

KULANU

“all of us”



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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XU XIN TO SPEAK AT NEXT KULANU MEETING — SEE PAGE 8
PASSOVER READING — SEE PAGE 7

From the Road In Manipur

By Bryan Schwartz

I am having one of the most amazing times of my life here in Manipur, India, visiting the Bnei Menashe. I will send you a full report of the visit and my suggestions after I have left and have better internet access and time to reflect upon my overwhelming experiences. For the time being, let me say that the Bnei Menashe are among the warmest, most hospitable, most beautiful groups of humans beings I have ever met, and that the earnestness of their Jewish practice is only exceeded by the depth of their Jewish spirit.

Sandy Carter, a Canadian photographer, and I have visited perhaps a dozen synagogues in villages scattered across Manipur, and have been welcomed into families' homes and hearts. I only hope that our writing can in some way return the love that they have shown us, making the world more aware of their commitment and their condition.

Kulanu has made a real difference here, and the deep respect for Kulanu and in particular Dr. Zeller, is truly impressive. Kulanu has much to be proud of in Manipur.

That said, this is a very needy community. I will detail the community's needs in greater depth later, but a few points are worth saying now:

1) The elected leadership of the Bnei Menashe Council ask that we please use Isaac Thangjom as our official contact on all matters concerning the Bnei Menashe. His email address is thanz31@usa.net. His English is perfect as he was raised in English-speaking boarding schools and is highly educated. The highly regarded BMC (Bnei Menashe Council) president is Mr. L. Maccabi Touthang and the general secretary is Mr. Lemuel Henkhogin Haokip. Lemuel speaks English very well and will hopefully have email soon. Maccabi unfortunately does not speak English.

2) Sandy is bringing back a beautiful tallit and kippot handcrafted by Benei Menashe women, along with several letters to Kulanu from the leadership. The Bnei Menashe craftsmanship is remarkable and I hope that Kulanu can help them market their products -- help them help themselves.

3) The Bnei Menashe need more siddurim, and are especially eager (and curious) to have Sefardi siddurim. I have prayed here using siddurim donated by Kulanu.

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“You Don't Have To Be White To Be Jewish!”

By Karen Primack

Fortunately, the e-mail announcing the conference came just before we left for New York to visit our daughter for the weekend. The notice said that the newly forming Jewish Multiracial Network would be holding a conference in New York entitled “The Changing Face of Judaism” on November 12. As Kulanu activists who are involved in the multiracial world Jewish community, my husband Aron and I thought we would be right at home at the gathering, even though we are not a multiracial family. We were right!

Featured speaker was Carolivia Herron, a black Jewish convert who has her doctorate in Comparative Literature but is best known for her acclaimed children's book, *Nappy Hair*. Herron, who hails from our hometown of Washington, DC, told the rapt group in exquisite detail about her path to Judaism.

The conference also featured Jewish songs led by an Asian-American cantor with a beautiful soprano voice. Only later did we learn that Angela Buchdahl, who was adopted as a child by Jews and raised Jewish, will finish rabbinical school this spring!

A four-member panel of Jews in multiracial families discussed their own experiences. One, a Jewish father of two adopted biracial children, said the experience had opened up a larger world to him: “I look for the person rather than the veneer.”

Another, a black woman convert married to a born-Jewish white husband, told of sad and humorous reactions by white Jews. “You don't have to be white to be Jewish!” she exclaimed. All agreed that isolation is a serious issue for Jews of color.

Although many of the topics were of a serious nature, the affair was very upbeat, with new bonds forming everywhere. And the beautiful young children, of every human hue, were attentive during the songs, the author's reading of *Nappy Hair*, and craft projects.

Aron and I attended a JMN havdallah gathering in the Washington area the following week, which attracted at least 30 families. The event was covered in a prominent *Washington Post* article, “Gathering Shines a Light on Judaism's Diverse Faces.” A Chanukah gathering in Washington was scheduled for December.

JMN events in the Washington, New York, Connecticut and Boston areas are listed on the organization's web page, <http://www.multiracialjewishnet.org>. A major event, the annual retreat, is scheduled for March 30-April 1, 2001, at the Jewish Retreat Center in Falls.

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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

Questions About the Luba

My name is Tshibusu Bilomba and for the past three years I have been doing research on a group of people known as the Luba. This group is located in central Congo-Zaire. In my childhood, I used to hear stories about how these people originated from ancient Israel. Since the stories are still going on, I thought it would be interesting to verify it, especially after seeing the Lemba example.

I thought it would be wise to share my findings with you in order to get a second opinion on their origins. I have references I am ready to share and questions I wish to ask you and answer to the best of my ability. I have a quote here that might interest you. It comes from Dugald Campbell, *In the Heart of Bantuland*, Negro Universities Press: New York, 1969, p.266:

"Northward [of Katanga] lives one of the greatest tribes of Central Africa, the Baluba, who are of undoubted Semitic origin. The name Baluba means 'the lost tribe,' and their language and customs have many Hebrew affinities. Their name for, and idea of, God, with their word for water, and people, and many other words and ideas, show their Semitic strain."

This meaning makes sense to Luba people as shown in a reaction I received: "Here is what could be a possible explanation of this statement linguistically. The source is potentially correct if we take the verb kulubakana. Mwana mulubakana = a confused child, or a lost child. Muluba, shorter form of mulubakana, means a 'lost person.' Baluba, the plural, would thus be 'lost people.'"

Another quote is from Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained*, Burt Franklin: New York, p 1004:

"So that at this day also the Abassins affirme, that upon Nilus towards the west, there inhabiteth a most populous nation of the Jewish stock, under a mightie K. And some of our moderne Cosmographers set downe a prouince in those quarters, which they call The land of the Hebrewes, placed as it were under the equinotiall, in certaine unknown mountaines, betweene the confines of Abassia, and Congo."

So far archeological evidence and oral history point towards a North-Easterly direction of their current location for Luba origins. Could these be part of the same people Africanus mentions?

I have someone with me (a Luba elder) who would be interested in discussing with you as well. He is very much knowledgeable on the Luba and can probably help more than I can.

Any help you can give me through book references or people I can contact will greatly be appreciated. Our goal is to arrive at a final answer for a century-old Luba question: "How come we have the same customs as the Jews?"

*Tshibusu Bilomba tbilomba@hotmail.com
Ottawa, Canada.*

Messianics Infiltrating

I recently read in *The Jewish Voice* that messianics are infiltrating conversion ulpan in Israel. Apparently their tactic is to gain certification for Jewish status so their missionary work (misleading Jews into accepting Jesus as the Messiah) will be more effective. Kulanu is a good target for these messianic missionary groups, and our membership should be on the alert. In particular, those who are in direct contact with groups in Africa and Asia should be careful to whom they give names and addresses.

*Irwin Berg
New York, NY*

A New Zimler Novel in the Works

You do a great job. And the work you do is also valuable, particularly as an antidote to Jewish exclusion of non-traditional Jews (which I find totally abominable). Your work is a giant mitzvah!!!

I've just finished my new novel, by the way. It's taken me three years. It starts in Porto in 1800 and ends in South Carolina and NY in 1831. It's narrated by a distant descendent of Berekiyah Zarco, the narrator of *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon*. There's also one other visionary connection between the two books. As I say in the sub-title, this one is a novel of Secret Jews, Unspeakable Betrayal, and African Destiny. I hope it's good. We shall see. I just sent it to my agent a week ago.

*Richard Zimler
Porto, Portugal*

Family Tree DNA Website

I have started a website called Family Tree DNA. We perform DNA testing, including the Cohanim test described in various article since Dr. Hammer Bradman and Stoerki produced their work in 1996. We are very much interested in the same issues that enliven Kulanu, and in fact I have been a subscriber to Kulanu for a number of years. Please take a look at www.familytreedna.com.

*Bennett Greenspan
President, Family Tree DNA*

Abayudaya School Construction Needed

I am happy to inform you that we successfully closed the academic year 2000. We are now waiting to see the results of our first lot of candidates in the A & O-level National examinations for the year 2000. Of the 15 Candidates who sat these exams eight were Abayudaya, of which three were women -- Tzipora Naisi, Rachael Namudosi and Norah Natabo.

On a negative note, if we fail to improve on the existing structures, we most likely will lose business to the newly opened Catholic high school down hill. We are therefore seeking a kind donation of \$3300 to enable us make a floor, plaster, paint and fence the available structures.

I am excited at the possibility of making joint music presentations with Joab in August in the US, May HaShem cause this to happen.

*Gershon Sizomu, Headmaster
Mbale, Uganda*

Sephardi Prayer Books Needed in India

We are so grateful for your kind gift of kippot, tallith and tefillin. May Almighty HaShem bless your family. We distributed those articles to our members who cannot afford and they have good use of it and they are very glad and feel fortunate.

As regards prayer books, we need Sephardic prayer books in English and Hebrew. If you could kindly provide us at least one book, our happiness will have no bounds.

Our secretary and family have left Imphal for Eretz Israel, so now I am in charge of all correspondence.

