



NEXT MEETING SEPTEMBER 10 — SEE PAGE 6

Betar and Lemba Youth Meet

By Karen Primack

A joint “mini-camp” weekend for 10 Lemba youths and their counterparts in the traditionally white Jewish youth movement Betar was held in late June. According to one of the organizers in Johannesburg, Kulanu activist Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum, they hope to arrange a number of socials as well as a three-week camp session in the Cape Province. They also envision leadership training classes and computer and bookkeeping classes as possible future projects, depending on funding.

Although 10 Lemba youths participated in the joint weekend in June, Mausenbaum notes that “we could not afford to take more and that was sad as we had 58 Lemba who wanted to come.” The weekend was made possible by a generous grant from Kitty Teltsch, and the weekend was named in her honor: the Kitty Teltsch Mini Machaneh.

“The success of this first tentative integration of the two groups cannot be overemphasized,” reports Mausenbaum. “I expected joy and happiness from the Lemba youth. What I had not envisioned was the effect this weekend had on the Betar youth. They were exhilarated and inspired by the experience. As they piled out of the bus the feeling of awe was almost palpable.”

Mausenbaum has high hopes for Lemba to join Betar youths at their end-of-year camp, which attracts Betar youth from all around South Africa. However, this three-week holiday/camp includes a train journey and sleeping cabins, and will need funding.

“We sincerely hope that the acceptance and socializing will help to heal the pain of centuries of rejection – it is a beginning, and I hope within a few years we will have a totally integrated group of Lemba Betar!” she said.

Mausenbaum noted that there is no pre-condition for Lemba participation:



Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

(Continued on page 8)

A New “Student Struggle” For Ethiopian Jewry

As any regular reader of this newsletter knows, 26,000 Jews remaining in Ethiopia suffer from the lack of basic necessities such as a sufficient supply of food and adequate medical care. This Diaspora community, waiting to make aliyah, consists of the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Jews who were cut off from the larger Ethiopian Jewish community, often as a result of dislocations caused by war or famine. Many of these Jews, the so-called Felash Mura, actually converted to Christianity, but a substantial number of the conversions were only nominal; in the vast majority of cases, the conversions took place as a result of intense economic and social pressures. For example, in a country where the economy is based upon agriculture, Jews were not allowed to own land. To save their children from starvation, some parents chose to behave, at least outwardly, as Christians.

Nevertheless the members of the Felash Mura community did not intermarry, and their Ethiopian neighbors continued to regard them as part of the Jewish community. In certain areas, the Felash Mura secretly continued to observe Jewish practices.

Over the past several years, the Felash Mura have been returning to Judaism. They pray three times a day, keep kosher, and celebrate the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Eighteen thousand Felash Mura currently live in Addis Ababa or Gondar, having left, or in some cases having been forcibly driven, from their villages. They have congregated near the Israeli embassy in Addis Ababa and the consulate in Gondar, waiting to present their cases for aliyah. All of them are awaiting reunification with family members already in Israel. In Addis Ababa, two thirds of the families have first degree relatives in Israel -- parents, spouses, children, grandchildren, grandparents, brothers and sisters.

They have been accepted as Jewish by the major American Jewish religious movements (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform) as well as by the rabbis and *kessoch* (traditional spiritual leaders) of the Ethiopian Jewish community. However, despite the backing of the vast majority of Jewish religious leaders, the major relief institution of the American Jewish community, the UJA-funded American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint), has refused to provide the Felash Mura with any assistance other than extremely limited medical care. Consequently, hundreds have already died while the Jewish world fails to act.

The community’s living conditions are appalling. (Interior Minis) (Continued on page 10)

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.

Kulanu Welcomes a New Chapter

History has been made! Temple Beth El of Bradenton, Florida, is the first congregation to become a chapter of Kulanu! The board approved a donation of \$500 to Kulanu, which covers the cost of 20 newsletter subscriptions, and the congregation has undertaken educational and service objectives.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, herself a descendant of Italian Crypto-Jews, has announced, "As a Kulanu chapter we hope to devote time each year to supporting isolated congregations through mitzvah projects done by our congregants and Hebrew School students. When we get together to work on projects, we will call these efforts 'A Kulanu Weekend.'

Aiello plans that one of the first projects will be to create children's alef-bet books to be sent to Africa. She also hopes, as one of the congregation's B'nai Mitzvah projects, to see students make a trip next summer as part of this program. "We already have a contact with the Jewish community in Haiti to do some volunteer work there," she reports.

She envisions children and parents working together on service projects for a Kulanu communities abroad, making Hebrew picture books for young children, collecting or making kippot, collecting and repairing tallitot, and using computers for pen-pal relationships. The congregation has already collected a large number of books for Ghana's Jews.

On the cultural side, Temple Beth El is scheduling a Sephardic/Ladino music evening with Juan de la Serra on November 7.

"We love Kulanu and are excited to be a chapter...the first...I understand!" Aiello comments with typical enthusiasm.

Other Kulanu chapters are in place in South Florida, Tucson, and Greater New York City.



Rabbi Barbara Aiello (standing) with Dusty Robbins

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Politics of Good Deeds

By Jack Zeller

Many of you know that Yossi Abramowitz, one of the foremost Jewish journalists in the world, as well the president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, is also an outspoken supporter of Ethiopian Jewish refugees in Ethiopia. Few people have done more to defend the poor and starving community of refugees whose high death rate is a scandal that the Jewish world will never live down.

What most do not know is that Yossi and his wife Rabbi Susan Silverman went to Ethiopia not only to give uplift to our downtrodden kin, but also to adopt a baby, Adar. Their experience is being made into a documentary film by Sam Seder, and will be called "Adar, and the Politics of Good Deeds."

Funds are needed for this endeavor. Please make tax-deductible checks payable to "Film/Video Arts" and add the word "Adar" to the memo line on your check. Send to Pilot Season Productions, 425 Park Ave. South, Suite 10A, New York, NY 10016.

A New College Program

By Shep Wahnnon

It is my privilege to accept the responsibility to manage the new Abayudaya college education fund. This opportunity to assist the Ugandan Jewish community is one which I take very personally. It was back in the mid-1970s that, through a lead given to me by David Horowitz of the United Israel World Union, I first began a correspondence with the Abayudaya—one of their very first with an outside Jew.

During the past year I have been working with Yaakov Gladstone in raising funds for and awareness of the Abayudaya. I was able to raise over \$800 for Ugandan Jews through my synagogue's sale of *hametz* this past Pesach.

The Abayudaya education program will identify and verify qualified post-secondary students, wire funds to Uganda, and provide accountability. I will also act as a liaison to the Ugandan community directly by maintaining e-mail contact with Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, the education director. I will be working closely with Yaakov Gladstone and others in raising funds and identifying worthy students.

