

KULANU

“all of us”



Helping Lost Jewish Communities
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Lemba Lineages in Zimbabwe Unite and Plan To Join World Jewry

A landmark conference was held in Zimbabwe in December as the Lemba lineages gathered together from all the provinces for the first time since colonialism. Hosted by Headman Tadzembwa, the welcome ceremony featured the sacrifice of a white lamb as the elders from all the lineages took turns at the offering thanking God and forefathers for finally bringing the Lemba Nation back together after years of separation. The lineages represented were Hamisi, Bakani, Toavakare, Seremane, Zungunde, Madi/Ngavi, Sadiki, Nemanga, Hasani, Sarifu, and Mhani.

As reported by Mushavi Ernest Nhandi Sadiki, at an emotional closed-door session the elders “lamented the loss of some of their cultural values due to the inability of their forefathers to document them and causing the following generations to rely on oral traditions. All the Lemba scholars and young people were tasked to start in-depth research and writing on their Lemba ways.”

Rabson Wuriga Hamisi and Dr. Gedzu Mathivha Seremane were present representing Lemba of South Africa.

Nhandi reports that at another closed session, “it was unanimously agreed that it was imperative for the Lembas to be joined to the rest of the world in following the true ways of their forefathers and they went on further to note that the Lembas themselves could not do

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Shabbat with a Committed Group in Nigeria

By Jeffery Davidson

I would like to let you know how much I enjoyed having the opportunity to meet a small community of Nigerians involved in defining their connection and commitments to Judaism and the Jewish people. I spent Shabbos with Congregation Gihon, and also met on a number of occasions with Remy Ilona's Abuja group, young men “rediscovering” their past.

I was totally taken by the Gihon experience -- a small group of committed people who have been working at becoming Jewish over the past 10 years. There were three men who are self-taught in Hebrew and were responsible for conducting the worship service. From beginning to end, not a word was missed, following with great care almost all of the formalities of the service and its prayers. Gihon is a traditional congregation. The women sit separated from the men; they used an Orthodox prayer book - tattered photocopies of the ArtScroll *siddur*. They remained in the “shul” through lunch, *mincha* and the third meal.

While only a few prayers were chanted congregationally, after the

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An Ashkenazi-Sephardi-Kushite Seder in Brussels

By Yochanan Bwejeri

Rabbi David Kuperman and his family arrived safely in Brussels, and my wife Godeberthe and I are blessed to welcome them in our house. When they came out of the security area of the airport, we recognized each other immediately with emotion, and a miracle occurred between Hannah (their young daughter, five years old) and Sylvia (our daughter, eight years old). They recognized each other as sisters, as if they had only been separated by normal circumstance of vacation during a month, and they began to play as they were supposed to do every day at home; till now they are inseparable.

David and I started to work immediately after they had put down their baggage. We talked and talked and talked. David's wife Linda was warmly welcomed by my wife and her best friend Rachel. Linda, Rachel and Godeberthe started to talk, talk and talk, until we reminded them that Linda, Hannah and David had made a long and hard trip and that they had to rest if we wanted to have them strong enough for the coming hours, before the great event of Havila Pesach Seder.

The Seder turned out to be, as we expected, the most powerful event that occurred in our Jewish life. It was nothing less than a miracle of reconnection and Teshuvah. We led it, David and I. I was really impressed to watch the Kushite guests wearing proudly the kippot that David had brought, even when they were not members



Current Burundi Flag

of Havila. I knew that there is a great hunger of re-introduction to Judaism among the Kushite Community of the homeland, but I was completely ignorant about the same phenomenon among the Kushite diaspora, since I had not held so wide a religious gathering with them before.

Thank you for the initiative to send us so spiritual a rabbi as David Kuperman. His speech, that I tried to translate for the non-English-speaking of the Tutsi Community, was a strong message of hope and strength. He found the words and the way to empower Havila and my leadership of the Tutsi Kushitic Community. Linda was wonderful while involving the Kush children in the different steps of the Seder, and Hannah was so spontaneously welcomed and inte-

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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. This newsletter is published quarterly by Kulanu, 11603 Gilsan St., Silver Spring, MD 20902.

Getting Oriented In Africa

This issue is particularly rich in coverage of Jewish communities in Africa. Major articles discuss no fewer than seven nations! (Of course, there are Jews in other African countries, too.) This map may serve as a guide for the perplexed.



A Shabbat Visit to Sefwi Wiawso

By Karen Hudes

A group of 50 families in the small village of Sefwi Wiawso in the heart of Ghana are practicing Judaism. I had promised Harriet Bograd, whom I met at a Yale Law School reunion this fall, that I would visit these families on my next trip to Ghana. (I visit several times a year as the World Bank's lawyer assigned to Ghana). Sefwi Wiawso is nestled in a mountainous, forested area where bauxite used to be mined. The region is agricultural and produces palm trees and cacao. Most of the remaining population of Sefwi Wiawso (total population 1,500) are practicing Christians.



David Ahenkorah.
Photo by Karen Hudes

Sefwi Wiawso is situated about 100 miles to the southwest of Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city. I found an enterprising taxi driver in Accra, Ghana's capital on the eastern coast, and set out for Sefwi Wiawso at noon on Friday, February 13. I arrived at the outskirts of Kumasi around dusk, and was greeted by a vast swarm of bats lifting off from the trees lining the road. My driver asked for directions, and set off in what later turned out to have been somewhat of a detour. By ten o'clock, with the elusive village still several hours away, I overnights at a hotel frequented by Ghanaian truck drivers.

I arrived in Sefwi Wiawso the following day. Locating New Adiembra, which is the quarter of the village half-way down the southern slope of the mountain where the Jewish fami-

lies live, proved challenging, but at ten o'clock we pulled up to an unmarked cinderblock building, which turned out to be the synagogue. I was delighted to see David Ahenkorah, the leader of the synagogue, emerge wearing a yarmulke and a tallit. Although David had not yet received my letter, he told me that he was not surprised by my unannounced visit, since he and another synagogue member had dreamed that they would receive a visitor.

David and Kofi Kwateng were in the middle of leading Shabbat services, attended by about five men, two women, and twenty children. The service was in English, conducted from old *siddurim* that had been donated by a congregation in Des Moines, Iowa, called Tifereth Israel. The synagogue in Sefwi Wiawso has adopted the same name in gratitude. The synagogue has attractive benches of polished red-colored wood, divided by a center aisle. David gestured that I should join the women, who were sitting on the right side.

The bimah consists of a large table covered by a white tablecloth, with a Torah on plain paper that was brought to them from the US in 1996 by Daniel Baiden. Daniel was born in Ghana to a family that had migrated from Ethiopia several generations earlier. Daniel's brother Isaac had visited Sefwi Wiawso in the late '50's.

At the conclusion of the reading, David and Kofi carried the scroll around the synagogue, and gave the members of the congregation the opportunity to touch their *siddurim* to the Torah and afterwards kiss the *siddurim*. The reverence for the Torah was as devoted as in any synagogue I have ever attended. After the services, David asked me to make a short statement to the Congregation. I mentioned that I had brought tapes of the Shabbat blessings in Hebrew at the suggestion of the Rabbi William Rudolph of Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland. Beth El has a World Jewry committee, and I am trying to arrange for this synagogue of 900 families to stay in touch with the Ghana group.

Many of the children have Biblical names such as David, Joseph,

KULANU MEETS IN DC

Ethiopian Music Now at the Kulanu Boutique

An impromptu Kulanu meeting featuring two Ethiopian Jews was held in Silver Spring, Maryland, on March 28 to accommodate a visitor from the West Coast. Following Ethiopian refreshments, a crowd of 40 gathered in the Primack living room to hear a slide-talk about Ethiopian history by Dr. Yohannes Zeleke and a personal story as told by Alula Tzadik, who was visiting from Los Angeles. Alula, a former teen pop idol in Ethiopia, is known for his Ethiopia-influenced Jewish music. He performed throughout the evening and impressed us so much that the Kulanu Boutique will now be featuring his latest CD!

The CD, entitled *Make Joy Not War*, is a collection of traditional Jewish and Ethiopian Jewish songs, all with a World Beat that Alula hopes will appeal to the mainstream. The languages used are English, Hebrew and Amharic, and the musical influences are traditional Jewish, Afro, disco and Reggae. **The CD can be ordered on page 15 of this newsletter, through <www.kulanuboutique.com>, or at most music shops in the US.**

One of the most moving cuts on the CD is "Shimela, Shimela," Alula's treatment of a beloved Ethiopian Jewish tradition of migratory storks. To a stirring flute background, the artist chants:

Is our country Jerusalem fine?

Is our home Jerusalem OK?

This is what we say when we see the storks fly over our villages once a year, seasonally.

Some of us even believe that they come directly from Jerusalem bringing us greetings...

Ethiopia is one of those who have the oldest Jewish culture.

When we learn that Moses's second wife was a Cush, the biblical name for Ethiopia

When we learn that Abraham had a child from his maid who is also a Cush

When we learn that King Solomon had a son from Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia who ruled the country after his mother's death, As a child I thought that Jewish people were all blacks

It is funny, very funny, but it's highly precious and deeply inner-fulfilling to find

People who keep the traditions

People who follow the commandments

People who follow the Torah

Til the endless of time

Til the endless of our generations

No matter where we are from

No matter what we are from

No matter who we are from

No matter why we are from

No matter how we are from

Baruch HaShem, baruch baruch,

Baruch HaShem

This is the artist's fourth recording. A pop single with political satire produced in Germany in the 1990s, titled "Mr. President," was a best seller in Europe but landed the artist in jail in Ethiopia. Alula, who sings and plays more than a dozen instruments, including the kirar, a lyre dating back to biblical times, also produced a best-seller in Ethiopia, a song called "Sentahehu." He is currently at work on two more CDs, one of which will be all Amharic, and one, like *Make Joy Not War*, in English, Hebrew, and Amharic ("the languages that are the three major parts of me").

