magid and I were honored to be a part of. It was yet another beginning. We met with a number of Lemba people, all identifying as Jews, one being Dr. Rudo Mathivha, pediatrician and US trained ICU specialist, daughter of Professor Mathivha. Also there were Ephraim Selamolela, the (very) successful businessman, his two good-looking and successful sons, a niece whose name means "great

person," her mother, and the gentleman who is president of the Lemba Burial Society. I looked into Rudo's warm smiling eyes, enveloped by her acceptance, and felt humbled that these gracious and successful people were willing to accept me -- part of the (white) Jewish community who had ignored their existence and claims for years. They asked for nothing; they are successful, educated, and charming. All they had hoped for was (some form of) acceptance. Dr. Shmuel Wapnick left, with the go-ahead to arrange for a *shaliach* (emissary), one of our little network of caring Jews from around the world, to come and start the Lemba Educational Center, in Louis Trichardt. Yaakov Levi's historic arrival is now well known.

Regarding the results of the newsbreaking genetic testing, recently David B. Goldstein, a population geneticist at Oxford University, took the discovery one step further; Goldstein's research showed that the proportion of Lemba men carrying the genetic signature of the *cohanim* (priests) was similar to those found among the major Jewish populations, strongly supporting the Lemba tradition of Jewish ancestry. The DNA sequences were particularly common among Lemba men who belong to the Buba clan, the senior of their 12 groups. (The Lemba, from South Africa and Zimbabwe, believe they were led out of Judea by a man named Buba.)

In a separate study, Tudor Parfitt, director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, has discovered the route the Lemba claim they used to emigrate, saying he was told they traveled from a place called Senna to Africa. Parfitt, who has studied the Lemba for 10 years and described his work in a recent book, *Journey to the Vanished City*, said he found a village called Senna in Hadramawt, a former site of Jewish communities in Yemen. He believes that is the "Senna" referred to in Lemba oral tradition. "It turned out what they are saying about themselves is substantially correct," he said.

Which leaves us, the mainstream South African Jewish Community, with a moral dilemma: What is our responsibility as Jews, our future obligation towards helping those interested, back to *halachic* Judaism? Now that we know, can we continue to pretend they do not exist?

Jewish Heritage Tours to Greece

Kol haKEHILA, a newsletter and web site for the study and preservation of the Jewish monuments of Greece, is organizing its first Jewish Heritage Tours to Greece for its readers. These tours are scheduled to take place April 21 through May 1 (with an optional return on April 30), when the tourist season in Greece has not yet started and the weather is warm and pleasant.

The three tours listed in www.yvelia.com/greece-tour combine the diverse Jewish cultures of Greek Sephardim and Romaniotes, with sightseeing in historic sites of Greek antiquity and the Middle Ages. Included are visits to synagogues and monasteries, ancient temples and theaters, mountains and islands, Jewish quarters and ancient mystical sites. The tours also include a taste of the exquisite Greek cuisine and pastries, singing and dancing to the rhythms of Greek music and meeting local Greeks and Jews. The Kehila Jewish Heritage Tours of Greece are organized and guided by experts in the field of Greek Jewish history and architecture and experts in Greek tourism in the historic sites of Greece. Accommodation includes first and second class hotels and travel by air-conditioned luxury coaches.

For more details and fares contact greece@yvelia.com

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Kulanu Has a New Web Address

See Kulanu's wonderful, expanded web page, with easier surfing, at its new address: <http://kulanu.ubalt.edu>.

Abayudaya Guest House Is Ready

Matt Meyer has announced that the Kulanu group visit to the Abayudaya in Uganda has been postponed. But he encourages individuals and families to go on their own. This has never been easier, now that the Abayudaya have a guest house and e-mail. (See the last issue for information about the guest house.)

Mark Your Calendar!

Gloria Mound's upcoming speaking tour of North America will include St. Augustine on February 21 and Kingston, Ontario on March 5. For details and bookings, contact her at marrano@gezernet.co.il.

Dr. Shmuel Wapnick has been invited by Rebetzen Jungreis to talk on the Lemba at Hinaynee in New York on February 13. For information, please contact him at Lemba21@hotmail.com.

Saraband will perform Sephardic music at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, on March 3. For tickets call TicketMaster at (301) 808-6900. The charge is nominal.

Simcha Jacobovici's latest film, "Quest for the Lost Tribes," will air on CBC on April 4. The A&E air date is not yet available, but will fall soon after the CBC date.

Jews of Timbuktu

Since Rick Gold's fascinating talk on the Jews of Timbuktu at the last Kulanu meeting he has been snapped up to speak at three more organizations in the Washington area. A comprehensive article by Shari Berke appeared in the *Washington Jewish Week* (Dec. 30) about this talk. The article is reprinted on the Kulanu web site (<http://kulanu.ubalt.edu>). If you would like a copy of the article and don't have access to the web, contact the Kulanu office. The article will serve as a reminder that Kulanu is always in need of books and Jewish literature in French for Zakhor (the Timbuktu Association for Friendship with the Jewish World). These kinds of books are always hard to find. If anyone has access to such books, we would be eager to get them shipped.

