

KULANU

“all of us”



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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Gloria Mound Lectures About Secret Jewish Communities

Gloria Mound is founder and director of Casa Shalom Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies in Israel. Casa Shalom collects material about secret Jewish communities around the world. In March, on one of her frequent lecture tours to North America, Mound shared some of these secrets with her audiences.

At a slide talk at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and at other lectures, Mound discussed some general information about Sephardi and Converso culture, and then zeroed in on her special area of research, the Balearic Islands. (She and her husband planned a one-year stay in the Balearic Islands on their way from their home in England to making aliyah in Israel. Fascinated, they stayed for three years, and once in Israel, Mound worked even harder researching Crypto-Judaism in the Balearic Islands -- Ibiza, Majorca, Formentera, and Minorca -- and has now continued beyond that locale.)

She has made a particular study of customs within the family. One custom that interested her was how in some families it is mandatory to eat dessert first. Further investigation showed that this was when the dessert had milk ingredients and was followed by a meat meal. She expresses her surprise that this custom continued or was known in the southern United States, Puerto Rico and Cuba, as well as the Balearic Islands.



Gloria Mound

Another custom she has encountered is sweeping the floor into the middle of the room rather than out the door. To the *anusim* this is to avoid disrespect to the mezuzah, but this custom seems to continue among descendants of *anusim* today, even when the families have no mezuzah.

Mound has discovered many past and present indications of Con-

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Levi Returns from South Africa

After six months in South Africa, working to set up educational programs in Judaism for the Lemba, Yaacov Levi has come back to the US. Kulanu president Jack Zeller encouraged him to return as he was facing significant health problems as well as a shortage of funding.

Levi stated, “We feel there is a need for a different approach to the Lemba project and that the expense of my being there was not workable for Kulanu at this time. We need to approach some outside supports for the various projects that we have in mind, which include a children’s home, a school, and agricultural demo projects. All of these require funding far beyond present resources.”

Levi continued, “I have built excellent relationships and friendships with many Lemba and hated to leave them. But, we need to direct our attention to these other areas. Hopefully we can begin to head in these new directions.”

Lemba activist Shmuel Wapnick, who has worked alongside Levi in South Africa, said that Levi “contributed to an historical and exciting event.” He noted that Tudor Parfitt was impressed with the efforts to start a concrete presence to show the Lemba that Jews accept them and want them to be counted with the Jewish nation. Wapnick pointed out that Parfitt mentions Yaacov Levi’s name in the new edition of his book about the Lemba.

Wapnick has received correspondence from many Lemba expressing appreciation and a sense of support by the dispatches Levi has written from South Africa for the Kulanu newsletter.

Kulanu president Jack Zeller called Levi’s work “Kulanu’s most creative outreach in our short six-year history.” He said that Levi has, in a few months, “roughed out” the prospects for the next 100 years of a diaspora renaissance.”

In the months ahead, Zeller said, “we need to find partnerships with other Jewish institutions as well as expand our own efforts to nurture our relationships and Judaica programs with our Lemba kin. This is a big job for a small organization and every Kulanu supporter has to do a fair share and then a little more.

Zeller hopes to see the weekend Lemba youth conclaves with the Betar Jewish youth group of South Africa expanded in number and to include other youth groups. (Each costs about \$1000 for 100 youths.) Second, he would like to see Judaica lessons supported for Lemba in

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Youths Plan Summer Courses with Ghana’s Jews

Gabriel Gershowitz, 18, of Des Moines, Iowa, and Nathaniel Asher, 17, of Overland Park, Kansas, have raised funds for a trip to visit the Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana. Gabi’s USY chapter held an auction, raising about \$600 for the trip. The Gershowitz’s congregation in Des Moines, Tifereth Israel, will give \$400. The families will cover the cost of a visa, immunizations, ground transportation, the first night at a hotel, and other incidentals. Nate has also raised funds in Kansas City and both boys will split a \$1000 stipend from Kulanu.

They are prepared to travel from June 6 through July 13. Both youths have counselor jobs at Camp Ramah for the rest of the summer.

Although school will be in session in Ghana, the boys will do Shabbat programs and will work with the schoolchildren each afternoon and with adults in the evening. Also, there is no school on Sunday, which lends itself to more intensive programming. During the day, while the adults

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A Kulanu Profile: Shahanna McKinney

Shahanna McKinney recently curated a traveling museum exhibit on Jews of African heritage in Milwaukee, co-sponsored by the Milwaukee chapter of the American Jewish Committee and America's Black Holocaust Museum.

Not even a month after that exhibit closed, Shahanna was busy soliciting a collaboration of educational entities in western Massachusetts to sponsor talks by Tudor Parfitt in the area. She planned a public lecture at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, as well as a dinner before the lecture, and developed a color flyer for the event.

The co-sponsors Shahanna "amassed" for the event include the Five Colleges Lecture Fund, Hampshire College Keshet, Hampshire College UMOJA, Kulanu, Moreshet Network of African Heritage Jews, Smith College African American Studies Department, Smith College/Amherst College Hillel, United Jews of Color-Pioneer Valley, Yale University Chai, and the following organizations within UMass-Amherst: African American Studies Department, Black Student Union, Hillel, Judaic Studies Department, Multicultural Seder Committee, and Office of Jewish Affairs.

Did we forget to mention that Shahanna is a graduate student at the School of Education at UMass Amherst? She is a Master's Degree



Siblings Jason, Shahanna, Adam, and David McKinney

candidate in Social Justice Education. She earned her BS degree in Secondary Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she majored in Hebrew and minored in Communications.

She studied in Israel, directed weekly Sunday Religious School at Congregation Emanu-El of Waukesha, Wisconsin, and taught Jewish Studies, Hebrew Language and Literature, and Drama at the Milwaukee Jewish Day School.

She has taught high school Broadcasting, Oral Communication and English, and is currently responsible for coordinating culturally competent interpreting services for victims of sexual violence and battering whose primary language is not English. She was recently a Teaching Assistant at UMass for the course "Blacks and Jews," and has researched intersections of racism and anti-Semitism in the lives of Jews of color for the UMass Office of Jewish Affairs.

Among the awards Shahanna has received are Wisconsin Black Women's Network's *Outstanding Women in Religion Award* – and, for two years running, the Wisconsin Area Music Industry Award, *Best Ska/Reggae Band!*

Kulanu needs 20 more Shahannas!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Proving One's Jewishness

By Jack Zeller

Even after the Rabbis of Israel deemed the Ethiopian Jews to be authentic and entitled to come to Israel under the Law of Return, it is almost impossible to find an Ethiopian Jew who was not (unnecessarily) asked at some time to prove his Jewishness in one way or another. Most of us "real Jews" know we are Jewish from oral tradition. As an example that is close to home, my mother was born in Europe during the bitter cold of winter in 1910 so she was not registered until the subsequent summer for the convenience of others. Since her birth date and registered date are not the same, is her Jewish identity impaired? Would that also make me less Jewish? And so on. Unless of course you accept oral tradition as a form of the necessary "proof."

It is demeaning for one Jew to have to prove his Jewishness to another Jew. We can't find enough "*al chet's*" for this insult. Kulanu bases identity on oral traditions and practices as if they are one's "notarized signature." Despite a school of academics who thrive off of "they invented themselves" theories, we think that impoverished communities do not have the communication talent or inclination to formulate these forgeries. Inventiveness on such an intense scale is a product of modern life, especially developed in the imagination of this school of particularly ethnocentric academicians.