Alula performs frequently at synagogue services and concerts in the Los Angeles area, often with Craig Taubman. He can be reached at alulaalula@aol.com or telephone (301) 586-6881.



Alula (seated) and Yohannes Zeleke

Women's Mission to Uganda Returns Aglow

By Laura Wetzler

(The author, Kulanu's Coordinator for Uganda, led a Jewish Life In Uganda Mitzvah Tour with eight other women on January 28)

I am back from a month with the Abayudaya. It was a truly fantastic trip and much is being accomplished with Kulanu's help. The Abayudaya are doing great things. Mazal Tov to leaders Israel Sirini, Aaron Kintu, Naume Sabano, Samson Shadrak and Samson Wamani. *Kol Hakavod* to Chaya Weinstein and the Abayudaya Women's Association for laying extensive organizational groundwork that is coming to fruition. Rabbi Gorin's fantastic work has resulted in major new school construction. Noam Katz and Jaime Wolman performed wonderful volunteer work with the youth.

Kulanu Treasurer and board member Harriet Bograd and I attended over 25 meetings with Abayudaya members, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, and Ugandan government officials. Abayudaya are working tirelessly on their organizational, outreach, facilitation and accounting skills, as well as on improving health and hygiene standards.



Abayudaya women. Photo by H. Bograd

Several community-organizing workshops I facilitated were well attended and participation was spirited. The *Jewish Life In Uganda Mitzvah Tour* apparently afforded the first organized opportunity for the greater Abayudaya community to travel from all their distant villages to perform for each other and for the visitors in a formal concert dance performance, featuring tribal dances, Jewish historical skits, and Ugandan Jewish songs. According to the Abayudaya, this cultural sharing and celebrating together was a landmark experience for them and is helping to bring the geographically extended community closer together.

Water, Hygiene, and Electricity Projects

Thanks to Roberta Roos and Woodlands Temple, Richard Sobol, David Weisman, and Kulanu supporters, nine above-ground tanks on brick and concrete circular pedestals and one large reservoir underground tank are currently under construction. These tanks will make a very significant difference to the health and welfare of this Jewish community. Hygiene workshops are being held in the community by Abayudaya medical student Samson Wamani. Hand washing cans at latrines and waste management cans will be installed at all institutions. In addition, there has been improvement of latrines at the Hadassah School. Window screens and mosquito nets are planned for the new Hadassah dormroom.

We are still working on getting a working well/borehole at Nabugoye Hill. We have toured the site with Sam Watalatsu of the Fund for Sustainable Communities in Mbale, who will advise us in our efforts.

After doing a detailed cost-benefit analysis with Abayudaya members, solar businesses in the US and Uganda, and the Uganda Ministry of Energy, we recommend that Abayudaya electricity needs be fulfilled by connection to the hydro-electric powerline grid, as opposed to creating a solar power system. As a passionate solar advocate, I am sorry to say it is not yet cost effective for Nabugoye hill institutions, but other Abayudaya villages may benefit from solar in the future.

Abayudaya are submitting paperwork immediately and will ad-

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KULANU BRIEFS

Inside Kulanu

Kulanu's Anousim Coordinator, **Yaffah Da Costa**, is planning to make Aliyah to Israel in the next year. In addition to continuing her Kulanu work, she will participate in efforts to assist Anousim in Israel, and also continue her management and marketing consulting work there. She reminds us that she will be available for lectures (on Anousim and the phenomenon of Returnees) at synagogues and colleges in North America in the coming months for less travel cost than after making *Aliyah*! She can be contacted at yafbatya@hotmail.com.

We are delighted that **Shep Wahnnon** has signed on as one of the moderators of the Kulanu List. (To subscribe to the List, send an email to kulanu-list-subscribe@yahoo.com).

Take an Abayudaya Tour of Uganda On Your Own!

The Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour was so successful that two companies, Volcanoes Safaris and Shoebill Safaris, have now joined the Abayudaya in offering small group tours of 6-14 people. Custom itineraries feature 3, 5, or 7 day visits in the Abayudaya community with excursions to beautiful nearby Sipi Falls and Mt. Elgon plus fantastic wildlife safaris in Uganda's magnificent western national parks to see elephants, lions, hippos, gorillas, chimpanzees, marabou storks and more. The Abayudaya earn \$600 per traveler in guide fees for their community synagogues, Jewish schools, health and development projects. Have fun with your family and do a mitzvah! Contact laura@laurawetzler.com for more information on organizing a group.

Genealogy Conference in Jerusalem

The Israel Genealogical Society will host the 24th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy at the Renaissance Hotel in Jerusalem July 4-9. One of the topics will be Jewish communities from around the world. For further information, see www.jewishgen.org/jerusalem2004. The event will exploit Jerusalem's treasure trove of unique archival and family history resources unavailable anywhere else in the world.

Speakers Spread the Word

The JCC in Manhattan held "The Flying Camel: An Exploration in Jewish Multiculturalism - An Evening with **Loolwa Khazzoom**" on April 20. Khazzoom is the editor of *The Flying Camel: Essays on Identity by Women of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Heritage*.

Harriet Bograd spoke on April 2 at the West End Synagogue in NYC on her recent participation in the Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour.

Prof. Aron Rodrigue of Stanford University spoke on Sephardim and the Holocaust at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington on February 19.

Guillermo Lazo spoke about Anousim at the Tucson chapter meeting of Kulanu in February.

Jack Zeller participated on a panel on Jewish Communities Around the World at a March conference of the Young Leadership of the UJC in Washington, DC.

Jews of Rhodes Project

The Rhodes Project hopes to interview survivors and descendants of survivors of the Holocaust that occurred on the Greek island of Rhodes during World War II. The Project will include a trip to recreate the journey that 1700 Rhodesies endured from Rhodes to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Descendants of Rhodesies are urged to contact Joya Me-

nashe at 503-287-1358 or jmenashe@charter.net or Isaac Dostis at 973-984-6618 or act1presents@aol.com.

Spain's Crypto-Jews Seeking to Return

More than fifty descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Crypto-Jews attended an intensive three-day seminar in Madrid in late March, sponsored by Amishav. Amishav director Michael Freund described the curriculum: "We studied Jewish texts together, learned about the travails of their ancestors, and examined issues of identity and return currently faced by the Bnai Anousim." Lecturers included Rabbi Moshe Ben-Dahan, the Chief Rabbi of Madrid, Mr. Jacobo Garcon, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain, and Mr. Jackie Haddad, spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Madrid.

Federations Assisting NACOEJ

In the wake of the death of Lloyd Rigler, a multi-million-dollar contributor to needy Falash Mura in Ethiopia, several U.S. Jewish federations have stepped in with a \$248,000 emergency grant. The program is sponsored by the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry in Addis Ababa and Gondar. The federation money will go toward Rigler's feeding program for children and pregnant and nursing women in Ethiopia. For information on how to help the Falash Mura survive until Israel opens its doors, please see <http://www.nacoej.org>.

Continuing Jewish Multicultural Programs in NYC

Michael Saxe-Taller, a program director at the Manhattan JCC, will be relocating to the West Coast in June. Before he leaves, he wants to help continue the JCC's support of strong Jewish multicultural programming. He convened a meeting of activists and others interested in Jewish multiculturalism on April 27 to discuss future programs and to establish a forum for networking. Others can offer suggestions and comments by contacting him at mtaller@jccnyc.org.

Event Honoring Iranian Jewry

American Sephardi Federation and Beth Simchat Torah co-sponsored an evening in New York City to celebrate the story of the Iranian-Jewish experience. The March event at the Center for Jewish History featured Persian literature, music and delicacies.

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies Plans Conference

President Abe Lavender has announced that the annual conference of the SCJS will be held in Portland, Oregon, on August 8-10, 2004. Further information on the conference, as well as the Society itself, can be found at www.cryptojew.com. The Society publishes the quarterly journal *HaLapid*, a treasure-trove of academic articles, personal stories, news, and even recipes. Individuals can join by sending a \$25 check, payable to the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, to: Randy Baca, 7836 East Via Sonrisa, Scottsdale, AZ 85258, USA.

Refuah Shleyma

We wish speedy recoveries to **Jeannette Okin, Lillian Bréger, Lois Levy, Dr. Yale Palchick, Miriam Cohen, Dr. Arthur Felix, Lillian Stickle, Dr. George Revis, Dr. Irwin Steinberg, and Pat Steinberg**.

Mazal Tov

To **Rabbi J. Hershy Worch** on the publication of his latest book, *The Kabbalist Haggadah*, published by Spirit of the Desert Productions in Scottsdale, Arizona. For information and to order, see www.rebshesky.com.

KULANU BRIEFS

Juicism in Cuba: Can It Survive?

© 2003 by Irwin M. Berg

To **Avrum Ashery**, whose 60th birthday was celebrated by his Rockville, Maryland, congregation, Tikvat Israel, and whose art was exhibited in a one-man show by the JCC of Greater Washington. The exhibit included six baseball oil still lifes, 35 framed pieces of communications and fine arts, and T-shirts bearing some of the logos he has designed. Ashery, an internationally known graphic artist, donated Kulanu's logo and cover design for the book *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity*.

To **Noam Katz**, who has been accepted to rabbinical school at HUC in New York.

Condolences

The entire Kulanu community extends condolences to Chaya (Emily) Weinstein, her mother, Norma Weinstein, and their entire family on the sudden death of Chaya's brother, **Adam Weinstein**, at age 42.

