

KULANU

“all of us”



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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Next Kulanu meeting Sept. 1 (see page 4)

A Pilgrimage to Portugal

By Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

“Celebrating Our Portuguese-Jewish Heritage,” an eight-day conference-tour of Portugal, was conceived by and led in June by Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum, founder of Saudades. It was jointly sponsored by Saudades, Kulanu, and Root & Branch. The group of



Mausenbaum (center) is flanked by the author Isabel Violante Pereira and Jose Bernardo Madeira da Costa at the Synagogue in Oporto

25, many of whom are descendants of Crypto-Jews from Portugal, included scholars, artists, history buffs and Sephardi activists. The enthusiastic group toured the major sights of Jewish significance in Portugal in a motor coach, hearing a continuous flow of lectures and presentations by experts – both on and off the coach. Kulanu encouraged the participation of Dr. Rudo Mathivha from the Lemba community in South Africa to share the parallel and similar story of the Lemba. Here are some excerpts from Mausenbaum’s trip journal.)

We were welcomed at a reception by Castelo de Vide’s mayor, former mayor and other city officials, where we were briefed regarding the Jewish history and had the former-mayor, Carolino Tapadejo, take us on a walking tour of the old Jewish quarter.

He was proud – and rightfully so – of his role in getting

Castelo de Vide’s Jewish history recognized. It was in this old and beautiful town that Mario Soares, then president of Portugal, apologized to the Jewish people in the presence of then Israeli Ambassador (to Portugal) Colette Avital in 1989. It occurred during Carolino Tapadejo’s tenure as mayor, so we were fortunate to have someone who was involved and instrumental in the restoration of the Jewish quarter take us on our tour.

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Abayudaya Mourn Death of Samson Mugombe, An “Official” Jew

The Abayudaya Jews of Uganda are mourning the death of Samson Mugombe, their most respected elder, and the last surviving direct disciple of Abayudaya founder Semei Kakungulu. Mugombe died in a hospital in Mbale after a long illness. He is survived by over 100 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Born in 1909, he had embraced the new Jewish community when it began in 1919.

Rabbi Andy Sacks of Jerusalem, who visited Mugombe last February, has said, “This marks the death of an important member of the world Jewish community.”

Prof. Arye Oded of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, a former diplomat and author of a book on the history of religion in Uganda, issued this statement:

My wife Esther and I were very sorry to hear the sad news of Samson’s Mugombe’s death. We had very close and friendly relations with him when we lived in Uganda in the 1960s.

Mugombe was one of the closest persons to the founder of the Abayudaya Semei Kakungulu and since 1944, for nearly 50 years, he was recognized as the spiritual and secular leader of the commu-

(Continued on page 10)

72 Peruvian Immigrants Arrive in Israel in May

by Michael Freund

Seventy-two new immigrants from Peru arrived in two groups at Ben-Gurion Airport on May 8 and 14. The arrivals, all of whom converted to Judaism last December via a special Beit Din sent by Israel’s Chief Rabbinate, hail from villages outside Lima, the Peruvian capital. They join some 150 other Peruvians who came here back in 1990 and 1991.

With the help of the Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Absorption, the Gush Etzion Regional Council will be absorbing the newcomers in the communities of Alon Shvut and Carmei Tzur. “They came

(Continued on page 7)

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.

Your Donations

As you all know, we depend entirely on your generosity to keep working with all the communities the world over who need our help. We ask you to give at least \$25 per year to keep the newsletter coming to you and more to help with these fascinating and needed projects.

We are sending this newsletter to all former subscribers, in hopes that if you haven't donated recently you'll start up again.

This last year has been a wonderfully productive one. By now, everyone has heard about the Beit Din to Uganda (articles in the *Jerusalem Post*, *Hadassah Magazine*, *The Forward*, among others) and the Beit Din to Peru. These were, of course, very costly for Kulanu.

We are now beginning the plans for an educational trip to Uganda scheduled for February 2003. These efforts, plus working with the Ghana Jews, the Lemba in Southern Africa, the descendants of the Chinese Jewish community, the Bnei Menashe, and others all are taxing the coffers greatly.

Therefore, please send in a further contribution at least once a year, and more often if you can, to keep all this work going.

We are counting on your generosity!

Thank you!

Some Kulanu Tzedakah Opportunities

Kulanu Operating Fund

Kulanu President's Discretionary Fund

Abayudaya Funds

Orphans Education (Lorna Margolis Fund)

Semei Kakungulu High School

Hadassah Infant School

Abayudaya General

Jewish Community of Ghana Fund

Bnei Menashe Fund

Jewish Communities of Peru Fund

China Projects Fund

Ethiopian Jewry Fund

Lemba Fund

General Anousim Fund

Brazilian Anousim Fund

Mexican Anousim Fund

Deadline Extended! Contribute to Our Book! Enter Our Contest!

Kulanu hopes to publish a book of special *Readings in Jewish Diversity*. We hope it will be used for synagogue services, home ceremonies, communal gatherings, and quiet contemplation of the rich diversity to be found within Judaism.

We welcome poems, prayers, prose, even songs! Perspectives can be Ashkenazic or Sephardic, white or nonwhite, American or Asian or African, Lubavitch or "Marrano" – you get the idea! The writing can be, but need not be, geared to a particular holiday or life-cycle event.

Both published and unpublished writings are acceptable, by well-known authors and obscure authors alike (we won't publish anything without written permission).

We know that Kulanu readers include professional writers and poets as well as many eloquent, intelligent others with valuable perspectives.

As an incentive for you to write something especially for this collection – or to submit one of your own unpublished works – we are announcing a CONTEST! Kulanu will award prizes of \$300 for first place, \$200 for second place, and \$100 for third place for the most beautiful, moving and appropriate original submissions by an adult. We are running a separate competition for young writers (16 years of age and under) with awards of \$150, \$75, and \$50.

All contest submissions will be considered for publication in the book. Please indicate clearly if your submission is for the contest as well as for publication. There is no reading fee, but submissions cannot be returned. Each submission **should be submitted in triplicate** and should include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for notification of results. **The new deadline for submissions is December 1, 2002.**

This idea was inspired by a moving Social Action Shabbaton held in January at Tifereth Israel Congregation in Washington, DC. The service included readings that the congregation printed in a small booklet called *Bring Us Home from the Four Corners: Readings and Prayers of Identity, Hope and Justice*. In it, among other things, were a responsive reading incorporating the words of Martin Luther King Jr., prepared by Rabbi Nathan Abramowitz and "After the Fire" by Clara Castelar (a poem about *anousim* that appears on the Kulanu web page). The Shabbaton was chaired by Chris Zeilinger and Gene Herman.

Send submissions to Kulanu Book Project, 1217 Edgevale Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910-1612 or by email to pri-mack@starpower.net.

PLEASE NOTIFY US OF A CHANGE OF ADDRESS. IT IS VERY EXPENSIVE FOR KULANU TO FIND OUT THROUGH THE POST OFFICE!!

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THE LOST CALYPSO SHTETL:

Trinidad's Jewish Community

By Nicole Bland

The Jewish presence in Trinidad is at once constant and invisible. There have been several waves of Jewish immigration to this most southern island of the Caribbean archipelago, yet each one has largely been forgotten by the populace, and few reminders exist in the society of their past (and continuing) presence.

The first major influx of migrants was in the late 1700s and today many of the surnames on the island (Herrera, Pereira, Hart, De Silva, De Lima and Nunes, Ferreira, Stollmeyer to name a few) are living testaments to their presence. Today however none of the descendants of these early immigrants are currently practicing halachic Judaism, and the vast majority are not even aware of their Jewish heritage, a testimony to the high degree of intermarriage between the Jews and the Catholic French of Trinidad in the last two centuries.

In the late 1800s another group of Jewish people made their way to Trinidad, mostly Portuguese in origin. Many of these also assimilated and/or intermarried. Official records show that at the turn of the 20th century, the number of Jews on the island numbered just 31 and all were English in origin. They worked mostly as civil servants and as merchants. One of these, Sir Nathaniel Nathan, served as associate justice of the Trinidad Supreme Court from 1893 to 1900 and chief justice from 1900 to 1903.

The 20th century however would see a rapid rise (and equally rapid fall) in the numbers of Jews in Trinidad.

Of the thousands of Jews who fled Nazism, many found a haven in the Caribbean. From 1936 to 1939 Trinidad was the most welcoming beacon as it had no visa requirement, and only a £50 landing deposit. New arrivals were quickly settled in houses rented by a Jewish aid society in the capital, Port of Spain.