*Lemuel Henkhogin Haokip, Bnei Menashe Council
Amishav House
Old Lambulane-Jail Road
Imphal, Manipur 795001 India*

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Learning Jewish Culture at Nanjing University

By Gong Jin

(Excerpted from an article published in The China/Judaic Connection)

On my 14th birthday, my cousin gave me a book. I read it and was so fond of that chatterbox girl but at the same time so sorrowful about her fate that later on I wrote in my diary: "I like Anne. I feel so close to her. She is just like one of us – full of dreams and anxious to know or experience everything new around her. But I don't understand why such an innocent and lovely girl has to be murdered. Only because she is a Jew?" That book was called *Anne Frank – The Diary of a Young Girl*. And that was the first time I came to realize so strongly the concept of a "Jew."

Eight years later, when I was still an undergraduate student at Nanjing University, I selected a course in "Jewish Culture" offered by Professor Xu Xin, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies. Like most of the students around me, my knowledge of the Jewish people at that time was limited, abstract and sometimes even one-sided – that, for example, the Jews are very smart; they care about money like the Shylock stereotyped in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and that although they kept being persecuted since the destruction of the second temple, they still remain.

I was fascinated by this group of people – for their peculiarity and great vitality. But most of all, I was eager to find out the answer to the mystery of Anne's death. Therefore, I entered into this vast kingdom of Jewish culture, which later proved to be a new horizon for me.

In Prof. Xu's course, we learned about Jewish history, Judaism, Jewish culture for the first time. In class, we were shown some artifacts for Jewish rituals or daily use like the *Menorah*, *Tallit*, *Tefillin*, *Yarmalke* and so on, which gave us a perceptual knowledge of the Jewish life.

Learning Jewish culture became another way of looking at the Western Civilization. During the course of learning, we had as much shock as appreciation toward Jewish culture which has been regarded as one of the two main sources of the Western Civilization. I myself had very mixed feelings toward it because it seemed to be both unfamiliar and familiar to me. It was unfamiliar because of its totally different cultural context and historical evolution, but it also in some depth contained many commonalities with our Chinese culture in terms of basic values and world outlooks, which seemed fairly familiar to me.

I began my graduate study majoring in British and American literature in 1997. By coincidence, I read Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta*, in which the Jew Barabas was a twin image of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Both were portrayed as objects of scorn, hatred, laughter or contempt. The negative image of the Jews on the Renaissance stage only reflected the Christian prejudice toward the Jews at that time. That knowledge on Jewish culture helped me to better understand literary works was an unexpected reward to me. It in a sense opened a new horizon in my literary studies.

In the unforgettable summer in 1999, I was one of 33 participants in the Workshop on Jewish History and Culture organized by Prof. Xu. For the first time, I had dismissed some of my misconceptions on Jews but also opened a new horizon for my personal growth.

During the time when I was gathering materials for my MA dissertation (Prof. Xu is my supervisor), I came across the American Jewish writer

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PROFILE OF A LEADER

Meet Mijael Garcia of Xalapa, Mexico

By Jeff French Segall

I have developed an increasingly warm e-mail friendship with Mijael Garcia, the leader of a Mexican Indian-Jewish Community located in the city of Xalapa, in Veracruz, Mexico.

I have learned that he is a journalist in his hometown of Xalapa and that he writes extensively on Jewish and other topics. He has written pamphlets on Jewish practice for general distribution among the non-Jewish population and, in general, has done everything he possibly can to enhance the position and stature of Jews in Mexico.

Mijael made aliyah, but once in Israel found that the religious leadership doubted the authenticity of his Judaism and they had him do an Orthodox conversion. He was chagrined and disappointed by their attitude, but he complied. Three years later, he still had received none of the normal support that Israel gives to *olim chadashim* (new immigrants). In exceedingly sub-standard housing, he received no support for employment. He could only attribute this to racism and, exceedingly disappointed, he returned to Mexico with his family.

Last summer Mijael traveled to New York in search of work to put bread on the table of his family, and to provide sustenance for his Jewish community. Though not trained enough to be considered a rabbi, by dint of his studies both in Mexico and in Israel he became their teacher and their leader.

We finally met in New York, and I learned more about him. I learned that his community consists of 16 families, all exceedingly poor, struggling to make ends meet and without a spiritual home (i.e., synagogue) in which to practice their Judaism. They receive some support from local Catholic and other Christian groups, but none from the Mexican Jewish community. More on that below.

Mijael teaches Torah, *kashrut*, *shomer Shabbos* rules, all the powerful and important attributes that Jews need to retain and preserve their heritage. But he never charges for these lessons. No one could pay him. They lack the means to. He frequently prepares and delivers lectures on Jewish issues to interested non-Jews. He refuses to charge, even when requested to deliver these lectures, because he's trying everything he can not to have people accuse him of being a "money-grasping Jew."

"That would undermine everything I'm trying to do here," he explained to me.

What little he earns he does through his journalistic efforts. He is not well paid there, but he puts out a weekly column. He has sent me every one of them that he has written since he returned to Mexico from NYC last summer, and they make utterly fascinating reading. I have a copy of his little pamphlet on the Jewish priesthood.

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A Tidal Wave of Converts?

By Moshe Cotel

(While pondering on future demographics of the Jewish people for a rabbinic school paper, Moshe Cotel hit on some points of interest to Kulanu readers. Here are some excerpts from his work.)

The assignment gives me pause because my own life experience has taught me that the future is unprecedented. Only in hindsight do things make sense. We also know that prophecy has left the people Israel. So, all we can really do, in my opinion, is fly by the seat of our pants and pray a lot. Only God knows the future.

So, here's my point. In the mountain of data we examined regarding Israeli and American Jews, where is there any mention of the fact that for the first time in history more people are converting to Judaism in this country rather than from? Where is there any mention in the books we read and discussed that Jews have a chance again to proselytize for the first time in two thousand years?

For example, we read in the population projection of American Jewry, 1990-2020, that the number of American Jews will peak in the year 2000 at 5.7 million and decline thereafter. In addition, the percentage of Jews among all Americans, which is 2.1 percent (median projection) in 2000, will fall to 1.9 percent in 2010. At around the same time, the numbers for Israeli Jews and American Jews are expected to converge, and after the year 2010 Israel will be the world's largest Jewish community, later becoming the absolute majority of world Jewry.

However, this projection by Rehun, DellaPergola and Tolts is only one of many possible population projections and the authors attach reserved caution to their results. I think they should. I have the gut feeling that there's a tidal wave coming our way and many of our experts are not looking in that direction. It's a tidal wave of converts and it could change the face of American Jewry in the coming decades.

Several years ago, there was an article in *Moment Magazine* by Rabbi Harold Shulweis entitled "Seek Converts!" which made a convincing case for proselytism. Rabbi Shulweis argued that outreach and inreach are complementary. Outreach stimulates inreach, he said. They are two sides of the same coin. In our open and free society, we are all de facto Jews by choice. Rabbi Shulweis ran an ad in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Daily News* and the *Jewish Journal*. Some 500 attendees arrived each night including lapsed Catholics and Lutherans disenchanted with their inherited faith and church dogma. Forty members of the congregation Valley Beth Shalom volunteered to welcome people into their homes for Shabbat and to help answer questions about Judaism.

One reader of this article, Rabbi Samuel M. Silver, later wrote in (Forum, August 1997), "I suggest that the enterprise go national and that it be given a name. The name I suggest is 'Gentiles for Moses.' I envisage full-page ads in many newspapers with this legend: 'To our gentile friends: Do you believe in the Virgin Birth? Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Do you believe in the Holy Trinity? If so, you are an adherent of an important branch of monotheism. If you do not subscribe to these tenets, but you still want to cling to monotheism, consider Judaism. Judaism is open to converts. For more information, see your nearest rabbi or write to the local branch of 'Gentiles for Moses.'"

Now, the American Jewish community may not have taken organizationally to this inspired idea, but as Daniel J. Elazar has pointed out in his article, "The Organization of the American Jewish Community," there is no organizational pyramid in Jewish life. National organizations are unable to issue directives to local affiliates, and no local "roof" organization is able to order others within its "jurisdiction" into line. I believe that the unintended benefit of this apparently chaotic arrangement is that individual Jews with enough passion and commitment can band together and start to do the work which they feel pressing.

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A few years ago, a handful of such people put together the Conversion to Judaism Web Page (www.convert.org). This grass-roots effort has seen a steady rise of visitors, now totaling over 250,000. There has also been an increase in the number of rabbis willing to be listed. As Barbara Shair, one of the prime movers in this effort, has stated, "We have an opportunity to increase and invigorate Judaism by opening our doors and letting people who wish to join us feel welcome... Population surveys about Jewish demographics could be rendered ridiculous if the Jewish community put a bit of financing into conversion programs."

This past year, following the success of the above-mentioned web site, a new site for potential converts has also gone on the web <ChooseJudaism.org>. This is the first proactive conversion to Judaism web site, and potential converts are already using it. Institutions such as The Conversion to Judaism Resource Center in Commack, NY, provide information and advice for those who are currently considering joining the Jewish people. We need to form and fund many more such organizations around the country.

A step in the right direction, in my opinion, is the Reform movement's program, "A Taste of Judaism." Christians in the American hinterlands are converting to Judaism, and it's not because they're marrying Jews. According to another *Moment Magazine* article by Sue Fishkoff in the December 2000 issue, "Taste of Judaism" courses are spreading across the South and Midwest. Most of the time, people come to learn, not to thump their Scriptures and condemn Judaism. It's not just the Reform movement which is attracting converts today, either. A Baptist minister in Palestine, Texas, recently converted to Orthodox Judaism and moved to Brooklyn, taking a good chunk of his congregation with him.

