

KULANU

“all of us”



Helping Lost Jewish Communities
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Volume 12 Number 1

Spring 2005

Documenting Our Crypto-Jewish Rituals and Moving On

By Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

The prayers learnt at my mother's knee have immense and untold value for me and I suspect for many other *Anousim* around the world. These prayers are what defines us and made us who we were --separate to Christian or Jewish communities. They are what sustained us and our families for 500 years or more.

I want my children and grandchildren to know those prayers; to appreciate the long line of staunch and incredibly brave people they descend from; to understand the dangers our ancestors faced; to know at what risk to themselves and their families they upheld our faith; to fully comprehend what it takes to rejoin normative Judaism after the centuries of living in a no-man's-land.

I want my children and grandchildren to appreciate, remember, and honor these ancestors for their bravery and their love for the Law of Moses, and I want them to know the names of some of the many martyrs strewn across the Iberian soil. The Inquisition should be remembered together with the other sad and horrific episodes of our history, documented and taught as part of Jewish history. It should be remembered in a national day of mourning!

Today, many continue living as neither fish nor fowl in this self-imposed no-man's-land, accepted by neither Christians nor our Jewish brothers and sisters. So, what practices do we 'keep'? Where will we (and more importantly, our descendants) fit in if we are not prepared to take that final leap of faith to join normative Judaism --or one of the other faiths that influenced us for so long?

It is a romantic dream and (my personal view) unsustainable for the *Anousim* to remain static... as 'living artifacts,' a curiosity. Those who are not able to return at this time may lose all desire to do so. The powers that be may not have succeeded in making us Christian, but in many cases they have succeeded in killing our souls, wrenching

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NIGERIA NOTEBOOK

Igbos Are Moving Towards Judaism

By Remy Ilona

I recently returned after an extensive tour of Anambra state, Nigeria, to survey the progress of the ongoing Igbo renaissance, i.e., Igbos returning to the ways of our ancestors, which is pure monotheism. There is serious progress since a group of Igbos embarked on *teshuvah* (return) and Kulanu and friends assumed the burden of assisting those Igbos.

Judaism based on the written Torah is no longer a new or strange faith in Igboland and Nigeria. In Awka, capital of my state of Anambra, it is common to see many persons strolling in the streets wearing a Jewish *kippah* (skullcap). And on the Sabbath, hundreds of people close their businesses to worship and rest. And it is so in the other towns and clans.

As for the Igbos who are returning without the Torah, i.e., the Hebrewists, or Ndi Ogo Mmoo, or the Godianists, as they call themselves these days, they are equally realizing that only God should be worshipped in Igboland. And the pleasant thing is that they are taking steps to join the Judaists to institute monotheism in our homeland.

So many nice things took place but I will relay only the following: We traditionally observe the first fruit offerings in Igboland. We call the feast the new yam festival. The new yams are brought as an offering to God, and then we are free to eat. This practice survived all the virulent attacks of the missionaries. So this year as it was being organized, a group of our Christian brethren opted out of participation in the feast, stating that since the yams are to be offered only to Chukwu Abiama (the God of Abraham), they would not participate in the festival. The clan quickly made a decision and expelled the ring-leader, who is a non-native. The clan saw where they were heading -- toward fragmentation of the clan.

But what encouraged the clan to take action against such people who were/are perceived as knowing the better way? The answer is that

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PURSUED BY THE ARMY OF PHARAOH

By Rabbi David Kuperman

This year's seder in Belgium was an extraordinarily significant event for the Tutsi community in Europe as well as for the Batusi in their Central African homeland.

As I wrote in a newsletter article a year ago, last spring's seder was a watershed event. It energized and focused the community of Tutsis in Belgium and gave immense credibility to Havila's platform and to the reality of the Tutsi heritage of Israel. It strengthened the promise of cultural and ethnic rebirth for Tutsis in Europe who are in exile from the Homeland and for Tutsis in the Homeland who are in exile from the core of their identity. It gave pride and hope to our brothers and sisters living in fear for their lives among people who seek their death as individuals and their destruction as a distinct community of people. For Professor Yochanan Bwejeri, founder and director of the Havila Institute, last year's seder opened doors with the Jewish community of Brussels and gave him the respect of government officials in Burundi and Rwanda and the confidence and leverage he needed to establish critical relationships with people on the ground in Burundi.

A year later, Tutsis in Europe and Central Africa look increasingly to Havila to provide the leadership, under God's outstretched hand, to lead them from the narrow constraints of their *Mitzra'im* (Egypt) and to deliver them from the clutches of Pharaoh. Not that they expect Professor Bwejeri or Western Jews to hand them *ge'ulah*, redemption, on a platter. But *t'shuvhah* (return), epitomized by

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Help Bring the Bnei Menashe Home to Israel

By Michael Freund

In an historic decision, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar decided on March 30 to formally recognize the Bnei Menashe of northeastern India as “descendants of Israel” and to send a *beit din* (rabbinical court) from the Chief Rabbinate to India to convert them. Over 800 Bnei Menashe are already living in Israel, but another 6000 are in India, hoping to make aliyah. After so many years of longing to return to Zion, all of the Bnei Menashe now have the door to *aliyah* open before them at last.

This is a tremendous opportunity, and we must move quickly to bring it to fruition. At the Chief Rabbi’s request, *Shavei Israel* will shortly begin constructing kosher *mikvaot* (ritual baths) in India for use in the conversion process, as well as send additional emissaries to the area to prepare people prior to the arrival of the *beit din*. These emissaries will include rabbis who will be posted to *Shavei Israel*’s already-existing Hebrew Centers in Aizawl, Mizoram, and Churachandpur, Manipur.

The Chief Rabbi made clear to us that only once the *mikvaot* are built and the emissaries have been sent will it then be possible to go ahead and perform the conversions. The cost of making this happen is many thousands of dollars -- so I am turning to you, our friends in Kulanu, in the hope that you will consider taking part in this important *mitzvah* by sending a donation to *Shavei Israel*.

At this time of year, when we recall the Exodus of our ancestors from Egypt so long ago, nothing could be more fitting than to help the modern-day Exodus of the Bnei Menashe become a reality. I hope you will join us in doing so.

Donations in the US may be sent to: American Friends of Shavei Israel, Suite 1405 - Attn: Margy Davis, 25 West 45th Street, New York, NY 10036. And in Israel: Shavei Israel, Heichal Shlomo, 58 King George Street, 4th floor, Jerusalem 94262 Israel. (Editor’s note: the writer is Chairman of *Shavei Israel*)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Remembering Bea Hantman

By Jack Zeller

Bea and Joe Hantman were Kulanu treasurers and primary recipients of Kulanu correspondence and funds for many years. They were senior in many ways: in years, in calming maturity and good humor, and in presenting more programs on Kulanu communities than anyone else in the 11-year history of our organization.

Bea always had a smile and gentle way. She did not complain even when she was burdened. After a visit to their home for routine Kulanu matters, I always left with more faith that we were all on the right path.

Bea and Joe worked together. Even though Joe is visually impaired, it was always clear that her presence made Joe no less a partner in what might appear to be work that required full vision. I never knew how they accomplished this; just another miracle of love.

Joe is the Kulanu archivist. He was the first to hold this position and still holds it to this day. Bea drove with Joe everywhere and it is hard to imagine one without the other.

Her presence was a blessing. Now her memory is.

After 500 Years, Passover Returns to Southern Italy

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

The long arm of Chief Inquisitor Torquemada reached into Southern Italy, humiliating, torturing and killing the thousands of the Jews who had already fled similar persecutions in Spain, so finding any Jews in Sicily or Calabria today would be nothing short of a miracle. But miracles are things that we Jews have experienced over and over again throughout our history. Pesach 5765 was no exception. Maybe it wasn’t as dramatic as the parting of the Sea of Reeds, but it seemed so. After 500 years, Passover seders returned to Sicily and Calabria.

Organized in Milan, by the members *singoga* Lev Chadash, the first Progressive (Reform) synagogue in Italy and led by me, the first Progressive and first woman rabbi in Italy, the seder experience featured ancient Sephardic traditions shared by people who joyfully celebrated the rebirth of their Jewish roots.

April 25 was Italian Independence Day, and what better way to honor the ideals of freedom and unity than to welcome Jews and friends of the Jewish community to Sicily’s Passover seder that evening?

In a mountain restaurant in the small village of Piano

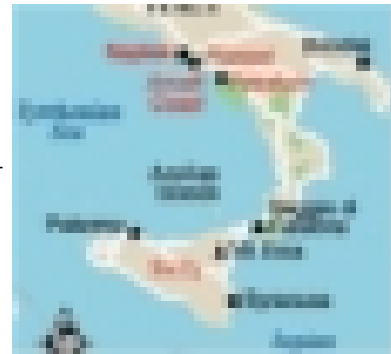
Battaglia, tables were set with traditional seder plates, along with the “Haggadah,” or traditional story of the Jews’ exodus from Egypt, and, of course, baskets of unleavened bread called matzah.

Older members of the Jewish communities of Palermo and Messina delighted in seder symbols they had heard about as children. In addition to the shankbone at the leader’s table, individual seder plates used the *bietola* (red beet) to symbolize the lamb’s blood on the doorposts that saved the firstborn in Hebrew families. There were other examples of Sephardic Jewish influence. Romaine lettuce (more bitter than the American variety) replaced horseradish as a symbolic reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Pieces of celery stalk, rather than parsley, serve as *karpas*, or greens, dipped in vinegar, rather than salt water, symbolizing the tears shed by our people. The traditional egg on the Italian seder plate was a rich brown in color, because it had been roasted for hours with onion skins, vinegar and saffron.