We also mourn the tragic death of **Al Heppner**, son of Max Amichai Heppner, in San Diego. Contributions in his memory can be made by phone to The Jewish National Fund at (800) 542-8733

Rabbi Samuel Lerer, who is said to have converted more people to Judaism than anyone in the past two centuries, died on February 5 at age 89. Lerer, who had retired to San Antonio, Texas, lived in Mexico City from 1968 to 1999 while leading English-language Beth Israel Community Center. During that time, the Conservative rabbi reached out to Mexicans who believed they were descended from Spanish Jews forced to convert to Catholicism during the Inquisition. By his own count, Lerer converted about 3,000 Mexicans, most frequently in Veracruz, Venta Prieta, and Puebla. More than 500 of these converts have moved to Israel

Todah Rabah

Rabbi Jeffrey Summit at Tufts University Hillel continues his heroic efforts to raise funds for Abayudaya college students. In addition to the \$1500 he raised during the latest semester, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings added another \$1500 to the fund from royalty money on CDs sold. The CD, *Abayudaya: Music From the Jewish People of Uganda*, was compiled by Summit and is available at most recording outlets.

New York's **Congregation Beth Simchat Torah**, donated monies collected through the sale of *chameitz* to Kulanu. **Shep Wahnon**, who suggested the arrangement, encourages others to use this method to raise funds for the benefit of the dispersed of Israel.

Ziv Tzedakah Fund donated \$500 "to help underwrite the school uniforms for the children in the Abayudaya schools. We continue to be very excited about working with you on this project."

Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, DC has donated 100 Hertz Chumashim to Kulanu. Many thanks to **JoHanna Potts** of Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, MD, who got the word out via the principals meeting that we are in search of books for our communities.

United Synagogue of Hoboken has raised \$225 to benefit the Abayudaya through the sale of the book *Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda*. Thanks to **Louise Kurtz**, who worked on the book and initiated the fund raising effort.

Aleene and Morimer Smith have generously contributed \$2000. \$500 donations were received from **Irwin and Elaine Berg** and **Emily Taitz**. \$150-250: **Debbie & Mark Glotter**, **Bernard & Rena Shapiro**, **Jeffrey & Anita Bimbrey Stein**, **Audrey & Scott Weitz**, **National Center to Encourage Judaism**, **Sandra Reynolds** The \$100 Club: **Judge Edward A vadenka**, **Michael & Mary Baron**, **James Belin**, **Marc Carrel**, **Bert Davidson**, **Jonina Duker**, **Sheldon Rabinowitz**, **Julius & Barbara Shair**, **Linda & Michael Toohey**, **Jack & Stephanie Ventura**, **Arvin & Bonnie Weiss**, **Dr. Norman Weiss**, **Ellen Ziegler**.

There are about 1,500 Jews in Cuba, of which 1,200 live in Havana. Only about half of these publicly identify as Jews. The intermarriage rate from 1963 to 1992 approached 90 percent and since 1992 has decreased only slightly. Can such a community transmit to its children the beliefs, the sense of peoplehood, a reverence for the holy land, and the sense of common purpose that have preserved us as Jews in the Diaspora for two thousand years?

It came as a great surprise to me that the weapon being used by Cuban Jews to combat assimilation and insure survival is "conversion." According to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, more than 60 percent of Cuba's Jewish population are converts, married to converts or descended from converts.

The future of the Jewish community in Cuba is intimately tied to the history of the Jewish community in Cuba, going back to the first American Jews who entered Cuba following the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Jewish History in Cuba

Jews first came to Cuba from the United States in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. They were business people, and they sought to take advantage, with other Americans, of business opportunities created by the defeat of Spain. In 1904 they formed a Reform synagogue in Havana.

Shortly before World War I, Jewish immigrants from the Ottoman Empire began coming to Cuba. Many settled in Havana but others moved into other areas such as Camaguey, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, and Sancti Spiritus. Even today, the few remaining Jews outside of Havana are largely Sephardic Jews. Locally, these Jews became known as "Turcos" or Turkish Jews. In 1914 the Turcos founded Chevet Achim, a Sephardic synagogue, in Old Havana.

Beginning in the early 1920s, but particularly after 1924, Polish Jews seeking to come to the United States, but unable to do so because of immigration restrictions, settled in Havana. For these Polish Jews, Cuba was only a temporary stop before they would ultimately settle in the United States. These Jews were known locally as "Polacos" or Polish Jews. The Polacos came without money and settled mainly in Old Havana. They began as manual laborers and then opened up small businesses. As they lifted themselves out of the ranks of the poor, they built two synagogues in the Old City, of which only one, Adath Israel, still stands.

The more affluent moved to the suburbs. Wealthy Ashkenazi Jews less committed to Orthodoxy organized to build a community center in the Vedado district of Havana. In 1953 these wealthy Jews, the Patronato ("Patrons"), built a Jewish center called the Patronato de la Casa de la Comunidad Hebrea de Cuba. The community center contained a synagogue called Beth Sholom. The wealthy Sephardic Jews built Centro Sefardi, also in Vedado. Even before the Castro revolution, two of the three synagogues in Old Havana, Chevet Achim and Cento Israelita, lost most of their congregants.

The Castro Revolution

Fidel Castro entered Havana on January 1, 1959. At that time there were about 15,000 Jews living in Cuba. By 1963 the number had dwindled to 4,500 and by 1990 it had further dwindled to 1,500.

Beginning in 1959, the Cuban government began a process leading to the complete socialization of the economy. At first, only farms over a certain size were nationalized. By 1963 more than two-thirds of the farmland was owned by the state. The rest of the farmers were required to sell most of their produce to the government at prices set by the government. All businesses were nationalized. Self-employment and private trading were banned. The government's pol-

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Judaism in Cuba (cont.)

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icy of nationalizing private businesses hurt the Jewish community economically. It is thus not surprising that most Jews left. But who remained, and why?

Some were old and poor and still lived in Old Havana. Some had salaried employment and were needed by the government. Some were intermarried and therefore felt bound to stay in Cuba for the sake of their spouses. Most, I suspect, were sympathetic to the Revolution and stayed to help it succeed.

Religion

In July 1992, the Castro regime amended its constitution, changing the nature of its government from "atheistic" to "secular." Although the change may not seem significant to an outsider, to the Cuban it was a change of major significance.

From 1959 to 1990, religion was discouraged. A believer could not be a member of the Communist Party, or expect to receive a good government job, or be allowed to attend college or a professional school. A whole generation of Cubans began living together without the sanction of the church. After the policy reversed, bap-

An entire generation had been raised without any Jewish education and with no involvement with a synagogue.

tisms increased from 25,258 in 1979 to 62,664 in 1992.

Before the policy reversal, Cuba's attitude toward religion had a similar effect on Jews. By 1990 only 305 identifiably Jewish families remained in Cuba. Before 1990, the last bar mitzvah was celebrated in Havana in 1973 and the last Jewish wedding was held in 1976. Although three of Havana's five synagogues were open in 1990, the level of activity was low, and the participants were mostly elderly. An entire generation had been raised without any Jewish education and with no involvement with a synagogue.

Beth Shalom (Patronato) in Vedado

Beth Shalom is currently the most active of the three remaining synagogues in Havana, and it attracts more young people than any of the others. Two young emissaries from Argentina, Nestor Szewach, and Mara Steiner, have been sent by the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to lead the services in Beth Shalom and to teach its children. Neither of them can perform rabbinic or religious functions such as conversion, circumcision or kosher slaughtering, or offer answers to religious questions. But they are young, energetic, and loved. They have trained about five people to lead services; they helped eight young boys and girls to be bar- and bat-mitzvah in 2002. The success of their stewardship is evident with the energetic singing of the congregation during a Friday night service attended by about 50 people, and in the love bestowed upon them - particularly by the children.

After the Friday Kabbalat Shabat service, the congregation is offered a free meal of chicken, rice, beans and dessert. The chicken is not kosher even though there is a *shochet* (kosher slaughterer) on the island. This is probably the only meat that most members of the congregation will eat. Although a blessing was said over the wine and the bread before the meal, no blessings were said or songs sung at the end of the Shabbat meal. It is, therefore, appropriate to wonder: did the 50 people who came to the service attend because they wished to participate in a Jewish service or because they could get a free, nutritious meal? My reading of the congregation leads me to believe that, for most (especially the young), the service fulfilled a spiritual need.

I am led to this conclusion not only by the energetic singing of the congregation but also by the presence of the boy who on the fol-

lowing day would be bar-mitzvah. He came with his born-Jewish father, converted-Jewish mother and three siblings. The boy had undergone a *brit milah* (circumcision). The mother showed great excitement and pleasure from the honor bestowed on her son as bar-mitzvah, even more than the father.

Centro Sefardi in Vedado

Shabbat morning I attended the Centro Hebreo Sefardi de Cuba in Vedado. There were about 35 people in attendance, equally divided between men and women. Men and women sat separately, but there was no *mechitza* (barrier) between them. Since the year 2000, women are counted in the minyan, and a woman was called to bind the Torah (a *gelilah*).

Jose Levi is the president of the congregation and he is clearly its guiding force. The prayer book is a Sephardic one printed in Mexico. The leader of the service was a young man trained by Jose Levi. The same young man also read the portion of the Torah, not from the Torah itself but from a *Tanach* (Bible).

After the service, a meal was served downstairs consisting of chicken (non-Kosher), rice, and ice cream. Among the members of the congregation was a black child, her black mother and her black grandmother. The father of the child is a Cuban Jew who made aliyah to Israel. I was told that he sends money to the mother to support the child. Again it is appropriate to ask: was attendance at the service motivated by a spiritual need or by the subsequent meal? No answer would be the same for all.

Adath Israel in Old Havana

Adath Israel is an Orthodox synagogue located in Old Havana. It is Orthodox in the sense that it follows all Orthodox traditions in the separation of men and women, in the conduct of the service, and in the presence of a *mikvah* (ritual bath) on the premises. It is not Orthodox in the sense that the congregants are Orthodox; I was told that 90 percent of the congregants are married to non-Jews.