Recently, the Lemba, regarded by anthropologists and some Jewish *mavens* of numerous stripes as "non-Jewish," have turned the tables with the active help of Tudor Parfitt, a London-based anthropologist and "honorary Lemba," who was himself helped by a group of eminent geneticists, most of whom are Jewish. (The Lemba have been found to have an anomaly on their Y chromosome that depicts their Middle Eastern heritage and, in fact, marks their priestly clan as closely related to the *Cohanim*.) Exciting, but also tragic. DNA sequences are interesting, but we have to hide our shame for needing to wait for this scientific evidence to convince us of their Jewishness.

You wouldn't need DNA for proof if you met a Lemba (or a Bnei Menashe from India, for that matter). Meeting a Lemba "one on one" conveys the palpable Jewishness in his or her soul. Joseph Halevy didn't need DNA 150 years ago when he went to meet the Beta Israel of Ethiopia. It was obvious to him from discussion alone.

It doesn't take a jet plane (some call it scientific explanation) to cross the street! And if you don't want to cross the street for some other reason, the jet won't help.

Millions Learn About Lost Jewish Communities

The last three months have seen an unusual amount of publicity for the international communities with which Kulanu is involved, particularly the Lemba. Millions of people are now acquainted with some lost Jewish groups.

On a North American lecture tour promoting the new paperback edition of his book about the Lemba tribe of South Africa, Tudor Parfitt visited Toronto, New York, Washington, Amherst, San Diego, and San Francisco. The book, *Journey to the Vanished City – The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel* – was released by Random House in April and is available through Kulanu (see page 16). Parfitt, a London anthropologist, has been studying the Judaic roots of the Lemba for over 10 years.

In addition, television specials about Tudor Parfitt's work with the Lemba have recently been broadcast in the British Isles by the

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LEARNING FROM GHANA'S JEWS

By Michael Gershowitz

Part III

(Parts I and II appeared in the previous two newsletters.)

Conversion

The people seemed pleased that their non-Jewish neighbors sometimes ask if they can become Jewish. Their answer is, "Yes, you can become Jewish, but first you have to learn all of our laws and then you have to practice them." The obvious next question is, "What are these laws?" The answer is, "First you have to be circumcised. Then you must close your business early on Friday and take a bath, and on Saturday you cannot work at all. You cannot eat pork at all, and you must only eat other meat that is slaughtered the proper way. And during your wife's menstrual period, she must sleep in another bed and you cannot have relations with her, and after seven days, that evening she must take a bath and only then can you resume having relations with her."

Upon hearing all of these requirements, the usual reply is, "Okay, that's too much for us. Maybe we won't convert." And the Jews' answer is, "It's not necessary for you to convert. God loves all people who are good people whether they are Jewish or Christian."

Because there are few converts, it's not surprising that the Jews are genetically different from their Christian neighbors. Most Ghanaians have broad noses with round nostrils, but nearly all of the Jews, although having quite dark skin, have long, narrow Semitic noses. The difference is immediately apparent.

Who Are the Jews of Ghana?

They are the proverbial Wandering Jews. They have been wandering about in West Africa for hundreds of years, each time moving because of persecution. According to their oral history, they have lived in Ghana for about 150 years, and before that, in Ivory Coast, a neighboring West African country, for some 250 years. They moved from Ivory Coast to Ghana because of persecution. Until 400 years ago, they lived in Mali, where they also were persecuted. (Indeed, I recently read in the Kulanu Website about a community of 1,000 Crypto-Jews living today in the vicinity of Timbuktu, Mali, who secretly studied Judaism for fear of persecution from the Islamic rulers.) Before Mali, the trail leads from the northeast, from Israel, where they claim to have originated in ancient times.

Ghana treats its Jews well. There is freedom of religion and they get along well with both their Christian neighbors and the government. But there is an underlying current of concern, based on past history, that someday things may change.

Several of my American Jewish friends speculated that Africa's black Jews are descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who was black, but at no point in my discussion with the people of Sefwi Wiawso did they mention her name. One of their songs, however, says that David was a great king, and Solomon an even greater one. Of course, if they were descended from Solomon, they would also be descendants of David, Solomon's father.

How Were They Discovered?

They weren't. Rather, they went out to discover Jews on the outside. For generations, they believed that they (and small communities in Ivory Coast and Mali of which they were aware) were the only Jews in the world. In the 1980s, David's predecessor as leader (now deceased) had a dream that, with the reestablishment of Israel, there must be Jewish people living there, and he set out to find them. He journeyed to Accra to speak with the Israeli Embassy and returned home disappointed after finding out that there was no embassy. Some time later, he and a delegation made the trip to the Israeli Embassy in Ivory Coast where they learned that, indeed, there were Jews not only in Israel but in America and throughout the world.

They were given an address in Israel, waited two years for a reply, and were eventually put in touch with Kulanu. (Continued on page 6)

The Strange Evolution of the Synagogue in Maputo, Mozambique

By Michael Metelits

US Ambassador to the Republic of Cape Verde

Part II

(Part I appeared in the last issue of this newsletter.)

What can I say? A sanctuary is a sanctuary—except when all of the sanctified objects have been removed long ago. It was obvious where various functional parts of the sanctuary had stood, but the room was for all purposes bare. Broken windows punctuated the ingress of light (and, of course, air) above us. There were no electric lights to speak of in the sanctuary, no seats, no arc, no pulpit, no railing, nothing. And yet...and yet, there was something there beside an empty room.

Believe me, I'm no mystic. While I like to read a good sci-fi yarn, I'm neither an addict nor a proselyte. This really makes it difficult for me to describe what I saw and felt in that inner room in terms that even I can accept. But here goes.

It was impossible for me to be in that sanctuary without immediately sensing a very personal bond with past events that must have taken place there -- weddings, bar mitzvahs, services, arguments. There was an overwhelming presence in that room of an active community in the past. Without hearing human voices I felt the things that had probably been said. The sensation was very strong and persisted during my entire time in the sanctuary. It had the effect of creating a bond between me and...and what? Certainly it wasn't a bond between me and the structure. Nor could it have been a bond between me and people I had never met and would never meet. So what was it? Perhaps a link with the community. To this day I don't know and can't say.

The tour ended and we left the building. In the car, Maria told us a little about her past. As we drove through the city she described how her father had been a government official in Angola and had been exiled to Mozambique because his politics did not agree with the regime's. Maria, therefore, grew up in colonial Lorenzo Marques. As we passed through one neighborhood she pointed to where as a little girl she had learned to roller skate, had participated in the Girl Scouts, had received help in skating from other, older girls in the neighborhood. Maria's story described a small, self-aware, tightly knit community that was now simply a dim memory. She was the one who first told me about the need to search for a minyan in the local hotel. She recalled how one part of the community used the temple on Friday evening and the other on Saturday morning. The only thing lacking in her recounting, as I now perceive, was any description of how members of the community practiced their religion in the home.

As we reached the embassy, conversation turned to custody of the synagogue. The woman from the AID Mission was understandably reluctant to have full responsibility over the property. I must have been feeling impetuous that day because I said I would be delighted to keep the keys. In the back of my mind was the idea that they might also be keys I could use to contact people in the Department of Religious Affairs for material to use in our annual Human Rights report. So the keys to the padlock at the gate and the door of the temple itself at that point came into my possession.