Thus far the current post-secondary students who will be receiving aid are: Aaron Kintu Moses, Seth Ben Yonadev, Uri Katula, and Samson Ben Shadruch. It's this simple: They cannot attend college without our help. Anyone interested in participating in our efforts to help this very deserving Jewish community should contact me at shepw3@hotmail.com.

Tax-deductible checks payable to Kulanu, clearly marked for the "Abayudaya college fund," should be sent to me rather than to the Kulanu office. Please send to Shep Wahnnon, 115 East 9th Street, #16M, New York, NY 10003.

L'Shana Tova!
Have a sweet
New Year!

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For inquiries and subscription address change, contact the above address or call (301) 681-5679 or e-mail <kulanu@ubmail.ubalt.edu>.

AMONG THE LIVING AND DEAD IN JODESAVANNE

By Irwin Berg
Part I

I had heard about Jodensavanne, Suriname, as a place which, although now deep in a tropical rainforest, was once a thriving Jewish community supporting more than 100 sugar plantations on the labor of thousands of African slaves. I also knew that the Jews who settled in Jodensavanne were descendants of Portuguese Marranos or Portuguese Jews who were forcibly converted to Christianity in 1497 but secretly maintained their identification with Judaism. In some ways, the situation of Portuguese Jews was worse than that of the better known Spanish Jews. In 1492, the Spanish Jews were faced with the choice either to depart from Spain, where they had lived for 1,500 years, or convert. The Portuguese Jews were given only the choice of converting. If they refused to convert, they were threatened with, among other things, having their children taken away from them. Many of their children were indeed seized, separated from their parents and sent to colonize islands off the coast of Africa. It was always a puzzle to me how such people - having so recently endured such a calamity - could inflict no less pain on others.

When my wife, Elaine, and I were invited to join a group of volunteers to document Jewish tombstones in Jodensavanne, we immediately said yes. I was eager to investigate the dilemma of slave-owning Jews. I knew that there would be no hotels in the rain forest, and I was not sure how we would find potable water and edible food, or a way to clean our clothes and ourselves. But, when I broached the subject to Elaine, she agreed to the trip enthusiastically. As it turned out, the conditions were not as harsh as I thought they might be, although they were far from comfortable.

The organizers of the trip were two scholars who wish to publish a book on the tombstone inscriptions in the graveyards at Jodensavanne and Cassipora, the latter being about two miles from Jodensavanne. The trip had the support of STINASI, a Suriname government agency charged with protecting the environment and historical sites. It also had the support of the FOUNDATION FOR JODENSAVANNE, a Surinamese Jewish organization, and of CARIBBEAN VOLUNTEER EXPEDITIONS, an American organization, which documents historical sites in the Caribbean.

Exploring Paramaribo

Our trip from New York to Paramaribo led through Curacao. In the airport in Curacao, we met Mr. Henk D. Jessurun, the President of Suriname Airways, who happened to be taking the same flight as we from Curacao to Paramaribo. "Jeshurun" is the Hebrew word for "righteous", and "Benei Jeshurun" is one of the names for the Jewish people in the Bible (Deut 33:5, 33:26; Isaiah 44:2). The name "Jeshurun" was adopted by many Marranos upon their return to Judaism. I would soon learn that many members of a "Jessurun" family are buried at Jodensavanne. Henk Jessurun acknowledged his Jewish ancestry, recalling that his grandfather took him to the Sephardic synagogue in Paramaribo until his death when Henk was 10. The grandfather married a non-Jewish woman. Henk's father married a Catholic Indian (an Asian Indian -- American Indians are referred to as "Amerindians"), and Henk was raised as a Catholic by his mother. As a young man, he studied for the priesthood. He is now married to a Catholic woman, and his children are raised as Catholics. His warm feelings for his Jewish heritage were reflected in his emotional recounting of his recent trip to Israel and his interest in our mission.

Our first night in Suriname, July 30, 1999, was spent in a hotel called the "Eco Resort". The Eco Resort was once the manor house of the deVries family. The deVries family is an old Ashkenazic family, and members of the family are buried in the old Ashkenazic cemetery in Paramaribo. A contemporary member of the family, now deceased, Johan deVries, was Suriname's representative to the United Nations. He was an Evangelical Christian.

There are currently about 250 people who identify as Jews in Paramaribo. These 250 are all that remain of the tens of thousands of

Surinamese who are descended from Jews. Each year the Jewish population of Suriname decreases through emigration, intermarriage and disinterest. The synagogue has a minyan (a quorum of ten men) only for the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and for a communal seder on Passover. About 60 percent of the Jews in Suriname are of Ashkenazic descent and about 40 percent are Sephardim. All of the Jews of Suriname live in Paramaribo or one of its suburbs.

There are two synagogues in Paramaribo. The older one, the Sephardic synagogue, was built in 1736 and is now closed. All of its interior appointments have been lent to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem for 10 years. These include its furnishings, six rare silver Torah finials and a Torah crown from 1679 thought to be one of the oldest Jewish ritual objects of the Western Hemisphere. It is almost certain that the Sephardic synagogue will never reopen, and it is likely that the furnishings will remain in Israel.

The second synagogue, built in 1835, is called Tzedek ve Shalom ("Righteousness and Peace"). It is large (about 70 feet by 35 feet) and beautiful and looks like a manor house. It is furnished with elegantly carved, wood appointments and large chandeliers. It is Sephardic in style with the reader's platform, called the *tevah* (*bemah* among Ashkenazim), in the rear of the synagogue and the ark, called the *hekhal* (*aron kodesh* among Ashkenazim) in the front. Between the *tevah* and the *hekhal*, the congregants sit on long benches facing each other across an open space. The synagogue has two unusual features: a sand floor and a pulpit. Only three synagogues in the world have a sand floor, and all of them were founded by Portuguese Jews. There are two explanations for the sand floor: (i) it is in memory of the 40 years the Jews wandered in the Sinai Desert and (ii) it is in memory of the sand spread in the homes in Spain and Portugal to muffle the footsteps of the Marranos who gathered to pray in secret.

The second unusual aspect of Tzedek ve Shalom is its elevated pulpit similar to the ones found in Christian churches. There is no similar pulpit in Shearith Israel, the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue in New York, or in Mikvah Israel, the Portuguese synagogue in Curacao. We were told that the pulpit was built for the benefit of a very popular but short rabbi.

Five years ago, the Parnasim (officers in Portuguese-Sephardic synagogues) sold Tzedek ve Shalom to the Ashkenazim because their numbers were so few that they couldn't afford to maintain it. The sale was made with the stipulation that all services conducted in Tzedek ve Shalom continue in the Sephardic *minhag* (custom). The Sephardim then withdrew to the older and smaller synagogue on Heerenstraat. But as Jewish numbers continued to dwindle, the Heerenstraat synagogue was closed, and all its furnishings sent to Israel. Today, for the first time in 350 years of Jewish settlement in Suriname, the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities -- what is left of them -- pray together at the Tzedek ve Shalom synagogue, owned by the Ashkenazim, in the Sephardic *minhag*.