Interest in Jews of Ghana

Michael Gershowitz has remained active on behalf of the Ghanaian Jews he recently visited. Author of the three-part article currently running in this newsletter on Jews of Ghana, Gershowitz has taped a 30-minute segment for the Des Moines Jewish cable TV program "Light One Candle." It will air in February. Also, a prominent story by Tom Suk, "Gifts Link Synagogues," with color pictures, recorded Gershowitz's visit in *The Des Moines Register*. Gershowitz made a tape of the first half of Noah Golinkin's Hebrew primer, *Shalom Aleichem*, and sent it to Ghana. Also, his synagogue, Tifereth Israel, has decided to offer 70 of its used *tallitot* to the congregation in Ghana.

Jewish Children in Ethiopia Need Food

Jewish children attending the NACOEJ school in Addis Ababa are hungry. Under NACOEJ's lunch plan, supporters can feed a child lunch for the school year for just \$39 (the real price is closer to \$54, but NACOEJ picks up the difference). You will receive a picture of the child after you contribute. Send a check to North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, 4501 Connecticut Ave., Suite 706, Washington, DC 20008.

Jews of African Heritage Exhibit

The Milwaukee Chapter of the American Jewish Committee has collaborated with America's Black Holocaust Museum to produce the exhibit "Moshet Eldad -- Giving Voice to Jews of African Heritage." This groundbreaking exhibit will run through March 31. This is an exciting project—not only for Jews of color, but for all of Klal Yisrael/the world Jewish community, and the Wisconsin chapter of the AJC deserves credit for its commitment to coalition building. Several Kulanu folks assisted – Jack Zeller, Karen Primack, Jay Sand, Matt Meyer, and Shep Wahnon. The updated exhibit website is "<http://hometown.aol.com/shahanna/myhomepage/index.html>". For further information contact Shahanna McKinney at shahanna@aol.com.

Keys to Spanish Homes

When the Jews and Arabs were forced into exile from Spain, many carried the keys to their lost houses with them. People believe that these keys were then passed on from generation to generation through five centuries by the descendants of the expelled. Veil of Memory is a research project that focuses on the stories of the keys and the people who still hold them. The final outcome of this research will be artwork that will be exhibited in Spain and in the United States. If you have one of these keys you believe to be from the house your ancestors left in Sepharad, or know someone who does, or if you have a family legend to share, please contact Professor Terry Berkowitz at 212 226-7136, fax 212 334-9805 or by email: terry_berkowitz@baruch.cuny.edu.

Abayudaya Students on the Rise!

When you contribute to Kulanu's scholarship fund for Abayudaya students in primary and secondary school, you are donating to a fund set up by the family of Lorna Margolis, who passed away in 1995 at the age of 86. She had visited Uganda and fallen in love with the country, and had always been keen on education (she was the first lawyer in her family), so it seemed fitting to establish the Lorna Margolis Memorial Fund for Abayudaya Education. Thanks to her family and countless Kulanu supporters, this Fund has been assisting a steadily increasing number of students – 184 in January 2000, up from 93 in January 1996! Your tax-deductible contribution to Kulanu can be earmarked for this Fund.

Introducing Kol HaKEHILA

This interesting web site, www.yvelia.com, is the meeting place for Jewish and Greek culture. It includes their online newsletter, Kol HaKEHILA and is devoted to the preservation of Jewish sites of Greece. The site recommends three new books, available through the site – *Voices from Jewish Salonika* by David Bunis, *The Jewish Press in Greece* by Raphael Frezis, and *Pinkas HaKehillot – Greece* by Braha Rivlin.

Artifacts Wanted

An exhibit this spring at the Washington, DC, JCC, entitled "I Carry My Roots with Me," revisits the flight of Jews to the New World following the Inquisition and 1492 expulsion from Spain. It will also explore Jewish identity in Latin America today. If you have stories or artifacts to share, contact judith@dcjcc.org or (202) 777-3209.

Books on Bukharan, Zambian Jewry

Chala is a new novel about Bukharan Jews by Tajik writer Mansur Surosh. The word "chala" refers to Jews who converted to Islam in the 18th century. Scorned as traitors by Jews and never fully accepted

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by Muslims, the so-called "chala" have lived an existence that has become a metaphor for the exclusion of minorities in the region. See a powerful review of the book by Najam Abbas on Kulanu's web site <http://kulanu.ubalt.edu>.

Zion in Africa: The Jews of Zambia, by Hugh Macmillan and Frank Shapiro, was published in 1999 by Tauris. It chronicles the history and culture of the small Jewish community still existing in Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) and also contains maps, photographs and a bibliography. Yael Even-Levy's review of the book can be found at <http://h-net.msu.edu/~judaic>.

Books on the Caribbean and India

Mordecai Arbell has compiled a bibliography entitled *The Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the Caribbean and the Guianas*. It is published by John Carter Brown Library of Providence, Rhode Island and information can be obtained at JCDBL_Information@Brown.edu. Or by writing to JCBL Books, Box 1894, Providence, RI, 02912.