No one knows exactly how many Americans have converted to Judaism. It's estimated, however, that one out of every thirty-five Jews in the country converted to Judaism.

There is another factor I perceive which our experts have not caught on to yet. That is the growing schism in Jews-for-Jesus, since the group now includes those who believe that Jesus was the messiah but not God. If these schismatic Jews-for-Jesus spread their idea within the Christian camp itself, the idea could take hold among some fundamentalist Protestant groups in the coming decades and grow into a full-blown Protestant schism throughout America. It's the law of unintended repercussions. The right-wing Protestant missionaries wanted to convert the Jews, but instead they could paradoxically wind up converting themselves. I believe that this possible turn of affairs would add momentum to the already accelerating movement among gentiles to explore Judaism and become Jews by Choice.

In the ancient world, ten percent of the Roman Empire was Jewish. Who says there couldn't be 25 million Jews in America by the end of the new century?

Where's the money for this effort going to come from? Although, as mentioned above, there is no organizational pyramid in Jewish life, institutions and organizations playing at least four kinds of roles are found in every fully functioning and completely organized Jewish community. Elazar identifies these as government-like institutions (such as federations), localistic institutions (synagogues), general purpose organizations (Hadassah, for example), and special-purpose organizations (men's clubs). In the religious-congregational sphere there are country-wide confederations of like-minded congregations. And the vast majority of American Jews who affiliate with synagogues are either Reform or Conservative (about 40 percent each).

The real repository of authority and power remains in the individual congregations. A network of synagogues around the country doing the work described by Rabbi Shulweis would bring about a revolution in Jewish life in the United States. There would be such a flood of converts to Judaism, we would hardly be able to absorb them!

LETTER FROM ZIMBABWE

Meet a Non-Lemba Bantu Jew

By Kosinathi Nyathi Mbolekwa

My first name is Knosinathi "Kosi - na - thi" (Spirit - with - us). My Xhosa mother told me it is reserved for first-born males as a sign that "Kosi" (God) is with us for we are blessed with a first-born son to carry the family name with pride. The Bantu language stem "Kosi" means "Spirit" -- for us the "Almighty." However Kosi is used in addressing a chief or king for respect but does not mean we think the king/chief is invisible or an "Almighty" spirit and creator.

Curiously in Bantu the only way to describe the Almighty Kosi / Nkosi, a Creator Spirit, is air or wind = "Moyah." Inherently immeasurable, the immensity cannot be calibrated, split up or calculated in any way; our Nkosi remains for us invisible and ultimately most sacred to the Bantu family. Worldwide no other people seem as strict about the Almighty as the Jewish people and "Nkosi sikelela Africa," the popular liberation anthem used by the ANC and several African nations, is clear testimony, appealing directly to "Moyah" / "Air" to bless us its people. To us this is a "sign" or our signature.

I'm Gouteng born and my mother is of BaXhosa descent. My grandfather is of BaSuthu origin and my male lineage has resided in Zimbabwe for a century alongside VaKalanga/Ndebele, BaVenda and northern BaSuthu of South Africa. Like so many Bantu tribes, we practice male circumcision rigorously as initiation. Some of us still stick to the eighth-day law pertaining to circumcision. Unlike other nations, we seem frantic about circumcision; even though not all original Jewish laws have been kept accurately, we still keep to its framework.

These cultural actions may seem insignificant and inconsequential but are central and essential to our basic day-to-day existence and proud heritage for millennia. **Mistaken for pagan and persecuted as heathens or non-believers because our invisible "Almighty" seemed for others unfathomable, and with no objects or idols to show as proof of our beliefs, we fled our homeland.**

With our belief and identity misunderstood we left Palestine and many of us went south to be known as "lost tribes" of Yisrael / Judah. We entered Africa to live with other Semites, Hamites and Kushites, descendants of our great-grandfather Noah. Some of us went to Yemen and lived with Arabs who influenced us, as did the Koi and San later on, but we kept very Jewish and discernible until we reached our southern African destination along the eastern coastline of Africa. This movement, circa 2500 years ago, was later nicknamed the Bantu migrations.

Today we are known as Bantus and all too often "gentiles," too. This is misunderstanding as to our actual identity. About 70 percent to 80 percent of southern Bantus are not gentiles, nor are we simply Hamitic-Pygmies admixtures producing Negroes, as current history may purport. Our oral traditions suggest that we are Jewish, with songs like "Jerusalem" and places like "Dombo Ra Mwari / Nwali" ("Rock of God") in the Epworth district, as outstanding features and proof of our spiritual past, let alone our bloodlines. Yes, we have mixed with many people and nations, but we have remained basically dark / black in complexion throughout the ages.

Over 70 years ago Zimbabwean elders started tracing our origins, and Great Zimbabwe seemed a logical place to start. This search led to my own research and, like most looking for our true history, I arrived at the same conclusion. We are the 12 tribes of

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A Brief Visit In Addis Ababa

By Lucy Steinitz

On December 5, I visited the compound in Addis Ababa where 8,000 rural-born and often illiterate Ethiopian Jews anxiously wait for their applications to Israel to be approved. Some have histories that include a pro-forma conversion to Christianity (often under duress); now sworn testimonies have to be amassed to underscore their "true identity." Some reluctant assistance comes from the Joint Distribution Committee. The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry takes prime responsibility, yet conditions remain difficult and extremely overcrowded.

The compound is NOT like a refugee camp, which is what I had first imagined. People don't live here; rather, they have temporary homes (or shacks, more likely) in the surrounding neighborhood and come to the compound for administrative matters, for prayer, and for the children to attend school. During the day, the temporary synagogue is also turned into a work-room for an embroidery project; this is the only income-generating project on-site to help families make ends meet while they wait for the Israeli bureaucracy to make its determination. (Original and magnificent embroideries are gifts to supporters who make donations of at least \$100. Please contact NACOEJ at 132 Nassau St suite 412, NY NY 10038; tel 212 233 5200.)

Another synagogue is used on Shabbat, but during the week this is divided into four classrooms.

I asked Ashegre Zeleke, the local manager, what the average



Youth in compound

length of stay is at the compound. "As short as possible," he answered. "But for many, this has already meant three years or more."

One of the problems is that, if the Israeli embassy turns down a family's application, they can always appeal -- which most do. Meanwhile, their lives "back home" in Ethiopia's northern region near Gondar have been completely shattered. If they can't make it to Israel, they may also be unable to pick up where they left off near Gondar. What then?

Difficult as life is in Addis, there are some definite advantages. All the children are able to attend school through grade eight, which is free of charge. School lasts four hours; but there are so many children (2300 in all) that they must attend school in two shifts -- morning or afternoon.

Even with that accommodation, children sit cheek-to-jowl on low benches, without desks or equipment. The conditions are the most crammed I have ever seen -- without illustrated books, posters, or virtually any supplies. When I asked the science teacher, for example, if he had access to a microscope or even a magnifying glass, he laughed and said, "No one has ever seen these things here."

On the other hand, most children seem attentive, even eager. They also know they will get lunch served -- cheese, bread, a hard-boiled egg, vegetables, and fruit. For many, it is their only real meal of the day.

Yet it is obvious that everyone does the best they can. Every-

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A Tidal Wave (cont.)

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all! We would therefore need to build closer connections between federations and synagogues in many communities and thus deal with this problem in the communal-welfare sphere.

Efforts are now underway to formally convert many gentile Russian immigrants who have come to Israel together with their Jewish family members under the Law of Return. These conversionary efforts have had a rocky start, but the Israeli conversion institute is now beginning to turn out small numbers of formally-converted Jews. These numbers will grow as the process continues.

Less well known is the work of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail who has devoted his life to working with the lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people. His organization, Amishav, has brought hundreds of Bnei Menashe from India to Israel for formal conversion. Many thousands remain in India living totally Jewish lives. There is a potential population pool of over one million souls in India who could convert to Judaism over the next several generations. To my mind, the question is not whether this can happen (it's happening right now) but rather, how many thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Third World Jews the State of Israel could absorb over the coming decades. Avichail's work is supported in the United States by Kulanu, a non-profit organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who want to rejoin the Jewish community.

I foresee Judaism coming alive in Africa and India in the new century. Many of these new Jews will want to immigrate to the two main Jewish population centers, Israel and America. But many will remain in their Third World countries forming Jewish communities the likes of which we have not seen in millennia.

Large new Jewish centers could sprout up around the world at any time. The experts who put together the population projections did not consider the possibility of millions of Jews in East India in what could be a virtual Jewish state there later in this century. They did not foresee countless African Jews in the new century, either. But we may be witnessing the beginnings of this phenomenon now with the Abayudaya Jews in Uganda who already live totally Jewish lives. Let us also consider the Lemba in South Africa who are starting to explore their ancient, lost, recently rediscovered Judaism.

I believe that we should not shrink from the challenge of opening the doors and embracing millions of new Jews by Choice. In America today, a land in which religious authority has shifted to personal autonomy, we are all Jews by Choice

**Xu Xin to speak at Kulanu meeting
March 25. See page 8**



A Historian Volunteers in Suriname's Jewish Cemeteries

By Irwin Berg

(The author wishes to acknowledge two people in connection with the project to record the inscriptions on the tombstones of Jodensavanne and Cassipora. The project is the product of the vision of Rachel Frankel. Prof. Aviva Ben-Ur is the scholar who brought that vision to fruition.)