Most of the refugees knew very little about the Caribbean before their arrival; as a result, the adjustment was often quite challenging. It did not take long however for the new arrivals to establish small businesses. In the island's two main towns, Port of Spain and San Fernando, new cafes, factories and shops started to appear. The sole daily newspaper at the time, the *Trinidad Guardian*, wrote "One of the physicians, a lady doctor, is now a midwife, another turned chemist, and a third one is a foreman in a local factory. A famous master-builder of Vienna is now looking for any kind of work. His wife makes a living by tailoring. A lawyer has become a canvasser, another a floor-walker, while a third one is going to open a jeweler's store"

By 1939 the European Jewish community numbered 600 and the following calypso by Charlie "Gorilla" Grant could be heard:

*Tell me what you think of a dictator
Trampling the Jews like Adolph Hitler
Tumbling them out of Germany
Some running for refuge in the West Indies
Some land in Demerara and Grenada
They land in Trinidad very regular
The way they are coming all of them
Will make Trinidad a New Jerusalem*

Concerned, colonial authorities enacted a temporary ban on immigration from 'specified' European countries. There also existed a sense of ambivalence about the Jewish presence amongst the local population. These feelings however were more rooted in intense competition for scarce economic resources among the generally impoverished population than in anti-Semitic sentiment, and the new immigrants experienced no real expressions of hostility.

As they created new economic niches for themselves in their "Calypso Shtetl," the "Calypso Jews" (as they now say themselves) (Continued on page 9)

Resolution on Ethiopian Jewry Praised

At its 2002 Conference in May, the Rabbinic Assembly, which is composed of Conservative rabbis, passed the following RESOLUTION ON ETHIOPIAN JEWRY:

WHEREAS a healthy Diaspora is a critical component of modern Jewish life, and all Jews in the Diaspora are precious and worthy of our support, and the institution of the synagogue is central to the Diaspora for organization, vigor, education, and communication; and

WHEREAS those Jews living in Ethiopia believe that the political climate in Ethiopia is such that it is now possible to create a public, institutional, indigenous presence, and that such a presence would help protect the Jewish heritage of Ethiopia;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Rabbinical Assembly support Ethiopian Jews with encouragement, literature, advice, visitors and financial support.

Kulanu president Jack Zeller welcomed the adoption of the Resolution as an important step in correcting widespread misinformation. He commented, "Some large and important Jewish institutions have said, many times, there are no more Beta Israel in Ethiopia. As in any Jewish society, there are those who want to make *aliyah* (immigrate to Israel) and those who do not for whatever reasons. This resolution humanizes Judaism in its Ethiopian (Beta Israel) format and appeals for help. Most importantly it corrects misinformation. Let's think about how to make this resolution known; and think of small but repetitive ways of making this resolution a living document."

Yohannes Zeleke, an Ethiopian Jewish archeologist, also praised the document. He pointed out that "the largest portion of the Ethiopian Jews are still in Ethiopia. On the top of that, hundreds and thousands of people are in the process of confidence-building and re-converting to their original religion, Judaism."

Zeleke hopes the resolution will also encourage preservation of

the largest portion of the Ethiopian Jews are still in Ethiopia

the Ethiopian Jewish cultural heritage. He explained, "The Ethiopian Jewish cultural heritage should be protected and preserved as part of the global Jewish historical and cultural identity. The cemeteries, and over 800 synagogues should not be abandoned or avoided as if they do not have historical significance."

Zeleke feels this question will soon be raised by the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel: "For the Bete-Israelis, still and forever, Ethiopia is their home country. I have to remind you that the Bete-Israelis are the founders of the Ethiopian state. And it was the only Jewish kingdom in power in the world up to 330 CE, and several times thereafter. We have the oldest Jewish temple and hundreds of synagogues that need very special attention, protection and research."

Zeleke is fond of explaining to the uninitiated that, in addition to the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem, there was a Temple of Yeha in Tegray from 150 BCE to 150 CE, in the context of the proto-Axum civilizations. Although some European researchers simply call it a "temple," Zeleke has argued that since the religion in the area up to 330 CE was Judaism, the Yeha Temple should be considered Jewish. He will soon have an article on this, co-authored with the French scholar Eric Gudet, published in the *Journal of Annales D'Ethiopie*.

KULANU BRIEFS

Next Kulanu Meeting

The next Kulanu meeting will be held on Sunday, September 1, at 10 a.m., at the home of Aron and Karen Primack in Silver Spring, Maryland. Guest speakers will be **Max Amichai Heppner** on developments in the Mexican and Orlando Anousim ("Marrano") communities, and **Ana Kurland**, on her adventures and discoveries running Kulanu's Anousim Listserve. Bring a vegetarian brunch dish to share. For directions call 301 565 3094 or email primack@starpower.net.

Deadline for Next Newsletter Moved Up!

The deadline for the next newsletter will be **September 15** (one month earlier than usual), due to the editor's travel schedule. Please send notices and submissions to primack@starpower.net.

New Address for Donations and Data

Please note that Kulanu has a new treasurer and a new address for receiving your tax-deductible contributions:

Kulanu, Inc.
c/o Harriet Bograd, Treasurer
165 West End Ave., 3R
New York, NY 10023

Kulanu has installed a new, improved database, and any additions, deletions, or revisions should be sent to hbograd@compuserve.com or tel. 212-877-8082 or fax 212-724-7929.

Those desiring an **email (Adobe Acrobat or pdf) version of the newsletter** should contact Aron Primack at primack@starpower.net. This will enable Kulanu to save printing and mailing costs, will save trees, and will allow the recipient to receive the newsletter faster and in color!

A Jewish Multicultural Curriculum

Kulanu has become a sponsoring organization of the Jewish Multicultural Curriculum Project (JMCP), a national project to diversify Jewish education, to offer Jewish multicultural training seminars to educators and community leaders from all backgrounds, and to serve as a clearinghouse for Jewish multicultural resources. JMCP is developing the first-ever curriculum about Jews from Africa, the Middle East, Central and East Asia, Central and South America, and Southern Europe. By Fall 2003, the complete curriculum and a resource guide will be available for teachers, camp counselors, and youth group leaders across the country.

Boutique News

Do you want to give a special gift and perform a mitzvah at the same time? Shop at the Kulanu Boutique, which assists lost and dispersed Jewish communities by encouraging their handicraft industries and enabling them to earn much-needed funds. The Boutique has just received a large shipment of tallitot and kippot hand made by the Bnei Menashe of northeastern India. These can be ordered through www.kulanuboutique.com or through the order form on page 15 of this newsletter. If you are not sure of your recipient's tastes, consider sending a hand-calligraphed Kulanu Boutique Gift Certificate. These are available in amounts of \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$125.

Ghana Challah Covers – Buy in Volume!

The Kulanu Boutique continues to sell beautiful embroidered challah covers from Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana. We only have 10 left

from the last shipment, but we are expecting another shipment soon. It makes a huge difference when individuals buy a dozen, and either resell them or use them for gifts. The usual price is \$25, but if you buy a dozen they cost \$20 each. For pictures of the covers and ordering information, see the Sefwi Wiawso (Tiferet Israel) Challah Covers on www.kulanuboutique.com. Thanks to the following purchasers of a dozen or more challah covers: Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein, Karen Kunstler Goldman and Neal Goldman, Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman, Bert Linder and Bliss Siman, Marc and Susan Platt, Diane and Jack Zeller, West End Synagogue (for synagogue Shabbat dinners).

One-Time T-Shirt Offer!

Rabbi Howard Gorin and Tikvat Israel Congregation in Rockville, Maryland, have generously donated 50 beautiful "Am Echad" T-shirts as a fund-raiser for the Abayudaya. The design (see picture), created by artist Susan Fullenbaum, depicts a multi-racial group of seven Jewish children and adults holding symbols of festivals. "Am Echad" (in Hebrew letters) and "We Are One" are part of the design. The shirt is available only in Adult sizes Small and Medium.



To receive a shirt, please specify quantity and size, and send your name, address, phone and email with a check for at least \$25 per T-shirt (this includes domestic shipping), payable to "Kulanu," to: T-Shirt Offer, c/o Harriet Bograd, Treasurer, 165 West End Ave., #3R, New York, NY 10023. **And PLEASE don't forget your telephone number and email address.**

Shi Lei Cancels US Tour

Shi Lei, the descendant of Kaifeng Jews who is studying in Israel, regrets he has had to cancel his US speaking tour because he was unable to obtain a visitor's visa. He is currently working on extending his Israeli visa to spend a second year in Israel, this time at the Machon Meir Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Historic Cochin Cemetery Endangered

A court of law in India has issued an injunction order prohibiting the Mayor of Cochin and other officials from acquiring any cemetery land or interfering with the wall at the Cochini Jewish cemetery in Emakuum. This historic burial ground of the oldest Jewish community in India is threatened by a municipal road construction project. Isaac Joshua, president of the Association of Kerala Jews, calls the injunction "temporary relief" and predicts "a long official fight is ahead."

Tefillin Needed in Ethiopia

Men and boys who *daven* at the Jewish compounds in Addis Ababa and Gondar have to line up every day for a turn at laying *tefillin* and making the blessings. The National Conference on Ethiopian Jewry is receiving donations of *tefillin* – even old and no longer kosher ones can be repaired and refurbished. Send to: NACOEJ, 132 Nassau St., New York, NY 10038.