Jewish Exile in India: 1933-1945, edited by Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt, explores the little known chapter of the escape from the Nazis of several hundred European Jews to India. It was a complex time when India was governed by Britain, which required visas and treated German and Austrian Jews as enemy aliens.

The book can be obtained by writing to Manohar Publishers, 2/6 Ansari Road, Daryaguni, New Delhi, 110 002, India.

A Sephardic Listserve

Interested readers are invited to subscribe free of charge to the Sephardic listserv, sephardic-list-subscribe@eGroups.com. It will be a forum, open to everybody, in English, French and Ladino. Ladino experts, rabbis, and many others who are willing to share their knowledge will be participating. In the future, messages will only be sent through this listserv.

Ottoman Liturgy Recorded

A new double-CD by Hazzan Isaac Azose, *The Liturgy of Ezra Bessaroth*, features a wide sampling of the Rhodian and Turkish prayers and seder melodies. (Ezra Bessaroth is a Sephardi synagogue in Seattle.) To purchase the double-CD or double-cassette, send \$23.20 to "Azose CD," c/o Steven Baral, 5257 South Brandon St., Seattle, WA 98118.

A Judezmo Textbook

A new university-level textbook on Ladino/Judezmo (the language of the Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire) has been published by the Magnes Press in Jerusalem. It contains 24 lessons and Judezmo-Hebrew and Hebrew-Judezmo glossaries. There is no English-language translation of the book as yet. For information, contact Zachary Baker at Stanford Univ. libraries, zbaker@leland.Stanford.edu.

At Kulanu's Busy Tucson Chapter

This busy chapter had an October meeting featuring four people who shared their reasons for becoming Jews by Choice, all of whom had discovered at least one Jewish ancestor. Another motivating factor was their direct interaction with Jews on a social or business basis. Their December meeting heard a lecture about ancient Jewish strategies for survival by Dr. J. Edward Wright, assistant director of Judaic Studies at the Univ. of Arizona. Their January meeting featured Rabbi Samuel M. Cohon speaking on the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

The chapter is scheduled to have a February 13 meeting with Rabbi Arthur Oleisky on "Conversos, Conversions and Russians Who Have Married Jews," a discussion on Jewish survival. For information contact Barbara Rosenblum at 520-575-0204 or brynah@azstarnet.com.

Volunteer Teachers Wanted!

Teachers of Hebrew and Judaic subjects are always needed by developing Jewish communities in South Africa, Uganda and Ghana. Also, the Jewish high school in Uganda is seeking teachers of secular subjects, especially science, math and computers. Please contact the Kulanu office (see masthead).

"Lost Tribes" on the Web

Stevy Epstein's article on the Bnei Menashe, "A Long-Lost Tribe Is Ready To Come Home," was selected by the VirtualJerusalem web site for inclusion under its January theme of "Among the Nations." After January 2000, the article will be available on the site's "theme of the month" archive. See www.virtualjerusalem.com/theme/index.htm.

The Lubovitchers, also hoping to raise awareness of the lost tribes, have a web page <<http://moshiach.com/tribes/ns/>> with information on "lost tribes" (click on the flags). This site also provides a link to Stevy Epstein's excellent web page on the Bnei Menashe, found at www.bneimenashe.com.

Rufina's New Web Address

Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum's beautiful web site on Portuguese-Sephardic history has a new address: <http://www.saudades.org>. This site has been named one of the Top 10 Sites by the Jewish Agency for Israel!

Daniel J. Elazar

Political scientist, author and Sephardic activist Daniel J. Elazar died on Dec. 1 at the age of 65. The author of *The Other Jews*, *The Sephardim Today*, and dozens of other books and hundreds of articles, Elazar was an ardent spokesman for equal rights and representation of Sephardi/Mizrahi rights and history in Israel. May his memory be a blessing.

Sephardi/Mizrahi Artists Announce Journal

The *NASAWI News* features stories, articles, reviews, poetry and a calendar. Sponsored by the New Association of Sephardi/Mizrahi Artists & Writers International, the journal may be ordered through Ivri-NASAWI, 1033 N. Orlando Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90069 (323-650-3157) or www.ivri-nasawi.org.

Judeo-Spanish Studies

The Proceedings of the Tenth British Conference on Judeo-Spanish Studies (held in London June 29-July 1, 1997) are available for purchase. Edited by Annette Benaim, the 24 papers cover such diverse topics as language, literature, history, social anthropology, music and cookery. Articles by Kulanu supporters Judith R. Cohen (on her ethnomusicological fieldwork in Iberian Crypto-Jewish regions) and Yitzchak Kerem (on disdainful and accepting Portuguese attitudes to Sephardic Jewry throughout history) are included. For ordering information, contact R.Lane@qmw.ac.uk.