Part III

Since the 1530s, Marranos had been leaving Portugal for any place where they were allowed to emigrate and not be pursued by the Inquisition. Brazil was one of these places and so were the Low Countries of Belgium and Holland. In 1623, the Dutch (free of the Spanish monarchy since 1579) conquered Brazil from the Portuguese. This made Brazil an attractive destination for Portuguese Jews in Holland who had long since shed their dual lives, and it also allowed the Marranos in Brazil to "come out of the closet." This state of affairs continued from 1623 to 1654 when the Portuguese reconquered Brazil and put in mortal danger all the Jews who resided there.

The reconquest caused most of the Jews of Brazil to flee to Amsterdam. Some ran to the interior of Brazil, some to the Dutch colony at Cayenne (now in French Guyana) and some to the British colonies at Essequito and Thorarica (now in British Guyana and Surinam respectively). The British – who at this time did not allow Jews into the mother country – encouraged them to settle in its colonies and offered them special privileges if they did so. What made them especially attractive to the British was that these Portuguese-speaking Jews had experience with plantation agriculture based upon slave labor which they learned in Brazil.

Although they were not the first Jews in Suriname, some 200 Portuguese Jews under the leadership of David Nassy (also known as Joseph Nunez de Fonseca) came from Cayenne in 1664 after the Dutch colony at Cayenne was conquered by the French. Some of these Portuguese Jews had for a period of time lived in Livorno, Italy, before coming to Cayenne. This group settled on Cassipora Creek, which flows into the Surinam River about two miles upstream from Jodensavanne – a town which in a very few years would become the center of Jewish life in the interior of Suriname.

In 1667 the British and the Dutch entered into the Treaty of Breda. According to its terms, the British surrendered Suriname to the Dutch and acquired New Amsterdam (now New York) in its stead. After a short period in which the Dutch attempted to restrict the rights of the Jews, in 1669 they did an about-face, and granted David Nassy the right to establish a colony about 40 miles south of Paramaribo which became known as Jodensavanne (Jewish Meadow). They not only guaranteed the Jews the free exercise of their religion throughout the colony, but they confirmed and expanded the privileges granted by the British to the Jews who settled in the interior. These privileges included the right to have their own educational, judicial and even military institutions. [In 1776, David de Isaac Cohen Nassy (who has since achieved considerable fame for writing the first history of the Jews of Suriname) fled from Paramaribo to Jodensavanne, where he could not be arrested for failing to pay his debts. Another of the more significant privileges was the right to expel from the country any member who brought scandal upon the community.]

The wealth of the community continued to grow until 1760. The privileges of self-government which it enjoyed encouraged it to be a closed society with a powerful hierarchical structure and with the town of Jodensavanne as its center. At its height, 800 in 1760, Jews owned 115 sugar plantations with 10,000 slaves. But the soil was beginning to get exhausted and would produce lower and lower yields. In 1772 the Amsterdam Bourse, which had invested heavily in Suriname's plantation economy, collapsed. The planters who had been living high on borrowed money were unable to borrow fresh money and repay their old debts.

Planter relations with the Maroons (fugitive slaves in jungle communities) were inconsistent. During the 1730s and 1740s several slave revolts occurred during which slaves killed planters and escaped to join the Maroons in the jungle. The civil authorities, with Jewish support and sometimes with a Jewish militia, conducted numerous military expeditions against the Maroons during these years. The cemetery in Jodensavanne contains the stones of several planters who died in these rebellions or on these expeditions. The warfare abated during the 1760s, when the Dutch authorities adopted a policy of encouraging the Maroons to live in peace with the settlers.

But the Maroons lived in numerous small villages and were of many diverse tribal origins. Not all the tribes could be restrained from raids on wealthy plantations or able to persuade their members to return run-away slaves, and

A KULANU PASSOVER READING:

Honoring the Return of a Lost Tribe

© 1995 BY Jonina Duker

(To be read just before the recitation of Dayenu.)

Reader #1:

From the time of the Assyrian Exile in 722 B.C.E. until the present, segments of the Jewish people have been forcibly separated from us through persecution and expulsion.

Reader #2:

One such segment previously lost to the Jewish community is a people now known by at least three names: Bnei Menashe (since they trace their ancestry to the tribe of Manasseh), the Shinlung (after caves in which they once found refuge), or the Chikimi (after the Chin, Kuki and Mizo ethnic groups from which they spring). The Bnei Menashe believe their ancestors were exiled in 722 B.C. E. and wandered across many lands. They live now in a mountainous region on the India-Burma border. Knowledge of various ritual observances was handed down orally for twenty-six centuries. Since 1993, approximately 600 Bnei Menashe have immigrated to Israel, worked to support themselves, and studied for conversion (back) to Judaism under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel. We recite a poem that, according to tradition, accompanied the Bnei Menashe throughout their migrations:

All together:

*We must keep the Passover festival
Because we crossed the Red Sea on the dry land
At night we crossed with a fire
And by day with a cloud
Enemies pursued us with chariots
And the sea swallowed them up
And used them as food for the fish
And when we were thirsty
We received water from the rock**

Reader #1:

We pause to reaffirm our unity with the Bnei Menashe and with K'lal Yisrael, all the Jewish people:

All together:

*As we have wandered, so have they
As we have suffered for our beliefs, so have they
As we have retained our faith, so have they
As we have clung to our precious identity, so have they
As we long to lead Jewish lives, so do they
As we believe in the Promised Land, so do they
As we pray "You are One", so do they**

Reader #1:

May those among the Bnei Menashe, and anyone else who desires to return to or turn to Judaism, celebrate Passover Seders next year in peace and tranquility. L'Shanah Haba B'Yerushalyim!

*E. Avichail, The Tribes of Israel, 1990

Publications of Note

The November issue of *Hadassah Magazine* is a real keeper! Devoted to "Anousim," the issue features Alan M. Tigay's beautiful story, "Letter from Belmont: The Flame of 26,000 Sabbaths," as well as his piece on "The Jewish Traveler: Portugal" and his report on a Spanish-language ulpan in Israel, "A School for Homecomers." The issue also includes Andree Aelion Brooks's "The Mystique of Dona Gracia," a 16th century female Converso leader, and a photo essay by Cary Herz from her Crypto-Jews of the Southwest Photographic Project. Nonmembers of Hadassah can order this unique issue by sending \$3 for each copy desired to Dorothy Silfen, Hadassah Magazine, 50 W. 58th Street, New York, NY 10019.

Another winning issue, *Hadassah Magazine* of January focuses on Jewish genes and contains a sensitive article by Janine Lazarus about the Lemba of South Africa: "At the Jewish Doorstep in Africa."

A page-one story in December's *New Mexico Jewish Link*, "Kulanu Finds Lost Jewish Communities Worldwide," by Norma Libman, highlights Kulanu's work on four continents.

"Crypto-Jews celebrate finding their families' faith roots," by Nancy San Martin, appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* of December 16. This lengthy article discusses personal stories of returning anousim.

(continued on page 10)

KULANU BRIEFS

Next Kulanu Meeting March 25

The next Kulanu meeting will be held on Sunday, March 25 at 10 am. The speaker will be Prof. Xu Xin of Nanjing, China, who will give an update on the Kaifeng community, recent visitors and their impact. The meeting will take place at the Dennis and Phillip Ratner Museum, 10001 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda (just south of Democracy Blvd.) For further information call 301-681-5679 or 301-565-3094.

Xu Xin Visits To Teach

Prof. Xu Xin will be a visiting professor at Montclair State University in New Jersey during the spring semester (January-May). He hopes to teach a course on Jewish diasporas in China. He will also travel and lecture during the term in Cleveland, Boston, and Bethesda and will be available for guest lectures at synagogues, community centers, and schools. (For scheduling, contact Ray Kaplan at RAYKAP@worldnet.att.net). Although not Jewish himself, some years ago Prof. Xu developed a deep interest in Jewish history and established a Judaic Studies Department at Nanjing University. In addition, he has been instrumental in establishing Jewish Historical Institutes in Shanghai, Kaifeng and elsewhere in China. He oversaw the development and publication of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* in Chinese and has written a book on the ancient Kaifeng Jewish community.

China/Judaic Connection Continues Online

Dr. Beverly Friend, editor of the *China/Judaic Connection*, published by the China Judaic Studies Association, has announced that the publication will cease its print edition, but will maintain its electronic publication. The Internet version of the newsletter is available at <http://servercc.oakton.edu/~friend/chinajews.html>.

Kulanu Listserv Becomes Moderated

The Kulanu listserv is now a moderated list. Submit posts to kulanu-submit@ube.ubalt.edu. Explaining the reasons for the change, Kulanu's Internet coordinator David Turetsky noted, "Since its inception Kulanu's listserv has been an open forum for the exchange of information related to Kulanu's historic mission. While the list has often been a wonderful resource and welcome common virtual space for exchanges, at times some of the dialog has strayed from Kulanu's mission. Occasionally there have been breaches of etiquette and inappropriate personal exchanges. These incidents are not only unfortunate diversions, but also subject our subscribers to traffic they do not wish to receive. Traffic to the list will now first be subjected to review prior to dissemination to subscribers."