The seder meal began with a *primo piatto* of rice steamed with vegetables, because in the Sephardic tradition rice and legumes are considered kosher for Pesach. Roasted lamb is a must, along with *mina*, a layered lasagna-type meat and matzah pie.

For me as rabbi and service leader, it was Four Cups, Four Questions, Four Sons -- and Four Seders, the last of which was held in Serastretta, the small Calabrian village where my father, Antonio Aiello (of blessed memory), spent his childhood. Two buses, “Pullman” as they are called by the locals, brought Calabrian Jews from as far away as the villages of Palmi and Goia Tauro. Here, at the beautiful restaurant at Parco Pingitore, an interfaith group including not only Jewish families, but Catholic and Protestant church members, joined in the seder celebration.

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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.

Visiting Our *Mishpacha* in Uganda

By Roberta M. Roos

Early in 2002, Gershom Sizomu, spiritual leader of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, spoke at a Shabbat service at Woodlands Community Temple in White Plains, NY. Inspired by his story, a group of congregants decided to raise money to help bring water and electricity to the Abayudaya. We established the Moses Synagogue Associate Membership Project, raising well over \$10,000. Little did we imagine that we would ever personally see the results of our endeavors.

On January 10, 2005, Jeanne Bodin and I (co-chairpersons of the Woodlands project) arrived in Uganda, joining four other Americans on the Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour & Safari. We were met by Richard Sassi, an experienced Ugandan guide, Samson ben Shadrak, a leader of the Abayudaya community, and Laura Wetzler, Kulanu's devoted and inspiring Coordinator for Uganda, who has been a guiding force in the collaboration between Americans and the Abayudaya, and who had arrived in Uganda a week earlier.

My main reason for making the trip was to visit the Abayudaya. Although the first few days of our trip were to include a safari, I really didn't care about seeing animals – for that I have the Bronx Zoo! Was I in for a surprise! There is nothing quite like getting right next to a warthog as it ambles past your hotel room, or seeing an elephant in its natural habitat. And, the countryside – Uganda is an incredibly beautiful and breathtaking country. Spending a few nights in Sipi, we experienced hotel living without electricity, but with an “elegant” latrine and bush shower. It helped to give us the sense that we were really in Africa.

Laura arranged a special treat. On the way to Mbale (near the Abayudaya villages) we stopped at the U.S. Embassy in Kampala for a visit with Ambassador Jimmy Kolker. In addition to increasing our understanding of Africa, Kolker, a Jew from Missouri, also told us of his experiences *davening* with the Abayudaya.

We reached Mbale in time to change clothing and head up to Moses Synagogue for *Kabbalat Shabbat*. As we approached Nabugoye Hill, my heart started to beat rapidly. We had spent three years thinking about this community, receiving emails from some of its members, learning about the community's challenges and potential solutions, meeting with Laura and others who are working to help the Abayudaya become self-sufficient, raising funds for water and electricity, and educating our own congregation about our *mishpacha* in Uganda. And, now, we were really here and the thrills began!

We were led into the synagogue, surrounded by smiling faces. I was asked to light the Shabbat candles; I thought about all the Jewish women who, through time and space, are connected by performance of this *mitzvah*. Here, in rural Uganda, I felt them standing beside me.

The service itself was a traditional one, using the old Conservative *siddur*. Some psalms were in Hebrew, with the majority in Luganda (we were provided with transliteration). There was much singing, some of the melodies being familiar to us and others based on African rhythms and some accompanied by tambourine. We sensed that the congregation was very familiar with the service – which they must be because they usually have to *daven* in the dark, having no electricity. For our visit, they had rented a generator so they could have a small light in the synagogue. This evening, the rabbi (Aaron Kintu Moses – a brother of Gershom) gave his *drash* on the Torah portion in English – and a congregant translated it into Luganda. The *parasha* was on the plagues and we could not help but be aware of the connection that the congregants felt – they had gone through their own persecutions; they had their own pharaoh and now they are free. At the

“announcement” portion of the service, we were welcomed by the rabbi, by Israel Siriri (chairman of the community), and by JJ Keki (the first Jew to be elected to public office in Uganda). This Shabbat was a special one in that there was another visitor – Hadassah, who came from Kenya with four children. She is a teacher in Kenya and she came to see how the Abayudaya community functions and to leave her children at the school because they are not able to get a Jewish education in Kenya. She expected to return the following week with more children. At the end of the service, was *Kiddush* – juice and bread. And, lots of “*Shabbat Shaloms*.”

Services on Saturday provided the opportunity for Jeanne to be thrilled. The mantle on the torah scroll read that it was donated by Beth Abraham Congregation, the synagogue in Auburn, Maine, in which she grew up.

Lunch – rice with peanut sauce and fruit – was prepared especially for us. The community split up after services, with the men going to their discussions and the women to theirs. Shabbat for the women is a sacred day, providing a real rest from very difficult lives. In spite of their difficulties (most are subsistence farmers, with all the precariousness that it entails), these women have tremendous dignity and spirit. They dressed for a celebration – because Shabbat is a celebration for them. We asked for the peanut sauce recipe and an hour later the women were planning a cookbook (something entirely new to them). We also introduced ourselves individually and told what work

we do/did. Cfira, one of our group, is a child psychiatrist. After she explained what a child psychiatrist does, a mother asked questions about a child who wouldn't go to school and asked if this was something that could be addressed. Jeanne talked about women's equity in education and the problems of women gaining their voices both personally and publicly. I spoke about my experience as a child in an Orthodox environment where women were denied the ritual opportunities of men, and how things have changed now – with women becoming rabbis and cantors (knowing that one of the young women in the group wants to be a cantor). The women nodded knowingly, indicating that we were reaching something that had a personal meaning to them.

On our second Shabbat afternoon, a member of the Women's Association of each community talked about present and future projects – pineapple and cassava gardens and poultry projects. The women are even making their own bricks to construct the enclosure for their poultry. Namatumba (the village furthest away) women expressed concern about lack of communication with the others. A conference of all the women was held some months ago and the hope is that there will be three conferences each year, enabling the women to express their concerns, tell of their joys and successes, share ideas, and learn from each other.

On Sunday, there was a celebration/music competition at which each community participated – with singing, dancing, and drama. This was the second time it was held – given the distance from Nabugoye Hill that some of the communities are located and the cost of transportation and preparation, they rarely are able to get everyone together. It was possible last year and again this year because \$600 from each tour participant went to the Abayudaya (that's one reason it is a “*Mitzvah*” tour). Little children sat quietly for nearly three hours, enrapt. Rabbi Aaron said that this is how the kids learn – orally – and the dramas in particular were little morality plays about familiar issues – AIDS, alcoholism, lack of money.

On Monday morning, we toured Nabugoye Hill and saw Hadas-

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Abayudaya women with new water tank in the background

KULANU BRIEFS

Kulanu Meeting June 7 in DC Area

Laura Wetzler will be the guest singer/speaker at a Kulanu meeting on the evening of June 7 in the Washington DC area. Wetzler, Kulanu's sensational Coordinator for Uganda, will discuss her experiences with the Abayudaya and her upcoming mitzvah tour to Uganda (see back page of this newsletter). Wetzler will also give a brief musical program of Jewish songs from around the globe (see www.LauraWetzler.com for her bio, impressive discography, and sound bites from her most recent CDs). Time and location of the meeting are to be determined. For this information, email primack@starpower.net or call Jack Zeller at 301-681-5679 after June 1.

Fourteen Countries Represented on Kulanu List

We are all justifiably proud of the global reach of the Kulanu List. Its members now hail from Australia, Belgium, Israel, Canada, Spain, France, Mexico, Brazil, Namibia, South Africa, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, and the US. To join the List, contact hbograd@compuserve.com.

Speakers Spread the Word

In a May 11 program devoted to Operation Solomon (in which more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel), **Stephen Spector** and **Riki Mullu** spoke at the Manhattan JCC. Spector is author of the new book *Operation Solomon: The Daring Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews* (Oxford University Press, 2005). Mullu is an Ethiopian-Jewish artist who participated in Operations Moses and Solomon.

Brown University Hillel Foundation presented on March 10 "Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda," a discussion of shared experiences showcased through music, photographs and words. It featured ethnomusicologist **Rabbi Jeffrey Summit**, photographer **Richard Sobol**, **Matthew Meyer**, and **Brooke Bocast**.

Rabbi Carol Levithan facilitated a panel discussion on April 4 at the Manhattan JCC entitled "Funny, You Don't Look Jewish." It featured Jews by Choice from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groups, including Jews of Hispanic origin and Chinese-American, Korean-American, and African-American Jews.

Montreal's Shaare Zion Congregation lecture series featured a talk on February 27 by **Efrem Berman**, who spent a special Shabbat in Sefwi Wiawso. His topic was "Jewish Communities in Exotic Places: The Black Jewish Community of Ghana."

Prof. Xu Xin of Nanking University completed his ninth visit to the US this winter, lecturing about China and the Jews at the following campuses: Oakton Community College, Yeshiva University, Montclair State University, Princeton, Lehigh, Dickinson College, Baltimore Hebrew University, Johns Hopkins, UC Berkeley, and Stanford.

Rabbi Mark Sameth of the Jewish Multi-Racial Program of Westchester Jewish Community Services spoke about the Jews of China on May 3 at the Chappaqua Public Library.