Let's stop and think a minute. If you had the keys to a rundown synagogue in a city where there was no indigenous Jewish community, what would you do with them? Please understand that control of the keys meant control of the synagogue, which had a certain weight in

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KULANU BRIEFS

Mitzvah Club Supports Ghana's Jews

After reading Mike Gershowitz's story about Ghana's Jews in the Kulanu newsletter, members and friends of Temple Beth El, in Bradenton, Florida, were inspired to collect and send books and tallitot to the community. The effort was part of Rabbi Barbara Aiello's "Rabbi's Mitzvah Club," which works on a "gimlut chasidim" (acts of loving kindness) project each Hebrew month. Past mitzvah projects have included collecting materials and cash for Bradenton's Head Start program, raising money for the training and vet care for a companion dog for a young girl who is physically disabled, buying school supplies for a child of a migrant worker, raising \$600 to help send a teen to the March of the Living, collecting \$500 for Kids by the Sea, a support group for children with cancer, as well as toys for them to choose after completing a round of chemotherapy. The Kulanu book project was the Rabbi's Mitzvah Club project for the month of Adar II.

A Communal Seder in Uganda

The Abayudaya Jews of Uganda organized a joint communal seder. Most of the costs for the event were met by Gershom Sizomu, the community's religious leader.

New Offerings in "Kulanu Boutique"

Two new publications are being offered in the Kulanu Boutique (see page 16) for the first time. Arye Oded's *Religion and Politics in Uganda, A Study of Islam and Judaism* (\$10) has been donated by the author, an Israeli diplomat and professor who visited the Abayudaya in the 1960s; sales will benefit the Semei Kakungulu High School established by the Abayudaya in Uganda. The new paperback edition of Tudor Parfitt's *Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel*, about the Lemba, is being sold for \$14; sales will benefit Kulanu.

Latin American Jewish Diaspora Brochures

Ana Kurland has collected several copies of the brochure for the "Mis Raices las Cargo Siempre: Touchpoints of the Latin American Jewish Diaspora" exhibit showing May 18-November 9 at the DC Jewish Community Center. The brochure is in English, with a few Spanish words sprinkled in. Anyone interested in receiving a copy may contact Ana at akur@yahoo.com or c/o Hispanic Division, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20540-4850

Conversion to Judaism Center Expands

Evelyn Rothstein (212-924-6229) is the latest staff member of the Conversion to Judaism Resource Center. She joins Dr. Lawrence Epstein and Barbara Shair in helping people interested in converting to Judaism. Rothstein is now in the process of campaigning to publicize the purpose of the Resource Center. Since Kulanu members are traditionally valuable allies in supporting people seeking to become Jews by choice, Rothstein reminds readers to refer anyone to the Resource Center website-- www.convert.org.

Travel To Open Between Yemen and Israel

According to Israel Radio, Kol Yisrael, negotiations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Yemeni officials are expected to pave the way for Israeli tourism to Yemen. Executives from one of Yemen's largest travel agencies recently visited Israel and met with Israeli agents to organize travel packages between the two countries. This is favorable news for the Lemba. It means on every trip to Israel the Lemba may be able to stop off and visit in the land where their ancestors in Sena (in Yemen) came from.

Jewish Sites of India Tour

Speaking of travel, what are you doing January 10-26, 2001? You may want to join Dr. Kenneth and Joyce Robbins on their Journey to India in Search of Jewish Traditions and Communities. The itinerary will include Mumbai (Bombay), Cochin, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Agra, and Delhi. Contact International Ventures & Travel Inc., 551 Fifth Avenue #1923, New York, NY 10176, tel 800-338-2624; fax 212-557-5890, email ivat@ivat.com.

Kulanu Speakers

Kulanu president Jack Zeller spoke about Kulanu communities abroad at a session of the United Jewish Communities National Young Leadership Conference in Washington in March. The title of his session was "From Cuba to Kiev, and Bombay to Budapest - Jewish Communities Around the World."

Bene Israel leader in New York Romiel Daniel spoke at the Queens Library in April. His discussion and video screening was titled "Jews in the Cradle of India."

Judaica Lessons for Interested Lemba

Shmuel Wapnick has arranged for Hebrew teachers in Johannesburg to teach those Lemba who would like to learn Hebrew and Jewish religion. Payment for these *shiuirim* (lessons) - about \$11 US each -- will be provided by outside funding. Kulanu supporters are invited to donate to this fund by contributing to Kulanu and earmarking the contribution for "Lemba *shiuirim*." We have been advised that in general two such lessons per week are required. The Lemba who wish to enroll will be under guidance of *morim* (teachers) who are involved in official *gerus* (conversion to Judaism process).

Books Needed in India

Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail consulted with some of the Bnei Menashe in Israel, and upon their recommendation he suggests sending Jewish books to the following two addresses in India: (1) Eleazar Sela, c/o The Jewish Store, Bazar Bawngkawn, Aizawl 796001, Mizoram, India and (2) Lulun Hangshing, Amishav House, Bet-El Synagogue, Old Lambuland, Imphal 795001, Manipur, India. Most of the books should be sent to the second address (the one in Manipur), as there are more people there.

Cukierkorn Accepts New Post

The New Reform Temple in Kansas City, Missouri, has announced that Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn will become the congregation's new spiritual leader in June. Cukierkorn, who has been a Kulanu activist since the organization's founding in 1994, has led learning missions to the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda and Crypto-Jews in rural Brazil. He will undoubtedly bring a global view of Judaism to his new congregation!

A Sephardi Exhibit in Melilla

The trend of recognizing Spain's rich Jewish past continues as the city of Melilla, a protectorate on Morocco's northern coast, opens its first-ever exhibit dedicated to Sephardic culture. The City Museum (*El Museo de la Ciudad*), directed by Simón Benguigui, will include artifacts from Melilla's nine synagogues. The Sephardic population is Melilla's third largest, after Christian and Muslim social groups. To learn more, visit the Sur website, at <http://www.diariosur.es/diario/suscr/melilla04.htm>.

A Joint Seder in Search of Freedom

As it has done for the past four years, the American Jewish Committee (Milwaukee Chapter) and the Milwaukee Urban League teamed

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up in April 2000 to hold the African American/Jewish Task Force Seminar. The title of the event this year was "In Search of Freedom, Exploring Common Ground."

Commemorate an Occasion

Making a Kulanu donation is a wonderful way to commemorate a birthday, anniversary, bar/bat mitzvah, graduation or other special occasion or to honor the memory of a loved one. Donate at least \$25 to Kulanu and we will gratefully acknowledge your contribution with a special card.

Refuah Shleima

Kulanu wishes a speedy recovery to **Solomon Magoma** of the Abayudaya community, Mbale, Uganda.

Todah Rabah!

Jonathan and Gail Schorsch have sent Kulanu a generous grant of \$3000 to benefit the Semei Kakungulu High School, recently founded by the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda.

Two wonderful **Anonymous Donors** have contributed \$2400 to pay the transportation of three Bnei Menashe to Israel, in response to Aron Primack's challenge (in the last newsletter). And **Joe and Bea Hantman** have donated the cost of transportation of a Bnei Menashe immigrant to Israel to meet the challenge.

Lionel Okun donated \$1000 to Kulanu for Tudor Parfitt's research work, an additional \$500 to the Margolis Fund for Abayudaya orphan education, and yet another \$500 for the Lemba. His generous donations are in memory of Chaim Herzog and in honor of Aura Herzog.

Dr. Irene Vogel has donated \$1000 to Kulanu's general fund and contributed another \$100 on the occasion of Tudor Parfitt's talk in Washington.

Joyce Kammerman's youth groups at Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, Maryland, contributed \$1000 to an Ethiopian Jewry food fund via the Washington Association for Ethiopian Jews. This money will be given to the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ); in return 40 student refugees photos and bios will be distributed to the Temple Shalom classes.