Seeking Jewish Community Leaders

Kulanu president Jack Zeller has been receiving welcome replies to his email letter to Jewish community leaders to become 'Friends of Kulanu,' receiving occasional news by email of our activities, significant events of interest in the various dispersed Jewish communities Kulanu follows, and the availability of touring speakers. If you know of anyone who might have an interest in receiving such occasional news, whether rabbi, community leader, or otherwise, pass their email address along to kulanu@ubmail.ubalt.edu.

Abayudaya Tallitot Available

We have just received two sample tallitot from the new Abayudaya handloom project. This project was conceived in 1995 by Rabbi J. Hershy Worch. The tallitot measure about 3 feet 5 inches by 5 feet 5 inches. They are white cotton and wool with colored stripes, with the *tzitzit* blessing hand-embroidered on the *atarah*. This is a high-quality hand-made product that does not look like a machine-made factory product. It will be a treasured keepsake of these remarkable Ugandan

Jews, and a reminder of distant, exotic Jewish communities every time you wear it. The special introductory price of \$100 (including bag) is inexpensive by Western standards, but these proceeds will be an enormous help to the Abayudaya in their educational, agricultural and health endeavors. Make checks payable to Kulanu and send to the Kulanu office. More tallitot will be arriving; if you are not one of the purchasers of the first two, you may have to wait a few months, but your check will reserve you a tallit.



JJ Is Coming!

Joab ("JJ") Keki, former chairman of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, has been invited to speak and sing at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington on August 6. He hopes he will be able to stay in the US at least six weeks and to accept other invitations for lecture-recitals (for scheduling, contact Karen Primack at 301-565-3094, Primack@mindspring.com).

While JJ is a successful farmer and businessman (he grows coffee and has chaired the local coffee collective), he is perhaps best known to Kulanu readers as a musician. He is the choir director, chief composer, and chief male soloist for the Abayudaya recording "Shalom Everybody Everywhere!" Among his melodies are the renditions of "Sh'ma Yisrael" and "L'cha Dodi."

JJ is also known for his leadership skills in resurrecting the spirit of the Abayudaya in an incident in 1988. Muslim squatters tried to seize Abayudaya lands and bribed local officials, who issued a decree ordering the Abayudaya to leave the area – an area which the youths used as a "kibbutz" to build bricks for a new synagogue. JJ and his two brothers, Aaron and Gershom, led a demonstration defending the youths and were arrested and severely beaten. JJ's battle cry had been *Oba tuffa tuffa* ("If we are to die, then let us die"), and his courage and commitment were recognized not only by the Abayudaya, but also by Muslim and Christian neighbors.

As Lucy Steinitz, a frequent visitor to the Abayudaya, has noted: "JJ exudes leadership in every sense of the word – the very kind of leadership that our people – our world – desperately needs more of."

Take a Virtual Tour

Visit a Lisbon synagogue as it celebrates its centenary by going to <http://www.multimania.com/shaaretikva/>. The synagogue, Shaare Tikva, was the first purpose-built synagogue in Portugal since the Inquisition. The website is also a wonderful resource for some Portuguese Jewish history.

Toward a JCC of Thane

The Jewish community of Thane, India, recently completed the renovation and beautification of its 120-year-old Gate of Heaven Synagogue. The next phase of development of a comprehensive Jewish community center will be the renovation of their mikveh. The center will cater to 40 percent of India's 5500 Jews.

KULANU BRIEFS

A Jewish-Africana Website

Carolivia Herron co-moderates the Jewish-Africana online discussion group along with Julius Lester. She says, "We have just opened our website <<http://www.jewish-africana.com>> and invite you to come and have a look around. There are several more organizations that should be added to our list of resources. Please send a note to me if you have suggestions. We are particularly interested in expanding the list of books. Let me know if you have children or adult books to add to our suggestions of works depicting the lives of Jews of African descent. All money generated from web sales will go to Ethiopian Jews."

A New Abayudaya Businessman

Israel Siriri of the Abayudaya community in Uganda has recently earned his certificate in Building and Civil Engineering. Israel has left a job with a company in eastern Uganda because he was required to work on Saturday and because he missed the Abayudaya community. He has now decided to start his own construction company, Chaim Lebatim Construction Ltd., early in 2001. It is under the process of registration by the Ugandan government. "In doing this, it will help to create employment for the community members and at the same time train some to adopt skills. We shall also require no external manpower for our own construction," he explains. He is selling shares in the company at \$10 each to people or organizations interested in Abayudaya development, in order to raise start-up capital for equipment.

New Lemba Pen Pal Program

Rose Bromberg of Riverdale, NY, has started a "friendship circle" pen pal arrangement between American Jews and our Lemba cousins in South Africa. Anyone interested in becoming a pen pal is invited to send name, address, age, email address and special interests or requests to Bromberg at bromrosam@aol.com.

Gold Speaks About Timbuktu

Rick Gold has spoken about the descendants of Jews in Timbuktu to the Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah in Baltimore and to Machar in Washington. Gold, who spent four years in Bamako, Mali, has helped publicize this group. He can be reached at rickgold@mindspring.com.

Falash Mura Are Sicker Than General Ethiopian Population

A three-month survey released in November by members of the Struggle to Save Ethiopian Jewry, an advocacy group based in New York, is reporting widespread disease and malnutrition among the Falash Mura, the Ethiopian Jews who want to immigrate to Israel. Half of Addis Ababa's 8000 Falash Mura were examined by two doctors and a nutritionist.

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, the survey found that the Falash Mura are suffering much greater hunger and disease than the general Ethiopian population – 55 percent of children under five are stunted, 16 percent are abnormally underweight, and nearly 60 percent of children reported being sick in a two-week period. The rate of more severely underweight children among the Falash Mura was six times higher than among the general population. Among mothers, 50 percent have goiter, as do 24 percent of children. Goiter indicates iodine deficiency and can cause miscarriage, stillbirth and retarded fetal growth.

Contributions for these Falash Mura can be sent to: NACOEJ, 132 Nassau St., New York, NY 10038.

We Grieve

Sarah Nantabo of the Abayudaya community in Uganda died on December 12, 2000, at age 24 of sickle cell disease.

Israel Rubin, founder of the Tucson chapter of Kulanu, passed away on November 12.

Nettie Kuzminsky, 91, mother of Kulanu activist Irene Vogel, passed away recently.

Refuah Shleyma

Rabbi Samson Mugombe, who studied with Semei Kakungulu, founder of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, is extremely ill. His son Ephraim Kadosi has asked that we pray for him.

Mazel Tov!

To Enosh Keki and his wife Shirah Musenero on the birth of their daughter Irer-al Galenda Eisner in Mbale, Uganda.

To **Irene Vogel** on the birth of her grandson, **Benjamin Nathan Franklin Vogel**.

To **Rabbi J. Hershy Worch** on the publication by Jason Aronson Inc. of his translation of *Sacred Fire* by Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira. The book covers the sage's Sabbath and holiday messages in 1939-42 in the Warsaw ghetto.

To **Rabbi Jeffrey Summit**, an ethnomusicologist, on the publication of his new book, *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*, by Oxford University Press, with a CD included. The book examines how choice of melody helps Jews present and maintain their religious and cultural identity.

To **Michael Sachs**, who has been appointed AIPAC's Northeast Regional Director

Todah Rabah!

To **George and Lenore Cohen**, and to **Simcha Kuritzky** for their donation of religious books for communities abroad.

To the **Lillian Schermer Charitable Trust** for its grant in the amount of \$1666 and to **Abe Pollin** for his \$1000 grant.

To the **Madav IX Foundation** for its generous grant, **Jan Katz** for her \$200 donation, **Irwin Berg** for his \$500 donation to the Abayudaya Orphans' Fund, **Louis Blumengarten** for his \$180 contribution, to **Ray Kaplan** for his \$125 contribution, to **Jonathan Marshall** for his \$108 donation for Abayudaya education

To members of the \$100 club: **Mary B. Cooper, Marvin Wolf, Dr. Stanley Azen, Evan Dobelle**

To **Burt and Linda Cohen** for their contribution to the Lorna Margolis Fund for Abayudaya Orphans Education, in honor of the birth of Irer-al Galenda Eisner, daughter of Enosh Keki and Shirah Musenero.

To the donors who responded to the president's special appeal for Bnei Menashe transportation to Israel: **Mr. & Mrs. Frank Bachrach, Irwin & Elaine Berg, Jack Goldfarb, Dr. Jules Harris, Max Amichai Heppner, David Holtz & Diane Glatt, Gary & Meira Itzkowitz, Drs. Edwin & Roz Kolodny, Seymour Kunin, James Lande, Robert & Jeri Lande, Elihu Leifer, Lionel Okun, Ira & Marilyn Polon, Claudine Schweber, Rachael Segal, Julie & Barbara Shair, Dr. & Mrs. Lawrence Tannenbaum, Drs. Jack & Diane Zeller.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We Remember Israel Rubin

By Jack Zeller

Israel Rubin has left us. Israel, a true Kulanu activist, was the founder of our Tucson chapter. He was also a valuable proponent for Jewish education in his community. Israel's life explains so well our tradition to say Zichron Livrachta (to be remembered as a blessing). Israel was so inspiring, active, and ingenious to find a novel way of achieving a higher level of Jewish life.