I attended Adath Israel for a weekday afternoon and evening service. About seven men and four women were in attendance. Without a minyan, the prayers requiring ten men, including the Kaddish (mourner's prayer), were not said. The service was a curious mixture of Ashkenazi and Sephardi customs and melodies. The administrator of the synagogue is Juan Luis Rouso Altuna, whose grandparents came from (then in Turkey - now in Greece).

There have been 300 conversions in the past eight years, and the number shows no sign of decreasing.

Adath Israel is the only one of the three synagogues that has a connection with Chabad (Lubavitch). On the high holidays and on Pesach, Chabad sends an emissary to conduct services and to be a *shochet*. On the wall at the entrance to the synagogue is a picture of the Rabbi Schneerson, the late leader of the Chabad movement.

After the service, I was approached by three of the men who attended asking for a personal donation. This kind of begging is not unusual in the Orthodox world, but it made me wonder why the men were there. Was it to perform a religious obligation or to waylay a tourist?

All three of these remaining synagogues fell into a state of disrepair between the years 1960 and 1992. While Beth Shalom and Centro Sefardi have largely been restored, Adath Israel still needs a great deal of work.

The Future

Cuba has not had a *mohel* in over 35 years. When a boy is born, the circumcision is done by a doctor in a hospital. Since the visit by Pope Paul II in 1998, Cuba has allowed regular visits by foreign rabbis to preside over a ceremony in which a symbolic circumcision is performed.

Judaism in Cuba (cont.)

Cuba has also allowed periodic visits by *Batei Din* (Jewish Courts) for the purpose of performing conversions on those who have been prepared. All three synagogues must agree that a candidate for conversion is ready. This consists of attendance at Sunday school (children at Beth Shalom, adults at Centro Sefardi) and at regular worship services for periods of time lasting as long as five years.

Up to the present time, the *Batei Din* supervising the conversions have consisted of Conservative rabbis from Spanish-speaking countries, usually Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. Israel's Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, upon his visit to Cuba in 1994, deemed the conversions valid. This is a most unusual concession to reality: in order for a convert to be accepted by an Orthodox *Beth Din*, he or she must agree to undertake all the commandments in the Torah, written and oral. (I was told many times that no one in Cuba observes Shabbat in an Orthodox manner). While meat is scarce, Cuba is not a totally meatless society. Being kosher means being a vegetarian in a society where pork is generally the only meat available. Despite the difficulty, there are a few Jews who are kosher and will not eat even the meat served in their own synagogues. One of these is Adela Devorin, the vice president of Beth Shalom.

There have been 300 conversions in the past eight years, and the number shows no sign of decreasing. Because of this high number of conversions, 60 percent of Cuba's Jewish population has been estimated to be part of a family in which there is a convert. What is it that makes conversion to Judaism so appealing to Cubans, and can it continue?

I asked these questions of the heads of the three synagogues without getting a consistent answer. The closest that I got to a spiritual answer was that Judaism is a healthy religion that helps people to live a good family life. In the Cuban context, this reasoning resonates. Between 1968 and 1992 about 40 percent of pregnancies in Cuba resulted in abortions. Since 1992 the rate of abortions has increased. Three out of five mothers are unmarried. I do not know what the comparative figures among Jews are, but those who felt that Judaism led to a good family life felt that abortions and unmarried mothers were less common among Jews than among Cubans in general. Last year nine religious weddings were conducted in the three synagogues of Havana, the most in more than 30 years.

Is it a model that could serve other Jewish communities, especially our American Jewish community?

about Judaism back into the synagogue, might also attract converts to Judaism. The synagogues provide a place to meet, mingle, dance, and be entertained. They offer classes, services, and festive dinners. These functions which we take for granted are more important where money is scarce and there is little to do.

In the United States where synagogues also perform these functions, it is mainly the elderly who imbibe. In Cuba it is more often the young, and with great enthusiasm. Jewish foreigners are often deeply impressed with these young people as they pray and dance and sing and show obvious attachment to the State of Israel.

So far, the Cuban model has served the Jewish community of Cuba better than one would have expected. Also, there does not seem to be an alternative in Cuba for the model that it has adopted for itself. Is it a model that could serve other Jewish communities, especially our American Jewish community? That is a question that has received a considerable amount of comment because of the increasing intermarriage rate in the US. Should we continue to discourage intermarriage or should we, as the Cubans do, make an effort to invite the non-Jewish spouse into our synagogues?

Jerusalem Literary Reading On Diversity Book

A ground-breaking Literary Reading took place at Tmol Shilshom Bookstore Café in Jerusalem on February 29. Eight co-authors of the Kulanu book *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity*, all residents of Israel, read from their work.

Sue Tourkin-Komet organized and "emceed" the event. The eight readers, among 50 co-authors of the anthology, included Tourkin-Komet (on learning Russian to



Shulamith Halevy reading, with Sue Tourkin-Komet, event organizer

honor her heritage), Shulamith C. HaLevy (on the Mexican martyr Luis de Carvajal), Hadassah W. Harr-El (on racial diversity within Judaism), Gloria Mound (on secret observances of Spanish Anousim), Yitzchak Kerem (on the Holocaust's decimation of much of Sephardic

Jewry), Emma Kimor (on the Cochin synagogue in India), Gila Green (on suicide bombings in Jerusalem), and Ruth Fogelman (on the dispersion of the Children of Israel). Most traveled from cities outside Jerusalem to attend. Stand-ins read from the writings of two absent Israel co-authors, Loolwa Khazzoom and Michael Freund.

Kulanu received reports that the well-attended event was "professional, respectful, smooth, warm, and friendly"

Guests included Dr. Dov Noy, founder of the Folklore Department at Hebrew University, and Dr. Aryeh Oded, a retired diplomat and author of two books on the Abayudaya.

According to Tourkin-Komet, "Anyone and everyone who has begun to read or even just glance at this book is fascinated, charmed, and well impressed."

For a review of *Under One Canopy*, see page 16. For ordering information, see the Kulanu Boutique on page 15.

LETTERS TO KULANU

Mexican Jew Wants Pen-Pals

I'm a Mexican Jew. We have found that our family has Anousim origins, and I'm the third generation that returned recently to Judaism. I would like to know people from everywhere! I understand English, Spanish, and Portuguese (only reading) and German and some French, but I'd like to have some friends to learn Portuguese and share some information about the roots of our families. We are from Veracruz, the most important port of Mexico, in the Gulf of Mexico, a coast city very much like Sao Paulo or Rio. We are a small community, about 100 members. The name of my community is Beth Shmuel, so from now on, any time you want to visit my hometown, you can contact me at danieljm@yahoo.com.mx.

Also, our community has its own e-mail and we welcome questions or suggestions about our congregation. The congregation's email address is <kehilabethshmuolveracruz@yahoo.com.mx>.

*Daniel M. Jimenez
Veracruz, Mexico*

The Irony of Poraz

(In response to a Jewish Press article on March 12 that Israeli Interior Minister Avraham Poraz will bar immigrants from Ethiopia, India and Peru because they undergo only Orthodox conversions)

For thousands of years, Jews had no place to go where we were guaranteed the right to practice our religion in peace. Now we have Israel -- where we can go, as long as we agree to give up our religion! What kind of sense does that make? In future generations, will some future organization like Kulanu be helping the remnant of those who were forced to give up Judaism by Israel, instead of by Spain, Portugal, and other countries?

*Robert Book
Chicago, Illinois*

Praise for a Man with a Will of Iron

You beat me to commending Remy Itona. Without using TV, newspapers, or radio, the gentleman has raised the profile of Judaism in Abuja/Nigeria. There must have been Judaism in Nigeria before, but who heard about it? Almost nobody. Yet in a very short period Itona has made it a subject of discussion among the Igbos. This is proof that a man with a will of iron can build or rebuild a nation.

I was born as a Christian. I grew up as a Christian, benefited by studying in Christian schools, yet I have a certain soft spot for Judaism because of Israel. I am studying the religion now. And I can vow that this applies to most Igbos who are Christians. Determined and consistent enlightenment is necessary so that Igbos can know what Judaism is, and how it differs from Christianity. This is of immediate importance, so that Judaism can spread and survive. Because for Judaism to survive, a sizeable number of Igbos must identify with the religion, and that is not so yet; even though awareness of it spreading.

*Robert Nwankwo
Abuja, Nigeria*

(Editor's note: Kulanu's Nigeria Coordinator, Ahab Elijah, can be contacted at <ahabeliyah@yahoo.com>.)

The Falash Mura Are Intensely Jewish

I have just returned from a trip to Israel and Ethiopia on a mission with the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, where I saw first hand many of the 24,000 remaining Falash Mura and the appalling conditions they are living in. For all those who question their Jewishness, I can definitively testify that they are intensely Jewish. We brought the Gondar community a Sefer Torah donated by an American. The Fa-

lash Mura were given only a one-day notice of our visit. When we arrived we were greeted by about 2000 Jews dancing, singing and ululating in celebration. It was truly moving and totally convincing of their dedication to Torah and the Jewish People.

During the month I spent in Israel prior to going to Ethiopia, I visited with Ethiopian Jewish school kids through the Jerusalem NA-COEJ office. Again, I was so impressed by their sincerity. I also had the opportunity to spend time with the Bnei Menashe, both in Jerusalem and Kiryat Arba. Their fervor was also overwhelming. In my eyes these were Jews. Throughout my time in Israel I met up with Jews from India and Ethiopia, with Anousim from Belmonte, Portugal, Samaritans, Karaites even a Chinese Jew from Kaifeng, China. Never did they question my Jewish authenticity, but we Western Jews frequently challenge other Jews who don't look like us. The only time I myself was questioned about my Jewish identity was by El Al personnel who didn't recognize my surname as Jewish. (It happens to be Jewish of Moroccan origin). So I know to a small degree what it feels like to be a non-Ashkenazi Jew whose Jewish identity is challenged.