Bob and Jeri Lande have contributed \$500 to pay for lessons for Lemba interested in conversion to Judaism. They also donated an additional \$100 for the benefit of the Lemba.

Samuel Tadessee has very generously contributed \$500 as a general donation to Kulanu.

The **Samiljan Family Fund of the United Jewish Federation of San Diego County** has approved a grant of \$500 for the benefit of the Lemba Jews in Africa. Our thanks to **Ed and Rae Samiljan** for initiating this generous grant.

Bet Mishpachah of Washington has selected Kulanu for one of two or three annual donations it makes to deserving organizations for tzedakah. Kulanu sincerely appreciates its \$500 grant.

Irwin Berg has contributed \$500 to Kulanu.

In addition to his \$300 unrestricted donation to Kulanu, **Terrence Kalley** of Troy, Michigan, included \$280 to purchase Kulanu subscriptions and Abayudaya CDs for seven friends. What a great way to spread the word!

Fifteen Friends have donated \$356 for the **Josie Gimbel Memorial Fund**.

Lois K. Levy donated \$300, which included \$100 for her support of Kulanu, \$100 for Semei Kakungulu High School in Uganda, and \$100 for the Lemba.

Kehila Chadasha has donated **Rick Gold's** \$250 honorarium to Kulanu at his request. Gold had given the Kehila a talk about the Jews

of Timbuktu.

Temple Israel Religious School of Memphis, Tennessee, under Barbara Mansberg, has donated \$181.50 to Kulanu, from their Tzedakah Fund.

The **Fabrangen Cheder** donated \$100 to Kulanu, as have **Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Robbins, Marco Rabinovitz, Ira and Marilyn Polon, The National Center to Encourage Judaism, David Holtz, Seymour L. Kunin, Hope and Fred Pracht, Mel and Margery Elfin,, Joy and Claire Rosen, and Frank Bachrach.**

Matt Meyer has contributed \$100 to the Margolis Fund for the education of Abayudaya orphans.

Jonina Duker and Alan Lichtman donated \$100 in honor of **Bubbe and Zeyde**, and **Dr. Roselyn L. Kolodny** contributed \$100 in honor of **Dr. Jack Zeller.**

Cynthia and Michael Weisfield made a contribution to Kulanu in honor of the bar mitzvah of **Shaul Lent.**

Congregation Beth Tikvah of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, has donated tallitot, challah napkins, Shabbat tablecloths, brass candlesticks and challah bread boards, some of which were sent to the Lemba in South Africa.

Trocki Hebrew Academy in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, has donated a selection of Hagaddot to the Jewish community in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana.

Valley Outreach Synagogue of Henderson, Nevada, sent very useful books to Uganda, including a 10-volume Jr. Jewish Encyclopedia, Jewish calendars, and many other books. Our thanks to **Rabbi Richard Schachet.**

Simcha Kuritzky donated two cartons of books and *mezuzot* to communities in Uganda and India.

Levi Returns from South Africa (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

easy reach of the mainstream Jewish community in Johannesburg. Zeller also hopes to begin a search for "large funds" to train lay Lemba leaders in the Northern Province and Zimbabwe for a year as outlined by Yaacov Levi.

Zeller announced that Kulanu will be setting up three separate accounts for these contributions: Lemba youth, Lemba Judaica lessons, and Lemba lay leaders. He invites contributors to specify the account if they wish.

(Editor's note: Levi's Journal begins on page 13)

Learning from Ghana's Jews (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

Pronouncing the Unpronounceable

I saved the most intriguing part of the trip for last. Sorry, those of you who are curious, but out of deference to those who would find it discomfiting or inappropriate, you're not going to find out here how to pronounce the Tetragrammaton, God's four letter name. But the Jews of Sefwi Wiawso claim to know how to pronounce it. And they just may be right.

A little background for those of you who may not have studied Hebrew. In the Torah, God's name is written yud-hey-vuv-hey, which is the English equivalent of YHWH. In the days of the Temple, the High Priest would utter the name on Yom Kippur, spellbinding the Israelites who heard it. The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 letters, all consonants. To read Biblical Hebrew, you must have sufficient mastery of the language to supply from knowledge the missing vowels.

English-speaking people routinely do the same thing. For instance, if a street sign says "Blvd.," we recognize the word as "Boulevard." If we knew only a little English, we might think the word is "Beloved," which would fit although it would be wrong in the context of a street sign. Or if we knew no English but knew the alphabet, we might read the sign as "Boloovaid," which would be plausible (the consonants are there, and in the proper sequence) but isn't an English word. On the other hand, if someone pronounced "Blvd." as "Banivard," we would immediately know that it's wrong -- "Blvd." has no letter "N."

Now, back to the Hebrew. In the Middle Ages, a group called the Masorites devised a system for writing the vowels as subscripts or superscripts on the consonants, which is the system used today in Hebrew Bibles and prayer books to enable Jews with limited knowledge of the language to pray in Hebrew. But since God's name had not been pronounced in hundreds of years, the Masorites did not know how to vowel-ate yud-hey-vuv-hey. So they arbitrarily assigned it vowels.

When Jews come to that word, they do not pronounce it. Instead, they substitute the word "Adonai," meaning "My Lord." But various Christian groups read the word as "Jehovah," and the name is sometimes also referred to as "Yahweh." Both of these are obviously wrong, as Hebrew has neither a "J" sound nor a "W" sound.

David Ahenkorah must have noticed me looking surprised when – in the places where mainstream Jewry would say "Adonai" -- the Sefwi Wiawso congregation substituted "Jehovah." "You're not supposed to say God's name," he leaned over and explained. "Our Christian friends say 'Jehovah' because they think it is God's name, but we say it because we know it's wrong."

"How," I asked, "do you know it's wrong?"

"We know," he replied, "because we know that God's name is ----." And he said it, as if I had asked the most obvious of questions, adding, "the name has been passed down from generation to generation since antiquity." Just to be sure, I asked him to repeat it, and he did. It was a plausible pronunciation; the consonants were the right ones, and in the right order, so that you could make "yud-hey-vuv-hey" come out just as David said it by supplying the proper vowels. Of course, that doesn't guarantee that the pronunciation is in fact the right one; different vowel combinations could lead to a dozen or more pronunciations of the word. But at least it couldn't be peremptorily dismissed.

But is it right? I don't know, but there's some tantalizing evidence that it may be. The first piece of evidence relates to the law of probability. The Jews of Sefwi Wiawso don't know any Hebrew, so if the pronunciation permuted over the years, there would be a good chance that an obvious error would creep in. Odds are, something in the pronunciation would signal that it was wrong.

The second relates to their proper pronunciation of a known word – Biblical Hebrew for "Jerusalem." In modern Hebrew, Israel's capital is "Yerushalayim," but in the Bible, it appears as "Yerushalem." During their services, the Ghanaian Jews sang a hauntingly beautiful melody

about Jerusalem -- the city of their exile. They pronounced it "Yerushalem."

I didn't think much of it until one day I was debating with an Orthodox rabbinical friend whether the people in Ghana were really Jews. I argued that from their religious practices, immediately recognizable as Judaism, and their oral tradition going back hundreds, thousands of years, that they were. He took the opposite position -- their practices deviated too far from normative Judaism. Somehow, our conversation veered toward their chants and I mentioned the one about Jerusalem.

"How do they pronounce it," he asked. "Jerusalem or Yerushalayim?"

"Neither. They say 'Yerushalem'."