He co-founded a successful University of Arizona Committee on Judaic Studies program that encourages life-long Jewish learning. He created the nonprofit New Southwest Jewish Archives. He participated in the restoration of the Jewish Cemetery at Boot Hill in Tombstone, Arizona. At the time of his death, he was developing a computer based program, "Lighting Candles in the Closet: The History of Conversos and Crypto-Jews."

A new organization is not easy to move along and modified Jewish ideas inherently have an incubation period that seems intolerably long. Israel made all this both easier and faster. For all these reasons it is hard to let go. And we shouldn't since his memory remains to inspire us all until it is our time to also let go. (Donations may be made to Kulanu's Israel Rubin Memorial Fund.)

Addis Ababa (cont.)

(Continued from page 5)

where you look, the compound is clean and well-maintained. Despite the limited resources, the sheet-iron walls of the dirt-floor classrooms have been illustrated in bright colored paints with educational pictures of the human body, Israeli geography, and Hebrew words. Principal Tsegaye and vice principal Setegn (who proudly wrote his name for me in Hebrew) also showed me the store-room which contained notebooks and pencils which are given to every child. There is a full-time nurse on site who makes referrals, if necessary, to the health clinic run by the Joint Distribution Committee, about 15 minutes down the road. Some children have also been selected for training for the compound's circus; they learn gymnastics and tumbling when they are not in class. As an incentive, they get a second meal as well.

Everyone greeted me warmly. "Shalom!" they said, and smiled. A few asked me questions, mostly in Hebrew, which is taught during and after school. "Where are you from?" "What is your name?"

Although I visited on a Tuesday morning, the temporary synagogue was packed full. Women and men sat separately, praying fervently in Amharic and Hebrew. What would an American rabbi give for such an attentive crowd, I wondered? As I left the compound, the sound of a familiar children's song reached my ears: "Am

We Are Grieving for Sarah Nantabo

By Rabbi J. Hershy Worch

Sarah Nantabo is dead ... we are grieving. Who can fathom the depths of a Jewish heart? Who can write a eulogy for the soul of a leader among the Abayudaya, a mother, a daughter?

AAAAAaaaiiiiiiiiieeee

I have tasted her oversweet-cha, eaten her delicious matoke, listened to her chanting the sacred liturgy of her people, our people, and watched her checking, grain by grain, kilos of rice for traces of bugs which might render the food she cooked unkosher. She was our sister.

The loss of Sarah Nantabo is our loss.

All women of the Abayudaya have beauty and grace, but Sarah was gifted with an abundance of rare talents and genuine charisma.

AN ELEGY ON SUDDEN DEATH

*Shall I tell them of your blue black hair?
and you crumpled like a leaf.
Talk joy of you, let them share?
and you gone beyond belief.
The shy glad smile, would they care?
and you gone God-knows where.*

*Shall I tell them of your classic face?
gurgling laughter, the time we had.
Describe your skin, lips and breath?
or the manner of your death.
Herein and thereafter
forever in that other place
where you've been had.*

The death of Sarah Nantabo rocks our firmament whether we find ourselves in the USA or in Australia or in Africa.

The biggest smile in the world has died.

It is Chanukah and the Halacha forbids eulogies other than those for extraordinary individuals, and then only if the eulogizing is done during the funeral.

So I will end with the blessing that He who mourns for Jerusalem the capital city of the world of the heart, of truth, of Shabbes, of peace, may He comfort us among all the mourners of Zion.

Publications of Note (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

The fall 2000 issue of *Judaism* quarterly magazine featured an article by Kenneth Schultz with Matthew Meyer entitled "From All Their Habitations – Reunited with Our Ancient Faith: Practicing Judaism in Uganda." This nine-page article delves into the history and current practices of the Abayudaya, and their meaning to the authors.

The cover story of *The Jerusalem Report* of October 10, "The New Jews of Mexico," by Yigal Schleifer, addresses the rejection by Mexico's mainstream Jews of congregations in Venta Prieta, Puebla and Veracruz composed mainly of "indigenous" Jewish converts.

Gabe Levenson's "Uganda: Matzah in the Mire," appeared in the December 15 *New York Jewish Week*. It encourages a visit to the Abayudaya for Passover.

"True Believers" by Sue Fishkoff appeared in the December issue of *Moment*. It details the growth of conversions to Judaism in America's south and Midwest, partially in response to "Taste of Judaism" courses.

The Jewish Proclaimer, published by the National Center to Encourage Judaism, PO Box 651, Silver Spring, MD 20918, tel 301-593-2319, (Continued on page 12)

A Historian Volunteers in Suriname's Jewish Cemeteries (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

not all planters could be convinced to forego harsh retribution for real or imagined or fabricated breaches of peace terms.

By the 1770s, the government decided to abandon the policy of treaties with the Maroons and commenced to engage in an all-out war against them. Jodensavanne, which was situated on the extremity of the settled area and on the edge of Maroon villages, occupied the front line in the conflict. This added to the decline of the Jewish plantation economy in general and to Jodensavanne in particular.

By 1787, in response to the economic and security conditions, the number of plantations owned by Jews declined from 115 to 46. Although some planters turned from sugar to other crops, there was no substitute for sugar and security. The Jews were moving from Jodensavanne (in the interior) to Paramaribo (on the coast), where they became merchants, storekeepers, artisans, peddlers and professionals.

The move had another effect on the Sephardic community. They now began to live closely with the other inhabitants of the country -- Ashkenazi, Dutch Protestant, freed Blacks and Mulattos. They lost their sense of community and with that loss came a lessening of their commitment to the faith of their ancestors.

Today, Jodensavanne and the surrounding area contain nothing of their former grandeur. Some of the remains of the synagogue, *Beracha ve Shalom* (Blessing and Peace), still are visible. It was once a grand Sephardic place of worship with a gallery for women, a Jewish Court (Beth Din) and a school all under one roof. It is now largely a collection of bricks and rubble only suggesting its former size and none of its former glory. The synagogue stood in the center of a town of which nothing whatsoever - not a house, not a street, not an original tree - remains.

Beracha ve Shalom synagogue in Jodensavanne was first built in 1685 by the Jews who came from Cayenne. It was rebuilt, extended and enlarged several times since that date. It may not have been the first synagogue; there is a belief that there was an earlier synagogue on Cassipora Creek which has never been found. There may also have been an earlier synagogue in Jodensavanne. *Beracha ve Shalom* stands on a hill at the edge of the east bank of the Surinam River about 35 feet above the level of the water. It would have been clearly visible by anyone traveling up or down the river, and many an 18th century artist has recorded it for posterity from this viewpoint.

In 1785, *Beracha ve Shalom* celebrated its 100th anniversary. The governor of the colony, the Council of Policy and the leading citizens of the country attended -- in all 1600 persons. At that time, the synagogue was already barely more than a symbol which was cherished by its former Jewish inhabitants and their descendants now living in Paramaribo. In 1832, Jodensavanne was gutted by fire, and a portion of the synagogue's roof collapsed. In more recent times, a civil war was fought in and around the remains of *Beracha ve Shalom*, causing it to deteriorate further.

There are three cemeteries within the vicinity of the synagogue. One is the Beth Haim cemetery of Jodensavanne, which we came to transcribe and record. It lies about 400 yards east of the synagogue. The second is a Creole cemetery which is about 300 yards further east. The third is another Jewish cemetery about two miles up-river from Jodensavanne at Cassipora Creek, also on the east bank of the river.

The Beth Haim Cemetery at Jodensavanne is rectangular, about 135 yards long and 70 yards wide. The length of the cemetery is roughly on an east-west axis and the width on a north-south axis. The cemetery slopes gently downhill so that the southern length of the cemetery is lower than the northern half. The southern half is also more damp and has more shade. After Jodensavanne was abandoned (it is unclear when it was totally abandoned, but by 1800 there were only about 20 Jewish families living there), the jungle reclaimed the town and the cemetery. Just how quickly cleared land can revert to jungle became vivid when twice a day we passed a metal, ocean-going steamer which recently ran aground on the Surinam River. It is now

partially enveloped by green vines climbing up to the top of its highest mast.

The Beth Haim Cemetery at Jodensavanne has undergone several major clean-ups since it was abandoned. In 1906 there was a futile attempt to restore the cemetery. In 1940 and 1941, the Dutch government in exile transported Dutch Nazis and German nationals living in Indonesia to Suriname. For the duration of the war, they were confined at Jodensavanne where they were compelled to clean up the cemetery, the ruins of the synagogue and the surrounding area. In the early 1980s another clean-up took place in connection with an archaeological study by the government. Most recently, Adriana (the same Adriana who cleaned-up the Ashkenazi cemetery at Kwataweg) hired some workmen to clear out debris along the southern border of the cemetery.

The Beth Haim Cemetery at Jodensavanne contains about 456 limestone, marble and brownstone tombstones. There may be well more than 456 persons buried there because the southern half of the cemetery has much fewer stones than the northern half. It is a possibility that the poorer inhabitants of Jodensavanne who could afford only wooden grave markers were buried in the southern half, which was less desirable than the northern half. In time, the wooden grave markers may have decomposed and disappeared. It is also possible that among the poor who are buried in the southern half are those free mulattos and blacks in Jodensavanne who became, or were raised as, Jews. Their number could not have been very great because a 1762 census listed only 27 free mulattos and blacks in Jodensavanne, without giving their religion.