Francisco Photographs Showing

Photographer Jason Francisco will have a show at Stanford University Art Gallery through September 30. The show is titled "Far

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from Zion: Time in Jewish Homelands.” Francisco, an assistant professor in the art school at Rutgers, wrote about the Telugu-speaking Jews in India in Kulanu’s book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*.

Ethiopian Children Receive Gifts

Gaily wrapped books, dolls, stuffed animals, musical instruments, puzzles, coloring books, and other toys collected by concerned young Jewish adults in New Orleans in April were gleefully torn open by Ethiopian pre-schoolers at the Mevasseret Zion absorption center, accompanied by the joyful shouts of those unaccustomed to such “luxury.” Some 6,000 recent immigrants from Ethiopia are living in 15 absorption centers throughout Israel, from Nehariya near Israel’s northern border to Beersheva, capital of the Negev. Almost half of the newcomers are below the age of six. *Yasher koach* to the Young Adult Division Social Action Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans!

Special Rabbis

Rabbi Howard Gorin received the first-ever *Kulanu Extraordinary Service Award*. It was presented to him on May 31 by Diane and

Rabbi Gorin keeping immersion records at the river in Uganda



Jack Zeller at a Shabbat dinner at Gorin’s synagogue, Tikvat Israel, in Rockville, Maryland. Gorin, who was giving a talk about his February trip to Uganda at the event, was honored – without advance notice -- for his unique and courageous achievement in bringing a Beit Din to convert more than 300 members of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello hosts a radio program, “The Radio Rabbi,” on local station WTMJ AM 1280 in Sarasota, Florida, and she begins and ends the show with the “Shema” and the “Shalom” songs from the Abayudaya recording of Ugandan-Jewish music. Since many of her listeners want to purchase CDs when they hear these songs, they are being sold at the gift shop at her congregation, Temple Beth El in Bradenton.

Rabbi Scott Glass, of Temple Beth-El in Ithaca, New York, used the Abayudaya “Bruchim Habaim” at an American wedding ceremony for the first time. The melody was composed by Rachel Namudosi, an Abayudaya musician, and was used under the huppah several times when Glass was in Uganda on the conversion trip in February.

New Yorkers Are Active

A group of Kulanu supporters in New York City, organized by Yaacov Gladstone, has been sending Jewish calendars and Chanukah candles to the Jewish communities in Uganda and Ghana. Gladstone

met with Shi Lei in Israel and reported back to the group. Rabbi Hailu Paris is assisting with outreach to the Black Jewish communities of Greater New York. Gladstone has commented, “They have struggled alone in isolation much too long. We want to reach out to them in a spirit of kinship. They should be part of Klal Yisrael. With our help we hope this will be achieved.”

Latino-Jewish Hip Hop Is Here!

Hip Hop Hoodios is an all-star Latino-Jewish rap/rock collective that has just released the new bilingual “Raza Hoodia” CD. (The band’s name is a play on *Judio*, the Spanish word for Jew.) The CD has been described by critics as hilarious, diverse, danceable, racy, and irreverent. To order the CD by mail, send a check for \$8.99 (it includes postage) to Hip Hop Hoodios CD Offer, c/o JN Media, 612 Cochran Ave. #402, Los Angeles, CA 90036. For more information and sound bytes, go to www.Hoodios.com.

Mazal Tov!

Mazal Tov to **Jack Zeller** on retirement in July from his long-held positions as a distinguished pathologist at the VA Hospital in Washington and Assistant Professor of Pathology at George Washington University.

This photo depicts Zeller concentrating on Kulanu business!



A double Mazal Tov to **Uri Katula** in Uganda. Not only did he graduate from university (see Letters to Kulanu), but ten days later his wife **Zerida** gave birth to their daughter, **Anita**.

Jehoram Kasakya, and his wife **Sarah** have welcomed a new daughter, **Emima**.

Irwin and Elaine Berg recently celebrated their 16th wedding anniversary.

Congratulations to **Yaakov and Alex Gladstone** on the birth of their great-nephew, **Joshua Aaron**.

Mazal tov to Rabbi **Jack Bresler** and **Denise Yeh Bresler** on the marriage of their son **Michael** to **Rivkah Berman** at Beth Tfiloh in Baltimore. The wedding featured Chinese hors d’oeuvres and Jewish fortune cookies. The Breslers have been active in Kulanu’s Asian affairs projects. Denise Yeh Bresler was the translator of the Shema prayer into Chinese that appeared in Kulanu’s book, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*.

Mazal Tov to **Flory Jagoda**, who has won a 2002 National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA provides national recognition and support to significant projects of artistic excellence, thus preserving and enhancing our nation’s diverse cultural heritage. Jagoda is part of a musical Jewish family, mother and seven children, once well known in Bosnia for their interpretation of Ladino songs. The family escaped to Italy during World War II, and she met her husband, an American soldier, at the DP camp. Her performances, recordings and songbook include many traditional songs centuries old, as well as new ones she has written (including “Ocho Kandelikas”).

Professionally recorded VHS videotapes and DVDs of a concert performed by Jagoda and her family in New Jersey last February are
(Continued on page 10)

Bring the Bnei Menashe Home to Israel

By Michael Freund

(This article originally appeared in the Jerusalem Post on July 25, 2002)

Several time zones away, in the northeastern reaches of India, live thousands of men and women longing to join the Jewish people. Scattered throughout the towns and villages of the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur, they follow Jewish law, observe the Sabbath and festivals, and even pray in Hebrew, turning their faces, and dreams, toward Zion.

Known as the Bnei Menashe, or children of Manasseh, they believe they are descendants of the lost Israelite tribe of Menashe, which was exiled by the Assyrians from the Land of Israel over 2,700 years ago. Despite centuries of wandering, they preserved fragments of their ancient Jewish heritage, and now they wish to return to their people.

Earlier this year, together with Efrat Chief Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Eliyahu Birnbaum of the Chief Rabbinate, Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail of the Amishav organization, and Rabbi David Avichail of Mitzpe Ramon, I traveled to India to visit the community and see firsthand how they live. What we found was nothing less than an inspiring lesson in the power of Jewish memory.

Though British missionaries arrived in the area over a century ago and succeeded in converting them, the Bnei Menashe's Jewish consciousness remains strong. Customs practiced until the missionaries' arrival included circumcision on the eighth day after birth, levirate marriage, and sacrificial rites tantalizingly close to those of ancient Israel.

An elderly man whose uncle had been a priest prior to the arrival of British missionaries described a spring-time sacrifice in which the meat had to be carefully removed from the bones lest any of them break, something that would invalidate the offering. Blood from the animal's carcass was smeared on the doorposts. Needless to say, the similarity with the laws of the ancient Passover sacrifice is striking.

The man also recited some of the sacrificial chants he had been taught as a child, songs which lauded the exodus of his ancestors from Egypt, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and, of course Manasseh, who is viewed as the Bnei Menashe's forebear.

Even the Christians in Mizoram, such as the storekeepers, merchants and professionals whom we encountered, all acknowledge their Israelite ancestry.

Rabbi Avichail is the Bnei Menashe's spiritual mentor and guide. He first learned of them over two decades ago and, after carefully investigating their claims, came to the conclusion that they were in fact lost Jews. After our recent trip to the area, Rabbi Riskin, Rabbi Birnbaum and I all came away equally persuaded.

Don't forget this would not be the first time that a lost tribe has

Even the Christians in Mizoram, such as the storekeepers, merchants and professionals we encountered, all acknowledge their Israelite ancestry.

been found. Take, for example, the Ethiopian Jews, whose aliyah to Israel was nothing less than a modern-day miracle. When the Chief Rabbinate ruled in 1973 that they were Jews, the decision was based in part on the belief that the Ethiopians were descendants of the lost Israelite tribe of Dan.

Since that historic ruling, tens of thousands of Ethiopians have come to Israel, bolstering the country and adding some much-needed demographic reinforcements to its Jewish population. There is no reason for the Bnei Menashe to be treated any differently.

Indeed, over the past decade, some 600 Bnei Menashe have managed to come to Israel. All have undergone formal conversion by the Chief Rabbinate to remove any doubts about their status, and all have received Israeli citizenship. They serve in the army, live observant Jewish lifestyles and are productive members of Israeli

One member of the community recently received rabbinical ordination

society.

One member of the community recently received rabbinical ordination and now works in Jewish outreach, while another is a certified religious scribe whose quill has produced beautiful Scrolls of Esther. Still another has enlisted in an elite combat unit, risking his life in defense of the Jewish state.

Two years ago, the Interior Ministry inexplicably decided to freeze the Bnei Menashe aliyah. After intense lobbying of senior government ministers and high-level bureaucratic officials, Rabbi Avichail and I recently succeeded in getting the Bnei Menashe aliyah reinstated, and 100 of them are slated to arrive in Israel later this year.

But there are still thousands of others waiting to join their family and friends in the Holy Land. **At the rate of just 100 per year, it will take decades to bring them all here.** That is neither fair nor reasonable.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has repeatedly spoken of the demographic challenge facing Israel in the next decade, one that will require a massive influx of Jews from abroad to ensure that Israel remains a Jewish state. With aliyah from the former Soviet Union drying up, and only small numbers of Western Jews making the move, the long-lost Jews of Mizoram and Manipur might just provide the answer.