The two-volume set of Proceedings of the Sixth European Association of Jewish Studies Conference, held in Toledo, Spain, in 1999, has just been published. Included among the 169 papers are articles by Gloria Mound (on Jewish connections between Prinz Luis Salvador of

(Continued on page 13)

“Return” Certificate Issued in Israel (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

pigs. Meat and milk were not eaten together. In the morning they ate dairy foods and no meat; at dinner either milk or meat was served. Fish without fins and scales were avoided. The reason given for avoiding pork and scavenger fish was that it was forbidden, and the reason given for separating meat and milk was that mixing them was bad for one's health. Eating at strangers' homes and eating food cooked by non-family members was not acceptable.

Upon death of a family member the body was washed, all the gold and silver was removed from the teeth. Burial was kept simple; some bodies were covered only with mortalia (burial shrouds), and the rest in an extremely simple coffin, though others did have elaborate ones. Also unlike neighbors, the body was not laid out in church before it was taken to the cemetery for burial. The burial was carried out as quickly as possible, and except under very unusual circumstances, never more than 24 hours. Family members were the first to put earth over the interred body. In the house of the deceased water was spilled, glass windows and mirrors were covered with dark cloth, pictures with glass panes reversed. Simple foods were served; the family sat in hammocks, in a dark room. Relatives would serve the mourners light food for at least seven days, depending on degree of closeness. David was told these customs were according to the Bible. David knew the

Only upon arriving in Sao Paulo for university did David learn that modern-day Jews existed.

Pai Nosso and *Ave Maria*, but did not have his first communion till he was 13. Communion was not customary in his mother's family but David wanted an education and in the 1970s, there were no education opportunities outside the church.

Only upon arriving in Sao Paulo for his university education did David learn that modern-day Jews existed and were walking the streets. This was astonishing to him. He could not believe people dared talk about Israel openly in the cafes. David does not know how he came to feel that Judaism was not something one would discuss publicly, but in his mind all this would have to be kept secret. It all seemed like a dream to him, surreal! Some of these Jews eventually became his friends. He became aware that many of the customs he remembered from childhood were much like the Jewish customs his new Jewish friends kept, and he started to question the reasons for the separateness in his upbringing, the secrecy, the many Bible stories at bedtime, the Biblical explanations for customs not kept by Christians. All these memories began to re-emerge with new meanings. When he was little, every Easter, David's maternal grandparents cloistered themselves and the family in the house, locking the doors and dimming the light, and left gifts of food outside. Toward the end of the day and into the night, people from all over the region would come by, wearing masks and yelling that they were looking for Judas "Where is Judas? "Could he be hiding here?" as the family huddled inside, silent and scared. Eventually the intruders took what was left for them outside and went away, but these were fearful hours, fearful memories.

After obtaining his degree David went to work for the government in Brasilia. There he had an English tutor who was Jewish. David learned more and more about Judaism, and the more he learned, the better he understood his roots. Eventually he decided that the time has come for him to rejoin the open Jewish community. He wrote many places: to the Israeli Embassy, the Israeli Consulate in Rio, the Hebraica Society in Sao Paulo, and others. Finally he decided that the

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right way for him was to go to Israel, get himself a good Jewish education, and make his return formal there. The opportunity presented itself with a special course offered in Israel in his professional area. David received a letter of recommendation from Rabbi Abraham Anidjar from Rio. He spent five months on a kibbutz, and then transferred to a yeshiva in Jerusalem.

When he first arrived at my home, David was already studying in the yeshiva, but wanted to make sure that when he got his certificate from the Rabbinate, it would make clear that he is returning to Juda-

David wanted a certificate that would make clear that he is returning to Judaism, not converting.

ism, not converting. I gave him a copy of a letter from Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu which says that *anousim* formalizing their return be given a return certificate, and that when they immerse the prayer is recited that the Rashbash Q R. Solomon b. Shimon Duran composed for returning *anousim* in the 15th century, which reads as follows:

Our God and God of our fathers, bring success to your servant, and bestow your grace upon him. Just as you have moved his heart to return in complete repentance before you, so may you plant in his heart love and fear of you. Open his heart to your Torah and guide him in the path of your commandments that he may find grace in your eyes. So may it be, and let us say Amen.

He thus further distinguishes the process from conversion and gives the person undertaking the return further affirmation of his/her historic connection to the Jewish People. At last, everything seemed to be progressing beautifully. David was enjoying his studies and feeling more and more eager to be circumcised. David kept talking about the urgency he felt to perform this commandment, and how he suffered from the delay. Although his teachers now understood that he was returning, they could not internalize it and understand that once he knew of the commandment, he felt he was transgressing more with every day that passed. When he finally was circumcised, four months later, David was elated. Only two days after the painful procedure he walked across town to visit us for a Shabbat lunch.

Now the countdown for immersion began. When the day finally arrived, I went with him to see that no further problems arose. We sat and sat at the offices of the Rabbinate in Jerusalem, surrounded by divorcing couples and countless other unhappy people, and a convert sitting all alone, lost and confused. The atmosphere was chaotic. No one seemed to know whom to turn to or what to do; no one knew about the appointment set for David; the responsible rabbi did not show up. After persuading the person in charge to make some phone calls (which he previously argued were impossible to make), David was

No one knew about the appointment set for David; the responsible rabbi did not show up.

instructed to continue to the ritual bath in two hours. We had a party at my home in honor of this happy event the very same evening, and now all that remained was to wait for was the certificate.