We attended Shabbat services at Tzedek ve Shalom that began at 8 a.m. and ended at 9 a.m. Because only seven Jewish males (including myself) attended, the Torah was not read and prayers that require a quorum of ten men were not said. Elaine and two other women sat in the women's section upstairs. Two non-Jewish visitors from Holland also attended. In the synagogue, all Orthodox laws were observed (no picture taking; no writing; women upstairs) although none of the worshippers was Orthodox.

Among those in the congregation were Rene Fernandes, Dennis Kopinsky, and Jack Van Neil. Rene Fernandes is of Portuguese origin. His family has lived in Paramaribo for 7 generations. He is the President of the Jewish Community of Paramaribo, Suriname.

The Strange Evolution of the Synagogue in Maputo, Mozambique

By Michael Metelits

US Ambassador to the Republic of Cape Verde

Part III

As I have already mentioned, one of the first things that Alkis did for the temple was to twist some arms in Johannesburg in the Jewish community of South Africa to get them to donate a new roof. In particular he focused his efforts on a Jewish gentleman who owned a factory that made such metal products. [I had the privilege of meeting this gentleman and his wife at their home just outside Johannesburg and taking Sabbath dinner with them at a later date. They are wonderful people!]

Please remember that there was a war—a hot civil war—going on at the time and it was a life-risking proposition to drive a vehicle across the narrow stretch of land that separated Maputo from the South Africa border. Nevertheless, a new roof was forthwith fabricated and installed in what was a truly generous act. Thereafter, the South African Jewish community identified a South African synagogue that had gone out of business, which was going to be the source of a wood railing separating the congregation from the ritual activities on the pulpit and at the Ark. There was also a possibility of getting seats for the congregation as well as an Ark, an eternal light, and—most necessary of all—a Torah.

Meanwhile, Alkis set up a meeting between me and some of the leaders of the Jewish community of South Africa who planned to visit Maputo. I invited them to my home for dinner. As the meal progressed, we spoke about the synagogue, what it might stand for, how it might function, what was still necessary in terms of materials and labor in the campaign to finish the restoration. As the conversation developed it became quite clear that their ideas and the ideas of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee (which had expanded beyond just Alkis and me) differed in some very fundamental respects.

The gentlemen from South Africa wished to restore the building so that it could serve as a reminder of what had once stood there. Their emphasis was, if I may summarize, to create a monument, perhaps a museum. They were prepared to underwrite the reasonable costs of accomplishing that task, which was extremely generous of them.

On behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee, I disagreed openly with them. The Committee had met and addressed the issue of what to do with the synagogue. There was already a handful of us—myself, the woman from the US AID Mission, our new General Services Officer at the Embassy, and the wife of the resident director of the World Bank, as well as a Brazilian couple—rather than simply a phantom group of two. Since we were resident in Maputo and since we were Jewish, we felt the need for a center, a focus where we lived, for our Jewish culture. We wanted a *living* synagogue, not a monument.

So it was that I responded to the generous offer of the group from South Africa with a counter-proposal. We were not interested in creating a museum. We wanted to restore a functioning synagogue and we wanted to re-create the Maputo Jewish community. If they wished to cooperate with us, we would be happy to help them spend their money, but if they insisted on their original plan, we were prepared to take a longer time and accomplish our goals using our own resources, thank you very much. I don't think they had come prepared to hear dissent. However, they deserve a great deal of credit for listening carefully to our arguments and promising to think the matter over.

Their decision to keep the subject under consideration was something of a challenge to our small group. First, we had to show our South African friends that we meant business about depending on our own resources while not excluding the possibility of further coopera-

tion on their part. Second, if the synagogue was going to mean anything in Maputo after our departure (since all of us except Alkis were there on limited-term assignments), it had to embrace the local as well as the foreign Jewish community.

Meaning business meant that we had to begin to put some of our own money where our mouth was. One of the primary things that the synagogue lacked was interior lighting fixtures. There was no problem seeing inside the sanctuary during daylight hours, but the lack of electric lights meant that it would be impossible to meet or to hold religious services at night. However, in wartime Maputo, there was nowhere that one could turn to purchase appropriate lighting fixtures. It was thus that we turned to a Jewish-owned business in South Africa to purchase lighting fixtures. Their sales representative visited the site and was duly impressed with the temple. We agreed on the kind of fixtures that would be appropriate for the room and would provide adequate light. Someone from among us came up with the money and the purchase was made. The lights were subsequently delivered and installed.

Another pressing concern was the state of disrepair of the grounds. We arranged for garbage pickup and got the grounds cleaned up. The neighbors agreed to respect the religious property and keep their trash to themselves. More significant still, our General Services Office got the land cleared and inaugurated a program of planting things to beautify the grounds. He spoke Hebrew and knew the appropriate prayers, so we had a ceremony with respect to planting fruit trees around the temple.

In view of all these efforts, it was obvious to everybody that we meant business. The next challenge was to bring Mozambican Jews into our program. To tell the truth, we had no idea whatsoever if there even *were* any Jews left in Mozambique. As one might understand, being Jewish *and* African during the Portuguese colonial era would have invoked a double-whammy of potential discrimination, so people didn't exactly hang out a shingle advertising to the world that they shared our cultural heritage. Instead, if there *were* any Mozambican Jews, they would have used tried and true survival tactics that Jews had developed during the Inquisition period. In a word, they would have gone underground as Jews and would have adopted, at least superficially, a non-Jewish (probably a Roman Catholic) public identity

Who were these potential heirs and beneficiaries of our program. Where were they? Did they even exist? How in the world could we find out?

We decided to use the democratic means at our disposal: the free press. Our plan was to place an ad in the local newspaper inviting persons of Jewish heritage to a meeting in the synagogue. We intended to place the ad in the paper a number of times for a given period announcing the existence of the Ad Hoc Committee, *e.f.*, and inviting the interested Jewish public to meet.

It was lucky that we had formed the committee, for as we learned, local regulations did not permit individuals to take out an ad in the newspaper for religious purposes—only a recognized institution could do that. Since the Department of Religious Affairs had chosen us to represent the Jewish community, we were able successfully to argue with the newspaper that the Government of Mozambique had recognized us as the kind of institution that the rules had in mind. Each of us dug into our pocketbook and the committee came up with the cash to pay for the ad. It appeared in the paper and we held our breath.

In a country of 13 million—ruled by Portugal for 500 years, that had experienced the Portuguese Inquisition, had felt the long-term cooperation between the Salazar regime and the local Catholic Church, and where the pre-independence Jews had been foreigners who had fled on the eve of independence—what were the prospects for finding a

Publications of Note

The Devil's Shepherd by **Steven Hartov** is a spy thriller that opens with Operation Jeremiah, a convoy of boats filled with Ethiopian Jewish refugees and takes place in part in Addis Ababa.