The Bnei Menashe will be loyal citizens and good Jews. They are kind and soft-spoken people, with strong family values and a deep abiding faith in the Torah. They are hard-working and earnest, and the arrival of thousands of them will be a true blessing for Israeli society.

The time has come to bring Manasseh's children home. The time has come to bring the Bnei Menashe to Israel.

(President's note: At a time when we ask, a long distance away, how we can help Israel economically and spiritually, the absorption of another Jewish community comes close to the best answer. Unfortunately, your generous contributions to UJC (aka Federation of Jewish Philanthropies UJA) are not available at all for the Bnei Menashe's first year in Israel. Tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu can be earmarked for Bnei Menashe travel to and absorption in Israel.)



72 Peruvian Immigrants in Israel (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)



Newly arrived Peruvians at the Kotel

strated genuine sincerity in their desire to join the Jewish people.”

“They are very spiritual and very earnest. They dreamed about coming to Israel for so long, and now their dream has come true”, he added.
(Editor’s note: *The Beit Din was funded by Kulanu.*)

here because they are imbued with faith, and they believe it is a mitzvah to live in the Land of Israel,” said Shaul Goldstein, the mayor of Gush Etzion. “We are happy to be able to help them fulfill their dream.”

According to Goldstein, the latest aliyah is the result of an incident that occurred last year, when a Peruvian immigrant was badly injured in a terror attack in the Jordan Valley. When Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau visited the man in the hospital and asked him if there was anything he could do to help, the man replied, “Yes. Bring over the rest of my family.”

After looking into the matter, Rabbi Lau dispatched a Beit Din to Peru last December, which decided to convert a total of 16 families, numbering 84 people. According to Rabbi Eliyahu Birnbaum, a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay who served on the Peruvian Beit Din, the Peruvians had all been living according to Jewish law for over a decade. “They were all involved in a spiritual quest, in a search for spiritual truth,” he said, noting, “they built their own synagogues and communal life, and they demon-

An Amazing New CD

By Karen Primack

The ASCAP Award-winning singer-songwriter-guitarist Laura Wetzler would be a strong candidate if there were a competition for the Quintessential Kulanu Musician.

Sure, she’s talented. After all, Pete Seeger has said “Laura is one of the very best,” and she is invited to give 150 concerts each year. Her gorgeous voice has been heard on more than 300 radio stations. But it’s not just that.

Sure, she came along on the Kulanu trip to the Abayudaya in Uganda last February, bringing her music and gifts and enthusiasm and teaching skills. Sure, she gave a young Abayudaya singer her guitar. Sure, she got Abayudaya teens interested in two projects that would utilize the tape recorder she gave to them – an oral history project to record the stories of the elders, and one to preserve the Jewish music of the Abayudaya women. But it’s not just that.

Sure, she invited JJ Keki and Gershom Sizomu to join her in her recording studio in New York to sing their song for her next CD and paid them generously. But it’s not just that, either.

Sure, she’s into diversity. She studies the traditional music of as many strains of World Jewry as she can find. In Uganda, she sang a concert of songs from Israel, Yemen, Ethiopia (in Amharic), Spain (in Ladino) and Eastern Europe (in Yiddish). She even got the Abayudaya to sing along in Yiddish! She created and performs in more than 20 different theme or tribute concerts/lectures, among them a unique duo show with gospel singer Janiece Thompson called “Jewels of the Diaspora-A Concert Celebration of African-American and Jewish Song.” So, now we’re getting closer!

Sure, her new CD, *Kabbalah Music: Songs of the Jewish Mystics* is sensational. Not only does it contain Jewish music from Uganda, Italy, India, Spain, Yemen, Iraq, Greece, Morocco, Eastern Europe, and the US, but it is so beautiful to listen to, I have played it over and over. Her voice is flexible, pleasant and – like Joseph’s coat – of many colors. She seems at home in so many idioms and moods. On top of that, this CD contains the Abayudaya rendition of “L’cha Dodi,” with Laura, JJ and Gershom singing. But it’s not just these facts, either.

I guess it’s the combination of all this – the beautiful music of a pro and the spirit of Kulanu.

The CD *Kabbalah Music: Songs of the Jewish Mystics* is available at book and music stores and on the web. For additional information see www.LauraWetzler.com.



Laura and friends in Uganda

LETTERS TO KULANU

Jewish Workshop in China Is Too Successful!

The workshop on Jewish history and culture in Nanjing from July 14 - August 4 was originally designed to provide systematic training for those Chinese professors who teach courses such as world history and western civilization at college level. The goal of the seminar is to present reliable, accurate, and concrete knowledge of Jewish history or culture through intensive study of three weeks instructed by Jewish scholars outside of China (from the US and Israel). This, in turn, would enable them to incorporate information of Jewish history and culture into the scope of courses they teach at their home institutions so that Chinese college students can be reached. This is the third as well as the last one of the kind according to my plan five years ago. We did it twice before, in 1997 and 1999.

Perhaps because of the great interest of Chinese in Jewish history and culture, we got more responses from many Chinese colleges than before and we have now taken 35 (our original plan is to take 20-25.) as this is the last one.

Besides we also have taken 12 Jewish descendants from Kaifeng (we planned to have 6-8 but 12 arrived) to study at the seminar. It is the first time such a systematic education on Jewish history and culture has been provided for the Kaifeng Jews in last 200 years, if not longer. They also had a chance to learn some Hebrew and Jewish rituals.

Therefore, we have 47 participants in all now. For people from Kaifeng, we have to cover all expenses (\$300 per person for their traveling expenses, accommodations and food for three weeks, materials and books and etc.) as they have very little means to pay for it.

The budget we had is \$31,000, of which I have received \$25,000 from Rothschild Family Foundation. Because of the greater number of participants, and the cancellation of one foundation grant due to stock market problems, I am putting out this urgent call for financial assistance.

*Prof. Xu Xin
Nanjing, China*

(Editor's note: Tax-deductible donations to Kulanu can be earmarked for Kaifeng Jewry.)

True Christian Zionists

There's a group of people starting a program to raise funds (within the Christian community separately from the Jewish community) to support the forced converts of 500 years ago (from Spain and Portugal under the Roman Catholics) who lost their religious freedom and have been secret Jews all these years (Marranos or Crypto-Jews, in Hebrew Anousim). Many are now coming out of their fear and returning to the faith and traditions of their Fathers (According to Maimonides, if their ancestors were forced against their will but observed as many of the commandments as they could, then they are still considered to be Jews.) If you know of any Christians who might be interested in helping, please refer them to me at yafbatya@hotmail.com or tel. 800-883-6586.

We are helping these people to make the "return" all the way back to the Land of Israel (in the Negev). See my article at the Blossoming Rose website, a humanitarian group in Michigan that will be administering the funds from the Christian world for us under their 501(c)(3) group < <http://www.blossomingrose.org/anousim.htm>>. We will be taking Hispanic people on trips to Israel (and the Biblical Tamar Parks in the Negev) under this banner as well.

This is a great way for Christians ("righteous Gentiles") of today to make restitution for the damage done to the international Jewish community many centuries ago. And these people are the TRUE Christian Zionists, those who want to help the last major wave of *olim* (immigrants) to return HOME to Israel. I will be going on a tour to

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speak on all this for churches and other groups around the country.

*Yaffah Batya
Dallas, Texas*

Abayudaya Celebrate Second Graduation

It was so historical on 10th May 2002 for the Abayudaya to have their second graduate. Mr. Katula Uri graduated from Busoga University after successfully completing his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education. At the University, the ceremony was conducted by the Vice Chancellor of the University and many government officials.

Uri and his friends left the campus amidst a convoy of members who went to witness the ceremony. Uri, who was very smart in his gown of black with blue, yellow and green stripes, was driven back to Nabugoye Hill by Rabbi Gershom. He was welcomed by a crowd who congratulated him for struggling hard to achieve the success. People shouted "Mazel tov" to Uri, danced in a circle around him and lifted him up as a sign of wishing to rise for more success. It soon approached Shabbat and we all joined in for evening prayers.

On Sunday 12th May the parents of Uri welcomed him in their home. Uri, in a green suit with his gown, reached home amidst a convoy of vehicles which escorted him. He was driven home by Rabbi Gershom with people pushing the vehicle as a sign of respect. Songs of joy and welcome in both local languages and Hebrew were sung.

Entering the shade which was full up to its capacity, about 700 - 800 people all stood up, and a prayer of thanks was led by Mr. Moshe Kornfeld, a Kulanu representative.

Speeches were said thanking Uri for foregoing all his interests and deciding to pursue education. A family member appealed to Uri not to be satisfied with his first Degree, but to continue pushing for Masters and of course PhD.