*Shep Wahnon
New York, NY*

Laptop Computers Needed

I've just come back from an inspiring 16-day visit to the Abayudaya community in Uganda. I am eager to find donations of laptop computers to send to the Abayudaya community. I have given them a printer/copier/scanner, but the computer I brought to support the printer failed to work. None of the other computers that the community has are fast enough to support the new printer. We need a laptop that is 350 Mhz or faster. I will reinstall software on it and get it ready to send to the Abayudaya community.

Please get in touch with me if you can help. I'm at <Hbograd@compuserve.com>.
*Harriet Bograd
New York, NY*

Mallorca's New Rabbi

Since English is not my mother tongue (I am born in Sweden), I am only sending you a little information about our small community in Mallorca. I am the first full-time rabbi here for almost 600 years -- since the 1420's!!! The community is Askenazi, mixed British-South American with a few members from other countries as well. The community has only about 60 members, but we are searching! The weekly activities consist of services every Friday at 7 p.m. in the Orthodox synagogue, Talmud Torah on Sundays, English library on Thursdays, as well as sale of Kosher meat products on Thursdays.

We have established Restaurant "Ki Tov" with Kosher catering, which can serve tourists by delivering lunches to hotels, preparing picnics, and supplying Shabbat dinners.

A very exciting part of my job is to make bonds with the substantial group of Anousim (here they are called *Chuetas*). On the small island there are living an estimated 20,000 *Chuetas*. But if you ask me, I think it is almost impossible to find ANY person of Mallorcan origin that does not have Jewish ancestry. But this is my personal opinion and not a scientific statement.

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The Most Exhilarating and Learning Experience of My Life

By Noam Katz

Arrival

I have arrived safely and soundly in Uganda! I am sitting at an internet café in sunny, humid Mbale with my new friend Itzhak. I arrived at Entebbe airport on Wednesday and was greeted by Samson, currently studying at the university in Kampala, and JJ Keki, one of the community leaders. We dropped Samson back off at school and then drove 4 hours back to the community, getting in around 9pm. There I was welcomed by even more members of the community, and we sang and ate plenty...don't worry: all of the vegetables were cooked! Some of the appetizing dishes included: smoked fish (like the good stuff), eggplant, cooked spinach, *matooke* (a potato-like food), and *posho* (made from cauliflower). Washed down with bottled water.

Thursday, I woke up for morning prayers at 7am (I have to prepare to read the parashah and give a short *d'var* this Shabbat), and then met with Seth Jonadav and Aaron Kintu Moses, the heads of the two schools, to discuss my agenda for my time here. School is about to go on vacation, so I will be spending more of my time conducting youth activities, writing and directing a Chanukah play, teaching computers, and teaching at the yeshiva on Sunday mornings. Whew!

Mid-morning, Itzhak took me for a walk through the surrounding villages. Most of the children looked at me, smiled, and said "*muzungu*" (white man). I impressed them with the few Lugisu words that I have learned. I am still getting used to being a novelty act because of the color of my skin. To be honest, everyone has been so warm and hospitable, and I feel perfectly safe.

A Month Later

Uganda continues to dazzle and challenge my preconceptions about poverty, politics, and religion. I have now been living with the Abayudaya for nearly a month, and no longer feel like a "*muzungu*" outsider.

A week ago Sunday, we sponsored a community-wide Chanukah party, complete with latkes, dreidls, gelt, and a play about the Maccabees that I worked on with the youth. For those interested when I return to the U.S., I have the whole thing recorded on mini-disc (accompanied by the youth singing "Maoz Tzur" and a Chanukah song in Luganda). I also distributed handfuls of nuts to the little ones so they could ante up for games of dreidel. I led some singing in the synagogue. Then we all feasted on massive portions of rice, *skuma* (cooked spinach), and Kosher chickens (freshly slaughtered for the occasion). For the strong of stomach, I have pictures of that too.

This past week, another volunteer and I have been conducting computer lessons, helping the community with several grant proposals (the Abayudaya Women's Association runs a loan service and a crafts collective that makes beautiful knit kippot and tallitot), and taking in the natural beauties of the jungle. We walk out the front door of the headmaster's house where we are staying atop Nabugoye Hill, and are surrounded by banana and mango trees, semi-permanent structures made of brick and mud, and the constant smells and sounds of cow (*ente*), goat (*embooz*) and rooster (*encoco*).

The youth, who do not go back to school until late January, are often hanging around, singing, playing jump rope, and an African variation of Parcheesi. I went on a hike up Mt. Wanale with them this past Tuesday...the most intense, exhausting "climb" of my life. I am also trying to organize a trip for the youth to Sipi Falls, a beautiful site about an hour away from Mbale (the place that you see on most posters/postcards of Uganda).

The work here continues to be simultaneously rewarding and challenging. I am thrilled that people want to learn Hebrew (I'm cur-

rently teaching group lessons in Nabugoye and Namanyoni 3 times a week), Judaics, and computer skills. We successfully set up the desktop computer at Hadassah yesterday, and so have two workstations that can be used at the same time. Our intentions are to get as many people versed in Word, Excel, and basic internet functions as we can before I leave in Feb.

Less Than One Month To Go

Today is a big day for the Abayudaya: nine "*muzungu*" visitors from North America are coming on the first venture of the Abayudaya's start-up tourism industry. They will be here for just under two weeks, meeting members of the community, touring the rural countryside, and checking out a few of Uganda's natural wonders, like Mt. Elgon and Sipi Falls. We have also been working hard at preparing an Abayudaya cultural arts show for this coming Sunday. All I can say is that I have been mesmerized for the past two weeks in song and dance. Men and women, from the ages of six to 86 have been rehearsing *zabuli* ('psalms' in Luganda), traditional welcome dances (they tie cloth belts around their waists and do a lot of shaking), and drumming, oh the blessed drumming!

In addition, I have been working with the youth to create a play about the life of Semei Kakungulu, the founder of the Abayudaya.

I have also been busying myself with computer lessons (they want to learn how to type 50 words a minute), Hebrew classes 3x a week, and preparing for the oncoming school year, which officially starts next week. This past Monday, I led a teacher-training workshop for the faculty of SK High School on students with special needs, learning disabilities, and alternative learning styles. To be sure, this was the first time that most of them had heard about the wonders of ADD. But I couldn't resist, telling them personal anecdotes from home to rouse laughter. I have to say that working for 3 years in an American public high school certainly did equip me for handling a wide variety of educational challenges. But this

will be my first time teaching an entire class of non-native English speakers.

In the meantime, the construction team is hard at work outside my window at Hadassah Infant School. We are building a new dormitory, a 3-classroom block, and new latrines and showers for the kids. Money is short, so it will probably run out before they can set the metal roofing or cement floor for the new classrooms, but headmaster Aaron is confident that he will be able to complete them by the end of this term. I am eager to return home and start giving my Abayudaya presentations, as I think that the North American Jewish community will be surprised, impressed, and interested in supporting one of the most unique Jewish communities on the globe.

Farewell

I leave Uganda next Monday. After 3 months of summer weather, I don't if I can adjust to the cold...Has the groundhog seen his shadow?

For the better part of the past two weeks, I have been going back and forth between the community's high school and Hadassah Infant School, teaching a full load of classes on Monday through Friday. The students are incredible! Despite the fact that there is not enough money to seal windows and doors at the primary school (and the younger grades meet outdoors), the youngest children are thirsty for knowledge, energetic, and just thankful to be attending school.

At the high school, I have been conducting regular English and Hebrew classes, and the occasional Computer Science class. I am still



Noam Katz (the big white guy) and friends

(Continued on page 10)

A True Mitzvah Project

It all started from a phone call from Kay Klass Levitt who read about the sharing of *Chumashim* between Shaare Tefilah Congregation in Silver Spring, Maryland, and the newly formed synagogues in Abuja, Nigeria, that Remy Ilona was supporting. Kay had the idea that she wanted to extend that relationship at the most precious time of her family, when her son Joel becomes responsible for the commandments of Israel at his Bar Mitzvah. She wanted to know what Kulanu's president, Jack Zeller, thought of collecting Judaica, especially books, for Joel's many guests to donate to Abuja synagogues. Jack was ecstatic. He responded, "Certainly the good deeds that Remy has performed in Abuja have spread thousands of miles and brought us all together."

Here is the letter Joel wrote to his guests:

My Bar Mitzvah Haftarah is from the book of Amos. The prophet Amos predicted that the Children of Israel will lose the Promised Land and be scattered throughout the world, due to their sinful behavior. In the eighth century B.C.E., when the ten northern Israelite tribes were conquered by Assyria, the prediction of Amos came true, and the Israelites were driven out of the land and forced to resettle, many of them in Africa. The ten tribes of Israel disappeared and became known as the Lost Tribes.

I read recently in the *Washington Jewish Week* about Jews living in Abuja, Nigeria. I was familiar with the Ethiopian Jews but had no idea there were Jews in Nigeria. Like the Ethiopian Jews, the Jews in Nigeria are believed to be remnants of the Lost Tribes.

Kulanu, meaning altogether, is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to finding and assisting lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people. This includes research, contacts, education, donations, help with conversion when requested, and help with relocation to Israel if desired. They depend on volunteers for everything.

The Jews of Nigeria are in need of basic Jewish ritual objects like kippot, prayer books, Tanakhs, tefillin, tallitot, seder plates, menorahs, dreidels, Hebrew dictionaries, books on learning Hebrew, books on Judaism and Israel, Hebrew songbooks, etc. With two brothers, my house sure has a lot of extra kippot!