Kathleen Alcalá's *Spirits of the Ordinary* is a fantasy novel set in northern Mexico and the southwestern US in the 1870s. A Crypto-Jewish family, some of whose members practice Judaism openly, is at the novel's core.

The promotional material of *SUDDENLY JEWISH: Jews Raised as Gentiles Discover their Jewish Roots*, by **Barbara Kessel**, is enticing: "One woman learned on the eve of her Roman Catholic wedding. One man as he was studying for the priesthood. Madeleine Albright famously learned from the Washington Post when she was named Secretary of State. 'What is it like to find out you are not who you thought you were?' asks Barbara Kessel in this compelling volume, based on interviews with over 160 people who were raised as non-Jews only to learn at some point in their lives that they are of Jewish descent." It is new from Brandeis University Press. We hope to have it reviewed in the next (November) Kulanu newsletter.

The beautiful Fall 1999 volume of *Shofar* is a must-have for serious Kulanu readers. *Shofar*, published by the University of Nebraska Press, is subtitled *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, and this issue (Vol. 18, No. 1) is a special issue on Crypto-Judaism, guest-edited by **Schulamith C. Halevy**. It contains scholarly yet highly readable articles, book reviews and poems; perhaps the centerpiece is Halevy's article on "Jewish Practices among Contemporary Anusim." To order, specify this issue and send \$14 plus \$4 shipping to Kirt Card, Univ. of Nebraska Press, PO Box 880484, Lincoln, NE 68588-0484.

Tudor Parfitt's 1997 book about the Lemba, *Journey to the Vanished City – The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel*, has been updated and issued in paperback by Random House. In a new Afterword, Parfitt discusses the significance of the DNA testing that revealed that the Lemba share some of the markers found in other Jewish populations. This book is now available through Kulanu (see page 16).

Laura Varon's *The Juderia: A Holocaust Survivor's Tribute to the Jewish Community of Rhodes* (Praeger; 1999, \$35) is a personal memoir of the Holocaust in Rhodes, where a Sephardi community once thrived.

The February 11 issue of *The American Journal of Human Genetics* contains an article by **Mark G. Thomas, Tudor Parfitt**, et al. entitled "Y chromosome travelling south: the Cohen model haplotype and the origins of the Lemba-- the black Jews of Southern Africa."

Richard Zimler's popular murder mystery novel, *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon*, is now out in paperback in America. It is already enjoying success on some chains' bestseller lists. Irwin Berg in Vol. 5 No. 2 of the Kulanu newsletter very favorably reviewed the book.

Sephardi Jewry, A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries by **Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue** (UC Press, 2000), is the first paperback edition of a study original published in French; a hardback version appeared in England as *The Jews of the Balkans* in 1995

Joshua Benjamin's *Jews of Cochin, India*, a 35-page booklet, was published in 1999. To receive a copy, send a donation to the

"Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi," and mail to Mr. Joshua Benjamin, A-7 Nirman Vihar, New Delhi 110 092, India.

"Women, Ritual and Secrecy: The Creation of Crypto-Jewish Culture," by **Janet Liebman Jacobs**, appears in the Spring 20-00 issue of *HALAPID*, the publication of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, 2000 Avenida Cesar Chavez, Monterey Park, CA 91754.

Jewish Communities in Exotic Places by **Ken Blady** (Jason Aronson Inc, 2000) offers an overview of 17 Eastern or Oriental Jewish groups (*mizrahim*), including the Mountain Jews of Kurdistan, the Krimchaks of the Crimea, the Ebraeli of Georgia, the Mountain Jews of Dagistan, the Tadjiki Jews of Bukhara, and the Bene Israel of Bombay.

Ladino-English/English-Ladino Concise Encyclopedic Dictionary by **E. Kohen and D. Kohen-Gordon** (Hippocrene, 2000), \$19.95 in paperback, includes 27 pages of Ladino proverbs and popular sayings.

The *Casa Shalom Journal* for Spring 2000, published by the Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies in Israel, is chock full with articles, poems, Gloria Mound's research on the early Jewish history of Florida, and even a review of David Gitlitz's and Linda Kay Davidson's book of recipes of Spain's Secret Jews – with a recipe included! To subscribe, contact marrano@gezernet.co.il or PO Box 66 Gan Yavneh, Israel 70800.

The *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* is available for \$15 per year. Send check to the Journal c/o Prof. Braj Mohan Sinha, Dept. of Religious Studies, Univ. of Saskatchewan, 9 Campus Dr., Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 5A5. Sam and Erna Daniel recommend requesting Volume 3, which is particularly packed with interesting articles!

The University of New Mexico Press's Jewish Latin America Series (tel 800-249-7737) has recently come out with six new titles of interest:

1. *The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner* by **Isaac Goldemberg** is a novel set within a small community of Jews in Peru in the 1930s.
2. *The Book of Memories* by **Ana Maria Shua** is a humorous, yet moving exploration of a Jewish family as seen through the eyes of three generations of women.
3. *The Prophet and Other Stories* by **Samuel Rawet** is a collection of stories about displaced individuals in a rigid society.
4. *Passion, Memory and Identity*, edited by **Marjorie Agosin**, is a collection of essays on Jewish women's experience in Latin America.
5. *Chaper* by **Alicia Freilich** is a novel of 20th century Jewish life in Venezuela.
6. *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas* by **Alberto Gerchunoff** is a series of vignettes about shtetl life in Argentina, as two cultures coexist.

While he just happened to be perusing the *Jewish Frontier Anthology 1934-1944*, Mark Berch came across an interesting article, "Jewish Indians in Mexico," by **Marie Syrkin**. The article notes that the 3000 "Jewish Indians" in Mexico are not mentioned by tourist guide books, but they have become a part
(Continued on page 8)

KULANU BRIEFS

Next Meeting

The next Kulanu meeting will take place on **September 10** at 12 noon at the Ratner Museum, on Old Georgetown Road at Lone Oak Drive East in Bethesda, just south of Democracy Blvd. Regina Igel and Robert Feron will discuss their travels to Recife and Northern Brazil, where they visited the ruins of the synagogue and heard the personal stories of local "Marranos." The meeting is pot-luck: please bring a vegetarian dish. Call 301-681-5679 or 301-565-3094 for information.

Kulanu Billing Information

Kulanu subscribers please note: You will not be billed yearly, since we do not want to devote precious funds to hire a bookkeeper. Your mailing label indicates the date of your last payment. Your newsletter subscription expires after one year without further payment.

Speakers

Lionel Okun was featured recently in a special event in the Maimonides Series at the Alpert Jewish Community Center in Long Beach, California. He also addressed an open meeting of Hadassah in Seal Beach. His topic: *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*.

The New York 92nd Street Y will be the venue for four upcoming events: **Mike Gershowitz** will be speaking about Ghana's Jews on September 17, **Rabbi Tokayer** on Asian communities October 16, **Romiel Daniel** on India's Jewish communities November 29, and **Mitchel Serels** on descendants of the Jewish community of Cape Verde February 28.