From the Abayudaya, various people gave speeches. Israel Siriri told members that the success is the result of trust, cooperation and transparency. JJ Keki also informed people present that it's time for Abayudaya to stop being satisfied being behind, where they had been for so long. Naome Sabano, who represented women in this ceremony, thanked Uri for having done it and she urged women and girls that, "So far now we have two degrees but there is no gender balance. It's now your time." Jacob Mwosuko asked Uri to use the position he has got to develop his home and the community at large. Moshe Kornfeld commended the community leaders for a wise choice in encouraging everyone to acquire education. He also thanked the leaders for the good cooperation they have with Kulanu. Rabbi Gershom, who also escorted Uri by putting on his gown again, said that now the door to development is open. "It has been so hard for me only to compete alone in this country as the only degree holder. But with brother Uri, things are now simple." He appealed to students, especially those who are joining University this academic year -- Tziporah Naisi, Moses Sebagabo and Jacob Mwosuko -- that it is their turn to do it for betterment of this community.

A government representative and the member of Parliament of that area thanked the Abayudaya community, Kulanu, and the family at large for educating Uri. "It's now my time to do all that I can to see that brother Uri uses his degree to develop. I know Uri, with all that I have heard about him, is a hard working boy and is going to do much towards development." Hon Stephen Malinga the MP also appealed to the youth to take example of Uri, who has achieved this with a family of five children.

The ceremony ended peacefully and lunch was served.

*Jacob Mwosuko
Mbale, Uganda*

(Editor's note: It was the generosity of the Shectman family of Topeka that made Uri's education possible. Those interested in contributing to the college education of other Abayudaya should contact Rabbi Jeffrey Summit at jsummit@tufts.edu or tel. 617-627-3242.)

Invisible Dreamer, Memory, Judaism and Human Rights

A review by Mollie L. Berch

Marjorie Agosin, an award-winning Chilean poet, human rights activist and long-time professor of Spanish at Wellesley College, has just added to a lengthy list of her publications this anthology of essays written in Spanish with several translators. Many have been published in some form in previous books.

She grew up in Chile, and in these essays credits her ancestors with instilling in her the importance of Judaism, of memory, and of *tikkun olam* --- repair of the world. Her tools in this struggle are words. She meditates on the influence the Spanish language had on her writing and in several essays pays tribute to her female ancestors.

The meaning of home, exile, and remembrance/memory penetrate all of her work. Memory is explored in many essays, such as what women's memory is like, and the importance of the transmission of stories of dead ancestors. She points out that while memory is always individual, it would not exist without the search for a collective memory.

Some of the best selections deal with Latin-American Jewish literature. In exploring the possibility of a strong anti-Semitic undercurrent in Latin America, she comments that this is due to ignorance and to the influence of the Catholic Church. The theme of exile is particularly present in her essay dealing with life in Georgia.

The final section is concerned with human rights violations. Her stories of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and those who disappeared during the regime of Pinochet are very vivid.

I found particularly interesting her essays on Chilean women we Americans do not know much about -- Gabriela Mistral and Esther Seligson. She explores the reasons for the invisibility of Jewish women in Chile, but also points out their leadership roles. Chile is a society that is unconcerned with pluralism --- but she feels that the Jewish presence has forced the country to "recognize the outsiders within."

Agosin writes from the perspective of a Jewish woman with a deep love of Chile who considers herself living in exile. The collection has some of her poetry that is very striking, especially "Traces" from *Yad Vashem*, "Torah" and "Alphabet in my Head." They tie together her themes of memory, Judaism and exile.

To really appreciate the contribution of Marjorie Agosin, I suggest reading some of her earlier books, especially *A Cross and A Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Child in Chile* (1997); *Always from Somewhere Else: A Memoir of my Chilean Jewish Father* (1998); *The House of Memory: Stories by Jewish Women Writers of North America* (1999); and *The Alphabet in my Hands: A Writing Life* (2000).

THE LOST CALYPSO SHTETL (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

began to turn their attention to creating a cultural and religious life for themselves on the island. A synagogue and community centre was founded in a rented house on Duke Street in Port of Spain (today one of its Torah scrolls can be found at Congregation Dorshei Emet in Montreal). There were aid societies for the poor and elderly, and even a dramatic and opera society. Although the community was refused a license for kosher slaughter, it was granted a separate section (Bet Olam) of Port of Spain's main cemetery, the Mucurapo Cemetery. Today the cemetery is maintained by the island's only remaining member of this 1930s influx, Hans Stecher, who left Vienna with his family for Trinidad shortly after the Anschluß when Nazi Germany annexed Austria. It is my hope to establish a fund that can be established to relieve him of this responsibility and to ensure the section's perpetual upkeep.

Unfortunately, the relative stability and bliss which the refugees had settled into was not to last. With the outbreak of war all refugees deemed to be 'enemy aliens' were interned in camps throughout the Caribbean; Trinidad was no exception. In addition to captured Italian and German merchant seamen and German U-boat crews, Trinidad's new 'enemy aliens' now included, ironically, those Jewish families who came from Austria or Germany.

While an internment camp was being constructed outside of the capital, the Jewish families were housed in barracks on tiny islands off the mainland (Hans Stecher still has a shark's fin saved from the shore during his time on the island). After a few months in the barracks they were moved back to the mainland. The internment camp (which stood on what are now the residential neighbourhoods of Federation Park and Eilerslie Park) is documented at Trinidad's Chaguaramas Military Museum and was surrounded by a tall barbed wire fence with sentry towers and search lights. Although children were given special permission to attend school outside the camp, many of the refugees, understandably, felt deeply insulted by this course of events.

In 1943 they were released, with certain wartime restrictions: daily reporting to the nearest police station, a ban on driving cars or riding bicycles, and an 8pm-6am curfew. In disgust, some families left, others stayed and brought back to light the community life they had started pre-internment. A soccer team was established, the drama club performed plays in Hebrew and Yiddish, fund-raisers for Israel were held, and a *schochet* was even brought in from the United States. The community was, in a word, vibrant. As the children grew, however, the viability of the community was undermined, as there was at the time no local university. Once the children went overseas to study, few returned to live. Of those who did, many intermarried or assimilated and the community gradually began to dissolve.

In the 1970s Trinidad's political and social stability was threatened by a wave of 'Black Power' riots. Fearing for their safety, and haunted by bad memories, the majority of the remaining population migrated *en masse*. Many created new roots in Canada where they remain to this day. Today, pictures and memories are all that remain of the "Calypso Shtetl." It is hard to believe that at one time Passover Seders were so large they were hosted at the Trinidad Hilton!

Still, if one looks around, one can find evidence of this brief renaissance of Jewish life in Trinidad. Most notably on every police car, policeman and police station on the island, as the insignia of the police force is a hummingbird within a Magen David (Star of David). A British commander who came to Trinidad from Palestine (while it was still under colonial rule) put a white star against a blue background for the local army symbol, switching the colours of what was to become the Israeli flag. The hummingbird was later added for (Continued on page 13)

Abayudaya Mourn Death of Samson Mugombe (cont.)

KULANU BRIEFS (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

nity. His devotion to the Jewish faith and his charismatic leadership kept the community together during the difficult and tragic times of the dictator Idi Amin's rule in the 1970s, when he persecuted the Bayudaya, outlawed the community, and destroyed their synagogues and school.

Mugombe's knowledge of the history of the Abayudaya was the main source of my writings about this unique community.

The Abayudaya lost a great man.

As a teen-ager, Mugombe was circumcised by Semei Kakungulu and immersed in a specially constructed mikveh. He served as a leader of the Abayudaya community for most of his life. Rabbi Joseph H. Prouser of Little Neck, New York, who also visited Mugombe in February on Kulanu's Beit Din trip, praised the elder's courage and religious zeal five months before his death:

He is revered by the community to this day and known to them as "Rabbi Samson." This title is emblazoned, together with Jewish religious symbols (a Magen David and Menorah) on Samson's home -- a modest hut of mud-brick walls and corrugated tin roof. Many Abayudaya homes are painted with similar designs, so as clearly and proudly to identify the inhabitants' religious loyalties to their Christian and Muslim neighbors.

Gershom Sizomu, current leader of the Abayudaya, credited Mugombe with steering the community through the hard periods of Jewish persecution in Europe and through the dangerous Amin regime in Uganda. "He discouraged intermarriage, which saved the community from religious assimilation, and he fought very hard to sustain the community during 70 years of economic hardships and isolation," Sizomu stated.

While the Abayudaya can be sure of Mugombe's "Jewishness," so can the rest of the world. When four Conservative rabbis convened

a Beit Din in Uganda last February and officially converted about 300 Abayudaya to Judaism, Mugombe was too frail to undergo a ritual circumcision or immersion. However, the Beit Din did speak with him at his hut.