I would like to collect surplus Judaica and send it to the Jews of Nigeria. Please bring to my home or Bar Mitzvah celebration any Judaic articles you can afford to live without, and I will make sure they get to the Jews of Nigeria. Who knows, maybe my parents will let me deliver it personally.

Alternatively, you may make a contribution in honor of my becoming a Bar Mitzvah to Kulanu. That would be a wonderful Bar Mitzvah gift. Your donation should be sent to: KULANU C/O Harriet Bograd, Treasurer Kulanu Inc., 165 West End Ave., Apt. 3R, New York, NY 10023

Thank you, and I can't wait to see you on May 1st when you can hear how this mitzvah project fits with my Torah portion too.

The results? This newsletter goes to press before his May 1 date, but at press time over \$800 had been donated to Kulanu in response to Joel's letter, and he had amassed a lot of Judaica that Jeffrey Davidson has started taking to Nigeria. Rabbi Menachem Youlus assisted with book selections.

Yasher Koach to Joel and his family!

The Most Exhilarating Experience (cont.)

(Continued from page 9)

mesmerized at how the teachers are expected to cover a wealth of information to prepare their students for national examinations without the aid of textbooks or basic classroom resources. It is a truly committed staff, especially considering the fact that they work for such low pay and spend half of the week searching for other sources of income. Their degree of collegiality and camaraderie is amazing...they quickly accepted "*Masaba*" Noamas one of their own.

In my "spare" time, I am working on typing and editing a proposal to the German Embassy in Uganda for the construction of a new library facility. In general, I hope to raise awareness and hopefully some funding in the U.S. to help these schools develop their programs, improve their facilities, and pay adequate salaries to their teachers. Amen.

The past few nights I have been sitting down with my friends JJ Keki and Jon Nkola, strumming on a few acoustic guitars, and making some shoebox recordings on my mini-disc recorder. I have been completely taken by the infectious harmonies and rhythms of Ugandan music, which often borders on reggae roots of Bob Marley and the

bassy-tones of Ladysmith Black Mambazo. If you do not currently have one, look online for some CDs of Abayudaya music—I promise, it will be like no other (Jewish) music you have ever heard.

I have also written about a half-dozen new tunes, and God (and wallet) willing, will try to get back in the studio this spring to record a new album. Percussion, bass, and harmonies abounding, with some special guest tunes from my African brothers and sisters. Wish me luck.

I have been trying to mentally prepare for my departure, but I know that it will be mucho difficult to say goodbyeto my new extended family. I am also trying hard not to make promises or guarantees that I can't keep.

This has undoubtedly been the most exhilarating and learning experience of my life. I think that I have a much deeper and personal understanding of *tikkun olam*, (the Jewish obligation to repair the world). The fact that Muslims, Christians, and Jews live in harmony and go to school together atop Nabugoye Hill is truly inspiring—I imagine there are only a handful of places in today's world that can make the same claim. *Har shalom*.

PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

■ The Spring 2004 issue of *Reform Judaism Magazine* is devoted to “Jewish Diversity.” Perfect for Kulanu readers, it features such articles as **Jennie Rothenberg’s** “The Jews We Don’t See: Frederic Brenner’s Vision”; **Magda Elias’s** “For Papa (on a Guatemalan Jewish family)”; **Patricia Lin’s** “Patricia Yu Chava Esther Lin bat Avraham”; **Carlton Watson’s** “The Dream” (about a Jamaican convert); “Signs,” an interview with **Alysa Stanton**, an African-American woman in rabbinical school; **Angela Warrick Buchdahl’s** “Kimchee on the Seder Plate”; **Yavilah McCoy’s** “Ten Ways To Become a More Tolerant Jew”; and a sidebar by **Karen Primack** and **Jack Zeller**, “Jews, Lost & Found.”

■ **Dr. Arye Oded**, a retired Israeli diplomat, has written a book in Hebrew on the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, with whom he interacted in the 1960s. The author presented 20 copies of *Judaism in Africa: The Abayudaya of Uganda* and their contacts with World Jewry to Kulanu for sale and presentations, but his reason for writing the book was to inform the people in Israel and Israelis abroad of the unique history of the Abayudaya. This volume updates an English-language book Oded wrote in 1995, *Religion and Politics in Uganda*. Proceeds of the book’s sales will benefit the Semei Kakungulu High School in Uganda.

Oded, who served in Israel’s embassy in Uganda and became Israel’s ambassador to Kenya, has had a long and distinguished career in many African countries. The book will be sent to all Israel embassies in Africa, including the Israeli embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, which deals with Uganda and other countries in East Africa. Noting that most Israeli tourists to East Africa pass through Nairobi, and hundreds of Israelis work in Kenya and Uganda, Oded hopes that those Israelis who are on their way to Uganda or who work there will come to know about the Abayudaya and where they live and be able to visit and assist them.

Now a lecturer at Hebrew University, he recently attended a Kulanu Literary Reading in Jerusalem introducing the anthology *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity*.

■ A *Sun News* (Abuja, Nigeria) article on March 28 was entitled “I’m sure, Igbo are descendants of the Jews – Noam Katz, Israeli envoy.” In it, Katz is quoted as saying, “I’m aware and sure that we have unique traditions, culture and strong bonds that link us to the Igbo people. It has been proved that these unique bonds are helping in creating ties between us. There are some traditions that the two peoples have in common. I was told by some Igbo friends about common cultures and customs that we have together, some linguistic connections between Hebrew and Igbo.”

■ A new Spanish-language Jewish newspaper, *Tora Tropical: Judaismo con Sabor Latino*, has begun publication in South Florida. Funded by the Jewish federation movement, the quarterly has a press run of 10,000 and hopes to go monthly and expand to Chicago and Los Angeles.

■ An incredible article by **Avraham Shmuel Lewin** in the March 12 *Jewish Press* quotes Israeli Interior Minister Avraham Poraz as saying that “immigration to Israel from Ethiopia, India and Peru will be frozen because immigrants from those countries undergo only Orthodox conversions and many choose to live in Judea and Samaria.” The article is titled “Charge: Interior Ministry Barring Immigration From Three Countries.”

■ “Honorable Memorial,” by **Simone Rosenzweig** ran in the *Jerusalem Post* on January 28. It notes that after 20 years of delays, a permanent home on Jerusalem’s Mount Herzl has finally been found for a monument recognizing the 4000 Ethiopian Jews who died on the perilous journey from Ethiopia to Sudan in 1984-85. Some 8000 survived the trek and came to Israel as part of Operation Moses. The monument will be designed in the next year by Israeli and Ethiopian-Israeli architects working in conjunction with the Ethiopian-Israeli community. An annual national memorial ceremony to honor those who died will

be held on Jerusalem Day.

■ An article on Uganda’s Jews entitled “Equatorial Torah” appeared in the January 24 issue of *The Economist*.

■ **Gregory Cuellar’s** article in the Winter 2004 issue of *HaLapid*, “The Mishnah and the Masa of the Com Tortilla,” is a fascinating discussion of a creative adaptation of rabbinic tradition by Crypto-Jews of Texas. Although the Roman Catholic priests were not at liberty to substitute plentiful maize for the more scarce wheat in producing the Eucharist, the Crypto-Jews opted to sustain the Mishnaic tradition of “taking challah” or separation of the priest’s dough by substituting maize. The author believes these Crypto-Jews were aware of the rabbinic tradition that only grains that leaven produce dough that must be separated, and maize tortilla dough qualifies. *HaLapid* is the quarterly journal of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies, and Cuellar is a Crypto-Jewish descendant from Texas and a PhD student in Hebrew Bible/Rabbinic Literature.

■ **Gabe Levenson’s** April 2 article in the *NY Jewish Week*, titled “Rebirth in Iberia,” reviews the Crypto-Jewish history of Portugal and previews Kulanu’s April 18 conference-tour to Portugal. He contrasts the present with his visit to Belmonte 20 years ago, when he could not find a single Jew.

■ **Corrie MacLaggan’s** article “Veracruz Jews seek new rabbi and acceptance from Jewish world,” appeared on the JTA wire on April 4. In addition to a discussion of the 30-family community on Mexico’s Gulf coast, it features a color photo of the beautiful port city, complete with palm trees. Hopefully, visitors will flock there to help the community! **MacLaggan** also had a JTA story on December 18, “Jewish school reaches out to Latin world.” This describes the efforts of Mexico City’s Hebraic University to expand its programs to train much-needed new teachers at Latin America’s Jewish schools through internet courses, traveling seminars, and sending students to Israel and the US for workshops.

■ Two Jewish genealogical societies in South America have announced the publication of books on Jewish surnames. Sociedade Genealogica Judaica do Brasil (Jewish Genealogical Society of Brazil) has published *Dicionario Sefardi de Sobrenomes* (Dictionary of Sephardic surnames). The book is bilingual (Portuguese-English) with the narrative portions (Introduction, Presentation, History and Onomastics) in both languages. Technically, the dictionary portion is in Portuguese, but since it consists of names, countries of origin, names of people, etc., it is understandable in any language. The etymology in the dictionary portion is bilingual. The authors gathered data from nearly 400 sources from all over the world, covering 650 years and more than 39 countries. The society can be reached by e-mail at faiquen@terra.com.br.

Asociación de Genealogía Judía de Argentina (Association of Jewish Genealogy of Argentina) has published *Diccionario de Apellidos Judios, su etimología, variantes y derivados* (Dictionary of Jewish surnames, their etymology, variants and derivatives) by **Benjamin Edelstein**. It includes some 20,000 names. The author died three years ago at age 91 without finishing the work. It was finished by the society. It is the first book on the subject written in Spanish. The price is \$35 dollars plus \$15 postage (unregistered air mail) and \$19 (registered air mail). Information about the society can be found at <http://www.jewishgen.org/iajgs/yearbook-2003/argentina.htm>.