Karen and Aron Primack will address Beth Israel in Media, Pennsylvania, on September 17. Their topic will be the Abayudaya.

Reform Outreach

The Outreach Division of the Reform movement recently held an introduction to Judaism course in California for Marranos and interfaith couples June 19-July 23. Sponsored by Temple Ner Tamid of Downy, the course was given in Spanish and English.

Conversion Information

Speaking of outreach, Barbara Shair and Larry Epstein continue to do powerful work with their Conversion to Judaism organization and web site. Check www.convert.org for a list of over 250 rabbis who welcome converts as well as an explanation of the differences between Judaism and Christianity. As the centerpiece of its advertising campaign, the organization is going to use a bumper sticker suggested by Rabbi Stuart Federow, CHOOSE TO BE CHOSEN, CHOOSE JUDAISM, CALL A RABBI.

Check the Kulanu Boutique

Check the back page of this newsletter for the latest offerings from the Kulanu Boutique. In addition to our regular offerings of book, kip-pot and recordings, note the addition to two new books: *Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism* by Arye Oded (about the Abayudaya), and *Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel* by Tudor Parfitt (about the Lemba).

Heifers for the Abayudaya

Students in all classes at the Hebrew School of Beth Israel, a Reconstructionist congregation in Media, Pa., contributed funds from their tzedakah boxes toward the purchase of heifers for the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Additional funds were raised through a falafel sale and a Pu-
Page 6

rim carnival. The project was led by the principal Liz Bloch Smith and at the instigation of two of social action committee members, Amy Bug and Diane Harrison. The fund raising netted a bit more than enough to buy two cows (\$1162.71) and there is a strong possibility that the children will decide to continue their efforts next year. Letters have also gone back and forth between school students and members of the community in Uganda.

Growth and More Growth!

In 1995, when Lorna Margolis's family decided to set up a memorial educational fund to assist Abayudaya orphans, there were three students in primary school, and three in secondary school. Today, happily, there are 160 primary students and 45 secondary students. It's difficult to keep up, but the family and Kulanu are dedicated to providing this type of help to this very special community. Your tax-deductible donation to Kulanu can be earmarked for the Lorna Margolis Fund for Abayudaya Education.

In addition, many Kulanu supporters have been contributing scholarship money for Abayudaya university students. Those wishing to contribute to the scholarships for the four students presently attending college should send their checks to Shep Wahnnon as indicated on page 2.

A New Chanukah Ritual?

Kulanu activist Ruth Silverman has suggested that Kulanu initiate a new Chanukah ritual honoring *anousim*, or forced Spanish and Portuguese converts of the 15th and 16th century. She suggests a special reading on the fifth night of Chanukah – a reminder of the 500 years that have passed since the Iberian Inquisitions. We would like to invite descendants of these *conversos* to submit appropriate poems or other prayers or readings they have written or they are familiar with. We will publish these suggestions in our next (November) newsletter, in time for Chanukah. Please send suggestions to the Kulanu office.

Todah Rabah!

To the **Or-Fastenbauer family** for their generous grant of \$3200 to transport four Bnei Menashe emigrants from India to Israel, to **Dr. Aron Primack** for his \$2000 contribution for Abayudaya education, to **Congregation Beth Simchat Torah** in New York City for its \$1000 donation, to **Harvey M. Hoffman** for his \$400 donation, and to Max Heppner for a \$200 contribution.

To **Carl & Sharon Hantman** and **Jeff & Rachel Hantman** for their \$300 contribution in honor of the 80th birthday of their father and father-in-law, **Joe Hantman**; and to **Laura, Josh, David & Rebecca Hantman** for their \$100 contribution in honor of the 80th birthday of their grandfather, **Joe Hantman**. These contributions are for Bnei Menashe transportation to Israel.

To **Emily Burt-Hedrick, Rachel Segal, Jordan Hymowitz**, members of the \$100 club.

To religious school students at **Ohr Kodesh Congregation**, Chevy Chase, Maryland, who allocated \$72 of their tzedaka money to Kulanu.

To **William Meyers** for sending us a supply of Haggadot, and to **Yehuda and Joan Barch** for three bags of books and ritual item.

To **Rose Bromberg** for sending Judaic books to Ghana.

To **Chaim Kram** for his hard work (and sleepless nights) on Kulanu's new complex database.

Lemba Study Participants Sought

Shmuel Wapnick (Lemba21@hotmail.com) is planning to do a cooperative study with Lemba in South Africa on their religious and cultural customs. This will be done in the hope of recording their

KULANU BRIEFS

characteristics before changes occur in future contact with Western culture. The following preliminary studies are in progress: Practice of women in Lemba society, including mikveh; dietary laws; attitudes toward Judaism; function of priestly activities of the Buba (priestly tribe); compilation of a Lemba dictionary; music and art.

According to Wapnick, Dr. Tudor Parfitt has indicated an interest in some aspects of this research. If appropriate funding is secured he would sponsor a research fellow (preferably a Lemba man or woman) to do field research in Southern Africa and complete the work at the School for Oriental and African Studies at London University.

Anyone interested in working for a Masters or Doctor thesis on this subject, or anyone interested in further information should contact Wapnick at the e-mail address above or at 1202 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10028 (tel 914-594-4044).

Pen-pals for Lemba Teens Sought

Shmuel Wapnick is also seeking teen-agers interested in writing to their Lemba cousins. Please contact him at Lemba21@hotmail.com or at 1202 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10028.

Wapnick Visits Lemba

Shmuel Wapnick visited the Lemba in South Africa in July with the gifts from generous donors. Sandy Leeder donated three Pentium computers to allow more individuals to receive regular Torah instruction by e-mail. Also, Hanoch Young donated two suitcases packed full with religious items, Chumashim and other Jewish books. Wapnick is also seeking good quality electronic equipment, cameras, and recording machines for the Lemba.

CAJE Presentation

Moshe Cotel and Lynn Golub-Rofrano will do a 90-minute presentation on incorporating Kulanu information into religious school curricula at this summer's CAJE conference. Abayudaya music and the Tudor Parfitt video on the Lemba will be featured. The session, entitled "Help Endangered Jewish Species in Africa, India and the Americas," is scheduled for the 25th Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education on August 13-17 at Hofstra College, Hempstead, NY.

Lemba Web Site

Special thanks to Harry Leichter <HarryLeichter@haruth.com> for putting together a great web site about the Lemba. It covers a great deal of information, many of the classic sources over the last 150 years, much of what Kulanu is doing. We can't thank Harry Leichter and all who supported his effort enough! <http://www.haruth.com/JewsLemba.html>

Iranian Jews Convicted

The Iranian court has convicted 10 Jews for espionage, and has conferred prison terms of 4-13 years. A *New York Times* editorial called the verdict "a brazen violation of international human rights standards and the due process of law." Activists are beginning an international effort to stop a multi-billion-dollar Japanese loan to Iran, to defer World Bank loans to Iran, and to persuade governments and individuals to boycott Iranian products, especially carpets.