B'nai B'rith Mission in India

Dr. Ken Robbins led an historic B'nai B'rith International trip to India in February to present a Humanitarian Award to the ancestors of the Cochin Royal Family. Ever since the 4th century, the rajahs of Cochin have befriended, protected and favored the Jews, allowing them to openly practice their religion. In addition to the Jewish delegation and the Jewish community of Cochin, the award ceremony at Kalikotta Palace on February 23 attracted more than 150 members of the royal family, three elephants, and a large band. The event received TV and newspaper coverage.

In Every Tongue, a New DVD

In Every Tongue: A Story of Eternity is a new DVD released as a joint project by the Idan Raichel Project, the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, the Israel Center of San Francisco, and Shari & Avishai Mekonen. The DVD is a 10-minute visual and musical celebration of the racial and ethnic diversity of the Jewish people, featuring in particular Ethiopian Jews in Israel. It can be viewed at www.JewishResearch.org, and free copies can be requested by contacting info@JewishResearch.org.

The Idan Raichel Project is one of the most popular performing groups in Israel today, blending modern and traditional music in Hebrew and Amharic. Coinciding with their first college campus tour in America, this DVD is being distributed to tens of thousands of college students, telling the story of the Ethiopian aliyah and reinforcing Israel's role as a haven for Jews of all races.

Aristides de Sousa Mendes Remembered

Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Righteous Gentile who saved the lives of an estimated 30,000 Jews and others during the Nazi Holocaust, was honored at New York's Museum of the Jewish Heritage on April 6 at a reception sponsored by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF), the Consulate General of Portugal in New York, and the Consulate General of Brazil in New York.

More Raves for Abayudaya Music

An excerpt from a recent music review of the latest Abayudaya CD: *The group was persecuted by the Idi Amin regime, but has remained, and this music reflects the collision of Jewish and Ugandan cultures. It's a fascinating mix, to hear prayers like "Adon Olam" sung with ineffable harmonies. There's so much joy here on Abayudaya - Music From the Jewish People of Uganda that it doesn't seem religious -- there's an underlying seriousness, as befits anything sacred, but the voices burst out of the speakers, and on those tracks with accompaniment, there's simply the feel of a village enjoying itself, singing. It's wonderful, infectious stuff, and even the solo voices seem to barely contain the pleasure. Sociology meets religion, and everyone's a winner.* ~ Chris Nickson, All Music Guide at msn.com.



Multiculturalism Poster Available

This attractive poster is now available for purchase from the Jewish Multiracial Network. The poster, entitled "Because Jews Come in All Colors," can be ordered at <http://www.isabellafreedman.org/jmn/poster.shtml> or by going to www.jewishmultiracialnetwork.org and clicking on "Poster."

KULANU BRIEFS

Kosher Olive Oil in Portugal

For the first time since expelling its Jews in the 15th century, Portugal has once again begun producing kosher olive oil—under the supervision of Rabbi Elisha Salas, an emissary of the Jerusalem-based Shavei Israel organization. Manufacturer Penazeites will produce “Ribeiro Sanches Kosher” with the “Triangle-K” kosher symbol in Penamacor, Portugal.

The company’s commercial director, Joao Manuel Rodrigues, noted that Penazeites was home to a large Jewish population, “so we thought it only fitting that we undertake this project, which in some small way closes a historical circle.” And Carlos Mendes, a communications consultant for the company, said, “The renewal of kosher olive oil production in Portugal is a sign that Jewish culture can once again flourish here.”

As a gesture of reconciliation, the olive oil’s label bears the motto *For the return of the Jewish people*, and a Talmudic quote, *Why is Israel compared to an olive tree? Because just as the leaves of an olive tree do not fall off in either summer or winter, so too the Jewish people shall not be cast off*. For more information contact: rodriguez@iol.pt.

Passover Visitors to Uganda

Noam Katz, a 1st year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem, and Jaime Walman, a graduate of the Hornstein and Heller Master’s programs at Brandeis University, were reunited with their Abayudaya “family” this year to celebrate “an absolutely amazing Pesach in the jungle, reuniting with old friends, and meeting some of the newest, cutest additions to the Abayudaya community (newborns Hillel and Gilah).” They enjoyed two beautiful seders on Nabugoye Hill, the first one in the synagogue with about 150 present from both Nabugoye and Namanyonyi (including four visiting Israelis on *tiyyul*), and a second smaller one outside under the African night sky. Noam and Jaime served as volunteers with the community during the winter of 2003-04. During their three weeks with the community, Noam and Jaime also taught computer tutorials, helped develop a template for evaluating future volunteers, and led a memorial service for Yom HaShoah that commemorates victims of the Holocaust, as well as those who lost their lives in Uganda during the oppressive regime of Idi Amin. (To see Noam’s pictures from their last trip to Uganda, please visit: <http://www.noamkatz.com/photougan.html>)

Abayudaya Electricity

After years of struggle, Abayudaya chairman Israel Isiriri recently announced with great joy the historic arrival of electricity on Nabugoye Hill, location of the community’s main synagogue and Semei Kakungulu High School. Kulanu salutes those who played a central role in enabling the Abayudaya to bring electricity to their community: Dr. Irene Vogel, Drs. Karen and Fred Shectman, Temple Shalom in Norwalk, Woodlands Community Temple in White Plains, Richard Sobol and Temple Isaiah in Lexington, Mass., and Laura Wetzler.



The community still has a long way to go, since six Abayudaya villages and four more Synagogues are not yet electrified. They hope that the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, working under the umbrella of the Joint Distribution Committee, will mobilize funds and bring electricity and running water to all six Abayudaya villages and to the four remaining Abayudaya synagogues.

SCJS Call for Papers for August Conference

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies will be holding its 15th annual conference August 7-9 in Miami Beach, Florida. It invites proposals for papers, presentations, or workshops to be submitted by June 1 on crypto-Judaism from any discipline (e.g., anthropology, history, sociology, philosophy, literature, music, etc.) and from any geographic location or time period. The society also welcomes papers on other aspects of the Sephardic experience and other communities whose historical or sociological experience is similar to that of the crypto-Jewish community. Proposals are welcome from scholars and professionals, including advanced graduate students, and from individuals with personal stories and genealogical or other research relating to crypto-Judaism. Proposals must include a 200-word abstract and a brief bio. Please send proposals or inquiries to Stanley M. Hordes, Latin American and Iberian Institute, University of New Mexico, MSC02 1690, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 87131-0001, <smhordes@aol.com>. For more information, see the SCJS website at <<http://www.cryptojews.com> www.cryptojews.com>.

Todah Rabah

Kudos to recent bar mitzvah **Sandon Hess** of Norwalk, Conn., who donated \$1000 from the sales of his hand-made jewelry to the Abayudaya. In addition, he asked his bar mitzvah celebration guests to contribute Judaica for the Abayudaya or funds. Half the money raised has been earmarked for the Abayudaya and half for the Obey Foundation, founded by Sandon’s African drumming mentor, Brother Kojo, to fund schooling in Ghana. Sandon also gave each guest a copy of the Abayudaya musical CD *Shalom Everybody Everywhere* (he purchased 80 copies for the occasion). Now, if every bar or bat mitzvah acted this way.....!

The **Jewish Publication Society (JPS)** recently sent more than 500 pounds of JPS Tanachs (Hebrew bibles) as well as other JPS books to the Jewish community of Nigeria. **Rabbi Howard Gorin** of Tikvat Israel Congregation in Rockville, Maryland, who travels to Nigeria twice a year, arranged for the shipment. Another shipment of books was sent to the Jewish community in Ghana. The Tanachs were sent as part of the JPS Mitzvah Project program, which donates “scratch and dent” books, those that have been slightly damaged in shipping, handling, or by being browsed through on bookstore shelves. JPS seeks sponsorships to cover shipping and handling costs.

Kingdom Books of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, recently donated a carton of excellent Judaica books to Kulanu.

The Elementary School of the Israelite Community of Athens recently sent CDs with educational materials on Jewish Studies and a recording of traditional Greek songs sung in Hebrew to the Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana. Thanks to **Antonis Vogiatzis** and **Pantelis Katzolis** for making this possible.

We are grateful for donations from our High Rollers: The **Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation** \$5000, **Rabbi Howard Gorin** \$5,000, **The Woodlands Community Temple** (White Plains, NY) \$3,800, **Ronnie Williams & Suzanne Arnopolin** \$3,000, **Joseph Berma** \$2,000, **Tikvat Israel Congregation** \$1,400, **Matthew & Hope Feldman** \$1235, **The Hillel Council of New England** \$1,100, **the Gloria and Sidney Danziger Foundation** \$1,000, the **Samiljan Family Fund** of the Jewish Community Foundation \$1,000, **Drs. Jack & Diane Zeller** \$1,000, **Chizuk Amuno Congregation** (Pikesville, MD) \$1,000, and **Howard & Judith Mayer** \$1,000.

And to our donors of \$250 - \$500: **Cord Beatty, Beth Tfiloh** (Baltimore, MD), **Mark Bowman, Kehila Chadasha** (Bethesda, MD), **Columbia Jewish Congregation** (Columbia, MD), **Ron Glover**,

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Documenting Rituals and Moving On (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

all spirituality from us. In many cases life has become an academic exercise with no love left for either God or religion. Just an empty void.

I believe there are more than 44,000 documented cases against the Crypto-Jews of Portugal in the National Archives of Lisbon, recording in great detail how many of these heroic martyrs were tortured while clinging to the Torah of Moses. Centuries of persecution, of living in fear and shame certainly took their toll. The systematic persecution left its mark, the devastating tragedy continuing to haunt untold numbers of our people even up to today. The cruelty of the Inquisition, the brutality of the torture and forced conversions, lasting 300 years, continue to impact on us. Unless we take a stand now -- in our lifetime -- it may be too late to rescue anything at all except the documented prayers and rituals to add to the dusty 44,000 cases in the National Archives.