When it came at last, three months later, David was beside himself with disappointment. The paper read as a conversion certificate; the father's name was Abraham! I called the rabbi who signed the certificate and he refused to budge, saying that his (~~Cabbinate~~ *Cabbinate*)

“Return” Certificate (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

only trained to convert, and that he was not warned about this. We went with his rabbi to see Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, who arranged and informed the rabbinic court about the return certificate—and still no progress. I called the rabbi who heads the rabbinic court and wrote Rabbi Aaron Soloveichick from Chicago who has been very helpful to *anousim*. I received his response by fax, and forwarded it to the rabbinic court.

We may never know for certain what determined things ultimately, but the same rabbi who signed the first document arrived at his yeshiva, after another three months, and gave David a big hug and a certificate that reads return/precautionary conversion, and records David’s biological father’s name as the father—not Abraham, as a conversion paper would read.

David is the first to have received this document in Israel. The process is better understood now, and known to rabbinic courts. More recently a special ulpan for return and conversion taught in Spanish opened in Israel, and several *anousim* attend it and enjoy the program very much. There are still many problems, but we have come a long way.

In retrospect, David says that his inner conviction that he was Jewish all along, and must be recognized as such, gave him the strength and hope that carried him through his many trials—the misguidance, the lack of understanding. David is a trail-blazer; he always fought with other *anousim* considering return in his mind. He hopes that his journey will ease that of others; that other people, his family too, will follow in his path and build up the courage to reclaim their true identity. He went back to Brazil to resume his job with the government, so he can regain his financial independence, and find a position in Israel. He has since married a Sefardi girl in Brazil, and, to use his own words:

“As [for] myself, I [am] very happy and so says my wife, she is also very happy! She is kind and lovely and I’m feeling Hashem’s presence constantly in my life.”



David and his bride at their wedding in Brazil.

The Popular Music of the Abayudaya

Thousands of Jews and non-Jews have already fallen in love with the music of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Here are two new developments – a chance to hear, and a chance to help:

A chance to hear

For some time now, Kulanu has had a recording available of the music of the Abayudaya, “Shalom Everybody Everywhere!” To those of you who have not yet had a chance to purchase or hear it, sample tracks from the CD can now be downloaded from Kulanu’s web site, <http://www.ubalt.edu/kulanu>.

A music reviewer in Chicago had this to say about the recording:

The community’s debut album, “Shalom Everybody Everywhere!” is a vibrant expression of joy that shimmers with goodwill and love of being Jewish. Imagine the Siddur set to the music of Paul Simon’s “Graceland” album, and you’ll get some idea of the sound as well as of how moving and entertaining that sound is.

Cantors and teachers have enjoyed applying the Abayudaya melodies to familiar prayers in synagogues!

To order, please see page 16 of this newsletter. It makes a great gift!

A chance to help

Do you have any used musical instruments that are just gathering dust in the back of your closet? Put them to good use! The Abayudaya community needs your guitars, basses, drums, trumpets, saxophones, keyboards, etc., as well as any musical equipment (amplifiers, strings, picks and other accessories) you can spare.

Jay Sand, who recently returned from a visit with the Abayudaya in Uganda, says:

I was overjoyed to find that music is such an integral part of the community’s life. Abayudaya elders write beautiful melodies to both traditional and original lyrics. Abayudaya youth take every opportunity to play the community’s two old, deteriorating guitars.

There is incredible musical talent in the Abayudaya community but there is no money to buy instruments, let alone strings or picks or other musical equipment. I believe all they need to become, as they say, “powerful musicians,” is our help to get instruments of all varieties into their hands.

Jay has offered to collect instruments and send them with people going to visit the Abayudaya. If you have an instrument to donate to Kulanu for this purpose (it’s tax-deductible!), please contact Jay at jay@tao.ca or 304-291-1507.

Also the Abayudaya musicians are about to produce a quality recording in Uganda with some non-Abayudaya musicians. They are seeking financial backing for this enterprise. Proceeds will benefit the new high school and the project is bringing the Abayudaya closer to their neighbors. See Joab Keki’s letter on page 5 of this newsletter.

Journal from Lemba Lands (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

bat at shul here and Shabbat dinner with Rabbi Bernard. Sunday is a get-together at an Israeli owned restaurant here with some local interested folks, and a number of the Lemba.

So, things are happening, and I am excited at both the interest and support for the project here, and am falling in love with the weather and the flora here, elements of Eretz plus San Diego and a tad of the tropical thrown in for good measure. I love going to a mall and seeing large displays of orchid PLANTS. I have also seen several 'Israeli' birds out the window, and numerous others I have to get acquainted with. It really is a beautiful country and I encourage everyone to put it on their 'must-visit' list.

Rufina Mausenbaum, along with her friend Sylvia Magid, have been doing great things in organizing things and setting up meetings.