Videos Available

The video of *Quest for the Lost Tribes*, showing the Bene Israeli, the Bnei Menashe, and other "lost tribes" is available for \$29.95 from A&E, PO Box 2284, S. Burlington, VT 05407 (tel 800-423-1212). The video *Desi: South Asians in New York*, is available by becoming a

member of Channel 13 in New York. Write to Channel 13, 356 W. 58th St., New York, NY 10019 (tel 212-560-2888). The video *Lost Tribes of Israel*, about Tudor Parfitt and genetic testing of the Lemba, is available for \$19.95 from WGBH, PO Box 2284, S. Burlington, VT 05407 (tel 800-255-9424).

Refuah Shleimah

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery to **Diane Zeller** and **Dolores DeLuise**.

Mazel Tov!

Joe Hantman celebrated his 80th birthday in July. One of the charter members of Kulanu, he serves as its archivist and shares duties as our financial secretary with his wife Bea. He writes frequently for the newsletter and has taught scores of courses on lost Jewish communities. The Hantmans frequently visit Jewish communities abroad.

Rosemary Lujan, a member of the community of would-be converts in Peru that Kulanu has been working with for years, has come to New York, formally converted, and was married on July 2 at Yeshiva Spring Valley in Monsey, New York.

Rachel Frankel, the New York architect who has researched and written about Jewish cemeteries in Jodensavanne, Suriname, reports, "I have a happy alert and sociable little boy named **Emanuel Eraclis Anastos**."

Joab Keki's two sons, **David** and **Moses**, celebrated their Bnei Mitzvah in July in Uganda.



Joe and Bea Hantman in Budapest

Guillermo Lazo has completed his return to Judaism with a conversion in Rockville, MD on July 12, 2000, assisted by Rabbi Howard Gorin of Tikvat Israel Congregation.

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, one of Kulanu's founders, has relocated to the New Reform Temple in Kansas City, Missouri. Cukierkorn, who has led Kulanu trips to Uganda and Brazil, can be expected to spread consciousness of lost Jewish communities to the Midwest.

Kulanu activist **Moshe Cotel** has retired from his position on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of Music to devote himself full-time to studying for the rabbinate. He taught composition at the conservatory since 1972 and is an award-winning pianist and composer. Jewish themes permeate many of his compositions, including a political protest piece, "The Night of the Murdered Poets"; a choral cantata, "The Fire and the Mountains"; "Yetzirah" for two pianos; a setting of children's poems, "My Shalom, My Peace"; and the opera "Dreyfus."

A Jewish Past Reborn in Brazil

By Irwin M. Berg

An excellent article by Larry Rohter appeared in the *New York Times* on May 19. Under heading *Recife Journal*, it was entitled "A Brazilian City Resurrects its Buried Jewish Past" (you can find it on the Kulanu web page). It recites that the first synagogue in the Western Hemisphere has been discovered on Rua do Bom Jesus or Street of the Benevolent Jesus, and that the synagogue was established by Portuguese Jews who settled in Brazil in the 16th century.

In a two-part article printed in the Kulanu newsletter (Vol. 5 No. 4 and Vol. 6 No. 1), I wrote about the history of these Portuguese Jews. They were forcibly converted to Christianity in Portugal in 1497. After a period of tolerance toward the new converts, the Inquisition was installed in Portugal in the 1530s. This caused many of the new converts to flee to Brazil where they continued to practice Judaism secretly.

From 1630 to 1654, the Dutch occupied Recife and most of northeastern Brazil. The Jews came out of hiding, and they were joined by other Portuguese Jews who had fled from Portugal to Holland. It was during this period that Kahal Tsur Israel, the first synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, was built on a street that was originally named by the Dutch "Judenstraat", or Jews Street. The location of the synagogue has been known for several years, and a plaque marking the spot states in Portuguese that the synagogue was the first in the Americas.

In 1996, I visited Rua do Bom Jesus. It is one block from the main berthing wharves of the city. (The city's name, "Recife", comes from the Hebrew word for "wharf"). The location of the oldest Jewish cemetery in the Americas is also in Recife. It lies beneath an old age home not far from the synagogue.

The article mentions in passing "a Polish-born Jew" who accompanied the first Portuguese expedition to land in Brazil in 1500. That Jew is known to us as Gaspar da Gama; his Jewish name is unknown. Gaspar was born in Poland about 1450. He made his way to Jerusalem and then to Alexandria, Egypt. In Egypt he became a prisoner, and then a slave, and somehow ended up in India. In 1497 his path crossed that of the great discoverer, Vasco da Gama, during Vasco's visit to Goa, India. Gaspar spoke Yiddish, Arabic and local Indian dialects; he was also familiar with Aramaic and Hebrew. Because of these linguistic talents, Vasco kidnapped him, forced him to convert, renamed him, and brought him back to Portugal.

After the Portuguese reconquered Brazil from the Dutch in 1654, the Jews again fled - 23 to the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam (now New York City), many back to Holland and many to the forbidding interior. Today, in Recife there is an organization called Agudah Datit Sepharadit Bnai Anussim (An Association of Religious Sephardim who are the Descendants of Forced Converts). They have a newsletter called "Tzur Israel" - named after the first synagogue. The real wonder is not that the buried synagogue was lost and has now been found, but that Tsur Israel has been reborn.

Betar and Lemba Youth (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

"We are accepting the Lemba as Lemba who have Jewish ancestry and not because we expect them to return to Judaism." She noted that the majority of Lemba have had little or no exposure to Judaism. "By going away together the youth will have the opportunity to experience first hand a little about Judaism and a Jewish way of life. Only once they have an understanding of what Judaism is all about can an informed choice be made. This is where socializing and exposing the Lemba to a Jewish environment becomes an important factor."

She praised the youth of Betar, who "have opened their heart and their ramshackle 'bayit' (home) to the Lemba."

She noted that all South Africans "come with a huge amount of baggage - very recent and painful - still a part of our lives as we try to overcome the years of apartheid."

Mausenbaum urged, "We need all your prayers as we hold hands and take the first tentative step towards a new future."

The Kitty Teltsch weekend was also supported by the kind and generous donations of Kulanu members, Shmuel Wapnick, and an anonymous donor. Funding for future programs is urgently needed.

The three-week camp in December will cost \$650 per person, which includes food and transportation. Programs, such as the leadership training program, will cost \$1000 each. Each Johannesburg weekend event costs \$2500, and each weekend event in the Northern Province costs \$3000.

Tax-deductible donations to Kulanu can be earmarked for the Lemba-Betar youth project.

Publications (cont.)

(Continued from page 5)

o the itinerary of any visitor with specific Jewish interests. The author claims these Jewish Indians are descended from Marranos who came to Mexico with the Spaniards at the beginning of the 16th century. She writes they intermarried with natives and converted them to Judaism, and they suffered at the hand of the Inquisition when discovered. For a copy, contact the Kulanu office.