It was as if a light bulb lit up in his head. "Really! Takeh, I think maybe they really ARE ancient Jews. How else could they know to say 'Yerushalem'? Most American Jews don't even know it, but it's in the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) as 'Yerushalem.' It was changed to Yerushalayim later on."

Indeed. And undoubtedly it was passed down from generation to generation, since antiquity.

Mozambique Synagogue

(Continued from page 3)

terms of determining the future of the structure and grounds. There were many options:

- Rent the property to someone and create a positive cash flow;
- Leave well enough alone—don't interfere with the building's natural demise;
- Sell the property;
- Fix what is broken and see what happens;
- Act as custodian for the vanished community;
- Try to do what you think the departed community would do had they stayed.

Frankly, Alkis had strong notions of what the short-term course of action needed to be. These included fixing what was broken (starting with the roof) and acting as custodian for the departed community (which at that point had no intention whatever of returning, but that may be changing now). For my own part, I strongly agreed with him both from a practical standpoint as well as in keeping with my own experience inside the sanctuary.

Several events took place in the ensuing months that lend a charm to my experiences with the synagogue, even if they lack in any profound overall significance.

We needed from time to time to deal with the Government of Mozambique in regard to the synagogue. We needed permission to post the guard, to start an electricity account with the local provider, and so on. But who were "we"? The government was used to dealing with formal organizations and we were nothing but a hodge-podge of amateurs who just happened to have the keys to a place we were bent on fixing up. Alkis and I decided we needed to become something that had a *name*, something that would command respect in the government. Yet, to exist legally, such an organization would need prior government authorization. Because of my status as a foreign diplomat and for Alkis' own business reasons, neither of us felt comfortable with the idea of so formalizing our efforts. We considered many possibilities and in the end hit on the idea of creating an

(Continued on page 12)

The Returning Jews of the Amazon

By Ray Kaplan

The Greater New York chapter of Kulanu was recently treated to a fascinating talk on a unique Jewish community in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon. The lecturer was Ariel Segal, a Venezuela-born Israeli anthropologist who spent four months in 1995 researching a little-known Jewish community in Iquitos, Peru.

Iquitos today is a large city located on the Amazon River in the western part of the huge Amazon region. Before air routes were established between Iquitos and the outside world, one had to travel 2300 miles along the Amazon River, starting in Belem, Brazil, on the Atlantic Ocean, to reach this isolated outpost. The confluence of the emerging automobile industry and the development of vulcanized rubber tires in about 1880 motivated adventurous young men to head for the Amazon to make their fortunes in rubber. The so-called Rubber Barons were followed by hordes of young men, including many Jews, ready to furnish the equipment and supplies needed to establish the rubber plantations and to support the growing population of the developing area.

The Jews who went to Iquitos were mainly Sephardic Jews, many of whom came originally from Morocco. Some of them had been living in Belem, Brazil, while others came from various cities in Europe. Some of them returned home after their adventure in Iquitos, but many others stayed on and intermarried with the local Amazonian women. Many of them became prominent leaders in the political, economic and cultural life of the rapidly growing city. By 1909, the Iquitos Jewish community had organized itself into the Israelite Society of Iquitos and had purchased land for a Jewish cemetery. Over the ensuing years, this cemetery would remain as one of the strong reminders of its Jewish heritage.

However, as the years passed, the Judaism of the isolated community became weaker and less knowledgeable of Jewish customs and traditions. In addition, the rites and traditions of their Amazonian wives were integrated into their lives. Further, Catholic and Protestant missionaries found their way to Iquitos and were very successful in converting the local population. Although the Catholicism of Iquitos was relatively liberal, being so isolated from the rigid rule of the Catholic hierarchy in the big cities, it did have its influence on many of the Jewish families. Segal defines the current descendants of these early Jews as *Mestizos*, Spanish for descendants of mixed parentage. He found that the present day *Mestizos* were very comfortable with the mixture of their old Jewish customs, the influence of the Amazonian spiritual ideas and the inroads made by the Catholic Church; many are in fact practicing Christians.

Despite all this and the relatively peaceful and comfortable existence of the current Jewish community, Segal found that in recent years, there has emerged a strong desire on the part of many members of the Jewish community to return to their Jewish roots. In 1991, the Israelite Society of Iquitos, which had disappeared over the years, was resurrected and reorganized, with a strong emphasis on the religious aspects of Judaism. Jewish holidays and Shabat are now being observed by many in the community.

Attempts had been made, over the years, to develop ties with the Jewish community in Lima, Peru. Lima is located on the other side of

the almost impassable Andes Mountains and until air routes were established in the early 1930s, there was little contact between the two Jewish communities. However, the airplane bridged the enormous geographical, political, economical and cultural distances between the Peruvian Amazon and the coastal cities. Communications and cultural exchanges became possible. Jews from Iquitos visited Lima and made contact with the Jewish community there. Although initially cold-shouldered by many of the established Jewish organizations in Lima, these strange looking Jews with Amazonian features gradually made inroads with the community. Some of the Iquitos Jews moved to Lima and gradually relearned the customs and traditions of their ancestors. Jews from Lima visited Iquitos and established economic and cultural ties with the community there.

Rabbi Brener from Lima, visited Iquitos in 1944 to perform a circumcision. He was the first Rabbi ever to visit Iquitos. He returned in 1959 to perform another circumcision. Through ongoing modern communications, TV, videos and various publications, the Jews of Iquitos learned about the Jewish world communities, the Holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel. Years later, in 1991, Rabbi Bronstein, the Rabbi of a large Conservative synagogue in Lima, visited Iquitos and took it upon himself to initiate a program to further educate the local community in the customs and traditions of the modern Jewish world. As a result of his visit, the reconstituted Israelite Society expanded its membership to over 80. By early 1992, membership in the Society passed 100. Rabbi Bronstein laid out a plan for the community for formal *halachic* conversion to Judaism. His efforts were reinforced by the extended stay of Ariel Segal in 1995. In addition to his primary research and study objectives, Segal soon found himself deeply engrossed in developing and expanding the Jewish knowledge of the people with whom he came into contact.

Aliyah of Jewish *Mestizos* to Israel actually started in 1967, when the Six Day War ignited a spark of jubilation and excitement among the young people, as it did in Jewish communities throughout the world. Several of Iquitos Jews made *aliyah* at that time. Over the years additional individuals have followed. In the early '90s, the Israeli ambassador to Peru visited Iquitos and initiated an ongoing communication channel between the Iquitos Jewish community and the Israeli embassy in Lima. In the early and mid-'90s the pace of *aliyah* picked up. Today, there are some tens of former Iquitos Jews living in Israel. They were able to make *aliyah* under the Law of Return, all having at least one Jewish grandparent. Others, who have been unable to prove that they had a Jewish grandparent, are waiting in Iquitos while the authorities in Israel are working on the problem.

It is a fascinating story, and Ariel Segal, who is now living in Israel, has documented his work in a book entitled *Jews of the Amazon, Self-Exile in Paradise*, published recently by the Jewish Publication Society. I heartily recommend this book to all of you who would like to learn more about this latest unknown Jewish community.

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.

LETTERS TO KULANU

Messianics Approach the Abayudaya

I would like to inform you that in December 1999, Dabai David from the Messianic community in America came and visited us for about 2 hours. He came again in January 2000 and wrote a letter seeking permission to come back with a group of people and stay with us some weeks. His suggestion was not allowed and there was no permission granted to him.

Instead we have handed him to a Christian group to welcome and host him. So please don't get confused when you come across any different information.