The traditional method of Jewish burial is for the feet of the decedent to face east and the head to face west. Tradition has it that the Messiah will appear from the east and, upon his appearance, the dead will be physically resurrected. In order for the dead to rise to greet the Messiah at the earliest moment possible, the dead are buried with the feet toward the east. This tradition was not rigidly observed at the Beth Haim of Jodensavanne or Cassipora. The tombstones gave a helter-skelter appearance, some facing east and some facing south. I was told in the synagogue in Paramaribo that the stones that face south were the children of mulattos or of non-Jewish women or of women who had transgressed. The stones appear to contradict this report. Husbands and wives, such as Abraham Raphael de Aguilar and his wife, Sarah, are buried on an angle, not due east. Grave 401, of a rabbi whose name I could not read, lies in a north-south orientation. Women who are described as virtuous, and unmarried women for whom the term "virgin" is used, have stones facing south. The stones of children could regularly be found at right angles to those of their parents.

Thus, it appears that the Portuguese nation of Jodensavanne did not observe the tradition of burying the dead to greet the Messiah upon their resurrection. Or, it may be that they overrode tradition by the desire that all members of the family arise together at the coming of the Messiah. It seems more likely that those who scandalized the community or who compromised their sense of unity left the community or were denied the right to be buried there.

The gravestones at the Beth Haim in Jodensavanne are remarkably uniform in appearance and content. Most of them bear inscriptions both in Hebrew and Portuguese. Some are entirely in Portuguese; a lesser number are entirely in Hebrew; still fewer are entirely in Dutch.

The typical stone starts by advising us that the year would be written in the abbreviated fashion ("L P K"). Next, there is a quotation from the Bible in Hebrew that was deemed appropriate for the decedent. Most often it is a quote about the person in the Bible after whom he or she was named:

"Then Isaac gave up his life and died and was gathered unto his people." Genesis 35:29

(Continued on page 13)

LETTERS

(Continued from page 2)

Sephardic Holocaust Memoirs

Two years ago, Sephardic House launched a project to publish Sephardic Holocaust Memoirs. We applied for grants as seed money for this project and this past spring we were awarded grants which will help us develop a Sephardic Studies and Holocaust Library Series. We received an initial grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany as a Matching Grant. We subsequently received funding from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Recanati Foundation. We are still seeking matching funds for this project in the amount of \$10,000. If you wish to make a minimum donation of \$100 donation to this project, your name will appear on each of the first 5 volumes we publish and you will receive gift copies of these books.

Dr. Steven Bowman, Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati, is the director of the project. At this time, we are interested in receiving for review for publication, memoirs and important documents relating to the Holocaust experience. For questions, please contact me directly and privately.

Scott Alfassa-Marks, elpasha@sephardichouse.org
Director of Research and Development
Sephardic House
New York 212-294-8301 x8357

Fan Mail

Please include me on your mailing list. All my contact information is listed below. By all means feel free to email me. I am fascinated by what you are doing. I saw the documentary on the lost tribes and find this information incredibly interesting. Thank you for the work you are doing. It makes me understand and appreciate the really special people we are.

Gayle Spiegel
Newton, MA 02464

There are presently almost 500 messages in my Inbox because I haven't had time to do badly needed sorting and organizing. However, my mailbox will never be too full for a message from you. I applaud the work you are doing. I live in Carlsbad, California, and--because I have primary responsibility for seeing that the needs of my 98-year-old mother are met--rarely travel. Thus, I'm not likely to be able to attend any of the lectures you sponsor. However, as a Jew and JewishGen volunteer designing and constructing Web sites on perished Jewish communities, I am very interested in your efforts to help identify and encourage Jews living everywhere--even in the most unexpected places.

Marjorie Stamm Rosenfeld
Carlsbad, CA

The newsletter was great as usual. We read the story about Ghana aloud at our Shabbat table.

Steve Epstein
Toronto, Canada

INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Please let Kulanu know whenever you have a new address, and please include your new phone numbers and e-mail. Every issue of the newsletter that has to be redirected costs Kulanu a minimum of \$1.50--money we would much rather spend for our communities.

And Don't Forget, the date on your label is the date of your LAST donation to Kulanu. After 12 months without a donation, the merciless data base refuses to send you any further newsletters. So, PLEASE, remember us at least once a year, although donations are gladly received as often as you wish.

What if you are a snowbird and regularly spend time at another location? The new Kulanu data base can handle that flawlessly providing you tell Kulanu the months you usually spend in each residence.

Publications of Note (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

is a quarterly newsletter that highlights the scores of synagogues and Jewish institutions in the US that reach out and welcome all. The Center helps fund outreach studies that go under such names as Taste of Judaism, Introduction to Judaism, and Kaballah for Non-Jewish Souls.

Celeste Katz's "Jews of India Add to City Fabric," in the *NY Daily News* of Nov. 19, 2000, features Romiel and Noreen Daniel, Bene Israel (of India) leaders in New York City.

By subscribing to *The Casa Shalom Journal*, readers can enjoy a quarterly always chock full articles on anousim history, current research, commentary, and even book reviews, recipes, and poetry. At the same time, they can give much-needed monetary support to Gloria Mound's research at the Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies. To subscribe send \$36 by check or International Money Order in any equivalent convertible currency to: Casa Shalom Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies, PO Box 66, Gan Yavneh Israel 70800. Check Mound's web site at www.gezernet.co.il/marrano.

AT NANJING U. (CONT.)

(Continued from page 3)

Elie Wiesel's autobiographical account *Night*. I decided that I would further explore Wiesel's works and this came about in my MA thesis--*The Choice of Existence in the Post-Holocaust Era as Seen through Three Early Novels of Elie Wiesel*.

Four years have elapsed since my first contact with the Jewish culture. The initial obsession with Anne has led me into a fantastic world of the Jewish culture, which is out of my imagination. During this process of learning and thinking, I have kept on reaching new horizons in different respects and levels. This is only a beginning, I think, and it will go further.

Meet a Non-Lemba Bantu Jew (cont.)

(Continued from page 5)

Yisrael in their entirety, descendants of Avraham, Isaac and Yakov, who built a temple Dzimba dze ma bge (Houses of Rocks) out of a rock called "Bgwe" and then around it a trading center -- very Jewish, huh?

We are Jews. Witness this by what we do and how we live, as the Good Book suggests, and not by what we look like -- besides, original Jews were dark and still are, to this there can be no mistake. We believe we are the living, breathing Torah and have kept Torah in our hearts. "Torah" in Shona (the main Zimbabwean language) translates as "take" or Tolah in Zulu/Xhosa, and was "given" on Mt. Sinai to be "taken" by the Yisralites. This pattern of similarities permeates Bantu culture and languages, which are merely offshoots of original Hebrew.

We still pay "lobola" to the parents of a bride, as Isaac and Yakov did by working their fields for seven years, or some form of labor and gifts, but now cows as a sign of wealth are acceptable. Jews resident in Yisrael and Europe have forgotten its practice. We keep one day of the week sacred called "Tshisi" in Zimbabwe. **Many of us have forgotten all the old ways mainly due to colonization, Diaspora and Christian missionary education that slowly but surely has eradicated our identity and knowledge of it, so once again it is in great jeopardy.**

However, 70 years ago we started to rekindle our culture and with it its inseparable religion. Congregation Betel was formed and is now led by Rabbi Cohen Maguwazah from our Rusape Synagogue as head rabbi of southern African Jews. We now have branches in South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and are associated with Betel in America.

I am so pleased and proud to see such great efforts finally being made in addressing the significant genetic finds made by Parfitt and others. **These are rather interesting and ground-shaking discoveries, but this information has been known for centuries.** We are not seeking special recognition, any form of special attention or status. **We are just black Jews, now called Bantus, and we are finding the truth about who we are and how we ended up south of the equator.**

Generally speaking, a negative myth and mistaken identity have plagued Jews throughout our history. That is why we left Palestine in the first place and lived in Diaspora for centuries. Our failure to show objects as our "Almighty" got Romans and Greeks to regard us as pagan or heathen, yet they are the gentiles. Later Arabs called us *kifers* (nonbelievers) because they could not understand how we knew of blood separation in animal slaughter (kosher killing) if we hadn't read their "book," the Koran, that has echoes of our Torah which for us is written in our hearts.

We should never underestimate the power of the "Almighty." Our tribe is much bigger than we think. There aren't hundreds of thousands of Jews in Africa, but millions. And millions more in India and China, etc. **I have relatives and friends from the Lemba tribe and we have always known that not all Bantu are Israelite but many more than just the Lemba are Jews.** The Lemba are just one major group of Jews that settled in southern Africa, but like our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia, it is not just one small group of people; a much larger picture can be drawn of our entire inheritance. The Yorba, Hausa, Ashante, Buganda, and many other tribes in Africa have made public and open their Hebrew roots, but on deaf -- or can I say outright racist -- ears who find these claims outlandish.

I shall gather you from beyond the rivers of Kush/Ethiopia (Zephaniah 3:10). The country of Kush holds the descendants of Ham, son of Noah. Beyond those rivers we can trace our bloodlines directly to those in Yisrael at the time of Aaron and before all the way to Yakov.