Maputo Synagogue (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

local Jewish community? I think the honest answer to that question was that the odds of our finding a few Jewish Mozambicans were about five million to one against us. The very thought of finding a group of 10 or more—an impossibility! So the ad went into the paper announcing our existence and our intention to hold a meeting for all Jews. We waited for a response, *any response*.

The appointed evening came. We all arrived at the synagogue, turned on the lights, set out some refreshments, and waited.

I don't know—God is certainly good and we were extraordinarily lucky. People began to arrive. They were mostly women, mostly middle-aged women. It was astonishing. We had at least a dozen guests! I recall that some of them brought their teenage children with them. I recall that the young boys and girls were all wearing crucifixes. In good underground Jewish fashion they had been reared as Catholics. Now their mothers wanted them to know their true heritage. To say this was a heartwarming experience would be to understate the obvious. It was extremely gratifying to learn that our hard work would actually benefit a community that would survive us nomads.

God is certainly good and we were extraordinarily lucky

My last memory of the synagogue is on the very eve of my departure from Mozambique at the end of my tour of duty there. The Jewish community held a farewell for me in the synagogue. As I drove up to the building at dusk, I noticed a Mercedes Benz sedan with government plates on it. There was a big shot there. The VIP turned out to be the Foreign Minister, who not only wanted more than just to say goodbye to me. He recounted that as a boy growing up in Maputo, he had passed the synagogue every day on his way to and from school and had always been curious about it. Now that it had become a functioning institution once again, he used the occasion of the farewell to see for himself what it was like inside.

This account is far longer than I had expected it to be. I have omitted several episodes that would allow American participants to be individually identified in circumstances that might affect their right to privacy. As I indicated at the beginning, it is a very unimpressive place at first glance, but it is a very special place when you get to know it. I hope that Jewish communities elsewhere find means of communicating with the Maputo group. I'm sure that the Ad Hoc Committee, *e. f.*, has served its purpose and is enjoying a well deserved retirement. I have heard by the grapevine that a very important rabbi from South Africa officially consecrated the synagogue. However, I'm certain that much work on the synagogue, for the Jewish community, still remains. Then, there's the question of refurbishing the Jewish cemetery...but that's another story!

JODESAVANNE (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

grandfather obtained the first Coca-Cola franchise in Suriname, and it has remained in the family ever since. His business interests have now expanded into other soft drinks and a bakery whose products are sold under the "Fernandes" trade name.

Dennis Kopinsky is the Vice President of the Jewish Community. His grandfather came from what was then Poland but is now the Ukraine. Dennis is anxious that his three young children remain in the Jewish fold. On Friday nights he has a formal Shabbat meal and says the usual blessings before and after the meal. Since kosher food is unavailable, he buys halal meat from a Moslem butcher, which assures that the meat is not from a forbidden animal even if it is not slaughtered according to Jewish law.

Jack Van Niel was the cantor (*shaliah tsibur*). Until his father died, about two years ago, he was not interested in Judaism and could not read Hebrew. His father's death inspired him to dedicate himself to the faith of his ancestors. This is not an easy matter in Paramaribo where there is no rabbi, no Jewish school, no Jewish teacher, and no kosher meat. With the help of members of the community, he taught himself the prayers. His next goal is to read the Torah. He does not understand the words, but he reads well and has a good voice. Mr. Van Niel said a Misheberach (a blessing) before an open ark for a man who had reached his 62nd birthday. Since he was unfamiliar with the prayer, he read it from a transliteration of the Hebrew words.

(Part II will appear in the next newsletter.)

BRIEFS (cont.)

A New “Student Struggle” For Ethiopian Jewry (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

ter Natan Sharansky recently described the homes he visited in Ethiopia as being worse than his punishment cell in Siberia. He visited a home in Gondar where the mother was too malnourished to nurse her child. The baby died several days later. Food prices have also risen dramatically as a result of the famine which is sweeping Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa and Gondar Jewish children are begging on the streets for food. In Gondar alone, 510 people died within 21 months; most of them were children under the age of five, who died primarily as a result of diseases exacerbated by malnutrition.

The only remain in Ethio-State of Israel them. The Ethio-permits its citi-freely. Yet de-of prominent political leaders, istry for the past refused to even tions for aliyah in many cases, the clearly qualify for rael’s Law of Re-were not Jewish parents and Israel who have Jewish by the Wouldn’t it we could (1)



Jewish children are begging on the streets for food.

reason these Jews pia is because the refuses to admit pian government zens to emigrate spite the support Israeli rabbis and the Interior Min-few years has accept applica-Ethiopia. In applicants would aliyah under Is-turn even if they since they have grandparents in been certified as Interior Ministry. be wonderful if Raise funds to

provide desperately needed life-saving assistance to the Jews left in Ethiopia; (2) Educate the public on the desperate plight of our Ethiopian Jewish brethren; (3) Persuade Jewish organizations to provide support for those in Ethiopia waiting for the Israeli government to process their claims; (4) Urge the State of Israel to allow these 26,000 Jews to make aliyah so that they may be reunited with their families in the Jewish homeland; (5) Fight for better educational and job training programs for Ethiopian Jews in Israel?

Happily, a new global/grassroots organization has been formed to address these very goals. It is called the Student Struggle for Ethiopian Jewry (SSEJ), based on the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ). The SSEJ membership is assisted in its efforts by its Board of Governors and Legal Counsel. The Board of Governors consists of members of Knesset, academics, and human rights activists such as Glen Richter (a founder of SSSJ). Legal counsel is headed by Professors Alan Dershowitz of Harvard and Irwin Cotler of McGill (currently a member of the Canadian Parliament), both of whom were prominent in the Soviet Jewry movement.

This new organization deserves our attention and support. Start by checking out their excellent web site at www.studentstruggle.org. Donations can be sent to: SSEJ c/o Adam Karkowsky, 17 West 70th Street Apartment A, New York, NY 10023. A \$39 contribution supports a child for a year.

The Wedding

By Irwin Berg

On July 2, Rachel Lujan and Shimon Behboudnia were married at the Yeshiva of Spring Valley in New York, by Rabbi Ben-Zion Wosner of Monsey. But this was not an ordinary wedding.

Rachel Lujan was born Rosemary Lujan in Trujillo, Peru’s second most populous city. She is part Native American and speaks Chechutua as well as Spanish and English. About five years ago, she and her three brothers became followers of a local Native American who became disenchanted with Catholicism. They began to practice the Jewish religion as they understood it from the Bible, but later in its halachic form with the assistance of Kulanu, but particularly under the guidance of Rabbi Mendel Zuber. About 30 people of Native American descent in and around Trujillo now wish to become, or have become, Jews.