There are some individuals who come and pay visits to us in the name of their communities when they have different views, aims and objectives toward this community than those of the Messianics. This community is open and allows anybody with good intentions to come and get any information necessary so long as it will be useful and benefit to the entire Jewish world.

This letter is serving as warning to such individuals, organisations, etc., who may have such views as the Messianics, that we are not ready to deal with them. Please publish this warning in your newsletter to safeguard us from such people.

*Jacob Mwasuko
Chairman, Abayudaya Community
Mbale, Uganda*

Jews for Jesus: A Menace!

I wonder how many of you realise the severe worldwide menace of the Jews For Jesus organization? In today's climate of so many hidden Jews coming out of the closet and seeking information on their heritage, sadly all too many of them—before they have time to consider matters—are stalked and hounded by these messianics. Some examples that I have personally come across are in universities around the world, and in places like the Balearic Islands amongst the Chuetas.

I have also encountered this menace in Israel, where families of working mothers (which in Israel most mothers are) are approached in secular schools and offered after-school facilities for doing homework and having a light snack. Only later, when children started to let slip what indoctrination was going on in these centers did the truth come out; by then many children were involved.

In Florida, where there have of late been many Marrano-Anusim arrivals from the Caribbean, these Jews for Jesus literally lie in wait and try to dissuade these newcomers, who understandably are often confused, from approaching rabbis or attending synagogue. Many of them have a difficult time if the rabbi approached knows nothing about Marranos or their history, and refuses to accept these newcomers as Jews. Thus often Jewish help is slow off the ground, whilst we have these vultures awaiting to swoop.

In some cases, as awareness strikes, those who have joined these church communities have left and discovered a full Jewish life. But even then they are not able to leave peacefully. More than ever, those of us engaged in helping the Anusim should be vigilant as to this dangerous situation and try to make local communities aware of what is happening.

*Gloria Mound, Director
Casa Shalom Institute For Marrano-Anusim Studies
Gan Yavneh, Israel*

Success and New Challenges in Uganda

Semei Kakungulu High School opened on February 10 with an

increased number of Abayudaya students. I am glad to report that 14 lost Abayudaya sons and daughters from Namutumba Community have returned, and are currently living with me at Nabugoya hill and studying at SKHS at my expense. While this is good for Abayudaya, I am finding extreme difficulty raising money daily to cater for the welfare of 20 lives. I call for assistance.

Secondly, since the number of students and classes has grown, more classrooms, furniture and laboratory equipment are urgently needed. The school project is not only providing education to members but will in the near future provide employment to several Abayudaya members. This will keep the community together.

Currently, the teaching of Hebrew and Judaism is in progress and I am in full control of this department. I am glad to note that some non-Abayudaya students are becoming interested and even doing better than Abayudaya students. Every day there are hopes that Nabugoya may turn out to be an international centre for Jewish culture, and education that will accept teachers and students from abroad.

I am very happy to report to you that I have been honoured by Jay Sand and his wife-to-be, and their families to officiate as Rabbi at their wedding in the U.S., scheduled for November 2001. I am very excited and I would appreciate it if you arranged other programmes for me such as meetings, speeches, short courses with rabbis, etc.

*Gershom Sizomu
Religious leader and headmaster
Abayudaya Community
Mbale, Uganda*

A Ugandan "Head Start" Program

I am happy to inform you that as a contribution to the development of Abayudaya community I have started an infant school near my house in the name of "Hadassah Nursery School" to set up a good religious and academic foundation for our little ones as it is said "*vshinaitam le baneich*" (you shall teach them to your children). I organised a seder for them on the second night of *pesach*.

Currently, I have enrolled 10 kids. Pray for my success. I am made to understand though that the infant school will be recognised by the ministry especially after I get my first degree which I am pursuing at Makerere University. Thank you for the help and I kindly request you to continue to support our University Education. Sincerely it is heart breaking to fail to complete University Education.

*Aaron Kintu Moses
Secretary, Abayudaya Community
Mbale, Uganda*

Lemba Program Introduced

We are happy to work with Yaacov Levi and Kulanu to assist the Lemba communities in the following four areas:

1. Integration of Lemba culture with Judaism. Fortunately many of the indigenous Lemba have retained, documented and continue currently to observe the Lemba culture. We anticipate that Mr. Levi and others will guide the Lemba where they have departed from Jewish culture to rectify their errors. The teaching of the Jewish culture will enable the Lemba people to make appropriate comparisons between the two cultures

2. Religion and Judaism. It is worth noting that much has been lost in the area of the original Lemba religion due to migration for many centuries. We propose that Mr. Levi and other teachers should

LETTERS (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

approach this area by first teaching the people Judaism because many of the traditions related to *minhagim* (customs) have been virtually forgotten amongst our people. This will certainly indicate to them the difference between Judaism and Christianity. You do not recruit people to something that they do not know or understand. Missionaries who came to South Africa amongst the Africans only propagated Christianity. They enforced this by education, discrimination or restriction of dwelling location. Judaism was not propagated. There is no doubt in the mind of Professor Mathiva, myself and other senior members of the Lemba Cultural Association, that once people understand, although it may take some time, they will accept and convert to it.

3. Meeting the people. In order to know the Lemba people better and to realize how far apart they are scattered, visits will be arranged to the following places: Sinthumule, Ramokgopa, Mpaketsane, Sikhukhuni, Zimbabwe. Funding for fuel for transport must be arranged.

4. Development. Lemba farmers have purchased land for farming purposes. Others have leased government land whilst others are farming communal land. It is possible to arrange lessons for children and adults in computer skills in one central place or in multiple sites. We will need assistance for our agricultural and computer literacy endeavors. There is much more that we can do together and share with others interested in the new energy that has awakened amongst the Lemba

Shmuel Moeti

*Secretary general, Lemba Cultural Association
PO Box 339, Shayandima 0945
Northern Province, South Africa*

A Great Grandmother in Queens Loves Our CD!

I want you to know when I received my CD last year, *Shalom Everybody Everywhere!* I played it to bring in Shabbat and also to close Shabbat. May the higher power bless you for blessing me. I am a great grandmother and belong to Beth Elohim Hebrew Congregation in Queens, New York. Our Shabbat school would love very much to be in contact with their sisters and brothers in our Homeland (Africa).

*Aliyah Israel Walker
St. Albans, New York*

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Mozambique Synagogue

(Continued from page 6)

entity that would not exist.

Think of it! There was no indigenous Jewish community. There was not even a functioning temple (yet). What would be more honest than to create, as we did on paper, the *Ad Hoc* Association of the Jewish Community of Mozambique, *e.f.*? It was the last two letters that clinched it for us. The formal name, of course, was in Portuguese (*Associação ad hoc da Comunidade Judaica de Moçambique, e.f.*). Those last two letters—my invention, I have to admit—are an abbreviation that doesn't exist formally in Portuguese and signify "*em formação*," which you can take to mean "still under construction." Fortunately, the people we dealt with in the government didn't ask us what the *e.f.* meant and we strictly observed a "don't ask, don't tell" policy because the title gave us standing to do things without having to exist in reality. It was truly the best of both bureaucratic worlds.

So we had our Committee (*e.f.*) which was strictly *ad hoc*, which meant that any time Alkis or I felt the need to do something about the temple, we sat down together and the Committee was in session. That Committee certainly had its magic moments!