Soon I will be heading north and we begin to meet the Lemba there and start finding out what their needs and expectations are.

I had Shabbat dinner along with Erev Shabbat at Rabbi Bernard's. He is with Chabad and he is 'on our side'; he knows full well the situation with the Ethiopians in Eretz and is supportive of our step-by-step plans. He gave a beautiful explanation of them to another visitor Erev Shabbat at dinner, who was initially hostile and by the end of the dinner was wanting to promote a game farm with kosher antelope venison produced by the Lemba! Lot of progress there in a short time! It was good actually, because his objections helped me to see beyond them to his concerns and to be able to verbalize a rational reply, and it was great to have Rabbi Bernard's obvious support. He is the most senior rabbi around so this is a MAJOR plus for us and the project. I loved his shul, they REALLY know how to sing there. I kept looking around to see if Jan Peerce was with us.

This afternoon we have a luncheon meeting with some of the Lemba here in J'burg and I am looking forward to it. I am 'over the jet lag' now and feeling pretty functional, looking forward to getting upcountry. J'burg is a beautiful town, but I'm a country boy. I am really looking forward to getting some personal seeds into the ground.

I forgot to mention, Rufina took me over to meet Tal Glazar of the Betar Youth and I am greatly impressed with him, and his positive attitude towards the Lemba. I also met the president of the youth group and again his attitude towards the Lemba is far more than I hoped for. We are blessed by so many of the right things coming together right now at the right time. As always, Rufina is a major blessing, as is Sylvia Magid, who has also shlepped me around. We need major prayer blessings for both these ladies.

To date everything looks good and I am very positive. I am also thinking it is for sure a long-term project with numerous side goals to be realized as we proceed.

Once settled in up north we NEED a vehicle.

I have been here a week today, met with some great folks, got my shots for the next couple of years, and I go up to Louis Trichardt tomorrow. Yesterday I spent most of the day in Soweto, meeting with Lemba elders there, and was surprised to find out how many Lemba there are in Soweto, as well as Pretoria and other cities between here and Louis Trichardt. There are about 5000 in Soweto and probably twice that many in Pretoria. To make a living and to find work a great many have come to other areas to feed their families. And there are

significant numbers in each area who wish to be instructed in Torah and Judaism.

After meeting with elders throughout the area, I can see a need for teachers and lay leaders much sooner than envisioned. To this end I am going to be meeting with Professor Mathivha this week and other leaders of the Lemba to begin an immediate program to give instruction to a group of lay leaders in the daily and Shabbat services and to receive the weekly parsha to teach to congregations. It has been the absolute absence of this that has led to the assimilation of many of the Lemba and conversion to Christianity and Islam.

When back in the States I had only a vague idea of the numbers of those who wished to return to Judaism. This is "firming up" to an expectation of thousands, scattered over several hundred kilometers in numerous communities. This is exciting work to be in, and it is only possible with the help of many.

January 2000 *The Farm*

The farm I am staying at, with the generous hospitality of Ephraim Selamolela, is about 50 km. west of Thohoyandou. However, it is isolated and difficult for the Lemba to reach for shul services and classes, and it is totally unknown how long before we will have telephone service. A vehicle is going to be a necessity to reach outlying communities plus just obtaining basic necessities. Thohoyandou (Venda for elephant's head) has almost no stores and is very spread out. The price of a good used vehicle will be around \$5-6000 US, plus around \$3000 a year to operate.

We need materials to meet the needs of a congregation of 50 adults. It looks like this is what we can expect at Thohoyandou. We have received 38 Artscroll *siddurim*, 22 *chumashim* (books of Torah), and one complete set of *machzorim* (holiday prayer books). Thus we need at least 12 more Artscroll *siddurim*, 28 *chumashim*, and 49 *machzorim*, as well as kippot, *taleisim*, Shabbat items, and Jewish toys. Please contact your congregations, as used books will

be very valuable and well taken care of. For details about delivery, please contact Shmuel at Lemba21@hotmail.com.

On Sunday, January 9, a meeting of the executives of the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA) was held at Ephraim Selamolela's farm. Present were the president, Prof. M.E.R. Mathivha, deputy president Sam Moeti Hamisi, Ephraim Selamolela and myself. It was agreed to find a large house in the Thohoyandou area to facilitate holding of services and to make Jewish Education classes more available until the center at Sweetwaters is completed (hopefully within 15 months). Classes, services and *shiurim* (lessons) will be held on a circuit basis throughout the area.

Sam Moeti Hamisi suggested beginning an outreach to Zimbabwe, with several of the committee plus me making a trip to the principal Lemba area in February. The trip would be up to a week in duration and would center on Judaic services and lessons.

The LCA, through local branches, will begin to canvass for four to six men for conversion training with me. This training will be coordinated with Rabbi Bernard of Johannesburg. Upon completing the training and subsequent to appearing before a *bet din* in Johannesburg, the successful candidates will return to their homes and provide services and classes to their home areas. At least one of the trainees will be from Zimbabwe. Recruitment of ~~the candidates is~~



Yaacov Levi

BRIEFS (CONT.)