I do not in any way wish to diminish the force and strength of the *Anousim* phenomena spreading across the world. But I have warning bells going off in my head, and I believe we need to harness this energy into a positive force by returning to what we were. Speaking for myself, I cannot describe the sadness and loss I feel for having had my identity and heritage so cruelly denied. My loss, your loss, our loss, can never be replaced. It has been obliterated forever. But that is the past, and while it should never be forgotten, we *do* have the future. *"From the ashes we will rebuild, from the sorrows, a song, from the tears, hope."*

Retain our Crypto-Jewish rituals? No, I don't believe it will be to our benefit. Remember and document them? Yes indeed! Let us remind our children and our grandchildren of their great and cherished heritage! But let us return to the religion our ancestors were practicing before they were forcibly converted.

(Editor's note: *Rabbin Stephen Leon of El Paso, Texas, agrees with the writer that there should be a national day of mourning to commemorate victims of the Inquisition and has proposed that these victims be officially remembered at all Tisha B'Av observances. Tisha B'Av this year occurs on August 14.*)

Passover Returns To Italy (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

Pesach traditions, Italian-style, continued with the passing of the matzah plate shoulder to shoulder among the guests, a symbol of the heavy burden of slavery. The singing of *Dayenu* included "whips" of green onions, used to mimic the beating of the Hebrew slaves. Pentecostal choir members demonstrated their gratitude and their love for Israel by singing a beautiful selection of Jewish melodies, all in Hebrew.

Thanks to dedication and generosity of my local Jewish community, I was able to pack a giant suitcase filled with more than a dozen boxes of matzah. For some Jewish families, who trace their roots back to Jewish grandparents or great-grandparents, the Milanese matzah was their first taste of this traditional Passover staple. Following the seder, there was enough matzah to give to individual families so that they could continue the tradition by keeping kosher for Pesach in their own homes. For most of these families, it was their first opportunity to obtain "local" kosher food.

Journalists from local newspapers and a crew from RAI 3 Italian television documented the festivities. News articles that appeared several days before the seder included an interview with Professor Vincenzo Vilella, author of a new and extremely important book for Italian Jews. *La Judeca di Nicastro, e la storia degli Ebrei in Calabria (The Jews of Nicastro and the history of the Jews in Calabria)* recounts the history of many Jewish families, my own ancestors among them, and emphasizes the little known and less appreciated fact that, prior to the Inquisition, more than 40 percent of the entire populations of Sicily and Calabria were Jewish. Professor Vilella also included an exhaustive list of Italian-Jewish surnames, along with ideas for discovering and documenting an Italian Jewish family tree.

As I stood before the 62 Calabrian participants, I found myself whispering a prayer of gratitude for what was the most emotional experience in my rabbinic career. Recalling my own family's history, I was able say, "When my *Nonna* carried candles to the cellar to kindle the lights of Shabbat, I realized that fear and prejudice nearly extinguished our heritage. This year, in Calabria and in Sicily, we Jews who were nearly robbed of our religion and our traditions brought the light of Pesach out of the *cantina* and into the hearts of fellow Jews. After 500 years, they now have a new opportunity to do as Torah commands and be "a light unto the nations."

The seder concludes with the traditional wish, "Next year in Jerusalem." For me and for the nearly 100 returning Jews who shared Passover together, we add, "Next year in Sicily," and "Next year in Calabria," too.

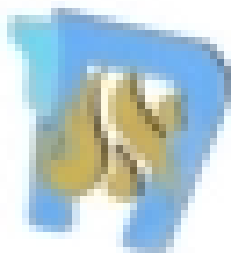
(The author can be reached at <rabbi@rabbibarbara.com>. For more information see <www.rabbibarbara.com>.)

AISH CHAI: Life Comes Out of the Fire of the Inquisition

After 500 years, the resurgence of interest in Judaism by those descendants of *Anousim* who were forcibly converted to Christianity in Spain and Portugal is nothing short of a miracle. Since hundreds who did not submit were burned at the stake in *autos-de-fe*, some have likened this Return to life reviving out of the ashes.

So we were delighted when we came across a certain creation by Deborah Potash Brodie of Dor L'Dor. Measuring three-quarters of an inch, it is a lapel pin fashioned of Sterling silver with gold plate, depicting in Hebrew letters *Chai* (Life) coming out of *Aish* (fire). We are now offering this pin for \$30 at the Kulanu Boutique (see page 15 of this newsletter or go to <www.KulanuBoutique.com>.)

We thought that wearing this pin would be the perfect way for *Anousim* and Friends of *Anousim* to honor and identify with this chapter in Jewish history that is both tragic and hopeful. Kulanu will use the funds raised through the sale of this pin for our education programs to assist descendants of *Anousim*.



LETTERS TO KULANU

A Desperate Need for Funds For Portuguese Rabbinic Student

As many of you know, after the June 2002 Saudades/Kulanu/Root & Branch Conference-Tour to Jewish Portugal, a few of us who met with our brothers and sisters in Belmonte made a decision [together with the community] to try to help in preserving and promoting our Portuguese-Jewish heritage in Belmonte and throughout Portugal.

This led to a number of achievements over the last two years, the most important being the sponsorship of José João Mendes Rodrigo to study at the Yeshiva of the Sephardic Education Center in Jerusalem. Rabbi Kassin, the head of the yeshiva, says that he is doing extremely well - his Hebrew is excellent, and he is a quiet, committed and serious student who is making tremendous progress. He will be able to return to the community of Belmonte as a rabbi and a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) after a number of years of study.

I am taking the liberty of writing this appeal for donations towards this commitment due to our desperate need for funds. We need donations to help pay for José João's tuition fees as well his accommodation and living costs while he attends the yeshiva -- US \$1,000 a month.

The American Sephardi Federation serves as non-profit, 501(c)3 umbrella agency for SAUDADE SEFARAD donors and grantors, facilitating the acceptance of gifts and funds. If you can and would like to assist, please make your tax-deductible donation directly to The American Sephardi Federation, noting "**For JJ Mendes Rodrigo / Belmonte**" on the memo line, and mail to: The American Sephardi Federation, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011-6301 USA.

Your gift honors the power of the Anousim and Belmonte Jewish community's faith over the centuries and our own religious freedom. Please try and assist in this great mitzvah by making a donation.

*Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausebaum
Johannesburg, South Africa*

Impressed by Igbo Book

I am a Nigerian, Igbo by tribe. My state of origin is Imo. Presently I am living in Abuja where I work as a government accountant.

Among my interests are philanthropic works, reading, sports, and Bible studies. I have been in search of the one true God. As an Igbo, I was born into a Christian home (a lot of Igbos are born into Christianity). This exposed me to reading of the Bible and other materials that could lead me to fuller understanding of the Bible teachings. I began to read other materials of other religious beliefs until I found Judaism. It is the religion of my ancestors. I saw my father's junior brother practice it (as my father was a Christian), although uninformed Christians in our environment have ridiculed and discredited the faith. But every day of their lives, Jews have reflected in the belief in God. This can be found in their high ethical way of life, even in their basic beliefs, and economic and agricultural practices.

In my search for the One and Only God, one of the books that I read was *The Igbos ; Jews In Africa* by Remy Ilona and Ehav Eliyah. A preview of the book makes it clear to me that it was expertly researched and written from beginning to end. It made me believe that I really am Jewish, and I love being it!

I strongly recommend this book to other Igbos both in the Diaspora and at home. Remy and Ehav succeeded in their book to bring in the fore facts and cultural evidence showing that Igbos are Jews. It is a work that every Jew should have. If one must read any book this year, this is the book.

*Joseph Nduka Igbo
Abuja, Nigeria*

(Editor's note: An American edition of the book is in preparation.)

Praise for Freund and Avichail

Miriam and I wish to express our heartiest congratulations to Michael Freund and his Shavei Israel organization for their persistent efforts which have culminated in this wonderful breakthrough with the Chief Rabbinate. March 30, 2005 / 19 Adar-II, 5765 will be marked forever in the history of the Bnei Menashe as the day of their welcome into the Jewish family. Recognition by the Chief Rabbinate should make aliyah for members of the Bnei Menashe much smoother than it has ever been in the past, especially as it should permit the *Sochnut*/UIA to assist in the process.

At the same time I wish to pay tribute to the pioneering work of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail and his Amishav organisation, whose efforts initially brought the situation of the Bnei Menashe onto the world agenda, guiding them to develop as committed Orthodox Jews, and helping the first members of this community to settle in Israel, in very difficult circumstances.

The Bnei Menashe have been fortunate to have had two such dedicated champions promoting their cause.

*Myer Samra
New South Wales, Australia*

A Peace Corps Volunteer Returns To Ghana

I went to Ghana in early January to reunite with my former students from Sefwi-Wiawso Secondary School. I had taught there in the Peace Corps 42 years ago. It was an amazing visit and I got to meet up with many students and colleagues. They are all grandparents now!

I was also able to spend some time with the Jewish community there. I literally ran into David, Kofi and Joseph while walking through the town with some of my students who live in Sefwi-Wiawso. We made plans to meet on the following Sunday morning at the synagogue where they were all gathering to cement the outside of that building. When I arrived, there was plenty of activity going on: mixing of cement, masons on scaffolding applying it, children playing, and some of the women cooking. I was very impressed with how everyone worked together.