After returning to the US, Prouser, an expert on Jewish law and on the history of conversion, did painstaking research to answer the *She'eilah* (question) "What is the religious status of Samson Mugombe, a 'candidate' for conversion?" His 10-page *Teshuvah* (response), which cites Biblical and Talmudic sources, concludes that "the members of the Bet Din who personally met and questioned Samson Mugombe are hereby authorized to declare him a full and proper convert and to issue him a document of conversion. They are urged, with all possible dispatch, to inform him that in his old age, he has been rightfully acknowledged as a Ger Tzedek of heroic and historic stature." The Bet Din unanimously approved the *Teshuvah*, and Mugombe received the notification.

(The text of Prouser's scholarly *Teshuvah* will be available on the Kulanu web site, www.Kulanu.org.)



Samson Mugombe, leader of the Abayudaya for 70 years

(Continued from page 5)

available. Send \$30 for VHS or \$50 for a DVD (postage is included) to: Media Masters, Inc., 5104 Woodland Way, Annandale, VA 22003. For further information contact Abby Sternberg at 703-978-2198 or abbym@erols.com.

Todah Rabah

Todah rabah to **Dr. Diane Zeller**, who is taking a leave of absence from Kulanu for health reasons. She has served many long hours in many different capacities since Kulanu's inception and will be sorely missed.

We are so grateful to our Lifetime Supporters, those who recently gave \$1000-\$5000: **Nina Rosenwald, Dr. Gary & Diane Tobin, Dr. Jules Harris, the Schermer Charitable Trust, Rabbi Ben Kreitman, Lionel Okun (in honor of Aura Herzog and in memory of President Chaim Herzog), Abe Pollin, Bruce & Laurie Berger, Rabbi Scott Glass and Temple Beth-El, Rabbi Howard Gorin and Congregation Tikvat Israel, Drs. Jack and Diane Zeller, Aron and Karen Primack**

And to our generous donors of \$500: **Arlene & Howard Eisenberg, Beth Shalom Congregation, Deborah Nadel Mcgee, Harold Alderman, Howard Eisenberg, Irwin and Elaine Berg, the JCC of Fort Lee, Judy Neri, Rabbi Michael Klayman, Sanford Ehrenkranz, the Glori a and Sidney Danziger Foundation.**

Todah rabah to the following recent donors of \$200-\$499: **Norma Brooks, Winnie Hartman-Gross, Kehila Chadasha, Anonymous in memory of Frances Zeller, Marcia Kaplan, J. Katz, James Lande and Joyce I. Mason, Lois K. and Theodore Levy, Bergen Academy, Ray Kaplan, Rabbi Serge A. Lippe, Kulanu's Tucson Chapter, Karin Kunstler and Neal Goldman, Larry Paul, Laura Wetzler, Madav IX Foundation, Norman and Bonnie Weiss, Temple Shalom, Barbara and Joseph Psotka, Rhoda Posner, Chaim Engelber, Debbie and Mark Glotter, Debra Lieblich, Yehuda and Catherine Sherman, Harriet Bograd and Kenneth Klein, Jewish Appleseed Foundation, Julie and Barbara Shair, Julie Earne, Sherman and Rita Shapiro, Roger and Eileen McIntire.**

And to those who recently gave \$100-\$199: **Dr. Arlene Gardsbane, Alan and Lorna Eder, Rabbi Michael Strassfeld, Martin Gouterman, Dr. Harriet Schnur, Paul and Leah Knopf, Dr. Byron and Joyce Hurwitz, Michelle Sager and NFTY-GER, Charles and Louise Chatlyne, Arthur Shay Cytryn, Dr. Stanley Azen, Drs. Edwin and Roz Kolodny, Edith and Marco Rabinovitz, Edward and Rae Samiljan, Elaine Reisman, Ellen and Robert Meyer, Emily Burt-Hedrick and Peter Hedrick, Eric A. Suss, Eva and Frank Bachrach, Friendly Neighbours and JCC on the Palisades, Gayle Kesselman, I Michael Goodman, Ira and Marilyn Polon, Irving and Lauren Cohen, Jack and Connie Goldfarb, Jack and Stephanie Ventura, Jerome and Lisette Barry, Libby Lovett, Marvin Wolf, Max Amichai Heppner, Mona and Mark Berch, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Gersh, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bachrach, Paula and Mordecai Rosenfeld, Phil and Ellen Ratner, Rabbi H. J. Karp, Rhoda and Louis Israel, Robert Wiener, Jerry Romain (in honor of the Berg anniversary), Ruth Bloom, Shirley and Morty Kadushin, Fabringen Tzedaka Committee,**

Todah Rabah to **Allegra and Olivia Hanson**, who performed a community service/bat mitzvah project by holding a benefit concert to assist the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Khakatay, a drumming ensemble from Bridgewater State College, donated its services, and the students received assistance from the Temple Beth David Social Action Committee in Randolph, Massachusetts. A total of \$700 was raised!

To **Hayley Schubert** for donating books, kippot, tefillin and tallit.

(Continued on page 14)

PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

Bene Israel Genes Are Cohanic

A July 20 article by Rashmee Z. Ahmed in the *Times of India* reports on a new study confirming that the Bene Israel Jews of India carry the gene of Jewish priests (*cohanim*). In the article, entitled "India's Children of Israel Find Their Roots," Tudor Parfitt, the British anthropologist who initiated the research, is quoted as saying that there is only a "billion to one chance of a mistake." Genetic testing was performed in Mumbai, Pune, Thane and Ahmedabad, where about 4000 Bene Israel live.

And in a *New York Times* article on May 14, Nicolas Wade writes about a new genetic study of Jewish female mitochondrial DNA, revealing that in each of nine different Jewish communities, there were only a few founding mothers, and these matriarchs were different in each community. It also finds that there was little inter-change with the host population. The study is reported in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, vol. 70, pp. 1411-1420, 2002 by Mark Thomas, et al.

Ai, Chang, Chao, Chin, Kao, Li and Shih

"Yiddishkeit on the Yellow River," by Ze'ev Gilkenstein, in the Spring 2002 *Avotaynu*, discusses a 340-year-old parchment manuscript of more than 100 pages belonging to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. The parchment records the lineages of the Jewish clans then in Kaifeng, China. The names in the title are the only seven surnames used by Jews in Kaifeng. The article also reports that the Royal Ontario Museum holds 11 important items from the Kaifeng community.

French Internet Site Discusses Abayudaya

The French internet site for religious news, Religioscope <www.religioscope.com> ran on March 18 a lengthy article about the history and conversion of the Abayudaya by Jean-Louis Mayer. More recently, the site noted that "the most frequently read article by readers of Religioscope in the month of March was that which we dedicated to the official reception of the Abayudaya of Uganda into Judaism. We give here more news of this community because its celebration of Pesach this year caught the attention of a correspondent of the Associated Press." It went on to recount the March 27 report of AP reporter Matthew Rosenberg.

Recife Synagogue a Tourist Destination

The *NY Times* Travel Section reports on the restored ancient synagogue in Recife, Brazil, as a tourist destination. A piece by Mery Galanternick on June 2 describes the significance of Kahal Zur Israel (Rock of Israel) synagogue, built in 1637 by the Sephardic Jewish community of Recife. The synagogue was recently restored and reopened, four centuries after it was closed by the Inquisition.

Beit Din Coverage

Stacey Schultz's article "The Jews of Uganda: Into the Fold" was published in the June/July issue of *Hadassah Magazine*. Accompanying the five-page account of the trip were eight color pictures taken by Ed Samiljan, another trip participant. Schultz, a senior editor at *US News & World Report*, had followed her older brother to Uganda. Kenny Schultz had lived with the Abayudaya while working on an honors thesis in 1994.

Rabbi Gershom Featured

A flattering portrait of Abayudaya spiritual leader Gershom Sizomu, "A New Leader for Ugandan Jews," by Melissa Shere Beek, ran in the *Miami Jewish Star Times* on June 26.

And the Summer 2002 issue of *Reform Judaism Magazine* contains another feature on Rabbi Gershom in the article, "A Bayudayan Rabbi in the Big Apple" by Heather Robinson.

Kaifeng and Kansas City?

An article by Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn in the March 2002 *Hadassah Magazine* compares the small Jewish community of Kansas City with that in Kaifeng China and finds similarities and lessons to be learned. The article is entitled: "Letter from Kansas City – Jews from Middle Kingdoms."

Barros Basto Biography

BEN-ROSH is a new biography in Portuguese of Captain Arthur Carlos de Barros Basto by Dr. Elvira de Azevedo Mea and Inacio Steinhardt. Barros Basto is the Portuguese World War I officer of Crypto-Jewish descent who sparked a large but short-lived movement of a return to Judaism by "Marranos." Barros Basto was separated from active army service, defamed, and accused of being a Communist, yet he carried on with his lifelong mission and took an active part in the rescue of his brethren in faith who fled from the Nazis. He made the Oporto community a shelter for the refugees, some of whom have been redeemed, have started a new life, and are still there to testify.

The book was published by Edicoes Afrontamento - Rua Costa Cabral, 859 - Porto - Portugal and is also obtainable via Internet at: <http://www.liv-arcoiris.pt>. INQUIRES FROM PUBLISHERS INTERESTED IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO: Inacio Steinhardt - inacio@cheerful.com.