(Continued from page 9)

Hapsburg and Nathaniel von Rothschild of Vienna) and Judith R. Cohen (on her ethnomusicological fieldwork). To order the \$162 set or parts thereof, contact Gloria Mound for information <marrano@gezernet.co.il>.

A New Web Magazine on Social Action

Rabbi Sue Fendrick has announced the launch of SocialAction.com, an online magazine dedicated to social justice. The first issue includes an article about the unfinished exodus from Ethiopia. The magazine can be found at <http://www.SocialAction.com>.

Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World

In "Faculty Picks – Books Recommended by the Jewish Theological Seminary Faculty," Chancellor Ismar Schorsch recommends *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, edited by Benjamin Gampel. The book's essays review Sephardi culture and how it has been affected by the expulsion.

Todah Rabah!

To **Aron Primack**, who donated \$800, in honor of Rabbi Avichail, to pay the transportation of one Bnei Menashe immigrant to Israel. **He challenges 99 other Kulanu supporters to do the same during the year 2000 (see article on page 2).**

To **Diane and Jack Zeller** for their substantial grant for the Lemba project.

To **Brian and Ana Kurland** for their donation in memory of **Max Kurland**. To **Richard Sobol** for his contribution in honor of the bar mitzvah of his son **Daniel Sobol**. To **Ray Kaplan** for his generous donation for the Bnei Menashe. And to **Marcia Kaplan** for her generous contribution to the Lorna Margolis Memorial Fund (for Abayudaya scholarships)

To **Eric and Melanie Werner** for their generous contribution of \$1500 to the Cukierkorn Publication Fund.

To **Barbara Shair** for generous donations to both the Lemba Pro-

ject and the Abayudaya education fund and for sending 11 M bags of boxes of books to the Lemba

To the Ten Friends who contributed to the Josie Gimble Fund. To **The Madav IX Foundation** for its generous contribution. To the **Sectman Family Mitzvah Fund** for its donation of Uri Katula's college scholarship. To Yafeu ibn Taom, for sending a box of siddurim with a beautiful dedication to the Lemba. And to Betsy Combs for donating a child's tallit, kippot, and other items for a Kulanu community.

To **Feed & Read University Bookstore** in Kutztown, Pa., for donating \$3000 worth of gently used college textbooks (literature, biology, chemistry, geology, geography, sociology, psychology, accounting) for the Abayudaya and to **Tamar Kemp** and Afram Jews for collecting and sending them to Uganda!

To **Helene Warhit, Dr. Robert Wolf, Jack Goldfarb, Brotherhood Synagogue, Jeremy Goldberg, Hope Pracht** for donating *siddurim*, *chumashim* and ritual objects for the Lemba.

Journal from Lemba Lands (cont.)

(Continued from page 12)

planned to be completed by June 2000 and training begun then.

We are looking for investors into the kosher lodge that is being built. Please contact Shmuel at Lemba21@hotmail.com. Investors in South Africa and New York have already made commitments. Please note that memorial sections in the shul and *beit sefer* (school) can be dedicated as a memorial to a loved one.

I can be contacted on my cell phone (from the US) at 011-27-082-4040603.

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.

A MELODIOUS SHABBAT IN GHANA (CONT.)

(Continued from page 3)

international access code, 233 is Ghana's country code, 272 the code for the region that includes Sefwi Wiawso, and 391 is the phone number.) But beware -- it's difficult to get a circuit through, and you can expect to be placed on hold for five or ten minutes until the person comes to the phone. Kofi Kwateng is the best person to ask for, since his shop is near the Post Office. You can also write to the community: Send mail to David Ahenkorah, Vote for God Photos, P. O. Box 57, Sefwi Wiawso, Western Region, Ghana. David is a professional photographer as well as the religious leader.

The Synagogue

The synagogue in Sefwi Wiawso is an unmarked cinderblock building that can accommodate 150 to 200 people. It has an open doorway and openings for light and air to enter. There is no electricity. Men sit on simple benches on one side of the center aisle, and women on the other side. There is no *mechitza* (dividing wall). Children sit in the front rows on either side. It was reminiscent of chapels I've attended at Jewish summer camps in America.

The *bimah* holds a table with four seats for the leaders. While I was there, only men sat or stood on the *bimah*. The table has a white covering with the word "Shalom" and a picture of a menorah. A

Frankly, I found the African kippot far more attractive, and was disappointed that the community prefers the American version, feeling that they are more authentically Jewish.

seven-pronged menorah sits atop the table. A student Torah scroll, printed on paper, is set against the wall in a special case. It was hand-delivered to them a year or two ago by Daniel Baiden, a Ghanaian-American visitor, as a gift from Kulanu. Although they cannot read it, they treasure it.

A water-filled urn is set at the synagogue entrance. The men and women ritually wash their hands before entering. Men over 13 wear kippot. Boys under 13 do not cover their heads, but all of the married women cover their heads with beautiful kerchiefs. Tallit and tefillin are unknown. I saw two types of kippot -- traditional (and very beautiful) embroidered hats that match the men's outfits, and American-style satin kippot that were donated. Frankly, I found the African kippot far more attractive, and was disappointed that the community prefers the American version, feeling that they are more authentically Jewish.