My main business that morning was to deliver a digital camera and a laptop computer. I spent some time showing David and one of the other members how to use the camera. While I was giving a computer lesson to David, the digital camera was already being used to take photos of the work going on outside. The three hours I spent there went too quickly and it wasn't enough time. David invited me to have some lunch with him and his youngest child. I saw David briefly Monday morning at his photography shop and he told me that he had already started reading the user manual for the camera.

I also was able to deliver the suitcase full of medical supplies to the hospital at Sefwi-Wiawso. It was greatly appreciated. I've been invited back and hope to return next year.

*Barbara Lockhart
Stratford, Connecticut*

A Volunteer in Uganda

I write to you from my home for the next three months, Mbale, Uganda. The Abayudaya community is beautiful. The children are little beautiful angels and the adults are adult beautiful angels. Everyone has been so welcoming and they are so happy that we are here. When we first arrived at the Hadassah Infant School (where we are now living with 60 children who board at school), the children all ran from their classes to greet us. They swarmed around us, taking our hands and curtsying to the ground. They were laughing and smiling,

(Continued on page 10)

Igbos Are Moving Towards Judaism (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

with the rise of rabbinical Judaism and the publication of the authentic histories of the Igbos, many people are beginning to realize that our ways of the past are in fact superior to the way that the colonialists brought. Also, the Igbos place a premium on what their fathers tell them, and in this case, our fathers told us only that our God is Chukwu, who is invisible and indivisible.

As this group is starting to believe that the Igbos did in fact originate from Israel, it is starting to see the need to use the Torah, rather than just the memory, which can fail.

* * *

Some days before Pesach, some prominent Igbos were at a book launch event in Abuja, and among them was Hon. Teddy Luttwak, an Italian Jewish businessman and longtime resident in Nigeria. This event was not specifically to affirm or confirm the Igbos' Israelite origins, but somehow that became the theme of the evening. The Igbo dignitaries, ranging from a former state governor to an equivalent of a federal minister, all stood up and announced that the Igbos came from Israel, underscoring their position by referring to Luttwak as a friend of the Igbos.

When it was Luttwak's turn to talk, he gave an outline of the similarities between the Igbos and the Jews, and very wisely he ended his talk by calling on the Igbos to emulate the Jews in having solidarity, emphasizing that that is one area where the Igbos don't resemble the Jews, because today there is no longer the famed Igbo clan solidarity.

A comment from me on the lack of solidarity: It is ironic that Igbo divisiveness is so bad now. Before, Igbos were known as people who looked out for each other. I took care to tell Luttwak that Judaism will ameliorate the breach.

* * *

Right now we have two libraries. My house is a library, and so is our Hebrew Centre. And my joy is that more and more Igbos/Nigerians are taking an interest in our programme, which is to use Judaism to heal the land and people. There was something I said last year, and I repeat it: "Kulanu and its friends and allies are repeating the feat that the great Moses achieved." Who is benefiting from this work which you fine people are relentlessly pushing forward? "Everybody" is the answer!

I had a discussion with an Italian Jew, the only member of the expatriate Jewish community that I am acquainted with. After he read some information from Kulanu and gauged the local situation, he is daring to hope that Kulanu may have finally found a solution to Nigeria's anti-Semitism virus by encouraging and facilitating enlightenment about Judaism. The Hausa-Fulani rabidly Islamic state of Jigawa, Nigeria, recently signed an agreement with the State of Israel, for Israel to aid them in reforestation. And that was a state that printed thousands of Sheik Yassin's posters, and financed protests against Israel when Yassin died. So what helped the change in perception? The programme that I started with my Hausa Fulani friend Sule Gise is a contributor; I devoted time to enlighten him about Judaism, and he picked up Hebrew on his own since he is fluent in Arabic. Now in mosques he preaches that by giving the Torah to the world Israel showed love for all. And it is working, because such news travel far in stridently religious Nigeria! I am elated because at last we are seeing light, and complementing what the Israeli

government wants to achieve by sending and sponsoring thousands of Nigerians to Israel for training. The much or little that we are doing is proving that much could be achieved by letting non-Jews see the inside of Judaism.

* * *

The Sabbath before Pesach in Nigeria, eight Israelis participated in Sabbath services with us at Gihon Hebrews Research Organisation in Abuja, in a most remarkable way. Gihon, which had a full house, had just finished the *shacharis* (morning service); most of the congregants had gone outside to stretch their legs, and a few who live nearby had retired to their homes to rest a bit, while a few remained in the synagogue for discussions. Then one of those outside saw a small convoy of motorcars driving up.

The occupants of the vehicles were Israelis. When they got to Gihon, they all got out and as a man walked inside, and after the customary *Shalom*, they rose in song! *Adir Hu, Dayenu*, and other Passover melodies gently filled the air. After 25 minutes, word had gone around and most of the Nigerians had returned. The Israelis decided to take a break, and they told the Nigerians to take over. Gihon took over, and the Israelis joined in, contrary to the understanding that they would just listen. This session lasted over 40 minutes.

When the singing stopped the Israelis introduced themselves and their mission. Three of them live in Israel, and had come to Nigeria to celebrate Pesach with their family members, who had told them the "unbelievable words" that there are Jews in Nigeria. They decided to come and investigate, and they saw with their own eyes that what they had heard was true. More stunning news still awaited them! That there are in fact four other synagogues in Abuja, fully Judaic. And that Nigeria houses over 40 million people (the Igbos) who are descendants of Israel, a number of whom left Judaism due to the ill effects of colonialism. That many of those who left

are returning. That in Igboland and other parts of Nigeria there are many synagogues.

Everything was so incredible, wonderful, and delightful to them. The Israelis enjoyed the afternoon service and donated eight books, some money, and enough matzah for all the congregations in Abuja. They promised to send more books, to donate a mezuzah for the opening of Gihon's permanent synagogue when it is ready, and to tell their story to all Israel when they return.

* * *

We had a great Pesach!

Do you want to know what our synagogue, Beth Knesseth Siyahh Israel, used for *maror*? We used *onugbu*. This herb is the famous bitterleaf that no Igbo jokes with if it is used to prepare soup. When not washed, it is perhaps the bitterest herb in the world. But when washed, and used to prepare *ofe onugbu*, accompanied by pounded yam, or *akpu*, it is probably the greatest delicacy to an Igbo.

We could not get *utazi*, another bitter leaf that the Igbos value, so we used *onugbu*. And no amount of matzah, groundnuts, or carrots ameliorated the taste of unwashed *onugbu*!

Can anybody find out if those bitter herbs mentioned in Exodus are *onugbu* or *utazi*?

(The author can be reached at <rcilona2000@yahoo.com>)



Remy Ilona with his niece, Uche, at the Hebrew Centre

PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

Amichai Max Heppner's new book, *I Live in a Chickenhouse*, has just been published and is now available directly from the publisher at: Authorhouse, 1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, IN 47403 or telephone order 1-888-280-7715 or online at <http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail.aspx?q3=z%252fmFKCndZ8s%253d>. The book relates what Heppner remembers when he was a child hiding in a chickenhouse in Holland during the Holocaust and the years immediately following (1942-1946). It is built around 50 drawings he made at the time; 17 of the drawings are also on exhibit at Yad Vashem. The book is suitable for adults and children. (Heppner is also Kulanu's Regional Coordinator for Mexico).



Best-selling author **Richard Zimler's** third novel about the Portuguese-Jewish Zarco family is out in Europe and will be published in the US in July. *Guardian of the Dawn*, published by Constable, is set in the Portuguese colony of Goa in the 16th century. Look for a review in the next newsletter.



Bring Me More Stories: Tales of the Sephardim, is a new book by **Sally Benforado**, published by Floricante Press. The collection of short tales tell of a family of Sephardic Jews, from their close knit home in Turkey to their new lives in America.



An Annotated Bibliography and Internet Guide for the Madeira Islands, by **Silva, J. Donald**, has just been published by Edwin Mellen Press. It contains an English-language list of over 500 books, articles and manuscripts about the Madeira Islands, with historical outline.



Operation Solomon: The Daring Rescue Of the Ethiopian Jews, by **Stephen Spector**, was published recently by Oxford University Press, giving the author's carefully reconstructed inside story of the historic event.



"The Y-chromosomal Heritage of the Azores Islands Population," in the 2005 *Annals of Human Genetics* by **P. R. Pacheco**, et al., gives the results of a scientific study demonstrating that the Azorean population has a relatively high contribution of Jewish heritage – 13.4% of the haplogroup J, the lineage characteristic of Jewish population.



In an article entitled "Youth Is Served for an Aging Congregation; A Cuban-American Rabbi Invigorates a Yonkers Synagogue," **Jennifer Medina** wrote in the April 22 *New York Times* about Rabbi Manny Vinas' two-year dynamic tenure at Lincoln Park Jewish Center.



Susan Roenbluth's article in the Nissan 5765 edition of *Jewish Voice and Opinion* was titled "Israeli Rabbinate Recognizes Northeast India's Bnei Menashe as 'Descendants of Israel.'" It presents a detailed profile of Michael Menashe, an Israeli Bnei Menashe rabbinic student who made a US visit, as well as of the Bnei Menashe community in India.

Andrea Waxman wrote "Passover – A Chance To Celebrate Jewish Diversity" in the April 8 issue of the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*. In it she recommends Kulanu's book *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity* for Passover selections about Jewish history, survival and liberation.



On April 5, the *BBC World Service* carried an interview on its Outlook series with A. Gange, a Bnei Menashe immigrant in Israel, Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail in Jerusalem, and James Reynolds, a BBC Jerusalem correspondent, concerning the Chief Rabbinate's acceptance of the Bnei Menashe as a lost tribe of Israel.