Jewish Heritage of Portuguese Kings

The Mendo da Guarda a D. Manuel by Isabel Violante Pereira, in Portuguese and English, traces the Jewish heritage of the Portuguese royalty. The price is \$15 plus \$4 postage and handling. It must be prepaid with a check to Sephardic House or a credit card and expiration date. Send to Sephardic House, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011.

Zelege Publishes

Ethiopian Jewish archeologist Yohannes Zelege has had a chapter published in Prof. Desmond Clark's last book on the famous Kalambo Falls Prehistoric Site in Africa, *The Earlier Cultures: Middle and Earlier Stone Age, Vol. 3*, published by Cambridge Press in 2001. Zelege's contribution is "Study of a sample of Acheulean flakes and fragments from Site A4 1963, River Face and A5 Extension at Kalambo Falls."

Correction

In the last newsletter, the incorrect email address was given for Barbara Vinick, editor of the Hadassah book *Esther's Legacy: Celebrating Purim Around the World*. The correct email address is barbv@bu.edu.

Pilgrimage to Portugal (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

His passion and interest were infectious. It was clear that this project remains close to his heart. He admitted quite openly that he – and possibly most of the Portuguese in this town – could well be descendants of the forced converts from so long ago.

We negotiated the picturesque narrow cobble-stoned network of winding streets, and all the while were intensely aware of the large Jewish community that once lived in this beautiful and well-preserved Judiaria. The synagogue, and yeshiva, located on the corner of the Rua da Judiaria and Rua da Fonte, have recently been fully restored, with archaeological research having discovered three silos, dug out of granite and used for storing grain. As we had in other places, we sang and rejoiced in the old house of worship and in my mind, I could hear the voices and feel the presence of those in the past, joining us in song and celebration.

As the mikveh has not yet been found, we indulged in a lively debate, all trying to work out where this essential part of Jewish law could have been housed.

Before leaving, I had the opportunity of stopping off at the shop of the last person in Castelo de Vide to identify today as an Anous – someone with whom I share a family name – and as I identified myself I was greeted with a warm, "Shalom." Here we heard of visitors from Izmir, Turkey, whose ancestors had left Portugal, who had written documents and drawings of the Judiaria from the time of the forced conversions, and who on visiting the town could identify many of the places now documented, including the midwife's home! This was how they managed to restore the synagogue with its original architectural lines intact, find the Rabbi's house and the oven for baking bread!

En route to Covilhã, Art Benveniste shared some fascinating accounts of contemporary Bnei Anusim, and of Portuguese-Jewish history and the forced conversion. Judith Cohen spoke about her research on musical traditions in Belmonte, Tras-os-Montes, and other parts of the Portuguese-Spanish border region, especially among Crypto-Jews, and once again we arrived at our destination with time on the bus having "flown" (due to our great speakers)

At **Covilhã**, we visited the Textile Industry Museum Exhibition, where it was no surprise (for us) to identify the many familiar names of New Christians and their professions. This area, situated near the foot of the Serra da Estrela, and all along the border of Spain, was densely populated by New Christians before and after the Inquisition. Many well-known figures of our history were from this area. It seemed perfectly apt that we were received at the University of Beira Interior by Prof. Maria Antonetta Gomes Baptista Garçia, who excitedly told us of the new Jewish Studies program introduced recently. She is the author of two research books on the Jews of Portugal and Belmonte, and we were honored to have her give a fascinating and well researched lecture on the Jewish Influence and presence in the area, as well as the devastating effects of the Inquisition on (Jewish) life in Portugal. After questions and answers, we were on our way for the 15 minute drive to Belmonte, where we were to meet and have dinner with the Belmonte community.

The air seemed somehow fresher and cleaner in the mountain town of **Belmonte**. Here where the synagogue was inaugurated in 1996 to commemorate the abolishment of the Edict of Expulsion of the Jews from Portugal in 1496. The town has retained much of its medieval atmosphere, and among its most interesting sights are a 13th-century castle, a Romanesque-Gothic church, and the Cabral family pantheon. The Jewish Quarter was situated outside the castle walls at the easternmost end of the town. Houses with crosses engraved in the stone close to the doors were inhabited by New Christians, Jews who had been unable to leave Portugal and were baptized by force, and enslaved. But this was not why we had made the trip to Belmonte. We

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came to meet our family -- people who, like our ancestors, had kept the flame of Judaism alive, secretly in their hearts throughout the generations.

Many of us in the group had waited for this moment, not quite knowing what to expect – so much has been written and aired about this unique community high in the Serra da Estrela (mountain of stars). The lovely and deceptively small-looking synagogue (from the outside) overlooks a beautiful valley and as dusk falls we enter to join the locals at the *Maariv* service, well led by a young Belmonte man, perfectly versed in Hebrew.

Our scheduled dinner with the community was held in the community hall down-stairs in the same building as the synagogue. A

We came to meet our family -- people who, like our ancestors, had kept the flame of Judaism alive, secretly in their hearts throughout the generations.

beautiful big flag of Israel welcomed us and we joined the people we felt we already knew from the many articles and books written about them. What a dinner!

Rabbi Leo Abrami made *Ha'motzi* before our meal and an evening of getting to know one another began. We did this by introducing ourselves individually and explaining our interest and connection to Jewish Portugal. We received a warm welcome and then it was their turn to introduce themselves to us, sharing their dreams and thoughts for the future. We talked, we laughed, we embraced, we sang "*Haveinu Shalom Aleichem*," hugging and singing truly amongst family. For me personally it was coming home. For those who shared this dream, it was almost too much to bear. A number in our group met up with cousins in the Belmonte community. I was told by one member that I was a family member -she recognized my name — and whether this is fact or not we bonded as if we were sisters! Singing, clapping, crying, we sang, "*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*" (Jerusalem of Gold) and by that time I could not contain myself any longer, tears rolling down my face. We ended with "*Am Yisrael Chai*" and in their eyes, I saw the reflection of my own feelings -- tears of happiness and joy, shared by those of us who share so much more than can ever be expressed in words.

Sitting on the bus for the short trip back to our hotel, I felt reassured about the transition of the Belmonte Community. Yes, they need our help — our unconditional love and ongoing support — they need computers, they need a Hebrew/religious teacher, but they are on their way to a better future. We need to do our share in ensuring a Jewish future with nurturing, acceptance and love. In spite of the years of turmoil, shame, hiding, fear and deceit, they were once again in the fold of Jewish-life. May they and their future be blessed. Indeed, *Am Yisrael Chai*, rang in my ears — what an apt way of ending a glorious day!

* * *

There are many wonderful moments I cherish – Ernest meeting his cousins, my meeting cousins (which will need confirming) in Belmonte, the opportunity of "sanctifying" our old houses of prayer, having Rabbi Abrami lead us in prayer and song and say *Kaddish* at three Inquisition centers, meeting our people who are identifying as Jews in Portugal after we had believed that secret Judaism had completely died out two generations ago. The Jewish *neshama* (soul) is alive and burning bright once again, a miracle in itself.

One of our group mentioned that what they found exceptional was the genuine feeling of friendship and love among ~~the community~~ (Continued on page 13)

Pilgrimage (cont.)

(Continued from page 12)

group of intelligent and strong individuals who came together like a true family!

I felt that the tour given us by Jose Madeira and his gracious mother Teresa was a personal and amazing tour of the Jewish Quarter in Porto. I truly felt I was "walking in the footsteps of our ancestors."

Having Judith Cohen with us throughout was another special treat. Sharing her knowledge along the way, which culminated in her concert, was worth schlepping across the ocean for.

Being able to honor the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes by planting a tree in his name was another special event. Hopefully we will continue to remember him, his wife and the whole family, who were so adversely affected by their good deeds.

Having Rudo Mathivha join us was one of the best ideas. It was a wonderful way for her to fully understand that we, the Anusim and the Lemba, are facing similar problems in returning to "normative" Judaism. She is a wonderful and vibrant companion and inspired all with her account of the Lemba story.

The most precious part of the whole experience was the closeness and caring that I felt from every member of our group. **We were a unique and special fellowship of seekers on a divine pilgrimage**, as well as accomplished individuals adding a meaningful educational/spiritual experience to our lives.

I can't explain with exact words the emotion that goes through the heart when one of us met, after centuries, with the soul, the family that after three centuries were floating, apart, and in front of our very own eyes, embraced. That was a moment of tears of joy, of sadness, of glorious victory over evil. It was the song of survival. Right there in

It will need more visits and brainstorming to try and help the hundreds of Bnei Anusim still in hiding in Portugal today.

front of our eyes, the sweet song of freedom.

The contacts I made with many of our Bnei Anusim were worth the conference. Knowing that Portuguese Judaism has not "died out" with my grandmother's generation, but that there is a new awareness. It will need more visits and brainstorming to try and help the hundreds of Bnei Anusim still in hiding in Portugal today.