The synagogue was built at the very bottom of the hill, at the lowest point in the Jewish quarter, at the base of Sefwi Wiawso's mountain. They told me that the site was selected because of the Torah's admonition, "you shall not worship from the high places" -- a reference to the Canaanite practice of building altars on mountaintops.

Shabbat

The Shabbat morning service ran from 8 to 10 and followed the English text of the *siddur* for *shacharit*. A Torah portion was read from the Hertz Chumash. The Torah scroll was on the *bimah*, but was not used -- no one in the community reads Hebrew. The service was attended by 30 to 40 men, about 10 women, and 20 or 25 children.

A number of songs were chanted, in the local language, Sefwi. The melodies were captivating and the themes were thoroughly Jewish. The songs were well known to the congregation -- everyone joined in, with much gusto. On Sunday, I had some of the people re-

cord the melodies on a cassette that I brought home. Unfortunately, the recording quality is very poor. If a better recording can be made, I think it can be marketed in America, with profits donated to the Jews of Sefwi Wiawso.

One of the tunes is about Jerusalem, and says, "We were exiled from Jerusalem because of our sins. Jerusalem is our home, and we long for the day when our hearts are pure enough so that we can return." Another says, "There are gifts you can buy with silver and gold, but the best gift of all is free. It's Shabbat, and it's the best gift because it's a gift from God." Several tunes extol the virtues of King Solomon, whom the Ghanaian Jews hold in as high esteem as, or possibly higher than, King David.

Kiddush was recited in the synagogue, over wine, and everyone then went home for lunch. The meal was bountiful, and much like Friday night's dinner. David apologized for the early hour of services, but said that it was not permitted to eat before the morning prayers. There was ritual hand washing and a short blessing. A long grace after meals concluded the meal. We ate outdoors at David's house with several other families. One of the men explained that the Jews' practice was different from that of their Christian neighbors. "They recite a long benediction before eating. They're hungry and can't pay attention to their benediction. We recite a short blessing because we want to eat, then when we're satisfied, we take the time to give thanks to God." How Jewish!

Following the meal, we were taken home and told to rest until 1:00, at which time a group of 40 or 50 gathered in the synagogue for Torah study. The men took turns coming to the *bimah*, reading a sentence at a time from a Hertz Chumash while David, the religious leader, gave a linear commentary. It reminded me of reading a Chumash with Rashi's line-by-line commentary. This was followed by the afternoon service, and at 3, we went back home until dinner at 5. The people who brought us dinner apologized for the early dining hour, but explained that it was required to eat three meals on Shabbat. The evening service, concluded with havdalah, was at 6.

Unlike the mainstream custom of observing Shabbat for 25 hours, the Jews of Sefwi Wiawso observe 24 hours. Havdalah was beautiful, with very nice melodies in Sefwi. Instead of using a candle with a

A number of songs were chanted, in the local language, Sefwi. The melodies were captivating and the themes were thoroughly Jewish.

twisted wick, candles were placed in the two end candlesticks of the menorah, symbolizing the end of one week and the beginning of the next -- the seventh day and the first. For the blessing over spices, spiced wine was used. It was sniffed, then drunk.

(This series concludes with Part III in the next newsletter.)

A KULANU PASSOVER READING:

Recovering the Afikomen – and Recovering Lost Jews

By Jeri Roth Lande

(To be read after the children search for and find the hidden afikomen.)

Reader:

Before the Seder can continue the *afikomen* is eaten in memory of the Pesach offering. Another name for this part of the service is *tzafun* or, literally, the "hidden". Many interpretations have been given for the custom of breaking the *afikomen* and hiding a portion of it for the children to find and ransom.

All together:

One interpretation is that the hidden portion of the *afikomen* represents those parts of the Jewish people who have become lost or separated from us.

Reader:

One such group is the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, who became separated from the rest of the Jewish nation after the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 B.C.E. Another such group consists of Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, but who secretly maintained some part of their Jewish heritage.

Just as we recover the hidden *afikomen* during this part of the Seder, in recent years some descendants of each of these groups have discovered their hidden Jewish roots and returned to Judaism. For example, the Shinlung in India believe that they are descended from Menashe, one of the Ten Lost Tribes. More than 5,000 are now practicing Judaism, and more than 400 have made *aliyah* and formally (re)converted. Recently, some descendants of "Marranos" or "Anousim" in Portugal, Mexico, Brazil, the United States and elsewhere have also begun reclaiming their roots and returning to Judaism.

All together:

Let us welcome each returning Jew with warmth, enthusiasm and joy. Their return to Judaism completes our community as the *afikomen* completes our Seder meal.

(For another Passover reading see the Kulanu website at <http://kulanu.ubalt.edu>)

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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.*

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Deadline for next issue: April 15, 2000	Recycled Paper	Edited by Karen Primack
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