By the way, my surname is Nyathi / Buffalo, but due to adoption as a child Mbolekwa is my legal surname. My father's side is Nyathi and the story goes that we were caught up in Suthu wars many a year ago but in short the Buffalo (an ox) is significant of oxen hamstringing by Shimon and Levi. On that little clue, on behalf of the entire Betel congregation, I bid thee Shalom.

A Historian Volunteers in Suriname's Jewish Cemeteries (cont.)

"And Abraham gave up his life, dying at a ripe old age, an old man, satisfied with life, and he was gathered to his fathers." Genesis 25:8

"So Esther was taken to the King's palace." Esther 2:8

"And Jacob resumed his journey. Then the angels of God encountered him." Genesis 32:1-2

"And Moses went up to God." Exodus 19:3

"And Sarah lived 100 years." Genesis 23:1

A wife's tombstone might read: "Many women have done well/But you have excelled them all." Proverbs 31:29

A Kohen's (priest's) inscription was: "Let thy Priests robe themselves in righteousness/And thy saints with joy.: Psalms 132:9

The Portuguese portion of the inscription starts with the letters "SA" standing for "Sepultura" or "Grave of." It is followed by the full name of a man, or, if a woman, by her given name and then the full name of her husband or father. This is then followed by the date of death according to both the Hebrew and Christian calendars. Instead of giving a date of birth, the age of the decedent is often given in years and months (and sometimes days). Finally, an acronym is used at the end of the inscription which expresses the hopes and feelings of the deceased's closest relatives.

The most common are the following:

S A G D G : (S)ua (A)lma (G)oze (D)a (G)loria - May his soul delight in glory.

S A G D E G : (S)ua (A)lma (G)oze (D)a (E)terna (G)loria - May his soul delight in eternal glory.

S B A G D E G : (S)ua (B)endita (A)lma (G)oze (D)a (E)terna (G)loria - May his blessed soul delight in eternal glory.

(The next installment will appear in the net newsletter.)

HAVE A HAPPY PESACH

Meet Mijael Garcia (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

He frequently welcomes the Archbishop and other prelates during large Jewish festivals and celebrations, and they appreciate his services enormously. I've seen several photos of him together with them. They all praise and commend this extraordinary effort at inter-religious outreach. It is because of his unusual outreach efforts that the Mexican government has called upon him to prepare or write tractates and articles about the essence of Judaism. At their request, he prepared a guide to *kashrut* which has now been incorporated into an official government document.

In addition to that, he just completed a translation into Spanish of the Masechet Midot, the talmudic tractate on the measurements of the Ancient Temple.

Mijael's ties with the Archbishop of Veracruz are close. He has often received Christian support when he needed a space for the High Holidays or for other holidays. But it is of constant embarrassment to him that every time he is asked why the Jews can't help him, he has no answer.

Recently, he worked together with leaders and members of other faiths, including Seventh Day Adventists, a Buddhist community, and the Anglican Church to feed 200 homeless people in the rain in the shadow of the Municipal Palace. "It is important to bring Judaism and all religions out of the pulpit and into the streets to feed and help the hungry and the homeless," he said.

Mijael also supports the open practice of indigenous religions in Mexico and writes extensively in the Xalapa press about indigenous religions and their need for respect and consideration equal to that received by the Jewish and Christian communities in his country.

In short, then, Mijael practices the same kind of Social Action encouraged by some of our greatest Jewish leaders of the 20th Century. But his community desperately needs our help.

Mijael told me that his community receives no financial help from the Ashkenazi community of Mexico because they challenge the authenticity of his community's Judaism. In support of the longevity and depth of religious Jewish practice in his own family, Mijael told me of the Chumash handed down to his grandmother by her grandfather. His grandmother observed the Shabbat every week of her life. Through her stories, he is certain that his community dates back to the Jews among the Conquistadores in the 1500s. To "prove" their authenticity is as difficult as it was for the Ethiopians and Russians to do so once they got to Israel. So they get no organizational support from their Mexican brethren.

Mijael wants to rent a building that can be used as a synagogue. They need supplies. They have no need to pay a rabbi, because Mijael gives of his knowledge and services freely. Their annual budgetary needs are a tiny fraction of those of any North American congregation. They would need a mere \$7000 per year. **If 200 of us could donate at least \$36 each, once a year, we could sustain Mijael's community.**

All in all, you can see that the indigenous Jewish community of Xalapa has a lot to offer to its community as well as to Judaism as an institution. It is for that reason that I am so wedded to it and to its survival. It is my hope that all who read these words are moved to join with me to send them the ongoing support and resources necessary for their survival as a community.

(Jeff Segall is an Adjunct Professor of Spanish at Borough of Manhattan, Community College in NYC and a Musical Chaplain at the Jewish Home and Hospital in NYC. Donations to Kulanu can be earmarked for the Xalapa community.)

From the Road in Manipur (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

4) The Bnei Menashe want financial assistance in purchasing their own plot of land in Imphal to set up a synagogue and community center. Currently they are renting a building but want a place to call their own. Land is very cheap here. An acre of farmland can be bought for about \$500 US.

6) Sandy and I are donating 5000 rupees, 4000 of which will help bring electricity to the Jewish village of Petakh Tikvah here. FYI, 4000 rupees is less than \$100. A little money here goes a long long way to changing the quality of people's lives.

You Don't Have To Be White! (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Village, Connecticut.

The Network was started in Boston and is now expanding as a result of grants from the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Jewish Outreach Institute. The national organizer is Linda C. Jum, a Chinese-American who converted to Judaism 29 years ago, while in college. Jum, who serves as outreach coordinator, can be reached at Linda@multiracialjewishnet.org. JMN's communications coordinator is Yosh Schulman yosh@multiracialjewishnet.org.

Those without computers can contact the Jewish Multiracial Network at 307 Seventh Ave., #900, New York, NY 10001, tel. 212-242-5598, fax 212-924-5112.

Jews of color and their families have a lot to learn from one another. But white Jews also have a lot to learn from multiracial Jewish groups. Let us hope that some joint programs will be in the offing.

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.*

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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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BOOK COMMENT: *Suddenly Jewish* by Barbara Kessel

Reviewed by Irwin M. Berg

An interesting and worthwhile book is Barbara Kessel's work, *Suddenly Jewish*, published by Brandeis Univ. Press in 2000. The subtitle of the book is "Jews Raised as Gentiles Discover Their Jewish Roots." A more accurate subtitle would include as well "descendants of Jews who never knew they had a Jewish ancestor." The fascinating aspect of the book is that both are deeply moved when they learn about their Jewish roots.

The first of the four chapters is entitled "Crypto-Jews." By this title, Kessel intends to tell us about the descendants of *conversos* (Spanish and Portuguese Jews who converted to Catholicism not out of conviction but under duress). She is interested in only those descendants who, until they were adults, never knew that they had Jewish ancestors. Interviews with more than 20 of these descendants are reported.

Some of those interviewed had parents or grandparents who engaged in certain practices and traditions whose significance was lost but which had been handed down through the generations. Only by happenstance did they learn that these practices and traditions were Jewish in origin. Others learned of Jewish ancestry after doing genealogical research. For some, the new knowledge had no impact. But for most of those interviewed by Kessel, the result was emotional upheaval. Some families split; brothers and sisters took different paths; some parents admitted that they knew but others denied knowledge and rejected the evidence.

The most interesting cases are those where the child, although brought up Catholic, felt different from classmates and neighbors. Some even felt Jewish although they had no contact with Jews and were unaware that a grandmother was performing rites that had a Jewish origin. One of those interviewed described herself as a "tissue" Jew; her "tissues" knew that she was a Jew even if she did not.

The second chapter is entitled "Hidden Children." All of the episodes involving the Hidden Children occurred during the Holocaust. As the author notes, these children were twice traumatized: once when they were removed from their parents, and again when they were reunited. The original "hidden child" was Moses. Some, like Moses, gained strength from the experience, but others are psychologically injured.

The chapter on the "Children of Survivors" refers to children who were raised by parents who were born as Jews but who converted to Christianity or simply lived as Christians. It is the children who were never told that their parents or grandparents were Jews that is the subject of this chapter. Therefore, the use of the word "survivors" is misleading since it includes parents who "converted" or "passed" before as well during the Nazi period. The final category is adoptees - children with a Jewish birth parent (or Jewish grandparent) who were adopted by Christians. These adoptees are far less disturbed by their discovery and far less open to becoming Jewish than any of the other children who suddenly discover a Jewish ancestor. For them the level of emotion ranges from wistful to uninvolved. Only in one of the cases did an adoptee convert to Judaism.

The book certainly causes one to ponder. There are many children in various parts of the world whose Jewish identities were concealed by their parents because of fear of persecution, or of the Inquisition, or of the Nazi camps. Are they to be treated as gentiles if they show an interest in the religion of their ancestors and be refused three times before they are accepted? Shouldn't they be welcomed into the community with a special dispensation based upon their suffering or the suffering of an ancestor? Shouldn't anyone, whether or not he or she had a Jewish ancestor who suffered for the desire to be Jewish, also be welcomed? These are the questions inspired by Kessel's book that most intrigue me as a member of Kulanu.

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