"The Vanishing Jews of the Arab World," by **Semha Alwaya**, was published March 6 in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. It tells the story of the author, a Baghdad native, who was one of 900,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries dispossessed by Arab governments in the 1950s. After living in refugee camps, she writes, "housing was eventually built for us, we became Israeli citizens, and we ceased being refugees. The refugee camps in Israel that I knew as a child were phased out, and no trace of them remains. Israel did this without receiving a single cent from the international community, relying instead on the resourcefulness of its citizens and donations from Diaspora Jewish communities."



"The Face Of Jewish Uganda" by **Shelli Liebman Dorfman** in the March 3 *Detroit Jewish News* is a very lengthy article on the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda and the visit to Detroit by Abayudaya leaders JJ Keki and Rachel Namudosi Keki.



In a February 15 article in the *NY Jewish Week*, "The Color of Inclusion," **Debra Nussbaum Cohen** wrote about Bechol Lashon's conference in San Francisco, noted elsewhere in this newsletter.



In a *Jerusalem Post* article on February 17, "Save the Subbotniks," **Michael Freund** argued that this isolated group of descendants of Russian peasants who converted to Judaism 200 years ago needs assistance. The community has faithfully endured two centuries of oppressive anti-Semitism, forced exile, and persecution, first from Czarist Russia, and then from Soviet-imposed assimilation. Freund visited the community in February and noted that "seven decades of harsh Communist rule took its toll on the Subbotniks." In recent years, 500 Subbotniks from the town of Vysoki have made aliyah, and another 800 trying to do the same have been meeting with obstacles from Israel's Interior Ministry.

Freund's article must have had an effect. According to a JTA article of March 22, Israel plans to airlift a community of 20 Subbotnik families to its shores. It is anticipated that hundreds more will follow.



Cody Yiu's article in *The Taipei Times* on February 14 is titled "Taipei's Jewish Community Has Deep Roots." In it, he describes Tai-

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LETTERS (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

and honestly, have not stopped since then. Last night, before bed, we read stories and sang and danced outside in the pitch black night. They know tons of Jewish songs and are excited to learn more. They get a kick out of my Luganda (which is humorously poor, apparently) and think it is funny when I answer "Balungi" (fine) to their never-ending "Mazungu, how are yoooooooooooouuuuuu?" that follows us as we walk down the road. (*Mazungu*=white person.) I have taught a few basic Hebrew classes already and sat in on all of the high school English classes, which, I may add, are phenomenal. The high schoolers speak nearly perfect English and are learning grammar that I never learned. I hope to work on some writing projects with the older kids that will then be able to be shared with the community--their community and maybe yours as well!

Shabbat was not magical, as I had imagined it, but was instead natural and comfortable. Kiddush is made over orange juice and there is very little food throughout the day. Many of the prayers are in Luganda; it is different, yet very much the same as a "regular" Shabbat. It is, as the Thai would say, "same, same, but different." I gave a *dvar* Torah in shul (alongside a translator for the community) and joined a women's study group after services. The best part of everything is the singing.

I have an address, a phone, and three meals a day (rice and beans, yum!) I have good friends and I am with good people. What more could I ask for?

Sarah Gold

Mbale, Uganda and Richmond, Virginia USA

Sheba Film Festival in Harlem in August

The Sheba Film Festival features films by and about Ethiopian Jews and the greater Ethiopian community. It is produced annually in New York City by the Beta Israel of North America Cultural Foundation (BINA), which aims to increase the awareness of the Beta Israel community, to provide opportunities for self-empowerment among our community, and to provide an outlet for artistic members by creating cultural showcases and festivals depicting the Ethiopian Jewish heritage. Our name *BINA* signifies "knowledge" and "understanding" in Hebrew, and we seek to promote knowledge and understanding about our culture and history.

The Sheba Film Festival 2005 will be undertaken together with the American Performing Arts Collaborative Inc., a non-profit organization in New York City, dedicated to the support of the performing arts. The festival will be held on

August 20 and 21 at the Faison Firehouse Theatre, in Harlem. We presently have five films, works from various artists, and an Ethiopian singer agreeing to take part in the showcase.

Beejhy Barhany

New York, NY

Requesting Photos and Articles About India's Jews

I am a journalist from Cochin, South India, now in Israel and trying to publish my third book about Indian Jewry. I wish to request that readers contact me and provide me with any informative material such as photos and copies of articles, which will be returned, with acknowledgement, when the book is published. Please help me to record Indian Jewish history and traditions for the benefit of the next generation.

Ben Eliahu Eliah

POB 781

Haifa 31007 Israel

PURSUED BY THE ARMY OF PHARAOH (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

the seder, provides the inspiration and the sense of purpose that must inform whatever social or political action they will take. The Batutsi are in real and immediate danger of genocide, both physical and spiritual. The horrors we can witness in a sanitized form in the film *Hotel Rwanda* are a reality NOW, and while those horrors may be currently on a smaller scale than what we see in the film, the situation in Burundi, Rwanda, and eastern Congo is explosive, and the horrors could escalate rapidly. The participants in this year's seder have demonstrated as undeniable fact the commitment of the Tutsi people to their identity and to the defense of their integrity as a people who will not allow themselves to be ground down in the brickworks of Central Africa.

For me, one of the most striking aspects of this year's seder was the extraordinary lengths to which the Roman Catholic Church, working through local Tutsi men and women associated with Havila and taking advantage of that association, has gone to interfere with the seder and, more generally, to confuse, distract, and fragment the community and thereby divide and conquer it. I am proud to say that though its efforts to divide have to some extent been successful in creating tactical advances, its efforts to conquer have not at all succeeded. Havila, on the other hand, has been successful in maintaining a very active ferment, a focus for the community as it struggles for identity and survival, and an effective counterweight to the community's great fear and pain regarding their families in their Great Lakes Homeland.

At the end of February, I received a probe from Belgium about my participation in this year's upcoming seder to which, at Professor Bwejeri's urging, I did not respond. So without firm information, and assuming that Havila would hold its seder on Saturday evening, the start of Pesach and a more convenient time than Sunday evening, a Tutsi organization sponsored and controlled by the Church scheduled a major cultural event for Tutsi women and children precisely at that time. When Professor Bwejeri announced afterwards that the seder would be held on Sunday afternoon and evening, the Church had to scramble. It immediately scheduled a dance party for Sunday afternoon and a chorale practice for that evening, warning Tutsi mothers that if they did not bring their children to that practice then their children would be irrevocably thrown out of the group, effectively banning them from participating in cultural activities with their friends.

Having seemed to have come to a recognition that the Tutsi insistence on a Tutsi identity will not go away, the efforts of the Church to undermine Havila are testimony to the importance it attaches and the threat it perceives in a specifically Hebrew Tutsi identity. The more pressure the Church exerts, the more push-back it gets from those who are committed to such an identity. (As I explained during the seder, the egg on the seder plate is, among other things, a symbol of the people of Israel: the more they cook us, the harder we become.) It is impossible to underestimate how crucial the relationship is between Kush

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Transatlantic Exile: A Case Study

By Ines Diaz y Oben

My maternal grandfather, Jose Alejandro Oben y Alvares, would tell my cousins and me island stories beneath the star-filled skies of Havana. We would stand on the porch and look up to the velvet blue as he told us of navigators who could read the stars: *There are many islands, different people in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.* We also were fascinated with the people whose customs he had encountered as a youth, and we imagined them speaking French and Creole, cooking exotic foods. We knew of the Haitians' valor in battling against the colonists, and we started to believe that bravery was in the foods they ate. He cooked pastries and French-style foods and a Puerto Rican dish called *pasteles*, made from plantains and viands, wrapped in plantain leaves. *People in Ponce, Puerto Rico, live long lives --, there is something in the water,* he would say. He lived to age 96.

He wrote poems about Cuba or my grandmother, who was to all of us a symbol of Cuba and its struggle for dignity and freedom. His chest swelled with pride and respect mentioning "*El Titan de Bronce*," the Cuban hero General Antonio Maceo, named so because his skin was bronze-colored and because he was brave. Sometimes, after the stargazing and imaginary island-hopping, my grandfather would sing me to sleep: "*En el tronco de un arbol, una niña. . .*" He sang of an old, forgotten tree nostalgic for the little girl who marked her name on his trunk.

He was an only child and his father died at sea. He remembered that his father traveled the seas, spoke a foreign language, and had lived in St. Martin before living in Puerto Rico. According to an Oben descendant, they "were from Saint Thomas, stayed in Curacao for a while and after that came to Haiti and finally arrived to Baní, Dominican Republic." During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Obens often married members of the Victoria family, who came from Bordeaux and Northern Spain, according to a book on Baní's historic roots. A researcher from the Dominican Republic let me know that the Victorias practiced Judaism at least until the 1840s, so I wondered: "Were the Obens Jews as well?" Reading more about Jewish customs led me to understand that interfaith marriages were not likely 200 years ago, so the Obens were probably Jews.

Within the information about Caribbean Jews and *Anousim*, definite patterns emerged. The history of the migration of Iberian and Dutch Jews and *Anousim* spans Brazil, Venezuela, the Virgin Islands, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Cuba, New York, New England, Colombia, and Canada. Some left when the Inquisition arrived in Brazil over three centuries ago, a group of them settling in New Amsterdam (now New York City). In the Virgin Islands, prosperous Jewish communities such as that of Curacao engaged in trade with other islands. One such community, St. Eustacius, assisted the United States by running the blockade put up by the English during the American Revolution. The residents were later forced to evacuate. Around 1800, land reform in Venezuela forced those whose property was taken to seek opportunities elsewhere. In Santo Domingo, persecution of the Masons, who supported freedom from Spanish rule, led some Jews to leave, according to one of their descendants.