On one occasion our Ambassador received a letter from a gentleman in the U.S. Midwest. He carefully explained that his father had died decades ago in Mozambique's second-largest city, Beira, and was buried in the Jewish cemetery there. He went on to say that he had lost his photograph of his father's gravestone and implored the Ambassador to help him replace that photo with a more recent picture. The Ambassador turned to her Deputy Chief of Mission (yours truly) and told him that there was an American citizen who needed some help and would the DCM please help him.

Please understand that in those days there was a hot civil war raging everywhere outside the cities. This meant that one couldn't simply drive up to Beira, snap a picture of the gravestone, and return to Maputo. I discussed the matter with Alkis, whose business tentacles reached throughout the country. He informed me that a member of his staff would be making a trip (by air—also a risky endeavor, but for very different reasons) to Beira soon on company business. Alkis suggested that his employee could photograph the gravestone.

The following day, as Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy, I had the pleasure to write to the gentleman in the U.S. I told him that although the Embassy had no resources to undertake the perilous trip to Beira, I was going to turn the matter over to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Jewish Community in Mozambique, *e.f.*, in the hope that they could help him. A week later the business trip was over and Alkis' man produced a photo of a gravestone with Roman and Hebrew script—it looked like the right thing. He had found a needle in the haystack. That is to say, a person who read neither Hebrew nor English went to an abandoned Jewish cemetery, found a headstone matching the description he was provided, and shot a photo that was artistically acceptable.

So the Ad Hoc Committee met (i.e., Alkis and I got together) to send the photo to the U.S. We designed and printed a letterhead and we wrote the man a letter enclosing the photo. Several weeks later I received a letter (as the DCM in the Embassy) from an astonished and grateful gentleman thanking the Ad Hoc Committee for its efforts and asking how he might show his gratitude. As DCM I responded that as far as I knew the Ad Hoc Committee was very happy to have been of assistance. I went on to say that that group was currently engaged in a project to renovate the synagogue in Maputo and if he wished to make a contribution to that committee, I was sure that his donation would be put to very good use.

Sure enough, several weeks later a letter arrived at the Embassy from the gentleman in the Midwest enclosing a check (for a modest amount, but a quantity far exceeding the price of the photograph) made out to the Ad Hoc Committee. It was our first work ~~King Capital~~ ~~Moeti~~

JOURNAL FROM LEMBA LANDS

By Yaacov Levi

February 2000

I have received many books from Barbara Shair and Lenore Levin and they will be the basis for much teaching. I would like from Barbara and Lenore some samples of US Jewish school curriculums to start to work from. And someone please give them a big hug for me. We need many more Artscroll *Siddurim*, *Parshas*, *Chumashim*, etc.

After many talks with Ephraim Selamolela and Sam Moeti Hamisi I am looking for a site near Elim/Sweetwaters for a central place to work out of. Sweetwaters is the area where the Synagogue/Education Center is planned and construction begun. Elim, a couple kilometers away, has a concentration of Lemba. The concentrations are at Elim/Sweetwaters, Thoyandou, and a six village area just to the west of Louis Trichardt as well as in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and other cities in South Africa. This is going to be a major area of effort, as we have to have a centrally located place to hold services instead of driving all over the province. I am still going to set up separate 'regional' class sites for eve classes during the week.

At this point I estimate that at least half of the Lemba in South Africa are nominal Christians; of them a number will come back to Judaism as they become aware of its re-emergence.

I am looking for a permanent site to work from to establish a regular education project. Ephraim has offered to build a school/education building on his farm if Kulanu will support the teachers wages. We would need two licensed South African teachers to cover the matriculation subjects, and I would cover the Judaica. The students would have both daily Shaharis and Minchah services at school plus Judaic/Torah classes, along with computer courses.

Before the flooding occurred, Prof. Mathiva and I were going to go north to Zimbabwe for several days to meet and coordinate with Lemba there and to recruit one man to begin study with me here, along with another. Both will be with me for a year, go before a *Bet Din* headed by Rabbi Bernhard of Johannesburg for conversion, and upon completion will return to their home areas to begin congregations there. I am still open to where the South African candidate will be from. I would like to begin with more trainees, but two are doable financially now. I am estimating that the two will cost approximately US \$5500 to support and equip with books, etc., for the approximate year of study. It will be intensive for them and take a year to get them through the Jewish yearly cycle. Plus train them on services for the various holidays. Besides Torah, Hebrew, and liturgical study they will have intensive practices in the daily, Shabat and Holy Day services as well as Bris and Bereavement services.

Additionally, I have found out that despite there being a definite 'upscale' culture of the Lemba there is also much poverty among them, including many 'street children.' I am looking at this with an eye to see if it is feasible/plausible to start a home for some, close to wherever I will be. They of course would be in a Jewish home and learn a Jewish lifestyle. There is a nurse/social worker here that I will be talking with on this. She is also a Lemba, and a friend of Ephraim's.

We have established a 'Jewish presence' in the center of the Lemba area, and will soon be reaching out to those in Zimbabwe. We have local Lemba looking forward to beginning a school, and inquiries about services in various areas. There is a heightened awareness of Jewish identity among the Lemba.

The Lemba in Mozambique, Soweto and Zimbabwe have been and are being 'evangelized' by the Muslims. This is a real and continuing situation.

The flooding has delayed this month's meeting of the Lemba Cultural Association. It is hoped that this will be happening in the next couple weeks, and when it does I will be speaking for a lengthy time on our education and service plans and also providing Jewish prayer to open and close the meeting. Last meeting, much to my surprise, the 'chaplain' called on a Lemba who opened his New

Testament and made a prayer from it.

Now with the little Nissan pick-up truck we are able to reach the population centers throughout the area. My plans are for an evening class in the west area and one in Thoyandou, as well as Erev and Shabat services and classes in the Elim/Sweetwater area. Ephraim's farm is just to the east of Elim, about 5 kilometers from Elim. This will mean three evening classes a week on Judaism and the *parasha* along with Shabat, and filling the days in with a myriad of other activity. I think in probably six months there will be a need for a helper, possibly either one of the conversion candidates, or both, as well as visiting short-termers.

Two areas of concern are stable support for myself (salary would be nice) along with support for the ongoing work. I need feedback from Kulanu about the proposed school and funding estimates and if it's doable from a support standpoint. I don't want to give encouragement here if funding is not feasible for school, children's home, etc.

Rufina has done yeomen's duty providing support here; she has been a great help in more ways than I can count. We also have solid support from Rabbi Bernhard in Johannesburg. We will be receiving more educational support from and through him in the coming months.

My thanks to all for the support received so far. Your support is bearing fruit here and will continue to. We have made and are making a solid beginning.

South Africa is a beautiful country and I strongly encourage all Kulanu supporters to consider it for a vacation. Ephraim's bed and breakfast will be opening in April with a beautiful lodge, pool and gorgeous scenery. It's quite a project and has been fascinating seeing it come to completion. There is excellent hiking and birding to be had there, and lots of antelope and other wildlife to see for those who hike early and quietly. Kruger National Park is just to our east and a major vacation stay in its own right. The Lemba area is en route to the northern part of Kruger. Come and enjoy!
March 2000

I was stranded here in Johannesburg last week when roads to the North Province were impassable or cut by the flooding. The media coverage is all on Mozambique and with good reason; the devastation there is almost complete, and the country will be generations recovering after they deal with the massive loss of life. The heroes of the South African Defense Forces should earn the undying gratitude and admiration of the world for their incredible efforts to rescue the forgotten and abandoned. They are doing what the rich nations should have been doing.