In November 1999, Rabbi Zuber made arrangements for Rachel to visit the United States. Once here, she underwent a halachic conversion supervised by the ultra-Orthodox *bet din* of Monsey. After her conversion, Rabbi Zuber introduced Rachel, who had never married, to several eligible Orthodox men. One of them, he reported to me, was more aggressive than the rest and proposed marriage. His name is Shimon Behboudnia.

Shimon comes from a Persian Jewish family that fled Tehran in 1979, shortly after the Shah of Iran was overthrown. He and members of his family were yeshiva educated in the US. His brother David Behboudnia is a rabbi with a congregation in Cleveland.

The combination of a wedding conducted by an ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi rabbi, a Peruvian bride who was converted by an Ashkenazi *bet din*, and a yeshiva-educated Persian groom made this wedding an especially interesting hybrid.

Rabbi Zuber and the groom’s father escorted the groom to the *chupah*, and the groom’s mother and Rabbi Zuber’s wife escorted the bride. The bride’s parents were unable to attend since they were refused visas by the American consul in Peru.

The wedding took place outdoors. Rabbi Wosner had not been advised in advance that according to Persian custom the bride does not go around the groom seven times upon reaching the *chupah*. I caught him looking quizzically at Rabbi Zuber and making a circling motion with his finger, and getting back a hand signal to overlook it. The wedding proceeded without the encircling.

The bride wore a beautiful white wedding gown. If my wife had been with me, she would have enabled me to describe it, but even I could see how radiant Rachel looked in it. Instead of a kittel, the groom wore a large tallis over a business suit. At one point during the ceremony, he completely covered his head in the tallis; at another, he wrapped the tallis around his bride.

The ceremony itself was very familiar. Each of the seven blessings was sung by a different family member or respected guest. (Rabbi Zuber sang one of them.) The groom took the customary vow under the *chupah*. The *ketuba* was read aloud by someone who looked like he came from the Satmar hasidic synagogue across the street. The final act – before the chorus of “mazel tovs” – was the breaking of the glass.

After the ceremony was over, the groom’s brother and cousins escorted the new Mr. and Mrs. Behboudnia back into the yeshiva, where the reception took place. They did so intertwined, facing the couple, walking backwards and singing Hebrew songs of joy – the traditional way of bestowing honor.

This wedding also had a significance apart from the joy it gave to its participants. It demonstrated that the *chupah* can bond Jews despite their disparate origins. Also, it challenged the commonly held view of ultra-Orthodox Jews as inflexible and hostile to Jews who are not members of their communities.

LETTERS TO KULANU

Abayudaya CD “Almost Reggae”

I loved the Abayudaya CD “Shalom Everybody Everywhere.” The music wasn't at all what I expected. Instead of African rhythms or tribal melodies, it had more of a Calypso or Caribbean sound (which borrowed from Africa to be sure, but still is different). It was almost reggae. It really gave me a lift and every time I start it up, it brings tears to my eyes to hear it. The music is so different, the people so different and far away and yet those same familiar, much loved words and phrases offered with the same spirit and devotion.

Mac Sintes, Greenbelt, MD

More Outreach Needed

Yo, Barbara Shair (of the Conversion to Judaism Resource Center – www.convert.org)! Bless you! You're right! We need more people like YOU! 5,000 – 10,000 Jews in this country convert to Christianity every year and the right-wing Protestants are shelling out \$200 million a year to fund this effort. At the same time, 5,000-10,000 gentiles in this country are converting to Judaism every year and we're hardly spending a dime! What the Barbara Shairs in our community could do if they had sufficient funding to expand! If we got our priorities straight & spent a fraction of the fortune that the Southern Baptist Convention et al are plowing into their efforts, we would see a flood tide of new converts to Judaism unlike anything that has ever happened in the entire history of our religion. The Jewish community in America has the money to do this & we SHOULD do it, too. We Jews have a level playing field for the first time in 2,000 years - and we oughta play!

Moshe Cotel, New York, New York

Seder in Johannesburg

I must admit I was initially nervous but when I got there and exposed to the atmosphere and the people, Kgomotso my wife and I relaxed and enjoyed ourselves. The hosts and guests are very friendly people. They made us feel welcome and part of mishpocha (family); it made it easier for us to be part of the ceremony.

The ceremony as you know extends over two nights. Its significance is to celebrate the FREEDOM and eating of the Matzah (unleavened bread). It was the first time I tasted Matzah. It was very nice. The proceedings start with people reading from the Haggadah with washing of the hands without the regular Bracha (blessing), singing of Mah Nishtana, and then the main meal with splendid food. We drank four cups of wine for four different expressions of how HaShem took the Jews out of Egypt. People talked and after dinner we sang songs including the Hallel Psalms which we are learning. I was following the proceedings in English though I was getting lost the first day. The second day it was much easier.

We finished late in the night and we had to rush home to our son as we had left him with a baby sitter. We had a wonderful time and we enjoyed the celebrations. Some of the people there knew of the Lembas but others did not. I explained myself to them as to how we always knew we were Jewish and how the recent scientific evidence of the Y-chromosomes Kohen Haplotype model confirmed scientifically our Jewish origin. I think they also need to be educated that we are brothers, from the same forefathers, Moses, and later Jewish leaders. They must not be surprised or shocked about us.

The Lembas have recently received a lot of attention on worldwide television and on the Lemba chat list Lemba@onelist.com. Certain views expressed by individual Lembas were their personal views and did not represent uniform Lemba views. The personal views of an individual should not influence the attitude of the Jewish community in the US and elsewhere. Unfortunately in the TV presentations on CBS, not all Lembas were interviewed. Some have clearly and unequivocally accepted Judaism. Many more will decide where to go from here. Just be patient and people will be able to make a more informed decision.

As for me I acknowledged the fact that I am Jewish. I have now cancelled my office hours on Saturday to avoid transgressing Shabbas. I had never been exposed to Judaism and hence I want to learn all the steps required on how to practice Judaism. Please, let's give people the information (knowledge) about Judaism and then everybody will decide what they want.

Lavhelesani Aaron Gangazhe, South Africa

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

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The KULANU Boutique

Jews in Places You Never Thought Of, a 305-page hardback which includes descriptions of personal interactions with returning and emerging Jewish groups around the world; over 30 photographs. *Proceeds benefit Kulanu.*

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

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

Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism by Arye Oded, an Israeli Ambassador to Africa. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya High School.*

Journey to the Vanished City: The Search for a Lost Tribe of Israel (paperback) by Tudor Parfitt. The fascinating story of the Lemba, recently shown genetically to have distinct close ties to the Jews, especially *cohanim*. *Proceeds benefit Kulanu.*

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<i>Journey to the Vanished City</i> _____		14.00	\$3 (ea. addl. \$2)	_____

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Please make checks payable to "KULANU" and mail to 1217 Edgevale Road, Silver Spring, MD, 20910-1612. Allow up to 5 weeks delivery but orders are generally filled within 5 business days.

Deadline for next issue: Recycled Paper	Edited by Karen Primack
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