The 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses of Puerto Rico as well as the 1917 census of the Virgin Islands bear traces of this almost continual exile. In the 1920 census, a road called *Camino Judío* (Jewish Road) can be found. It appeared that the Obens migrated for several generations from France to the Virgin Islands to other islands, including Puerto Rico. They lived on roads from Salinas, Guayama, and Ponce. I found on the census an Oquen surnamed woman was married to a man named Moises Levis-Maduro, a tailor from St. Croix. The Levis-Maduros, some *conversos* and some still practicing Judaism, are an old family from the Virgin Islands. The great-grandson of Moises Levis-Maduro recognized the description from the census. He writes to me that his great-grandfather was really from St. Thomas, but St. Croix

was close enough, the profile matched.

My grandfather lived in Ponce at the time of the 1910 census, in a neighborhood where several French families lived. His mother was Juana Alvares y Escribano and his grandfather, Benito Alvares y Luna, from Spain, was a vendor of "confections." His grandmother was Antonia Escribano, which is translated to Scribner or Schreiber, meaning "writer of religious texts." Marie Therese Escribano, a comedienne, described them as "*marranos* from the South of Spain." I read about a cantor named Maria Teresa Escribano.

In the St. Thomas, V.I., census I found an Emanuel Oben, a foreign citizen, married, who spoke French. He was a fisherman and partner to a Joseph Quetel.

In postings by Crypto-Jews seeking answers to some of the same questions I asked, behaviors are described which match those of my family. My grandfather's habit of always wearing a hat, a fairly Cuban trait in olden days, became relevant. My family's refusal to attend Catholic or any church, yet their respect for freedom of worship, warranted further research. When my grandmother died, my mother was intent on ensuring that her mother's body would not be used for organ donations or in any way altered. I was surprised at her preoccupation with this "detail" at a time when grief overtook the rest of us. At the time of my grandfather's death, my aunt took over and he was buried so quickly I could not make travel arrangements for the funeral. Cooking methods, respect for the Sabbath, my father's evening prayers, the mezuzah inside the house, are Crypto-Judaic practices.

In Cuba, the end of the Inquisition did not mean freedom to openly practice Judaism; it was allowed in private after 1821. This led to secrecy as a way of life, which creates a fertile field for research. For example, listening to early 20th century Cuban music one hears surprising new terms for Crypto-Judaic practices, such as "the dinner for 'she who is leaving'" -- the celebration bidding goodbye to the Sabbath bride.

Cuba's sugar industry was founded by Dutch Jews. In the 19th century, economic crises after the end of slavery and economic opportunities in Cuba led some Virgin Islanders, Haitians, and French to emigrate. Jamaicans also came, to work in the sugar cane fields. Some Sephardis contributed money to free Cuba from Spanish rule, fought in the Spanish American War, and later moved to Cuba. Early in the 20th century, some Sephardis from Turkey who had migrated to New York City decided to seek a warmer climate and a more familiar language in Cuba.

My grandmother, Ursulina Hierrezuelo y Sanchez de Oben, would refer to her mother as a *true Isleña* from the Canary Islands. In Cuba, euphemisms for 'Jewish' included *Polaco* and *Turco*; I read that *Isleña* was also used in that manner. My grandmother would sternly warn that I should worship only one God, so that my ancestors would not be displeased. She would ask that we keep the tradition of giving our daughters "names from the old times, traditional names," which I took to mean names related to slavery. She had promised her parents to keep the tradition for two generations, and then it was up to us to keep the promise. At times I thought it an oppressive demand that my daughters bear such a mark. Now, I understand that the names could have been a way of paying homage to Judaic and/or African roots, rather than a way of remembering oppression. Close relatives were named Rosa Délia, Idália, Ofélia, Onelia, all names derivative of Leah.

Many evenings my grandmother would read to me from the journal her father wrote. He had been a lieutenant in the Liberation Army during the Spanish American War. He related the raw cruelty of slavery and the struggle for freedom. He also wrote that all of the slave masters had not been bad people, as some slaves were taught to read and write, while most Caucasians were illiterate in the 19th century. However, when the time came to choose whether to stay or leave, he

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BRIEFS (cont.)

(Continued from page 5)

Roger Lund, Beth Am Synagogue (Baltimore, MD), **Temple Isaiah** (Fulton, MD), **Debbie & Mark Glotter, Temple Shaaray Tefila** (New York, NY), **Jeanne Bodin, Judy Manelis, Beth Israel Congregation** (Owings Mills, MD), **Marlene and Samuel Halperin**, and the **Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation**.

And to our donors of \$100 - \$245: **Roberta and Lloyd Roos, The AJ and Lynda Scribante Charitable Foundation, National Center to Encourage Judaism, The Academy for Jewish Religion, Bernd & Lucy Kiekebusch-Steinitz, Robert and Lois Maller, Toby Silverman, the Jewish Campus Life Fund, Inc.** at Columbia University, **Temple Emeth** (Chestnut Hill, MA), **Brian and Jen Primack, Liz and Bill Adams, Robert Fenichel, Lea Golde, I. Michael Goodman, Drs. Edwin and Roz Kolodny, Rabbi P. Michael and Israela Meyerstein, Judith Rivas, Joseph Sander, Frank and Susan Schuster, Julius and Barbara Shair, Ruth Shapiro, Jack and Stephanie Ventura, Harold Alderman, Stanley and Lillian Bernstein, Joseph and Nancy Blum, Curtis and Joan Green, and Sol and Hilda Sonenklar.**

Mazal Tov

Mazal tov to long-time Kulanu activist **Lucy Steinitz**, who was recognized for her pioneering work on HIV/AIDS for the past 7 years in Namibia in Rahel Musleah's article, "Extreme Tikun Olam," in the spring issue of *Jewish Woman* magazine.

To acting Rabbi **Aaron Kintu Moses** and Women's Association Chairperson **Naume Sabano** on the birth **Hillel** in Uganda.

To **Jack and Diane Zeller** on the birth of granddaughter **Amy Geneveive**, daughter of Susan and Chris Geller in Minnesota, USA.

Remy Iona conveys from Nigeria this welcome news of a newborn: The baby's full names are **Moshe Ekenedilichukwu Asogwa**. *Ekene* means ("Thanks be to God" in English. The father is **Oliver Zurishaddai Asogwa** and the mother is **Ngozi Asogwa**. The family belongs to Beth Knesseth Siyahh Israel Synagogue in Lugbe, Abuja.

Transatlantic (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

left. His father chose to stay and he never again was mentioned in the journal.

I felt proud when told that excerpts from my great-grandfather's journal were published in the Cuban magazine *La Bohemia*. My mother would describe him as an "agnostic" and certainly a man who utterly forbade his family from participating in any church. He was very kind but also very strict, especially about taking God's name in vain. She was somewhat scared of him but also proud of him; she sometimes recalled the military funeral given him with all honors.

He wrote of the slave market. *People's teeth were examined, as if they were animals about to be sold. They were displayed in front of the market, for examination by the 'customers.'* Can you imagine how humiliating this was? My grandmother described episodes from the journal. The Hierrezuelo brothers and a sister became guerillas. The story of her aunt's valor, how she threw herself in front of the Spanish soldiers, distracting them, to allow her brothers to escape -- that story is etched in my memory as a reminder of women's bravery. Ironically, it happened toward the end of the war. If she had only survived a little longer, she could have seen its end. Her brothers were guerillas hunted down by the Spanish soldiers, so only she was able to sneak into the soldiers' encampment and take food. These stories from his journal became my childhood bedtime stories.

When I came to the United States, I had no choice but to be different. I learned that discussing slavery was "too different" and often misinterpreted. In the United States the subject is almost anathema. In Latin American culture, we go beyond that; we recognize the inhumanity of the institution and also that African culture strengthened us and allowed us to survive it. The Brazilian writer Jorge Amado also reflected this attitude in his stories, wherein Brazilians of African descent are grateful of the culture which allowed them to survive slavery. Through rituals, they pay homage to the ancestors who carried on the culture, keeping some of the old ways: language, religion, family, customs, and standards of conduct.

I was nine years old when I became an exile in a land which was culturally very far. As she packed flannel pajamas for my brother and

(Continued on page 13)

PURSUED BY THE ARMY OF PHARAOH (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

physical survival on the one hand and, on the other, Kush *t'shuvah* to its Hebraic roots and traditional mindset and practices (which are so much like yours and mine).

The Church, the former colonial powers, the Hutu power structure, and influential and/or corrupt Eurocentric Tutsis in Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern Congo all know this. That is why events such as this seder are so very, very important. When people in Europe and in the Homeland see that Havila has brought off this well organized, well attended, elegant, and traditionally Jewish event, and that an American rabbi representing an American Jewish organization has come to Belgium to lead it, Professor Bwejeri's personal credibility and the credibility of the Havila program are immeasurably enhanced. And that helps strengthen the resolve of those Tutsis who may be wavering in the face of bribes and threats coming from the Church.

Three days after the seder Professor Bwejeri hosted an opportunity for members of the community to meet 'the rabbi' and learn more about traditional Judaism and how it differs from Christianity. Four guests showed up: all of them Burundian Tutsi priests! The Church in Burundi is hemorrhaging Tutsi priests. After speaking with those priests that afternoon, and learning how poorly Catholicism fits the Batutsi and how badly Tutsi priests fare under the control of Hutu bishops, I could understand why those priests were so open to the possibility of embracing their true identity.