But two provinces of South Africa are also hard hit, and thank HaShem that both have much high ground. Still, many farms are washed away by the raging floodwaters, 80-odd bridges are gone, over 200 homes have been literally washed away by the torrents, over 100 people missing and over 100 confirmed drowned, all in North Province alone. The flooding has been the controlling factor in all of our lives the past month. The farm where I live has been without electricity for the past month, and much of it (the farm) has gone downstream to Mozambique.

Still, with all the problems, this is one of the most beautiful places that HaShem has blessed me to live in. With all of the post-apartheid problems that South Africa has to deal with they are slowly sorting them out. Many are too frustrated with the birthing pains and have left or are leaving. The 'brain drain' has become a real-life problem here. Yet, there is still a slow sorting out going on as the problems are worked through. I am hopeful despite the daily conflicts that I see.

The Lemba are getting their lives back in order after the flooding; their dispersion has helped in this. Thohoyandou was completely cut off for eight days, with no electricity and no food coming in. Other communities had the same. It will be years before the infrastructure

Gloria Mound Lectures About Secret Jewish Communities (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

verso presence in the Balearics. In Ibiza, Marrano homes had two entrances and two exits. A 14th century Megilla Esther was found in Ibiza among six volumes as the binding of 18th century wills and testaments. While in a family pension in Formentera, the Mounds were shown a synagogue hidden under the kitchen floor; 50 Jews in community still meet there secretly. Ibiza archives have yielded a business letter with an interesting postscript containing Jewish code phrases. The writer refers to sending two brothers to be raised in Italy to put them "on the right road" (i.e., Judaism), and "avoiding alcohol" (Marranos did not drink in public to avoid spilling secrets).

In Ibiza the Mounds visited the Church of Jesus, where the priest has a menorah on his table and *tallit* on his pulpit, but won't talk about his Jewish background. However, the Mounds were served in a restaurant by the priest's cousin, a waiter. When they described their religious dietary restrictions, the waiter commented, "You're one of us."

Until 1722, pirates often took prisoners, but if the prisoners were Jewish, the pirates often released them without ransom. Apparently the pirates had Jewish links and maintained a grapevine; they tried to get Marranos to the port of safety at Livorno, Italy, when possible. Mound reminded her audience that this was an age when Jewish congregations collected money to redeem Jewish prisoners.

The Island of Minorca, under British occupation during the 18th century, was more open to Jewish life, since the British encouraged Jews in order to weaken the Catholic Church. There was some emigration from Minorca to Florida, starting in the 1760s, when Britain arranged to send 1000 people to St. Augustine, Florida, to escape a famine.

In 1986, '87 and '88 the Mounds lived in Ibiza and made Passover seders for the Marranos. After moving to Israel, they came back to Ibiza to make seders again in 1997, '98 and '99. In the 1999 season, the Joint Distribution Committee provided matzos, but they were impounded by Customs, taxed heavily, and arrived at their destination only 30 minutes before the seder. The matzos were distributed to 38 families, plus the 25 individuals at the seder. Although Casa Shalom could not provide a seder in Ibiza in 2000 due to demands made on them from elsewhere, Mound says, "We endeavor to keep in touch with such families around the world all through the year, sending them such Jewish items that they need."

Mound has an increasing interest in *anousim* in the US. She notes that, with new educational opportunities, youths in tiny villages of New Mexico are going to college and meeting Jews for the first time. And in these encounters they sometimes see customs similar to those kept, often secretly, in their own families. Even though their families converted to Roman Catholicism hundreds of years ago, there were some things they didn't give up. And these secret practices are the ones they see modern-day Jews observing. "Even if they don't want to convert to Judaism, they can still be aware and proud of their Jewish background," Mound states.

Mound is now engaged, together with the Judaic Studies Department of the University of Miami, in investigating early Jewish immigration to Florida. The research has pushed back the hitherto known history by a further 100-150 years, proving that a number of the families that came to Florida and Cuba from Spain (especially those from the Canary Islands, Gibraltar and the Balearic Islands)

were of Jewish origin, and brought with them Judaic customs. In some cases Mound has even linked the early settlers to their descendants today. These descendants even now maintain Jewish customs and in some cases have completely come "out of the closet" and taken up a full Jewish life. She lectures about these developments in many parts of the world, while continuing to intensively research the subject from her base at Gan Yavneh, Israel.

Gloria Mound will be returning to Europe and the USA in October 2000 and February 2001. She always welcomes bookings and other forms of assistance.

"We want people to contact us and join Casa Shalom, maybe buy our publications," she says. "Without such help we cannot carry on. I badly need to get back to Florida and get into some private archives before it is too late. A certain section of people there who are today staunch Catholics feel I have learned too much and we are afraid that some doors might suddenly become closed to us."

Contact Gloria Mound and Casa Shalom at marrano@gezernet.co.il or at PO Box 66, Gan Yavneh, Israel 70800. See their web site at www.gezernet.co.il/marrano.

Millions Learn About Lost Jewish Communities (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

BBC and in North America by NPT's *NOVA* and CBS's *Sixty Minutes*.

Also, the BBC World Service radio, which has an audience of around 200 million world-wide, is doing a special documentary on the Bnei Menashe. The team spent time interviewing in Israel and India; it should be broadcast in May.

Further, the CBC and A&E networks aired Simcha Jacobovici's *Quest for the Lost Tribes* in April. It featured the Bnei Menashe prominently, including footage of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail with the community in India.



Tudor Parfitt.

Youths to Ghana (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

are at work and the children at school, the youths will plan programs.

They are also planning to bring back learning from Sefwi Wiawso to use at Camp Ramah. For example, they would like to teach Ghanaian-Jewish songs to the Ramah children and teach about the Ghanaian practices.

Gabi and Nate will be accompanied to Sefwi Waiwso by Gabi's father, Michael Gershowitz, who wrote a three-part article published in this newsletter on his visit to Sefwi Wiawso; he will be in Ghana on business at the time.

Both boys have solid Jewish backgrounds. Nate is completing 11th grade at Hyman Brand Jewish Day School in Kansas City. He just finished a year as vice president and is president-elect of Emtza Region United Synagogue Youth (USY), which covers nine Midwestern states and two provinces.

Gabi has studied privately with various rabbis in Des Moines, attended Camp Ramah in Wisconsin for six years, and spent the summer of 1998 in Israel. He has just completed a year as president of Emtza Region USY. He has led junior congregation at his synagogue for two years and teaches bar/bat mitzvah classes there. He plans to start George Washington University in the fall of 2001, after spending a year at a yeshiva in Israel.

JOURNAL (cont.)

(Continued from page 13)

here is restored .

So, life goes on, that's the basic message, things happen, we pick up and go on. "Life will find a way," a memorable line from Jurassic Park, but one of hope. Blue sky is showing through the overcast, the roads are passable, with care, and I am heading home to the North.

We are preparing for Passover already in the Northern Province. The Christian influence resulted in the local Lemba ignoring the Jewish Festivals. This year the Lemba will be eating *matzah*.

Mozambique Synagogue

(Continued from page 12)

over, we were able to cash the check: it didn't bounce and the local banking system recognized the Ad Hoc Committee. That was a very sweet success.

Other events combined in their own way to begin to shape the kind of institution our group was creating through this synagogue. Some of the activities involved interactions with the Jewish community of South Africa—a juggernaut in world Judaism and certainly a super-Goliath in comparison with our pre-pubescent David in Maputo. That community had its own ideas about the temple and what it should represent. Other activities involved making our Ad Hoc Committee less *ad hoc* and far more representative of a real Maputo Jewish community.

(Part III will appear in the next newsletter.)

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