■ Journalist **Dina Kraft** had three insightful articles on the JTA wire in late March about the challenges faced by Ethiopian Jews and Falash Mura immigrants in Israel. These are entitled “*Kids have African-Israeli identity, but Ethiopian parents still foreigners*”;

“*Young Ethiopians in Israel look to boost their brethren*”; and “*New beginnings and challenges for Falash Mura immigrants in Israel*.”

■ In a biting column in *The Jerusalem Post* on February 18, **Mi-**

(Continued on page 14)

Shabbat in Ghana (cont.)

Joshua, Rebecca, and Sarah. All of the children and many of the adults speak English, but Sefwi is the local language. The community observes the Sabbath by refraining from working or cooking. I stayed with Joseph Armah and his family. Their living room was nicely furnished and had a color television. We spent the rest of the Sabbath talking and resting.

At sundown there was a thunderstorm, and we celebrated the *havdalah* service at Joseph's home. I especially enjoyed watching several goats and their kids cavorting outside the house. I slept very soundly under my mosquito netting and woke up well rested to the crowing of roosters.

The reverence for the Torah was as devoted as in any synagogue . . .

Early the next morning we visited Kofi's shop, Shalom Enterprises. The shop is painted in vertical blue and white stripes, and boasts two sewing machines. Harriet Bograd has been helping Kofi to market challah covers in the US. Congregation Beth El will help by selling these in their gift shop. Kofi had just shipped his last challah cover, and insisted that I take a dress and matching head covering back with me instead.

Our conversation covered many topics: their contacting Israel's ambassador in the Ivory Coast; their attempt to send a member of the congregation to receive training as a rabbi; David's work in a neighboring village where others are starting to practice Judaism; problems in the Middle East; the challenges of children marrying spouses of other religions. David, Joseph, and Kofi made me feel very welcome, and I promised that I would keep in touch and return to Sefwi Wiawso again.

Zimbabwe Lemba (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

all that by themselves but will need moral, cultural and financial support from well-wishers and other Lemba sympathizers. To this effect, credit was given to the KULANU board which the Lemba now regard as 'a spiritual family.' They believe that even though they (the Zimbabwe Lemba) have not come into physical contact with anyone from KULANU, the continued support KULANU is giving renders them part of the Lemba family."

After adoption of the constitution, elections were held to choose the leaders of the newly launched Lemba Cultural Association (Zimbabwe Branch) to relieve the hardworking steering committee

. . . it is imperative for the Lembas to be joined to the rest of the world in following the true ways of their forefathers . . .

which did all the groundwork leading to the successful hosting of the Conference. A 12-member Council of Elders was elected, representing the 12 lineages, as was a Chiefs Council, led by Headman Tadzebwa. The new president is Mushavi Tarcisio Chinyoka.

According to Nhandi, "The Lemba who were interviewed claim that what they now need is full Jewish literature and artifacts so that they can now fully identify with any other Jew in the world."

(Editor's note: Ernest Nhandi can be reached at <ernest.nhandi@unilever.com> or tel: 023 416 391.)

Gershom Writes Home

(Responding to some questions about women's participation from his community in Uganda, Gershom Sizomu takes time from his rabbinical school studies in Los Angeles)

Thank you so much for your e-mail and for your concern. The reason why Judaism is more appealing to me is that it allows for reasoning. Now let us look at the reasons why women were not major participants in public affairs.

a) They were (are) physically weak as compared to men and therefore mistakenly regarded to be mentally inadequate for public work. They were, therefore, not allowed to act as witnesses. Note however that careful research has revealed that men are more corrupt than women and therefore women are much more reliable as witnesses than men.

b) Their main institution was the home; they therefore had no time for public affairs. This is no longer the case today.

c) Husbands and parents feared that appearance of their wives and daughters in public would encourage sexual immorality. Will you prevent girls from going to school?

d) They do not have a beard, which is the traditional quality of a *Shaliach Tzibur* (*Hazzan*). If we take this seriously, none of you with exception of JJ and Kisolo Magoma would qualify to lead services.

e) Other sources regarded them as ritually unclean, however to emphasize this is to insult your Mom and your wife. I think that women are more conscious about their cleanliness than men are.

The above arguments are equivalent to the traditional Buganda prohibition of women from eating chicken, which is no longer applicable.

Give a modern look at women, and realize that they are equally smart as men or even smarter.

To prevent them from reading the Torah is to suggest that "*Shema Israel*" excludes them. Why should they even study the Torah if they are denied the platform to demonstrate their abilities?

Why should you deny them religious leadership and entrust them with raising your children religiously?

You should stop looking at women as less important human beings. If you read the creation story in *Bereshit*, the most important creature was created last and which one was this? The Woman. I have not found a verse in the Torah that prevents women from religious leadership.

I think that encouraging women to participate in services and other religious leadership activities will spiritually strengthen our community.

I wish you all a successful adjustment.

Shabbat with a Committed Group in Nigeria (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

service the congregation broke into song. For me, this was as remarkable as the prayer service which had preceded it. They sang a *capella* of course, sharing a variety of psalms and prayers sung in three-part harmony using African rhythms and melodies. They had developed this repertoire over their years as a congregation. I shared some thoughts and melodies with the congregation, and left behind my own Shabbos *bencher* (booklet with songs and grace) for their use. We talked a fair bit, and I have a small but important wish list from the congregation of items they would like me to bring back next visit.

Mr. Green Comes to Nigeria

By Remy C. Ilona

A few months ago, I received a report from two Ibo gentlemen about a Canadian Jew who spent hours looking for Abuja's Jewish congregation, Gihon, but was unable to locate it. Last Friday I finally met the Canadian face to face.

Evan Green, an official of the Canadian International Development Association, had been on an assignment to Nigeria, but prior to his tour he had read in a Jewish paper about a Jewish community in Abuja. Hashem works in a mysterious way. While searching for Gihon during his first tour, he ran into the aforementioned Ibo fellows who, being unable to discover Gihon, took him to what I choose to call a Judeo-Christian Church run by Ibos. He spoke to the leader of the church, but insisted to them that he still needed to see the Jewish congregation, Gihon.

About 10 days ago, I received an email from Evan Green, stating that he would be visiting Nigeria again and that he would be happy to meet me and possibly visit Gihon. I responded, and we exchanged a few more letters.

I was in the middle of a meeting one recent Friday afternoon, when my phone rang, and it was Mr. Green calling from the Judeo-Christian Church. We agreed to meet at a designated place. I wound up proceedings at the meeting, and immediately went to meet him.

You needed to be present to see what happened. We greeted like old friends or brothers. All onlookers must have thought that we were probably college mates in Canada. After greetings he told me the following story:

In the failed bid to visit Gihon last Sukkot, he located the Ibo Judeo-Christian Church, because the Ibo gentlemen taking him around felt that as the church is named Christ our Redeemer Sabbath Synagogue, it is also Jewish. I believe that it is all Hashem's work, because, as I was to learn, Green found out from Joshua, the leader of the group, that they were doing what they thought to be the right thing, but they had very inadequate knowledge about basic Judaism; most importantly, he learned that they were prepared to learn and shift into Judaism. He made a commitment to send them some Jewish materials, and he kept his promise. During this last visit he gave them a Hebrew dictionary, a *Chumash*, a *siddur* and a Torah, sources that they did not know existed.

At this stage of our talk we had got to the church, and Mr. Green introduced me to Joshua, and told the gentleman that he should henceforth strive to work with me in studies of religion and Israel. I con-

gratulated Joshua for the progress he had made, i.e. by naming his church Synagogue, and by holding services on the real Sabbath, Saturday. I pledged to stick to them like glue. (And last Shabbat at Gihon provided an opportunity for me to start keeping my word. Towards the end of service I went with two fellow congregants on a solidarity visit to the church. There we were received like royalty.)

When we left the church, I took Mr. Green to Gihon. All the while we talked. He was especially concerned about rising anti-Semitism in Europe. We shared ideas on how the Jewish world can confront the abomination. He raised some observations which he had already written to me about, the most interesting being that every Ibo he came across during his two visits expressed, and felt Judaism. His Ibo driver joined us by saying that it is general knowledge among the Ibos that we have Hebraic roots. On why Israelitishness and Judaism are becoming matters of priority among the Ibos now, I responded that the Nigerian Jewish Friendship Association, Ibo-Benei-Yisrael, generously supported by Kulanu, has worked untringly. For example, a sticker produced and distributed freely by the Nigerian Jewish Friendship Association, with the motto *Peace for Israel is Peace for the World* has for some time being the favourite of Ibo commercial drivers.

He wanted to know about Kulanu and Ibo-Benei-Yisrael. He pledged that he would join Kulanu and participate in its work. I have accordingly furnished him with the names and emails of the Kulanu leaders and Ahab Eliyah, who leads Ibo-Benei-Yisrael.

As we went about he addressed small groups of Ibos and all, to a man, described themselves as Jewish. My erstwhile bitterest critic was the most prominent among those he met, and he proudly told Green that he is now a Jew, while showing him a photo of his infant son, whom he give the name Zion (he had relinquished the title pastor after comparing the *Tanakh* with the Christian translation). This newest addition to our community is rather special. We all were circumcised on the 8th day, and this boy Zion was too, but since we used the books of Jewish traditions, the Jewish prayers were said, even in the absence of a mohel.

Mr. Green mandated me to extend his particulars to Dr. Jeffrey Davidson, who also visits Nigeria, so that possibly they can co-operate in aiding struggling Jewish communities. He mentioned that in his regular travels he seeks out Jewish communities and helps them. As a parting gift I gave him a copy of the new book *Under One Canopy*, edited by Kulanu's Karen Primack.