The situation in which those priests find themselves is the situation of all Tutsi men and women who want to be Tutsis and who find themselves subject to the momentum of a terrible history. In an email I received shortly after my return, one of those priests expressed the hope that God would continue to give me strength and the will to persevere in my fight for the rights of each person to life and well-being. And then he made me a promise: "I will struggle, along with others, on the side of life and the dignity of the individual, according to the path of the Eternal One that our ancestors have passed down to us as a legacy."

PUBLICATIONS (cont.)

(Continued from page 9)

wan's small Jewish community, which began in the 1950s when US troops were stationed there, and profiles Dr. Fengshan Ho, a Taiwanese diplomat in Europe in the 1930s who issued 1200 visas to desperate Jews, many of whom fled to Shanghai.



Babaganewz is a news magazine for students in Hebrew schools and day schools. Its Adar One edition featured "Long-Lost Jews," an article about the Bnei Menashe that quoted Jack Zeller and mentioned Kulanu. The magazine is published by the Avi Chai Foundation in partnership with *Jewish Family & Life*.



Yigal Schleifer's February 6 JTA article, "Oral History Project Illuminates Turkey's Forgotten Jewish Past," details a project initiated by Istanbul's Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Culture Research Center and the Vienna-based Centropa (Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation). A web-based archive will be developed to collect interviews and old photos documenting the historic Turkish Jewish community.



In a *Jerusalem Post* article of February 2, "Stolen Churches, Stolen Jews," **Michael Freund** reminds the reader that the Catholic Church has frequently helped itself to Jewish property and assets in the wake of various expulsions, massacres and persecutions. He cited the Corpus Christi church and convent in Segovia, Spain, which was once a grand synagogue.

He further reminded readers of the October 1946 document, recently published in Italian and other newspapers, containing a directive from the Vatican's Paris representative, Angelo Roncalli, stating that Jewish children hidden from the Nazis should not be returned to their parents if they were baptized while in the church's care. The Vatican has rejected recent requests to open its archives or publish wartime baptismal records.

The article quoted ADL director Abraham Foxman, who was hidden during the war and illicitly baptized by a Polish nanny: "There may have been tens of thousands of rescued and baptized Jewish children who to this day are not aware of their true origins." Freund concludes, "It is time for Israel and world Jewry to turn up the pressure on Rome to come clean. The Vatican must open its archives and release the baptismal records at once. It is bad enough that they plundered Jewish property over the centuries. They cannot be allowed to get away with stealing Jewish children too."



Chris Nickson's January 31 article in the Ugandan paper *The New Vision* is entitled "Abayudaya: Uganda's First Ambassadors to the Grammys." It tells of the Ugandan Jews' nomination for the American Grammy Awards, which it calls "the most prestigious music awards in the world"



A January 31 *Haaretz* article by **Amiram Barkat**, "Government To Bring All Falashmura from Ethiopia by 2007," told of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's announcement affecting more than 15,000 practicing

Jews in Ethiopia. As of June 1, the monthly rate of immigration from Ethiopia to Israel will be doubled from 300 to 600 people.



The website <beneisraelheritage.com> announces the publication of the five-volume CD *Heritage of the Bene-Israel in India*, which includes the topics of synagogues, heritage, recipes, prayers and songs. Copies can be ordered on the website or by contacting Ralphy Jhirad at <ralphy@saitechventures.com>.

Transatlantic (cont.)

(Continued from page 12)

me, my grandmother prepared me: *You cannot pack much, Chinita, but remember that education fits in any suitcase. Remember the Jews, how they had to pack and leave at a moment's notice, always had to be ready to leave in order to live, yet wherever they went they were able to get back on their feet, to live well, to adjust, because they had skills and knowledge. They had their education. Never forget that.* She might as well have been talking about computers and laser beams, but she was my beloved grandmother and I listened closely. When I learned about the *Shoah*, I supposed that she had been referring to it, to the German, Polish, French Jews who left in the 1930s and 1940s. I admired her knowledge of history, intellect, concern for the Ashkenazi Jews and their ability to adjust and to survive. Now I believe that she also spoke of all Jews.

Whether or not Afro-Cubans identified with Jews only because the story of Exodus inspired slaves to seek their freedom is not certain. Whatever the reason, in Cuba as well as in the United States there was an identification with Judaism. I have learned that some Jamaicans who came to Cuba may have had Indian as well as Jewish heritage and that there were Jewish communities in Ghana and in South Africa. My grandmother was very tall and thin, dark-skinned but with fine, straight hair and thin lips. Her physique and her beliefs are not typical of Yoruba, the group from Africa which most people presume when discussing Afro-Cubans. Other Hierrezuelos have welcomed my research but say that only those in Cuba have retained the memories of the family's heritage. I have converted to Judaism and feel it reflects who I am. I enjoy studying Torah in order to reconnect to what I identify as my religion. I take classes at the temple. I feel comfortable and welcome within Reform Judaism.

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Our Mishpacha in Uganda (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

sah Infant School, Semei Kukungulu High School and the highlight of our trip - THE WATER TANKS and THE ELECTRIC POLES MINUS THREE (more on that later).

We saw additional classrooms under construction at Hadassah that will result in more dormitory space for the children who board (necessary because of the distances and lack of public transportation). All Jewish students may attend the schools free of charge, thanks to Kulanu, which pays their tuition. When we visited the high school, we realized how wonderful it will be when they have a science laboratory – it is very difficult for students to pass college entrance exams never having done lab work. The need for textbooks, also, is critical.

Jeanne and I were thrilled to work with the kids. We did two art workshops, one on Tu B'Shevat and the other on Chanukah. In each, we started with about 15 children and had nearly 70 by the end – kids had to travel by foot to get there and it took some time. Either we were incredible teachers or these are the children that every teacher dreams of – attentive, responsive, polite and sharing. The kids decorated wooden dreidels, the same type that our Woodlands children decorated and sent to the Abayudaya last year for Chanukah. Because the youngest children lacked facility in English, two teenage girls translated for us. One girl confided in us that she hopes to become an attorney and the other that she wants to be a physician.

While we worked with the kids, Howard, a retired businessman in our group, and Laura presented a workshop for the adults on creating a business plan and applying for a micro-loan. When we had met with Ambassador Kolker, he stressed how important it is for borrowers to have a plan to repay their loans and not be in perpetual debt.

Yet another thrilling moment occurred on Nabugoye Hill. There, on the doorway of a home, was one of the *mezuzot* that Woodlands third graders and their families had made for the Abayudaya a year ago. Many of our congregants had purchased the scrolls that were inserted in the mezuzah cases before we sent them to Uganda.

We also visited three other communities – Namanyoni, Nasenyi, Namatumba – and talked with them about their needs, the work they do, and what they grow. We saw the Heifer Project in action – with the baby calf that will be given to neighbors.

Nabugoye and Namanyoni have water tanks, thanks, in part, to Woodlands' efforts. We are so proud that the public school on Nabugoye Hill was given a water tank. Water is so necessary for life that making it available to neighbors goes far in building good relationships. Unfortunately, Namatumba cannot have a tank because it does not have a roof on which to catch the rainwater. A new synagogue – with a proper roof – is under construction, but the financing of its completion seemed years away. (Note: When Jeanne and I returned home, we sent a letter informing our congregants of this problem and raised sufficient funds to complete the synagogue and the water tank.)

Although we saw the results of our work to bring water to the community, electricity was another thing. When we had arrived two weeks earlier, we wondered about the three deep holes in the ground, soon to discover that they were awaiting the last three poles needed to connect the center of the Abayudaya community – Moses Synagogue, the schools, the bank, and the offices – to the Uganda power grid. Buildings had been wired and fixtures installed, but no electricity. After saying our good-byes on the last night on Nabugoye Hill, we stumbled along a moonlit path to find the way to our van. The remaining step in bringing electricity to the community – the step that would allow for a metal workshop, computers, evening adult studies, and other activities that promote self-sufficiency – had not yet occurred.

But two very special things happened within a week of our return home. First was an email from Israel Siriri: "Mazal tov to everybody. Abayudaya gets electricity at the Headquarter Nabugoye. It was this morning when light came up in the village, after a long time and years of struggle. Everyone is happy, very bright light, comfortable for people to read at night. I am very happy as I talk now. Thanks very much Kulanu, thanks very much all our friends everywhere."

And next was a letter from the Commission on Social Action of the Union for Reform Judaism informing us that Woodlands will receive the Irving J. Fain Social Action Award for our Abayudaya Moses Synagogue Associate Member Project. We were selected for our efforts in support of Jewish communities in Africa.

As a result of our trip, our determination to support the Abayudaya was strengthened and we embarked on three additional projects.

The first involves Woodlands. It is a "Celebrate A Woman" card for our congregants to send to the women in their lives they wish to honor - on Mother's Day or on birthdays. Our Abayudaya Committee will send the cards to each honoree for an \$18 donation. The money will be sent to Kulanu to be used for the Abayudaya Women's Association – for women's conferences, transportation, communication (short-wave radio and cell phones), workshops in business planning, budgeting, and banking procedures, materials (seeds, chickens, etc.), and starting a cookbook.

The second and third are personal. Jeanne is sending her own birthday money and gifts from friends and family to Kulanu to fund a micro-loan bank for the communities far from Nabugoye Hill. And I am using a milestone birthday to raise funds from my friends and family to purchase sets of Hebrew books that Rabbi Aaron has selected (so all the kids in a class can all have the same book to learn from).

By the end of our journey, we understood how the power of collaborative efforts has enabled the Abayudaya community to move toward self-sufficiency and to become connected to the global Jewish community. We sing praises of Kulanu for its leadership and facilitation of these collaborative efforts.

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