* * *

My fellow-travelers generously shared their comments and impressions from the trip:

"For a mere Litvak, and a non-spiritual person, the intoning of the *El Malei Rachamim* and the *Kaddish* in the square outside the Inquisitor's house was very moving, 500 years of memorial."

"What a special joy it has been for me to share the recovery of my Jewish *neshama*. For years, I have felt incomplete and puzzled by something missing in my life. Now that I have converted to Judaism and made this pilgrimage back to Portugal, the home of my ancestors, it has all become clear. This trip has erased all doubts. For the first time, I can really say that I am at home. My journey of reclaiming my Jewish heritage, my real identity, is finished. That journey has taken more than 500 years."

"It was a wonderful feeling to walk the walk of our ancestors, to pray in their honor with Rabbi Abrami, in the tongue of Israel, right in the sites where the Autos da Fe took place and so many died, burnt in many cases with green wood for further suffering, because they did not desist from practicing Judaism. To learn so much about their history, suffering and strength. They were real heroes, our ancestors, the New Christians, Marranos, Conversos, Anusim, whatever everyone wants to call them, they were Sephardi."

"The tour made something change, as your friendliness began something with the reestablishment of relations of the Portuguese people with Jewish presence."

THE LOST CALYPSO SHTETL (cont.)

(Continued from page 9)

Other legacies of the Jewish presence in Trinidad are the Bet Olam section of the Mucurapo Cemetery (a smaller cemetery exists in San Fernando); place names such as Albert Einstein Avenue, Theodore Herzl Drive and Golda Meir Gardens; and landmarks such as Stollmeyer's Castle and the stores that continue to bear the names of their Jewish founders (such as Yufe's and Stechers).

Looking Ahead

The Jewish community of Trinidad still endures. Small in numbers, fragmented, disorganised, but present. There are families here. There are the descendants of the original immigrants who, though not Jewish in faith, still identify with their heritage. There are immigrants. There are descendants of conversos slowly becoming aware of, and uncovering, their heritage. There is a small number of sincere and interested would-be converts who lack (as does the Jewish populace) local options for Jewish education. There are also expatriates who, upon arrival, find it difficult to make contact with the local community as there is no central site for information or networking. Even if they do find one contact, they often remain disconnected from the wider community web. Frustrated, they are usually reconciled to 'temporary exile' for themselves and their families. It does not have to be this way, and I would like to bring about some changes. Especially as the "Hebrew" Christian movements begin to make inroads under the banner of Judaism.

Next year I am planning to bring the Anne Frank House's traveling exhibition to Trinidad. It is my hope that working on this project will also be the catalyst to the longer term memorialisation of a rich part of Trinidad history that has all too quickly faded from the public's memory. I would like to establish a non-profit organisation under whose banner we would oversee:

- A centralised archive for the many oral, pictorial and textual testimonies created by the surviving refugees, who have nothing but warm memories of their (often former) island home.
- A centralised database of the Jewish community in Trinidad that would allow those who arrive in the island to easily connect with people. I would also like this database to identify families that are willing to host travelers or visitors for Shabbat dinner, and to contain the contact information for those Trinidadian Jews (and their families) who now live overseas as well.
- An online archive (webpage and database) for the above.
- A trust fund to establish the perpetual care and upkeep of the Bet Olam section of the Mucurapo cemetery and the archives once they are created (it is my belief that a trust fund was established for care of the Jewish dead, but I am not sure if it is still in effect).
- Opportunities for Jewish education
- Increased opportunities for communal holiday observance

I would also like to create some form of Jewish education outreach, and I am interested in how other communities have tackled this subject. There is currently a large interest expressed to me by Jews and non-Jews in learning Hebrew. And I believe that this can be a start.

It is my sincere hope that through the community's efforts and with support from our overseas families these plans can become realised, and hopefully Trinidad will soon see itself represented among the member nations of the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and The Caribbean!

(Those interested in helping in this effort to revive this lost and dispersed Jewish community are invited to contact the author at tikkunolam@tsitt.net.tt.)

Helping Marranos Help Israel

By Gloria Mound

Director, Casa Shalom, the Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies

For 30 years, since I found a small group of Marranos-Anusim in Ibiza, in the Balearic Islands of Spain, a small band of historians, researchers and caring Jews here at Casa Shalom, on the tiniest of budgets, has been making representations to the Israeli Government, the Jewish Agency, and rabbinical authorities to help us investigate and assist the Marrano-Anusim of this world who wish to identify, regain their Jewish heritage, and return to the land of their forefathers.

Mercifully in the last couple of years The Institute of Jewish Studies, set up by the Israeli Rabbinate to form classes here in Israel for potential converts, has helped those small numbers who have arrived, but these people have NONE of the rights of Olim and are not permitted to work until their conversion is finished (which takes at least a year), so they have to come with sufficient money for fares and to support themselves during this period. Once they arrive, a small group of us tries to be available to help them adjust.

Far greater in number are those in far-away countries like Brazil, Cuba, Canary Islands, Spain, and Puerto Rico, where it is reckoned that there are literally in excess of three million wishing to make aliyah. Many of these people are in Agriculture, something that could so enhance the labour situation here. The way they have clung to Jewish customs and marrying only amongst themselves should be an example to people living openly as Jews all over the world.

We had interviews with a high official of the Jewish Agency some four years ago when we were seeking funding for our seders for Anusim in Spain. All the response we could enlist from this gentleman was **he had no idea that there were any Marranos left in the world** and anyway his priority was to enlarge the Russian Aliyah.

Since the advent of E-mail, hardly a day passes that our Institute does not receive messages enquiring about the writers' possible Jewish identity. By using our experience, database, and library, a writer frequently experiences a re-awakening after some parents have hidden from their children their true origins. These exchanges are initially slow, but gradually the ways and history of the family emerge. If requested, we send prayer books, dictionaries, *taleisim*, *mezuzot*, etc.

We work full time, without salary.

Two weeks ago a 34-year-old physician from the Caribbean, now living in the USA, suddenly realised that all the strange customs, which had become more apparent to her and her sisters since she came to live in the US, were Jewish ones. We are at all times most careful not to give any personal details away, but we have permission to quote the following:

My paternal grandfather told me in a dream what generations had decided it would be better for me not to know. He told me that I was Jewish and why I was Jewish...my mother. And I prayed. I started to ask questions at home but not really knowing what to look for or what to ask. I have never told them about the dream, because after all it was a dream and they would think of it as such. After noticing that I was not (getting) anywhere, I prayed. And God put you in my way.

Last night I read the Casa Shalom Journals and, of course, the section about (my country). And something clicked in me. All of a sudden all of the pieces of a big puzzle started to fall in place and I was able to see the whole picture. And I cried. I wept. I sobbed like I haven't in a long time. (And while I'm writing this, tears are still rolling on my cheeks.) I cried because of anger. I cried because of pain. I cried because of joy. I cried because of anger towards human intolerance against other humans and promised to myself that as long as I live I would not condemn or judge another human just because they believe differently from me. I cried because of the pain of my ancestors who were forced to convert to something they didn't in order to maybe ensure that their children would be able to live. I cried because of the joy that God, in His great mercy, decided that we had had enough. He decided that it was time to know that when Abraham looked into the skies and saw the stars, one of them was me....

More details about the activities of Casa Shalom, the Institute For Marrano-Anusim Studies, can be obtained from our regularly updated web site at www.casa-shalom.com. We can be reached at Marrano@aquanet.co.il or POB. 66, Gan Yavneh, Israel 70800.

KULANU BRIEFS (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

tot to Kulanu.

To **Elizabeth Frenchman** and the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue's **Grade 4 Sunday class** for collecting \$210 to send three Abayudaya children to school.

To **Michelle Sager, Allie Rubin and NFTY in the Garden Empire region** for collecting \$110.50 for the Margolis Fund for Abayudaya Education.

To **Libby Sussan**, for her contribution in memory of **Joseph Rod** and to **Myrna Goldman** for her contribution in honor of **Bob Lande's** 50th birthday.

To the members of **Tuesday Lunch 'n Learn Group** at Temple Beth-El for their donation in honor of **Rabbi Scott Glass**.

Generous gifts in honor of **Elaine and Irwin Berg's** 16th Anniversary were received from **Frank & Eva Bachrach, Ira Bartfield, Vickie Goldstein, Jerry Romain & Nick Russo, and Mordecai & Paula Rosenfeld**.

To **Jan Golden** and her **4th and 5th grade Judaics students** at Beth Chaverim in Ashburn, Virginia, for collecting \$75 in tzedakah for school supplies and uniforms for the children of the Abayudaya community.

Thanks to **Bertrand Taveau** and **Daniella Barry Taveau** for their much-needed translation services.

Refuah Shlemah

We wish a speedy and complete recovery to **HaRav David Asseo Shlita**, Grand Rabbi of Turkey since 1961.

Also to **Rabbi Hailu Paris**, to Rebbetzin **Frances Trainin**, to **Bea Hantman**, and to **David Sureck**.

The Kulanu Boutique

Also accessible online – with photos – at www.KulanuBoutique.com

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

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