A Commemorative Abayudaya Grogger



Rosenthal metal and fused glass commemorative grogger

Washington Sculptor Gary Rosenthal designed this limited-edition grogger to commemorate the Purim 2004 (5764) celebration in Uganda.

The metal and fused-glass groggers were made in fund-raising workshops Rosenthal conducted to raise awareness of the Abayudaya and to subsidize the celebration in Uganda. Watch for your chance to make one next year!

Rabbi Prouser's report on the Uganda Purim celebration will appear in the next newsletter.



Detail of reverse side

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

chael Freund noted that it was exactly a year earlier that the Israeli government made a solemn promise -- that it has thus far failed to keep -- to bring 20,000 Falash Mura still in Ethiopia home to Israel. In "Putting a Price Tag on Ethiopia's Jews," Freund observed, "At a time when aliyah is down, and Israel is looking for new pools of potential immigrants, thousands of would-be Israelis continue to linger in Ethiopia, enduring awful conditions, while Israel's bureaucrats shuffle the paperwork, affix the stamps and plod along at a snail's pace." Freund accuses Interior Minister Avraham Poraz and Absorption Minister Tsipi Livni of placing a price tag on Ethiopia's Jews: "The two ministers have come out against increasing the annual quota of Falash Mura immigrants, warning that it costs approximately \$100,000 to absorb each arrival from Ethiopia. When Foreign Minister Shalom sought to boost the number of immigrants from 300 to 1000 per month, Poraz and Livni joined forces to torpedo the initiative, citing the high cost involved." Other points made by Freund:

* Since when has it become official government policy to calculate the value of a Jewish life? Have we strayed so far from our heritage that we would turn away new immigrants because it costs "too much" money to absorb them?

* Adding to the absurdity of the situation is the fact that at the very same time that the government says it has no money to absorb Ethiopians, it manages to find the wherewithal to reduce the tax on our DVD players.

* Since money is fungible, what the government is essentially saying in this case is that it prefers cheaper DVDs over absorbing additional Ethiopian immigrants.

■ In agreement with Freund, above, a hard-hitting editorial in the *NY Jewish Week* on March 26 praised North American federations for raising funds for the Falash Mura and for pushing Israel to accept the Falash Mura more quickly, but urges "the community to press for expediting the aliyah of a long-suffering people."

■ *The Road to Fez*, a novel by **Ruth Knafo Setton**, has been described in a *Forward* review as "a mesmerizing and gorgeously written account of the exotic yet disappearing community of Moroccan Jewry and an exotic tale of a young woman's search for self." And a review in *Lilith* compares Setton's "awe-inspiring skill in weaving legend, lore and life" with writings of Isaac Bashevis Singer and Shalom Aleichem, whose stories involve "the immigrant with one foot in the old country and a few toes in the new." This novel was published in 2001 by Counterpoint.

■ An eye-opening account of a fascinating tourist site was recently carried on www.travel-watch.com. "The Spanish-Jewish Connection: The Jews of the Basque" by **Myrna Katz Frommer** and **Harvey Frommer** relates the little-known story of the 10,000 quiet Jews of the Basque region of Spain (they numbered 60,000 at one time). Although Bilbao is the major Basque tourist attraction, Vitoria-Gasteiz has been a major commercial center since the middle ages, when it had a thriving Jewish community, whose well preserved homes still stand along the Calle Nueva, formerly the Calle Juderia. A popular park half a mile away, the Parque de Judimendi, is the former site of the town's Jewish cemetery. When the Jews left during the Inquisition in 1492, the authors say they extracted a promise from city leaders that their sacred burial ground would not be violated: "This was a promise that was kept. Although tombstones deteriorated and disappeared over the years, the land was kept intact. All proposals for construction on the site -- from houses to markets to stables to parking lots -- were met with the same response: it is forbidden. Four hundred and fifty years later, a delegation of descendants of the Vitoria-Gasteiz exiles came to the city from Bayonne, France and presented officials with a formal release from the centuries' old vow. But their offer was declined. Instead city officials elected to commemorate the place in perpetuity by

(Continued on page 16)

Mission to Uganda (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

wise the development committee on their needs.

Other Significant Developments

- ✓ A new micro-finance loan society run by Abayudaya women has made 35 loans to community members to start small businesses or for family need.
- ✓ Tourism: Two tour companies will now work with the Abayudaya offering trips at a 6-person minimum.
- ✓ A craft sale kiosk in Nabugoye is up and running, with many new items. Craft and business training is on-going.
- ✓ Major progress has been made on a Fair-trade Organic Coffee Project.
- ✓ The Abayudaya college scholarship fund has been enhanced by the Smithsonian "Jews of Uganda" CD royalties, thanks to Rabbi Jeffrey Summit!
- ✓ There is progress on science lab construction and accreditation, thanks to Navit Robkin.
- ✓ New connections were made for improved educational support for girls and women through Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE Uganda)
- ✓ New relationships have been established with several international NGOs based in Mbale
- ✓ A Peace Corps Volunteer is planned for next year
- ✓ A mobile health clinic is being planned
- ✓ And thanks to the fundraising efforts of Rabbi Howard Gorin, a new dormroom, a new playground, a new 3-classroom block for Hadassah School have been completed.

All thanks to Abayudaya initiative in partnership with Kulanu! The needs remain great. Anyone who can help with grant writing and contacts is encouraged to write to me at Laura@laurawetzler.com.

Kushite Seder (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

grated among the Tutsi children, especially while eating the Israeli matzoh and then the Kushite Jewish matzoh (made with a non-fermentant flour made from a special cereal called "UBURO).

David had the insight to interview diverse members of the Community who wanted to tell him their biography and their concerns.

As you can guess, I'm still tired, but am very happy. We go to bed very late, and we wake up very early, as we used to behave since generations of pastors, who are dedicated to take care of the sacred herds of Auburn oxen used for purification and sacrifices in the Temple.

Just one word about my emotion to see over our heads the flag of Israel and the flag of Burundi, at so crucial an event as the first communal Israeli-Ashkenazi-Sephardi-Kushite Pesach organized by Havila in Brussels! The two flags show our common links to Israeli-Kushite national redemption.

Unfortunately our Kushite Israelite flag is in danger. About two weeks ago, the government ruling Burundi today has decided to remove the three *Magen Davids* from the Burundian flag. The announcement of the decision was published in the local mass media and it has produced great emotion and sorrow among the Tutsi Jewish Community, both in the diaspora and in the Homeland. That is also the reason I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to display the last image of our Kushite Israelite flag in the presence of a faithful rabbi such as David Kuperman and at a very spiritual Israeli-Kushitic event.

La-Shanah haba be-Yerushalaim.

(Editor's note: The author, founder and president of the Havila Institute, which concentrates on the Hebraic remnants of the pre-Talmudic tribes of Israel in Havila [the White Nile basin], can be reached at <bwejeri@hotmail.com>.)

The Kulanu Boutique

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

Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity, a 162-page book of poems, essays, stories, and songs by Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, African, and Asian Jews. *Proceeds benefit Kulanu.*

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, in English, Hebrew, Luganda, and Swahili. *Proceeds benefit Abayudaya.*

Hand-crocheted Ugandan Kippot, dual-colored in two shapes, skullcap and pill-box. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

Hand-Woven Ugandan Tallitot, white with colored stripes, bag included. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

Challah Covers from Ghana, very colorful with fine machine embroidery. *Proceeds benefit the Sefwi Wiawso Jewish community.*

Hand-woven Bnei Menashe Tallitot, white with black or blue stripes. *Proceeds benefit the Bnei Menashe.*

Hand-crocheted Bnei Menashe Kippot (skullcap shape only), muted colors. *Proceeds benefit the Bnei Menashe.*

Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda. 160 pages of beautiful photographs with text by Richard Sobol, complete with a CD of Abayudaya music, with notes, compiled by Rabbi Jeffrey Summit, an ethnomusicologist. *Proceeds benefit Kulanu and the Abayudaya.*

Make Joy Not War, Alula Tzadik's CD of Ethiopian and traditional Jewish songs with a World Beat. *Proceeds benefit Kulanu.*

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Please add an additional \$15.00 shipping charge per order for international orders. _____

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Please allow four weeks for delivery.

Under One Canopy Attracts Praise

A February 20 book review by Rabbi Rachel Esserman in *The Reporter* (Binghamton, NY) discusses Kulanu's recent anthology, *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity*, edited by Karen Primack. Esserman writes:

"Anyone who has the impression that Jewish culture is limited to Europe and Russia will find reading *Under One Canopy* an eye-opening experience. Others who are more familiar with Jewish diversity may still be surprised at the richness and variety of Jewish life. This book serves as a good starting point for learning about our extended cultural heritage."

This \$15 paperback can be ordered on page 15 of this newsletter and online at <www.kulanuboutique.com>. Proceeds benefit Kulanu's programs. Please order several for gifts and try to interest your local bookstores and Judaica shops in stocking it!

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)

(Continued from page 14)

erecting the tall, narrow monument inscribed with a Star of David that stands in the park's center and informs passerbys of the special nature of the place. This was 1952, sixteen years before the Edict of Expulsion was finally revoked, twenty-six years before freedom of religion was finally guaranteed to all Spaniards, forty years before the 500th anniversary of the Expulsion...."

■ In "A Culture Recaptured," a *Jerusalem Report* feature on February 23, Yigal Schleifer discusses a new Ladino CD that is a best-seller in Istanbul, even though it comes with a 160-page booklet of notes. *Yahudic - Urban Ladino Music*, with Israeli singer Hadass Pal-Yarden, is a recreation of Jewish music of the late, vibrant, open Ottoman Empire. It is described as a "multicultural" time when Turkish, Greek, Arab, European, Armenian and Jewish musical traditions all influenced one another

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